



American Friends
Service Committee
ARIZONA OFFICE

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The Barrio Centro Community Safety Participatory Research Project Report



By Grace Gámez, PhD
and the Flowers & Bullets Collective



**FLOWERS ARE THE ART
AND BULLETS ARE THE STRUGGLE**

with the American Friends Service Committee's
Re-Framing Justice Program



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arizona has the highest incarceration rate in the western United States and disproportionately targets Black, Indigenous, people of color, poor, differently-abled, queer, and trans communities for capture.

The Barrio Centro Community Safety Participatory Research Project, BCCSPRPR, is a collective and convivial community-driven initiative to determine what community safety means for people directly affected by shifting conditions of life and survival. The Barrio Centro Community Safety Participatory Research Project Report, BCCSPRPR, is the result of a two-year **community action research** project on safety. It is co-designed by Grace Gámez, PhD, independent scholar and American Friends Service Committee ReFraming Justice Program Coordinator together with Barrio Centro community members and community researchers from Flowers & Bullets, F&B, a local arts-based organization dedicated to community empowerment through the amplification of community knowledge, cultural roots, and sustainable living practices.

The BCCSPRPR is modeled after Meghan McDowell's research report on Durham, North Carolina, Reimagining Public Safety Project, RPSP, which identifies open communication, interdependence, mutual aid, and play as integral to safety (McDowell 2017). While the communities of Durham and Tucson are different, each can be understood through a framework of **organized abandonment**, which **refers to the process of municipal/state/federal and capital disinvestment from particular communities**. Regardless of geographic distinctions, both communities grapple with similar issues. Findings in both research reports can easily be put in conversation with community research projects across other municipal contexts. As with RPSP, the purpose of the BCCSPRPR is to consider alternative understandings and practices of community safety that can inform municipal and state policy.

Rather than bringing a pre-defined research agenda to the community, community action research is research-with-respect for meaningful community input and community-informed change.

Community action research begins with the recognition that community members best know and understand their community strengths, needs, and desires. Community leads this research. In effect, the BCCSPRPR elevates community voices and visions to:

- **redefine notions of community safety;**
- **introduce a glossary of terms around safety;**
- **advance public dialogue; and**
- **inform policy change around safety.**

The positive impact of community-led safety research is understudied. Yet, it is precisely the research necessary to inform alternative understandings and approaches to community safety. The BCCSPRPR is designed to be respectful of community voice, responsive to community-identified needs, and relevant to policy makers. The goals of this research are to:

- **remedy the understudied nature of community-informed understandings of safety;**
- **support productive conversations between community members and policy makers;**
- **bridge gaps in understandings of community safety; and**
- **inspire change-oriented policies.**

To accomplish these goals, there must be a shared vocabulary around safety as it is understood, imagined, and practiced in community.

Defining safety as **carceral safety** has proven destructive with asymmetrical impacts across different communities. Carceral safety relies on systems of punishment, retribution, and coercive control including policing, prisons, incarceration, and detention as almost exclusive means of understanding, imagining, and practicing safety. It suggests that banishment (via jail, prison, detention, and deportation), criminalization, and policing are integral to harm reduction and community well-being (McDowell, 2017). The damaging impact of such an approach to safety is made sustainable by public policy and legislation such as mandatory minimums, the war on drugs, three strikes laws, immigration policies, Truth-in-Sentencing, and the thousands of life-long collateral consequences that follow a person post-conviction (Gottschalk 2015; Rodriguez 2008; Sentencing Project 2019). Such legislative policies perpetuate punitive systems and structures, devastate family ties, disrupt community life, contribute to poverty, reduce access to often already-diminished public benefits including mental-health resources, jobs, and education, and sustain obstacles to well-being for incarcerated, and formerly-incarcerated, people and their families. These same policies reproduce the limited and limiting terminology of carceral safety.

Bolded terms throughout the report are those used by community members, scholars, and/or activists to address safety. They do not rely on carceral approaches to safety but rather shift the focus toward community care, health, wellness, and mutual aid. They reveal an understanding of the role of local and state support and an awareness of the negative consequences of local and state disinvestments. The Glossary of Terms introduced here is a resource that can be used in conversations, community pláticas, between city representatives, legislators, and/or policy-makers and other community members.

The BCCSPRPR reveals that when listened to, community members can be effective communicators

and policy advocates for their own communities. Because community members, especially those who are directly-impacted, rarely have a voice in decision-making about policies and practices that impact their daily lives, this report:

- amplifies community voices;
- highlights community knowledges;
- offers a community-informed glossary of terms;
- increases awareness and understanding; and
- is written for multiple audiences including organizers, public advocates, and policy makers.

METHODS

Informed by the principles and practice of participatory action-oriented research-with-respect and a commitment to deep listening, two qualitative research methods – open-ended survey questions and photo-elicitation – were used to invite broad community engagement with the topic of safety. Inquiry methods were designed bilingually to include English- and Spanish-speaking members of the community. Research participants were recruited via convenience, snowball, and virtual snowball sampling. Surveys were distributed and gathered at the Barrio Centro Fiesta, a community re-entry fair, and through an online survey form. Survey results were coded thematically.

Given the commitment to research-with-respect as designed by such Indigenous scholars as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Shawn Wilson, the research process was community-relevant, collective, and democratic. Survey questions were co-written and vetted by the F&B crew. They were written with consideration for differing language capacities in English and Spanish. The bilingual survey questions focused on how the community of Barrio Centro defined, experienced, and understood safety for themselves and their community (N= 179, English 174, Spanish 5). Participants in the study responded to three open-end questions:

-
1. What does safety feel like?
 2. What resources are present in healthy, thriving communities?
 3. What does safety look like?
-

The fourth and final survey question asked participants to “check all that apply” with an option to also write in an open-ended response:

What would you like to see in your neighborhood? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Murals
- ☐ Ramadas

- ☐ Shade Trees
- ☐ Community gardens
- ☐ Sidewalks

Other: _____

¿Qué le gustaría ver en su vecinadario?

Selecione todas las que aplican:

- ☐ Murales
- ☐ Ramadas
- ☐ Árbloes de Sombra
- ☐ Jardines Comunitarios
- ☐ Banquetas

Otra/s cosa/s: _____

The photo-elicitation component asked members of F&B to submit photos and share written descriptions of what safety looks like to them. The photographs included in this report are their responses.

RESULTS

Results from this research introduce new terms to include a community-driven redefinition of community safety that points representatives, legislators, and/or policy-makers to a much broader understanding of what it means to be and to feel safe. For the overwhelming number of project participants, **community safety**, quite simply, refers to **the ability to thrive together in culturally relevant, sustainable, and self-determined ways.**

In describing what safety feels like, more than half of the respondents spoke about community and **community relations.** The most prevalent theme raised included **the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with one's neighbors and to be in trusting relation with those who serve the neighborhood.** Regarding resources present in healthy, thriving communities, respondents identified critical investments that are currently absent or not widely available. One comment particularly illustrates what resources and investments are necessary to produce healthy, thriving community outcomes. The respondent wrote,

Systems need to be in place that ensure the physical and mental health of residents as well as the health of the environment. But this shouldn't take a fix it as needed approach. A community needs to invest in arts, leisure, sustainable food systems, to take a proactive approach to ensuring that people are active, healthy, and living in a thriving environment.

While the respondent signals what are perhaps traditional modes of mental/health care, the answer that is given is also seeking something much more holistic. This response suggests that by deeply resourcing communities, we invest in preventing those social drivers that lead to harm.

A deeply resourced community is one with a robust social infrastructure that ensures wellness and meaningful relations—

physical and mental health, arts, leisure, quality food, well-paying jobs, affordable housing, transportation and mobility, quality and culturally-relevant education, and green open spaces.

