ASU Project Cities
Planning a Sustainable Future for Apache Junction

PUP 548: Planning Sustainable Communities
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Conduct a **sustainability assessment** of Apache Junction to determine what assets and opportunities can be leveraged for a more sustainable future.

Propose specific sustainability **recommendations** for the city’s next **General Plan update** that will transform the city as it moves into the future.
STAR Communities

Seven themes:
1. Built environment
2. Climate & Energy
3. Economy & Jobs
4. Education, Arts & Community
5. Equity & Empowerment
6. Health & Safety
7. Natural Systems

For each one:
1. Sustainability assessment
2. Strengths
3. Areas for improvement
4. Recommendations
Built Environment:
Achieve livability, choice, and access for all where people live, work, and play
We looked at water systems, compact & infill development, and transportation.
Strengths

- Stormwater research, water and wastewater compliance with CCR's and EPA ECHO
- EPA Infill Development report and newer infrastructure
- No transportation fatalities

Areas for Improvement

- Previous water and wastewater violations, dependant on groundwater
- Suburban sprawl and low density development, unknown infrastructure
- Low transit and pedestrian options, 78.5% commute by driving alone
- Longer average commute time longer than Metro Phoenix and National
Recommendations

- Plan for diversification of water supply managed by a single system
  - Buckeye

- Organic approach to transportation planning
  - Curitiba

- Creating downtown with sense of place and connectivity
  - Downtown Flagstaff
Climate and Energy:
To attain a sustainable, healthy, and comfortable community.

Yulei Yin
Strengths

- In the last general plan aimed to:
  - Explore and develop incentives and educational green awareness programs;
  - Develop an energy conservation policy plan to promote greater use of renewable energy;
  - Incorporate water conservation methods such as water harvesting and xeriscape into new developments and redevelopments.

Areas for Improvement

- Lack of assessed citywide vulnerability to future climate change;
- Lack of an integrated climate change adaptation action plan;
- Lack of GHG emissions data and measurements.
Recommendations

● Prepare for the impacts of climate change
  ○ Develop a set of indicators to provide quantitative measures of the preparedness of the AJ community, set goals in terms of these indicators, and report on them annually.

● Provide access to climate and energy data
  ○ Develop a measurement system to track overall progress towards climate goals and provide neighborhood-level data.
“To utilize the existing assets of Apache Junction to create community inclusion, an information network, and connectivity of resources to spark economic development”

Kaylin Ayotte and Caleb Carpenter
Strengths

- 82.9% of Households are at or above the Living Wage of $24,511 (MIT Calculator)
- Apache Junction General Plan has diverse and impactful economic goals and objectives, which can be utilized to create economic prosperity

Areas for Improvement

- Unemployment rate is higher than Maricopa County and Pinal County
- Limited amount of targets and complementing action plans to implement strategies
Education, arts and community: To promote an educated, cohesive, and socially connected community.
Strengths

- Equal educational attainment of male and female;
- Abundant special events for residents which will enhance the arts and culture of the city;
- Adequate programs to enhance the community cohesion;

Areas for Improvement

- The lowest high school graduation rate and the highest dropout rate comparing with other cities in the county.
- Lack of art programs that support local artist and advance arts education.
- Lack of access to information about community issues for minority people who do not speak English.
Recommendations

- Offer multiple pathways to graduation as a way to improve educational outcomes for students;
- Establish an Art Education Programs to educate people especially young people to provide city youth with marketable skills and job savvy. (Example: Gallery 37 in Chicago, Illinois)
- Provide access to information about community issues, programs, services, and activities that is also accessible to non-English speaking residents.
Equity & Empowerment

“The fair, just, and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy.”

“Creating more choices for those who have few.”

Shelbie Draper
Strengths

- Last General Plan mentions community involvement as important
- Goal for transparency in decision making
- Environmental planning in air quality and general pollution

Areas for Improvement

- No mention of minority populations and how to engage them
- Lack of fair and equitable distribution of public facilities throughout AJ
- Environmental clean up in regards to flood and wastewater and toxic, pile-up materials in yards
Recommendations

“If people are uncomfortable addressing the social pillars of sustainability, then perhaps those actions are not sustainable”- Carlton Eley, EPA

- Evaluate where and who are the disadvantaged communities within Apache Junction
- Create diverse stakeholder meetings by providing food and childcare at meetings, as well as various start and end times
- Provide information and resources equally among residents so they have the opportunity to help themselves
Health & Safety: “The development of healthy, safe, and resilient communities requires proactive efforts to prevent disease, injury, and premature death by fortifying protective factors and reducing risk factors that undermine healthy outcomes”

-STAR Communities

Brian Rojas & Kellie Rorex
Strengths

- Diversity in services offered by medical facilities
- Many non-profits creating a healthy community for residents
- Hazard mitigation plan is approved by FEMA

Areas for Improvement

- General plan has no mention of creating a safe and healthy community
- Poor connection, majority land area a food desert
- Lack of accreditation for emergency management services
Recommendations

- Pop-up food markets

- Create a new section in the general plan update for health and safety with the following sections: Health conditions, equity and access, recreation and physical activity, healthy eating, food access and sustainable food systems, violence prevention and safety

- Incorporate law enforcement policies into the general plan
Strengths

- Has many valuable natural resources
- The City sits at the base of the Superstition Mountains and has strong natural habitat
- Many recreations trails

Areas for Improvement

- Low tree-coverage, which reduces the comfort of the environment, due to heat and pollution
- Many of the valuable natural systems that are present are owned by either the State or Federal government
- No clear path for the implementation for the goals of the General Plan
Recommendations

- Partner with state and federal lands - solidify long term preservation of the wildlife corridors
- Become a Star Community Member
- Partner with Central Arizona Conservation Alliance (CAZCA)
- Implement ASU Trail connectivity plans
- Incorporate best practices from other cities including green streets, Tree City USA Program, Learning landscapes
- Dedicate a percentage of funding invested in green infrastructure
Thank you!