

# NEW DAWN FOR DOWNTOWNS

PHX East Valley cities see a resurgence in retail and restaurant centers that are driving growth and economic development





# DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE

PHX East Valley downtown destinations are experiencing a wave of renovations, refreshes and exciting offerings — enticing visitors from both near and far

By ERIN THORBURN



**T**he European Renaissance of the 14th through 17th centuries was a time of rediscovery and rebirth, ushering in some of the most memorable works — from the printing press and microscope to the Mona Lisa and Sistine Chapel (to name a very few). Now, largely due to future infrastructure planning and innovative thought leaders, Phoenix East Valley downtown regions are experiencing their own kind of renaissance. From mixed-use marvels and one-of-a-kind retail options to education hubs and opulent outdoor areas, Tempe, Gilbert, Chandler and Mesa are carving a space in Arizona's history books.

### Infrastructure and right timing

The Renaissance of centuries past was a byproduct of “right timing.” Currently, the vibrancy and rebirth of several Phoenix East Valley downtown areas are on hyperdrive. And, much of their success can be attributed to preparation and planning that began decades ago.

“What’s really interesting, for Gilbert, is our downtown is a redevelopment area,” explains Amanda Elliott, redevelopment program manager for the Town of Gilbert. “It was designated like that in 1989. And so we have a redevelopment plan that really takes the community’s input and then puts their input into goals and tactics.”

Adds Kim Moyers, cultural development director for the City of Chandler, “Downtown Chandler has been decades in the making. The city council invested in upsizing and upgrading all of the infrastructure. We’ve seen all new roads along Arizona Avenue, wider sidewalks and trees for shading that makes it very inviting.”

In Mesa, a well-conceived infrastructure is responsible for the city’s successful downtown rejuvenation and expansion. “The city has invested in the light rail, the Mesa Art Center and partnering with Arizona State University (ASU), and it’s also just got great character,” says Mesa Mayor John Giles.

Because of the ingenuity and forethought of infrastructure planning, combined with the East Valley’s reputation for stellar leadership collaboration, Tempe,

Gilbert, Chandler and Mesa have been able to meet the demand for more dynamic offerings in key downtown hotspots.

“Residents and visitors are expecting that kind of amenity in suburban communities now,” Elliott says. “And so you’re seeing Mesa, Gilbert, Chandler all really focused on reinvesting and revitalizing.”

Giles agrees, adding, “I think you’re going to see more people that are drawn to a more urban lifestyle and a less car-centric lifestyle where they have great entertainment options, can park their car and work from home or work from a co-work space downtown.”

### History meets unique offerings

In addition to smart infrastructure investments and planning, Tempe, Chandler, Gilbert and Mesa share in the capitalization of their historical attributes, while also being autonomous in their more individual and unique offerings.

The Gilbert Water Tower, originally erected in 1927 and now restored, has become the focal point of the Gilbert Heritage District in the downtown area.

“We draw people [to the Gilbert Water Tower] specifically for all kinds of events,” says Gilbert Mayor Brigitte Peterson. “We don’t light a Christmas tree in Gilbert. We light the water tower. It’s a really wonderful amenity to have in our downtown as a historic area of the community.”

Jimmy Lindblom, who manages community outreach for Willmeng and is also chairman of East Valley Partnership — and also happens to live in Gilbert — describes the water tower as the “family room” of Gilbert’s downtown. Willmeng is now in the beginning stages of working with the Town of Gilbert to build out this focal point.

“[The town] is investing some dollars and has been out in the community to get input on what they would like for the area. We’ll see where it all leads, but we’re excited to be a part of it,” Lindblom says.

Much like Gilbert, Chandler’s downtown renovation includes preserving its history. “Chandler started within our downtown,” Moyers says. “It’s over 100 years old, so we have these beautiful, older buildings.”

Moyers goes on to explain that new



**Amanda Elliott**



**John Giles**



**Dan Henderson**



**Donna Kennedy**



**Jimmy Lindblom**



**Kim Moyers**



**Brigitte Peterson**



**Corey Woods**



# EAST VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

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**SCHOOL DAYS:** Gilbert’s downtown Heritage District houses Park University, University of Arizona and the University of Arizona College of Nursing — all in a collective building.

downtown development, mixed with honoring the city’s history has created a “cool, funky and vibrant,” atmosphere that’s helped encourage continued growth and momentum.

