



# TUCSON — NORTE-SUR —

*A Policy Framework for Equitable  
Transit-Oriented Development*

Executive Summary

September 2024



# Statement from Tucson Mayor Romero

"As an elected official deeply committed to the prosperity and inclusivity of Tucson, I am proud to endorse the Tucson Norte-Sur Plan, a transformative initiative set to shape our city's future. Funded by the Federal Transit Administration's Pilot Transit-Oriented Development Program, this 3-year project aims to strategically guide development along a pivotal north-south transit corridor spanning from the bustling Tohono T'adai Transit Center, passing through downtown Tucson, the City of South Tucson, to the vibrant Tucson International Airport.



This effort has been led by the City of Tucson's Department of Transportation and Mobility, in collaboration with the City of South Tucson. Other stakeholders involved include the Housing and Community Development and Planning and Development Services, as well as local businesses and organizations. Likewise, I want to thank the Community Ambassadors and Connectors for helping us meet our community members where they are, whether that be at a transit station, a restaurant, or a park.

The Norte-Sur Plan seeks to foster equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD). This approach not only enhances connectivity and sustainability but also prioritizes community well-being, economic vitality, and the preservation of our unique cultural heritage. By leveraging strategic land use and thoughtful planning, this initiative promises to create vibrant, inclusive neighborhoods where all Tucsonans can thrive."

In Community,  
Mayor Romero

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Regina Romero'. The signature is stylized with fluid, connected letters.





## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who contributed to this planning effort, including City of Tucson staff from the Department of Transportation & Mobility, Planning & Development Services, Housing & Community Development, Parks and Recreation, The Office of Equity, The Office of Health, Safety, and Wellness, the Office of Economic Initiatives, the City of South Tucson, and staff from the South Tucson Housing Authority. A special thanks to the Project Working Group and the Project Steering Committee members who put in many hours providing direction over a period of two years. And of course, all of the community members in Tucson and South Tucson that provided input through the engagement process.



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# Norte-Sur is a Plan

Tucson Norte-Sur is a plan and policy document for communities to identify equitable Transit Oriented Development opportunities along a north-south transit corridor from the Tucson Mall/Tohono Tadaí Transit Center in the north to the Tucson International Airport in the south. Transit oriented development (TOD) is a planning and design approach that seeks to create compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods around new or existing public transit stations.

Many transit advocates, planners, community-based developers, and others have embraced TOD as a strategy to create more vibrant and connected neighborhoods, increase transit ridership, expand opportunity, and reduce the greenhouse emissions that contribute to climate change. However, the high demand for housing adjacent to transit can make TOD homes inaccessible to people with lower incomes, while the rapid appreciation sparked by new transit investments can lead to gentrification and displacement, countering equity goals.

## **The Tucson Norte-Sur plan is not a capital project and does not include:**

- Funding for capital projects, such as the construction of transit
- Selection of a specific transit types
- Selection of specific corridor alignments or roadway changes
- Planning for transit operations

**Tucson Norte-Sur is separate but complementary to the Tucson Rapid Transit Project, which is focusing on Bus Rapid Transit on Stone Avenue between Tohono Tadaí Transit Center and Ronstadt Transit Center. Planning to identify the route and type of High Capacity Transit south of downtown will start in 2025. For more information see [tucsonrapidtransit.com](http://tucsonrapidtransit.com).**



### **Tucson Norte-Sur (plan):**

The land use planning and policy development along the transit corridors focused on **affordable housing, multimodal connectivity, cultural preservation, and equitable development outcomes.**



### **Tucson Rapid Transit (project)**

The identification and implementation of a specific **bus rapid transit corridor**, stations, and transit technology.

## The Study Area

- 14.5 miles
- Includes City of Tucson and City of South Tucson
- Connects the Tucson Airport to Downtown Tucson and the Tucson Mall
- Connects three transit centers - Laos, Ronstadt, and Tohono Tadaí
- Home to more than half of all of jobs in the Tucson metro area
- Key need - #16 bus (Oracle Ave), #18 bus (S 6th Ave) and #19 bus (Stone Ave) serve about 1 million trips per year, 3 of 5 busiest in metro area





# Why We Need a Plan for Equitable Transit Oriented Development

*Why is the Norte-Sur plan for eTOD important for neighborhood livability?*

1) The **COST of HOUSING + TRANSPORTATION** in Tucson makes up almost half (46%) of the average household income, creating a burden for many. Policies that combine affordable housing with access to affordable transit can reduce living costs for existing and new residents.



2) Some neighborhoods within the Norte-Sur study area have been disproportionately burdened with **RAPIDLY RISING** housing costs, high **HOUSING TURNOVER** rates, and a high proportion of rental units. Referred to in the Norte-Sur plan as “**EQUITY PRIORITY AREAS**”, these areas stand out for risks to housing instability and displacement even relative to other parts of the study area which already score highly in Tucson’s Equity Priority Index.

3) There is **HIGH TRANSIT USAGE** in the Norte-Sur Study Area, combined with **POOR SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE**. Bus routes 16 (Oracle Rd), 18 (S. 6th Ave), and 19 (Stone Ave) are among the top 5 best performing SunTran routes, while sidewalk coverage (59%) and tree coverage (7%) are low.

# Work Completed - Phase I

Tucson Norte-Sur includes multiple plans and components that have been completed since the effort began in 2021. **Phase I included a Market Assessment and a heavy emphasis on data collection and community engagement. Phase II included additional community engagement, research, and policy recommendations.** These include:

## **Tucson eTOD Community Engagement Plan (2021)**

Provides Guiding Principles for public outreach and strategies for community engagement.

## **Tucson Norte-Sur Market Assessment (2022)**

An assessment of housing, retail, office, and industrial demand across the Tucson Norte-Sur study area, split into 4 distinct zones: the North side, downtown, City of South Tucson, and the South side.

## **A Plan for Equitable Transit Oriented Development Phase 1: Data and Community Input (2023)**

The Phase 1 summary comprises two major components: Community Engagement and Data. Both components provided the basis for 3 primary themes that emerged and formed the basis for Phase 2: Affordability, Mobility, and Community.

# Work Completed - Phase II

## **Tucson Norte-Sur Phase II: A Strategic eTOD Framework (2024)**

The Phase II report encompasses the policy and program action strategies for land use, housing, cultural preservation, mobility and infrastructure.

## **Norte-Sur Sidewalk Connections Pedestrian Access Study (2024)**

As part of the Norte-Sur project, this study was conducted to identify gaps in the pedestrian network surrounding the planned Stone Ave Bus Rapid Transit project. The existing pedestrian infrastructure in this area was evaluated to determine needed improvements to sidewalks, curb ramps, and driveways to increase access to transit.



