Greater Phoenix Forward represents an important step towards initiating proactive community dialogue around significant human-services infrastructure issues facing Maricopa County. As demographic and socioeconomic changes have taken shape on a rapidly expansive scale in the Phoenix region, Valley of the Sun United Way and our community partners are working diligently to establish a long-term, outcome-based model that will contribute to improving lives for Valley residents.

Our goal is to advance the common good by focusing on the areas of education, income, and health. These are the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health. We are committed to focusing on prevention to get at the underlying causes of social issues that affect us all. These goals can only be achieved through the continued collaboration of business, government and nonprofit leadership and through understanding of the fundamental issues that contribute to each and every human-services challenge.

On behalf of Valley the Sun United Way, I would like to thank the College of Public Programs and ASU for their time and dedication in the painstaking assembling of this comprehensive report. Additionally, I would also like to acknowledge the City of Phoenix and Mayor Phil Gordon for their invaluable co-support of this report, as well as Alcoa Foundation, SRP, APS, and the Downtown Phoenix Partnership. Working together, we can bring to light the challenges we all face and create a brighter future for everyone.

Merl Waschler
President and CEO, Valley of the Sun United Way
Greetings:

As Mayor, and on behalf of the City Council, I am proud that the City of Phoenix has joined the Valley of the Sun United Way as the principal supporters of Greater Phoenix Forward.

Every day the City of Phoenix works to provide the best possible services for all members of our community. As our city grows, adding roughly 3,000 new residents each month, we work very hard to determine how to maintain and improve our service functions. That means planning and implementing not only for the “bricks and mortar” aspects of our growth, but also developing and delivering human services.

The ASU College of Public Programs, our new downtown neighbor, has performed a valuable service by initiating the Greater Phoenix Forward project and its first phase, this research and policy report. It presents timely and important data and analysis on human services in our metro area and offers innovative ideas for improving the quality of life of our residents and communities.

The City of Phoenix is very proud to be a partner with Arizona State University. Our combined efforts will certainly make this dynamic city an even better place to work, recreate, and live.

I strongly encourage you to read this report—and, as you do, to imagine how the city, the university, and all our residents can ensure the brightest possible future for Phoenix.

Sincerely,

Phil Gordon
Mayor, City of Phoenix
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GREATER PHOENIX FORWARD: MEASURING AND MEETING OUR HUMAN-SERVICES NEEDS

An ASU College of Public Programs Project to Help Meet the Challenges Facing Maricopa County

Rob Melnick, Ph.D., Director, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, and Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director, Global Institute of Sustainability

Maricopa County has experienced remarkable population growth for decades. As a result, it has become the envy of many other metropolitan areas, especially those whose populations are declining. Their assumption: More population leads to more opportunity, more talent and more wealth. In fact, this is often the case for regions with strong in-migration.

To ready themselves to respond to the pressures and opportunities from fast growth, metro areas typically pay close attention to their physical infrastructure. They diligently plan and budget years in advance for public works such as roads, sewers, utility rights-of-way, water treatment plants, libraries, schools and similar projects. But just as typical is the relative lack of attention to their capacity to handle future demands for human services under the same growth scenario. Nevertheless, regions that want to sustain or improve the quality of life of their residents, especially when an area’s population is becoming more diverse, need to plan and budget for the considerable human-services challenges that accompany fast growth.

Year after year of rapid and demographically diverse population growth is straining the capacity of Greater Phoenix’s human-services system. This appears to be the case for public, quasi-public, and private systems alike. The challenges are considerable now and will become even more demanding in the future, as the county’s population continues to swell, pushes out to the edge of the metro area, and further diversifies.

Many agencies and individuals in the county provide human services, yet the “big picture” of the Valley’s service infrastructure is not a clear one. Data on the nature and extent of human services provided to residents in area cities, towns and unincorporated areas are highly diffused. Plus, our mobile population makes it hard to tell from year to year who is in most need of such services. Still, research provides a pretty serious bottom line on this matter: Indications are strong that the number of Greater Phoenix residents who will need various human services is very likely to grow faster than the human and fiscal resources—and maybe the political will—needed to serve them. Complicating this trajectory is the fact that our capacity to meet human needs competes with the demand for other public goods and services amidst a confluence of complex public policy issues.

