



Adopted
May 20, 2026

MARICOPA
COUNTY

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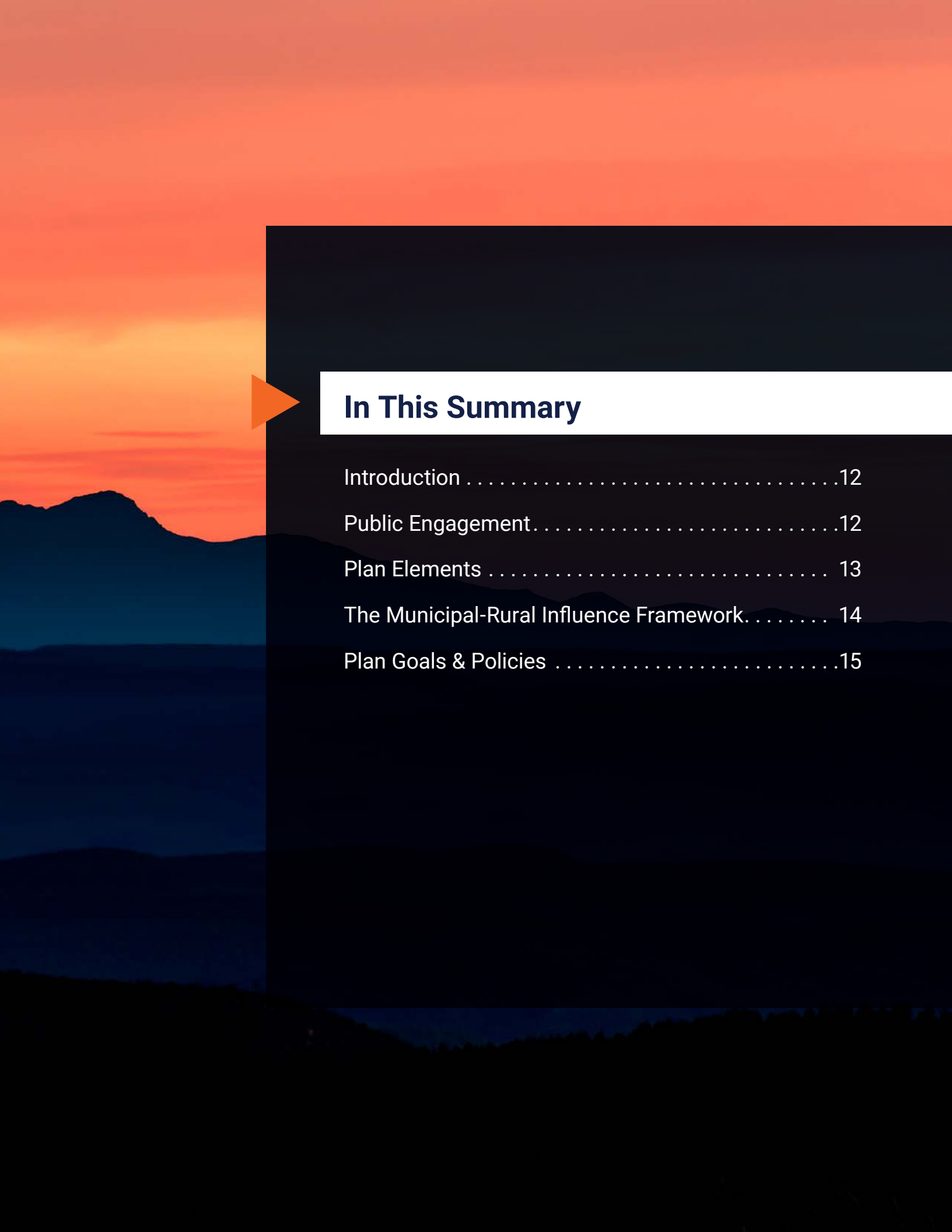


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Executive Summary



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The Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan is Maricopa County’s official guide for shaping growth and development in its unincorporated areas over the next 10-20 years. This Plan provides a strategic foundation for evaluating past trends, understanding current conditions, and charting a clear, forward-looking path for the future.

Introduction

Developed in accordance with Arizona statutory requirements, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a cohesive policy structure that promotes responsible land use, safeguards public health and safety, and commits to meeting needs of the unincorporated areas while ensuring the prudent use of public resources. Through the Comprehensive Plan, Maricopa County seeks to balance maintaining opportunity for future generations with stewardship of the County’s natural systems and open spaces, in a manner that supports long-term prosperity.

To help provide these outcomes with quality and consistency, Maricopa County uses unifying vision and mission statements along with several strategic priorities.

- **Vision:** Citizens serving citizens collaboratively, efficiently, and effectively.
- **Mission:** Provide regional leadership and fiscally responsible services for a healthy, safe community.
- **Strategic Priorities:** Safe communities, best-in-class regional services, efficient infrastructure, economic vitality, and fiscal stability.

Public Engagement

Framework 2040 represents the culmination of a two-year planning effort launched in spring 2024. Central to this planning process was an extensive and inclusive public engagement strategy designed to ensure community voices shaped long-term priorities and planning direction. Countywide outreach included:

- 13 public meetings, 3 virtual events, 2,400+ surveys, and multiple interactive web-based engagement tools.
- Top community priorities centered around: preserving open space, expanding recreation, ensuring water security, improving public safety, and supporting economic opportunities.

Plan Elements

The Comprehensive Plan addresses nine critical overarching topics that influence future growth and development across unincorporated Maricopa County. These topics, referred to as “elements” in the Comprehensive Plan, explore key issues that guide the goals and policies shaping informed, effective decision-making. Below is a brief overview of each element.

Land Use:	Promote coordinated, high-quality development; protect public health and safety; maintain fiscal responsibility.
Transportation:	Expand and maintain a multimodal network; coordinate future regional vehicular safety and capacity needs.
Environment:	Improve air and water quality; protect sensitive lands; mitigate hazards (i.e. wildfire, flooding); preserve biodiversity.
Economic Growth:	Diversify economy; support workforce development; attract innovation-driven industries.
Growth Areas:	Assess the physical and social constraints and pressures for growth in the unincorporated area.
Open Space:	Expand regional parks and trails; protect scenic corridors; maintain connectivity.
Water Resources:	Contribute to the long-term water supply through support of conservation, reuse, and compliance with Assured Water Supply programs.
Energy:	Support a comprehensive energy source development strategy in the region; encourage renewable energy and efficiency; plan for rising energy demand from technological advancement.
Cost of Development:	Require new growth to fund infrastructure and services; maintain transparency and fiscal health.

The Municipal-Rural Influence Framework



The Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan introduces a new strategic framework for managing both urban and rural development across the unincorporated County's vast and varied landscape. It is titled the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework, and it will function as the primary guidepost for development decisions.



Municipal-Rural Influence Framework

Identifies two areas in unincorporated Maricopa County:

- Area of Municipal Influence: Areas capable of supporting urban or suburban context development provided necessary infrastructure and services are available.
- Area of Rural Influence: Areas more appropriate for rural land uses and character and preservation of natural landscape.



Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD) Strategy

The evaluative strategy that Maricopa County employs to:

- Evaluate infrastructure readiness (water, sewer, roads, emergency services) as part of considering urban development in unincorporated Maricopa County.
- Gauge the ultimate feasibility of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or zoning district change in unincorporated Maricopa County.

Plan Goals & Policies

The following represents the Comprehensive Plan's important goals and policies, listed in **Table 1**, organized based on their Chapter and Element order:

Table 1. Plan Goals and Policies

	LAND USE
Land Use Goal #1: Achieve a coordinated pattern of development.	
<i>Goal Statement:</i> Ensure that development across the County is well-planned and cohesive, promoting efficient land use and infrastructure, and leading to a more organized growth pattern.	
Land Use Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports phasing plans for new urban development to coordinate such development with new urban services and infrastructure.	
Land Use Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports market feasibility studies, cost/benefit where warranted to help determine when new urban development in unincorporated areas is appropriate.	
Land Use Policy #1.3: Maricopa County supports considering the existence or readiness of urban services and infrastructure as a factor in the approval or denial of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Zoning District Change in accordance with the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.	
Land Use Policy #1.4: Maricopa County supports carefully evaluating development in areas where infrastructure and public services are limited or not planned, with consideration of long-term service delivery and fiscal impacts.	
Land Use Policy #1.5: Maricopa County supports coordinating land use and infrastructure planning with state agencies, other counties, municipalities, relevant utilities, federal agencies, and other regulatory bodies.	
Land Use Policy #1.6: Maricopa County supports annexation of urban development in unincorporated Maricopa County by municipalities.	
Land Use Policy #1.7: Maricopa County supports annexation of any unincorporated area of the County that is within a municipal planning area and completely surrounded by a municipality or municipalities.	
Land Use Policy #1.8: Maricopa County supports the prevention of forming new County Islands.	

Land Use Policy #1.9: Maricopa County supports planning coordination with adjacent municipalities, landowners, and neighboring public community members for proposed development within County Islands or municipal planning areas.

Land Use Policy #1.10: Maricopa County supports considering the plans and projects of overlapping or neighboring agencies in the planning of unincorporated lands and invite comments and coordination when appropriate.

Land Use Policy #1.11: Maricopa County supports flexible design and zoning techniques within County Islands or municipal planning areas through pre-annexation agreements, as needed, to align future development with the standards and service expectations of the adjacent municipalities.

Land Use Policy #1.12: Maricopa County supports directing new urban development to the Urban Growth Area identified in this Plan and complying with the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.

Land Use Policy #1.13: Maricopa County supports balanced land use patterns that include various residential, retail, non-retail employment, and public and civic land uses when appropriate urban services are available.

Land Use Policy #1.14: Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new urban development on existing rural land uses, including but not limited to, agriculture, mining, and forestry.

Land Use Policy #1.15: Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new rural development and new agriculture on existing urban land uses.

Land Use Policy #1.16: Maricopa County supports periodic reviews of the Area Plan Program and the individual Area Plans to assess relevance, implementation progress, and alignment with the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Policy #1.17: Maricopa County supports decommissioning an individual Area Plan upon Board consideration and approval if the amount of unincorporated land within the area equals less than 50% of the original total Area Plan limits.

Land Use Policy #1.18: Maricopa County supports requiring any Area Plan Update or new Area Plan to use the land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Goal #2: Protect public health, safety, and well-being within unincorporated Maricopa County.

Goal Statement: Implementing land use policies that prioritize the health, safety, and overall well-being of residents is essential for creating desirable developments and destinations and maintaining a high quality of life for existing residents.

Land Use Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports considering response times for public safety, fire, and other emergency responders in determining the feasibility of new development in unincorporated areas.

Land Use Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports public safety and security features included in the design of new and existing development to promote safe and active communities.

Land Use Policy #2.3: Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new development on Maricopa County’s regional parks, the Maricopa Trail, and other public open spaces.

Land Use Policy #2.4: Maricopa County supports interconnected trails, parks, preserves, open space, recreation centers, and similar features in new development areas where feasible.

Land Use Policy #2.5: Maricopa County supports the preservation of known and potential sources of aggregates and related mining operations within its area of jurisdiction from sterilization by proximate incompatible land uses.

Land Use Policy #2.6: Maricopa County supports land use buffers and land use transitions in urban/rural interface areas, including near aggregate mining operations, military installations, proving grounds, and the County’s regional parks.

Land Use Policy #2.7: Maricopa County supports the restoration of land to a beneficial condition on post-aggregates mining reclamation sites, that may include future development if feasible considering site conditions and the compatibility of nearby land uses.

Land Use Policy #2.8: Maricopa County supports flexible design and zoning techniques when used to establish balanced and efficient land use patterns, and when used to protect important environmental and open space areas and the connections between these areas.

Land Use Policy #2.9: Maricopa County supports the use of land use buffers and compatible land use strategies near existing and future high voltage electric utility line corridors in coordination with power utility companies.

Land Use Policy #2.10: Maricopa County supports land use compatibility within the High Noise or Accident Potential Zone of Luke Air Force Base, Auxiliary Airfield #1, and the military auxiliary airfield near the town of Gila Bend.

Land Use Policy #2.11: Maricopa County supports land use compatibility in the influence area of a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site.

Land Use Goal #3: Encourage high-quality development.

Goal Statement: Development projects that meet high standards of design and construction are key for enhancing the County’s aesthetic appeal and long-term viability.

Land Use Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports mixed housing options.

Land Use Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports residential development that contributes to maintaining a long-term level of high quality of development.

Land Use Policy #3.3: Maricopa County supports steering housing in areas served by transportation networks, in close proximity to job centers, and where public services and infrastructure are available or readily available.

Land Use Policy #3.4: Maricopa County supports rehabilitation and/or abatement by private parties of substandard, nuisance, vacant, and/or abandoned homes, buildings and land to protect neighborhoods and property values.

Land Use Policy #3.5: Maricopa County supports subdivisions rather than unregulated land divisions otherwise known as “wildcat” lot splits.

Land Use Policy #3.6: Maricopa County supports high-quality commercial centers and well-designed offices, business, and industrial parks in the Urban Growth Area with a preference for these developments to annex into a municipality.

Land Use Goal #4: Exercise sound financial management in land use decisions.

Goal Statement: Land use decisions that strengthen the County’s fiscal health and ensure long-term financial stability are important and central to the financially responsible planning aims of the County.

Land Use Policy #4.1: Maricopa County supports compliance with its capital improvement and other funding programs, except when reimbursement is made to the County for unplanned costs or when private capital is used for the provision of services and infrastructure.

Land Use Policy #4.2: Maricopa County supports using homeowners’ associations and related organizations and improvement districts to manage and maintain services, infrastructure, and amenities to help limit impacts to taxpayers where appropriate.

Land Use Policy #4.3: Maricopa County supports using development agreements for large-scale urban development to help limit financial impacts to the County.

Land Use Goal #5: Provide regional leadership on land use issues.

Goal Statement: The County seeks to take a proactive and leading role in addressing land use challenges and setting standards for development in the region among the various jurisdictions in order to promote best practices in land use planning.

Land Use Policy #5.1: Maricopa County supports promoting awareness about the unique aspects of living in unincorporated areas.

Land Use Policy #5.2: Maricopa County supports periodic reviews of the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance and the initiation of specific amendments on an as needed basis.

Land Use Policy #5.3: Maricopa County supports periodic comprehensive updates of the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance on an as needed basis.

Land Use Policy #5.4: Maricopa County supports coordinated planning efforts between local, state, and federal agencies.

Land Use Policy #5.5: Maricopa County supports coordinating with the Arizona State Land Department in the planning and design of large-scale urban development in or adjacent to State Trust Land.

Land Use Policy #5.6: Maricopa County supports working with state and federal agencies and utility companies on any changes to their land ownership boundaries that could lead to acquiring land for local public use.

Land Use Policy #5.7: Maricopa County supports coordinating with state and federal agencies and utility companies to address safety and security issues associated with new development near the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station.

Land Use Policy #5.8: Maricopa County supports the on-site incorporation of utility infrastructure by developers and corridors in large-scale urban development that are necessary to provide essential utility services to that development.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Goal #1: Provide a comprehensive transportation system.

Goal Statement: Developing an integrated transportation network that meets the needs of all users is vital to ensure that the system is accessible, efficient, and well-connected.

Transportation Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports compliance with the County Department of Transportation's currently adopted Transportation System Plan and its successor plans.

Transportation Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports adherence to its Transportation Improvement Program and its successor programs.

Transportation Policy #1.3: Maricopa County supports using the preferred funding methods identified in the Cost of Development element to pay for transportation improvements necessary for new development.

Transportation Policy #1.4: Maricopa County supports new development funding unanticipated, accelerated and nonprogrammed improvements where such development requires deviation from the Transportation Improvement Program.

Transportation Policy #1.5: Maricopa County supports the preservation of rights-of-way, as necessary, to maintain and extend the grid system, to support the state's development of the highway-interchange network, and to preserve the scenic corridors.

Transportation Policy #1.6: Maricopa County supports roadway planning that promotes identified scenic corridors and wildlife habitat linkages and connectivity where necessary.

Transportation Policy #1.7: Maricopa County supports public education efforts that assist in reducing air pollution.

Transportation Goal #2: Manage the transportation system to provide continual improvements in reliability, efficiency, and safety.

Goal Statement: Continuously improving the reliability, efficiency, and safety of the transportation system through active management is crucial to meet the community's evolving needs.

Transportation Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports coordinating decisions on land use patterns and transportation investments that aim for a safe, efficient, and fiscally solvent transportation network.

Transportation Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports designing new roadways to include pedestrian facilities separated from vehicular traffic with safe multimodal crossings on arterial roadways as necessary.

Transportation Policy #2.3: Maricopa County supports the inclusion or connection to alternative transportation in the design of existing and new urban development, as feasible and effective. Alternative transportation can include, but is not limited to, sidewalks, the Maricopa Trail and other trail connections, bicycle facility infrastructure, park-and-ride/public transit facilities, and other appropriate practices.

Transportation Policy #2.4: Maricopa County supports using Intelligent Transportation Systems and Connected Vehicle technology for efficient and safe movement of people and goods.

Transportation Goal #3: Support regional and interagency collaboration.

Goal Statement: Fostering collaboration among the transportation agencies in the region is critical to create and maintain a more effective, integrated, and functionally competitive transportation system.

Transportation Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports partnerships with municipalities in cost sharing and mutual financial support for road repairs and improvements.

Transportation Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports municipal annexation of roads that are adjacent to County Islands.

Transportation Policy #3.3: Maricopa County supports intergovernmental agreements that allow for municipal or private construction of roads in and passing through County Islands to the standards of the surrounding municipality where these roads are intended to be annexed by the municipality.

Transportation Policy #3.4: Maricopa County supports partnerships with federal, state, and local governments and agencies for interjurisdictional traffic operations and management for the benefit of regional safety and mobility.

Transportation Policy #3.5: Maricopa County supports coordination between property owners to establish an agreement to maintain private ingress/egress.



ENVIRONMENT

Environment Goal #1: Enhance the regional environmental quality for the overall well-being of the community.

Goal Statement: Improving the overall environmental quality through improvements in air quality and water quality and through the protection of natural resources is a benefit to the overall health of the region.

Environment Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports providing education, regulatory guidance, permitting, inspection, and enforcement services through the County Air Quality Department's Strategic Plan and its Compliance Assurance model to assist in achieving compliance with federal air quality standards.

Environment Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports the achievement and maintenance of federal air quality standards, including National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Environment Policy #1.3: Maricopa County supports incentive programs that promote implementing clean air technologies and addressing air quality issues throughout Maricopa County where feasible and effective.

Environment Policy #1.4: Maricopa County supports compliance with its Drinking Water program and its Water and Wastewater Treatment program to protect water quality.

Environment Policy #1.5: Maricopa County supports a comprehensive program to control dust (PM₁₀) particularly from unpaved roads, alleys, and parking lots.

Environment Policy #1.6: Maricopa County supports noise reductions in new development design and in the construction of new buildings where necessary or otherwise where feasible.

Environment Policy #1.7: Maricopa County supports enforcement of its Dark Sky Ordinance and supports regional efforts to limit excessive nighttime light.

Environment Goal #2: Support the protection of sensitive lands and environments.

Goal Statement: The County aims to safeguard environmentally sensitive areas from the impacts of development in order to preserve natural habitats and rural landscapes while accommodating growth in the future.

Environment Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports planning future development while considering the prohibition of development within floodways and, where necessary, 100-year floodplains as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Environment Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports the Military Compatible land use designation for High Noise or Accident Potential Zones, and compliance with state laws relating to land use compatibility and consistency with the high noise or accident potential of Luke Air Force Base and the ancillary military facilities.

Environment Policy #2.3: Maricopa County supports the Military Compatible land use designations within the influence area of a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site, and compliance with state laws relating to land use compatibility and consistency with the operation of the installation, range, or site and its influence area.

Environment Policy #2.4: Maricopa County supports flexible zoning techniques when used to keep new development below the 15% hillside slope and to protect riparian areas.

Environment Policy #2.5: Maricopa County supports using the hillside general design characteristics identified in this element.

Environment Goal #3: Protect the natural biodiversity of the region.

Goal Statement: Protecting and promoting the region’s natural biodiversity is critical to conserving diverse species and habitats within the County to preserve an ecological balance.

Environment Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new development and urbanization on environmentally sensitive areas, including the habitats and migration corridors of native wildlife (both fauna and flora).

Environment Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports innovative project design and development techniques that protect important plant and animal habitats, desert washes, and migration corridors.

Environment Policy #3.3: Maricopa County supports completing resource and biological surveys and establishing needed mitigation measures prior to new development as directed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the State Historic Preservation Office.

Environment Goal #4: Strengthen the County’s preparedness for hazards.

Goal Statement: Strengthening the County’s ability to respond to hazards through effective planning and preparedness reduces regional risk and builds resilience to foreseen and unforeseen environmental threats.

Environment Policy #4.1: Maricopa County supports compliance with watercourse master studies and plans and area drainage master studies and plans.

Environment Policy #4.2: Maricopa County supports fire and wildfire prevention and mitigation measures in the design of development where necessary and appropriate.

Environment Policy #4.3: Maricopa County supports public education about the risks and limitations of developing in hazard-prone areas.

Environment Goal #5: Provide regional leadership to promote all aspects of regional environmental quality.

Goal Statement: Leading efforts to promote environmental quality across the region is a key objective to steering beneficial environmental stewardship.

Environment Policy #5.1: Maricopa County supports participating with local, state, and federal agencies on developing solutions for State Implementation Plans that have not been addressed.

Environment Policy #5.2: Maricopa County supports continuing to build relationships and collaborations between the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and other partners in the effort to preserve ecosystems.

Environment Policy #5.3: Maricopa County supports its Department of Emergency Management continuing to work closely with local, state, federal partners, and community organizations.

Environment Policy #5.4: Maricopa County supports implementing the Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan to ensure a comprehensive and effective emergency management strategy for the region.



ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic Growth Goal #1: Foster a diverse and balanced economy to promote long-term economic stability and economic resiliency.

Goal Statement: Aiming for a diverse and resilient economy to ensure long-term stability and growth is integral to creating a balanced economic environment that can withstand various economic challenges locally and externally.

Economic Growth Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports coordinated and balanced land use patterns that allow for both Basic and Non-basic sector businesses.

Economic Growth Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports assessing its regulations and processes to enhance effectiveness, ensure quality service, increase efficiency, and establish a competitive advantage.

Economic Growth Goal #2: Support the growth of opportunity in the local and regional economies.

Goal Statement: Promoting initiatives that create economic opportunities for residents and businesses is crucial in elevating job creation, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility.

Economic Growth Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports partnerships with a variety of entities and stakeholders to increase business success and address community needs.

Economic Growth Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports efforts to recruit prospective businesses and industries to the County and efforts to retain existing businesses and industries.

Economic Growth Policy #2.3: Maricopa County supports the continuation and expansion of vocational, technical, and emerging career workforce training in the region.

Economic Growth Goal #3: Cultivate a thriving business environment that incubates and retains innovative companies.

Goal Statement: Attracting, retaining, and supporting innovative companies and a skilled workforce drives a dynamic and competitive business climate.

Economic Growth Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports implementing the Comprehensive Plan in a clear and consistent way to help businesses make long-term investment decisions.

Economic Growth Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports an economic environment that promotes entrepreneurial activities and business formation.

Economic Growth Goal #4: Contribute to partnerships that advance an effective and integrated regional economy.

Goal Statement: Strengthening the County's role in the broader regional economy through effective collaboration and integration emphasizes the importance of partnerships for regional economic success.

Economic Growth Policy #4.1: Maricopa County supports programs that provide citizens with the education and training necessary to attain careers in emerging and high-demand fields.

Economic Growth Policy #4.2: Maricopa County supports organizations and programs that attract a variety of Basic Sector industry clusters that have long-term, stable growth prospects.

Economic Growth Policy #4.3: Maricopa County supports the Maricopa County Industrial Development Authority, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Community Development Block Grant program, and other economic opportunity incentive programs.



GROWTH AREAS

Growth Areas Goal #1: Address growth strategically to ensure orderly, compatible land use and reasonable development.

Goal Statement: Ensuring orderly and reasonable growth through effective development planning practices is crucial for providing the appropriate infrastructure needed to maintain a high quality of life.

Growth Areas Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports assurance of annexation, where feasible, of new urban development and redevelopment sites within its Urban Growth Area.

Growth Areas Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports planning for urban/rural interface transition areas between its Urban Growth Area and Rural Service Area.

Growth Areas Goal #2: Have urban growth that is consistent with the County's Urban Growth Area, meets statutory requirements, and implements the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.

Goal Statement: The County's Urban Growth Area allows for the growth of infrastructure, services, and development according to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy in order to protect the public's health, safety, and well-being.

Growth Areas Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports consistent implementation of and compliance with its Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy in its Urban Growth Area.

Growth Areas Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports periodically evaluating the development constraints and considerations identified in this element to determine how they impact the Urban Growth Area, and whether they require reconsideration or modification.



OPEN SPACE

Open Space Goal #1: Protect and expand the regional park system proportionately with population growth.

Goal Statement: Ensuring that the regional park system grows and integrates in proportion to meet the needs and demands for recreational opportunities in the natural landscapes and spaces of an increasing population in both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of Maricopa County.

Open Space Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports implementing the County Parks and Recreation Department's currently adopted Parks, Open Space & Trail System Plan, and any successor plan.

Open Space Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports soft edge treatments along the perimeter of its regional parks, regional trail system, the El Rio corridor, and open space in unincorporated areas of the County.

Open Space Policy #1.3: Maricopa County will coordinate with the planning initiative that seeks to revitalize the Salt and Gila River corridors as vital ecological, cultural, and economic assets.

Open Space Policy #1.4: Maricopa County supports the mission and ongoing efforts of the Lower Gila River Collaborative, a voluntary partnership focused on restoring the Lower Gila River ecosystem while promoting stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

Open Space Goal #2: Support access to both local and regional recreational opportunities and open space.

Goal Statement: Supporting appropriate public access to recreational lands and open spaces in the region outside of the County's jurisdiction is important for providing opportunities for exercise, relaxation, enjoyment, and social interaction, while also supporting environmental conservation and local economies.

Open Space Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports new residential developments using the local park ratios identified in this Plan as a guide for the provision of local recreational amenities.

Open Space Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports user-based funding options for its regional park system and regional trail system to help maintain high-quality amenities and access.

Open Space Goal #3: Maintain the Maricopa Trail and the Maricopa County Regional Trail System.

Goal Statement: Continue to protect and enhance the Maricopa County Trail System in addition to working with regional municipalities to connect the trail system to their parks, preserves, and open space systems.

Open Space Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports dedication and improvement of trail right-of-way within new development, including the Maricopa Trail and Maricopa County Regional Trail System.

Open Space Goal #4: Provide regional leadership to promote the preservation of the desert landscape through protected recreational lands and open space.

Goal Statement: Leading efforts to preserve and conserve the natural landscape and wildlife habitats and corridors through protected recreational lands and open spaces is a primary objective for the flourishing of the unique environment of the Sonoran Desert for future generations.

Open Space Policy #4.1: Maricopa County supports the protection of scenic corridors and views as outlined in adopted scenic corridor plans and in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance.

Open Space Policy #4.2: Maricopa County supports partnering with municipalities to address edge treatments along the perimeter of regional parks and the regional trail system.

Open Space Policy #4.3: Maricopa County supports partnering with adjacent federal and state agencies to expand recreation opportunities and protect and preserve existing open space from development pressures where feasible.

Open Space Policy #4.4: Maricopa County supports partnering with adjacent federal and state agencies to promote responsible recreational activities and opportunities that aim to protect and preserve existing parks, recreation areas, public lands, and open spaces.



WATER RESOURCES

Water Resources Goal #1: Contribute to the endurance of the region's water supply and its delivery.

Goal Statement: Supporting the local water providers' efforts to secure the reliability and endurance of the region's water supply ensures stability in water delivery necessary for planning future development and the needs of the community.

Water Resources Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports residential development that is subject to the requirements of the Arizona Department of Water Resources Assured and Adequate Water Supply programs.

Water Resources Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports water adequacy determinations for new subdivisions outside Active Management Areas.

Water Resources Policy #1.3: Maricopa County supports water conservation techniques in the planning and design of new development.

Water Resources Policy #1.4: Maricopa County supports low water use and drought-tolerant landscaping.

Water Resources Goal #2: Promote and protect regional water quality.

Goal Statement: Focusing on initiatives and best practices to maintain and improve water quality for all users.

Water Resources Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports compliance with its Drinking Water Program and its Water and Wastewater Treatment Programs.

Water Resources Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports renewable water use for landscape, park and common area irrigation; artificial lakes; and decorative water features.

Water Resources Goal #3: Support and provide leadership for water conservation in the region.

Goal Statement: Leading initiatives to promote water conservation practices across the region is vital for supporting the efficient and prudent management of water resources in the desert Southwest.

Water Resources Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports informing the public about the importance and benefits of water conservation.

Water Resources Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports the collaboration of municipalities to implement best practices for water planning and conservation.



ENERGY

Energy Goal #1: Support enhancing the stability and the development of the energy grid in the region.

Goal Statement: Improving the stability and reliability of the energy grid through resilient and dependable energy infrastructure to support current and future regional energy needs.

Energy Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports an all-of-the-above energy strategy that incorporates both traditional and alternative sources of energy to ensure that the energy supply is abundant and meets demand.

Energy Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports expanding the energy generation supply and capacity to meet the increased needs from future growth.

Energy Goal #2: Increase energy efficiency through development patterns.

Goal Statement: Promoting development patterns that enhance energy efficiency is essential to reducing the rate of demand for new energy generation sources.

Energy Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports energy efficient design and construction of new development.

Energy Policy #2.2: Maricopa County supports energy conservation through balanced and efficient development patterns where residential, commercial and employment land uses with complementary compatibility are proximate.

Energy Policy #2.3: Maricopa County supports energy conservation through having new urban development locate in cities and towns, and in the Urban Growth Area of the County identified in this Plan.

Energy Goal #3: Support energy development in the region.

Goal Statement: Encouraging the development of energy resources through investment in local energy projects is requisite to support growth, development, and innovation within the region.

Energy Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports energy conservation and emissions reduction through allowing new development to provide alternative transportation options or connect to existing alternative transportation infrastructure.

Energy Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports the utilization of traditional, alternative, and clean emission energy research and development.

Energy Policy #3.3: Maricopa County supports the use of appropriate setbacks and buffers to residential uses from energy generation and/or energy storage facilities to prevent or lessen the impact from potential fires and other potential hazards.

Energy Policy #3.4: Maricopa County supports developing energy infrastructure using low-impact construction techniques and, where feasible, siting such energy infrastructure on previously disturbed locations for the benefit of local wildlife (including flora and fauna).

Energy Policy #3.5: Maricopa County supports appropriate buffers and setbacks to ecological and riparian habitats found along borders of significant washes and riverbanks from energy generation and/or storage facilities.

Energy Policy #3.6: Maricopa County supports responsible and timely decommissioning of solar energy generation and battery energy storage system facilities to ensure public safety, environmental protection, and restoration of land to a beneficial condition.

Energy Goal #4: Coordinate energy initiatives/programs in the region.

Goal Statement: Aligning energy initiatives/programs with jurisdictions both within and outside of Maricopa County ensures coordinated planning partnerships and viable development in the long-term.

Energy Policy #4.1: Maricopa County supports incentive programs that promote energy efficiency where feasible and effective.

Energy Policy #4.2: Maricopa County supports efforts to assist businesses and individuals with renewable energy options and energy conservation.



COST OF DEVELOPMENT

Cost of Development Goal #1: Exercise sound financial management and build the County's fiscal strength.

Goal Statement: Making fiscally responsible decisions that strengthen the County's financial health is needed to ensure that development projects contribute positively to the County's fiscal stability.

Cost of Development Policy #1.1: Maricopa County supports continuously evaluating the preferred funding methods with respect to the legal, socioeconomic, land use and administrative considerations identified in this element, and making changes when deemed necessary.

Cost of Development Policy #1.2: Maricopa County supports using the traditional and preferred funding methods identified in this Plan to offset costs of new development.

Cost of Development Policy #1.3: Maricopa County supports recouping the costs of its products and services without unfairly burdening those most in need of its products and services.

Cost of Development Goal #2: Ensure transparency in financial reporting

Goal Statement: Providing clear and accurate financial information about the County to residents and stakeholders is key to maintaining transparency in financial reporting that builds public trust and accountability.

Cost of Development Policy #2.1: Maricopa County supports the provision of clear, accurate, and accessible financial information related to the costs of development and to overall County operations.

Cost of Development Goal #3: Require that new development pays its proper and reasonable share of the costs of new infrastructure, services, and other public improvements.

Goal Statement: Ensuring that new developments contribute their proportionate share to the costs of infrastructure, services, and public improvements is important for reducing future liabilities and protecting the long-term fiscal solvency of Maricopa County.

Cost of Development Policy #3.1: Maricopa County supports new development contributing its proportionate share of the costs of infrastructure necessary to support the demand for electric, water, sewer, and other services generated and necessitated by the development.

Cost of Development Policy #3.2: Maricopa County supports requiring new development to contribute its proportionate share of long-term maintenance costs associated with the use of all new infrastructure to support the demand for electric, water, sewer, and other services generated and necessitated by the development.

Cost of Development Policy #3.3: Maricopa County supports requiring the provision of infrastructure, facilities, and services needed by new development prior to that development, either directly or through fees. Where appropriate, the construction of infrastructure and facilities may be phased to coincide with project timelines.



2

Introduction



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The Reason for Planning

Understanding the significance of the **Framework 2040** Comprehensive Plan (Plan) begins with recognizing the value of planning itself. It is often described as both an art and a science, reflecting its blend of technical analysis and creative problem-solving. The way these diverse issues are addressed directly influences public health and safety, economic stability, environmental quality, the fulfillment of community needs, and the responsible use of public funds.

A defining feature of planning is its foundation in public engagement. It is a collaborative process in which citizens, stakeholders, and community leaders work together to identify and respond to complex and evolving challenges. Through dialogue and consensus-building, planning helps communities anticipate future needs and develop practical, innovative solutions that reflect shared values and long-term goals.

History of Planning in Maricopa County

Modern planning in the United States began in the early 1900s as cities faced growing social, environmental, and economic challenges. In response, states adopted long-term planning requirements to address public health, safety, and quality of life. The field was formalized with the 1926 and 1928 publication of federal zoning and planning acts, which continue to influence state and local planning efforts, including those in Arizona.

Planning in Maricopa County began in the late 1950s with initial studies focused on land use and population growth at a regional scale. In the decades that followed, the County developed small-scale plans for specific unincorporated areas and assisted smaller growing municipalities in preparing general plans for their jurisdictions. Due to its large geographic size and rapid growth, Maricopa County introduced Area Plans to address localized planning needs. While Area Plans remained a key component of the County's strategy, the increasing population and emerging countywide challenges in the early 1990s prompted the development of the first County Comprehensive Plan for the entire unincorporated area. Adopted as Maricopa County 2020 – Eye to the Future, this plan established policy direction for land use, transportation, economic development, growth areas, and environmental stewardship.

Following the adoption of that plan, Arizona enacted the Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus legislation, which expanded the scope of comprehensive planning. These laws required counties to plan for areas of growth, open space, environmental impacts, water resources, and the financial implications of new development. They also introduced requirements

for inclusive public participation, stronger coordination with the Arizona State Land Department, and consistency between zoning changes and comprehensive plans. In response, Maricopa County updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2002 to meet these standards and added a housing affordability component. Subsequent updates incorporated additional state mandates, including land use protections around military installations, safeguards for aggregate resources and mining operations, and policies promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan for Maricopa County was the previous plan that the Board of Supervisors approved in 2016. It emphasized coordinated land use planning, infrastructure investment, stewardship of the environment, and economic development while continuing to reinforce the importance of preserving rural character where appropriate. What set Vision 2030 apart was its introduction of the Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD) strategy, which provided clear, criteria-based guidance for determining where urban-context development should occur. This new strategy helped align land use decisions with infrastructure capacity, municipal planning efforts, and long-term sustainability goals, ensuring that growth was both strategic and fiscally responsible. The USUD strategy served as a key foundational piece to the new planning framework introduced in the **Framework 2040** Comprehensive Plan.



Statutory Requirements

Arizona has long recognized the need for careful and deliberate planning and has laws directing how Maricopa County must prepare, adopt, and amend this Comprehensive Plan. The following is a summary of how Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) directs the County's comprehensive planning responsibilities.

- **ARS §11-802:** Requires that Maricopa County plan and provide for future growth and improvement in its jurisdiction (i.e. unincorporated areas) to promote public health, safety, convenience, and general welfare. This statute also requires that Maricopa County coordinate all public improvements and adopt and enforce rules, regulations, ordinances and plans regarding future development.
- **ARS §11-804:** Requires that Maricopa County prepare and adopt a long-term Comprehensive Plan for unincorporated areas. Specifically, this Plan must address the following topics:



- **ARS §11-805:** Requires Maricopa County to adopt and subsequently amend or extend the Comprehensive Plan to serve as the official guide for development of areas within its jurisdiction. This statute also outlines the procedures and requirements for adopting and amending the Comprehensive Plan.
- **ARS §11-811:** Requires that Maricopa County's Zoning Ordinance, and all rezoning and zoning amendments, be consistent with and conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan.
- **ARS §11-814:** Requires that all rezonings be consistent with and conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan.
- **ARS §28-8481:** Requires that Maricopa County adopt a Comprehensive Plan that ensures development is compatible with the high noise or accident potential generated by military airport and ancillary military facilities.

Vision, Mission, and Strategic Priorities

Maricopa County's authority is limited to only what is specifically required or allowed by state law. The County provides many services like public health and healthcare, roads and related infrastructure, flood control, law enforcement, criminal justice, education, parks and recreation, libraries, animal control, election oversight and community development. To help provide these services with quality and consistency, Maricopa County uses unifying mission and vision statements along with several strategic priorities. These statements and priorities are a commitment to achieving quality results for residents.

Maricopa County Vision

Citizens serving citizens by working collaboratively, innovatively, efficiently and effectively. We will be responsive to our customers while being fiscally prudent.

Maricopa County Mission

The mission of Maricopa County is to provide regional leadership and fiscally responsible, necessary public services so that residents can enjoy living in a healthy and safe community.

Maricopa County Strategic Priorities

- Maricopa County will support safe communities and neighborhoods by providing access to a timely, integrated, and cost-effective smart justice system.
- Maricopa County will provide best-in-class regional services, both mandated and of concern to citizens, while coordinating with municipalities, other local jurisdictions, and community-based entities to consolidate services and avoid duplication, when applicable.
- Maricopa County will deploy an effective and efficient infrastructure to implement streamlined policies and procedures improving delivery of services, and promoting a healthy workplace and a fully engaged workforce.
- Maricopa County will innovatively leverage its resources, be adaptive in its regulatory policies and practices, and proactive in its public relations to attract, promote and support the growth of business enterprises in order to produce a vibrant and balanced regional economy.
- Maricopa County will continue to efficiently manage County resources and engage in effective fiscal planning with integrity and transparency to promote financial stability and economic prosperity for Maricopa County residents.

The Importance of the Comprehensive Plan

Fulfills Statutory Requirements

State law requires Maricopa County to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Plan that includes specific mandated elements while allowing flexibility to address additional issues as needed. Because laws and societal conditions evolve, periodic amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be necessary to maintain compliance with state requirements and to ensure the Plan remains responsive to public needs.

Protects Public Health

Protecting public health is a core responsibility of Maricopa County. The Comprehensive Plan supports this goal by promoting efficient land use patterns that reduce air pollution and other environmental impacts. It also encourages personal well-being through the development of interconnected open spaces that support physical activity and safe travel by foot, bicycle, and other non-motorized means.

Protects Public Safety

The Comprehensive Plan enhances public safety by evaluating, coordinating, and approving new development in consideration with essential infrastructure and services, including roads, law enforcement, fire protection, and water and sewer systems. It also discourages development in hazardous areas where lives and property may be at risk.

Protects General Welfare

The Comprehensive Plan protects the general welfare by evaluating land use, infrastructure, and public services in a coordinated manner that supports the overall well-being of unincorporated Maricopa County. Through this integrated approach, the Comprehensive Plan promotes orderly growth, efficient service delivery, and high-levels of long-term community quality of life.

Prioritizes an Affordable Future

Maricopa County is committed to keeping its communities affordable and livable for everyone. Consequently, the Comprehensive Plan actively promotes policies to maintain a low cost of living and expand access to affordable housing. By prioritizing affordability, Maricopa County ensures that essential workers, young professionals, and long-time residents can continue to call the County home.

Supports Consensus Building

Comprehensive planning is a collaborative process that considers the complex and interrelated nature of social, economic, and environmental issues. While complete agreement on every issue may not be possible, consensus is essential. The Comprehensive Plan reflects a continuous effort to build consensus and adjust priorities as conditions and community needs change.

Establishes New Development Framework for Unincorporated Areas

The Comprehensive Plan proposes a new development framework, titled the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework. This is an organizational framework that allows for all unincorporated land to be evaluated under an established set of policies to determine where urban or rural development is most appropriate. This framework also allows for development in County Islands not covered by a County Area Plan to be more accountable to consider the surrounding context including, but not limited to, available infrastructure and services, and community needs.

Promotes Quality Communities

The Comprehensive Plan supports the development of high-quality communities by encouraging the inclusion of parks, open spaces, schools, libraries, and community centers. These features enhance quality of life and foster a sense of connection among neighborhoods and residents.

Helps Allocate Limited Financial Resources

While new development can bring economic benefits, it also creates demands for services and infrastructure. The Comprehensive Plan helps protect taxpayers by promoting balanced and efficient land use patterns that broaden the tax base, reduce financial burdens, and support stable, economically resilient communities. The Plan's Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy ensures that growth is aligned with available infrastructure and services, minimizing costly obligations. It also requires that new development contribute its fair share toward the cost of necessary improvements.

Establishes Public Policy

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth policies that guide Maricopa County in addressing long-term social, economic, and environmental challenges. These policies provide a consistent foundation for decision-making, and any deviation should be justified by demonstrating a clear benefit to the County as a whole.

Serves as a Decision-Making Guide

The Comprehensive Plan assists the County, residents, and businesses in making informed decisions about development location, type, density, and infrastructure needs. It supports the creation of cost-effective capital improvement programs, helps prioritize competing demands, and enables individuals and investors to make choices based on the timely availability and quality of services in different areas.

Links Complex and Interrelated Issues

Development decisions have far-reaching impacts. Choices about residential densities and location influence housing affordability, infrastructure needs, and service delivery. These, in turn, affect budgets, tax policies, and the provision of services such as education, transportation, law enforcement, and emergency services. Development patterns also shape employment opportunities, retail locations, traffic congestion, and environmental quality. The Comprehensive Plan plays a vital role in navigating these interconnected issues and guiding Maricopa County's response to rapid growth and change.

Comprehensive Plan Scope

While the importance of long-term planning is well understood, comprehensive planning has limitations that must be acknowledged.

Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances

Comprehensive plans are often mistaken for zoning ordinances, but they serve different purposes. **Framework 2040** is a policy and decision-making guide that addresses community needs and sets long-range planning goals. It is not regulatory. In contrast, the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance (MCZO) regulates how land can be developed by controlling factors such as land use type, building height, lot size, and other parcel-specific standards. Although distinct, the zoning ordinance supports the Comprehensive Plan because Arizona law requires that any changes to zoning district boundaries be consistent with and conform to the adopted plan.

