



PEOPLE • NATURE • BUILT ENVIRONMENT

RIO PHX DESIGN GUIDELINES

For development along the Rio Salado Corridor in Phoenix



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
**PRESERVE
SHAPE
BUILD**



CREATED BY THE CITY OF PHOENIX 2026

PURPOSE

The RIO PHX Design Guidelines are grounded in values identified by residents, business owners, and community stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhoods. They provide inspiration and direction for developers, property owners, architects, and landscape designers to create a welcoming, distinctive, and contextual sense of place for the Rio Salado corridor that celebrates both natural and cultural heritage. Design solutions should aim to honor these values by reinforcing local identity, discouraging displacement, enhancing environmental health, and creating inclusive spaces for gathering, expression, and economic activity.

The guidelines represent an important step toward realizing the community's long-standing commitment to Rio Reimagined: a vision to transform the Rio Salado into a defining natural feature and iconic public space within the City of Phoenix that enriches our history, culture, and natural beauty while fostering vibrant, walkable communities along and beyond its banks. They also serve as a key tool for implementing the community vision outlined in the Rio Salado District Policy Plan, helping to translate policy goals into clear design direction for development. Information on existing plans and ongoing efforts that support the vision can be found on the RIO PHX website.



“ The Rio Salado Corridor is special to our city. Defined by its wild natural beauty, it is a place of unparalleled ecological importance and historical significance, and holds the promise of becoming the grand, defining public space of our region. As Phoenix continues to grow and urbanize, this special river corridor deserves a surrounding built environment that will complement, protect, and celebrate its natural beauty and environmental value. Together, let's rise to the challenge of creating a built environment around our river as awe-inspiring as the river itself. ”

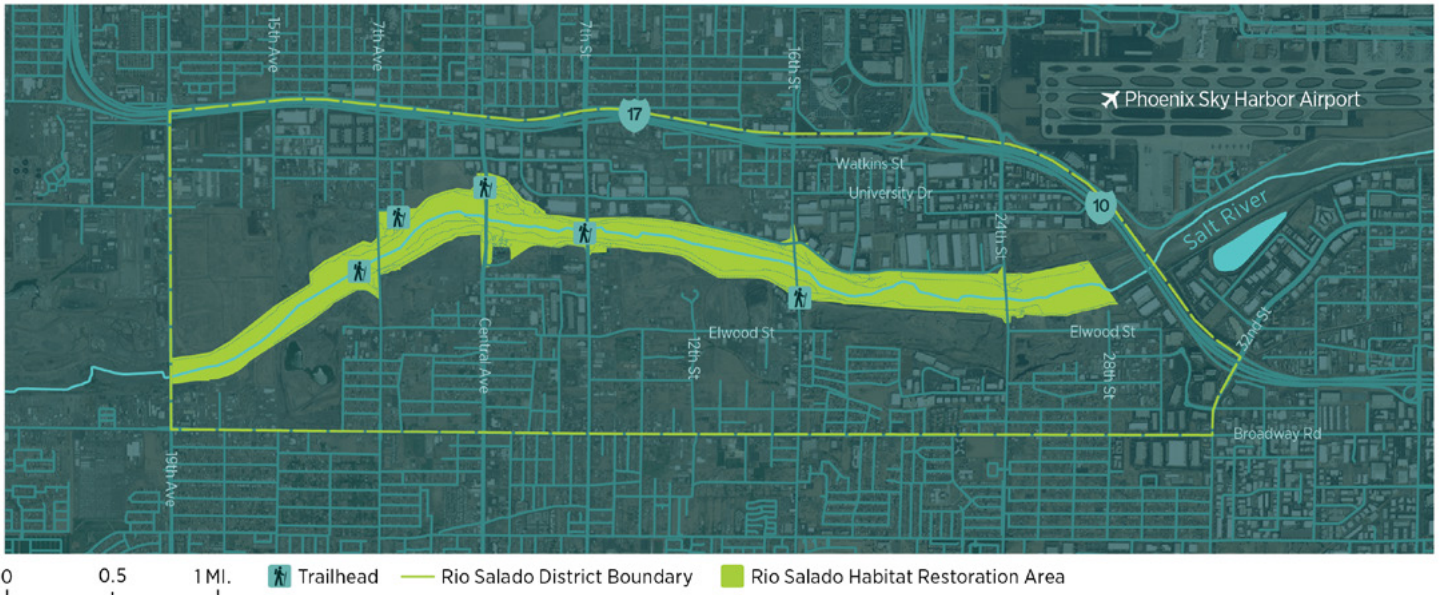
— KATE GALLEGRO,
MAYOR OF PHOENIX



Photo credit: City of Phoenix

GEOGRAPHICAL APPLICABILITY

The RIO PHX Design Guidelines apply to all buildings, structures, and landscapes that are built, rehabilitated, or redeveloped on private and public property in the Rio Salado Corridor, as defined in the applicable area (see map). These guidelines should also inform development beyond the mapped boundary along other segments of the Rio Salado corridor.



