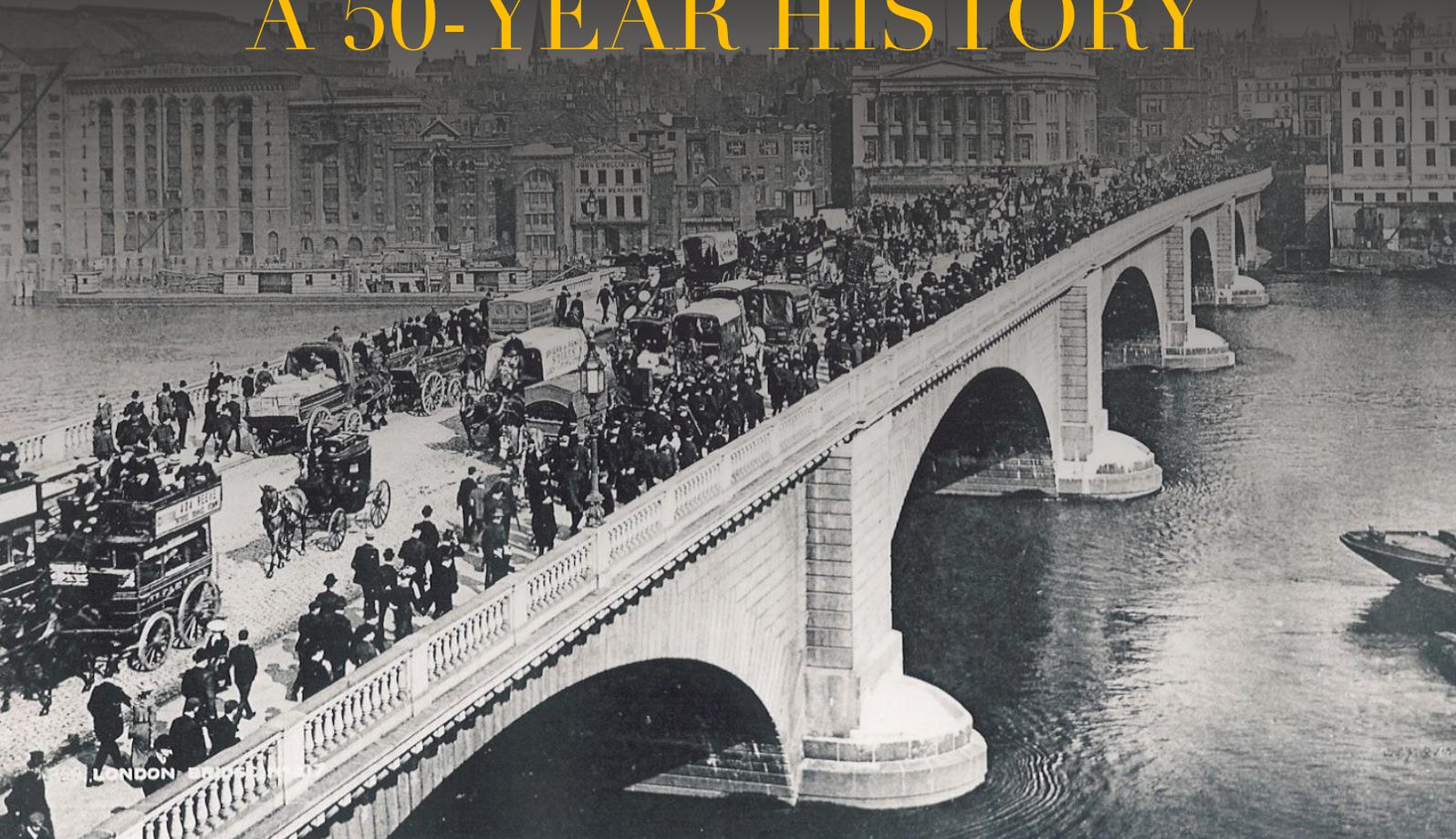
