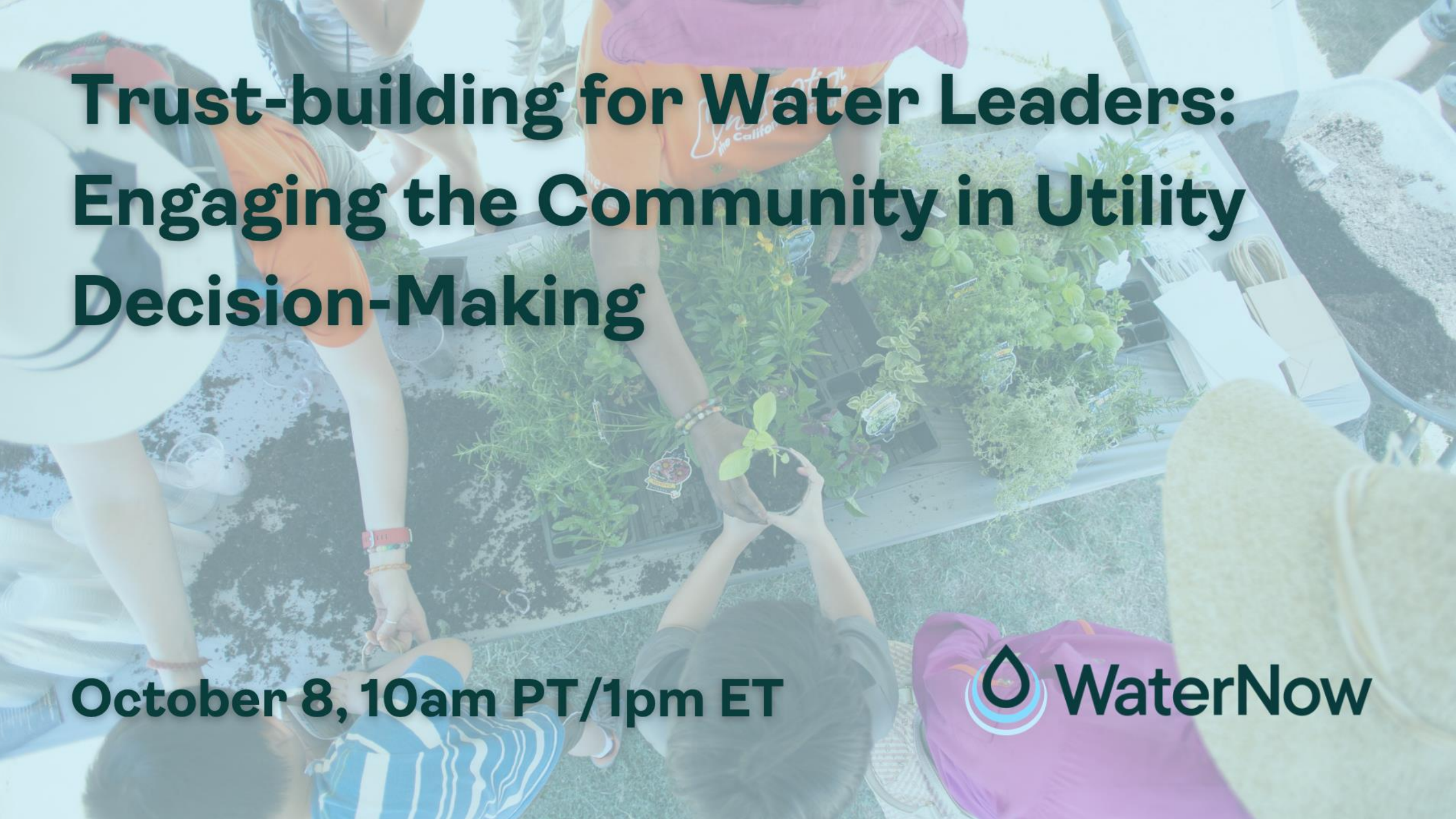


A high-angle, top-down photograph of a group of people, mostly seen from the back or side, gathered around a large, grey, rectangular planter box. They are engaged in planting various green seedlings into the soil. The people are wearing casual clothing; one person in the foreground wears a blue and white striped shirt, another wears a purple shirt, and a third wears a white shirt. The planter box is filled with dark soil and several small green plants. To the right of the planter box, there are some white papers and a small pile of soil. The background shows a grassy area and a paved path.

Trust-building for Water Leaders: Engaging the Community in Utility Decision-Making

October 8, 10am PT/1pm ET



Trust-building for Water Leaders: Engaging the Community Decision-Making

Q&A

You ask:13:05

How do I use these awesome tools?

Joshua Jones answered:13:06

You are already using one of the most awesome tools. We'll discuss the rest right away.

Please input your question

☐ Send Anonymously

Send

October 8, 10am PT/1pm ET





WaterNow is:

- A network of water leaders advancing resilient and sustainable water management strategies.
- A nonprofit consultancy demonstrating the viability and value of distributed, green, and nature-based approaches.
- A resource for water leaders, providing guidance and expertise on policy, funding, and implementation for innovative water solutions.

We are committed to empowering local water leaders and helping communities thrive.





Emerging Leader Awards

A WaterNow Initiative



Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Building Blocks of Trust Framework

Audience Polls: Community Trust

Case Studies:

Detroit Water & Sewerage Dept.

