

Transcription of Episode 343: Bryan Montgomery, Indio City Manager

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SPEAKERS

Bryan Montgomery, Bob Firing

Note: This transcription was computer-generated and may contain typographical errors.

Bob Firing 00:10

Good afternoon Shadow Hills. This is Bob Firing and the new season is beginning. I see some faces that have been gone for the summer. And the north course is greening up. Some of the clubs are starting, bocce ball was starting this afternoon. And I know there are things going on within Sun City Shadow Hills. But there's an awful lot going on in the city of Indio, that you may have missed. And I want to cover all that. And to do that my guest is the city manager of the city, Bryan Montgomery. Bryan, welcome to the podcast.

Bryan Montgomery 00:50

Thank you for having me, Bob. I look forward to the discussion.

Bob Firing 00:54

Yeah, I think that if it's easy for the people here to just pay attention to what's going on within the walls of our development. And there's lots going on, and lots of new businesses starting. And so our residents I think are most interested in is what's going on north of the freeway. So like where the Walmart is, and Jackson and 42nd. And what's happening there.

Bryan Montgomery 01:30

You bet there is a lot going on throughout the community on the north side, significant amount of retail development is taking place under construction at the showcase shopping center. So this is the corner of 42 in Jackson, the southwest corner, we have a new ice cream shop going in next to Dave's Hot Chicken and Chipotle right there. Also, there's a new Pollo Loco that just opened in that retail center and under construction is a hotel located more toward the Vallarta Market and toward the Tractor Supply. And that construction is underway. So a significant amount of construction just within that complex. As well as there have been some renovations. I know Chase Bank has just renovated inside. Buzz Box, which has a large facility there next to Tractor Supply has done some renovations and some expansion. And there's a new indoor StorQuest going in at that location. So from a retail standpoint, there's just a lot going on at 42 Across the way there's a Tilly's as well as a Skechers store going in next to the Five Below and note that construction will take place. Also recently there have been some added and there'll be more added electric vehicle charging stations. So Tesla is setting up there and expanding what they have to offer at that location. So quite a bit going on there on the north west, north east corner rather of 42 and Jackson, we have Dutch Brothers coffee as well as one other very well known quick serve that hasn't ready to announce yet but they will be going in there near the golf

course. Right on that northeast corner. So again, a lot going on just in that 42 in Jackson area. On the north side. We also have more toward Walmart here of Raising Canes has been announced. It's a quick serve, that will be located there near the Starbucks and Arby's in that general area as well as a couple of others that have sent in letters of intent. So there's just a lot of retail activity right there along Avenue 42 On the north side, in response to the number of residents there and so forth and they're in the retail tends to follow as they get the rooftops built.

Bob Firing 04:10

And so then what's going on within the city in downtown Indio?

Bryan Montgomery 04:17

Well, that is where, you know, finally we feel like it's time to return a focus and from a retail restaurant, dining and a gathering a community gathering spot in downtown which historically has been the case but over the last 10 to 20 years has changed but we have two new buildings from the College of the Desert that are under construction as we speak. They will also once those are completed be doing a renovation of the existing campus facility. So they're spending well over \$100 million on their investment in the downtown. And that is already underway. We also have a handful of restaurants that that are locating to or under construction right now along miles and others are underway, including a taproom a brewery, a small craft brewery type restaurant that has recently been recently featured by Guy Fieri. And there are two or three other exciting mixed use developments. So these are we will use the term mixed use it's residential above. And then we tell office on the bottom. And we actually have three of those along oasis that had been approved, one should start construction over the next couple of months. The other two are currently in their plan review stage. And that will be further investment in the downtown. We're also working on a new library as well as a new city hall building. So these structures that have been here for 50 plus years and are somewhat obsolete and, and not as functional, will eventually go away as we continue to invest in a in a new, brighter downtown. Also to start on October 9, again, this year is our farmers market. So we'll see that on Sunday mornings on the corner of town and bliss. And that's just a week or so away, though they will be they will be starting actually to Sunday, right?

Bob Firing 06:29

Sunday.

Bryan Montgomery 06:31

So a lot going on in the downtown significant investment. We've got some signage up, not only in the downtown to help people understand what's going into these older buildings that are being renovated but also along how they want to live. And we've put some, some banners up along the fence lines to try to guide people to the downtown and informing them of what's going on. We have held for almost a year now our second Saturday's concerts. This is a free concert on the corner of Smurr and Miles. And this weekend. We have that concert once again as the second Saturday of every month in the evening. And we will soon be building a stage that will permanently house the second Saturday and other concert and community events downtown. So you see how the downtown is, again, trying to reinvigorate itself and become that gathering living room for the community to show up and dine and hear music and enjoy a real peaceful, calm walkable downtown.

Bob Firing 07:36

Are there going to be new apartments that are going to be built in conjunction with COD's location there?