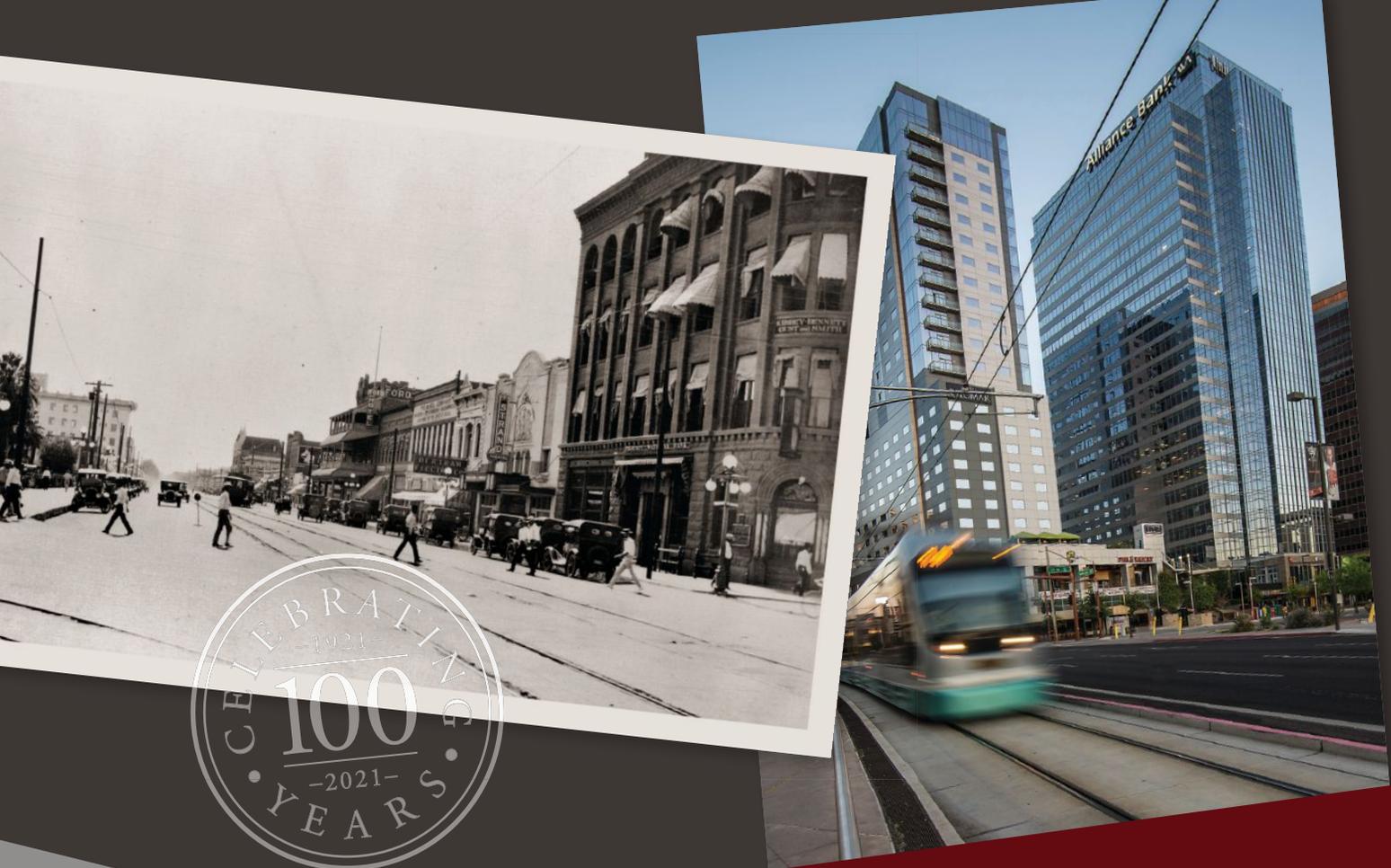


