

# Placemaking at the Sunshine Mile

## Tucson AZ

June 25, 2019

Creating a Sunshine Mile Urban Overlay District (UOD) that will maintain and enhance the quality and character of the roadway and the adjacent neighborhoods.

## INTRODUCTION

This memo includes a summary and notes from the Placemaking Workshop to obtain preliminary ideas regarding the Sunshine Mile overlay zone from a comprehensive representation of community members and stakeholders.

Rio Nuevo Tax Increment Finance District in Tucson retained a team composed of Project for Public Spaces (PPS), for the Sunshine Mile. The UOD will serve as a Broadway corridor community development tool, and will carefully incentivize the establishment of uses that will help to redevelop the commercial corridor itself, as well as revitalize and connect the adjoining neighborhoods.

During the information gathering phase of the project (May 2019), PPS led focus groups with key stakeholders of common interests and conducted one workshop with neighborhood leaders and the public. The work of PPS was also based on a previous placemaking community engagement for the Sunshine Mile conducted in 2017.

PPS and the team worked with the community to discuss a vision for the future of the Sunshine Mile corridor. To create the legislative intent for the UOD, we began with reaffirming the community values adopted in the Plan Tucson. The workshop and interviews engaged neighborhood residents, real estate interests, corridor property owners, educational representatives, civic service providers and the public.

### Description of workshop and focus group interviews:

Project for Public Spaces and the Rio Nuevo team organized several outreach activities between May 15 and May 18, 2019. Below is a summary of the activities.

- PPS conducted focus group discussions with Sunshine Mile stakeholders, including neighborhood leaders, business owners, historic preservation leaders, property owners, and developers, for a total of 50 participants across 8 focus groups.
- The workshop took place on Saturday morning, May 18, 2019 with 90 participants in attendance.

The workshop consisted of the following activities:

- Responding to questions about the character of Sunshine Mile and writing comments on a large map
- Commenting and voting on idea boards related to the goals of Plan Tucson
- Listening to a PowerPoint presentation introducing UODs and placemaking at the Sunshine Mile
- Breaking into small group discussions, responding to guiding questions, and reporting findings back to the whole workshop
- Writing individual comments on a Place Vision form handed out during the workshop

Notes from the stakeholder focus groups and from the Workshop activities are included in the Appendices.

The workshop activities focused on the following:

- Verifying the values and goals for the uses, design, and character of the entire corridor (Euclid Avenue to Country Club Avenue)
- Placemaking and how to create public spaces and destinations along the Sunshine Mile
- Developing distinctive sub-areas along the Sunshine mile that represent the type of preferred land use patterns that will be encouraged in the corridor's redevelopment. Key uses include commercial, residential and civic applications.

## ○ GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Zoning is merely a planner's tool that interprets the community's vision, goals and objectives and provides guidance for community developers. PPS is seeking input from the community regarding the preferred uses and the character of places along the Sunshine Mile to determine the content of the overlay zone.

The Overlay Zone is intended to address the following issues:

- Vacant properties
- Loss of parking lots in front of businesses and its effect on retail
- Preservation and enhancement of the historic character of the Sunshine Mile
- Improvement of mobility and pedestrian safety
- The widening of Broadway and how to mitigate its consequences

Overall goals of overlay zone:

- Create a vibrant, walkable neighborhood
- Preserve historic buildings and blocks
- Become a local and regional destination
- Encourage new development that creates areas with the appropriate density and facilitates the establishment of pedestrian and transit-oriented urban neighborhoods
- Address obstacles to new development

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### ○ RANKING OF ISSUES

Chart below summarizes the workshop participants' ranking of issues the Overlay Zone should address.

