



Neighbors

Alicoate new Mesa parks, recreation director; **18**



INDEPENDENT



Education

DECA prepares students for business world; **10**

August/September 2026

Volume 6 Issue 8

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

EVIT improves transportation issues

By Janet Perez

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The East Valley Institute of Technology has launched a new method for transporting students from nine East Valley district school campuses to its main location in Mesa.

EVIT now has a two-year agreement with Windstar Lines, a charter-bus rental company, to ferry students back and forth to its campuses. The company began transporting students on Aug. 3.

In a letter sent to EVIT Superintendent Chad Wilson, school districts alleged that in the first week of providing transportation to students, EVIT had been using commercial ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft, and some students were being left stranded.

The letter was issued on behalf of the Queen Creek, Chandler, Gilbert, Higley, Cave Creek, Apache Junction, Fountain Hills, J.O. Combs and Tempe Union school districts.

EVIT denies it used ride-hailing

• See **EVIT** on page 13

Mesa business recognized as 'heart health specialized'



Brookdale East Arbor in Mesa recently celebrated its new designation as a "Heart Health Specialized Assisted Living Community." The senior living community at 6060 E. Arbor Ave. on Aug. 5 celebrated with a ribbon cutting, open house and a fundraiser for the American Heart Association. From left are Michael Alejano, Clifton Costales, Christina Moss, Samantha Branson, Jared Power, Ana Bischoffer, Ally Warth, Andrea Palmer, Maggie Stytz and Mesa Councilmember Dorean Taylor. See the full story at <https://tinyurl.com/3pnafx8s>. (Larnell Malon III)

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Man sentenced; placed cameras inside ex-wife's Mesa home

By Andrew Lwowski
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Former Fountain Hills firefighter Douglas Rohr was sentenced Thursday, Aug. 6, to 10 years of supervised probation, ordered to register as a sex offender and complete both sex offender and mental treatment programs by the Maricopa County Superior Court for placing cameras inside his ex-wife's Mesa home.

The court also mandated strict computer monitoring supervision, travel restrictions and a no-contact order to the victims.

Rohr, 54, was arrested in August 2025 following an investigation into the allegations. Prosecutors say he spied on his ex-wife and two underage children using three video cameras, all different models. One was located in a bathroom, the laundry room and master bedroom of the home.

Records show Rohr and his wife had been separated since April 2025.

Maricopa County court reports show Rohr was sentenced July 30 with attempted voyeurism, a class 6 felony. He was charged with another count of voyeurism and two counts of unlawful recording. However, court records show his second voyeurism charge was dismissed due to grand jury indictment while the two unlawful recording charges were dismissed as part of a plea deal.

Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

COMMUNITY

Foreign-trade subzone deal OK'd with electronics company

By Janet Perez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

An electronics supply chain company has entered into an agreement with Mesa to operate in a foreign-trade subzone at three locations.

The Mesa City Council approved the agreement during a recent meeting on a 5-0 vote. Mayor Mark Freeman and Councilmember Alicia Goforth were absent from the meeting.

The agreement was on the council's consent agenda in which all matters are approved with one motion and vote.

The agreement will allow Arrow Global Supply Chain Services Inc. to operate a foreign-trade subzone at 7449 E. Pecos Road, 7453 E. Pecos Road and 7250 S. Sossaman Road.

Under the deal, Arrow Global Supply Chain Services will pay the city a one-time activation fee of \$1,000, as well as an annual operator fee of \$5,000.

Arrow Global Supply Chain Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of Arrow Electronics, provides services to customers around the world, according to a staff report.

"Their warehouse logistics center along Pecos and Sossaman Roads is a key part of Arrow's global supply chain infrastructure, enabling faster, more resilient distribution for its electronics supply chain clients," the report continued.

Operations at the three sites will include importing, exporting, receiving, repackaging, quality control inspections and distribution.

"At this time, no production activity is proposed or anticipated," the report stated.



The Mesa foreign trade zone program is administered by the Office of Economic Development. (City of Mesa)

As a subzone within Mesa's Foreign Trade Zone, the company can take advantage of deferred, reduced or even eliminated import-export duties on foreign materials and components used for manufacturing and assembling.

"Without an FTZ, companies may pay customs duties multiple times as products move through different stages of manufacturing and distribution," the staff report stated.

In April, Arrow Global Supply Chain Services received FTZ site status approval from the U.S. Depart-

ment of Commerce Foreign-Trade Zones Board. The operator agreement with Mesa is the next step toward FTZ site activation.

Companies operating within an FTZ must still pay local property taxes, utility costs, development fees and other taxes and obligations.

The Mesa FTZ originated at Mesa Gateway Airport but was reorganized to include the entire city.

Janet Perez can be reached at jperez@iniusa.org. To voice your opinion on this story, connect with us at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