# ARIZONA CITY&TOWN

A publication of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns | Winter 2021

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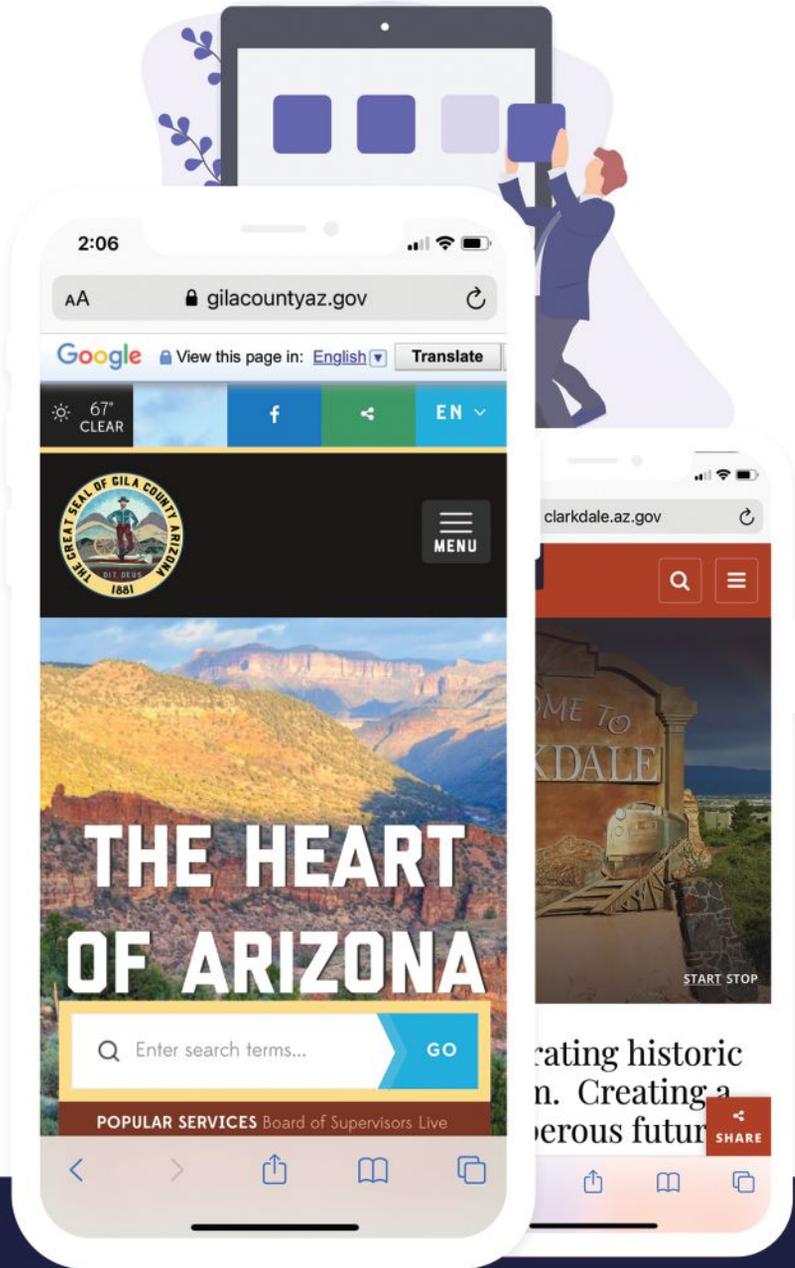
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*As of November 3, 2021*

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Arizona City & Town is published by Innovative Publishing. 10629 Henning Way, Suite 8 Louisville, Kentucky 40241 Phone 844.423.7272 Fax 888.780.2241

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GO LAKE HAVASU

## Arizona's Historical Sights

Throughout its 110-year history, Arizona has experienced some compelling stories come to life. From card game naming ceremonies to gold mining settlements, there are so many interesting places with impressive histories whose legacies can still be seen today.

In this issue of *Arizona City & Town*, we take a deep dive into one of those histories with a look at the London Bridge in Lake Havasu City. Development and tourism are important to many Arizona cities today, and this article exhibits just why that is. Lake Havasu City's founding, and its showcase of London Bridge, is a perfect example of how development and tourism can work together to set up cities for success.

In the last 50 years, Lake Havasu City has built itself into a strong Arizona city that we can all be proud of. Take a look through the article to see all that surrounds the bridge, and learn why it is one of the many must-see attractions on any Arizona city and town road trip.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Thomas Belshe".

Tom Belshe  
League Executive Director

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# LONDON BRIDGE

## A 50-YEAR HISTORY

A thriving city of more than 50,000 residents has sprung up around beautiful Lake Havasu, but just 50 years ago, there wasn't much around. Surrounded by the roaring Colorado River and Arizona wilderness, founder Robert P. McCulloch saw potential in the emptiness of the area and set out to develop a desert oasis for generations to come.

