



CHAPTER 9

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SanTan Village Mall

Vision Statement
Gilbert is “open to business” and attracts, retains, and grows innovative, entrepreneurial businesses of all sizes that provide high-wage job opportunities for Gilbert residents and enhance Gilbert’s outstanding quality of life.



Coffee Shop, Agritopia



Gilbert Heritage District



INTRODUCTION

With build-out a possibility during the twenty (20) year time period envisioned by this General Plan, the choices Gilbert makes now about its economic development future are of vital importance. Gilbert must not only build on its past successes; it must also be prepared to capitalize on expected growth in industries such as health sciences, clean and renewable energy, aerospace/aviation, high technology and other high-wage industries. In doing so, Gilbert expects to provide an environment that encourages and sustains innovation and entrepreneurship.

Gilbert residents, businesses, and the community will pro-actively work together with other key public, private and educational partners to create and capture these future opportunities. In addition, Gilbert's municipal services should be business-friendly and innovative in interactions with businesses of all sizes.

Finally, Gilbert's economic growth will be consistent with and support Gilbert's vision as a livable community characterized by the high quality of life that Gilbert residents enjoy.

This Economic Development Element provides goals and polices for economic development that support Gilbert's land use policies. It also provides policy support for Gilbert's Marketing Strategy and Five-Year Strategic Plan, which sets forth strategies and actions through which Gilbert will achieve its desired economic development. The Economic Development Element is presented in the following sections:

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



Cooper Point



San Tan Hyundai



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9.1 Existing Conditions

Gilbert's economic development efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Gilbert is recognized as a globally competitive community for business and industry. It is expected that Gilbert will continue to see significant positive opportunities over the next ten years and beyond. Key existing conditions that will affect such opportunities are:

- Gilbert has experienced a significant amount of residential development. Approximately 225,000 residents, living in a diverse array of housing types, now call Gilbert home, and another 100,000 residents are expected to move to Gilbert before build-out. Gilbert's employment base is over 85,000 workers (with nearly a million more workers within a 45-minute commute) and includes people with nearly every skill-set and educational level.
- Office, flex and industrial space has expanded significantly along the Loop 202 Santan Freeway and in the established business parks in Gilbert. Several large tracts of land are also planned for business park and employment uses in key areas of the community.
- Gilbert's commercial retail sector has grown with the opening of the Loop 202 Santan Freeway and includes a regional mall, several successful power centers, an auto mall and shopping opportunities to satisfy local and regional needs.
- Gilbert has identified major employment corridors and is focusing attention on attracting and retaining businesses in these key areas. The employment corridors are dynamic and will change over time with development and available land. A map of the current employment corridors can be obtained through the Business Development Division.
- Within the major employment corridors, Gilbert has identified five (5) areas of the community where vertical development is encouraged to maximize land use for employment and mixed-use development opportunities. Those areas are: 1) Banner Gateway Medical Center area (Higley/US 60); 2) Power Road Corridor (adjacent to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport); 3) Gateway District (Cooley

Station area); 4) Higley/Warner (Adjacent to Loop 202 Santan Freeway); 5) Loop 202 Santan Freeway area (Gilbert to Ray).

- Gilbert has many innovative, small and home-based businesses that provide diversity and entrepreneurial growth opportunities for the community. Many of these businesses add local charm and character to Gilbert and will likely have the potential of becoming medium or large businesses with investment support from public and private resources.
- Gilbert’s job-based economic development strategy currently targets industries with an emphasis in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skill-sets. In doing so, Gilbert is creating a “preferred environment” for life science and health-care industries to capitalize on its three growing medical campuses and the expected strength of such industries. Gilbert has identified economic development with a primary emphasis on bio-med/life sciences as a priority. In addition to the life sciences and health-care industries, Gilbert targets the following industries: Advanced Business Services, Aerospace/Aviation, Clean and Renewable Energy, High Technology, and Unique Retail, Entertainment and Hospitality opportunities.
- Gilbert coordinates regional business attraction activities with the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, the Arizona Commerce Authority, neighboring communities and other nearby assets such as Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport (of which Gilbert is part-owner), ASU Polytechnic, A.T. Still University and the Maricopa Community College System and supports partnerships and collaboration with these groups.
- Gilbert’s proximity to established and growing economic areas in Chandler (Chandler Airpark area) and Mesa (Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport area) allows Gilbert to capitalize on and complement successes in neighboring communities.
- Gilbert participates in state and regional forums on economic development issues as they affect the community and the overall business climate.
- Gilbert encourages tourism related activities and is working to promote recreational, sports marketing, shopping and hospitality opportunities.



