

## BROADWAY COALITION STATEMENT ON BROADWAY PROJECT 6 March 2012

The Broadway Coalition wish to place into the record of this Study Session the following statement:

Since January 2010 a group of citizens has been gathering information about the Broadway Project. We believe this decades-old plan is not only gratuitously destructive, but unnecessary given current and historic traffic volumes. It will also damage the region's tax base and livability and cost a projected \$71 million taxpayer dollars we do not have to waste.

The City of Tucson's 1987 Draft Final Report calls for a 150' wide street with eight lanes and a 24' landscaped median as well as a 30' landscaped buffer. <http://dot.tucsonaz.gov/projects/broadway> This would necessitate demolishing all structures on the north side of the street between the alley and Broadway, Euclid and Country Club. This would wipe away virtually all local businesses, several dozen historically and architecturally significant properties, and a landmark church.

Broadway Coalition urge the Mayor and Council to reconsider this project for the following reasons:

### 1. TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS OFF

The project is unnecessary. Traffic projected for 2005 in the 1987 report has not yet materialized. The city's own 2008 traffic counts found 30,000-40,000 cars per day, much the same as those for 1984 found on p.4 of the 1987 report. There is no reason to think traffic projections for 2030 or 2040 will prove any more accurate than those for 2005.

### 2. WASTEFUL SPENDING OF \$71 MILLION

The project is expensive, costing \$71 million taxpayer dollars we simply do not have. Improvements such as bus pullouts and turn bays as suggested in the City of Tucson's 2009 report (furnished to Council members) would alleviate the minimal congestion currently occurring, leaving the bulk of funds for other more pressing RTA priorities such as the Modern Streetcar. The January 19, 2011 budget for the project showed the bulk of funds, \$43.7 million, allocated for property acquisition, suggesting substantial cost savings could be achieved by redesigning the roadway within the existing footprint. mayor and council action on acquisitions - <http://www.tucsonaz.gov/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=728&doctype=SUMMARY>. [Resolution #21681](#) We do not agree that the City's premature purchases of properties now sitting vacant where small businesses once flourished constitute "investment." This practice instead depresses private investment and creates blight.

### 3. NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON TAX BASE & ECONOMY

The project is destructive to local businesses and the built environment. The 1987 Plan would remove approximately one half of the 287 taxpaying and tax-generating businesses currently fronting Broadway, depressing City, County, TIF and State tax revenues. Most of these

businesses are locally owned, generating more revenue for the City than chain stores. Longstanding family businesses contribute to the unique local ambience drawing tourists and tourist dollars to Tucson. Destroying scores of local businesses would be counterproductive to job and revenue growth and recovery.

#### 4. NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON LIVABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The project is antithetical to COT and PAG goals of livability, sustainability and walkable streets. It would degrade not only the immediate locality but the livability of a large section of central Tucson. The stretch between Euclid and Country Club is the only commercial strip on Broadway between Downtown and the El Con Mall, neither of which offer a comparable variety of businesses and services. These include auto repair, insurance, restaurants, professional services, and specialty shops of all sorts. This vibrant commercial cluster serves neighborhoods for at least a mile radius in all directions. Destroying it would force local residents to drive to businesses and services to which they can now walk or bike –the opposite of sustainability. This would impose particular hardship on the elderly, disabled, students and the poor, many of whom do not drive.

The plan also jeopardizes 39 potential contributing properties to Sam Hughes Historic District,<sup>1</sup> 19 contributing properties to Rincon Heights Historic District,<sup>2</sup> and seven architecturally significant buildings identified by the Modern Architecture Preservation Project.[mapptucson.catnet](http://mapptucson.catnet) This amounts to at least 65 architecturally or historically significant properties. The recently publicized Broadway Charter omits the sound wall proposed in 1987 that would buffer the neighborhood from noise these buildings currently absorb.

We question whether the expenditure of \$71 million taxpayer dollars will provide benefits to the community outweighing the damage to the regional economy and livability due to the disruption and loss of commercial activity and tax revenues on Broadway. Neighborhood preservation and mobility are not in conflict but interdependent in planning for our region's future.

Any changes to Broadway must enhance and not detract from livability. They must meet actual conditions, protecting local businesses and historic properties while providing safe bicycle and pedestrian amenities. The north side of the street must not become a dead zone denuded of commercial activity. Any new development must be context-sensitive, visually enhancing and sympathetic to the existing streetscape.

For all of these reasons, we urge the Mayor and Council to reconsider this gratuitous, expensive and destructive project.

Respectfully submitted,  
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<sup>1</sup> source: historic survey by Ralph Comey and Janet Parkhurst&Associates, Architects, 3834 E. Calle Cortez, Tucson 85716 (520)320-9043: obtained by J. O'Dowd's FOIA request

<sup>2</sup> source: Rincon Heights Historic District Nomination.