



State of the City

By Mayor Sam Kathryn Campana

January 11, 2000

Honored guests, my fellow City Council Members and my fellow citizens:

To begin the Year 2000 State of the City address, I'm going to rely on one of Arizona's most provocative authors, the late Edward Abbey, to wake you up. Here is how he describes the place he called home:

“Ninety percent of my state is an appalling burned-out wasteland, a hideous Sahara with few oases, a grim, bleak, harsh, over-heated, God-damned and God-forgotten inferno. Arizona is the native haunt of the scorpion, the sidewinder, the tarantula, the vampire bat, the centipede, and three species of poisonous lizard: namely the Gila monster, the land speculator and the real estate broker.”

The rich irony is that Edward Abbey deeply loved this state. He was *Arizona Highways* turned inside out, the desert lover who told the rest of the world to stay away, for the sake of the land. As we enter the 21st Century, most of us have a touch of Abbey in us. We all harbor contradictory impulses. We've made this grim, bleak, harsh land so attractive and comfortable that thousands are rushing here to take up residence, turn on the air conditioners, and join the fight to save it.

It was Abbey's duty as a writer to throw us off balance in order to make us think. It's my duty as a mayor, looking to the future, to find balance. How do we love the land and live on it, too? How do we build a community that appeals to each of us individually, and to all of us collectively? How do we turn the many, varied, often contradictory desires of Scottsdale citizens into a vision for the future?

Grady Gammage, Jr., the author of a recent book on the history of the Valley's growth, captured some of these challenges more clearly. He wrote: “The reality of growth is subtle and complex and rarely attributable to scapegoats. Simply discarding the old consensus is not enough. A new vision of the city cannot be only that our old vision was bad.”

I agree with Grady. I believe we can create a new vision, even though we sometimes seem a more disjointed community than ever. A common set of dreams and values has held Scottsdale together. We must never let those values fall prey to the diseases that threaten the civic health of most communities – cynicism, apathy, the no-to-anything-

and-everything syndrome. That's not the Western spirit that this small-town Idaho girl grew up with. It's not fitting for the West's Most Western Town.

Last year, I laid out four very specific challenges for Scottsdale in 1999. Each involved tough choices. I'm proud that citizens did not shrink from them. We agreed on some and disagreed on others. The key is that we made decisions, we made progress and we learned valuable lessons.

This year, my last as your mayor, I hope you'll indulge me as we look further into the future. I have another list of challenges for Scottsdale. Some are continuations of the work already started in 1999 and previous years. Others look ahead several decades and allude to the "new vision" we'll need. My list of goals is longer – but so are my deadlines. Here is my "to do" list for Scottsdale at the beginning of the 21st Century:

- Complete the redevelopment of Los Arcos Mall.
- Complete the construction of the Pima Freeway to I-17.
- Find an achievable, holistic vision for Scottsdale's downtown.
- Preserve Scottsdale's quality of life by approving a new bond issue.
- Push for an amendment to the State Constitution and put the tools in place at all levels of government to finish the long, complicated job of preserving a third of our city.
- Prepare for the fast-approaching day when Scottsdale has finished growing and becomes a fully mature city with a very different list of challenges.
- Finally, and most important, seek a deeper appreciation of what it means to set down roots, to be a citizen and contribute to Scottsdale, the Most Livable City and The West's Most Western Town.

This year, we will celebrate the millennium and lead up to another watermark event in our history. In 2001 we will observe the 50th anniversary of our incorporation as a town. We have good reason to celebrate. As we approach our golden anniversary, the state of our city is outstanding. I can't recite all the evidence in this speech– but much of it is available to you this morning in the pamphlets and brochures we've provided. A short story will also illustrate the point: I met last week with the our local Interfaith Community, and one of the ministers of a large congregation told me he had received a brochure offering a grand prize trip to Hawaii, Florida or Scottsdale. "See how lucky we are?" he said. "We don't have to win a contest to live here."

