

Housing and Neighborhoods

Element 12



INTRODUCTION

The City encourages housing availability for all economic sectors and special needs populations.

Sierra Vista strives to enhance the livability by providing clean and safe neighborhoods, promoting walkable neighborhoods, and building people-oriented neighborhoods, for both new and existing areas.

The enabling legislation for this Element states that the element should contain “standards and programs for the elimination of substandard dwelling conditions,” and “an identification and analysis of existing and forecasted housing needs.”

BACKGROUND

The Arizona Department of Housing and the Drachman Institute (University of Arizona) completed a Housing Assessment and Strategic Plan in August 2008. While the Housing Assessment was the first study conducted since the early 1990s, the Assessment outcomes were consistent with previous studies. For example, the study indicated 53 percent of the housing units are in excess of 20 years old. Another example is that renter-occupied units are at 38.7 percent of the total housing units, which is above the national average (as reported by Bloomberg) of 35 percent; this difference in rental percentages is indicative of the City’s transient nature.

Table 4				
HOUSING STOCK ACCORDING TO 2000 AND 2010 CENSUS				
	2000 Census		2010 Census	
	2000 Census Numbers	Percent of Housing Stock	2010 Census Numbers	Percent of Housing Stock
Total Units	15,685		19,666	
Owner-Occupied Units	7,417	47.3	9,675	49.2
Renter-Occupied Units	6,779	43.2	7,614	38.7
Total Unoccupied Units	1,489	9.5	2,377	12.1
Built prior to 1950			207	1.1
Built between 1950 and 1959			823	4.2
Built between 1960 and 1969			1,191	6.1
Built between 1970 and 1979			4,051	20.6
Built between 1980 and 1989			4,194	21.3
Built between 1990 and 1999			3,390	17.2
Built between 2000 and 2009			5,608	28.5

Affordable Housing

The Cochise College Center for Economic Research completed and published the *Affordable Rental Housing Study: Sierra Vista, AZ (June 2012)*, which concluded that there is a shortage of affordable rental housing for certain household sizes. The most extreme of the shortages are for studio and one-bedroom units where the demand exceeds supply by approximately 200 for the extremely low-income households (those with 30 percent of the city’s median household income). Also, the low-income households (those of 80 percent of the City’s median household income) of four or more persons need approximately 120 more units to satisfy the need.

In Sierra Vista, there are approximately 425 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) apartment units of various sizes and approximately 175 project-based (owned by HUD) Section 8 units (as of 2013). Sierra Vista residents also use approximately 75 percent of the entire Cochise County allotment of Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8 tenant-based assistance).

Growth

Infill opportunities for new development include State Trust Land and a limited amount of privately owned land. The City has identified that the growth patterns for most new construction will be to the east, southeast, and northeast; this new construction includes the

approved specific plans for The Tribute and Ventana de Flores. (See Land Use Element for additional information).

Homelessness

As of 2013, the City has only one privately run shelter, the Good Neighbor Alliance, for homeless men and families with children. The City has supported this shelter through numerous Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding allocations. There are also several organizations and churches that go to the homeless to administer aid.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-Funded Housing Programs

Prior to 2014, all HUD funding dispersal to Sierra Vista came through the Arizona Department of Housing (ADOH). Sierra Vista has received biennial CDBG funding and one \$300,000 HOME Grant for renovation of owner-occupied homes. Post 2013, Sierra Vista should receive direct allotments of HUD funding. While there are a number of programs available through HUD, the City does not foresee owning public housing or entering the arena to offer project- and tenant-based Section 8 or Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) that are currently administered through the Cochise County Housing Authority.

However, the City supports private developers who wish to build LIHTC projects and HUD programs for developers to use including Section 202 Elderly Housing and Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities. Support cannot be a direct financial contribution, but the City will support these programs by reducing Development Fees, Building Permit fees, and Development Review Processing fees.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 12-1 Promote quality affordable rental housing

According to Section 154 of the City Code, Development Fees are waived for any project, apartments or single family homes, that meet the HUD affordability guidelines for low and moderate income households. The City also has a policy that 50 percent of the review fees can be waived for affordable housing projects.

There are a total of 8 affordable housing developments within the community. With a small exception, there is no availability at these developments. There is potential, based on tax credit applications submitted to the Department of Housing, of three tax credit projects constructed within the next five years.

