

COVID-19 Effects: Community, Business, and Communication



Sustainable
Cities
Network

Arizona State
University

Project Cities



A Fall 2020
Collaborative Project with
Arizona State University's
Project Cities & the
City of Peoria



PART 1:

Project and community introduction

GET TO KNOW THE PROJECT

ABOUT ASU PROJECT CITIES

ABOUT THE CITY OF PEORIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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This report represents original work prepared for the City of Peoria by students participating in courses aligned with Arizona State University's Project Cities program. Findings, information, and recommendations are those of students and are not necessarily of Arizona State University. Student reports are not peer reviewed for statistical or computational accuracy, or comprehensively fact-checked, in the same fashion as academic journal articles. Editor's notes are provided throughout the report to highlight instances where Project Cities staff, ASU faculty, Municipal staff, or any other reviewer felt the need to further clarify information or comment on student conclusions. Project partners should use care when using student reports as justification for future actions. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from Project Cities.

Cover images:

**City of Peoria,
PUP 642 students,
and Project Cities**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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On behalf of the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory, the Global Institute of Sustainability and Innovation, and the School of Sustainability, we extend a heartfelt thank you to the City of Peoria for enthusiastically engaging with students and faculty throughout the semester. These projects provide valuable real-world experience for our students and we hope that their perspectives shine light on opportunities to continuously improve Peoria's future livelihood and community well-being.

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To access the original student reports, additional materials, and resources, visit:

links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaCOVID20F

ABOUT PROJECT CITIES

The ASU Project Cities program uses an innovative, new approach to traditional university-community partnerships. Through a curated relationship over the course of an academic year, selected Community Partners work with Project Cities faculty and students to co-create strategies for better environmental, economic, and social balance in the places we call home. Students from multiple disciplines research difficult challenges chosen by the city and propose innovative sustainable solutions in consultation with city staff. This is a win-win partnership, which also allows students to reinforce classroom learning and practice professional skills in a real-world client-based project. Project Cities is a member of Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), a growing coalition of more than 35 educational institutions partnering with local government agencies across the United States and around the world.

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CITIES NETWORK

Project Cities is a program of ASU's Sustainable Cities Network. This network was founded in 2008 to support communities in sharing knowledge and coordinating efforts to understand and solve sustainability problems. It is designed to foster partnerships, identify best practices, provide training and information, and connect ASU's research to front-line challenges facing local communities. Network members come from Arizona cities, towns, counties, and Native American communities, and cover a broad range of professional disciplines. Together, these members work to create a more sustainable region and state. In 2012, the network was awarded the Pacific Southwest Region's 2012 Green Government Award by the U.S. EPA for its efforts. For more information, visit sustainablecities.asu.edu.

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Project Cities

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ABOUT PEORIA

Ranked as the No. 1 place to live in Arizona by Money Magazine, the City of Peoria is currently home to over 171,000 residents. The City enjoys a reputation as a family-oriented, active community with an exceptional quality of life. Peoria entertainment and recreational amenities include attractions such as Lake Pleasant, trails, and community parks.

The City has also demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability, as evidenced by its incorporation of LEED building design standards, a council-adopted Sustainability Action Plan, and the "Green Team" staff dedicated to managing organization-wide sustainability initiatives.

PEORIA TEAM

Project Cities Community Liaison

Jay Davies, Interim Public Works Director, Fmr. Chief of Staff,
City Manager's Office

Peoria Project Leads

Jennifer Stein, Director of Communications and Interim Director of
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*Peoria is the place
World class ▪ Sustainable ▪ Future Ready*

peoriaaz.gov



City of Peoria

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July 7, 2021

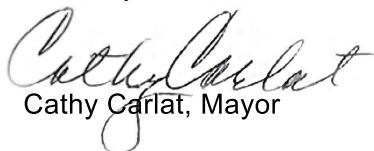
Dear Peoria community members,

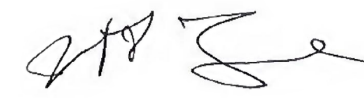
It is with tremendous appreciation and excitement that we bring to your attention the results of the second year of our collaboration with ASU's Project Cities program. Although it was a very different kind of year than the first year of our collaboration, that did not dampen the energy of the students or the final results of their work. This partnership has provided the opportunity to work with faculty and students across several academic programs, benefitting from their insights, creativity, and diverse perspectives on a number of projects. Many of these entailed public participation, and you may have participated by completing a survey that was distributed in our community through a variety of platforms.

Project Cities is one of several partnerships we enjoy with ASU, and part of our ongoing strategy to engage with community partners to leverage our resources as we address the many issues that face us as a local government. With a modest investment in this program, we have received extensive research, recommendations, and deliverables that take several key initiatives to the next level for us. These include our efforts around water conservation, transit, recycling, and the possibilities around our Skunk Creek corridor in P83. By engaging students and faculty on these subjects, we have advanced our understanding and positions on each one much more quickly than we could have without their assistance.

The results provided on each project provide us with invaluable insights into many of our most important opportunities, and will position us to better serve our community. The city has already begun to incorporate the students' deliverables into next steps in advancing these projects. We look forward to continuing this work on additional projects in the coming year, and cherish our partnership with ASU and Project Cities.

Sincerely,


Cathy Carlát, Mayor


Jeff Tyne, City Manager

Peoria, Arizona



Proud partner of

ASU Sustainable Cities Network
Arizona State University

Project Cities

Rio Vista Recreation Center

Demographics

total population: **179,872**

median age: **39.8**

highly skilled and educated workforce of 85,252

11,997 veterans live in Peoria

78% of residents are homeowners

median property value: **\$331,700**

33% of residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher

median household income: **\$75,323**

Schools

#3 of 131 Best School Districts for Athletes in Arizona

#5 of 40 Best School Districts in Phoenix Metro Area

#7 of 130 Best School Districts in Arizona

The Peoria Unified School District is one of the largest employers in the West Valley. The district consistently receives high ratings and offers signature programs such as the Career and Technical Education programs.

Peoria is also home to Huntington University, a liberal arts college offering digital media education in animation, broadcasting, film, graphic design and other digital media arts.

Leading industries

Peoria, Arizona is not just a scenic suburb of Phoenix, but also a thriving economic development hub with an educated workforce and high-end residential living. There are over 4,000 employers and more than 75,000 people employed within Peoria. Leading industries include health care and social assistance, retail trade, and finance and insurance. Highest-paying industries include utilities, manufacturing and public administration. Beyond these industries, Peoria works actively to attract businesses from aerospace and defense, film and digital media, technology and innovation, hospitality and tourism, and research and development. Peoria is the place for business owners, developers and investors.



Health Care & Social Work

10,905 employees



Retail Trade

10,628 employees



Finance & Insurance

6,574 employees



History

Founded in 1886 by Midwestern settlers, Peoria is nestled in the Salt River Valley and extends North into the foothills around Lake Pleasant. Beginning as a small agricultural town, the economy received a major boost when a railroad spur line was built along Grand Avenue. The construction of the Roosevelt Dam in 1910 secured a reliable water supply, attracting more settlers to the area and business endeavors to the town center. Peoria's economy continued to have an agricultural focus for decades. Continually growing, Peoria assumed city status in 1971 with a population of 4,792. It has since grown into a city with a population over 175,000, and is renowned for its high quality of life and recreational amenities.

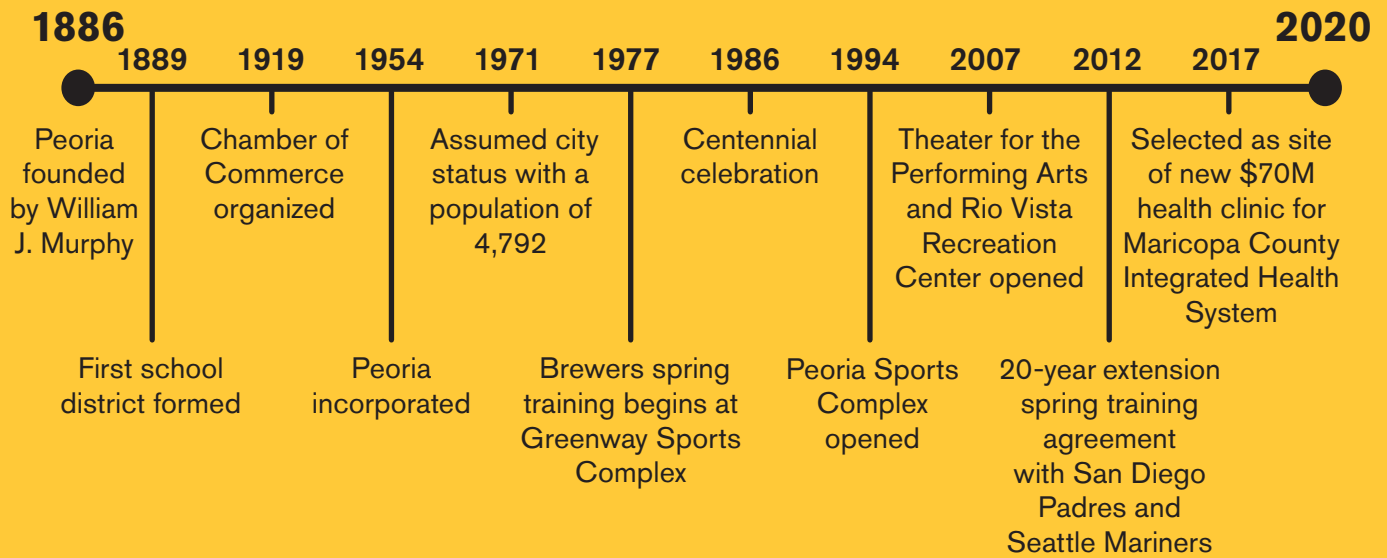
Sustainability

Peoria has demonstrated leadership in municipal sustainability efforts through a wide range of actions. Listed below are some of the City's sustainability accomplishments.

- Incorporation of LEED building design standards
- Appointment of a full-time city staff member who manages and coordinates sustainability initiatives
- Sustainable urban planning practices including open space planning and water management principles
- Sustain and Gain: Facebook page and brochures keep residents up to date on city sustainability efforts and ways to get involved
- Water Conservation Program: free public classes, public outreach at city events, and water rebate incentives for residents
- Council-Adopted Sustainability Action Plan: this strategic planning document, in its second iteration, ensures city departments are developing sustainability-oriented goals, tracking success metrics, and encouraging cross-communication in the preparation of Sustainability Update presentations made to the Peoria City Council on an annual basis
- Sustainable University: courses and workshops to empower residents to make small changes that make Peoria a better place to live. Topics covered include residential solar, gardening, composting and recycling

Awards and recognition

- Number One City to Live, Work and Play in 2021 (*Ranking Arizona*)
- Received three Crescordia awards by Arizona Forward at the annual Environmental Excellence Awards in 2016
- 12th City for Green Space in the U.S. in 2019 (*Wallethub*)
- Top 15 Safest Cities in the U.S. 2017-2019 (*Wallethub*)
- 6th Wealthiest ZIP Code in 2020 (*Phoenix Business Journal*)
- Top 50 Hottest Hoods in 2018 (*Phoenix Business Journal*)
- 10th Best City to Raise a Family in 2018 (*Wallethub*)
- Top 100 Golf Course in U.S. 2017-2019 (*Golf Digest*)



Livability

Peoria is renowned as a great place to raise a family and start a career. A plethora of

local amenities and attractions contribute to Peoria's livability. Beyond the tourist attractions of Spring Training and Lake Pleasant, the City offers many community facilities and recreational opportunities for all ages and interests such as an extensive public park system and annual community events. Peoria's dedication toward livability is also evident in the City's latest General Plan which addresses sustainable water use, housing, public services and more.

Ranked as the No. 1 place to live in Arizona and one of the best cities in the United States.

-Money Magazine and Yahoo! Finance

Peoria strives to uphold these six major livability priorities in order to maintain an exceptional quality of life for its citizens.

	Arts, Cultural and Recreational Enrichment		Economic Prosperity
	Smart Growth		Superior Public Services
	Healthy Neighborhoods		Integrated Transportation

Community facilities

- Peoria Community Center
- Rio Vista Recreation Center
- Peoria Sports Complex
- Peoria Center for the Performing Arts
- 36 neighborhood parks
- 2 libraries
- 3 swimming pools
- 6 golf courses
- 9 lighted multi-purpose ball fields
- 15 tennis courts

Peoria Sports Complex



Lake Pleasant

Urban ecology, ecotourism and recreation

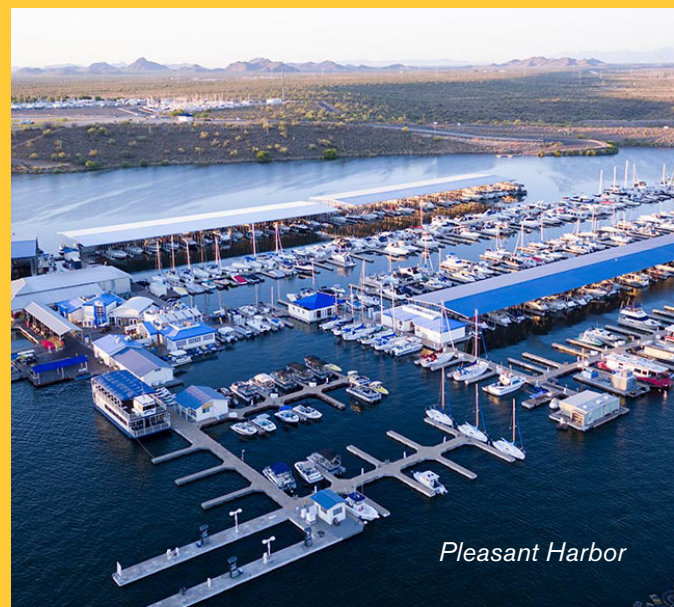
Peoria is surrounded by the natural beauty of the Sonoran Desert and is home to Lake Pleasant, a 23,000-acre park and major recreational asset to the North Valley. The transient Agua Fria River and New River flow through Peoria, as do a multitude of washes and creeks. Most notable perhaps is Skunk Creek — known for the recreational trails running alongside it — which forges a connection between Peoria and Glendale. Northern Peoria is home to beautiful mountains and buttes including Sunrise Mountain, Calderwood Butte and Cholla Mountain.

Boasting over 300 days of sunshine annually, Peoria's ecotourism opportunities are a steady industry for residents and visitors. The City features over 60 miles of trails for walking, biking and horseback riding, as well as 570 total acres of accessible park land.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park contains a full-service marina, providing opportunities for water-oriented recreation such as kayaking, water skiing and even scuba diving. Visitors can also go horseback riding, take gliding lessons, hike, camp and more.

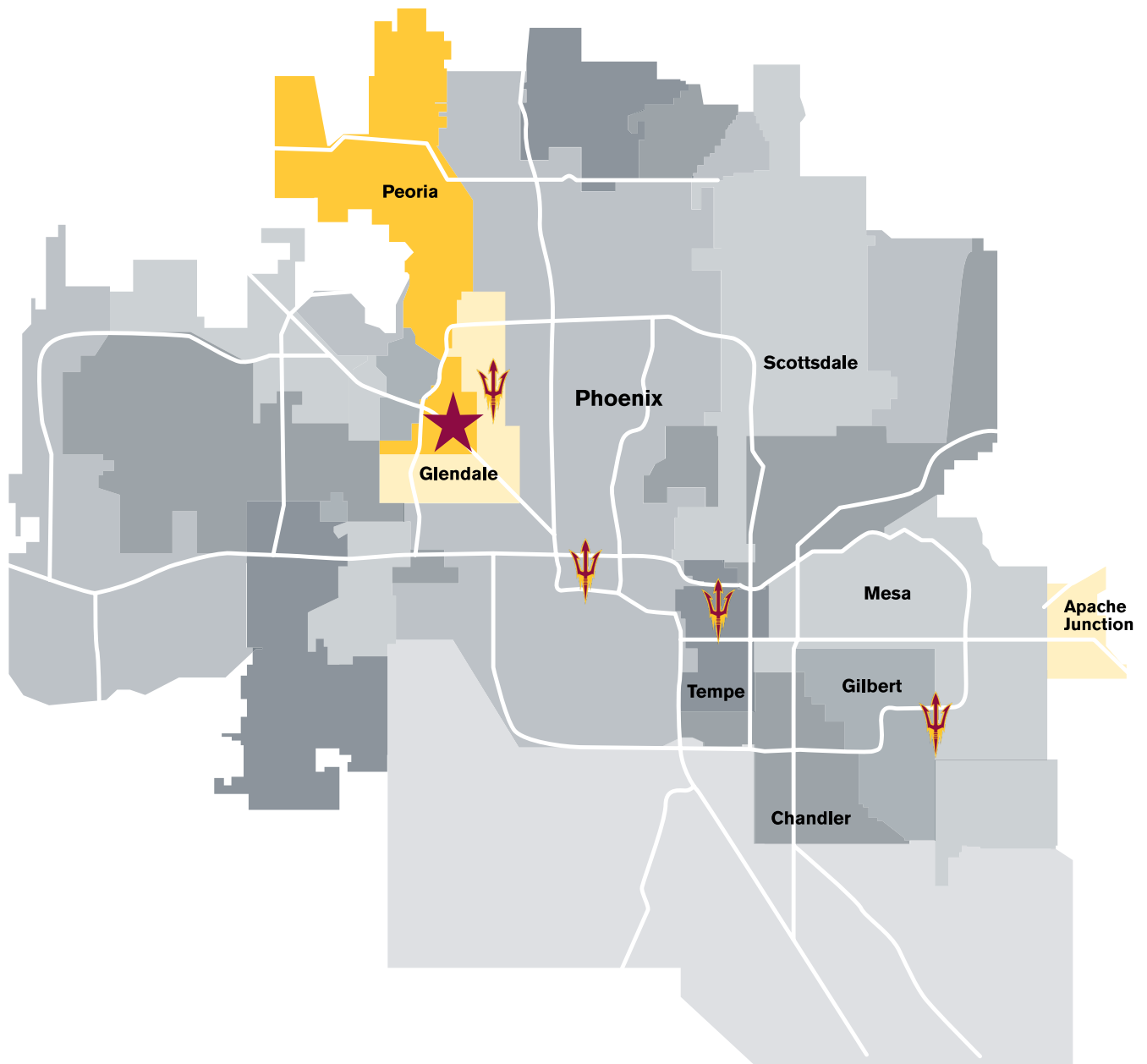


Skunk Creek



Pleasant Harbor

MAP OF PROJECT CITIES PARTNER COMMUNITIES IN THE GREATER PHOENIX METROPOLITAN AREA



 Peoria City Hall

 ASU campus



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Peoria has continually demonstrated itself as a forward-thinking, sustainability-minded city. With booming economic and population growth, Peoria is presented with the opportunity to support its community as the recent COVID-19 pandemic makes its way throughout the state. With financial instability and health concerns, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated several existing challenges, calling upon municipal entities to inform and facilitate emergency services.

