

Summit will take aim at McDowell corridor

By Jane Larson
THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

Car dealers, economists, real-estate brokers and Scottsdale residents will come together Saturday to try to agree on how to breathe new life into Scottsdale's aging Motor Mile.

The McDowell Road Corridor/South Scottsdale Economic Development Summit is the result of a promise Mayor Jim Lane made at his January inauguration to help jump-start revitalization of the area.

In an interview last week with *The Arizona Republic*, Lane said he hoped people attending the summit would come up with a direction for Motor Mile that stakeholders can begin acting on. Whether the direction is technology, medicine or another big idea, it should be something that can be started in the short term, he said.

"Ultimately, we're looking for buy-in on a program," Lane said. "We want the stakeholders to take hold of it ... we want direction and a consensus toward action."

Lane expressed reluctance for the city to take a huge lead in the McDowell corridor's redevelopment, saying businesses, landowners and others with stakes in the area should be the ones to determine what ideas are viable, and drive them forward.

"The city can't create a market," he said, though businesses and property owners who spot a market can persuade the city to change zoning or take other action.

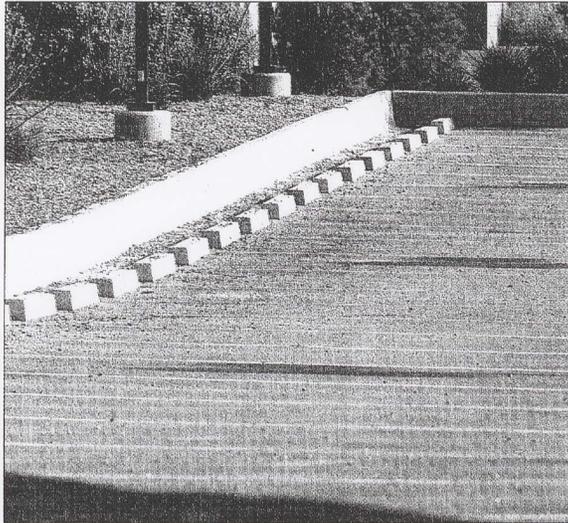
The public summit is free. From 100 to 150 people are expected.

It will be broken into three panels of businesspeople and others with interests in McDowell Road. After the groups discuss the auto industry, the neighborhood's advantages and its prospects, they will come together for a plenary session on next steps to take in the area.

The decline of McDowell Road started years ago, most notably when stores fled Los Arcos Mall and big-box retailers like a Smitty's grocery and Kmart store closed.

SkySong, the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center; the Granite Reef Senior Center; McDowell Village senior apartments; and a Lowe's home-improvement store eventually replaced them.

The decline accelerated last year, when six of Motor Mile's 20 new-car deal-



PAT SHANNAHAN/THE REPUBLIC

A parking lot sits unused where a car dealership once operated along McDowell Road in south Scottsdale. Mayor Jim Lane has vowed to help revitalize the area.

erships closed, victims of consolidations, bankruptcies or the lure of more space along freeways. The Los Arcos Crossing shopping center and its Bashas' grocery store also closed, and developers have put on hold plans to replace the site with a mix of housing and restaurants.

Consultant Aaron Gruen, who authored a 2007 report for the city on the McDowell corridor, said the growth of population and retail in Mesa, Tempe and North Scottsdale has created stiff competition for McDowell Road retailers. The area's remaining older shopping centers are not big enough to offer the array of retail, dining and other services that would pull shoppers to Scottsdale, he said.

Besides the increased competition, Gruen also found that the McDowell corridor is constrained by the small acreage of its commercial properties, which back up to single-family homes.

On the plus side, he said, the area boasts proximity to Loop 101, the Indian

Bend Wash greenbelt and the downtowns of Tempe and Scottsdale.

Gruen's report recommended the small properties be aggregated and converted to housing that would attract workers seeking short commutes to General Dynamics Corp., Scottsdale Healthcare and downtown Scottsdale. Properties also could be combined to allow for bigger, more modern retail developments that would meet the needs of empty nesters and young families moving into the area, he said.

Getting to that point will take luck, persistence and vision, he said.

Gruen said the city has two choices: let the market work things out, or be proactive.

"It's a tough challenge," he said. "If you just wait, you have to suffer through the area declining until prices get low enough (to attract development.) With the other approach, the issue is how to motivate the property owners and developers to make the needed investment."

McDowell Road corridor summit

Up to 150 people are expected for Saturday's summit on the future of south Scottsdale and its potential for redevelopment.

— Jane Larson/The Republic/
azcentral.com

WHEN

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

WHERE

Granite Reef Senior Center, 1700 N. Granite Reef Road, Scottsdale.

THE AGENDA

9 to 9:30 a.m.: Registration.

9:30 to 9:45 a.m.: Welcome.

9:45 to 11 a.m.: Breakout sessions on three topics.

11 to 11:15 a.m.: Break.

11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.: Lunch and plenary session. Bill Gray of the Arizona School of Real Estate and Business will moderate a discussion of "Where Do We Go From Here?"

12:30 to 1 p.m.: Closing remarks.

BREAKOUT SESSION TOPICS

The future of Motor Mile: John Lund of Lund Cadillac Hummer Saab, David Shelburg II of Autokam Automotive Group Inc. and Bryon Schломach of the Goldwater Institute will discuss where the auto industry and McDowell Road dealers are headed.

Advantages and opportunities in the McDowell Corridor: Aaron Gruen of Gruen Gruen + Associates, Steve Evans of the ASU Foundation, Paul Salemi of General Dynamics Corp. and Jeremiah Foster of Resolute Commercial will review the area's assets, demographics and market potential.

What might come: Nan Ellin of Arizona State University's urban and metropolitan studies program, Bill Gosnell of Quantum Capital, Jim Meadows of Meadows & Associates and real-estate attorney Larry Lazarus will discuss redevelopment opportunities, potential and likelihood.

TO REGISTER

480-312-2433 or www.scottsdaleaz.gov/council/j_lane/summit.asp. There is no cost to attend.