The City amended the Development Code in 2016 to allow apartments as permitted uses with the General Commercial Zoning Districts. This Code amendment was reflected the trend of developers converting hotels to apartments because of the need for additional multi-family housing in the community.

In 2019, the City Council adopted an Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance which allowed Accessory Dwellings in single family residential zoning districts, provided certain development criteria was met. One of the arguments in favor of this allowance was that Accessory Dwelling Units provide a form of affordable housing. The City has received two applications for Accessory Dwelling Units since Ordinance adoption.

- Strategies**
1. Support, through incentives, rehabilitation and reinvestment in existing affordable housing units.
 2. Encourage private developers applying for Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) by reducing fees.
 3. Apply for grant funding for renovation, when appropriate.
 4. Encourage new regulations and incentives to permit accessory dwellings.
 5. Encourage alternative housing types, such as dense, small lot or multi-family housing.

Goal 12-2 Promote quality affordable owner-occupied housing

The City has budgeted \$20,000 for an Emergency Home Repair and Disabilities Modification Program. This program provides funding for emergency home repairs to substandard housing and accessibility modifications for the elderly and disabled. The maximum amount of assistance is \$7,500 per household. In total, the City has provided funding to nine property owners.

- Strategies**
1. Research inclusionary housing options and promote viable options to local developers.
 2. Apply for grant funding to assist in rehabilitation.

3. Support, through incentives, rehabilitation and reinvestment in existing affordable housing units.

Goal 12-3 Improve understanding of property management and maintenance for homeowners and renters

National Fair Housing Month is celebrated in April of every year. The City Council reaffirms their commitment to Fair Housing in Sierra Vista with a proclamation every April. The City does provide brochures and information about Fair housing. However, any questions or complaints about housing discrimination are directed to the Southwest Fair Housing Council.

Strategies

1. Continue to provide training on federal and state Fair Housing requirements.
2. Continue to provide literature on the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, Mobile Home Land and Tenant Act, and various other publications to assist both the residents and landlords.
3. Research and possibly provide training on issues such as basic financial literacy, the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, and foreclosure information.
4. Research the possibility of providing basic home maintenance courses.

Goal 12-4 Continue enforcing the Neighborhood Enhancement Property Maintenance Program to encourage the quality, safety, and livability of neighborhoods

The City Council amended the City Code in 2019 to prohibit the parking of recreational vehicles/trailers on a public street for any portion of any five cumulative days in a 30-day period. This was the result of the number of complaints the City received from the residents.

The City does continue to be proactive in code enforcement as well respond to complaints. The response times are typically within 24 hours. The neighborhood officers have responded to 436 cases since January. Most of the cases relate to Overgrowth (200 cases) and sidewalk obstructions (106 cases).

The City's current policy on graffiti removal is that if the graffiti can be viewed from a public roadway, the City will remove. If the graffiti cannot be seen from a roadway, the homeowner is responsible to remove the graffiti.

In terms of offering more neighborhood clean-ups, the City provided a roll off dumpster for the Sierra Vista Southwest Residents Association in the spring.

- Strategies**
1. Amend the Property Nuisance Codes to reflect the desires of the residents.
 2. Continue to support the City's proactive approach to code enforcement that preserves, enhances, and promotes safe neighborhoods.
 3. Promote public-private partnerships to monitor the condition of abandoned or vacant buildings to mitigate negative effects on a neighborhood.
 4. Enhance response efforts to eliminate graffiti impacts.
 5. Educate property owners on the value of maintaining and improving their properties.
 6. Offer more neighborhood clean-ups.

