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Buckeye uses Web to market development options

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Before the Internet seemingly was in every home and office, Lori Gary either had to put a packet of information in the mail or drive people around in her car to help lure new businesses to the town of Buckeye.

Today, Buckeye's economic development director can point interested parties to a Web site that's been designed as an economic development tool for the rural area, which has 5,500 acres slated for commercial use.

"Now, they just search on the Web," she said. "So, to be competitive with other cities, we needed an updated look and better navigational tools. We want to make it easy for companies to learn about Buckeye."

Buckeye is projected to grow from about



JIM POULIN/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Construction activity in Buckeye is following population growth. The town has more than 5,500 acres slated for commercial use. Here, a Lowes home improvement store is being built near Watson Road, south of Interstate-10.

That includes its accessibility to freeways, airports and major cities, plus a calendar of events, and information on quality of life, education, outdoor activities and master-planned communities.

It was designed as an information center for developers who want to open commercial centers or build on industrial land, and business owners interested in relocating, growing their existing business or opening a new company in Buckeye.

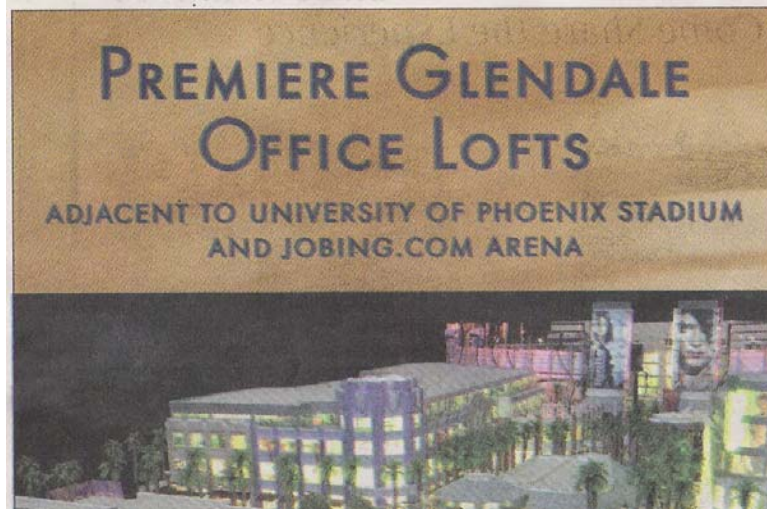
It also includes real estate and demographic data, labor force trends, employment information, population estimates, permitting, number of housing units, and incentives such as tax and research and development credits. The site also has an interactive map, maps of Buckeye including the general plan, zoning map and annexation map.

I-ology developed the site so Buckeye Valley Development can update it in-house.

To drive potential visitors, I-ology is using search engine optimization techniques. That means people can do a search on the Internet by general or specific terms and Buckeye will come up in national rankings.

Gil Rodriguez, I-ology's director of client services, said the firm also is doing cross promotion with sites like aps.com (Arizona Public Service) and gpec.org (Greater Phoenix Economic Council).

Success will be based on the number of inquiries the city receives and the number of real projects that result from those inquiries, Gary said.



32,000 residents to 100,000 by 2010.

Buckeye Valley Development, a not-for-profit group that works with the town to foster responsible growth, funded and created the site with the help of city officials and I-ology Inc., a Scottsdale Web firm.

Bob Bushfield, Buckeye's director of community development, said the site was created in response to growth.

"In as soon as 30 years, we're going to have 1.5 to 2 million people living here, so we have to start getting prepared," he said.

But development won't come at any cost. Bushfield thinks the town needs a balance of business, industry and rooftops.

"We hope the Web site is going to help us start moving in that direction," he said.

The core focus of www.buckeyedevelopment.com is to provide commercial, industrial and residential prospects with real-time information about the town.