

Superstition Vistas

An initiative to create a model for sustainable desert communities is in the works for the Superstition Vistas, 275 square miles of state trust land in the path of metro Phoenix growth. A committee of public and private entities, including the Sonoran Institute-Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Joint Venture, is driving a visioning and planning process for the area to demonstrate the principles and benefits of smart growth.

Challenge and Opportunity

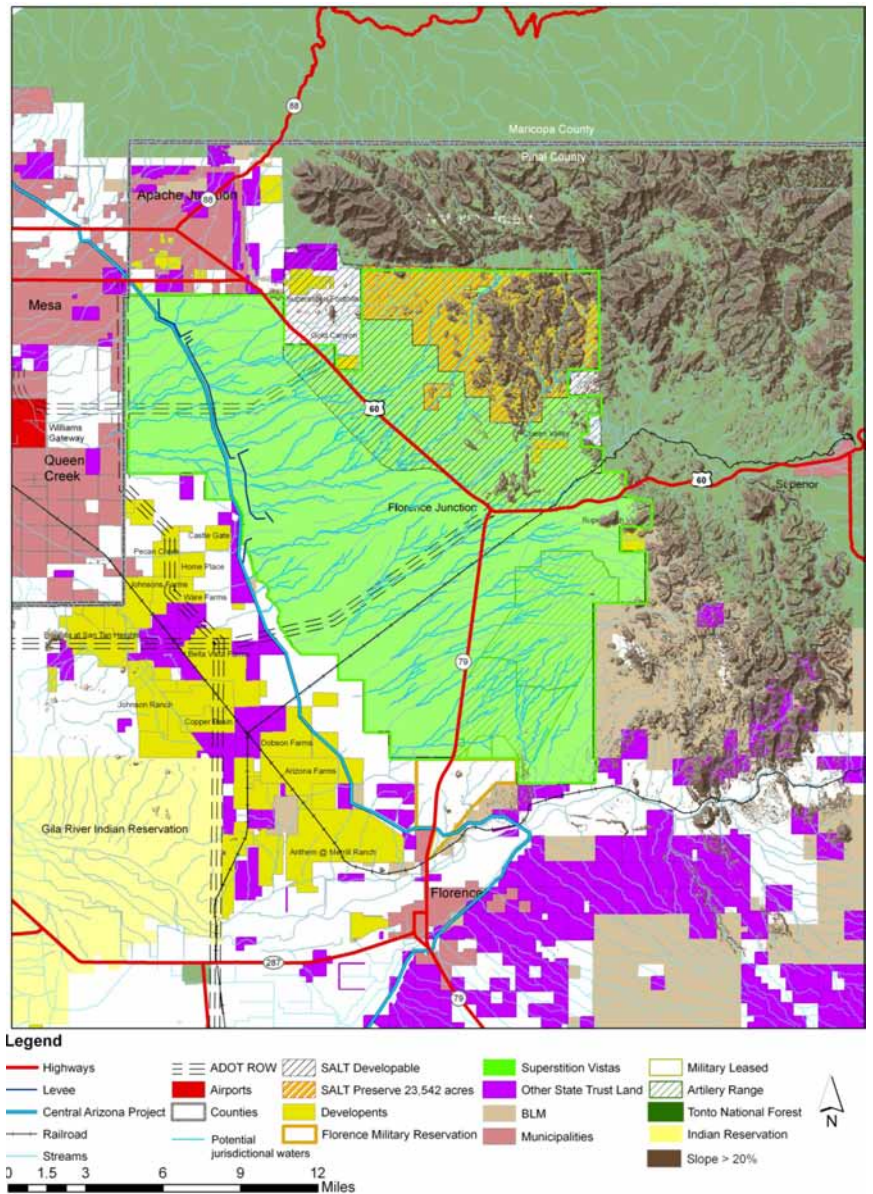
Superstition Vistas may be the singular most significant planning opportunity in the United States. It is strategically located at the edge of the Phoenix metropolitan area, one of the fastest growing metro areas in the country, and the 275 square mile parcel of state trust land is under the sole ownership of the State of Arizona.

