



MINUTES

TEMPE TOMORROW – GENERAL PLAN 2050 COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP (CWG)

March 7, 2023

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Tempe Tomorrow General Plan 2050 Community Working Group (CWG), of the City of Tempe, which was held in hybrid format in person and via Zoom at the Tempe Public Library, 3500 S Rural Road, Arizona Cypress Program Room (Meeting Room B), Tempe, AZ.

Regular Meeting convened at 5:30 PM

Present:

Staff:

Chair Andre Salais	Ryan Levesque, Deputy Director – Community Development
Myrna Baez	Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner
Lily Cardenas	Brenda Clark, Neighborhood Services Specialist
Pat McNamara	Craig Hayton, Community Services Director
Robert Moore	Alex Jovanovic, Deputy Community Svcs Dir - Parks & Rec
Donald Ortiz	Shawn Wagner, Deputy Community Svcs Dir - Parks & Rec
Shane Peterlin	Brendan Ross, Dep Community Svcs Dir - Arts/Culture
Sarbeswar Praharaaj	Jess Jupitus, Deputy Community Svcs Dir - Library
David Sokolowski	Robbie Aaron, Planner II
Logan Tokos	Jacob Payne, Planner I

- 1) **Call to order** by Chair Salais
- 2) **Attendance Roll Call:** Chair Salais made the roll call. A quorum was present with 10 members present.
- 3) **Public Comments:** NONE
- 4) **Voting of the Meeting Minutes**

Chair Salais called for a motion to vote on the meeting minutes from January 17, 2023, and February 7, 2023

Motion by Commissioner Sokolowski to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2023, and February 7, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Baez. Motion passed on 10-0 vote.

Ayes: Chair Salais, Commissioners Myrna Baez, Lily Cardenas, Pat McNamara, Robert Moore, Donald Ortiz, Shane Peterlin, Sarbeswar Praharaaj, David Sokolowski, and Logan Tokos.

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Vice Chair Till, Commissioners Sydney Bethel Price, Jana Lynn Granillo, Katherine Schmidt, and Nolan Williams.

- 5) **Presentation on General Plan Elements:** Presentation on General Plan Open Space, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities Chapter: Open Space element, Recreation element, Public Art, and Cultural Amenities element. Presentation by staff.

6) Activity and Discussion: Discussion on the Conservation Chapter elements for Tempe Tomorrow - GP 2050

Commissioner Sokolowski stated that when talking about programs and services, we have a lot of nationalities in Tempe. He asked if we are looking at servicing people from other parts of the world.

Staff stated that Tempe always plans to incorporate for the community and all its diversities, so we work and collaborate to make our programs reflect the City's demographics. Some facilities even provide specific services like room rentals and supplies for specific groups. The equity study is to reach those populations that might have been missed. We are working with a consultant on this plan and get to people who we might miss through traditional outreach.

Commissioner Baez asked if we are modeling after any existing City programs and what the vision is for the open space model and arts and culture. She asked which ideas we are working on, and what is finished.

Staff advised they had updated the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2021. There was significant public involvement, including 1,800 survey engagements at that time. They came out with four guiding principles: inclusion, resilience, strategy, and sustainability. They then discussed the levels of service moving into the future for Tempe Parks. The Equity Study was called out in this program so we can engage more people than before and find out how are people interacting with the space or why are not.

Staff also stated that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the General Plan are interconnected. We have to think long term in the General Plan, but all the things in the Master Plans are derived from higher goals in the General Plan.

Staff advised that the Arts and Culture Master Plan articulates a vision of starting in downtown and rippling through the neighborhoods of an artistic Renaissance. We are flipping that and looking towards hyper-locality. Through small local identifiers like art and programs, these flow and connect into hubs at more formal institutions and indigenous sites. Through this we gather some sense of regional distinctiveness and celebrate the excellences. It is a local and unique expression, but also a unifying vision.

Commissioner Baez stated that Tempe is such a diverse community, including young and elderly, and she wanted to know what barriers are stopping the broadened arts and culture, especially reaching out to younger generations and other groups that may be missing out.

Staff noted the Clark Park revamp is a good example, where we added art on previously blank walls. It is not just about an open space but about having a welcoming environment.

Commissioner Moore stated he loves the sentiment of a tributary effort for these plans. Tempe has never been very centralized. In the past, arts and music started in strip malls and elsewhere and eventually made its way downtown. A refocus needs to be on neighborhoods instead of full effort in downtown. Artists are usually just given a wall and told to paint, but artists should be involved early in the process so that their work can be integrated effectively.