Bryan Montgomery 07:44

Yes, not by COD but private parties will we have three of them. They've already been approved as one of them will be under construction for in the next couple of months. That's on the corner of Oasis and bliss. So those will total almost 200 housing units downtown that will support cod as well as others

Bob Firing 08:08

well thanks. That's good. I mean there's gonna be a lot a lot more people downtown on a permanent basis. And I was just thinking that so we the new Kia dealership has opened up here. And as is there more activity in the auto center contemplated.

Bryan Montgomery 08:29

We do hear of another dealership that's very much interested the Kia dealership has been a huge success as they have just opened over the last couple of months and the owner reported to me last week that they are doing great. And next to it there is space for another dealership under construction right now is the used car dealership for Honda Unicars. So they are expanding and will have a large inventory of pre owned vehicles. And that fence is already up and you can see the construction going on. As part of that there are a couple of other vacant parcels within the Auto Mall area. And again, we hear interest from RV boat as well as at least one other major car dealerships. So we continue to work the market there and hopefully I can bring a couple more in to the mall.

Bob Firing 09:35

And it seems to me that so talk about the new Van Gogh exhibit that's going to go on it seems like a real coup for the city that that we got that and not another city in the desert.

Bryan Montgomery 09:50

Absolutely. Well this just commenced this last weekend. But at the Polo Grounds, there's a very large indoor facility that was able to house the exhibit? And so the beautiful grounds are the Empire Polo Grounds is available there as well as this, this large structure to hold the event. I have not attended yet, but I will and from rave reviews, just trying to target the site, I think those that planned for the event and looked in the valley, where can we best gather people in the type of environment with the parking and the grounds that really is fitting for such a display man they selected in deal with the Polo Grounds. They're off of Monroe.

Bob Firing 10:38

And another thing that there's changing this year is the Indio fairgrounds are going to be operated by a private operator, rather than the county. And my understanding is that they're planning to have a lot more events there. Do you know anything about that?

Bryan Montgomery 10:59

Yes, in fact, we have been in communication just so that we're aware of all of these events coming in. The pandemic certainly slowed the county down on holding other events others than the actual fairgrounds and date festival, that this new company is trying to energize and, and make available the whole facility every weekend. And so we already understand there will be number, a new number of events coming up. I know there's a monster truck event coming up soon, it will be a much more active space than it has been previously.

Bob Firing 11:35

And I think this would be a good time to mention that Indio is rebranding itself. And you've got you've hired a marketing company to help improve our image around the world. And so would you talk about that a little bit?

Bryan Montgomery 11:52

Yeah, in fact, we hired a firm, consulting firm last summer and did some significant survey work focus groups, trying to gather the analytics of how Indio as the largest city in the valley, and the city that first incorporated so the oldest city can stand out and step up. And through that process, we've come up with a new logo and branding program. The logo, as I hope many of your listeners have seen is much more vibrant than the consultant used the term of putting on our red lipstick, so to speak, trying to be noticed and stand up and be proud. And so the colors show that initially when I saw the colors, I was a little bit maybe surprised at how bold they were. But the consultants said, Well, let me show you a few logos of some very capable companies that have researched this and Google eBay, Microsoft to CNBC NBC anyway, they went through this list of other companies that saw these colors as a symbol of progress and wanting to stand out. We have a tagline now with the city of festivals, and always will be. But the tagline says "take center stage." And we think it's finally time for Indio to take center stage to be the one that shows up as the largest city the most dynamic, fastest growing city in the valley, where we truly have momentum and energy. And this new branding shows that and we have hired a firm to help us implement that and to spread the word. We're putting up signs throughout the community and doing our best to brand ourselves as something moving forward something exciting. We have all kinds of folks in the community taking center stage. And we want to be the example that ourselves. And I think that's what's going to be seen over the next several years.

Bob Firing 13:50

Right? Yeah, it's interesting. You can go anywhere in the world practically. And you tell people you're from Indio, California, you get a blank face. But if you tell them that that's where the Coachella Music Festival is held. They all want know about it, and they all want to come Sunday.

Bryan Montgomery 14:06

They do in fact on that point. So just as everyone walked into the Coachella and stagecoach festivals this last year, one of our first unveilings of our new brand and logo. Were the six foot tall letters that literally 1000s and 1000s of people took their photo in front of while at Coachella just to remind them of which city they were in.

Bob Firing 14:28

That's cool.

Bryan Montgomery 14:28

And to help that branding throughout the world.

Bob Firing 14:31

Yeah, yeah. And so the next thing on my list is you never know who's going to be listening to this podcast. And I know the city is sponsoring some \$5,000 grants for nonprofits. And so would you talk about that and what you're looking for?