# Work Completed - Phase II Cont.

## *Tucson Bus Rapid Transit Assessment: Economic Development, Demographic, Commuting, and Rent Perspectives (2024)*

This study was commissioned to address potential impacts and implications of bus rapid transit (BRT) on land use, commuting behavior, and residential, retail and office growth by reviewing comparable BRT systems.

## *Tucson Norte-Sur Study Area Roadway Safety Audits (2023, 2024)*

The City of Tucson requested three Road Safety Audits in the Norte-Sur study area, specifically to identify short-term and long-term safety enhancements to the Stone Avenue and South 6th Avenue corridors.

## Norte-Sur Timeline

**JUNE 2020**



**The City of Tucson is Awarded a Grant From the Federal Transit Administration Pilot TOD Planning Program**

La ciudad de Tucson recibe una subvención del Programa Piloto de Planificación TOD de la Administración Federal de Tránsito

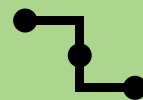
*Phase I*  
**2021-2022**



**FTA Grant Tucson Norte-Sur Phase 1/Subsidio FTA Fase 1 Tucson Norte-Sur**

- Community Engagement Phase 1 / Participación de la Comunidad Fase 1
- Technical Data Collection/ Recopilación de datos técnicos
- Market Study/ Análisis de Mercado

*Phase II*  
**2023-2024**



**FTA Grant Tucson Norte-Sur Phase 2/Subsidio FTA Fase 2 Tucson Norte-Sur**

- Community Engagement Phase 2 / Participación de la Comunidad Fase 2
- Policy and Program Recommendations / Recomendaciones de políticas y programas

# The Outreach Process

The Tucson Norte-Sur planning process included a wide range of community outreach and engagement strategies to help center community voices. This process acknowledges the systemic and institutionalized barriers to engagement such as languages used, the formats of receiving feedback, outreach methods, location and time of engagement events, and more.

We have therefore employed outreach and engagement efforts with a specific emphasis on engaging those communities that will be most impacted by the proposed high capacity transit route as well as intentionally reaching out to—and amplifying the voices of—communities and populations that have been historically left out of planning and decision-making processes. This includes low-income families and individuals, homeowners as well as renters in the study area, Latino/Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities, Native American communities, people with disabilities, youth, workers, transit riders, small business owners, and more.





# Meet the Connectors

Community Connectors meet the community where they are. Instead of asking people to attend public meetings, the Connectors [meet the public where they are](#) and engage community members in conversations about the Tucson Norte-Sur Plan. They host diverse community dialogues with small groups of residents at times and places that are convenient for them. They meet community members at places they congregate, such as transit centers, grocery stores, parks, libraries, or neighborhood events. They also bring their talents and creative connections to this project, whether getting people to fill out surveys while they wait for their food at a food truck or hopping on a bus and engaging the riders about the plan.



# Lead Community Connectors



**Selina Barajas**

Southside Tucson  
City of South Tucson

Selina Barajas, a native Tucsonan alum from both Sunnyside and Tucson Unified School Districts and the University of Arizona, holds a master's degree in Urban Planning from UCLA and has experience advocating for social, cultural and economic development initiatives for the community. Selina has worked on mobility projects such as the 12th Avenue Street Improvement Project, Proposition 407 Bicycle Boulevard's on Tucson's south side, and Move Tucson. It remains a top priority for Selina to promote and support local businesses, creatives and makers, especially those traditionally undervalued.



**Valerie Sanchez**

Northside Tucson  
Downtown Tucson

Valerie is the founder and CEO of Juntos Communications, specializing in community betterment, economic mobility and positive social change. She is also a Community Outreach Manager in Arizona State University's School of Social Work Office of Community Health, Engagement and Resiliency (OCHER), working with communities to co-create interventions and initiatives that focus on inherent strengths to promote resiliency. Her work is guided by lived experience and professional history - experiential and rooted in relationship building to advance equity, social and economic impact, and social justice.