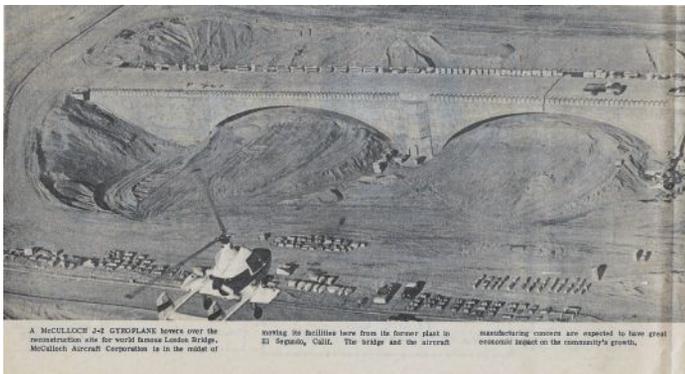


Following the construction of London Bridge and a tourist boom, the city of Lake Havasu incorporated and created a place for people of all ages to celebrate what the city has to offer. Visitors can go boating, hiking, kayaking, fishing and golfing with the historic London Bridge and mini lighthouses as a backdrop.

What was once a bare desert has turned into a warm-weather haven for those wanting to escape the big cities. In its 50-year history, the founders of Lake Havasu City took empty land and provided a home to thousands with the help of an old bridge and the promise of what's to come.

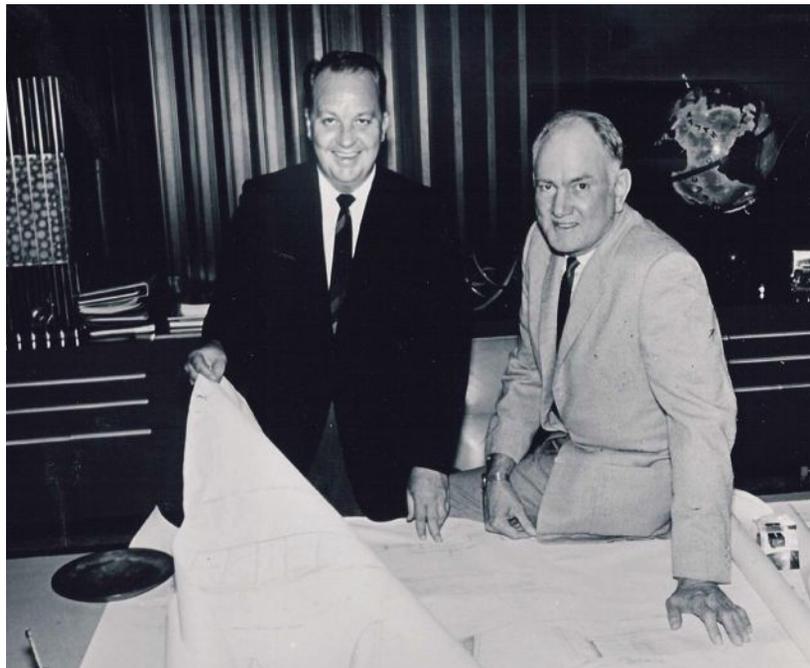
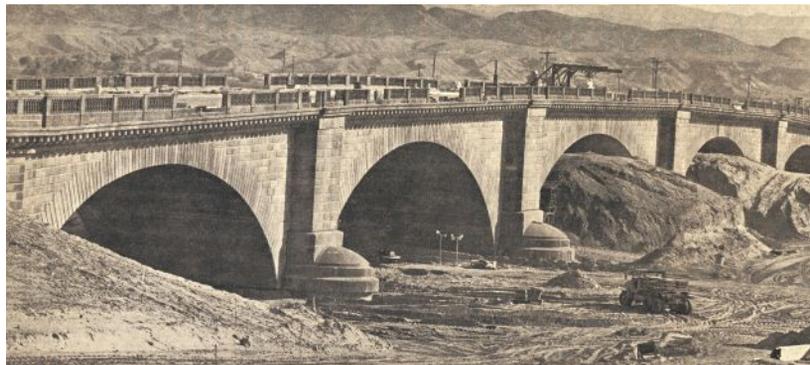
## BLAST TO THE PAST

While it is hard to imagine London Bridge anywhere but in blue Lake Havasu, it has not always called the city home. Named after its home city, London Bridge was built on the River Thames in London, where it stood for 138 years! Bridges were built across the river for thousands of years, but after the introduction of the automobile in the early 20th century and a population boom in the city, London Bridge began sinking.



A McCulloch J-40 gyroplane hovers over the reconstruction site for world famous London Bridge, McCulloch Aircraft Corporation is in the midst of moving its facilities here from its former plant in El Segundo, Calif. The bridge and the aircraft manufacturing concerns are expected to have great economic impact on the community's growth.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GO BUTCH WOOD



As London Bridge began falling down, the city of London decided to disassemble and auction it in 1967. The founder of Lake Havasu City won the bridge with a \$2.4 million bid, a cool \$19 million today, and set out to use it as the centerpiece of a new urban center in Arizona.

