

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview



1.1 Introduction



This 2015 update of the Pima County Comprehensive Plan, Pima Prospers, is truly comprehensive in nature, incorporating many county services and recognizing the county's important role in the region. While maintaining a lens farther into the future, we actively look forward to the next 20 years, recognizing that in Arizona, county plans are required to be updated every ten years.

Pima Prospers is the product of an eighteen month planning process, including extensive community involvement, the engagement of all levels of government, the coordinated efforts of various County departments and the review and support of community leaders, residents, business owners and stakeholders, adjacent jurisdictions, and regional and state agencies.

Pima Prospers focuses intimately on our people and our communities, but also takes a broad view of the County's role in the region and the Sun Corridor, both in partnerships with others and in leadership roles in the services we provide. Pima Prospers is action oriented with a work program that will be administered, monitored and updated annually. **[Note: Appendix B contains the draft work program**

format. The final work program will be brought back to the Board for ratification after plan adoption, and will be annually monitored and updated as described later in the plan.]

With Pima Prospers, Pima County intends to align, to the maximum extent possible, its annual budget, capital improvement program, and future bonding programs with its comprehensive plan. County actions are taken in full consideration of the plan's vision, goals and themes. Over time, implementing policy documents of county agencies such as facilities expansion plans and development review manuals will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to ensure they are on the same universally shared path. By state law, decisions of land use change must and will be in conformance with the adopted plan. Like all plans, Pima Prospers is understood to be a *Living Document*, one that allows for change as it becomes necessary due to changing circumstances, extraordinary opportunities, or critical needs.

Why this plan and why now?



1.2 Looking Back...Looking Forward...

Pima Prospers recognizes and builds upon the work of the past as it looks into the future. It is the third Comprehensive plan update since our 1992 plan set the modern framework for our planning documents, incorporating many small area plans created over the years into one document. Key policies from those past plans show up in our 2015 plan. The 2001 Comprehensive Plan incorporated the internationally award-winning Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, which remains one of the key pillars of this plan update.

Pima Prospers is to be our plan looking ahead about 20 years into the future. It has been built on the ideas of hundreds of Pima County residents from Ajo to Vail, Catalina to Arivaca Junction, many business and citizen interests in our communities, representatives from the other jurisdictions in the region, and more than one hundred county staff members from many departments. It recognizes our role as a county in our region and in the multi-county region of the Sun Corridor. It recognizes that a significant change in our demographics is upon us and everyone who wants to will play a part in the development of its future. It is not meant to be a wish list of the impossible; rather it seeks efficiency and pragmatic improvement in delivering the county's mission in the 21st century. It is meant to be implementable and fiscally responsible.

1.3 What Has Changed and Will be Changing?

Who We Are and Who We Are Becoming



The 2010 U.S. Census has been completed, giving a more up-to-date count and characteristics of the existing population. From the census and other sources, we know our population is changing and certainly becoming more diversified. Our population is getting older with many wishing to age in place, while others want to downsize and move closer to the city center. Aging baby boomers do not necessarily want the same lifestyles as their parents enjoyed. Young people see themselves very differently than their baby boomer parents. A growing population means we are also having more kids. But upon graduation, many of our younger people seek their fortunes elsewhere. As a result, fewer of us proportionately will be of prime working age. Some families are getting smaller; one and two person households are not uncommon, but some are growing larger. The demand for multi-generational housing

is increasing, some by choice and some by necessity. We expect that as a county, our population will become increasingly Hispanic and will eventually change to where the majority is made up of ethnic and racial minorities. In most of these trends, we mirror nation-wide expectations.

Regional Vision

The Imagine Greater Tucson (IGT) regional vision was put forward after a lengthy and involved public process and was accepted by the Board of Supervisors in 2012. As the IGT regional vision does not specifically include the rural parts of the county, Pima Prospers reflects a modified version of the vision (See section 1.8). Further, it means we have in this plan provided adequate choices in housing and transportation where possible.

Renewed Focus on Economic Development

With the Board of Supervisors adopting the County Administrator's economic development strategic plan, this focus has intensified since the last Comprehensive Plan. The topic is now covered and interlinked with other elements in Pima Prospers.

