

AZ CENTENNIAL

1912-2012

If I could, I would give Arizona more rain, less heat and cheaper air-conditioning (OK, that last part was for me). I would give her better schools and more opportunities for her graduates to use that education. I would offer more support for small businesses and big ideas.

ROBERTS

Continued from Page B1

this faraway land called Arizona, and I came with him, to scout out the place before the rest of the family arrived.

I fell instantly in love. I don't know if it was the palm trees that swayed against a sky the color of a cornflower or the warmth of the sun that kissed my face the way it does in March, when much of the country is still making like a Popsicle.

There was just something about this place and the people who lived here. They had a certain spring in their step, an optimism in their outlook, as if they already knew what the rest of us would soon discover, that this place was special.

It is special still.



Laurie Roberts

Republic columnist

Oh, Arizona hasn't always lived up to its potential. There have been plenty of growing pains, a few scandals and some wild political show-downs that make the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral look like a pillow fight.

But Arizona — the one I saw on that long ago March day — endures. Gloriously beautiful, unapologetically optimistic and still, after 100 years of statehood, a thoroughly captivating work in progress.

Just think of the things this young state has already contributed to the nation: Barry Goldwater and Cesar Chavez. Sandra Day O'Connor and Steven Spielberg. Kool Deck and chimichangas and even a planet named Pluto, before it was kicked to the celestial curb a few years ago.

Tasers came from Arizona as did the right to remain silent (thank you, Ernesto Miranda).

The question is: What can we give back now as she celebrates this milestone birthday?

What gift can we offer the state that already boasts one of the seven natural wonders of the world and a few unnatural ones as well?

I thought about a padded room —

handy for housing the Arizona Legislature — or an oven mitt for a certain governor and her nationally known finger.

I'm warming to the idea of giving Arizona open primaries. Surely if we dig through the scorched earth of today's politics we can find that elusive middle ground, where the good of the state trumps the purity of ideological argument.

If I could, I would give Arizona more rain, less heat and cheaper air-conditioning (OK, that last part was for me). I would give her better schools and more opportunities for her graduates to use that education. I would offer more support for small businesses and big ideas.

And I would give her the leadership she deserves, people with a passion for the land and the vision and intellect to grow this state well, as befitting a place that really could be heaven on Earth.

But I think the best gift that I, or any of us, can give her would be to simply remember what it was that drew us here or kept us here, if we were fortunate enough to be native-born. We should each consider how we might say thank you.

Nearly 101 years ago, former President Theodore Roosevelt predicted that we would come. It was March 1911, and he was in the Valley, having just returned from a trip to dedicate Roosevelt Dam. He had been awed by the natural beauty of this place, and he predicted that great things could be ahead for Arizona.

"I believe, as your irrigation projects are established, we will see 75 to 100,000 people here," he said while standing on the steps of Old Main at Tempe Normal School, now Arizona State University.

"It is one of the most fertile regions of the country. You have the great material chance ahead. You can throw it away if you have not the right kind of men and women."

As Arizona reaches the ripe young age of 100 — with a population exceeding 6 million — I think the best thing that we can give her is a pledge to be the right kind of men and women.

Reach Roberts at laurie.roberts@arizonarepublic.com or 602-444-8635.

Tempe Center for the Arts

700 W. Rio Salado Parkway Tempe, AZ 85281

© AndrewGrantPhoto.com

# be part of the scene-ennial

be part of the cultural fabric with these popular series

- Bully Mammoth sketch comedy
- LakeShore Jazz
- Performance with a View
- Poetry in April
- Songwriters' Showcase
- Sonoran Chamber Music
- Tempe Symphony Orchestra
- Walk-in Wednesdays Open Mic Night

be part of the experience with these performing groups

- Arizona Academy of the Performing Arts
- A Ludwig Dance Theatre
- Arizona State University Public Events
- Arizona Wind Symphony
- Childsplay
- CONDER/dance
- Desert Dance Theatre
- Tempe Community Chorus
- Tempe Symphonic Wind Ensemble

For tickets to these and other events at TCA, call 480-350-2822 or visit [www.tempe.gov/TCA](http://www.tempe.gov/TCA)

Bring this ad to the Tempe Center for the Arts and be entered in a drawing to win 2 tickets to the May 5 Songwriters' Showcase.

City of Phoenix

City's efforts stabilize Phoenix neighborhoods

Neighborhood Stabilization Program

Only a few years back, Phoenix was filled with vibrant, thriving neighborhoods and the local economy relied heavily on the flourishing real estate market. Fast forward five years later and one can see the toll countless waves of foreclosures have had on community neighborhoods and the city as a whole. In an effort to alleviate the impending ripple effects of the housing crisis, the federal government provided a funding source to the city of Phoenix, referred to as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), to help stabilize the hardest hit neighborhoods. While the number of homes NSP will be able to directly affect is small in comparison to the magnitude of the foreclosure problem, Phoenix's multi-program approach is making a difference one home, one street, one neighborhood at a time.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the city a total of \$115.4 million to address foreclosed single-family and multi-family properties through acquisition and rehabilitation to create homeownership opportunities and increase the number of affordable rental homes available. More than 2,400 foreclosed housing units will be recovered from foreclosure, turning them back into sustainable homes. To date, more than 250 households have benefited from NSP funding, enabling families to achieve the dream of homeownership. In addition, eight foreclosed multi-family communities (totaling 1,695 units) have been purchased and are in the renovation process to provide families with quality rental homes along major transportation routes and close to employment centers.

