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In a Downtown State of Mind

Have you ever thought about how many of our day-to-day sayings or clichés have to do with cities? When someone is having great success with his or her activities, we say he or she is “really going to town!” If someone is going to be leaving an area — regardless of where he or she is from — we say he or she is going to be “out of town.” And if you’re having a great time, you are “painting the town red!”

Cities and towns are part of our psyche and culture. Think for a moment about the elegant image that comes to mind when you hear Billy Joel’s “Uptown Girl” or the unbridled exuberance of Petula Clark’s massive 1964 hit record, “Downtown.” Did The Tradewinds really expect us to believe that “New York’s a Lonely Town?” It’s the biggest city in America!

The image of downtown holds a special place in our hearts. You probably fondly remember the downtown in the community where you grew up, whether it was a large metropolitan city that buzzed with energy and activity or a sleepy one-intersection area that was only a couple blocks long. Downtowns define the personality of a community and give it an identity — good or bad.

That’s why it is so encouraging to see so many Arizona communities take a renewed interest in their central districts and inject new life into their downtowns. It’s a trend that is occurring all over the country in cities and towns of all sizes.

People are discovering the architectural treasures of some long-forgotten buildings and are infusing them with new purposes and new life. Downtowns across Arizona are being revitalized and setting the stage for economic vitality and a generation of new memories for all their citizens.

You will find some examples of that kind of activity in this issue. It’s a positive, encouraging message. Life happens in Arizona cities and towns — particularly downtown. And that’s something good to celebrate.

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Downtowns are often known as the “heart” of a city. Like a heart pumps blood through its veins to reach every extremity of the body, so a downtown pumps life into its city. Thriving downtowns can add personality to a town, create stable business, boost tourism and enhance the quality of living for residents.

The concept of a downtown means different things to different people, but for most of us, it is a gathering place. It is where members of the community conduct their business daily, where people shop along streets, and where residents gather to eat and enjoy events together. Arizona’s downtowns have always held a special place in the hearts of their residents, but recently, several of these downtowns have made an impression in the minds of many.

Downtown revitalization is occurring in several of Arizona’s cities and towns.

While it was once one of the quieter metropolitan downtowns, Phoenix has spent the last several years focusing energy on the area to create a bustling arts-and-education-driven capital city. Tucson, one of Arizona’s three major university cities, enhanced its downtown with emphasis on public transportation and relationships with businesses.

The town of Gilbert hung up its hat as being known solely as the “Hay Shipping Capital of the World” and has now accepted the moniker of “Delicious Downtown Gilbert,” the mecca for East Valley foodies. The Verde Valley’s renaissance marked it as a tourist destination for locals and travelers to experience history, culture and relaxation.

These communities, along with a constellation of others, have enhanced their downtown offerings, turning them from the center of a city to the center of it all.

But the revitalization of these downtowns hasn’t happened by accident. It is through the strong vision of municipal councils, hardworking city and town staff members, and support from local residents that this is created. These cities and towns have been persistent and purposeful about their planning of these areas.

Each of these municipalities has painted a picture of what a thriving downtown looks like and how it is achieved. The heartbeat of the Arizona downtown is strong.

DOWNTOWN GILBERT COMES TO LIFE

Once known as the “Hay Shipping Capital of the World,” Gilbert, Arizona, spans more than 72 square miles and is home to more than 235,000 residents. Its humble beginning started in its downtown, now known as the Heritage District. Gilbert’s Heritage District is the symbolic center of the community, where echoes of the Old West meet the world of modern cuisine. It has been named one of the five Best Food Neighborhoods in Metro Phoenix by the Phoenix New Times and is commonly referred to as “Delicious Downtown Gilbert.” This area’s growing popularity is years in the making, with past and present community leaders envisioning the Heritage District as a destination for people to shop, dine, work and attend school.
Today, that vision is coming to life. If you visit the Heritage District, you will see families lined on the picnic tables outside Joe’s Real BBQ and a line down the sidewalk to have breakfast or lunch at the Farmhouse. Don’t forget Liberty Market, a Gilbert staple that’s always busy at any time of the day. Postino and Joy Ride, two of Upward Projects’ latest investments in Gilbert, have full and lively patios every day of the week. Oregano’s, one of the first restaurants to kick-start the revitalization of Gilbert’s downtown, is always packed. Downtown’s newest additions, Zinburger, Lolo’s Chicken and Waffles, and Barrio Queen Café, are bustling day and night.

