CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Morrison Ranch

Vision Statement

Provide the citizens of Gilbert and the development community with guidelines and assistance to continue to develop Gilbert emphasizing its heritage; yet open to innovative design opportunities that result in projects that are diverse and complementary, promoting the stewardship of the community's resources.

Rome Towers

The Community Design Element of the Gilbert General Plan provides for the manner in which projects are designed and developed within the community. The Community Design Element is presented in the following sections:

- Existing Conditions
- Issues
- Goals and Policies
- Planning Guidelines
- Implementation Strategies

The Community Design Element establishes Town policy for the various aspects that affect the quality of development in the community. It is concerned with the physical development of public and private lands, their appearance and function. Policies established in this Element lead to procedures, guidelines, standards and ordinances to manage the growth of the Town. The Community Design Element is a major factor in the achievement of the Town's vision, including the establishment of a community image distinct from those of neighboring communities. The Town recognizes that good community design improves the overall quality of life, makes the Town more desirable for business development, enhances property values and can set Gilbert apart from other communities. This Element addresses design issues pertinent to the entire town. Those parts of the community that have special or unique design issues are discussed in more detail in the Character Areas Element.

6.1 Existing Conditions

For a number of years the Town has exercised control over the form and quality of new development. Through annual surveys our residents indicate that the design of the overall community is attractive and well planned, meeting the aesthetic standards set by the Town. Because of the rapid residential and commercial growth, it is important for the Town to manage the design of its neighborhoods, commercial areas and public facilities.

Gilbert Neighborhood

6.2 Issues

Current and potential issues expected to be of concern over the next twenty (20) years include:

- Multi Modal street design, including medians, tree-lined streets, lighting and pedestrian walkways
- Landscaping
- Signage
- Pedestrian scale open spaces in commercial developments
- Neighborhood design
- Commercial/Residential interface
- Architecture
- Parking lot appearance/integration
- Lighting design
- Utility infrastructure
- Drainage and storm water management, including retention and detention basins
- The irrigation canal system
- Agricultural heritage and character
- Town gateways
- Public art
- Character Areas
- Vertical development
- Sustainability

6.3 Goals and Policies

Goal 1.0
Promote quality design for new development.

> **Policy 1.1** New developments should strive to achieve highly articulated architecture (composition of individual pieces with relationships to one another), efficient site design, sustainable landscaping (water conserving/heat island reduction/cost effective), creative signage and energy efficient lighting.

> **Policy 1.2** Build or restore Town facilities to exceed Town standards.

> **Policy 1.3** Encourage residential/non-residential land use transitions that minimize negative impacts of commercial and industrial uses on adjacent residential uses.

Goal 2.0
Develop a quality suburban environment while preserving the rural feel and agricultural heritage of the community at appropriate locations.

> **Policy 2.1** Preserve key elements of the Town's agricultural heritage, such as the canals, strategic open spaces and historically significant sites and structures.

> **Policy 2.2** Respect the character of land use areas designated for large lot development that accommodates a semi-rural lifestyle through preserving view corridors, dark sky (reduction of outdoor light pollution) and architecture.

> **Policy 2.3** Continue the trail system that accommodates equestrian mobility where appropriate, as well as pedestrian and cycling activities to connect to regional systems.

Policy 2.4 In the Santan Character Area, incorporate agricultural design elements (entry features, open fences, streetscape) in the land planning of new development, where appropriate.

Policy 2.5 Maintain an open feel in new developments by strategically placing open space for visual relief, active uses, buffering and entry accents.

Policy 2.6 Encourage use of turf only in high visibility and high use areas, consistent with the Town's water conservation goals.

Policy 2.7 Encourage the use of Xeriscape principles in the design of new or revitalized projects that provide lush and diverse plant materials appropriate for this region. Avoid large expanses of gravel and turf as an alternative for ground covers.

Goal 3.0
Encourage developers and builders to provide diverse residential neighborhood designs that provide a sense of place, high level of architectural articulation (how the parts of the house elevation fit into the whole) and are built utilizing sustainable (energy efficient/environmental friendly/cost effective) design and environmentally responsible construction practices.

Policy 3.1 Encourage developers to establish neighborhood identity by developing unique entry features and design themes for each project.

Policy 3.2 Encourage builders to provide diverse house designs in new and infill developments by providing distinct house plans with elevation options that offer architectural articulation and thematic features on all sides of the houses.

Policy 3.3 Encourage use of the most energy efficient systems on doors and windows and employ energy efficient methods for cooling/heating and water systems on new and retrofitted houses in all new and remodeling construction projects.

Policy 3.4 Encourage use of traffic calming devices and techniques in designing neighborhoods to discourage cut-through traffic, slow vehicle speeds and create streets that are comfortable to navigate for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.

Policy 3.5 Encourage developers to avoid the predominance of garages by providing mitigation measures such as: placing garages considerably recessed from the front plane of the house, designing side entry or tandem garages or integrating their design into the architectural style of the house.

