Coronado Heights Neighborhood

Neighborhood Profile and Goals for a Healthy Neighborhood

MAY 2012
The Drachman Institute

The Drachman Institute is a research and public service unit of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Arizona dedicated to environmentally sensitive and resource-conscious development of neighborhoods and communities. The Drachman Institute dedicates its research and outreach activities to the proposition that housing is the building-block of neighborhoods, and neighborhoods are the building-blocks of communities.

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CPPW - Communities Putting Prevention to Work

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) is a national initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The goal of the initiative is to prevent or reduce obesity, increase physical activity, and improve nutrition through policy, systems, and environmental change. Pima County is one of 44 communities nationwide to receive CPPW funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

CPPW is being developed and administered by the Pima County Health Department, in partnership with Activate Tucson, a coalition advocating healthy eating and active living.
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1. NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

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Coronado Heights is a 12 square block neighborhood located in central Tucson, Arizona (see Figure 1.1).

This neighborhood was settled by ranchers in the 1800s and remained outside the original city limits until the first half of the 20th century. Oracle Road developed as the major gateway to the city from the north starting in the 1920s, followed by the establishment of Miracle Mile, acting as the prominent gateway from the west.

The combination of these two roads, in concert with a massive advertising campaign touting Tucson as a desirable tourist destination, led to the commercial and housing development in and around Coronado Heights neighborhood.
Coronado Heights is bound directly by Fort Lowell Road to the north, Stone Avenue to the east, Glenn Street to the South, and Oracle Road to the west. Miracle Mile begins along the west side of the neighborhood, halfway between Fort Lowell and Glenn (see Figure 1.2).

To the northwest of the neighborhood sits Evergreen Memorial Park and Mortuary; a large, well-established burial ground dating from 1907.
LAND USE

Existing Land Use Map

Figure 1.3: Coronado Heights Existing Land Use
Figures 1.3 and 1.4 demonstrate current land uses in Coronado Heights. Commercial and multi-family properties make up a large portion of the neighborhood, mixed in with single family residences.
There are a total of 138 businesses in the Coronado Heights neighborhood, mainly located on the outer boundaries of Stone and Oracle. Table 1.1 shows that 39.5 percent of area businesses are service-related, with another 16.3 percent retail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Business Summary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 1.1: Coronado Heights Area Business Summary
Source: Business data provided by Infogroup, Omaha, NE. ESRI Business Analyst Service forecasts for 2010 Businesses reported by Service Industry Codes (SIC).
The Coronado Heights neighborhood lacks any school facilities within its boundaries, but many are found within a one mile radius (see Figure 1.5). Those schools include: Keeling Elementary, Nash Elementary, Turning Point Elementary, Arizona Academy of Leadership, Desert Rose Academy, and Amphitheater High School. The local middle schools (not shown on the graphic) include Amphitheater Middle School and Flowing Wells Junior High. The designated public schools for those living in the neighborhood are Nash Elementary, Amphitheater Middle School and Amphitheater High School.
With the exception of the Habitat For Humanity neighborhood pocket park, Coronado Heights lacks a dedicated or programmed open space. A number of open space facilities are found nearby, including Evergreen Memorial Park, Jacobs Park, Jacinto Park, Balboa Heights Park, Keeling Desert Mini Park, and Amphi Neighborhood Park (see Figure 1.6).

Opportunity exists to procure vacant land within the neighborhood and dedicate it solely to green space initiatives. At the same time, linking existing green spaces with tree-lined walkways, safe crosswalks, bike paths, and signage would enhance access to healthy outdoor environments.
Cemetery Wash runs east to west directly through the northern portion of Coronado Heights (see Figure 1.7). Like most waterways in Tucson, it is an ephemerally flowing wash.

The wash is an incredible asset to the neighborhood and could be both developed and ecologically reconciled in order to create a pedestrian path, wildlife corridor, and multi-use green space.
Due to being boxed in by major vehicular routes, Coronado Heights is very well connected to the bus systems running up and down Oracle and Stone (see Figure 1.8). Figure 1.9 on the following page shows that the average daily traffic volume on Oracle reaches over 47,000 automobiles.