Commissioner Moore stated that the model the library is using now is incredible. He has seen the programs online and has been amazed by the efforts and the way the library acts as a community hub. Libraries were once written off, but our programming has been keeping it alive. PAD (Planned Area Development) is limited to commercial developments and should be expanded to include mixed-use. Heritage is mentioned in the Arts and Culture Plan, and it is important to understand at a certain level. It takes community to build things that are authentic, rather than developers trying to manifest artists and "placemaking" concepts. We should lean into cultural and environmental heritage. We are a desert city and lean into it with our cultural identity, the environment anchorage our culture.

Chair Salais stated he was not familiar with our process for approving public art proposed by a community. Art is not the first thing often discussed in projects. It is usually from artists who have worked with the developers before and are as "non-offensive" as possible. There are often strings attached with public art that it must be palatable, but Tempe does a little better than most other jurisdictions. He asked if there is a path forward for us to relax rules about non-offensive arts. Maple Ash is a good example of a place that can benefit from local artists giving to the character of the area.

Staff stated that the freedom for government to not fund investments sometimes allow for more variety in art. We can look at ways to promote artists to have more liberty with designs.

Chair Salais noted the art on the Broadway Curve is cactus fruit and does not represent the people near the corridor where the freeway is.

Chair Salais referenced the archaeology sites, such as the petroglyphs on Bell Buttes, felt there are some missed opportunities with our sites. He would like to see something that makes people more aware of these features and gives more access to the sites. Something to draw attention to it. Probably not the only place in Tempe that can benefit from this but making it a more prominent feature would benefit education of our history. He also stated he is curious about what measures can be taken to increase cultural accessibility to our open spaces.

Staffed stated that the equity study will help us to determine this. We have 128 strategies in the Master Plan, and recreation have identified eight to move forward with immediately in 2023. The equity study will help identify the under-served communities and spaces and look for enhancements to assist in this effort. One of the goals is to connect with folks who have not participated, whether the barrier has been knowledge of the programs, technology, or language.

Chair Salais stated that if we are talking about making recreational facilities more culturally accessible, things like the that structure that exists that allow the Jewish community to leave home on the Sabbath in Chandler. He was wondering what other programs exist to enhance cultural accessibility, and how other cities do it.

Staff noted that something that is similar to that is having safe bathrooms for residents that are transgender in the public spaces.

Commissioner Praharaj stated he wants to know we are ensuring connections between the different chapters in the General Plan. In Land Use and Transportation, we spoke of parks and a 20-minute city. He noted the 20-minute city relates to park access as well so we can mention things like this and land use hubs and mixed-use corridors. Connections between chapters would be great to assess. He likes the idea of park connections between the different park classifications. The map shows parks but not park connections. He stated that Boston has done great work in park systems of hierarchies and connections.

Staff stated that the document is very integrated by nature and agrees that they should be woven like a web. We also need all the elements by the state law, so we have organized them into chapters. Threads that weave them can be found in the preambles and the maps. The Land Use, Circulation, and Density maps as well as others in the plan are all based on one another, and connectivity is very important.

Staff noted that when we go through and draft the plan, we will go through objectives and strategies and see how they relate to other sections of the plan. We are working on a way to show this visually in the plan.

Commissioner Sokolowski stated that the Character Area Plans were the way to draw on distinct neighborhoods. North Tempe has more population than south but south have much more parks. We need to make sure the park system is equitable. Alleys are underused and would make for a vast and integrated park system of trails. Phoenix has a pilot program to do this with alley closures and turn them into public spaces.

Commissioner Tokos asked how integrated these plans are with other departments, like the parks plan, forestry, transportation plan etc.

Staff stated that forestry is within the Parks and Recreation department and communications with transportation happen regularly when working on these plans. There has been a lot of interdepartmental cooperation on the plan development.

Staff stated that the Planning Department meets bi-weekly with a lot of City departments to discuss development. With plans like this we make technical groups to get members from all entities in the City that need to be considered. For example, our Historic Preservation Officer is involved in a lot of work because of the vast archaeology in the City.

Staff stated we have strategic priorities from the City Council that lead to cross departmental cooperation. We know our own areas well, but we need to rely on other's expertise. The Clark Park remodel had to consider land use, transportation, and many others than just parks choosing to remodel a park.

Commissioner Moore noted that we talk about accessibility and connectivity, to make sure that viewshed of desert landscapes are cultural amenities. We have a national class skyline that is free to access and viewable. Protection of viewsheds is crucial for maintaining cultural amenities. Important not only to Tempe history but also indigenous tribes.