Pima County is Climate Smart

As noted in Pima County's 2014 Sustainable Action Plan, the County has a large role to play in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adaptively planning to ensure economic, social, and environmental sustainability into the future under climate variability. The Sun Corridor, has in fact, been identified as a climate change hotspot* and as such, faces threats to infrastructure, food production, water supplies, human health, and the economy. Notably, the County's proactive efforts to reduce its emissions through renewable energy alternatives and efficiency improvements are important mitigation steps already underway. Successful planning, however, also requires addressing the "climate gap," or areas in which vulnerable regions or communities may be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts. Pima Prospers addresses these gaps and many other interrelated and interconnected needs associated with successful climate adaptation planning.

*"Climate Assessment of the Southwest": University of Arizona Institute of the Environment

Growing Smarter Scorecard

In 2009, as part of the implementation of Arizona's Growing Smarter Acts, Pima County like all jurisdictions filled out and submitted the Arizona Smart Growth Scorecard, a self-assessment questionnaire. While we did well overall, scoring 83 percent, there were areas in which we fell short of our 2001 plan. Examples include a lack of a tie between the Comprehensive Plan and capital improvement programming, not having a stated vision, addressing adaptive reuse of existing buildings to a much greater extent, metrics for tracking certain plan components, and how we addressed affordable housing, social services, air quality, and transit oriented development. For the most part these can be addressed in Pima Prospers. The Scorecard can be viewed at www.pimaprospers.com.

State of Arizona requirements

State law mandates that the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed and updated every ten years, and for a dynamic area like Pima County, that is a must. The State Legislature gave local governments some extra time and a revised deadline for adoption of July 2015. The County's current comprehensive plan was completed in 2001, with some major policy amendments such as on water supply, transfers of development rights, and military airports subsequently adopted. However, the plan does not meet the relatively new state of Arizona requirement to include an energy element, the addressing of sand and gravel resources, and specific language required by the Attorney General's office regarding the vicinity of military airports.

Land Use



Compared to past Pima County plans, proposed land use map changes are comparatively few, as for the most part, this plan focuses on regional infill and logical suburban expansion of some parts of the unincorporated area being or having been reviewed by municipalities in their planning. There is only modest room to grow in unincorporated Eastern Pima County without massive increases in new public infrastructure and/or the suburbanization of rural or open lands with significant physical constraints. The land use maps of the plan show changes in land use designation. The land use changes approved by the Board of Supervisors include some of the requests put forward by staff and by individual property owners, rectification of land use classifications for accuracy as to what is actually developed on the ground, and modifications due to the revised land use legend: (a) proposed modifications put forth by staff, (b) modifications resulting from staff analysis of special requests that were submitted prior to February, 2015, (c) modifications due to revised categories in the proposed land use legend described below, (d) corrections from the current plan dating from 2001, and (e) rectifications of land use classifications for accuracy as to what is actually developed on the ground.

Additionally, we have made several changes to the legend of land use categories on the land use maps, after due consideration, as necessary to bring the plan up-to-date with current trends and perceived need based on staff's and the public's observations. These include, among others, the return of "Resource Conservation" for conservation lands the county holds in fee; renaming what was "Resource Transition" to the more descriptive "Resource Sensitive"; splitting the wide ranging "Medium Intensity Urban" which has been 0-10 residences per acre plus office uses into two categories; reducing the number of commercial categories; and adding a Mixed Use commercial/residential/employment category.

Water

Pima County's available water supply is always a cause for great discussion. The county itself has not been a water provider, with residents and businesses accessing water from municipalities, water districts, private water companies, private and shared wells, and in some cases in rural areas, water hauling. Most of the county, including all of the highly populated area in the eastern portion, is within the Tucson Active Management Area (AMA), a planning area designated by the Arizona Department of Water resources.

A pre-recession 2006 study by Sharon Megdal and Kelly Mott LaCroix of the University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center discusses the very complex subject of water, several scenarios, specific assumptions, and conclusions for the Tucson AMA. The report notes that the municipal water needs of the region can be met for the then 2030 projected population based on clearly stated but important assumptions. The most recent population projections have shown a significant slowing since the report was written. The report can be found at:

<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/sites/wrrc.arizona.edu/files/megdal.az.water.resource.avail.for.tucson.pdf>.

