



# Town of Thatcher General Plan Update



## Policy Plan

FINAL DRAFT: October 2021





# Policy Plan

## Prepared for:

Town of Thatcher  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Town of Thatcher sits in the desert of southeast Arizona between Mount Graham and the Gila River in the Gila Valley. Settled in 1881 and incorporated as a municipality in 1899, Thatcher was built around an agriculturally driven economy and a community focused on education. New opportunities and challenges influenced by mining operations, retail and tourism are now further diversifying Thatcher's economy. Residential and commercial development, capitalizing on the region's growth, is beginning to reshape the Town.

### Local History

Human activity in the Gila Valley region can be traced back over 15,000 years to the Hohokam, Mogollon and Anasazi Indian tribes. From this time on, the area experienced culturally diverse people from Spanish explorers, Franciscan missionaries and early European traders and trappers who traversed the valley until U.S territorial claims were established in the 1850's. Early inhabitants left the land rich with archeological burial grounds, villages and sacred sites.

An expedition to view the "Valley of the Gila" in the late 1800's brought pioneers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the area. Satisfied by the fertile soil and water rich lands, homesteads were soon established south of the Gila River. In 1883, a Mormon pioneer and businessman named Christopher Layton was appointed as head of the Gila Valley settlers. President Layton was instructed to see that the settlers in the area did not sprawl throughout the land, that surveys existed for townsites and that these localities had adequate facilities and protection against brigands and other hostile intruders.

The Thatcher townsite received its name in commemoration of a visit by apostle Moses Thatcher in December of 1882. Along with Thatcher's settlement, Layton established the St. Joseph Stake Academy, eventually becoming the first two-year community college in Arizona, now known as Eastern Arizona College.

In the early years of Thatcher's establishment, Layton and his family worked to develop the Town as shade trees were set out for a mile along Main Street and the sidewalks cleared and leveled, which added much to Thatcher's beauty as well as the convenience of walking. The Valley settled rapidly. By 1895 homes marked the region and the completion of the railroad named the Gila Valley, Globe and Northern brought life to Thatcher.

A major economic force in the Gila Valley became its downfall for a few years around 1910. Farms throughout the area were on the brink of abandonment due to impacts of mining mills. Finely pulverized rock (tailings) flowed into the Gila River and spread over the farmland during irrigation, making agriculture nearly impossible. Valley settlers joined together, taking the matter to the courts. The United States Supreme Court confronted the mining companies, forcing their operations to change.



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

While development of the community has continued to evolve in important ways, present day Thatcher is reminiscent of earlier times. Area population has remained dedicated to agriculture and diversifying the local economy.



### Thatcher General Plan

The Thatcher General Plan (General Plan) serves as the road map managing growth within the Town's corporate boundary in a manner consistent with the community's vision. It guides future decisions about growth, land utilization and annexation balancing economic development, preservation of agriculture, and conservation of resources. The General Plan provides the basis for development while supporting the quality of life desired. This General Plan is a vital document to the decision makers in Thatcher as the Town moves forward. It supplies the outline needed to plan for healthy economic development, orderly growth and support of Thatcher's desired community character.

### Thatcher General Plan Update

The Thatcher General Plan Update represents a statement of what the community expects their Town to become over the next twenty years. It is driven by citizen input, as it is a tool to help guide and shape the physical development of the Town.

The Arizona Revised Statutes requires municipalities to update as needed and re-adopt their general plans at least once every 10 years. The first Thatcher General Plan was created and adopted in 1997. The 1997 general plan previous update was adopted in 2008. The 2020 Thatcher General Plan Update conforms to the letter and spirit of the Arizona Revised Statutes legislation guiding municipal planning and growth management with enhanced public involvement.

The previous general plan update included four elements: Land Use; Circulation; Public Services and Facilities; and Economic Development.



## Thatcher General Plan Elements

Imagine Thatcher: the 2020 Thatcher General Plan Update includes the following elements or chapters:

- Growth Areas/Planning Areas
- Character Areas/Use of Land
- Connectivity, Access and Mobility (Circulation/Transportation)
- Highway 70 Revitalization
- Economic Development
- Housing and Community Design
- Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space
- Public Services and Facilities
- Environmental Planning and Water Resources
- Cost of Development
- Administration
- Implementation

## How To Use This Document

### General Plan Organization

The 2020 Thatcher General Plan Update is intended as a guide. All General Plan Elements are interrelated and intended to be considered collectively. Users are strongly urged not to rely on select, excerpted statements; but, rather, are encouraged to consider all the subject matter of the Thatcher General Plan Update as a whole. It is important that the Plan Elements do not stand alone. To support a user-friendly experience, the General Plan Includes the following volumes:

1. **Executive Summary** summarizes the General Plan planning process and serves as a marketing tool.
2. **The Background and Current Conditions Technical Report** contains all pertinent analyses supporting the Policy Plan. In compliance with all applicable Revised Arizona Statutes, this document identifies the physical, regulatory, demographic, socioeconomic and fiscal opportunities and challenges impacting growth, use of land, infrastructure, economic development and resource management. This technical report and the public input gathered during the community engagement process serve as the foundation supporting the goals and policy framework included in the Policy Volume of the General Plan.

3. **Community Visioning Report** summarizes the results of the public engagement process included in the Public Participation Plan adopted by Mayor and Council at early stages of the planning process, this plan defines the community engagement and outreach program that guided the planning process in compliance with the State of Arizona Revised Statutes. The *Community Vision Report* summarizes and analyzes the input received at the various community meetings, workshops and visioning efforts.
4. **The Policy Plan (this volume)** includes the policy framework guiding development, redevelopment, infrastructure, economic development and resource conservation efforts within Thatcher. This Plan includes the community vision, overarching principles, and plan elements in compliance with all applicable Arizona Revised Statutes. Each element includes goals and policies. This volume also includes the administrative tools to manage, monitor, amend and implement the General Plan.

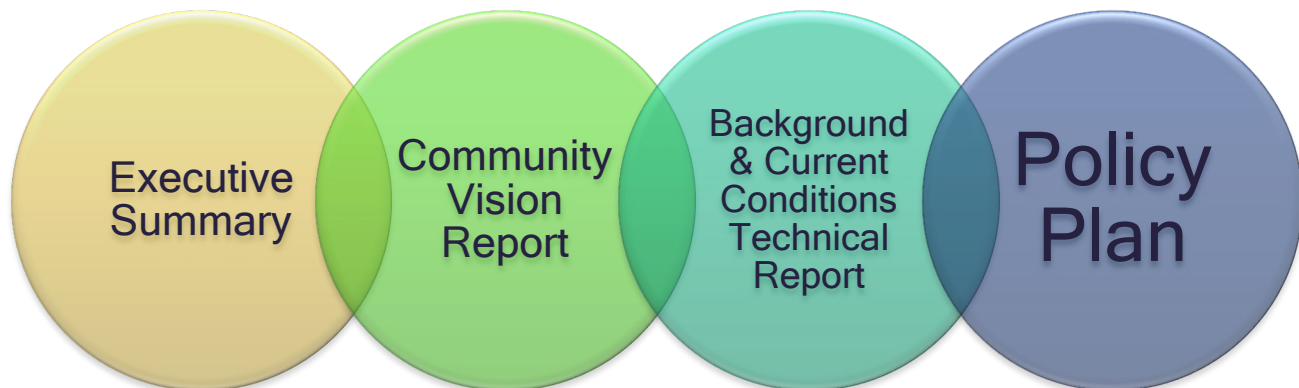


Figure 1: General Plan Organization

## Thatcher General Plan Policy Plan Definitions

The Thatcher General Plan guides development, infill, revitalization and redevelopment within the Town of Thatcher. The Policy Plan organization streamlines the development review and decision-making processes by allowing staff, decision makers and users to easily find information. It also supports user needs in a user-friendly manner while complying with all applicable Arizona Revised Statutes mandates. The major components of the general plan structure are defined in the following page.





## Town of Thatcher General Plan

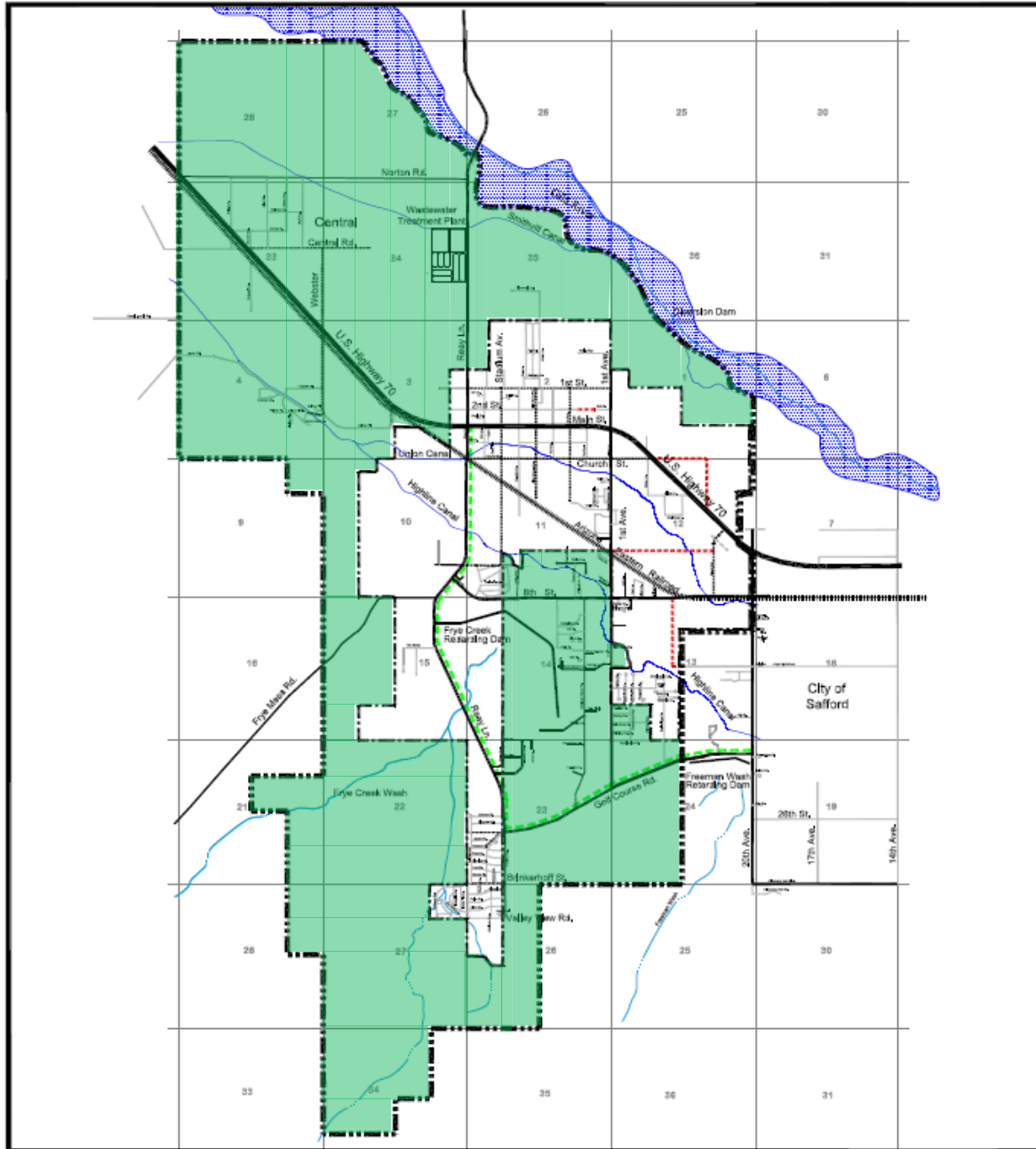
General Plan Definitions	
<b>Vision Statement</b>	A non-measurable statement of intent or aspiration summarizing in a brief paragraph the desired outcome or what the community would like to achieve or maintain.
<b>General Plan Elements</b>	The chapters of the General Plan. The General Plan Update includes various elements, the General Plan Administration, and the General Plan Implementation Strategy.
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	Overarching principles or precepts guiding the intent of an element irrespective of changes in goals, policies, and implementation strategies. Guiding principles support the Vision Statement and guide the Element's goals.
<b>Goals</b>	General statements expressing the desired outcomes and supporting the vision the community seeks with regards to the future development and the element's precept.
<b>Policies</b>	Action statements supporting goals, providing a framework for present and future decisions, and guiding the formulation of specific programs and implementation strategies enumerated in the implementation plan.
<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	Strategy to carry out the policies of the General Plan and implement its goals.

## The Thatcher Designated Planning Area

The Thatcher Designated Planning Area, or Thatcher Planning Area, expands the geographic base of Thatcher's influence beyond the present Town limits. Coordination with jurisdictions abutting the planning area, including Graham County, the Town of Pima and the City of Safford, plays a fundamental role in ensuring compatible and efficient development needed to provide for orderly growth and adequate provision of essential infrastructure and public services. Exhibit 1 shows the Thatcher Designated Planning Area.

The Thatcher Designated Planning Area includes approximately 14 square miles currently in unincorporated Graham County. The Town hopes to exert a positive influence on growth and development in partnership with Graham County and the City of Safford. A strong, cooperative relationship between the Town, the County and the City are crucial in implementing necessary growth management practices.

Exhibit 1: Thatcher Designated Planning Area



Legend

-  Thatcher Designated Planning Area



## GENERAL PLAN VISION AND PURPOSE

### Our Vision

Thatcher's vision for the future reflects the values of Thatcher citizens. Understanding growth is a regional reality, the public wants to be sure that future Thatcher is known as 'the best of the best' and envisions their community to retain its small Town-character. Emphasis is placed on friendliness, respect for community heritage, family-oriented, safe neighborhoods and traditional civic events. The following Vision statement uses the perceptions and expressions identified by Thatcher citizens to describe the future Thatcher.

***THATCHER is an economically vibrant and prosperous, family-oriented Gila Valley community with small-Town character, offering a vibrant downtown, a revitalized Main Street, quality neighborhoods, commerce, employment, environment, amenities and supporting services and a destination for adventure tourism.***

### General Plan Update Purpose

The primary purpose of the 2020 Town of Thatcher General Plan Update is to provide a tool to guide and coordinate development efforts over the next 20-year period. The General Plan also fully responds to Arizona's Growing Smarter/Plus requirements.

Anticipating population growth and development as a result of economic changes in the region, Thatcher citizens participated in the General Plan Update planning process prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. They assisted in the development of a plan that embraces their vision of an economically prosperous, family-oriented community with adequate amenities and supporting services.

In its adopted form, this comprehensive planning document, the Thatcher General Plan Update, serves as a general guide for the Town Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town staff, as well as public and private interests regarding development and growth in and around the Town of Thatcher.



## PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS & PRINCIPLES

The Thatcher General Plan Update includes recommendations and analyses of current and future conditions, which are summarized in the *Background and Current Conditions Technical Report*. Because the Town has little or no control over many external forces that will influence its future, it is necessary to identify some of the more significant general conditions that appear likely to prevail in the future. There are a few fundamental assumptions which assist in organizing Thatcher's General Plan principles. Town development policies coincide with these basic directions.

**TABLE 1: Population Projections**

Place	2010 Census	2017 (Est.)	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055
Pima	2,387	2,548	2,520	2,613	2,704	2,792	2,870	2,934	2,991	3,042
Safford	9,566	9,915	9,974	10,233	10,491	10,739	10,950	11,116	11,253	11,368
<b>Thatcher</b>	<b>4,865</b>	<b>5,217</b>	<b>5,269</b>	<b>5,447</b>	<b>5,622</b>	<b>5,790</b>	<b>5,938</b>	<b>6,061</b>	<b>6,167</b>	<b>6,261</b>
Graham	20,402	20,595	20,850	22,092	23,314	24,496	25,573	26,523	27,385	28,187
Total	37,220	38,275	38,614	40,384	42,132	43,817	45,331	46,634	47,796	48,858

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 counts and 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017 estimates and Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity Projections 2019-2055 Sub-County Population Projections, Graham County 2019-2055 Projections.

### Planning Assumptions

- **Population Growth:** The Town of Thatcher and its Designated Planning Area will continue to experience an increase in total population. As provided on Table 1, based on Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity population projections, the Town of Thatcher and the Thatcher Planning Area will continue to experience a population increase. Based on projected growth, it is anticipated that over 10,000 new residents will reside in the region by 2055. Some of such growth will take place within the Town's Designated Growth Area.
- **Quality of Life:** Thatcher's community continues to value high quality development, infrastructure, amenities and services. As population increases, so will the demands from its citizens for high quality residential, employment, services and amenities. The Town must continue to sustain and improve the quality of life valued by the community.
- **Character:** Thatcher will continue to support the unique small-town character, identity and sense of place valued by the community. The natural setting and lifestyle of the Town meets the needs of individuals and families seeking the characteristics of a prosperous Arizona town that supports its urban core and rural areas while embracing its suburban lifestyle.
- **Traffic:** Traffic will continue to increase on US Highway 70 (Main Street) along with safety and access concerns. As Thatcher, along with Safford and Graham County, continues to grow, average daily traffic on Main Street in Thatcher, as the only through corridor, will significantly increase. Revitalization efforts of this central spine must be carefully designed



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

to meet the multiple functions of this vital corridor: supporting continuous traffic flow, providing access to services and amenities, and including revenue generating uses that invites visitors to stop, visit and extend their stay.

- **Economic Diversification:** Agriculture will continue to be replaced as the principal economic activity of the Town. The area continues to transform from predominately farm and cattle operations to more suburban development as focus within the community shifts to favor economic diversification. As a healthy and sustainable community, Thatcher will continue to support agriculture as an important component of the local economy while supporting a diversified economic development strategy.
- **Economic Development:** Economic development will continue to emphasize job creation, business retention, expansion and attraction, and municipal revenue generation. The Town plans to attract quality jobs and businesses and understands that helping local businesses grow is important. Technology, innovation, and new employment contributing higher-wage occupations are, also, targeted. Workforce development is prioritized.
- **Cost of Development:** Development proposals are expected to coordinate with and participate in costs of infrastructure and services needed to support such development. A fair-share approach is preferred with new development expected to construct or fund infrastructure, including major off-site improvements needed to support proposed development.

## Principles

Thatcher's comprehensive planning approach establishes the following healthy community principles to assist in translating Assumptions and Element Goals into implementable strategic actions. These principles include:

- Align use of land, the provision of infrastructure, and economic development initiatives to benefit all citizens and support the Town's long-range viability.
- Actively recruit target industries and facilitate the location of quality jobs in the Town of Thatcher.
- Support workforce development initiatives needed to attract quality, high-wage employment.
- Ensure new development projects fit the character of Thatcher and include supporting facilities and public improvements.
- Require new development to pay its "fair-share" for infrastructure and Town services.
- Guide growth and development patterns to follow Town policies.
- Work collaboratively with surrounding jurisdictions, Graham County, the City of Safford, and the Town of Pima to support a thriving region.



## GROWTH AREAS ELEMENT

The Arizona Revised Statutes requires the Town to identify growth areas 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 ARS 9-461.05, this Growth Areas element includes policies and implementation strategies designed to:

- a. Make automobile, transit, and other multimodal circulation more efficient, make infrastructure expansion more economical and provide for a rational pattern of land development.
- b. Conserve significant natural resources and open space areas in the growth area and coordinate their location to similar areas outside the growth area's boundaries.
- c. 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.

### State Trust Lands and Military Lands

#### State Trust Lands

The Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) manages State Trust lands and resources to enhance value and optimize economic return for the Trust beneficiaries. Consistent with sound business management principles, prudent stewardship, and conservation needs, ASLD supports socio-economic goals for current and future generations that act in the best interest and preserve the long-term value of State Trust lands.

Development within State Trust Lands requires advanced coordination with ASLD and concurrency with a conceptual land use and circulation plan and the preparation of feasibility analysis to determine viability prior to the release of those lands for sale. In addition, ASLD lands located outside of the Town's corporate boundary require annexation. It is anticipated that State Trust lands will not be available for development within the planning horizon of this General Plan.

ASLD awards multi-year lease agreements, including grazing permits on their land for a variety of uses and easements. In addition, a temporary "Recreational Use Permit" can be obtained online at the Arizona State Land Department website that allows the signatory limited privileges to use State Trust land for some recreational purposes. Recreation under this permit is limited to hiking, horseback riding, picnicking, bicycling, photography, sightseeing, GPS-based recreational activities, and bird watching. Camping is restricted to no more than 14 days per year. A recreational permit does not permit commercial, competitive, or group events. Lands leased for agriculture, mining, commercial, or military purposes are not open to recreational use.

The use of State Trust Land for recreational purpose can be program with ASLD as part of the eco-tourism economic development strategy given the scenic value and views.

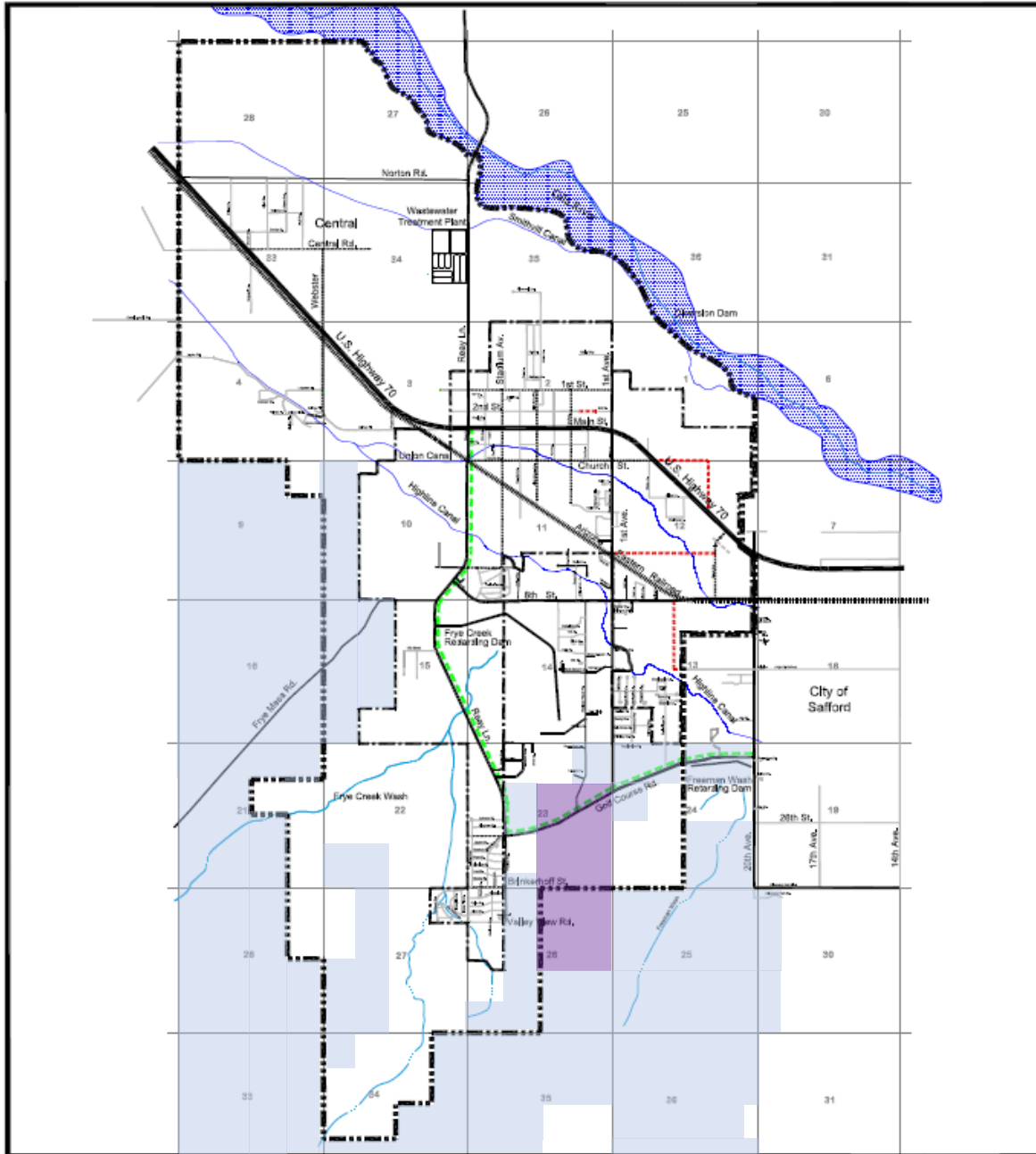


### Military Lands

Federal lands include military lands in the United States held in public trust and managed by the federal government. Pursuant to the Property Clause of the United States Constitution, the Congress has the power to retain, buy, sell, and regulate federal lands, such as by limiting cattle grazing on them. These powers have been recognized in a long line of U.S. Supreme Court decisions. It is anticipated that military lands will not be available for development within the planning horizon of this General Plan.

Exhibit 2 shows State Trust lands and Military lands.

Exhibit 2: State Trust Land and Military Land



Legend

- State Trust Land (Arizona State Land Department)
- Military





## Thatcher Major Planning Areas

Rather than utilizing a piecemeal, pre-mapped land use approach that attempts to predict future developments, Thatcher plans the future through an integrated, flexible, place-based approach that fosters the high-quality development desired by the community. Such approach builds on local and regional assets and entrepreneurial leadership by maintaining Thatcher's identity, showcasing its uniqueness, and focusing on social, environmental, and economic efforts. In addition to promoting existing revenue sources and the more traditional economic development concepts, the character areas approach embraces emerging industries, and incorporates eco-tourism and adventure tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, technology and innovation, a regional approach to recreation, alternative energy sources, and green/clean industry.

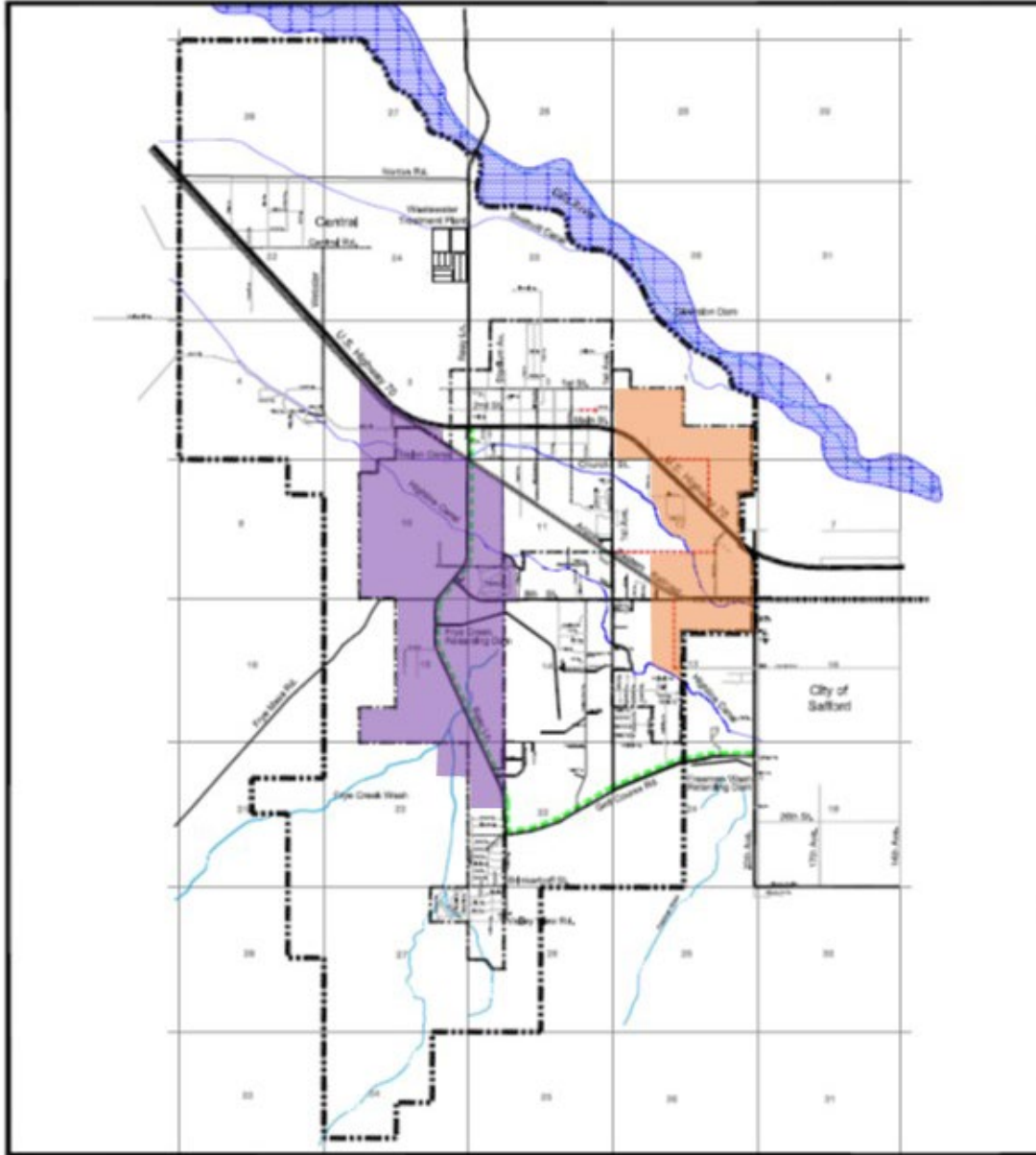
The mass, scale, height and feel of new development must be compatible with or enhance the character of existing development and must reflect the goals and intent of the planning area. In lieu of precise land use boundaries, this design-oriented approach allows the General Plan to respond to changing market conditions. It defines criteria and design intent based on the characteristics that are unique to each major planning area, and it assists developers, staff reviewing development proposals during the Development Review Process (DRP) and decision makers by providing a consistent tool designed to streamline the DRP and provide flexibility, while ensuring that new development will further the community vision of recapturing Thatcher's charm.

Major planning areas provide the framework necessary to formulate the character area use of land policies and economic development strategies that will support the vision of Thatcher and assist in the implementation of this General Plan. Each of these areas presents a set of unique characteristics, opportunities, and challenges. Based on the analysis provided in the *Background and Current Conditions* technical report and on the input provided during the visioning process, this Growth Area Element identifies Thatcher's planning areas.

Each planning area presents unique opportunities for growth, development, redevelopment, revitalization, or infill. Exhibit 3 shows growth areas and Exhibit 4 shows major planning areas. The Character Areas/Use of Land Element provides the specific policy direction for development within major planning areas based on the character of such areas. Thatcher's planning areas were established to guide the character, land use mix, densities, and intensities appropriate for each area and include:

- **Growth Areas:** Areas with large amounts of vacant or developable land located inside the Town limits and within the Thatcher Designated Growth Area.
- **Revitalization/Redevelopment Areas:** Areas of the built environment in need of revitalization or redevelopment.
- **Infill Areas:** Areas of the built environment within the planning areas that have few vacant parcels available for development.
- **Character Areas:** Planning areas with a distinct character based on existing development. (See Character Areas and Use of Land Element).

