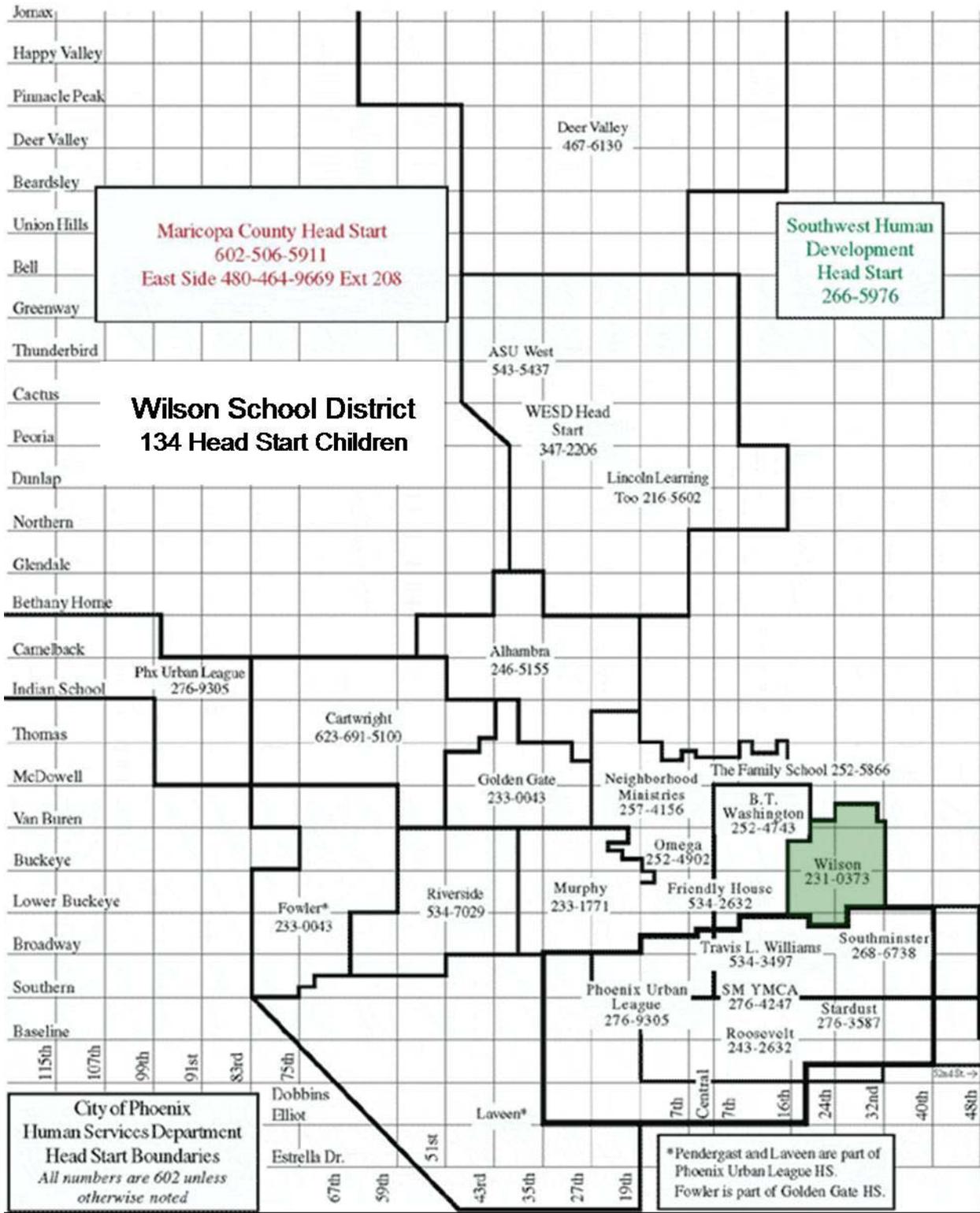


**Wilson School District**

**City of Phoenix Head Start Map Showing Individual Delegate Agencies  
Wilson School District**



**City of Phoenix Head Start**

***Program Approvals***

***Program Year 39 (2004-2005)***

***Community Assessments, Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan***

Delegate Agency Name: Wilson School District  
Address: 430 N. 30th Place  
Phoenix, AZ 85008

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Board Chairperson/Executive Director

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Delegate Agency Director

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Policy Committee Chairperson

## Wilson School District Refunding Application Program Year 39 (2004-2005)

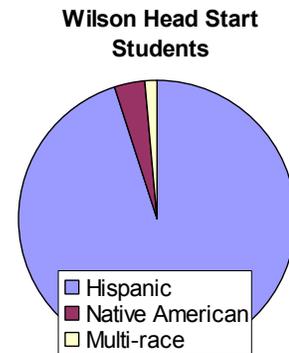
### School District Description

The Wilson Elementary School District is located in Maricopa County, Arizona, within the downtown Phoenix metropolitan area and a designated Enterprise Zone. The district spans approximately 35 square miles and consists of two adjoining school campuses with a nearby charter high school. The district serves approximately 1,400 students in Head Start through eighth grade.