There are a few other facts that deserve mentioning this morning:

- In 1999, we became only the third city west of the Mississippi with a AAA bond rating from the international firm of Fitch IBCA. The rating is Fitch's highest. It's

an independent confirmation that Scottsdale's city government and its economy are rock solid. We are a blue chip stock in the municipal marketplace. We've achieved this enviable position not through a slash-and-burn approach to government, but by investing wisely and demanding the very best for our city.

- We're also a safe city. An innovative residential fire sprinkler code, adopted a decade ago, continues to save lives and property. Automobile accident rates have declined after the city made the difficult decision – which I supported -- to use red-light cameras and photo radar. Most important, crime rates continue to drop as our Police Department affirms its commitment to community policing.
- We are a community of quality in so many ways – great schools, excellent health care, active neighborhoods, fine parks and dozens of superlatives each of you could add.

We don't take our good fortune for granted. This year, and in the next decades, Scottsdale has to keep moving, has to keep making the tough choices to create a quality future. These are the decisions and issues at the top of my "to do" list:

First, we must complete the redevelopment of Los Arcos Mall. We must continue to focus on the health of the businesses and neighborhoods in the area.

In the next several months, the city staff will negotiate the details of the Los Arcos redevelopment agreement with the Ellman Companies and the Los Arcos Stadium District and present the agreement to the City Council.

Unfortunately, there are still opponents determined to undermine the Los Arcos plan at any cost. Some have already begun talking about another referendum – a third vote – on Los Arcos.

They fail to understand that the city and the Stadium District Board heard Scottsdale citizens loud and clear after the first two votes. We know that citizens will demand a project that requires no new taxes, keeps traffic moving, remains viable for decades and enhances the entire area.

We have adopted strict guiding principles that we'll use as the acid test for any deal. These set high standards. I am confident that the city, the district and the developer can craft an agreement that will meet them all. We must. We owe it to the citizens of Scottsdale. They said -- unmistakably -- in May and again in November that it is time to stop the nay-saying, time to move ahead, time to invest in this essential part of our community. It is time to make Los Arcos a reality.

The second item on my list is the early completion of the Pima Freeway and a community-based transportation plan for the future.

Just a few weeks ago, we held an early opening for the first stretch of freeway in our city limits, between Via Linda and Shea Boulevard. By now, most of you have had a chance

to drive the freeway and see the amazing public art that will set it apart from any other transportation artery in the country.

I want early openings to become the norm. I would like to open the 28-mile loop around the entire northeast Valley in 2001, joining Mesa, Tempe and Scottsdale to north Phoenix and Glendale. We sometimes pay lip service to regionalism. This is the real thing.

Last year, we made great progress on a major hurdle to an early opening. We continued to work with the Army Corps of Engineers on an environmental permit for the Desert Greenbelt flood channel system in northern Scottsdale. The greenbelt is an integral part of the freeway's drainage design as well as critical flood protection for large areas of the city. ADOT cannot begin early work on the freeway without the permit.

You've heard critics of the greenbelt dismiss the importance of an early opening for the freeway. Have they not been stuck in the mile-long lines waiting to exit at the end of our unfinished freeways around the Valley? It's utter nonsense to argue that there's no harm in sticking to the original 2003 schedule. Our whole freeway system is years behind the demand now. Let's complete the Pima as soon as we can, period.

Whatever the final timetable for construction of the freeway, it will not be the ultimate solution to every transportation challenge. We knew that in 1997, when we put the ambitious "Transit Plus" proposal before voters. A similar proposal passed in Tempe and came close in Phoenix, but Scottsdale's citizens rejected it nearly 2-1.

We must continue searching for a regional solution. Why? Even if Scottsdale stops growing today, traffic from Phoenix and other communities will continue to increase on our freeways and streets. Consider this fact: The State Land Department is considering plans for a huge new mall on the west side of Scottsdale Road, in Phoenix. We already have a site for a mall in Scottsdale near the Pima Freeway. Should we be concerned about the volume of traffic from a mall in Scottsdale? Certainly. But the alternative is the development of a site that generates all the sales tax for Phoenix and at least half the traffic headaches in Scottsdale. Whether we build it or not, the cars will come.

