

# Tribune

EAST VALLEY • SCOTTSDALE

July 12, 2008

## Pinal County leaders envision plan for growth

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From Staff Reports

New freeways, a major airport and protected open space for views of the Santan mountains are all envisioned in a plan for growth created by Pinal County. Now, county officials are trying to promote awareness of the plan. The plan is available for review at [www.pinalcountyplan.com](http://www.pinalcountyplan.com).

The various plan elements include: mobility and connectivity, economic sustainability, open space, environmental stewardship and a plan to create a sense of community and quality education.

Pinal County is the third fastest growing county in the nation with more than 300,000 people, according to the most recent Census data.

The boom in housing has created a series of new bedroom communities that use a handful of major roadways to connect Pinal County residents to the East Valley and Phoenix. Retail outlets and job centers still are sparse in many areas of the county.

Evidence of some of the explosive growth in the county can be shown through the growth of homes in the Florence Unified School District. The school district has grown from \$9.7 million in property values to \$237.5 million in one decade.

The new comprehensive plan will replace one that the county created in 2001.

The Pinal County Board of Supervisors focused on three areas when updating the general plan, according to county officials. Its direction was to preserve open spaces, improve mobility and attract good employment. The county has put a particular focus on creating areas which could turn into employment centers that attract more than low-wage retail jobs.

For instance, an area near Florence is being set aside under the general plan to create an airport that could rival the size of Tucson International Airport. The county, also focused on preserving open space, has the most developable state trust land in the state. That land has traditionally been sold to housing developers and the money goes to the state's schools.



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