

For Immediate Release

Commentary from Councilmember Matt Orlando

September 21, 2007

City making strides with environmental programs

A recent newspaper editorial urged Chandler to be more environmentally aware and challenged us to “start talking about ways it can help tackle the urban heat-island effect, encourage smarter water use and tout sustainable building practices.”

A noble challenge indeed, and to some extent it is in response to August dialogue by the Gilbert City Council to create a commission that reviews “green” policies and projects. I applaud Gilbert for its discussions and the other Valley communities that are reviewing ways to tackle the urban heat-island effect.

In Chandler, we have had similar discussions on how to be more environmentally responsible. But more importantly, we have already initiated a number of resource-saving programs in the community.

In fact, a set of goals and priorities the City Council and staff have recently developed touch on a number of environmental areas. One incorporates the use of shade and environmentally sensitive design into our development standards for commercial, residential and government buildings. We have also polled the development community to get their input on our efforts and we will take their feedback into consideration as we move forward. By early next year, we expect to have these revised standards complete, along with a plan to institute a green building program in Chandler.

More than a year ago, the City Council also had a joint meeting with members of the Planning and Zoning Commission where we discussed many of these issues. That was an excellent dialogue because it ensured the Councilmembers and Planning Commission members have a shared vision as we move to instituting more environmental programs.

A municipal project currently under way in southeast Chandler includes a wetlands area, police substation, park and educational facility. The project buildings incorporate “green” technology that include natural lighting and insulated concrete foam block. Our future City Hall will also allow us to explore ways to make the facility environmentally friendly. All existing City buildings use an energy management control system to conserve power.

Another major goal of ours is to become more connected as a City. That means we are working to provide pedestrian and bicycle-friendly links among our facilities so that residents can move throughout the community without the need of a car. This will

identify better opportunities to create meaningful open space and community gathering points.

This work is being discussed now as we update both our City Transportation Plan and the General Plan. In fact during our three recent community meetings on the General Plan update, we received many comments that residents want to see more of this. We would like to hear your thoughts as well. Please visit the City's Web site to provide input on our General Plan update (www.chandleraz.gov/gpupdate.aspx).

With water being our most precious resource, we have worked hard to conserve. We use waterless urinals in all of our park bathrooms, when available we irrigate our turf areas with reclaimed water and use state-of-the-art technology in controlling the amount of water we use in our open spaces. We also have in place a very successful conservation program that gives rebates to residents who convert their yards to desert landscaping and utilize electric timers for their irrigation.

So yes, Chandler has been diligent in promoting a more ecologically friendly community – and for quite some time. We will continue to do so because it is simply the right thing to do.