And it’s about to get even busier.

Later this year, Snooze AM Eatery, a trendy breakfast and lunch establishment, will also open its doors. Pomo Pizzeria and Petersen’s Ice Cream Company will also join the various restaurants in the Heritage Marketplace development, which, at total build-out, will encompass over 70,000 square feet of retail space.

What was once a quiet center of a small town is now a thriving hub of one of the fastest-growing and safest communities in the country. Under the iconic water tower, you will see families enjoying the splashpad, an outdoor concert or the Saturday Farmer’s Market while others are watching local theater at the Hale Centre Theatre. But before and after, you won’t want to miss a meal at one of the downtown’s many restaurant offerings.

To add to the growth and excitement, Gilbert’s first university, Saint Xavier, will open its doors this fall, just steps behind the new Heritage Marketplace off of Gilbert Road. This will bring a new energy of young, enthusiastic students, adding to the already eclectic vibe at the center of the community.

If you haven’t been to Gilbert’s Heritage District, get out and discover Gilbert.

**DOWNTOWN PHOENIX IS HOT!**

Phoenix has become a destination for popular events. Most recently, the downtown Phoenix area served as the main hub for the 2015 Super Bowl, hosting an array of events, concerts and activities related to the big game. Photo from the City of Phoenix.

Downtown Phoenix is hot in more ways than you can imagine! As the urban heartbeat of the city, downtown is pulsing with activity. Riding the wave of the recent Super Bowl successes, including Super Bowl Central and the NFL Experience, downtown is a vibrant, sought-after destination!

“The Super Bowl was the perfect event to showcase Downtown Phoenix, and we really opened a lot of eyes,” Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton said. “Over the past decade, there have been nearly $4.7 billion in investments to revitalize the downtown core. The results speak for themselves — world-class shopping, entertainment and restaurants; METRO Light Rail; a top 25 convention center; and more than 3,500 hotel rooms with a lot more to come.”

The new amenities in the area allow visitors to experience the Downtown Difference!
The Downtown Difference consists of more than 800,000 square feet of retail space featuring popular brands, professional sports, live entertainment, great food and fun activities. CityScape, a 5-acre, mixed-use development that blends urban living with work, shopping and entertainment, includes notable restaurants, a hotel, offices and outdoor event space.

The Arizona State University Downtown Campus is home to more than 10,000 students. The downtown area is home to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, the College of Public Programs, the College of Nursing & Health Innovation, and the future home of the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law. Photo from the City of Phoenix.

Downtown Phoenix has more than 4,800 residential units, 9,000 permanent residents and a workforce of 64,000 daily. The Arizona State University Downtown Campus, which opened in August 2006 with 2,766 students, now has more than 10,000 students enrolled. The campus, which is continuing to expand, is home to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, the College of Public Programs, the College of Nursing & Health Innovation, and other notable programs. The new law center, which will house the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, is expected to open in the fall of 2016.

Education thrives in Downtown Phoenix! The Phoenix Biomedical Campus (PBC), the city-owned campus, sits on 30 acres providing advanced medical training to students at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and doing cutting-edge research at the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGEN). The campus looks forward to the opening of the 220,000-square-foot, $100 million outpatient cancer treatment clinic operated by the UA Cancer Center and the St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center later this year.

Downtown Phoenix is hot and attractive to new residents. High-rise projects such as 44 Monroe, Arizona’s tallest residential high-rise, opened its doors in 2008 offering 196 condos. The Summit at Copper Square, the second-tallest residential tower, overlooks Chase Field and offers 165 condo units. Downtown Phoenix residential developments continue to grow. Portland on the Park is the anticipated urban project that will include 170 luxury condos and lofts in three structures ranging from four-, 12- and 14-story towers. The property is within walking distance of the METRO Light Rail, Margaret T. Hance Park and the Japanese Friendship Garden. The West Fillmore redevelopment project, which began taking proposals from private-sector developers in spring 2015, will be one of the largest developments in downtown history. The 7.5-acre site is expected to meet the demand for downtown living, providing homes for 1,000 new downtown residents in addition to retail shops and restaurants.

New employers and their employees are making Downtown Phoenix home. Jay Geier, CEO of The Scheduling Institute, recently opened his Arizona headquarters in the Warehouse District and cited that the location’s close proximity to restaurants, hotels and entertainment is ideal for his clients when they fly into town.

