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WEST VALLEY BUYER GUIDE

West Valley Water Security & Infrastructure-Cost Guide for Home Buyers

A plain-language comparison of water supply, regulatory status, and infrastructure-cost questions across the ten communities Mike Greco serves. Current as of September 29, 2026.



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Why this matters more than most buyer guides admit

Every West Valley home sits on top of the same basic fact: Arizona is a desert, and water here is managed, allocated, and litigated, not simply "available." Two things buyers rarely get told plainly:

1. **Your water provider determines your water source mix.** Some cities run their own municipal water utility. Others are served in whole or in part by a private, state-regulated utility (EPCOR, Liberty Utilities, Arizona Water Company), and some cities have more than one provider operating within their limits. A master-planned community can even be served by a different utility than the city around it. The provider serving a specific address is what actually matters, not just which city it's in.
2. **State groundwater regulation for this region is in the middle of an active legal fight, not a settled picture.** A 2023 policy restricted new water-supply approvals for some subdivisions. Two separate court rulings in 2026 have since found parts of the state's approach invalid, and the state has said it will appeal. This guide describes the status as of its stated date and is deliberately careful not to claim more certainty than a live court case allows.

This isn't about scaring anyone away from a purchase. Every one of these ten communities is a real, livable, well-established or well-planned place. It's about understanding *why* one address's water source, utility, or tax bill might differ from the house next door. A local specialist should be able to explain those differences.

The regulatory picture, as of September 29, 2026

Arizona requires new subdivisions in the Phoenix Active Management Area (the regulatory region covering most of the Phoenix metro, including all ten communities in this guide) to show a 100-year assured water supply before lots can be sold. That happens one of two ways. A water provider can hold a **Designation of Assured Water Supply** covering its whole service area, in which case new subdivisions it serves rely on the provider's designation. Or, where the provider isn't designated, each development applies for its own **Certificate of Assured Water Supply**.

In January 2023, the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) released groundwater modeling for the Lower Hassayampa sub-basin around Buckeye. A broader Phoenix AMA-wide model followed on June 1, 2023. Both projected that, over a 100-year horizon, groundwater alone could not meet all projected demand in the modeled areas.

What this restricted, precisely: ADWR stopped issuing new certificates that relied on groundwater in the modeled areas. It did **not** ban home construction outright. Certificates already issued (including for developments not yet built) and providers that already held a designation were unaffected, so the many thousands of existing West Valley homes in certified or designated areas were never part of this. The practical effect fell mainly on new, not-yet-approved subdivisions served by providers without a designation, where a developer has to qualify for a certificate on its own. This hit outlying Buckeye-area development most directly.

In 2024, the state added an **Alternative Designation of Assured Water Supply**, a newer path for groundwater-reliant utilities to become designated. In October 2025, ADWR issued the first one to EPCOR's West Valley system, which serves Sun City, Sun City West, and EPCOR's Agua Fria district. It was the first new 100-year designation in the Phoenix AMA in roughly 25 years.

Two separate 2026 court rulings have since found parts of ADWR's approach invalid, and the matter is not finally resolved:

- **April 21, 2026:** A Maricopa County Superior Court judge ruled that ADWR's "Unmet Demand" and "Depth-to-Water" standards were adopted without the formal rulemaking process Arizona law requires, and barred ADWR from relying on them when reviewing certificate applications.
- **June 2026:** The same judge struck down a requirement within the alternative-designation program that providers show extra supply beyond the projected 100-year demand. The grounds here were different: the court found that the requirement went beyond what the state's groundwater statute allows, not only that a procedural step was skipped.

ADWR and the Governor's office have said they intend to appeal each ruling once it becomes final. As of this writing, this guide could not confirm that a final judgment has been entered, that an appeal has been filed, or that either ruling has been put on hold. The narrow, accurate way to describe today's status: the specific standards named above cannot currently be used by ADWR, which gives some previously stalled projects a path forward again. The underlying 100-year assured supply requirement itself has not been eliminated, and the legal fight over how ADWR may apply it is ongoing. That is meaningfully different from either "still fully restricted" or "restriction lifted," and this guide avoids both of those shorthand versions.

