



Business

Mega-firm brings on PV executive; 4



INDEPENDENT



250th

Town celebrates U.S. milestone; 18

June 2026

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Gilbert launches public engagement for NW redevelopment

By Tom Blodgett
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

After years of study, discussion and planning, Gilbert has reached a key milestone in its effort to shape the future of one of the community's oldest developed areas.

The town has officially launched the public engagement phase of its Gilbert Northwest redevelopment initiative, asking residents, business owners, property owners and other stakeholders to help create a long-term vision for nearly 13 square miles of established neighborhoods, employment centers and commercial districts.

Town officials say the next several months will be among the most important of the entire process because the focus is no longer on defining the redevelopment area, but on determining what the community wants it to become.

"We're not taking a we-know-best approach, we're taking a 'community, we want to hear, we want to listen, we want to understand, and we want your voice to be heard through this process,'" former Economic Development Director Dan Henderson said. Henderson was speaking during his last week with

• See **Redevelopment** on page 24

Gilbert ASU graduate takes sustainability mission to Peace Corps

By Tom Blodgett
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For Thomas Hancock-Bacon, a path that began in Gilbert classrooms and a high school agriculture course is about to take him more than 2,000 miles away to the Caribbean.

This fall, the Arizona State University graduate will leave for Jamaica, where he will spend two years as a Peace Corps volunteer helping support sustainable agriculture projects.

It is the next step in a journey that has taken him from Mesquite High School to leadership roles at ASU and now toward a career focused on sustainable development.

The Gilbert native graduated this spring from ASU's W.

• See **Graduate** on page 7



Thomas Hancock-Bacon graduated from Arizona State last month as the Turken Family Outstanding Graduating Senior from the W. P. Carey School of Business and will be heading to Jamaica to serve in the Peace Corps in the fall. (Shelley Valdez/Arizona State University)

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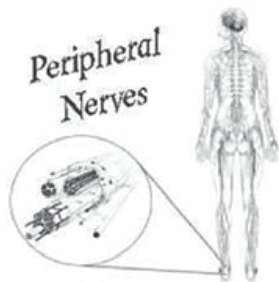
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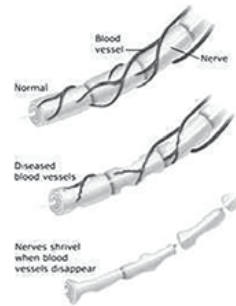
PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY AND CHRONIC PAIN WARNING!

Mesa, AZ — The most common method your doctor will recommend to treat your chronic pain and/or neuropathy is with prescription drugs that may temporarily reduce your symptoms. These drugs have names such as Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Neurontin, and are primarily antidepressant or anti-seizure drugs. These drugs may cause you to feel uncomfortable and have a variety of harmful side effects.

Chronic pain and/or peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves often causing weakness, pain, numbness, tingling, and the most debilitating balance problems. This damage is commonly caused by a hands and feet which causes the nerves to begin to degenerate due to lack of nutrient flow.



As you can see in Figure 2, as the blood vessels that surround the nerves become diseased they shrivel up which causes the nerves to not get the nutrients to continue to survive. When these nerves begin to "die" they cause you to have balance problems, pain, numbness, tingling, burning, and many additional symptoms. The main problem is that your doctor has told you



to just live with the problem or try the drugs which you don't like taking because they make you feel uncomfortable. There is now a facility right here in Mesa that offers you hope without taking those endless drugs with serious side effects.

(See the special neuropathy severity examination at the end of this article) In order to effectively treat your neuropathy three factors must be determined.

- 1) What is the underlying cause?
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Aspen Medical will do a chronic pain and neuropathy severity examination to determine the extent of the nerve damage as a public service to you and/or your family and friends. This neuropathy/pain severity examination will consist of a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, and a detailed analysis of the findings of your neuropathy.



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Compass International Holdings Names Greg Hague Director of Home Sale Strategy

Founder of 72SOLD will provide voluntary, no-cost strategy training to more than 300,000 agents across the company's portfolio of brands

New York, NY – April 23, 2026 – Compass International Holdings, a global real estate services company, announced that Greg Hague, founder of 72SOLD and one of the most credentialed and experienced home sale strategists, has been appointed Director of Home Sale Strategy. Hague brings more than 50 years of experience to the role, with a career spanning brokerage, law, and real estate innovation. His work is grounded in the idea that the market is not a fixed constraint but a dynamic environment in which skilled real estate professionals can influence outcomes through strategy, positioning, and execution.

“My passion has always been helping real estate professionals unlock what’s possible for the clients they serve,” said Hague. “It’s about mastering how to position, market, show, and negotiate homes in ways that drive better results. When agents have access to the right strategies and the freedom to use them, the impact for sellers can be significant. I’m excited to share that with agents across this incredible network.”

Hague’s approach is designed to complement the company’s listing marketing strategies, giving agents additional tools around home positioning, buyer demand creation, showing strategy, and negotiation. Agents can adopt and adapt these strategies as they see fit, with the goal of delivering stronger outcomes for sellers.

“Greg and I share a belief that the future of this industry is one where agents are empowered to lead, and sellers have more choice in how their homes are marketed and sold,” said Robert Reffkin, Chairman and CEO of Compass International Holdings. “The best outcomes happen when the professional closest to the client has the flexibility and tools to act in their client’s best interest. Greg has spent his career building strategies that do exactly that, and we’re excited to make that expertise available to every agent across our network.”

Hague’s training will be available to all agents across Compass International Holdings’ brands at no cost, with participation entirely optional. Agents maintain full discretion over how and whether to incorporate these strategies into their business.

About 72SOLD

Founded in Scottsdale, Arizona, 72SOLD is a home-selling strategy consulting and training company operating across major U.S. markets. Inc. 5000 ranked it #211 among America’s top 250 fastest-growing private companies and the number one fastest-growing real estate company in the Southwest. The company has been recognized as one of the Most Admired Companies in Arizona. Seven independent studies over five years have documented higher seller net proceeds from agents trained on 72SOLD’s methods. Learn more at 72SOLD.com.

About Greg Hague

Greg Hague is one of the most credentialed and experienced home sale strategists in the country. A licensed real estate attorney who earned the top score on the Arizona bar exam,



Greg Hague

he is a 50-year real estate professional who made a deliberate choice early in his career: that the real estate business needed better thinking more than it needed another lawyer.

He began selling homes in the 1970s at his father’s Cincinnati real estate firm and never looked back. Over the decades that followed, he has personally listed and sold thousands of homes, and has trained agents across the country who have collectively effected the sale of tens of thousands more. Realtor Magazine ranked him among the Top 20 home-selling agents in the United States.

Hague founded 72SOLD, a home sale strategy consulting and training company that Inc. 5000 ranked #211 among America’s top 250 fastest-growing privately held firms and the number one fastest-growing real estate company in the Southwest. 72SOLD has been recognized as one of the Most Admired Companies in Arizona.

Seven independent studies over five years have documented higher net proceeds for sellers represented by agents trained on Hague’s methods. The most recent, a 2025 study of 11,618 Phoenix Metro MLS transac-

tions, showed a 5.8% higher median sale price compared to other homes sold in the same market.

Hague has built a fully integrated infrastructure supporting agent training and seller results, including a proprietary CRM, an in-house advertising agency, a buyer lead generation platform, an appointment-setting center, and an AI partnership with PolyAI.

About Compass International Holdings

Compass, Inc. (“Compass International Holdings”, “CIH” or the “Company”) (NYSE: COMP) is a global real estate services company with a presence in every major U.S. city and approximately 120 countries and territories. Compass International Holdings serves millions of buyers and sellers through a portfolio of some of the most recognized and iconic brands: @properties, Better Homes and Gardens® Real Estate, CENTURY 21®, Christie’s International Real Estate, Coldwell Banker®, Compass, Corcoran®, ERA®, and Sotheby’s International Realty®. Every day, we empower a global network of 300,000 real estate professionals and affiliate broker-owners to grow their businesses and deliver exceptional service to consumers

The Company empowers real estate professionals to streamline operations and seamlessly guide clients through every phase of residential and commercial transactions, leveraging powerful tools, including its modern technology platform. Compass International Holdings brings together integrated services, including brokerage, franchise, mortgage, title, insurance, escrow, and relocation.

