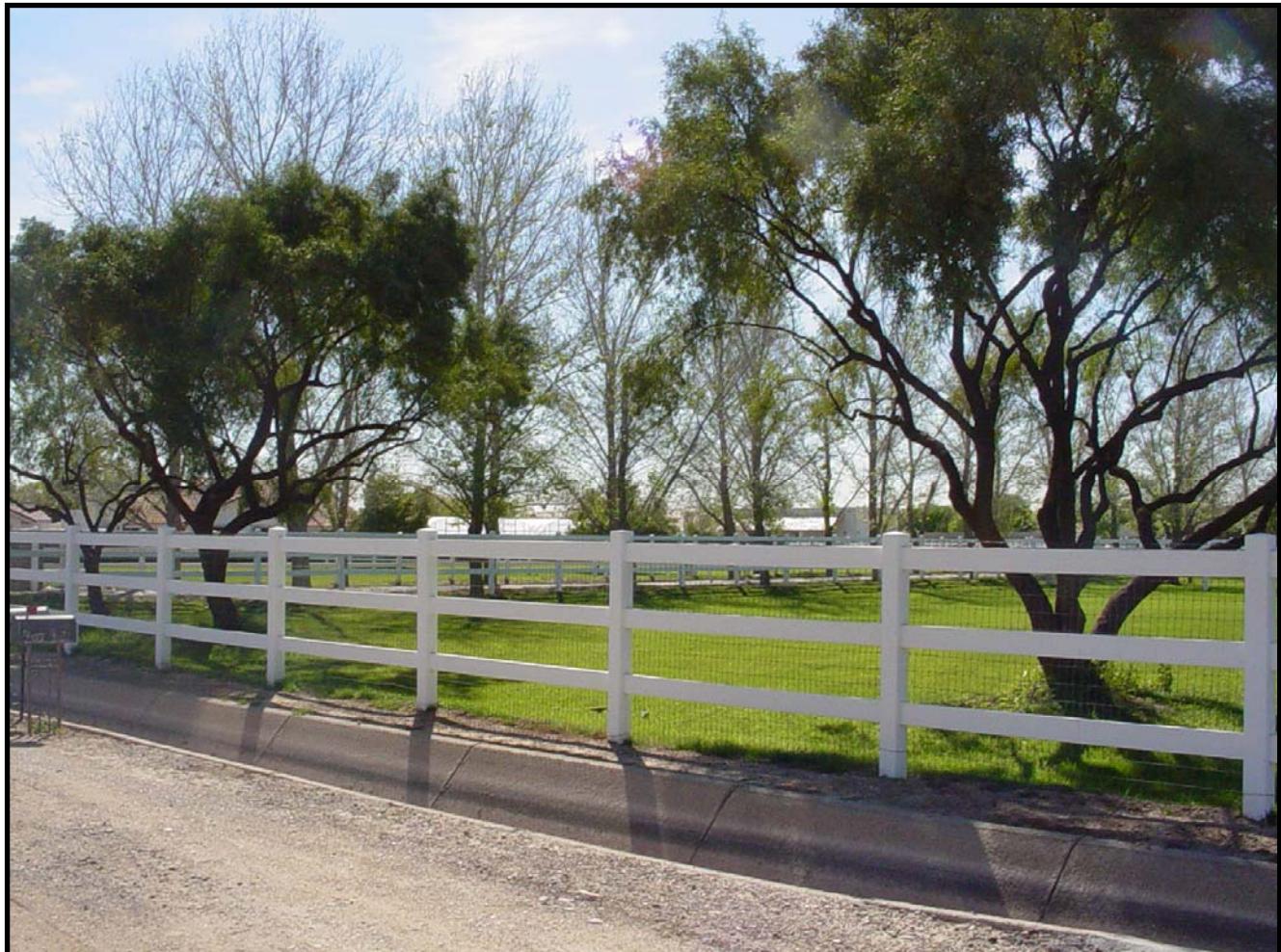


CITY OF PEORIA

FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY AND ALTERNATIVES: COUNTY ISLANDS



**LL DECKER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
THE ROZELLE GROUP, LTD**

MARCH 17, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LL Decker & Associates and The Rozelle Group worked together for the past five months to conduct research into the reasons two target county islands located within the City of Peoria might be willing to be annexed into the City. We interviewed City staff, elected officials, and county island residents to better understand past annexation efforts and determine conditions under which county island residents might support annexation into Peoria. Research also included four focus group sessions with selected county island residents to gain insight into two questions:

1. What can Peoria do to encourage county islands residents and owners to annex into the City?
2. How should the City approach residents to gain their support for annexation?

For the most part, the focus group participants were opposed to annexations. We found that at the heart of the controversy is the personal feeling by residents that they cannot trust Peoria City government. Some residents reported instances, going back many years, where they felt they had been treated disrespectfully by the City staff or elected officials. Since they are neither citizens of the City nor voters, many believe that City Council and management make decisions without considering the impact on their community, and in fact, treat them as non-entities. Whether those interviewed have personally experienced such treatment or have simply heard the stories from their neighbors, these stories now have the power to influence annexation efforts. In deference to the City, there were many examples noted of similar stories from county island residents directed toward the County and the local schools.

Additional fears, concerns and misunderstandings that county island residents have regarding annexation include:

- A general misunderstanding of land-use regulations, land-use planning procedures, methods and rules for changing unincorporated areas into annexed areas, and the county and city regulations for keeping animals.
- A feeling that City government has been and will continue to be disrespectful of their rights. They are skeptical of City promises and fearful that the City may agree to one set of rules, and then change those rules once annexation is completed.
- A generalized fear of the annexation process, changes in land-use and the rules for land-use controls, increased taxes, financial loss, loss of independence and control of their community, new rules and regulations that might adversely affect them, and of changes to the surrounding area that may affect their way of life.
- Specific fears regarding gaps in fire and police service, and, if annexation occurs, a loss of rural (low density) character, increased traffic and congestion, and the potential to have to pay for sewer and water line installations. They also fear the cost of new, unwanted public services, increased regulations on buildings and property maintenance, and the cost of impact fees for new construction projects.
- Reaction to the current annexation discussions shows a great distrust of the City because of previous attempts to annex, and a need for timely, accurate information concerning the costs and benefits of annexation to the individual property owner.

