

ARIZONA
TOWN HALL

Creating Solutions



**CREATING
VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES**
COMMUNITY TOWN HALL
FINAL REPORTS

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Source: Vitalyst Health Foundation

"A healthy community is one where people have the opportunity to make healthy choices, in environments that are safe, free from violence, and designed to promote health."

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"



KEY POINTS FROM FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHS

- Educational opportunities.
- Good community design with indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Environmental Quality/Parks and Recreation.
- Youth themselves.
- Social/cultural cohesion, especially in small communities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage local strengths via community events in local neighborhoods and engage local businesses.
- Expand interaction among people in different neighborhoods and communities to increase diversity. Knowing your neighbor matters.
- Increase accessible green spaces, community gardens, pedestrian walkways, and hiking/biking trails.
- Enhance transportation options and access to public transportation.
- Improve/expand communication about the resources available to increase awareness and utilization.
- Utilize social workers in the area to help residents be resilient during these difficult times.
- Improve community safety.
- Increase educational opportunities, including extracurricular programs, to improve economic opportunities.
- Ensure that adults reach out directly to young people to hear their voices. When more young people get involved, the world can become a better, more peaceful place. We are here to change the world.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

- COVID-19 has affected every part of the wheel. Work styles and lifestyles have changed. Social issues below the surface have been exposed, such as the fragile nature of mental health, unequal access to quality education, disparities in healthcare and mental healthcare, and unequal access to services and resources.
- COVID-19 has made it clear that socioeconomic status is related to race. Racism affects social cohesion, raises tensions, and causes distrust in politics. These issues must be discussed, and local governments need to work together to provide equitable outcomes.
- Shortages of supplies and healthy foods as well as reduction in community activities and educational opportunities have negatively impacted the quality of everyday life.
- Mask and vaccine mandates have divided the community, isolated some groups, and disrupted the unity we had before.
- Approach each public issue proactively with comprehensive solutions.
- Use the design of communities to break down barriers.

- Enhance online infrastructure to facilitate online neighborhood associations.
- Use novel approaches, such as what Meals on Wheels has done, to identify neighbors who can help those near them.

WHAT ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

- Creating vibrant communities requires a focus with intentionality on the planning process to benefit the health and wellbeing of the entire community. Address equity in our communities so that where you live doesn't determine how long you live or how laws are enforced. Conduct outreach sessions and listen empathetically and deeply to understand the different perspectives of your constituents.
- Make access to reliable broadband service, high quality healthcare, education, and transportation available to all.
- Affordable housing that is accessible to jobs, transportation hubs, medical services, and stores is critical.
- Focus on the populations most affected by climate change to ensure environmental quality.
- Strengthen employment opportunities and vaccination availability/access.
- Mobilize youth to increase the vibrancy and resiliency of a community by reaching out to them. Recognize them as an important part of the community who can make a difference. Increase the number of adult mentors and expand city programs that work with youth groups. Create safe spaces for adults and youth to talk on-on-one. Give feedback and acknowledge that young people have been heard.
- Raise awareness of the short- and long-term effects of harmful substances and behaviors.
- Spend a day with children from different communities and cultures to get to know people who are different from you. A child's point of view is basic and can teach us all something we didn't know before.
- Utilize vacant public lands to enhance public and commercial recreational opportunities.

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC IDEAS

- **AzCASE:** One of our biggest issues is finding people who care. Get young people more motivated. Improving your community is a basic human need to be regarded as more than an extra credit activity.
- **Mesa Community College:** Teach youth how to take care of themselves before they become adults. Teach them how to take personal fiscal responsibility in high school. Ensuring students can catch up after the pandemic and are well prepared for their future careers is important in all school districts.
- **South Phoenix:** Improve our health and wellness by ensuring that healthier food alternatives are available in our community. Ensure that we have equitable transportation, air quality, parks, and trees.
- **Paradise Valley:** Resources for families are even more important with the stressors brought on by the pandemic. Quality after-school programs at affordable prices are essential to provide a safe place for children while their parents are working. Support for teachers is essential to provide quality education for our youth.
- **Tucson:** Implement "justice reinvestment" and spend our local resources and taxes less on police and other aspects of the criminal justice system, including incarceration, and more on social programs to meet needs. Better utilize neighborhood watch programs to help enhance public safety with less formal policing. Increase transparency with regards to public allocation of funds so that the public better understands these allocations and can see that justice reinvestment is achieved.

TAKING ACTION

- Enhance social cohesion by providing equitable access to all critical resources and services, especially quality housing with opportunities for neighborhood and local social engagement, transportation, health care, mental healthcare, education, and public safety.
- Increase/enhance access to counselors and mental health services.
- Protect the environment and educate ourselves and others about how to do that. Seeing the skies of Phoenix had an eye-opening impact during the pandemic because of less traffic.
- Facilitate dialogue on racism and important issues, such as mental health, the environment, and health.
- Ensure healthy food options are accessible to everyone. Focus on prevention through healthy foods and lifestyle instead of the current focus on acute care.
- Lower drug misuse in our communities through programs and discussion in schools, minimizing advertisements for smoking and alcohol, and zoning that reduces the number of liquor stores.
- Provide high quality education for all, including vocational training, job apprenticeships, and trade school programs.
- Encourage communities to be proactive in deciding and communicating their needs and desires. Parents should play a leading role in molding future citizens and leaders who are civically engaged. Leadership should be representative of their communities to produce flourishing neighborhoods.
- Take some of the burden upon ourselves to reach out to our legislators and share our opinions. Above all, VOTE. Every election at every level counts.
- Recognize that we are the community and educate ourselves on how we can best help and support our community. Be open to the needs of our neighbors, not just our own. Be a voice for our community, support local businesses through patronage and encourage other community members to do so as well.
- Balance being outspoken constituents, responsible citizens, and considerate neighbors to help our community.
- The responsibility for taking these actions begins with us. While adults can help us and we can seek their assistance, we are the future adults. We are the ones experiencing these challenges, and we have the understanding and passion to begin the change needed. We can also be role models for other youth by exemplifying the change. Don't underestimate ourselves and each other.

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS

Mesa Community College

Paradise Valley Community College

Yavapai College – Prescott Campus

In collaboration with AzCASE

In collaboration with Opportunities For Youth

In collaboration with South Mountain W.O.R.K.S.

In collaboration with Tucson Young Professionals, Greater Tucson Leadership, Pima County, University of Arizona, and Arizona State University-Tucson

Additional programs are pending at the time of printing and will be integrated into subsequent publications.

I WILL...

- Campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores.
- Not go to parties and become involved with drugs. Inform my friends and peers of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Work with my coalition to put up anti-smoking signage in Peoria parks.
- Produce a resource hub website for the prevention of distracted driving among Arizona youth.
- As an adult, listen and mentor more with youth.
- Send letters and emails to senators.
- Ask elected leaders to fund more prevention, mental health, and community-based initiatives.
- Vote in local to federal elections. Encourage others to vote as well as this is the easiest way for our voice to be heard.
- Volunteer more in my community.
- Educate youth about issues that are going on and help them to find their voices and to be empowered.
- Create discussion in my own school and present at least one workshop by the end of the year.
- Convene conversations at the college bringing together state and local elected officials who have opposite perspectives to help combat the growing political and social polarization and show students that we can engage in difficult conversations with civility and understanding.
- Find ways to ensure civic engagement is embedded into the student experience.
- Advocate for patients with low health system literacy.
- Be steadfast in my determination to ensure continued self-education and education of others on social topics and their role in equity, equality, and inclusion.
- Finish the Student Public Policy Forum this semester then work on getting my social worker certificate next semester.
- Think of the Elements of a Healthy Community model when I participate in conversations in Tucson Young Professionals.
- Advocate for community design projects that lead to better social and health outcomes.
- Advocate for access to counselors as a very important resource to students.
- Utilize methods of participation used by Arizona Town Hall in future public engagement activities.
- Network with Arizona Town Hall. The reason why it feels so overwhelming is because the issues are so big. With the support from Arizona Town Hall, we can feel a little bit less helpless.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
"CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"
FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALL
SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS**

COX Charities

TRBF

THOMAS R. BROWN FOUNDATIONS



Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

July 30, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

July 30, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Vibrant, healthy communities are the product of various elements that work together synergistically to promote individual and community health. There is significant economic opportunity in the Maricopa County region, as compared with other parts of the state. Development in the West Valley has been rapid, strong, and largely focused on economic development. As development continues it will be important to discuss the healthy communities wheel to be sure all the elements of community health are considered.

Economic prosperity is not as robust and universal as it might be. There are many pathways to education and workforce training, but there are also some challenges. For example, some children lack computer technology and broadband access that is needed to utilize educational resources. Simply being employed, if one must work two or three jobs to live, is not economic prosperity. For a community to be economically healthy working people should be able to earn a living wage.

Among the strengths of West Valley communities are the existence of programs such as food banks, meal delivery programs, and utility assistance. West-side communities are diverse, safe, and calm places where people can sit and talk with each other with relatively high degree of social cohesion. There is abundant, quality health care. There are many retirement communities with lots of ways to engage—fitness centers, rec centers, golf.

There are wonderful resources available in the West Valley, but there is room for improvement.

While there are many ways for people to connect, there are pockets of loneliness and isolation, and COVID-19 has made that worse. We need to find ways to connect with people who are not part of organized communities. There are a variety of health care resources available, but some people have difficulty accessing them or even finding them. There is a need for care coordination. Educational programs and services are not universally available and accessible, and more focus is needed on the issue of equity. West-side communities should become more engaged in joint planning and coordination to optimize their investments in the elements that support healthy communities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

COVID-19, and the significant disparity in death rates, have highlighted the disparate conditions prevalent in our society that affect health and wellbeing. Those who are most vulnerable have been impacted the hardest. The elements of health depicted on the wheel represent underlying conditions that contribute to chronic disease, and vulnerability to COVID-19.

The most vulnerable are highest at risk of not having, or losing, food, shelter, clothing, and health care. They are least likely to be employed securely, most likely to become unemployed in a downturn, and least likely to

be reemployed. They are most likely to suffer from chronic disease, and least likely to be educated about chronic conditions or to receive preventative care for those conditions. This is reflected in disparate death rates from COVID-19—8 per 100,000 in Maricopa County, 15 per 100,000 in Navajo Nation, 20 per 100,000 in Yuma County.

At the societal level, COVID-19 has damaged the social fabric. There is less social cohesion, and a greater sense of isolation. Although access to care is enhanced in some ways, such as through greater availability of telehealth, in others it has been diminished. It is projected that 30-50% of the nonprofits that provide services to the most vulnerable will go out of business in the next 6 months.

Sun Health, and other health care providers, are also directly affected by these conditions. Sun Health has a global work force that is affected by the conditions that create these disparities and the need to treat people coming from regions where health care is not generally available. The U.S. spends two-and-a-half times what other developed nations spend, but we have outcomes at bottom of pack. We need to look at where the money is going, spend more on social determinants of health and education, and spend less on administration and treatment. We need to prioritize educational programs that help people understand and deal with chronic underlying conditions.

TAKING ACTION

1. Make sure that members and residents are informed about health care programs and what Sun Health is doing to contribute to community health.
2. Based on the West Valley community needs assessments performed earlier this year – collaborate with community leaders and organizations on three key topics: chronic disease, access to care (1-800-I need help) and Alzheimer's.
3. Create a directory of like-minded organizations to facilitate communication and collaboration.
4. Create/enhance the pipeline of post-secondary educational opportunities to assure that there is a trained and educated workforce. Organizations like Sun Health can partner with educational institutions to provide opportunities for internships and mentoring.
5. Provide scholarships for students who otherwise could not afford to attend college to become trained as health care workers.
6. Refine the general ideas developed during this discussion into two or three specific proposals that can be presented to prospective partners for consideration and action.
7. Look ahead to evaluate and plan for a possible senior affordable housing crisis.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

August 27, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

August 27, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Several elements must come together to make a community healthy and vibrant. Robust educational and economic opportunities are especially important because they serve as “conduits” for other important elements.

With respect to educational opportunity, our community benefits from a shared understanding that our children deserve to grow up in healthy, vibrant communities. In that regard, multiple stakeholders are focused on the well-being of our children. Early childhood educators are deeply committed despite the many challenges facing their profession. We have a strong infrastructure in place, and know what we need to do to support young children, including to help them deal with trauma. More work needs to be done, however, to improve coordination among stakeholders, make our policies more cohesive, and optimize our financial and other resources to have greater impact.

Our community is strengthened by our commitment to each other, resiliency, and cultural cohesion. We also have good resources in the areas of transportation and parks and recreation, but there are inequities in those systems, and in other areas, that must be addressed to make our community healthier and more vibrant.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Poverty, systemic racism, and other pervasive disparities must be addressed to make the critical elements of healthy, vibrant communities accessible to everyone. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on these disparities, and the fact that they are the root cause of many of the other problems facing our communities. COVID-19 has also created additional trauma for our vulnerable populations, including our children, who are being deprived of critical developmental experiences.

To the extent that the pandemic has brought stark clarity to these systemic issues, we need to use that clarity as a turning point to improve the overall health of our communities. For example, we have become much more aware of our interdependence regardless of socio-economic status. Educators and childcare providers are now widely acknowledged to be “essential workers.” Finally, we better understand the interrelationships between the various elements of healthy, vibrant communities.

TAKING ACTION

Several important actions need to be taken to make our community healthier and more vibrant.

- As individuals, we need to:
 - recognize our own privilege, and how our circumstances may be different from the challenges faced by others;
 - make a commitment to listen to and understand each other;
 - educate ourselves about – and speak out on – systemic racism, social justice, economic inequality, and other issues affecting the health of our communities; and
 - be informed voters.
- As a community, we need to:
 - consider the educational needs of our children at all levels, and how we can provide appropriate opportunities to meet those needs even during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - enhance our data collection and analytic systems, which will equip us to improve educational opportunities and other elements of healthy communities;
 - focus on our interdependence and the resulting imperative to support each other;
 - make voting as accessible as possible; and
 - provide a “safe space” for community members to speak out on issues affecting the health of our communities.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the AzAEEYC Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Stand beside and speak out against racial and social injustice and stand back when necessary to amplify and elevate the voices of underrepresented community members.
- Work to make sure that once the Pandemic is over that we don't 'cover up' the things revealed during this period...and return to 'normal', forgetting about the great inequities we see.
- Commit to ensuring the voice of those impacted most by decision making is amplified and a key component of the process.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Arizona Association for the
Education of Young Children

American Planning Association Community Town Hall

September 11, 2020 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

American Planning Association Community Town Hall

September 11, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COVID-19 IMPACT ON PERSONAL GROOMING

The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in new grooming habits for those who work from home. Often those who work from home dress professionally only from the waist up with Shoes and socks optional. Others have not experienced any change—especially if they are in work environments that still require them to go into the office.

The new informality has impacted the way people engage with each other. Some people are more comfortable expressing their opinion virtually while others speak less and engage less.

Virtual meetings allow for more participation by people who would otherwise not have attended meetings. Although their participation tends to be passive listening.

So they may be more informed although we are nor always hearing their thoughts and input on public matters. When they do weigh in, the online format can cause some people to be harsher than they would be in person.

While technology has some benefits with increased passive participation, it can create barriers, especially for older residents of our communities. It can also be more challenging to get input through body language and other nonverbal means.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic and rising daily temperatures on Arizona have highlighted the need to address several areas for long range planning

Rural areas always have a shortage of healthcare providers. The pandemic has highlighted this disparity to access of care. It has also raised concerns about economic aspects that relate to tourism and winter visitors.

Rising temperatures mean that we need to address water needs and how to plan for public spaces. This may include for example, what plants to use for public landscapes and how to water them.

Given rising temperatures, planners should continue to encourage homeowners to use drought tolerant plants, trim trees, and take actions that reduce wildfires. To reduce the possibility of fires, we should look at volunteer groups who can assist residents in clearing their property support such volunteer groups as much as possible. We also should consider planning for wildfires, should they occur. Such planning includes how to effectively manage evacuations.

Rural areas of Arizona do not seem to have as many discussions or concerns about racial justice. These discussions appear to be more focused in the urban areas of Arizona.

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

September 30, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

September 30, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arizona as a state has an extraordinarily rich history and heritage that unites all of us. That includes rural and urban areas as well as reservations. We could leverage that rich heritage by using it in design of the built environment to create greater vibrancy within our communities.

Some of Arizona's other strengths include its population of young people, who are stepping up to take responsibility for their future and are taking action to improve conditions in the state. However, there is concern about a thread of ageism that has emerged in the wake of COVID-19, and we should also value the many contributions by and wisdom of seniors.

Arizona's education system could be a strength but is not universally excellent. Some parts of education system are excellent, others are not. There are some bright spots (there are some excellent charter schools, public schools, and universities) but the K-12 system is not universally excellent. It needs to be excellent throughout so that the benefits can be leveraged for everyone.

Where excellent education is available it is a powerful tool for community vibrancy. For example, Yuma is a border community with high poverty, under-employment, and an agricultural economy. But students who want post-secondary education to have great opportunities. There is a low dropout rate and high success rate, with all three state universities offering programs. This is part of a system that could be leveraged to improve the community.

Access to care is an important issue for Arizonans, but care is not equally accessible for all. In the southwest valley access to health care is exceptional. Sun Health knows what the community needs because it has been involved in providing health care from all sides. There are some challenges because some people do not have access to, or are not comfortable with, new technologies through which care is being provided. Mental health care is far less accessible than other forms of health care, and is relatively unavailable to certain populations, such as people in prisons.

Arizona communities strongly value and support public safety, public works and infrastructure, parks and recreation, the arts, and the natural beauty of the surrounding environment. It is important that Arizonans get involved in efforts to protect the environment, including parks, trails, and recreational amenities, which promote health and social cohesion.

Throughout Arizona affordability of housing is becoming a real issue. The lack of affordable housing has contributed to the problem of homelessness and poverty. Increasingly, landlords are refusing to rent to low-income persons. When the eviction moratorium ends this problem will likely get worse. We need to do more to provide for the construction of affordable housing and to assure that people who are experiencing poverty and homelessness get the help they need to find suitable housing.

There is a big difference between rural Arizona and urban Arizona for all the attributes on the wheel. In these times broadband infrastructure is critical for access to all the things that people need, including education and health care. We may need to find a way to fund satellite dishes for people living in rural areas to give them access to these amenities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Our society will be reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, both for good and for ill.

COVID-19 has acted like a huge magnifying glass bringing attention to and exacerbating inequities already existing in our communities. Tribal and lower-income communities and communities of color were harder hit than other communities. The disproportionate impact reflects the relative lack of investment over the years in the things that contribute to community health.

COVID-19 has created incredible stress on the innermost ring of the wheel. It demonstrates that everything is linked; we can't separate the facets of community health into separate topics. Shocks like the global pandemic will likely come more frequently, and we need to look to the experts and prepare to respond.

