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CC residents help hammer out land use recommendations

With Arizona's population expected to double in 45 years, decisions on what to do with State Trust Land and how best to manage land development are critical to our future. Approximately 150 Arizonans, representing a cross-section of statewide leaders, will gather to discuss those issues in-depth October 28 – 31 at the Grand Canyon during the 91st Arizona Town Hall on "Land Use: Challenges and Choices for the 21st Century."

Four Cochise County residents (see below) are among the Town Hall participants — all of whom have a wide variety of relevant expertise and sometimes divergent opinions. The group's goal is to develop consensus-based recommendations and plans of action to deliver to legislative and community leaders.

During the opening on Sunday October 28, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano will appear by video to present her thoughts on the future of Arizona's land.

Former U.S. Interior Secretary and former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt will address Town Hall participants over lunch on Monday, October 29. Babbitt worked with President Clinton to get many Western lands designated as conservation areas and has recently joined actor Edward Norton and others to create the National Conservation System Foundation.

Dr. Arthur Chris Nelson leads the dinner discussion on Monday. Dr. Nelson, who is director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, is one of the nation's leading authorities on growth management and metropolitan development. Dr. Nelson will present new research indicating the magnitude of future development facing Arizona.

Town Hall participants will tackle other important issues including: the effectiveness of "Growing Smarter" legislation; the appropriate balance of government regulation and taxes vs. the free market; the impact of tribal and federal lands; the interface of land development on water, transportation, energy and the environment; and how to create "livable" communities.

Prior to attending the Town Hall, participants received a comprehensive background report prepared by Arizona State University. This background report, which is available at www.aztownhall.org, has already been hailed as one of the most comprehensive and current resources for land issues in Arizona.

The Town Hall's recommendations will be available on its Web site on November 14. The recommendations also will be combined with the background report into a final report and formally published in January 2008.

The four Cochise County residents among the Town Hall participants are: Judy Anderson, Cochise County's Planning Director, Jack Blair, Jr., Chief Member Services Officer, Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Michael Jaworski, Site Manager, Copper Queen Branch, Phelps Dodge/Freeport McMoRan, and Curtis A. Shook, Douglas' City Manager.