

VIEWPOINTS

Tucson needs the leadership of good business people

By Jim Kiser

No single event better illustrates Tucson's lack of business leadership than the decision to locate the new spring-training baseball stadium on the city's southside along East Ajo Way.

It should have been built downtown, where it would have contributed to revitalizing the heart of the city.

But even as the county Board of Supervisors turned what should have been a rational decision into a political decision, the business community mostly kept silent.

Consequently, the stadium is being built on a large vacant lot, in a non-commercial section of Ajo Way, next to Kino Community Hospital. Across the street are the county probation offices, a Sheriff's Department district office, a Sheriff's Department impound lot and the county's Juvenile Court Center.

The hospital has pulled off something of a public relations coup by signing on as the team hospital for the Chicago White Sox. But neither the probation offices, the sheriff's offices or the juvenile cen-

The forming of Tucson's council is a hopeful development. A study of CEO civic groups by the private Frey Foundation of Grand Rapids, Mich., found that the groups 'are a powerful mechanism for urban problem solving.'

ter will be helped by the stadium's proximity. Nor will they help the stadium.

That debacle, along with the Chamber of Commerce's absurd opposition to the county's open-space bond issue, leads to the conclusion that Tucson needs enlightened leadership from its business community. Despite the chamber, the voters approved the open-space bond issue.

It is not that anybody thinks business has all the solutions to Tucson's problems. But it's certain that neither do city or county government. And community decision-making is harmed when some of the most influential, capable and accomplished of Tucson's residents tend primarily to the more narrow concerns of their corporations and of the non-profit organizations they have chosen to serve.

Indeed, Tucson has many involved business leaders who commit time and energy to serving on the boards of numerous organizations.

Yet the community suffers from a lack of coalition builders who commit their skills, time and corporate resources to solving community-wide problems.

In conversation, business and community leaders paint a portrait of Tucson as a community without leadership. The baseball stadium and open-space bond issue are considered just examples of the inadequate, fragmented, non-collaborative leadership in Tucson.

To fill that void, leaders of a number of Tucson's largest businesses are in the early stages of developing a new CEO-led civic organization. So far, it carries the ungainly name of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council.

The council's mission isn't yet fully conceptualized. Its membership isn't yet fully determined. Even so, it already is somewhat controversial within business leadership circles. Some members of the Tucson 30, especially, see the council as a direct threat to their organization, which itself is made up of business and community leaders. Some privately doubt the council will fill a need at all.

The council is similar to organizations in several other large cities, including Phoenix with its Greater Phoenix Leadership. A common rap is that these groups are out-of-touch and elitist. But that's not always fair. The Greater Phoenix Leadership, for instance, fought hard to win a Martin Luther King holiday for Arizona after Gov. Evan Mecham rescinded the order creating the holiday. And the Phoenix group's push for more university funding seemed to help ease Gov. Fife Symington's tight



KANNER

hand on the state's purse strings.

If some of the Tucson council's founders have their way, it will focus on "brick and mortar" issues — downtown redevelopment, water, transportation — and avoid zoning fights or developer impact fees.

But that is all in the future. So far the group has incorporated, with the first seven directors consisting of Tucson Electric Power's Charles Bayless (who will serve as the organization's first president), Hughes' Greg Shelton, developer David Mehl, Arizona Bank's David Wright, Tucson Realty's Hank Amos, lawyer Si Schorr and Tucson Newspapers' Larry Aldrich.

The leaders have hired Barbara Huffstetler, former aide to John Even, as executive director, and they now are recruiting other members.

The forming of Tucson's council is a hopeful development. A study of CEO civic groups by the private Frey Foundation of Grand Rapids, Mich., found that the groups "are a powerful mechanism for urban problem solving."

Indeed, the council could do much to "promote and foster the civic, economic and social welfare of its members, the greater Tucson area and the State of Arizona" — its stated mission in its articles of incorporation.

But the council's success is not foreordained, especially given Tucson's record of failed public policy initiatives.