Goal 12-5 Revitalize targeted areas

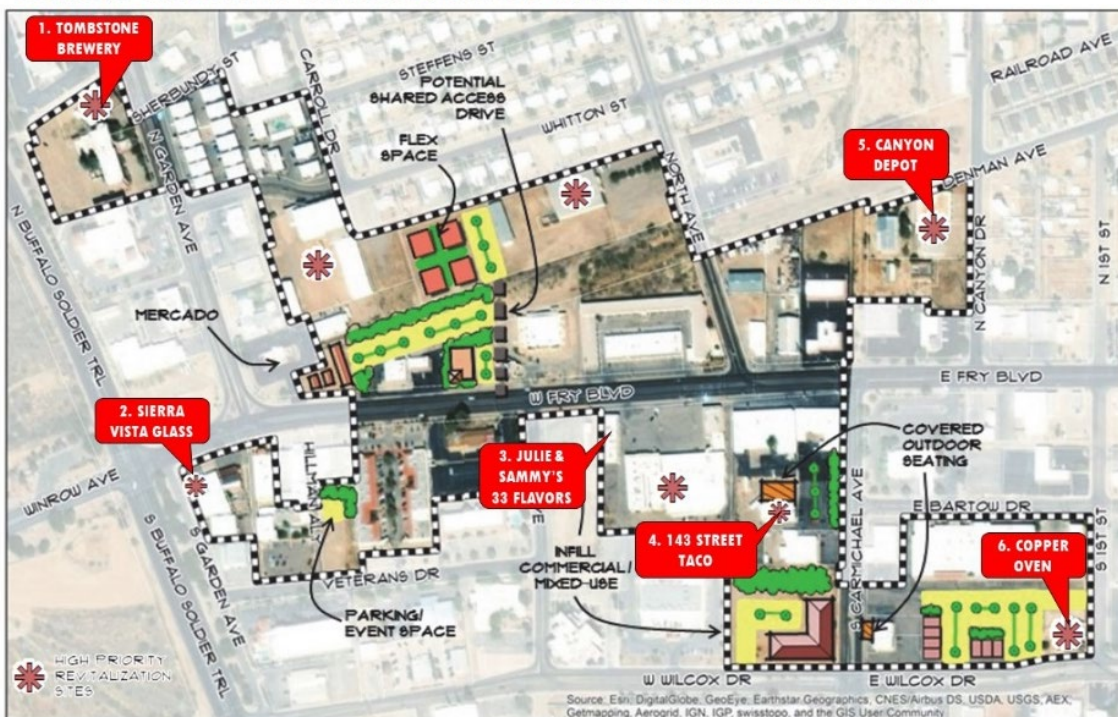
The City Council adopted the Infill Incentive District Policy in 2005 which provided development incentives as a tool to encourage investment in the Sierra Vista West End and Cloud Nine Planning Areas. The Policy was revised on December 10, 2020. Some of the incentives include expedited processing of plans and proposals, waivers of municipal fees, and relief from development standards. Implementation of the incentives is approved by the City Manager.

The West Sierra Vista Redevelopment Area Plan was originally adopted on March 22, 2018 and readopted on March 28, 2019 where the boundaries of the Area were expanded. The scope of the Plan focuses on improving conditions within the West Fry Boulevard and North Garden Avenue rights-of-way, incentivizes reinvestment and the reuse of idle properties, and growing small business through the development of an incubator. One of the first projects to be constructed in this area is the West Fry Boulevard Corridor North Garden Avenue Improvement Project. This project will revise the existing infrastructure on Fry Boulevard from Carmichael Avenue to Buffalo Soldier Trail and use the area more efficiently by implementing a more balanced, multi-modal corridor that is safe for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It is anticipated that this project will be completed by winter 2021.

A component of The West Sierra Vista Redevelopment Plan is the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program which provides matching grant assistance to business owners that improve their property. Improvements can include storefront improvements, building an site infrastructure, quality signage, ADA accessibility, landscaping and public art, and other beneficial improvements. Only those business owners that are within the West Sierra Vista Redevelopment Area are eligible to receive the grant assistance. The map identified as Exhibit "E", Conceptual Master Redevelopment Framework, designates eight "high priority revitalization sites" where economic development efforts and grant support are being focused.

1. **332 N. Garden Avenue (former Daisy Mae's Steakhouse).** This property is in the process of being redeveloped into a new brewpub to be operated by Tombstone Brewery. The City provided grant support for the demolition of the blighted building and parking area on the site through the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program. Staff anticipates a site plan and building permit application to be submitted in August 2020 with construction starting by the end of this year.
2. **556 W. Fry Boulevard (formerly Martin Cleaners).** This property was purchased and is being renovated for use by Sierra Vista Glass. A building permit has been issued for the tenant improvement.
3. **268 W. Fry Boulevard (formerly Philadelphia Bakery).** This unit was renovated for use by Julie and Sammy's 33 Flavors Ice Cream Parlor. The City provided grant support for the tenant improvement, signage, and landscaping through the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program. The owner is in the process of renovating another unit in the plaza to expand his business to include a game room.
4. **80 S. Carmichael (formerly Peacock Restaurant).** This longstanding vacant building was renovated to accommodate 143 Street Taco which opened in June 2020. The City provided grant support for the tenant improvement through the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program.
5. **160 N. Canyon Drive.** This building was renovated to provide interior offices and accessibility improvements. Final inspection was approved in August 2020. The City provided grant support for the tenant improvement through the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program.
6. **185 E. Wilcox (former Blues Café).** A building permit has been issued to renovate this longstanding vacant building into a new restaurant called the Copper Oven.