- Rumors, confusion, misunderstanding and factual errors about annexation, the process, and the City's motives for desiring annexation are rampant. While many of the tales described may be far short of accurate, it appears that many have a "kernel of truth" at the heart of the stories. These tales of trouble with City departments is driving the behaviors described above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase communication and build trust

- Be absolutely clear and unambiguous that the City wants to annex all county islands within their boundaries. Clearly articulate the requirements for annexation, including what the City is willing to negotiate as a condition of annexation, and what is non-negotiable. Be as flexible as possible, but set limits and respect those limits.
- Work to rebuild trust. There is a deep, deep distrust of anything being proposed by the City. Conditions for annexation must be in writing. County island residents indicate they need a legal commitment that cannot be reversed by future Councils.
- Find one issue that the county island residents want to address and that the City successfully work with them.
- Create a Staff Annexation Team that focuses on responding to county island issues in a timely manner, developing materials to answer questions, and opening communication with county island leaders.

Review and revise land-use policies to favor annexation

- Consider revising current zoning and land-use regulations to be sensitive to all areas of Peoria currently developed and zoned for low-density residential housing. Identify changes to accommodate criticisms of the current zoning, utility and land-use restrictions.

Encourage county island resident participation

- Consider creating, over the next six months, a community advisory group of county island leaders to build a channel for communication and to start building trust.
- Work with the county island residents to create a neighborhood character plan that the City can use to create the security in land-use control desired by residents.
- Complete a comprehensive plan for each target annexation area.

Continue research

- Conduct community-based research to learn more about the areas targeted for annexation. Determine specific projects that have high saliency to people in each county island. Make a concerted effort to understand county island residents' motivations, and develop concessions that will assure them that their concerns will be addressed.

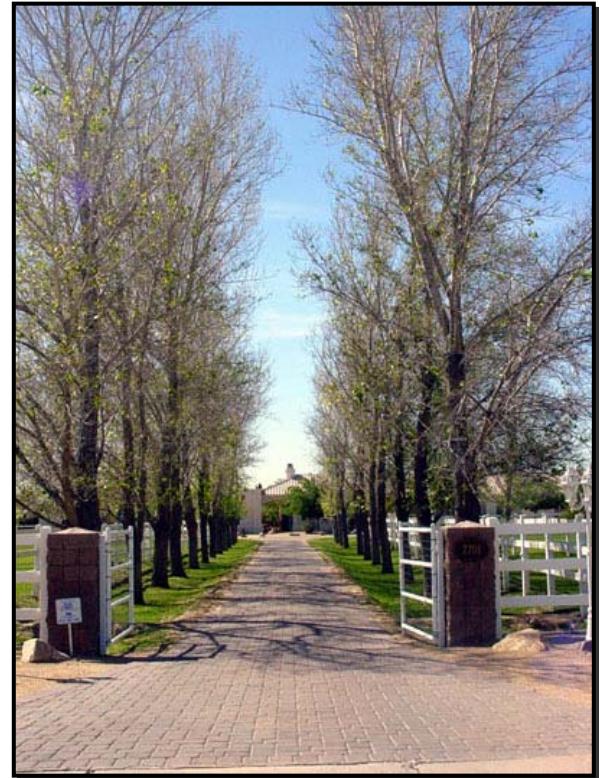
Above all, be patient. Annexation of these two areas will require dedication and patience. Annexation may occur naturally over time. The City needs to decide if it really wants to spend the time and staff resources to actively encourage annexation.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

Annexation of county islands is an issue that is gaining attention throughout the state. In our research we found that the reasons for cities wanting to annex county islands, and the reasons that county island residents resist annexation are not simple, nor are they obvious. The most superficial reasons given by cities declare that county island residents want to escape paying for common public services by avoiding municipal taxes. This statement only covers a small portion of the reasons residents give for resisting annexation. Likewise, beliefs by residents that the primary reason cities want to annex them is to charge property taxes are equally superficial. Annexation of residential properties is shown generally to generate a net loss to cities.

What caused county islands in the first place?

County islands are often the result of 1) simple oversights or an incomplete previous annexation process conducted by a city, 2) a lack of interest on the part of a city to annex a specific area for economic or political reasons, 3) an inability to negotiate previous terms and conditions of annexation, or 4) vocal resistance from pockets of residents within the county island to join collective municipal governance. In Arizona many county islands were created during the 1980's. As cities competed for prime land developments, they strip-annexed large geographic areas leaving many residents in county island areas surrounded by cities. These surrounded areas were seen as the full responsibility of the county, and were ineligible for city services.



Why do cities now want to annex county islands?

For a variety of reasons, most municipal governments want county islands to annex. These cities are trying to balance their economic interests for land-use management and public service delivery against the property rights and state statutes protecting county island landowners from forced annexation. Cities are finding themselves continually facing the dilemma of filling the holes in their service delivery systems.

First, cities find that it is more efficient to deliver public services when large chunks of the jurisdiction either are not qualified for service, or can reject public services for cheaper, short-term measures like water wells, septic tanks, and infrequent trips to the landfill.

Second, most county islands have no sewers, no municipal water, have unimproved roads, minimal storm drainage, and poor (if any) planning. While residents of county islands see this as rustic, municipal policy makers and managers see this lack of infrastructure as being detrimental to their interests.

Third, the lack of code enforcement means that residents are not required to comply with the stricter building codes and maintenance standards of the surrounding municipalities. In some instances county island properties are not built or maintained to the same standards of construction and maintenance as the subdivisions surrounding them.

