



City of Phoenix
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT
STAFF ANALYSIS**
December 30, 2021

<u>Application:</u>	GPA-SM-CC-1-21-7-8
<u>Applicant:</u>	City of Phoenix Planning Commission
<u>Location:</u>	Area generally bounded by Union Pacific Railroad tracks (south of Jefferson Street) on the north, 7th Street on the east, South Mountain Avenue on the south, and 7th Avenue on the west.
<u>Approximate Acres:</u>	3,270 +/-
<u>Requested Change:</u>	To establish the South Central Transit Oriented Development Community Plan
<u>Reason for Requested Change:</u>	To provide a district plan to realize the shared community vision to make South Central a world-class destination in which current and future residents both share in the prosperity a walkable and transit-oriented community brings. The plan will serve as a living document inspired by the voices of the community to attract, guide, and prioritize strategic investments in infrastructure, housing, economic development, and other areas.
<u>Village Planning Committee Dates:</u>	Central City – January 10, 2022 South Mountain – January 11, 2022
<u>Staff Recommendation:</u>	Approval

SUMMARY

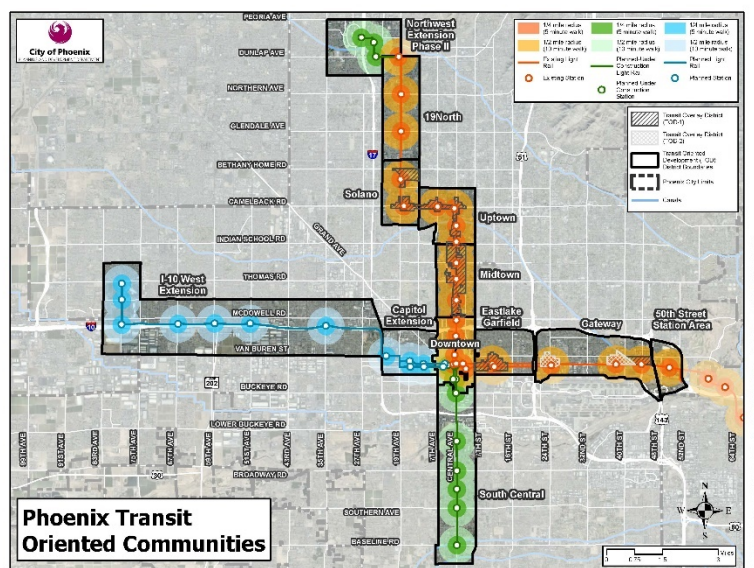
The purpose of this request is to establish the South Central Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Community Plan. The plan is a result of a collaborative effort between city staff and community residents, businesses and stakeholders. The plan articulates a future vision for the area that seeks to ensure a walkable, environmentally equitable, compact and connected community that is sustainable and resilient by

supporting local, small businesses, sharing and preserving culture, and improving health for all existing and future residents of the South Central corridor.

The South Central Corridor is an approximately 3,270-acre area generally bounded by Union Pacific Railroad on the north, 7th Street on the east, South Mountain Avenue on the south, and 7th Avenue on the west. The South Central Corridor is located at the southernmost segment of the exiting light rail line. Building upon the previous work to create walkable communities for all residents in Downtown, the five ReinventPHX districts (Gateway, Eastlake-Garfield, Midtown, Uptown, Solano), and more recently the 19North District, the South Central Transit Oriented Development Community Plan will serve as the city's seventh TOD district policy plan.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, the largest light rail construction project in the nation's history was completed in Phoenix. This major achievement was the result of a partnership between local and federal agencies, strong civic leadership, and visionary urban planning that began decades earlier. The infrastructure, however, was designed to not just add high-quality transportation options, but to lay a foundation for "reinventing" the communities surrounding it by creating new urban living choices in a city planned almost entirely for the automobile.



