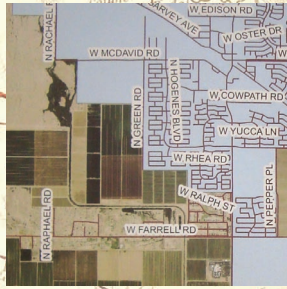




tourism resource assessment for Maricopa, Arizona



About this Assessment

This report gives an overview of the tourism resource assessment for Maricopa conducted in the spring of 2010 by 56 students in TDM 402 (Assessment and Evaluation) under the supervision of Dr. Timothy Tyrrell. It describes the assessment in terms of eight separate research projects with findings that will hopefully facilitate the future development of a tourism development plan for the City.

Figure 1 Eight Community Tourism Resources



Figure 1 depicts our understanding of how eight community resources relate to one another. Each resource was studied by its own research team represented by one box in the figure. Starting at the bottom is a box representing Natural and Environmental Systems which we consider the most basic community resource. It supports social and cultural systems and the economic system. Historical community development defines the community as a “place” which is an important condition for image creation and destination branding. Social and Cultural systems work with community governance to provide public services, infrastructure and along with economic development creates capital. The tourism industry is supported in many ways by all of the other community resources.

Acknowledgements

The many authors of this report would like to thank the Maricopa Chamber of Commerce and City Council for supporting this research. We would also like to thank the following for meeting with and educating us about the many resources of Maricopa: Brent Billingsley (City of Maricopa Transportation Director), Brenda Campbell (City of Maricopa Special Events Manager), Danielle Casey (City of Maricopa, Economic Development Director), Ed Farrell (City of Maricopa, Council Member), Nicole Gilloti (Ak-Chin Resort and Casino), Terri Kingery (Executive Director Maricopa Chamber of Commerce), John Nixon (City of Maricopa Community Services Director), G. Anthony Snider (Wells Fargo Bank Maricopa, Vice President/ Branch Manager) and Lester Tsosie (Ak-Chin Indian Community tribal government). Layout and design support from the ASU College of Public Programs (Felipe Ruiz).

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From the Chamber of Commerce

"The partnership developed with ASU during the development of this Tourism Project, will be instrumental in our Communities success in developing and promoting tourism in Maricopa which has become a key component in our City's Economic Development strategy."

Terry Kingery
Executive Director
Maricopa Chamber of Commerce

From the Mayor

"Tourism and higher education are critical elements to be developed in the City of Maricopa. By partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and ASU, we will accelerate our progress towards identifying the assets that promote Maricopa's proud history and vision for a prosperous future."

Tony Smith
Mayor Maricopa

Destination Quality and Competitiveness

The approach to tourism development reflected in this research project can be described as "Tourism for the Public Good." By developing the qualities of the community that make it a desirable place to live for residents, a destination will be created that is very attractive to visitors and highly competitive with other destinations. This assessment of the resources of Maricopa is intended to focus attention on the broad range of aspects that define the City, some of which deserve increased attention of community leaders and/or prospective visitors.

In this document we use quotations from tourism community development scholars to guide our interpretation of key findings from our informational investigations of Maricopa. Our team selectively chose to include those findings that we believe are the most useful. We have made every effort to confirm our findings, but recognize that additional materials are needed to further validate them. We have tried to remain unbiased in our assessment and have refrained from promoting any specific type of tourism development project. Instead we have indicated one or more "opportunities" for each resource to contribute to development of the Maricopa tourism industry.

Most of our findings have been reported elsewhere; we have documented the original sources. This report attempts to organize these findings in a comprehensive new way, from the perspective of college-educated Millennials with an eye on the potential for tourism development. The perceptions of this generation are unique and will help determine the future success of tourist destinations.