Within the next few months, we will hear a report from the Transportation Commission on the results of their community conversations. They will recommend the next steps in a project dubbed "Let's Get Moving." They'll look at transit, telecommuting, land use planning and other issues – focusing on what's truly practical. I urge you each of you to take a serious and thoughtful look at the report and give us your reactions. We can tackle this issue only if citizens help us define the solutions that will work.

The third item on my list is a holistic, achievable vision for Scottsdale's downtown. In the wake of the September vote on the Canals of Scottsdale plan, I appointed a citizens committee to take a fresh look at downtown revitalization. In the following months, we also saw at least two new plans emerge and many new ideas floated to help ensure downtown's future.

We are still a long way from consensus, especially about the future of the Arizona Canal and the Galleria. What seems clear from September's vote is this: Citizens were wary of the scope and cost of the Canals project and how it might change the scale and feel of the downtown area.

Any new vision for downtown must address those concerns. It must show that redevelopment can complement and enhance the best part of our city's core. It must draw on one of the fundamental assets of downtown -- its diversity. We boast one of the finest gallery districts in the West, first-rate restaurants and shops, a superior arts center and museum and a hugely successful mall within walking distance. We must find ways to connect them or we lose an enormous advantage.

The underlying reason we've focused on the Arizona Canal is its potential to unify the downtown. It's not unlike the Indian Bend Wash. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, we insisted that the Indian Bend Wash should not be a concrete channel dividing this city, but a series of green spaces that draw it together. A similar vision applies to the Arizona Canal in our downtown. It shouldn't split our city's core. It should be the connecting centerpiece.

I believe we face a window of opportunity. The economy is peaking. If we don't move quickly, the next chance may be years away. If we are going to take advantage of the window, a new plan for the canal area must be brought to the City Council soon. I want to see it before my retirement in June.

The next item on my list is a new challenge specifically for the year 2000. It is the final item on my short-term list. Scottsdale should put a bond issue before the voters this fall.

We cannot take for granted the parks, streets, bike paths, service centers and other public facilities that make us a Most Livable City.

Our last major bond election was 11 years ago. The results of the \$287 million in bonds approved in 1989 are evident wherever you go: We built an award-winning stadium, a new police and fire training facility, several new fire stations, the Via Linda Senior Center, Cholla, Horizon, Aztec and Rio Montana parks, doubled the Civic Center Library and built the new Palomino Branch Library. We bridged the CAP canal at Hayden and Thompson Peak Parkway, providing significant traffic relief, widened dozens of major streets and upgraded our computerized traffic signal system. We opened a brand new, state-of-the-art water campus that reuses our most precious natural resource, pumping more than 4 billion gallons a year back into the aquifer for storage.

But we have not kept up with growth on all fronts. For example, we're running out of fields for kids' soccer, baseball, softball and football. People are driving farther to use any athletic field available. In a city that prides itself on parks and outdoor recreation, the ratio of developed park acres to citizens is below the national average.

We face other, mounting needs to maintain and widen major streets, to expand and add libraries and senior centers, to add new police and fire facilities, to take care of flood control and other environmental needs. The city has a list of nearly \$800 million in projects over the next 10 years with no identified source of funding.

This month, I will urge my fellow City Council members to join me in moving quickly to take an in-depth look at our infrastructure needs and devise a comprehensive, realistic bond proposal.

There is a silver lining to this issue. The growth in Scottsdale's economy and property values has been so strong that the impact of a bond election on property tax rates is likely to be very small. We can even consider capping the property tax rate, guaranteeing that it would not rise above a certain level, and still fund a substantial bond issue.

It's time to act this fall, to ask Scottsdale voters to continue investing in the quality of life in this community.

Los Arcos, transportation, the downtown, a bond election. My final five months will focus on these short-term goals.

Now, let's turn to our long-term challenges for Scottsdale. All of them are related. They comprise the legacy that we'll leave to our children and grandchildren.

The first long-term challenge is the completion of this country's most ambitious municipal open space program, and making sure we have the tools to do it.