Fourth, county islands foster non-conforming land uses...activities that would not be permitted even in the loose county zoning that currently exists. Illegal businesses and non-conforming uses within county islands are difficult to monitor by the counties, and municipalities have no jurisdiction to control such activities.

Fifth, is the “free ride” that cities perceive as being taken by county island residents. While residents clearly don’t see this as the case, municipal governments would like to have county island residents share the burden of generalized public services.

Finally, the most salient feature of county island annexation raised by both cities and county island residents is the status of the Rural Metro fire service. Public safety is a sensitive issue. A failure to, or a delay in responding to a fire, a call for police assistance or an emergency medical situation can not only lead to a tragic result, but also potentially create a negative public relations situation for the city. In most cases cities respond regardless of who pays the bill.

If Rural Metro leaves county islands without subscription services, will municipal fire departments provide service? The answer is not clear, and the passage of HR 2145 in February 2006 may set a precedent for mandatory municipal fire service to county islands.

HR 2145 is limited to a small service area in the east Valley town of Gilbert. It provides a mechanism for residents to create a fire district under State statutes within their county island, collecting taxes to pay for fire service, and then potentially can force the Town of Gilbert to provide fire protection. The eventual outcome of this legislation is up in the air, and ongoing legal disputes are likely to follow, but uncertainty about the State’s requirement for municipalities to serve county islands may lead to further resistance by county island residents to annex on the basis of needing secure fire and emergency medical services.

Why do county island residents resist annexation?

For an equally complex array of reasons, residents resist annexation. In some cases residents of county islands simply do not want to be subject to the rules and regulations that apply to incorporated areas. Municipalities generally have stricter building and land-use codes; requirements that people accept minimum levels of sanitation, sewer and water service may also apply. As areas grow and population density increases, rules for collective living make it possible for people to live comfortably in denser, urbanized environments.

Some residents of county islands resist efforts to annex into incorporated areas in the belief that they can stop these changes from occurring.

Some residents have stated they resist annexation because they want to simply avoid paying municipal property taxes. Municipal taxes are used to support street maintenance and lighting, fire and police protection, sanitation, libraries and other municipal services. In other cases county island residents indicated that they already pay higher rates for city water and sewer (if they use those utilities), pay sales tax each time they make a purchase in Peoria, and so contribute to parks and libraries through cost sharing agreements between the county and the city.

Because development and maintenance in county islands is not always monitored, some people living there find it easy to avoid building permits and codes, "boot-leg" construction, operate illegal businesses, create unregulated land-uses, and avoid requirements for minimum property maintenance. They say they live comfortably, efficiently on their fixed incomes.

Coming into the city would increase their property values, increase their overall tax bill and require them to comply with maintenance rules. When they moved into the neighborhood, they all tacitly agreed to the more liberal terms of a rural lifestyle.



Is anti-annexation a universal belief within the county islands?

No. Some see annexation as a way of gaining benefits, increasing their safety and becoming part of the governance of the area. However, it is our observation that without specific answers to their questions even the most vocal pro-annexation advocates may be reluctant to champion annexation with their neighbors.

What is the purpose of this research?

The difficulties summarized here regarding county islands are not isolated but represent a problem repeated in developing areas Valley-wide. As Maricopa County grows, these islands become more and more difficult to justify as sanctuaries of rugged individualism. For all the reasons cited above, the City of Peoria wants to create an annexation strategy that is fair and uniform, and that gives all county island residents an honest and safe way to participate in the discussion process.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project objectives were:

- To gather geographic and demographic research regarding two county islands located within the City of Peoria boundaries.
- To determine the current level of support by residents for annexation into the City.
- To identify critical constraints to annexation.
- To identify concessions that the City might make to residents that would encourage annexation.
- To determine the best approaches for gaining resident and owner support.
- To develop optional approaches and a set of recommendations for encouraging annexation over the long term.

PROJECT APPROACH

In Phase 1 the researchers first assessed the conditions within the two targeted county islands (See Appendices A and B for locations), and then asked county island residents to suggest alternatives that the City of Peoria might use to encourage annexation. Phase 2 includes recommendations to create an environment that will be conducive to annexation. This phase could take up to twelve months and is instrumental in building trust between the City and county islands residents. Recommendations to create opportunities for annexation would occur in Phase 3.

Phase 1 – Research Design and Information Gathering



In the first stage of the process researchers gathered data, and from that data developed useable information for understanding the motives of county island residents. Prior to a meeting with City staff, managers and policy-makers, researchers and planners assembled census data, maps and demographic information regarding various facets of these areas. A meeting was held with staff to: 1) discuss an overall approach to the project, and 2) become familiar with the communities. Researchers then took a driving tour of the two target areas. A summary of observations and an action plan for research design was prepared.

Researchers conducted interviews with key stakeholders including the Mayor, City Council members, former City Council members, department managers and selected leaders residing within county islands. These interviews created a foundation of information

pertaining to 1) how previous annexation efforts proceeded, 2) how City elected officials and managers perceive annexation, 3) how residents view the City's efforts to annex them, and 4) the issues, perceptions and impressions that the City faces in annexation efforts. From these interviews the names of additional people to be interviewed were obtained.

The results of research were assembled and discussed with the project team. We continued to assemble the names of potential interviewees. These were people with community interests, businesses, and civic leaders within the county islands, and in surrounding areas. To gain a balanced and accurate view of the socio-political landscape, we intentionally sought people to interview who felt strongly in their opposition to, or support of annexation.

The information obtained from the interviews provided the raw materials for developing a series of four small focus groups to discuss alternatives for encouraging annexation.

