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the sanctuary issue

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Contents

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Editor's letter

We all want to feel secure, to feel like we have a space to exist in peace. The Sanctuary Issue explores this desire. Our writers look at how we belong despite the precarity of the resources we need to feel safe. Sources of water continue to dwindle as communities grapple with potential limitations on supply. Students forgo the right to privacy for the sake of supposed academic integrity. We traverse ASU's scorched campus, finding relief in shaded alcoves scattered throughout. Phoenix's housing crisis continues burgeoning out of control — but there remains hope in community action.

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Report

One billion gallons

Amid shortages in the Colorado River and a historic megadrought, cities, the agricultural industry and ASU may need to look to other water sources. Here's why sustainability experts say ASU isn't worried yet

by Keetra Bippus
Illustrations by Biplove Baral

The Colorado River supplies water to Mexico and seven U.S. states, serving millions of households and businesses and a multi-billion dollar agriculture industry. The water running through it, however, is dwindling.

In 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation declared a shortage in the Colorado River, requiring drastic cuts to how much water communities can draw from the vital source.

The Colorado River is aridifying — becoming drier — and its supply has been over-allocated in the past, according to Sarah Porter, director of ASU's Kyl Center for Water Policy. Cities and states relying on the river will have to adjust the way they consume water in order to support the populations and industries that rely on it.

ASU has improved its water efficiency in recent years. In 2007, ASU started reporting its water use to an external sustainability ranking system.

Since then, it has used 16.77% less potable water per campus user, 28.38% less per gross square feet in building spaces and 45.59% less per acre in areas with vegetation according to data recorded from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. These improvements come from various sustainability initiatives, such as updating water fixtures and watering landscaping at night.

The future of water in Arizona is uncertain and precarious, but sustainability experts say the University is well-prepared for impending cuts to the Colorado River supply.

Water in the desert

The Colorado River provides over a third of Arizona's water supply. The rest is from in-state rivers, groundwater and reclaimed water.

Arizona doesn't have enough groundwater to support its growing population in the long term, so it draws

some of its water from the Colorado River system. The state is usually entitled to 2.8 million acre-feet of water — the amount of water needed to fill an acre of land one foot high — from the Colorado River system, its second-largest source after groundwater.

"The problem with groundwater in a place like Arizona, where it doesn't rain much, is that we are good at pumping water out of the ground a lot faster than it's replenished," Porter said.

Over-reliance on groundwater can have serious consequences. In San Joaquin Valley, California, the ground is projected to physically sink for decades unless the groundwater is replenished. Building new groundwater wells or deepening existing ones can also be expensive, disproportionately affecting those living in low income rural areas who often don't have the resources to diversify their water supply or dig new wells.

A study this year by the Bureau of Reclamation projected a Tier 2a shortage in 2023 on Lake Mead, a reservoir along the Colorado River that supplies water to Arizona, California, Nevada and Mexico. Once water levels fall below a certain level, a shortage is declared and restrictions on how much water can be drawn are put in place, depending on the shortage tier.

Consequently, Arizona has to reduce 21% of its Colorado River usage beginning in 2023.

Although that is three percentage points more than the existing cuts required by the Tier 1 shortage, which was declared in August 2021, the additional restrictions will undoubtedly impact the state's water use.

Agriculture will be the most affected by these cuts to water supply. Nearly three-fourths of Arizona's water goes to agriculture, which was already impacted by the existing Tier 1 shortage. However, a Tier 2a shortage will begin to impact water that is supplied to municipalities. Each city in metro Phoenix has a unique water portfolio, meaning their water supply comes from a variety of sources and is apportioned differently.

Although cities won't immediately face cuts in their Colorado River supply, Porter said it's likely they will face obligatory reductions in the future. If that happens, cities will have to either draw more from groundwater wells or find alternative water sources.

ASU's water supply

ASU mainly draws water from the cities its campuses reside in, said Alex Davis, assistant director of University Sustainability Practices, in an email. Unsurprisingly, the Tempe campus uses the most — it accounted for over half of the University's total water consumption in 2019.

During fiscal year 2021, over 1 billion gallons of water were used across all ASU campuses. To put that number to scale, 1 billion gallons comes out to only about 6% of the city of Tempe's potable water distribution to Tempe and Guadalupe customers that year. Davis said the University is prepared for cuts to its water supply, but does not anticipate any in the foreseeable future.

ASU's water use has grown alongside the University's population. The amount of water the University consumed increased about 34% in 2021 compared to 2007, while University enrollment over that same period grew about 21%.

Wastewater, on the other hand, declined steadily between 2014-2020.

Wastewater from the Tempe, Downtown Phoenix and West campuses is treated at the 91st Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant and then reused. About half of the recycled water goes to the Palo Verde Generating Station while the rest filters through a man-made wetland and flows back into the Salt River, said Nazario Prieto, Assistant Water Services Director for the city of Phoenix.

Alongside the increase in water consumption since 2007, ASU has simultaneously become more water efficient.

ASU's biggest improvement is in its outdoor water use — the University has nearly halved the amount of water that it uses per acre of vegetated grounds since 2007.

Unlike most of Arizona, where 70% of water in municipal areas is used outdoors, the Tempe, Downtown Phoenix and West campuses use the largest proportion of their water indoors, according to Davis.

Katie Spreitzer, a sophomore studying sustainability, said the University is good about using its water supply wisely. She applauded the University's plan on updating and installing more water-efficient fixtures.

"In 2020 the university completed a multi-year project to retrofit 2,000 high-water-use plumbing fixtures [mainly toilets] on the ASU Tempe campus," Davis said. "More recently, we have been transitioning shower heads in residence halls to lower flow models."

Madisyn Langford, a sophomore

studying sustainability and financial officer for Campus Student Sustainability Initiatives, agreed the University has quality sustainability initiatives in place, but said she would like to see improved efficiency.

"I think one of the biggest areas that ASU could improve is [in] a lot of the residential dorms," she said. "So many people are reporting having leaks and flooding issues." In August, Best Hall reported having plumbing issues, while Hayden West had a sewer backup.

Just a short walk from these dorms, the Barrett, The Honors College Academic Complex has a state-of-the-art greywater capture-and-reuse system. Barrett's greywater system captures and treats up to 10,000 gallons a day from water fountains, showers and sinks in the complex before treating it to a standard that's reusable for irrigation.

"The system ... supports the University's commitment to sustainability and serves as an example for campus housing," read a statement by Biohabitats, an ecological conservation and restoration company which designed the greywater system.

Steps toward water conservation are needed as the chance of water falling low enough in 2024 to trigger a Tier 3 shortage in Lake Mead is nearly 60%. If a Tier 3 shortage occurs, Arizona would have to give up 720,000 acre-feet of its apportionment, which would restrict water usage in municipalities.

The Southwest's water system is designed for drought, said Margaret Garcia, an assistant professor in ASU's School of Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment. Arizona has built-in storage for extra water from wetter years to supply the area during drier ones, she said. However, the state's water system is struggling to adapt to the current "megadrought," which began in 2000. It's considered the most intense drought in the past 1,200 years.

