



**Pima Prospers – Pima County 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update**  
**Board of Supervisors Final Draft, October 14, 2025**

**2025 Comprehensive Plan Update – Special Area Policy Revision**  
**S-8 Tucson Mountains**

On September 29, 2025, District 3 Supervisor Andrés Cano, District 5 Supervisor Jennifer Allen, their staff, and Development Services Department staff met with representatives of the Tucson Mountains Association to discuss and make minor revisions to Special Area Policy S-8 Tucson Mountains (additions are shown in green):

**Name:** S-8 Tucson Mountains (TM)

**General Location:** Within unincorporated portions of Township 13 South, Range 12 East; Township 13 South, Range 13 East; Township 14 South, Range 12 East; and Township 14 South, Range 13 East.

**Description**

The Tucson Mountains area was first homesteaded by families with the intention of keeping the area rural with large open residential parcels. Current residents expect the same. As a result, the Tucson Mountains contain some of the last significant open spaces to the west of Tucson's core. Low density development such as Suburban Ranch (SR) zoning (1 residential dwelling per 3.3 acres) help to retain the rural quality and dark skies of the area. Current decisions for use of this land will reverberate well into the future through its direct impact on the ecology, culture, and quality of life of our community.

The planning area is located between urbanizing areas in the City of Tucson and the public reserves of Tucson Mountain Park, Saguaro National Park, and Sweetwater Preserve. This area is distinguished by rugged terrain, highly diverse vegetation, significant wildlife habitat, and many riparian areas as well as scenic beauty and expansive views from the Gates Pass and West Anklam Scenic Corridors. The purpose of the Tucson Mountains Special Area Policy is to protect this special environment while accommodating limited growth. To achieve this purpose, planning strategies include: 1) declining westward land use intensities; 2) a low-density conservation area and buffer to Tucson Mountain Park and Saguaro National Park; and 3) preserving in perpetuity habitat connectivity for biological conservation as emphasized in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

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#### A. Structures

1. All structures west of Silverbell Road shall be limited to a maximum height of 24 feet and shall be sited and landscaped to minimize negative visual impacts. The Board of Supervisors reserves the right to limit construction to one story. All structures shall be of a color which is in context with the surrounding environment. Muted colors are acceptable for use on building exteriors and may include ranges of brown, such as rust, sepia, sands, tans, and buffs, and some olive and gray tones. Other tones and colors may be used for trim. Residences along W Anklaam and Gates Pass Roads must conform to the exterior colors specified in the Scenic Routes section of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Accessory buildings, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), shall be subordinate and incidental in scale and clustered with the principal dwelling to preserve open space and viewsheds.

#### B. Open Space

1. When conservation subdivisions are proposed, the proposed design should maintain the low density and open space character of the existing Tucson Mountains development pattern. Incentives such as density bonuses in exchange for natural and/or functional open space such as floodplains, hillsides, native plant preservation areas, riparian habitat, or other Sonoran Desert resource value sensitive areas must demonstrate compatibility and be in harmony with the rural character of the Tucson Mountains area.
2. Open space adjacent to SR-zoned parcels should be preserved, with clustering to maintain viewsheds and habitat connectivity, and consider context with surrounding zoning.

#### C. Zoning Districts

1. Notwithstanding the zoning districts permitted under the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Legend, SH (Suburban Homestead Zone), RH (Rural Homestead Zone), and GR-1 (Rural Residential) shall not be permitted.
2. Notwithstanding the zoning districts permitted in accordance with the Major Resort Community provisions, CPI (Campus Park Industrial Zone) or TR (Transitional Zone) shall not be permitted.
3. Outside the designated Commercial Activity Center (CAC) at W. Sunset Road and N. Silverbell Road, requests for commercial rezoning will be discouraged and must be carefully analyzed for impacts to and demonstrate compatibility with the low-density residential character, dark skies, and scenic corridors of the Tucson Mountains.
4. Future residential rezonings shall be limited and must demonstrate compatibility with existing low-density patterns. Duplex or triplex dwellings in SR or Single Residence (CR-1) zoning must meet per-dwelling lot area equivalents, achieved through

clustering that preserves open space and viewsheds.

#### D. Floodplain Management

1. When addressing flood control and erosion, low impact design green infrastructure and building techniques shall be utilized to minimize the use of concrete and/or soil cement armoring and employ self-healing gabions as well as rock riprap wherever possible.

2. Erosion Hazard Setback reductions are strongly discouraged.

#### E. Riparian Protection

1. All riparian areas shall be protected. In the Tucson Mountains these areas are primarily mapped as Xeroriparian Class C.
2. Development shall avoid the Flood Control Resource Areas, previously adopted in Pima Prospers Comprehensive Plan, to preserve the habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors.

#### F. Buffer Overlay Zone

Continue to implement the Buffer Overlay Zone, including any additional properties added to Federal, State, or County Park boundaries.

#### G. Water Resources

Promote water harvesting in new residential construction to conserve potable water resources and to reduce stormwater runoff or flooding. The Pima County 2015 *Design Standards for Stormwater Detention and Retention Manual* and the City of Tucson 2005 *Water Harvesting Guidance Manual* provide techniques for residents to capture and collect storm runoff. Additionally, promote the installation of water-efficient appliances in new residential construction by contractors to further conserve water resources.

#### H. Dark Skies

Continue to implement and enforce the City of Tucson/Pima County Outdoor Lighting Code for dark skies. Development shall demonstrate no material increase in skyglow during rezoning or site review, with shielding and curfews applied where necessary.

#### I. Climate Resiliency

Continue to promote and incentivize the installation of solar energy systems for residential dwelling units to facilitate providing hot water and electricity. In addition, all new construction is encouraged to incorporate proper solar orientation, passive cooling techniques (e.g., shade overhangs), and energy-efficient appliances and windows.