



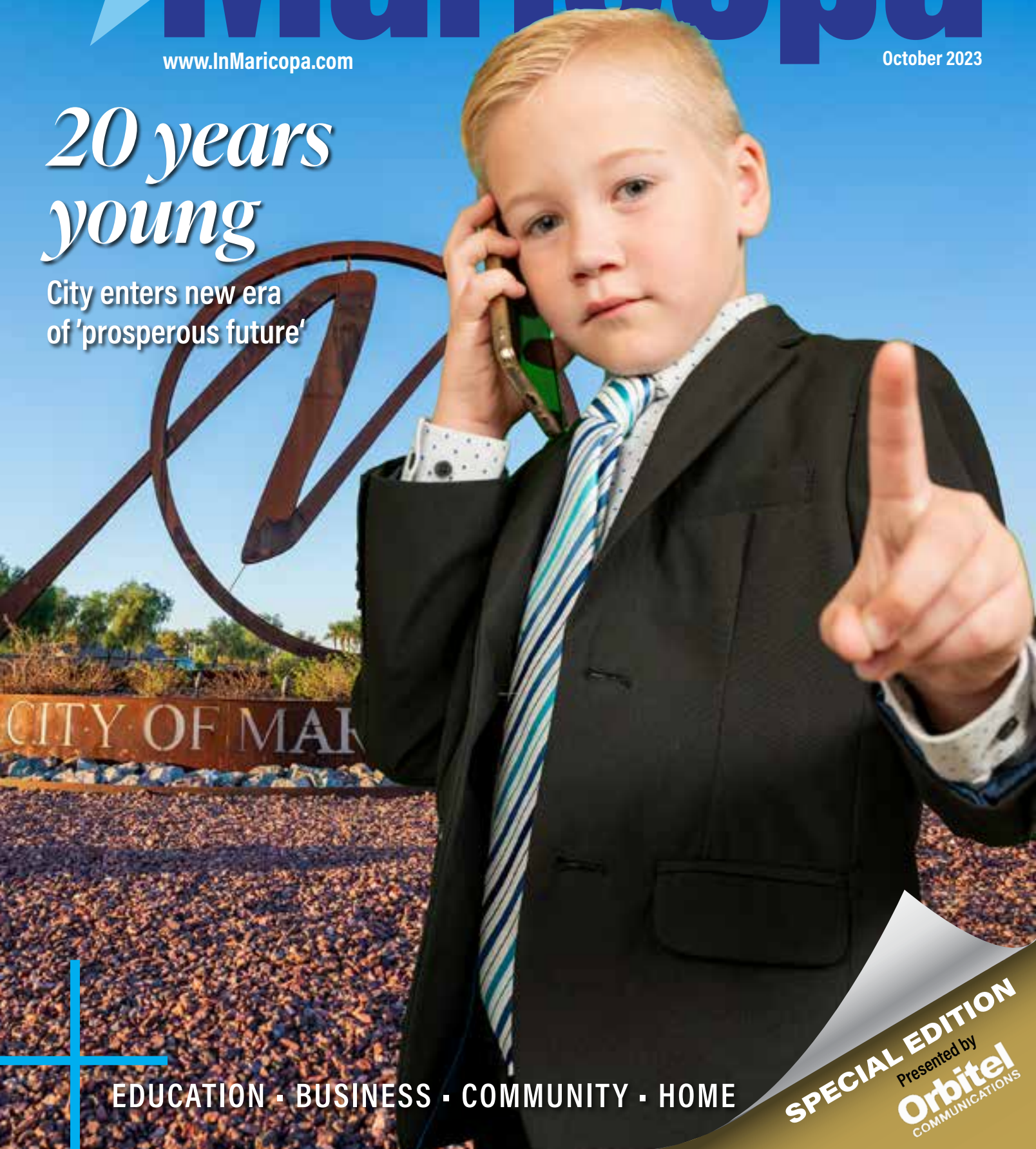
# Maricopa

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October 2023

## 20 years young

City enters new era of 'prosperous future'



CITY OF MARICOPA

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27560R20 Yokohama Geolander G015	\$299.99
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22560R16 All Season Radial 98H	\$114.99	23545R18 All Season Radial 100W	\$127.99
23570R16 All Season Radial 107T	\$114.99	23550R18 All Season Radial 101W	\$129.99
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OTHER SIZES AVAILABLE. 40,000 Mileage Warranty

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OTHER SIZES AVAILABLE

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21545R17 Assurance Maxlife 87V BLK	\$217.99
21555R17 Assurance Maxlife 94V BLK	\$215.99
22565R17 Assurance Maxlife 102H BLK	\$217.99

OTHER SIZES AVAILABLE

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#### \*BUY 3, GET 4TH FREE

SIZE	BUY 3 PRICE
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Includes hazardous waste fee. If your MFG. Requires 20W50, or full synthetic oil, or other special weights, there's an additional charge for other weights of oil. Price is for 5W20 or 5W30 synthetic blend oil up to 5 quarts. With coupon only. Expires 10/31/23.

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Most cars & light trucks with coupon only. Expires 10/31/23

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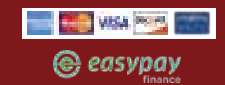
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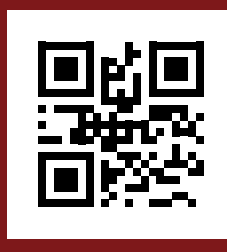
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State or local taxes or surcharges for Environmental protection will be an extra charge.

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**ON THE COVER**

Bryan Mordt captures this commanding shot of Nathan Mangum (photo illustration), a sharp-dressed 7-year-old who lives in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado. This young Maricopan, pictured in front of the iconic rusted metal sculpture welcoming southbound drivers to town, could be a future leader in the city. See more future Maricopa leaders on page 39.



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Hey Maricopa!

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# Like fine china

Fine china has long symbolized the 20th anniversary, a milestone the great city of Maricopa celebrates this month. Brimming with captivating intricacies, the gift of fine china demands our careful attention — much like the city itself.

It cannot be tossed casually into a dishwasher; instead, it requires deliberate handwashing and tender drying. Just as it has taken steadfast leadership to nurture Maricopa's profound growth by hand, as exemplified by Arizona state Rep. Teresa Martinez's tireless efforts to make our roads safe and accessible as recounted by Justin Griffin in this edition of *InMaricopa*.



Traditionally exchanged among royalty, U.S. presidents and married couples, fine china is a timeless symbol of wealth. A fitting analogy for Maricopa, whose wealth soared like a phoenix from the ashes of the Great Recession, an epic comeback story awaiting your discovery in this magazine.

Chinese porcelain also symbolizes respect and mutual understanding. Likewise, Maricopa has grown to accept those of all ilks, like the city's burgeoning gothic community and their curious collections of eerie porcelain dolls. I've stepped out of the sunlight and into this dark and mysterious world in this issue.

Remember your parents' fine china cabinet growing up? Those delicate porcelain treasures rarely left their wooden confines, only gracing the table during special occasions, signaling the arrival of guests. In much the same way, Maricopa has welcomed countless newcomers since 2003, often

from worlds away. Come with me as I follow one such adventurous soul on her Viking pilgrimage from the Arctic to the desert as you navigate these glossy pages.

When we dare to break out the fine china, people get uptight, agonizing over whether it'll break or not, and that can overshadow the togetherness and celebration it's meant to represent. With Maricopa's exponential growth comes anxiety for some over shattering the city's quiet retreat from cosmopolitan sprawl. Prosperity has no concerns with such trepidations.

Sure, the fine china makes an appearance during special occasions, namely a 20th anniversary. But what it misses, holed up in that dusty kitchen cabinet, are all the moments in between. The memories, triumphs and accomplishments that we as Maricopans achieve each and every day in our bustling little city.

I invite you to celebrate this milestone in whichever way you feel most appropriate, be it with familiar loved ones or newfound neighbors. Let us usher in this era of growth with a touch of elegance, raising a toast in fine china vessels.

Oh, and when you see the goths out hunting for ghosts in Maricopa later this month, remember our city's rural tradition isn't a specter but the heart of an ever-evolving place. I, for one, can't wait to see what the next evolution brings.

And as always, thank you for reading *InMaricopa*.

**ELIAS WEISS**  
MANAGING EDITOR | [Elias@InMaricopa.com](mailto:Elias@InMaricopa.com)

## CONTRIBUTORS



**TRUDY FULLER**

Trudy informs on the ins and outs of growing garlic in the desert. Hint, don't expect the same product you get in a grocery store.



**TOM SCHUMAN**

Tom delves into the emerging world of pickleball. This new sport is taking over the world — and Maricopa is no different.



**RICK HORST**

The city manager offers a look at the past, present and future as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Maricopa's incorporation.



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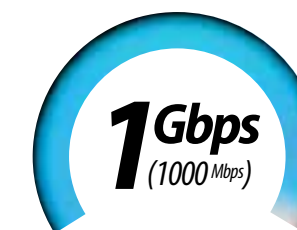
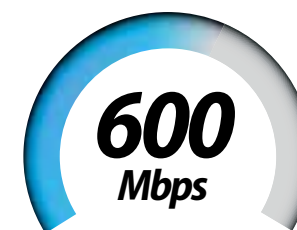
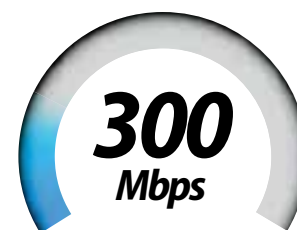
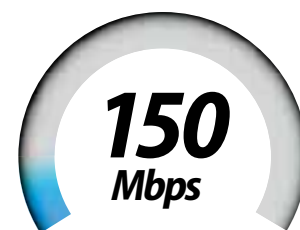
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CELEBRATING

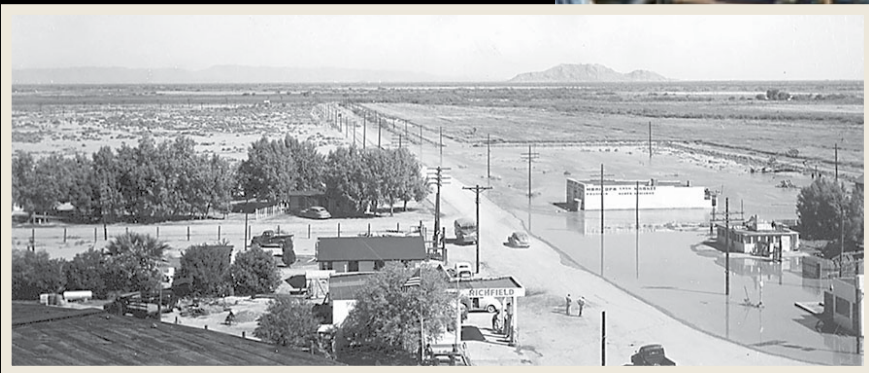
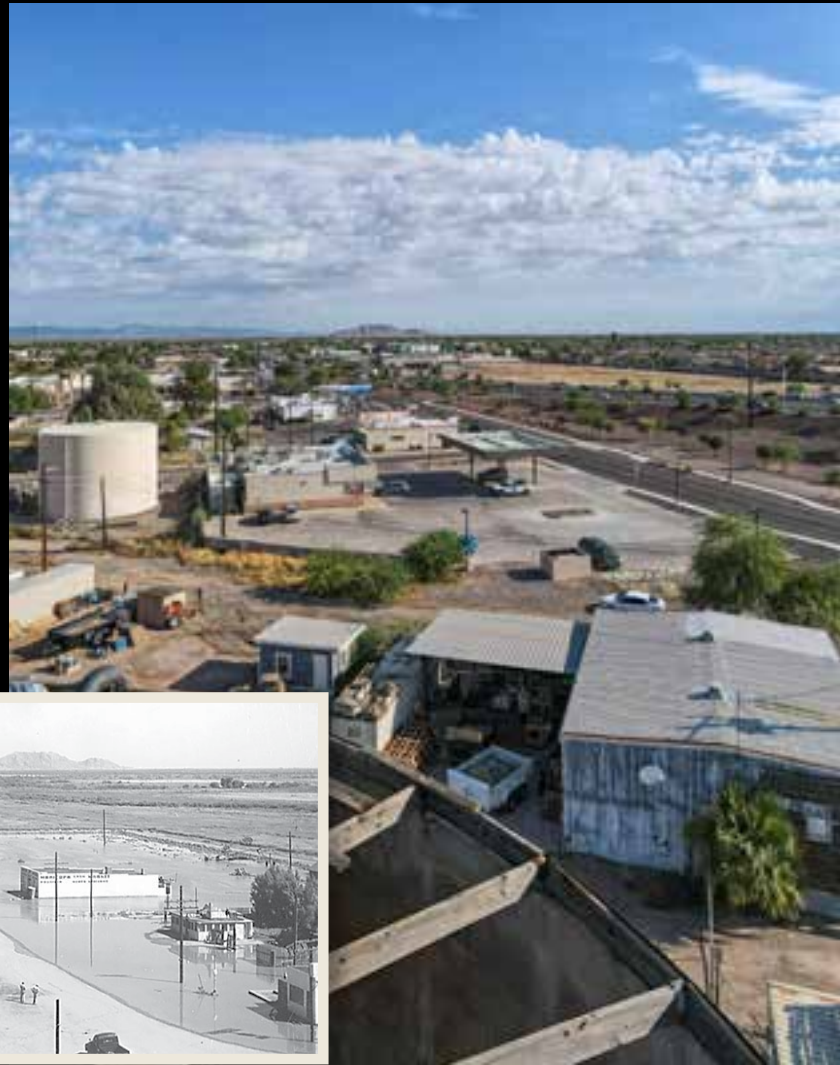
Maricopa's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

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## All along the water tower

The old water tower is a familiar landmark that highlights the city's history as a hub for trains. This old tower has seen it all. The bottom photo was taken after a flood hit the town in 1949. The Maricopa dirt road heading north runs along the bed for the former Maricopa & Phoenix Railroad line that stopped running in the mid-1930s. Maricopa Market is the upper-right, white building. The recent photo shows North John Wayne Parkway where the dirt road once was. Today, the road is John Wayne Parkway, and many local businesses can be seen. In the top right corner, you can see The Villages at Rancho El Dorado.



SAVE WATER  
OUTDOORS

## Up to 70% of residential drinking water is used for landscaping

Fall is just around the corner, which means it is a great time to design and select plants for your landscape.



### TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

- ✓ **Make a plan, even if it's simple** — have a plan for plant groupings, plant locations, and low water use plants to use before you spend any money
- ✓ **Mix it up** — the general rule for successful plant groupings is something tall, something triangular and something round
- ✓ **Group plants by water requirements** — this makes installing irrigation easy and reduces the chances of over or under watering
- ✓ **Use color** — desert plants are extremely diverse offering color in the form of flowers, leaves, bark, and even thorns, take advantage!
- ✓ **Select the right plant for the right place** — whether it is a tree, shrub, cactus, or succulent consider the size of the fully grown plant when selecting location

### THIS MONTH BACK IN...

For these and other historical stories, visit [InMaricopa.com](http://InMaricopa.com).



2008

Residents looking to fill their gas tanks had another option when QuikTrip joined Maricopa's main strip Oct. 9. It joined Fry's Marketplace, Shell and two Circle K gas stations on John Wayne Parkway. Shell has since become Chevron, and Maricopa Auto Outlet replaced one of the Circle K locations.



2013

The first official city council meeting at the new City Hall was held Oct. 29. Two clowns feigned arresting Maricopa Police Chief Steve Stahl for shopping at a Target store in Casa Grande, a skit that supplemented the city's efforts to convince residents to shop local.



2018

City council rezoned land for the city's first apartment complex. The 6-acre parcel on Porter Road north of Walmart and south of Banner Health was rezoned from industrial to mixed use. Oasis at The Wells and Horizon at The Wells welcomed tenants three years later.

Maricopa Historical Society | Brian Petersheim Jr.

For additional landscape design resources visit  
[www.gwresources.com/conservation-education](http://www.gwresources.com/conservation-education)

# Maricopa: One community united for the future

BY CITY MANAGER RICK HORST



**O**N THE BUSTLING CROSSROADS of Honeycutt and Porter Roads, and once more at the juncture of Honeycutt and Plainview, Maricopa's residents are met with a delightful sight: two vibrant signal boxes standing as distinctive landmarks.

The first showcases a helmeted astronaut, while the second features a submerged deep-sea diver, both set against captivating backdrops blending elements of space, ocean and desert. When these artistic installations made their debut last year, they prompted a question in the community: "What do these figures signify in Maricopa?"

While artistic expression often invites interpretation, the artist behind these creations, who chooses to remain anonymous, sheds light on the inspiration behind these works. He explains he sought to capture the essence of the people who call Maricopa home.

What common threads unite them? Often, they are drawn to Maricopa by the allure of affordable housing, promising job opportunities and a safe haven to raise their families. Over just two decades, these advantages have enticed more than 70,000 people from across the nation to uproot their lives and embrace Maricopa's ever-expanding desert retreat.

In their pursuit of dreams, this city's residents embody the same resolute spirit as astronauts and deep-sea divers, epitomizing determined exploration. In their respective domains, they are pioneers, venturing into the far reaches of the universe and the uncharted depths of the ocean.

Likewise, Maricopa's residents are pioneers, undeterred by the challenges of the harsh desert environment. They are trailblazers, innovators, groundbreakers and trendsetters, shaping the city's rich heritage and providing the foundation for their homes. It's no surprise a community that has captured the hearts of so many in such a short time now stands at the precipice of a new frontier in expansion.

Today, residents witness rapid and tangible signs of progress in their city. The completion of the once seemingly unattainable overpass on John Wayne Parkway has unleashed Maricopa's full potential. The city has seen a surge in retail offerings, with new shopping outlets and restaurants springing up. Maricopa celebrated the opening of its first 24-hour hospital and

Bryan Mordt | Submitted





emergency center, saving lives nearly every day.

Furthermore, the establishment of new school campuses, competitive salaries and improved living accommodations has led to significantly enhanced retention rates among qualified and dedicated teachers.

Maricopa has ventured into the national event tourism arena, complemented by the pristine fields at Copper Sky, promising to invigorate the local economy. Public art initiatives and beautification projects are revitalizing the city, fostering a sense of communal pride and identity.

Investments in transportation infrastructure are enhancing daily commutes while groundbreaking for a new police headquarters and courthouse positions the city for a secure future. With this growth, job opportunities in Maricopa have flourished, exemplifying the defining progress enveloping the community.

As the city reaches new heights, many


residents ponder what life in Maricopa will look like in the next 20 years.

In light of all that has been accomplished together, we invite you to envision "Greater Maricopa" with us! Imagine vibrant neighborhoods adorned with lush landscapes, inspired by local ecology, evoking a sense of oasis in the desert. Picture creative neighborhoods teeming with boutique shops, eclectic restaurants, small businesses, entertainment, and local arts and crafts. Envision regional and national shopping opportunities and diverse housing options that foster daily interaction, strengthening civic bonds.

Imagine a community with a small-town feel, rich cultural and social amenities, vibrant green spaces, excellent schools and a strong sense of safety. Imagine a community that remembers its heritage, remains responsible for one another and gives more than it takes. Imagine a community that welcomes all.

For newcomers, these goals may seem ambitious, but those who have witnessed Maricopa's momentum firsthand know they are not only attainable but already within reach.

As city manager, I am often asked, "How will we prepare for this growth?" To this exciting challenge, I respond: We will do so intentionally, strategically and as one community. We will embrace our differences and use them to bring us closer together.