To encompass a breadth of COVID-related challenges, three different classes, from various backgrounds, set out to understand and evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the City of Peoria and its residents. Each class evaluated a unique challenge, and subsequently drafted diverse recommendations for the City of Peoria to consider. Each class worked directly with the City of Peoria, and research methods ranged from literature review to focus groups to provide the City with recommendations.

JUS 385: Students with the School of Social Transformation conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with stakeholders from local organizations for Gregory Broberg's Justice and Everyday Life course. For the COVID needs assessment, students interviewed with Peoria organizations and residents to identify gaps, needs, and availability of resources that affects the organizations' ability to react to challenges such as COVID-19. For their final deliverable, students identified key recommendations for each of the 21 participating organizations.

COM 415: Students in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences addressed challenges regarding communication about the pandemic. Students from Majia Nadesan's Risk Communication online course set out to identify and describe Peoria's public messaging surrounding COVID-19. Students individually evaluated samples of Peoria's COVID-19 communication and provided recommendations for future messaging based on an evaluation of the intended audience and the effectiveness of the messaging. Key points from 30 individual student reports spanning 3 assignments were combined to create this class summary section.

PUP 642: Graduate students from the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning split into six groups to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on Peoria's business community. Students conducted focus groups, analyzed omnibus survey data, compared Peoria to other relevant cities, and evaluated the impacts on the restaurant and fitness industries.

For their final deliverable, each student group compiled their research and findings into a final report and identified key recommendations for the City of Peoria to support its economic growth.

The following student work and recommendations can be used to inform Peoria's practices and support as the pandemic continues, as well as lend useful insights for potential future preparation and action strategies surrounding community health threats. Consistently across the reports, the need for more inclusive communication is highlighted as residents struggle to keep up with the evolving knowledge and practices in relation to COVID-19. Local businesses and organizations require support to maintain their current momentum in the community and provide necessary services to Peoria residents, such as access to food, health care, and mental health services.

Project goals

The students' research and diverse recommendations aim to address various challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The three participating classes seek to provide the City of Peoria with viable recommendations to support local businesses and community organizations as they contend with challenges in health and safety, resource availability, and financial support. In addition, recommendations are provided to address the City's communication about the pandemic and available resources to its residents and businesses. While most research and recommendations in the following class summary sections specifically reference the COVID-19 pandemic, the information can also be adapted to other widespread community challenges and preparedness efforts.

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for supporting local businesses	Read more
Seek or facilitate additional funding packages for local businesses. Specifically focus on businesses in the Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food, and Other Services categories in the Old Town and P83 areas as they are considered most vulnerable in the community. Municipal loans, in addition to a large CARES grant pool, may also be useful funding resources for businesses.	pp.74-77, 79-80, 82, 89-92, 97
Integrate innovative marketing tactics for local restaurants to recruit patronage locally and encourage consumers to consider small businesses and repeat visits.	pp.74-76, 81, 83, 94, 98
Collaborate with local businesses to create affordable marketing avenues by encouraging the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook or official tourism pages to promote the businesses.	pp.75-76, 81, 83, 90-91
Help fitness centers and gyms retain or grow memberships by providing free or easy-to-rent outdoor spaces to host socially-distanced events and games.	pp.75-76
Host community events in which gyms can market to potential customers. This could include a community pickleball, tennis, kickball, softball, or other competition that can host crowds in a socially distanced manner.	p.76
Create a program that helps small businesses receive resources to combat the spread of COVID-19, providing products such as sanitation supplies, heating, temperature readers, and seating to accommodate outdoor dining services. The program could also help identify grant funding for further assistance.	pp.79-80
Provide lease-agreement support as it would be useful in the immediate short-term support of local businesses.	pp.74, 79-80, 82
Consider using innovative technologies to enhance tourist experiences while connecting them to small businesses.	pp.81, 83
Focus on the “triple bottom line” (equity, environment and economic growth) for long-term business goals.	p.83
Emphasize placemaking opportunities to foster an environment for business growth.	pp.75, 78, 81, 83
Focus on retail and commercial developments that prioritize walkability and connectivity to natural assets. For example, enhancing the Skunk Creek Trail could provide an additional boost for the already successful P83 district.	pp.78-80, 86-87
Adapt light commercial and big-box retail environments to accommodate e-commerce fulfillment and delivery operations to offer more attractive spaces for businesses eager to satisfy changing habits of the Peoria consumer.	pp.84-87

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for supporting local businesses (cont'd)	Read more
Develop a free and inclusive one-on-one mentoring program for local businesses regardless of their size. The services offered to the city's small and diverse business community could help businesses reposition themselves. This may include Business Builders, workshops, seminars, ASU Startup School, and connections to informational and other business support resources.	pp.88-89, 92, 96
Partner with area community colleges to provide on-the-job training for entry-level employees and technical assistance for business owners.	p.96
Adopt a program whereby local businesses not only remain open during the pandemic but also offer a range of special deals and promotions. These businesses can be featured on a special list that can be published online and promoted to residents via social media.	pp.90, 93, 96
Collaborate with the Fire Marshal to ensure appropriate closure of streets, alleyways, and easements to provide public space for social distancing. Businesses could also work with the Department of Liquor Licenses and Control to allow restaurants the option to sell alcohol to customers ordering takeout.	pp.90, 93, 95-96
Develop a GIS-based digital app to help increase business and resource visibility. Presuming local businesses publicize their information through the app, it could provide a centralized information hub for sharing variable businesses hours and restrictions, and where entrepreneurs are operating from. Medical facilities could also be included in the app, as well as COVID-19 testing sites and businesses offering COVID-19 mitigation supplies.	pp.94, 97
Prepare a guide for starting businesses and consider zero-interest loans for new businesses to serve as down payment assistance for opening expenses.	pp.89, 92, 97
Identify corporate programs available for small business assistance.	p.97
Develop outreach for employers to help facilitate maximum support for quarantined employees. For example, resources to help navigate federal assistance processes could result in more available funds for businesses and employees in need.	pp.37, 38, 44
Provide support for businesses to stay open by helping procure basic resources such as food supplies, shelter, and access to emergency services.	pp.40, 44
Develop a "gold standard" list of recommended guidelines and precautions for COVID-19 and award it to businesses and organizations who implement and adhere to said standards. Additionally, publish a monthly list of businesses who meet the "gold standard" to increase exposure.	p.47

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for COVID-related communications	Read more
If feasible, include more consistently updated case numbers and community statistics in relevant communications. Further familiarizing residents with the situation could result in less fear and uncertainty in future risk communication interactions.	pp.59-61
Favor short and simple social media posts that convey important information in a quick, comprehensible manner.	pp.59, 61
Implement helpful examples when requesting action from residents, such as explaining why wearing a mask is important. Further illustrating and explaining the reasons with a solid scientific backing could help alleviate tension from the target audience.	p.61
Encourage residents to engage in responsible, independent research to help educate themselves on a situation they may be unfamiliar with. Consistently including links to credible sources, such as the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, could help guide residents responsibly.	p.61
If feasible, provide information on specific case locations in the community. This could help residents navigate public outings easier and provide peace of mind.	p.61
Maintain consistency in messages conveyed to residents through social media and public broadcasts. Frequent, consistent updates could help alleviate uncertainty and provide stability in an unfamiliar situation.	p.61
Implement more vibrant colors in the visuals used to convey risk communication. Vibrant colors such as green, blue, and yellow are eye-catching and could attract the attention of a resident scrolling through their social media feed.	p.61
Include simple yet impactful phrases in addition to visuals used to convey risk communication. The inclusion of statistics in an understandable visual could be beneficial as well.	p.61
Implement posts and perhaps even a section on the city website that highlight positive happenings to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. This practice could help residents feel more hopeful, seeing that positive occurrences can come during a stressful time.	p.61
Promote media outreach encouraging individuals to seek out available mental health services to help deal with the compounding stressors associated with the pandemic.	p.43
Design informational flyers as a help guide of resources provided by the City.	p.47

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for COVID-related communications (cont'd)	Read more
Create a help hotline for COVID-19 related affairs such as mental health, employment, and safety precautions. Additionally, a separate hotline created specifically for non-emergency health questions and assurance could also be beneficial.	p.47
Integrate specific offices and services commonly needed into one centralized phone number as opposed to many different phone numbers.	p.47
Develop marketing campaigns to advertise available pandemic-related services and how to access them.	pp.47, 92
Use media outlets to encourage the need for immunizations and healthcare visits which display the safety practices taken by those who work within local medical clinics.	p.47
Provide virtual presentations about the pandemic and associated support that can be streamed for free with coordination for internet access if necessary.	p.47
Create an online community hub for information regarding COVID testing and safety tips.	p.47

Recommendations for employment	Read more
Develop a program that assists individuals in applying for unemployment resulting from COVID-19. As associated website providing simplified answers to common unemployment questions may be a helpful part of the program	p.47
Create a temp agency for various occupations, but employers participate if they have intentions of being able to provide full-time positions.	p.44
Promote skilled-trade programs taught in-house to improve income opportunities for future residents.	p.44
Develop and support better services for homeless job seekers to find work.	p.44
Hold a community job fair that can help people find temporary or entry-level employment options.	p.44

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for essentials (food, housing, healthcare)	Read more
Encourage and assist businesses and restaurants that are able to donate food and services to their communities by implementing a scheduled donation drop system.	p.45
Provide hot meal pop-ups, potentially in collaboration with local businesses, to help distribute hot meals to homeless people in need.	p.45
Focus on community nutrition by providing more affordable fresh produce options, especially consider the implementation of community gardens in unused lots.	p.45
Publish “food maps” throughout the city to highlight entities that provide food assistance such as local businesses, religious organizations, or local housing complexes.	p.45
Organize a system of “community fridges” where people can donate produce and/or take what they need. This could also work in conjunction with implementation of mobile food bank trucks that can operate across the city.	p.45
Develop a contactless food-box delivery service and advertise the resource through a virtual outreach system.	p.45
Coordinate with food banks and volunteers to disburse food boxes with a variety of nutritional food in various neighborhood schools and allow the residents to come pick them up on their own time. Additional, assure residents that safety guidelines are being strictly followed at all food banks.	p.45
Introduce drive-thru or delivery grocery and food bank services, or other alternatives to in-person pick-up, especially for single-parent and working families, those who do not have access to transportation, or those who may be ill and unable to leave their homes.	pp.38, 45
Consider policy changes that can decrease barriers to food resources, such as those surrounding ID requirements and food subsidy applications.	p.45
Host a community housing fair to help individuals in need locate available affordable housing options.	p.46
Provide resources and assistance towards tenants’ rights, eviction prevention, and rental assistance during the pandemic.	p.46
Revise the rental assistance program to include deposit assistance for anyone who is currently employed or fleeing a situation of domestic violence.	p.46

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for essentials (food, housing, healthcare) (cont'd)	Read more
Consider pursuing policies that work toward the construction of more affordable housing in the community.	p.46
Consider establishing collaborative efforts between community leaders and real estate agents to utilize empty buildings to provide additional shelter resources for individuals experiencing homelessness.	p.46
Prioritize low- or fixed-income housing for senior citizens. Perhaps coordination with apartment buildings or townhomes with vacancies can help provide interim space for seniors in need.	p.46

Recommendations for building resource networks	Read more
Encourage residents to register for a voluntary neighbor's network to help reduce the pressure and financial strain on some public services. This network can offer assistance when a neighbor needs non-emergency assistance.	p.97
Provide childcare and tutoring support. The City of Henderson, NV, established free homework and tutoring services for K-8 children to complement its public school program via its Battle Born Kids program. This program also provides low-cost childcare for children ages 5-14.	p.97
Organize voluntary support services to aid seniors with technology for things such as virtual appointments.	p.48
Create a committee that can research grants that benefit community needs.	p.48
Facilitate non-profits to group together via Zoom to cross-source and serve the community by partnering with other organizations to provide as many available resources as possible.	p.48
Build relationships with institutions that advocate for small businesses which would provide access to continuing education on program funding.	pp.48, 90
Enhance relationships with respective municipalities to have proactive alternatives for future unforeseeable events.	p.48
Develop a centralized forum composed of all involved agencies to improve communication between each other regarding who needs aid and what specific aid they require.	p.48
Facilitate integration throughout agencies to ensure that seniors in need receive the help they need as soon as possible.	p.48

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for public support services	Read more
Implement a mobile health bus to provide vulnerable populations with basic health needs, COVID-19 tests, basic check-ups, and supply deliveries.	p.43
Expand access to mental health care and counseling by offering free or reduced counseling for vulnerable populations, such as youth and disabled, arrange virtual or weekly mental health assessment testing, and provide resources such as handouts or online lessons to educate the public on mental health issues.	p.43
Invest in a domestic violence awareness campaign so individuals at increased risk due to COVID-19 have the tools they need to get assistance.	p.43
Implement counseling programs that can assist children aging out of the foster care system to prevent homelessness and consequentially their risk of contracting COVID-19.	p.43
Survey homeless living conditions to form a consensus on what supplies and other resources are needed most during the pandemic.	p.43
Expand emergency shelters that fit COVID safety guidelines.	p.43
Promote services like Telehealth and Zoom conferencing to bypass access and transportation barriers created by the pandemic.	p.43
Allow those volunteering at services that assist in sustaining their communities to be classified as essential workers.	p.44
Supplement those who qualify for federal food stamps with vouchers that can be used to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and cleaning supplies.	p.46
Provide community training and certification for local volunteers working in food delivery services, to ensure safety and reduce health risks.	p.46
Provide mask, sanitizer, and other hygienic product “pop-up” locations around the city, focusing on homeless population hotspots.	p.46
Raise awareness around Medicaid and the relevant benefits, specifically those targeted at seniors, that may help vulnerable populations through the pandemic.	p.47
Invest in internet and telecommunications infrastructure to accommodate rising digital industries. Ensure energy and internet grids are able to accommodate a growing number of people conducting business from home.	pp.85-87

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for public support services (cont'd)	Read more
Revise policies for shared parking, unbundled parking, and shared easement use of private parking facilities during off-hours to provide alternatives to traditionally rigid parking billing structures.	pp.95-96
Provide internet hotspots for anyone participating in medical treatment via Telehealth or are enrolled in vocational training or educational programs.	p.44
Install pop-up public “networking” locations with internet, computers, and phones to increase accessibility to online resources.	p.48
Procure funding towards increased transportation (bus route, uber/cabs, etc.) and consider implementing additional public transit routes focused on access to food resources and homeless shelters to further serve vulnerable populations.	p.48
Offer suggestions on alternate ways to participate in public activities (e.g., social distancing and Zoom gatherings). This could provide residents with a comfortable sense of autonomy, while keeping themselves and others safe.	p.61
Offer suggestions on how to combat “pandemic fatigue” that include examples of safe, socially distant activities, self-care practices, and mental health resources.	p.61

CITY OF PEORIA PROJECTS: ALIGNMENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS'

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As the leading international framework for sustainable decision-making, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lay out a path for partnerships toward global peace and prosperity. The SDGs provide a set of goals and metrics for project impact to be measured, offering an illustration of the benefits experienced by the cities, towns, and students who participate in a Project Cities partnership. For details on the SDGs, visit sdgs.un.org/goals.