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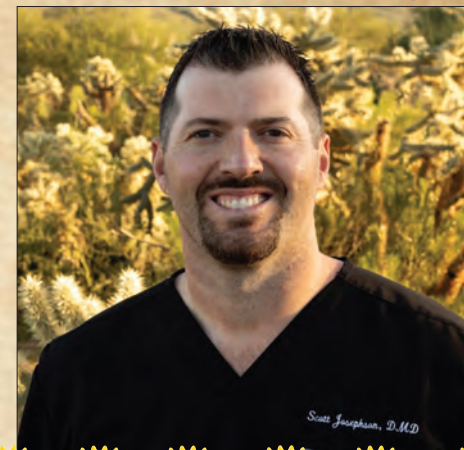
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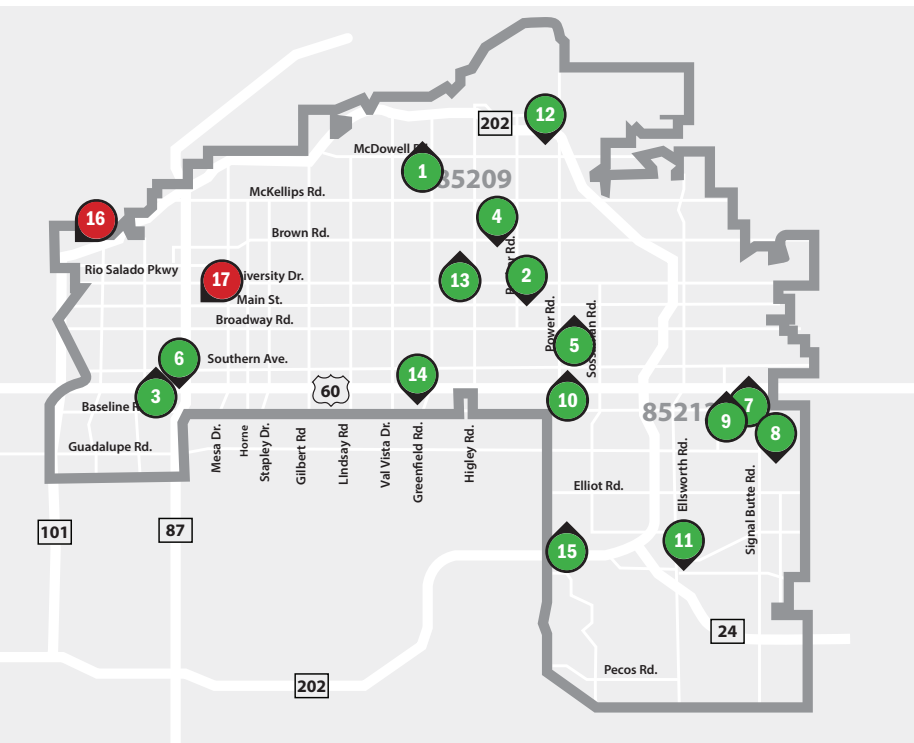
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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

IN THE NEWS

1 An industrial flex property at 4220 E. McDowell Road in Mesa recently sold for \$5.25 million. The transaction was completed by Mark Cassell, Landon McKernan, Cameron Miller and Joe Jones of the LevRose Industrial Team, which exclusively represented the seller throughout the sale process. The property includes a 20,544-square-foot industrial flex building on 2.37 acres and was constructed in 2006. It has block construction and approximately 15,494 square feet of office space. Go to LevRose.com.

2 Brookdale East Arbor in Mesa recently celebrated its new designation as a "Heart Health Specialized Assisted Living Community." The senior living community, 6060 E. Arbor Ave., on Aug. 5 celebrated its new designation with a ribbon cutting, open house, and a fundraiser for the American Heart Association. Go to

<https://www.brookdale.com>.

3 Salad and Go filed for bankruptcy protection and shut down all of its locations, including six in Mesa at 1040 W. Southern Ave., 5259 E. Brown Road, 251 S. Power Road, 1956 S. Country Club Drive, 10031 E. Southern Ave. and 2814 S. Signal Butte Road. Dutch Bros Coffee is purchasing the assets of the closing And Go business, according to documents from U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Southern Texas. The documents show Tempe-based Dutch Bros will purchase And Go's assets of \$105 million. And Go was known for its Salad And Go business in the Valley.

Customers could visit Ace Hardware Aug. 7-9 and make a \$5 donation to Phoenix Children's Hospital to receive 20% off nearly anything that fit inside a 5-gallon bucket. Every donation benefited the Phoenix Children's Hope

9 Fund. Local stores include:
10 Ruggiero's Ace Hardware-East Mesa, 2758 S. Crismon;
11 Van Marcke's Ace Hardware, 6315 E. Southern Ave. Suite No. 101;
12 Ellsworth Ace Hardware, 5221 S. Ellsworth Road;
13 Mesa Ace Hardware, 2842 N. Power Road;
16 Rod's Ace Hardware No. 2, 1050 N. Higley Road.

14 America First Credit Union and the America First Charitable Foundation hosted their annual Backpack Bonanza, a back to school drive collecting backpacks and essential supplies for children attending Title I schools. Donations were accepted at all America First Credit Union branches in Arizona through Aug. 8. The credit union has two Mesa locations: 4354 E. Baseline Road and 6846 E. Warner Road.

COMING SOON

16 W Rieth — also known as "Chef W" — is opening Don Pastrami's, part of the Sheraton Hotel Mesa at Wrigleyville West near Sloan Park in the Riverview area. It is open for catering and Rieth is aiming to open the carryout sandwich shop to public customers by Sept. 1. Rieth expects to smoke about 30 pounds of pastrami at a time. Other planned offerings include smoked turkey, a pesto smoked pork tenderloin sandwich, cold-cut sandwiches and pasta salad bowls.

17 A five story, 85,000-square-foot AC Hotel by Marriott is planned at the northeast corner of Main Street and Centennial Way. The hotel will have 150 rooms, a minimum of 1,500 square feet of meeting space, a restaurant and lounge open to the public that consists of a minimum 2,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, and an outdoor pool. Construction is set to be concluded within 24 months.

If you have a new business that has just opened, is under construction or is celebrating an anniversary, please email rdyer@iniusa.org



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BROOKDALE EAST ARBOR



SALAD AND GO



ACE HARDWARE



AC HOTEL

BUSINESS

New 5-story hotel set for Downtown Mesa

By Janet Perez

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Mesa City Council voted at a recent meeting to approve a series of development deals and leases for the construction of a five-story, 85,000-square-foot AC Hotel by Marriott at the northeast corner of Main Street and Centennial Way.

On a 7-0 vote, the council approved and authorized the city manager to execute a development agreement, Government Property Lease Excise Tax Agreement and a parking license agreement with OCAP Main St LLC.