	#	%
<b>PLACEMAKING</b>		
Landscape guidelines	10	17%
Public spaces (public or private)	26	45%
Sidewalk streetscape	27	47%
Setbacks	4	7%
Shade / tree canopies	26	45%
Alleys & alley access to commercial	21	36%
<b>BUILDING CHARACTER</b>		
Land uses	16	28%
New development	12	21%
Building height	11	19%
Building density	13	22%
Protect & enhance historic character	35	60%
Design: facades, windows, entrances, ground floors, architectural details	28	48%
<b>MOBILITY</b>		
Walkability & bikeability	49	84%
Shared parking	15	26%
Parking lot design	11	19%
Access management: limiting or consolidating curb cuts	5	9%
Multi-modal transit access (trolley stops, bike sharing, etc.)	26	45%
Service access and waste management	7	12%

### ○ OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: WORKSHOP AND FOCUS GROUPS

#### Goals

- The Sunshine Mile should be welcoming to all-- equitable and inclusive.
- The area and its activity should be “place-based rather than vehicle-based.”
- Sunshine Mile should be a gateway to the downtown and be a destination with its own unique “Tucson” character. The area should be “vibrant” and “enticing.”

#### Overlay Zoning

- Some recommend the use of form-based zoning or design guidelines to regulate height, density, character and relationship to the street. They felt the character is more important than the uses.
- Many said that the right incentives would be important to encourage historic preservation.
- Residents and developers agreed that the overlay zone should allow for enough residential density to support retail uses.

- Residents are interested in protecting their neighborhoods, while at the same time many understand the need for greater height and density in some areas to incentivize development.

## Placemaking

### Streetscape

- Many participants desired an attractive streetscape with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian lights, canopies and shade.
- The sidewalks could be buffered from the street.

### Public spaces

- There is some interest in public parks, pocket parks and community gathering spaces.
- Some participants would rather have no public space (they suggest that unless it is well-managed, it may be underused and an attractive nuisance) and would rather have privately-owned courtyard spaces, like Broadway Village.
- There was some interest in a dog park.

### Shade

- Many people mentioned that shade provides a better setting for pedestrian comfort generally, and specifically along the Avenue, in civic places and in parking lots.
- Shade could be provided by trees, canopies or shade structures

### Alleys

- Many participants mentioned making better use of the alleys. Some suggested that the alleys could provide access to businesses and others suggested that they become bikeways. Many people would like to see them paved and cleaned up.
- Alleys should have walls along them to create a buffer and sound barrier between Sunshine Mile businesses and development and the residential neighborhoods. Some thought that some of the walls should be porous and provide openings for pedestrians so neighbors could access businesses without having to go around them.

### Landscape

- Design guidelines for landscaping were recommended. Some thought it important to have a consistent Sunshine Mile “look” with similar trees, shrubs, and colors. For example, some suggested that it could have a desert theme with Saguaro cacti or trees that all have yellow blossoms.
- Landscaping in front of buildings should be incentivized to ensure that property owners follow through, and the former parking lots should be landscaped with sidewalks or walking paths.

### Setbacks

- There was little support for consistent setbacks from the street, although some thought commercial uses should be placed close to the sidewalks.
- Setbacks could be consistently landscaped.

### Public Art

- There could be a consistent theme—perhaps historic—to public art along the Sunshine Mile.
- We could work with the artist whom the RTA hired to create art as part of the road project.

### Signage

- The historic neon signage should be maintained: either create new signage or restore historic signs. The Sunshine Mile could have its own signage guidelines.

### Green infrastructure

- Bioswales, green infrastructure, shade trees, rain gardens and pervious paving should be encouraged in public streetscapes, private properties and parking lots.

### Waste management

- Each block could have a compactor and combined dumpster to prevent the proliferation of trash cans.

### Mobility

#### Pedestrian safety and walkability

- 84% of workshop participants prioritize the walkability and bikeability of the Sunshine Mile.
- There was a huge consensus among workshop participants, residents and business owners that Sunshine Mile should be much more walkable and safer to cross.
- There was concern that it would be more difficult to cross after widening; some recommended as solutions pedestrian overpasses and others suggested that pedestrian signals be longer.
- There was general concern about traffic speeds on Broadway.
- Sidewalks with planted buffers next to Broadway were also recommended.
- Extending walkability and bikeability into the neighborhoods north and south, and connecting with sidewalks is a priority.

#### Bikeability

- Bike lanes on Broadway should be safe and there should be bike access to alleys and bikeways between Broadway and the University.
- There should be more bike facilities, specifically at multimodal hubs and near businesses and residential buildings.

#### Multi-modal access

- There was enthusiasm for micro-mobility hubs that offer bus stops, trolley stops, bike share stations, bike parking and car share.
- These nodes could be public spaces with food trucks or other conveniences for bus riders.