A critical finding in the BCCSPRPR is the fact that no respondents name traditional carceral safety, including police, policing, border patrol, or jails, as resources that community members feel contribute to healthy, thriving, and safe-looking or safe-feeling communities.

Asked directly to describe safety, participants from communities that are grossly under-resourced, effectively abandoned, and/or where disinvestment is normative and prolific responded with asks that require shifting resources away from policing, jails, prisons, incarceration, and detention. Rather than name carceral safety as a resource, participants instead expressed wanting resources that support collective care and well-being. Only 10 of 174 respondents, or .06% who answered the survey in English, explicitly named police as a positive source of safety. Of those who named police, 4 did so to suggest a need for different policing practices. For example, one participant shared: “...It doesn't feel safe when the police are always staked out somewhere watching for trouble.” Another asked for policing practices that are attentive to the communities they serve, “Police who get out of their cars and walk the streets and speak the languages heard in the neighborhood.”

Notably, zero respondents who answered in Spanish named police in any of their answers whatsoever. This finding suggests a pointed lack of trust of police and policing by the Spanish-speaking community. Significantly, when provided the opportunity to name what resources they would like to see more of in their neighborhood, zero respondents (English or Spanish) listed police. Collectively, these responses demonstrate that even for those who might understand police as a public good, safety is understood as much more than police and policing.

The BCCSPRPR introduces the urgency of relational values and interdependent, holistic approaches to community safety and well-being that recognize and shift away from organized abandonment and from notions of safety rooted in carceral frameworks. The findings of this study reveal policy-relevant understandings and practices of community safety that are rooted in relationships, trust, interdependency/mutual aid, and economic as well as cultural self-determination and well-being. Such community-informed understandings of safety can take root and flourish in communities that are deeply resourced and designed to sustain meaningful community relations.

POLICY-RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS

In describing what safe communities look and feel like, respondents offered holistic descriptions of intergenerational neighborhoods that invite play, interaction, and beautification through culturally-relevant art and sustainability projects. Respondents spoke of communities where robust opportunities and quality resources are accessible and plentiful. They emphasized the importance of community relations and community conversations that are based on trust and that are relevant to community strengths, needs, and desires.

A Holistic Approach

Survey responses make clear that meaningful and lasting policy is best created when community relations, wellness, and vitality are broadly understood and engaged as related issues. Wellness is enhanced by green open spaces and green career paths, neighborhood walkability and bikability, public art, shade, clean water, easily accessible and affordable housing and transportation, quality education, jobs, elder and child care, and healthy, affordable, culturally-relevant food systems.

A Community-Relations Approach

Respondents collectively reveal the importance of community relations as connected to policies related to safety. Spaces should be developed that facilitate opportunities for meaningful community connection. Examples include funding community garden spaces, and creatively using dead-end and roundabouts for green spaces and pocket parks. Additionally, policies that promote connection through mobility should be prioritized. Expanding bike paths, and affordable and reliable public transportation would well serve communities. Directing funding towards bus stop covers is a basic necessity that speaks to care and concern for community health and wellbeing. Finally, funding should be provided and investments made in

community-led organizations supporting and promoting community wellbeing and community programming for life-long learning.

An Anti-Gentrification Approach

When community members were asked to identify resources that are present in healthy communities, many included “affordable housing” in their responses. Policies that preserve affordability keep people in their homes and further mitigate displacement by controlling gentrification and predatory developers should be immediately enacted. Such policies should ensure quality options for low- and middle-income affordable housing and allow families, businesses, and community-led organizations to stay and thrive in their neighborhoods. Long-term plans should be developed with community input to retain long-time residents, homeowners, and their families.

An Economic Self-Determination Approach

Respondents expressed a need for policies that advance economic mobility and opportunity through living wages, overall affordability, development programs for green career paths, and support for small business grants including through micro-lending. Policy makers should expand the supply and variety of housing and employment choices and creatively invest in the leadership of community organizers and community-led organizations. The leaders in this report create real opportunities in entrepreneurship, green skill building, and organizing for community members. Therefore, when a city invests in community organizations and community leaders’ self-determination and skill building, they increase their investment in the communities those leaders serve.

A Conversational Approach

Respondents value community relations and being included in community conversations. Policies, and policy-relevant community conversations, should reflect words and understandings circulating in community. The Glossary of Terms is intended to support a conversational approach based on deep listening, care, and understanding.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR COMMUNITY PLÁTICAS

Carceral Safety

is a term that relies on systems of punishment, retribution, and coercive control including policing, prisons, incarceration, and detention as almost-exclusive and delimiting means of understanding, imagining, and practicing safety.

Community Action Research

is participatory research-with-respect for meaningful community input and community-informed change.

Community Relations

include the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with one's neighbors and to be in relation and to trust those who serve the neighborhood.

Community Safety

refers to the ability to thrive together in sustainable ways that are culturally relevant and self-determined.

Deeply Resourced Community

is one with a robust social infrastructure that ensures wellness and meaningful relations—physical and mental health, arts, leisure, quality food, well-paying jobs, affordable housing, transportation and mobility, quality and culturally-relevant education, and green open spaces.

Organized Abandonment

is a term introduced by scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore and used by activists and community organizers. It refers to the process of municipal/state/federal and capital disinvestment from targeted communities. It has to do with the way communities and neighborhoods, and the individuals and families that constitute them, do not have equitable levels of support and protection. Governmental responses often turn to policing and criminalization to narrowly address problems imposed and exacerbated by abandonment through punishment. Organized abandonment is not only abandonment by the government, it's also abandonment by capital that pushes particular people out of certain spaces unless they are workers in the service industry. Wilson Gilmore suggests that thinking and talking about the effects of organized abandonment should move us to actively intervene in the ways capital and the government work to raise barriers for some and lower them for others.

INTRODUCTION:

RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY

“I dream that one day our old elementary school will feed our neighborhood, and you can’t sell someone a dream that you’re not willing to work for yourself.” - Tito



When policy-makers, politicians, and other public figures talk about community safety, it is often from a narrow, punishment-based perspective of policing and incarceration. There has been an increased investment in programs that perpetuate the cycle of punishment through a criminalizing approach that centers retribution and capture through detention and incarceration. Decades of such approaches are linked with negative intergenerational health and livelihood outcomes for communities in South Tucson and with what scholar, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, terms organized abandonment. **Organized abandonment** refers to the process of municipal/state/federal and capital disinvestment from targeted communities. It is experienced when government and capital withdraw their support and provide little to no resources to communities. Current pandemic conditions, ongoing police and border patrol violence, and the austerity budgets of the last several decades are examples of *organized abandonment*.

Increased policing and incarceration arise in the spaces of such disinvestment. Thus, instead of support, protection, and capital investment, poor and communities of color experience “saturation policing, mass criminalization, and mass incarceration as alleged ‘solutions to crime’” (Gilmore & Gilmore, p. 175). In addition to saturation policing, South Tucson is further saturated by the Border Patrol through detention and deportation. The reality is that such punishment-based responses intensify vulnerabilities for communities of color. Of course, this is not a new phenomenon. Elizabeth Hinton (2015), a scholar of poverty and race, argues that the Johnson administration of the 1960s shifted away from Great Society programming aimed at reducing mass unemployment and police brutality and, instead, adopted excessively harsh and punitive approaches to manage communities of color (p. 809). This new kind of social policy increasingly relied on policing in urban areas. Issues related to poverty and crime were combined to criminalize working folks and those experiencing poverty. As these communities were abandoned, policies were enacted to begin including law enforcement in employment, housing, and education (Hinton 2015, p. 809). Organized abandonment has functioned to grossly under-resource and destabilize historical Tucson communities.

Funding Punishment is a practice revealed in Arizona's funding priorities. City and state budgets are moral documents that reveal values through their funding priorities.

Instead of focusing on life-giving programs such as quality neighborhood schools, affordable housing and transportation, public arts, and mental health services, the state of Arizona prioritizes funding punishment.

