Stories and Resources to Inspire Community Engagement in Vigorous, Equitable Climate Action
Here at the YWCA of Southern Arizona, we know that justice is always intersectional. To fulfill our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women, in addition to our focus on racial justice we also address restorative justice through our Teen Court program, economic justice through our Women’s Business Center & Women’s Leadership Academy, and reproductive justice through Project Period, to name just a few. Now, as we partner with Local First Arizona (LFA) and Tucson 2030 District, we are excited to add climate and environmental justice as an area of YWCA’s focus and action. Our community faces real, everyday challenges of food, housing, and energy insecurity, and we have seen these challenges compounded and intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic. We want to be part of the solution, to transform injustice into justice, insecurity into security, so that our community not only survives, but thrives and grows as we face the future together.

We also know that to see the change we want in the world, we must be the change. That means being a role model to our community in demonstrating that justice is intersectional, and that justice is attainable. That’s why we are so excited to be the first local non-profit to take on all three of LFA’s Green Business Alliance sustainability programs — and the first to complete a full energy, water, and transportation audit through LFA’s partnership with the Tucson 2030 District. We hope to show our community that any organization can find ways to address climate justice with both immediate and long-term benefits for our community and our planet.

**We hope you will join us on this journey towards justice.** We invite you to witness the progress, learn from the process, and celebrate the successes with us. This is how we build a sustainable and equitable future for all.
YCLIMATE ACTION
Introduction: Mayor Regina Romero

Tucson is celebrating! Last September 9th, my colleagues in the Council and I committed to addressing the climate and ecological crises by declaring a Climate Emergency and pledging to become a carbon neutral city by 2030.

Climate change is a threat to our public health, our economy, and our way of life. 2020 was the hottest and second-driest year on record. This year, a Tier 1 shortage on the Colorado River was declared. A warming climate will only exacerbate drought conditions in our region, threatening our long-term water supply.

The effects of climate change are detrimental to the entire Tucson community, but they are especially felt by our Black, Indigenous, and Brown brothers and sisters, who have and continue to experience systemic environmental racism.

As a community, we all have a role to play. In the past year, the city government has adopted an Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Roadmap to support community-wide EV adoption, from changing building codes for EV-ready new buildings to electrifying our fleet. We have embarked on a zero-waste path and opened a compost facility at Los Reales Sustainability Campus. Through the Tucson Million Trees initiative and with our partners, Trees for Tucson and Tucson Water, we are increasing tree canopy in heat vulnerable communities, while installing green stormwater infrastructure to capture and filter stormwater.

This celebration is a testimonial to how our collective efforts locally can have an impact globally. Local businesses can and are being part of the solution to address climate change. Once we decide to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce our water use, increase energy efficiency, increase our canopy cover, and beautify our city, there is no stopping us.

As Mayor, I have decided to do my part to help Tucson become a climate resilient city, and I am grateful to the YWCA and other local businesses that have made this commitment as well.

I encourage all Tucsonans to support this collective effort by planting a native tree, avoiding single-use plastics, and using public transportation. Businesses can join Local First’s Green Business Leaders Program and adopt sustainable practices that will help save our planet while cutting cost.

In community,
Regina Romero
City of Tucson Mayor

Mayor Regina Romero
Are you ready to build a stronger, more resilient, more just community? To re-imagine and then create solutions for what we are clearly facing in the years to come: the ever-emerging and evolving challenges of an altered climate?

The journey, while seemingly daunting, is ours to take, with a little help from our friends and neighbors. That’s what the City of Tucson Climate Action Anniversary, and this publication are about: sharing experiences as a guide for what we can do now — take one determined step after another, continuously, until sustainability and climate equity become the natural pathway of our lives.

YWCA Southern Arizona, its House of Neighborly Service in the City of South Tucson, and locally owned businesses associated with the YWCA’s Women’s Business Center (WBC), through a partnership with Local First Arizona, spent the past year not just talking about needed changes in their operations to make them more climate-resilient, equitable, and successful but doing the work required — even as they battled back against the sorrows and harsh disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The City of Tucson and the Mayor’s Office didn’t rest on the laurels of having signed a historic promise to take on climate change; they got to work, too. “It is an important declaration,” said Mayor Regina Romero. “It’s not just words on paper. It sets us in motion.”

“My feeling is that finally people are really seeing the devastating effect of climate change, the tangible results” of what will continue into an undefined future, said Romero. “It will take partnerships — public, private, nonprofit — to find solutions for climate resiliency and protecting our environment. We all play a role.”

To a person, those involved discovered an added benefit to jumping into action — energy and enthusiasm overtook doom and gloom.

“We have an opportunity to come out of this darkness. An opportunity to reinvent ourselves,” says Magdalena Verdugo, CEO of YWCA Southern Arizona. “I am excited about the possibilities, and it starts with us.

“What impact do you want to make?”

Secretary General of the United Nations, on the climate crisis

“There is no time for delay and no room for excuses.

—ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
Magdalena Verdugo had just been appointed CEO when she arrived at YWCA Southern Arizona in January 2020, her 90-day plan of action in hand as she and staff looked forward to a year that marks the 105th anniversary of the Southern Arizona women’s organization.

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic. “My plan went out the window,” Verdugo said. “We had to learn to pivot. Immediately.”

Already an advocate for building a more sustainable community, Verdugo realized that the pandemic was exposing what is also at the core of the climate crisis: systemic social inequities that prevent communities of color, the poor, and all our underserved residents from having the means and the access to survive the hardships of global warming — the very people YWCA embraces.