### Transit

- Several people suggested implementing bus rapid transit on Broadway.
- Some suggested a historic trolley (or 1950's buses) that could link the downtown area with El Con Shopping Center.
- Several suggested streetcars like those on 4th Avenue.

### Parking

Although parking issues were not a focus of the workshop, they were frequently mentioned in the focus groups. Suggestions included:

- No parking requirements in the UOD
- Shared parking with a “park once” strategy
- Require parking behind buildings
- Covered parking with solar panels
- Required landscaping in parking lots
- Conveniently situated parking structures
- Screen parking from the streets
- Limit parking in the neighborhoods

### Traffic Calming

- There was a general consensus that speeds should be slower on the Sunshine Mile with a 30 mph speed limit enforced.

### Wayfinding

- More consistent wayfinding signage was desired—especially when approaching the downtown area, signs that designate the neighborhoods and banners on lamp posts were requested.
- Also, it will be important to show drivers where to park because parking lots are behind buildings.

### Connections to side streets

- Improving walkability into neighborhoods is critical.
- Developers should be required to build sidewalks on side streets.
- Some suggested that the blocks be porous: openings in rows of buildings to allow easy access to parking and alleys behind.

### Street closures

- Some suggested closing some of the side streets to traffic, while leaving them open for pedestrians and bikes. Streets could then be used for Broadway parking uses.
- Parts of Sunshine Mile could be closed temporarily for Cyclovia or block party—we would have to test it out.

## Character of built environment

### Historic Preservation

- Protecting and enhancing the historic character of the buildings and the Midcentury architecture is another priority: 60% of participants indicated this in their priorities for the Sunshine Mile.
- There was consistent support for preserving historic buildings, especially the mid-century plazas, the iconic mid-century buildings and the Miles School.
- There was mixed support for preserving the bungalows. There is concern that it will be hard to preserve some of the bungalows because the widened street would come right up to the steps.
- Preservation models would include looking at the adaptive reuse of buildings and shopping centers, such as Uptown Plaza and the Newton on Camelback Road in Phoenix. Other models include Palm Springs, Old Town Scottsdale, old downtown Tucson (former arcades) and Congress Street in Austin, TX.
- Some mentioned maintaining industrial character of district to the south.

### Design Guidelines:

- There was enthusiasm for design guidelines on the Sunshine Mile that would regulate facades, windows, entrances and architectural details.
- Authenticity is important: “Sunshine Mile should not be a caricature of itself.” We should “focus on what is unique about Tucson.”
- There was also broad support for active and transparent ground floors.
- There was little consensus about which architectural styles should be preferred: mid-century modern, Spanish or “Old Tucson” and contemporary were all mentioned. Some felt infill should be consistent with historic buildings, while others thought a modern style could be used. A lack of homogeneity could be a good thing, according to some.

### Land Uses:

- There was a general sense that a plurality of uses would be appropriate. This would include commercial uses (retail, restaurants and entertainment), residential and office uses, as well as mixed-use buildings. For example, the Safeway could have housing above.
- There was a broad consensus that retail and restaurants should be local.
- Some suggested forbidding chains in the overlay zone.
- Specific ideas included:
  - A range of multi-family housing types, including affordable housing, but there was little enthusiasm for more student housing. More residential uses on the Sunshine Mile will help the businesses and create a more vibrant street. A density bonus could be offered to build more affordable housing.
  - Restaurants should be the anchors in the commercial nodes. Entertainment would be appropriate in some areas.
  - Commercial uses should serve both local residents and visitors from outside the neighborhoods. Uses could include offices, maker and artisan spaces, incubator spaces for start-ups and small retail, social services, educational uses.
  - Drive-up and drive-in uses should not be allowed in the new zoning.

### Building Density

- Historic preservationists thought it important to retain the small scale of buildings and businesses—existing storefronts should not be combined into larger businesses. The narrow width of the buildings in the plazas is part of their character and charm, and should be incentivized.
- Many said that infill buildings should be similar in scale to the historic buildings.
- Higher density buildings at key nodes and near the downtown could be appropriate.

