

**MAY
2026**

THE POWER + PROGRESS ISSUE

POWER & PROGRESS

ELECTION SEASON

Six candidates. Three seats. The race for Council.

MARICOPA SCHOOLS

After the override loss. What's next for MUSD.

MARICOPA LIFESTYLE *Magazine*

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

*Where Maricopa
heals. Resources to
save.*

maricopalifestylemagazine.com

FROM THE EDITOR

This city *doesn't wait.*

Every city has a moment when it stops being *up-and-coming* and starts being *arrived*. Maricopa is in that moment right now — population just topped 85,000, growth is the third-fastest in Arizona, and we're heading into the most consequential local election in our short history.

This issue is called *Power + Progress*, and we mean both words. Power as in the people stepping up to lead — six City Council candidates, a school board in transition, women building businesses in a city that didn't know it needed them yet. Progress as in everything we still have to figure out: a defeated school override, an SR-347 still under construction, real conversations about who's getting left behind.

And one more thing. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. We didn't want to skip past that. You'll find a thread of it throughout the issue — in our youth spotlight, our women's feature, and a dedicated resource page on 13. Because Maricopa growing up means taking care of each other on the way.

This isn't a booster magazine. It's a mirror — and the city looking back at us is beautiful, complicated, and ours.

Welcome to the issue.

— THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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PROGRESS

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CRISIS LINE · OPEN 24/7

Pinal County: 1-866-495-6735. National 988 Lifeline: dial 988.
Free, confidential, no insurance required.

BY THE NUMBERS · 2026

Maricopa, *by the numbers*

Pinal County's fastest-growing city. Third-fastest growth rate in Arizona. The engine of a county projected to grow 118% by 2060.

POPULATION (JULY 2025)

85,553

↑ 6.7% in one year. ↑ 45% since 2020 census.

Source: AZ Office of Economic Opportunity

RESIDENTS ADDED (24-25)

4,894

Largest single-year gain in Pinal County. #5 statewide in raw growth.

Source: AZ OEO, January 2026

MUSD ENROLLMENT

9,950+

11 schools · Largest employer in Maricopa (~1,200 staff)

Source: musd20.org

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$96,391

Above the AZ state median. Poverty rate: 7.41%.

Source: World Population Review

MEDIAN RESIDENT AGE

36.8 yrs

A young, working-age city. 49,035 adults. 9,501 seniors.

Pinal County is projected to grow 118% by 2060 — the fastest in Arizona. Maricopa is the engine.

2020 2022 2024 2026

POPULATION · 4 CYCLES

The Race for Maricopa

Three Council seats. Six candidates already in the race. Mayor Smith's term runs to 2028 — but a Council majority is on the ballot this year.

MARICOPA LIFESTYLE **Magazine**

ELECTION 2026

04 / 05

As of November 2025, six candidates have formally entered the 2026 Maricopa City Council race. Three incumbents — Vice Mayor Vincent Manfredi, Councilmember AnnaMarie Knorr, and Vice Mayor Henry Wade — are running to defend their seats. They're being challenged by Chrystal Allen-O'Jon, James Singleton, and Adam Leech.

INCUMBENT

Vincent Manfredi

Vice Mayor · Term: 2022-2026

INCUMBENT

AnnaMarie Knorr

Councilmember · Filed Oct. 29

INCUMBENT

Henry Wade

Vice Mayor · Confirmed running

CHALLENGER

Chrystal Allen-O'Jon

Co-founder, Black Maricopa Chamber. Platform: living wages, affordable housing.

CHALLENGER

James Singleton

Software engineer, former P&Z Commissioner. Released AI-drafted General Plan critique.

CHALLENGER

Adam Leech

"Building a future where every voice is heard."

The big issues this cycle:

01 / The General Plan

Voters must ratify the updated General Plan — last approved 2016. Two community input rounds completed in 2025. Singleton's 32-page revision just passed P&Z 5-1.

02 / SR-347 + Roads

A 2025 study named SR-347 the road most likely to net the steepest insurance hike in the country for speeding. Bridge construction continues.

03 / Public Safety

MPD response times, second fire station discussion, and teen services expansion are all in play this cycle.

04 / Equitable Growth

Allen-O'Jon's platform names what others have danced around: who's the boom actually working for?



Service to others is the rent we pay for our time on this earth, and I take that calling to heart.

— CHRYSTAL ALLEN-O'JON · CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE

Future in Session

MUSD opens a new K-8 academy in July 2026. Voters just rejected the override for the fifth time since 2009. The district is choosing what to do next.

MARICOPA LIFESTYLE **Magazine**

EDUCATION 2026

06 / 07

Maricopa Unified School District is in a peculiar moment: enormous momentum on one side, financial pressure on the other. The Alma Farrell Innovation Academy opens July 2026 — the district's first new campus since the \$70M bond passed in 2024. Desert Sunrise High School just opened a student-run greenhouse. Butterfield Elementary became the first AZ school to earn both Cognia Accreditation and STEM Certification simultaneously.

