

INTRODUCTION



*Photo by Louis Werner III, Paradise Valley
Resident and Planning Commissioner*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

The Town of Paradise Valley 2012 General Plan (also referred to as “The General Plan” or “The Plan”) represents a statement by the public of what they expect their Town to become. It is a citizen-driven Plan, conforming to the letter and spirit of “Growing Smarter Plus” legislation (A.R.S. 9-461.05) established by the State of Arizona to guide municipal planning and growth management.

This 2012 Plan is an update of the 2003 General Plan with two new Elements: Community Character and Housing and Sustainability. As in 2003, this Plan emphasizes the desire of the community to remain primarily one-acre residential properties.

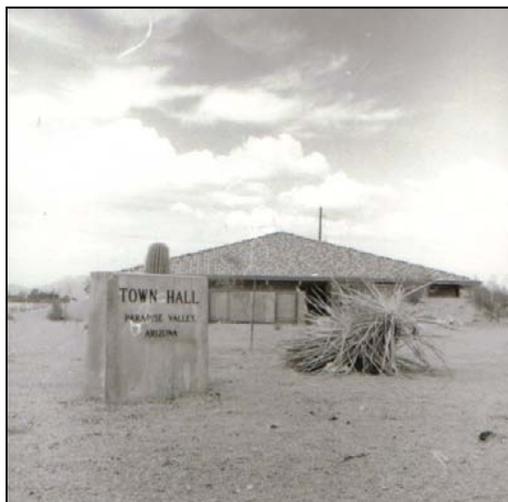
1.2 Town History

The Town of Paradise Valley (“the Town”), which lies in central Maricopa County between Phoenix and Scottsdale, was created in response to concerns that the sparsely populated desert lifestyle of their community was in danger of slipping away due to threatened annexation and the changing density and commercialization of neighboring Phoenix and Scottsdale. The incorporation effort provided a forum for direct citizen involvement in the creation of a vision for the new community. The area originally incorporated as the Town included 2.69 square miles. By 1970, the Town had incorporated contiguous parcels to increase the area to 13.3 square miles with police services, a municipal court system and an Underground Utilities Ordinance in place. The population had reached 6,637 residents.



Groundbreaking for Town Hall

The decade of the 1970s saw the Town prevail in court challenges to the legality of incorporation, zoning regulations and special use permits. A revised Master Plan was approved, Resort and Religious Facilities Regulations were adopted, additional land was annexed and a permanent Town Hall was built. Also, infrastructure needs were addressed including fire hydrants, the first sewer line, floodplain designations, improvement districts and improvements to Lincoln Drive, McDonald Drive and Doubletree Ranch Road. Traffic and police protection became significant Town concerns. The Town's low-density residential character was promoted by ordinances limiting outdoor lighting and excessive noise. In addition, the Town adopted the Hillside Building Regulations to provide specific guidance for developments within the hillside areas.



Town Hall constructed in 1973

By 1980, the Town had a population of approximately 11,000 residents and included approximately 14 square miles. That year, the Town Council adopted a General Plan under Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 9-461.05. The 1980 General Plan remained in force until 1997.

During the 1980s, large areas were annexed into the Town, including the Mountain Shadows Resort on Lincoln Drive and the Paradise Valley Country Club on Tatum Boulevard. Street improvements continued and dirt roads began to disappear. A new police facility was added to the Town Hall, and the police force was expanded. The Mummy Mountain Preserve was established to protect the natural profile and wilderness of the higher elevations of the mountain, and numerous donations of mountain land were received.

By 1990, the Town had grown to approximately 16 square miles and 11,770 residents. A Capital Improvement Fund was established by a vote of the residents to provide for needed infrastructure as the community matured. Undergrounding of utility lines continued at an increased pace, flood control and

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sewer capability were studied, and street maintenance was organized with appropriate schedules. Increased traffic throughout the Town remained an important concern of the residents. The 1990s saw a renewed market-driven interest developing the remaining vacant land of the Town for more expensive and larger homes. In limited cases, clustered housing development has been used to retain open space or natural features and to provide greater than normal residential setbacks from heavily traveled thoroughfares without reducing the number of residential lots that might otherwise be created. Many small ranches disappeared as residential developments designed for the maximum number of allowable lots took their places. A renewed commitment to desert vegetation was exemplified by the redesign of the Lincoln Drive medians.



Lincoln Drive landscape medians, circa 1983

By 1996, the area of the Town included 16.5 square miles and 12,500 residents. The growth and community change that had occurred since the adoption of the 1980 General Plan prompted the Town to initiate an update of the plan. That update was completed in 1997, when the Town Council adopted the “Vision 2020” General Plan, which included three elements: Land Use, Circulation and Conservation. At the time, only the Land Use and Circulation Elements were required by State law; the Town voluntarily adopted the Conservation Element to address locally important issues.

