

Tucson, AZ

In their 2001 City of Tucson General Plan (see web address below) sustainability is defined as “a concept that supports creating and maintaining a balance between the needs of the community and its resources; sustainable planning means proposing long term strategies and solutions to ensure that future generations have the ability to meet their needs and to uphold environmental, economic, and social values.” The following describes the path Tucson has taken as the city more toward a more sustainable future, a path called “Livable Tucson.”

Visioning Process

Tucson began a visioning process, the “Livable Tucson Vision Program,” in 1997 to determine goals that embodied the “values and aspirations of the community to maintain and improve Tucson in the future.” The process began with three public forums in each of Tucson’s wards followed by forums were held to more specifically target business, youth, and Spanish speakers. City council office bulletin boards and an Internet site were also used to gain citizen input on priorities. Thousands of comments were used to determine 17 key goals for Tucson. (See web address below.)

Program Indicators

The process next included six workshops held in the spring of 1998 to develop indicators to measure progress toward the 17 goals identified in the visioning process. Tucson will use these indicators to create a community report card. A list of goals and indicators are posted on Tucson’s Web site (<http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/livable2.html>) with each goal including 1) a definition of the goal; 2) what the community said about that goal; 3) City Department/Office Support for the goal; 4) key indicators of progress; 5) what you (the citizen) can do; and 6) a featured project for the goal indicator.

Program Supervision and Management

The Livable Tucson Team, formed in the fall of 1999, was put in place to continue the progress made and further expand the program in both the city and community. The team includes interdepartmental staff who meet on a regular basis. Priorities identified by the team for 2001 were to “1) refine the indicators and determine how indicator data can be gathered on a regular basis, 2) review current City of Tucson projects with a goal of determining how these projects could benefit from additional collaborations with other city departments and offices, as well as organizations outside of city government, and 3) determine strategies for communicating progress on Livable Tucson to the community.”

Sustainable Initiatives

The following provides concrete examples of initiatives to put Tucson’s goals into action:

Pedestrian Master Plan and Corridor Studies

The Pedestrian Master Plan and Corridor Studies was developed to address the goal of “People Oriented Neighborhoods.” The definition of this goal was: “Includes designing new neighborhoods and investing in old neighborhoods to promote a mix of commercial and residential uses, a pedestrian focus, landscaping and aesthetics, and interaction among residents.” Some comments from the community in expressing their hopes in this area were:

- "Old-fashioned, front porch, out of car experiences."
- "Better local services, such as a grocery store, located within walking distance from my home."
- "Create a walkable city-scape, design it with people in mind rather than cars."

The Pedestrian Master Plan was used to promote alternate modes of travel. To support this goal, the Department of Transportation included a Pedestrian Master Plan in the Fiscal Year 2000-01 budget to develop a systematic method to develop pedestrian routes connecting schools to neighborhoods or connecting the disabled population to services

such as SunTran. The corridor studies go beyond traditional transportation studies and look at “circulation, livability, economic development, and aesthetic improvements.”

Indicators Tucson will use to measure their success include:

- Percentage of residences located within half a mile of a market
- Number of pedestrians in neighborhoods

An Infill Fee Waiver Program

Another Tucson goal was to address “Infill and Reinvestment,” An Infill Fee Waiver defined as “well planned growth, the management of sprawl, and development in the city's core, rather than on the periphery.” The community said they wanted to “push infill and discourage urban sprawl” and that “constantly building on the periphery strains all sorts of services - transportation, pollution, delivery of water, services, parks, etc. - infill!”

The infill waiver program was initiated by the Mayor and the city council in 1997. The program waives plan check and building permit fees for single-family homes. The Mayor and Council identified an area of the city where they believed reinvestment could encourage building and rehabilitation of 22% of the city.

Indicators for this goal include:

- Ratio of City building permits to total regional building permits
- Percentage of residences located within half a mile of a market

Zanjero Program and ¡Viva Reciclaje!

Another goal, Efficient Use of Natural Resources, is defined as “conservation of resources and use of sustainable energy sources.” Community comments about their hopes for this goal included:

- “Less consumption, more recycling.”
- “We must invest in protecting our environment - make it easy but a requirement that we do such things as recycle and conserve.”

One program that has been successful in meeting this goal is the Tucson Water Department's Zanjero Program, which promotes conservation of Tucson's most important natural resources: water. This innovative program provides customer outreach featuring trained conservation specialists who visit homes and businesses with large water consumption. The visits allow the specialists to check fixtures, irrigation systems, and customer water use habits. The customers also receive individualized surveys to identify problem and provide guidelines to reduce water use. The program also supports the installation of low-flow fixtures and other water-saving devices installed in some homes.

The Zanjero Program has save approximately 35 million gallons of groundwater annually and by conducting free water use audits in homes and businesses, the Zanjero Program staff have not only addressed conservation, but have created considerable savings for water customers.

The goal, “Efficient Use of Natural Resources” is also addressed by a solid waste program. In 1998 the Tucson received an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant to launch ¡Viva Reciclaje! This innovative education outreach program targets Tucson's Hispanic community by raising awareness about waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

A bilingual education specialist educates school children and the community using neighborhood events sponsored by the Hispanic community in targeted neighborhoods about the benefits of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Staff also seeks to determine barriers

and ways to facilitate change by walking the neighborhoods and talking to residents one-on-one.

The ¡VIVA! program has seen a 7% increase in curbside recycling and nearly 40% increase in tonnages collected at Neighborhood Recycling Centers in the target areas. ¡Viva Reciclaje! was awarded the 1999 Urban Recycling Program of the Year by the Southwest Public Recycling Association and is being used as a model for Denver, Colorado.

Indicators to address the natural resources goal include:

- Per capita water consumption
- Recycling as a percentage of total waste

Information Sources

To learn more about Tucson's activities, visit the following Tucson websites:

For the Livable Tucson Vision Program, including program description, goals, and highlighted projects, go to <http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/livable2.html>

For City General Plan go to <http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/planning/grosmart/newgp.htm>