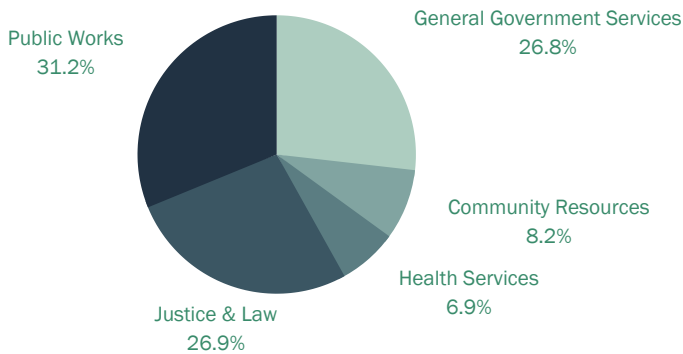
The Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry has an annual budget of 1.1 billion dollars. However, that number only encapsulates prisons. Policing, courts, jails, and probation departments have budgets of their own across every city and county in Arizona. For example, the Pima County Attorney's office spends roughly 40 million dollars per year on its criminal and civil divisions. The Pima County Sheriff spends 50 million dollars of its 158-million-dollar annual budget to operate the Pima County Jail. The Pima County Superior Court has a budget of 54 million dollars, and more than 17 million dollars are spent on Adult Probation personnel and operating expenses. Pima County consistently spends over a quarter of its budget on punishment. Similarly, the City of Tucson's Public Safety and Justice Services Department, which includes the City Court, the Public Defender, and the Fire Department, had a budget of 339.2 million dollars for the 2019/20 fiscal year. A full half of that total budget went to police, and it was increased by another 2 million dollars for the 2020/21 budget. In Tucson, the Police Department is funded at a greater amount than the other departments. Specifically, and according to the 2019/20 Tucson City Budget, Police are funded at \$180,930,030, Housing is funded at \$83,360,840, Development is funded at \$7,814,440, Parks are funded at \$32,933,500, and Transportation is funded at \$143,925,110.

Pima County FY 2019/2020 Adopted Budget

Comparison of Expenditures by Functional Area

Expenditures by Function

Fiscal Year 2019/2020



Expenditures by Function (000's)

Fiscal Year 2018/2019-2019/2020

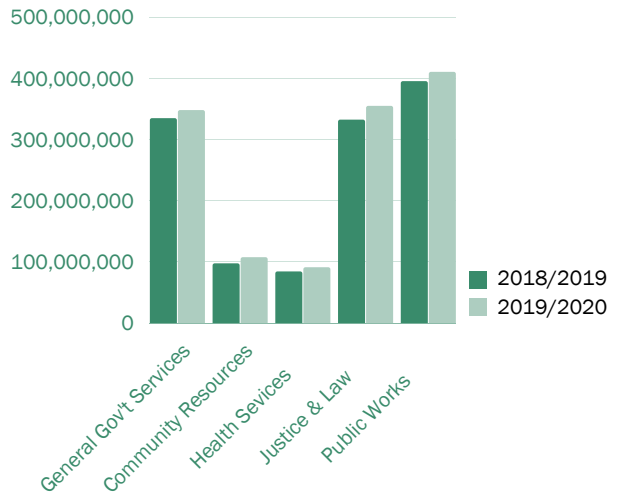


Figure 1

City of Tucson Budget

Summary of Expenditures by Department Operating and Capital (if applicable)

Public Safety and Justice Services							
City Court	\$	9,686,072	\$	10,478,910	\$	9,866,820	\$ 12,715,950
Public Defender		2,685,798		2,758,440		2,758,440	3,155,730
Public Safety Communications Center		11,920,932		13,467,710		13,499,790	13,947,520
Tucson Fire		108,558,196		97,276,900		97,406,960	102,580,010
Capital		4,923,839		22,564,700		22,564,700	12,585,400
Tucson Police		173,071,579		170,936,680		169,831,980	180,930,030
Capital		6,740,007		12,082,800		11,932,800	12,344,400
Subtotal	\$	317,586,423	\$	329,566,140	\$	327,861,490	\$ 338,259,040
Community Enrichment and Development							
Housing and Community Development	\$	71,586,228	\$	85,542,330	\$	62,704,780	\$ 83,360,840
Capital		3,732,120		5,695,170		503,390	5,730,760
Parks and Recreation		25,714,288		31,875,350		30,409,060	32,933,500
Capital		4,367,652		10,111,890		3,588,880	20,192,900
Planning and Development Services		6,326,500		6,278,990		7,402,610	7,814,440
Transportation		124,496,070		130,297,420		129,734,890	143,925,110
Capital		65,727,312		201,526,400		85,846,750	130,147,670
Tucson City Golf		7,330,480		7,750,910		7,900,290	7,660,870
Tucson Convention Center		10,496,875		10,443,690		10,823,900	11,155,920
Subtotal	\$	319,777,525	\$	489,522,150	\$	338,914,550	\$ 442,922,010

Figure 2

See Pima County budget:

¹ https://webcms.pima.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/Government/Finance%20and%20Risk%20Management/Adopted%20Budget/Adopted%202019-2020/PimaCountyAZ_4.pdf

² See City of Tucson budget: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/budget/FY_2020_Budget_Book_0.pdf

Communities that are under-resourced and abandoned by capital and the state, except as sites of racialized social control through punishment and surveillance, are historically marginalized and criminalized communities. Punishment is funded in these communities so that **carceral safety** becomes the only recognized and consistent social safety net. The disinvestment from all other social safety nets produces communities that are viewed and treated as criminal. Such disinvestment is, therefore, necessarily accompanied by an analogous rise in people and families impacted by the punishment system with a relatively high number of people from these communities cycling in and out of the carceral system.

As evidence of the power of carceral safety to constrict not only ways people can speak about safety but also the ways people practice and even imagine safety, one participant noted:

“I don’t feel like I have a good answer for this. I want to say something about people looking out for each other, but in my neighborhood that just means that someone called the cops on me because they thought I was trying to break into a neighbor’s house (I was letting his dog out, as he asked me to do while he was working late). When I see something, I don’t have the resources to do anything about it without resorting to calling the cops.”

Carceral Safety is made immediately apparent by the fact that Arizona leads the western United States in rate of prison population growth and holds one of the highest percentages of people in private prisons.³

According to a report by the State of Arizona Office of the Auditor General (2010), from 2000 to 2008 Arizona’s prison population increased tenfold and had a growth rate that exceeded that of every other western state.⁴ Though crime declined in this time period, by total number and per capita, the prison population grew by 60% – currently 1 in 13 people in Arizona has a felony record (fwd.us 2018). Furthermore, research on Arizona incarceration trends reveal deepening disparities. Punishment resources are routinely concentrated in under-resourced and historically marginalized communities of color.⁵ People of color are disproportionately represented in Arizona’s state prison and county jail populations. Latinos make up 38.8% of Arizona’s prison population and represent 31.7% of the general state population. Black people represent 14.7% of those incarcerated, but only 5.2% of the general state population. Of the people held in the Pima County Jail, 2019 data show 9.8% were Black, compared with 4.2% of the county’s total population; 40.9% were Latino, compared with 37.8% of the county’s total population; and Native Americans make up 4.4% of the county’s total population, but represent 5.9% of the jail population.⁶ Despite Arizona’s penchant to over invest in carceral safety, the Arizona Department of Corrections statistics reveal that 50% of people currently incarcerated in Arizona have a record of a prior prison term. In other words, the prison system fails to “rehabilitate” 50% of the time.

Despite the many failures of this carceral system, the Arizona State Legislature has steadfastly refused to pass meaningful sentencing reform that would reduce the population inside or lessen the number of people flowing into the prison system. The make-up of Arizona’s legislative body is one of the primary reasons it is so difficult to enact any meaningful legislation to address this crisis. It is the reason laws that would address the systemic nature of these issues are also seemingly impossible to imagine.