The pieces of the bridge were shipped across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal, to the port of Los Angeles, before

traveling over land to reach Lake Havasu City. The first part of London Bridge reached the United States in 1968, and the U.S. Bureau of Customs declared the bridge an antique. The entire process of getting the bridge to the future bridge site took three years.

## **THE FOUNDING OF A CITY**

In the dry Mohave Desert, a cool oasis was created in the 1930s by the Parker Dam on the famous Colorado River. This was



Lake Havasu. Recognizing the beauty and potential of the lake, Robert McCulloch had a vision of a city surrounding the oasis, and with the help of the Disneyland Park designer C.V. Wood, he drew up the plans for Lake Havasu City.

The city was originally just over 16,000 acres, compared to its almost 30,000 acres today, and McCulloch needed to attract potential residential buyers for all the land he had leased. After purchasing London Bridge, McCulloch knew it was just the attraction needed to bring in tourists and buyers alike. So he spent another \$7 million, and the next three years, constructing the bridge in the heart of the new city.

## **CONSTRUCTING THE LARGEST PUZZLE**

Over the three years, London Bridge was assembled to look exactly as it did on the River Thames. Visitors today can see faded numbers on the stones, as the City of London numbered each piece so that it could be reconstructed anywhere like a giant puzzle! The bridge was reassembled in Lake Havasu with a steel framework and granite alongside the original stones. The bridge was built on dry land, and once assembly was complete, the land under the bridge was excavated to create Bridgewater Channel. In 1971, the official opening of London Bridge was attended by tens of thousands of American and British citizens.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GO LAKE HAVASU

London Bridge began to draw visitors and helped to develop Lake Havasu City into the place we know and love today. In order to gain interest in the new bridge, McCulloch chartered free flights to Lake Havasu City so visitors could see for themselves the new and improved London Bridge. Visitors also got the chance to be the first to put in an offer to buy land in a new and trendy desert locale. Within ten years of the start of reconstruction, the last bit of land in Lake Havasu City was sold, and the city incorporated in 1978.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GO LAKE HAVASU



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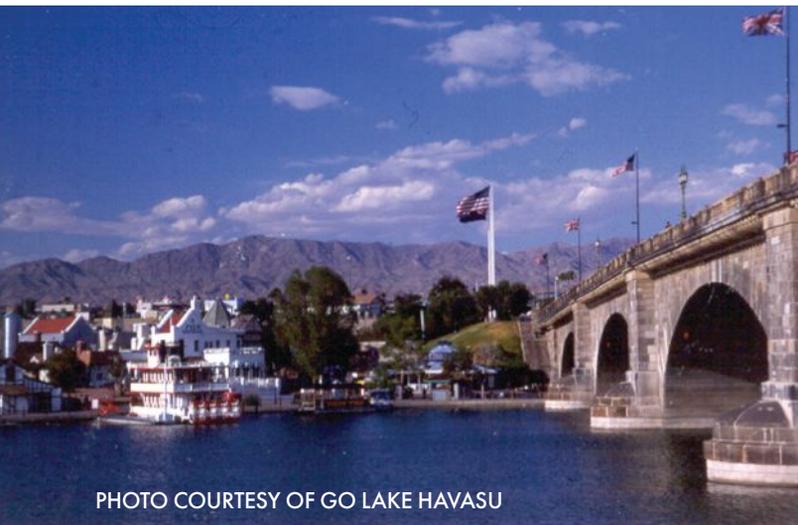


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## LONDON BRIDGE TODAY

To accompany the new bridge, McCulloch built the English Village. The recreation of a quaint English town brings the perfect blend of Americanness and Britishness to compliment what the bridge currently and historically represents. The English Village is a great place for visitors to shop, eat and walk along the channel and bask in the presence of the beautiful London Bridge.