Pima County Flood Control District

Moderated Q&A

Resources and Closing



Today's Speakers



David Fielder
Project Manager
Detroit Water and
Sewerage Department



Nichole Casebeer
Landscape Architect
Pima County Regional
Flood Control District



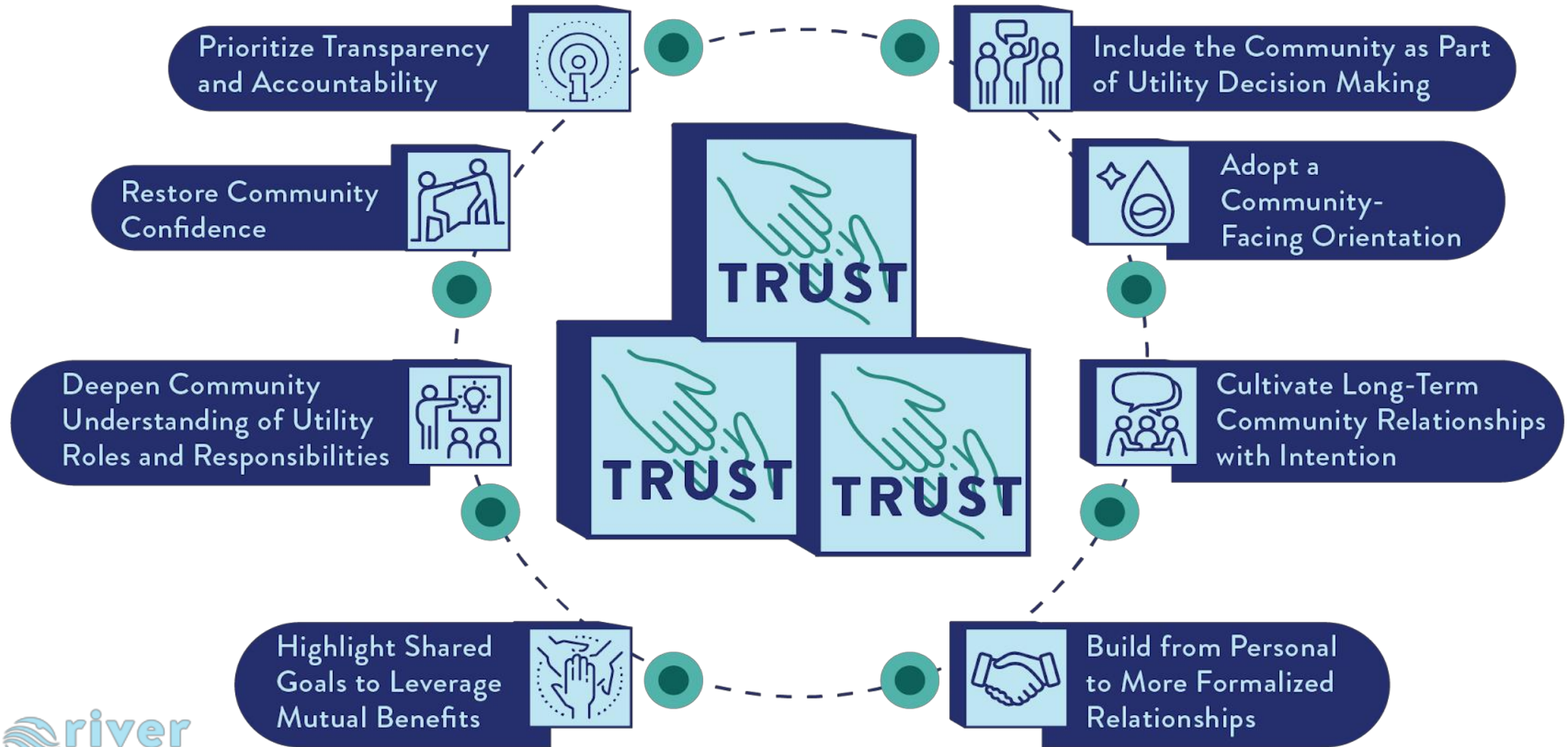
Kerry Miller
Program Manager
WaterNow



Emerson O'Donnell
Senior Program Manager
WaterNow



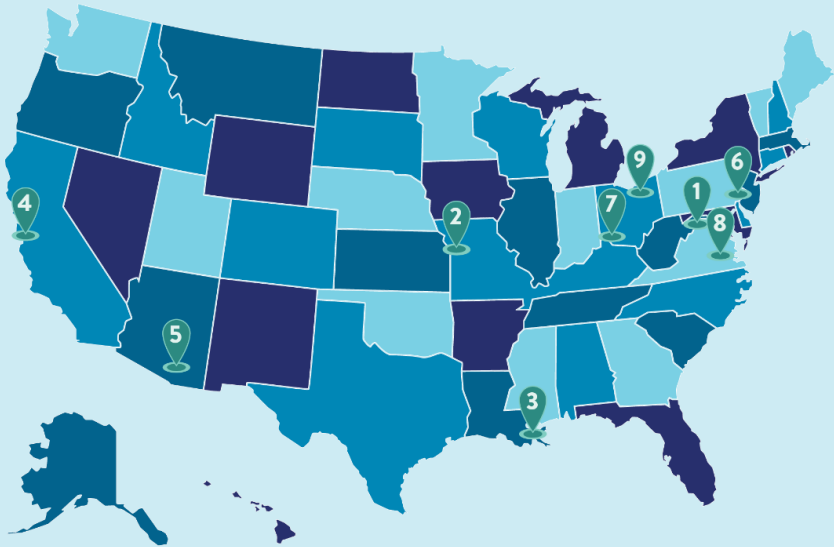
Building Blocks of Trust: Best Practices for Authentic Partnerships & Community Engagement



Developing the Building Blocks of Trust Report



WATER TRUST WORKGROUP COMMUNITIES



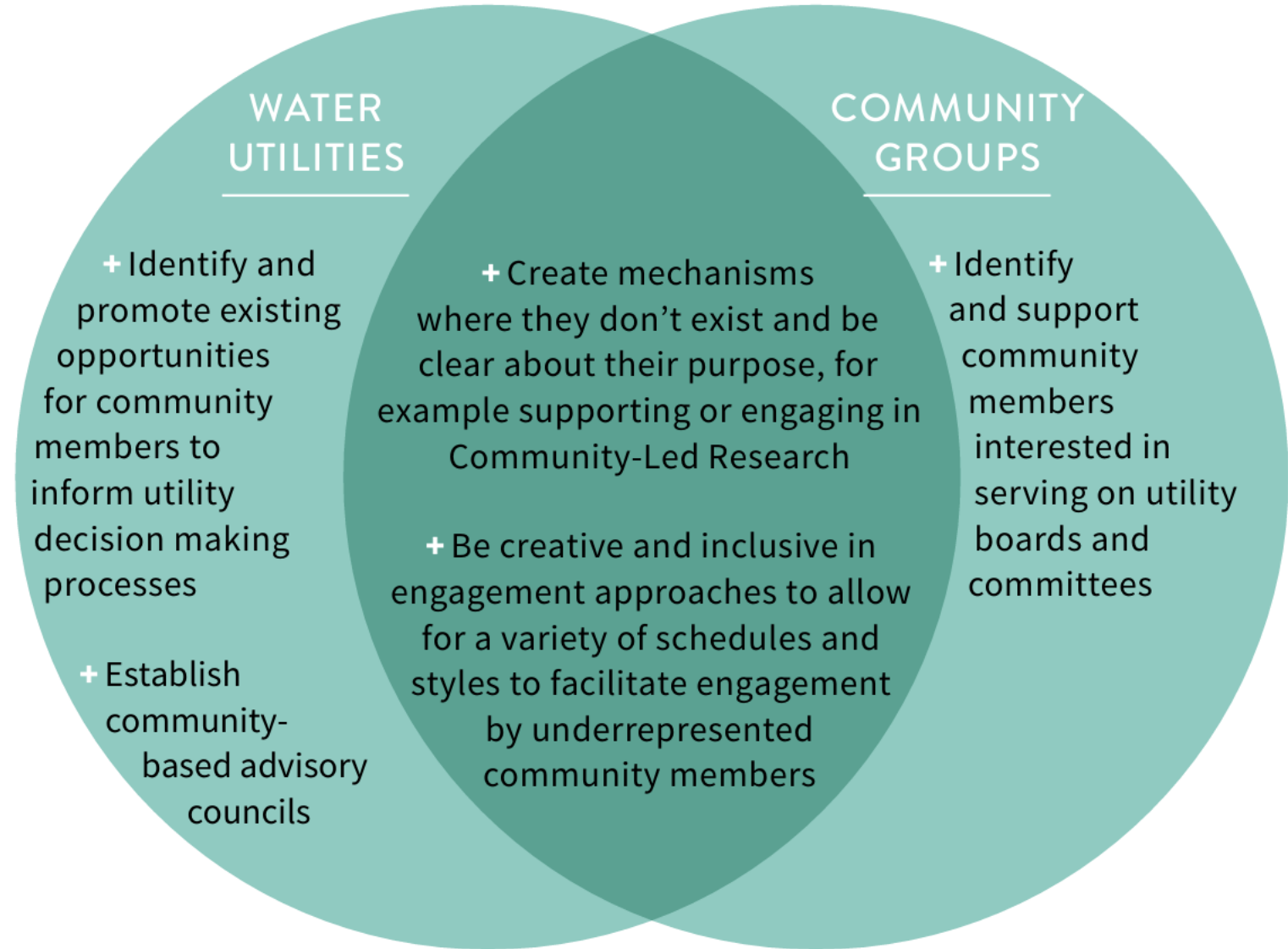
Below are the Water Trust Workgroup communities who shaped this report.
More about each partnership can be found throughout this report.

- 1 Harpers Ferry, WV – West Virginia Rivers Coalition and Harpers Ferry Water Commission
- 2 Kansas City, MO – Heartland Conservation Alliance and Kansas City Water
- 3 New Orleans, LA – Healthy Community Services and Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans
- 4 Santa Cruz, CA – Santa Cruz Water Supply Advisory Committee and Santa Cruz Water Department
- 5 Tucson, AZ – Sonora Environmental Research Institute and Tucson Water
- 6 Philadelphia, PA – Schuylkill Action Network and Philadelphia Water Department
- 7 Northern Kentucky – Groundwork Ohio River Valley and Sanitation District Number 1 of Northern Kentucky
- 8 Richmond, VA – Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities
- 9 Cleveland, OH – CHN Housing Partners and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewage District





