



Surprise soccer

USL2 squad at OUAZ; 8



INDEPENDENT

100-foot setback

Recommended distance; 12



3 sources fund local public schools

DUSD releases new video explaining budget process

By Delarita Ford INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Dysart Unified School District broke down the basics of education funding through an online video about the "intricate and complicated topic" of school finance.

A budget overview on funding sources is explained in the district's video on its YouTube channel. School funding is described as a "web of complicated formulas and funding sources that becomes more complex as you learn more about it."

Basics on how the district receives and spends money — and how taxpayers' dollars work for students —

• See Budget on page 3

Going once, going twice ...



Surprise recoups some money by reselling its old assets

By Jason Stone INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Looking for a new car? Need some computer monitors for a home office? How about joining the market for a new garbage truck?

All of these items can be found from the city of Surprise through public surplus auctions the city periodically conducts to get rid of items the city no longer needs or has outgrown.

These items include vehicles, equipment, office furniture, tools and other materials.

• See Auctions on page 4

Above, a street sweeper is among items the city of Surprise has put up for sale at PublicSurplus.com. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

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FROM THE COVER



The Dysart Unified School District has a video on the basics of how the district receives and spends money, and how taxpayers' dollars work for students. (Courtesy DUSD)

Budget

• From page 1

is noted below on the funding from three main sources:

- State of Arizona — 90%
- Federal government — 10% can only be used for those programs
- Local revenue — Includes property taxes.

While 90% of funding comes from state and local sources, 10% comes from federal government, which supports such things as special education services and to support the learning needs of low-income students using Title I funds.

“That money can only be used for those programs. The district can’t use that federal money for anything else,” the video stated. “Almost every dollar the school district receives has strings attached.”

State and local funding money is divided in to two main pots: maintenance and operations (M&O), with Dysart spending 95% of its funds from the M&O pot and 5% in capital.

M&O is said to be day-to-day expenses, operating expenses, which includes salaries and benefits for employees, utilities, transportation services and general supplies.

Capital expenses are for items that last many years such as buildings, furniture, equipment, technology, textbooks and buses.

Arizona law requires that capital money is only used for capital purchases and M&O only used for M&O.

“We can’t just go buy one less bus to fund a teacher and we can’t cut a teacher’s salary to buy a computer,” according to the video.

If the school district wants additional money to “provide a better education for students that goes above and beyond what the state and federal government provide,” the district can ask for something called an override or a bond, which is a tax on property from the local community.

Overrides and bonds are two different things and are not interchangeable as there is no such thing as an

• See **Budget** on page 15

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FROM THE COVER

Auctions

• From page 1

Surprise Assistant Finance Director Nicole Lewis called it a “complete mix” of bidders for the items, from other municipalities to businesses and residents who might want to tinker with a new vehicle.

“Who are we determine what somebody else might think is a prize?” Lewis said.

Publicsurplus.com hosts the periodic weekly auctions and shoppers can find the latest items up for bid at surpriseaz.gov/surplusauction.

Beside a garbage truck, recent auctions have included items such as SUV seats, police and fire SUVs, a Honda Accord and an enclosed trailer.

The recent auction that ran through Aug. 3 was for office supplies, computer monitors, office chairs and metal cabinets.

“It’s open nationwide, so once it’s put out there, it literally could be anybody,” Lewis said. “It’s just a wide variety (of bidders).”

In fiscal year 2025, the city generated \$791,927 from surplus auction sales.

For fiscal year 2026 through April — the most recent month of tracking — the city had already taken in \$622,605 in funds.

The highest priced item that was sold in the last three years was a Vactor truck, which ultimately went for \$144,100.

Vactor trucks are heavy-duty vehicles that clean sewer lines and perform other duties by using high-pressure water jetting and powerful vacuum suction.

Lewis said all proceeds from the sale of a surplus item goes back to that original funding source of where it was purchased.

The city departs with some of its assets for several reasons, Lewis said. Sometimes, new technology makes older vehicles and machines obsolete or with a growing city, some departments have to refresh their assets to keep pace.



Desktop computers and other office items are regularly up for bid at PublicSurplus.com. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

Each city department contacts the Finance Department when it has items it no longer needs. Those items are first offered to other city departments in case they can be recycled inhouse.

For the stuff that is not needed, the city’s procurement technicians coordinate with the Public Surplus auction house to set up the next weekly bidding.

The auction runs like eBay, where the city can set a reserve price that acts as a minimum bid that the city is willing to take to part with the item. If an item does not sell, the city can simply resell it like a listing on eBay.

“As a city, we definitely try to sell everything,” Lewis said.

The city has a series of rules for bidders to follow in order to receive their item.

Payments are only accepted online or by wire transfer to Public Surplus and they must be made within five business days from winning the auction.

All items must be claimed and hauled off within 10 days from the auction ending — a rule the city is serious about because anybody who fails to pick up an item will be blocked from bidding in future auctions.

The city will not ship any of the items to anybody, and the winning bidder must pay for all aspects of shipping the item, if



Former Surprise Police SUVs are available at PublicSurplus.com. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

needed.

And, of course, an 8.5% sales tax is imposed on all sales.

The items are in as-is condition. On the city’s website it warns bidders that the running, driving or overall working condition of vehicles are “unknown” and “not guaranteed.”

“The city does not test or inspect the vehicles prior to auction or the working condition of the vehicle or any of its parts (and) no guarantee of the value of vehicle or the functionality,” the city’s website states.

In addition to items the city resells, there are things that have no more useful life, are damaged or broken or are just no longer serviceable.

For those items, the city must give public notice that they are disposing of the those items.

Recent items that have been thrown away include wheelchairs, TVs, fans, a Bluetooth speaker and 47 containers of an expired cleaning solution.

The city also had to give notice of its intent to donate 125 books, DVDs and Blu-rays to the Friends of the Surprise Libraries.

Jason Stone can be reached at jstone@iniusa.org. 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.

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Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our opinions, and we insist on civility. Please include your name and phone number, so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We welcome your photo. All opinions must be no more than 300 words. Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month. Two submissions in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

Speak Up

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

Corrections

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

It is time for a change in CD 8 representation

I heartily concur with Anne Whitmore's letter, "Why is Abe Hamadeh defending the Tate brothers?" concerning our representative's strange championing of Andrew and Tristan Tate, who face 59 criminal charges of sexual assault in the U.K.

I'm seriously confused because I thought his responsibility and actual job is to represent those of us in Congressional District 8, Arizona.

Instead of holding Town Hall meetings where he can hear from his constituents, he's busy fighting extradition for these two highly questionable men. It's simply not in his purview and he needs to focus on his

constituents and by that I mean all of us, not just the Republicans he picks and chooses to attend photo ops in his D.C. office glittering with golden gewgaws in emulation of

the president.

I have not seen one single accomplishment for CD 8 since Abe has been in office. Much of CD 8 is on Social Security and Medicare since a portion of the district includes the Sun Cities.

Drastic cuts are coming and even Social Security is in danger yet not a word about these two vital social programs. I'm very tired of not having a chance to engage with my representative — he even turns off comments on social media which, by the way, is against the First Amendment.

It's time for a change in representation. Hamadeh won't engage with us and is busy chasing issues that have nothing to do with CD 8. Let

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the Tate brothers take care of themselves and let us take care of Abe by removing him from office this fall.

Connie Morrison
SUN CITY WEST

Congressional District 8 includes parts of Surprise, Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City and Sun City West. 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.

