

Jim Schooler, Candidate for Yucca Valley Town Council, District 1

What is your vision of the role of rural character in your community as it relates to progress and economic well-being, and how might you attain that vision as a Council member?

Like so many Morongo Basin residents, I remember fondly the look and feel of Yucca Valley when I first arrived here. The clean air, the open spaces, the charm of the small rural desert community and the seemingly relaxed attitude of its 6,000 residents were compelling to a young man hoping to experience life outside of the big city. Having grown up in West Los Angeles, Santa Monica and the San Fernando Valley, my "normal" surroundings consisted of the endless development, expansion and congestion associated with metropolitan areas. In my high school and college years, I determined that I would prefer to live and raise a family in the small-town environment of a rural area if possible. When I moved to Yucca Valley, it didn't take long for me to assimilate into the life and culture of what would become my children's hometown.

As much as we might want to shut the door behind us when we arrive here, we know that is not possible. Communities are dynamic; they will move forward or backward, but they will always be changing. I am grateful that the Morongo Basin hasn't experienced the explosive uncontrolled growth that has taken hold in other areas. I believe that our residents and community leaders share a deep appreciation for our rural character. Growth and change will happen, but it is vitally important to manage our growth with reasonable balance of control that promotes economic stability, accommodates the priorities of our citizens, and protects our rural character.

My vision is that we will maintain our small-town feel while we simultaneously keep up with the times. We can continue to grow and improve our community with reasonable compromises between development projects and environmental concerns. As a councilmember, I would not support large solar farms or other projects that dismiss the value of our environment and rural character. One initiative that I am excited about is the effort to bring broadband internet to our area. Such an infrastructure would serve our citizens and grow our economy by allowing residents to make a living, receive

medical care, and pursue their education online with little impact on our natural environment. Our community leaders will be asked to consider other opportunities that come our way in the years ahead. I look forward to participating in those decisions and improving our town while remembering what first attracted us to Yucca Valley.