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Editorial

More growth in Pinal

A national and state slowdown in the housing industry has affected Pinal County as well, but yet growth continues. New homes are going up as people continue to come to Arizona, and the spillover into Pinal County seems to be irreversible. This is true even though jammed roads and higher gasoline prices have taken away some of the incentive to look farther south. Land in much of Maricopa County is more expensive and in short supply.

In another of its periodic looks at growth and resulting effects, the Dispatch has found that government is coping pretty well. School systems are keeping up, despite the fact that enrollments in some districts are becoming multiples of what they were at about the beginning of the decade. Cities are providing services and planning amidst change that is unprecedented here.

Pinal County commissioned a professional study to set the tone for developing a new comprehensive plan. The county is being forced to deal with large areas that actually should be cities. And the county has set up the criteria for imposing builder impact fees, although it was a little late in doing so.

Casa Grande has a plan for seven-lane roads after a long history of contemplating no more than five. The city also has the beginning of plans for a beltway system that should eventually help people get around. Other cities are expanding their streets and planning as well. The Arizona Department of Transportation is beginning to expand access along state highways, although costs and other factors mean much of this will not happen for many years.

Retail stores and entertainment are catching up with the population growth, providing what probably is the main reason for many people not to mind the growth too much. They like having more services, even though some growing pains come with them.

Many new residents seem to enjoy their new communities. As we have said before, the area's future depends heavily on getting these people involved as stakeholders in that future. Also, those who favor the good things about rural life need to become more involved in order to help retain that.

As the communities become larger, so do job opportunities. That must be encouraged in order to help grow the economy and prevent some of the transportation problems that otherwise could only become worse.