### Building Height

- There was no clear consensus on building height, although neighbors were in favor of a height no more than two stories in buildings adjacent to residential areas.
- Some said that other areas, such as the gateway to the downtown area, the Campbell intersection, Tucson Boulevard and location where the El Parador was could be zoned for higher buildings.

### Development Issues

- Developers are interested in higher density and taller buildings to allow them to get parking in their buildings.



- The approval process should be streamlined, otherwise Overlay Zoning will not be adopted.
- Businesses will need help to survive the road construction, and Rio Nuevo should support new businesses to move to the Sunshine Mile.

## ○ SUNSHINE MILE CHARACTER - TRANSCRIPT OF SUGGESTIONS ON MAP

Participants were asked to answer two questions and use post-it notes to give ideas regarding the sub-areas and the general character of the Sunshine Mile.



Euclid Avenue to Country Club Road was divided into 5 areas:

- 1-Gateway
- 2-Bungalows
- 3-Campbell Ave/Neighborhood Commercial
- 4-Mid-Century retail
- 5-Country Club/Destination Retail

Questions asked were:

- 1-What do you like about the Sunshine Mile?
- 2-What can be improved along the Sunshine Mile?

The photo below shows the exercise results: question 1 was answered using a yellow post-it and question 2 using a red one.



### 1. Gateway area

1. Still poor signage, directing traffic
2. Public Art that is also utilitarian (but must be maintained)
3. Love the snake bridge
4. Streetcar extension to El Con / Hi Corbeto. In the "Extra" new lane with transit signal
5. Gateway to downtown, welcome signage
6. Formal Access to Downtown



7. Shade structures at major intersections?
8. Minimize driveways along Broadway
9. Bus rapid transit
10. Low travel speed, so people can see businesses
11. History preserved Tucson C Haem
12. Gateway signage to Lost Barrio
13. Proximity to higher density housing
14. More local development (in Tooley's spaces, et al.)
15. Bring back Lost Barrio! Restaurants
16. Put back bulldozed historic properties & local businesses
17. Mixed use residential / commercial Tucson architecture
18. Connections to historic neighborhood, UofA, Downtown, etc
19. "Good" design and architecture, high quality building, parking lots in new construction
20. Walkways
21. Speed & traffic - unfriendly
22. Protected bike lanes
23. At once had a good mix of local businesses & services & residential in historic character
24. Keep pedestrian crossings at all intersections
25. Breaks in medians for wheelchairs, strollers
26. Pro-development. City Should look grown up
27. Tucson has enough suburbia, preserve what makes Tucson Tucson (and not any town, USA)
28. Dedicated transit lanes from Day 1 - as task force voted
29. Future roadside parking on Broadway? Makes more like a boulevard.
30. The old Houses
31. Cool architecture modern

## 2. Bungalows

32. Highland, Bike path to UA (major southern entrance)
33. Less busy
34. City/community facility for neighborhoods/community groups use - repurpose an acquired building
35. Bicycle access Highland
36. Pedestrian bridge to keep connectivity to UA from Milwa Challa Bridge
37. Fill in between houses, mix use?
38. Safe, convenient accessible and comfortable ways to cross Broadway on foot (all along)
39. Close to downtown
40. Building scale!
41. Close to the UofA
42. Too many homeless people
43. Cholla, pedestrian bridge (cholla skeleton)
44. Pedestrian activation and infill development at minor intersections (because big ones)
45. Historic buildings
46. Gathering places (more)
47. Love the bungalows
48. Small scale local businesses - support "startup" culture
49. More commercial development
50. Highlight historic building area
51. Easy pedestrian access paths
52. Min: Event areas: - art show, - car show, - farmers market

- 53. "Good" density on vacant + redevelopment lots (ie mixed use, mixed-income housing, affordable housing, NOT student housing)
- 54. Drive-thrus unsafe

### 3. Neighborhood Commercial/Campbell Ave

- 55. Non-car options fully available
- 56. Pedestrian Bridge like snake bridge - "cholla bridge"
- 57. Re\_\_ historic buildings
- 58. Slow traffic, add crosswalks
- 59. Potential of alleyways
- 60. Sunshine Mile potential
- 61. Fill in front of lot--short setback to Broadway
- 62. Toy store
- 63. Pedestrian safety
- 64. Modern Buildings
- 65. Need stuff tight , small setbacks
- 66. Add: frequent smaller electric buses

