

NORTH SIDE

Amphi area making comeback

\$650,000 worth of improvements aid neighborhood

By Danielle Sottosanti
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Amphi Neighborhood is getting \$650,000 in improvements intended to help residents get their neighborhood back.

"I watched it go from real nice to all the way down to rock-bottom and now we're making the climb up," said Rick Wicinski, co-president of the Amphi Neighborhood Association. He has lived in the neighborhood for 26 years.

The neighborhood now has complete sidewalks along North First Avenue from East Prince to East Roger roads.

Thanks to the sidewalks, parents pushing strollers, kids walking to school and other pedestrians won't have to walk out in the street, Wicinski said.

And there are more improvements on the way: 21 streetlights along Navajo, East Mohave and East Yavapai roads; and 12 speed humps and three traffic circles designed to mitigate traffic throughout the neighborhood.

The improvements' projected completion time is March or April, said Bennett Bernal, project manager for Pima County.

A combination of city and county money is paying for the work.

On April 3, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved using \$500,000 in 2004 Neighborhood Reinvestment Program county bond money for improvements to Amphi.

Additionally, the neighborhood received \$150,000 in Back to Basics funding through City Councilwoman Karin Uhlich.

"It's one of the neighborhoods in (Ward 3) that has been lagging behind in infrastructure



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Alex Reed, left, and Norman Martin amble along one of the Amphi Neighborhood's new sidewalks, which were among the Ward 3 improvements being financed by a combination of city and county money.

improvements such as sidewalks and lighting," she said.

It's also one of the ward's "high-stress areas," she said. Those areas typically have lower income levels and higher crime rates, and haven't seen the neighborhood investments that other neighborhoods have, she said.

Soon after she was elected, Uhlich went on a walking tour of the neighborhood. "It really helped me to better understand the challenges they were facing there," she said.

Drugs, prostitution and gang activity are the three largest factors in the decay of the neighborhood, Wicinski said.

But he and others invested in the community hope that the improvements will make Amphi Neighborhood safer.

Slowing down traffic will encourage people to "feel safe and get out and talk to their neighbors instead of hiding behind closed curtains," Wicinski said.

"We hope that, with the added

ABOUT AMPHI NEIGHBORHOOD

- **Boundaries:** Fort Lowell Road on the south, Roger Road on the north, North First Avenue on the east and North Oracle Road on the west.
- **Size:** One square mile.
- **Number of residents:** 9,194, based on 2000 U.S. census data.
- **Neighborhood association meets:** From 7 to 8 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month in La Paloma Family Services Community Center, 240 W. Navajo Road. There will be no meeting in December.
- **For more information:** e-mail: AmphiNArick@aol.com.

Source: Rick Wicinski, co-president of the Amphi Neighborhood Association.

safer will improve the lives of boys in Menninger Group Home, located there, said Leslie Skoda, associate director of La Paloma Family Services.

"My agency was very excited that the grant was accepted because that means the neighborhood improvements will help (better) the overall environment of the children," she said.

"The sidewalks and lighting will enhance the overall safety of the neighborhood," she said.

Ten boys ranging from 13 to 18 live in the group home after being referred through Child Protective Services.

There continues to be crime in the neighborhood, but the neighborhood association has helped put in improvements that will make the community safer and healthier, Skoda said.

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streetlights, the criminal element doesn't want to be seen," he said.

Making the neighborhood