The item was on the council's consent agenda in which all matters are dealt with through one motion and vote.

"The project will generate significant private investment, expand Downtown Mesa's hospitality offerings, create employment opportunities, improve public infrastructure, and strengthen Downtown Mesa's ability to attract visitors, conferences and special events," according to a staff report.

The proposed project consists of redevelopment of approximately 0.75 acres within the Town Center Redevelopment Area and the Central Business District. It will be adjacent to the Center Street Light Rail station and the city's Hibbert parking garage.

The hotel will have 150 rooms,

• See **Hotel** on page 8



The city has signed a series of agreements to bring an AC Hotel by Marriott to downtown. (City of Mesa)



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BUSINESS

Chef W Rieth returns to kitchen with Don Pastrami's

By Tom Blodgett

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The daughters of W Rieth — “Chef W” to most everybody — grew up in their dad’s restaurant, Not Your Typical Deli, in Gilbert.

So when his 11-year-old walked into his new restaurant and told him, “Dad, this feels like right again,” it hit him hard.

That new restaurant is Don Pastrami’s in Mesa, part of the Sheraton Hotel Mesa at Wrigleyville West near Sloan Park in the Riverview area. It is where the former Gilbert restaurateur is returning to his own kitchen after spending much of the past four years on the corporate side of the restaurant business.

“They grew up in the deli,” Rieth said. “That was their whole life.”

Her reaction, he said, choked him up.

Don Pastrami’s is already open for catering, and Rieth is aiming to open the carryout sandwich shop to public customers by Sept. 1.

For Rieth, 50, it represents a return — but not an attempt to recreate Not

Your Typical Deli.

“I’m ready for it again,” Rieth said. “I think that I got a lot to offer still. Just that point in my life where it’s just like, I want to do it for myself. I don’t want to do it for anybody else.”

Familiar food, a different restaurant

Not Your Typical Deli, which opened in Gilbert in 2016, became known as much for employing and training neurodivergent workers as for its food — though the food earned its own acclaim.

Don Pastrami’s takes its name from one of the deli’s top-selling sandwiches. Rieth said he used to imagine that if he ever started another restaurant, he could build a small carryout operation around the Don Pastrami name and character.

But even the signature pastrami is changing.

Rieth did not have a smoker at Not Your Typical Deli, using dry rubs there to approximate smoke flavor. At Don Pastrami’s, he has an in-house smoker and plans to produce

the meat in small batches.

“This is the artisan part of my career,” Rieth said. “Everything’s going to be high level, as best as I could get.”

Rieth expects to smoke about 30 pounds of pastrami at a time. When a batch sells out, customers may have to wait for the next one.

Other planned offerings include smoked turkey, a pesto smoked pork tenderloin sandwich, Uncle Sal’s brisket made in an old-school Jewish style, cold-cut sandwiches and pasta salad bowls. His mother will make cheesecakes and the cookies familiar to customers of the old deli.

“I don’t want to try to mock the deli because the deli was its own thing,” Rieth said. “I don’t think the deli could ever be done again like that.”

Lessons from the past

Rieth also is applying lessons learned from the financial pressures of running a full-service restaurant.

Don Pastrami’s will be small, primarily a lunch operation at first, with



(Independent Newsmedia, Tom Blodgett)
Chef W Rieth is set to open Don Pastrami’s in Mesa, hoping to do so by Sept. 1

Rieth in the kitchen and perhaps one other person at the register. There is no traditional dining room.

Catering is intended to provide the financial foundation.

Read the full story at <https://tinyurl.com/yc7z6jwc>

Hotel

• From page 7

a minimum of 1,500 square feet of meeting space, a restaurant and lounge open to the public that consists of a minimum 2,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, and an outdoor pool.

The developer will provide sidewalk, landscaping and lighting improvements along Main Street and Centennial Way, as well as license 100 parking spaces within the Hibbert parking garage.

The Government Property Lease Excise Tax Agreement provides the project with an eight-year tax abatement of \$2.1 million upon completion of all public and private improvements.

Under the GPLET agreement, the developer will convey the property and improvements to the city, and the city will then lease them back to the developer for eight years. At the end of the GPLET term, ownership of the improvements is conveyed back to the developer, according to the staff report.

The development agreement will

provide a block of at least 10% of total guest rooms for major events that Mesa hosts, co-hosts, sponsors or partners.

The agreement also includes a provision of rental-free use of hotel meeting rooms by the city or city partners for two meetings per year or eight hours per year.

Among the economic benefits the town anticipates are:

- About \$45 million in new private investment within downtown Mesa
- Projected \$59.8 million in gross sales tax revenues to the city over 35 years

• Estimated visitor spending of \$45 per day outside of the hotel, totaling \$4 million annually after the third year of operations

- 290 construction jobs
- 50 permanent jobs
- Expanded lodging space supporting tourism, special events and Downtown Mesa businesses

Construction of the property is set to be concluded within 24 months.

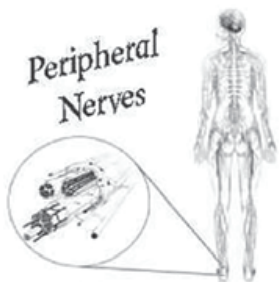
Janet Perez can be reached at jperez@iniusa.org. To voice your opinion on this story, connect with us at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

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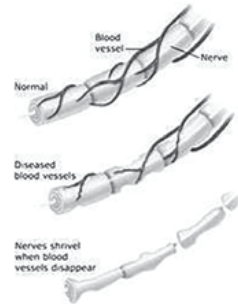
PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY AND CHRONIC PAIN WARNING!

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?
- 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained?

NOTE: Once you have sustained 95% nerve loss, there is likely nothing that we can do for you.

- 3) How much treatment will your condition require?

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The amount of treatment needed to allow the nerves to fully recover varies from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. As long as you have not sustained at least 95% nerve damage there is hope!