Flexibility and Certainty

The Comprehensive Plan provides clear and consistent policies that help reduce uncertainty in land use decisions. However, to remain relevant, the Plan must be adaptable to changes in state law, environmental conditions, economic trends, political leadership, and community priorities. Maricopa County will periodically review the Plan and update the Plan in accordance with ARS requirements, ensuring that any revisions enhance County conditions without compromising the Plan's core principles.

Countywide Scope

A common misconception is that the Comprehensive Plan applies to the entire county. In actuality, the Comprehensive Plan only governs unincorporated areas. Each municipality within Maricopa County has its own general plan that applies to its specific jurisdiction. While municipal plans may extend into unincorporated areas and include areas that could be annexed in the future, the Comprehensive Plan remains the guiding document for those areas until annexation occurs.

Planning Horizon

Unlike many municipal general plans that envision a full build-out scenario, the Comprehensive Plan takes a more focused approach by planning for approximately the next 10-20 years. Given the County's vast size and the many uncertainties it faces, projecting land use and development patterns beyond this timeframe is neither practical nor advisable. This shorter horizon allows Maricopa County to plan in a deliberate and flexible manner, responding to change while maintaining long-term vision.

Public Engagement

Engagement Approach

Throughout the planning process, the Comprehensive Plan team worked to gather input from a broad range of voices to help shape the County's future. To accomplish this, the team designed multiple engagement formats aimed at:

- Collecting feedback from County residents
- Exploring key topics in depth
- Ensuring representation of varied experiences and perspectives



Outreach by the Numbers

13 Public Meetings held throughout
all **5** Supervisor Districts
in **7** unique locations
3 All-County Grand Virtual Meetings

9,325 visits to virtual outreach tools
6,505 unique visitors
3,138 participants in virtual engagement activities

154 responses in collaborative mapping activities (in-person and virtual)

12,000+ visits to the Comprehensive Plan website

577 idea wall posts and comments

25 participants
in **5** Technical Advisory Committee meetings with regional stakeholders

2,407 completed surveys



Engagement Methods

Public participation opportunities included individual surveys, one-on-one conversations, stakeholder meetings, in-person Supervisor District workshops, and countywide Grand Virtual Events.

To reach underrepresented communities, the team coordinated with non-profits, political action groups, and neighborhood/HOA organizations to organize small group meetings and tailor outreach efforts.

A list and description of each engagement tool is outlined below:



- **Digital Outreach:** A dedicated website (Framework2040.com) was used to inform residents, announce upcoming events, share draft documents, and launch community involvement activities. During the planning process, social media and e-blasts also served as key communication tools to keep residents informed and engaged. The County used platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram to share updates about the project, provide links to available documents, and promote opportunities for public participation, including surveys, virtual meetings, and comment periods.



- **In-Person Workshops:** The heart of public engagement activities was facilitated through a workshop series of ten in-person meetings hosted within each Supervisor District. These meetings were used to collaboratively review and discuss existing and future conditions with participants. To ensure all those who participated had an equal voice, different types of interactive exercises and real-time polling technology was used to record live audience opinions. The use of public outreach technology offered the team a chance to visualize public opinion and residents the ability to frame follow-up discussions around direct polling reactions.



- **Virtual Workshops:** To account for residents' busy lifestyles, participants were also able to engage at different points in the planning process by joining three countywide Grand Virtual Events that were hosted online. Identical to in-person meetings, live interactive polling was used that allowed participants to give real-time feedback. Results were displayed instantly to make the virtual presentations more engaging.



- **Countywide Surveys:** Multiple online surveys were used at various points in the process to evaluate resident satisfaction with existing county qualities and public preferences for prioritizing future efforts.

- **Interactive Mapping:** The County also engaged participants by initiating an interactive mapping application, via the project website, so that the geographical context of any particular challenge or opportunity could be captured for use in the development process of the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Idea Wall:** Participants were able to take part in a broad, virtual "idea wall" conversation that explored the question "How can Maricopa County be improved in the decades ahead?" Respondents posted text, pictures, and/or videos that captured their ideas regarding the future of the county.

- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):** Composed of County officials, representatives from governmental agencies, professionals from housing and economic development associations, and regional service providers, the TAC met routinely throughout the Plan development process to provide technical expertise and assist in shaping plan recommendations.

All meetings were facilitated by County staff or project consultants. They guided activities, engaged in personal conversations with participants, and answered questions about the planning process.

What We Heard

The specific takeaways described in this section were summarized and tallied from multiple engagement events conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan process. Public input includes comments and activity entries from the virtual and in-person workshops; the project website and resident surveys; as well as input from the online collaborative mapping.

Residents want to see the Comprehensive Plan focus on:

- Preserve both natural and rural landscapes – Prioritize protecting open spaces, desert ecosystems, and maintaining scenic rural landscapes.
- Expand access to recreational lands and opportunities – Increase parks, trails, and outdoor spaces to promote health, wellness, and accessibility for all.
- Encourage high-quality development – Promote development that is aligned with community values.
- Protect the regional water supply – Foster water conservation, proactive management, and infrastructure for long-term supply security.
- Support the improvement of safety coverage and response times – Enhancing emergency response times and coordination across urban and rural areas.
- Continue business environment for economic opportunities – Support local businesses and attracting investments for industry and job growth.



Guiding Themes & Desired Outcomes

Based on the results of engagement activities and conversations with the community, three guiding themes emerged as the top outcomes desired from the Comprehensive Plan.

These guiding themes and desired outcomes are integrated throughout the Comprehensive Plan and serve as the overlapping foundation for its collective goals and policies. Brief reminders are provided in each chapter to convey how these community-driven priorities were translated into interconnected strategies. As these themes are closely interrelated, it is important to recognize they are intended to be viewed as being equal in weight and are not listed in any particular order of importance.

Opportunity



Where are we today...

Maricopa County is one of the fastest growing places in the nation. Quality of life investments, emerging industries, and comfortable weather patterns have resulted in many community benefits that have made the County quite attractive to residents and businesses seeking to settle and thrive here.

Residents recognize these significant assets create a unique character to the County and establish a cherished built and natural environment. However, residents are increasingly concerned that uncontrolled growth will not only negatively impact currently available opportunities but also hinder the ability to leave the County better for future residents who will make Maricopa County their home.

Where are we going...

The Comprehensive Plan visualizes a County where the unique needs of the varying population groups in the County are strategically met by the ability to provide local, affordable options for housing, efficient transportation systems, and robust industry. Ultimately, aiming for initiatives that protect the County's established prominence will also lead to the continued enjoyment of the varying lifestyles that exist across the County. In turn, future residents can then protect and contribute to the endurance of what the County has to offer.

Stewardship



Where are we today...

Maricopa County uses the best available information to protect, enhance, and integrate new development to reduce environmental impacts and preserve the recognized special importance of the County's natural systems and open spaces.

When thinking about the future and growth in general, the community consistently identified the protection of natural open spaces, farms, and parks as one of the most important opportunities and one of the most important challenges the County faces as it plans for the next decade and beyond. This prevalent focus is further supported as the community identified the limited availability of water and poor air quality as some of their biggest concerns related to growth and development in the County.

Where are we going...

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes residents' strong desire to protect natural open space, enhance recreation areas and activities, and promote local food production to support the livability and prosperity of the region. Within this context, anticipated population growth will also require the region to evaluate and identify long-term water management practices, alternative energy sources, and thoughtful land development policies and regulations. Furthermore, the region will need to sustain rural lands and their character by directing larger and higher concentrations of growth to municipalities.

Prosperity



Where are we today...

Maricopa County oversees a prosperous economy that features significant job growth and a multitude of industry sectors that offer a wide range of wages and career advancement. The County cultivates business development to purposefully enrich the community economically and socially so as to allow all residents better access to paths for economic growth.

Resident feedback expressed an appreciation for the unique experiences and employment options that draw people of all ages and interests to Maricopa County. However, the community desires to closely manage this prosperity to ensure the intensity and scale of non-residential development respects the surrounding character. There is greatest interest within the community to support the development of technology and healthcare-related industries. Furthermore, collected input showed strong support for ensuring growth pays for itself.

Where are we going...

The Comprehensive Plan assists in managing economic growth, particularly in municipal planning areas to ensure the infrastructure and utilities needed to support such growth are readily available.



The Comprehensive Plan in Context



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How Framework 2040 Relates to County Area Plans

The Comprehensive Plan outlines the overarching policies and expectations for development in Maricopa County’s unincorporated areas. However, given the vast size and variety of these areas, the Comprehensive Plan cannot feasibly address every local or site-specific issue or interest. To account for this fact, the County relies on its Area Plan Program to address localized unincorporated needs, priorities, and unique conditions.

Since 1997, Maricopa County has utilized Area Plans as more focused planning documents tailored to the distinct characteristics and issues of specific parts within the County that are expected to see increased growth. These could be related to community characteristics, topography, environmental context, special conditions, etc. Each Area Plan has been coordinated with the respective residents and stakeholders within the extent of the Area Plan to address local concerns. While able to be implemented individually, each Area Plan also supports and works in concert with the overarching vision of the **Framework 2040** Comprehensive Plan. Maricopa County has eight active Area Plans, which vary in size, scope, and location to reflect the distinctive communities they serve. These eight Area Plans are:

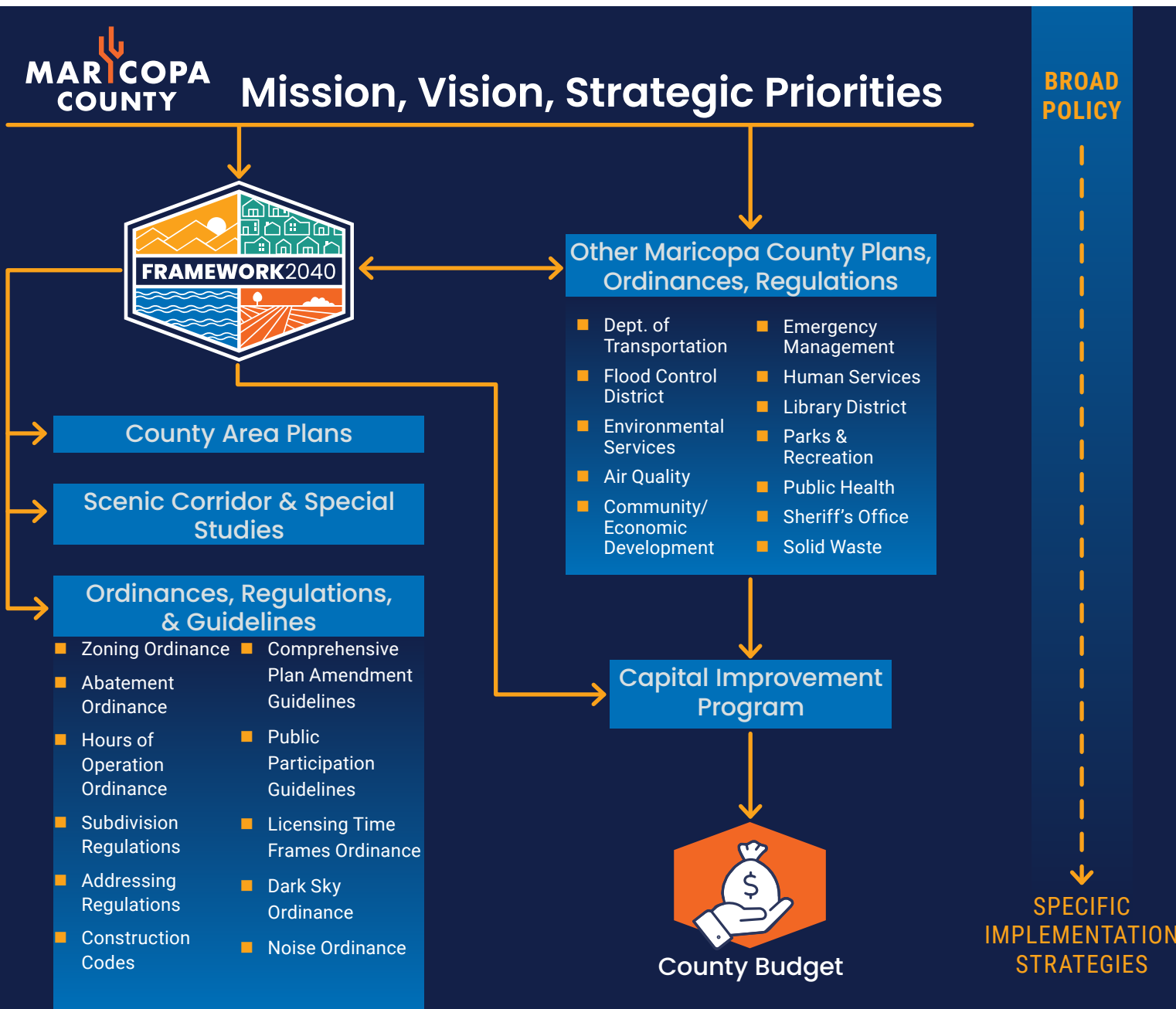
- Daisy Mountain/New River Area Plan
- Goldfield Area Plan
- Old U.S. Highway 80 Area Plan
- Rainbow Valley Area Plan
- Rio Verde Foothills Area Plan
- State Route 85 Area Plan
- Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan
- White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan

As Area Plans reflect the structure of the Comprehensive Plan, they each include goals and policies, strategies and a future land use map, tailored for the individual areas.

How Framework 2040 Relates to Other Plans, Ordinances, & Regulations

The Comprehensive Plan addresses future growth, but there are other County plans, ordinances, and regulations that influence development. **Figure 1** shows how the Plan fits with these and within overall county operations.

Figure 1. Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan Hierarchy



Relating to Other Jurisdictions' Plans

An important feature of this Comprehensive Plan is how it considers other jurisdictions' plans for future growth. This is challenging given that the federal and state government, as well as the many cities, towns and Native American communities all manage development in certain areas. Despite this challenge Maricopa County coordinates with these jurisdictions where practical to ensure consistent growth patterns. The following is how this coordination occurs.

Municipal General Plans

Arizona cities and towns have general plans for their respective jurisdictions, and it is common for these plans to extend into unincorporated areas that may someday be annexed. Maricopa County recognizes these plans and the need to coordinate planning with municipalities, in particular for County Islands to obtain assurance of annexation when necessary. Maricopa County will evaluate development proposals for alignment with municipal comprehensive or general plans when located within their planning boundary. Maricopa County will provide written notice of all entitlement actions requiring a public hearing to all municipalities within 3 miles of the boundaries of an entitlement proposal, and include municipality comments in staff report attachments. However, until land is annexed Maricopa County retains planning authority.

Arizona State Land Department

State law requires the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) to develop long-term plans for certain Trust lands under their management. Maricopa County has many parcels of Trust land within its jurisdiction, but not all of them have been included in an ASLD Conceptual Plan. Where they have been included in an ASLD Conceptual Plan, Maricopa County must cooperate with the ASLD to integrate planned lands into its own Comprehensive Plan or Area Plans where appropriate. Further, in accordance with ARS § 11-804.E, any Trust Land designated as open space, recreation, conservation, or agriculture within a County plan shall have a default minimum development density of one dwelling unit/acre, Maricopa County will continue coordinating with the ASLD on strategies that enhance value to the Trust and in alignment with the County Comprehensive Plan.

Federal Government

Maricopa County includes a lot of federally managed land including the Tonto National Forest, Barry M. Goldwater Range, Sonoran Desert National Monument, and several wilderness and wildlife areas. The federal government prepares plans for these areas which are generally off-limits to development but instead are managed for a specific purpose such as scenic, cultural, and recreational benefits or national priority. Maricopa County reaffirms its commitment to coordinate with federal agencies, especially in areas adjacent to federal land, to help avoid potentially adverse impacts from new development.

Native American Communities

Maricopa County also has several Native American Communities but given their sovereign nation status the Comprehensive Plan does not apply to such areas. Instead, each Community is responsible for preparing land management plans for the area within its jurisdictional limits. Maricopa County does engage in ongoing coordination with the Native American Communities for projects that are in close proximity to their jurisdictional limits.





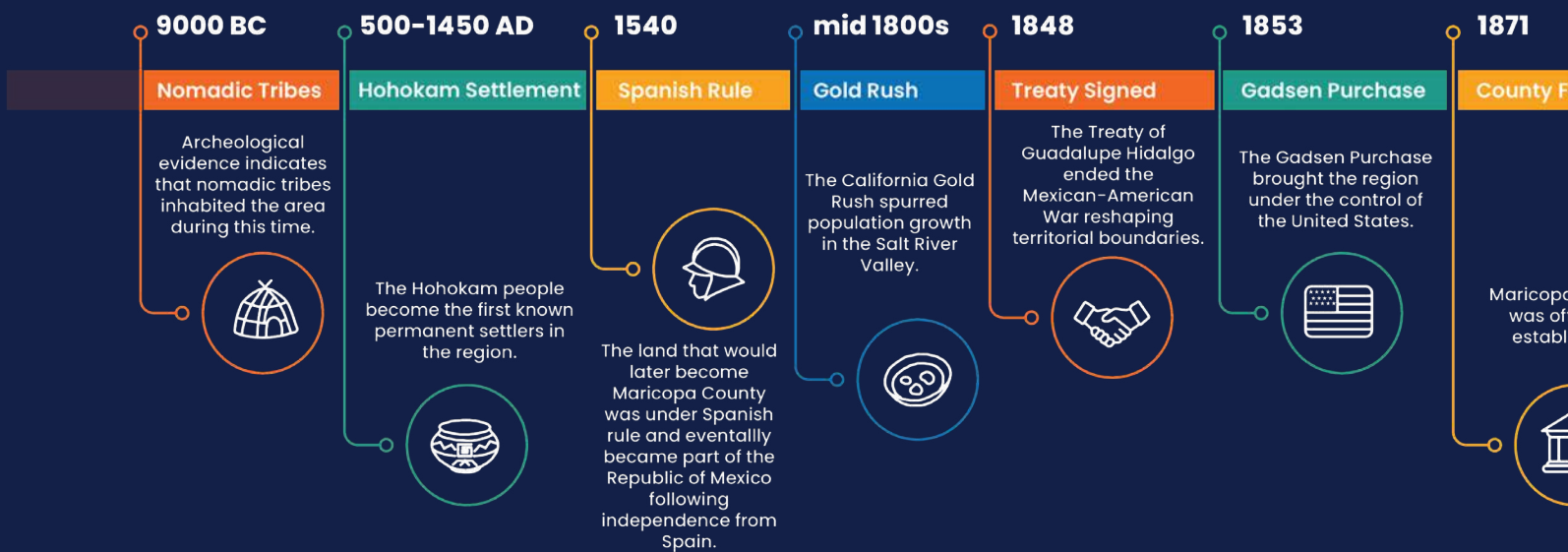
Maricopa County Overview



In This Chapter

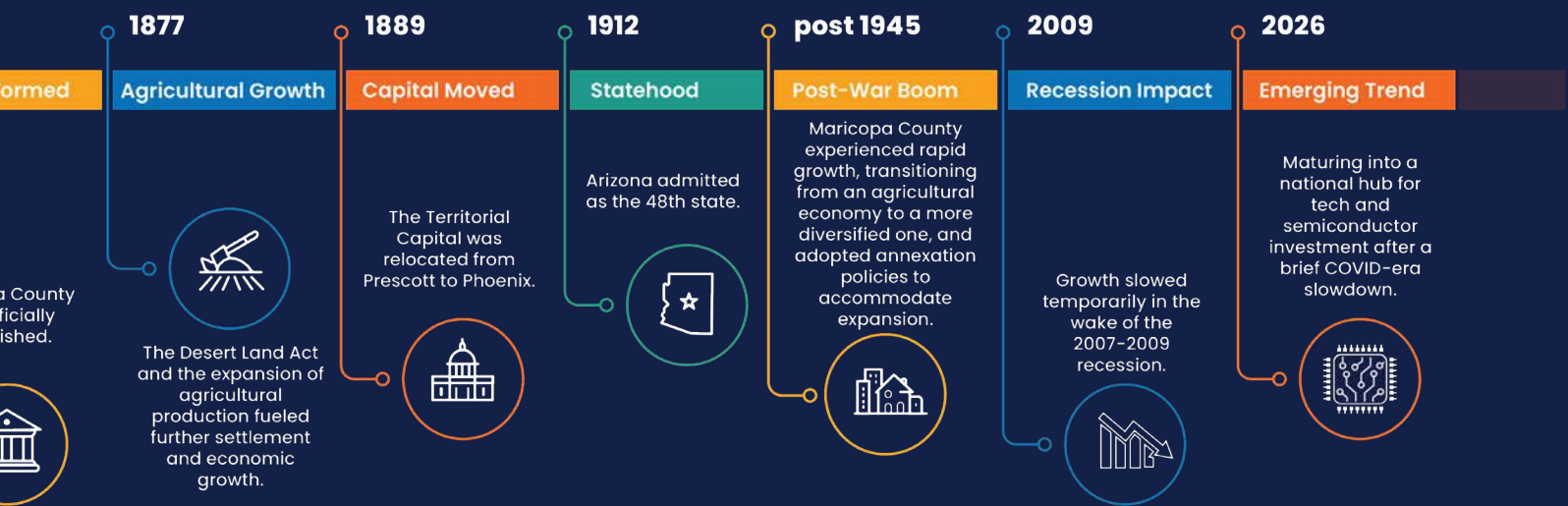
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History



Archaeological evidence indicates that Maricopa County was inhabited as far back as 9,000 B.C. by nomadic tribes that traveled and lived throughout the Americas. The first known permanent settlers were the Hohokam who occupied the area between approximately A.D. 500 and 1450. It is believed the Hohokam lived in progressively larger villages and harnessed the waters of the Salt and Gila Rivers by constructing extensive canal systems to grow and sustain annual crops; however, around the year 1300 the Hohokam began abandoning the region surrounding the Salt and Gila River Valleys for reasons that currently remain unknown. Many of the canals left behind by the Hohokam were used by later European and American settlers. From 1540 until 1821, the area that would become Maricopa County was under Spanish rule. It then became part of the Republic of Mexico when independence was declared from Spain.

