

**State of the Town of Queen Creek, Arizona**  
**By Mayor Gail Barney**  
**January 19, 2011**

---

As your Mayor, I have the privilege each year in January of delivering the annual State of the Town address on behalf of the Town Council.

This year has marked a transition from Mayor Sanders and a Town Council comprised of many long-time residents, to a Town Council filled with several relative newcomers to the community. I'm excited about the future of Queen Creek as we continue to move the Town forward for the betterment of all our citizens.

This past year we have seen considerable progress and change for our community, and I am pleased to re-cap 2010's accomplishments and the upcoming challenges we are looking forward to in 2011.

I'd like to thank my fellow Town Council members for their teamwork and dedication. This new Council formed just six months ago, has already made a number of important decisions and discussed many critical community issues.

While I have previously served on the Queen Creek Town Council for seven and a half years, the role of Mayor is new for me, and I am honored to serve in this capacity and appreciate greatly, the help and assistance my fellow council members continue to provide. The Mayor has no more authority, such as a "weighted vote" than any other council member, and in our form of government we really do need a strong team, with strong relationships to continue to make positive contributions to the community.

I'd like to also express my support to staff for their efforts in providing residents with top-quality services. Their assistance in working with this Council is a major factor that keeps Queen Creek a place that many people enjoy calling home.

### **Highlights of the Last Twelve Months**

The role of local government is critical to the day-to-day life of all Queen Creek's residents, influencing everything from road and fire safety to local shopping opportunities. We all work together to achieve the common vision of a Town built upon high standards and high levels of respect.

I'd like to highlight some of 2010's accomplishments that have made Queen Creek a leader among local governments, despite its smaller size.

### **Budget**

Despite a challenging economy, Queen Creek recognized the trend toward declining revenues early and has worked to restructure our budget. In 2010, a \$90.2 million budget was adopted, including nearly \$25 million for our capital program. This budget is down from last year's budget which was \$98 million, and was a drastic reduction from the nearly \$226.7 million that was budgeted for the 2008 fiscal year. The organization was restructured, collapsing departments and re-evaluating our priorities. Constantly seeking new opportunities and lots of advanced planning has ensured that the Town of Queen Creek remains financially sound and fiscally responsible.

## **Cost Savings and Alternative Funding**

This year the Town made great efforts to save money and find alternate funding sources, including receiving several grants, some of which I would like to highlight:

- Our Public Works Department negotiated an intergovernmental agreement with the Maricopa County Flood Control District for \$3.7 million in construction costs for the Sossaman basin and drainage project.
- The department also obtained a grant for \$180,000 from the Maricopa County “Small Cities Transportation Assistance Program” for the construction of Victoria Lane between Ellsworth Loop and Ellsworth roads.
- The Economic Development Department received a \$10,000 matching grant from the Arizona Department of Commerce to conduct a feasibility study for a business incubator. The study was conducted with plans to open QC Inc. in January 2011.
- The Town’s Information Technology Division is currently transitioning all Town staff to Google Mail, saving the community nearly \$50,000.
- Our Parks & Recreation Department received a Transportation Enhancement grant for \$610,000 for a multi-use path on the bank of the Queen Creek Wash from Desert Mountain Park to Ellsworth Road.
- More than 12,000 volunteer hours, equating to approximately \$231,000 were donated throughout various programs during the year. These valuable contributions to the community result in both financial savings as well as a positive experience for the many dedicated individuals who contribute their time and talents.

## **Growth and Economic Development**

Queen Creek worked toward and achieved several significant goals this year aiming to ensure the community’s future financial stability and providing services that residents said they want.

The Town approved an intergovernmental agreement with Rio Salado College for construction and operation of the Communiversity at Queen Creek. The Communiversity will be located on Ellsworth Road immediately north of the Queen Creek Library and is scheduled to be open for classes in fall 2013.

The *Shop Queen Creek* program, offered in partnership with the Queen Creek Chamber of Commerce and local businesses, expanded to include the first “Back to School” and “Shop Queen Creek for the Holidays” campaigns.

Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre hosted 99 individual events, with more than 27,000 spectators and participants. A variety of events and shows were held at the park including Arabian, reining cow horse, team roping, bull riding and gymkhana.

## **Transportation Projects**

In the transportation area we've seen several improvements to roads and traffic flow in the community.

Construction was started on the South Ellsworth Road from Cloud Road to Empire Boulevard. This work on this project is being completed through an intergovernmental agreement with Maricopa County Department of Transportation and Pinal County. This \$18 million project, \$10.5 million of which the Town is contributing from a state grant, is anticipated to be completed by June 2011.

The Queen Creek Wash Trail Connection project was completed between Hawes Road and Desert Mountain Park. This important link provides a continuous trail between Power Road and Desert Mountain Park.