In designing these focus group sessions we emphasized the following messages:

- The purpose of this research is to develop annexation approaches to help the City successfully bring county islands into Peoria's boundaries.
- The City wants to annex county islands
- A fair and civil process is to everyone's advantage.
- The City is prepared to discuss residents' concerns and enter into negotiations to mitigate many of their worries.
- It is important to understand which concessions the City might make that are most important to residents.

Focus group participants were invited in two ways. Invitations were sent to approximately 100 residents in both islands. Approximately 40 of those were people we interviewed or learned of through our interviews. The remainder of those invited were randomly selected from areas within both islands where we had no representation. We received approximately 40 more telephone calls from people who received a copy of the invitation from a neighbor and wanted to be included. We talked to all of these people by telephone and invited them to the meetings (See Appendices D and E).

We have analyzed the information gathered from the interviews and focus groups, offer observations regarding the county island residents and their interest in annexation, and present alternatives and an annexation approach that will, over the long term, result in unifying these areas with Peoria. This approach will be presented to City Council at its March 17th planning retreat for their comment and further action.

THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

Upon completing our research the following common themes emerged:

- The City must restore trust in the relationship with county island residents.
- Any new services that would be required after annexation should be reasonably priced.

- There needs to be accommodation to provide an inexpensive and easy way to access any new services required after annexation. The initial cost of entry into the City is a concern.
- Residents need a clear, “rock-solid” contract on what services would be required, what services would be optional, and the direct and indirect cost of those services.
- Clarify what county island residents would receive as new citizens of Peoria. What would require additional contributions from impact fees and improvement districts?
- Residents of county islands want guarantees if they are to petition for annexation

The following observations may help the City decision-makers better understand the issues facing them as they pursue annexation of county islands:

- The City must clarify many misconceptions and errors in fact that are circulating in county islands. There are strongly held beliefs and myths about how things work and don't work.
- The Acoma county island area is well connected and leadership exists.
- There is a need to repair gaps in trust. Some residents have a very long memory of perceived broken promises and insults by Peoria,
- The City needs to commit to a long-term, frequent and honest conversation about annexation with these areas.
- Continued respect is needed. Be careful about missed steps that will only reinforce negative stereotypes.
- Some residents feel they're being “blackmailed” by the City with respect to conditions placed upon them as they try to gain access to City water.
- It is most unlikely that the individuals who came forward prior to our research requesting annexation will immediately want to champion a further discussion of annexation. They need answers to their questions and a feeling that there is sufficient incentive for county island residents to annex.
- Many of those attending the focus group sessions displayed a resistance to any type of collaboration at this time; however they indicated a willingness to have the City prepare a list of conditions/services that they could consider.
- Results of our personal interviews were more supportive of annexation, and some of them would be candidates for “champions” of annexation with their neighbors.
- There appears to be peer pressure from those opposing annexation toward people who might want to collaborate with Peoria.
- Residents feel that the County contributes to their feelings of isolation, individualism and independence. “The County doesn't want these islands... it doesn't make any sense for Rural Metro to want these areas, either.”



PHASE 2 SUGGESTED APPROACH

Phase 2 – Create a Positive Environment for Annexation

The design for Phase 2 should be focused on long-term, persistent communications with county island residents. Opposition to annexation is so vocal as to overwhelm any City effort at this time. The initial thought of working with and through a core of county island leaders wishing to annex is probably at least twelve months premature, however there are many attitudes and actions the City can take in the mean time to lay a foundation for later, more collaborative activities:

- Be absolutely clear and unambiguous that the City wants to annex all county islands within their boundaries. Clearly articulate the requirements for annexation, including what the City is willing to negotiate as a condition of annexation, and what is non-negotiable. Be as flexible as possible, but set limits and respect those limits.
- Annexation of these two target areas will require dedication and patience. Sooner or later annexation may occur naturally. The City needs to decide if it really wants to spend the time and staff resources to actively encourage annexation.
- Timing is critical to this venture. Provide a continuing opportunity for annexation. Show good faith in all future actions involving county islands.
- Make annexation easy.
- When the time is right, engage other entities like the County and the school districts in helping solve problems identified by county island residents.
- Be cautious in communicating with county island residents. The City has been blamed for many transgressions; some of these perceived sins are the City's fault and others are the responsibility of the schools, the County and/or private individuals.
- There is a deep, deep distrust of anything being proposed by the City. Conditions for annexation must be in writing. County island residents desire a legal commitment that cannot be reversed by future Councils.
- Expect some rancor and hostility from county island residents. Do not respond in kind. Many county island residents see the City as an aggressor and believe themselves under siege.
- Consider every interaction with a county island resident as an opportunity to show the City's good faith. In their view, too many perceived promises have gone unfulfilled. If the City gives a county island resident a promise, treat that promise as if made to a Peoria citizen. Put all promises, commitments and interactions in writing.
- Every word said by a City employee or manager to a county island resident is currently suspect, so everyone involved in this annexation effort must be absolutely accurate, every time they speak on the subject.



- Treat county island residents like they are Peoria citizens. While they cannot vote, provide access to input into decisions that affect them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Phase 2 are organized into four categories: 1) increase communications and build trust; 2) review and revise land-use polices to favor annexation; 3) encourage county island resident participation; and 4) continue research.

Increase Communications and Build Trust

- Develop a comprehensive public information campaign directed toward county island residents. Provide slow, steady, positive communication.
- Finalize the county annexation tool kit, including collateral materials, newsletters, targeted mailings, FAQ's, etc. which clearly articulates the requirements for annexation. For new resident materials develop a special document describing the benefits of annexation.
- Answer the questions (See Appendix C), in writing that county island residents asked of our consultants. Develop accurate and timely responses to those questions. Place on the city website.
- Identify one issue that county island residents want to have the City address successfully. Work unilaterally, if necessary. Projects might include traffic on Acoma, school bus cut through traffic, easy access to City water and sewer in areas where service is available, securing agreements for land use control in areas surrounding county islands, etc.
- Consider sending each county island resident a quarterly annexation newsletter. The first time this newsletter is received it will create a storm of criticism, but be patient and committed.
- Revise the messages the City sends through its employees, managers and policy-makers regarding county islands and the people who live there.