Disclaimer: This design guideline document is a tool that provides guidance and inspiration toward achieving the community’s vision and does not impose any new regulatory standards that are not already applicable. This document does not prevent the application of existing overlay districts and their associated requirements per the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance.



The **Rio Salado District Policy Plan (2026)** provides policy guidance for development within the Rio Salado District boundary identified above. To implement the community vision, this plan contains the following to guide development in the area:

- Master Plans (Illustrative, Land Use, and Connectivity)
- Catalyst Site Vision Concepts
- Typology Illustrations (Open Space, Scenic Drive, Paseos, and Canals)

LOCAL REGULATORY REFERENCES AND RELEVANT GUIDELINES

Several regulatory standards, policies, and plans provided inspiration for these design guidelines, in addition to community input.

DOWNTOWN CODE

Chapter 12 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

Zoning for the downtown core that prioritizes walkability, active frontages, step-backs, and shaded public space.

WALKABLE URBAN CODE

Chapter 13 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

Form-based code encouraging compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly development in targeted urban areas.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

Chapter 5, Section 507 Tab A of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

Citywide design principles promoting climate-responsive design, native landscaping, pedestrian comfort, and neighborhood context.

NORTH BLACK CANYON OVERLAY DISTRICT

Chapter 6, Section 654 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

Overlay guidelines that emphasize integration of natural features, washes, and pedestrian access into site design along the Sonoran Desert Preserve.

RIO SALADO INTERIM OVERLAY DISTRICT

Chapter 6, Section 655 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

Overlay district protecting the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area (RSHRA) by controlling open, outdoor land uses and other uses in order to have a positive impact on the RSHRA and add to the long-term value of adjacent land.

SHADE PHOENIX PLAN

Citywide strategy for expanding shade through tree planting and built structures to reduce urban heat and improve walkability.

GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE (GSI) GUIDELINES AND HANDBOOK

Design and permitting guidance for green stormwater infrastructure like bioswales and rain gardens to manage runoff and support ecological function.

Rio Salado Gateway
Artist: Tom Strich



Photo credit: Bloomberg Philanthropies

“ One should know they are within the Rio Salado Corridor even before they reach the river. The integration of shade trees, plants, public art, river signage, pathways to the river, benches and other amenities, as well as beautiful, contextual architecture, will serve as visual cues of the river’s proximity and make people feel welcome, comfortable, and happy to be there. We are excited about the impact these community spaces will have on our students and their families. ”

— DR. DANIELA PORTILLO,
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE ROOSEVELT
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GOALS OF THE RIO PHX DESIGN GUIDELINES

1 IDENTITY AND CHARACTER

Shape an identity for the Rio Salado Corridor that celebrates the natural attributes of the environment, respects the historic traditions from indigenous communities, and integrates the existing character and heritage of its surrounding communities and neighborhoods while creating stronger social cohesion.

2 CONNECTIONS AND RIVER ACCESS

Improve physical and visual access to the river for abutting communities and visitors through multimodal corridors for greater connectivity.

3 SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

Improve the well-being of residents through a cleaner natural environment and increased opportunities for recreation and public open spaces by enhancing safety through intentional design of outdoor landscapes and the built environment.


4 ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RESILIENCY

Advance climate-resilient development by encouraging design strategies that reduce urban heat, conserve water, and promote long-term biodiversity, ecological health, and sustainability.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHY DESIGN MATTERS IN THE RIO SALADO CORRIDOR	1
DESIGN GUIDELINES	2
Building Design	2
Site Design	5
Art and Placemaking	8
Parking and Bicycle Facilities	10
Landscaping and Fencing	12
Outdoor Lighting	14
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	15



“ Urban design in the Rio Salado Corridor is a responsibility. It responds to water, land, and heat as active forces and acknowledges Indigenous stewardship. Intentional design strengthens relationships between land and the built environment, creating regenerative, equitable, and shaded spaces. ”

— DUSHAWN “DJ” JOHN-ARMENIA,
COMMUNITY LEADER

WHY DESIGN MATTERS IN THE RIO SALADO CORRIDOR

A vital resource for Indigenous communities and more recently a hub for industrial activity, the Rio Salado Corridor is poised to evolve into a natural, cultural, and recreational amenity, as well as an economic catalyst for Phoenix.

The impact of development on natural systems can foster a healthier, more vibrant river ecosystem and a more comfortable public realm. People are drawn to the area. Their presence supports existing local businesses and the formation of new businesses, creating jobs and generating demand for housing. This everyday activity increases “eyes on the street,” ensuring more people use public spaces throughout the day and contributing to a safer and more welcoming corridor.

