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**Tribune**



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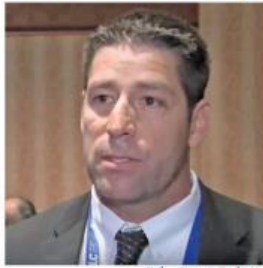
# Committee targets opioid addiction in the East Valley

BY SRIJANTHI PERERA  
Tribune Staff Writer

With evidence of a full-blown crisis at hand, opioid addiction in the East Valley has a new force to reckon with.

Tempe Councilmember Joel Navarro is heading a large multi-agency and multi-city committee to find ways to share resources and ideas to create a best-practices approach to the problem.

"It does not matter who you are: addiction will hit everybody," said Navarro, addressing representatives from the Regional Opioid Action Planning Committee at the Graduate Hotel in Tempe recently.



Tempe Councilmember Joel Navarro established the Regional Opioid Action Planning Committee in November.

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# Elliot Road corridor shines spotlight on Mesa's tech hopes

BY WAYNE SCHUTSKY  
Tribune Staff Writer

The Silicon Desert is expanding in Mesa, one announcement at a time.

The city's Elliot Road Technology Corridor – already home to Apple's global operations command center – is beginning to attract an array of tech companies to occupy the stretch of land between Signal Butte and Hawes Roads.

The city of Mesa has been active in its attempts to further spur economic development in corridor and the Mesa-Gateway region as a whole.

"There are two things that attract technology companies, or any company," said Mesa Economic Development Director Bill Jabiniak. Those two things include "the amount of available infrastructure" and "how quickly we can get through the entitlement process."

The corridor, which the city officially named in 2014, has the infrastructure in place to attract technology companies, such as a redundant power system that has close proximity to SRP's Browning receiving station and 500kV, 230kV and 69kV transmission lines.

Another benefit is access to SRP's extensive dark, or unused, fiber network. Businesses can pay SRP to tie in to the existing fiber network, which connects with major carrier network access points and data centers in the Phoenix metro area, according to SRP.

Mesa also established the Elliot Road Technology Corridor Planned Area Development Overlay, which reduced entitlement time in the corridor from roughly six months to six weeks. The overlay encompasses areas directly north of Elliot Road from Signal Butte to Hawes Roads.

The Mesa City Council approved the

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# Light rail's next stop?



Some street improvements in northeast Mesa are being sacrificed for the light rail's extension to Gilbert Road, where the new end of the line could look like this. See page 3.

# OPIOID

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"It's a crisis, and right now, we're in the middle of it," he added. "Over-prescribing of pills, the availability of heroin, fentanyl, carfentanyl – all these things have really got us to this point. That's why we're here – to work together."

According to new data from the state Department of Health Services, 790 Arizona residents died from opioid overdoses last year, showing a startling increase of 74 percent over the past four years.

The report also shows that more than two Arizonans die each day as a result of an overdose of opioids, which include heroin as well as prescription medicines.

The new numbers have prompted Gov. Doug Ducey to declare a statewide health emergency "because we need to know more about the epidemic, so that we can develop real, targeted solutions," he said.

While data specific to the East Valley is difficult to parse, Maricopa County shows that opioid-related mortality rates have increased from 2005 to 2015.

The county also has created a map of metropolitan Phoenix denoting drug activity by ZIP code. It shows high and medium-high activity in Central Phoenix and Mesa, while Chandler and Gilbert show medium to medium-low activity and Tempe shows medium-low activity.

Arizona Department of Health Services reported in July 2015 that from 2008 to 2014, there were 1,903 cases – an increase of 235 percent – of neonatal abstinence syndrome in babies born addicted to drugs because their mothers used them.

Navarro, a former Phoenix firefighter, worked last year on a national task force on drug addiction and met people who were battling the epidemic on the West Coast.

"We have opportunities to learn from best practices that are going on around the country and craft something that makes sense here," he said. "We want to be effective; we want to be efficient; we need to advocate for programs that are going to make an impact."

Navarro established the local committee in November, comprising representatives

from Ducey's office, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, Chandler Coalition on Youth Substance Abuse (CCYSA), the Chandler Gilbert Substance Use and Treatment Task Force, medical, educational and public safety providers and substance use treatment and recovery groups from East Valley cities.