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“ A destination’s competitive environment constitutes the most salient elements that define its immediate arena of competition (Kotler, 1988). Apart from the destination itself, it includes members of the travel trade (i.e., tour packagers, suppliers, retail travel agents, specialty channelers, and facilitators), tourism markets, competitive destinations, and a destination’s publics or stakeholders (including residents of the destination, employees of the tourism and hospitality industry, citizen-action groups, the media, financial, and investment institutions, relevant government departments, and immediate neighborhoods). As components of the tourism system, they shape the immediate environment within which a destination must adapt in order to compete. ” Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, 146

What makes the millennial authors of this report unique?

millennials (18-29)		gen X (30-45)		boomers (46-64)		silent (65+)	
technology use	24%	technology use	12%	work ethic	17%	WWII, depression	14%
music/pop culture	11%	work ethic	11%	respectful	14%	smarter	13%
liberal/tolerant	7%	conservative/trad'l	7%	values/morals	8%	honest	12%
smarter	6%	smarter	6%	"baby boomers"	6%	values/morals	10%
clothes	5%	respectful	5%	smarter	5%	work ethic	10%

Note: Based on respondents who said their generation was unique/distinct. Items represent individual, open-ended responses. Top five responses are shown for each age group. Sample sizes for sub-groups are as follows: Millennials n=527, Gen X n=173, Boomers n=283, Silent n=205.

Key Findings:

Our assessment focused on the three dimensions of natural and environmental systems: land, water and air.

Land

Maricopa includes 19,000 acres as shown in the table, 51.4% of the land in the City is in Agriculture and 12.6% is vacant or open. The Ak Chin Indian Community is located on 22,000 adjacent acres. The Gila River Indian Community is north and east of the City on 372,000 acres. Bureau of Land Management lands are located to the southwest consisting of 34,400 acres. There is a great deal of open and undeveloped land in the region.

Water

Global Water Resources distributes water to most of the City of Maricopa and is devoted to “water conservation through recycling and reuse.” The quality of surface waters in Maricopa is not known, however 1.07% of surface waters in Pinal County are impaired or threatened according to the EPA.

Air

The Environmental Protection Agency has classified the study area as non-attainment for 8-hour ozone, Particulate Matter and Sulfur Oxides. This is likely due to the desert dust environment.

Type	Existing use %	Acres
Agriculture	51.4	9,600
Rural & Low Residential	4.2	780
Medium Residential	21.0	3,930
Commercial	0.9	160
Industrial	9.1	1,710
Public/Institution	0.8	130
Vacant/Open Areas	12.6	2,350
Total	100%	18,660

Data from August 2005, City of Maricopa Planning Department.

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Opportunities:

The great amount of open and undeveloped land in the region, combined with warm winter climate suggests outdoor recreational and spectator facilities, would be attractive to visitors except during windy or extremely hot days.



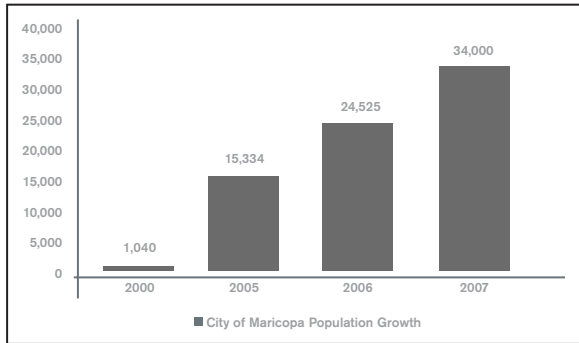
“The physiography of a destination “is so important that it might also be deemed a qualifying determinant of visitation. Because it includes the overall nature of the landscape and the climate of the destination, it defines the nature of the environmental frameworks within which the visitor exists and enjoys the destination.”

Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, 146

Social and Cultural Systems

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Opportunities:

- New, young, educated residents with good incomes could support many new attractions and commercial services associated with the tourism industry.
- The Native American cultures would be attractive to visitors.



Key Findings:

In 2000, Maricopa was not incorporated but had an estimated population of 1,040. By 2005, the population had grown by 1,432 percent to 15,934. By 2007, the population had grown by 102 percent in only 2 years to over 32,000. (Applied Economics, 2008)

The largest share of the population, 38 percent, works in the services sector, with high concentrations in health care, professional services and education. An additional 15 percent work in finance and insurance, primarily in banking and mortgage lending. About 14 percent work in manufacturing with a concentration in electronics and instruments. (Applied Economics, 2008)

More than three-quarters of the population works outside of Maricopa and travels more than 15 miles one way to work and make over \$50,000 per year. (Elliot D. Pollack, 2009)

Maricopa has a small but growing economy with a young, highly-educated local (46% have bachelors, associates or graduate degree compared with 36% Maricopa County) market that will support new and expanded community events, as well as the associated leisure and hospitality businesses. (Elliot D. Pollack, 2009)

Maricopa is working with Central Arizona College on the development of a future campus that has funding as a result of the recently-approved bond.