To all the astronauts, deep-sea divers, pioneers and dreamers of the world, we extend a warm welcome. Come and discover why Maricopa is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. Come and experience why so many choose to call this place home. Join us in finding sustainable solutions and building a thriving city for all. Together, we can shape the future of Maricopa. 

Submitted

# Going on the record



**Eric Goettl**

**Maricopan since:** 2004  
**Community:** The Villages  
**Favorite activity in town:** We love to enjoy nice nights on the edge of town, admiring the beautiful sunsets and night sky views.  
**Describe Maricopa in 2043:** In the city of Maricopa 2040 Vision, I totally agree with one of the opening paragraphs: "The city of Maricopa is a family-friendly, vibrant community that offers diverse opportunities in culture, technology, education, business, entrepreneurship, transportation, entertainment and recreation for all ages. A close-knit community of committed leaders, engaged citizens, and diverse partners with pride in our history, and a shared vision for a prosperous future." While we still have areas to improve on, we have done very well over the past seven years to make this vision a reality. The next 20 years will bring a next level of growth and services to our city.  
**What changes do your constituents want to see?** We are working hard to fix our transportation and infrastructure challenges, bring more careers — not just jobs — and industry to our city, and keep us among the top 10 safest cities to live and play.



**Amber Liermann**

**Maricopan since:** 2004  
**Community:** Alterra  
**Favorite places in town:** City Hall, Copper Sky Park, Maricopa High School and Plaza Bonita restaurant.  
**Favorite activity in town:** I enjoy spending time with family and friends and serving the community when I have the opportunity.  
**Describe Maricopa in 2043:** Maricopa in 2043 will be double in population with many more amenities and opportunities to live, work, play and worship.  
**What is Maricopa doing well?** Maricopa is fighting for improved safety by advocating in every arena for transportation expansion.  
**What changes do your constituents want to see?** Constituents want to see continued safety, improvement in roads and infrastructure.



**Vincent Manfredi**

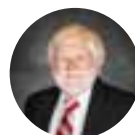
**Maricopan since:** 2010  
**Community:** Maricopa Meadows  
**Favorite place in town:** My home, when I have time to relax.  
**Favorite activity in town:** There are so many, but outside of spending time with family, it is sitting on the dais for a council meeting.  
**Describe Maricopa in 2043:** In my opinion, in 20 years, Maricopa will be a place where citizens can work, recreate and live knowing their family is safe. I hope it is where my daughters buy homes and I get to spend a ton of time with my future grandchildren.  
**What is Maricopa doing well?** Maricopa is living within its means and working hard to build a future we can be proud of.  
**What changes do your constituents want to see?** I believe residents want more jobs, fixes to SR 347 and better roads around town. Although not a "change," I believe they want continued fiscal responsibility.

*Editor's note: Vincent Manfredi is an owner of InMaricopa.*



**Nancy Smith**

**Maricopan since:** Pre-incorporation  
**Favorite place and things to do in town:** Our park system is extremely impressive and one of my favorite places to spend time with family. We have two large parks, Pacana and Copper Sky, and recently opened two new dog parks to enjoy with our pets. Soon, we'll be opening another new park at The Lakes in Rancho El Dorado. For such a young city, we've been blessed with lovely places to play.  
**Describe Maricopa in 2043:** In this year's budget, we've included the goal to complete a master plan for an industrial park that provides a vision for companies to consider. I'd certainly like to see multiple companies fill this park by 2043.  
**What changes do your constituents want to see?** One of our highest priorities is our partnership with the Maricopa Economic Development Alliance to bring more high-paying jobs to our city.



*Editor's note: Councilmembers Bob Marsh, Rich Vitiello and Henry Wade were unwilling to participate in this panel.*

## Home sweet home

**M**ARICOPA WATER AND ICE, located in the Bashes' shopping center, is a family-owned business that started in 2004.

Owner Tonya Thompson was born and raised in Arizona. Her family moved to Maricopa when she was 2 years old.

"I love my hometown and the people who live here," Thompson said. "My customers are like family to me."

Maricopa Water and Ice is known for its quality drinking water through reverse osmosis, alkaline water and ice. It also sells customer favorites like Thrifty ice cream, soft-serve ice cream, fresh fruit smoothies, protein and antioxidant add-ins, and your favorite nostalgic candy at family-friendly prices.

Maricopa Water and Ice supports the community by donating water and ice for local sports teams and city events.

As Maricopa grows, Thompson continues to give back to her community. She partnered with Safe House founder Jelani Elliot to provide a fun and non-judgmental environment for teens at her store every month.

"I am truly blessed that I can provide a much-needed service to my community," Thompson said. "I look forward to continuing to evolve and grow with this community that I love."

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Water & Ice owner Tonya Thompson



# The road to El Dorado



## Mike Ingram

EL DORADO HOLDINGS CO-FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN

### What changes do you expect to see in the next 20 years?

Maricopa will not just be known as a bedroom community over the next 20 years. You're going to see a lot of employment that will develop within Maricopa, sooner than you think sitting here today. It's coming, and it's coming quickly.

### Do you consider Maricopa to be metro Phoenix? If so, when did that happen?

I think Maricopa became metro Phoenix whenever it joined the Maricopa Association of Governments. You started seeing yourself as part of Phoenix, a part of the Valley. Now, you're included in structure deals that involve the whole region.

### What's next up for development in Maricopa?

I think you're going to see a lot of health care. I think there will be a real interest in Maricopa for improved health care and improved infrastructure in the whole city.

## Chris Grogan

EL DORADO HOLDINGS PRESIDENT

### Where do you see real estate in 20 years?

You'll continue to see residential demand out to the east.

### What about commercial real estate?

You're on the cusp right now and in the next 20 years of seeing some real push for employment. You're going to see some heads turn towards, 'Why aren't we doing more with employment type development real estate plays in this area?' I think you'll see some of the Trammell Crows, the big developers that are up in the Valley, those types of players look at Maricopa with a little more detail.

### Are you currently involved in any Maricopa projects?

Right now, we are under construction on Porter Road. We own some of the land there, we put some of the multifamily developers there and we're developing EVR Porter across from Walmart. We have some commercial plays there as well. Down in the Stanfield area, which is part of Maricopa's planning area, we do have some properties down there that are being planned as well.



Elias Weiss



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**Jim Kenny**

EL DORADO HOLDINGS CEO

**Do you consider Maricopa to be metro Phoenix? If so, when did that happen?**

They're trying to create a full city in Maricopa with the different amenities and the different options for different types of housing and businesses that come. You're going to see it, more and more, become reflexively automatically part of metropolitan Phoenix.

**What will bring more commercial development to Maricopa?**

It's very numerically driven. When you have a certain number of people, it's the right time to build office buildings, it's the right time to build more retail, it's the right time to build manufacturing. All different types of development look to the population.

**To what do you attribute the development trajectory?**

City Manager Rick Horst has done a really good job, and the city council has supported this in terms of setting the stage to bring more people in so that the commercial employment functions can begin to take off as they already are. The stage is set there, they're ready to go, everything's in place and it's just evolving in the right way.

Elias Weiss



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# How Mike Ingram brought together the building blocks of Maricopa



Developer Mike Ingram ignored skepticism and followed his vision for Maricopa.

**M**IKE INGRAM IS NOT CRAZY OR stupid.

That may be obvious to observers now, but 28 years ago, many of Arizona's most knowledgeable movers and shakers thought he was nuts. Now the chairman of El Dorado Holdings, which he founded in 1992, Ingram became one of the most influential people forming the modern history of Maricopa.

After creating Rancho El Dorado and sister subdivisions The Villages and the Lakes, El Dorado Holdings still has thousands of acres in and around Maricopa set for residential and commercial development. It has thousands more acres in other communities it is also developing.

But Maricopa continues to be Ingram's baby. The work has been a combination of puzzle pieces and chess moves to find the right combination of partners and investors in what others thought was a hair-brained scheme.

"I had this vision and plan for a new city there," said Ingram, 78. "At the time, we had entitlements through Pinal County. There was no city of Maricopa. Maricopa was less than 500 people."

His first deal in real estate was with partner Marty Ortman, with whom he purchased El Dorado, a ranch formerly belonging to John Wayne near Stanfield. That gave their fledgling company its name. Then they purchased other farms in the vicinity in 1992 and became known to other landowners.

He still clearly remembers the day Karl Eller called and asked him to lunch at Phoenix Country Club. The late Eller was an advertising

mogul and John Wayne fan, who had purchased the Red River Ranch in 1980 from the late actor's estate.

"I need you to think about buying the Red River from me," Eller told Ingram. "But I need you to close it in a week."

Eller had a loan with a local savings-and-loan company that had collapsed and been taken over by the U.S. government. He made a deal with Resolution Trust Company, the government's asset-management company, to pay off the loan. Time was running short. He offered Ingram a fair price.

"So, we bought the Red River in '92," Ingram said. "I had a love for John Wayne my whole life. When we bought El Dorado Ranch, I was real excited to be a part of that deal, the Louis Johnson and John Wayne history behind it and what that means to the whole community down there. And preserving that history, you just don't have any idea what that means to me."

When El Dorado Holdings had Red River in escrow, Ingram received a call from Louis Johnson, Wayne's long-time business partner in Maricopa, whose property was in the middle of Red River. Johnson said he wanted to be a partner in Ingram's real estate plans and set him up with Willard Sparks, one of the largest commodity traders in the nation.

Another partner, Dr. James Little, became one of Ingram's best friends.

## It started with a road

When Ingram began buying farmland around Maricopa, some residents thought he could be key to solving a serious problem: Maricopa Road. Community leaders like Alma Farrell,

Jane Askew and Ann Donithan were hosting meetings in their homes to get property owners on board with widening the deadly, two-lane strip.

Leading farmers Bill Scott and John Smith reached out to Ingram, getting the ball rolling for the Maricopa Road Association.

"He recognized that we needed to have a four-lane highway coming out here," Smith said. "So, we got together and posted a bond issue. We knew that the county wouldn't help finance it. So, we voted on it, and it just barely passed."

In 1989, Arizona Department of Transportation was ready to accept the road if the association could raise half the money.

"The citizens of western Pinal County all had a big, big part in making that happen," Ingram said. "Alma Farrell was a big part of that. She had many, many meetings, actually gave me a place at Headquarters to work out of in those days. In a room between the bar and the restaurant, that was my little office there in Maricopa. And we went to work on it."

Former U.S. Sen. Dennis DeConcini brought federal money to the table. Pinal and Maricopa counties also came on board. Gila River Indian Community agreed. Property owners around Maricopa voted to tax themselves for the improvement district.

"Mike worked hard, a lot harder than I did," Smith said.

In tragic irony, Jane Askew, who had been a passionate voice in widening the dangerous roadway, was killed in a crash on that very road in 1990. The main park in Rancho El Dorado is named in her honor.

The widening of the section of Maricopa Road, newly named State Route 347, to two lanes in each direction was completed in 1996.

Despite naysayers calling it a road to nowhere, Ingram knew it was vital to his plans. He started piecing together his properties, buying farmland from Smith and others.

## The need to believe

Ingram knew he still needed a powerful real estate broker to bring in homebuilders. Each one he called in Phoenix shot him down, telling him Maricopa would just be a bunch of mobile homes.

"In those days, all the interest was on Casa Grande," he said. "I went to every broker in town and showed them my idea. And every broker except one said, 'Mike, you're absolutely crazy. You'll never sell one lot. You'll never sell one home until Casa Grande is completely built out. Do you not understand that Casa Grande has doctors, they have shopping centers, they have car dealers, they have dentists? You have a Circle K and Headquarters, and NAPA was there.'"

The one broker who listened was someone Ingram did not want to approach in the first place. James "Nate" Nathan of Nathan & Associates brokered some of the biggest deals in the state, including Johnson Ranch, Power Ranch and Copper Mountain Ranch in Casa Grande. Ingram saw him as a major competitor.

Nathan listened because he saw what Ingram saw: tiny Maricopa's proximity to the East Valley and Sky Harbor.

"You could tell growth patterns," Nathan said. "He said, 'I can't list this with you because you're going to take the people to those other places.' I said, 'No, I'm not. It's an emerging market.'"

In 2000, Nathan and his partner, David Mullard, took the first phase of 1,000 lots and sold to three homebuilders. It took them just 10 weeks.

Nathan said a top selling point was the newly widened road.

"The affordability in the Southeast Valley was going away, just like it is again, and so Maricopa exploded," Nathan said.

Many homebuilders wanted to go cheap, building homes with carports and swamp coolers, roof-mounted air conditioners and composition roofs instead of tile.

"Mike was like, 'No, I'm creating a whole new city,'" Nathan said. "We went with the builders that Mike believed would build the quality product that he demanded. He never wavered from that once."

Ingram said if he had settled for the county standards, he wouldn't have put in curbs and sidewalks and could have chip-sealed the roads. He said Maricopa would look like Arizona City today. Instead, he wanted standards like those in municipalities like Chandler and Gilbert. At Nathan's insistence, the homebuilders agreed.

Ingram was spending \$14 million on The Duke golf course and another \$3 million on landscaping for phase 1 of Rancho El Dorado and wanted quality homes to go with it. With no impact fees at the time, homebuyers could get an 1,800-square-foot home for what they would pay for a 1,300-square-foot home in Chandler.

The homebuilders were just the first hurdle. Utilities had no interest in coming to Maricopa.

When he had 1,103 lots in escrow with five homebuilders, Ingram went hunting for a water company. He went to Atlanta, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and Dallas.

"Nobody would put in a water company or wastewater," he said. "So, we put in the water and the wastewater."

Eventually, Global Water agreed to take over most of Maricopa's water system, inheriting those early lines.

Ingram asked Cox to provide cable service. That was another no-go from a company that did not believe Maricopa would be a success. Then Ingram found Orbitel and talked its principals into being a partner in the venture.

"Orbitel was certainly one my favorite projects of all time," said Rick Anderson, a partner in Orbitel at the time. "Mike's group had a great vision for Maricopa. I have never witnessed anything like growth in the early days of Maricopa."

Anderson said when he was asked to pull something together after Cox passed on

the opportunity he was impressed with the developers. Two decades later, Cox finally would come to Maricopa.

"I found the Rancho El Dorado group very straightforward in their approach to forming a partnership that formed the foundation for the success of Orbitel," Anderson said.

President John Schurz said the founders of Orbitel "believed in the city of Maricopa and its residents. There is a 'Can Do' spirit that permeates throughout the community. And, like Mike Ingram, Orbitel saw the potential in Maricopa."


Then Ingram received back-to-back doses of bad news.

"The darkest day of my whole life was the day Arizona Public Service told me they wouldn't bring me electricity," he said. "Qwest said they wouldn't bring fiber optics."

Electrical District No. 3 was serving farmers in the area with hydroelectric power. Ingram saw they did not have the capital or the know-how to bring thousands of homes online. So, he flew to California to convince Edison Power to partner with ED3 on a new utility company.

"About that time, Qwest called after they saw the utility formed, and they said, 'We're on our way with fiber optics,'" Ingram said.

Looking back, it might have been easy for Ingram to quit trying to open so many closed doors.

"People didn't believe in it. I would go to these meetings at these restaurants, and people would say I was the craziest man in the world," he said. "We built this four-lane divided highway and thought we could build a town down there. I was absolutely the laughingstock of the real estate community." 



Kyle Norby

# Visionaries

## Monty Ortman

EL DORADO HOLDINGS CO-FOUNDER,  
VINTAGE PARTNERS PRINCIPAL



### Why did you decide to invest in Maricopa?

In the late 1980s, my partner and I had just started our company El Dorado Holdings. We

saw the increase of land values in the Valley and thought that a good business plan would be to identify other opportunities for land development to provide less expensive housing located within a reasonable distance from Sky Harbor Airport. Our search led us to Maricopa, and the rest is history.

### What are the biggest surprises of where Maricopa is today versus where you thought it'd be 20 years ago?

I am thrilled to see the tremendous growth, residential communities, opportunities in education, retail, medical and expanded services. Often, I come across individuals who either live in the city or have relatives living there and they comment about how much they enjoy living in Maricopa.

### What do you hope for the city over the next 20 years?

I hope that as the town grows, the residents of Maricopa are able to continue to retain a strong sense of local community that everyone has come to know, love and appreciate about Maricopa.

### What is your favorite memory of the early days of Maricopa?

One of my most vivid memories that is fresh in my mind, even today, is the day we cut the ribbon on the new Maricopa Road, the 347, which expanded Maricopa Road from a two-lane road to an expanded four-lane divided highway. We had worked on this project for over 10 years and the opening of that road made the dream a reality.

## Rick Anderson

ORBTEL COMMUNICAITONS CO-FOUNDER



### Why did you decide to invest in Maricopa?

I was approached by Rancho El Dorado Holdings about supplying video and internet services because Cox

had passed on the opportunity. I thank them every chance I get.

### What are the biggest surprises of where Maricopa is today versus where you thought it'd be 20 years ago?

I'm still having a hard time comprehending the change. When I made my first visit to the area, there was not a single home — they had just begun grading. Once things got moving, it was truly amazing to see homes being built at the rate that they were.

### What do you hope for the city over the next 20 years?

I hope that it can continue the journey of becoming a model city.

### What is your favorite memory of the early days of Maricopa?

I have two great memories: The first was seeing the Orbital sign turn from black in the daytime to white at nighttime. I guess once that was in place, I felt that we were a real part of the community. The second was going to the cable meetings and reminding Cox that we had twice as many HD channels as them and faster internet speed.

## Larry Miller

MATRIX EQUITIES CEO



### Why did you decide to invest in Maricopa?

We recognized in 2002 that Maricopa, before incorporation, was on the edge of future growth. We

were excited to bring Maricopa Meadows to the community, followed that project with Tortosa and are now in process of building West Maricopa Village.

### What are the biggest surprises of where Maricopa is today versus where you thought it'd be 20 years ago?

We have been surprised at how well the city has managed growth while maintaining its rural character. City staff and officials we've dealt with are considerate, cooperative and professional. Maricopa is a very pleasant place to do business.

### What do you hope for the city over the next 20 years?

We hope to see more employment-based development to keep the community growth stable.

### What is your favorite memory of the early days of Maricopa?

Working with the Tohono O'odham Nation, hunting in the pecan groves near the Santa Rosa Wash and lunch at the Headquarters Café.

## Scott Bartle

INMARICOPA FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER



### Why did you decide to invest in Maricopa?

I was introduced to Maricopa in 2000 by my dad, who was part of the team that developed Southern

Dunes Golf Club. The growth projections for the community in the early 2000s were off the charts, and I wanted to take advantage of that. The hard part was deciding what type of business to start because the community was in need of everything.

### What are the biggest surprises of where Maricopa is today versus where you thought it'd be 20 years ago?

Despite the tremendous growth, it's nothing compared to the early projections. But Maricopa has overcome a lot. It was the posterchild for the economic and housing boom and also of the subsequent bust; and now it's back on the growth leaderboard again. I am surprised larger employers have not yet located here.

### What do you hope for the city over the next 20 years?

I hope the city lands major employers or fully commits to being the best bedroom community in the world. I also hope the electorate chooses smart, sensible and selfless servant leaders to represent us on the city council. We have a professional manager of the city, which wasn't always the case, and when that is complemented by policymakers who are driven by the success of the community more than themselves, magic happens.

### What is your favorite memory of the early days of Maricopa?

The barn dances in Sonny Dunn's barn were great fun, as was having my sister and brother-in-law, who bought the house next door to me in Rancho in 2004, as neighbors.

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# The rise and fall — and rise again — of Maricopa

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**M**ARICOPA'S GROWTH SINCE INCORPORATION IN 2003 may be perceived by some as an overnight success. When you drive up and down John Wayne Parkway, businesses are packed with customers. Traffic is bumper-to-bumper.