Bike routes, though under-developed, also surround the neighborhood. Bike infrastructure in this part of Tucson needs upgrading in order to offer a safe and enjoyable transportation option.
Figure 1.9: Traffic Count Map

Source: 2011 Market Planning Solutions, Inc. Map made with ESRI Community Analyst
Like much of Tucson, the Coronado Heights neighborhood is quite dark, with the exception of the east and west bounding streets, Stone and Oracle. Two lights have been installed in the neighborhood due to requests from residents (see Figure 1.10). Some of the surrounding neighborhoods with similar demographics and mixed-use parcel development have significantly more street lighting, which is something the neighborhood may want to pursue with the city.
Coronado Heights is located in Ward 3, represented by Councilwoman Karen Uhlich (see Figure 1.11). The Ward 3 office can be reached at: ward3@tucsonaz.gov, 520-791-4711.
Ward 3 has higher rates of burglary compared to other Tucson jurisdictions. Neighborhood design plans should include crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) concepts such as street lighting, fencing, natural surveillance, and territorial reinforcement. See page 32 for a complete description of CPTED concepts.

Ward 3 has lower home ownership rates in comparison with other Tucson jurisdictions.
Ward 3 has higher rates of single parent households in comparison with other Tucson jurisdictions.

Ward 3 in on par with Wards 2 and 6, and the city as a whole, in relation to the percentage of children and seniors living below the federal poverty level. The poverty level is significantly higher than the country as a whole, where XX of children and XX of seniors live in poverty.
2. GOALS FOR A HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD

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2. GOALS FOR A HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD

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Communities Putting Prevention to Work: Coronado Heights Neighborhood
What Defines a “Healthy Neighborhood”?

Neighborhoods that protect and enhance overall health and quality of life have:

- Accessible public transit
- Reduced vehicle use
- Density and mixed uses
- Interconnected streets and networks
- Reduced barriers to easy, enjoyable, efficient walking and biking
- Appealing and comfortable street environments
- Reduced surface parking facilities to promote pedestrian activity
- A variety of open spaces and parks
- Bus stops that are safe, comfortable, and within walking distance of homes, businesses, and amenities
- Increased social connection and sense of community

Highly Desired Neighborhood Projects

**CORNERSTONES PROJECT:**
Use Pro Neighborhoods $2,400 grant to install several cornerstones that identify the Coronado Heights neighborhood by name.

**CEMETERY WASH IMPROVEMENTS:**
Enhance wash and adjacent areas to include increased native habitat, a walking path, seating areas, pedestrian crosswalks over streets, a bikeway under Oracle, and a pocket park that accommodates a community garden and dog park.

**BLACKLIDGE BIKE BOULEVARD:**
Work with the City to develop a bike boulevard plan that includes integrated signage, traffic calming, street painting, water harvesting, street/intersection trees, and either street-level or overhead lighting.

**CASTRO KID’S CORRIDOR:**
Create a child and family-friendly street that includes native trees and shrubs, fruit trees, designated walkways, seating, water harvesting basins, “play” structures, and art murals in order to encourage a sense of community and civic engagement.

**CASTRO BIKE BOULEVARD:**
Work with the City to develop a bike boulevard plan that includes integrated signage, traffic calming, street painting, water harvesting, street/intersection trees, and either street-level or overhead lighting.

**MULTI-USE LOT DEVELOPMENT:**
Convert empty lot to include a community garden, desert park, playground, and job-training facility that can focus on bike repair, gardening, landscaping, etc.

**CACTUS DRIVE-IN:**
Maintain contact with Cactus Drive-in Theatre Foundation, Inc., the non-profit heading up the drive-in project, to create a beneficial partnership between the neighborhood and the Foundation.

**Figure 2.2: Highly Desired Neighborhood Projects**
NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN PROCESS

Figure 2.2 shows highly desired neighborhood projects that are complete, in process, or being developed into action plans with various partners.

Ideas from Coronado Heights residents on these select projects are as follows:

Castro Kid’s Corridor:
• Give Castro a “facelift”
• Provide a sense of place
• Create a biological corridor with vegetation
• Provide comfortable walking space
• Install local art
• Make play spaces for children

Cemetery Wash:
• Adopt the wash as a neighborhood
• Begin with trash maintenance
• Transform it over time into a parkway and bikeway

Cornerstones Project:
• Bring a sense of place and identity to the neighborhood with signs that call attention to Coronado Heights
RESIDENT FEEDBACK

Additional Desired Neighborhood Projects

Figure 2.3: Additional Desired Neighborhood Projects
On April 5, 2011, Coronado Heights neighborhood held a “visioning meeting” in order to hear and document design and policy ideas from residents (see Figure 2.3). The notes from that meeting are as follows:

• Running path starting at Oracle/Blacklidge, down Balboa – landscaped for shade
• Very low percentage of home owners – Habitat For Humanity built up the ratio
• Most people don’t know the name/boundaries of the neighborhood
• Cornerstones Project: signs that identify the community – Oracle & Glenn, Stone & Glenn (Paul Bunyon), Stone & Wash – they hoped for a sign facing Miracle Mile – “Welcome to Tucson”
• Kids Corridor – along Castro – incorporate fruit trees, native plants, activity spots, exercise path/circuit equipment, information walk (signs on trees, rocks) – health education
• Lots of activity currently going on at Castro & Laguna
• Empty(ish) SE lot – would like to see multi-use park, job training, garden
• Beacon facilities provide meeting areas, but limited to business hours, LEED certified building
• Would like to see community gardens for each apartment complex – Blacklidge Terrace is already interested- also for casitas – habitat and food gardens
• Empty recycling plant along Fort Lowell (possible garden or park location) – could have environmental issues
• Would like to see a walkway along the wash – running path on north side – this is controlled by DOT, not Tucson Parks
• Would like to see a dog park adjacent to the wash
• Neighborhood needs more lights – along Balboa, at each intersection
• Almost all neighborhood corners present traffic issues – people speed through this neighborhood
• Very few sidewalks in neighborhood – problems for people in wheelchairs
• Wash goes under Oracle – meet up with running path through the cemetery, connect to bike boulevard
• More pocketparks
• A walking solution either under or over Oracle (connected to wash path) needs to be found – either crosswalk or digging under the bridge
• Water floods from Keeling into Wash
• Trees needed on all streets, especially Castro
• Projects being done at Castro and Laguna – Watershed Management Group and SW Conservation Corps
• School bus stops throughout the neighborhood – congregation spots for parents and kids – should be incorporated into a walking/shade plan
• Teens have very little to do – congregate in the streets, at the car wash, on skateboards where possible, tagging
• Vacant lot on Oracle & Laguna – could be a park space
• Habitat & safety are big concerns at the northwest corner of the neighborhood – low income, mobile homes
• Habitat community has a park – owned by the city – could be extended – currently feels exclusive to HFH homes but it’s technically not – more space for a wider variety of activities is needed
• Bus stops in the area have no shade, sometimes no benches – residents would like to see mesquite trees planted at all stops
• Traffic on Glenn has gone way up in the last 25 years – width encourages speed
• Is there still a plan to build medians with trees on the adjacent section of Stone?
• Cactus Drive-In is a possible project on Oracle – would like to see major buffering from traffic, sidewalks with lots of vegetation, bike-in
• Lots of community gardens
• Traffic calming – traffic circles may not work due to water flow – chicanes?
• 2 bike boulevards in the works – Blacklidge and Castro
LAND USE POTENTIAL

Figure 2.4: Parcels for Development

Communities Putting Prevention to Work: Coronado Heights Neighborhood
Figure 2.4 shows parcels that are either for sale, vacant, or underutilized, as determined by a walking visual survey. These parcels may be of interest for future neighborhood green space development projects. Detailed information about these parcels can be found on Pima MapGuide (gis.pima.gov/maps/mapguide/).

1. **Parcel number 1**, located along Fort Lowell Road, presents an opportunity for a neighborhood park and community garden. Skill-enhancing programs involving bike repair and landscape restoration could also be integrated.

2. **Parcel number 6, 7 and 8** present a fantastic opportunity to turn an entire block of Coronado Heights into verdant multi-use open space, peppered with innovative commerce and community engagement. Currently, a drive-in/bike-in theater is being considered for parcel 6. Expanding the vision of this project to include the whole block along Oracle could create a culturally, economically, socially and ecologically rich space that nurtures and supports Coronado Heights.

3. **Parcel number 10** is owned by COPE Behavioral Services and could be transitioned into a multi-use outdoor space including job training, event hosting, neighborhood farming, and market stalls.
A significant street tree program can be achieved by working in partnership with neighborhood residents, Trees for Tucson, and City of Tucson Departments of Transportation and Parks and Recreation. Recruit neighborhood volunteers and partnerships with schools, churches, and neighborhood-based organizations to implement planting projects. Middle- and high-school students could help, and bring their families along. Tree-planting projects instill a sense of ownership and pride in the trees that result, create social connections among the participants, and build momentum for the next improvement project.

