

Pedestrian Underpasses Proposed For Sahuarita Road

SAHUARITA, AZ (November 14, 2008) - One of the defining characteristics of Town Centers is that they have strong connections to the surrounding community. And now, there is an opportunity to create safe and convenient connectivity between the Sahuarita Unified School District's K-12 campus and the Market Place to the proposed Sahuarita Town Center. Rancho Sahuarita is proposing the formation of a public/private partnership to facilitate the construction of two, pedestrian underpasses in conjunction with the Town's widening of Sahuarita Road.

Previous studies commissioned by the Town have indicated that "pedestrian overpasses" straddling above Sahuarita Road would be too unsightly and costly, while being underutilized. However, according to the Urban Land Institute ("ULI"), one of the world's premier real estate organizations, "Strong connections to surrounding neighborhoods, commercial areas, and park systems help reinforce that the Town Center is accessible to all users and it differentiates it from a traditional private shopping center. Rancho Sahuarita believes that Sahuarita Road needs to be "easy to cross" to facilitate a successful Town Center development and pedestrian underpasses are the answer. Underground walkways can be designed to be a key component "that feed into and connect a Town Center to the surrounding neighborhoods and other communities" according to the ULI. In addition, Rancho Sahuarita has confirmed that these pedestrian underpasses can be constructed in an aesthetically pleasing and cost effective manner when the Town widens Sahuarita Road in 2009.

Rancho Sahuarita has agreed to fund the design and construction of up to two pedestrian underpasses, one near SUSD Administration Building and another near the Fry's Marketplace, provided that it would eventually be reimbursed through a mutually acceptable economic development agreement or EDA. An EDA could allow for the reimbursement of this developer funded, public infrastructure from a portion of future taxes dollars generated by new Commercial Development south of Sahuarita Road.

Many residents have expressed concerns regarding pedestrian safety once Sahuarita Road is widened. One such resident is Karen Eggers who spoke to the Town Council at its November 17 meeting about her experience when she attended the Halloween Safe House at Town Hall. She was genuinely worried for the safety of her children when crossing Sahuarita Road to attend this event. Future expansion plans for Sahuarita Road call for an ultimate 6 lane section to be constructed, which will be similar in size to Ina or Oracle Road.

"The safety of our residents and protection of our children have always been the highest priority for both Rancho Sahuarita and the Town Council," said Robert Sharpe, Managing Partner of Rancho Sahuarita. He continued, "It makes economic

sense to promote community connectivity and construct these underpasses in conjunction with the Sahuarita Road widening rather than at a later date.”

Sharpe concluded, “These pedestrian underpasses, which can be funded now at a reasonable cost and reimbursed later through an EDA, will benefit all of the residents of Sahuarita.”