In terms of land use, Pima Prospers addresses only the unincorporated area. Because the plan's proposed land use remains within the current adopted population projections, implementation of Pima Prospers generally will increase the use of water but remains within the parameters of the water study. However, water use both should continue to be addressed regionally for eastern Pima County as well as statewide, and land use changes on individual parcels of land will continue to be addressed at the time of rezoning. Each parcel is unique in terms of water usage, its source for water, proposed use of land, and possible effects on the water table in the neighboring area.

Updates

Our plan has been updated to eliminate primarily land use policies that have already been implemented or are no longer relevant due to annexation as an example. Some of these are general in scope, but many were specific to certain parcels of land, usually as the result of individual comprehensive plan amendments in the past which have subsequently either been developed or abandoned.

Overall Content, Format and Presentation

Pima Prospers reflects a very different format than past plans, partly because the content has been greatly expanded as discussed above and because we have taken a more comprehensive approach, since so much of what makes up a county and what county staff do are very much interconnected and interrelated. Our background analysis and land use maps are presented on 13 planning areas, partially based on watersheds, as opposed to the seven sub-regions used in the previous update. The content looks different as well, as we have better distinguished between background statements, goals, policies, and strategic implementation actions.

1.4 What do We Mean by “Pima Prospers”?

Why the title Pima Prospers? Moving forward, the county must advance on multiple fronts. Our economy must assuredly prosper and grow. Our environment must be nurtured to prosper. Our people must have the tools to allow them to individually prosper as well. We must create opportunities in which our people can prosper: as individuals and families, together in our communities and in our region. We want to celebrate and capitalize on what we love about our county....our diversity, our culture, our arts and our natural beauty. We must seek to improve our overall quality of life and standard of living, find solutions that raise all boats and build the communities that meet our needs and also those of the coming generations whose wants and needs will be in some ways, different than those who live here today.

1.5 The County’s Role in the Region

For most of or the entirety of the County, Pima County Government means public health services, our public library system, our flood control district, much of the court system, workforce development and training, our animal care center, the wastewater reclamation system and so much more. For the unincorporated area, outside of cities and towns and tribal nations, the County means transportation, parks and recreation, the sheriff, the conservation lands system, long-range planning, building and zoning permit review, and more.

Regardless, there are critical relationships that must be fostered between cities, towns and the county, school districts and fire districts, water providers, economic development, social and health service non-profits, our institutions of higher learning, our business community, and our community and neighborhood leaders. We believe that along with our partners we must focus regionally to resolve countywide issues. These challenges may also be a source of opportunities to innovate and create new technology to address climate issues, food production, water resources, and alternate modes of transportation.

We recognize that Pima County is not an island, that we play a potential critical and strategic role within the State of Arizona, as a part of the Sun Corridor. The Sun Corridor is the central spine that links from the international border north to the Prescott area, including Maricopa and Pima Counties which together will see the lion's share of population, job and economic growth in the state.

As noted especially in the Economic Development Element of this plan, our relationship with Mexico is of paramount importance and needs to be addressed as a two-way partnership.

1.6 Our Expected Population

Population growth trends in the United States are expected to continue. While very recent trends show the slowest growth *rates* since the Great Depression (due primarily to the recession with less population movement and delayed child bearing, an aging population, and a decline in immigration), actual population will continue to climb. It took 52 years to grow from 100 million to 200 million people in 1967 and 39 years to grow from 200 to 300 million. Slowing growth rates mean current estimates peg the United States population to grow to 400 million in 2051, 45 years since 300 million. (U.S. Census Bureau statistics)

Pima County is part of the Sun Corridor, one of 23 “megapolitan areas” expected to collectively share the largest population and economic growth of the country, and stretching south to north through the central core of Arizona from the Mexican border to about the Prescott area. The Sun Corridor (for purposes of this comparison, a three-county area of Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties) totaled 5.2 million people in the 2010 Census. While past targets showed the Sun Corridor growing to 10 million people by 2040, that number, similar to the country as a whole, has been scaled back to almost 9 million. While the major share is expected to be subsumed by Maricopa and Pinal Counties, Pima County will both grow and be affected in various ways by the growth of the Corridor overall.

By 2035, the time frame of our Comprehensive Plan, current projections suggest Pima County overall will grow to approximately 1.3 million with people within the unincorporated area accounting for approximately 454,000 people, or 34.9 percent of the county's projected population (assuming current boundaries of cities and towns, which of course will change over those 20 years). The 2010 Census comparatively was 980,263 people in the county, with the unincorporated county accounting for 353,264 or 36 percent of the population. This is lower than past projections. Our slower growth rate reflects (1) the results of the recession, and (2) the expectations that most of the growth of the county will be within incorporated jurisdictions, most notably the City of Tucson and the Towns of Marana and Sahuarita. As approved during the planning process, if the actual population does not meet the projected figures, adjustments may be made.