COVID-19 had huge impacts on the mental health of the community. There were insufficient mental health resources to begin with. Add to that the incredible stress of COVID-19-caused stress and uncertainty, people struggling with lack of access to health care, trying to work from home, struggling to help their children with homework, worrying about their jobs and their health. The result has been an increase in mental health issues and trauma, depression, suicide, and abuse. Schools are important sources of referrals for help for homelessness and abuse, but DCS referrals are down 90%. There is concern about domestic violence and child abuse that is occurring in the home while people are isolating. Among the homeless families at UMOM there have been ten deaths attributed to COVID-19-related trauma, including two youths aging out of foster care.

The isolation and loneliness associated with COVID-19 have also taken a toll, particularly on the elderly population. Many older individuals are tech-challenged, less able to connect with others via technologies such as Zoom, and thus may not have the ability to maintain social connections. This has caused widespread suffering for that population.

Other impacts of the pandemic have included a lack of access to quality and affordable food. Information should have been made more widely available in Spanish. There is a sense that the connection between people has eroded, and the bonds that tether our civil society have frayed. There is growing uncertainty about the reliability of information we receive from government, the media, and one another.

During the pandemic racial disparities have become more apparent. Seventy-five percent of homeless families are people of color. The scarcity of ventilators and other medical supplies and equipment on the reservation during the pandemic highlighted the pre-existing gap in access to health care resources. Once again rural areas were hurt worse because they have fewer financial resources.

COVID-19 has highlighted where there are gaps and weaknesses, but it has also allowed us to find ways to find new ways of doing things. The shift to online technologies for meetings and events has had some benefits, promoting easier connection for people who otherwise might lack access. COVID-19 has caused some organizations to revisit their missions and resulted in companies reinventing their service models and delivery methods and finding new ways of doing things. People are spending more time outdoors, for recreation and exercise. Some groups have created new rituals to connect people and lift their spirits, and some people have

found new ways to volunteer to help their neighbors. COVID-19 has created an opportunity for us to do the work of examining systemic racism and offers the hope that we will spend the time and energy required to make the changes that are needed to address that problem.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Establish broadband access across Arizona. The digital divide cuts across many issues. It impacts schools, economic development, and even things like food access. Yet there are parts of Arizona where there is NO internet access.

Expand resources for development of affordable housing. At the local level, identify, address, and mitigate barriers to affordable housing. Streamlining the process would expedite development considerably. The state should add more resources to the pot for development of affordable housing. One way to do this would be to restore the Housing Trust Fund, which was swept by the Legislature in 2008. At the federal level encourage the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to bring more resources than the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to development of affordable housing.

Restore funding to the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund (\$10 million per year). This would provide a source of revenues for communities that want to invest in their heritage through restoration of historic buildings.

Realign funding for education and training at the state level so that everyone in Arizona has the tools they need for economic opportunity and self-sufficiency.

Fully fund our education system, including counselors. Schools are vital societal hubs as well as centers of learning.

Address the issue of childhood poverty through the lens of the wheel. Every meeting room at every level of government should have a poster of the wheel and come to understand the concepts involved in getting out of silos and addressing problems holistically.

Take what we have learned from the COVID-19 crisis and use the information to prepare for future challenges. Engage the public in conversations about the issue of community health to apply these lessons and make decisions in context.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Go to boards that I am part of and raise these issues (and the wheel) to be discussed.
- Encourage the State Land Department to be more active in working with communities on annexation of land, specifically in Oro Valley.
- Work to bring Arizona Town Hall to the community of Oro Valley.

- Be very loud with Arizona legislators about the need for internet accessibility.
- Continue working with leadership at ADOH to find ways we can leverage Historic Tax Credits with LITC to adaptively reuse significant heritage assets in our communities to address the affordable housing crisis.
- Align state funding to metrics that require school districts that require higher level off graduates that are job or college ready. Continue to work to create those pathways within the curriculum.
- Add the topics discussed today on every non-profit board I serve on, and to encourage my fellow board members to review and update their bylaws, policies, and procedures to effect needed change.
- Print out an 8-1/2 by 11 copy of the wheel and send it out to mayor, council members, and school board members with a letter educating them about the issues.
- Commit to raising awareness on these issues.
- Use my school platforms and programs to have healthy dialogue and debate.
- Commit to promoting this wheel with my community and school programs as well.
- As a volunteer, I will work with partners in Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties to hold Community Town Hall meetings on Creating Vibrant Communities.
- Continue to advocate for additional resources and strategies to increase affordable housing.
- Reach out periodically to older people who are isolated and help them get up to speed on Zoom.
- Engage with fellow board members on the foundation I am part of in Flagstaff to use the Healthy Communities wheel to direct our funds to the greatest needs.
- Become more aware of the needs in my community which might be addressed by working with Arizona Town Hall.
- Focus more on the gaps limiting our town's success, particularly those that have become more acute do to COVID-19!
- Periodically reach out to isolated seniors and try to assist them in accessing technology and knowledge for zoom video communications so they can connect with family, friends, religious services, healthcare, etc.
- Print out the wheel and send it, with a cover letter, to my state legislators, my city council person, and perhaps school board members.
- Share what I learned during the Sun Health Town Hall with others in my community.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 14, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 14, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Different regions within Arizona have different community strengths that contribute to community health. For example, Green Valley, a senior community in rural Pima County, doesn't have all the bells and whistles that are present in larger communities, but it does have a caring population that looks out for one another. They can build on these strengths by reaching out to community leaders, so they are reaching out to their constituents to assure that they are caring for themselves and one another.

Flagstaff has a free drop-in youth center that offers recreation for youth as well as scholarships. Surprise in the west valley is a very safe community that is diverse in age and ethnic background with a great deal of open space and parks and plenty of health care systems. The Veterans Heritage Project works with the school systems. Rural northern Arizona is the tourism center for Arizona and people live there by choice. Geographic centers in this region are quite diverse. The region has major universities and education centers, and adequate health care.

In Yuma, due to distance from other urban centers, they grow their own programs, tapping into the resources of the state's universities and the benefits of the border economy. There is a need for more youth and senior recreation programs. Yuma benefits from an influx of winter visitors, and the ability to access health care resources on both sides of the border.

COVID-19 has had an impact on community strengths. Volunteerism, a traditional strength in many communities, has been reduced because of COVID-19. Although efforts are being made to work around these challenges, the overall level of volunteer service, particularly by older Arizonans, has been reduced. COVID-19 has also impacted sexual and domestic violence shelter programs, due to distancing requirements, isolation, and lack of reporting. Some businesses and employers are taking advantage of desperate employees who may fear loss of job more than the trauma of abuse.

Some felt there was is generally broad and equal access to health care throughout their communities. Others felt that there is not equal access to health care, particularly in rural areas, where there are fewer health care providers and specialists, and for low-income populations and the homeless. While there may be plenty of health care providers and facilities, if you do not have the resources to access and pay for these services, they are not accessible, and it cannot be said that access is equitable. In rural communities there are additional challenges such as lack of transportation and unavailability of access to digital resources, such as broadband internet.

Communities could reduce health care costs and improve access to health care if they find ways to keep our populations healthy instead of waiting until people become ill from the many social conditions that affect health and then treating illness once it occurs. Spending money in advance on efforts to address background environmental conditions may avoid the need to pay for expensive in-hospital care. More collaboration, bringing government, nonprofits, and volunteers together to address conditions that are harmful to health, could produce big dividends. A greater focus on nutrition and exercise has emerged in response to COVID-19, and this could produce longer term benefits for community health.

Broadband internet services keep people connected to one another and to vital community telehealth services, particularly in rural areas, and help keep people healthier and reduce the demand on more expensive inpatient services. Investment in greater access to broadband throughout Arizona would offer many other benefits, including connecting students and families to their schools, and making it possible for employees to work from home.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has both created new problems and exposed the weaknesses in systems, and magnified problems that already existed.

Systemic racism has become a focus during the pandemic, but it was a pre-existing condition that has needed to be addressed for many years. The pandemic has further eroded the trust minority communities have in systems that should be there to help them, such as law enforcement. The virus has affected different segments of the community differently. This should have raised sensitivity to the differences in conditions affecting these communities, including circumstances such as racism, poverty, lack of access to broadband, and safe housing and health care services. It has also called attention to the fact that white people are in the position to make decisions and all too often people of color are not. We need to work harder to include people of color in decision-making and discussions at all levels. Unfortunately, there are still many people who are unaware of these discrepancies and the need to address the problems of systemic racism.

COVID-19 has also undermined the bonds that connect us and protect us. There is concern that children and other vulnerable individuals are suffering because of the isolation caused by COVID-19. Adverse Childhood Experiences, domestic violence, abuse, and neglect are occurring in secret, not reported because victims are removed from view and mandatory reporters, and there is potential for life-long harm. Frustration and fear that parents feel are transferred to children. They know something is wrong. Inability to have normal social interaction is not good for their health. Children are in danger of losing their sense of safety and stability. What are we doing to help build resilience while children are not connected to the teachers and other helpers with whom they normally have regular interactions?

The disconnection from schools has even more serious consequences for communities of color. These communities may be more dependent on schools for educational resources and access to social services, and for engagement with the larger community. They may have fewer resources at home and may be disproportionately affected by the disconnection.

There is concern that COVID-19 is having a profound impact on community health. Viewed from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, COVID-19 is affecting the most basic human needs for safety and security. People are afraid of dying from COVID-19, so they avoid seeking needed medical care, and are dying at home instead. People are affected by fear and need to find a way to get back to providing safe access to food, lodging, water, and meeting other basic needs across the diverse spectrum of population. COVID-19 has also caused economic injury to the business community and at home. In rural northern Arizona average wages can't compete with unemployment payments, making it difficult to get people to come back to work.

One way to address systemic racism in the context of the pandemic is to take it into account in setting our priorities for action when addressing issues affecting community health.

Stronger as One mental health and wellness.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Participants would tell Arizona's elected leaders:

1. End the digital divide by developing a plan and providing the funding to invest wisely in state-of-the-art internet infrastructure for the whole state, including the reservations and small rural communities. Internet is like a utility, and these communities have the same needs as big cities. This will help with education, employment, social connectivity, virtual care for health care, and calls for help by victims of abuse and neglect. Austerity should not be the overarching criterion for this plan. Communities should be engaged in a collaborative effort to develop the plan to consider the unique needs and characteristics of each region. This initiative should be carried out at the state level, led by the Governor's office, and funded by the Legislature. Perhaps we could build on Proposition 123 funding for this purpose. To increase the likelihood that the Governor and the Legislature will act, individuals and communities must demonstrate their support for the plan.
2. Be inclusive. You represent the whole community, not just the people who voted for you or contributed to your campaign. You are role models for the entire community. You should make everyone in the community feel needed and cared for.
3. Finish the I-17 corridor, which includes broadband internet. This would extend the I-19 to the I-10 segment from the international border in southern Arizona to Maricopa County, and the I-17 corridor north from Maricopa County to Nevada.
4. Foster collaboration and inclusivity through meaningful incentive programs.
5. Healthy communities are comprised of more than just one thing. They need arts, culture, health care, and transportation. They are affected by changing conditions and shifting priorities. Needs and priorities vary from town to town, and region to region. Listen to individual communities when determining community needs.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- To get things done we must collaborate, plan, and recruit a champion to advocate effectively to governmental leaders.
- Instead of waiting to respond to crises, we should invest in preventative measures to address social problems in each community before they become a crisis.
- Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG) is writing a recovery and resilience plan addressing all the issues addressed today and will apply for federal funds to leverage as much private sector investment as possible.
- Better Together, a grassroots organization in Green Valley that meets periodically, will continue to work to raise funds to provide internet access for school children.

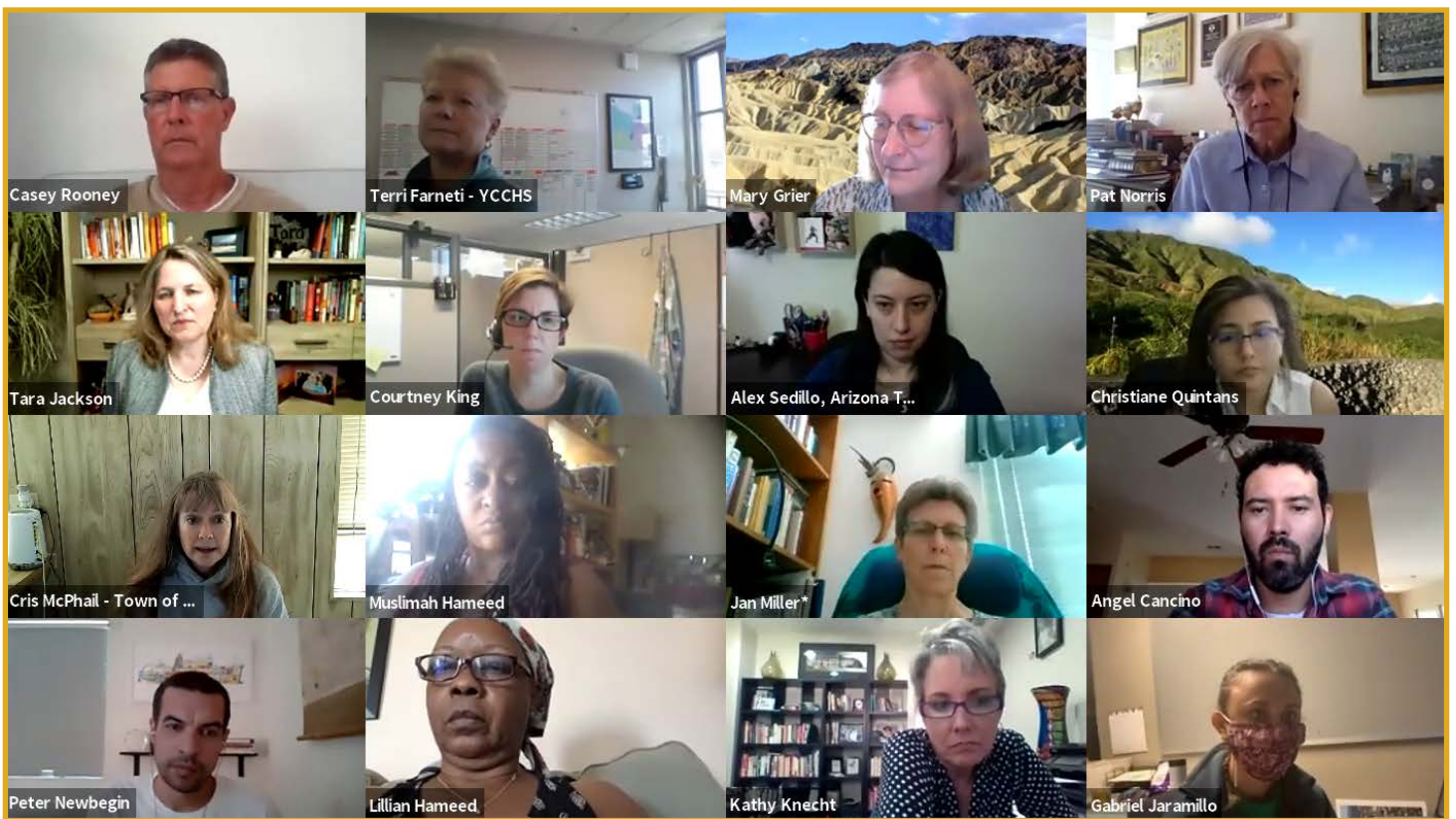
- Continue to use my voice and privilege to advocate for investment and attention into prevention programs to decrease future crises.
- Continue to speak up about things that are relevant, whether in my personal life or in my family.
- I've been working on this issue for a few months already. I've had conversations with the Chambers of Commerce, Greater Phoenix Leadership, the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits, Arizona Grantmakers Forum, Arizona Public Health Association, League of Cities, Arizona Association of Counties, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Arizona Commerce Authority, Valley Leadership, and more.
- Commit to voting thoughtfully in each and every election.
- Continue to participate in future Town Halls and share information with others. I will also bring youth to the table as often as possible.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 22, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 22, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arizona communities vary in their individual strengths and their focus on those strengths as starting points for discussion about community health.

In Southern Arizona social and cultural cohesion is the starting point and foundation for building cooperation and collaboration across sectors to improve the community and community health. Additional strengths of Southern Arizona are environmental quality and the proximity to national parks.

In the Northwest Valley of the Phoenix Metro Area one thing that shines is the regional focus on access to parks and recreation. Municipalities have invested in the infrastructure that allows people to participate in affordable sports and exercise, including both large and small community parks, sports facilities, and trails.

In Camp Verde quality of life is front and center. There is a growing collaboration with the Yavapai-Apache Nation which has brought out the best qualities of the different segments of the community, including respect for elders. Transportation systems are another strength in this region, including planned trails that provide access to recreational facilities. This system supports robust employment and a thriving tourism industry.

In the West Valley, there is access to health care facilities and excellent education. West-MEC is a great strength in this region.

During the pandemic the lack of access to digital resources, including computers and internet, has been identified as a gap to be addressed for some segments of the community. It is important to find ways for students and others to connect outside the classroom, for social and emotional health. Schools have been forced to address this need so that students can continue their education while isolated. Another aspect of this issue is the relative unavailability of internet connectivity in rural areas at a time when the pandemic has increased demand. In Prescott Valley where many people are moving into the community, people are reluctant to meet in person due to the pandemic. This creates a need for virtual meetings such as this town hall.

One thing Arizona communities have in common is their interest in leveraging scarce resources and building on their strengths to optimize community health. Several examples illustrate the opportunities for such efficiencies.

By treating mental health problems rather than criminalizing them, we can save substantial sums and improve outcomes.

One police department has developed a successful trauma care program where police communicate information about children who have suffered trauma to schools and child safety agencies.

Schools and libraries are community hubs that already serve as resources and might be leveraged to do even more. The Phoenix public libraries sponsor myriad programs that benefit the public and promote literacy. Most people trust and respect libraries, find them safe and comfortable places to go. Schools are places where

families are used to coming and might be leveraged to provide access to different types of information and services families need. We could build on these resources as sources of community strength and connection. However, we should not expect teachers, schools, and libraries to take on new and additional responsibilities without providing additional funding.

In leveraging scarce resources data sharing across communities will be essential.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

COVID-19 has shined a light on existing economic disparities affecting Arizona's communities. Primary among these are the lack of access to health care and affordable housing for some segments of the community. Health care is a complex issue. Many people lack meaningful access to quality care. Even those who have insurance may have difficulty finding a provider who will accept it. There is also a shortage of affordable housing that has put many families and seniors in a desperate situation.

Lack of access to childcare is another issue that has been aggravated by shutdown of K-12 schools. Many people cannot afford or do not have access to childcare that would allow them to continue working during the pandemic or are not comfortable with the quality or conditions of the care that is available to them.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the ongoing problems of K-12 education funding. For example, some teachers laid off during the pandemic discovered that they made more on unemployment than when teaching. The lack of access to broadband internet and computer technology for some students has underscored the impact of poverty and lack of resources on educational opportunity for some communities.

People of color are disproportionately affected by all these issues. The history of red lining and segregation has kept communities of color in "less desirable areas," with fewer resources and investment to make them better. There has been widespread denial of systemic racism. COVID-19 has brought greater public attention to and acknowledgement of the disparities affecting communities of color and the impacts of racism on these communities as well as the need for reform.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

When things get tough, communities cut back. In the COVID-19 era cutting back is not the answer. Instead, we need to provide more services, particularly to communities of color and lower income communities. Problems tend to grow and have ripple effects.