What this means for a buyer: if you've read anywhere that "you can't build new homes in Buckeye because of water," that description was never fully accurate (existing certified neighborhoods were unaffected) and is now further complicated by two 2026 court rulings still working their way toward appeal. The one-line takeaway that's actually safe to rely on: **ask about the specific water provider and assured supply status for a specific address before assuming anything about a whole city.** Check again closer to the time of purchase, since this situation is still moving.

How to read the comparison below

The comparison below describes each community without ranking them. The available data differs enough by community that a ranking would suggest more certainty than the research supports. For each community, four things are covered where the information exists: which utility actually serves it; that utility's water-source mix (Colorado River water via the Central Arizona Project, or CAP; Salt and Verde River water via the Salt River Project, or SRP; groundwater; and reclaimed/recycled water); whether the provider holds an assured supply designation from ADWR; and what, if anything, shows up as a recurring infrastructure cost beyond the water bill itself. Where information wasn't independently verifiable, that's stated plainly rather than guessed at.

At a glance

Community	Primary water provider(s)	Source mix	Provider designation status
Glendale	City of Glendale (municipal)	About 44% CAP, 43% SRP, 7% groundwater, 6% reclaimed (city figures)	Designated provider
Avondale	City of Avondale (municipal)	Blends SRP, CAP, and groundwater; recharges 100% of treated wastewater	Designated provider
Goodyear	City of Goodyear (municipal)	CAP surface water via its own treatment plant, plus a groundwater allocation; expanding reclaimed-water recharge	Designated provider
Peoria	City of Peoria (municipal)	CAP is the largest single source (44% in the city's published portfolio), with SRP, reclaimed water, and small shares of stored credits and groundwater	Designated provider
Surprise	City of Surprise (municipal), with other utilities serving some areas	Tap water is pumped groundwater; the city recharges its CAP allocation and reclaimed water into the aquifer	Designated provider (city utility)
Buckeye (municipal system)	City of Buckeye, alongside EPCOR and Arizona Water Company serving other parts of the city	CAP allocation, reclaimed-water recharge, groundwater	Not a designated provider; relies on development-by-development certificates, which the city says cover 20 to 25 years of already-approved growth. The city is pursuing a designation
Verrado	EPCOR, not the Buckeye municipal utility	EPCOR system; see Buckeye and Verrado notes below	Covered by EPCOR's West Valley alternative designation if the home is in EPCOR's Agua Fria district (confirm with EPCOR)
Sun City / Sun City West	EPCOR	Groundwater-reliant systems; EPCOR also draws on renewable supplies such as CAP water	EPCOR West Valley alternative designation (October 2025)
Litchfield Park	Liberty Utilities (Litchfield Park Water & Sewer)	Groundwater from wells	Not a designated provider; many homes are enrolled in the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGRD), but not all
Waddell	EPCOR serves at least part of the area (for example, Granite Vista)	Varies by provider	Depends on the provider serving the specific address

What's genuinely unresolved, stated once here rather than repeated per city: the practical, address-level consequences of the 2026 court rulings; whether a specific Verrado or Waddell address falls inside EPCOR's designated service area; and which other providers, if any, serve the rest of Waddell. None of these gaps should be filled with a guess. A buyer should contact the relevant utility to resolve them before making a decision.

Notes by community

Glendale

Glendale's water comes predominantly from two renewable river sources. The city's own figures put Colorado River water delivered via CAP at about 44% and Salt/Verde River water delivered via SRP at about 43%, with groundwater around 7% and reclaimed water around 6%. Glendale holds a 100-year Designation of Assured Water Supply and runs a multi-stage drought management plan. Because Glendale is a city-run utility, rate decisions go through the city council with public hearings rather than the Arizona Corporation Commission, which regulates private utilities like EPCOR and Liberty.

Avondale

Avondale blends Salt/Verde River water, Colorado River water, and groundwater, and holds a 100-year Designation of Assured Water Supply. The city treats wastewater at its Charles M. Wolf Water Reclamation Facility and then conveys that treated effluent to a separate recharge site (McDowell Recharge Basins), where it's stored in the aquifer for later recovery. Avondale states it recharges 100% of its reclaimed water this way, banking credits against future shortages rather than discharging that water.

