

## E. Valley becomes a richer region

# Census reflects rise in median incomes pursued by cities

**BY EMMA JOHNSON TRIBUNE**

Every Wednesday night more than 300 motorcycles pull up to Chuy's Mesquite Broiler in Chandler for the restaurant's Bike Night.

"You want to see affluence?" said Mike Lanza, 52, who coowns the restaurant with his wife, Laurie, 50. "These are lawyers and business owners with their \$40,000 bikes."

Most live in the south East Valley, including the Lanzas, who moved to Chandler in 1991 and have since been employed by Intel.

Chuy's Bike Night and its proprietors could be considered a symbol of what that city has become —an upscale community where the median household income for the first time has surpassed that of Scottsdale, according to recently released Census 2000 data.

That prosperity is directly linked to a boom in growth, said Tom Rex, research manager for Arizona State University's Center for Business Research.

"What's behind it is there was a lot of growth" in the south East Valley, Rex said. "And that growth was high-end."

That was no mistake, Chandler Mayor Boyd Dunn said.

Chandler attributes its 20 percent increase in median household income to a vision of growing into an upscale community. City officials passed codes to ensure high-quality, high-priced homes; increased impact fees; and made it their mission to attract high-tech industry.

"It's a vision we stuck to," Dunn said.

And a vision that saw the likes of the Lanzas. In addition to running Chuy's, they both still work for Intel — Mike Lanza's salary alone is more than the 2000 median household income in Chandler of \$58,416.

Since they moved here, they have bought three motorcycles and built two homes. The current one cost more than \$300,000 and is more than 3,800 square feet.

"Chandler made a very strong effort to attract the right kind of business," Mike Lanza said.

Percentage income growth is based on inflation-adjusted 1989 dollars compared with 1999 incomes reported on the 2000 census.

Queen Creek, which experienced the largest increase in wealth in the East Valley at 35 percent, did so by

encouraging luxury homes and by forcing new homes to be built on half- or full-acre lots.

Other municipalities such as Apache Junction and Gilbert also saw the median income of residents grow during the 1990s, but used less aggressive tactics to make it happen, mayors in those communities said.

Apache Junction Mayor Doug Coleman said residents of his city were on average 31 percent wealthier in 2000 than a decade earlier because of growth associated with expansion of U.S. 60.

Gilbert's reputation for upscale living is self-perpetuating and contributed to its residents' 30 percent increase in median household income, Mayor Steve Berman said.

East Valley municipalities that did not keep up with the state average of 15 percent increase in wealth blame lack of population growth. Landlocked Paradise Valley, still the richest East Valley municipality with a 2000 median household income of \$150,228, increased its median household income by just 6 percent over the previous decade.

Likewise, Tempe residents became just 4 percent wealthier in the 1990s because that city doesn't have the space to build the new, expensive homes that more affluent people seek, Tempe city planner Mark Elma said.

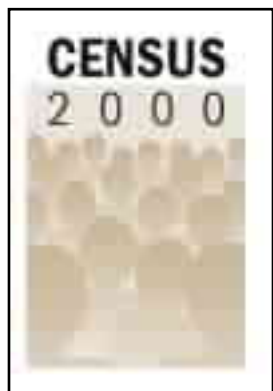
"When you get these big jumps in household incomes," Elma said, "those people want to build new homes."

Mesa, on the other hand, is a new-home mecca, but its median household income increased just 11 percent to \$42,817. Mayor Keno Hawker said that rate keeps pace with Mesa's vision of economic diversity.

"We pride ourselves on having housing stock for all different elements of the community," Hawker said.

Scottsdale, by contrast, has long worked to attract wealthier residents, Mayor Mary Manross said. She said she believes her city's 15 percent increase in median household income is a safe rate. But she is skeptical of the census data that found that her city's residents are less affluent than residents of Chandler, and critical of a monolithic economy, no matter how wealthy it may make a community.

"I think it behooves every city to create economic diversity in a city," Manross said. "You don't want to be totally dependent on technology, any more than real estate or agriculture."

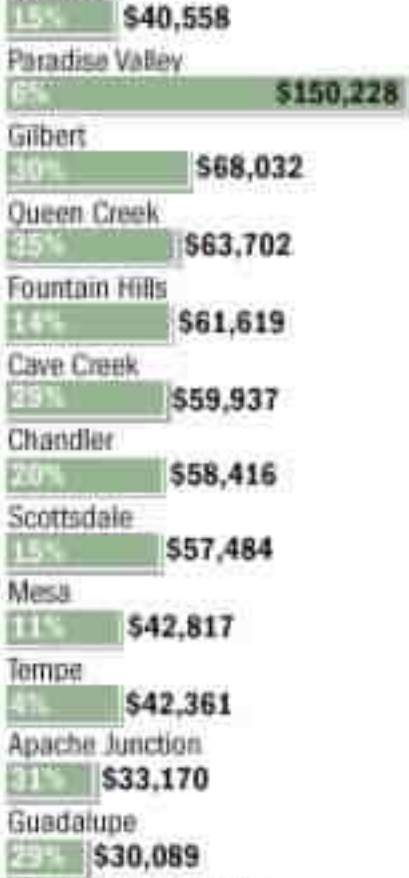


## Income

Many East Valley municipalities got twice as rich as the rest of the state in the '90s, with increased wealth linked to population growth.\*

**Change since 1990**      **Median household income in 1999**

### Arizona



\*Percentage growth based on inflation-adjusted 1990 figures

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