



Stephen W. Christy
Supervisor, District 4

PIMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS


33 N. STONE AVENUE, FLOOR 11
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85701

TELEPHONE 520-724-8094
E-MAIL: district4@pima.gov

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 28, 2022

TO: Melissa Manriquez
Clerk of the Board

FROM: Steve Christy 
District 4 Supervisor

SUBJECT: Agenda Addendum Item

Please place the following item on the Addendum to the Agenda for the Board of Supervisors meeting of August 2, 2022:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Eviction Rental Assistance Program

Discussion/Direction/Action regarding the Federal ERAP update memorandum transmitted to the Board on July 21, 2022 by the County Administrator. Discussion to include, but not be limited to, an explanation by the Administrator as to why "Effective May 2022, ...all of the ... work has shifted over to the County, " from the "larger cooperative effort with the City of Tucson and its subcontractor agencies".
(District 4)

Thank you.



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 21, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Federal Eviction Rental Assistance Program Update**

Since the beginning of the pandemic and related recovery efforts in 2020, Pima County has awarded a total of \$41.9 million of federal, and to a lesser extent, state funds and served 15,698 households with rent and utility assistance.

The major components of this effort are the Federal Eviction Rental Assistance Program 1 and 2. These resources administered by Community & Workforce Development Department on behalf of Pima County, have been part of a larger cooperative effort with the City of Tucson and its subcontractor agencies. Effective May 2022 all of the Federal Eviction and Rental Assistance Program work has shifted over to the County. Since that time, Pima County has awarded or obligated nearly \$5.9 million to 1,016 households.

During this transitional period, the caseload served by this team has increased significantly. While this expansion has not been without its challenges, the staffing and infrastructure has grown to meet the increased demand.

Please note that the rental assistance resources currently being pushed out are federal funds linked back to the government's larger pandemic response. Absent further federal action, those resources will be exhausted sometime in 2023. At that time rent and utility assistance will need to be scaled back to its usual size of approximately \$10 million per year.

Attached please find a detailed report on the Federal Eviction Rental Assistance Program from Community & Workforce Development Director, Dan Sullivan.

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator and Chief Medical Officer
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator



PIMA COUNTY

COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 20, 2022

To: Jan Leshar
County Administrator

From: Dan Sullivan, Director *DS*
Community & Workforce Development

RE: Rental & Utility Assistance Program Update 2nd Quarter 2022

Background

The County's Community and Workforce Development (CWD) department has administered pandemic-related rent and utility assistance since the onset of the pandemic. In that time, CWD has distributed or obligated more than \$41 million in rent and utility assistance to more than 15,000 households and their respective landlords.

The largest allocation of rent and utility assistance is the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which comes from the Department of Treasury and was authorized under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and American Rescue Plan Act. Other recurring CWD funding sources have supplemented those funds during the pandemic.

Before ERAP funds were distributed, the City of Tucson and the County—each of which received its own direct allocations of ERAP dollars—realized that in order to streamline services a single entry point provided the most advantageous method of direct service delivery and expenditures of grant funds to those experiencing financial hardships due to COVID – 19. Through a contractual agreement with Community Investment Corporation (CIC), the City and County invested in an online portal for the ERAP system.

The portal was built and entirely operated by CIC until May 2022. CIC managed the process of case intake, de-duplication, and assignment, along with related activities. CIC serviced cases within City limits, primarily through community-based sub-recipient agencies. CIC assigned the remainder of cases, primarily those outside of City of Tucson limits and those in the unincorporated areas, back to CWD for processing.

In March 2022, the City of Tucson program made the decision not pursue a second reallocation of ERAP funds from Arizona Department of Economic Security. Subsequently the City's contract with CIC expired June 30, 2022.

Community & Workforce Development took over the portal at that time and agreed to process remaining cases in the queue. In this way 3,585 applications were transferred to CWD on May 1, 2022. Of these, over 80% were within the City of Tucson limits, with the remainder from the balance of the County. The transition occurred over the course of three months and included work with County Information and Technology Department (ITD) to determine support capability of the full transition of

various data systems and web portals. Throughout the process ITD, CWD, City of Tucson and CIC staff have coordinated efforts to continue to provide the services with limited interruption.

