Tucson Modern Streetcar Land Use and Development Implementation Plan

Executive Summary and Action Plan
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Executive Summary and Action Plan

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In the fall of 2012, The Pima Association of Governments (PAG) and the City of Tucson executed companion contracts with the team of The Planning Center/Poster Frost Mirto to develop a community consensus plan to facilitate the appropriate intensification of transit-oriented development (TOD) within ¼-mile radius of the Tucson Modern Streetcar alignment. The City of Tucson, the RTA, the State of Arizona, and the US Federal Transit Authority have invested $192 million in a 3.9-mile long inner-city Tucson streetcar line. To take full advantage of that transportation investment, PAG and the City of Tucson seek to address barriers, gaps, and needed refinements in current planning, zoning, and design guidelines, to develop innovative and solution-oriented new development along the streetcar line.

Plan Elements


During the week of January 14 – 20, 2014, the Streetcar Land Use and Development Implementation Plan (SLUP) Team conducted an extensive community-based, participatory Charrette (an intensive/interactive community design and planning process) on the second floor of the Historic Train Depot which culminated in a final presentation at the Rialto Theater (Final PowerPoint presentation). In preparation for the Charrette and during the six-day process, the team conducted approximately 50 meetings, resulting in a total attendance of almost 650. Approximately 250 people attended the final presentation. The conclusions of the Charrette were the following:

- “Our community is supportive of higher intensity land uses along the streetcar corridor as long as it is done right.”
- “Done right” needs to include the following:
  - Heritage, culture, and art - in this place - should be the foundation for all decisions.
  - The public realm of our urban community should be our living streets.
  - A new approach to the car should use incentives to reduce traffic, provide adequate parking where needed, and, should support a greater range of transportation choices.
  - Each new project should contribute to a healthy mix of uses.
  - Our poor pedestrian system must be continuous, attractive, comfortable, safe, shaded, and well-lit.
  - Development should be a transparent process. All stakeholders should be able to participate.
  - For cycling to work for more people, we will need a continuous network of safe routes, fewer conflicts, and abundant, well-located bicycle parking.
  - There should be a healthy mix of housing by type, density, age-demographic, and income. Workforce housing should be protected and new housing promoted.
  - The Streetcar should be a major economic stimulus for our community with arts, culture, and a sense of place at the heart. Promote higher-paying home-grown jobs.
The Streetcar alignment runs through eight distinct character areas each with its own distinct and individualized vision for the future.
- The Western Terminus - Heritage Gateway - Tucson Origins
- Downtown Cultural/Convention District
- Downtown Central Business District
- Downtown Entertainment District
- Fourth Avenue Business District
- University Boulevard
- Main Gate District
- Eastern Terminus – Innovation Gateway
Exhibit 4 Character Areas

Legend
- Major Streets
- Interstate 10
- Tucson Modern Streetcar Line
- Tucson Modern Streetcar Stops
- Quarter-Mile Focus Area

Character Areas
- Eastern Terminus
- Main Gate
- Central Segment
- Downtown Entertainment District
- Downtown Cultural/Convention District
- Western Terminus

B. Analysis and Diagnostic Document

At the initial stages of the SLUP, a detailed and extensive Analysis and Diagnostic document was prepared that set the factual basis for future planning. The following quote, guided by the Charrette, set the basis for the research and analysis:

The Tucson Modern Streetcar is a multidimensional corridor. Starting at Tucson’s Origins, the Heritage Gateway, it moves towards the University of Arizona, the Innovation Gateway, connecting our past with our future. The modern streetcar travels in space and time from 4000-year-old Tucson’s birthplace, through an 18th century mission complex, by 19th century Barrios, through a burgeoning Downtown, up eclectic 4th Avenue, across University Boulevard traversing early 20th century historic neighborhoods and finally arriving at the University of Arizona, a center for exploration, discovery, and innovation. The streetcar line links Tucson’s rich culture through time and space. It connects the community, offering a portal to the past, the wisdom of our heritage, and a window into our sustainable future. It links the built environment with the lush Sonoran desert, enhancing access to employment, a diversity of housing choices, commerce, government, entertainment, and education and providing opportunities for heritage tourism, and eco-tourism while respecting the character and historic relevance of adjacent neighborhoods. This Land Use and Development Implementation Plan guides future development to create a vibrant, viable, sustainable, healthy, compatible, walkable, bikable, ridable, and drivable corridor with a strong Tucson identity, character and sense of place.

