



CITY OF TOLLESON

9055 W. Van Buren St., Tolleson, AZ 85353 • (623) 936-7111 • TTY users, dial 711 for Relay • www.tolleson.az.gov

**TOLLESON CITY COUNCIL ADVANCEMENT MINUTES
TOLLESON CIVIC CENTER
9055 WEST VAN BUREN STREET, TOLLESON, AZ 85353
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025
5:00 PM**

Doors open to Council Chambers at 4:45 PM for public seating.

4:30 PM: COUNCIL DINNER

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rodriguez called the Tolleson City Council Advancement Session to order at 5:00 PM.

B. ROLL CALL

City Council: Mayor Juan Rodriguez, Vice Mayor Jimmy Davis, Council Members Christine Chavira, Clorinda Erives, and Cruzita Mendoza.

Not Present: Council Members Adolfo Gámez and Linda Laborin.

C. FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

1. Strategic Advancement Discussion: Aim to anticipate, innovate and explore ways to drive community progress and collaboration.

Discussion led by Matt Lehrman of Social Prosperity Partners.

D. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.

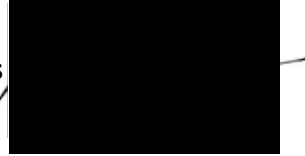
Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01 and A.R.S. § 38-431.02, notice is hereby given to the members of the Tolleson City Council and to the general public that the Council of the City of Tolleson will hold a meeting open to the public. Council Members of the City of Tolleson will attend by telephone/video conference call.

THE CITY OF TOLLESON ENDEAVORS TO MAKE ALL PUBLIC MEETINGS ACCESSIBLE TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. With at least two business days advance notice, accommodations can be provided at this meeting for individuals with vision, hearing and/or speech disabilities, including a transcriber, large print, an interpreter, an assistive listening device, etc. Please call the City Clerk at (623) 936-7111, or TTY users may dial 711 for Arizona Relay Service (AZRS), to request an accommodation to participate in this public meeting. The City will try its best to accommodate any last minute requests.

LA CIUDAD DE TOLLESON SE ESFUERZA PARA HACER TODAS LAS REUNIONES PÚBLICAS ACCESIBLE PARA INDIVIDUOS CON DISCAPACIDADES. Con al menos dos días laborables de previo aviso, se pueden proporcionar adaptaciones en esta reunión para personas con discapacidades visuales, auditivas o del habla, incluido un transcriptor, letra grande, un intérprete, un dispositivo de asistencia auditiva, etc. Llame a la Secretaría Municipal al (623) 936-7111, o los usuarios de TTY pueden marcar 711 para el Servicio de Retransmisión de Arizona (AZRS), para solicitar un alojamiento para participar en esta reunión pública. La Ciudad hará todo lo posible para satisfacer cualquier solicitud de último minuto.



To: City of Tolleson
Reyes Medrano, City Manager
Wendy Jackson, Deputy City Manager
Pilar Sinawi, Deputy City Manager
From: Matt Lehrman, Social Prosperity Partners
Date: October 21, 2025
Subject: Report of City Council Strategic Advance



Thank you for engaging me to facilitate today’s Strategic Advance with the Tolleson City Council. It was a privilege to support the Council’s annual opportunity to reflect on the City’s progress, align around emerging priorities, and strengthen the foundation for collaborative governance.

As stated at the outset, the objective of the session was clear:

A Strategic Advance aims to gather consensus on high-level priorities for community progress and set clear expectations for meaningful advancement.

This was a conversation for **direction, not decision**. It built upon the priorities identified at last year’s Strategic Advance and was informed by the thorough overview you provided at last week’s City Council meeting. Together, these provided the context for clarifying shared intentions, identifying focus areas, and setting direction for the City’s continued progress in the year ahead.

To be clear, no votes were taken, and no effort was made to wordsmith specific language. The descriptions in this memo are intended to capture the spirit of the Council’s discussion, **not to serve as final text**. They should be viewed as a first draft of ideas—subject to further refinement by staff and formal consideration by Council in subsequent discussions.