Scottsdale citizens have gone to the polls five times to vote on a sales tax, bonding and revisions to the city charter to guarantee permanent protection for preserve lands. Each measure has passed by commanding margins.

We're right to celebrate our successes, but there is so much more to do.

Securing the remaining state land, 16,000 acres, and the additional acreage to complete the McDowell Sonoran Preserve will require tenacity, patience and teamwork with every level of government. Scottsdale could afford to go it alone to save the mountains, but we'll need the cooperation of the state and federal governments to save the larger stretches of beautiful high desert in our far north area.

The Arizona Legislature must take the next logical step in the Arizona Preserve Initiative process. The Legislature must heed the recommendations of Governor Hull's Growing Smarter Commission and ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment to preserve our most scenic state lands at no cost to taxpayers.

This constitutional change won't work without Congressional approval. Senator Jon Kyl already has offered to introduce the necessary legislation. Representative Carolyn Allen, the McDowell Sonoran Commission, the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust and Carla, our

leading citizen advocate for preservation, have all played a pivotal role in bringing us this far. It is time for the entire community to join in the push for this vital legislation now.

In addition, we must continue our pursuit of federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars to help acquire open space.

I propose a tangible goal that will drive our preservation efforts forward and serve as a symbol of their importance for the entire City of Scottsdale and the Valley. Let's commit ourselves in the next ten years to connect our major open spaces with a Millennium Trail from Tempe's Town Lake to the Tonto Forest. Let's connect the Indian Bend Wash, the ranches, our Desert Greenbelt, the McDowell Mountains and the deserts of the far north. Let's build the Millennium Trail, and let's make it a true public-private partnership.

My second long-term challenge is the flip side of preservation – preparing for the day when land for development is scarce and we are a fully mature city.

The day is sooner than you think.

Last year, I asked this community to take up the challenge of scaling back our ultimate population. I also challenged us to reexamine our General Plan and determine other ways to hold down growth and increase open space.

I didn't want us to go quite as far as China. That nation has taken the strongest stand against sprawl of any country. Development on protected farmland, without gaining all the requisite approvals, is now a capital offense. Developers face the death penalty for spreading sprawl!

Fortunately, our own developers seem to be responding without the shock treatment. We've seen a dramatic impact from our preservation program and our continuing efforts to promote the value of open space in new developments. Even when they have zoning for more homes, developers are scaling their subdivisions back. They have discovered virgin Sonoran Desert is to Scottsdale what the beachfront is to La Jolla or Malibu. It is incredibly valuable.

I challenged Scottsdale last year to aim for an ultimate population of 300,000, not the 376,000 we once foresaw. I could have been bolder. The latest estimates set Scottsdale's build-out population at less than 300,000. Think what that means. If all the fans at the Fiesta Bowl moved into Scottsdale today, we'd be done. We can sustain our current rates of growth for no more than a decade. Things are likely to slow long before that, as the supply of lots shrinks. Ultimately, our overall average residential density may approach one home per acre!

These facts foreshadow a profound change in our community mind-set. Just a few years ago, we were boasting that Scottsdale was only a third or half developed. Today, at least 70 percent of our ultimate population has arrived. Seven of ten homes that will be built in this city exist ... right now.

What does this mean for the Scottsdale's future leaders? What will replace growth as the key issue?

Look at the southern portion of our city. Our older neighborhoods, at four homes to an acre, have aged gracefully. The demand for those areas is high. We are adding very few homes to the supply, and values have risen faster than any other area of the Valley. I see that trend continuing and becoming more pronounced as Scottsdale's supply of residential land – north, south and central -- is consumed.

Look also at the most recent building trends. A year ago, 50 percent of the single-family homes being built in Scottsdale were tract homes. That number has dropped dramatically. Today, only 20 percent of the single-family homes under construction are tract homes. 80 percent are custom homes.

