

Executive Summary for the Sun Corridor Consortium

Arizona's Sun Corridor is projected to be among the fastest growing of the 20 megapolitan regions in the United States through the next 30 years. The megaregion's current population of 5.4 million people represents more than 80 percent of the state's residents and is expected to nearly double by 2035. This will create extraordinary demands on the corridor's infrastructure and natural resources. In addition to this dynamic growth, the Sun Corridor also has been impacted severely by the recession. The high foreclosure and unemployment rates, disproportionately high levels of poverty among Native American residents, and a highly cyclical economy that is predicated on future growth and housing construction are indicators of the economic stress of the region. The need to build a more sustainable economy never has been greater. The Sun Corridor Consortium is applying as a megaregion under Category One to develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD).

The Sun Corridor Consortium was established on the foundation of years of collaboration among three councils of governments and 120 total partners. The effort leverages nearly \$21 million in community support from 45 partners, including the strategic right-of-way valued at \$14 million that has been contributed to ensure successful implementation of the trail system along the canals. In a spirit of cooperation and commitment to sustainability principles, the Sun Corridor Consortium will mobilize leaders and residents alike to shape a future that provides opportunities for all residents to thrive. The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development will coordinate planning for housing, transportation, and employment. This coordination will help to reduce costs, improve the quality of life, and mitigate negative impacts on the environment.

The Sun Corridor is composed of the Maricopa/Pinal Metropolitan Statistical Area and the adjacent Pima Metropolitan Statistical Area. These two areas are inextricably linked by common issues. Addressing these common challenges and planning for a sustainable future must begin at the megaregion scale. This is the appropriate geography for addressing challenges associated with the economy, housing, infrastructure needs and environmental concerns. However, many decisions, such as land use and significant infrastructure investments, are made at the local level and not at the regional or megaregion level. Therefore, a framework is needed to plan for sustainable actions at multiple levels of geography with significant buy-in from all constituencies to ensure a successful planning effort.

The formation of the Sun Corridor Joint Planning Advisory Council (JPAC) was a major step in creating this new paradigm. The JPAC was formed voluntarily in December 2009 through a resolution signed by the Regional Councils of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG), and the Pima Association of Governments (PAG), with the goal of enhancing and coordinating existing planning and information sharing. This coordination is critical because activity within this megaregion is highly interconnected and will significantly impact the rest of the state. The Sun Corridor Consortium builds on the relationships established by JPAC and expands the scope and membership of the group to include a diverse array of stakeholders dedicated to sustainability principles.

The Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program presents an opportunity to build upon the work of JPAC with the support of a diverse consortium of local, regional, state, nonprofit and community partners. This integrated approach to developing a RPSD for the Sun Corridor will ensure that activities are responsive to emerging needs, that support is built early in the process, and that resources made scarce by the recession are maximize. This approach involves the integration of a plan and set of sustainability strategies that will be scalable between the megaregion level and the regional/metro level. Since the vast majority of local jurisdictions in the megaregion have signed on to

the initiative as partners, this will not only enhance the consistency of the planning efforts at multiple levels of geography, but will also maximize the potential for successful implementation of the plan.

This approach will simultaneously synchronize planning efforts at the Sun Corridor megapolitan level with those occurring at the regional/metro level. While megaregion issues and concerns that transcend the entire Sun Corridor are analyzed, the consortium will engage the public at the regional/metro scale to conduct scenario planning that will be synthesized with the RPSD. The strength of this approach lies in the integration of planning efforts that will break through fragmented approaches and will be augmented by the extraordinary support of a significant coalition of public organizations, private sector, nonprofit agencies, community coalitions and grassroots organizations, and many other stakeholders.

The overall goal is to enhance the megaregion's resiliency using sustainable development practices that conserve natural and economic resources, resulting in communities that enhance quality of life and promote unique social and environmental assets. A number of perspectives shape this work. Housing, employment, and transportation planning need to be coordinated to achieve location efficiency and lower costs. To this end, the consortium will sponsor six initiatives to inform the RPSD.

