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A publication of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns | Winter 2014

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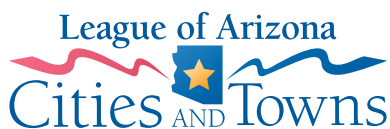
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## A CITY SUCCESS STORY

Anyone who questions whether a city or town plays a role in the economic development of our state or region will certainly be impressed by the Tolleson story in the pages of this magazine. Businesses large and small depend on the services provided by cities, and the environment created by the city can mean the difference between success or failure.

If blight or high crime is a problem, customers will not come to retail establishments. Or, if streets are rough and congested, businesses that depend on efficient transportation will not locate there. Good city services and a healthy business climate are two sides of the same coin.

While Tolleson is the focus of this issue of the League's magazine, it is certainly not the only success story of its kind. All over the state, cities and towns are taking inventory of the assets they have, working with their local business communities and others who may be interested in locating there, and cooperating to map out which public services offer the greatest return for both the businesses and the local citizens.

Being business-friendly is beneficial to every citizen of a city or town. The more economic activity that happens in a community, the more revenue is generated for both the public and private sector. A good business climate means jobs, stability, opportunity and prosperity — for the community, the region and the entire state.

We need to be sure policymakers in the Legislature recognize this reality and acknowledge the crucial role cities and towns play in the success of businesses. When entrepreneurs and investors come up with an idea for a successful business, they need to find the best place to locate their enterprise to ensure the greatest possibility of success. By partnering with cities and towns to work together toward mutual goals, the results can be exceptional.

Congratulations to the city of Tolleson for its success and to the other 90 cities and towns across Arizona that are working to build prosperous, livable places for their own businesses and citizens.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Strobeck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Strobeck  
Executive Director

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# TOLLESON

## A RICH HERITAGE | A BRIGHT FUTURE

by Samantha Womer, Communication and Education Assistant, League of Arizona Cities and Towns



Workers in a packing plant. Agriculture was the mainstay of Tolleson's economy following the Great Depression.

The city of Tolleson is six square miles. It is a city entwined in the flourishing West Valley, neighboring other vibrant and growing communities like Avondale, Goodyear, Glendale and Litchfield Park. It is a city nestled between Interstate 10 and Buckeye Road, landlocked and unable to grow physically, yet the city of Tolleson is anything but a small piece of land hidden beneath the spotlight of others. It is a city whose small-town roots and intentional planning has led to a solid foundation of creative economic development, generating sustainable success through the difficult years of the economic downturn, thus allowing the city to be poised for a renaissance as the economy begins to rebound.

### From a Spark – Recalling Formidable Beginnings in Agriculture

Tolleson's origins are much like many other Arizona beginnings, entailing a story of a man and his family moving across the country in search of better weather in the mysterious desert. Walter G. Tolleson and his wife, Althea, packed up their children and headed west in 1908. Their eldest son suffered from health ailments, which led them to look for a climate suitable for his condition. After a trek from South Carolina, they landed right at the west end of the Salt River Valley, where they purchased a 160-acre ranch at the intersection of 91st Avenue and Van Buren Street. Walter Tolleson turned their space into the Ten Mile Store, a hub for travelers heading even further west. At the time, Tolleson was the only spot to accommodate travelers before they embarked on their travels to Yuma.

Walter Tolleson could be considered the first economic development director of the area. He chartered a train from the Arizona Eastern Railway and provided free transportation,

lunches and \$5 gold pieces to prospective buyers. An auctioneer sold 80 lots at an average price of \$50 per lot. Following the sales, a general merchandise store and the first post office were completed and a rural post route was established. Tolleson also contributed acreage to create schools, which today is the established Tolleson School District, one of Arizona's largest high school districts.

The community was officially incorporated in 1929, right on the cusp of the Great Depression. Like the rest of the nation, Tolleson saw its share of struggles during this time, but soon thereafter, agriculture brought the city back to its feet. As the town's main economic driver, agriculture gave jobs to those who needed them and helped the city begin a dramatic recovery. In fact, by the 1950s, Tolleson was known as the "vegetable center of the world." It became a flourishing community, and, as a result, it was the first community in Arizona to enjoy street lighting.