Review and Revise Land-Use Policies to Favor Annexation

- Consider revising current zoning and land-use regulations to be sensitive to all areas of Peoria currently developed and zoned for low-density residential housing.
- Identify changes that could be made to accommodate county island requests and criticisms of the current zoning, utility and land-use restrictions.
- Recast land-use planning philosophy to respect these "rural emeralds and diamonds" contained within Peoria's borders. Develop programs around the rural/ranchette concepts that use these areas to create something special for Peoria.

- Consider special zoning districts, overlays and “hard zoning” that protect low-density rural-character areas.
- Clarify the City’s requirement that property owners must sign an annexation document for connection to City water systems.
- Work with staff and Council to develop policies that make annexation more attractive to county island residents.
- Review current City policies for discrimination against county islands.
- Use the City’s existing partnership with the school district to facilitate desired changes as recommended by county island residents during our research sessions.
- Reconstitute the Staff Annexation Team to focus on responding to county island issues in a timely manner, developing materials to answer questions, and opening communication with county island leaders.

Encourage County Island Resident Participation

- Consider creating, over the next six months, a community advisory group of county island leaders to build a channel for communication and to start building trust.
- Ask the county island residents to create a neighborhood character plan that the City can use to create their desired security in land-use control.
- Complete a comprehensive plan for each target annexation area.
- Consider providing a planner to help county islands organize themselves into effective negotiating units, and help leaders understand annexation and land-use planning.
- Determine if a municipality ever conducted a comprehensive planning process for a county island, and if so, identify the results.

Continue Research

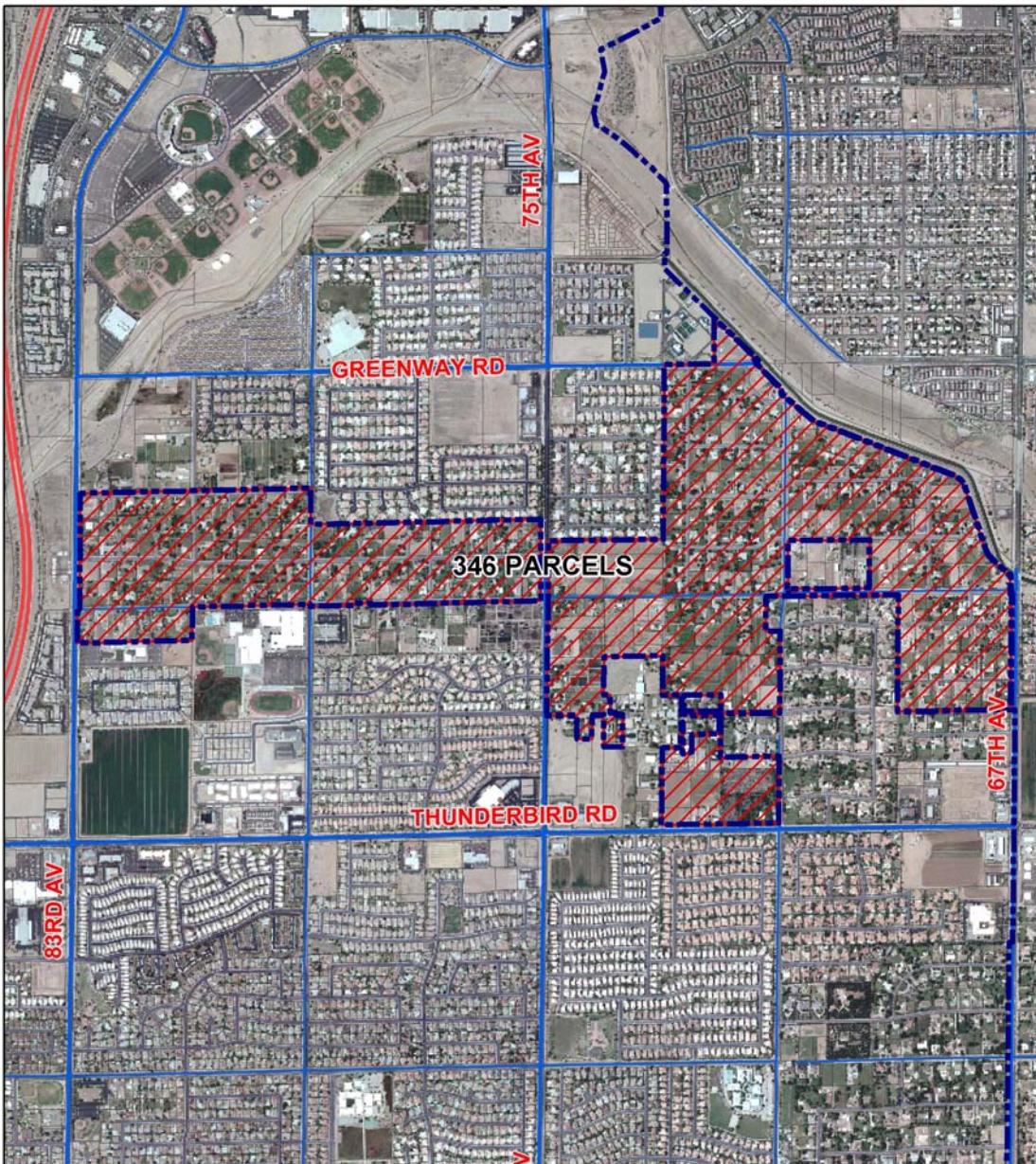
- Conduct community-based research to learn more about the target areas. Determine specific projects that have high saliency to people in each county island.
- Make a concerted effort to understand county island residents’ motivations, and develop concessions that will assure them that their concerns will be addressed.
- Conduct a 100% survey of areas that have been annexed in the past. Find out what people who have been annexed feel about annexation now that it’s occurred. Present all the facts in a fair and balanced manner.
- Continue to create a list of county island leaders and reach out to them on issues needing resolution.