In preparation for the Design Charrette, the team produced a thorough analysis of the background and existing conditions of the overall streetcar route, including specific analysis of each of the subareas:

- **Tucson Streetcar Corridor Introduction and Overview**
- **Analysis and Recommendations for Central Segment Diagnostic Report**
- **Transportation Analysis and Recommendations for Main Gate West University Neighborhood Plan (WUNP) Transition Area Diagnostic Report**
- **Analysis and Recommendations for Western Terminus and Surroundings Diagnostic Report**
- **Analysis and Recommendations for Eastern Area Terminus and Surroundings (Speedway Boulevard and Campbell Avenue) Diagnostic Report**

As a result of this analysis and the input from key stakeholders and through the Charrette process, the team distilled the following reports to outline the recommended strategies, which are outlined in the following documents:

- **Supplemental Strategies (Throughout Study Area) Diagnostic Report**
  - a. Marketing Element
  - b. Housing Element
Implementation Strategies
   c. Overall Streetcar Corridor
   d. By Character Area

**Action Plan by Geographic Area**

1. **Origins (Western Terminus) Character Area**
   The Origins (Western Terminus) Character Area of the Streetcar route has been preceded by extensive planning work both at the grassroots level and the professional level. Future land use decisions should consider the [Menlo Park Position Paper](#) (Revised December 4, 2012) and [Origins Heritage Park Plan](#).

   The current issues for this Character Area are:
   - Inappropriate zoning (I-1) in some locations
   - Large tracts of City-owned property.
   - Sign code is restrictive and does not allow for the types of signs desirable in a pedestrian urban environment.
   - The need to support the ongoing Gadsden development north of Cushing Street
   - An uncertain market demand south of Cushing Street.

   It is recommended that:
   - The zoning issues north and south of Cushing Street be resolved as part of the revisions to the Infill Incentive District.
   - The use of City of Tucson land be resolved and implemented through an RFP for the City-owned lots south of Cushing, using the Origins Heritage Park Plan for the lot footprints and insuring extensive community involvement in the RFP process.
   - The quality control of new development south of Cushing Street should be implemented through well-structured development agreements.

2. **Downtown Character Area** (Downtown Cultural/Convention District, Downtown Central Business District, Downtown Entertainment District)

   The Downtown Character Area has the least number of obstacles to development of any area in Streetcar alignment. The Downtown Central Business District, Downtown Entertainment District has several vacant parcels where development is waiting for the demand generated by the Streetcar. The economics of this development is still marginal, so incentives like GPLET will still play an important role.

   - The zoning afforded by the Downtown Core of the Infill Incentive District is adequate and generally does not present an obstacle to development.
   - The overlays should be simplified, particularly merging the IID Downtown Core with the Rio Nuevo District.
   - Continue to utilize the Downtown Tucson Partnership for lot-by-lot development facilitator to eliminate or reduce barriers to development.
3. **Fourth Avenue Business District Character Area**

Many of the Modern Streetcar development concerns expressed in the Charrette and the subsequent public meetings and presentations had been addressed by the *Downtown Links Urban Overlay District (DL-UOD)* proposal. Adoption of this proposed overlay was put on hold, but has recently been resumed. Concerns about the DL-UOD and the IID that were expressed by councilmembers and some members of the public included:

- No process for design review.
- No resolution to the design and funding of streetscapes.
- No consensus resolution to the parking concerns, policy and funding.
- Addition of another overlay to an already complex regulatory environment.

