



Rio Salado and Beach Park Masterplan Vision



prepared by:
Holly Street Studio and Floor Associates

for:
City of Tempe, Arizona
Fall 2018

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Executive Summary | pg. 3 |
| 2. Introduction | pg. 4 |
| a. Project Purpose | |
| b. Project Background | |
| c. Scope | |
| d. Outreach | |
| e. Policy Considerations | |
| f. Project History | pg. 5 |
| g. Recreation and Events | |
| h. Economic Impact | |
| i. Identity Crisis | |
| j. Current Conditions | |
| k. Management and Operations | |
| l. Concurrent Planning and Development Efforts | pg. 6 |
| 3. Existing Conditions & Analysis | |
| a. Regional Connectivity | pg. 7 |
| b. Regional Constraints | pg. 8 |
| c. Site Information: Public and Private | pg. 9 |
| d. Site Utilities and Infrastructure: Existing Network | pg. 10 |
| e. Site Constraints: Disparate Interventions | pg. 11 |
| f. Site Opportunities: Hidden Treasures | pg. 12 |
| g. Site Adjacent Parking & Transit: Access and Support | pg. 13 |
| h. Site Influences & Views: Vistas All Around | pg. 14 |
| i. Site Photos 1 | pg. 15 |
| j. Site Photos 2 | pg. 16 |
| k. Site Photos 3 | pg. 17 |
| 4. Programming | |
| a. Activity Zones: Logical Conclusions | pg. 18 |
| b. Activities and Possibilities: Supporting Case Studies | pg. 19 |
| c. Outreach - City Staff + Public Open House | pg. 20 |
| d. Outreach - Public and Stakeholders | pg. 21 |
| 5. Design Concept | |
| a. Overall Plan: The Big Idea | pg. 22 |
| b. Key Zones: | |
| Eco Zone + Arts Park | pg. 23 |
| Beach Park + Entertainment | pg. 24 |
| Marina + Riviera | pg. 25 |
| Riviera + Eco Zone East | pg. 26 |
| 6. Implementation Strategies | pg. 27 |
| Appendix | |
| Public Involvement Plan | |
| Public Comment | |
| Veterans Memorial Concept | |
| Boat House Concept | |



prepared by:
Holly Street Studio and Floor Associates
for:
City of Tempe, Arizona
Fall 2018

1. Executive Summary

The following words and drawings outline three distinct phases of **Analysis, Outreach** and **Exploration** on behalf of the City of Tempe's residents, stakeholders and visitors for the guided development of Rio Salado Park. Beginning in the summer of 2017, these efforts resulted in the vision presented herein, along with a platform for phased implementation. At the time of publication, fall 2018, this input was combined to create a masterplan that will serve as a road map, a visual prioritization list, and planning guidelines - to set the stage for the next 20 to 30 years of development. The plan will be updated with Council direction as opportunities arise, and unsolicited proposals for activities or amenities received by the City will be evaluated against this document.

Among a vast array of participants, support has been unanimous for the improvement of Tempe's best known urban oasis in the current trajectory of new development. This study should serve as a roadmap not just for keeping the original vision moving forward, but also for establishing consistent high-quality park development and management.

Key Topics

- **Tempe Beach Park** in demand: Tempe Beach Park is the oldest park in the City. Built in 1931, it was completely renovated in 1999. It has been the location of choice for events large and small. The park will require substantial renovation and restoration to carry its use into the next generation. A review and updating of access, uses and patterns allows for an appropriate transition into the future.
- **Existing Open Space** along the Lake: "Pockets of both private and City owned land are available for development while the need for public gathering spaces remains high."*
- **Programming:** "The City is often approached by outside resources and vendors to 'do something' in the park. We need a plan that provides the framework for implementation."*
- **Major Events:**