Superstition Vistas will someday be home to many Arizonans. The Sonoran Institute-Lincoln Institute of Land Policy is working toward a vision for the area with a rich array of discrete and sustainable neighborhoods, villages, towns and urban centers — interwoven with networks of parks, open spaces, and civic and education centers — connected by integrated, multi-modal transportation systems.

Such development of Superstition Vistas will demonstrate wise land use that also maximizes the benefit to the school children of Arizona, which is the goal of state trust lands.

The vision is tied to the growing “mega-region” of Phoenix and Tucson. Superstition Vistas has the potential to become a distinctive, yet integrated, part of the growing metropolitan area that contributes to global competitiveness, rather than a dormitory for workers who face long commutes to earn livable wages and secure affordable housing.

By creating a fully integrated and overarching vision that openly explores and successfully balances these and many other considerations, Superstition Vistas can become an example of true sustainability — a place that not only satisfies the best hopes and aspirations of future Arizonans but also sets a standard worthy of worldwide consideration and emulation.





Planning Superstition Vistas

Similarities to Regional Visioning and Planning

- Superstition Vistas, like any region, has numerous stakeholders, including local, regional, and state entities, who must eventually grant approvals for development. This requires effectively building consensus among the diverse stakeholders.
- Transportation, water and other infrastructure for Superstition Vistas could place significant burdens on surrounding jurisdictions or, conversely, could improve regional growth patterns and lower overall regional infrastructure costs. Superstition Vistas must be fully analyzed within the regional context or it will be difficult, if not impossible, to entitle.
- This project's 50-year time frame necessitates flexibility to adjust to changing trends and circumstances for Superstition Vistas that is more analogous to government than private planning. Therefore, the creation of Superstition Vistas requires a level of trust and partnership between the private and public sectors that can best be sustained through an ongoing public dialogue similar to regional visioning.
- Like a region, Superstition Vistas is of sufficient size and longevity to create major new cities and urban centers. Planning for this scale is very different from creating even the largest master planned communities.

Similarities to Large-Scale Master Planned Communities

- Master planned communities usually have one owner, or a handful of owners, that has strong feelings and specific objectives concerning how the property will be developed. Similarly, Superstition Vistas also has one owner —the State of Arizona — acting in a fiduciary capacity.
- Regional plans sometimes do not carefully consider either the financial feasibility of the plan or the profitability impact on specific parcels, while the developers of large-scale master planned communities focus on financial feasibility and must produce a reasonable return. The owner of Superstition Vistas must also carefully evaluate the financial feasibility of any plan and its profitability over a long, uncertain time horizon.
- Creating a successful mega-development requires designing a wide range of high-quality “places” for people to live, learn, work and play. If Superstition Vistas is successful, it will include a number of successful master planned communities, in addition to major urban, industrial and activity centers.

Making the Vision a Reality

Superstition Vista stakeholders, including the Sonoran Institute/Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Joint Venture, have established a goal of raising \$2 million to support a regional visioning and scenario planning effort. We are approaching this goal and have contracted with Robert Grow Consulting, which has assembled a world-class regional planning team including John Fregonase & Associates, Robert Charles Lessor, Harris Interactive and EDAW.

Achieving an ambitious, forward-thinking vision for the Superstition Vistas can fulfill multiple goals:

1. As humankind seeks to lessen its footprint on the Earth, Superstition Vistas can demonstrate development that protects and conserves water, air, land and energy resources for future generations.
2. With collaboration and good planning, Superstition Vistas has the potential to become a central hub of the Sun Corridor, a booming, economically powerful “megapolitan” area that competes successfully on the 21st-century world stage.
3. At the same time, this land can fulfill its mission to contribute to better education for Arizona’s school children.



Learn more at trustland.org, sonoran.org, or by contacting project manager Susan Culp at the Sonoran Institute’s Phoenix office: sculp@sonoran.org or 602.393.4310