Everywhere you look, it's a beehive of economic activity.

That's impressive when you consider in 2003 Maricopa's population was only around 2,000 residents.

Now it's a bustling city of more than 70,000.

According to U.S. Census figures, nearly 6,000 people move to Maricopa each year.

As popular as Maricopa has become these days, it wasn't always the case.

Maricopa was the perfect example of a Wild West boom town in its early years as a city.

Within two years of incorporation, the city saw its population increase to 16,000 and, for a while, it was the fastest growing city in the nation.

Real estate prices were remarkably lower than available stock in the Phoenix area, and people loved the small-town atmosphere.

Spurred by the housing industry, Maricopa still remains among the fastest growing cities in the nation.

But a rapidly expanding bubble almost always bursts.

Dayv Morgan has lived in Maricopa since 2006 and has sold real estate here since 2009. He's experienced the ups and downs of the housing market as a Realtor and a homeowner.

For Maricopa, that moment came during the Great Recession, when housing prices cratered seemingly overnight both nationally and locally.

As the Great Recession took hold around 2008, the flood of interest and new citizens did an about-face.

Houses bought for hundreds of thousands of dollars the year before were sold in foreclosure for \$80,000 — sometimes less.

Dayv Morgan, a Maricopa-based agent who's sold more than \$284 million of real estate since 2009, hadn't yet become a realtor and was caught off guard at the time.

"I think I was a little naïve, really, to where the market was," Morgan said. "The first house we bought was in 2006, which was pretty much the peak of the market here."

He paid \$236,000 for that brand new little house. It was 1,500 square feet.

"We loved that house," he said.

"I don't think we really understood what was happening with the market until one of my neighbors made the comment that our house was only worth \$100,000. We said, 'There's no way.'"

The neighbor's words proved true.

The Morgans lost their home, and the bank sold it for \$80,000, about one-third of what they paid for it.

Morgan's experience during the Great Recession was common in Maricopa.

According to the 2010 census, Maricopa's population was 43,482. And from 2008 through 2012, the city saw 5,124 foreclosures. Based on census data for an average household of 2.5 people, that means there were roughly 16,992 homes in Maricopa at the time. In other words, nearly 1 in 3 homes suffered foreclosure during that period.

## The straw that stirs the drink

In the early days of incorporated Maricopa, the city's economic driver was housing. When the market dried up, the rest of the city's economy struggled.

Nowhere is this more evident than by looking at the city's sales tax collections during that time.

In the first few years after incorporation, collections were overwhelming. It only took three years for Maricopa to top \$25 million in sales tax revenue.



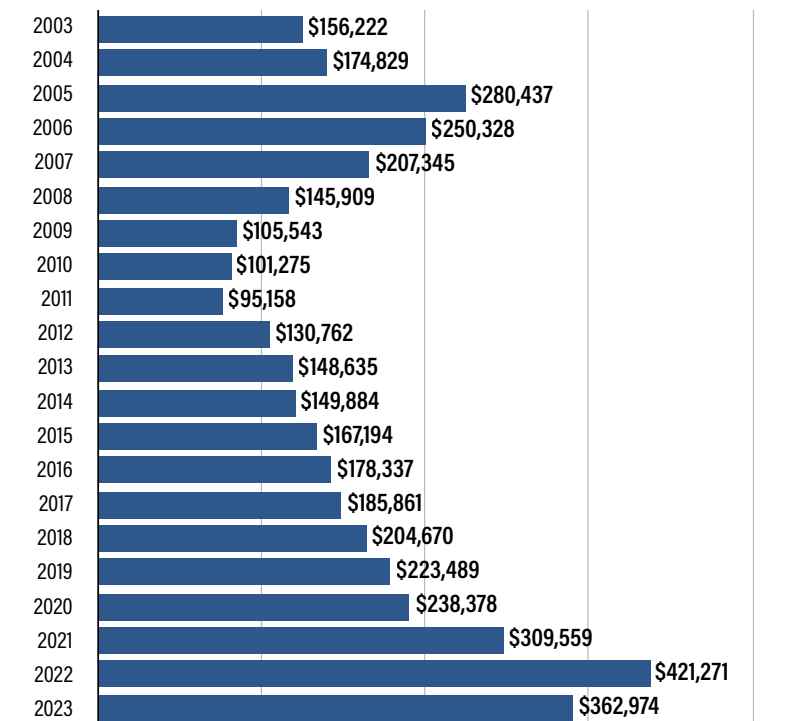
It's a number that took nearly two decades for the city to replicate, when it raked in nearly \$29 million for the fiscal year of 2021-22.

After the highs reached in the first three years after incorporation, the numbers started to fall off. For the fiscal year 2006-07, there was a 13% drop to just over \$22 million. The following years saw even more drastic reductions with the worst year coming in 2009-10 when the city only generated \$6.6 million, a drop of nearly 75%.

**"I don't think we really understood what was happening with the market until one of my neighbors made the comment that our house was only worth \$100,000."**

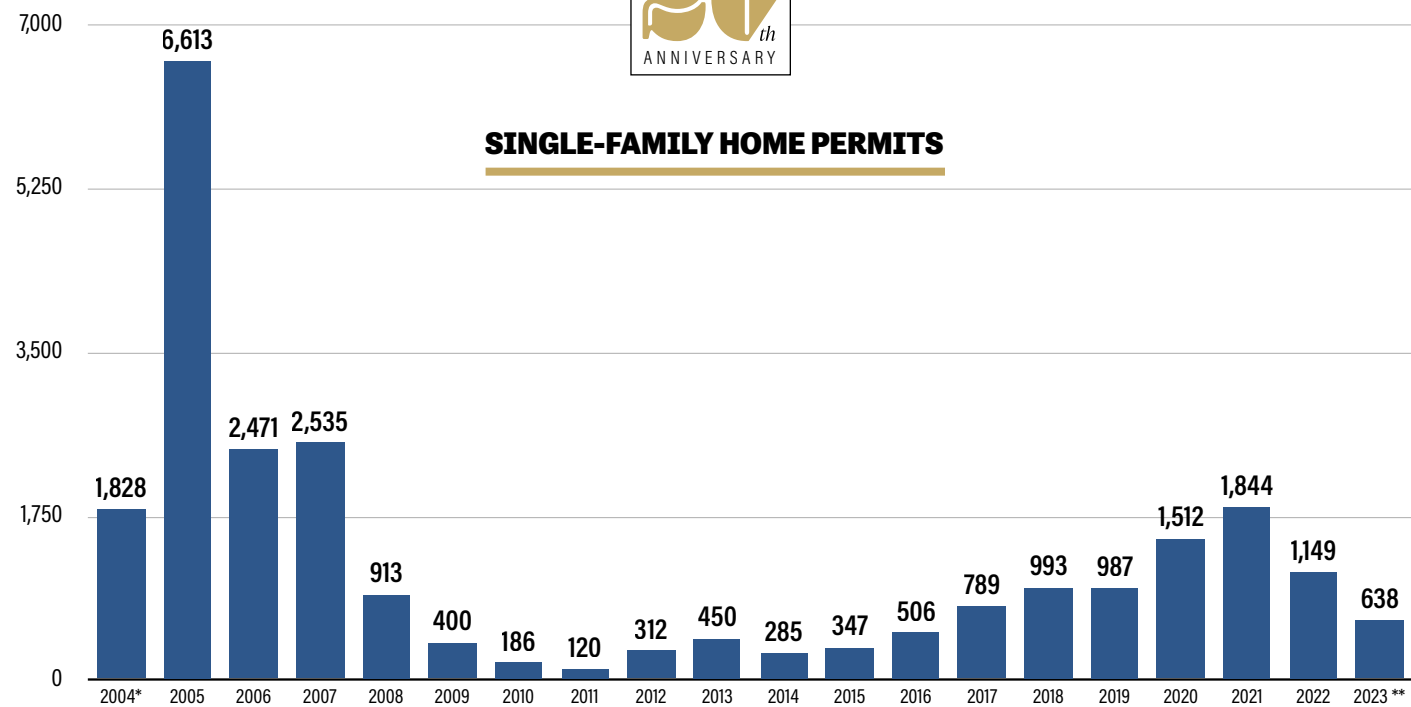
DAYV MORGAN, REALTOR

## MARICOPA AVERAGE HOME SALES PRICES



Note: Figures from August of each year.

Bryan Moroff



\*Permitting through the city of Maricopa began in July 2004 \*\*Through Sept. 18

## DIGGING OUT

For many years, the driving force behind the real estate market in Maricopa was foreclosures and short sales during and following the Great Recession.

Foreclosure begins when a homeowner falls behind on mortgage payments and the lender initiates the legal process to recover the amount owed. Homeowners are given a 90-day notice to bring their payments current. When the grace period elapses, there's a trustee sale where the lender sets the minimum bid at the amount to satisfy the loan. If that minimum isn't met, the bank can take ownership of the property and sell it.

A short sale is when a homeowner owes more money on a property than it's worth and asks the lender to sell it for less than what's owed on the mortgage note.

A crush of foreclosures and short sales in Maricopa stymied

the real estate market for years. People's credit scores were wrecked, as Maricopa-based Realtor Dayv Morgan explained.

"There were so many people who lost their homes to foreclosure," Morgan said. "They were not able to buy again. If you have a foreclosure on your credit report, banks are not going to give you a loan for another three, four or seven years, depending on the type of loan program."

Morgan wasn't immune to it, either.

"Unfortunately, I had bad credit as well," Morgan said. "I was in that group that couldn't buy and had to rent for a little bit."

Foreclosures were a way of life back then.

"There were so many homes in foreclosure or short sale in that 2009 period," Morgan recalled. "About 75% of the closed sales in that time were either short sales or foreclosures, or HUD homes, or auction homes."

As a result, Morgan started what was, in effect, a concierge service for investors.

"We did everything for them," Morgan said. "We helped to clean the houses up."

Morgan's investors bought homes sight unseen. Most of the time, inspections weren't allowed. There wasn't any telling what unpleasantry they could uncover in those homes. People might still be living there. Or maybe they left the home but never moved out their belongings.

"A lot of times, you are buying these homes as-is without even seeing the inside. You could drive past them and maybe find out if they're occupied or vacant. But if the blinds were closed and the doors are locked, you have no idea what the condition of the home is like inside. So, definitely a high-risk adventure for an investor because you could open that door to find everything was missing inside or it was riddled with mold."



Submitted



Christian Price

The city was in a slump that didn't start to seriously turn around until 2016-17 when it finally hit double digits again at nearly \$10.5 million.

Housing permits told a similar story.

The city issued 13,447 permits for single-family homes between 2004 and 2007.

In 2008, housing permits fell to 913, a 64% drop from the 2,535 issued the previous year. The carnage continued with the market bottoming out in 2011 when just 120 permits were issued.

Former Mayor Christian Price said the economic woes had some people looking for the door. Price bought his home in Maricopa in 2005 and then watched it lose 80% of its value in just a few years.

In 2011, when Price was considering a bid for mayor, there were doubters.

"I remember when I was thinking about it, and I contacted a friend to run my campaign, she told me, 'The only reservation I have is that everyone wants to leave Maricopa,'" Price recalled. "Everybody wanted to leave this city that I knew. Everybody. They wanted to get out. They thought it was the middle of the recession. They were angry. They had been promised something and I tried to come in with a little bit of optimism and a little bit of belief that, hey, it's going to be OK."

Morgan remembered one of the hallmarks of the Great Recession was brand-new homes were simply abandoned.

For many years, there was very little construction as the city used up the inventory it had on hand.

"It took about 15 years for it to fully rebound to where the prices were when I moved down here," Morgan said. "I never had any doubts it would come back. But for me, the moment that demonstrated things were getting better was when building started again."

Bryan Morcht

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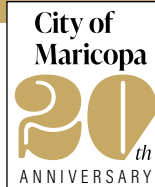


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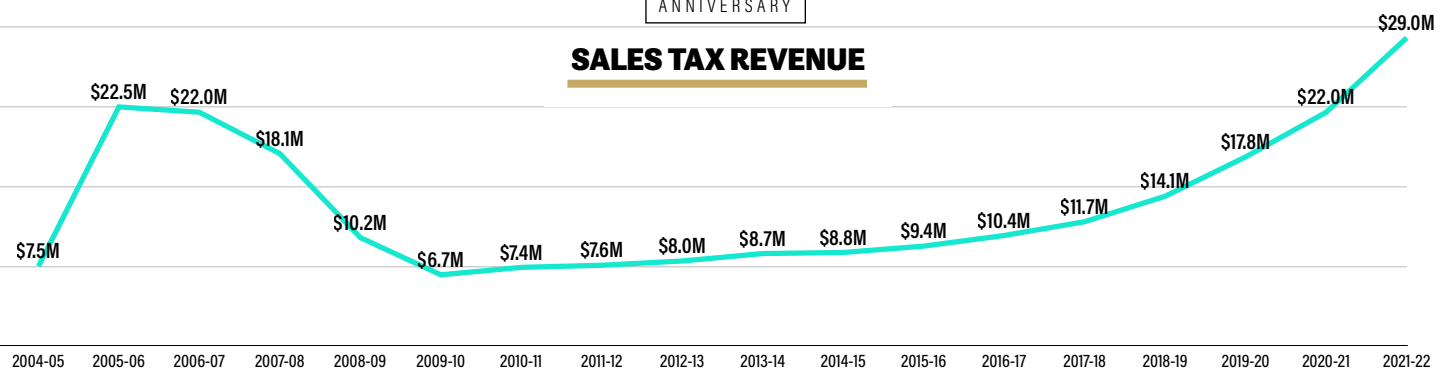
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### SALES TAX REVENUE



Note: 2004-05 was the first full year of collection

### THE GREAT RECESSION, EXPLAINED

The Great Recession is regarded as the nation's second-worst financial crisis. While many factors played into the crash, most economists say its origin was the

subprime mortgage market collapse. There were too many defaults on high-risk housing loans — which later led to a serious credit crunch that affected the global banking system and made bank loans nearly impossible to obtain. During the height of the housing bubble,

mortgage lenders approved as many home loans as they could, regardless of creditworthiness. Nearly 80% of those loans were adjustable-rate mortgages where the borrower couldn't afford the payments once the introductory rate went away.

Some subprime borrowers had poor credit histories and questionable streams of income. The loan verification process was so absent at the time that mortgage lenders issued "NINJA loans," which stands for "no income, no job and no assets."

The explosion in loans caused a higher demand for houses, which oversaturated the market. When those risky loans defaulted, home values tanked in Maricopa and the rest of the nation.

The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, a 10-person committee formed by Congress in 2009 to investigate the financial crisis, said the causes included, "an explosion in risky subprime lending and securitization, an unsustainable rise in housing prices, widespread reports of egregious and predatory lending practices, dramatic increases in household mortgage debt, and exponential growth in financial firms' trading activities, unregulated derivatives and short-term 'repo' lending markets, among many other red flags."

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# Born and bred

This multi-generational Maricopa family wouldn't live anywhere else

BY MONICA D. SPENCER

**N**ATIVE ARIZONANS KNOW THE look.

Tell a transplant you're a genuine born-and-raised Arizonan and watch their brows raise, eyes widen and mouth begin to shape an "oh" or "wow" in response. It can feel both exhilarating and embarrassing to be recognized as the rare breed born with sun and heat coursing through the veins.

For Ray Nieves, that experience grows tenfold when he tells people Maricopa has always been his hometown.

"It's kind of funny, I tell people I grew up here and they think I've been here for 10 years," he said. "No, I've been here for a long time. Like, I've seen everything here evolve."

Nieves identifies as a second-generation Maricopan, watching the once tiny farm town blossom into one of the fastest growing cities in Arizona. He remembered his friends in the little 2A Maricopa High School aching to move away, but he never saw himself living anywhere else.

"They couldn't wait to get away, but I liked it here," Nieves said. "It fit my lifestyle and people are surprised I still live here."

That desire to plant deeper roots in the community led Nieves to open 911 Air Repair in 2017 after a decade working for others in the business.

"I can't get away, I'm locked and loaded," he laughed.

His mother, Noemi Nieves, moved to Maricopa from the historic border town of Douglas in 1980 as her father searched for an agricultural job. At the time, even Douglas — population 16,000 — dwarfed Maricopa.

"Douglas was a little town," she said. "But they had stoplights, they had a post office and schools and a hospital. Maricopa didn't have any of that. You blinked and you were in Gila Bend."

It can be difficult to conceptualize just how much the city has exploded over the last two decades. In 2000, U.S. Census data showed Maricopa had a population of just more than



Ray Nieves, with wife McKenzie, and Abigale, 1, Alivia, 2, Rayden, 7, and Remy, 8. Below are Nieves' grandparents, Ascension and Belen Rico.



1,000. With its current population of more than 70,000, that's a 7,000% increase over the years.

Both noted Maricopa's agricultural identity still lingers with nearby farms pushed to the outskirts, the feed yard still operating and occasionally getting stuck behind a tractor on roadways.

But the 90-minute bus rides after school are relics of the past. The corn and alfalfa fields disappeared, along with the pecan tree groves and the evening "fog" that blanketed the area. In reality, the fog was dust and cow manure permeating the air.

"When the sun went down, the cows started to roam around after being huddled under the shade all day," Nieves said. "There was one feed yard that didn't use sprinklers to keep the dust down. So, when the cows moved around, you would get that slight wind and it would weave its way through the desert to town."

While those sights and experiences are far in the rear-view, both Nieveses said they still feel a connection to Maricopa and look forward

to raising a third generation in the city: Remy, 8; Rayden, 7; Alivia, 2, and Abigail, 1.

"The sense of community still exists," Noemi said. "When Ray was growing up, I knew where he was and didn't have to worry about him."

"For me, it's the sense of community but also the comfort that this is home," Ray said. "My mom is here, my in-laws, my grandparents and my best friends are here. My kids get to grow up with my best friends' kids. That foundation is already here ... I'm excited for what the future holds."

Submitted

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# Grow with the flow

Global Water a key partner in Maricopa's growth

BY JAY TAYLOR



Jon Corwin, vice president and general manager

**A**RIZONA, PINAL COUNTY AND MARICOPA ARE UNIQUE — we all know that.

How do we make cities sprout on land that is inhospitable, arid and unforgiving?

In Maricopa's case, it meant partnering with a leading utility that provides the water supply needed to make a city thrive.

Let's face it — Maricopa would not have grown its 2,000 residents at the time of incorporation in 2003 to more than 70,000 residents today without a stable and assured supply of quality water. Global Water helped the city provide citizens with that supply for two decades.

Achieving that goal wasn't always easy.

When Global Water launched in 2003, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality almost immediately beseeched it to step in and assist — and eventually acquire — the city's previous water utility, which provided lower-quality water high in nitrates. That company had contracts with several large developers to provide water but had not put the necessary infrastructure in place.

"The early years for us in Maricopa were quite busy," said Global Water's vice president and general manager, Jon Corwin. "The city went from not much at all to explosive growth, and that caused quite a few issues. As a company, we were doing everything we could to stay out in front, create a master plan and lay out the city's water future."

Today, Corwin said Global Water recycles about 10.5 billion gallons of Maricopa's water per year through an extensive network designed and developed to save precious groundwater. The company processes about 4 million gallons of wastewater every day, transforming it into top-class water for use in lakes, residential common areas and irrigation, meaning residents do not have to use valuable potable water for such purposes.

"There is no need for grass to be watered with potable water," Corwin said.

The company never stopped expanding and upgrading capacity in Maricopa. The city's wastewater treatment facility, located behind Global Water's offices near The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado, has gone through several expansions, including the construction of a water distribution center in Rancho Mirage. New wells were drilled and brought online around the city.