The solution supported by Mayor and Council is to pursue an integrating/simplifying approach substantially revising the overall IID regulations and consolidating these overlays to reduce redundancy and complexity among the stakeholders, neighborhoods, and developers. To accomplish this, the former DL-UOD boundaries will be expanded incorporating the basic intent of DLUOD provisions and merged into the revised IID as a third sub-district (Sub-District #1 = Greater IID, Sub-District #2 = Downtown Core, Sub-District #3 = Downtown Links). Downtown Links will become part of an improved IID.

The goals of context-appropriate Transit-Oriented Development would be incentivized through this new approach. This new Downtown Links sub-district of the IID will be implemented along with modifications to the Greater IID through a very public process in the fall of 2014.
4. **University Boulevard Character Area**

The Modern Streetcar runs along University Boulevard through the historic West University Neighborhood. This area is both listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a local historic district (HPZ), protected by stringent design and development guidelines. With a few exceptions, development in this area is expected to be limited. Remaining issues include:

- Currently, the north end of 4th Avenue south of University Boulevard is both in the Infill Incentive District and the Historic Preservation Zone. The City has clarified that the provisions of the HPZ supersede the IID when those regulations are more stringent. This will be further clarified in the revisions to the IID and the language of the Downtown Links Sub-District of the IID.
- Several key lots in and around the intersection of University Boulevard, within the HPZ and with large amounts of surface parking, are likely candidates for more intense development. It is recommended that these lots either follow the requirements of the HPZ as currently written or propose revised zoning with a PAD rezoning. A PAD will allow a more open and clear process of concept development and negotiation among City staff, the neighborhood, and the developer in which trade-offs and commitments can be approved by the Mayor and Council and memorialized and enforced by conditions of zoning.
- Streetscape funding issues remain unresolved. A capital investment will be required to provide ADA access from the West University neighborhood to the Streetcar stops. Design of that streetscape is guided by the Streetscape Manual, created in conjunction with this study. (Link.)
- Within both the Fourth Avenue and University Boulevard character areas, there needs to be a comprehensive strategy for parking structures, on-street metered parking, and neighborhood protection within the context of Transit-Oriented development and policies of parking/auto travel demand reduction. ParkWise is the most appropriate agency to address these issues, and has begun the process with studies and communication with various stakeholders.

5. **Main Gate Character Area**

Given that Main Gate Urban Overlay District, which addresses zoning and land use issues, has recently been adopted for the Main Gate Character Area, the recommendations are primarily concerned with establishing standards for a cohesive walkable streetscape throughout the area and a coherent policy for parking and transportation issues. (See D. Streetscape Design Manual and E. Parking and Transportation below for more information and specific recommendations.)

6. **Eastern Terminus (Helen-Warren Station Area) Character Area**

The Streetcar Charrette vision stated:

“The Speedway and Campbell area develops as a UA eastern gateway, providing a high quality mixed-use urban environment that incorporates sustainable design elements, a network of urban open spaces, and access to variety of transportation modes.”

The Helen-Warren Station Area is a good candidate for more intensive development. If developed appropriately, this intersection could become a mixed-use Transit-Oriented hub with an urban
feel, while acting as an eastern gateway to the University of Arizona. Therefore, the recommendations for this area will focus on creating regulatory policy guidelines that would pave the way for the gateway vision that was articulated during the Streetcar Charrette.

Neither the current zoning nor the related Area Plan (*University Area Plan*) or Neighborhood Plans (*Sam Hughes Neighborhood Plan* and *Blenman Vista Neighborhood Plan*) fully support the development of the Speedway/Campbell area as a high-density mixed-use Transit-Oriented hub, particularly in the areas of building heights and land use intensity. It is recommended that ultimately the underlying Area and Neighborhood Plans be amended by a Special Policy Area that comprehensively addresses the potential zoning modifications at all four corners of the intersection. It should provide specific recommendations regarding height, setbacks, uses, parking, and design review process. This plan would then become the regulatory policy document, upon which developers can pursue their own PAD rezonings.