For years the Wilson Elementary School District has been considered one of Maricopa County's most "at risk" school districts, with a high number of children and families in poverty. A brief windshield survey of the Wilson neighborhoods demonstrates why it has earned the reputation as a difficult place to grow up. The main thoroughfare through the District, Van Buren St., is well-known for prostitution, drug dealing and gang activity, all of which can be visible at any time. The area has no city parks, no library, no YMCA or other recreational facilities, no banks, no movie theatres and no grocery stores (except the corner liquor market). Within the District boundaries are two shelters for homeless families and domestic abuse victims, a defunct women's prison facility, the State Hospital for mental illness, a number of topless bars and fantasy motels, as well as substandard housing, rent-by-the-week motels, dilapidated trailer parks and apartment units. The only neighborhood church shares the same city block as the District Schools.

### Ethnic composition of the Wilson Community

The community is made up largely of Hispanics, at 69% compared to 34% for the rest of the city. Many of those residents are recent arrivals to the United States. The vast majority of Head Start children are also Hispanic at 95%, the remaining students are 3.5% Native American and 1.5% multi-racial. The Wilson Head Start staff is also largely Hispanic at 74%, 11% white, 4% Native American and 11% African American. Levels of English proficiency reflect the ethnic distribution: 68% of district students and 80% of Head Start students speak Spanish as their primary language.



	<b>City of Phoenix</b>		<b>Wilson District</b>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total population	1,321,045	100%	5,081	100%
Population under 5 years	114,516	8.7%	478	9.4%
Population 5-19 years	308,263	23.3%	1,185	23.3%
Median age	30.7		28	
Hispanic Origin	449,972	34.1%	3,508	69.0%
Single mother households (with own children under 18)	37,656	8.1%	97	10.6%

Wilson’s family income level is much lower than in the rest of the City. Median family income in Wilson was \$22,252 at the time of the 2000 census, less than half the median income for the City of Phoenix, \$46,467. In the Wilson School District 464 family households have children 18 and younger. More than half of those families (294) live below the federal poverty line. Of families living in poverty, 158 have children that are Head Start age and younger. All of Wilson’s schools are designated Title I, and 97% of the elementary through high school students are eligible for free and reduced lunches.

***Disparities Between Wilson School District and Other Areas of the City:***

	<b><i>City of Phoenix</i></b>		<b><i>Wilson School District</i></b>	
	<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>	<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Families in poverty status with related children under 18	30,777	87%	294	94%
Median family income	\$46,467		\$22,252	

These challenges, combined with family mobility and limited English proficiency levels, all impact the ability of the District’s students to succeed academically. About 20% current enrollment are first-year enrollees in the District. Moreover, many of the Wilson students do not come from backgrounds where it is the norm to complete high school and go on to college. Frequently they are born to teenage mothers who decide to work rather than complete school. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, the Wilson area has about twice the number of babies born to teenage mothers than Maricopa County.

***Educational Attainment for Wilson School District Residents***

	<b><i>City of Phoenix</i></b>		<b><i>Wilson School District</i></b>	
	<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>	<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade education	86,881	10.9%	877	32.25%
High school graduate or higher		76.6%		43.8%
Bachelor’s degree or higher		22.7%		7.6%

***Housing and Transportation***

The Wilson community is also plagued by a shortage of adequate housing and transportation. Families commonly remain for years in the weekly rental motels along Van Buren St. Families who do own their homes take great pride in them; however, few homeowners are in the district. The total number of occupied housing units for Phoenix is 465,834, of which just 917 units are in the Wilson community. Relative to other neighborhoods in the City, Wilson’s households house far more people in typically older homes. Most of Wilson’s houses were built between 1940 and 1970; fewer than 1/3 of the homes have been built in the last 25 years. Inadequate housing is a top concern for community members in the Wilson area.

Community activists and leaders have joined together to form the Wilson Renaissance Project, which will someday provide quality housing and recreational opportunities for the families in the community.

Many people rely on the Phoenix bus system to get to and from work and for grocery shopping. Unfortunately, residents must take more than one bus to get to the nearest stores. The lengthy time between busses can present challenges for grocery shopping, especially in the summer months when the heat threatens to spoil food quickly. An anticipated light-rail system will run south of the Wilson District, but its funding is uncertain and construction is several years away.

