Developing a Sustainable Land Use Code - Tucson, Arizona
Sausage making in Tucson
Tucson Background

- Oldest continuously inhabited community in U.S.
- 2006 – 1 million in region;
- Per capita water 99 gal.

Prop 207 - A land use regulation can be challenge for compensation by a property owner if the property owner makes a case that the regulation reduces market value of property without compensation.
Sustainability in the City Organization

- Office of Conservation and Sustainable Development (OCSD)
- Habitat Conservation
- Public Information on sustainability
- City Organization coordination on energy efficiency
- Grant Administration
Example of Sustainable Policies

- Graywater stub outs
- Solar ready installations
- Visitability ready installation
- Fee waiver for solar energy set up
- Rainwater harvesting on commercial properties
- Infill – Infill Incentive District – flexible standards – loading, landscaping, downtown parking option but no change in use
Streetcar at the U of A
Back to the future
Downtown Infill Zones

• Regional Activity Centers
• Infill Housing
• Flexible Design
• Streetcar Line
Sustainable examples continued

• **Urban Overlay District** – PAD-like overlay allowing a flexible infill standard option

• **Parking code** – More shade in parking lots, individual parking plan, Downtown design for flexible standard option

• **As-is development standards** – More options for re-use for non-conforming existing development property - still a problem for zoning violations

• **Buffelgrass removal program** - Urban interface issue
DOE Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant Projects

- Residential energy-efficient retrofit program
- Conversion to energy-efficient lamps in neighborhoods
- Upgrading water booster pumps within City’s distribution system
- Consolidating of the City’s data centers
- Citywide water and energy audits
- Green business certification program
- Voluntary net-zero energy building code
- Sustainable Land Use Code
About the Sustainable Land Use Code Project

- Overlaps with the code reformat project
- Intend to develop about 15 text amendments or General Plan policies
- Have a total of $230,000 between diagnostic report and revision effort
- Have to spend it by October 1, 2012
Three Phases of the Project

• Inventory
• Diagnostic report
• Text amendments
Pre-report Stakeholders Input

- Build on work already doing
- Streamline the process when available
- Focus on incentives and flexibility
- Address re-use and new development

March 3, 2011
Diagnostic Report’s 11 Elements

- Water conservation
- Alternative energy
- Mobility
- Urban forestry and heat islands
- Housing accessibility-affordability
- Community health/safety
- Food production
- Recycling
- Open space
- Green buildings
- Climate change/air quality
Diagnostic Report Contents

• Review of current sustainable programs and shortcomings in the 11 elements
• Barriers to sustainable development
• Incentives to consider for sustainable development
• Policy gaps
• 148 recommendations on various subjects
Comments so far on the preliminary recommendations

• Try to offer cost effective solutions especially if it is mandatory
• Focus on option or a menu of options
• Be flexible whenever practical
• Make it easy to do
• Emphasize items that have more than one pay off
Emerging issues

• Elected Officials - emphasis on water conservation, infill barriers, and developing alternative energy
• Stakeholder - support flexibility, and listed options over mandatory prescriptiveness
• Have gaps with heat islands, food production, alternative energy
• No opposition to alternate energy and electric vehicle
• Have concern with neighbors about accessory dwelling units
• Have some mild interest in urban chickens but not other animals
• Have some developer concerns with community gardens
More issues

- Community composting concern about vermin
- Inclusionary zoning no interest
- Expansions of conforming and nonconforming a lot of interest
- Pervious surfaces in parking lots is popular
- Maximum parking lot size some resistance from business interests
- Water conservation - rainwater harvesting emphasis – land use and water planning need more study
- Wider use of recharge lines needs more study
- Flexible setbacks for rain cisterns some interest and some concerns about adjoining neighbors.
Strengths and Weaknesses

Rainwater harvesting

Buffelgrass infestation
What are the most likely revision areas?

- Expand urban infill standards
- Consolidate solar rules
- Improve heat island rules
- Address nonconforming use and expansions
- Explore expanded use of rainwater harvesting
- Explore urban food options
- Update alternative energy rules
What are we learning?

- Proposition 207 reduces reliance on mandatory prescriptive regulations
- Current General Plan / land use plans have gaps and barriers
- **Best compliment** is green building and zoning codes and General Plan together
- Era of reducing **nonconforming uses** runs into re-use as a green policy
- **Historic preservation and infill conflicts** - not a good policy answers right now
- **Already doing things** but can improve on them – solar, infill, heat islands etc.
- **Stakeholders** – passionately green to concerns about increased development costs
- **What’s the best we can get for the money and time available?**
- Process improvement is the guiding strategy
- **Zoning is not always the best answer to sustainable issues**
- **Adapting to climate change** is an ongoing process
Next Steps

• Have M/C direct on two to three packages of text amendments
• Focus on flexibility and objectives the stakeholders have laid out.
• Finish first group in eight months, second/third group in remaining time
• Make the text amendments fit the new reformatted code organization from the outset.
Contact Information

• Jim.Mazzocco@tucsonaz.gov

• Sustainable Code Diagnostic Report -