Disappointed that Dems are betting only on sure things

Recently, I reviewed Swing Left Maricopa County's schedule of online events. I emailed and asked why there was no event featuring Bernadette Greene-Placentia. The response was revealing:

"We appreciate your question. We would love to address every race, however it does not match our mission which is to flip red districts to blue in swingable Congressional Districts. Currently AZ 08 does not fall under that category as its vote spread is quite high: Vote Spread: 15.26% Leaning: Republican Competitive-ness: Outside of Competitive Range. In Maricopa County we are currently focused on the swingable CD 01 (Shah) and two others statewide: CD 06 (Jo Mendoza) in Tucson and CD 02 in Flagstaff (Jonathan Nez)... Remember that LD 27 is half of CD 8 and it IS flippable with the AZ Legislative Senate candidate Kyle Clayton and House candidate Debo-

Speak Up

From Nextdoor & Facebook

Here are some comments about stories happening in Surprise:

Detention facility tensions dominate council meeting

"No ICE. It'll melt the community around it." — **Dolores G.**

"I live in Surprise, and I fully support ICE and the detention facility. I don't see an issue with more police on our streets." — **Scott J.**

"How many of these people have taken an illegal into their homes and are supporting them? Bet it is zilch. You can thank Biden for ICE." — **Judy B.**

"Someone explain the connection between 'democracy' and the detaining and deporting of people who are here illegally." — **Mitch M.**

"This is all very funny since there taking applications and hiring for the facility." — **Jason A.**

"I fully support ICE and DHS enforcement of U.S. immigration law." — **David C.**

"The detention facility brings more jobs and more taxes to the city. Win-win." — **K.J. O.**

"We're gonna pack this place after the midterms, so buckle up Surprise." — **Day D.**

"I love seeing our community fighting against detention camps." — **Marcella G.**

"Open up the detention facility. Enough of this BS." — **Mark M.**

"There are way more important things to be worried about than where they are going to be temporarily housing criminals." — **Diana L.**

"This is all gonna get a whole lot harder for ICE after November. They better hurry before the money tap get shut off." — **Thomas T.**

Terrible's hopes to make north Surprise area not so bad

"If you think traffic is bad now in that loca-

Opinions

• From page 6

rah Howard. So your effort can make an impact in not only the Legislative districts but in CD 8's results."

In 2024, Schweikert won CD 1 by 16,572. A reasonable margin in a district that has been won by Democrats twice in the last three elections. CD 8 on the other hand has elected three Republicans in the last three cycles. In 2024, Hamadeh won by 47,925 votes.

Here's the thing. Bernadette Greene-Placentia presents a great story. Smart, well-informed and focused on all the right stuff. A knowledgeable and compelling candidate who deserves to be heard.

To my friends in the half of LD 27 that live in CD 8, you might want to let SLMC know you are not going to just lay down.

If voters in CD 8 believe their voices matter, they should remind organizations like Swing Left that competitive districts aren't created — they're built through organizing, candidate support and showing up.

Let's get some game, CD 8!

Epson Brewer
SUN CITY

This writer is using a pen name. Bernadette Greene-Placentia is seeking to unseat incumbent Abe Hamadeh in CD 8, which includes parts of Surprise,

Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City and Sun City West. 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.

Why so much sympathy for the undocumented?

Mr. Gibson in his letter, "ICE facilities anything but humane, reader says," suggests that I investigate much further before presenting what he believes is one side of the story.

It seems to me that he believes his side of the story is the right one based on "many respected news organizations" including the liberal, left-wing New York Times. Are the other ones possibly CNN, MS Now? Hmm, I wonder?

I cannot understand why there is so much sympathy for these illegal criminals. Does he really want them to stay in our country? Don't they realize that because Biden failed to stop millions from coming in that it has affected our housing, schools, medical facilities, etc.?

Jean Goncalves
SUN CITY WEST

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Speak Up

• From page 6

tion, wait till you see the inclusion of this addition." — **Jesse F.**

"Love it." — **Mark H.**

"The name is off-putting." — **Sandy K.**

"They will have the cheapest fuel prices in town. In Kingman, they are 5 to 8 cents a gallon. Cheaper the same way in Vegas." — **Timothy S.**

Planners vote for 100-foot setbacks for BESS units

"Battery farms are known to catch on fire. The

smoke from those fires can be toxic. I think 1,500 feet (setback) is good." — **Tom O.**

"More heat in an already hot desert and a hum creating noise that we're going to be very sick of in a very short time. That's what we need is one more source of noise in this Valley, times however many they're planning to put among us." — **John P.**

"With all the empty miles in Arizona, why do these need to be anywhere close to people?" — **James D.**

"They need to put them far out from the city and away from people and they have to make their own electricity and they have to bring in water from somewhere not use ours and bring up our rates." — **Charlie L.**

Be a Civility Advocate!



Civility Checklist

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

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



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

Surprise soccer team still reaching for Stars

USL2 squad finishes second season with 4-4-4 record

By Jason Stone

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Kenny Laird could not pass up the chance to go to this summer's World Cup when one of the former soccer players he coached hooked him up with tickets to a match between Switzerland and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"It's hard to describe to people what a World Cup match in person is like," said Laird, the coach and owner of the Stars FC club, which plays home matches in Surprise. "It's like being at a Super Bowl every night. And the crowd with the singing and the drums and all that, that's very real. It's almost deafening."

Laird is hoping his Stars FC can one day draw up a passionate fan base in Surprise as well now that the second season of games at OUAZ has wrapped up and preparations are already in place for Year 3.

Stars FC went 4-4-4 on the year after a late-season swoon evened out a fast start that saw the Stars in first place in its division for the first half of the summer season.

Laird wants to meet up with Surprise officials and talk about the future of his USL2 semipro team. He still has dreams to eventually elevate into the first division, which would be the league right under the Champions division that features teams like the Phoenix Rising.

In the offseason, Laird said he plans to do another business push for sponsors on the uniforms and other team assets.

He also plans to work on getting the word out about his team to the Surprise community.

It is all part of an effort to capitalize on the popularity of the World Cup, which brought attention to the sport

"Just getting accepted into the draw was amazing."

Kenny Laird

Stars FC owner and coach



The Stars FC soccer team went 4-4-4 in its second year of USL2 league play at OUAZ. (Courtesy Kenny Laird)

to American audiences.

Ironically, the World Cup negatively affected attendance for Stars FC in its second year at OUAZ. The number of fans through the gates was down in the second half of the season

because two matches were played at the same time as U.S. national team matches. After attracting about 700 or so fans for the first couple of games, the attendance dwindled down to 50 when the USA was playing. Conflicting games featuring Mexico were not any better.

"We had the power through the World Cup," Laird said.

Even established teams like FC Tucson, which draws 2,000 fans regularly, saw attendance dips this year as people went to parties to watch World Cup games.

"There was no way for us to anticipate what the schedule was gonna do because we made our schedule in

February," Laird said. "There was no way for us to say, 'The U.S. will be playing the night we chose to play.'"

In the first season, the team attracted between 300 to 900 fans a game.

Laird likes the model built in Tucson this century. He aims to grow a fan base in a similar organic way after establishing itself in the Surprise community.

"When I talk about Tucson having a couple thousand people attending, they have 23 years at that field," Laird said. "They have built up a fanbase over social media and marketing."

Laird said his team is starting to grow in those areas. It gets up to 80,000 views a month on the website and already has thousands of social media followers.

"Would I love it to be massive right out of the gate? Yeah, but I don't think that was ever realistic," Laird said.

Stars FC held the top record in the Southwest Division for five weeks this summer before injuries to three goalkeepers turned the season slightly

south.

"I really had a good feeling about getting into the playoffs, and then (we had) our last stretch," Laird said.

Two of the goalkeepers were hurt in the same game and were out for four matches.

The loss of starting goalie Noah Lawrence, who has full professional experience, was felt at the end of the season.

"We actually leaned on him for almost all the games," Laird said about Lawrence. "Noah played 10, and I think he's getting older, and I think it caught up to him a little bit. That last game, it happened at the worst possible time."

The 27-year-old Lawrence pulled his hamstring and then suffered a hip dislocation with less than 10 minutes in the game. He tried to tough it out but soon after the injury he allowed a goal soon his coach said he would have normally saved.

"That's why I knew he can't go

• See **Stars** on page 14

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Paradise Honors Panthers

12275 N. 175th Ave., Surprise

2025 record: 6-6
Playoffs: 4A second round
Region: 4A Skyline
Coach: Josh SeKoch
(second year)

SEASON PREVIEW

Paradise Honors vets focus on versatility

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Months after a playoff bid in its 4A debut season, Paradise Honors prepared for 2026 by going away from its strengths.

The Panthers have an accomplished core of 10 or so returning starters. Coach Josh SeKoch and his staff spent much of the offseason having them put in work at another position.