The first permanent settlers of European descent arrived in the area in the early 1800s. It was not until the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s that the population of the Salt River Valley began to grow rapidly. The increasing presence of the U.S. Army also contributed to the area's growth. Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ending the Mexican-American War and the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, the region that would eventually become Maricopa County came under the control of the United States of America.



Maricopa County was officially formed in 1871. The Desert Land Act of 1877 and the expansion of agriculture production fueled further growth and additional settlement in the County. The Territorial Capital was moved in 1889 from Prescott to Maricopa County in Phoenix, which would continue as the state capital in 1912 when Arizona was admitted as the 48th state. Slow and steady growth characterized the County following statehood until World War II.

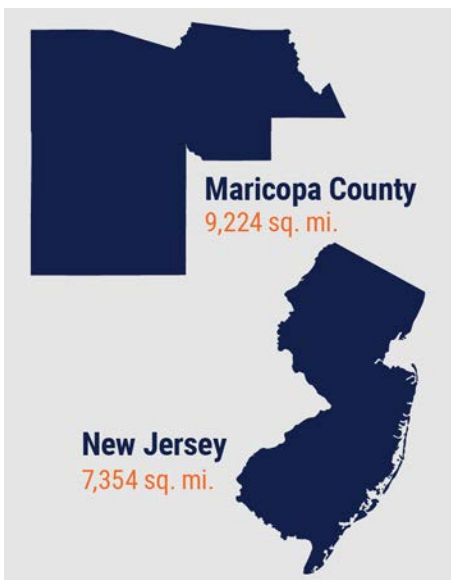
After the War, growth in Maricopa County accelerated rapidly due to industrial development, widespread use of automobiles and air conditioning that made the extreme heat of the desert summer tolerable for its new residents. The steady influx of residents has spurred rapid development in the County as it transitioned from an agricultural economy to a more diversified one, with industries such as electronics and manufacturing taking root.

The municipalities of the County adopted annexation policies in this timeframe, reducing the total amount of Maricopa County’s unincorporated land. The construction of freeways and other infrastructure projects supported these growth patterns. During this time, the County faced challenges, such as the aftermath of the recession of 2007 through 2009, which slowed growth temporarily. Following several years of slow economic recovery, Maricopa County has experienced increasing economic diversity and growth for most of the 2010s and the early 2020s with a noticeable pause in this trend as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2021. Today, Maricopa County is emerging as a national and international hub for semiconductor manufacturing and large-scale technology investment. Through all the development and growth of the past 80 years, Maricopa County has solidified its place as an exceptional place to live and one of the fastest growing counties in the country.

Maricopa County Profile

4th
MOST
POPULOUS
COUNTY IN
THE COUNTRY

LAND
AREA
GREATER
THAN **8**
STATES



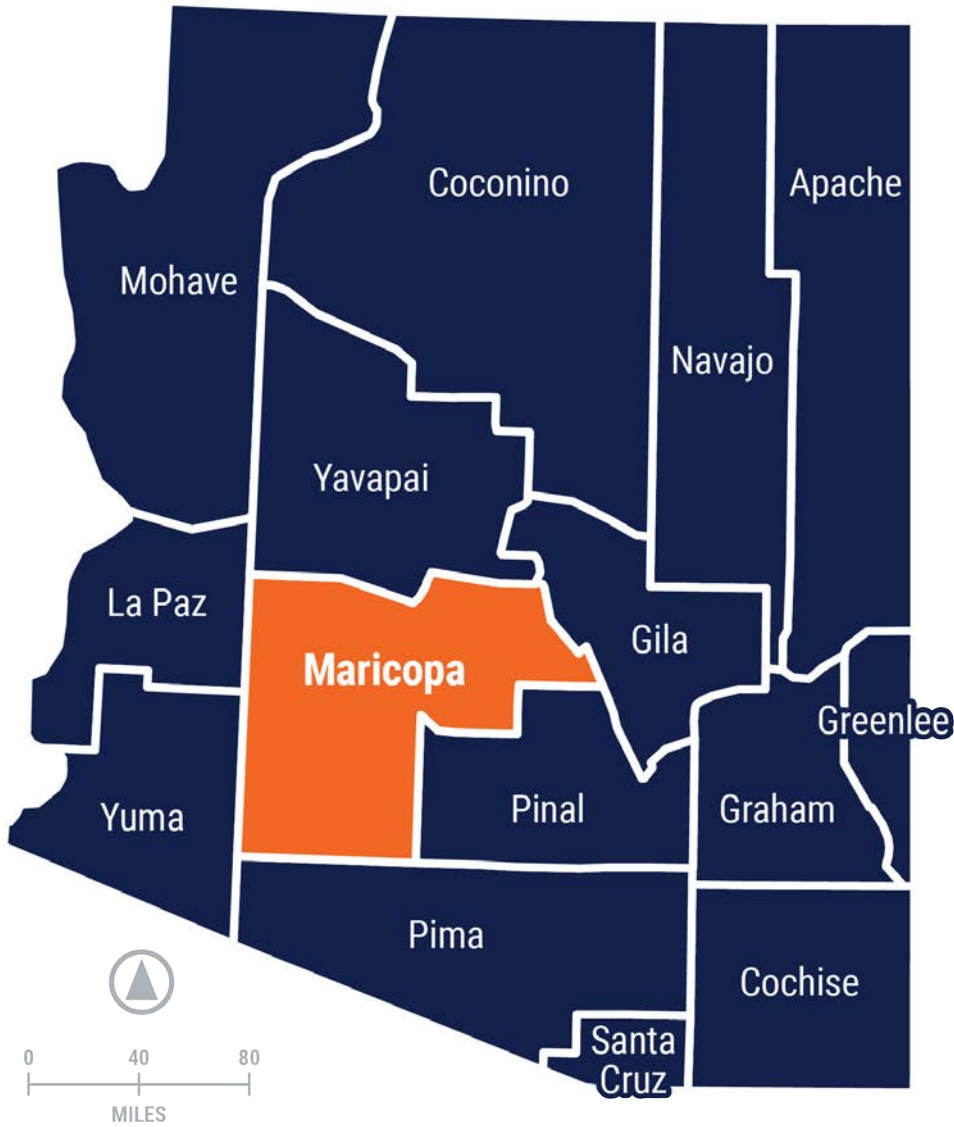
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Michael Baker International Analysis, 2026

Regional Context

Located in the south-central part of Arizona as seen in **Map 1**, Maricopa County is neighbored by Yavapai County to the north, Gila County to the east, Pinal and Pima Counties to the south, and La Paz and Yuma Counties to the west. Maricopa County's seat is the City of Phoenix, which also serves as the state capital of Arizona. It is the most populous city in the state and the fifth-most populous city in the United States (U.S.). Maricopa County is notably the largest county in the nation in terms of area in which the capital city of the state sits. The County includes 23 other municipalities within its boundaries. There are several other communities that are unincorporated, comprising the spectrum of rural and urban development patterns. These unincorporated areas are under the direct jurisdiction of Maricopa County. There are also four Native American communities within the boundaries of the County, which are the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Maricopa County is Arizona's most populous county. As of the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS), the entire County had a population of 4,430,871, accounting for about 62% of the State of Arizona's total population. It has the fourth largest population residing within its boundaries compared to the other counties and county equivalents in the country. In terms of area, Maricopa County encompasses 9,224 square miles of land, making it the 15th largest county by area in the country and larger than eight individual states in total land area. The County stretches 132 miles from west to east and 103 miles from north to south with diverse geography including parts of the Sonoran Desert and the Tonto National Forest. Of the 14 counties in the country with a larger area than Maricopa County, only one of those counties has a population over two million residing within its boundaries. Maricopa County, therefore, operates in a unique position as a large county by area combined with a large population within its area of jurisdiction.

▶ **Map 1. Regional Context**



**Maricopa County
by the Numbers**

4,430,871

TOTAL POPULATION

62%

SHARE OF ARIZONA'S
POPULATION

9,224

Square Miles

TOTAL LAND AREA

15th

LARGEST COUNTY BY AREA
IN THE U.S.A.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Michael Baker International Analysis, 2026

Area of Jurisdiction

While the total area within the boundaries of Maricopa County is 9,224 square miles, the area of jurisdiction for the Comprehensive Plan is comprised of the 6,596.53 square miles, or 4,221,777 acres, of unincorporated land in Maricopa County. This means that Maricopa County's area of jurisdiction of unincorporated land is about 71.51% of the total land within the County's boundaries. Conversely, 23.90% of the total land within the limits of Maricopa County is under the jurisdiction of an incorporated municipality, and 4.59% of the total land is under the jurisdiction of one of the four Native American communities within the County's limits, which are the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and the Tohono O'odham Nation. **Map 2** shows the distinction between the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County, as well as the location of the Native American communities. As of 2022, the total population estimated to live in Maricopa County's area of jurisdiction is 308,633 (ACS 2022).

Geography

The County's many mountains contrast with its relatively low desert areas, evidenced by elevations that range from approximately 300 feet above sea level near Gila Bend to over 7,600 feet in the Four Peaks Wilderness Area. Higher elevations in northeast and some mountains of central, southern and western Maricopa County contain small woodlands and forests, while lower elevations include desert scrub, saguaro and other cactus species. However, the most diverse native and non-native plant and animal species are found along the county's many rivers, streams and washes.

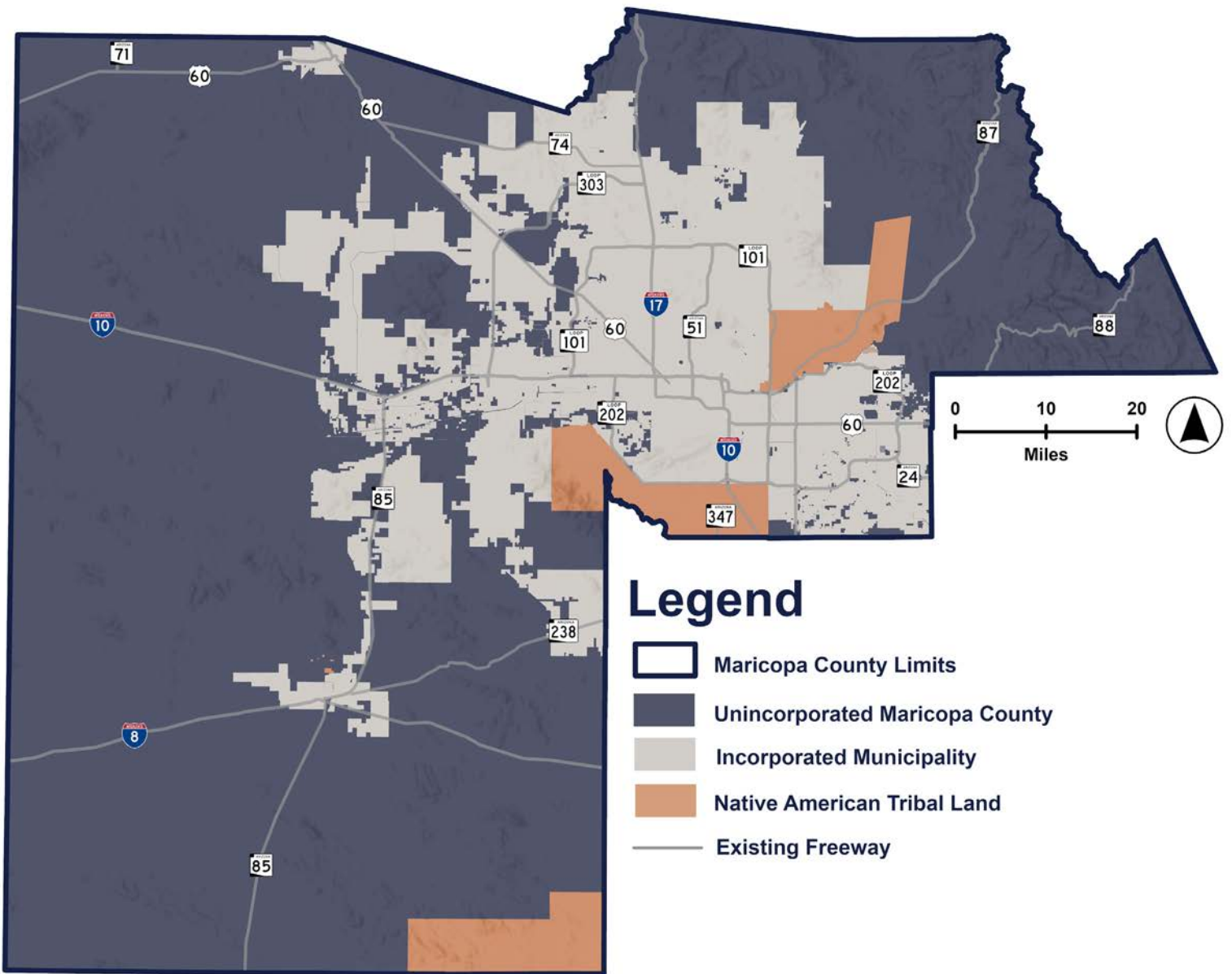
Climate

Located within the Sonoran Desert, Maricopa County experiences a subtropical desert climate. Temperatures in the County can vary significantly due to the contrasts in elevation. Summer temperatures in lower desert areas regularly exceed 110°F. However, winter temperatures in higher mountain elevations can fall well below freezing (32°F) and significant snowfall may occur.

Water

Due to its dry climate and desert environment, residents in municipalities and unincorporated Maricopa County cannot solely rely on surface water within the County limits to sustain the levels of growth and development that have persisted since the mid-20th century. Originating as runoff from snow melt in higher elevations to the north, the Salt and Verde Rivers were the initial sources of surface water in the County and continue to be important sources today. The second noteworthy source of surface water is the water that is supplied by the approximately 336-mile Central Arizona Project (CAP) Canal, bringing about 1.5 million acre-feet of water from the Colorado River to Pima, Pinal and Maricopa Counties. Yet even with multiple surface water sources, periodically persistent droughts in the Colorado River basin mixed together with population growth and high water-use industrial developments require strategies to ensure dependable, long-term supplies of groundwater. Most water conservation efforts are overseen by the Arizona Department of Water Resources including the Active Management Area (AMA) program and the Arizona Water Banking Authority that regulates groundwater pumping to control stress on aquifers. These and other state and local efforts work toward ensuring safe and reliable water supplies for future population growth and to provide for the needs of existing residents.

▶ **Map 2. Maricopa County Area of Jurisdiction**



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

71.51%

This percentage represents the portion of total land within Maricopa County's boundaries that constitutes the County's area of jurisdiction of unincorporated land.

Land Ownership

Data for land ownership is managed and presented by the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) surface land management program which administers federal, state, and private land ownership across the country. This data was augmented by recent updates to State Trust Land from the ASLD. Land ownership (Table 2) within the Maricopa County area of jurisdiction is predominantly held by five classifications of landowners. The top five classifications are BLM, Military, Private, U.S. Forest Service, and State Trust land which together account for 98.4% of the ownership

of the total unincorporated land in Maricopa County. BLM comprises over 37.5% of the County’s land, with the land concentrated in the County’s western and southern areas. Military installations are the second most prominent landowner with the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, located in the southernmost extent of the County, accounting for 16.6% of the military land holdings in the County. Privately owned land accounts for 16.6% of unincorporated Maricopa County, at just under 1,100 square miles. The U.S. Forest Service owns 15.5% of the land in the area of jurisdiction, which

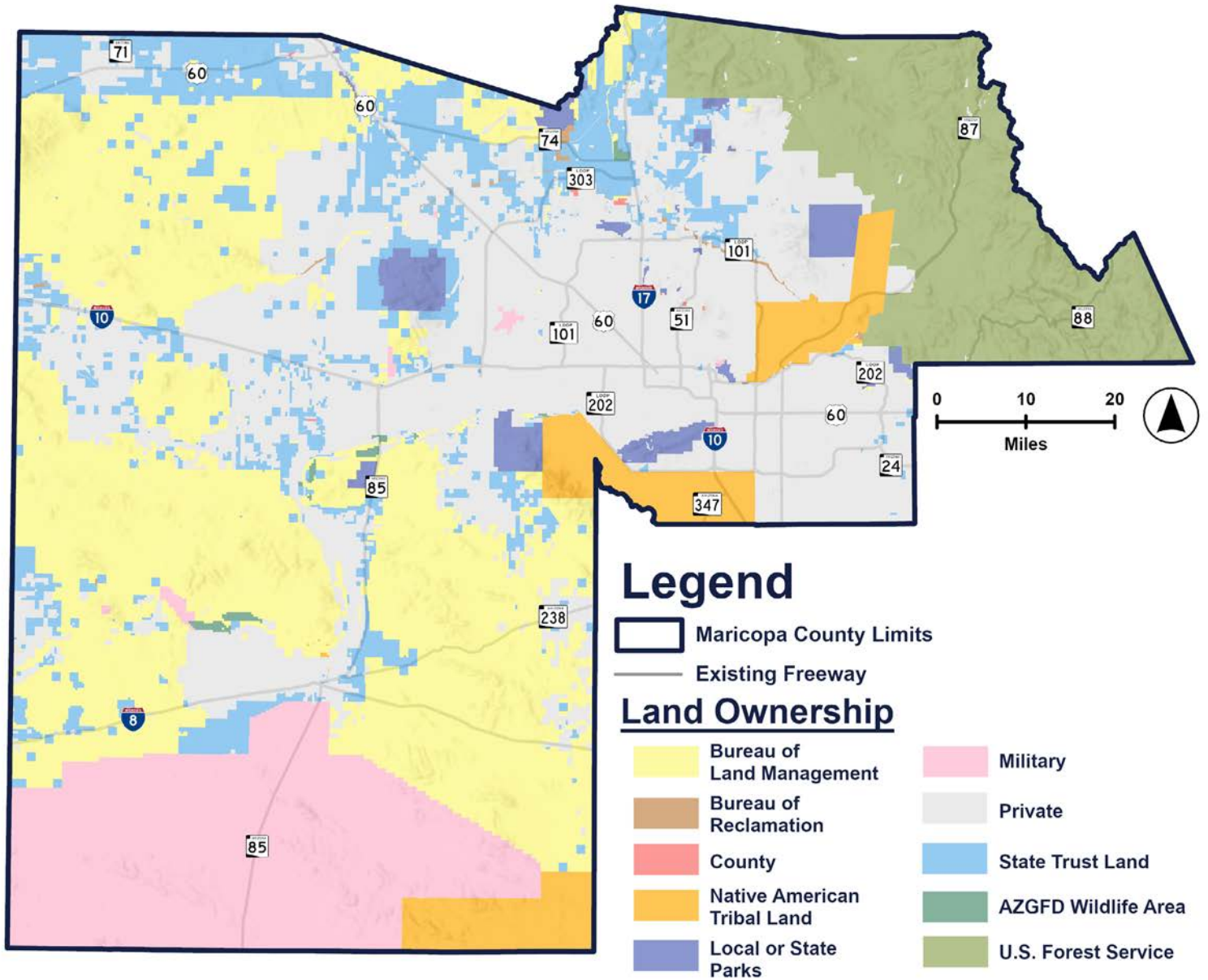
consists of the Tonto National Forest located in the entirety of northeastern Maricopa County. State Trust Land, managed by the ASLD, encompasses 11.5% of the unincorporated area at 758 square miles. Map 3 displays the locations of the land ownership categories in the area of jurisdiction of Maricopa County. While Native American Communities are not part of the County’s area of jurisdiction, it is noteworthy to mention that there are 423.88 square miles of tribal land within the boundaries of Maricopa County.

Table 2. Land Ownership

Land Ownership	Percent of Total Land	Square Miles
Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) Wildlife Area	0.145%	9.56
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	37.530%	2,475.66
Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)	0.029%	1.91
County	0.004%	0.26
Military	17.192%	1,134.09
Private	16.624%	1,096.60
Regional/County Park	1.465%	96.63
State Trust Land	11.490%	757.95
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)	15.521%	1,023.83
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	0.001%	0.04
TOTAL	100.000%	6,596.53
Native American Tribal Land	---	423.88

Source: Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department

Map 3. Land Ownership



Legend

Maricopa County Limits

Existing Freeway

Land Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- County
- Native American Tribal Land
- Local or State Parks
- Military
- Private
- State Trust Land
- AZGFD Wildlife Area
- U.S. Forest Service

Source: Bureau of Land Management, 2025; Arizona State Land Department, 2025

37.53%

This percentage represents the portion of County land that is owned by the Bureau of Land Management

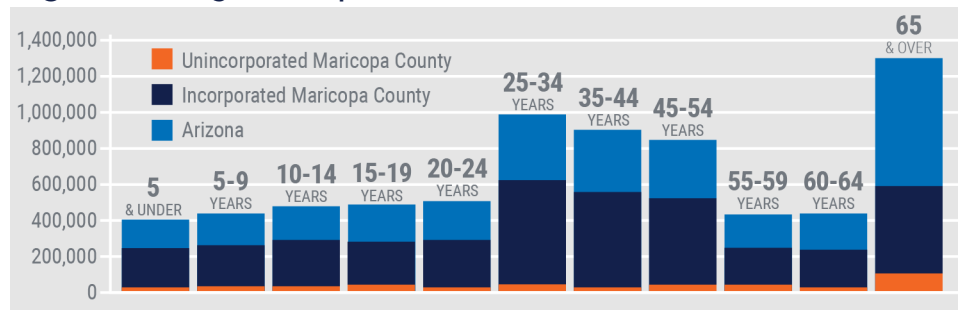
Maricopa County Demographics

As mentioned previously, the total population estimated to live in Maricopa County’s area of jurisdiction according to 2022 is 308,633. Further population data breakdowns follow below.

