

Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program
Draft* Application Planning Document
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Section One: Introduction

The purpose of this document is to stimulate dialogue and clarity about the potential impact of regional efforts to address sustainability. The recession is the catalyst for restructuring the priorities and activities that will sustain the Sun Corridor region for years to come. The Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program offered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is one vehicle to drive such change. Responding to the Sustainable Communities Program may assist the region in securing federal funding to move critical goals forward such as rebuilding the economy, promoting social equity, and enhancing the environment.

This discussion is framed from the perspective of the Sun Corridor. This area includes the regions under the purview of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Pima Association of Governments (PAG), and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG). As the demographics section will attest, the issues facing each region resonate with the next. Truly holistic planning cannot be achieved by considering each region independently. Working with the megapolitan area as a whole acknowledges the significant connections that already exists between and among the counties. This grant offers a forum to address common areas and overlapping issues constructively, within each subregion, as well as throughout the Sun Corridor. These communities cannot fix problems in an isolated manner when each county needs the next to be part of the solution.

The Joint Planning Advisory Council (JPAC), formed in 2009, will serve as the coordinating body to engender a collaborative, seamless approach. Each subregion will address issues that are unique to them through this grant process. Unifying themes within the Sun Corridor will be addressed through JPAC. Currently the Sun Corridor is the smallest of the 20 megapolitan regions in the country, but it is also projected to demonstrate the most growth. As a result, significant progress can be achieved in this region. Greater economies of scale can be attained here than in most other parts of the country.

One of the strengths that poises this effort for success is the expertise of the partners involved. In addition to the councils of governments and their member agencies, an impressive array of nonprofit and public agencies, private sector representatives, and community activists play

integral roles in the development of this application. The steadfast support of Urban Land Institute (ULI), Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC), and Arizona State University (ASU) is described in addition to a number of other partners in section four. This effort is also indebted to the leadership of the elected officials who champion efforts to make the region more sustainable. The next section describes the demographics that make such efforts critical.

Section Two: Demographics

An extensive review of demographic information will be presented in the application. The following data from the 2008 American Community Survey one year estimates provides a high level overview of the Sun Corridor's profile.

Maricopa, Pima, Gila, and Pinal Counties represent 5.2 million people with more than 3.9 million people living in Maricopa County. The demographics of the Sun Corridor do not vary significantly from one county to the next. Just more than 20 percent of the residents in Pima County are age 60 plus, while this figure drops to 15 percent in Maricopa County. Given the larger percentage of older adults in Pima County and the fact that the rate of disabilities increases as people age, Pima County has the highest percentage of people with disabilities at 13 percent. Pima County also has the highest percentage of Hispanic people at 33 percent while Pinal County has the lowest percentage at 29 percent. Maricopa County has the highest percentages of White people at 82 percent as well as Black /African American people at four percent. There are more people living below the federal poverty line in Pima County than elsewhere in the Sun Corridor at 15 percent. Maricopa County has the lowest percentage at 13 percent.

Demographic	Maricopa	Pinal	Pima	Sun Corridor total/percent	US total/percent
Population	3,954,598	327,301	1,012,018	5,293,917	304,059,728
Housing costs 30%+ of income	42%	40%	39%	41%	37%
% In poverty	13%	14%	15%	14%	13%
% White	82%	73%	79%	81%	75%
% Black/ African American	4%	3%	3%	4%	12%
% Native American*	1%	5%	3%	2%	1%
% Hispanic	31%	29%	33%	31%	15%
% Age 60+	15%	17%	20%	17%	17%
% Disability	10%	12%	13%	10%	12%

* The American Census combines Native Americans and Alaskan natives. There are very few Alaskan natives in the Sun Corridor.

Residents in the Sun Corridor are slightly more likely to live in poverty (14%) compared to the rest of the country (13%). There are striking differences with regard to the national average of the percentage of Native Americans, Hispanic people and Black/African American people. The percentage of Native Americans more than doubles in the Sun Corridor and is five times higher in Pinal County than the national average. Less than a third of the national average of Black/African American people live in the Sun Corridor while the percentage of Hispanic people in the Sun Corridor is more than twice the national average.