Core Values

The Council began with a review of the City’s Core Values and asked that I note their “enthusiastic affirmation” of the values as currently expressed. Through subsequent discussion, members also recommended the addition of one more:

Involvement We actively engage the entire Tolleson community in shaping our shared future. Every resident, business, and organization is invited to take part, contribute ideas, and see themselves as partners in the City’s progress. Together, we turn participation into purpose and belonging into action.

Related to the Core Values, the Council revisited its understanding of how its governing role differs from that of staff under the leadership of the City Manager. Members reaffirmed their shared respect for this distinction: elected officials are responsible for determining *what* the City should achieve over time, while staff are responsible for determining *how* that work is carried out.

As in years past, the Council emphasized the importance of alignment—recognizing that both the Council and staff are united in values and goals. Together, they described this relationship as a “yin/yang” balance, encircled by a band symbolizing their shared and unbreakable commitment of care to the Tolleson community.

As an aside, I shared with the Council that I was recently delighted to discover the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico similarly identifies *cariño*—“caring”—as its core value. I suggested that Tolleson might consider connecting with other communities nationwide that share this commitment to caring as a defining principle of local governance. **It’s a rare and meaningful distinction worth celebrating.**

Vision & Mission

I invited the City Council to review the City’s current Vision and Mission statements, asking members to reflect on how effectively the Vision expresses what Tolleson aspires to become, and how the Mission conveys what the City does to achieve that future.

I presented draft language—not as a proposal for change, but as a concept—to explore whether there might be an alternative way to express the intent of the existing statements.

While the Council did not engage in wordsmithing, members expressed support for forwarding the draft to staff for further review, with the expectation that a refined version might return to Council for formal consideration.

Current Text

Vision: The vision of the City of Tolleson is to be financially sound to fund reliable programs and services. We support leadership development opportunities for all.

Mission: The City of Tolleson provides an inclusive, healthy, safe affordable place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Revised Text for Further Consideration

- Vision:** Tolleson continually strengthens itself as a thriving, caring city—financially strong, service-focused, and united in advancing opportunity, leadership, and the well-being of all who call it home.
- Mission:** The City of Tolleson provides an inclusive, healthy, safe, and affordable community—where every resident can live well, work productively, play freely, and raise a family, together in a city that cares.

Governing Goals & Priorities

I’m especially gratified to report that the City Council fully engaged in a rich and thoughtful discussion of its governing goals and priorities. As you’ll recall, last year the Council developed a pyramid-shaped model to illustrate these priorities, categorized as “Immediate Priority,” “Short-Term Priority,” and “Long-Term Priority.”

This year, members refined that framework to better reflect their intent and expectations:

- **Immediate Priority** – Matters the Council considers having the highest opportunity and urgency for action.
- **Strategic Priority** – Areas where the Council asks staff to develop a comprehensive strategy and return with recommendations on how and when these initiatives can be pursued.
- **Ongoing Priority** – Commitments the Council expects staff to continue advancing, generally along established or well-understood paths.



In conveying the following points, I want to emphasize that I am not an expert in the subject areas discussed. While I’ve attempted to accurately reflect the Council’s perspectives, I respectfully encourage you to engage directly with Council members to gain a full understanding of the scope and depth of their interests and concerns.

Immediate Priority

The Council identified one area of particular urgency and opportunity for immediate attention. This priority reflects the members' shared sense that timely action could yield meaningful progress and visible benefit for the community. While discussion focused on direction rather than specific decisions, the Council expressed clear enthusiasm for advancing work in this area.

- 1. Put City-Owned Properties to Work** – The Council sees this as an opportune time to activate City-owned buildings and spaces through bold initiatives, creative partnerships, or even potential sale. The intent is to put these assets to productive use in ways that enhance Tolleson's distinctiveness and deliver broad community benefit—beginning with economic development and housing, and extending to overall community vitality.