Convenient transportation is key to the explosion of downtown development. The METRO Light Rail connects Downtown Phoenix to points throughout the city and the world. The commuter train, which launched in December 2008, provides reliable transportation connecting passengers from West Phoenix to the East Valley through Downtown Phoenix with dedicated stops at the Convention Center and Sky Harbor International Airport.

Speaking of the Convention Center, the expansion of the facility and construction of the 1,000-room Sheraton Hotel enables Phoenix to accommodate 80 percent of the association meetings market and attract high-profile events such as the MLB All Star Fanfest, NBA All Star Jamfest and WWE Fan Axxess, as well as notable conventions such as the NRA and U.S. Greenbuild. In 2015, the Phoenix Convention Center welcomed the Super Bowl NFL.
Experience and looks forward to hosting fan fests for the College Football Playoffs in 2016 and the NCAA Final Four in 2017.

Downtown has something for everyone! The redevelopment of Downtown Phoenix has redefined our city. The downtown renaissance provides lasting memories with lively indoor and outdoor activities at CityScape, including Lucky Strike bowling alley, Stand Up Live comedy club, and a host of bars, restaurants and shops. Sports fans will feel right at home at Chase Field, where the Arizona Diamondbacks play, and Talking Stick Resort Arena, home of the Phoenix Suns. Theatergoers will enjoy visiting the Herberger Theater, the Symphony Hall and the historic Orpheum Theatre. Downtown Phoenix is more than a destination, it is a community that makes residents and visitors from around the globe feel right at home!

WINE AND WONDERMENT IN THE VERDE VALLEY

The City of Cottonwood, once a sleepy town that travelers passed through when visiting the nearby communities of Sedona and Jerome, is now a tourist destination. In the heart of Arizona, nestled in a green valley near the base of Mingus Mountain, Cottonwood, once one of the best-kept secrets in northern Arizona, is now a successful, bustling destination.
Cottonwood was one of the few communities in northern Arizona where the commercial industry actually grew during the recent recession. That is directly attributed to a forward-thinking city council, a visionary city manager and an economic development director who had what it took to get it done.

Community. Cottonwood also has an array of businesses, county offices, a transit system, a major hospital and numerous medical facilities.

Cottonwood opened a new recreation and aquatics center, with state-of-the-art equipment, a dance studio, an indoor leisure pool, a community events hall, a gymnasium, a climbing wall and an electronic game room for the entire family. The facility attracts visitors from throughout the Verde Valley and is a quality-of-life attraction for those looking to relocate. In addition to this facility, the outdoor pool was also renovated and is now a venue for state swim events that has been officially sanctioned by the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA).

Annual events such as the Old Town Main Street Holiday Light Show, Walkin’ on Main, the Chocolate Walk and the Tilted Earth Wine and Music Festival — plus the added attraction of Old Town Cottonwood, with its historic feel, along with wine-tasting rooms, serving award-winning wines produced right here in the Verde Valley — now attract thousands of visitors each year.

Right next door to Cottonwood is Clarkdale, a town that appreciates and fiercely protects its sense of history. Key to the revitalization in Clarkdale are the creative, passionate and dedicated citizens; the leadership of the town council and staff; plus the property owners, both within the historic business and throughout the town, who believe in building a sustainable future on the foundation of the town’s history. Recognized as a registered historic district, Clarkdale is proud of its history. With the 2-acre town park in the center of the historic district, featuring a restored gazebo gracing the grounds, this park is home to the summer concert series in the park. The Town Hall Complex, itself a group of historic buildings, features the first geothermally heated and cooled buildings in Arizona. In addition, many of the original homes are restored while retaining their historic charm.

In planning a sustainable future, the citizens overwhelmingly approved the updated Town General Plan in March 2012. Clarkdale’s citizens then completed the Sustainable Community and Economic Development Plan, a roadmap outlining the desired
economic development directions for Clarkdale, with support from Arizona Public Service and town staff members. The council set the plan into motion with its adoption in June 2013.

The commercial heart of Clarkdale, the first planned community in Arizona, has always been the historic business district along Main Street. However, after the closing of the copper smelter in 1953, the town suffered from families moving away to find work. Now, Clarkdale is on an upswing.