Cultural features of Maricopa include the Him-Dak Museum, located in the Ak-Chin Indian Community and the Hohokam Pima National Monument located north of the City in the Gila River Indian Community. However, the latter is not open to the public.

“...local and regional cultural amenities are of prime importance to outward-directed city marketing as well as for the inward-directed generation of regional identity.” Dziembowska-Kowalska and Funck (1999, p.1394)

“A destination’s culture and history furnishes a basic and powerful attracting force for the prospective visitor. This force appears to be growing in significance for many segments of the travel market particularly in today’s world of “homogenized tourism,” where one destination often seems to resemble another.”

Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, 146

Key Findings:

The Ak-Chin Farm is 16,000 acres, which makes it one of the nation's largest farming communities. (About our Community, 2010)

Thousands of visitors work at the Volkswagen North American hot weather test track and the Nissan test track in Maricopa, but they are accommodated elsewhere.

Harrahs Ak-Chin Resort and Casino already identifies itself in advertisements as being in Maricopa. Its visitors are primarily from Phoenix and Tucson markets.

The Maricopa Agricultural Center, one of U of Arizona's Agricultural Experiment Station centers, employs 35-50 people who perform research on the Agricultural production process, rather than value-added, retail and distribution issues. They are developing Yulex made from Guayule which is a unique plant to the region.

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Retail Gap Analysis in October 2009 by found that significant out-shopping is taking place in every category (Buxton, 2009). Wal-mart opened its Maricopa SuperStore in 2009, and it is believed to be highly successful.




Opportunities:

- Linkages could be established with Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino.
- Hospitality services could be developed for visitors to auto test tracks and the University of Arizona agricultural experiment station.
- Residents are underserved and could help support eating, drinking and entertainment businesses.

“[R]ural tourism has come to occupy a prominent position in the debate about rural restructuring partly because of demand changes which favor rural tourism and partly because rural agencies recognize a need to provide economic activities with potential for growth in a rural economy in which traditional providers of rural employment have been shedding labor at a rapid rate.”

Slee, Farr and Snowdon 2008, 181

Historical Community Development

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Key Findings:

The City of Maricopa has a long history both as a farming community and as a transportation center. Other Arizona Cities have had a rapid growth history similar to Maricopa. It has been suggested that Prescott and then Chandler experienced similar rapid growth that Maricopa experienced since 2000. Stanfield is expected to be the next to experience that rapid growth.

The City of Gilbert for example emerged as a railroad station, followed by major agricultural development. "Gilbert has transitioned from an agricultural town to a young, family oriented affluent city" (Hedding, 2007). The Gilbert population grew from 5,717 in 1980 to over 215,000 in April 2009. The Gilbert vision focuses on "Green," "Water," "Education," and "Balance." The "Green" aspect "re-

flects the agricultural heritage of Gilbert's farming past." The Gilbert General Plan goals include: "Encourage agricultural landowners/producers and other groups to collaborate on agricultural easements, community gardens and/or land preservation. Explore opportunities to support urban agriculture. Consider acquiring a working farm as part of the park system to demonstrate Gilbert's agricultural heritage. Create landscape elements that recall the valley's agricultural environment." (Gilbert General Plan, 2009).

Many Maricopa farms have been replaced by residential neighborhoods. In addition, new residents work outside the City and in non-farming professions. These factors have led farming to become less important in people's lives.

"The City strives to improve the quality of life for all residents by providing avenues for social interaction, community unity, and creation of lasting memories, self-expression, tradition building and creating an identity for the City of Maricopa. Maricopa desires to keep its small town feel while producing high-quality, professional events with a diversity of activities." (The City of Maricopa.)

Because of John Wayne's reputation as a film star whose characters fought Indians, his Red River Ranch in nearby Stanfield and "John Wayne Highway" are not promoted as visitor attractions.

Opportunities:

- The City's history as a transportation center and farming center could attract heritage tourists through events such as Founders Days.
- Growth management history in other Arizona communities could provide guidance for Maricopa and a model for other cities.
- Tasteful presentation of the John Wayne's connection to Maricopa could attract fans of the actor as visitors.



“The culture and history of the destination is the second dimension of destination attractiveness [behind physiography].”

Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, 146

Key Findings:

“When it comes to tourism and special events in Maricopa, the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce are, no surprise, of the same mindset: The bigger, the better. During a joint meeting of the two bodies, both city officials and chamber members said they’d like to see the chamber take on a bigger role in promoting the city and organizing events such as the Maricopa Salsa Festival, with the goal of drawing more visitors, and their money, into town”. Argabright (2009)

“The city is in the process of trying to trademark the National Salsa Championship and hopes the festival can grow to the level of popularity of events like the Hatch (N.M) Chile Festival. The article also suggests that there is renewed interest in Stagecoach Days and festivities surrounding Arizona’s centennial celebration.

A recent billboard advertisement by Harrah’s Ak-Chin resort prominently identifies its location as Maricopa.

The tourist websites of two other Arizona communities (Scottsdale and Fountain Hills) were compared by team

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members to that of Maricopa. The Scottsdale website is colorful, with many pictures, and easily navigable so that a visitor can plan an entire trip, including airline tickets and rental cars. It scored 4 out of 5 (as it is not updated daily). The Fountain Hills website was not as aesthetically pleasing or attention-grabbing, but it is well organized with much information and easy to navigate. It scored 3.5 out of 5. The Maricopa website provides a calendar of events but very little additional information for potential tourists. There are no pictures or colorful backgrounds and there is no information on accommodations. The website is geared toward residents and potential business relocations. It scored 2.5 out of 5.

“City branding provides the basis for developing policy to pursue economic development and, at the same time, it serves as a conduit for city residents to identify with their city.” (Kavaratzis, 2004)

Opportunities:

- Special events could be used to help brand Maricopa .
- Harrah’s Ak-Chin Resort and Casino appears to be leading the development of the Maricopa brand. This can be leveraged by a closer partnership with the City.
- There are good examples of attractive tourism web sites that could be used as models for Maricopa.



“Marketing a city is unique because it is a product composed of a physical good, a service, and an idea, which combined provides the visiting experience. A city contains physical goods, such as the buildings, the parks, the streets, the monuments, and even the transportation treatment.” Bonita, 2006

Community Governance

Model of Collaboration:

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Canyon Kucish

Opportunities:

- Leadership in tourism development should be institutionalized in a dedicated Maricopa office. This could provide the foundation of a Convention and Visitors Bureau working together with many community stakeholders.

Key Findings:

Davis and Morais (2004) examination of Williams, Arizona suggests some advice for Maricopa. Resident's attitudes toward tourism suffered when locals felt alienated from planning/development decisions. Williams is a small town of around 2,500 residents and, as a home to the "Grand Canyon railway," the residents have experienced both resort cycle and "boomtown" tourism. "The city government has been unable to develop a coherent strategy to take advantage of tourism because it cannot form effective coalitions with others in the community."

The authors concluded that "the community has had several opportunities in regards to tourism, but have not necessarily been taking advantage of them. Instead of working separately, all aspects of the community need to be working together in order to create a successful tourism plan." The most helpful advice for community governance was that "It is in the best interests of tourism operations not to expand too rapidly and cross the threshold into socially

unsustainable tourism. If they do, they risk encountering community resistance caused by negative attitudes toward tourism."

Currently Maricopa does not have a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

If Maricopa were to establish a CVB, it would encourage deliberate, effective communication among stakeholders and facilitate development of tourist attractions.



“Given the complex nature of cities, it is argued that the promotion of urban tourist destinations requires a citywide integrated management approach based on governance principles and strategic vision of competitiveness. ... [P]romotion of tourist cities should be redefined to creating a city appeal that is aspiring to all stakeholders—tourists, businesses, and citizens. ”

Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007

Public Services, Infrastructure and Capital

Key Findings:

The primary roadway within Maricopa is State Route (SR) 347 (also known as Maricopa Road and John Wayne Parkway). It serves as the primary link between Maricopa and the Phoenix metropolitan area. It accommodates 50,000 trips per day. The other major highway passing directly through Maricopa is SR 238, commonly known as the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway.

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) parallels the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway and SR 238 from Casa Grande to Gila Bend. Currently, between 45 and 55 different freight trains operate daily through Maricopa. Union Pacific expects the number of daily trains to reach 70 within the next few years and 80 by 2013. Amtrak's Orlando-Los Angeles Sunset limited has a daily scheduled stop in Maricopa. (Regional Airport Study, 1-3) Discussions are underway with Amtrak and Union Pacific to move and build a multi modal transportation hub in Maricopa.

The City of Maricopa offers the MaricopaXPRESS with connection to downtown phoenix and Tempe. (Maricopa Matters) Harrah's Ak-Chin Resort runs local buses to and from Scottsdale, East Valley/Sun Lakes, Bell Road, West Valley and Tucson. 95% of the Ak-Chin Customers are from Arizona – mostly Phoenix.

The Hassayampa freeway bypassing Phoenix from Casa Grande to Wickenburg and becoming Interstate 11 and connecting to Las Vegas is under discussion. It would run near Maricopa and provide great access to the City.

A new regional airport is planned for the City.

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Opportunities:

- Rail, highway and airport facility development in Maricopa are poised to bring significant increased traffic to the City. This traffic will require travel and hospitality services.
- A coordinated transportation plan for visitors could include the new intermodal transportation hub as well as both the Ak-Chin Resort transportation system and the MaricopaXPRESS.



“At the national level, “Infrastructure development is a vital component in encouraging a country's economic growth. Developing infrastructure enhances a country's productivity, consequently making firms more competitive and boosting a region's economy. Not only does infrastructure in itself enhance the efficiency of production, transportation, and communication, but it also helps provide economic incentives to public and private sector participants.”

Alexeenko & Graefe, 2008

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Opportunities:

- Maricopa has several unique facilities and events that can be incorporated into a tourism brand for the City.
- New events like the balloon festival held in Albuquerque could be compatible with tourism development in Maricopa.

Key Findings:

Maricopa offers few accommodations (the recently announced Holiday Inn Express will be a welcome addition) and only four major attractions: The Duke at Rancho El Dorado, Southern Dunes Golf Club, the Ak-Chin Resort and Casino and Ak-Chin-Him-Dak Eco-Museum.

Maricopa's biggest potential attraction for tourists is the array of festivals and events. The Chamber of Commerce website lists ten unique events.

The Southern Dunes and Duke Golf courses offer many of the same amenities that other courses within the valley offer. Arizona Soaring is the second busiest glide port in the United States.

Nearly 95% of Ak-Chin customers are locals from other cities within Arizona. The majority hail from Phoenix, with a small portion residing in the West Valley and the City of Tucson. (Nicole Gilotti, personal communication, February 26, 2010)



The development of the City of Show Low has relied on strong ties to White Mountain Apache community. This collaboration could be a model for Maricopa and the Ak-Chin community.

The October Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in New Mexico attracts up to 100,000 visitors, relying on cool temperatures, open land and beautiful mountain scenery. Attracting up to 750 balloonists, it features "evening fireworks, mass ascensions, balloon glows, the Special Shapes Rodeo, and the America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race."

Maricopa Events	Dates of Event
Aquafina Pitch, Hit & Run	May
Citizen Engagement	September–October
Daddy/Daughter Dance	June
Fishing Derby	March
Founders Day	October
Great American BBQ	July
Holiday Homes on Parade	December
Holidays of the World	December
Movies in the Park	May–June
NFL Pepsi Punt, Pass and Kick	August
Salsa Festival	April

“As tourism becomes increasingly important to communities around the world, the need to develop tourism sustainably also becomes a primary concern. Human communities represent both a primary resource upon which tourism depends, and their existence at a particular place at a particular time may be used to justify the development of tourism itself.”

Derek Hall, 2003

“The community is an economic system containing within its boundaries a bundle of resources available to generate an output, typically called welfare, for its residents. These resources include the political, social, economic, and physical inputs which support or have potential to support community decisions.”

Shaffer, 1989

Maricopa Tourism Opportunities

The great amount of open and undeveloped land in the region combined with warm winter climate suggests outdoor recreational and spectator facilities would be attractive to visitors except during windy or extremely hot days. Events such as a balloon festival would be compatible with the environment in Maricopa and would have minimal competition.

The City's history as a transportation center and farming center could attract heritage tourists through events such as Founders Days. Native American cultural events and facilities would be attractive to many cultural visitors.

Rail, highway and airport facility development in Maricopa are poised to bring significant increased traffic to the City that will need travel and hospitality services. A coordinated multimodal transportation plan for visitors could include both the Ak-Chin Resort transportation system and the MaricopaXRESS.

Transportation, marketing and tourism product development should be coordinated with Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino. Harrah's appears to be leading the development of the Maricopa brand..