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Approved rezoning allows for Target retail center

Town Council approved a rezoning request May 19 on a 4-3 vote that clears the way for a Target-anchored retail center at the southeast corner of Higley and Ocotillo roads.

Vice Mayor Chuck Bongiovanni and council members Bobbi Buchli and Jim Torgeson dissented on the rezoning changes that allow for a single user larger than 75,000 square feet.

Read more: tinyurl.com/39b-5c5mm

Council OKs budget, property tax levy

Gilbert Town Council gave preliminary approval May 19 to the town's fiscal year 2026-27 budget and secondary property tax levy, advancing a spending plan officials said balances infrastructure investment and essential services amid continuing revenue pressures.

The council voted unanimously on the preliminary budget adoption of \$2.55 billion, about \$93 million more than last year or 3.8%. It also unanimously adopted the secondary property tax levy, which will remain at 98 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation for another year.

Read more: tinyurl.com/u5958f3h

MEETINGS**Gilbert Town Council**

6:30 p.m. June 9, 23
50 E. Civic Center Drive, Gilbert
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Gilbert elevates assistant to town manager

By Tom Blodgett

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Gilbert has selected Mario Paniagua as its next town manager, choosing the current assistant town manager and longtime Phoenix administrator to lead the town through its next phase of growth and financial challenges.

Paniagua officially assumed the role June 1 following what the town described as a "comprehensive and competitive national selection process."

In the town's announcement, Paniagua described Gilbert as a community whose success has been built intentionally over time.

"I am honored and invigorated by the mayor and council's trust in selecting me as Gilbert's town manager," Paniagua said. "Gilbert is a place where nearly 300,000 residents experience the warmth and kindness of a small town. It's safe, attractive, and genuinely thriving. That's no accident. It takes intentional leadership, and I'm proud to be part of it."

Council unanimously approved an employment agreement for Paniagua during its May 19 consent agenda. Under the agreement approved by council, Paniagua will receive an annual salary of \$375,000 and will be eligible for Gilbert's pay-for-performance program, deferred compensation benefits and other executive-level benefits provided to salaried town employees.

Paniagua has served as Gilbert's assistant town manager for nine months after joining the town from the city of Phoenix, where he spent more than 27 years in a variety of leadership roles, including more than a decade as deputy city manager.

He said his priorities as town manager would focus on supporting employees and working collaboratively to address the town's future challenges.

"Gilbert's people are exceptional, and my focus as town manager is



Mario Paniagua, right, shown speaking to former Councilmember Scott September at a town manager candidate forum, worked as an assistant town manager in Gilbert for nine months after coming over from Phoenix. (Independent Newsmedia/Tom Blodgett)

straightforward: support the team doing the work, collaborate diligently on the challenges ahead, and keep Gilbert prospering for residents, businesses, and visitors," Paniagua said.

Mayor Scott Anderson said in the town's release that Paniagua distinguished himself during the selection process through both his leadership approach and understanding of the community.

"Mario brings exactly what Gilbert needs: steady hands, a sharp mind, and genuine care for the people he leads," Anderson said. "His deliberate, thoughtful approach stood out throughout this process, and I'm confident Mario will be an exceptional town manager. I'm proud and excited to have him lead Gilbert into this next chapter."

The town said Paniagua demonstrated strengths throughout the process in areas including his understanding of Gilbert's culture, commitment to employees, strategic vision and willingness to engage directly with residents and businesses.

Paniagua takes over leadership of the town as officials continue grappling

with a projected structural budget gap, infrastructure reinvestment needs and the transition from rapid growth toward long-term redevelopment and maintenance.

During Gilbert's recent finalist forum, Paniagua identified the town's financial condition as the top challenge facing the next manager.

"We're able to bring forward a balanced budget this year," he said, "but we also realize that there are some severe needs that the community has, some strong needs that the community has that we're just not able to meet moving forward."

He also pointed to economic development and infrastructure replacement as major priorities as Gilbert nears buildout.

"We've got to really make sure that we strengthen and bolster the approach that we have for economic development," Paniagua said.

We would like to invite our readers to submit their civil comments, pro or con, on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Tom Blodgett can be reached by email at tblodgett@iniusa.org or follow him @sp_blodgett on X.



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Graduate

• From page 1

P. Carey School of Business with dual degrees in finance and business sustainability. Along the way, he founded ASU's Ethnobotanical Club, served as president of the T.W. Lewis Ambassadors, participated in several student organizations and earned the Turken Family Outstanding Graduating Senior award from W. P. Carey.

Yet Hancock-Bacon traces many of his interests back to his hometown.

He attended Oak Tree Elementary, Gilbert Arts Academy, Eduprize Schools, Gilbert Junior High School and Mesquite High School. At Mesquite, an agriculture-focused class helped open his eyes to a side of Arizona he had not fully considered.

"I was like, 'Oh, people are actually farming in Arizona,'" Hancock-Bacon said.

His interest in agriculture merged with a lifelong concern for environmental issues and a family culture that valued sustainability.

Initially, he planned to attend Washington State University to study organic agriculture. He even paid his enrollment deposit before changing course.

Instead, he chose ASU because he believed business and finance would

give him a greater opportunity to influence large-scale change.

"I really wanted to be able to make change at scale throughout my life," Hancock-Bacon said. "You need to be in the rooms where capital is moved, where policy decisions are made and really where it all happens."

At ASU, he immersed himself in opportunities that stretched well beyond the classroom. He credits the T.W. Lewis Center for Personal and Professional Development as one of the most influential experiences of his college career because it exposed him to speakers and ideas from a wide range of disciplines.

Those experiences helped shape what he describes as a mission to serve as a bridge between fields that often speak different languages.

"I really intend to be a translator across systems throughout my career," Hancock-Bacon said.

That philosophy also influenced his decision to join the Peace Corps.

While his education gave him experience in finance and policy, he wanted firsthand experience working directly with communities. In Jamaica, he will help support efforts to increase agricultural production, improve crop diversity and strengthen climate resilience in farming communities.

"I wanted to partner

• See **Mission** on page 15

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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Tom Blodgett

NOW OPEN

1 Atomic Underground opened May 1 at 2270 E. Williams Field Road, suite 112, Gilbert. It sells brand name collectibles, action figures, model kits, Lego, plushies, toys and gifts. 480-292-9646. atomicunderground.com

2 The Crowned Egg opened a location May 3 at 1520 W. Guadalupe Road, suite 101, Gilbert. The breakfast restaurant has a location on Lindsay and Warner roads in Gilbert and one in Chandler. 480-392-2269. thecrownedegg.com

3 Driftwood Coffee opened May 4 at 4428 E. Elliot Road, Gilbert, in the center of the Mission Community Church campus, from which it is leasing space. It serves coffee drinks with beans from around the nation and some pastries. It also has a location in Peoria. driftwoodaz.com

4 Prime and Proper Barber Shop opened March 31 at 3107 S. Gilbert Road, suite 109, Gilbert. It does male grooming services. 480-918-8216. primeproperaz.com

5 Sable Boulangerie opened May 13 in the windows out back of 228 N. Gilbert Road, Gilbert, behind JesterZ Improv Comedy club in the Heritage District. It is a classic French bakery that is faithful to French cooking. maison-william-porter.com

