

PHOENIX Business Journal

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Phoenix selected as site for museum of TV memorabilia

BY TIM GALLEN
Phoenix Business Journal

A museum project could get Phoenix-area residents and visitors to tune in downtown.

Phoenix will be the home of the Museum of Television, the brainchild of TV fan and former television writer James Comisar, who owns an extensive collection of TV memorabilia, props, costumes and artifacts.

Such a unique attraction likely would bolster Phoenix's arts and cultural economy, which has a \$361 million local economic impact, according to studies done by the city.

Bill DeWalt, president of the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, said another museum establishing itself here is a plus.

"If you think about New York City, it's

SEE MUSEUM | 51



PROVIDED BY JAMES COMISAR

James Comisar's collection includes the "Carnac the Magnificent" headpiece Johnny Carson used on "The Tonight Show."

Space saver

Maverick developer Michael Levine fights to save warehouse district

BY MIKE SUNNUCKS
Phoenix Business Journal

Phoenix's warehouse district has been through a lot: two world wars, multiple economic booms and busts, and promises of revitalization after construction of Chase Field and US Airways Center.

Now, the cluster of old warehouses, industrial buildings, parking lots and restaurants just south of the two sports venues faces a new set of challenges — but also potential promise.

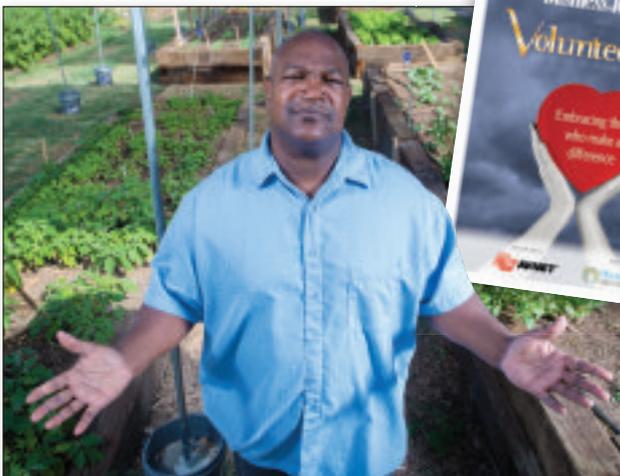
The question for district boosters such as maverick developer Michael Levine is how many of the several dozen industrial buildings —

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Businesses build from the heart

This year's Heart of Business Awards honor a host of individuals, nonprofits and businesses across the Valley that help make life a little better for all of us. One of this year's honorees is Darren "Tiger" Chapman, chief executive of the Tiger Mountain Foundation. Here, he stands in one of his organization's community gardens, which helps feed residents in south Phoenix. It also serves as a microbusiness, because much of the produce grown there is sold at farmers' markets. The money made goes back into Tiger Mountain programs that support the garden and surrounding community. Read more about how Chapman and others are giving back and using volunteerism to better Phoenix. **Pages 17-40**



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Chris Lee Johnson, president and CEO, Johnson Carlier Inc. **41**



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MUSEUM: Television memorabilia could add to Phoenix's cultural elements

FROM PAGE 1

got tons of museums," he said. "But you don't hear anyone say New York has too many museums."

Museums and other institutions help enhance an area's cachet as a cultural destination, which can play a role in attracting new people and businesses, DeWalt said.

"The very best thing that a city, especially a city as large as Phoenix, could be identified with is having a great educational system and a great cultural community — a really good symphony, a really good set of museums, a really good opera, etc.," he said. "Those are the kinds of amenities that I believe are attractive to lots of people. It just kind of enhances the desirability of the community as a place to live and work."

Early on while amassing his collection, Comisar said it hit him that he would want his collection to anchor a cultural institution "to tell the story of what was happening on and off the TV screen over the past 60 years."

"It's interesting how television has always held a mirror to what was going on off-screen," he said. "I am very interested in that story, interested in talking about our shared past."

The museum will be about 50,000 square feet, Comisar said, and cost about \$35 million to build. He didn't have a specific number, but said hundreds of jobs would be created by the project from construction to museum staff.

He hopes to have the museum open within three years. He declined to share specific sites he is scouting, but did say



RENDERING PROVIDED BY JAMES COMISAR

A gallery dedicated to the 1960s TV show "Batman" is part of the planned Phoenix museum.

he wants the museum to be in downtown Phoenix.

So far everything related to the museum has been self-funded, Comisar said. To help spread the word and pique the interest of potential donors, he is planning a museum preview center to illustrate what the full facility would offer and look like.

"It's a common plan of action: Open up a small preview, show what we're thinking and let it build through word of mouth, and let it find the appropriate parties who might want to invest in the community," Comisar said.

The preview center will be roughly 6,800 square feet. Comisar said he has been of-

fered no-cost space in the downtown area to open it by this spring. He declined to share the location of the preview center.

Jo Marie McDonald, vice president of the Phoenix Community Alliance, said the Museum of Television would be a great complement to the area's current museum offerings and serve as another element to attract visitors to town.

"This could be another museum that we could add to our base and use to attract a wide variety of people," she said. "I think Phoenix is a good fit."

The most commonly asked question he gets about the project, Comisar said, is: Why Phoenix?

"Phoenix already shares art with the world — Phoenix Art Museum, Heard, the MIM. These are all good museums," he said. "But Phoenix does not have a social history museum that tells the story of our American popular culture. We feel we could fill that void."

In truth, Comisar said Phoenix wasn't even on his radar until he read a magazine article while visiting Scottsdale that described adaptive reuse of aging buildings in the area. From there, he connected with Jim McPherson, a local public relations consultant and downtown Phoenix advocate, who gave Comisar a tour of the Valley and introduced him to groups such as Downtown Phoenix Partnership and Phoenix Community Alliance.

McDonald said such a unique museum could be a draw for the thousands of people who visit Phoenix for conventions.

"I think this would be something that conventioners would love to have," she said. "There's no other TV museum that I know of anywhere. With our convention center and all the tourists coming down here, I think there's a natural fit. ... It's another cultural opportunity."

The Valley already is home to the House of Broadcasting, which catalogs and preserves Arizona's radio and television history. Mary Morrison, director of HOB, said she's been hearing talk of Comisar's museum for more than a year now, and she is ecstatic about the project.

"I'm all for what they're doing," she said. "I hope they do come. I think it's awesome."

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