Phase 3 – Create opportunities for annexation

- Create a budget item each year for incremental capital projects, such as water and sewer, in the newly annexed areas. There could be an issue of equity, however. Some areas within the City's boundaries are also on septic systems and may feel that they also deserve the same opportunity to hook into the City's sewer system.
- Work to rebuild trust. As soon as possible find one issue that county island residents want to have addressed that the City can work with them and be successful. Address the issue and celebrate the success.
- Create a program within the City to create an ongoing discussion with county island residents about annexation. Within this program create key messages that the City will systematically use to encourage annexation.
- Provide assurances and protections for people who want to annex
- Conduct seminars for people who want to know more about the subject.
- Use the City's Neighborhood Services staff to help county islands work toward annexation.
- Provide "no strings attached...neutral" resources to the county island residents to give them advice and help them organize.

APPENDIX A: MAP OF ACOMA

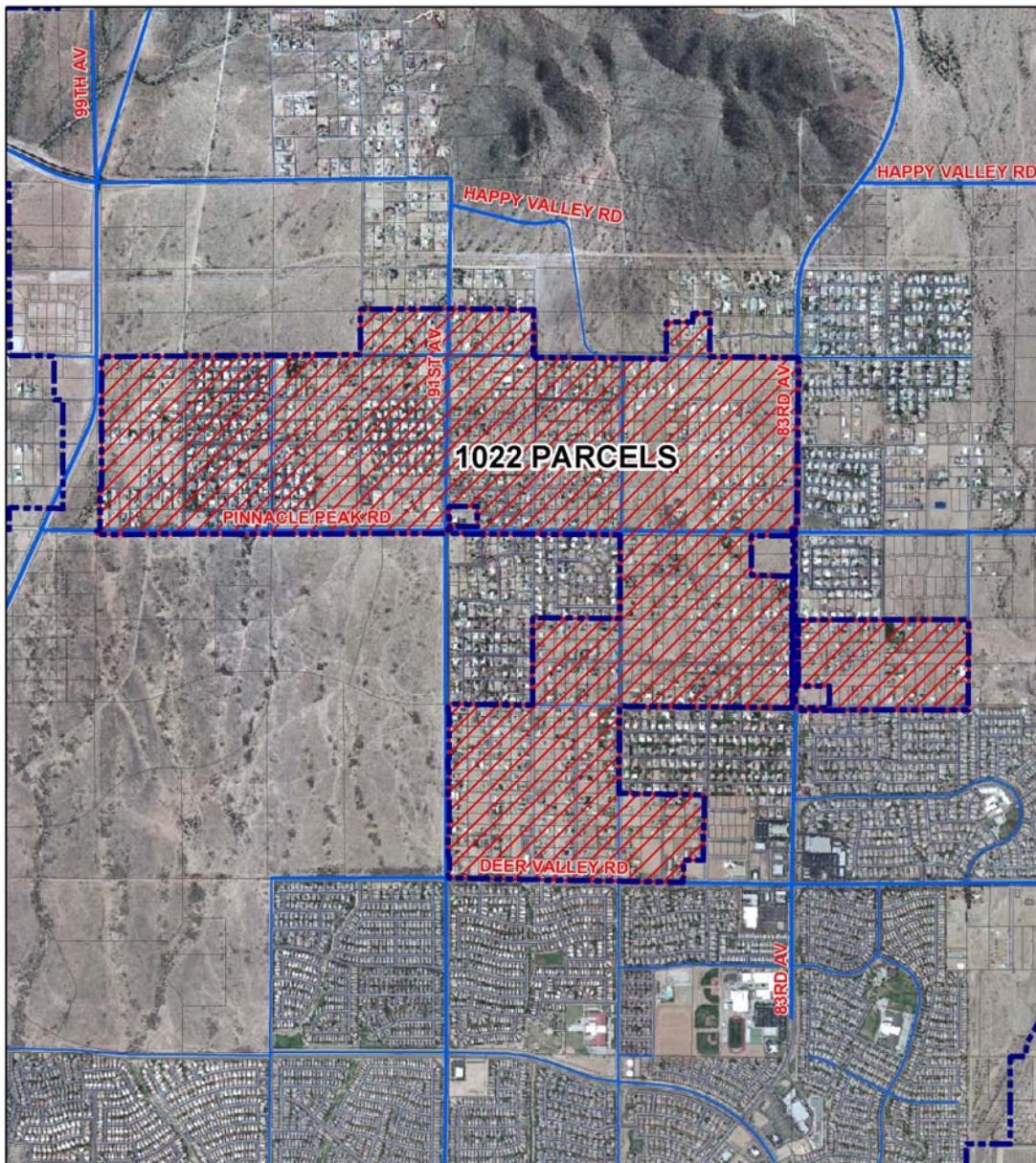


Peoria County Island
75th Ave / Thunderbird Rd

346 PARCELS



APPENDIX B: MAP OF PINNACLE PEAK



Peoria County Island
83rd Ave / Pinnacle Peak Rd

1022 PARCELS

Legend
County Island
Peoria Corporate Boundary
Parcel Boundary
Major Street
Collector
Minor Street

Air Photo - Aerials Express June 2004



NOTE:
This map is not to scale.
Contact your local engineer or
for detailed information.

APPENDIX C: CRITICAL QUESTIONS THAT THE CITY MUST ANSWER

Q – When annexation occurs, who pays?

Q - How will building permits be handled after annexation?

Q - What will annexation mean to us?

Q - What will residents be required to do differently after annexation?

Q – Isn’t the City library open to anyone who pays County taxes? Library services are already paid for. Is that true or not?