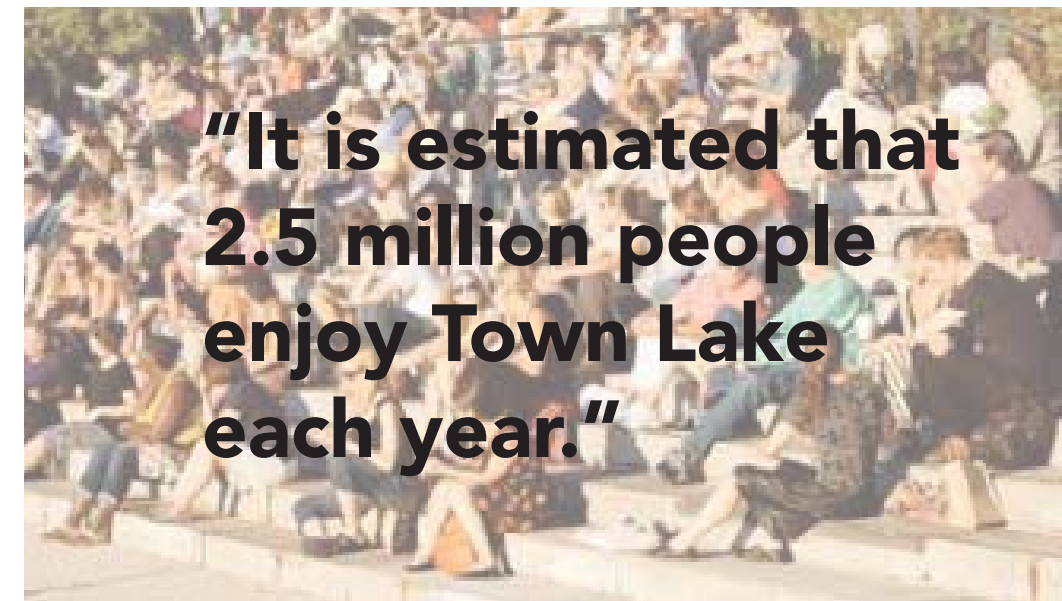
| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| Aloha Fest | 100,000 | Octoberfest | 100,000 |
| Kiwanis 4th of July | 50,000 | Rock 'n Roll Marathon | 35,000 |
| Pat's Run | 35,000 | Ironman | 20,000 |
| Innings Festival (New) | 30,000 | | |
- **Everyday Events:** With an increase in residential units coming to Tempe as well as a growing workforce, quality of life issues become imperative. The park can and must accommodate walking, running, cycling, watersports, gatherings, recreational sports, environmental immersion, arts and culture integration.
- **Iconic Presence:** A close look at the park in aerial view illustrates Tempe Town Lake's location relative to the Valley of the Sun's natural and built environment. It is at the region's center of physical, social, and cultural experiences. Rio Salado Park serves as a living example of the Desert Oasis, and a reminder of the precious commodities of water & landscape, education & commerce, neighborhoods & metropolis.

* City of Tempe Request For Proposals, February 2017

Guiding Principles

The following compilation of ideas is guided by design strategies that are non-prescriptive, yet committed to a design vocabulary that is both sustainable and transformative, growing from existing context and in concert with the values of the City of Tempe - a place of respite, innovation and community.

1. **Public Ownership:** Balance between special events and everyday experiences.
2. **Connectivity:** Multimodal access from near and far; connection to various networks + neighborhoods.
3. **Shade:** Trees as primary source with supplementary structures related to new developments.
4. **Opportunity:** Vibrant combination of active and passive activities for all walks of life.
5. **Sustainability:** Environmental stewardship, flora and fauna conservation, ease of maintenance.



2. Introduction: Goals and Ideas

Project Purpose

To create a comprehensive, inclusive road map for both public and private development surrounding Tempe Town Lake in and adjacent to the Rio Salado and Beach Park for the next 20 to 30 years, that fulfills the original vision of a grand public amenity, desirable destination and point of pride for the City of Tempe, the region, and beyond.

Project Background

Tempe Beach Park and the adjacent Rio Salado are hugely popular destinations both locally and regionally and are the second most visited site in Arizona. Beach Park, in particular, is the preferred area for special events and is often identified as a potential host site for unsolicited large-scale events and entrepreneurial ideas generated by both non-profit and for-profit entities. To move from piecemeal, reactive planning, the Masterplan is intended as a visionary look at the next 20 to 30 years. Once implemented, it will contain a variety of destinations for people traveling across the street or across the nation. It offers opportunities for recreation, economic diversity, social engagement, ecological exploration, education, competition and much more.