In anticipation of the increased service demand with the transition, CWD restructured its processes and added staffing to support the additional caseload, including the creation of a new team to conduct the functions previously managed by CIC. A dedicated hotline number and email was established to help the public navigate through the changes.

Processing Backlog Cases

Staff reviewed the list for duplicated cases and made prioritizations based on the date of initial application, potential for eviction and household income, in compliance with federal requirements. The backlog went as far back as February 2022, and a decision was made to process all these cases expeditiously and cases were assigned to 27 case managers at the rate of 400 cases per week. As of July 15, 2,289 active backlog cases have been assigned to a case manager. Since May 1, CWD has awarded more than \$5.8 million in rent and utility assistance to more than 1,000 households.

Staff make no fewer than three attempts to contact the applicant over the course of a week. This includes calling, emailing and sending letters to the applicant. CAD staff inactivate application after they have exhausted all attempts to contact the applicant. Please note that 5% of the cases have incomplete or missing contact information leading to delays in processing.

Applicants who receive notice of eviction or enter into eviction proceedings are quickly transitioned to the Emergency Eviction Legal Services (EELS) program, where they can be provided legal support, and their application is escalated to avoid eviction if the landlord is willing to participate. Escalated cases are immediately assigned to a dedicated team of case managers. They are responsible for expeditious processing of ERAP assistance and for coordinating efforts with property owners and their counsel. This multi-layered approach has proven to be a pivotal resource in mitigating the impacts of eviction throughout the community.

Current Staffing

The Community Assistance Division (CAD) of the department manages this process from beginning to end. CAD currently has a total of forty-four staff dedicated to providing emergency rent and utility assistance to households in need.

Twenty-seven case managers or program specialists award federal dollars at a rapid pace. They make eligibility determinations, contact applicants, and push completed applications through the fiscal process while keeping the client and property owner informed. Case managers also aid households in relocating or connecting to re-housing services when property owners decide not to participate in the program.

Seven staff support the fiscal functions of this team. This group issues checks, reviews for errors, and assists property owners with registration in the vendor self-service portal. This team is critical to ensuring fiscal integrity of the program and ensures compliance with the various federal rules that govern these resources

CAD management includes a division manager, a program manager and two program coordinators. The management arm responds to stakeholder and customer complaints, provides guidance to case managers regarding client eligibility and approval of payments and case closures.

In support of the transition, CAD expanded to include a program coordinator responsible for de-duplicating the backlog of cases, review the new cases, manage the hotline 724-2505 and escalates cases where needed to other community resources. Five customer care specialists answer calls received, as well as emails received at the Pima.Cares@pima.gov. Hotline staff navigate those clients to the appropriate entity, correspond with callers as to their case status, connect to other community resources like workforce programs, childcare assistance, support services and more.

Email, Hotline and Web portal for ERAP

To facilitate client access, we have established Pima.Cares@pima.gov for applicants and property owners to inquire about their case status as well as a hotline number (520) 724-2505.

The hotline started operating June 20. It is answered during regular business hours Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm. Our goal is that calls get responses within 24-hours. The hotline received more than 1,000 calls in its first two-week period. In total, 91 callers hung up, 1,007 calls were handled by staff and 20 voicemails were received. The average time per call was 15 minutes and average wait/hold time was 2.5 minutes.

The Pima.Cares@pima.gov email address is accessed by several staff members throughout their scheduled shift. The email is another means for property owners and tenants to check the status of their application, submit any updates or changes to their applications, and easily upload documentation. The email is also on the tucsonpimaep.com portal and within the email confirmation that is sent to the customer when they complete the application.

Community Based Organizations and ERAP

In an effort to provide seamless services to the community, the County built upon the City/CIC partnership to create a sole entry point during the pandemic. CIC entered into sub-contracts with various community-based organizations to provide assistance using City and County administered dollars. This all hands approach provided the community much needed services at a time when all were stretched to capacity trying to navigate the system. Sub-recipients and subcontractors included:

Community Investment Corporation
International Rescue Committee
Compass Affordable Housing
International Sonoran Desert Alliance
Valley Assistance Services
Pascua Yaqui Tribe Charitable Organization
Portable Practical Educational Preparation, Inc.