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.



Aspen Medical will be offering this chronic pain and neuropathy severity examination from now until September 30th, 2026. Call 480-796-1136 to make an appointment to determine if your chronic pain and peripheral neuropathy can be successfully treated.

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Charter board approves new Mesa school, reviews financial recovery plans

By Stacy Mantle
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools spent much of its August meeting preparing for the new school year while addressing charter school accountability, approving a new Mesa high school and reviewing financial recovery plans for two charter operators.

One of the meeting's primary action items was approval of a replication charter for CAFA Inc., which owns and operates Southwest Leadership Academy Mesa and Southwest Leadership Academy Gilbert.

This application replaced a previously approved Queen Creek expansion that the operator voluntarily surrendered because of construction and facility delays.

The proposed school will serve grades 9-12 in Mesa beginning in July 2027. Board documents did not identify a specific campus address. The application replaces an earlier approved expansion in Queen Creek that school officials voluntarily withdrew after construction delays and facility challenges prevented the project from moving forward. The new Mesa campus will also include behavioral health services and therapeutic foster care support.

School officials said the experience prompted them to rethink the expansion.

Board members praised the decision to delay the project rather than move ahead before it was ready.



DECA helps QCUSD students learn professional skills to navigate the business world. (QCUSD)

DECA prepares Queen Creek district students for business world

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The lessons learned in Queen Creek Unified School District's career and technical education programs can extend beyond graduation.

For Crismon High School graduates Isabella M. and Kamea M., DECA played a pivotal role in shaping their futures, according to a district press release.

Both students immersed themselves in DECA's competitions, leadership opportunities and networking experiences, allowing them to apply classroom learning in real business scenarios.

For Isabella, DECA reaffirmed her career aspirations. "DECA has helped me realize that this is exactly what I want to do," she stated in the release. "It has made me more excited and better prepared for everything I want to achieve. It has given me the skills I need to succeed and

helped me get where I want to be."

Throughout her time in the program, Isabella strengthened her public speaking, communication and problem-solving skills while working toward her goal of one day owning her own business.

Kamea said DECA expanded her vision of what was possible after high school.

"DECA has shown me how many opportunities are out there and made me want to explore everything the world has to offer," Kamea stated in the release.

Reflecting on her experience, she encourages current and future students to take advantage of every opportunity available.

"I've learned to always say yes to opportunities," Kamea stated. "The more you're willing to try, the more you'll learn."

RELIGION

D-Backs' Aug. 21 game is on 'Faith & Family Night'

The Arizona Diamondbacks Faith & Family Night promotion is likely to draw in church groups from all over the state.

Tickets, through the promotion, are \$30 each and are for section 136 for the D-Backs' game against Cincinnati, with the first pitch set for 6:40 p.m., Friday, Aug. 21 at Chase Field in downtown Phoenix.

A postgame concert by Christian artist Matthew West is planned.

Mesa church helps mentor kids in foster care

The foster and adopt ministry at Central Christian Church is partnering with Fostering Heroes to serve local group homes through support and mentorship to kids in foster care.

The next events are at 4 p.m. Mondays, Aug. 31; and Sept. 14, 21



"Step into a vital role by volunteering in a foster group home, where your presence can bring stability, encouragement, and connection to children and teens navigating life in care," it states at <https://www.centralaz.com>. (Metro Connection)

and 28.

"Step into a vital role by volunteering in a foster group home, where your presence can bring stability, encouragement, and connection to children and teens navigating life in care," it states at <https://www.centralaz.com>.

"Volunteers help create a safe,

nurturing environment by assisting with daily routines, offering mentorship, organizing activities, and simply showing up with compassion. Whether you're helping with homework, sharing a meal, or leading a game night, your time makes a lasting impact in the lives of youth who need consistency and kindness most," it

states.

Contact Hailey Shuster at hailey.shuster@centralaz.com or 480-249-6492

Go to <https://www.centralaz.com/locations/mesa> to learn about Central Christian Church at 933 N. Lindsay Road in Mesa.

Sunday evening recitals at temple's visitors' center

Enjoy sacred music most Sunday evenings in the Mesa Temple visitors' center, 455 E. Main St. in Mesa.

Recitals begin at 6:30 p.m. and are free to the public.

If a performer interested in participating, select the button at <https://mesatemple.org/events> and submit your information.

For information and dates, email vcarizona@churchofjesuschrist.org or call 480-964-7164

13th Annual

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Festival / Event:
Garlic Festival



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GRILL AT THE MILL
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PIZZA DATE NIGHT
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SEPT 9, OCT 14

SANGRIA SOCIAL
OCT 17, NOV 21, DEC 19

OLIVEPALOOZA
HARVEST CELEBRATION
JAN 9 - 10

SEPTEMBER

Salt River Tubing

Open on the Lower Salt River seven days a week through Sept. 7, weather and water-flow conditions permitting.

Beginning Sept. 8 it is open Friday-Sunday through Sept. 27, according to <https://www.saltrivertubing.com>.

Salt River Tubing is seven minutes from Loop 202 East on North Power Road in Mesa. Salt River Tubing operates under permit of the USDA Forest Service in Tonto National Forest.

The cost for a shuttle pass for a customer bringing their own tube is \$22.

SEPT. 14-20

Pro pickleball tourney

Veolia Arizona Open is at the Arizona Athletic Grounds, 6321 S. Ellsworth Road in Mesa. It is the second tour stop of the Carvana PPA Tour's 2026-27 season. Competition in the Veolia Arizona Open is to include the biggest stars in pickleball, including Anna Leigh Waters and Ben Johns, gold medalists from February's Carvana Mesa Cup Chris Haworth, Anna Bright, and Hayden Patriquin alongside Argentine Federico Staksrud and Arizona locals such as University of Arizona alum Augie Ge and 16-time PPA medalist Lindsey Newman. The Veolia Arizona Open will feature the PPA Tour's special blend of professional competition where the best players compete for titles and crucial world ranking points, and vast amateur competitions where players of all ages and skill levels can find themselves competing for medals and bragging rights on the pro courts.