**EXHIBIT “E” –
CONCEPTUAL MASTER REDEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN**



Strategies

1. Install public improvements in targeted areas, where needed, to encourage and strengthen rehabilitation and redevelopment activity.
2. Develop program measurements and evaluation criteria as part of an area’s revitalization planning process.
3. Continue the City’s commitment to revitalize and redevelop the West End.
4. Support economic development efforts in targeted areas with public improvements to community facilities when needed.

Goal 12-6 Build strong neighborhoods

Necessary public facility and infrastructure upgrades in the redevelopment areas are primarily funded and implemented through federal grant programs and local funds. The status of prior/current capital improvement projects by funding source is as follows:

CDBG

- ***Timothy Lane Park Improvements:*** Provide funding for the construction of a stormwater basin, multi-use pathways, and landscape improvements. The City expended \$180,340 in PY 2018 and 2019 towards construction.
- ***North Garden Avenue Park Improvements:*** In PY 2019, City Staff developed a concept plan for improvements to Soldier Creek Park and Landwehr Plaza in consultation with the Carmichael Neighborhood Association, West End Commission, and the Sierra Vista Parks and Recreation Commission. The construction documents will be prepared by City Engineering Staff in 2020-21. Construction is scheduled to take place in the Fall/Winter of 2022. The total budget for this project is \$200,000.
- ***Demolition of Former Public Works Yard*** (Precursor to Eddie Cyr Center Park Project): Provide CDBG funding for the demolition of buildings located at 1224 North Avenue to prepare the land for additional parking/recreational use (refer to Eddie Cyr Park Master Plan). The demolition work was completed in December 2019 at a total cost of \$82,515. The PY 2020 CDBG Annual Action Plan allocates \$271,810 for implementing the proposed improvements.
- ***5th Street North (Fry Townsite)*** – curb, gutter and sidewalk along west side, south of Denman Avenue. The project was completed in the Spring of 2020 at a total cost of 84,680.
- ***Alley between N. 1st Street and N. 2nd Street (Fry Townsite)*** – repave alley and install vertical curb along eastern extent to improve drainage. This project was completed in the Spring of 2020 at a total cost of \$87,401.33.
- ***Solar Streetlights (Sulger/Fry Townsite):*** In PY 2017, the City installed 35 solar powered street-lights in the Fry Townsite and Sulger neighborhoods to increase public safety at a total cost of \$161,838.

- **Taylor Drive (Garden Canyon):** In PY 2016, the City installed curb, gutter, and sidewalk along Taylor Drive, from North Garden Avenue to North Avenue at a total cost of \$109,430.
- **ADA Ramps/Sidewalks:** In PY 2019, the Streets Section of the Public Works Department installed 446 lineal feet of sidewalk, 102 square feet of curb, and one ADA ramp.

MPO

- **West Fry Boulevard/North Garden Avenue:** Goal 3.1 of the Transportation and Circulation Element encourages a public transportation system that incorporates all modes of transportation using a “complete streets” model. The City has contracted with an engineering firm to prepare construction plans for improving West Fry Boulevard and North Garden Avenue to improve the form, function, and character of the street to meet this goal. The MPO has budgeted \$2.35 million towards construction which is started in summer of 2021. Anticipated completion date is winter of 2021.
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Sewer Fund

- **Third Street Wash Stabilization.** This project was studied and completed at a cost of \$80,000 in FY 18-19.
- **Sulger Sewer Trench Repair.** This project was undertaken in FY 18-19 at a cost of \$70,000. More trench repairs are needed.