Most mayors would love to have the problem of skyrocketing property values, but I worry. Years ago, we vowed that Scottsdale would be a complete community, not an exclusive enclave. I believe we still want a city where people from all walks of life can live, work and play. We want a place where our teachers, police officers, firefighters, small business owners and even our own children and our retired parents can afford a home.

A lot of us long for the “good old days” when Scottsdale seemed a more close-knit community. I ask you to recall whether those days might have been different because we thought differently then, too. In those days, people wanted to live next to churches and schools. They wanted to be able to walk to the park. They celebrated when lights were installed at the baseball field across the street because their kids could play during the cool summer nights. They knew someone had to live next to the fire station, the auto dealer and the convenience store.

If Scottsdale is to continue aging gracefully, we will need to appreciate that way of thinking. We will have to ask ourselves whether we really want to live in a community, with its diversity, character and warmth. Or do we only care about our own back yards? Even if some of us really do only care about our back yard, at least allow the rest of us to build a community with the amenities we need for our parents, our children and ourselves.

We've looked at preservation and build-out as long-term issues. The final item on my “to do” list for the 21st Century is far less tangible, but as important as any I've covered.

I'd like to suggest a different way of thinking about our identity, about who we are and what we stand for. We should rediscover what it is that makes Scottsdale the Most Livable City and The West's Most Western Town.

Cynicism, even when it is trite, too often passes for a form of wisdom these days. I am reminded of this each time I read some columnist proclaiming Scottsdale the “West's Most Midwestern Town” or hear a radio talk show host ask, “When was the last time you saw a living horse on Main Street?”

If they are going to lampoon Scottsdale, they should at least do it right – the way Edward Abbey lampooned Arizona. Or the way General William Tecumseh Sherman did, when he complained that “We went to war with Mexico to get Arizona, and now we should go to war with her again to make her take it back.”

Heck, even Grady Gammage, Jr., does a nice job of it, and he’s a zoning attorney to boot. He talks about how Arizona was settled with the help of land scammers. “This whole place really is the product of real-estate speculation...We are the children of con men.”

Shame on you, Grady. I knew your mother, and she was no con woman!

Back to the main point: The pundits who make fun of our city and our motto should at least have some idea what they are talking about. There is a reason we became the West’s Most Western Town back in 1947, when a group of business owners banded together to boost tourism downtown. They agreed to a Western architectural style for downtown buildings and started using the slogan in promotions. It proved so successful that it became Scottsdale’s official motto in 1951.

The dirt roads and most of the hitching posts once commonplace in downtown are gone, but the motto has stuck. A few years ago, a local newspaper editor ran a contest for a new moniker. He was amazed at ferocity of the response from readers. They said, “No way!”

In recent years, the motto has become the byword for an ongoing debate about Scottsdale’s character and identity. That debate is healthy and should continue. Any community that is truly alive and vital must define and redefine itself over time.

We should take the debate to a new level in the 21st Century. We ought to talk seriously and respectfully about the character of this place and the values it represents.

And we ought to talk seriously, not condescendingly, about the motto. It has proved so durable because it encompasses one of the most powerful ideas in American history – the idea of the West.

It’s an idea almost too big to describe. Filmmakers Ken Burns and Stephen Ives tried to do so a recent documentary. “In the West,” they said, “everything seems somehow larger, grander than life, and we now can see why so many different peoples have come to consider their own most innermost lives inextricably linked with it. Over the centuries, the West has been the repository of the dreams of an astonishing variety of people -- and it has been on the long, dusty roads of the West that these dreams have crisscrossed and collided, transforming all who travelled along them, rewarding some while disappointing others.”

Scottsdale’s own history has its cowboys and Indians, but the same “astonishing variety of people,” from a Civil War chaplain to the preeminent architect of the 20th Century, comprise the leading characters.

The months leading up to our city's 50th anniversary next year will be a good time to reflect. The fact is that the real story of Scottsdale is as much a part of the West as the story of Tombstone or Dodge City. The farmers, teachers, business owners, engineers, artists and laborers who make up our story are no less romantic than the gunslingers of Hollywood films. They embody the real spirit of the West. They made a community blossom in the middle of an awesome, arid place, and they grew to love this land.