Age Groups

The median age in Maricopa County is 37.1, which is lower than the median age for the State. Compared to both the incorporated area of the County and Arizona overall, unincorporated Maricopa County follows a similar trend for the distribution of the population by age groups until the 65 and older group. The three jurisdictions have smaller and relatively even distributions for the under 25 age groups and the 55-65 age groups. Slight increases in distribution are seen in the early adulthood and middle age range from 25-54. Like Arizona, unincorporated Maricopa County has a larger number of residents over the age of 65 than the other age groups as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2. Age Groups



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Generational Change

The composition of growth in unincorporated Maricopa County shows the percentage of the population that is comprised of the Baby Boomer generation (born 1946 to 1964) and Millennial generation (born 1980 to 1994) grew by 7% and 4% respectively from 2010 to 2022. The Alpha generation (born 2010 to 2024) also emerged over this period and consists of approximately 14% of the population in unincorporated Maricopa County. **Figure 3** shows this shift over the twelve-year period from 2010 to 2022 of generations living in unincorporated Maricopa County.

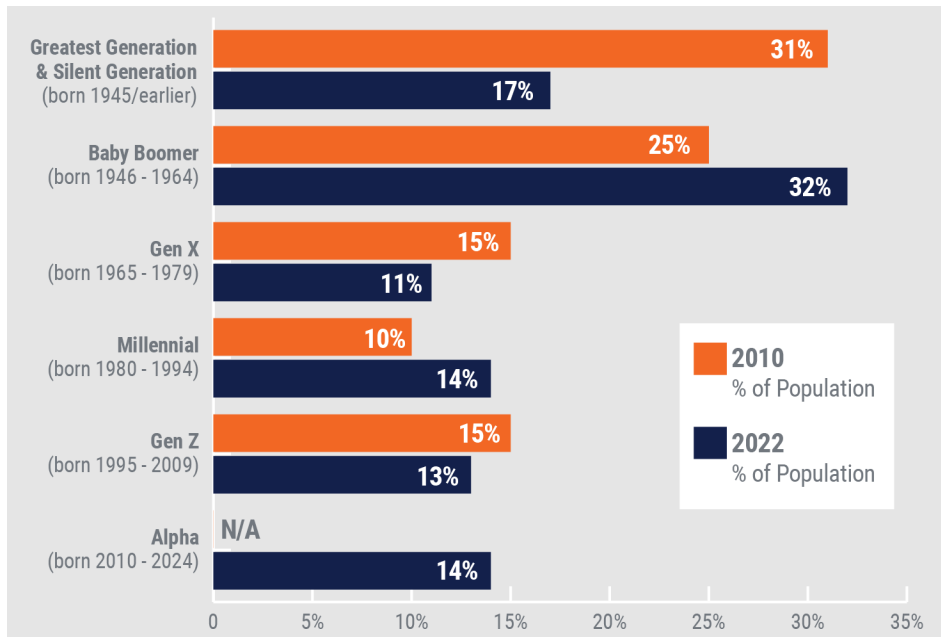
The reason for this generational shift is likely due to several factors. The

Baby Boomer generation now has the highest number of residents in unincorporated areas, taking the place that the Greatest and Silent Generation cohorts held in 2010. This makes sense as the youngest members of the Baby Boomers are now older than the minimum 55-year age requirement for Sun City, Sun City West, and other large age-restricted communities located throughout unincorporated Maricopa County. Millennials surpassed the Gen X generation group in the 2022 data. Housing affordability, while significantly lessened since 2020, plays a part of the Millennial generation increase as the median home value within unincorporated Maricopa County is lower when

compared to equivalent housing types in municipalities located within the County.

The generational composition of the County significantly impacts community habits and needs by driving demand for more focused services like healthcare, transportation, housing, social activities, and recreation choices, while also potentially changing the overall pace and character of an area due to a larger population of residents with different priorities and lifestyle choices.

Figure 3. Generational Change



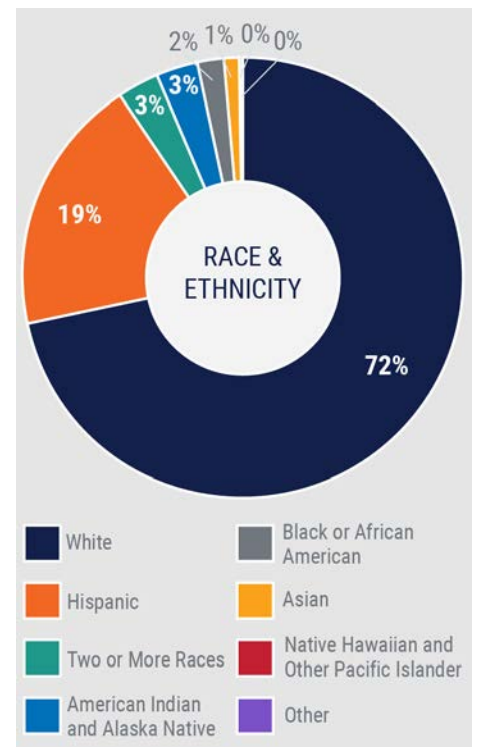
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity play a crucial role in developing this Comprehensive Plan for several reasons. Reviewing these factors is essential to ensure an accessible engagement and decision-making process. Additionally, cultural differences, often rooted in racial and ethnic backgrounds, impact how people use and view public infrastructure and services as well as the natural landscape.

As seen in **Figure 4**, 72% of the unincorporated Maricopa County population identifies as white, which is higher than Maricopa County and the State. Additionally, 19% of the population identify as having Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, meaning they are of Spanish descent with roots in Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other counties with Spanish cultural influences. This percentage is lower than Maricopa County as a whole and the State. By combining ethnicity and race in one figure rather than two, a more comprehensive overview of the demographic composition of a population is provided.

Figure 4. Race and Ethnicity in Unincorporated Maricopa County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Maricopa County Trends

Historic Population Growth

Maricopa County experienced significant population growth in recent decades, befitting its status as one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. This growth has shaped the County’s development, with recent trends between 1990 and 2022 highlighting important shifts in both unincorporated and incorporated areas. In 1990, the unincorporated areas had 170,246 residents, while incorporated areas had nearly 1.95

million. Over the following decades, unincorporated areas saw steady growth, most notably growing at a rate of 34.8% between 2000 and 2010 as seen in **Table 3**. Growth slowed in recent years, with only a 0.4% increase in the population of unincorporated areas from 2020 to 2022. This deceleration can likely be attributed to a brief slowdown in growth in 2020 in the initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since 2022,

however, Maricopa County returned to a period of growth. However, recent rapid increases in the cost of land and housing have had a tempering effect on the County’s growth in the near-term compared to the growth rates seen in the 21st century. These changing population patterns emphasize the needs for strategic planning to meet the county’s future needs.

Future Population Projections

As shown in **Figure 5** the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) projects unincorporated Maricopa County to approach the 400,000-resident threshold by 2030. MAG estimates that unincorporated Maricopa County will reach a population of 371,800 by 2030, and it will continue to grow to 478,500 in 2040, 566,600 in 2050 and 645,800 in 2060. This means that by 2040, MAG is projecting that the population for unincorporated Maricopa County will increase by 55%, while the County’s

incorporated population growth rate is projected to increase by 29% at the same horizon year.

Figure 6 shows the estimated population growth from MAG’s population projections for both unincorporated and incorporated Maricopa County through 2060 in ten-year increments. The figure shows MAG does project that incorporated Maricopa County will have a higher growth rate over the coming decades than the unincorporated parts of the

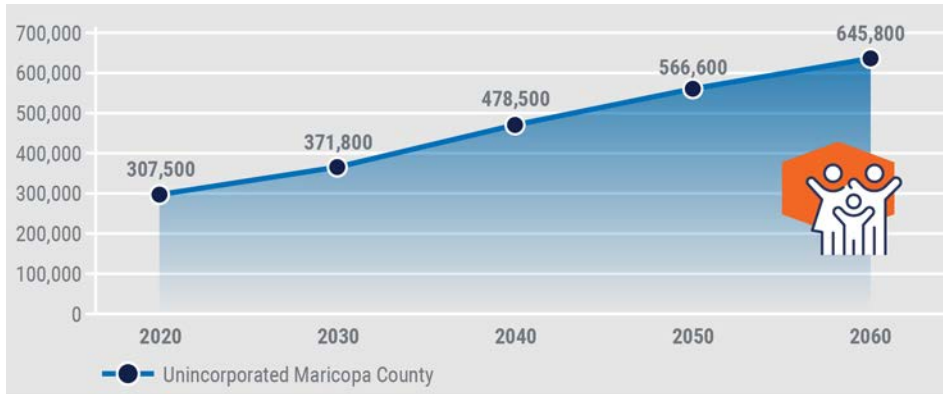
County. This difference in anticipated growth rates is reasonable given that rapid growth areas (especially on the urban fringe of the County) are often annexed into an incorporated municipality, often receiving municipal services. Thus, the associated population growth in these areas is counted as part of the incorporated population and not as part of the population of the unincorporated areas of Maricopa County.

Table 3. Population Growth

Year	Incorporated Area	Incorporated Area Growth Rate	Unincorporated Area	Unincorporated Area Growth Rate
1990	1,951,675	-	170,426	-
2000	2,861,266	46.6%	210,883	23.7%
2010	3,532,875	23.5%	284,242	34.8%
2020	4,113,029	16.4%	307,539	8.2%
2022	4,122,238	0.2%	308,633	0.4%

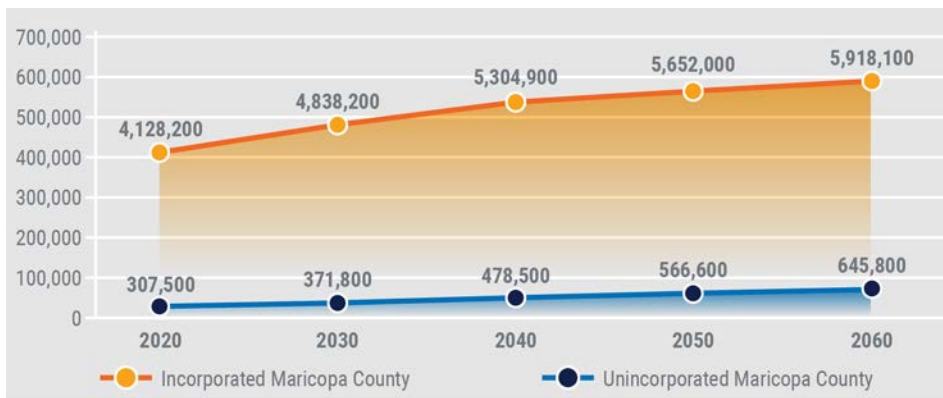
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census; 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5. Unincorporated Maricopa County Population Projection



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments, 2023 Socioeconomic Projections

Figure 6. Population Projection Comparison



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments, 2023 Socioeconomic Projections

Recent Growth

As Maricopa County plans for a projected 55% increase in its unincorporated population through 2040, it is anticipated that these current areas of growth as shown in **Map 4** will continue to develop, while other growth areas will emerge as new development takes place in currently undeveloped areas. However, it is also recognized that while some areas of the county should be planned for this new development, other areas should be preserved or protected or see little new development.

Between 1990 and 2010, much of the growth that occurred in unincorporated Maricopa County was focused in the eastern and northern parts of the County. When comparing the change in population in unincorporated Maricopa County from 2010 to 2022, the areas that experienced the highest population growth have shifted and are now predominantly located in the west valley as exhibited in **Map 4**.



Population Density and Annexation

Table 4 shows that since 2010, the county has lost over 65 square miles of unincorporated land to annexation into incorporated cities and towns across the valley. This reduction in land area, coupled with population growth, has caused the population density within unincorporated Maricopa County to increase from an average of 43 persons per square mile in 2010 to almost 47 persons per square mile in 2022.

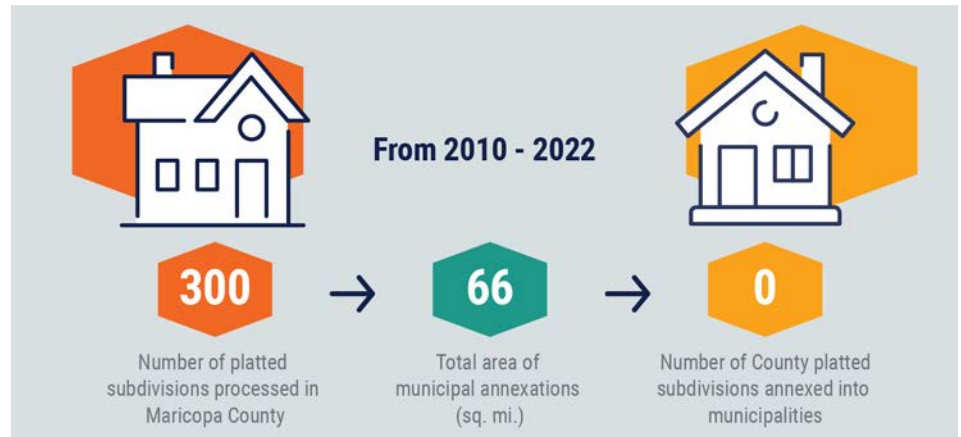
Table 4. Annexations of Unincorporated Maricopa County and Population Density

Year	Population	Unincorporated Area (sq. mi.)	Population Density (per/sq. mi.)
2010	284,242	6,662.16	43 people/sq. mi.
(Municipal Annexations)	-	65.63	-
2022	308,633	6,596.53	47 people/sq. mi.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

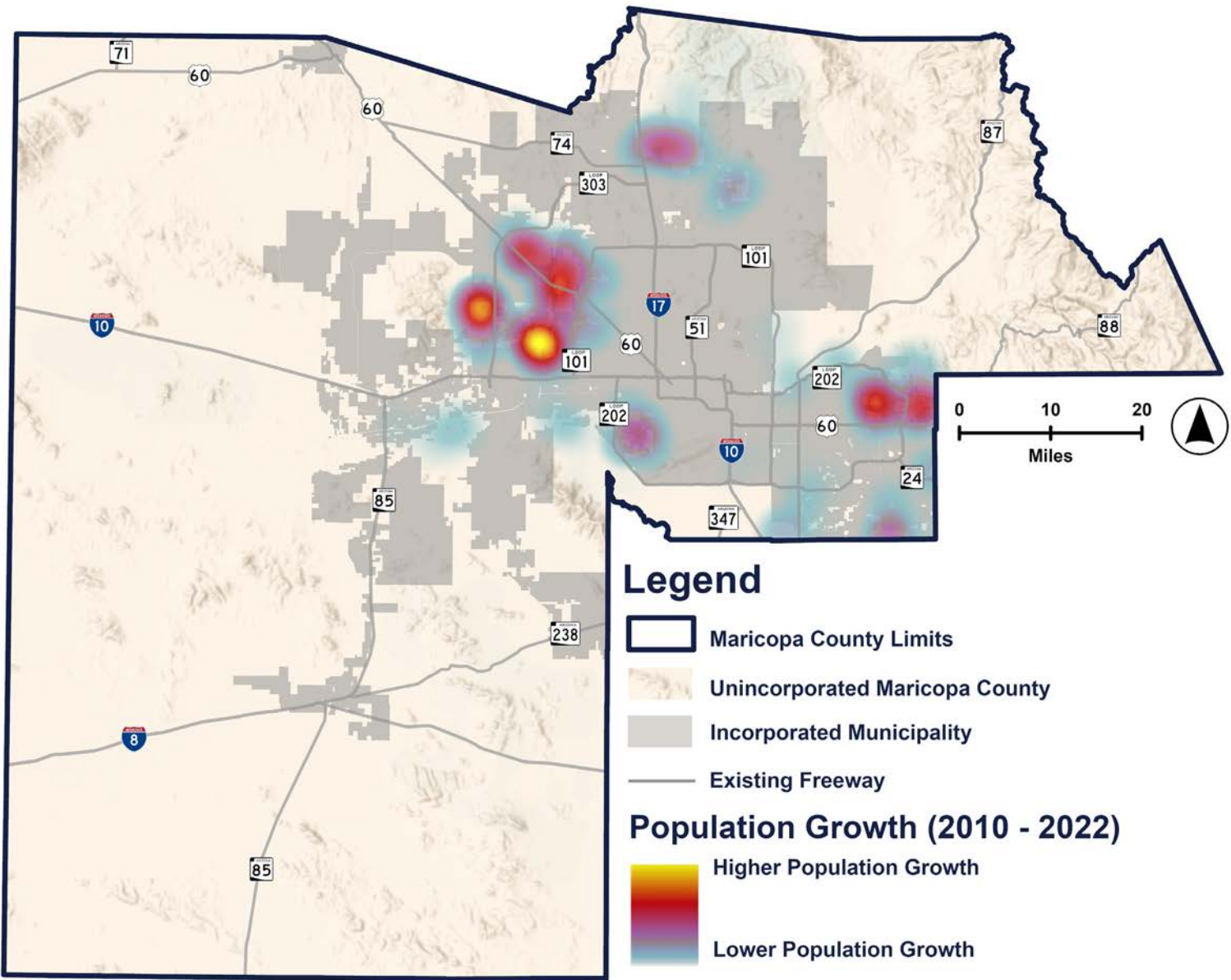
Recent Unincorporated Development and Annexation

Although the total unincorporated land in Maricopa County that has been annexed since 2010 amounted to over 42,000 acres, interestingly, all the subdivisions that were platted within these annexation acres were subdivided after annexation (i.e. they were subdivided once incorporated). Relatedly, none of the subdivisions developed in the County over this same period were annexed.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Map 4. Growth Trends in Unincorporated Maricopa County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Michael Baker International Analysis, 2026

55%

The percentage increase of population in unincorporated Maricopa County by 2040 as projected by the Maricopa Association of Governments.



Land Use





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The Land Use element maintains that sensible, functional, balanced, fiscally efficient, and economically viable land use patterns are important priorities. This element also reinforces the County’s support for its area plan program and includes updated land use categories.

Introduction

Land use planning is a foundational component of the Comprehensive Plan, shaping the County’s vision for responsible growth and development. Through strategic goals and policies, the Land Use element promotes development that is both high-quality and conscious of the desire to preserve the natural desert landscape, reflecting the values of unincorporated communities. The Land Use element also emphasizes the importance of aligning growth with available infrastructure and public services, ensuring that new development enhances connectivity, efficiency, and community vitality. By guiding orderly expansion and minimizing land use conflicts, the Comprehensive Plan reinforces a commitment to pursue prosperity, stewardship, and a prosperous future of opportunity for all residents in unincorporated Maricopa County.

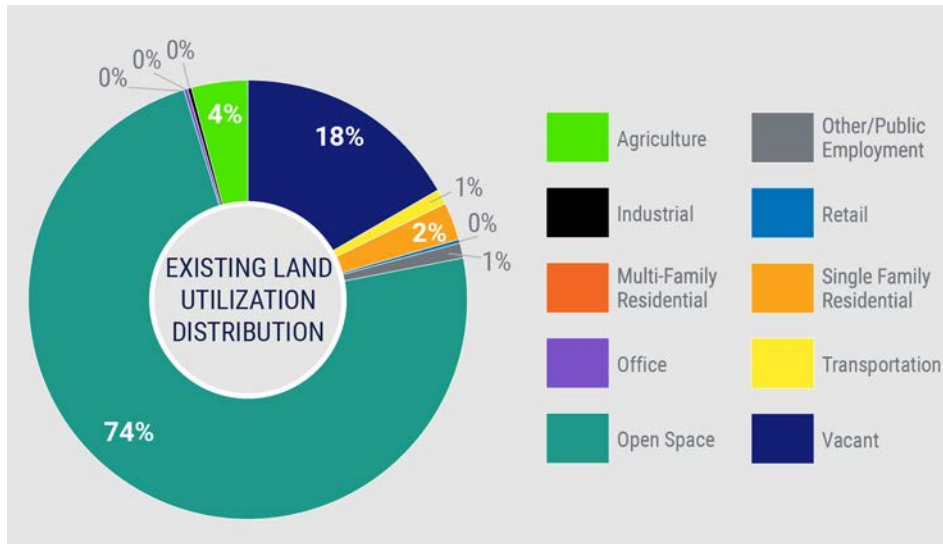
The existing land utilization patterns within Maricopa County’s jurisdiction are the starting line for envisioning future growth and development. By analyzing current conditions, the County can better identify unincorporated areas with the greatest potential for expansion, redevelopment, or preservation. This understanding informs strategic planning efforts, ensuring that future land use decisions are both context-sensitive and aligned with long-term community goals.

The Maricopa Association of Governments collects and manages existing land utilization data as part of its socioeconomic modeling efforts. This data captures how land within Maricopa County is currently being utilized. It is distinctly different from a zoning map which determines how a specific property can be developed today, or a future land use plan which identifies how land may be developed in the future. The Existing Land Utilization database was created by MAG based on an analysis of Maricopa County Assessor parcels, aerial photo interpretation, Arizona State Land data, MAG databases, and input from MAG member agencies. This data receives final approval by the Population Technical Advisory Committee and then is released for public use.

Figure 7 shows how existing land utilizations are distributed within the unincorporated area of Maricopa County, and **Map 5** illustrates where these land utilizations are located. **Table 5** provides a more detailed breakdown of the percentage share and the total square mileage of each existing land utilization category in the County’s area of jurisdiction.

The most prevalent existing land utilization within unincorporated Maricopa County is Open Space, which makes up 73.5% of the area, amounting to over 4,850 square miles. The significant amount of current

Figure 7. Existing Land Utilization Distribution



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments, 2026

73.5%
*The most prevalent existing land utilization in unincorporated Maricopa County is **Open Space**, making up over 4,850 square miles of the area.*

Open Space is understandable given the overall size of the County and the fact that the Tonto National Forest, Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, BLM land holdings, State Trust Land, and County regional parks are included in this total. While some of the Open Space areas are parks and recreation areas, it is important to point out that MAG’s classification of these noted areas as Open Space refers to their protected nature from development owing to their land ownership. MAG’s Open Space classification should not be implied to indicate any use of these noted areas for parkland or recreation or prohibiting landowners from exercising their property rights.