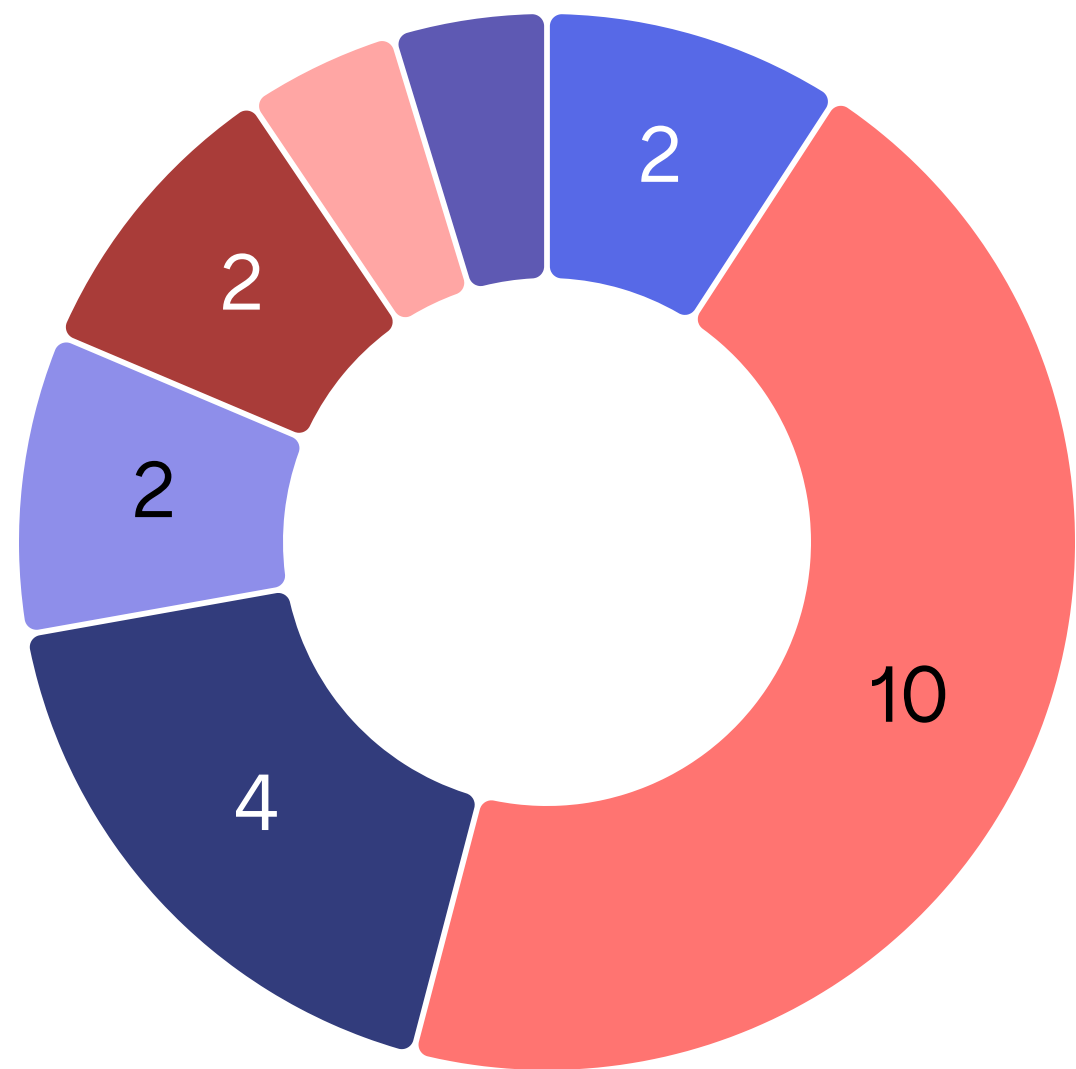
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR INCLUDING THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF UTILITY DECISION MAKING



How would you describe the relationship between your organization and the communities you serve? E.g., collaborative, challenging, trusting?



What is the biggest challenge your utility or organization faces in involving community members in decision-making?



- 2 Finding the right people or community partners to engage
- 10 Reaching people who are often missed by traditional engagement
- 4 Having enough time or staff capacity for robust engagement
- 2 Knowing the best strategies for developing an ongoing engagement process
- 2 Building trust or credibility with the community
- 1 Getting internal leadership or staff buy-in
- 1 Other (share in Zoom chat)

Engaging the Community in Utility Decision-Making

Case Study: Detroit Water and Sewerage Department

David Fielder





**WATER MAIN BREAK LEAVES DETROIT
NEIGHBORHOOD UNDERWATER**



Engaging the Community in Utility Decision-Making

Case Study: Detroit Water and Sewerage Department

David Fielder



Stormwater Parks Program



Beyond the Basin:

Equity-Centered Approaches to GSI & Success Stories from
Pima County's Stormwater Parks Program

Prepared by Nichole Casebeer | September 2025



Overview

About Pima County Regional Flood Control District:

Who we are and what we do

RFCD Stormwater Parks Program:

Introduction to the program & driving values

Our Process in Practice | Equity-centered GSI

What's working and what we are learning through our new Stormwater Parks Program planning and engagement initiatives.

About the District

About the District

District Mission

Pima County Flood Control District is a regional agency whose mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Pima County residents by providing comprehensive flood protection programs and floodplain management services.



The background image shows a stormwater basin with a body of water reflecting the sky. Large trees with dark trunks and green foliage are in the foreground and background. Pink flowers are in the lower left, and yellow flowers are in the lower right. A house is visible in the background on the right.

About Stormwater Parks – The Basin

About Stormwater Parks

What are they?

Stormwater parks are neighborhood green stormwater infrastructure projects.

1. Stormwater is harvested from the street
2. Water slows as it flows through basins
3. Once collected, water spreads and sinks into the ground
4. This water supports native plants, animals, and the community



About Stormwater Parks

What are they: A “basin”

Foundational Stormwater Park Features / *Características principales de un parque de aguas pluviales*



Shade Trees
Árboles de sombra



Native Edible Plants
Plantas nativas comestibles



Native Pollinator Plants
Plantas nativas polinizadoras



Wildflower Seed Mix
Mezcla de flores silvestres



Habitat Structures
Estructuras para crear hábitat



Stormwater Collection Basin (Natural Irrigation)
Cuenca para recoger aguas pluviales (riego natural)



Stormwater Inlet/Outlet
Entrada/salida de aguas pluviales



Mulch Surfacing (Rock and Woodchip)
Manto de roca y astillas de madera (mulch)



Access Control Features
Control de accesos



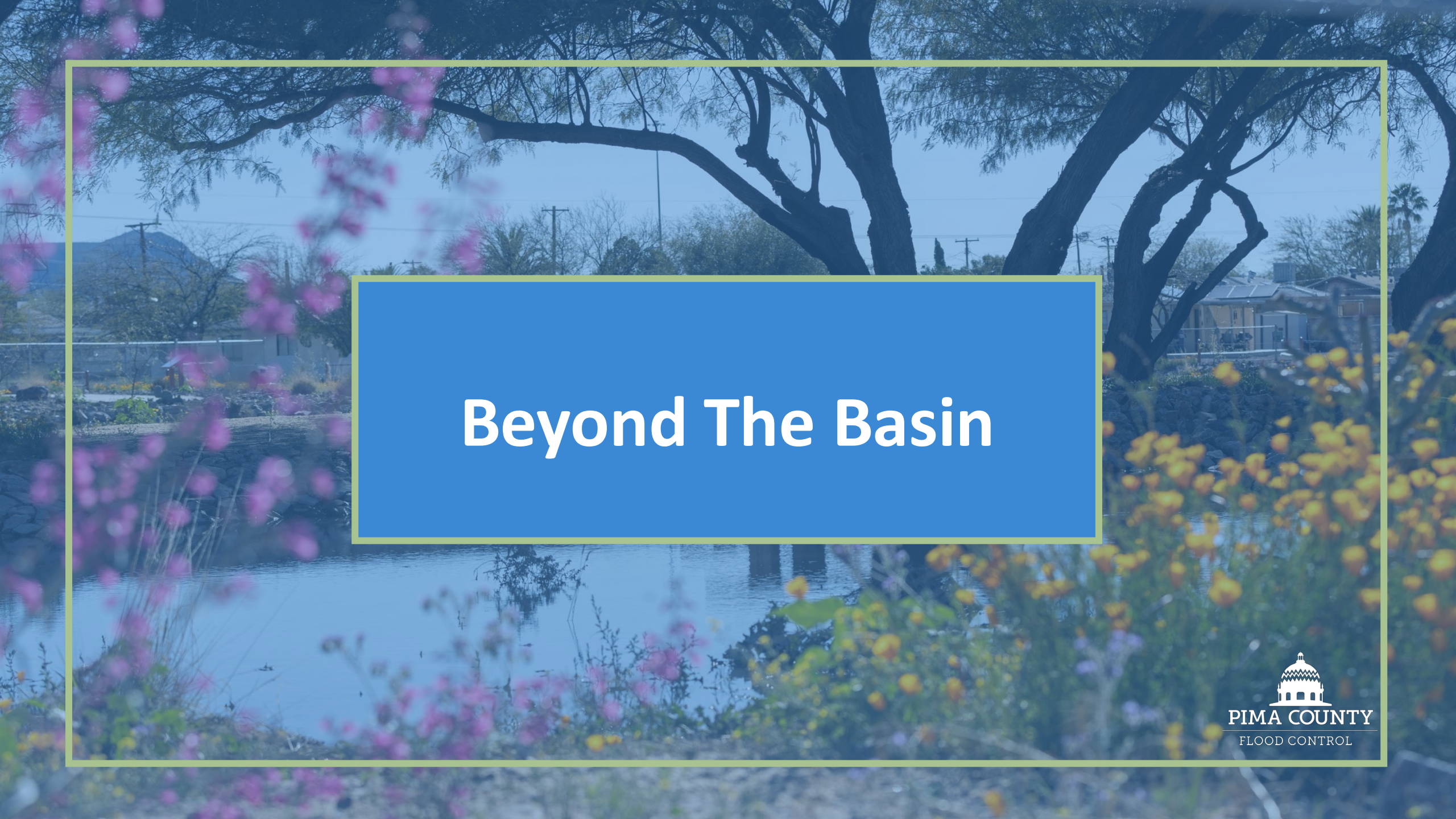
Cherry Ave Stormwater Park



Pre Construction

Monsoon 2021

Seneca Park – Palo Verde Neighborhood

The background image shows a scenic view of a river or canal. Large, leafy trees frame the top and sides of the image. In the foreground, there are out-of-focus pink and yellow flowers. The water reflects the sky and the surrounding greenery. A blue rectangular box with a yellow border is centered over the image, containing the title text.