Annually, 90,000 riders visit the Verde Canyon Railroad, enjoying the sights and sounds of the Verde River and its riparian areas. The award-winning Arizona Copper Art Museum opened in December 2013 and showcases the beauty, versatility and functionality of copper in all its forms. The new museum is located in the gloriously refurbished Clarkdale High School on the corner of Main and Ninth streets — truly one of a kind and a prime example of historic building revitalization.

Diagonally across the street from the museum is the charming Clarkdale Caboose and Gift Shop, offering fine pastries in the morning plus treasures created by local artists, all tucked into the back of a restored train caboose. It’s not to be missed. Just up Main Street is the beautifully renovated 10-12 Lounge, so named because it opens at 10 and closes at 12. There is always fun to be had there, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, when live music and dancing fill the bar.

Just across the street is Four Eight Wineworks, with a nod to Arizona becoming the 48th state. Not only is this the only winemaker’s
incubator offering tasting of luscious, locally made wines, but also the business calls the former bank building home. Tastefully updated with historic photographs on the walls, teller windows are wine display cases, and the former safe is the merchandise room. Just up the street, the former pharmacy has been revitalized and now serves as professional offices. Underway is the renovation of the two-story building across the street from Town Park. Turning into a boutique hotel, the former miner’s apartments are under construction now, and the former theater is coming back to life with the return of the box office on Main Street in the building once housing the Grand Theater.

The streetscape is also coming back to life. Banners depicting various aspects of Clarkdale life line Main Street, and signage with historic flair is under construction. The Flag Corps installs a river of flags down Main Street honoring military holidays throughout the year.

All Clarkdale stories are nurtured and preserved under the watchful eye of the Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum, located on Ninth Street. The museum offers a glimpse into Clarkdale’s past and showcases treasured artifacts. For more information on your visit, stop in and chat with folks in any of the businesses and museums or Town Hall. All have Clarkdale stories to share.

Whether visitors are looking for a leisurely wine tasting, a journey through history, or an exploration of the natural destinations of the Verde River, state parks and national monuments of northern Arizona, the Verde Valley has become the top attraction. The revitalization of the Clarkdale and Cottonwood downtowns has put these communities on the map!
The City of Tucson is also fast becoming known as a logistics center due to Interstate 10 and I-19 and its proximity to Mexico, the Union Pacific Rail Line, the Tucson International Airport and the Port of Tucson. In the international trade arena, the city has partnered with Visit Tucson to utilize its office in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, as an extension of the economic development office located in Tucson. The city’s international trade specialist travels to the office monthly to meet business owners interested in exploring how to expand into the Tucson market.

Additionally, the city collaborates with Pima County and supports plans to construct a new limited access road from I-19 to I-10 called the Sonoran Corridor. This large infrastructure project will open up large tracts of land for industrial uses in the future and will further solidify the Tucson region as a prime logistics center.

Downtown Tucson continues to be one of the hottest development markets in the region. City infrastructure expenditures and the Sunlink Modern Streetcar are certainly primary contributors to the private investment the city is now experiencing. Downtown Tucson has been transformed in the last few years thanks to well-placed, public and private investment dollars. However, the lure to downtown extends beyond on-trend restaurants and housing. The area has welcomed many new businesses from the well-established to creative newcomers. These newest professional tenants have generated new construction, converted warehouses and breathed new life into historic homes and buildings. They are the next wave of newcomers to Downtown Tucson, and their presence will attract talented entrepreneurs and high-quality jobs to the available office space downtown.

The City of Tucson has driven the revitalization of downtown. Policies and incentives put in place by the mayor and city council have been geared toward turning downtown into an economic development engine. The city currently has 21 incentive tools that have made new development projects a reality in downtown.

Students are also injecting life into downtown like never before, with students from the University of Arizona’s Eller College of Management using co-working space downtown to house their student-run companies. Student-run businesses are part of a burgeoning innovation district, and shared work environments are quickly becoming the new way of offices for young professionals and startups.

The City of Tucson has also established the Small Business Assistance Line, which attracts callers on a daily basis. The help provided ranges from how to obtain a city business license to how to establish a new business in Tucson. The Economic Initiatives Office also staffs the Small, Minority, and Women Owned Business Commission, which meets monthly to facilitate the success of small businesses.

The Tucson City Council has led the economic development effort for the city by proposing incentives and assistance programs, bringing new businesses to the city and supporting those that are already operating there.

Downtown Tucson is once again becoming a vibrant urban core, and both seasoned and young professionals want to be part of its future.

