



Bold predictions made for Gateway

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This is going to be big. Really, really big.

Mesa has long known, and long advertised, that the Williams Gateway area would become one of the Southwest's premier job and residential centers.

But the vision presented Tuesday to more than 200 political and business leaders at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa in downtown Mesa went several steps beyond that.

Think world-class resort. Think high-rise corporate headquarters. Think multimillion-dollar executive homes. Think one of the world's leading research universities and a 21st-century urban core smack in the middle of a virtually brand-new city of about 2 million people.

Those were some of the themes woven through a two-hour discussion sponsored by DMB Associates, the Scottsdale development company that last year bought more than five square miles of the General Motors Proving Ground northeast of Williams Gateway Airport.

DMB has named its project the Mesa Proving Grounds, and City Manager Chris Brady said that could be prophetic as the biggest test of civic vision Mesa has ever faced.

"The proving grounds is an area where they prove, test and push to the limit the best of what (GM) had," Brady said. "I would suggest to you that that's exactly what we're doing. That the Mesa Proving Grounds will become for this community an opportunity . . . for Mesa to step up."

Grady Gammage Jr., one of Arizona's foremost land-use and planning experts, said projections about the area already are a moving target. And each time the target moves, opportunity grows.

Ioanna Morfessis, a Valley business expert, spoke of the area as being part of a new kind of city called an "aerotropolis."

Railroads drove development in the 19th century, freeways in the 20th, and in the 21st, she said, it will be airports. She said Williams Gateway is the leading business-development opportunity in the country, with potential to be a commercial hub in the globalized economy.