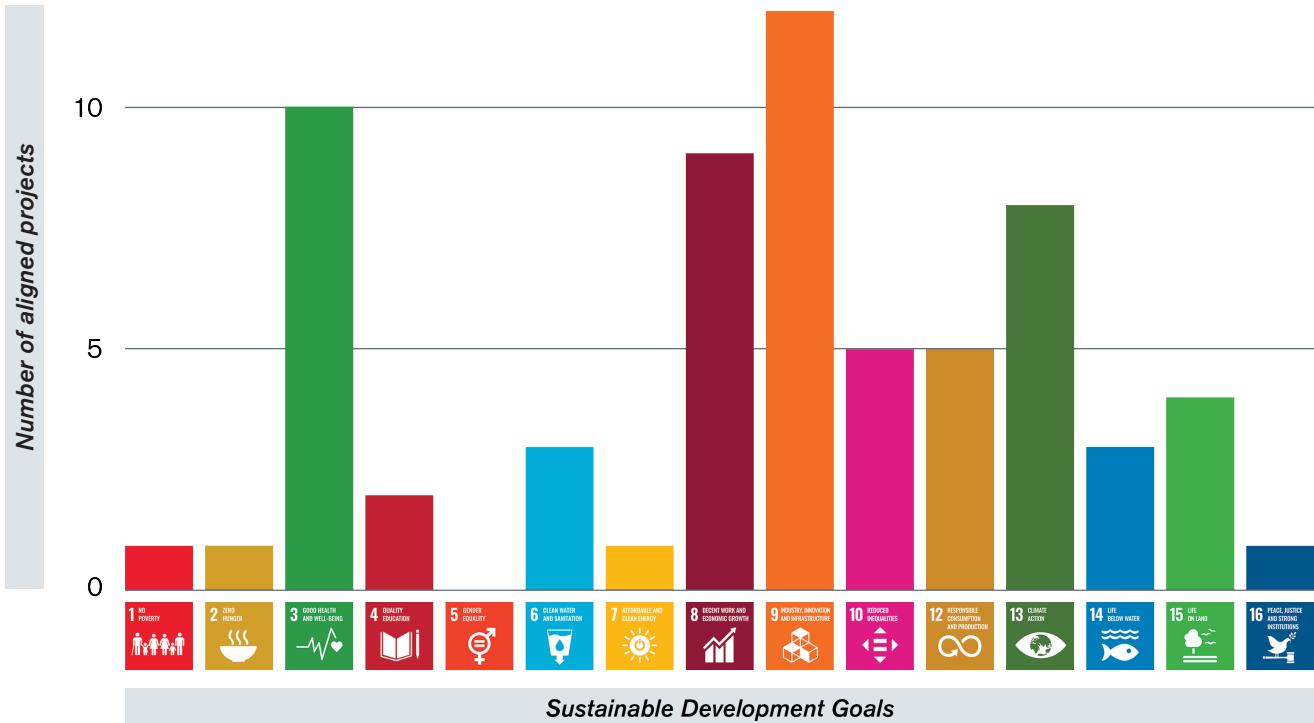
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Every project in the PC program aligns with SDGs 11 and 17.

The figure below illustrates SDG project alignment throughout the City of Peoria's partnership with Project Cities, through the Fall 2020 semester.



TOP THREE GOALS ADDRESSED IN THE FOLLOWING REPORT

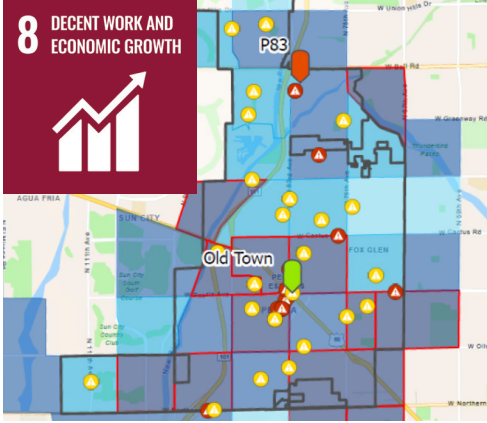
The COVID-19 related projects conducted by three different courses were able to touch on a wide range of issues including public messaging, economic resilience, and community support. While the research involved a broad spectrum of the SDGs in varying capacities, the overarching themes of the report as a whole involve goals 3, 8, and 10.



Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

"Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

Public messaging and community resources throughout the pandemic have given people the tools they need to stay healthy and safe through uncertain or stressful scenarios.



Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

"Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all."

Businesses were heavily impacted by the pandemic, but it is shown that community support can make a great difference in their resilience.



Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

"Reduce inequality within and among countries."

Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly or disabled, were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Assistance through municipal, non-profit, or community organizations can help provide vital resources to those who need it most.

The following report summarizes and draws highlights from work and research conducted by students in JUS 385 Justice and Everyday Life, for the Fall 2020 partnership between ASU's Project Cities and the City of Peoria.

To access the original student reports, additional materials, and resources, visit:

links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaCOVID20F

PART 2:

COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment

**A SURVEY OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ON
COMMUNITY IMPACTS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

JUS 385: JUSTICE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

**FACULTY
GREGORY BROBERG**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

During the Fall 2020 semester, students in Gregory Broberg's JUS 385: Justice and Everyday Life participated in a research-based effort to understand the met and unmet needs related to COVID-19 within the City of Peoria, Arizona.

Throughout the project, students focused on several primary goals:

- **Connect** with Peoria residents (or surrogate organizations) to understand their needs (met or unmet) during the pandemic
- **Collect** data utilizing a focus group interview methodology (approximately 1 hour via Zoom)
- **Analyze** focus group data to identify important “themes” in terms of needs (food, healthcare, housing, and employment)
- **Produce** a final report that clearly articulates the project findings

Sustainable Development Goals

A significant aspect of this project focuses on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals emphasize the promotion of prosperity by recognizing the importance of many factors which go hand-in-hand when tackling recovery from the pandemic. COVID-19 recuperation considers many of these goals, giving it a remarkable presence in many recent recovery methods as it not only aims to solve more apparent problems but actually recognizes deeply rooted issues that have contributed to the suffering of many. The SDGs that serve as central themes in this project are goals 1, 2, 3, and 10.



Figure 1 Primary SDGs present in this project, including No Poverty (1), Zero Hunger (2), Good Health and Well-Being (3), and Reduced Inequalities (10)

- **Goal 1 - No Poverty:** Poverty is a major global issue, even before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as millions live without being able to fulfill their most basic human needs. A great imbalance in wealth has developed over many years as the most vulnerable groups are left with no assistance. With the current pandemic, this has been aggravated as millions of people are pushed into poverty while billions receive no social protection of any kind. Goal 1 strives to face this head on by focusing on the pressing matter of COVID-19 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020, para.1-4).
- **Goal 2 - Zero Hunger:** Those suffering from hunger in developing countries and even individuals in first world countries have only faced more strife with COVID-19. Food producers have suffered harsh blows due to the crisis as lockdown measures make it challenging to get products to consumers. Not to mention other established threats to food systems like changing climates and pest infestations continue, further contributing to the damage. Goal 2 focuses on sustainable agriculture, equality of resources, and cooperation for improvements in infrastructure and technology (UNDP, 2020, para.1-3).
- **Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-Being:** Goal 3 seeks to recognize and address the effect of inequality, environmental hazards, and emerging viruses like COVID-19. Combating these targets includes ending the effects of poverty and inequality through universal healthcare and investigating possible issues such as ensuring that all countries are prepared for detecting, reporting, and responding to health emergencies, as opposed to being caught by surprise (UNDP, 2020, para.2-3).
- **Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities:** Issues of inequality by sex, race, or ethnicity are prevalent worldwide; however, throughout the pandemic more vulnerable groups, such as older persons, those with disabilities, and children, have suffered greatly from the myriad of domino effects triggered by COVID-19. Goal 10 looks into global solutions by improving regulations of financial markets and providing greater assistance to the groups that require it the most, like women, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, and older persons as they face difficulties in access to resources, lack of opportunities, and discrimination (UNDP, 2020, para.3-4).

Participating Peoria organizations

The City of Peoria identified 31 potential organizations. Each of these non-profit service providers were contacted to determine if they were willing to participate in focus group interviews. Twenty-one of these organizations agreed to the one-hour focus group interview, conducted virtually by students. Participating organizations are presented in Figures 2A-B, and additional contacted organizations are listed in Figure 3.

Participating community organizations		
Group name	Group focus	Sectors served
Benevilla	Community resource referrals, family support coordination, parent and child interactive programs, parent programs, senior services	food, financial, education
Lutheran Social Services	Offers aging and disabilities services, children & family programs, refugee and immigration services and emergency services to include temporary shelter and wrap-around services to unsheltered citizens	food, housing, employment, financial
Phoenix Rescue Mission	Homeless navigation, food and connections to necessary wrap-around services	food, housing, healthcare, employment, financial
Stepping Up for Seniors	Helping seniors who require care, but lack family support or financial resources to provide needed care for themselves	housing, healthcare, financial
Area Agency on Aging	S.H.I.P. Free Medicare and Medicaid counseling: Not affiliated with the insurance industry	healthcare
CASS (Central Arizona Shelter System)	The CASS housing navigator can assist you in your journey to locate affordable housing, focusing on “No matter how big fear presents itself, it’s no match for success!”	housing, financial
Adelante Healthcare	Eligibility specialist to assist with AHCCCS forms and other available options (also WIC)	healthcare, financial
Dress for Success	Supports female jobseekers with tools to secure employment including resume assistance, job leads, transportation resources and interview attire	employment, education
Ability360	Programs to empower people with disabilities. Programs include Community Integration, ADA services, Advocacy, peer support, home care services, Benefits to Work AZ, Theater 360, Livability and more	housing, healthcare, employment

Figure 2A Community organizations which participated in project focus group interviews

Participating community organizations (cont'd)		
Group name	Group focus	Sectors served
Habitat for Humanity	Administers Peoria's Emergency Home Repair Program and builds new homes through the Community Development Block Grant funded Home Program	housing
Billy's Place	Grief support for children and families who have lost a loved one	education
ARIZONA@Work	Workforce development, job readiness, employment options for 16-24 yr. olds offers Access Point adult workforce program	employment, education
Homeless Youth Connection	Eliminates barriers to graduation for homeless youth	food, housing, financial
Noah	Offers income-based healthcare, dental and counseling and benefits eligibility services	healthcare, financial
Cancer Support Community	Provides support for newly diagnosed people and their loved ones	education
Crisis Response Network	Helps individuals in crisis through continuum of care, referral and data services 24-hour peer-run warm line, SMI determinations, mobile team dispatches, crisis transportation and ER room assessments	housing, healthcare
Deep Within	Men's drug and alcohol recovery program (live-in)	food, housing, employment, education
Kaity's Way	Advocates healthy relationships by providing education, skills and tools to youth and their allies Monthly workshops, works with families, schools and organizations to support and provide a holistic approach for families in crisis	education
Bloom 365	Healthy relationship education, mentor teens as peer educators/advocates to offer crisis counseling, intervention and ongoing support to teens experiencing dating abuse or sexual violence	education
Take Charge America	Provides financial education and tools for healthy finances	financial, education
Boys and Girls Club	Distance learning, youth development and after school programs	food, education

Figure 2B Community organizations which participated in project focus group interviews

Contacted, non-participating community organizations		
Group name	Group focus	Sectors served
Foundation for Senior Living (Community Action Program)	Provides crisis case management and financial assistance to low-income residents and provides in-home care, adult daycare, affordable housing, and senior centers	food, housing, employment, financial
St. Mary's Food Bank	Largest food bank providing nutrition to hungry families throughout 9 counties in Arizona	food
Child Crisis	Provides emergency shelter, foster care, adoption, counseling, early education, home visitation, and parenting support services to Arizona's most vulnerable children and families	housing, education
Reveille Foundation	Holistic support for the underserved focusing on transitioning military, veterans and spouses Assess individuals, create and execute plans. Offers support with housing, transportation, education, workforce development and employment	housing, employment
Hope Women's Center	Provides vulnerable women and teen girls with education, mentoring and support	food, housing, healthcare, employment, financial
Salvation Army	Serving the needs of their local community through employment services and food services	food, employment
St. Vincent de Paul	Provides person-to-person services and assistance to vulnerable citizens	food, financial
JAG	Assists youth to remain in school and acquire the academic, personal and leadership skills required for success after graduation	education
One n Ten	Serves and assists lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, by providing tools to improve self-esteem and self-acceptance	education

Figure 3 Community organizations which did not participate in interviews but were contacted and researched

RESEARCH METHODS

Team roles

To effectively distribute project responsibilities throughout the semester, students were placed in teams of 4-5 and assigned a specific role to play in their group, as outlined below.

- **Group leader:** Responsible for coordinating all group activity. This person has to be a strong leader and compassionate when working with others to ensure that all project deliverables are complete. Must be actively involved through all phases of the project. The group leader will also provide a weekly team status report via Google Form.
- **Interview leader:** Carries out the assigned focus group interview, including facilitation of the Zoom focus group session using the provided interview protocol. The role is crucial to ensuring the teams achieve their goal of facilitating a robust data collection session.
- **Interview coordinator:** Works hand-in-hand with the interview leader, ensuring that Zoom records the session and asking follow up questions during interviews based on input from focus group members.
- **Data analysis creator:** Analyzes the recorded focus group session and records key findings in a Google Sheet. This person does not directly participate in the focus group.
- **Final report creator:** Leads the development of the final report profile. Other team members provide the report creator with a template, which is then filled based on the data analyzed by the data analysis creator.

Focus group interviews

This ambitious project was accomplished through the combined efforts of several student groups, with each member in charge of a specific step in the process. Each group was responsible for completing this process with their assigned organization that served as the project participants. Interviews were conducted to encourage the citizens of the City of Peoria to provide their perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic and how the City responded to it. These interviews were led by one to two students with at least two representatives of the participating organizations serving as the interviewee. An open discussion format was taken to allow the participants the opportunity to voice their thoughts on the matter more freely. However, all student interviewers had the same five questions of discussion in order to gain the desired feedback on specific topics.

Interviewers would not interrupt participants unless it was required for clarification or going more in depth with a question. Original focus group templates used by students during the interviews are available in Appendix A at links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaCOVID20F. Students conducted 19 interviews over the course of about 2 weeks. Interviewers also provided contact information to participants to provide the option for a more private conversation.

The recorded interview and automatically generated transcript are then shared with the Data Analysis Creator. The raw data is analyzed and coded to identify the portions that cover the main questions and anything that should be included regarding the overall goals of the project. Using process and concept coding technique outlined by Saldana (2016), students were asked to take interview transcription data and code it according to the following guidelines:

Process Coding

Process Coding uses gerund-based language to convey action in data through activities that can be observed and more abstract concepts of action. This is done to keep track of the processes of human action and how they can appear in a certain order or change over time. Doing so creates a form of storyline that is easier to follow when working with studies that have continuous dialogue that must be recorded, like a focus group interview that emphasizes open discussion (p.111-113).

Concept Coding

Concept Coding uses words or short phrases to provide an idea that goes beyond the surface of what is seen in raw data. This is done by grouping units of data and analyzing them in order to identify abstract concepts. Concept Coding works especially well in a study that works with interview transcripts as there is much content that can be looked into to create a much more general idea that encompasses the original data (p.119-122). Coded data is then shared with the group's final report creator to organize and display the student findings, using the template provided as a guide.

In addition to their group assignments, students were asked to complete an end-of-semester survey. The survey intended to collect data related to key learning targets, provide an opportunity for students to analyze and reflect on the justice-related implications of their work, and identify ways in which the project contributed to their growth as a group participant.

Participating organizations survey

To collect additional demographic and project-related data, surveys were distributed to each participating community organization at the end of their focus group interviews. Surveys were conducted via Qualtrics and shared with a link provided to interview participants at the close of their Zoom sessions. Information requested in each survey was the same for all participants and is summarized in the following list. See Appendix B at links.asu/PCPeoriaCOVID20F for the full survey.

- What is your zip code?
- To which gender identity do you most identify?
- Race (check one of the following categories):
- Ethnicity (check one):
- Your age:
- What is your employment status?
- How many people are in your household (including yourself)?
- Your annual household income?
- Which ONE (1) group do you most closely represent:
- The role of the Peoria SUPPORT program is to bring awareness to the citizens of Peoria about the social service resources that are available to them. With this in mind, please check SIX (6) topics that you think the City should be acting on and educating the public about:
- I am familiar with the Community Assistance Resource Center (Peoria SUPPORT program) and its offerings.
- What method do you (or would you) utilize to receive or research training opportunities or services (please check all that apply)?
- Would you like to have information provided in a language other than English? If so, what is your language preference:
- What location would you prefer to attend free social services classes/ seminars (select all that you prefer)?

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data collected from the interview and survey process helped students identify connections between the community organizations and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This project could serve to advance SDGs 1, 2, 3, and 10. The following sections list relationships between the organizations' missions, needs, and concerns, with each of these four SDGs:

Goal 1 - No Poverty

Ability360

One main concern of the Ability360 organization was that with the increase in unemployment, challenges would arise for Peoria residents due to a lack of access to accessible and affordable housing.



Benevilla Family Resource Center

The interview with the Benevilla Family Resource Center affiliates relates the importance of ensuring distributive justice is being met to existing gaps in community services during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Services that were topics for such concern were in the areas of transportation, affordable housing, and food security.

Bloom 365

Bloom 365 explains how COVID-19 has impacted the people they work closely with. They share how many have lost their jobs or have faced major pay cuts due to government/statewide shutdowns. Since Bloom 365's main focus is on adolescents within the community they have noticed high rates of unemployment within the youth.

Adelante

Focus group members mentioned their patients would divulge their mental and emotional frustrations with the constant restraints due to COVID. Whether it be the lack of assistance with teaching their children, determining who would stay home with the family or go to work, or what to do if a single parent caught COVID-19.

Goal 2 - Zero Hunger

Adelante

According to Mrs. Castaneda, some Peoria residents are afraid to go to grocery stores due to fear of contracting COVID-19. When we asked if food items could be delivered or picked up curbside, Mrs. Castaneda stated there is no system to accommodate this. The lack of a system is due to vendors (store owners) not participating in an upgrade to the WIC and SNAP system to accommodate this feature.



Arizona Works

Some of the addressed challenges include clients having trouble filling out applications or being denied because of something in their past, thus restricting their access to government programs. Food banks have also been hit hard because most of the food donations often depleted within a brief period due to the overwhelming amount of people needing food for their household.