Paradise Honors is one of the smaller 4A schools in terms of enrollment, although the charter school enjoys high athletic participation rates. But the roster is not large and depth is a challenge.

“What we try to do is teach kids two positions. That might be two on offense or two on defense, or one and one,” SeKoch said. “Right now we’re managing Chuck Van Dyke in practice. He doesn’t need every carry. So we’re seeing the other three kids, knowing full well what you have there. That’s an ace in the hole.”

The coach may be underselling the second leading rusher in Arizona in 2025. Van Dyke rolled up 2,082 yards and 21 touchdowns despite missing the Panthers’ second playoff game at Tempe Marcos de Niza with a broken collarbone.

Senior athlete Madden Obregon could cycle through five roles — wide receiver, tight end, running back, free safety and Linebacker.

Senior defensive tackle Sam Valverde spent the offseason also learning how to play end and middle line-

backer. Senior Ty Woodhouse-Gandy will start at wide receiver and also see snaps at strong safety and running back while returning kicks.

“If the ball goes inside our 20, Abe Torres is going in at defensive end. But he doesn’t have to do that if you’re up 28 or down 28-0,” SeKoch said.

Abraham Torres, a four-year starter, moved to left tackle after massive road graders Sean Lillmars and Jayden Marquez graduated. Center Chase Coats is a three-year starter.

Tryston Sanchez, a 6-4 senior, should be the other bookend after concentrating only on wrestling the last two years. Sophomore Will Laizure should start at right guard.

“Our run game is good, but since we got Ron Baker as offensive coordinator it’s definitely going to open up the pass game a lot from last year,” Torres said.

Baker is not offensive coordinator. Kenny Mitchell will serve as the play caller and wide receivers coach.

But Baker’s work as a quarterback coach precedes him. And the Panthers probably cannot win games with 53 rushes and six passes this year.

Senior quarterback Parker Schmitz should be the beneficiary of Baker’s work, along with offseason throwing and film sessions with Paradise Honors legend Gage Baker. Junior Robert Casas transferred out so freshman Bryson Sinsheimer may be the varsity backup.

“When Chuck was hurt in the playoffs, we didn’t have an answer.



Paradise Honors junior running back Chuck Van Dyke smiles after being named the Epic Sports Network player of the game in a Oct. 16, 2025 win over Thunderbird. Van Dyke was the state’s second leading rusher last year and is back for his senior year. (Courtesy Sonya Tellez/For Independent Newsmedia)

Parker needed more of a quarterbacks guru. That’s what Ron is and to have Gage around all summer working out with the kids and throwing with the quarterbacks and the younger guys ... that’s a kid that processes the game so different,” SeKoch said. “If you talk to him he’s a savant about football. But he also got that from Ron, who teaches it a certain way.”

Senior receiver Jackson Short is the top target, followed by Obregon and Woodhouse-Gandy.

“There’s a lot of gaps to fill, bringing up the young guys as they’re taking in all this information. They’re

PARADISE HONORS PANTHERS

KEY RETURNEES: Parker Schmitz, Sr., QB; Charles Van Dyke, Sr., RB; Madden Obregon, Sr., WR/DB/LB; Jackson Short, Sr., WR/DB; Chase Coats, Sr., C; Abraham Torres, Sr., OT/DT; Sam Valverde, Sr., DT/DE; Justin Alvidrez, Sr., CB.

TOP NEWCOMERS: Ryan Anderson, Fr., CB; Tryston Sanchez, Sr., OT.

definitely stepping up and trying their

• See **Panthers** on page 25



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10:00AM-NOON

12759 W. Ballard Dr.,
SUN CITY WEST

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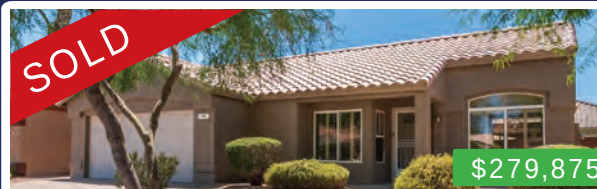
Highly sought after Prescott model. Home has 1872 sq. ft., 2 bedroom, 2 bath, den & great room floor plan. Home is located just a block & half from SCW's Desert Trails GC pro shop. Don't Wait! Call Today to View!



15192 W. Las Brizas Ln., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7059982

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-151st, L-Corral Dr., R-Acapulco. L-Las Brizas Ln.

Highly desired Prescott model is located on the 7th fairway of Desert Trails GC. This 1856 sq. ft. home has 2 Bdrms (split), 2 baths plus a den. New roof underlayment 2022, HVAC in 2020 & kitchen appliances 2019. Quick close of escrow is possible. Home has been well maintained. This one is one you'll want to see! Call today to view!



22202 N. Cochise Ln., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7051608

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker., L-135th, L-Deer Valley Rd., L-Tom Ryan, R-Via Manana, L-Las Brizas, R-Pecos, L-Cochise Ln.

Popular La Paz model located in the Palm Ridge Rec. Cntr. area of SCW. Home has 1086 sq. ft., 2 bedroom, 2 bath, great room floor plan & a block wall fenced private backyard. New roof underlayment 2026. Neighborhood HOA allows pets & rentals. Call today to view!



12759 W. Ballard Dr., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7064685

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-128th, R-Aurora, R-Ballad Dr.

Nicely maintained Gemini/Twin home just a half a block from SCW's Stardust GC club house. 1419 Sq. Ft., 2 Bdrms, 2 baths plus a large, screened patio. New HVAC 2023. Guest bath updated. Porcelain plank tile flooring. HOA allows pets (max 2) & rentals. Quick close of escrow possible. This one is one you'll want to see! Call today to view!



23100 N. Drifter Way, SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7062138

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker, L-135th, L-Deer Valley Rd., R-Dusty Trail Blvd., R-Drifter Way

Popular Rio Verde model (expended). This 1612sq. ft. home has 2 Bdrms (split), 2 baths plus an added den/office/craft studio. Both bathrooms updated including walk in/roll in showers (2023). Paid off solar lease. Quick close of escrow is possible. No neighborhood HOA fee. This one is one you'll want to see! Call today to view!



12635 W. Eveningside Dr., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7040339

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-128th, R-Sunglow Dr. which becomes Eveningside Dr.

Fabulous panoramic view of Stardust GC's 4th & 5th fairways & greens. Home has 2599 sq. ft., 3 large bedrooms (split), 2 updated bathrooms, golf cart garage plus an added 175 Sq. ft. art/crafts studio or office. This home is truly special & an absolute must see! Call today to view!



P&Z sticks with 100-foot setbacks for BESS

Commission recommends same distance to council

By Jason Stone

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Surprise planning and zoning commissioners are still in favor of 100-foot setbacks for Battery Energy Storage Systems, or BESS.

The commission voted 5-0 on Aug. 6 to reaffirm its preference for that distance of space between an existing residential dwelling and the edge of a BESS.

The city council plans to host a similar public meeting on the matter at its next meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 1.

A BESS is a facility consisting of electrochemical storage batteries, battery chargers and controls. They are designed to store energy for when it's needed in the future.

P&Z commissioners in May voted to lower the proposed separation distance from homes and buildings from 1,500 feet to 100 feet as part of a proposed zoning text amendment concerning BESS.

But the city council in June threw it back to the P&Z commission when it opened the matter for more discussion at setback distances of 100, 500 and 1,000 feet.

Goodyear recently enacted a 330-foot variance from residential units or 150 feet if a plume study is completed. The city also allows BESS no closer than 150 feet to commercial buildings and 100 feet to industrial buildings.

Buckeye uses 150 feet as its minimum for all structures, while Mesa breaks it up between commercial (150 feet) and residential (1,000 feet).

"This will bring tax dollars, but more importantly, it will bring reliability to our grid."

Lisa Everett

Surprise planning and zoning commissioner



Surprise planning and zoning commissioners are still in favor of 100-foot setbacks for Battery Energy Storage Systems, or BESS. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

Other nearby cities do not yet have BESS regulations, which became crucial in 2019 in north Surprise after an BESS that APS operated suffered a "thermal runaway" incident. The explosion badly injured four Peoria firefighters and hospitalized four from Surprise.

