



Fireworks show
City celebrating milestone; 4



INDEPENDENT

Singing trio
America's Sweethearts; 11



July 1, 2026

Volume 29 Issue 26

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

50 Faces of Surprise

Residents predict what city will look like in 2076

By Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

What you are holding is a newspaper.

Those may not be around in 2076, but in case it is, this won't be much of an artifact for future generations.

But if it's not, this is how news was delivered in Surprise back in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

This paper will be part of a collection of historical items the city of Surprise is putting in a time capsule to be opened in 50 years.

This issue makes up 50 faces of Surprise, from city and community leaders to regular residents and kids.

It shows what they think life will be like in Surprise in 2076.



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Big fireworks show expected for America 250

City celebrating milestone day with festivities in City Center

This year's Surprise Independence Day event will feature a variety of food trucks and DJ music inside both Surprise Community and Mark Coronado parks, along with a fireworks show beginning at 8:45 p.m.

The following are sites of celebration:

- Surprise Community Park, 16089 N. Bullard Ave. Enjoy DJ music before the fireworks show. Food trucks will be along Bullard Avenue beginning at 6 p.m. Personal grills and alcohol are not permitted.

- Mark Coronado Park, 15960 N. Bullard Ave. Open to the public as a viewing area for fireworks. Guests can enjoy DJ music and food trucks available inside the park before the show.

- Surprise Aquatic Center, 15831 N. Bullard Ave. The "Red, White and Pool Party" is for residents from 6-9 p.m. for games and swimming. Stay to enjoy a poolside view of the fireworks. Tickets are \$6 per person and registration is limited to the first 400 residents at surpriseaz.gov/SurpriseRec (click Aquatics).

Visit surpriseaz.gov/Independence or call 623-222-2000.

IF YOU GO

What: Surprise Independence Day fireworks

When: 8:45 p.m. Saturday, July 4

Where: Surprise Community and Mark Coronado parks in City Center

Admission: Free

Information: surpriseaz.gov/independence



Onlookers watch as fireworks light up the Surprise sky just north of the Surprise Community Park on July 4, 2025. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)

Bullard closed for fireworks traffic on July 4

Bullard Avenue will be closed between Tierra Buena and Paradise lanes on July 4.

Parking lots at city of Surprise buildings around Surprise Stadium will be open for those wishing to watch this year's fireworks from their cars.

Event parking will be available at the following locations:

- Surprise Stadium parking lot, north

of the stadium.

- Surprise Community Park.
- Overflow parking south of Tierra Buena, between Bullard and Civic Center Drive.

- Overflow parking north of Paradise, between Bullard and Civic Center.

- Accessible parking will be available in the southeast portion of the Surprise Stadium parking lot and the southwest

end of the Surprise Aquatic Center.

No parking will be allowed along Civic Center Drive.

Personal fireworks and sparklers are not permitted, nor are personal grills.

Pop-up tents are welcome, but they must be properly secured with stakes or weights.

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City reminds residents of firework laws

America 250 celebrations to allow private use until July 6

As residents plan Independence Day celebrations, here's a quick overview of fireworks use within Surprise city limits:

The use of consumer fireworks is allowed on private property within city limits, with the property owner's consent, through Monday, July 6.

During this period, fireworks use is still prohibited between 11 p.m. through 8 a.m. the following day. But on Saturday, July 4, there is an exemption allowing the use of consumer fireworks between 11 p.m. through 1 a.m. Sunday, July 5.

State law calls for the sale of permissible consumer fireworks from May 20 through July 6.

The minimum age for purchasing consumer fireworks is 16 years old.

While consumer fireworks are per-

mitted on private property within the city limits, they are still illegal to use anywhere on public property, including streets, sidewalks and parks.

Residents in HOA communities should be aware of the restrictions in their neighborhoods regarding the use of fireworks in driveways and yards.

The Surprise Fire-Medical Department may grant permits for the public display of fireworks upon application of a temporary use permit and proper inspection. Permits may be revoked during times of high fire danger warnings.

For information regarding the sale and use of consumer fireworks, including permissible use during other times of the year, visit surpriseaz.gov/FireworksUse.

To report a violation, contact Code Enforcement at 623-222-3013.



The city of Surprise has reminded residents about the laws regarding the private use of fireworks. (Courtesy town of Gilbert)

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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.

Resident says data center led her to run for city council

I didn't set out to run for Surprise City Council. But after watching councilmembers say nothing about Project Baccara, I decided to file as a write-in candidate for District 6.

Project Baccara is a massive, hyperscale AI data center and natural gas power plant. The proposed site at Litchfield and Olive is next to established neighborhoods, with the closest residence just 2,000 feet away, and perilously close to Luke Air Force Base.

I've watched as elected county officials ignore the hundreds of letters of opposition and the residents who show up to public meetings and

More online

Read more opinions at YourValley.net/surprise-independent

ask their representatives to stop Project Baccara. Surprise won't reap any of the promised tax benefits of this project because it's just outside the city limits. But the

residents of Surprise are the ones who will shoulder the burden of it: dwindling water supply, contaminated groundwater, polluted air, constant noise, and diminished property values.