"That system was not designed for the type of drought we're experiencing now," Garcia said. "And that's both in terms of the physical design, but even more importantly the way water has been allocated, and the rules around allocation."

Water law

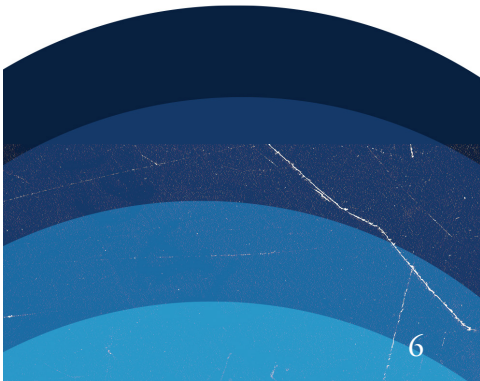
Water allocation laws in Arizona are old and highly complex. The law dividing up the Colorado River — the Colorado River Compact — was signed 100 years ago. The compact had a major flaw: it assumed the Colorado River had more water than it actually did.

The compact divided 16 million acre-feet among the seven Colorado River system states, assuming the river flowed with more than 17.5 million acre-feet yearly.

The reality was very different. The average flow between 2000 and 2020 is actually 12.5 million acre feet — much lower than it was believed to be when the compact was signed.

"The compact is bad," said Rhett Larson, a professor of water law at ASU's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. "We would all probably be better off to just take the whole system apart and rebuild something new."

Water-conscious policy in Arizona is nothing new. In 1980, the state signed into law the Groundwater Management



"We would all probably be better off to just take the whole system apart and rebuild something new."

— Rhett Larson

Act. This law identified areas with high use of groundwater and required any new development in these areas to have enough water to support its population for 100 years.

In 2015, Arizona's water use had declined by 3% from 1957; its population ballooned nearly 500% during that time frame. Despite an overall decrease in water use, the state faces the largest cuts from the Colorado River system due to its junior water rights. Arizona's junior water rights mean the state is impacted the most by water cuts to the river since it held the water rights for less time than other states.

Indigenous tribes were not included when the compact was originally signed, as they were not considered U.S. citizens until 1924. Many Indigenous water rights are senior to the Colorado River Compact. The 1908 Supreme Court case Winters v. U.S. established the "Winters Doctrine," which protects senior water rights on federal reservations.

Some tribes have asked for their full allotment of water from the Colorado River. The Gila River Indian Community said in August it will stop leaving its unused allotment in the river and instead store it underground for future use.

In spite of its inaccuracies and lack of inclusivity, the Colorado River Compact has been extremely difficult to renegotiate, "mainly because there are so many legal rights that are founded on the compact," Larson said.

"It is a weight-bearing pillar," he said. "If you pull it out a lot of things would fall apart and a lot of people would bring a lot of lawsuits."

But eventually, legislators may have no choice but to renegotiate or set a new precedent entirely.

"The more dire our situation gets, the more radical solutions start seeming realistic," Larson said.

ASU is in a safe spot for now. While the University is prepared for potential cuts to its water supply, it's not anticipating them, Davis said.

"Several university departments have been collaborating for multiple years to identify and implement water conservation projects and plan for hypothetical water restrictions, should conditions warrant them in the future," he said.

ASU has invested in reducing its water consumption and becoming more water efficient. Since it established the first comprehensive degree-granting sustainability school in the country in 2006, ASU's commitment toward a sustainable campus continues. As the Southwest faces water shortages in the Colorado River system unlike anything that it's experienced before in modern history, innovations on the local, state and national level are needed to conserve this valuable resource.

"Nothing else matters if you don't have water," Larson said. "... We need to reinvest into taking care of water infrastructure. That probably means that our largest water consumers need the largest incentives to conserve."

Opinion

‘The invasive gaze’

An Ohio court ruled a student’s privacy outweighed a university’s need to scan rooms to protect academic integrity. ASU needs to do the same

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by James Doyle Brown Jr.
Illustrations by Biplove Baral
Photography by Sydney Huyge

In August, an Ohio district court ruled that a room scan prior to an online test, like the ones required in some exams at ASU, violated a student’s constitutional right to privacy.

While ASU’s use of online proctoring services isn’t directly implicated by the Ohio decision, ASU has a decision to make about continuing to use them.

ASU has a three- to five-year commitment with Honorlock, which was named in the Ohio ruling, as a proctoring solution for iCourse and oCourse classes. But it’s important the University doesn’t continue a precedent that eats away at our personal liberty.

If ASU takes pride in its charter, it should remember that it expresses a fundamental commitment to the “economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.” Threats to privacy directly counter the social health of the ASU community.

When asked for comment about the ruling, Tess Mitchell, Honorlock’s chief marketing officer, provided a link to the company’s FAQ page, which defends the correct use of room scans as a best practice. It also correctly cautions that the Ohio district court decision is limited to a specific set of facts, is not a national ruling, and may be appealed.

Kahlea Cranford, manager for Learning Experience Support with the University Technology Office, said in an email that they understand there is uncertainty regarding the ASU policy for online proctoring. An ASU spokesperson confirmed that the policy is currently being reviewed.

Nothing can be said about Honorlock that isn’t already addressed in the nearly 2,500 Google reviews — which average a one-star rating — or the online petition for ASU students, who have signed to “Stop ASU from forcing Honorlock on students,” which had 139 signatures at time of publication. Signers note that the monitoring is an invasion of privacy, an abuse of power and

“The more we grant public access to spaces like our bedrooms, the less we can claim that they’re private.”

that students paying tuition should not be subjected to “network snoopers.”

Similar petitions on campuses across the country echo those concerns and have raised others. Online proctoring services require complete privacy, creating issues for students living at home or with roommates, and invalidate a test if there’s movement in the background. They can pause while the clock continues to run if the tester is too fidgety, if their head is not positioned properly, or if there is background noise.

The name “Honorlock” is as patronizing as the presumption of guilt that led to this tormenting practice. Honor implies trust. There’s no honor in being physically locked out of an opportunity to make a choice — the honor comes from making the right choice. It seems the academic integrity pledge that students often sign at the beginning of courses wasn’t enough.

ASU claims Honorlock “stops cheating as it is happening.” That might be true, unless a student knows how to Google “how to cheat honorlock.” There are articles. There are videos. There are Reddit threads.

Providing these aren’t meant to condone cheating, or to endorse these methods, but they do show that innovative students can find ways to deceive the invasive gaze of online proctors.

What’s honorable about a service that’s cheatable, intrusive and adds stress to a community of students already struggling with anxiety?

The truth is it’s the academic integrity of the University being shielded from shifty students who can’t be trusted. For Honorlock, that shield, ASU could be charged nearly $4.5 million for five years of use.

There’s much more at stake than student mental health or academic integrity, though. As we grow increasingly comfortable with technology, we’re blurring the lines between public and private spaces in ways the government could exploit.

