



# Mayor wants to be closer to city

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Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and other city officials will host their first Town Hall meeting Tuesday to answer questions and learn what's on the minds of Ahwatukee Foothills residents.

*The Ahwatukee Republic* is co-sponsoring the meeting with Phoenix.

"I'm excited because it will allow me the opportunity to do what I do best - and what I believe is important for every elected official - to be connected to the community so that people get to know me as a father, a husband, a person and as mayor," Gordon said Friday. The forum is designed to be a free exchange of ideas, with residents asking questions or offering comments about the 88,000-resident community.

"They can ask anything, any questions about transportation, public safety or other issues without any filters first," Gordon said. "That's how I learn best. Nothing is off limits, and it should be fun and informative."

Paul Maryniak, *The Republic's* Southeast Valley general manager, praised Gordon and Phoenix administrators "for their willingness to engage in such a grass-roots dialogue with Ahwatukee residents."

"Having worked in other large cities, I can assure you this kind of willingness to come to the people is not the norm," Maryniak said. "*The Ahwatukee Republic* is delighted to partner with Mayor Gordon to facilitate what I hope will be the first stage of an ongoing dialogue that we would like to host in print, on our Web site and in person."

Although Gordon has held other meetings in Ahwatukee Foothills since voters elected him mayor in September 2003, this is the first large-scale Town Hall meeting of its kind in one of the city's so-called 15 villages. Gordon's staff sent an e-mail to residents living in all three Ahwatukee Foothills ZIP codes inviting them to the meeting.

"Really what I'm taking is the 'State of the City event' out into the community," said Gordon, who is running for re-election this year. "It won't be the last one in Ahwatukee or the city, but Ahwatukee gets to be the pilot, and I think it's paid its dues."

As the southernmost enclave of the 500-square-mile city and separated by South Mountain, Ahwatukee has undergone explosive growth in the past two decades.

"As mayor I don't want the city to lose the support of Ahwatukee by feeling on the outside," Gordon said. "As an aside, half the city staff live there."

Gordon said he expects the proposed South Mountain Freeway to take top billing at the meeting.

He is opposed to the long-studied \$1.7 billion, 10-lane freeway running west along Pecos Road through South Mountain to connect to 55th Avenue, the "preferred preliminary build alternative" chosen last year by the Arizona Department of Transportation.

"I strongly believe that a partnership with our Native American partners to the south is not only the viable option, but in my opinion the only option to have the connectivity so we don't create even more transportation problems," he said.

The Gila River Indian Community begins just south of Pecos Road, and many freeway opponents have suggested the tribe could develop its open land by selling ADOT land to build the 22-mile freeway to complete Loop 202 ringing the Valley.

City Councilman Greg Stanton, who frequently holds coffee chats and constituent meetings in his Ahwatukee-northeast Phoenix district, said he and the mayor have similar approaches to their jobs.