³ According to a 2019 study by the Sentencing Project, between 2000-2017 Arizona’s private prison population more than doubled- from 1,430 to 8,283 (479%). <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/private-prisons-united-states/>

⁴ See <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/10-08.pdf>

⁵ See http://c4sr.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/ThePattern.pdf

⁶ For Arizona census data see <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/AZ>; For Pima County census data see <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/pimacountyarizona/LND110210>; For AZDOC data see <https://corrections.az.gov/sites/default/files/REPORTS/CAG/2020/cagjune-20.pdf>; For Pima County jail data see https://pimasheriff.org/application/files/5015/6261/4366/Jail_at_a_Glance_March_2019.pdf

⁷ See https://corrections.az.gov/sites/default/files/REPORTS/CAG/2016/may_2016_cag.pdf

During the 2018 legislative session, the American Friends Service Committee-Arizona (AFSC-AZ) ran a modest earned-release credit bill (HB 2270), which had bipartisan support and was in line with Arizonans' support for reform.⁸ The bill would have created the opportunity for people serving time in prison on non-violent charges to reduce their time inside by 50%, and for those with violent convictions to be released at the 65% marker versus the current percent obligation. If HB 2270 had passed, it would have reduced the prison population by 8,300 beds or 19% by 2028.⁹ It did not pass. Instead, obstructionists led by then Maricopa County Prosecutor Bill Montgomery passed SB 1310, a bill so limited in scope that it is projected to only benefit approximately 100 people.¹⁰ Arizonans might ask how it was that Montgomery and those offices and individuals who enabled these decisions were able to derail not only 2270 but an entire slate of sentencing reform bills.¹¹ One answer returns us to the misguided idea and criminalizing practice of carceral safety as the only available and viable safety net.

Carceral safety is rooted in punishment; it suggests that banishment via jail, prison, deportation and through other criminalizing acts, together with policing, are central to safety. Safety to Arizona prosecutors is understood strictly as carceral safety. As such, it is:

- sending a person convicted for the first time of a non-violent act to prison;
- spending 1.1 billion dollars a year on punishment over rehabilitation and healing;
- establishing diversion programs that impact a small fraction of people;
- promoting and passing legislation that will send more and more people into the punishment system for possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia; and

- adding more police, more prisons (including for-profit prisons), longer sentences, and lifetime impediments for people who have conviction histories.

As one respondent notes, safety looks and feels like no police, no border patrol, and no businesses tied to gentrification:

“Donde no hay policias, migra, ni negocios de gentrificacion.”

This is what carceral safety is; what it looks like; and what it does in Arizona (McDowell, 2017). It is made up of police and border patrol and includes all forces of community punishment and pushout. This report highlights how punishment, carceral safety, and community safety are not the same thing.

Community safety is concerned with harm reduction, rehabilitation and healing, and with community well-being. It is political participation that builds thriving social relations that is non-oppressive and decentralized for meaningful community input and engagement.

Although from any standpoint – moral, economic, political – sentencing reform in Arizona is woefully needed, we remain unable to move beyond the limiting and punishment-oriented carceral safety narrative.¹² To effectively challenge this powerful, and powerfully limiting, narrative, we must first acknowledge its reliance on mass criminalization and incarceration. We must also meaningfully engage community perceptions and feelings about safety.

⁸ See FWD.US collection of reports on Arizona including an impact analysis of 2270 if it passed, polling data on Arizonans' appetite for sentencing reform, and the system impact on women and families: <https://www.fwd.us/criminal-justice/arizona/>

⁹ See FWD.US <https://www.fwd.us/news/hb-2270/>

¹⁰ 1310 only applies to people with drug possession or paraphernalia convictions to earn early release credits, and only if they participate in drug rehabilitation or “major self-improvement” programs- programs which do not exist and/or are offered in a limited capacity and not at all facilities. The text of the bill was heavily influenced by then Maricopa County prosecutor, Bill Montgomery. <https://www.acluaz.org/en/news/only-criminal-justice-bill-moving-through-legislature-not-reform-all>

¹¹ See <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/legislature/2018/05/08/bill-montgomery-county-prosecutors-prison-sentencing-reform-stalled/552117002/>

¹² From a moral standpoint, the need to address Arizona's punishment crisis is clear. At the rate we are moving, Arizona is heading towards number one in rate of incarceration, Arizona already ranks first in the Western United states. The financial impact is to the tune of 1 billion dollars a year. Unsurprisingly, there are gross racial disparities across the system. The impact is destroyed lives and devastated communities, especially among historically oppressed communities. If financial, moral, ethical arguments are not convincing pathways to reform- we have to ask and investigate, why?

When we enter into community conversations, we must be prepared to listen and learn from community about their experiences with carceral safety and about their ideas and needs around community safety. To do so, we must go to the root to learn where, and how, and from whom notions of safety, harm, punishment, and accountability are learned? We should ask, too, how perceptions are influenced by: pre-existing laws and policies; social and cultural biases; religious ideas; family units; and the media.

Though systemic racism and structural violence have impacted the ways safety is, or even can be imagined, participants in BCCSPRPR signal a different path forward. For example, one respondent noted that safe communities are “Not gated, clean/litter free, safe spaces for the homeless, local police stations/police who show up to calls, no gentrification/segregation, schools that represent a variety of ethnicities and socio- economic status.”

Thus, the BCCSPRPR considers what a community safety strategy might look like away from ideas that posit police, incarceration, and exclusion as essential or exclusive components of safety. It asks what a community safety strategy that centers relational connection, rehabilitation, and healing rather than retribution and punishment might look like? And, what is possible when we imagine beyond the limiting concept of carceral safety that has been preconfigured for us as the only possibility and begin to dream together of broader understandings and practices of community safety and wellbeing?



FLOWERS & BULLETS: AN INNOVATIVE LOCAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND COMMUNITY-INFORMED SOLUTIONS

Under-resourced and abandoned communities intimately know that if they wait for the state to feed them, they will starve waiting and wait starving. Such communities often express that when they come up without or are raised and live in under-resourced contexts, they learn to look for and create pathways, shared spaces, and opportunities. When they find such opportunities, they creatively produce, circulate, and multiply resources to survive and thrive. This vision of community wellbeing and safety is rooted in practice and fortified by Adrienne Maree Brown's development of the concept of emergence as a community strategy (2017). Emergence, as a strategy, is based on intelligent and intentional community collaboration and a belief that what is paid attention to is what grows. It is rooted in community relations and trust and calls for the active refusal of advancing false solutions.

F&B is a community-led, local organization that works collectively and collaboratively for an equitable, healthy, empowered, and engaged Barrio Centro.¹³

Through art and ancestral food systems, they serve as

Barrio Centro community caretakers who promote broad cultural wellbeing through sustainability, preservation, and self-determination. Their work is an example of what alternative models of safety could look like – where the work of safety is done by and for the community. This community research report centers their voices and visions as innovative and policy-relevant.