Tolleson experienced a state of emergency in 1948 when gasoline storage tanks exploded and started a fire that would take two days to extinguish. Fueled by more than 50,000 gallons of



Historic photos of downtown Tolleson

gasoline, the fire destroyed an entire business block and several residences. It was the first — but certainly not the last time — Tolleson would need to find a way to rebuild.

### Igniting the City’s Urban Development – Maintaining the Present Economic Model

Following years of agricultural success, the city abruptly faced a crossroads. Agriculture was soon becoming a modernized profession; more methods of machinery were created, and shipping methods improved greatly. Field hands were no longer needed for harvesting, and the city’s economic source was dwindling. Worried about finding jobs for a community suddenly out of work, the Tolleson City Council knew a decision needed to be made.

During these formative years, Tolleson was renovating, planning and developing: City planners went to work on a master plan, beautification projects began springing up throughout the city, and growth was encouraged as both industrial and residential projects came to fruition.

What started out as a necessity to create jobs progressed as a perceptive fiscal decision, creating a stable economic base



The city is home to more than 30 Fortune 500 companies. Home Depot’s Distribution Center is located in Tolleson.

for the city. To maintain its focus on small-town community while increasing revenue streams, the city looked at many nontraditional sources of revenue. While other cities continued to search for development in housing or retail, Tolleson built upon its nascent success and went into industrial development, gaining revenue from property taxes, warehousing and distribution.

The choice to pursue urban development was not one taken by chance. While Tolleson wanted to grow financially, it did not want to greatly increase in population size.

From the beginning, the city has been steeped in family history

and a small-town community feel, and the city wanted to stay true to its origin and heritage. Industrial development was the perfect solution. It brought in jobs and a revenue source through property taxes, and it preserved the city’s small-town feel by not greatly increasing population density.

The planning and preparation paid off when the city began to land several developments — Con Agra, Bay State Milling, Borden Creamette, Fry’s Food and Drug and Albertson’s Distribution Centers were the first of many that would eventually settle in the city. From that point on, Tolleson became a nucleus for industrial expansion. During the last 40 years, the list of companies that call Tolleson home has only grown. PepsiCo, Bose, Nabisco, Freightliner, Rush Trucking Center, Staples, Costco, Home Depot and Sysco Food Systems are just a few of the many companies that have distribution and light industrial operations in Tolleson. More than 20,000 people are employed



Tolleson’s unique location has led it to become an epicenter of the trucking industry. The city is home to Freightliner of Arizona.



Tolleson's fire station was built in 2011 and is LEED Gold-certified.



Tolleson Veterans Park is a feature of the downtown area.

within these companies, 30 of which top the Fortune 500 list.

The city's dedication to creating a sustainable economy, along with focused leadership, has enabled the city to draw these companies to its doorstep. Tolleson is committed to being a business-friendly municipality, creating easy paths to development and emphasizing business retention. In one such instance, the city was able to use a business-retention project to expand its trucking industry. In visiting a business whose lease was expiring, the city learned that the company was outgrowing its current location. The city's partnership, dedication and responsiveness to the changing needs of this business led to the procurement of a larger property and expanded operation, freeing up the original space to be leased by another trucking business.

The trucking industry is another major asset in the city of Tolleson. As a rural pocket in a large metro area, the city doesn't always have the same retail opportunity as the larger cities; the city has yet to get a grocery store. And, while 20,000 people flock to the city streets to work each day, the population remains at a steady 6,500. But Tolleson has capitalized on its size and location on the I-10 and has used what some could see as a challenge to its advantage. While Tolleson is represented to interstate travelers by only a few freeway exits, the city understood that its location was



a great asset to truck drivers, and its outreach to the industry has led it to become an epicenter of the trucking industry.

Beginning with the Great Recession and continuing into recent years, cities nationwide have been struggling to stay economically afloat. Due to perceptive planning and a stable economic base, the city of Tolleson was able to maintain a source of revenue without having to make too many cuts. So, while many municipalities nationwide are working toward recovery, Tolleson is working toward redevelopment.

### **Illuminating a Street of Lights – Looking to Future Development**

Just as the streetlights first came to Tolleson all those years ago, so they will again shine with the city’s new Paseo de Luces project.