Bloom 365

Due to the loss of jobs and pay cuts Bloom 365 notes that there is not enough money found within their community members households for basic necessities, including food. The increase of demand for affordable or free food created an even larger need for food banks, making them more prevalent.

Habitat for Humanity

Gabriel Jaramillo from Habitat for Humanity had talked about the possibility of volunteers not being able to make it to the shelters in order to package the food resulting in a reduction in the amount of food boxes available to families. He also talked about the amount of time spent waiting in line, up to an hour or more, when picking up said packages.

Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-Being

Kaity's Way

The organizer of Kaity's Way, a non-profit organization that seeks to bring awareness to teen dating violence and providing education on healthy relationships, stated that people are not able to provide for their families, and that may help explain the recent increase in suicides. Kaity's Way's CEO had also discussed that the concerns regarding adequate food and shelter have strained mental health as well with increased suicidal ideations.



Adelante

According to Mrs. Castaneda, children's immunization is not happening, specifically between 0 and 2 years of age. The reason for the lack of participation in the community is fear of the COVID-19 virus. Families do not want to run the risk of their children becoming ill and believe that there is a higher chance of this happening if they visit the doctor's office.

Bloom 365

One of the main concerns brought up was where to get tested, especially for free, for COVID-19. Since there is no serious widespread promotion of free testing, many do not know how to take this precaution without being held financially responsible for doing so. One of the interviewees, Donna, explained that her children were able to get tested in school along with their family, however even after using their insurance they still needed to pay \$600 out-of-pocket.

Cancer Support Community

There has been a decrease in cancer screenings which may lead to a spike in diagnoses and treatment when people feel it is safe enough to visit medical offices again.

Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities

Kaity's Way

Regarding shelter during COVID-19, Kaity's Way CEO comments, "The shelters are filling up and then of course shelters have certain COVID restrictions. I'm not sure the shelters can actually fill up entirely in order to continue to do social distancing. As graduated foster children already struggle to adapt and find housing after they leave the foster care system, it is evident that the aggravated housing situation through COVID has made this issue worse." When a foster child ages out they more than likely become homeless causing them to be more prone to getting COVID-19 and passing it on to others since they do not necessarily have resources to stop the spread.



Billy's Place

COVID-19 has restricted a lot of normal access nationally and according to the participants at Billy's Place has severely restricted the older residents in their area.

Habitat for Humanity

In the interview, it was discussed how community centers, rec centers, or any program-based centers are closed right now. Gabriel talked about the fact that these centers also often provide food for children. There was a dramatic cut in attendance limits, from 50 students to 8, in order to allow for social distancing.

Survey findings

The following findings are derived from the survey shared with interview participants at the end of focus group sessions. Thirty-nine individuals completed the survey, providing students with demographic information as well as key opinions regarding public services in the community.

Demographics

People of color account for fewer participants as most were white individuals, according to Figure 5. Even when the other ethnicities are combined, it remains significantly less than the leading demographic. A great amount of information came from the perspective of nonprofit agencies, as seen in Figure 6. Those that identified as solely Peoria citizens had the least amount of participation along with other affiliations that were not directly mentioned in the survey.

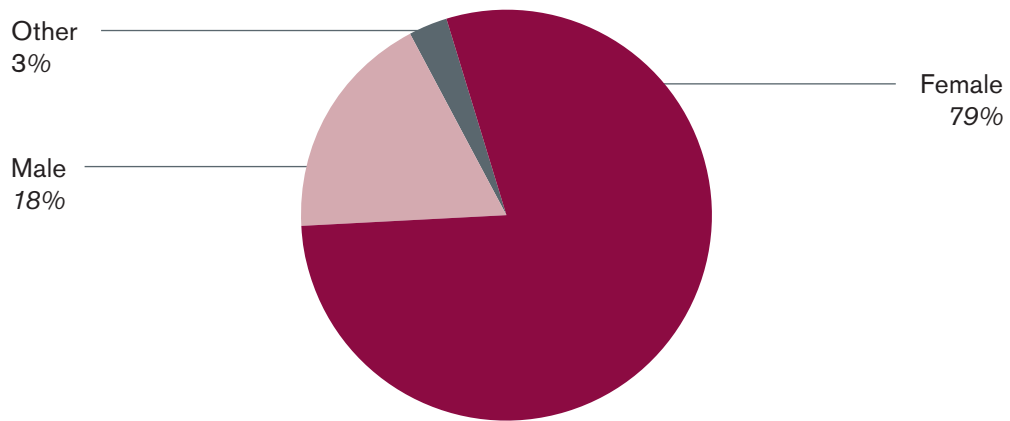


Figure 4 Survey demographic results by gender, n=39

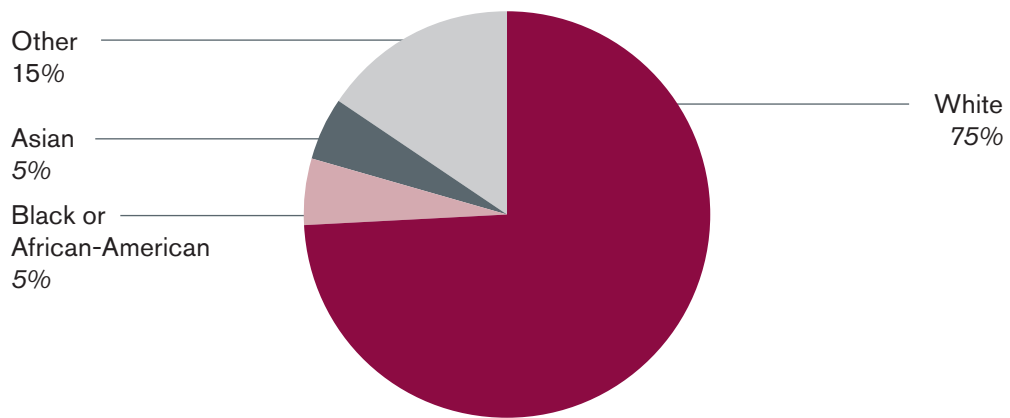


Figure 5 Survey demographic results by ethnicity, n=39

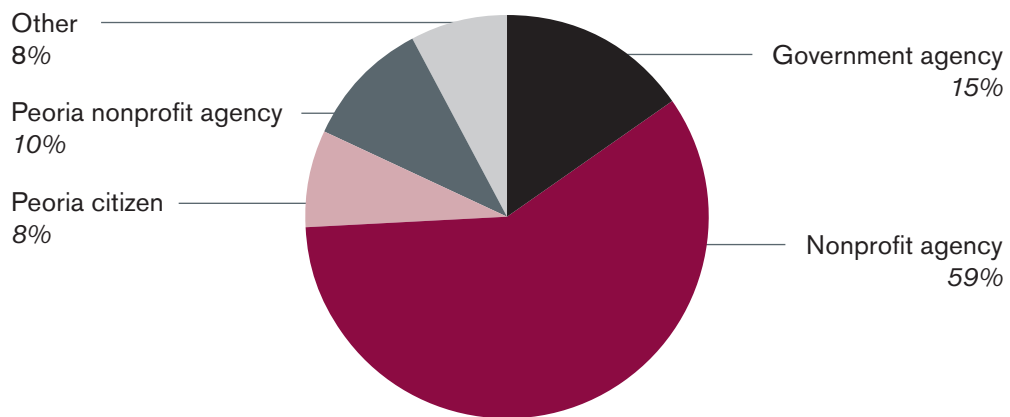


Figure 6 Survey demographic results by affiliation, n=39

Topics of importance

Adult homelessness is seen as a pressing matter as it outnumbered all other topic options combined (Figure 7). Many of the organizations that participated specialized in the area of homelessness, especially with the increased economic issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

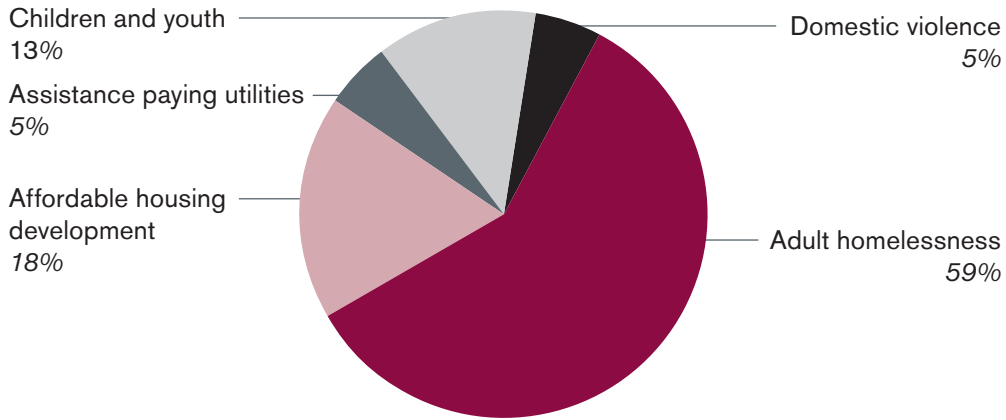


Figure 7 Survey results for topics of interest, "What topics should the City of Peoria be acting on or educating the public about?" n=39

Information dissemination

While the most popular method for training opportunities or services was clearly online, it should be noted that the two next popular methods were Facebook and the City of Peoria website (Figure 8). Each of these options require internet access, and the least popular choices did not. With the growing emphasis of technology for communication during the pandemic, it makes sense for contact-free methods to be desirable.

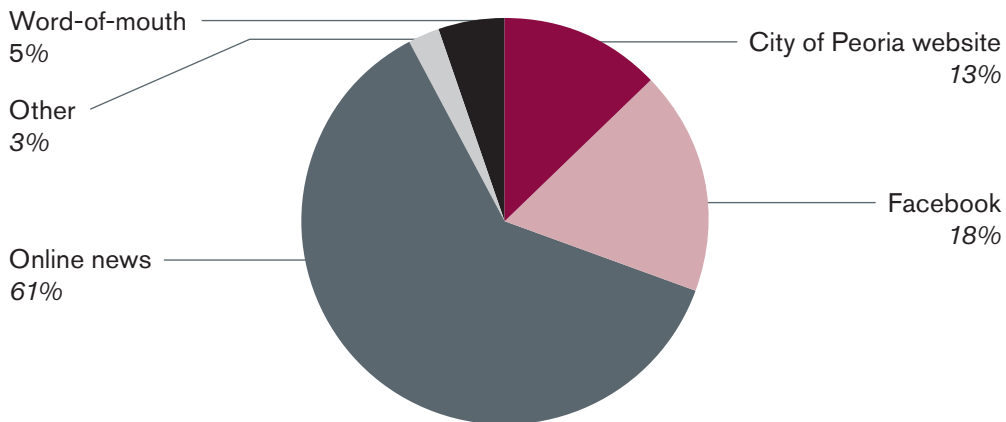


Figure 8 Survey results for information dissemination, "What method should be used for training opportunities or services?" n=39

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the focus group interviews and survey data analysis, students identified recommendations for the City of Peoria, organized by service sectors they are most relevant to. Appendix C features the complete organizational profiles where students developed their original recommendations, and is available at links.asu.edu/PCPeoriaCOVID20F.

Emergency health services

- Consider partnering with or creating a mobile health clinic that is geared towards serving homeless populations.
- Arrange virtual monthly or weekly mental health assessment testing.
- Provide free or reduced charge COVID-19 counseling sessions.
- Invest in a domestic violence awareness campaign so individuals at increased risk due to COVID-19 have the tools they need to get assistance.
- Implement counseling programs (maybe group home situation) that can assist children aging out of the foster care system to prevent homelessness and consequentially their risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Survey the homeless on their living conditions to form a consensus on what supplies and other resources they need most during the pandemic.
- Distribute medical aid to those without means of transportation through the use of mobile medicine.
- Create a mobile health bus that provides residents with basic health needs and COVID-19 tests and the bus is stationed in their own neighborhoods.
- Provide mental health tools, handouts and lessons.
- Expand emergency shelters that fit COVID safety guidelines.
- Provide wider access to mental health services for all community members.
- Promote media outreach encouraging individuals to seek out available mental health services.
- Promote services like Telehealth and Zoom conferencing to bypass access and transportation barriers created by the pandemic.

- Provide internet hotspots for those participating/seeking out medical treatment via Telehealth or are enrolled in vocational training or educational programs.
- Continue to offer free counseling, especially for youth and people with disabilities.

Employment

- Develop outreach for employers to ensure they support individuals who need to quarantine and still be paid (some employers would not pay employees who contracted COVID and were required to quarantine).
- Develop a program that assists individuals in signing up for unemployment as a result of COVID-19.
- Allow those volunteering at services that assist in sustaining their communities be classified as essential workers.
- Create a temp agency for various occupations, but employers participate if they have intentions of being able to provide full-time positions.
- Promote skilled-trade programs taught in-house to improve income opportunities for future residents
- Develop and support better services for homeless job seekers to find work.
- Hold a community job fair that can help people find temporary or entry-level employment options.

Financial assistance

- Encourage essential services to allow payment arrangements or grace periods.
- Provide support for small businesses to stay open during major issues by offering basic resources like food supplies, shelter, and access to emergency services.

Food access

- Implement a scheduled donation drop from businesses and restaurants to provide food and services for the community.
- Provide hot meal pop-ups, potentially in collaboration with local businesses to help distribute hot meals to homeless people in need.
- Focus on community nutrition by providing more affordable fresh produce options, especially consider the implementation of community gardens in unused lots.
- Publish food maps throughout the city, which help spread information about where people can buy, grow, or eat food in their communities. Suggested locations to post food maps can include local businesses, religious organizations, or local housing complexes .
- Organize a system of “community fridges” where people can donate produce and/or take what they need.
- Develop a contactless food-box delivery service and advertise the resource through a virtual outreach system.
- Coordinate with food banks and volunteers to disburse food boxes with a variety of nutritional food in various neighborhood schools and allow the residents to come pick them up on their own time.
- Introduce drive-thru or delivery grocery services, or other alternatives to in-store shopping, especially for single-parent and working families, those who do not have access to transportation, or those who may be ill and unable to leave their homes.
- Consider policy changes, like the ID requirement and inability to get food stamps in the future and allowing residents to apply for food subsidies.
- Create a delivery service for those who are not able to get to a food bank to access food.
- Provide mobile food bank trucks throughout the city.

Health and safety

- Supplement those who qualify for federal food stamps with vouchers that can be used to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and cleaning supplies.
- Provide community training and certification for local volunteers working in food delivery services, to ensure safety and reduce health risks.
- Assure residents that safety guidelines are being followed at food banks.
- Establish safer work environments and guidelines.
- Provide mask, sanitizer, and other hygienic product “pop-up” locations around the city, focusing on homeless population hotspots.

Housing

- Host a community housing fair to locate affordable housing options.
- Provide resources towards tenant rights, eviction prevention, and rental assistance during the pandemic.
- Increase access to food and homeless shelters
- Consider pursuing policies that work toward the construction of more affordable housing in the community.
- Encourage collaborative efforts between community leaders and real estate agents, or people who are expecting to have empty homes, in order to provide more shelter for homeless individuals.
- Provide utility and rent assistance to those behind on payments.
- Request hospitals to verify housing security before discharging patients.
- Revise the rental assistance program to include deposit assistance for anyone who is currently employed and working or fleeing a situation of domestic violence.
- Prioritize senior low- or fixed-income housing. Perhaps coordination with apartment buildings or townhomes with vacancies can help provide a way to pay for seniors to live there until the City can fund or procure space for the seniors in need.

Information sharing

- Design informational flyers as a help guide of the resources that are provided by the City.
- Create a help hotline for any related COVID-19 affairs (mental health, employment, etc.).
- Create a hotline specifically for the City to address non-emergency health questions and assurance.
- Provide an easy to use website that provides simplified answers to questions about unemployment.
- Integrate specific offices and services that are needed into one phone number as opposed to many different phone numbers.
- Develop marketing to advertise available services and where/how to access them.
- Use media outlets to encourage the need for immunizations and healthcare visits which display the safety practices taken by those who work within local medical clinics.
- Create a “gold standard” list of recommended guidelines/precautions for COVID-19 and only award it to businesses and organizations who prove they have implemented and are adhering to said standards. Then publish, digitally and in print, a monthly list of the businesses who have been awarded the “gold standard”.
- Raise awareness around Medicaid and the relevant benefits, specifically those targeted at seniors, that may help vulnerable populations through the pandemic.
- Provide virtual presentations that can be streamed for free with coordination for internet access if necessary.
- Create a community hub for information regarding COVID-19 testing and safety tips.

Building resource networks

- Organize voluntary support services to aid seniors with technology for things such as virtual appointments.
- Create a committee that can research grants that benefit community needs.
- Facilitate non-profits to group together via Zoom to cross-source and serve the community by partnering with other organizations to provide as many available resources as possible.
- Provide mobile resources to increase access to needs such as check-ups, testing, and supply deliveries throughout the city.
- Install pop-up “networking” locations with internet, computers, and phones that are open to the general public.
- Build relationships with institutions that advocate for small businesses which would provide access to continuing education on program funding.
- Enhance relationships with respective municipalities to have proactive alternatives for future unforeseeable events.
- Develop a centralized forum composed of all involved agencies to improve communication between each other regarding who needs aid and what specific aid they require.
- Facilitate integration throughout agencies to ensure that seniors in need receive the help they need as soon as possible.

Transportation

- Procure funding for increased transportation resources.
- Collaborate with public transportation in Peoria to provide transportation to eligible individuals.
- Provide adequate transportation for residents to access food banks and doctors’ appointments.
- Improve transportation options for students.