Project Baccara will turn our neighborhoods into ticking time bombs. On-site propane and ammonia storage increases the risk of a Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion (BLEVE) like the one that threatened Garden Grove in May. And Luke jets have crashed in areas dangerously close to the proposed site, such as the 2013 crash at Peoria and Bullard. Imagine what would happen if an F-35 crashes into this power plant. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of people who live and

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.

work in this area could be killed or seriously wounded. Homes would be destroyed.

We all want safe and sustainable growth for Surprise. AI data centers like Project Baccara are neither safe nor sustainable.

I'm just a regular person who wants to do right by the residents of Surprise, not corporate or political interests. As councilmember, I will actively oppose Project Baccara and all future AI data center development in and near our neighborhoods.

Carrie Deakin
SURPRISE

Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters, or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

Reader wants all out-of-town protesters to go back home

To the activists who have turned Surprise City Council meetings into a weekly spectacle, I have a simple message: Go home.

Most of you do not even live in Surprise. Yet you continue showing up at our council meetings, protesting outside City Hall, disrupting public comment and behaving as though you speak for the residents of our city. You do not.

There is a difference between passionate disagreement and outright disrespect. Unfortunately, the language, behavior and theatrics displayed by some protesters have crossed the line. Shouting, insults, exaggerations and misinformation have become the norm. One has to

wonder: Do you know how to act in public?

Surprise residents are tired of the endless drama. We are tired of the exaggerations. We are tired of hearing claims that our city is unsafe when Surprise consistently ranks among the safest communities in Arizona. We are tired of watching outsiders attempt to create division while portraying themselves as victims.

Most importantly, we are tired of seeing our elected officials and city staff treated with contempt simply because they refuse to embrace the demands of activists who neither live here nor represent the majority of our community.

No one is denying your right to protest.

The First Amendment protects your ability to speak freely. But free speech does not give anyone the right to be rude, disruptive or dishonest. Nor does it mean the people of Surprise are obligated to applaud your antics.

The actual residents of Surprise support our police officers, our city employees and our councilmembers. We elected them to govern, not to serve as props in someone else's political theater.

Enough is enough. Stop the insults. Stop the misinformation. Stop the grandstanding.

Ava Smith
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Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters, or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

CORRECTION

The hours for Conscious Creations Art Studio at 16511 N. Dysart Road is open seven days a week at 10 a.m.



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BRIEFS

Independence Day closing city offices day earlier

The city of Surprise offices and Surprise City Hall will be closed Friday, July 3 in observation of Independence Day.

Trash services will not be affected by the holiday closure.

Most other city offices will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, July 6.

Surprise college softball player on academic list

A college softball player from Surprise was recently named to the American Rivers Conference Academic All-Conference Team.

Geneva Galler, a junior business major, was one of 30 Buena Vista University student-athletes earning recognition.

To be eligible for the honors, a

student-athlete must be eligible to play, at least a sophomore in academic standing with at least one year in residence and attain an accumulative GPA of 3.5 or better at the college in Storm Lake, Iowa.

Trio of Surprise students faring well at Utah school

Three Surprise area students at Utah Tech University were among 869 students earning president's list honors for the spring semester.

Kennady Rolfe, Maddy Flavel and Mason Cox each attained a semester GPA of 3.9 or higher and completed at least 15 credits

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America's Sweethearts usher in big birthday

Singing trio will celebrate community, culture, country

America's Sweethearts will celebrate community, culture and country leading up to America's big birthday.

The singing trio will perform Friday, July 3 at The Vista Center for the Arts, 15660 N. Parkview Place.

America's Sweethearts bring the timeless sound of female close-harmony groups to life with a fresh, vibrant twist.

Using the era of The Andrews Sisters as an inspiration, the New York City-based trio performs vintage favorites like "Boogie Woogie"

• See **Sweethearts** on page 13



America's Sweethearts will celebrate community, culture and country leading up to America's big birthday on Friday, July 3 at The Vista Center for the Arts. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

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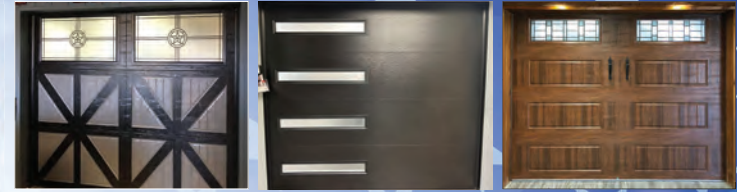
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BRIEFS

Group to play patriotic ukuleles for senior home

The Northwest Valley Ukulele Club has scheduled an Independence Day concert for the residents of Fellowship Square Independent Living in Surprise.

Sun City West resident, musician and Blue Star Mom Lauren Erickson will direct the band through a range of patriotic songs from early Americana to soulful rock from 10-11:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 4.

The residents will be presented with a reader's theater-style drama concert, which will include an introduction to each song, some history about the music and then encourage the residents to sing along with the ukulele members.

The ukulele club will be providing attendees with small American

Flags, a 250th celebration gift and a sweet treat.

For information about how to join the ukulele club, contact Lauren Erickson at nwvuke@gmail.com, or visit their facebook page "Northwest Valley Ukulele Club."

