



Strategic Plan
FY 2025-27:
Returning to Our Roots

Tohono Chul Park



Historic Photo of Wack House

FY 2024 Tohono Chul Board of Directors:

Sasha Case, President
Charlotte Cordes, Vice President
Penny Crutchfield, Treasurer
Stephan Donovan
Koren Manning
Jamie Maslyn Larson, Executive Director
Jacquelyne Mingle, Secretary
Lesli Pintor
Penny Pointer
Rodney Pond
Michael Racy
Andy Swarthout

FY 2024 Tohono Chul Senior Leadership:

Jamie Maslyn Larson, Executive Director
Ethan Cox, Director of Strategic Growth
Nicollette Daly, Director of Finance
James Schaub, Director of Arts & Engagement
Rae Vassar, Director of Operations
Linda Wolfe, Director of Retail

From our Board President

I am delighted to present our strategic plan, a robust blueprint designed to navigate our organization towards a future of sustainable growth with deep ties to the Wilsons' vision. As the President of the Board, I invite you to delve into this strategic plan with curiosity and optimism.

This strategic plan is the product of extensive collaboration among my fellow dedicated board members and senior staff. It articulates our crystal-clear vision of the future and the concrete, actionable steps we will undertake to realize it. It reflects our collective unwavering commitment to excellence.

Your enduring support and dedication to the Wilsons' vision is truly invaluable. Together, we will co-author the next chapter of Tohono Chul's remarkable story.



Sasha Case
Board President

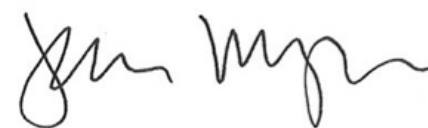
From our Executive Director

My favorite quote from the Wilsons is from the Park's dedication on April 19, 1985: "We wanted to keep something natural in the middle of all the development so that people could come easily for a few hours and get out of the traffic and learn something at the same time." Inspired by these humble origins and with new leadership in place at Tohono Chul, we have reignited our commitment to nurture our gardens and our community. To achieve our mission, our team needs a roadmap to align with and execute the priorities of the park. This strategic plan is the first step towards our evolution.

Key to this plan is a philosophy that Tohono Chul—its staff, the campus, our community—can achieve more when we work as one towards a common vision. We can achieve horticultural excellence and accessible engagement. We can advance technology and stellar guest experience. We can protect serenity and provide a sense of belonging for visitors of all ages, abilities, and income. How do we do this? We work differently. That is what this plan is about.

Albert Einstein once said, "Nothing happens until something moves." This plan is the first step in a forward motion to guide Tohono Chul's growth for many years to come.

Let's enjoy this journey together!



Jamie Maslyn Larson
Executive Director

Embracing the Wilsons' Vision

At the core of Tohono Chul's purpose is a commitment to stewardship. Our new strategic plan embodies this commitment by honoring the legacy of our founders, Richard and Jean Wilson, and their vision of Tohono Chul as a "desert corner" dedicated to community and conservation.

"We dedicate this place to those who come here, who, we hope, will not only admire and find comfort in the natural beauty of the area, but will achieve greater appreciation of the ways of conserving all our precious desert region and obtain a greater understanding of the people native to these areas"
— Richard & Jean Wilson

The story of Tohono Chul began in 1966, when the Wilsons began piecing together desert patches that would form its core—ultimately becoming 49 acres. Their commitment to preserving natural lands culminated in Tohono Chul's formal opening in 1985, offering a refuge for people to connect with the Sonoran Desert and with one another.

In the 40 years since its dedication, Pima County and the area around Tohono Chul have grown significantly, fragmenting landscapes vital to ecosystem function. Climate change and a prolonged 20+ year drought have intensified heat and aridity, severely impacting plant and animal species and increasing fire risks. As our native plants struggle, invasive species spread aggressively, disrupting habitats. Against this backdrop, the Wilsons' vision to protect this land in an urban center seems prescient.

At the same time, Tohono Chul's visitor experience has also evolved since its founding—from an informal "park" with trails to a vibrant destination with designed gardens, gift shops, galleries, a restaurant, and a range of educational and community events. Today, Tohono Chul has an opportunity to broaden and diversify the cadre of desert stewards so that we meet the Wilsons objective for people to admire, appreciate and learn at our desert oasis.

This strategic plan, developed with Tohono Chul's board and senior staff through months of workshops and conversations, reflects our origins around stewardship. Internally, it focuses on building an efficient and effective organizational culture that responsibly manages our physical, human, and financial resources. Externally, it aims to cultivate a community united by love and respect for the land and its inhabitants. Nurtured at Tohono Chul, we seek to inspire generations of caretakers dedicated to preserving the Sonoran Desert for years to come.

Our strategic plan is a guiding light and a lasting tribute to the Wilsons' legacy of conservation, community, and reverence for our desert home.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats

By recognizing Tohono Chul's strengths and understanding its challenges, we can uncover unique opportunities for growth and innovation – gateways to a bright future.



