

What a week we've had! What a wonderful future these actions portend for our community!

Let me give you a few details:

Downtown Revitalization: Four key actions/decisions were made earlier this week that clearly indicate Downtown Is Happening! Here's what occurred and why I think we have reason to celebrate - briefly - then get back to work to build our future.

75 Acre Downtown Master Planning and Development / Pre-development Agreement: The Private Sector has stepped up - Big Time! Williams & Dame [which was instrumental in the revitalization of Portland's Pearl District ... and our own MLK, turning it into market rate apartments downtown], Scott Stiteler [a California businessman with strong Tucson ties who sees Tucson's future and has been investing in real estate in the downtown area for more than a decade] and Jim Campbell [a Tucson area developer who owns OasisTucson] and several other partners have formed the Downtown Tucson Development Company.²⁰ They will be investing millions of dollars in Downtown for the public good - this in addition to their current holdings. They will be investing money and expertise in helping the Warehouse Arts Management Organization assess the warehouses in the district, strengthen their own operations, and fix up 20 buildings so artists can live and work in the area. They'll be spending \$1- million to upgrade the City-owned Rialto Theatre. They'll continue their work on the rest of the Rialto block, which they own, creating a 20,000 square foot restaurant home to Mr. An's latest offering: An Congress. [Love the name!] And they'll be giving a temporary home to the kids at Skrappy's, an important program for young people in our community. All this while developing zoning standards and design guidelines for the 75 acres that comprise the east end of Downtown. Every existing downtown business will benefit from their efforts, as will other developers who have an interest in creating a project Downtown. This is a major win/win for our community and marks an important next step for the City. Our role in Rio Nuevo has been basic vision and infrastructure - providing the framework for the Private Sector to come in and invest. And it's happening. Now. Exciting!

Bonds Sale: Last summer, Mayor & Council authorized selling approximately \$500-million in bonds in support of Rio Nuevo projects.

[This is part of our responsibility in terms of providing infrastructure and public facilities.] A careful plan was laid out for selling those bonds in increments driven by when we'll need funds to plan/build specific projects. Then the economy fell apart. Well, despite the dismal market and the fact that other municipalities floated bonds and had to pull them back because of lack of interest, WE SOLD EVERY BOND WE PUT ON THE MARKET THIS WEEK! That is an extraordinary result and speaks volumes about the confidence the financial community has in our plans and our ability to bring those plans to fruition. I might add our success also speaks volumes about the excellence of our City staff and consultants who worked so hard on this project. By December 30th we will have approximately \$80-million dollars in hand, enabling us to take important next steps on Mission Gardens, the Civic Center projects, several museums, the Cushing Street underpass, Depot Plaza and providing needed infrastructure to two of Tucson's oldest Barrios that are being most directly impacted by Rio Nuevo.

Federal Support for the Modern Streetcar: We moved to the next critical level with the US Department of Transportation on the Streetcar project on Monday. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters informed us that a Letter of No Prejudice is on its way to us. This means Congress will now review our specific initial request, and then we can spend up to \$25-million right away on Streetcar infrastructure. This is a HUGE step forward for the Streetcar project!

RTA Support for the Modern Streetcar: We approved an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Regional Transportation Authority for additional \$87-million in funding for the Modern Streetcar. We are actually now moving forward a bit ahead of schedule in bringing this fundamental element in Downtown revitalization to reality. By 2012 we should have the first major section of the Streetcar in operation from UA Main Gate through Downtown across the Cushing Street Bridge past the Cultural Plaza and up to Congress.

So, now that we have proved ourselves on the Bond Market and have initial funding for the Streetcar, we can move forward in substantive ways. Future bonding will be determined by our local economy.

Convention Center Hotel: Another move forward downtown: Monday evening more than 100 people attended the first of several design forums for the new Convention Center Sheraton Hotel. The initial vision for the 550-ish room hotel was spectacular in its general shape and mass. However now it is time for the community to have input into the final design, look and feel of the building itself.

This is all fabulous news, but as good as this is, we're still facing tremendous financial challenges as a City. [Please remember that funding for Rio Nuevo and Downtown Revitalization comes from a separate pool of money that can ONLY be used for these projects.] In January, Mayor & Council will be given an update on anticipated revenues and continue the process of examining virtually every expenditure to prioritize use of the more limited funds we'll have for the next fiscal year. Together, we will make the difficult decisions, keeping in mind our priorities as a community ... and the tremendous need that continues to grow. Your thoughts are always welcomed.

A few other updates of note:

Sun Tran and Van Tran WILL be offering free rides on all routes on Thursday, December 25, 2008. Sun Tran will also continue the holiday tradition of providing free shuttle service to the Tucson Convention Center for the Salvation Army's Annual Christmas Dinner that will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The shuttle service will operate between 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

First Night: The Downtown Tucson Partnership is proud to announce the launch of FIRST NIGHT - a New Year's Eve celebration of arts, culture & community. This family-friendly and alcohol-free festival will bring together Tucsonans of all ages in a welcoming and safe atmosphere to enjoy multicultural music, dance, comedy, magic, children's activities and more! Everyone is invited to join in and share the fun and

anticipation as the evening builds toward a grand finale of sights and sounds at midnight! For more information:

<http://www.downtowntucson.org/>

CONGRATULATIONS ALEX!!!! Alex Hingle, who has been part of our Ward VI team from the beginning, graduates from the University of Arizona TODAY!!!! It was challenging for him to work 20+ hours on behalf of our Ward VI constituents ... and the entire city ... while also being a full-time student, but he did it and we're proud of him. Way to go Alex!

Gallery VI Art Exhibit: Through the end of the year ... and into the first week of next year ... the next phase of the Finding Voice project is on display in the Gallery at Ward VI. Come view some stunning images and essays from young people in the Catalina Magnet HS English as a Second Language class. It is so enlightening! Monday through Friday, 9 - 5.

I guess that's it for now! I will try to write again before the New Year, but in the mean while, I hope you and your family have the happiest of holiday seasons. We are living in challenging times. Now more than ever it is more important to take joy in our families, our friends, and our diverse and caring community.

Nina J. Trasoff

Councilmember - Ward VI

3202 East 1st Street

Tucson, Arizona 85716

520-791-4601 Office

520-791-3211 Fax

<http://www.tucsonaz.gov/ward6/>