Visitors can walk across the bridge to get a unique look at the lake and end up at the Nautical Beachfront Resort to see the only beachfront hotel in Arizona. When the Arizona heat

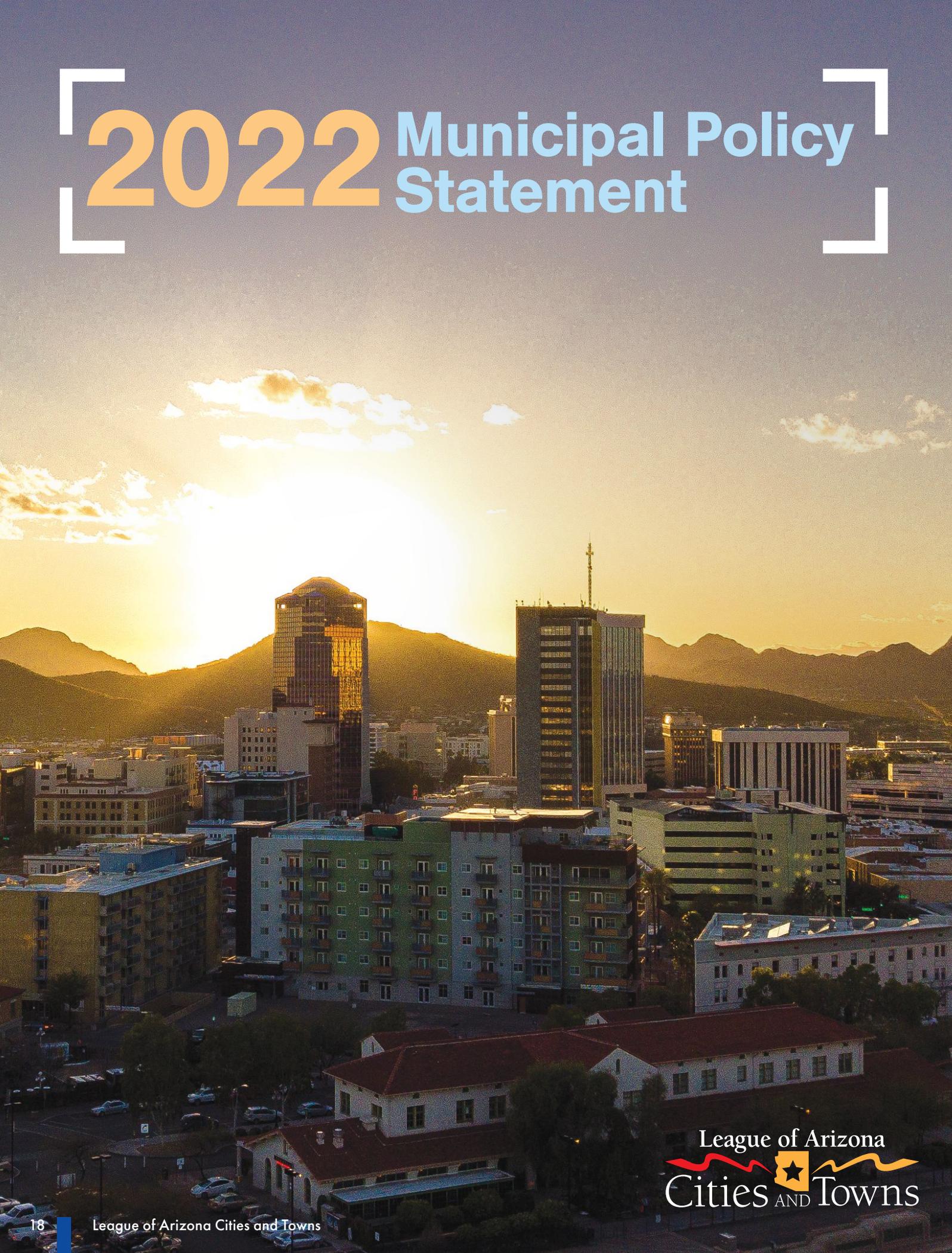
becomes too much, visitors can also rent a boat for the family and get up close to the view that made Robert McCulloch choose the lake as the site of his new development.

The vision the founders had of Lake Havasu City has come to life, with London Bridge standing as a reminder to members of the community of how much they have created in the past 50 years. The bridge remains one of the largest attractions in Arizona, attracting over 800,000 visitors each year. To learn more about London Bridge and Lake Havasu, visit [www.golakehavasu.com](http://www.golakehavasu.com).



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# 2022 Municipal Policy Statement



## Overview

Cities and towns in Arizona are home to nearly 80% of the state's residents and more than 90% of the state's business activity. They are the level of government closest to the people, most accessible to them and most responsive to their needs. They provide the vast majority of first responder—police and fire—services and are national leaders in business development, government efficiency and quality-of-life amenities. Arizona's cities and towns are an essential part of the continuum of government in our state.