The leadership council's most critical test will be whether it can be trusted in its view of growth, which somehow appears to be at the heart of every serious Tucson problem.

Businesses such as Tucson Electric Power, Tucson Realty, Tucson Newspapers, not to mention major retailers, banks, car dealers and large home builders, all have direct interest in Tucson's contin-

ued growth. These businesses generally are built on a formula that says the more people, the better.

Moreover, the group's interest in infrastructure surely will raise the concerns of those community members who already are suspicious of corporate activity, especially corporate activity related to roads, sewage, water — all of which affect the community's growth rate.

Many Tucsonans, undoubtedly including some council members, are concerned about the effects of growth on the open spaces around the city and the city's air and water — in short, Tucson's quality of life. It will be important, but difficult, for the council to establish credibility with these Tucsonans.

A second key issue is how the council chooses to define its purpose and mission. The "bricks and mortar" formulation reflects serious Tucson needs. The Frey Foundation report says, too, that CEO-civic groups tend to be more successful when focused on such concrete issues as building convention centers or revitalizing downtowns.

Yet as a vision, it is much narrower and less attractive than the vision, say, of the Greater Phoenix Leadership.

The Phoenix group, in fact, generally avoids a bricks and mortar approach, even though it advocated for passage of a bill to finish construction of Phoenix's freeway system. In addition to fighting for the King holiday, the group created a summer job program for teens, runs a neighborhood development program, is developing summer school and after-school programs on school campuses, recommended solutions to the state's K-12 education finance problem, promoted a clean air campaign, developed opportunities for small business and — in collaboration with the city of Phoenix, the

Maricopa County Attorney's Office and the Arizona Supreme Court — is developing a strategy to prevent violent crime.

In Tucson, one benefit of an emphasis on bricks and mortar would be to avoid conflicts with the Tucson 30's broader social agenda. But because of membership overlap between the two organizations, another possible result, unfortunately, might be a diffusion of effort.

The council's success will depend, too, on its members' commitment. As several leaders have pointed out, creating a new organization does not equal commitment. Nor does writing a \$10,000 corporate check yearly (those are the expected dues for large businesses) to hire an executive director and a staff. Not to put too sharp a point on the issue, but heads of large organizations frequently are seen as "big picture" people who leave the details to others. Commitment, however, requires rolling up your sleeves and doing the work yourself.

A serious problem for the council and for Tucson is that Tucson does not have an economy that readily develops business leaders who can speak to community issues.

In the same way that the odds are against the success of any new business, so are the odds against the success of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council. After so many years of drift, Tucson will not overnight develop enlightened corporate and community leadership.

Tucson has become in the past several years even more of a corporate colonial outpost. Most major employers have headquarters elsewhere. When a community's major banks, retailers, employers and even newspapers are not locally owned, corporate leadership tends to be more transient, as executives climb the corporate ladder by moving from city to city. It is understandable, too, when executives running district operations tend to be more attuned to the needs of the parent corporation than to the community.

Moreover, such multi-state organizations tend to focus more on growing by acquisition than by improving the communities in which they operate. There's nothing nefarious about any of this. But it does make developing an enlightened corporate leadership harder for Tucson.

A final concern is that leadership requires many capabilities, most notably formulating and consistently articulating a vision of a better future — a vision of what Tucson can and should be. I seldom hear any key players publicly doing that.

Occasionally, a business leader has stepped forward and melded together a coalition between business and government, the best example being the crisis concerning the possible closure of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

But those have been narrowly focused efforts. A broad issue, such as the future we want for Tucson, is much less likely to bring forth such a leader. However, the community's future begs for leadership.

In the same way that the odds are against the success of any new business, so are the odds against the success of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council. After so many years of drift, Tucson will not overnight develop enlightened corporate and community leadership.

For the council to succeed, a few of its members must articulate a compelling vision for Tucson that will attract a broad range of people with varying views and hopes. It will require much time and energy to carry it off.