The depth of the vulnerability was made clear, said Verdugo, when YWCA Southern Arizona joined with the Mayor’s Office to help disperse federal relief funds for hard-hit local businesses — and through its participation in grant funding for businesses located in the Rio Nuevo District. Administered by the city’s We Are One | Somos Uno Resiliency Fund program, many of the applicants were small minority- and woman-owned operations.

What she discovered in both cases was a gap for many of the smaller businesses between having a business and running one, the nuts and bolts, like the need for a business banking account and profit and loss statements — even a marketing strategy. Also lacking, computer skills. “There was a technology divide. They didn’t have the tools,” said Verdugo.
FOOD SECURITY IS WHERE THE HEART IS

The daughter of migrant workers, whose father brought his work home as an avid gardener, YWCA CEO Magdalena Verdugo remembers the many conversations she and her father enjoyed together as he planted and harvested his array of fresh produce — irrigated with the water he collected in buckets, long before water harvesting was “a thing.” Among the topics discussed: what her mother would be cooking for dinner that night.

From past experience, Verdugo was especially disheartened by the food shortages that hit in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. “The stories I heard about food insecurity resonated, especially if children were involved,” she said. “No one should ever fear food insecurity.”

Today, food security is a priority at YWCA Southern Arizona, through education and, in the future, hands-on training in gardening and nutrition. Also being launched, a food entrepreneur program. “We won’t be teaching people how to cook but how to run a [food] business,” said Verdugo.

“Climate change affects our basic needs and our basic needs are food, water, and the air we breathe,” she said. “We’re starting with food.”
Nothing is more sustainable than maintaining a tradition of community service, which is what YWCA Southern Arizona is more than happy to do as it readies the House of Neighborly Service (HNS) for its re-entry as a long-treasured but more climate-resilient neighborhood community center.

Most recently owned by the Presbyterian Church and occupied by the Presbytery De Cristo, the mission of HNS since 1946 has been outreach, advocacy, and social justice, most especially for underserved women, children, and families.

So, it was a no-brainer for YWCA to agree to the terms for acquiring the block-long property for one dollar — to continue supporting the HNS pledge of service to the South Tucson community.

The newly renovated HNS will make its debut this December at a party celebrating the property's 75th birthday. Now in the planning stages, the committee overseeing the event includes Amanda Martinez, HNS site coordinator for YWCA Southern Arizona; the mayor of South Tucson, Bob Teso; Vice Mayor Herman Lopez; and, most importantly, people from the neighborhood.

“There are women here in their 80s who came to HNS when they were children. It’s really incredible,” said Martinez. “Older neighbors talk about it in a way that shows how much they love it. We have this amazing opportunity to reach out to so many people for our 75th.”

Mariachi music, tree-lighting, activities for kids, the December event “is going to be beautiful,” echoes Liane Hernandez, director of YWCA’s Women’s Leadership and Wellness Center. Hernandez fondly describes HNS as “this little space of hope and dreams.”

Far from a task, renovating and readying HNS for its next chapter of service to the South Tucson neighborhood has been a joy for those involved. “Come by on a Monday and you’ll get the first inklings of what you will see next year,” said Martinez.

During the party-planning meetings on Monday mornings, she said, folklorico music is playing outside as a group of older women dance. There are kids on the playground; 20 women doing Zumba. “There are more than 40 people on campus just doing something.”

The goal all along has been to preserve and improve upon the services that HNS provides, from community meeting space for classes, meetings, and conversations to basketball courts and a generous park setting for children and families.

But first YWCA Southern Arizona had to prove itself a trusted steward.

“When Amanda and I were allowed to take on HNS as part of our work, it allowed us to have some accountability around the ways the work is done here,” said Hernandez. “We needed to show the community that the YWCA cares about this property.”

Neglected through the first months of the pandemic, “maintenance and cleanup work hadn’t been happening,” she said. “But then we started having people here more often, for monthly trash cleanups, fixing up the basketball court and hoops and the benches, sandblasting, painting.”

“We were taking care of things.”

As Hernandez emphasizes, the mission of service to the community isn’t going away. It will continue and strengthen, and includes plans to weave the elements of sustainability into activities and conversations with the neighbors.

“I hope that what we’re doing honors the work that has been done by the neighbors,” she said, adding that by continuing to build collaborations of trust and real community, “we’re showing what we can do collectively.”
For Mike Peel, the House of Neighborly Service represents a watershed moment in his organization’s dedication to building community-wide sustainability.

YWCA Southern Arizona is the first organization and HNS is the first facility to participate in all three of the sustainability programs offered through Local First Arizona’s newly formed Southern Arizona Green Business Alliance — and the first to complete a full energy, water, and transportation audit through LFA’s partnership with the Tucson 2030 District.

The audit is the crown jewel in YWCA’s commitment to sustainability, and its completion at HNS this past June takes the stewardship of the beloved South Tucson community center to global heights: The comprehensive audit is aimed at helping building owners save money while also reducing their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50 percent by 2030, which means that HNS joins the climate-committed club of businesses and organizations pledging to meet, or exceed, the carbon reduction goals of the national 2030 Challenge for Planning and the Paris Agreement.

The House of Neighborly Service “has embarked on a journey to build community resilience and become more sustainable by 2030 and beyond,” said Peel, LFA’s statewide sustainability director. “The audit represents a big commitment of time, resources, and energy. But it also means that the YWCA and HNS can not only meet but exceed the sustainability and climate-equity goals they have going forward for the South Tucson community.”