## Core Principles

The League of Arizona Cities and Towns is guided by two core principles:

- 1) Preserve local decision-making; and
- 2) Protect shared revenues.

## Legislative Priorities

The League supports legislation respecting the role of municipal government and its core principles and opposes measures that undermine them. The following policy priorities were developed with input from our members, approved by the League's Resolutions Committee, and will ensure that cities and towns can maintain the high-quality municipal government services that businesses and citizens rely on.

- Work with housing and homelessness advocates to find long-term solutions to the homelessness epidemic in our communities.
- Provide flexibility to local governments to amend adopted budgets to respond to unforeseen challenges or development opportunities with proper notice and community oversight.
- Support a statutory mechanism to dissolve water and wastewater special taxing districts once an area is annexed or incorporated if the city or town provides the same services administered by the special district.
- Allow local governments to reasonably regulate the use of fireworks during specified period of time.

## ISSUES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Protecting State Collected Local Revenue

There are four types of state collected revenue that is distributed to local governments. Those revenue categories are income tax collections also known as Voter Approved Local Revenue (VALR), sales tax collections, Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF), and Vehicle License Taxes (VLT).

In many states across the country, local governments have their own local income tax. In contrast, municipalities in Arizona are supported by state collected local revenue, approved by the voters in 1972 by an initiative that provides a pro-rata share of 15% of the state income tax collections. For the past 50 years, our communities have relied on VALR to provide public services like police and fire, water and wastewater, parks and libraries, and economic development.

During the 2021 legislative session, our local governments faced the most substantial impact on VALR in its 50-year history with the legislature's proposed income tax cuts. Fortunately, the League, key stakeholders, and a handful of key legislators were able to help cities mitigate impacts on VALR by increasing our share of VALR from 15% to 18%.

The League of Arizona Cities and Towns firmly believes that strong cities make a strong state. Following one of our two core principles – preserving state collected local revenue and protecting local decision-making – we vow to continuously fight to preserve local revenue distributions so our local governments can continue making Arizona a great state to work and live in.



## Homelessness & Housing Affordability

While homelessness rates have declined over the past decade, the state is seeing an uptick in individuals without stable housing. On any given day, nearly 11,000 individuals experience homelessness in Arizona<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 20% of these cases represent people who are considered chronically homeless.

Arizona cities and towns have responded to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic by providing relief in the form of rental assistance for both renters and landlords. Utility and eviction prevention assistance programs have served to keep those who may otherwise be at risk of becoming homeless in

stable housing. Preventing and addressing the homelessness crisis remains top of mind for local governments. Cities and towns have implemented initiatives at the local level to better respond to and address homelessness, including:

- o Funding supportive housing programs;
- o Training law enforcement to collaborate with social service providers;
- o Encouraging affordable housing developments;
- o Establishing relationships with schools to assist students and families experiencing homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

Despite local and regional efforts, the pandemic has exacerbated an existing housing affordability crisis. Senior populations and low wage workers have a more difficult time absorbing rent increases – often being forced to choose between housing and medical expenses or basic needs.<sup>3</sup> Lack of affordable housing and soaring rent prices are resulting in cost-burdened households that are at high risk of being evicted.<sup>4</sup>

Homelessness is mobile and does not recognize municipal or county boundaries – addressing the issue fundamentally requires partnerships between the state, local governments, and continuum of care providers. The League is committed to working with lawmakers, housing organizations, advocates for the homeless, state agencies, and key stakeholders to seek legislative and non-legislative solutions to combat homelessness and address housing affordability.

