

NEWS SEARCH

Advanced search

Coolidge News

Growth, renovation may define 2007

By BRIAN AHNMARK, Editor, Coolidge Examiner January 10, 2007

[Email to a friend](#) [Voice your opinion](#)

Residential and retail growth are expected to continue to dominate headlines in 2007, although the beginning stages of the downtown renovation project could give Coolidge its most significant facelift.

Housing market

While 2006 was considered a "down year" in terms of the overall housing market in Arizona, Economic Development Director Alton Bruce said the 625 new home permits issued in Coolidge were a "smidge" more than the number of permits issued in 2005.

"It was below my expectations, but based on the market, any increase denotes a pretty good year," he said. Bruce expects the number of new permits to remain steady or increase slightly in 2007.

"The market has bottomed out," he said. "We're looking at a good year, but not gang-busters."

The housing market could receive a major boost thanks to some cooperative marketing efforts. Bruce said he recently met with a group of representatives from roughly 10 different homebuilders who will be active in 2007. Their mission: to promote Coolidge.

"We're working on a joint marketing campaign to raise the visibility of Coolidge as a destination for homebuyers," Bruce said. "While there are already multiple builders here, we want the general public to recognize that we're as easy a commute as Casa Grande to Valley jobs, and we don't have the traffic problems that you see in some areas."

Bruce acknowledged that it is "not common" to see competing homebuilders team up in this manner; one proposed idea would even arrange a "Parade of Homes" in Coolidge, a proposal that has Bruce "very excited" about the cooperative effort.

And population growth begets commercial and retail expansion. Bruce cited new businesses in the Coolidge Gateway area; Domino's Pizza recently opened in the Safeway Plaza, and Wells Fargo has committed to build a stand-alone bank next to Walgreen's.

"There are ambitious plans for additional tenants in those areas," Bruce said. "We're getting interest from national chains. All of this growth in retail will benefit the city and bring jobs."

▶ Casa Grande Dispatch
▶ Real Estate Buyers' Guide
▶ Tri-Valley Dispatch
▼ Coolidge Examiner
Coolidge News
School News
Coolidge Sports
Upcoming Events
Religion/Churches
▶ Florence Reminder
▶ Eloy Enterprise
▶ AZ City Ind/Ed
▶ Maricopa Monitor
▶ Pinal Ways Magazine
▶ TV Roundup
▶ Personal Finance
▶ Fun and Games
▶ Our Newspaper

- #### SECTION LINKS
- City of Coolidge
 - Coolidge Chamber of Commerce





As will long-awaited growth at the Coolidge Industrial Park. For years, hair dye manufacturer Bright International has been the only tenant in the city's west side space zoned specifically for industrial uses. In 2007, Bruce anticipates vertical construction from Mesa Fully Formed, designer of custom counter tops, Felix Construction, and Revegetation Services, a landscaping company. Those facilities could be occupied by the end of the year, creating hundreds of new jobs.

Downtown

The coming year will also usher in numerous projects dedicated to the renovation and beautification of historic downtown Coolidge. The city staff is developing a downtown facilities plan, with specific focus on renovating City Hall.

Also in the works are the initial phases of the downtown revitalization plan, laid out last month in a public hearing by consulting firm HyettPalma.

"We're already going through our downtown inventories and looking at our resources," Bruce said.

In the next 60 days, local residents can expect to see progress with the façade improvement program, dedicated to the renovation of downtown business storefronts. Jill Dusenberry, Coolidge grants coordinator, explained that the city has been collecting applications for the program for the past year. Only businesses in the downtown historic district are eligible to apply.

"We've gotten applications from some operating businesses, and applications for some vacant buildings," Dusenberry said. "Through this program, we can only serve operating businesses."

The façade improvement program is funded by Community Development Block Grant funds through the Arizona Department of Housing, which is an extension of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The first three businesses to benefit from the program are neighbors on Main Street; D&J Trends, Hansen Engineering and the old State Farm Insurance location (now owned by Taylor Hansen). In an interesting twist, all three locations share a canopy awning system, so the businesses partnered to apply for the program at the same time. Dusenberry said because of the shared awning, it would have been impossible to proceed had the businesses not applied as a trio.

A bid went out this week for a licensed general contractor interested in completing the façade work. The city hopes to award a bid in February, with improvement work beginning in late February or early March.

"It will tie in quite nicely with other improvements in the historic district," Dusenberry said. "To come up with the initial plans, we hired an architect who has worked with historic preservation in the past, so the plans keep with the theme of the downtown buildings."

Dusenberry said HyettPalma has encouraged the city to continue to seek funding for the project into the future.

Fire station

During the first quarter of 2007, Coolidge will begin its transition from a volunteer fire department to a full-time fire department to cover a burgeoning population, especially on the city's west side. A temporary fire station is in the works and will be built near the intersection of Signal Peak and Val Vista roads. Bruce said Pulte Homes is providing the land, while Pivotal Group is funding construction of the

temporary station. Area homebuilders will help defray the costs associated with 24-hour coverage, and the city is expected to hire some full-time firemen this year.

In other public safety news, Bruce said the engineering phase was just about completed for the proposed traffic signal at the intersection of Arizona 287 and Attaway Road. The city is negotiating with the Arizona Department of Transportation to keep the costs down.

"Over time, the cost has been driven up higher than we had hoped," Bruce said. "We'll try to hit ADOT up for some additional funds." The complex engineering process involves plans for the eventual widening of Arizona 287, and the relocation of electrical power lines and utility boxes.

"I would never predict the timing of ADOT, but the signal should be installed in 2007," Bruce said.

There are also indications that proposed improvements to Signal Peak Road could get under way this year. Pivotal Group has obtained the right-of-way for a stretch of Signal Peak Road, which will serve as one of the major points of entry and exit for the Sandia master planned community. Pivotal plans to pave the gravel road, and eventually install a traffic signal at the intersection of Signal Peak Road and Arizona 87.

The city of Coolidge is also wrapping up a Small Area Transportation Study in conjunction with the town of Florence. The study is intended to help design an arterial roadway system to connect this region with surrounding communities. Bruce said the study should be completed by June. Meanwhile, Pinal County is spearheading a Routes of Regional Significance study focused on access control of major thoroughfares. These combined studies should help the county establish a plan for improvements to infrastructure.

"The county is working aggressively to get ahead of the curve," Bruce said.

Mayor's perspective

Coolidge Mayor Tom Shope said he was eager to see the city "continue its growth as a community. Even though the housing market has slowed down, we still put out over 600 permits in 2006."

Shope, a die-hard fan of Coolidge sports, is especially eager to see the March opening of the Kenilworth Sports Complex on the city's west side. He also hopes to see the Coolidge Police Department's proposed crime suppression unit get off the ground in 2007. That unit, comprised of four officers and a sergeant, would allow the department to focus patrol efforts on particular neighborhoods or crimes.

"With that unit, we can try to cut crime down to zero," Shope said. "That's my New Year's resolution. It may be impractical, but we need a goal. That unit will help, and not just with the older communities, but with the farm land we've incorporated through annexation."

Shope also looks forward to the beautification of Coolidge, courtesy a second code enforcement officer. That position is currently being advertised.

"That is an impossible job for one person, and I'm anxious to get a second officer on board," he said.