

Mesa leaders promise change to residents who vote for bond

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TRIBUNE

Mesa political and business leaders promised change to residents who vote in favor of a bond package in the Nov. 4 ballot.

But they also acknowledged it would be tough to sell to voters who in the past have turned down a primary property tax.

The bond package would fund specific road and public safety projects.

Mayor Scott Smith, who ran on a platform of change, said the passage of \$169.2 million in bonds would be his greatest achievement to date. And, he said, it would allow the city a chance to earn trust and prove that things are changing.

"Give us the opportunity to gain your trust," Smith said at a fundraising event Tuesday night in southwest Mesa.

The city can't advocate favoring the bond, but local political and business leaders gathered to begin a campaign to support its passage, using the political action committee Mesa Citizens for Responsible Public Policy, which helped gain voter approval of the Waveyard water theme park.

The firm HighGround, which has a history of working on political campaigns, was hired to promote the bond. Consultant Chuck Coughlin said the firm has completed a survey, but he said he wasn't ready to share results that he suggested proved there was some support of the bond package.

Passage of the package would create what is called a secondary property tax for Mesa property owners, which is used to pay off specific bond programs. Estimates are that owners of a home valued at \$250,000 would pay less than \$4 a month in new taxes.

Mike Galloway, a retired police officer and owner of Mesa's Galloway Asset Management, said he was encouraged by the promise of change. He attended and donated funds from his company because he said the city needs improved roads and police and fire infrastructure to attract businesses that will make Mesa thrive.

Augie Gastelem, also a Mesa business owner, said people are starting to get excited about a time for change.

"I think it's Mesa's time to come into its own and become the big city it is," he said.

The bond package includes \$110.9 million in street projects. It will speed up the completion of some road work and also allow the city to collect \$24.5 million in additional road work funding through a countywide sales tax program, officials said.

Roads that will be improved in the bond package include Power Road from Loop 202's Santan Freeway to Pecos Road; Ray Road between Sossaman and Ellsworth roads; Hawes Road from Southern Avenue to U.S. 60; Mesa Drive from Southern Avenue to U.S. 60; Greenfield Road from Baseline Road to Southern Avenue; the intersection of Dobson and Guadalupe roads; and the intersection of Dobson Road and University Drive.

The package also provides \$58.3 million for public safety improvements, including land for and design of two fire stations — one in east Mesa and one in west Mesa. It provides funding to address emergency response times as the two new stations are constructed.

It also replaces the Dobson Ranch Police Station with a larger facility and upgrades the emergency radio communications system and the police aviation program, among other services.