Scope

The Rio Salado and Beach Park Masterplan began with an RFP in December 2016. The consultants selected, Holly Street Studio Architects and Floor Landscape Architects, began work in August 2017. Their scope of work includes the area from Priest Drive on the west to McClintock Drive on the east, and from the 202 freeway on the north to a boundary on the south that includes public land and the existing Tempe Beach Park. The program includes three tasks:

- **Task 1:** Analyze the site, existing and past planning documents, current and potential uses.
- **Task 2:** Gather input, initially from City staff and decision makers responsible for developing, managing and maintaining the park, the lake, and all events and activities; followed by stakeholder and public input.
- **Task 3:** Create a comprehensive conceptual plan.

It is important to note the coordination of various parallel planning efforts of major importance, including the Urban Core Masterplan, Transportation Overlay District, Affordable Housing Strategy, and Character Area Plans. The planning teams worked together to gather stakeholder involvement and public outreach in ways that made participation easy for residents and businesses. The goal was to ensure that we have a formalized planning document in place to both preserve and create a park that meets the needs of our residents, employees, visitors and event enthusiasts that will become a legacy in our City.

Outreach:

Several staff meetings that preceded public outreach included decision makers, managers of events, parks, the lake, facilities, and anyone responsible for the maintenance of any part of Rio Salado Park. The consultant team presented the analysis and first draft of the plan to Council on February 1, 2018, requesting input prior to initiating outreach to the public. Meetings with stakeholders (in the downtown, around the lake, ASU, Downtown Tempe Authority [DTA], and other groups and organizations connected to the Beach Park) took place from February through May 2018. Public meetings were held on February 28 and May 9, 2018. Several Tempe Boards and Commissions were updated throughout the process.

Policy Considerations

Tempe Beach Park is a well-known and highly desired venue both for its impressive setting and the reputation Tempe has for being event friendly. Tempe Beach Park and the Arts Park host nearly 30 large events per year, and some are multi-day events. Approximately seven major events are held in other areas of the park. During 2018, more than 20 weekends were booked between September and May. Some weekends host more than one event. In the summer months (June-August), only one large event is scheduled: the 4th of July Celebration. Events typically range in scale from 200 to 300 people, except for the large signature events: Ironman (20,000), Pat's Run (35,000), Rock 'n Roll Marathon (35,000), and the Aloha Fest and Octoberfest (100,000 each). Tempe collects approximately \$200,000 in event fees annually. The impact of some of the large events, such as Iron Man, can benefit the community by more than \$3 to \$4 million in overall revenues and donations.

The scale and frequency of these exciting events (and associated set up and tear down) is a constant challenge to the management of the park and the health of the living assets: scheduling maintenance, turf restoration, clean up, landscaping, and keeping the grounds in good shape for the next event. Most people know Beach Park, and the Town Lake; but they don't typically recognize the expansive area of Rio Salado Park as a programmable resource. From a policy perspective, Council may choose to use the masterplanning process to explore strategies addressing the capacity and resources of the park.

- Consider expanding activity throughout Rio Salado Park, allowing for more activities serving a wide variety of users, on a more frequent basis. This decentralization may require additional resources.
- Consider the fee policy to ensure impacts to resources are addressed, especially by for-profit agents.
- Consider the scheduling practices to allow for a recovery period for the park and impacts to neighborhoods.
- Consider how other City goals interface with the use of the park.
- Consider the relationship of Tempe's Rio Salado Park in the context of Rio Reimagined Initiative, a legacy project along 58 miles of the river initiated by Senator John McCain.
- Consider the appropriateness of the resource to host large spectator events in this context of ASU 365 Community Union at the Sun Devil Stadium.



2. Introduction: Past, Present, Future

Project History

50 years ago, Dean James Elmore led a class of Arizona State University architectural students through a planning exercise that many believe gave birth to the idea that Rio Salado Park, which encompasses 400 acres including Tempe Town Lake, Tempe Beach Park and the Tempe Center for the Arts, could become the focal point of the Tempe community. For generations – from the Hohokam to post settlement to modern day Tempeans – people have cherished the area. Today, Tempe Town Lake is the second most visited site in Arizona, behind only the Grand Canyon. The lake is recognized as an engineering marvel that protects the region from flooding, provides recreation, creates jobs and stimulates investment in Tempe. There are multi-use paths on either side of the lake, and the park is the centerpiece for:

- More than 2.5 million people who spend time at Rio Salado Park each year.
- Development and activity, as the economic impact of Tempe Town Lake since its creation is more than \$1.5 billion.
- 34 special events at Rio Salado Park annually, including the state's largest Independence Day celebration.
- More than 40,000 people who work at the many businesses surrounding Town Lake.