Phoenix Transit Oriented Communities Map Source: City of Phoenix Planning and Development Department

In 2011, the City of Phoenix was awarded a \$2.9 million Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Thus, a collaborative partnership and initiative between the City of Phoenix, HUD, and numerous other organizations was born. This partnership came to be known as "ReinventPHX" and aimed to create a new urban development model in Phoenix to achieve walkable communities. "ReinventPHX" resulted in the creation and adoption of a TOD Strategic Policy Framework in 2013 followed by five district policy plans in 2015 to illustrate the community vision and align it with development strategies and actions for the communities situated along the first phase of the light rail. In 2016, the Northwest Extension Phase I was completed and shortly after, the city began a three-year process working with that community to develop a sixth TOD district policy plan, titled 19North, using the ReinventPHX TOD Strategic Policy Framework as a guide. The 19North TOD District Policy Plan was recently adopted on April 7, 2021.

Since its adoption in 2013, the City of Phoenix TOD Strategic Policy Framework has been utilized successfully to provide a holistic and multidisciplinary engagement, visioning, and implementation plan framework for several diverse transit oriented communities in the city of Phoenix. Approval of the TOD Strategic Policy Framework in 2013 established “Place Types” for the planned station areas for the South Central Extension, thereby providing guidance on scale and intensity for the corridor.

Voters approved the South Central extension in 2000, 2004 and in 2015. In 2016, the Phoenix City Council approved advancing the opening date from 2034 to 2023. The advancement is funded through Transportation 2050, a 35-year, multi-modal transportation plan approved by Phoenix voters, and the South Central Extension/Downtown Hub is now expected to open for operations in 2024. In 2016 the City of Phoenix was awarded a \$2 million Transit Oriented Development Planning grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to engage the community and support local businesses along the South Central Avenue planned light rail extension prior to construction taking place.

The South Central Corridor is uniquely situated between two regional destinations, Downtown Phoenix to the north, and South Mountain Park and Preserve to the south; and it offers an abundance of recreational and open space opportunities due to the Rio Salado and the Highland and Western canals that run through portions of it.

The corridor also contains segments that are within the Downtown Code, Central City South Area Plan, Del Rio Area Brownfields Plan, Rio Montaña Area Plan, Baseline Area Master Plan, Rio Salado Beyond the Banks Area Plan, Target Area B Redevelopment Area, and Mountain Park Neighborhood Special District Plan. These foundational documents provided valuable insight on the community’s desired vision, goals and values.

Communities across the nation have focused discussions on several historic factors such as redlining, exclusionary zoning, racist restrictive covenants, and discriminatory lending practices that have created a health, wealth and housing gap disproportionately impacting communities of color. The South Central Corridor communities are no exception and have acknowledged these historic factors in their own communities. These topics have been essential in empowering residents and community members towards a vision that embraces more equitable outcomes, goals, and investments that benefit existing residents first. Despite these challenges and history, South Phoenix has proven resilient, and seeks creative, collaborative, and authentic ways towards improving the quality of life for everyone.

The City of Phoenix in collaboration with project partners, community stakeholders, and the Mayor and City Council-appointed South Central TOD Steering Committee embarked on the planning process in 2018 to develop a TOD community plan for the South Central Corridor. The product of the planning process will be the seventh TOD Policy plan, inspired by the hearts and voices of the community, that will serve to attract,

guide, and prioritize strategic investments in infrastructure, housing, economic development, and other areas to realize a shared community vision for the future of the corridor.

The TOD grant team project consultants consisted of a well-rounded group of partners that handled a variety of tasks during the planning efforts. The grant team handled community engagement, planning and design, provided business assistance, national expertise on TOD research and practices, investigated and made civil and landscape design recommendations for TOD.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Between December 2018 and August 2019, a series of workshops were held with city staff, the TOD grant team, and the community to understand the existing state of the corridor, categorizing future change areas, identification of desired investments, and refinement of the vision developed with the community's input. Simultaneously, the grant team engaged with the local business community as part of the business assistance portion of the grant. The TOD grant team hosted three business assistance workshops and conducted individual business assessments for more than 100 participating businesses. The assessments allowed a tailored approach to provide a variety of marketing, legal, and networking assistance to help better position the business to withstand disruptions during light rail construction. The following is a summary of the major planning activities that contributed to and influenced the community vision, investments, and outcomes represented in the plan:

Business Assistance Forum (December 6, 2018) – The forum brought together business owners from the 19th Avenue corridor to share their stories and experiences of running a business during construction of the light rail extension. The 19th Avenue business owners participated in a panel discussion and then answered questions from audience members that included businesses and residents from the South Central light rail corridor. The topics covered included advice for the best ways to thrive before, during, and after construction.