CONCLUSION

This project has allowed the people of the City of Peoria to have their voices heard and in doing so has resulted in a bounty of information that could be used to benefit the most vulnerable individuals during this difficult time. Using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as guidance, many pressing issues affecting the citizens of Peoria can be analyzed and addressed. The goals can help focus local efforts to increasing access to important resources while confronting deeper issues of inequality, resulting in long-term changes that help prevent similar effects from future health emergencies. The many organizations that participated in this project are already deeply involved with the objectives set by the SDGs in their actions, so the implementation would only be more effective.

Students recognized their responsibility in the project process and played a vital role in conducting interviews, gathering data, using fitting methods of coding, and developing a final report that would serve as a pillar of this project. Recommendations to the City of Peoria were developed from a multitude of perspectives resulting from the experiences of these organizations and the possible areas that can be improved on the City's part. The possible courses of action or resources that should be considered would allow these organizations to more effectively provide their services to the community. Assistance in the form of economic relief, guidance, support, prioritization of mental health, and cooperation between different facets of the community will create a perfect starting point for pursuing the SDGs even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In matters of representation, this project has already shone a great light on where to improve and bring about reduced inequalities. Possible areas for improvement are seen in the organizations that participated as the survey demographics show that while diversity does exist it can always be strengthened. Doing so would bring in new ideas and perspectives that would make approaching issues less of a challenge. This project is the result of the hard work of many individuals and has nearly limitless potential. It is the voice of the citizens of the City of Peoria and continuing in its path can help move forward in the constant progression toward helping community members in need in the most effective ways possible.

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To access the original student reports, additional materials, and resources, visit:

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PART 3:

Risk Messaging & Communication Around COVID-19

**A CULMINATION OF THREE RISK COMMUNICATION
ASSIGNMENTS AIMED AT FURTHER IMPROVING CITY
MESSAGING WITH RESIDENTS**

COM 415: RISK COMMUNICATION

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL
SCIENCES**

**FACULTY
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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic swept across the nation throughout 2020 and many individuals were left uncertain how work, school, and recreation would change as the year progressed. To aid in alleviating this uncertainty, the City of Peoria has made it their mission to effectively communicate with their residents and continuously update them throughout a long period of wondering what will come next. Through various social media posts, public service announcements, and their website, the City of Peoria actively communicated risk to their residents. The COVID-19 pandemic left the residents of Peoria concerned and frustrated with what 2020 looked like and what the future had in store. Because of the overall uncertainty of circumstances, even now, it is important to consider the positive actions that have been taken, and how to further improve upon those actions.

Arizona State University's online COM 415: Risk Communication course facilitated by Dr. Maija Nadesan aims to understand how risk communication is constructed and assess how it is practiced in professional settings. The Fall 2020 session of the course worked alongside Project Cities in an effort to analyze the City of Peoria's risk communication practices and offer audience-based insight and recommendations to further improve the messages they are communicating to their residents. The students in the course were tasked with completing three separate analyses, all looking at different aspects of the messages put out by the City of Peoria. The purposes of these analyses were to describe and clarify risk communication, identify the target audience and how messages are shaped in context, and offer recommendations for risk communication practices.

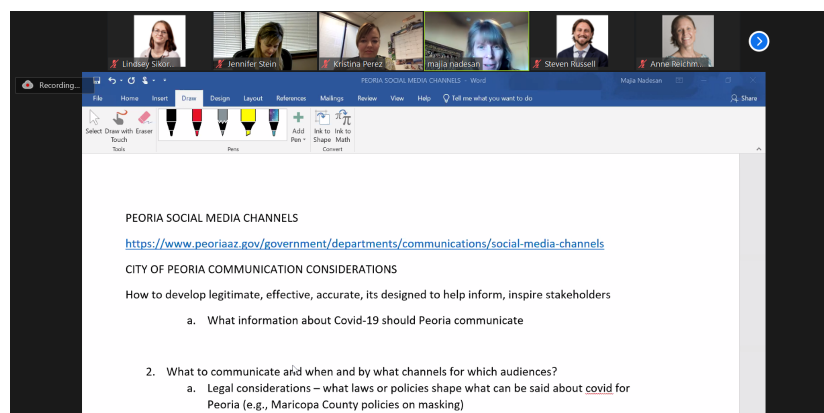


Figure 1 Fall 2020 Zoom Communications Panel where students had the opportunity to discuss their research with City of Peoria communications professionals

Background

Definitions in Context

- **Hazard:** The SARS-CoV-2 virus and the disease it causes (COVID-19)
- **Risk:** The probability of suffering loss or damage from hazard
 - The probability of contracting COVID-19 and suffering harm from it
- **Incidence:** A measure of disease that allows researchers to determine an individual's probability of being diagnosed with a disease during a given period of time
 - The number of newly diagnosed cases of a disease
- **Prevalence:** A measure of disease that allows researchers to determine an individual's likelihood of having a disease
 - The total number of cases of disease existing in a population
- **Morbidity:** Illness
- **Mortality:** Death

Risk assessment is a step-by-step process that seeks to identify and evaluate risks. Through this process, researchers hope to also identify potential risk reducing processes and how to proceed forward. This process helps decision-makers consider complex choices in an effort to manage or reduce any kind of potential human or ecological risk. Ahmed (2011) highlights how risk management prioritizes risks, categorizes recommendations, and checks the feasibility of implementation. It is an essential decision making process that considers “political, social, economic, and engineering information” as well as any risk-based information to identify an appropriate response to potential health hazards.

		Severity				
		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Almost certain	5	10	15	20	25
	Likely	4	8	12	16	20
	Possible	3	6	9	12	15
	Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
	Rare	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 2 A risk matrix, often used in risk assessment

RESEARCH METHODS

In Fall of 2020, COM 415 students engaged in individual research; each taking time to view specific posts and videos shared by the City of Peoria. Throughout the course of these tasks, students took copious notes to complete the following three assignments.

Risk And Ethics Case Analysis

The first assignment the students completed was the Risk and Ethics Case Analysis. Students were tasked with identifying the goal of communicating information about the risk, and why the communication is occurring. They acknowledged legal considerations, socio-cultural considerations, general optics, and any communication media access issues.

The students were tasked with reviewing the City of Peoria's website and answering the following questions in a double-spaced three page essay:

- What challenges does COVID-19 risk communication present according to your review?
- What are the best practices of COVID-19 crisis/risk communication that you identified in your review?
- Based on this initial research review, describe and evaluate the City of Peoria's risk communication.

Students then described the risk communication that the City of Peoria was practicing and evaluated the risk communication in regard to COVID-19, paying close attention to any ethical and/or legal risk issues.

Public Service Announcement Analysis

The second assignment was the Public Service Announcement Analysis which acknowledged any special legal and ethical requirements or challenges associated with COVID-19 and crisis communication. Students considered what legal or ethical requirements, issues, and challenges are most important and why they should be prioritized.

The students engaged in an audience analysis and considered the following questions:

- How are the purpose and objectives of the risk communication driven by the target audience?
- How does the nature of the risk itself drive the communication with the audience (is it care, consensus, or crisis communications)? Urgency?
- How many audiences might the communication appeal to? What are the characteristics of those audiences?
- How are communication characteristics of the risk message (such as level of analysis, use of technical language, specificity of details) shaped by the targeted audiences?

The students were also asked to consider the following:

- What information about COVID-19 should Peoria communicate? How much detail and about what subjects?
- What to communicate and when and by what channels for which audiences?
- Legal – What laws or policies shape what can be said about COVID-19 for Peoria?
- Social Cultural – What cultural beliefs and social institutions have relevance for COVID-19 messaging by Peoria?
- Optics – How will the communication reflect back upon the City?
- Communication Media Access Issues – What are the best means of communication for targeted audiences? Should it be simplified?

Visualizing Risk

The third and final assignment the students completed was the Visualizing Risk assignment. For this assignment, students analyzed how risk was framed through specific visual choices and how visual framing emphasizes aspects of risk while de-emphasizing others.

Students analyzed risk communication visualization of COVID-19 in the City of Peoria's communication by addressing the following:

- How is the risk “framed” through the selective choices about words and images that have been made?
- How do the images (objects, people, words, colors, etc.) used to represent the risk shape audience perceptions about that risk?
- How does the visual framing of the risk highlight certain aspects of risk while de-emphasizing others?
- What are the benefits and limitations of the particular framing?
- How might visual framing be enhanced for the targeted audience?
- What recommendations can you make?
- How can reliance be visualized into this process?

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Overall, the City of Peoria exemplifies positive risk communication practices with their residents; taking good care to cater their posts and information based on what platform they are communicating through. COM 415 students highlighted areas of excellence they observed from the communication instances and noted the following elements: **Accessibility and Empathy**. These elements contributed to the City of Peoria's overall message effectiveness and audience-centeredness.

Accessibility

The use of inclusive language displayed a great sense of rallying together as a community, rather than leaving residents fearing the need to fend for themselves in the wake of the pandemic. The City of Peoria was praised by the students for “clear, consistent, and transparent messaging,” which helps all residents, regardless of their level of media literacy, understand what is being communicated. For example, the City of Peoria's website has a section dedicated to information and resources pertaining to COVID-19, which are presented in a way that is clear, concise, and easily understandable. The website is also easy to navigate, which is essential in potentially communicating with a portion of a population who may be less versed in the use of technology.

Empathy

The City of Peoria does well in appealing to the emotion of their residents through their communication and general social media presence. They took great care in acknowledging residents' concerns, as well as addressing their questions on how to move forward with new routines such as mask-wearing and social distancing. In her public service announcement to the residents of Peoria, Mayor Carlat relates with her audience by saying that she too wants to see the pandemic "in the rearview mirror," but also acknowledges the rapid rise in cases at that point-in-time. She carefully addressed her audience with a reassuring tone and thanks residents for their resilience, assuring them that action is being taken in order to get the virus under control. With awareness of high stress and uncertainty from her audience, Mayor Carlat calms their nerves by striking an exceptional balance between meeting the emotional needs of her audience and backing her message with credible scientific evidence.

After a description of these areas of excellence, students list suggested recommendations aimed at the continued improvement of the City's risk communication.

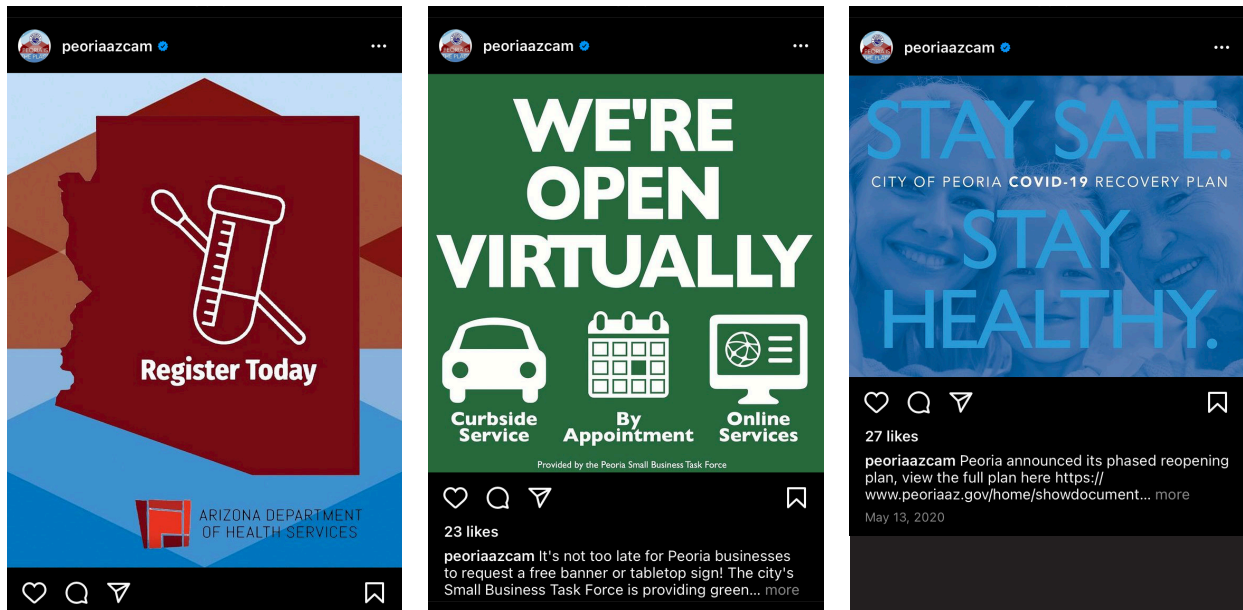


Figure 3 Examples of COVID-19 communications disseminated by the City of Peoria via Instagram, including information on COVID testing (left), the Small Business Task Force (center), and a municipal recovery plan (right)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If feasible, include more consistently updated case numbers and community statistics in relevant communications. Further familiarizing residents with the situation could result in less fear and uncertainty in future risk communication interactions (Jarrell, p.4).
- Offer suggestions on alternate ways to participate in public activities (e.g. Zoom gatherings). This could provide residents with a comfortable sense of autonomy, while keeping themselves and others safe (Meneses, p.5).
- Favor short and simple social media posts that convey important information in a quick, comprehensible way (Kalo, p.4).
- Implement helpful examples when requesting action from residents, such as explaining why wearing a mask is important. Further illustrating and explaining the reasons with a solid scientific backing could alleviate tension from the target audience (Kalo, p.4) (Islam, p.3) (Foster, p.5).
- Encourage residents to engage in responsible, independent research to help educate themselves on a situation they may be unfamiliar with. Consistently including links to credible sources could help guide residents responsibly (Davids, p.4) (Brown, p.4).
- If feasible, provide information on specific case locations in the community. This could help residents navigate public outings easier and provide peace of mind (Morris, p.6).
- Offer suggestions on how to combat “pandemic fatigue” that include examples of safe, socially-distant activities, self-care practices, and mental health resources (Klenk, p.4) (Barba, p.4)
- Maintain consistency in messages conveyed to residents through social media and public broadcasts. Frequent, consistent updates could help alleviate uncertainty and provide stability (Rost, p.7) (Morano, p.6).
- Implement vibrant colors in the visuals used to convey risk communication. Vibrant colors such as green, blue, and yellow are eye-catching and could hold the attention of a resident scrolling through their social media feed (Barba, p.4).
- Simple, yet impactful phrases could be a great addition in the visuals used to convey risk communication. The inclusion of statistics in an understandable visual could be beneficial as well (Dube, p.4).
- Implement posts or a section on the website that highlight positive happenings. This practice could help residents feel more hopeful, by highlighting positive occurrences during a stressful time (Armentrout, p.4).

CONCLUSION

Through their risk and crisis communication, the City of Peoria exudes great effort to ease the worries of their residents, address important questions and concerns, as well as effectively communicate the importance of practicing preventative measures in regard to COVID-19. Their objective was to develop legitimate, effective, and accurate COVID-19 risk and crisis communication designed to help inform and inspire their residents and other stakeholders. Arizona State University's COM 415: Risk Communication students completed three assignments dedicated to analyzing the risk communication conveyed by the City of Peoria and offered an outside perspective on what the City is doing well, assisted them in navigating COVID-19 centered messages, and developed recommendations on how to continually improve.

It should be noted that the City of Peoria exemplified positive attributes when communicating with their residents. Notable elements the City excelled in were accessibility and empathy; several posts analyzed embodied themes that fell under these umbrella terms. The City of Peoria exemplified accessibility by using simple, straight-forward language when communicating with their residents. Their website layout is easy to navigate and presents information comprehensively. The City practiced empathy by using careful, inclusive language and relating with residents by acknowledging their concerns and addressing uncertainties. Along with these positive elements, comes the opportunity to improve even further.

COM 415: Risk Communication students offered helpful insight as to how the City of Peoria can continue to improve their risk communication practices. Out of the culmination of three separate assignments in the course, came recommendations to strengthen the practices already in place. A notable recommendation that was common among several students was the importance of encouraging independent research and education. Offering credible, educational sources backed by scientific research is a strong step in allowing residents a sense of autonomy and alleviating uncertainty by guiding them in the correct direction. Several students also relayed the importance of residents' mental health during these times of crisis. Many recommended informational sources on how to ease what they referred to as "pandemic fatigue," as well as examples from the City on how to participate in activities and events safely and responsibly.

The COM 415: Risk Communication class hopes these recommendations can assist the City of Peoria and aid in further improving their risk communication practices. All recommendations were put forth with the health and well-being of the residents of Peoria in mind. The City of Peoria has done well with addressing community uncertainty and putting the needs of their residents at the forefront. An outside perspective on the City's communication methods is essential in strengthening these practices, making the partnership between Arizona State University and the City of Peoria all the more fruitful. While the recommendations were put forth for risk communication in regard to COVID-19, it should be noted that these recommendations also serve a purpose when or if the residents of Peoria find themselves in these circumstances once again. With these important recommendations, comes increased preparedness for the future.

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PART 4:

Business Impacts Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

**IDENTIFYING COMMON ISSUES AND DETERMINING POTENTIAL
MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES**

PUP 642: URBAN AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

**SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES AND
URBAN PLANNING**

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Peoria is located in the northwestern region of the Greater Phoenix Metropolitan Area. Ranked number seven on Yahoo Finance's "America's 50 Best Cities to Live" list in 2017, Peoria offers a diverse quality of life that engenders a community full of educated and highly-skilled individuals. With a population of 175,961 (2019), Peoria is a city that offers many economic opportunities to its residents; it consists of many industries that bring prosperity to local and surrounding communities. Peoria has partnered with large and small businesses to incorporate successful economic development into the urban fabric. Companies such as SerialTek and Maxwell Technologies are prime examples of ones that have established development offices in Peoria because of its diverse workforce.