Exhibit 3: Thatcher Growth Areas



Legend



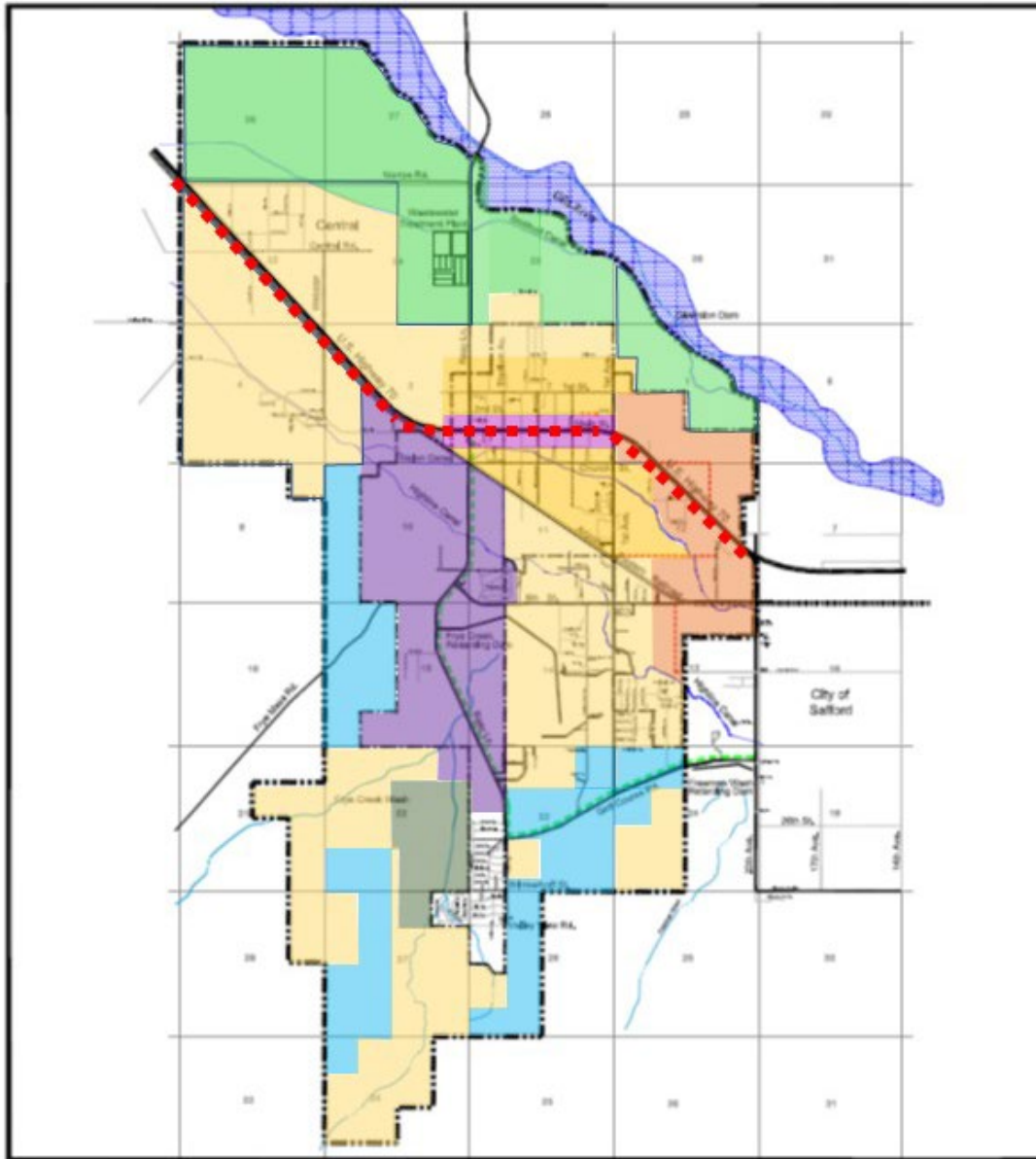
-  Northeast Gateway
-  Reay

Exhibit 4: Thatcher Planning Areas



Legend

- Rural
- Neighborhoods
- Golf
- Town Core
- Town Center
- Northeast Gateway
- Reay
- Reserve (State Trust and Military Land)
- Highway 70 Commerce Corridor



Table 2

## Thatcher Major Planning Areas Concept/Intent

Planning Area	Area Type	Concept/Intent
<b>Northeast Gateway</b>	Growth Area	This <b>growth area</b> serves as the eastern gateway of Thatcher sharing its eastern boundary with the City of Safford. This character area is identified as a growth area and encompasses the area of Town bounded by the existing Town limits on the north, east and south and 1st Avenue on the west. The Northeast growth area spans from 20th avenue to first avenue and includes the automobile-oriented segment of the Highway 70 corridor as well as the 8th Street and the 20th Avenue corridors.
<b>Reay</b>	Growth Area	This <b>growth area</b> encompasses the area of Town within the existing Town limits along Reay Corridor bounded on the north by the Town Center/Main Street planning area, on the east by the Town Core and the Neighborhoods and portions of State Trust lands, on the south by the Neighborhoods, the Mt. Graham Golf Club and State Trust Land and on the west by Neighborhoods and State Trust lands. Suburban in character, this growth area supports employment, industry, commerce and higher density residential uses along the Reay Corridor and residential uses.
<b>Highway 70 Commerce Corridor</b>	Revitalization Redevelopment & Infill	The Highway 70 Commerce Corridor traverses Thatcher supports revitalization, redevelopment, and infill in 3 distinct segments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Northeast Gateway:</b> Auto-oriented higher intensity segment within the Northeast Gateway Growth Area;</li> <li><b>Main Street:</b> this segment of Highway 70 located within the Town Center area is pedestrian-oriented and functions as Thatcher's Main Street</li> <li><b>Northwest Gateway:</b> this segment of Highway 70 continues to support commerce while retaining the rural character of surrounding areas.</li> </ol>
<b>Town Center/ Main Street</b>	Revitalization, Redevelopment, and infill	The Town Center functions as the heart of Downtown Thatcher and supports Highway 70 as a Main Street pedestrian-oriented corridor. Providing a human-scale and comfortable atmosphere for strolling, site-seeing, and shopping, the segment of Highway 70 within this area is designed as a destination corridor that will evolve into Thatcher's premier shopping, restaurant, and entertainment destination for residents and a "must see" magnet for visitors. A variety of unique eating experiences that reinforce the unique character of Thatcher is intended to complement the range of specialty, locally own shops, and stores. Restaurants and cafes along Main Street and within the Town Center cater to local residents and attracts the attention of visitors and guests.

Table 2

**Thatcher Major Planning Areas Concept/Intent  
(Continued)**

Planning Area	Area Type	Concept/Intent
<b>Town Core</b>	Planning Area	The Town Core includes residential uses, established neighborhoods, the Eastern Arizona College, schools, and recreational areas and provides a transition from higher density/intensity planning areas such as Growth Areas and the Town Center to the lower density Neighborhoods.
<b>Neighborhoods</b>	Planning Area	The Neighborhoods supports a variety of residential densities reflecting the suburban character of the area in which they are located. A mixed of uses are permitted as part of a TND. Development takes place either in the form of subdivisions or is master planned providing transitions along its edges in a manner compatible with existing abutting residential development. Defined as complete neighborhoods, the Neighborhoods Planning area also include schools, churches, parks, recreation and other public facilities, open space and other uses servicing Thatcher's neighborhoods and provide connectivity to walkaways, bike routes, and trails. Neighborhood commercial is permitted along arterial roads, or at the intersection of arterial and collector roads with appropriate landscape buffers to protect adjacent lower density residential uses. Areas located outside of the Town limits require annexation prior to initiating the Development Review Process.
<b>Development Reserve</b>	State Trust Land/Military Land Planning Area	Development Reserve lands includes State Trust land managed by ASLD and Military lands. Due to land ownership, lack of infrastructure, and annexation requirements, development within this planning area is not anticipated within the planning horizon of this General Plan. A variety of temporary uses are available true land leases, easements and temporary permits including recreation and grazing permits.
<b>Rural</b>	Planning Area	Rural in character, this planning area along the Gila River Corridor supports agriculture as well as community-based, sustainable eco-tourism, encouraging bird watching, hiking, nature study, and other forms of passive recreation in proximity to the Gila River Corridor. River restoration is pursued as a regional long-range strategy.
<b>Golf Course</b>	Planning Area	The Mt. Graham Golf Club owned and operated by the City of Safford is a recreation destination within the Thatcher Designated Planning Area. Although the Town has no jurisdiction, as surrounding areas outside of Thatcher boundaries are annexed and development occurs, coordination with the City of Safford will encourage land use compatibility to support this regional recreation destination.



## Growth Areas Goals and Policies

### GOAL 1: Direct growth to areas suitable for development.

#### POLICIES

1. Prioritize growth in areas with planned or existing infrastructure.
2. Take a balanced approach to conservation to ensure sustainability and fiscal viability goals are met.
3. Identify growth areas that are conducive to multi-modal transportation options.
4. Focus new higher intensity development in key identified growth areas that will encourage mixed-use development and the use of transit within the community such as Highway 70.

### GOAL 2: Align growth areas with economic development priorities.

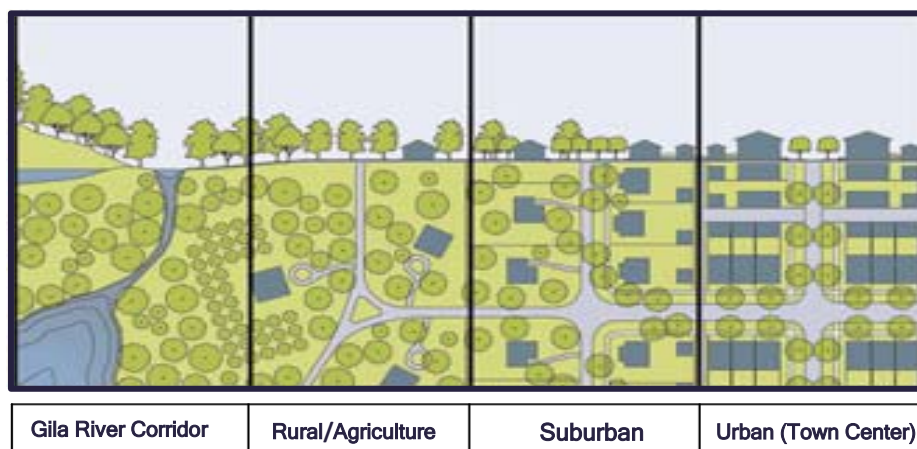
#### POLICIES:

1. Promote use of employment land resources to maximize jobs and revenue.
2. Promote a balanced mix of uses at major community nodes and gateways, in neighborhood nodes (corner commercial clusters), and along key corridors as Highway 70, as well as in industrial areas.
3. Partner with landowners to rezone Growth Areas to a mixed-use category to encourage their development.
4. Establish a Town Center area that capitalizes from the proximity of major employers and supports the needs of Eastern Arizona College.

### GOAL 3: Manage growth to support a compatible land use mix that reflect the character of Thatcher.

#### POLICIES

1. Require higher density development in growth areas to reflect the human scale and character of Thatcher and respect the character of adjacent residential areas.
2. Protect residential and agricultural areas by providing appropriate buffers designed to define the edges through the incorporation of density/intensity, height transitions and landscape buffers.
3. Require development north of Highway 70 to transition in density and intensity using a transect approach as a planning tool as illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Density transition from the Gila River Corridor to the more urban Town Center.**

**GOAL 4: Manage growth to support wellness and healthy, active lifestyles.**

**POLICIES**

1. Require new mixed-use, commercial and employment development in designated growth areas and along Highway 70 to support walking and bicycle use by incorporating courtyards and plazas, walkable streetscapes, and bicycle parking.
2. Require site design to provide connectivity to sidewalks, trails, multi-use paths, bicycle routes, schools, parks, and recreation areas.

**GOAL 5: Encourage the utilization of planning tools that result in compact development and incorporate high quality site design and open space.**

**POLICIES**

1. Offer the preparation of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) as an option for mixed-use development requiring a rezoning.
2. Require the preparation of a TND for development in designated growth areas or along Highway 70 proposing more than one land use or higher density/intensity when adjacent to lower density residential, active agricultural lands, or the Gila River Corridor.



**GOAL 6: Develop funding methods to proportionately distribute infrastructure costs associated with new development in designated growth areas.**

#### POLICIES

1. Coordinate public funding of infrastructure and financing planning through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) with privately financed development activity that meets the Town's economic development goals within designated growth areas.
2. Encourage the use of special improvement or community facility districts, development agreements, dedicated tax or user fees, or other public/private infrastructure financing techniques to support funding efforts for specific development related infrastructure improvements as appropriate.
3. Require new development to fund its proportionate share of the costs associated with the provision of public services to accommodate the project in conformance with all applicable goals and policies included in the Cost of Development Element.





## CHARACTER AREAS/USE OF LAND ELEMENT

The Character Areas Element establishes goals, policies and implementation strategies that will guide the Town's use of land, physical form, and development in conformance with the character of each area. Intended to direct orderly growth, this element designates the location and extent of public and private uses of land and intensity, and distribution of land uses in an all-inclusive manner. The Thatcher's Character Areas map provides an adequate supply of land for the anticipated growth for the 20-year planning horizon. This Character Areas/Use of Land Element guides the decisions of the Town Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and Planning staff in directing the future growth and development of the Town through the year 2040.

Based on public input, Thatcher citizens believe in a balanced community with educational excellence, safe neighborhoods with ample recreational provisions and fair-shared responsibility for the cost of infrastructure to support new development. This is achieved utilizing a comprehensive, systematic and integrating character areas approach.

### 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 requires a flexible land use approach that incorporates safe, efficient, and multimodal transportation, an integrated mix of uses and services, and the open spaces, recreation, parks, entertainment, and other amenities necessary to reflect a strong and well-defined sense of place to live, grow, work, learn, shop, play, and age.

### 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.

Recent market trends indicate an increase of more compact housing types. In addition, the presence of Eastern Arizona College as a major regional employer also requires a look into the housing types needed to support the college. New trends are emerging. Remote working is becoming a trend for many businesses. Many communities are housing quality workers seeking quality environments to live. While working remotely, they can contribute to the local economy. Thatcher's market is not fully meeting these demands, and the increasing competition for units in denser, mixed-use neighborhoods paired with the recent economic downturns may increase the demand for these housing products, impacting use of land.



## Thatcher Community Desires

During the Imagine Thatcher public participation program, the community voiced the needs to:

- Establish Thatcher as a major gateway in the Gila Valley region;
- Provide a larger diversity of housing types for different income ranges, including married students;
- Revitalize Highway 70 and define Highway 70 as a Commerce Corridor with distinct segments (Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor, Main Street and West Gateway Rural Segment);
- Revitalize the Town Center and Town Core areas;
- 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;
- Increase the Town's retail and revenue base;
- Attract high wage employment and industry;
- Diversify the Town's economic development portfolio to ensure long-range livability;
- Provide opportunities to capitalize on the regions natural and scenic value while supporting small local businesses that would benefit from tourism industry;
- Restore the Gila River Corridor and explore opportunities for regional recreation, eco-tourism, geo-tourism, and adventure tourism;
- Support and retain current major employers and local businesses;
- Retain Thatcher's youth; and
- Provide high quality public services.

At the convergence of these trends, there is an opportunity to create a healthy community capable of sustaining new growth and meeting the demand for location-efficient mixed-use places that support regional economic growth strategies and increase 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 a diversity of housing types suited for different generations and incomes.

These must be achieved while maintaining the distinct character that makes Thatcher unique. This Character Area/Use of Land Element addresses these complexities in an integrated manner. It provides a flexible land use framework that supports the community desires and emerging trends and assists the Town and the community in attaining its shared vision. Such vision is achieved by identifying the distinct character areas that make Thatcher unique while enhancing the Town's identity, character and sense of place.



## Place-Based Character Area Design Framework

Thatcher includes places defined as neighborhoods, highway corridors, employment centers, river corridor, etc. - each expresses a mix of land use, physical forms, and connectivity that reflect and enhances the unique identity of its corresponding character area. Along with the General Plan vision of healthy and active lifestyles, complete neighborhoods with access to amenities and services, 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 Thatcher'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 the Town of Thatcher, 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, learning, shopping, playing - in a manner which reflects the local values, historical form, and attitudes that make up Thatcher.

## Thatcher's Character Area's Approach Intent

This Character Areas/Use of Land Element preserves Thatcher's agricultural character by providing appropriate areas for municipal growth and supporting thoughtful design decisions throughout the Thatcher Planning Area.

The primary objective of this approach is to preserve Thatcher's history, character, identity and sense of place by valuing, respecting, and enhancing the character that makes the Town unique which includes the distinct characteristics of each of the Town's character areas identified in this element. Differences may be the result of development patterns such as urban, suburban, and rural, topography, age and style of housing, the built and natural environments, land use patterns, landscapes, street patterns, open space or streetscapes.



## Character Areas as Growth Management Tools

As growth occurs, land absorption will be guided in a manner consistent with General Plan goals. Although residential development will remain the largest user of land, the Character Areas map is intended to reflect the established development pattern of Thatcher along with recently approved new development. The Character Areas map translate the goals and policies of this Character Areas/Use of Land Element, into a desired, balanced community.

## Existing Land Use Patterns

The Town of Thatcher grew from a grid system where a range of land uses exists. Development of the Town spread primarily south towards the Pinaleño Mountains and west toward Safford. US 70 highway runs through the Town serving as the area's primary transportation and commercial corridor. Revitalization of the US 70 highway corridor is a major focus of this general plan update. The Highway 70 Revitalization Element addresses more specifically the intent of this area. Another area of focus of this General Plan update is the establishment of a Town Center. A mix of land uses, including single and multi-family housing exist in Thatcher with a large portion designated for public/institutional land uses, three blocks of which represent the Eastern Arizona College Campus.

Residential growth continues to occur throughout Thatcher, mainly in the northern half of Town, which includes areas around Eastern Arizona College. The only area to see no residential growth is the commercial area along the western edge of Town.

Employment land uses are focused primarily along the segment of US Highway 70 identified as Main Street, which stretches from 1<sup>st</sup> avenue on the east the Town's limit on the west, and at several nodes through the center of the planning area.

The Thatcher planning area is approximately 18.8 square miles or 12,032 acres. Based on a year 2055 population assumption of 10,000, including anticipated growth added to population projections based on Census data in the planning area, demands for future land uses will likely include: Residential- 1,461 acres; Commercial- 144 acres; and Industrial- 64 acres. These figures are general guides relating the use of land based on existing and projected intensities of development. Thatcher's current build-out capacity of the planning area far exceeds the projected population of 10,000. Additional planning by Graham County and the Town of Thatcher will serve to better define use of land and development patterns.



## Existing Land Uses

For consistency, the existing land use inventory utilizes the land use designations adopted in the previous General Plan as applicable. The existing land uses within the Town include:

### Agriculture – AG

The General Plan recognizes farming and other agriculture activities as one of the principal land uses in the planning area. Agricultural uses have secondary effects to immediately adjacent properties making lower intensity land uses such as low-density residential appropriate transitions adjacent to agriculture. The density range of the Agriculture category, in accordance with statutory requirements, is up to 1 residence per acre; however, the continuation of lower densities as required by existing zoning is supported. The largest contiguous expanse of land currently used for agriculture include areas:

- South of the Gila River Corridor in North Thatcher;
- Bounded on the north by the Town limits and the Arizona Eastern Railroad, on the south by the Highline Canal, and on the west by residences and Eastern Arizona College;
- Located in Central Thatcher;
- Abutting the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor; and
- Located in the West Gateway of Thatcher outside of the current Town limits and inside the Thatcher Planning Area.

### Very Low Density Residential (VLDR)

The Very Low-Density Residential category continues to promote the continuation of the rural character that is common across much of the planning area. Rural areas may include farming and small-scale livestock operations along with low-density residential uses. The density range of this category is 1.0 dwelling units per acre or less.

### Low Density Residential (LDR)

The Low-Density Residential designation accommodates a range of residential products including semi-rural large lot development with generous distances to streets and between residential dwelling units and a viable semi-rural character setting. Limited livestock privileges may be a part of this character for areas where lot sizes are a minimum of one acre. Low-density residential areas comprise most of the residential land in the Town. Smaller lot sizes, less than 10,000 square feet within planned neighborhoods are also supported. The density range of this category is 1.0 to 5.0 dwelling units per acre.

### Medium Density Residential – MDR

The Medium Density Residential category provides for planned, single-family residential neighborhoods with a mixture of dwelling unit types, which include significant open space, recreation, and cultural opportunities, including schools, churches and neighborhood facilities. Medium density residential developments are expected to immediately create infrastructure



demands for roadways and utilities. The density range of this category is 5.0 to 10.0 dwelling units per acre.

### High Density Residential (HDR)

The High-Density Residential designation provides for multi-family dwellings that may be multi-story buildings. This category includes townhouses, condominiums, and apartments. Substantial common open space, recreational amenities and on-site support facilities are included to serve residents. High-density uses are appropriate in mixed-use developments. The density range of this category is 10.0 or more dwelling units per acre.

### Neighborhood Commercial – NC

The Neighborhood Commercial land use category provides for commercial nodes within the Town. The intent is to provide neighborhood and community scale shopping, offices, medical facilities, and subordinate multi-family residential uses which incorporate pedestrian, and neighborhood needs through site planning, architecture, access, lighting and parking design. Single-family residential uses are not supported.

### Commercial – C

The Commercial category provides for larger scale commercial, including Regional Commercial uses that serve the greater Thatcher area. This category would provide for larger scale retail stores, heavy equipment dealers, hotels/motels, automobile service and subordinate multi-family residential uses which incorporate pedestrian, and neighborhood needs through site planning, architecture, access, lighting and parking design. Single-family residential uses are not supported.

### Town Center Mixed Use – TCMU

The Town Center Mixed Use designation is intended to foster a mixture of commercial retail, service and residential uses within the same building and/or project site located within Thatcher's core area. Higher density residential (such as apartments and condominiums) is expected in Town Center Mixed Use projects. The density range of this category is up to 10.0 or more dwelling units per acre.

### Employment – E

The Employment land use designation provides areas for the development and perpetuation of employment activity involving offices, manufacturing, machining, warehousing, freighting, wholesale, and retail activities and support uses. Areas supporting Employment have adequate transportation and infrastructure access with an emphasis on minimal conflict with existing adjacent land uses.

### Public/Institutional – PI

The Public and Institutional category provides for public, semi-public or institutional uses such as school campuses and their attendant uses (playgrounds, ballfields, parking lots, etc.), hospitals, churches, public library facilities, Town offices, public cemeteries, infrastructure, utility



sites, and water treatment facilities. Public institutional uses are permitted by right in most zoning districts. Therefore, they are not singled out in the Character Areas maps.

### Parks/Open Space – POS

The Parks and Open-Space category designation refers to open-space sites and corridors intended for public recreation and resource conservation. The Future Land Use map included in the previous General Plan did not locate future neighborhood park sites. This General Plan recognizes the need for parks, recreational areas and open areas throughout the Town, which add to the attractiveness of the community, the quality of life of the residents and the expectation that park sites will be reserved and developed within new development projects or as needed. Parks and recreation facilities are permitted by right in all residential zoning districts. Therefore, future parks are permitted in the Neighborhoods Character Area.

### Vacant Land

Within Town boundaries, vacant, developable parcels occur as: zoned and platted vacant lots; zoned, unplanted parcels, and undeveloped school sites. It also occurs in the form of infill in the Town Center, Town Core, and Highway 70 Corridor character areas. Outside the Town boundary and within the Thatcher Planning Area, vacant land requires annexation. Once annexed, it becomes part of the Town land inventory under a zoning district equivalent to its current zoning in Graham County as per state law.





## Thatcher's Zoning Districts

The Town of Thatcher regulates use of land through the *Town of Thatcher Zoning Ordinance* adopted in 2013 and amended in 2019. The Zoning Ordinance includes the following zoning districts and overlay zones:

- **Single Residence Zoning Districts**
  - "R1-43" Agricultural Residential Zoning District
  - "R1-22" Low Density Residential Zoning District
  - "R1-10" Low Density Residential Zoning District
  - "R1-8" Medium Density Residential Zoning District
- **Multiple Residence Zoning Districts**
  - "R-2" Medium Density Residential Zoning District
  - "R-3" Medium Density Residential Zoning District
  - "R-4" High Density Residential Zoning District
- **Commercial Zoning Districts**
  - "NC" Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
  - "C-1" General Commercial Zoning District
  - "C-2" Highway Commercial Zoning District
  - "MU" Mixed Use Zoning District
- **Industrial Zoning Districts**
  - "I-1" Light Industrial Zoning District
  - "I-2" General Industrial Zoning District
- **"MH" Manufactured Home Zoning District**
- **"OS" Open Space Zoning District**
- **"P-I" Public - Institutional Zoning District**
- **Overlay Zoning Districts:**
  - "TND" Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay Zoning District
  - "RV" Recreational Vehicle Overlay Zoning District





## Character Areas Approach

A character area is a portion of the Town with distinct development patterns, land uses, densities or intensities, development potential and overall characteristics that differ from neighboring areas. Together, these character areas create context and further the General Plan. Thatcher character areas are based on the latest land inventory conducted as part of the *Background and Current Conditions* assessment and the input received during the public engagement process of the General Plan.

The character area approach achieves and maintains the high quality of life valued by the community expressed during the visioning process by seamlessly integrating Thatcher's built and natural environments, protecting established neighborhoods, encouraging compatible uses, supporting healthy and active lifestyles, and providing the foundation for a vibrant economy. The character area approach:

- Integrates land uses, physical assets, and amenities, including parks, streetscapes, public art, and public spaces, in a seamless manner to encourage social interaction and support Thatcher's distinct identity.
- Incorporates and maintains the high-quality infrastructure required to sustain the healthy and safe operation of the Town's functions.
- Supports an economic structure that contributes to a healthy and sustainable livable and viable community with a high quality of life.
- Understands and protects the sustaining functions of the environment and its relevance as an economic development tool while promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- Promotes strong social networks and offers opportunities for social exchange and the sharing of skills, knowledge, resources, and assets.
- Values community institutions that sustain and support each of the dimensions described above.

This character area approach supports a development strategy that fosters economic resiliency. Such development encourages walking and cycling, a mix of residential, employment, and commercial uses, and offers a diversity of housing types suited for different generations and incomes while maintaining the distinct small-town character of Thatcher.



**Figure 3: Creating Quality Public Spaces**

The character area approach provides a flexible land use framework that considers emerging trends and market fluctuations and assists in achieving the community vision by protecting existing and future neighborhoods, supporting the built, social, and natural environments, sustaining a healthy economy and maintaining the community's public spaces. The identification of character areas assists in defining infill strategies for areas within the community that require careful attention. These strategies include:

- Defining major gateways to convey a sense of arrival to Thatcher and major destinations within the Town;
- Developing the Town Center as the vibrant heart of Thatcher;
- Identifying areas that can sustain growth including large tracts of economically developable land and areas that can support infill;
- Prioritizing areas in need of revitalization, redevelopment, or repurposing; and
- Identifying large tracts of developable land that because of land ownership, such as State Trust lands managed by the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and federally managed Military lands require long-range planning processes and coordination with their respective state and federal agencies prior to becoming available for development.
- Identifying lands that require annexation before development can occur.



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

This character area approach recognizes three types of planning approaches to manage growth: areas with growth potential; planning areas with redevelopment, revitalization and infill potential, and gateways. Thatcher growth areas and planning areas are described in the Growth Areas Element. Character areas are defined in this Element. Gateways are defined in the Connectivity, Access, and Mobility Element.

The Character Area descriptions and guidance included in this element serve as the guide for future development approvals, conform to the planning area concept and intent included in **Table 2: Thatcher Major Planning Areas** and support the goals and policies included in this and other elements of this General Plan.



*New Development must Support the Scenic Quality of the Town through the provision of View Corridors.*

## Thatcher Character Areas

The Town of Thatcher is traversed by a major spine road, US Highway 70 (Highway 70). This major roadway divides the Town into North and South Thatcher. North Thatcher offers a gradient of densities and intensities that transition from a green belt of environmentally sensitive lands along the Gila River Corridor to large tracts of agricultural land, followed by suburban lower density development with the highest densities/intensities along the Highway 70 Corridor within the more urban Town Center planning area. A transect planning approach can support a vibrant North Thatcher that balances the built and natural environments by supporting transitions appropriate for the scale of that area of the Town. **Figure 2** included in the Growth Element illustrates the land patterns appropriate for North Thatcher.

### Rural

The Town of Thatcher Planning Area is bounded on the north by the Gila River Corridor. For the most part, agricultural lands abut this corridor. The Gila River Corridor offers opportunities for community-based sustainable ecotourism by supporting efforts that focus on outdoor activities in conformance with the Gila River Linear Park & Trail City of Safford and Town of Thatcher Conceptual Master Plan completed in June 2020. Land abutting the Gila River Corridor is rural in character and supports agriculture, R1-43 residential development and uses permitted in the current zoning under agricultural lands. In addition, this area permits community-based ecotourism, encouraging bird watching, hiking, nature study, and other forms of passive recreation in proximity to the Gila River Corridor. The revitalization of Highway 70 could support hotel and hospitality and small locally owned businesses that offer asset tours for bird watching, nature study, hiking, biking, and other forms of passive recreation along the Gila River Corridor. Agriculture/rural land uses will continue to abut the Gila River Corridor as provided on Exhibit 5.





### Town Center/Main Street

This character area is envisioned as the heart of Downtown Thatcher and supports Highway 70 as a Main Street pedestrian-oriented corridor. Providing a human-scale and comfortable atmosphere for strolling, site-seeing, and shopping, the segment of Highway 70 within this area is designed as a destination corridor that will evolve into Thatcher’s premier shopping, restaurant, and entertainment destination for residents and a “must see” destination for visitors.

A variety of unique eating experiences that reinforce the distinct character of Thatcher is intended to complement the range of specialty, locally own shops, and stores. Restaurants and cafes along Main Street and within the Town Center cater to local residents and college students and attracts the attention of visitors and guests.

Main Street includes institutional and public land uses including Thatcher’s Town Hall and Government Center, the Eastern Arizona College, and schools. Uses permitted within the Town Center include residential (R1-8 and higher density residential) mixed use (MU), commercial (C1 and C-2) with appropriate landscape buffers to protect existing residential uses. Public and institutional land uses such as schools, libraries, churches, civic uses, and parks are also permitted within the Town Center/Main Street Character Area.

Urban density and intensity transitions gradually from the Main Street Highway Corridor to the edge of the Town Center planning area. Guidelines for Main Street revitalization are provided in the Highway 70/Main Street Revitalization Corridor Element.



## Northeast Gateway

This character area serves as the eastern Gateway of Thatcher sharing its eastern boundary with the City of Safford. This character area is identified as a growth area and encompasses the area of Town bounded by the existing Town limits on the north, east and south and 1st Avenue on the west. The Northeast character area spans from 20th Avenue to 1st Avenue and includes the automobile-oriented segment of the Highway 70 corridor as well as the 8th Street the 20th Avenue corridors.

South of Highway 70, the Northeast Gateway includes tracts of agricultural land uses currently zoned commercial. The portion of this character area south of 8th Avenue, includes lands near the Mt. Graham Regional Medical Center located in Safford, Arizona. Opportunities exist to work in partnership with Eastern Arizona College (EAC), North Arizona University (NAU), University of Arizona (UA), City of Safford and Graham County to attract additional medical industries to this area as well as technology and innovation uses offering opportunities for local startup incubators for emerging medical and clean industries. TNDs appropriate entitlement tool for this area to accommodate a mixed of uses.

The segment of the Highway 70 Corridor within this character area supports a variety of hotel and hospitality, automobile-oriented shopping, services, mixed-use, employment, higher density residential uses and other uses permitted under C-2 zoning, provided that such uses include appropriate transitions to abutting lower density development to protect the character of established residential areas.

