

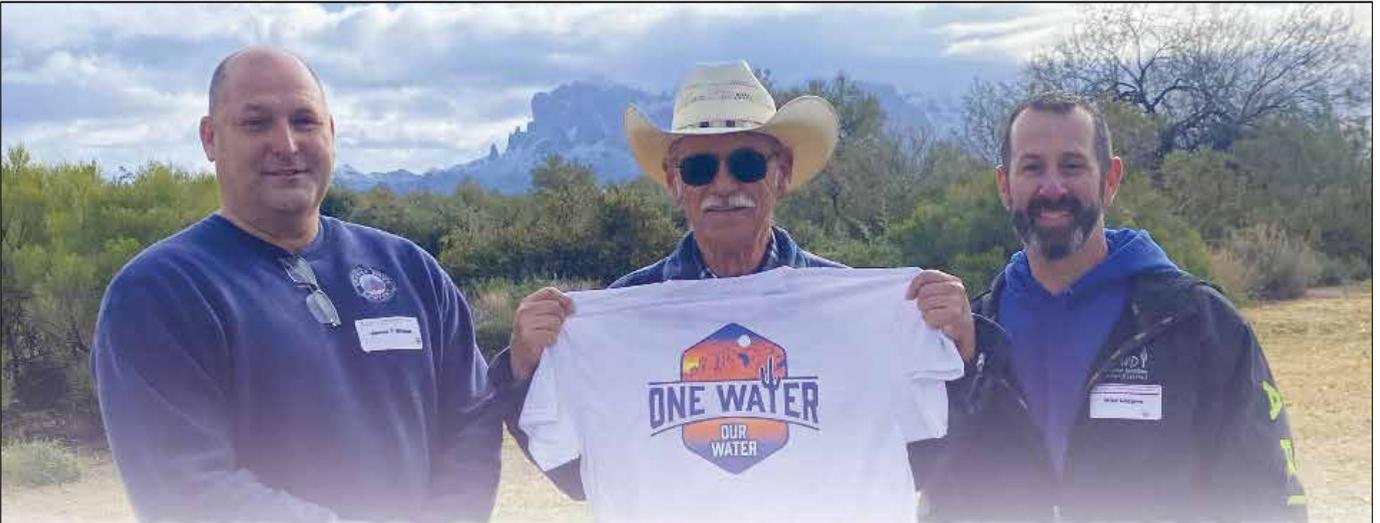
TOWERING OVER TEMPE:

The first phase of South Pier Tempe Town Lake includes 724 rental units and 26,000 square feet of retail. The Davis Experience is the project's architect and Clayco serves as general contractor. Rendering courtesy of McBride Cohen Co.



RISING IN THE EAST

Massive mixed-use projects are driving economic development in the PHX East Valley



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WIDENING THE WORKFORCE

ASU's Polytechnic campus will fuel even more of the PHX East Valley's advanced manufacturing, logistics and related industries workforce pipelines with the addition of ISTB12, a 173,194-square-foot innovation hub.

By ERIN THORBURN

When the bicycle, automobile and even cheeseburger were first released into mainstream culture, all three received their fair share of skepticism. In fact, according to Vox.com, the Washington Post went as far as to call bicycling “a hot fad for fancy ladies” in 1890. But the visionaries behind these creations knew they were on to something — and something big. The same goes for the innovators behind Arizona State University (ASU) Polytechnic campus and its new (Interdisciplinary Science and Technology 12) ISTB12 building.



For the educators, builders and creators behind the \$185 million ISTB12 building, they know the programs and partnerships housed within will yield incredible dividends for the Phoenix East Valley advanced manufacturing, logistics, aerospace, semiconductor and additional industries for years to come.

Thankfully, unlike the inventors behind the bike, car and cheeseburger, those involved with the conception and expansion of ASU's Polytechnic campus have the benefit of a tried and true reputation for forward-thinking and excellence in innovation.

"[The Polytechnic campus] really goes back to the days of Williams Air Force Base in the 1990s," says Mesa Mayor John Giles, "when the Air Force decided to close Williams Air Force Base and gave the keys to the City of Mesa and some of the keys

to ASU. Watching the progression of the Polytechnic campus since that time has been fun to see."

