

City Manager's Corner January 2011

I hope your holidays were enjoyable and that your new year is off to a great start. As I was ringing in 2011 with family and friends, I couldn't help but reflect on the year that just passed.

You know from reading my previous columns and news reports that 2010 was a very difficult year for the city. I won't rehash the many challenges that we managed to overcome, thanks to the support of the Mayor, City Council, city employees and Phoenix residents.

Instead, I'd like to reflect on our many successes in 2010. An editorial that appeared Dec. 14 in the Arizona Republic summed it up best. Here is an excerpt:

"The atmosphere at Phoenix City Hall is much calmer today than it was a year ago. Then, city officials were scrambling to plug major leaks in their financial boat. A grocery-sales tax was rushed to passage. Employees agreed to pay cuts. In all, the city ended up with \$240 million in cuts and savings.

"This year, that panic is nowhere to be seen. The fiscal year ended with a \$24 million surplus. Financial trends are within a few dollars of what budget officials expected, in stark contrast to the 20 percent miss last year. There will be no drastic midyear cuts, no new tax, no appeal to employees for an immediate pay cut. What a turnaround."

Righting our "financial boat" was definitely a major achievement in 2010, and it is gratifying to see the local media acknowledge it.

There were many more accomplishments, including:

- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The city worked aggressively to secure federal stimulus dollars, and by year's end, Phoenix had been awarded more than \$425 million.
- Downtown redevelopment. The city broke ground on the Health Sciences Education Building at the Phoenix Biomedical Campus, 600 E. Van Buren St., and celebrated the grand opening of Downtown's CityScape, the mixed-use project that I told you about last month.
- Public Safety. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR), Phoenix violent crime figures are at 20-year lows. Homicides are at a 20-year low with clearance rates reaching 20-year highs, and property crimes are at a 25-year low with more than 24,000 fewer victims between 2006-2009. In 2010, the city opened two new Police precincts – Estrella in southwest Phoenix and Black Mountain in northeast Phoenix. The Fire Department, meanwhile, completed a plan to staff every engine company with a crew that includes two paramedics; every ambulance is now staffed with a paramedic and an EMT. The city also opened a new fire station in northeast Phoenix.
- Library Services. Phoenix Public Library extended hours of service late last year at Burton Barr Central Library, 1221 N. Central Ave., and Mesquite Library, 4525 Paradise Village Parkway North. Both locations are open until 9 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These additional hours were funded through budget-

saving measures identified by library. Phoenix Public Library also opened a new Harmon Branch Library, 325 S. Fifth Ave. The 12,500-square-foot building almost doubles the size of the original branch.

- Neighborhood Services. In addition to traditional reporting tools, Neighborhood Services launched a program last year that enables residents to use free smart-phone applications to report blight, graffiti and abandoned shopping carts.
- Parks and Recreation. In 2010, the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department continued to add land to the city's Sonoran Preserve in northern Phoenix. The city completed the purchase of a 278-acre tract that provides crucial connectivity between two large preserve areas adjacent to Cave Buttes recreation area. Meanwhile, staff is overseeing the construction of the area's new trail network.

The city will build on those successes in 2011. Although the year is just getting under way, we already have a major new initiative □ developing a strategic plan for the city. With support from the Mayor and City Council, we have created a team to move forward with a plan for the future that will help establish budget priorities.

The strategic plan will focus on 10 areas: economic development and education; financial excellence; infrastructure; innovation and efficiency; neighborhoods/livability; public safety; social services delivery; sustainability; technology; and the Phoenix team, focusing on supporting our employees, volunteers and community partners.

I look forward to updating you on the strategic plan's progress later in the year.

Meanwhile, to learn more about what the city achieved in 2010, please refer to the annual report in the January/February issue of Notes. You'll find Notes in your municipal services bill or online at phoenix.gov.