

Tucson Citizen

TOWN HALL REPORT

Feedback from participants helps to start community-building process

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As 159 weary citizens completed the final report of the Tucson Regional Town Hall on Wednesday, concluding almost 30 hours of serious discussion over four days, both participants and observers were eager to evaluate the outcome immediately.

The success of the Town Hall should, however, not be evaluated on the basis of the warm feelings of common community values generated among the diverse participants or by the clear reflection of those values in the final report.

The true measure of success must be documented progress toward declared goals that arise from the Town Hall report.

I am deeply gratified by the performance of the Town Hall participants and more than satisfied with the work they have earnestly completed. They have done the job they were asked to do and properly earned the appreciation of their community.

They were not asked to crystallize a noble vision for the region, nor were they asked to solve all of our problems. They were not expected to draft a plan that would define our future and tell us how to get from here to there.

The primary purpose of the Tucson Regional Town Hall was to accelerate the evolving process of community building that extends beyond our treasured neighborhoods and jurisdictional domains to embrace the full extent of our region.

We all know regional approaches must be adopted as we confront challenges in

transportation, water management, environmental preservation, health care, education, recreation and cultural enrichment.

But somehow we have struggled to develop the spirit of regional community that is required to meet these challenges.

The Town Hall was designed to involve large numbers of people of diverse perspective in confronting (not resolving) these challenges, hoping that good people with different personal interests would come together in recognition of the need to work together, and if necessary make individual sacrifices for the greater good.

In meeting this purpose in relation to the participants, our Town Hall was a roaring success!

But what about the larger populations of our region, the people who did not participate actively in the Town Hall?

Will they be moved by the oral testimony of the participants and by the written record of their work to embrace the spirit generated?

Or will they feed upon the critics who will ignore the successes and focus upon the inevitable deficiencies of the Town Hall?

I cannot know how this will turn out, but I have faith in the capacity of all human populations to seize upon the hope for progress and go forward even in the face of obstacles and uncertainties.

If we allow ourselves to be paralyzed by our fear that our imperfect efforts will be criticized, then we will never even try to make the world a better place.

When you have the opportunity in a few weeks to read the report of the Tucson Regional Town Hall, you will see that my optimism for our community and all of its people is widely shared by the Town Hall participants - whether from the business community, government, or nonprofit sector (education, health care and private foundations).

You will see evidence in the report of a regional philosophy that contrasts sharply with the abandonment of community responsibility that too often accompanies our proud Arizona commitment to individual initiative.

I think you will be proud of the work of the Tucson Regional Town Hall and will embrace it as your own.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Go to www.tucson.com/townhall to learn more about the Tucson Regional Town Hall.

Peter Likins is president emeritus of the University of Arizona and chairman of the Tucson Regional Town Hall.