

## THE CONTEXT

Shocking population projections like the one on the cover from Pima Association of Government's annual report are cited by Tucson's decision makers as the basis for planning our community's future. We are told that this scale of growth is inevitable, and that it must be accepted and planned for, regardless of effects on public health, safety, and quality of life.

Many leaders still believe that this is a good thing, that Tucson can "grow its way" out of its current growth problems. Our community faces real economic, social and environmental challenges related to local and global climate change, declining water supply and quality, immigration, aging infrastructure, an economy too closely tied to land development, and soaring prices of everything from energy to food.

Each and every one of these challenges stands to become worse in the face of unrestrained growth.

## A WAY FORWARD

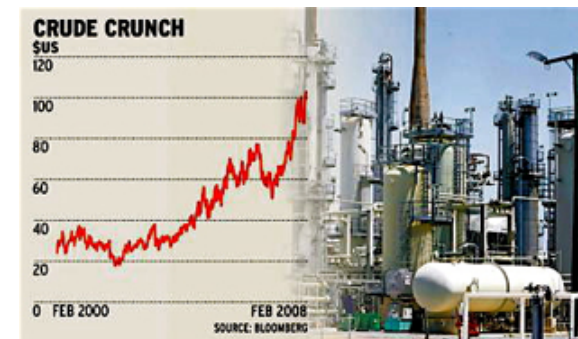
The challenges that face our community also present significant opportunities. If we act in time, we can develop a regional economy that

is based on sustainable, 21st-century industries that meet the needs of people and the planet.

Until now, Tucson has approached problems and opportunities in a scattershot fashion, often pitting related interests against each other.

We must have a process for planning that is inclusive of all people in the region—families as much as businesses. We must look at the whole range of issues together, how they interconnect, and how we can approach them in the most timely, efficient, effective and just manner that preserves our human rights, a desirable quality of life, and the needs of the environment upon which we all depend.

Sustainable Tucson's purpose is to facilitate this process, and to hold it up to the standards of the emerging understanding of sustainability.



## In the face of such uncertainty...

- **ECONOMY:** *Our economy is highly dependent upon development, and housing markets are reflecting the aftershocks of the mortgage lending crisis and impending recession.*
- **ENERGY:** *Oil prices have topped \$110 a barrel, and were just \$10 a barrel 10 years ago. While others imagine a shift to coal, its price jumped 40% last year alone.*
- **CLIMATE:** *The Southwest is named in virtually every peer-reviewed climate report as likely to be hotter and drier. Reservoirs are below 50% capacity.*
- **FOOD SECURITY:** *Food prices rose more than 30% globally last year, and demand at food banks is outpacing supply.*
- **WATER:** *There is disagreement over the security of our water supplies, and rising costs for delivery and treatment.*
- **INCLUSIVENESS:** *Processes claiming to seek the input of the community are scheduled in ways that limit participation.*
- **LACK OF VISION:** *Tucson lacks a clear, compelling vision for the future.*

*and more...*

**... shouldn't we be focused on sustainability?**

**QUESTIONING  
OUR  
ASSUMPTIONS  
ABOUT  
GROWTH**

## QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

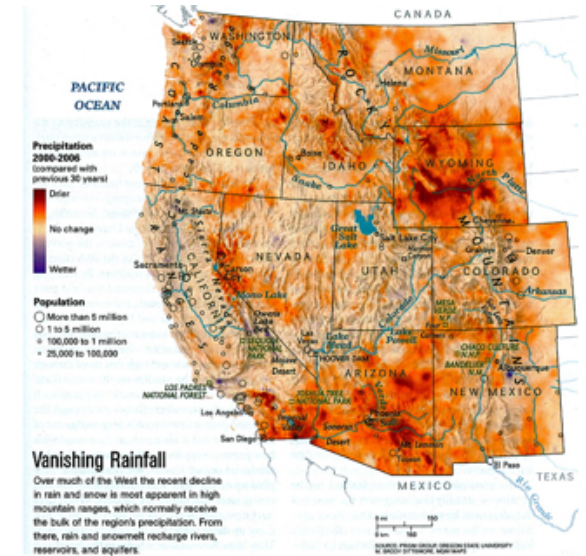
As we undertake this process together, we ask you to consider the following points:

- If we accept the statement that growth is inevitable, this means we think we are powerless. A future is being promoted that is not the future we want. We have the right to address our concerns, and the capacity to protect our community's public health and our economy.
- Could growth management be underpinned by the need to preserve the health, safety and quality of life of the Tucson region's current residents—rather than the assumption that growth is inevitable?
- Can we evaluate our current practice of subsidizing population growth as our main economic development strategy? Development impact fees currently cover only a small fraction of the real cost of growth.
- Shouldn't we instead be figuring out how to diversify our economy in order to best sustain our quality of life in the face of mounting uncertainties? Subsidies for redeveloping our region in a sustainable way could produce desirable jobs and boost our economy.
- Can we think of other strategies that would benefit Tucson residents, rather than exacerbating our problems or passing them on to future generations?
- Can we consider Tucson families as the primary stakeholders in this process instead of special interests or government agencies?
- Might it be wiser to empower a regional planning process, rather than "regional authorities?"
- If achieving sustainability requires significant investments, what should we be investing in?
- How can we address our costly, grossly inefficient transportation system and aging housing stock?
- Will there be enough water if Tucson families start growing some of their own food out of necessity?
- Are we willing to recharge chemical laden CAP or wastewater into our groundwater without knowing the potential harmful effects of emerging contaminants like pharmaceuticals, hormones, narcotics, and endocrine disruptors?
- Are we willing to pay any price for testing and treating all of our recycled water to meet drinking water quality?

- Will we build a new economy based on the opportunities of sustainability?
- Will we do it in time before the opportunities become liabilities?
- Are we forgetting the arts & culture as partners toward sustainability? There are many opportunities to add beauty, richness, and fun in our lives as we achieve sustainability.
- Will we one day be able to say to our children, we saw where we were heading and we turned things around? If not, what will we tell them?

The Tucson Town Hall, the past Sustainability Forum, the work of many in government and other organizations all represent pieces of a puzzle that we need to solve. The only way through this process is together. There are classic conflicts on issues as sensitive as growth in our community, though there are vast areas of agreement as well. These areas of agreement are fertile soil for problem solving that is neglected by falling into the throes of the growth vs. no-growth debate.

Instead, we should focus on how to implement solutions that already fit into the values we share, like having abundant clean water and air; affordable transportation, food and living wages for our families; and a healthy, diversified modern economy.



With an open mind to creative solutions and good base of information, we can and will develop a sustainable path for Tucson and the region. The next step is to establish facilitated, diverse, working groups to focus on what solutions have the greatest potential of contributing to a sustainable future.

Please visit our website below to see what Sustainable Tucson is doing to broaden involvement in the discussion about sustainability, and make yourself a part of the future we are creating together!



**Sustainable Tucson**

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[www.sustainabletucson.org](http://www.sustainabletucson.org)