Peoria's Economic Development Department understands that economic growth is one of the vital organs a city needs in order to be successful. It understands that contributions from both small- and large-scale businesses are crucial to economic growth. Peoria was heavily impacted by COVID-19, like many other cities worldwide. It led to the shutting down of small businesses, lack of employee funds, and a surge in unemployment. The City's Economic Development Department faced numerous challenges but it quickly assembled the Small Business Task Force, which provided immense support to local businesses and helped them stay afloat during the pandemic.



Figure 1 Intersection at 83rd Avenue and Washington Avenue in downtown Peoria, and its line of adjacent small businesses

The countless efforts of the task force were very successful; however, additional recommendations should be acknowledged despite the present economic uncertainty. It is best if the City continues the path forward. This report seeks to help the City understand some of the underlying vulnerabilities posed to specific areas pre- and during COVID-19 to help identify what in the City's economic makeup needs further support in the face of current challenges.

About the project

This project was carried out in collaboration with ASU Project Cities to provide recommendations for the City of Peoria. It was supervised by Amber Costa from the Economic Development Department of the City of Peoria, and Kristin Slice, the Senior Program Manager of Peoria Forward within Entrepreneurship + Innovation, part of the Office of Knowledge Enterprise Development at Arizona State University.

The graduate students in Deborah Salon's PUP 642: Urban and Regional Economic Development class, in collaboration with ASU Project Cities, developed a brief analysis on additional efforts the City of Peoria can engage in with their small business community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City has accomplished multiple objectives, but the continued economic uncertainty makes it essential to continue investigating additional actions.

Aim of the project

The objective of this project is to help develop a better understanding of community business needs, and design strategies for recovery and resilience going forward. In order to support this, seven different groups of students carried out research in the following areas to advise on COVID-19 response strategies for Peoria. The projects, along with their objectives, are as follows:

- **Restaurant outreach:** Contact local businesses that received COVID-19 relief to assess the process and effectiveness.
- **Fitness industry:** Understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the fitness industry at-large by reviewing case studies from local gyms, fitness centers, and recreation centers that received grants from the City.

- **Shifting consumer behaviors inform economic development strategies:** Analyze data on current consumer behavior and explore whether or not consumer behavior will change permanently post pandemic and what are the planning implications of this for the City of Peoria?
- **Focus group:** Analyze the focus group and survey data along with additional geospatial data to recommend investment strategies for specific vulnerable districts in Peoria for the continued support of small businesses during and beyond the pandemic.
- **Omnibus survey data:** Provide insights about what could make the region more desirable to residents and their interests in the area.
- **Identifying comparison cities and recovery from the suburban Sun Belt:** Advise Peoria on what actions and strategies it should take to help their local businesses adapt to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, using the examples of other Maricopa County cities and peer communities in the Sun Belt region (California and Nevada) as guidance.

RESEARCH METHODS

In November of 2020, Project Cities Program Manager Steven Russell, Kristin Slice, and Amber Costa held a virtual meeting with PUP 642 students to discuss the history of Peoria's development, Project Cities past projects, and the challenges the City is facing due to COVID-19. After the session, the students were given topics to work on and two groups came up with their own topics for research. The students split into six different groups based on the topical areas of their research and analysis, which are listed and described in the previous section.

Each of these groups took different research approaches depending on the nature of their area of study. For instance, two groups were provided with data sets to work with so they analyzed the given information and derived recommendations from it. However, most groups carried out written or oral interviews with different stakeholders (e.g., city officials, industry representatives) as a part of their primary research whereas the secondary sources consisted of government websites and reports, policy documents and related academic journals. The methods used by each group to achieve their objective are detailed in the following sections.

Student group methodology

Restaurants

Students identified and contacted the restaurants which received government grants and conducted interviews with them. The questions looked at how grant funding was utilized, the process to receive the grant funding, the impacts of COVID-19 on the business, and if any funding would be needed in the future. The business respondents include Westside Concepts, Into the Fire Pizza, Mercer's Restaurant, Wild Horse West, Ballpark Pizza, T & J Asian Cuisine.

Fitness industry

Students approached businesses in Peoria that received grants with an aim to document their experiences of operating businesses during the pandemic. The analysis for providing recommendations to the City was based on the responses to questions pertaining (but not limited) to the process by which the businesses received the grant, the impacts of the pandemic on the businesses, and whether the businesses would need additional funding in the future. Three businesses participated in the survey including IronGirlz, a women's only gym; White Noise Dance Company, who provides services for multi-age cheer and dance; and Peoria Anytime Fitness.

Shifting consumer behaviors

This group based their analysis on the dataset provided to them by Professor Salon and her colleagues. The data was collected by researchers at Arizona State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago through a grant funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The data was sorted by the student group to focus on variables related to time spent working from home, shopping and dining habits and lifestyle changes made during quarantine. For shopping and dining behaviors of Peoria residents, the survey looked at the number of people preferring or doing in-person shopping, delivery, takeout, dine-in or delivery through online shopping. Whereas for lifestyle changes, the data was gathered on the preferences of working from home, commuting, driving less, traveling less, taking more walks and online shopping. The team selected these variables to provide information about consumer behavior changes in Peoria and West Valley residents to help Peoria's small businesses adapt to their new environment.

Omnibus survey data

The City of Peoria provided this group with the previously gathered survey data. The group gave context on perceptions pre-COVID, where residents were asked to answer various questions, including time spent in a district, the visiting frequency at those locations, and how to enhance specific districts in the City. Proceeding with the analyses of omnibus and geospatial tools, the group evaluated COVID impacts on those districts based on the Community Impact and Social Vulnerability Index. The team conducted a short examination of small businesses expected to need the most assistance.

Focus group

The focus group data set was gathered by the Mayor's Ad Hoc Small Business Committee. The group conducted a brief literature review to explore potential solutions for the City. In their analysis, the team identified two main themes followed by a few sub-themes.

Comparison cities and recovery from the suburban Sun Belt

Two groups worked on Comparison Cities in which one group chose cities in the West Valley, namely Glendale, Goodyear, Surprise, Gilbert, and Buckeye, Arizona. These cities were selected based on City of Peoria's desirability as well as the similarity of their economic development approaches with the City as they are also considered competitor cities. Another group assessed peer communities in the Sun Belt region, including Rancho Cucamonga, Burbank, and San Marcos in California, and Henderson, Nevada. The group identified suburban communities with exemplary responses to economic hardship and increased barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation that have been caused by COVID-19.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



RESTAURANT OUTREACH AND FITNESS INDUSTRY

The restaurant and fitness industries suffered greatly during the pandemic, with some entities closing permanently, temporarily, or considering closing during the lockdown in Peoria. However, according to some gym and restaurant owners, the business grants received did in fact help them, and owners indicated if they had not received the grant they might have closed their businesses down due to financial distress (Falsone et al., 2020; Olson et al., 2020). Even though businesses were struggling, some restaurants also hired additional staff to assist with COVID-19 precautions and no business at any point thought about leaving Peoria. The grant application process for all respondents was very straightforward. While some respondents indicated that they would require additional funding in the future, some mentioned that they will probably take out a loan or dip into personal savings because they need help keeping up with rent and utility payments as they have not been provided any kind of deferral or support from their landlords relating to rent payments. For instance, one of the fitness center respondents downsized their space in an effort to afford rent.

Another fitness center respondent also faced a unique challenge where they did not qualify for any of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) money because their trainers were 1099 independent contractors and therefore not considered part of the business' payroll, as opposed to W-2 employees who are on company payroll and therefore eligible for PPP funds. Another company's members decreased by 55 students and seven staff members. One fitness center lost approximately 100 members. With all these ongoing challenges, it was very difficult to keep the businesses afloat. One of the representatives from the fitness industry explained that they "wished there were a rent relief program to protect the businesses, allowing rent payments to be extended without inflation" (Olson et al., 2020). Some of the respondents also admired the part that Peoria played to support local businesses and felt that Peoria was very proactive in their approach. Importantly, they emphasized how grateful they were for the City of Peoria's grant. Another respondent stressed that "the City of Peoria has truly done so much for us already, featured us on their page, this grant, signs and putting our name on the map so we appreciate everything and feel very fortunate to be in a city that cares if we make it or not" (Olson et al., 2020).

The pandemic made it clear that challenging circumstances require creative solutions. For example, the City of Akron, Ohio developed an online application that showcases local businesses, tracks spending, and offers cash rewards which can be redeemed at local businesses (MacBride, 2020). Another way of helping business owners is with operational regular payments. Many jurisdictions around the country have been able to provide relief to businesses by reducing occupational taxes and business license payments, waiving fees and fines on sales tax payments to allow deferrals, and negotiating with utility companies to maintain service even if a business falls behind on payments (National League of Cities, 2020). Moreover, the City has taken steps to remove barriers to outdoor dining, and expedited permitting, but long-term placemaking strategies should be considered to build resilient land uses that are less likely to be disrupted by pandemics, climate change, or other circumstances (Garcia, 2020). One solution could be to reduce or eliminate off-street parking requirements in pedestrian-rich parts of the city, and encourage the development of patios, plazas, or other outdoor spaces that could be used for distanced gatherings or live events (Falsone et al., 2020; Olson et al., 2020).

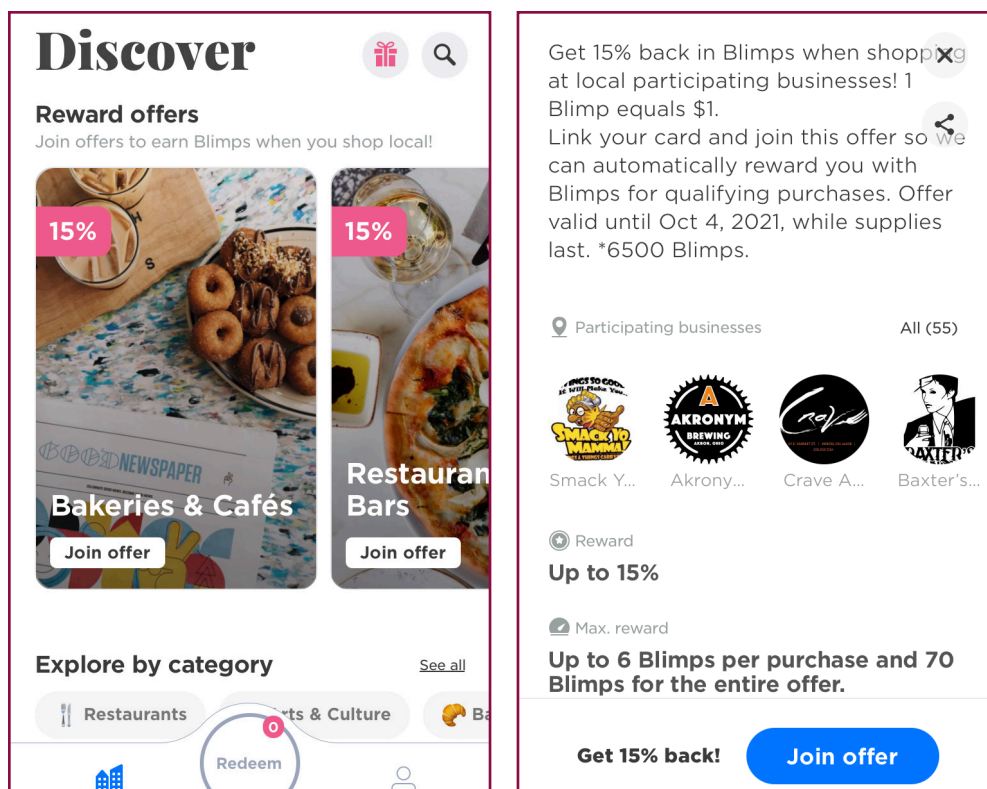


Figure 2 The Akronite mobile app, in Akron, OH, helps locals and visitors support small businesses in Akron by attracting customers with discounts and rewards, while increasing exposure of community offerings

Recommendations for restaurant and fitness industries

- Seek or facilitate another funding package for local businesses because even a small boost in funds can go a long way in providing financial security (Falsone et al., pp.7-8).
- Integrate innovation in marketing local restaurants and recruit patronage locally to encourage consumers to consider small businesses and repeat visits (Falsone et al., pp.7-8).
- Strengthen resilience by enhancing outdoor commerce and recreation (Falsone et al., pp.7-8).
- Provide and encourage outdoor recreation through gym memberships by allowing gyms free or easy-to-rent outdoor spaces that are stimulating and refreshing. For example, allow gyms to host socially-distanced events and games at locations like Spring Training Fields (Olson et al., pp.5-6).
- Develop grants specifically for COVID-19 cleaning products and other new innovative technologies. Power cleaning tools, sanitation products, and reinvestment in the gym equipment, special-use masks for customers and trainers, and infrastructure can allow for an increase in customer perception and comfort (Olson et al., pp.5-6).
- Collaborate with local businesses to create affordable marketing avenues by making use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook or official tourism pages to promote the businesses (Olson et al., pp.5-6).
- Host community events in which gyms can market to potential customers. This could include a community pickleball, tennis, kickball, softball, bowling, or other competition that can hold crowds in a socially distanced manner (Olson et al., pp.6-7).



OMNIBUS SURVEY DATA

Mitigating the challenges caused by the pandemic for small business owners in the City of Peoria also involves addressing what attracts residents to various city areas. The students analyzed the omnibus survey and identified three well-known economic districts as significant areas of potential investment: Old Town, P83, and Four Corners (Figure 4) (Drosos et al., p.3).

The "Four Corners" or North Peoria, and Old Town areas hold an array of boutiques, national retail anchors, and restaurants. Old Town Peoria is a historic district undergoing revitalization and focusing on arts and culture. P83 is an entertainment district with large mixed-use developments. Following is a discussion on the three identified districts as they are recognized as the most at-risk areas due to the pandemic.

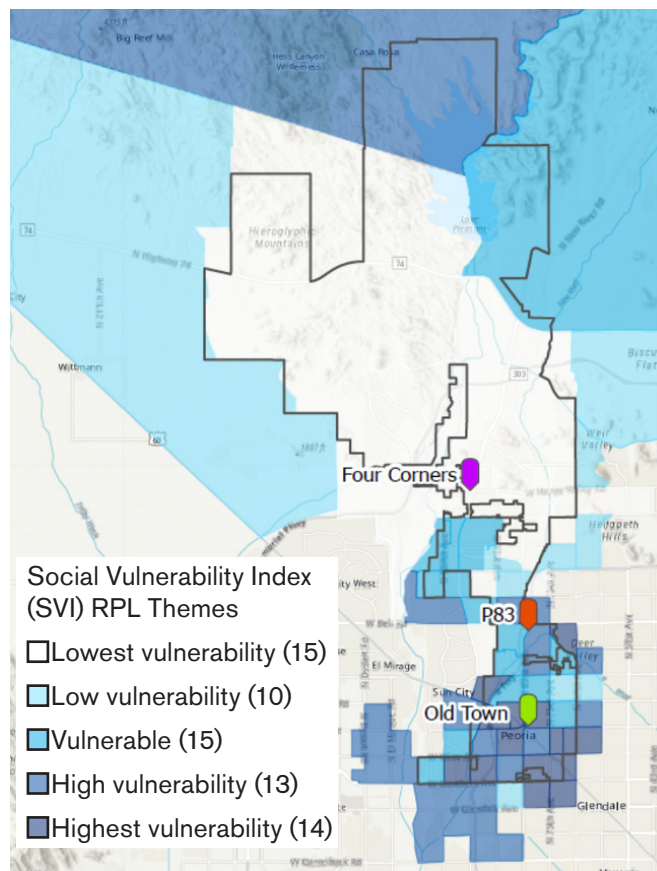


Figure 3 Peoria map of vulnerable communities, using the Social Vulnerability Index, by Tatiana Penton

Old Town

Old Town is typically seen as an entertainment area where residents can get food and enjoy a variety of cultural attractions. When asked how long a typical trip was to Old Town (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.114), almost 90% of respondents said 1-2 hours, meaning that most people visit the area for a relatively short amount of time. Along with this, when asked if they had attended any events in Old Town within the last year (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.116), 71% of people responded in the negative which demonstrates that most Peoria residents did not visit Old Town. Lastly, a question asked what placemaking strategies people would like to see added to Old Town. Of the responses, 68% said entertainment, while 45% said leisure, and 43% wanted a better nightlife scene

P83

In the P83 area, many people stated that they did not spend time in P83 after events such as Spring Training games (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.144). The P83 center could encourage sports fans to stay in the area after a game's conclusion. Secondly, the survey asked the last time people visited P83 (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.153); of the responses, 55% of people stated they had visited in the last week, while 87% of total respondents indicated they had visited P83 within the last month or sooner. When asked how much time is spent "just walking around" in P83 (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.163), 77% of those who answered said less than five minutes, meaning that many do not find the area to be very pedestrian-friendly or attractive for foot travel. To improve this attractiveness, respondents wrote (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.165) that including assets such as better lighting, shaded areas, misters, trees/flowers, and more could remedy the relatively low walkability.

Four Corners

For the Four Corners area over 92% of respondents said they visit the area at least 1-2 times per week. Additionally, Four Corners is vehicle-oriented in its design, like P83. An open-ended question was posed in the omnibus survey, asking what would make the area more appealing or photogenic (City of Peoria Omnibus Survey, 2019, p.199). Many respondents stated that they would like to see more landscaping, trees, greenery, and other similar traits. If developers added these features, it could also make the area more walkable and inviting.