Goodyear

Goodyear operates its own Surface Water Treatment Plant to take Colorado River water directly, alongside a groundwater allocation from the West Salt River Valley sub-basin, and appears on ADWR's list of designated providers. The city has publicly described expanding reclaimed-water recharge capacity as part of a shift away from relying on previously stored water credits toward direct delivery.

Peoria

Peoria describes a blended portfolio. In the city's published breakdown, CAP water is the largest single source at about 44%, followed by SRP water (32%) and reclaimed water (19%), with long-term storage credits and groundwater making up small remaining shares. CAP is the largest share, not a majority. Other published figures for different years don't match exactly, so treat these as the city's current published portfolio rather than a fixed number. Peoria also appears on ADWR's designated-provider list. The city has invested in new groundwater wells and pumping capacity as a backup against future CAP cuts; that investment is a hedge, not a sign that groundwater is currently a major source.

Surprise

The City of Surprise holds a Designation of Assured Water Supply for its own utility. The city describes a mix of renewable surface water, groundwater, and reclaimed water, but the way it's used matters: tap water in the city's own system is groundwater pumped from wells, while the city's CAP allocation and reclaimed water are recharged into the aquifer to offset that pumping. Some parts of Surprise are served by other utilities, so confirm the provider for a specific address.

Buckeye and Verrado

Buckeye has several water providers. The City of Buckeye operates its own municipal system, while EPCOR and Arizona Water Company serve other parts of the city. Water service therefore varies even within city limits. **Verrado is served by EPCOR, not the Buckeye municipal utility.** Third-party sources place Verrado in EPCOR's Agua Fria district, which is part of the West Valley system covered by EPCOR's October 2025 alternative designation. EPCOR is the right place to confirm that for a specific address.

The City of Buckeye is not currently a designated provider. Its water-portfolio materials state the city has the resources to serve existing customers and growth that already holds Certificates of Assured Water Supply, and that those certificates cover another 20 to 25 years of already-approved growth. That is the city's estimate about already-certified development, not an independent guarantee or a household-level expiration date. Buckeye also holds a Colorado River allocation, banks reclaimed water, and has been acquiring additional long-term water rights (including land in the Harquahala Valley) to expand future supply, and it is pursuing a designation of its own. Buckeye's outlying areas were the most directly affected by the 2023 restriction on new groundwater-based certificates described above, and remain the area most exposed to however the 2026 court rulings are ultimately resolved.

Sun City and Sun City West

EPCOR serves both communities. It is a private utility regulated by the Arizona Corporation Commission rather than a city council. In October 2025, EPCOR's West Valley system, which serves Sun City, Sun City West, and its Agua Fria district, received the state's first Alternative Designation of Assured Water Supply. EPCOR describes that system's supply as a combination of groundwater and renewable sources, including Lake Pleasant and Colorado River water. The designation must be renewed every 10 years. The June 2026 court ruling described above concerned how one of that program's requirements was written; this guide found no report that it revoked any designation already issued. Both communities are also largely built out, which reduces the pressure that comes with new construction. Rate changes for EPCOR customers go through Arizona Corporation Commission rate cases rather than a city council, a process that is typically slower than a municipal utility's.

Litchfield Park

The City of Litchfield Park doesn't run its own water utility. Service comes from Liberty Utilities' Litchfield Park Water and Sewer division, a private, state-regulated utility drawing groundwater from wells. No Colorado River (CAP) surface-water treatment was found for this system, and Liberty has added new wells in recent years. Liberty does not hold a Designation of Assured Water Supply. Many homes in the area are instead enrolled in the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGRD), which replenishes groundwater used by member properties, but the city has noted that not every home is in that district. Liberty has said it is evaluating the newer alternative designation.

Separately, a Litchfield Park mailing address doesn't always mean a home is inside the city, which can affect which provider serves it. I cover that in Litchfield Park vs. a Litchfield Park mailing address.

Also worth knowing: at least one specific subdivision, the Village at Litchfield Park, has its own Community Facilities District (CFD) that has levied an annual assessment on property owners within that district. A CFD assessment can cover bond debt service, ongoing operating and maintenance costs, or both. That district's bond payments were scheduled to run through July 2026, and it has adopted a budget for fiscal year 2026-27. A scheduled debt payoff doesn't by itself mean an assessment has ended, since a district may still levy for operations, so check the current figure rather than assume either way.