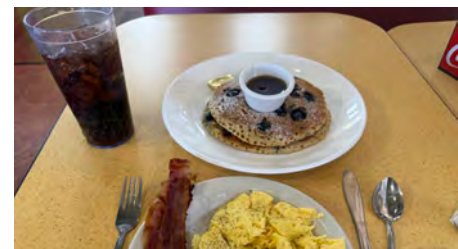
6 SpringHill Suites by Marriott opened March 25 at 1801 S. Santan Village Parkway, Gilbert. The all-suites hotel has a pool, fitness center, meeting event space, picnic area and free breakfast. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for May 14. 480-996-0800. marriott.com

7 Sync Chiropractic opened April 15 at 625 N. Gilbert Road, suite 207, Gilbert. Dr. Chase Foote's services include upper cervical care, neurological scans, advanced 3D imaging, neurological optimization and postural correction. 480-745-2717. sync-chiropractic.com

8 Ted's Hot Dogs opened a location May 23 on the Chandler-Gilbert border at 2700 E. Germann Road, Chandler, in the Crossroads Towne Center. The Buffalo, New York-based chain grills hot dogs and other items and allows customers to choose their toppings. The only other location outside the Buffalo area has been in Tempe for more than 40 years. 480-275-3152. tedshotdogs.com

COMING SOON

9 Chipotle is building a new restaurant at 4733 E. Germann Road, Gilbert. It is a fast-casual restaurant chain that specializes in customizable tacos, burritos, and bowls. It will be the sixth location in Gilbert. No opening date has been announced. chipotle.com



THE CROWNED EGG



DRIFTWOOD COFFEE



TED'S HOT DOGS

10 The Escape Game is anticipated to open in late summer at 366 N. Gilbert Road, Gilbert, in the Heritage District. It is an interactive, team-based entertainment experience where players uncover hidden clues and solve puzzles to complete their chosen mission. The Gilbert location will feature five immersive escape games. The Escape Game has 50 locations nationally, but the Gilbert location will be the first in Arizona. 623-698-0907. theescapegame.com/gilbert

11 Fabletics plans to open a store at 2168 E. Williams Field Road, Gilbert, in the SanTan Village mall. It is an

• See **Moves** on page 9

Moves

• From page 8

activewear apparel store. No opening date has been announced. fabletics.com

12 Light Heart Coffee plans to open a stand at the northwest corner of Higley and Queen Creek roads in spring 2027. It serves specialty coffee and noncoffee drinks. It has two locations in Scottsdale and one in Gilbert's Heritage District. lightheartcoffee.com

13 The Stand Coffee Co., which has been operating as a coffee truck, will open a brick-and-mortar location in the Fry's shopping plaza at 1845 E. Baseline Road, Gilbert. The truck currently is operating out of the parking lot there. No opening date for the cafe has been announced. thestandcoffee.com

RELOCATIONS

14 Blue Lemon Pools moved from Queen Creek to a new office at 75 W. Baseline Road, suite 23, Gilbert. It does pool maintenance and repair. 480-843-0530. bluelemonpools.com

15 Bobazing closed its original location April 12 at 3611 E. Baseline Road, Gilbert, and moved to 2401 E. Baseline Road, Gilbert. The tea house serves a variety of boba, smoothie,

juice, and coffee-based drinks, plus has board games. 480-590-3225. [instagram.com/bobazing_gilbert/](https://www.instagram.com/bobazing_gilbert/)

16 Goodman Dental Center moved April 13 from Queen Creek to 4727 E. Pecos Road, suite 101, Gilbert. It is a general dentistry practice led by Drs. Brian and Tanner Goodman. 480-807-4000. goodmandental-center.com

17 Seros Wealth Partners moved March 23 from Tempe to 155 E. Rivulon Blvd., suite 304, Gilbert. It is a financial advisory firm. 480-967-1155. serosfinancial.com

NEW OWNERSHIP

18 Premier Eyecare of Arizona has been sold and is rebranding at the end of June as MyEyeDr at 3271 E. Queen Creek Road, suite 107, Gilbert. It does comprehensive eye exams, including pediatric eye exams, treats dry eye conditions and manages eye disease and conditions, myopia and LASIK. 480-392-3937. premiereyecareaz.com/myeyedr.com

CLOSINGS

19 The Chick-fil-A at 2533 S. Market St., Gilbert, in the SanTan Village Marketplace has closed for renovations. It is anticipated to be closed for several months, but no reopening date has been announced. 480-814-7200. chick-fil-a.com/locations/az/san-tan-village-marketplace

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Mercy Gilbert earns sixth straight 'A' for safety

Mercy Gilbert Medical Center received top national marks for patient safety and quality in the latest evaluations by The Leapfrog Group and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Mercy Gilbert earned an "A" grade in the Spring 2026 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade report. The nonprofit organization evaluates hospitals nationwide on performance measures related to patient safety and error prevention.

For Mercy Gilbert, the recognition marks its sixth consecutive "A" rating in the biannual survey, reflecting sustained performance in safety standards.

In a separate federal rating, Mercy Gilbert received five-star overall ratings from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Former Gilbert Road bank sells to Overton Builders

A freestanding retail property at 900 S. Gilbert Road sold for \$2 million, according to commercial real-estate website vizzda.com.

The buyer, an entity tracing to Overton Builders, financed it with a \$2.2 million loan from Bell Bank, with a maturity date of April 6, 2036.

The seller, an entity tracing to Spencer's TV & Appliance, acquired the property in December 2023 for \$1.75 million.

The property consists of a 4,465-square-foot, single-story building on 1.51 acres.

Read more: tinyurl.com/3ce-wy82a

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By Heather Cain

CEO, UNITEDHEALTHCARE OF ARIZONA

With spring in full swing, May is a good time to reset and learn how your health plan can support your financial and health goals. Understanding your coverage can be a vital part of your family's financial planning. Especially since 36% of adults report skipping care due to cost in the last 12 months.

At UnitedHealthcare, we are working to make it easier to understand your benefits, compare your care options in advance and feel more confident navigating health care.

Here are five practical tips to help you be a savvier health care consumer:

1. Consider digital solutions designed to improve your experience

Some health insurers offer tools that help you find network providers more easily, compare treatment options and make more informed decisions about where to get care. AI-powered tools such as chatbots and enhanced provider search may also be available to help you navigate benefits and take the next best step in your health care journey.

UnitedHealthcare recently introduced Avery, its AI chatbot, designed to help create a simpler health care experience. Available when using the UHC app and member website, eligible members can ask Avery questions about cost estimates, claims, provider search and more. Avery offers clear next steps—and if extra support is needed, she can transfer you to a customer advocate.

2. Compare costs and care options before scheduling care

Just like other major purchases, comparing costs and options ahead



Heather Cain, CEO, UnitedHealthcare of Arizona

of time can help you make informed decisions and potentially save you money. Some health insurers offer plan and provider search tools that can help you understand your choices and expected costs before you book an appointment.

3. Explore personalized programs and services

Check whether your health insurer offers digital tools that make it easier to find programs and services that fit your health and lifestyle needs with offerings supporting women's health, mental health, weight management, nutrition and fitness, chronic conditions and more. The UHC Store, for example, is a digital shopping experience for eligible members to shop for and purchase a variety of discounted

health and wellness offerings to meet their individual needs throughout the year at an average of 26% off retail prices.

4. Establish a relationship with a primary care provider

Building an ongoing relationship with a primary care provider can help catch potential issues earlier, when treatment may be simpler and less costly. It can also support better outcomes by helping coordinate care over time.

Annual checkups, vaccines and certain screenings may be covered by your health plan at no additional cost when recommended by a network provider. That's especially important as rates of certain cancers and chronic conditions continue to rise among working-age adults.

5. Don't forget about financial protection plans

Expenses from an unexpected illness, injury or hospital stays can add up quickly. That's where supplemental plans can help. This can include options like accident insurance, critical illness insurance or hospital insurance.