The College of Public Programs at Arizona State University prepared this report to help leaders and human-services practitioners better understand the current condition of the Valley’s human-services infrastructure, and to provide them with a view of its potential future. It is the first of a three-phase project intended to yield policy decisions about human services that are based on sound research, objective analyses and public discourse. Thus, this report and research compendium serves as a platform for the deliberation phase and the action phase that will follow in sequence. Specifically, the report provides:

- Data in a single volume that describe an array of human-services structures and functions in Maricopa County
- Trends for populations who utilize these services
- Analyses of how to sustain the present level and quality of human services
- A glimpse of how present service trends could play out by 2012

In short, this report provides descriptive data for understanding the status of human services in Greater Phoenix today, describes provocative issues that certain populations and providers face, and offers a starting point for determining the Valley’s aspirations for tomorrow’s human-services infrastructure.

Scope: What This Report Is and What It Is Not

The phrase “human services” creates a very big umbrella. Unfortunately, most of the public thinks of the phrase as merely a surrogate for public economic security measures (welfare) and health care for the indigent. That is, many people automatically associate human services with “poor people.”

This report takes a broader view of human services. It describes a wide array of populations that use and depend
on these services—people at many income levels, tourists, recreationists, the young and the elderly, among others. It also discusses important features of the human-services infrastructure, such as the capacity of nonprofit organizations, community resilience, and a government-employed workforce. However, the report does not cover every important human-services topic—most notably, public education and public health per se—because the expertise of the College does not include such areas. Nevertheless, the report presents analyses of 12 distinct and critically important topics that comprise and/or affect the human-services infrastructure in Maricopa County (the geographical unit of analysis):

- demographics
- poverty
- children and families
- substance abuse
- parks and recreation
- nonprofit organizations
- arts and culture
- Latinos
- aging
- mental and behavioral health
- tourism
- resilience

Taking On Tough Research and Policy Issues

Providing adequate human services is a serious challenge in every metropolitan area. But—to repeat—the challenge in Greater Phoenix is compounded by our rapidly growing and diversifying population. On top of that, this report is being written at a precarious time in the economic cycle, when both public and private revenues are shrinking. Although Arizona and Greater Phoenix have withstood previous economic downturns and come back strong, discussing policies, programs and investments in human services is more difficult in tough times. The usual response at such times is to cut, not add services, at the very time when people may need them the most. In that sense, the timing of this report may be propitious.

This report also appears at the same time as an historic and frequently rancorous debate over international immigration policy rages at the national and state levels. Since Greater Phoenix has had and can continue to expect a substantial number of foreign immigrants, legal and illegal, the outcome of this debate will affect how both the public and its policy leaders think and act on the provision of human services to both newcomers and long-standing residents who immigrated from other countries.

By design, the report has something of a “futures” orientation; that is, it identifies and describes trends occurring now that will shape the Valley’s future, and offers projections on various topics to the year 2012. Despite the sage advice of famous futurist Herman Kahn to “never give a date when you make a prediction,” this report has culled data from a variety of sources in order to make predictions and suggest when they are likely to occur. Predictions can be a risky business; many social science reports shy away from them. At the same time, projections—while certainly imperfect—can be important stimuli to getting decision leaders to face up to what very well may lie ahead.

Few matters are as policy-sensitive as providing human services. In the most simplistic way, Greater Phoenix’s commitment to a sound human-services infrastructure can be measured by budget allocations, be they public or philanthropic. Human services compete for the same dollars and attention from policy leaders as do other public needs. In the end, though, the adequacy of human services will clearly be a function of the leaders’ priorities. Solutions to many problems of the human condition—as well as the quality of life for all residents regardless of their health and wealth—are profoundly affected by the programs the leaders choose to support.

The Authors, Their College, Their Mission

As mentioned above, this report is one aspect of, and a resource for, a multi-phase outreach project. It is an effort that includes researchers from every academic department, institute and center that comprise ASU’s College of Public Programs, which is located on ASU’s Downtown Phoenix campus. The Seidman Institute, a unit in ASU’s W.P. Carey School of Business, is a research collaborator.

Professor Debra Friedman, University Vice President and Dean of its College of Public Programs, initiated the project. Morrison Institute is the coordinator of Phase I, the production of this report.

In Phase II of the project, the authors will discuss the report with Arizona policy makers, executives of human-services providing organizations, leading human-services practitioners and community leaders. Each author is an intellectual leader in his or her field and contributes to the College’s mission of innovation and discourse about public programs. Thus, the report also serves to inform Valley and state decision leaders and human-services practitioners on the intellectual and research talent the College has to offer. In Phase III of the project, the authors and College administrators will become resources to public, nonprofit, and private-sector leaders as they shape and, hopefully, implement plans and investments to create a human-services infrastructure that has the capacity to address the challenges that lie ahead—to the year 2012 and beyond.

Rob Melnick, Ph.D., has been the Director of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University—Arizona’s oldest “think tank”—since 1987 and holds an academic appointment as research scientist in the School of Public Affairs. He also is Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer of ASU’s Global Institute of Sustainability.