

## Commercial Rainwater Harvesting White Paper

### *Background*

Council Member Rodney Glassman sent a memorandum on December 3, 2007 titled, "Setting the Bar for Tucson's Future Development." In this memo, CM Glassman mainly focuses on steps the City of Tucson should take to become more energy efficient and states the following, "We must be sensitive to the fact that there is a crisis in the homebuilding industry, as the market continues to readjust. Yet, we must also acknowledge that ensuring a sustainable water supply and decreasing our community's dependence on non-renewable energy are issues that must be addressed today. While I do not feel that our City Council should mandate the installation of expensive systems that would cost Tucsonans thousands of dollars to install, we do have a responsibility to demand that the construction of today be plumbed to facilitate the green-living of tomorrow."

### *Issue at Hand*

A stakeholders group was assembled soon after Council Member Glassman sent his memorandum and it included representatives from the Arizona Builder's Alliance, SAHBA, TAR, Sonoran Institute, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and rainwater harvesting advocates. The group met a number of times since February to discuss rainwater harvesting systems, research the University of Arizona has completed on this subject and statistics City staff has compiled to detail what level of rainwater harvesting is needed on a site based on 100%, 75% and 50% landscaping requirements. Additionally, in August, a Technical Advisory Group was assembled, mainly made up of individuals who have technical experience in developing projects and harvesting rainwater, to construct the Development Standards under which this ordinance will be governed by. At the stakeholder's September 18 meeting, City Staff presented information indicating that the threshold for the need for a cistern is 60%. In other words, if the percentage at which a developer must harvest to maintain their landscaping is above 60%, there is no way that could be done without the construction of a cistern. Since Council Member Glassman has mentioned that he wants multiple options to be available to developers, it was recommended that the percentage be dropped to 50%. The stakeholders group voted 8-4 in favor of lowering the percentage to 50%. The Mayor and Council plan to vote on this item at their October 14 Regular Meeting.

### *Recommendation*

It is recommended that the Board of Directors support the recommendation made by the Stakeholders Group and encourage the City Council to construct a Development Standard that provides a developer of a commercial project a number of options in order to meet the 50% rainwater harvesting requirement.