A CFD is also a different mechanism from a CAGRD assessment, which can separately appear on a property tax bill for member properties and pays for replenishing groundwater those properties use. The two assessments fund different things. Neither one appearing on a tax bill is by itself a sign of a water-scarcity problem. Any specific property's actual current charges should be checked directly against a Maricopa County tax bill and the relevant district's current budget, not inferred from a general description like this one.

Waddell

Waddell is an unincorporated area, so there's no city water utility. EPCOR serves at least part of it, including the Granite Vista master-planned community, which falls within EPCOR's West Valley service area. This research did not confirm which utilities serve the rest of Waddell, and some rural properties may rely on private wells. A buyer should ask directly which utility serves a specific address rather than assume it matches a neighboring community.

What this means for a buyer, in plain terms

Water supply deserves attention wherever you buy in the West Valley. Renewable surface water is a genuine strength, but it isn't drought-proof either: Colorado River supplies are subject to federal shortage declarations and interstate operating agreements that can affect deliveries in a bad year, regardless of how diversified a city's portfolio looks on paper. A designated provider and a diversified source mix are reassuring signs. A heavier reliance on a single source, or an area still touched by an active legal fight over regulation, isn't a reason to avoid a city outright. It is something to understand before closing. A recurring charge on a tax bill labeled CFD, CAGRD, or similar is a normal, findable part of owning in many Arizona planned communities. Check the charges for the specific property before buying.

Four questions worth asking about any specific home:

1. Which utility provides water to this exact address?
2. Is that provider designated, or was the subdivision approved with its own Certificate of Assured Water Supply?
3. Is the property a CAGRD member, and does the tax bill show a CFD or CAGRD assessment?
4. Has anything changed in the court cases or ADWR's rules since this guide's date?

If you're looking at a specific property

I work these ten communities every day, and I can help you find out which utility serves a specific home and what shows up on its tax bill before you write an offer. For anything the utility or county has to answer, I'll point you straight to the right office rather than guess on your behalf.

Contact me to talk through a specific West Valley property.

Mike Greco is a REALTOR® with Realty ONE Group serving the Phoenix West Valley.

Sources

- Arizona Department of Water Resources: Phoenix AMA groundwater supply updates, Lower Hassayampa model announcement (January 2023), first Alternative Designation issued (October 2025), and the list of designated providers
- Court rulings: Gammage & Burnham legal alert on the April 2026 ruling, AZ Mirror (April 2026), KJZZ (April 2026), Arizona Capitol Times (June 2026), KJZZ (June 2026), Holland & Hart (June 2026), KTAR on the planned appeal (May 2026)
- EPCOR: ADAWS designation announcement, Office of the Governor (October 2025), KJZZ (October 2025), water quality reports
- City sources: Glendale drought preparedness, Avondale sustainable water planning, Avondale water reclamation, Goodyear water supply, Peoria water supply, Peoria water portfolio, Surprise drinking water, Buckeye water portfolio, Buckeye utility providers, Litchfield Park budgets
- Litchfield Park water: Liberty Utilities Litchfield Park, Litchfield Park Independent on the city's first water report
- CAGRD: Member land FAQ

This guide reflects Mike Greco's professional experience and publicly available information believed accurate as of September 29, 2026. It is not a guarantee of future water availability, city or utility policy, or property values, none of which can be predicted with certainty. Water regulation in this region is actively being litigated, as described above, and program rules, fees, and assessments change. Verify current details with the relevant city, utility, ADWR, and Maricopa County before making a decision.



QUESTIONS ABOUT A SPECIFIC HOME?

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About Mike

Mike Greco is a licensed REALTOR® with Realty ONE Group, serving Litchfield Park, Goodyear, Avondale, Buckeye, Verrado, the Sun Cities, Waddell, Surprise, Peoria, and Glendale. Before real estate, he founded and ran an HVAC company in the Phoenix West Valley for over a decade before selling it to move into real estate full time.

That background shapes how he works with buyers and sellers today: a practical eye for how a home's systems actually hold up, while always pointing clients to a licensed inspector rather than standing in for one.

Mike Greco is a REALTOR® affiliated with Realty ONE Group. Realty ONE Group is a licensed real estate broker licensed by the state of Arizona and abides by equal housing opportunity laws.

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