Beyond The Basin

About Stormwater Parks

More than “just” infrastructure

Stormwater Parks strive to support projects that are:

1. Community Centered
2. Multi-use + multi-benefit
3. Nature-Based

Neighborhood Stormwater Parks



Flood Control for the Community

Stormwater is a precious water resource in the Sonoran desert. Pima County Regional Flood Control District uses taxpayer dollars to invest in community projects that harvest stormwater to mitigate flooding and build more resilient neighborhoods.

More than just infrastructure

Project Priorities



Flood Mitigation
Projects slow and capture stormwater to reduce flooding



Health & Safety
Parks are designed to provide cool, safe, accessible spaces for neighbors to enjoy nature



Equity
We work to ensure that Pima County's most vulnerable and disinvested areas benefit from stormwater infrastructure investments

Stormwater parks help our community by...



Turning neighborhood nuisances
FLOODING
URBAN HEAT ISLAND
VACANT PARCELS
DENuded AREAS
UNDERUTILIZED SPACES



Into community assets
POCKET PARKS
WALKING PATHS
PICNIC AREAS
WILDLIFE HABITAT
FOOD FORESTS
AND MORE!

>> Restore nature and re-envision your neighborhood with benefits like:

Shade & Cooler Temperatures

Accessible Green Space

Places to Connect with Nature & Neighbors



201 N STONE AVE
TUCSON, AZ 85701



+520-724-4600
www.pima.gov/floodcontrol

Beyond the Basin Community-Centered

Stormwater parks are co-designed with communities to ensure equitable, community-aligned designs and uses for these spaces

We are reenvisioning green stormwater infrastructure as green social infrastructure



About Stormwater Parks

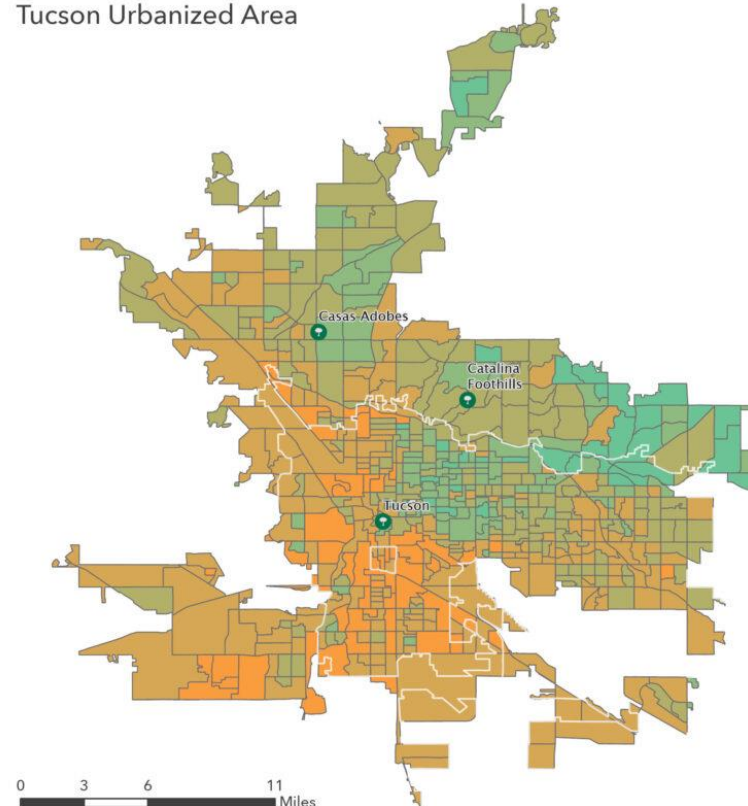
Multi-Benefit

We care not just about what the benefits are but who benefits:

- Heat island effect
- Lack of safe accessible green space
- Flood risk

Tree Equity Score Tucson/Pima County

Tucson Urbanized Area



Tree Equity Score is a way to measure how well a neighborhood, municipality or region is ensuring the benefits of urban tree canopy are reaching low income communities, populations of color and other populations that are particularly susceptible to extreme heat and other climate-related conditions.

Increasing your score means you're getting closer to creating Tree Equity in your neighborhood and Municipality.

This map highlights Tree Equity Scores by neighborhood, defined as Census Block Groups.

Tree Equity Score

Range: 0 - 100

Lower Score
Needs more
tree investment

Higher Score
Less investment
in trees needed

 Municipal Boundary



© American Forests. For more information, visit
www.TreeEquityScore.org July, 7, 2021

About Stormwater Parks

Multi-Use

These projects go beyond infrastructure, utilizing stormwater harvesting as a foundation for multiple community benefits like:

- Food Forests
- Play & Recreation
- Cultural Storytelling
- Art
- Community Programming



Seneca Park view from above



Seneca Park site prior to improvements

What can we design with you?

Pima County Regional Flood Control District can design stormwater parks that include various community and neighborhood amenities such as those listed below.

While there are some things we cannot fund, such as splash pads and play equipment, we can save space and plan for future features in your design.

We engage neighbors to strengthen and celebrate local community through:

>> Stewardship & Education

We work with neighborhoods and non-profit partners to host events that support environmental learning and action

>> Community Art

Projects provide neighborhoods a platform to highlight and celebrate local artists, makers and creatives

>> Storytelling

Every site and neighborhood has a unique story that projects highlight through interactive displays and interpretive signage

>> Sense of Place

Projects nurture and support our unique local ecology and connection to the Sonoran Desert



