



Marketing and Economic Development Go “Hand in Hand” -July 2017

Letter from Mayor Les Peterson

With an increased amount of interest in new business and development in the area, sometimes marketing is seen as Economic Development. Are they one of the same? What are the differences and do they overlap? How important are they?

Let's start with **marketing** in the context of the town of Carefree. Currently, Carefree's primary marketing objectives include communications and incentives to help generate awareness of and create a brand that personifies the deserts beauty however offering a progressive town. Secondly, marketing attracts people to visit the downtown commercial area of Carefree who have never visited. Rarely is there an immediate or direct “payback” in destination marketing and it is understood to be a process that requires repetition. It can take years to develop a “brand” that is seen as unique to all the other cities and towns in the Valley. As the economic landscape changes so will the marketing. Existing businesses play a part of the overall strategy of the town marketing when they advertise or host an event. Their personality and what they offer is seen as part of the brand, and can add to it with every experience a visitor receives.

An example of the Town taking ownership of an event to help enhance the brand is that of the Pumpkin Festival. It perpetuates an artistic environment, creative, and a unique feel while offering a broad audience appeal. Carefree has been prudent to select an artist like Ray Villafane who is world renowned, the best in his field. He has a following across the globe. In less than a two years, the Town has executed well received, signature events attracting 60,000 or more people to view his outstanding pumpkin carvings but also a platform to experience the beautiful Town. We have garnered exposure not only for the local community and region but also for potential new businesses looking to make the area their new home. Not bad for a town with a population of 3,700.

For Carefree, success in **economic development** is establishing ourselves as a home for businesses that offer “unique” appealing experiences, products and services to enhance the quality of our resident's life as well as attracting visitors from all over the world. Construction tax and sales tax are healthy and core funding that feeds the local economy and maintains the level of town services. Without new ideas, partnerships, growth, change and enhancement of the existing landscape the town will die.

Marketing attracts people to the town and gives them a sense of what to expect when they arrive. Economic development delivers that experience through viable and memorable services and products.

So to answer the question. Marketing and economic development go “hand in hand” and work together to provide a healthy economy that attracts people and dollars to the Town. Without either of them the town will slowly deteriorate. Over time the marketing we are doing today will launch the perception and awareness of Carefree and help strengthen the adoption of new business. As the economic landscape changes in Carefree for the better, the marketing will change right along with it.