



Member Perspective: REIAC Fireside Chat An evening with GPEC's Chris Camacho

By Karla Moran

The REIAC Southwest 2021 Fireside Chat featured Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) CEO Chris Camacho, who shared his big-picture view of the Valley's standing in the U.S. economic development playing field and how, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, said he is bullish on Arizona making a strong recovery.

This year's event was moderated by Dan Henderson, Director of Office of Economic Development for the Town of Gilbert.

Chris joined GPEC in 2008 after serving as President and CEO of the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation (GYEDC). He immediately went to work. The tax policy and incentives that he helped create have been a boon to the vibrant communities that make up Metro Phoenix now.

Chris said he believes that Arizona will see a full recovery by Q3 2021, adding back the jobs that have been lost since April 2020. Moving forward, he also said renewable and carbon neutral will be a driver for companies. In 2020 we had the worst year for Foreign Direct Investment. Chris sees this changing in the coming years with investment coming back to the U.S.

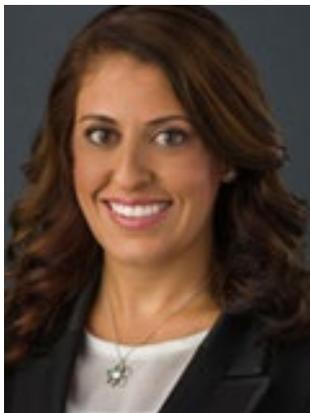
Arizona's industrial sector remains very strong and Arizona has been able to add more base industry jobs. For Arizona to remain competitive, he said, Arizona will still have to invest in modern infrastructure, focus on education, and modernize our tax system. He added that elevating our Hispanic population, which stands at 30 percent of the total state population, will be key as well.

Arizona policy right now is focused on tax cuts, he said, about \$600 million over the next 3 years. Reducing real and personal property tax from Class 1 to Class 6, which is a more favorable tax rate, is an important factor in our growth as well, he said.

Chris views education and workforce as short-term challenges, but important nonetheless. He said 1 in 5 school children don't have access to digital learning. Chris said he would like to see Phoenix become an IT innovation hub. Arizona will remain to be a top four semiconductor market.

Chris pointed out some positive trends due to COVID. As mobility has increased, it is allowing higher-cost market employees the ability to move to Phoenix and retain their higher wages. Hybrid return will allow companies to shed nonessential space and consolidate into major U.S. markets. "Office comes back" will return to a centralized approach.

Manufacturing remains hot here, he said. GPEC has a robust pipeline with more than 280 companies/deals, the makeup of which is 70 percent industrial and 30 percent office. A positive sign of the times: the number of mega deals has increased. Normally the region would only see one mega deal per year. Currently GPEC has 10 mega deals in the pipeline.



REIAC Vice President Karla Moran is Senior Project Manager, Economic Development, for SRP. Karla works in collaboration with the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, the Arizona Commerce Authority, regional and state entities and local municipalities to help ease a company's relocation process. She has been in economic development with more than 10 years of experience in a variety of roles at Arizona Commerce Authority and the Town of Gilbert. Reach Karla at Karla.Moran@srpnet.com or (602) 236-2396.