

## **1981 to 2000 in Phoenix**

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### **1981-2000 Southwest Metropolis, Expansion of Sports, Culture and Early Downtown**

#### **Phoenix Revitalization**

In addition to community issues revolving around crime, violence, drugs, and gangs, many of the effects of urban sprawl that had infected the city in previous decades still lingered, as the city continually faced increasing difficulties effectively providing for its constituents. In response to these issues, polls were taken in order to get a better understanding of the popular opinion of how these issues should be dealt with, and the polls indicated that citizens were in favor of a district system style of representation instead of an at-large system. Mayor Margaret Hance, along with almost all other city officials, local businesses, and even local newspapers did not approve of the idea of the district system nor did they approve of the plans surrounding the proposed district system. However, the vote to move to district representation passed 39,591 to 37,821, with only about 25 percent of registered voters in the city casting votes. As a result, Phoenix was divided into eight separate districts, Mayor Hance would decide not to run for reelection, and Terry Goddard, who was widely considered perhaps the leading spokesperson in advocating for the district system, would be elected as Mayor of Phoenix. Many felt that Goddard's election was perhaps a changing of the guard, as Goddard ran his campaign on the stance of opening up City Hall to the public and making governmental actions more visible in the public eye, as well as focusing on improving the overall quality of life for residents rather than solely focusing on creating the best business climate possible. Goddard made significant strides tackling key issues surrounding the Phoenix area by effectively explaining the need for tax increases and government spending.

The 1980s also saw a massive increase in the number of service jobs available in the city, a luxury that many would argue had evaded Phoenix in previous decades. The city also began to further develop its reputation as a destination spot for tourists and many of the hotels and resorts across the city were being recognized nationally for their accomplishments. However, the Greater Phoenix area began to struggle in its attempt to maintain its status as the destination spot for technology companies and began to further develop issues identifying a sufficient water supply for the entire region. As mentioned earlier, the city was still experiencing issues with growth rather than development, and many felt that little was being done preserve the desert environment. This growth, accompanied with the utilization of the districting system, aided in the development of a complex city structure and civic life, and critics of the districting system would argue it further fragmented the city and created glaring disparities between certain areas of the city.

One of the areas suffering the most from this fragmentation was Downtown Phoenix, and city officials recognized the need for its revitalization. However, this revitalization proposal was not necessarily supported by everyone and insufficient funding, amongst other challenges, perhaps prevented the effort from ever reaching its full potential. That being said, some headway was made due to these efforts. There was certainly an emphasis placed on bringing sports franchises to the downtown area in an attempt to hopefully stimulate the area's economy, which resulted in the development of sports stadiums to accommodate The Phoenix Suns and Arizona Diamondbacks.

In addition to placing an emphasis on expanding sports, there certainly appeared to be a desire for monumental development in the downtown area. The era saw the city experience significant redevelopment through the construction of the Arizona Science Center, Central Library, and Phoenix City Hall, as well as the expansion of the Civic Plaza and Phoenix Art Museum. Many residents of Phoenix believe these revitalization efforts played significant roles

in the attempt to restore the downtown area. However, that being said many residents of Phoenix still do not believe that the downtown area has reached its full potential just yet and there is room for improvement, though at the very least these efforts have given residents reason to be optimistic when considering the future of Phoenix (City of Phoenix, 2014).

### **Works Cited**

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