Supplemental plans can provide financial peace of mind by offering fixed payments or reimbursements during covered life events. This added layer of protection may help with everyday expenses, medical bills and unexpected costs that can come with time away from work.

A few small steps can make health care easier to navigate. Take a few minutes to review your benefits and contact your health plan and employer with any questions. With the right tools and support, you can understand your coverage, plan for costs and choose care that fits your needs.

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LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 14



Tyler Farnsworth

Primary: House Republican Party
Hometown: Gilbert

Occupation: Marketing professional

Why do you think you're the best candidate for the position?

Public service is service, not a career. I'm not a staffer. I'm not somebody's protégé. I built a business and managed significant budgets for Fortune 100 clients. I'll be a proper steward of every tax dollar. My kids walk the streets I grew up on. Individual liberty is the foundation. Smaller government, freer people. That's the fight I'll bring to the Legislature.

For more questions and answers:
tinyurl.com/kfnd6tas



Jedidiah "Jed" Lyons

Primary: House Republican Party
Hometown: Gilbert

Occupation: Nonprofit fundraising consultant

Why do you think you're the best candidate for the position?

I'm the best candidate because I bring a record of execution, not just ideas. In my career, I've built organizations, delivered measurable results, and taken on challenges most people avoid. I understand how to move quickly, solve problems, and follow through. I'm not running to be part of the system. I'm running to make it work for the people it serves. My focus is simple: public safety, strong families, and real economic opportunity.

For more questions and answers:
tinyurl.com/kfnd6tas



Mary Rose

Primary: House Democratic Party

Hometown: Phoenix
Occupation: Retired

Why do you think you're the best candidate for the position?

I will fight for the things that will help the majority of people live their lives without struggling just to put a meal on the table or to have to choose between gas and groceries. I will fight against the rich getting richer. It's time to bring the power back to the people, by the people, and for the people. We need to leave our younger generation a better world in which they can thrive.

For more questions and answers:
tinyurl.com/e39v83hr



Stephanie Walsh

Primary: Senate Democratic Party

Hometown: Gilbert
Occupation: Engineer

Why do you think you're the best candidate for the position?

My experience in engineering, business, and nonprofit leadership gives me a practical, results-driven approach to public service. I understand how decisions impact real people, businesses, communities, and our economy. I care deeply about Arizona and the people who live here, and I am committed to bringing thoughtful, solutions-focused leadership to the Legislature. I'm a problem-solver who works well with people of different opinions, and I'm dedicated to building a stronger future for our state.

For more questions and answers:
tinyurl.com/e39v83hr

CANDIDATES NOT RESPONDING Laurin Hendrix (House Republican), Mylie Biggs (Senate Republican)

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CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 5



Daniel Keenan
Party affiliation: Republican
Hometown: Gilbert
Occupation: CEO of DK Builders
Why do you think you are the best candidate for the position?

I have been consistent and resolute in my beliefs. I stood with President Trump while weak RINOs betrayed him in 2020, like my opponent Mark Lamb. Mark stated his full confidence in the election systems and has refused to indicate whether he would have vot-

ed like Biggs on his certification of the 2020 election. This district deserves a fighter that will stand for their beliefs like Andy Biggs, not someone who will compromise their values for when it becomes politically advantageous.

For more questions and answers: tynyurl.com/yewc4axb

We would like to invite our readers to submit their civil comments, pro or con, on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Tom Blodgett can be reached by email at tblodgett@iniusa.org or follow him @sp_blodgett on X.

CANDIDATES NOT RESPONDING

Mark Lamb (Republican), Brian Hualde (Democrat), Chris James (Democrat), Elizabeth Lee (Democrat)

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Allyson, 16

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INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA



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OPINION

Take the Civility Pledge

Yes, I will do my part to help my community become a safe place for people to engage in civil discourse about public issues. Visit iniusa.org/civility-pledge/ to take the pledge.

Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our opinions, and we insist on civility. Please include your name and phone number, so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We welcome your photo. All opinions must be no more than 300 words.

Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month. Two submissions in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

Speak Up

We support the use of pen names. Too many people don't speak up because they fear intimidation or even danger to their families and/or careers. Pen names are an important part of our nation's history.

Corrections

We will promptly correct all factual errors. We offer a "right of reply" to the people about whom we write. Readers who disagree with a news story are welcome to respond with a letter.

Arizona public schools answer to us, not themselves



Rod Wielkie

Public school districts do not answer to themselves. They answer to the public.

That reality seems to be getting lost.

District leadership routinely speaks about transparency, accountability and professionalism. Yet too often, those principles seem to apply only when convenient. When decisions are made behind closed doors, when processes rely on subjective judgment rather than documented performance and when legitimate questions are met with silence, the message is clear: Accountability is optional.

That is not governance. It is institutional arrogance.

CORRECTION

Legislative District 14 candidate Tyler Farnsworth was incorrectly identified in the text of a story on page 22 of the May edition.

Gilbert traffic safety sign pilot shows mixed results

Love the creativity but there are very few things that actually impact peoples' willingness to actually change their driving, except, perhaps, stronger and more frequent enforcement. — **Reynold B.**

A roadside sign is a distraction and takes eyes away from the road. Even the sign tells us that. — **Richard R.**

They make me think and remind me of things I have gotten lazy with. I like them. They are also good for kids who do not drive, to teach them. — **Nancy L.**

Gilbert council approves pre-

LETTERS

Public institutions do not have the luxury of operating above scrutiny. Every hiring decision, every administrative action and every internal process carries public consequences. When those decisions lack transparency or consistency, confidence erodes, not just in a single outcome but in the system itself.

A fair process should withstand scrutiny. A transparent system should invite it. Leadership that resists questions or simply ignores them signals something far more concerning than disagreement. It signals a belief that oversight does not apply to them.

Governing boards exist to prevent that. Their role is not ceremonial. It is to ensure that leadership operates within standards that uphold fairness, consistency and accountability.

Taxpayers fund the system. Families depend on it. Educators dedicate their careers to it. All deserve more than assurances. They deserve answers.

Public trust is not maintained by carefully worded statements. It is earned through actions, especially when those actions are questioned.

Anything less is not transparency.

SPEAK UP

liminary \$2.55B budget for fiscal year 2026-27

What does it matter? Town of Gilbert will just raise our taxes or float a bond! That's what politicians do. — **Blake G.**

If we are so close to the Michigan water crisis, why was that never disclosed! If the water pipe replacements are in the budget, why couldn't you reduce the water costs and spread the income over four years. It's disheartening that council never budged! Since you and the other council members had not one resolution option, you don't deserve our votes. — **Bonnie L.**

Gilbert Public Schools earns

Please send your comments to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

It is avoidance.

Rod Wielkie
Chandler

Rod Wielkie is a retired federal agent, military veteran and a former middle school social studies teacher.

Lamb would 'fit in' with worst of Congress

Mark Lamb is running for Congress. He's a true financial genius!

Mark owns a house in Queen Creek and just bought a 140-acre ranch in Tennessee; never mind all of the sexual harassment/assault complaints against him, he's a good Mormon and tithes 10% to the church.

All of those expenses are a pretty heavy lift on a retired sheriff's income.

Ya, he's gonna fit in just fine in the cesspool of Congress.

Larry Reister
Chandler

music education recognition

Extremely important. Helps with math skills, reading, memorization, emotional strength. A lifetime of the gift of music! — **Wendy T.**

It's fun for the students, but essentially plays no part in the development of kids. They need things like English, math, economics and logic classes to prepare them for life. — **Larry B.**

Chandler district high school has 12 military enlistees

That's a moment to be proud of. I've had

• See **Opinion** on page 15

Opinion

• From page 14

family go this way and it turned out pretty amazing. — **Josh B.**

I'm glad Perry took the time to recognize these students. Walking into military service after high school is not an easy choice, and it says a lot about their character. I remember making that decision myself years ago, and I know it changes your life. These young men and women deserve support and respect as they start that journey. — **Rodney W.**

Please send your comments to
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We would like to invite our readers to submit their civil comments, pro or con, on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Tom Blodgett can be reached by email at tblodgett@iniusa.org or follow him at [sp_blodgett](https://twitter.com/sp_blodgett) on X.