Pollinator Gardens

Including monarch waystations



Walking Paths

For accessible and affordable exercise



Picnic Areas

For friend and family gatherings



Signage

Provides helpful guidance and local stories



Little Libraries

Support sharing books, seeds, and other resources



Access Control

Ensure user safety and promote positive uses on site



Shade Trees

Provide needed cooling, wildlife habitat and traffic calming



Food Forests

With native and desert adapted edibles



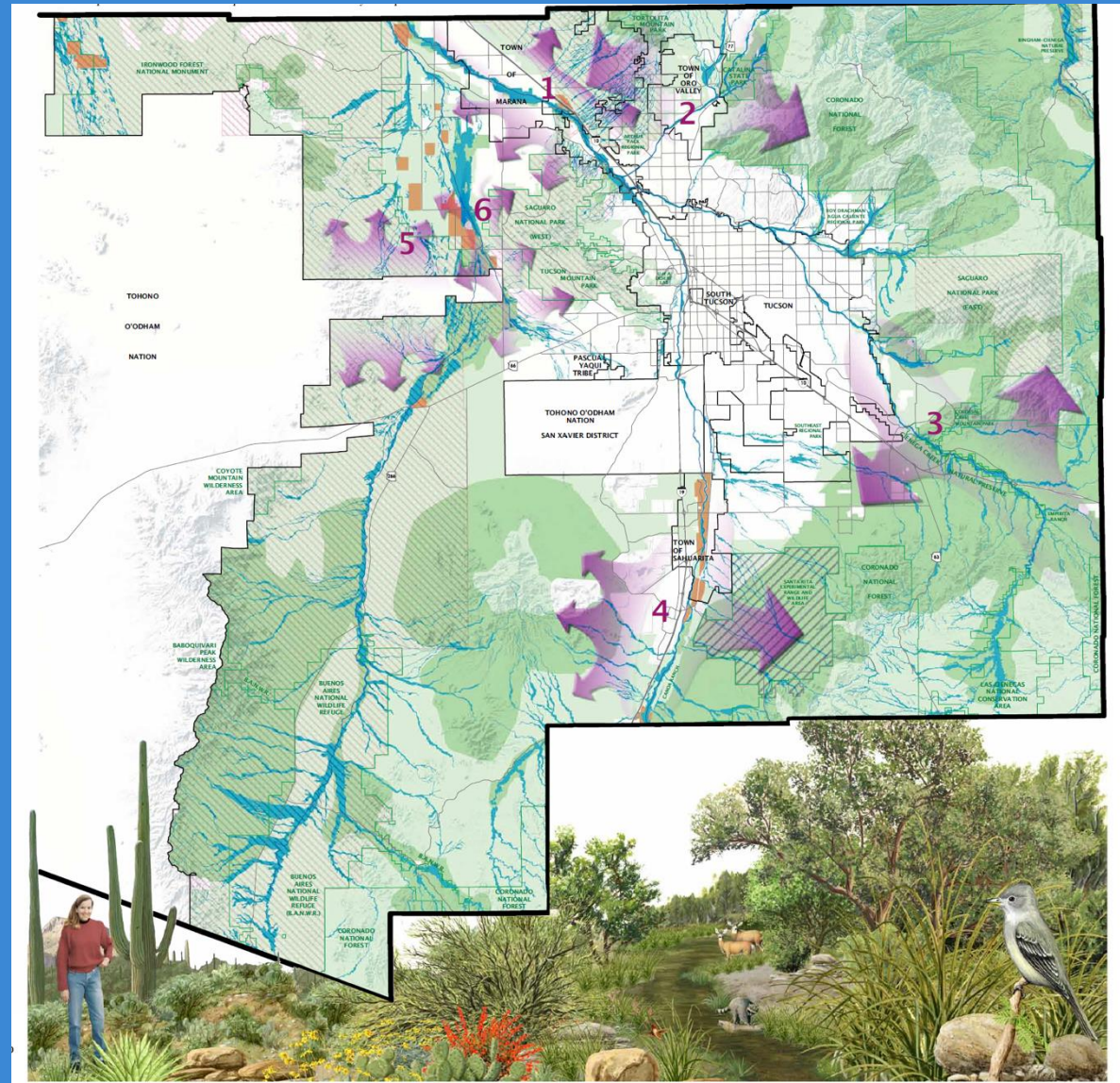
Seating & Rest

To wind down and enjoy the view

About Nature-Based

These projects protect and restore habitat in the most unlikely places.

Urban habitat is integral to broader conservation and restoration efforts.



The background of the slide is a photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, there are out-of-focus pink flowers on the left and yellow flowers on the right. A large, dark tree trunk is visible on the right side. The river flows through the center, with a house and utility poles visible in the background under a clear sky.

Our Process in Practice

The Process

Typical Project Lifecycle



The standard structure for project delivery is check box engagement

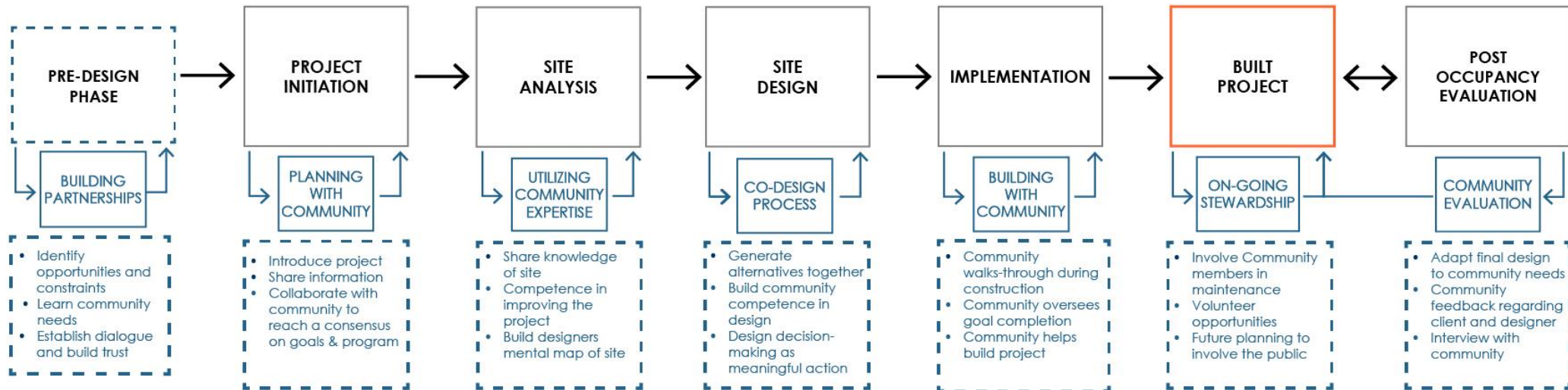


Source | <https://www.usemotion.com/blog/project-life-cycle>

The Process

The Equity-Centered Life-Cycle

Incorporating equity and checking for alignment on our values at every step of the way



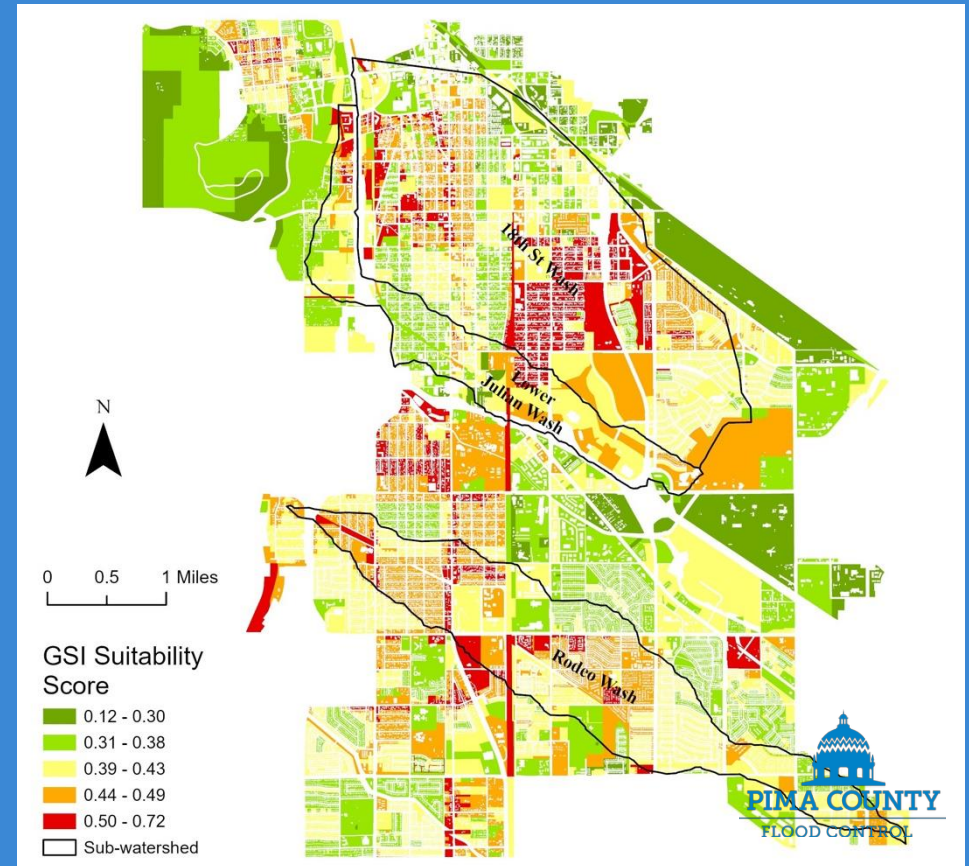
Source | <https://see-design.weebly.com/design-process.html>

The Process

Planning & Prioritization

Flood Control's team assesses a variety of variables to identify potential sites for Stormwater Park projects including:

- Flood Risk
- Heat Vulnerability
- Social Vulnerability





Seneca Stormwater Park

Seneca Park was redesigned to encourage community engagement while supporting environmental...



Richey Stormwater Park

Richey Park project was redesigned to improve drainage along North Richey Blvd. between Speedway...



Cherry Avenue Stormwater Park

The Cherry Avenue Stormwater Park project enhances the City of Tucson's Cherry Ave Recreation Center by...



Las Vistas Stormwater Park

Las Vistas Stormwater Park features a landscaped strip along E. Sunland Vista, between E. Cochise Vista and ...