Catholic Community Services
Family Housing Resources
Chicanos por La Causa
Interfaith Community Services
Primavera Foundation
Sunnyside Unified School District
Salvation Army

CWD has historically contracted with local community-based organizations to deliver services inclusive of emergency services like rent and utility assistance in order to expand the reach of assistance to the community. Therefore, post transition some community-based organizations have or may elect to

continue to serve in the ERAP assistance role depending on their capacity and willingness. We anticipate that contracts with select agencies will come before the Board for approval at the August meeting.

Performance to Date and in the Transition Period

An analysis of data collected through the single online portal indicates that service times remain largely unchanged during the transition. The time from the date of application to case assignment remains 2 to 3 weeks. The time from case assignment to payment remains at 1 day to 2 weeks.

The main factor determining response time remains the responsiveness of the of the tenant and property owner. Cases completed at a faster rate are those with correct and current contact information, complete documentation provided in a timely manner, and with applicants who respond to calls and emails sent by the case managers. In addition, cases that are escalated by the EELS team also have a faster rate of completion and payment as the intake process through eviction court tends to simplify the document gathering process and leads to a prompt cooperation.

The summary graph in Attachment A displays the monthly dollars awarded and the number of payments made for households since the onset of the pandemic. Since the beginning of the federal ERAP funding, Pima County has awarded more than \$24.7 million to more than 4,630 households.

A review of the geographic location of served households documents that all areas of Pima County are getting assistance including those in rural and unincorporated Pima County. The heat map in Attachments B and C, details the geographic locations of households receiving eviction assistance since March 2020. Areas highlighted in blue represent households who received ERAP services to date. Areas with a darker blue hue represent areas within Pima County with more housing concentration like apartment complexes, duplexes, etc. The heat map is not representative of dollar amounts, but rather the households served with ERAP assistance.

Moving Forward

Community & Workforce Development continues to lead the charge nationally in spending down these federal dollars and getting funds into the hands of households and property owners across Pima County. CWD continues to provide assistance through ERAP-2 funding, which total more than \$12 million. The County has received approval from the Arizona Department of Economic Security for a further reallocation of \$15 million in ERAP-2 dollars. An application for these funds was formally submitted to Treasury July 12 and is pending award.

The community has benefited greatly from the significant reallocations of federal funds, which would not have been awarded if our efforts had not been successful. The County will continue to seek reallocation as long as federal funding is available. Still, at some point funding will run out. CWD anticipates that currently available funding will run out in late November of 2022. If the additional recent reallocation request is granted for \$15 million, funds should last into the Spring of 2023. Another round of reallocation could potentially extend funding into late 2023. When federal funding is exhausted and absent additional Congressional intervention, CWD will return to a normal level of around \$10 million annually in rent and utility assistance.

The County has to be prepared for this contingency, since it would impact our own operation and that of sub-recipient agencies. As more certainty develops regarding the current reallocation request and potential future requests, CWD will continue to update the Board and County Administration on the anticipated end of ERAP funding. (Attachment D)

