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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pinal County Developing Sustainable Smart Growth Strategy, Part II

The second of four provocative sessions focused on Economic Development related to the new Pinal County Comprehensive Plan was held May 22, 2008 at Central Arizona College.

According to Judie Scalise, president of ESI, Corporation, we're entering a perfect storm of workforce development constraints. "Lagging educational attainment of our citizens coupled with a need for a more highly skilled workforce in this Country poses a real challenge to economic development" said Scalise. She continued, "In order to bring quality employers to Pinal, we need a workforce that is technically skilled."

Finding quality employment opportunities is a challenge for Pinal County, Jack Tomasik, consultant for Central Arizona Association of Governments, explained. "Our most recent figures calculate only 150 jobs per 1,000 population in Pinal County; this compares to nearly 500 jobs per 1,000 in Maricopa and Pima Counties." With an unbalanced jobs-to-population ratio like Pinal's, nearly 2 of every 3 employed residents commute out of Pinal County for their job. "Out-commuting," Tomasik continued, "adds to an already stressed transportation system that is extremely costly to expand, and takes away personal time we could spend with our families."

Both Tomasik and Scalise agreed this trend can be reversed through good planning. Scalise noted that a "portfolio approach" can best address Pinal's future needs, including the creation of activity centers, incorporation of higher education and training, and preserving land for future economic development opportunities.

The discussion series with leading experts on topics related to growth and development in Arizona and Pinal County continues. Each Thursday evening, an important topic related to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan will be discussed:

May 29: Water

How will the relationship between water and growth be addressed in Pinal County? This has been one of the most commonly asked questions during the year-long comprehensive planning effort. The expert panel will explore this relationship and offer opportunities to ensure Pinal's future can be achieved.

June 5: Sustainability

Sustainability is simply defined as ensuring that the needs of existing residents are met while not compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs: a simple concept with complex implications. A panel of experts will explore sustainability and its relationship to Pinal County planning.

All forums from 6-8 pm at:
Central Arizona College
Signal Peak Campus
Gloria R Sheldon University Center, Room T116

In order to expedite registration at the event, and to receive a confirmation packet including event information and a map, visit: www.PinalCountyPlan.com/WorkshopReg.html. These workshops are the sixth round of public involvement events for the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. For more information visit the project website or contact Peggy Fiandaca (PSA) Consulting Team Project Manager at 480.816.1811 or PSAinc@cox.net. To arrange for media coverage, please contact Audra Koester Thomas, 480.816.1811 or AudraPSAinc@cox.net.

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