

426.13 Southern Arizona Regional Orientation Center

Location: Five acres on the southwest corner of Cushing Street and Interstate 10 along the Santa Cruz River.

Scope: Create a Regional Orientation Center along the Santa Cruz River, including associated acquisition costs, environmental remediation, planning, design, and construction of a facility and related infrastructure that may include indoor space for exhibits, educational programs, auditorium, gift shop, offices, and outdoor cultural plaza. The Center will be built on a former landfill. Remediation costs are subject to change depending on the type and extent of materials found during excavation. Additionally, the City is required to remap the area for FEMA after the completion of the Cushing Street Bridge. The final remapping may delay the start of this project, and, if the site is deemed in a flood plain, additional fill will be needed. Project partners include the City of Tucson, the Rio Nuevo District Board, the University of Arizona, the Western National Parks Association, Visit Tucson, Friends of Tucson's Birthplace, and local stakeholders.

This project will require formal agreements to be executed between Pima County and the City of Tucson, and Pima County and the future operators, prior to starting the project.

Cost Estimates and Project Schedule by Major Task:

- Land Acquisition – Property to be deeded by the City of Tucson to Pima County at the time of a successful bond election.
- Planning and design - \$1.0 million at 30 months.
- Site remediation - \$2.0 million at 6 months.
- Infrastructure including utilities, access road, grading - \$3.0 million (City of Tucson to provide both potable and reclaimed water to site at their cost) at 6-12 months.
- Site Grading, fill, flood proofing, floodplain mapping with FEMA approval, and river improvements - \$2 million – up to 24 months.
- Up to a 30,000 square feet facility with state-of-the-art auditorium, information areas, retail space, offices and storage - \$8.5 million at 18 months.
- Large outdoor plaza to be integrated with the Santa Cruz River Park and Loop– \$1.0 million at 6 months.
- Interior costs - \$1.5 million (Western National Parks Association/Visit Tucson are providing an additional \$1.0 million in tenant improvements for interpretive retail operations, office fixtures, and other related costs) at 8 months.

Many of these elements will run concurrently.

Benefits: Development of a regional orientation center sited on the Santa Cruz River will help to advance efforts to enhance economic development in the community by revitalizing tourism in the region. Tourism studies show the natural environment, and the exploration of it and activities surrounding it, is Tucson's greatest attraction. The Center will promote local and regional tourism that sustains and enhances the geographical character of our region, its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of our residents.

- Information hub for regional attractions, natural area and heritage destinations, public outreach/education;
- Central location to market, coordinate and direct visitors/residents to area attractions;
- High visitation will benefit local restaurants, hotels and local businesses;

- High traffic will encourage future investments and reinvestment in the West side;
- Gateway to Tucson Origins Heritage Park commemorating the Birthplace of Tucson and educational programming about Stjuckshon, the San Agustin Mission and Gardens, and Tucson's history.

Total Cost Estimate: \$19,000,000

Bond Funding Estimate: \$18,000,000

Other Funding Estimate: \$1,000,000 from the Western National Parks Association/Visit Tucson for tenant improvements

Implementation Periods: 1, 2, 3

Project Manager: Pima County

Operator: Western National Parks Association

Regional Benefits: Will coalesce, promote and showcase the vast assortment of natural, cultural, scientific, and other attractions throughout Pima County and southern Arizona, which will enhance economic development and revitalize tourism throughout the region.