



Fast drivers leave Tucsonans furious



TUCSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

A tow truck loads vehicles impounded during a street-racing deployment by the Tucson Police Department and the Pima County Sheriff's Department on the city's southeast side.

Street takeovers block roads to perform dangerous stunt driving

SIERRA BLASER
Arizona Daily Star

It's not uncommon to hear tires screeching and gunshot-like fire from a cut-off exhaust in Tucson as cars race by.

With the recent death of 3-year-old Anna Garcia in a street racing crash, Tucsonans are rallying for stricter laws and harsh crackdowns around street racing and takeovers.

"The consequences of street racing are not strong enough to stop it, especially for young drivers and repeat offenders," said Emmanuel Garcia, the father of Anna Garcia, said at a city council meeting earlier this month. "If the risk does not outweigh the reward, it continues ... and it is continuing."

The Garcia family is pushing for "Anna's Law," in an online petition calling for street racing to become a felony if it results in death or injury, with mandatory prison time upon conviction. The petition had 23,785 signatures as of midweek.

"I've been to several community meetings where now they want to talk about street racing. The community is upset," said Lieutenant Rudy Dominguez. Dominguez has been with the Tucson Police Department for 19 years, but was moved to working on emergency management and homeland security efforts earlier this year, where he now oversees street racing and takeover investigations.

Street racing and takeovers have been a problem across Tucson since 2020, according to Dominguez. He said the problem was exacerbated through 2022 by COVID-19 and social media.

"A lot of people were at home doing whatever, they weren't going to work," he said. "And then social media really helped propel that, where they could organize quick takeovers really, really fast. Faster than we could respond to them and deploy."

Street racing is the illegal competition of speed between vehicles on public roads, and a street takeover is the coordinated blocking of intersections or roads for dangerous stunt driving, including donuts or drifting.

Dominguez said the police department's initial response to the phenomenon was reactive, sending officers into congregations and breaking them up. "It was very resource intensive," he said. "If people stopped for us, we'd issue them the appropriate citation if we had probable cause for it, and if they fled, we just would let them go and get as much information on the vehicle as possible."

TPD is now taking an intelligence-based approach, the lieutenant said, gathering 88-crime tips, talking to business owners in the community after nearby incidents have occurred, monitoring social media platforms and working with Pima County Sheriff's Department and other police departments across southern Arizona.

"We have seen a decrease in deployment to the actual street takeovers," he said. "I think each agency sharing intel with each other has led to a big success for us."

Dominguez said in his own research, he's found Suffolk County in New York to be one of the most successful police departments in street racing because of their intelligence gathering strategies, which are similar to TPD's. The main difference, however, is that Suffolk has a dedicated street racing and takeover task force, something TPD and other local agencies are looking towards.

Launched in November 2024, the Suffolk County Police Department Street Takeover Task Force is a proactive unit established to combat illegal street racing, reckless driving and chaotic car meets. It uses specialized intelligence to intercept events, resulting in 93 takeovers broken up, 70 arrests and 113 impounded vehicles.

The task force, comprising of officers trained in vehicular enforcement, uses social media and intelligence to anticipate and disrupt events. They deploy undercover officers in covert cars and have received support from the local legislature to toughen penalties and confiscate vehicles.

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Census: Growth in Tucson stalled

HOWARD FISCHER
Capitol Media Services

PHOENIX — The state's largest cities are in no danger of losing their status, at least not immediately.

But new figures from the Census Bureau show that the trend is decidedly not in their favor as their growth has largely stalled — and, in some cases, is actually declining.

Yes, Phoenix remains the champion with an estimated 1.66 million residents as of last year, the most recent data released. But the Census Bureau said it added just 3,157 new residents in the preceding 12 months, an anemic 0.2% growth.

Tucson fared even worse, with its 548,371 head count actually 2,262 less than the year before. In fact, since the decennial census in 2020, the state's second-largest city added only 5,773 residents.

Similar patterns of slow — or negative — growth show up for Mesa, Gilbert, and Chandler, the next largest cities according to the Census Bureau.

But Surprise managed to increase its year-over-year population by more than 7,700, a 4.6% annual growth rate. And that places it just 15,000 less than Tempe, with a 0.6% annual change.

And other communities on the fringes of urban areas grew even faster.

Leading the pack is Queen Creek, where its nearly 6,800 new residents boosted population by 8.2% in a single year. Goodyear grew by 6.5%, with Apache Junction up 5.8%.

There are also signs of growth farther outside the Phoenix metro area.

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Pima County GOP sues to drop some polling place rules

HOWARD FISCHER
Capitol Media Services

PHOENIX — The Pima County Republican Committee has filed a lawsuit to overturn some rules about what people can do in and around polling places.

Legal papers filed in federal court contend that Democratic Secretary of State Adrian Fontes has put regulations into the Elections Procedures Manual that impermissibly violate the First Amendment rights of those going there to vote, as well as those who are promoting candidates and causes outside.

And the committee, along with Kathleen Winn who is its chair, want U.S. District Court Judge Michael Liburdi to not just declare those rules illegal, but prevent election officials from enforcing them.

The litigation did not originate with the county party.

Winn said the Oversight Project already was working with her over a dispute about whether party observers were improperly banned from polling places in Pima County in the November 2025 election. That led to a decision by the Oversight Project, which has a history of investigations and litigation over what it considers corruption and fraud in government, deciding to take on Fontes and the state — and doing so through Winn and the Pima GOP as plaintiffs.

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Fontes



Winn

Feds trying to seize sacred site for wall

TREVOR HUGHES
AND LAUREN VILLAGRAN
USA TODAY

Federal officials are trying to seize from the Roman Catholic Church a rugged border mountain topped with a massive statue of Jesus, arguing they need the land to build President Donald Trump's border wall and keep out unauthorized immigrants.

Filed in U.S. District Court in New Mexico on May 7, the federal government's eminent domain claim on Mount Cristo Rey on the Texas-Mexico-New Mexico border comes as Trump and Pope Leo XIV have disagreed over the United States' treatment of immigrants.

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GABY VELASQUEZ, EL PASO TIMES

The Cristo Rey monument overlooks the U.S.-Mexico border region March 24 near Sunland Park, N.M.

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