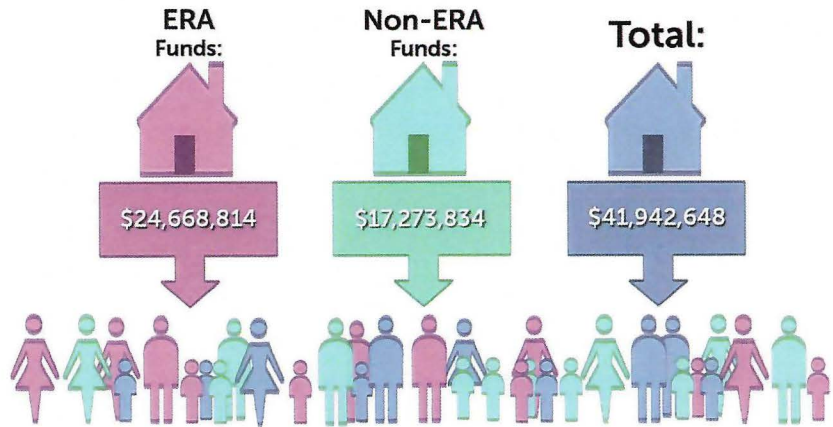
Conclusion

Given the unprecedented numbers of individuals seeking services, the amount of emergency funds and sheer volume of applications, our Department has once again pivoted to respond to the community needs. In planning stages, CWD started hiring and onboarding staff, subsequently established a hotline and worked closely with ITD for email systems and website management. Given the number of individuals receiving services versus those in queue, the process works.

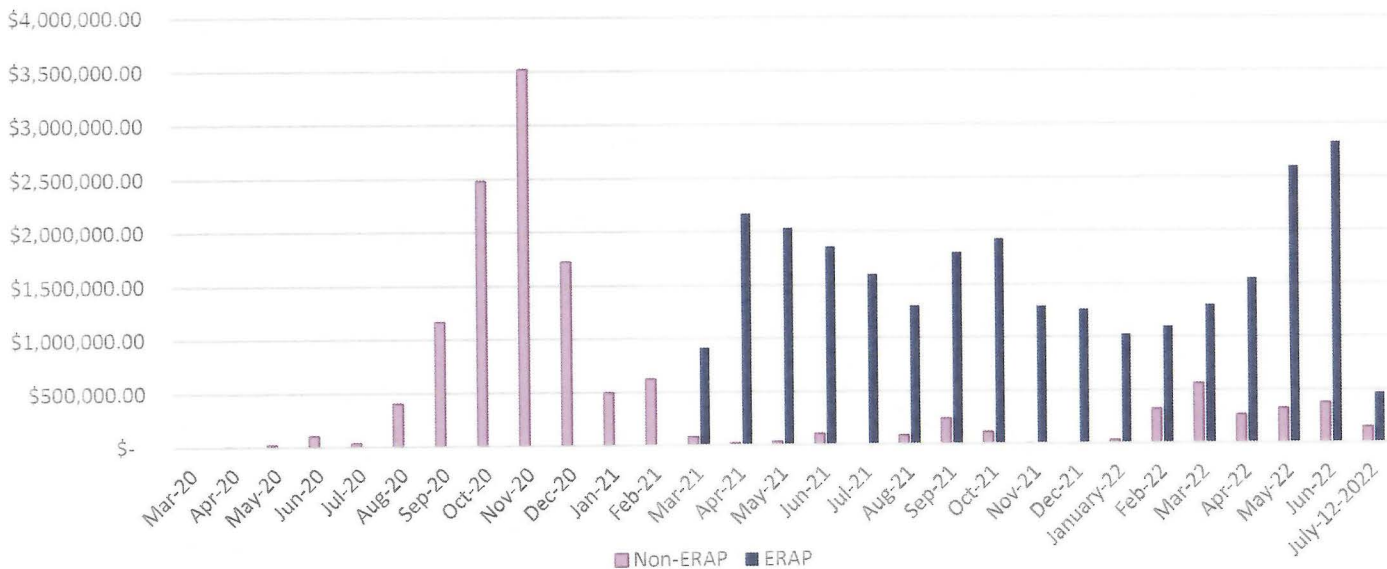
In order to maintain the current momentum and address challenges that may arise, we will continue to review and analyze the number of applications received, number of staff providing services, number of calls and response, as well as other areas within the robust system. It is our objective that the needs of customers, both tenants and property owners, are met during this unprecedented time.