Ben McJunkin, an associate law professor and associate deputy director of the Academy for Justice at ASU said the Supreme Court has already decided a number of cases with a troubling trend: The more we grant public access to spaces like our bedrooms, the less we can claim that they’re private.

“If technology continues to change in a way that we have consistently invited an undiscriminating public into our private spaces, we’re gonna have less constitutional protection against the government,” McJunkin said.

In other words, if you “BeReal” in your bedroom, the government may think that implies you are fine with them coming in as well. McJunkin calls this reasoning “horrifically misguided,” but warns there is justifiable concern over the potential consequences.

“I am delighted but shocked at the things my students are willing to share with me about their personal lives,” said Jessica Berch, a lecturer at the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law. “And remember, the definition of search is: ‘is this something you subjectively tried to keep private?’ And ‘is it objectively reasonable?’ If you’re vomiting out all of this information, that puts a lot of pressure on that.”

Intruders can argue that accessing someone’s bedroom isn’t a search if the student doesn’t keep it private. The defense representing Cleveland State made a version of this argument in the Ohio ruling — which Honorlock reminds us might still be appealed. ASU shouldn’t wait to find out.

With information accessible everywhere, Catherine O’Donnell, a professor of history in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, believes professors should work with the University to design assessments that show students understand how to use information, support arguments and think creatively.

While O’Donnell is sensitive to the challenges that professors face, like designing

exams for courses with a large number of students and ensuring knowledge has been gained, she agrees with what she has heard from students: that Honorlock is oppressive and ineffective.

"Can ASU put more of its energy and more of its resources to helping faculty create gradable assessments at scale, to helping faculty figure out how to educate for mastery rather than focus on sorting and grading and gatekeeping?" O'Donnell said.

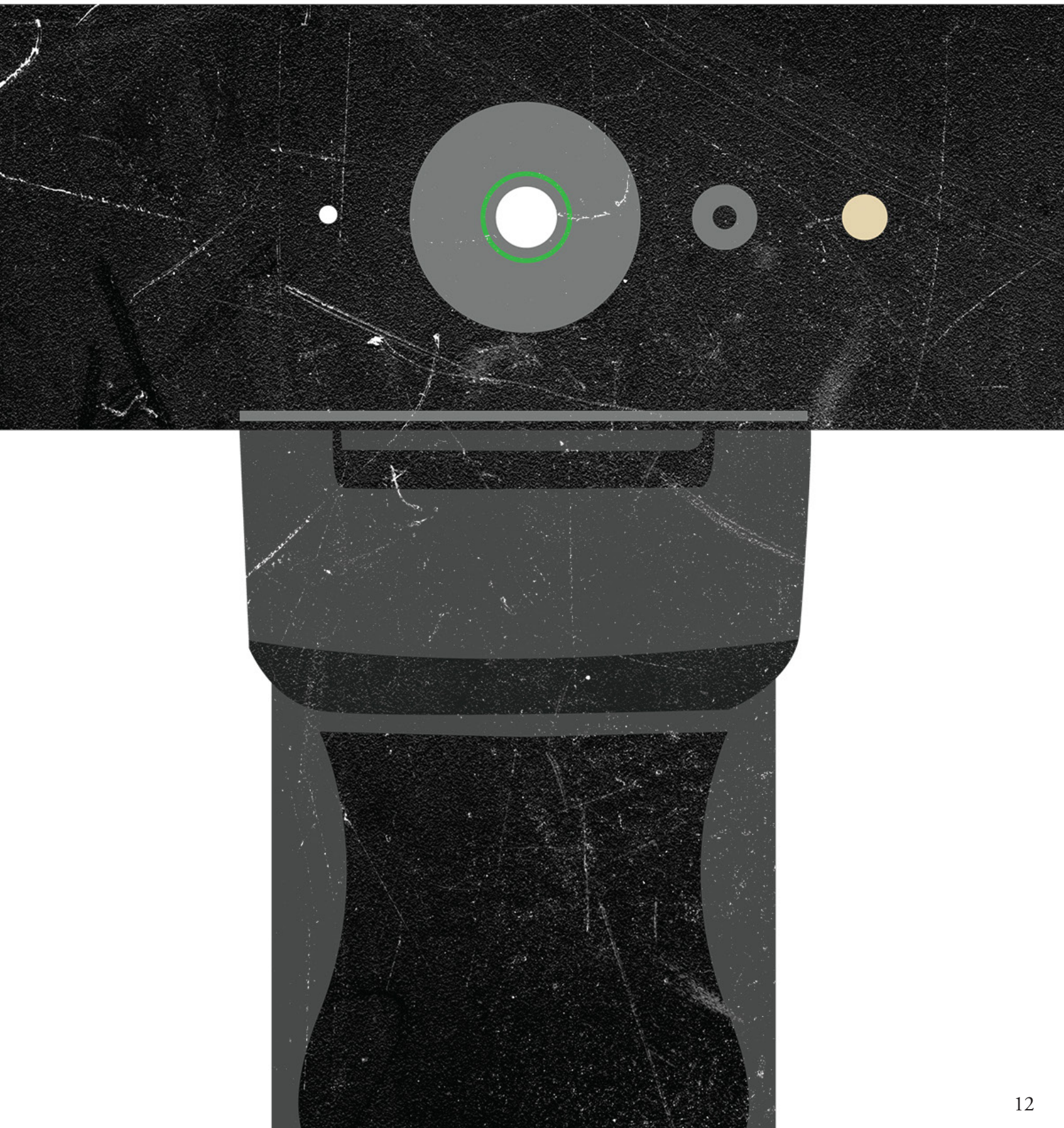
ASU has three main choices: it can do nothing, it can change the policies, or it can end the practice altogether. Berch said if it changes the policies based on the ruling, they may actually choose to increase the use of room scans to avoid the appearance that scans are being used arbitrarily.

Searches can be reasonable without a warrant if they're applied to everyone, like airport security. When flying, we're effectively offered a binary choice — fly and be searched or don't fly. Choosing to allow ourselves to be searched is a tradeoff for flying on an airplane.

ASU must do the honorable thing: recognize its fundamental responsibility to our community, and that not giving students a choice in sharing what they could otherwise keep private is eroding the rights of students.

It must revise its policies to allow students to opt out of room scans, if not stop the practice altogether. If not, they may be complicit in locking us into a future where we have no choice at all.

This opinion column was originally published on statepress.com on Sept. 8, 2022.



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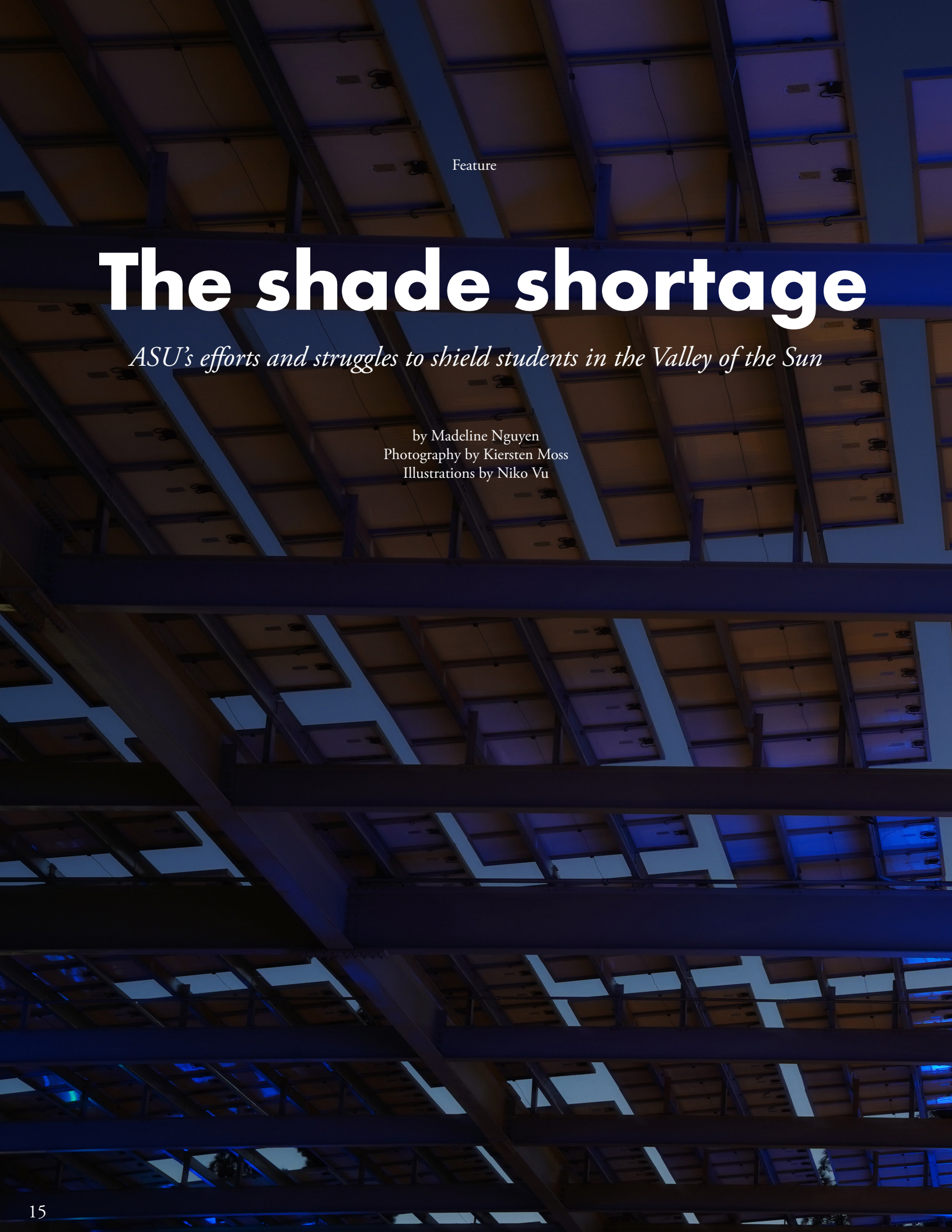


Feature

The shade shortage

ASU's efforts and struggles to shield students in the Valley of the Sun

by Madeline Nguyen
Photography by Kiersten Moss
Illustrations by Niko Vu

Walking across ASU's Tempe campus in the scorching heat is by far the worst part of my Tuesdays — the day my lab in the Walton Center on the east side of campus requires me to trek nearly a mile in grueling triple-digit heat.

My journey begins when I shuffle into the cavernous breezeway of Coor Hall, one of the last moments of substantial shade I'll enjoy on my walk across campus.

Rather than a fully shaded sanctuary, ASU's Tempe campus resembles a quilted patchwork of pavement interspersed by respites of roving shadows changing shape throughout the day as the sun travels across the sky.

Byron Sampson, associate director of the Office of the University Architect, compares these shaded enclaves to an oasis.

"You're journeying to something to find recovery, and then you move to the next one, to the next one, to the next one," he said.

According to the city of Tempe, ASU's Tempe campus is actually the most tree-shaded area in the city, and the University has taken strides in recent years to implement more shade across the campus.

But ASU could do more to provide shade to those who traverse its campus, said Ariane Middel, an urban climatologist and the director of the University's SHaDE Lab, a research group that explores the effects of urban heat.

"You can never have enough shade, especially in places like Phoenix, where the incoming solar radiation from the sun is really the main driver of people's comfort and the main reason we feel stressed when it's hot outside," Middel said.

Jennifer Vanos, who serves on the leadership team for the University's Urban Climate Research Center, says people may generally underestimate how devastating the heat can be. It is particularly harsh on vulnerable populations, which include those with mental health issues or chronic illnesses, people with disabilities and commuters who have limited access to transportation.

After a day of walking to classes from her parked car at Lot 59, Sage, an undergraduate student who requested anonymity because of privacy concerns, collapsed on her couch "on the verge of heat stroke."

Sage is currently in remission for Lyme disease, which makes her particularly sensitive to the harsh effects of extreme heat. Long walks in the sun on ASU's scorching campus have brought Sage to the verge of passing out from pain and exhaustion in the past.

"There is nothing heat-sensitive about ASU," Sage said.

Taking cover

Despite having some of the highest rates of canopy coverage in the city, downtown Tempe and ASU continue to look for new ways to provide shade to pedestrians.

When highs in Tempe jump to triple digits during the summer, shade can make all the difference. Vanos said despite high air temperatures, the sun itself is "what's really going to cause us to overheat."

To differentiate high air temperatures from how humans experience heat, scientists use mean radiant temperature, a measurement of the total heat load experienced by the body.

When individuals are in complete shade, their mean radiant temperature is roughly equal to the air temperature, Middel said. But in unshaded areas surrounded by heat-trapping materials like concrete and asphalt, mean radiant temperature can rise above air temperature.

On the exposed concrete walkway between Neeb and Stauffer halls, Middel once measured a mean radiant temperature of just over 144 degrees Fahrenheit, the same temperature an egg can cook at.

That was six years ago. And "it's not getting any cooler," Middel said.

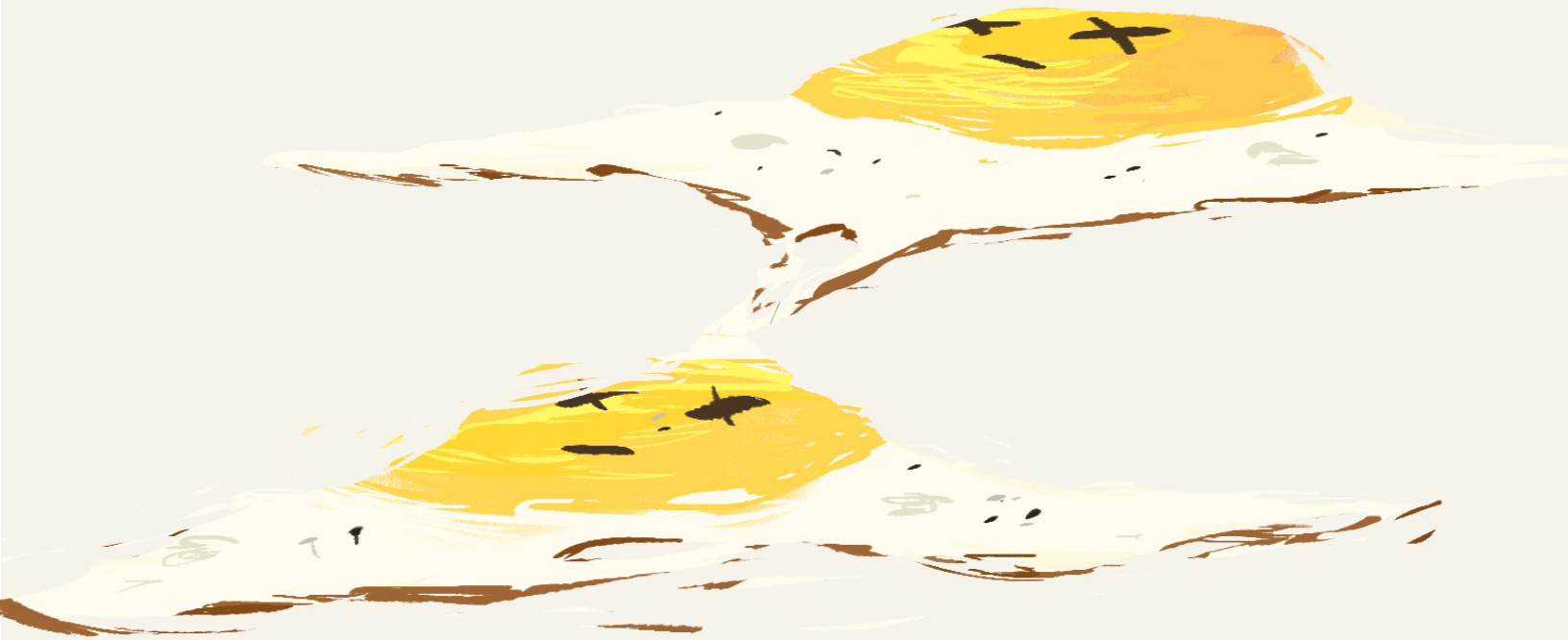
Temperatures are worsening in the already-sweltering desert state. Arizona has experienced a 3.3 degree increase in its annual average temperature since 1970, earning it a spot among the fastest-warming states in the nation, according to the climate change research nonprofit Climate Central.

A study published last year by The Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit, found the Valley's incrementally rising temperatures are setting off a destructive chain of events that may result in hundreds of heat-related deaths and billions of dollars lost to hospital visits and decreased worker productivity.

This July, heat-associated deaths in Maricopa County hit a half-year record — the latest grim milestone in the surging number of heat-related fatalities in the state.

Ximena, an ASU undergraduate whose last name has been omitted due to privacy concerns, went to her first college football game this year. The freshman was excited to experience a hallmark of college. She left the stadium with a stinging bruise on

“Heat builds into a throbbing migraine that pulses like a second heartbeat behind my eyes. Dehydration-induced spots float across the field of my vision. My drenched clothes cling to me like a second skin.”



her head, dizziness from dehydration and a concussion.

When Ximena started feeling dehydrated at the game, she tried to go grab water. But she never got the chance — on the way, she passed out and hit her head.

To treat her anxiety, Ximena takes SSRIs, a type of antidepressant medication. The effects of the medication make her particularly vulnerable to heat.

One of the side effects of SSRIs is excessive sweating, which can become a dehydration hazard when those who take them are exposed to high temperatures. Scientists have also found early evidence that some antidepressants affect users' ability to regulate their body temperature.

Middel and Vanos highlighted freshmen like Ximena and out-of-state students as populations particularly vulnerable to the effects of campus heat. For the unprepared, Tempe's triple-digit highs can be utterly overwhelming.

"I mean, if you're outdoors for two minutes — you step outside and come out of an air-conditioned building — you're fine," Middel said. "But if you're standing there for 20 minutes in the sun, then all of a sudden you start to feel really miserable."

Twenty minutes is the minimum time it takes for Kirsten Chanel Webber, a junior studying English literature, to walk to class from Lot 59. As a transfer student, Webber's campus heat fears came true when walking to her first class on campus caused her to overheat.

The moment she felt the effects of heat exhaustion, Webber made up her mind: this would be her first and last semester attending in-person classes at ASU.

She came to the conclusion that even though attending class in-person would be "a great opportunity for connections with other students," the heat and sun on campus were forcing her to choose her health and safety over an ideal college experience.

The Tempe campus' lack of consistent shade is also pushing Sage off campus. Like Webber, she's frustrated she isn't receiving a true "student experience" at ASU, as the heat has driven her to avoid attending professors' office hours, study halls and club meetings.

Currently, Sage is only

taking classes part-time at ASU but is considering transferring to an out-of-state university in a cooler climate that would better accommodate heat-vulnerable students like herself.

Solving the shade shortage

On the north side of the Memorial Union stands a hulking steel behemoth of a structure, a glowing canopy crowned with an array of solar panels.

This is one of the campus' PowerParasols: innovative canopy structures made of 1,380 solar panels that not only provide shade, but also send energy to the grid. Completed in 2014, the structure acts as a unique campus centerpoint where students gather, rest, study and relax in the shade.

Not even 10 years ago, Orange Mall looked very different. In the PowerParasol's place stood numerous curved, sloping shade structures dubbed "Pringles" for their resemblance to the canned chips.