Research shows that contact with the punishment and legal system has lifelong, intergenerational, health, and financial consequences for families and neighbors of incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, convicted and deported people (Comfort 2009; Pew Charitable Trust 2010; American Psychological Association 2018). Structural and systemic racism is enshrined in profit-driven legislation that has established Arizona as among the leaders in for-profit prisons and detention facilities. Arizona's draconian "Show me your Papers Law" (SB 1070) and the "Anti-Ethnic Studies Law" (HB 2281) are legislative expressions of the state's xenophobia with particularly dire consequences for under-resourced communities of color. Such laws are continuations of past racial codes, adapted to the times and meant to ensure the subjugation and early

¹³ In 2012, Flowers & Bullets (F&B) emerged out of the anti-Ethnic studies bill that became law in the state of Arizona (commonly referred to as H.B. 2281). Many of the core organizers of F&B watched Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) officials walk into their classrooms, pack up and ban books – cantos – that sang a collective history in these lands. In 2012, the very existence of Chicanx people was labelled seditious by the state of Arizona, when representatives passed a bill to make teaching Ethnic Studies against the law. This site of trauma became the soil where the first semillas that grew into Flowers & Bullets, were planted. Ongoing threats to cultural survival and sustainability pointed the way forward toward freedom dreams. Community learned, together, that the myth of scarcity is one that keeps communities from thriving. It was revealed as a myth that functions to force communities and people to compete for resources that should be rights, for authority that should be theirs, i.e. community control.

death of certain bodies.¹⁴ Sociologist Mona Lynch terms Arizona's combination of racism, harsh sentencing laws, and punitive incarceration "sunbelt justice." Arizona's legacy of racism and inequality coupled with its models of supervision, punishment, and control have relegated entire generations of communities to underclass status, depriving them of educational and economic opportunities, and tracking youth of color, and LGBTQ youth of color into the school-to-prison pipeline (Gómez 2012; Burdge, Hyemingway, and Licona 2014). Federal, state, and local officials continue to rely on ideas, methods, and practices that have historically resulted in a systematic reduction of opportunities for Black and Latinx communities to prosper and thrive, which further exacerbates the need for directly impacted people and communities to organize and survive on their own terms.

The work of F&B in Barrio Centro, an urban area of 2,000 single-family homes in Tucson, is undertaken 50 minutes away from the US-Mexico border. Many in Barrio Centro are Latinx youth, 15 to 25 years old, and many of the families that live in the neighborhood have lived there for generations. 21% of Tucsonans live in poverty, but 28.6% of the residents of Ward 5, whose boundaries include Barrio Centro, are living in poverty. According to the City of Tucson Poverty & Urban Stress Report (2012, 2020 draft), 45.5% of Barrio Centro residents are living in poverty, and 32.4% of children in Barrio Centro are living in poverty.¹⁵ It is an underserved, abandoned community impacted by divestment, economic insecurity, and disproportionate rates of policing and incarceration. The F&B collective describe the neighborhood this way:

Illegal graffiti spots occupy vacant lots and police headquarters are nearby. We sit between a major street, an expressway, and a railyard that unloads

trains all day and night. Air pollution from a coal plant drifts our way. An Air Force runway sits one quarter of a mile away from our vacant school. Heavy military air traffic over the neighborhood causes daily air and noise pollution, which forced TUSD to close our only school in 2004.

Barrio Centro is a neighborhood that has been effectively abandoned by government investment. It is a neighborhood that exemplifies the effects of organized abandonment insofar as it has structurally, systemically, and strategically abandoned community needs and access to opportunity are routinely unaddressed. What Barrio Centro and similarly situated neighborhoods receive instead of broad investment in community resources are investment in carceral safety through more police. In seeking to more deeply understand community needs, members of the F&B collective conducted an informal community assessment and identified high rates of system-involvement, substance use, food insecurity, health disparities, and educational as well as economic inequality. These serve as sources of collective trauma for the community.¹⁶

As an emergent community strategy, F&B pays attention to what community identifies as its problems, needs, strengths, and ideas. They connect with the content of collective imaginings and community longings to facilitate community-led solutions to community-identified problems. In Barrio Centro, **carceral safety** is a problem and **community safety** is a solution.

Community-Informed Solutions are revealed through the practices of F&B, which is made up of members

¹⁴ Racial codes are laws, ordinances, and policies directed at specific racialized groups (i.e. persons of color). Some historical examples include: Black Codes, Convict leasing system, Jim Crow laws, segregation, redlining.

¹⁵ See <https://poverty-and-urban-stress-cotgis.hub.arcgis.com/> to view data from City of Tucson Poverty & Urban Stress Reports, 2007, 2012, 2020 (draft). That data reflected herein was pulled from the 2020 draft report and associated interactive maps. The maps break down several important indicators that can trace neighborhood stress and attendant neglect. Barrio Centro is incorporated in Census tract 20. However, census tracts often don't line up exactly with neighborhood boundaries. There are parts of tract 20 that are outside Barrio Centro- namely Arroyo Chico and Pueblo Gardens.

¹⁶ Flowers & Bullets conducted an informal needs assessment before commencing their work in Barrio Centro in 2012. From their conversations with residents they found a high number of community members who were, or had been system-involved (probation, jail, prison), high rates of diabetes, and a need for mental and substance abuse services.

who are primarily from and currently live in Barrio Centro. They engage in values-driven, participatory, community-led initiatives and long-term goals for community building and intentional and radical space-making in the neighborhood. As an example, in 2016, F&B repurposed Julia Keen Elementary School. This 10-acre site, which had been the hub of the neighborhood, was shuttered in 2004 by TUSD. Working with local families, F&B re-envisioned the vacant property as a Mid-Town Farm and Cultural Center. As noted above, to inform culturally-relevant, community-serving practices on the farm, F&B conducted an informal community assessment. Findings from this community research revealed that the Barrio Centro community is impacted by high rates of system-involvement (i.e. probation, jail or prison). A primary goal of the farm, therefore, became to move away from the punishment system and towards strong neighbor relations and a supportive, sustainable community. By creating opportunities for people to collaborate and connect with one another at the Mid-Town Farm, F&B invites the neighborhood into deeper relationship with one another, with the neighborhood, and with the land upon which they are situated. Through the work of dreaming together and collaboratively building the neighborhood environment to reflect those visions and values, F&B promotes the inherent dignity, purpose, and belonging of all community members. In other words, the focus is on relationships based on intention and care which promote community well-being and safety to prevent harm from occurring in the first place.

As one community member stated, safety looks and feels like: “Neighbors that know each other. Alternatives to law enforcement when dealing with violence—especially domestic violence. Disability accessible public spaces.”

To creatively and collaboratively address the traumatic consequences of community exclusions and experiences with the punishment system and model of carceral safety, F&B continues to develop the Mid-Town Farm and Cultural Center as a vital community-

informed resource. Together with community, they promote backyard gardening, food production, and art to build and encourage deep neighborhood relationships for wellbeing and safety as defined from within the Barrio Centro community.





FEELINGS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS AS POLICY-RELEVANT DATA

Understanding that feelings structure every minute of our lives, Jackson and Meiners (2011, p. 271) argue that to dismantle the paradigm of public safety as carceral control, people must engage with and reframe what it means and what it feels like to be safe. F&B's expansive understanding of (and approach to) what safe and secure communities look and feel like, is what makes their work cutting edge and responsive. This responsive awareness is the animating element of the BCCSPRPR. By shifting away from state-led definitions, understandings, and responses to safety, spaces are created to gather situated insights about how people define safety for themselves, thereby creating new, culturally-responsive and culturally-relevant, evidence upon which to create policy. In other words, this report treats feelings that are revealed through qualitative inquiry as innovative, informative, and culturally-relevant data points with policy implications.

Taken together, the survey and photo-elicitation components of this study offer a values-driven vision of community safety that moves away from narrow understandings of carceral safety which depends upon banishment (via jail, prison, and deportation), criminalization, and policing (McDowell, 2017). Through a practice of deep listening, it instead centers community relations as central to safety. The BCCSPRPR draws from stories of everyday life and, respectfully, considers the revealed perceptions. As such, this study offers innovative analytical insights as policy-relevant data points. These emerge from the people most directly impacted by experiences of carceral safety—people who are formerly incarcerated or convicted, poor/working class folx, people of color,

and families of mixed-migration status—communities that shoulder a disproportionate policing impact and live under heightened and sustained surveillance.



