

## Zoning change will allow Tucson mental health facility to expand

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Sonora Behavioral Health Hospital is set to build a 48-bed expansion east of itself after the Pima County Supervisors on Monday approved rezoning, 60 Corona Road Tucson, Ariz., Aug. 24, 2024.

Grace Trejo

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**A** zoning change will allow a behavioral healthcare provider on Tucson's northwest side to expand.

Rezoning of the roughly five acres Sonora Behavioral Health Hospital sits on – near North La Cholla Boulevard and West Orange Grove Road – and the nearly five acres of vacant land to the east of it will allow for a 21,000 square-foot, 48-bed expansion while leaving a portion of the vacant land untouched to protect an existing wash and floodplain, according to **project documents**.

The expansion is needed due to the increased local demand for inpatient behavioral services. According to the project documents, the hospital turned away 2,042 people over several months due to a lack of available beds.

The demand isn't just a local issue. According to the expansion documents provided to supervisors, in 2023, "Arizona ranked 47th of the 50 states for access to behavioral health care, and 63.5% of Arizonans with mental illness were not able to receive the treatment they needed."

The expansion approved last Monday "is a significant contribution to local mental health services," documents on the project say.

The hospital, at 6050 N. Corona Rd., is in the Northwest Medical Center complex and is operated by Acadia Healthcare Company.

Built in 2000 and expanded in 2016, the hospital is currently a 140-bed "acute inpatient psychiatric hospital that caters to individuals who are working towards recovering from behavioral health conditions and chemical dependency issues," the packet says. It provides short-term mental health and substance abuse treatment for children and adults.

Some neighbors east of the hospital said during a July zoning hearing that they were concerned about the expansion affecting the floodplain and a wash. The rezoning project documents says more than two-thirds of the vacant parcel has been set aside as open space, preserving the wash and floodplain, and "providing significant natural buffers to the existing residential uses to the east."

Supervisor Rex Scott, whose district includes the hospital, said ahead of the board's approval, that the including protection of the wash in the expansion plan was a big reason why it moved forward.

"When this matter came before the planning and zoning commission, it gained a 10-0 vote in support," Scott said. "They are doing important work on behalf of a segment of our population that absolutely needs the services they provide."

**By Charles Borla**  
Reporter