We need to do something for special populations, including people with disabilities, seniors, and youth.

Collaborate. Figure out how to collaborate across parties, levels of government and different sectors of stakeholders.

Engage more of the community in this discussion about how many elements of healthy communities interact.

Put partisanship aside, find common ground, listen to all people and groups. You represent ALL people in your community, even those who didn't vote for you.

As architects of communities designed to produce disparities, take responsibility for the outcomes, instead of blaming the residents of communities that have been deprived of the resources they need to thrive. You can change the outcomes by reversing course and providing more resources to historically underfunded communities.

Stop cutting taxes. Our state budget is about the size of Wyoming's. Their population is just under 600,000, ours is 7 million. Hundreds of millions of dollars are missing from our communities every year because of the tax cuts. We need to fund basic services such as public education.

Get out into the community. Visit people where they live, and see how they live, before you make decisions about their lives.

Have some integrity. Be honest. Build trust. Don't make promises you don't intend to keep. Stand up for what you believe is right.

Reach out beyond the people who voted for you, to educate the entire community, engage them in the public process, support and connect them with one another. Respond to constituent needs and requests, particularly from vulnerable groups.

Continually work toward more civil discourse. Communication may be blocked when people fear aggressive response from others.

TAKING ACTION

We all cannot do everything but we ALL can do something! We can make a difference together.

Encourage people to find ways to stay active during these times.

Be compassionate and kind share what you can.

Vote. Run for office. Get involved in civic organizations and civil discussions of public issues. Encourage organizations in which you are involved to become more diverse and representative. Promote civic engagement in the community.

This Domestic Violence Prevention month remember to check in on your friends, especially seniors, who are still relatively isolated. In Yavapai County they are reaching out to seniors and teens with care packages.

Combat violence and hatred by taking actions that give the world hope. Even simple actions such as picking up trash, or speaking up about something that is wrong, make a difference.

Foster positive peace, by encouraging people to foster one another. Take a meal to an isolated senior, or a homeless person.

Multigenerational efforts such as the cyber-Seniors program and youth teaching seniors, and community building physically and access technologically, are beneficial in preventing walls being built. Tutoring offers face-to-face connection for some students that is a powerful boost for their personal and educational success.

Community engagement is a first step, but engagement alone is not enough. Community empowerment must follow, and it is much harder because it involves the person or group in authority giving up power.

Education and communication are key to activating change. We need to find ways to engage those who are disengaged. Inclusion is a privilege that has great value. Some strategies to consider include changing the timing and location of meetings so that more of the people affected by the decisions being made can participate.

We also need to motivate those who are comfortable and feel no need for change to become more open to empowering others for the good of the larger community. People show up and take actions when something personally affects them. Reframing the message, perhaps by providing information about how improving conditions for others will positively affect them personally, is one strategy that may motivate them.

Become aware of our own implicit biases and create awareness of these issues in others. Encourage dialogue about these issues within family and community groups.

Governmental organizations can implement better communication processes. Some communities have policy workers set up informal events such as "Speak with a Planner" or local official to have community events where they just update in informal settings such as bars, once the COVID-19 threat is diminished.

Organizations should be open to conducting self-assessments, to identify their own implicit biases and to improve their efforts to become more inclusive.

We should resist the "us vs. them" paradigm and build community through listening and learning. Our objective should be to listen and learn, not to tolerate but to understand, to accept and value one another's differences.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

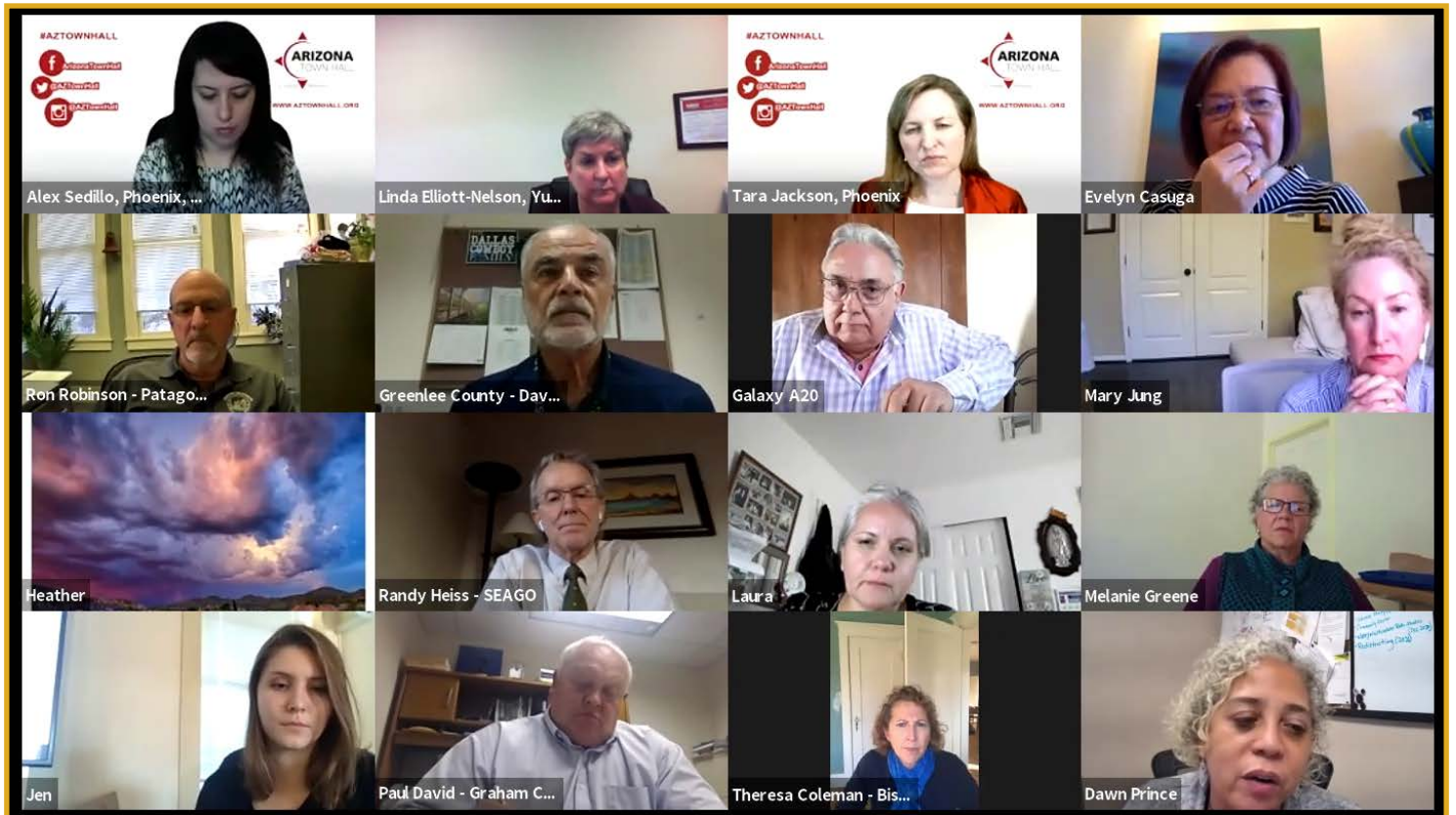
- Continue to tutor neighborhood K-12 children who need a personal connection to reach their educational goals.
- Continue to reach out in listening, mentoring and educating with respect to friends and neighbors!
- Bring listening and learning to the West Valley. Grow multiculturally rich programming in the West Valley. Run for office. Seek ways to promote positive peace.
- Reach out to the City of Phoenix vs. Neighborhood Board in dealing with the issues regarding the problems we are experiencing with our current HOA board.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall

November 20, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall

November 20, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the four counties in Southeast Arizona, there are a number of strong community elements present that keep our area resilient despite the tough year we are experiencing with the current pandemic and national concerns. In general, there is sufficient access to quality affordable food in the area. In the community of Bisbee, there are steps to provide outreach support services from local volunteers and organizations to help their neighbors and decrease food waste. Willcox has groups that have come together and prioritized accessible food pantries for providing food to those in need. There is significant social and cultural cohesion in the region with collaboration between different segments of the population. There is economic opportunity with large employers, although driving some distance to work is necessary. Cochise College helps with providing an educated workforce in the region with different vocational and academic options for residents.

Access to care, however, is a challenge. There are healthcare facilities, but often higher access to care requires traveling to another location, which causes stress with patients and their families. One community has focused on advocacy for seniors and the disabled population to provide better access to care and has done so through C.A.R.E.S. Act funding and working with the hospitals and city governments. Community health improvement plans in one area discovered a capacity issue with people able to solve issues at the community level. This finding helped create the Cochise Leadership Capacity, a nine-week course, which has led to bring community members together to become leaders and to create solutions to problematic issues. City government, such as the Willcox government, has prioritized economic development and increasing opportunities for jobs, the arts, and opportunities for youth.

Housing, however, has become more of an area of concern due to gentrification and stratification in some communities. Residents with fixed incomes have no elasticity in their purchasing power and have reached a crisis mode for their basic needs. In Bisbee, there is underutilized property, which is an issue, and is being addressed in various ways.

There are cross-border activities with Mexico, which have engaged communities, and have benefited both sides of the border. Engaging the region's population with neighboring Sonora has helped engage our communities. Economic development has been an area of focus throughout the years. The pandemic has had a negative effect on all communities in this area. Through government funding, a number of businesses have been helped. Communities that have historically depended on tourism had to virtually shut down during the pandemic, but with assistance are slowly coming back.

Overall, Southeast Arizona is located in a beautiful environment, which provides rivers, mountains, the desert, and great weather that residents appreciate.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic has had significant impact the communities in Southeastern Arizona. Communities have had to decrease services and, in some cases, close services such as parks, public restrooms, and events.

There is concern that students are falling behind in education and may lose a year or more in schooling and their overall development. In particular in rural areas, there is a lack of regular, stable access to the internet and educational services so necessary for learning during the pandemic. In some circumstances, schools have not developed a well-designed educational experience and have lost enrollment to other entities. The adaptation to distance schooling has had a mental health impact on youngsters due to the lack of a social life outside of home and the instability of education access.

This level of stress has also reached families and our aged population. Older adults may not have experience interacting with technology and don't know how to access services, which causes stress and social isolation. Bringing younger students and the older population together is a possible solution to help bridge the technology gap.

However, people are scared to go outside. The pandemic has created an overall mental health situation, which has stressed the entire population.

TAKING ACTION

This area has a board that has helped develop a roadmap with action items that include many elements of the vibrant communities wheel. In Bisbee, the library has served the community in several ways as a disseminator of information from various services that assist the community with mental health, stress, education information, and more. It important that residents know that in this difficult time, it is okay to reach out for help. Our governments and other organizations can assist people with classes and information on health cooking, mental health, and other areas to build self-resiliency.

The Council on Aging helps with resources for older adults. The more information that can be shared, the better this council can help the elderly. Bringing younger students and the elderly together is an action that can help with resiliency for both of these groups.

We should look back on the pandemic experience to better prepare ourselves to address future challenges. Some areas hit significantly by the pandemic included healthcare, transportation, and education.

People need to feel more connected. The pandemic has isolated residents even though they appreciate their independence. Economic opportunities can be made more visible and enable businesses to connect as well. The SEAGO Economic Advisory Council creates a platform and a space for developers to connect and share information about resources and training. Open dialogue and supporting each other is essential. We all can help. The entire community needs to identify and bridge the gaps that exist.

Communities and organizations have searched for and found funding for projects that help our communities and also put people to work. Some examples include housing and sidewalk improvements.

We are learning from crises created by the pandemic and can move forward. SEAGO's strategic planning efforts can help Southeast Arizona going into the future and find and be the helpers for all of our communities.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Assist with the reopening of a community development center.
- Build in individual self-reliance and resiliency using government resources/funding.
- Become a Cochise Leadership Academy mentor/cohort, continue working with nonprofits, and help build ground up community resiliency.
- Keep applying for monetary support for nonprofits I am associated with.
- Lead by example. Instead of working for "A" community, work with ALL communities.
- Make myself more available through phone calls, going on site, working with the mayor and council and other departments and community members.
- Advocate for the senior population and do my best not to get dragged down by negativity (political or otherwise).
- Continue the work I already do and double-down on the efforts.
- Continue to help in what ways I can like picking up groceries for seniors and others.
- Strategize where funding is best applied to help low-income families (like for sports, devices, internet, etc.).
- Volunteer more in community and be more visible.
- We have an excellent aging council with 17 members who are active in their communities and bring back information that has been shared with them. I will give those members additional information to take back to their communities and connect youth with seniors.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



**SouthEastern Arizona
Governments Organization**



ARIZONA COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF THE GILA VALLEY

Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall

December 16, 2020 – Online via Zoom





Creating Vibrant Communities

Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall

December 16, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

The program was opened by the Prescott Commission on Well-Being with welcoming remarks by Peg Travers, Vice Commissioner, and topic introduction by John Murphy, Chairman. The goal of the Commission is to make Prescott America's premier city of well-being. As reflected by the Commission's logo, depicted above left, the key to well-being is balance. Prescott is already considered to be in the top ten communities for well-being. Nonetheless, participants repeatedly voiced concern about heightened political divisiveness and the need to create a safe welcoming place for people of diverse cultures, races, and beliefs. The question now is what can be done to increase well-being for all. One ultimate objective of this quest for well-being is the creation of a sense of community.

Dr. Hojat Askari of Thumb Butte Medical Center explained that to create a sense of community, every year he donates over 1,000 meals to needy people in the community. This is just one of the ways in which Dr. Askari has contributed to the community and his participation in building the community is greatly appreciated. Dr. Askari noted the importance of prevention as part of community well-being and spoke about the impacts of the current pandemic and community-based efforts to address the pandemic.

Courtney Osterfelt, director of the Launch Pad Teen Center, introduced two youth leaders Reilley Phelan and Emma Wymore who spoke about their recent event "Better Together." Concerned about the impacts of racism and privilege and political and cultural differences, they sought to engage youth in conversations about social justice issues, to encourage youth to become more inclusive, and to give them tools to be more effective in communicating across differences.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE PRESCOTT COMMUNITY

Prescott is a vibrant community with many fun, cultural events to engage residents and visitors. There are opportunities for volunteer service and social engagement, strong community support for schools, and generous and caring community outreach efforts to help those in need. Prescott has a strong community of volunteers who want to make a difference. There is an incredible generosity of spirit, with people who are willing to step up and get involved in a hands-on way. That helps to build a stronger community, bringing unique talents together to build stronger relationships and foundation. Prescott's greatest treasure is the people who live here.

Another strength of Prescott is that it is a safe, low-crime community. People feel safe and are more welcoming as a result.

Another of Prescott's great strengths is its geography and climate. There are over 100 miles of trails for hiking and numerous parks for recreation, and they are well used.

One of Prescott's strengths is the ability of its residents to inspire one another. There is talent, intelligence, care, and passion residing in the local community. Prescott has its own local versions of Brene Brown and Tony Robbins, and some of the world's best musicians live in this community. The youth who are working to engage the community in discussion about contentious issues, and their courage in addressing issues affecting people of color in a largely white community, are also a source of inspiration.

Prescott has cross-sector partnerships, and these partnerships create successful relationships with people, and lead to a healthy community. The whole-person approach to wellness is the wave of the future but that requires having the hard conversation about why some people are entitled to health care and others are not. Change is hard, but it is achievable if we make the effort to connect with one another across boundaries to address issues that might seem intractable but can change if there is will and effort.

There is a perception, nevertheless, that Prescott government and social networks are somewhat closed, in other words, an insider's network. While there are supportive relationships and other elements of a healthy community within different sub-communities, those sub-communities are sometimes disconnected. For the health of the larger community, Prescott needs to identify common goals between and among its separate groups and establish processes for engaging all members of the community in an open and transparent way.

Events like the protest on the square this summer provide the opportunity for learning and growth. While the white residents of Prescott may not perceive racism as a particular problem in Prescott, the young people participating in the protest were responding to what they perceived as the pain of people of color living in the community, and many of them experienced violent assaults and threats because of their peaceful protest. There is a need to improve communication and understanding, tolerance and acceptance of people with different cultures, languages, beliefs, religions, and goals. Prescott is working hard to create unity within the community, but it can and should do better.

Financial security provides the foundation for the other components of well-being. Unfortunately, some people face challenges in this area, but those who are less well-off are marginalized and often isolated. This is another area that warrants attention. Prescott should invest in programs that address the needs of the less fortunate such as affordable housing, public transit, access to care, and drug abuse prevention, particularly programs that target fentanyl.

Prescott should engage more youth and capitalize on the energy and enthusiasm of its youth. One way to do this would be to bring together caring adult members of the community to engage in discussions and other activities with teens. For example, there are plans to bring back a community garden, which could engage

community members across the age spectrum. The median age of Prescott is 58 and 92% are white. Most downtown events are geared to this age group and tourism revenue. More diverse, youth-oriented events in the downtown area rather than on the fringes of town—Dia de los Muertos, pow wows, Scottish highlander festival, Pride Day events, and other youth-oriented events would help create a more inclusive community.

While engaging youth the talents of the older population should not be overlooked. Prescott could take better advantage of the wisdom and experience of its seniors to serve as volunteers, mentors, and engaged residents in service of community efforts. Many older people are able and eager to serve others and this population is a great untapped resource that could be leveraged for good. Pairing this population with teens could create an amazingly effective volunteer force. The schools could be an excellent place for this activity to occur. An added benefit of this pairing would be to create ongoing relationships between younger and older people, increasing the likelihood that young people will find reasons to remain in the community after they graduate from high school.

Excellent schools are another great resource of the Prescott community. They should be a focus of connection for the community and should continue to be supported financially and with volunteer service activities.

We need to have serious conversations about these issues and come up with an action plan to make changes happen.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

A key factor in resilience is a strong, united, compassionate community. Some groups in Prescott stepped up to promote public health and safety in the wake of COVID-19 in significant ways. For example, Prescott Indivisible and Democratic Women of the Prescott Area (DWPA) spearheaded two mask programs—delivering over 10,000 masks made by community members to the Navajo Nations and Masks for Safe Schools. The quad city area has been engaged in preparing a community health assessment for some time. It is available at <https://www.yavapai.us/Portals/39/Quad-Cities-CHIP.pdf>. COVID-19 has made clear how interconnected health issues are, and how much comorbidities affect health. Many agencies are already doing work on community health issues and should reach out and connect with one another. Those with resources should reach out to these agencies to provide funding and other resources.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred in a poisonous and divisive political environment. This has magnified the impacts to individual and community health. Political divisions, illustrated, for example, by political signs, separate neighbors, foster tribalism, and lead to resentments. These divisions have also undermined the will of political leaders to enforce public health measures, such as the wearing of masks and social distancing requirements. Indeed, some individuals wearing masks in restaurants and stores have reported being bullied and fear retaliation. People report not feeling safe because these basic public health measures are not being observed. One group that sought to promote support for loving your neighbor by publishing a letter to that effect in the local newspaper was told that its members should fear for their lives if the letter was published with attribution.