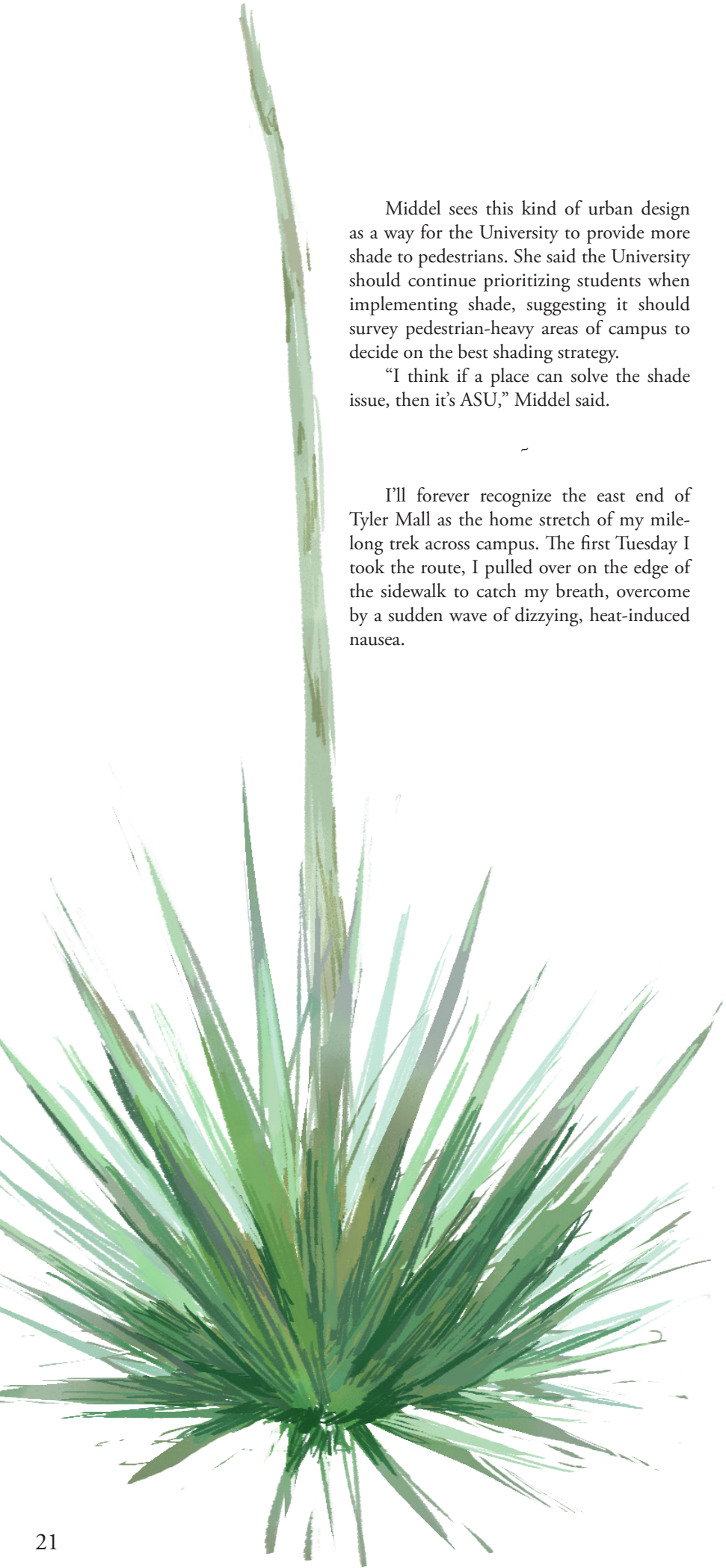
"During the summer, this whole area was just dead," Middel said. "Nobody was out there because it was way too hot. After ASU installed these [photovoltaic] canopies, there were concerts. It's a very lively place. People actually eat outdoors, and it has completely transformed that space."

When Sampson worked to design the PowerParasols, he knew shade was their main purpose, but it wasn't his only goal. He wanted the structure to be a "site of memory," a built environment with "ethereal" qualities that evoke a specific reaction or experience in a viewer.

"They're all coming to this space," Sampson said. "So that became kind of like a visual, physical marker and landmark that people could gravitate around."

The Tempe campus is crowded with buildings and record-breaking numbers of new students. Instead of growing outward, Sampson's office believes the University must now build upward to conserve space and increase shade coverage.

As ASU tears down outdated buildings to make room for taller, more efficient structures, Sampson's vision is guided by the idea of buildings with a sustainable "100-year life cycle" — tall, heat-resistant structures which cast enormous shadows.



Middel sees this kind of urban design as a way for the University to provide more shade to pedestrians. She said the University should continue prioritizing students when implementing shade, suggesting it should survey pedestrian-heavy areas of campus to decide on the best shading strategy.

"I think if a place can solve the shade issue, then it's ASU," Middel said.

~

I'll forever recognize the east end of Tyler Mall as the home stretch of my mile-long trek across campus. The first Tuesday I took the route, I pulled over on the edge of the sidewalk to catch my breath, overcome by a sudden wave of dizzying, heat-induced nausea.

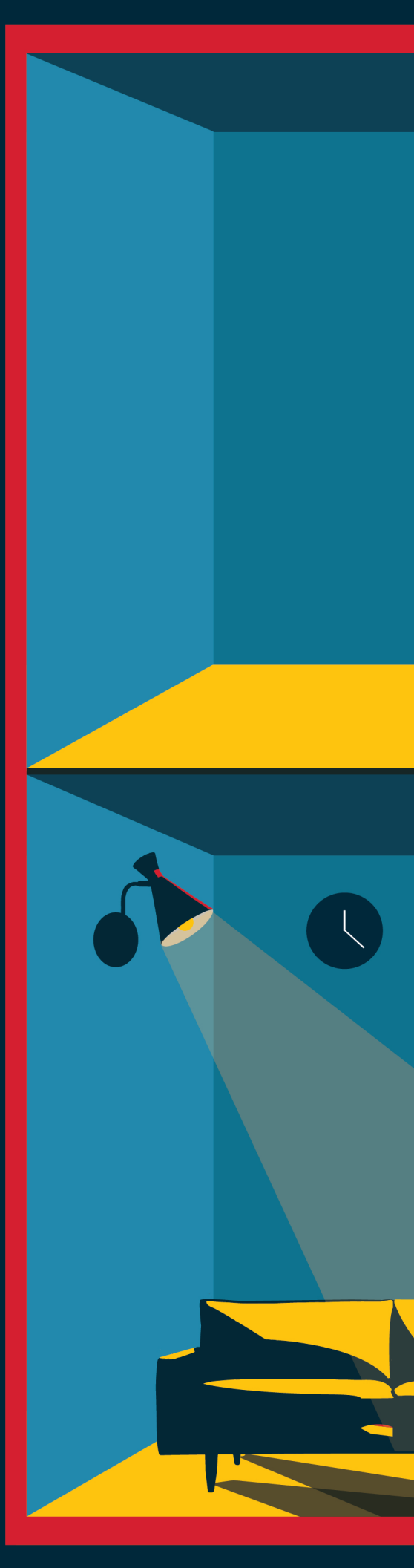
On Tuesdays, I usually end up feeling the phantom pain of a sunburn. Heat builds into a throbbing migraine that pulses like a second heartbeat behind my eyes. Dehydration-induced spots float across the field of my vision. My drenched clothes cling to me like a second skin.

On Tuesdays, I arrive at the Walton Center sticky with sweat, panting as I exhale hot air from my lungs. My feet drag on the stairs as I'm filled with exhaustion, my vision pooling into an addled haze.

On Tuesdays, I open the door and welcome the relief that only an air-conditioned building can provide on such a sun-exposed campus.

On Tuesdays, I count down the days until winter will come.

"Rather than a fully shaded sanctuary, ASU's Tempe campus resembles a quilted patchwork of pavement interspersed by respites of roving shadows changing shape throughout the day as the sun travels across the sky."