Attachments:

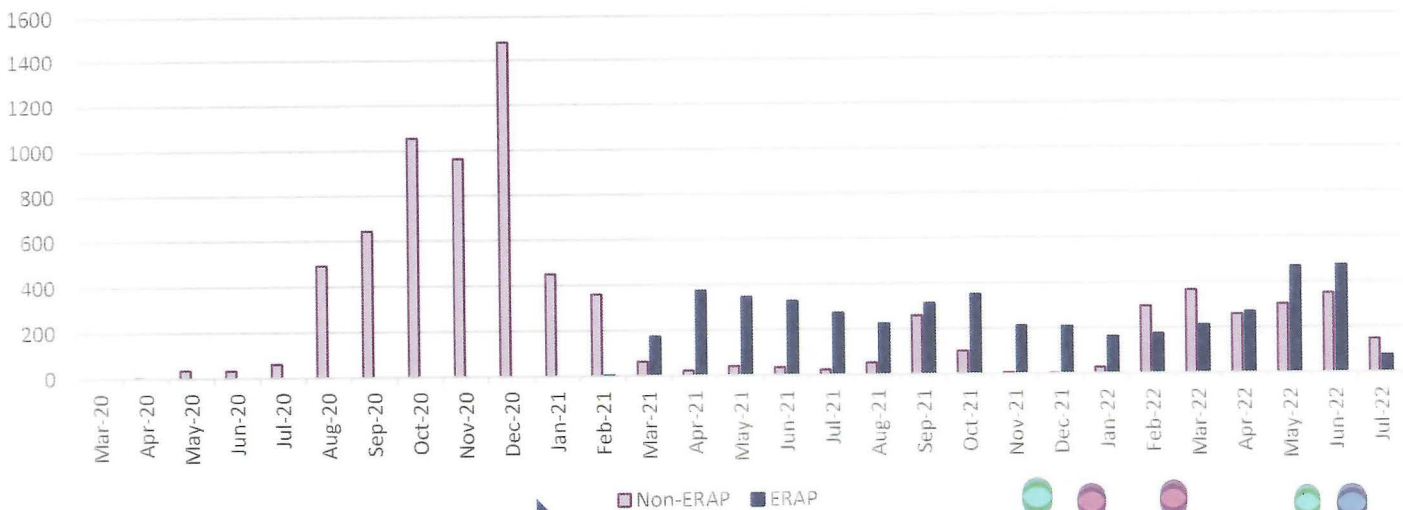
- A. Breakdown of Pima County ERAP as well as other rent and utility funds distributed through July 12, 2022
- B. Heat Map of Central & Eastern Pima County ERAP Cases
- C. Heat Map of Western Pima County ERAP Cases
- D. Past ERAP Communications to the Board of Supervisors