Recreation and Events

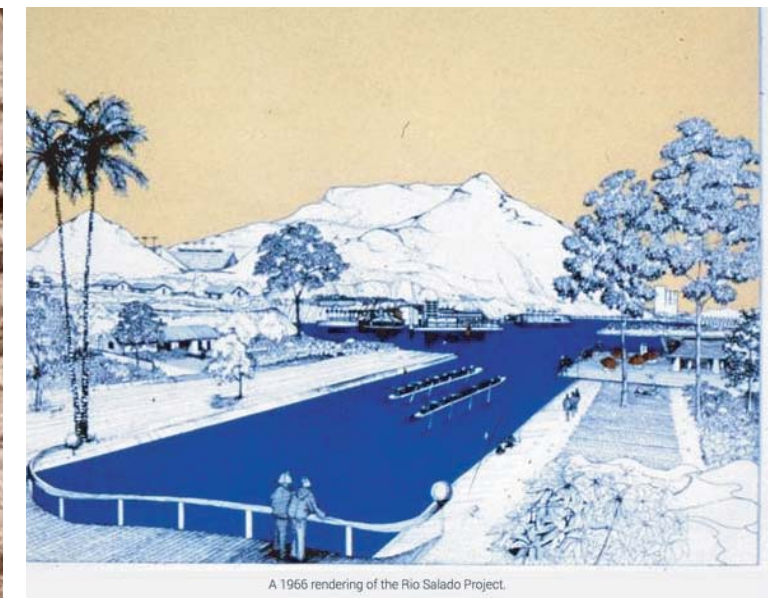
- More than 5 million people have attended a special event at Rio Salado and Beach Park.
- Approximately 968,000 people have visited Tempe Center for the Arts since its opening.
- Close to 800 events take place annually inside Tempe Center for the Arts.
- In the past three years, about 3,000 people have taken a class at Rio Salado and Beach Park, including rowing, beach yoga and stand up paddle boarding.

Economic Impact

- Businesses surrounding the park have earned more than \$753 million since the lake opened.
- Town Lake is one of the reasons many businesses choose to open on Mill Avenue.
- More than 5,000 people live along the Town Lake, with many more people expected.

Identity Crisis

In the past 60 years, classic urban community park design has changed, moving away from the Olmsted model of a pastoral oasis of calm in an urban center, to smart parks that engage the fundamentals of eco stewardship while advocating for action, activity, density and entertainment. Parks succeed because of their relevance to the community, a broad range of constituencies to support and participate in park activation, and the ability of neighbors to tolerate a delicate balance between too much and not enough. In the theory of public spaces, legitimate uses will always displace illegitimate uses.



Current Programming

Requests for increased programming for special events – and the intensity and duration of those events – has diminished the park's resources, and the spacial organization of the park does not address the needs of large scale, annual events and smaller scale ongoing activities. This has led some residents to express a state of disenfranchisement during event set-up, production and tear-down.

In terms of a cohesive park layout, equal pressure to the park is applied by a steady supply of unsolicited proposals to energize the site with cultural events and high-thrill amenities, as well as civic minded groups looking to advance projects that align with their organizational aspirations or Tempe's values. These conditions are problematic for such prime real estate, as decisions can be made in a disjointed fashion with an unclear process.

Tempe Beach Park and the surrounding areas have evolved into a series of linear improvements and tired infrastructure due to over use and deferred maintenance. In this sense, the park struggles to work well; it's time to re-examine the park from today's reality and tomorrow's vision.

The park needs to embrace the emerging understanding of urban placemaking: connecting people to their park; connecting the park to its urban mixed-use neighborhood; and connecting these concepts to a collective vision provided by City Council and the community. **The planning team imagines:**

- A waterfront park that is relevant to its surroundings and supports a range of programmatic experiences from daily drop-in use to the needs of successful medium to large scale events.
- A multi-use public gathering place that is small enough to know you and large enough to serve you.
- An activity and amenity hub that connects multiple cities, nature, communities and people.