**Neglected to Newly Renovated**

The city's single-family strategy is to restore neglected homes back to neighborhood assets by stabilizing and improving home prices, reducing vacancies and increasing the number of owner occupants. "We believe that improving these properties helps values go up and will have the greatest long-term impact on a neighborhood," said Jerome Miller, deputy city manager for the city of Phoenix.

The foreclosed homes undergo significant rehabilitation: health and safety issues are resolved, homes are made energy-efficient and curb appeal enhancements are made, resulting in improved housing stock. "There's a big difference in the level of improvements. NSP projects are more comprehensive top to

bottom, inside and out, with special attention on lowering utility costs," said Heather Marin, general contractor and owner of Marin Development, which has renovated more than 10 NSP homes. "Also, NSP work continues to keep us busy, allowing us to keep our people working so we don't have to lay off anyone."

**Putting People to Work**

NSP funding helps create new jobs and retain existing jobs in Phoenix through home construction, rehabilitation, building materials, lending, real estate sales and property management. Phoenix works with a number of nonprofit and for-profit organizations to deliver program activities and services. "The work flow trickles down creating jobs for the subcontractors — it's a partnership," said Mike Sytsma, a subcontractor with Valley Crest Building Systems. An estimated 1,250 jobs will be created or retained as a result of NSP projects. "NSP funding has made it possible to take on challenging projects and create jobs in the community," says Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton. "We are pleased to see the program impacting the community and contributing to Phoenix's economy."

**Homeownership Done Right**

Part of the program's goal is to prepare homebuyers for the responsibilities of homeownership by providing guidance and setting realistic expectations. Each NSP homebuyer takes part in extensive homebuyer education and counseling in an effort to ensure long-term success. Buyers are only able to secure a standard loan and must have at least a one-year home warranty. As a result, the whole neighborhood benefits from having a well-informed and prepared homeowner move into their community.

**NSP Works!**

NSP is working on multiple fronts — renovating homes others would pass on, generating jobs, setting up homebuyers for success, offering financial support, inspiring buyers to purchase and neighbors to improve their properties.

Many would agree that owner occupants take a strong sense of pride and accomplishment in maintaining their home and establishing roots in the community. "Having owner occupants in the home makes a huge difference because of the pride they take in their home and community," Said Linda Howard, president of a South Mountain homeowner association and neighbor to a recently purchased NSP home.

NSP projects also create neighborhood synergy by inspiring others on the street to make improvements. Dana Johnson, a Phoenix resident and active community member commented on the "domino effect" NSP activity created in his neighborhood, saying that "These owners inspire other neighbors to clean up their yards and do projects they have put off for years. It's unbelievable to directly observe the positive change."

Over the next few years, the city of Phoenix plans to continue every effort to revitalize and strengthen Phoenix communities through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. "We want to make a difference every day in Phoenix neighborhoods — educating residents about responsible homeownership and open the door to opportunity" says Chris Hallett, Director of the city's Neighborhood Services Department. "We want to see happy new neighbors who can establish roots in the community and become leaders and stakeholders. We want to see Phoenixians put back to work. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program has offered great opportunities to do all of that."

Phoenix Neighborhood Stabilization Program Partners: Cesar Chavez Foundation, Chicanos Por La Causa, Community Housing Resources of Arizona, Desert Mission Neighborhood Renewal, Foundation for Senior Living, Greater Phoenix Urban League, Mandalay Communities, Neighborhood Housing Services of Phoenix, New Town CDC, NSPAZ LLC, R.O.I. Properties

### Homeownership Opportunities

**\$15,000 loan to use toward closing costs and down-payment (zero interest, no monthly payment)**

**Move-in Ready Program**  
Limited selection of newly remodeled homes that feature sustainable energy-efficient systems, improved design finishes and enhanced curb appeal

**Home Improvement Program**  
Up to \$40,000 to make eligible home repairs when you select a foreclosed home within 23 Phoenix zip codes

**Program Guidelines:**

- Must be able to qualify for a fixed rate mortgage loan
- Not be on title on any residential property (you do not have to be first-time homebuyer)
- Able to contribute half of the home's required cash down payment
- Total household income must meet program income guidelines (for example, a household of four may have a maximum income of \$79,700)

**To learn more, call 602-262-6602**  
**[phoenix.gov/nsphome](http://phoenix.gov/nsphome)**