



THE TOWN OF GILBERT'S GENERAL PLAN

The Town of Gilbert's General Plan is the Community's vision and guide for future physical, economic and social development and is a long-range policy document covering a period of ten (10) to twenty (20) years. The General Plan contains visions, goals, policies and implementation strategies that guide decisions such as how the Town grows and looks in the future, areas appropriate for residential, employment and commercial uses, areas to reserve for parks and open space, the location of new roads and energy and resource conservation and sustainability. The General Plan seeks to assure that decisions are consistent with the Community's Vision.

In summary, the Plan outlines community goals, provides a decision-making guide and fulfills State legal requirements. Over time, many specific decisions will be made by Boards, Commissions and the Town Council to carry out this Vision.

Process

The Town's existing General Plan was approved by voters in 2001 and according to State law, the plan must be reapproved every ten (10) years. Even with the change in State law in 2010, allowing an extra five (5) years for renewal, the Town of Gilbert's General Plan update was well underway and will be submitted to the voters in May 2011 for approval.

Since the Town's General Plan is a reflection of the Vision and Goals of the Community, a transparent process was established to obtain as much public input as possible. Work began in August 2008 and by January 2009, a General Plan Steering Committee was formed. The Steering Committee consisted of Town Council members, Planning Commissioners, a Design Review Board member, a Redevelopment Commission member, an Economic Development Advisory Board member and a member-at-large. The purpose of the Steering Committee was to oversee the process of the update and ensure consistency within the document.

After identifying and grouping the Chapters of this General Plan into four categories, the Town solicited applications from Gilbert residents willing to serve on Sub-Committees dedicated to drafting the Chapters. A total of fifty-six (56) volunteers were chosen for the Sub-Committees. Chairs were selected to lead the Sub-Committees and the four (4) chairs also sat on the Steering Committee. Each member of the Steering Committee was also

appointed as a liaison to a Sub-Committee. Planning Division Staff provided support for the Steering Committee and Sub-Committees. The General Plan Steering Committee and all four Sub-Committees held a kick-off meeting in May 2009.

A total of fifteen (15) Steering Committee and fifty-one (51) Sub-Committee meetings were held between May 2009 and June 2010. During this time, each group heard from experts in the fields, reviewed the existing General Plan, reviewed other General Plans and created the new Chapters. All minutes and draft documents were placed on the Town's website after each meeting. Once drafted and approved by the Steering Committee, the Chapters were put on the Town's web page as one of several methods of soliciting public input.

In January 2010, the Steering Committee began holding open houses at various locations and attended events throughout the Town. The goal was to present the draft Chapters to the Citizens in order to gather public input. A total of ten (10) events and open houses were held. Handouts at the events included survey sheets that could be filled out and sent to Staff for inclusion in the update.

The Town was also very active in providing information to the public via local newspapers, cable television, Nixle and Twitter. These social media networks were utilized to advertise open houses and public events to solicit public input on the creation of the plan. Additionally, the Town's web site had an interactive survey that could be filled out and submitted directly to Staff.

The result of this effort is a citizen driven public document that reflects the Vision and Goals of the Community. This document will be the guide and direction for the development of the Town for the next two decades.

Chapters

The General Plan contains several Elements which have been incorporated into twelve (12) Chapters. A number of these Elements are required by State Statute; however, in order to achieve the defined Vision, other Elements have been added by the Town.

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Land Use and Growth Areas Element
- Chapter 3 Circulation Element
- Chapter 4 Parks, Open Space, Trails, Recreation and Arts and Culture Element
- Chapter 5 Public Facilities and Services Element
- Chapter 6 Community Design Element
- Chapter 7 Environmental Planning Element
- Chapter 8 Housing and Conservation Element
- Chapter 9 Economic Development Element
- Chapter 10 Character Areas Element
- Chapter 11 Energy Element
- Chapter 12 Neighborhood Preservation and Revitalization Element

Amendments to the General Plan

The General Plan, including the maps, constitutes a comprehensive policy statement that is used to guide the growth and development of the Community. Over time, factors that affect the General Plan, as well as the policy direction from elected officials, will undoubtedly change. Consequently, the General Plan must be reviewed and amended to remain current and effective. The Plan will be reviewed each year and amended, if necessary. State law also requires adoption of the General Plan by the voters every ten years.

State law requires that major amendments to the General Plan be presented and considered by the Town Council at a single public hearing during the calendar year in which the proposed amendment is requested. Minor General Plan amendments may be considered by the Town Council at any time during the year.

Major amendments are defined as follows:

Residential Amendments

- Any Land Use Map residential density classification increase of 160 acres or more.
- Any change from a residential Land Use Map classification to a non-residential classification of 40 acres or more.

Non-Residential Amendments

- Any change of non-residential Land Use Map classification of 40 acres or more.

Minor amendments are all changes not defined as major amendments above, and include:

Mandated Changes

- Any change mandated by initiatives or state law.

Golf Course, Parks/Retention, Public Facility/Institutional Land Use Classifications

- Any change to or from Golf Course, Parks/Retention and Public Facility/Institutional Land Use Map classifications.

Amendments to the General Plan shall only occur after careful staff review of the request and public hearing(s) by the Planning Commission and Town Council. The public is provided ample opportunity to review and comment on proposed amendments. The term "amendment" includes both text and map revisions.

Amendments to the General Plan may be initiated by the Town or by formal application by the owner(s) or their agents, of real property within the Town planning area boundaries. General Plan amendments must result in the General Plan being internally consistent and conforming to State law. Applicants requesting an amendment to the General Plan must demonstrate that the proposed change is an improvement to or consistent with the General Plan.



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