

## Sustainable Cities Network

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Our urban form, including how we use our land and develop our public infrastructure, will have a tremendous long-term impact on the sustainability and quality of life of our region. Creating a sustainable urban form will require leadership, investment, collaboration and active participation across all sectors, particularly local governments, which hold many of the policy and investment levers: comprehensive planning, zoning, infrastructure investment, economic and community development, provision of services, tax policy and public involvement. These activities and instruments directly influence the quality, form and sustainability of our region.

Particular sustainability challenges facing our cities and our region today include:

- Rapid population increases and changing demographics
- Fiscal structures that are volatile and unsustainable, hindering regional coordination
- Burgeoning demand for community services
- Local economies lacking diversity and dependent on growth
- Lack of preparedness to compete in a global economy
- The need to attract and retain an educated and innovative work force
- The need to provide affordable housing and social services
- The need to assure good air quality and adequate water and energy resources
- Loss of open space and habitats
- Lack of knowledge, resources, and in some cases political support, to invest in sustainability.

Arizona State University and the ASU Global Institute of Sustainability (GIOS) are committed to advancing sustainability through research, education, and university operations, and through engagement with sustainability practitioners and decision makers. Sustainability practitioners are at the front lines of addressing key sustainability challenges both locally and globally. Our initial focus is on the advancement of sustainability efforts in our surrounding communities. Accomplishing this will help to establish the Sun Corridor as a sustainable region, an effort critical to our future.

GIOS and the School of Sustainability are increasingly being looked to by our neighboring jurisdictions for leadership and solutions on sustainability challenges. Collaboration between ASU and valley cities can assist local and regional sustainability efforts in multiple ways: convening workshops, conferences, and meetings; providing

education and training for capacity building; incorporating applied courses and practitioner expertise and perspectives into curricula; and targeting research to address key challenges. Ensuring adequate water supplies in the face of climate change, addressing the urban heat island, advancing solar energy technology, and designing sustainable developments are just a few examples of ongoing ASU research on specific issues critical to sustainability in our cities. ASU can also serve as a laboratory for sustainability practices as they are implemented on our campuses Valley-wide. As a first step, GIOS proposes to establish a “Sustainable Cities Network.”

### **Proposal**

GIOS, in conjunction with Sun Corridor cities, proposes to establish a network of the sustainability policy leaders and practitioners for area cities and towns. Our goal is to establish an informal coalition for sharing opportunities, challenges, and best practices, and for building linkages between local practitioners and university researchers. This Sustainable Cities Network will bring sustainability into the forefront of city operations and policy and create and nurture a local cadre of sustainability experts and practitioners. This will in turn propel the valley into the forefront of national leadership in sustainability.

Topics to be addressed by this network could include:

- Determining and understanding key sustainability practices and challenges for area cities
- What individual cities are doing & can do to adopt sustainability practices
- How ASU is improving the sustainability of its campuses
- Regional opportunities for cities and ASU to work together cooperatively.
- Structuring ASU research and education to solve pressing sustainability challenges

This effort will be developed as a collaborative network between ASU and Valley cities; the activities will be driven by the sustainability opportunities and challenges common to our region. We will concentrate our efforts on building the network, identifying the most promising short- and long-term opportunities, and then moving forward on two or three projects. Initial focus group work has identified the need for a best practices inventory for our region, as well as a solar initiative; work has already begun toward meeting these needs.