More detailed data on socioeconomic characteristics will be prepared for the grant application to HUD.

Section Three: Purpose of Regional Sustainability Efforts

Perhaps more so than any other area in the country, the Sun Corridor is facing significant challenges that threaten its economic vitality and sustainability. The rate of foreclosures is among the top in the country, rendering entire neighborhoods vacant. For years, much of the region's economy was dependent on housing and population growth. The foreclosure crisis abruptly put an end to that. The ripple effect has cast thousands into unemployment. The challenge presented by the recession and the opportunity offered through the Sustainable Communities Program is to end the economy's dependence on the housing market and to rebuild it on sustainable initiatives.

Sustainable development is being championed throughout the country, from federal agencies, to community organizations, to local citizens. Much progress can be made by embracing this principle in this region. The impact of the recession on the Sun Corridor clearly delineates the time for change. Individual lives can be improved by increased coordination of housing, transportation, and employment. The environment will be improved by reducing congestion and promoting a green footprint. The economy will benefit when people have more time and income to invest. The efforts described in this document will bring the region closer to achieving these benefits.

One possible vehicle to drive such change is the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program. This new initiative is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency. Approximately \$100 million in funding nationally will support the creation of regional plans for sustainable development. Up to \$5 million is available for large metropolitan areas. MAG, CAAG, and PAG may be eligible to apply for funding. Creating regional plans for sustainable development may position the partners well in the future if such plans become a requirement with the reauthorization of federal funding and other federal initiative, including those addressing housing affordability, environmental protection, energy use, and healthy communities.

The purpose of the plans for sustainable development is to integrate existing plans related to housing and transportation in order to benefit the economy, the environment, and social equity.

According to HUD, each plan needs to identify priorities and goals related to housing, transportation, and the environment; establish outcome measures and strategies; prioritize projects; and engage residents in meaningful ways throughout the project. The next section will detail the partners needed to complete these activities.

Section Four: Potential Partners

Dedicated, talented partners are integral to the success of this project. Each person and agency brings a level of expertise critical to the region's ability to address sustainability in an effective way. A short description about the role is offered for the initial primary partners. Everyone involved has assisted in shaping the proposal and will continue to be involved should the grant be awarded.

The following agencies have attended planning meetings: (PAG and CAAG to add more)

- Joint Planning Advisory Council: serve as the main coordinating body and address Sun Corridor related issues.
- Maricopa Association of Governments: convene partners in Maricopa County and guide planning on the subregional level.
- Pima Association of Governments: convene partners in Pima County and guide planning on the subregional level.
- Central Arizona Association of Governments: convene partners in Pinal County and guide planning on the subregional level.
- Arizona Community Foundation
- Arizona Department of Housing
- Arizona Department of Transportation: advise on alternative analysis planning for intercity rail between Phoenix and Tucson
- Arizona Housing Alliance
- Arizona State University- American Indian Policy Institute, Morrison Institute, and Stardust Center: assist with best practice research, metric development, and community engagement
- Central Arizona Project: assist with the proposed focus on development of the path along the canal corridor through Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal Counties
- City of Chandler
- City of Mesa
- City of Phoenix
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC): advise on housing and social equity issues
- Maricopa County
- Metro Light Rail
- Native American Connections: advise on housing and social equity issues
- Sonoran Institute: leverage collaboration with Lincoln Land Institute regarding local government fiscal issues
- Urban Land Institute: advise on land use and activity center issues
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Phoenix Field Office

The following agencies have been invited to participate: (PAG and CAAG to add more)

- MAG, CAAG, and PAG member agencies
- Arizona Community Action Association

- Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
- Arizona Town Hall
- Phoenix Community Alliance
- Salt River Project

The following agencies have been proposed as additional partners for this project: (PAG and CAAG to add more)

- Arizona American Planners Association
- Arizona State University-Global Institute for Sustainability
- Arizona Transit Association
- East Valley Partnership
- Friends of Transit
- Greater Phoenix Economic Council
- Greater Phoenix Leadership
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
- Nature Conservancy
- Phoenix Revitalization Corp
- Reboth Saints Center
- Valley Forward
- Valley Metro
- Valley Partnership
- Westmarc
- Your Guide to Green

The next section features the process that will engage these as well as additional partners.