PHHS student honored in early college program

A Paradise Honors High School student was among 672 students enrolled in University of Alabama Early College during the spring semester who were named to the director's list.

Jackson Breeding-Goodrich earned at least a 3.6 GPA or higher at the school in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

UA Early College allows high school students to get a head start on their college courses.



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Sweethearts

• From page 11

gie Bugle Boy” with crystal-clear harmonies, colorful costumes and a style that gets audiences tapping their feet.

The show features classics from the Great American Songbook and Broadway, including “Lullaby of Broadway,” “Happy Days Are Here Again” and “The Shoop Shoop Song (It’s in His Kiss),” delivered through a mix of trios, duets and solo moments that appeal to audiences of all

MORE ONLINE

Read more Surprise news at YourValley.net/Surprise-Independent

ages.

Tickets are available for between

IF YOU GO

What: “America’s Sweethearts”

When: 7 p.m. Friday, July 3

Where: The Vista Center for the Arts, 15660 N. Parkview Place

Tickets: \$21-\$43

Information: surprisearts.com

\$21 and \$43 at SurpriseArts.com

As part of the evening, the performance includes a special tribute honoring veterans and active-duty service members.

By selecting the military and veteran appreciation add-on during ticket checkout, veterans, active-duty service members, Gold Star family members and their guests can receive a complimentary hot dog or popcorn from concessions.

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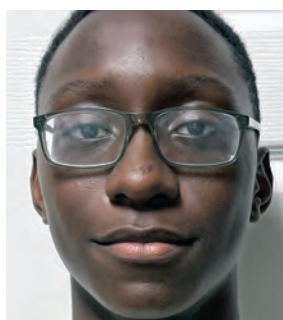
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WHAT WILL SURPRISE LOOK LIKE IN 50 YEARS?



Raoul Sada, 66
President & CEO of
Northwest Valley
Chamber of Commerce

Surprise will be a strategic powerhouse in the Phoenix metro area — uniquely positioned at the intersection of advanced manufacturing, logistics and regional connectivity. With proximity to major investments like TSMC, access to the BNSF rail corridor, and direct routes linking Arizona to Las Vegas and beyond, Surprise will help drive the entire region's economy.



Chase Cammon, 14
High school freshman

I believe that Surprise will have shed its old reputation of being a "quiet retirement town" and do a complete transformation. I think that Surprise will be home to a lot of new technology, such as flying cars, and the empty desert space will be replaced by robot factories. Surprise will have solar panels all over town, providing energy for its civilians. The town will still continue to be a peaceful and tight-knit community for years to come.



Rob Coombs, 62
High school teacher

I have lived with my family in Surprise since 2008 and I have been amazed at the growth of the city in that time. I am particularly impressed with the number of entertainment and dining options that have opened during that time. My hope is that the city continues to be responsible when it comes to growth and to make sure that there is the requisite infrastructure in place to handle it. It's a great place to live.



Shanelle Kunz, 37
Co-founder of Desert Farm
Lights/Desert Fall Festival

I envision Surprise as home to The Desert—a luxury entertainment destination that draws visitors from across the nation, especially during the Christmas season, while offering world-class experiences year-round. By day, families gather for exceptional coffee, beautiful outdoor spaces and imaginative play; by night, they enjoy remarkable dining, entertainment and unforgettable experiences surrounded by beauty.



Elodia Fernandez, 61
Hospital administrator

As a lifelong resident, I never imagined the area would look as it does now. I expect the city will continue to grow as large as possible, eventually replacing the farmland we grew up with. It will likely become a major metropolis with high-rises to ensure its longevity. I imagine our Original Town Site will eventually be replaced by new developments, leaving only photos to remind us of how it all started — though few seem interested in looking back.



Shlomo Ceitlin, 27
Rabbi

I see Surprise as a flourishing city of half a million, thriving in the Messianic era. Goodness and kindness will be woven into society; people will love each other. Conflicts, arguments or war will be nonexistent. All creation will see godliness daily. Amid a vibrant community and vital houses of worship, advanced technology will be seamlessly incorporated into everyday life, existing to enhance and elevate our world.



Evan Becher, 42
Surprise police chief

I believe Surprise will be recognized as one of the nation's most desirable communities. A city that has embraced innovation and growth while preserving the values that make it a special place to live, work, and raise a family. Public safety will continue to be a cornerstone of that success, built on strong partnerships between residents and first responders, a commitment to service, and an unwavering dedication to community trust.



Seth Dyson, 46
Surprise Human Service &
Community Vitality director

Surprise will continue to have a small-town feel because of the intentional focus on community, bringing people together and taking care of our neighbors and visitors. Significant advances in automation and other technological advances will put greater focus on intentionally bringing people together to maintain a healthy, resilient community. Surprise will still be known for our Original Square Mile, baseball, affordability and safety.



Earle Greenberg, 68
Vice mayor of Surprise

In 50 years, I would be 118 years old, so I don't plan on seeing any of these things even though I believe life expectancy and wellness will dramatically increase. I expect personal transportation will be radically different and safer with self driving and flying vehicles. Unfortunately, based on our current environmental trajectory, I don't believe that desert areas like Phoenix will be survivable during much of the year due to extreme heat.