Another way that Chandler differentiates itself from neighboring downtowns is its policy for dining to remain local. No chain restaurants are permitted in the City Center District.

## Tempe transitions

Tempe allocated \$8 million in renovations to help preserve its downtown historical integrity, while also introducing fresh, exciting contributions as part of its Refresh Tempe program.

“Tempe has one of Arizona’s most historic, and yet most energizing downtowns,” says Tempe Mayor Corey Woods. “You can literally step off the Valley’s only streetcar and go to your technology job in a state-of-the-art building, and also walk down tree-lined, brick sidewalks enjoying the architecture of beautiful buildings built in the 1800s.”

The Hayden Flour Mill serves as a prime example of Tempe’s achievement of taking a historic landmark and reimagining it into something truly dynamic. Built in 1874, it was once the home

of Charles Trumbull Hayden, father of Senator Carl Hayden and owner of the Hayden Flour Mill. Today, Hayden House is the home of Downtown Tempe Authority.

While Mesa certainly has its share of historic downtown buildings and areas, one of the city’s captivating stories from more recent history comes from the early 2000s, and features what has now become the thriving Asian District.

“Peter Quach, who was a Vietnamese refugee, came to the United States with nothing, got into the Asian grocery store business in San Francisco, came to Mesa, bought a boarded up store which is now Mekong Plaza,” Giles says.

“Along Dobson Road,” he continues, “beginning at Main Street, going all the way along this corridor in Mesa, we have over 80 Asian-themed businesses.”

## Education destinations

One of the exciting additions to several Phoenix East Valley downtown destinations is educational offerings.

Tempe has long been recognized for housing several colleges and universities downtown, including the University of



# Micro-electronics are Arizona's future

ASU's MacroTechnology Works in Tempe is a one-of-a-kind facility that operates as both a lab and a fab, a national resource for microelectronics companies of all sizes.

## Accelerating innovation

Arizona State University's MacroTechnology Works facility in Tempe is where the public and private sectors come together to develop the research and workforce that Arizona will need as it transforms into a global hub for microchip manufacturing. It's a collaborative approach attracting attention from national policymakers because it allows companies of all sizes to partner with ASU to solve microelectronic challenges that impact our daily lives and national security. It also directly connects these companies to the largest pipeline of engineering and technology talent in the U.S.\*

\*American Society for Engineering Education, 2021



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## REFRESH TEMPE

**BACKGROUND:** Tempe's downtown is getting a fresh new look, thanks to the "Refresh Tempe" initiative. As part of the city's efforts to maintain an attractive, welcoming and fun atmosphere, investments have been made to:

- **Mill Ave Bridges-String Light Replacement:** Construction beginning late Spring 2023.
- **Festoon Lighting along Fourth and Sixth Streets:** Construction beginning Spring 2023.
- **Fifth Street-Farmer to College Streetscape:** Construction expected to begin Summer 2023
- **Mill Avenue - Rio Salado Parkway to University Drive Streetscape:** Design beginning in Spring 2023. First construction phase beginning in 2024.

**IMPACT:** "Refreshing Downtown Tempe is so valuable," says Donna Kennedy, Tempe economic development director. "Not only does it help us retain the great businesses we already have here — some of which have been here for decades — but knowing that the City of Tempe values the downtown enough to continue to invest in it speaks volumes to potential new businesses, from restaurants and retailers to Fortune 500 companies."

Advancing Technology, Maricopa County Community College District, and the main campus of Arizona State University (with more than 65,000 students).

ASU at Mesa City Center has been significant in the revitalization of Downtown Mesa, bringing attention to the area with the MIX Center, the newly coined Sidney Poitier New American Film School and other programs within the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, as well as the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering.

"ASU is going to continue to add more buildings," Giles says. "[The City Center] is a great location for them because it's just a few Light Rail stations from the Tempe campus."

Gilbert's downtown Heritage District houses Park University, University of Arizona and the University of Arizona College of Nursing — all in a collective building.

"We did a ribbon cutting with [the College of Nursing] in December," Peterson says. "And they are so excited to be in that space and we're really excited for

them to have the programs that they have there because they're doing an integrative nursing program that I don't think is being done any place else, maybe even in the country."

### Mixed-use momentum

Mixed-use may not be new to downtown development, considering square footage is often scarce, but Phoenix East Valley downtowns are adding their own special touches to the trend.