A street tree program can help visually unify neighborhoods; they calm traffic, provide shade for pedestrians and bicyclists, and provide a cool green recreational environment for residents.

Trees for Tucson is an urban forestry program operated by Tucson Clean & Beautiful, Inc. This program provides trees for neighborhood groups to plant at home, along their streets, in parks, and on vacant lots. Five-gallon trees are currently offered at $8.00 each. Street Tree Applications are available at www.tucsonaz.gov/tcb/tft.

Trees for Tucson helps with obtaining permits for planting in the public right-of-way and offers advice on planting, utility avoidance, traffic sight lines, and pedestrian access. Hands-on assistance with tree planting and planning for long-term care is also provided.

Tree species most suitable to the climate and conditions found in Tucson and most likely to provide a verdant urban environment on harvested rainwater alone, are species that are native to our Sonoran desert.

Neighborhood tree planting projects are usually pursued in conjunction with funding for a water truck to provide scheduled irrigation during an initial establishment period (ideally 18 months).
Crime Prevention

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

Research into crime prevention shows that criminal activities tend to occur in dark, isolated, unwatched, and unprotected areas. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multidisciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior primarily through design strategies intended to reduce fear of crime and opportunities to commit crimes. Reducing the opportunity to commit crimes makes a neighborhood feel safer and more inviting, contributes to quality of life, and can help lower costs for public safety, victims services, and private insurance.

CPTED focuses on eliminating unsafe features of the environment such as poorly lit or isolated areas, blocked sightlines, areas with no access to help, and features that allow criminals to hide or entrap victims. CPTED also builds on the idea that crime prevention is a community-wide effort, not solely a police responsibility. As such, CPTED asks residents to participate in their own well-being and safety in four ways:

1) Express territoriality by showing that your neighborhood residents care about the place you live in by keeping both public and private areas clean, well-maintained, and beautified with trees, gardens, murals, and other expressions of ownership and care. In the neighborhood visioning meeting it was mentioned that most people do not know the boundaries of the Coronado Heights Neighborhood. This could be helped through the Cornerstones Project of installing attractive neighborhood signage. Resident feedback also indicates an interest in “adopting” the Cemetery Wash to keep it clean and attractive, which is another way to express territoriality and discourage vandalism.

2) Allow natural surveillance by keeping sight lines and watchful eyes open. Creating community park areas and pedestrian-friendly paths will mean more “eyes on the streets.”

3) Control access to private areas such as yards and homes through fencing, trees, etc.

4) Support positive activities in the neighborhood such as walking, biking, picnics, gardening, playing sports, and getting to know your neighbors.

As noted on page 18, Coronado Heights neighborhood is well lit on the outer boundary streets of Oracle and Stone Avenue, but within the interior of the neighborhood there are only two installed street lights. Because lighting is important to crime prevention and pedestrian safety, neighborhood initiatives can make an important contribution. Motion sensitive lighting installed on private property can illuminate neighborhood trouble spots.

Solar lighting is also a viable alternative. Solar-powered lights do not require connection to the electrical grid and cost much less to purchase and install; neighbors can install them easily at home. There are now excellent commercial grade solar lighting options that could be pursued.
At the visioning meeting it was noted by several residents that high speed traffic is a problem in Coronado Heights Neighborhood. There are several ways to encourage traffic calming.

**SPEED HUMPS**

Speed humps are the most common form of traffic calming. Relative to other methods, humps are inexpensive and immediate. Humps must be installed in a series to be effective.

**SPEED TABLES**

Speed tables serve double-duty as raised crosswalks, simultaneously slowing traffic and increasing the visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists.

**TRAFFIC CIRCLES**

Traffic circles are one of the best speed control measures resulting in an average 5 mph speed reduction. They significantly reduce collisions at intersections, and are especially effective at reducing cut-through traffic. Intersection safety is improved by slowing traffic speed and increasing reaction time and decreasing the number of conflict points where vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian collisions may occur.

Traffic circles can beautify the street and neighborhood with vegetation, community art, and signage. Traffic circles are best suited for neighborhood intersections where traffic speeds, volumes, and safety are potentially problematic.

**CHICANES AND CHOKERS**

Chicanes are curb extensions that alternate from one side of the street to the other, forming S-shaped curves in the roadway. Chokers are like chicanes, but do not alternate, creating a pinch-point. Both chicanes and choker effects can be created with parallel or diagonal on-street parking.

