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**Top Stories**

**Maricopa services striving to keep up**

By BETSY RICE, Staff Writer November 07, 2005

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**City plan calls for coordinated effort**

MARICOPA - A game of catch-up.

That's the position the city of Maricopa is in, trying to balance booming residential growth with adequate public infrastructure. Managing public services, including water, sewer, garbage, police and fire protection, electricity and roads, is a huge task for a city in the flux of hypergrowth. The draft General Plan, currently available for public review, takes a detailed look at those needs.

"Today, the service level provided by Maricopa's public facilities is varied," the plan states. "Facilities needed to support the original rural community have evolved to service large master-planned developments. Municipal infrastructure is a mix of components that vary in quality, differ in capacity, and may involve multiple service providers or jurisdictions."

The plan illustrates that certain public services, including water, wastewater and refuse utilities, are privately provided in Maricopa. As a result, a certain degree of cooperation between the city and these private entities is required to ensure quality service and reasonable costs for all residents.

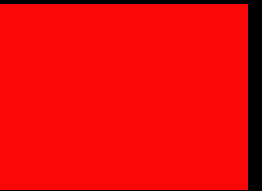
With between 600 and 800 building permits a month being issued by the city, the plan also states a need for developers to contribute a reasonable amount of infrastructure, a move that will benefit all.

"The availability of public services and facilities will enable Maricopa to meet its future population expectations, accelerate growth in desired areas of the community and, if needed, the flexibility to constrain development where growth is not desired. Developer-provided infrastructure, coordinated with the city's efforts, is an important component."

That infrastructure includes dedication of land by developers in master-planned communities for municipal facilities, such as police and fire stations, as well as school sites. The plan also supports requiring developers to pay impact fees, so new growth "pays its own way."

The city has already adopted a development fee schedule that will be in use by the end of the year. Those fees, charged for each building permit issued, will be used for roads, police, traffic control, parks, recreation and open space, and general government.

According to the plan, "as Maricopa matures, new functions, public and private facilities, and income producers add new dimensions to the community. Once public facilities and services are established, a broadened revenue base can support these and other desired investments. Until this balance is reached, where



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facilities and services meet citizens' needs, the city and the community are in a position of playing catch-up."

The plan lists several areas in desperate need of improvement, including fire, police and educational facilities.

According to the report, the Maricopa Fire District, a separate governmental entity, is lagging behind Maricopa's rapid growth, with emergency response times estimated at five to 10 minutes. The plan suggests response times of three minutes and one firefighter per 1,000 population.

Police services, currently provided by the Pinal County Sheriff's Office, are also failing to meet standards. The plan says the department's current staffing equates to a ratio of 0.5 officer per 1,000 citizens, well below the federal guideline of 2.7 officers per 1,000. Looking to the future, the department will need to employ 225 officers to meet the needs of a projected population of 150,000 in 2025, and even then, would only meet a ratio of 1.5 officers per 1,000.

The Maricopa Unified School District must also find ways to cope with the demands of growth. According to the plan, conservative estimates show the district enrollment increasing to 14,000 students by the year 2010 - more than seven times the 1,800 currently enrolled. However, the plan says the district is headed in the right direction by engaging in long-range planning to meet future needs, preparing demographic and enrollment projections, and adopting policies and resolutions that address rapid development.

In order to best determine how to approach the needs presented as a result of Maricopa's growth, the General Plan suggests more detailed plans and studies are needed in the areas of emergency services, wastewater, floodplain, water and reclaimed water, transportation, libraries, parks, trail and open space systems.

"Each of these plans will provide information on existing facilities, assess current and projected needs based on desired levels of service, and make recommendations for future public and private actions."

The draft General Plan is available for any interested party to review and comment on. Review copies are available at the Maricopa Community Library and City Hall. Comments can be e-mailed to David Williams at [dwaplanning@comcast.net](mailto:dwaplanning@comcast.net) or mailed to General Plan Comment, Maricopa City Hall, P.O. Box 610, Maricopa, AZ 85239.

The 60-day public review period will end Saturday. Comments will be cataloged and provided to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council during public hearings scheduled for November and December.

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