

WORK SESSION MINUTES OF THE AVONDALE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AVONDALE, ARIZONA

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER

March 04, 2025

A **Work Session Meeting** of the City Council of the City of Avondale, Arizona was convened at 11465 West Civic Center Drive in open and public session at 8:10 a.m.

Members Present: Mayor Mike Pineda; Councilmembers Tina Conde, Jeannette Garcia, Gloria Solorio, Shari Weise, and Max White.

Members Absent: Vice Mayor Curties Nielson

Other Municipal Officials Present: Ron Corbin, City Manager; Tracy Stevens, Assistant City Manager; Katie Gregory, Assistant City Manager; Dale Nannenga, Deputy City Manager; Nicholle Harris, City Attorney; Marcella Sarmiento, City Clerk; Liz Barker Alvarez, Intergovernmental Affairs Administrator; Kirk Beaty, Public Works Director; Barbara Coppage, City Auditor; Memo Espinoza, Police Chief; Joel Evans, Facilities Director; Craig Jennings, Judge; Corey Larriva, Parks and Recreation Director; Chris Lopez, Neighborhood and Family Services Director; Andy Mesquita, Human Resources Director; Kimberly Moon, Engineering Director; Jodie Novak, Development Services Director; Abril Ruiz-Ortega, Court Administrator; Larry Rooney, Fire Chief; Jeffrey Scheetz, Chief Information Officer; Pier Simeri, Marketing and Public Relations Director; Jennifer Stein, Economic Development Director; and Renee Weatherless, Finance and Budget Director.

Audience: No members of the public were present.

1. ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor, City Staff, and the Strategic Plan Consultant provided a welcome and instructions. This item was for discussion only.

3. PANEL DISCUSSIONS

City Council participated in the following panel discussions. This item was for discussion only.

Economic Development / Housing Panel

- Moderator: Jen Stein, Economic Development Director, City of Avondale
Provided an introduction noting the City of Avondale would not be successful without the strategic partners who help advance projects. Ms. Stein introduced the panelist who will provide an overview of their entity, role, obstacles, priorities, and the landscape.
- Jonathan Robles, Interim Associate Vice President for Community Alumni and Foundation Relations at Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC) and has been there since 2009 where he manages fundraising for scholarships for students. Regarding

background information related to EMCC, the Community College system is uniquely American and there is no other open access system for higher education like it in the World. EMCC is thirty-three years old, being the youngest of the ten Community Colleges within the Maricopa Community College District and serves six municipalities.

The college builds partnerships within the community, welcomes opportunities to engage with municipalities, and other strategic partners. Priorities for the college include producing a workforce that serves the cities and economic development. Student retention is a main priority with a goal of increasing the number of completers to 1,300 by 2026. A focus on fundraising for students includes the recently launched EmpowerED three-year campaign with a goal of raising \$500,000. There is a potential of acquiring some State funding for the STEM, nursing, and teacher programs.

Working with multiple municipalities and their environments can be a challenge but rewarding at the same time as the college helps with their economic growth and workforce development. Ensuring students and their families have food to eat continues to be a challenge but there is a Basic Needs Taskforce in the district EMCC is working with to address basic needs. Transportation is always a challenge for students which Avondale's Micro Transit helps many of the students with. Opportunities for EMCC include Bachelor degree programs in Nursing, Business, IT, and Cyber Security coming within the next two years. There are seventy acres of undeveloped land that have had multiple ideas presented on how to develop through public and private relationships.

Key programs at EMCC and notable partnerships and awards include, Nursing, which is the second in the State with a 100 percent passing rate. Cyber Security which was formally designated as a National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Security Defense by the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security. Artificial Intelligence program that partners as a Microsoft Data Center Academy and they provide \$100,000 in annual scholarships, Business program that is creating a small Business Development Center with actual office space. The dual enrollment program for high school students increased 102 percent. In 2022 EMCC received the Governors Innovation Award for Academia.

- Eric Tune, Senior Vice President with Brookfield Residential, a large-scale master plan developers and home builders. The primary business in Arizona is master plan development with three large scale communities one of which is in Avondale, called Alamar. Mr. Tune has been in master plan development for over twenty-five years.

Major struggles are workforce, supply chain, and costs. An example of the benefit of the public and private partnerships was creating an amenity which was a 50/50 split that benefited all of Avondale. The most important thing to focus on is skilled labor, which is a big struggle. It is imperative to find ways to entice the youth to enter the construction, engineering, and master plan development. There are also land constraints experienced in Phoenix. Continuing the partnership between the State Land Department and local agencies is a major part of this business.