The project is the city’s own downtown redevelopment concept. Wanting to give back to its own community, Tolleson City Council decided to invest \$8 million of city funds into the project — \$6 million through a city bond and \$2 million from General Purpose funds. The project, which will start at the

first of the year, is slated to be finished in October 2014. Construction will happen between 91st and 99th avenues along Van Buren Street. The purpose of this redevelopment is to create a downtown hub, complete with pedestrian-



friendly shopping, arts and entertainment. The multimodal environment will be accessible for pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles and public transportation and will serve as a catalyst for future city development.

True to its desire to continually keep to its rich heritage and small-town feel, the project will be right in the heart of where the city was originally established. Just as Walter G. Tolleson chose Van Buren for the spot of his Ten Mile Store, so the city will dedicate their efforts to that stretch of road, running right through the heart of its downtown. The new downtown will pay homage to the rich heritage and diversity of the Tolleson community, focusing on the generations of family members who have paved the way for the future generations. This project is an investment for future development, but also an investment for posterity.

Not every success or failure that faced the city of Tolleson was deliberate; many times, outside factors influenced how the city responded — from the loss of agriculture as a revenue stream to the fire that almost completely destroyed its infrastructure. But, each time, the city and its residents adapted to the circumstances to make a stronger, more vibrant community. The city’s success in recent years has been anything but happenstance. City leaders never shied away from investing in their city, ensuring that Tolleson remains a vibrant, family-oriented, business-friendly community now and into the future. ■



Visitors of Tolleson City Hall are greeted by a mural, depicting the rich heritage and history of the city.



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The AZCities@Work website serves as the central hub of information for the Arizona Cities @ Work program. It is updated with new content daily, and aims to provide an overview of municipal services in a fun and accessible way, including upcoming events.



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If you would like to nominate someone to be featured from your city or town, please send the information below to **Samantha Womer** at [swomer@azleague.org](mailto:swomer@azleague.org).

- Name of Person
- Position within the city/town
- 100-150 words explaining why this person is important to your city or town
- Photo of person

## EVENTS

Have an upcoming city or town event or festival? Let AZ Cities @ Work be a part of it! We would love to have a booth to discuss the great things cities and towns do each and every day.



## QUESTIONS?

Contact League staff for more information on Arizona Cities @ Work. Staff can be reached at 602-258-5786 or [azcitieswork@azleague.org](mailto:azcitieswork@azleague.org).





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# MUNICIPAL ISSUES AT THE CAPITOL FOR 2014

## OVERVIEW

The League of Arizona Cities and Towns, a voluntary association of the 91 incorporated municipalities in Arizona, is governed by two core principles: to protect shared revenues and promote local decision-making authority. In addition to fighting for these two guiding tenets, every year, the legislative division of the League lobbies at the Capitol for a number of municipal priorities as determined by our membership. Those priorities are encapsulated in the League's Municipal Policy Statement, a document that facilitates in conveying the importance of these issues to legislators and other key stakeholders.

The body of the Municipal Policy Statement is reproduced below for your use. Please visit [www.azleague.org](http://www.azleague.org) for more information about the League and our legislative advocacy.

## PRESERVE LOCAL CONTROL

Decentralized government at the local level represents a fundamental principle of American democracy, recognizing that when it comes to community governance, one size does not fit all.

The League calls upon the Legislature to respect the authority of cities and towns to govern their communities in the best interests of their residents. The League will endorse legislation that supports and sustains the principle of local control and oppose legislation that conflicts with the autonomy of cities and towns.

## PROTECT STATE SHARED REVENUE

The League is determined to safeguard the economic resources cities and towns require to ensure safety and provide high-quality services for their residents. To that end, the League calls upon the Legislature to enact a budget that maintains existing historical formulas for the distribution of state-collected shared revenue to local governments.