ISTB12 TAKES SHAPE

Added to ASU's proven record in planning for the future, continuing to keep time with the latest education, application and advancements in manufacturing and technology, has made the decision to expand the Polytechnic campus an easy one.

"There was always a manufacturing technology program here at ASU as a full degree a couple of years back," says Binil Starly, director and professor at ASU School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks. "And then it became a concentration. But then ASU said, 'With all these manufacturing companies moving in, you know what? We are going to have an entire new school.' This school will focus itself on manufacturing systems with the new forms of digitization that's happening in factories."

And, as Morgan Olsen, executive vice president, treasurer and CFO of ASU explains, "polytechnic really means learning through doing."

Olsen goes on to note that because ASU's Polytechnic campus is focused on hands-on learning, designed for engagement with local industry, it fits with ISTB12's design intent.

"Being able to have some high-base spaces that would allow work with various types of robots, including drones being a type of autonomous vehicle or robot is part of that," he says. "There will also be labs that will support certain aspects of research around the semiconductor industry. Artificial intelligence and particularly how that's applied to manufacturing systems and processes, are all part of the work that will be going on in that school and ultimately in this building when we open it."

Adds Starly, "There's a significant amount of automation and robotics that's making its way into the factory. This building — has the infrastructure for training students with the use of industrial robots, training students with the new kinds of processes that these companies might have inside their factory."

A photograph showing three individuals at a groundbreaking ceremony. On the left, a man in a light blue shirt and dark trousers, wearing a white hard hat with the Sysco logo, holds a blue Sysco shovel. In the center, a woman in a black blazer and skirt, also wearing a white hard hat with the Sysco logo, holds a blue Sysco shovel. On the right, a woman in a colorful patterned blouse and dark pants, wearing a white hard hat with the Sysco logo, holds a blue Sysco shovel. They are standing on a concrete surface in front of a large, modern building with a white facade and large windows. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the building and some greenery.

WAITING WORKFORCE: The Polytechnic campus will help provide workers for businesses like Sysco, pictured here at the ceremonial groundbreaking of Sysco Arizona East.

PHX EAST VALLEY PARTNERSHIP



John Giles



Morgan Olsen



Binil Starly

WORKFORCE PIPELINE INFUSION

The School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks housed within ISTB12, due to its hybrid model of educational instruction and hands-on training, will further enrich the Phoenix East Valley's workforce pipeline (and beyond).

"At the bachelor's level, we already have two academic programs to train the next generation of engineers who will work for these industries if they choose to be in Arizona," Starly says. "These programs are really meant for these students to supply the workforce needed."

Currently, the School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks has around 250 students, according to Starly, with the hope of expanding to a 3,000 to 4,000 student population.

With the addition of ISTB12 and its programs, Olsen says the greater Polytechnic campus goal is to grow the enrollment to 15,000 students," he notes.

Adds Giles, "This advanced manufacturing school is going to be training the engineers and the workforce for all the advanced manufacturing that's happening right across the street."

The activity Giles refers to is the hive of economic development taking place around the Mesa-Gateway Corridor.

"Apple, Google, Meta and Amazon are all building multi-billion dollar facilities in some cases, and you've got a lot of a microchip supply chain going in out there," he says, "and a lot of other advanced manufacturing."

Giles also mentions the area adjacent to the ISTB12 building, which encompasses a hybrid research/industrial park.

"A lot of the businesses want to be next to the people who are coming out of that

school," Giles says. "They're going to want to build a business in that research park adjacent to the college campus."

PIPELINE = PARTNERSHIPS

Because of the surge in both skilled and qualified students graduating from the School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks and advanced manufacturing development surrounding the Polytechnic campus, ASU's ISTB12 crew has already forged significant and valuable partnerships with local businesses.

Starly notes that Intel, Honeywell, Amos Mfg., National Laboratories, FANUC and Rockwell Automation have all engaged with the Polytechnic campus.

"FANUC is probably the world's largest industrial robotics company," he says. "Of course, they're based in Wisconsin and Michigan areas, but they don't have a presence in the Southwest. So we have now entered into a relationship with FANUC and they can supply the robots, we can train the students and hopefully their hope is that companies can then adopt their robots."

In addition to the relationships that advanced manufacturing and logistics companies have solidified with ASU's Polytechnic campus, additional related industries and sub industries are reaping the benefits of talent graduating from the campus, and will continue to do so even more with the completion of ISTB12.