- Jeff Campos, President, Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce (SVCC) a nonprofit 501(c) (6) organization that represents six cities in the Southwest Valley where he has been for four years. The SVCC helps businesses grow by advocating for the members on economic interest through networking, collaborating, and community engagement. They also bring in new businesses that support community efforts using economic development referrals.

Along with advocating and representing the best interest of local businesses the SVCC share lobbyist with other chambers in the West Valley called the West Valley Chamber Alliance. The alliance meets weekly to discuss issues benefiting businesses and the cities. SVCC is having success using networking to connect with members, organizations, advance initiatives, and foster relationships between businesses. Training, educational, and mentorship programs, as well as access to market research are offered through SVCC for small businesses. They also promote tourism for the cities they represent.

The main goal is to promote and highlight existing community strengths to assist in getting others to gain interest in participating in the West Valley. A challenge is the growth that has occurred over the last four years with memberships and cities, which is a matter of having controlled growth and working more efficiently to deliver services as an organization.

- Clark Princell, President and Chief Executive Officer, Valley Partnership a thirty-eighty year old business that advocates for responsible and sustainable development within Maricopa County. The vast membership and the development segments they represent differentiate them from other development groups.

There are many good problems they are facing; the economy is diversified, there is a lot of uncertainty at the national level and the macro level related to goods, the price of goods, and potential impacts on labor. Valley Partnership works with community colleges and the trades to ensure an effective and stable workforce moving forward; however, the cost of financing and stable labor has increased leaving uncertainty. Locally there are three issues to point out.

1. Resources cut at the State level - work with cities to develop infrastructure and actively working with State partners to regain the resources necessary to build infrastructure and create communities.
2. Lack of power - working with utilities to obtain reliable power for the next project, while acknowledging how important Data Centers are.
3. Water – balancing needs and working with public jurisdictions and water providers to create certainty moving forward.

The goal is to obtain certainty going forward to attract capital and make investments in a region. Knowing those investments can derive value to pay back creditors in decades to come is vitally important.

- Sintra Hoffman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Westmarc an organization that has served the West Valley community for over 35 years in economic development support and public policy. Over the last nine years the key focus has been on workforce development, a key component to attracting businesses. Partnerships have been developed with EMCC and SVCC on their workforce development efforts, but there is still a challenge with construction workers.

Westmarc created a 501(c)(3) with their own board of directors that is dedicated to workforce development. Engaging with the business community to understand their needs and working closely with the education community to create programs that address the needs and graduate immediately employable students. A lead partner with Aqua Fria's Academies of the Southwest that serves the community by creating pathways for students to explore in high demand careers.

Westmarc works with all communities to bring them together as a region, which allows brokers to view the West Valley region. They will be supporting Avondale and eight other communities with a Health Care Investment forum later this month. Avondale has experienced quality growth and become a community of opportunity, within a region of opportunity with perception. Westmarc created a new strategic plan focusing on five pillars.

1. Marketing the region – working with community development partners
2. Supporting business growth – with investment forums
3. Supporting infrastructure – SR-30 and the opportunities it will bring to the City of Avondale, West Valley Region, and State of Arizona
4. Public policy – a delicate balance between the business and city needs provided there is funding support.
5. Regional data dashboard – working with ASU to build a regional dashboard that will provide resources for the West Valley.

The Mayor and Councilmembers were given an opportunity to commend and ask questions.

- ▶ Councilmember White commented on the common theme of “workforce development” and inquired how the City could attract residents and create a balance within the community. Ms. Hoffman recommended the business community open their doors to students to learn about the variety and multitude of career opportunities through internships or virtual meetings, because you must get them early on. Mr. Robles discussed internships through the Center for Workforce Development at EMCC, but not enough businesses participate. The Blackstone Charitable Foundation provides funding to businesses that hire students. It is important to provide this information to the businesses and helpful to the college. Mr. Lane noted exposure should begin in elementary school and instead of forcing a four-year college degree show them what they can do with a trade. The craft and trade group are aging out and no one is back filling.
- ▶ Councilmember Weise inquired if there are any apprenticeship programs in the trades for high school students to build skills and obtain an entry level job upon graduating. Ms. Hoffman provided an overview of the Academies of the Southwest opportunities that include marketing, health care, and construction. Ms. Stein explained the Economic Development Target Sectors for the City of Avondale that will be discussed later are in alignment with existing workforce or the future pipeline being created. Industry partners

are providing core competencies and necessary skills that can be incorporated into a curriculum and integrated into high school or earlier programs.