# Community Connectors



Armando Sotelo



Erica Castaneda



Patricia G. Sanchez



Rosario 'Chayo' Bernal-Mendibes



D'Andre Silva



Mike 'Slick' Edmonds



Lucky Salway



Karma Campbell



Jon-Lee 'Jonni' Campbell



Imelda G. Garcia



Stacey Sizemore



Eliza Garcia



Alejandro Bohon

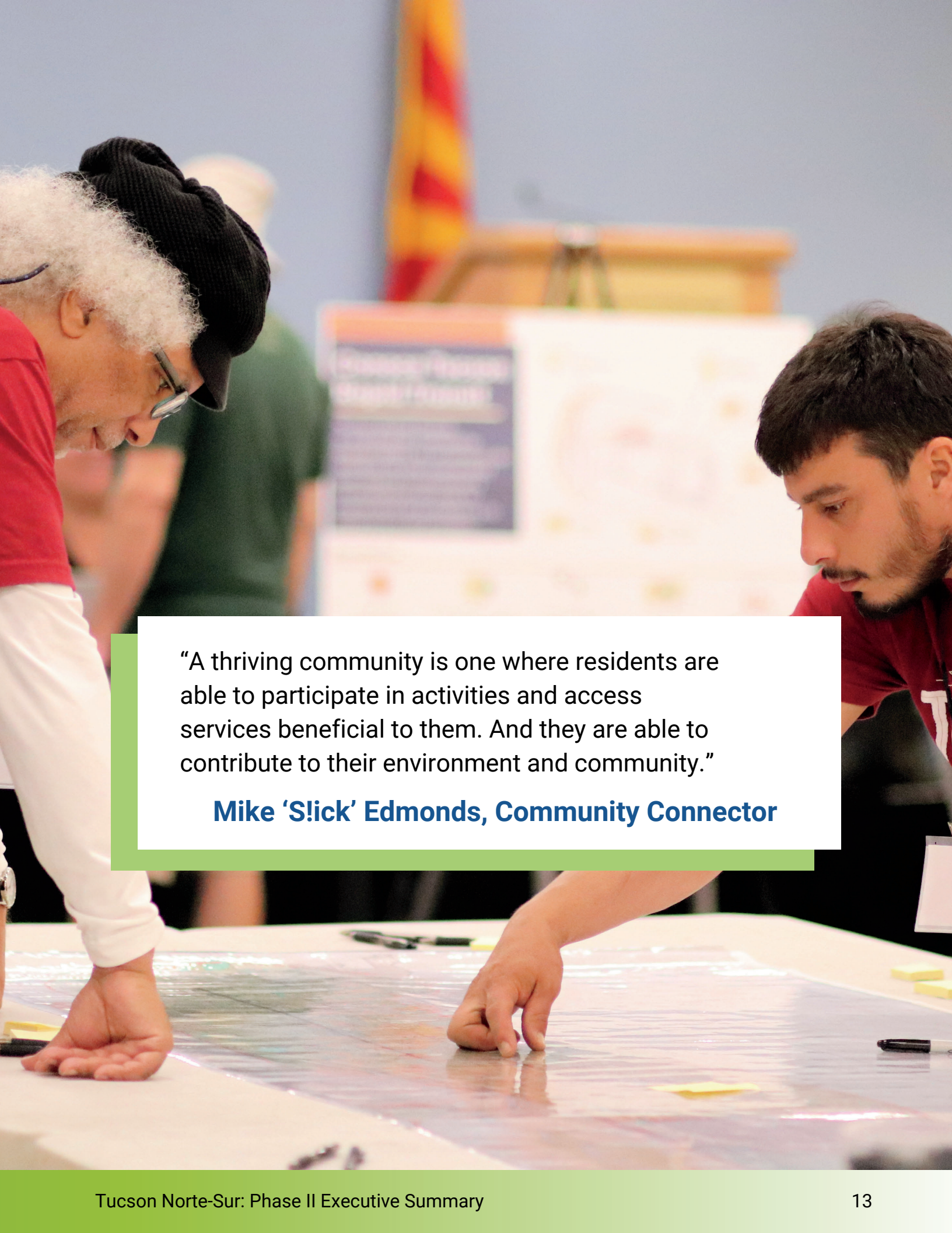


Vanessa Gallego



Timothy Peth



A photograph showing two individuals, an older woman on the left and a younger man on the right, both wearing red shirts, looking down at a large, colorful map or diagram spread out on a white table. The woman is wearing a black beanie and glasses. The man has dark hair and a beard. In the background, a Spanish flag is visible, and there are other people and posters, suggesting a community meeting or workshop setting.

“A thriving community is one where residents are able to participate in activities and access services beneficial to them. And they are able to contribute to their environment and community.”

**Mike ‘S!ick’ Edmonds, Community Connector**



# Phase I Outreach Methods

Phase I community outreach consisted of:

- 1 Norte-Sur website
- 1 Online Survey (2,417 responses)
- 10 Community Open House Events
- 1 Community Ambassador Training Program
- 6 Community Dialogues
- 16 Pop-up Events
- 7 Focus Groups



# What We Heard Phase I

## What did we hear most from our 30 + outreach events in Phase I?

Votes and responses across more than 30+ outreach events were tabulated to determine community priorities around transportation and housing. These comments were grouped into themes to provide a clearer picture of goals for Norte-Sur going into Phase II. The full summary of comments can be found in the appendix of A Plan for Equitable Transit Oriented Development Phase 1: Data and Community Input (2023)

*Top 3 themes that respondents found most important to creating equitable TOD:*

- 1 **THE NEED FOR FAST, RELIABLE, FREQUENT, WELL-CONNECTED, AFFORDABLE PUBLIC TRANSIT**
- 2 **WALKABILITY, BIKEABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY**
- 3 **CONCERNS AROUND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, GENTRIFICATION, DISPLACEMENT**





# Phase II Outreach Methods

Phase II community outreach consisted of:

- 1 Community Connectors Program with 15 connectors
- 21 Small Group Meetings or Cafecito's
- 17 Pop-ups
- 5 Open House Events
- 3 Community Workshops
- 2 Transit Center Walkabouts and Focus Group Discussions
- 2 Thrive in the 05 Business Forums
- 1 Business Outreach Survey





# What We Heard Phase II

Based on the themes that emerged as priorities from Phase I (housing, mobility, community), the Norte-Sur team drafted specific goals and sought community feedback on the proposed goals by asking participants to vote for their favorites.

## Phase II Top Overall Goals by Votes Received

- 1 Integrate tree canopy, water harvesting, and native plants in landscape design
- 2 Improve bicycle connectivity within Tucson Norte-Sur
- 3 Expand walkability within Tucson Norte-Sur
- 4 Improve access to affordable services; childcare, healthcare, healthy food options







“Equitable mobility is ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to safe, affordable, and efficient transportation options. When individuals have access to reliable transportation options, they are better able to access job opportunities, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other essential services. This can help break the cycle of poverty and create more equitable communities.”

**Erica Castaneda, Community Connector**

Erica Castaneda

# Norte-Sur Business Survey Results

Norte-Sur Phase II also included a business survey, which was mailed to all businesses in the Norte-Sur study area. Additionally, Community Connectors canvassed many of the commercial corridors with the survey, such as S. 6th Ave, Oracle Rd, and Stone Ave. Full survey results can be found at [tucsonnorte-sur.com/engage](http://tucsonnorte-sur.com/engage)

The survey asked which challenges small businesses are facing, and what programs may be most beneficial. Respondents identified the following as the most beneficial programs:

1

Social Media and Marketing Assistance



2

Façade Improvements



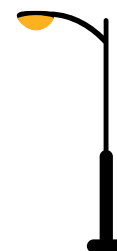
3

Business Access Signage (tied)



3

Street Lighting (tied)





# Key Action Strategies

Based on the data collected and feedback from more than 70 outreach events and two surveys over two years, we've developed policy recommendations related to the three themes of housing, mobility, and community. The following is a list of **10 action strategies** to advance the goals of Norte-Sur and carry momentum forward. The full list of policies and action strategies can be found in Part VI: Ensuring Equitable Outcomes.

## #1 Formally Adopt and Establish Programming for Equity Priority Areas

### What

Infrastructure investments provide community improvements and can therefore intrinsically increase redevelopment potential for properties, which in turn generates market interest and development from investors, which can lead to higher property values and other tangible impacts for residents living within the general vicinity of the transit corridor.

### How

The Tucson Norte-Sur team coordinated with the Office of Equity to identify Equity Priority Areas within the Tucson Norte-Sur study area. While the Tucson Norte-Sur study area is already a focal point for the city's Equity Priority Index, these areas have seen rapid increases in housing costs and high rates of housing turnover and demographic change even relative to other areas in the study area and have been identified as having higher rates of housing cost-burdened households, higher poverty rates, higher rates of vulnerable age groups and residents with a disability.

Due to the risks for displacement and higher need in combination with fewer resources, TOD Equity Zones provide a physical basis for focusing equity policies and infrastructure improvements. For example, a business applying for a façade improvement grant or other program may score higher if they are located within an Equity Priority Area.