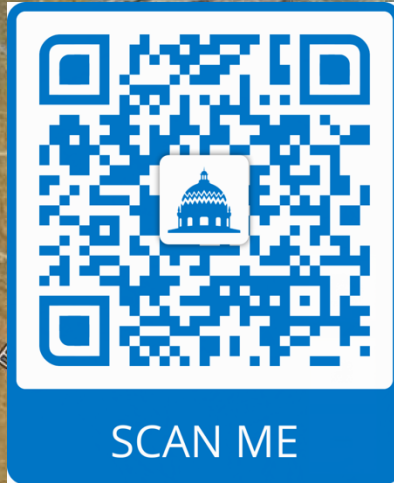
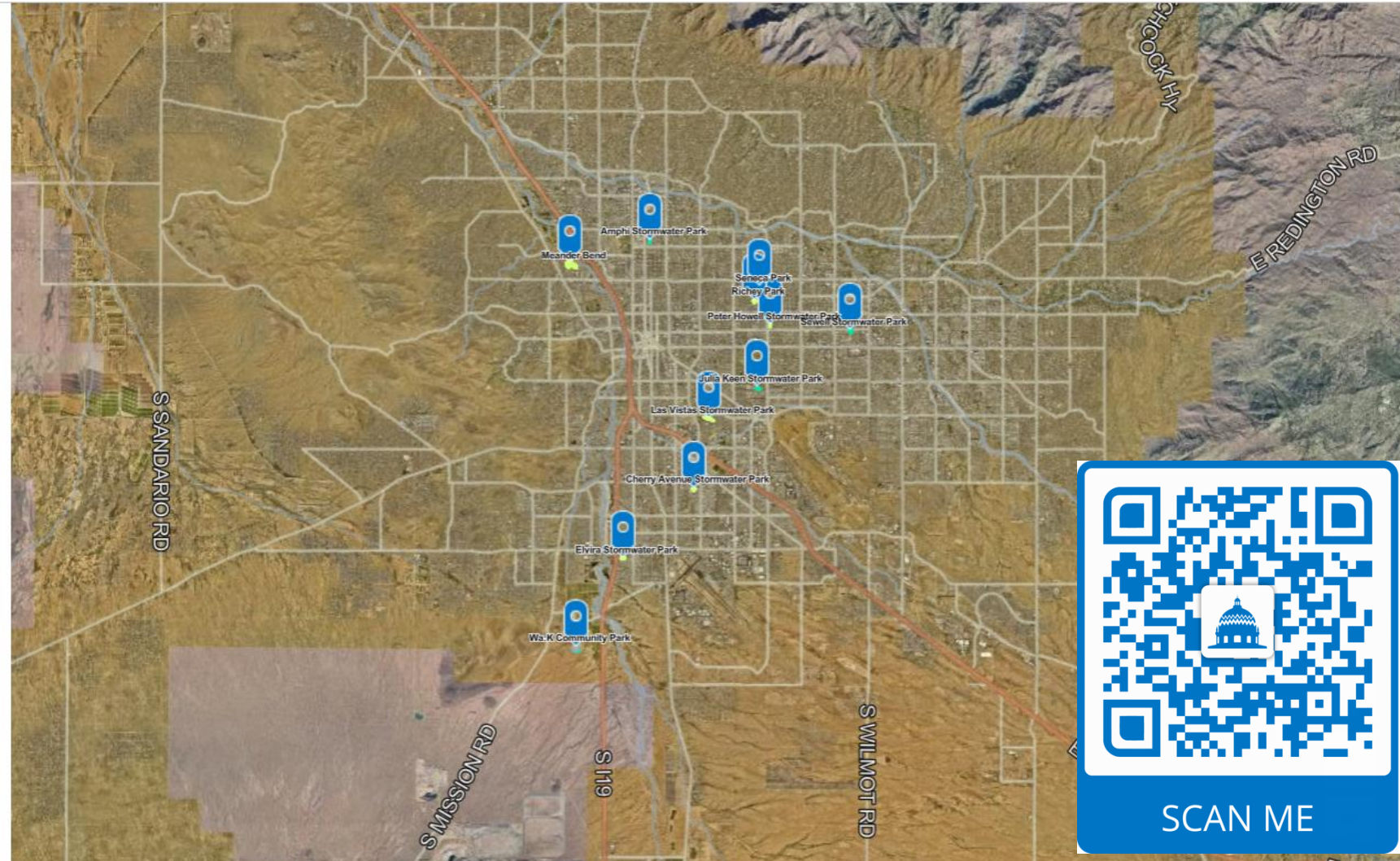
Elvira Stormwater Park

Formally El Vado New Hope Park, Elvira Stormwater Park features native vegetation, edible plants, and...



Meander Bend Park

Developed on 18-acres gifted by the Silvercreek Homeowners' Association to Pima County's Regional...



Visit our Story Map for More Projects

The Process

What type of outreach is appropriate, realistic, honest and authentic to a project and the community you are serving?

What if I don't have a lot of time?

- Transparency
- Scaled options
- Crystal clear expectations
- Keep promises

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

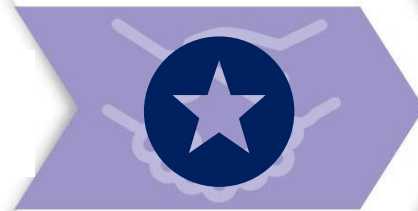
© Federation of International Association for Public Participation 2024. All rights reserved. This work was created with contributions from Lewis Michaelson, Martha Rozelle and Doug Sarno.

The Process

Typical Engagement Timelines

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Community partners are identified to build a community centered engagement strategy.



COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community input is gathered to influence the final site design.



FINAL DESIGN & BID

The final design set is sent to bid to select a contractor.



CONSTRUCTION

The site comes to life as construction begins.



CELEBRATION

Construction ends and the site opens for community use.



The Process

Partnership Building

Doing our homework

- Understanding relationships
 - Existing efforts
 - Helping bridge and align efforts
 - Barriers inventory!!
-
- *Engage early and often*
 - *Work through trusted 3rd parties*
 - *Ask not what engagement can do for gov't, but...*
 - *Plan for resource sharing – not information extraction*



The Process

Typical Timelines

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The Process

Participatory Design

We partner with community to host a variety of events to

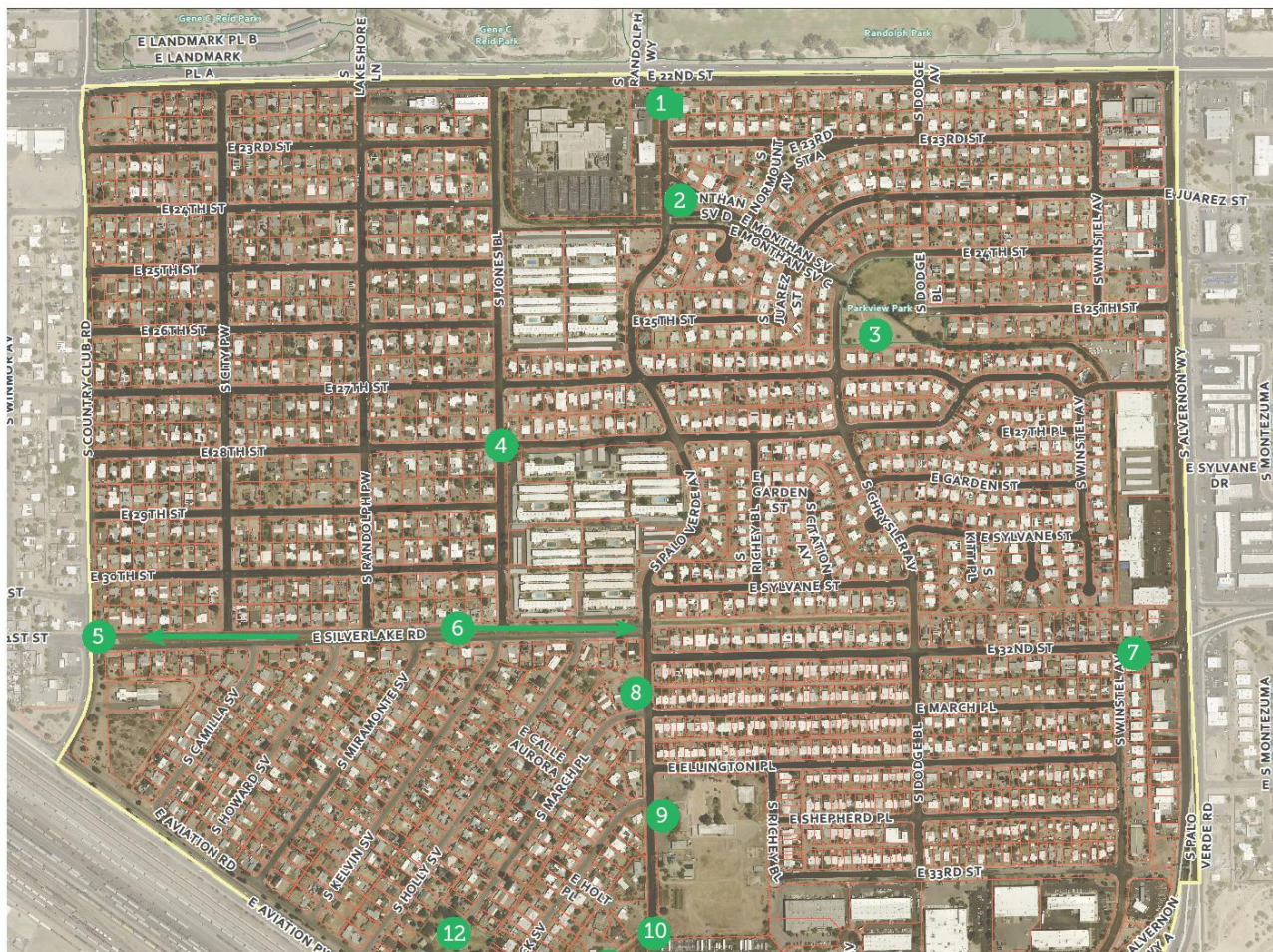
- Co-create the space together
- Empower and uplift community knowledge
- Center community needs