Go to <https://ppatour.com/tournament/2026/arizona-open>.

SEPT. 16

'Croce Plays Croce'

Acclaimed singer songwriter, piano virtuoso and multi-instrumentalist A.J. Croce is once again taking his celebrated tour across the country, bringing audiences an unforgettable evening of music that bridges generations and celebrates the enduring power of song.

7:30 p.m. at the Ikeda Theater at Mesa Arts Center, 1 E. Main St. Tickets start at \$57 at mesaartscenter.com.

THINGS TO DO



FlowRider rates at Rhodes Aquatic Complex are \$12 for youth and \$16 for adults for a one-hour ride while the fence is in. Rates are \$14 and \$22, respectively, without the fence. (Independent Newsmedia, Arianna Grainey)

2 Mesa pools open weekends through Sept. 6

Mesa has extended the public swimming schedule of two city pools past July 18, the end of the regular aquatic activities season, for people to cool off and enjoy:

Skyline Aquatic Center, 845 S. Crismon Road and Rhodes Aquatic Complex, 1860 S. Longmore, will stay open on weekends through Sunday, Sept. 6.

Mesa pools open for public swimming at 1 p.m. most days. For specific pool hours, visit the Mesa Pools and Aquatics at <https://tinyurl.com/48uum5fa>.

Admission fees are \$3 for youth 17 and under, \$5 for adults and \$4 for seniors 55 and older. FlowRider rates at Rhodes Aquatic Complex are \$12 for youth and \$16 for adults for a one-hour ride while the fence is in. Rates are \$14 and \$22, respectively, with-

out the fence.

Information about all Mesa parks and recreation programs is available on the city's website at <https://tinyurl.com/3xh42fc3>.

Drop-in sports offered at Mesa facilities

A variety of sports with drop-in play are available at city of Mesa facilities, such as:

- ♦ Pickleball at Webster Rec Center, 202 N. Sycamore in Mesa, 6-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays.

- ♦ Basketball, volleyball and fitness center at Eagles Community Center, 828 E. Broadway Road in Mesa, 5:30-8 p.m. Fridays.

- ♦ Basketball at Red Mountain Center, 7550 E. Adobe St. in Mesa, 5:30-7 a.m. and 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon-

day, Wednesday and Friday; 5:30-10 a.m. and 12:30-9 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday.

- ♦ Tennis at Mesa Tennis & Pickleball Center, 4125 E. McKellips Road, 6-8 p.m. Fridays.

- ♦ Pickleball at Mesa Tennis & Pickleball Center, 4125 E. McKellips Road. Pickleball hours vary throughout the fall season. Visit our website for current drop-in pickleball hours.

- ♦ Pickleball at Red Mountain Center, 7550 E. Adobe St. in Mesa, 1:30-4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 1-4 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday.

For information, go to at <https://tinyurl.com/48zpw4vt>.

EVIT

• From page 1

services and instead contracted with Harbor Transportation to provide charter vans.

Wilson conceded there was room for improvement, which led to the change.

"We started the school year off with our vans and the hope that it would be successful," Wilson said.

"We weren't as efficient and as effective as we needed to be, and so the decision was to transition now to buses."

In exchange for reducing "pass-through" funding to career and technical education student satellite programs on various school campuses, EVIT agreed to foot the bill to transport students from schools to its main campuses in Mesa. Transportation had been a local district expense under past agreements.

Last fall, the districts sued EVIT when the tech school announced it was reducing the percentage of state funds it doles out to the districts for satellite programs, citing a state audit as its rationale.

Under the new deal, EVIT funding to campuses has been reduced to 76%, but EVIT agreed to absorb up to \$5 million in transportation costs to get students to its campuses.

Wilson said EVIT had offered to

reimburse the districts up to \$4 million for transporting students to Mesa but "obviously that offer was denied" as the districts worked on two inter-governmental agreements with one covering the central campus and the other dealing with the satellite campus programs.

"I didn't want in that conversation as we moved forward this idea of central campus transportation being held

• See EVIT on page 14



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EVIT

• From page 13

hostage as part of the negotiations,” Wilson said. “It would have been much easier had the member districts agreed to provide the transportation even if it meant that EVIT was paying for it. But like I said, when we made that offer to them as part of the negotiating process, it was rejected.”

A representative for QCUSD, which has schools in Mesa including Eastmark High School, countered the districts never took transportation or reimbursement off the table.

“There was language in both the IGAs that we still needed to work through, but there wasn’t an outright, ‘No, we’re denying the \$4 million.’ Up until even last week, we were asking to transport students because we know we do transportation well,” said Amber Bordes, chief operating officer for QCUSD.

Also, while the districts usually had one IGA to cover the main campus and satellite programs, they believed it was now essential to have separate agreements to protect all career and technology education students regardless of where they took their courses.

EVIT is now in the transportation business.

Wilson said its contract with Windstar is similar to the contract EVIT had with Harbor Transportation, “but it’s more than what we would have spent had the member districts accepted our offer to provide transportation and we reimbursed them the cost.”

“I think one of the things that’s really good about the partner that we have here now is that they’re going to actually become our transportation department ... that will handle some of those logistical things that currently aren’t in place the way that we would like them to be,” Wilson said.



EVIT has contracted with Windstar Lines to provide buses for students at several East Valley district schools who are attending the main campuses. (EVIT)




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REAL ESTATE

Housing sales in Mesa down 5.1% from a year ago

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Comparing the first seven months of 2026 with last year, existing single-family home sales rose 5.1% in Greater Phoenix, according to the latest activity data from Phoenix Realtors. At the same time, pending sales held nearly even, down just 0.6%, and new listings dropped 2.8% in the metro area.