"My biggest concern here is safety and making sure that people are safe, whether they're living next door to a BESS facility, or they're first responders, or there is somebody walking by," Commissioner Jared Holland

said before the vote.

Commissioner Lisa Everett said BESS safety has come a long way since the incident seven years ago.

"This will bring tax dollars, but more importantly, it will bring reliability to our grid," Everett said. "What will council members in our city say to constituents when we have unreliability from the grid, when we have to experience brownouts or rolling blackouts?"

Autumn Johnson, of the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association, spoke in favor of 100 foot setbacks, reminding the commission that because of the 150-foot internal setback from the property line, it is actually a 250-foot setback total.

Commissioner Kevin Perry said he was in favor of 100-foot setbacks to help bring a stable electrical grid.

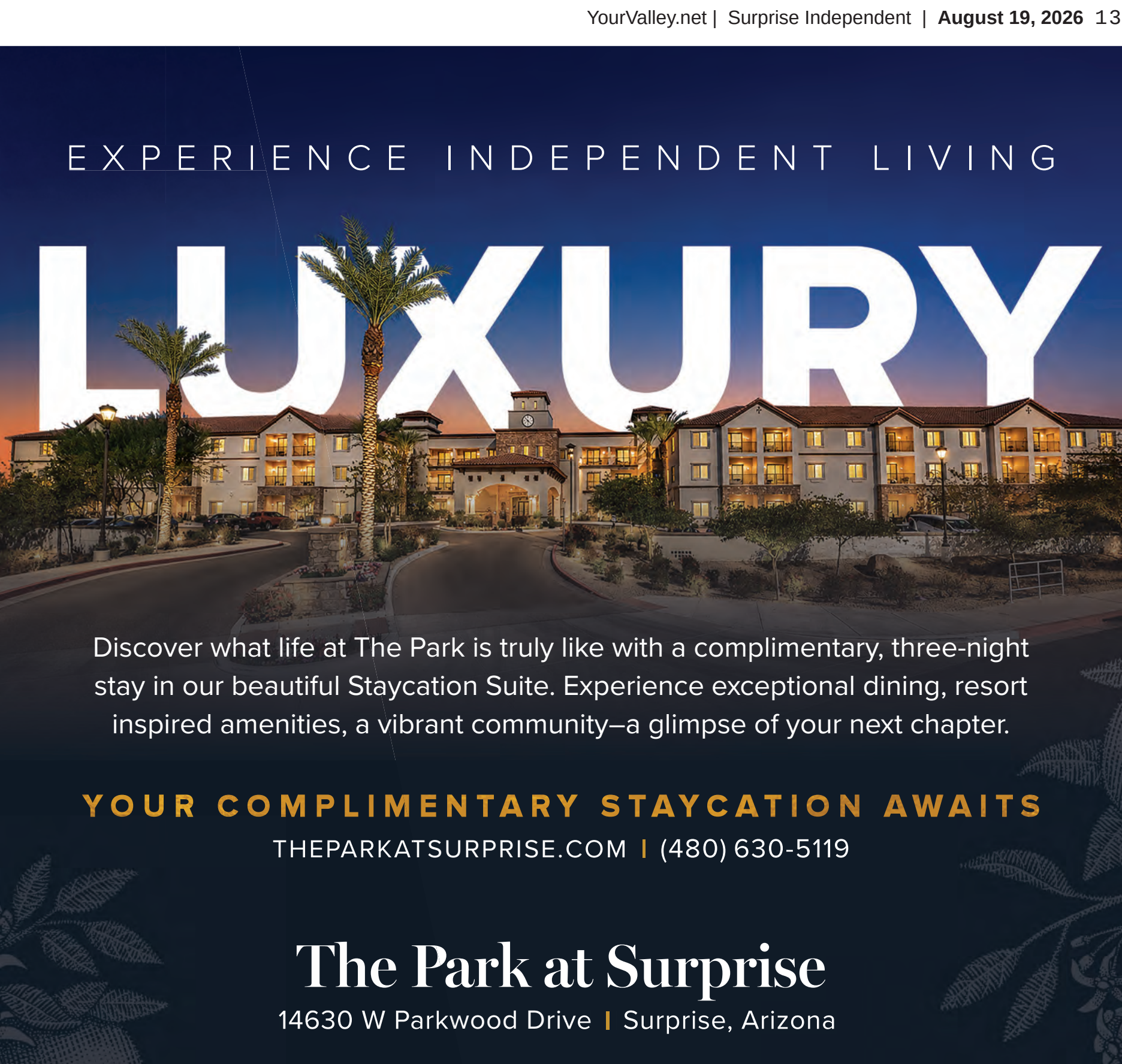
Jessica Perry, public affairs manager for APS, told the commission 100 feet was among National Fire Protection Association standards.

"Batteries are an essential piece to how we serve customers today, capturing that excess power during a time that's not being demanded and then deploying it during a time that is needed, especially today in those hot summer months," Perry said.

Jason Stone can be reached at jstone@iniusa.org. 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.

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Stars

• From page 8

anymore,” Laird said.

With a series of injuries, the team’s only option was calling up 16-year-old youth goaltender Seth Blasing to help out the thin unit.

“We had to in the front end of the schedule pull back a little bit so that we could have everybody there for the first week,” Laird said.

The coach said he was pleased with how the team played this year and found success early.

Among highlighted players for the year, Liam Mullins scored in the last two matches, including a hat trick against Capo in a 3-3 draw to end the season on July 11.

Matys Price, a player at Division II Regis University, was the team’s captain.

Chase Saverino, who’s also playing over OUAZ this year, was the team’s

left back for the last five matches.

“The guy was absolutely nothing short of amazing,” Laird said.

The Stars’ academy developmental team, which features players from the regular team, was invited to the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, the largest soccer tournament or open division in the United States. Laird said it is considered the oldest and longest running professional tournament in the U.S.

“Getting a bid to that and getting approved and accepted was amazing for us,” Laird said.

“Just getting accepted into the draw was amazing.”

The qualifier round starts in mid-September. The team’s roster will be set by the last week of August.

Jason Stone can be reached at jstone@iniusa.org. 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.



Members of the Stars FC team share a laugh during a recent practice during the team’s second season in Surprise. (Courtesy Kenny Laird)

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FROM THE COVER

Budget

• From page 3

override bond or a bond override.

A bond is designated for capital money: buses, school buildings, safety and technology. A bond can only be used for those capital purposes, noted the online resource,

The last time Dysart approved a bond was in 2006. The district can call for either a capital override or an M&O override.

DUSD asked voters to fund full-day kindergarten, quality arts and education programs and maintain class sizes in 2025 through the continuation of the M&O override.

The community approved the M&O override for those specific things, and the current override provides about \$27 million to the district's M&O budget.

These pots of monies that Dysart receives varies from year-to-year, depending on how many students enroll in Dysart, whether or not voters approve an override, or whether or not the state or federal government decides to cut or adjust funding.

The video concluded by stating despite the funding fluctuations, Dysart continues to live within its budget, and "its been doing pretty well," for a district that maintains its status as having some of the best voted public schools in the Valley, and A-rated top schools with graduates going on to college and career.

Log on to Dysart.org/budget.

Delarita Ford can be reached at dford@iniusa.org. 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.

BRIEFS

Benevilla celebrating 2nd grand opening of its gym

Benevilla will celebrate the re-grand opening of Benefitness Adaptive Gym's expanded Rock Steady Boxing Room and new personal training suite from 9–11 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 10, at Benefitness Adaptive Gym, 16752 N. Greasewood St.

Admission is free and open to the public as the community is invited to attend.

The Benefitness Adaptive Gym event will include morning tours.

The celebration marks the completion of Benefitness' new Rock Steady Boxing room, which was made possible through a Ken Kendrick Grand Slam Award grant from the Arizona Diamondbacks Foundation, allowing the

nonprofit to better serve individuals living with Parkinson's disease.

Arts commission selects chair, vice chair for FY27

Hassan Rasul was picked as the new chair of the Surprise Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission.

Commissioners voted unanimously to select Rasul, who had been serving as vice chair.

The new vice chair to replace Rasul as vice chair is Commissioner Katherine Dunphy.

The seven-person commission meets once a month to discuss and plan public art and culture projects across Surprise.