The RIO PHX Design Guidelines establish clear expectations for quality, connectivity, sustainability, and aesthetics. These expectations help shape development that contributes to an inviting and vibrant corridor that benefits residents, businesses, and tourists alike.

The types of land use located along and beyond the Rio Salado banks play a significant role in shaping its character and the public's experience. Uses that activate the riverfront and welcome people, including recreation and open space amenities, community facilities, food and beverage, cultural or educational spaces, ecological research, and local retail, help strengthen the connection between the community and the river.

Uses that face inward or are comprised of industrial activities that rely on warehousing, processing of raw materials, data centers, or heavy truck-oriented uses, are generally less compatible with the desired experience for the corridor.

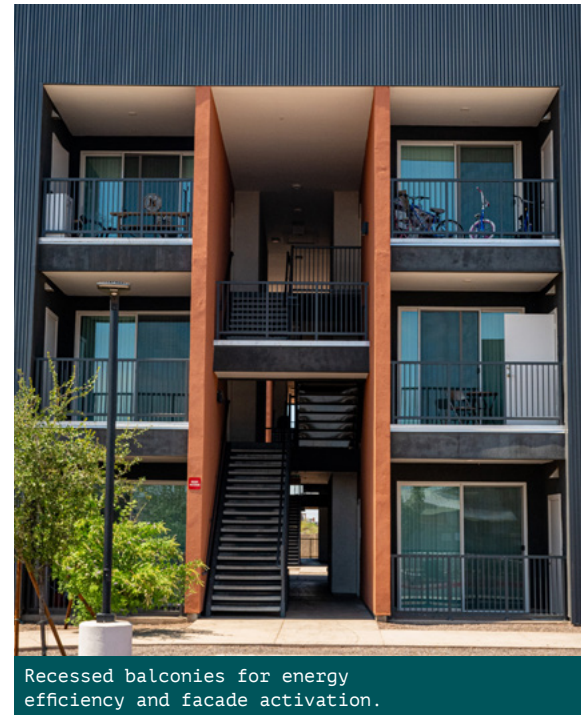
These perspectives reflect themes heard during community engagement efforts led by the City of Phoenix, which emphasized a desire for more welcoming, people-oriented activities along and beyond the riverbanks.



DESIGN GUIDELINES

Integrating nature, people, and the built environment.

BUILDING DESIGN



Credit for all photos: Bloomberg Philanthropies

- Scale, massing, and step-backs.** To maintain compatibility with surrounding context, building massing should be broken down through roofline changes, material transitions, or step-backs. Step-backs for buildings over 30 feet or two stories adjacent to the Rio Salado help preserve views. Civic, cultural, and iconic public buildings may exceed standard step-back and height guidelines when necessary to achieve programmatic or architectural goals.
- Building form and facade articulation.** Use architectural variation such as insets, material changes, or deep-set openings to reduce visual bulk and create a pedestrian-friendly scale. Incorporate recessed entryways, articulated facades, and shading elements like canopies or mesh screens to provide comfort, visual interest, and opportunities for creative and celebratory architectural expression.
- River- and street-facing facades.** Facades facing the river or adjacent trails should be treated as primary frontages with the same design quality, transparency, and articulation as the main street-facing entries. Where feasible, incorporate active uses such as entries, balconies, porches, outdoor seating, shaded areas, or storefronts to enhance public engagement and walkability, and to encourage businesses to orient activity toward the river.
- Ground floor design and pedestrian comfort.** Design ground-floor spaces with operable, public-facing entries, transparent glazing, and ample shade elements, such as tree canopies or built shade structures. Include pedestrian-scale furnishings such as planters, benches, and lighting. Recessed entries with overhead shade improve comfort and reduce energy demand. Ground-floor facades should feature clear glazing (at least 75% on most commercial frontages) rather than mirrored or opaque glass, to maintain visibility and an active public realm.
- Corner articulation.** At intersections designated as enhanced corners in the Downtown Code, buildings should include architectural articulation and features that emphasize the corner and draw attention to the entry. Examples may include subtle height accents, chamfered or rounded forms, wrap-around glazing, material changes, or recessed entries to foster a more inviting sense of place.

