

THE CITY THAT ISN'T!

By Ben Roloff—Sun City Historian

SUN CITY, def. Located in Maricopa County, Arizona, with over 38,000 residents, Sun City is not incorporated and has no local government that provides city services like city police, city fire and medical, city recreation, city health, city utilities, or city planning and zoning. It also has no local sales tax, property tax, or Sun City school tax.

Homeowners do pay an annual property tax to Maricopa County for some basic services like sheriff functions, street repairs and replacement, building permits, and for health and library services. Additionally, Maricopa County collects property tax for community colleges, drainage and flood control, street light districts, and for funds to support Sun City Fire and Medical Services.

Question? Was Sun City ever interested in becoming a city? The answer? Yes! It was one of the first topics of concern for our first residents. Most had moved from cities where they had a mayor and city council, and enjoyed city services either totally absent in Sun City or those that had to be contracted for on an individual basis. In fact, the topic of possibly incorporating as a city was a major reason why in December, 1960, those first residents met and elected their first leaders and charged them with establishing what became the Sun City Home Owners Association and Recreations Centers of Sun City.

Through great effort, SCHOA convinced Maricopa County to conduct an election in Sun City to determine the answer to incorporating with the vote being binding. A huge majority were against incorporating as a city during the election held on December 1, 1964, with 72% saying “no” to a local government. That was not the end of discussion!

In 1971 SCHOA asked the question again, but this time restricted voting to only SCHOA members. Several thousand participated in the new vote, and the result was even more decisive. Only 5% voted in favor of incorporating and electing a mayor and city council.

At that point SCHOA stepped aside and adopted a position of “forever neutral” on the incorporation topic. Del Webb Corporation, to the contrary, never gave up on the idea Sun City would be better off for its future if it organized as a city. From the day Sun City opened in 1960 until the last subdivision was completed in 1978, Webb believed Sun City’s continued success was directly tied to incorporating. Several different groups tried to keep the idea of future incorporating alive over the next two decades with little or no success, and now sixty-three years after Sun City’s story began we remain a city in name only.

So, how does Sun City work without a government? That is a subject for next month!