- ▶ Councilmember Solorio commented on the transportation barriers. Ms. Hoffman explained that is the top issue all schools are struggling with. A West Valley Pipeline 2.0 was created that focuses on social needs such as transportation, childcare, housing, and others. It continues to be worked on, but the major setback is funding. Mr. Corbin explained the City consistently looks for ways to address these issues through development and other programs to bring the training to where the people are. In this situation WeRide is flexible and available to bring students to and from school.

- ▶ Mr. Corbin inquired if EMCC has plans to create a skills program, HVAC, or engineering programs. Mr. Robles noted it would be a great example of building a partnership with the industry, but they have been advised a construction program was too expensive to get started, but South Mountain Community College and Gateway Community College offer that program.

- ▶ Councilmember Garcia commented on the key points raised being opportunity, partnership, and community. Avondale is a community of opportunities and a new perception that attracts businesses and workers. The missing piece is that many residents don't know about the many opportunities within the community, and it is up to the Council and all of us to let them know.

- ▶ Mayor Pineda spoke about agility and listening to stakeholders and partners to develop ideas to address community needs and demands and being innovative in response. Communication allows residents to become aware of opportunities that exist because of these connections and responses to needs. This Council has a desire to make things happen and be as competitive as possible. Everyone wants residents to stay here, go to school here, work here, play here, and have dining and entertainment opportunities. Councilmember Weise inquired if Class A office space is needed. Ms. Hoffman advised it is something that should be looked at as the need is increasing. Mr. Campos advised there are businesses and individuals seeking high-end office space and housing.

- ▶ Councilmember White shared an experience from Beachwood, Ohio and commented To model a community as a space and place for affluent growth, it must be reinvested in. Everyone can sit at the same table, be in the same space, be at the same place, and enjoy nice things together.

- ▶ Mr. Corbin inquired what the leaders can encourage or set as priorities to help bring housing, jobs, and people to the community. Ms. Hoffman recommended multifamily housing, controlling where it goes and using design guidelines to control what it looks. Mr. Lane recommended being flexible because the developer must be diversified in the housing they provide and flexible in how it is developed. Multifamily housing helps provide affordable housing, but density is the key. Ms. Hoffman noted the importance of efficient and effective processes.

Healthcare Panel

- Moderator: Cheryl Covert, Assistant Economic Development Director, City of Avondale provided an introduction and introduced the panelist who will provide an overview of their entity, role, obstacles, priorities, and the landscape.

- Clifford Lew, Vice President of Strategy, Phoenix Children's Hospital where he has

been for three years and the previous five years were at Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. There are over one million children in Phoenix and Avondale who deserve access to health care and Phoenix Children's Hospital embraces that. In 2013, the five hundred bed hospital was built downtown on the Thomas Campus with a full-service emergency department and multiple specialty care sites. Additional sites include Arrowhead Campus, East Valley, and Dignity Health. The hospital engages with community leadership on what community needs and how to help in a meaningful way as the only true pediatric provider in the State.

- Dr. Christina Conrad, DO, Medical Director, Phoenix Children's Emergency Department, Avondale, which opened in July 2023 to provide local emergency services. The hospital has forty rooms and physicians 24/7 as well as the same services as a large hospital offers, that serve a need in the community. In 2024, the first full year in service, over 50,000 children were seen.
- Martha Smith, Arizona Complete Health's Plan President and CEO, Arizona Complete Health and has been there for twenty-nine years. There is a long-standing partnership between Avondale and the Resource Center that cover approximately 600,000 lower income Arizona residents through the Medicaid program Access, Market Place programs, and Medicare programs. Arizona Complete Health is also the regional behavioral health authority in both the northern and southern parts of the state and provide services to the Serious Mental Illness population and those in critical need of mental health services. The organization was recently awarded the long-term care contract for the state of Arizona.

Potential federal funding cuts to Medicaid and subsidies are potential obstacles that could create a budget shortfall of \$2 billion, leaving fewer individuals with medical coverage and a burden to the health care delivery system. It is important for everyone to interact with our representatives and encourage them to focus on making sure those budget cuts don't occur. An Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) is a new program coming in 2026 that is closely tied to the Market Place supported through small businesses. This is a great opportunity for communities like Avondale that have many small businesses in their community.

