New Morrison Institute Study Looks at Arizona’s “Megapolitan” Future

Two out of three Americans are expected to live in just 20 “megapolitan” areas in about 30 years. One of these megapolitans—the Sun Corridor—is in Arizona. Already one of the most urban and fastest-growing states, much of Arizona’s projected growth is expected to be in the Sun Corridor, which stretches from Santa Cruz and Cochise counties to the center of Yavapai County.

Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor, just released by Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, is the first comprehensive analysis of this new geography. Morrison Institute’s Grady Gammage, Jr., Rob Melnick, and Nancy Welch authored the report along with ASU’s John Stuart Hall and Robert E. Lang of Virginia Tech.

People have been predicting for 50 years that Phoenix and Tucson would grow together into one giant desert conglomerate. A diverse pattern of land ownership in central and southern Arizona will most likely prevent that. However, what is happening now, according to Megapolitan, is that the economies of metro Phoenix and metro Tucson are merging. With approximately 5 million people now and nearly 8 million projected for 2030, the Sun Corridor will be at the heart of Arizona’s expansion and the state’s opportunities and challenges.

Predictions of growth are not new. However, because growth and development are happening nationwide at an unprecedented pace, the “mega” concept is moving into the mainstream of public policy and planning. “The megapolitan concept is powerful in part because it reinforces the strength of fundamental forces shaping Arizona and the world,” says Rob Melnick. Its power lies in the recognition that an economic merger brought on by overlapping community patterns and shared interests is more important than a physical one.

How the Sun Corridor will change in the short term depends largely on choices in five “megaton” areas including global connections, governance, water, quality of life, and the “trillion dollar questions” related to residential and commercial development plus infrastructure.

Megapolitan concludes with a critical question: “Do you want to live in the Sun Corridor?” Author Grady Gammage, Jr. notes that “the future of the Sun Corridor isn’t inevitably either rosy or bleak. It is what we make it. What can we do collectively to make the Sun Corridor somewhere we want to stay?”

Megapolitan is one of the first reports in the nation to analyze one megapolitan area. Robert Lang, co-director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech and a visiting ASU scholar in 2006, helped develop the megapolitan concept in 2005 as part of projecting where the next 100 million Americans would live. Lang’s definition is based on economic interdependence, population, and the U.S. Census Bureau’s “combined statistical area” designation.

Download Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor at www.morrisoninstitute.org.
Funding for *Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor* was provided by the Stardust Foundation, Arizona Public Service Corporation, Salt River Project, and the UniSource Energy Corporation family of companies, Tucson Electric Power, UniSource Energy Services.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy conducts research that informs, advises, and assists Arizonans. It is a part of the ASU School of Public Affairs and College of Public Programs.

###

MEDIA CONTACT:
Nicole Haas
Nicole.Haas@asu.edu
602.496.0202
Morrison Institute for Public Policy
Arizona State University
Phoenix, Arizona USA
www.morrisoninstitute.org