- **Traditional desert building materials.** Where feasible, consider regionally appropriate, high-thermal-mass materials such as adobe, rammed earth, or stone. These materials can buffer temperature swings in arid climates. Use finishes like stucco, light-colored plaster, or appropriately treated clay tile (Saltillo/terracotta) to reduce solar heat gain and reinforce regional character.
- **Natural textures and patterns.** Projects should incorporate design elements inspired by the surrounding desert and riparian landscape. Biomimicry strategies, such as patterns, forms, colors, or rhythms drawn from natural habitats, help buildings blend with the ecological character of the Rio Salado Corridor.
- **Modern adaptations of traditional systems.** Where traditional materials are not feasible, teams should explore alternatives like stabilized rammed earth, compressed earth blocks, insulated concrete forms (ICFs), or cast-in-place concrete. These systems offer similar thermal benefits and can align with performance requirements in the Phoenix Building Construction Code.
- **High-performance wall and roof assemblies.** Projects should incorporate systems that combine insulation with thermal mass, such as ICFs, rainscreens, or thermally broken cladding. Roofs should include materials with high Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) values to reduce solar heat gain. See the Phoenix Building Construction Code and 2024 International Energy Conservation Code for assembly guidance.
- **Solar-reflective and energy-efficient materials.** Exterior finishes with high solar reflectance, such as light-colored stucco, coated metals, or cementitious panels, help reduce heat absorption and cooling demand. Avoid dark-colored roofing and paving to reduce urban heat impacts.
- **Solar control and shading strategies.** Design elements such as overhangs, vertical fins, or exterior mesh screens help minimize solar exposure. These strategies can be paired with deep-set windows and building orientation to support passive cooling.
- **Bird- and wildlife-friendly design.** Within 500 feet of the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, use bird safe glazing such as fritted, patterned, or UV treated glass. Avoid highly reflective materials and design outdoor lighting to



RELEVANT PRECEDENT

AUDUBON CENTER, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The Audubon Center along the Rio Salado incorporates bird-friendly design elements to protect local avian species, including designs on the windows to prevent bird collisions. The building facade is made of natural materials that blend with the surrounding desert landscape.

reduce glare, sky glow, and spillover into habitat areas. Interior lighting should be minimized or turned off when not required at night. Where feasible, consider nesting ledges or pollinator friendly plantings at the building edge.

- **Durability and low-maintenance materials.** Materials suited to desert conditions, such as factory-finished metals, fiber-cement panels, stucco, masonry, or sealed wood, reduce long-term maintenance. Clay or concrete tile, metal roofing, and elastomeric or breathable stucco finishes improve performance under intense sun, wind, and dust. UV-stable coatings, fade-resistant sealants, and corrosion-resistant hardware can further support longevity.
- **Sustainability and resource efficiency.** Projects should build to the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) standards, and utilize strategies such as

passive ventilation, solar readiness, green stormwater infrastructure, greywater reuse, and construction waste reduction may also qualify for additional LEED points. On-site renewable energy, such as rooftop solar, may further reduce operational carbon impact.

- **Security features.** Designs should incorporate passive surveillance strategies, such as glazing, active frontages, and pedestrian-scale lighting, to enhance safety. Where additional security lighting is warranted, it should be used selectively and designed to be consistent with the lighting principles in this document, including minimizing glare, spill, and wildlife impacts. Where additional security measures are needed (e.g., fencing, gates, grilles), they should be integrated discreetly and in alignment with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.

RELEVANT PRECEDENT



CITY OF AVONDALE VISITOR AND CONFERENCE CENTER, AVONDALE, ARIZONA

The City of Avondale Visitor & Conference Center exemplifies desert-appropriate building design through its use of natural textures, shaded facades, and energy-efficient systems that respond to the climate. Its articulated form and integration of sustainable materials create a pedestrian-friendly scale while reflecting the regional character of the Sonoran Desert.

Photo credit: City of Phoenix

SITE DESIGN



Vision for a pedestrian-oriented riverfront that integrates shade, public art, and flexible spaces for recreation and everyday use.

Source: BandukSmith Studio

- **Building orientation.** Orient buildings toward the river, trails, and river-adjacent streets where possible. On parcels not adjacent to the river, building orientation should prioritize public street frontage to reinforce a walkable and connected district pattern.
- **River frontage.** Buildings that front or side the river should maximize their exposure along the riverside. For multi-tenant commercial projects, individual storefronts and entrances should face this edge so it functions as a true front of the building, supporting activity, visibility, and access.
- **Open edge treatment.** A minimum of 60% of the river-facing edge of a site should consist of publicly accessible open edge treatment, such as pedestrian paseos, plazas, or landscaped areas. Private open space narrower than 20 feet should not count toward this minimum. Open edge design should balance visual and physical access to the river with ecological sensitivity, using native low-impact landscaping and shade to enhance pedestrian comfort and continuity along the corridor.
- **Paseos and physical access to the river.** Projects should incorporate publicly accessible paseos, breezeways, open corridors, or mid-block connections to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access and reinforce connectivity to the river. Paseos must be ADA-compliant, clearly marked, and well-shaded. They should link directly to riverfront trails, adjacent public streets, or other pedestrian routes in a clear and intuitive manner.



Shade structures to encourage outdoor activity in commercial context.



Use of corner site as opportunity for public art and native plantings.