Those who run care institutions were busy before the crisis hit. They have become busier throughout the crisis, in some cases as a coping mechanism. Despite their hard work and expertise their advice has been ignored or rejected. Many are approaching physical and mental burnout. The Recreation Services Department has also

struggled with keeping volunteers engaged while not sacrificing their health since the majority are in a high-risk age category.

In this environment people who are self-isolating to avoid contagion, and caregivers of vulnerable people in special care settings, suffer mental and emotional health impacts. They feel isolated and without community. They feel sad, unsafe, and unsupported. These circumstances have enabled them to understand a little of what people of color must feel living in Prescott.

One take-away is that people should reach out to their neighbors with grace to heal these divisions and repair relationships.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

You must listen, and leadership must reflect everybody. Set your personal beliefs aside, and lead for the benefit of the community. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Be involved. Join in. Be present when local leaders are crafting plans for the community. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Have some courage and lead, even if it's not popular. Do the moral thing, the right thing. (All levels.)

Certain things that are best for the community must be mandated, even though constituents don't like mandates. (All levels.)

Make a place for young people that is equitable. Be inclusive, not ageist. (All levels.)

Lead with values. Define community good, out loud, repeatedly. Lead by example. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Include in the strategic plan a statement against racism and in support of increasing diversity, inclusion, and equity. (City Council.)

Work together. (Local.)

Lead by example. (All levels.)

Collaborate with the private sector to find ways to change people's habits. (All levels.)

Take measures to help people improve physical well-being, such as strengthening their immune systems. (Local.)

Listen to Arizona Town Hall and its reports. Participants at Arizona Town Hall are your constituents. When they are unhappy ballot measures are the result. Work across the aisle for the good of all. (State).

TAKING ACTION

The most important actions to make the Prescott community more vibrant:

- Understand that the world is getting more diverse. Prescott can't stop this and needs to deal with it.
- Showcase the beauty of Prescott by, for example, creating a socially distanced hydration hike.
- Preserve open spaces.
- Keep water in our lakes for the birds. We have several Important Bird Areas (IBA) here in Prescott. We need to continue to care for our lakes.
- Create better transportation options.
- Create more trails for people with disabilities
- Put in parking meters that take credit cards but would allow two hours of free parking. This would eliminate some of the traffic, congestion, and pedestrian/bike/auto accidents that occur.
- Set up lines of communication between different organizations including the city and law enforcement.
- Create more outdoor spaces for the community to use to socialize.
- Have community meetings moderated by professionals.
- Make our community a walkable city like Europe.
- Communication is critical.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Promote movement and the importance of hydration.
- Continue to encourage wearing of masks and will always wear my mask when out in public.
- Commit to always working to call out and eradicate racism and bigotry.
- Meet with neighbors again in our back yards when it is safe and focus on all the things, we are together on.
- Host a quarterly neighborhood potluck.
- Do all I can to help mentor young people, academically and professionally, to make them the best leaders they can be. The planet needs them right now!
- Strike up a socially distanced conversation with whomever you see. Say hi.
- Continue our work with the Launch Pad Teen Center and Teen Advisory Committee. We look forward to organizing more events like "Better Together" for youth and adults to advocate for inclusivity and bettering communication skills.

- Keep an eye on our next-door neighbor and help if and when we can.
- Get Tara Jackson to speak about the Arizona Town Hall on our podcast!
- Through the Launch Pad Teen Center, commit to organizing more community education and connection programs.
- Continue to conduct a meditation class weekly.
- Continue to work with the Prescott Commission on Well-Being to improve well-being.
- Listen to the community and try to help.
- COMMUNICATE!

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

March 6, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

March 6, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Early childhood education (ECE) creates the foundation for a vibrant community. It all starts with the home, which must be a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. In the absence of such homes, the community suffers. From infancy and throughout childhood, parents must build trust with their children. A healthy start and a safe environment are essential for children to be able to grow and learn. ECE programs help children to develop trust and a sense of safety by supporting parents in several ways. These programs provide resources and connections for parents that enable them to grow as individuals, parents, and contributors to their community.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are an obstacle to a vibrant and resilient community. ECE is an early intervention that can reduce the negative impact of ACEs, providing a strong foundation for our children's future that allows them to overcome obstacles and contribute to a more vibrant community. The entire ECE community can empower and uplift children to envision themselves as more than their situation, thereby giving future generations the ability to break the cycles of poverty and trauma.

All the people we care for are becoming part of our community. By developing people, we are developing our community. Early educators have the most important role in brain building, helping children develop the skills that are the building blocks of life. These skills include the foundation of ethics, principles, awareness, tolerance, and acceptance. Quality programs and interaction with other peers help children figure things out on their own, become more open minded, and develop social skills and friendships. Critical thinking, interpersonal and communications skills, self-regulation, and overall brain development are all associated with education, childcare, and pre-school. As adults, we want the neighbor with whom we can have a conversation about a barking dog and a clerk who engages in eye contact and says, "Hello, how's your day?" We want kindness and respect, acceptance, inclusion, understanding, and empathy. These are all elements of a vibrant community.

Early childhood educators have information and resources to strengthen family connections, events, and communities. Parents often do not know where to go for help. Parent engagement is important in the education process, and parent education is an important component of the system. Parents can, and must, teach their children important skills at home such as reading, art, and creative play. Parents also need to be informed about opportunities that may help their children's development, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and developmentally appropriate activities. Working together, parents and educators can create a community of learners.

The early childhood community brings people together. Parents meet other parents and collaborate in the interest of promoting their child's development. They develop friendships and become advocates for the wellbeing of both their children and their community. Early education that focuses on appreciating diversity is one of the best tools to increase vibrancy and resiliency. It is critically important to instill an open and inclusive mindset, to allow children to make messes, and to help them learn creative skills.

In thinking about ECE, it is important to look beyond Head Start programs, and to include other providers. Head Start only serves about 25% of children. We need to find ways to share the great qualities that Head Start brings to early childhood education with the rest of the industry. Programs such as First Things First that seek to improve the quality of early childhood education across the board are a good start.

We are not creating products. We are creating people and people make up our community. By providing greater support to ECE, we can increase the vibrancy of our communities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

ECE is important to our communities because it strengthens families and improves parenting. It helps children develop skills, teaches them how to adapt, become more curious, increase their awareness of the world, and become involved. However, ECE was not appropriately funded before the pandemic, and we cannot allow a return to inadequate funding. It is important that legislators understand the economic and societal impacts of in-person ECE programs. Virtual learning is not effective for young children, so we must get them back in programs that provide in-person learning. To do that, we need well-funded programs.

We need to increase advocacy in the legislature on behalf of young children and those who care for and educate them. Personal stories from constituents provide a powerful message to motivate legislators. We should connect with our own legislators, inviting them to virtual visits or introducing them to families we serve, have our families write letters, send artwork, and otherwise let legislators know we are in their community.

When communicating with legislators, we should tie investment in early education programs to opportunities to improve the health of our communities through outcomes they value, such as decreased crime, less drug use, better high school graduation rates, and increased college attendance. We need to demonstrate that investing in these programs produces a greater return. Elected officials want to see that revenues are well spent and we can demonstrate that through our stories.

The early childhood workforce has continued to be hit hard by the pandemic. The pandemic has shown us the importance of having quality childcare available, and the necessity to fund these programs at an appropriate level now and moving forward. Legislators need to understand that doing so will produce community and economic development benefits. ECE professionals have a huge impact on the economy, both because of their influence on children and their own importance to the economy. They make it possible for parents to go to work and contribute to the economy as consumers and supporters of businesses that employ people in our communities and buy locally. ECE programs need funding to get the state up and running again.

Early childhood education is a career and a profession. We are developing minds and community members. Early education is the foundation for building a strong and vibrant community now and for the future.

We need the investment that matches the importance of the profession. We can't create a group of professionals for this important work if we don't pay them a livable wage. Early childhood educators should not have to take a vow of poverty to serve children.

We need to provide early education teachers access to hybrid programs including online and in-class programs, internships, and continuing education opportunities. Early education degrees should be valued comparably to K-12 degrees in status, pay, and growth opportunities. ECE educators should be treated as equals to other educators, not as glorified babysitters. It is important to recognize ECE educators financially,

educationally, and socially and to reduce class sizes to enable more effective learning and to ensure a fair workload for ECE educators.

Funding for early childhood education programs should include support for children with developmental, physical, and learning disabilities.

We also need to ensure that early education honors cultural traditions. The tribal community especially has been negatively impacted by the history of sending children to federal boarding schools. These communities have been resilient despite this historic trauma. Nonetheless, we need to address this and other traumas within marginalized communities to ensure their vibrancy. We should make the necessary systemic changes that honor and incorporate “what was lost.”

TAKING ACTION

Several important actions need to be taken to make communities healthier and more vibrant:

- Become trained in trauma-informed care, which is essential to healing our society.
- Give children the tools they need to grow.
- Continue to partner with families and fellow educators to have their voices heard.
- Be prepared to advocate when the opportunity arises.
- Make sure that our families and everyone we encounter knows the importance of this field.
- Begin with educating parents so they understand that behavioral, intellectual, and social skills/growth begins with early education before kindergarten.
- Spread information about ECE within the community. Use your voice to educate and influence your community; it takes just one person.
- Parents voices are powerful and meaningful; share your story, it creates change.
- Support each other—whoever needs help and however you can help (mentor, ambassador, etc.).
- Start parental ambassador programs.
- Reach out to your First Things First community outreach coordinator to help you with the language to communicate passionately.
- Think globally to expand the message of the importance of ECE outside its community.
- Use your voice and get to know your neighbors better; we all have something to share.
- Make parents feel that they belong and give them strength through the information on what their community offers and what they can offer their community.
- Have self-care workshops for parents and practice individual self-care.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the March 6, 2021 AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Share my early childhood story.
- Be ready to talk about the needs for funding for ECE educators, centers, communities.
- Continue to get involved in the community, share my story, and practice self-care.
- Be a voice to the underserved communities.
- Be prepared to share why Early Childhood MATTERS!
- Advocate for increased funding for quality programs and pursue continued education and work in family education and social work, with a special focus on trauma informed approach to education.
- Research our legislators and have discussions about the impact of early childhood!
- Continue to have open conversations about supporting education as early as birth. Advocating for children and families in at-risk communities.
- Fight for a healthy wage for early childhood professionals.
- Shine light on the fact that things are pretty bad in early childhood since the pandemic- but that we were in a childcare crisis even before the pandemic.
- Support and encourage parents to find their voice in sharing their stories.
- Continue to try and connect with my Legislative District 11 elected officials to have a conversation about the importance of early care and education as an educational and economic driver to a vibrant community.
- Continue to teach intentionally in my classroom, be a reflective practitioner, and continue to proactively seek out opportunities to advocate for children, families, and educators.
- Continue to develop in my role as a Community Engagement Specialist and learn from our Child Care Resource and Referral Partners and events like these so that I can have a solid foundation of knowledge in this field and can work as a true advocate for children and families.
- Continue to advocate by inspiring and involving fellow educators and their families to have our voices heard and effect much needed change especially as our world changes around us!
- Spread awareness of the importance of a child's first five years.
- Encourage teachers and parents to also feel empowered to grow and learn so that children can have the best opportunity to learn, grow, and aspire!!!
- Join more opportunities like this one today, become more involved, and make more connections with others in our community!
- Become more familiar with my legislators and when appropriate share stories about low compensation and quality in our programs and the importance of building strong communities.

- Message my local and federal representatives regularly on ECE successes and needs.
- Continue to support our early education providers by sharing stories, actively reaching out to our representatives, and attending trainings to stay up to date on shared goals.
- Use the Vitalyst “Elements of a Healthy Community” to organize community conversations to illustrate the importance of early childhood education in contributing to healthy connected communities.
- Continue to get families involved and informed about how we as early childhood educators are just as important as teachers in schools.
- Parents are a child’s first teacher! I want to continue to educate parents, which empowers them to create a safe, nurturing, and loving environment for their children. This is what sets those children up in life!
- Continue to help new educators be informed and enhance teaching skills and share ideas from this video as a center for monthly trainings.
- Within the behavioral health research and policy community, I will continue to say if you are only focusing on adult patients/clients, you will never solve complex social issues. A focus of behavioral health must be children and families.
- Continue to concentrate on developing a Parental Ambassador Program to be a voice that can be called upon.
- Get to know my immediate neighbors better and share my passions with them.
- Continue to dedicate my work and efforts towards advocating and elevating the voices of children and their families!
- Stay committed and continue the fascinating work that is being done!!!!

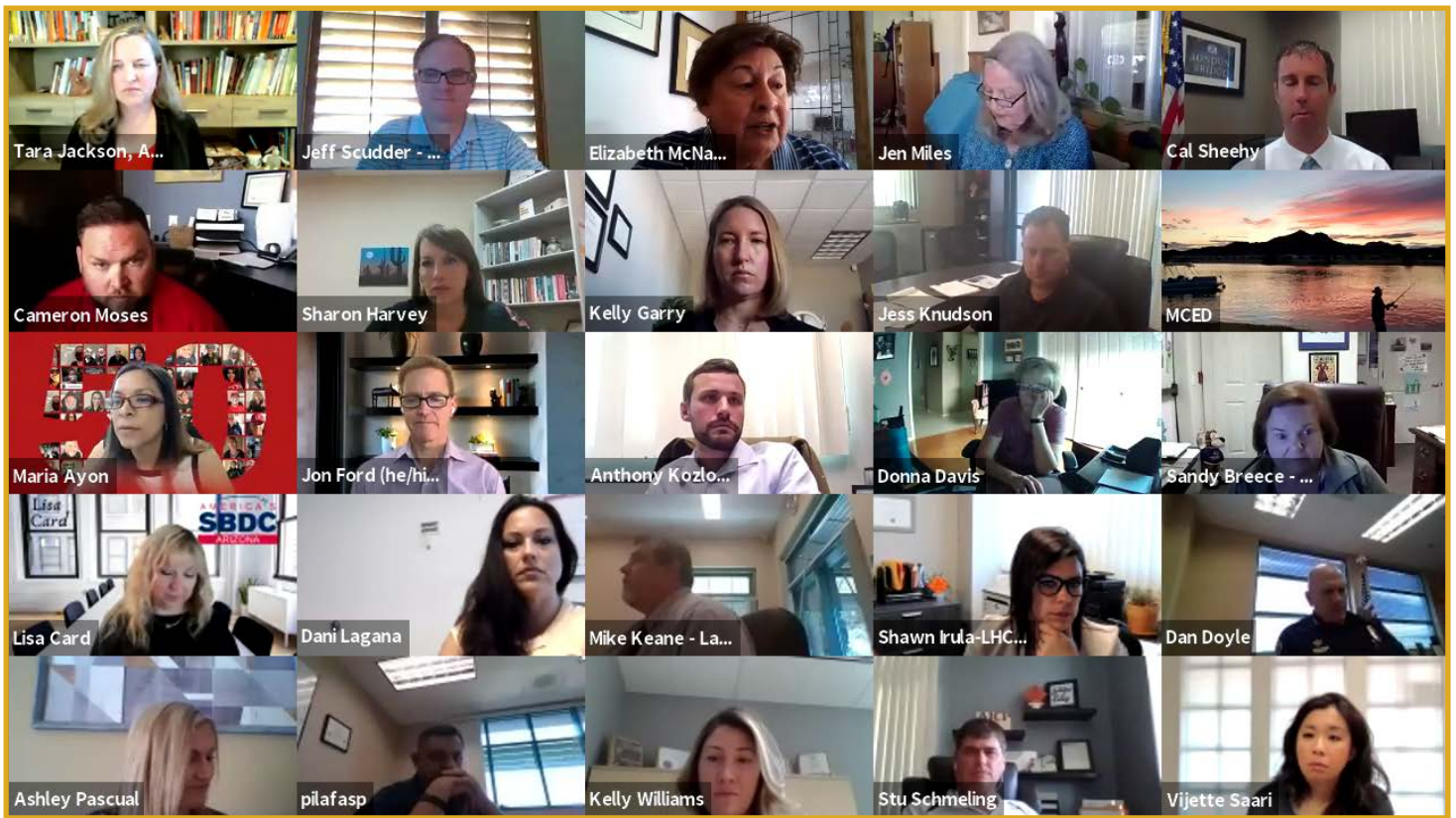
SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Arizona Association for the
Education of Young Children

Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall

April 15, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall

April 15, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many elements are required to make a community healthy and vibrant. In our communities, we enjoy:

- Excellent parks and recreational opportunities
- Strong local school districts and educational partnerships with our community colleges and state universities
- Robust economic development programs supported by our excellent chambers of commerce and strong partnerships amongst our cities
- A healthcare system that benefits from strong partnerships with our healthcare providers
- Active community support for local non-profit organizations and events
- A shared commitment to volunteerism and working together in a cohesive, collaborative fashion
- A deep sense of pride in our communities and a commitment to friendliness

We can build on these strengths to improve other elements of our communities and overall community health, by:

- Analyzing food insecurity in our communities and developing strategies to improve access to healthy food
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing, including long-term rental units
- Diversifying our economies to reduce our dependence on tourism and improve economic opportunities for our citizens
- Improving access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet
- Working with healthcare partners to expand access to childhood immunizations and “well visits” and improve the ratio of healthcare providers to patients, especially in the area of mental health
- Leveraging our local educational systems and partnerships, including early education programs and our technical schools, to improve our talent pipeline and workforce development

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed, and in some cases created several challenges that affect the health of our communities. The pandemic itself was politicized in a way that exposed divisions amongst our citizens. That, in turn, has challenged our healthcare system both in the context of treating illness and in supporting the vaccination program.

COVID-19 also highlighted the disparities that exist within our communities in the areas of access to transportation and other types of infrastructure, broadband internet access, educational opportunity, food security, access to healthcare, rates of substance abuse, and economic opportunity. These disparities are even more acute within our minority populations, a significant problem that has become more transparent and widely understood in recent months.

In the education system, teachers have been stretched thin at all levels, but there have also been silver linings. Our educators have adapted and identified new ways to deliver instruction, new models for reaching marginalized populations, and opportunities to partner with other organizations to support these efforts.

Significant education and encouragement from our leaders is needed to overcome challenges so we can heal the divisions within our communities and make it healthier and more vibrant.