### Themes Adressed

Housing, mobility, and community

### City of Tucson Lead Agencies

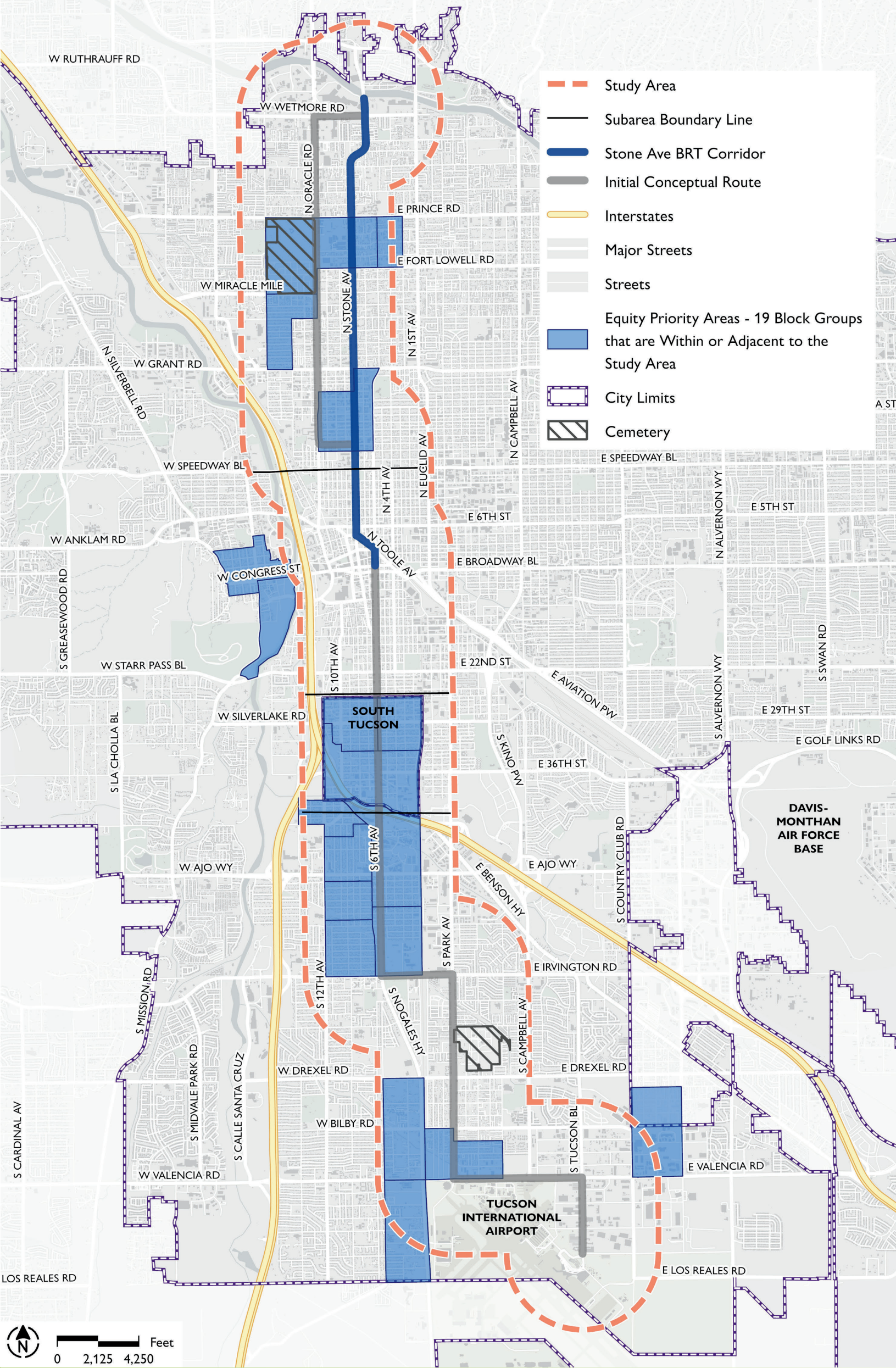
Office of Equity, Management Systems  
GIS Section, Planning and Development  
Services

### Requires Funding?

No

### Action Requested

Create an application process, eligibility criteria, and guidelines for programming; schedule for Mayor and Council adoption.





# #2 Advance Key Activity Centers Within Tucson Norte-Sur Study Area

## What

As Tucson Norte-Sur progressed between 2022 and 2024, a few areas emerged as priorities for equitable Transit-Oriented Development based on community input and the selection of Stone Avenue Bus Rapid Transit in January 2024. These areas include major transit, educational, and job hubs, as well as areas with great potential for reinvestment.

## How

The Tucson Norte-Sur plan recommends planning for Key Activity Centers for the following locations:

- 1) [Tohono Tadaí Transit Center/Tucson Mall](#) together with with Pima County, SunTran, and surrounding stakeholders
- 2) [Pima Community College campus BRT station area](#) with PCC, Thrive in the 05 and surrounding stakeholders
- 3) [North Downtown/Warehouse District](#) as the Links transportation and utility project is reaching completion with the Downtown Tucson Partnership and other downtown and warehouse district stakeholders
- 4) [Laos Transit Center/El Pueblo Center](#) in conjunction with ongoing improvements and efforts by City of Tucson Parks and Recreation and others

## Themes Adressed

Housing, mobility, and community.

## Requires Funding?

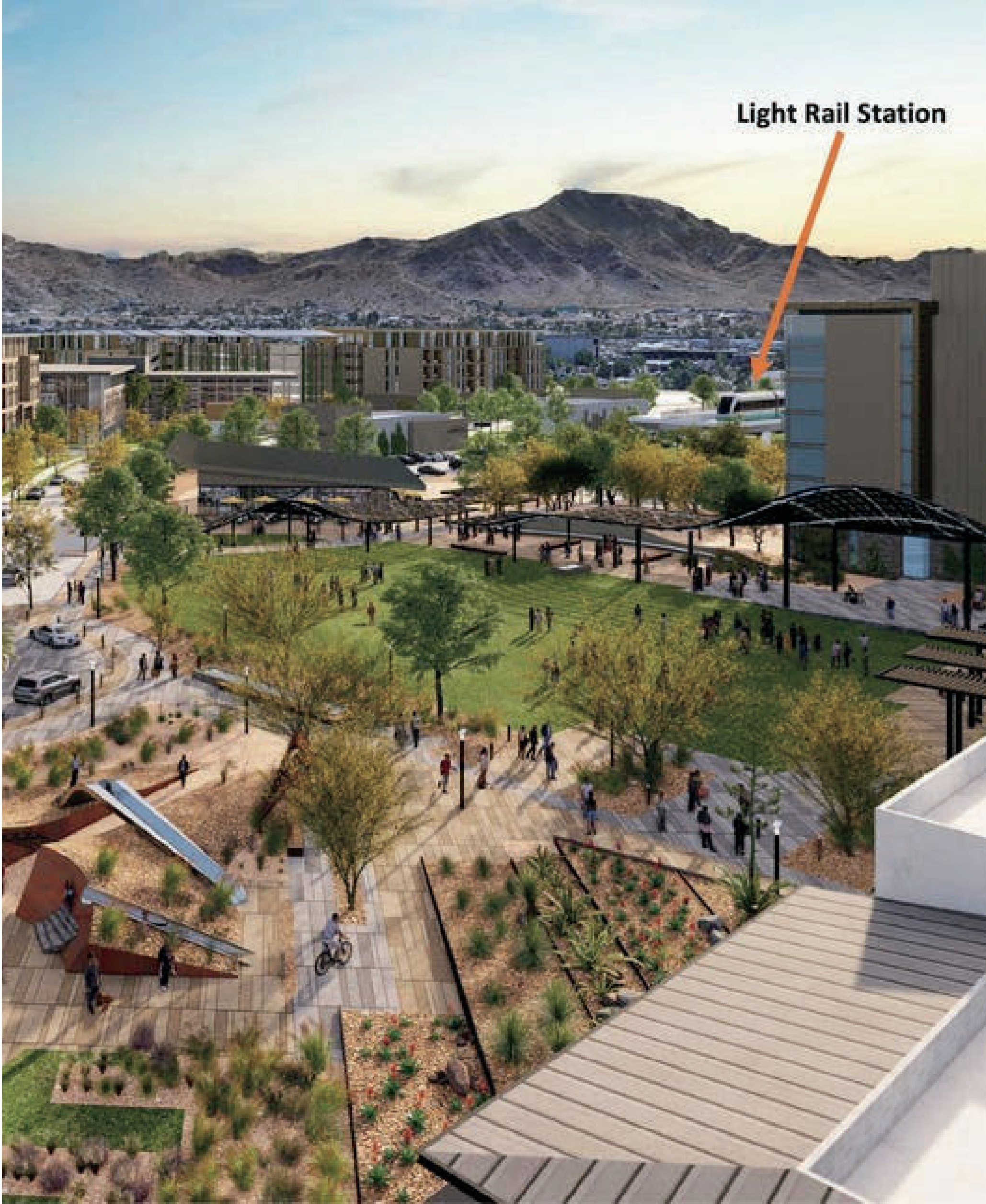
Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Planning and Development Services  
Department, Department of  
Transportation and Mobility, Parks and  
Recreation