Tucson's fortunes do not necessarily depend on the council's success.

But if it does succeed — which I strongly hope — it can improve Tucson significantly. It can provide a way for business, government, nonprofit organizations and community activists to work together in deciding the future we want — and then in creating that future.

Jim Kiser is editor of the Star Comment page.

Indians gave much, but never agreed to give up their sovereignty

By Tim Giago

When a farmer has to do a job over that he has devoted a lot of time doing the first time, he usually says "this is like going back over plowed ground."

I feel that way sometimes when I write this column.

I have been writing this column for 20 years come October. It is just now reaching many more people than it did at the beginning. So I suppose it is only natural that many of the things I wrote about in the past have not been read by many people.

I just finished doing a radio talk show for a station in Madison, Wis., and the key question, the one that appeared to be uppermost in the minds of many callers was:

"Why can't American Indians forget being American Indians and join the mainstream of society like everybody else?"

This reminds me of those who believe that American Indians, as a general rule, are on welfare.

I often point out to those who would believe this that many American Indian tribes signed treaties on a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

Clearly written within most of these treaties was a deal for an exchange of land for certain rights. American Indian nations gave up millions of acres of land for perpetual funds to educate their children, for health care and other rights, and for the right to run their own governments.

This is known as a treaty right, not a welfare right.

Perhaps the government officials of the time believed they had worked a really clever deal to get so much land for what often turned out to be "empty promises," but the tribal leaders of that time took the United States at its word.

To the tribal leaders the treaties were a solemn vow from one government to another.

There is no other ethnic minority that was here on this continent to greet the people of Europe except the indigenous people.

There is no other ethnic minority living on lands with clearly defined borders and boundaries, nor one that has signed treaties with the United State of America as governments with equal political status.

There is no other ethnic minority living upon lands where the state governments have no jurisdiction.

There is no other ethnic minority with

its own police force, judiciary or independently elected leaders. And above all, there is no other ethnic minority on this continent that was the object of human, ethnic and cultural genocide as was the American Indian. I point these things out because the major question directed at me on the talk show addressed why American Indians do not simply forget who they are, what they are, and become "like everybody else." The cultures that came together by virtue of settlement and immigration that of Europe and the Western Hemisphere — were totally different. We did not become the same because of colonization or because of failed attempts at spiritual and cultural genocide.

When England, Germany, Belgium and France colonized countries in Africa, did they expect that the indigenous people would become "just like themselves?"

The American Indian people fought and laid down their lives in defense of their lands and their way of life. We signed treaties with the United States, but we never relinquished our basic freedom as sovereign nations.

I think it is high time for the American people to respect the inherent sovereign rights of the American Indian people and not try to make us over in their own image.



The American Indian gave up more to the United States than any other people. Why not respect our remaining right of sovereignty and the right to retain our language, spirituality, culture and traditions?

Would America take even this from us in the name of "making us over in their image?"

I've written it before, and I will probably write it again, but the American Indian is not a European, Asian or African American.

We are Lakota, Navajo, Hopi, Tohono

O'odham, Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Ojibwe, Cree and on and on. We were sovereign people long before the first settlers landed at Plymouth Rock.

We may drive a car, live in a house or use a telephone just as the former subjects of the European colonizers in Africa now do. But they, like us, did not become French, German, Belgium or British simply because they were colonized by those nations.

To this day they are still Africans of their own nations just as the American Indian is still a citizen of his or her own nation.

To me, it is really not hard to understand.

Because the American Indian wishes to retain his sovereignty does not mean he does not like America nor does it mean he wishes to become an enemy of America.

It simply means he wants to be left alone to live his life as a member of a sovereign nation within a nation.

We have already given up a continent. Please let us retain our independence and sovereignty.

Tim Giago is editor in chief and publisher of Indian Country Today, a national weekly newspaper on American Indian issues. His Lakota name, Nanuica Kciji, means "Stands Up for Them."