



# Sun Corridor LEGACY PROGRAM

The Sun Corridor’s desirable climate, affordable housing, and relatively low cost of living are reasons why this area continues to attract new residents. The area’s future quality of life, environmental quality, and economic prosperity will be determined by how well growth is managed. Going forward, regional solutions that comprehensively address conservation, development, and transportation, water, and energy issues will be critical to a sustainable future.

## OUR VISION & GOALS

### SUN CORRIDOR

**S**onoran Institute believes that both prosperity and environmental sustainability can be achieved in the Sun Corridor of Arizona. Communities, with care and foresight, can implement pragmatic approaches to position themselves for sustainable prosperity. Local and regional decisions lay the groundwork for projects and policy reforms that will enhance our built environment while creating an urban framework that makes it easier to conserve our cherished natural environment, protect and sustain our water supplies, and make wise economic investments for our future, including the addition of a robust portfolio of renewable energy and the development of smart infrastructure corridors.

The Sonoran Institute’s Sun Corridor Legacy Program encourages healthy community design, new and smarter infrastructure and land conservation through the following goals:

- Advance the availability of clean and secure energy for the Sun Corridor.
- Balance continued urban growth by protecting appropriate landscapes throughout the region.
- Encourage state policies that protect and restore Arizona’s rivers.



*Shaping the Future of the West*



## Vision: Sustainable Prosperity

The Sun Corridor Program will empower a future megapolitan region in central and southern Arizona that grows and prospers in a way that is respectful to limited natural resources, responds to the need for increased quality of life, and is inclusive of diverse cultures and points of view.

To achieve this ambitious vision, we are applying our efforts on three main goals including:

### 1. Actions to advance smarter growth and prosperity

Our current economic engine is based on a model that cannot be sustained in an uncertain future and many of our cities provide an environment that is unhealthy and provides a low quality of life. Through focused efforts we will enable a new economy based upon a robust renewable energy program, smart and efficient trade corridors, and a new vision for Arizona's urban communities.

### 2. Working together with respect and collaboration

Real solutions that would bring change toward sustainability and economic opportunity have been suppressed in favor of partisan politics and rhetoric; meanwhile, Arizona's most vulnerable populations suffer for lack of action. We will focus on bringing people together who will think collaboratively about solutions to the problems we face.

### 3. Empowering practical conservation

We can no longer ignore the fragility of Arizona's environment in the face of an uncertain climate future, prolonged drought, and the slow degradation of the beautiful setting that harbors our natural heritage and enhances our quality of life. For a quarter century, the Sonoran Institute has promoted pragmatic thinking and win-win solutions that can achieve the conservation of our incredible heritage and achieve prosperity.

## Focus Areas

As the Sonoran Institute's most urban Legacy Program we seek to integrate the built environment with the conservation of healthy landscapes to preserve the quality of life enjoyed by all Arizonans. As we improve the built environment of our cities and make them more livable, the pressure for outward development decreases.

### Renewable Energy

The Sonoran Institute is working with the Bureau of Land Management, conservation groups, and industry representatives to encourage renewable energy development that is appropriately situated on lands that will have the least environmental impact. Through the Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and the Restoration Design Energy Project, Sonoran Institute is guiding energy development to areas with the least conflicts. Early collaboration with stakeholders will ensure creation of a robust renewable energy portfolio in Arizona as well as conservation of public lands of ecological importance; a two-fold success.

### Healthy Community Design

Investing in our future includes the wise and efficient use of resources, such as energy, land, and water. The Sonoran Institute has partnered with a consortium of like-minded groups to promote holistic community design principles. To this end we have helped create the Healthy Community Design Toolkit. This collaborative effort serves to educate the public as well as provide examples of healthy community design policies that local governments can incorporate into general and comprehensive plans throughout Arizona.

"A desert rain, just passed, accentuated the pungency of the greasewood and I stopped my walk with the dreadful first decision that the man of 2012 would not be able to walk from his doorstep into this pastel paradise with its saguaro, the mesquite, the leap of a jackrabbit, the cholla or the smell of a freshly wet greasewood, because people will have transgressed on the desert for homesites...The forests will still be protected as well as our parks and monuments. But even they will have as neighbors the people who today enjoy hardships to visit them."

Sen. Barry Goldwater - Arizona's Next Fifty Years, Feb. 14, 1962, Tucson Citizen



## Water

The Santa Cruz and Verde are two of the last rivers with year-round flow in the Sonoran Desert. We use science to create water policy and river restoration programs that help communities balance the water needs of people and wildlife. Water harvesting is one example of a low cost-mechanism that improves water quality while reducing communities' dependence on groundwater and imported water. Water harvesting also helps desert plants flourish naturally, shading our urban spaces and decreasing local temperatures.

