



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 25, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Update – Old Tucson**

Attached is the latest required update describing the re-opening plans of Old Tucson under the awarded leaseholders, American Heritage Railroads.

Notable highlights in the report include:

- Purchase and upgrade of equipment on site, which will be needed to conduct, not only planned programming, but also filming, venue rental and guest requests for special event production.
- Technology and Infrastructure upgrades throughout the site to provide improved security, sound, lighting and production capabilities through the site. This includes multiple server rooms with full build-out, electronic ticket sales equipment and improvements to food, beverage, retail and staff offices.
- Hiring of local staff including a new General Manager, Site Facilities staff, security, HR, marketing, and production teams. A casting company was used to hire actors, performers, and musicians for planned programming. Over 400 applications for various positions were screened for positions both full and part-time for opening day of Nightfall on October 6, 2022.
- Opening production of Nightfall, a Halloween themed interactive presentation running over 16 days to be followed by a holiday themed old western experience through the end of the year. January will feature on-going programming of a western themed nature with additional concerts and live theater shows.
- Ticket sales and entry will be sold under a “timed entry” ticketing system, which will improve the customer experience at the facility and improve the traffic flow to and from the property.
- Additional on-site amenities for guests including expanded offerings of food and beverage, expanded retail and merchandise offerings including themed guest photography, movie heritage merchandise and branded items.

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- Out-reach to film and media companies for location filming at Old Tucson. Active discussions are being held with media companies, studios and production houses spurred by the interest in SB2156 and possible film incentives.

Another update from American Heritage Railroad will be forth-coming in January to provide additional updates and programming elements for the new year.

JKL/anc

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Diane Frisch, Director Attractions & Tourism



Semi-Annual Update

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

Re: Update of Old Tucson Operations

On April 5, 2022 the Pima County Board of Supervisors awarded the Operating Agreement for Old Tucson to American Heritage Railroad, (Old Tucson Entertainment). We immediately began the work of bringing our vision of the “new” Old Tucson to life. It is important to us that the transformation acknowledge and respect the decades of commitment to the unique heritage of the facility and its location in Tucson Mountain Park while bringing new ideas and events to the property. Our goal is to restore Old Tucson as a top attraction in Southern Arizona for both residents and visitors of our community.

Maintenance, Repairs, and Upgrades

While closed, Pima County has continued to invest and repair permanent infrastructure onsite while Old Tucson Entertainment has focused on needed upgrades and improvement of elements, which will drive attendance to the property and improve our ability to present new programming, provide support for filming and improve security and presentation while visitors are on-site. This includes:

- Two new maintenance vehicles
- Two new side by sides with dump beds
- One new passenger side by side
- One new forklift
- One new skid steer
- Three new attachments
- Variety of small to medium sized tools and equipment
- Variety of film/media production equipment
- New motors and repair of Train Set
- Upgraded parts for the Carousel



Technology Infrastructure

- Built multiple server rooms with full buildouts
- Acquired dozens of electronic pieces of equipment for ticket booths, offices, retail, and F&B locations.
- Upgraded two-way security/camera systems with multi-vision capabilities
- Engineered lighting and sound layout for the entire property (interior and exterior) to repair and upgrade existing infrastructure to today's standards and safety protocols. This includes creation of a multiple zone system for the facility with a central hub for management and controls. All technology onsite will be over internet protocol (IP) that staff can remote into from any location in the country.
- Over two miles of new Cat 6 cable to all buildings on site
- All new interior lighting and sound technology in the Grand Palace and Stage Two
- New mobile sound and lighting equipment for stages around property

Vegetation/Grounds Management

- Pruned all vegetation within the train loop on property
- Repair and add fencing around property and vegetation for safety of customers
- Create safe walking pathways around property that are outside of the Old Tucson streets
- Spread and compact dirt as needed to cover exposed conduit and ruts that have been caused by rain to create a safe walking and driving environment on the streets
- Disposed of old equipment, displays, and infrastructure that created a safety hazard.
- Upgrading and repairing ground lights around property
- Repairing and improving existing parking infrastructure, lighting, pathways, and fencing

Building Maintenance and Repairs

- Cleaned and inventoried all restaurants
- Repair walkways, broken windows, broken doors, and restrooms
- Upgraded all locks on interior and exterior doors
- Repair of exiting bleachers and seating areas around property
- Upgrade and repair Amphitheater and Rodeo grounds





Staffing

Over 99% of all staff onsite for Old Tucson is hired locally from Pima County with only 1% being contractors or hired by other companies. Old Tucson has received over 400 applications for the various positions that have been available and officially made offers to 77 applicants. A majority of the jobs available range from \$14-\$34 per hour with benefits varying based on position.



Old Tucson Programming

As seen on social media and throughout media outlets, Nightfall will be the opening event for Old Tucson on October 6th. Nightfall will celebrate its 30th anniversary at Old Tucson with a new look and feel, running through the month. After Nightfall, Old Tucson will present a Christmas event starting mid-November and going through Christmas day that will then lead to the start of the “Old Tucson Experience” in January. Tickets for these events will start at an estimated \$30 for Children/\$35 for Adults and will include all shows, attractions, and entertainment. There is a transition period from each event to complete the break down and setup for each theme. To start, each themed activity we will be open Thursday through Sunday. Once the total sales for these days hit a specific occupancy threshold, additional dates will be added. This is a strategic strategy to control overall operations and ticket booking patterns. This strategy has proven successful across multiple states and different industries. (See attached draft schedule). This schedule also allows time for filming and other media productions to occur during the week.

