

Recommendations for the Silverbell Corridor

Silverbell Action Coalition -April 14, 2005

Debbie Hecht, spokesperson
743-9494
(as of 7.09 at 808-989-3222)

Mission Statement: To preserve and improve the Silverbell Road area ecology, ensure public safety and enhance residents' quality of life, while providing necessary transportation and other infrastructure improvements for well-planned development from Grant Road to Avra Valley Road over the next 20 years.

Objective

The Silverbell Action Coalition (SAC) recommends that the entire Santa Cruz River be designated as a Conservation Zone, and that all of the following recommendations occur in the most environmentally sensitive manner. SAC recommends that all Silverbell Road improvements adhere to the Scenic Roadway standards and that the rural, country character that makes this area unique be retained. The Santa Cruz River Riparian Habitat should be improved and enhanced by designating untouched open space and environmentally sensitive park uses along the Santa Cruz River.

Traffic

1. **Ensure that the Silverbell Road Plan is included in the Regional Transportation Authority Plan and sources of funding are secured for the future. Ask for a representative from SAC to be appointed to the RTA Citizens Committee.**
2. **Move traffic off Silverbell to I-10 by improving east -west connector streets and bridges.**
3. **Widen Silverbell Road between Grant and Goret to 2 lanes in both directions, with turning bays.**
4. **Install a traffic light at Goret and Silverbell Road. It has been suggested that the County do this and the City reimburse the County over 3 years, or an improvement district be formed.**
5. **Require all ingress and egress from the 143 -lot Estes subdivision and the 150-lot Silverbell/ H.U.D. subdivision to funnel through the traffic light controlled intersection at Goret and Silverbell.**
6. **Replace the bridge over the Santa Cruz River at Sunset Road to divert traffic to I-10.**
7. **Add 2 turn lanes on the eastbound lane of El Camino del Cerro at I-10 to turn south onto the Frontage Road or freeway.**
8. **Install northbound right hand turn lanes at the entrances to the Silverbell Golf Course and Columbus Park.**
9. **Install southbound right hand turn lanes at Placita Sombra Chula and Neosha.**
10. **Redesign two dangerous intersections for better visibility: Goret/Silverbell and Neosha/Silverbell.**
11. **When travelling north on Silverbell, provide a left hand turn signal at Sweetwater for school traffic.**
12. **Provide all weather crossings at 8 dips along Silverbell Road, when it is improved.**
13. **Provide bus turn-outs so that traffic is not impeded at bus stops on Silverbell and Grant.**
14. **Conduct traffic counts along Silverbell Road to determine each jurisdiction's use every year when school is in session.**
15. **Suspend all building permits if another traffic death occurs or when the car trips per day exceed Silverbell Road's traffic capacity of 19,000 car trips per day, then all building and grading permits shall be suspended until the prevailing jurisdictions agree to a Silverbell Corridor transportation solution.**
16. **Start Pima Association of Governments Silverbell Corridor Study immediately.**
17. **Preserve the scenic quality of Silverbell Road with densely landscaped 60+ foot wide buffers with intermittent undisturbed open space. Silverbell is a designated scenic roadway.**
18. **Start an express bus route along I-10 from Cortaro Farms Road to downtown with stops at Ina Road, Camino del Cerro and Grant Roads with parking lots provided for commuters, before I-10 widening starts.**
19. **Build multi-use trails (paved surfaces for bicycles and decomposed granite for walking separated by curbs) on the east side of Silverbell road from Grant to Ina**
20. **Widen El Camino del Cerro from Silverbell to I – 10 to 2 lanes in either direction with 2 turn lanes onto I -10 as Columbus Park develops and population increases.**
21. **Widen the Camino del Cerro/ I-10 underpass to 2 lanes each way with turning bays.**
22. **Install turn lanes and increase visibility at County intersections of Silverbell and Orange Grove, Abington, De Green, Desert Foothills, Lost Horizon and Hills of Gold before I-10 widening starts.**

23. Construct an additional Santa Cruz River crossing and access to I-10 between Camino del Cerro and Grant.

24. Install turn lanes and increase visibility at County intersections of Silverbell and Orange Grove, Abington, De Green, Desert Foothills, Lost Horizon and Hills of Gold before I-10 widening begins.