Chris Reed, 62
Retired Marine

I think Surprise is going to just blow up. I think the biggest thing that they're going to probably work on is infrastructure with the roads and everything — and hopefully get all the freeways knocked out, where everything is running good. I see a good future for Surprise.



Jim Rumpeltes, 72
Artist and musician

Of course, there will be many more people in 50 years; however, the institutions that connect and support us — schools, churches, and cultural organizations — will be stronger. Organizations like Benevilla, Ottawa University and The Vista Center for the Arts will be thriving. These foundational community groups, and many more to come, will continue to make Surprise a great place to live.



Colin Stone, 75
Retired newspaper pressman

I think City Center will have highrise buildings. What's the highest you got over here? Six stories? You know when money comes in, tall buildings go up.

WHAT WILL SURPRISE LOOK LIKE IN 50 YEARS?



Theresa Poellnitz, 80
Resident

I hope there are not spaceships and flying cars. Oh, my goodness. Those driverless cars, Waymo — that'll probably be here. But maybe by that time, they would have perfected it even more.



Alex Catalano, 15
High school sophomore

In 50 years, I want Surprise to still have lots of green space and big trees. We live in a desert, and it's nice to have open green areas to enjoy."



Holly Osborn, 46
Surprise Parks & Recreation director

I envision Surprise as a city where parks, recreation facilities, trails and open spaces continue to grow right alongside our community. These places will be the backdrop for countless adventures, community events and celebrations, and everyday moments where children can play, families can grow, friendships can blossom and memories can take root.



Jimmy Johnson
Retired utility worker

Probably flying cars, or getting close to flying cars. AI is already here. I think (the population) is going to expand more. It's going to continue to grow.



Rick Hernandez, 48
Police sergeant

Surprise will have grown into one of Arizona's premier cities, known not only for its size but for maintaining the family-friendly values, parks and sense of community that attracted so many of us here. As someone who has lived in Surprise since 2001 and raised a family here, I hope it remains a place where neighbors stay connected, children have opportunities to thrive, and public safety continues to be a trusted partnership between the community and its police department.



Jesse Cuellar, 42
Maintenance technician

I'd say more futuristic when it comes to buildings. More technology, of course, because of AI. Probably more self-driving vehicles. I don't know about flying cars, but who knows? As far as humans go, we can really develop a lot of things as far as technology. It's hard to say, but we'll see



William Pupo, 72
Former city manager

When I vision the year 2076 I see a different Surprise than retail and rooftops of today. With Banner Health and its cutting edge research in health care already established in the area, Surprise will become a regional leader in health care and research as the West Valley continues to grow and as Arizona State University continues to invest in medical programs. These medical, science and research programs will diversify the Surprise economy.



Charlene Bisson, 49
Newspaper publisher

I think there will be autonomous cars everywhere. Although, I hope there are flying ones like on "The Jetsons." We will send messages to friends through AI holograms on watches, and computers will not have keyboards with better voice commands for dictation, fact checking and grammatical corrections.



Declan Longoria, 7
Second grader

"The houses will be bigger because there are more materials to use and more plants because a lot of people plant plants and flowers. There will be a lot of things that are electronic and automatic with a lot more technology and sports."



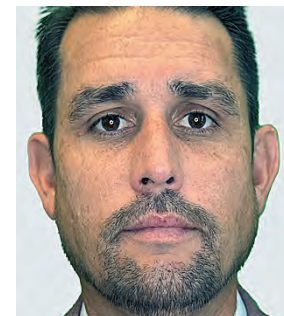
Jalen Richardson, 24
Groundskeeper

I think it's just going to be like a lot more developed — more spots for self-driving cars and (places) to charge (electric cars). There'd be one around every corner. A little bit more on the (Loop) 303 would probably be a little bit more developed.



Randy Boldt, 63
Retired Air Force

Being stationed both here and in Tucson at the Davis Monthan Air Force Base, I would say within 50 years Phoenix and Tucson are basically one metropolitan area. As the years go by Tucson is building north. Phoenix is building south. I definitely believe it's going to be one metropolitan area.



Reilly Murphy, 39
Ottawa University-Arizona head football coach

Surprise will be one of the most sought-after places to live in America, a city known for strong families, a thriving economy, excellent schools, and a deep sense of faith and community. The West Valley will continue to grow as a place of opportunity and purpose, and I hope OUAZ will have played a role in that story by transforming lives. Surprise's greatest legacy won't be its growth, but the people whose lives were changed here.

WHAT WILL SURPRISE LOOK LIKE IN 50 YEARS?



Jeanine Jerkovic, 52
Surprise Economic
Development director

Fifty years from now, I imagine Surprise as a major employment and innovation center where residents can build successful careers without leaving their community. The seeds we're planting today in entrepreneurship, workforce development, and strategic growth will help create opportunities for generations to come.



Sherry Simmons Aguilar, 66
Retired city clerk

Being a lifetime resident of the Original Townsite, my hope is that in 50 years, the city will continue to recognize and preserve what little history we have left by maintaining our existing city buildings in the oldest part of the city where Surprise began, carrying on our history. I have concerns of keeping up with infrastructure needs due to overpopulation, and will we have adequate water availability to maintain our ever growing population?



