Scenarios for the Future Superstition Vistas

Project Description

The State Trust land holdings in northern Pinal County—known as Superstition Vistas—present an unparalleled opportunity for Arizona: to create a model for the best thinking on land use and development. An estimated 275 square miles roughly equivalent in size to California’s San Fernando Valley, the tract’s development will affect not only the lives of its future residents, but also the future of much of the Phoenix metropolitan area. By thinking about the entire area now, the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) will be better able to guide the development of the region and maximize long-term returns to the land trust’s beneficiaries, which include the state’s public schools.

ASLD and other public and private institutions asked Morrison Institute for Public Policy (School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University) to conduct a research and visioning process—or, more specifically, to craft potential scenarios for the future of Superstition Vistas. The institute now is examining such questions as:

- What are the forces that will most shape this area?
- In what ways might these forces influence alternative visions?
- What would stakeholders—current residents, political stewards, business leaders, and neighboring communities—most like and not like to see happen to this area?

The study will result in a number of possible scenarios for the future of Superstition Vistas, thus providing a platform for creative thinking and subsequent planning. In essence, the study will serve as a catalyst for discussion—and then appropriate actions. The study is not a development plan for the area; rather, it is a starting point from which stakeholders together can craft a vision and move ahead.

Grady Gammage, Jr., a Senior Fellow at Morrison Institute for Public Policy and a well-known land use, water, design, and development expert is leading the institute’s team. Team members include policy analysts, water experts, and economists who will focus on critical factors affecting the future of Superstition Vistas. These include water resources, demographic and population projections, development and lifestyle trends, and the insights and opinions of a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The study is expected to be completed by early 2006.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy is conducting this work on behalf of seven funding entities, including the cities of Apache Junction, Mesa, and Queen Creek, Pinal County, the Central Arizona Project, the Sonoran Institute, and Salt River Project. The Arizona State Land Department is a non-funding sponsor. In addition, East Valley Partnership provides project coordination.

For further information about Morrison Institute’s Superstition Vistas study and scenario development, contact: Karen Leland, Morrison Institute public affairs manager, (480) 965-4525 or Karen.Leland@asu.edu.
Superstition Vistas
Frequently Asked Questions/Talking Points

- **Why is this study being conducted?**
The disposition and development of this State Trust land in northern Pinal County will affect the future of much of the Phoenix metropolitan area. Seldom has one landowner held such a large tract on the edge of a major metropolitan area and had the authority to make decisions about its development over time. Superstition Vistas is unique in the western U.S. and perhaps the entire country. Now is the appropriate time to consider how this opportunity can serve the best interests of the Phoenix metro area and Pinal County. By thinking about the entire Superstition Vistas area now, the Arizona State Land Department will be better prepared to guide the development of the region in the best interests of the metropolitan area and maximize the long-term returns on the State Land Trust.

- **What will the study tell us?**
The study will help explore questions about the forces shaping growth and what stakeholders want, and do not want, the area grow into. The study also will further knowledge about the area’s water status. In addition, the study will provide a range of population growth estimates over the next 30-50 years and examine the forces driving that growth. The research will analyze the likely preferences in lifestyle, transportation, and technology that may influence housing and community life. The final product will be a variety of possible scenarios for the future of Superstition Vistas, not a development plan. The report will serve as a starting point from which stakeholders together can craft a vision and take the appropriate actions.

- **Who is conducting the study?**
Grady Gammage, Jr., a Senior Fellow at Morrison Institute for Public Policy and a well-known expert in land use, water, design, and development in Greater Phoenix and the western U.S. leads the project team.

Rob Melnick, Morrison Institute director and one of Arizona’s most prominent policy and scenario experts, is assisting in scenario preparation and project administration.

Other contributors include: Morrison Institute policy analysts Rick Heffernon, Richard Toon, Bill Hart, and Suzanne Taylor, associate director Nancy Welch, staff member Laura Davis, and graduate assistant Gene Slechta. In addition, other scholars and experts include: ASU associate director for Sustainability Partnership Enterprises and former assistant director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources Jim Holway; Tom Rex, associate director, ASU Center for Business Research; ASU economics professor Kent Hill, and Central Arizona Project water planning analyst Terri Sue Rossi.

- **What is the timeline?**
Morrison Institute for Public Policy began work on the study in February. Completion is anticipated in early 2006.

- **What entities are supporting the study?**
The cities of Apache Junction, Mesa, and Queen Creek, as well as Pinal County, Sonoran Institute, the Central Arizona Project, and Salt River Project are funding the $200,000 study. East Valley Partnership provides project coordination. The Arizona State Land Department is a non-funding sponsor.
Who can provide more information about the Superstition Vistas scenario research?
Karen Leland, Morrison Institute public affairs manager, will connect those interested in the Superstition Vistas scenario research with the most appropriate person on the team, depending on the issue. Ms. Leland can be reached at (480) 965-4525 or Karen.Leland@asu.edu.
Morrison Institute for Public Policy

Morrison Institute for Public Policy analyzes current and proposed public policies that are important to the future of greater Phoenix, the state of Arizona, and the nation. Its mission is to conduct research that informs, advises, and assists Arizona's state and community leaders.

Morrison Institute was established in 1982 through a grant from Marvin and June Morrison of Gilbert, Arizona in response to the state's growing need for objective research on issues of public policy. Since then, Morrison Institute has conducted important work on a wide range of topics, including urban growth and development, education reform, water resources, health care, human services, urban growth, government structure, arts and culture, technology, quality of life, public finance, the environment, and economic development.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy is supported by private and public funds and contract research. Under the auspices of Arizona State University, the Institute employs a staff of highly experienced researchers and routinely includes faculty members on project research teams.

For further information, contact: Karen Leland, public affairs manager, (480) 965-4525 or Karen.leland@asu.edu.