Photo credit (top and bottom): Bloomberg Philanthropies

LIBERTY WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTER, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The Liberty Wildlife Rescue Center is an example of brownfield redevelopment that integrates both indoor and outdoor spaces using natural materials in the building and site design, and low-impact landscaping that blends with the desert environment. The site also demonstrates how parking areas can utilize alternative dust-proofing materials and be screened with native vegetation while maintaining an inviting and functional layout for visitors.



RELEVANT PRECEDENT

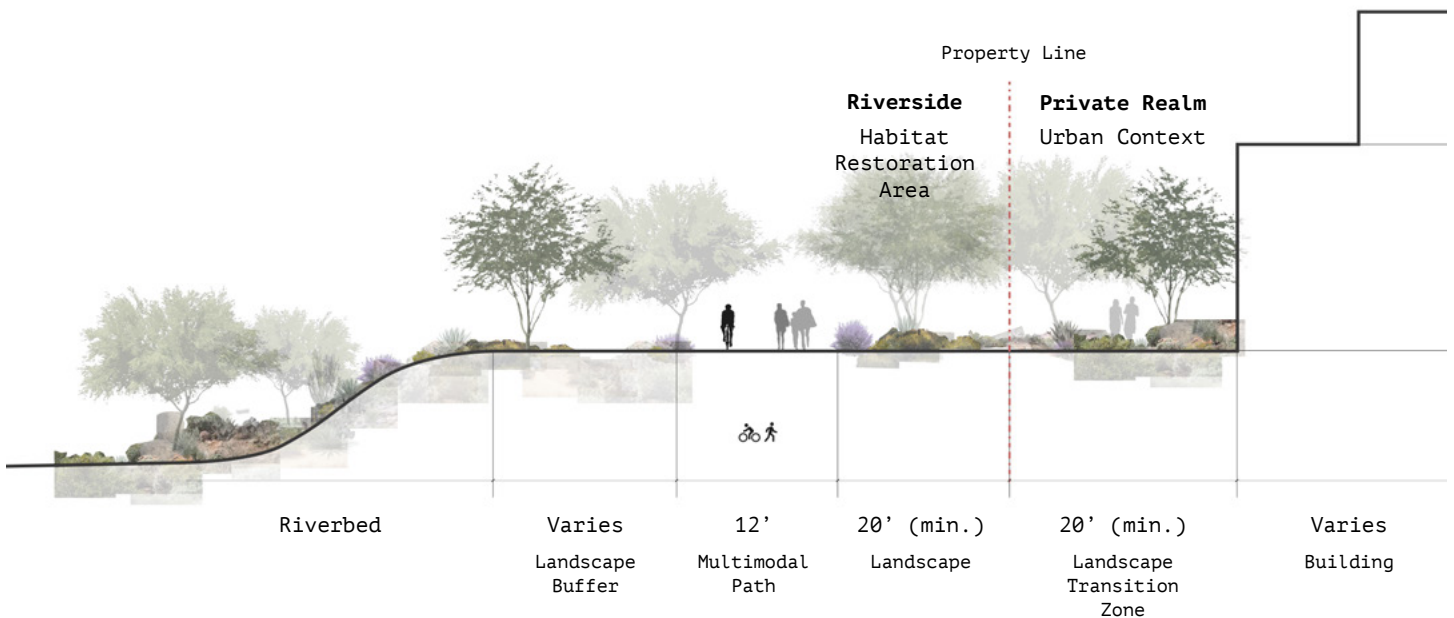
Photo credit: Bloomberg Philanthropies

- **Visual access to the river.** Preserve public views to the Rio Salado and South Mountain through strategic building placement and open corridors. Use varied building massing and open spaces to frame key views from public streets or plazas. Reinforce these visual connections with coordinated paving, lighting, and landscaping.
- **Public paths and access.** Projects should improve existing or construct planned publicly accessible pathways along the river corridor and support pedestrian and bicycle activity. Where feasible, these pathways should link to the broader trail and street network and connect to adjacent developments or open space. Coordinate the placement of utilities and site infrastructure to avoid conflicts with pedestrian and bicycle paths, shade elements, and landscaping.
- **Building placement and spacing.** Where multiple buildings are planned, they should be placed close to one another to help define continuous street walls along the river corridor. Gaps between buildings should be minimized unless used to create active open space or view corridors.
- **Shading and solar orientation.** Building orientation should maximize shading on adjacent sidewalks, trails, and shared-use paths. Incorporate overhangs, tree canopies, and built shade elements along primary pedestrian routes to improve thermal comfort and provide up to 75% shade coverage, consistent with the City's Shade Phoenix Plan goals.
- **Amenities.** Include amenities such as shaded seating areas, bicycle fix-it stations, and water fountains to create a comfortable and inviting environment. Position these features where they are clearly visible from river trails, streets, and other public spaces.
- **Signage materials and placement.** Signage should use natural colors and materials, such as weathered metal, wood, or stone, and avoid overly bright or visually

dominant finishes. Ground-mounted signage is preferred to reduce visual clutter, particularly along river-adjacent frontages where signage should remain low-profile and oriented toward pedestrians. Animated or flashing signs should be used sparingly and designed to minimize visual impact. Pole-mounted “lollipop” signs should be avoided; where permitted, pole covers should incorporate natural textures and materials to maintain visual consistency.