"We have faculty that are experts in cyber manufacturing, robotics and smart manufacturing [as examples]," Olsen says. "And that can be applied to a wide range of industries in the East Valley. That part of the Valley has really come alive in the last

five years. And the pace of development there is pretty significant, in addition to aerospace and aeronautics."

Naturally, because of the diverse talent the Polytechnic campus is feeding into the workforce pipeline, it has become a key economic driver for the region and beyond.

"Whenever I have the opportunity to talk to one of these big businesses that we're romancing, trying to talk into coming or they're here and we're congratulating, I promise you the first topic of conversation is workforce," Giles says. "Because if a company is going to invest \$1 billion or more in your city, they really want to make sure that there's going to be people that can walk into that building and bring it to life and make it work."

ISTB12 TIMELINE

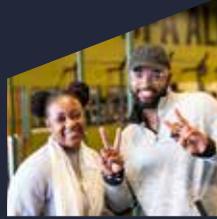
Once completed, ISTB12 will be a 173,194-square-foot building consisting of three floors, 128,828 programmable square feet for office, meeting, instructional, research and collaboration spaces, including labs specializing in additive manufacturing, robotics for smart manufacturing and industry automation, cyber manufacturing and operations research, semiconductor manufacturing, and manufacturing systems for the energy sector.

"The building itself we think will be done for the fall 2025 semester," Olsen says.

Adds Starly, "My hope is that once the building comes, we're going to see a lot more partnerships that can further enhance the quality of the academic programs as well as the research that will come out of it." **AB**



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MIXED-USE MARVELS

By ERIN THORBURN

Some of the most forward-thinking, large-scale mixed-use projects are taking shape in the burgeoning PHX East Valley. Check out the latest and greatest game-changing developments



ADDING TO THE MIX: Epicenter at Agritopia blends luxury multifamily housing (The Tyler) with unique dining, retail, wellness services and more. (Photo provided by Discover Gilbert)

There's a reason the Swiss Army Knife has withstood the test of time. With origins dating back to 1886, the multi-purpose tool can cut through iron, uncork a wine bottle, release a bottle cap, strip a wire, saw wood and open a can among multiple additional uses. In the Phoenix East Valley, mega-mixed-use projects are the Swiss Army Knife of development, providing tenants and their communities with a multitude of offerings. From bustling downtown city centers to suburban, master-planned areas, mixed-use hotspots combine the best in living, working, retail, wellness and dining services and experiences for their residents and visitors.

Here are four stand-out projects bringing this lifestyle to the East Valley.

NOVUS INNOVATION CORRIDOR

If there is a top-of-the-line, Swiss Army Knife of mixed use, it's Novus Innovation Corridor. Located partially on Tempe Town Lake and adjacent to Arizona State University's Tempe Campus, the massive 355 acres of commerce, urban living and recreation is an economic powerhouse in the making. Upon completion, Novus is expected to yield 34,000 jobs and house more than 4,000 residents.

The genesis of Novus has much to do with what many other mixed-use developers have come to realize.

"What we've all figured out as place makers is that people like to be able to do lots of things," says Charley Freericks, senior vice president of Catellus Development Corporation. "People like to be able to do lots of things and not get in a car and not deal with getting on a freeway. People really do benefit from, and enjoy, having a mix of uses."

But to truly be able to enjoy a "mix of uses," Freericks says there's a necessary component.

"I've been doing this for 40 years, and it came to me not very many years ago — but it finally dawned on me," he says. "Without employment, nothing happens in a place. You've got to have jobs otherwise people pack up and leave."

In addition to the direct employment opportunities generated by Novus, according to the PHX East Valley Partnership, the entire region's labor force is 759,712 workers strong, and "economists project that the PHX East Valley will add 300,000 new jobs in the next 30 years."

This means that while the Novus Corridor can — and will continue to — employ a substantial share of the PHX East

Valley's workforce, those who choose to live within Novus don't have to endure a hefty commute. And vice versa for those who live outside of Novus but choose to work or play there. Plus, Novus is conveniently located off the Loop 101 and 202, with access to the Light Rail.

"You can walk and ride your bike to work. All these locations are on Light Rail stops or the new streetcar — so mass transit is easy. There's a great bus system already in place," Freericks says.

