

# West Valley VIEW

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## Rec corridor 1 step closer to reality

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A 32-plus mile stretch of the Agua Fria River moved one important step closer to becoming a recreational paradise when the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors recently approved the Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan.

The supervisors' vote early this month was most loudly celebrated by Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor, a nonprofit advocacy group formed two years ago to promote the massive West Valley Recreation Corridor project.

"The board members need to be commended for pushing this across the line, and for the foresight that goes with that," said Friends' President Roger Baele. "This master plan is going to serve as the guide for any future developments that go on in that river corridor in an integrated way."

The yeas vote, he added, "was the most important event in the life of this project so far. Now the next stage is the implementation phase, and that's what we're very excited about. That's where we're going to start to see this thing come together bit by bit."

Baele's vision is to create over the next 20 years a multi-use, non-motorized recreation corridor connecting residential areas, parks schools and commerce in and around the project site. The Friends will provide input on planning and design, help to facilitate public events, identify and secure funding sources and promote adjacent recreational uses.

Initiated by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, the Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan extends from the Gila River to the New Waddell Dam at Lake Pleasant. It winds through unincorporated Maricopa County and the jurisdictions of Avondale, El Mirage, Glendale, Peoria, Phoenix, Surprise and Youngtown.

### **More bang for the buck**

Leaders, citizens and businesses in these communities have for seven years worked with the Friends to come up with a comprehensive master plan, Baele said.

The challenge was to simultaneously address flood control and public safety concerns; add recreational opportunities and open space; accommodate existing economic activities; and potentially transform the

floodplain designation for more than 3,000 acres of land along the river to mitigate flooding and support recreational and other development.

“The potential for this project is extraordinary,” Baele said. “It provides health and wellness benefits, economic development opportunities and regional connectivity. It will be a landmark amenity not only for the West Valley, but for all of Maricopa County.

“But because there are so many moving parts on this thing, I was afraid it might get knocked out of the box. So I am very glad that they moved it forward. We’ll be able to get a whole lot more bang for the money that’s going to be spent on it now.”

For information, or to join Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor, call 623-695-4602 or visit [www.friendsofwvrc.org](http://www.friendsofwvrc.org) on the Internet.

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