- Tony Houston, Dignity Health Arizona Market President, Dignity Health and has been there for over ten years. This is the largest Catholic Health Care Company in America with over one hundred and sixteen hospitals among twenty-four states. Dignity Health has eight Acute Care Hospitals, fourteen standalone Emergency Departments, and 15,000 care givers that work every day with a special preference for the vulnerable populations. Dignity Health has ownership in a Medicaid plan, a pledge to be advocates of social justice, and partner with organizations in the community that do the same. There is a long-standing relationship with Phoenix Children's Hospital.

Creighton University is a medical school in Phoenix that offers a multitude of medical programs which is one way to focus on building the next generation of health care providers, but more are needed, and it will take a collective approach to think about how to perpetuate that next generation of the work force. In relation to economics, inflation

affects health care costs and labor costs when trying to retain talent. It is difficult to attract the workforce and maintain affordable health care.

The Mayor and Councilmembers were given an opportunity to commend and ask questions.

- ▶ Councilmember Weise inquired if there is a shortage of beds for long-term care and if so, can we meet that need. Ms. Smith explained there is a need and a shortage; however, the program's goal is to not institutionalize people and support them living independently in the community. There is a critical need for Assisted Living and Supported Facilities in the community. Mr. Houston explained there is a need for over 3,000 beds to meet the demand in Arizona, but even if we grew as fast as possible that need would still be there. The way care is delivered is evolving in home care or through technology.
- ▶ Councilmember White asked for a forecast on what could be done to transition Avondale to a Blue Zone. Dr. Conrad responded, stating to start young, kids should be engaging in their community. Have things accessible for all types of children to keep them active, access nutritious foods, and engage with the community. It must be a lifestyle to change their course. Ms. Smith explained partnerships are critical, such as fitness programs, food pantries and other organizations provide an opportunity move towards a blue zone concept. Mr. Houston recommended walking every evening after dinner encouraging friends and family to join.
- ▶ Mayor Pineda commented on the opportunities and benefits of the trail system and sports programs for residents.
- ▶ Councilmember Conde shared a positive personal experience with Phoenix Children's Hospital. Many community members strive to do things with their children including utilizing the Parks and Rec programs.
- ▶ Ms. Covert commented on the programming offered at the Sport Center. She inquired about how the health care systems, local government, and the community can work together to tackle opioid addiction and chronic conditions. Mr. Houston explained clinicians are using nerve blocks instead of opioids for procedures. Recognizing and removing the stigma that comes with mental health and substance use disorders, which allows individuals to access programs available to them. At the same time educating the community on what this means is important. Dr. Conrad spoke about overdoses in the teenage population and a grant that allows them to offer Narcan to take home. In addition, the physicians do continue education on opioid abuse and addiction and opioids are not used for pain in children either. Mr. Lew spoke about the Bridge Clinic for children who are discharged from the emergency department with behavioral health concerns without a behavioral health provider. Behavioral Health Therapist are starting to be provided to the network of pediatricians within their offices
- ▶ Mr. Corbin inquired about what the city can do to get more access for residents to health care, behavioral care, and others. What can the City do to bring more facilities here, get more staffing, providers, and more care. Arizona has a significant lack of behavioral health care. Mr. Houston discussed the shortage of mental health caregivers across the Country and starting as early as possible to encourage children to think about health care as a career. Having affordable housing available for caregivers to live where they work is critical. Continue to be creative with combining resources. A discussion ensued regarding affordable housing and longevity. Ms. Smith spoke about support roles in the medical field and developing programs in the community colleges and high schools

to get people ready to work in the healthcare system. Foundation Grants have been provided to community colleges to develop or expand programs to support the needs of the community.

► Councilmember Garcia spoke about being able to offer peer coaches and different types of health care paths where people don't have to medicate themselves are important. Promoting exercise, healthy eating, and going outside for mental health is huge. Dr. Conrad commented on the recently developed Integrative Health Clinic for kids who have chronic complaints such as pain, that promotes other avenues for a full and active life. Ms. Smith spoke about the importance of peer support which is required by the Medicaid program in Arizona. Arizona Complete Health offers a robust peer and family support program for substance use disorder and other challenges that ensure someone can get back to a more productive space.