## Reay

This character area is identified as a growth area and encompasses the area of Town within the existing Town limits along Reay Corridor bounded on the north by the Town Center/Main Street Character Area, on the east by the Town Core, the Neighborhoods character areas and portions of State Trust lands, on the south by the Neighborhoods Character Area, the Mt. Graham Golf Club and State Trust lands and on the west by Neighborhoods and State Trust lands.

This area is intended to be suburban in character and support residential, high-density residential, and commercial uses along the Reay Corridor with opportunities for employment uses west of the Town Core Character Area and industry uses south of 8th Avenue and Frye Mesa Road. Current zoning permits C-2, I-1, and I-2 and various residential densities along the corridor.

This character area also includes green riparian areas along Frye Creek Wash. A TND that clusters development allowing existing riparian areas as open space is a recommended tool for development in these areas. The existing shared path will continue to be the major bicycle/pedestrian shared path circulator throughout the Town. All new development is required to provide connectivity to the share path.



## Town Core

Located south of the Town Center/Main Street character area, the Town Core includes established neighborhoods, Thatcher High School, Eastern Arizona College (EAC) campus, including NAU at Eastern Arizona College, the Nursing Education Center, the Small Business Development Center, the Fine Arts Auditorium, and the Guitteau Gymnasium. In addition, this character area includes the Town Cemetery, the Thatcher Splash Park, the Herb Winsor Ballpark, and the Thatcher Skate Park. With only few parcels available for infill development, this character area will continue to develop to reflect the existing densities/intensities characteristics of Thatcher's core.

During the visioning process, community members mentioned the need for a community center including aquatics. With its strong education, recreation, and community-oriented focus, Thatcher's Town Core offers the ideal location for a community center that could be planned in conjunction with existing regional recreational facilities to create a recreation destination hub. Current zoning permits R1-8, R-3, C-2, and R1-43.





## Neighborhoods

When people and businesses consider relocation, major considerations include access to neighborhood amenities and services such as quality education, churches, parks, and convenient shopping. Thatcher's neighborhoods offer access to a variety of amenities and services and include connectivity to quality open space throughout the Town. Thatcher's neighborhoods are served by quality neighborhood amenities and services and support connectivity via pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular modes.

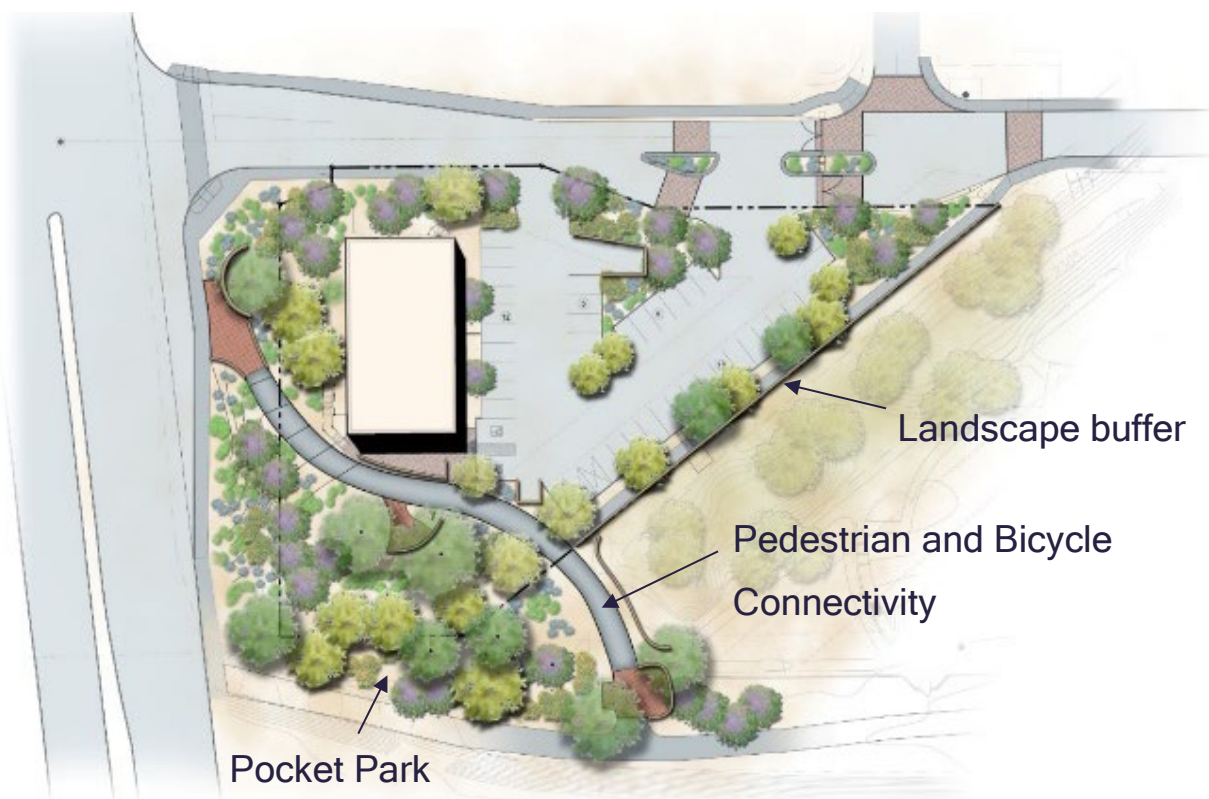
Quality neighborhoods are key components of a healthy community, define Thatcher, and support the economic vitality and long-term resilience of the Town. Thatcher neighborhoods are safe, tranquil, and aesthetically pleasing "complete neighborhoods" providing:

- Quality housing choices for all age groups and income ranges in a setting that includes walkable streets, drought-tolerant/low water use landscapes and shade-providing trees;
- A quality street network that offers multimodal access to jobs, schools, services, parks, recreation, open space and other neighborhood amenities;
- Excellent schools, parks, recreation, and other neighborhood amenities and services; and
- Trail connectivity to natural open space.





The Neighborhoods character area permits a variety of residential densities. New development provides transitions along its edges in a manner compatible with existing abutting residential development. Compatibility with existing residential development is achieved through the use of landscaped buffers or heights and density/intensity transitions. Schools and other public facilities, churches, parks, recreation, and open space are permitted within residential areas. Neighborhood commercial is permitted along arterial roads, or at the intersection of arterial and collector roads with appropriate landscape buffers to protect adjacent lower density residential uses.



**Figures 4: Neighborhood Commercial along an arterial road providing a landscape buffer, a pocket park, and trail connectivity to adjacent residential uses.**

## Highway 70 Corridor West

Development along the segment of Highway 70 west of the Town Center outside of Town limits will require annexation prior to occur. It is anticipated that this segment of the Highway corridor will be more rural in character than the pedestrian-oriented Town Center/Main Street and the automobile-oriented Northeastern Gateway segment of the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor. There is opportunity to cleanup lots fronting the highway to enhance the western gateway into the Town.



Figures 5: Example of informal landscapes appropriate for Highway 70 Corridor West.

## Golf Course

Includes the Mt Graham golf course and club house a major regional recreation destination. This area is currently outside of the Town Boundary. Development abutting this area must provide appropriate buffers to support this character area.

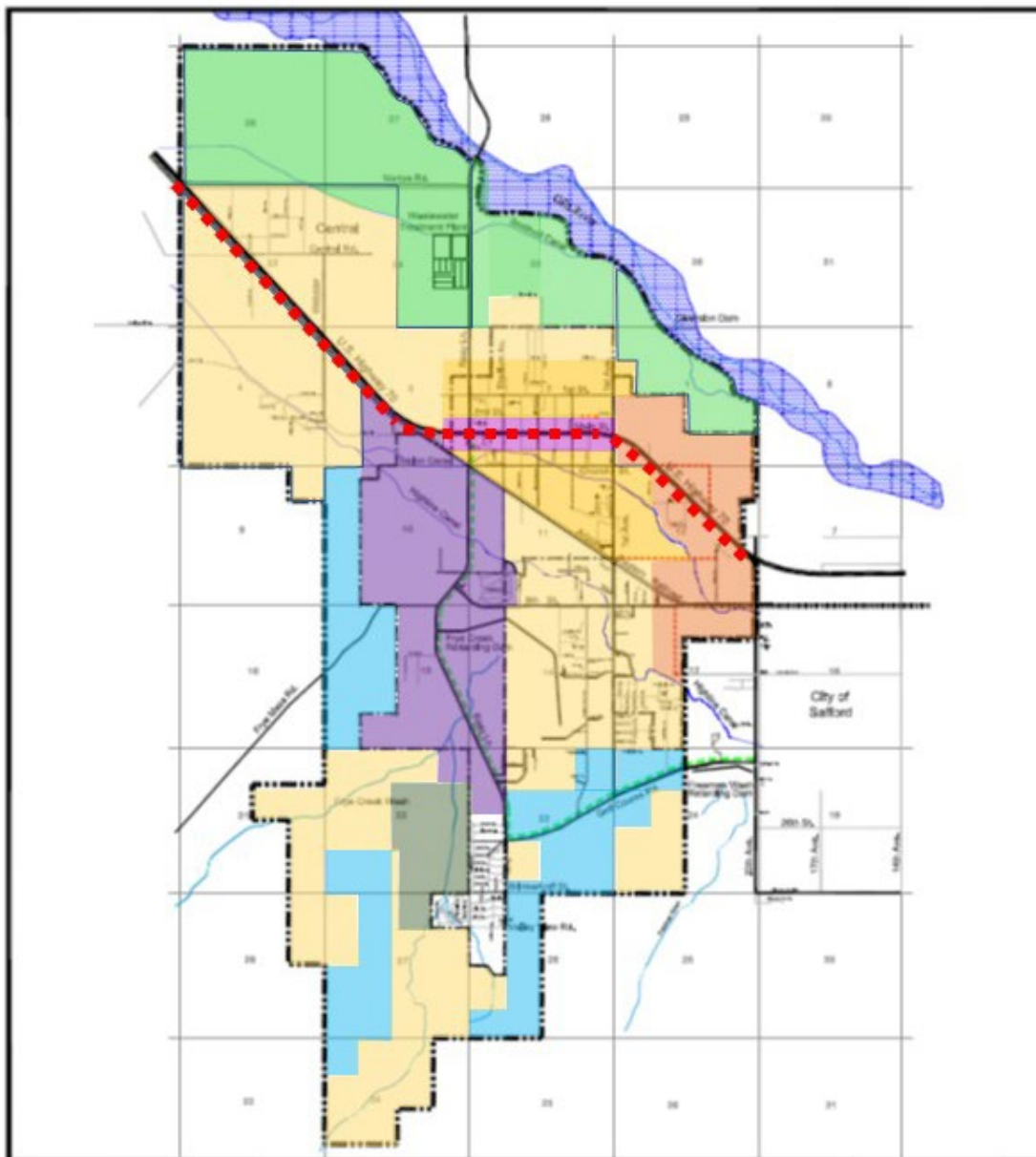


*Mt. Graham Golf Course and Club House, Thatcher, Arizona*

## Reserve (State Trust and Military Land)

This character area includes State Trust lands managed by ASLD and military lands located outside of the Town corporate limits. Development within these lands must respectively comply with all applicable state and federal requirements. Development of these lands is not anticipated within the planning horizon of this General Plan.

Exhibit 5: Thatcher Character Areas



Legend

- Rural
- Neighborhoods
- Golf
- Town Core
- Town Center
- Northeast Gateway
- Reay
- Reserve (State Trust and Military Land)
- Highway 70 Commerce Corridor



## Thatcher Character Areas Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Address growth management, economic development, infrastructure expansion and use of land in an integrated manner to ensure the long-range livability and viability of the Town and the Gila Valley region.**

### POLICIES

1. Ensure land use planning, rezoning and land development approvals go hand-in-hand with infrastructure planning, financing and construction and support the economic development strategy included in the Economic Development Element.
2. Include the Town's business community in planning efforts.
3. Continue to partner with neighboring jurisdictions, including the City of Safford and Graham County, to ensure that development outside of the incorporated Town boundaries is consistent with the Thatcher General Plan Update.
4. Implement consistent review and permitting procedures for all development application via the Development Review Process.

**GOAL 2: Proactively manage and direct growth to character areas suitable for residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, and other land uses.**

### POLICIES

1. Manage growth in a manner consistent with the intent of each designated character area delineated in Exhibit 5 and defined in this element.
2. Permit public facilities, utilities, and other community-oriented uses in all character areas provided that such uses are compatible with the character of the area in which they are located and conform to all applicable zoning regulations.
3. Ensure quality growth and development through the implementation of zoning and development regulations and community design standards that further the direction of this general plan.
4. Encourage lower residential densities towards the Neighborhood Character Area (Exhibit 5) encompassing the south, west and north portions of the Thatcher Designated Planning Area.
5. Continue to monitor development proposals in the Thatcher Designated Planning Area and north of the Gila River and coordinate planning and infrastructure needs of new development with Graham County and the City of Safford.
6. Require development along Highway 70 Commerce Corridor to conform to all applicable goals, policies and design guidelines included in the Highway 70 Revitalization Element of this General Plan.



**GOAL 3: Preserve the agricultural heritage of the Town of Thatcher for future generations.**

**POLICIES**

1. Support the continuing viability of agricultural operations in the most suitable portions of the Thatcher Designated Planning Area.
2. Continue to promote Thatcher's agricultural character.
3. Discourage development that directly diminishes the viability of prime agricultural land.
4. Ensure compatibility between proposed development and existing agricultural lands by integrating appropriate buffers in site design such as landscape areas, linear parks, building height and massing transitions, open space, or other techniques supporting the transect approach illustrated in Figure 2 of the Growth Element.
5. Identify incentives for the long-term preservation of prime agricultural areas.
6. Allow agricultural conversion of agricultural lands on areas with urban densities/intensities such as the Town Center/Main Street, the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor, the Town Core, and the Northeast Gateway character areas.

**GOAL 4: Maintain existing neighborhoods and residential areas and support revitalization and preservation of historic buildings.**

**POLICIES**

1. Support revitalization and preservation of mature housing.
2. Pursue demolition of existing structures when rehabilitation is not possible.
3. Consider relocating existing public housing structures in need of rehabilitation located along Highway 70 to areas within the Neighborhood Character Area (Exhibit 5).
4. Ensure that residential areas within the Neighborhoods Character Area inside Town boundaries are safe and attractive places to live and promote healthy active lifestyles by supporting pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.
5. Encourage property owner investments in existing residences and voluntary property maintenance.



**GOAL 5: Expand commercial and employment uses that support local and regional needs to ensure the long-range viability of the Town.**

#### POLICIES

1. Encourage commercial and employment uses to ensure long-term vitality of the Town.
2. Promote high quality development opportunities that enhance Thatcher's employment and retail base.
3. Reserve prime locations for future commercial/office development.
4. Support higher residential densities and mixed-use in proximity to and in coordination with Eastern Arizona College to support this major employer.
5. Require new employment and office uses to:
  - a. Integrate retail, employment and mixed used where possible, feasible, and appropriate;
  - b. Adhere to consistent design standards and site design that support the character of Thatcher;
  - c. Reflect the specific massing, scale and height of the Character Area in which such development is located;
  - d. Provide landscaped buffers to lower density development to protect the character of established residential neighborhoods;
  - e. Support Highway 70 revitalization in conformance with the direction included in the Highway 70 Corridor Element;
  - f. Support healthy and active lifestyles by providing connectivity to pedestrian, bicycle and trail systems;
  - g. Incorporate view corridors in site design to protect the views and scenic value of the Town; and
  - h. Contribute to the healthy growth of the Town and the Gila Valley region.

**GOAL 6: Revitalize Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as a premium destination.**

#### POLICIES

1. Revitalize Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as a destination in conformance with all applicable guidelines and direction provided in the Highway 70 Commercial Corridor Element.



## Community Character Goals and Policies

**GOAL 7: Maintain a clean, well-kept image for the Town.**

### POLICIES

1. Implement all applicable guidelines and regulations designed to enhance public and private properties' appearance.
2. Improve the visual quality of all areas of Town by enforcing all zoning ordinance regulations related to outdoor storage and blight abatement.
3. Initiate volunteer teams within the community to upgrade and maintain landscaping in visible areas of Town.
4. Incorporate community excellence as a theme in community activities.
5. Identify and pursue grant programs that promote beautification such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).





# CONNECTIVITY, ACCESS, AND MOBILITY

## Thatcher Gateways

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. Gateways are key components of wayfinding in the Thatcher.

Gateways instill a sense of arrival to a destination. A hierarchy of gateways improves wayfinding and reflect character and sense of place. The primary gateways to Thatcher are located at the east and west entrances to the Town along Highway 70, a principal arterial. Primary gateways must define the identity of Thatcher, serve as primary entry points to the Town, define major destinations, and convey a sense of arrival.

Secondary gateways identify entrances into the Town via minor arterials. Town Center gateways articulate the entrances to Thatcher's downtown. Thatcher gateways include:

1. **Primary Gateways**
  - Northeast Gateway: At the intersection of Highway 70 and 20th Avenue
  - West Gateway: At the Intersection of Highway 70 and West Town Limits
2. **Secondary Gateways** (East entrances to Thatcher along its eastern boundary):
  - 8th Street: along the eastern Town boundary.
  - Golf Course Road: along the eastern Town boundary. Golf Course Road also provides connectivity via the shared path.
3. **Town Center Entrances**
  - Highway 70 and 1st Avenue: Defining the main eastern entrance to the Town Center along Highway 70.
  - Highway 70 and Reay Lane: Defining the main western entrance to the Town Center along Highway 70.
  - Entry Features: Identify minor entrances to the Town Center along 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Church Street.

The following sections define the functions and design character conveying the hierarchy of Thatcher's gateway system.



## Thatcher's Gateways Function and Design Character

A gateway feature, sometimes referred to as an “entrance feature,” can be described as an element intended to assist travelers in finding their way, and in so doing contributing a sense of identity for a community. The feature should be visually striking such that it can be noticeable to passersby but should also blend and fit in with the surrounding landscape and built form.

Gateways can be thought of as community signatures and their design should reflect elements of local culture, natural landscape, local materials, built form or community history, helping to define community boundaries. Gateway features are typically thought of as some form of structure, often with text or a logo and integrated with landscaping. Materials can range from natural stone to concrete or brick products and include local metals such as copper in their design.

### Primary Gateways

U.S. Highway 70 is the principal roadway serving the Thatcher Planning Area. The primary gateways to the Town are located along the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as provided in the previous section.



### Primary Gateway Functions

Primary gateways serve as major access points to the Town of Thatcher, distinguish the Town from neighboring jurisdictions by conveying a sense of arrival, and support the identity of the Town as a unique destination while reflecting the character of the area in which they are located. The main function of primary gateways is to draw more visitors to the Town and to support a strong tax base and robust local economy.

### Primary Gateway Design Character

Designed to enhance user's experience as they travel to and from Thatcher, primary gateways convey a sense of arrival while defining clear wayfinding by incorporating:

- Landscape features and ornamental plantings;
- Hardscapes and monument walls featuring the name of the Town;
- Accent lighting;
- Signage; and
- Public art.



## Secondary Gateways

Secondary gateways occurred at the east entrances to Thatcher along the Town's eastern boundary.

### *Secondary Gateway Functions*

Secondary gateways distinguish arrival to the Town from its neighboring jurisdiction, the City of Safford by conveying a sense of arrival and support the identity of the Town while reflecting the character of the area in which these gateways are located. The main function of secondary gateways is to invite residents and visitors to explore the Town and increase guest spending.

### *Secondary Gateways Design Character*

Designed to reflect the character of the area in which the secondary gateway is located, these gateway areas distinguish the specific theme and functions of the gateway and include entry features less elaborate than those found at primary gateways that provide multimodal vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, while defining clear wayfinding by incorporating:

- Directories pointing at major destinations such as the Town Center, parks, and Mt. Graham's Golf Course;
- Landscape features and ornamental plantings;
- Hardscapes and monument walls featuring the name of the Town;
- Accent lighting;
- Trailhead for the Shared Path along Golf Course Road; and
- Signage

## Town Center Gateways

Town Center gateways clearly distinguish arrival to an urban center and the cultural and governmental heart of the Thatcher.

### *Town Center Gateway Functions*

Conveying arrival to a major urban destination, the Town Center, these gateways effectively guide residents and visitors to the multiple destinations within the Town Center including Town Hall, Eastern Arizona College, Visitors Center, shops and entertainment using a Town Center directory.



### **Town Center Gateways Design Character**

Designed to support the specific cluster functions of the governmental, civic and social context defining a pedestrian-oriented Main Street, Town Center gateways:

- Provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the Town Core;
- Utilize decorative paving patterns with varying natural colors to accentuate the vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle entries;
- Employ a landscape theme that reflects the hierarchy of this type of gateway;
- Include directories pointing at major destinations in the Town Center;
- Hardscapes and monument walls may feature commemorative plaques reflecting the history of the Town;
- Accent lighting; and
- Showcases Thatcher Park and includes a trailhead for the Shared Path along Reay Lane Road;
- Provides a directory for the Shared Path Loop, listing major connections to the Town's trail system, and the Gila River Linear Park Corridor at Thatcher Park once the Town completes the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan described in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element.

## **Regional Access, Connectivity and Mobility**

In Thatcher, transportation is mostly dependent on the automobile. Travel occurs mainly on one highway and a series of arterial and collector roadways. Congestion is low and current levels of service are generally excellent. Constraints to expansion of the circulation system include Arizona Eastern Railroad with limitations on new rail crossings as well as the topography of the Pinaleño Mountains to the south and the floodway of the Gila River to the north. The Town of Thatcher Public Works Department oversees the construction and maintenance of the Town's infrastructure and road network. Exhibit 6 shows the Transportation/Circulation Road Network.

### **Regional Connections**

U.S. Highway 70 is the principal roadway serving the planning area. US 70 provides access to central Arizona including Globe and the Phoenix metropolitan area, 160 miles to the northwest. US 70 connects to US 191 in Safford to the east and provides a link to Interstate 10, located about 35 miles to the south. Interstate 10 provides direct connections to Tucson, about 120 miles southwest and to New Mexico and Texas to the east. The segment of US 70 within the Town Center Character Area serves as Thatcher's Main Street.



## Roadway Network

The Town of Thatcher, Graham County and ADOT all own and maintain roadways in Thatcher and its planning area. The primary roadway through Thatcher is US 70, bisecting the Town Center Character Area where it serves as Thatcher's Main Street. As the principal arterial serving regional and local traffic, US 70 is a five-lane roadway, converging to two lanes outside incorporated areas. US 70 is an ADOT maintained facility entering Thatcher's planning area on the west from the Pima area and on the east from Safford.

Circulation through central Thatcher and through Daley Estates at the most southern end of the Town primarily runs on a grid system with local streets providing direct residential access. Reay Lane, First Avenue and 20th Avenue serve as the main north-south connections between these two main areas. Reay Lane located on the west side of Town is the only roadway providing access north across the Gila River. First Avenue provides important access to many of Thatcher's residential areas and maintains connections to Safford with intersections at Main Street, 8th Street and Golf Course Road. Each of the three intersecting roads connects with 20th Avenue, providing an important link to Town services. Exhibit 6 included in this element shows the Transportation/Circulation Road Network.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity

Two major multi-use pedestrian/bike pathways exist in the Thatcher planning area: 1) along Golf Course Road, from 20th Avenue to Reay Lane, provides regional connectivity between Safford and Thatcher; 2) Along Reay Lane from Golf Course Road up to Main Street with a connection path from Reay Lane to Stadium Avenue along the Ballpark Drive.

## Rail Service

In August 2011, AZER was purchased by Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W). AZER has trackage rights over UP between Bowie, Arizona, and Lordsburg, New Mexico (48 miles), and includes freight service from Bowie to Miami, Arizona, (135 miles) and Lordsburg, New Mexico, to Clifton, Arizona, (67 miles). All traffic is interchanged at Lordsburg, New Mexico. The railroad serves the copper mining region of southeastern Arizona and the agricultural Gila River Valley primarily transporting copper products, chemicals, building supplies and grain.

Currently, two freight trains pass through Thatcher daily; once in the evening and once in the early morning. Major track improvements were completed by the end of 2008 that allow trains to run at 20 to 25 miles per hour through the Thatcher area.

## Air Service

There are two international airports providing service for Thatcher residents and visitors. The Tucson International Airport (TIA) is in Tucson about 120 miles southwest of Thatcher and the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) is located in Phoenix about 160 miles northwest of Thatcher.



The Safford Regional Airport serves the Thatcher area for business and private use seven days a week. The airport was originally constructed as a training facility for the U.S. Air Force in 1941 and has since become a full-service facility with two (6,800-foot and 4,800-foot) paved, lighted runways with UNICOM radio. Owned and operated by the City of Safford, the airport can accommodate charter planes and large aircraft. Shuttles to area restaurants and motels and both courtesy car and car rental services are provided.

## Transit

Public transit service in Thatcher is limited. SouthEastern Arizona Community Action Program, Inc. (SEACAP), located in Safford, provides senior citizens and disabled residents throughout the Thatcher area free shuttle service for shopping and medical needs.

The Graham County Transit Feasibility Report completed in May of 2007 and updated in 2016 by SEAGO found citizen concerns regarding the lack of transit service in Thatcher and the surrounding area. The report identifies needs for increased transit service for the growing senior population, students attending Eastern Arizona College and the growing number of Freeport McMoRan workers. Additionally, the study recognizes alternatives to single occupant vehicles will likely be important to mitigating congestion, pollution and accessibility issues as the Town's population increases. The following section identifies percent of single occupant vehicles in Thatcher.

## Existing and Planned Transportation Services

### The San Carlos Apache Nnee Bich' o Nii Transit

The San Carlos Apache Nnee Bich' o Nii Transit provides the only general public transit service within Graham County. It operates as an intercity route open to the general public and designed to meet the needs of tribal members. The San Carlos to Safford route provides public transportation within the study area. Tree round trips per day, Monday to Friday, serve Pima, Thatcher and Safford with stops at key destinations including Eastern Arizona College, Walmart and Mount Graham Medical Center.

### The Southern Arizona Community Action Program (SEACAP)

SEACAP provides transportation services in the Safford, Pima and Thatcher area, including dial-a-ride service to meet the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, and serves the general public on a space available basis. The services are utilized for trips to congregate meal sites, doctor visits, dialysis, grocery shopping and Department of Economic Security (DES) visits. SEACAP is able to serve about 15-16 one-way passenger trips a day.

### Easter Seals Blake Foundation, SAGE Division

SAGE provides residential, employment and day program services for individuals with developmental disabilities and provides transportation to and from day programs, residential programs, individual homes and for a variety of recreational purposes. This service is paid by the Blake Foundation.



## Greyhound

Greyhound applied to DOT to provide intercity service to Graham County. The proposed route would provide one daily round trip between Phoenix and El Paso, Texas, with intermediate stops in Mesa, Superior, Miami, Globe, Peridot, Bylas, Safford, Duncan, Lordsburg and Las Cruces.

## Connectivity Considerations

During the planning process the community identified circulation related issues including:

### □ **Traffic**

As growth continues in the Thatcher area, planning for new east/west and north/south corridors should be addressed.

### □ **Highway – Rail Crossings**

Development of new rail crossings should be planned ahead of growth needs, as the approval process is slow and uncertain. Approval must be coordinated with the Federal Railroad Association (FRA), the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) as well as the Arizona Eastern Railway.

### □ **Safety Concerns**

With the growing number of residents in Thatcher, traffic speeding through neighborhoods is a concern for pedestrian safety. Limited sidewalk availability was identified as a concern as well.

### □ **Control and Lighting**

Traffic control and street lighting improvements need to be identified and installed to help traffic flow and improve safety.

### □ **Retail and Job-Related Transit**

Transit is needed to improve accessibility to retail areas and jobs for residents with limited mobility, including students and seniors and to reduce traffic volumes.



## Connectivity, Access and Mobility Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Provide for the safe, efficient, and convenient movement of people and goods within and around Thatcher.**

### POLICIES

1. Continue to participate in the preparation of local and regional transportation studies and implement recommendations from those studies.
2. Support neighboring jurisdictions efforts to implement regional roadway improvements.
3. Identify existing and potential safety concerns for automobile, bicycle and pedestrian traffic to improve multi-modal access, mobility and connectivity.
4. Protect residential areas from disruptive and unsafe cut-through traffic.
5. After adequate study and analysis, install traffic calming devices, including speed bumps, traffic tables, traffic circles, and other appropriate methods to discourage speeding and through traffic within existing neighborhoods.
6. Install traffic signals, street lighting, and connecting sidewalks were needed to increase safety, promote connectivity, and support healthy and active lifestyles.
7. Develop residential street alignments and designs that provide connectivity to adjacent areas.
8. Require new development to include adequate road extensions and improvements to meet current and future needs created by that development.
9. Require new development to provide vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections at the time of rezoning as part of the Development Review Process as a condition for site plan or plat approval.

**GOAL 2: Develop and maintain an efficient roadway system.**

### POLICIES

1. Expand major and minor roadways, including new connections to existing roads, to keep pace with growing traffic volumes and new development.
2. Maintain and upgrade existing streets to meet the needs of Town residents.
3. Consider new routes at logical locations to enhance traffic movements, support growth, and enhance character area needs.
4. Continue to work with ADOT, adjacent jurisdictions, major employers, and regional partners to:





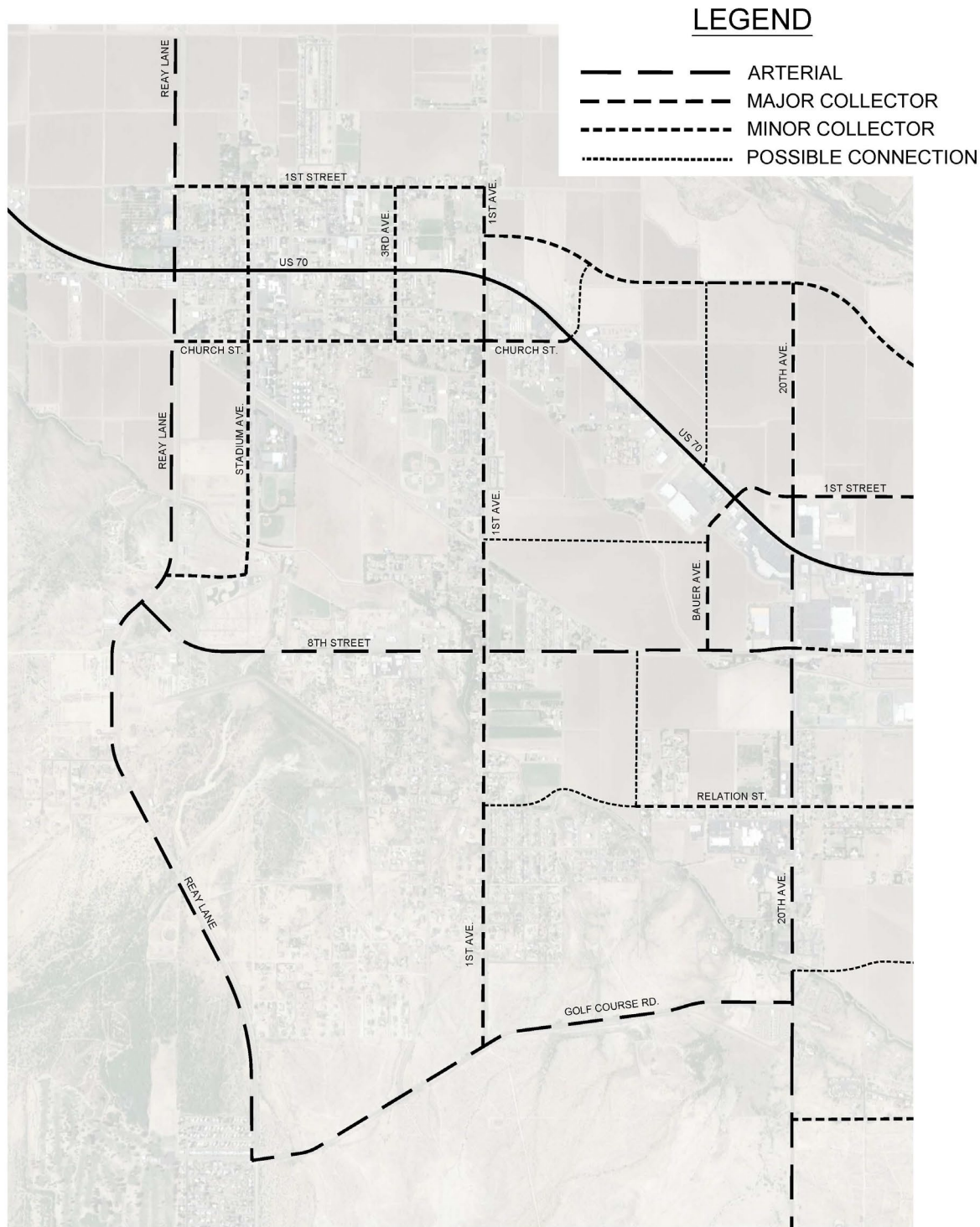
- a. Ensure that Highway 70 supports the long-range economic development strategy of the Town and of the Gila Valley region as a vital major corridor;
  - b. Increase Thatcher's voice in transportation decisions;
5. Plan for and secure adequate rights-of-way for future road widening projects.
  6. Develop a plan for alternative routes through Town to alleviate future congestion on Main Street.