It meets on the first Wednesday of each month at the Surprise Regional Library.

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A map shows the area that is now commercial to make way for a convenience store with gas station, an undetermined fast food restaurant and a building for more retail. (Courtesy city of Surprise)

Terrible's hopes to make north area not so bad

**Gas station, fast food joint
are part of rezoned land**

By Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Surprise City Council gave its approval of a new convenience store, fast food restaurant and retail building in the growing north area of the city.

The council agreed Aug. 4 to rezone the southeast corner of 163rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road from residential to community commercial to make way for a Terrible's convenience store and other businesses, including possibly an auto parts store.

One of the current owners of the property, Matt Stevenson, told the council that his group, 163 Surprise, is entertaining offers from a variety of businesses who want to move in.

"We're trying to work with Surprise to determine what is the best fit for the residents in the area because we're a little spoiled with choice of what goes there," Stevenson told the council.

A site plan and final plat for the Terrible's project is currently in review.

Councilmember Nick Haney, who serves the area, said he is excited to bring more amenities to the area.

"It's really commercial that would

be geared towards serving the communities nearby, so maybe they don't have to go south on 163rd Avenue," Haney said.

Four residents attended a neighborhood meeting last month with concerns about increased traffic.

Terrible's operates gas stations, convenience stores and car washes in western Arizona, such as Parker, Quartzsite, Lake Havasu City and Bullhead City. It recently moved into the Valley in Peoria, and one is also under construction in central Phoenix near Interstate 17 and Northern Avenue.

The Surprise rezone application includes a final plat application to subdivide the parcel into three parcels and a master site plan

Terrible's would be part of the first phase of the commerce center. The 5,000-square-foot convenience store would include a gas station with an automated car wash tunnel.

The fast food restaurant and a 6,000-square-foot retail building are part of future phases to the east.

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

North Surprise ready for new Panda Express

Popular Chinese chain looks to open its 4th location in city

By Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Another Surprise-area Panda Express is in the planning stages — and it will bring the first location to north Surprise.

Ruben Rodela with GWA Architecture has scheduled the required development project neighborhood meeting to discuss a conditional use permit the restaurant is seeking for a location on the southeast corner of 163rd Avenue and Pinnacle Peak Road.

Discussion on the drive-thru facility is scheduled for 6-7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 12 at Asante Library, 16755 W. Vereda Solana Drive.

It would be the fourth Panda Express location in Surprise. The city already has spots at 16760 W. Waddell Road, 13732 W. Bell Road and 14182 N. Litchfield Road.

Panda Express reported it operated 2,679 loca-

tions in the U.S. and 112 in Arizona as of mid-July. Arizona has the third most locations in the nation behind California and Texas.

Maricopa County also has the second most locations among U.S. counties. It sits only behind Los Angeles County.

Visit Pandaexpress.com for full locations and menu options.

Zaxbys, a popular national fast food chicken restaurant, will soon be coming to the same corner.

Other restaurants planned for north Surprise over the next few months include Baskin Robbins, CAVA, Chipotle and Farmer Boys.

Thai Chili 2Go and Jimmy John's also recently opened in the northern tucked-in area of Surprise.

Call 623-222-3011 for information about the neighborhood meeting.

Jason Stone can be reached at jstone@iniusa.org. 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.



Panda Express is eyeing its fourth location in Surprise. (Courtesy Panda Express)

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The city of Surprise is offering students in grades 6-12 the opportunity to participate in the Surprise Youth Justice Project. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)

Youth Justice Project needs students

Opportunity is offered to students in grades 6-12

The city of Surprise is offering students in grades 6-12 the opportunity to participate in the Surprise Youth Justice Project.

The SYJP is a program committed to increasing the availability of restorative justice opportunities for teens and allows participants to learn more about the justice system and to serve as jury members in teen court.

In partnership with Maricopa County and Surprise City Court, students participate in Teen Court, a diversion program for juvenile offenders.

During Teen Court, a juvenile offender's actions are assessed by a jury of their peers, who then decide on the appropriate steps the offender must take to repair the harm they have caused.

This practice effectively resolves conflict, deters future offenses and allows the offender to take responsibility for their actions without permanent stigmatization.

The SYJP program begins on Aug. 24 with a group orientation at the Surprise City Court and runs through

IF YOU APPLY

What: Surprise Youth Justice Project

When: Applications due Monday, Aug. 10

Information: surpriseaz.gov/youth-justice

April 26, 2027.

Applicants must reside in Surprise or attend school or homeschool in Surprise and be able to attend the required training on Monday, Aug. 24.

Regular attendance at Teen Court sessions held on the last Monday of the month from September through April, except on city-observed holidays.

To be considered for the program, applicants must complete the SYJP program application at surpriseaz.gov/YouthJustice.

Applications must be submitted by Monday, Aug. 10.

Applicants will be notified of acceptance into the program by Monday, Aug. 17.

Visit surpriseaz.gov/YouthJustice.

Volunteers needed to pack meals for food bank

City hosting big event to fight hunger in September at OUAZ

The city of Surprise invited residents to give back during a special day of service meal-packing event in partnership with Meals of Hope and the Rotary Club of Surprise and Sun City West.

It is from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Sept. 19, at the lobby of Ottawa University-Arizona's Faith Arena, 14470 W. Tierra Buena Lane. Volunteer check-in is at 8:30 a.m.

Volunteers will help pack 25,000 meals to support Valley View Community Food Bank and directly help serve local individuals and families facing food insecurity.

All of the meals packed during the event will stay in the community.

This high-energy, family-friendly event is open to people 14 and older. There are a variety of volunteer

IF YOU GO

What: Meal-packing day of service event

When: 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, Sept. 19

Where: OUAZ Faith Arena, 14470 W. Tierra Buena Lane

Information: surpriseaz.gov/dayof-service

roles, including pouring ingredients, sealing and labeling meal bags and boxing up completed meals. No prior experience is necessary.

Registration is required, and space is limited to 200 volunteers.

Sign up now at surpriseaz.gov/DOSVolunteer

Meals of Hope, a nonprofit found-



The city of Surprise invited residents to give back during a special day of service meal-packing event in partnership with Meals of Hope and the Rotary Club of Surprise and Sun City West. (Independent Newsmedia/Kelly O'Sullivan)

ed in 2007, has helped pack more than 100 million meals nationwide.

For questions about the event, contact Daisy Vargas at Daisy.Var-

gas@surpriseaz.gov, or 623-222-1612.

Visit surpriseaz.gov/DayOfService.

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Storytelling to extend 250th celebration into fall

Library to host 'Reflecting America' event in November

The Surprise Public Library System invited the public to help bring history to life with "Reflecting America: A Semiquincentennial Living History," a special America 250 program celebrating the nation's 250th anniversary.

The free event will take place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave.

It will feature local storytellers sharing personal and family stories that reflect the American experience.

From tales of perseverance and triumph to family histories that trace back to the nation's founding in 1776, the program will showcase the diverse experiences that have shaped America over the past 250 years.

Community members interested in presenting are encouraged to submit a proposal to library@surpriseaz.gov by Monday, Aug. 31. Presentations should be approximately five to 15 minutes long and may feature personal stories, family history or other historically significant experiences connected to the American story.

Proposal submissions should include:

- Presentation title (10 words or fewer).
- Abstract describing the story and its historical connection.
- Format (panel discussion or interactive storytelling).
- A brief, 50-word speaker biography.

Call 623-222-2901, or visit surprisepubliclibrary.gov/Programs

and type "America 250" in the search bar.

Library commission to pick new leaders

The next meeting for the Surprise Library Commission will include the selection of its new chair and vice chair for the fiscal year.

Commissioners will vote on this as part of its agenda at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 20 at Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave.

The seven-person commission acts as advisers on general policy relating to the operation of the Surprise Public Library System.

It also makes recommendations for library operations, planning and programing.

An agenda is available at surpriseaz.gov/agendas.

Local history buff brothers graduate with honors from Arizona State

Surprise residents Tristyn Vazquez, 18, and Donovyn Vazquez, 20, graduated summa cum laude (4.0 GPA) from ASU's Tempe Campus with bachelor's degrees in history.