Human Services / Non-Profit Panel

- Chris Lopez, Neighborhood and Family Services Director, City of Avondale
Noted the panel members are all long-time supporters of the Resource Center and Avondale who will share information about their organization, trends in the community, and how they envision us working together in the future.

- Kathy DiNolfi, Chief Program Officer, A New Leaf, a large human service organization where she has been there for twenty-eight years. A New Leaf is based in Glendale and provides services through Faith House, a Domestic Violence Shelter and have been partnering with Avondale for approximately nine years. They offer forty programs that address housing, domestic violence, foster care, community behavior health, among others. There is a need for stability in funding that is eight-five percent government funded. Another area of focus is addressing the challenging continuum of homelessness and potential resources.

- Sam Leyvas, Vice President, Corporate Relations & Social Responsibility, United Way and has been there for three years but in the nonprofit sector for many years prior. United Way who has been strong partners with Avondale, will celebrate their 100th anniversary in fall 2025. They partner with four hundred organizations, cities, for profit organizations, and companies to connect with the needs of the community and align goals with real issues. After COVID and new leadership a reassessment was conducted which created the Mighty Changed Agenda 2026 with four key areas.

1. Education, specific focus on young children and keenly on third grade literacy rates and how to make better progress and outcomes.
2. Workforce development, breaking intergenerational poverty or cycles of poverty is access to gainful employment. The focus is on job training and workforce development.
3. Food Insecurity, children and seniors regularly go hungry and there is a need to work with community partners to close that gap.
4. Housing and homelessness, there are approximately 9,000 residents every night in Maricopa County that experience a form of homelessness. Will require partnerships with nonprofit organizations and community organizations.

- Delaney Russell, Regional Director, First Things First is the state's first and only Early

Childhood agency supporting early childhood. The program has 30,000 children birth to age five and approximately 7,100 reside in Avondale. Programs such as family support, parenting education, professional development, and others are offered. They have been a core partner at Arizona Complete Health, Avondale Resource Center since 2010, which is the busiest and most state-of-the-art centers.

The Mayor and Councilmembers were given an opportunity to commend and ask questions.

- ▶ Councilmember Weise inquired about the need for childcare. Ms. Russell discussed the need that is present across the state that is related to affordability and accessibility. The average cost of childcare for an infant average more than the cost of tuition for a university. The increasing cost was exacerbated by COVID.
- ▶ Mr. Corbin inquired about what the City and Council can do to help. Ms. Russell provided an example of Phoenix providing \$4.5 million in childcare scholarships to employees. That example is a drastic measure but subsidizing the cost, working with businesses, there are many creative solutions, and if you are interested a feasibility study can be conducted. Mr. Leyvas discussed childcare being an example of a public-private partnership and coming together to rely on respective strengths to create a solution.
- ▶ Councilmember White spoke about providing family support while caring for the kid in the community, which is becoming more challenging. Ms. Russell noted the City is already doing it through the Resource Center which is built around the five protective factors; parent resiliency, understanding of child development, understanding of social emotional development, concrete support, and social connection. The need has and continues to grow and there will be a potential need for more investments and expansion.
- ▶ Mr. Leyvas commented on expanding opportunities to resources and vocalizing priorities for the community help partners know where the leaders stand, which is helpful in facilitating action, collaboration, and leveraging resources.
- ▶ Councilmember Solorio shared positive and intriguing feedback from the Small Cities Council.
- ▶ Councilmember Garcia inquired on how to get available resources out to all of Avondale. Ms. Russell suggested the use of AviWise, word of mouth, and social media. First Things First can provide the most relevant information, but this might be an area for some brainstorming on how to get the most accurate information out about accessible resources. Ms. DiNolfi noted word of mouth is the best referral source they have. The Resource Center not only provides resources but assist with navigating additional resources.
- ▶ Mr. Lopez inquired what the emerging trends are, what are the big needs on the horizon to be aware of and working to address. Ms. DiNolfi noted affordable housing, childcare, and transportation. The Resource Center is focused on support services once individuals become housed because there is still a need for support, connecting, and navigating other resources. Mr. Leyvas discussed United Ways specific focus is on supporting shelter emergency transition while still focusing on housing and homelessness. Additionally, keeping an eye on the potential impacts of the federal, state, and local policy implications on resource availability. Mr. Russell discussed an increased need and dependency on social services and financial assistance, such as SNAP, WIC, and TANF.
- ▶ Mr. Lopez inquired if workforce development needs with a shortage of human service

workers and how can Avondale support nonprofit organizations to hire qualified personnel. Mr. Russel spoke about the Academies of the Southwest Valley through Aqua Fria District and how human service jobs are low paying. The City could provide incentives for roles in the social service, show support and rally behind the providers.