Currently, the developer of the northwest corner of this intersection has applied for a plan amendment reflecting this desire to develop a transit oriented project. The team understands and supports the developers need to move forward on their portion of the intersection, but recommends that the City continue to pursue the amendment for the other three corners to encourage future transit oriented redevelopment and reinforce this intersection as an opportunity area along the streetcar route. The requested plan amendment will serve as a pilot project, and lessons learned from this project will provide guidance for the possible future adoption of the Special Area Policy for the remaining three corners of the intersection. This potential amendment may allow the University of Arizona to consider more land use options as it updates the Campus Comprehensive Plan.

**C. Streetscape Design Manual**

From the public process and the team’s investigation, it was clear that the Modern Streetcar Route is in need of an overall vision for streetscape, including landscape, paving and furnishings. The Streetscape Design Manual is being created to address a coordinated effort towards streetscape design and elements within the public rights-of-way of the streetcar study area. The Streetscape Design manual is intended to be used by private development, public entities, and other organizations wishing to make improvements within public rights-of-way with the identified character areas. It will also function as a guiding document by which City staff will review submittal and proposals for such improvements. This document is considered a living document and it standards will be revised as necessary to reflect best management practices and implement newly acquired knowledge and technology related to the streetscape design and maintenance. Specifically, this manual’s intent is to provide the following:

- A clear and easy to follow program for streetscape improvement requirements;
- a document by which consultants and City staff can review proposed improvements and
- a method to guide the efficiency and quality of use of the public realm (streetscape within
  the public rights-of-way)
Major elements of the City of Tucson streetscape include: shade, water use (irrigation and drinking fountains), paving, pedestrian circulation, seating, and rainwater harvesting. Specific Guiding Principles include:

- **Character/History/Cultural Preservation** - Heritage, culture, and art should be considered and honored in the decisions related to streetscape improvements.
- **Streetscape Quality** - Streetscape element and materials must be well constructed, high quality and easy to maintain.
- **Pedestrian Connectivity** - Within the public ROW, the streetscape pedestrian system must be continuous, designed for pedestrian comfort, provide safe and easy access to streetcar, and complement adjoining buildings’ entries and uses.
- **Parking** - The streetscape must address the adjacent on-street parking as well as correspond to the existing and proposed off-street parking/multi-modal circulation.
- **Bicycle Infrastructure and Safety** - The streetscape must make cycling appeal to more riders by providing a continuous network of safe routes, fewer conflicts, and abundant, well-located bicycle parking.

This Streetscape manual provides guidance for the actual development, and is a good first step toward a streetcar-wide coordinated effort to achieve goals toward these principles. In developing and redeveloping portions of the streetcar study area, funding for these improvements has been done by the developer. However, in the case of areas such as West University that will not be redeveloped, alternate funding must be identified for streetscape improvements. Possible sources could include:

- City Partnerships and Funding Mechanisms for Streetscape
- City can pay for some improvements for the corridor, but nothing is currently funded
- City can facilitate formation of improvement districts to share in the costs and benefits
- Areas with vision in place likely to have priority on CDBGs
- Potential local partnerships for local improvements—merchant associations and institutions
- City can use new development to help pay for improvements
- Use of possible/proposed 2014 Pima County Pedestrian Bond

### D. Parking and Transportation

The [West University Area Plan Transition Area Transportation Diagnostic Report](#) focused on parking and multi-modal transportation issues in the Main Gate area. The team recommends focusing on multi-modal travel and mode shift, rather than trying to provide facilities for additional motor vehicles. However, parking is still an integral part of the area. Land owners in the area do not have plans to add parking at this time, but the public-use garages and several areas of on-street parking are available. In the residential areas off-campus, neighborhood parking permits are required in most areas, and it is not expected for that to change.