Special thanks to these individuals who contributed to this article: Kyla Allen, City of Cottonwood; Jennifer Alvarez, Town of Gilbert; Jodie Filardo, Town of Clarkdale; Lane Mandle, City of Tucson; and Cynthia Weaver, City of Phoenix.
While some Arizona downtowns have experienced a renaissance, many of Arizona’s cities and towns have shaped their municipal downtowns for many years. This list is by no means comprehensive of all the great downtowns in Arizona, but here’s a quick peek at some of the most unique to be found in our great state.

**ARIZONA’S UNIQUE DOWNTOWNS**

**DOWNTOWN BISBEE**

Historically known as the “Queen of the Copper Mines,” Bisbee, Arizona, is now a charming destination for travelers to experience history and culture. After large-scale mining operations became obsolete, the city evolved into an artist’s colony, a tourist attraction and a relaxing place to relocate. Visitors will delight in strolling the sidewalks of this community, experiencing art galleries, small specialty shops, bookstores, cafés and local restaurants.

Bisbee is also home to the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum, an ideal location for history buffs to learn about copper, architecture and Bisbee’s past. Many will also come to Bisbee to take the Copper Queen Mine Tour, a look into the days when copper was dominant in Bisbee’s culture.

**DOWNTOWN CHANDLER**

Downtown Chandler is emerging as an urban environment that continues to evolve and embrace many ways to work, live and be entertained. This destination for dining, retail and events is a hotbed for development. Alta Steelyard Lofts opens this fall with 301 residential units, igniting the next wave of multifamily, office and retail in the downtown core. Budding companies continue to enter the market, along with the presence of two state universities to create a dynamic work environment. The mix of restaurants and shops is expanding with Peixoto Coffee now open and Crust Restaurant opening late summer at the Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort. Chandler Center for the Arts, improvMANIA comedy club, festivals and the opening of an outdoor stage this fall are increasing entertainment options for all.
Downtown Flagstaff — the geographical, cultural and historic centerpiece of Flagstaff. Along historic 1890s streets, buildings and hotels, you will find numerous clothing boutiques, outdoor outfitters, art galleries and retailers selling authentic Native American arts and jewelry. Live entertainment can be found almost every evening at Heritage Square or within the great restaurants and nightlife venues. The downtown district is one of the most walkable downtowns in Arizona featuring regular events like the First Friday Art Walk or the Flagstaff/Grand Canyon Ale Trail to enjoy many of the unique local breweries. Venture south of the railroad tracks to the evolving Southside District with amazing dining and cafés lining the streets. (Flagstaff 2015 Official Visitor Guide)
There is a lot of activity happening in Downtown Florence today. Main Street is open for business, and locally owned shops and restaurants are springing up next to established destinations. Most of these businesses occupy buildings dating back to the Territorial Period of our state’s history and are included in the oldest townsite historic district in Arizona. Main Street is quaint; pedestrian-friendly; and considered the gathering place for events and social gatherings, whether it is along Main Street or at the new Padilla Park next to the Silver King Marketplace. With an eye toward the future, the Town of Florence recently constructed a new library and aquatic center at the north end of downtown that opens the door for additional development in the Territory Square master-planned area.

Historic Downtown Glendale has been named by USA Today and Sunset magazine as one of the country’s 10 Best Places for Shopping. The historic downtown has two neighborhoods — Historic Catlin Court, with its white picket fences and mature shade trees welcoming visitors to the bungalows-turned-specialty-shops; and Old Towne, boasting brick-trimmed sidewalks and glowing gaslights leading the way to the famous antique stores and ethnic eateries. The 90-plus specialty and boutique shops in Downtown Glendale are noted for the retail-chain-free collection of stores, which feature everything from eclectic and funky fashion and accessories to pop-culture collectibles, and the diversity of restaurants serve up everything from savory, wood-fired pizzas and two-scoop ice-cream cones. In fact, the critically acclaimed collection of ethnic eateries in Downtown Glendale includes Polish, Italian, German, Mexican and Vietnamese. Glendale’s downtown is also home to award-winning festivals that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, which include Glendale Glitters and the Glendale Chocolate Affaire.
Visitors and residents alike have been enjoying the historic architecture, community events and businesses in Kingman’s revitalized downtown. In 2014, Kingman hosted the International Route 66 Festival, which brought 8,000 attendees from 24 different countries to downtown to celebrate the historic road. This year, Kingman will combine the celebration of Route 66 and classic cars with its love for rodeo in the Inaugural Best of the West on the Route 66 Festival September 25-27. In addition to public events, two event centers have opened in previously vacant historic buildings and are available for private parties, weddings and community fundraisers. The success of events in historic downtown could not have taken place without many improvements, beginning with the elimination of nonemergency train whistles. The reduction in noise also led to the opening of several new businesses, including a boutique hotel, restaurants and bars. Beautification projects, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) -compliant upgrades and repairs to the sidewalks, park improvements, and abatement projects, have helped create a welcoming atmosphere to complement the area’s growth.