Management and Operations

The project RFP stated: In 2010, as a result of the economic recession, the City made a strategic decision to phase out the Rio Salado Project Management Team. Economic development, land-use planning, and financial analysis/budgeting were assigned to the **Community Development Department**; special event management, coordination, and boating/fishing/recreation programs were assigned to the **Community Services Department**; and park ranger and security responsibilities were **downsized and outsourced**. Lake, park, and recreational amenities, dam infrastructure and water quality, however, remained the responsibility of the **Public Works Department**. In 2015/16, the City put into place a new operational model that coincided with the delivery of the new steel gate dams. There is now a dedicated Tempe Town Lake team, headed by Public Works and Community Services, who share resource management and community programming respectively.

2. Introduction: Concurrent Planning Efforts

Rio Reimagined

Rio Reimagined is a legacy initiative of Senator John McCain, who understood the history and value of the Rio Salado, once a perennial river flowing through urban Maricopa County, spawning early settlements and connecting diverse communities. For decades, community leaders and stakeholders have explored ways to reconnect people to the splendor of the river through ecosystem restoration, flood mitigation and economic development. Beginning in spring 2017, a partnership was initiated between the eight primary Valley community stakeholders along the river - Buckeye, Goodyear, Gila River Indian Community, Avondale, Phoenix, Tempe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Mesa. It is envisioned that the river corridor will integrate multiple objectives, such as public open space, environmental and water quality, housing, transportation, economic development, workforce development, community sustainability and resilience, as well as others.

Urban Core Masterplan

The City of Tempe is preparing a Masterplan for the 6-square mile Urban Core area. This plan has a time horizon of 2040 and will be a comprehensive and unified development blueprint for downtown Tempe and the Urban Core that is prosperous, sustainable and cohesive. The Urban Core Masterplan is designed to coordinate regulations, infrastructure investment and policies related to development, and will be coordinated with other planning efforts.