While there are no plans to add stand-alone parking structures, new student housing developments are required to have their own parking and to implement vehicular reduction programs. Although the developer will encourage tenants to leave their cars at home and make use of the car share vehicles, walking, cycling, or the Streetcar (all of which are or will be located within steps of the front door), the University of Arizona Parking and Transportation Services (PTS) has expressed concerns that tenants may use campus parking lots and/or garages for vehicle storage. As part of this study, the
consultant team conducted a transportation and parking survey of residents of Level. This study showed that some students are indeed parking overnight in campus parking lots/garages. And, recently, with regard to the MGD student housing project, the University has taken the position that it will not prioritize parking permits in its parking structures for the project’s residents.

Enforcement and monitoring will be crucial, particularly in the early years of the development and Streetcar operation. In addition, PTS may also consider differential parking rates for overnight parking or proximity to campus.

Further west in the West University character area, near 4th Avenue, it may be necessary to increase parking rates for on-street parking, particularly along the Streetcar line. This can help increase turnover, which is beneficial for businesses. In addition, higher parking rates can reduce demand and may further encourage travelers to use other methods of transportation. For example, if it becomes cheaper to park in a downtown garage and use the Streetcar than it is to park on the street or near campus, people may change their habits. Parking issues in this area will also be addressed as part of the parking requirements of the Downtown Links Sub-District of the Infill Incentive District. These alternative zoning parking requirements will emerge from the public process of the Infill Incentive District modifications in the Fall of 2014 in conjunction with City of Tucson ParkWise strategy development.

Within the Downtown character areas, parking issues such as parking structures, on-street metered parking, and neighborhood protection and parking/auto travel demand reduction policies are being addressed by the City of Tucson ParkWise. It will present a comprehensive strategy for

Many charrette participants discussed the need for a parking, specifically a Park and Ride facility at each of the termini. On the eastern terminus, land is at a premium and space is limited. Therefore, the team does not recommend a Park and Ride facility specifically for streetcar riders. Existing University of Arizona lots can be used for a fee during the day and many are free at night. Likewise, on the western terminus, future development will provide parking options, and developable land will be at a premium. However, in order to support and encourage early streetcar ridership, the City may want to consider a temporary Park and Ride facility on some of the vacant City-owned land as an interim use.

In addition to the above findings, the team recommends several specific measures that can be taken to enhance and promote pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as to increase transit ridership, while protecting neighborhoods from traffic intrusion.

### E. Affordable Housing

Housing is the principal building block of any community. Its physical design, its density, its cost, and its character contribute substantially to how a city functions. It is what strikes “closest to home.” People are justifiably sensitive to the characteristics of their own homes and the housing characteristics of their neighbors. Even though the Streetcar is not yet complete, there has been an upsurge of development along its spine. The new housing includes mostly student housing, with a small amount of affordable housing and a few market rate housing developments. What is determining the present mix of development is the current housing market.
The economics of housing is exerting a strong influence on the current development pattern. In general, Tucson rents are in a fairly compact range. Outside of student housing, residential rentals in the Streetcar Corridor cost approximately $1.00 - $1.15 per square foot per month as a base rent. In this market, those current rents will not support a loan necessary for new construction; i.e. purchase land, design the project, permit the project, pay appropriate development and impact fees and build it. Finally, these area rents have been relatively stagnant in the face of the six-year-old bursting of the housing bubble and the recession that has followed. Two recommendations flow from this:

- Market development will blossom when renters or owners recognize the premium location of the Streetcar line and are willing to pay premium rents and premium purchase prices for housing in this area. Recent projects like 1 East Broadway show substantial encouragement that this emerging market might be gaining strength. Developers and lenders need to be confident about this trend, before investment and capital will flow to this market the way it flowed to student housing in the last three years. Incentives (like GPLET, reduced parking requirements, and other regulatory facilitation) will still need to support this emerging development.

- The area is perfectly situated for the development of work-force housing in accordance with the vision that emerged in the Streetcar Charrette. The Arizona Department of Housing scoring criteria (QAP) for their best work-force housing subsidy program, LIHTC, heavily rewards housing located near a Streetcar. The City of Tucson should utilize City-owned land to partner with LIHTC developers to develop housing in substantial quantities along the Streetcar line. This will spur new housing development and act as a hedge against the potential negative effects of housing cost inflation on lower income individuals, families, and seniors.

