

Creating a Sense of Place

The Vision

A distinctive sense of place and a convenient lifestyle are essential elements of a livable community. In addition to providing unique homes, the vision for Rancho Sahuarita includes school, recreation and a “Town Center”, which will serve as a social gathering place for residents to live, learn, work, play and shop.

A Master Plan

To implement its master plan, Rancho Sahuarita has already donated over 60 acres for school sites, a 15-acre lake park and an additional six acres for a municipal complex. Rancho Sahuarita is also proposing to preserve the Santa Cruz River in its natural state by enhancing this river corridor with a pedestrian oriented linear park. It has offered to donate up to 200 acres of river bank, open space to accommodate a sports oriented North Park with baseball and soccer fields, and skate and doggy parks.

A Traditional Town Center

The Rancho Sahuarita plan has also always envisioned a pedestrian-friendly Town Center that features a Main Street, Central Park, Town Hall, Public Library, Post Office, and retail shops. A Sahuarita Town Center, located south of Sahuarita Road on both sides of I-19, could incorporate an urban, mixed-use design, architecturally inspired by the traditional downtowns found in many small communities. Rancho Sahuarita’s goal is to create a definitive sense of place that provides an identity for the community and a focal point for the entire town.

A Public Library and Central Park

To establish an even more vibrant place, Rancho Sahuarita has recently offered to donate a Public Library site, located on the planned Main Street. This exceptional parcel is adjacent to a proposed town park that will include a band shell, interactive “kids” fountains, gardens, a river walk, picnic areas, and other amenities. The Town’s new Central Park would provide a special venue where neighbors can meet for concerts, festivals, and holiday celebrations.

A One-Of-A-Kind Destination

The Sahuarita Town Center will feature architecturally distinctive buildings, which create a one-of-a-kind destination, and showcase Rancho Sahuarita’s unique 17th century, Spanish Colonial architecture. Just east of the existing Post Office, the Town is building a 62,000 square foot municipal complex and Carondelet is planning a 300-bed hospital and medical campus. Along with the proposed Main Street, Central Park and Library, these facilities would make “Downtown Sahuarita” one of the most exciting amenities in Southern Arizona.

Common Goals

Everyone agrees that the future vision for the Town should include a Sahuarita Town Center, community and regional shopping, and jobs. As these common goals are achieved, an expanded retail sales tax base will generate revenue needed to support additional Town services. With the proper infrastructure in place, the time frame required to meet these common goals can be decreased and recurring tax revenue can be increased. Without this investment in improvements, it is not likely that further commercial development will occur as quickly as residents, the Town and Rancho Sahuarita desire.

A Public/Private Partnership

Individually, neither the town, Rancho Sahuarita, nor future commercial users have the financial ability to provide the funding for all of the essential improvements. However, a public/private partnership could respond to this challenge by facilitating the construction of the improvements required to attract new commercial development to the Sahuarita area at a much earlier date than might otherwise happen. This development will create additional sales tax revenue, that would not typically occur for many years, and which could be used to help offset the cost of the necessary infrastructure.

Developing Essential Infrastructure

Based on legislative authority, communities throughout Arizona and the country have offered various strategies, incentives and reimbursements, including the sharing of future tax revenue, to support the development of essential infrastructure that will encourage commercial growth. Private companies provide the financial and development resources to build crucial infrastructure and then are repaid from a portion of future sales tax revenue. Developers front all of the money, time and effort to complete the improvements and the municipality receives the future benefits. In addition, the companies assume the risk that the anticipated commercial development will occur to provide the revenue required to repay their costs.

Attracting Commercial Development

In addition to providing improvements for the Library, Central Park and Main Street, Rancho Sahuarita would advance substantial sums to construct the infrastructure necessary to attract new commercial development to the 300 acres located south of Sahuarita Road. The investment in these improvements would be off-set by the Town reimbursing Rancho Sahuarita from 50% of the additional sale tax proceeds generated by users located “in this new commercial district”. Once Rancho Sahuarita is paid back, the Town’s share of all sales tax revenue generated from this new development would increase from 50% to 100%.

Increasing Sales Tax Revenue

A public/private partnership, between the Town and Rancho Sahuarita, would rapidly increase sales tax revenue. A stable, long-term source of income could eliminate the need for additional taxes, while providing funds for new community improvements, like the Library, Central Park and North Park. According to Bob Sharpe, the managing partner of Rancho Sahuarita, “an infrastructure reimbursement partnership would allow growth to pay for itself, the Town to achieve economic self-sufficiency and residents to benefit from a closer proximity to services”.

A Win/Win Opportunity

Over the last five years, Rancho Sahuarita has presented these Town Center plans to thousands of residents, who overwhelmingly support a Main Street lifestyle coupled with exciting commercial areas. Facilitating commercial development through a public/private partnership creates a “win/win” opportunity to resolve concerns regarding the Town’s financial future. Sharpe recently said “Creating a strong commercial base, as well as a popular destination for residents, is vital to the Town’s long-term fiscal integrity. We’re optimistic that the Town Council will foresee the future needs of the community and embrace this civic vision for an economically viable, ‘Downtown Sahuarita.’”