As part of the HNS audit, YWCA Southern Arizona considered what it hoped to achieve over the next five years, including access to early childhood education; addressing local issues of homelessness and affordable housing; encouraging participation in local water and energy policies; “being at the table” for future regional economic development; and focusing on solutions for “the disproportionate impact” that climate change has on the populations served by YWCA.

Critical drivers for reaching those goals are consistency and collaboration, said Peel. “Consistency builds trust.” And collaboration, he said, builds strength through the establishment of long-term relationships — with the neighborhood, the community, and Local First Arizona — ensuring reaching goals in the present and continued support as needs arise.

“We engage in ways that reach into the future,” said Peel of the sustainability efforts of LFA and the Tucson 2030 District. “Our work is not just about finishing a project. We are sustainably engaged with our partners in the process from the beginning and beyond.”
Memories Are Alive Still at “La Escuelita”

By Amanda Martinez
HNS Site Coordinator, YWCA Southern Arizona

At the corner of 33rd St. and 8th Ave. in the City of South Tucson are memories of the hundreds of children and adults who spent time at the House of Neighborly Service, also known as La Escuelita, over the last 75 years.

After its opening in 1946, it quickly became a place where people gathered, laughed, celebrated, learned, and played.

The Presbyterian Board of National Missions of New York opened the House under the leadership of the Southern Arizona Presbyterian Church and Rev. Guadenencio Ramirez.

Tucsonan Ona Gardner soon became the House manager, and within 10 years of its opening, there was a combined 26 club meetings and activities taking place on campus each week with the help of 44 volunteers. These included piano lessons, the 4-H Club, a new mother and baby wellness clinic, kindergarten, and a basketball team.

By far the most popular feature at the House was the pool built in 1955. Although it no longer exists on campus, many people in the neighborhood still tell stories about learning how to swim there and many summer afternoons spent in the water.

All of the time and love people put into the House reflected right back onto the neighborhood by changing and creating new programs to meet the community’s needs, often in innovative ways.

In a 1956 newspaper column, Gardner wrote about the “first of its kind clinic for sick children” that operated on Tuesday nights. Nurses and doctors donated their time and all services were free of charge.

After decades of ownership by the Presbyterian Church, YWCA Southern Arizona acquired the property for $1 in 2015.

YWCA is continuing this spirit of innovation through its sustainability initiative. In the coming months, the House will host multiple events focusing on gardening and sustainable transportation alternatives.

In August, volunteers helped prepare seven container gardens on campus, which will be cared for by YWCA program participants, including senior women from the neighborhood in the Las Comadritas program.

In October, seeds and starts will go into the soil. The House will also be the host site of two events by Tucson Clean and Beautiful to clean and plant trees along the South Tucson greenway. Later in the year, YWCA will partner with Living Streets Alliance to host a free bike fix-it event for people in the neighborhood.
YWCA Southern Arizona was established in Tucson in 1917, just five years after Arizona statehood, by visionary women committed to the progressive values of the young state. It was founded as a place for women to rest, socialize, learn, organize, and contribute to creating a more progressive community.

Intersectional in approach since the beginning, YWCA was the only place where children of color could learn to swim in the years before local-built municipal swimming pools emerged. Our organization provided the first child daycare centers for working families and the first domestic violence shelter in our region.

From the beginning, YWCA has been committed to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

Over the last 104 years, we’ve worked in coalitions to promote the well-being of our neighbors. Recently, this work has included advocacy around the impact of environmental crises, gender and racial justice, anti-violence work, and local economy building.

As we approach our 105th anniversary, we embrace our role as Green Champions. We commit to advocating and building communities of practice to address the needs and recognize the solutions emerging from racialized people who are affected first and worst by the Climate Crisis. This existential threat will continue to drive issues like housing, water, land use, utilities, environmental racism, public health crises, war and displacement, and economic downturns. Towards that end, we look forward to launching future training informed by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 by all the Member states of the United Nations. Using this global framework, we will do our part in meeting the City’s declaration and help fulfill our own mission work around transformational leadership exemplified in the 2030 goals. We call on you to join these efforts and center the sustainable and joyful work of this community.

We have been part of the YWCA USA network, a pioneer in the United States in race relations, labor union representation, and women’s empowerment for more than 160 years. Together with our sister associations, nationally and globally, we are proud to be part of a strategic alignment to continue the fight and reimagine a future where we all thrive together.
A YEAR INTO THE ‘CLIMATE DISASTER,’ MAYOR ROMERO AND THE CITY TAKE CHARGE

‘Deliberate,’ ‘Equitable’ Are Key Words for Ensuring True Success

By Karen Peterson
Climate Tucson

THE CITY OF TUCSON

“Let’s get to work,” said Tucson Mayor Regina Romero on September 9, 2020, after the council, in an emphatic 6-0 vote, approved passage of the city’s historic Climate Emergency Declaration.

Romero has kept her word.

This September 9, Romero joined Magdalena Verdugo, CEO of YWCA Southern Arizona, at the City of Tucson Climate Action Anniversary to honor the efforts of YWCA and all the Tucsonans who have come together against the threats inherent in our changing desert climate.

“We’re celebrating the one-year anniversary of the passage of the declaration,” Romero said. “It is going to take all of us to put this into action.”

Action can’t start soon enough. As projected by the scientists, our region has experienced higher average temperatures; increased incidences of hotter heat waves; higher nighttime temperatures; extreme weather events, including, as witnessed this summer, bouts of heavier rainfall; continued drought exacerbated by heat and periods of less rainfall, as experienced last summer; and the ever-present heat associated with our built environment, or the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect.