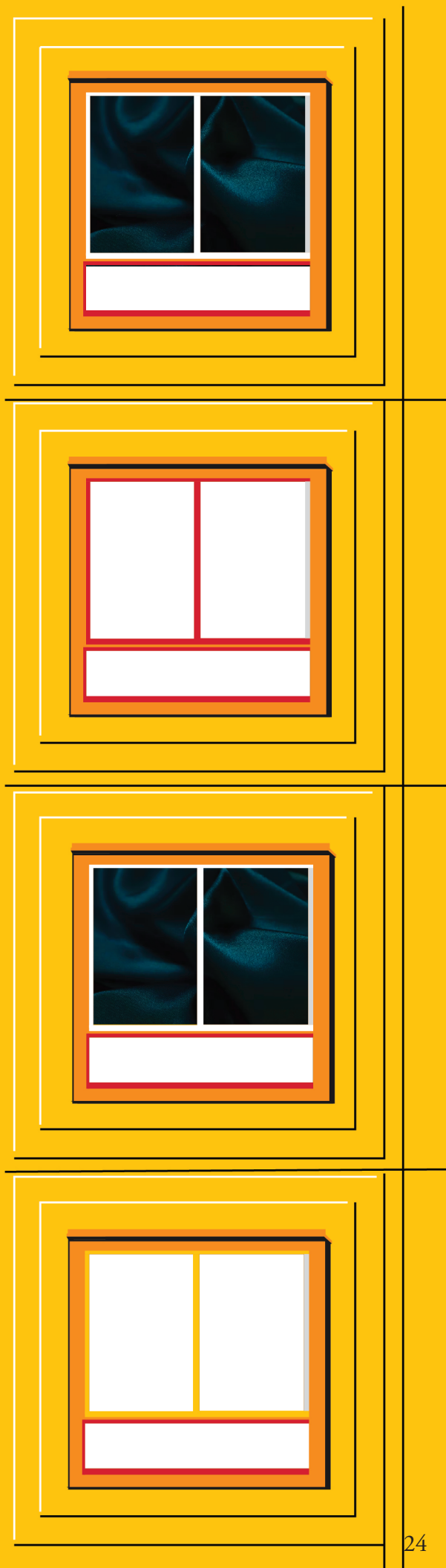


Report

Market failure

In metro Phoenix, giving developers free rein has resulted in skyrocketing rent prices and eviction rates. Policy experts and fair-housing advocates say solving the housing crisis will require broad structural change and grassroots action

by Alexis Moulton
illustrations by Biplove Baral



If you live in metro Phoenix, you've probably felt the effects of the housing crisis.

Even if you're paying rent on time every month, you may have chosen a longer commute to work or live with roommates to make ends meet. According to Mark Stapp, director of ASU's Center for Real Estate Theory and Practice, there's an "increasing divide" between those who can afford to live in today's housing market and those who cannot.

"This is not just a housing problem," Stapp said. "This is a social problem."

The crisis is most impacting renters, a demographic that includes most service workers, teachers, first responders, medical staff and, of course, students, Stapp said. In a 2020 survey from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 48% of surveyed college students nationwide had experienced housing insecurity in the past year, and 14% experienced homelessness.

Ashlee Tziganuk, a research analyst at ASU's Morrison Institute for Public Policy, said the metro Phoenix housing crisis is adversely affecting anyone who earns the median income or below in their neighborhood. That's a lot of people — by her estimates, around 44% of renters in Maricopa County are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

"When people experience housing insecurity, sometimes they have to do things like double up with people, find roommates or live with family members," Tziganuk said. "Worst case scenario, people are experiencing housing loss."

Garima Jain, an international graduate student at the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning, said she spends about 65% of her income on rent. When she got an offer to start her Ph.D. program in January 2021, she started monitoring rent prices in Tempe immediately.

Within a few months, she said some had increased almost $400.

"By mid-August, when I got there, the rent that I had seen in January had exploded," Jain said. "The market had completely gone out of whack."

Average rent has increased by about 37% in Tempe and about 40% in Phoenix since March 2020, according to data from Zumper, a leading rental aggregator. Apartment List, another rental data site, ranked Phoenix in the top 10 fastest rising rents in the country.

Jain is a full-time ASU student and employee. Like many graduate students, she lives off a University stipend — in her case, about $20,000 per year. According to ASU's Knowledge Exchange for Resilience initiative, the average annual cost of living for a single adult in Maricopa County is over $28,000.

This fall, Jain had to move in with extra roommates to shoulder the cost of rent. So did Nathalie Emery, a sophomore studying English literature who lives in an off-campus apartment in Phoenix.

"It's hard living paycheck-to-paycheck," Emery said. "I had to reduce my hours at work so that I can be a full-time student to keep my scholarship. But then I can barely pay for my housing because it's not covered by my scholarship."

Emery, a Federal Pell Grant recipient, relies on financial aid to pay her tuition. This July, she discovered her New American University scholarship had been reduced, shortly after the Arizona Board of Regents voted to increase tuition at ASU.

At a precarious time for short-term renters, students need all the help they can get. Reducing essential financial aid "reflects very poorly on the University," Emery said. And she's worried it's only a matter of time before she has to take out loans just to pay her rent.

"I've had really tough circumstances over the past year," she said. "I mean, everyone has. I'm not gonna single myself out. Everyone's had a really, really hard time trying to live in the world that we've made for ourselves."

Sarah Saadian is senior vice president of public policy and field organizing at the National Low Income Housing Coalition. She works with state-level organizations, like the Arizona Housing Coalition, to conduct research and develop policy solutions to housing insecurity.

So what are they? If we want to end the housing crisis, what has to happen?

Saadian can instantaneously rattle off a list of emergency actions local, state and federal governments could take to ease the burden on Phoenix-area renters. But even if NLIHC's comprehensive platform was implemented tomorrow, it will still require grassroots action to get everyone in stable, affordable housing as quickly as possible.

"There's no single answer," Saadian said. "It falls on all of us to end the housing crisis."

1. Extend and enhance emergency rental assistance

In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a national eviction moratorium in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the moratorium, Maricopa County had some of the highest rates of eviction filings in the country. After the moratorium's implementation, filings in 2020 plummeted to about 25% of their annual average highs.

In August 2021, the Supreme Court ended the moratorium. In August of this year, Maricopa County received 6,574 eviction filings, the highest number of filings in a single month since October 2008.

The federal eviction moratorium prevented about 1.5 million eviction filings nationwide, according to the Princeton Eviction Lab. Saadian sees no reason why such emergency policies cannot be reimplemented and enhanced to combat the current crisis.

"That was very successful at keeping people stably housed," Saadian said. "That's what we need permanently going forward."

In August, the city of Phoenix exhausted its Emergency Rental Assistance funds and began referring applicants to other nonprofit agencies. The city of Tempe exhausted its funds for emergency rent and mortgage assistance in December 2021.

Deborah Arteaga is the CEO of Tempe Community Action Agency, a nonprofit that provides emergency and long-term housing assistance. She said TCAA is understaffed, underfunded and has insufficient shelter space. She's too busy coordinating day-to-day operations to get involved with policy advocacy directly, but she said something has to change, and soon.

"There's a big gap between what we need and what's available to help," Arteaga said.

According to Emma Muriel, the communications manager for Arizona Housing Coalition, which coordinates advocacy for hundreds of housing justice groups, fatigue and underfunding are common threads statewide.

"We hear from our membership every day that they're burnt out and very tired," Muriel said. "Unfortunately, we see staffing shortages as well. The folks that work in direct service are trying their best, but there's always a gap in terms of resources, funding and places to send folks who are in need."

