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Bill could fuel Scottsdale apartment boom

BY TOM SCANLON
Progress Managing Editor

Bad news for those who hate big apartment buildings: Arizona legislators are hell-bent on providing more multifamily homes – even if it means stripping zoning power from Scottsdale and other cities.

State lawmakers again flexed support for

apartments when an Arizona House of Representatives committee unanimously approved a “striketrough” that may pave the way for Axon’s controversial North Scottsdale plan.

The Taser maker wants to build a spaceship-themed corporate office surrounded by four apartment buildings and a hotel on Hayden Road near the Loop 101.

Despite passionate pleas from Scottsdale

City Council members Jan Dubauskas and Barry Graham to allow Scottsdale voters to decide the issue, the Arizona House Committee On International Trade unanimously approved an Axon-friendly “striker” at a March 26 meeting.

Eight days earlier, City Council was warned

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Turmoil over N. Scottsdale roundabout

BY TOM SCANLON
Progress Managing Editor

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say Scottsdale is running in circles on the roundabout issue.

The circular intersection is also an apt metaphor for a “ghosts of Council past” haunting. After the current Scottsdale City Council pulled the brakes on a planned circular intersection at Scottsdale Road and Dynamite Boulevard, a former councilman cried foul – filing a complaint with the Arizona Attorney General.

SEE **ROUND**A PAGE 8

Art-y Time



At the third annual Scottsdale Family ArtsFest at SkySong, thousands of Scottsdale Unified students, parents, staff, neighbors and community partners showed up to celebrate the creativity of the “next generation” of artists. The March 21-22 event featured musical performances, art exhibitions and hands-on activities. (SUSD)



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Local brothers help disabled diners eat out

PROGRESS NEWS STAFF

A pair of Scottsdale brothers have launched an online site to help address what they consider an oft-forgotten part of the nation's dining scene: people with disabilities.

Sanjit Krishnamurthy, a 16-year-old Brophy College Preparatory junior, and his brother Rohit, a Brophy grad who is a strategic financial analyst for Uber, recently launched the Beta version of dinability.com.

Describing themselves as “passionate about leveraging technology to create a more inclusive world,” the brothers created the free artificial intelligence-driven site to help people with disabilities find accessible restaurants.

“Did you know that it is incredibly difficult for disabled patrons to plan for restaurant visits?” asked Sanjit. “My cousin was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy at 10 years old and over the last 15 years, he has been dependent on a motorized wheelchair, service dogs, and



Scottsdale brothers Sanjit, left, and Rohit Krishnamurthy have developed a website that helps disabled people see how accessible Valley restaurants are for people who are wheelchair-bound or need other accommodations for their special needs. *(Special to the Progress)*

a great support system.

“I have seen first-hand, many activities that we take for granted such as dining out at a restaurant, require significant planning for people with disabilities.

“Every new restaurant visit takes hours of planning often resulting in disappointing experiences,” he continued. “Is the restaurant’s wheelchair ramp access close to the parking? Is the entrance truly wheelchair accessible, as indicated on their website? Do they welcome service dogs? How does the restaurant staff treat individuals with disabilities?”

Their project started about 18 months ago when Rohit, a Brophy grad who earned a degree in economics from the University of California/Berkeley, went to visit that cousin in Boston and were shut out of a rooftop restaurant.

“The ‘wheelchair accessible’ entrance touted by Google Maps turned out to be a narrow service elevator through a crowded kitchen,” Sanjit said.

SEE DINE PAGE 23

The Original Taste features top eateries

PROGRESS NEWS STAFF

The nonprofit Executive Council 70 will present its 52nd annual The Original Taste, a formal food and wine event benefiting over 100 children's charities next weekend.

Scheduled to run 7-11 p.m. Saturday, April 12, at the Scottsdale Civic Center, it will feature the Valley's top restaurants, wine and cocktails for an “elevated tasting experience” with live entertainment, according to a release.

The Original Taste will feature samples from over 20 restaurants like Pyro, STK, Uchi, Cala, Kasai Japanese Steakhouse, Maggiano's Little Italy, Velvet Taco. and more. Live entertainment includes perfor-

mances from Dee Jay Silver and Nashville's rising country star Josh Ross.