Tristyn's focus was on Asian history and carries an associate's degree in Japanese.

Donovyn's studies focused more on American history with an interest in World War II.

The brothers plan to take a gap year to travel and research before starting their master's degrees.



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Trampoline park jumps into Surprise market

Elevate opens 7th location in Arizona, 2nd in West Valley

Elevate Trampoline Park took a big leap into the Surprise market this month with the opening of its seventh location in Arizona.

The trampoline park and activity center arrived at 14537 W. Grand Ave., Suite 200, to provide local families with a new spot for active indoor recreation, birthday parties and group events just as summer vacation gets underway.

The 30,000-square-foot facility includes wall-to-wall trampolines, a ninja course, foam pits and attractions for guests of different ages and skill levels. The grand opening event on July 8 featured giveaways, spe-

cial offers and family-friendly indoor recreation. The first 250 guests were guaranteed prizes, including free jump passes and memberships.

"We've been looking forward to bringing Elevate Trampoline Park to Surprise and introducing families to everything the park has to offer."

Kimberly Wesolowski
Elevate Trampoline Park vice president of operations

Company leaders said the opening reflected continued demand for family-friendly indoor recreation options in one of Arizona's fastest-growing communities.

"We've been looking forward to bringing Elevate Trampoline Park to Surprise and introducing families to everything the park has to offer," Vice President of Operations

Kimberly Wesolowski said. "The grand opening is designed to be more than a ribbon-cutting. It's an opportunity for families to experience the park, take advantage of special offers and be part of a memorable first day



Elevate Trampoline Park is opening its seventh Arizona location in Surprise. (Courtesy Elevate Trampoline Park)

as we become part of the community."

Elevate has been in business for 11 years and operates 14 locations across the six states. Other Arizona locations are in Gilbert, Goodyear, Mesa, Queen Creek and Tucson, which has

two.

Wesolowski said the business is expected to provide families with a safe indoor destination they can enjoy year-round.

"Having more family-focused recreation options available locally gives residents additional opportunities to spend time together, celebrate special occasions and stay active in a fun environment," Wesolowski said.

Single-day passes at Elevate Trampoline Park generally range from \$14.99 to \$29.99, depending on jump session, age group and day of the week.

The business is open at noon weekdays, 9 a.m. on Saturdays and 10 a.m. on Sundays. It stays open until as late as 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

Visit elevatetrampolinepark.com/surprise.



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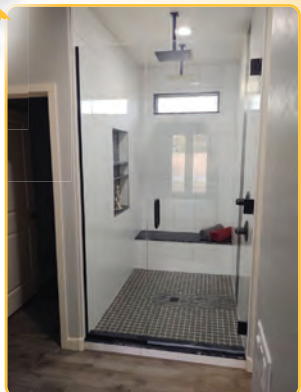
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The Desert Sands Contracting team consisted of, front row, left to right, Brad Brulotte, Chris Espejo, Tom Yurkunas, Phil Murray and John Hammel and back row, left to right, Randy Van Wagner, Jeff Nickerson, Terry Hughes, Jim Opyd, Jim Mathews and Randy Ratcliff. Not pictured is Jerry Eastham. (Courtesy Howard Sumner)

Grand softball leagues crown 2 champions

Desert Sands wins weekday, GenEx takes Saturday league

The Grand Softball League recently crowned two champions for its summer competition.

The Desert Sands Contracting team won the Summer 1 Weekday League, while General Exterminating wrapped up an undefeated season at the Field of Dreams to win the Summer 1 Saturday League championship.

For Desert Sands, managers Randy Van Wagner and Brad Brulotte helped mold the team chemistry into

a 10-4-2 record.

The solid defensive team was particularly well-rounded, including using Brulotte in the rover position.

Other team members were Chris Espejo, Tom Yurkunas, Phil Murray, John Hammel, Jeff Nickerson, Terry Hughes, Jim Opyd, Jim Mathews, Randy Ratcliff and Jerry Eastham.

In the Saturday League, GenEx scored in double figures every game of the session and averaged 15.5 runs. But the team gave up almost as many per game, making several of the con-

Softball

• From page 22

tests close. The team's never say die attitude, however, pulled out multiple victories late.

The team hit over .650 combined as six GenEx players hit over .700 for the session: Jay Schirpke (six doubles, two home runs), Kevin Katsuki (four doubles, a triple), Schneider (five doubles), John Boland (three doubles, four triples and a home run), Jim Opyd (two doubles), and Joe Eschenbrenner (three doubles, a triple).

Two players hit over .650: Ken Kryzminski (two doubles) and Paul Jinneman (two doubles and a triple).

Recognition was given to pitcher Ted Schneider and catcher Sal Politi as the battery mates for the team. Schneider only missed one game and Howard Sumner subbed in and pitched and snagged a close win for GenEx.

John Bertholdy hit over .550, while Politi was over .500 (two doubles).

Ed Hart had to miss some games this session but also added to the offense with an above .300 average.



The General Exterminating team consisted of, front row kneeling, left to right, John Bertholdy, Kevin Katsuki, John Boland, Jay Schirpke and Sal Politi and back row, left to right, Ed Hart, Jim Opyd, Joe Eschenbrenner, Ted Schneider, Paul Jinneman and Ken Kryzminski. (Courtesy Howard Sumner)

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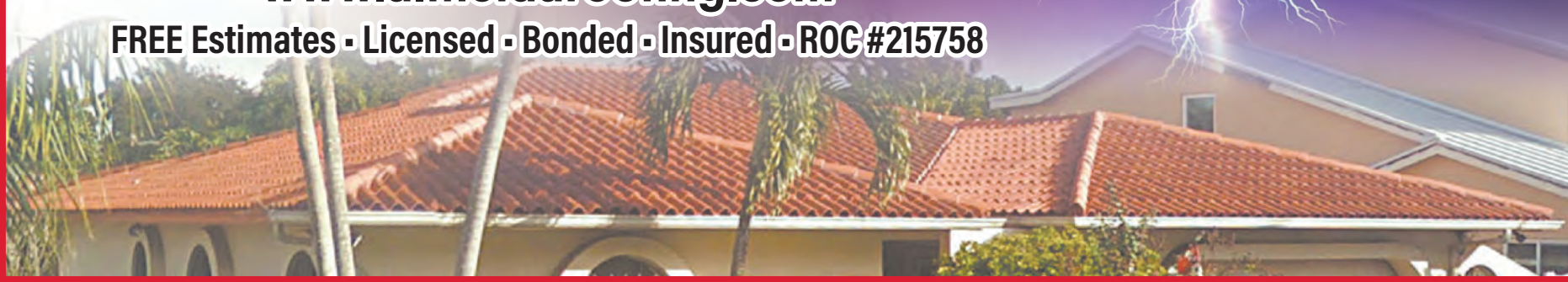
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Avilla Foothills adds to city's rental options

NexMetro opens 108-unit community on Cotton Lane

NexMetro Communities, a national builder of cottage-style build-to-rent home neighborhoods, opened Avilla Foothills, a new 108-home luxury rental community in Surprise.

Located on a 9.3-acre site at 12350 N. Cotton Lane, the gated neighborhood expands housing options in the city.

Avilla Foothills features a collection of single-level, mostly detached homes designed to offer residents more space, privacy and flexibility than traditional apartment living. The community includes one-, two- and three-bedroom floor plans with private entrances, front porches and private backyards, along with upscale finishes and onsite professional management.

The continued growth of the northwest Valley, combined with rising home prices and evolving lifestyle preferences, is fueling de-

mand for housing options that provide the comforts of a single-family home without the responsibility of ownership.

"For a growing number of residents, renting is not a compromise; it is a strategic lifestyle choice that offers flexibility, convenience and access to a high-quality home environment without the burdens of ownership," said Jared Geisler, NexMetro's regional managing director for Phoenix and Denver.

"For a growing number of residents, renting is not a compromise."

Jared Geisler
NexMetro's regional managing director
for Phoenix and Denver

hills delivers the space and privacy of a home with the simplicity and reliability of a professionally managed community, while helping meet the growing housing needs of Phoenix's northwest Valley."