TAKING ACTION

To make our communities healthier and more vibrant:

- Our cities and supporting organizations should:
 - continue to analyze the positions required to support efforts. Compensation levels need to be addressed to attract and retain top talent to fill those positions.
 - pursue available funding through the federal rescue plan and other sources and deploy that funding strategically to support these efforts.
 - engage in and promote long-term strategic planning to ensure that our parks, roads, water and sewer systems, and the equipment needed to support public safety and other core city services meet the needs of our businesses and residents.
- Our education systems should:
 - continue efforts to build the K-12 pipeline for educational attainment goals, including through the free after-school tutoring program.
 - continue to promote the educational opportunities available in Mohave County, from early education to post-secondary programs.
- Our citizens should:
 - take pride in our communities and commit themselves to building a healthier, more vibrant community, including by taking the time to engage in conversations with each other to create better shared understanding.
 - support small businesses and local food sources, including attending farmers markets.
 - attend broadband training sessions.
 - use our individual spheres of influence to promote these efforts.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

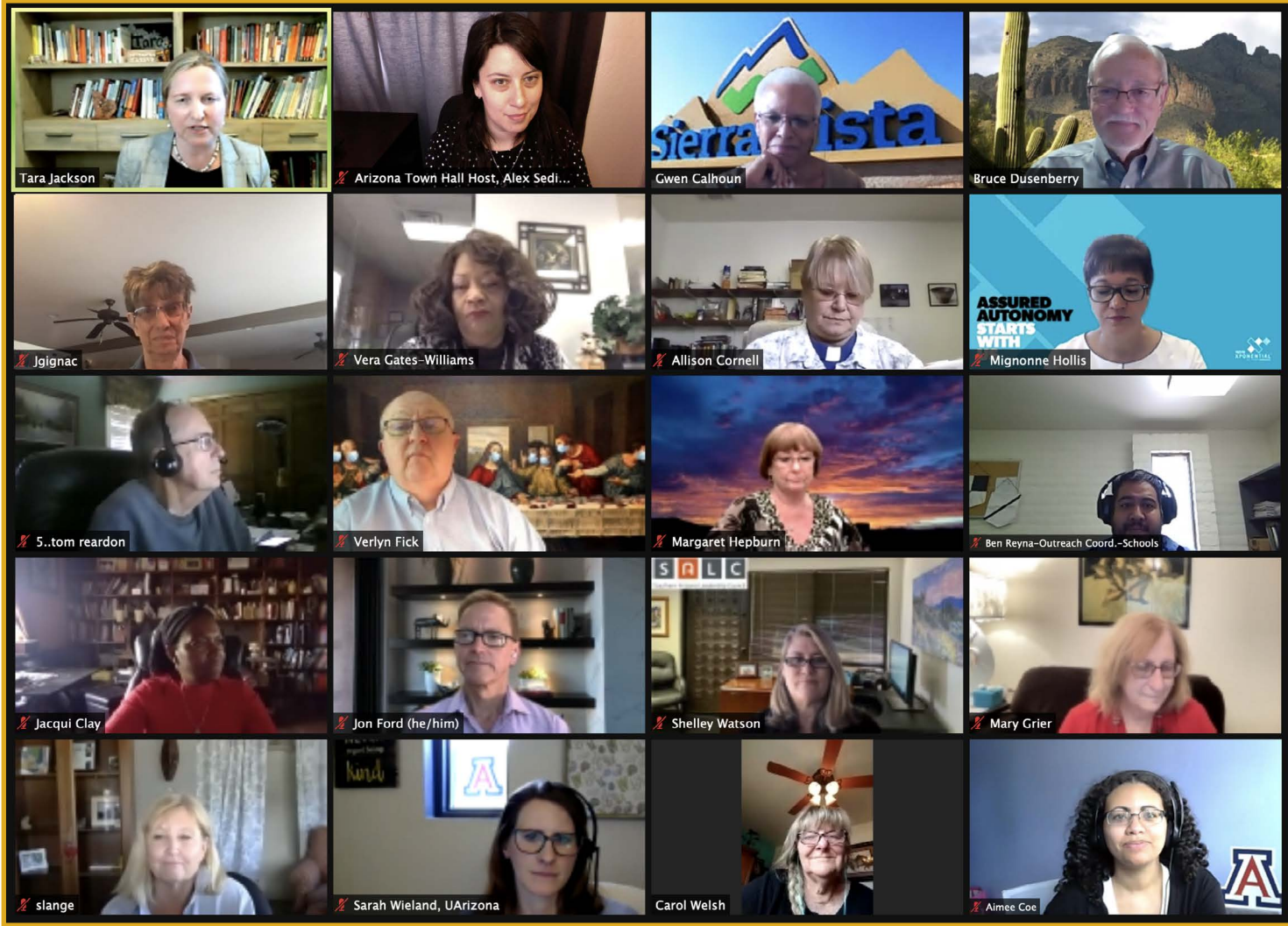
- Participate in community clean up and attend/participate in city council meetings. Also, I recently started the Short Creek Running Club and a local farmers market.
- Engage and facilitate conversations with citizens in our community to move forward to address the issues and to implement a vibrant community.
- Attend the farmers market to support the community and contribute my time once a week.
- Continue to inquire and share partnership opportunities to help community members continue their life journey.
- Put the heat on ADOT to protect our roads, including Highway 40 off-ramps and Highway 95.
- Continue to be a strong part of the educational community and a pioneer to Lake Havasu City (tomorrow is my 55th anniversary of joining this great community).
- Strive to help make our county and our city the best it can be.
- Continue working on broadband access, affordable housing, and workforce development both for the county and regionally!!!!

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall

April 29, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall

April 29, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Social cohesion is a real strength of the Sierra Vista community. The first thing you see when driving into Sierra Vista is the array of signs featuring the many service clubs active in the community. These groups are emblematic of the spirit of compassion and caring that characterizes Sierra Vista. The Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona is another example of this culture of compassion and has generously funded grants that support many community needs. When we have common goals, communicate, and work together, even things that at first appear impossible can be accomplished. This is especially true when people come together in times of emergency or crisis, such as after a fire or flood.

Although Sierra Vista is strong in these areas, it could do even better by reaching out to more people in the community. However cohesive the community may consider itself to be, there are segments that do not feel included, including people of color, people in rural areas, LGBTQ+, and people who are not native English speakers. The community could be even better if efforts were made to reach out to include those who may feel left out and assure that everyone's voice is heard.

One lesson learned from COVID-19 is that it is possible to include more people in regular meetings via online platforms. Leaders are making exceedingly difficult decisions on new issues in a context that requires community input. Ideally, meetings should be inclusive and engage the public in these decisions in a constructive way.

For a rural community, the health care system in Sierra Vista is of an extremely high standard, although improvements are needed in the area of mental health care. Sierra Vista also has an especially strong parks and recreation department, with excellent programming.

The local newspaper is under threat at a time when it is desperately needed to promote civil discourse and maintain social cohesion among citizens. The region also could benefit from a volunteer lawyer or legal aid programs. Without access to legal advocates, low-income individuals are more likely to be victims of predatory practices and less likely to access needed services.

The local economy is an area that needs to be strengthened. Small, rural communities face challenges in developing good jobs, particularly jobs that are suitable for two worker families. Economic opportunities are not evenly and equitably distributed throughout the county and there is too much poverty. This lack of economic opportunity creates stress and impairs health and wellbeing. Many communities in the county could benefit from linkages to the programs and opportunities that are available in Sierra Vista.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

While Sierra Vista has been affected by COVID-19, the particulars are not universally or well understood, and there are pockets of inequitable and disparate impact. People in rural areas, communities of color, the

LGBTQ+ community, people without adequate internet access or access to information especially pertaining to COVID-19, and people who could not access the vaccine all suffered disproportionately. Many students, particularly those in poverty, have fallen off the map and suffered significant setbacks in their education as well as mental health impacts.

Although the county health department and other agencies have collected information about health and social determinants of health, that information is not generally known or available within the community. It also takes time to collect and process the data. It might be helpful and cathartic to invite people who have been impacted by COVID-19 and/or racism to come together and talk about how they have been affected.

People love living in Sierra Vista and it is a community that doesn't think it has a racism problem. Nevertheless, there are populations that feel marginalized and their voices need to be heard.

Videos of killings of Black men and women has raised the level of discussion of racism nationwide. This might be a good time to establish a new and improved diversity, equity, and inclusion commission. It would also be useful to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on county jail inmates, to look at police conduct, and to consider the need for reforms in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement. The recently formed Cochise County Public Accountability Community Engagement Transparency Liaison Committee (PACTLC) has just initiated a police accountability effort.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- The Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona will consider a grant cycle to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training in the community.
- Take this information out to the 11 Healthy Community Groups throughout the county. If you are interested in joining one of these groups, visit <http://www.healthycochise.org/> or contact Evelyn Whitmer at emarkee@arizona.edu.
- Obtain more and better data about the key issues.
- Attend city council, school board, board of supervisor, and other public meetings and share the information we obtain there widely with groups we are involved with.
- Cochise County will collaborate and help put out an Educational Concerns Survey, provide venue for feedback at the Superintendents Roundtable, Career and Technical Education Workgroups, County and Cochise College Student Advisory Council. If you are interested, please contact Jacqui Clay via email at jclay@cochise.az.gov.
- Carry the idea back to the Sierra Vista City Council establish a commission in the community on social awareness and embracing diversity.

Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall

May 13, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall

May 13, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In Pima County, we have a strong focus on relationships, collaboration, connecting, and communicating with each other. We can build on this strength by ensuring that we are being mindful of blind spots to diverse and marginalized communities (such as communities of color, LGBTQ+, etc.) and by continuing to actively collaborate in areas where different organizations are working on the same issue to reduce duplication of services. We may want to explore teams of organizations and people who are working on similar topics, perhaps using the Town Hall method, at local or grassroots community levels to have a greater direct impact on neighborhoods.

Pima County also has some strong educational resources such as charter, private, and public schools, community and tribal colleges, and access to Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. There are a significant educational resources and programs such as the Joint Technical Education District (JTED), Promise of Preschool, STEAM, and JobPath to name a few. We can use these to expand opportunities for future workforce needs by utilizing and expanding existing relationships between private and public organizations to build and support the talent pool for our future workforce needs. We should strive for better integration with the court system to deal with mental health issues. Pima County has rich public lands that surround and inhabit our communities. These assets provide opportunities for activity and improved health.

One of the strengths of our community is our ability to meet the needs of those with food insecurities. We can capitalize on this strength by making these gatherings a resource opportunity to meet other needs such as financial planning, job services, housing, and other services that may help those in need. We should develop, in conjunction with AARP, a housing plan for older adults, particularly the availability of more affordable housing. We should build on the successes of collaboration such as the Elder Alliance and the City of Tucson working to develop elder friendly community by looking across the elements of a healthy community and minimizing duplication of services.

Pima County adopted a plan based on the elements of a healthy community, which has helped to break down the silos within and between government, agencies and other organizations. The Tucson/Pima County Community Investment Partnership, created as a result of the pandemic, provides a single portal for information on housing assistance disbursement to reduce evictions.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic has exacerbated challenges with mental illness and housing. We can address these challenges better if we can come together more and collaborate to support those neighborhoods most in need. We need to increase/improve staffing at our agencies because we are also facing burnout of staff. The pandemic taught us that housing people in hotels helps people by giving them a sense of dignity by having a personal space. The need for more people working in social services became obvious in the pandemic and it's not limited to that, especially as other businesses raise wages. Despite constant fundraising, it is still difficult to compete for staff.

The pandemic brought to the surface what people have seen or experienced for a long time. Specifically, it brought to light issues of racial injustice, social inequities, ageism, the isolation experienced by many older people, and issues surrounding dying. We need to better plan for death and address social isolation. The digital divide became more obvious as a result of the pandemic, impacting the ability to access services, participate in telehealth visits, and other opportunities. We acknowledge that the digital divide also applies to teachers, not just students, because there is both an access and an affordability issue.

With respect to racism, COVID-19 and other events raised awareness of the continuing presence of racism and created opportunities for more people to go outside of their comfort zone to help people who might look different from them. It was an opportunity (for those who took it) to see how they could be a part of the solution. We also need to use this opportunity to address institutional racism.

The pandemic further highlighted the need for high-quality childcare and the need for broadband internet availability to all communities. It also highlighted inequities in our healthcare system, especially frontline workers who had to continue to go to work to pay the bills and did not always have the educational resources to know how to respond to the risks of COVID-19.

The delivery system for healthcare, which separates public health from individual providers, exacerbated the problems with COVID-19. We need a better system to support direct healthcare workers. While Pima County is blessed with good leadership in the public health arena, the pandemic clearly demonstrated that we need to invest a lot more in our public health infrastructure to avoid future problems like those we experienced because of COVID-19.

The pandemic also exacerbated issues with access to housing. Those who were housing challenged prior to the pandemic were even more so. Stable housing is critical for healthy communities.

TAKING ACTION

Nonprofits are critical to the vibrancy of our community, and they can provide the expertise, collaboration and leadership needed to make our communities healthier and more vibrant. The work of nonprofits should be done in balance with local and state governments and others. It is important for us to look at solutions that allow for effective collaboration between all of these groups. It is also important for us to ensure that nonprofits have the resources needed to do their work.

We need to address climate resiliency—addressing the warming of the earth and how to ensure we have enough water and can take care of those who are most vulnerable to climate change. Related to this is the need for clean, available water to our communities. The lack of clean water impacts community education and health. These are community-wide issues that require community collaborations with nonprofits, businesses, governments, and individuals.

Addressing the difference in housing costs and wages and exploring how to turn Tucson into a living wage community is also necessary. Half the wages in Pima County are low wage jobs.

Virtual or digital town halls have allowed us to engage more diverse people and to come up with solutions that allow for better discussions and solutions. We should continue to utilize digital town halls as part of our efforts to engage a broader and more diverse community. We also need to be sensitive to community members who may not be able to be a part of these discussions. There are opportunities with faith-based and other organizations for partnerships in this area.

Collecting data that allows us to see the impact on marginalized communities is essential as we move forward.

The pandemic highlighted significant work that needs to be done in all these areas.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Look for ways to have the faith communities I work with continue to expand their involvement in the issues we have discussed today (housing, outreach to vulnerable communities, etc.).
- Continue my professional contributions to and advocacy for public education.
- Continue to serve on community boards addressing homelessness.
- Be kind.
- Continue collaborating for constructive disruption with members of our community supporting STEAM education in particular.
- Advocate immediate action that can be taken on a “camper’s camp” in Pima County. A low-impact spot where people can live outside but get services. A place where outreach workers can FIND their clients when housing does become available.
- Continue to work both in a professional and personal sense to ensure an equitable community.
- Continue to work with the Y helping young women get good employment.
- Push for the adoption of the Legatum Index of Prosperity as a unifying measurement system to show progress over the 32 variables which underlie prosperity.
- Continue to organize at a grassroots level in our barrio and use our nonprofit to reach out to possible partnership to bring in resources to our multi-generational families.

- Continue our mission to prevent homelessness, working with our community partners.
- Continue to strategically connect the dots throughout the community and professionally disrupt the status quo.
- Look at everything I am engaged in (social service agency, faith community, etc.) to think about them not in an isolated way but as aspects of a vibrant community.
- Starting my own "network" of community change agents and look for opportunities for this "network" to effect change.
- Continue to work on a strategic plan for broadband infrastructure in Pima County.
- Share the factors needed for a vibrant community with Juvenile Court and encourage taking these factors into account when dealing with juveniles and their families who enter the Juvenile Justice System.
- Work to identify new leaders in each of our PCI faith communities and help them get trained to organize their communities to use their voices to advocate for their needs.
- Commit towards the effort of increasing affordable housing, both rental and homeownership, collaborating with community leaders, developers and state and federal agencies

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Greater Tucson Leadership & Alumni Virtual Community Town Hall

May 26, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities Greater Tucson Leadership & Alumni Virtual Community Town Hall May 26, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Tucson is a community that has several strong elements that foster vibrant community. Social and cultural cohesion, which includes Tucson's strong attitude toward helping one another, is a widely agreed upon element of our community as its strength. A community that has cultural cohesion can leverage this strength for a lot of things, in an effort to increase the strength of areas where we might be deficient. It can be used to create opportunity across the board and to create strengths where we might have weakness.

An additional strength of the community are the outdoor recreational opportunities. Parks and recreation assets assist in creating additional connection among the community, which naturally enhances cultural and social cohesion among groups that may traditionally be disconnected. The outdoor elements can also be leveraged to increase economic opportunity for many groups, specifically within tourism. Having a strong tourism industry within the community could be an asset that we can leverage in order to create more economic opportunity for those who may not have access to it.

Outdoor recreation and connectivity opportunities, including assets like The Loop, Tumamoc Hill, and Reid Park, can be used to connect groups to other services. This highlights elements of community design, which tackles the overall organization and design of a community including access to physical transportation to important services like job centers, affordable food, healthcare opportunities, etc. Transportation assets, as well as parks and recreation assets related to transportation, can be used to connect disconnected groups, assist in place making, and increase access to various elements of quality of life for our community.

Lastly, a significant strength that exists within our community is the network of nonprofits and the services they offer. If we can leverage this strength, including innovative practices like outbound healthcare services coupled with existing assets related to transportation and outdoor recreation, we can better facilitate community design. This will increase opportunities for all groups within our community, invariably increasing social and cultural cohesion, building and supporting a vibrant community.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare many inequities across our community. One issue that was explicitly demonstrated to us is the concept of access to technology and digital equity. Lack of technology, including access to internet as well as equipment, severely limited some groups' access to essential services. In a world that is consistently becoming more and more digital, additional investment in this specific area is going to be key in the fight to minimize inequity. This lack of access has further implications, including lack of access to both general and specialized healthcare services, including access to COVID-19 testing and vaccines. This divide will only increase without investment in technology in disadvantaged communities.

Access to food became a significant issue during the pandemic, especially for those already at a disadvantage. Those who rely on public transportation faced a greater challenge in having access to food in general, let alone affordable food. At the intersection of access to school, food, and technology, we see the fact that schools, which are already underfunded, become the sole access point to food for disadvantaged communities.

Further related to access, we saw an increase in the disconnect to essential services including childcare, mental health services, and others. Lack of access to these essential services can further widen the gap and significantly impacts additional opportunities for economic growth and health, especially to already disadvantaged groups. General mental health has been identified as a key component of physical health, and the pandemic exacerbated an already difficult focus of healthcare that has not been given adequate attention.

Public safety on the national level has added to discord and ire involving minority groups. The concept of public safety is already a sensitive subject. The pandemic shined a spotlight on challenges around public safety and abuse of power.

The combination of preexisting racial inequities and the pandemic, exponentially increased challenges in the areas of the digital divide, access to healthcare (both mental and physical), childcare, access to food (especially affordable food), education, safety, justice, transportation, and more.

TAKING ACTION

Nonprofits are critical to the vibrancy of our community, and they can provide the expertise and leadership needed to make our communities healthier and more vibrant. The work of nonprofits should be done in balance with local and state governments and others. It is important for us to look at solutions that allow for effective collaboration between all of these groups. It is also important for us to ensure that nonprofits have the resources needed to do their work.

We need to address climate resiliency—addressing the warming of the earth, how to ensure we have enough water, and how to take care of those who are most vulnerable to climate change. Related to this is the need for clean, available water to our communities. The lack of clean water impacts community education and health. These are community-wide issues that require collaborations with nonprofits, businesses, governments, and individuals.

Addressing the difference in housing costs and wages and exploring how to turn Tucson into a living wage community is also necessary. Half the wages in Pima County are low wage jobs.

Virtual or digital town halls have allowed us to engage more diverse people and to come up with solutions that allow for better discussions and solutions. We should continue to utilize digital town halls as part of our efforts to engage a broader and more diverse community. We also need to be sensitive to community members who may not be able to be a part of these discussions. There are opportunities with faith-based and other organizations for partnerships in this area. Collecting data that allows us to see the impact on marginalized communities is essential as we move forward. The pandemic highlighted significant work that needs to be done in all these areas.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



American Planning Association Community Town Hall

August 24, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

American Planning Association Community Town Hall

August 24, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In some areas that have experienced rapid growth, facilities and infrastructure may be new and well financed, but social cohesion and transportation are lacking. Leapfrog development, large service areas, and being a terminal commuter community all contribute to the transportation challenges.