The Town received a large grant to improve traffic signal timing for 12 traffic signals in the Town Center area as phase one, with phase two covering the rest of the community.

### **Resident Experiences**

This past year saw many new opportunities for residents to engage in community activities, encouraging our long-standing small-town tradition.

The Parks & Recreation Department coordinated a variety of special community events throughout the year, and many had record attendance in 2010. They also offered an average of 67 recreation classes to more than 300 participants each quarter. Additionally, this year marked the introduction of online registration for Parks & Recreation programs, making it easier for residents to participate in our wide variety of activities!

The Town hosted an ice cream social in June and a pancake breakfast in October. Residents took advantage of these opportunities to ask questions about Town issues, get information about current projects, learn safety tips, and enjoy time with friends and family.

We were also very pleased with community participation in our other annual events such as "Monsoon Madness" in July, the Halloween event - "Trunk or Treat" and our "Hometown Christmas" events. Each year, participation in our events continues to increase and I, along with the Council, are extremely pleased with our continued abilities to provide opportunities where the community can gather, in a positive, and family-friendly environment, something Queen Creek is known for valley-wide.

Additionally, Queen Creek continued to be innovative in 2010 in its communication with residents. Along with many improvements to the Town's website, we continued to enhance our Facebook and Twitter sites, providing opportunities for thousands of residents to participate in the community conversation.

This year the Founders Park Beautification project was completed, including installation of irrigation systems, new turf grass, split-rail fencing, borders, granite, and new plants. The final leg was made possible by the use of a 400+ volunteer group, along with Parks Maintenance and Facilities Maintenance staff. Volunteers also painted buildings, curbs, dug-outs, and armadas throughout the park.

We continue our development of our public safety and emergency services for the community. In 2010 we trained firefighters to safely install child safety seats in vehicles, sent 10 paramedics to pre-hospital trauma life support training, and deployed medical backpacks and hydration waist belts for firefighters responding to calls at hard-to-reach, off-road medical scenes, like those in the San Tan Mountains.

Also, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank our partners in the community at-large, the Queen Creek region, such as the new Banner Ironwood Hospital, providing much needed major medical services to Queen Creek and this region. Also, our friends in Maricopa and Pinal Counties, including our adjacent cities and towns who we recognize as key partners in advancing the interests of not only Queen Creek but our collective interests to promote this community and region for the betterment of existing and future generations.

### **A Look Ahead to 2011**

Queen Creek continues to look ahead and plan for the future. There are some exciting things on the horizon for 2011! Economic development, maintaining sustainable revenue streams and continuing with services that our residents expect will be our priorities as we start a new calendar year.

The Town Council is looking forward to the first Roots N' Boots Pro and Family Rodeos, coming to Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre in March. These events will honor our community's roots as a farming and ranching community while providing fun activities and shows for the whole family to enjoy.

Queen Creek will continue to work toward the goals of our Economic Development Strategic Plan, including launching the Communiversity for local higher educational opportunities, bringing health facilities into the Town, assisting in retaining and expanding local businesses, and supporting further development of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and related businesses.

Emergency and disaster response have been high priorities for government agencies since 2001. Queen Creek will continue this year to work with residents, businesses and our government partners to prepare the community to respond to emergency situations in a comprehensive, professional and caring manner.

We continue to look for ways that technology can provide convenience to our residents so that they can efficiently conduct business with the Town. For example, the Town has made strides to offer a greater number of services online for customer convenience, such as making utility payments and submitting job applications. We plan to continue these efforts in 2011 with online registration for recreation classes, improving access, convenience and hopefully participation. Additionally, we will continue our efforts to work with the private sector to expand telecommunications and broadband services in the community to better serve residents and help attract new businesses.

Continued improvement as a high-performing organization is a key goal for the Town Council. As we move into 2011, we will continue working to improve our service to customers through comprehensive training involving all Town staff, ensuring that the Town remains responsive and centered on customer-service.

Additionally, 2011 could be a defining year for strengthening and renewing our regional partnerships with our counties and adjacent cities and towns. Queen Creek recognizes that together, we can make

a difference in the region and make positive contributions that are in the best interest of the State of Arizona. Ensuring that the state legislature continues to find value in cities' and town's ability to deliver front line services, those that are closest to all our residents is imperative.

Finding common ground amongst our partners to stretch limited resources will be important, such as continuing partnerships on transportation, wastewater and library services in particular.

Also, maintaining a positive dialogue with the community at-large, such as residents in the surrounding community of San Tan Valley is also important for the future.

## **Conclusion**

These are only a few of the highlights from last year and a glimpse of 2011. I want to thank everyone for their continued efforts, both large and small, that add to the success of this community. So much is given on a daily basis, and I would like to extend my appreciation for all that could not be mentioned tonight. It is our residents' dedication to their hometown that keeps Queen Creek such a wonderful place to live!