ERAP Funds & Non-ERAP

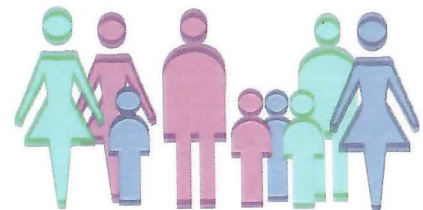


Number of Payments for Households



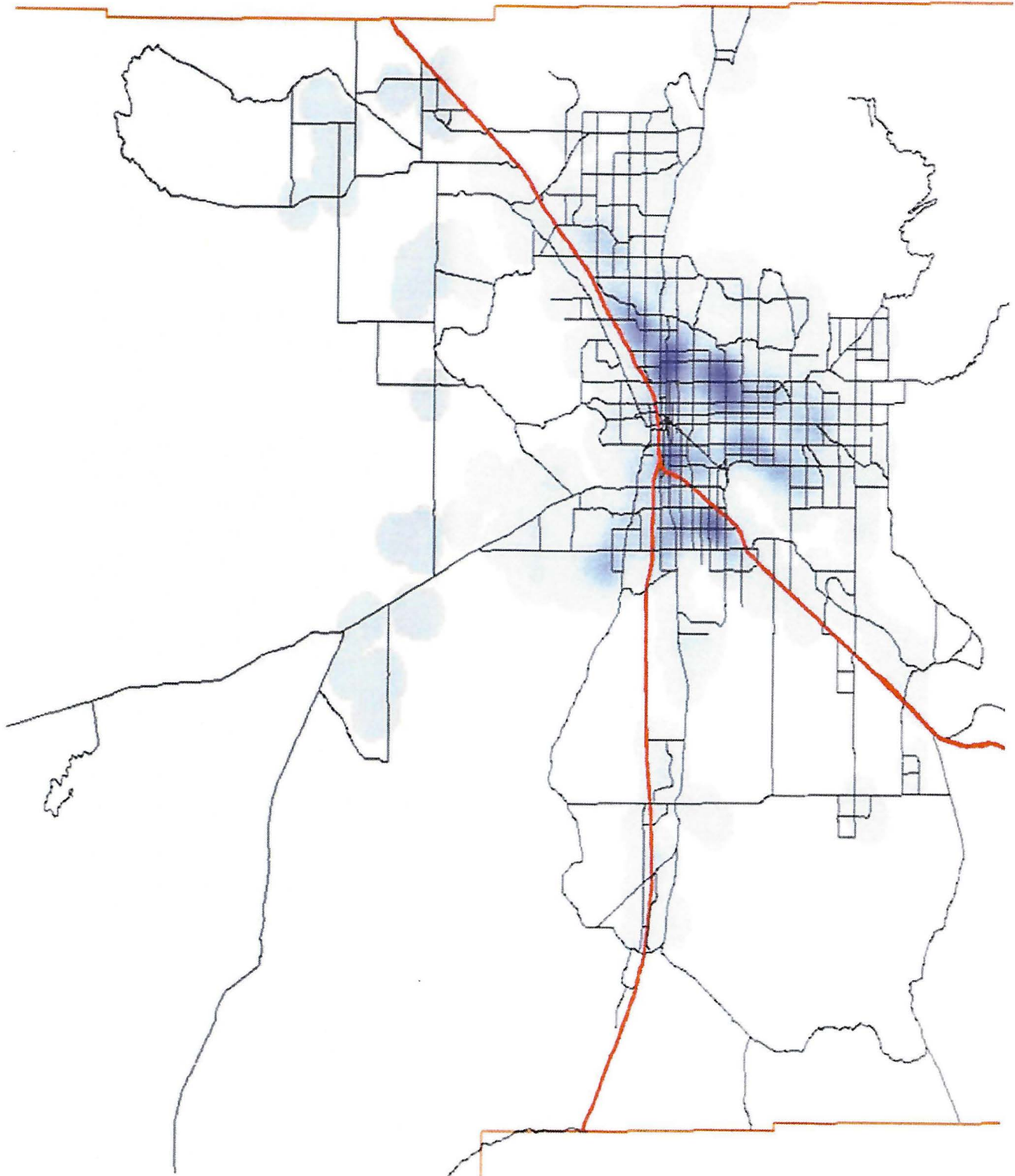
Total Payments

15,698



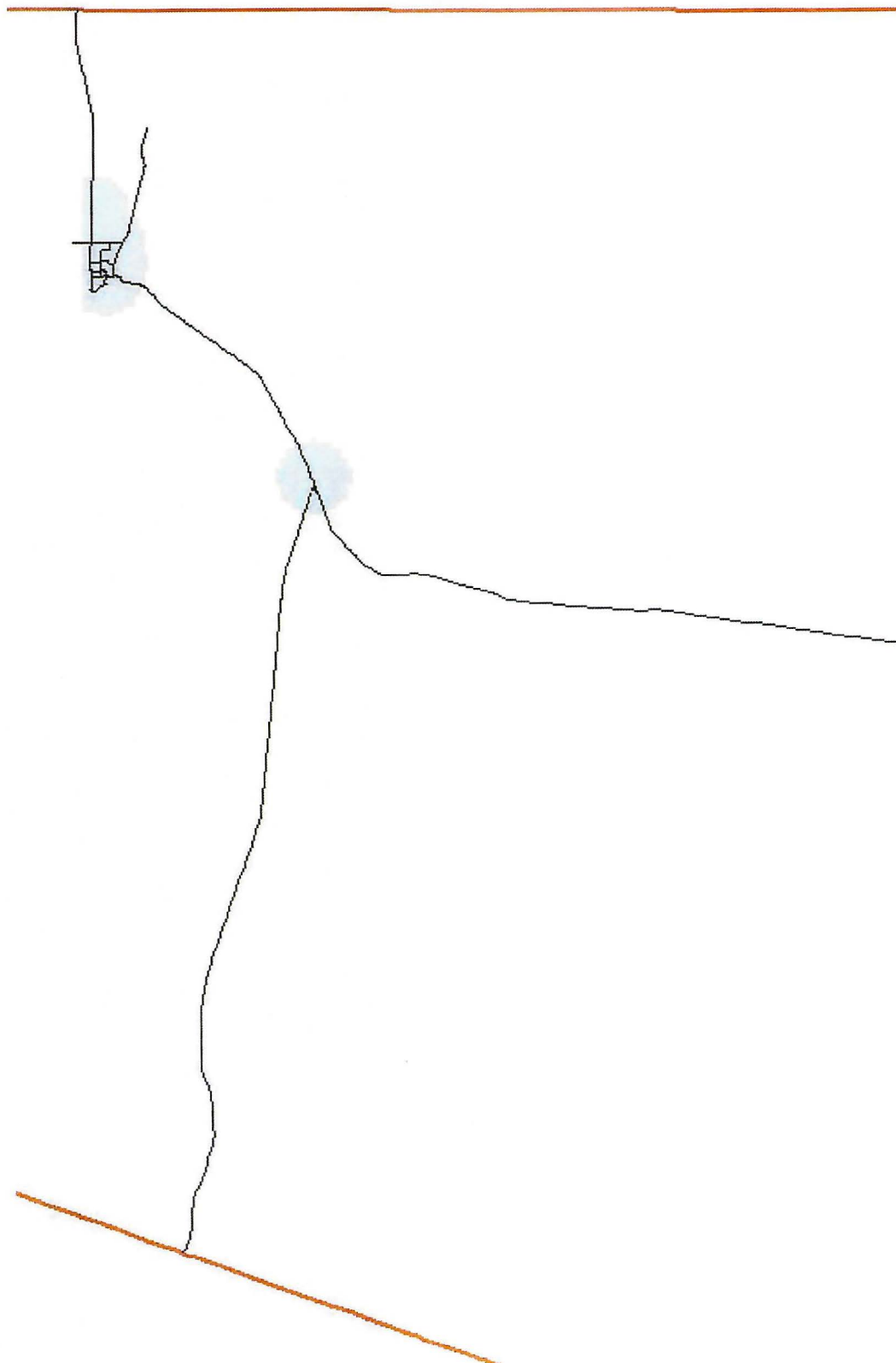
Attachment B

Central & Eastern Pima County



Attachment C

Western Pima County



Attachment D

CWD will continue to update the Board of Supervisors regarding all aspects of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) that it administers. Please see the following links for all memoranda regarding CWD and ERAP.

- [June 16, 2020 – Updated Eviction Information](#)
- [July 29, 2020 – County Response and Prevention Efforts Regarding COVID-19 Related Evictions](#)
- [September 10, 2020 – Applications for Rental and Home Energy Assistance](#)
- [March 12, 2021 – Emergency Rental Assistance Program Capacity in Pima County](#)
- [March 19, 2021 – Various Federal Programs and Funding Allocations Associated with Emergency Rental Assistance, Low Income Energy Assistance, Food Supplements, and Other Programs to Ease Eviction Pressures](#)
- [April 5, 2021 – Emergency Rental Assistance Program Update](#)
- [March 14, 2021 – Pima County Emergency Rental Assistance Update](#)
- [June 10, 2021 – Report on Rental Assistance Program](#)
- [June 24, 2021 – Updated on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program known as ERAP 1 and ERAP 2](#)
- [August 6, 2021 – Emergency Rental Assistance Program Update](#)
- [August 24, 2021 – Office of Emergency Eviction Legal Services](#)
- [September 16, 2021 – Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Emergency Eviction Legal Services Updates](#)
- [December 6, 2021 – Emergency Eviction Legal Services Update and Board of Supervisors, December 7, 2021 Agenda Item 19 \(Procurement – Legal Services\)](#)
- [March 8, 2022 – Update on Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#)