South Central business owners attending December Business Assistance Forum

Community Planning Workshop Series 1:

Shape Your Vision For The Future (March 4 and 9, 2019) – The March 4th community planning workshop introduced the concept of transit oriented development and the six-planning element framework. After the presentation, community members engaged in a visioning table discussion with their peers. Community members were asked to discuss the important places that are a part of their history in the South Central Corridor. Community members were encouraged to write important milestones in their personal history with the community. After the exercise, community members were invited to visit

the various exhibits, corridor model, comment boards, and meet to record their personal story and history. Each activity provided educational information and shared community quotes from a variety of previous outreach efforts.

A follow-up discussion on affordability was held on March 7th at Centro Comunitario de PAZ. A presentation was given to demonstrate the full costs of housing and transportation and how the light rail can help increase affordability in the South Central Corridor. The Center for Neighborhood Technology presented recent findings and possible strategies to accommodate development without displacement. Group discussion followed the presentation and concluded with a question and answer session.

The March 9th closeout session reflected information that was collected during the first workshop with continued feedback and discussion from community members imagining a future state of the community in 2045. The event began with a community conversation about planning elements focused on “what is needed?” and “where it is needed?” Community members participated in a table exercise. Each table had a map of a station stop area. Highlighted were nodes labeled as transit, arterial and neighborhood zones, based on their proximity to the proposed light rail stops. Participants were asked to mark locations on the map with potential land use types using pre-marked stickers of amenities that they would like to see within the community. The exercise allowed for participants to identify areas of change and associated scales. Input received contributed to various aspects of the community vision and illustrations represented in the plan.



South Central residents engaging in community workshop activity.

Both the March workshops were conducted in English and Spanish simultaneously, capturing a variety of multi-generational, cross-cultural views on the South Central corridor and provided a youth activity area with the prompt “Design Your Park”, which inspired children to share new ideas through craft and various materials.

Community Planning Workshop Series 2: See Your Vision for The Future (May 6 and 11, 2019) – TOD grant team members and staff facilitated table discussions with community members and held an interactive exercise designed to engage community input regarding the type and location of investments and change by station area. Community members were asked to discuss certain areas within the corridor that are at-risk for displacement. Following this exercise, the TOD grant team and staff asked community members to identify investment types related to the six planning elements that should be considered throughout the various station areas within the South Central Corridor. Each table was provided a deck of investment menu cards categorized by planning element that the community members could look through and place on the table representing the types of development they would like to see in that area.

Access to Capital Business Outreach (May 9, 2019) – The workshop was aimed at helping the small business community in South Central learn about how to access loans at fair rates to grow their businesses. The event featured six financial entities that are known to have loan packages in small enough increments to support the small businesses in the corridor needing loans between \$2,500 to \$25,000 to buy equipment, improve building infrastructure, or grow their inventory. The goal with this event was to open doors into new opportunities that enable businesses to borrow at rates as low as 6 percent from institutions that know and understand small business needs, and which are willing to customize products to create successful small loans.

The May 11th workshop provided a follow up to the community's input and celebrated history and heritage with a family-friendly event at South Mountain Community Center. TOD grant team members and staff asked the community members to visit the four station areas (Baseline, South Phoenix, Audubon, and North) marked by tables throughout the room with the corresponding area map. Community members were also asked to participate in a building height exercise. Illustrations of the community concepts were presented to the public for feedback.

Business Assistance Marketing Workshop (October 1, 2019) – Local businesses in the South Central corridor reported in interviews with the business assistance team having marketing assistance needs. These businesses reported they did not have funds for advertising and would like low-cost or no-cost methods to reach new potential customers. The event featured two marketing experts that shared invaluable insight and strategy on how the business owner can optimize their marketing and social media presence.

