



MAYOR & COUNCIL MEMORANDUM

July 21, 2026

Subject

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Safe City Initiative Update – Public Drug Use Enforcement and Pathways to Treatment with Kate K. Vesely, Director, Pima County Justice Services Department (City Wide)

Issue

Time has been set aside at the request of Mayor Regina Romero to provide an update on the Safe City Initiative that aims to improve neighborhood and community safety and open space access by aligning the complex system of services and resources that serve those encountering homelessness, substance disorder, behavioral health issues, and housing insecurity in order to enhance efficiency and efficacy, leading to better outcomes.

City Manager's Office Recommendation

No action is required by Mayor and Council as part of the Study Session item; however, the Mayor and Council can provide feedback and direction on the update.

Background

On November 18, 2025, at the request of Council Member Lee, Mayor and Council discussed strategies to address public drug use and directed staff to work with the Pima County Attorney's Office (PCAO) to identify opportunities to strengthen enforcement and prosecution of drug-related offenses. Additional direction included evaluating the feasibility of a public drug use ordinance, engaging the Safe City Task Force to review a draft ordinance, and mapping the criminal justice system's response to drug offenses.

Over the following months, the Tucson Police Department (TPD), City Attorney's Office (CAO), and PCAO met regularly to evaluate existing processes and identify opportunities for improvement. This collaboration resulted in enhanced officer training and case preparation, refinements to felony interim charging documents, and exploration of long-term improvements to information sharing and digitization. A proposed ordinance addressing loitering for drug-related activity was also developed and reviewed by the Safe City Task Force. Following stakeholder feedback and continued coordination with PCAO, staff determined that strengthening existing criminal statutes and prosecution practices would be more effective than adopting a new ordinance. A memorandum summarizing this work was provided to Mayor and Council on January 20, 2026.

On April 7, 2026, Mayor and Council received an update on Public Drug Use Enforcement and Pathways to Treatment. Staff reported that TPD and PCAO have continued executive-level coordination to improve case preparation and prosecutorial outcomes, while expanding collaboration with Community Safety, Health and Wellness, Housing and Community Development, and community providers to support deflection, treatment referrals, and coordinated interventions for individuals with repeated drug-related and nuisance offenses. Staff received direction to continue working with the Pima County Attorney's Office and other justice system partners to improve access to case disposition information related to enforcement actions and Safe City deployments, identify barriers to tracking outcomes across the criminal justice system, and return within 60 days with an update.

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Present Consideration(s)

The case disposition dashboard has been updated since we last met. On average, about 75% of the narcotic cases presented to the Pima County Attorney's Office have been issued. Many of them pled to a lesser charge or the charges were amended in court.

TPD has developed a pilot Focused Deterrence Quality of Life Initiative. This initiative is centered on misdemeanor criminal offenses that most seriously impact the quality of life of our community, coupled with a high utilizer analysis of the most frequent offenders in Operations Division West (ODW). The list of quality-of-life criminal offenses includes:

- Trespassing
- Disorderly Conduct
- Shoplifting
- Solicitation
- Loitering
- Drug Paraphernalia Violations
- Public Urination
- Criminal/Public Nuisance Violations
- Median Violations

The high utilizer analysis will produce the top 50 individuals most frequently and directly involved in the listed offenses. The action team for this pilot program consists of:

- TPD Community Outreach, Resource, and Engagement (CORE) Unit
- TPD Mental Health Support Team (MHST)
- TPD ODW Zebra Officers
- Tucson City Court Representatives
- Community Safety, Health, and Wellness Representatives

Every week, this action team will review two identified individuals, conduct outreach, and connect them with appropriate mental health, substance-use, housing, or alternative-to-jail services. Individuals who decline available assistance and continue offending may be referred for enhanced criminal justice accountability in coordination with prosecutorial partners. The pilot will be evaluated for effectiveness after six months and, if successful, be replicated in other areas of the city.

TPD is developing a Focused Deterrence Narcotics Initiative to identify narcotics dealers through an algorithm that will be created by TPD Research & Analysis. The intent is not to actively seek out these individuals for enforcement, but rather to ensure that if they are arrested, there is greater certainty and consistency in charges through coordination with the Pima County Attorney's Office.

These individuals may be involved at any level of narcotics distribution, not just street-level dealing. We will also explore a partnership with Community Safety, Health, and Wellness (CSHW) to ensure those individuals are offered services and resources that may help them exit the lifestyle. Each patrol division will be responsible for addressing the identified subjects within their operational area. Data will be collected to evaluate outcomes and measure the effectiveness of the initiative. The project is currently in the early stages of development as we continue building the process and partnerships necessary for long-term success.

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Plan Tucson and other Adopted City Policy Consideration(s)

This initiative is consistent with **Plan Tucson 2025**, including:

- **Goal 4 – Improve Health, Wellness, and Safety Across the Community**, particularly:
 - **Wellness 4**, facilitating collaboration with public, private, and nonprofit agencies to better serve the community.
 - **Wellness 9**, creating and supporting community and regional partnerships to improve emergency response and resource sharing.
 - **Wellness 10**, investing in high-quality, efficient, and effective public safety services.
- **Goal 1 – Foster Inclusive, Transparent, Efficient, and Equitable City Governance**, including:
 - **Governance 8** and **Governance 9**, promoting interdepartmental coordination and integrated planning across City departments.
 - **Governance 17**, ensuring fair, timely, and efficient access to justice and court services.
- **Housing 8**, providing services and pathways to help individuals experiencing homelessness access and maintain stable housing.

Property Initiative(s)

The Safe City Initiative advances the Prosperity Initiative by supporting evidence-based strategies that reduce generational poverty, improve community well-being, and strengthen neighborhoods through coordinated public safety, housing, behavioral health, and workforce partnerships. Specifically, this initiative aligns with the Prosperity Initiative recommendations to:

- Improve Quality of Life and Opportunity in High Poverty Areas through investments that improve neighborhood conditions, reduce violence, and strengthen community assets.
- Prevent and Reduce Crime as one of the Initiative's cross-policy strategies supporting long-term community prosperity.

Financial Considerations

The Safe City Initiative is leveraging many City and partner resources there are multiple funding sources supporting the various programs outlined in this Memorandum, which include City General Fund, State, and Federal Funding.

Operating Cost and Maintenance Input

None

Legal Considerations

City Attorney's Office has reviewed this Memorandum.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Morales
Assistant City Manager

LM: MP:df
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE