The coziest, the chicest, the poshest abodes. We round them up here for you in our annual guide to the city's absolute Best Places to Live.

SCOTTSDALE

In 2006, 7.7 million visitors stayed in Scottsdale—which is second only to New York City in AAA Five-Diamond hotels—to soak in the city's abundance of shopping, golf and night life. But it's the city's 236,000 residents who get to fully enjoy its 25 spas, 600 restaurants and 53 golf courses.

NORTH

Privada

Homes starting at $1.4 million; Custom homesites starting at $890,000

The 40 two- and three-bedroom Santa Fe-style homes at Privada in Pinnacle Peak will range from 3,100 to 3,800 square feet and come complete with optional room add-ons and guest casitas, and several choices of floor plans. Eleven custom lots allow future owners to choose lot size, location and view. The development intends to be energy- and cost-efficient through the use of eco-friendly windows, walls, landscaping and appliances, in accordance with the tenets of Scottsdale's Green Building program. Just beyond the gates, you'll find shopping, dining and night life. And for tee time, Grayhawk and Troon North are right around the bend.

Bonus: Next door is the acclaimed Four Seasons Resort at Troon North. Let the pampering begin! 480.473.7711, www.privadapinnaclepeak.com.

Desert Mountain

Courtyard homes starting at $1.3 million to $1.7 million; Custom homes, cottages and patio homes, from $900,000 to $7 million-plus; Homesites from $400,000 to $3 million

Abutting the Continental Mountains is Desert Mountain, a community offering casual living like no other. The private master-planned community opened more than 20 years ago and is now building its final phase, Cintarosa Ranch. This exclusive neighborhood, designed to blend with the desert landscape, will feature 21 custom homesites on one- to five-acre lots. Potential buyers can choose from three floor plans of about 4,700 to 5,500 square feet. Desert Mountain also includes a variety of elegant homes, like its recently developed Hacienda collection of "lock and leave" courtyard-style homes with three impressive floor plans ranging from 2,550 to 3,250 square feet. The leisurely desert lifestyle at Desert Mountain would not be complete without golf. This is the only private club in the world with six—yes, six—championship Jack Nicklaus signature golf courses. Other perks include nine tennis courts, six themed clubhouses with an array of dining options, a fitness facility and a spa—making life at Desert Mountain as refined as it is relaxed.

Bonus: CARE (Cancer with Awareness, Research and Education), the community's member-created charity, has raised more than $2.2 million. 480.488.2998, www.desertmountain.com.

Whisper Rock Estates

Custom homes from $2 million to $5 million

Hidden within Scottsdale's northern corridor is the private community Whisper Rock Estates. Situated on 850 pristine acres, this exclusive enclave incorporates traditional architecture in its custom homesites and villas, and emphasizes wide-open spaces outdoors. Each of Whisper Rock's 197 custom homesites resides on parcels that range from one to four acres, with custom homes from 4,000 to 10,000 square feet and intimate villas from 3,400 to more than 4,000 square feet. Note that the coveted Whisper Rock Golf Club and its two courses are separate from Whisper Rock Estates, which means that membership to this elite club is by invitation only.

Bonus: In addition to the community's state-of-the-art fitness facility, concierge service tennis courts, pool and therapeutic spa, Whisper Rock has a 24-hour guard staff on duty. 480.502.3700, www.whisperrock.us.

Mirabel

Golf villas starting at $1.4 million; custom homes starting at $1.9 million; homesites starting at $350,000

Surrounded by majestic mountains and overlooking Pinnacle Peak, the Mirabel community consists of 713 acres of gorgeous green landscape. Single-family golf villas within El Corazon are lavishly crafted and move-in ready. And Mirabel's custom homes and homesites allow future residents to bring their visions to life. This private community is complete with a Tom Fazio-designed par-71 golf course, and its developer-owned golf club accommodates all skill levels.