Then there's the override. In November 2025, voters rejected MUSD's latest budget override 60-40. It was the fifth time since 2009 voters have said no to district funding.

01 / Alma Farrell Opens

MUSD's newest K-8 campus opens July 2026. First school built in the new Sorrento community. Capacity ~800 students.

02 / The Bond at Work

2024's \$70M bond is funding Alma Farrell, MHS Career & Technical expansion (July 2027), and Desert Sunrise expansion (July 2028).

03 / The Override Loss

5,215 No vs. 3,541 Yes. Board President Scott Bartle called it disappointing but said the district will work within its allotted budget.

04 / Board in Transition

2026 governing board election filings open this summer. Current members: Robert Downey (Pres), Patti Coutr  (VP), Carolyn Lopez, AnnaMarie Knorr.



The district's voters said they don't want to increase the budget. MUSD's dedicated staff will continue to work within its allotted budget, as it does every year.

— SCOTT BARTLE · MUSD BOARD PRESIDENT

9,950+

STUDENTS ENROLLED

11

ACTIVE SCHOOLS

\$73K

AVG. TEACHER SALARY

~1,200

MUSD EMPLOYEES

Women Who Build Maricopa

Female founders, leaders, and business owners reshaping our city — from civic leadership to the coffee shop counter. Some you know. Some you're about to.

MARICOPA LIFESTYLE **Magazine**

WOMEN'S FEATURE

08 / 09

When Maricopa's growth is told as a story of new homes and 347 traffic, we lose something important: women have been quietly running large parts of this city's economy and civic infrastructure for years. This feature is the start of an ongoing series — and we want reader nominations for July.



NANCY SMITH

MAYOR · CITY OF MARICOPA

Now serving her current term through 2028, Mayor Smith is leading Maricopa through its fastest growth period in city history — and the General Plan ratification that will define the next decade.

Mayor · Term 2024-2028



CHRYSTAL ALLEN-O'JON

CO-FOUNDER · BLACK MARICOPA CHAMBER

"I'm honored and excited to serve the Maricopa community. As a lifelong advocate for human rights, I intend to lead with compassion, integrity, and inclusiveness."

2026 City Council Candidate



ANNAMARIE KNORR

COUNCILMEMBER · CITY OF MARICOPA

As a sitting Council member and active MUSD Governing Board member, Knorr operates at the intersection of two issues defining Maricopa's next decade: growth and education.

Council Term: 2022-2026 · Filed for re-election Oct. 29, 2025



DR. TRACEY LOPEMAN

SUPERINTENDENT · MARICOPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Leading the largest employer in Maricopa (~1,200 staff) through both its biggest expansion (Alma Farrell, 2026) and its toughest financial signal (the 2025 override loss).

MUSD · 9,950+ students · 11 schools

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT · MUSD 2026

Rising Stars

Maricopa students and campuses making noise — in classrooms, on stages, and across the district. Got a student to nominate for July? Tag us @maricopalifestyle.



Desert Sunrise H.S.
STUDENT-RUN GREENHOUSE

DSHS just celebrated the grand opening of its student-run greenhouse, integrating sustainable agriculture with hands-on STEM curriculum.

STEM · Agriculture



Pima Butte Elem.
A+ SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

MUSD's only A+ School of Excellence designation. Sustained academic standing across multiple years.

Academics



Santa Cruz Elem.
"A" RATED CAMPUS

MUSD's "A" rated campus. Students consistently delivering at the top of district performance metrics.

Academics



Butterfield Elem.
FIRST IN ARIZONA

First school in Arizona to earn Cognia Accreditation and Cognia STEM Certification simultaneously. A statewide first.

STEM · Accreditation



Kelsey Snyder
MARICOPA HIGH SCHOOL

Director of Guitar & Choral at MHS. Named Arizona Choral Educators' New Music Educator of the Year. Shaping student musicians.

Performing Arts



Your Nominee
JULY 2026 ISSUE

Reserving spots for reader-nominated students. Sports, academics, arts, leadership — submit via @maricopalifestyle.

Open Call

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH · MAY IS THE MONTH

Teen Lifeline (Arizona): call or text 602-248-TEEN (8336). Trained teen volunteers, supervised by master's-level clinicians. **Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741. Free. Confidential. Available now.

LOCAL BRANDS TO WATCH · 2026

Business Boom

Maricopa-grown businesses worth your follow, your dollar, and your loyalty.
Locally-owned and not going anywhere.