Dale Martell, 69
Retired general contractor

Surprise is not going to be known as the retirement suburb of Phoenix. It is going to be its own high tech little city. I think in 50 years, probably half a million people will live here, if not more. One thing the city lacks is trail system to interlink the city.



Elizabeth Donovan, 8
Second grader

"In 50 years, I think Surprise, Arizona will be much bigger and have lots of new stores and shopping centers. Cars might drive themselves, and most homes will use solar power because it is so sunny. I think Surprise will be a fun place to live with cool parks, places to shop and lots of things for families to do."



Tina Molica, 55
Educator & community
activist

Surprise has grown to be a family-friendly community with many sports, arts and entertainment options in the 25 years I have lived here. In 50 years, I hope it will become an even more diverse community, led by those who prioritize community safety and health and filled with family-friendly activities and rich cultural experiences, not data centers and detention centers.



Ernest Valenzuela, 38
Maintenance technician

I'm going to say "Aliens" meets "The Jetsons." Something crazy for sure. The way stuff is going, there will definitely be some stuff you wouldn't expect — especially 50 years from now.



Kevin Sartor, 43
Mayor of Surprise

Surprise will be the shining star of the West Valley. I can see the tireless efforts of our dedicated council and employees coming to fruition through the expansion of highways, parks, recreation centers, and businesses. As growth and progress continue, Surprise will undoubtedly be unrecognizable from the city it is today. I envision a bright future for the residence of Surprise and a continued legacy of a connected community.



Rachel Villanueva, 87
Former city councilmember

I hoping the Original Town Site would look better. People who come in the entrance to Surprise coming from the East side to the Original Town Site, I don't think they're very impressed because we don't have the beautification the rest of the city has. We are the original Surprise. That's where the city grew. I feel like it's been left behind even though we have new construction. It should be taken care of just like everywhere else.



Jason L Flowers, 59
Pastor

Surprise will be a thriving, multicultural city that is built on the core values of integrity, hard-work and respect for all people. The city will be forward-thinking and a leader in economic growth. There will be diverse representation among city leaders along with a driven purpose for everyone to know Jesus and His saving grace.



Bambi Shelby, 51
Library branch manager

I see Surprise being one of the largest suburbs in the West Valley. I see a busy downtown district for both residents and tourists to shop and hang out. I see Surprise as a sought-out place to work and live with all the amenities of a large city but keeping the small-town feel for the community vibe.



Tristen Seto, 5
Kindergartener

It's going to have a new school (very, very new). There are going to be new jobs, and there are going to be people making new friends."



Andrea Davis, 45
Surprise city manager

Surprise will be a thriving, well-planned city in 50 years. It will be a place that has grown with intention while preserving the community pride, safety and quality of life that make it special today. Our commercial and retail areas will be walkable and diverse, with major employment centers, neighborhood shopping districts, entertainment destinations, restaurants, and locally owned businesses serving residents close to home.

WHAT WILL SURPRISE LOOK LIKE IN 50 YEARS?



John Croteau, 56
Dysart Unified School
District superintendent

Our schools will continue to play an important role in shaping the future of the community. There will likely be new jobs that don't even exist yet, so schools will have to adjust in order to ensure that students are learning the skills they need to be successful. Although technology will most certainly continue to expand, I think it's important to ensure that we continue to focus on and teach other essentials like character, interpersonal skills, problem solving, creativity, and leadership.



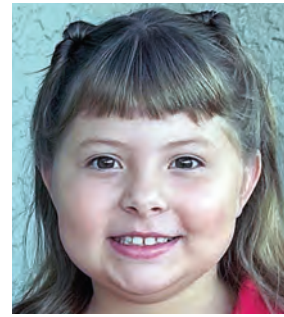
Delarita Ford, 53
Newspaper reporter

I will not be surprised (pun intended) if the population and popularity quadruples. The community is welcoming and hopefully will remain a place for families and individuals to take themselves, their partners, kids, and pets to enjoy well-thought-out offerings designed to bring people together. The landscape will be vastly different, with the depletion of space, foliage, more trains and warehouses. Yes, living costs will increase.



Virginia Mungovan, 45
Surprise Marketing &
Communications Director

Surprise will have an energetic downtown core that draws visitors from around the Valley with premier shopping, dining and entertainment amenities. While the city's footprint will transform with new development, the hometown vibes will remain strong through our commitment to community gatherings that bring connection and shared celebration.



Grace Morris, 9
Fourth grader

Surprise will be overtaken by AI, with robots helping people do almost everything. They might help people with jobs, drive cars and even make our city smarter and easier to live in.



Brenden Espie, 47
Deputy city manager

I envision Surprise will be one of the largest municipalities in the West Valley, yet one that proudly maintains its small-town heart and rich history. My hope is that our public safety departments remain on the cutting edge of innovation and continuously advance their programs. There is nothing more important than preparing our future generations to take the reins and leave this community even better than they found it.