Land Use

1. Include all existing area plans, such as The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, all jurisdictions' Zoning and Comprehensive Land use plans and riparian restoration plans etc.
2. **Prohibit zoning for commercial development, and other uses (like churches) that increase traffic more than residential use along Silverbell, from Goret Road to Ina Road**
3. **Preserve all wash crossings as usable wildlife corridors.**
4. **Preserve FEMA 100-year floodplains and Section 404 jurisdictional washes along the Silverbell Corridor. There are eight at-grade dip crossings of FEMA floodplains between Camino del Cerro and Cortaro Farms Road. The FEMA floodplain is very wide along the Santa Cruz River from Camino del Cerro to Cortaro Farms Road and land is best used as park property.**
5. **Conservation Subdivisions and Cluster Development- Treat Conservation Subdivisions and Cluster Development as a re-zoning, when lots are clustered, because of the potential for housing density increases next to older, established, rural neighborhoods. Neighbors within 1,000 feet of these subdivisions should be given notice regarding this re-zoning.**
6. **The Santa Cruz River Park:**
 - **Convey all City, County and Marana owned land between Silverbell Road and the Santa Cruz River into the Santa Cruz River Park, from downtown Tucson to Marana, including the 85 acre property leased by the Border Patrol from the City of Tucson, Columbus Park with the 55 acres to the north and the entire Silverbell Golf Course.**
 - **Establish and link bicycle paths and equestrian trails along the Santa Cruz River Park with the Rillito River Park and the El Paso & Southwestern Greenway pedestrian and biking trails.**
 - **Establish and link equestrian trails to the Equestrian staging area at Columbus Park.**
 - **Preserve the 140 + acres that City of Tucson Council members voted to set aside for open Space by designating those lands as "Conservation Easements" assuring residents that this property will remain as undisturbed open space in perpetuity and not be subject to re-zonings.**
 - **Preserve archaeological sites**
 - **Build an aquatic center and library.**

Impact Fees

1. **Initiate the Silverbell Corridor Impact Fee Area to gather funds for traffic needs, including alternate transportation (bike lanes, buses, etc.) so existing residents won't bear the costs of improvements needed by new development. The Impact Fee Area would include all new development within a 2 - mile radius that adds traffic to Silverbell Road.**
2. **Require Developers to pay for road widening, environmental testing (by an uninvolved 3rd party), contribute to schools, parks and other infrastructure for the areas of Silverbell Road affected by their developments.**

Environmental Contamination

1. **Test soils before and after fill is added at proposed development sites such as the Estes subdivision and the Silverbell H.U.D. subdivision, because of adjacent landfills, migrating methane gas and contamination at the existing Silver Creek subdivision.**
2. **Recommend testing for all of the 10 dumpsites along the Santa Cruz by ADEQ.**

- 3. Recommend that the State Department of Real Estate institute a new Environmental Disclosure Clause on Subdivision Reports whereby the proximity of landfills, pipelines, high tension power lines or any other potential health hazards from environmental contamination that are within 1,000 feet to**

1/2 mile of the subdivision, be disclosed on the first page of the State of Arizona Subdivision Report in bold lettering and that potential buyers be required to sign or initial this disclosure clause. (see supporting information below)

Supporting Information

Background- Concerned citizens united to discuss Silverbell Road as a result of heavy development, 3 traffic fatalities in 2004 and increased traffic along the Silverbell Corridor. Our group asked Staff from the City of Tucson, Marana, Pima County, PAG and Arizona Department of Transportation to educate us as to their plans for Silverbell Road. We included at least 18 homeowner's groups in this process and have done 3 mailings to 400+ area residents to keep people informed. We have been meeting since November 2004 to formulate these recommendations.