01 Restaurants

Headquarters Restaurant & Bar	Top-rated
Arroyo Grill	Sunset views
Plaza Bonita	Family Mexican
Gyro Grill	Mediterranean · Est. 2017
Say Sushi	Local sushi bar

02 Coffee & Cafés

Honeycutt Coffee	Premier local
Neaux Coffee	Yelp top-ranked
Vekol Market	Coffee + market
Sunrise Cafe	Breakfast standard
Good Donuts	Hole-in-the-wall

03 Trades & Services

SU's Creative	Marketing · Design
Maricopa SBDC	Business advising
Black Maricopa Chamber	Founded 2024
Maricopa Chamber	Power Hours · 1st Fri

04 Family & Casual

Brooklyn Boys Pizzeria	Italian standard
Raceway Bar & Grill	Chicago pizza · retro
Cilantros	Local Mexican
Native Grill & Wings	Family fave
Rili B's Taco Shop	Quick + good

05 Creators & Media

InMaricopa	Hyper-local news	The What Now? Show	Interview podcast
SU's Creative	Branding · Strategy	Maricopa Lifestyle	This magazine

WHAT'S COMING NEXT · 2026 - 2028

Development *Watch*

Track what's actually breaking ground (and what's still on paper). 155+ active development projects in Maricopa right now.

JULY
2026

EDUCATION · MUSD

Alma Farrell Innovation Academy

MUSD's newest K-8 campus, opening this summer. First school built in the Sorrento community. Funded by the 2024 \$70M bond. Capacity ~800 students.

2026

CIVIC · GOVERNMENT

2026 General Plan Ratification

Voters must approve the 10-year update — last ratified in 2016. Two community input rounds completed. P&Z just advanced an AI-drafted revision (5-1 vote) to Council.

ONGOING

INFRASTRUCTURE · ROADS

SR-347 Bridge Construction

Active construction continues on the 347 bridge. Be aware: SR-347 was just named the road most likely to net the steepest insurance hike in the country for speeding.

JULY
2027

EDUCATION · MUSD

Maricopa HS Career & Technical Expansion

First major MHS campus expansion in 25 years. New career & technical education space funded by the 2024 bond. Opens July 2027.

JULY
2028

EDUCATION · MUSD

Desert Sunrise High School Expansion

New 9-12 classroom space at Desert Sunrise. Bond-funded. The greenhouse opening this year is just the start of what this campus is becoming.

2026 -
2028

DEVELOPMENT · TRACKING

155+ Active Projects

Maricopa has more than 155 active development projects in zoning approvals, construction, or planning. Visit **maricopa-az.gov** for the full What's New Maricopa map.

WHERE MARICOPA MEETS & HEALS

Local *Life*

The places this city actually shows up to — and the resources we want every resident to know about during Mental Health Awareness Month.

Coffee & Mornings

Honeycutt Coffee

Premier local · 347 view

Neaux Coffee

Yelp top-ranked

Vekol Market

Coffee + market combo

Networking & Civic

Chamber Power Hours

First Friday standard

Black Maricopa Chamber

Co-founded by Allen-O'Jon

Library & Cultural Center

39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

Family & Weekends

Copper Sky Park

Splash pad + lake

Pacana Park

Trails + play

Maricopa Lake Park

Family essential

Jane Askew Memorial Park

Morning walks

WHERE MARICOPA HEALS

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Save these. Share them. They're free. They're 24/7. They work for everyone — insured or not.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988

Call or text. National. 24/7.

Pinal County Crisis Line

1-866-495-6735

Arizona Complete Health · 24/7

Teen Lifeline (AZ)

602-248-TEEN

Call or text. Trained teens, clinical supervision.

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME → 741741

Free national text-based support.

Horizon Health & Wellness

Pinal County

Crisis Mobile Team. School support. hhwaz.org

Veterans Crisis Line

988 → press 1

Confidential. Free. No VA enrollment needed.

SUMMER · MAY 2026 · ARIZONA LUXE

DESERT Power

Sun-bleached neutrals, copper-warmed metals, and unbothered confidence. The Maricopa woman dresses for 110° and the boardroom — without compromising either.

BONE

SAND

COPPER

TERRACOTTA

COBALT

INK

THE EDIT · 6 PIECES

Six pieces that earn their place from May through September.

01 / OUTERWEAR

The Linen Duster

Floor-grazing, bone-colored, weightless. Throws over everything. Looks intentional even when you're not.

02 / DENIM

High-Rise Wide Leg

Sand-washed, structured, a little unforgiving — in the best way. The new uniform.

03 / TOP

Silk Shell & Tank

Bone, sand, or oxblood. The grown-up version of the basic everyone needs.

04 / DRESS

The Slip

Bias-cut, copper-toned, ankle length. Daytime with sandals. Evening with anything.

05 / FOOTWEAR

Leather Slides

Heritage leather. Squared toe. Made for desert pavement and looking unbothered.

06 / METAL

Stacked Copper Cuffs

Heavy. Warm-toned. Worn three at a time and never taken off.

MARICOPA LIFESTYLE
Magazine

||

Our City. Our Future. Together.

*A reminder, on the back of every issue: this city is what we build it to be —
together. Show up. Vote. Shop local. Check on your people. Stay loud. 988
saves lives.*

VOL. / ISSUE
02 · May 2026

THEME
Power + Progress

NEXT ISSUE
July 2026