Travis Huss, 11
Sixth grader

I think the city of Surprise will be fully automated, and there will be a lot of people in this city, and it will have a lot of bars and establishments. There will be electric cars everywhere, and there will be tons of jobs.



Raymond Grim, 58
Insurance agency owner

Surprise will be a city where churches work together in unity to address the needs of the community. Faith organizations across the city will collaborate as partners, creating a culture of service that strengthens neighborhoods, supports families and uplifts residents from all walks of life. This will draw attention from communities across the nation and become a model of what the faith community can become when they serve God and people.



Mike Boule, 42
Surprise Water Resource
Management director

Surprise will be home to 425,000 residents, supported by utility providers that have adapted to significant technological advancements and evolving resource conditions. The residents of 2076 will have a deep appreciation for the value of water and the essential role it plays in sustaining their community and quality of life. This commitment to water stewardship will be reflected from the city's infrastructure and landscapes to the everyday choices of its residents.



Kevin Spirlong, 50
Interim Fire-Medical chief

Surprise will be home to more than 400,000 residents, with beautiful parks, open spaces, connected trails and vibrant neighborhoods. As we grow into one of Arizona's larger cities, I hope we maintain the strong sense of community and civic pride that define us today while preserving the small-town spirit that makes Surprise such a special place to call home.



Jason Stone, 53
Newspaper editor

It is hard to believe water won't be an issue in 50 years, especially with maybe 400,000 people living in Surprise by then. All those people will enjoy rides at a Surprise Six Flags theme park. The city will stop hosting spring training in the 2050s, but a new outdoor amphitheater will entertain guests with AI-generated content for decades.



Dennis Tyner, 66
Ottawa University-Arizona
president

Surprise will likely be recognized as a city where advanced manufacturing, aerospace, health sciences and technology industries thrive alongside vibrant residential communities. It will have evolved into a city with a resilient infrastructure, autonomous transportation networks and sustainable water and energy systems. Its close partnerships among higher education, industry and civic leaders will have created a culture of entrepreneurship.



Lisa Everett, 62
Community advocate

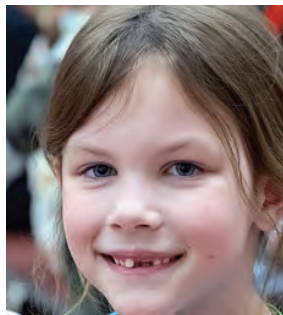
Surprise could exceed 500,000 residents, with technology and advanced industries serving as major economic drivers. Growth will require expanded transportation infrastructure, while the McMicken Dam parks and sports complexes are expected to be fully developed. Dysart Unified School District will evolve as new communities emerge, making today's decisions about growth and education critical to the city's future.

WHAT WILL SURPRISE LOOK LIKE IN 50 YEARS?



Olivia Catalano, 17
High school senior

I hope Surprise is an even kinder, friendlier and more hope-filled place to live.



Becky Tackett, 6
First grader

It will be crusty and dirty with broken things that no one wants to buy.

City wants to find community legends for award

Commission to recognize 4 local difference-makers

The Surprise Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission invited the community to nominate those making a difference in the city for the annual Surprise Community Legend Awards.

The city is accepting nominations for individuals and groups who have contributed to improving the quality of life of others.

Examples could be measurably improving the lives of vulnerable Surprise residents through grassroots efforts, promoting quality of life, accessibility and equity for all residents of Surprise or linking residents to programs that offer the support needed for a fuller, safer lifestyle.

Nominees must fall into one or more of the following four categories:

- ♦ Individual Legend (must be a Surprise resident for at least two years).
- ♦ Outstanding Youth (must be age 18 or younger).
- ♦ Volunteer of the Year (organizational affiliation must be in the application).
- ♦ Organization of the Year (private, nonprofit or faith-based).

The nomination form is at surpriseaz.gov/



Albert Celozza, executive director of Arizona Interfaith Movement, discusses love and unity at the 2024 Interfaith Breakfast event at the Dysart Unified School District office. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)

CommunityLegend.

All applications must be received by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22.

A selection committee comprised of members of the veterans and disability commission will evaluate applications and award one recipient per category.

Award winners will be formally recognized at the city's annual Interfaith and Golden Rule Community Breakfast in September.

Contact Kara Poling at Kara.Poling@surpriseaz.gov.

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Surprise residents already begin voting

Voting centers are now open as ballots get mailed out

It is too late to register for the July 21 primary election, but for those who did, ballots are already in the mail for early voters.

Vote centers and drop boxes are also available starting Wednesday, June 24.

Of course, there is not too much to vote on in Surprise. Voters in Districts 1, 5 and 6 only will have one candidate on the ballot for city council.

The city also does not have any bonds or other measures to settle.

Only those on the active early voting list automatically received a ballot by mail. Those who did not can request one at Request.Maricopa.Vote.

Independent voters and voters without a political party that are on the active early voting list must request either a Republican, Democrat, No Labels or City Only ballot before the Elections Department can send a ballot for the Primary.

To make a request, visit your voter dashboard at BeBallotReady.Vote or make your selection at Request.Maricopa.Vote.