- ▶ Mr. Lopez asked what actions cities can take to address behavioral health needs in the community to ensure residents, especially the most vulnerable, are being served.
- ▶ Ms. DiNolfi discussed removing the stigma around mental health needs and services and lean on providers that have resources and can help navigate the system to acquire timely and effective interventions.
- ▶ Mr. Lopez where Avondale prides itself on being an innovative City, are there any innovative human service practices or models coming the City should look at. Mr. Leyvas discussed partnering with literacy hubs, particularly at the third-grade level, because they are hyper focused on bringing the best to the community through evidence informed practices.

Natural Resources Panel

- Moderator: Kirk Beaty, Public Works Director, City of Avondale discussed natural resources and the vital role they play in our lives, the economy, water supplies, clean air, land and open spaces, healthy wildlife and other elements of nature. The panel represents a cross section of natural resources affecting Avondale. Hopefully after learning about these resources a broader discussion can be had about how the resources connect and interact with each other and how the community can protect such resources responsibly and to responsibly use them to influence and support economic development, housing, and health and human services.
- Warren Tenney, Executive Director, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association (AMWUA) which has been around since 1969 and was established for water security, maintaining water, and water rights. Avondale is a member of AMWUA and one of the ten municipalities that provides water to 3.7 million residents, businesses, and industries that are key to the economy. Water security is knowing residents will have water for a long time because water is the foundation to the economy and Arizona has strong water policies. Water requires a lot of planning and investing, which never stops. One of the challenges is the Colorado River is producing less water, ground water has reached limits on the aquifer, and we must keep investing in supplies
- Matthew Poppen, Environmental Director, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) which is the regional planning agency where Mayors and City agencies come together to make policy decisions on topics that need regional coordination, such as environmental topics. MAG is the lead air quality planning agency for Maricopa County and Pinal County. Regional plans are developed and submitted to EPA on how the stringent National Air Quality Standards will be met. With the PM2.5 EPA standard, Avondale is not in compliance due to residential wood burning and consumer fireworks activity, which are two of the unhealthiest activities. The ozone layer will be studied this summer by ASU to understand what is really happening and bring real science back to policy makers.

- Bobby Lamoureux, Land Specialist, Arizona Game and Fish Department spoke about open spaces and reviewing long-term plans such as the 2040 General Plan for early identification of open spaces. Forming relationships early on with private landowners, creating incentivized programs for them to do treatment, and providing educational opportunities has been beneficial
- Tice Supplee, MS, CWB, retired biologist, Arizona Game and Fish Department National Audubon Society discussed big picture planning which is critical. One area to consider is the sand and gravel operations that are full of open water sites. Think about remediation of the sites as a water resource, natural area, and natural open space when those operations are gone. Another consideration is collaborating with the flood control district to create natural infrastructure solutions for flood management instead of hard scape, which could save money in the long term and provide natural open space. Implement a setback along SR-30 for industrial development from the river corridor. Maintain farmlands or agricultural zoned property near the river corridor.

Mr. Beaty these discussions shed light on the fact that these resources, water, air, open space, and wildlife are interconnected and impactful to everything that is done within the City with housing and economic development, which is in turn impactful on water and natural resources. The idea is to always think forward and collaborate on these issues for the benefit of the City.

City Council recessed the Work Session at 11:35 a.m.

City Council reconvened the Work Session at 12:33 p.m.

**Councilmember Solorio was not present when City Council reconvened; however, her arrival to the meeting is noted below.*

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

City Council received a presentation from Jen Stein, Economic Development Director, City of Avondale regarding an economic development update.

The strategic plan is fluid and will be constantly monitored and evaluated every six to twelve months. The plan should align and implement the Council's vision. Economic development is building the City for future generations, and we have one shot to get it right, engage with the right development partners in the community to make sure we are delivering smart, intentional, quality development that will deliver jobs and amenities residents expect and deserve.

Looking at the numbers tells potential businesses why Avondale is right for them, but they also tell a story about the growth the City has experienced. Ms. Stein discussed trade areas and how they are working on creating a trade area. From a transportation corridor standpoint, Avondale is in the middle of semiconductor activity and with the TSMC expansion announcement, it makes sense to create a supplier tech park to house semiconductor suppliers.