In parts of Tucson where trees and their shade are scarce, or nonexistent, UHI can easily add another 8 degrees to an already scorching day, said Romero. Those neighborhoods — identified on tree canopy maps that clearly show the link between fewer trees and lower incomes — are of particular concern.

“We’re being very deliberate about where we plant trees,” said Romero, who is adamant that social equity be interwoven with city planning and policies going forward. The climate emergency declaration directs all city departments to prioritize and align efforts with the Paris Agreement and the Green New Deal.

To date, through its partnership with Tucson Clean and Beautiful and its Trees for Tucson program, Tucson now has 14,000 new trees in underserved communities, mostly located on the south and west sides of town.
Romerino isn’t waiting to move ahead on what’s needed before the completion of the city’s comprehensive 10-year Climate Action and Adaptation Plan in 2022. In June, mayor and council approved an ordinance requiring the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in new one- and two-family dwellings — a jumpstart on her pledge to reduce the use of fossil fuels through electrification in the transportation sector, one of the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters.

“I absolutely believe Tucsonans understand climate change and how it is affecting us day in and day out,” said Romero, whose mayoral race put climate change solutions and community resilience at the forefront. “They want us to take the bull by the horn and start acting immediately.”

“I also believe Tucsonans understand that climate change does not affect everyone equally, that there are inequities,” said Romero, referring to what also became painfully clear as the Covid-19 pandemic spread relentlessly through the community: the health, social, and economic disparities that were exposed as the virus raged.

Climate change is not only an environmental issue but a public health hazard as it creates conditions ripe for the spread of new diseases. As with Covid-19, that threat disproportionately affects seniors, low-income residents, communities of color, and children, said Romero. “They are on the front lines.”

**CRAFTING THE 10-YEAR ROADMAP**

The passage of the emergency declaration includes the steps the city will take as part of its on-going defense posture, notably reducing the city’s carbon footprint by 50 percent and to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The city is also actively seeking a consultant to help tailor the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and it has established an advisory council made up of an “amazing group of advisors,” said Romero, including climate experts from the University of Arizona and ASU; representatives of the city’s communities of color and Indigenous voices; and members of the city’s wide-ranging climate and environmental groups, “who have been doing the groundwork all along,” she said.

Most heartening has been the outpouring of youthful climate activists, among them members of Sunrise Tucson and the Arizona Youth Climate Coalition, who have supported her efforts from the start, said Romero.

This past summer the Mayor’s Office held online “listening sessions” with members of the community about what was most concerning to them and what they’d like the mayor to address. The top response, and no surprise in the second-hottest city in the nation — Tucson often ties with Las Vegas for the dubious placement — was heat and the impact it has on health and the environment.

The report on listening sessions is completed and will be available to the public. Moving forward, the city will create an online dashboard with data and metrics for tracking the steps and results of the ongoing efforts. The goal is transparency and accountability, said Romero.
Waste Is on Its Way Out, Literally

Waste is on its way out at the city-owned-and-managed Los Reales Landfill, where Tucsonans unload 2,300 tons of their accumulated trash each and every day.

First, the name is changing to Los Reales Sustainability Campus. Also changing is the city’s new way of thinking about the amount of trash we generate: the Climate Emergency Declaration calls for a 50 percent diversion of the waste dumped at Los Reales by 2030 and zero waste by 2050.

“It’s not just about consumption, consumption, consumption anymore,” said Mayor Regina Romero of America’s unsustainable appetite for buying and tossing.

The philosophy today is “reduce, reuse, recycle,” said Romero, and to that end an adjunct mission of the landfill is to encourage all of us to pitch in, not pitch out. “We’re going to transform that space” by including an educational component that will teach and encourage consumer-based sustainability, she said, until “waste not” is a way of life.

Among the ideas for reducing the waste that has accumulated there since it opened in 1967: food composting, separating recyclables, and shipping plastic to a waste-to-energy facility. The land around Los Reales will be put to use as a nursery for growing and nurturing the trees that will someday find their way into city neighborhoods.

MORE TREES TO HUG

Again, and no surprise, planting more trees is one of the most popular mitigation solutions identified in the listening sessions. “Tucsonans love the common sense of planting trees,” said Romero. “Trees gobble up CO2 but they also make us happy. They are good for our mental and physical health.”

Last year, the city formalized its “Tucson Million Trees” initiative and hired its first “urban forestry” project manager, Nicole Gillett. “We’re on a 10-year timeline,” said Gillett of the tree-planting effort and the emergency declaration goals.

Just as concerning to Tucsonans as heat is the water needed to sustain the anticipated addition of one million trees to our current “forest” of urban trees. Irrigation is no longer seen as the primary resource; harvesting rainwater is, including the water that courses down our streets.

This past May, a new fee was included in household and business utility bills to support the development and placement of “Green Stormwater Infrastructure.” Adding about a dollar a month to the water bill, the anticipated $7 million raised over three years will be used for sustainable stormwater harvesting in parks, streets, and parking lots. Importantly, said Romero, the fee will help fund tree-planting “in a very equitable way” for our underserved, tree-deficient neighborhoods.

THE UNBROKEN CIRCLE

Climate change, like the weather it brings, touches everything in our lives — and especially those things that we love most about where we live, said Romero, “our open spaces, our saguaros, all our little critters.”

For Romero, the underlying question is, “How does climate affect nature? How is it affecting biological diversity, all the living things in our Sonoran Desert?”

“It is the circle of life that we need to make sure that we’re protecting,” she said, not just for us today but for future generations. “In my case, it’s about my kids,” said Romero. “They’re 11 and 15. My family has lived here for seven generations. Will they still be able to live here?”