"I think the most exciting [mixed-use project] for me is the 9.1-acre site just north of the power line that's bordered by Juniper and Gilbert Roads that closed in July," Peterson says. "And we're hoping that that project will break ground a little bit later this year. It's going to have 170,000 square feet of office space, 30,000 square feet of retail and restaurant, a boutique hotel and 288 units of residential."

Over on the south end of Gilbert's downtown, is the "south anchor," a 300,000-square-foot, mixed-use development with residential and

amenities on the ground floor, according to Dan Henderson, director of economic development for the Town of Gilbert.

Of course, Tempe's much-discussed, mixed-use jewel is 100 Mill. The 286,990-square-foot, 15-story, class AA office tower boasts an onsite hotel, conference room, roof-top amenities and more.

In Chandler, Moyers points to the city's mixed-use Overstreet development, a 31,804 square-foot, mixed-use project. "Phase one of Overstreet includes a new movie theater — Look Cinemas — with a two-story building that has retail on the bottom and office on the top," she says.

In Mesa, Caliber has been integral in mixed-use activity, adding 10 buildings and an estimated 160,000 square feet of mixed-use space.

### On the horizon

The European Renaissance that produced countless art, literary and other works is difficult to condense into a single story, and it's not much different when appraising all the downtown projects proliferating Tempe, Gilbert, Mesa and Chandler — and more is yet to come.

"A lot of the focus that we're going to see in the future is the expansion of our downtown to the South," Moyers says. "Now that our downtown core is completely filled, we see developers who are interested in continuing the success of the downtown further to the south."

For Gilbert, the focus remains on providing a mix of retail — especially restaurant options — throughout the Heritage District.

"[Residents] have been asking for amenities, and that's been our goal all along," Peterson says, "to be able to bring these to the Heritage District, and in other areas of the town too, but the Heritage District is definitely a gem for us."

Adds Donna Kennedy, Tempe economic development director, "People like coming [to Tempe] because of the number of things you can do once you've arrived. You can climb a mountain or go paddleboarding on your lunch hour, have happy hour right next to your office, or even walk out the door to a special event like the Tempe Festival of the Arts. It makes coming to work fun." **AB**



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# SEMICONDUCTOR LOCOMOTION

If ever there was a bullet train making its way through the PHX East Valley, it's the semiconductor industry, fueling economic development at an alarming rate

By ERIN THORBURN

**R**emember the children's story "The Little Engine that Could" about a loveable locomotive who chanted, "I think I can, I think I can," to get itself up the hill? Now, imagine a train making its way through the Phoenix East Valley — but instead of repeating "I think I can," it's screaming, "I already am!" This is the story of the PHX East Valley "semiconductor train."

Even before the CHIPS and Science Act was signed into law last August, the East Valley's semiconductor and semiconductor packaging industry was moving full speed ahead. In fact, in 2022, Technavio reported the semiconductor chip packaging market will total somewhere around \$487.11 billion between 2020 and 2025.

### The semiconductor train has left the station

For those not well acquainted with semiconductor packaging, the process involves creating a support case that protects against damage and/or corrosion to the semiconductor in the final stages of the manufacturing process. With this explanation in mind, combined with knowledge of the investment semiconductor companies have made thus far, it's no wonder semiconductor packaging facilities are eagerly populating the East Valley.


But, even prior to the arrival of notable East Valley semiconductor institutions such as Intel, Fujifilm, Mitsubishi Chemical, Amkor Technology, LG, Yield

Engineering Systems and JX Nippon Mining & Metals USA and others, there was Motorola.

"[Motorola] really set the stage for what we were about to become many years later," says William Jabjiniak, director of economic development for City of Mesa.

Next to Motorola, Jabjiniak explains that Intel is a significant piece of the East Valley's semiconductor story. In addition to being part of the region's foundation for semiconductor manufacturing and packaging, they continue to be part of the market's expansion.