As for those who do choose to live, work and play at Novus, the payoff is plentiful.

"Not everybody's going to live here and work here, but many want to," Freericks notes. "A lot of people already work in this sub-market. Tempe is an amazing high-tech, top-wage earner market and people want to live close and walk."

Additionally, companies also want to be in Tempe, attracted to the robust East Valley workforce and its continuously fueled pipeline.

"We're getting companies who want to be in this location, a lot of them want to be right next to ASU. They want to hire interns, researchers and graduates," Freericks says, citing State Farm, MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company and Infosys — a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting — as examples.

But State Farm and Infosys aren't the only companies dialing into Novus. Retailers are also planning to take up residence in the mixed-use destination.

"We're creating Novus Place Entertainment District, which is a mixed-use retail location that has food and beverage," Freericks says.

PHX EAST VALLEY PARTNERSHIP



Brad Miner



Charley Freericks



Dan Henderson

SOUTH PIER

Also taking residence at Tempe Town Lake is the South Pier mixed-use project.

South Pier at Tempe Town Lake Phase I is a 737,585-square-foot, waterfront development set to include 724 multi-housing units and 26,767 square feet of retail space.

Upon completion, Phase I of the McBride Cohen Company-led project will be the largest apartment development in Arizona. Among its mixed-use amenities, South Pier will boast the towering Arizona Amazing Wheel, a pedestrian bridge, public dock, a 2-acre public park, fitness centers, spas, pools and doorstep access to other waterfront amenities, including the South Pier Isle Entertainment District.

“The South Pier project will continue the evolution of the waterfront along Tempe Town Lake, providing world-class housing and retail amenities, which will drive further demand and investment to the city,” says Brad Miner, senior director of the JLL Capital Markets Advisory team. “This phase is a vital step in generating momentum for the transformative South Pier master plan.”

South Pier at Tempe Town Lake Phase I is projected for completion in the second half of 2026.

THE RANCH

In Gilbert, located on the west side of Power Road between Elliot and Warner Roads, directly off the Loop 202, is another monumental mixed-use mecca: The Ranch.

“Guiding our community through the process that led to the approval of The Ranch mixed-use development, was one of the town’s most notable economic wins,” says Dan Henderson, economic development director for Gilbert. “The project sits on 300 acres, representing Gilbert’s single largest undeveloped employment-focused property.”

According to Henderson, The Ranch will feature industrial, retail, dining, office and multi-family attributes.

The mixed-use development’s carved-out living space will include “Residences at the Ranch,” combining residential and commercial uses, including two- and three-story homes with ground-floor commercial space. Additionally, there will be a 16-acre green space that will include trails and landscaping for the community to use.

“This project is poised to attract 3 million square feet of new employment industrial space, which in turn will support the growth of high-wage employers in clean tech, optics/photonics and information technology,” Henderson says.

Construction on The Ranch is expected to begin in spring 2024.

EPICENTER AT AGRITOPIA

Added to the mixed-use marvels in Gilbert is Epicenter at Agritopia. An extension of the Agritopia master-planned community, Epicenter at Agritopia blends a mix of unique boutiques, well-known eateries — such as Buck & Rider, Gadzooks and Matt’s Big Breakfast — as well as wellness options, self-care services, retail and more.

Also of note in the mixed-use complex is The Tyler luxury apartments spearheaded by StreetLights Residential.

“We were immediately attracted to the project due to its East Valley location, and more specifically, the Agritopia neighborhood surrounding it,” says Greg Nadeau, senior vice president of development for StreetLights Residential. “The Gilbert demographics are some of the strongest in the state and we knew there was a real opportunity to attract some of the best restaurant and retail operators as a result. The Town of Gilbert played a significant role with their staff and elected officials supporting and thinking outside the box as we worked together to bring forward a pioneering project at the time.” **AB**



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TASTY TOURISM:
Queen Creek Olive Mill is one of several agritourism destinations in the Phoenix East Valley, building success on the region's agricultural roots.

DEEP ROOTS

The agriculture sector has a long history in the PHX East Valley, with family farms creating legacies that have launched several of today's most popular agritourism and agritainment destinations

By ERIN THORBURN

Is the tradition of family farming fading?