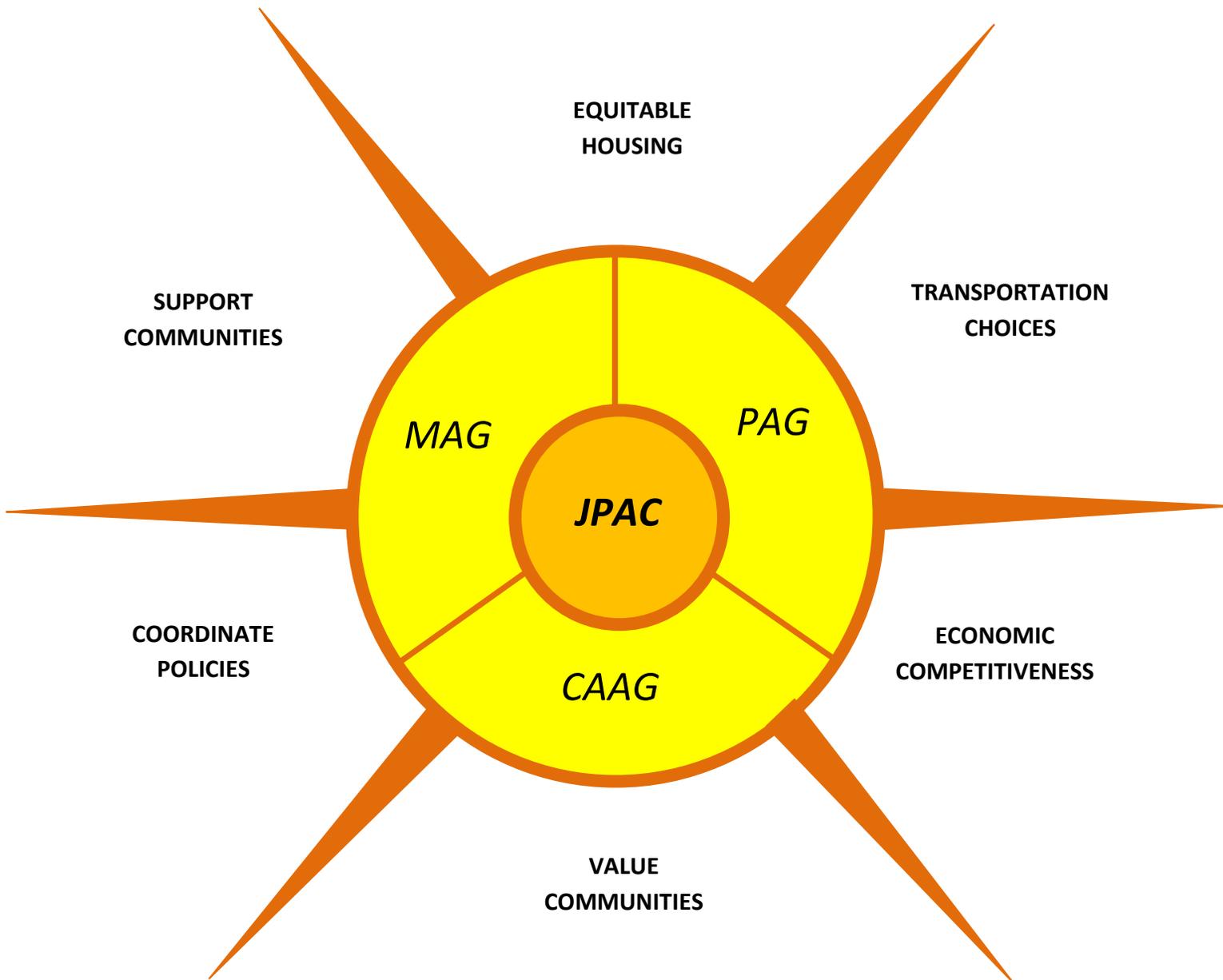
- *Regional Housing Plan* to address fair housing issues and the range of housing needed within the Sun Corridor to support a sustainable economy and housing policies free from discrimination.
- *Cluster/Economic Development Study* to identify the industries that have the most potential for success in the Sun Corridor and elements needed to support them.
- *Canal Path Integration Study* to identify missing segments in the trail along the canals that run throughout the Sun Corridor and strategies to complete the trail system, resulting in an environmentally friendly alternative mode of transportation.
- *Native American Communities Transit Study* to connect Native American Indian community residents with employment opportunities to reduce poverty rates and increase employment rates.
- *Connected Centers Framework Study* to synthesize the results of the other studies and determine the steps needed to make current and emerging centers sustainable.
- *The Arizona Health Survey* to track indicators related to health, quality of life, and social equity.

The end result will be an overall Regional Plan for Sustainable Development with a set of strategies and principles for the Sun Corridor that provides a unifying framework to align housing, transportation, and economic development plans and activities, making the Sun Corridor more sustainable in a manner that conserves, enhances, and protects the physical and cultural environment.

The Sun Corridor Consortium has the capacity and community support needed to make this plan a reality. The significant leverage applied to this project is one example of how the megaregion is rallying to this cause. Several other initiatives are already underway that have embraced the livability principles and will support the work of this plan. Partners are exploring opportunities to improve and benefit from goods movement through the megaregion and to evaluate the potential development of inland ports that could create a vital economic Sun Corridor. A capital fund for transit oriented development projects is being established. This grant completes the picture by providing funding to support the focus and activity needed to integrate existing plans and to shape future plans in a sustainable way.

The Sun Corridor Consortium thanks the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and its partner agencies for the opportunity to apply for this program. It presents an exciting opportunity to redesign the future of the Sun Corridor on strategies that will sustain the megaregion for many generations. The activities generated by the project will have an indelible impact on the lives of millions of residents and will reshape the growth of the state for a sustainable future.

SUN CORRIDOR CONSORTIUM ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



JPAC - Joint Planning Advisory Council

PAG - Pima Association of Governments

CAAG - Central Arizona Association of Governments
Governments

MAG - Maricopa Association of

Roles

Joint Planning Advisory Council: Develop Sun Corridor strategies and sustainability plan.

CAAG, MAG, and PAG: Organize work groups, approve menu of strategies, and develop regional approach.

Livability principles: Housing, transportation, and economic competitiveness will be addressed by their respective work groups. Policy coordination will be addressed by the Sun Corridor Steering Committee composed of designated representatives from MAG, PAG, and CAAG. The supporting existing communities principle will be addressed by the Housing Plan and Centers Study. The valuing communities and neighborhoods principle will be addressed by scenario planning, the Canal Path Study, and the AZ Health Survey. Please refer to the Partner Role Matrix for details on specific agency commitments.