At the southern point of Arizona, just a stone’s throw from Mexico, the City of Nogales is a center of culture and connection. Downtown Nogales is filled with historic architecture, unique local stores and restaurants, and picturesque views.

Morley Avenue is home to classic boutique department stores and local shops, serving as the nucleus of the Nogales downtown. Owners of the shops hail from all over the world, each with a unique story and collection of goods. Avenida Obregon is a peek at another world of shopping — small shops, vendors, restaurants and clubs give this area the character of “Old Mexico,” and many annual festivals are held right here.

Visitors will also experience history and architecture, with the Historic 1904 Courthouse and Old City Hall, and Pesqueria and Ochoa Plazas offer areas of activity, arts and culture for visitors and residents alike.
DOWNTOWN PAYSON

Payson is surrounded by the largest ponderosa pine forest in the world. To the north is the majestic Mogollon Rim that is home to some of the best camping, fishing, hunting and hiking trails in the southwest. In addition to all these surrounding recreational opportunities, in the middle of Payson is Green Valley Park, originally built as a water reclamation project. From its inception, it was designed in a way that would collect runoff water but, at the same time, double as a park that offers residents and visitors alike beautiful surroundings and access to three lakes. These three lakes are stocked with trout and are part of the Arizona Game and Fish Rural Fishing program. The park is also home to the Zane Grey Museum and the Rim Country Museum. During the town’s 4th of July Hometown Celebration, the park serves as the gathering place for over 15,000 people annually. In June and July, on every Saturday night, you will hear the melodious sounds of great music coming from the amphitheater during Payson’s very popular Summer Concert Series. In the spring, Green Valley Park serves as the backdrop for over 300 classic cars that make up the Beeline Cruise-In Car Show. The economic vitality and all of these activities would not be possible if it were not for this great recreational venue. We invite you to come to “Arizona’s Cool Mountain Town” and enjoy the “jewel” of Payson — Green Valley Park, located at the end of Main Street.

A look above at Payson’s downtown. Photo from the Town of Payson. Right: Downtown Payson is the gathering place for many community events and festivals, including fireworks on the Fourth of July. Photo from the Town of Payson.

DOWNTOWN PRESCOTT

In the center of Prescott’s picturesque downtown area is the historic tree-lined Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza, around which the town was designed and built. Known as the “jewel” of Downtown Prescott, the plaza is a majestic, man-made urban forest in the heart of a historic commercial district. For more than 140 years, it has served as a gathering place for celebrations, commemorations, campaign kickoffs, concerts, movies and festivals. Adjoining the courthouse plaza are fine establishments, including a large assortment of locally owned and operated bars, breweries, coffee shops, restaurants, art galleries and museums. The main street in town, Montezuma Street, includes a one-block historic area known as Whiskey Row, the town’s center of recreation during the early days of the Wild West, when cowboys, miners, gamblers and brawlers reigned over the cluster of rustic saloons and put the “Wild” in Wild West.

A bird’s-eye view of Downtown Prescott. Photo from the City of Prescott.

DOWNTOWN SCOTTSDALE

Downtown Scottsdale is among the most vibrant and unique urban centers in the American Southwest. It provides a mix of specialty retail, art galleries, dining to suit every taste, legendary nightlife, and public art and cultural attractions with broad appeal. It is also home to one of the most successful shopping centers in the southwest — Scottsdale Fashion Square. Scottsdale’s downtown is also known for hosting lively events throughout the year, such as farmers and artisan markets, art walks, festivals, parades, concerts, and block parties.

The Scottsdale Waterfront, conveniently located near the Scottsdale Fashion Square, includes high-rise living and favorite local shops and restaurants. Photo courtesy of Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau.
DOWNTOWN TEMPE

Right in the heart of Arizona State University sits the eclectic and unique downtown of the City of Tempe. Boasting an iconic nightlife, an array of unique local businesses, tech companies, lakefront property and an unparalleled history, Downtown Tempe is truly the place to be.