In 1870, the U.S. Census recorded that farmers made up 47.7% of the workforce. Today, The American Farm Bureau Federation reports that farm and ranch families comprise less than 2% of the U.S. population. While statistics may answer affirmatively to the initial question posed here, for the Phoenix East Valley, the rich history, tradition and practices tied to family farms are still very much alive — and thriving. In fact, many of the region's farms — established even before their towns and cities were incorporated — have evolved into national agritainment and agritourism hotspots.

DEEP FARMING ROOTS

Before Morrison Ranch was the picturesque and expansive development that many Gilbert residents know and love today — and even before Gilbert was incorporated in 1920 — the area was largely farmland. Howard and Leatha Morrison were among the first to homestead, arriving from Oklahoma in the early 1920s.

“My grandparents came to visit [Gilbert] Thanksgiving 1933,” recalls Scott Morrison, partner of Morrison Ranch. “My grandmother’s brother Hugh took my grandfather aside and said, ‘You don’t need to go to New Mexico, we’ll get you set up right here.’”

From there, Morrison Ranch bloomed into one of the “East Valley’s biggest farming operations, including several square miles of cropland and one of the world’s largest dairy farms, as well as one of Arizona’s largest ranching businesses (grazing cattle on over 400 square miles of state and leased land stretching from Flagstaff to the Verde River),” according to the Morrison Ranch website.

Similar to Morrison Ranch, Sossaman Farms in neighboring Queen Creek was homesteaded in 1919 by Jasper and Nancy Sossaman.

“The farm at that time was producing vegetables and supplied the mines in Miami and Globe,” explains Steve Sossaman. “Through the years we have grown just about everything from specialty crops like sugar beets and potatoes to conventional crops like cotton, corn and durum wheat.”

Two decades later, in 1941, Schnepf Farms established its operations, growing a variety of produce including potatoes, corn and peaches.

Another 20 years after the advent of Schnepf Farms — in 1960 — Jim Johnston and his wife Virginia purchased a farm in Gilbert which is now known as Agritopia, a 166-acre mixed-use planned community in Gilbert, Arizona designed to “encourage agrarianism.”

FIELDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The history of Phoenix East Valley family-farm-based institutions, such as those previously mentioned, is important in understanding why agriculture has — and continues — to be an integral part of the region’s identity.

But to remain relevant and competitive, long-time East Valley farming operations have evolved over the years. Despite embracing the change necessary to remain prosperous, however, they haven’t lost sight of their agricultural roots.

“As time passed and Gilbert began to get swallowed by Metro Phoenix, as we always knew it would,” Morrison explains, “around 1991/1992, I started to say, ‘I think it’s time for us to think about what’s next.’ And before too long, several family members were helping me do that.”

After much contemplation, Morrison and his partners came up with the concept of a master-planned community; what’s known today as Morrison Ranch.

“We didn’t want there to be a Morrison Ranch that wasn’t tied to Gilbert’s roots



Perry Rea



Steve Sossaman

“Queen Creek has a rich history of farming with fertile soil and a climate conducive to agriculture” – Perry Rea

and we didn’t want Gilbert to simply become Greater Phoenix,” Morrison says. “And so we undertook to plan a master plan community that would be tied to Gilbert’s roots.”

In keeping with the agricultural integrity of Gilbert’s farming foundation, the design of Morrison Ranch echoes many characteristics of its pre-township beginnings. For example, because agriculture in Arizona is in clear, straight lines, the tree-lined streets of Morrison Ranch were deliberately planted in the same configuration.

“We had groves of pecans and groves of oranges and even some groves of dates,” Morrison says. “And so we made the street landscape agriculture in nature, lines of trees that are straight and lined up, and very little else.”

The housing community’s sidewalks are intentionally detached from the curb, making them several feet from the street.

“It’s a more inviting place for families to be — for a couple to walk down the sidewalk with their kid on the tricycle and not think that the kid is one second and six feet from being in front of a car,” Morrison says.

Morrison Ranch also incorporates multiple parks, with almost every street cul-de-sac ending with some type of park space.

“And then another thing we did along

the [east-west] arterial streets is put all our houses facing the street with a frontage road because we drove to every farmhouse and every ranch neighborhood in Gilbert and none of them turned their back to the main street,” Morrison says.

Sossaman Farms, which continues its farming operations, has kept its ties to agricultural beginnings by “showcasing the ancient grain connection,” Sossaman says.

