

SCOTTSDALE HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

# A Five Year Strategic Plan for Scottsdale

a city in the desert the desert in a city

Idea Maps & Conversation Summaries from Scottsdale

A 5 Year Strategic Road Map



Think in systems and recognize the necessity to change one or more systems to realize your future picture.



The Identity Matrix & Place Narrative for Scottsdale

The State of the Industry



Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### UPS AND DOWNS IN TOURISM

Scottsdale is a notably successful destination. It's profile is unusual. It is highly seasonal and is dependent on the affluent resort market which is sustained by corporate meetings. Such an asymmetrical marketplace is unhealthy on the face of it, but it has been so successful as to be a source of pride. However, repeated downturns in the late 1990's, after 9/11 and the great recession of 2008 have eroded that success. And the city is seeing faltering tourism revenues. The instinctive response of the industry is to seek a single solution such as new events or new markets.

### IDENTITY IN SCOTTSDALE

In the meantime, the City of Scottsdale is increasingly aware of an identity problem as the Phoenix metropolis threatens to swallow Scottsdale. And the people who are advocates "for keeping things they way they are" are concerned about taking actions which will damage the place, unaware that not taking action, and specifically action to secure the economic independence of the city, will assure Scottsdale's absorption into the megalopolis. As everyone knows, it is the natural order of things unless there is a plan to do otherwise (don't do anything is not a plan). Reports going back ten years call attention to this problem.

What motivates this kind of protectionism is love of place. PLACES, by reading and researching about elements of the place and by conducting interviews and collecting stories about the place, has developed a tool to help guide the way through change. It is called Scottsdale's Identity Matrix. In the strategic plan for Scottsdale, PLACES recommends that the Identity Matrix be a living document which informs the decisions about the future, about what to strengthen and how to keep what people love alive and a part of everyday life. Economists have a term, social capital, which describes the investment of citizens in the place they live. What inspires social capital is love of place. The love of people for a place is a major asset, valuable in tourism and immeasurably important in protecting a place under threat.

What's necessary to protect Scottsdale, is a deep understanding of: what needs to be protected, how keeping a unique place requires that Scottsdale have a strong local economy, the importance of being organized like a city (with more connections and joint enterprise interest in the future of the place). The isolation of Scottsdale, geographically, socially, in business and civic life is more like a suburb. Suburbs don't focus on building an economic base, they focus on land use. Suburbs get absorbed, cities stand on their own. Independent and distinctive cities have strong downtowns.

### DOWNTOWN, THE PLACE TO START

Four things converge to recommend that Scottsdale create an urban experience in downtown. An amenity-rich, pedestrian-friendly downtown designed around authentic identity will anchor leisure tourism and next generation economic development. Making downtown a major focus area for Scottsdale extends the city's competitiveness and financial success as well as the protection of its unique identity into the next era. The four converging things are:

- 1) The problems perceived by meetings market that Scottsdale has little to do.
- 2) A huge shift in lifestyle preferences among young professionals in travel experiences and in where they live.
- 3) The need to protect and advance the identity of Scottsdale within and against the region.
- 4) The opportunity to continue the very successful economic development edge in which a visitor to Scottsdale turns into a resident, and brings their business with them, and to address next generation professionals in the green, tech and creative class sectors of the economy).

### THE STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The downtown opportunity is to focus on the identity of Scottsdale and its unique character of place combined with a deliberate attempt to encourage downtown development in a pattern of urban lifestyle and programmed activity "Scottsdale style." This will create a major advantage for Scottsdale tourism in stabilizing and significantly growing the market in a move from a resort centered to a destination centered approach to tourism combined with the strategic approach which addresses the future of tourism. PLACES' recommendations for

doing so follow.

Strategic planning is undertaken to change a system, the way it operates and the way it performs. The Downtown strategic focus area, begins with an assessment of the economic issues which would support reinvestment by current land owners and improve the opportunities for current merchants operating downtown. It then follows a stepwise plan to begin creating this lively and prosperous downtown. There are additional initiatives for downtown: create an Arizona Central facility to support the touring vacation and to get those on touring vacations to make Scottsdale part of their experience. Create an “animated” experience with small events, rituals and festivals that make the Downtown a place where locals, those in the region and those on trips want to spend time. And create a funding and management structure to keep those experiences going.

Recognizing that the most important component of economic stability in the future is to be a desirable place to live (and in Scottsdale’s case - visitors decide to stay - and bring their businesses with them). What will make this even more true for the next generation than it was for the last generation is being a unique place with the amenities people want. PLACES believes that the qualities of the place that make citizens love it, provide the roadmap for the next steps and for deepening the sense of place. How to use this “Love of Place” is described in the strategic plan, and Scottsdale’s Identity Matrix embeds core identity elements for Scottsdale and all its citizens and businesses to use in what PLACES describes as pervasive interpretation of place.

Since Scottsdale has lost some steps in its appeal and involvement of next generational professionals, there is a strategic focus around how to develop the right mix of amenities downtown to provide the live/work environment desired by this group and how to leverage some of what Scottsdale has accomplished to aid in recruiting companies in areas of high growth like tech, green industries and creative economies.

Transportation is a strategic focus area: the connection to the airport, the issues with visitors getting around in Scottsdale plus the larger issues of workforce transportation and Scottsdale’s connectedness to the region. The plan also addresses opportunities in private jet

travel to Scottsdale Airport. There are also strategies to strengthen access and use of the quite extensive trail system, beginning downtown, as a signature for Scottsdale. The trail system is one component which anchors love of place core identity characteristic “a city in the desert, the desert in a city” (from Scottsdale’s Identity Matrix).

There are strategic focus areas for the development and extension of thought leadership and innovation opportunities for both golf and group meetings, the traditional mainstay of the tourism industry in Scottsdale. These strategies leverage content and expertise in Scottsdale.

A significant recommendation in this consultancy is that the tourism industry move from resort centric to destination centric. So developing the leisure market, with more experiences in Scottsdale, an animated downtown are part of the focus. So is developing strategies to grow leisure in all seasons including the development of regional themed events around an area of content which is marketable over several weeks, and the addition of classes of all kinds in the summer.

The final area of strategic focus has to do with managing (or stopping) crisis so as to limit their effect on tourism.