F&B serves as a living alternative to carceral safety to offer Tucson a new imaginary of safety— one that is reflective, responsive, and co-created with community. The following sections discuss each theme that emerged from qualitative research in and with community. Shared responses are from people living, loving, and making meaning in community. They should be of interest to politicians, pundits, and policy-makers. Creatively engaged, these sections are filled with data that can inform responsive action in the service of more humane, supportive, and generative as well as

¹⁷ In general, “evidenced based practices” (EBP), are those that have been empirically researched and proven to have measurable positive outcomes. Part of the problem is what gets studied in the first place. Frequently, system/state-led programming is automatically considered normative and rational, and thus the only interventions studied. This limitation of EBP has damaging consequences as such “evidence” produced serves to guide funding streams, practice, and policy.

culturally resonant, holistic approach to safety. Each section is accompanied by photos and descriptions offered by F&B of what safety looks and feels like to them.

Relationships

“Our survival depends on the relationships we build.”
Megan Swoboda, *The Ruckus Society*



Asked “What does safety feel like?” survey participants identified multiple contributors to feeling safe in their neighborhood. Significantly, most participants expressed that it was community relations and the possibility for meaningful relational connections that correlated to feelings of safety. For example, one respondent stated that

Safe communities are ones where “people and families are out and about on the streets, know each other and where there are public gatherings put on by the neighborhood where people can get to know each other.”

Another person reflected, “what makes me feel safe is

seeing people use the park, walking, using the bike path and knowing our neighbors.” To feel safe, another community member shared that they want to see “Other people out and about, walking dogs, running, working on their yard, house or cars, sitting on their porch, etc.” How a neighborhood is planned and built is directly connected to its residents’ ability to easily and meaningfully connect with one another. Accessible, open, shaded, beautiful spaces, including pocket parks and bike paths allow community members to build such supportive relationships that lead to feelings of safety. As a cultural expression of relational values, respondents added that safe neighborhoods are ones that invite intergenerational interaction, play, collaboration, and also art.



An Economic Self-Determination Approach

F&B understands that authentic connections are central to building and sustaining relationships in Barrio Centro. As a result, they intentionally create meaningful opportunities for residents to meet and mingle as well as to learn and co-create. At the Mid-Town Farm & Cultural Center, F&B offers a range of workshops such as backyard gardening, bee keeping, chickens, goats, and food production. The farm also serves as a site for artistic expression and beautification through community mural planning and music concerts. It is attentive to cultivating joy for neighborhood children and their families through wet

down days in the summers. Each event represents an opportunity for the neighborhood to enter into deeper relationships with one another. As one member of the F&B collective stated:

“Our ancestral knowledge teaches us to share, to give, and to be caring to our neighbors. A simple wave or the small act of giving plants to our neighbors has helped us to get to know each other much better. Building relationships like this has welcomed conversations about where we are from, what we would like to see in the community, and how we can keep ourselves and our homes safe in times of need.”

In detailing what community safety looks and feels like through a culturally-relevant, relational framework, community identified “consistent ceremonial gatherings” and “community gatherings/parties to strengthen ties.” They want to connect in and through “parques, centros comunitarios, [y] fiestas.”

The idea that community relations and mutual care are essential to safety and survival has come into sharp relief during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mutual aid has historically been a tool that dispossessed communities employ to co-create safety, care, and possibility for themselves especially in contexts of organized abandonment, which reflect the disinvestment of capital and the absence of governmental support discussed in this report. COVID-19 has made the care methods that marginalized communities have long employed both rational and urgent.

There is a clear concern expressed for all members of the Barrio Centro community, including those who are unhoused and those being threatened by gentrification as revealed in this vision of community safety and wellbeing as one that is:

“Not gated, clean/litter free, safe spaces for the homeless, no gentrification/segregation, schools that represent a variety of ethnicities and SES.”

Policy-makers can learn from the innovative ways communities express care and concern and the ways they are mobilized in the name of one another’s wellbeing. F&B responded in service to the neighborhood at the onset of the pandemic by partnering with Thunder Canyon Brewery to make hand sanitizer and with the neighborhood association to make masks. Over the course of two days, they distributed free kits to anyone who needed and wanted them. It is important to note that it wasn’t government leaders or police who immediately responded to the health and safety needs and concerns of the community. It was the neighborhood itself that mobilized to protect and care for one another. These relational acts of care are further expressions of the need for communities to be deeply resourced. The policy implications of this answer are directly tied both to a community’s built environment and to its planning as well as to its capacities to form and sustain meaningful community relations.



Interdependence

“Nothing happens in isolation. There is always a squad, collaborators, a body that supports change occurring.”
Sage Crump, Alternate Roots

Asking “What resources are present in healthy, thriving

communities” respondents identified critical structural investments that are currently absent or not widely available. They identified community agricultural and community gardens as something that would be both beautiful and nourishing. One survey response in particular well illustrates what resources and investments are necessary to produce healthy, thriving community outcomes. The respondent wrote:

“Systems need to be in place that ensure the physical and mental health of residents as well as the health of the environment. A community needs to invest in arts, leisure, sustainable food systems, to take a proactive approach to ensuring that people are active, healthy, and living in a thriving environment.”

While the respondent names “physical and mental systems,” signaling perhaps traditional modes of mental health care, this response is also calling attention to the larger environment in which such systems are situated. The ask here is for a much more holistic approach to understandings of community and to community resource allocation. Importantly, with regard to safety, the comment names neither carceral security nor the punishment systems as resources that contribute to healthy, thriving communities.

This response further reveals an interconnected understanding of communities and for them to be well-resourced to be interdependent. Interdependence is presently illustrated in the ways the neighborhood and F&B pool their resources to meet the need, for example, of childcare and also support the development of the cross-generational leadership capacity of children, youth, and elders in the community.

As made evident in the following response, members of the Barrio Centro community clearly want to offer solutions to community challenges and to see themselves represented in community leadership:

“...after school programs led by local community

members of color, parks, gardens, job opportunities, less police contact, more schools, cultural events, resources, lights, peer counselors, gyms, affordable housing.”

In the absence of state investments, community members rely upon each other to co-create conditions that will lead to healthy outcomes for them and their families. From a policy perspective, this research reveals the power and promise of decentralizing decision-making processes and community-based practices. Such an inclusive approach requires that community members be always included in policy and planning discussions, dreams, and determinations. This would allow for solutions to emerge from outside the confines of carceral safety to include attention to the arts, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability, and wellness as richly described to include intellectual, physical, and mental wellbeing.

Joy and Play as Community Values

Survey participants are interested in practices and policies that support sustainability in terms of the economy, the built and natural environment, and food systems. They also express an interest in sustainability as it relates to relations, culture, and family. Children, parents and families are the corazón of the neighborhood of Barrio Centro. Following the idea that joy and play are political acts of resistance and insistence, many respondents named green open spaces and children playing outside as elements of feeling safe. Indeed, creating opportunities for children to be healthily and happily engaged is a reoccurring theme in the study and one that F&B frequently hears from neighbors as well. Importantly, such spaces are imagined as free from police presence.

One respondent described a joyful neighborhood that invites meaningful, healthy play and looks like:

“Padres cuidando a sus hijos y con actividades que empoderen a los chicos.”

Another respondent described safety as sites of care and sounds and visions of play and joy:

“People take care of each other. They look after

common spaces and help each other out with their yards. Kids play outside (like the kids who play in the parking lot of the apartment complex apart from my house). We all greet each other. There aren't police around."

There is a need in Barrio Centro for caring spaces to cultivate play and joy.

Respondents called for "...children's museums, creative spaces" and for "good noise such as laughter, children playing, adults talking, everyone looking out for each others' children and pets."

In the summer of 2019, F&B members noticed that youth were coming and hanging out at the farm all day. This revealed both a community interest and a clear lack of summer programming that is free, accessible, and appealing in the area. Summer camps are largely absent or unaffordable.