Q - There is a lot of confusion within the residents about the facts. What are the facts about annexation of county islands? What are the actual requirements?

Q - How, exactly, does the annexation test work?

Q – Can you give people information in ways to graphically illustrate the key points in the transaction? Show us graphs, charts, maps and pictures.

Q – Show us a simple graphic of what we have now, and what we would have after annexation?

Q - What’s really happening on Acoma Drive regarding widening, recent surveys, etc?

Q - What, exactly, can the City do to bind future Councils and managers to commitments made today regarding land-use regulation, zoning and restrictions?

Q - What promises were made by the school district regarding bus traffic in the Acoma and Country Gables area? Why were these promises not kept?

Q - What’s the rule on requiring properties to change from a septic tank to a sewer?

Q - Some people want to assemble smaller parcels into something that would work for apartments. Some people want to split their current properties so that they can build additional single family homes. Some people want the County to approve these splits; some people want the City to provide public services. What is the rule on lot splits and parcel assembly? What is the City willing to do to maintain the one dwelling per acre character of these areas?

Q – If we annexed into Peoria, how could we be sure that you wouldn't allow developers to come in and pick us off one-by-one and build apartments in our neighborhood?

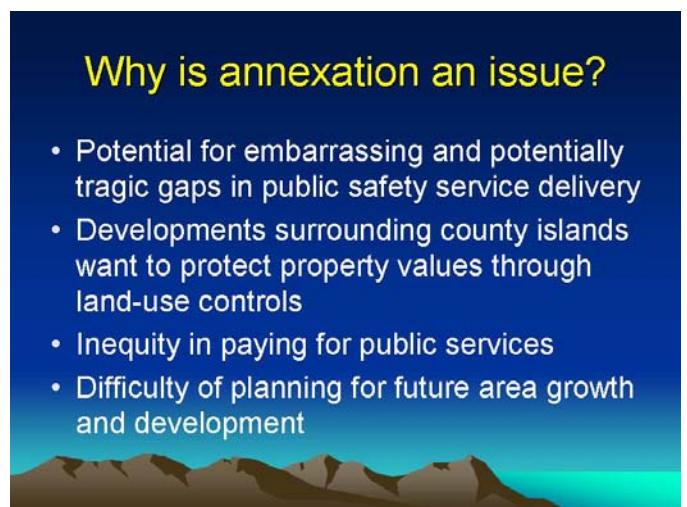
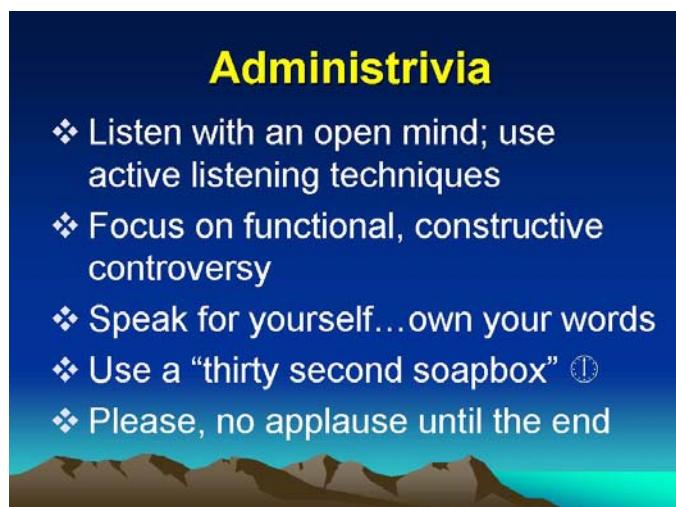
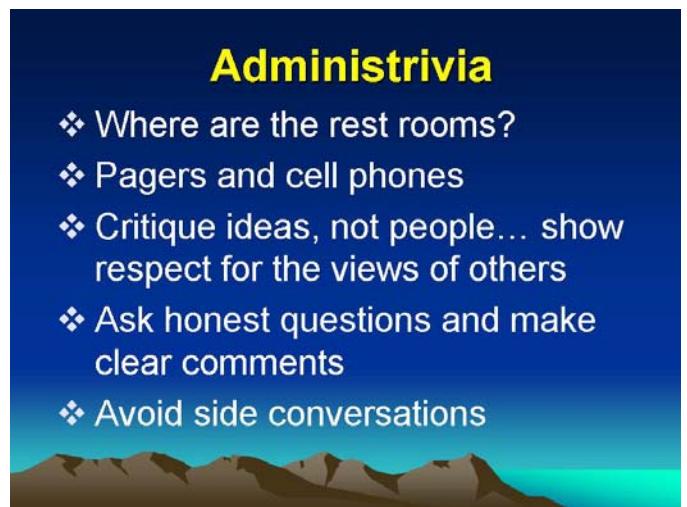
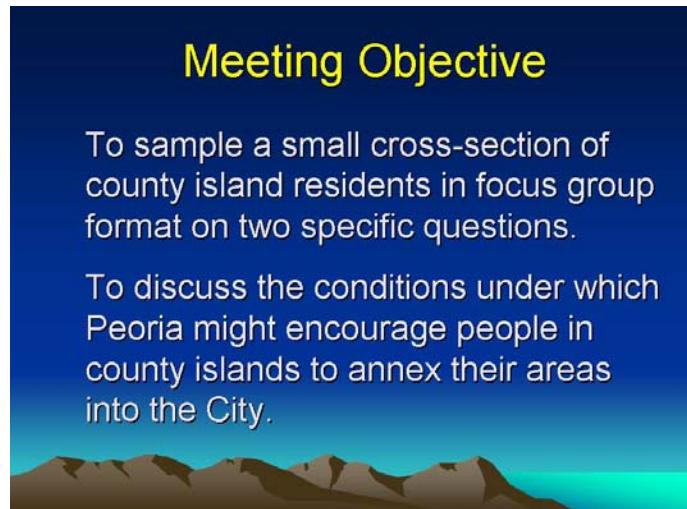
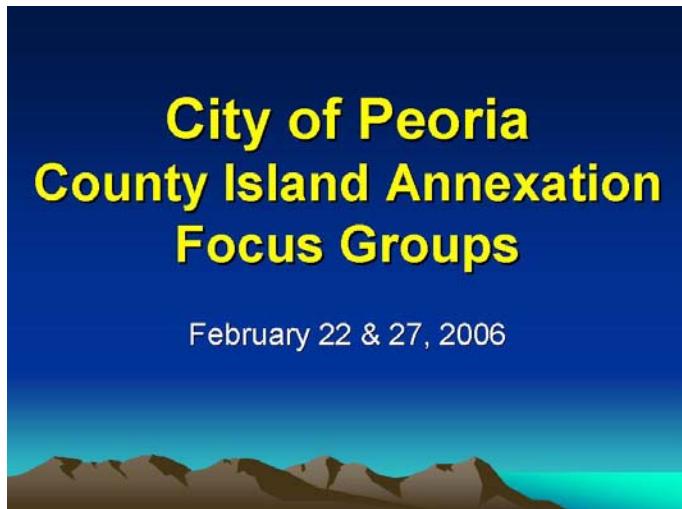
Q - The county island residents have more questions than the City has answers. What is the City willing to do to hear those questions and give us answers? The last time the City came to Acoma to discuss annexation they said they'd answer our questions, but they never did.

