

Strong state, local partnership key to Arizona's success

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OPINION

On average, more than 200 people are moving to Arizona every day. They're moving to places like Phoenix and Buckeye, some of the fastest-growing cities in the nation, bringing with them new opportunities for growth and investment that benefit our entire state.

Arizona is working hard to lead on smart policies that keep our state attractive for new businesses and residents, but we're not alone.

Whether it's sound water and fiscal policies or reducing regulations to attract businesses and enable them to thrive, cities and towns are key partners in Arizona's mission to provide opportunity for all.



Gov. Doug Ducey (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, File)

Just consider a few of the many diverse ways our local communities contribute to our state's success.

Tucson was recently named the No. 1 “up and coming market” for new tech jobs by real estate and investment firm CBRE. According to the report, tech jobs in Tucson have grown 90 percent in just five years.

Farther south, the city of Sierra Vista remains a national leader in military intelligence, cyber security and unmanned aircraft, with thousands of civilians and uniformed personnel working hard every day. For its collaboration and support of military families and communities, Sierra Vista was awarded the “Community Excellence Award” by the Association of Defense Communities.

Out in Mesa at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, city officials like Mayor John Giles are working with regional and state leaders to establish SkyBridge Arizona, the very first inland cargo inspection facility in the nation housing both U.S. and Mexican Customs. The new facility, which is projected to create roughly 17,000 direct and indirect jobs, will change the way Arizona and the United States conduct cross-border business.

And the city of Chandler continues to garner national attention for its embrace of innovation and pioneering self-driving technology.

Our cities and towns are at the forefront of Arizona’s growth, which is why the state has made it a priority to invest in local communities and give them the tools needed to succeed.

For example, thanks to a growing economy and forward-thinking budget decisions, more local transportation dollars are going to critical infrastructure projects. This includes \$95.3 million in our latest budget for targeted road projects and highway work across the state to improve safety and spur economic development.

In addition to these dollars, we are investing \$2.6 million for wastewater treatment in the border community of Nogales. We’ve also invested \$700,000 to build a cold room for perishable goods at the Mariposa Port of Entry, along with \$134 million in improvements we announced last year to SR189 leading from the Mariposa Port of Entry to I-19.

The state is also investing \$130 million to widen the I-17 north of Phoenix, a key highway connecting the Valley to cities like Flagstaff, Sedona and Prescott.

In addition to transportation infrastructure, Arizona is working to make sure people in our rural communities have access to 21st-century educational opportunities.

This year, we’re investing \$3 million to expand high-speed internet in rural communities, along with \$14 million for community colleges outside of Maricopa and Pima counties. On the Navajo Nation, Diné College is receiving \$1 million to support remedial education programs that will help students finish their degree or certification programs on time.

With tourism a major and growing economic driver, Arizona is partnering with local communities across the state on projects to spur more visitors, like at Oracle State Park north of Tucson.

And in the thick of wildfire season, we're helping communities prepare for and avoid the worst-case scenarios. Just a few weeks ago, I visited the robust response efforts to the Museum Fire in Flagstaff along with Mayor Coral Evans, where our brave firefighters, first responders and volunteers worked around the clock to contain the fire and keep people safe.

This year, the state is helping local communities fight fires by increasing funding for hazardous vegetation removal from \$1 million to \$2 million along with \$1 million for a forestry fire training center in Navajo County. We're also providing \$750,000 for a critical water line to the Mount Lemmon Fire District. In addition to these investments, we've doubled the funds available to reimburse local Arizona fire districts for their work combating wildfires to \$20 million.

As we make these investments in Arizona's future, we are fortunate to have many mayors working alongside us to open opportunity for their citizens. And it was my honor to recognize the fruits of our collaboration last week at the League of Arizona Cities and Towns annual conference in Tucson.

My thanks go out to all the mayors, councilmen and women and local leaders working to make a difference in their communities and for the residents they serve. These local leaders and so many others have helped make – and keep – Arizona the land of opportunity it is today.

With a strong and vibrant partnership with our cities and towns, Arizona's future will continue to look bright.

Doug Ducey, a Republican, is serving his second term as governor of Arizona.