Parents obviously felt the farm was a safe and healthy alternative to staying home all day, and it was evident that children in the neighborhood felt the same. F&B brought in the neighborhood youth and the farm provided an opportunity to plant more seeds of transformation in the community. Young people became ambassadors of the message and ethic of the collective, participating as farm tour guides for foundations and businesses interested in volunteering and donating to the farm.

F&B created a play space at the farm, with tether ball courts, and goats and chickens nearby. They adapted to this shift by bringing in volunteers to help run programming for the kids for a few hours each day, and by providing snacks, water, and sunscreen at the farm. Events, such as the Barbacoa & Oldies celebration that wrapped up their goat processing workshop in Spring 2020, are always all ages, drug, alcohol, and hate-speech free, and frequently will have a jumping castle, face painter, or art project for the children to work on. There is a deep commitment to cultivating joy in the community. This commitment is accompanied by a recognition and understanding of who the community is made up of, and what they need because members of F&B are from the neighborhood. Part of the reason why F&B Mid-Town Farm is a site of safety is because it reflects and responds to the beauty, strengths, talents, and needs of the community. The policy implications of these insights suggest the need to approach sustainability from something much larger than an ecological approach and that joy must be understood as significant to feelings and understandings of community safety.

Economic Self-Determination and A Solidarity Economy

"We don't want to wait on someone to hire us and give us a check. We want to create our own opportunities."
Nipsey Hussle

As one member of F&B puts it:

"Safety to us means the ability to start your own business and hire those in underserved communities with limited resources and opportunity. It's shown that the highest recidivism occurs because of lack of jobs. If you own the business, you can hire whoever you want."

Findings in this report underscore that job opportunities and thriving, locally-owned business are essential to safe communities. Economic self-determination is important because Tucson, like so many other cities across the country, is in a battle against gentrification. Tucson's downtown housing market and industry have displaced families that have been rooted there for generations. Long-neglected





barrios, including Barrio Viejo, Barrio Hollywood, Barrio Anita, Barrio El Hoyo, that have endured organized abandonment are now attractive financial opportunities for investors because they border downtown and the University of Arizona. Proximate neighborhoods, like Barrio Centro, are also being negatively affected. To safeguard a community from being overrun by predatory developers, who frequently demand ordinances that further displace the most vulnerable, local government should commit to fair and affordable housing, support and strengthen small community businesses, and provide meaningful employment opportunities to community members.

There is a clear desire for such quality options as exemplified in this respondent's call for:

“Employment that is better than leaving people as working-class poor. Healthy food options. Safe spaces to gather...” and “Good schools, solid housing stock, mixed density and a healthy mix of socio-economic demographics. Nearby jobs. Parks and outdoor recreation, shopping, and restaurants”

F&B is committed to amplifying community members' businesses. They turn to the community to hire and collaborate with them on projects and they amplify neighborhood businesses on their social media pages. This is not lost on the community and frequently community businesses are some of the most

enthusiastic supporters of the collective. More broadly,

These practices build economic self-determination that is rooted in cooperation, not competition, decentering capitalist logics and planting seeds to grow a “solidarity economy.”

As one example that promotes a solidarity economy and that demonstrates the value of economic self-determination, an F&B collective member began a food truck, “Geronimo’s Revenge,” Tucson’s first local, organic, and sustainable food truck. While in operation, Geronimo’s Revenge served culturally-relevant Tucson classics, hired from within the community, and was a popular Tucson eatery. As such, safety looks like the ability to learn to start your own business and to skill-build, hire, and house those from your home communities who are otherwise faced with limited resources and little opportunity. It also looks like bringing people together around nourishing food. The relationship between sustainability, equity, and dignity must be acknowledged, understood, and considered so that the three are regularly ensured as policies are established in matters that advance economic mobility and opportunity from education, housing, jobs, living wages, grants, and micro-lending as well as small business and green career paths.



CONCLUSION: COMMUNITY VOICES, VISIONS, AND PRACTICES AS POLICY-RELEVANT RESOURCES

“Institutions in our society need reinventing. Time has come for a new dream.” Grace Lee Boggs

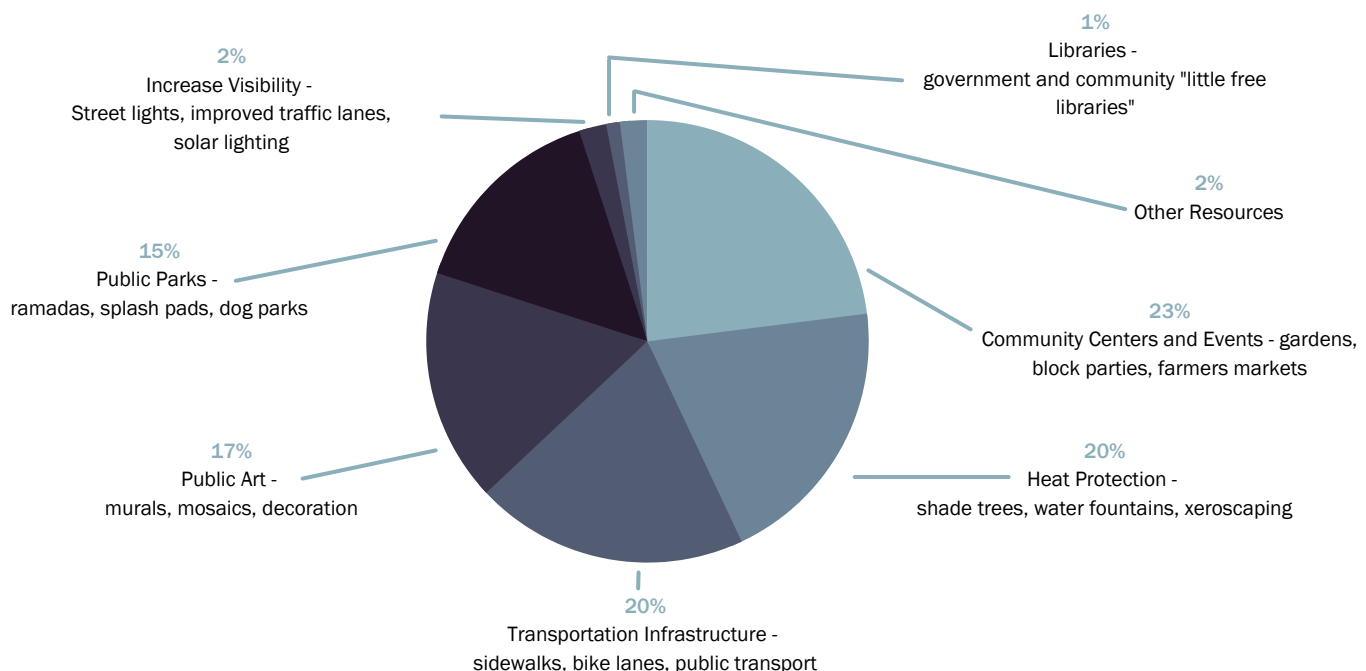
At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to name specifically what they would like to see funded in their neighborhood. Ninety-five percent of all responses fall into categories that are decidedly outside of those associated with carceral safety and the punishment system. These include funding for:

- neighborhood beautification and the revitalization of cultural heritage through public art such as murals;
- heat and sun protection through built ramadas and planted shade trees;

- mobility and transportation infrastructure including bike lanes, reliable public transportation, and covered bus stops;
- spaces for community engagement such as pocket parks and green, open spaces where people can gather, play, and celebrate; and
- community gardens where people can collectively work and be nourished.

It is important to recognize that not one respondent named more funding for police or for additional policing presence in their community.

What would you like to see in your neighborhood? (mark all that apply)



Flowers & Bullets approaches community safety through an abolitionist orientation that is not about what is torn down, defunded, or eliminated. Rather, their focus is on what can be built together that would make life tenable for everyone. It is about more deeply and meaningfully resourcing communities. According to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “[a]bolition is figuring out how to work with people to make something rather than figuring out how to erase something... [it] is a theory of change [and] of social life. It's about making things” (Petitjean, 2016).