Downtown Tempe is home to the iconic Mill Avenue, a street marked with local businesses, new restaurants and nightlife that bring students and residents together in the community. Just north of Mill Avenue sits Tempe Town Lake, a top attraction in the state of Arizona, drawing visitors to its water and waterfront parks for community events and recreational activities.

As Tempe continues to grow and evolve, the definition of downtown is changing. New businesses are coming to make the city home, and development is continuing to change the blueprint of Tempe Town Lakefront. Up-and-coming local restaurants are claiming territory in Tempe, forever changing the landscape of downtown, like Culinary Dropout at Farmers Art District and the Postino Art Annex on College.

With new projects taking place daily and an eye toward a bright future, the Tempe Downtown will always be at the center of it all.

DOWNTOWN TOLLESON

The 2014 revitalization project of Downtown Tolleson into Paseo de Luces has spawned into an entertainment destination that people want to experience. Paseo de Luces (Path of Lights) is more than a downtown; with its family-style seating, it has become a gathering place for all people.

Visiting Paseo de Luces offers the opportunity to enjoy an amazing art collection designed and fabricated by West Valley Fine Arts Council’s Gallery 37. This collection consists of seven sculptures that comprise the Paseo de Arte (Path of Art), which embodies the city’s past, present and future.

In 2015, the West Valley Arts Council recognized the City of Tolleson as its Champion of the Arts for including this art collection as a staple in the new downtown design, as a symbol of the community’s commitment to the arts. In addition to this remarkable artwork, Paseo de Luces has a Central Plaza with a water feature, free Wi-Fi and a sound system that plays music all year long.

But downtown is more than a visitor destination. It’s also the city’s second-largest employment center and a budding hub for technology and health care companies like Yelp, Weebly, Zenefits, McKesson Pharmaceuticals, ZIVELO, ZocDoc, Digital Air Strike and ReplyBuy.

This employment hub has brought an increased demand for residential projects so people can live near their jobs. Downtown Scottsdale provides a sustainable live, work and play lifestyle for residents within a vital urban environment.
DOWNTOWN WICKENBURG

Wickenburg boasts one of the American West’s classic downtowns, featuring unique shops, eateries, public art and activities. Decades of investment in streetscape improvements by the town have made Wickenburg a popular destination among tourists and Arizona natives alike, who flock to the community for its cowboy culture and western charm. Visitors can explore the downtown’s public art, including life-size sculptures depicting scenes of the Old West. The Desert Caballeros Western Museum, a world-renowned fine art institution, also resides downtown just a short walk from the visitor center in the old train depot. During the busy season, team roping at two nearby arenas is in full swing, and popular events such as the annual Gold Rush Days celebration fill the downtown with excitement. In May 2015, the town completed the Hassayampa River Walk, an adaptive reuse event space overlooking the Hassayampa River.

DOWNTOWN WILLIAMS

Route 66 conjures thoughts of rich history, neon lights, classic cars and fun for the whole family. Williams was the last town in America on historic Route 66 to be bypassed by the Interstate 40 freeway in October 1984. Only in Williams will you enjoy the beauty of a mountainside town, the best-preserved stretch of Route 66, outdoor adventure to suit every need, a railway to get you to the Grand Canyon in style, an outdoor drive-through wildlife park, a true western setting with cowboys swaggering through town, and a friendly atmosphere greeting you the moment you arrive and bidding you farewell when you depart. Some of those same motor hotels from back in the day have been revitalized with all the comforts modern travelers expect, and the storefronts of Main Street are preserved as a designated National Historic District. With its preservation of an authentic small-town atmosphere and history, Williams is the perfect place to “Get Your Kicks on Route 66” before you visit the Grand Canyon and after!

DOWNTOWN YUMA

Main Street in Downtown Yuma has always been the heart of “old Yuma,” dating back to 1849, when more than 60,000 California-bound gold-seekers came through the area. Now Yuma’s historic downtown is the hub of shopping, dining and entertainment. Visitors and residents can enjoy films and live performances at the Historic Yuma Theatre, take a course or stroll through galleries at the Yuma Art Center, and visit a variety of businesses and restaurants. Downtown Yuma is also the perfect venue for festivals the entire family can enjoy, which are scheduled throughout the year on Main Street.
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