Proposing an Arts-focused Bicycle Corridor
Connecting North and South Tempe

By Sydney Lines
In 2014 the City of Tempe released its Arts and Culture Plan:

- Tempe residents seek informal cultural experiences available throughout the city, such as at coffee shops, bars, parks and festivals.
- There is room for improvement in the quality, affordability, availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings to the community.
- Arts and culture are seen as an excellent way to promote diversity and inclusion.
- Residents of South Tempe would like more activities to be available closer to home.

1. Arts Programming Throughout the Community
   1.6. Continue, expand and enhance informal arts programming provided in community settings

3. Artists and Arts Organizations
   3.10 Plan for the commissioning of one or more signature public artworks.

4. Diversity and Inclusion
   4.3 Promote Community-Initiated Arts projects that address diversity and inclusion.
   4.4. Support community festivals celebrating cultural diversity and explore a citywide multicultural festival.
Tempe Culture & Community

- Tempe has one of the highest percentages of bicycle commuters in the country (4%) 
- Tempe is just 40 square miles yet there are 175 miles of bikeways

The City of Tempe is pro-bike, pro-sustainability, and pro-arts
Demographics

- Only 41.8% of housing in Tempe is owner occupied (the national average is 63.9%)
- The median household income is $49,012 with 21.7% of the population living below the poverty line (the national average is 14.7%)
- 59.6% of the population is white, 22.6% are Hispanic

Tempe is an interesting and sometimes fluid community. It is a college town with a mix of both rooted residents and transient university students, and it is in the middle of a development boom where high-rise luxury residential and commercial buildings keep popping up around Tempe Beach Park with mixed response from the community as rents increase citywide.
Existing Infrastructure

- The Hardy Drive streetscape project was completed in 2015 after engaging the local community.
- Tempe is in the process of planning for and developing the Highline Canal Multi-Use Path that will run from Chandler to South Tempe and connect with the Town of Guadalupe, which could easily be connected to the Western Canal Path.
Recommendations

1. Explore the potential for activating the industrial park between Broadway and Southern roads on Hardy Drive
   a. Activate warehouse space for pop-up galleries, exhibitions, or murals
   b. May also serve as hot spot for coffee shops, bars, or tech start ups

Exemplars:

- Tucson Warehouse District
- Phoenix Warehouse District
Recommendations

2. Recognize the bicycle corridor as an opportunity to plant shade trees and further expand the City of Tempe’s Urban Forestry Master Plan to 25% canopy coverage by 2040.

Exemplars:
Recommendations

3. Create a city-sponsored self-guided “art tour” approach for a bike tour of the arts corridor.
   
a. Name it and build out map, signage, digital assets, and app with push notifications
   b. Create a single or multi-day festival utilizing the arts corridor

Exemplars:
Recommendations

4. Connect with neighboring Town of Guadalupe
   
   a. Primarily Hispanic (44%) and Pascua Yaqui Native American (31%) community with a median household income of $29,375 and a poverty rating of 24.1%
   
   b. Proposed arts corridor would activate space in some of the lowest income neighborhoods in Tempe

   “You can’t have a prosperous neighborhood where people can engage in social interaction and converse if they have to drive everywhere. If you can accommodate biking and walking, you’re much more likely to have social interaction, social equity, and a high performing real estate market — it all comes together. If you have a walkable environment, people that aren’t wealthy and those who are actually end up in the same proximity. They interact, and it strengthens the culture, the economy, and the outcomes that you get.”
   
   - John Norquist
Conclusion

As the Knight Foundation’s 2010 “Soul of the Community” report reminds us, community attachment has a direct correlation to GDP growth, and attached communities are those that are open, social, and beautiful—all aspects that can be identified with the arts-focused corridor.