2. Subsidize and build more affordable housing

Claire Nelson, a junior studying sustainability and geography, is a downtown Phoenix local who serves as a board member of their neighborhood association. They said while the current housing crisis was exacerbated by the pandemic, it's ultimately the result of decades of rapid expansion and growth in the Valley.

"This isn't anything that we couldn't have seen coming," Nelson said. "And we have seen this coming."

Nelson was born and raised in Phoenix. When they graduate, they said they won't be able to afford rent in their neighborhood of 20 years.

Stapp traces the roots of the crisis to the Great Recession. When the market crashed in 2008 due to an oversupply of housing and predatory lending practices, developers overcorrected, underbuilding for the next 10 years.

That's why some experts characterize the crisis as a basic supply and demand issue. Data from the NLIHC indicates there are only 20 affordable and available rental units per 100 extremely low income households in metro Phoenix.

According to Saadian, there is no profit incentive for developers to build affordable housing. The supply of affordable housing almost never catches up to demand without assistance from government subsidies.

"There's this market failure where the private sector cannot build housing that's affordable to people with the lowest incomes unless there is federal, state or local resources that are being put into it," Saadian said. "And for decades, we've underfunded those resources and those solutions."

New developments don't move quickly either — it usually takes around 18 months to build and begin leasing new apartments — and the building process can be complicated by other factors, such as single-family zoning laws or local resistance.

In November 2021, the Morrison Institute's housing research team compiled a set of policy proposals to address affordable housing shortages, including replacing traditional single-family zoning with "inclusionary zoning" to accommodate more apartment and multi-family housing development. Each proposed solution faces state-level legal barriers, which would require legislative intervention to change or circumvent.

In Tziganuk's opinion, zoning laws in Arizona are "some of the biggest issues" in addressing today's crisis.

"It's not that they're failing," Tziganuk said. "It's just that these systems are not set up in a way that's conducive to building affordable housing."

Nelson is wary of over-simplified, under-regulated approaches to housing development. Phoenix absolutely needs more housing, and quickly, but not if it means compromising on high sustainability standards and truly affordable prices.

"We need to do so in a way that's conscious, that's understanding of where you're building things," Nelson said. "Oftentimes, people are like, 'we are building more housing,' and forget the affordable, sustainable part of that housing."

In January 2021, Tempe started the Hometown for All initiative, which

> “We all know that the realty industry and landlords aren’t going to do anything for us. So it’s really up to us to fix this.”
>
> — Claire Nelson

allocates a portion of city permit fees to support affordable and workforce housing opportunities. Current projects include the Apache Boulevard redevelopment, which could add 500 new affordable units.

A city-funded study in 2021 found Tempe would need at least 11,500 new affordable housing units to fully accommodate its low-income residents.

“We’re working on the supply issue in Tempe. But in the meantime, people are in crisis today,” Arteaga said. “So where do they go for help? What neighborhood is acceptable? Right now, all neighborhoods need to be open to get together and be part of the solution.”

Nelson thinks ASU is not doing enough to combat the housing crisis. They said the University often fails to provide reliable and stable housing for students, leaving them in “situations that are kind of rough,” such as rat-infested complexes, or sometimes hotels when dorms have reached capacity.

Jain agrees. ASU could take on a more proactive approach to building affordable housing, at least for its students, faculty and staff. With an ever-growing student population, she thinks it’s past time to invest in on-campus housing specifically for graduate students as well as undergrads.

“[ASU has] a lot of land, but they always choose to build just like a hotel, or they rent out lots of commercial properties,” Jain said. “But they don’t invest in graduate housing at all.”

3. Create and strengthen legal protections for renters

Last year, when housing was already in short supply and job loss was high, Arteaga

watched as some developers used the crisis as an opportunity to capitalize on a vulnerable market.

"Many properties, especially during the pandemic, have been bought by other developers or companies that have raised the price of rent — sometimes dramatically — giving very little notice to renters," she said.

According to Arteaga, the fastest-growing unsheltered population in Maricopa County are seniors. At TCAA, she's seen cases of renters in their 90s getting evicted — "and I think that ought to be against the law," she said.

Arizona has some of the weakest renter protection laws in the nation. The state has no "just cause" measure, meaning landlords and property managers can end rental agreements arbitrarily. They can also file for evictions within as little as six days after rent was due.

"I think a lot of people are scared of their landlords," Nelson said. "When you're renting, that is an inherently precarious situation."

Nelson proposes strengthening the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, which is currently unenforced by any state agency, meaning most evictions are informal and considered a private matter. They also said renters often have more power than they realize, if they find a way to leverage it as a community.

Tenant unions have sprung up like wildfire across the U.S in recent years. In some cities, union organizers have successfully lobbied for "right to counsel" ordinances for guaranteed legal representation and even prevented evictions by disrupting court proceedings.

Saadian said NLIHC definitively supports resident organizing.

"It can be extremely powerful," Saadian said. "It's incredibly important that you have people at the table helping to determine policy solutions who are closest to the problem."

She also emphasizes that housing is not only a socio-economic class issue, but a racial justice issue as well. The converging histories of segregation and redlining continue in the Phoenix metro today, resulting in persistent racial disparities in eviction rates.

Nelson is enthusiastic about burgeoning developments in tenant organizing in the Phoenix area — "I'm a fan of unions in the workplace and I'm a fan of unions in housing," they said. Tenant unions may be one of the few solutions to the housing crisis that grasps the root of the issue, since market failure is what got us here in the first place.

"We all know that the realty industry and landlords aren't going to do anything for us," Nelson said. "So it's really up to us to fix this."

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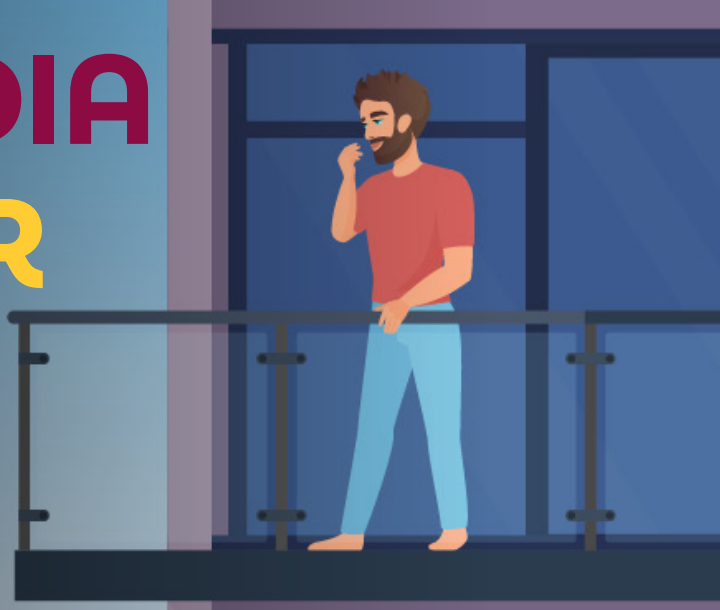

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