- **Preserving natural features.** Where canals, natural vegetation, or riparian elements cross or border the site, development should preserve and integrate them as visible and accessible public amenities. Design solutions should include trails, overlooks, and native plantings that reinforce the site’s natural identity.

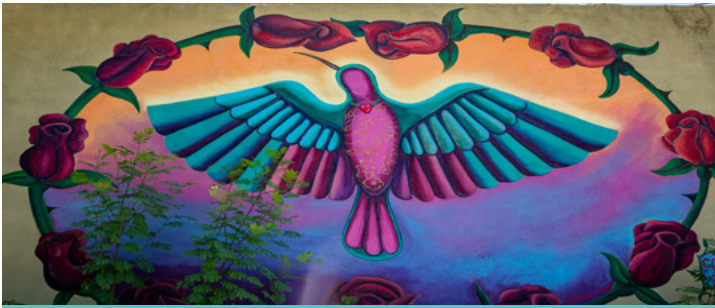
- **Parking placement.** Locate off-street parking behind, adjacent to, or within buildings and away from the river corridor or public streets. Where parking is visible from the river or a public street, it should be screened with landscaping or low walls to minimize visual impact. Surface parking near public edges should be avoided when feasible.
- **Outdoor storage, refuse containers, and loading areas.** Avoid outdoor storage. Refuse receptacles, loading areas, and any necessary outdoor storage should be located in the interior of the site, away from the river corridor and public streets. Heights of these elements should be limited, and they should be fully screened from the river corridor or any public street.



Source: Multistudio and SCAPE

River-adjacent sites should be designed to create an attractive edge condition that transitions private development to the public realm at the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area. A publicly accessible landscaped transition area should be provided with usable open space that features active and passive elements to activate the riverfront. Buildings should provide a step-back of 1-foot for every 1-foot of additional height above two stories and 30 feet along the riverside.

ART AND PLACEMAKING



Facade activation by local artist.
Artist: Martin Moreno



Facade activation by local artist.

Credit for all photos: Bloomberg Philanthropies

- **Art and placemaking elements.** Integrate public art and placemaking features that express the natural environment, cultural heritage, and distinct identity of the Rio Salado Corridor. Examples include murals, artist-designed shade structures, sculptural seating, patterned paving, or other creative installations in highly visible public areas such as trailheads, gateways, and plazas. These elements should enhance the sense of place and invite public engagement.
- **Visibility and corridor connection.** Locate art and placemaking features where they are easily seen from the river corridor, adjacent trails, streets, and key gathering areas. Their placement should strengthen the pedestrian experience, highlight important views and circulation routes, and reinforce the visual identity of the corridor.
- **Wayfinding and interpretive signage.** Integrate wayfinding and interpretive signage to orient visitors and celebrate the river's ecological and cultural history. Consider elements like river markers, poetry plaques, or map kiosks to reinforce corridor identity.



Obelisk that changes color based on air quality, combining public art with function and public engagement.
Artist: Sam Gomez

- **Collaboration with local artists.** Collaborate with local artists, designers, and cultural organizations during early stages of project design to ensure that features are meaningfully integrated and contextually relevant. Incorporate themes that reflect the cultural heritage of communities historically connected to the Rio Salado Corridor.
- **Flexible public space design.** Design plazas, paseos, and other public-facing areas to accommodate temporary or permanent art installations, performances, markets, and cultural programming. Where possible, incorporate infrastructure such as lighting, shade structures, kiosks, electrical outlets, and seating to support activation.

- **Material and design consistency.** Design placemaking elements to complement adjacent site features such as landscaping, lighting, and building materials. Use materials, textures, and colors that are consistent with the natural and cultural character of the river environment.
- **Drainage and green stormwater infrastructure integration.** Integrate stormwater retention and conveyance elements, such as landscaped basins or bioswales, into open spaces as visible design features. Incorporate artistic or interpretive treatments, native planting patterns, or public art that respond to the desert hydrology and character of the Rio Salado. These features should enhance both ecological function and the visual identity of the corridor.
- **Maintenance and durability.** Ensure art and placemaking elements are incorporated into long-term site maintenance plans. Select materials appropriate for the Sonoran Desert that minimize heat gain, reduce maintenance needs, and withstand intense sun and wind. Consider the use of corrosion-resistant materials, as well as UV-protective and weather-resistant coatings that help retain appearance and function over time.



