

Mayor Phil Goode Letter for March 1, 2023

The Realities of Land Development and Growth in Prescott

During my many years of serving the Citizens of Prescott as Planning and Zoning Commissioner, Councilman and Mayor, one overarching topic has been growth and development in Prescott. After moving here, I became involved in many organizations, and as a result was quickly plugged into the issues facing our community. Among them, growth, land development and private property rights were front and center, next to water and infrastructure.

Often, I hear calls to “stop growth” and “stop building” from both new and long-time Prescott residents. As much as we would like to keep our fair town exactly as it was when we moved here, the truth is that no elected official or governing body has the power to put a halt to growth and development. We can manage growth, and encourage appropriate development, however, we can never take away legitimate rights of property owners who wish to develop and build on their property. Likewise, property owners must comply with applicable zoning, height restrictions building codes and the city’s water policy. Through codes, ordinances, and ballot initiatives we can manage and control the pace and appropriateness of growth. We can influence how new development impacts our water supply, our traffic patterns, our public safety services and our infrastructure, but we cannot arbitrarily stop it.

The City has a number of development agreement contracts in place on hundreds of acres of land, mainly in north Prescott. These are developments approved for thousands of residential units, with an expectation that they will be built out over the next several decades, not all at once, or immediately. Mostly these are single family homes, with multi-family apartments and condos also planned. These projects were approved by the City Council over the years, by different councils at different times. In each case a development agreement and water allocation was negotiated, drafted and voted on by the council in place at the time. These agreements are contracts that bind the City to allow the negotiated elements, assuming they are legally conforming homes and meet all of the zoning, building safety requirements of the City code, and that they meet the provisions of our water policy.

What does all of this mean for Prescott? New home construction will continue. We are in a desirable community. Housing costs have increased substantially in just three years, due in part to supply chain, component costs and labor. So much so, that our working class and professional residents such as police officers, teachers, nurses, are having a difficult time finding places they can afford. The City has established a Workforce Housing Committee, to explore how we can impact affordability. More living units are needed. Prescott has been growing consistently over a 10+ year period. It remains a manageable level of growth, provided that the City works to keep up with appropriate services and public safety infrastructure.

Through all of this, we must all work together to maintain the community and culture of Prescott, while welcoming a sustainable pace of growth, and providing an affordable place for all of our valued residents to live.