



A sustainable plan

By [Roger Yohem](#), Inside Tucson Business
Published on Friday, July 23, 2010

The Planning Center of Tucson has authored the state's first fully-sustainable General Plan for a municipality. The City of El Mirage, northwest of Phoenix, adopted the plan July 8 and will present it to voters for ratification on the Nov. 2 ballot.

A General Plan is a blueprint for government officials to use to evaluate proposals for development, redevelopment and revitalization. State law requires all municipalities in Arizona to adopt a general plan.

The El Mirage General Plan includes policy direction for contained farming, industry and technology, affordability, revitalization, water harvesting, roof gardens, multi-modal access, walk-ability, energy efficiency, and a targeted 50 percent reduction of the city's carbon foot print by 2020.

It also requires new development to meet the high LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) standards.

"This is an example of what a compact, land-locked community can do to leverage limited resources when the right public-private partnership is in place," said George Flores, the city's community development director.

Along with public participation, The Planning Center coordinated a national team for the project including SERA Architects of Portland, Ore., Nolte Associates of Colorado Springs, and Theater Simple of Seattle. The Planning Center, located at 110 S. Church Ave., Suite 6320, is owned by Mike Grassinger, Jack Neubeck, and Linda Morales. Maria Masque is a principal and project manager.

Scott Chesney, the city's economic development director, said the plan will help "rebuild the economy of an economically unsustainable city." Prior plans used "old-school strategies" of breaking the city into zones such as industrial, retail, and residential.

"This integrated plan allows for mixed use, flexibility, opportunities without boundaries,

and the setting of policies that will result in quality of life and sustainability,” he said Chesney.

The Planning Center is currently working on the General Plan update for the city of Nogales.

E-mail news items for this column to ryochem@azbiz.com. Inside Real Estate & Construction appears weekly.

Copyright © 2010 Inside Tucson Business