The team has been working hard to entice and bring in businesses, but if we don't have the product, we are unable to accommodate and support them. Rates have increased or remained steady, which shows competitiveness, and we are in a good place for recruitment. It was clarified that there is sufficient class A office space in the valley but there is not enough submarket office space.

The vision was read into the record. The priorities were reviewed

1. Job Creation – to increase head of household incomes they need quality head of household jobs, which are aggressively being pursued.
2. Revenue Generation through Redevelopment – Avondale is ninety percent built out, so redevelopment is critical and infill parcels.
3. Workforce Development and Strategic Alliances – this is the number one factor when determining if a business is coming into the community, is there enough workforce to support their operations.
4. Tourism Development and Destination Branding – increasing hotel and hospitality assets and partnership opportunities and program activation with Phoenix Raceway and other entities.

Economic development goals –

1. Create 200 Jobs Per Year in Target Sectors – A healthy number based on the available product is one thousand jobs over five years. The objectives were reviewed and discussed.
 2. Redevelop an Additional 3% of Avondale Infill Land – There is an active RFP for the BLVD for a mixed-use development partner and there has been a lot of interest. Cooper's Hawk Restaurant is going through the process now, which is a game changer and a catalyst. Future land will be unlocked by SR-30 and auto district expansion
- In response to Councilmember White's question, Ms. Stein explained they can pursue luxury car dealers and have already had conversations with Lexus and BMW. Currently, Kia is not willing to sell their old OEM dealership.
 - Mr. Corbin discussed land in the BLVD area that Council had previously imposed strict development restrictions upon and inquired if those restrictions should be changed and how does the City ensure that gets developed. Ms. Stein discussed the lack of amenities, lifestyle centers, high-quality sit-down centers, and want to be strategic in the type of development.

Old Town Priority Sites – the City of Avondale now owns 518 E Western and is working on conceptual site plans, and have engaged with stakeholders, businesses, developers, and brokers. Initial feedback from the development community is it would cost more to remodel than to demolish and start new. At this time Council feedback is sought on the RFP that will potentially include demolition.

Council Discussion:

Councilmember comments included demolishing the existing structure, rebuilding something the community can use, such as small office spaces, be mindful of and maintain the culture, maintain the one level structure, take it to the next level, invest in walkability, and there is a concern with ingress and egress traffic.

3. Address Workforce Gaps with Two New Workforce Development Initiatives / Events Per year – forming strategic alliances is where the focus is. The City will be working with Women in Manufacturing for Workforce Development Panel and Avondale's Got Talent with EMCC
4. Boost Tourism to Achieve a 3% Increase in Bed Tax and Occupancy – Avondale has the highest consistent hotel occupancy rates in the west valley that are helping to advance the City to the next level. Recruiting mega and nationally acclaimed events to draw people into Avondale.
5. Long-Term Economic Development Vision – identifying key development sites through land assembly. The tech park will be occupied by R&D Advanced Manufacturing Suppliers.

Strategic plan achievements to date that are in alignment with the Strategy and Outcomes were read into the record.

Economic development key priorities – Council feedback requested on anything to be added or taken away.

- ▶ Councilmember Garcia noted the priorities aligned with her vision and was pleased to learn that developer's plans can be denied if they don't align with the strategic plan.

**Councilmember Solorio arrived at the meeting at 1:23 p.m.*

- ▶ Councilmember Conde stated the City is on target and everyone is talking about job creation, workforce development, and tourism.
- ▶ Councilmember White spoke about the aspect of financial literacy and a mechanism for creating wealth in Avondale that is missing from the priorities.
- ▶ Councilmember Weise noted the discussion about the restaurants from Bell Road down and from Loop 303 was insightful.
- ▶ Councilmember Solorio discussed The Small Cities Council meeting and economic development other communities asked for. Avondale has reached an area where they look big. Keep doing what you are doing because it is great to see the things that are coming and the level of business.
- ▶ Mayor Pineda spoke about residents wanting to spend time, money, live, and work in the BLVD and wanting to keep the development process to a higher standard is what they deserve. These are legacy projects that will stand the test of time.

Mr. Corbin followed up noting that one of the guiding principles is to say a no and yes in the right places to make sure the community has the resources they need. There are continued efforts to get a bank on the lower side of the community. Another guiding principle is making sure the community and residents have what they need to be successful and have a great quality of life. Everything Ms. Stein and her team do is strategic. The number one priority is job creation that will lead to generational wealth and residents growing up here and staying here.