F&B makes things in Barrio Centro. Through their efforts with other community members they co-created the Mid-Town Farm and Cultural Center. This powerful reclamation of community space and knowledge enlivened what was otherwise simply another shuttered community school site by making it into a vibrant community space.

Community safety looks like gardening and farming, art-making, showing up for your neighbors, play, mutual aid, reclaiming stolen lands, job possibilities and labor power, and fortified kinship networks. Re-imagined models of safety are being made and remade every day in Barrio Centro.

Today, Barrio Centro smells like creosote after a desert rain, sings like the cicadas in June, laughs like the tinkering bells of paleteros, smells like Sunday night carne asadas and oldies. The work is relationally and culturally specific. It is created by and for la comunidad querida.

Carceral safety has worked to criminalize entire communities. This participatory research report concludes that organized abandonment, reflected in communities where investment and social support has been replaced with incarceration and policing, is a significant problem that needs community-informed solutions. Organized abandonment looks like foreclosed/abandoned homes, vacant industrial plants/business, and shuttered schools.

Criminological theory influences and produces social policy. Broken windows and 'stop and frisk' policing emerged from broken windows theory. As more and more money is poured into misguided community safety projects that begin and end with police and border control officials, we observe a corresponding rise in arrests and targeting of poor, people of color, and Black people specifically (Gilmore 2016). Funds for violence prevention, or hot spot policing, flow easily into criminalized communities – much easier than monies earmarked for revitalization, beautification, wellness, jobs, affordable housing and other resources that create stability (Vitale & Jefferson, 2016). The vulnerabilities named in this report are not new – these outcomes are merely continuations of what has always been. The convergence of this moment is teaching us that we can no longer reach for the familiar tactics of reform. We must reimagine the social contract to include everyone and rewrite the contracts to privilege care and connection. This is in our control to make real. One avenue is directing the flow of resources to demonstrate a different belief system– that where life is precious, life is precious. Where we invest and how we allocate our resources demonstrates who and what we value.

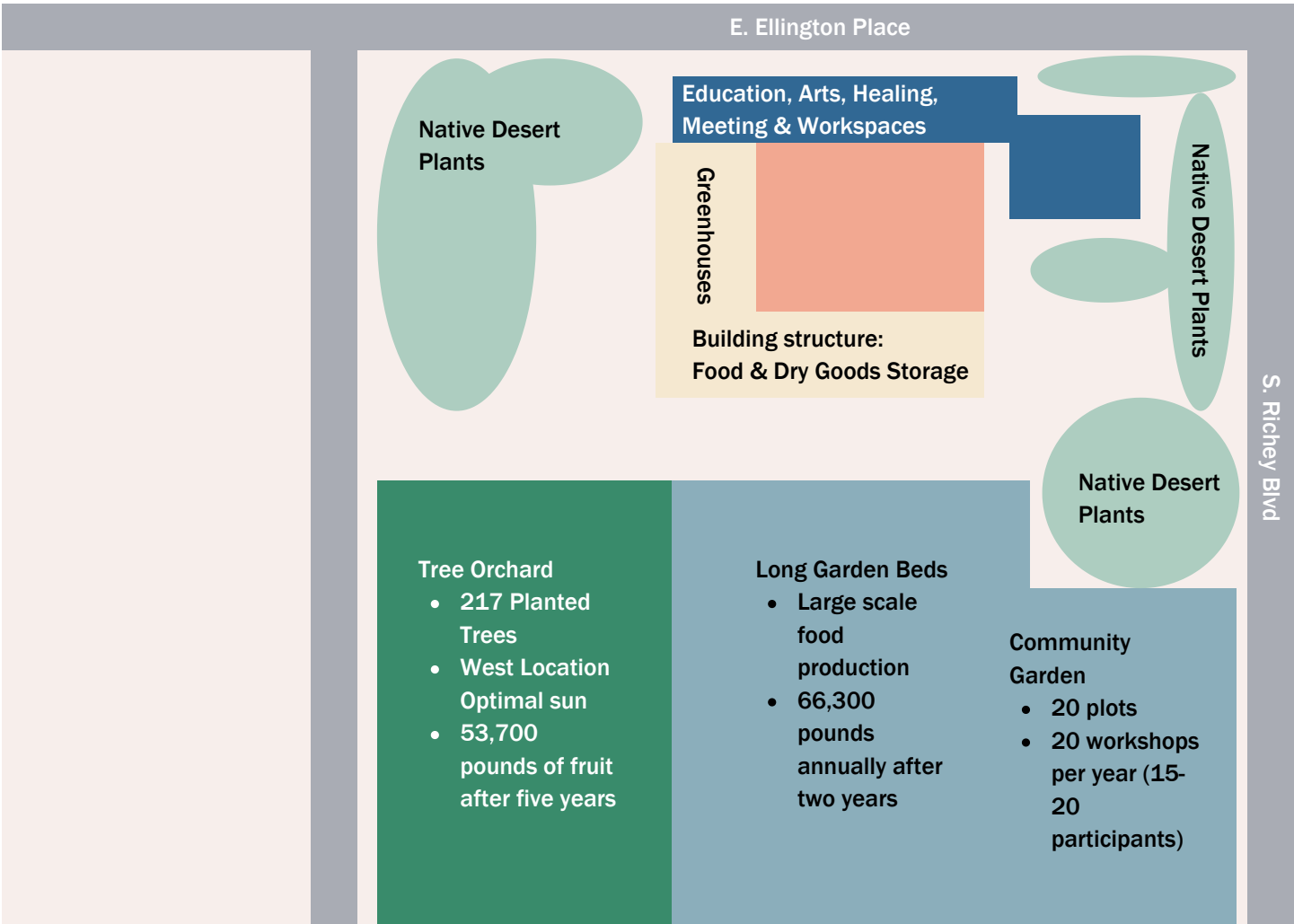
To that end, policy measures should be created with community-informed and community-defined wellness and vitality in mind. Wellness is enhanced by increased access to public amenities such as green open spaces, walkable/bikeable communities, transportation, education, job training and jobs, and healthy, affordable culturally-relevant food systems. Useful policy would include a sustainable funding plan directed at reanimating and creatively repurposing vacant properties in historically criminalized communities. An attendant recommendation is for the City of Tucson to fund the community safety work of F&B. By supporting their efforts to purchase the building at Julia Keen Elementary, the City of Tucson will be investing in what will become a community resource center at the Mid-Town Farm. Invested in sufficiently, this work could become a harm reduction safety model to replicate in other neighborhoods in Tucson.

The findings of the Barrio Centro Community Safety Project reveal that another world and other ways are possible and that the roots of safety are found in love and care as everyday revolutionary acts. Safety is an active practice of being and building with and for one another.

It is about practicing community care in an environment where people can live, move, labor, and love. Everyone is called to participate in creating safety, in building communities that thrive. Imagine what might be possible, imagine what could be built, if everyone, in the multitude of roles they fill, moved from the basic ethic that we belong to each other?

Further community safety research informed by the present findings is recommended. Building on the

intentional and inclusive design of the BCCSPRP, future research should be co-designed and led by community leaders. A quantitative community study on safety and root causes of instability, soliciting input on material investments that make for well-resourced communities, would help inform a City-wide community safety strategy. Additionally, oversampling– or targeting responses from Wards identified with the highest poverty and stress markers (Ward 1, 3, and 5)– is critical. Oversampling in these Wards will allow researchers and policymakers to hear from people historically underrepresented by aggregate safety data– save for as “offenders”– about their perspectives and insight into how to remedy disparities related to community safety outcomes. Together with the BCCSPRP, such research would offer a complimentary roadmap forward for City government to meaningfully invest in community safety that serves the most impacted.



“Another world is not only possible; she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

Arundhati Roy



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