Q – What will the City put on the table to offer us in exchange for annexation? I can't offer support on annexation until I have something on the table to look at and respond.

Q - How can the City protect the county island resident's property values from being negatively affected by higher density developments that the City allows?

Q - Could each of the county islands take a few years to organize themselves for the annexation, negotiate with the City, and do their own detailed plan that can be guaranteed?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP POWERPOINT PRESENTATION



Why is annexation an issue?

This issue of county island annexation is being discussed widely in Arizona.

Other states provide for easy city annexation of enclaves, but Arizona resisted requiring areas surrounded by municipalities to annex.

Annexation is an extremely volatile topic for many county island residents; effort to annex may be divisive to neighborhoods.



Why do residents resist annexation?

- Loss of being special, unique... independent
- Requires compliance with zoning and land-use rules
- Fear of intrusive local government
- Avoid municipal property taxes
- Fear of being caught doing something illegal



Why does Peoria want to annex?

- Safety of area residents
- Uniformity and consistency of public utilities and services
- Control over future planning and development
- Protection of public investments
- Equity in sharing public service costs (tax revenues)



Why do residents resist annexation?

- Fear of vocal “anti-annexation” neighbors
- Fear the loss of a unique, rural life-style
- Avoid mandatory public services
- General resistance to change



Research Approach



Phase One

Research the issues

- Gather information
- Assess the data



Phase Two

Develop an implementation strategy

Phase Three

Implement annexation program

What do we want to know?

- Extent of local support for annexation
- How past efforts are viewed by the residents, the Mayor, City Council, and City staff
- Specific issues, concerns, perceptions
- Areas of misinformation
- Suggestions for annexation approach

What do you need to know?

- Peoria wants the county islands contained within its boundaries to annex into the City
- Peoria cannot force county island annexation
- Annexation requires 50%+ of the properties to sign petition
- Requires 50%+ of the assessed value of properties to ask for annexation
- Annexation takes a while... minimum of 5 months
- Annexation process is controlled by statute



What do we want to know?

What can Peoria do to encourage county island residents and owners to annex into the City?

How should the City approach residents to gain their support for annexation?

APPENDIX E: TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP SCRIPT

SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP CALLS TO PEOPLE DEMANDING ACCESS TO THE FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

=====***=====

Introduce the topic by saying: <first name>? My name is <your name>. You called the City of Peoria a few days to ask about some meetings on the topic of annexation. <wait for affirmation>

Would you like to participate in one of these focus groups? <affirmation>

I need to confirm the spelling of your name and your address so we can send you a formal invitation. <confirm name and address>

I need to explain that I am not employed by the City of Peoria, but someone from LL Decker & Associates will be running these meetings. We are conducting research into the various ways that the City can construct an annexation agreement with county islands so that people will want to voluntarily be part of the City.

<some chatter about annexation>

Let me be clear about this. The City of Peoria wants to annex county islands, but it has no power or authority to do so. They've asked us to conduct research and develop strategies that the City can use to inform and negotiate with county island residents. The objective is to develop ways to make annexation acceptable.

The City believes that, over the long run, it's in everyone's best interest to annex, but past fears and bad experiences with the City keep many county island residents suspicious and cautious. I'll go through the City's initial thinking on this topic, and then ask for questions the participants need to have answered before they can continue the discussion. I'll then ask several driving questions to focus the discussion and finally request comments.

The question we're trying to address is, "What can the City of Peoria do to encourage annexation of county islands?"

Everyone who agrees to enter into civil conservation, and will show good will toward each other is welcome to participate. If your stated position is "no way, no how, under no circumstances will I ever agree to annex, I don't want to hear anyone speak the words and over my dead body..." then you're not going to have much to offer and I would suggest you invest your time in some other activity. If you have serious reservations about annexation but are willing to discuss those reservations, you're more than welcome to join us.

Since I have to keep the numbers of participants actively engaged in the discussion to 15 or less at any one time, I'm asking people who are not actively engaged in the discussion sit quietly, listen carefully and play the role of observers. Then, when someone leaves the table, someone can come forward to participate.

I understand that in the past people attending a meeting with the City felt less than pleased with the conversation. Let me assure you that we are not here to organize the community to annex. We're trying to find the points of agreement and disagreement that might lead us to successful annexation.

How many people from your home will be attending? What session would you like to attend? Any further questions?

I'll have someone from the City send you a personal invitation.

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