In addition to themed activities, Old Tucson is already working with promoters to bring different concerts and live theater to the facility. These events will be starting in the spring of 2023 and roll into the fall season. With the unique environment of Old Tucson and expected performers in review for the



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concert series, ticket pricing will start at an estimated \$49 for a unique experience and will include all shows, attractions, and entertainment. These concerts and live theatre entertainment will represent a variety of cultures and genres of music.

With a renewed focus on safety, customer service, and over- all experience, Old Tucson has developed a new timed entry ticketing system, parking/traffic pattern once onsite, and a limited occupancy to the facility. These improvements should enhance customer service issues that the facility and Kinney Road users have experienced in the past. The timed entry ticketing system being implemented will only allow a specific number of tickets to be sold at any time slot and only allow tickets to be redeemed at the specific time scheduled or after. This coincides with the improved parking control plan in which cars will be redirected to create a “consistent flow of travel” using both the primary and auxiliary lots. Once onsite, guest will also notice an improved experience due to creating a limitation of guests on property. The occupancy of Old Tucson will be initially cut by 40% from historic events and will increase by a specific number as needed to control guest experience, traffic, and safety.





Property Special Events

Old Tucson has had multiple requests for corporate events, bike/run races, and festivals. These activities are being scheduled and approved while space is available, and the financial metrics determine that the event will be successful. Space may be limited as filming requests on the property increase. There is currently one race, two festivals and four corporate events in review.

Educational, non-profit, and youth experiences are also in the process of being developed. These activities will tie into existing events and productions that are being performed. A baseline for how Old Tucson will be operating needs to be created and established first prior to implementing any additional activities. The goal is to have the first non-profit and youth experience occur in October.

Photography

A partnership has been established between Old Tucson and an experienced photography company that has established locations worldwide with theme parks, movie studios, aquariums, and other live entertainment locations. Old Tucson will have photo opportunities around the property from staged photos with backdrops to live photography with a professional. The cost to have your photos taken by a professional will be in addition to the ticket price.

Retail/F&B Development

The retail/F&B team has completed a deep dive into historical operations and planning. All three restaurants, two bars, four retail spaces, and up to six concession stands will be open on property. Old Tucson is still researching possibilities of how to open a restaurant to the public without having to pay full entrance admission. Restaurants on site will offer a variety of BBQ, American, and Mexican food. Four retail locations will have a mix of Old Tucson branded items, movie brands, heritage products from different cultures in the area, and name brands like Pendleton, Stetson, Cactus, and other popular products. All stores will be open when the facility is open.





Media Filming Productions

Media Production outreach began prior to being awarded the contract by Pima County. By being proactive, Old Tucson has been able to build a relationship with major production industries and create partnerships with producers, directors, and media production professionals that are actively managing and marketing Old Tucson as a filming location. With the passage of SB2156, the Film Incentives Film has renewed interest in filming in Arizona and competition for productions will be high. This development will significantly affect Pima County, the Tucson community, and Old Tucson's ability to capture the entirety of a media production.

Old Tucson is in discussions for the following media productions,

- Four movie productions
- Two documentaries
- One TV production
- One series

Each one of the above productions require specific sets/backdrops being built, multiple office spaces, a sound stage, and general storage. Old Tucson has already committed over a million dollars and space for backlot/set development, buildings for storage and prep, and office space for pre-postproduction management. We believe these commitments from Old Tucson have secured at least 3 of these productions. If all of the productions listed above go through, there will be filming on property of some type from late September 2022 through June 2023.

Wrap-Up

As seen from the above information, it takes a team, time, and resources to accomplish the revitalization of Old Tucson. Support from all parties involved is crucial to bring the property back to life and make Old Tucson a destination for both locals and tourists alike. The needs of this historic property are ever evolving and adapting. Old Tucson encourages questions and ideas from the Pima County Administration and continues to applaud Pima County on their dedication to reinvesting and saving this national treasure.



Draft Operating Schedule

August/September 2022: Media production review/Nightfall creation

October 2022: Nightfall- Live Rehearsal with County Employees, Non-Profits, and Employee Families. Live Dates 6,7,8,9,13,14,15,16,20,21,22,23,27,28,29,30- (Thursday-Sunday) (16 Days) Additional dates may be added based on sales

Media Productions

November 2022: Nightfall breakdown and Christmas event setup 1st-20th

Live Rehearsal with County Employees, Non-Profits, and Employee Families

Live Dates: 22,23,25,26- Live Christmas Event (4 Days)

Property rented out for special events

Media Productions

December 2022: Christmas Event Live Dates: 1,2,3,4,8,9,10,11,15,16,17,18,20,21,22,23,24,26,27 (Thursday-Sunday) (19 days) Additional dates may be added based on sales

Property rented out for special events

Media Productions

January- April 2023: Old Tucson Experience- (Thursday-Sunday) More dates may be added based on sales.

Property Rented out for Special events

Media Productions