**GOAL 3: Create bike and pathway links between housing, employment, educational and recreational facilities to support connectivity and healthy active lifestyles.**

#### POLICIES

1. Require new development to include connectivity to adjacent pedestrian, bicycle, and trail systems as integral components of site design;
2. Assess the need for additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities identifying the most important routes, destinations, and connections;
3. Encourage pedestrian access to schools, churches, employment, and shopping throughout the community;
4. Support pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the Gila River Linear Park and Trail and connect these routes to the Town shared path along Reay Lane and Golf Course Road to create a loop that serves the entire Designated Planning Area.
5. Require that all new residential and non-residential development along Reay Lane and Golf Course Road provide connectivity to the shared path along these corridors.
6. Establish links from Eastern Arizona College to planned commercial/retail areas via bicycle facilities and pedestrian pathways.

Exhibit 6: Transportation/Circulation Road Network





## HIGHWAY 70 REVITALIZATION ELEMENT

### Main Street

The roadway segment of Highway 70 identified as Main Street, stretches from the western Town boundary to North 1st Avenue, traversing the heart of Downtown Thatcher defined in the Character Areas/Use of Land Element as the Town Center Character Area. This segment of the commerce corridor functions as a pedestrian-oriented Main Street. Providing a human-scale and comfortable atmosphere for strolling, site-seeing, and shopping, this segment of Highway 70 is designed as a destination corridor that will evolve into Thatcher's premier shopping, restaurant, and entertainment destination for residents and a "must see" destination for visitors.

A variety of unique eating experiences reinforce the distinct character of Thatcher along this segment intended to complement the range of specialty, locally owned shops, and stores. Restaurants and cafes along Main Street cater to Thatcher's residents, government and school district employees, and Eastern Arizona College students, faculty, and employees. Thatcher's Main Street also functions as a destination inviting travelers along it to stop, extend their stay and spend money in the Town.

Referred to as "Downtown Main Street," this segment of Highway 70 supports the greatest diversity and serves as the main entry to Thatcher Town Hall, Eastern Arizona College, Thatcher Park, Freeport-McMoRan Training Center, and much of the Thatcher Unified School District. Additionally, the area features an abundance valued local restaurants and businesses. Main Street includes institutional and public land uses including Thatcher's Town Hall and Government Center, the Eastern Arizona College and Thatcher Middle School. Uses permitted along Main Street include commercial (C1 and C-2) with appropriate landscape buffers. Mixed-use including retail on the ground floor and multi-family are permitted as a second tier allowing commercial uses to define the commercial corridor.

Urban density and intensity gradually transition from the Main Street Highway Corridor to the Town Center planning area. Retail stores and service establishments, personal service establishments, offices, hotels and motels, schools and civic uses are among the uses permitted along Main Street. Mixed uses that include retail, office or service on the ground floor and multiple-family dwellings with ten or more units are permitted provided they conform to the policy direction established in Goal 1 of this element.

Gasoline service stations and single-family residential uses are expressly prohibited along Main Street. Groups of buildings or structures consisting of 10,000 square feet or more are permitted provided that site design incorporates varied setbacks with quality public amenities.

## Main Street Vision

“Thatcher’s Main Street offers a safe, walkable, comfortable, festive, active, and charming streetscape that:

1. Celebrates local identity;
2. Connects residents with educational campuses, civic buildings, parks, commerce amenities and neighborhoods;
3. Captures the attention and interest of travelers; and
4. Encourages exploration of local retail, restaurants, and businesses.”



**Figure 7: Incorporating Courtyards within the Building Setback Area from a Main Street**



## Main Street Concept

While the Downtown Main Street Concept recommends improvements to the right-of-way and adjacent properties, it is vital to recognize the importance of all property and infrastructure within a walkable distance (approximately 1/4 mile) of the corridor. This concept attempts to broadly address contextual factors that may aid in the reinvigoration of this section of Main Street.

The roadway segment of Highway 70 identified as Main Street, stretches from the western Town boundary to North 1st Avenue, traversing the heart of Downtown Thatcher defined in the Land Use Element as the Town Center Character Area. This segment of the commerce corridor functions as a pedestrian-oriented Main Street. Providing a human-scale and comfortable atmosphere for strolling, site-seeing, and shopping, this segment of Highway 70 is designed as a destination corridor that will evolve into Thatcher's premier shopping, restaurant, and entertainment destination for residents and a "must see" destination for visitors.

Potential right-of-way improvements may include:

1. Formal desert-adapted landscape, 6) specimen street trees;
2. Decorative hardscape (pavers, planters, seatwalls, screen walls);
3. Traffic calming infrastructure at major signalized intersections design to slow traffic while supporting traffic flows;
4. Contiguous wide walkways;
5. Green infrastructure, including drip irrigation and water harvesting;
6. Decorative lighting;
7. Festive signage/banners; and
8. Themed site furnishings.
9. Development adjacent to the right-of-way should feature celebratory architecture, use building setbacks that activate the public realm, screen parking (behind buildings), and include prominent building entries (entry patios, porches, courtyards) and large storefront windows.



## Main Street Concept Objectives

1. Highlight the diversity of uses along Main Street but emphasize the Academic, Civic, and Public uses along the streetscape. Unique streetscape identity in the region.
2. Emphasize the importance of infill development and population density near Main Street, and the opportunity to incentivize thoughtful reinvestment in Main Street properties.
3. Propose streetscape and building frontage improvement objectives that could lead to an active and festive Main Street identity.
4. Accentuate the need for safe multi-modal transportation (pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles) to Main Street from adjacent neighborhood and along Main Street.

## Goals and Policies for Main Street

**GOAL 1: Revitalize the Main Street Segment of Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as a major destination in the Town.**

### POLICIES

1. Revitalize the Main Street Segment of Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as a destination in conformance with all applicable guidelines and direction provided in this element.
2. Provide Town Center Gateways at the entrances of Main Street to convey arrival to a major Town destination in conformance with the gateway guidelines included in the Connectivity, Access and Mobility element;
3. Require new development along the Main Street segment of the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor to:
  - a. Render a pedestrian-oriented human-scale that conveys the small-town character of Thatcher;
  - b. Locate commercial uses along the highway corridor;
  - c. Provide a gradual intensity and height transition from the Main Street Highway Corridor to the Town Center planning area.
  - d. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to adjacent uses;
  - e. Provide all utilities underground to eliminate visual clutter;
  - f. Adopt a landscape and streetlight palate to support uniformity and cohesiveness;
  - g. Provide varied setbacks where feasible to encourage walkability and to create quality community gathering spaces.
  - h. Include trees with abundant shade and allow space for seating as well as storefront presentation with to support pedestrian activity;

4. Permit bike share and cycling in proximity to Eastern Arizona College.
5. Permit residential development in TNDs along Highway 70, provided that commercial, civic and employment uses are located along the highway and mixed use and higher-density multifamily residential uses are located on the next tier and include height and density transitions where abutting lower-density residential development.
6. Permit retail stores and service establishments, personal service establishments, offices, hotels and motels, schools, and civic uses along Main Street.
7. Prohibit the location of new gasoline service stations and single-family residential uses along Main Street.
8. Encourage groups of buildings or structures consisting of 10,000 square feet or more to incorporate quality site design that includes plazas, courtyards or varied setbacks that activate the public realm.
9. Limit height along Main Street to 35 feet (3 stories) including parapets and roof mechanical equipment to maintain a uniform silhouette that makes business support the character and scale of Thatcher.
10. Develop Red Lamp Plaza as a destination in a manner that reflects the best site designs principles summarized in conceptual manner.
11. Consider incorporating a banner that brands Main Street by conveying Thatcher's unique heritage, character, identity, and sense of place.

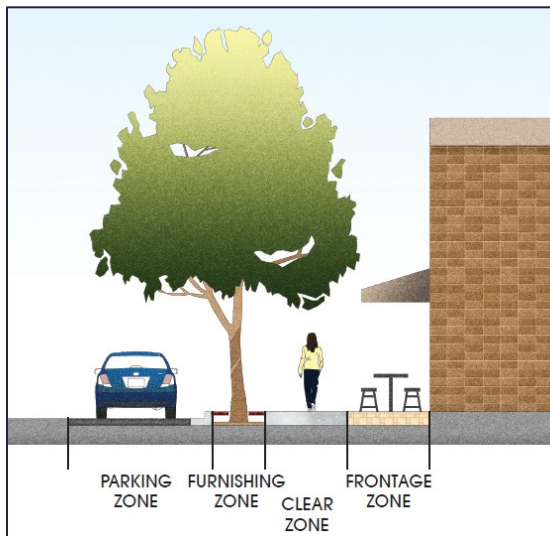


**Figure 8: Example of Monumentation Defining a College Campus Entrance**

## Development Guidelines for Main Street

### Streetscape Definition

Thatcher’s Main Street reflects an inviting human-scale, conveys Thatcher’s small-town character and uniqueness, and supports pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the different destinations inside the Town Center. Streetscape defines Thatcher’s Main Street. Figures 9 and 10 show streetscape concept options. Figure 11 shows a plan view streetscape concept for Main Street.



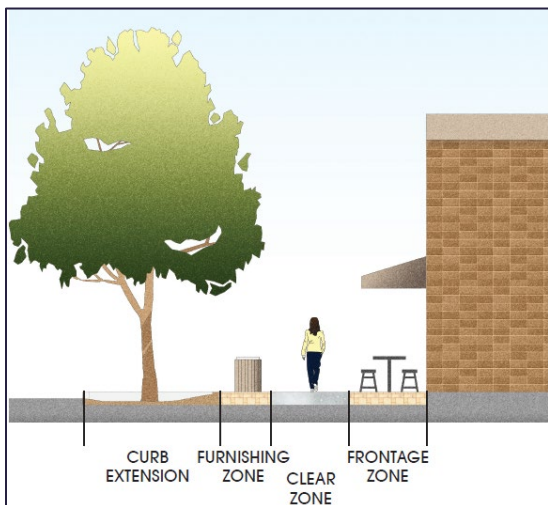
**Frontage Zone:** Minimum Width: 2'. Use: Displays, café and restaurant outdoor seating, furnishings aligned with frontage, planters (surface or above-ground); overhanging elements

**Clear Zone:** Minimum Width: 4' (Wider Preferred). Use: Clear of obstacles, ADA compliant accessible walking surface, overhanging elements (>80")

**Furnishing Zone:** Minimum Width: 3' (Wider Preferred). Use: All site furnishings, trees, and landscaping.

**Parking Zone:** Minimum Width: Width of parking lane. Use: Parking, temporary parklets

Figures 9: Streetscape Concept Showing Parking Space (Option 1)



**Frontage Zone:** Minimum Width: 2'. Use: Displays, café and restaurant outdoor seating, furnishings aligned with frontage, planters (surface or above-ground); overhanging elements

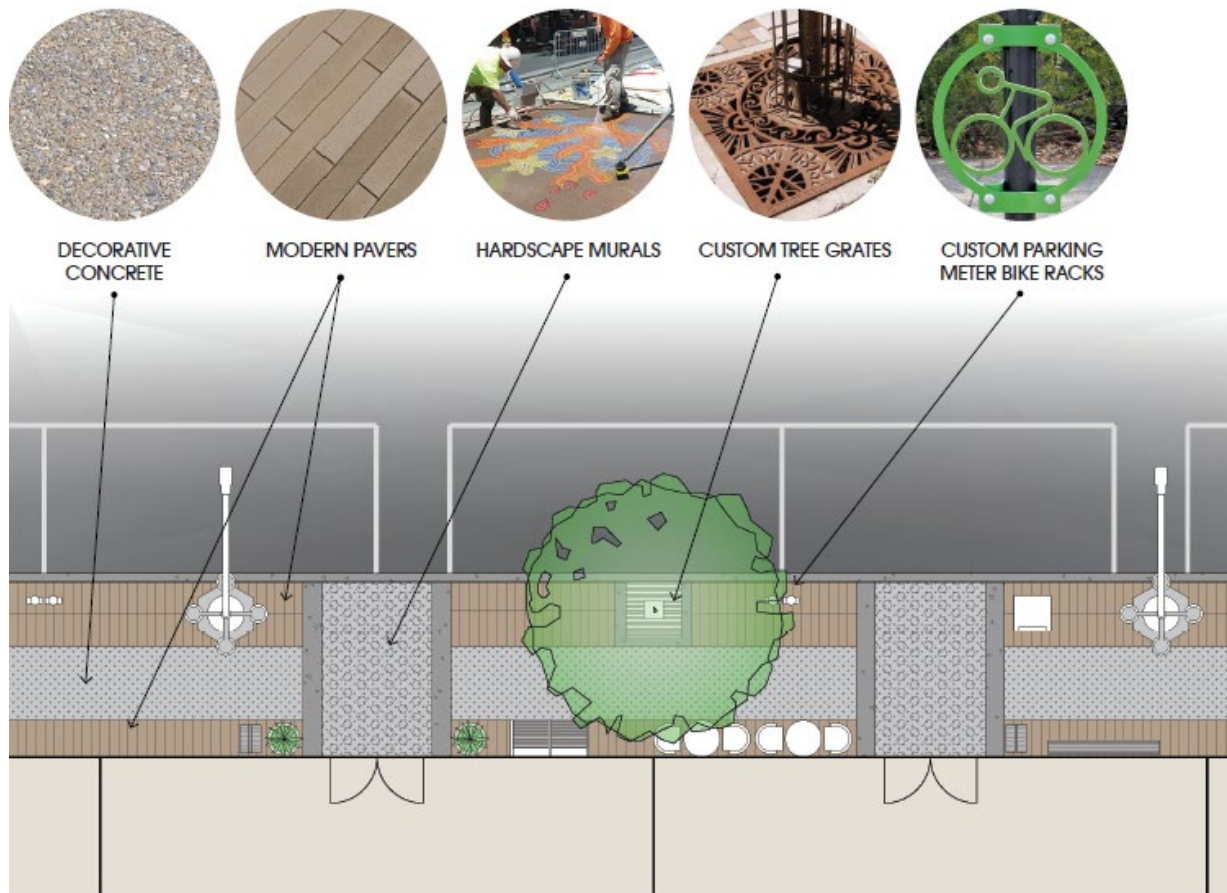
**Clear Zone:** Minimum Width: 4' (Wider Preferred). Use: Clear of obstacles, ADA compliant accessible walking surface, overhanging elements (>80")

**Furnishing Zone:** Minimum Width: 3' (Wider Preferred). Use: All site furnishings, trees and landscaping.

**Curb Extension:** Minimum Width: Width of parking lane. Use: All site furnishings, trees and landscaping, street lighting, utilities, Temporary Revocable Easements (TRE)

Figures 10: Streetscape Concept Showing Curb Extension (Option 2)





Figures 11: Plan View Streetscape Concept Using Pavers to highlight Furnishing Zone, Clear Zone, Frontage Zone.

### Safe and Decorative Pedestrian-Friendly Crossings

Pedestrian-friendly crossings include two types: those crossing local streets where these streets meet Main Street; and Main Street pedestrian-friendly crossings. The first promotes traffic calming as vehicles driving on local roads approach Main Street. The second allows for safe, efficient, and timely crossing of Main Street at traffic lights and are designed in coordination with the ADOT to minimize traffic congestion and to support traffic flow along Highway 70.



SPECIALTY PAVERS



BOLLARDS



PUBLIC ART



DECORATIVE PLANTERS

Pedestrian friendly crossings come in a wide variety of styles and assist in character definition. It may include a variety of specialty pavers, decorative planters, bollards, and public art. **Figure 12** shows elements commonly used to define pedestrian-friendly crossing. **Figure 13** shows strip street crossing at signalized intersections.

On local streets traffic calming measures such as crosswalks, on-street parking and landscaped parkways are planned to support easy and safe access to all areas of the Town Center improving walkability and supporting healthy active lifestyles without compromising the traffic flow along Main Street.

Figures 12: Design Elements Commonly Used to Define Pedestrian-friendly Crossings.



Figures 13: Example of a Pedestrian-friendly Crossing for Main Street.

### Varied Setbacks along Main Street

Highway-oriented commercial development is essential to the business welfare of the community and to the Town's long-range viability, it is possible to plan for it and to provide adequate controls. Automobile-oriented development like big boxes are discouraged along the segment of Highway 70 functioning as Thatcher's Main Street.

Vegetative screening along the entire segment enhances character, supports adjacent neighborhoods, and maintains land values in the Town Center. Varied setbacks create quality common spaces that invite the community and visitors to walk, bike and gather, activating the public realm and supporting healthy, active lifestyles.

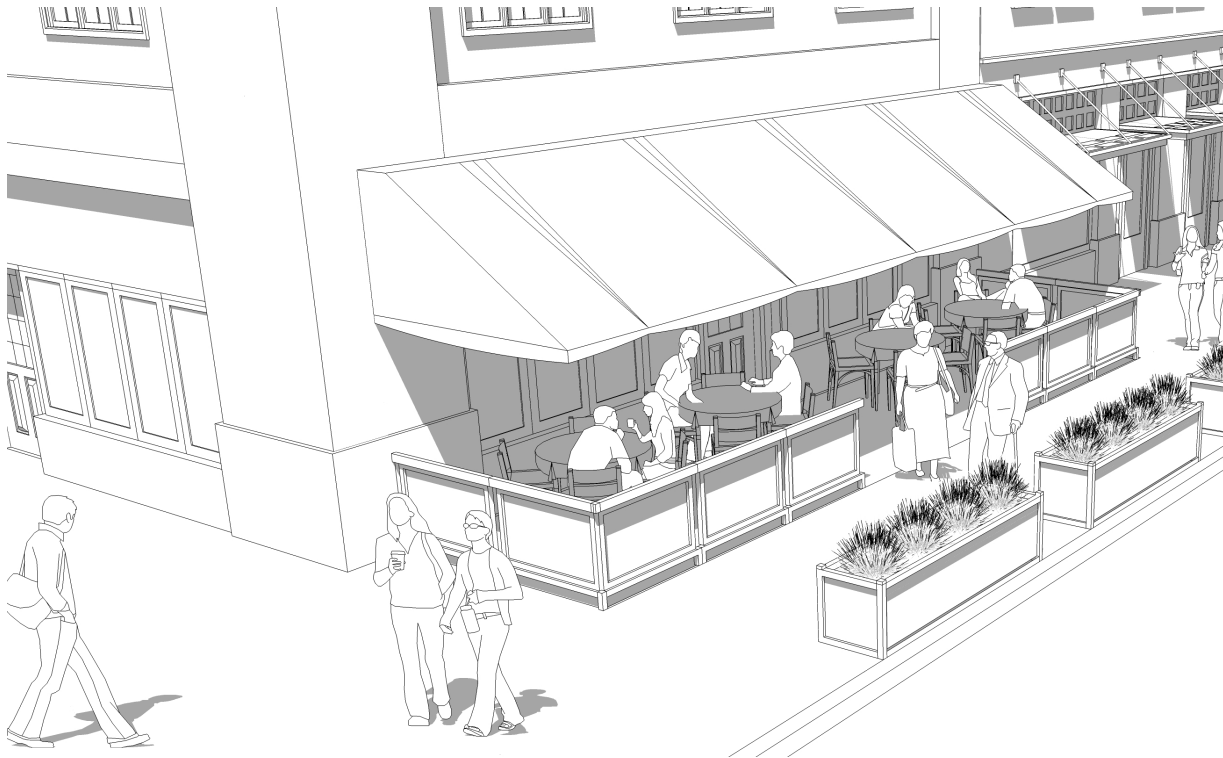
Figure 14 illustrates public realm activation through the use of setbacks to establish quality community spaces that become destinations. Figures 15 and 16 show setback treatments appropriate along Main Street.



Figures 14: Creating Destinations Through Varied Setbacks Along Main Street.



Figures 15: Setback Treatment Option Appropriate for Main Street.



Figures 16: Setback Treatment Option Appropriate for Main Street.



## Red Lamp Plaza

The Red Lamp Plaza Concept conveys the quality of site design desired for development along Thatcher's Main Street.

### Red Lamp Plaza Vision

"Red Lamp Plaza is a lively urban activity center within walking distance of Eastern Arizona College at the heart of Thatcher, Arizona, that encourages a "Live, Work, Play" lifestyle by consolidating retail, restaurants, offices, and residences within a highly accessible neighborhood setting along Main Street."

### Red Lamp Plaza Concept

The Red Lamp Plaza infill development concept comprises 4.4 acres of land at the southwest corner of Main Street (Highway 70) and 3rd Avenue, while the southern boundary abuts 4th street.

This plan introduces an engaging mixed-use development concept along Main Street that celebrates Thatcher's unique regional identity and establishes its downtown as an active destination for locals and travelers.

The Red Lamp Plaza concept caters to a diversity of uses by providing opportunities for retail, restaurants, offices, neighborhood services, hospitality, and residences. This concept features approximately 85,000 SF of gross floor area spread across multiple buildings and stories; although, the scale (building footprint and height) of these conceptual buildings will surely adjust to the desires of potential developers and community. The architectural theme at Red Lamp Plaza should celebrate the history of the Town of Thatcher and mix neo-traditional aesthetics with contemporary design approaches. The Red Lamp Plaza concept also showcases large, flexible, and highly amenitized outdoor gatherings areas, open air event spaces, formal promenades, pedestrian plazas, and vibrant landscapes.

A boutique-style, neighborhood scaled activity center with regional allure, Red Lamp Plaza's tenants could include: Fitness Center, Pharmacy, Local Restaurants, Bakery, Frozen Yogurt Shop, Art Studios, Clothing Retailers, Hair Salon, Coworking Studio, Makerspace, or General Offices. Events could include: "Movie Night in the Plaza," "Red Lamp Arts and Craft Fair," "Red Lamp Farmer's Market," or "Plaza Concerts" among many others. A flexible mixed-use concept includes an option to integrate student or market-rate apartment housing. Such housing could be accommodated in the upper floors of multi-story buildings with a maximum of three floors.

This site concept features an openness between buildings and along Main Street that provides views into the project's core. Additionally, vehicular, and pedestrian access points are abundant on all sides. The visual and functional access throughout the site welcomes locals and travelers alike.



Architectural frontage along Main Street must be memorable and convey a human scale, while still embracing passersby along the road. Themed signage, covered walkways, abundant seating, decorative hardscape, formal landscape, large shade trees, thoughtful public art, clear store fronts, festive outdoor dining, and interactive plaza events encourage visitors to stay and explore the area.

The Red Lamp Plaza benefits substantially from its location along Main Street, near Eastern Arizona College. While the Red Lamp Plaza site concept features internal and on-street vehicular parking options, the parking quantity portrayed on the current plan is minimal. Red Lamp Plaza is viewed as a multi-modal destination where visitors walk or bike from the adjacent campuses, neighborhoods, civic buildings, parks, and Main Street attractions. Supplemental surface parking could be constructed near the site, or structured parking could be incorporated into Red Lamp Plaza itself (i.e., underground parking or parking garage).

### On-Street Parking Along Main Street

On-street parking is convenient to patrons. Pedestrian portals to interior parking lots support walkability. The Red Lamp Plaza Concept illustrated in Figures 18 and 19 offers a variety of amenities and opportunities for outdoor activities such as art fairs, farmers market, jazz under the stars and other family-oriented events, making this area the heart of Downtown Thatcher and a social destination.

### Public Art

Public art can be used to celebrate the history of the Town and also enhance curb appeal.

### Desert Appropriate Vegetation

Drought-tolerant native plants reinforce the character and identity of Thatcher while promoting water harvesting, drip irrigation and other forms of water conservation. Trees providing shade enhance space appeal and invite residents and visitors to extend their stay.

### Signage and Wayfinding

Banners and directional signs assist with wayfinding by directing residents and travelers to the different destinations in the Town Center. A banner system can be used as a wayfinding marker and as a branding tool for Main Street.

### Utilities

All utilities are underground to support a clutter-free, walkable streetscape.

Figures 17 and 18 illustrate the Red Lamp Plaza concept.

# RED LAMP PLAZA CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN



Figures 17: Red Lamp Plaza concept



Figures 18: Red Lamp Plaza Concept





## Highway 70 Corridor Northeast Gateway (Auto-oriented)

The segment of Highway 70 east of Main Street and the Town Center Character Area, stretches from North 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to North 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and functions as the main eastern gateway of the Town. This segment supports the automobile-oriented, higher-intensity development of the Northeast Gateway Character Area establishing this segment of the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor as an auto-oriented segment serving the region. Existing businesses along the corridor include the Gila Valley Plaza, Safeway, Bashas a variety of restaurants and hotel/hospitality uses such as the Comfort Inn & Suites Thatcher-Safford, and the SpringHill Suites by Marriot

With its auto-oriented focus, businesses set back from the highway with adequate off-street parking and common controlled access to reduce traffic conflicts. Existing strip commercial development along the corridor needs revitalization. Additional strip development is discouraged.

### Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor Vision

Commercial developments located along the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70 conveys a strong visual image. The attention paid to design reflects the character of Thatcher and its revenue generation contributes to the Town's long-term economic vitality. The nature and location of each development affects a project's specific design solution. Overall, development among this segment invigorates the public realm by incorporating quality gathering spaces, plazas, and public art, when possible, to convey the character of a shopping, services, hospitality and entertainment auto-oriented "Village Commerce District" destination.

### Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor Concept

The goals and policies included in this section encourage the highest level of design quality and creativity and recognize the importance of parking and circulation design to the success or failure of commercial enterprises. Applicable zoning district site-specific development standards should support the goals and policies included in this section.

### Goals and Policies for Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor

**GOAL 2: Develop the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70 as a vibrant auto-oriented regional destination.**

#### POLICIES

1. Develop the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70 as a vibrant auto-oriented regional destination in conformance with all applicable guidelines and direction provided in this section.
2. Ensure that development along the Northeast Gateway Corridor furthers the intent of the Northeast Gateway Character Area (Exhibit 5) by incorporating quality mixed-use, employment and auto-oriented retail in a manner that:



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

- a. Defines street edges to create visual continuity, eliminate visual clutter, and support a pedestrian environment while maintaining an auto-oriented scale;
  - b. Designs surface parking to minimize negative visual impact;
  - c. Avoid linear arrangement that does not encourage multiple shopping stops;
  - d. Encourage inward-focusing arrangement to create a “village” feeling and encourage multiple shopping stops;
  - e. Provide strong connection to adjacent office/commercial areas;
  - f. Design service areas and loading/unloading areas consolidated, internalized and screened from public view; and
  - g. Separate parking areas when feasible and possible to reduce expansiveness and provide overlap opportunities;
3. Incorporate the latest access, circulation, and parking best practices in site design:
- a. Require that site access and internal circulation promote safety, efficiency, and convenience;
  - b. Avoid conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians;
  - c. Provide continuous circulation throughout the site to the greatest extent possible.
  - d. Prohibit the use of dead-end driveways;
  - e. Incorporate adequate areas for maneuvering, stacking, truck staging, loading and emergency vehicle access as part of site design;
  - f. Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to adjacent residential areas to eliminate the need to access via collector road system;
  - g. Design access roads to ensure that they serve non-residential and adjacent residential uses;
  - h. Encourage the use of shared driveways and quality site design to minimize access points along Highway 70;
  - i. Design parking lots with a clear hierarchy of circulation:
    - i. major access drives with no direct access to parking spaces;
    - ii. major circulation drives with little or no parking; and
    - iii. parking aisles for direct access to parking spaces.
  - j. Provide separate access and circulation for loading and service areas whenever possible; and



- k. Clearly define pedestrian paths from parking areas to primary building entrances and sidewalks along the site's perimeter.
4. Permit residential development in TNDs along Highway 70, provided that commercial, hospitality, employment and other non-residential uses are located along the highway corridor and residential is located on the next tear.

## Development Guidelines for the Northeast Gateway Highway Corridor

### General Design Objectives

Non-residential development along the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70 should:

1. Establish a distinct architectural and environmental image to distinguish the auto-oriented focus of the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor as a "Village Commerce District" while sustaining the character of an auto-oriented gateway commerce corridor;
2. Consider the scale, proportion, and character of development in the surrounding area;
3. Establish attractive, inviting, imaginative and functional site design that integrates building siting, parking areas, and high quality architectural and landscape design to define the character of this segment of the commerce corridor traversing the Northeast Gateway Character Area;
4. Provides proper access, visibility and identity.
5. Facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity from surrounding development and mitigate adverse automobile-oriented planning patterns;
6. Minimize incompatible impacts of noise, light, traffic, and visual character along areas abutting residential neighborhoods;
7. Preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site such as maintaining Thatcher's view corridors, including mature trees along the highway corridor;
8. Define the character of Thatcher;
9. Avoid a sea of parking lots by incorporating landscaped islands; and
10. Include parking shade structures incorporating solar energy to minimize utility costs when feasible and appropriate.



## Entry Area and Entry Features

An entry area is the transition area between the public street access point and the development entrance. This area includes the entry driveway, access to parking areas, and access to drive-through businesses. The entry area sets the image and identity of a development parcel. It also conveys the character and identity of the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70. Signage, monumentation or entry features and landscape define the entry area. Figures 19 and 20 illustrate the character of a “Village Commerce District.”

### Entry Area and Entry Features Guidelines

In addition to conformance with all applicable standards and guidelines included in the corresponding zoning district, all new development and redevelopment along the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor segment of Highway 70 must conform with the following entry area and entry feature guidelines.

1. Project entry signage complies with all applicable signage guidelines and is integrated into the surrounding landscape;
2. Avoid planting trees or shrubs within the visibility area of any entry driveway for traffic visibility purposes;
3. Prohibit parking along the major entry driveway;
4. Utilize accent plant materials or specimen trees at formal building entries without encroaching into the streetscape setback at the site entries or at sign locations;
5. Define drop-off areas with special landscape materials and enriched paving; and
6. Invigorate the public realm by incorporating quality gathering spaces, plazas, and public art, when possible, to convey the character of a shopping, services, hospitality, and entertainment auto-oriented “Village Commerce District” destination.