Use of art to conceal unsightly equipment and storage.
Artist: Tato Caraveo

Photo credit: Bloomberg Philanthropies



RELEVANT PRECEDENT

ART ALONG THE RIVER, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

A coordinated public art approach along the San Antonio River illustrates how creative placemaking and landscape design can be integrated into river corridor revitalization to support public use, celebrate local culture, and reflect the surrounding environment. Through partnerships involving the San Antonio River Foundation, artists, and community stakeholders, installations such as River Return by Stacy Levy incorporate sculptural forms and native materials to interpret natural systems and contribute to the character of the corridor. Across the Mission Reach park system, these art-integrated spaces support everyday use and community programming, showing how thoughtfully integrated creative elements can strengthen identity and enhance the experience of a linear open space.

Artist: Stacy Levy

PARKING AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

- **Bicycle parking.** Install bicycle parking in safe, visible locations near main entrances. Meet zoning minimums (0.25 spaces per unit for multifamily, and 1 space per 25 car spaces for commercial uses). Racks should be secure, accessible, and placed outside pedestrian paths. Provide shade or cover where feasible to improve usability in hot weather.
- **Electric vehicle parking.** Incorporate dedicated parking spaces with electric vehicle (EV) chargers to support sustainable transportation. EV chargers should be placed in accessible, shaded areas and integrated with overall parking and circulation design.
- **Shade for parking areas.** Include native shade trees and built shade canopies in parking areas. Maximize use of covered parking structures, such as solar panel canopies, to reduce the urban heat island effect and improve pedestrian comfort. Use high solar reflectance materials for all covered parking structures.
- **Paving materials.** Avoid the use of traditional asphalt and use materials from the Alternative Dustproofing Materials list from the City of Phoenix Planning and Development Department. Permeable pavement can serve as a decorative or artistic surface; however, this should be used where maintenance needs are addressed long-term.
- **Landscaping and stormwater infrastructure.** Incorporate green stormwater infrastructure elements such as bioswales and small bioretention basins to improve water quality, promote stormwater infiltration, and support native vegetation. Where appropriate, use alternative paving materials in plazas, courtyards, parking lots,

Credit for all photos: Bloomberg Philanthropies



Distinctive bike rack design as placemaking element.



Use of natural materials, including caged rock and exposed concrete, to tie visually with the Rio.



Dual-use of solar panels as shade structures for parking.

and pedestrian paths to promote infiltration and help achieve the co-benefits of GSI design elements. Parking lot medians may also incorporate GSI features to capture runoff and support native tree plantings.

- **Minimizing parking footprint.** Avoid exceeding the required minimum number of parking spaces to reduce paved areas and promote efficient land use. This allows for increased open space, shade, and amenities while supporting walkability. Consider shared or on-street parking strategies, as well as connections to light rail, bus transit, and micromobility options, to reduce demand for on-site parking.
- **On-street parking.** Encourage on-street parking for personal vehicles (especially in non-residential areas) to reduce the number of on-site parking spaces, leaving more room for open space on the property.

- **Off-street parking.** Off-street parking should be located behind or alongside buildings, and not adjacent to the river or public streets. Where visible, parking areas should be screened with native landscaping, low walls, or shade structures to improve the pedestrian environment and reduce visual clutter.
- **Parking screening.** Where walls are used to screen parking, consider context-appropriate materials such as gabion, weathered steel, or other finishes that reflect the natural character of the river corridor and desert environment.
- **Truck parking.** Avoid on-street parking of heavy trucks and semis along river corridor scenic drives or public streets near the river.

RELEVANT PRECEDENT (CONCEPTUAL IMAGE)



Source: TYLin Group

3RD STREET RIO SALADO BIKE/PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AND PATHWAY, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

This early-stage project aims to connect neighborhoods north of the river to trails and future development south of the river through a new bike and pedestrian bridge and pathway. The design emphasizes shaded, comfortable crossings and safe bicycle connections, demonstrating how bicycle facilities can be integrated with larger mobility networks to expand access to the Rio Salado Corridor. The bridge design and adjacent artwork also incorporates community-driven placemaking elements.

LANDSCAPING AND FENCING



Parking lot curb opening for water infiltration.



Native plantings and rocks delineate walking path.



Laser cut metal fencing combines visual intrigue and color with function.