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

From roads to public safety, cities and towns are service providers. Our residents look to their local government to provide key services critical to creating welcoming, healthy communities. Therefore, the League urges the passage of legislation to:

- Make the requirements for annexation a more simple and flexible process;
- Prohibit fire districts from annexing areas inside a municipal planning area without the consent of the municipality, provided the municipality operates a municipal fire department;

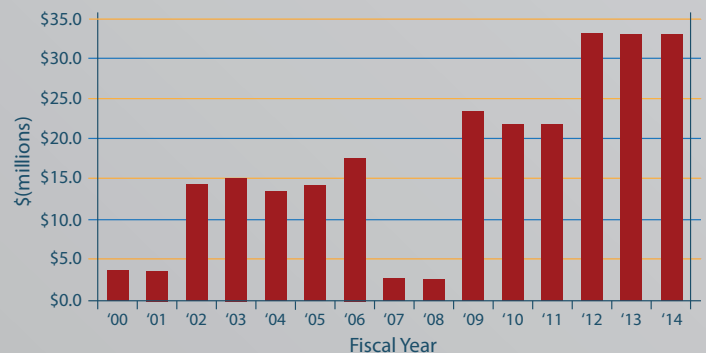
- Authorize street light improvement districts to levy and expend money to repair, maintain and replace lighting facilities; and
- Amend statute to ensure that restitution for graffiti offenses includes all abatement costs associated with a victim of graffiti.

## FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Cities and towns provide public safety and other high-quality services for their residents. In order to accomplish this there needs to be fiscal certainty in funding sources from the state level. The League calls upon the Legislature to:

- Stop future sweeps of Highway User Revenue Funds (HURF) allocated to Arizona cities and towns and follow statutory formulas for the distribution of HURF monies;

## HURF Transfers from Cities and Towns to DPS (2000 - Present)



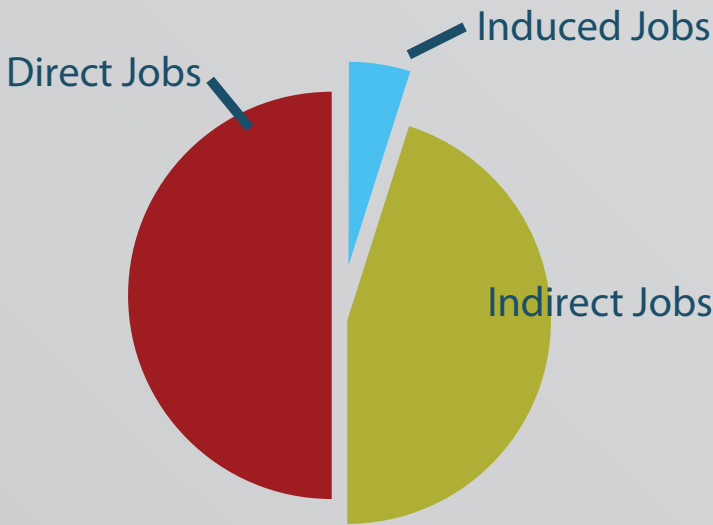
- Develop and pass legislation to ensure the viability of Arizona state parks and to restore the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund; and

## THE TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ARIZONA STATE PARKS ON THE STATE WAS

# \$266,436,582

- Include one representative from a large city along with one representative from a small non-metropolitan city on the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System Board of Trustees.

- 96,328 jobs in Arizona are associated with the U.S. Military; 45,568 direct, 39,942 indirect, 11,269 induced



### FEDERAL ISSUES

The League recognizes that all levels of government must work cooperatively in order for local communities to be successful. Therefore, the League will:

- Support the passage of legislation or engage in other activities that support and advocate for resources to improve Arizona’s ports of entry with Mexico and related infrastructure;
- Support the long-term retention of Arizona’s military installations;
- Encourage Congress to preserve the tax exempt status of municipal bonds; and
- Push Congress to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act. ■



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# WINDOW TO THE PAST: Town of Clarkdale

## Clark Memorial Clubhouse

The Clark Memorial Clubhouse was originally opened on October 19, 1927. Built as a memorial to William Andrews Clark after he provided a bequest of \$100,000 on his death in 1925, the building contains an auditorium, a ladies lounge, a kitchen, a reading room and a men's lounge. The auditorium was used for dances with live music provided by the mining company as well as theater productions and funerals. Today, it serves as the town council chambers, and a meeting place for boards and commissions, community events and special occasions. In the mid-2000s, the council and staff began discussing ways for Clarkdale to work toward greater sustainability. The first project undertaken as part of the Sustainable Clarkdale Initiative was the installation of a geothermal heating and cooling system in the Clubhouse. The project was developed to improve energy efficiency in the 13,000-square-foot Clubhouse and ensure its year-round use to the residents. From FY '11 to FY '12, building utilization increased 53 percent, from 231 uses in FY '11 to 355 uses (averaging one per day) in FY '12. The replacement of the inefficient furnaces allowed the town to utilize the Clubhouse with much more frequency while decreasing overall energy costs.

