

## Mayoral hopeful sees airport as keystone

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Standing in the Buckeye Municipal Airport lobby, Michael Todd is pointing to maps that are lined and circled with expansion plans for the next 20 years.

"Eventually, we're going to be busy enough we'll need a second runway," he explained, as private propeller planes land on the strip outside.

Todd's goal, if he becomes mayor, is to turn the airport into the largest aviation and commercial hub west of Phoenix.

"This airport, with the right vision, is going to service the West Valley, like Scottsdale (Municipal Airport) services the East Valley," he said.

Todd, 33, has spent the past two years leading the Buckeye Airport Advisory Board in creating an airport master plan.

Over the next two decades, the airport could have 80 hangars, a state-of-the-art weather information system and a privately run terminal with a restaurant, airplane repair station and flight school.

Todd says the airport could support a commercial corridor along Palo Verde Road, which borders the east side, featuring a bank, hotel and convention center.

"As you look to regional airports all over the place, the economic impact is huge," said Todd, who works for a medical helicopter company, LifeNet Arizona.

The town has the advantage of starting from scratch in a largely undeveloped stretch of land.

Buckeye's competitors, Glendale Municipal Airport and Phoenix Goodyear Airport, are "maxed out," he says.

The airfields are landlocked, Todd says, and close to capacity already.

"This is the next spot," he said.

"There was a failed vision for the airport up until a few years ago," Todd said. "You could count on one hand the number of planes coming in here in a day. It was a ghost town."

The airport now sees dozens a day and Todd wants to see more.

"It makes Buckeye a bigger destination point," he said.

As mayor, Todd says he would "help the council see the potential for the airport."

"Everything we do at the airport today sets us up for the future," he said.