Community amenities include a resort-style pool and spa, outdoor kitchen and barbecue grills, landscaped open spaces, covered parking and optional garages, along with a 24/7 maintenance team, pet parks and no breed or size restrictions for pets.



Avilla Foothills is a luxury gated community that NexMetro Communities opened this month in Surprise. (Courtesy NexMetro Communities)



Avilla Foothills comes in one- through three-bedroom floor plans. (Courtesy NexMetro Communities)

Pre-leasing is currently underway, and early tours are available at Avilla Mystic in nearby Peoria.

Designed to serve a range of residents including families, young professionals and retirees, the community provides a neighborhood setting with modern features and flexible living options.

"The northwest Valley continues to attract new residents, employers and investment, creating strong demand," Geisler said. "Avilla Foothills reflects NexMetro's continued commitment to delivering high-quality purpose-built rental home neighborhoods in locations

where people want to live, work and build community."

Avilla Foothills is part of NexMetro's growing portfolio of more than 60 communities completed or underway across the Sunbelt, including markets such as Phoenix, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, Denver, Tampa and Atlanta.

The company continues to expand throughout the Phoenix region with another Valley community scheduled to open later this year.

For information about Avilla Homes neighborhoods, visit AvillaHomes.com. To learn about Avilla Foothills, visit AvillaFoothills.com.

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Panthers

• From page 10

best. But we've got a lot of teaching to do," Obregon said.

Woodhouse-Gandy said defense was the strong point last year.

Sophomore Mason Becker impresses Obregon and could start at outside linebacker. Junior safety Braxton Hammond came back as a different, improved player.

"Especially from previous years, he's really improved a lot. He's proved himself," Woodhouse-Gandy said.

Zach Greer is a 6-4 junior safety.

Before the opener against Bullhead City Mohave, the defensive backfield is all hands on deck — including a player in his first weeks of high school.

"The secondary is completely new. All those guys graduated. I've taken over that. Justin Alvidres is back. He sat out five games last year then started at corner the last five. And we were able to move (Obregon) back to safety. We have a freshman Ryan Anderson at one corner. He's been able to do it. If you can cover Jackson Short and those guys we have, you'll be ok," SeKoch said.

Junior offensive lineman Andre Hanna has improved, Torres said. Creston Cooledge is back as offensive line coach.

Kelly Mitchell is the freshman coach and runs the varsity running backs. SeKoch can be largely hands

off with the offense.

Harold Dumas is the defensive backs coach.

"The senior class has responded. I think the little bit of a taste of winning a playoff game at 4A when everybody thought we'd probably go 2-8 or whatever helped," SeKoch said.

If anything, the staff have to tamp down overconfidence.

"I feel like toward the end, before we came to 4A, we were taking over 3A," Woodhouse-Gandy said. "Especially after last season, this season I feel more prepared. I think our whole team can agree that we should make it pretty far this year," Woodhouse-Gandy said.

Torres said he now understands the urgency last year's seniors played with.

The Skyline Region remains the deepest in 4A.

"I think that's what prepared us for the playoffs. And it's always tough to beat the same team twice," SeKoch said.

"You have to practice smart because you know every game is going to be a battle. ALA is going to be physical. St. Mary's is going to be well coached, spread the ball out and do some crazy stuff. Any time you get to Northwest, you're going to get the most technically sound kids, who are not going to miss tackles and be solid everywhere. Peoria always has a bunch of athletes and Thunderbird has athletes. We're somewhere in between."

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Surprise author dreams up another one

Award-winner publishes sixth book, called 'End of Ages'

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Award-winning Surprise author Alex Zabala wants others to know how dreams can come true at any age, just as his did after dreaming about an adventure story he put on hold years ago.

That story is his new book, "End of Ages," which is available at Amazon.com.

It joins his other adventure novels that he is proud of as three of his six books have won awards from the Clive Cussler Adventure Writers Competition. Likewise, Zabala encourages local residents to also try writing a book that could be the "next great American novel," he said.

"There are many residents of Surprise who have a story in them," Zabala said. "Be persistent, regardless if you hear any negativity. Book sales are not as important as exercising your brain. I write for myself first, my wife (Anita) second and then the rest of the human population."

"All my books are fiction and have an archaeological theme, similar to the Indiana Jones adventures. Since I am an avid Bible reader and student, I specialize in clean adventures for all



Surprise author Alex Zabala has published a sixth adventure novel. (Submitted photo)

readers, teenaged and up. My motto is 'Life is too short to read boring books, that's why I write stories of intrigue, action and archaeology.'"

Meet the author and read about him below.

Are you an Arizona native and if not where are you originally from?

My pen name is Alex Zabala, I was born in Berkeley, California, although as a child my parents moved our family to live in Ensenada Baja, California. I guess you could call that "reverse immigration."



"End of Ages" is the sixth published book from Surprise author Alex Zabala. (Submitted photo)

How long have you lived in Surprise?

Twenty six years. I remember when Greenway Road was dirt.

How long have you been an author?

I consider myself a late bloomer. I started writing at age 45 (I am now 67)

Have you always been a writer, if not what is or was your profession?

I am a landscape contractor by trade. I moved to Arizona in 1999 to work for Del Webb Corporation as a landscape warranty specialist. As they built out, I decided to become a landscape contractor.

What inspired you to write?

I know this sounds cliché, but when I was 45, I had a vivid dream about a time-travel adventure. After I wrote the story, I really didn't feel it was ready to be published, so I stashed the manuscript in my closet. Twenty years later, in 2025, I decided to get it ready to publish, which happened this year. The title is "End of Ages."

Describe your last three books?

In the ensuing years, I started writing more stories and found an Indie publisher, Arcani Arts. Coincidentally, the owner of Arcani Arts, Dyego Alejandro, is also an author, so he and I teamed up to write some award-winning books! We've submitted multiple manuscripts to the Clive Cussler Adventure Writers Competition.

What top 10 awards have you won?

- The Treasure of the Mayan King 2013 Top 10 award
- The Deadly Mind Game 2023 Top 10 award
- The Golden Scepter 2024 Top 10 award

What are other novels you have written?

- The Secret of La Danta, published 2020
- End of Ages, published 2026

Those who have questions about writing a book can email alexzabala2@gmail.com.

Delarita Ford can be reached at dford@iniusa.org. 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.

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Public Notice

City of Surprise Program Year 2027 Annual Action Plan Notice of "Needs" Public Hearing

In accord with its Citizen Participation Plan and in anticipation of receiving approximately \$782,957 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Surprise announces an opportunity for organizations and citizens to comment and provide input on any housing and/or community development needs they may have identified. The identified needs should focus on providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. The City's Consolidated Plan outlines the City's goals and objectives as they relate to housing and community development needs.

The City's Consolidated Plan enables officials and citizens to collectively solve neighborhood and community problems. This hearing is being conducted in advance of the City's formation of its Third Year Annual Action Plan, for the program year that will begin July 1st, 2027. Comments may also be made on the City's intended use of HOME funds. HOME funds will be received through an agreement with Maricopa County as the lead agency for the Maricopa HOME Consortium. The funding amount for HOME is approximately \$214,000. All citizens are encouraged to participate by expressing their views to the Surprise Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission at the following hearing:

Wednesday, September 9th, 2026
6:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

The public may also access the meeting by viewing a live stream or broadcast of the meeting. To watch live, please visit www.surpriseaz.gov/surprisetv, the Surprise City Gov Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cityofsurprise. Cox channel 11 will also carry the meeting live.

Other questions concerning the hearing or funding opportunities may be directed to Housing & Community Services at 623-222-1550. Written comments may also be submitted on or before Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, to the City's Human Service & Community Vitality Department at the address shown above.

SPECIAL NOTE: PERSONS WITH SPECIAL ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS, INCLUDING LARGE PRINT MATERIALS OR INTERPRETER, SHOULD CONTACT THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE @ 623.222.1200 NO LATER THAN 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE SCHEDULED MEETING TIME. FOR TTY-BASED TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES, PLEASE CALL 711.