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Be a Civility Advocate!



Civility Checklist

How to engage in respectful, honest & civil dialogue about public issues

- Take the high road.** Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.
- Be respectful.** Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment, and threats directed at another person — or that person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone's character or motives.
- Be truthful.** Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes. When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.
- Don't misrepresent.** Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.
- Listen & learn.** It's both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don't agree with your own.
- Look for common ground.** When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.
- Respect privacy.** Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.
- Set a good example.** Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it's OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.



Now that you've read the checklist, take the Civility Pledge at yourvalley.net/civility-pledge.

HERO AT THE HELM

Local industry leader explains how hormones hold the key to vitality

Aging doesn't have to mean slowing down, and CarolAnn Tutera is proof that hormonal balance is the ultimate comeback strategy.

CarolAnn is the first female medical entrepreneur to bring bioidentical hormone pellet therapy to the forefront. As the CEO and co-founder of Tutera Medical® and SottoPelle® with her late husband Dr. Gino Tutera, MD, FACOG, she has dedicated over 30 years to positioning the company as the industry leader.

Using a multi-patented, individualized dosing method developed by Dr. Tutera, they helped thousands of patients regain their health and vitality. As tireless advocates for wellness and longevity, they set the gold standard for bioidentical hormone therapy (BHRT) pellet practices across America.

Now, menopause is finally having its moment

after decades of misconception, while testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) continues gaining traction in men's health.

"We are the industry pioneer in BHRT pellet therapy and the reason it is practiced today," she says. "Our mission is to support people's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being."

Armed with an unwavering vision and a relentless commitment to their patients, CarolAnn has helped to shape the hormone industry and change lives.

PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

With offices in Scottsdale and several Arizona locations, Tutera Medical® provides personalized hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to help men and women manage their hormonal imbalances. SottoPelle® is an international training



and education company that teaches medical providers how to use BHRT.

"Our providers undergo rigorous training to create a custom-tailored approach for each individual," CarolAnn says. "We always put our patients first."

That explains why Tutera Medical® has been named the "Number One Hormone Therapy Practice in Arizona" for 11 consecutive years by Ranking Arizona.

CarolAnn has been a core entrepreneurial force who redefined the rules of aging by bringing bioidentical hormone therapy into the mainstream spotlight.

"Our goal is to prevent serious illnesses and help people age gracefully, in addition to treating menopause and andropause."

BALANCING ACT

Feeling frazzled, forgetful, fuzzy and fatigued? Constantly grumpy or down in the dumps? It could be due to sex hormone imbalances. But what do sex hormones have to do with health?

"Everything," CarolAnn declares, explaining that the sex hormones aren't just for reproduction. "They regulate every function of the body and brain and determine the health of the entire body."

Dr. Tutera discovered that by age 45, most men have lost over half of their testosterone while women have lost most of their estrogen, testosterone and nearly all their progesterone.

A 2023 study found that as hormone levels decline, people face a higher risk of heart disease — the leading cause of death for both women and men in the U.S. — along with increased rates of autoimmune and cognitive disorders.

CarolAnn explains that HRT offers protective benefits to help insulate the body against cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's and neurodegenerative conditions, with a notable slowdown in biological aging markers. Started within a decade of perimenopause, HRT is linked to a 25% to 50% reduction in fatal cardiovascular events and cognitive decline.

PELLET THERAPY

The SottoPelle Method® uses plant-based bioidentical hormone pellets that match the molecular structure of human hormones. Gently slipped under the skin, pellets provide 24/7 delivery for optimal effectiveness and typically last four to six months.

"We have always emphasized a custom-tailored approach based on a patient's individual needs, instead of a one-size-fits-all method," CarolAnn says. "We treat the whole person, not just the ailment. Patients feel that the moment they walk in the door."

HELPING MEN GET THEIR MOJO BACK

Testosterone is central to a man's well-being, but levels drop quickly over age 45. HRT can help offset the fatigue, low energy, malaise, and loss of muscle mass.

Testosterone acts like a "first responder" and Navy SEAL for men's health. Tutera Medical® offers a special program to help men boost their vitality with optional testosterone injections formulated by a compounding pharmacy, in addition to BHRT pellets.

CarolAnn notes that the company began using TRT successfully over 12 years ago to treat NFL football players with concussions and military veterans with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Tutera Medical® now accepts insurance from select plans for pellet therapy and TRT injections. A simple blood test and consultation with a certified trained provider can put a man on the road to recovery.

BREAKTHROUGHS

Some patients hesitate to consider HRT, often due to misconceptions over cardiovascular risks.

A 2024 study linked low testosterone to increased rates of stroke and a 60% higher risk of cardiovascular mortality. Another recent study suggested that "250,000 women's lives could have been saved" with greater access to estrogen and progesterone therapy.

"It is my hope that the medical profession will recognize the importance of hormones in overall health and mental function as well as disease prevention and support their patients who choose HRT as part of their wellness regimen," CarolAnn says.

The Tutera Medical® legacy reflects CarolAnn's passionate commitment to advancing more effective methods of hormonal health, helping men and women across the globe age gracefully.

Call us at 480-874-1515 to schedule an appointment, or visit tuteramedical.com.

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Fluctuating levels of estrogen and testosterone decrease bone strength and increase the chance of fractures. Women who undergo premature surgical menopause also remain at greater risk of developing osteoporosis, making it critical to check their hormone levels. Pellet therapy has a 4x greater increase in bone density than oral estrogen and 2.5x greater increase than patch delivery methods.

Improves sexual function

Estrogen deficiency can result in vaginal pain and dryness, uncomfortable sex, and even urinary incontinence in women. Low testosterone in men can lead to sexual performance problems including erectile dysfunction or "ED". BHRT pellets help to restore youthful hormone levels to alleviate these problems and improve sexual function and enjoyment in both women and men.

Protects against disease

Hormone decline is associated with many life-threatening illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, and more. Maintaining proper hormone levels with BHRT Pellets can help prevent disease and maintain youthful vitality, health and energy.

Wondering if you may have a hormonal imbalance?

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AMERICA@250

Gilbert working on service challenge for America's 250th birthday

By Tom Blodgett

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As the nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Gilbert leaders are asking residents to celebrate not with fireworks alone, but with service.

Through a partnership between For Our Town Gilbert and JustServe, the community is aiming to complete 25,000 hours of volunteer service before July 4 as part of the nationwide America250 initiative.

Mayor Scott Anderson promoted the effort in an email encouraging "every resident, family, school, business, and organization in Gilbert" to participate by volunteering and logging their hours online, including service performed retroactively back to January.

Rachel Hixon, director of JustServe in Gilbert and a board member on For Our Town Gilbert, said the initiative is designed to highlight service as a core American value.

"We just thought this was a great opportunity to show what our nation was built on, which is service," she said. "The effort proposed and the ef-



Mowing a neighbor's yard is an example of what can count as a service in Gilbert's challenge to do 25,000 hours of community service to mark America's 250th birthday. (Courtesy town of Gilbert)

fort that went forward through the For Our Town Board was that we would track the service hours and have a goal of 25,000 service hours between now and July 4th."

The effort launched in early March, and organizers said the response has exceeded expectations.

"In fact, I think we're close to half of our goal already," Hixon said.

The challenge goes beyond organized volunteer projects and encourages residents to count everyday acts of kindness and neighborly assistance.

"If you are helping your neighbor mow their lawn, if you're picking fruit for mom and dad in the backyard, if you are going down the street and helping someone weed their front yard or doing any everyday thing that you can do, we want people to track it," Hixon said. "We want them to recognize that the reason this country is so great is because we serve each other day-to-day, minute by minute."