Small rural communities face challenges with developing and maintaining a vibrant downtown area where people can gather. Malls are in decline and good alternatives need to be developed. In some communities, people have high expectations for government services that are inconsistent with the political and economic culture.

Many communities, particularly smaller and rural communities, face challenges with transportation, affordable housing, economic development, and job opportunities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Surprisingly, building permit activity remained steady throughout the pandemic. However, permits were generally issued for housing at the high middle and upper end of the affordability spectrum, not the affordable end.

One big impact of the pandemic was to focus communities on outdoor space. Spaces are being converted and improved to make them more suitable for outdoor use by creating shade, trails, and authorization for outdoor activities in public spaces, such as educational institutions. Some campus communities have been redefining their role in the community to create more public access and more outdoor public space. Some of these efforts will address the heat island effect in large cities.

Federal monies made available to mitigate the impact of the pandemic have helped some communities to make improvements to facilities and programs with significant community input and benefit.

The pandemic also created a massive exodus of people from the cities to rural areas which, in many cases, were not prepared to receive them. These people were largely white and well-to-do; many people of color were left behind in cities. People who are less well-off did not have access to broadband and could not work from home or from remote areas and were more likely to be adversely affected by the pandemic.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

The passage of SB 1350, which prohibits cities from regulating short term rentals, has reduced the number of units available for longer term lease in some communities, exacerbating the affordable housing shortage. This creates a host of associated problems for communities and residents.

Schools should be allowed to use education monies to pay for all students to receive free lunch.

Leaders should work collaboratively across their jurisdictional lines, particularly in areas such as Yavapai County where there are many small jurisdictions affected by common challenges.

Elected officials should base the information they report to the public on facts. They could provide sources and data to the public to support their decisions and explain the basis for their decisions.

The time has come to provide incentives for developers to include affordable housing in their developments.

The big issues, such as water quality, water supply, transportation, etc. need to be better coordinated among local jurisdictions. In addition, the statute that allows challenges to community plans should be modified as it interferes too much with the progress of community planning.

There should be concurrency of development and service. Planning responsibility should correlate to the level of responsibility for the service.

We should encourage planned communities, so that development occurs in proximity to the amenities that people need and want to make their communities livable, and address transportation challenges.

Gila Valley Community Town Hall

September 10, 2021 – Thatcher, AZ



Creating Vibrant Communities

Gila Valley Community Town Hall

September 10, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Generally speaking, we work well together as a community. And, we have a good reputation for being a safe community with responsive law enforcement. While there are always areas for improvement, there is good access to health care with a strong regional hospital, which includes hospital administration who serve the community well. We also have a good supply of dentists.

We have strong non-profits who work together to serve the community, help to maintain a beautiful environment, and act as economic drivers for the community. We have a great natural environment with clean air, beautiful surroundings, and clear, dark skies that support the Mount Gram International Observatory.

Overall, when it comes to parks and recreation our community works together well and is responding better to the different needs of today's children and teenagers.

For a community of our size, our educational opportunities are strong. We have good teachers with high expectations and opportunities for lifelong learning. Eastern Arizona College allows for educational opportunities and support that attract business and economic development. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for improvement, especially for children who are not able to attend pre-school.

As a region we are getting better at responding to the concerns of minorities and tribal communities, although there is still room for improvement.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated disparities with access to broadband and education. Schools that had more resources were better able to pivot to more effective online learning. Schools with less resources fell behind as did students and families who did not have access to the internet.

Lack of broadband affects education. It also affects safety, access to care, work opportunities, and access to needed services. Broadband and the ability to effectively use it has become an essential luxury.

It has become increasingly more difficult to operate in our current world without access to broadband. The pandemic has motivated our leaders to take action to make it more available and reliable. Federal funding and community leaders becoming better informed of the immediate need for broadband should allow us to begin to correct these inequities and better prepare for the future.

The pandemic created challenges with access to healthcare. It highlighted disparities in access to healthcare systems, including disparities between rural and urban areas. An unintended consequence of HIPAA was that people didn't know who might have COVID and were unable to effectively respond in some instances. There were also challenges created when families could not visit or communicate with loved ones.

While there were many community conversations and some disagreements over how to respond to the pandemic, the ability of our community to work together and cooperate with each other allowed us to be more resilient respond more quickly and effectively to the many challenges faced through the pandemic.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Local governments need to better advocate at the federal level to bring greater investment to our communities. This would include applying for grants and an approach that includes a specific local plan for the need being addressed, whether its broadband, education, transportation, affordable housing, youth programs, or employment opportunities for our youth.

Volunteerism is huge in this community. Perhaps we can form regional focus groups that can meet, share information, and then provide our elected leaders with specific guidance from the community for community investment. With respect to community investment, it's important to consider sustainability—especially if the initial funding is a one-time investment. Broadband may be one of the investment opportunities where one-time funding from the federal government would be very beneficial. This may also help support economic development and the creation of new job opportunities for our youth that would keep them here locally.

State leaders should consider our unique needs. This includes providing a larger percentage of the transaction privilege tax (TPT) that comes from the mining operations within our community but that often doesn't come back to benefit our community. Also, wildcat subdivisions create a lot of issues within our communities for infrastructure, parks and recreation, environmental quality, transportation, safety, and quality of life. The state government should allow the county government to have more authority in managing and developing subdivisions.

Government should be here to help us—not to create challenges or burdens that help Maricopa County to the detriment of our local community and that do not allow us to use money in the ways we know will best serve our community.

TAKING ACTION

To make our communities healthier and more vibrant:

1. Addressing our housing issues:
 - a. Create a private-public-non-profit partnership to create affordable and workforce housing.
 - b. Have a local town hall to address housing.
2. Preserving our environment: Work to create a better more vibrant Gila River (Bill will work with others and needs helpers).

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Gila Valley Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Contact Arizona Community Foundation about affordable housing.
- Continue pushing donations to Graham Greenlee Tax Credit Coalition (GGTCC).
- Teach students about scholarship opportunities.
- Be active in local politics.
- Support my local nonprofit organizations.
- Continue river work in order to create a better vibrant river.
- Engage Eastern Arizona College students!
- Continue to attend community events and meetings to identify both short-term and long-term needs of the Gila Valley.
- Advocate for funding and action to be take in support of those needs.
- Volunteer time to assist Graham County and the local towns to create long-range planning goals and zoning politics to generate new jobs and housing with diversification in mind.
- Support and provide funding for youth groups and substance abuse recover and prevention.
- Work to find solutions in my community. Figure out some groups that need individual support (me).
- Do more research and get involved.
- Continue to help the communities that I serve to become sustainable.
- Focus on housing (teacher- and workforce-centric).
- 4 steps: Champion, Helpers, Timeline, Execution.
- Pursue development of: homeless respite center (host a town hall); Graham County Historical Society Museum; renovation of Wet Canyon and Noon Creek (host a town hall); emergency preparedness at the county level; low cost housing (host a town hall); improve communications.
- Increase discussion on furthering the expansion of broadband throughout the Gila Valley.
- Speak with Chamber staff to discuss the opportunity of creating focus groups.
- Be more involved in my community.
- Become more aware of where I am most needed to help my community become more vibrant.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



ARIZONA COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF THE GILA VALLEY



**Southwest Arizona Town Hall
"Creating a Vibrant Community"
Foundational Forums
Summary Report**

April-September, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Foundational Forum One – April 22, 2021

“Human Opportunities”

OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITY VISION

We believe Yuma County is a thriving community with a promising future, and together we have envisioned what tomorrow's vibrant Yuma community would look like. In such a vibrant community, Yuma County residents would be connected to each other across cities, demographics, and industries. We would play to our strengths and be seen nationally as a center for agriculture, and we would highlight our position as a bi-national area, showing the strength of our proximity to the USA-Mexico border and its access to both local populations. We would have a robust educational system at all levels, a thriving arts and culture community, and job opportunities that people feel passionate about, with accessible resources, available and affordable childcare, and robust transportation options. Our higher education system would nimbly adapt to industry needs, our infrastructure would have needed improvements, and we would have greater community outreach about available resources.

One key element in building a vibrant community is educational opportunity, primarily because educational opportunities within a community are very influential on employment opportunities. An available, educated populace with workforce experience and technical certificates, who are trained and ready to work in skilled positions, is a strong lure for companies, which in turn provides more opportunity for residents. Also, companies looking to locate in Yuma County always ask about education, both K-12 and secondary, as it is important to their own relocating families and management, who look for locations with quality of education for their children. We have a guide to this process in Maricopa County, who is on the cutting edge of attracting additional businesses to their area. It is critically important that Yuma County gain insight on those conversations such that we can be successful in doing the same.

In our envisioned education system, there would be learning opportunities for all members of the community. This means not just traditional college degrees but also on-the-job workforce vocational training, programs for mothers caring for their children, and opportunities to develop skills in seniors, youth, and entrepreneurs. We also would have more early education for children and expanded childcare opportunities to take the burden off of young families, and mothers in particular. We do not need to reinvent the wheel to achieve this, as others have had successful programs in other communities and we ourselves have underutilized existing programs. It would be better to conduct outreach to our citizens, particularly current primary and high school students, on the educational opportunities already available to them. To achieve this, we can use those community members that have degrees and specialized training and are already doing well as mentors and positive influences. We would expand this system by creating better collaboration between businesses and educational organizations to develop resources and get current resources into the hands that need it.

We would love to see all high school students with access to higher education without financial burdens. Through our outreach programs, they would understand the pathways to get there and how to achieve their dreams. While it goes without saying that quality preschool and elementary education is critical, it is equally important and essential to expose the youth to educational opportunities and/or programs that assist with developing career pathways. Students need to be exposed to different occupations so that they are empowered to explore expanded dreams for their future. It would allow students to go into a career they might not have

considered if they had not been exposed early on. Expansion and inclusion of vocational training, CTE, and/or CORE curriculum is critical in this endeavor. Many local programs already offer hands-on experiences through local employers. This should be expanded and made a higher-profile effort that every student knows about and can count on. We should not hesitate to commit more resources to our primary and secondary students to enable them to do more, as they are our pipeline into the future success of our community.

Within today's economy, both parents are likely part of the workforce to meet the needs of their family. In order for them to do so, we need more high-quality, early-childhood systems that will assist parents while shepherding children through school, prioritizing education, and encouraging pathways to get to a higher education. Yuma also needs flexible employers who provide work-life balance opportunities, such as employers that allow a parent to work at home if they have a sick child. Flexibility allows adults and older students to take more credit hours at the college or pursue supplemental training or other educational opportunities around their work schedules. This is also true for working parents where childcare is the limiting factor, and they can gain more flexibility if they had better access to childcare facilities for their children. Higher education and advanced training benefits the entire family unit, as education is key to breaking the generational poverty cycle. Childcare facilities and flexible arrangements should not just be for the affluent. Our schools and community should offer more afterschool programs and early child programs to accommodate the needs of this population.

Certainly, to achieve our vision we must fight the cycle of poverty. There are several programs in Yuma County currently, but it takes outreach to make sure the resources reach all citizens and not just those who lucked upon them by word of mouth. We sell the Yuma community to visitors but not our own locals; we should be equally focusing on outreach of services to our citizens. We should consider Family Resource Centers to serve as hubs within targeted communities currently underserved. A big dream is for businesses to adopt specific communities to break the poverty by assisting with local programs for kids and residents of all ages.

Lastly, another key component of a vibrant community is accessible and affordable transportation and housing, particularly for low-income families. We would also have high-speed and reliable internet and other technology assets that bridge connections across groups and provide easier access to greater resources. Infrastructure like housing, transportation, broadband internet, and other improvements greatly influences human opportunities. Further, companies need certain infrastructure improvements in place to decide to move here. We would have trained and educated individuals to assist with infrastructure development through targeted recruitment and training of our citizens.

EXPANDING COLLABORATIONS: EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND INDUSTRY

To achieve our vision, collaboration is vital. Particularly, it is most important for different municipalities to work together as a region, instead of competing with each other. We need to build common language and linkage between the local leaders and systems so that we can share resources. We can improve communication through the development of pilot system partnerships. Overall, we need to collaboratively identify what makes Yuma County a great place as a whole—it may not be the "big cities" of Phoenix and Tucson, but we are a city with many opportunities for all types of people and industry with unique attributes through which we stand apart from other locales within the state and country.

Many who have never been to our area believe we are nothing more than the tiny piece of the city of Yuma the freeway passes through, and they have no idea of the size of our population and the pool of resources and

talent that exists here. We should better market our county and its strengths, because our great community collaboration, particularly between education and industry, the Colorado River region and cross border benefits, and our important agriculture, business, and military assets are often an unknown to outsiders. Through Town Hall and other opportunities, we should provide a well-thought-out and cohesive story that depicts our mission and goals such that others, even our children, can see the issues clearly. People and industries will hear the story and find additional ways to bring more value to our community. Right now, we do not sell it well enough, even to our own residents. Perhaps we can better use those opportunities when the national spotlight is on us for other reasons to reframe the dialogue about our county. There are other proactive ways to broaden our message's reach, like having a welcome committee and welcome packages for people doing business in Yuma County, which would have the additional benefit of allowing businesses to better integrate into the community and to connect with potential employees. Clearly, these types of collaborations between our existing institutions and programs would be helpful in the development of one of our key factors to community success: showing companies they can make money and thrive here with high productivity from a trained workforce and with a good quality of life for their employees. Everything else falls into place once companies know they can be successful in this region.

Development of the educational opportunities in partnership with the needs of the community is also a critical collaboration. As attracting businesses should be our ultimate goal as it serves everyone, we must provide an educated workforce capable of serving those needs while advancing their own personal success. Education needs to check in with existing businesses and potential businesses to see what they need from education in order to for companies to stay in business here or move here. Yuma County already has a great start on collaboration between education and industry, so whatever can be done to build on this relationship would be helpful. For example, one practical example would be an HR assessment regarding what types of available jobs currently exist and what skills and education are needed in order to help narrow the workforce training and education we should develop or expand on. It would also be useful to share this type of information with young people and students so they can make educated decisions on jobs and positions available in our region as they choose their educational paths. We should consider additional and expanded collaborative efforts, like an innovation center that brings new business owners, students, and others together to meet industry needs and help grow the economic environment. Working with businesses to expand offerings of paid internships and apprenticeships also would provide needed training to our workforce. Education and business industry collaboration could help students join the work force already trained and ready to work.

Unfortunately, many residents do not realize the opportunities that educational institutions and community organizations already have in place for them despite the doors that educational opportunities open and the advantages to income and growth, particularly with business partnerships. Career and vocational technology programs in high schools have advisory boards for licensing and certification, but we need to get the word out throughout Yuma County to get a better connection with the industries we are training for. We need to concentrate on keeping the students and our future workforce here in Yuma County and avoid a "brain drain." Making sure that students and young people in the area are aware of the opportunities for them here would help with job creation and workforce retention so these people do not move away from the area with their skill sets. Perhaps a marketing or educational/awareness campaign with "educational ambassadors" would be beneficial as would programs that allow high school students to better learn about the possibilities and opportunities.

To best achieve these goals, we must also address the gaps in access to education and resources in minority communities due to transportation and accessibility. We should target poverty pockets to close the gaps between communities. We need to eliminate the stigma of 'South County' and evolve into ONE Yuma County with a united goal of promoting and developing our community.

We must also continue to enhance our community benefits to attract new residents and companies. This includes affordable and accessible healthcare for the entire family, as well as competitive salaries where people can earn more than minimum wage. Programs through organizations like the City of Yuma, the Parks and Recreation department, and partnerships with non-profits provide additional tangible and intangible benefits improving quality of life. Development of additional Pre-K and childcare options are critical.

All these items will take the involvement of many parties and interest groups, and all should have input on how they should be built and designed. There are opportunities for collective impact, where local leaders can come together to try and solve specific issues. We must identify backbone agencies that already exist and function within these spaces to facilitate gatherings of interested stakeholders to develop new collaborations, solutions, and programs.

ACCOMPLISHING THE VISION

Accomplishing this vision takes leadership from individuals who the community respects and trusts. We need people from the region who bring together passion, business investment, and non-profit resources to create plans and ideas for our community's future. The right people need to be at the table: people with strong commitment and accountability.

Business leaders are critical, particularly from our core industries. But we also need to include small, start-up businesses and entrepreneurs here in Yuma to get information on what worked, did not work, and what needs to change to allow new local businesses to thrive. Investors also need to be included. Additionally, successful collaborations need to have more than the business industry at the table. We also should include families, students, industry, chambers, agency partners, and anyone who is passionate about these issues. We need to reach more broadly to bring in community members with drive and commitment, such as members of service organizations, which are typically more engaged in local needs and have outside connections. Local elected officials need to be included in these collaborations. Cities, like the City of Yuma, which help provide the environment that young professionals seek, should also be part of the discussions. We also need to include more minorities and young people in these conversations, particularly considering our county demographics.

We must continue to develop underserved areas identified for development. The purpose is it not to focus on what we do not have, but what we envision could be, with consideration of the different goals in different sectors of the community, like transportation. We should bring leaders together to address the stigma of 'South County' to look at a broader vision for a cohesive county. We should recognize that many families are so busy working that they often do not have the time to engage, and we must seek ways to include them. Others complain of a lack of flexibility of employers in letting employees continue their education, despite the potential return on investment, and we should seek better industry collaboration with access to education. Many students lack guidance to assist in determination and development of interests and career paths, and there are opportunities for community volunteers to bridge this gap. Access to reliable transportation plagues many segments of our community. We also need better capacity on grant writers in Yuma County, especially for our local non-profits, and should seek more unified ways to get more funding. We should adopt community blocks for better understanding on the long-term vision of our various populations. Those collaborations need to be attended by the "do-ers" of businesses and the community and other critical stakeholders in order to formulate a good plan of action, with actionable and measureable milestones.

During COVID many people came to Yuma, especially from California. COVID-19 made people appreciate their family more and shifted priorities, and it may be easier to convince people to stay in Yuma or come back, whereas perhaps this would not have occurred without the pandemic. We need to capitalize on this new sentiment in our marketing plan. Growing families needs to be marketed to keep our residents and students here and encourage relocation from other areas of the country to our community.

For all these goals, involving journalism is also vitally important, as it helps educate the community on growing opportunities and promote the area to businesses here and those considering moving here. Also, social media influencers should be included, as they can highlight what Yuma County has to offer in an increasingly relevant way, particularly to younger generations.

PERSONAL ACTIONS TO IMPACT CHANGE

Committing to a change that one is passionate about or capable of effectuating, no matter how small, will make an impact on our community's vision. Many community members offered their own action goal to impact change. A selection of these goals include:

- Encourage United Way of Yuma County to continue working to break poverty cycle and educate the participants. Start to Finish!
- Articulate an elevator speech and pitch that speech to your local service agency.
- Invite people to see the wonderful things going on.
- Research the right people within your groups/agencies to further market the good things.
- Reviving plans of action that were put in place pre-COVID.
- Improving access to care.
- Opening myself to opportunities that keep the conversation moving to stir up more ideas/collaborations outside of the typical network to find common goals to unite.
- Seeking more grants.
- Coordinating fundraising.
- Offering paid internships.
- Speaking publicly.
- Continue to be involved in discussions like these.
- Support students through the educational pipeline through job attainment.
- Using the Yuma Sun to promote programs in the community.
- Creating a plan to see the big picture to determine where I fit.
- Being active in my school and helping others to participate as well.
- Bringing an innovation center to Yuma County.