The data further demonstrates the City of Peoria has the opportunity to invest in the P83 and Old Town areas to mitigate the effect of COVID on local business. Figure 5 shows that the pandemic has majorly impacted the Old Town and P83 areas as over 31 businesses were "impacted," and 18 businesses have "closed" (AZGeo Coronavirus Response, 2020). Utilizing the Peoria Business License categories and the 2-digit NAICS Codes, students found that between P83 and Old Town, the majority types of businesses consisted of retail trade, accommodation and food, and other services. Other services include businesses like auto repair services, barbershops, and hair salons (PEO BUSINESS, 2020). The small businesses in this area that fall under these categories are in the most need of COVID resources. Supported by the Mayor's Ad-Hoc Survey's recommendations and our additional suggestions for different approaches, the City has an opportunity to offer its small business help in addition to what has already been implemented.

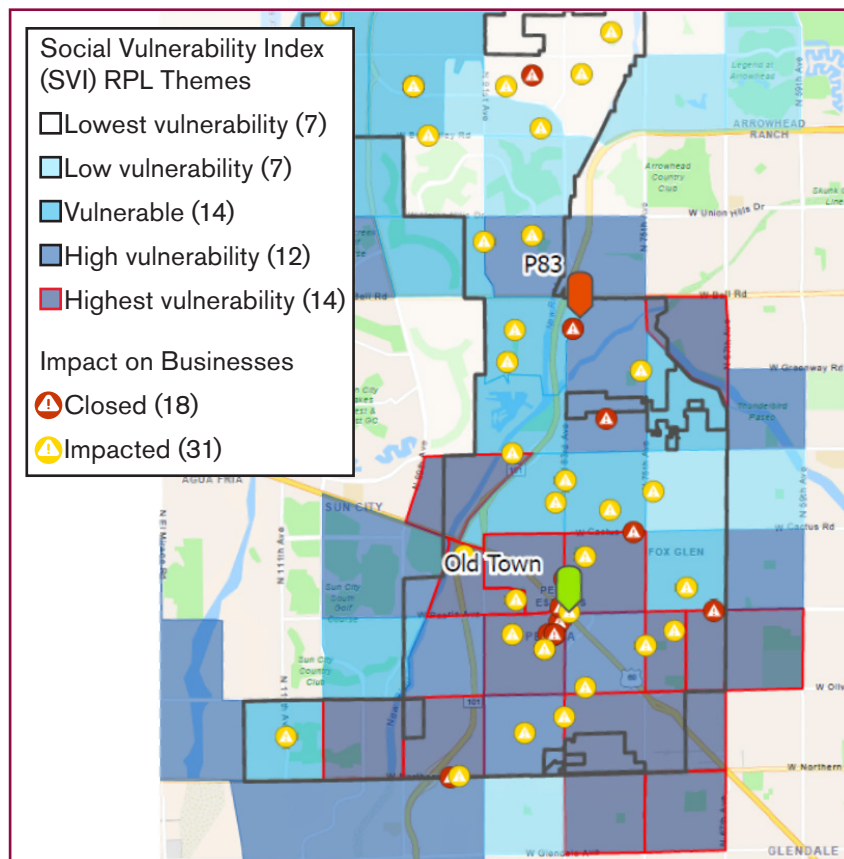


Figure 4 Peoria focus area map of COVID impacted businesses, by Tatiana Penton

The survey encompasses a range of recommendations such as new signage fixtures, leasing agreement forgiveness, and general strategies for increasing public awareness of small businesses and categorizing the suggestions by the respondents' level of support and the time-scale in which the strategy operates. In response to these special districts' vulnerabilities, the students composed methods in the form of continued fiscal support for these three areas. Overall, it appears that there is a consensus to provide more entertainment and leisure activities in Old Town, with a heavy focus on more walkability and overall pleasantness in both P83 and the Four Corners. The students believe that survey data can play a crucial role in finding ways to further economic development and focus on the efforts needed to support small businesses (Drosos et al., 2020).

Recommendations from the omnibus survey data

- Provide financial assistance to businesses that are in retail trade, accommodation and food, and other services specifically in the Old Town and some of the P83 areas to support them as they are the most vulnerable in the area (Drosos et al., pp.5-6).
- Create a program that helps small businesses receive resources to combat the spread of COVID-19, providing products such as sanitation resources, heat, lighting, temperature readers, and additional seating to accommodate more outdoor dining services (Drosos et al., pp.5-6).
- Provide lease-agreement support as it would be useful in the immediate short-term support of local businesses (Drosos et al., pp.5-6).



FOCUS GROUP DATA

The students that analyzed the focus group survey data identified two main themes, namely promotion and marketing, and small business growth. Promotion and marketing features social media and smart tourism as sub-themes, whereas small business growth has short-term strategies and long-term strategies as sub-themes.

Promotion and marketing

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram offer new ways to engage and attract customers. Various features on these platforms make it easy not only for businesses to relay information but for customers to share with their friends as well. Some of the popular uses of social media are using hashtags to target the promotion of small businesses with other related social media posts.

Some businesses posted updates on the health and safety precautions they were taking to make customers feel comfortable about returning to their establishments (Joseph et al., 2020). Furthermore, updates that customers are visiting and precautions are being followed, can strengthen the idea that it is safe to visit the place. Sutton et al. (2020) analyzed the use of hashtags throughout the first 60 days of the pandemic and found their early use helped support small businesses in the spring of 2020. For example, the #greatamericantakeout hashtag encouraged people to order from local restaurants.

Whereas in looking at research related to tourism, cities around the globe have employed smart tourism models. By incorporating information and communication technologies (ICT) in the form of social media, adding technology to physical structures, smartphone apps, and smart businesses, cities can create an environment that promotes the shared experience of tourism. Many tourists want to capture these images, upload them on social media and reminisce about their own memories. Cities can help by enabling this pursuit. For example, the City of Barcelona, Spain added interactive tourism displays and USB charging ports to their bus shelters (Gretzel et al., 2015). These tools help tourists easily navigate the city and ensure they have enough power to continue to share their experience.

Small business support

By reviewing the short-term small business support strategies, the group's keyword approaches revealed recent articles and research that showcased success stories from other cities. During the pandemic, small businesses struggled to maintain economic stability and sought immediate financial support that could sustain them through the economic downturn. The federal economic stimulus helped to sustain small businesses through rent payments, workforce payroll, and loss in activity. Additionally, cities have found ways to redirect state funds from Community Development Block Grant funding to match grants awarded to small businesses/nonprofits by the state economic development agency up to a certain dollar amount per business (Berkaw, 2020).

Short-term strategies

Existing mechanisms like Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) and property tax abatement offer routes to stabilize businesses in the short-term while still encouraging development projects for the long-term. Through locating, redirecting, and installing mechanisms that can directly fund or relieve small businesses, it can ensure that small businesses do not have to close their doors, which would result in job losses that further increase local unemployment.

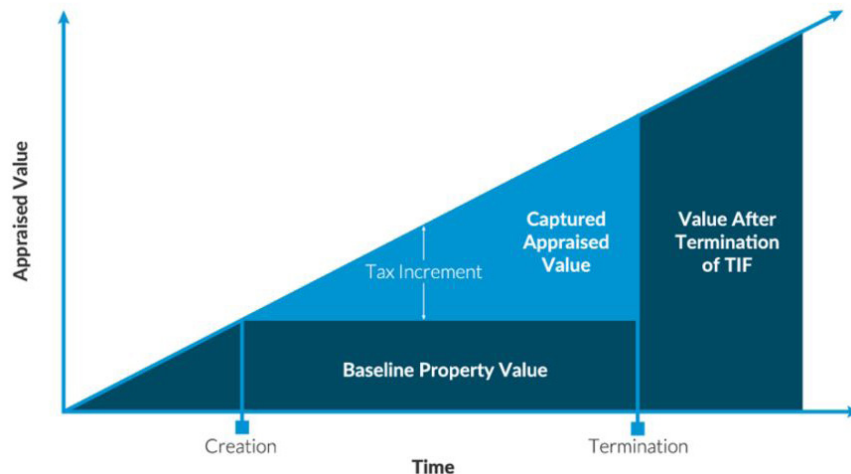


Figure 5 A basic representation of tax incremental financing (TIF), which can assist in stabilizing small businesses in the short-term, by City of Eudora, Kansas

Examples of effective short-term strategies include programs in cities like Seattle, WA, and New Orleans, LA, where local executive orders helped defer payroll taxes and business utility payments, which translated to additional take-home pay for eligible employees of up to \$2,100, and kept utilities running throughout the pandemic. Similarly, the City of Peoria exemplifies great communication and outreach support to small businesses in the community and virtually. Maintaining a strong line of communication can be a powerful tool to provide resources, tools, and updates on city websites. Providing education and simple tools for small businesses to understand the process and apply for funding may help to ease the burden off of applicants and city officials managing the high volume of applications. By maintaining strong channels of communication with local businesses that utilize loans may help to inform how the small business community is doing and adjustments to funding strategies in order to meet the needs of the business community at each stage of the pandemic.

Long-term strategies

For long-term strategies, it might be beneficial to include environmental and social equity goals to ensure sustainable economic development. This is called the triple bottom line (TBL) approach where all three facets are considered in an economic development strategy. Sustained economic growth can be aided by the use of more community economic development tools (e.g. affordable workforce housing, marketing assistance) instead of relying solely on business incentives (e.g. tax abatements) (Zhang et al., 2017). A review of the most recent Peoria Economic Development Implementation Strategy consists of both community economic development tools and business incentive tools.

Recommendations from focus group data

- Encourage small businesses to make use of social media platforms and features (Renai et al., pp.4-8).
- Consider smart technologies as a way to enhance the experience of tourists while connecting them to small businesses (Renai et al., pp.4-8).
- Focus on the “triple bottom line” (equity, environment and economic growth) for their long-term goals (Renai et al., pp.4-8).
- Emphasize placemaking opportunities which creates an environment for small business growth (Renai et al., pp.4-8).



SHIFTING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS

Shopping and dining behavior

COVID-19 has had its largest consumer impact on in-person shopping and dining, and this holds true for consumers in Peoria as well. Figure 7 details the frequency of in-person, delivery and online shopping related to grocery, dining and all other shopping categories prior to and during the pandemic. Expectations on future behavior relating to these categories is also included (Tokos et al., 2020).

Peoria resident shopping and dining behaviors			
Category	Pre-pandemic (average number of days)	Current (average number of days)	Post-pandemic expectation (average likelihood response)
Grocery - in-person shopping	1.4	1.3	Somewhat less than before
Grocery - pickup	0.1	0.2	About the same
Grocery - delivery	0.1	0.1	About the same
Restaurant - dine-in	0.8	0.4	Somewhat less than before
Restaurant - takeout	0.2	0.7	Somewhat more than before
Restaurant - delivery	0.1	0.2	About the same
Online shopping - all other goods for delivery	0.4	1.1	Somewhat more than before

Figure 6 Peoria resident shopping and dining behavior comparisons, from the "COVID-19 and the Future" study conducted at University of Illinois at Chicago

Survey respondents from Peoria indicated that they were grocery shopping in-person fewer days per week than before the pandemic and expected to continue doing the same after the pandemic has subsided. Survey respondents showed that Peoria residents choose to have groceries delivered infrequently and expect that behavior to continue once the pandemic has passed.

Restaurant and dining behavior was a little more pronounced. Survey responses by Peoria residents show that before the pandemic they were dining out in restaurants less than one day per week on average and that behavior during the pandemic dropped by half. Expectations for in-person dining after the pandemic were pessimistic, with respondents expressing that they expected to dine at restaurants in-person even less than they did prior to the pandemic. Frequency of restaurant takeout was up and Peoria respondents plan to take food to-go somewhat more than before the pandemic. Restaurant delivery was almost the same and respondents expect that behavior to continue after the pandemic has subsided.

The most dramatic trend that the research captured was that Peoria respondents nearly tripled their frequency of online shopping for all other goods. Online shopping frequency averaged 0.4 days per week before the pandemic. That increased to 1.1 days per week during the pandemic and the respondents, on average, expected to shop online somewhat more than before post-COVID.

Telecommuting

The onset of the pandemic served as a springboard for large-scale experiments in remote-work policies for the US worker. Figure 8 illustrates the average frequency of telecommuting before and during the pandemic of Peoria residents, along with residents of other West Valley cities and Maricopa County generally, as well as their expected frequency post-pandemic.

Telecommuting behavior and expectations			
<i>Time period</i>	<i>Maricopa County</i>	<i>West Valley</i>	<i>Peoria</i>
	<i>Average number of days worked from home</i>		
Pre-pandemic	1.7	1.8	2.0
Current	4.9	4.7	4.7
Post-pandemic expectation	2.2	2.4	2.5

Figure 7 Phoenix Metropolitan Region telecommuting behavior comparisons, from the "COVID-19 and the Future" study conducted at University of Illinois at Chicago

The survey data shows that prior to the pandemic, Peoria residents worked remotely more days than their counterparts in other West Valley cities and Maricopa County at large. While the post-pandemic expectation for all groups is to continue telecommuting practices, Peoria residents indicated they expect to work from home an average of 2.5 days per week, which was the highest frequency of West Valley respondents (2.4 days) and Maricopa County respondents (2.2 days).

Figure 9 shows the percentage of survey respondents from Peoria, the West Valley and Maricopa County who indicate continued behavior change once the pandemic subsides. Particularly, 19% of Peoria respondents would like to continue taking more walks. This is more notable when paired with the finding that 12% of Peoria respondents want to commute less and 18% want to drive less in general. Pedestrian linkages in this heavily-trafficked area could improve perceived safety issues and attract smaller-scale tenants that would balance out the currently dominant big-box environment. Both of these variables related to transportation mode and frequency highlight a significant deviation from the responses by West Valley or Maricopa County respondents overall.

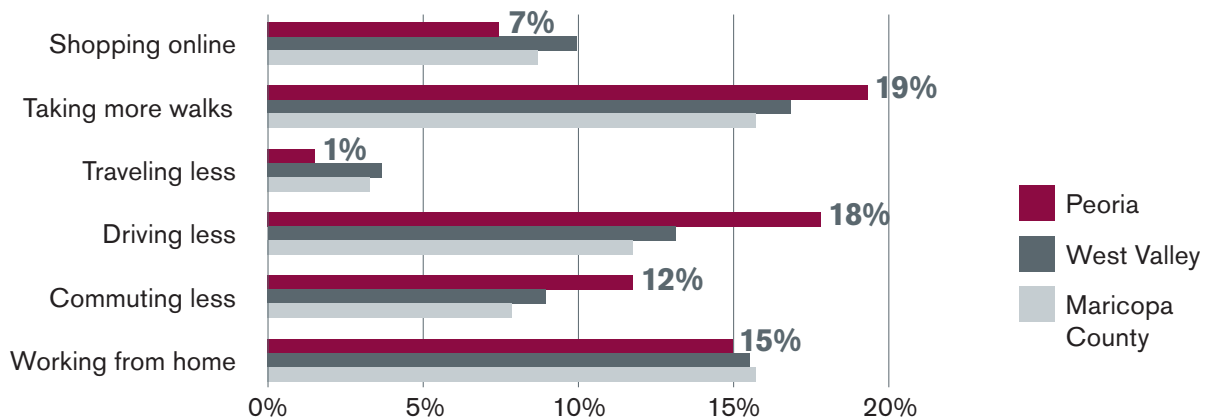


Figure 8 Phoenix Metropolitan Region perceived continued behavior change post-pandemic, with percentages show for Peoria, from the "COVID-19 and the Future" study conducted at University of Illinois at Chicago

Recommendations based on shifting consumer behavior

- Focus on retail and commercial developments that prioritize walkability and connectivity to natural assets. For example, the Skunk Creek Trail could be made more pedestrian friendly adding to an already successful retail and entertainment district (Tokos et al., pp.5-8).
- Invest in internet and telecommunications infrastructure to accommodate rising digital industries to get a bigger return (Tokos et al., pp.5-8).
- Adapt to changing consumer habits, such as increased online shopping and remote work, by pivoting away from large office development and investing more in telecommunications and internet infrastructure. Additionally, existing light commercial and big-box infrastructure can be adapted to accommodate e-commerce fulfillment and delivery operations, benefiting consumers and providing greater opportunities for businesses to grow alongside changing shopping trends that have only accelerated during the pandemic (Tokos et al., pp.5-8).
- Ensures that the energy and cable or fiber internet grids are able to accommodate a growing number of employees that work from home (Tokos et al., pp.5-8).



COMPARISON CITIES

The five studied comparison cities within Maricopa County; Gilbert, Glendale, Surprise, Goodyear, and Buckeye, are of comparable size and character to Peoria, and all but Gilbert are in Phoenix's West Valley (Gilbert is in the East Valley). These cities are partners, and their success is mutual and codependent, especially during the ongoing pandemic. All cities inclusive of Peoria received the CARES Act grants by the government to provide a much-needed boost to their local businesses. The cities also adopted similar practices, such as development of mentorship programs, conducting business outreach, providing job training, etc., in order to support their local businesses. However, upon further exploration, it is evident that the City of Peoria can also benefit from innovative practices and policies, such as 1) providing business with a start guide, 2) lease freezing, 3) investing in telework for better connectivity and 5) ensuring a strong neighborhood network.

Furthermore, four peer communities in the Suburban Sun Belt region with exemplary responses to economic hardship and increased barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation due to COVID-19 are located in California and Nevada. Comprehensive assessments of COVID response policies offer insights on programs in these cities which might complement Peoria's existing COVID-related economic development efforts. Additional weight has been given to programs which may be beneficial beyond immediate COVID-19 relief efforts, providing opportunities for long-term entrepreneurship visibility and streamlined economic growth and land development.