Vacant land (land that is undeveloped, but is not managed or preserved as open space) is the next most common land utilization in the County with about 1,198 square miles making up 18.2% of the total. Both Open Space and Vacant land account for 91.7% of the existing land utilizations in unincorporated Maricopa County. The next three most prevalent land utilizations in terms

of percentage share are Agriculture, Single-Family Residential, and Other/Public Employment totaling together 7.4% of the County’s area of jurisdiction. When analyzing the County as a whole, these five categories (open space, vacant land, agriculture, single-family residential, and other/public employment) amount to 99.1% of the existing land utilizations in Maricopa County. Most of the Single-Family Residential land utilizations are located adjacent to or near incorporated municipalities or along prominent highways. Other/Public Employment land utilizations are often found in close proximity to Single-Family Residential utilizations. The Other/Public Employment category includes, but is not limited to, large employers, government buildings, utilities, power plants, churches/places of worship, and aggregate land utilizations. Open Space, Vacant Land, and Agriculture land utilizations tend to be on the periphery of the County’s border and extend inward toward the populated areas.

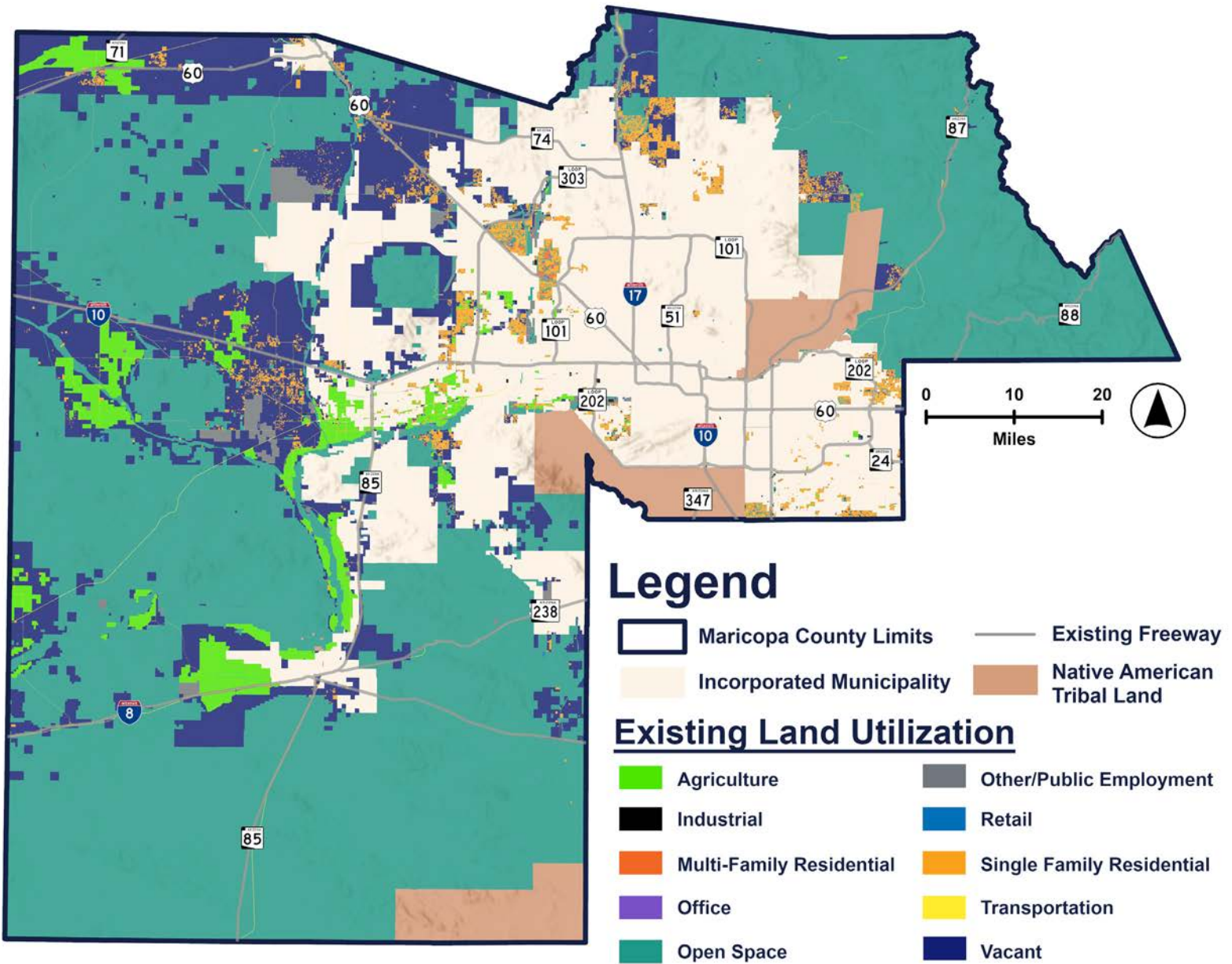
Table 5. Existing Land Utilization in Unincorporated Maricopa County

Existing Land Utilization	Percent of Total Land	Square Miles
Agriculture	4.17%	292.447
Industrial	0.05%	3.628
Multi-Family Residential	0.06%	4.421
Office	0.01%	0.607
Open Space	73.83%	5,182.142
Other/Public Employment	1.14%	80.29
Retail	0.11%	7.528
Single-Family Residential	2.48%	173.847
Transportation	0.68%	47.494
Vacant	17.47%	1,226.293
TOTAL	100.00%	6,596.527

Source: Maricopa Association of Governments, 2026



▶ **Map 5. Existing Land Utilization Map**



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments, 2026

91.7%

Open Space and Vacant land collectively account for 91.7% of the existing land utilizations in unincorporated Maricopa County.

Planning Considerations

Area Plan Program

Maricopa County's Area Plan Program has proved to be effective at addressing local concerns in the unincorporated area. Each Area Plan includes unique policies, a future land use map, and an implementation program. Although an Area Plan addresses local needs, they still support this Comprehensive Plan and will continue to be an important part of the County's future strategy.

In the past ten years, Maricopa County updated the Daisy Mountain/New River Area Plan in 2019 and the White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan in 2023. These updates accounted for significant growth, changes in development patterns, and adjustments to their individual plan limits as urban development continues and adjacent municipalities continue to expand their jurisdictions. **Map 6** shows the extents of the eight active Area Plans in Maricopa County and the following list orders by the year of their most recent update.

- White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan (2023)
- Daisy Mountain/New River Area Plan (2019)
- Goldfield Area Plan (2007)
- Old U.S. Highway 80 Area Plan (2007)
- Rio Verde Foothills Area Plan (2005)
- Rainbow Valley Area Plan (2003)
- State Route 85 Area Plan (2003)
- Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan (2000)

Maricopa County supports updating the individual Area Plans when significant shifts are recognized including, but not limited to, rapid land use changes, rising development pressures, or projected surges in population and employment. Updates are also encouraged when the planning for major infrastructure

projects, such as freeways, transit corridors, or energy facilities, is underway. An unincorporated community within the limits of an Area Plan limits or the Board of Supervisors may also submit a formal request to consider commencing an update of an established Area Plan.

Public participation is central to planning practiced at Maricopa County. An Area Plan is only beneficial and effective with public engagement and input. Any new or amended Area Plan(s) must undergo a robust public engagement process to ensure that the final plan reflects the value, priorities, and aspirations of the unincorporated community that it serves.

Division of Area Plans

The County can support dividing the established Area Plan into two or more separate plans if it is determined to be appropriate. To determine the need for dividing an Area Plan, the following conditions must be satisfied:

- A single established Area Plan covers portions of the unincorporated area that has distinct sub-regions with differing land use patterns, growth trajectories, or community identities;
- Public engagement or implementation of the individual plan is challenging due to the size or complexity of the Area Plan; and,
- Stakeholders across the distinct sub-regions of an established Area Plan express strong support through a formal request to the County for more customized planning.

After satisfying all these conditions, the Board of Supervisors can give consideration and final approval with

dividing an individual Area Plan into two or more separate Area Plans for future planning.

Consolidation of Area Plans

Maricopa County also has the ability to consolidate adjacent Area Plans when it is determined to be appropriate. Consolidation can be considered when the following conditions are met:

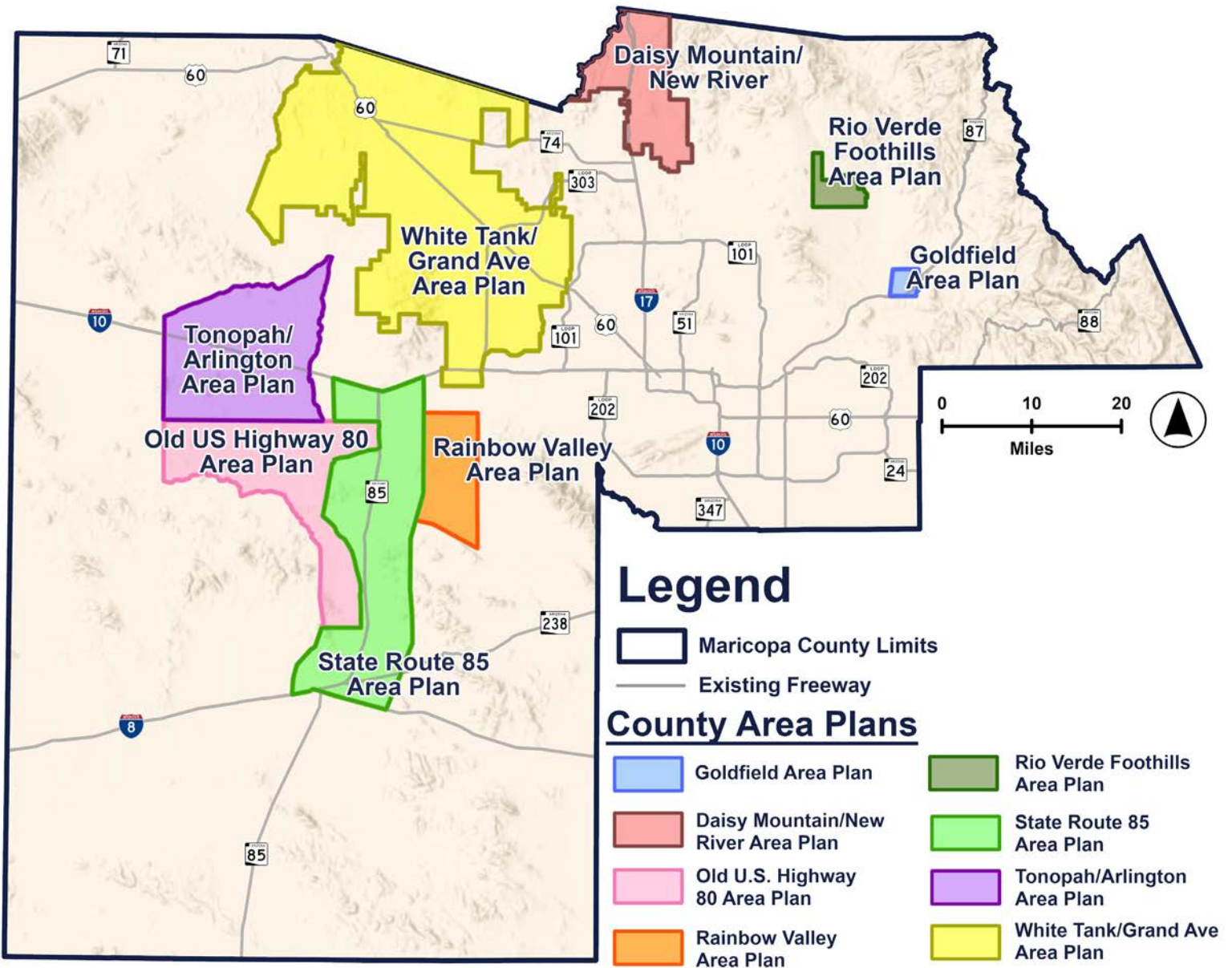
- Two or more adjacent Area Plans share similar land use characteristics, infrastructure needs, and community goals;
- Administrative efficiency and/or implementation of planning goals would be improved from consolidation of the adjacent Area Plans;
- There is clear support through a formal request to the County from affected communities and stakeholders for the consolidation of the adjacent Area Plans.

After satisfying all of these conditions, the Board of Supervisors can give consideration and final approval with consolidating separate Area Plans into a single Area Plan.

Decommissioning of Area Plans

Under the previous Maricopa County Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan, there were 13 Area Plans. In 2022, the Board of Supervisors, on recommendation from the Maricopa County Planning & Development Department staff, voted to decommission five of these Area Plans, resulting in the current eight Area Plans. The five decommissioned Area Plans included: East Mesa, Estrella, Laveen, Mobile, and Queen

▶ **Map 6. Maricopa County Area Plans**



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

8

This number represents the number of active Area Plans in Maricopa County.

Creek. Over 50% of the original acreage within these five Area Plans incorporated into adjacent municipalities thus falling outside of Maricopa County's area of jurisdiction.

The removal of these five Area Plans did result in pockets of unincorporated County Islands where little and/or infrequent development generally occurs without specific planning tools for handling development. Those County Islands now fall within the planning tools of the Comprehensive Plan.

County Islands

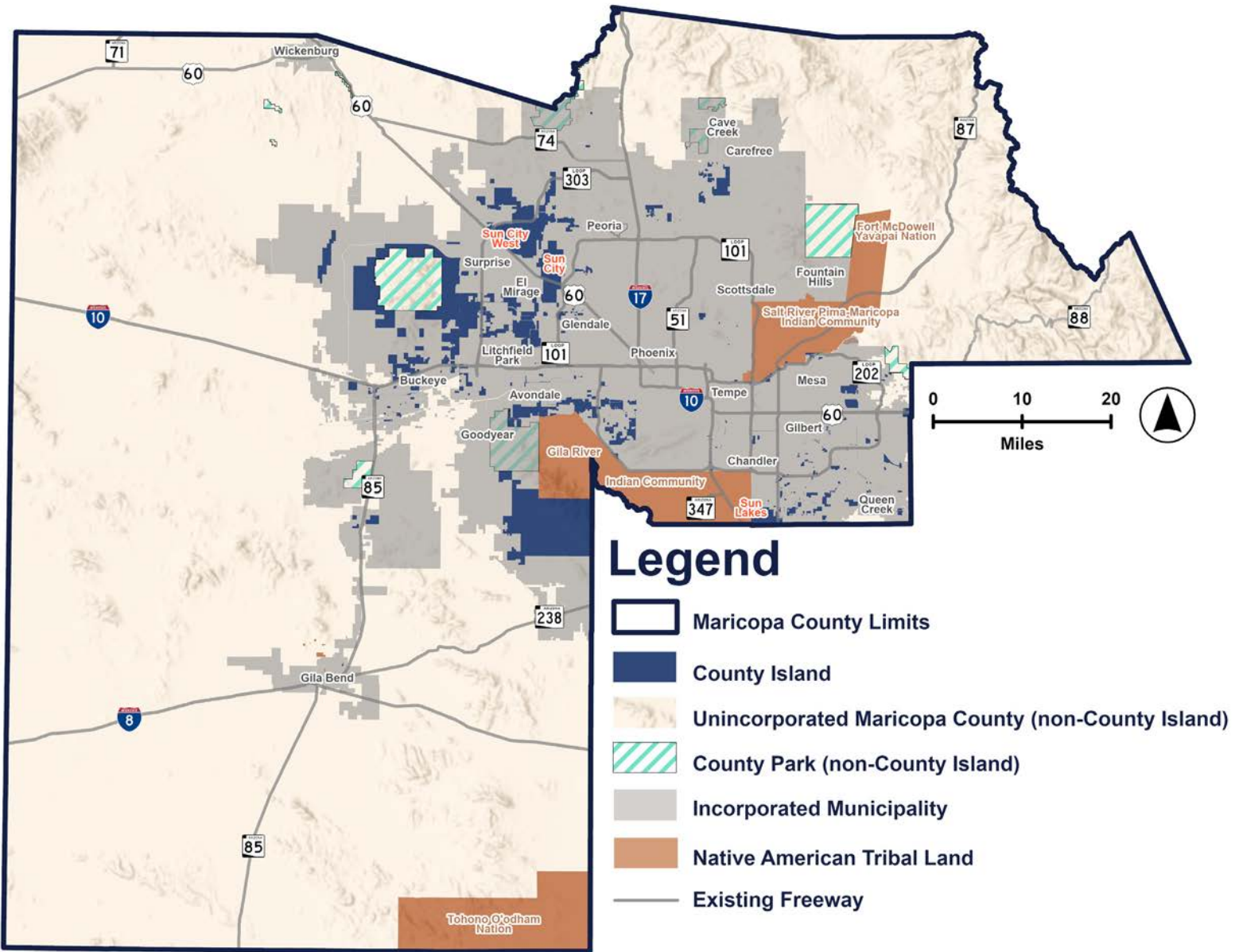
As defined in ARS § 11-251.12, County Islands are unincorporated areas that are completely surrounded by one or more incorporated municipalities or Native American communities. These Islands often form when municipalities expand and annex surrounding land but leave out certain parcels, either due to property owner preference or due to a consideration that the parcels will not bring revenue or long-term value to the city or town. Most of these Islands in Maricopa County are neighborhood subdivisions, frequently characterized by a less densely populated, more rural development pattern than the urban or suburban context of the adjacent municipality. However, some well-known County Islands in Maricopa County have developed their own sense of community such as Sun City, Sun City West, Waddell, Laveen, and Sun Lakes among others. County Island land totals 488,643.32 acres within Maricopa County's area of jurisdiction.

Living in a County Island comes with both benefits and challenges. Residents typically enjoy lower taxes as they are not paying for municipal services, and often face fewer regulations and ordinances. However, due to Maricopa County not providing municipal services, residents of County Islands must manage their own utilities and services, such as trash collection, water, wastewater, and fire protection, which can be more costly and time-consuming. Additionally, they must rely on the County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement, and cannot vote in municipal elections.

The existence of County Islands presents unique challenges for planning growth, development, and service provision. As cities and towns grow and develop in Maricopa County, integrating these unincorporated areas can be complex and contentious. Some County Islands may eventually be annexed into their adjacent surrounding municipalities, while others may remain independent due to the preferences of the residents or legal and logistical hurdles. This dynamic creates a patchwork of governance and service provision requiring careful collaboration between the County and the various municipal authorities to coordinate adequate services and support for residents when such services are provided by jurisdictions. The most evident example of the challenges with this patchwork governance is the provision of police services in the County Islands as confusion over jurisdictional responsibility can lead to slower response times and gaps in law enforcement. Curbing the growth and ultimately reducing this patchwork governance is the reason that state statute now regulates municipal annexations to prohibit the creation of new County Islands. Due to this statute and County policies associated with service provision, Maricopa County reaffirms its support for eliminating existing County Islands in its area of jurisdiction through municipal annexation wherever feasible.

Map 7 identifies the County Islands in Maricopa County. While the larger County Islands are easier to spot in **Map 7**, smaller County Islands present the greater number of challenges to manage due to the above-mentioned dynamic of governance and service provision. Overall, there are 325 County Islands ranging between 1 – 160 acres in size.

▶ **Map 7. County Islands in Maricopa County**



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

There are **325** County Islands ranging between 1 – 160 acres in size, making them candidates for annexation from the County’s viewpoint.

County Islands have the ability to incorporate or undergo municipal annexation if within a defined MPA and if a majority landowners within the Island desire to be a part of a municipality. Moreover, ARS § 11-269.07 gives the authority to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to vote to require a municipality to annex a County Island that is comprised of a single parcel up to ten acres in size if neither the property owner(s) nor the municipality submits written objections within 60 days of notice of this proposed action. While this law exists in state statute, there is very limited evidence of it being actively used due to a variety of reasons, including political resistance, administrative hurdles, and general unfamiliarity with the procedure. As such, annexations in Maricopa County have proceeded under the general annexation statutes rather than this specific provision. The 276 County Islands ranging between 1 – 160 acres are candidates for annexation from the viewpoint of Maricopa County due to their size; however, the sheer volume of individual County Islands within this range of acreage will likely require considerable coordination with the potential annexing municipalities.

Urban Development in Unincorporated Areas

Urban development has expanded significantly in Maricopa County, driven in part by the growing number of master planned communities located in unincorporated areas. As these areas become more urban in character, the County opens itself to facing increased demand for infrastructure and public services. These services are partially subsidized by residents of incorporated cities and towns, making it essential to carefully evaluate the financial, social, and public health impacts of urban development in unincorporated areas.

A key challenge that most residents and businesses in unincorporated areas experience is the lack of access to municipal services such as water and sewer systems, local police and fire departments, trash collection, and public parks, all of which are critical to maintaining public health and safety. Cities and towns generally do not provide these services outside their jurisdiction. Except for law enforcement provided by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, residents must rely on private companies or subscription services to meet these needs. In the absence of an elected municipal government, decisions about service provision are often made by homeowners' associations, special districts (like designated districts for fire protection), or similar organizations.

While many residents in low-density rural areas value the independence and lifestyle associated with unincorporated living, those residing in more urbanized unincorporated communities should be fully informed about the limitations and responsibilities that come with this choice. Understanding the governance structure, service availability, and financial obligations is essential for making informed decisions about property investment and long-term residency. Clear communication and strategic planning will help ensure that urban growth in unincorporated Maricopa County is efficient, balanced, and aligned with community expectations.

Affordable Housing

Like many other localities in the country, Maricopa County is grappling with a growing housing affordability crisis, driven by rising home prices, limited housing supply, and increasing mortgage rates. This is especially difficult to accept for long-time residents and first-time homebuyers due to Maricopa County's historical reputation for an affordable cost of living. Despite a surge in demand, new construction has not kept pace, and rising land costs, labor shortages, supply chain disruptions, investor activity (i.e. institutional investors, corporate landlords, short-term rentals, etc.), and higher interest rates have further driven up home prices, leaving many individuals and families finding themselves priced out of the local market and increasingly skeptical of future homeownership attainability and housing affordability overall in Maricopa County.