For Our Town Gilbert is a collaboration of nonprofit organizations, businesses, faith groups and commu-

nity leaders focused on volunteerism and community engagement. Assistant to the Town Manager Melanie Dykstra said the organization works to connect residents with community needs through quarterly meetings, service drives and volunteer events.

Among its recent initiatives have been teacher supply drives, community food drives and service projects tied to the town's annual Sept. 11 memorial observance.

Dykstra said last year's 9/11 Day of Service effort involved nearly 6,700 volunteers contributing more than 13,000 hours across 97 projects benefiting 88 organizations.

The current America250 challenge relies heavily on JustServe, an online platform sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that connects volunteers with organizations needing help. While church-sponsored, organizers stressed the platform is open to all community organizations and volunteers.

Residents can find volunteer opportunities through JustServe.org and log their hours through links available through For Our Town Gilbert.

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Gilbert Fourth of July celebration set

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Gilbert will host its annual Fourth of July celebration from 5 to 9:30 p.m. on July 4 at Gilbert Regional Park, 3005 E. Queen Creek Road.

The free, family-friendly event will include live music, food vendors, a drone show and a fireworks display scheduled to begin at about 8:50 p.m., weather permitting.

Gates open at 5 p.m., with entertainment beginning shortly after. DJ Kayla is scheduled to perform from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., followed by the band Sedona Red from 7 to 9 p.m.

General admission is free.

A paid VIP experience will offer reserved seating, complimentary food, shaded dining, games and access to al-



Live music is part of the Gilbert Fourth of July celebration. (Courtesy town of Gilbert)

cohol sales within a restricted area. Pre-sale tickets are listed at \$40 per person, with higher pricing at the gate.

Parking will be available on-site for

\$15 per vehicle, payable by credit or debit card. Event officials encourage early arrival due to expected heavy traffic, with street closures anticipated

later in the evening.

A variety of food and beverage vendors will be available, with both cash and card payments accepted. Outside food, drinks and coolers are permitted, but alcohol is restricted to the VIP area and is not allowed for general admission attendees.

The town advises attendees to bring chairs, blankets, sunscreen and water. Prohibited items include pets, glass containers, grills, tents, personal fireworks and drones.

The park will be closed from 10 p.m. July 3 until reopening at 5 p.m. July 4 for the event.

The event will take place at the park's amphitheater and great lawn and is accessible for strollers, wheelchairs and walkers.

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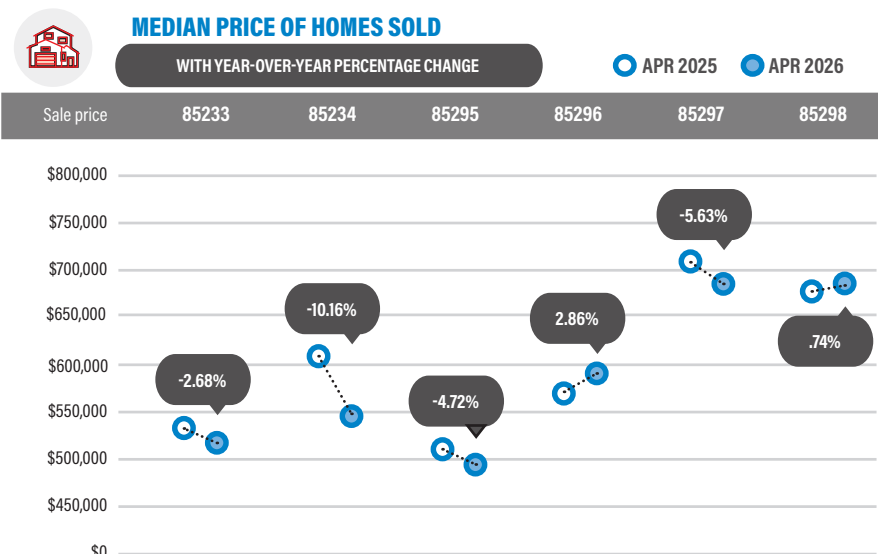
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NUMBER OF HOMES ON THE MARKET

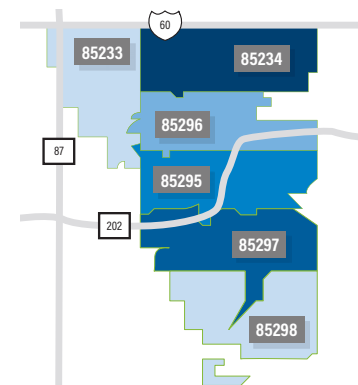
	APR 2025	APR 2026
85233	110	92
85234	147	121
85295	150	136
85296	146	140
85297	127	127
85298	217	194

NUMBER OF HOMES UNDER CONTRACT

	APR 2026	APR 2026
85233	61	54
85234	56	52
85295	66	67
85296	69	78
85297	46	44
85298	85	76

AVERAGE DAYS ON THE MARKET

	APR 2025	APR 2026
85233	60	58
85234	76	56
85295	50	56
85296	54	53
85297	36	83
85298	57	50



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Mission

• From page 7

some of my higher finance experience with some really grassroots on-the-ground community-led development,” Hancock-Bacon said.

Although he does not yet know his exact assignment, he expects to work on agricultural development projects after completing three months of training upon arriving in Jamaica in September.

The opportunity appealed to him because it combines many of his interests: sustainability, agriculture, economic development and cross-cultural collaboration.

“I’m able to just hop straight into making a positive impact on the world around me,” Hancock-Bacon said.

Looking further ahead, Hancock-Bacon sees several possible career paths, from international organizations such as the United Nations or World Bank to private-sector sustainable finance firms. Regardless of where he lands, he says the

goal remains the same: helping finance projects that create environmental and social benefits.

As he prepares to leave Arizona, Hancock-Bacon, who once was a member of the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee, remains grateful for the community that helped shape him.

“I think that really Gilbert is a pretty good example of how to do things in a sustainable forward-thinking fashion,” Hancock-Bacon said.

In part, that comes from the way he views sustainability. He said sustainability is a universally agreeable concept when framed in terms of energy independence, supporting local farmers, and strengthening community ties, rather than just through a narrow environmental lens.

“Having strong community ties, like being something that operates as a town as the town of Gilbert does, that is something that is inherently trying to keep a sustainable community glued together,” he said.



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SPORTS & RECREATION

Cactus Yards earns USSSA park of year

Cactus Yards in Gilbert has been named the Outstanding Park of the Year by the United States Specialty Sport Association, marking the sixth time the facility has received the national recognition.

The honor is based on feedback from coaches and players who participated in the 2025 USSSA baseball season. The complex received high marks across several categories, including amenities, cleanliness, affordability and overall management.

Cactus Yards scored 77 out of a possible 80 points. Individual ratings included perfect scores for park amenities, cleanliness, management, staff courtesy and affordability. Field conditions received an 8 out of 10, while concessions and field maintenance each earned 9.5 out of 10.

Since opening in 2019, the facility has earned the recognition six times in seven years of operation.

Gilbert parks to close for summer maintenance

Several parks across Gilbert will temporarily close this summer for planned maintenance and improvement projects.

Most closures are scheduled during the summer months, when park usage typically declines due to high temperatures, to reduce impacts on residents and allow crews to work more efficiently.

Projects range from routine maintenance and rehabilitation to upgrades intended to expand recreation opportunities.

Planned closures include:

Cactus Yards entryway: May 18 to about Aug. 18.

Cosmo Dog Park beach and lake:

July 5 to Aug. 10.

Crossroads Park ballfields, sand volleyball, playground, restrooms and north parking lots: June 5 to Sept. 5; multiuse fields: June 15 to Aug. 14; AZ Ice parking lot: Sept. 7 to 23.