- Work as a board member.
- Highlight the bi-national character of the region.
- Develop a strategic plan for economic development with input from various community groups and from different perspectives and look to South County for growth opportunities.
- Promote the opportunities at Arizona Western College.
- Convince businesses to join the conversation particularly re: bringing more business to the region.
- Serving as an ambassador and speaking positively about Yuma County.
- Providing professional training to others.

Foundational Forum Two – June 11, 2021

“Access to Healthcare and Quality Affordable Food”

THE QUALITY HEALTHCARE VISION

Members of our community agree: an important element of a vibrant community is quality healthcare. The Yuma County community has a vision of how to develop quality healthcare, which includes a desire for healthcare to be more integrative, including traditional health, overall wellness, and collaboration between specialists. These categories are necessarily broad and encompass improved access to healthcare (from traditional medical services to mental health and substance abuse providers), to healthy eating habits and food security, to expanded children's services. Yuma County is well known for relations and collaborations across broad industry groups and interests and by using this strength to create an integrated approach to quality healthcare, we can become a model for the state. In fact, it was partnerships such as these, forged collaboratively through different groups, that alleviated the severe nurse and physician shortages Yuma used to experience. These efforts have been so successful that a shortage of space is the biggest limitation now.

Elements of this quality healthcare vision include services not just for “normal,” traditional healthcare needs, but also for the special needs populations, especially children with cancer or severe handicaps, and mental health care. For mental health and substance abuse, our community does not have enough outpatient programs to support our residents' physical, emotional, gifted, and disability needs, especially for children and adolescents. We acknowledge that psychiatry and mental health care expansion is very complicated and will require partnerships with specialized institutions, in the hopes that we can entice qualified providers to choose Yuma as a place to practice. But solving this problem brings many tangible advantages apart from improved health, including reducing pressure on law enforcement, as implementation of mental health response teams could avoid escalation to law enforcement responses and lower incarceration rates.

Indeed, more community- and outreach-based programs focused on preventing the formation of health issues and complications altogether would serve our community well, and not just in mental health and substance abuse care, but also in traditional medical services. For example, for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, medical professionals need the training to learn to listen to patients who cannot express themselves well and find ways of meeting the patient's total needs. Community health workers and nutritionists are key for success in this area. Only by working together with other health, education, and other community organizations can we find a solution to quality healthcare and access for our community.

Further, greater efforts to improve communication between all the various providers would significantly benefit community members regarding the status of his or her healthcare as well as provide greater access to preventative care. YRMC has enhanced healthcare in Yuma County by utilizing systems such as the MyCare patient information system, which coordinates all their contracted providers. It would be even more valuable if all providers (including nursing homes, healthcare providers, urgent care facilities, hospitals, etc.) utilized this system for patient records to avoid any mistakes.

Lastly, quality healthcare also means improving access to various clinics and more diverse medical care providers, as well as providing assistance to citizens with understanding available benefits. One large problem with access to healthcare is cost, so emphasis should be put on quality healthcare at affordable prices.

OPPORTUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

As identified above, a true strength of Yuma County is its willingness to collaborate with various stakeholders and groups across industries and interests to reach innovative solutions that could not be accomplished individually. It is necessary to avoid working in isolation and collaborate with multiple organizations to meet the need. The agencies in Yuma County work very well together already but we can enhance the partnership by increasing greater participation by members of the public. With more participation, greater advantage may be taken of those resources that have yet to be tapped in Yuma County, especially as it relates to preventative healthcare and care for those who may be more dependent on others to assist them and/or advocate of them. Priorities include addressing affordable housing, transportation, technology, and healthcare. However, it is clear that the biggest focus should be on improving access to quality nutrition in order to improve the health of children and adults, as access to quality, affordable food is a key element of a vibrant community.

In Yuma County, we produce a lot of fresh produce for the entire country, but that does not mean that healthy food is abundant and accessible in our own back yard. Yuma County is actually a group of separated communities, with food deserts and a need for more access points. Further, a lack of transportation is a barrier to accessing resources and services for many individuals. Improving access to quality, reliable transportation is the type of partnership that can greatly assist with food security. While the Yuma Community Food Bank travels to San Luis, Somerton, and Wellton, we need to think of inviting ways to deliver food to the community, such as drive-thru's, home delivery, and year-round school or library pick-up locations. It is necessary to remove barriers for food box access – such as IDs or limiting families to one box a month. Currently, people that rely on the Food Bank can only get food at most 3 to 4 days a week and need more consistent access. Additionally, in many cases schools provide food to the students, including both school meals and a backpack of food for the weekend, but this service ends in the summer. Other programs are needed for the summertime as well as for the rest of the family.

Yuma County has a great potential of creating community cooperatives to work together to overcome these obstacles, particularly by incorporating non-profits into this mission and including the agriculture companies located here. Non-profit organizations can also assist with land and resources to build new pathways to deliver food, including churches, which are another key provider of food to the community. However, more grants and other financing needs to be found to increase food purchases and for any service expansion such as a mobile pantry. Consolidating the efforts of the various groups that deal in food products, including but not limited to food production, sales, and distribution, as well as those who may be aware of those who are in need (churches, etc.), would provide greater resources and outreach, decreasing food waste and improving the supply of quality, affordable food. This will take effort to address liability, harvest costs, and distribution, but there are already some protections and solutions in place that just need to be communicated to potential organizations.

Lastly, increased efforts at education are critical. It is challenging to compete with the convenience industry that offers high-calorie dense food with poor nutrition value at low costs. We need to educate our residents about the benefits of cooking and consuming healthy food as education is the key to changing culture. A large portion of the community does not have adequate information on fueling their bodies. Trained dieticians

are needed to combat diabetes, heart disease, and obesity for total health and wellbeing through education of adults and at-risk children. Even more elementally, working with local schools, colleges, and universities to offer courses on healthy food preparation is essential. It is time to bring back home economics courses to our schools. Nutrition is no longer taught in the schools, so people often don't know how to cook and eat healthy even if they have access to good quality food. Many of our schools have state-of-the-art kitchens that are underutilized. Schools should teach budgeting and financial wellness so that more families are able to provide for themselves. Putting this type of essential "life skill" training back in the schools or through other community outreach programs would help with both hunger and healthiness. Programs must be available in English and Spanish through different modalities and locations.

PERSONAL ACTIONS TO IMPACT CHANGE

Committing to a change that one is passionate about or capable of effectuating, no matter how small, will make an impact on our community's vision. Many community members offered their own action goal to impact change. A selection of these goals include:

- Providing staff and program support through Yuma County's organizational leaders, such as YRMC, Sunset, RCFBH, schools, on-profits, etc.
- Applying for grants, including the Yuma Community Foundation's \$50,000 currently available to non-profits.
- Networking with people who are passionate about the subject.
- Bringing together subject matter experts to collaborate and work.
- Taking the step to set up that one meeting that can make a difference.
- Investing in more parks and multi-use pathways at the city and county level to promote healthier lifestyle.
- Paying attention to our own personal health.
- Being willing to serve on a task force.
- Seeking alternatives to crop destruction when left unharvested, such as donation.
- Research and developing ways to logistically harvest produce set for destruction.
- Calling local government leaders.
- Advocating for folks with disabilities to better address their needs.
- Educating the public of what they can do to assist those groups that already are set up to provide assistance.
- Fostering the partnerships we have here in Yuma and connecting my patients with community partners—not just referring them to digital resources and a handout.
- Encouraging others to volunteers with non-profits.

Foundational Forum Three – July 16, 2021

“Equitable Living (Transportation and Affordable Housing)”

THE EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING VISION

A central theme around all discussions in the community about equitable living is adequate affordable housing and access to resources, which hinges on available, affordable, and convenient transportation. Transportation and housing are key to economic opportunity and jobs, and all people, regardless of income or background, must have a safe, comfortable, and affordable home and reliable and accessible transportation to get to their jobs and required services.

A vision for a vibrant future includes robust housing with walkability or bike-ability. Development of affordable housing only on the fringes of communities compounds transportation issues and removes options for non-vehicular or public transportation. Currently, our community faces a two-year wait time for affordable housing. There are other ways to break this logjam, including increasing education financing and credit management services to prepare individuals for home purchases. Housing affordability targeted at 30% of budget remains a key metric, and the development or preservation of affordable housing at that percentage of income should be a priority for the community. Of course, we must always also focus on raising the income levels within the community such that people can obtain housing without a lot of public subsidies; this is achieved by expanding job training and recruiting employers, and by improving the community's other components (i.e., education) as a whole).

As a compliment to affordable housing, residents need transportation in order to work and access resources. There must be viable transportation options for those citizens without vehicles. Public transportation in Yuma is improving and increasing, particularly with the bus system. Public transportation should have a regional focus beyond the confines of a particular city or town so that more people can utilize community services. Improved public services, such as sheltered bus stops, stops with air conditioning or wifi access, and other amenities can also make public options more attractive and useable. With improvements to bike lanes and access, we already see an increase in bicycles usage as a viable transportation option. Emerging technologies like self-driving cars could ease transportation costs and assist with burdens on personal budgets. Full-service transportation passes, supported by educational or employment, giving opportunity to transfer from different transportation modalities could also assist (busses to ride-share or taxis).

Ultimately, combining both goals can work in tandem. We should develop housing that incorporates both bicycling and walking accessibility. Housing within walking or biking distance of jobs, services, and businesses assist with both housing and transportation burdens, and alleviate the burden on current transportation and budgets.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SECTORS OF TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING

Demands for housing opportunities in live/work/play communities prioritizing walking or biking as the main transportation mode are increasingly being seen as a key to economic prosperity and a greater quality of life. Yuma County needs to identify more opportunities for mixed-use development and the governments should prioritize it over development on the fringes of our communities. Mixed-use developments where live/work/play is walkable or rideable alleviate transportation burdens, as neighborhoods that are spread out into the countryside end up making transit harder and can also make economic opportunity more difficult. We should take advantage of current development, utilizing more density in the heart of our city, where services and utilities are already in place. Generationally, young people are not in hurry to obtain a driver's license, and public transportation options and walking or biking are increasingly more important. The next generation will choose to live in communities that invest in these transportation options and that prioritize these mixed-use live/work/play developments.

To achieve this, the community should bring the interested stakeholders to the same table, including citizens, transportation providers (public and private), and businesses, all of whom are invested in growing jobs in quantity and quality. Transportation investments will not only increase quality of life within the community but will ultimately save money for interested stakeholders. Specific collaborations between entities that make sense—such as YCAT and Arizona Western College, or builders and transportation hubs—will also be beneficial to implementing innovative solutions.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Yuma needs well-planned communities, where residents rarely need to travel for day-to-day services. We do not have to reinvent the wheel to do this: a prime example is the Verrado development in the West Valley of Phoenix. While it is located immediately adjacent to Interstate 10, the residents do not need to utilize the freeway for most services. It is an example of the live/work/play concept.

Yuma County is a combination of publicly and privately owned land. Our community needs collaboration between different governmental entities and the private sector. Yuma is at a tipping point with development. Investment into transportation and housing is an investment into business development and economic prosperity. The goal is career employment through business development. Simply put, companies will not consider locating or relocating to Yuma unless the workforce is strong, and this includes healthy transportation options and robust housing options to include modern mixed-use developments.

Yuma's biggest export is our next generation talent. Without collaboration, Yuma shifts into a retirement community which makes it more difficult to obtain political will for investment into transportation, education, or affordable housing. A shift to robust housing options is seen as a way to retain talent and expand opportunities. A cultural shift is needed. We must target a younger generation using YCAT and other public transportation options. If you have density, they you can create a credible transit system.

Some of these goals can be achieved simply through better communication. Political leadership has vision for future and private sector has vision for the future, but those visions are not always understood by the general public. Placing it all in a single accessible place may assist with this. Communities should be targeted with information specific to them and via community partnership. Sponsorship programs and assistance with

fees can help bring awareness of these services to communities. Ground level involvement to spread awareness and better understand community needs will also serve to tailor options to the community.

Currently, over 92% of people who use transportation for work purposes go by single occupancy vehicle. We should be viewing transit as a social service option and funding it accordingly. Funding remains large hurdle for investment into transportation methods or emerging technologies. A fair distribution of state shared gas tax as well as local control over road monies would go far in achieving appropriate funding. Obtaining knowledge of how transportation and housing is funded, through tax programs or even the business community, is essential to understanding and modifying existing programs.

Foundational Forum Four – August 13, 2021

"Community Safety"

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

What does the vision of community safety look like in a vibrant community? Well, one with no crime! While that may not currently be possible, there are things that can lead us closer to that vision.

The community needs to deal with the root causes of crime rather than just prosecuting those that need help. This includes marginalized segments of our society like LGBTQ and other minorities. More understanding of these segments might allow us to stop crime before it starts. For example, there has been a resurgence of displaced and homeless individuals who live/camp in public places, for example in the wetlands areas. This gives a perception of lack of safety. There needs to be a serious discussion of how to solve this problem, as it leads to wildfires, crime, injuries, and other issues. This will require dealing with underlying issues that this population and first responders face. Mental health first responders could be attached to police and fire departments so we have qualified people to help with their issues.

Community design should focus on removing "pockets" of income inequality and crime rates and equalizing opportunities across town. Education regarding ongoing issues—such as drug awareness and water safety—will help reduce the number of calls through prevention, allowing available resources to focus on more serious matters. Education, retention, and recruitment requires unique thinking and an eye on targeting the youth. Interaction with the community by safety personnel will assist in preventing the need for emergency services, creating trust with the citizens, aiding in recruiting personnel, and further educating through boots-on-the-ground efforts. Access to Parks and Recreation should be expanded to keep youth engaged, productive, and off the streets. Funding parks and recreation should be a priority. Encouraging and fostering community involvement will help keep citizens safe and create ownership and pride in our community. Better lighting increases actual safety which increases the willingness and desire to go outside and get involved.

Vibrant and extensive transportation is critical to moving throughout the region and providing access to the workforce. Yuma also struggles due to a large number of people not residing in the city, but still affecting Yuma's community safety. Retention and recruiting are a necessary focus.

When it comes to physical safety, the desert environment offers many unique challenges that could be reduced with education about desert safety. Bicycling safety can be increased with signage, bike lanes and other ways to increase visibility. Embracing bicycling as a quality-of-life issue is advantageous for both residents and visitors. These issues need to be included in municipal general plans and education efforts.

Allowing people to be free to create ideas to solve a lot of these issues can go a long way to providing viable solutions. This means, though, eliminating many government regulations and interference in the economic arena such as minimum wage laws, permits, and other regulations of that type. Society as a whole is too complex for a group of select people to plan. By allowing each individual to plan their life and/or in conjunction with others, the marketplace will see to it that the correct solution will be implemented. However, people need to be allowed to work together with a very minimum of regulations.

COLLABORATING ACROSS SECTORS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Yuma's location on the border presents unique challenges that must be faced. There is much more to our community than agriculture. Current funding for infrastructure and tourism could be directed to actual tasks and projects that would enhance our community so that we are more of a destination. But no matter how many great activities we have here, people will not come if they perceive safety threats. We all have responsibility to keep our community safe and provide opportunities for our youth so that they don't make bad choices with their life. We should use our excellent ability to collaborate and not just depend on our first responders.

When we look at the segments of our community, we should look at who is impacted the most by crime. Finding ways to help people provide for themselves, rather than just providing a handout, will improve crime rates. Poverty is directly linked to crime, and communities of color are the most impacted by poverty due to lack of higher education. Higher paying jobs will entice people to work and reduce crime. Thus, increased access to higher education can ultimately help with economic development, jobs, and reduced crime.

We need to strive for a grassroots approach rather than grasstops. Impacted communities must be at the table as solutions are formulated, or the "Smart People" "solutions" will just be a band-aid. A collaborative effort of the County, cities, education, non-profits, and churches, where everyone focuses on the greater good rather than taking credit could really move solutions forward. The Capstone Town Hall is a great opportunity to move in this direction. It is important that these discussions don't just end up as a report on the shelf. Participants should take it upon themselves, or be organized, to impact activities like municipal general plans.

Involve middle school and high school students in citizen academies and ridealongs with emergency personnel to counteract the negative messages of media and social media. Camp Inferno is a good example of such an academy. Encourage neighborhood watch groups to increase the sense of safety and form relationships among neighbors. Interaction by law enforcement with those groups, or other smaller groups, will help further dispel negative messages. Exposure is the best way to foster positive feelings and experiences. This will serve to also encourage members of our communities to pursue careers in emergency services. Create and increase opportunities for open discussion community forums – such as Coffee with a Cop.

Communities, governments, and emergency services need to embrace technology and create a bigger footprint on the platforms used by our youth to better connect with them and get them the information they need. Services and programs should be put in place around the city to provide alternatives for children after-school and provide access to strong mentors. It is necessary to target these programs to the much younger children, as high school may be too late. The criminal justice system needs to be incorporated into the discussion and programs need to be crafted to address those who are better served by non-criminal justice programs – such as the mentally ill. There need to be more than discussions. Action plans are critical to moving forward. Being innovative in addressing these various issues will draw people to our community.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION VIA COLLABORATION

Our communities are too interconnected to not be unified. Together, mayors, administrators, representatives of the business community, non-profits, youth organizations, Tribal, Latino, and black leaders, mentally ill and homeless advocates, etc., should be gathered at one table to develop a master plan for the County as a whole. Real-world perspectives of crime and the tough situations that lead up to it need to also be represented in planning for solutions. The Capstone Town Hall would be a good start, so all of those entities should be encouraged to participate. This can be accomplished through community service clubs and other venues.

After the Capstone Town Hall, we should form an action group that would encompass all aspects of our community and be given enough influence so that they can impact policy bodies where decisions are made. Realizing that society as a whole is too complex for a group of select people to plan, a grassroots movement may need to be created to strengthen the efficacy of this advocacy. Such movements need youth, elders, people of color, and others that are most impacted working respectfully together in support of each other. This kind of movement, along with minimizing regulation so that the marketplace will offer solutions, may help individuals properly plan their own lives, leading to true solutions.

We should focus on the younger years and getting all the stakeholders in one discussion, including teachers, parents, and community leaders. The community needs to provide support to our youth programs through not just finances but by taking an actual leadership role and being involved. School Resource Officers are a great and positive opportunity to teach youth that law enforcement is there to assist and support the community. The SRO program should be expanded, particularly at the elementary and middle school level while children are still forming opinions. However, it is also critical to open up a dialogue with high school children, who have greater contact with society and may need answers. Continuing to have open dialogue and talking through issues is the best way to move forward, meet our goals, and generate creative ideas. Follow-through is critical to accomplishment. We should target afterschool clubs and lunch periods for education and interaction among the youth and emergency services. Law enforcement should increase its presence as teachers and leaders at community events. We should identify communities that are more efficient and effective at meeting their goals and utilize their programs as our foundation. We have to remember that we are creating our community for the next generation, and their input and dreams should be a focus to get them excited about the future of Yuma.