The data for the city of Mesa shows single-family housing sales were down 5.1% year-over-year from July 2025.

The median sales price for homes in Mesa is \$480,000, no change from a year ago; and the average sales price also remained the same compared to July 2025, \$546,185.

In Maricopa County alone, year-to-date sales were the same as the overall region, up 5.2%, pending sales

flat with a 0.1% drop, and new listings were down 3.2%. Pinal County, the second-largest submarket in Greater Phoenix, saw year-to-date closed sales down 0.5%, pending sales dropped 5.3%, and new listings dipping 5.7% compared to 2025.

"Summers are typically the slowest time of the year for home sales. The market is still moving, just at a more measured pace," said Sammy Glassman, board president of Phoenix Realtors. "Buyers can take a little more time to make decisions, while sellers who price their homes well are in the best position to attract serious offers sooner."

The housing affordability index remained at 72, indicating affordability held steady year over year. A higher index number reflects greater affordabil-

ity. Maricopa County's year-to-date median single-family price was flat at \$510,000, while Pinal County's was nearly flat, rising 0.1% to \$382,000.

The number of days a single-family home in Greater Phoenix sits on the market stretched to 78 compared to 73 for the first seven months of 2025, a 6.8% increase. The percent of list price received remains constant at 98.1%, with little fluctuation over the past couple of years.

Although the inventory of homes for sale ticked up 1.3%, it remains at a four-month supply. In Maricopa County, the inventory dropped to 3.6 months, down 5.3% from the same month in 2025.

For information on Phoenix Realtors, go to <https://www.phoenixrealtors.com>.

MESA HOUSING BY THE NUMBERS

New listings: 429 (-6.7%)

Pending sales: 245 (-31.8%)

Closed sales: 372 (-5.1%)

Days on market until sale: 65 (-5.8%)

Median sales price: \$480,000 (0.0%)

Average sales price: \$546,185 (+0.0%)

Percent of list price received: 98.4% (+0.1%)

Inventory of homes for sale: 1,146 (-4.9%)

Months supply of inventory: 2.9 (-9.4%)

(Percent change reflects year-over-year data for the indicated month).

Source: Phoenix Realtors market report for July 2026



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NEIGHBORS

Artist traces SW water history in performance

By James Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sculptor, storyteller and performance artist Zarco Guerrero brought a 2,000-year history of the Southwest's water systems to the West Valley on a Thursday in July, warning an audience that the region has reached a critical historical crossroads regarding its most vital resource.

The free public event, held inside the Goodyear City Hall Council Chambers, traced the legacy of the region's "River People" the Indigenous populations historically reliant on the Gila and Salt rivers.

Organized by the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center in partnership with the City of Goodyear and Arizona Humanities, the July 16 program was part of the "America 250 Initiative," a nationwide effort celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence by connecting local histories to broader national contexts.

"We've been trying to plan lectures that tap into the broader link between our local history and national history," said Lisa Hegarty, executive director of the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center.

According to Guerrero, a Mesa native, understanding that local legacy



Zarco Guerrero, a Mesa native, urges action on water scarcity while connecting local heritage to contemporary struggles. Guerrero relies heavily on expressive, handcrafted masks to bring his historical narratives to life. (Independent Newsmedia, James Goldmeer)

has never been more urgent.

"There are so many stories that we don't know, that we didn't grow up hearing," Guerrero told the crowd. "I thought it was very important now that we're at a critical point in our history with water... It's not a happy story. As a matter of fact, it's a tragic story."

Mask and metaphor

Guerrero relies heavily on expres-

sive, handcrafted masks to bring his historical narratives to life. He designs and molds every mask himself directly on his own face, using simple plaster bandages and paper pulp clay to create customized, tight-fitting pieces that transform him into a vessel for the region's ancestors.

When he dons each mask and costume, Guerrero undergoes a physical transformation, seamlessly adapting his voice and mannerisms to channel



distinct personas. These characters serve as highly approachable experts, allowing him to transition fluidly from lighthearted, silly moments to serious conversations about culture, history and human perseverance.

Guerrero said the mask serves to highlight individual struggles and the shared humanity that binds diverse communities together.

Visit zarkmask.com for more information.

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NEIGHBORS

Arizona governor picks former Mesa mayor as running mate

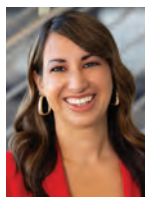
Democratic Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs has picked a Republican-turned-independent to be her running mate as voters elect the state's first lieutenant governor.

Hobbs on Aug. 11 chose John Giles, a former mayor of Mesa. Giles, a registered Republican for decades, changed his party affiliation to independent on May 17 and voted in the Democratic primary last month, according to county voting records.

Go to <https://tinyurl.com/mumemhzhk>

Alicoate new Mesa parks, recreation, community facilities department director

The city of Mesa has appointed Andrea Alicoate as director of the Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department.



Andrea Alicoate

Alicoate was the department's interim director since December 2025.

She began her career with the city of Mesa answering phones for animal control, a starting point she credits with shaping her hands-on approach to public service. She advanced



Former Arizona Cardinals player Larry Fitzgerald Jr. recently hosted 50 students from Child Crisis Arizona for a back-to-school event. (Bell Bank)

through leadership roles in community services before moving into the City Manager's Office, where she has spent the past five years leading city-wide policy and strategic initiatives.

An Arizona native, Alicoate holds a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University, a master of public administration from California State University, Northridge, and completed an executive education program at Yale University.

50 students from Child Crisis AZ get back-to-school shopping spree

Thanks to the generosity of Bell Bank and Bell Champion and Pro Football

Hall of Famer Larry Fitzgerald Jr., a group of local students are now well-prepared for the start of their school year.