## Action Requested

Work with PDSD to identify budget, timeline, and work plan. Planning for Activity Centers may include working with neighborhoods to identify land use changes, activation/programming ideas, and infrastructure improvements.





# #3 Initiate Development Code Updates to Support Transit-Oriented Development

## What

Two-thirds of the Norte-Sur study area features transit-conductive zoning, yet current code regulations do not effectively facilitate Transit-Oriented Development or enable properties to achieve their maximum density potential under existing zoning. By making adjustments to the Unified Development Code and utilizing the Market Assessment (2022) to better understand market conditions, properties may be developed to their fullest potential without requiring rezoning or causing compatibility issues, especially considering most of the study area is transit-supportive.

## How

To unlock the reinvestment potential of properties within the Norte-Sur study area, coordinate with PDSD's Corridor Redevelopment Plan to initiate code amendments that reduce barriers to constructing equitable TOD, such as outdated parking minimums, arbitrary setback and lot coverage requirements, and maximum heights/densities.

## Themes Adressed

Housing, Mobility, Community

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

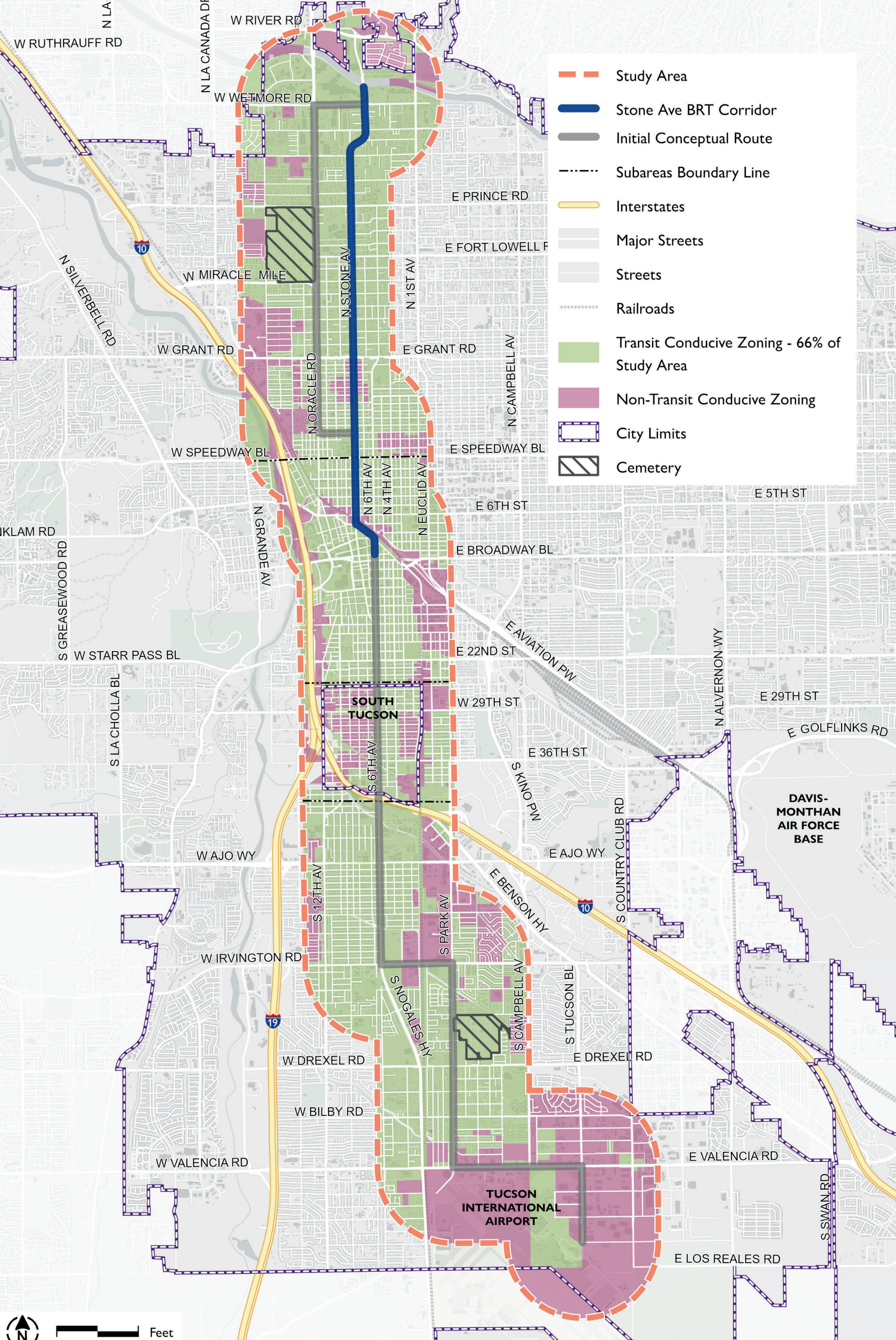
Planning and Development Services Department (PDSD)

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## Action Requested

Work with PDSD to determine the appropriate zoning changes and modifications to current development regulations in the UDC and incorporate into ongoing efforts, such as the Corridor Redevelopment plan.