For more information, visit climateaction.tucsonaz.gov
“Everyone’s concerns are overlapping with heat, water, and also equitable access to resources.”

“Everyone’s concerns are overlapping with heat, water, and also equitable access to resources,” said Luna of the results of the sessions. Although the Mayor’s Office collected nearly 4,000 responses from an online climate survey, Luna adds that there were gaps in the makeup of the respondents: in large part they were White, the majority over age 45, and highly educated.

“The mayor is very intentional in her desire to reach out to the front-line community” of underserved Tucsonans, said Luna. The listening sessions were the alternative, drawing in a more diverse group of residents in a mix of White, Latino, Black, and Indigenous people. “Between the survey and the sessions, we had two different strategies for engaging the community and to identify their concerns about climate action,” she said.

The sessions, funded by a grant from the University of Arizona, also included training for the facilitators. For Luna, the sessions were the most rewarding of the outreach efforts, not necessarily because of what was said but who was asking the questions — many of them young women of color. “That was rewarding for me,” she said, “just seeing them take on that role.”

During the session with the Indigenous community, Luna said her thinking on how to approach these conversations was transformed.

“I learned that we need to ‘decolonize’ how we talk about climate change and [better understand] their relationship with the land, the plants, and the animals. We have to be more intentional when we reach out.”

The region’s Indigenous communities were managing the land and the ecosystem long before the Europeans arrived, said Luna. “Traditional ecological knowledge is important. We have a ton to learn from their perspective.”
FORESTS, IN TUCSON? YES, AND MORE TREES ARE ON THE WAY

Changes in the Climate Already Impacting Our Heritage Trees

By Karen Peterson
Climate Tucson

Nicole Gillett’s position as Tucson’s first “urban forestry” project manager is not a job title you run across every day, in any city, let alone one as naturally arid as ours. But we do have trees and trees constitute a forest; even our saguaros are an arborecent (tree-like) species that technically grow in a forest.

Simply stated, forestry is management of trees. Urban forestry “is about managing our natural infrastructure, our trees, to meet the needs of communities,” said Gillett, who joined Mayor Regina Romero’s team last November. That need today is twofold: maintaining what we have now — a very rough estimate of 1.9 million trees — and adding a million more by 2030.

“We’re pushing as hard as we can to get it going,” said Gillett of the Tucson Million Trees Initiative, which she heads up. “We’re entering the planning phase of determining what you need to make the program successful. We don’t want to rush into anything. We need to know where we are in order to go anywhere.”

TREES UNDER STRESS

It’s a tricky business planting and maintaining trees in the desert, let alone a million of them, said Gillett, “and especially in a climate that is changing as rapidly as ours.”

The past two years of extreme heat and drought followed by excessive monsoon rainfall has underscored — and exacerbated — the stress that the climate is putting on the city’s heritage trees, the older ones that have adapted to what is no longer a “normal” environment. Not unlike people, trees can get stressed by wide swings in the weather, which makes them susceptible to diseases. “They’re in a vulnerable situation,” she said.

Already stressed trees facing more stress “are prone to failure,” said Gillett. “It’s been a rough two years for our trees, and we’ve lost a lot of them.”

For now, as Gillett and the city make plans for the future flurry of tree-planting, the focus is on balance.

“We have to keep our existing canopy healthy.”

“We have to keep our existing canopy healthy,” she said. “In June, when it was so hot and dry, we were telling people to give water to their older tall trees. If we lose the mature canopy of trees that were raised in a different time, we’ll be in a tough spot. We need to grow drought-resistant trees [to replace them] and that takes time.”

Still, Gillett, who was previously with the Tucson Audubon Society, claims optimism. “This is an amazing place,” she said. “People have lived here for thousands of years. That kind of resilience continues to exist.”

THE ‘URGENT’ NEED

While nurturing our trees and determining what trees will do best in our unsettled climate are front and center, so is “the very urgent need” for trees in neighborhoods where few trees exist.

“That’s where we want to focus our energy,” said Gillett, noting the current tree-planting efforts being undertaken through the city’s partnership with the Trees for Tucson program.

“In 10 years, we will have made a difference with the trees we’ve planted now, but 10 years is not enough for those communities,” she said. “We have to make up for the lack of tree infrastructure and time lost. Equity and outreach are our lens and that will encompass everything we do.”

Nicole Gillett

BENEFITS OF TREES

- Increase property values
- Increase retail/commercial performance
- Reduce cooling costs
- Increase business appeal
- Create jobs
- Reduce greenhouse gases
- Reduce urban heat island effect
- Improve air & water quality
- Reduce stormwater runoff & erosion
- Provide habitat
- Improve human health
- Provide shade & create visual and sound buffers
- Beautify neighborhoods
- Slow traffic
- Improve walkability

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The first and most important piece of advice that Katie Gannon, executive director of Tucson Clean & Beautiful, shares when asked what it takes to plant a tree: “Don’t plant it too deep.” It’s a common mistake and it can kill the tree, but it’s easily rectified by taking advantage of the resources on the Trees for Tucson website. (The correct depth has to do with root ball measurements.)

If you’re concerned about the water it takes to keep a tree healthy and growing, you can find answers on the website as well, including tips, rebates, and grant opportunities from Tucson Water — and notably a new mini-grant opportunity for neighborhoods to create their own collective “earthworks” solution.

Up to $45,000 is available through City Wards for a neighborhood group to take part in the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Mini-grant Program by installing watering infrastructure in public spaces — such as a basin to collect water; cutting curbs or shoulders to release the flow of storm water into planted areas; or an in-street traffic circle. In the latter case, pavement is removed for planting a rain garden brimming with lush native plants.