More information on housing can be found in the Supplemental Strategies report.

F. Streetcar Umbrella Organization

Tucson has made a $196.6 million investment with the construction of the Streetcar. Across the country, it has been documented that the more that communities focus their efforts to promote development in a streetcar corridor, the more likely they are to leverage greater economic benefits. These economic benefits include added business and residential potential, development and property valuations.

Three organizations with similar transit corridor community-building priorities are described below and include examples from Mesa/Phoenix/Tempe, San Francisco and Minneapolis-St. Paul. A matrix summary of these organizations is included in Attachment B. Additional information can be found in the Supplemental Strategies report.

**Case 1: Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC), Mesa/Phoenix/Tempe, AZ**

[www.sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.com](http://www.sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.com)

This non-profit organization promotes equitable transit-oriented development along the Valley METRO light rail by catalyzing the development of affordable housing, community services, fresh
foods markets and other neighborhood assets. To launch the partnership, SCC attracted a combined $20 million of private investment from two national partners: Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) and Raza Development Fund (RDF). The policy focus of the Collaborative includes, Diverse Housing, Public Healthy transit-oriented communities, Community Development urban services, and Alternative Transportation systems.


Case 2: Great Communities Collaborative (GCC), San Francisco Bay Area, CA
www.greatcommunities.org
This entity brings together a diverse set of nonprofit and philanthropic partners focused on ensuring that at least half of the Bay Area’s new homes built by 2030 are in walkable communities in close proximity to public transit, at prices affordable to all. The GCC engages in two work areas: 1) site-specific engagement at 25 of the 75 Bay Area light rail station areas; 2) support in creating tools that citizens, elected officials, local government staffers, and other stakeholders can use to facilitate community involvement.

Case 3: Corridors of Opportunity Initiative (CoO), Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN
www.corridorsofopportunity.org
The mission of this organization is to support development along transit ways that advance sustainability, equity and economic competitiveness. The Initiative provides funds for:
- affordable housing and transit-oriented development (TOD) investments
- demonstration projects
- small business support
- corridor-wide investment initiatives
- community engagement
- technical studies

Funding for CoO initiatives comes from two national sources: a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and a package of loans and grants from Living Cities - a collaboration of 22 of the nation’s largest foundations and financial institutions which is managed by the Saint Paul Foundation.

To ensure the greatest return on the public’s significant investment in the Tucson Modern Streetcar, the following near-term actions are recommended.
Work with existing local non-profits, community groups, and public agencies to create an organization to promote investment in TMS Streetcar Districts modeled on Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC), Mesa/Phoenix/Tempe

Invite representatives from Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC) to present an all day workshop to familiarize local leaders with their structure and their recent successes.

G. Project Outcomes

In summary, the Streetcar Land Use has contributed to several processes which have led to, or will lead to legislative-ready processes. These include:

- Draft revisions to combine the Rio Nuevo Downtown overlay and the Infill Incentive District (which have been rolled into the overall IID revisions initiated by the Mayor and Council)
- Revival and revamp of the Downtown Links UOD process, which will now be included as a subdistrict within the IID
- Creation of a draft Streetscape Manual, which is currently being reviewed and refined by City of Tucson staff
- Draft of priorities and recommendations related to a special area policy for the Eastern terminus, which are currently being used in the review and evaluation of the plan amendment request for the proposed transit oriented development project at the northwest corner of Speedway and Campbell
- A parcel level review of potential development sites within the downtown
- Site inventory and analysis for the western terminus, as well as recommendations related to development and a potential RFP for City–owned land.
- Specific transportation recommendations intended to improve and enhance multi-modal transportation in the Main Gate area.

It is the Team’s hope that these processes and products will continue to simplify processes while encouraging further investment within the streetcar corridor.