Bonus: Mirabel residents can munch in the community's Desert Lodge, rejuvenate at Mirabel's personal spa and salon, or enjoy cocktails poolside. 480.595.2545, www.mirabel.com.

Silverleaf

Sterling bungalows starting at $1.34 million; casitas starting at $2 million; verandah homes starting at $2.3 million

Neighboring DC Ranch and Market Street, Silverleaf caters to a fortunate few. If you missed past opportunities to purchase, now's your chance. Silverleaf recently added The Sterling, located within the Canyon Village. This intimate community offers bungalows that fuse Spanish Colonial and rural Mediterranean architecture. Starting at $1.34 million, these private retreats come in four floor plans ranging from 2,680 to 3,110 square feet. Silverleaf also offers The Verandahs and The Casitas. Catering to an outdoor style of living, the planned casitas include private outdoor courtyards with open recreational space. Layouts within this neighborhood range from 3,000 to 4,100 square feet and start at $2 million. Homes within the Verandah collection (3,000 to 5,600 square feet) provide residents even more room to breathe. Starting at $2.3 million, these abodes are distinguished by Spanish Colonial, Ranch Hacienda and Monterey styling as well as elevated front yards, large covered porches and five open floor plan options .

Bonus: When you're not at home, spend the afternoon among friends on a Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, or simply relax at the club and spa. 480.502.6902, http://www.silverleaf.com/.

Starting in the high $700,000's

The legendary master-planned community DC Ranch is expanding to include yet another neighborhood, Rosewood at DC Ranch. This 34-home enclave offers your pick of one- or two-story construction in Tuscan, Spanish Colonial, Spanish Mission and Monterey styles. Courtyards, covered porches, covered balconies or covered loggias can also be included—a priceless amenity, given Arizona's 300-plus days of sunshine. Rosewood residences range from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet.

Bonus: Golfers can become members at the neighboring course, The Country Club at DC Ranch. 480.502.2725, www.dcranch.com.

The Landmark

Tower Two Residences from $1.2 million to just over $3.6 million

The Landmark at Kierland has long been touted as a trendsetting residential high-rise. Now it showcases an award for design excellence. How's that for leaving a mark! Located in North Scottsdale, real estate at this six- and seven-story residential high-rise on the Westin Kierland Golf Course is quickly selling out. As of press time, all 50 units in Tower One had been sold, and Tower Two had 10 remaining residences (from 1,500 to 4,500 square feet) priced from $1.2 million to just over $3.6 million. Sure to please, six penthouses were custom-designed in styles including traditional, Tuscany Mediterranean, New York penthouse and Contemporary Asian. Landmark residents can also make use of a full-time concierge and a porter service, resort-style amenities and an award-winning clubhouse.

Bonus: Scottsdale's premier outdoor mall, Kierland Commons, is within walking distance. 480.699.2607, www.landmarklifestyle.com.

CENTRAL

Array

Starting at $399,000

Modus Development and Graham Downes Architecture are making local history as they develop Array, a neighborhood of nine eco-friendly modern town homes. This development will be built to strict LEED standards, using energy-efficient construction and recyclable materials. In conjunction with SRP, Modus will provide homeowners with the first-ever standard solar electric system in the state. Solar panels—which utilize Arizona's most prevalent natural resource—will adhere to all rooftops in an effort to lower the cost of electricity, and homes will be equipped with their own heat pumps. Even the earth-tone exterior will respect its desert surroundings. Interiors encompass 1,000 to 1,727 square feet spanning three floors, and kitchens will feature energy-efficient appliances. The 12-foot low-E floor-to-ceiling windows allow ample natural light in while providing spectacular mountain views. Array expects to be Scottsdale's first residential project to achieve LEED Silver certification.

Bonus: This community backs up to Indian Bend Wash, rendering recreation close at hand. www.array-scottsdale.com.

DOWNTOWN

Optima Camelview Village

From the low $400,000's to $2.7 million

If you want to live near the pulse of the city, consider Optima Camelview Village. Recently touted as "one of the top architectural achievements in Arizona" by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Optima is quickly completing its third and final phase. Located on Scottsdale Road at Highland Avenue, this urban dweller's dream offers 700 plush condominiums (800 to 3,000 square feet). These six- and seven-story high-rises span 13 lush acres in the heart of Downtown Scottsdale, and their floor-to-ceiling windows provide dramatic panoramic views. Modern amenities include an enclosed dog park, an on-site dry cleaner, a business center and a health club. An eco-friendly salon and a hip restaurant, Posh, are planned.

Bonus: No need to putt across town. Practice your swing on Optima's personal green. 602.840.2500, www.optimaweb.com.

W Scottsdale

Starting at $1.2 million

The August 2008 opening of the W Scottsdale was much touted and highly anticipated. But this is not just a hotel. A select few residents, 18 to be exact, will have the opportunity to also call it home. Imagine coming home every night to the most happening hotel in the Valley. Penthouse residences soar to new heights with awe-inspiring city views, top-notch amenities and W's world-class "whatever, whenever" service. Residential units at the W range from 1,000 to 3,000 square feet.

Bonus: W amenities include Bliss Spa, Sweat Fitness Center, the W restaurant, Sushi Roku, and Wet, a rooftop beach oasis. 480.970.2100, www.whotels.com.scottsdale.

Safari Drive

$700,000 to $1.6 million

Now being built on the former site of the legendary Safari Hotel and Resort, the 14-acre mixed-use project Safari Drive on Scottsdale Road just north of Camelback Road includes a residential and hotel corridor, a retail level and upper-level office space. Residents of Safari Drive have unlimited access to amenities including a Zen pool, a Safari room, a spa and health club, and a cooling tower/water feature, which cools air from 115 degrees to 75 degrees.

Bonus: Its prime location is within walking distance from Scottsdale Fashion Square (soon to house anchor Barney's New York) and Downtown Scottsdale's restaurants, boutiques and vibrant night life. 480.222.2642, www.safaridrivescottsdale.com.

CAVE CREEK

Cave Creek prides itself on epitomizing the "true Arizona." With attractions from native wildlife like snakes and bobcats and gorgeous views of the Sonoran Desert, to eclectic shopping and Western rodeos, the town's 5,000 residents just might be right.

Montevista

$500,000 to $1 million

Bordering Scottsdale's city limits is Cave Creek's newest residence, the master-planned community Montevista. When complete in 2009, five neighborhoods—Ocotillo, Palo Verde, Desert Willow, Cottonwood and Cypress—will offer sites for 302 semi-customizable homes with 25 choices of floor plans. Each collection offers outdoor living areas, cozy porticos, grand courtyards, gourmet kitchens and multiple layout options.

Bonus: In Toll Brothers' 8,500-sq.-ft. design studio in Scottsdale, you can envision and design your dream home. 480.595.2800, www.tollbrothers.com.

PHOENIX

With more than 1.5 million residents, Phoenix is the nation's fifth largest city. Its climate, promise for growth and relatively low living costs have attracted major corporations like American Express, Intel, Charles Schwab and the Mayo Clinic. Luckily, Downtown Phoenix's 90-block Copper Square provides ample after-work entertainment, with theaters, Chase Field, US Airways Center, and 90 restaurants and bars.

NORTH

Sonoran Foothills

$400,000 to $1 million.

Below the foothills of Carefree is the master-planned community Sonoran Foothills. Spanning 800 acres adjacent to the planned McDowell Sonoran Preserve, it's a dream location for nature lovers. Homes in five actively selling neighborhoods—Desert Enclave, Desert Springs, Desert Trail, Desert Vista and Desert Pass—will vary from 2,400 to 5,100 square feet. Once complete, this community will be home to 4,500 residents, making it no wonder that a school is also in the works. A 4,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse is surrounded by a 12-acre park where residents can picnic, lounge, partake in daily activities or hike the trails within and surrounding the community.

Bonus: Sonoran Foothills' kid-friendly features include a splash fountain, a swimming pool, volleyball and tennis courts, sand pits and a picnic pavilion. www.sonoranfoothills.com.

CityNorth

Mid-$400,000's to just over $1 million

Elaborate, elegant and energetic! The 5.5-million-sq.-ft. CityNorth will span 144 acres across North Phoenix, with the 70-acre CityCenter of CityNorth as its hub. Phase one of the two-stage CityCenter of CityNorth project, High Street, is scheduled to debut Nov. 13 and will offer a mixture of eclectic restaurants and retail. Phase one's 99 condos will allow residents the convenience of living above and around these amenities. Housed in two four-story buildings, the condominiums will range from 750 square feet to 1,850 square feet. Slated to open in November 2010, phase two will add 54th Street, to be lined with quaint shops and new-to-market eateries; and The Boulevard, which will feature a mix of upscale residences and office space, as well as Phoenix's only Nordstrom and Arizona's first Bloomingdale's.

Bonus: CityNorth will strive for LEED certification by utilizing eco-friendly development practices. 480.355.0202, www.citynorthaz.com.

DOWNTOWN

CityScape

Pricing not yet available.

The $900 million mixed-use development CityScape is beginning to reshape Downtown Phoenix. The southeast and southwest corner of Washington and Central will act as the hub for the district's newest retail, residential, office and dining corridor. Phase one is expected to arrive in December 2009 with retail and restaurant options. Phase two will follow in 2010 with a residential building offering 165 units and a 250-room four-star Kimpton Hotel Palomar.

Bonus: Live, work, dine and entertain all in one locale. 480.947.7772, www.downtownphxrising.org.

PARADISE VALLEY

One of the nation's 50 wealthiest zip codes, Paradise Valley has it all—amazing views, proximity and privacy. Here, desert landscaping complements diverse home styles. Per its mission statement dating back to 1961, the town prides itself on maintaining a "residential community

in a quiet and country-like setting with little government intervention."

The Villas at Intercontinental Montelucia Resort and Spa

Starting from the low $2 millions

The Villas at Intercontinental Montelucia Resort and Spa was recently awarded two Gold Nugget Awards of Merit by the Pacific Coast Builders Conference. And we can see why. Inspired by Spain's Andalusia region, this resort-style community below Camelback Mountain blends timeless charm with modern comforts. The Spanish-style villas offer three distinct floor plans (ranging from 3,800 to 4,700 square feet) and six different exterior options. Best of all, Montelucia residents have unlimited access to the resort's A-list amenities like a state-of-the-art gym, a full-service spa, a swimming pool, 24-hour concierge service and gourmet dining.

Bonus: With resort-style living, you'll feel as if you're always on vacay. 602.956.9400, www.montelucia.com.

The Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley

Starting at $2 million

If approved by Paradise Valley voters on Nov. 4, The Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley will bring both a resort and a master-planned residential community to town. The 110-acre, $1.5 billion project (expected to be complete by 2010) will include a luxurious 225-room hotel in addition to villas, estate homes and one-acre estate homesites. Through The Ritz-Carlton Residence Program, homeowners will enjoy access to all the amenities offered on the hotel property, including private chef services, daily housekeeping and a day spa. After all, you live there.

Bonus: Also planned is an adjacent mixed-use component that will house upscale retail and restaurants as well as an Ian Schrager hotel, Edition. 866.779.7489, www.rcpvluxury.com.

FOUNTAIN HILLS

Being surrounded by mountains and two Indian reservations may give the 20-square-mile town of Fountain Hills a sleepy quality, but its 25,000 residents like the wide streets and safe neighborhoods, and Scottsdale's shopping and nightlife is less than half an hour away.

The Villas at Firerock

Starting at $1.6 million

The private resort-style Firerock Country Club community is framed by Fountain Hills' million-dollar views, and this exclusive club is continuing to add even more residences. The Villas at Firerock are an intimate cluster of 26 exquisitely crafted homes with interior space ranging from 3,300 to 3,700 square feet. Each villa offers top-notch custom interior design, its own guest casita and an inviting courtyard entrance. Prospective residents will also love Firerock's 29,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse complete with formal and informal dinning options, a state-of-the art fitness facility and a pool.

Bonus: Firerock's 18-hole championship course, designed by award-winning architect Gary Panks, weaves throughout the community. 480.837.3306, www.villasatfirerock.com.

Eagles Nest Living

$500,000 to $1.5 million

Tucked near the Fountain Hills' McDowell Mountain range is the private gated community of Eagles Nest–an exclusive neighborhood of 244 custom homesites on one-acre-plus parcels extending 500 acres. The community backs the McDowell Mountain Regional Park offering 40 miles of horseback riding, hiking and biking, and views of Four Peaks, the Superstitions and the Goldfields.

Bonus: Homeowners will also have the opportunity to become members of neighboring Firerock's exclusive country club, with amenities

including a a par-72 golf course, a members-only lounge and a formal dining room. 800.284.0090, www.eaglesnestliving.com.

SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN

This county island 20 miles east of Mesa is backed by Superstition Mountain, which gets its mystique from centuries-old lore. The mountain is known as the Valley's eastern landmark, separating urban living from wilderness adventure.

Superstition Mountain

Custom homes from $599,000 to $ 1 million; Club Village villas starting at $599,000; Prospector Village homes starting at $810,000; Custom homesites starting at $435,000

At the base of the Superstition Mountains, wherein the legendary Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine is thought to be hidden, is the community of Superstition Mountain. Once completed in 2015, this private residential community will have sites for 850 homes spanning 927 acres. Potential buyers will be presented with three residential options: the Club Village's intimate mix of 88 courtyard-enclosed villas (2,000 to 3,700 square feet); Prospector Village's luxury homes (2,300 to 3,300 square feet) that offer open space and choice views; and custom homesites with land parcels of one-half-acre to more than two acres in size. Residents can enjoy golf on the two 18-hole Nicklaus-design courses: the Prospector or the Lost Gold. To boot, the Lost Gold course hosts the annual Safeway International LPGA tournament. The nearby Lost Dutchman State Park offers horseback riding, hiking, boating, fishing and many more outdoor activities.

Bonus: A redesign of the community's Sports Club, with a range of cardio, resistance and aerobic training, is underway. 480.983.3500, www.superstitionmountain.com.

MESA

More people live in Mesa than in St. Louis or Miami. Its generally stable housing market, diverse residential offerings and gorgeous palm-laden Dana Park Village Square shopping center are among the attractions for residents moving to this family-friendly city.

Aquaterra

$189,900 to $633,000; penthouses starting at $900,000

Mesa's newest development, Aquaterra, promises to bring the urban-living experience to the city. Near Alma School and Southern, its "residential campus" will consist of three six-story contemporary buildings connected by a central courtyard. These stylish LEED-certified abodes will offer potential residents five roomy options (a studio, one- , two- and three-bedroom units and 14 penthouses). Fourteen live-work units from 831 to 1,200 square feet will be available in the retail section of the development. Residents will also have access to a lifestyle center offering such amenities as a wine tasting room, a rooftop pool and poolside cabanas.

Bonus: With the Metro Light Rail in December coming within walking distance, you'll find easy transport to Phoenix and Tempe. 480.890.1038, aquaterramesa.com.

GILBERT

The nation's fifth fastest growing market, Gilbert has family-oriented professionals flocking to it. The town offers modern amenities like upscale shopping and dining at SanTan Village and saunas and a climbing wall at the Freestone Recreational Center.

Power Ranch

$169,000 to $566,900

Power Ranch recently ranked second out of 10 in a 2007 survey for top-selling master-planned communities by RCLCO (Robert Charles Lesser & Co., LLC). Developers Sunbelt Holding and DMB Associates, together with 15 of the Valley's elite builders, joined forces to create a 2,000-acre oasis of 12 neighborhoods (Mountain View, The Groves, The Vineyards, The Oaks, The Orchard, The Arbors, Meadow View, The Grange, The Willows, The Knolls, The Timbers and Trilogy at Power Ranch). This multi-award-winning community expects to house 20,000 residents at completion in 2010 Homes range in square footage, and 58 different layouts provide variety. All neighborhoods are linked by parks outlined by trails.

Bonus: Two clubhouses and ample outdoor recreation opportunities make this community family-focused. 480.988.0960, www.powerranch.com .

TEMPE

Although it is the East Valley's only landlocked city, Tempe is continuing to grow—upward--with high-rise condos catering to those who want a shorter commute. The city's growth doesn't appear to be slowing, either, with $2 billion in new projects planned for the next five years and the Metro Light Rail set to connect Tempe from border to border by December.

Hayden Flour Mill

Did you ever wonder how Mill Avenue got its name? This thriving thoroughfare is named after its once functioning flour mill. Located on the corner of Mill Avenue and Rio Salado Parkway, the original 1874 flour mill burned down during the summer of 1917. This symbolic structure was rebuilt but soon abandoned. Avenue Communities has obtained city approval to restore Tempe's landmark into a mixed-use development of chic residential, retail and office space joined by gourmet eateries and high-end boutiques. The Hayden Flour Mill development will complete phase one by the summer of '09 with a restored mill building and the addition of two retail buildings and office space. By 2010, its final phases two and three will be nearing completion, providing Downtown Tempe with a 120-room boutique hotel and urban-style housing. Once the development is completed, this intersection, recently named "the third hottest intersection in the Valley for real estate" by the Urban Land Institute, will provided a picturesque—and coveted—portal to Tempe Town Lake.

Bonus: With the Metro Light Rail system debuting by year's end, residents will have an easy time getting around town. 480.294.6333, www.reallifestyle.com.

Centerpoint Condominiums

Phase One, $300,000 to $1 million

The Mill Avenue district is welcoming a new tenant. Located in Downtown Tempe, Centerpoint Condominiums developer Avenue Communities will host the grand opening of the plaza's main level this winter (the development's residential corridors will open this October). This innovative mixed-used development is sure to become a main attraction of Tempe's downtown with Italian restaurant Trattoria M; Aroma, a market-caffé; the PurVine winery; and expanded retail. Phase one comprises two towers of 375 total condominiums. Additionally, two privileged homeowners will enjoy Tower One and Tower Two's penthouses, each spanning 7,200 interior square feet and 4,500 outdoor square feet, affording picturesque views of Tempe's night lights.

Bonus: Mmm, what's for dinner? Resident chef Michael DeMaria will help you decide in Centerpoint's on-site demonstration kitchen. 480.966.5433, www.centerpointaz.com.

Bridgeview at Hayden Ferry Lakeside

$600,000 to $5 million

Also offering the upscale urban lifestyle is Bridgeview at Hayden Ferry Lakeside. This waterfront property stands 12 stories tall overlooking Tempe Town Lake. It's no wonder half the units were sold prior to completion. With 104 condominiums ranging from 1,800 to almost 5,000 square feet, residents can choose from one-, two- and three-bedroom layouts, not counting the penthouses. Want to hang with the neighbors? Socialize at the billiard room, pool, fitness center, putting green or movie theater. Beyond the development, enjoy Tempe's energetic Mill Avenue, take in a game at Sun Devil Stadium or see a show at Gammage Auditorium.

Bonus: Bridgeview hosts a weekly "Yappy Hour." Mingle over wine and cheese, while your pooch interacts with its four-legged friends. 480.317.6800, www.haydenferrylakeside.com.