Bryan Montgomery 14:52

Yes, the city council, appropriated some funds and established a program all of which is available online. For nonprofits and other worthy entities that are taking center stage striving to do something to improve Indio, and the grants are up to \$5,000. There may be some that would be less and some of the requests may be less. But the application process will be four times a year, knowing that some of these fundraising activities take place throughout the year. The first one is coming up very soon. So those that may be interested, will want to check out our website and fill out the online form, provide the information make the best argument possible, again, acknowledging the city council's acknowledging that it's not only the city and the residents in general that are making an impact. But these nonprofits out there can make a huge impact in the lives of our residents. And the council wants to help invest and encourage that positive activity that these nonprofits bring

Bob Firing 15:56

Is there, are you looking for a nonprofit to be located in Indio? Or is there a, you know, is there a thing, the reason to tie in do into these or is it just a straight grant?

Bryan Montgomery 16:12

Yeah, the most competitive will be those that are located in Indio, those that will provide services in Indio could also be considered under some circumstances, but the priority is for those local nonprofits that are located here within the community.

Bob Firing 16:29

Okay, and the last thing on my list is not exactly when it's part of the city, but the Coachella Valley History Museum has a rather neat event. I won't say it in Spanish, but it's the Day of the Dead. And it's a really unique concept where it's the day that you we people honor family members who have died. And they, they bring a photo of them, they bring their favorite things. And it's very much a part of the Hispanic culture. And it's going to, you know, the big event is right here at the Coachella Valley History Museum. Can you expand on anything that I just said,

Bryan Montgomery 17:20

it is a great event, great tradition, a Disney movie, fairly recently, Coco is a great learning tool for those that may not be accustomed with the tradition, the event. But I would certainly encourage all to contact the museum, go onto the website, the Coachella Valley History Museum and sign up to come to the

dinner. So there'll be a dinner as well as a demonstration of these altars, and explanation of the event, some great food and drink and really a good time together, appreciating the tradition, but also just sharing time together as a community, I will be there and I look forward to it. The last year I attended and it was a very successful event there is it's a fundraiser element as well for the museum. So we would hope many of your listeners would buy some tickets and enjoy that evening on November 5.

Bob Firing 18:14

Okay, well, that's all the things I had written down. Is there anything going on that I've missed?

Bryan Montgomery 18:23

Oh, there's just, you know, right now, we're there more than 50 count the work being done by the county on how we want to live and we're paving over \$15 million worth of streets. So utilizing a special tax measure x funding that the voters approved to just pave as much as we can this year. We'll do it every single year, but it's a huge investment. They say almost \$15 million of street work. We know there's some inconvenience with that, but it's the price of progress and improving the community. So the county work is on highway 111. It should wrap up here in the next couple of months. It's pretty extensive reconstruction. And the rest of the city work should be done also within the next 30 to 45 days. On streets throughout the community. We've touched almost every part of the community I'm doing this paving work.

Bob Firing 19:15

And that did trigger another thought. I know the plan is to upgrade the Monroe exit off the freeway just like they did Jefferson is there a timetable on that?

Bryan Montgomery 19:28

It's really waiting some mostly federal funding so the city's funding has been set aside for the project. This will be a new bridge arrangement across the Interstate at Monroe. Jackson is also another one that is in need of work, it would come later. But probably within a two year window we would hope all the funds will be in the design will be complete and we'll be able to start construction on that project. It's close to \$100 million. So to gather that type of money You're both locally, regionally, state level and the federal government has been, has been a huge challenge. But we're at it. I just had a lunch meeting with someone who is assisting in that process of getting the federal money and it looks good, but it's just going to take a little bit more time to, to raise the funds.

Bob Firing 20:18

And here's one more I know that the mayor went back to Washington to try to lobby to have a train stop here. And is there any progress on that, as far as you know,

Bryan Montgomery 20:36

There's been great interest, we know, from not just the federal government at the state level on alternative modes of transportation, so hoping people can more get out of their vehicles and get onto a train. And this would be a commuter train platform right here in downtown Indio. It has some history as being one. But in theory, you could go anywhere Amtrak goes, any where commuter train goes, and just hop on here and hop off after you've done your trip. So certainly, both Phoenix and LA would be

the most common route. But with some transfers, you could get all the way to Washington, DC, if you wanted to on a train ride from downtown Indio. There is some preliminary analysis being done and the studies and so the mayor went back east to help obtain some of the planning money that's necessary at this point. And he reports that they're our delegation was favorably impressed and just a matter of going through the appropriations process to get those funds set aside. That's millions 10s of millions, just to do the environmental and other planning studies.

Bob Firing 21:48

Okay, well, thank you for taking the time to update the residents on what's going on here. You see, there's this is a very dynamic city. We've got a lot of land and a pro growth City Council. And so lots of good things can be happening here in the future. So Brian, thank you for your time, and I look forward to you updating us again in the future.

Bryan Montgomery 22:14

Thank you, Bob. Thank you.

Bob Firing 22:15

Okay, and for the audience. Thank you for your attention, and until next time, bye bye.