# #4 Acquire Vacant and Underutilized Properties for Affordable Housing in Key Areas

## What

Much like other cities across the nation, Tucson is experiencing a housing crisis which is largely attributed to inadequate supply and rapid increases in costs that account for an overburdening share of personal monthly income. According to a study conducted by the City's Housing and Community Development Department, over 75,000 households across the city spend more than 30% of their income on housing, and therefore, are more vulnerable to housing instability. These challenges are most acute in the study area.

Recognizing that a significant amount of land within the study area is vacant or underutilized despite being zoned to support higher density residential uses or other TOD supportive land uses, Norte-Sur recommends that the City focuses on acquiring vacant/underutilized land and investing in city-owned properties to maintain long-term affordability within Equity Priority Areas and eTOD Focus Areas, near stations, and in areas with more vacancies and higher amounts of transit-supportive land uses and zoning.

## How

- 1. Coordinate with HCD on existing opportunities for long-term affordable workforce housing on city-owned land, focusing on areas around the transit centers, near planned transit stations, and adjacent to city parks and basic services
- 2. Implement a tax or bond referendum for affordable/workforce housing, with a portion of available funding for land acquisition

## Themes Addressed

Housing

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Housing & Community Development

## Action Requested

Utilize funding strategies outlined in Tucson Norte-Sur.



McKisson, M. (2023). Sleepy Hollow Mobile Home Park. [Photograph].



# # 5 Develop an Anti-Displacement Fund Directed at the Most Vulnerable Housing Types

## What

An Anti-Displacement Fund is a direct response to significant community concerns raised by Norte-Sur neighborhoods and stakeholder organizations about gentrification pressures from reinvestment on long-term residents and businesses. This may take the form of direct financial assistance such as a grant to individual homeowners, renters, small businesses, or communities such as mobile home parks that are most at risk to rising property values.

## How

Develop a Norte-Sur Affordable Housing Preservation Fund in partnership with a local financial institution to provide acquisition capital and housing cost increases to at-risk homeowners and landlords of existing affordable multifamily housing.

## Themes Addressed

Housing

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Housing and Community Development

## Action Requested

Utilize funding strategies outlined in Tucson Norte-Sur and identify a local lending institution



Friendly Village of the Catalinas [Photograph].  
<https://grahammhsales.com/friendly-village-of-catalinas/>



# # 6 Create a Façade and Walkway Improvement Grant Program for Norte-Sur Businesses

## What

The Norte-Sur Small Business Survey, conducted in Spring 2024, identified access and visibility as significant challenges and “Façade Improvement Assistance” was listed as a program that would be “most helpful” for businesses along the corridors. Similarly, two Road Safety Audits on Stone Ave in 2023 and 2024 identified the need for safe and direct pedestrian access between sidewalks and many of the businesses along the corridor, which are often separated by large, pedestrian-hostile parking lots. A Façade and Walkway Improvement Grant could assist with both challenges, giving businesses and property owners flexibility to enhance storefront visibility and provide walkways for people accessing on foot, bike, or transit.

## How

- 1. Identify municipal funding sources, apply for grant program, or partner with lending institutions or community partners
- 2. Develop a program description, application requirements, grant parameters, evaluation criteria and grant tracking
- 3. Coordinate with PDSD’s Corridor and Underutilized Property Project to issue a call for funding and request proposals from landowners, strip mall owners, and individual businesses

## Themes Addressed

Mobility, Community

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Joint program of Department of Transportation and Mobility and Economic Initiatives

## Action Requested

Identify funding or municipal set-aside of approximately \$1 million annually.





# # 7 Expand the Sidewalk Network

## What

A successful transit system requires a supporting pedestrian network that is accessible, comfortable, and safe. Currently, a significant portion of the Norte-Sur study area lacks sidewalk connectivity, even on major arterials such as Stone Ave. An analysis during Phase 1 found that 23% of all streets within the study area, including local streets and major roads, are considered “high stress.” This means that factors like missing or minimal sidewalks and high vehicle traffic speed and volumes create unsafe or uncomfortable conditions for people walking. Just within the entire study area, there are 112.9 miles of sidewalk gaps. *(Phase 1: Data and Community Input, pg. 111)*

The data collected in Phase 1 of Norte-Sur led to the Norte-Sur Sidewalk Connections Pedestrian Access Study (2024), which focused on specific recommendations for sidewalk infill between Drachman Rd and Wetmore Rd, and Oracle Rd and 1st Ave in the North side subarea.

## How

- 1. Utilize the Norte-Sur Sidewalk Connections Pedestrian Access Study, which recommends priority sidewalk projects based on set budget amounts
- 2. Undertake a sidewalk connections and pedestrian access study in the southern portion of the Norte Sur Corridor between I-19 and Irvington Road in conjunction with HCT planning & project development
- 3. Work with neighborhoods to identify priority sidewalk infill for when funding becomes available
- 4. Develop strategies to encourage private property owners to permit greater pedestrian connectivity and facilities through and to the corridor, including circulation within commercial areas (see Action Strategy #6 above)

### Themes Adressed

Mobility

### Requires Funding?

Yes

### City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Department of Transportation & Mobility

### Action Requested

Mobilize existing funding mechanisms such as Prop 411 and other sources to go towards sidewalk projects that support connectivity to high-capacity transit projects.





# #8 Upgrade Tohono Tadai, Ronstadt, and Laos Transit Centers

## What

The Tucson Norte-Sur study area includes three transit centers – Tohono Tadai, Ronstadt, and Laos. These transit centers were built to accommodate efficient bus transfer and access points for Sun Tran riders and include covered platforms, bus bays, restrooms, on-site security and information kiosks. Ronstadt is currently in the process of being redeveloped into a mixed-use downtown destination, while Laos is part of an effort to improve access and park space at the adjacent El Pueblo Center, and Tohono Tadai will need to be rebuilt to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit in the near future.

In June 2024, the Norte-Sur team worked with stakeholders, community leaders, and city department staff to review both Tohono Tadai and Laos Transit Centers for short-term and long-term programmatic and facility improvements.

## How

- 1. Review findings from the June 2024 Tohono Tadai Facility Review and Recommendations and the Laos Facility Review and Recommendations as part of Norte-Sur Phase II
- 2. Review recommendations with DTM and Sun Tran staff to develop a plan for advancing short-term improvements
- 3. Incorporate long-term recommendations into Key Activity Center plans (see action strategy #2) for Tucson Mall and El Pueblo Center

## Themes Adressed

Mobility, Community

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Department of Transportation and Mobility, Sun Tran

## Action Requested

Leverage recent Transit Center facility reviews to seek funding for improvements as part of FTA’s Fleet & Facilities Discretionary Program.





