

Southern Arizona's Land Planning – Overview of Significant Issues

There are currently several vital issues that will define and dictate the future growth of Pima County. For the inaugural issue of TREND report, we have provided an overview of a number of important activities affecting the real estate and development industry throughout the Tucson metropolitan region. Since there is so much to cover and each topic deserves its own issue, we will delve deeper into these and other relevant topics over the coming months. Our goal in these next issues is to promote discussion of these topics amongst the industry and to ensure that we work together on the issues at hand to promote best practices in future development of the Metro Tucson area.

State Land

One of the biggest stories in the past few weeks has been the Arizona State Land Department's announcement of large planning efforts in relation to state trust land. The two largest tracts of land currently being planned are approximately 12,000 acres of land on the southeast side of Tucson (under a planning permit issued to Westcor) and the Arroyo Grande property, a 14 square mile tract of land between Oro Valley and the Pinal County line. As the major landowner in southern Arizona, the State Land Department will have a significant impact on land supply in the metro area through these properties and other dispositions.

Environmental/Conservation Planning

The City of Tucson is in the process of preparing the Habitat Conservation Plan which will address proposed development activities in three City of Tucson planning sub-areas: Southlands, Avra Valley, and Santa Cruz River. A draft plan is available from the City's website. Marana is also in the midst of this same process, and anticipates having a draft for public review in December 2008.

Pima County's Southwest Infrastructure Plan

Although nearly everyone agrees that the southwestern portion of the metro area is an appropriate area for development, it also has the greatest need for infrastructure improvements. The solutions put forth in this plan could set a precedent for the rest of our community. Once this plan is complete, the County plans to prepare similar studies for other portions of the County experiencing growth pressures.

Regional Water Planning

Following the success of the Regional Transportation Authority, business leaders are calling for a regional water advisory committee to promote true regional collaboration and develop better policies, better management and more efficient use of water.

City of Tucson Land Use Code Updates:

The City is currently in the process of developing several new code amendments related to in fill and development pressures on existing neighborhoods. The Flexible Lot Development option would replace the existing Residential Cluster Project option. The Neighborhood Preservation Zone is currently being implemented as a pilot program in neighborhoods surrounding the University of Arizona. In fill incentives are also being developed to encourage development within the city. A Mixed Use In fill zone is also being developed. In addition to these in fill incentives, the city is considering implementation of several storm water harvesting, solar energy and grey water reuse requirements.

Next Month

We will take an in-depth look at the Southwest Infrastructure Plan, (SWIP) which covers 70 square miles of Tucson's southwest sub market. The purpose of the SWIP is to provide a basis for infrastructure decision-making related to development in the Southwest area.

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