**MEDIANS**

Medians work well at the entrance to a neighborhood. They reduce cut through traffic and slow traffic as it enters the neighborhood. They can also provide a welcoming gateway to the neighborhood. Medians are great locations for signage and art.

**CLOSURES AND DIVERTERS**

Full and partial closures as well as diverters limit vehicular thru-traffic and direct cars to alternate routes, often main thoroughfares better suited for vehicular traffic, while allowing bicycles and pedestrians to safely continue.
The following three neighborhoods provide some examples of healthy neighborhood practices in action: Dunbar Spring, Rincon Heights, and Miramonte neighborhoods.

**Dunbar Spring Neighborhood**

**HIGH POINTS**

- “Ownership” of right-of-way
- Water harvesting
- Urban forestry
- Public art
- Traffic circles with way-finding
- Community bulletin board
- Community garden
- Activism, experimentation

The name Dunbar Spring comes from nationally reknown African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar for whom the segregated Black school in Tucson was named, and John Spring who was one of Tucson’s first teachers. Dunbar Spring has had a strong cultural identity as one of the first African-American neighborhoods in Tucson and several African-American families have lived there for many generations.

http://www.dunbarspring.org

Key Partners:
- Tucson Urban League/Drachman Institute planning and design TA, 1995
- Dunbar Coalition gained ownership of Dunbar School and grounds for community use and neighborhood garden, 1995

Brad Lancaster is an international expert and advocate for sustainable living. In Dunbar Spring Neighborhood you will see his philosophy in action. The influence of Brad can be seen throughout the neighborhood, in the activism, the hard labor, the healthy, thriving plants and busy bird life, the deep, mulched basins, and the guerilla curb-cuts. An author, a doer, a tireless teacher, Brad’s philosophy is manifest in this vibrant, healthy neighborhood.

“At home, my brother and I harvest over 100,000 gallons of rainwater a year on a 1/8th acre urban lot and adjoining right-of-way. This harvested water is then turned into living air conditioners of food-bearing shade trees, abundant gardens, and a thriving landscape incorporating wildlife habitat, beauty, edible and medicinal plants, and more. Such sheltering landscapes can cool buildings by up to 20° F (11° C), reduce water and energy bills, and require little more than rainwater to thrive. Outside the home, I have helped others do the same and enabled clients to create ephemeral springs, raise the level of water wells, and shade and beautify neighborhood streets by harvesting their street runoff in adjacent tree wells.”

*Brad Lancaster*
**Rincon Heights Neighborhood**

**HIGH POINTS**

- Street narrowing
- Water harvesting
- Urban forestry
- Community park
- Activism and engagement
- Newsletter

**Key Partners:**
- Drachman Institute
  planning, design & technical assistance, 1997, 2004
- Trees for Tucson
- Watershed Management Group
- Pima County Neighborhood Reinvestment Program
- City of Tucson Transportation Dept. and Ward Office

“It’s very exciting to see so much interest in the kind of thing we’ve been doing. Ninth Street is amazing right now. Can’t believe the break in the weather that we’ve had. The plants all look great even though we got them in pretty late in the planting season. Chris and I believe that planting 9th Street changed the weather in Tucson :-) We have weeds to tend to, but the trees and shrubs are going to be such an improvement. I’ve already walked by a bump-out and seen a flock of finches fly away. It was awesome.”

Carrie Sturm, Rincon Heights Neighborhood Project Co-Chair
Miramonte Neighborhood

HIGH POINTS

- 3rd Street Bike Route
- Tucson’s bicycle network
- Neighborhood (desert) park
- Bicycle amenities: drinking fountain, toucan street crossing

Miramonte Neighborhood now has two “toucan” crossings where “two groups can cross” (pedestrians and bicyclists) along the 3rd Street Bike Route. The newest is at 3rd Street and Alvernon, the other is located at 3rd Street and Country Club. Tucson has the highest number of these specialized traffic signals in the nation. (The third toucan signal is located at University Boulevard and Stone Avenue.)

The signal permits only pedestrians and bicyclists to cross the major street, requiring drivers on the minor street to turn right rather than being able to cross or turn left onto the street. Although it could cause some inconvenience to drivers, the signals are located on local streets with little automotive traffic but high pedestrian and bicycle traffic, where it is typically difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross safely.