GLENDALE

All sports fans' eyes have been on Glendale recently, as Arizona's fourth-largest city continues to attract A-games like the Super Bowl, the Fiesta Bowl and soon the 2009 NCAA Regional Finals. Next at bat, the city is readying itself to become the new spring training site for the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Chicago White Sox.

The Majestic

$400,000's to $2 million

Lately, the West Valley has been the place to be for major events. Now, a new residential offering lets Valley residents make this epicenter of entertainment home. The Majestic will break ground in 2009 at Westgate City Center. The 10-story, 181-residence development features three styles of housing (penthouses, town houses and condos) and about 40 choices of floor plans. Interior design elements like movable walls and exposed-brick walls are sure to attract a hip crowd. Best of all, you'll be walking distance from Jobing.com Arena and the University of Phoenix Stadium.

Bonus: Once complete, the complex will offer eight million square feet of shopping, dining, entertainment, residences, parks and offices. 623.772.4000, www.westgateaz.com.

PEORIA

The question in this city is not "how will it play here" but "how to play here." With a median age of 36, residents spend weekends of this low-key suburb sailing on Lake Pleasant or attending a spring training game at the Peoria Sports Complex—arguably the nicest spring training stadium in the Valley.

Blackstone at Vistancia

Homesites starting at $200,000; homes starting at $600,000

Blackstone, the newest edition of award-winning master-planned community Vistancia, will span 590 acres and encompass 200 custom one-half to one-acre homesites and 350 luxury homes (ranging from 3,000 to 5,100 square feet). The homes will reflect Old World styling and "desert contemporary" charm. With Blackstone's state-of-the-art clubhouse and ample recreational opportunities, including Jim Engh's craftily designed golf course, residents will enjoy a laid-back family lifestyle. One caveat: equity golf memberships are limited.

Bonus: Blackstone offers multiple activities geared just for children, like the property's Kids Kamp. 623.476.2923 www.blackstonecountryclub.com.

GOODYEAR

Just 20 miles west of Downtown Phoenix, Goodyear and its scenic 39 miles of mountain trails have gone largely unnoticed, and largely untouched. In 2008, the city reported that more than 90 percent of its usable land was still available for development.

Greenspointe at Mountain Ranch

Starting from $269,000 to $319,900

It’s been nearly 20 years since the Estrella community opened to its first residents. Now rounding the corner on its emerald anniversary, it encompasses multiple communities with thousands of residents. This past July, Estrella welcomed its newest edition, Greenspointe at Mountain Ranch. The 60 new homes within this community will feature four different single-family floor plans with spacious layouts, indoor-outdoor living areas and high-end amenities. Residents can enjoy a day out on Estrella’s 18-hole, par-72 championship public course—a Nicklaus design that Golfweek recently designated one of the best courses in America.

Bonus: Explore the many recreational possibilities at the adjacent Sierra Estrella Mountain range. 623.386.1000, www.estrella.com.

BUCKEYE

The small-town identity that came naturally to Buckeye, about 35 miles west of Downtown Phoenix, may not last forever—the town’s population in 2000 was 8,500, but by 2007, the population had jumped to more than 40,000 residents, who came for the undeveloped land and the welcoming environment of Arizona’s “biggest small town.”

Verrado

Homesites, $200,000’s to $1.1 million; Custom homes, starting at $1 million

At the base of the White Tank Mountains sits the development Verrado, with custom homesites ranging from one-half to three acres. The community comprises three neighborhoods: Mesquite Grove provides breathtaking views of surrounding canyons; Mountain Cove overlooks the luminous city night lights; and Regent Hills backs the desert’s natural wash. Linking the community is an 18-hole Lehman-and-Fought championship-design Raven Golf Course.

Bonus: The residents are big on community building. Exhibit A: The Giving Tree, which fosters philanthropic and volunteer endeavors by the community. 623.215.6060, www.verradocustomhomes.com.