If you don't believe Scottsdale has a rich history, I invite you to participate in the Scottsdale Millennium Series highlighted in brochures that are available to you this morning. It's a series of nine presentations on Scottsdale's past, present and future, beginning tonight at the Mustang Library.

We truly do need to understand the roots of this community and appreciate the people who built it. They saw the diversity of our heritage. Our forefathers knew City Hall didn't have to look like the OK Corral and the city's first big mall didn't have to resemble Knott's Berry Farm. It is my prayer that we repeat their experience, in our own ways, through each successive generation. They took risks, made bold and courageous decisions and discovered for themselves what it means to be a Westerner.

In the coming years, when we talk about the meaning of "The West's Most Western Town," let's avoid making the West a small, one-dimensional place with room only for stereotyped characters wearing six-guns and spurs. It is so much bigger than that. I've had the pleasure of reading the late Wallace Stegner, one of the West's most respected writers, while camping at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. He eloquently defined the idea. He said the West is "America, only more so." We should be proud that Scottsdale reflects and embraces the "astonishing variety" that is the real West -- the quality that is America at its best.

I want Scottsdale to always be the home of cowboys – and cowgirls. I hope the wild horses that roam the Salt River Indian Community today will always be there, and we'll catch a passing glimpse of them once in a while from the freeway. I want us to become even more attached to this land and acquire an even greater respect for the Sonoran Desert we are working so hard to preserve.

Above all, I hope our city will strive always to be the true home of the Western spirit – the craving for space, openness, generosity and optimism. It all depends on you and me as individuals and as a community to embrace the essence of Scottsdale, to discover its soul.

If we do that, we'll be able to bring balance and wholeness to the Scottsdale of the 21st Century. We can revitalize Los Arcos, meet our transportation challenges, reinvigorate our downtown, maintain our quality public facilities, finish the job of preserving a third of our city and make the transition from a growing to a mature city – while remaining The West's Most Western Town.

It has been an honor to serve these past four years as your mayor, for 12 years in city government and the past three decades in the public policy arena. I've been blessed to work with citizens, volunteers and staff who carry the real Western spirit and keep it alive. My warmest thanks to City Manager Dick Bowers, who will be retiring this year, for instilling in his staff a vision as big as the West.

My heartfelt thanks to my current colleagues on the City Council and those with whom I've served over the years. First, thanks to the Drinkwater family for all they have given and for the privilege of serving with our beloved, late mayor, Herb Drinkwater. Thanks to my other former colleagues, Jim Bruner, Jim Burke, Don Prior, Greg Bielli, Bill Walton, Ross Dean, Susan Bitter Smith, Myron Deibel, Rene Wendell and Bill Soderquist. They and other council members who served before my time continue to give so much to Scottsdale in so many ways. They continue to provide leadership and mentoring, volunteering in our charitable and service organizations, always working for the greater good. Thank you for allowing Sam Campana to join that list. I promise to follow their lead and keep on contributing to this community.

After all, the only enduring measure of accomplishment is found in the relationships we weave and bonds we build. I cherish a quote, given to me by our new Poet Laureate, Geoffrey Platts, from the actor Ralph Fiennes:

"I call people successful not because they have money or their business is doing well, but because they have a fully developed sense of being alive and engaged in a lifetime collaboration with other human beings ... their mothers and fathers, their family, their friends, their loved ones, the friends who are dying, the friends who are being born.... Success? Don't you know it is all about being able to extend love to people? Really. Not in a big capital letter sense, but in the everyday – little by little, gesture by gesture, word by word."

The absolute last word must go to Peppermint Patty, given to us by the retiring Charles Schulz. In the last "Peanuts" strip, Patty is running around the football field, asking, "Hey, Chuck, it's a great game, isn't it?" and "We're having fun, aren't we, Chuck?" At the end, she laments, "Nobody shook hands and said, 'Good game.'"

City Council, board and commission members, city staff and Scottsdale citizens, I'll say it. High five, Scottsdale! It's been a good game!

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