Ted Huntington, who heads CCYSA, is part of the Chandler-Gilbert task force and also a member of Navarro's committee, has been leading efforts to educate the community and counter drug abuse in Chandler for many years.

Working with five sectors – healthcare providers, pharmacists and dispensers, law enforcement, education, and prevention and rehabilitation – the task force has devised a strategic plan to fit Chandler, and also added partners from Gilbert and Queen Creek.

Its strategies include constant networking; using the CCYSA's website as a resource tool; community presentations on topics such as the prescription drug disposal program and alternatives to prescription drugs; helping schools with implementing their campaigns; changing health care prescribing practices, referrals to treatment and messaging to peers; and promoting pharmacists' use of the Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program.

"The committee's common theme is to allow for the leaders in the community to understand their community and then adapt these different principles to that and be flexible with that," Huntington said.

Along those lines, the Maricopa County Correctional Health Services has introduced MOSAIC, an intensive, six-week substance abuse treatment program to inmates. Consenting participants work with medical and mental health staff to overcome addiction and develop skills to prevent them from failing and lapsing into bad behaviors and returning to jail.

"You have to continue to service (people) outside of the jail," Navarro said.

Questions such as "Are there enough resources? Is there enough connectivity and where do we lose people?" should be posed by communities, he said.

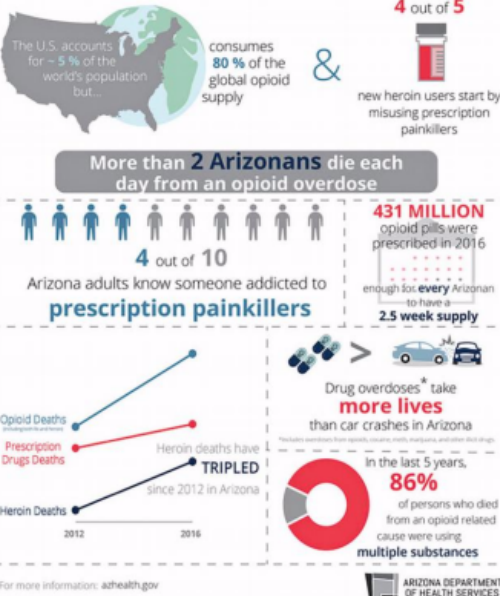
Another is the Community

resource management in order to make informed decisions about the future of their communities and economies.

For instance, industries like semiconductor manufacturing can be water-intensive, but also have a huge impact on the state's economy.

There are various resources available for residents, including helpful FAQs on SRP's website. Porter also

# Opioid Epidemic In Arizona



paramedic program, in which cities send paramedics to individuals they have previously identified, help them along in their treatment and get specialized help if necessary. This also helps reduce 911 calls that create a large cost to cities.

Educating youth is another pillar in the plan, officials said.

During the committee's last meeting at the Graduate Hotel, the participants divided to discuss a three-pronged approach: foster regional cooperation, increase public awareness by all means available and facilitate treatment in jails.

Committee members are working over the summer to achieve two or three items

in the resultant action plan: they will reconvene on Sept. 5 to evaluate their work.

"Our regional partnership will make a difference as we begin to execute our plan," Navarro said in an email to the group.

The Chandler Gilbert Substance Use and Treatment Task Force is holding a free conversation about opiates with prevention and treatment professionals 6-8 p.m. June 22 at Dignity Health Mercy Gilbert Medical Center, McAuley Conference Rooms, third floor, 3420 S. Mercy Drive, Gilbert. Details: [cysachandler.org](http://cysachandler.org).

# BOTTLING

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metropolitan area]."

To Porter, the question is not so much about water bottling plants specifically as it is about the region's economy as a whole.

She believes residents need to educate themselves about the nuances of water

is working with ASU to develop an online educational resource. She also hopes more cities will follow the lead of Scottsdale, which has a water academy for its citizens.

Sierra Club's Bahr wrote, "We think water should be a consideration regarding these industries, and there should be requirements for minimizing and reusing water, whenever possible."

Porter stressed that this is not a black-and-white issue, stating it all comes down to priorities and what kinds of jobs cities and regions want to have moving forward.

"The larger issue is with all manufacturing economic drivers and [residents asking if a] should a city have a preference for low-water-intensive economic development," she said.