"Intel has innovated and invested in the East Valley for more than 40 years," says Tom Rucker, vice president of technology development at Intel Corporation,



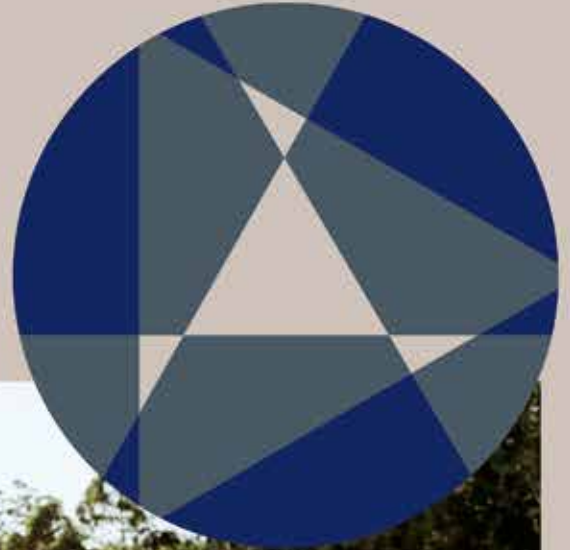
**IMPACT PLAYER:** Construction equipment prepares the site for two new chip factories at Intel Corporation's Ocotillo campus in Chandler. The \$20 billion pricetag represents the largest private-sector investment in Arizona history. (Photo courtesy of Intel Corporation)





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# EAST VALLEY PARTNERSHIP



Chris Camacho



Katie Hobbs



William Jabjiniak



Rezwan Lateef



James Murphy



Tom Rucker

“helping to establish an ecosystem of innovation known as the ‘Silicon Desert,’ which includes Intel suppliers, customers, entrepreneurs and other organizations working in the semiconductor industry to advance technology. This long history of innovation is what makes Arizona and the East Valley a prime location for further investment in advanced semiconductor packaging.”

## A powerful workforce engine

The East Valley’s longevity in technology and advanced manufacturing is largely responsible for attracting semiconductor packaging companies — like Yield Engineering System — but it’s not the only reason.

“You have this large infrastructure that is prepared for semiconductor, high-tech type of development,” says Rezwan Lateef, president of Yield Engineering. “And that leads to the three areas that we considered when we were looking to relocate.”

In addition to longevity in the market and a solid infrastructure, Yield Engineering was also looking for a region that contained a robust labor pool.

“When you think about why a business locates to a certain spot, it used to be how big of a check you used to write,” Jabjiniak says. “Not anymore. Today it’s more about your workforce.”

In September 2022, Chris Camacho, president and CEO of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) shared with Az Business that, “100,000 jobs in the metro market [are] tied to Arizona’s semiconductor industry.”

Of course, it’s not only the volume of workforce that beckons a semiconductor packaging presence to the East Valley, it’s also the quality of talent within that labor pool.

“You have a large university in-house,” Lateef says, “and you have tech schools as well, that are producing a wide variety of high-tech [doctorates] and scientists. You also have operators and technicians.”

## A connection to the supply-chain train

As a thank you to the East Valley for its readily-available talent and proven staying power, the semiconductor and semiconductor packaging markets are — in

development and advancement of the semiconductor industry, and a tremendous growth opportunity for the U.S.”

Added to the semiconductor packaging ecosystem that’s repairing and fueling the supply chain, are its suppliers, manufacturers and sub-suppliers, according to James Murphy, CEO of Willmeng. “The tide rises together in the communities that are good to work with and when economic development is on board,” he says. “And we certainly have that rising tide in the Southeast Valley.”

## There's no sign of a caboose yet

The influx of Phoenix East Valley’s semiconductor and semiconductor packaging economic development has, unsurprisingly, not only caught the eye of major companies and trickle-down suppliers, manufactures and sub-suppliers considering a move to Arizona. It was recently announced that SEMI® — a global industry association that represents the electronics manufacturing and design supply chain — has opted to host its SEMICON West conference on a rotating basis in Arizona and has already solidified 2025 and 2029. Currently, SEMI connects more than 2,500 member companies and 1.3 million professionals worldwide.

“We’re proud to welcome SEMICON West to Arizona!” says Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs. “Arizona has become a global leader in chip manufacturing and innovation, with rapid growth across our entire semiconductor ecosystem. We look forward to joining with local partners and SEMICON West to welcome industry leaders from around the globe and showcase why Arizona has become the world’s leading destination for new chip investments.” **AB**



turn — fueling the region’s economy. Plus, the semiconductor supply chain, sorely impacted by COVID-19, is also benefiting from the development boom happening throughout Phoenix East Valley.

“The CHIPS Act has helped with [the semiconductor] supply chain, and I think you’ll continue to see companies that want be closer to the big primes with Taiwan Semiconductor and Intel,” Jabjiniak says, “and think about the demand those two chip manufacturers make, plus who was already here.”