For more and for details, visit Tucson Clean & Beautiful.

Most importantly, Trees for Tucson is tasked with what Mayor Romero and the community-at-large want to see accomplished — righting the wrongs of neighborhoods in Tucson where trees are scant or missing entirely.

Planting trees in underserved neighborhoods is not new to Trees for Tucson. For the past two-and-a-half years, Trees for Tucson, along with its volunteers, has been serving the needs of these “very high-priority neighborhoods,” said Gannon, providing up to three free trees (and the planting services) per household. Volunteers come out on Saturday mornings to do the digging and planting.

There is more involved in planting a tree than you might expect — from checking with utilities such as Southwest Gas to make sure that digging the hole for a tree doesn’t puncture a gas line to helping neighbors choose the trees most suitable for a particular location and then delivering them. “There’s a six-week lead time before the planting event,” said Gannon.

Residents learn of the service through bilingual fliers hung on doors throughout the target neighborhood. “Residents can sign up online,” said Gannon, “but if there’s a problem with that, they can call. It’s an easy process.”

From there, those wanting trees choose the species and indicate where they’d like them to be planted on their property.

There are barriers. People say they have no time or ability to plant, or that they can’t afford to water and care for the trees. “The purpose of our program is to reduce barriers to tree planting. That’s why we come out with volunteers to help do the work.”

But the people who do participate “are very excited about it,” said Gannon, which is the fuel that keeps Trees for Tucson going. “We may only plant 75 to 100 trees in a neighborhood of 1500 households,” she said, but doing so is also about creating a culture of tree planting and tree care.

“Even 75 or 100 trees in a neighborhood has an impact,” said Gannon. “And the children love it.”
Welcome to the first City of Tucson Climate Action Anniversary through YClimateAction! We are excited to celebrate the progress made in the last year in the community. Local First Arizona is committed to environmental action that prioritizes long-term goals for Arizona communities to be healthier and the economy to be stronger with an emphasis on equity. We can meet larger essential climate goals through community engagement, local resourcefulness, and systems change. Change is possible through collaboration.

We need mobilization to act locally with our desert community needs, including water conservation and planning, to directly address our ongoing megadrought issues, resource conservation, restoring and rehabilitating ecosystems through green infrastructure, and carbon sequestration with a focus on massive tree planting, among major strategies. Climate change and inequity are inextricably linked as the climate crisis does not affect all people equally; low-income communities and communities of color are affected first and most gravely by climate impacts, including extreme heat.

We support the City of Tucson’s Climate Emergency Declaration locally and the 2030 District Challenge For Planning nationally. Sustainable business practices are an integral part of a more resilient, regenerative and human economy. Local First Arizona is committed and has been making progress on the larger climate action goals with the YWCA Southern Arizona and City of Tucson through sustainability programs, such as our SCALE UP project planning program, green business certification program, and the many advocacy campaigns for climate action. Now is the time to collaborate to make Southern Arizona a model for inclusive economic development, new economy solutions, and equitable community benefits.

Thank you to the YWCA’s summer cohort of certified Green Leaders that you will read about in more detail in the publication and our partners for all their commitments and leadership to a more resilient and sustainable community!

2030 District: The Process

The Tucson 2030 District is a main partner of Local First Arizona on sustainability programs for local businesses and nonprofits. As a partner, we are now offering the Green Champions Program with the goal to go deeper than the Arizona Green Business certification program and the SCALE UP program by assisting and inspiring partners to go beyond implementing the building improvements necessary to meet the 50% reduction goals of the 2030 Challenge For Planning for their buildings and properties by modeling resilience and community value as part of this major 2030 national challenge. Tucson 2030 District—part of a national public-private network of 22 districts aiming to reduce building energy consumption, water use, and transportation emissions by at least 50% by 2030—offers more intensive consultation and resources to help businesses and nonprofits reach those challenging goals.

YWCA Southern Arizona is the first organization to commit to engaging in all three programs offered by both Local First Arizona and Tucson 2030 District.
By 2030, all existing buildings within developments / neighborhoods / towns / cities / regions adopt and implement a 50% reduction standard below the regional average/median for:
- fossil-fuel operating energy consumption
- CO2 emissions from transportation
- water consumption

The YWCA’s House of Neighborly Service (HNS) team is committing to the Green Champions program goals of 2030 and beyond and to becoming a community model of sustainable best practices. The YWCA HNS team will create a community green space for learning about environmental, economic, and community benefits, prioritizing equity and inclusion. HNS is the first Green Champions Program project supported by Tucson 2030 District, Local First Arizona, Mrs. Green’s World, Ecoblue, and many other community partners.

The partners look forward to pursuing a long-term partnership with the YWCA Southern Arizona and HNS team to support more businesses, entrepreneurs, and nonprofits to be sustainable in the way they operate, as well as to ensure that our community is addressing all goals of the City of Tucson’s Climate Emergency Declaration while sharing progress frequently with the community.

**BACKGROUND ON THE GOALS**
A major milestone to celebrate is YWCA’s House of Neighborly Service (HNS) and its work embarking on a journey to build community resilience and become more sustainable by 2030 and beyond. HNS is the first Green Champions Program project committed to the 2030 Challenge For Planning goals with Tucson 2030 District, Local First Arizona, and partners. The partnership team is now connecting climate threads from global to national to local through individual and collective actions and systems change work.