Desert Sky Park: May 26 to Sept. 4.

Freestone Park ballfields, restroom building and surrounding parking: June 5 to Sept. 28; skate park, basketball, restroom building and sand volleyball: July 20 to Sept. 11.

Gilbert Regional Park pickleball courts: courts 1-8: June 15 to 21; courts 9-16: June 22 to 28.

Officials said closure dates may change based on weather, construction progress and operational needs. Residents are encouraged to visit other parks during the closures.

Gilbert begins trail detours for concrete repairs

Annual concrete repairs on trails

throughout Gilbert were to begin June 8.

Work is taking place along portions of the Loop 202 trail, the Western Canal Trail and the Powerline Trail, with crews repairing selected sections of the system.

Trails will remain open, but areas under repair will be temporarily closed. Detours with signs and barricades will direct pedestrians and cyclists around work zones.

The project is expected to take about 90 days to complete, weather permitting. Officials said routine maintenance is intended to keep the town's trail system safe and accessible.

San Tan Charter hires volleyball coach Laikona

San Tan Charter School in Gilbert has hired Daniel Laikona as its high school volleyball program coach, Ath-

• See **Sports** on page 23



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Sports

• From page 22

letic Director Kristofer Sippel Jr. announced.

Laikona brings more than 20 years of playing experience and eight years of coaching experience. His background includes positions at the high school, club and collegiate levels, most recently serving as coach at Basha High School and working with Arizona Storm Elite

Volleyball.

Sippel said Laikona has a record of developing student-athletes and leading teams to top finishes at regional and national tournaments while emphasizing academics and character.

Laikona said he was drawn to the school's culture and commitment to student-athletes. He said he plans to build the program around trust, accountability and consistency, with a focus on athletic and personal development.



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Redevelopment

• From page 1

Gilbert before moving to a similar position with Glendale.

The redevelopment area, branded as Gilbert Northwest, stretches from Arizona Avenue east to Lindsay Road and from Baseline Road south to Ray Road, excluding the Heritage District, which operates under its own redevelopment framework.

The Town Council adopted the redevelopment boundary in 2024, a necessary step under Arizona law that allows Gilbert to use redevelopment tools in the area. The designation followed years of study and came after town officials identified the Northwest Corridor as an area where proactive reinvestment could help preserve and strengthen the community over the long term.

The nearly 13-square-mile area represents about 18% of Gilbert's planning area and contains some of the town's



Resident Tabby Denton takes in the information at the Gilbert Northwest redevelopment open house. (Independent Newsmedia/Tom Blodgett)

oldest neighborhoods and commercial properties. Earlier town analyses found that 59% of parcels in the area were developed before 1990. The area also con-

tains higher concentrations of smaller vacant parcels, foreclosure history and participation in the town's emergency home repair program than other parts of

Gilbert.

Despite those statistics, officials have consistently stressed that the redevelopment effort is not a response to widespread decline.

"We really shy away from terms like slum and blight because we don't see that in this area," Redevelopment Program Manager Mike Martella said. "We see that if there was ever a place that that could potentially happen over years, this is the first developed part of the town. It makes a lot of sense to just say, 'Hey, we're doing pretty good, but there's always opportunity for improvement.'"

Instead, town leaders describe the initiative as an opportunity to build on the area's strengths before challenges emerge.

Gilbert Northwest remains one of the town's most important economic engines. It contains the community's largest concentration of employment

• See **Engagement** on page 25

Engagement

• From page 24

uses and remains home to major employers, industrial businesses, neighborhood retail centers and thousands of residents.

“It’s still a really successful employment area,” Martella said.

However, the area also reflects the realities of being the first part of Gilbert to experience significant growth. Some industrial and commercial buildings were designed for a different era and no longer match the needs of modern businesses.

Jennifer Graves, Gilbert’s interim economic development director, pointed to the experience of Silent-Aire as one example. The company initially located in Northwest Gilbert before eventually expanding into the Central Business District along the Germann Road corridor as it outgrew its original facility.



Redevelopment Program Manager Mike Martella, left, and resident Owen Baynham discuss an area map at the Gilbert Northwest redevelopment open house. (Independent Newsmedia/Tom Blodgett)

Graves said many older industrial buildings remain occupied, but changing business demands have created new challenges. Ceiling heights, parking configurations and other building fea-

tures that were common decades ago are often no longer sufficient for modern users.

“What we’re seeing is you have 27-, 25-foot ceilings and the industry now is

moving to 30-, 32-, 35-foot ceilings,” Graves said.

She said redevelopment planning gives the town an opportunity to identify policies and tools that can help older employment areas remain competitive while supporting continued investment.

Town officials emphasize that the planning process extends far beyond economic development.

The redevelopment plan is expected to address topics ranging from infrastructure and transportation to neighborhood improvements, public spaces, placemaking, housing, connectivity and quality of life.

“It’s going to be a holistic approach to looking at a lot of different concepts and strategies, thinking about a 10-year vision and how we can bring in different programs, look at potential, whether it’s code changes or redevelopment policies to really serve a lot of different constituents at the same time,” Martella said.

The town recently held its first major

• See **Engagement** on page 30



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SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

Gilbert Public Schools

The district will continue using its current 2-2-2 academic calendar structure for at least three more school years.

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Gilbert Public Schools

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6 p.m. June 23

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Music programs strike chord in Gilbert Public Schools

By Tom Blodgett

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

From elementary choirs to award-winning orchestras and marching bands, music has become a defining part of student life at Gilbert Public Schools.

District leaders say the music program's strength comes from both its scale and consistency, with students introduced to music early and given opportunities to continue through junior high and high school.

Participation in band and strings programs has grown over the years, even rebounding strongly after pandemic-era declines.

"We have an amazing music program in GPS," district Special Areas Coordinator Karen Coleman said.

Gilbert Public Schools recently earned recognition as one of the nation's Best Communities for Music



Greenfield Junior High string students perform at a Gilbert Public Schools Governing Board meeting. (Independent Newsmedia/Tom Blodgett)

Education for the seventh consecutive year. Only five Arizona school districts received the designation this year.

District officials said the programs span every grade level and include elementary music instruction, beginning band and strings, junior high and high school ensembles, choir, orchestra and

marching band programs.

That pipeline has helped to create large and active secondary programs throughout the district, including major participation in orchestra, choir and band at schools such as Highland High School.

• See **Music** on page 27



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Music

• From page 26

Music education leaders also pointed to growing student achievement through Arizona diploma seals tied to arts participation. The state seals recognize students for achievement in fine arts and can help students qualify for scholarships and other opportunities after graduation.

According to district leaders, orchestra students represented the largest group earning arts seals last year before drama students narrowly surpassed them this year, with band students also heavily represented.

District officials also credited early student exposure for helping sustain participation.

Through a grant partnership with the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Gilbert Public Schools has provided museum access to more than 17,000 students since 2018.

The district later expanded the effort through “Night at the Museum,” which allows families and employees to attend as well.

Music administrators said the district’s educators remain heavily involved in statewide professional organizations, including the Arizona Music Educators Association, Arizona Band and Orchestra Directors Association and Arizona Marching Band Association.

That involvement has translated into recognition for individual campuses.

South Valley Junior High and Highland Junior High recently qualified for the Arizona Band and Orchestra Directors Association’s Program of Distinction recognition, which evaluates performance ratings, participation and student achievement.

District leaders said stronger collaboration between elementary, junior high and high school campuses also has helped fuel growth, including expanded festivals and performances that connect younger students with older ensembles.

Superintendent Shane McCord said music education benefits students well beyond the stage or classroom.


“I think it’s really important,” McCord said. “I’m not a musician, but I know that music education is beneficial to every student.”

He later added that music instruction supports students “physically, mentally, neurologically” and academically.

The district showcased some of those programs during a governing board meeting earlier this month, where Greenfield Junior High orchestra students and Val Vista Lakes Elementary choir students performed for board members and attendees.




District leaders said the performances reflected the energy and enthusiasm surrounding music programs across Gilbert schools. Coleman summed it up.

“Well, if that doesn’t put you in a great mood, I don’t know what does,” she said.

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RELIGION

Mission Church announces preteen camp

Mission Church will host a three-day preteen camp July 9-11 at its Gilbert campus, offering activities, worship sessions and group experiences for children entering grades 4-6.

The camp will take place on the church's campus at 4450 E. Elliot Road and is open to all children in the specified grade range, regardless of church affiliation.

Organizers plan a schedule that includes games, group worship, teaching sessions and an off-campus excursion, along with meals and supervised overnight accommodations. Registration costs \$180 per child, with a \$50 deposit required and payment plans available through July 1.

Church leaders said safety measures will include on-site security, separate sleeping areas for boys and girls and a

communication system allowing parents to contact group leaders directly during the camp.

Activities will primarily be held indoors to limit exposure to summer heat, with one planned trip to Revel Surf Park. [missionaz....center.com]

Scholarships are available, with applicants asked to submit a deposit before applying. [missionaz....center.com]

Central Christian holding weekly men's group

Central Christian Church in Gilbert is offering a recurring Tuesday night men's group designed to foster spiritual growth and connection among participants.

The group is open to men at all stages of their faith journey and aims to provide a welcoming environment for discussion and relationship-building, according to event information.

Organizers encourage those interested to attend and connect with others in the community, with additional details available by contacting Gary Small by email at ggrsmall47@gmail.com.

Christ Greenfield hosts weekly Tots and Toys playtime

Christ Greenfield Church in Gilbert is hosting a weekly indoor playtime for young children and their caregivers throughout the summer.

The event, titled "CG Tots and Toys Playtime," takes place every Wednesday from 9:30 to 11 a.m., beginning June 17, at the church's campus.

Designed for children ages 0-5, the program offers a casual, supervised environment with toys and activities set up in a gymnasium for free play. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to attend with their children.

Organizers said the event provides

an air-conditioned space for families to stay active and connect with others while avoiding extreme summer heat.

The playtime is part of the church's CG Kids programming, and registration is available online.

Community blood drive scheduled at First UMC

A community blood drive is scheduled for Sunday, June 14, at First United Methodist Church of Gilbert.

The event will run from 7 to 11 a.m. in the church's activity center at 331 S. Cooper Road. Donors may either schedule an appointment in advance or walk in to give blood.

Organizers encourage residents to participate, noting that blood donations help save lives and support ongoing medical needs. [gilbertumc.org]

Appointments can be made through Vitalant's donor portal using the blood drive code P1AH2. [gilbertumc.org]

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Smarter Braces: How Digital Technology Is Changing Orthodontic Care

Orthodontics is evolving quickly as digital technology changes how braces are planned, monitored, and managed. Advanced imaging and remote monitoring are making treatment more precise, more efficient, and better suited to modern schedules.

In traditional analog orthodontics, the same basic appliance is placed on every patient, with customization occurring later through archwires, auxiliaries, and adjustments over time. While effective, this approach relies on standardized components applied to highly individual patients. Digital orthodontics reverses that process. Treatment begins by identifying needs specific to each patient using high-resolution 3D imaging and digital scans. Appliances are then customized from the start based on those findings. Teeth are as unique as fingerprints, and digital tools allow orthodontic care to reflect that individuality with far greater accuracy.

Digital models allow orthodontists to plan treatment before braces are placed, designing customized brackets and wires for each patient's anatomy. This leads to more predictable tooth movement and often

shorter treatment times. Digital simulations can also show how teeth are expected to move throughout treatment, helping patients better understand the process and the intended outcome.

These digital tools have also made new treatment options possible, including hidden braces placed behind the teeth. Using advanced digital planning and customized mechanics, these systems move teeth from the inside with precision, offering a discreet alternative without visible brackets or removable aligners.

Another major advancement is remote monitoring. Using a smartphone and secure software, patients submit periodic photos of their teeth from home. These images allow orthodontic progress to be reviewed regularly without requiring an in-office visit every time.

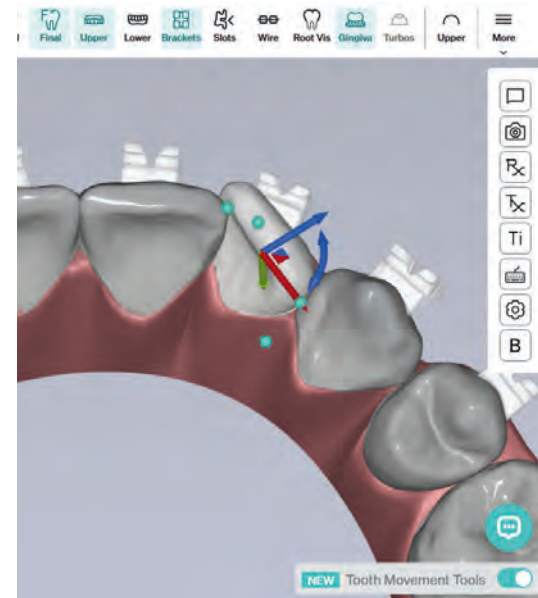
Remote monitoring helps verify that teeth are moving as planned, identify issues early, and reduce unnecessary appointments. In-office visits can then be reserved for adjustments that truly require hands-on care, improving efficiency for both patients and providers. Clinical research and real-world data have

shown that digital planning and remote monitoring can reduce unnecessary appointments and improve treatment efficiency, while maintaining high-quality outcomes.

Digital orthodontic systems can increase costs when layered onto traditional treatment models, often resulting in added fees for patients. Practices designed around fully digital workflows are able to absorb those costs through improved efficiency, allowing treatment fees to remain unchanged while delivering a more advanced level of care.

Digital orthodontics does not replace the orthodontist. Instead, it enhances clinical expertise with better data, clearer visibility, and more consistent communication, creating a more streamlined and patient-centered experience.

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Engagement

• From page 25

public open house for the project and launched GilbertNW.com as a central hub for information, surveys, public comments and future engagement opportunities.

Officials expect community outreach to continue throughout the year through surveys, stakeholder meetings, pop-up events and additional public gatherings.

The goal, Henderson said, is to create a plan that reflects community priorities rather than a predetermined town vision.

“If done well, this creates not just a vision for town staff, but a common vision for the community,” Henderson said.

Early feedback suggests residents and stakeholders generally agree with the town’s assessment that the area is strong but could benefit from strategic



Businesses like Go Daddy have made the Northwest Corridor the town of Gilbert’s largest employment area. (Independent Newsmedia/Tom Blodgett)

reinvestment.

Residents highlighted quality-of-life issues they hope will be part of the conversation. Northwest Gilbert resident Tabby Denton said she would like to see improvements that make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient.

“The freedom of people being able to

choose to walk or bike brings a lot more joy and happiness,” Denton said.

Owen Baynham, who has lived in the area for about 30 years, said his biggest concern remains water supplies as Gilbert and the region continue to grow.

“Water is going to be everybody’s big issue,” Baynham said.

While still learning about the re-development effort, Baynham said he appreciated the town’s efforts to seek public input.

“I think that this community involvement like this is a really, really good thing,” Baynham said.

Town officials say those types of conversations are exactly what they hope to hear over the coming months as they work toward a draft redevelopment framework.

While officials have said they hope to have a draft plan by the end of the year, Henderson said the emphasis will remain on gathering meaningful input rather than meeting a specific deadline.

As Gilbert approaches buildout and opportunities for large-scale greenfield development become increasingly limited, leaders see Gilbert Northwest as an opportunity to focus on reinvestment and long-term community stewardship.

“We want this plan to ... belong to the community in crafting it,” Martella said.

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