Adds Rucker, “Advanced packaging is a key enabling technology for the continued



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# BLAST OFF

Aerospace and defense is shooting through the stratosphere of the PHX East Valley, bringing abundant new business and jobs to the region

By ERIN THORBURN

**A**erospace and defense may have started off as one small step for Greater Phoenix, but has now become one giant leap for Arizona. According to the Arizona Commerce Authority, the Grand Canyon State ranks in the top five for aerospace and defense manufacturing employment, houses 56,500-plus aerospace and defense workers, and contains a military talent pipeline of upwards of 625,000 service members and veterans.

“Arizona has long been a leader in the aerospace and defense sector, and the industry continues to experience rapid growth in our state,” says Sandra Watson, president and CEO of the Arizona Commerce Authority. “Many global leaders have a large presence in Arizona.”

Watson goes on to highlight some of the state’s major players, including Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Honeywell, Boeing, CP Technologies, Lockheed Martin, BAE

Systems, Gulfstream Aerospace and more.

And, many of these heavy hitters — and others — have found their home in the Phoenix East Valley.

“The East Valley has a lot of the key ingredients we look for as a business,” says Katie Yursky, director of International Apache Programs for The Boeing Company, “that are particularly important to the aerospace and defense industry.”

### Out of this world workforce

One of the most important factors that companies like Boeing look for is a healthy, highly trained workforce.

“There’s a lot of energy and excitement around aerospace and defense here in the East Valley,” Yursky says. “And part of what makes that so exciting is the partnerships that we have with our education and workforce partners.”

Boeing’s educational and community partnerships and steady workforce pipeline no doubt contribute to the company’s longevity in the Phoenix East Valley. “We’re celebrating our 40th year, which we’re really proud of,” Yursky says.

In addition to Arizona State University’s aerospace, aeronautical and astronautical engineering programs and Chandler-Gilbert Community College’s aviation maintenance programs, several other Arizona universities and community colleges offer programs

related to aerospace and defense, including University of Arizona (UArizona), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Pima Community College.

“Arizona is also an ideal location for aerospace and defense companies because of the extensive supply chain, pro-business climate and proximity to some of the world’s largest economies,” Watson says.

### Smooth landings

Just beginning their journey in the East Valley, Virgin Galactic announced plans to open a new manufacturing facility in Mesa, according to Watson, who says the facility will serve as the final assembly point for the space travel company’s Delta class spaceships, creating 400 highly skilled aerospace engineering and manufacturing jobs.

“Our spaceship final assembly factory is key to accelerating the production of our Delta fleet, enabling a rapid increase in flight capacity that will drive our revenue growth,” says Michael Colglazier, CEO of Virgin Galactic. “We’re thrilled to expand into the Greater Phoenix area which is home to outstanding aerospace talent, and we look forward to growing our team and fleet at our new facility.”

In addition to new arrivals to Phoenix East Valley, there are many existing aerospace and defense companies that are







**Michael Colglazier**



**James Murphy**



**Katie Yursky**



**Sandra Watson**

expanding throughout the region.

James Murphy, CEO of Willmeng has witnessed the growth of one such company — Northrop Grumman — firsthand. “Our original contract for Northrop Grumman was for a swing space in Chandler,” he says. “Then, the next thing you know, there was an RFQ issued from Northrop Grumman to renovate their existing Price Road campus.”

What happened next, Murphy describes, was a pause on the project when Northrop Grumman pondered: “Does it make sense to renovate or should we just build a new campus?”

#### **Paying dividends**

The result was indeed a new 633,000-square-foot, build-to-suit campus containing Northrop Grumman’s office and manufacturing facility which supports national defense and aerospace.

The success of Northrop Grumman’s Chandler facility led to the completion of its expansion of the satellite manufacturing facility in Gilbert, adding 120,000 square feet to the existing 135,000-square-foot facility.

“In that project,” Murphy explains, “the heaviest tilt panels ever recorded in the continental U.S. were used. They’re two feet thick and 87 feet tall.”

In September 2022, Boeing expanded, opening its new 155,000-square-foot Advanced Composite Fabrication Center.

As for what comes next, Murphy hints that we’ll see more projects headed to Phoenix East Valley in 2023, but due to NDAs, these exciting developments will have to remain under wraps for now.

In the interim, this industry remains a pivotal cog in the economic development ecosystem for Phoenix East Valley and the state.