Commission Moore stated that when walking along the lake on TCA and Priest, you see irrigation nubs from trees when young and they become over-irrigated and fall. We have these nubs because of the poor management of the infrastructure. We could save money and make the city more attractive.

Staff noted that area is tricky with a mix of private and public maintenance, but the forestry master plan has functions for both areas of ownership and management to improve landscaping management.

Commissioner Moore stated that the Double Butte cemetery would make for a great arboretum, it is very connected and noise buffer. Bell Butte is an interesting spot, and should be a City property

Staff advised that it is Tempe's property now.

Commissioner Moore was happy to hear that. It should be spaced out and saved as a landmark. Buffer it out and honor cultural and environmental cemetery.

Commissioner Moore stated that he loves the Papago Center idea, and it honored the desert vibe and the flavor for the area. The Butte has been surrounded by tall buildings and the viewshed is lost. The same applies to the Salt River. We should honor the history with development along it. It represents watersheds in the valley. There is a nautical vibe to the art at the lake and it misses the point of the local identity and heritage of the river.

Commissioner Tokos asked if we work on Rio Reimagined.

Staff advised that we do have representation in this effort.

Commissioner Tokos asked if there are plans for expansion of the lake or amenities to the ends, near Coyotes proposal.

Staff advised that we would embark on a plan for the northern shore and marina as a focus. The western end is still a location for future active recreation but not the top of the list.

Chair Salais asked if we annexed/purchased the land for the indigent burial section of the Double Butte cemetery.

Staff advised it is owned by the County.

Chair Salais stated we have overgrowth in the Salt Riverbed. He knows there are hazards associated with allowing people into the riverbed, but stated it is an incredible resource and he would like to see that leveraged. He does not know how feasible this is. He noted that Phoenix has multi-use paths through riparian areas.

Commissioner Sokolowski stated that we are supposed to have birdwatching platforms and boardwalks to observe riparian areas. He does not mind a Ferris wheel in the lake, but this is our Central Park and should be there to find green space in the city. He would like to see plenty of trees and natural space, and to shield the freeway.

Commissioner Tokos asked if you could connect the Lopiano preserve area to that,

Staff stated that shade is one of the priorities and we do ensure that bird species are monitored in the riparian areas to see what is present. It is finding a balance between natural spaces but that are also safe spaces for people. Balance activation, maintenance, and connectivity.

Staff noted that some of the topics are covered in other chapters. Riparian corridors and other things are mentioned in the wildlife and conservation elements. We will try our best to connect all the dots in the plan. We are aware of the preservation issues in the city and have language in the character areas that encourage blue stakes. Character Area Plans and HP plan have viewshed protections in both to keep views of the buttes open.

Commissioner Moore noted we talked about library and TCA. He stated that the history museum is also an excellent resource and does a great job showing off a niche for our community. They are an invaluable resource and should continue to be so. Tempe has amazing proximity to museums, and he thinks there is potential for more. The old tuberculosis building would be a good candidate. We should leverage this as part of our identity. Tempe as a university town and nexus of education, but museums are a natural component we have not leaned completely into yet. Even downtown plays into this with history and the Mill and other buildings giving a historic narrative. Connectivity is key.

Chair Salais agrees with the need to spread the population out. He noted we have spent time talking about heritage and the civilizations that were here before Tempe and the people who were here during the early part of Tempe's history. Personally, he feels it is a lost opportunity to not incorporate their history more into our public art. We are in the process of renaming parks, schools, and streets that were named after people who were KKK members. He feels we can go further with acknowledging our failures about communities that were not served. The San Pablo community, for example, could benefit from public art in the area where it used to be. Part of embracing our history is making an effort to show contributions of people who have not been served well by the community.

Commissioner Tokos asked if there is a way to work with homeowners who have external facing walls to get murals on them and also plant shade trees on their property to benefit people that are walking by. She heard of a cost matching program and said that as a homeowner she would be willing to plant a tree closer to the sidewalk to provide shade for those on public walkways.

Staff advised there is a cost matching program and an agreement that the community member who purchases the tree has to essentially maintain and take care of it. We will not plant the tree but will the community member in knowing the correct place to plant it, especially with regard to the underground utilities line, and which tree would be the most beneficial.

7) **Questions & Discussion**

None

8) **Community Working Group, and City Staff Announcements**

None

Meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Prepared by: Joanna Barry, Administrative Assistant II
Reviewed by: Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner