

Tech innovation can help build Austin-like aura

Working on Cynthia Lukas' mayoral campaign in 2004 enabled me to introduce ideas early on in the "Scottsdale Innovation Center" public discourse.



ROY TORRES

Development options on the corner of McDowell and Scottsdale roads, to replace the blighted site, became a political hot topic as it remains today.

As a proponent for high technology having a place in the city, it was refreshing to read recently about SkySong's impact on the local economy. It should be encouraging for all concerned, particularly for that area. The projected economic impact is a "wonder figure" of \$9.2 billion in total economic output when fully developed, which can only be realized by smart and collective execution, not distraction and obstruction.

Scottsdale might not compare easily to Austin, but it is worthy of portraying

what might be for the city. Austin is the envy of many cities because it is tops in the nation for innovation and economic growth. They seem to have a formula that works.

MY TURN

Components of the equation are entrepreneurship, business-friendly environment, a strong university relationship and an aggressive campaign to bring businesses into the city. Other aspects include tax abatements, enterprise-zone exemptions, public-utility incentives and financing programs.

Austin's economic engine continues to produce results, ranking high in patent activity, attracting regional offices and corporate headquarters. It is on the road to adding 72,000 new jobs.

SkySong is no sleeping giant. It has the trappings to be the mecca of business vitality and innovation. While hardware and software development companies, worldwide, are locating in the facilities, several business incuba-

tion and support-services firms such as law firms are housed there as well.

Keeping in mind that the Scottsdale innovation center is only four years young, the visionaries of the center should look to boosting a campuslike environment that would showcase the tapestry of a strong and sustaining private-sector community coexisting with its neighbors, the arts and cultural offerings. SkySong is more than just office buildings and laboratories; it's a gathering of brain matter that fuels the economic engine long term.

With a developed infrastructure of telecommunication, transportation, electric and water capacities, companies like data centers are exploring the greater Phoenix region.

Large to small local businesses use these centers for uninterrupted 24/7 service. Some companies require high speed and high bandwidth for data, image and voice transmission, thus making a fiber-optic system imperative. SkySong offers the appropriate infra-

structure to support such requirements.

A campuslike environment could lead to a more diverse community of emerging-technology companies, venture-capital firms, clinical research and development laboratories.

Creativity and innovation lives in a campuslike community. This environment depends on everyone being comfortable sharing ideas and opinions. The sharing has no boundaries, in that it occurs during recreation activities, social gatherings including conversations at local cafés and restaurants.

As Austin revels in the atmosphere it created — energy and buzz — so should the southern part of the city. Scottsdale is a melting pot of old town, galleries, entertainment, art and culture, signature events, visitors, newcomers and longtime residents. It is time for technological innovation and imagination to gain a place in iconic Scottsdale.

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