Large water and wastewater line extensions were also added to accommodate the city's growth. Because every new subdivision needs water, developers build the infrastructure and hand it over to Global Water as part of a development agreement, with Global providing the water mains and lines.

Global Water now serves about 55,000 connections (both potable and wastewater) to about 26,000 homes in Maricopa. Corwin said the company positioned itself and the city to keep taps running in the future through strategic planning.

"Pinal County has stopped issuing certificates of assured water supply," Corwin said.

Global Water had the foresight to guarantee a century's water supply — 22,000 acre-feet of water.

"We are well-positioned for the short- and long-term future," Corwin said. "And since the city currently is using only about 8,000 acre-feet of that supply, there is plenty of room for continued growth."

Corwin said supply will support a population of about 200,000 people, meaning even as the city continues its exponential growth, Maricopa's water needs will be covered well into the future.

"That supply allows the city to continue to build homes and bring in commercial development because it allows us to provide water for those things to continue," Corwin said, adding infrastructure will be a key issue for the company and the city moving forward.

"We have to make sure we plan appropriately to stay in front of the growth we know is coming," he said. "You can't build new buildings without that in place. We look out into the future and determine what the needs of the city will be."

Moving forward, the key to sustaining success is Global Water's symbiotic relationship with the city of Maricopa.

"That relationship really allows us to stay in lockstep, know what's coming our way and stay in front of it," Corwin said. "We don't want to be the bottleneck that prevents growth or development opportunities from happening."

With growth in Maricopa showing few signs of slowing, it's good to know the city's water utility has a strong vision for both the present and future.

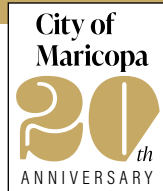
Bryan Moritt

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# Connecting the dots

Orbitel dared to put Maricopa on the grid

BY JAY TAYLOR



Bryan Johnson, director of marketing

**B**UILDING A CITY OF MORE THAN 70,000 RESIDENTS IN an isolated area from nothing but farmland and dreams took vision. Not just on the part of developers and community leaders, but the companies that shouldered the risk of investing in the infrastructure and services required to facilitate such growth.

Orbitel Communications, one of those Maricopa “OGs,” did what other cable and internet providers simply wouldn’t.

Mike Ingram of El Dorado Holdings approached Orbitel in 2001 as he developed some of the first homes in Maricopa. Orbitel shared his vision to create a community with affordable housing within proximity of jobs in the Valley. When other communications companies refused, Orbitel agreed to construct a state-of-the-art communications network in Maricopa and to become a full-service communications provider, investing millions of dollars in Maricopa’s economy.

“Other companies would not do it — it was too far away, too much work, too expensive,” said Bryan Johnson, Orbitel’s director of marketing. Instead, the company partnered with the developers, and in 2002 was awarded the franchise license to connect its first customer.

Progress continued when the city granted Orbitel a cable TV franchise in 2004, and the company opened its customer service center and local office in the Bashes’ shopping center the following year. In 2006, Orbitel added telephone to its existing cable TV and high-speed data offerings.

Today, Orbitel is an integral member of the community, providing service to thousands of homes and tens of thousands of residents. Its offices are based in Maricopa and its staff lives, works and contributes to the growth and quality of life enjoyed by all who live and visit Maricopa.

While Orbitel’s presence in the community has been a constant over the past two decades, the product and service offerings changed with the rapid advancements in technology.

The company’s first internet offerings were speeds of 64 and 512 kilobits per second (Kbps). Today it offers “gig speed” connections of 1 million Kbps, or a gigabit — 100 times faster than 20 years ago.

The addition of dual elimination system backups provides an alternate route for the signal, so internet service doesn’t go out if a line is compromised, improving the quality of service to Maricopans.

“We have redundancies in place that didn’t exist before, and that improves the reliability of our service dramatically,” Johnson said.

Johnson said Orbitel will launch a new video product later this year. The company will replace the old-style DVRs that include a hard drive, with an IPTV concept featuring a small box like a Hulu subscriber might have. Customers will plug into the box and download the Orbitel app, allowing all channels to stream over the internet rather than older coaxial lines.

He also expects next year to see an upgrade to the company’s website, which will introduce an e-commerce component for customers to order services, schedule appointments and chat with a representative.

The advancements will continue to expand as tech capability grows and Orbitel’s commitment to the city will continue to grow with it, Johnson said.

“All of our new-builds in Maricopa are fiber to the home,” he said. “We are no longer putting coax in the ground. We have our eyes firmly fixed on the future and if we do anything, we’ll overbuild. We want to be ahead of the curve. We’d much rather overbuild than play catch-up in a city growing as fast as Maricopa.”

Johnson added that Maricopa is a huge priority for Orbitel, which has grown its service area to include Sun Lakes and Saddlebrooke.

“The city of Maricopa has been a great partner since we first got going,” he said. “All 31 of our employees live and work here in town and spend their money here as well. Maricopa is a significant portion of our business, so we give it a lot of attention.”

“It’s been a challenging process to keep up with the growth here, but we are doing it.”



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## ORBITEL BY THE NUMBERS Source: Orbitel Communications

<b>64 Kbps</b> Internet speeds in 2002	<b>1 Gbps</b> Internet speeds today	<b>15,625</b> Times faster today's internet speed is versus 2002	<b>-650,000%</b> Change in price per Kbps internet speed since 2002	<b>116</b> Miles of fiber optic cable buried since 2002	<b>31</b> Employees living, working and playing in Maricopa
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**THEN:** Harrah's Ak-Chin Hotel and Casino could be seen with a partially built UltraStar entertainment complex in 2012. The entertainment complex broke ground in November 2011, and opened in the following year.



**NOW:** The same intersection can be seen with new shopping centers at Edison Pointe. Ross Dress for Less and Planet Fitness were just two of the new businesses that opened in 2018; IHOP opened New Year's Day the next year.

**NOW:** Harrah's Ak-Chin Hotel and Casino has had quite the makeover. The project that included the 11-story "Cactus Tower" a ballroom, parking garage and a Sky Bridge to UltraStar finished in 2019. UltraStar was later replaced by Ak-Chin Circle in late-2020.

**From above:  
Maricopa  
then and now**



**THEN:** Work continues at North John Wayne Parkway and West Edison Road in 2016. Land that would later become Edison Pointe can be seen on the right side.



**THEN:** This northeast facing photo shows Maricopa High School in 1998. The labeled "old gym" and library remain today.



**NOW:** MHS can be seen in this east-facing photo in 2023.

# A 'taxing' history

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**M**ARICOPA'S PROPERTY TAX AS we now know it started in 2006 when residents voted in favor of Proposition 400, a referendum that would allow the city to collect a property tax to fund municipal fire and police departments.

The new tax replaced a secondary property tax levied by the Maricopa Fire District. On average, it saved taxpayers around \$400 per year.

Maricopa voters supported the measure overwhelmingly, voting 578-39 in favor.

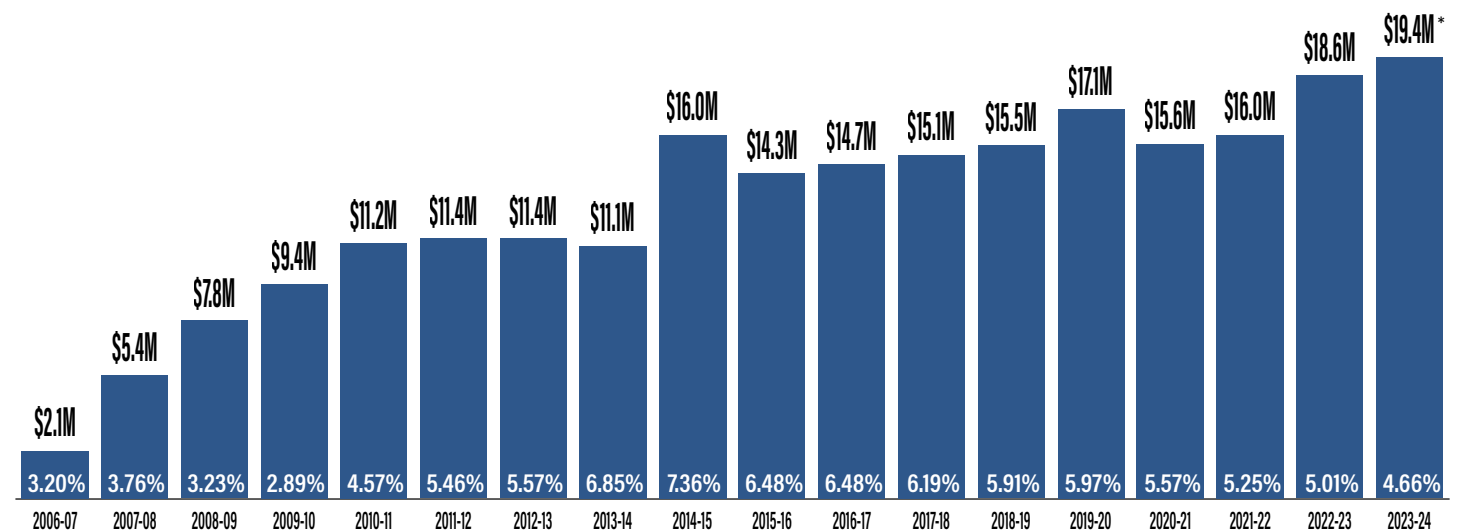
The city added a secondary property tax in 2010 when it issued a \$20 million bond package to construct a regional recreational complex, later named the Copper Sky Multigenerational Center. The development included an eight-lane, 25-yard lap pool with diving boards, leisure pool, water slide, lazy river, splash pad and rock-climbing wall.

The regional park opened in March 2014. The pool and aquatic center opened Memorial Day that same year.

As housing values decreased during the Great Recession, property tax rates increased with the 2014-15 fiscal year at a combined rate of 7.36%.

Over the last five years, the rate has dropped four times, with the latest combined rate standing at 4.66% — the lowest since it was 4.57% in the 2010-11 fiscal year when the secondary tax was first collected.

## PROPERTY TAXES



\*Projected

Notes: The fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30. | In 2010-11, a second levy was enacted to service the city's debts. All totals including and after that year include the second levy. | Property taxes were not collected until Prop 400 passed in 2006, allowing a public safety levy.

Bryan Moritt



Rebekka Ash Ás  
Halldórsdóttir

# Sonora Borealis

This Maricopan brings Arctic traditions to the desert

BY ELIAS WEISS

**C**AN YOU REALLY “BLOOM WHERE YOU’RE PLANTED” when you’ve lived your entire life in a place where the very soil beneath your feet seems to defy life itself?

That poses no obstacle for Rebekka Ash Ás Halldórsdóttir, a Maricopa resident who isn’t just living the adage — she’s redefining it.

For Halldórsdóttir, it was a journey of 4,200 miles — from a desolate arctic lava field to the searing Sonoran Desert, where even saguaros struggle to survive. Two deserts, worlds apart in every other way.

“It was the biggest adjustment of my life,” she said.

It was love that guided her to Maricopa in 2020, when she and husband Hamilton Ash left her native Iceland to be near Ash’s family here.

Iceland, a boreal jewel adrift in the North Atlantic, tiptoes the Arctic Circle’s edge. Halldórsdóttir is among just 400 Maricopa residents born in Europe, according to U.S. census data.

Halldórsdóttir’s hometown of Reykjavík — Iceland’s capital city — barely scrapes 40 degrees in October, according to the Icelandic Meteorological Office. Maricopa’s October temperatures are beyond double that, a toasty 85 degrees.

Reykjavík experiences just 1,300 annual sunshine hours, and that’s including the famous midnight sun from May to August when the sun extends a belated apology for its winter disappearing act. Maricopa, on the other hand, basks in a whopping 3,900 sunshine hours yearly, ranking it inside the world’s fifth-sunniest metro area.

“Growing up in Iceland, we spent our whole lives waiting for summer,” Halldórsdóttir said.

Above the Arctic Circle, the sun doesn’t muster a peep over the horizon all winter, a time hallmarked by blackness, despair and unbearable cold. And yet, in the middle of this disconsolate season comes *Jól* — Christmas

— a massive banquet that reverberates notions of communion and cycles of renewal.

Halldórsdóttir’s Glennwilde home doesn’t bear the turf-blanketed roof common in her native land. But inside, Scandinavian tradition endures.

Take *Jól*, for example. Halldórsdóttir’s four children — the eldest born in Iceland, the others born here — will begin celebrating in the coming weeks.

Throughout the 26-day celebration, 13 Santa Clauses will pay a special visit to Maricopa. Shoes on windowsills will hold treats for the well-behaved and rotting potatoes for the naughty. The children will contend with *Gryla*, a child-boiling monster, and the fearsome Christmas Cat’s deadly appetite.

Not quite an American Christmas, is it?

“We always have Icelandic Christmas, even though it is traditionally a dark time for us,” Halldórsdóttir said. “It’s just in me, in a way. I’m very Icelandic. That’s just a part of my culture.”

Halldórsdóttir brings much of her culture to Maricopa through song. You might have heard her croon Icelandic folk songs at the Maricopa Music Circle’s Christmas concerts, at Kids Day Maricopa last month and at funerals in town. Or maybe even during karaoke night at The Roost on John Wayne Parkway, her favorite Maricopa pastime.

“I sing a lot of Icelandic folk songs,” she said.

Folk music has long defined Halldórsdóttir, even before she studied at the Söngskólinn music academy in Reykjavík. Her father founded *Menningarnótt*, the largest annual music festival in Reykjavík, in 1996.

Some 100,000 people attend the cultural showcase, an eye-watering percentage of the country’s total population of 315,000 and Reykjavík’s population of fewer than 118,000.

Halldórsdóttir sang there at a young age. Last month, former Eurovision star Jóhanna Guðrún sang there and released a new cover of the Icelandic folk song *Orðin Mín* on Sept. 1.

The lyrics resonate with Halldórsdóttir.

*Mundu að hvar sem hjartað slær, hamingjan er oftast nær*: Remember that wherever the heart beats, happiness usually isn’t far away.

“You can be anywhere in the world, but you need to take a piece of what’s true to you and carry it with you,” Halldórsdóttir said. “That’s why I always come back to my roots.”

It’s not only the diametric climates that made Halldórsdóttir’s move to Maricopa jolting. She bid adieu to endless free running water and geothermal energy, and she experienced a bit of culture shock along the way.

Back in Iceland, she found the website “People of Walmart,” a humor blog showcasing the many eccentric customers of Walmart stores across the U.S. It wasn’t until she moved here that she realized the jokes were very much rooted in reality.

“You don’t go in your pajama clothes outside in Iceland,” she laughed. “If you’re going to go out, you’re going to look presentable. Here, you see people wearing whatever. That is so absurd to see. It’s such a different culture.”

But she has learned to love this crazy American culture with the help of her husband, an MMA fighter whom *InMaricopa* featured earlier this year. His Viking-inspired dojo, Berserker Sports Facility, is on Maricopa Road.

And by marrying an American man, she circumnavigated the use of the genetic database *Íslendingabók*. It’s a must for couples in Iceland, where a tiny population means checking for blood ties before marriage is crucial.

Halldórsdóttir misses other things, though. Growing up working at a fish farm, she was once disgusted cutting the heads off cod for hours on end. Now, she misses the ocean, the fresh air and seafood markets.

However, occasional visits home — and the sound of crashing waves during sessions at Yoga Hús, her Icelandic yoga studio in Maricopa — are enough to quench that yearning.

“The world is really big, and Iceland is a little island,” Halldórsdóttir said. “I don’t want to be stuck on the island.”

For her, Maricopa symbolizes freedom and adventure. She’s grown to see the city as a sort of second home.

“There’s a lot of good people in Maricopa,” she said. “There is a good, supportive community here. People care for each other. I like that about Maricopa.”

Safe to say, this Scandinavian-turned-American is built “fjord tough” and raises her kids correspondingly.

Success hinges upon three simple tenets, she said: “Toughen up. Be a strong Viking. Don’t be a pushover.”

Not everyone can transition between polar opposite environments with such grace. But Halldórsdóttir did just that — proving even in the harshest landscapes, growth finds a way.

And perhaps her new home isn’t so unfamiliar after all.

Iceland and Maricopa have one thing in common at the end of the day, Halldórsdóttir said:

“It’s that cozy feeling.”

*Editor’s note: Elias Weiss is a Scandinavian language speaker who studied journalism at a Nordic university. He’s been in newspapers and on public radio in Sweden, and also spent time in Iceland, Denmark and Norway.*

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# A new generation

**T**HOSE WHOSE CHILDHOOD memories of Maricopa are dotted with trips to the movies and fast-food restaurants, copious ribbon cuttings and endless trips to neighbors' front doors bearing home-cooked welcome offerings

might just fit into what we call "the first real generation of Maricopans."

People born in Maricopa between 1995 and 2005 are adults now — adults who might not have ever defined their home city as rural, ranchy or desertous.

While millennials are usually classified as people born in time to witness the dawn of the internet, these special members of Generation Z were born in time to witness the genesis of Maricopa as a city.

Let's meet a few of them!



## Esmeralda Compian

**Age:** 27

**Maricopan since:** Birth

**Maricopa memories:**

- "I would play touch football, catch or pretend we were pulling a rope on each end of the road in front of cars on Pershing Street."
- Riding ATVs where the Villages at Rancho El Dorado and Senita are now.
- During her walk to kindergarten class at Head Start, a preschool near Maricopa High School, Compian recalled stopping at a candy store, where ACP Painting is now. "Sometimes, my parents would give me a few dollars and I would go buy some candy."
- Giving birth to her two kids, 9-month-old Jeremiah and 3-year-old Eliana.



## Cosme Borunda

**Age:** 18

**Maricopan since:** Birth

**Maricopa memories:**

- Living in a ranch home in the Stanfield area with his grandparents.
- "It's like you just knew everyone growing up. You grew up with the same class and graduated with the same class."
- Walking around the neighborhood with friends.



## Jonathan Lissarrague

**Age:** 20

**Maricopan since:** 2006

**Maricopa memories:**

- McDonald's and QuikTrip opening on Maricopa's main strip in 2008, and Walmart a year later.
- Weekend family outings usually consisted of a meal at Native New Yorker.
- UltraStar opening up was a big moment. "I remember going with friends all the time to see movies, play laser tag or play arcade games."

# Boss babies

Maricopa is the boss, but it's still a baby. The average Arizona city was incorporated in 1939, while Maricopa earned its stripes 64 years later in 2003. These young men — maybe future leaders of Maricopa — are among their city's youngest natives.



Miles Kajtaz, age 1, lives in Desert Cedars.  
Weston Leavitt, age 4, lives in Sorrento.  
Nathan Mangum, age 7, lives in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado.



Submitted

Bryan Mordt



# From Point A to Point B

Republican puts politics aside in name of safety

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**I**T'S A HOT MORNING IN LATE June and while traveling to Maricopa on State Route 347, you notice traffic backing up. It's hard to tell why — a miles-long automotive caravan lines up in front of you, robbing your visibility. As it turns out, a semi-trailer full of trash caught fire just north of Casa Blanca Road. The incident was reported around 10:30 a.m. It took nearly eight hours for the road to re-open. While a literal dumpster fire on SR 347 offers some poetic justice, most commuters will tell you it feels like an everyday occurrence on this troubled highway.

It seemed like the punchline to a joke, but it was anything but to the thousands of commuters who had their day disrupted as one of the worst heat waves in Arizona history began.



Bryan Moret

“I don’t have time for any more political games. I’m going to be nice to people and be cordial wherever I can, but I’m not going to back down. I’m going to fight for what I think is right for my constituents.”