TOD Grant Team Final Presentations (November 4, and 5, 2019) – The TOD grant team unveiled Illustrative Master Plans at two public meetings that were held in English and Spanish. The community was able to see their input and what they selected as areas of prioritized investments through visually engaging maps showing incremental growth and highlighting areas of future development.

Village Planning Committee Informational Sessions – An overview of the plan was presented as an informational item at the October 2019 and March 2021 Central City and September 2019 and March 2021 South Mountain Village Planning Committee meetings.

Planning Commission Informational Sessions (August 2020 and January 2021) – An overview of the plan was presented as an informational item to the Planning Commission.

Additional targeted engagement was conducted in March of 2021 as directed by the South Central TOD Steering Committee for local developers and those in the community most at risk for displacement in workshops that were hosted by local community partners, including the South Central Collaborative. As a result, more than

40 local developers provided feedback on code, process, and financial barriers to implementing affordable TOD style development. A local partner shared preliminary results of an ongoing literature review and information on different factors of displacement. Both efforts contributed to additional action items to continue working with local partners on health equity.

The South Central Collaborative –

The Collaborative consists of more than 40 public, private, nonprofit, philanthropic leaders, and community members. Throughout the planning efforts their group has hosted several partnering meetings, operated four sub-groups, provided recommendation documents on light rail design, presented development guideline recommendations to the South Central TOD Steering Committee, and continues to build capacity between the local community.



The South Central Collaborative was a pivotal partner in the South Central TOD planning efforts.

South Central TOD Steering Committee – The Mayor and Council appointed Steering Committee was essential in crafting of the plan and to ensuring it captured the essence that the community voiced. The fourteen (14) member steering committee represented a variety of South Central stakeholders and neighborhoods. They advocated for an equitable outreach and engagement process, for rejecting displacement of existing residents, food and housing security, local small businesses, and infrastructure investments amongst their extensive list of items to champion for the South Central community. The Steering Committee’s ongoing engagement, with more than 20 meetings open to the public, refined and prioritized several strategies and actions to respond to the needs of the Corridor. The Committee also assisted in identifying partnerships that could potentially provide implementation resources, and they continue to advocate for residents of the South Central Corridor. On May 19th, 2021, the South Central TOD Steering Committee unanimously approved the draft plan and recommended to proceed through the public review and approval process with the name change to South Central TOD Community Plan instead of South Central Equitable TOD Community Plan. The name change was the result of a committee discussion in which they stated that equity is not just a given, and that it will require action, hard work, follow through and accountability to become an equitable plan.

PLAN STRUCTURE

Employing the six planning element framework established within the ReinventPHX TOD Strategic Policy Framework, the South Central TOD planning effort successfully provided a holistic and multidisciplinary engagement, visioning, and implementation effort. The framework consists of six intrinsically interconnected planning elements (Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Mobility, Health, Green Systems) to

ensure a multidisciplinary process. The framework, combined with active engagement of the community, and created a plan that is responsive to the specific needs and desires of the South Central community. The South Central Transit Oriented Development Community Plan is comprised of an introduction and three substantive sections – *Who We Are Today*, *What We Want*, and *How We Get There*.

The four distinct areas of the corridor, each uniquely focused on the people’s history, character, uses, and aspirations to blend all future community identified investments and enhancements in an equitable and appropriate way are identified as North of the Interstate 17 Freeway (I-17), at the Rio Salado, South of the Rio Salado and most adjacent to South Mountain.

The introduction section provides a brief history of the planning corridor and details existing adopted policy and efforts that influenced the plan.