The formal-attire event also will feature cocktails served from premium Valley bars and a custom hat-making station from Rancher Hat Bar.

General admission tickets are \$175 and VIP tickets priced at \$275 allow access to a VIP lounge with premium views of the stage and preferential bar access. VIP tickets will also grant access to The Original Taste's Afterparty starting at 11 p.m. onsite.

General admission guests will have a chance to purchase an after-party ticket at the event. Guests who purchase two or more VIP tickets will get \$25 off per ticket. This event is for ages 21 and older.

Tickets: ec70phx.com/original-taste.

EC70 is a group of working professionals dedicated to helping the local community's youth through a series of fundraising events and initiatives. Originally formed in 1972, the 70 active and 300 life members have raised more than \$12 million the past five years.

Funds are raised through signature events like The Original Taste, Holiday Classic and Cantina along with direct contributions to the nonprofit's annual campaign – Support Arizona Youth.

Executive Council Charities has supported more than 100 charities this past year, distributing more than \$2.8 million.

Publicizing The Original Taste this year is



Executive Council 70 marketing chair Sean Frantz is charged with getting out the word on The Original Taste. *(Special to the Progress)*

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DINE FROM PAGE 22

Though their cousin said “this was a common occurrence,” Rohit was so shocked that when he came back home, “we both decided to find a solution,” Sanjit said.

“Turns out there are about 60 million people in the US who have mobility, hearing or vision issues that are impacted by this. Activities that we take for granted, such as dining at a restaurant, require significant planning for these individuals.

“After scanning through thousands of reviews on Yelp and other platforms, we found that there are few first-hand reviews relevant for disabled individuals planning to visit restaurants,” Sanjit explained. “We realized that the challenge is to find these relevant reviews.”

Sanjit learned visual coding in grade school and an AI programming language called Python in middle school. Before even starting high school, he earned data science certification at the Pragmatic Institute, where he was the only high school kid among master’s and PhD students.

So it’s not surprising that to start the project, he created a web scraper.

It scrapes and analyzes firsthand reviews from restaurant patrons from public websites, and extracts relevant insights on accessibility features, such as wheelchair access, service for patrons with service dogs, and amenities for visually or hearing-impaired individuals and summarizes the sentiment in 25-to-30-word paragraphs.

After pulling the information together in a rudimentary format, the brothers,

sons of Harish and Jaya Krishnamurthy, enlisted a professional company to design and create the current website.

The brothers split their duties with the website.

While Rohit focuses on all the financials and marketing activities for Dineability, Sanjet said, “I focus on the AI, coding and technical development.

“We work closely together on overall idea for Dineability, the strategy, partnerships and execution,” he added.

The website is designed to provide information accessibility quickly; a user just enters a restaurant’s name to see if it’s accessible or look at the map and click on any restaurant to see their disabled-relevant reviews.

But as Sanjit stressed, the site is still in it Beta stage for several reasons.

“We pulled info for about 1,000 restaurants in the Phoenix metro area,” he said. “I believe there are about 3,500 restaurants in Phoenix and probably a lot more in Maricopa County. Arizona in total has about 12,000 restaurants.

“We know there are more restaurants in these areas and plan to update soon.”

He said he and Rohit also plan to add more functionality to the website “but we want to get people using it so they can provide feedback that we can use to update the website and AI programs.”

While noting that many first-hand reviews on Google and Yelp are “specifically around accessibility,” Sanjit also said they’re difficult to find.

Hence, “finding and analyzing the reviews that are relevant to accessibility and service animals is the challenge.” 🐾

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largely the job of marketing chairman Sean Frantz, who has been the marketing director for the nightlife and restaurant hospitality company Riot Hospitality Group in Scottsdale for over 10 years.

Outside of the office, Frantz dedicates his time to volunteering at local foundations, which is what excited him the most when a close friend approached him about Executive Council Charities’ volunteer group, Executive Council 70, according to a release. 🐾

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