REP. TERESA MARTINEZ, REPUBLICAN VICE CHAIR, ARIZONA HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

## A WOMAN ON A MISSION

When you talk to Republican Arizona state Rep. Teresa Martinez, it doesn't take long for the conversation to turn to the problems faced by Maricopans on the local roads, most notably State Route 347.

Martinez, the House whip and vice chair for the Arizona House Transportation Committee, has personal reasons for her laser-beam focus on traffic safety.

According to Arizona Department of Transportation statistics, a crash occurs every other day on the thoroughfare.

One crash, however, stood out to Martinez.

Back in March, 10-year-old Suheiry Fernandez died in a multi-car crash on SR 347. Martinez never met Fernandez or her family, but she understands their deep feelings of loss.

When Martinez was 10, her father, Victor Martinez, died in a crash the day before Christmas Eve during his daily commute to San Manuel.

“It was icy and some of those sharp curves at the time weren’t the safest,” Martinez said. “He lost control of his truck and died on the way to the hospital.”

To this day, Martinez remembers seeing her father for the last time.



“He went to kiss me on the cheek, and I turned away because I was mad at him,” she said. “I wouldn’t even look at him and he left. The 23rd was his birthday. He left at midnight and on the morning of Christmas Eve, they tell me that I get to open my presents because he’d died the night before.”

Victor Martinez was 35 when he died needlessly, like the deaths that occur on SR 347 each year.

“That stuck with me,” said Martinez of her father’s death and Fernandez’s. “When we go by and we see traffic accidents just, that’s somebody’s dad or somebody’s brother or somebody’s son. That 10-year-old little girl, that was their child in a traffic accident that didn’t need to happen.”

“That could have been avoided.”

And for that reason, Martinez says she will unapologetically vote for any bill she believes addresses road safety for her constituents.

Martinez has taken fire from conservative groups like the Arizona Free Enterprise Club for her votes on transportation issues, most notably putting Proposition 400 on the ballot in Maricopa County, but says she’s more worried about road safety than winning a purity contest.

“I’m sure they’re going to put out a mailer where they label me as a RINO (Republican in name only) or a low-energy Republican or whatever,” she said.

“I just turned 55 on Sept. 1,” Martinez said. “I don’t have time for any more political games. I’m going to be nice to people and be cordial wherever I can, but I’m not going to back down. I’m going to fight for what I think is right for my constituents.”

Martinez pointed out her “yes” vote for Prop 400 will directly benefit Maricopans who commute each day to the Valley for work.

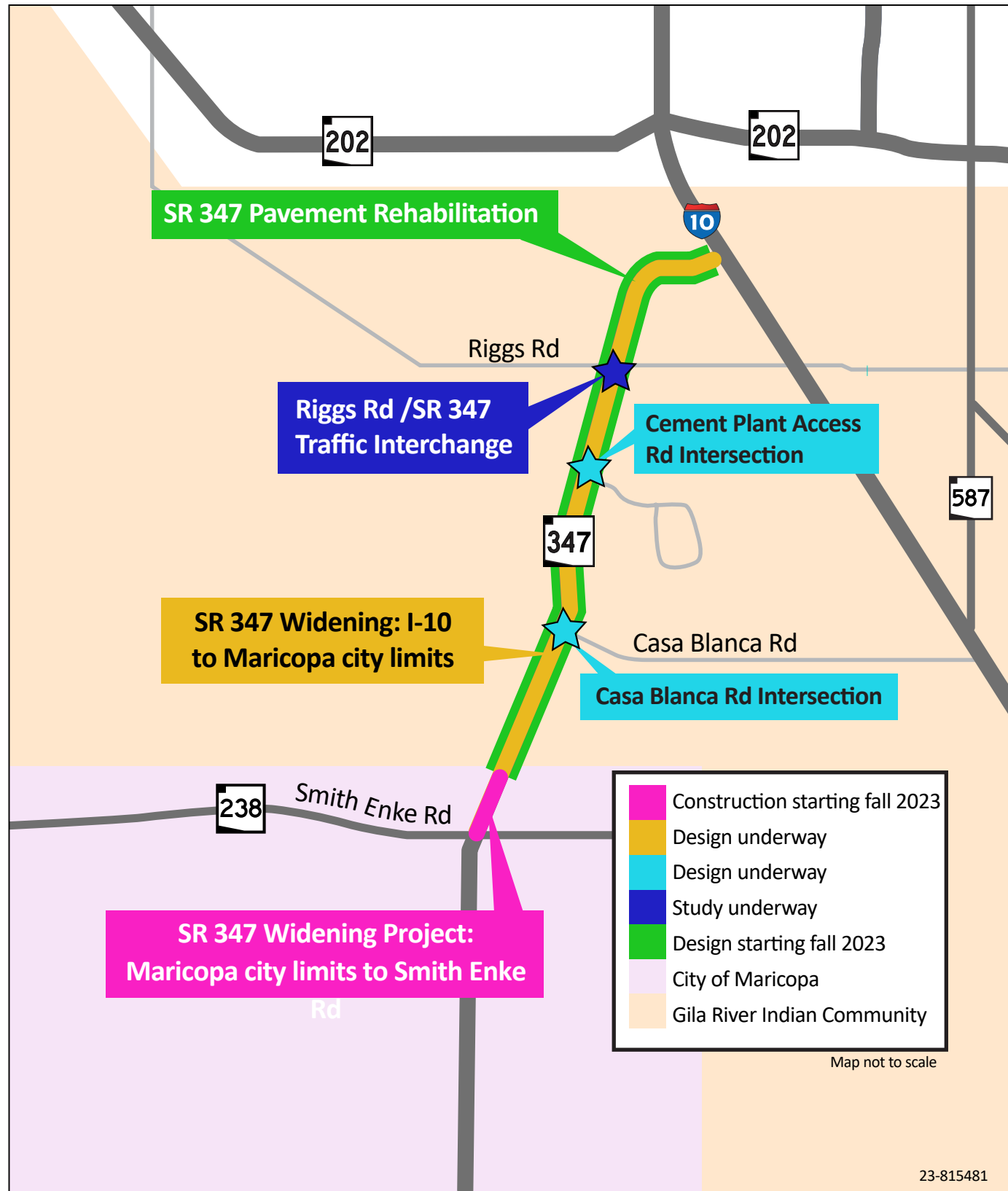
“It’s important to know that there’s five miles of SR 347 in Maricopa County,” Martinez said. “It’s going to help fix part of that road. How could I vote ‘no’ against that bill, knowing that my constituents are driving on it every day? How can I do that in good conscience?”

Martinez is a conservative Republican who served as a staffer for U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) prior to becoming a state representative. She believes that the state government should be held accountable for making sure that roads are safe and efficient.

“Government shouldn’t be in our lives about sex, or about how we spend our money. The least we could do is deliver the mail on time, fix our roads, protect our country, and teach our kids a little bit of math, English, writing and some science, so they can get a job and support themselves.”

“Everything else needs to be handled by the people, but we can’t even get the roads right.”

**SR 347 PROJECTS**



might have another kind of disaster waiting to happen.

A day after Martinez spoke of the hardships endured by motorists during the June 26 dumpster fire, another similar situation took place Sept. 12 when a violent storm came through that downed power lines and rendered traffic signals useless, once again shutting down the thoroughfare, stranding thousands for hours.

The next morning, the traffic lights still weren't working, but law enforcement officials were on hand to direct traffic until everything was back online.

**The road ahead**

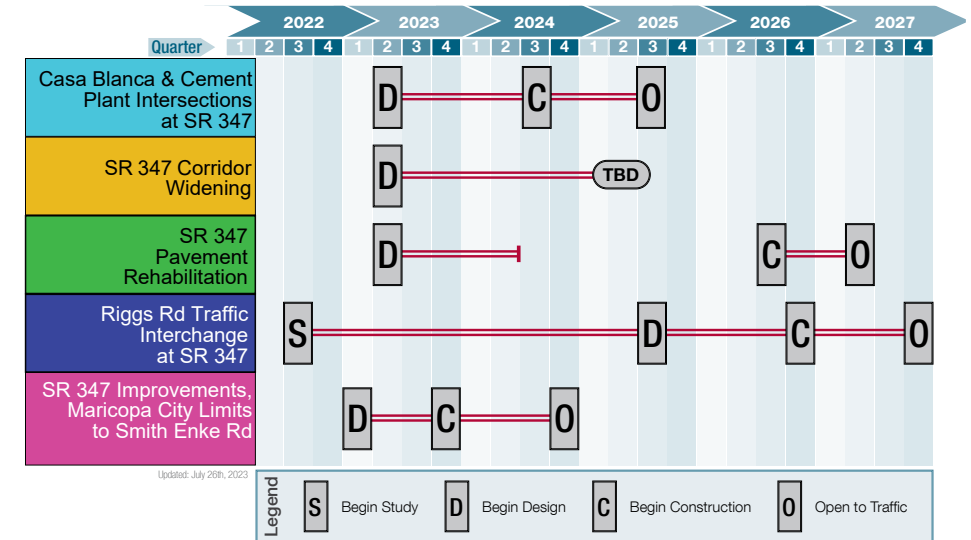
Ironically enough, one of those intersections affected by the freak storm in September that shut down the traffic lights was at Riggs Road and has been slated by the Arizona legislature for an overpass, which would allow traffic to move through without a stoplight.

The project is the first in a line of planned improvements for SR 347. Former Arizona state Rep. Bret Roberts secured \$35 million in state funds for the overpass before he moved to South Carolina in 2021. When Roberts left, Martinez was tapped as his replacement and won reelection the following year.

Martinez has been working to ensure that the Riggs Road overpass doesn't slip through the cracks of ADOT's bureaucracy.

With the number of entities involved — Maricopa County, the Gila River Indian Community, Pinal County and the state — the

**SR 347 CORRIDOR - ANTICIPATED PROJECT SCHEDULES**



**“It’s my job to make sure that the holdup isn’t with ADOT and that they are moving things along as fast as they can.”**

REP. TERESA MARTINEZ, REPUBLICAN VICE CHAIR, ARIZONA HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

process can become complicated, Martinez explained.

“These projects take time, and I get that,” Martinez said. “It’s my job to make sure that the holdup isn’t with ADOT and that they are moving things along as fast as they can.”

She’s gotten assurances and timetables, which show construction for the project starting in 2027 and opening for traffic in 2028.

The project at Riggs Road is a huge one for the thousands making that daily commute, but it’s not the only action taking place.

In its last session, the Arizona Legislature allocated funds for more enhancements for SR 347 and State Route 238 corridors.

The projects include:

- Reconfiguring intersections at Cement Plant Road and Casa Blanca, improvements aimed at eliminating cross-traffic at these intersections, resulting in improved safety and reduced congestion
- Pavement rehabilitation on SR 347
- Widening of SR 347 from I-10 to the Maricopa city limits
- Improvements on SR 238 within the city limits

As part of the \$17.8 billion budget passed at the end of July, each Republican house member was given \$20 million to spend and each senator was given \$30 million.



Bryan Mondt

“It takes time to go through and do the studies that are necessary, it takes time to do the planning that’s necessary, but even harder, it takes time to get the funding. That’s one of the biggest hangups that we have.”

GREG BYERS  
ADOT ENGINEER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TJ Shope, Maricopa’s Republican state senator, ponied up \$18 million from his own allotment for the intersections at Cement Plant Road and Casa Blanca. The design phase for the project is underway. Construction is slated to begin next fall with completion in the fall of 2025.

The pavement rehabilitation will happen in the next five years and will cost \$28 million with 94.3% coming from federal aid funds and the remaining 5.7% from the State Highway Fund. The planning is ongoing with construction to begin in 2026 with completion expected in the summer of 2027.

Martinez spent \$6 million on widening SR 347 between I-10 and Maricopa this year. The

project is in the design phase. The completion date is unknown.

During last year’s session, Martinez procured \$16 million for improvements within the city limits on SR 347 and 238 as part of a turnback agreement where ADOT will repair the roads and turn over control to Maricopa. Some of the work has already begun.

The city is adding an additional \$7.7 million, along with matching federal funds for the project, which will most notably include:

- Adding a northbound lane from SR 238/Smith-Enke Road to the northern city limits
- An additional northbound acceleration lane that begins at Lakeview Drive
- Rehabilitating existing pavement
- Installing sidewalks
- Adding an improved traffic signal at Lakeview Drive

### How the sausage is made

As part of the turnback project, Martinez had originally secured \$19 million in funding. However, the law specified the money could only be used on SR 347. When the city wanted to use some of that money for SR 238, Martinez had to resubmit the bill to get the language added to allow the change in scope.

Unfortunately, the process involved sending the bill through appropriations, which meant Republican state Sen. Jake Hoffman, the transportation committee’s vice chair that year, was able to shave a few million dollars off that amount and force Martinez to send it elsewhere.

Republicans are constantly looking to curry favor with activist groups like the Arizona Free Enterprise Group. Hoffman was no different.

“He wanted to prove a point in front of Free Enterprise, who do not like me,” Martinez said. “He was showing off in front of Free Enterprise and the Cato Institute.”

Hoffman, who outranked Martinez at the time, told her she could pick any community in the state to spend those dollars — except Maricopa. Legislators ended up spending the money on a project on the Gila River Indian Community.

This political wrangling is a prime example of the hoops Maricopa’s representatives must jump through to make sure the city’s concerns are addressed in the state capital.

ElectraMeccanica, Lucid, Polestar, Rivian and others have operations in the area, leading some to call Pinal County “the Detroit of electric vehicles.”

A law in neighboring California requires all new vehicles sold in the state to run on alternative fuels, namely electricity. Arizona already rewards drivers for going electric.

It is part of ADOT’s 2023 Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Deployment Plan, which will use \$76.5 million in federal funding

to install EV charging stations spaced no more than 50 miles apart on selected highways.

Plans for the location or number of charging stations have yet to be announced.

Maricopa City Council member Henry Wade told InMaricopa he thinks adding more public charging stations in Maricopa is needed.

“We’ve got a lot of electric vehicles driving around out there, so I think it would be a service to offer,” Wade said. “I believe there’s one or two (in town).”

### OHM ON THE RANGE

Electric vehicles are gaining momentum in Arizona — and they’re making their way down to Maricopa.

Amid a long list of pending requests for improvements on State Route 347, the Arizona Department of Transportation is considering adding charging stations for electric vehicles along the highway.

Metro Phoenix is a hub for battery-powered buggies — Tesla, Atlys Motor,



### Short-term recommendations

During a safety meeting earlier this year on SR 347, ADOT Division Director Brent Cain said ADOT’s assessment included determining a number of short-term recommendations that can take place between longer-term projects.

“This is not the ultimate solution, but what we can do...now to help with the crashes that are out there,” Cain said.

Cain said ADOT recommended several short-term solutions, including re-stripping the road to add or extend turn lanes to “help with traffic capacity.” Other recommendations included speed enforcement by the Arizona

Department of Public Safety, installing additional signage, re-evaluating posted speed limits and installing median crossovers, a short roadway on the median that allows for U-turns in emergencies.

However, State Engineer and Deputy Director Greg Byers pointed out these kinds of projects take resources.

“None of this is happening very fast,” Byers said. “It takes time to go through and do the studies that are necessary, it takes time to do the planning that’s necessary, but even harder, it takes time to get the funding. That’s one of the biggest hangups that we have.”

Bryan Mendt



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# Faces of Maricopa



## Alex Smith

Age: 30 | Years a Maricopan: 17

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** An employee at Chitwood, Alex enjoys keeping up with "all the new stuff that's coming into town," says the modern-day farmer with a little homestead filled with cows, horses, donkeys, sheep, chickens and goats.



## Burnest Green

Age: 66 | Years a Maricopan: 6

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Affectionately known as Paw Paw, Burnest, a retiree, loves the community's quaint, friendly and diverse atmosphere. Burnest appreciates the peacefulness of Maricopa, but he's not a fan of the 347 traffic, a sentiment shared by many. He enjoys "a life well-lived is a life filled with family and adventure."



## Lindsey Garcia

Age: 43 | Years a Maricopan: 15

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** A medical office manager at American Medical Associates in Maricopa, Lindsey enjoys the familiarity of knowing the community inside out, the camaraderie of her neighbors and the overall sense of security.

Bryan Mordt



## Candace Folaalela Fa'amuli Iafeta

Age: 39 | Years a Maricopan: 6½

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Candace, a stay-at-home mom, and the owner of Polynesian Dance Maricopa, likes the city's small-town charm and that it's a retreat from the bustling city life of the metro area. It's also where her family found their first home, forming deep bonds in the community. She also appreciates the city's beautification efforts, from artistically painted traffic signal boxes to elegant rock walls, metal art installations and the lush greenery that now graces the lanes. She's also a fan of the painted Maricopa horses.



## Mason Whitted

Age: 22 | Years a Maricopan: 12

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Mason likes the balance in Maricopa. "I like that Maricopa is close to the city, but not too busy. It's nice and quiet," he notes. Mason enjoys the city's proximity to exciting road trips, from San Diego to mountain hikes. Mason is also an avid collector of physical media, including Blu-rays and books.



## VanDrey Herron Sr.

Age: 60 | Years a Maricopan: 3

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** VanDrey appreciates the friendly nature of Maricopa's residents. He's an avid fisherman, enjoys shooting and loves boating. He and his wife have been married for 15 years and they recently purchased a new home in Maricopa.

## Catalina Cordova Avilez

Age: 31 | Years a Maricopan: 1/2

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Catalina aspires to be a supportive sports mom to her two boys, José, 7, and Rafael, 9, who have interests in football, soccer and skating. She met her future husband, Brent Green, in Maricopa, who shared her love for ice skating.



## Carsten Randall

Age: 24 | Years a Maricopan: 3

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Carsten, a sales representative at Minuteman Supply Co., appreciates Maricopa's small-town charm. He values the sense of community that still thrives here, making it a special place to live. When he's not working, Carsten's passion for sports takes center stage.



Bryan Moret

## Joanne Siebert

Age: 53 | Years a Maricopan: 12

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Siebert, a chiropractor and the founder of Happy Clown Chiropractic, enjoys the city's small-town charm despite its growing population. Her practice specializes in pediatric and family chiropractic care. In her free time, Joanne's simple joy comes from spending quality moments with her family.

## Wayne Brewster

Age: 60 | Years a Maricopan: 1

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** Wayne, a retiree who worked in the motion picture industry, likes that Maricopa has small-town charm mixed with the convenience of being just minutes away from the bustling city life of Chandler and Tempe. Wayne is also dirt bike enthusiast.



## Lucia Aguilar

Age: 63 | Years a Maricopan: 23

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** "I love everything about Maricopa," says Lucia. "The sense of community and the small-town vibe makes it feel like home. It's wonderful to be surrounded by friendly faces." Lucia also enjoys biking, dancing, singing and sports.



## Zachary Owen

Age: 20 | Years a Maricopan: 8

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** An assistant manager at Minuteman Supply Co., Zachary appreciates the tranquility and an escape from the hustle and bustle of larger cities. In a place like Maricopa, he finds solace and a slower pace of life. Zachary also loves "range days with the guys."



## Jacob Hart

Age: 17 | Years a Maricopan: 13

**Favorite thing about living in Maricopa:** "Maricopa's a nice small town. I like how close everything is. You don't have to go very far to get what you need," Jacob said. Currently, Jacob dabbles in landscaping work here and there and loves basketball, playing four times a week.