Section Five: Proposed Process

The Joint Planning Advisory Council will coordinate the activity proposed in this grant at the megapolitan level, while the subregional planning efforts will be coordinated by the management structure in place through MAG, CAAG, and PAG . The Council is comprised of the elected official and staff leadership from MAG, CAAG, and PAG. Each subregion will maintain work groups comprised of their member agencies and community partners. Parallel work groups will be maintained at the Sun Corridor level. At least one representative from each subregional workgroup will participate in their parallel work group at the Sun Corridor level. This will maintain seamless communication and collaboration throughout the greater area.

The process will begin by convening member agencies, councils of governments committee members, and community partners to develop sustainability guiding principles. The principles will reflect the overarching goals and priorities for each subregion. Each subregion will provide their guiding principles and JPAC will develop principles for the Sun Corridor in collaboration with partners that represent the greater area.

Upon confirmation of the guiding principles, best practices will be researched for their relevancy and applicability to the Sun Corridor. The areas of focus will be identified by the principles. Work groups will review and guide the research. One area of focus for the work groups will include the integration of existing plans, development of green housing and jobs along high

capacity transit routes, and developing policies to redefine land use for the vacant residential and commercial buildings.

Once the most relevant best practices have been identified, strategies will be developed to replicate their success in this region. These strategies will include outcome measures in order to track progress made. The community will be heavily involved to ensure the strategies speak to their needs and utilize resources effectively. The intended impact of each measure will be specifically defined.

Partners will select the strategies most appropriate for them to implement. Pilot projects may be implemented to determine the viability of strategies and to resolve any issues or modifications needing to be addressed. The impact of each measure will be modeled through JPAC and the regional impact of all the measures identified. The results will be presented and modifications made as necessary to support the guiding principles. Projects will be prioritized for implementation and future funding opportunities. An evaluation will be conducted through JPAC and changes in focus will be made as needed.

Community engagement will be maintained through a variety of mechanisms. Representatives from the community will be invited to participate through the work groups. Youth may participate through a civic engagement curriculum designed to stimulate creative thinking and present their ideas as part of the planning process. Public hearings and presentations at community events will be offered throughout the process to gather critical data and feedback.

Assistance from community partners will be solicited to ensure people are invited to participate. The councils of governments have a strong network of human services providers that can further assist in this area. Surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews will be implemented to serve two important purposes. First, this outreach will collect information from the public that is vital to the responsiveness of the planning process. Second, it will inform people about the process and engage them to participate.

Conversations with member agencies, committee officers, and community partners have suggested the following areas for focus and further research during the creation of a single regional Sun Corridor plan for sustainable development with elements to address unique issues within MAG, PAG, and CAAG:

(PAG and CAAG to add more)

Housing and Transportation Coordination

- Leverage the MAG Sustainable Transportation and Land Use Integration Study, a project already in the FY 2011 MAG Unified Planning Work Program. It evaluates land use and transit oriented development (TOD) along potential commuter rail routes.

- Develop model codes that address challenges associated with transit oriented development building codes and joint revenue sharing between jurisdictions.
- Promote more live-work, affordable housing along key transportation corridors. Some of this is done through transit oriented development (TOD) districts, but it could be enhanced in urban corridors.
- Develop green jobs and housing along high capacity transit routes such as commuter rail, light rail, and the intercity rail between Phoenix and Tucson. This could include solar, workforce housing, dust control, and infill projects.
- Conduct additional studies of downtown areas and key neighborhood linkages, more walkable neighborhoods, and identifying what type of enhancements create those environments.

Economic Development

- Identify economic opportunities related to freight passing through the region.
- Identify the housing and transportation needed to support the economic opportunities related to the freight passing through the Sun Corridor.
- Identify economic development opportunities and the elements needed to sustain an inland port and the proposed Punta Colonet.
- Conduct a cluster study of industries and the elements needed to maintain them.
- Conduct an activity center study to identify key elements that make centers the most sustainable.
- Develop regional adaptive re-use policies to address the thousands of vacant commercial buildings.
- Develop shared sales tax revenue agreements.

Housing

- Develop policies to address the vacant homes and redefine land use. Distressed real estate is a significant issue for this region.
- Promote location efficient workforce housing. Current research indicates that housing and transportation costs should total no more than 45 percent of household income.
- Develop regional consensus on green building code for all cities.

Transportation

- Develop a pedestrian/bike way along the 336 mile canal system stretching from Maricopa County to Pima and Pinal Counties. The system has a 20 foot area along the length of the canal that is dedicated for public development but not much of the area has been developed. This could connect cities and counties via bike and pedestrian routes.
- Increase access to transit among Native American communities in the Sun Corridor.
- Connect crossings to connect the 181 miles of canals in Maricopa County, creating an off-street network.
- Fill in gaps in the path along the New River corridor since there are several missing segments
- Promote the complete street guide that promotes more transportation choices.

Environment

- Include activities related to food security and urban agriculture.

- Address environmental concerns include reducing green house gas emissions, the urban heat island, and water conservation.
- Promote using recycled asphalt.
- Build on work undertaken already to identify obstacles to increasing the use of reclaimed water. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel is working on several aspects of water sustainability including public perception of using reclaimed water and specifications for reclaimed water infrastructure.
- Create a desert open spaces plan for the Sun Corridor.
- Promote the preservation of wildlife in urban corridors.
- Enhance regional efforts for water recharge and recovery in active management areas.
- Promote best practices in eliminating septic systems, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

The next section will indicate the products to be delivered as a result of this process.

Section Six: Anticipated Products

The most important product to come of this project is a cohesive sustainability plan for the Sun Corridor to rebuild the economy in a way that promotes inclusive access to housing, transportation, and a healthy environment. The following tools may be developed or acquired as a result of the planning process and used in the future to support additional sustainability efforts.

- Interactive mapping tool to measure progress made through regional plan for sustainable development
- Land use modeling and visualization tools for community planning in the areas of transportation, air quality, and housing.
- Maps of vacant residential and commercial buildings to illustrate pre and post recession as well as pre and post sustainability efforts

The next section will illustrate the desired impact of the plan.

Section Seven: Desired Impact

The impact desired by this activity is that the economy will shift its reliance from the housing market to more sustainable activities. As the region becomes more economically viable, people's incomes will stabilize. Their ability to access housing and transportation options within their means will increase. Focusing on social equity and community engagement throughout the process will ensure that these opportunities are available to all people regardless of their race, income, age, or level of ability. Attention will be given to environmental concerns to ensure that the natural resources that draw people here are maintained and protected.

Other desired impacts include a reduction in regional travel through the coordination of housing, employment, and transportation. This will reduce the burden on air quality and the transportation infrastructure, increase the time people have with their families, and make more money available for other investments. As a result, the quality of life will improve and the region will be more sustainable.

Section Eight: Conclusion/Next Steps

The activities described in this document are tentative pending direction from the Regional Councils of MAG, PAG, and CAAG. The highest priority is to increase the sustainability of the

member agencies through the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program and other opportunities as they become available. Plans for this program may also be modified by the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) released in June. Requirements made clear in the NOFA may indicate another approach is more viable.

Feedback is welcomed throughout the process. Consistent communication will ensure whatever activities move forward are responsive to the will of the region and are best suited to meet emerging needs and opportunities.

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