In 2013, the town of Clarkdale received the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Community Sustainability Award recognizing the town's deployment of geothermal energy in a historic building. ■

*The Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum offers tours of the Clark Memorial Clubhouse on a monthly basis and features the building during its annual Clarkdale Historic Building and Home Tour, which is held each December. Contact the Museum at 928-649-1198 for more information.*



Clark Memorial Clubhouse, now





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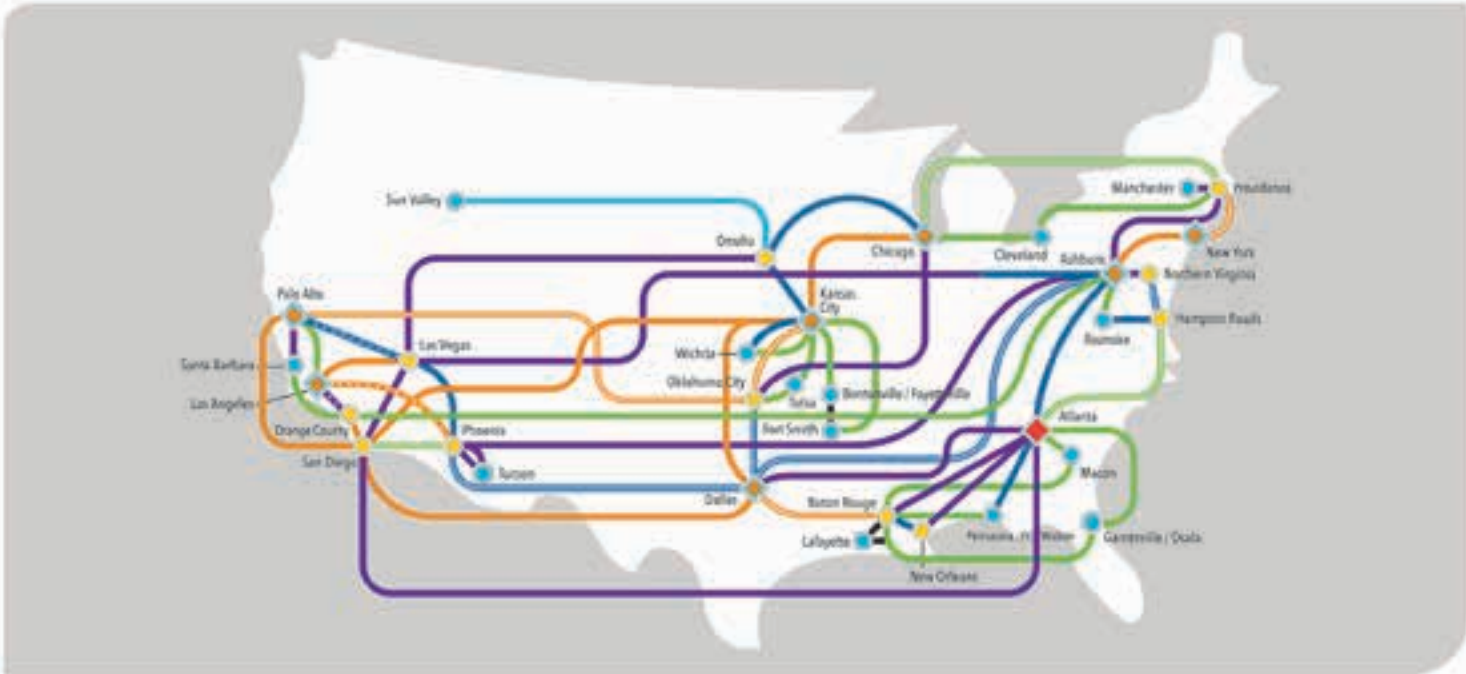
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