Our Core Tools

- *Hyper local engagement partners – not “outreach mills”*
- *CBO friendly contracting*
- *Steering Committees*
- *Pass through funds for advisory and support CBO’s*



Julia Keen Neighborhood Community Mapping



About this Map



Through a neighborhood asset mapping exercise, residents came together to identify existing strengths, opportunities, and areas in need of improvement. The locations highlighted here reflect potential projects envisioned by community members to enhance green spaces, improve environmental resilience, and create more welcoming, accessible, and vibrant public places. This map serves as a foundation for potential future collaboration and investment that may be pursued by community partners.

Legend

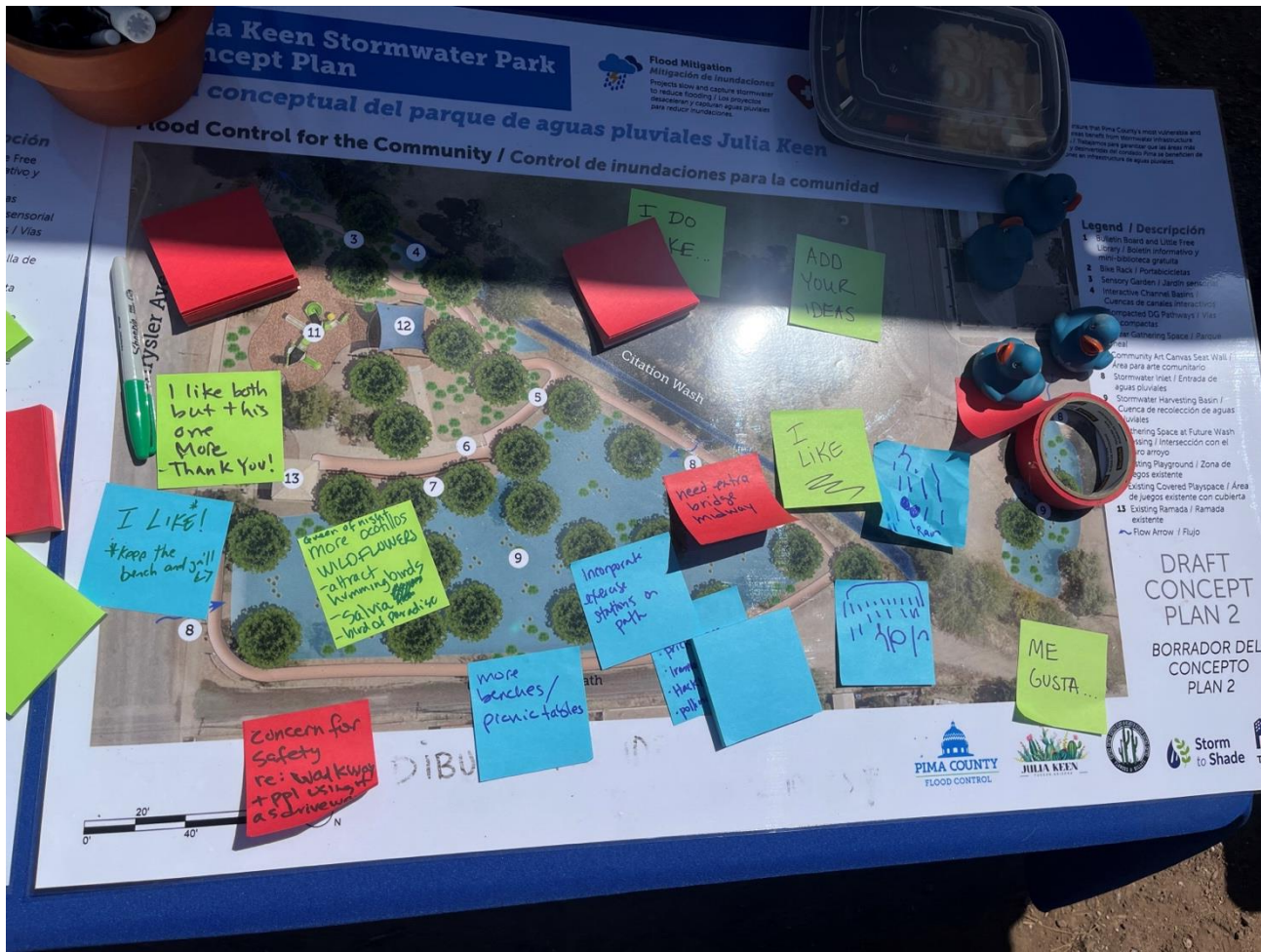
Green Community Improvement Ideas

1. Improved Crossings & Safer Connections to Reid Park
2. Triangle Pocket Park & Neighborhood Entry
3. Julia Keen Stormwater Park
4. Highlight - Community members desire more intersections like this one, which hosts a planted traffic circle and mature trees at the corners
5. Enhanced Neighborhood Entry Point
6. Silverlake Mesquite Greenway (along with overall improved wash / median maintenance that encourages tree growth and shade while treating invasives)
7. Improved / Shaded Bus Stops (applies to all neighborhood bus stops)
8. Highlight - Community members desire more naturalistic pocket parks like this one, which hosts a variety of native plantings and rainwater harvesting features
9. Continued events and programming at Midtown Farm - ideas included hosting a rotating classic car show
10. Activation of dead-end spaces - like this cul-de-sac - to prevent illegal dumping
11. Improved bikeways & clear connections to Aviation Bikeway
12. Programming and community events to increase park usage - especially activities for youth and teens.

Overall Comments: There was general desire for increased shade canopy to improve neighborhood aesthetics, provide cooler temperatures, and improve connectivity and access for pedestrians and bikers. Existing green spaces are highly valued but undertutilized due to lack of shade, perceived lack of safety, lack of accessible connections to parks, as well as lacking park amenities and programming the would encourage increase use of existing green spaces.