1.7 Hearing the Public

From late fall of 2013 through the first quarter of 2014, we held 14 community meetings throughout the county. We gathered public opinion at four targeted events: Tucson Meet Yourself, the TMC Half Marathon, Thanksgiving in the Barrio and the Tucson Festival of Books, as well as holding a targeted event at the Downtown campus of Pima Community College. Multiple community stakeholder meetings were held mostly at the invitation of the group, usually consisting of presentations with comments and questions.

We used a unique online tool called MindMixer to ask two sets of questions, general ones in the fall of 2013 and more specific ones in spring of 2014. We received hundreds of comments through MindMixer. Reports from each of the community conversations and the fall MindMixer comment summary can be found at www.pimaprospers.com. A summary of the public participation actions and results are found in Appendix C of this plan.

While there were differences amongst individual areas of the County, a very quick summary of our public engagement process was that we heard most often about the following:

1. Infrastructure (especially transportation – road maintenance, circulation in general and non-automobile forms)
2. Economic development and jobs
3. Social services
4. Parks and Recreation
5. Community Character and Design

Over 75 percent of the comments addressed these topics. We received many, many comments covering much of what the county provides as services, but also comments on services the county does not provide, either directly or indirectly, including water service, broad K-12 education, and power supply, for example. This indicates to us that the public is less concerned about who addresses issues than that the issues are being addressed by somebody.

Between October and December 2014, a series of stakeholder meetings and eight public meetings were held to introduce changes in the plan and solicit comments. A number of comments were received and evaluated for incorporation into the draft.

1.8 Vision

After an intensely public process over approximately two years, the Imagine Greater Tucson regional vision was put forth in 2012 and accepted by the Board of Supervisors later that year. A core premise behind the vision is to create “a region where we want to live, and where our children and our children’s children will want to stay.” 66 individual values were categorized into nine interrelated categories:

- Accessibility
- Environmental Integrity
- Educational Excellence
- Good Governance
- Higher Education
- Quality Neighborhoods
- Healthy Communities
- Prosperity
- Regional Identity



The IGT report saw that to make the vision a reality, to meet the needs of current and future generations, the following interconnected steps would be necessary, regionally:

- Create more residential choices and appealing places, especially for younger and older people throughout the region.
- Diversify and strengthen our economy.
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- Continue to make our environment and conservation of key areas of our undeveloped desert a priority in regional and personal decisions.
- Improve access to goods, services and destinations for all residents.
- Increase regulatory certainty, regional collaboration and meaningful public participation.
- Make our region more compact by focusing on design, increasing density and encouraging infill development where appropriate.
- Maximize investments in infrastructure through efficient use of land.

The complete vision document can be accessed at <http://www.imaginegreatertucson.org/about/vision-principles/>



While each of these categories and steps are critical to the region as a whole, Pima Prospers seeks to incorporate, as appropriate, goals, policies and implementation strategies that move the Regional Vision forward. Given that there is less potential for major land use changes in the unincorporated county, the focus on achieving the Vision will be in the provision of services and in intergovernmental and public-private-nonprofit partnerships in the coming years. In addition, we recognize that we are not one community; we are many communities, many neighborhoods. We are interlinked without doubt, but we are diverse and proud of it. The unincorporated communities of Ajo and Picture Rocks, Green Valley and Arivaca, Corona de Tucson and Vail, Catalina and Casas Adobes as well as the many hamlets in between each share certain needs but each deserve special attention.

For those communities that are separated from or less linked to the metropolitan Tucson area, each needs to have and develop its own vision and if there is interest, its own community planning document in addition to the overarching vision. For those areas, and for fully developed areas inside the unincorporated portion of the metropolitan area, the land use aspects of the regional vision may not be as relevant as the economic, social and environmental aspects of the vision.

As a county, we will need to work in partnership with other local jurisdictions and many in the community and regional business sector, non-profit sector, and citizens to help bring the vision about regionally.

1.9 Themes and Principles

Within the vision, this plan is guided by key principles which appear as themes throughout the document.