The last day to request a ballot in the mail is Friday, July 10, and voters have until Tuesday, July 14 to mail them back to reach vote counters in

IMPORTANT PRIMARY ELECTION DATES

Wednesday, June 24: Ballots mailed, voters centers open and drop boxes available

Friday, July 10: Last day to request a ballot by mail

Tuesday, July 14: Last day to mail back ballot

Tuesday, July 21: Primary Election Day

time for Primary Election Day.

Surprise City Hall, 16000 N. Civic Center Plaza., is a designated vote center for anybody casting a ballot in Maricopa County. The Community Room in City Hall will be open for in-person voting and ballot drop-off. It will open at 9 a.m.

It will act as a spot for voters who receive a ballot by mail to return it by mail or drop it off.

Surprise voters can access important dates and information at surpriseaz.gov/Elections.

To find a list of additional voting locations and drop box hours, visit Locations.Maricopa.Vote.

Voters may also track their ballot at BeBallotReady.Vote.

DUSD records tech has spirited attitude

L.A. transplant now helping students at Rancho Gabriela

The Surprise Independent periodically features a different educator in our city. This week, we shine the light on Dysart Unified School District data records technician Yahzid Alcala.

Your name: Yahzid Alcala

What is your title/occupation? Data records technician.

What school or department do you work/volunteer at? Rancho Gabriela Elementary School.

How long have you worked here? Three years at RGES and 13 total with DUSD.

Town/Neighborhood: Rancho Gabriela community.

What are you excited about on your campus/in your department and why? I'm excited for Spirit Weeks. It makes learning fun for the kiddos.

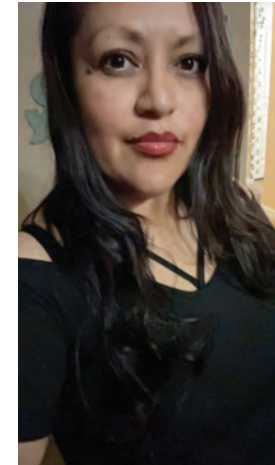
What do you like most about living here? The quiet and chill environment.

Favorite community cause and why? Food Banks because they offer food to the families in our community.

When and why you moved here? I relocated to Arizona about 15 years ago when my family moved out here.

Where you lived prior to moving? Los Angeles born and raised.

What do you like most about your job? Interacting with the students and building



DUSD data records tech Yahzid Alcala has been with the district for 13 years. (Submitted photo)

relationships.

If you could pick another occupation, what would it be? Coaching.

What are your interests and hobbies? Attending sporting events, watching sports on TV, listening to music and karaoke.

Describe one of the happiest moments in your life.

When my daughter was

born. Best day ever!

What is your best and worst habit? Helping others and being too self-critical.

What traits do you admire in others? Honesty.

Who is a person that inspires you and why? My mom. She inspires me to work hard and stay positive.

What is your guiding philosophy? Continuous learning. Every day is a learning experience.

What is your advice for today's youth? To "Live, Laugh, Love" every day to the fullest.

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Did you know?

Americans will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in July 2026, and the word "semiquincentennial" may come up in conversation during those celebrations.

Some people may not be familiar with the term and what it means. A semiquincentennial is the 250th anniversary of something. It breaks down to "half" of a "quincentennial," which is 500 years. Synonyms may include sestercentennial, bisequicentennial or quartermillennial. Each term refers to a period of 250 years. It's a rather large word for a simple meaning, but people are bound to hear more of it as 2026 goes on and Independence Day is celebrated on July 4.



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Notable quotes from American presidents

Americans will celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States throughout 2026. Many a notable leader has influenced the country in its 250-year history, and the following are some notable quotes from American presidents over the course of the nation's history.

♦ "If we can but prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them, they must become happy." - **Thomas Jefferson, 1802**

♦ "Peace is the best time for improvement and preparation of every kind; it is in peace that our commerce flourishes most, that taxes are most easily paid, and that the revenue is most productive." - **James Monroe, 1817**

♦ "Officeholders are the agents of the people, not their masters." - **Grover Cleveland, 1886**

♦ "In the history of mankind, many republics have risen, have flourished for a less or greater time, and then have fallen because their citizens lost the power of governing themselves and thereby governing their state; and in no way has this loss of power been so often and so clearly shown as in the tendency to turn the government into a government primarily for the

benefit of one class instead of a government for the benefit of the people as a whole." - **Theodore Roosevelt, 1903**

♦ "Governments do not make ideals, but ideals make governments." - **Calvin Coolidge, 1926**

♦ "No government is perfect. One of the chief virtues of democracy, however, is that its defects are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and corrected." - **Harry S. Truman, 1947**

♦ "Mankind must put an end to war — or war will put an end to mankind." - **John F. Kennedy, 1961**

♦ "A president's hardest task is not to do what is right, but to know what is right." - **Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965**

♦ "American has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens." - **George W. Bush, 2001**

♦ "Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." - **Barack Obama, 2008** (delivered while campaigning for president in an election Obama ultimately won)