Strategic Priorities

What unites these Strategic Priorities is the Council's desire for comprehensive and coordinated approaches. Each topic calls for thoughtful analysis, clear articulation of achievable outcomes, and well-developed strategies to guide staff planning and implementation.

- 1. Innovate Options for Homeownership** – Develop creative pathways to increase affordable, accessible, and family-owned housing. The Council recognizes the long-term value of attracting and sustaining residents with a lasting stake in the community's future.
- 2. Homelessness, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse** – Establish a comprehensive approach to addressing these interconnected challenges—balancing compassion with accountability. The Council seeks strategies that ensure residents feel heard and helped while reinforcing shared responsibility for community well-being.
- 3. Water Independence and Wastewater** – Create a long-range plan to ensure the City's potable water independence and reduce vulnerability to reliance on recycled sources. In parallel, explore opportunities to generate new revenue from unused wastewater treatment capacity.
- 4. Sense of Place** – Pursue a holistic approach to strengthening Tolleson's identity and civic pride, including:
 - a. Paseo de Luces Maintenance** – Improve upkeep and presentation. Council members expressed immediate concerns about dead and dying plants, broken lighting, and damaged benches, tiles, and pavers—emphasizing the need for consistent quality befitting a signature public space.

- b. **Welcome Signage** – Enhance the sense of arrival and belonging through well-designed entry markers.
 - c. **Arts and Cultural Activation** – Foster community connection through events and public art that bring energy and life to shared spaces.
 - d. **Parks** - Ensure parks and recreational spaces continue to respond to—and anticipate—the needs of residents. From shade structures to pickleball courts, maintain a focus on accessibility, comfort, and opportunities for community gathering.
- 5. **Update the Roles of the Mayor and City Council** – Review and, if appropriate, refine expectations, responsibilities, and structures of these offices to reflect current realities and ensure they continue to attract and support high-quality candidates for public service.
 - 6. **Centennial Planning** – Begin coordinated preparations for Tolleson’s 100th anniversary in 2029, envisioning how this milestone can both honor the City’s history and inspire its future.

Ongoing Priorities

These Ongoing Priorities represent areas of continuing effort and emphasis—initiatives that the Council expects staff to advance steadily through established programs and ongoing collaboration.

- 1. **Emergency Preparedness** – Continue strengthening the City’s readiness for crises, with particular attention to preventing and responding to the threat of gun violence on school campuses.
- 2. **Housing Revitalization** – Maintain focus on revitalizing existing housing stock, with special attention to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) opportunities and initiatives that serve seniors.
- 3. **Education Partnerships** – Deepen collaboration with local schools to support Tolleson’s children, families, and future workforce.
- 4. **Aging in Place** – Advance programs and services that help older residents remain active, supported, and connected within the community.
- 5. **Smart City Initiatives** – Continue advancing efforts toward a connected, sustainable, and efficient city—expanding access to broadband and Wi-Fi, and supporting electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.

6. **Economic Development** – Sustain efforts to grow the local economy, both to strengthen sales tax revenue and to expand the range of amenities and services available to residents.
7. **Sister City Relationship** – Explore opportunities to strengthen and express Tolleson’s connection with its Sister City, Puerto Peñasco (Rocky Point), Mexico—developing ways this partnership can manifest through cultural exchange, economic collaboration, and community engagement.

Conclusion

Again, I want to extend my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to once again assist the City Council and executive leadership in this important annual exercise. The Strategic Advance continues to demonstrate Tolleson’s strong culture of collaboration, foresight, and care for its community.

The priorities outlined in this report represent the Council’s directional intent—an invitation for thoughtful exploration, staff analysis, and continued dialogue. I look forward to seeing how these ideas evolve into specific actions that strengthen Tolleson’s identity as a city that leads with caring, purpose, and integrity, and I welcome the opportunity to continue supporting that work.