# Farmageddon

Macabre takes center stage in Maricopa

BY ELIAS WEISS

**M**ARICOPA, ONCE A BASTION OF barley fields and pecan groves, has traded in its cowboy hats for a darker, edgier ensemble. Forget the tractors belching plumes of smoke like storybook dragons — this desert city has a new cast of characters: skulls, spikes, pentagrams and goat-headed deities.

Amid a surge in population, an enigmatic subculture has emerged in this sun-drenched city where darkness seems paradoxically misplaced. In a world of sunseekers, these denizens of the macabre prefer to toy with life's morbid underbelly.

They're not your typical Phoenix urbanites, preoccupied with cosmopolitan pursuits. Among their ranks are newcomers and others who have long lingered in the shadows.

When they united for a maiden public display in Maricopa last month, it was a watershed moment — proving we are truly living in gothic times.

## Two worlds

A cluster of skull-shaped cherries peeked over Angela Manzer's pinstriped collar. She draws the eye in that Maricopa café — what with her miniature coffins for earrings and leather pants tighter than a Gibson Les Paul string.

Lips painted as black as her coffee took a sip as Manzer peered through cat-eyed frames. If the goths of Maricopa were to choose a leader, she would surely be their countess.

"When I was a kid, I got picked on for being goth," Manzer recalled. "I remember getting spit on for wearing my mom's black trench coat to school. People treated me like I was trying to kill somebody."

Goth subculture has gained traction among younger Maricopans like Manzer's 12-year-old daughter, Emily, who laments she's not allowed to wear her spider-webbed high heels to class at Leading Edge Academy.

Manzer, 43, is a self-styled "old-school goth girl from the '90s." Think Marilyn Manson,

Korn and Nine Inch Nails. The community considers her an elder goth, "but I guess I earned that title," she said.

The lifestyle she embraced at the age of 16 wasn't exactly in vogue back then. The same held true when she traded San Francisco for Maricopa in 2010, when the rural community had little appetite for the alternative.

"We're toeing the line between two worlds," she said.

## Crave the Dead

But in the years and months since the coronavirus pandemic, Manzer, who dons the mantle of an optometrist when she's not studying the dark arts, noticed a turning tide amid eye exams at a Maricopa practice.

"Working at Nationwide Vision, I was seeing a lot more people who looked like me coming in to get their eyes done," she said.

And then during industrial rock concerts at the Rebel Lounge and Crescent Ballroom in Phoenix, increasingly, she met others from Maricopa.

So, she launched Crave the Dead in April this year — a "dark entertainment" outfit offering goth trivia, goth aerobics (haven't you ever exercised in the dark?) and on Sept. 23, the first-ever, all-out goth festival in Maricopa.

"I've gotten tired of the sports bars and the country music," Manzer said. "I'm seeing more and more people like me in Maricopa, and I want to give something back to them."

"Dieonysis" (pun very much intended) was a pivotal moment for the city's burgeoning goth community. Veiled merchants purveyed their occult trinkets to the sound of death metal and the hum of a tattoo gun.

"There has never been anything in this town that is remotely for us," Manzer said. "There still isn't — except for this damn show."

Manzer has been active in the community for as long as she's lived here.

She's the woman behind other Maricopa businesses, like A Leg Up Tutoring and Angela's Cakes & Things.



Nick Sanchez, tattoo artist and owner of Redemption Tattoo, has created many tattoos for Maricopa's growing goth community.



The lifestyle Angela Manzer embraced at the age of 16 wasn't exactly in vogue back then. The same held true when she traded San Francisco for Maricopa in 2010, when the rural community had little appetite for the goth lifestyle.

Elias Weiss | Bryan Moritz

"I feel like I'm a staple part of the Maricopa community," Manzer said. "I really built roots in this community."

And yet, in a way, she's putting her genuine self on display for the very first time.

**That's so metal**

Manzer spent much of her career in education, working stints at Santa Cruz Elementary School and Leading Edge Academy.

Brad Turnbow used to work in education, too, at Maricopa High School and Legacy Traditional School. Until he gave it up one day in 2016, changed his name to SpellXCaster and became a goth guitarist instead.

"I started making music in Maricopa," Turnbow said.

He found his muse juxtaposing the quiet, sunlit countryside with music both loud and dark.

"I went to that mysterious place in my mind as I ran through the cornfields," he said. "It's like escaping to a dark new world."



Above: Gothic art lines the walls of Redemption Tattoo. Left: A Cut Above Handmade sells this unique tumbler enveloped in bloody newspaper clippings depicting serial killers' crimes. Right: This zombie getup is everyday apparel for Maricopa's goth queen.



**That outcast thing**

Emily Bauman-Heieie opened A Cut Above Handmade on a whim during the coronavirus pandemic.

The shop on John Wayne Parkway sells such items as bloody newspaper clippings of serial killers.

"Everything is horror themed all year long," Bauman-Heieie said. "Back when Maricopa was a small town, I don't think it would have sold. Today, there is a community out here in Maricopa that loves what I do."

Without music, there is no goth scene, Manzer said.

In the cradle of small towns like Maricopa, a sort of rural-meets-metal scene crops up — the rise of gothic cowboys. Take, for instance, the Las Vegas metal band Falling in Reverse and their unapologetically conservative, anti-woke anthem "Zombified" released last year.



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Other business owners in Maricopa noticed the city's goth-ification since the pandemic. Take Nick Sanchez, tattoo artist and owner of Redemption Tattoo on North Maricopa Road

Sanchez was a teen in Mesa in the 1990s, a time when tattoos of skulls and scythes came from homemade tattoo machines in "the hood," and were a far cry from the mainstream.

"I like goth, dude," he said. "It's like a popular fad now, all of a sudden. Especially with younger kids. Even the parents of those younger kids."

Sanchez did many of Manzer's tattoos, and they cover her like a second skin. She's got bats, skulls and even a ghost holding a butcher's knife on her shoulder.

"The foundation of the goth world is the macabre — everything that is death, spooky, freakish or taboo to society in some way," she said. "It's that outcast thing."

**We live in gothic times**

"Outcast" implies a sort of avant-garde counterculture. Why, in just the last three years, have so many reported goths made their ingress to the normie world?

"There is political unrest, and that's where a lot of the punk sounds come from," Manzer said. "Metal sounds come from that anger toward society and how we treat each other. You'll see a lot more black. You'll see a lot more spikes."

This timeline seems universal — Maricopa isn't far behind the Valley, where the Arizona Goth Society held the state's first goth festival in Mesa just last year. On Oct. 28, they'll gather in Maricopa for an organized ghost hunt.

In 1974, English novelist Angela Carter posited, "We live in gothic times." Think Vietnam, Watergate and the Oil Crisis.

But the '70s were mere prologue to the tumultuous early '20s, marked by profound political turmoil in the U.S. and a once-in-a-century pandemic claiming millions of lives.

The pandemic brought fear, claustrophobia and isolation. It's a perfect storm for a goth resurgence.

After all, the Arizona Goth Society was created directly "in response to the pandemic," according to its founders.

When you see goth people in Maricopa doing goth things, don't misunderstand them — although they're used to it. Being misunderstood is kind of their whole schtick. Well, part of it, at least.

"We're not scary or horrible people in any way," Manzer said. "Even if we are angry, we are outcasts, we are alternative. We're the nicest people you'll ever meet."

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## Maricopa Wellness Center announces spooktacular sales event

BY DR. KRISTINA DONNAY DNP, FNP-C

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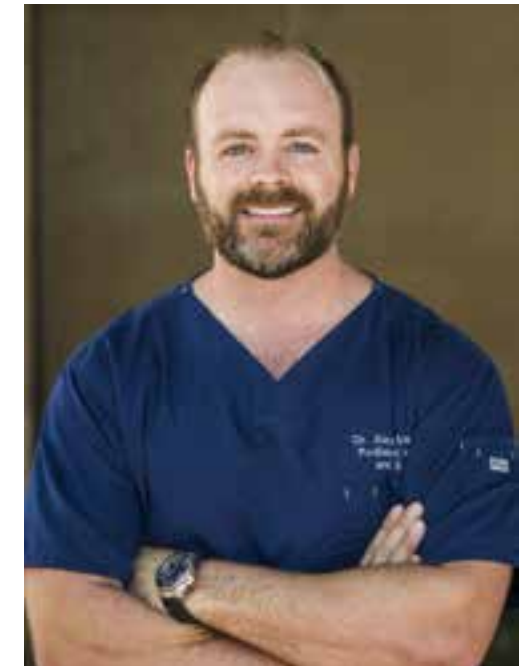
BY DR. ALEX M STEWART

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# Learning curve

Artificial, human intelligence tangle in Maricopa schools

BY CAMERON JOBSON



**O**NE YEAR AGO, CHATGPT DIDN'T exist. Today, it's a close friend to many.

But for students and teachers in Maricopa schools, the question is this: How close a friendship should that be?

For better or worse, ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence programs freely available online have stormed the walls of Maricopa schools.

Educators, administrators and students are harnessing the power and shouldering the dangers of AI as they reconcile the permanence of this new technology.

Students and teachers can lean into the new paradigm, using it to tailor instruction, write lesson plans and even complete entire assignments.

## Forget-me-bot

Talitha Martin, a 12th grade English teacher at Maricopa High School, worries reliance on AI harms students' critical thinking skills.

Naturally, she believes language is a crucial means of expression and exploration. When ChatGPT can write, rewrite and edit a document, it strips students of their learning experience.

"While adults may have more knowledge of their own voice in writing, students are still working out their understanding and command of language," Martin said.

Introducing something so extreme during a phase characterized by learning from one's mistakes is a tough pill to swallow.

"This is a time when their brains need to be focused on their own thoughts and expression," Martin said of her pupils, "not just dumping pre-formed word clusters onto a page."

Abusing chatbot output as a substitute for original thought also brings up ethical concerns, such as plagiarism and cheating.

Martin said she hopes to teach her students to evaluate and understand concepts in their own minds rather than test their "copy and paste" skills.

But just because students can doesn't mean they will.

Maricopa High School senior Nicolas Yendrzski pointed out there are other ways to cheat when doing assignments at home, on personal computers far away from the district's restrictions. It's nothing new — but that doesn't make every student a likely cheater.

"It's a whole different playing field at home," Yendrzski said. "But I don't use it for school because I know that it's frowned upon. I'd rather do my own work with my own name."

Monica D. Spencer



Nicolas Yendrzski

Although he avoids chatbots in the classroom, he said they're "fun to mess around with" in his free time.

## Uncharted waters

The Maricopa Unified School District does not have a method to detect AI, but some teachers have already noticed its implementation.

*Continued on page 58*

**"While adults may have more knowledge of their own voice in writing, students are still working out their understanding and command of language."**

TALITHA MARTIN, 12TH GRADE TEACHER

## ALEXA, WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Artificial intelligence has seamlessly integrated itself into virtually every facet of modern life. It's revolutionizing the way we interact with technology in a way most see as more significant than the birth of the internet.

Whether an Amazon Alexa device turns on the lights in your kitchen or Siri places a call on your iPhone, AI is all around.

It feels familiar because it simulates human intelligence. Computers can now make decisions, recognize patterns, solve problems and understand natural language.



Take ChatGPT for example; a chatbot that exploded into the mainstream after its launch just 10 months ago.

Unlike traditional AI systems designed for specific tasks — like when Alexa lets you know your chicken is done baking — generative AI creates brand new text, images and even music and video.

ChatGPT can compose emails, write essays and

answer complex questions within seconds.

As new as it feels, artificial intelligence has loomed behind the scenes for years.

Streaming services like Netflix and Hulu use AI predictions to recommend shows and movies, while social platforms like Facebook and YouTube use AI to suggest and organize posts in your feed.

In 1958, early computer scientists H. A. Simon and Allen Newell predicted "a digital computer will be the world's chess champion" and "a digital computer will discover and prove an important new mathematical theorem" within a decade.

It's been 65 years, but they finally got it right.



### CAN YOU SPOT THE BOT?

Spotting the difference between artificial- and human-generated content is a challenge to some, especially as ChatGPT rolls out more advanced iterations of its predictive text bot as it did just last month.

However, there are a few telltale trademarks

to look out for: repetition, inaccuracy, droning, lack of unique expression and poor contextual understanding.

Can you decipher which passage was written by artificial intelligence? Check our website with the QR code below to see if you got it right!

- A. *Nestled in the arid beauty of the desert, the city of Maricopa, Arizona, unveils a tapestry of joys waiting to be discovered. As the sun bathes the landscape in warm hues, the city's vibrant spirit comes to life. Maricopa is a place where community thrives, where neighbors become friends and smiles are exchanged freely.*
- B. *Maricopa stands out as a quaint bedroom community that blends*

*residential homelife and modernity. As one of the oldest and most historic communities in Arizona, it's a haven nestled in the middle of the Sonoran Desert.*

C. *Maricopa distinguishes itself as a quaint suburban enclave that harmoniously integrates residential living with contemporary elements. Nonetheless, the city's struggles with traffic congestion and protracted commuting durations cast a shadow over its otherwise charming allure.*



Martin thinks it is easy to differentiate between original work and bot-written content, which is hallmarked with flowery language and long, droning sentences.

"If I have had time to get to know the students and their speaking and writing voice, it is very obvious when something comes in that is not their own," Martin said. "I find it cold and somewhat callous to pass something off that you had no hand in actually writing."

Josefina Nichols, a Desert Sunrise High School math teacher, agrees.

In a curriculum that revolves around complex equations and problem-solving, Nichols must push her students to show their work.

"If students choose AI for their work, it will be a disservice to themselves," Nichols said.

**"If I have had time to get to know the students and their speaking and writing voice, it is very obvious when something comes in that is not their own."**

TALITHA MARTIN, 12TH GRADE TEACHER

### 'TRANSITION TO THE 21ST CENTURY'

A+ Charter School takes a different approach and faces the nascent technology head-on. The school integrates artificial intelligence into its curriculum.

The school introduced the Archer Intelligence Project this year, a high school elective class designed to help students take full advantage of burgeoning predictive text generators.

Dean of Academic Services Nate Wong said AI literacy is crucial in the modern world.

"We felt it was really important that we started having conversations about AI now," Wong said, "so we can have live feedback from the kids."

Wong said AI is a catalyst for

critical thinking. It's like having access to a round-the-clock tutor. The new course hones students' skills in prompt selection and language model training.

"If we don't show them stuff like this, they're going to get swallowed up," Wong said. "We really want to help transition kids into the 21st century."

And that concept extends to all in the classroom, he said. AI chatbots are new to teachers, too, providing an opportunity for students to watch the learning process.

"We would be doing kids a disservice, in our eyes, if we didn't learn with them," Wong said. "We're not trying to teach them one way or the other; we're trying to learn right along with them."

Students and teachers alike embrace mistakes in the Archer Intelligence Program before the new tech inevitably advances. With a focus on ChatGPT, the school is transitioning from a traditional, rigid learning model to a more individualized, standards-based approach.

Students in the class simulate conversations with Abraham Lincoln, argue in mock trials and much more. In today's technology-driven world, Wong said students learn differently — and teachers teach differently.

If his students understand an objective but can't seem to put it into writing, Wong encourages them to utilize their artificial assistant. It even helps describe complex ideas using familiar references like Harry

Potter, Mario and Pokémon.

"In five minutes, they can get five different perspectives that are relevant to things in their age group," Wong said. "And that sparks engagement, communication and listening to their peers."

So, while AI is a non-human aid, Wong says it's a bridge to the future of human intelligence. He encourages staff and students to lean into artificial intelligence, knowing full well it won't go away any time soon — if ever.

And the Archer Intelligence Program is one step forward in that regard. Wong doesn't intend to leave his students behind.

"Technology is always going to be exponential," he said. "This is going to grow into something else."

### If you can't beat 'em, join 'em

Although Nichols said she understands the dangers of artificial intelligence, she also recognizes its dichotomy.

"AI can be used as a tool," she conceded. "But it should not replace your lessons and activities. AI will not help students develop conceptual understanding and application."

However, some administrators argue AI can assist with writing prompts and brainstorming, among other helpful applications.

Christine Dickinson, MUSD's technology director, views AI as a tool to enhance understanding and believes it can be used as a "jumping-off point for students to build upon," she said.

"There is a useful case for everything," Dickinson said. "AI is no exception."

Its potential is unlimited and constantly proliferating. And if used ethically, Dickinson believes it can help — no different than the dawn of calculators or internet search engines.

Yendrzkeski sees it the same way.

"We already bounce ideas off of each other," he said. "And AI can do it faster, with a deeper understanding."

But despite possible benefits, most teachers seem to strictly discourage generative AI in the classroom. Especially when it is passed off as original and authentic.

"I dread the idea of a world where expertise, individual voice and authenticity become obsolete," Martin said. "And I view AI as fast-tracking us to that place."

### Lesson plan B

Because it is free online, students have nearly unfettered access to AI. The notion of AI in classrooms likely conjures images of students typing away into the prompt box.

But what about the teachers?

Educators with booked and busy schedules could offer themselves some leeway if they use AI to streamline lesson planning or grade tests.

"Think of AI as a partner in a collaborative work session," Dickinson said. "This partner has access to a wide range of resources and information that you may need and can offer suggestions and a different point of view."

Rather than dedicating hours and their own money to put curriculums together, teachers have a new option.

Martin flirts with the idea, but it still does not sway her opinions.

"Instead, it makes me wish that teachers

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had more available time and creative space to turn their knowledge into effective lessons and materials," she said.

**The future of education?**

Like the entry of computers and calculators to the classroom in previous decades, AI could simply end up supplementing existing infrastructure.

It's unlikely AI will outright overhaul the framework of education, educators say, but they are still grappling with when to use it and when to refuse it.

Chatbots can provide data-driven insights, accessibility and enhanced efficiency.

"AI will allow for students to have a free tutor available to them at nearly all times," Dickinson said. "The rapid advancement of these tools will provide breakthroughs for our learners."

On the flip side, artificial intelligence can make kids dependent on tech, dampen critical thinking and warp ethical perception.

Martin said she prefers a world where humans bounce ideas and inquiries off one other to generate new ideas. She and other teachers agree on one thing: AI should be approached cautiously.



"I won't be leaning in anytime soon," Martin Kase Whitted, 18, using Chat GPT at his home. said. "My plate is already full."

Artificial intelligence has unfathomable potential. But one thing is certain: As technology continues to metastasize, educators and students alike will be among the first to feel its impact.