Building on these recommendations, the City of Peoria should take careful consideration as it fine-tunes and expands upon its COVID-19 response and recovery strategies. The following sections discuss best practices distilled from the studied comparison cities.

Phoenix Metropolitan Area

Gilbert, Arizona

The Town of Gilbert created the #GilbertTogether Business Recovery Program. The Program consists of three phases focused on 1) supporting relief, 2) recovery, and 3) working towards long-term resiliency. The features of the program are as follows:

- **#GilbertTogether business relief grants** - The Town received a total of \$29.2 million in CARES Act funding. Nearly \$18 million of which were allocated to business relief programs, with \$11 million set aside for one-time grants. The program grants allocate qualified businesses up to \$35,000 based upon positive financial impacts on the community. Qualifying businesses are required to demonstrate revenue declines of at least 15% due to COVID-19.
- **#GilbertTogether microloan recovery program** - The Town has sponsored low-interest microloans for businesses. Businesses are eligible for between \$10,000 and \$50,000. These recovery loans were intended to enhance business recovery by bridging the gap between other loan programs and revenue losses due to COVID-19 and business shutdowns. The loans were offered at a rate of 4% for a term of up to 48 months, or a rate of 5% up to 60 months.
- **Business resiliency assistance program** - The program provides entry-level and technical training to Gilbert-based businesses. In partnership with other organizations, the program provides up to 200 hours of technical assistance and individual access to 19 short-term Certificates of Completion (CCL). The Town also provides one-on-one technical assistance, workshop opportunities, and bootcamp group training for local businesses. The sessions cover topics such as customer acquisition, marketing and branding, social media, operations and legal considerations.
- **Town of Gilbert department accommodations** - The program modifies various department operations by streamlining processes and ensuring remote access to city businesses. The public can attend public meetings in-person or online. The Utility Department committed to not disconnect water through January 2021 and to provide rent and utility assistance grants through AZCEND, formerly the Chandler Christian Community Center (CCCC). Development Services shifted to a 100% online permit submission and inspection request format. Most residential, and some commercial re-inspections are now conducted virtually instead of in-person. Extension of Premise permits are also being issued to allow outdoor dining and outdoor liquor sales.

Glendale, Arizona

The economic department established relationships with small business owners to ensure they had the necessary resources to keep businesses open, such as PPE and signage. They also established a great relationship with Mark Anthony Brewing to open a new White Claw facility, bringing in numerous jobs to Glendale.

- **AZCARES funds** - Received \$28.9 million in General CARES Act funds, \$3.5 million in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, and \$3.7 million in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) CARES Act funding. The funds provided to the city helped develop programs such as rental and utility assistance programs, small business grant programs, and workforce development programs.
- **#ShopGlendaleAZ campaign** - Organized a social media campaign to promote small businesses within the community. Customers who upload a photo of their purchase(s) to their social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) using the hashtag #ShopGlendaleAZ entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gift card to any small business of their choice in Glendale. This campaign has successfully circulated money throughout the economy while attracting new customers from surrounding jurisdictions.
- **Flexible policies** - Worked closely with the Fire Marshal to allow street and alleyway closures to ensure businesses abide by the CDC social distancing guidelines. Glendale officials worked with the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control to ensure businesses the sale of alcohol to customers ordering takeout.

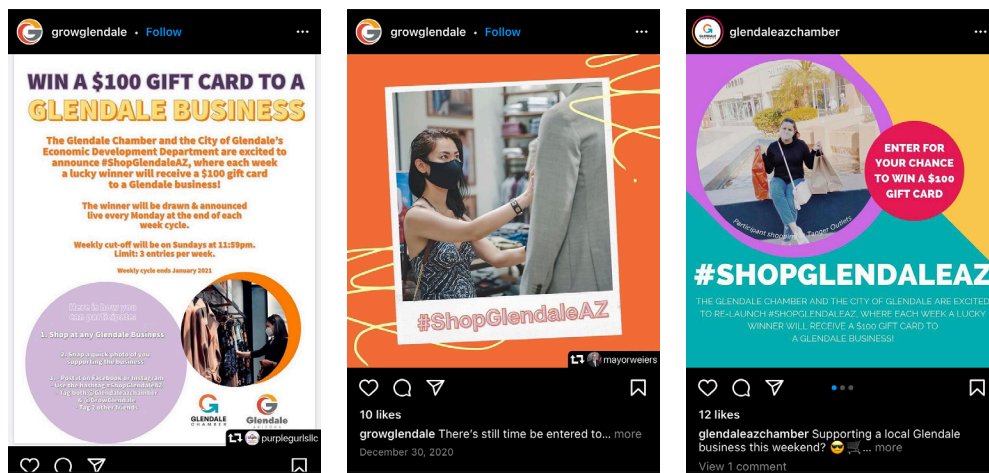


Figure 9 Various #ShopGlendaleAZ Instagram posts

Surprise, Arizona

Surprise received \$16.3 million in COVID-19 relief funds through the AZ CARES fund. Additionally, the City took several wide-reaching, proactive and consumer friendly steps to ensure its business community overcomes the economic shock that came with the state's COVID-19 restrictions. One of these interventions was the "See Red Get Fed" Banner campaign and "Open for Business" banners which were provided for free to help advertise open businesses. Other steps include:

- **Cash grants** - Provides emergency relief for businesses, local retailers, and nonprofits experiencing distress and revenue losses for assisting with rent, utilities, payroll expenses and other necessary operating costs.
- **100-Day Business and Workforce Recovery Plan** - Communicate to residents in a manner that directly supports local businesses using social media and weekly email correspondence, and identify immediate, short-term and long-term community workforce development solutions. The plan's main priorities were business engagement, workforce displacement assistance, business re-entry, and recovery.
- **Safe-To-Reopen toolkit** - Toolkit that detailed steps for businesses to reopen safely with an emphasis on cleanliness, coordination, and communication, and provided a plethora of resources, categorized by business type, that explains current state and local regulations for opening businesses.

COVID-19 BUSINESS RESOURCES

The Surprise Economic Development Department is committed to providing relevant and reliable information on a variety of resources and programming to all COVID-19 impacted businesses in our community. Information on this business resource page has been organized by a number of important topics and is subject to changes because of regularly posted updates.

Video Resources

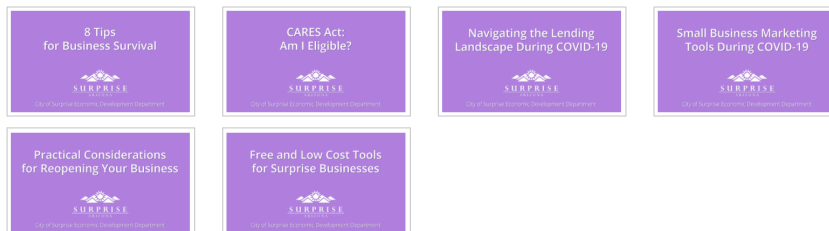


Figure 10 Excerpt from the Surprise, Arizona Business Resources webpage

Goodyear, Arizona

The economic development department of Goodyear provided support where it was needed, which mainly included information provision to businesses and connecting them to needed resources.

- **The Innovation Hub** - The City is offering inclusive one-on-one mentoring to help the businesses reposition themselves. The services are offered at no cost to the city's small and diverse business community. This includes Business Builders, workshops, seminars, 1:1 mentoring, ASU Startup School, and connections to informational and other business support resources.
- **Information and digital resources** - The City developed a webpage for COVID resources, a restaurant page letting the residents know which ones were open for take-out, and a CARES Act page with links directly to the resources that could help businesses. A social media campaign has been developed to encourage residents to support the restaurants with takeout and delivery options. Goodyear started an e-blast program which sends out important information to businesses and residents. The City also made a temporary sign ordinance and temporary outdoor seating policies.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** - Goodyear's allocated \$75,000 in CDBG COVID-19 funding through the Urban County to emergency water utility assistance for the residents. Another potential \$75,000 award may be issued through CDBG and the City has proposed that it be used for rental or mortgage assistance.

Resources Available for Business Owners		
CITY OF GOODYEAR	The latest information about the Coronavirus	goodyearaz.gov/residents/coronavirus-info
Arizona @ Work (Employees)	Arizona employers with Immediate Openings	arizonaatwork.com/newsroom/all/arizona-employers-immediate-openings
Arizona @ Work (Employers)	The city of Goodyear is partnering with Arizona@Work to assist Goodyear companies who are either temporarily hiring or laying off employees during the Covid-19 pandemic.	arizonaatwork.com
	NEW as of January 8, 2021	
	Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey announced \$2 million of additional funding to restaurants in order to continue expanding outdoor dining space and to slow the spread of coronavirus.	Governor's News Release
		SORAP Additional Guidelines and Application
		Safest Outside Restaurant Assistance Program
		Rapid Employment Job Training Grant Brochure
Arizona Commerce Authority	SAFEST OUTSIDE RESTAURANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SORAD) The State of Arizona created the Safest Outside Restaurant Assistance Program, which is designed to assist bars and restaurants with funding for the infrastructure needed to expand their premises. With \$1 million total in the fund, businesses may apply for up to \$10,000 to cover expenditures for items restaurants need to extend their premises to approved outdoor spaces such as outdoor furniture, barriers, patio heaters, or parklets.	azcommerce.com/covid-19/ Gradual Step by Step Plan for Arizona

Figure 11 Excerpt from Goodyear's online COVID resources for businesses

Buckeye

Buckeye has been among the least negatively impacted by the pandemic of all the municipalities in Maricopa County. The City has taken a number of steps toward ensuring that it remains prepared and resilient, while also following proper safety guidelines.

- **Interim outdoor dining allowances** - The expansion of temporary outdoor dining into on-site parking spaces without permit. This allowance will remain in place for the duration of the local emergency, after which point normal protocols will resume. Outdoor dining remains prohibited on public rights-of-way, including sidewalks and streets. All existing ADA, health, and fire safety codes remain applicable.
- **Interim temporary sign process** - Allowed all temporary signs identified in the City Development Code to be placed without permit. Though quantity, size, and location requirements remain effective, this allowance permits signs to remain posted continuously for the duration of the local emergency.
- **COVID-19 Shop Buckeye** - Created a program for promoting local businesses that remain open during the pandemic. Businesses that adjust their hours, offer pickup and/or delivery services, or offer promotions may fill out a form on the growbuckeye.com website and be featured on a list of businesses posted online and shared via social media with Buckeye residents.



Figure 12 Graphics from the Shop Buckeye campaign available for local businesses

Suburban Sun Belt

Rancho Cucamonga, California

Rancho Cucamonga maintains a GIS web portal to connect residents and visitors to information about business closures while promoting businesses attempting to stay open during the pandemic. The application also allows enterprises to post information about hours, website links, and product descriptions through the application. Users can filter by type of business and location

Peoria could also use GIS tools to help increase business visibility during the pandemic. This GIS application has present benefits for the City by offering a central location for determining where and when businesses are open, and where entrepreneurs are operating from during the pandemic. Medical facilities, COVID-19 testing sites, and businesses offering COVID-19 mitigation supplies can also be included on the map alongside businesses. All spatial elements of the pandemic response can be consolidated into a single map application. A GIS application could easily merge information on Peoria's eye-catching "Dine Out Options" handout with the status of other businesses in an interactive format. The mapping application can demonstrate how each phase of city reopening will affect the market activity across the city.

However, the true benefit of developing a GIS asset will be the ability to easily adjust the application to suit future needs. Such an app can provide a plethora of opportunities, as businesses look for opportunities to use COVID policies to generate long-term change in business support structures and methods for flexible business marketing and growth. GIS applications can provide places for business owners to maintain contact information, links, attachments, and a form of advertising in a centralized place, particularly when using the new integrated online platforms with ArcGIS Pro and revamped interactive tools for ArcGIS Online through ESRI.



Figure 13 Panoramic view of Rancho Cucamonga, California

Burbank, California

The City's COVID-19 response is guided by the community's Economic Recovery Plan which is designed to "revive" the local economy by prioritizing efforts to "prevent homelessness, encourage continued development, and sustain financial stability" (City of Burbank, 2020) (Hughes et al., 2020).

City officials developed a flexible parking system by updating city zoning ordinance requirements. The local government will evaluate these potential changes to the city's parking regulation for long-term application: a) shared parking, b) unbundled parking, and c) shared easement use of private parking facilities during off hours.

Interstate 5 currently serves as a belt of economic activity in the heart of Burbank. The City plans to focus investment in emerging commercial centers and corridors because of the essential role they play in the economic development in the city. These changes to parking regulations are projected to attract more local and regional customers, promote flexibility with existing parking resources, and reduce developer and tenant pressure in some situations. Compared to the City of Burbank, there are two major channels connecting the region to the City of Peoria: Arizona Route 60 and the Loop 101 freeway. Peoria can take advantage of the two channels to stimulate the economy by promoting shared parking, unbundled parking, and the use of private parking facilities during off hours, particularly near key emerging business corridors.



Figure 14 View of downtown Burbank, California

The change to a policy of unbundled parking separates parking fees from rent or house fees and allows residents to choose parking spaces. This policy ensures that residents and tenants do not need to pay for parking services they do not need. Peoria may also benefit from temporary cancellations of minimum parking requirements in crucial commercial centers. This should be done in cooperation with any new unbundled parking policy. Minimum parking requirements force developers to build expensive parking spaces, thereby pushing up housing prices. If the local government cancels minimum parking requirements, costs could be alleviated for development following the pandemic as the city seeks to help its development market recover. Finally, private parking facilities could be used by other visitors during off hours through an opt-in city program. This can maximize parking availability in existing business areas with few expensive investments.

Recommendations from comparison cities

- Develop a free and inclusive one-on-one mentoring program for local businesses regardless of their size. The services offered to the city's small and diverse business community could help businesses reposition themselves. This may include Business Builders, workshops, seminars, ASU Startup School, and connections to informational and other business support resources (Garcia et al., pp.9-10).
- Partner with area community colleges to provide on-the-job training for entry-level employees and technical assistance for business owners (Garcia et al., pp.7-8).
- Adopt a program whereby local businesses not only remain open during the pandemic but also offer a range of special deals and promotions. These businesses can be featured on a special list that can be published online and promoted to residents via social media (Garcia et al., pp.6).
- Collaborate with the Fire Marshal to ensure appropriate closure of streets, alleyways, and easements for proper social distancing. They can also work with the Department of Liquor Licenses and Control to ensure restaurants are allowed to sell alcohol to customers ordering takeout (Garcia et al., pp.9).
- Revise policies for shared parking, unbundled parking, and shared easement use of private parking facilities during off-hours (Hughes et al., pp.4).

- Develop GIS tools in a digital app for increasing business visibility during the pandemic. This will provide the city with a central location for determining where and when businesses are open, and where entrepreneurs are operating from. Medical facilities can be included on the map alongside businesses, along with incorporating COVID-19 testing sites and businesses offering COVID-19 mitigation supplies, from personal protective equipment to masks and smaller homemade tools (Hughes et al., pp.5).
- Prepare a guide for starting businesses and consider zero-interest loans for these businesses to serve as down payment assistance for opening expenses (Garcia et al., pp.12-13).
- Register all residents in a voluntary neighbors network to help reduce the pressure and financial strain on some public services. This network can offer assistance when a neighbor needs non-emergency assistance (Garcia et al., pp.12-13).
- Identify corporate programs available for small business assistance (Hughes et al., pp.3).
- Provide municipal loans in addition to a large CARES grant pool for businesses (Hughes et al., pp.3).
- Provide childcare and tutoring support. The City of Henderson, NV, established free homework and tutoring services for K-8 children to complement its public school program via its Battle Born Kids program. This program also provides low-cost childcare for children ages 5-14 (Hughes et al., pp.3).

Editor's Note

Some of the recommendations in this section were formulated following feedback received at the Fall 2020 End-of-Semester Showcase event, and therefore may not be fully reflected or expanded on in the original student reports.

CONCLUSION

In response to the pandemic, municipal governments across the country have funneled resources from the state and federal governments, including CARES Act grants and Community Development Block Grants, to provide a much-needed boost to their local businesses. Many local governments have gone above and beyond, finding creative ways to keep their economies going in the age of mask mandates and social distancing. The City of Peoria, Arizona has been no exception. The students of PUP 642 are grateful to the City of Peoria for making it easy to get information and running a very effective program. The groups have also tried to be mindful of the economic development needs of the City of Peoria while providing their recommendations and hope that their work will help the City overcome the challenges brought upon the area's local businesses by the pandemic.

The trends revealed from the analyses of consumer behavior, focus group, and omnibus survey data may benefit in informing the City's economic development strategies moving forward. Changing consumer behaviors and expectations for telecommuting will have significant implications for the success of development projects, community investments, and land use decisions in Peoria. Innovative promotion and marketing of businesses during the pandemic is also an important trend for better communication. It is also worth remembering that residents wanted to see more vegetation, lights, misters, and other features that would make Old Town, P83 and Four Corners more walkable and pedestrian-friendly. The study of the restaurant and fitness industries disclosed that the initial grant was successful in maintaining local businesses during a shutdown. However, further financial assistance is needed to re-establish a thriving local economy.

The aforementioned recommendations take the context of Peoria into consideration and can help promote Peoria's reputation as a world class, sustainable, and future ready city. These suggestions should not be considered a perfect solution to solve the current issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the City should consider this analysis as an additional component in their decision-making process. The short- and long-term recommendations provided by the students will benefit the City in maintaining support programs for small businesses that can be effective in navigating through the pandemic while building a stronger and more resilient city in the process.

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