Who, what will power Scottsdale this year

2009 is sure to be fascinating, given how the city has been shaken by political, economic forces

LAURIE ROBERTS

The champagne has run dry, the party hats are put away and the holiday bubble, so to speak, has burst. Finally, it's 2009. I don't know about you, but I'm glad to see the old year go.

Everything is topsy-turvy these days, from our politics to our bank books. What was down is up and what was in a year ago is out — or nearly so. Why, I actually read that Scottsdale residents are now having to put their breast implants on layaway. Who'd have thought it?

Though all eyes are on Washington, this should be a fascinating — even if less cosmetically enhanced — year in Scottsdale as well. I don't know where 2009 will take us, but I have a pretty good idea of who will be driving the Lamborghini. Or maybe, given the state of things, the Yugo.

Here are some people to watch in 2009:

JIM LANE

The stunner of 2008: the mild-mannered accountant beats out the 16-year campaign-tested City Hall veteran.

Lane ran for mayor on a platform of open government and the dire need for fiscal restraint, making him look like a psychic. Scottsdale, in a blink, has gone from a city that spares no expense to one that must pinch pennies.

Lane has the chance to take Scottsdale in a new direction. It remains to be seen if he will.

If he's wise, he'll realize that this is a time to think big, a time to begin setting the stage for the day the economy rises from the ashes.

If he's really wise, he'll realize that the best bold visions come not from mayors but from citizens, people who spend tireless hours volunteering because they simply love this place.

Could 2009 possibly be the year that our leaders begin listening?

JOHN BERRY

Everybody loves a nice guy, and Berry has made a career of being one, which is why he gets virtually anything he asks for at City Hall. With a silver tongue and an aw-shucks manner, Berry is the king of development attorneys in Scottsdale.

Think of any project and the affable Berry was probably there before the bulldozers.

Next up: convincing our leaders to dump an ugly SRP station onto another neighborhood so his client can make a killing on a hotel and condos. Look for Berry's assurances of a "win-win" — no matter that the neighbors are about to, well, lose.

MIKE RYAN

One editorial voice in Scottsdale was silenced last month as the *Scottsdale Tribune* closed. That leaves the *Scottsdale Republic* as the city's only newspaper.

Ryan, as this newspaper's general manager, calls the shots on the *Scottsdale Republic's* editorial pages. He's a resident of the city and deeply plugged in with a civic resume that's headlined by a spot on the executive board of the Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce.

Ryan believes the thing that could sink this city is arrogance, a willingness to rest on its laurels while other up-and-coming cities out-Scottsdale Scottsdale.

Look for him to promote a bold vision for this city, what he calls "the next great thing that Scottsdale could be." I don't know what it'll be. I don't think he does either just yet, but think WestWorld. Think McDowell Road.

THE STATE LAND COMMISSIONER

We don't yet know who will hold the job in a Jan Brewer administration, but whoever it is will have a huge impact on Scottsdale.

For years, this city has had an ambitious preserve plan. The problem: cash. Of the 36,000 acres to be preserved, the city still needs to acquire 19,000 acres, all of it state land. But it already has spent $600 million of the roughly $1 billion available.

City and preservation leaders have long pinned their hopes on picking up the state land on the cheap via state trust-land reform. Unfortunately, every effort to change the rules governing state land — rules that require the state to sell to the highest bidder — has failed. Already, preservationists are talking about trying again in 2010. The question is: Can we wait that long?

The current land commissioner, Mark Winkleman, was champing at the bit in 2007 to sell 1,700 acres of prime developable land within the preserve, but Mayor Mary Manross headed him off at the pass by appealing to his boss, Gov. Janet Napolitano. Soon, however, there will be a new boss in town and at the Capitol.

For now, the land is safe, given the economy. But for how long? Will the new commissioner (or

WESTCOR

If Berry is the undisputed king of development, Westcor is the undisputed king of sales-tax receipts now that the car dealers are heading out of town. With the opening of Barneys and a new wing of luxury stores, all eyes will be on Scottsdale Fashion Square. In a down economy, look for Westcor, the mall's owner, to become more important than ever, given its status as the primo engine for sales-tax revenue.

When Westcor talks, the city will be all ears. So what will Westcor want to talk about? Well, a few years ago, the company convinced Phoenix to allow high-rises at Biltmore Fashion Park. Now, I'm told execs have