- ▶ Councilmember Solorio discussed affordable housing that should really be attainable housing that brings in another level of individuals who add to the workforce, spend time and money here.

Mr. Corbin assured the Council all that is being worked on to find solutions for the community, including Veteran's housing in Old Town and potential project on Broadway Road.

5. ECONOMIC UPDATE

Luis Cordova, Senior VP & COO, Rounds Consulting provided and discussed an economic update that covered the broader U.S. economy, the status of the market, inflation, and the risk of recession. An overview of the State economy and what it means for Avondale will also be provided.

The U.S. economy at the end of 2024 was in good shape but recent projections on GDP are worrisome with negative growth projected due to uncertainty. Companies and manufacturers are holding off on capital investments and federal cuts and layoffs will impact spending on the economy. The job growth was above average at the end of 2024, but the federal cuts and layoffs can create a ripple effect and impact jobs across the Country. Prior to 2025 the unemployment rate was almost a record low, which grew wages and contributed to inflation, that spiked after the pandemic. To stop inflation the growth rate needs to be zero.

There are many factors that contribute to inflation, such as supply and demand, one major factor is the amount of money the federal government put into the economy during the pandemic lockdown that ended up in consumers' pockets, low interest rates left in place too long, and increased spending after the pandemic. The outlook on inflation takes into consideration federal spending, geopolitical activity, monetary tightening, interest rates, and tariff and trade wars. Economists provide projections not predictions but when looking at the risk of a recession there are many factors to take into consideration such as job growth, GDP growth, the stock market, yield curve conversion and many of them show signs of increased risk.

Arizona's economy has continued, steady growth in population and employment. There are challenges relating to the affordability and attainability of housing due to a shortage of housing causing increased cost of housing and rentals. Federal policies and budget cuts impact Arizona's economy such as the potential Medicaid cuts could have a \$7.5 billion devastating financial and humanity impact. Avondale has seen and will continue to see steady growth in population and jobs. There has been an increase in building permits

for multifamily housing in Avondale, which is important for diversifying housing. Statistics show that ninety percent of Avondale residents work outside of the city. A goal should be to look for opportunities to stop that leakage and bring high wage industries to Avondale.

With uncertainty and many things happening quickly at the state and local levels, there should always be a focus on investments and economic and community development which help with job stability and resilience for the workforce. Also, municipal budgeting and planning properly with a continuous eye on what is happening in the Country and State.

In response to questions, Mr. Cordova reluctantly predicted there will be a recession towards the end of this calendar year. The tariff wars and companies pulling back from investing create uncertainty and higher risk of a recession. When budgeting, keep an eye on the one-time revenue sources and plan for a normal year and a normal year with a possible recession.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor, City Staff, and the Strategic Plan Consultant provided closing remarks. This item was for discussion only.

- Mayor Pineda spoke about the significant benefit of this experience of being able to hear from the partners together as an organization. As policy makers the Council makes their decisions rooted in favor of the residents. Unfortunately, as discussed today there are many variables that make it difficult to predict the best decision. The strategic plan will set the goals and objectives and how to meet them within any constraints. The administration, department heads, and the professionals here today will guide the Council to be creative and innovative in tackling the challenges they face.
- Tracey Stevens, Assistant City Manager, commented on take-a-ways from the day being, creating opportunities for all, attainable housing, creating wealth, workforce development, job creation, and a health care system for residents. Tomorrow these issues will be discussed further to develop new or reshaped strategic outcomes.
- Nancy (?) commented on the powerful and inspired focus on the future that the topics resonated. Many discussions addressed core issues and opportunities. The next session will elaborate on the present and future success.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, Councilmember Garica moved to adjourn the Work Session Meeting; Councilmember White seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously 7 to 0.

Councilmember Conde	Aye
Councilmember Garcia	Aye
Councilmember Solorio	Aye
Councilmember Weise	Aye
Councilmember White	Aye
Vice Mayor Nielson	Aye
Mayor Pineda	Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.


Mike Pineda (Apr 8, 2025 12:27 PDT)

Mike Pineda, Mayor

CERTIFICATION AND ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session Meeting of the Council of the City of Avondale held on the 4th day of March 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.



Marcella Sarmiento, City Clerk

April 7, 2025

Date Approved by City Council