Julia Keen Case Study – Asset Mapping





Julia Keen Case Study – Community Design

The Process

Participatory Design

We host a variety of events to get the community engaged in shaping the design including:

- Listening sessions
- Project Pop Ups
- Design workshops

Core Tools

- *Paid community steering committee*
- *Don't grip the expert pen too tightly*

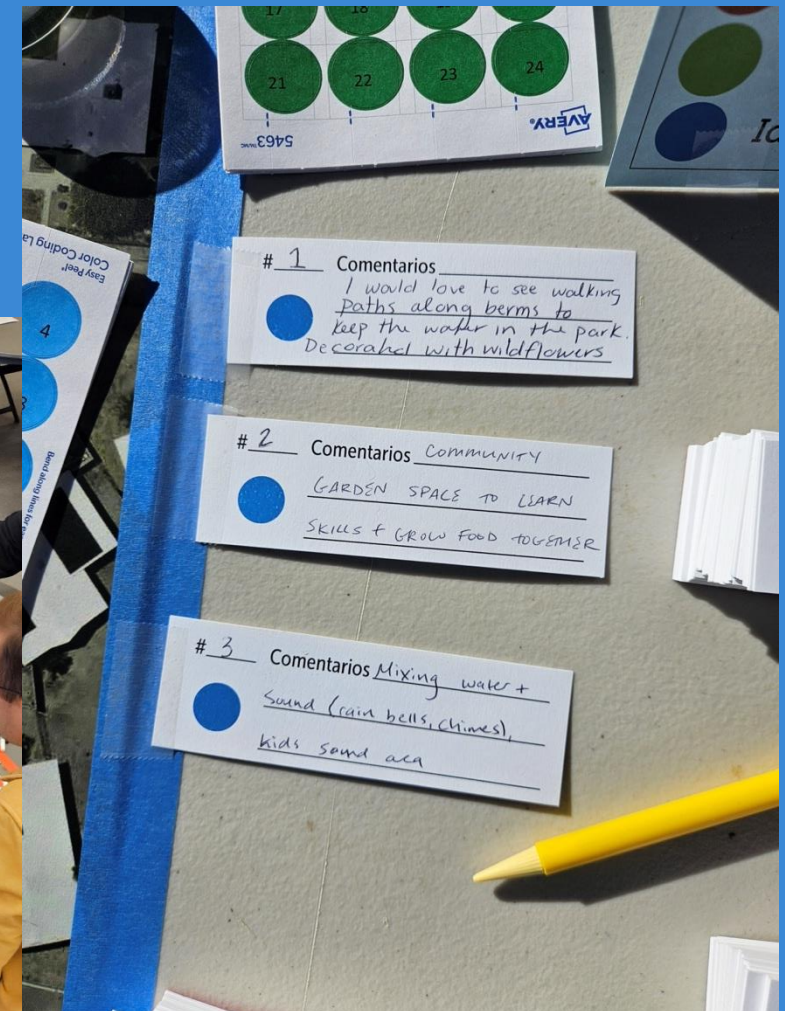


The Process

Participatory Design

Building your engagement “go-to activities”

- Stop light sticky notes
- Visual preference dot voting
- Less structured tools
- Diverse means of engaging
- Low-tech, low barrier



The Process

Design for Safety & Multi-Use Programming

Building Blocks for a Vibrant Community Space / *Creando espacios vibrantes en la comunidad*



Little Free Library
Mini-biblioteca gratuita



Public Art
Arte público



Interpretative Signage
Señalización



Bike Racks
Portabicicletas



Pet Waste Station
Estación para desperdicios de mascotas



Community Bulletin Board
Boletín informativo



Walking Paths (Decomposed Granite)
Senderos (granito descompuesto)



Picnic Areas
Áreas para picnic



Benches
Bancas



Boulder Seating
Asientos de piedra



Nature Play
Juegos en la naturaleza



Walls & Murals
Paredes y murales

The Process

Typical Timelines

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Community partners are identified to build a community centered engagement strategy.



COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community input is gathered to influence the final site design.



FINAL DESIGN & BID

The final design set is sent to bid to select a contractor.



CONSTRUCTION

The site comes to life as construction begins.



CELEBRATION

Construction ends and the site opens for community use.



Julia Keen Stormwater Park Concept Plan

Plan conceptual del parque de aguas pluviales Julia Keen

Flood Control for the Community / Control de inundaciones para la comunidad



Flood Mitigation
Mitigación de inundaciones
Projects slow and capture stormwater to reduce flooding / Reduce la velocidad del agua pluvial y la captura para reducir las inundaciones.



Health & Safety
Salud y seguridad
Parks are designed to provide cool, safe, accessible spaces for neighbors to enjoy nature / Los parques están diseñados para proveer un espacio agradable, fresco y seguro para los vecinos.



Equity
Equidad
We work to ensure that Pima County's most vulnerable and disinvested areas benefit from stormwater infrastructure investments / El Condado Pima trabaja arduamente para que sus áreas más vulnerables se beneficien de la infraestructura para contener las aguas pluviales.

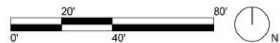


Legend / Descripción

- 1 Bulletin Board and Little Free Library / Boletín informativo y mini-biblioteca gratuita
 - 2 Bike Rack / Portabicicletas
 - 3 Sensory Garden / Jardín sensorial
 - 4 Compacted DG Pathways / Vías DG compactas
 - 5 Post and Cable Fence / Valla de postes y cables
 - 6 Existing Sidewalk / Banqueta existente
 - 7 Stormwater Inlet / Entrada de aguas pluviales
 - 8 Stormwater Harvesting Basin / Cuenca para recolección de aguas pluviales
 - 9 Existing Playground / Zona de juegos existente
 - 10 Existing Covered Playspace / Área de juegos existente con cubierta
 - 11 Existing Ramada / Ramada existente
- Flow Arrow / Flujo

DRAFT
CONCEPT
PLAN 1

BORRADOR DEL
CONCEPTO
PLAN 1



Julia Keen Stormwater Park Case Study – Design & Bid



We are transparent and keep our core partners updated and engaged on final decisions and outcomes.

The Process

Typical Timelines

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Community partners are identified to build a community centered engagement strategy.



COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community input is gathered to influence the final site design.



FINAL DESIGN & BID

The final design set is sent to bid to select a contractor.



CONSTRUCTION

The site comes to life as construction begins.



CELEBRATION

Construction ends and the site opens for community use.



We leverage investments to create paid and other training opportunities for residents.



El Vira Stormwater Park Case Study – Construction

The Process

Typical Timelines

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Community partners are identified to build a community centered engagement strategy.



COMMUNITY DESIGN

Community input is gathered to influence the final site design.



FINAL DESIGN & BID

The final design set is sent to bid to select a contractor.



CONSTRUCTION

The site comes to life as construction begins.



CELEBRATION

Construction ends and the site opens for community use.



The Process Celebration & Milestones



The Process

Long-Term Care

Partner to ensure these spaces continue to benefit the community

A long-term maintenance partnership is part of our program – IGA with the City

We additionally leverage this for a community stewardship program – where members of the neighborhood can be paid to support site stewardship



The Process

Site-Based Programming

Water Advocates Training in Environmental Resilience (WATER) Program

- Paid educator professional development workshops
- Free field studies classroom support and outdoor learning for highschoolers
- Paid student internships & career readiness programs



The Process

Site-Based Programming

NatureWorks Industry Academy

- Earn as you learn training, low-barrier for young adults
- Recruitment from underserved populations through a vibrant partner network
- Whole human development model
- Bridge programs into climate careers



The background of the slide is a photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, there are out-of-focus pink flowers on the left and yellow flowers on the right. A large, dark tree trunk is visible on the right side. The river flows through the center, with a house and mountains visible in the distance under a clear sky.

Thank you!
Questions?

Moderated Q&A

Please put your questions in the chat!



Building Blocks of Trust Training Series

Based on the Building Blocks of Trust report, this online, self-paced training series covers the 8 "Foundations of Trust." Created to support community groups and water utilities in building strong relationships for clean and safe water, this training aims to uplift long-term partnerships with mutual benefits.

Sign Up Now



bit.ly/BBoTTraining



Building Capacity through Partnerships

Water utilities across the country are increasingly, and successfully, turning to partnerships with community groups, NGOs, and other cities and utilities to build capacity and advance greater water resiliency in their communities.

Click through the sub-sections below to learn how to **identify main capacity challenges** facing utilities serving frontline communities, how to **identify local partners** who can help overcome those challenges, and what **best practices** to follow when building capacity through partnerships. Partnerships can also include "public-private partnerships," and the precise meaning of "public-private partnership" is often a source of confusion. This term is used to describe a variety of arrangements between governments and private sector organizations from full privatization of formerly public municipal water providers, to outsourcing, grants, leases, asset sales, and others. Check out the Partnership vs. Privatization sections of the Toolkit to explore the **most common types of public-private partnerships** formed in the water sector and several **key considerations** for determining whether to enter into any of these arrangements.

Identifying Internal Utility Capacity Challenges



Identifying Partners Who Can Add Value



Best Practices for Building Trusting Partnerships

Hosting a Community Water Academy



<https://waternow.org/tools-guides/>

Join WaterNow



LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP

<https://waternow.org/become-a-member/>





Please Complete our Post-Webinar Survey!



Thank You!



**For more information,
email:**

Emerson O'Donnell

eo@waternow.org

Kerry Miller

kmiller@waternow.org

Resources:

<https://waternow.org/>

<https://rivernetnetwork.org>