“We have conducted many tours over the years and also consult with others wanting to start growing these grains,” he says. “On our Grain R&D website, we have lots of information and videos — even an Amazon Special. We look forward to building more ways to educate the public through the development of our Heritage Corner. This will include a new malthouse, restaurants and an event center.”

NEWER SPROUTS

Although newer on the timeline — but already cultivating its own fruitful history — Queen Creek Olive Mill is another example of East Valley agriculture evolution. On vacation during the winter of 1996, Perry Rea and his wife Brenda were inspired by the olive trees they saw in Old Town Scottsdale. Fast forward to 2005, the couple established Queen Creek Olive Mill with the vision of creating a local, sustainable, and family-owned olive farm and mill.

“Queen Creek has a rich history of farming with fertile soil and a climate conducive to agriculture,” says Perry Rea, owner of the Queen Creek Olive Mill. “This historical context provided a strong foundation for the Queen Creek Olive Mill, aligning with our vision of creating a local, sustainable and family-owned business. The agricultural heritage of Queen Creek has contributed to community support and resources beneficial for the Olive Mill’s success.”

Recently, Agritopia has undergone a metamorphosis from an agrarianism-focused, master-plan community to an agritainment focal point, incorporating Epicenter at Agritopia. At Epicenter, visitors can enjoy an abundance of retail, dining and wellness opportunities, while still experiencing the agricultural ambiance and activities of Agritopia (such as U-Pick experiences).

As agriculture continues to transform throughout the East Valley, one thing is clear: it is still very much alive and well. And as for family farming? It may be a dwindling art in some parts of the country — but not there.

“We now have the sixth generation (my grandkids) living on the original farm,” Sossaman says. “We still farm about 350 acres of the original 1,000 acres. Being in Queen Creek has been a blessing.”

UPROOTED: Originally from Ontario and Detroit, Perry Rea and his wife Brenda made their way to Queen Creek, where they established agritourism hotspot, Queen Creek Olive Mill.

Agriculture school

We asked Perry Rea, owner of the Queen Creek Olive Mill why maintaining agriculture and education about agriculture is relevant and important today. Here's what he had to say: "Maintaining agriculture and promoting education about agriculture are relevant and important today, particularly in the context of agritourism, for several reasons."



PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE:

Agriculture has been a vital part of human civilization for thousands of years, contributing to food production, economic development and cultural identity. Maintaining agriculture helps preserve our agricultural heritage, ensuring that traditional farming practices and knowledge are passed down to future generations.

PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES:

Education about agriculture allows for the dissemination of information regarding sustainable farming practices. Agritourism provides an opportunity for visitors to witness firsthand how sustainable agriculture can contribute to environmental conservation, resource efficiency and the overall well-being of ecosystems.

CONNECTION TO FOOD SOURCES:

As urbanization increases, many people become disconnected from the sources of their food. Agritourism activities, such as farm tours and farm-to-table experiences, help bridge this gap by allowing visitors to see where their food comes from, fostering a greater appreciation for the agricultural process.

ECONOMIC IMPACT:

Agritourism contributes to the economic sustainability of rural areas by creating additional revenue streams for farmers and local communities. Education about agriculture enhances the overall agritourism experience, attracting more visitors and boosting local economies.

DIVERSIFICATION OF INCOME:

Agriculture is susceptible to various factors, including climate conditions and market fluctuations. Agritourism provides farmers with an additional income source, helping to diversify their revenue streams and mitigate risks associated with traditional farming.

EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL VALUE:

Agritourism serves as an educational and recreational outlet for individuals and families. Visitors can learn about crop cultivation, animal husbandry and sustainable farming practices while enjoying recreational activities such as farm tours, workshops and seasonal events. The Queen Creek Olive Mill has over 650,000 visitors a year!

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Agritourism fosters community engagement by bringing together farmers, local residents, and visitors. Educational programs and events create opportunities for community members to share knowledge, celebrate local traditions and build a sense of pride in their agricultural heritage.

PROMOTION OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLES:

Understanding where food comes from and how it is produced can lead to healthier lifestyle choices. Education about agriculture encourages a better understanding of nutrition, the importance of fresh produce and the benefits of a diet rooted in locally sourced, seasonal foods. **AB**

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