### 4. Mid-Century retail

- 67. Pedestrian link
- 68. Improve neighborhood industrial access
- 69. Parking share
- 70. 7/10 better setbacks than most
- 71. Relocate homeless
- 72. Facade restoration
- 73. Unique character
- 74. Range of businesses
- 75. Sense/feeling of vitality
- 76. Access to parking
- 77. Share parking when not in use so people can park & walk from here
- 78. More shared solar parking. Transit means the whole city can use El Con. Create pedestrian/bike
- 79. Sweet small retail strip
- 80. Something which pulls the block together
- 81. Too much parking up front
- 82. Locally owned businesses
- 83. Facade Pedestrianisation
- 84. Preservation use of historic structures
- 85. This is better
- 86. Ugly Buildings
- 87. I like buildings that have been here

### 5. Country Club/Destination Retail

- 88. Racos! + Zemano
- 89. The Hawk
- 90. Bike/ped x-ing
- 91. "Dead zone" retail, why?
- 92. Priority given to cars not to people or businesses
- 93. Historic Architecturally significant buildings
- 94. Pretty tight housing, good!

95. Preserved historic shoe building
96. Unique storefronts
97. Historic Modern Architecture
98. Chase bank architecture
99. Isolated
100. I like this design up to road, parking in back
101. Broadway Village, do they have frontage w/widening
102. Lost space
103. No
104. Bleh
105. This area is a mess non-urban design

## ○ PLAN TUCSON – VALUES AND HOW THEY APPLY TO THE SUNSHINE MILE

Participants were asked to add ideas related to the goals of Plan Tucson, the city's recent comprehensive plan.

### Board #1

What are your Thoughts about Social Goals at The Sunshine Mile?



#### 1a: Home ownership & affordable housing

- Increase homeownership %
- Where? Will the density be high enough to activate businesses, transit systems?
- Use land trusts or other tools to provide affordable housing
- Mix of housing types + prices
- Work-live spaces

### 1b: Local economic opportunities

- Promote & protect locally owned small businesses
- *Couldn't read*

### 1c: Safe community

- Slow speed for safety & business vitality
- Pedestrian friendly accommodations
- Enhance citizen interaction
- Fun places to gather

### 1d: Arts & culture

- Bring out beauty of buildings and places
- Hold local competitions including school children and implement ideas even at the smallest level
- Interpretive signs for historic elements, pedestrian wayfinding
- More street fairs like cyclovia on Park, south of Broadway
- Public art funding w/maintenance

### 1f: Sustainable food

- CSA Location @ Miles?
- Farmers market on Park, south of Broadway

### 1g: Educated citizenry

- No library close to Sunshine Mile: opportunity
- Support help jumpstart neighborhood association (in Miles and elsewhere)

## Board #2

What are your Thoughts about Economic Goals at The Sunshine Mile?



#### 2a: Existing businesses support

- A must in summer time
- Fundamental@
- We've been here for 30 years @ nobody knows us! AZ sound @ light

#### 2b: Attract new businesses

- Local! Grants to local businesses; local-income loans; mix w/established business women owned
- Priority given to locally owned shops — maybe even disallow chains altogether!
- More businesses, fewer homeless
- Train neighborhoods to be commercial brokers to get businesses they want

#### 2c: Job opportunities

- Health... *can't read*

#### 2d: Local oriented economy

- People gather in spaces that are not facing 6-lane roads
- Protect businesses from widening: - make sure they do not suffer from construction, - will they lose parking access or part of the building?
- Locally owned businesses
- Help existing businesses get through the 2-year road construction w/funding help; time of construction ditto!!
- So...if we support local — Why is Starbucks Coffee staying?