Policy 3.6 Encourage design of common areas in each neighborhood that recognizes open space, passive and active, as a necessity providing recreation for children, youth and adults and designating areas for off-street parking adjacent to active areas.

Policy 3.7 If gated communities are proposed in a master plan or infill project, ensure the natural flow of traffic from arterial and collector roads is uninterrupted and the community remains accessible to pedestrian traffic; and that the private streets be constructed to the same quality level as public streets.

Policy 3.8 Allow gated neighborhoods in infill parcels on a limited basis.

Goal 4.0
Encourage the use of sustainable (energy efficient/environmental friendly/cost effective) practices in the land planning, building design and redevelopment of all projects.

Policy 4.1 Adopt policies and standards that encourage the design and development or redevelopment of sustainable residential neighborhoods, industrial and commercial projects.

Policy 4.2 Consider adopting a nationally recognized green building rating system standard and require all new Town funded projects (site development, infrastructure and buildings) to meet those standards. Chapter 7 – Environmental Planning should be referenced for additional Green Building Goals and Policies.

Policy 4.3 Develop and adopt policies and approval processes that provide incentives to land developers and businesses that meet green building standards adopted by the Town.

Policy 4.4 Identify and provide measures to revitalize underperforming areas of Town (such as vacant, unfinished and poorly maintained projects). Promote adaptation and reuse of vacant structures and parking areas to become vibrant mixed-activity developments and transportation opportunities.

Goal 5.0
Encourage developers to design multi-family projects, either stand alone or part of a larger development to provide a comfortable and unified environment and to be an aesthetic enhancement to adjacent developments.

Policy 5.1 Encourage multi-family projects to provide variety in orientation and articulation (roof line variation, massing changes, details, colors and materials application) of individual buildings as well as the project's overall

layout. Encourage the architecture of accessory structures (club house, garages, maintenance building, etc.) to be integrated with the design of the main buildings.

Policy 5.2 Encourage design that provides a combination of active and passive open spaces in each cluster of buildings.

Policy 5.3 Encourage projects to protect the privacy of adjacent single family residential uses through effective placement of landscape buffers, screening, shielded light fixtures and other mitigation measures.

Goal 6.0
Encourage developers to design attractive and functional retail and service facilities that serve the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.

Policy 6.1 Encourage use of integrated architectural and landscape design themes for all commercial uses.

Policy 6.2 Encourage developers to provide safe and efficient access to commercial uses by pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles and to design access for disabled persons to minimize crossing of vehicular drives.

Policy 6.3 Encourage service facilities to be screened from view in a well integrated manner such as a combination of architectural walls softened with vegetation that result in a visually pleasing design.

Policy 6.4 Encourage lighting plans to be designed using sustainable (energy efficient/cost effective) principles that not only enhance the design of the project but provide a safe level of illumination, without spilling glare onto adjacent uses or public rights-of-ways.

Policy 6.5 Encourage dark sky preservation and reduction of light pollution associated with rapid growth of commercial development.

Policy 6.6 Encourage use of comprehensive and master sign programs for all commercial developments to address design, graphics, installation and illumination for all types of signs as permitted by the sign code.

Policy 6.7 Encourage the reduction of the Heat Island Effect (HIE) through design tools such as: extensively landscaping parking areas, using cool roofs, cool pavements and green roofs and integrating the design of parking shade structures and garages with the design of the principal structures on the site.

Policy 6.8 Encourage developers to de-emphasize the view of parking lots from public streets by placing buildings toward the front of the site and reducing the expanse of parking fields by breaking fields into smaller clusters. Discourage the siting of gas pumps, drive-through windows or similar uses along street frontages.

Policy 6.9 Encourage developers to include in the design of shopping centers and other major commercial projects and power centers, usable pedestrian gathering areas with enhanced walkways that connect buildings in the same development and are accessible to public transportation.

Policy 6.10 Encourage developers of commercial projects to designate visible areas to display public art and design seating areas with enhanced paving, sheltered with shade structures and vegetation, pedestrian lighting and other place making features.

Policy 6.11 Encourage enhancement of building mass (basic exterior form) by balancing height, roof lines, facades and rhythm of design elements.

Goal 7.0
Encourage developers to design neighborhood retail and office uses to respect residential scale and character.

Policy 7.1   Encourage use of scale, style and color schemes that are appropriate to the context of residential developments in the surroundings.

Policy 7.2 Encourage use of sign programs that are complementary with the architecture and scale of the retail/office uses.

Policy 7.3 Encourage lighting design that assures safety and sustainability.

Goal 8.0
Encourage developers to design and build attractive employment and industrial projects.

Policy 8.1 Encourage maximum use of landscaping to buffer employment uses from adjacent non-employment uses, identify prominent areas for the display of public art and provide adequate amenity areas for employees.

Policy 8.2 Encourage developers to orient service areas where large vehicles stage and may generate noisy or visually obtrusive activities away from neighborhoods and arterial street views.