Bryan Moridt



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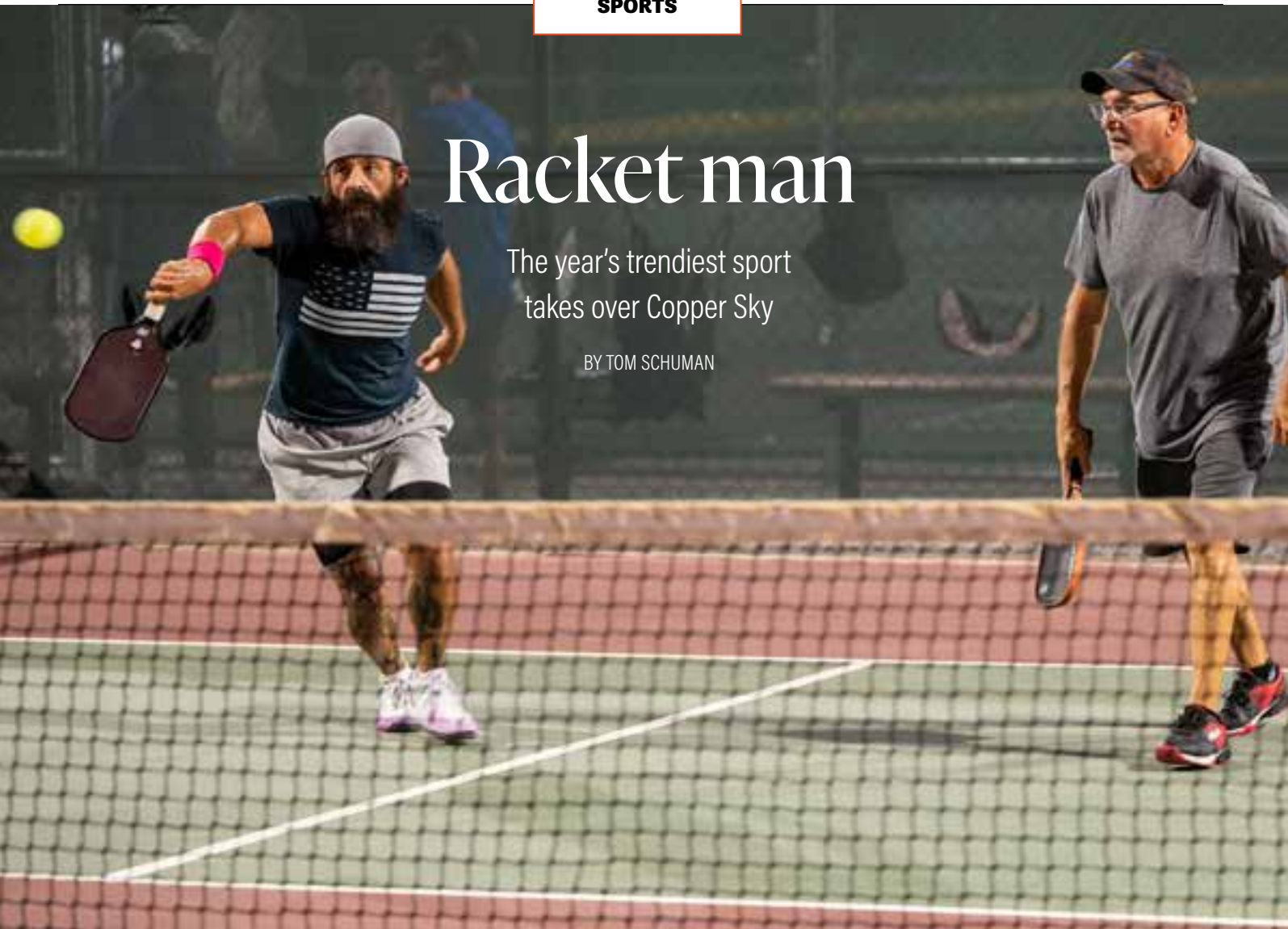
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# Racket man

The year's trendiest sport takes over Copper Sky

BY TOM SCHUMAN



**I**T'S A HOT, STEAMY WEDNESDAY in late August. The thermometer is still at 104 degrees at 7:30 p.m., yet a troupe of eager pickleballers of all ages and abilities makes its way to the half-dozen outdoor courts at Copper Sky Recreation Park.

A fun and competitive round-robin tournament — with emphasis on the former — is a weekly occurrence through the sizzling summer months. Additional events will take place on Saturday mornings as the weather cools and more winter residents return to the city.

Pickleball, the fastest-growing sport in America, has a long history in Arizona. Buckeye hosted the first national tournament in 2009, with Casa Grande serving the same role for three years beginning in 2015. In early November, more than 4,000 amateur and professional players will convene at a new 68-court complex in Farmers Branch, Texas, north of Dallas, for the USA Pickleball National Championships.



Pickleball, which combines facets of tennis, badminton and ping-pong, is played on a court about a quarter of the size of a tennis court. Players hit a hollow, perforated plastic

Dozens of pickleball players converge on the courts at Copper Sky during the week to get a game in. Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in America.

Bryan Mordt

ball with paddles to score points in singles or doubles games.

Though perhaps a little late to the pickleball party, Maricopa players say the racket sport is more than just a game.

"I consider this — my pickleball family — to be my second family," said 53-year-old Alberto Holguin, one of those playing in a recent round robin at Copper Sky.

## Family affair

Zander Newey, 18, is a newer participant in the Wednesday night round-robins. A four-year tennis player at Maricopa High School, he made the adjustment to pickleball early this year.

"I was a little skeptical at first. It looked like an easier version of tennis, and why would I play that?" he said. "But I love that it is less about power and more about control."

Newey looks forward to the opportunity to measure his progress each week.

"Playing against more experienced people, I get to learn things I didn't know before," he said. "This is where my full-time commitment is sports-wise."

The young racketer eyes entering tournaments when his play reaches a higher level.

Wednesday nights — and the sport in general — are a family affair for others.

Lourdes Figueroa found the game when her son learned about it in middle school. His "teacher"? Longtime local pickleball advocate Rocky Myers, a participant that evening at age 76.

"It's a family-friendly game that we all could play," Figueroa noted as she watched her husband, Fernando, on the court. "All four of our kids played at different times and still play with us when they can. We started our young nephew and niece, who want to play when they come and visit."

The Figuerosas have been Maricopa residents since 2007. They began playing indoors — using a makeshift court outlined by tape on the basketball hardwood at Copper Sky — shortly after the facility opened in 2014. It would be five more years before the outdoor courts became a reality.

"I like playing with the different people who come out here," Lourdes Figueroa said. "It's a good way to get exercise without you really thinking you are doing that. If we had more courts, we could get even more of the community involved."

Holguin, who grew up in Chandler and works in the financial industry in Maricopa, has played and coached many sports, including

## LEADING THE WAY

Rocky Myers is like the alpha dog of the Copper Sky pickleball pack. He became obsessed with the game shortly after moving to the city and playing for the first time a decade ago.

Myers, Maricopa's first USA Pickleball ambassador, led efforts to introduce the game to middle school students. He attended city council meetings to advocate for outdoor courts. At the time, games at Copper Sky were limited to half the gym just a few mornings a week — and sometimes

meant putting temporary nets on a tennis court.

The Figueroa clan were among those recruited to help tell the story of the sport's benefits. Myers brought council members and their spouses out to play, to show them the game is easy and fun.

After several years, Myers finally received a call in 2018 from then-Councilmember Nancy Smith. The message: "We're going to build!"

The Wednesday night round-robins and Saturday morning classes represent an evolution of all that early work. Myers hopes for continued growth.

"I'd like to see those classes offered again to the public to give them a chance to learn how to play," Myers said. "I also tried to work with youth groups — soccer, football, baseball leagues — to try and get those players to play pickleball in their off seasons. It would be great for hand-eye coordination."

Myers said he feels the game is a blessing.

"Pickleball has made my retirement so joyful," Myers said. "It's a fun sport, it's easy to learn and it's good exercise. And you can meet a lot of great people. I do warn people about one thing — it is addictive. But it's a good addiction!"



COPA Spectacular Round Robin: At Copper Sky

**"It's a good way to get exercise without you really thinking you are doing that. If we had more courts, we could get even more of the community involved."**

LOURDES FIGUEROA

## Pickleball ambassador

That's Jeffrey Fizer, an official USA Pickleball ambassador for Maricopa. The 53-year-old who works for the Department of Corrections in Buckeye succeeded Myers in that role two years ago.

A Chicago native, Fizer, 53, moved to Arizona in 2017 and began to play the game a year later. He saw an InMaricopa magazine ad for a Saturday morning beginners class led by Myers on the taped-off tennis courts, and his passion was ignited.

Continued on page 64



Pickleball, which combines facets of tennis, badminton and ping-pong, is played on a court about a quarter of the size of a tennis court. Players hit a hollow, perforated plastic ball with paddles to score points in singles or doubles games.

He is the creator, organizer and enthusiastic cheerleader for the round-robin tournaments in his adopted hometown. While the competition among the higher-level players can be intense, Fizer is even more pleased to

see newcomers warmly welcomed by the more experienced pickleballers.

"It really does get me excited. I had so much support when I learned how to play," Fizer said. "I just want to pay it forward."

For Fizer, the mission goes beyond the action on the courts.

"It's the fellowship and everyone coming together to have a good time in these trying times in our society," he said. "And it's getting people here in Maricopa understanding they've got a place to play. The game is good exercise, and we want to have the people of Maricopa more involved."

Fizer started the Wednesday night events, dubbed the Copa Spectacular, for just that reason. With snowbirds making their yearly migration back to town soon, Copa Classic round-robins and competitive tournaments will take place on selected Saturdays.

A mixed doubles competition held in April was the first official tourney in the city, attracting local players and others from Casa Grande, Gilbert and Tempe.

"That last tournament was just a starter," he said. "I play in different towns and cities in the area to promote what we're doing here. Pickleball is growing in Maricopa the way the city has grown the last 20 years."

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### Flag on the play

The Maricopa High girls started the flag football season with a bang, winning their first two games, a 58-9 win over Desert Sunrise and a 38-13 victory over West Point. This is the first year of competition for Arizona high school teams. Five other states have fully sanctioned girls flag football: Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Nevada and Alaska. At least seven more have launched pilots, including California and New York.



Victor Moreno



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## A homecoming first

Desert Sunrise enjoyed its first homecoming football game in September. Flagstaff played spoiler by coming to town and defeating the Golden Hawks 27-0, but Desert Sunrise, a school in its second year of existence, continued its development, compiling more than 200 yards of offense in the effort.



Bryan Morcht



## Death and taxes

BY CHRIS J. SCOGGIN, CPA

**T**HERE ARE MANY UNPLEASANT SITUATIONS THAT WE MUST deal with in life. But among the worst is when a loved one passes away and you are left to wind up their affairs. As a CPA, I often assist surviving relatives in preparing the final tax return for the deceased person and a separate return for their estate. This article will help you understand what returns need to be filed and when those returns are due.

### Final 1040 – Personal Tax Return

When someone dies, their income up to the date of death may need to be reported on Form 1040. This is the individual tax return that we are all familiar with. If the deceased person was married, the surviving spouse can file this return as Married Filing Jointly (MFJ), Head of Household (HOH) or Married Filing Separate (MFS). If the deceased person was unmarried at the time of their passing, they must file Single.

The next question is whether the deceased person's income exceeds the standard deduction. For tax year 2023, the standard deduction is:

FILING STATUS	SINGLE OR MFS	HOH	MFJ
Under 65	\$13,850	\$20,800	\$27,700
Over 65	\$15,700	\$22,650	\$31,400 (Both spouses)

If the deceased person's income is below the standard deduction, filing a return is not required. If the person's itemized deductions exceed the amount above, you need to use the itemized deduction amount instead of the standard deduction.

Finally, all income received or was paid while the person was alive must be included in the final 1040 return. This means that, if some income like social security, pension or retirement income is received in the days or weeks following the person's death, this income must be included on the 1040 return.

### Form 1041 – Income Tax Return for Estates and Trusts

Once a person passes away, that person's assets are considered to be an estate. Or, if the person created a trust while living, the assets of the decedent are held in this trust. If these assets continue to produce income, this income needs to be reported on Form 1041 – Income Tax Return for Estates and Trusts.

The types of income that might require filing the Form 1041 would be income from investments or rental properties that continue to accrue after the death of the taxpayer. However, Form 1041 usually results in much higher tax liability than the same income reported on Form 1040. This is because of the much lower \$600 standard deduction and much skinnier tax brackets.

For a married couple filing a joint tax return, for example, they do not enter the highest 37% tax bracket until their taxable income exceeds \$693,750. For an estate or trust, their income is taxed at the



highest 37% tax rate on income over \$14,450.

That said, trusts and estates can utilize tax deductions for attorney and accountant fees, final expenses for the deceased person and payments to the beneficiaries. If you find that you are the personal representative or trustee for an estate or trust, I strongly recommend meeting with a CPA to do some end-of-year tax planning. This can reduce the estate tax burden significantly.


### Form 706 – Estate Tax Return

If the decedent has a very large estate over \$12.9 million and no surviving spouse, their estate will likely need to file Form 706 – Estate Tax Return. This return does not tax the income of the estate, but rather taxes the value of the estate.

If the decedent has a surviving spouse, you can file Form 706 to double the marital estate tax exemption to \$25.8 million. This is a return that you will want to trust in the hands of a professional as the cost of error is massive.

### Conclusion

If you find yourself or a loved one facing any or all of the scenarios above, please come see us at CS CPA Group and we can help you better understand the requirements and timing needed to comply with these required tax returns. [📞](#)

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An updated site plan and anticipated construction dates are just a few updates InMaricopa learned in August. The new site plan shows the project spans nearly 13 acres, including the addition of several proposed shops and restaurants just west of the national home improvement retailer. The box store anticipates construction will begin in December or early January.



The most-circulated magazine and most-read daily online news source in Maricopa took home 10 awards in nine categories as a first-time contestant in the 2023 Arizona Newspapers Association's Better Newspapers and Excellence in Advertising contests Aug. 31. Top awards for InMaricopa included first place in website design and four second-place awards, including best news story.



In late August, Maricopa's second urgent care clinic began accepting new patients, giving residents a local and affordable option for same-day medical care. NextCare offers discounts for uninsured patients and those with high deductibles, making a flu shot or sports physical an inexpensive visit.



While the much-anticipated sit-down restaurant has yet to confirm an opening date, Nando's has some fun plans in store. Director of Operations Marijka Anderson told InMaricopa the restaurant slated a mural unveiling and will offer souvenir stadium cups for to-go margaritas. In the meantime, the restaurant plans to begin the hiring process for its fifth location in mid-October.



In preparation for cooler temperatures and the return of Maricopa's snowbirds, Roots Eatery updated its menu with the warm, robust flavors of fall. Squash and mushrooms add a sweet, earthy profile to meals, while sauces become richer, creamier and heavier, said owner Chris Spear: "Fall is one of my favorite seasons because there's a lot of good produce out there, and when you cook it right it's amazing."

Good stuff happening at your business? Let us know at News@InMaricopa.com.



## Permits

Aug. 14-Sept. 8

### COMMERCIAL

**Apex Landco LLC** nine commercial tenant improvement permits valued at \$803,000 for three buildings.

**City of Maricopa** for a parking shade structure at a fire station on Alterra and John Wayne Parkways, valued at more than \$146,000.

**GNC** to make \$46,000 of interior alterations, including flooring, lighting and fixtures, for its new store at Edison Pointe.

**Pinal AZ Investment I LLC** a wall sign permit for Banner Physical Therapy near Porter Road and Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway.

**Rancho El Dorado Homeowners Association** for a commercial shade structure at Lakes Park valued at \$176,000.

**Slim Restaurant P9 LLC** for wall and drive-thru signs for the Slim Chickens restaurant on Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway.

**Sloppy Toppings Snack Bar** to be a mobile food vendor.

### RESIDENTIAL

**Century Communities of Arizona LLC** to build three homes in The Trails Phase 1B.

**CW Tortosa LLC** to build one home in Tortosa South.

**D.R. Horton Inc.** to build 15 homes in Tortosa South, three homes in Sorrento Phase 2 and 17 homes in Rancho El Dorado Phase III.

**KB Home Phoenix Inc.** to build two homes in Tortosa South.

**K. Hovnanian** to build seven homes in Santa Rosa Springs.

**Lennar Arizona Inc.** to build three homes in Anderson Farms.

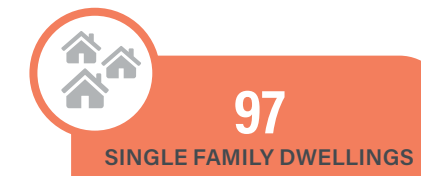
**Meritage Homes** to build four homes in Rancho El Dorado Phase III, 11 homes in the Trails Phase 1A and 22 homes in Province.

**Pulte Home Company LLC** to build four homes in Santa Rosa Crossing.

**Richmond American Homes** to build two homes in Rancho El Dorado Phase III.

**Starlight Homes** to build three homes in Tortosa South.

## Permits Issued



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# Restaurant inspections



A summary of the Aug. 10-Sept. 9 restaurant health inspections by Pinal County Environmental Health Services.

## SATISFACTORY



**Handwashing sinks**  
Water to handwash sink near takeout prep line not available.

**Chemical sanitation**  
Staff used sanitizer dispenser hose on a pan, immediately rinsed it with water and placed it on rack to dry. Sanitizer to be on dishware for at least one minute.



**Handwashing sinks**  
Water to handwash sink near takeout prep line not available.

**Chemical sanitation**  
Staff used sanitizer dispenser hose on a pan, immediately rinsed it with water and placed it on a rack to dry. Sanitizer to be on dishware for at least one minute.

## EXCELLENT

- Amberlynn's Sweet Treats
- Children's Learning Adventure Childcare Centers
- Cold Beer & Cheeseburgers
- Crumbl Cookies
- Desert Wind Middle School
- Dollar General (Papago Road)
- Leading Edge Academy

- Maricopa High School concession stand
- McDonald's (John Wayne Parkway)
- MOD Super-fast Pizza
- The New HQ
- Papa Murphy's Pizza
- Pima Butte Elementary School
- Province Community

- Association Clubhouse**
- Rili B's Taco Shop
  - Santa Cruz Elementary School
  - Santa Rosa Elementary School
  - Sequoia Pathway Academy
  - Thai Chili 2 Go
  - Water and Ice
  - Wendy's

**EXCELLENT** No violations found.

**SATISFACTORY** Violations corrected during inspection.

**NEEDS IMPROVEMENT** Critical items noted during inspection cannot be corrected immediately requiring follow-up inspection.

**UNACCEPTABLE** Gross, unsanitary conditions necessitating the discontinuation of service.

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## Growing garlic

It might be the perfect crop for curious desert gardeners.

BY TRUDY FULLER

**T**HE PERFECT PROJECT FOR THE curious desert gardener just might be planting garlic.

Once the inground garden bed, raised bed or large container is prepped with compost and fertilizer, it will be ready for the cloves from the garlic bulb.

A word of caution, though: Get your garlic from internet sources. Farms and nurseries in Arizona sell a stunning array of garlic varieties expressly for planting, unlike the typical garlic in the grocery store.

Note that some are hardnecked and normally planted in colder climates, while others are softnecked and better suited to warmer climates. Refrigerate purchased seed garlic in a paper bag for four to six weeks. This is called vernalization.

The optimum planting window in the low desert is usually from October through November. When planting, break the garlic bulb apart and plant the flat side of the clove downward and the pointed side up. It is recommended to plant cloves about 2 inches deep and 4 to 6 inches apart. Mulching is also advised. Be sure the soil is only moist and not saturated. The first signs of growth will appear in early spring, following winter dormancy.

Certain garlic varieties may send up flowering shoots called scapes. It is advised to trim these shoots to direct all energy to the bulbs below ground. These green scapes may be used in cooking sauces, pesto and soups, giving a mild garlic flavor. They can also be added to the compost pile.



Harvest here in the low desert before oppressive heat sets in, usually from early- to mid-May depending on the temperature of previous months. When the lower leaves of the plants turn brown, the bulbs are ready.

The bulbs may not look as big or white as those bought in-store, but don't let that concern you. Depending on the variety purchased, they may take the shape of a turban artichoke.

When harvesting, use a garden fork or spade to gently lift the bulbs out of the soil instead of pulling them like an onion or carrot. Try to avoid nicking the bulb. If the bulb is nicked, put it first in line to use for cooking.

Keep the remaining tops on the garlic after

harvesting to let the leaves direct more energy into the bulbs. Lay them out to dry, shading them from the sun. Due to the dry desert air, this can be as short as two weeks. Carefully trim the roots and the tops once dried. Store in a paper bag or open tray where air can circulate, avoiding the refrigerator.

Milder-flavored desert-grown garlic will be a welcome addition to your kitchen.

