

Gilbert community wants residents to slow down

By Jason Massad
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There's a slew of golf carts motoring around a retirement community in south Gilbert called Trilogy at Power Ranch - ferrying people to golf outings, tennis dates or just enjoyable evening rides.

But some in those golf carts are doubling as cops. Traffic cops to be exact.

The gated mega-neighborhood is trying to tamp down on speeding vehicles that violate the 25 mph limits posted throughout the 2,000-home community.

And it's using a small cadre of workers manning golf carts and watching a speed detector to track people driving too fast. Those busted receive a warning ticket and are told how fast they've been going.

"We have guys in golf carts and someone will be in the back of the golf cart," said Jerry Ebel, executive director of the management company that helps oversee the community. "If they are going over 29 and 30, they radio to the person ahead."

The golf-cart patrols are sort of a trial to track whether the private, gated senior community has a problem with speeding scofflaws, Ebel said.

An attorney associated with the community told the home-owners association that "what Trilogy was doing was ingenious," Ebel said.

The upscale community, linked by a network of private streets, doesn't get attention from the Gilbert Police Department when it comes to speeding and less serious traffic violations, according to city officials.

"Those are roadways in a private development," said Mark Marino, a Gilbert police spokesman. "It's the same as driving through a Wal-Mart or Target parking lot."

But some living in the community wonder if a crackdown on speeding is really the top priority for the active senior community.

There's been no move to step up the informal tracking to real tickets that cost money and are legally enforceable. Ebel acknowledged that some people "zoom by" when they are going to be served a warning ticket.

To really crack down, an attorney and a security company might be needed to actually fine residents for speeding and make it stick, Ebel said.

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Don Morici, 79, a retiree from Denver who lives in Trilogy, said that any step-up of enforcement might be unnecessary and complicated.

Speed radars would be needed, the instruments would need to be calibrated - all of which cost money. He said that nonresidential areas in the neighborhood don't even need a 25 mph speed limit.

"The next step would be pretty hard because what are they going to do?" he asked. "They can fine them. But how can they fine them without proper legal authority?"

Homeowners associations that gain a reputation for overstepping their bounds are pretty common stories around Arizona.

Trilogy is a shining example of one of the state's many easy-living suburbs for retirees. The neighborhood has a clubhouse, country club, an exclusive golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools and a slew of classes for residents, such as crafting stained glass and learning water aerobics.

Some residents say that many in the community don't want a step-up in traffic enforcement.

Ebel himself said that formal enforcement efforts have not really been discussed with any seriousness. But he said the standards in the community are high.

"You don't look at Trilogy unless you're looking for customer service," he said.