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## **Tempe leaders must study city's growth plans carefully**

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The city of Tempe, once just a college town and bedroom community, is fast becoming one of the most vibrant, progressive places to call home in the Valley.

Downtown Tempe, which is centered between Tempe Town Lake and Arizona State University, offers a developing urban lifestyle and many opportunities to "live, work and play" in one location.

The city enjoys a diversified economic base with the state's largest presence of technology companies.

Tempe has a young, highly educated, skilled work force that fuels the city's thriving and diverse economy.

The city has 43 residential, retail and mixed-use projects in development. Thirty-eight are within two miles of Town Lake and the downtown area.

It has a huge advantage over other cities with ASU and the vision of university President Michael Crow.

It has light rail.

It has an energetic mayor in Tempe native Hugh Hallman.

It has Google -- for now.

It's an exciting time for the community. No question, it's a city on the move.

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Despite all of the opportunities that lay ahead for Tempe -- condos, office towers, retail plazas, hotels -- it is a critical time for the city.

And there will be challenges.

Tempe, which covers approximately 40 square miles, is land-locked. There really is no place to build but up, which is exactly what the city has started to do. There are several vertical condo projects in the works that could bring as many as 5,000 new residents to the downtown Tempe area alone.

This type of infusion in the city's core is significant, but city leaders need to be prepared for future high-rise residential development in other parts of Tempe as well.

To create a sustainable future for Tempe, density and building heights need to be increased throughout the city to maximize land uses and mixed-use developments.

The controversial Tempe Marketplace, a 117-acre retail and entertainment project in development by Vestar Development Co. at 2000 E. Rio Salado Pkwy., could pose a major challenge for the city, which will need to reinvent Mill Avenue.

Tempe officials say they are coming up with ways to tie the Marketplace and Mill Avenue together, keeping competition between the venues to a minimum.

Additionally, the city and SunCor Development are working together on future development of 27 acres of ASU property to the east of Hayden Ferry Lakeside.

This probably is the best opportunity city leaders have for development, and they need to do it right. The plans, which have been the subject of discussion since 2001, absolutely must be a good fit.

The Hayden Flour Mill, which was constructed in 1918 and stands as a historic marker in the center of Tempe, also is a perfect opportunity for developers to create something unique. A project that can combine the old flour mill with the vibrant, urban atmosphere of Tempe surely will be special.

Tempe leaders should be applauded for their creative use of land that exists within the city's borders, but they also must realize that Tempe has a dynamic and ever-changing economy. What works today might not work tomorrow.