

# Study looks at Arizona's 'Megapolitan' future

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Two out of three Americans are expected to live in just 20 “megapolitan” areas in about 30 years, and one of these megapolitans – the Sun Corridor – is in Arizona.

Arizona already is one of the most urban and fastest-growing states, and much of its projected growth is expected to be in the Sun Corridor, which stretches from Santa Cruz and Cochise counties to the center of Yavapai County.

“Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor,” a report just released by Morrison Institute for Public Policy at ASU, is the first comprehensive

analysis of this new geography. The Morrison Institute’s Grady Gammage Jr., Rob Melnick and Nancy Welch wrote the report along with ASU’s John Stuart Hall and Robert E. Lang of Virginia Tech.

People have been predicting for 50 years that Phoenix and Tucson would grow together into one giant desert conglomerate. A diverse pattern of land ownership in central and southern Arizona most likely will prevent that. But what is happening now, according to the report, is that the economies of metropolitan Phoenix and metropolitan Tucson are merging. With about 5 million people now and nearly 8 million projected for 2030, the Sun Corridor will be at the heart of Arizona’s expansion – and the state’s opportunities and challenges, too.

Predictions of growth are not new. But because growth and development are happening nationwide at an unprecedented pace, the “mega” concept is moving into the mainstream of public policy and planning.

“The megapolitan concept is powerful in part because it reinforces the strength of fundamental forces shaping Arizona and the world,” Melnick says, adding that its strength lies in the recognition that an economic merger brought on by overlapping community patterns and shared interests is more important than a physical one.

How the Sun Corridor will change in the short term depends largely on choices in five “megaton” areas:

- Global connections.
- Governance.
- The “trillion-dollar questions” related to residential and commercial development plus infrastructure.

- Water.
- Quality of life.

The report concludes with a critical question: “Do you want to live in the Sun Corridor?”

Adds Gammage: “The future of the Sun Corridor isn’t inevitably either rosy or bleak. It is what we make it. What can we do collectively to make the Sun Corridor somewhere we want to stay?”

“Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor” is one of the first reports in the nation to analyze one megapolitan area. Robert Lang, co-director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech and a visiting ASU scholar in 2006, helped develop the megapolitan concept in 2005 as part of projecting where the next 100 million Americans would live. Lang’s definition is based on economic interdependence, population and the U.S. Census Bureau’s “combined statistical area” designation.

To download “Megapolitan: Arizona’s Sun Corridor,” visit the Web site [www.morrisoninstitute.org](http://www.morrisoninstitute.org) .

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Source: ASU

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