Linking to the national 2030 Challenge For Planning goals, as defined:
- By 2030, all existing buildings within developments / neighborhoods / towns / cities / regions adopt and implement a 50% reduction standard below the regional average/median for:
  - fossil-fuel operating energy consumption
  - CO2 emissions from transportation
  - water consumption

Linking to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as stated on the website:
- The SDGs are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”. The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.
- At its heart, the 17 SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.
The Urban Forest Project is a community whose goals are to address the causes and to provide solutions for food, financial, and housing insecurities. We provide economic development to low income areas with sustainable housing infrastructures and teaching methods that promote financial security. Additionally, we are helping people adapt to climate change by implementing ways to reduce energy consumption and payments by 25-50%. We created a Food Forest with green spaces replete with edible shrubs and trees that help mitigate the Tucson Heat Island Effect and help reduce food insecurities. See us at www.harrisfletcher.com and on Instagram @urbanforestbyhf

My name is Tyrell Blacquemoss. My pronouns are they/he and I am the founder of DREAM School. **DREAM School** is for Black and Indigenous students to feel safe to dream in a country built on their cultural genocide. DREAM School was inspired by my experiences while homeless and losing friends to suicide. DREAM School is a digital oral history project & online decolonial higher education institution designed to lower suicide rates for Black & Indigenous millennials and Gen Z-ers. We offer an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline through the study of ancestral dream traditions and entrepreneurial economic solutions. DREAM School's long-term vision is an Afro-Indigenous K-20 school, a sustenance learning farm, a teaching birth center, and Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) clinic. Contact on Instagram @cause.reign or on our website www.causereign.com or by email at tbn@causereign.com.

My name is Miriam Rojas. My husband and I are owners of **Poblanos Carpentry Inc**, and we make kitchen and bathroom cabinets. I am a person who likes to be involved in the community and learn about environmental issues. I have started making changes to my house, installing solar panels, and collecting rainwater. I also do window changes since I have air conditioning. It helped me reduce my bills. In my business, I would like to implement solar panels and insulate the walls of the building. It will help me to reduce the percentage of the business's bills. If we start to make a change in our homes and businesses, we can change or reduce the pollution of the environment. Miriam Rojas mrojas_sweet64@hotmail.com 520- 495-9051

From your home to your business, **Cleaning Circle, LLC** tailors cleaning services to fit your needs. We are insured and invest our time cleaning so you can focus on the things that matter most. 20 years ago we moved to Tucson and fell in love with the community, landscapes, and gastronomy. It's easy to see what a great city to establish roots for our family and business Tucson is! We feel fortunate to be part of such a beautiful city with such a diverse cultural community. Contact us to learn about our packages: (520) 869-1082, cleaningcirclec1lc@gmail.com, Facebook: @cleaningcirclec1lc

ABOVE: Tyrell Blacquemoss, DREAM School.
The Tucson Climate Project (TCP) was a year-long study emerging from the environmental sector in Southern Arizona, exploring strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities (SWOT) within the sector itself. TCP was unique because it was created, developed, and managed without any formal institutional or financial support. It was also a partnership between co-authors Luis Perales and Nick Spinelli, which saw the two intentionally collaborate across the lines of race, class, age, experience, and their respective institutions.

The goal of TCP was simple—to build a collective voice for the environmental sector. What would each individual voice within the sector combine to say when assembled together? Using snowball sampling (a research approach that saw TCP participants themselves recruit their peers into the study) the authors conducted 218 interviews with organizers, activists, paid professionals, and self-identifying members of the local environmental movement, generating over 260,000 words in notes. This formed the basis for TCP’s SWOT analysis.

TCP’s full report, containing over 80 pages of excerpts from participant interviews, found that the environmental sector was a leader in environmental issues at both the regional and national level—while also struggling significantly with issues of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA). Based on participants’ remarks, TCP concluded that the sector faces a choice—change or be marginalized. Though opportunities for future research and engagement exist, the authors’ biggest takeaway was the need for critical self-reflection at the individual level, as well as initiatives supporting this process. In addition, the authors were encouraged by their experience working together in what they termed insurgent third space, and suggested that intentional exploration of this space by others might lead to further opportunities to challenge the status quo and effect change for social justice.

Report (Summary):

Report (Full):
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1evUBR3B-U8dxzWji6Z6DXzvDDq68o94B/view

RESOURCE PAGES
The following lists are representative of the sustainability programs through Local First Arizona, YWCA Southern Arizona, and the official City of Tucson Climate Emergency Declaration supporters list. If you have additions for climate action efforts in the City of Tucson and the region for the next publication, please email Mike Peel, Statewide Sustainability Director, at mike@localfirstaz.com.

City of Tucson Climate Action Hub: climateaction.tucsonaz.gov

TUCSON CLIMATE PROJECT
Co-Authors:

Luis Alberto Perales, M.S., is a native son of the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, and is affiliated with the Institute for Transformative Education, the City of Tucson, and ZenCons Leadership and Life Coaching. lperales@changemakerhighschool.org

Nicholas Rosul-Spinelli, M.A., was born and raised on what is now northeast Ohio on traditionally Erie lands, and is affiliated with Prescott College, Teton Science Schools, and Ragland & Wilhite LLC. nicholas.spinelli@student.prescott.edu

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PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Take action in your local community right now through Local First Arizona’s sustainability programs and our partners’ programs and resources. Our programs focus on both businesses and the community. We help local businesses prepare for the future by finding solutions to transform the impact they have on the local economy and the environment, with a commitment to social justice.

Learn more at https://localfirstaz.com/environmental-action.

