



City of Safford General Plan

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City of Safford General Plan

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Introduction

To achieve the community vision expressed by the community of Safford and compete in today's world it requires more than just being the low-cost alternative. The City of Safford understands that major employers are no longer lured by just the notion of cheap land and low utility rates; they are also looking for unique value. Economic development has become more complex with an entirely new set of variables such as global competition, advance technologies, and ever-changing and evolving labor force, and the amenities desired by workers, including safe and thriving neighborhoods, affordable housing for all income ranges and a healthy community where residents can live, work, play, shop, and learn. Providing shovel ready, low-cost sites is only part of the package. In today's competitive world, Safford must embrace the desired quality of life that encourages entrepreneurship and attracts and develops a work force with a high degree of intellectual capital.

The key to success is thinking regionally and acting locally by offering a viable infrastructure, adopting the latest technologies, training the workforce, providing quality education and public services, retaining our youth, taking advantage of our location as Arizona's Southeaster Gateway in the Gila River Valley, strengthening our regional public/private partnerships, offering quality housing for all income ranges and providing the desired amenities that enhance Safford's unique heritage, character and sense of place.

A healthy community is one where its members, the environment and the economy thrive. A healthy community promotes well-being and offers a high quality of life. Healthy communities can be measured along seven dimensions which contribute significantly to a community's ability to thrive. The Safford General Plan addresses the impact from these seven dimensions:

- Social Networks
- Physical Assets
- Infrastructure
- Economic Opportunity
- Human Development
- Environment

The City of Safford General Plan takes into consideration Safford's entrepreneurial spirit and the City's strategic location in the Gila Valley to:

1. Solidify the City's position as a premier center for commerce and trade and the Gateway of Southeastern Arizona;
2. Use the railroad to the City's benefit for ancillary industry, intermodal inland port, trade and economic development;
3. Revitalize downtown as an attractive, mixed-use historic urban core with small town character that capitalizes on its proximity to the Gila River, US Highway 70 and US Highway 191;

4. Take full competitive advantage of the Safford Regional Airport;
5. Create the employment and retail base needed to secure the long-term fiscal vitality of the City;
6. Provide a safe, convenient and efficient transportation system that includes fully integrated vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle modes;
7. Conserve significant natural resources and open spaces while taking full advantage of eco-tourism and geo-tourism opportunities;
8. Support the phased infrastructure expansion and updates required to serve the existing and anticipated growth of the City
9. Promote the public and private construction of timely and fiscally sound infrastructure expansion through the use of infrastructure funding and financial planning that is coordinated with development activity;
10. Support the services needed to serve the City's current and future population; and
11. Identify, pursue and secure grants and other funding sources to successfully implement the General Plan.

Together we can achieve the extraordinary!



Regional Sports Complex and Recreation Facilities Concept along the Gila River, The Planning Center, 2015

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in the Upper Gila River Valley in the southeast corner of Arizona, the City of Safford serves as the Southeastern Gateway of Arizona and is the county seat of Graham County. The Gila River traverses the community on its northern portion. Incorporated in 1901, the City covers an area of 8.6 square miles and is bordered by the Town of Thatcher on the west and unincorporated areas of Graham County on the west, south, east and north.

Safford is located 160 miles of Phoenix and 125 miles of Tucson. Safford is the principal city of the Safford Micropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of Graham and, to the east, Greenlee counties.

U.S. Highway 191, U.S. Highway 70, Arizona Eastern Railway (AZER), and The Safford Regional Airport serve the Safford Planning Area providing opportunities for economic development. Access via air, rail, and highway offer an opportunity for the establishment of an active Southwest inland port providing international intermodal shipments.

Exhibit 1 shows City of Safford Regional Context.

SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA PLANNING AREA

The City of Safford is located in the Southeastern Arizona Planning Area. This area encompasses 16,072 square miles (sq. mi.) of geographically diverse groundwater basins in the southeastern corner of Arizona. Groundwater basins include: Aravaipa Canyon, Bonita Creek, Cienega Creek, Donnelly Wash, Douglas, Dripping Springs Wash, Duncan Valley, Lower San Pedro, Morenci, Safford, San Bernardino Valley, San Rafael, Upper San Pedro and Wilcox.

The Southeastern Arizona Planning Area is bounded on the east by New Mexico, on the south by the international boundary with the state of Sonora, Mexico, on the west by the Active Management Area (AMA) Planning Area (Phoenix, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Tucson AMAs) and on the north by the Central Highlands Planning Area and a small portion of the Eastern Plateau Planning Area. This planning area includes parts of 5 watersheds. The City of Safford is the third largest growth center in the Southeastern Arizona Planning Area with Sierra Vista and Douglas being the first and second.

SAFFORD GENERAL PLAN

The City of Safford General Plan is the second update to the City's General Plan. After the Arizona Revised Statutes' mandatory 60-day review period, the General Plan update was adopted by the Mayor and Council on ____ 2016 as recommended by the Safford Planning and Zoning Commission. There were no changes to the Commission's recommendations on the Policy Plan or the Background and Current Conditions volumes. The full plan can be found on line at www.cityofsafford.us.

The plan meets and exceeds all State of Arizona requirements for a general plan. It was created in accordance with a Public Participation Plan adopted by Mayor and Council at early stages of the planning process. It includes an implementation plan in the form of a matrix (a living work program) and process overseen by an Interagency Monitoring Team operating under the direction of the City's Planning and Community Development Director.

The previous general plan focused primarily on land use. This General Plan update expands greatly on the previous effort. It covers most aspects of city services, establishes a vision and guiding principles (notably healthy communities), and focuses on services, infrastructure and the economy in general. It is the product of a citizenry and stakeholders who Envisioned Safford as a place to live, work, learn, visit and play.

HOW TO USE THE GENERAL PLAN

The City of Safford General Plan is the roadmap guiding development and redevelopment within the City. Its planning process defines the vision of the community, encompasses a thorough analysis of opportunities and challenges, and includes the policy framework guiding development within the City as well as the implementation strategies necessary to implement the plan.

The General Plan serves as a guide for appointed and elected officials in the evaluation of proposals for development and redevelopment, in the identification of capital improvements projects, and in the development of more specific studies. It includes background data and current conditions and provides a policy framework for the refinement of existing implementation tools such as the zoning ordinance and the subdivision regulations. It also defines the administrative and monitoring mechanisms necessary to administer and manage the General Plan as well as all implementation strategies needed to implement the General Plan.

THE GENERAL PLAN DOCUMENT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES:

- **The Executive Summary** summarizes the General Plan planning process and serves as a marketing tool for the City.
- **The Policy Plan** volume serves as the regulatory document guiding development and redevelopment efforts within the City and includes the community vision, guiding principles, goals, policies and implementation measures and the administrative tools to manage, monitor, amend and implement the General Plan.
- **The Background and Current Conditions** volume contains all pertinent analysis supporting the Policy Plan. This volume serves as the backbone supporting the General Plan. This volume takes a comprehensive look at the physical, regulatory, demographic, socioeconomic and fiscal realities impacting development within the City.
- **The Public Participation Plan** volume includes the public engagement program adopted by Mayor and Council at early stages of the planning process in compliance with the State of Arizona Revised Statutes.



GENERAL PLAN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Section 9-461.05 of the Arizona Revised Statutes requires municipalities to designate the proposed general distribution and location and extent of uses of the land for housing, business, industry, agriculture, recreation, education, public buildings and grounds, open space and other categories of public and private uses of land as may be appropriate to the municipality. It also requires that the City updates its plan every ten years to ensure that it appropriately addresses social, physical, regulatory, environmental and economic impacts not foreseen in previous updates.

This General Plan responds to legislative mandates by creating a broader policy framework that more fully recognizes the complexities of the City of Safford and the Gila Valley region. Within this framework, public investment decisions regarding infrastructure and other capital facilities, redevelopment, and revitalization can be phased and pursued in a citywide context. This effort allows for greater recognition and understanding of the implications of such decisions.

This General Plan is premised on the existing and projected population of the City. It also takes into consideration the need to attract new economic development opportunities to ensure its fiscal viability.

GENERAL PLAN INTENT

This Safford General Plan seeks to provide a model for regional planning through addressing the City's challenges and maximizing its opportunities while supporting a thriving region. This General Plan update is created to provide specific guidance for Safford that not only supports the long-range viability of the City as a unique place to live, work, learn, visit and play, but that also continues to further the regional synergies necessary to sustain a vibrant region.



GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

This General Plan exceeds the statutorily required elements and includes the following elements:

- Growth Areas
- Use of Land and Character Areas
 - Gila River Restoration
 - Agriculture/Agribusiness/Future Residential
 - Safford Neighborhoods
 - Safford Downtown
 - Medical Corridor
 - Commerce and Employment
 - Commercial Highway Corridor
 - Safford Regional Airport
 - Industry
 - Aggregate/Extraction
 - Gila River Regional Recreation and Sports Complex
- Historic Preservation
- Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space
- Transportation and Circulation
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Community Design
- Public Facilities and Services
- Environmental Planning and Water Resources
- Energy
- Cost of Development
- General Plan Administration
- General Plan Implementation

GENERAL PLAN PLANNING PROCESS

The General Plan planning process involves five basic steps:

1. Document review and benchmarking;
2. The collection and analysis of pertinent data concerning the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the area, accomplished through the preparation of the Background and Current Conditions volume. Although not an adopted document with legal status, it provides the foundation and basis for the formulation of the General Plan;
3. The preparation, coordination and facilitation of an all-inclusive Public Participation Program;
4. The formulation of a vision statement for future growth and development; and
5. The preparation of guiding principles, goals, policy framework and implementation measures that serve as the road map for future development.



GENERAL PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Growth Areas Element sets the framework necessary to address the multiplicity of challenges, maximize the opportunities, increase the long-term viability of Safford and strengthen the fiscal vitality of the City. This approach identifies character areas and defines growth areas, infill areas and redevelopment areas based on each area's specific needs, opportunities and challenges. The growth areas element:

- Identifies areas of the City where future growth, employment, industry, and higher density development may be appropriate;
- Views land use and transportation network in an integrated manner in order to provide the connectivity needed to support orderly and well-managed growth;
- Prioritizes quality of life activities and regional opportunities needed to retain Safford's youth and to attract high quality employment;
- Attracts the latest technology, advance telecommunications infrastructure and bio-industry markets; and
- Identifies opportunities to create a diversified, vibrant and viable economy that includes the strong retail/service base needed to provide community services to future generations.

MAJOR GENERAL PLAN DEFINITIONS

Safford Planning Area or Study Area: The entire Safford planning area shown in **Exhibit 2**.

Planning Areas: All growth, infill, and character areas are planning areas.

Growth Areas: These are areas with development potential located inside the City limits and within the Safford Designated Growth Boundary or Study Area. (Establishing growth areas as part of the General Plan planning process is mandated by the Arizona Revised Statutes.)

Infill Areas: Areas of the built environment with few or small vacant parcels available for development.

Character Areas: Places within the Study Area that present unique opportunities and challenges requiring area-specific strategies. Examples of Character Areas in Safford include Safford Downtown, Neighborhoods, and the Gila River Restoration Area.

Exhibit 1 shows regional context.

Exhibit 2 shows the Safford Planning Area or Study Area.

Exhibit 1: Regional Context

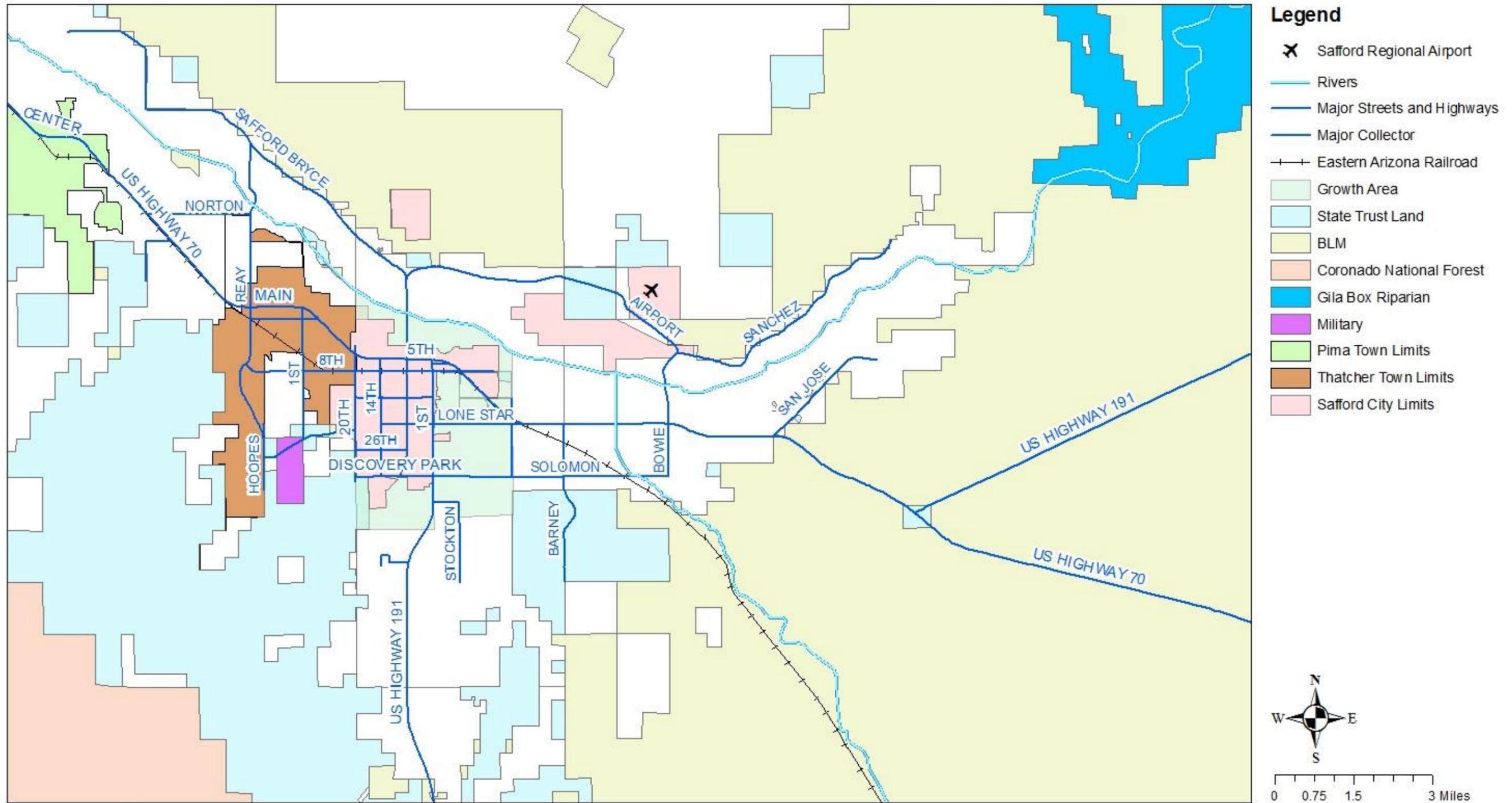
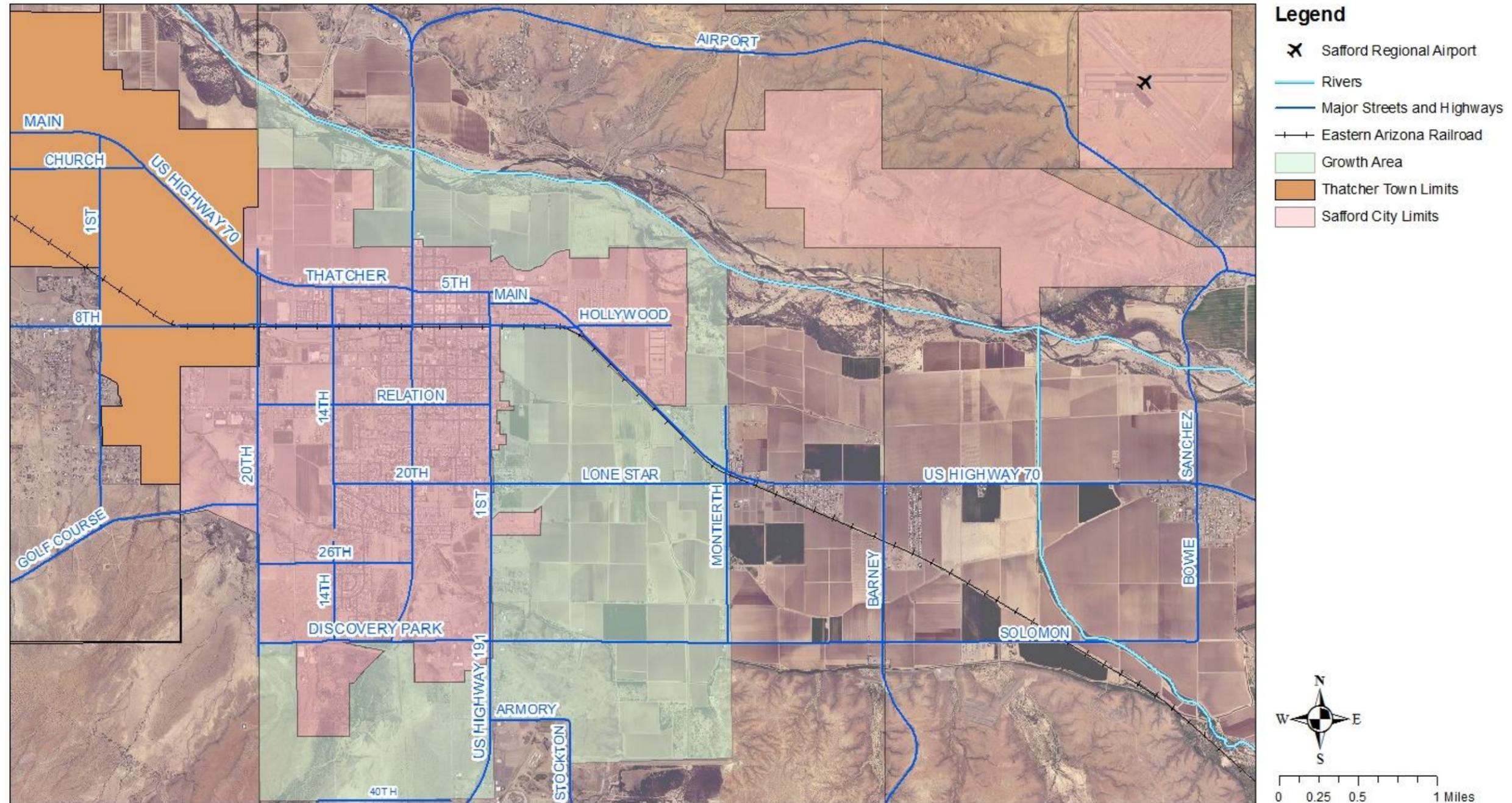


Exhibit 2: Safford Planning Area or Study Area



SAFFORD GENERAL PLAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The policy framework provided in the Policy Volume of the General Plan serves as the road map for development and redevelopment within each growth area and character area. Such policy framework balances the needs, desires and recommendations of the residents, businesses, major stakeholders, community organizations, and decision-makers expressed during four major public engagement opportunities defining the Envision Safford General Plan public participation process:

- The Graham County Fair Envision Safford public engagement process, which provided information and gathered comments in the form of comment board and community surveys;
- The Envision Safford General Plan Week-long Design Charrette, which provided a full week of workshops and meetings collecting input and survey responses;
- The 60-day review period required by the Arizona Revised Statutes; and
- The Planning and Zoning Commission and Mayor and Council public hearings.

This General Plan includes the direction provided by the community during these major public engagement processes, which included the Community Vision guiding the General Plan and the Guiding Principles guiding the goals on each element of the plan. The Public Participation Plan is available under separate cover.

GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The goals, policies and implementation measures identified in the Policy Volume of the General Plan are based on analysis of opportunities and challenges summarized in the Background and Current Conditions volume and community input provided during the Envision Safford public participation process. These terms are defined as follows:

Goals: general statements expressing the desired outcomes the community of Safford seeks with regards to the future development of the City.

Policies: action statements providing a framework for present and future decisions and guiding the formulation of specific programs and strategies enumerated under the implementation measures.

Implementation Measures: specific actions or strategies required to carry out the policies of the General Plan and achieving or implementing its goals.

Community Vision



A community vision is a concise statement of the desired outcome supported by guiding principles, goals, policies and implementation strategies. The Safford Community Vision is the product of analysis of all the input received during the Envision Safford Public Participation Program.



SAFFORD'S COMMUNITY VISION

Safford is a welcoming, attractive, economically viable, walkable, and bicycle-friendly healthy community with a small town feel, where people live, shop, play, learn, work, and recreate. Its thriving downtown exudes civic pride. Its skilled and integrated workforce attracts high wage employment. Sustainable infrastructure, excellent community services, mining, agribusiness, sustainable agriculture and food production, safe and livable neighborhoods, affordable housing for all income ranges, vibrant retail, a restored riverfront, exceptional education, regional recreation and sports facilities, and spectacular mountain views make Safford a destination in the Gila Valley and the Main Gateway to Southeastern Arizona.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette





SAFFORD GENERAL PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

After careful examination of existing documents, analysis of demographic and socioeconomic trends, assessment of physical and regulatory opportunities and challenges and incorporation of public input obtained during the Envision Safford public participation program, guiding principles for each element of the General Plan were established to guide the vision of Safford. Guiding Principles are included under each element of the General Plan.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

A healthy community is one where its members, the environment and the economy thrive. A healthy community promotes well-being and offers a high quality of life. Healthy communities can be measured along seven dimensions which contribute significantly to a community's ability to thrive. The General Plan is guided by the following Healthy Community Principles:

Social Networks: A healthy community has strong social networks that offer mutual support opportunities, facilitates social exchange, and the sharing of skills, resources, and assets.

Physical Assets: A healthy community has physical assets, such as buildings, parks, streetscapes, commercial, and other public spaces that are safe, clean, and comfortable, and provide opportunities for interaction and exchange. The physical assets of the community are aesthetically pleasing and offer the community a sense of identity.

Infrastructure: A healthy community includes the infrastructure required to sustain the healthy and safe operation of its functions.

Economic Opportunity: A healthy community provides a robust economic opportunity structure. The structure fosters innovation and allows all of its members to participate in the creation and production of goods and services that contributes positively to a healthy and sustainable high quality of life.

Human Development: A healthy community provides individual community members with opportunities for personal growth and improvement. Individuals will be able to gain knowledge, develop skills, talents, and abilities, including the ability to express themselves creatively.

Environment: A healthy community understands the sustaining functions of the environment and its relevance as an economic development tool and as a venue for an active and healthier life style.

Local Institutions: A healthy community has community based institutions that sustain, respect, and support each of the dimensions described above.

GROWTH AREAS ELEMENT



The Growth Areas Element considers those factors which will affect the growth of the City of Safford, both within the existing corporate boundaries and within the projected growth areas during the 20-year planning horizon. It sets the framework necessary to address the multiplicity of challenges, maximize the opportunities, increase the long-term viability and secure the fiscal vitality of the City with the intent to achieve sustainability.

The Growth Areas Element examines the opportunities and constraints to growth within the City of Safford Planning Area. In accordance with state statutes, this element identifies those areas that are particularly suitable for planned multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements designed to support a planned concentration of a variety of uses such as residential, office, commercial, tourism and industrial uses. In conformance with Section 9-461.05 of the Arizona Revised Statutes, this element includes goals, policies and implementation measures designed to:

1. Make automobile, transit and other multimodal circulation more efficient, make infrastructure expansion more economical, and provide for a rational pattern of land development;
2. Conserve significant natural resources and open space areas in these growth areas, and coordinate their location to similar areas outside the growth area's boundaries.
3. Promote the public and private construction of timely and financially sound infrastructure expansion through the use of infrastructure funding and financing planning that is coordinated with development activity.



GROWTH AREAS GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Safford's north, east, and south growth areas are carefully planned to expand the City's revenue base and maintain the small town feel of Safford. Growth Areas invigorate the region's economic engine, support sustainable agriculture, agribusiness, and clean energy, sustain high quality neighborhoods and vibrant industry, provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the Downtown and restore the Gila River as a regional recreation asset.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette

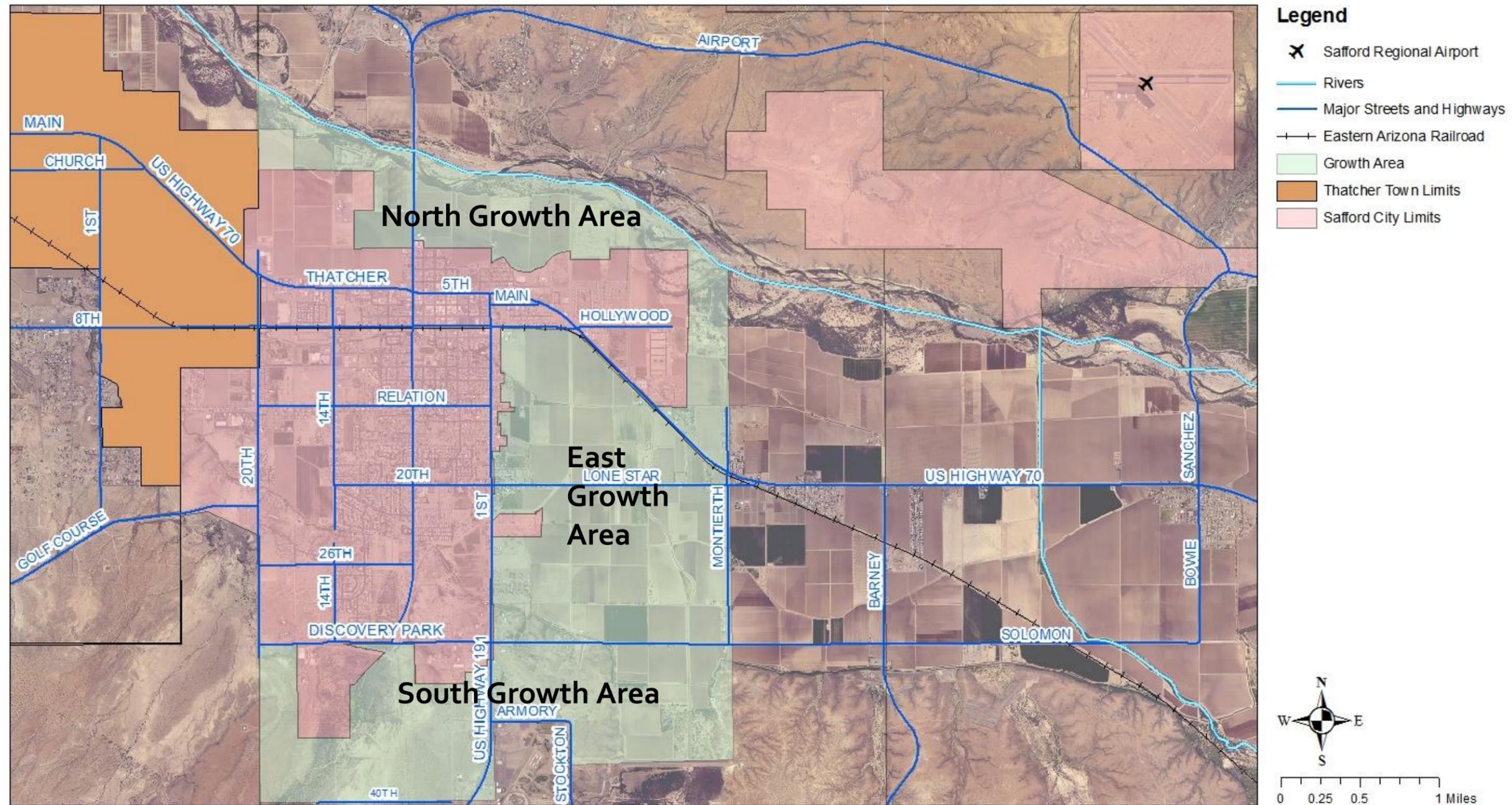


SAFFORD'S GROWTH AREAS

Three major growth areas are identified within the Safford Planning Area, the north, east and south growth areas. The north, east, and south growth areas are carefully planned to expand Safford's revenue base, support sustainable agricultural practices, agribusiness, and clean energy, maintain the small town feel of Safford while invigorating the region's economic engine, sustain high quality neighborhoods and vibrant industry, provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the cultural and entertainment heart of the community, Safford's Historic Downtown and restore the Gila River as a regional recreation asset.

Exhibit 3 depicts the three major growth areas identified within the Safford Planning Area.

Exhibit 3: Safford Designated Growth Areas





NORTH GROWTH AREA

The North Growth Area is located south of the Gila River and north of US Highway 70 and is depicted in **Exhibit 3**.

The City will work closely with ADOT, SEAGO, Graham County Flood Control District, Graham County, Town of Thatcher, the Gila Valley Economic Development Council, and other major stakeholders. Flood control, road alignments and other infrastructure needed to support economic development in the area, river restoration, and regional recreation efforts will be master planned in an integrated manner and will consider:

- Gila River Restoration;
- The establishment of a Regional Recreation District along the Gila River;
- Channelization of the Gila River;
- Regional Economic impact;
- The preparation of cost-benefit analysis to support highest and best use; and
- Other opportunities and challenges that may arise during the master planning process.

This growth area supports:

- US Highway 191 alignment to alleviate traffic along US Highway 70, improve regional access and mobility, provide flood control, and open economic development opportunities.
- High quality commerce, industry, employment, mixed-use and residential development.
- Higher education in close proximity to regional recreation and sports facilities and Downtown.
- A thriving US Highway 70 Commercial Corridor that complements Safford's Historic Downtown.
- Resort, equestrian, and tourist-oriented industry in close proximity to the Gila River
- 20th Avenue, 14th Avenue, Welker Road, 1st Street, Hollywood, and Montierth Road Alignments.

EAST GROWTH AREA

The East Growth Area extends north-south from Solomon Road to Hollywood Drive and US Highway 70 and east-west from US Highway 91 to Montierth Lane. Historically, this area has been associated with raw crop agricultural uses. Currently, the area includes cotton and corn fields, residential areas and the University of Arizona Safford Agricultural Research Center.

Due to its proximity to the railroad, the northern portion of this area offers opportunities for the establishment of an inland intermodal port. This area supports industrial uses. Goals and policies related to these are respectively included in the Land Use and in the Transportation and Circulation Element of the General Plan Policy Volume.

Road extensions needed to support this area are shown in the Proposed Future Transportation Network exhibit included in the Transportation and Circulation Element. North-south road extensions are proposed for Welker Road and Montierth Lane. East-west road extensions are proposed for Solomon Road, 26th Street, 20th Street, Relation Street and Hollywood Drive.

This growth area supports:

- US Highway 191 Commercial Corridor
- Sustainable agribusiness, agriculture, and food production
- Agricultural research
- Solar energy generation facilities
- High quality residential development
- Industry and commerce north of Relation Street and in proximity to the railroad

SOUTH GROWTH AREA

The South Growth Area extends from the 20th Avenue alignment on the west to the Montierth Lane alignment on the east, and from Discovery Park/Solomon Road south as delineated on the figure below. This area currently includes extraction and few industrial uses. The area includes Safford's Southern Main Gateway.

This growth area supports:

- US Highway 191 Commercial Corridor
- Industry
- Aggregate extraction (existing)
- Solar and wind energy generation facilities
- High quality residential development on steeper slopes where other types of development would not be feasible.

ANNEXATION STRATEGY

Annexation is the process by which Safford may assume jurisdiction over unincorporated territory adjacent to its boundaries. Annexation represents a serious step towards the overall growth of the City. In Arizona, annexation requires the consent of the owners of at least one-half of the value of the real and personal property and more than one-half of the property owners in the territory to be annexed. In addition, the consent and action of the City of Safford Mayor and Council is required. The Policy Volume includes a policy framework for annexation.

LAND USE AND CHARACTER AREA ELEMENT



The City of Safford Land Use and Character Area Element provides for the balanced development of compatible land uses within the existing corporate boundary and the City's growth areas addressed in the Growth Areas Element. A comprehensive, systematic and inclusive approach is used to define growth, infill and redevelopment areas based on each area's specific character, needs and opportunities and challenges.

CHANGES IN CONSUMER PREFERENCE

Changing consumer preferences, employer location strategies, and transportation planning trends reflect a shift towards sustainable development. The convergence of these trends results in an urban fabric that incorporates safe, efficient and multimodal transportation, urban densities, a mixed of uses and services at a walkable distance, and the open spaces, recreation, entertainment and public realm definitions necessary to reflect a strong and well defined sense of place to work, live, shop, learn, and play.

CHANGES IN HOUSING DEMAND

Housing demand is also changing because of major demographic shifts. These shifts include the aging of baby boomers, a decrease in household size, changes in family structure, and the fact that younger adults prefer urban, mixed-use environments. The National Center for Transit Oriented Development provides that two-thirds of demand is still for large single-family dwellings and a third is for smaller housing choices, including apartments, townhomes, live-work, and bungalows.

Although recent market trends indicate an increase of this type of housing, Safford's market isn't fully meeting this demand, and the increasing competition for units in denser, mixed-use neighborhoods paired with the current economic recession may increase the demand for these housing products.

COMMUNITY DESIRES

During the Envision Safford public participation program, the community voiced the need to:

- Establish Safford as the main gateway of Southeastern Arizona;
- Provide a larger diversity of housing types for different income ranges;



- Continue to revitalize downtown;
- Allow opportunities for mixed-use development in character with the community scale;
- Increase the quality of life by providing access to quality parks, recreation, trails and open space;
- Attract high wage employment and industry;
- Increase the City's retail and revenue base;
- Diversify the City's economic development portfolio to ensure long-range livability;
- Restore the Gila River Corridor and explore opportunities for regional recreation, eco-tourism and geo-tourism;
- Support and retain current major employers and local businesses;
- Retain Safford's youth; and
- Provide high quality public services.

At the convergence of these trends is an opportunity to create the structure for a new growth and development strategy that meets the demand for location-efficient mixed-use places that support regional economic growth strategies and increases housing affordability by increasing supply in neighborhoods with lower transportation costs. Such development encourages walking and cycling, has a mix of retail, commercial and residential uses, and offers a diversity of housing types suited for different generations and incomes. These must be achieved while maintaining the distinct character that makes Safford unique.

The Land Use and Character Area Element addresses these complexities in an integrated manner. It provides a flexible land use framework that supports the emerging trends and assists the City and the community in attaining its shared vision. Such vision is achieved by identifying the distinct character areas that make Safford unique while enhancing its identity, character and sense of place.

The land use and character areas goals and policies as well as the Safford's Character Areas map provide an adequate supply of land for the anticipated growth for the 20-year planning horizon. The rate of growth accommodated by the General Plan is more than what is projected by the population and employment forecasts. The Land Use and Character Areas Element guides the decisions of the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and Planning staff in directing the future growth and development of the City through the year 2035

PLACE-BASED URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The City of Safford includes places such as neighborhoods, highway corridors, employment centers, river corridor, etc. – each expresses a mix of land use, physical forms, and connective tissue that reflect and enhances the unique identity of its corresponding character area. Along with the General Plan vision of livability, economic opportunity, fiscal viability, and sustainability, these places create context.

Placemaking institutes land use and zoning by using policies and future public investments to organize land uses, their form and character; to infuse them with Safford’s values, identity, culture and heritage; and to provide for economic development opportunities – all in the service of achieving the desired place the community envisions.

In Safford, places are distinguished by their infrastructure skeleton – transportation routes, water and sewer lines, shared paths, parks, trail system, and sidewalks. Each of the character areas includes a group of land uses and building types that reflect the identity of the area working together to accommodate a variety of life’s daily functions – living, working, playing, learning – in a manner which reflects the local values, historical form, and attitudes that make up Safford.



LAND USE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Align land use, infrastructure, economic development, public services, environmental resources and amenities to take full advantage of Safford’s strategic location in the Gila River Valley and establish a thriving and sustainable regional economy that supports the long-range viability of the region, promotes a healthy, vital and competitive economic climate, retains, attracts, and supports a skilled workforce and promotes an appropriate mix of mining, agriculture, housing, retail, services, mixed-use, commerce, employment, and industry.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Safford Character Areas

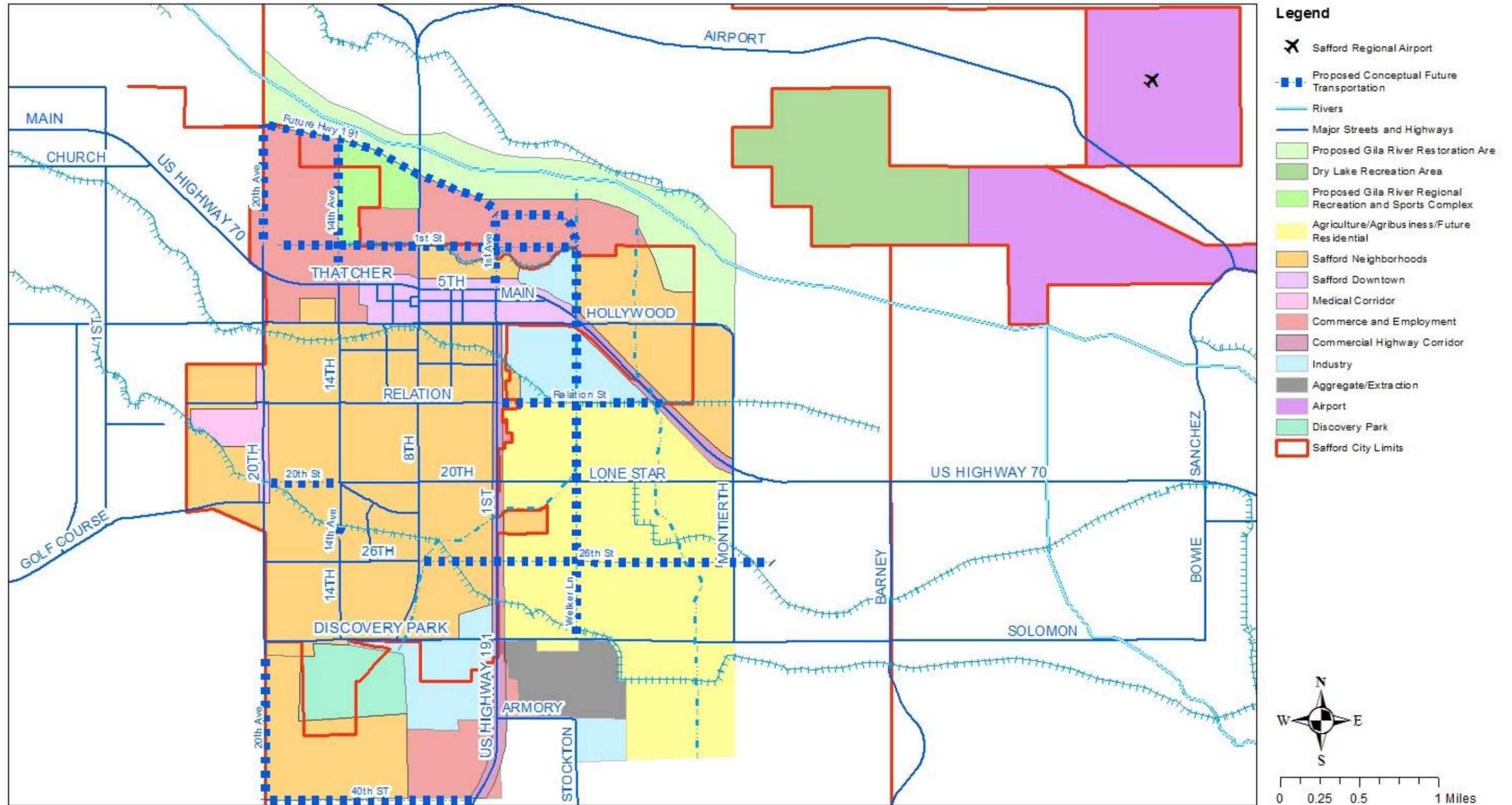
In addition to the growth areas described in the Growth Areas Element, several distinct character areas have been identified within Safford. These character areas provide the framework necessary to formulate the area-specific master plans, infrastructure plans, redevelopment, infill and revitalization efforts, and economic development strategies that will support Safford's vision and assist in the implementation of the Safford General Plan.

Each character area presents a set of unique characteristics, development, infill or redevelopment potential, opportunities and challenges. **Exhibit 4** shows Safford's character areas and the generalized land uses supported within these areas.

These Safford Character Areas include land intended for development when demand approaches. Development utilizing existing underlying zoning is not precluded. Character Areas identified in this General Plan include:

1. Gila River Restoration
2. Agriculture/Agribusiness/Future Residential
3. Safford Neighborhoods
4. Safford Downtown
5. Medical Corridor
6. Commerce and Employment
7. Commercial Highway Corridor
8. Safford Regional Airport
9. Industry
10. Aggregate/Extraction
11. Gila River Regional Recreation and Sports Complex

Exhibit 4: Safford's Character Areas



Source: City of Safford General Plan Design Charrette, The Planning Center, 2015, City of Safford GIS Department, 2016

Historic Preservation Element



The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. A total of 28 historic buildings, structures or sites within Safford are registered in NRHP. Although not required by the Revised Arizona Statutes, the Safford General Plan includes policy direction for the preservation of its historic downtown, Safford Main Street and other historic, buildings, landmarks and sites.

Extending north-south from 8th Street on the south to the north side of US Highway 70 and east west from the Intersection of Welker Lane with US Highway 70 on the east and 11th Avenue on the west, the historic Safford downtown functions as the civic, cultural, arts, retail, and historic core of Safford. The preservation and revitalization of downtown is a key component of Safford's economic development strategy.

In 2003, the Downtown Safford Revitalization Plan was completed. And in 2007, a comprehensive design charrette took place. This last effort served as the foundation for the streetscape improvements recently completed along Main Street in Safford. The policy direction included in this element of the General Plan positions Safford to take advantage of historic preservation programs and funds.



PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Protect and preserve the historic heritage of Safford and its historic Main Street and downtown.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element

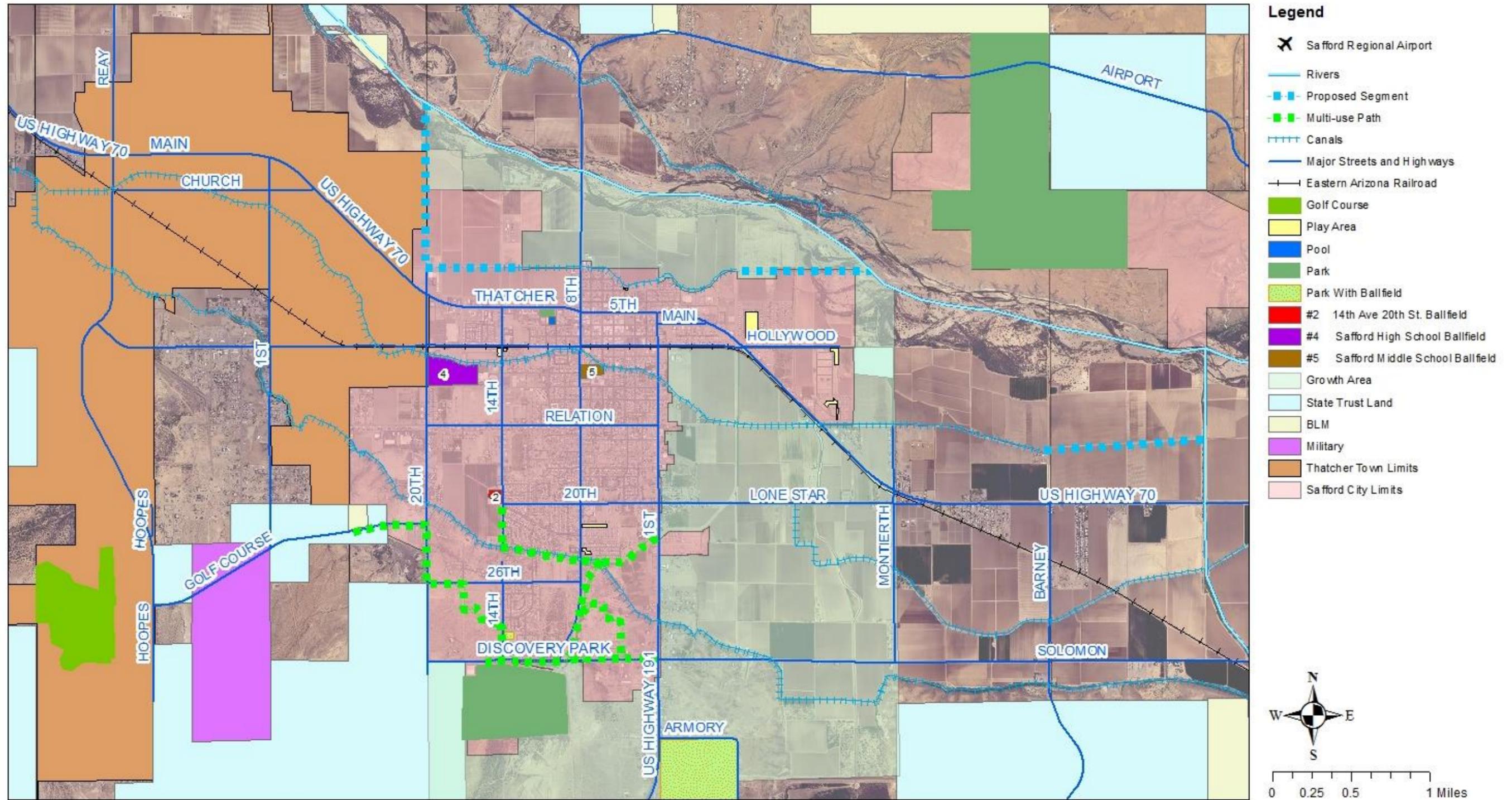


The Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element considers those factors which will affect quality of life and sustain healthy active life styles as the City of Safford grows, both within the existing corporate boundaries and within the designated growth areas during the 20-year planning horizon. This element sets the framework necessary to address challenges, maximize opportunities, sustain the long-term viability and fiscal vitality of the City and support the recreational needs of the region.

Based on a preliminary assessment of opportunities and constraints for the provision of parks, recreation, trails and open space summarized in the Background and Current Conditions volume and on input provided during the Envision Safford public participation program, this element provides general guidelines to direct the improvement of existing parks and the provision of passive and active recreation and connectivity throughout the Safford Planning Area. It also includes policy direction for future open space land acquisition and explores the establishment of a regional recreation district.

Exhibit 5 shows proposed conceptual trail connectivity throughout the region.

Exhibit 5: Safford's Proposed Regional Trail Connectivity





PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Develop a regional integrated system of quality parks, recreation, sports, shared paths, and nature trails that provides connectivity to all growth and character areas, Downtown, the Safford Golf Club and regional attractions such as the Gila River and incorporates hiking and equestrian trail systems along the Gila River.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Linear Park Concept (8th Street and 8th Avenue), The Planning Center, 2015

LOCAL AND REGIONAL RECREATION AMENITIES



As provided in the Gila River Regional Recreation and Sports Complex Character Area included in the Land Use and Character Area Element, the community expressed the need to address recreation from a regional perspective. A regional approach requires the City to work in partnership with other jurisdictions in the region and to identify the public/private partnerships needed to succeed. It also requires an integrative and comprehensive assessment that takes advantage of existing regional assets such as the Gila River and Mt. Graham that could open additional opportunities for geo-tourism and eco-tourism. The preparation of a Regional Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master plan is essential to address a variety of issues comprehensively and to explore opportunities for restoring the Gila River and establishing a Regional Recreation District in an integrated and cost efficient manner.

MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEM AND OVERALL CONNECTIVITY



REGIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX AND RECREATION FACILITIES



Regional Sports Complex and Recreation Facilities along the Gila River, The Planning Center, 2015

OPEN SPACE AND LAND CONSERVATION

The City of Safford includes a developed urban core with opportunities for infill development and few cotton fields within its current corporate boundary. Its designated growth areas include the Gila River Corridor, aggregate extraction, residential, commercial and agricultural fields. Most of the undeveloped land within the study area is privately owned. The City is taking a leadership role on regional recreation and open space, including the restoration of the Gila River Corridor addressed from multiple angles in various elements of the general plan and in the preservation of existing agricultural fields.

This Park, Recreation and Open Space Element includes goals and policies for the establishment of a Regional Recreation District if determined feasible and for the restoration of the Gila River utilizing a regional approach. It also includes goals, policies and implementation strategies to further establish recreational resources and to promote a regional system of integrated open spaces and recreational resources.

Although the City of Safford plays a leading role in the region in the preservation of open space and recreational resources, the vast majority of open space and scenic lands are located in Graham County, outside of the City of Safford's corporate boundaries and its designated growth areas. As provided in the Multi-use Trail System, the City is committed to providing connectivity to Graham County and Town of Thatcher trail systems.



PARK SYSTEM, ADVENTURE SPORTS AND ENDURANCE SPORTS



The Policy Plan volume of the General Plan includes policy for an integrated City's park system that includes share path and nature trail connectivity and incorporates adventure sports and endurance sports.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

The Policy Plan volume also includes policy for the incorporation of equestrian trails along the Gila River corridor. This open a variety of eco-tourism and geo-tourism opportunities in connection with hospitality industry along the river corridor.

Transportation and Circulation Element



The Transportation and Circulation element exceeds legislation requirements by addressing circulation, transportation, gateway development, roadway viability, and multimodal connectivity in an integrated manner based on sustainable street network principles. In Safford, the street network connects people to each other and to destinations. It also fosters economic development activity and provides public space for human interaction. The street network forms an effective, flexible framework for building the community. It is planned in an integrated manner with land use and economic development following healthy community principles.

As part of its comprehensive and regional approach, this element identifies opportunities for enhancements along US Highway 191 and US Highway 70. It provides guidance to position the Safford Regional Airport as a major transportation hub and explores opportunities for the development of an inland port along the existing railroad. And it anticipates regional collaboration with a multiplicity of public and private partners, including the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the South Eastern Arizona Government Organization (SEAGO), The Arizona Eastern Railway (AZER), Graham County and the Town of Thatcher.

The City of Safford Transportation and Circulation Element considers those factors which need to be addressed in order to provide a safe, effective and convenient multimodal transportation system within the City of Safford and its designated Growth Areas. Such system balances internal travel and convenient connection with regional access.

A preliminary assessment of transportation and circulation opportunities and constraints is summarized in the Background and Current Conditions volume. This element provides general guidance to direct the multimodal street system improvements needed throughout the City and its designated Growth Areas to foster economic development and serve the current and projected populations. The proposed conceptual extensions of the City's future street network are shown in **Exhibit 6**.



Recommended Roundabout at US Highway 70 and entrance to Main Street (See also recommended Street Cross-Sections for US Highway 191 and US Highway 70 (Option 2 – Median).



TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Safford provides a high quality, safe, efficient and convenient street network that is adequately maintained and supports access, local and regional mobility, alternate modes, and economic development.

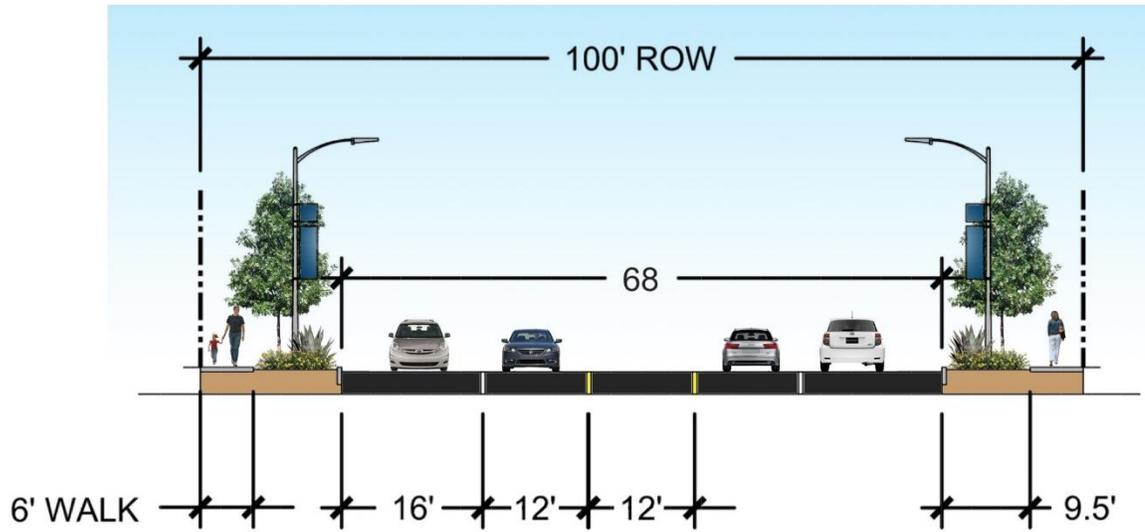
Safford General Plan Design Charrette



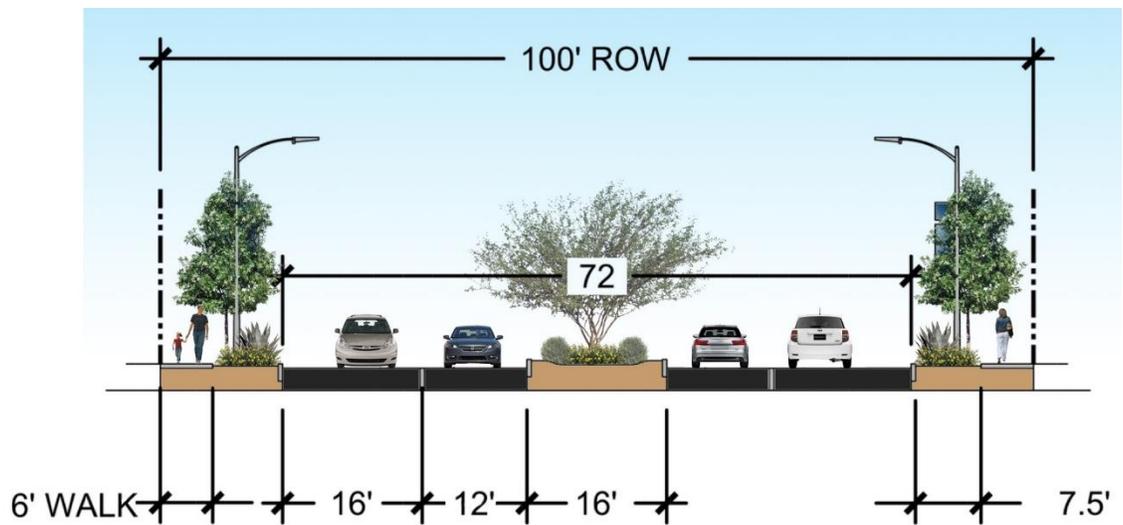
STREET HYERARCHY AND MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY

The City of Safford street hierarchy includes the following functional classifications: 1) Highways (US Highway 191 and US Highway 70); 2) Arterial; 3) Collector; 4) Main Street; and 5) Local Streets.

RECOMMENDED RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR US HIGHWAY 191 AND US HIGHWAY 70



Recommended Right-of-Way for US Highway 191 and US Highway 70 (Option 1 – Turn Lane).



Recommended Right-of-Way for US Highway 191 and US Highway 70 (Option 2 – Median).

Economic Development Element



The Arizona State Legislature does not require the preparation of an economic development element as part of the General Plan. This element includes the economic development goals and policies needed to ensure the fiscal viability of the City and to support a healthy and vibrant region. It includes overarching regional goals and policies to:

- Diversify the City's economic development portfolio;
- Protect existing employers;
- Create a welcoming climate to new business development, outside investment, and relocation of companies and employers;
- Sustains opportunities for job creation and job growth;
- Support and capitalize upon Safford Regional Airport;
- Capitalizes on existing and potential local and regional assets;
- Leverage SEAGO and the Gila Valley Economic Development Corporation economic development collaboration efforts;
- Strengthen tourism as an economic engine;
- Reaffirm construction of infrastructure, commercial, residential, public and community facilities as an economic stimulus;
- Provide opportunities for innovation and new technology; and
- Repair and restore our streets and highways.

The City of Safford Economic Development Element considers those factors needed to diversity and strengthen the fiscal viability of the City and the Gila Valley region.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Invigorate the region's economic engine in a sustainable manner while protecting Safford's assets, resources, and long-range fiscal viability and increasing its resiliency.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



GILA VALLEY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The City is cognizant that a strong region benefits all jurisdictions within it and values the unifying role of the Gila Valley Regional Partnership as a major economic development strategy.

The City of Safford's efforts to promote economic development, job growth and rising income within the region are focused on four specific strategy areas to protect our existing employer base, create new opportunities for job growth to revitalize tourism, promote a positive environment for business investment, and position the Gila Valley region as the gateway to Southeastern Arizona. These business retention, expansion and attraction efforts require region wide collaboration. The General Plan include policy and implementation strategies for:

- Job Retention, attraction and expansion;
- Tourism as an economic development strategy;
- Positive Climate for businesses and entrepreneurs;
- Workforce as an economic driver;
- Art districts and entertainment; and
- Construction as an economic development strategy.

Housing Element



Housing is a vital component of a vibrant, livable, and healthy economy. The City of Safford includes housing in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Creating quality places means ensuring that a full range of live-work-play options are provided. This includes having a mix of vibrant destinations and walkable neighborhoods. Providing a variety of housing options for different income ranges is an essential component of a healthy community.

Housing affordability is not just market price but also depends on access to essential services such as health care, healthy foods, libraries, community centers, recreation, and lower-cost transportation options (walking, biking and transit). In order to introduce a diversity of housing options for different income ranges, including mixed use developments, it is important to ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods through the use of community design tools.

The goals and policies in this element address the provision of a wide variety of housing types to meet varying needs, access to services and supplies, safe and healthy housing, fair practices, and services to retain housing. This element includes policy and implementation strategies for: 1) creating livable communities; 2) safe and healthy housing stock; 3) housing affordability; 4) housing choices; 5) increasing home ownership; and 6) fair housing.



HOUSING GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Derive the housing policy from a concrete assessment of the existing housing data and characteristics. Recognize the fact that good housing is the building block of excellent neighborhoods, and those excellent neighborhoods are the building blocks of great communities.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Community Design Element



Healthy community design refers to the practice of planning and designing communities that make it easier for people to live healthy lives. Healthy community design links destinations that promote health, such as schools, parks, grocery stores, and work places, via a transportation network that facilitates safe travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, and automobile occupants. Community design can influence the overall health of a community by making healthy lifestyle choices easily available and accessible to all community members. It also promotes the community character, identity and sense of place.

During the General Plan design charrette, the community emphasized the need to incorporate community design guidance in the General Plan to make Safford a welcoming and attractive destination. Although not a required element, this element addresses citywide enhancements and beautification and provides direction for new development and redevelopment within Safford within the character areas identified in the Land Use and Character Area Element.



COMMUNITY DESIGN GUIDING PRINCIPLE

New development, infill, and redevelopment includes design features that further the vision of Safford. These identity features include gateways located at major entrances to the City of Safford and in character areas, neighborhoods and major developments. They also include landscape amenities and inviting streetscapes, overall beautification such as façade improvements along Main Street, and the multimodal connectivity and recreational amenities needed to position Safford as a destination in the Gila Valley.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette

The Community Design Element includes policy and implementation strategies for: 1) creating a destination; 2) place-based design; 3) active design and safe-by-design strategies; 4) green building and site design; and 5) health impact assessment.

HIERARCHY OF GATEWAYS



Main Gateways: Signature entrances to the City and the Gila Valley along US Highway 191 and US Highway 70 defining a sense of arrival to a major destination, Southeastern Arizona.



Main Street Gateways: Main entrances to the Safford Historic Downtown and Main Street along US Highway 191 and US Highway 70.



Character Area Gateways: Include entry features to major character areas including entrances to the Gila River Corridor, the Gila River Regional Recreation Center and Sports Complex, Safford Regional Airport, Safford's Neighborhoods and major employment areas.

Environmental Planning Element



The Environmental Planning Element includes goals, policies and strategies to address anticipated effects of implementation of plan elements on natural resources using a regional approach. Policies and strategies under this plan element are designed to have citywide applicability. Protection of biological resources is considered an essential component of land-use planning and economic development.

This element addresses: 1) environmental planning; 2) water quality, supply and demand; 3) air quality; 4) cultural resources; 5) night skies and visual resources; and 5) energy. This element considers those factors which will need to be addressed in order to preserve, protect, and in some cases, restore the environment to ensure the sustainable future growth and development of the City.



ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Improve the sustainability of Safford by promoting energy efficiency, protecting water resources, embracing natural resources as economic development assets, and preserving the Gila Valley wildlife corridor, habitats, native vegetation, washes, groundwater, watersheds, and mountain views.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Public Services and Facilities Element



The City of Safford provides design, management and maintenance of the sanitary sewer system including conveyance and treatment systems citywide and within its service area. The extension of sewer lines is the most significant public works infrastructure tool the City has to guide growth and development into its infill and designated growth areas. Safford delivers sanitary sewer service to the City of Thatcher and portions of the unincorporated area of Graham County. The City of Safford currently owns and operates the Graham Landfill. Waste collection and recycling are services provided by the City. The City of Safford also provides police and fire protection services. Emergency Management services are provided by Graham County.

This element includes goals, policies and implementation strategies for: 1) wastewater system; 2) waste removal; 3) recycling and solid waste; 4) flood control as it pertains to working collaborative with Graham County Flood Control District; 5) public safety and emergency services, which includes police, fire and Emergency Management Services (EMS); 6) Healthy Community best practices as they relate to the provision of public services and infrastructure; 7) communications; and 8) guidance for the establishment of an Integrated Facilities Systems a general plan monitoring system designed to evaluate facilities planning in an integrated manner.



PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Safford supports high quality public services, efficient, cost-effective facilities and the sustainable infrastructure required to serve the current and future populations and needed to support the high quality of life desired by its residents.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Public Community Services Element



Public community services such as continuing education, health care improvement, recreation, library and other community services and programs improve the quality of life of residents and attract visitors. These element addresses those public community services managed, operated and/or funded by the City of Safford.

Located in the Historic Safford Central Business District, the Safford City-Graham County Library enriches lives and builds community through opportunities to learn, know, interact, and grow. It houses the Safford Mayor and Council Chambers. The Library's resources, community involvement, and leadership help people of all ages, from all walks of life, on their journey to reach their full potential. Embracing the principles that excellence must be defined locally, be attainable for library branches of any size, and be dynamic by nature, the Library provides free programs and services that make learning fun, transcends barriers, and improves lives.



PUBLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Safford supports high quality public community services with efficient, cost-effective facilities and the programs required to serve the current and future populations and needed to support the high quality of life desired by its residents.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



Cost of Development Element



INTRODUCTION ***

Economic growth ensures adequate revenue to support the City of Safford programs and services prioritized by the Mayor and Council and the community. Essential to economic growth is new development and redevelopment that contributes impact fees, sewer fees, water fees, and processing fees. In conformance with Arizona statutes requirements, this element addresses three key components: 1) fair share; 2) measure of fairness; and 3) It identifies various options that can be used to fund and finance additional, necessary public facilities and services.

The Cost of Development Element addresses meeting community needs for infrastructure and services in an equitable and reasonable manner. The Cost of Development Element cannot and does not address development that has already occurred; it is limited to new development and redevelopment of existing sites. This element meets the intent of the Cost Development Element required in Arizona Statutes. It establishes the goals and policy framework for developing implementation measures that will result in public-private cost sharing of capital facilities and services needed to serve new development and redevelopment. These measures clarify the roles of the public and private sectors, which are critical to achieving the City's economic development.

The City of Safford has a menu of options it can use to fund and finance development costs to allow the public and private sectors to partner and find the best cost recovery approach for each new development. The City also has the flexibility to adjust such approaches as additional methods become available. These Element of the General Plan addresses: 1) Integrated Infrastructure and land planning; 2) cost recovery; 3) impact of development on regional systems; 4) additional revenue sources; 5) available mechanisms to fund and finance development; and 6) existing method of recovery.



COST OF DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Develop implementation measures that will result in public/private fair cost sharing of capital facilities and services needed to serve new development and redevelopment.

Safford General Plan Design Charrette



General Plan Administration



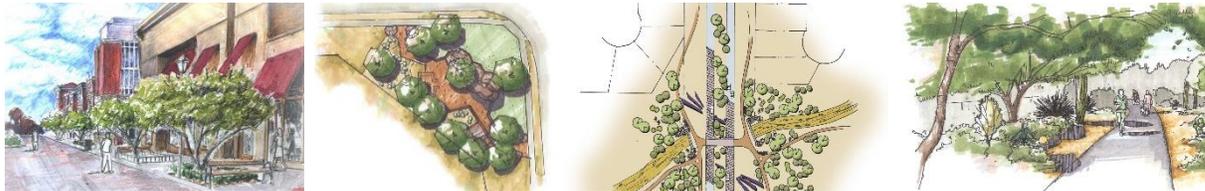
This chapter of the Policy Plan provides guidance to administer, amend and interpret the City of Safford General Plan. This chapter ensures that future amendments of the General Plan further Safford’s vision and strengthen the Gila Valley region, and that the vision, goals, and policies are implemented in a fair and equitable manner. Policies included in this General Plan are not intended to be applied to land being developed which has already been through legislative review and approval in the City.

All goals, policies and implementation measures included in the General Plan follow all applicable federal, state and City of Safford laws and regulations, as may be amended. Safford is committed to protecting private property rights. The General Plan is an important tool in land use planning. It serves as a roadmap for future development. It also protects grandfathered property rights for existing entitlements. The City of Safford recognizes the economic recession and the role new planned development plays in shaping our community and economic future. As such, the General Plan balances the benefits of policies applicable to development and the cost of compliance. This must be done to achieve sustainable growth, provide affordable housing, retain existing businesses, and attract new retail and commercial centers, and companies seeking to invest in job creation in the Gila Valley region.

Authority and direction to plan come from the Revised Arizona State Statutes, expressly the Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus Acts, as amended as well as other directives embedded in Statute. This chapter of the Policy Volume of the General Plan includes:

- General Plan Authority;
- General Plan Administration;
- General Plan Interpretation;
- Rezoning Process and General Plan Compliance;
- Map Interpretation;
- General Plan Adoption, Amendments and Updates; and
- General Plan Progress Monitoring

General Plan Implementation



The primary function of this chapter of the Policy Volume is to implement the vision, guiding principles, goals and policies of the General Plan. This is achieved by complying with the policy framework of the plan and by fulfilling the implementation measures provided in each element of the General Plan. The Arizona Revised Statutes provides a common starting point for plan implementation and mandates municipal planning agencies to undertake specific actions to implement the General Plan. Such actions are enumerated in this chapter. The General Plan Implementation chapter includes:

- General Plan Implementation Objectives; and
- The General Plan Implementation Matrix

The intent of the Implementation Matrix is to prioritize implementation measures identified on each element of the General Plan for their timely, effective, and successful completion. The Implementation Matrix categories are included in the following table. A variety of funding sources are identified in this chapter for each implementation measure. This ensures that the General Plan is a living document that can easily be implemented by the Project Management Team.

Implementation Matrix Categories

Matrix Category	Definitions
Implementation Measure	Identifies action necessary to carry out policy statements and support General Plan goals, guiding principles and overall General Plan vision.
Lead Department/Agency	Identifies the primary responsible City department for accomplishing a specific implementation measure.
Anticipated Timeframe	Identifies and prioritizes the intended timeframe for the implementation measure to be initiated.
Potential Funding Sources	Lists the potential funding source necessary to implement the measure based on the Funding Mechanism Matrix ID.
Public/Private Partners	Lists potential public/private partners