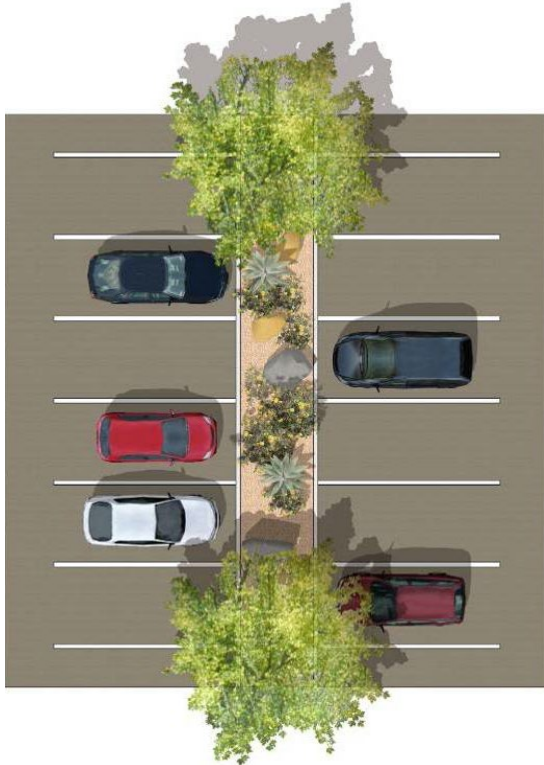
Figures 19: Character of a "Village Commerce District."



Figures 20: Character of a "Village Commerce District."

## Surface Parking

In addition to complying with all applicable zoning district standards, design parking areas visible from US Highway 70 to minimize the visual impact of surface parking lots, mitigate heat/glare and reduce heat island effect through the provision of landscaping, and provide accessible, safe circulation within and adjacent to the parking areas. Parking areas include parking stalls, parking aisles, drive aisles, and other associated on-site vehicular areas. Figure 21 shows parking planter bays. Figure 22 shows parking shade structures including solar panels.



### Surface Parking Guidelines:

1. Divide surface parking areas with design elements or building siting and include landscaped parking bays to reduce the adverse visual, glare, and heat impact of large, paved areas.
  2. Provide appropriate landscape screens around parking areas to reduce adverse visual impact of large, paved areas.
  3. Select landscape materials that are compatible with those used in adjacent streetscapes and overall on-site landscaping.
    - a. Required trees in parking bays at a ratio of one tree per every six (6) linear stalls.
    - b. Arrange trees in geometrical pattern in regularly spaced planter bays to create a formal look.
- Figure 21: Planter Bays**
- c. Trees must be located in planter bays to provide shading effect to the asphalt areas.
  - d. Drop-off areas must be clearly defined with special landscape materials and enriched paving.
  - e. Used shrubs in planter bays to screen cars from street frontages, property lines, entry drives and pedestrian walkways. Additional shrubs can be planted in planter bays to further reduce large areas of unbroken paving. All other disturbed surfaces shall be covered by groundcover and/or inerts.
  - f. Incorporate parking shade structures in surface parking design when feasible and appropriate.



**Figure 22: Parking Shade Structures Including Solar Panels**

## Highway 70 Corridor West Gateway

Development along the segment of Highway 70 west of the Town Center and outside of Town limits will require annexation prior to occur. Most of the vacant land in Graham County located along this segment of Highway 70 and its vicinity is zoned for agriculture. State statutes requires annexed land to come into the Town under an equivalent zoning district. Therefore, it is anticipated that this segment of the Highway corridor will be more rural in character than the pedestrian-oriented Town Center/Main Street and the automobile-oriented Northeast Gateway segment of the Highway 70 commerce corridor. Cleanup of lots fronting the highway to enhance the western gateway into the Town was proposed by community members during the visioning process as a high priority.

**GOAL3: Support the Highway 70 corridor west of the Town Center Character Area/Main Street as the thriving rural gateway of Thatcher.**

### POLICIES

1. Require Conformance with development guidelines and design objectives included in this section.
2. Protect and encourage local agriculture and sustain and enhance the rural character of this segment of Highway 70 by:
  - a. Attracting businesses that support agriculture including feed stores, agricultural equipment, and other businesses permitted by right in agricultural districts in the zoning code.
  - b. Encouraging community-based eco-tourism by supporting businesses offering guided tours to regional amenities, local shops and retail and other adventure tourism uses compatible with the rural character of this area.
  - c. Supporting local food system by allowing green houses, hydroponics, aquaculture, contained farms, and other forms of contained agriculture as standalone businesses, as parts of TNDs, or as accessory uses in low density residential lots.



Small Green House  
(Contained Farm)



#### 1 Online

- International Markets

#### 2 Wholesale

- Local Grocers
- Local Stores
- Others

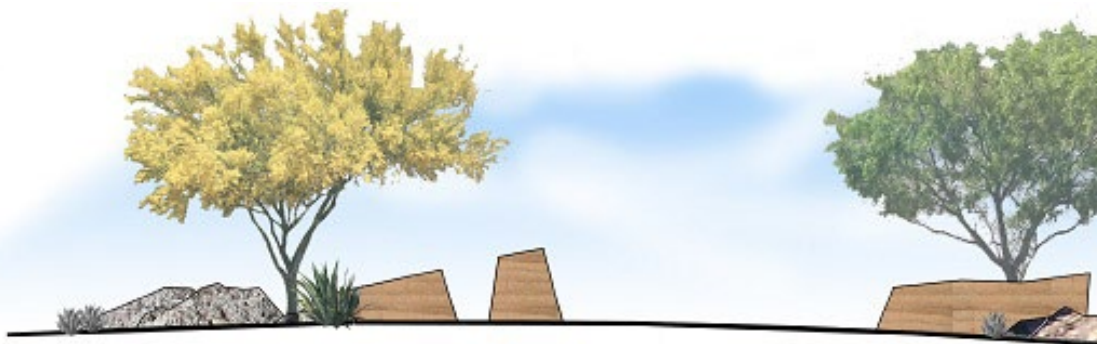
#### 3 Local

- Restaurants
- Breweries
- Bars and grills
- Farmer Markets

**Figure 23: Home-based, Local Food Micro-businesses Reaching Larger Markets**



3. Work with Graham County to identify and enforce blight abatement mechanisms to clean debris on frontage properties to enhance the sense of arrival to the Gila Valley region, Graham County, and the Town of Thatcher.
4. Define the west gateway of Thatcher along Highway 70 to convey a sense of arrival to Town that reflects the rural character of west Thatcher.
5. Partner with ADOT, Graham County and Safford to identify the best route to create a Gila Valley bicycle/jogging shared path connector to the existing shared path loop to supports healthy, active lifestyles in the region and attract cyclists to an eco-tourism destination that celebrates the scenic views of Mt. Graham and the Gila River Corridor by connecting the rural gateway of Thatcher to:
  - a. The Gila River;
  - b. Thatcher Park;
  - c. The Town Center Character Area/Main Street;
  - d. Eastern Arizona College;
  - e. The Reay Lane regional shared path;
  - f. Thatcher Splash and Skate Parks;
  - g. Mount Graham Golf Club; and
  - h. Safford via shared path on Golf Course Road.



**Figure 24: Share Path Connecting West Thatcher to the Town Center**

6. Permit residential development in TNDs along Highway 70, provided that commercial uses are located along the highway and residential uses are located on the next tear.



## West Highway 70 Commerce Corridor Vision

This segment of Highway 70 conveys a rural character, supports the needs of established non-crop agriculture businesses and permits agriculture related commercial, including farm stands, contained agriculture (greenhouses, local food gardens, hydroponics, and similar forms of contained farms) local food-related home businesses, garage industry, community-based eco-tourism, including adventure tourism businesses, recreation-related, trails, trails heads and residential very low density as a second tier with commercial uses along the road.

## Development Guidelines for the West Highway 70 Corridor

### General Design Objectives

Non-residential development along the West Highway Corridor:

1. Establishes a sense of arrival to the Town by defining the west gateway of Thatcher in conformance with the guidance provided in the Connectivity, Access, and Mobility Element.
2. Provides a variety of deep setbacks from Highway 70, creating an informal pattern that conveys the relaxed character of the adjoining rural areas.
3. Roadway edges without curb, gutter, or sidewalk support an informal streetscape that conveys the rural character of the area.
4. Buildings are spaced apart rather than lined up to maintain a sense of intermittence that conveys spaciousness.
5. Setback area, front of buildings, building facades and signage are maintained clean of debris and clutter.
6. Agriculture, agriculture-related, and eco-tourism-supporting commercial uses front the highway corridor followed by agriculture, very-low density, or low-density residential uses.
7. A shared path connector to the Reay Lane shared path loop is developed to take advantage of the striking views and support connectivity to Thatcher's major destinations for cyclist and joggers.
8. TNDs and master plans including a mix of uses in character with the rural identity of this area are encouraged provided that the uses fronting Highway 70 conform to all applicable design objectives in this section.
9. Trails along washes provide connectivity to Thatcher and Graham County trail systems.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Economic development is a critical aspect of maintaining Thatcher as a sustainable and balanced community and is therefore included in the General Plan Update as a separate Element. Jobs, revenue and financial stability contribute to the Town's economic health and as such, one Town goal is to ensure that Thatcher has a sound economic base built on quality and desirable employment and strong retail.

The Economic Development Element seeks to promote these attributes by planning for increased household incomes, increasing the number of quality jobs and employment choices, and by attracting desirable retail, commercial and industrial facilities to the Town.

Thatcher's economy has grown from strong agricultural roots, and is now in a transition with service sector, government and education employment dominating. The community envisions maintaining agriculture as an important economic sector while growing suburban neighborhoods and an economically well-balanced community conscious of its small-town agricultural heritage. Over the span of this Plan's horizon - to 2030 - forecasts point to continued residential growth with increasing emphasis on expanding commercial services.

Experience from other communities demonstrates that citizens can make conscious choices to attract employers in growth industries and promote tourism, shopping, and recreation.

The General Plan recognizes the importance of retaining local businesses and fostering expansion. The community is under-served in service sectors particularly specialty retail and medical facilities. Growth, including new residential projects, provides a catalyst for private sector enterprises.

### Thatcher's Assets and Advantages

U.S. Highway 70 provides access to Thatcher from Safford and the Tucson area, and from Globe and the greater Phoenix area to the northwest. Thatcher's climate and other natural amenities, including Mount Graham and the Pinaleno Mountains, contribute to Thatcher being a pleasant and livable community. Its small-town feel, personable residents, high quality education, including Eastern Arizona College, offer a desirable place to live, work, learn, grow, age and play.

Thatcher is not close to any major metropolitan area, with Tucson being the closest at over 100 miles away and Phoenix about 160 miles away. Recent growth and growth in general, has been driven by local economic activity, particularly the mining industry. A recent spurt in growth is attributed to mining construction and expansion northeast of the Town at the Safford and Morenci mines.

Understanding assets and challenges is essential to identifying local advantages and developing an effective economic development strategy.



## Thatcher's Assets

Thatcher's assets are tied to specific areas of comparative advantage and are shown below.

### Location Advantages

- Isolated from large urban areas
- Offers opportunity for small-town lifestyle without threat of urbanization

### Climatic Advantages

- Desert climate; mild winters
- Strong attraction/incentive for many prospective employers

### Natural Environment Advantages

- Wide-open spaces, scenic views, night-sky viewing
- River corridor and quality outdoors offer opportunities for geo-tourism, eco-tourism, recreation tourism and adventure tourism
- Maintains high-level of environmental quality, clean air

### Network Advantages

- Traversed by US Highway 70
- Arizona Eastern Railroad (connects to transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad)
- Proximity to Freeport McMoRan mining activity
- Access to interstate highway network (I-10)
- Safford Municipal Airport

### Residential Advantages

- Low to moderate housing costs, attainable housing
- Small-town ambiance, safety, desirable living quality
- Access to metropolitan goods, services, and amenities
- Quality education system, including Eastern Arizona College

### Commercial Advantages

- Easy access to Southeastern Arizona labor market
- Good access to goods and services regionally and nationally
- Low to moderate site and operating costs
- Quality infrastructure
- Land available/zoned for commercial and industrial use



## Scenic Attractions and Outdoor Adventure

Thatcher nests in the Upper Gila River Valley with one of Arizona's famous Madrean Sky Islands towering to the south and the Gila River to the north. The Coronado National Forest provides many recreational opportunities. Southwest of the town are the Pinaleño Mountains and the 10,720-foot Mount Graham. Swift Trail provides a route to the summit featuring picnic and camping sites. At alpine elevations above Thatcher lies Riggs Lake, an excellent camping and fishing destination. Scenic U.S. 70 connects Thatcher with recreation areas at San Carlos Lake and Coolidge Dam.

To the west are Klondyke and Aravaipa Canyon. Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness's outstanding scenery, desert fish and wildlife, rich history, offers opportunities for quality outdoor adventure and recreation and for nature study. To the south, Roper Lake State Park features natural mineral water hot springs along with developed camping sites and excellent fishing. Other recreational opportunities include Hot Wells Dunes, Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area and Black Hills Back Country Byway. Thatcher is traversed by the famous "Salsa Trail."

Scenic attractions offer a variety of economic development opportunities including, but not limited to, hiking, horseback riding, nature study, bird watching, rock climbing, hunting, skiing at the top of Mount Graham during winter months, fishing, camping and numerous outdoor activities. Opportunities for sustainable eco-tourism and adventure tourism constitute a key component of the economic development strategy of the Town.



*Aravaipa Canyon, Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness*



## Employment Centers

Employment Center opportunities were identified in the previous General Plan update on lands suitable for employment-based uses. Selected sites have necessary industrial or commercial zoning to support retail, manufacturing, office, research and development and similar activities. Existing and planned employment centers are found along Highway 70, at the eastern edge of Town, and along Raey Lane and 8th Street.

## Major Regional Partners

Coordinating efforts with SEAGO's economic development team, Graham County, the City of Safford, Eastern Arizona College, Freeport McMoRan, the Chamber of Commerce, and other major stakeholders will increase opportunities to attract visitors and prologue visitors' stay, increasing revenue generation from retail, lodging, restaurants, and other visitor-oriented services.

## Thatcher's Challenges

All communities and regions have economic challenges to overcome, and Thatcher is no exception. The guidance provided in the various elements of this General Plan transforming most of these challenges into opportunities. Thatcher's challenges are summarized below.

### Under-Served Population

Some of Thatcher's biggest needs are for expanded retail services and quality jobs. Presently, a significant portion of resident demands for consumer goods are met outside Thatcher, thereby economically leaking revenues to other communities. Supporting the revitalization of Highway 70 and adhering to the direction included in this and other elements will assist in turning this challenge into an opportunity.

### Proximity to Metropolitan Areas

The fact that Thatcher is over 120 miles from either the Tucson or Phoenix metropolitan area limits market credibility. While Thatcher does not have to compete with greater metropolitan commercial sectors, larger market goods and services may remain distant.

### Under-Utilized Commercial Properties

Thatcher has significant capacity to expand commercial properties and uses in key locations in the Town. Substantial new commercial retail development is anticipated for the area near the intersection of 20th Avenue and Highway 70. Currently, Highway 70's potential as a major commercial corridor is not fully explored. Strategies to revitalize Highway 70 are provided in various elements of this General Plan, including the Highway 70 Revitalization Element.



## Principal Economic Activities

Agriculture, once a mainstay of the Thatcher economy, is being eclipsed by higher education and the retail sector as the community's economic drivers. Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. operates two major facilities in the region, Safford, and Morenci, contributing more than \$435 million annually to the regional economy. Freeport's Safford open-pit copper mining complex, located less than 12 miles from Thatcher Town Hall, is a zero-discharge facility, and one of the most environmentally advanced copper mines ever built. With its hub location, Thatcher is seeing retail trade and the service sector emerging as major players in its economic outlook. Some former agricultural lands are now being converted to residential and retail uses.

## Employment Structure

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census American Community Survey 2017 estimates database, the total civilian employed population 16 years and older in the Town of Thatcher was 2,003 employees in that year. Table 3 shows top industry sectors ranked by employment.

**TABLE 3: Industry Ranked by Employment**

Industry Sectors	2017 Employed Population Estimates	Percent
Education, health care & social assistance	630	31.5%
Retail trade	277	13.8%
Arts, entertainment, food & recreation services	257	12.1%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, & mining	236	11.8%
Public administration	170	8.5%
Construction	139	6.9%
Professional, scientific, & administrative services	113	5.6%
Other services, except public administration	43	2.3%
Finance, insurance & real estate	42	2.1%
Information	42	2.1%
Transportation, warehousing, & utilities	37	1.8%
Manufacturing	11	0.5%
Wholesale trade	3	0.1%
Total civilian employed population 16 years and over	2,003	100%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017.*



## Thatcher Economic Development Strategy

Thatcher must develop and implement a viable, multiprong economic development strategy, particularly to ensure economic recovery after the global pandemic. Partnerships with adjacent jurisdictions in the Gila Valley region, SEAGO, Eastern Arizona College, Freeport McMoRan, major land owners and agricultural community are essential to support the agricultural industry sector, invigorate the economy, assist local businesses, increase the revenue stream, support a livable quality of life, and ensure the long-term fiscal viability of the Town.

Such economic development strategy, balances agriculture, agri-business, farming and ranching, sustainable agricultural conversion based on best practices were conversion is appropriate, job creation and workforce training, technology and innovation, employment attraction and retention, local business support and embraces new revenue streams by offering a quality outdoor experience including recreation, tourism, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism.

## Emerging Trends

### Remote Workforce Hosting

Remote workforce hosting is an emerging economic development trend assisting small communities with desirable quality of life to bust the local economy. This trend identifies community initiatives to needed to attract talented individuals currently employed in high-paying remote work positions to permanently relocate to work remotely for those same employers, stimulating the local economy.

Combined with a powerful communications strategy, the platform showcases the attributes of the host community and supports a list of incentives to make the choice to relocate seamless. In most host communities the platform includes a soft-landing program, connecting these individuals with others in the community to help them truly feel at home. The program requires an application and only high-value workers, and economic contributors are selected to participate. Eastern Arizona College could be a partner, serving as an anchor institution. The economic development strategy of Thatcher may desire to consider remote hosting as a way to boost the local economy.

Remote workforce hosting programs have been successful in other cities and recent data/articles suggest that citizens of larger cities are looking now more than ever to relocate to places like Thatcher offering the quality of life and natural amenities not available in larger communities.





## Home Occupations

Although live work scenarios are not new, according to the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin recent research finds that working from home is here to stay. More professionals are eager to work from home, supporting live work situations that decrease overhead expenses such as rent and utilities and increase profitability margins. This trend may require refinements in home occupations standards and guidelines for residential districts to accommodate professionals preferring to work from home.



## Thatcher's Economic Development Vision

The economic development vision of Thatcher includes:

- Increasing local and regional prosperity by being a competitive, business-friendly Town working with other regional partners;
- Sustaining high quality of life in a connected Gila Valley region;
- Enjoying a strong local retail revenue stream supported by revitalization;
- Supporting service and non-service sectors, technology and innovation, research and development, agri-business, heritage, and adventure tourism;
- Capitalizing on our agricultural strength, environmental setting, natural attractions, and workforce readiness;
- Offering small-Town character and a quality educational system to support a thriving and sustainable economy that benefits all members of the community and future generations.

## Economic Development Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Achieve the economic development vision by establishing strategic priorities.**

### POLICIES

1. Work with all local and regional partners to support the following strategic priorities:
  - a. Complement SEAGO's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) and strengthen local and regional public/private partnerships;
  - b. Support cross organizational groups that work together to deliver outcomes;
  - c. Create a welcoming local environment for investment based on communication and collaboration;
  - d. Prioritize Highway 70 Commerce Corridor, Town Center/Main Street and Town Core revitalization;
  - e. Focus on industry attraction and expansion;
  - f. Stimulate job growth and support ongoing workforce training;
  - g. Increase local businesses capacity building;
  - h. Support major employers like Eastern Arizona College and Freeport McMoRan;
  - i. Successfully advocate for catalytic infrastructure; and
  - j. Brand the Town to target industries desired and as an Adventure Tourism destination.



**GOAL 2: Achieve compatible, high quality, employment growth.**

**POLICIES**

1. Implement strategic priorities to attract and retain compatible, high quality, employment growth.
2. Attract non-service sector employment in light industrial, high-tech, agri-business, research and development industries, and adventure tourism.
3. Partner with providers to support the necessary infrastructure, private utilities, and new technologies such as high-speed data access to attract industries.
4. Partner with educational providers including Eastern Arizona College, Thatcher Unified School District, and other institutions to support workforce training.
5. Utilize incentives to support economic development efforts, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Directing new employment to identified growth areas with zoning and infrastructure in place to support it;
  - b. Offering a streamlined development review process;
  - c. Supporting Development Agreements (DA) that memorialize commitments;
  - d. Supporting development proposals that contribute to the revitalization of Highway 70.
6. Support expansion of existing businesses through infrastructure and service improvements and planning assistance.
7. Improve the Town Center Character Area and properties along Main Street (Highway 70) through revitalization.

**GOAL 3: Diversify Thatcher's economic development efforts.**

**POLICIES**

1. Avoid dependence on single industries, such as mining, or agriculture, by encouraging a variety of revenue-generating retail, service, office, research and production activities, technology and innovation, and adventure tourism.
2. Ensure consistent tax revenues and a stable fiscal base for the Town through a diversified and growing economy that supports a strong revenue stream.
3. Support employment diversification in the Town when making growth and development decisions.



**GOAL 4: Encourage and support heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism that attracts visitors in winter and year-round.**

**POLICIES**

1. Promote outdoors and recreational opportunities located in close proximity to the Town and identified in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space element as part of the eco-tourism, recreation tourism and adventure tourism economic development strategy.
2. Attract additional lodging facilities and high-quality RV Parks to Thatcher.
3. Support facilities and accommodations for seasonal residents.
4. Encourage local businesses that support these industries such as retail, restaurants, cafes, adventure tours, and bicycle, hiking, camping and gear rentals.
5. Partner with the Arizona State Land Department to take advantage of ASLD Individual, Family and Group Recreation Permits program for the temporary use of State Trust lands for recreation purposes including geocaching, hiking, horseback riding, picnics, bicycling, photography, sightseeing, bird watching and overnight camping for a total of 14 days.

**GOAL 5: Address business retention as an economic development strategic priority.**

**POLICIES**

1. Supports local businesses and major employers expansion and growth needs.
2. Promote community events that:
  - a. Enhance Thatcher visibility and reputation as a desirable place to operate a businesses;
  - b. Support local businesses and employers by encouraging participation and providing vendor space and opportunities to showcase products and services.
3. Increase the capacity building of local businesses and the Town by:
  - a. Partnering with Chamber of Commerce on programs and initiatives designed to strengthen local and regional public/private partnerships;
  - b. Increasing social and business interaction through business fairs and other programs;
  - c. Supporting nonprofit organizations providing services to the business community; and
  - d. Identifying and pursuing grants or loans to pursue the Town's economic development efforts;



**GOAL 6: Sustain a strong, diverse, and skilled workforce.**

**POLICIES**

1. Support institutions and programs that contribute to the expansion of an educated, motivated, and skilled workforce.
2. Work with the Thatcher Unified School District and local businesses to insure training program meet employer's needs.
3. Refer small businesses to Eastern Arizona College Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for assistance with:
  - a. Business Start-ups
  - b. Business Plan Development
  - c. QuickBooks Training & Advising
  - d. Sources of Financing
  - e. Accounting & Record-keeping
  - f. Marketing Strategies
  - g. Technology Solutions
  - h. Cash Flow Analysis
  - i. Human Resources
  - j. Government Procurement Opportunities
  - k. Business Expansion & Growth Assistance
  - l. Customer Service

**GOAL 7: Consider becoming a remote workforce host community.**

**POLICIES**

1. Work with regional partners, Eastern Arizona College, local businesses, and community to explore cost/benefit and desirability of becoming a remote workforce host community.

## NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING ELEMENT

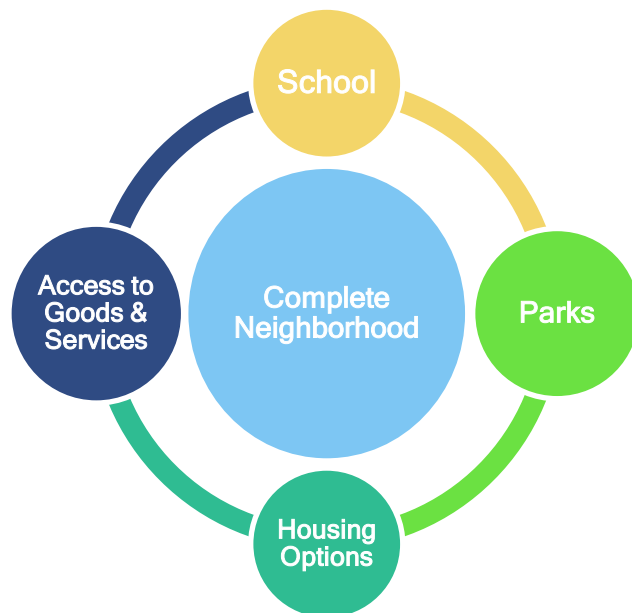
This element addresses the specific needs of neighborhoods, including housing variety, quality and maintenance, neighborhood amenities, neighborhood connectivity and neighborhood safety. The Character Areas/Use of Land Element addresses residential development within the urban, suburban, and rural context of each identified character area,

### Thatcher's Neighborhoods

Thriving neighborhoods are the benchmarks of a healthy community and support the economic vitality and long-term resilience of the Town. Rooftops support revenue generating retail and, thus, a healthy the economy. Thatcher neighborhoods are safe, tranquil, and aesthetically pleasing residential areas providing:

- Quality housing choices for all age groups and income ranges in a setting that includes walkable streets, defined streetscapes featuring drought-tolerant, low water use landscapes and shade-providing trees;
- A quality street network that offers multimodal access to jobs with sustainable wages comparable to the cost of living in Thatcher;
- Access to excellent schools, parks, recreation, and other neighborhood amenities and services; and
- Connectivity to trail system and natural open space.

### Complete Neighborhoods



In Thatcher, a “complete neighborhood” is a neighborhood where residents enjoy safe and convenient vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle access to the goods and services needed in daily life, including grocery stores and other commercial services, quality public schools, public open spaces parks and recreational facilities, in a setting that offers a variety of housing options.

Thatcher’s complete neighborhoods reflect the human scale and small-Town character and identity of Thatcher and support healthy and active lifestyles.

**Figure 25: Complete Neighborhoods.**



## Neighborhood Amenities

Thatcher's neighborhoods are served by quality neighborhood amenities and services and support connectivity via pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular modes.

### Neighborhood Amenities and Services

Neighborhood amenities include neighborhood parks, recreation, schools, and other services and amenities available to residential areas, and neighborhood commercial where in character with adjacent development. The Town currently owns and maintains three developed park sites: Thatcher Park, Thatcher Splash Park, and Thatcher Skate Park. Parks are addressed in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element.

The Thatcher Unified School District (TUSD) is comprised of three schools: Thatcher Elementary School; Thatcher Middle School, and Thatcher High School. Schools are further addressed in the Public Services and Facilities Element.

### Neighborhood Connectivity

Thatcher's regional shared path provides pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across the entire planning area along Reay Lane and Golf Course Road spanning from the intersection of Reay Lane and Highway 70 to the intersection of Golf Course Road and 20th Avenue and connecting to a regional recreation destination, Mount Graham Golf course. All residential development in the vicinity of the share path will continue to provide connectivity to the regional shared path system.

The Town's location near the foothills of Mount Graham provides opportunities for the development of a network of trails along natural drainage channels and washes to support a healthy and active lifestyle, provide connectivity to significant natural open space, supports valuable habitat for wildlife and enhance the quality of life of Thatcher residential areas.

Trails and open space system are addressed in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity are addressed in the Connectivity, Access, and Mobility Element.

### Neighborhood Safety

Future development will continue to support neighborhood safety by applying safe-by-design best practices. Prevention through design, also called safety by design, incorporates methods and practices that support community safety in the design process, with an emphasis on optimizing health and safety in the community. Thatcher will continue to support quality, tranquil and safe neighborhoods by adhering to "Safe-by-Design" methods and best practices.



## Housing

Housing expenses can easily consume 30 to 50 percent of household income. Access to housing and the affordability of housing impacts community development and long-term economic resilience. Housing development supports commerce and new jobs and provides desired housing options for all demographic groups. People support businesses and housing support people.

This section provides the housing context guiding the housing goals and policies included in this element. The Background and Current Conditions technical report housing and demographic characteristics, including population projections. A strategy that supports a variety of housing types, quality development and maintenance of the existing housing stock and residential areas is essential to sustain Thatcher's thriving neighborhoods.

### Residential Development and Housing Types

The current mix of housing types in Thatcher responds to the rural, suburban, and urban context in which residential development is located. Larger lots occur in rural areas in proximity to agricultural land uses. Subdivisions comprising a suburban pattern are located throughout the Neighborhoods Character Area. Higher density more compact neighborhoods occur in the Town Core and in the Town Center character areas, and most attached single family and multifamily development is located in proximity to Eastern Arizona College and Highway 70. Mobile home parks exist in unincorporated areas of Graham County located inside the Town of Thatcher Designated Planning Area.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau housing estimates, the owner-occupied housing rate in Thatcher was 59.8 with a total of 40.2 percent consisting of renter-occupied housing in 2019. The estimated medium value of housing-occupied units was \$149,400 for the same year. The estimated median monthly owner costs for a household with a mortgage was \$1,302, and the estimated median gross rent was \$836.

The latest Census Bureau figures show that Arizona's poverty rate fell faster, but remained higher, than the national average in 2019. Poverty in Arizona fell from 16.4 to 14.9 percent, while the national level went from 14.0 to 13.4 percent in the same period. Thatcher's poverty rate was 15.3 percent in 2019 according to the same source, indicating a need for affordable homes for people living at the poverty level or below.

### Quality Development

Residential development in Thatcher will continue to be safe-by-design and sensitively integrated into the natural, social, and built environments. Future residential development includes walkable streets lined with shade-providing trees and sustainable desert landscapes, is served by a quality street network that offers multimodal access to jobs, schools, parks, recreation, and other amenities and services, and provide trail connectivity to natural open space.





## Property Maintenance

Efforts to sustain neighborhood quality must reflect the diversity of neighborhoods and their needs. Most residential neighborhoods are well-maintained. Maintaining the character of the existing neighborhoods and encouraging new quality infill residential development is key to supporting thriving neighborhoods.

## Neighborhoods & Housing Element Goals and Policies

### GOAL 1: Continue to develop and maintain quality neighborhoods.

#### POLICIES

1. Continue to support safe, tranquil, quality residential development that is properly maintained and provides vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to parks, schools, and other neighborhood amenities and services and trail connectivity to quality open space.
2. Protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible development that does not support the character of that area.
3. Support neighborhood-scale, non-residential businesses, services, and amenities at the intersection of arterial or collector roads where feasible and in a manner that maintains or enhances the established character of the area.
4. Continue to apply safe-by-design principles and best practices in future development.
5. Layout and design new residential development in conformance to the urban, suburban or rural context of the planning area in which it is proposed.
6. Thatcher neighborhoods reflect the small-town distinct identity, character and sense of place of the Town.

### GOAL 2: Encourage a broad range of quality housing types to address current and future housing needs and to support long-term economic vitality.

