

TOWN SQUARE: A MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

“This is What Democracy Looks Like”



Horse-drawn streetcars pass by the Phoenix courthouse in the 1890s

Phoenix today is a very different place than Jack Swilling found when he settled here in 1868. But one thing that hasn't changed is the colorful character of our local culture. The revival of the Arts District and success of 1st Fridays proves that our pioneering spirit is still alive.

As American society witnesses a tremendous resurgence of grassroots political activity, a number of interest groups in Phoenix have begun reaching out to the audience gathered by the Art Walk, and a political subculture has emerged.

Could this be our next great rebirth?

Town Square

The Town Square is an open invitation to political organizers and volunteers to set up their exhibit tables at 1st Fridays and join the conversation.

We have found that Art Walkers are eager to talk about ideas once engaged in discussion. But it is difficult to capture and hold the interest of people who have come to be entertained.

If we can overcome this barrier, there is a huge opportunity for groups and their likely supporters to locate each other in the crowd. The key is finding a way to “put on a show”.

Festival of Ideas

The Town Square is an aesthetic concept designed to unite diverse groups around a neutral and appealing theme. It visualizes a setting where speech, debate, and philosophy can fill their roles as art forms, and a free exchange of ideas becomes paint on the canvas of people's minds.

By uniting behind this vision, we can reach a larger audience than we could by ourselves, and use the theme in creative ways to endear ourselves in the memory of the crowd.

Putting on a Show

The Town Square is a chance to sketch the portrait of a healthy Democracy, using the visual language of our past to evoke a feeling of comfort.

Familiar symbols of Americana such as soapboxes, bandwagons, draped flag bunting, skimmer hats, brass bands, Uncle Sam – exhibitors can mix these elements with modern twists like video blogs and multimedia to spark the imagination of the audience.

Extending the metaphor, a central “Grandstand” provides a natural place to hold speeches and debates. This serves as an attention-getter for passers-by and draws foot traffic into our Town Square. A crowd assembled in this way is more likely to linger in conversation, and to return.

Desert Nights

With a big campaign season starting, throughout 2008 people will become increasingly interested in political ideas. A monthly recurring 1st Friday Town Square, anchored by Grandstand events like the Third Party Debates, will give interest groups the chance to educate citizens via familiarity and repetition.

Third Party Debates

It's no secret that dissatisfaction with the status quo is behind a very powerful grassroots energy that is taking hold. Yet mainstream politicians, undaunted by net-roots that pick their sound-bites to pieces, keep repeating themselves - leaving an enraged public hungry for new direction.

The Third Party Debates are one way to connect with this desire in the public. Throughout the campaign season you will see debates involving Democrats and Republicans, but you will rarely see one that includes a Libertarian, a Green, or a Communist.

Starting in October, you will. These three parties are coming together for a conversation about the issues that is sure to turn some ears, and some minds. This will be an opportunity for the public to get acquainted with the array of choices they really have.

The Town Square is an organic grassroots gathering, so the invitation is open to all groups – particularly those that have been sidelined by mainstream politics. To get involved or learn more, join us on yahoo:
phxtownsquare@yahogroups.com.

**JOIN THE YAHOO GROUP TO LEARN MORE!
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