Photo credits: City of Phoenix (left), Bloomberg Philanthropies (top right and bottom right)

- **Native plants.** Select native Sonoran Desert plant species that reflect the ecological character of the Rio Salado area. Refer to the list of Approved Plants and Top Dressing Application for Development Adjacent to the Rio Salado, which can be found on the Rio Phoenix website. In other portions of the site, avoid using non-native plants, especially those that use large amounts of water. Avoid the unnecessary removal of existing mature native trees or cacti, and evaluate design alternatives to preserve these natural assets where feasible.
- **Biodiversity.** Select native plants that support local biodiversity and habitat, prioritizing species that benefit pollinators and wildlife (e.g. milkweeds, native grasses and flowers, desert shrubs).
- **Blend into nature.** Design landscaping to visually blend with the surrounding desert environment. Avoid installing expansive turf grass (natural or artificial) or ornamental plantings that are not native desert vegetation.
- **Green stormwater infrastructure.** Incorporate GSI strategies such as bioswales, rain gardens, curb openings, and bioretention basins to manage stormwater on site and support native vegetation, improve water quality before it reaches the river, enhance soil health, and help mitigate urban heat island effects. Use techniques that support infiltration in plazas, parking areas, and pedestrian paths.
- **Shade.** Incorporate tree canopies and layered vegetation to provide shade along pedestrian paths, gathering areas, sidewalks, and trails. Developments should target 75% shade coverage using structural shade and/or trees along priority areas such as sidewalks, pathways, patios, plazas, transit nodes, trailheads and river frontage zones using approved tree species and vegetation, with trees planted at a minimum 2-inch caliper size where feasible.
- **Visual and physical access.** Avoid barriers, walls, or fencing that limit public access and views to the Rio Salado. Preserve key public viewsheds to the Rio Salado, South Mountain Park and maintain clear sightlines for

safety and wayfinding. Access points to the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area must be approved by the City.

- **Fencing and walls.** Avoid fencing and walls along properties with frontage along the river. Barbed and razor wire fencing should not be used within the corridor.

- **Irrigation.** Avoid planting schemes that require excessive irrigation. When irrigation is necessary, install high efficiency drip systems and comply with City of Phoenix water conservation standards. In GSI features, use irrigation controls that activate only after soil has remained dry for an appropriate period to support water savings during and after storms.

RELEVANT PRECEDENT

OCOTILLO LIBRARY AND WORKFORCE LITERACY CENTER, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The Ocotillo Library demonstrates how native planting and open-view fencing can define site edges while maintaining visibility and a strong desert identity. Layers of cacti and rusted steel panels blend seamlessly with the architecture, illustrating how landscape and fencing elements can provide texture, shade, and visual interest without creating barriers between the building and its surroundings.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING



Arcade integrates lighting seamlessly into shade structure.



Dense and pedestrian-scale lighting provides a safe walkway.



Lighting incorporated into experiential public art.

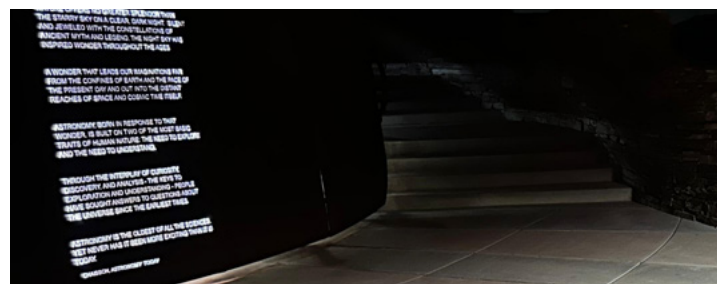
Bernie the Robot, Artist: Doug Boyd

Credit for all photos: Bloomberg Philanthropies

- **Avoid light spillage.** Design lighting to avoid light spillage into the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area or residential areas and to protect dark skies. Use full cut off outdoor lighting fixtures with a color temperature of 2,700 Kelvin or lower for development projects within 500 feet of the river corridor, consistent with the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department wildlife friendly standards. Select LED fixtures direct light only where needed to reduce sky glow. Turn off or dim exterior and interior lighting when not required at night.
- **Pedestrian-scale lighting.** Design and place lighting fixtures at a pedestrian scale. Where adjacent to the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, lighting should not exceed 12 feet in height, consistent with Parks and Recreation Department standards. Lighting should use LED fixtures and should be shielded to direct light only onto the pathway it serves, avoiding lateral spill and

minimizing glare. Lighting should operate only as needed to support nighttime safety and visibility.

- **Bollard lighting.** Where appropriate, use low height bollard fixtures (typically 3 to 4 feet tall) to illuminate walkways, plazas, and gathering areas. Bollard lighting should be fully shielded and downward facing, with shielding on sides that do not require lateral illumination, and spaced to provide consistent light levels without spillage.
- **Decorative fixtures.** Select decorative light fixtures that blend in with or evoke the natural environment and local heritage. This includes accent lighting along public streets and river-adjacent frontages to enhance the corridor character.
- **Durability.** Use weatherproof and tamper-resistant light fixtures to ensure durability.



RELEVANT PRECEDENT

ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN RANCH STAR TOWER, GOODYEAR, PHOENIX

The Estrella Mountain Ranch Star Tower uses creative lighting to guide movement, enhance safety, and highlight architectural features. Subtle path and accent lighting provide clear wayfinding while maintaining dark-sky sensitivity, creating a cohesive and visually striking nighttime environment.

Photo credit: City of Phoenix

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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 Office of the Mayor
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