Transportation Overlay District

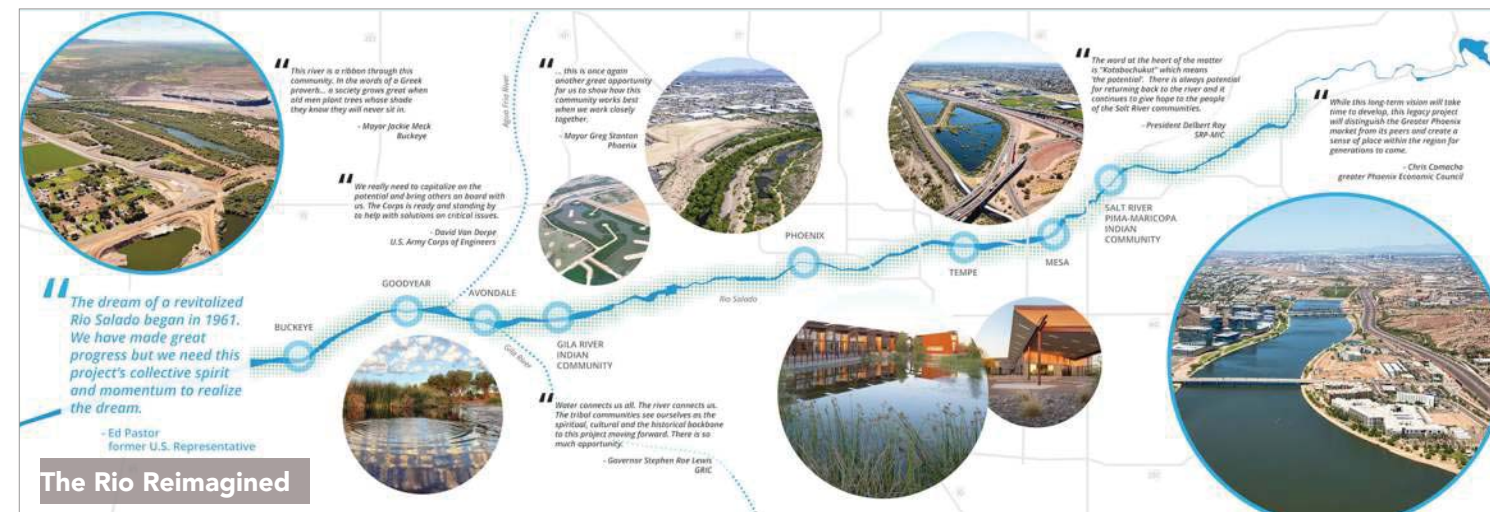
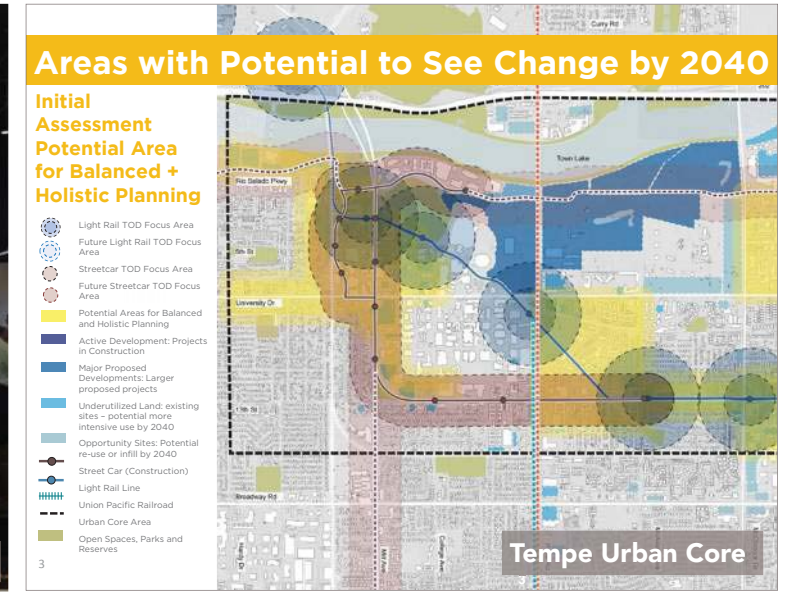
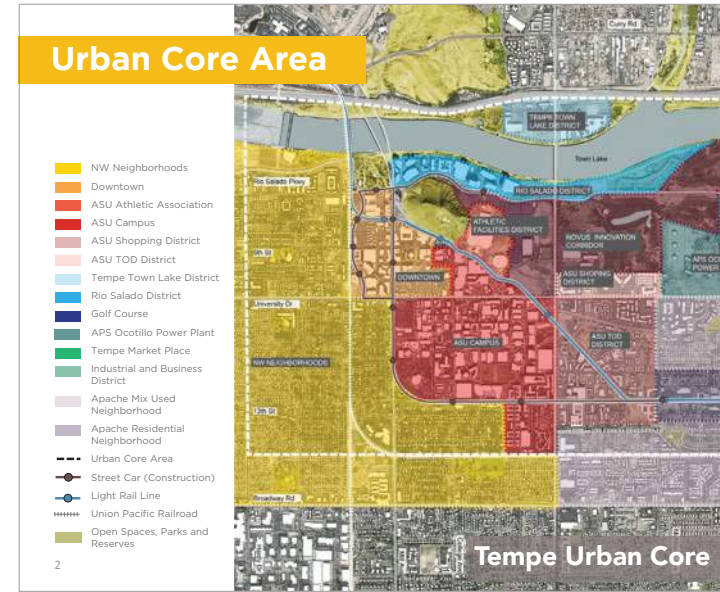
Tempe's existing Transportation Overlay District is being expanded to incorporate the streetcar route and stop areas, and will be updated to create transit friendly developments and improve walkability and accessibility by expanding pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Mixed-use development is encouraged to promote economic development and ground floor activity, serving neighborhoods and transit patrons.

Affordable Housing Strategy

Tempe's goal is to create policies and programs to support public transportation and increase housing options within the urban core that support a mixed-income, inclusive and accessible community. The City-wide strategy addresses the needs of families, people with disabilities, working professionals, students and retirees.

ASU Novus Innovation Commons

The Novus site is a multi-phased, mixed-use development site that includes office, multi-family residential, hospitality and retail spaces integrated with Arizona State University's Tempe campus. The Novus Innovation Corridor offers companies flexibility and freedom to build intentionally designed, next-generation headquarters in the urban core of a major metropolitan area. It encompasses 330 gross acres of prime real estate, including athletic facilities, roadways and public spaces located adjacent to Rio Salado Park and Tempe Town Lake.



- ### Urban Core Connectivity Objectives
- 1 Create strong public realm connections across the entire Urban Core
 - 2 Link the Urban Core to the Rio Salado
 - 3 Create a framework of larger scale connections
 - 4 Create fine grain local links to open space resources
 - 5 Encourage people to walk and bike to meet daily needs
 - 6 Enhance the quality of the public realm