Total Housing Units

The housing stock across unincorporated Maricopa County is fairly homogenous. Single Family (single-unit) detached housing accounts for over 73% of the County's housing portfolio and (single-unit) attached housing accounts for another 8%, resulting in single-family development comprising over 80% of the total number of housing units in unincorporated Maricopa County. The next greatest singular category of housing type is mobile homes accounting for nearly 12%. Multi-family development only accounts for 7% collectively for housing with two or more units (source: U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).



Housing Occupancy

Assessing the housing occupancy rate is one indicator of the health of unincorporated Maricopa County’s housing market. A low or high vacancy rate signals a housing shortage or surplus, indicating a possible imbalance between supply and demand. Currently, the national average for housing vacancy is slightly over 11%, meanwhile, vacant units accounted for 13% in unincorporated Maricopa County. The 13% vacancy rate is higher than the 7-8% vacancy rate that is commonly suggested as a long-term “natural” vacancy rate. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a larger supply of available housing units since the occupancy rate does not account for vacancies due to renovation, unsold/unleased new construction, or the part-time use of the unit as a vacation rental, to name a few. Of the 87% of occupied housing units, just over 84% are owner occupied, while the last 16% of housing stock is renter occupied (source: U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Median Household Income and Median Home Values

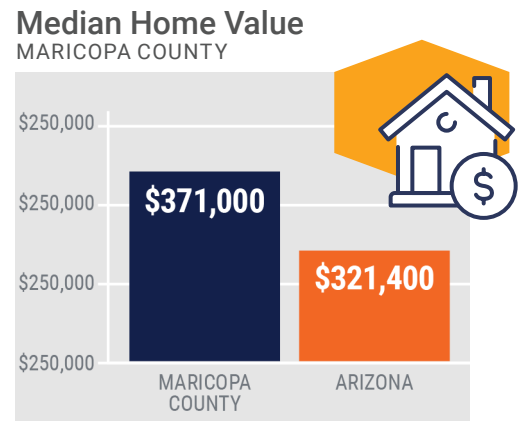
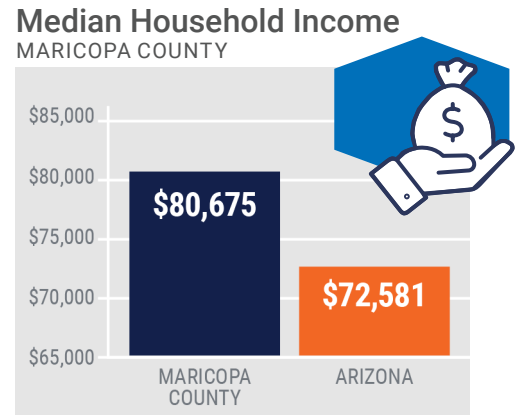
Contributing to the decrease in regional housing affordability is the fact that Household income has not kept pace with the cost of housing. Maricopa County’s median household income is \$80,675, which is higher when compared to the State median income of \$72,581. Meanwhile, the median home value in Maricopa County is \$371,000, higher than the State median home value at \$321,400. Both of these facts are shown in **Figure 8**.

This condition establishes a price-to-income ratio of 4.6. Financial experts suggest buyers spend no more than 2.6 times their annual income on a home. However, the national house-price-to-income ratio has been higher than the recommended 2.6 every year since 1985. This reality suggests that first time homebuyers will need to overcome a much higher hurdle to achieve homeownership in the future.

Cost-Burdened Households

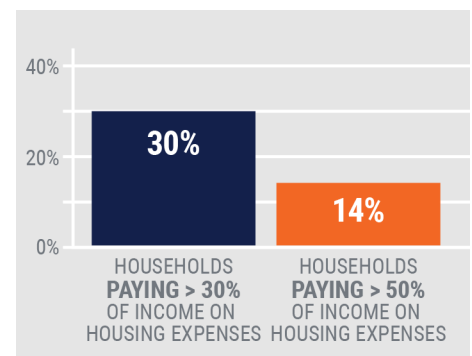
Cost-burdened households are those that are paying 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Severely cost-burden households are paying 50% or more of their household income on housing costs, whether mortgage or rent. When households (especially lower income households) spend more on housing costs this causes reduced financial flexibility on other essentials like food, healthcare, and transportation, which can lead to financial instability and reduced quality of life. **Figure 9** shows that across Maricopa County (including unincorporated and incorporated areas), it is reported that 499,668 households are cost-burdened, which reflects 30% of all households, while 14% of all households are spending half or more of their income on housing expenses.

Figure 8. Median Household Income and Home Value in Maricopa County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 9. Percentage of Maricopa County Cost-Burdened Households



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

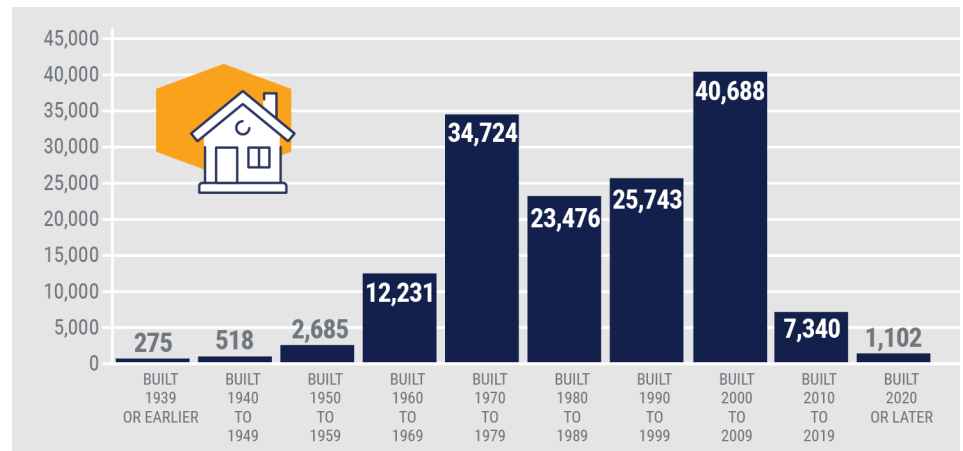
Housing Age

Of the 148,782 total housing units within unincorporated Maricopa County, 44% were built between 1990-2009, which encapsulates the housing boom and population growth that the Greater Phoenix Region experienced from the late 1990s to the 2007-2009 Recession. This housing boom period notably saw the development of the Anthem community. Housing units built in the 1970s account for 23% of the housing stock within unincorporated Maricopa County, which aligns with the development of Sun City West. The total housing units constructed by decade in unincorporated Maricopa County are displayed in **Figure 10**.

What is also evident from the data is the complete bottoming out of the rate of new housing construction in Maricopa County compared to the five decades prior to 2010. In fact, from 2000 to 2010, there were 389,400 units built in Maricopa County overall. In contrast, from 2011 to 2023, there were only 290,800 units built in Maricopa County, which reflects a 25% decrease in units built over the last 12 years (source: Maricopa Association of Governments).

While regional housing construction is showing signs of increasing in recent years, the lost decade of new housing stock of the 2010s may be one of the drivers of the County's current housing affordability issue. However, although housing unit completions have steadily increased across Maricopa County over the last number of years, housing affordability and homeownership still remains unattainable for many in Maricopa County, which underscores the need to address the spectrum of housing cost factors such as inflated land values, increased investor activity, higher labor costs, and fluctuating interest rates.

Figure 10. Unincorporated Maricopa County Housing Units Construction by Decade



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



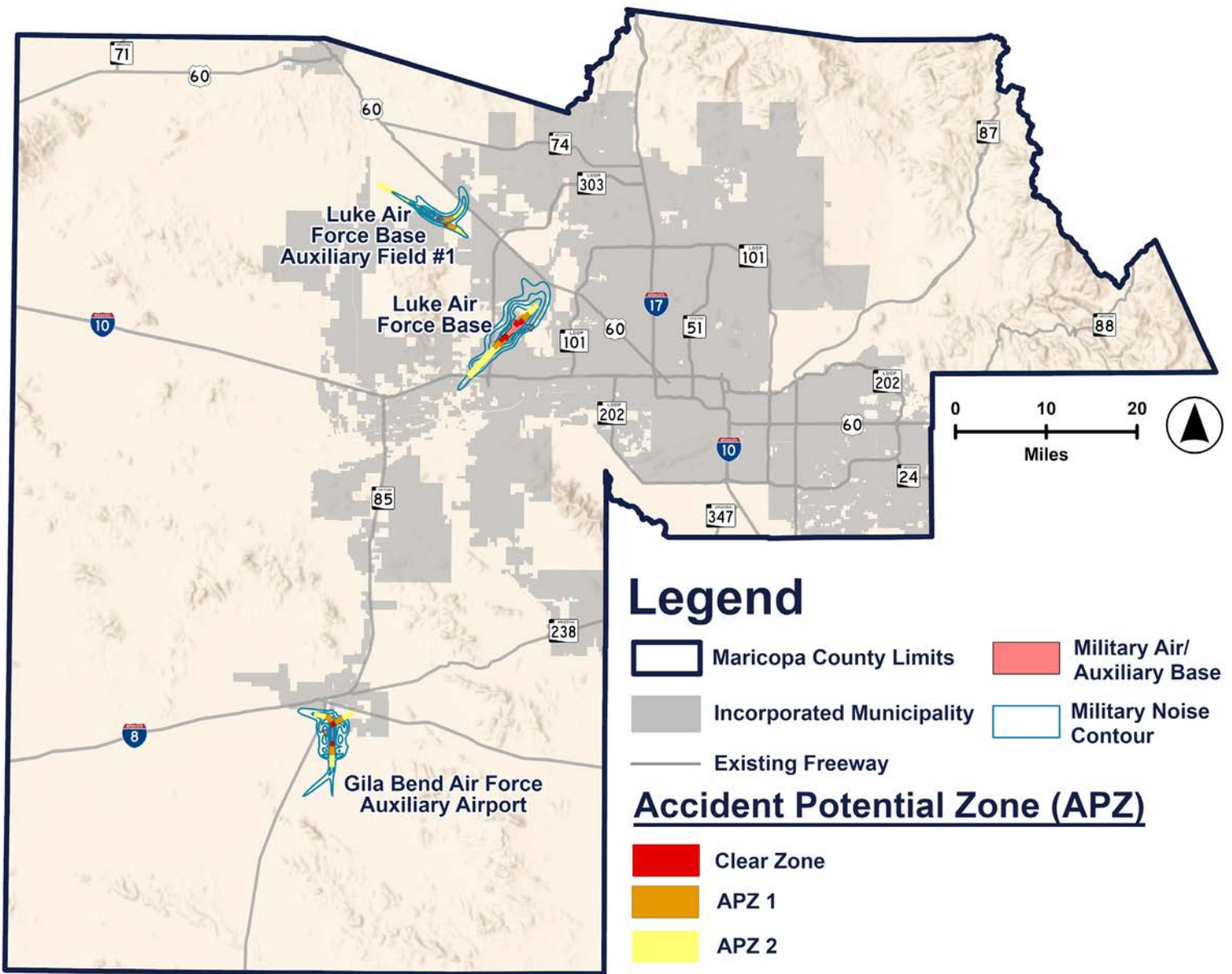


Military Compatibility

While not in the unincorporated area of Maricopa County, Luke Air Force Base (AFB), its ancillary military facilities at Luke AFB Auxiliary Airfield 1, and Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field play an important role in determining the suitability of land uses in the vicinities of its ancillary military facilities. While there is concern about noise and potential aircraft accidents near these installations, both the State of Arizona and Maricopa County recognize the important economic impacts of these bases and their need for protection of their operations. For areas located within the High Noise Contours, ranging from 65 to 85 decibels, or within the Accident Potential Zones (APZ) surrounding designated sites, ARS § 28-8481 imposes specific planning requirements. Local governments must adopt land use plans and zoning ordinances that ensure future development is compatible and consistent with the noise levels or accident risks associated with military facility operations. Such risks may pose adverse effects on public health and safety. These state statutory requirements apply to Maricopa County's land use planning since there are portions of the County's area of jurisdiction that are within the High Noise Contours and the APZs of Luke Air Force Base and its ancillary military facilities. The High Noise and Accident Potential Zones (HNAPZ) of the three military facilities discussed here are shown in **Map 8**.

Furthermore, ARS § 28-8481 identifies specific uses that are and are not considered consistent and compatible with the high noise or accident potential zones, although other uses may be permitted upon mutual determination of consistency and compatibility by Luke Air Force Base and the local jurisdiction. The Comprehensive Plan designates areas within the High Noise or Accident Potential Zones as "Military Compatible," and the compatible zoning requirements

▶ **Map 8. Military Bases and Decibel Contour Lines**



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

High Noise Contours near Luke Air Force Base range from

65-85 decibels.



for these areas are identified in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance.

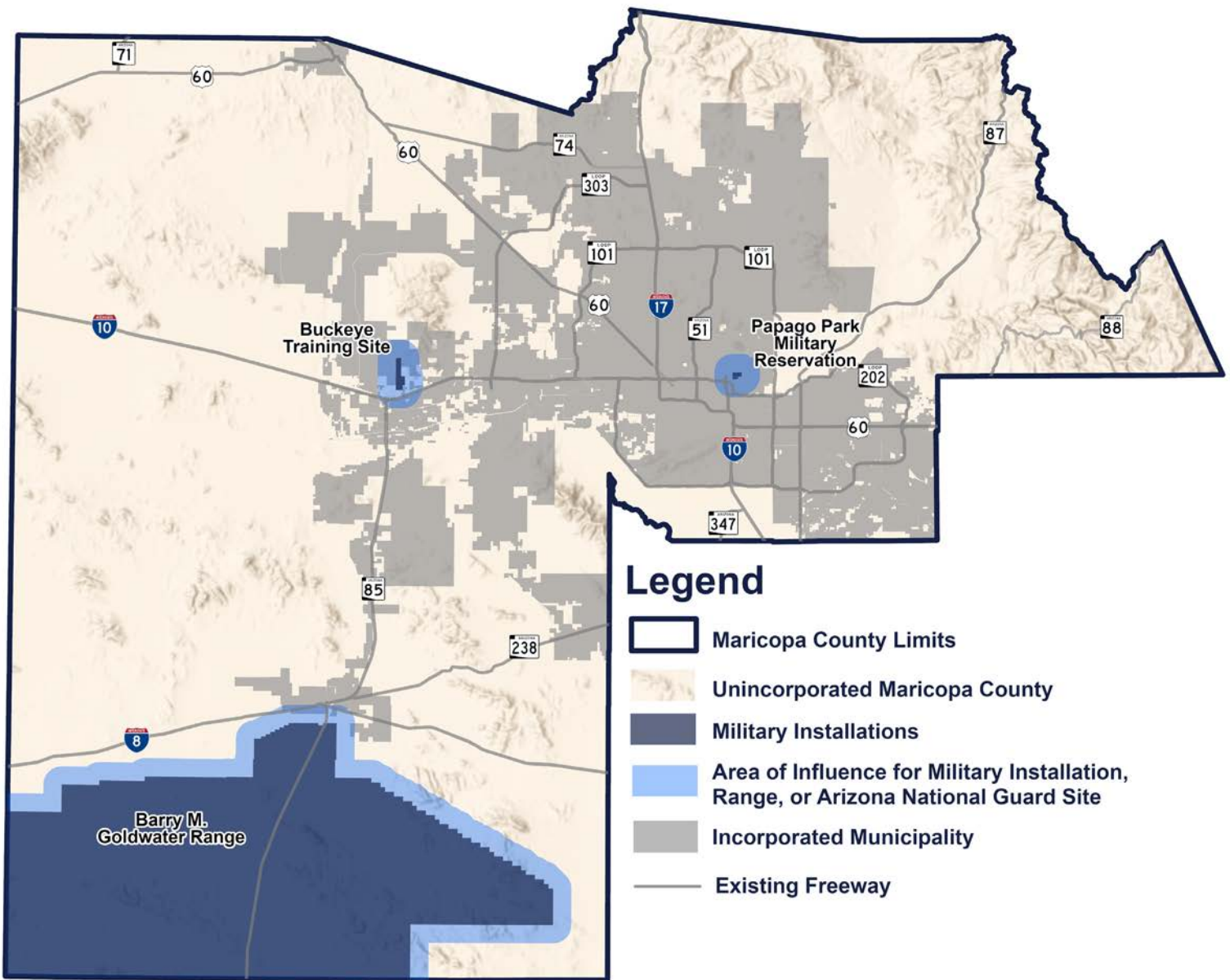
State statute also identifies a larger risk area around Luke Air Force Base and Auxiliary Airfield #1 and defines this area as the Territory in the Vicinity of a Military Airport. This area extends ten miles to the north, south and west, and four miles to the east parallel from the center of the main runway at Luke Air Force Base and Auxiliary Airfield #1. While land use restrictions do not apply in this defined area, noise reduction techniques are required in the construction of new habitable buildings.

The Comprehensive Plan is also required to identify the influence area of a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site. ARS 11-818.01 prescribes the meaning of “influence area” as a two-mile buffer and the meaning of “military installation or range or Arizona national guard site” as any site that is listed in ARS 11-818.01.(G)(2). In Maricopa County, there are three such sites that are listed in state statute as a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site. They are:

- Barry M. Goldwater Range
- Buckeye Training Site
- Papago Park Military Reservation

As shown in **Map 9**, these sites have two-mile influence areas that affect some portions of unincorporated Maricopa County. State statute requires that the County plan land uses that are compatible with the operations of the installation, range, or site of the unincorporated lands that are within these identified influence areas.

▶ **Map 9.** Military Installation, Range, or Arizona National Guard Site Influence Areas



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

2 miles

The required buffer defining a military installation's "influence area" under ARS 11-818.01.



Aggregate Resources

Aggregate resources in Maricopa County are vital for the region's construction and infrastructure development. These resources, which include sand, gravel, and crushed stone, are primarily extracted from riverbeds and floodplains of major rivers of the County including the Salt, Gila, Verde, Agua Fria, and Hassayampa Rivers as shown in **Map 10**. The Arizona Geological Survey maintains data and maps of the currently known extraction and mining points for aggregate deposits to aid in local and County planning, ensuring that these essential materials are conserved and managed effectively. The proximity of aggregate resources to urban areas helps reduce transportation costs and environmental impacts, making local sourcing a viable choice. As growth and development continues in Maricopa County, the demand for these materials remains high, underscoring the importance of strategic resource management to support ongoing development while minimizing ecological disruption. While aggregate mining is an important and necessary part of the economy the noise, light, dust and traffic from aggregate mines can affect the quality of life of nearby residents. To protect aggregate mining and safeguard residents' quality of life Maricopa County supports open space buffers, land use transitions, and other techniques that appropriately separate aggregate mining and residential land uses.

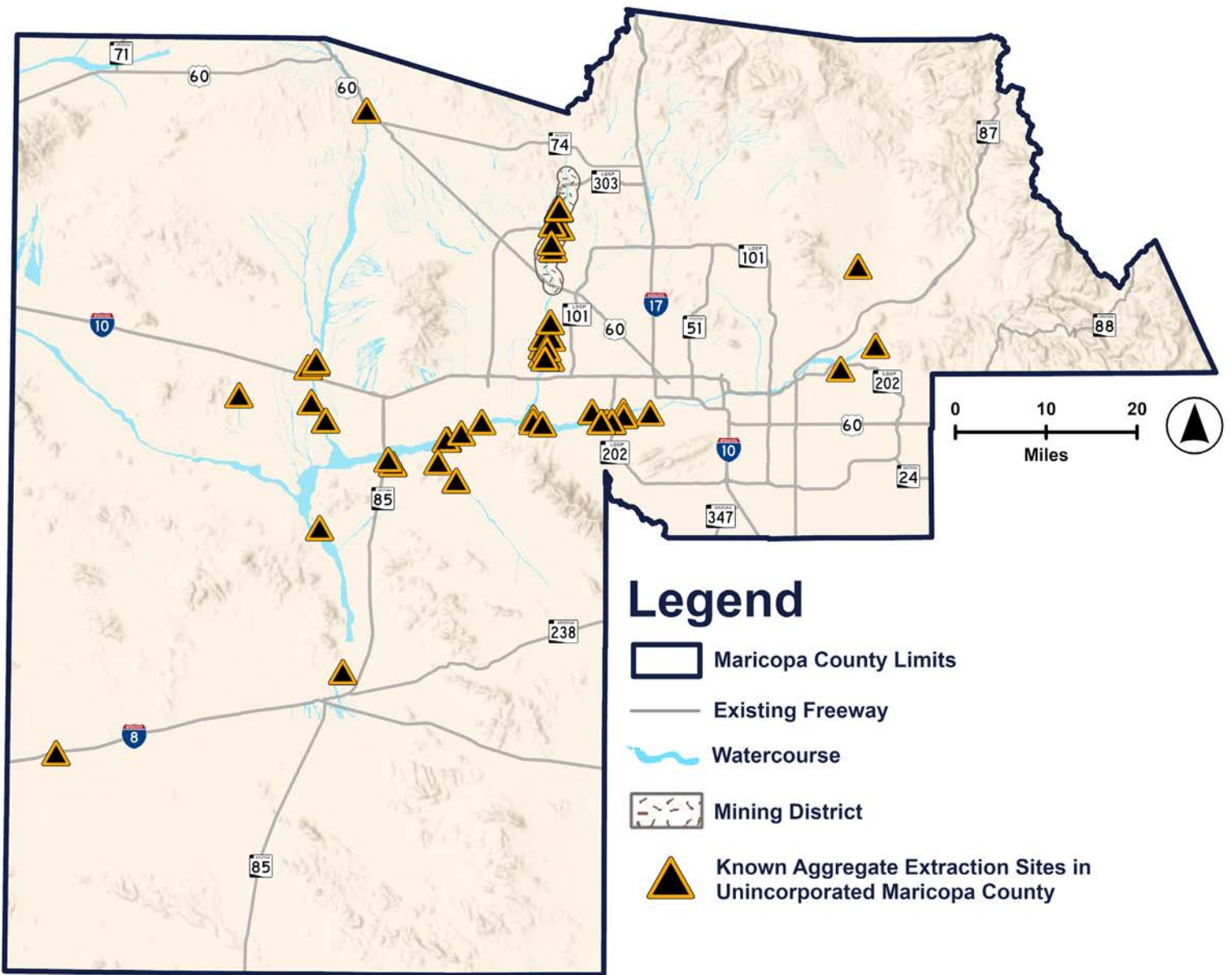
Maricopa County also views the importance of post-operation planning for aggregate mining sites, which the County Flood Control District coordinates and assists in such planning. The County supports the restoration of land to a beneficial condition on post-aggregates mining reclamation sites. The extent of such restoration may include future development of either constructed uses or natural habitats and landscapes or an integration of both considering site conditions and the compatibility of nearby land uses.