“We have a lot of really key champions in the community — champions within different organizations — and also elected officials who see the value that aerospace and defense brings to the East Valley,” Yursky says. **AB**

## **MESA’S AEROSPACE AND DEFENSE MECCA**

**CLOSER LOOK:** Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and surrounding area has become a thriving hub for aerospace and defense activity and economic development. No discussion focusing on Phoenix East Valley aerospace and defense is complete without a nod to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport’s aerospace and defense corridor. Spanning 35-square-miles surrounding Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport are a host of leading global aerospace and defense companies, which include:

- Able Aerospace, A Textron Company
- ACSS (Aviation Communication & Surveillance Systems)
- Aerocast, Inc.
- Ascent Aviation Services

- BAE Systems
- The Boeing Company
- CAE Oxford Aviation Academy
- Cessna
- Embraer
- Gulfstream
- Heliponents
- Inter-Coastal Electronics
- KP Aviation
- Lockheed Martin
- Marsh Aviation
- MD Helicopters
- Mercury Systems
- Nammo Defense Systems
- Northrop Grumman
- Precision Heli-Support
- SEEOP
- Silverado Cable
- Times Microwave Systems
- Unical Aerospace
- Virgin Galactic
- WireMasters



# HIDDEN GEMS

We ask some of the PHX East Valley's most innovative leaders to share their favorite spots from their cities and towns.



**Brigitte Peterson**  
Mayor // Gilbert

"A hidden gem I love in Gilbert is the Riparian Preserve! It's located behind the Southeast Regional Library at Greenfield and Guadalupe. This beautiful and peaceful location provides the perfect spot to enjoy nature whether you're walking alone, with your family or with your dog. The Riparian is home to many types of birds that visitors can see and feed, plus turtles, rabbits and squirrels to watch and fish to catch (and release)."



**Corey Woods**  
Mayor // Tempe

"My hidden gem is The Salted Knot. A delicious baked pretzel from owners and Tempe residents Chad and Maria that I always get at festivals and street fairs like Tempe Festival of the Arts and 2nd Sundays on Mill. Learn more about it at [thesaltedknotaz.com](http://thesaltedknotaz.com)."

**Ginny Dickey**  
Mayor // Fountain Hills

"A new Fountain Hills shop that doubles as entertainment is Atticus Books and Music located at Plaza Fountainside. Wander into browse the shelves, order whatever you need and enjoy the view. Stay to flip through the albums that evoke instant nostalgia, check out the posters and chat with the owner and staff. Get your book, then grab a sandwich, and sit on a bench as the Famous Fountain marks the hour!"



**John Giles**  
Mayor // Mesa

"Hope's Frybread. Hope learned how to make Navajo tacos and frybread, and she was exceptionally good at it. And one thing led to another, and she's now opened a very authentic Navajo taco, brick and mortar restaurant on Mesa Drive, just south of Main Street. And it's delicious!"







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**YUSRA B. BOKHARI**  
yusra.bokhari@gknet.com | (602) 530-8089



**TIMOTHY D. BROWN**  
tim.brown@gknet.com | (602) 530-8530



**JAMES B. CONNOR**  
jim.connor@gknet.com | (602) 530-8524



**JENNIFER A. CRANSTON**  
jennifer.cranston@gknet.com | (602) 530-8191



**D. LEE DECKER**  
lee.decker@gknet.com | (602) 530-8135



**RODNEY Q. JARVIS**  
rod.jarvis@gknet.com | (602) 530-8036  
**Phoenix East Valley Partnership Member**



**STUART S. KIMBALL**  
stuart.kimball@gknet.com | (602) 530-8425



**CHRIS S. LEASON**  
chris.leason@gknet.com | (602) 530-8059



**BRUCE B. MAY**  
bruce.may@gknet.com | (602) 530-8042



**PETER J. MOOLENAAR**  
peter.moolenaar@gknet.com | (602) 530-8145



**SARAH E. MYERS**  
sarah.myers@gknet.com | (602) 530-8252



**KORTNEY OTTEN**  
kortney.otten@gknet.com | (602) 530-8141



**MICHAEL R. ROSS**  
mike.ross@gknet.com | (602) 530-8498



**DALE C. SCHIAN**  
dale.schian@gknet.com | (602) 530-8140



**ERIK C. SMITH**  
erik.smith@gknet.com | (602) 530-8351



**WILLIAM C.B. UNDERWOOD**  
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