*Maricopa resident Trudy Fuller is a Pinal County Master Gardener volunteer.*

520-374-6263  
[macmastergardener@gmail.com](mailto:macmastergardener@gmail.com)

### most expensive HOME SOLD



40584 W. Desert Fairways Aug. 30 **\$** 624,000

This lakeside home has a three-car garage and an RV garage. In addition to three bedrooms and a great room, there is a study and gourmet kitchen with a breakfast nook. The master suite features a large walk-in closet and dual-sink bathroom. A covered patio in the backyard offers views of the community lake. It sold for \$15,000 less than its original list price.

**Community:** The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado  
**Square feet:** 2,580  
**Price per square foot:** \$242.25  
**Lot size:** 10,610 sqft  
**Days on market:** 46  
**Builder:** Richmond American Homes  
**Year built:** 2022  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Bathrooms:** 2.5

- 42483 W. Blue Suede Shoes Lane, Province .....\$600,000
- 43273 W. Knauss Drive, The Villages at Rancho El Dorado.....\$583,815
- 22043 N. O'Sullivan Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$570,000
- 21866 N. Backus Drive, Rancho El Dorado .....\$559,995

### least expensive HOME SOLD

44875 W. Paitilla Lane Aug. 10 **\$** 253,000



This single-story home has connected living, dining and kitchen areas. It sold for \$20,000 below its original list price. The house is already back on the market. The buyers listed it for \$319,000 Sept. 11. The home has changed hands several times. It fetched \$133,000 in 2015, \$109,600 in 2013 and \$74,580 in 2009.

**Community:** Acacia Crossings  
**Square feet:** 1,402  
**Lot size:** 5,189 sqft  
**Price per square foot:** \$180.46  
**Days on market:** 26  
**Builder:** Shea Homes  
**Year built:** 2004  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Bedrooms plus:** 3  
**Bathrooms:** 2

- 36350 W. Alhambra St., Tortosa.....\$261,000
- 44836 W. Gavilan Drive, Acacia Crossings .....\$270,000
- 19220 N. Toledo Ave., Tortosa.....\$275,000
- 36792 W. Mondragone Lane, Sorrento.....\$285,000

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Source: MLS, Aug. 10-Sept. 9

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# Maricopa



## Tenant giving notice? Do this!

BY SHERMAN AND EUPHEMIA WEEKES



**2 Arrange for an inspection of the property with the tenant.** Compare the condition of the property to when the tenant moved in. This is necessary to determine if the tenant is responsible for any damage to the property. Point out all damages outside normal wear and tear. It's essential that you document all damages to the unit with photographs and video. This is also a good time to verify the tenant's new address.

**TENANTS CAN GIVE A NOTICE TO vacate at any time during the lease term — and for a multitude of reasons.** Whatever that reason may be, as a landlord, here are the top five steps you need to take:

**1 Contact the tenant immediately** to determine the reason behind their decision. Try working with the tenant to see if you can do anything to help them continue renting your property.

**3 Begin showing the property to prospective tenants.** By law, a tenant cannot “unreasonably” refuse to allow showings after giving notice. It's important to work with your tenants and establish a showing schedule that works for both parties. Schedule all showings at least 48 hours in advance. If the tenant does not cooperate, you will need to send notices by mail with sufficient time to allow a showing within 48 hours of the tenant receiving the notice. If you find this difficult, consult with a property manager.

**4 Prepare the Security Deposit Disposition** itemizing all deductions from the security deposit and the amount to be returned to the tenant. The disposition document and deposit should be mailed to the tenant within 14 business days after you receive the keys from the tenant.

**5 Quickly and professionally prepare the property for rent.** You should ensure it is clean, safe and has good curb appeal. A fresh coat of paint can make your property attractive to prospective tenants. Begin marketing the property when the repairs are complete. This includes fair pricing and focused marketing. Setting the right rental price is difficult and can be costly if you don't have the tools to do a proper market analysis. If you price your property too high, it will sit on the market for a long time; too low and you will lose money. Property management companies are expert at setting rental rates. Consider hiring one so you get the right compensation for your property.

Contact us at Crest Premier Property Management if you need help when tenants serve you notice to vacate your property.

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## How Arizona's water issues may affect real estate in Maricopa

BY DAYV MORGAN

**W**ater – it's our most precious resource. Earlier this year, Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs announced restrictions aimed at protecting groundwater sources in areas outside of most municipalities that will require developers to provide alternative sources of water, aside from groundwater before they can build.

The move, which will only affect new

construction in rural areas, won't stop anything currently in the pipeline, but it brings the question of whether it will affect Maricopa.

The short answer is no.

Years ago, Global Water Resources, Maricopa's water utility company, went through a lengthy approval process with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, and was issued a Designation of Assured Water Supply. Governor Hobbs' restrictions only apply to groundwater sources that do not have this designation.

The well Global Water draws from is part of the Maricopa-Stanfield sub-basin aquifer. They were allocated approximately 23,000 acre-feet of water, but the city currently only uses around 8,000 acre-feet, meaning that Maricopa could more than double in size and still have enough water for its residents.

But maybe you prefer to live away from it all, perhaps somewhere like Hidden Valley, which will likely require that you drill your own well. With that approach, you'll only have to pay for the electricity to pump the water, but the upfront costs could be staggering.

Most wells in Arizona cost an average of \$45 per foot to drill, with the rate going higher when there's a lot of bedrock to drill through. The average depth

of wells in Hidden Valley are 600-800 feet, but in a worst-case scenario, you might have to drill 1,000 feet or more to find water. This means that the cost just to dig the well could reach \$45,000, which doesn't include the price of the pump, storage tank, pressure tank, or other equipment needed.

In addition to the high initial expense, repairs and maintenance can be very costly, and are solely the responsibility of the homeowner. And there's also no guarantee that the well will have an endless quantity of water to meet the demand. There are some wells in the area that have gone dry because they were not drilled deep enough. The majority, however, continue to operate just fine.

Whether you are in favor of continued growth for Maricopa or feel it's already grown too big, the good news is that for the foreseeable future, the water situation in Maricopa is a good one, and current homeowners within the city limits don't need to worry about a water shortage.

Dayv Morgan is a Maricopa Realtor and owner of HomeSmart Success.

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### EVENTS CALENDAR

#### OCTOBER

2

**Maricopa Historical Society**  
5 p.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

3

**Maricopa City Council**  
6 p.m., City Hall  
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

7

**Maricopa Amateur Radio Association**  
9 a.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**SafeHouse - Break the Ice**  
9 p.m., Water & Ice  
20928 N. John Wayne Pkwy.

11

**Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board**  
6:30 p.m., District Office  
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

12

**Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group**  
6 p.m., Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite 103

13-15

**Wild West Music Fest**  
All day, Copper Sky Recreation Complex  
44345 Martin Luther King Blvd.

17

**Maricopa City Council**  
6 p.m., City Hall  
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

18

**Blue Star Mothers of Maricopa**  
6:30 p.m., Maricopa Veterans Center  
41600 W. Smith Enke Road

21

**Teen Group**  
10 a.m.-noon, Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite 103

25

**Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board**  
6:30 p.m., District Office  
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

26

**Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group**  
6 p.m., Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite 103

28

**2023 Fall Craft Fair**  
9 a.m., Maricopa Veterans Center  
41600 W. Smith Enke Road

**Sundays**

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Maricopa Meadows Community Park  
45511 W. Honeycutt Ave.

#### Mondays

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
5:30 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
6 p.m., Community of Hope Church  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

#### Tuesdays

**Maricopa Cruise-in**  
5 p.m., Parking lot behind Burger King  
20699 N. John Wayne Pkwy.

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
6:30 p.m., Mountain View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

**Celebrate Recovery Large and Small Group**  
7 p.m., Maricopa Community Church  
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

#### Wednesdays

**Al-Anon - New Beginnings**  
10 a.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
Noon, Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

#### Art and Sip

7 p.m., The Roost  
20800 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite 101

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
5:30 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

#### Thursdays

**Maricopa Police Cadets**  
6 p.m., Maricopa High School  
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Community of Hope Church  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

#### Fridays

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
4:30 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Al-Anon - Strength & Home AFG**  
7 p.m., Community of Hope  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Mountain View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

#### Saturdays

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
10 a.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

ALL EVENTS ARE TENTATIVE

For details on these and other local events — and to list your own — visit [InMaricopa.com/Calendar](http://InMaricopa.com/Calendar).

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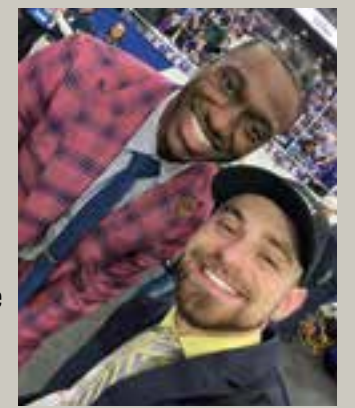
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**ELIAS WEISS**  
Editor, InMaricopa

**Hometown:** Charlotte, N.C.  
**Reside in:** Amarillo Creek  
**Maricopan since:** 2023  
**Cars:** 2023 Kia Forte  
**Hobbies:** Distance running, snowboarding, traveling, learning languages  
**Pet peeve:** Poor grammar and spelling  
**Dream vacation:** Antarctica wildlife cruise  
**Like most about Maricopa:** My readers



FAVORITE ...

**Movie:** Ocean's 11  
**Actor:** Lily James  
**Musician:** Luke Combs  
**Song:** Lovin' Lately by Big & Rich and Tim McGraw  
**Athlete:** LaMelo Ball  
**Team:** Charlotte Hornets, Carolina Panthers, Arkansas Razorbacks

**Food:** Tacos  
**Drink:** Sweet tea  
**Getaway:** Snowboarding in Flagstaff  
**Quote:** "Scars of battle are the marks of the Lord Jesus." -Billy Graham  
**Joke:** I need to hire someone to help my one-armed reporter type capital letters. It's shift work.

Learn more about Elias at [InMaricopa.com/Getting-to-Know](https://InMaricopa.com/Getting-to-Know).

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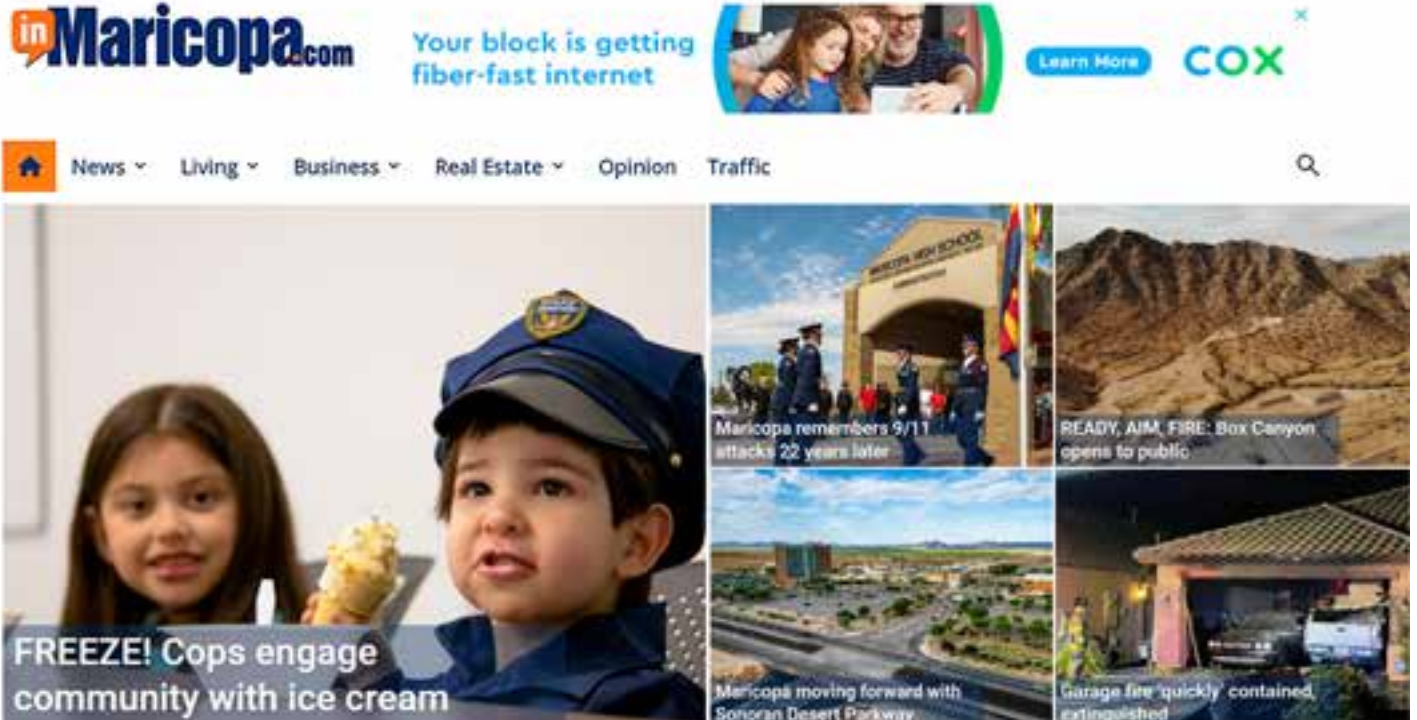


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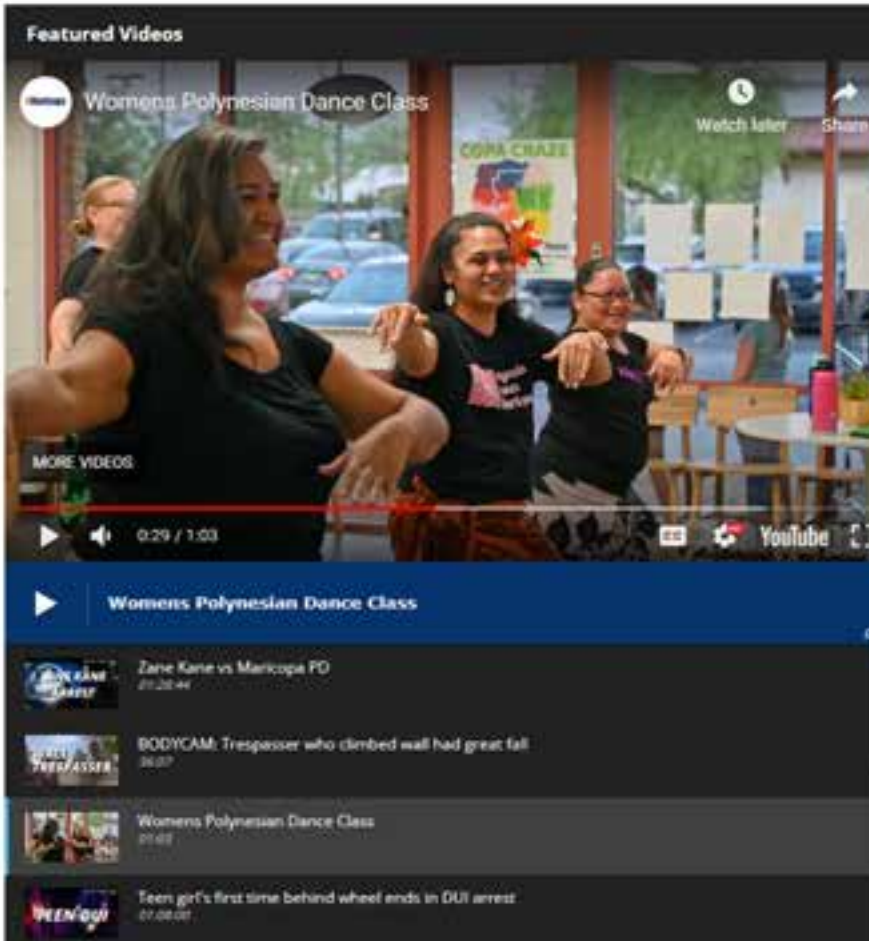
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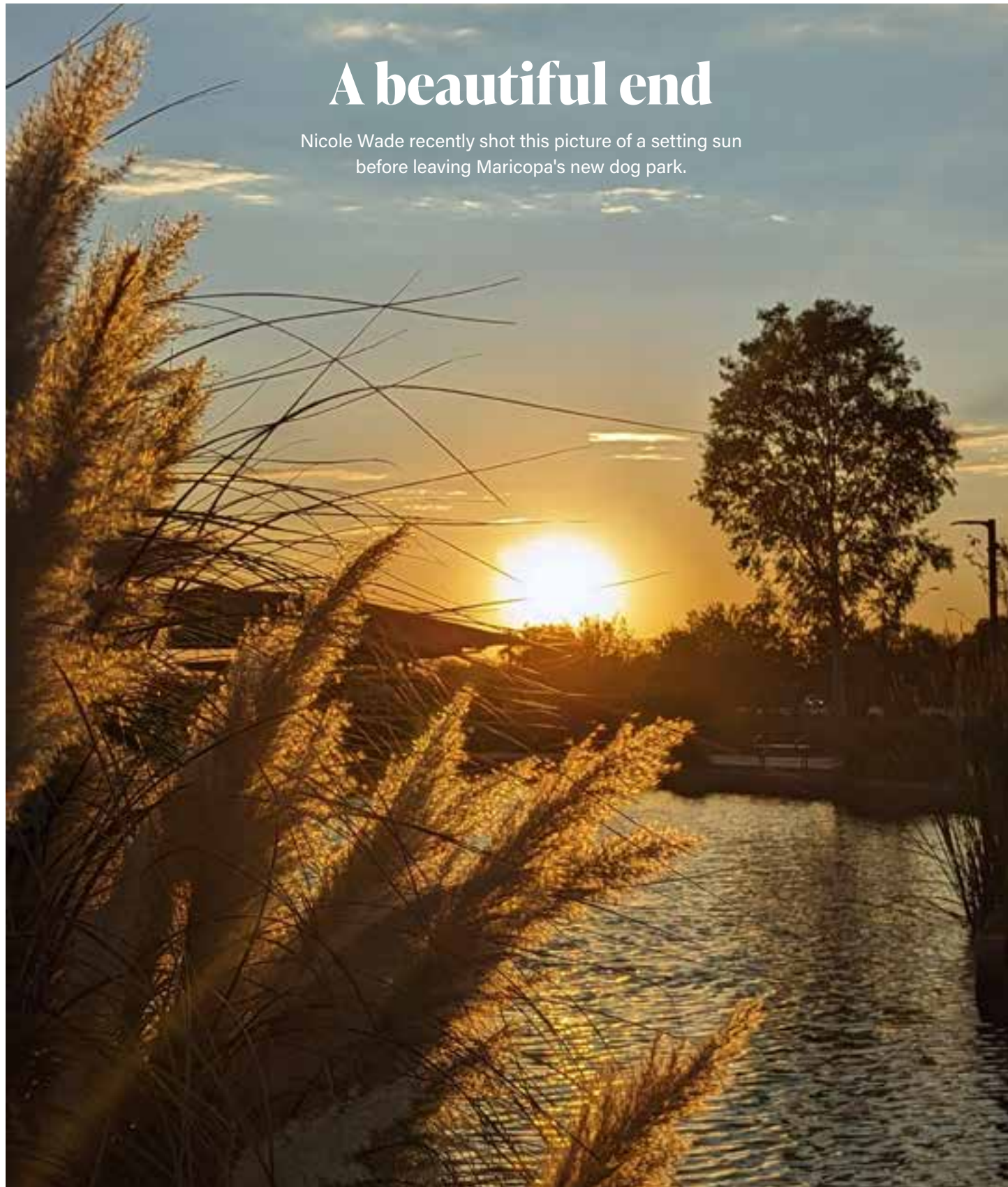


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