



"Including STAR metrics in Phoenix's 10-year update to the City's General Plan just made sense"

– Josh Bednarek, Principal Planner for the City of Phoenix.

"The Mayor charged us with making the plan more user-friendly, since the previous plan was 500 pages," said Bednarek. "We really liked the layout and framework that STAR provides in allowing the reader to dive into the topic area and very quickly figure out what we were going to do to address that."

To simplify the message, city staff focused on two questions: "What are the things you love about Phoenix?" and "What are your big ideas?"

Over the 2.5-year process, the City held 150 meetings and collected input from 1,300 web users that generated 9,700 big ideas to consider. The feedback resulted in the vision of Phoenix becoming a "connected oasis" and identified 5 core values to underpin [PlanPHX](#): celebrate diverse communities and neighborhoods, strengthen the local economy, connect people and places, build the sustainable desert city, and create an even more vibrant downtown.

Since Phoenix was also pursuing STAR certification at the same time, city staff used STAR's framework and metrics as a guide. "STAR's Outcomes provided metrics that really dovetailed well with our five core values," said Bednarek. "It was a really valuable tool for us to highlight where our plan lined up and point out things we hadn't addressed, either because they aren't required by state statute or the ideas hadn't come up in conversation with the public."

Alignment with PlanPHX also helped with data collection for STAR. As Rosanne Albright, Brownfields Program Manager, said, "Since Phoenix is such a big city that has so many programs going on at once, it really helped that all the departments were already collecting data for the general plan. In some cases, especially in the area of equity, STAR helped to identify new metrics that we can track to make sure we are meeting our goals."

Now that the general plan is nearing completion, attention is turning towards implementation. "How we're going to measure success, that's where STAR will really come in handy," said Bednarek. "In some cases, we're not quite there yet, but thanks to PlanPHX and STAR, we're well on our way."

Top 10 Reasons to Integrate STAR into Comprehensive Plans

Whether your community is ready to pursue STAR certification or just wants to download the rating system as guidance, there are many reasons to use STAR when developing your comprehensive plan:

10. STAR can help identify metrics for some areas that are harder to quantify, such as equity.
9. STAR metrics give the community a way to measure and track the plan's success over time.
8. STAR metrics provide good indicators to communicate progress to the public.
7. Timing the comprehensive plan process simultaneously with pursuing STAR certification can make data collection easier for all departments.
6. Cross-department collaboration ensures that all departments are working towards the same goals and identifies new ways they can work together.
5. Aligning the comprehensive plan with STAR's nationally vetted framework adds legitimacy and context to the plan's goals.
4. STAR's framework can illuminate gaps in the comprehensive plan draft about important ideas that didn't come up during public meetings.
3. STAR's framework can point out programs and policies that are already in place but have not yet been formally captured in the comprehensive plan.
2. STAR encourages the community to set ambitious targets to reach higher levels of sustainability and livability.

And the #1 reason is . . .

Achieving STAR certification at the end of the comprehensive planning process can boost feelings of accomplishment and civic pride, creating momentum for plan implementation.



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Photos courtesy of the City of Plano and the City of Phoenix