SCALE UP: SCALE UP (Sustainable Communities Accessing Lending and Expertise Upon Performance) is an award-winning program that offers a comprehensive seven-week workshop series for locally-owned and operated businesses and nonprofits in Arizona. Each cohort offers the unique opportunity for participants to go from education and collaboration to planning, financing, benchmarking, and implementation — all in one accessible package.

localfirstaz.com/scale-up

Arizona Green Business Program: A consulting and certification program that delivers strategies to local-owned businesses and nonprofits to reduce their impact, positively affect their bottom line, and recognize them for implementing sustainable practices into their operations.

localfirstaz.com/greenbusiness

Local First Arizona and YWCA Green Leaders: A customized consulting and certification program designed to evaluate your business’ basic sustainability footprint, connect you to local sustainability resources, and recognize your business’ leadership for adopting practices that build a more resilient local economy.

Contact Michael Peel at mike@localfirstaz.com and Liane Hernandez at lhernandez@ywcatucson.org

Environmental Action Consults: If you’re interested in learning more about how your business can participate and be recognized, book a consultation session with the Local First Arizona sustainability team!

localfirstaz.com/environmental-action-consults

Southern Arizona Green Business Alliance: SAZGBA was created to empower businesses and nonprofits, large and small, with sustainability strategies that strengthen their operations and make them more resilient in the face of climate change.

Learn more at www.localfirstaz.com.
Recyco’s SCALE UP project is to reduce electricity, gasoline, and propane use in their facilities, as well as reducing waste by encouraging customers to bring their metals in reusable bags and eliminating “take a number” tickets. They are projecting to save $900 in efficiency savings and $3000 from the reduction of waste and elimination of tickets per year.

They will first start by establishing a bilingual Green Team (also called el Equipo Verde) and invest in sustainable education, resources and partnerships. Then, they will complete their benchmarking and strategic plan, which will include adjusting route deliveries to reduce fuel consumption and adjusting high energy loads to off peak times. Then, they will pursue the green fund to invest in improvements.

In the future, they want to make the east side location a sustainable site, complete with water harvesting and a pollinator garden. Money saved from their projects will be invested in a green fund that they plan to develop for future sustainability projects.

Learn more about Recyco at www.recycoinc.com.

**SCALE UP SPOTLIGHT – RECYCO, INC.**

**About**

Recyco, Inc. is an industry-leading family-owned metal recycling business. Recyco partners with local, national, and global businesses in the responsible reuse and recycling of ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Vanessa Gallego is a community environmental leader in Tucson and Recyco’s Chief Operating Officer. Recyco provides volunteer hours for schools and community outreach on the importance of recycling and the city-wide clean up of Tucson and surrounding communities.

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**SCALE UP BLOGS ON 2020-2021 COHORTS AND PROJECT FOCUS AREAS:**

- https://www.localfirstaz.com/news-blog/scale-up-graduates
- https://localfirstaz.com/news-blog/sustainability-is-the-future-just-ask-these-scale-up-graduates
- https://localfirstaz.com/news-blog/scale-up-cohort-3
- https://localfirstaz.com/news-blog/scale-up-cohort-4
TUCSON CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION SUPPORTERS:
August 31, 2020  Total Signatures: 1200  Total Tucson Resident Signatures: 434

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Arizona Youth Climate Coalition  Iskashitaa Refugee Network
Sunrise Tucson  Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI)
Fuga Tucson  Youth Justice Collective
Climate Jubilee  Center for Climate Adaptation Science and Solutions
Desert Springs Children’s Center  Local First Arizona
Chispa Arizona  Friends of Ironwood Forest
League of Conservation Voters  Creation Care Committee at Grace St Paul’s Episcopal Church
Monsoon Chocolate  Citizens Climate Lobby, Tucson Chapter
Tectonicus Constructs LLC  Hotel Congress LLC
Elders Climate Action - Arizona Chapter  Arizona Interfaith Power & Light
Community Water Coalition of So. AZ  The Haven
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson  Ironwood Tree Experience
Mrs. Green’s World  Bicycle Inter-Community Art & Salvage
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection  JCC Current Events
League of Conservation Voters  Tucson Clean & Beautiful, Inc.
Monsoon Chocolate  JCC-News Group
Tectonicus Constructs LLC  ZUZI! Dance
Elders Climate Action - Arizona Chapter  Climate Tucson
Community Water Coalition of So. AZ  Wild Sonora
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson  Physicians for Social Responsibility, AZ Chapter
Mrs. Green’s World  Building Resilient Neighborhoods
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection  University of Arizona SOPHOS Sophomore Honorary
League of Conservation Voters  XR Tucson
Monsoon Chocolate  Borderlands Brewing Company
Tectonicus Constructs LLC  Climate Tucson
Elders Climate Action - Arizona Chapter  Arizona Youth Climate Coalition
Community Water Coalition of So. AZ  Sunrise Tucson
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson  Fuga Tucson
Mrs. Green’s World  Climate Jubilee
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection  Desert Springs Children’s Center
League of Conservation Voters  Chispa Arizona
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Tectonicus Constructs LLC  Arizona Interfaith Power & Light
Elders Climate Action - Arizona Chapter  The Haven
Community Water Coalition of So. AZ  Ironwood Tree Experience
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson  Bicycle Inter-Community Art & Salvage
Mrs. Green’s World  JCC Current Events
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League of Conservation Voters  JCC-News Group
Monsoon Chocolate  ZUZI! Dance
Tectonicus Constructs LLC  The AZ Ground Game
Elders Climate Action - Arizona Chapter  Mi Familia Vota
Community Water Coalition of So. AZ  Tucson 2030 District
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson  Southern Arizona Voters for the Environment