# # 9 Designate N. Stone Ave and S. Sixth Ave as Transit and Pedestrian Priority Corridors to Implement Multimodal Safety Improvements

## What

Tucson ranked as the third most dangerous metropolitan area for pedestrian fatalities with most regional fatalities occurring within the city limits in the 2024 Dangerous By Design report. The Norte-Sur corridors including Oracle Rd, Stone Ave, and S. 6th Ave are a part of Tucson’s High Injury Network (HIN). The HIN is 4% of Tucson's street network, but accounts for 68% of severe pedestrian crashes. Many of these crashes occur on popular transit routes that were built as wide, high-traffic roads designed for moving vehicles through quickly. Establishing North Stone Avenue and South Sixth Avenue as “Transit and Pedestrian Priority Corridors” with proven safety measures can increase walkability and connect people to transit, housing, and jobs.

## How

1. Review and implement recommendations from the three Road Safety Audits (RSAs) conducted in the Norte-Sur corridors as part of Tucson Norte-Sur Phase I and Phase II
2. Develop a schedule and coordinate with PAG to conduct Road Safety Audits on all high-capacity and frequent transit routes
3. Review the viability of reducing posted speeds in high-capacity transit corridors to 30 mph or less
4. Review the viability of access management and tactical engineering/safety treatments at major intersections along the corridor, such as No Right on Red and Leading Pedestrian Indicators
5. Formally endorse the goals of the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) initiative and approve the resulting action plan once finalized

## Themes Adressed

Mobility

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Department of Transportation and Mobility, Sun Tran

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## Action Requested

Coordinate with DTM as part of ongoing speed limit reductions to include high-capacity and frequent transit routes





# # 10 Require Street Trees to be Installed in a Landscape Zone Adjacent to High-Frequency Transit Corridors

## What

Requiring street trees on the high-capacity transit corridors will provide shade and mitigate the urban heat island effect while improving stormwater management. Some neighborhoods within the Norte-Sur project area are, on average, up to 6 degrees hotter than the mean surface temperature in Tucson (Tree Equity Dashboard). Heat severity is directly related to tree canopy cover, highlighting the need for an increased number of street trees where there is high pedestrian traffic. Currently, the study area tree canopy as a percentage of land area is only 7.5% (Phase 1: Data and Community Input, pg. 102). The Tucson Norte-Sur Project will improve access to transit and pedestrian-friendly urban design along the approved corridor, therefore, it is vital that barriers to planting street trees are lifted to maximize pedestrian safety, connectivity, and comfort.

## How

1. Coordinate with the Storm to Shade program to ensure existing stormwater and tree planting standards are being addressed in design of transit corridors and streetscapes
2. Review and remove S2S Program restrictions around planting street trees on arterial streets
3. Identify funding for long-term maintenance of street trees on high-capacity transit corridors

## Themes Addressed

Mobility, Community

## Requires Funding?

Yes

## City of Tucson Lead Agencies

Department of Transportation & Mobility, GSI Program (Storm to Shade), Tucson Million Trees Initiative

## Action Requested

Administratively allow modifications to standard details for road cross-sections on all new public-private developments through an administrative approval.





# Funding Strategies

The following table provides potential funding strategies and how each addresses one or more key action strategies requiring funding.

Funding Strategy	What and How?	Action Strategies This Funding Can Improve
<b>VARI (Value Added Reinvestment Initiative).</b>	Review tax revenue generated by the Streetcar and expected revenue from BRT to develop a dedicated “fund” for improvements or program implementation along high-capacity transit routes. Council at its discretion through the budget process could allocate funds equivalent to this amount for specific purposes whether near transit stations/corridors or elsewhere in the city.	<div> #2  #5  #6  #7  #8  #10 </div>
INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PROGRAMS		
<b>Proposition 407</b>	This \$225 million general obligation bond for parks, park amenities, and community connections is currently funding a number of projects in the Norte-Sur Corridor. Unallocated funding from this source could be used to fund proposed projects in the Tucson Norte-Sur Plan.	<div> #6  #7  #9 </div>
<b>Proposition 411</b>	This is a half-cent sales tax that is expected to generate \$740 million and allocates 80% of revenue to neighborhood street improvements and 20% to systemwide safety improvements. This source could fund sidewalk and traffic calming projects.	<div> #2  #6  #7  #9 </div>
<b>Proposition 101</b>	This funding source generated about \$250 million between 2018 and its sunset in 2023 through a half-cent sales tax. The remaining funds from this program could be used to fund short-term transportation improvements in the corridor. For example, segments of North Stone Avenue have been identified for repaving and remarking in CY2024.	<div> #9 </div>
<b>Storm 2 Shade (S2S)</b>	Revenue from this source comes from a monthly fee added to residential and commercial customers’ water/sewage usage (about \$1 a month for most residential customers). While this is a small funding source, it could be used in conjunction with other sources to add trees and vegetation supported by stormwater runoff throughout the corridor.	<div> #6  #7  #10 </div>



Funding Strategies Cont.

Funding Strategy	What and How?	Action Strategies This Funding Can Improve
<i>Road Improvements and Main Relocations</i>	This program could be relevant if there is a water main work in the Norte-Sur Corridor where right-of-way restoration can be coordinated with other improvements. Through Tucson Water, this program provides funds for the replacement of water main infrastructure as part of city, region, or state-funded capital improvement projects.	#6 #7 #10
LEVERAGING CITY LAND AND FACILITIES TO FOSTER JOINT DEVELOPMENT		
<i>Create an affordable housing revolving loan program.</i>	Uses annual general fund and/or bond funds to provide project gap funding for affordable housing projects.	#2
<i>City and Land Facilities</i>	The city can use its land and facilities (community centers, libraries, government offices) for mixed-use, transit-oriented development with private and non-profit developers. This strategy is already being applied to two city-owned parcels: one near the proposed BRT station at Lester Street, and another south of Downtown, formerly a public works storage yard.	#8
<i>Existing Transit Facilities</i>	The current transit use of the three transit facilities makes their site-specific joint-development potential distinct from the previous category. In the north segment, the Ronstadt Transit Center has a high potential for near-term joint development while the Tohono Tadaí and Roy Laos Transit Centers have joint development potential in the medium term.	#8
CITY REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES		
<i>Government Property Lease Excise Tax Program (GPLET)</i>	This Program approved by the State Legislature gives the city authority to abate (reduce) property taxes for up to eight years for properties located within the Central Business District. In this strategy, the city would have temporary ownership of real property and lease it back to the prior owner while charging an excise tax in lieu of an ad valorem property tax (a tax based on the value of the property). Previous GPLET agreements have led to substantial new market-rate housing and retail space in and adjacent to Downtown.	#2 #4
<i>Tax Increment Financing</i>	This tool is used to finance infrastructure improvements in an area from the incremental growth in tax revenues from an established base year. While there are two avenues for establishing TIF districts, a north-south district aligned with the Norte-Sur could spur redevelopment in a depressed corridor of the city using sale tax revenues.	#2 #8