Ciudad de Surprise Plan de Acción Anual Año Programático 2027 Anuncio de audiencia pública de "necesidades"

De acuerdo con su Plan de Participación Ciudadana y en anticipación de recibir aproximadamente \$782,957 del Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano de EE. UU., la Ciudad de Surprise anuncia una oportunidad para que organizaciones y ciudadanos comenten y brinden su opinión sobre cualquier necesidad de vivienda y/o desarrollo comunitario que hayan identificado. Las necesidades identificadas deben centrarse en proporcionar viviendas dignas, un entorno de vida adecuado y oportunidades para expandir las oportunidades económicas, principalmente para personas de ingresos bajos y moderados. El Plan Consolidado de la Ciudad describe las metas y objetivos de la Ciudad en relación con las necesidades de vivienda y desarrollo comunitario.

El Plan Consolidado de la Ciudad permite que los funcionarios y ciudadanos resuelvan colectivamente los problemas del vecindario y la comunidad. Esta audiencia se lleva a cabo antes de la formación del Plan de Acción Anual del Tercer Año de la Ciudad, para el año del programa que comenzará el 1 de julio de 2027. También pueden hacerse comentarios sobre el uso de los fondos HOME por parte de la ciudad. Los fondos HOME se recibirán a través de un acuerdo con el Condado de Maricopa como agencia líder del Consorcio Maricopa HOME. El monto de la financiación para HOME es de aproximadamente \$214,000. Todos los ciudadanos están invitados a participar expresando sus puntos de vista ante la Comisión de Veteranos, Discapacidad y Servicios Humanos de Surprise en la siguiente audiencia:

Miércoles, 9 de septiembre de 2026
6:00 PM
City Council Chambers
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

El público también puede acceder a la junta a través de una transmisión en directo de la sesión. Para verlo en directo, visite www.surpriseaz.gov/surprisetv, la página de Facebook del Gobierno de la Ciudad de Surprise en www.facebook.com/cityofsurprise. El canal 11 de Cox también retransmitirá la reunión en directo.

Se pueden dirigir otras preguntas sobre la audiencia o las oportunidades de financiación al Departamento de Servicios Comunitarios y Vivienda al 623-222-1550. Los comentarios por escrito también pueden presentarse antes o el miércoles, 9 de septiembre de 2026, al Departamento de Servicios Humanos y Vitalidad Comunitaria de la Ciudad en la dirección indicada anteriormente.

NOTA ESPECIAL: LAS PERSONAS CON NECESIDADES ESPECIALES DE ACCESIBILIDAD, INCLUIDOS LOS MATERIALES DE LETRA GRANDE O INTÉRPRETE, DEBEN PONERSE EN CONTACTO CON LA OFICINA DEL SECRETARIO DE LA CIUDAD AL 623.222.1200 A MÁS TARDAR 48 HORAS ANTES DE LA HORA PROGRAMADA PARA LA REUNIÓN. PARA SERVICIOS DE RETRANSMISIÓN DE TELECOMUNICACIONES BASADOS EN TTY, LLAME AL 711.

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Public Notice

Public Notice
City of Surprise
Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation
Report (CAPER) Program Year 2025

Notice is hereby given by the City of Surprise that the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) Program Year 2025 has been drafted and will be available to the public for review for a period of 21 calendar days beginning August 19, 2026.

The City of Surprise is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to annually submit a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). This report provides an assessment of expenditures and accomplishments of the City's progress in carrying out its 5-year Consolidated Plan and its Program Year 2025 Annual Action Plan for the following HUD-funded programs: Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG); and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME); The report covers community development objectives undertaken during the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. The report does not establish any new policy.

HUD requires the submission of the CAPER no later than 90 days after the closing of an entitlement grantee's program year. Before submission to HUD, the draft CAPER must be made available for public review and comment for no fewer than 15 days. The public review and comment period for the Program Year 2025 CAPER will be **August 19, 2026 – September 9, 2026**. The CAPER will be submitted to HUD by September 25, 2026.

The public is invited to review and comment on the draft Program Year 2025 CAPER for a 21-day period. This comment period is planned in accordance with the City's adopted Citizen Participation Plan. All comments will be reviewed and included in the final CAPER report.

Comments must be submitted in writing, by September 9, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. All comments must be directed to Jessica Weber, Grants Analyst, Human Service and Community Vitality, Housing & Community Services Division, City of Surprise, 16000 N Civic Center Plaza. For questions regarding the CAPER, please call Jessica Weber at 623.222.1550 or email at neighborhoodservices@surpriseaz.gov.

The CAPER will be available for review at the following locations:
 1) The City of Surprise website www.surpriseaz.gov/453/CAPER 2) Surprise City Hall, 16000 N Civic Center Plaza, Surprise, AZ 85374 3) The Surprise Resource Center at 12425 W. Bell Rd. Bldg. A, Ste. #124, Surprise 4) The Hollyhock Branch Library at 15844 N. Hollyhock Street, Surprise. 5) The Surprise Senior Center, 15832 N. Hollyhock St.

SPECIAL NOTE: PERSONS WITH SPECIAL ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS, INCLUDING LARGE PRINT MATERIALS OR INTERPRETER, SHOULD CONTACT THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE @ 623.222.1200 NO LATER THAN 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE SCHEDULED MEETING TIME. FOR TTY-BASED TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES, PLEASE CALL 711



Reasonable accommodations will be made upon a timely request.

Publish: Phoenix Independent, August 21, Surprise Independent, August 19, 2026/46893_1

ANUNCIO PÚBLICO
Ciudad de Surprise
Informe Anual Consolidado de Rendimiento y
Evaluación (CAPER) Año Programático 2025

Por la presente, la Ciudad de Surprise notifica que el Informe Anual Consolidado de Rendimiento y Evaluación (CAPER) Año Programático 2025 ha sido redactado y estará disponible al público para su revisión por un período de 21 días calendario a partir del 19 de agosto de 2026.

El Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano (HUD) de los EE. UU. requiere que La Ciudad De Surprise presente anualmente un Informe Anual Consolidado de Rendimiento y Evaluación (CAPER). Este informe presenta una evaluación de los gastos y logros en el progreso de la Ciudad en la realización de su Plan Consolidado de 5 años y su Plan de Acción Anual del Año Programático 2025 para los siguientes programas financiados por HUD: Programa de Subsidios en Bloque para el Desarrollo Comunitario (CDBG); y el Programa de Asociaciones de Inversión HOME (HOME); El informe abarca los objetivos de desarrollo comunitario emprendidos durante el período del 1 de julio de 2025 al 30 de junio de 2026. El informe no establece ninguna política nueva.

El Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano (HUD) requiere la presentación del CAPER a más tardar 90 días después del cierre del año programático del beneficiario de derechos. Antes de enviarlo a HUD, el borrador de CAPER debe estar disponible para revisión pública y comentarios durante no menos de 15 días. El período de revisión pública y comentarios para el CAPER del año programático 2025 será del **19 de agosto, 2026 al 9 de septiembre, 2026**. El CAPER se enviará a HUD antes del 25 de septiembre, 2026.

Se invita al público a revisar y comentar sobre el borrador del CAPER del Año Programático 2025 durante un período de 21 días. Este período de comentarios está planificado de acuerdo con el Plan de Participación Ciudadana adoptado por la ciudad. Todos los comentarios serán revisados e incluidos en el informe final del CAPER.

Los comentarios deben enviarse por escrito antes del 9 de septiembre, 2026 a las 5:00 p. m. Todos los comentarios deben dirigirse a Jessica Weber, Analista de Subvenciones, Servicios Humanos y Vitalidad Comunitaria, División de Vivienda y Servicios Comunitarios, Ciudad de Surprise, 16000 N Civic Center Plaza. Para preguntas relativas al CAPER, por favor llame a Jessica Weber al 623.222.1550 o envíe un correo electrónico a neighborhoodservices@surpriseaz.gov.

La copia del CAPER estará disponible para su revisión en los siguientes lugares: 1) El sitio web de la Ciudad de Surprise www.surpriseaz.gov/453/CAPER 2) Ayuntamiento de Surprise, 16000 N Civic Center Plaza, Surprise, AZ 85374 3) Centro de Recursos de Surprise, 12425 W. Bell Rd. edificio A, #124, Surprise 4) Biblioteca Hollyhock, 15844 N. Hollyhock Street, Surprise 5) Centro de Mayores de Surprise, 15832 N. Hollyhock St.

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