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9.2 Issues

The following current and potential issues may impact economic development efforts in Gilbert over the next twenty years:

- Developing and achieving sustainable revenues that meet the expected demand for services within Gilbert, especially with the budget's current dependence on sales tax revenues (sales tax, state-shared revenues and construction sales tax).
- The preservation and/or expansion of land planned for employment uses.
- Mitigating impacts when locating employment uses adjacent to existing residential areas.
- The need for available sites that support the space and infrastructure requirements of businesses within Gilbert's targeted industries.
- The prevalence of economic development incentives and tools used by "competing" foreign and domestic municipalities to attract and retain businesses.
- Support for the diversity of housing types that are needed to house workers across the spectrum of employment opportunities expected within Gilbert.
- Ongoing development of Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and the surrounding area.
- Current and future plans for educational programs at the higher educational facilities in and around Gilbert, including ASU Polytechnic, Chandler-Gilbert Community Colleges and A.T. Still University, among others.
- Maintenance of community quality while continuing to enhance the business-friendly image of Gilbert.
- Supporting platforms for the entrepreneurial efforts of existing and future small businesses in Gilbert.

- The quality and availability of water, power and the other resources (and related infrastructure) needed to sustain economic growth in Gilbert.
- Increasing pressure on existing and planned local and regional transportation infrastructure.
- Industry shifts and governmental regulation in the areas of environmental sustainability and “green” building standards, including the conservation of resources and the promotion of alternative energy sources (especially solar energy).
- Growing interest in mixed-use developments and determining what constitutes a “mixed-use development.”



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Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport Terminal



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9.3 Goals and Policies

Goal 1.0

Attract high-wage jobs for Gilbert residents while diversifying the local economy through the attraction, retention and growth of targeted industries.

Policy 1.1 Develop and promote a preferred environment for businesses in targeted life sciences industry sectors.

Policy 1.2 Actively recruit, retain and grow businesses in other strategic industry clusters including: healthcare and life science (beyond those covered in Policy 1.1); aerospace, aviation and defense; high technology and creative media; clean and renewable energy; and corporate and professional headquarters/offices in advanced business services.

Policy 1.3 Ensure that attracting high-wage jobs for Gilbert residents is a key goal of economic development efforts and that appropriate quantitative measurements and tracking systems are utilized to monitor success.

Policy 1.4 Support the development of public and private resources that encourage collaboration, entrepreneurialism and the innovation of businesses of all sizes.

Policy 1.5 Encourage the protection and expansion of the land (and/or densities) designated in the General Plan for employment uses.

Policy 1.6 Encourage vertical development within the vertical development overlay areas to best leverage lands designated for employment uses.

Policy 1.7 Consider creating and setting guidelines for a new “Mixed-Use” land-use designation for the Zoning Code to facilitate the integration of employment, residential and retail developments.

Policy 1.8 Develop economic development incentives and tools to attract businesses in targeted industries.

Policy 1.9 Involve organizations representing business in efforts to attract, retain and grow businesses in Gilbert.

Goal 2.0

Maintain and broaden the mix of unique shopping, service, hospitality and recreational opportunities in Gilbert to attract and retain local and regional sales and bed tax revenue within the community.

Policy 2.1 Utilize Gilbert’s community brand and demographics to attract and retain unique retailer, entertainment and hospitality to diversify and capture local and regional consumer expenditures.

Policy 2.2 Implement a strategy to identify and attract hospitality (hotel/motel/etc.) and tourism opportunities that fit Gilbert’s facilities and create new bed tax revenues.

Policy 2.3 Identify and attract unique tourism demand generators that will bring visitors and new revenues into Gilbert.

Policy 2.4 Continue to invest in redevelopment projects of the Heritage District; procure and apply public grants and private capital to accomplish redevelopment plans.

Policy 2.5 Implement programs to encourage existing retail developments to remain “current” and competitive in order to avoid the need for costly revitalization efforts in the future.

Goal 3.0

Ensure a high-quality level of public services for residents, businesses and visitors.

Policy 3.1 Understand the demands of and provide orderly service and infrastructure expansion to employment areas.

Policy 3.2 Strive to continually improve service levels.

Policy 3.3 Develop and project a pro-active, business-friendly attitude in all Gilbert departments and divisions so that businesses receive a consistent “open to business” experience when approaching the community.

Policy 3.4 Improve Gilbert processes and procedures to speed approvals and reduce the costs to develop and operate a business (especially small businesses) in the community.

Goal 4.0

Use economic growth to improve the quality of life in Gilbert.

Policy 4.1 Implement the economic development five-year strategic plan focused on high-wage jobs, innovation and capital investment.

Policy 4.2 Encourage new development that is supportive of the environment in terms of air and water quality, noise or visual impacts.

Policy 4.3 Strive to ensure that new development is consistent with “green building” standards and the wise use of resources and takes advantage of alternative energy sources when possible, including solar energy.

Policy 4.4 Enhance and maintain the high quality of both public and private development in Gilbert.

Policy 4.5 Attract businesses that are committed to collaboration, innovation and entrepreneurship with high levels of capital investment that enhance Gilbert’s bonding capacities.