Foundational Forum Five – September 10, 2021

“Community Design—Parks and Recreation”

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY DESIGN

A vibrant, thriving community would include many different elements. The viewpoint of each stakeholder group impacts the hierarchy of importance of each element within that segment. For example, the youth may choose broadband as the most important element of community design, whereas business stakeholders may choose access to water or stable power. Collaborative effort is key to developing all these elements. We must together decide what is “steak” to our community and what is “sizzle”; which of these design elements are foundation components (i.e., broadband, infrastructure) and which go on top of that to draw people here with a flair.

Certainly, there is concern about the level of water supply remaining sustainable. Water, in particular, is crucial for our community: we are “river people.” Without water, there is no community. Some communities are utilizing wastewater plants to help supplement and sustain community water resources. Yuma has ground water supplies that could be further utilized.

Also certainly, broadband access is critical. There are areas in Yuma County where broadband is inconsistent, and this causes frustration with residents and stymies growth.

But on top of these foundation elements, a vibrant Parks and Recreation effort adds to overall health for community residents and long-term benefits. This area plays a huge role in providing opportunities for families and youth to be outside. The PAC softball fields add to our community in many ways for local residents and visiting teams. Free outdoor recreational areas that are easily accessible to residents are desired and appreciated. Parks and recreation should invest in more staff to help connect the other parts we have talked about in previous discussions: housing, lower income, older population with social needs. By creating programs with non-profits, other government agencies, nursing homes, preschools, colleges, we can help our community.

We must also directly engage with the historic components of Yuma. This is expressly connected to our Old Town community and the riverfront, and these are key sites for focus and development. This expands the identity of Yuma in a way that “sizzles,” like Tombstone in Southern Arizona/Tucson. This development can balance the twin aspects of local community use and engagement alongside an expansion of Yuma as a tourist destination. The use of the spaces can range from outdoor hobbies (birding, activities in/on/around the water, etc.) as well as a constant and considered arts opportunity. Together, this combines the twin goals of (local) recreation and tourism as allied rather than distinct efforts. Moreover, this was posited to be developed with a key eye toward youth so that those who are here can have pride and enjoyment of their town while also being beneficial and attractive for their return if they go away for opportunities like college, thereby drawing them back to Yuma. Altogether, these proposals and ideas (the expansion of the arts, the further redevelopment of Old Town and the river areas, better infrastructure for connecting to the sites such as the Territorial Prison that facilitates both vehicular and foot traffic) demonstrate how the city could work to better strengthen its ability to market itself both locally and beyond. Indeed, we could even utilize the allure of a National Heritage Area and National Historic Landmark, as it is a big deal. That is why we are here, to tell the Yuma story and of how the Colorado River drew people to its shores.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECTORS: INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECREATION

Good community design requires collaboration between the community and utilities. Planning for the future needs input from interested stakeholders. As the population grows, the community system needs to be upgraded. We are "on the path of all of the above," as in, the community is moving in this direction, but lacking in some physical infrastructure.

To move in the right direction, there should be a clearer connection between development and the future industries and employment opportunities of Yuma. The lack of industry-ready development (especially in terms of spaces and buildings) currently limits expansion. Thus, collaboration with industry for current and future needs so that Yuma is ready is vital. There are a wide variety of stakeholders both in the city and the broader region. Currently, they are all operating somewhat autonomously, so facilitating a more formal sit down between these constituencies so that the various plans, intentions, needs, and wants can be shared and addressed, can enable working together so these goals and efforts are complementary. Collaborative effort will also reduce possible conflicts in the short-term and long-term plans when the individual entities have possible ideas for similar places. There need to be incentives to support collaboration to maximize the benefits to our community. Collaboration can lead to cost savings. This has occurred with utility companies and cities.

Throughout this, a focus on infrastructure is important, with key attention paid to roads, rails, etc., so that access to the various places is enabled (whether it is so businesses/industries can operate or for people to access our sites and new hotel developments). Similarly, other elements like strong internet, especially broadband, are important and beneficial so that Yuma is able to keep up with other communities. This forms both locals and businesses gaining stronger engagement with, and access to, a broader array of resources. It is important to invest into stable, employment opportunities within the city itself (with formal ties to the county more broadly), including expanding various part-time jobs into full-time positions, thereby offering more stability in the work being done as well as expanding the capacities of that work.

Similarly, it is vitally important for education to keep up with the workforce needs and articulate what these are. Collaboration is key. Through discussions with companies, education can design curriculum to meet workplace needs. These discussions have taken place in Yuma County throughout the levels of education and industry and have focused on how to train and retain an educated workforce.

Parks and recreation also are important for quality of life, especially for families. To keep families in Yuma County and retain them, accessible outdoor recreation activities are necessary. Lifestyle opportunities are also a reason for industry choosing Yuma County as a location.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

There are two key ideas around how the city can move forward and facilitate these ideas and opportunities. One is centered on a more formal engagement with the college and universities, highlighting interests in specific coursework and degree pathways that could be leveraged immediately on a local scale. Specific offerings in hotel/restaurant management, parks management, and recreation should be expanded. Alongside this, the 2% tax that is set to sunset in 2024 should be considered for extension. This tax represents millions of dollars for city and parks and recreation. Ideas around whether this needs to be reintroduced in a nearly identical form so that its time is extended, or possibly even working to increase the amount slightly, in line with other localities, thereby expanding the economic impact of the tax, should be considered.

It is important to work with various constituencies in and beyond the city so that this could be planned, with an emphasis on meetings with actionable goals for swifter implementation. A key example of the needs for this sort of coordination, cooperation, and communication is highlighted by the Avenue D extension conflicting with the plans for Rolle Field. By operating independently of each other without coordination, long-term plans can be put in jeopardy and the strongest possible routes for space utilization may be lost.

Community organizations, such as Visit Yuma, are essential for discussions on vibrant communities. Resident and tourist location draws, such as Telegraph Pass, would benefit from trees and facilities. The Bureau of Reclamation is an important stakeholder and collaborator since they have oversight over much land in the area. The military community has a significant presence in Yuma County and should be involved in discussions on community design. Active military look for activities and local areas would benefit as would the military personnel from local activities.

Incentives would help encourage collaboration. These could include tax incentives, a competition environment, reduction in regulations, and more. Each member of Yuma County needs to know how they, personally, will benefit from different elements of the community. People ask, "what can I gain from this?" In the end this helps in more ways than one, as even grant funding is more open to areas that demonstrate collaboration.

Yuma is a unique community where family is very important. Connecting with industry and partnering with education will enable our community to move forward successfully into the future. A cohesive community narrative will protect our mission of a vibrant community.

Foundational Forum Six – September 24, 2021

“Underserved Communities”

THE CURRENT STATE OF UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

While we explored the underrepresented communities of African Americans, Latina females, LGBTQ, farmworkers and the disabled, other important underrepresented communities in Yuma include the Native American community, Veterans and elderly communities, youth, incarcerated persons, substance abusers and those at risk for suicide. Others include those with mental health issues (including veterans with PTSD), the homeless population, migrant families, Hispanic males/Latinos, and Asian/Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern populations.

Yuma lacks resources and services needed to support these communities, which are part of the backbone of our community. Sometimes programs don't offer complete solutions and are thus not helpful. For example, vouchers for housing cannot be used because of high rental prices or even lack of available housing. Mental health and other challenges need to be addressed by our entire community. By meeting these needs, our community will become more attractive. Providing training and opportunities for these communities is necessary to incorporate them into our community. It is important that we learn about the symptoms and signs of challenges for these underserved communities, so that we can better respond. Providing proper educational facilities and opportunities is one way to make sure that such needs are met.

THE VISION OF A SUPPORTED UNDERSERVED POPULATION

In an ideal world, our community would be understanding and supportive, and everyone would have equal access to the benefits of a vibrant community. In some cases, misperceptions caused by lack of understanding will lead to continuing challenges. Education is a two-way street. In order to provide the support needed we must assure that everyone is able to recognize groups that are underrepresented and have challenges that need to be addressed.

We should strive to realize that we are all humans and have different needs. Rather than reacting negatively to different people, we should act with support and work to remove barriers. Social and conventional media could be used by municipalities and support groups to reach out to the underserved with information about support services. Awareness that underserved communities are made up of individuals with individual needs will allow us to tailor our support as needed. If people would use their personal responsibility to respect and honor individuality, we could take care of everyone as a whole.

To be a vibrant community, we envision the best support and equitable opportunities to include:

- Diversity on local boards, committees, and organizational leadership. This ensures a platform for all voices, including those from underserved communities, to be heard and represented.
- Coordinating town halls and open conversation such as this at local schools.

- Participation from underserved populations with local non-profits and civic organizations. There should be more awareness and outreach by these organizations to underserved communities.
- Respecting other opinions and perspectives. Online culture has made it more acceptable to be disrespectful and 'ugly.'
- Engaging with influencers from underserved communities. Get them actively involved so they can encourage others.
- Providing opportunities in all areas of our county, not just the 'Cities'. Wellton has unique needs and issues.
- Continuing to just do what we're doing. Labor of Love is a great example, it is a program that shows appreciation for our local farmworkers. San Luis does a great job of showing appreciation of our farmworkers through events like Dia de la Campesina.
- Starting the conversation at home. We need to work with parents to ensure they are offering an open space at home to engage in open and caring conversation.
- Creating spaces/opportunities for underserved communities to come together, such as Dream Big where youth and senior centers are combined. Seniors love to share their experiences and knowledge with our youth.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION VIA COLLABORATION

We have very powerful personal stories and experiences within our populace and these minds and voices need to get more exposure in our community. Simulations are a good way of helping people to understand their internal biases and what other communities face. School counselors can help shine a light on what realities are faced by the youth in these communities, helping the community at large to understand the challenges faced by others. To accomplish this vision, we need to work together and think of the greater region. Thinking regionally ensures opportunities are equally shared.

People in the underserved communities need to be able to take active leadership roles, but they often do not have role models to make them want to do it. All elements of our community need to be engaged. Students and even adults are not aware of where they can volunteer, so more effort at outreach to these communities is critical to their engagement. Community events should strive to make space available for support organizations to be present. Employers and the business community can play a major role in implementing needed changes by empowering individual employees to take action. We also need to better inform elected leaders so that they can do a better job of making the wider community aware of the needs of underserved communities. Municipalities constantly have openings on boards and commissions, which would be a good place to provide a voice and representation for the underserved. They also have leadership programs that could better reach out to underserved communities for participation. Business organizations should take an active role in educating their members about the importance of supporting underserved communities, and intentionally include diverse membership on their boards and other leadership roles. Non-profits always need volunteers, but if they do not actively reach out to diverse people, they may not get involved. Programs like the Heart of Yuma are important ways to provide inspiration about the reasons to volunteer, and they hopefully appeal to people who would not otherwise be motivated to do so. Community events that spread the word about volunteer and leadership

opportunities may go a long way to helping people get involved and represent their communities. Bottom line is, we all need to be not just accepting of people who are different than us, but we need to actively reach out to such individuals and encourage their inclusion and participation in our community.

It is our job as a community to listen and make an effort to understand all perspectives. To accomplish this, the following groups must be included in the collaboration:

- Private and public sector organizations. They can support community outreach and help fund needed programs.
- Civic groups. They are essential to organizing people and events.
- Volunteers. We have so many community members who are willing to help when needed.
- First generation residents. Their perspective is much different than those who have assimilated into American culture, and it is often overlooked.
- Military. They are a vital part of our community and can support.
- Joint venture partnerships with larger entities. They can help financially or provide needed services.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SERIES SPONSORS



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Verde Valley Community Town Hall

October 8, 2021 – Verde Valley, AZ and Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Verde Valley Community Town Hall

October 8, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

When we consider the Verde Valley we think of people, passion, perspective, personality, purpose, partnership, preservation, and public safety.

One of our most significant strengths is our commitment to volunteerism and collaboration. Community members donate tens of thousands of hours, and we see extensive civic engagement and strong regional organizations such as Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization. Each of our local communities have their own identities from Sedona to Cottonwood, Clarkdale, Jerome, Camp Verde, and Yavapai County.

We are a very safe community. We have access to health care even though we are a rural community. We have excellent libraries and educational resources and involvement at all levels from pre-K through our community college.

The Verde Valley has become effective at connecting people in need with the resources they need, and this was made apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we could do more to leverage the available resources.

Public transportation options, including paratransit and transportation for the elderly, are scarce and could be improved.

Parks and recreation are a strength, as is environmental quality. As a community that is close to natural parks and public resources, we do a good job of leveraging our location for recreation and tourism.

VERDE VALLEY CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

It has been said that we should never let a good crisis go to waste—instead we should look for opportunities to make lives better. COVID-19 has identified how interrelated our communities are and has highlighted disparities and needs which have including housing, health care, broadband, sustainable food availability, and transportation.

Organizations around the Verde Valley rose to the many challenges we faced. Yavapai County Health Services established a phone bank providing access to information, testing and vaccines. Verde Valley Caregivers delivered health care services to seniors. Manzanita Outreach provided food to the community and resources to our children through local schools. Many other organizations also made major contributions.

Inequities continue to be prevalent in the Verde Valley. COVID-19 both amplified and revealed the disparities in health care, housing, and other basic services. There are diverse elements of the community whose voices have not been heard, although the increased use of Zoom and electronic media has made meetings more accessible.

Not all members of the community have access to all elements of the wheel. Different groups have different levels and means of accessing the elements on the wheel. While Zoom and electronic platforms have improved inclusiveness, communities such as Cornville and many vulnerable communities remain excluded because they do not have reliable access to broadband internet. This can lead to social isolation and lack of awareness of available resources. It also made remote health care inaccessible to those without online communication access. The move to online education further exposed the lack of internet access many of our families have. A bright spot is that Yavapai County has committed half of its CARES Act funding to expanding broadband throughout the County.

There is a shortage of health care workers that has been made worse by the pandemic. Some hospitals were so overrun by COVID-19 cases that they were unable to serve people with other conditions in need of care. The pandemic has also increased awareness of substance abuse and mental health needs in the community.

Water continues to be a major issue and drinking water remains a significant concern. Native American community needs were exposed including lack of potable water for drinking and maintaining health. More integrative water planning needs to be addressed.

The lack of affordable housing poses a huge problem and directly impacts workforce development. Many workers who need housing cannot afford to live in the community. We have exposed an increase in the number of people in the Verde Valley experiencing homelessness. Some people have moved to the outskirts and live on undeveloped land, highlighting their needs and leading to environmental and public safety issues. While all communities are working on workforce housing, Sedona and Cottonwood have selected a single joint housing leader for both communities to address these issues.

Families found themselves without adequate transportation resources. Improving the shuttle schedule also could help to relieve the problem of unavailability of rental housing in Sedona by making it more convenient for workers to commute.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- We need more local control as one size does not fit all and we need to eliminate unfunded state-imposed mandates. This includes issues such as local control over short term rentals and taxes.
- Our schools are underfunded, and we should not continue to be 49th in the nation in public funding—we need better outcomes for our children and higher pay for teachers.
- We need to continue to work toward strengthening families.
- We need to embrace data driven decisions, cross the aisle, and move away from politicization.
- We need to diversify our leadership, encouraging youth and people of color to actively participate.
- We need integrated water management and planning.
- We should increase efforts to educate high school students and voters on civics and local issues and strongly encourage the importance of civic engagement through voting in primary and general elections.
- We need to see broadband communications expanding throughout all our local communities.
- The Verde Valley needs to continue to work together including the redistricting process.

- People are not always aware of resource availability—we need to have a single point of contact where people could go to be referred to the help they need.
- Funding for non-profits has been challenged by the pandemic. We need to promote and incite volunteerism and funding for non-profits that fulfill vital public services. Meals on Wheels, for example, is a vital, lifesaving service. Its costs have increased, and fundraising abilities have decreased due to COVID-19.
- The lack of affordable and workforce housing is the single biggest issue for people in this region.
- Workforce development needs to promote livable wage jobs.
- State officials should become as accessible and responsive as local officials.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Verde Valley Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Complete the broadband whitepaper and include PPP management opportunities.
- Energize the advocacy and research committee of VVREO as a board member.
- As president of the Cornville Community Association, I am working to bring more local residents into our organization in order to keep community involvement at a high level so that all are involved in the important decisions affecting Cornville.
- Ensure the work of Local First Arizona is always focused on the community needs and make an effort to attend similar events to hear directly from community members.
- Foster relationships and actions to leverage the full diversity of voices and talents in our region. One specific direction is a cross-sector collaboration to develop a pipeline of BIPOC leaders for conservation-related organizations and build momentum on tackling environmental justice issues.
- [Help to create] coalitions for every issue with working members.
- Be better at "Well Done" than "Well Said!"
- Continue to promote the Meals on Wheels program to Arizona's elected officials to inform them of the real plight of the elderly. Every official should take a trip with a MOW driver and home-deliver meals.
- Update the referral list we offer to our clients to be sure we are including all available resources in the Verde Valley.
- Pay attention to the primary elections and educate myself to make good voting decisions.
- Restart teen council.
- Reach out to state elected leaders to educate.
- Be more aware of political position and priorities of individuals running for office.

- Continue to talk to a variety of members of our community, listen to their needs and try to connect them to resources and leadership and elevate their voice.
- Work to amplify the voice of rural Arizona in the legislature, especially on education issues, by facilitating testimony in Phoenix on how rural answers differ from urban answers.
- Work with my colleagues to identify ways to support Verde Valley communities in efforts to build on strengths/assets for healthy, vibrant communities.
- Find a way to get involved in the Verde Valley as a citizen.
- Find ways to create pathways in collaboration with my K-12 partners.
- Learn basic Spanish.
- Go in person to meet students and leaders of the Yavapai-Apache Nation.
- Be more public in representing Yavapai College for accessibility.
- Research solutions for affordable housing and connect with the leaders who are working on the issue.
- Continue my work as a leader in my profession as well as work to support the efforts to strengthen families and communities.
- Continue to connect our valuable adults and their experience and introspect to youth to help guide them to support our community.
- Share the Camp Verde water study and the sinkhole study.
- Work with the state land trust to educate the public on education funding.
- Work with VVREO to be a collaboration to the Valley.
- Continue to inform on the failure of our public education—now 38th—40th worldwide down from #1. Only choice will free [us] from the failure nationwide of public schools.
- I have a unique talent of bringing people together to have difficult conversations and will help create, design, and implement community conversations around difficult topics.
- Bring my expertise to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) so that people feel included at the table conversation related to Verde Valley growth.
- Actively engage with the Yavapai-Apache Nation.
- Shop local.
- Join an impactful and passionate board of directors.
- Follow up with Linda Buchannan to contribute ideas and resources to Arizona Town Hall Future Leaders initiatives.
- Visit with Arizona state legislators (representatives and senators) and Congressman Tom O'Halleran regarding the importance of "Keeping the Verde Valley Together" as well as major themes from Verde Valley Community Town Hall.

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