#### POLICIES

1. Maintain high standards of new development with attention to maximizing the supply of affordable housing.
2. Provide a mix of housing types, densities, affordability levels, and designs for a wide range of income and age levels.
3. Increase home ownership and rental opportunities for all income ranges and age groups.



4. Encourage quality urban, compact, walkable mixed-use development that complements surrounding uses in the Town Center and Town Core planning areas and in other areas that may become available for urban development in conformance to guidance provided in the Character Areas Element.
5. Direct higher-density residential and mixed-used development to the Northeast Gateway Character Area as opportunities arise.
6. Support quality residential development that meets Town housing needs, promotes the vitality of established neighborhoods, and enhances the quality of life of Thatcher.
7. Provide for various regulatory and financial incentives to encourage well designed housing, special needs housing, and housing affordable to households of different income levels and age groups.
8. Support the housing needs of Eastern Arizona College by supporting student housing options that include family student housing.

**GOAL 3: Encourage development that supports the healthy and active lifestyle valued by the community.**

**POLICIES**

1. Require new residential development to:
  - a. Sensitively and aesthetically integrate residential site design to the social, built and natural environments by supporting neighborhood connectivity to parks, trails, schools, open space and other neighborhood amenities.
  - b. Be adequately served by parks, open space, passive and active recreation and support pedestrian, bicycle and trail connectivity to neighborhood services and amenities.
  - c. Include walkable streets with streetscapes including shade-providing trees and sustainable desert landscapes.
  - d. Support a quality street network that offers multimodal (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle) connectivity to nearby schools, parks, recreation, and other neighborhood services and amenities.



**GOAL 4: Achieve safe, quality multifamily and mixed-use development through innovative site planning and building design.**

#### POLICIES

1. Encourage new multifamily and mixed-use development to incorporate safe-by-design innovative site planning and building design:
  - a. Locate building entryways so that they are visible from public areas, other buildings, apartments, and houses.
  - b. Design entryways to provide residents with a view from their home into the corridor that serves them.
  - c. Provide a well-lighted and dark sky compliant, pedestrian circulation system with convenient access to walkways and sidewalks beyond the development.
  - d. Provide dark sky compliant lighting at doorways, windows, entryways, and in corridors and service alleys.
  - e. Provide each residential unit with an area of responsibility that extends beyond the entryway.
  - f. Design common stairways to serve a limited number of units.
  - g. Utilize amenities and distinctive elements that extend the private space of individual apartments onto landings and into corridors.
  - h. Disperse project amenities between certain units or clusters of units.
  - i. Ensure that outdoor activity areas are easily accessed from homes.
  - j. Locate children's play areas and other outdoor recreation areas so that they are visible and accessible from a maximum number of homes and locations;



## PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS & OPEN SPACE

A hallmark of a thriving community is to provide and maintain a safe and healthy public sphere, where residents and visitors have the opportunity to meet, interact, recreate, play, network, exchange ideas, and feel understood, appreciated, and cared for. Access to parks, recreation, trails and open space provides a high level of social intimacy, which in turn decreases isolation and supports safety by activating public spaces and increasing eyes on the street. Such network defines the physical and social setting in which residents and visitors interact, and it plays an important role in the Town's economic development strategy by valuing natural attractions and supporting eco-tourism and adventure tourism.

This element defines public parks, recreation, trail system and open space as areas for community interaction and networking. Such public spaces include regional, community and neighborhood parks as well as public gathering spaces like plazas and courtyards in association with mixed-use and urban development. This element views streets, sidewalks and trails as social connectors and also addresses passive and active recreation. When addressed in an integrated manner, the physical environment supports the social environment and promotes safety and a healthy and active lifestyle.

Thatcher recognizes the three main characteristics of a thriving social environment:

- **Health and Wellness:** Improve the health and wellness through parks and recreation that inspire personal growth and active, healthy lifestyles.
- **Connectivity:** Expand and strengthen outdoor experiences that connect residents and visitors to nature and to each other.
- **Social Interaction:** Offering safe, quality public spaces such as parks, plazas and courtyards that can host farmers markets, art fairs, concerts under the stars boosting the local economy by allowing vendors and serving as community destinations.

### Eco-tourism and Outdoor Adventure Gateway

The Gila River Valley is Southwestern Arizona's Gateway for eco-tourism and outdoor adventure. Framed by the stunning views of Mount Graham, the Town of Thatcher is located at the epicenter of this gateway offering residents and visitors a variety of settings to enjoy the outdoors. A variety of eco-tourism and outdoor adventure destinations at a short distance offer camping, cabins, and RV camping, fishing, hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, nature viewing, OHV riding in rough terrain, mountain bike riding, outdoor learning, picnicking, scenic driving, water activities, winter sports and other outdoor adventures.



This recreation area is the home of the Coronado's most extensive mountain range, the Pinaleno, and topped by the highest peak in southern Arizona, 10,720-foot Mt. Graham. A scenic road named the Swift Trail (Hwy 366) leads into these unique mountains and provides access to natural hot springs, campgrounds, forest trails, water falls, and fishing at Riggs Lake.

The Safford Recreation Area is also home to the Galiuro Mountains and the Santa Teresa Range. The 76,317-acre Galiuro Wilderness is steeped in history and contains an extensive trail network. The Santa Teresas are rugged and remote, with a variety of primitive trails leading into a 26,780-acre Wilderness and providing opportunities for rock climbing, hiking, and mountain biking in the Sky Islands Forest.

### **Gila Box National Conservation Areas**

The Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area is a National Conservation Area (NCA) located along the Gila River in Graham and Greenlee counties in southern Arizona. Administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the conservation area is approximately 23,000 acres in size.

Located 25 miles from Thatcher's downtown, this conservation area is a short scenic ride away from Thatcher's downtown. Campgrounds, hiking trails, hot springs, river rafting, birdwatching, and miles of trails make this National Conservation Area popular. Bonita Creek wildlife viewing area is accessible and has numerous interpretive displays and shade shelters. The section of the Gila River that flows through the Gila Box is popular with white-water rafters and kayakers.



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

The Gila Box Riparian NCA includes four perennial waterways, the Gila and San Francisco rivers and Bonita and Eagle creeks. This region is a very special riparian ecosystem abounding with plant and animal diversity. A canyon section, known as the Gila Box, is composed of patchy mesquite woodlands, mature cottonwoods, and sandy beaches. Impressive Gila Conglomerate cliffs tower more than 1,000 feet above the Gila River, and bighorn sheep are commonly spotted. Bonita Creek, a key tributary of the Gila River, is lined with large cottonwoods, sycamores, and willows.

Lower water affords hikers the opportunity to safely enjoy the scenic canyon. Numerous prehistoric and historical structures can be viewed. A network of primitive roads provides hours of backcountry adventure for four-wheel-drive and mountain bike trekkers. The Bonita Creek Watchable Wildlife Viewing Area provides a bird's-eye view of the riparian canyon below, with over 100 species of birds recorded. A homestead cabin, rock art and cliff dwellings, show evidence of the occupation of this important perennial stream by earlier inhabitants. The perennial creek and riparian vegetation make the NCA a year-round desert oasis.



### Mount Graham

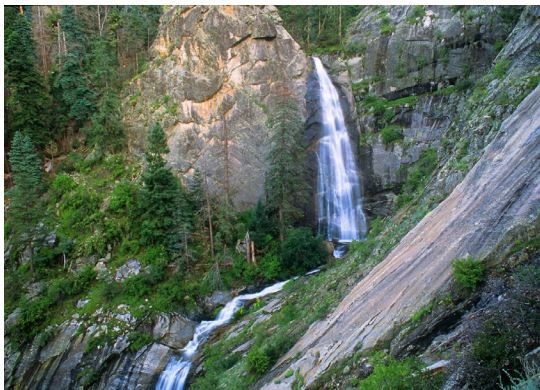
Thatcher's valley meets the foothills of Mount Graham. This mountain reaches 10,724 feet in height and is visible from any area in Town. It is the highest elevation in Graham County, the Coronado National Forest and the Pinaleno Mountains. It is also the southernmost peak and land area in the continental United States above 10,000 feet.

Mount Graham summits are headwaters for numerous perennial streams that tumble through five major botanical zones creating successive sky islands. Located between the southern Rocky Mountains and Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental, and biologically isolated for millennia, the higher elevations have provided refuge for relict populations of plants and animals with adaptive strategies rooted in Pleistocene ice age environmental conditions. Of particular note are stands of the oldest conifer trees in the U.S. Southwest and associated habitats for threatened and endangered species, including the Mount Graham Red Squirrel.



The Pinaleño Mountains are the single-most diverse mountain range in North America and host 11 endemic species that are found nowhere else on Earth. Visitors can travel the Swift Trail (Highway 366) through eight distinct zones in just a dozen miles, including Sonoran desert, Sonoran grassland, chaparral, pinyon-juniper woodland, Madrean evergreen oak woodland, Ponderosa pine forest, mixed conifer forest, and finally spruce-fir forest at the highest elevations.

### Ash Creek Trail



One of the Pinaleño range's larger streams carved the route for Ash Creek Trail, which drops from alpine forest to desert valley, Ash Creek Trail passes through all of the varied life zones that find a home on this unique mountain. Such a diverse set of surroundings makes this an excellent trail for encountering some of the varied wildlife species that inhabit the Pinaleño Mountains. Black bear, mountain lion, both mule and white-tailed deer, javelina and coatimundi are just some of the animals to watch. Pools in the middle reaches of Ash Creek hold populations of native Apache trout.

Creekside setting, trout fishing, historic sites, mountains to desert sky islands, make this high elevation trail an amenity for locals and visitors who admire the outdoors. This trail is suitable for horseback as well as foot travel. The stretch of the trail called slickrock is only suitable for foot travel.



## Riggs Flat Lake

A scenic 44-mile drive from Thatcher's downtown leads to the Coronado National Forest campground at Riggs Flag Lake at the top of Mount Graham. Riggs Flag Lake is located at the end of Swift Trail, a road that winds along the top of the Pinaleno Mountains.

The 11 acres lake is set in alpine forest and meadow. Its cold waters are stocked during the summer with rainbow, brown and brook trout. If the big ones aren't biting, there is always plenty of scenery to enjoy. In addition to the views of the lake and the surrounding forest, West Peak is visible from the vicinity of the lake. So are Aravaipa Valley and the Galiuro Mountains to the west.

Riggs Flat campground is one of the larger campgrounds located in the Pinaleno Mountains. The campground includes 31 campsites. Each is equipped with tables and fire grills.



Mount Graham provides visitors a wealth of activity, from scenic driving, nature study and sightseeing to more strenuous activities such as hiking, rock climbing, and cross-country skiing. Trout fishing at Riggs Flat Lake is a popular summer pastime, and several of the year-round creeks offer the challenge of stream fishing.



## Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness

Administered by the Bureau of Land Management and encompassing 19,400 acres, Aravaipa is one of Arizona's most scenic canyons, with stunning multicolored cliffs studded with saguaro cactus rising above the canyon. Fern-draped grottoes, seeps, and springs line the canyon. There are numerous archaeological sites, including a cliff dwelling along Turkey Creek. The riparian area includes scattered cottonwoods, willows, sycamores, Arizona alder and Arizona walnut.

Located 66 miles from Thatcher's downtown, Aravaipa is famed as a birder's paradise, with nearly every type of desert songbird and more than 150 species documented in the wilderness. Rich in habitats, the wilderness offers a four-season wildlife viewing. Aravaipa's outstanding scenery, desert fish and wildlife, rich history, and opportunities for primitive recreation beckon adventurers to explore its scenic splendor.





### Roper Lake State Park

Located 9.5 miles from Thatcher's downtown, Roper Lake State Park is a state park of Arizona, surrounding 32-acre Roper Lake. The park is located off U.S. Route 191, 5 miles south of Safford, in the Gila River Valley. The land for the park, formerly a ranch, was purchased by the state in 1972 in order to construct a reservoir.



### Hot Well Dunes Recreation Area

Located only 36 miles from downtown Thatcher is Hot Well Dunes Recreation Area where a beach surrounded a lake approximately two million years ago. What remains today is one of the most unique recreation spots in Arizona. Hot Well Dunes provides the opportunity to ride 2,000 acres of sand dunes, set up a camp, and then soak in relaxing hot tubs, all in the same location. This OHV sand dune recreation area also includes fenced in concrete hot tubs fed by Artesian mineral springs.

### State Trust Land

The Town of Thatcher Designated Planning Area includes State Trust Lands managed by the ASLD. Some of these State Trust lands include quality open space. Recreational use temporary permits for individuals, families, and groups can be obtained from ASLD to hike and camp on these lands. Recreational camping is limited to no more than 14 days per year.



## Parks and Recreation

In Thatcher, parks express the Town's identity, character and sense of place and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life of the Town. Parks and recreation services are viewed by residents as one of the most important factors indicating livability. Thatcher's parks provide an essential connection for residents and visitors of all ages to the health and wellness benefits of nature and the outdoors and support social interaction. The Town currently operates and maintains four parks.

The Thatcher Parks and Recreation Department manages a wide variety of facilities and activities. Such facilities include five community parks, a splash pad water feature, a skate park, tennis courts, basketball court, sand volleyball and a pickle ball court.

Additionally, the Town offers Summer Baseball, Softball, Women's Volleyball, Jr. League Volleyball, Men's Basketball, Children's Choir, Swim Team, Children's Orchestra, Community Choir, and Basketball & Tennis Camps.

Recreation swimming is available during the summer months at the City of Safford, Eastern Arizona College, and the Town of Pima aquatic centers.

### Community Parks

Community parks are diverse in nature, serving a broader purpose than the neighborhood or pocket parks. These are larger than neighborhood parks and are intended to serve the community as a whole often offering recreational amenities to regional uses. The Town features two community parks, the Thatcher Splash Park and Thatcher Town Park.

## Thatcher Splash Park



#### Amenities:

- Baseball/Softball Field
- Basketball Court
- Grill
- Parking
- Picnic Areas
- Picnic Tables
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Splash Pad
- Volleyball Court

**Address:** 3883 W Ballpark, Thatcher, AZ

## Thatcher Town Park (Reay Lane Park)



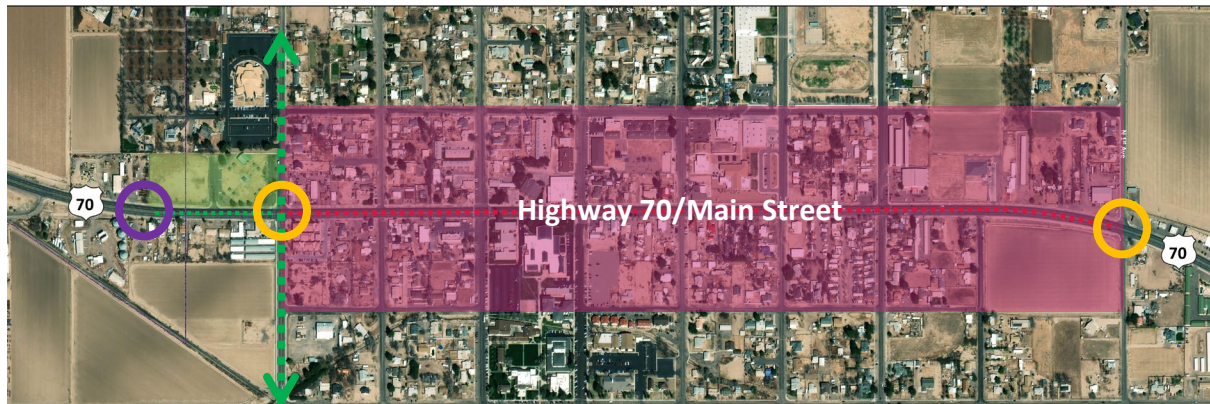
### Amenities:

- Grill
- Open Area
- Parking
- Picnic Areas
- Picnic Tables
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Soccer Field
- Volleyball Court

**Address:** 4048 W. Main St., Thatcher, AZ

Proximity of Thatcher Splash Park to Thatcher Skate Park and the Eastern Arizona College Sports Complex provides an opportunity to establish this area as a regional recreation destination.

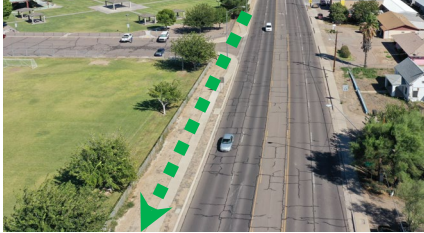
### Defining Thatcher's West Gateway



**Figure 26: West Gateway to Thatcher**

As shown in the figure above, Thatcher Park is located at the main western gateway of the Town (purple circle), the Main Street segment of Highway 70 (orange circles), and the Town Center Character Area. Thatcher Park plays a vital role in defining the arrival to a major destination and provides opportunities for defining a strong gateway. In addition, Thatcher Park provides an opportunity for improving the pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems of the Town.

A pedestrian and bicycle connector (green arrow) along Reay Lane north of Main Street can provide connectivity to the Smithvill Canal trail and the Gila River Linear Park, increasing opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles and supporting community-based eco-tourism efforts. This pedestrian and bicycle connector can provide connectivity south of Main Street to the Reay Lane regional shared path. This connector will also provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity for residences located north of Main Street to the Thatcher Splash Park, the Thatcher Skate Park and the Eastern Arizona College sports complex.



The Highway 70 Corridor Revitalization Element defines the segment of Highway 70 west of Main Street as the rural segment of the corridor abutting agriculture-support industry and agricultural fields. An additional pedestrian and bicycle connector defining that entrance of the Town along Thatcher Park would enhance the sense of arrival, character and identity of Thatcher and defining the Town as a destination.



**Figure 27: Example of a Shared Path Along Thatcher Park with Informal Landscape for Highway 70 within the West Gateway to the Town.**

## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks serve the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods. They generally range in size from 2 to 10 acres. Neighborhood parks are designed for a  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius of service. Concentrated intense recreation activities are common in these parks and they are usually designed within a limited amount of space. Neighborhood park amenities may include aesthetically designed play areas, picnic areas, splash pads, ball fields, skating, open space for field games, shelters, and walking paths. These parks serve residents in a variety of age groups. These parks should be easily accessible, and access should be uninterrupted by major roads or other significant barriers.

### Daley Estate Park



#### Amenities:

- Basketball Court
- Grill
- Open Area
- Picnic Areas
- Picnic Tables
- Playground
- Restrooms

**Address:** Kimball St. and Pinaleno Mtn. Dr. Thatcher, AZ

### Thatcher Skate Park



#### Amenities:

- Skate Park

**Address:** 3883 W BallPark Rd. Thatcher, AZ

## Pocket Parks

The smallest type of park, “pocket parks,” serve a concentrated population or a specific age group or function but they can serve persons of all ages located in the immediate area. Pocket parks are designed for up to a ¼-mile radius of service and are 1.5 acres or less in size. The park is generally a “walk-to” type park, meaning no parking facilities for automobiles are normally found. The primary purpose of pocket parks is to provide recreation to residents where major roads do not have to be crossed. The amenities provided can playgrounds for young children; however, some include passive activities for adults and seniors depending on the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. Other amenities typically include gazebos, benches, scenic overlooks, picnic tables, and ornamental landscaping. **Eagle Meadow Park** (1<sup>st</sup> Ave & Eagle Meadow Loop) and **Mountain View Estates Park** (Cota Ln. and Elizabeth Ln.) are examples of pocket parks featuring open space area and playground.

## Special Use Parks

Special use parks are areas that include specialized recreational activities. These activities can have a very broad range from field houses, museums, gardens, outdoor theaters, nature centers, and golf courses. These parks usually provide amenities that serve the entire Town as well as visitors from outside the community and the region.



## Mt. Graham Golf Course

Owned and operated by the City of Safford and located in Thatcher, Mt Graham Golf Course is a walker-friendly, traditional 18-hole par 72 course. For men, the course plays 6354 yards, par 72 with a rating of 69.5 and a slope of 116. For women, it's 5691 yards, par 73 with a rating of 70.6 and a slope of 119. The course's water and sand provide a great challenge for the average golfer. The course also features a grass driving range and short game practice areas.



*Mt Graham Golf Course, Thatcher, Arizona*

## Discovery Park & Mt. Graham International Observatory



Nature's Hideaway at EAC's Discovery Park Campus is a restored wetland. The restoration of this area was recognized at the National Wetlands Awards in Washington, D.C. Trails wind through this area allowing visitors to experience southeastern Arizona in its natural state. Descriptive signage is strategically placed to highlight the habitat restoration efforts. This nature hideaway offers specially designed viewing areas to watch wildlife and trails to walk through different habitats.

Gov Aker observatory is also located at the park and offers a full motion flight simulator on a ride through the solar system. The observatory houses a 20-inch reflecting telescope and a 0.5-meter radio telescope. Discovery Park conducts tours of the telescope at the Mt. Graham International Observatory. Tours run every Saturday through late fall.





## Health and Environmental Benefits of Parks

According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving and promoting places to be physically active can improve individual and community health and result in a 25 percent increase of residents who exercise at least three times per week. Studies also correlate stress reduction, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health to the length of stay in visits to parks. In addition, parks improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve air quality, provide vegetative buffers to development, provide habitat for wildlife, including birds, squirrels and a variety of butterflies, and provide a place for children, families, youth and elders to connect with nature and experience the outdoors together. Thatcher's parks are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit.

## Social Benefits of Parks

Thatcher's parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life valued by residents and visitors. They contribute to the Town's identity and sense of place, provide gathering places for families and social groups, as well as for individuals of all ages and instill a sense of public pride and cohesion to the community.

## Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan

The Town could benefit from the preparation of an integrated Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space System Master Plan that addresses the provision of these amenities while supporting wellness, connectivity, social interaction, and long-term economic development goals.

## Plazas and Courtyards

Plazas and courtyards are an integral part of the social life. These urban amenities provide opportunities for social interaction where open space access is limited like the Town Center, Main Street, and the Town Core. Urban public spaces contribute to social and intellectual capital of the community by creating opportunities to network, fostering relationships that nurture the exchange of ideas. Ideas flow while drinking a cup of coffee and having a conversation with a colleague or co-worker. Plazas and courtyards also support community member's wellbeing by providing walkable spaces in urban areas.

Plazas and courtyards are integral parts of a small-Town economy. These spaces support local artists and businesses by hosting art fairs, health fairs, science fairs, concerts, and other outdoor events that attract residents and visitors, making them destinations. Plazas and courtyards also benefit local businesses providing space for local art, craft, and food vendors to sell their products and for local musicians, artists, and performers to offer entertainment, supporting the local economy and the long-term fiscal viability of the Town.



Figures 28: Farmers Markets, Art Fairs, Concerts, Food Fairs and Health Fairs at Courtyards or Plazas



Figures 29: Courtyard Concept Appropriate for Mixed-use Development.



Figures 30: Plazas and Courtyards appropriate for Main Street (Highway 70).

## Multipurpose Recreation/Community Center

During the visioning process, community members mentioned the need for a multipurpose community and recreation center including aquatics. With its strong education, recreation, and community-oriented focus, the Town Core character area includes established neighborhoods, Thatcher High School, the Eastern Arizona Campus, NAU at Eastern Arizona College, the Nursing Education Center, the Small Business Development Center, the Fine Arts Auditorium, and the Guitteau Gymnasium and EAC sports complex. In addition, this character area includes Thatcher Splash Park and Thatcher Skate Park.

Thatcher's Town Core offers the ideal location for a multipurpose recreation, including aquatics and community center that could be planned in conjunction with existing recreational facilities to create a recreation destination hub.



Figure 31: Multipurpose Recreation/Community Center Concept

## Trail System

Thatcher's location near the foothills of Mount Graham, provides a network of natural trails, natural drainage channels and washes that extend through the community. Washes, are typically undeveloped, although most also contain utilities and utility easements, as well as serving as surface drainage corridors. Such network of undeveloped washes provides visual connectivity to natural open space between neighborhoods and connect to the regional trail system. Some of the popular regional trails include: Ash Creek Trail #307 addressed earlier, Arcadia Trail #328, Taylor Canyon Trail #306, and the Grant Hill Loop Trail #322.

There is opportunity to enhance the Thatcher trail system and identify trailhead locations to regional trails to encourage healthy active lifestyles in the community and to support the eco-tourism and adventure tourism efforts of the Town's economic development strategy.

### Trails Along Creeks, Canals and Drainageways

Supporting natural trails along creeks, canals and drainageways improves the connectivity to all the character areas in the town, supports healthy and active lifestyles, increases the quality of life valued by the community and assists in supporting eco-tourism. During the visioning process the Highline Canal, Smithvill Canal and Frye Creek were identified as potential areas for trail enhancements.



Figure 32: Example of Shared Path Along a Canal.

## Gila River Linear Park and Trail

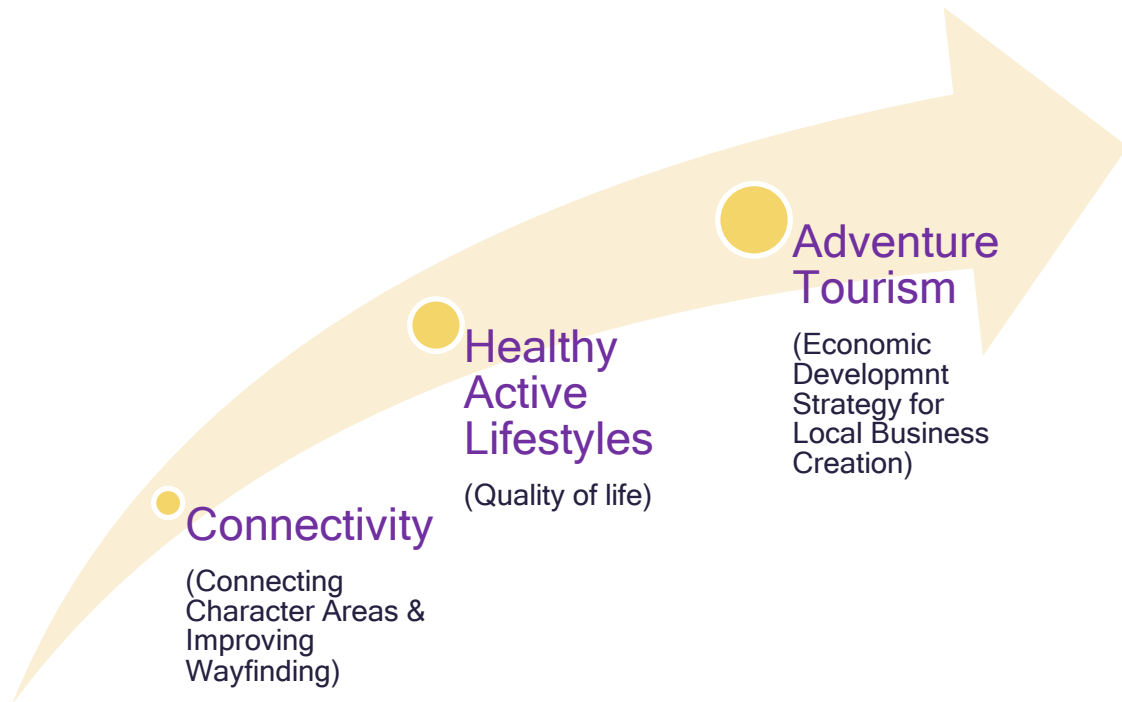
As provided in the Character Areas Element, the Gila River offers opportunities for community-based sustainable ecotourism by supporting efforts that focus on outdoor activities. Bird watching, nature study, hiking, bicycle, scenic tours, and other forms of passive recreation along the Gila River could provide a community and regional amenity that complements the rural setting of that character area.

In June 2020, the City of Safford (Resolution No. 20-019), Graham County (Resolution No. 2020-07), and the Town of Thatcher (Resolution No. 688-2020) adopted the Gila River Linear Park and Trail Conceptual Master Plan (Master Plan) prepared in collaboration with the Trust for Public Land and the Gila Watershed Partnership. The proposed Gila River Linear Park and Trail will extend along the south bank of the Gila River just north of the City of Safford and the Town of Thatcher in Graham, County, Arizona. The straight-line distance from beginning to end of the linear park and trails is approximately 5 miles. The shared-use recreational pathway will meander along the river and extend south along Graveyard Wash with an approximate length of 7-1/2 miles.

The Master Plan focuses only on the Gila River corridor, but the proposed Gila River linear park and trail has the potential to complement other recreational resources, including the City of Safford/Town of Thatcher shared-used recreation trail system. Future extensions that connect the river linear park and trail to these existing trails has the potential to significantly expand and enhance the existing trail network and assist in defining the western gateway of Thatcher as the gateway to outdoor adventure.



Figure 33: River Corridor Linear Park Concept



## Thatcher: an Eco-tourism and Adventure Tourism Destination

The Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element impacts quality of life, promotes healthy lifestyles, supports the aesthetics desired by the community, celebrates Thatcher's neighborhoods, and takes advantage of the Town's and region's parks, recreation, trails and open space resources and amenities. Public parks and river corridors coupled with nearby attractions and services are often the driving force for tourism. Parks, Mt. Graham scenic views, the Gila River, regional trails, and quality natural open space define the unique character of Thatcher and its distinct sense of place.

Open space supports passive and active recreation, floodplain and riparian area protection, natural resources, wildlife habitat corridors and scenic views preservation, ground water recharge, economic development, and farmland/ranch protection. The community's investment in maintaining open space along floodplains reduces the cost of flood insurance for Town residents. This element guides decision-making to ensure that residents and visitors continue to enjoy access to scenic attractions, parks, trails, and open space and to establish Thatcher as a recreation, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism destination.



## Types of Open Space

The Town of Thatcher recognizes two types of open space: general open space and natural open space.

### General Open Space

General open space can include golf courses, community gardens, pedestrian and bicycle trails, walkways, picnic areas, remnant parcels of open space lands, and urban plazas, squares, and courtyards. These areas do not function as parks but are used for both active and passive recreational activities.

### Natural Open Space

Natural Open Space include lands with significant natural features and landscapes such as hazard lands, washes, creeks and rivers, environmentally sensitive areas such as riparian areas floodplains, and areas of wildlife habitat. These areas perform important biological and ecological functions, provide passive recreational opportunities and most be conserved in their natural state. Site design for development proposals on sites that include significant amounts of natural open space, must cluster development in a manner that conserves natural open space in perpetuity.

## Parks, Recreation, Trails & Open Space Element Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Support health and wellness, connectivity, social interaction, and the long-term viability of the Town through the integrated design, programming, and use of parks, recreation, trails, and open space.**

### POLICIES

1. Continue to work with the City of Safford, Graham County, The Trust for Public Land, and the Gila Watershed Partnership in the implement the Gila River Linear Park and Trail Conceptual Master Plan.
2. Consider preparing and integrated Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan that addresses the provision of amenities to support wellness, connectivity, social interaction, and long term economic-development goals and:
  - a. Assesses current and future park, recreation, and trails needs;
  - b. Identifies users' preferences including families, working professionals, EAC community, youth and seniors;
  - c. Establishes levels of service standards for passive and active recreation that prioritize users' preferences;





- d. Identifies and phases improvements to pedestrian, bicycle and trail connectivity throughout the Town;
- e. Coordinates parks, recreation trails and open space maintenance in a comprehensive manner to reduce costs and maximize the provision of amenities;
- f. Identifies best location for a multipurpose recreation facility/community center and aquatic center in the Town Core Character Area;
- g. Addresses gateways and wayfinding;
- h. Identifies funding and grants available for these purposes and local as well as regional public/private partners, including Graham County, City of Safford, EAC, Freeport-McMoRan, ASLD and others;
- i. Works with economic development team to identify opportunities to support eco-tourism and adventure tourism capitalizing on natural local and regional attractions and areas of interest in the region to support local small businesses catering to this industry sector;
- j. Develops a phased strategy for the provision of amenities;
- k. Considers all these amenities and services as part of the Town's economic development strategy.