By the Year 2000, the Town’s population had increased to approximately 13,600, although the physical boundaries of the community had not changed since 1996 through annexation. According to the State of Arizona’s Growing Smarter/Plus statutes passed in 2000, every city and county in Arizona is required to adopt and maintain a general plan. In September 2001, the Town Council authorized proceeding with an update of the Town’s 1997 General Plan (Vision 2020). In

2003 the Town adopted the third General Plan which included seven elements: water resources, growth areas, cost of development, environmental planning, land use, circulation and conservation.

From 2004 through 2008 the Town was experiencing significant development. The Town saw many older, ranch style homes demolished and replaced with very large homes that often were built to the maximum square footage and lot coverage. Some of these newer homes did not integrate easily with the character and design of older established neighborhoods and resulted in residents clamoring for the Town to do something to remedy the situation. However, in 2006, the Arizona voters passed Proposition 207, touted as the Private Property Protection Act. Proposition 207 severely restricted the Town's ability to change land use regulations and, therefore, little or no action was taken to alleviate neighborhood incompatibilities.

When the economy declined in 2008, development in the Town slowed considerably. Projects stalled and the Town's revenues decreased. Severe budget cuts and staff reductions to pre-1980 levels resulted.

1.3 Purpose of the General Plan

A general plan is a community's "blue print" for land use and development; it serves as the basis for rational decisions regarding a community's long-term physical development. The general plan expresses the community's development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private. The policies and programs of the general plan are intended to underlie most land use decisions. Preparing, adopting, implementing, and maintaining a general plan serves to:

- Identify the community's land use, transportation, environmental, economic and social goals and policies as they relate to land use and development.
- Provide a basis for local government decision-making, including decisions on development approvals.
- Provide citizens with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision making processes of their community.
- Inform citizens, developers, decision makers and other cities and counties of the ground rules that guide development within the community.

A general plan typically has three defining qualities. *First*, it is general in nature, providing general guidance for the future, particularly regarding growth and development. More precise direction is provided in implementation documents and plans, such as annexations, zoning codes and other ordinances, design regulations, annual budgets and capital improvements program. *Second*, it is comprehensive in scope, addressing a broad range of environmental, social, and economic factors affecting the community. These factors include land use and circulation, environment and resources, economic and fiscal conditions, as well

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as a host of others. Furthermore, these factors should be addressed in an interrelated and, wherever possible, consistent manner. *Third*, it addresses the long-range future of the community. While the general plan takes immediate concerns into consideration, it focuses primarily on the future, particularly potential build out scenarios (i.e., the maximum size and population of the community and the density of development).

To clarify the role of the General Plan:

The General Plan is:

- An expression of citizen preferences
- A statement of Town policy
- A guide to public and private decision making
- A long-term perspective
- More than a land use map
- A blueprint to improve residents' quality of life
- A legal requirement under Arizona State Law

*The General Plan is **not**:*

- A zoning map
- A tool to promote special interests
- An unchangeable document
- A detailed policy for specific properties or areas
- A capital improvement program

1.4 Town Vision and Values

In recognition of the Town 50th anniversary, the Visioning Committee was formed to help guide the discussion for the General Plan update and create a vision for the future. From November 2010 until March 2011, there were 10 meetings in total, 7 committee meetings and 3 community town-hall meetings. Membership on the Visioning Committee was open to any resident interested in serving.

Two different questionnaires were used in an effort to reach different demographics. Both questionnaires were posted on the Town website, but the second questionnaire was sent via email to about 800 families with school-aged children. When combined, the response to the questionnaires was about 10%. (The percentage is based on 5700 households' not total population.)

The data gathered through the questionnaires, committee and community meetings netted six common themes:

- Primarily one-acre, residential community
- Limited government
- Creating a sense of community
- Partnerships with existing schools and resorts to enhance recreational opportunities
- Improving Aesthetics / Creating a Brand
- Preserving natural open space

Through the visioning process it became clear that the most important issue to our community is to maintain the primarily one-acre zoning. Paradise Valley is a residential community and it is important to maintain the high quality of life that residents choose when moving here. Quality of life issues included privacy, high-quality public safety services, maintaining dark skies and protection against increased noise and air pollution and blighted properties.

Residents also value the desert environment, convenient access to local amenities and the notion of limited government. Challenges and issues that were identified included providing an adequate water supply, sufficient revenue to fund police and fire services, minimizing traffic, improving code enforcement and consolidating private trash companies.

Residents said they were not interested in developing recreation centers such as a YMCA or a town library. But, there was interest in creating or improving bike paths and walking trails. Building on the successful project of undergrounding overhead utilities, improving aesthetics in the Town's rights-of-way by using consistent design palette to create a Paradise Valley brand and a sense of arrival was very important. Other important issues included promoting tourism and building a sense of community.

Since the Town's beginning, limiting the growth of government has been a way of life. However, as the Town has evolved, the Visioning Committee was asked if limited government means the same thing today that it meant fifty years ago. There was a consensus that residents don't want a strong active government except when it comes to land use issues, effective police and fire protection, effective code enforcement and controlling resort and non-residential development.

Through the course of the outreach efforts conducted for the Visioning Process update, the Town identified a series of recurring themes or core values held by Town residents. These themes or values collectively constitute the Town's Vision for its future. They are as follows:

Paradise Valley Vision

Visioning Committee 2011

Paradise Valley is a premier, low density, residential community in Arizona with a national identity reflecting excellence in development and design and protection of the natural Sonoran Desert environment.

Centrally located, this desert oasis, surrounded by mountains, cacti and wildlife in the midst of the sixth largest city in the country, offers convenient access to local and regional amenities while preserving a sense of privacy, quiet, dark skies and public safety that represents an unparalleled quality of life.

The incorporation of Paradise Valley in 1961 was hard fought, and came about with a conscious decision to preserve the natural desert and provide a semi-rural, residential community with limited commercial development and limited government.

As we look to the future, we build upon our past by capturing the independent spirit that founded this community while taking prudent, reasonable and responsible actions to improve the quality of life for Town residents.

Recognizing a proper balance between the powers of local government and individual property rights, our future will be defined by the continuation of our characteristic low-density, residential housing while understanding and appreciating the role of local government in providing quality public safety and other limited services, preserving natural open space and mountain views and ensuring neighborhood-compatible land use decisions throughout the Town.

The aesthetic beauty of our community open spaces, coupled with the natural beauty of the desert, welcomes residents, their guests and resort visitors alike, letting everyone know he is in a special place.

Our world-class resorts, churches, schools and other limited non-residential community-oriented development will continue to evolve and change with the times, but will always respect the quality of life of Town residents.

1.5 General Plan Elements

The balance of this document consists of the General Plan “elements,” which are the Town’s official statements of land use and development policy. The elements are organized in a way that allows the Town to address the statutory requirements of Growing Smarter/Plus in a manner that suits the unique circumstances of the Town. This includes a set of new and existing elements that collectively address the Town’s obligations for conformance with Growing

Smarter/Plus, as well as other issues that are of particular local importance. These elements are as follows:

- Land Use and Development
- Community Character and Housing
- Mobility
- Open Space and Recreation
- Environmental Planning and Water Resources
- Sustainability
- Public Facilities/Services and Cost of Development Element

Each of these elements includes a series of goals that are related to key topics. Under each goal is a set of policies intended to guide achievement of that goal. At the end of each element are several implementation measures that identify the actions necessary to effectively implement the General Plan.

1.6 Public Participation

The 2012 General Plan process has emphasized and encouraged public participation throughout. At the beginning of the process, the Town Council adopted Resolution 1231 for a Public Participation Program with the following goals:

- a. Meet the requirements of the Arizona Revised Statutes.
- b. Create awareness and understanding of the General Plan. Keep the plan in the public eye throughout the process and establish programs to increase their understanding of the plan and recommendations.
- c. Receive input from a broad cross-section of the community and understand residents' attitudes and opinions regarding the direction of the Town's growth and development, key issues facing the Town, and their views regarding the Town's future.
- d. Affirm community vision and values.
- e. Identify common ground on issues where there is a diversity of perspectives.
- f. Promote intergovernmental and interagency cooperation and collaboration.

Over the course of the 2012 General Plan Update, over 50 public meetings were held and numerous press releases were issued. The Town's website was continuously updated with the working draft documents, process and schedule updates. Also, in accordance with State Statutes, copies of the draft General Plan were provided to agencies and other local governments for review and comment.

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Community Open House February 2011

1.7 General Plan Adoption

In accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes, the Town of Paradise Valley 2012 General Plan, once ratified by the voters, is effective for up to ten years. The General Plan can be updated or readopted at any time at the discretion of the Town; however, it must be updated or readopted within ten years from the date of adoption. As conditions change (including demographic shifts or the emergence of new economic trends) the General Plan may require updates.

Town of Paradise Valley 2012 General Plan is required by Arizona law to be ratified by the voters. At a minimum every ten years, a new General Plan or the currently effective General Plan shall be submitted for voter adoption or readoption. Major amendments to the General Plan are not required to be submitted to the voters by State Statute, but must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Town Council as further detailed in the Implementation section of this Plan.

The process of General Plan adoption entails four key steps.

1. The Plan is provided for a review period of at least 60 days to outside agencies including neighboring municipalities, Maricopa County, Maricopa Association of Governments, and the State Department of Commerce.
2. The Paradise Valley Planning Commission reviews the General Plan over two or more public hearings thereby enhancing citizen accessibility to review sessions.

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3. The Paradise Valley Town Council holds a public hearing for final public comment.
4. The Town Council takes action to approve the Plan, and it is submitted to the voters for ratification.
5. If the voters do not approve the proposed General Plan, the current General Plan will remain in effect until a new, revised or resubmitted General Plan gains voter approval.

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