Policy 8.3 Encourage design of industrial buildings to be functional; using innovative construction practices, quality materials and creative architecture to increase their aesthetic value.

Goal 9.0
Encourage a balance of aesthetic design principles with functional requirements.

Policy 9.1 Encourage utilities to maximize the use of existing corridors for the extension of future power and communications lines and locate others to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Policy 9.2 Discourage utilities from placing power lines over 69 kV or higher voltage adjacent or near areas designated as residential or open space uses.

Policy 9.3 Encourage substantial landscaping in public and private projects to maintain a heavily landscaped feel to the community while utilizing drought tolerant plant materials and reclaimed water to irrigate planted areas to reduce the consumption of potable water.

Policy 9.4 Encourage retention areas to be designed to serve as functional and aesthetically pleasing open spaces.

Policy 9.5 In all projects, encourage the use of lighting types (performance) and selection of fixtures that complement the architectural style of buildings and promote efficiency.

Policy 9.6 Encourage all projects to be designed to provide a visual effect consistent with the character and scale of the area. Encourage design of new buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings to articulate all facades and select materials that are durable and energy efficient.

Goal 10.0
Incorporate aesthetic considerations into the design of public streets.

Policy 10.1 Incorporate landscaped medians into the design of arterial streets.

Policy10.2 Separate sidewalks from curb lines by landscape areas where possible.

Policy 10.3 Design roadways and appropriate intersections and other public spaces to be pedestrian, equestrian and non-motorized vehicle friendly.

Policy 10.4 In the landscape design of public streets, incorporate natural elements such as rocks, grading variation and vegetation, where applicable.

Policy 10.5 Provide design enhancements such as public art at significant intersections and incorporate gateway design elements at entrances to the Town.

Gilbert Neighborhood

Shaded Resting Area

6.4 Planning Guidelines

A) Neighborhood Design

Land planning design for neighborhoods is encouraged to include gathering places with pedestrian opportunities to promote walking over driving and be accessible to future transit hubs.

Standard plans in residential subdivisions should offer well articulated elevations that may include full front porches, recessed, side oriented or detached garages, courtyards, architectural theme details and other house product design features that create interest on the streetscape and promote social interaction.

B) Retail/Office/Commercial Design

Retail and commercial projects typically are located with existing or planned residential neighborhoods. Through noise mitigation, lighting design, landscaping and sustainable construction practices, impacts of these uses on residential neighborhoods can be substantially reduced. Where applicable, commercial sites should be designed to provide pedestrian and vehicular connections to residential neighborhoods.

C) Industrial/Business Park Design

Communities desire a solid employment and tax base while wanting to ensure negative impacts do not impede on adjacent residential areas. Industrial uses are encouraged to be buffered by less intense commercial uses between the industrial uses and the residential areas. Well designed business parks can be adequate buffers when land planning, landscape buffers and architectural design are effectively utilized.

D) Roadway Design

The design of roadways creates an initial impression of the community to residents, visitors and businesses. Wider rights-of-way allow for medians and detached meandering sidewalks on major and minor arterials. Well designed landscaped medians (type of plant material/visibility) do more than control traffic. They create a friendlier visual environment and provide relief from the summer sun by helping to reduce the "Urban Heat Island" effect experienced in desert communities. Detached meandering sidewalks and landscaped medians also screen adjacent land uses from headlight glare, traffic noise and emissions with increased distance between roadways and land uses.

E) Lighting Design

Lighting for each type of land use is specific in its nature and requires creativity and sensitivity to other adjacent land uses. Encourage conservation of dark sky when designing lighting for projects. By using different types of illumination, specific environments can be created without compromising safety. Lighting design for all projects should be energy efficient, durable, adequate in quantity and quality, not produce light pollution or trespass and utilize energy efficient lighting fixtures.

F) Sign Design

Sign design which is architecturally compatible with the project may be accomplished through the use of comprehensive packages and master sign plans.

6.5 Implementation Strategies

The intent of the Community Design Element of the Gilbert General Plan is to establish Town policy for the various aspects that affect the quality of development in the community. It is concerned with the physical development of public and private lands, their appearance and function. The Community Design Element is a major factor in the achievement of the Town's vision, including the establishment of a community image distinct from those of neighboring communities.

Community Design	Responsible Entity	Complete By
1. Adopt a policy that requires a green building rating system standard that applies to all new municipal buildings and develop a strategic plan to implement green building rating systems for all new construction.	Development Services Planning Permitting and Plan Review	2013
2. Adopt urban planning principles and practices that advance, mixed use, walkable, bikeable and disabled accessible neighborhoods, commercial and industrial projects which coordinate land use and transportation with open space systems for recreation and ecological restoration.	Planning Traffic Engineering Parks and Recreation	2012
3. Adopt design standards for the development of mixed-use with a residential component Town wide.	Planning	2013
4. Amend the Land Development Code to address minimum requirements for the provision of public art and incentives for commercial, employment-generating office and business park uses as needed to implement the policies of this plan.	Planning	June 2012