1 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

2 Maricopa Association of Governments: Municipal Responses to Homelessness, Best Practices

3 Department of Economic Security: Homelessness in Arizona Annual Report 2020

4 City of Phoenix: Homeless Strategies Report

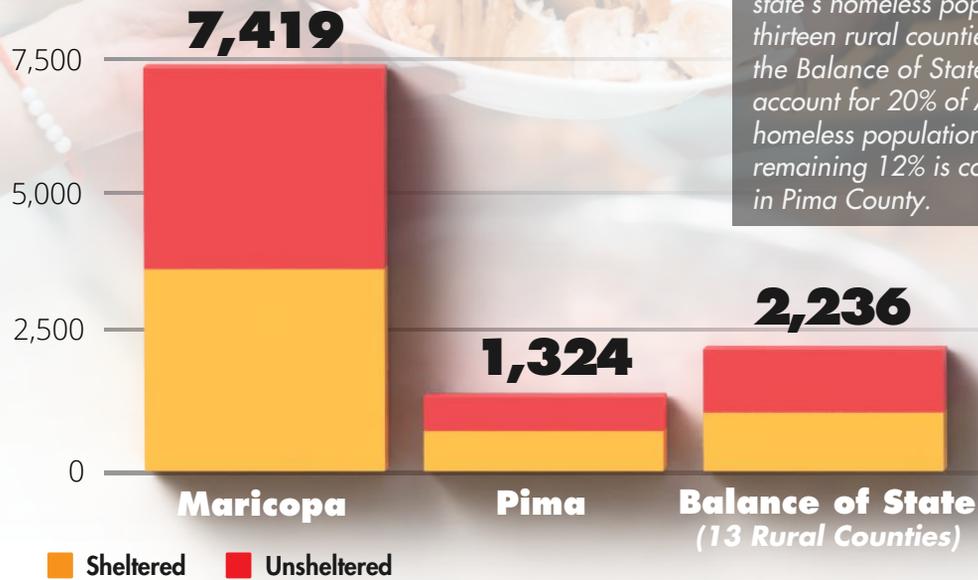


# HOMELESSNESS IN ARIZONA AT A GLANCE

## 2020 Point-in-Time Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless Count is an annual street and shelter count that determines the number of people experiencing homelessness. Every Continuum of Care is required to submit their PIT count to the U.S. Department of Housing.<sup>5</sup>

## Sheltered & Unsheltered Populations<sup>6,8,9</sup>



Urban communities in Maricopa County account for 67.5% of the state's homeless population. The thirteen rural counties comprising the Balance of State (BOS) account for 20% of Arizona's homeless population, while the remaining 12% is concentrated in Pima County.

### Arizona's 13 Rural Counties Key Takeaways:

- from 2019 to 2020, there was a 19.5% increase in number of individuals experiencing homelessness
- the most common reasons for homelessness are economic (loss of job), domestic (overcrowding or separation), & medical conditions
- 65% of those experiencing homelessness are male, over the age of 35<sup>10</sup>

### STATE HOMELESS POPULATION

While homelessness rates have decreased from post-recession levels when Arizona's homeless population neared 15,000, there have been consistent increases in homelessness rates since 2018. Today, half of those who experience homelessness are over age 50, compared to 37% in 2003.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>5</sup> [Regional Collaborative on Homelessness: Arizona Homelessness & Housing Background Materials](#)

<sup>6</sup> [RTPCH PIT](#)

<sup>7</sup> [TPCH 5-Year History](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Arizona Balance of State \(BOS\) 2020](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Maricopa Association of Governments PIT](#)

<sup>10</sup> [AZ Department of Housing, BOS 2020 Narrative Report](#)



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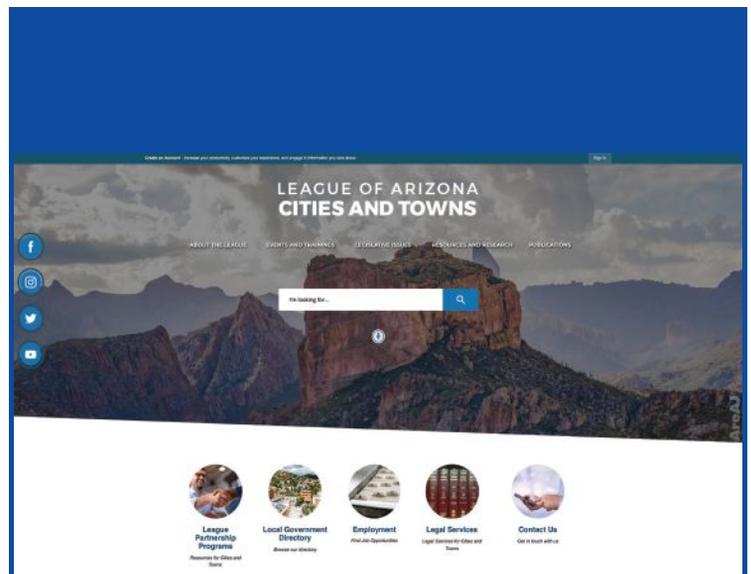
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