

TUCSON, AZ

Tucson Mayor Regina Romero: In Tucson, we have not created a safe route for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Evren Sömnez, Living Streets Alliance: A crisis, I think, when it comes to street safety issues. We're not done with January, and we've already had 11 fatal crashes in our streets.

Antonio Ramirez: If you take that towards safety, a lot of people think, "Oh, we need police," but actually, the concerns are really about the infrastructure.

Jennifer Flores: Getting that idea that it's not just for cars, that it's also about the people who are walking and the people who are on bicycles, the people who are in wheelchairs, the people who get on and off of buses.

Unnamed: People to get around safely, everybody deserves that, definitely.

Mayor Romero: My vision for the next 10, 20, 30 years for Tucson is definitely to institutionalize the concept of Complete Streets and mobility. It's where we have to go. The city of Tucson is a very special place. It has been inhabited for more than 5,000 years. It's known for its art, history, culture.

Evren Sömnez: Obviously, multiple communities in Tucson, but there's really close-knit relationships, I think, and people connect with each other and know each other and a lot of bubbles coincide.

Grecia Ramirez: Tucson's the place where there's a very vibrant community.

Jennifer Flores: The nice thing about Tucson is that we do have bike infrastructure, we had it before we even thought about the Complete Streets, but it's challenging. Even though I am a very safe cyclist, I stop, I signal, and I've been hit twice by people who looked right at me and then hit me.

Evren Sömnez: I think a lot of this comes down to how we created streets that are just dangerous by design. We're prioritizing speed over safety.

Patrick Hartley: We have seen, particularly in the last four or five years, a surge in pedestrian crashes, bike crashes, pedestrian fatalities in particular.

Jennifer Flores: I work in a place where we don't have sidewalks. If we have bike lanes, they're not finished. Tucson passed a proposition where this part of Drexel Road, all the way from 12th Avenue, all the way up to the light, will be a bike path and a walking path set apart from the street.

Evren Sömnez: In 2015, we spearheaded this effort to put together a pedestrian safety and walkability proposal, and then out of that forum, there were three priorities that emerged, and pursuing a Complete Streets policy was one of them. Complete Streets is more about a philosophy or an approach and putting equity at the centerpiece of it, I think is a pretty critical tenant of that, so I can't think of Complete

Streets without thinking about disparities and equity issues that come with that. The policy passed in 2019 in February.

Patrick Hartley: So I was hired on as a result of the Complete Streets policy. We really centered it on equity and talked about prioritizing investments, projects, and programs in the areas of the city where we have traditionally under-invested.

Mayor Romero: This is really a holistic approach to creating safety and equity in public health, and safe mobility options for all.

Evren Sömnez: Our streets and the way they're built, and the way they're designed, and the amenities that they have, and then how that impacts people's health differently and the disparities that come with that.

Grecia Ramirez: When I talk about Complete Streets, I talk about health in general, right? Disproportionally, Mexican Americans, African Americans, Natives, are affected with diabetes. That's a huge burden on some communities.

Mayor Romero: Because of those inequities, we see a lesser quality of life.

Patrick Hartley: So we have to identify those locations, and we're using safety as a key driver of that as well as investing in areas of our community that have historically seen lower levels in investment and where you see residents that are going to be more dependent on walking, biking, taking transit as their primary means of transportation, and they're gonna face those risks at higher levels than somebody who's just getting in their car and going from point A to point B.

Antonio Ramirez: I want to build a better world for my daughter and for the people around me, and if we were in a position where we didn't have to have a car, I think that would be ideal, because the choice is really important.

Patrick Hartley: Our voters, the residents of Tucson, have been really willing to commit to these improvements, and we have something called the Parks and Connections Bond that we're advancing right now. We're building hundreds of miles of bike boulevards across the city. And as we re-stripe our streets, it's kind of a low-cost solution, we're re-stripping with narrow lanes, expanding bike lanes, putting in buffered or protected bike lanes where the budget allows, dropping travel lanes where the volumes don't necessitate them. We've got 60, 70-foot roadways with 2,000 vehicles a day, those are golden opportunities when we go in there and repave them.

Antonio Ramirez: The fact that we get to be a part of that is really special and I think we're doing it really for her.

Evren Sömnez: So the value of streets is just public space, but not just a way to get from A to B, to me, is critical when we think about Complete Streets. Complete Streets is not just about efficient transportation, but it's also about cultivating the kind of place where people are out and about, connecting to each other.