

Introduction

1. Thank you for permitting us to address you during study session
2. I am speaking as Chair of Tucson Residents for Responsive Government and on behalf of neighborhoods who participated in our Initiative: [*Sustainable Neighborhoods Through Planning*](#).
3. We asked for this time because after 15 months of meetings with representatives from over 40 neighborhoods about their plans, we realized that direction and leadership is needed from you before any progress can be made.
4. My main job today is to convince you of the value of investing in Strong Neighborhoods and in Collaborative Long-Range Planning for Tucson's future. [VISUAL]
5. Every one of us in this room is a Neighbor and our hope is that we can use that commonality to bridge the issues that divide us about future growth and development.

Strong Neighborhoods

1. The Neighborhood Plan initiative that TRRG took on last year brought together representatives from over 40 Neighborhood Associations, all concerned about the future of their Neighborhood and Area Plans.
2. We learned a lot from the forums. The biggest take-home message is that Neighborhood Planning is only one component of what Neighborhood Associations contribute to the City.
3. Neighborhood Associations are vital for the interface between the City and its citizens.
4. We came to appreciate how integrated Neighborhood Associations are with various departments in the City that rely on registered Neighborhood Associations to communicate with and elicit assistance.

Here are some good examples:

A. Clerk's Office:

Relies on NA contacts for all Liquor License Notifications and Feedback

B. Environmental Services:

NAs are the main point of contact for Brush and Bulky Plus implementation and for Neighborhood Clean-up events and Dangerous and Hazardous Waste pick-ups

C. Code Enforcement:

NAs are needed for effective enforcement of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance and to Testify in court when needed. NAs are the groups that most often work to abate graffiti.

D. Police:

NAs are relied on for promoting and organizing Neighborhood Watch and other programs that combat crime. NAs are the community unit allowed to receive Victim's Rights of Notification for certain crimes. And NAs are the main point of contact for Community-based policing efforts.

E. Parks and Recreation:

NAs are integral for the work to maintain and improve neighborhood and area parks, to decide on park naming and special park memorials. NAs are the citizen partners with Tucson Clean and Beautiful. NAs also contribute material and monetary donations for Parks improvements.

F. Transportation:

NAs are the community units that help maintain street landscaping, who report potholes and traffic and street flooding issues, and who participate during major street projects public outreach.

G. Planning and Development Services:

PDSD is the department now responsible for registering NAs. They use NA contacts for almost all required notifications about projects, land-use changes and special exceptions.

5. (Turn to the chamber seating) How many of you who came down this afternoon regularly interact with these departments? Please stand. Thanks. You may sit down.

6. (Turning back to M/C) You just heard how embedded the NA is in our City's communication with its citizens. That is why we believe that the City must invest in keeping neighborhoods strong. We applaud the City

Manager's proposed designation of Rebecca Ruopp as the Neighborhood Engagement Specialist. We see that as the start of what must be a major reinvestment of personnel and resources to ensure that this vital component to the City's well-being functions effectively now and in the future.

Long-Range Planning

1. Which brings us to a discussion about Long-range planning for how the City will grow in the future.
2. The bulk of Tucson's 55 [Neighborhood and Area Plans](#) were written at a time when the City had a Planning Department and employed individuals who were charged with helping to write these plans to help direct future growth and preserve neighborhood character.
3. They were written at a time when the City had a Citizen Participation office whose primary function was to assist citizens in their efforts to organize, get plans for their areas and have a meaningful voice in decisions that impacted them.
4. The presence of these two offices did remarkable things for the City. Together, they fostered an atmosphere of co-operation and fair-minded decision-making that included all stakeholders early in the process of developing new policies.
5. A key question: Where does that exist in today's City government?

TRRG has shared with you [documentation of our concerns](#). (Show booklet). Today I will address these topics in terms of GOALS:

Goal 1 Planning as a Priority. Appendix D. PDSO Organizational Chart that we downloaded from the City's website shows there is not a single employee, out of the 53 listed on this chart, whose title shows that they deal with planning for future growth or whose job it is to assist neighborhood associations, even though this is where the last remaining vestiges of the once-healthy Citizen Participation Office/Department of Neighborhood

Resources were finally given a “home”. Appendix E. Look at the services being rendered for neighborhoods. Very minimal.

Goal 2 Adherence to UDC. The code gives serious attention to Neighborhood and Area Plans and to Citizen Participation with 257 references as we show in Appendix C 1 and 2. But time and again we have seen citizen and neighborhood interests diluted and ignored because it is more important to rush through development plans than it is to adhere to the spirit and intent of these planning documents.

One glaring example of this deterioration of citizen input is the relatively new concept that terms in the UDC like *conform* and *comply* have morphed into meaning a *need to be in basic harmony*. That may be legally defensible, but it is a slap in the face of neighbors who understand the intent of those terms when they were put into the UDC.

Goal 3 True Public Process. Future Growth Scenario map in Plan Tucson (appendix B in your [background materials](#)) is another example of the public being duped into thinking that their planning documents mean anything anymore. That map was introduced at the 11th hour in the Plan Tucson process. It was put together with no input from the neighborhoods who were impacted by the colored blobs on the map.

A disclaimer was put on the map stating that it does not indicate City policy but look at any rezoning plan that is submitted to you for approval, and that plan is justified as being in agreement with the Growth Scenario Map

Goal 4 Policy and Procedures to Update Plans. Appendix A, taken from Plan Tucson, ends with a sentence stating the need for updating the specific plans. Sadly, at the present time there is the lack of any mechanism, any process or any personnel to update Neighborhood and Area plans or to assist neighborhoods in writing such plans. The Plan amendment process was written for the developer who wants to exempt a single piece of property from a condition in the plan. It was never intended to be used for updating plans.

6. As the TRRG initiative demonstrated, we have a host of citizens who are willing to do the work needed to reinvigorate their plans or write new ones. But we need your help and leadership to accomplish that. I cannot

believe that you would want to waste this opportunity to breathe new life into planning documents that matter to our residents and that the City spent a lot of time and money to write originally.

7. The importance of community support for Strong Neighborhoods and Long-range Planning is not only evident in the attendance this afternoon, but in the fact that 738 people signed a petition which TRRG put on-line. We want you to take action to help us update our plans and to commit to real citizen participation when developing land-use and transportation policies.
8. TRRG looks forward to working with the City and other interested parties in making our goals a reality.

(Turn to the Chamber)—Please stand if you are ready to work with the City in reaching these goals.

Thank you. Bonnie Poulos, TRRG Chair