Strengths

- **Unique Assets:** Our gardens, galleries, shops, and restaurant, offer an immersive Sonoran Desert experience nearly 365 days/year.
- **Community Reputation:** Beloved regionally, our brand is primed for broader market reach.
- **Diversifying Audiences:** Recent initiatives, like the children's museum, show that targeted programming attracts diverse guests.
- **Ideal Location:** Easily accessible to Tucson residents, Tohono Chul sits at a known crossroads.



Weaknesses

- **Low Awareness:** Despite recent growth, many in Greater Tucson remain unaware of Tohono Chul, resulting in low attendance.
- **Uniform Audience:** Our visitors don't yet reflect Tucson's cultural, economic, and ethnic diversity, limiting our reach within the broader community.
- **Financial Literacy:** Long-term financial planning needs to be put in place for sustainable growth, asset management, and financial resiliency.



Opportunities

- **Organizational Renewal:** New, experienced leadership has set the stage for sustainable growth.
- **Valued Public Spaces:** During and since COVID, many people developed a deeper appreciation for connecting with nature.
- **Partnerships:** Allied institutions and businesses can help broaden our reach to wider audiences.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Rising interest in nature's impact on health aligns with our mission and presents new opportunities.



Threats

- **Climate Change:** Extreme heat, drought, and other environmental challenges in Southern Arizona affect plant health, garden upkeep, and visitor experience.
- **Economic Uncertainty:** Economic downturns may reduce discretionary spending on leisure, impacting visitor numbers and donations.
- **Shift to Screens:** Digital and social media can reduce wonder for nature and increase disaffection and isolation, especially with youth.



Photography by Bob Bingham

Mission | Vision | Values

Our mission defines our fundamental, unique purpose and describes why we exist for this moment. Our vision outlines the impact we intend to achieve in the future. Our values are our foundational principles, the moral and ethical guideposts that shape our journey. Together, these elements form a cohesive framework upon which we return to our roots and form Tohono Chul's legacy.

Mission

We are a community oasis where reverence for the cultural and natural ecology of the Sonoran Desert region inspires responsible stewardship so that future generations may thrive.

Vision

We envision a future where arid and semi-arid regions, notably our beloved Sonoran Desert, thrive culturally and ecologically. Visitors to Tohono Chul will not only immerse themselves in the desert's captivating beauty but also leave inspired to nurture these landscapes beyond our garden walls.

We envision a Tohono Chul that is:

- **An ecological leader:** Championing actionable, nature-based solutions to the core environmental challenges facing arid lands.
- **An immersive environment:** Celebrating the wonders of the Sonoran Desert.
- **A commons:** Integral to the community, meaningfully engaging with the diverse histories and cultures of the region.

Values

- **Stewardship:** We strive to be good ancestors, ensuring Tohono Chul remains beautiful and vibrant. We prioritize forethought and invest in resources and tools necessary for success.
- **Belonging:** We commit to being an inclusive and accessible environment that welcomes and benefits all people. Tohono Chul is a place to learn, grow, and cultivate community.
- **Integrity:** We endeavor to act with honesty, fairness, and decency in our actions and words. We honor our commitments and the spirit of this place.

Key Initiatives at a Glance

Tohono Chul has identified three **key initiatives** – broad goals to advance our mission and vision during this strategic planning period. These initiatives are supported by **strategies**, which are broad approaches or methods to achieve our long-term goals. Each strategy is implemented through **tactics**—specific, shorter-term actions that are executed within a set timeframe.

CAMPUS

Craft plans to facilitate our physical transformation

The experience, restoration, and care for our campus and gardens is a priority for Tohono Chul. Initiatives focus on developing our gardens team, revitalizing gardens, expanding our plant collections, and creating a visionary master plan.

Strategies

- Develop gardens team
- Conduct mission-based immediate upgrades
- Create a master plan
- Curate and manage plant collection

Sample Tactics

- Create the organization’s first operations and maintenance plan, establishing clear care standards and identifying necessary skills for the team.

COMMUNITY

Reflect the rich diversity of the region

While Tohono Chul is deeply loved by a devoted following, we will broaden our audience to metropolitan Tucson and its diverse communities. We will foster new partnerships and relationships, customize programs for key target audiences, and improve accessibility to all Tucsonans.

Strategies

- Offer relevant programs tailored to the interests of key target audiences
- Build relationships in the broader community

- Be available when working Tucsonans can and want to be here
- Become an accessible organization

Sample Tactics

- Redefine engagement programs to better connect with new audiences, including families and children, multi-generational Hispanic households, and environmentally curious individuals.
- Explore the value of membership for moderate-income individuals, building on the success of Museums for All.
- Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to design community-specific programming that meets the interests and needs of underrepresented groups.

CULTURE

Foster a thriving organizational culture

To achieve our strategic goals, we will create a supportive, diverse and inclusive environment where staff, volunteers and board members feel valued, motivated and engaged. Our initiatives will focus on collaboration, communication, staff empowerment, and creating a collective understanding and commitment to Tohono Chul’s mission and values.

