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New Name, New Brand for Navajo, Apache Counties Regional Development Effort



HOLBROOK, AZ -- Navajo and Apache counties offer 'Real Opportunity in Northeast Arizona, Right Now' to companies that are looking to build a future in diversified energy production and related industries in the newly-branded Real AZ Corridor.

Resources, Energy, Access and Lifestyle (REAL) are key elements of the region's economic development assets and the foundation of the **Real AZ Corridor** branding strategy that is being introduced this week.

The **Real AZ Corridor** regional branding strategy and gateway website are projects of the former Navajo **County Regional Development Council**, which changed its name to the **Real AZ Development Council** earlier this month to better reflect the regional nature of the bi-county effort. Members of the council overseeing the branding of the nearly 100-mile wide region include the Navajo County communities of Holbrook, Pinetop-Lakeside, Show Low, Snowflake, Taylor and Winslow and the Apache County communities of Eagar, St. Johns and Springerville. Unincorporated areas in both counties are also represented in the project.

The Council contracted with economic development branding and marketing expert **Lori Martinek of Presentation Plus** in February to develop a regional branding strategy that would help attract new industries and jobs to the area. Martinek's recommended branding strategy was approved by the Council at its July 8 meeting, according to **Navajo County Supervisor** and **Real AZ Development Council Chairman David Tenney**.

"This is about two counties with a lot to offer and a big story to tell," Tenney said. ""The **Real AZ Corridor** is a region that is in the right place at the right time."

"There is a lot of excitement about the potential for this effort going forward," he added. "A big part of Arizona's future is going to play out here."

Martinek conducted six visioning workshops with nearly 100 community stakeholders to get a first-hand feel for the region's offering. "The **Real AZ Corridor** offers employers and developers a unique and diverse range of assets and opportunities which every community contributes to," she reported. What has been missing, she added, is a public awareness of the region's economic potential.



"The region is primarily known for its natural and recreational assets and not for its economic development opportunities," said Martinek. "The region's real strength lies in its ability to be a great place to work and to play."





"Other communities make that claim, but few of them have the resources, the assets and the demonstrated potential to back it up and build a future on," she noted.

According to the branding strategy, the **Real AZ Corridor** is an ideal region to invest in a business or venture because it has all of the elements necessary to assure sustainable operating success, including **Resources**, **Energy** (diversified assets and potential), **Access** (transportation) and **Lifestyle** (recreational opportunities and quality of life).

"These are REAL assets that exist today, with demonstrated potential and visible opportunities for the **Real AZ Corridor** to become one of the premiere energy-producing and business sustaining corridors in the country," said Martinek. "The Council is working very hard to both protect and promote these assets, in order to assure the best possible future for these

communities."

Emerging opportunities can already be seen throughout the region.

The Navajo County Board of Supervisors recently approved **Phase II of Dry Lakes Wind Farm**, which is Arizona's first turbine-powered, commercial-scale energy project. In another category, three biomass utilization grants totaling nearly \$1 million were awarded by the **U.S. Small Business Administration** to Arizona companies for projects that will develop innovative ways to utilize product generated by forest preservation projects in Navajo and Apache counties. In June, senior representatives from the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** visited the region with other government officials to discuss the success of the **White Mountains Stewardship Contract** and the potential for a proposed **Four Forests Restoration Initiative**, which would create similar economic development opportunities in the region.

The region is also home to Arizona's only recycled paper mill (**Catalyst Paper** in Snowflake); a plant that utilizes small diameter trees from the forest to produce wood products and fuel pellets (**Forest Energy** in Show Low); and an expanding company that utilizes saline water to grow marine algae for use in pharmaceutical products (**Algae Biosciences Corp.**, near Holbrook).



"We want to build on the success that we are already experiencing in modern resource and energy development," said Tenney.

The **Real AZ Corridor** also has soils that are ideal for solar and CO2 storage, an abundance of water and land resources, interstate highway access and existing coal-fuel energy production at three plants that are owned by two major utilities.

"Real opportunity exists in northeastern Arizona and it is ready to be realized, beginning right now," according to the branding strategy.

make it Real in Apache County

Future marketing efforts will be directed at site selectors, investors and entrepreneurs who are linked to new and growing companies in diversified energy development, production, distribution, servicing and storage industries. The effort will also target companies in the education, training, transportation, technology and service sectors.

"We're going after future-focused companies and investors who are looking for sustainable energy access and early-stage development opportunities," Tenney noted. "There is a lot of ground-floor opportunity here."

The branding strategy includes a sub-brand -- **Make It REAL In ...** -- that will be used by each of the participating counties and communities in their local economic development marketing efforts. **Real AZ Corridor** communities received logos, branding guidelines and a personalized domain name (e.g. makeitrealinholbrook.com) as part of the project.

Martinek will also develop a gateway regional website that is scheduled to 'go live' in September.

The **Real AZ Corridor** branding strategy will also be a featured presentation at the Governor's **Regional Development Conference** in Flagstaff on October 14. Representatives from the **Real AZ Development Council** will also promote the new brand at the annual conference of the **Arizona League of Cities and Towns** in August.

The **Real AZ Development Council** is a 'truly collaborative economic development group', according to Martinek, who has worked on similar projects across the country. "Regional branding is a powerful and cost-effective way to build awareness, maximize resource use and attract new employment opportunities. The communities in Navajo and Apache counties recognize the value of working together to build a future that will benefit the entire region."



Presentation Plus is a full service national marketing and public relations firm that specializes in economic development and community branding and marketing. The firm was founded in 1988 and is headquartered in Cave Creek, Arizona.

Lori Martinek is a branding expert and author who was a featured speaker at the **Governor's Regional and Rural Development Conference** in 2008 and 2009. She is scheduled to speak on Regional Branding at this year's conference, which will be held October 14-15 in Flagstaff. Learn more [HERE](#).

Martinek can be contacted by calling (623) 537-0888 or by visiting her firm's website at www.pplusonline.com.

Information on the **Real AZ Development Council** is available by calling **Navajo County Government and Community Relations Administrator Rod Ross** at (928) 205-7663.

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