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Gold Medal Swim School began its entry into the Surprise market when it broke ground June 8 at an official city ceremony. The new school at 16517 W. Cactus Road is a family-owned company based in Chandler that has been providing swim instruction for swimmers of all ages and skill levels for nearly two decades. Mayor Kevin Sartor helped owner Mike Walker and the Gold Medal team celebrate the occasion. Jeanine Jerkovic and Mike Hoover, of the Surprise Economic Development Department, and Parks and Recreation Administrator Kasey Peterson were also on hand. Visit goldmedalswimschool.com/surprise. (Courtesy city of Surprise/Kris Cassens)



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Men's Wearhouse held a soft opening June 4 and officially celebrated the opening of its Surprise location at 16340 W. Waddell Road, Suite 104, on June 12 with community partners, supporters, elected officials and excited customers. Store manager Jenette Gutierrez cut the ceremonial ribbon with the Men's Wearhouse team — Zone Vice President–West Wendy Isaac, Senior Zone Outreach Manager–West Alfonso Matagarza and District Manager–Northern Arizona Laura Baniewicz. A special highlight of the event was the attendance of Dan and his service dog, Dandy, representing K9s For Warriors, one of Men's Wearhouse's veteran nonprofit partners. Through the company's "Threads of Valor" initiative, Men's Wearhouse customers and employees have donated more than \$2.1 million during the 2025-2026 program year to support veteran nonprofit organizations. Since the program's launch, a total of \$18.5 million has been donated to veteran-focused causes nationwide. Visit menswearhouse.com/store-locator/2518.



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PUBLIC NOTICE

Take notice that at the date, time, and place listed below, the City of Surprise Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing at the request of Jeremy Weber with Evergreen Devco, Inc. relating to the proposed Conditional Use Permit.

FS25-0733: A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a drive-through facility to allow for the development of a Zaxby's restaurant with drive-through. The site is generally located on the southeast corner of 163rd Avenue and Pat Tillman Boulevard.

PROJECT LOCATION



MEETING DETAILS

Planning & Zoning Commission

Date: July 16, 2026

Time: 6:00 pm.

Place: Surprise City Hall
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

At these meetings any member of the public may appear and be heard relative to this request or may submit written comments at any time prior to the Public Hearing. All written comments regarding this request will be made part of the record of the City. Any interested party may obtain an agenda 24 hours prior to the Public Hearing at the Surprise City Hall. Please note that this item will be placed on the next available agenda should the meeting be canceled or quorum be lost. Leslie Carnie with the City of Surprise at 623-222-3153 or Leslie.Carnie@surpriseaz.gov for additional information.

Publish: Phoenix Independent, June 26,
Surprise Independent, July 1, 2026/45029_1

Stallions girls hoops slowly builds more confidence

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Shadow Ridge girls basketball ended Section 7 and summer ball very excited to regroup late in the fall.

The Stallions won their last three games against in-state opponents at the Arizona Athletic Grounds in Mesa.

And the school that watched two of its neighbors in Surprise play for state titles last year made their mark at Section 7 led by a rising junior point guard, a senior transfer and two incoming freshmen.

"I think it's our will to compete. Starting out, they really didn't know. But now they have a will to compete after the tournaments they've played in. I'm super excited for next year," Coach Alan Mitchell said.

This was not a sure thing after leading scorer (21.6 ppg) and rebounder (8.7 rpg) Danica Lindemann graduated, along with five other seniors.

Junior point guard Carley Sams was the sure thing after getting back together June 1. She averaged double figures in scoring and more than four assists as a sophomore in 2025-26.

"We're seeing what complements Carley very well because she's an elite point guard that can get to her spots and be able to move around. So having players be in the right spots when she needs them, then she can facilitate," Mitchell said.

Shadow Ridge played a lot of games this summer. The Stallions traveled to the Thunderbird High School summer league the night of June 20 after an afternoon finale at Section 7.

Sams said the team is practicing with each other and testing out different things.



Shadow Ridge point guard Carley Sams drives toward the basket during the Stallions' final game of Section 7 on June 20 in Mesa. Sams will be a junior next school year. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

"I think we've already gotten to know each other better off the court, which helps us on the court," Sams said.

Incoming freshmen Isabella Perry, a forward, and Elyssa Slack, a guard, played large roles in Mesa.

Haidyn Bostick is transferring in from Willow Canyon for her senior year. Her three pointer in the final minute gave the Stallions a 54-53 win over Sahuarita to close Section 7.

"To have players come in that at least know the game and can put some things together gives us confidence that we'll have another strong season like we did last season," Mitchell said.

Tempe Corona del Sol held off Shadow Ridge 58-53 in the opening game of Section 7.

Comfortable wins against Desert Edge and Scottsdale Rancho Solano Prep led into the comeback victory

over Sahuarita.

"After our loss yesterday, which was a tough loss, coming back and winning three in a row was really good for us," Sams said.

It's another small step for a program that is starting to build momentum as it enters Mitchell's second season as coach. Shadow Ridge went 18-9 last year.

Most importantly, the Stallions broke through with a 6A play-in win at Mesa Red Mountain. The program did not make the play-in for the 2024-25 season, but lost in that round the previous three seasons.

Off their first trip to the 6A play-offs, the Stallions are building confidence.

"At the beginning we were in close games and we would not know how to handle it. After this game you can tell we've calmed down more," Sams said.



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Located in the Safeway shopping center
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