CIP

- **7th Street Sidewalks (2015).** This project was completed at a cost of \$57,445 and installed sidewalks from Fry Boulevard to the Highway 90 Bypass-east shoulder. Total sidewalk installed was 4,488 square feet which included 3 driveways and 2 ADA ramps.
- **Hawk Project (2015).** The provided a lighted pedestrian crossing on 7th Street, just south of Tacoma Street. The construction cost was \$73,280 and included 3 ADA ramps and 60 square feet of sidewalk.
- **7th Street and Fry Blvd. Signal Upgrade (2016).** The project improved the traffic signals at the intersection of 7th Street and Fry Blvd. The

construction cost was \$188,180 and included the installation of 500 square feet of sidewalk and 3 ADA ramps.

STP

- **7th Street Overlay Project (2012-2016).** This project provided an asphalt overlay on 7th street which extended from Buffalo Soldier Trail to the Highway 90 bypass. As part of the overlay sidewalks and ADA Ramps were also upgraded. A total of 91 ADA ramps and 4,050 square feet of sidewalks/alleyway crossings were installed. The total cost of the project was \$1,373,336 with the federal monies financing \$1.285 million for the project.

Park Fund

- **Cyr Park and Soldiers Creek Park Shared Use Pathway Repairs and Placement.** This project included making repairs to the Cyr Center Shared Use Path and Install ADA compliant pathways at Soldier's Creek Park from the parking lot to ADA compliant playground. The construction cost was \$7,347 and included the installation of 1,872 square feet of shared use path.

Streets Fund

- **General Repairs/Replacements.** From 2014-17, the Streets Division has replaced/repared approximately 1,614 square feet of sidewalk and repaired 1 ADA ramp totaling an estimated \$17,569.72 in improvements within the West End of Sierra Vista.

In 2016, the City carried out a cooperative redevelopment partnership with Cochise County to acquire, demolish, and clear eleven long standing blighted properties in the Fry Townsite neighborhood as part of a settlement agreement with the owner in connection with a federal bankruptcy case. Two of the lots were donated to the Cochise College Foundation for use as a learning lab for students enrolled in the Residential Construction Technology Program. A new single-family home has been constructed on each of the lots under the supervision of the program instructor and have been sold on the private market. Four of the lots were included in a land swap to acquire the remainder of the Fry Townsite Pioneer Cemetery that was in private ownership. The property has since been restored through a volunteer effort.

- Strategies**
1. Apply community infrastructure, as needed, to build strong neighborhoods.
 2. Develop health impact assessments (HIA) as needed to build strong neighborhoods.
 3. Construct curbs, gutters, and sidewalks in neighborhoods where needed.
 4. Apply for grant funding to assist community groups and constructing infrastructure.
 5. Establish clear neighborhood zoning and design standards to encourage walkability.
 - a. Amend the Development Code to encourage construction of walkable and pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods.
 - b. Retrofit existing neighborhoods, as funding allows, with walkable and pedestrian-scaled infrastructure.
 - c. Construct ADA ramps where needed.
 6. Continue retrofitting neighborhoods with multi-use paths and parks.
 7. Promote public-private partnerships to monitor the condition of abandoned or vacant residential homes or commercial buildings to mitigate negative effects on the neighborhoods.

Goal 12-7 Safeguard the condition and quality of the housing stock in order to maintain attractive and livable neighborhoods

Development Code Section 151.08.0045.(N), Pedestrian Access Standards requires all residential subdivisions to incorporate pedestrian connections that connect to adjacent subdivisions, multi-use paths, or parks. Residential subdivisions currently under construction that were required to construct such connections include The Retreat, Summit Heights and Canada Vista.

The City has adopted many water conservation ordinances since 1994. Water conservation measures required for new residences include, the installation of low-flow fixtures, insulated and reduced pressure plumbing fixtures, installation

of WaterSense toilets, the installation of water redistribution systems. (hot-water recirculation pumps, manifolds), and turf prohibitions in the front yards.

- Strategies**
1. Maintain and update, as necessary, the City's development standards to encourage quality development.
 2. Promote physical design, building structure, lot layout relationships, and landscaping opportunities between existing and new housing construction to help new developments complement the surrounding neighborhoods.
 3. Integrate sustainable building practices like solar and water conservation into new housing design and housing renovations.

Goal 12-8 Increase housing choices that serve all age groups and needs

The City Council adopted a Reasonable Modification code amendment on April 8, 2021 which allows for reasonable modifications to homes for the purpose of accommodating the residents living with a disability. Reasonable modifications to a home will include requests to reduce building setbacks, increase building height maximums, or increased lot coverage areas. The City has received and approved one request since adoption of the ordinance.