#### 2f: Poverty rate reduction

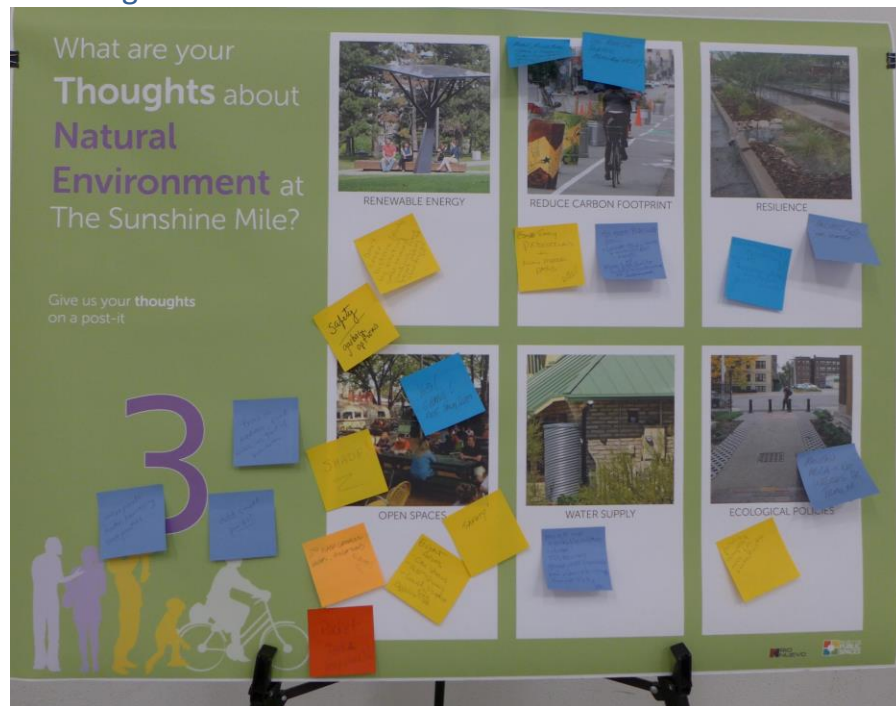
- Not through displacement

#### 2g: Attractive vibrant community

- Services, cultural, entertainment?
- Dining for area residents \_\_\_visitors
- Open space
- Public, maintained bathrooms

### Board #3

What are your Thoughts about Natural Environment at The Sunshine Mile?



#### 3a: Renewable energy

- Safety
- Garbage options
- Don't cover historic fronts by erecting solar covered parking, have parking to slow traffic

#### 3b: Reduce carbon footprint

- More, much more easily visible transportation options
- Bus rapid transport
- Use adaptable traffic management!
- Easy pedestrian + non motor paths! Ditto!
- To meet bike/walk goals: - counter road widening + increased car travel w/more high quality safety infrastructure on Broadway

#### 3c: Resilience

- Community gathering spots: - contemplating gardens, ; small concerts?
- Harvest lots of water
- Incorporate water harvesting best practices
- Add small parks
- Trees in median, road-sides, in front of businesses

#### 3d: Open spaces

- SHADE!!
- Yes! Shade! Not palm trees
- 3rd place cathedral spaces, pocket parks. Ditto!
- Safety!
- Event areas: - car shows, art shows, local small vendor opportunities



### 3f: Water supply

- How are more impermeable surfaces addressed? \_\_\_\_ ground water absorption road widening creates overall

### 3g: Ecological policies

- Public compost area for restaurants
- Maintain area — no weeds or trash

## Board #4

What are your Thoughts about Built Environment at The Sunshine Mile?



### 4a: Historic resources

- Incentives for builders who will do more than boxed strip malls
- Stop demolition of Broadway
- Preserve historic properties
- More historic structures whenever is possible instead of leveling
- Adaptive reuse when possible

### 4b: Public & Private Investments

- Incentives + grants for locally owned start-ups (retail etc.)
- No anywhere, USA development
- Balance demand caused by widening?



#### 4c: Alternative transportation mobility

- Alternative transportation - extend the streetcar line, - buses
- Parking?
- Plenty of bike racks
- Don't slow down transit with silly bus stops!
- Great idea, but not enough room?

#### 4d: Public facilities

- Safety water drinking
- Less space devoted to asphalt
- Prioritize walkers/bikers/busses over high-speed driving
- Will space be available for parking when public facilities are not using their dedicated parking?
- Put parking at back of buildings

#### 4f: Infrastructure & Services

- Create a living edge between the sidewalk + street with sitting walls + native planting low