Silverbell Road is a 2 -lane country road with no current plans for widening between Grant and Ina Roads. To reach the City of Tucson and cross the Santa Cruz River, all westside residents must use or cross Silverbell Road. There are only 4 bridge crossings on the 7.5-mile stretch between Cortaro Farms Road and Grant Road. Marana has started widening Silverbell from Ina to Cortaro Farms Road and has implemented an impact fee program.

Traffic capacity- Traffic engineers state that each new home adds 10 car trips per day. The capacity of 2 -lane Silverbell Road is 19,000 car trips per day. The traffic count between Grant and Goret is 20,000 car trips per day. The City has permitted 490 new homes and there are 407 more homes to be built in the area by the end of '05. Twenty additional acres have been sold south of Goret which will support an additional 100 homes. Traffic counts will increase to over 27,000 and the City has no plans to widen Silverbell. It is important to know traffic counts for each mile of Silverbell Road. Each jurisdiction should conduct traffic counts along each mile of Silverbell Road, each year, to determine each jurisdiction's use when school is in session. If another traffic death occurs, or when the car trips per day exceed Silverbell Road's traffic capacity of 19,000, then all building and grading permits shall be suspended until the prevailing jurisdictions agree to a Silverbell Corridor transportation solution. There were 3 fatal traffic accidents on Silverbell between Camino del Cerro and Grant in 2004, and 94 collisions occurred in 2003. When accidents occur on I-10, traffic is diverted to Silverbell Road. If traffic capacity is exceeded during the I-10 widening, ADOT should help fund other transportation improvements along the Silverbell Corridor, before widening Silverbell, and to get traffic off of Silverbell. Before I-10 widening starts, the improvements would include extra turning lanes off of Camino del Cerro, widening Camino del Cerro to 2 lanes in each direction, and an express bus route along I-10 from Cortaro Farms Road to downtown with stops at Ina Road, Camino del Cerro and Grant Roads with parking lots provided for commuters.

Land Use- Over the past few years, the City of Tucson has approved small lot subdivisions resulting in 543 new homes. There are 5 new subdivisions in Development Services plan check now, which will yield 381 new homes. The Estes subdivision (143 homes), the Silverbell H.U.D. subdivision (150 homes), a subdivision on Goret West of Silverbell, (14 lots), Gracious Estates north of Camino del Cerro and West of Silverbell (30 lots) and the Silverbell Trails property (44 lots). The Border Patrol Property of 85 acres is owned by the City of Tucson and is on a month-to-month lease. This property could support 425 homes additional homes. Pima County estimates that if all existing vacant land will be built out at current zoning, there will be an additional 2,700 homes and 27,000 car trips per day. A church is proposed near the corner of Camino del Cerro that has 85 parking spaces and is expected to be used daily. Although church properties are not a recognized commercial use, the traffic generated is similar to commercial properties. There should be no commercial development along Silverbell from Goret Road to Ina Road. Any use that will increase traffic, greater than residential development, should be considered as commercial use. Residential development permits should not be issued when Silverbell Road's traffic capacity exceeds 19,000 car trips per day.

Conservation easements - Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan has implemented the use of Conservation Easements to preserve Open Space. The City of Tucson voted in early 2005 to preserve 140

acres on the westside of Silverbell as Open Space. The use of Conservation Easements would preserve this property in perpetuity for future residents and ensure that these properties would not be vulnerable to future rezonings.

Impact fees and Infrastructure Construction Tax-If Silverbell Road needs to be improved, due to increased traffic from new development, existing property owners should not have to bear this expense. Any development that would add traffic should pay the cost to improve Silverbell Road or pay for other transportation solutions that reduce traffic on Silverbell. Developers should pay for road improvements, environmental testing (by an uninvolved 3rd party) and other infrastructure including parks, an aquatic center, library and schools for the areas of Silverbell Road that their developments affect. Marana uses a Construction Tax paid by Developers to help pay for other infrastructure needs. Developers adjacent to Silverbell need to pay to improve the road and pay a per lot fee. The Silverbell Corridor Impact Fee Area should be initiated to gather funds for traffic needs, including alternate transportation (bike lanes, buses) so existing residents won't bear the costs of improvements needed by new development. The Impact Fee Area would include all new development within a 2 mile radius that adds traffic to Silverbell Road. Impact fees from Westside properties would be reserved for Silverbell Road area improvements only, and not go into the General fund. Impact fees need to be implemented at the time that building permits are received.

