



Take a virtual tour.



Community » Mesa » Article

## Mayor Smith: Mesa must fight for future

By Gary Nelson  
The Republic | azcentral.com  
Thu Jan 24, 2013 1:57 PM

Mesa intends to step to the forefront of American cities and lead the way in innovation and job creation, Mayor Scott Smith said Thursday.

"This really is a war in many ways — a war for our future," Smith told about 500 people gathered for his annual Mayor's Breakfast at the Phoenix Hilton East/Mesa.

Speaking on the theme "Building the New American City," Smith used about 70 minutes to enumerate the accomplishments of his first 41/2 years in office and to lay out aspirations for the future.

Smith did not deliver thunderclap announcements as he did in 2011, when he rolled out the iMesa community brainstorming project, or in 2012, when he said he would run again for mayor.

He did advance his agenda by saying he will ask the City Council to designate four "innovation districts" as economic development hubs.

In a sense, however, that would merely formalize the direction in which Mesa has trended for years: Downtown, the Fiesta District, Falcon Field and Gateway are emerging centers of Mesa's economic gravity, and much recent policymaking and infrastructure development have targeted those areas.

Smith offered few details on how they would develop.

In the downtown, unused space in the Mesa Center for Higher Education — the former court building at 245 W. Second St. — could be devoted to incubation efforts.

In the Fiesta District, he proposes a partnership with Mesa Community College to redevelop fallow retail space.

"No matter what good things have happened, we've got to do better," Smith said. "The successes of 2012 and before were not the destination. They were part of the journey. They were the beginning in many ways."

Building on a theme struck in recent public appearances, Smith said he wants Mesa to become a "multi-generational city" where families will stay for decades because of the opportunities it offers.

For that to happen, Mesa needs more jobs and better jobs, he said. But they won't come by accident, he warned.

He cited statistics showing that America recovered from every recession between 1945 and 1991 within eight months. International competition has caused recent recessions to last longer and the last — the so-called Great Recession — created unemployment that is still higher than in 2008.

Further, he said, there is a worldwide shortage of "hundreds of millions of good jobs," and it's just as easy to hand one to someone in China with Internet access as it is to hand one to an American college graduate.

The federal government, Smith said, has little interest in fixing that.

Noting that he had just returned from nearly a week in the capital for a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting and other events, Smith said, "I heard about the fiscal cliff. I heard just a couple things about gun control."

But, he said, "I didn't hear a word about jobs," even though mayors at the meeting agreed the health of their cities depends on a strong economy.

"I've spent enough time in Washington now to know that Washington will not solve our problems," he said.

**ACE AIR**  
Any Size Heating & Cooling Units  
FOR \$3995 + TAX  
INSTALLED  
www.coolace.com

Most Popular | Top Videos

- Mesa cold cases
- Mesa council criticizes 4-year parks-development plan
- Jodi Arias murder case: Timeline of events
- Common Core will shake up learning at Mesa schools
- Early-hour assault latest Mesa Public Schools concern
- Mesa police: Boyfriend arrested when he pulls pellet gun during argument
- Missing 14-year-old Mesa girl found
- LIVE video: Jodi Arias murder trial
- Helicopter makes hard landing in Mesa neighborhood
- Pilot tells how he survived hard landing in Mesa neighborhood

AdChoices

Remaining Views

The state, he said, can only lay the groundwork for new jobs, and even at that its educational efforts are falling short.

The much-touted "common core" curriculum moving into Arizona's mainstream, Smith said, isn't enough.

"If all of our students met the standards of the common core, we're still a second-tier country," he said. "Common core shouldn't be a goal. It should be a beginning."

So if other entities won't fight for jobs, cities must.

"The most important challenge we face as a city in 2013 and beyond is our ability to create jobs," Smith said. And that means turning Mesa into an innovation hub. "Innovation is what's going to happen to make us successful," he said. "We can't rely on old strategies."

Smith noted that Mesa showed its flexibility in 2008, when, faced with a drastic revenue shortfall, it completely overhauled city government within a few months.

As another example, Smith cited the Mesa Fire and Medical Department's program with Mountain Vista Medical Center to staff medical response vehicles with health-care professionals. The model has been drawing national attention among cities looking for ways to reduce their emergency-response costs.

Smith also mentioned ongoing efforts to "rebrand" the East Valley to take advantage of the region's combined assets.

"For the first time, these communities have grown together," he said. "We have an asset base that's comparable to any in the world."

### Innovation districts

Smith said Mesa will develop four "innovation districts" to seed innovation and job growth:

### Downtown Mesa



**Downtown:** Assets include four new liberal-arts colleges, city offices, future light rail, arts center, museums and future Barry Goldwater library.