Hospitality services could be developed for commercial visitors to auto test tracks and the University of Arizona agricultural experiment station. Furthermore, current residents are underserved and could help support eating, drinking and entertainment businesses in the off-season. Young, educated, new residents could support many new attractions and commercial services

The experience by other Arizona communities could provide guidance. Growth management policies and attractive Arizona tourism web sites could be emulated in Maricopa.

Maricopa has several unique facilities and events that can be incorporated into a tourism brand for the City. Maricopa tourism industry leaders need to establish a destination management organization or Convention and Visitors Bureau responsible for bringing together stakeholders and promoting the Maricopa brand.

“Each society is faced with the decision of how best to provide for the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. The choices involved span complex economic, sociocultural, political, and environmental considerations. In particular, the economic base that a society chooses for itself has wide ranging ramifications. Increasingly, cities, states, and nations are turning to tourism as an important element in their economic portfolio as they recognize the potentially significant economic rewards at stake. Much of tourism development entails community development. If handled appropriately, tourism can become an important engine for achieving broader social goals.” Crouch and Richie, 1999, 137

Next Steps: The Community Tourism Planning Process

This report has described the resource assessment of Maricopa as a basis for developing a tourism plan for the City. The next step will be to present and discuss these findings with the Maricopa Chamber of Commerce, City Council and industry leaders to verify their accuracy. The following step should be an investigation of the goals and objectives of the people of Maricopa for its future.

With the prospect that Maricopa could become a competitive tourism destination, we suggest that the tourism resource assessment conducted here could be the first step in a tourism planning process in seven major steps shown in the Figure below:

Our research has attempted to address steps 2 and 3 and provide a historical setting to address step 1 (indicated by the asterisk). We recommend that step 1 be completed next in cooperation with Maricopa leadership and then the remaining steps be addressed in order.

1. Defining Community Goals and Objectives

- a) Historical Development of Community*
- b) Current Needs and Preferences
- c) Future Goals: specific social, environmental and economic characteristics

2. Assessing the Community System

- a) Economic System*
 - Major industries: Manufacturing, Agriculture, Retail, Services, etc.
 - Numbers of firms, employment, wages, sales, exports and imports
- b) Governance*
 - Form of governance, Government Offices and Departments
 - Numbers of employees, revenues and expenditures, key policies,
- c) Natural and Environmental Systems*
 - Natural Resources: land use, water resources, wildlife
 - Open Space, Parks, Vistas, Water supply, etc
 - Acreage, capacity, seasonality
- d) Social and Cultural Systems*
 - Population size, education, age distribution, ethnicity.
 - Professions of residents, education, ethnicity, cultural resources.
 - Community participation in local activities and governance
 - Social indicators: crime, unemployment, high school graduation rates
- e) Infrastructure and Capital*
 - Roads, Buildings, Airports, Gas, Electricity, Water, Financial Resources
 - Number devoted to tourists, seasonal capacity.

3. Assessing Tourism

- a) The Tourism Industry *
 - Tourism Businesses: Accommodations, Food & Beverage, Transportation, Recreation Facilities & Services, Entertainment, Special festivals and events
 - Numbers of firms, employment, wages, sales, exports and imports
- b) Communications, Collaboration and Destination Branding*
 - Visitor information centers, Chamber of Commerce, CVB's, tourism offices, parks, etc.
 - Numbers of employees, revenues and expenditures, key policies,

4. Creating the Tourism Development Plan

- a) Summary and Integration of the Community System with Tourism Industry
- b) Development of Alternative Tourism Products and Markets
- c) Development of Detailed Site Plans and Marketing Campaigns

5. Evaluating the Impacts of Alternative Tourism Development Plans

- a) Identifying Impacts on Social, Environmental and Economic Characteristics
- b) Quantifying Impacts of Alternative Development Plans
- c) Selecting among Alternatives

6. Implementation Planning

- Recommended time line, community participation and investments

7. Monitoring and Evaluation Planning

- Assigning responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation.
- Scheduling reports.

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“ is to harness tourism as an engine for community and social development. Using megapolitan areas as a model, MTRC will evaluate long-term, system-wide strategies for enhancing the public good that may be beyond the planning horizon of most industry and government organizations. ”

Thank you

We wish to thank the Maricopa Chamber of Commerce, the City of Phoenix and the College of Public Programs for their support of this project



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