Strategies

- Increase organizational efficacy
- Create a culture of trust and value
- Develop and implement safety and security plan
- Develop and implement inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility measures (IDEA)

Sample Tactics

- Develop and implement an annual “summer school” training program to support employee education and growth.
- Begin safety and security improvements starting with a risk assessment to prioritize actions and develop policies.
- Create tools to assess public program and event costs, enabling a stronger focus on initiatives with optimal financial and mission impact.

Implementing the Strategic Plan

This strategic plan has been designed to bring about meaningful change. It invites every visitor, partner, donor, volunteer, and staff member to join us in advancing the Wilsons' vision.

With this in mind, the essence of implementing the strategic plan lies in both envisioning our purpose and embracing a flexible mindset to evaluate and adapt to changing conditions. As we move forward, Tohono Chul board and staff leadership will convene annually to refine and modify the plan based on these core actions:

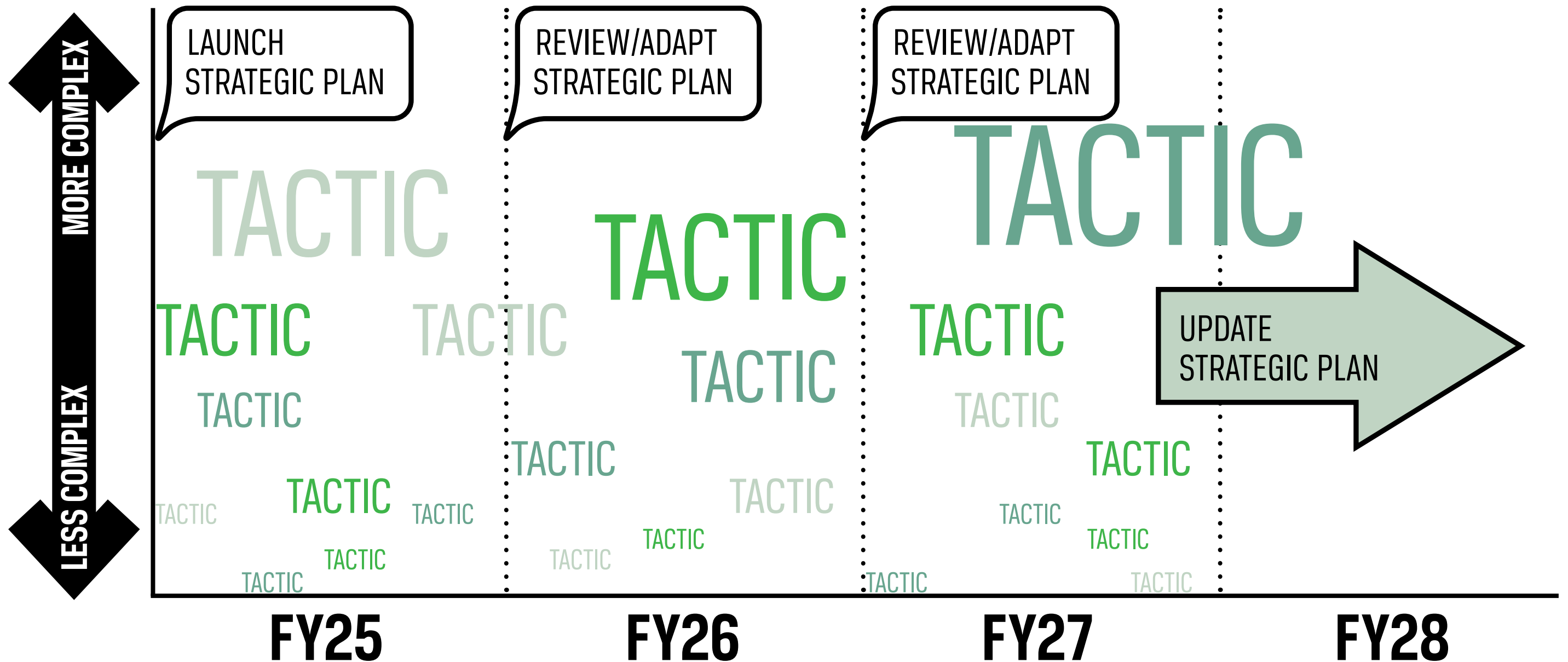
- **Grow awareness in the community:** Continue to share the plan and its purpose to foster alignment, broaden awareness and celebrate achievement.

- **Allocate resources:** Ensure that the team, budgets, and tools are in place to support implementation.

- **Develop a timeline and monitor progress:** Establish milestones and set up performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and tactics.

- **Adjust as needed:** Address obstacles and maintain flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

This strategic plan challenges us to deepen our connection to the land and to one another, to embrace the forces acting upon us, and to champion the Sonoran Desert's cultural and ecological heritage. Together, we will honor our roots while shaping a new legacy that will flourish for the generations who follow.





Sami's Courtyard, 2024



Tohono  Chul
GARDENS • GALLERIES • BISTRO

7366 North Paseo del Norte
Tucson, AZ 85704
phone: (520) 742-6455 | fax: (520) 797-1213