**GOAL 2: Review development and redevelopment proposals for the inclusion of plazas and courtyards as distinct public spaces designed to support wellness, connectivity, social interaction, and economic prosperity.**

#### POLICIES

1. Include plazas and courtyards as attractive amenities in urban areas where open space access is limited like the Town Center, Main Street, and the Northeast Gateway Commerce Corridor.
2. Require plazas and courtyards as integral design components of development plans for multi-tenant commercial, business parks, mixed-use, and higher density residential development.
3. Design plazas and courtyards including design elements that harmonize with adjacent parklets, streetscapes, landscape and hardscape features, colors, and materials to promote an aesthetically pleasing, cohesive design.
4. Require that plaza and courtyard site design include connectivity to pedestrian, bicycle, and trail systems.
5. Incorporate bicycle parking, trash receptacles, benches, and public art as part of a plaza or courtyard design.
6. Require that plazas and courtyards include shade trees, support the green infrastructure, and avoid the creation of heat islands.
7. Allow temporary uses such as concerts, arts festivals, food festivals, farmers markets, health fairs and other community events in plazas and courtyards.



**GOAL 3: New subdivisions provide sufficient park and open space to serve proposed development and connectivity to all existing and proposed trail, pedestrian, bicycle, and shared paths systems.**

#### POLICIES

1. Require all subdivisions to conform with the following common space and recreation guidelines:
  - a. Consult with the planning director as to the number, size, location, and design of parks prior to submitting a development plan, plat or site design.
  - b. Incorporate public neighborhood parks and open spaces within the fabric of the proposed subdivision.
  - c. Design parks to maximize proximity to the largest number of homes within the neighborhood and to maximize accessibility and visibility from the front of surrounding and nearby residences.
  - d. Prohibit the location of parks on remnants of land remaining upon completion of the lotting layout of the subdivision.
  - e. Require that all subdivisions, TNDs and master plans, contribute to the Town's regional park and trail system, either through land donation and/or in lieu fees.
  - f. Design neighborhood parks of five acres or larger within the fabric of the subdivision, or in a manner that links two or more neighborhoods.
  - g. Incorporate paths or trails within subdivisions in a manner that these elements link neighborhood components and amenities and provide connectivity to adjacent subdivisions, parks, trails, pedestrian, bicycle, shared paths, and trails systems.
  - h. Locate private neighborhood parks smaller than five acres within a half mile of the front of dwellings within the subdivision and connect it to the neighborhood path or trail system.
  - i. Integrate preserved washes and constructed drainage features into the overall site design.
  - j. Design drainage ways and detention/retention areas to create a natural appearance, with meandering channels rather than linear and trapezoidal channels.
  - k. Grade land to balance cut-and-fill areas and to distribute grade changes throughout the subdivision, to avoid where practicable grade differences and cut slopes greater than 4:1 between adjacent lots and between lots and adjacent rights of way.
  - l. Adhere to all additional requirements included in the Town of Thatcher Zoning Ordinance.
  - m. Develop a landscaping plan for the right of way in consultation with the planning director and Town engineer when the edge of a subdivision or TND adjoins public right of way for an arterial street.



**GOAL 4: Maintain existing and design new streets, sidewalks and trails as social connectors bringing neighborhoods and other character areas together.**

#### POLICIES

1. Design and maintain streetscapes to invite pedestrian use along roadways and to provide visual continuity throughout the Town.
2. Incorporate overlook or exercise areas where feasible to enhance users' experience.
3. Continue to apply safe-by-design principles to support users' safety along pedestrian corridors.
4. Comply with all applicable connectivity, access and mobility aspects of pedestrian and trail systems included in the Connectivity, Access and Mobility Element.
5. Address recreation aspects of trail systems in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan.
6. Continue to ensure maintenance of the public sidewalk system throughout the Town.

**GOAL 6: Continue to support quality active and passive recreation.**

#### POLICIES

1. Continue to support opportunities for passive recreation along trails, washes, shared paths, and the Gila River Corridor and explore the potential for passive recreation by assessing the feasibility of:
  - a. Establishing an eco-tourism gateway at the northern entrance to the Thatcher Designated Planning Area at the intersection of the Gila River and Reay Lane;
  - b. Extending the Reay Lane Shared Path from Main Street to the Gila River Corridor linear park;
  - c. Designating 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue as a north-south bicycle and pedestrian corridor extending from the Gila River linear park to the shared path along Golf Course Road;
  - d. Developing trails along washes and creeks;
  - e. Developing a trailheads system that includes directional signs and trailheads at points where trails intersect Reay Lane or 1st Avenue shared paths;
  - f. Incorporating Thatcher Park and the proposed trail connector along Highway 70 to define the western gateway of the Town in a manner that articulates arrival to a destination while celebrating the rural character of west Thatcher; and
  - g. Integrating the Thatcher shared path and trail systems to support wellbeing, connectivity, and eco-tourism efforts.



2. Continue to support active recreation and recreation programs at the various Town Parks.
3. Coordinate the utilization of ASLD tools such as leases, Special Land Use Permits, and ROW permits required for expansion of recreational amenities on State Trust lands with ASLD to further the goals of this General Plan in a manner that supports ASLD's missions and goals.
4. Develop an education program in partnership with ASLD as part of the Town's recreation strategy that informs users of the benefits of obtaining temporary Recreational Permits from ASLD for access to State Trust land for certain types of recreational activities on State Trust lands.

**GOAL 7: Protect Thatcher's unique scenic views and dark night skies as valuable recreation and outdoor resources.**

**POLICIES**

1. Protect the Town's scenic resources by:
  - a. Requiring all development to incorporate view corridors in site design through building siting and other site planning techniques.
  - b. Avoiding the use of perimeter walls in urban areas such as Main Street, Town Center, Town Core, and along the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor.
  - c. Minimizing the use of perimeter walls in subdivisions, TNDs or master plans to those necessary for drainage retention purposes.
  - d. Minimizing the visual impact and massiveness of perimeter walls when perimeter walls are visible from the public right-of-way, adjacent to existing residential development, or abutting natural open space by incorporating at least two of the following design treatments:
    - i. Include colors and materials that blend with the natural environment;
    - ii. Utilize two or more decorative materials such as stucco and stone to create visually interesting design on the wall surface;
    - iii. Utilize design patterns and decorative elements that break down the massiveness;
    - iv. Break the monotony by incorporating varied wall alignments such as jog, curve, notch, and setback;
    - v. Incorporate trees and shrubbery in voids created by wall variations; and
    - vi. Incorporate landscape elements to breakdown massive walls, especially in areas adjacent to quality open space.
2. Protect the unique environment of Thatcher by adhering to all applicable outdoor lighting regulations protecting and maintaining the access to the dark night skies.



Figure 36: Examples of Perimeter Walls Integrated with Natural Environment.



## PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES ELEMENT

Ensuring high quality services for residents, local businesses and visitors enhances the identity of the Town and reinforces Thatcher's commitment to the community. Addressing the needs of the community through carefully planned and implemented policies and programs supporting quality libraries, adequate recreation, first-rate police and fire services and well-maintained infrastructure are essential to meet community needs and expectations.

Thatcher's population is anticipated to increase and strong demand for public services will require continued investment by the Town and other service providers in new facilities. As future development occurs, a focus on developer provided infrastructure, coordinated with the Town's efforts will allow Thatcher to better serve community needs while directing growth in desired areas.

The Town's Public Works department manages, maintains, and improves the Town's streets, wastewater treatment and collection system, vehicle fleet, and cemetery as per the Town Council's direction and policies.

### Existing Conditions

The Town of Thatcher strives to offer high quality services to its residents. Public safety functions, such as police and fire protection, rank among the highest in the State. The Town recognizes the importance of providing recreational opportunities to meet the demands of a growing population and has completed plans with neighboring communities to incorporate interconnecting trail systems, parks, and open space areas throughout the region. Parks, recreation, trails system and open space are further addressed in the Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element.

Thatcher currently relies on neighboring communities to help meet certain service needs of its residents. Potable water and solid waste services are provided through the City of Safford. Most neighborhoods in Thatcher are served by the Thatcher sewer system and basic street systems designed for their level of need.

The preservation and maintenance of these neighborhoods will require infrastructure improvements. Continued expansion of Thatcher's land area through annexation, coupled with population increases and requests for various types of services, will require the Town to consider the strategic location of facilities throughout the planning area to maximize limited resources. Public facilities are permitted in all character areas as provided in the Character Areas Element.



## Facilities and Services

This section summarizes public facilities and services and provides goals and policies for the ensuring their functions. The General Plan *Background and Current Condition* technical report describes in detail the operational capacities of all public services and facilities providing services within the Town.

### Community Facilities

Town of Thatcher offices including Administration, Engineering, Planning and Zoning, Building and Utilities as well as the Thatcher Police Department, and the Thatcher Fire Department, are located in Town Hall at 3700 W. Main Street, Thatcher, Arizona. The Gila Valley Consolidated Municipal Court, which serves Thatcher, Safford, and Pima, is located at 702 S. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Safford, Arizona.

### Emergency Services

#### Fire Prevention/Suppression

The Thatcher Fire Department provides emergency rescue services and fire protection for all areas within Thatcher town limits, north of the Gila River and the Central/Jackson Heights Fire District including the Safford Mine. The Department consists of 35 trained volunteer firefighters qualified to do extrication and HAZMAT First Response. In addition, mutual aid agreements exist with Safford, Pima and Graham County, which enable all jurisdictions to share resources.

#### Thatcher Police Department

The Thatcher Police Department, located at 3700 W. Main Street, employs 11 full time officers, Officers. Current staffing equates to a ratio of nearly 2.5 officers per 1000 population, surpassing National Standards of 2.0 patrol officers per 1,000 population. Average response time for the Thatcher Police Department is 3 to 5 minutes. If needed, the Thatcher Police Department has additional support through mutual aid plans between Safford, Pima and Graham County.

#### Medical Services

Thatcher residents utilize complete medical facilities located in the City of Safford. Mount Graham Regional Medical Center located at 1600 S. 20th Avenue, provides 24-hour emergency services. The Center offers 49 beds and 25 physicians staffed to perform a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services.

Medical transports are provided by Lifeline ambulance, with no more than two ambulances providing service to the entire county. Often only 1 ambulance is on duty.



## Library

The Town of Thatcher does not maintain a public library. Residents utilize facilities at Eastern Arizona College (EAC) and in Safford. EAC maintains a 50,000-volume library for its students and Graham County citizens.

The Safford Public Library is considered the central facility for all of Graham County. It is maintained and funded (96%) by the City of Safford, with the remainder of support from Graham County and state taxes, federal grants, and local donations.

## Educational Facilities

Within Thatcher's incorporated area, the Thatcher Unified School District (TUSD) operates four public schools: The Jack Daley Primary School serves kindergarten through third second students; Thatcher Elementary School serves third grade through sixth grade; Thatcher Middle School serves seventh and eighth grades; and Thatcher High School serves ninth through twelfth grade students. The Discovery Plus Academy, a charter school located in Pima, serves various elementary grades. A regional vocational district, Gila Institute For Technology (GIFT), is also located in Thatcher and serves students from the area high schools.

The Thatcher District participates in a regional consortium serving students with special needs. Graham County Special Services located in the neighboring community of Pima currently enrolls 95 area students, including 47 from TUSD.

TUSD's service area overlaps with surrounding jurisdictions. Consistent with Arizona's Open Enrollment law, the District accepts out-of-district students within capacity limitations. Approximately 15 percent of Thatcher's enrollment is made up of students who reside outside of District boundaries. Other districts serving Thatcher's Planning Area include Bonita Elementary District, Fort Thomas Unified District, Klondyke Elementary District, Pima Unified District, Safford Unified District, Solomon Elementary District, Triumphant Learning Center and Discovery Plus Academy located throughout Graham County.

Forecasts prepared by the District and the Arizona School Facilities Board project enrollment will increase by 27% during the next five years at the primary, elementary and middle schools; and by 16% at Thatcher High School, bringing District.

The District has begun to plan for facility expansion, beginning with additional classrooms at the middle and elementary high schools. At this time, Jack Daley Primary School and Thatcher Elementary School have adequate facilities to accommodate increasing enrollment. Capacity limits, whether in space or staffing, have caused the District to occasionally limit out-of-district enrollment at various grades in recent years.





## Eastern Arizona College

Eastern Arizona College (EAC) provides local higher educational opportunities for residents throughout Graham County and Arizona. EAC, Thatcher campus is a two-year college with a current student population of 2,850. While most students are 18-19 years old, enrollment age at EAC ranges from under 18 to over 65.

EAC is working to expand campus capacity and increase technological capabilities for its students. EAC developed a partnership with Northern Arizona University to create opportunities for four-year degrees in multiple study areas. In 2005, EAC built the Wayne M. McGrath High Technology Center installing some of the most advanced computer technology in the Southwest.

## Domestic Water Supply

Thatcher's domestic water supply is provided by the City of Safford. Water is drawn from a variety of ground water sources for a service area of approximately 135 square miles. A storage capacity of 12.5 million gallons is expected to meet future development demands. As distribution extensions occur, plans will proceed for additional storage. The City of Safford Community Development Department, (928) 348-3100, provides information on availability of water service and required improvements.

## Wastewater Treatment

The Town of Thatcher Wastewater Treatment Plant services Thatcher residents. Approximately 95 percent of all buildings within Town limits are connected to the sanitary sewer system. Fees collected for sewer use and new connections currently fund the operation of the lagoon system treatment plant.

Originally designed in 1999 with a capacity of 800,000 gallons per day to meet Town needs for a 20 or more-year horizon, projected wastewater demand indicates current plant capacity will cover projected population growth into the year 2050 based on a 72 gallon per person per day use.

A study of the sewer collection system was conducted by the Town to determine the capacity remaining in the critical sewer collection mains and to study the possibility of increasing the size of those mains and/or building an additional treatment plant. In addition, the City of Safford has a plant capable of receiving wastewater from the Town of Thatcher and has expressed their willingness to accept wastewater from Thatcher.



## Solid Waste Collection and Disposal

Safford provides solid waste collection for Thatcher residents. Unincorporated areas within the Thatcher planning area are served by Vista Recycling or a self-service method. Graham County collectively shares the landfill, owned and operated by the City of Safford, located north of the Gila River. The landfill, at 2.05 million cubic yards, utilizes 80 acres of a 440-acre site.

Without further expansion, the landfill is believed to have a life span of 25 or more years. The additional 240-acres located at the northern end of the site can be developed by Safford through capital improvement funds supported by user fees as necessary.

## Flood Control

The Town of Thatcher has floodplain areas shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain maps. These areas are generally associated with Fry Creek Wash, the Fry Creek Retarding Dam and the Gila River. Other major drainage courses and canals impacting the planning area include the Freeman Wash (Freeman Wash Retarding Dam), Highline Canal, and Union Canal.

Stormwater management requirements can be found in the Town's drainage policy and ordinance. Regional flood control management is through the Graham County Flood Control District.

## Electric Service

Thatcher provides electric service within town limits through Graham County Electric Cooperative. Adequate electrical capacity exists for existing and anticipated growth.

Subdivisions, apartments, large-scale developments, etc. are required by the Town to provide underground electric. All electric infrastructure required for new development is installed at the expense of the developer following Town of Thatcher design standards.

## Natural Gas

Southwest Gas services the entire Thatcher area with natural gas and maintains gas lines within Town.

## Telephone and Communications

Century Link, Valley Telecom and Sparklight provide phone and internet services to the Town. High-speed data links are available through Sparklight and Century Link.



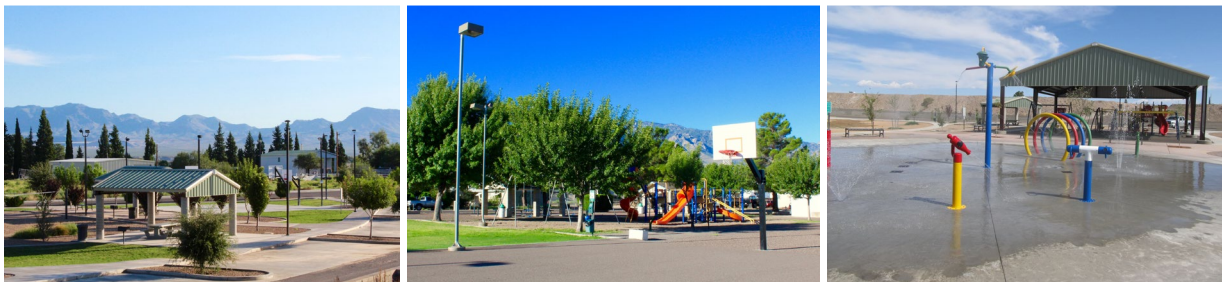
## Parks, Recreation and Trails

A variety of recreational facilities are available in Thatcher ranging from tree-filled parks and ball diamonds to the regional municipal golf course. Residents also enjoy the comprehensive facilities of Eastern Arizona College with its gymnasium, wellness center, conference facilities and swimming pool. In addition to its academic and vocational courses, EAC offers a wealth of diverse cultural events from concerts to a summer arts program.



The Thatcher Parks and Recreation Department manages and maintains all public parks and recreation areas within the Town. These facilities include five community parks, a splash pad water feature, a skate park, tennis courts, basketball court, sand volleyball and a pickle ball court. Additionally, the Town offers Summer Baseball, Softball, Women's Volleyball, Jr. League Volleyball, Men's Basketball, Children's Choir, Swim Team, Children's Orchestra, Community Choir, and Basketball & Tennis Camps. Thatcher residents currently utilize Eastern Arizona College, City of Safford or the Town of Pima for swimming pool facility needs.

The Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element addresses goals and policies related to the vital role these facilities play in sustaining the high quality of life valued by the community and supporting the long-term viability of the Town. This element addresses goals and policies related to the operation and management of these facilities and their programs as well as development requirements to provide such facilities. The Cost of Development Element includes direction to ensure that the cost of providing these are equitably apportioned and assessed to new growth with appropriate exceptions when in the public interest.





## Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

A goal of the Town is to invest in and maintain the community's infrastructure. The task for this goal is to implement the CIP as the Town's investment plan to bring streets and other infrastructure, facilities, parks and other green infrastructure up to established standards. Cost of development is addressed in the Cost of Development Element and economic development is addressed the Economic Development Element.

## Public Services and Facilities Element Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Ensure the provision of adequate public services and facilities.**

### POLICIES

1. Determine the appropriate long-term financing and resources to adequately fund services and facilities.
2. Comprehensively assess public services and facilities needed to support the existing and future residents of Thatcher and plan for the provision of suitable and desirable locations for such facilities and services.
3. Preserve and maintain neighborhoods and the facilities that serve them.
4. Continue to utilize intergovernmental relations to achieve Town and regional priorities.

**GOAL 2: Support high quality public safety services and facilities.**

### POLICIES

1. Continue to support acceptable minimum levels of service, including response times, that meet or exceed national averages for public safety services.
2. Ensure a high level of preparedness and adequate resources for public safety services.
3. Continue to support public safety education programs regarding fire and crime prevention, safety and first aid medical procedures.
4. Maintain mutual aid agreements with nearby jurisdictions and service providers.

**GOAL 3: Carefully manage and direct the maintenance and expansion of infrastructure systems to sustain Thatcher's current and future needs, to promote healthy growth, and to support the Town's economic development efforts.**

### POLICIES

1. Utilize funding tools as provided by Arizona law to assure equal footing for Thatcher when competing to attract new employment, commercial services and quality housing.



2. Direct growth through strategic placement of infrastructure systems.
3. Prohibit new development in areas where service needs cannot be met without unjustifiably taxing the existing system or users.
4. Maintain current levels of public services and infrastructure systems, including parks and open space, needed to serve the current population and projected populations.
5. Require new development to commit to providing needed infrastructure, utilities and facilities, including parks and open space, proportional to the impacts they create at the time of rezoning or site plan/subdivision plat approval.
6. Ensure developers install all needed utilities and improvements to municipal and state standards, as required by the Town, Graham County or the State of Arizona.
7. Require new development to locate all transmission and distribution lines underground.

**GOAL 4: Continue to partner with educational facilities to support their expansion needs and the long-term viability of the Town.**

**POLICIES**

1. Continue to work collaboratively with the Thatcher Unified School District to support Thatcher's education system capacity needs by:
  - a. Requiring new development to address school impacts with TUSD as a condition for development approval, including rezonings by the Town;
  - b. Work collaboratively with TUSD in the identification of policies and strategies that the municipality could use to require development to pay its fair share toward the cost of additional public service in conformance with Arizona Revised Statutes.
2. Continue to partner with the TUSD to enhance Thatcher's recreation and community needs through the use of:
  - a. School facilities for community meetings and programs after hours and when school is not in session for a fee; and
  - b. Sports fields and recreation facilities for community events.
3. Encourage the development of school community garden programs that teach students and community how to grow fresh local foods.
4. Continue to partner and work strategically with EAC to support the infrastructure and housing needs of the college required to support academic, technology and innovation, business incubators, and workforce training efforts of EAC;



**GOAL 5: Continue to maintain existing and develop new needed public parks and recreation facilities to meet current and future needs and to provide quality amenities that support economic development efforts.**

#### POLICIES

1. Require new development to include parks and open spaces as community focal points in subdivision design.
2. Site parks and recreation facilities strategically to connect neighborhoods and enhance usability.
3. Continue to:
  - a. Support regional collaboration in the implementation of the Gila River Linear Park and Trail Conceptual Master Plan;
  - b. Assess cost for the maintenance of existing public parks, recreation, trails, and recreation programs;
  - c. Identify grants and funding mechanisms to support Town investments in the provision of these public services;
  - d. Phase plans for the development of park improvements and the construction of new trails and trail heads;
  - e. Consider these public facilities and services as amenities supporting the economic development strategies such as heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism.

**GOAL 6: Continue to include infrastructure system and public facilities improvements in the CIP to further the goals of the Town.**

#### POLICIES

1. Support the Town's community vision and economic development strategy by investing in and maintaining the community's public facilities and infrastructure.
2. Prepare and maintain an annually updated CIP that prioritizes, and schedules public facilities and infrastructure system improvements owned and operated by the Town, including green infrastructure such as parks, recreation, open space, trails, and streetscapes.
3. Forward the CIP to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review on an annual basis.



# ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING & WATER RESOURCES ELEMENT

In conformance with the Arizona Revised Statutes this element addresses air and water quality, cultural, natural and visual resources, and alternative energy. Goals and policies included in this element have community-wide applicability and do not require the production of an additional environmental impact statement or similar analysis beyond the requirements of state and federal law. Protection of natural resources is considered an essential component of land-use planning and economic development.

During the visioning process, the guidance team emphasized the address the restoration of the Gila River Corridor from a regional perspective involving major regional partners, including Graham County and the City of Safford. Restoration encompasses removal of invasive species, riverbank enhancements and habitat restoration as well as the incorporation of hiking and equestrian trails along the Gila River Corridor. Specific policies for the Gila River Corridor are also included in the Growth Areas, the Character Areas, and the Economic Development elements.

## Environmental Planning & Water Resources Element Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Protect the valuable environmental resources that make Thatcher unique and restore the Gila River to create regional opportunities throughout the Gila Valley.**

### POLICIES

1. Protect environmentally sensitive riparian areas and wildlife corridors as community assets and as economic development resources for eco-tourism, geo-tourism, adventure tourism and regional passive recreation (nature trails, equestrian trails, nature learning and bird watching)
2. Preserve Thatcher's uniqueness by preserving its mountain view corridors and protecting its dark skies.
3. Work with regional partners to establish an integrated river restoration program that addresses:
  - a. Removal of salt cedar and other invasive wildfire prone and high-water consuming plant species;
  - b. Restoration of wildlife habitat and corridors;
  - c. 100-year floodplain review and possible revisions and flood control;
  - d. Feasible alternatives for the channelization of the Gila River;
  - e. Opportunities for regional recreation; and
  - f. Establishment of the Gila River Corridor and Linear Park as a regional amenity.



**Goal 2: Support efficient water demand management practices and strategies that protect both local and basin-wide water supplies.**

#### POLICIES

1. Continue to partner with the Town's water provider in efforts to support efficient investment and coordination for potable and renewable supply, treatment, and conveyance infrastructure.
2. Prioritize areas within the Town with distribution systems that have capacity to serve additional development to support balanced growth.
3. Integrate efficient water demand management practices and strategies in land use decisions.
4. Encourage new construction to implement efficient water practices and use renewable water resources, including reclaimed water and water harvesting, where feasible and available as part of site design.
5. Promote and incentivize, where appropriate, long-term water conservation strategies such as:
  - a. Low water use fixtures and appliances in building codes;
  - b. Low water use drought tolerant native landscapes;
  - c. Drip irrigation;
  - d. Increase use of reclaimed water and rainwater harvesting; and
  - e. Low Impact Development (LID) principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features and minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product where applicable and feasible.
6. Require that proposed solar energy generating fields utilize solar technologies that minimize consumption of water.

**Goal 3: Continue to maintain high standards of air quality for visibility and the health benefits of clean air.**

#### POLICIES

1. Continue to monitor and reduce ambient (outdoor) air pollutants throughout the Town.
2. Require all development projects to follow Town dust control procedures.
3. Encourage transportation alternatives such as pedestrian and bicycle use to support the reduction of automobile emissions.
4. Continue to enforce and implement and periodically update standards requiring the use of resurfacing and vegetative ground cover on parking and access areas for all commercial and industrial developments.





5. Enforce air quality standards and dust control regulations and periodically update Town ordinances related to reducing air pollutants.
6. Continue to enforce and monitor all applicable permits and standards to reduce air pollutants in the Town including fugitive dust, asbestos and open burning.
7. Work collaboratively with health providers to identify strategies to reduce adverse health impacts related to air quality such as increases in Valley Fever and other respiratory diseases.

**Goal 4: Recognize and preserve significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources for the benefit of future generations.**

#### POLICIES

1. Take every legal measure necessary to prevent the destruction and integrity of significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources.
2. Continue to identify funding sources to assist in the stabilization and preservation of significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources.
3. Update and amend as applicable and as needed Town ordinances related to the preservation of significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources.

**Goal 5: Protect dark night skies, mountain views and other scenic resources that define the distinct character of Thatcher and the Gila Valley region.**

#### POLICIES

1. Continue to enforce the preservation of darks skies to support and invigorate astronomy research and related industries.
2. Continue to strictly regulate the placement and design of view impeding structures such as billboards, communication towers, and multi-story buildings.
3. Protect mountain views through site design techniques that establish view corridor.
4. Prevent the unnecessary destruction of established mature pecan trees, Arizona Ash, and evergreen trees that define the character of Thatcher.
5. Continue to periodically update applicable ordinance and codes regulating light pollution, protecting dark night skies and preventing the proliferation of billboards.



**Goal 6: Increase reliance on clean alternative energy sources.**

**POLICIES**

1. Encourage passive and active solar methods of site design and building construction in new development and redevelopment.
2. Explore the feasibility of incorporating solar and wind alternative energy systems.
3. Support education programs that explore the advantages of clean alternative energy sources.



## COST OF DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The ability to sustain facilities and services for the community are affected by the rate of growth and the balance between residential and non-residential uses. The Town of Thatcher does not collect property tax to pay for ongoing facilities maintenance and operation. Maintaining a strong retail sales tax base is important to the community to help fund the operating expenses of the Town.

Costs need to be equitably apportioned and assessed to new growth with appropriate exceptions when in the public interest. Identifying guidelines by which development pays for itself will assure preparedness for increasing costs of additional public service needs. Three basic steps include:

- Establish service and facility standards, such as 2.5 police officers per 1,000 population, to help identify needed future capacities and facilities based on growth projections from new development.
- Recognize and quantify impacts resulting from new development on public services and facilities as more residents create more demand for services, such as parks and roads.
- Where applicable and to the extent possible, require growth to pay for itself. Developers contribute to costs of police, parks, roads, sidewalks, etc.

### Cost of Development Element Intent

It is important to accept and encourage reasonable population growth to bolster the workforce and support existing and future businesses and opportunities. Long-term maintenance costs must be considered as part of the Town's infrastructure investment to facilitate future growth as well as meet current service needs. This Cost of Development Element:

- Establishes the mechanisms by which new development (growth, infill and redevelopment) will pay its fair share of the cost of providing public services and infrastructure system.
- Includes the goals and policies that will result in public-private cost sharing of capital facilities and services needed to serve new development;
- Clarifies the roles of the public and private sectors;
- Provides guidance for the provision of public services, infrastructure and facilities in a fair and efficient manner; and
- Ensures that the Town will at least maintain current service levels and implement desired improvements.



Based on the Arizona Revised Statutes, this Element establishes the goals and policies that will result in public-private cost sharing of capital facilities and services needed to serve new development and to avoid public subsidies for private development. The need for existing public infrastructure capacity improvements, upgrading and maintenance will remain a central focus of the Town.

This Cost of Development Element addresses meeting community needs for infrastructure and services provided by the Town in an equitable and reasonable manner. The Cost of Development Element cannot and does not address development that has already occurred. Therefore, this Element is limited to new development, particularly in areas that may experience growth during the General Plan's 10-year planning horizon.

The Town of Thatcher uses existing ordinances to ensure that new development projects participate in proportionate infrastructure improvement costs. All new projects are evaluated through the development review and rezoning processes. The Town identifies necessary dedications and easements and requires improvement bonds before construction is allowed to commence.

## Legislative Framework

Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) Section 9-461.05 requires communities in Arizona to adopt a cost of development element as part of the general plan that identifies goals, policies and strategies that the municipality will use to require development to pay its "fair share" of the costs of additional public service needs generated by new development, with appropriate exceptions when in the public interest. As required by ARS, this element:

- a) Defines key terms such as "fair share" and "measure of fairness;"
- b) Identifies various mechanisms allowed by law that can be used to fund and finance additional public services necessary to serve new development, including bonding, special taxing districts, development fees, in lieu fees, facility construction, dedications and service privatization;
- c) Lists funding options the Town may use to fund and finance additional, necessary public facilities and services to support new development;
- d) Includes goals and policies to ensure that any mechanisms that are adopted by the Town under this element result in a beneficial use to the development, bear a reasonable relationship to the burden imposed on the municipality to provide additional necessary public services to new development in compliance with state law.



## Key Cost of Development Definitions

### Fair Share

State legislation allows the Town to define this term based on its unique needs and resources. Fair share relates to the portion of costs of infrastructure necessary to support new development to be paid for by developer.

### Measure of Fairness

Guarantees that costs borne by new development result in a benefit to the development; and provides a reasonable relationship between development costs and the burden imposed on the Town for providing additional necessary public services for such development. It is not the intent of the Cost of Development element to overburden the growth industry or to be a disincentive to private sector capital investment required for quality residential, mixed use and employment (commercial, office, and industrial) development.

### Funding Options

Refers to all the options used by the Town to fund and finance additional, necessary public facilities and services to support new development and redevelopment.

Other mechanisms available to the Town for funding expansion of services include but are not limited to:

- Primary and secondary property taxes
- Specialty Industry Tax
- Improvement Districts
- Community Facilities Districts (CFDs)
- User Fees
- Voter approved bonds
- Municipal Property Corporation Bonds
- Payback Agreements



## Cost of Development Methods and Funds

The Town utilizes regulatory and financial methods to capture appropriate costs related to new development or significant improvements to existing structures.