# Funding Strategies Cont.

Funding Strategy	What and How?	Action Strategies This Funding Can Improve
BUSINESS-SPECIFIC FINANCIAL INCENTIVES		
Primary Jobs Incentive	The City offers a financial incentive for businesses that create quality new jobs. The incentive provides up to 100% reimbursement of construction-related sales tax related to a project and public infrastructure improvements, offsets impact fees, and costs of job training. This is a city-wide program applicable to all portions of the ETOD Corridor.	#2 #8
Site-specific Tax Incentive	This City program is for retail projects that would not otherwise locate in the City of Tucson that can demonstrate significant and quantifiable economic benefits. The city can apply project-generated tax revenue to qualifying public expenses such as public infrastructure and employee job training. This tool may be applicable to an expansion of in-fill specialty retail at Tucson Mall.	#2
REGIONAL FUNDING PROGRAMS		
RTA Next	This is a draft 20-year multimodal transportation plan that will be dependent on voters approving the plan and the continuation of the half-cent regional sales tax for another 20-year period. It has been identified by City staff as the source of local funds for the Stone Avenue BRT project to provide local match for an FTA Small Starts capital grant application. The City’s prioritized project list includes number of multimodal transportation safety and accessibility investments throughout the corridor. While several significant issues have been raised by the city regarding the draft plan, RTA Next is a potential source of funding for transportation improvements in the corridor.	#6 #7 #9
STATE FUNDING PROGRAMS		
Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) 12.6	This is a state transportation funding by statute from a variety of dedicated sources that is suballocated to the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) area for use on arterial road/highway projects. There is an estimated \$23,000,000 available in 2024 with that amount increasing incrementally each year. The Tucson and Pima County can request up to three projects on a biennial basis and while this is a modest funding source, it could provide partial funding for arterial street projects in the corridor.	#7 #9 #10



Funding Strategies Cont.

Funding Strategy	What and How?	Action Strategies This Funding Can Improve
<b>Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) 2.6</b>	This is state transportation funding by policy from the same array of dedicated sources that is suballocated to the PAG area for use on state-controlled arterial roads and highways. In the Norte-Sur study area, Oracle Road north of Miracle Mile and Miracle mile are eligible for this funding source because HURF 2.6 requires the city to partner with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) on the identification and submission of projects and for all funds to be spent on planning, design, and construction of projects on the state-managed system of arterial roads and highways.	#9
AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS		
<b>Arizona Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)</b>	The Arizona Department of Housing (ADH) manages the federal LIHTC program and credits are awarded to specific development projects pursuant to the ADH's LIHTC Qualified Allocation Plan. The State Housing Trust Fund makes additional program funds available to provide gap financing for projects awarded 4% and 9% LIHTCs.	#4
<b>Arizona Industrial Development Authority (IDA)</b>	The Arizona IDA serves as a conduit issuer of municipal revenue bonds with the ability to assist private and public borrowers. IDA issued bonds can reduce the borrowing cost for projects and the proceeds of these bonds may be exempt from federal income taxation and for projects in Arizona, from state income taxation. IDA's program has been used to fund a variety of affordable housing, education, health care and commercial projects around the state.	#4 #5
SELECT FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS		
<b>The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)</b>	Also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the IIJA provides multi-year funding for federal transportation programs through September 2026. Listed below are a few of the programs in the bill that are transportation infrastructure focused and relevant to Tucson and the Norte-Sur Corridor.	See programs below.
<b>Surface Transportation Program/Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)</b>	As part of the Federal Aid Highway Program (FAHP) funded by the latest multi-year infrastructure bill, the Federal Highway Program has a Surface Transportation Block Grant Program that allocates funding to states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for transportation capital projects. At the state level, Arizona received over \$263 million in STBG funds in FY24. The process for allocating these funds to localities that make up PAG follows the same framework as for the allocation of state HURF 12.6% funds. This is a viable source of funding for one or more transportation projects in the Norte Sur Corridor.	#7 #8 #9

# Funding Strategies Cont.

Funding Strategy	What and How?	Action Strategies This Funding Can Improve
<i>Safe routes for All Program (SS4A)</i>	This is a new competitive safety program that provides approximately \$1 billion per year for safety planning and safety program implementation funds with the overall objective of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries in the public right-of-way. This is a viable source for safety projects in the corridor that aim to address the large number of high injury network corridors within Norte-Sur.	#7 #9
<i>Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)</i>	As part of the Federal Highway Program (FAHP), HSIP allocates highway safety improvement funds to states. Given that the Tucson Norte-Sur Corridor has a number of arterial streets and intersections in the City’s high injury network, projects could be advanced that meet the state’s program criteria.	#7 #9
<i>Rebuilding American Infrastructure w/ Sustainability &amp; Equity (RAISE)</i>	This is a national, competitive grant program with a grant award cap of \$25 million and a total of \$1.4 billion available for awards in the 2024 funding cycle. While this program requires a 20% local match, the corridor’s demographic characteristics, level of economic need, and major safety and accessibility issues, a well-defined project application could be competitive for program funding.	#6 #8 #9 #10
<i>Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) 49</i>	This funding source authorizes borrowing up to 49% of eligible project costs to help close project funding gaps with low-cost, long-term financing to support the implementation of infrastructure projects. This funding program may be appropriate for a large-scale corridor project where other local, regional, state and federal programs cannot provide sufficient funding.	#2 #4 #6 #8 #9
<i>Federal Transit Administration Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program</i>	This program provides funding through a competitive allocation process to states and transit agencies to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities. Major upgrades to the three major bus transit transfer centers, Tohono Tadaí, Ronstadt, and Roy Laos Transit Center, would likely qualify for this competitive grant program.	#8
FEDERAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING PROGRAMS		
<i>Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)</i>	This program provides tax incentives to encourage developers to create affordable housing. The two types of credits available, 4% and 9%, raises about 30% and 70%, respectively, of the cost of affordable housing development. This tool could be useful in advancing affordable housing development in the Norte-Sur Corridor.	#2 #4



# Summary

The information presented here is a synopsis of work completed over the past 2+ years as part of the FTA Pilot grant for equitable Transit Oriented Development. However, while the grant funding is for a set period of time, the work to ensure that transportation improvements, housing, and land use are coordinated and meet the needs of current residents and businesses continues.

The success of this plan will depend on:

- 1 **The ability for continuous and diverse stakeholder input at every stage of planning, design, and implementation of each project within the Norte-Sur study area.**
- 2 **Leadership that instills trust in the planning process by moving forward on ideas included here as a result of extensive community input.**
- 3 **A sense of community ownership in the type of development and transportation project that this plan believes is possible.**

The full report contains the detailed input received, the full analysis, and more than 50 specific recommendations. **The 10 Action Strategies listed here are meant to provide a focal point and framework for ideas to carry forward into the next phase of planning and design.** The funding strategies will make this work feasible. And in some cases, the work has already started. With these recommendations, we can move forward as a community that values equitable access to transportation and builds thriving neighborhoods.