The *Who We Are Today (Current State Assessment, Pages 22-94)* section provides a background on the corridor obtained from local resident expertise and their shared experiences along with technical data. As part of the initial planning process, an existing conditions report was created for the South Central Corridor project. The existing conditions report provides an in-depth current state analysis, background, and demographic overview utilizing the six-planning element framework: land use, housing, economic development, health, mobility, and green systems. After the six planning element assessments were completed the project team compiled several “Best Practice Community Investment Cards” such as safe bike lanes, safe crosswalks, community gardens, and trees and shade, similarly organized into the six planning elements. This “investment menu” became a foundation for facilitating interactive conversations, education, listening, and learning with the community. An overview of community-identified assets known as “points of pride” within the South Central corridor is also included in this section.

The *What We Want (Vision for The Future, Pages 98-154)* section outlines the vision of the community to 2045. As described in the public participation section above, residents and other Corridor stakeholders participated in surveys, bilingual workshops, and field surveys designed to identify and map assets, community needs, and improvement opportunities. Based on input received during the public workshops, and with guidance from the South Central TOD Steering Committee members, a corridor-wide vision statement to support equitable TOD & reject displacement was developed, alongside vision statements and illustrative renderings for the four distinct sub areas in the corridor.

The *What We Want* section also contains a community-identified “protect, enhance, invest” maps, intended to help guide future development within the planning area. Along with the adopted place types established in the TOD Strategic Policy Framework, these maps will help city staff and the community evaluate future rezoning requests within the four distinct areas of the corridor. The maps depict growth areas as follows:



*Four Distinct Sub Areas Map,
Source: South Central TOD
Community Plan*

- Protect areas are designated for slow incremental growth strategies, smaller scale and lowest intensity investments. Housing investments examples: accessory dwelling units, tiny homes, manufactured homes, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes.
- Enhance areas are designated for slow to moderate rate of growth strategies, medium scale and medium intensity investments. Housing investments examples: courtyard apartments, townhouses, medium multiplexes, and live-work units.
- Invest areas designated for moderate rate of growth strategies, medium/large scale and medium/high intensity investments. Housing investments examples: Mid-rise apartments or condominiums, mixed use residential.

The *How We Get There (Implementation, Pages 170-232)* section lists measurable outcomes designed to demonstrate success toward achieving the vision organized by the six planning elements. Top strategies and polices that were identified through community input, including prioritized investments and locations from the visioning process, are presented along with a five-year action plan that articulates a series of activities, partnerships, and steps toward achieving the vision both through short, and ongoing implementation items.

One of the top land use-related strategies is to apply the Walkable Urban Code to future development. Form-Based Codes, such as the Walkable Urban Code, are known to connect the complex physical environment to standards that can be adjusted for each individual context, or character area, while providing the restorative potential of time-tested pedestrian oriented forms of urbanism.

The South Central TOD Community Plan presents initial residential and commercial neighborhood characteristics that set the foundation for an in-depth Character Area assessment. The assessment, combined with the Protect, Enhance, Invest, maps will provide an extra layer of guidance on zoning and entitlement requests within the South Central Corridor to uphold the South Central Corridors' community-based vision to "Reject Displacement" and "Support Equitable TOD".

HOW THE PLAN WILL BE USED

The South Central TOD Community Plan represents a vision for the planning area that will be used by a variety of stakeholders. The plan embodies a community-supported vision for the corridor which will aid in supporting investment and reinvestment that is consistent with the goals and priorities outlined by the community. Similarly, city staff will utilize the plan as a policy guide for redevelopment projects seeking rezoning approval. Additionally, the implementation section of the plan identifies priority actions and investments that will provide valuable information that can help inform future decisions made by residents, business owners and government entities for things such

as infrastructure, services, and other community growth and development opportunities.

Inspired by the hearts and voices of the community, the plan has been called a “living document” referring to its ability to adapt to future conditions with periodic assessments as the six planning element framework evolves to the community’s needs. The plan also serves as a “call to action” for stakeholders and partners by providing an outline of implementation items organized by various government, community and business led partners to achieve the community vision.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of GPA-SM-CC-1-21-7-8 as the South Central Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Community Plan will help guide land use and investment decisions within the South Central corridor.

Writer

Elias Valencia
December 30, 2021

Exhibits

Exhibit A: South Central Transit Oriented Development Community Plan