Recently, Fitzgerald hosted 50 students from Child Crisis Arizona, a Mesa nonprofit, for a back-to-school event. Each student received a \$100 shopping spree at Going, Going, Gone; a backpack filled with school supplies; and two \$2 bills from Bell Bank — one to keep and one to pay forward, according to a release.

During the event, Fitzgerald, who played for the Arizona Cardinals for 17 seasons, enjoyed shopping for needed supplies with the students, all while encouraging them to work hard and enjoy the year ahead, the release states.

Dick's Sporting Goods and Going,

Going, Gone also donated \$5,000 to Child Crisis Arizona. The nonprofit provides emergency shelter, foster care, adoption, counseling, early education and parenting support to help protect children from abuse and neglect and strengthen families.

Mesa student at Eastern Oregon University on spring 2026 dean's list

Mesa resident Brode Colwell, who is pursuing a business degree in business administration, is one of 639 students at Eastern Oregon University named to the dean's list for the 2026 spring term.

Qualifying students achieve and maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale while completing a minimum of 12 hours of graded coursework for the term.

For information on Eastern Oregon University, go to eou.edu.

Mesa resident on University of Wyoming College of Law dean's honor roll

Bailey Dempsey of Mesa is on the University of Wyoming College of Law's spring 2026 semester dean's honor roll.

The dean's honor roll consists of students who earned a 3.4 or better grade-point average.

For information on the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming, go to <http://www.uwyo.edu>.

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Lower speed limits OK'd around Lehi neighborhood

By Janet Perez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The speed limit is dropping on sections of two roads that go through the Lehi Heritage Neighborhood.

The Mesa City Council recently voted 7-0 to lower the speed limit on Mesa Drive between Bates Street and Lehi Road, as well as on Horne between McKellips Road and Lehi Road.

The item was on the council's consent agenda in which all matters are dealt with through one motion and vote.

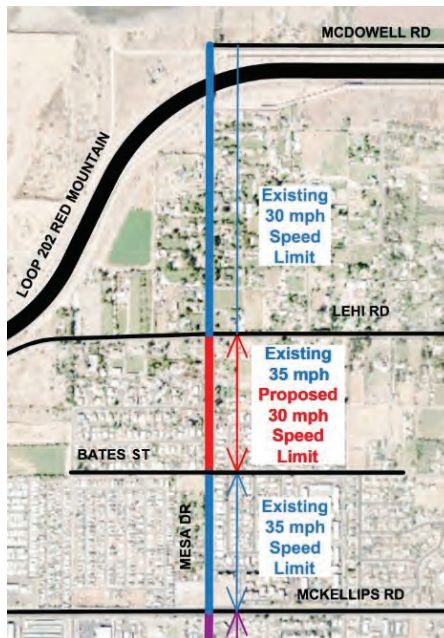
Reducing the speed limit from 35 mph to 30 mph on Mesa Drive between Bates Street and Lehi Road is meant to "account for Mesa Drive's semi-rural road characteristics, the low-density residential characteristics, the agricultural and equestrian usage, as well as the need for heritage preservation," according to a staff report.

In 2023, Mesa designated Lehi as a "Heritage Neighborhood" to "protect its unique historic and rural character, which dates back to its 1877 founding by Mormon pioneers," the report continued.

Originally, a request was made to lower the speed limit on Mesa Drive to 30 mph from McKellips Road to Lehi Road. But under state statute, the difference between adjacent speed limits cannot exceed 10 mph and McKellips Road has a posted limit of 45 mph.

Installing two new speed limit signs on Mesa Drive between Bates Street and Lehi Road will cost less than \$200, the report stated.

The speed limit will also drop to 30 mph from 35 mph on Horne



The Mesa City Council approved reducing the speed limit from 35 mph to 30 mph on Mesa Drive between Bates Street and Lehi Road. (City of Mesa)

between McKellips Road and Lehi Road.

That section of Horne provides north-south access through the Lehi Heritage Neighborhood and later dead ends at the Loop 202.

The intent for lowering the speed on that section of Horne is the same as the one for Mesa Drive.

Installing four new speed limit signs on Horne between McKellips Road and Lehi Road will cost less than \$300, the report stated.

Janet Perez can be reached at jperez@iniusa.org. Please send your comments about this article to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

To voice your opinion on this story, connect with us at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Desert Valley Winds calling all musicians

The Desert Valley Winds is seeking musicians for the upcoming season. Musicians who play the flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, saxophone of any size, trumpet/cornet, French horn, baritone/euphonium, trombone, tuba and percussion are invited.



Desert Valley Winds is composed of musicians ranging from high school students to senior citizens. The band includes both amateurs and professionals who enjoy playing and performing music together at local community events, concerts and celebrations. Desert Valley Winds has performed at the Arizona State Fair, Marine Ball, Falcon Field, Wreaths Across America, "USS MIDWAY" in San Diego and more. The band performs a wide variety of musical styles including the classics, marches, Broadway/movie music and patriotic music.

To inquire about playing for Desert Valley Winds, contact Director and Conductor **Steve Bouchier** at stevebouchier@aol.com or call 480-652-3911. For more information visit desertvalleywinds.org.

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INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA



Sun City - September 23, 2026 - Sundial Recreation Center

Sun City West - October 28, 2026 - SCW Foundation Center

Mesa - November 13, 2026 - Mesa Marketplace Swap Meet

Apache Junction - January 6, 2027 - Central Arizona College

Surprise - January 19, 2027 - The Colonnade

Litchfield/Goodyear - February 17, 2027 - Tuscany Falls Clubhouse (Pebble Creek)

Chandler - February 23, 2027 - Sun Lakes Country Club

Peoria - March 25, 2027 - Westbrook Village

Sun City West - April 13, 2027 - SCW Foundation Center

Sun City - May 3, 2027 - Sundial Recreation Center

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DEVELOPMENT

Banner rehab hospital expansion planned

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The design and landscaping for an approximately 13,231-square-foot expansion of the existing Banner Rehabilitation Hospital East building were discussed by the Mesa Design Review Board recently.