### Regulatory Methods

#### Town of Thatcher Subdivision Ordinance

The *Town of Thatcher Subdivision Ordinance* dated June 2013 identifies processes associated with platting, design principles and standards, public improvement requirements, grading standards, and landscape standards. In terms of cost of development, it incorporates the requirement of dedications of public right-of-way and easements within proposed subdivisions, improvement requirements (Chapter 152, Article 5) addressing sanitary sewer systems, water supply systems, grading/drainage/storm drains, streets (public and private) and access ways, alleys (where applicable and approved), utilities (electric, telephone, cable television, gas), traffic signals, street lights (where applicable and approved), monuments and signage, landscaping and streetscape, sidewalks, bicycle and multi-use pathways. This ordinance also includes provisions for dedications of public streets, applicable fees and developer responsibilities on required improvements.

#### Permit Requirements and Specifications for Underground Work within Town Right-of-Way

The Thatcher Town Code, under Section 11-1-2: Excavations, grants authority to regulate street cuts and excavations. The *Permit Requirements and Specifications for Underground Work within Town Right-of-Way* requires a performance bond and construction cost estimate to be submitted along with the permit application. The bond shall be of sufficient value to cover the cost for the Town to complete or correct the work if the permittee's work is deficient or incomplete.

#### Town of Thatcher Zoning Ordinance

The *Town of Thatcher Zoning Ordinance* adopted, in June 2013 and amended in June 2019, identifies the procedures to establish and regulate zoning districts within the Town. In terms of cost of development, there is a requirement for the dedication of public art, or fees in lieu.



## Financial Methods

The accounts of the Town are organized on the basis of funds. Town resources are allocated to and accounted for in individual funds based on the purposes for which they are to be spent and the means by which spending activities are controlled.

### General Fund

The General Fund is the primary operating fund of the Town of Thatcher and accounts for the resources and uses of various Town departments. It exists to account for the financing of services traditionally associated with local government. These services include police and fire protection, building safety code enforcement, public works (facilities/engineering/outside inspections), community services (parks and recreation/senior services), general administration, and any other activity for which a special fund has not been created.

### Special Revenue Funds

- a. **Streets Fund.** The resources in this fund are from the 0.2% of local sales tax, State-shared revenues and transfers from the Capital Improvement Fund. The State of Arizona taxes motor fuels and collects a variety of fees and charges relating to the registration and operation of motor vehicles. These revenues are deposited in the Arizona Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) and are then distributed to the cities, towns, and counties and to the State Highway Fund. This is a restricted fund that may only be used for street and highway purposes. The Streets (HURF) Fund is restricted in use solely for street and highway purposes. The fund depends upon State-shared revenues for over 90% of its annual revenues. The restricted fund balance will be based on the minimum requirement as specified in the schedule for projects funded with Special Revenue or grant funds. The schedule is reviewed on an annual basis to determine the required amount to be set aside as restricted fund balance.
- b. **Excise Tax Funds.** The excise tax funds are committed funds that the Town Council may dedicate for specific purposes by resolution or as part of the annual budget adoption.

### Special Revenue/Grants Fund

The Special Revenue/Grants Fund is restricted by the terms of the individual grants or program funds received. An example of this would be safe routes to school funds or CDBG funds. These funds are to be used only for the specific program or programs for which the funds have been awarded and in accordance with all the grant conditions.



### Capital Improvement Funds

Capital Improvement Funds are used for the acquisition and/or construction of major capital items including facilities, heavy equipment, technology, open space, park improvements, and major road improvements.

### Funds the Town May Consider

As local sale taxes increase, the Town may benefit from creating specific funds to support the various strategic efforts mentioned in this General Plan. These funds may include:

#### Capital Projects Funds

The Capital Projects Fund revenues could include committed revenues derived from excess General Fund revenues and 50% of the construction related local sales tax. The Capital Projects Fund may become the primary source of capital improvements funding for the Town. Accounted for separately, but considered part of the Capital Projects Fund, are accumulated development fees collected pursuant to Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 9-463.05 that are assessed on new construction for the purpose of funding growth. These funds are restricted to growth-related capital expenditures identified in the Town's adopted Infrastructure Improvements Plan.

#### Development Fee Funds

Once established, Development Fee Funds become restricted funds, which may only be used for the planning, design, and construction of public facilities serving the needs of the new development from which it was collected and designated. For the establishment of a Development Fee Fund, the Town would need to develop an Infrastructure Improvement Plan (IIP), identifying each public improvement that is proposed to be the subject of a development fee. This IIP is incorporated as part of the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Development Fee funds may include Fire, Police & Emergency Fund and the Parks/Recreation Fund.

#### Main Street/Town Center Strategy Fund

The Main Street/Town Center Strategy Fund would serve as a committed fund, which may only be used for development along the segment of Highway 70 identified as Main Street and the Town Center Area. Revenue for this fund comes from the local sales tax dedicated for this purpose.





### Economic Development Fund

The Economic Development Fund would only be used for economic development purposes once established. Revenue for this fund comes from the local sales tax dedicated for this purpose.

### Tourism Fund

The Tourism Fund would only be used for tourism purposes. Revenue for this fund may be provided by a transfer from the Economic Development Fund and grant money.

## Primary Revenue and Growth Management Tools

Local sales tax revenues are derived from several sources with a significant portion from construction related activity. To ensure that the revenues from growth or development are targeted to costs related to development or invested in improvements that will benefit future residents or make future service provision efficient, the Town may designate 50% of those one-time revenues to the Capital Projects Fund. Monthly, these revenues are transferred from the General Fund to the Capital Projects Fund for future appropriation.

### Capital Improvement Plan

As part of the budget process each year, the Town Manager or authorized designee prepares a capital spending plan that provides a detailed summary of specific capital projects for the five fiscal years subsequent to the fiscal year presented. The plan includes the name of the project, project schedule, capital cost by fiscal year and a recommended specific funding source. The five-year capital improvement plan is then reviewed by planning staff and the Town of Thatcher Planning and Zoning Commission who recommends it to the Town Mayor and Council.

### General Plan Monitoring System

The General Plan Monitoring Team, including Planning and Zoning Director and Public Works staff will annually compile departmental General Plan reviews reporting on the status of the General Plan Implementation included in the Administration and Implementation Chapter to determine progress on General Plan implementation strategies that impact capital improvements. This monitoring system ties the General Plan to the Capital Improvements Plan on applicable items allowing the Town to have a mechanism to monitor progress.



## Cost of Development Element Goals and Policies

**GOAL 1: Balance public and private interests to achieve fairness in allocating the costs of new development.**

### POLICIES

1. Recover fair share costs, which are defined as the total capital cost (facilities and equipment) minus developer credits and funds dedicated to a project as set forth in the Town's approved Capital Improvements Program.
2. Establish, and regularly review, a measure which will be applied consistently to assign a greater share of costs to new developments that are farther away from areas of existing services, increase in size, and absorb a greater portion of the benefits and services necessitated by the development.
3. Consider establishing development incentive areas or other incentives for infill and revitalization areas including the Town Center and the Town Core character areas and for Main Street and the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor which may allow reduced cost recovery obligations for development activity within those areas.

**GOAL 2: Seek local and regional cooperation to pursue new or enhanced revenues for regional infrastructure.**

### POLICIES:

1. Continue to pursue grants for bicycle system improvements to improve regional bicycle connectivity.
2. Work collaboratively with Graham County, the City of Safford, and the Town of Pima to determine if, and how, operations and maintenance costs of capital facilities supporting common economic development efforts such as business parks and tourism enterprises can be assessed and allocated on a fair share basis.
3. Continue to support membership in the League of Arizona Cities and Towns and/or other organizations lobbying to seek new or additional revenue-sharing opportunities from the state of Arizona, such as a state gasoline tax adjusted for inflation.
4. Explore additional revenue-sharing opportunities to more equitably offset the cost of revitalization, new development and growth.
5. Work collaboratively with ASLD in the preparation of feasible conceptual land use and circulation plans for State Trust lands to identify mechanisms to fund infrastructure needs of such areas prior to initiating an annexation process on State Trust lands.



### GOAL 3: Identify and secure additional revenue sources.

#### POLICIES

1. Identify additional revenue sources to provide supplemental revenues and ensure that adopted Levels of Service standards are maintained.
2. Pursue available grants and loans from federal, state, and regional sources that can provide financial assistance to the Town, property owners, investors, and developers.

## Available Mechanisms to Fund and Finance Development

Economic recovery after a world pandemic, requires small communities to explore all available options. The Town of Thatcher 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 Town also has the flexibility to adjust such approaches as additional methods become available. Funding options that could be used by the Town include:

### Pay-As-You-Go out of Current Revenues

This is generally considered the optimum way to pay for service expansion. Current revenues generally consist of primary and secondary property taxes, state excise use taxes, state-shared revenues, user fees, and grants. These revenues are usually necessary to fund day-to-day Town operations. While all organizations would prefer to pay for items with current revenues, this is not often feasible since revenues usually follow development while most service expansions must occur prior to or simultaneously with development. Additionally, some expenditures are limited annually by the State Constitution and significant expenditures for infrastructure expansion would cause the Town to exceed the limitation.

### Grants and Low-Interest Loan Programs

A variety of grants may be available to the Town from federal, state, and regional agencies. The Town has actively pursued and received funding from several agencies. The Town should continue to pursue grants through the Community Development Block Grant Program (general community improvements), State of Arizona Heritage Fund (parks and recreation facilities), and the Governor's Office (health and safety). Additional existing and future funding sources should be investigated with potential financial partners.

### General Obligation Bonds

The most utilized large project financing method in the United States is the General Obligation Bond. This is an inexpensive way to finance projects because the bonds' repayment is based on the taxing authority of the jurisdiction and repaid with secondary property taxes. Voter approved property tax supports the issuance of any General Obligation Bonds.



## Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are a method of borrowing to finance service expansions. The bonds are paid back through future revenues that are legally pledged to the bond issuer. Revenues generally utilized for debt service are Highway User Revenue Funds (payments made to the jurisdiction from state taxes), and connection user fees for wastewater service. Use of these bonds must be approved by a public vote.

## Certificates of Participation

These are methods of borrowing that are paid back by the Town General Fund. They are not legally tied to a specific revenue stream, such as revenue bonds. These methods can be utilized by action of the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council and are not subject to public vote. They are usually secured by the sale and lease back of Town buildings.

## Development Impact Fees

These are fees that are established by the Town based on the cost of expanding services to accommodate new development. Development impact fees are then included as part of the development cost. Development impact fees can be narrow in scope. Impact fees must be monitored and updated to ensure they are maintaining adequate funding levels without impeding the quality of development the Town desires to attract.

## User Fees

These are fees that are charged for services provided by the Town. The most significant user fee is for wastewater services. User fees cover not only operating costs but also service the debt for financing expanded services.

## Improvement Districts (Special Taxing Districts)

Improvement Districts can be formed to implement a specific improvement for a particular area of the Town as a special assessment district. An improvement district can only be formed by petition of the majority of the property owners in the affected area. This funding mechanism is typically used for neighborhood road improvements, street lighting, utilities and revitalization programs such as the revitalization of Main Street and the Town Center.

## Community Facilities Financing Districts

The property owners (generally the developer) in the area to be benefited by the project can agree to have the Town assess the future property owners to pay back the cost of improvements as a property tax. Improvements can include roads, utilities and enhancements such as parks and recreation.



## In Lieu Fees

These are fees that can be used to mitigate or offer alternatives to providing required infrastructure such as a park. An in-lieu fee can be made instead of installing a park when the development is small.

## Property Tax

The Town does not have a property tax. In terms of advantages, the property tax is a more stable and reliable revenue source than any other tax because property values are usually less susceptible to short-term economic fluctuations than other major revenue sources, including sales taxes. In terms of disadvantages, appraising property for tax purposes is a resource-intensive process compared to the voluntary reporting mechanisms of sales taxes. Although the property tax remains the most important source of total revenue for local governments, they must be approved by the voters. In addition, given the current economy, a property tax is not recommended since property taxes fall on unrealized capital gains that may not be correlated to cash flow. However, it is included in the list of available options since the plan covers a 10-year planning horizon.



## GENERAL PLAN ADMINISTRATION

This section includes procedures to administer, amend, interpret, update, and evaluate the Town Thatcher General Plan in conformance with the Arizona Revised Statutes. The General Plan is the product of an eighteen-month planning process, including community involvement, the engagement of all levels of government, the coordinated efforts of various Town departments and the review and support of community leaders, residents, business owners, property owners, major employers, other stakeholders, adjacent jurisdictions, and regional and state agencies.

This section ensures that future amendments of the General Plan further the community and the Town's vision and that the General Plan is administered in a fair and equitable manner. The implementation strategies supporting each element are outlined in the Implementation chapter. The Implementation Strategy included in the Implementation chapter provides an easy-to-use reference guide for the Town to monitor general plan implementation.

The General Plan is based on community values and an understanding of existing and projected conditions and needs, all of which are subject to change. The General Plan amendment process established by the Arizona Revised Statutes allows maps and written policy statements to be changed. The General Plan is a policy document for the entire Town and may be amended in a manner that supports the community's interest. Every General Plan amendment must be consistent with the rest of the General Plan or appropriate changes must be made to maintain internal consistency.

### General Plan Authority

The Thatcher General Plan is the primary overarching policy for the Town of Thatcher. The General Plan has a major impact on the future of the Town by setting goals and policies for governance in many areas of Town responsibility that will influence future development and redevelopment within the Town's corporate boundary.

Authority and direction to plan comes from the Arizona Revised Statutes, expressly the Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus Acts, as amended. Community involvement was conducted in conformance with the *Public Participation Plan* adopted by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council as required by the Arizona Revised Statutes. A *Visioning Report* was prepared based on the analysis of all the input received during the leadership, General Plan guidance team, and community visioning processes. The *Public Participation Plan* and the *Visioning Report* are available separately.

This General Plan adheres to all applicable federal and state laws. The direction included in this plan applies to new development, redevelopment, and infill. The General Plan directives do not apply to entitlements existing at the time of adoption of this General Plan which have already been approved by the Town and are therefore grandfathered.



## Planning Tools Used to Implement the General Plan

Rapidly evolving technology paired with globalization and a saturated marketplace offer consumers instant access to thousands of compelling products and services online. The impact of these changes is so profound that retailers and consumer companies must adapt to survive. Securing the long-term viability of the Town requires a flexible General Plan that adapts to market changes to support a thriving community.

The main planning tool used by the Town of Thatcher to implement the General Plan is the Town of Thatcher Zoning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance) which must be amended, as needed, to support the criteria defined in **Table 2, Thatcher Major Planning Areas**, for the character areas depicted on **Exhibit 5, Thatcher Character**, which replaces the Future Land Use Plan adopted in the previous General Plan.

TNDs, Specific Plans or Master Plan Communities (MPCs) are more flexible entitlement tools aiming at guiding development including one or more land use. Additional planning tools that may be used to implement the General Plan include the preparation of a feasible land use and circulation conceptual plan for the development of State Trust Land in coordination with ASLD, as well as character area plans, and revitalization plans for specific character areas with development, redevelopment, or infill potential.

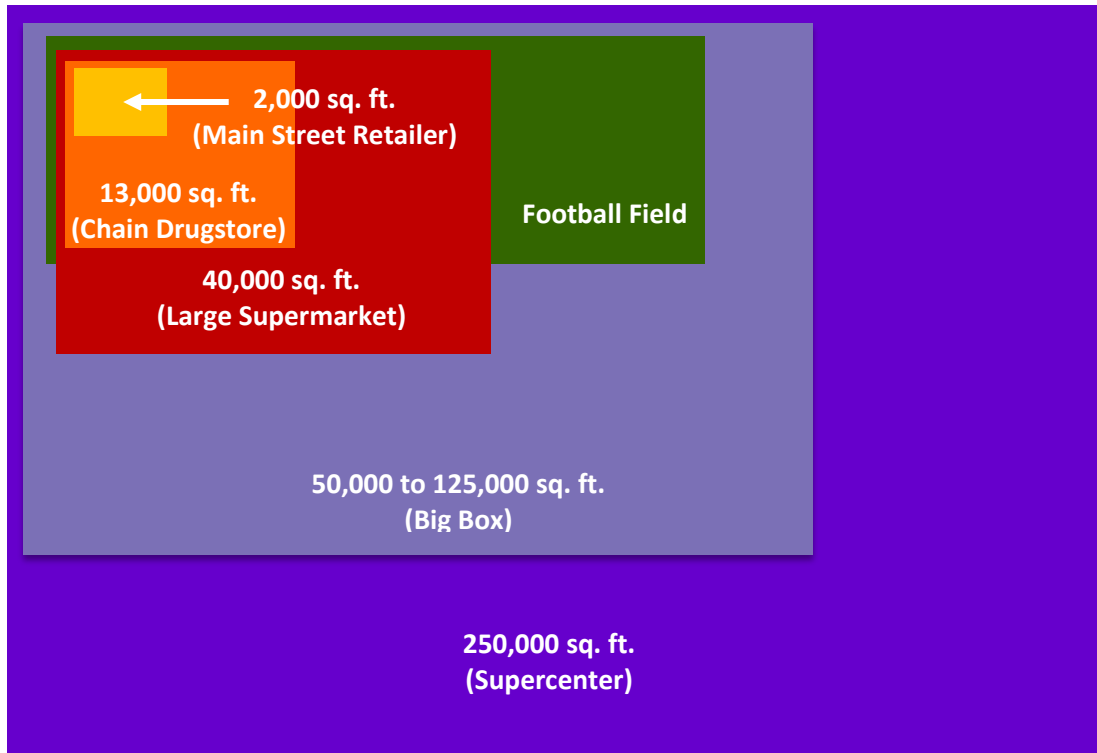
The plan administration mechanisms included in this chapter assist the Town in managing and administering the General Plan. The Implementation Strategy included in the following chapter assist in the identification of actions designed to support a thriving community that maintains the quality of life valued by the community as well as the long-term economic resilience of the Town.

The following table lists typical retail footprints and acreages needed to sustain those footprints. The diagram following the table visually illustrate size of the different retail footprints. These tools will assist Town staff in determining site appropriateness for proposed retail development, redevelopment, or infill, particularly along Main Street, the Highway 70 Commerce Corridor and within Growth Areas along major corridors, including 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Reay Lane.

**Table 4: Typical Retail Footprints  
Square Feet to Acre Conversion Table**

Retail Type	Square Feet	Acres
Main Street Retailer	2,000	0.04
Chain Drugstore	13,000	0.3
Large Supermarket	40,000	1
Big Box	125,000	2.8
Supercenter	250,000	5.7

**Illustration 1: Typical Retail Footprints Comparisons**



It is important to note that a population of 15,000-20,000 is needed to support a full-service grocery store (as opposed to a specialty grocery store that serves a specific market). Full-service grocery stores are generally 35,000-50,000 square feet. Big-box retailers, located in large-scale buildings of more than 50,000 square feet, including Walmart, Home Depot, Costco and others and supercenters require a much larger population. The current continues to move towards online purchasing with many of the larger stores closing nationwide.

## Existing Approved Entitlements with Approved Zoning

There are properties throughout the Town of Thatcher which have received necessary planning and zoning approvals from the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council and for which their respective property owners have made ongoing investments in anticipation of the recovery of the commercial and residential real estate markets. Their development plans and plats are required to comply with the zoning approval conditions of zoning. Approved entitlements, plats and signed development agreements are grandfathered and are not required to conform to this General Plan.





## General Plan Amendments and Updates

The Thatcher General Plan provides a decision-making framework for Town elected and appointed officials and staff to guide future growth, development, redevelopment and infill and maintain the public infrastructure and services needed to support existing and future needs. Over time, unanticipated or unforeseen changes in economy, technology, environment, demographics, transportation systems, and other factors may occur. General Plan Updates and Major, Minor, and Administrative Amendments allow the Town to address such changes. This section defines these General Plan administrative tools and describes their respective processes.

### General Plan Amendments

Amendments to the General Plan may be initiated by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council or requested by landowners or their designated representatives or agencies in accordance with the procedures set forth in State law. All Amendments to the General Plan must be approved by the Town Council. The term “amendment” applies to both text and map revisions. Amendments to this General Plan include Major, Minor, and Administrative amendments and General Plan Updates. The adoption or re-adoption of the general plan or any amendment to the General Plan shall be by resolution of the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council. Public Hearing notices for public hearings must conform with all applicable notification requirements in accordance to State law.

Proposed amendments to the General Plan may not result in an adverse impact to the community. Public participation shall be encouraged for any proposed amendment to the General Plan and all applicable State statutes legal requirements shall be met. Amendments to the General Plan require careful review of the request, and of findings of fact in support of the revision at public hearing(s) before the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town Council. Prior to any approval of any development, redevelopment, or infill that conflicts with the General Plan, an amendment to the General Plan must be approved and completed.

### Major Amendments

The annual plan amendment program described in this section provides an opportunity to address oversights, inconsistencies, and inequities in the General Plan or to acknowledge significant changes in a particular area since the adoption of the plan or plan update.

ARS requires municipalities to define the criteria to be used in determining if a proposed plan amendment effects a substantial alteration of the municipality's land use mixture or balance as established by the adopted General Plan. Major Plan Amendments may be proposed to the Character Areas Maps and text of the General Plan.

A “major amendment” to the General Plan may be initiated by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council or requested by private entities. Major amendments are considered once each year pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes.



### Major Amendment Process:

1. Major amendment applications must be submitted within the same calendar year they are being considered at a single public hearing in conformance with the “Major Amendment Criteria” included below.
2. The Planning and Zoning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the Major Amendment(s).
3. Major amendment(s) must be approved by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Town Mayor and Council;
4. All major amendments are subject to the public involvement policy included in the *Public Participation Plan* adopted by the Town Mayor and Council as part of this General Plan available separately.

### Major Amendment Application Process:

Application for a General Plan Major Amendment will be in accordance with Town policies and procedures. The Town will provide the necessary forms and information and will process the amendment request. Public participation is critical to the processing of a General Plan Major Amendment. A Public Participation Program, similar to the one applied to the General Plan Update process, will be followed to achieve a high level of citizen participation. The following process applies:

1. Applicants will attend a pre-application meeting prior to submitting an application.
2. Applications will be accepted from January 1 to June 30 for processing within that calendar year.
3. At least sixty days before the Major Amendment is noticed for Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing, the Town will transmit the proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council and submit a copy, for review and further comment, to:
  - a. Graham County Planning and Development Department;
  - b. City of Safford;
  - c. SEAGO;
  - d. Arizona Department of Commerce,
  - e. Any other reviewing agency listed in the Arizona Revised Statutes; and
  - f. Anyone who requests it.
4. All Major Amendments require a Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing prior to the Town Council public hearing.
5. Town Council public hearings to consider Major Amendments will occur between October 1 and December 31 within the calendar year the application was submitted.



### Major Amendment Criteria:

The following criteria are used to determine whether a proposed amendment to the Character Areas/Use of Land Element of the General Plan, or any development proposal substantially alter the mixture or balance of land uses. A Major Amendment is any development proposal that meets the following criteria:

1. A substantial change in the overall development intent or land use mix of one or more designated character areas within the Character Areas/Use of Land Element as determined by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council;
2. A substantial change in the overall development intent or land use mix of one or more growth areas identified in the Growth Areas Element as determined by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council;
3. Any request to change or modify the vision, overarching principles, or any goal contained in the General Plan or any request to add a new goal or element;
4. Any development proposal that places a significant cost burden on municipal or private utility systems may be considered a Major Amendment. That is, where available capacities or funded capital investments for expansion (such as roads, bridges and drainage control) are insufficient to support the proposed development, the applicant would be required to pay for necessary improvements. A Major Amendment would be called for if infrastructure needs are not demonstrated to be covered.
5. Any development proposal that results in a significant alteration of existing major corridors, including, but not limited to, a change in functional classification that is not currently planned within the General Plan;
6. Any development proposal that generates 50% or more of the total current enrollment of a K-8, middle school and/or high school as determined by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council, unless otherwise exempted by the Thatcher Unified School District.

### Minor Amendments

Revisions to the General Plan text and/or maps that clarify intent and implement the General Plan are considered “minor amendments” and may be processed independently or concurrently with applications for rezoning subject to Town policies and procedures. Minor amendments may be considered by the Town of Thatcher Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town Mayor and Council at any time.



### Minor Amendment Process:

All Minor Amendments to the General Plan proposed for adoption by the Town Council must be:

1. Heard and considered by the Mayor and Town Council at any time;
2. Noticed according to the same procedure as a rezone;
3. Recommended for approval, denial, or continuance at a public hearing by Planning and Zoning Commission;
4. Receive an affirmative simple majority vote of Mayor and Town Council for approval;
5. Approved, denied, or continued to a date certain by the Mayor and Town Council at a public hearing.

### Administrative Amendments

Changes to formatting, scrivener errors, photos, or graphics, not including maps, can be completed as an administrative procedure. The Implementation Strategy included in the next chapter is intended to be used by Town staff and the Town Planning and Zoning Commission as a working tool to evaluate General Plan progress. Maintained outside of the General Plan, the Implementation Strategy provides flexibility to prioritize and amend strategies as needed and does not require a General Plan amendment for its update.

### Mayor and Council-Initiated Amendments for Immediate Review

This type of amendment may be initiated at any time by the Town of Thatcher Mayor and Council if it determines waiting for the standard amendment period(s) compromises any of the following:

1. Ability to attract or retain quality jobs;
2. The Town's fiscal viability and tax base;
3. Provision of needed services for disadvantage populations;
4. Provision of affordable housing, mixed use, and compact development;
5. Emergency management response to natural or man-made disasters and hazard mitigation; and
6. Health, safety and welfare of the Thatcher community.



## General Plan Updates

According to ARS 9-461.06 (K), a general plan, with any amendments, is effective for up to ten years from the date the plan was initially adopted and ratified (if applicable), or until the plan is readopted and becomes effective. On or before the tenth anniversary of the plan's most recent adoption, the governing body of the municipality shall either readopt the existing plan for an additional term of up to ten years or shall adopt a new general plan.

Based on the Town of Thatcher' annual growth rate of 0.10 percent from the 2000 to the 2010 Census of population, the Arizona Revised Statutes does not require that the Town's voters ratify or approve this General Plan during an election. It is anticipated that the next 2030 General Plan update will require ratification by the voters during an election. General Plan Updates are initiated by the Town Council.

## Relationship to Other Plans

The General Plan provides comprehensive direction for the preparation of future plans such as economic development, parks, recreation, trails and open space plans, infrastructure plans, master plans, planned area developments and specific plans. Such plans implement the General Plan and shall be consistent with this General Plan. All adopted Plans are intended to support the General Plan.

## Statutory Plan Requirements

The Town of Thatcher General Plan Update complies with all applicable Arizona Revised Statutes requirements, including compliance with Arizona Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus.

The Thatcher General Plan Update contains the required elements needed to satisfy the Growing Smarter/Plus requirements. In addition, the General Plan includes the Highway 70 Corridor Element, which addresses the revitalization of a corridor with regional significance in a comprehensive, systematic and integrated manner.

## General Plan Elements

Plan Elements are the subject matter components that provide a logical, comprehensive structure for local jurisdiction planning. In Arizona, smaller municipalities like Thatcher whose population rate does not exceed an average of two percent per year period, are required to address two topical areas: Land Use and Circulation. The Town of Thatcher the following elements essential for long-term viability and considers these elements as interrelated parts of the planning framework for Thatcher.

- **Growth Areas Element:** As the main growth management tool, this element defines the Town's Designated Planning Area and annexation strategy and identifies the Town's growth, redevelopment, and infill planning areas.



## Town of Thatcher General Plan

- **Character Areas/Use of Land Element:** This element designates the proposed general distribution, location, and density/intensity of residential and nonresidential land uses utilizing a character areas approach.
- **Connectivity, Access and Mobility.** The element identifies the conditions and location of existing and proposed arterial routes, collector streets and other street classifications. The element discusses pedestrian, bicycle and transit modes and supports the Character Areas/Use of Land Element of the plan.
- **Highway 70 Revitalization Element.** This element provides a framework for promoting US 70 as the major circulation and economic development corridor sustaining the long-term viability of the Town and includes a conceptual framework for development, infill and redevelopment along this vital corridor.
- **Economic Development.** This element provides a framework for promoting the Town's economic and fiscal health. The Economic Development Element addresses areas of opportunity and identifies strategic targets.
- **Neighborhoods and Housing Element.** This element addresses housing condition, promotes ownership and addresses neighborhoods from a complete neighborhoods point of view.
- **Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space.** This element addresses the parks, recreation, trails and open space needs of Town's residents.
- **Public Services and Facilities.** This element details the current status of public infrastructure and provides planning strategies. Plans for police and fire service and utilities are also addressed.
- **Environmental Planning and Water Resources.** This element of the green infrastructure sustaining the Town and includes planning strategies for resource conservation.
- **Cost of Development.** The element specifies the intent and ability of the Town to ensure that new development pays its fair share of costs of new public services and facilities.
- **General Plan Administration.** Includes all the mechanisms needed to administer, evaluate, and monitor General Plan progress and key definitions such as major and minor amendments and General Plan updates.
- **General Plan Implementation.** Includes guidance to implement the General Plan.



## GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter contains the implementation strategies to carry out the goals and policies identified in this General Plan, serves as the primary mechanism for General Plan implementation, and conforms to all applicable State statutes. This chapter is intended to be used as a working tool to prioritize actions the Town should initiate or maintain to ensure that the vision and goals of the General Plan are achieved.

### General Plan Implementation Legislative Framework

The Arizona legislature requires the following actions to implement the General Plan:

- Adopt and implement the General Plan so that it serves as the community guide for orderly growth and development and as the basis for the efficient expenditure of Town funds related to the subjects of the General Plan;
- Render an Annual Report to the Mayor and Town Council on the status of the General Plan and progress with regards to its application;
- Upon adoption of the General Plan, every governmental, judicial and quasi-judicial agency or commission should provide a list of proposed plans for the construction of capital improvements within or partially within the Town, including a coordinated program of proposed public work for the ensuing fiscal year. This coordinated program must conform with the adopted General Plan.
- All acquisitions and dispositions of real property shall be reported to the Town of Thatcher Planning and Zoning department to ensure conformity with the General Plan. The Town's planning agency shall render its report as to conformity with the adopted General Plan within forty (40) days after submittal.



## APPENDIX A: GENERAL PLAN DEFINITIONS

### **Vision Statement**

A non-measurable statement of intent or aspiration summarizing in a brief paragraph the desired outcome or what the community would like to achieve or maintain.

### **General Plan Elements**

The chapters of the General Plan. The General Plan includes various elements, the General Plan Administration, and the General Plan Implementation.

### **Guiding Principles**

Overarching principles or precepts guiding the intent of an element irrespective of changes in goals, policies, and implementation strategies. Guiding principles support the Vision Statement and guide the Element's goals.

### **Goals**

General statements expressing the desired outcomes and supporting the vision the community seeks with regards to the future development and the element's precept.

### **Policies**

Action statements supporting goals, providing a framework for present and future decisions and guiding the formulation of specific programs and implementation strategies enumerated in the implementation plan.

### **Character Areas**

Thatcher is unique Town made up of a variety of communities, places and environments, expressing distinct characteristics. The Character Areas defines places that show a common form of development and land use patterns, lifestyle and "feel," intensity of use, design elements or other factors that collectively define the overall character, whether existing or intended in the future. The Character Area descriptions indicate the primary and secondary types of land uses, the infrastructure necessary for that type of development and serve as a guide for future development approvals.