The City promotes and encourages Adult Care Homes, Nursing Homes, and Residential Treatment Facilities in residential areas by permitting these facilities, provided there are six persons or less, within residential zoning districts. Seven persons or more would require a conditional use permit.

The City is always looking for opportunities to close sidewalk gaps and increase pedestrian connectivity. The Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes Plan prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle projects by their access to commercial nodes, schools, and other points of interest. The Plan was adopted by City Council as Appendix P of the General Plan. The priority list identified in the Plan is the same priority list the City is using when applying for the FTA grants. For example, there are proposed multi-use path projects on SR 92 and Buffalo Soldier Trail, both were designated as high priority in the Plan and both will provide multi-use path connectivity for all individuals. The City also prioritizes pathways that provide connections to essential services and public transportation. As has been stated in other chapters, grants have been applied to install additional missing sidewalks in the West End of town, which will help with those with disabilities to access transportation services.

The City supports local organizations like the Good Neighbor Alliance shelter for the homeless. Local support has included providing Community Development Block Grant money for improvements to the site.

Strategies

1. Support polices and techniques, including but not limited to, universal home design, *Visitability* design, or Aging-In-Place designs that provide housing opportunities to meet the unique needs of the elderly and disabled.
2. Provide incentives to builders and homeowners that proactively build or retrofit residences to meet *Visitability* standards.
3. Promote elderly and assisted care facilities in neighborhoods and create connections between residential developments that promote opportunities for aging in place and continuum of care for the elderly.
4. Seek opportunities to locate housing for those citizens with special needs near transportation services to make mobility easier.
5. Support agencies and organizations that provide shelter, housing, and services to the “hard to house” vulnerable populations, including ex-offenders and homeless.
6. Actively participate in identifying regional partners and solutions for those special needs that may be most appropriately addressed at the regional level.

“Visitability” is a growing trend nationwide. The term refers to housing designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers.

A house is visitable when it meets three basic requirements:

- *one zero-step entrance.*
- *doors with 32 inches of clear passage space.*
- *one bathroom on the main floor you can get into in a wheelchair.*

Goal 12-9 Develop High-Quality Housing Developments

Development Code Section 151.08.0045.(N), Pedestrian Access Standards requires all residential subdivisions to incorporate pedestrian connections that connect to adjacent subdivisions, multi-use paths, or parks. Residential subdivisions currently under construction that were required to construct such connections include The Retreat, Summit Heights and Canada Vista.

The City has adopted many water conservation ordinances since 1994. Water conservation measures required for new residences include, the installation of low-flow fixtures, insulated and reduced pressure plumbing fixtures, installation

of WaterSense toilets, the installation of water redistribution systems. (hot-water recirculation pumps, manifolds), and turf prohibitions in the front yards. The City incentivizes solar energy by not charging a fee for solar permits.

The Safe Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes Plan prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle projects by their access to commercial nodes, schools, and other points of interest. The Plan was adopted by City Council as Appendix P of the General Plan. The priority list identified in the Plan is the same priority list the City is using when applying for the FTA grants. For example, there are proposed multi-use path projects on SR 92 and Buffalo Soldier Trail, both were designated as high priority in the Plan. The City also prioritizes pathways that provide connections to essential services and public transportation.

- Strategies**
1. Promote physical design, building structure, lot layout relationships, and landscaping opportunities between existing and new housing construction to help the new developments complement the surrounding neighborhoods.
 2. Require that options be offered for sustainable building practices like solar and water conservation with new housing design and housing renovations.
 3. Create links between housing and adjacent uses, including but not limited to, senior centers, childcare centers, preschools, youth centers, and other community facilities to provide opportunities for intergenerational connections.

STATE LAW REQUIREMENTS

Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 9-461.05-9 E 6

“A housing element consisting of standards and programs for the elimination of substandard dwelling conditions, for the improvement of housing quality, variety and affordability and for provision of adequate sites for housing. This element shall contain an identification and analysis of existing and forecasted housing needs. This element shall be designed to make equal provision for the housing needs of all segments of the community regardless of race, color, creed or economic level.”

ATTACHMENTS

None

REFERENCES

City of Sierra Vista Housing Assessment and Strategic Plan, 2008