Building materials for the expansion at the 7.2-acre property at 1702 S. Pierpont include textured exterior insulation and finish systems, concrete masonry unit veneer, and metal panel, according to a city of Mesa document.

The landscape plan includes trees such as thornless cascalote, desert diva, desert willow, desert, museum palo verde and ironwood; and shrubs such as valentine bush, rio bravo sage, natal plum and yellow bells.

Approval of alternative compliance is being sought to have a design consistent with the existing building, Laura Boler, HDR senior project manager, wrote in a letter to the city.

“The proposed building addition has been designed to match the existing building in terms of the roof integration and changes in height or roof form to provide a seamless transition between the existing and the new,” she said. “(A)ll parapets will have a proper sheet metal trim cap designed to match the existing building for a seamless transition between the existing and the new.”

Sign plan changed for Mountainside Fitness

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A special-use permit was recently approved to modify a sign plan for a Mountainside Fitness near Ray and Ellsworth roads in Mesa.

The Mesa Board of Adjustment voted 4-0 recently to approve a consent agenda including the approval of

the permit to modify a comprehensive sign plan at 9311 E. Cadence Parkway. Vice Chair Shelly Allen and board member Gerson Barrera were absent.

The 3.8-acre site is part of the Cadence Commercial Center, Staff Planner Kwasi Abebrese said during a study session prior to the meeting.

Per the requirements of the existing sign plan, approved in 2020, the maximum aggregate sign area allowed is 186.4 square feet. The request is for it to be 278 square feet, he said,

Darshan Dawson of Arizona Commercial Signs is the applicant. Store Capital Acquisitions LLC is the owner.

Commercial, recreation center planned

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A permit has been approved to allow for modifications to an existing group commercial center at the northwest corner of East Broadway and South Power roads in Mesa.

The Mesa Board of Adjustment voted 4-0 recently on a consent agenda including the approval of a substantial conformance improvement permit for the 9.8-acre Power Village development. Vice Chair Shelly Allen and board member Gerson Barrera were absent.

The permit was sought primarily for landscape-setback deviations, Staff Planner Chloe Durfee Daniel said during a study session prior to the meeting.

Steven Brune of RKAA Architects Inc. is the applicant. Chris Hinkson, of HH-Power Village LLC is the owner.

2 illuminated signs approved for Living Word Church

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A special-use permit was recently



THREE-DIMENSIONAL COLORED RENDERING - NORTHWEST PERSPECTIVE



THREE-DIMENSIONAL COLORED RENDERING - SOUTH PERSPECTIVE

Building materials proposed for the expansion of the existing Banner Rehabilitation Hospital East include textured exterior insulation and finish systems, concrete masonry unit veneer, and metal panel. (City of Mesa)



The Mesa Board of Adjustment voted 4-0 on a consent agenda including the approval of a substantial conformance improvement permit for the 9.8-acre Power Village development. (City of Mesa)

approved for a sign plan with two illuminated monument signs for Living Word Church near Val Vista Drive and Brown Road.

The Mesa Board of Adjustment voted 4-0 recently on a consent agenda including the approval of the permit for a comprehensive sign plan for the church on 15.7 acres at 3520 E. Brown Road. Vice Chair Shelly Allen

and board member Gerson Barrera were absent.

An existing monument sign will be replaced with a 44-square-foot sign where the zoning district only allows a maximum of 32 square feet for non-residential land uses. An illuminated electronic messaging sign is planned, Staff Planner Emily Johnson said during a study session.

DEVELOPMENT

Terrible's fuel, convenience store, fuel planned

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A 4,689-square-foot Terrible's convenience store and 4,156-square-foot fuel canopy are planned about 1,500 feet south of the southwest corner of South Crismon Road and East Southern Avenue in Mesa.

The 1.3-acre development's look and landscaping were discussed during the Aug. 11 Mesa Design Review Board meeting. Board member Nicole Lynam was absent.

The convenience store is to be on the west side with the fuel canopy in the center, Staff Planner Chloe Durfee Daniel said at the meeting.

"We have a shared cross-access both to the north and south with exits on both sides shared with the rest of the group commercial center and then go out to Crismon Road.

We have 13 parking spaces that are required and 15 provided," she said.

Terrible's is a regional retailer founded in 1959 that has expanded to more than 180 locations throughout Nevada, California, Utah and Arizona, according to a written project narrative.

"The brand is recognized for its distinctive architectural identity and contemporary convenience retail format, typically featuring large, modern facilities offering fuel services alongside a variety of food, beverage and retail items," it states.

"The proposed Terrible's development will not only provide a local and regional service in an infill lot, furthering numerous goals of the city's general plan, but Terrible's will provide a unique twist on the classic service center development, bringing more users for surrounding



The Terrible's convenience store is to be on the west side of a site in Mesa with the fuel canopy in the center. (City of Mesa)

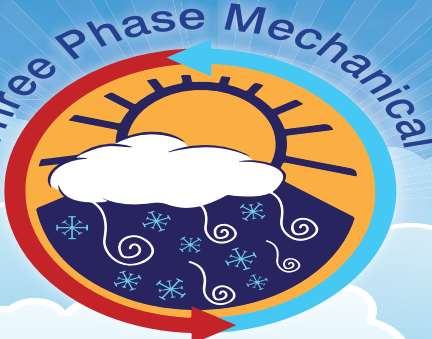
commercial developments from the U.S. 60 freeway and creating a more vibrant/interesting environment for the neighborhood as opposed to another traditional gas station," it states.

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