Environmental Concerns: There are 6 abandoned landfills along the Santa Cruz River between Grant and Twin Peaks Road. Development in these areas need testing by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality before grading begins and after fill is brought in to bring the property out of the floodplain. A 31-acre City of Tucson dumpsite exists near Silverbell Golf Course, the Border Patrol property and the proposed Estes and Silverbell H.U.D. subdivisions. There are two garbage dumpsites, 12 monitoring wells and 1 monitoring station on the Border Patrol property. An area used as a target practice range (with potential lead contamination) separates two 20-foot deep cells. Migrating methane from one of these dumpsites has killed grass on the Silverbell golf course. A May of 1995, Pima Association of Governments Report contains the following information about the Silverbell/ Jail Annex Landfill: " The City of Tucson operated the Silverbell/Jail Annex Landfill, which received municipal solid waste from city -owned garbage trucks, from 1966 to 1975 or 1977; the south cell is vacant, while the north cell underlies the Silverbell golf course. An area used as a target practice range by the Police Academy separates the two cells, which total approximately 31 acres. This landfill is within the Miracle Mile Interchange Area, which is a State Superfund site with VOC-contaminated groundwater." The Estes subdivision and the Silverbell HUD properties will also be built adjacent to the Silver Creek Neighbourhood "Brownfield" area. Volatile Organic Compounds (Vic's) at this site include TCE, PCE AND cis-1,2, DCE, in addition to vinyl chloride. These contaminants are of concern because they have contaminated the groundwater. The Silver Creek subdivision was also the site of a gasoline spill caused when the Kinder-Morgan pipeline ruptured during the summer of 2003. Five homes in the area were abandoned due to contamination. The Kinder Morgan Company was recently fined. Aging sewer lines run through the adjacent Border Patrol property. Sewer lines in this area have ruptured and there are no plans to revitalize these sewer mains. This property is within 1 mile of an EPA superfund site at El Camino del Cerro and the Santa Cruz River. W.A.P.A. high-tension power lines run the length of the east boundary of the Estes and Silverbell H.U.D. Subdivisions. These power lines are suspected to create magnetic fields that cause health problems in elderly people and young children.

Park expansion- The City, County and Marana own much of the property between Silverbell and the Santa Cruz River between Grant and Twin Peaks Road. Most of this property is questionable for development because of the FEMA floodplain, Section 404 jurisdictional washes, floodplain, W.A.P.A high-tension power lines, dumpsites and archaeological sites, but it represents a wonderful opportunity for parklands. All of this property could be used as the Santa Cruz Park, connecting with and similar to the Rillito River Park. The park should include Columbus Park and the 55 acres the City added to Columbus Park in 2004 and the 85-acre Border Patrol Property. This is currently leased to the Border Patrol by the City of Tucson and should also become part of this park system when the lease is vacated. The City of Tucson recently adopted the Columbus Park Plan, which was formulated with the help of Pima County Parks and Natural Resources and area stakeholders. Several of the park components will be built with 1997 Bond funds, including an equestrian Staging area, tennis courts, several ball fields, dog park and dog showing and agility fields. Archaeological studies have been completed and numerous significant ancient sites have been discovered along the Santa Cruz River. It is important to protect the natural and beneficial functions of the FEMA floodplains and Section 404 jurisdictional washes to reduce flooding elsewhere, and to protect riparian habitat and provide wildlife

corridors. Equestrian, hiking and bike trails could connect to the equestrian staging area at Columbus Park, the Juan Batista DeAnza Trail and the Rillito River Park trails. These could provide a safe (off of the streets), alternate transportation route to downtown and the east side for Westside residents. Pima County and the Army Corps of Engineers already have three studies underway to improve the Santa Cruz River Park and trail system: Paseo de las Iglesias, El Rio Medio, and Tres Rios del Norte Feasibility Studies.