## Large Landscape Conservation

The stunning Sonoran Desert, our unique history, and the culture of the region's inhabitants define Arizona's image. Opportunities afforded by Arizona's climate and open spaces dictate wise management of these lands through a balance of uses that includes meaningful large landscape conservation to permanently protect the Sonoran Desert and maintain the connection between communities and the beautiful natural environment.

We actively assist state trust land managers in meeting their fiduciary duty by broadening the range of land-use information, tools, and policy options available to them for the long-term sustainable management of state trust land. Sonoran Institute strives to enhance the value of the trust through better planning and implementation of residential and commercial development on state trust land and demonstrating the positive impact increased conservation of state trust land has upon nearby developed areas.



# RENEWABLE ENERGY

Abundant sunlight, vast tracts of flat land, and a mandate for renewable energy: all signs point to a remarkable opportunity for Arizona to become the solar capital of the United States.

## A Shining Opportunity

Arizona has some of the sunniest weather in the country, with Yuma and Phoenix topping cities in the U.S. for the highest average number of clear days a year, 242 and 211 respectively. This sunshine and expanses of open, relatively flat ground make Arizona favorable for locating large solar energy plants. This golden opportunity is further enhanced by the proximity to major markets that will allow Arizona to help satisfy an increasing demand for electricity in state and in southern California.

The Arizona Renewable Energy Standard mandates that 15% of the retail electricity sold by the state's regulated utilities must be produced from renewable sources by 2025. As of 2010, 6.2% of Arizona's power generation came from renewable sources. Policy advances, such as Senate Bill 1403, attract solar energy industry players, and efforts to streamline permitting of utility scale solar power plants on public lands have helped advance economic development in the state.

# Current Initiatives

## Sonoran Desert Heritage

In 2006, the Sonoran Institute began collaborating with a broad group of stakeholders to develop a science based, landscape level conservation plan for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands in Western Maricopa County. This inclusionary process has produced the Sonoran Desert Heritage plan to conserve, connect, and protect BLM lands. To learn more please visit [www.sonoranheritage.org](http://www.sonoranheritage.org).

## Arizona Alliance for Livable Communities

The Sun Corridor Legacy Program has partnered with a consortium of coalitions to form the Arizona Alliance for Livable Communities. The group, comprised of various non profit, state, and local entities, seeks to educate, engage, and encourage communities and decision makers to transform cities and towns in ways that improve health, livability, and well being.

## Conserve to Enhance

The Sonoran Institute, University of Arizona's Water Resource Research Center, and Watershed Management Group are launching Conserve to Enhance, the nation's first pilot program testing an innovative idea that links personal water conservation and local river restoration. The program uses dollars saved through water conservation to purchase water for the environment.

## Living River

With Pima County as partners, the Sonoran Institute is currently studying the impacts of the recent wastewater treatment plant upgrade in north Tucson that releases reclaimed water into the Santa Cruz River. Building on our series in the Upper Santa Cruz that was finished in 2010, this project on the Lower Santa Cruz River will provide a valuable new understanding of the benefits of wetland restoration with reclaimed water.

## Preserving Arizona's \$9 Billion Military Economy

In August 2014, Sonoran Institute launched a new project that aims to evaluate and ultimately resolve concerns around encroachment upon Arizona's military installations and their operations on publicly-owned lands. The goal of this project is to develop an understanding of the military footprint on publicly owned lands in Arizona to bring more clarity to what areas need to remain compatible with the military mission.



*The Sonoran Institute inspires and enables community decisions and public policies that respect the land and people of Western North America.*

### CONTACT:

Ian Dowdy, AICP  
Program Director  
[idowdy@sonoraninstitute.org](mailto:idowdy@sonoraninstitute.org)

Sun Corridor Legacy Program  
11010 N. Tatum Blvd, Suite D101  
Phoenix, Arizona 85028  
602-393-4310 ext. 308  
[www.sonoraninstitute.org](http://www.sonoraninstitute.org)

### Get Involved with Sonoran Institute

We invite you to learn more about Sun Corridor Legacy Program projects at [www.sonoraninstitute.org](http://www.sonoraninstitute.org)

To make a tax deductible financial contribution to Sonoran Institute's Sun Corridor Legacy Program:

- Send a check to the address above, include Sun Corridor in the memo
- Online at [www.sonoraninstitute.org/support-our-work](http://www.sonoraninstitute.org/support-our-work)