Policy 4.6 Attract, retain and grow unique retail businesses that serve a regional customer base as a means to increase Gilbert’s sales tax revenues.

Policy 4.7 Encourage local companies to develop and/or participate in public/private partnerships that provide educational and training opportunities to Gilbert residents.

Goal 5.0

Use Gilbert resources to achieve economic goals.

Policy 5.1 At the discretion of the Gilbert Town Council and with advice from municipal staff, consider utilizing development incentives and other public investments to attract targeted businesses to locate in Gilbert when a positive return on investment and public benefit can be demonstrated, or in rare cases, when needed to otherwise meet the clear and strategic economic development interests of the community.

Policy 5.2 Utilize Capital Improvement Projects (where possible) and other Gilbert funding sources to expand and maintain Gilbert utilities and other infrastructure to enable development of key employment corridors, retain existing businesses and speed the attraction and growth of targeted industries.

Policy 5.3 Use all reasonable efforts to work with neighboring communities and entities as well as relevant stakeholders to develop a comprehensive public transit system for the Gateway Area that may include bus routes and/or shuttle service between the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, ASU Polytechnic and the transit station site contemplated for Cooley Station, while also working on the provision of commuter and/or light rail service along the Union Pacific right-of-way to Phoenix and Tucson.

Goal 6.0

Participate in economic development efforts with neighboring communities, other political jurisdictions, educational providers and private sector partners.

Policy 6.1 Participate as a member of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) and work with other state, regional, local and tribal organizations (public and private) to attract, grow and retain businesses in Gilbert.

Policy 6.2 Continue as an owner and member of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

Policy 6.3 Continue to develop and strengthen Gilbert’s relationship with its neighboring communities: Chandler, the Gila River Indian Community, Queen Creek, Maricopa County, Mesa, and Pinal County.

Policy 6.4 Work with educational partners such as ASU Polytechnic, Chandler-Gilbert Community College, A.T. Still University, local school districts and other public or private educational institutions to prepare the workforce needed for Gilbert’s targeted industries, especially in the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Policy 6.5 Coordinate planning for commercial and industrial/office uses and gateway projects on Gilbert’s borders with neighboring jurisdictions.

Policy 6.6 Support significant employment development in areas near Gilbert, with emphasis on the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and Chandler Airpark areas.

Policy 6.7 Support orderly annexation of land within the Gilbert Municipal Planning Area.



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9.4 Implementation Strategies

Implementation of the Economic Development Element of the General Plan is the responsibility of a variety of departments and individuals. The following table identifies key activities, the responsible entity and the target date for completion.

Economic Development	Responsible Entity	Complete By
1. Create five-year strategic plan and annual action plan documents detailing specific activities that Gilbert will do to achieve the goals set forth in the economic development element of the General Plan.	Economic Development	5-year Strategic Plan by 6/30/2015 and 6/30/2020 with annual action plans each fiscal year
2. Review/Develop economic development policies and tools as they relate to targeted industries, redevelopment efforts, hospitality attraction and the preservation of existing retail centers.	Economic Development Town Manager’s Office	Ongoing
3. Cooperate with Gilbert’s economic development stakeholders in pursuit of business attraction activities.	All Departments	Ongoing
4. Actively participate in the development and management of Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.	Mayor’ Office Town Manager’s Office	Ongoing

5. Survey development customers to determine satisfaction with Gilbert processes and use results to drive improvements as needed.	Development Services	Ongoing
6. Review General Plan land use proposals and protect land designated for employment and retail uses.	Planning Business Development	Ongoing
7. Integrate economic development principles into all aspects of municipal government.	All Departments	Ongoing



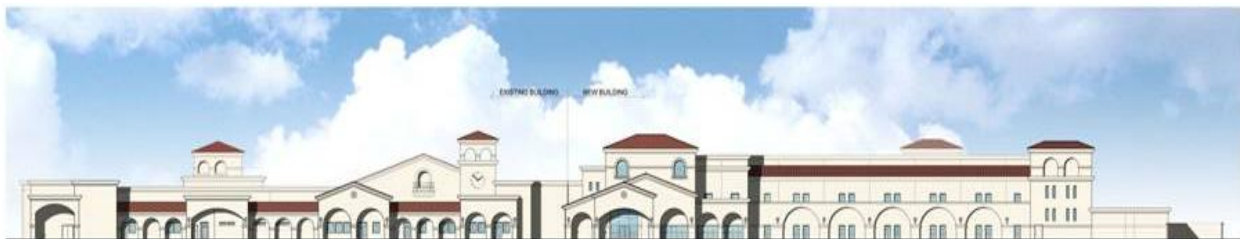
Mercy Gilbert Medical Center



Banner Gateway Medical Center



Banner MD Anderson
Cancer Center - rendering



Gilbert Hospital – proposed final build out