

BY KASIA MARCISZEWSKA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK PETERMAN

Since joining the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) in 2004, Barry Halpern has worked steadily to help the organization in its mission to strengthen the region's economy.

"I have always been impressed by GPEC's capacity to bring the private and public sectors together to accomplish what neither sector could do alone," Halpern says.

Halpern is active on several of GPEC's boards and committees, including the board of directors.

He is also a GPEC ambassador and served on the Workforce Development Task Force. During that time, he worked with other task force members to identify the types of high skill and high-wage jobs, particularly in the technology sector, that are needed in the Valley for economic growth.

Despite his involvement with various boards, Halpern cautions that working on these committees is no easy task.

"It should be clear that GPEC board membership is not an honorary position. GPEC has a hard-working board composed of very busy people who recognize the critical importance of economic growth to the continued financial health and livability of our state," Halpern says.

As a partner with the law firm of Snell & Wilmer, Halpern enjoys the unique perspective being a member of GPEC gives him.

"My work for GPEC is quite different from the day-to-day activities of a lawyer. With GPEC, I see our business community from a more macro perspective that is a very gratifying experience for someone who's practiced law for 30 years," Halpern says.

He cites several issues that GPEC is working on to help the state's economy, including attracting health care talent and improving the state's health care delivery systems.

"We are striving to raise the visibility of Arizona's health care capabilities inside and outside of the state," Halpern says. He adds that the lack of diversification in the state's economy is a crucial issue that also needs to be addressed.

Despite the challenges ahead, Halpern is confident that together with GPEC, Arizona will be able to move past its reliance on sunshine and real estate and look forward to a more diverse economy.

"We desperately need to break the cycle of real estate booms and busts, which have been the hallmark of our economy for the last 40 or so years," Halpern says.

Given the current state of the economy, Halpern notes that GPEC is more important than ever.

"GPEC is and will remain a catalyst for the kind of economic transformation our state needs," he adds. "Some of the challenges we face are socially and politically sensitive, but GPEC confronts these issues with no agenda other than to promote positive economic growth."

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