We seek to create and maintain Healthy Communities – this plan’s core organizing principle. Pima County is a series of communities. The principle of healthy communities means that our communities provide the opportunities necessary for people to thrive. It means economic growth, social vitality, environmental responsibility, access to healthy food, personal health, and to the extent possible, transportation and housing choices. There is assuredly a perfect ideal of a healthy community for which we strive, but there is also the reality of scarce resources which means priorities must be set and money used wisely. We recognize also that here in the west, our communities have an expectation of personal responsibility, and that the government cannot solve all problems and all conflicts.

We seek to make changes to our land use regulations in the unincorporated area so we can treat truly rural lands and lifestyles differently from suburban lands and lifestyles. Little of unincorporated Pima County could be considered urban, as urban lands are expected to be within cities and towns. The unincorporated part of Pima County consists of rural, suburban and a limited amount of urban scale lands. Much of our suburban area is built or with entitlements to be developed. What are left are largely, though not exclusively, infill or revitalization opportunities. Our suburban landscape, where feasible, needs to offer choices in housing styles and densities, transportation alternatives, employment and shopping, recreation, and conserved land. For our rural lands, small unincorporated towns, and hamlets of size, we recognize the need to acquire basic goods, provide employment, and provide social and recreational outlets especially for youth and our older populations. Rural lands also account for the majority of resource productive land uses in addition to conservation lands.





Our unincorporated small towns, such as Green Valley and Ajo, must flourish as sub-regional centers to meet all or most all of the daily needs of the residents and businesses. Each community is different as to those specific needs, and must be recognized as such. Whether small town or rural hamlet, if there is a gap between the need for certain services and the fiscal realities of obtaining that service, the community must entertain an honest conversation about what needs to change to attract the service or make it happen.

Pima Prospers is based on the beliefs that we can continue to conserve our cultural heritage and natural resources, proactively work to grow our economy and raise our per capita income, and work to improve our existing physical and social infrastructure. These concepts, often placed in conflict with one another, are not only not mutually exclusive, but interdependent and more or less equally necessary.

As we move forward, we are going to have to find ways, making changes as necessary, to adapt to changing desires of newer generations of people, technological changes on all fronts and all kinds, and to changes in climate. We can fear these changes and hide from them, or make them happen and improve the quality of life individually and as communities.

We must approach how we bring about needed changes recognizing that our communities are a system and that we must work systematically, efficiently, humanely and creatively to do the right thing, especially as we know that there will never be enough money or time to do otherwise. Much of what we do is regional in nature, and the County will continue to play an active role in setting and helping to carry out the regional cooperative agenda. How we implement our plan with all parts of the county working in a united and constructive manner and with partners in the nonprofit, private and governmental sector will be telling.

We approach our work with the adage that, to be successful at the end of the day, we shall strive to raise the quality of life. The policies of this plan will help govern the County's direction over the next ten years. Decisions in implementing the plan-the large and bold, but also the small and seemingly less important-will be paramount in how Pima County as a government performs and grows and conserves over the lifespan of this plan. Implementation actions should be multidisciplinary, measureable, and monitored.

1.10 Game Changers

As noted previously, comprehensive plans are a statement of visions, goals and policies for a county. There are potential changes that may or may not happen during the ten year lifespan of this plan that we must recognize as possibilities. If any of these occur, the county may need to significantly revise at least some aspects of the comprehensive plan prior to the next ten year update. Needed change would have to be analyzed and identified based on the facts as they exist at the time and extent of the impact, positive or negative. These potential “game changers” include but are certainly not limited to:

- A significant change in the mission at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base;
- Decisions to move forward with and identification of an alignment of an international trade corridor;
- Delayed recovery from the unforeseen national economic setbacks that impact the region;
- Opportunities for new major employers or major expansion of existing employers, especially in locations unforeseen by this plan;
- Climate or drought issues beyond the extent addressed within the plan; and
- New mine development.

1.11 Thank you to all Participants

Pima Prospers has been a shared community effort and many thanks go to the residents of the county for sharing their thoughts from the beginning of the process and often throughout. The efforts of very diverse communities are reflected in the efforts that are compiled in the Community Involvement Appendix C of the plan. The Guidance Committee, all participating county staff, advisors, consultant team, Commission and Board of Supervisors are acknowledged at the beginning of this document.

