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Marana in two counties

> **Annexation for development extends its borders into Pinal** <

By Aaron Mackey

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Marana became the first Pima County community to cross county borders last week when the Town Council approved annexing 440 acres of Pinal County land along Interstate 10.

The land, just north of the county line and east of I-10, is part of a planned 1,780-acre development called The Villages of Tortolita.

The development — which will include a mix of 6,500 houses, townhomes and apartments — will run from above the county line south to the Trico-Marana Road interchange.

Marana's previous northern limit was the Pima County line.

For the past several years, both Marana and Oro Valley have been considering annexations into Pinal.

Last summer Oro Valley began preliminary discussions to annex 45 square miles of state trust land in Pinal County. At the same time, Marana was already moving forward on its plan with The Villages of Tortolita.

For Marana, deciding to annex into Pinal made sense in this instance because a majority of the development already lies within Marana, said Town Manager Mike Reuwsaat.

"Each entity has to decide if such an annexation makes good community sense," Reuwsaat wrote in an e-mail last week.

Did you know . . .

- Marana will be the first community in Pima County to cross into Pinal County.
- The move into Pinal by Marana is nothing new for the county. Already, Apache Junction, Queen Creek, Winkelman and Hayden have some presence in Pinal and another county.
- In recent years, booming growth near Phoenix and Tucson has trickled over into Pinal County, where land is available for development, houses are cheaper and water is more plentiful.
- The county is the sixth-fastest-growing in the country and is expected to surpass Pima County's population in 20 to 30 years, according to officials.
- In the last year, Pinal grew by 13 percent. It's grown by 50 percent since 2000.
- While the county has only 300,000 residents now, it's expected to reach 1.4 million by 2025.

Oro Valley has no immediate plans to annex into Pinal, said Bob Kovitz, town spokesman.

The town is waiting to see what the future holds for state land just north of Pima County and will continue to be a part of the discussion, he said.

Any move made by Oro Valley would be for the good of the community, Kovitz said.

"We don't annex for the sake of annexing," he said. "Our interest is in orderly development."

Placing the entire Villages of Tortolita development within Marana town limits allows building permits and construction regulations to be streamlined for the developer, town officials have said in the past.

Also, police and infrastructure needs, such as roads and parks, can be better handled when the whole development is part of the town, Reuwsaat said.

The proposal passed 6-0 with Vice Mayor Herb Kai abstaining.

Scottsdale-based developer Michael Zipprick, president of HBCI Inc., wants to create a mixed-used community where people work, shop and eat within walking distance of their homes, according to plans filed with the town.

The project will feature higher-end neighborhoods, storefront retail shops and restaurants, office space and apartments. The developer also plans to build an industrial corridor along I-10.

Different aspects of the development will be divided up into smaller areas, called villages.

The plan is to connect the villages through open space, sidewalks and parks.

The development will offer residents many options in terms of housing, not to mention commercial and industrial opportunities, said Lisa Shafer, a town planner.

"It's got a lot of different components," she said.

During a study session on Tuesday the Town Council learned about the details of the development. The council is expected to consider approving the development's specific plan during a regular meeting next week.

Several other towns and cities in Arizona, including Sedona and Apache Junction, already straddle county lines.

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