***Housing and Transportation Issues for the Community:***

		<b><i>City of Phoenix</i></b>		<b><i>Wilson District</i></b>	
		<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>	<b><i>Number</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Housing Characteristics	Owner occupied units	282,670	60.7%	289	31.6%
	Households with 1.5+ more persons per room	30,749	6.6%	322	35.1%
	Lacking complete plumbing facilities	2,749	0.6%	36	3.9%
	Lacking complete kitchen facilities	2,850	0.6%	15	1.6%
	No telephone service	13,855	3.0%	108	11.8%
Transportation	Households with no vehicle available	41,607	8.9%	248	27.0%
	Workers rely on public transp., walking or other than a private vehicle for work	45,701	7.7%	323	22.4%

***Estimated Number of Children to be Served***

Based on the 2000 Census 478 children under 5 years of age live in the district. Approximately 192 of those are of Head Start age. The Wilson Head Start program currently serves 134 or 70% of that total. Some children are served by the Salvation Army’s Herberger Child Care Center for homeless children, New Creations, and Faces of Crisis Nursery. The remaining children are cared for at home by relatives or friends. Increasing numbers of residents who care for children at home are being trained through Kith and Kin to improve their home care techniques. In the past two years 52 people have been trained and, on average, they care for 3 children between the ages of 0-5.

***Services for Special Needs Preschoolers***

Wilson Head Start is the only provider of services for school district special needs preschoolers. To date, 19 children (14% of funded enrollment) have been certified for disability services. Of that group 10% are certified for Speech and Language Services and 4% are certified for Special Education. Typically, the number of students certified with disabilities by the end of the first semester averages between 25-30 (19-22%). Services are currently provided through Easter Seals of Arizona. The district also provides a Special Needs Aide shared by the seven Head Start classrooms, seven hours per day. If ever a case is so severe that Head Start cannot accommodate a preschool child, the district will pay tuition for another program.

## **Strengths and Needs**

In spite of their many needs, families in the Wilson area are quite resilient and resourceful. Most are employed and work very hard for low wages. Many do not speak English well or read in either Spanish or English, but they manage to live here successfully and find assistance when they need it. They are working to improve their educational level by participating in English classes when possible and convenient. The families in the community are close, and help each other in a crisis. They will move in with one another to share expenses to prevent homelessness, if necessary. Most cannot afford to pay for child care, so they baby sit for each other, often free of charge.

The Wilson Community Center has become a valuable resource for English training and many other personal development courses for parents. These programs fill up quickly, leaving many others without convenient, affordable classes.

Community members are very concerned about accessible and affordable medical care. Very few are eligible for the state health care system, but more and more are taking advantage of Kids Care for their children. Families are concerned about emergencies, especially for themselves as they lack insurance coverage. Community members would like to see more education about medical services in the community, particularly prenatal care. A new sliding-fee clinic scheduled to open in the vicinity early next year will fill many of the gaps in health care that exist in the Wilson community.

Dental care is also a significant problem. The children tend to have very bad teeth and parents need education in this area. They are hesitant to seek dental care and feel that it is unimportant to protect baby teeth that will fall out anyway. Resources for low cost or free dental care in the area is currently extremely limited.

The Wilson area has a high incidence of anemia. This issue is met through referrals to WIC and the free breakfast and lunch programs. Head lice is also a recurring problem for many families.

The families are also very concerned about neighborhood safety, but are hesitant to report problems to the police. They worry about children witnessing the indecencies of Van Buren St.—drugs, prostitution and gang activity—as they are leaving school. Additionally, among this community’s most devastating health issues is also an issue of public safety: in 2002 the highest cause of death for persons aged 20-34 was homicide.<sup>11</sup> Families would like to see more community members actively involved in reporting crime and want more block watches formed. One neighborhood re-formed its block watch and has seen moderate progress in the past few years. The community would like to see more resources for people involved in domestic violence and more safe recreational spaces for the children that are free of charge.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on Maricopa County Public Health data for zip codes 85006, 85008 and 85034 used in “Community Health Assessment for the Wilson Community.”

## ***Summary and Conclusions***

The City of Phoenix and other agencies have increased their attention to the Wilson community over the past few years, improving the quality of life for residents in the Wilson School District and surrounding communities. We believe that this means positive change is on the way. The Wilson 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Center has been instrumental in making necessary accommodations to meet some of the identified needs. As the data show, a lot of immediate need remains in the community. Inadequate housing, public safety, and health care are still the top three critical concerns for many families with young children in this community, and will require a long-term commitment for gradual change. For the near-term, increased accessibility to English classes for parents would be a tremendous help and would enable parents to work more comfortably with other entities to address some of these other issues.