PHOTO BY: Urban Advantage/Downtown Mesa in 2015 with light rail.

JUMP TO  OF 4

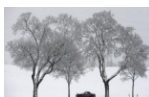
[SHARE URL](#) [EMAIL](#)

FONT: A A A

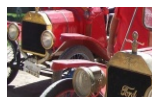
Recommend

Tweet

### IN THE SPOTLIGHT



**Photos of the Day**  
See eye-catching photos worldwide.



**Arizona history**  
Find out what happened today.



**Police mugshots**  
Notable arrests and cases around U.S.



**Bucket list**  
Ultimate Arizona list: 50 things to do.



### MORE FROM AZCENTRAL

- [Sisters disagree on question of sleeping through sex](#)
- [Elizabeth Hurley: Super skinny not attractive with age](#)

### FROM AROUND THE WEB

- [10 Things You Should Never Buy at Garage Sales](#) (Reader's Digest)
- [UPS delivery man steals iPad Mini after FedEx delivered it](#) (Digital Trends)

### ADS BY PULSE 360

AdChoices

#### 30-second trick for a flat belly

This daily 30-second trick Boosts your body's #1 fat-burning hormone

[Read more...](#)

#### 2.5% APR Arizona Mortgage Rates

Get a \$225K Mortgage \$889/mo. Get a Free Quote Now!

[Get details...](#)

#### 2.13% Arizona Mortgage Rates

\$150K Mortgage \$581mo. 2.35%APR. Get a Free Quote Now!

[Get details...](#)

### GET AZCENTRAL ANYWHERE

#### azcentral.com mobile editions

Get azcentral.com on your phones and tablets for the latest news, sports, video, photos and much more from azcentral, The Arizona Republic and 12 News.

» [Get azcentral.com mobile!](#)  
» [Android](#) | [iPad](#) | [iPhone](#) | [iPhone Sports](#)

From our sponsor

**Banner Children's Total Kid for iPad**  
Download your free copy of Total Kid, an interactive digital parenting magazine filled with trending health topics, videos, tips and activities. Sponsored by Banner Health.

- Meet Doug Meehan, new '12 News Today' co-anchor
- Missing 14-year-old Mesa girl found
- Boy, 8, injured in hit and run near Mesa
- Lance Armstrong Finishes Triathlon; Ignores Daughter *(itsybitsystems)*
- Schoolboy Crush Winnie Cooper Has Grown Up Gorgeous *(Zimbio)*
- How to Check a Plate Number on a Car *(eHow)*

[?]

**Got Scrap? Get Cash!**

**American Metals Company**



Recycling Specialists  
"We Buy All Metals"

**(480) 834-1923** [Click Here For Pricing >>](#)

**JAN 24: President Waives Refi Requirement**



**Under 18**   **19-25**   **26-35**   **36-45**   **46-55**   **56-65**   **66-75**   **Over 75**

**SELECT YOUR AGE:** [Lower My Bills.com](#)

**POPULAR TOPICS**

- [Investigations](#)
- [AZ Fact Check](#)
- [Arizona's American Indians](#)
- [Economic Snapshot](#)
- [City Comparison Guide](#)
- [Air We Breathe](#)
- [Republic 100](#)
- [AZ Storytellers](#)
- [2012 Olympics](#)
- [Who's Who In Business](#)
- [Saving Arizona's Children](#)
- [Immigration](#)
- [Boomer101](#)
- [Western Jobs](#)
- [My Town](#)
- [Fiesta Bowl Investigation](#)
- [Ask & Answered](#)
- [My Neighborhood](#)
- [Sheriff Joe Arpaio](#)
- [Valley Home Values](#)

**SITEMAP**

- [Homepage](#)
- [Healthy Living](#)
- [Business & Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Food & Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Things To Do](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Getaway Tips](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Weather](#)

[More of azcentral.com](#)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- [Advertise with Republic Media](#)
- [Careers at The Republic](#)
- [FCC Online Public Inspection File](#)
- [EEO Public File Report](#)
- [Careers at 12 News](#)
- [Contact The Republic](#)
- [Media In Education](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Subscriber Services](#)
- [Subscribe to The Republic](#)
- [Terms of Service](#)

**PARTNERS**

- [USA Today](#)
- [Gannett Co. Inc.](#)
- [Apartments: apartments.com](#)
- [Cars: cars.com](#)
- [Dating: eHarmony.com](#)
- [Homes: Homefinder.com](#)
- [HomeGain](#)
- [Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#)
- [Local Businesses](#)
- [Shopping: ShopLocal.com](#)