In the Arizona Geological Survey, soil types that are conducive to being sources of aggregates as well as the presence of riverbeds and floodplains do exist within Maricopa County's area of jurisdiction. Maricopa County will consider the importance of preserving these areas of potential sources aggregate materials as future development occurs.

The Maricopa County Aggregate Mining Operations Zoning District #1 (also shown in **Map 10**) is a designated area established to manage and regulate aggregate mining activities within a specific region. This district encompasses a three-mile radius around the main channel of the Agua Fria River, between the CAP Canal and Grand Avenue. The purpose of this district is to balance the needs of the mining industry with the concerns of local residents, ensuring that mining operations are conducted responsibly and with minimal impact on the surrounding community.

The district is overseen by the Aggregate Mining Operations Zoning District #1 Recommendation Committee, which includes representatives from both the mining industry and local residents. This committee acts as a mediator to resolve conflicts, adopts administrative regulations, and provides recommendations to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders, the committee aims to promote best mining practices while protecting the quality of life for residents in the area.

▶ **Map 10. Aggregates in Maricopa County Map**



Source: Arizona Geological Survey, 2024

The Maricopa County Aggregate Mining Operations Zoning District #1 is a designated area established to manage and regulate aggregate mining activities within a specific region.



Fire Protection

Maricopa County is served by 22 fire districts that are displayed in **Map 11**. All of the fire districts in unincorporated Maricopa County are crucial in maintaining safety and responding to emergencies in areas not covered by municipal fire departments. Each fire district is independent, with its own administration, funding, and resources tailored to meet the specific needs of its community. They work closely with other emergency services and local governments to coordinate efforts during large-scale emergencies and disasters. They work closely with other local agencies to provide coordinated and efficient services. The presence of these fire districts helps maintain a high level of safety and preparedness across Maricopa County. Some of the fire districts with the highest number of residents within their borders include:



- **Buckeye Valley Fire District:** Covers the Buckeye Valley area and provides comprehensive fire and emergency medical services.
- **North County Fire & Medical District:** Serves the northern parts of the County. This district focuses on both fire suppression and medical emergencies.
- **South County Fire & Medical District:** Serves the southern regions of the County, ensuring residents receive timely fire and medical response.



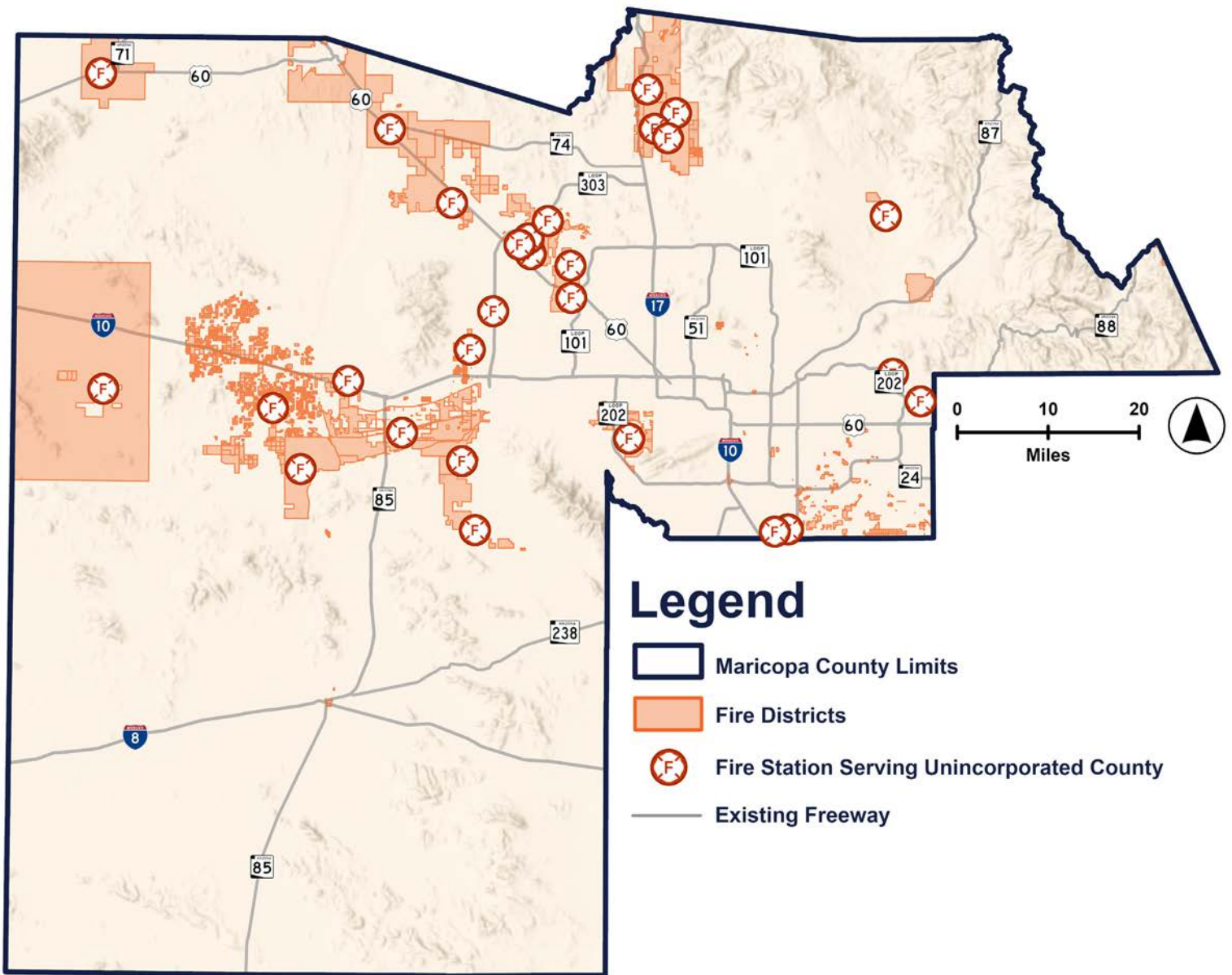
Since 2023, these three fire districts have operated under the Arizona Fire & Medical Authority (AFMA). The AFMA is an intergovernmental agreement where the three districts retain local control over individual budgets and services along with separate tax rates, while the personnel, equipment, facilities, and daily operations of the combined districts are governed by a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Governing Board. This operating model reduces overhead costs and improves service levels without dissolving the districts.



For unincorporated areas outside of the fire districts and select incorporated areas, Rural Metro Fire is a key provider of fire protection and emergency medical services. Operating under a subscription-based model, the company offer comprehensive services including fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency medical response. Since its founding, Rural Metro Fire has a long-standing presence in the County, tailoring their services to meet the unique needs of each area they serve. Their commitment to safety and readiness ensures that residents and businesses in unincorporated regions receive reliable and professional emergency services without relying on public funding.

Additionally, the Maricopa County Emergency Management team coordinates efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters and other emergencies. These services work together with the various fire districts to maintain safety and security for residents in unincorporated areas.

▶ **Map 11. Fire Districts in Maricopa County**



Source: Maricopa County Office of Enterprise Technology, 2024

22 districts

Maricopa County is served by 22 fire districts, each responsible for providing essential services such as fire suppression, emergency medical response, and fire prevention education to specific areas.

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

In unincorporated Maricopa County, police services are primarily managed by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). It is responsible for responding to emergencies, and ensuring public safety in the unincorporated areas of the County. To manage law enforcement services effectively, the MCSO divides its jurisdiction into five districts plus a Lake Patrol district unit as summarized below:

- District 1** covers the eastern part of the County, including the County Islands in the east valley municipalities. It is known for its diverse population and urban environment.
- District 2** encompasses Luke Air Force Base, Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, Phoenix International Raceway, the University of Phoenix Stadium, and a large portion of the Barry M. Goldwater Gunnery Range. This district covers downtown Phoenix, including the Superior Courts, Sheriff's Headquarters, and Chase Field. County recreational parks in the district include White Tank Mountains Regional Park, Estrella Park, and Buckeye Hills.
- District 3** comprises both rural farms and urban communities, including two large senior retirement communities, Sun City and Sun City West, and is the district with the most calls for service.
- District 4** includes the master-planned community of Anthem and services two contract municipalities: Carefree and Cave Creek. Services are also provided to Clearwater Hills.
- District 7** is responsible for law enforcement services to the unincorporated areas of Scottsdale, Rio Verde, Tonto Verde, Trilogy at Verde River and Goldfield Ranch and provides contractual law enforcement services to Fountain Hills.
- Lake Patrol (District 5)** covers the wilderness area and waterways of the Tonto National Forest within Maricopa County as well as Lake Pleasant and Urey Mountain Regional Park. Additionally, the Lake Patrol is responsible for Search and Rescue Missions, Dive Recovery, Mounted Patrol, Concentrated Traffic Enforcement, Flood Control District Enforcement, Sheriff's Medic Program, Mobile Field Force, and responding to any emergencies involving the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station. Patrols use off-highway vehicles, watercraft, and horses in addition to traditional vehicle modes.

Each district is managed by a District Commander and supported by a team of deputies, detectives, and administrative staff. This structure allows the MCSO to address the unique needs of each area, ensuring comprehensive law enforcement coverage throughout Maricopa County.

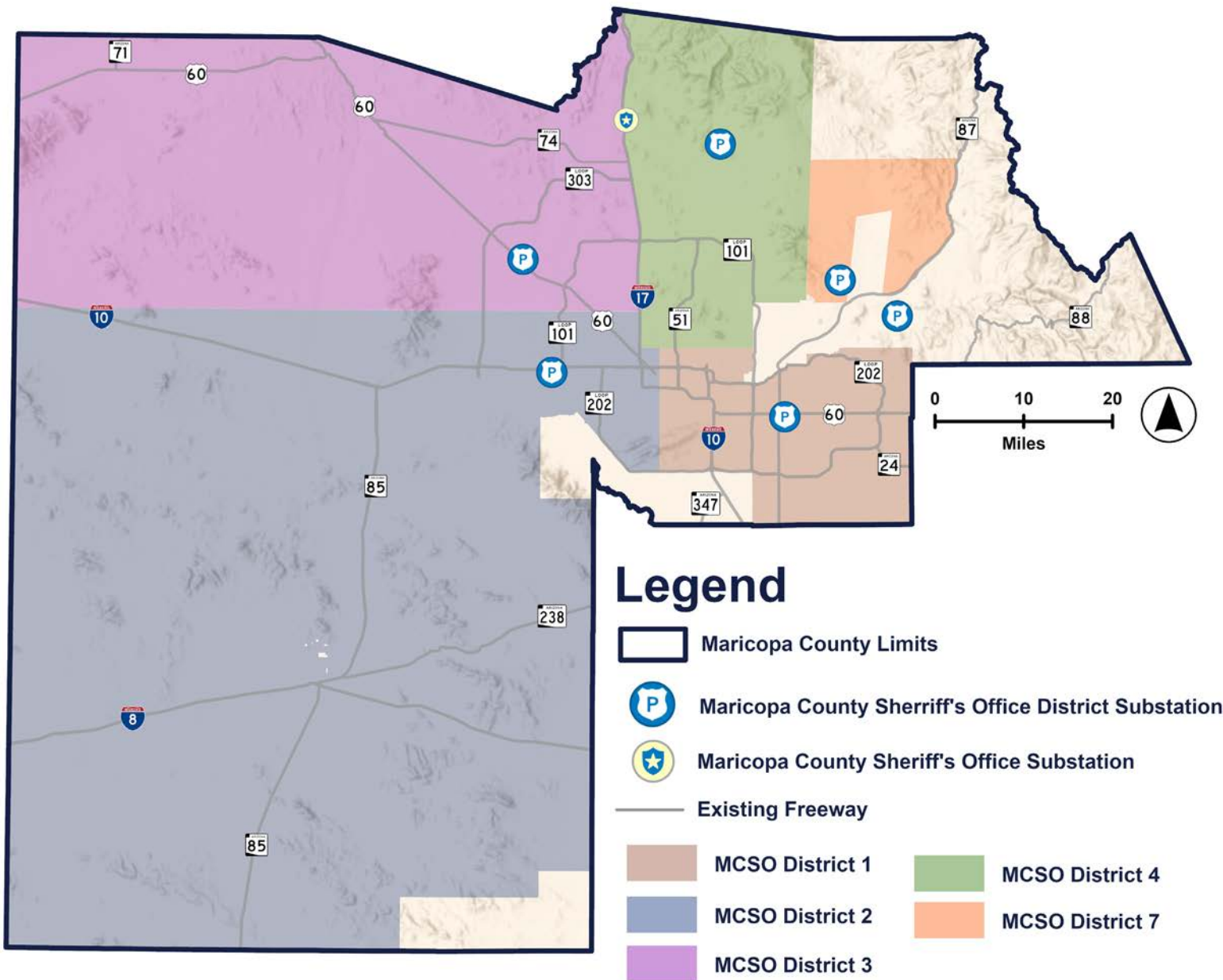
The MCSO also offers the Volunteer Posse program. Posse volunteers work with deputies and civilian staff to help improve law enforcement and enhance public safety, providing an invaluable service to the community. Posse volunteer personnel are trained in a variety of essential support functions, such as Search and Rescue, Crime Scene, Patrol, Disaster Relief, and Emergency Response.

The MCSO maintains a comprehensive response system across its jurisdictions. In data collected for 2022, the MCSO average response times reported by the different levels of priority are:

- Priority 1 calls: Average 8.2 minutes
- Priority 2 calls: Average 12.5 minutes
- Priority 3 calls: Average 18.7 minutes

Priority 1 and 2 calls are both deemed emergency calls. Priority 1 is a crime involving an immediate threat to life, and Priority 2 is a crime involving an immediate and substantial risk of major property loss or damage.

Map 12 shows the locations of the Maricopa County Sheriff Office District Substations and the Lake Patrol and Anthem Substations.



Source: Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, 2024

Five Districts

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office divides its jurisdiction into five districts plus a Lake Patrol unit to effectively manage law enforcement services.



Agricultural and Rural Lands

The continued conversion of agricultural and rural lands in Maricopa County to urban and suburban development has significant implications for the local food system. As farmland is subdivided into housing, commercial centers, and other infrastructure, the acreage available for crop cultivation and livestock production steadily declines. This loss not only reduces the capacity for local food production but also disrupts long-standing agricultural operations that contribute to the County's economy and agricultural heritage. The fragmentation of rural landscapes also make farming less viable due to increased land costs, reduced access/efficiency to water, and conflicts with non-agricultural land uses. Moreover, the loss of agricultural land may impact wildlife populations, specifically ungulates and migratory bird species which utilize agricultural fields for forage and cover.

The decline in local agricultural land affects food security by increasing dependence on imported food. Locally grown produce and livestock offer fresher options, lower transportation costs and emissions, and stronger connections between consumers and producers. As rural lands disappear, opportunities for community-supported agriculture, farmers markets, and farm-to-table initiatives also diminish. Preserving agricultural land and integrating food production into long-range land use planning can serve to maintain a regionally rooted food system in the face of rapid urbanization as well as seeking to retain historical farmland as rural.



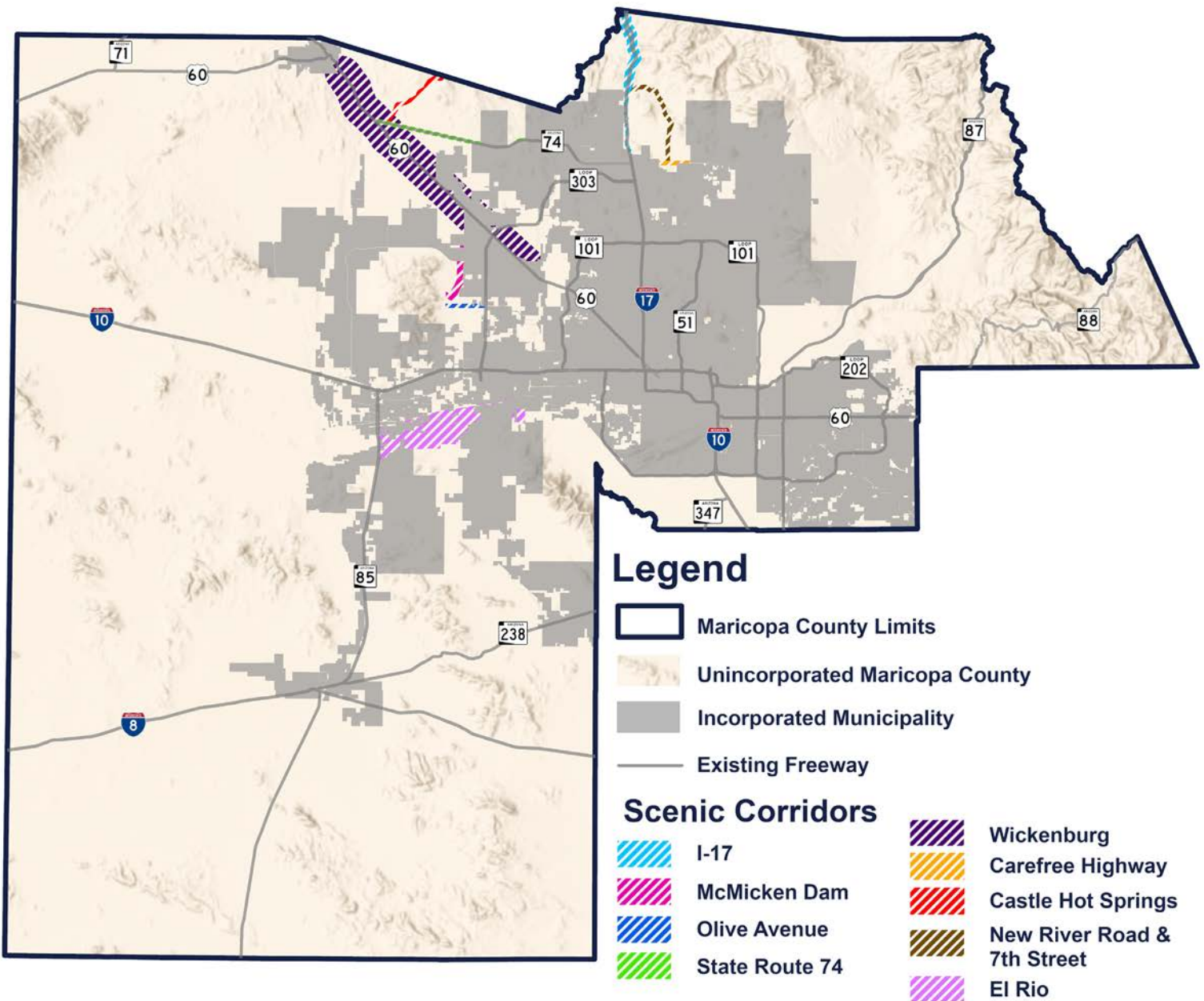
Scenic Corridors

By integrating land use planning with conservation goals, Maricopa County supports the desire of residents and visitors to enjoy unobstructed views of mountain ranges, saguaro-studded hillsides, and expansive desert vistas while traveling through the region. Scenic corridors in Maricopa County utilize development overlays or designations on specified routes that highlight the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique desert landscapes. These corridors are part of the County's long-range planning efforts, which aims to preserve and enhance the visual character of key travel routes. While scenic corridors are not a transportation planning tool, they are a long-range planning instrument of the Planning & Development Department. Scenic corridors often align with major roadways that traverse areas of significant topographic or environmental interest. These corridors are managed with specific design guidelines to protect viewsheds, limit intrusive development, and maintain the aesthetic integrity of the Sonoran Desert. The scenic corridors in Maricopa County include:

- Carefree Highway Scenic Corridor
- Castle Hot Springs Scenic Corridor
- El Rio Scenic Corridor (as represented by the El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards)
- I-17 Scenic Corridor
- McMicken Scenic Corridor
- New River Road & 7th Street
- Olive Avenue Scenic Corridor
- State Route 74 Scenic Corridor (Highway 74 Scenic Corridor)
- Wickenburg Scenic Highway Corridor



All nine of these designated scenic corridors in Maricopa County are shown in **Map 13**. The State Route 74 Scenic Corridor and the Wickenburg Scenic Corridor are also regulatory corridors in that they are overlay zoning districts in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance. These two zoning overlays applied to their respective scenic corridors establish criteria that encourage orderly and minimal impacting development along these routes to preserve the surrounding natural and cultural landscapes and scenic qualities. The other four scenic corridors are non-regulatory, however, there are guidelines in place for them to manage and protect the scenic nature of the corridor from overdevelopment. Any new scenic corridors and associated guidelines that may be implemented in the future are limited from outright prohibiting certain land uses due to ARS §12-1131 through §12-1138 and the intent to avoid any claims of diminution in value of property as a result of a new land use regulation.



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

9 Scenic Corridors

The number of designated scenic corridors in Maricopa County.

Strategies

Inter-Jurisdiction Coordination

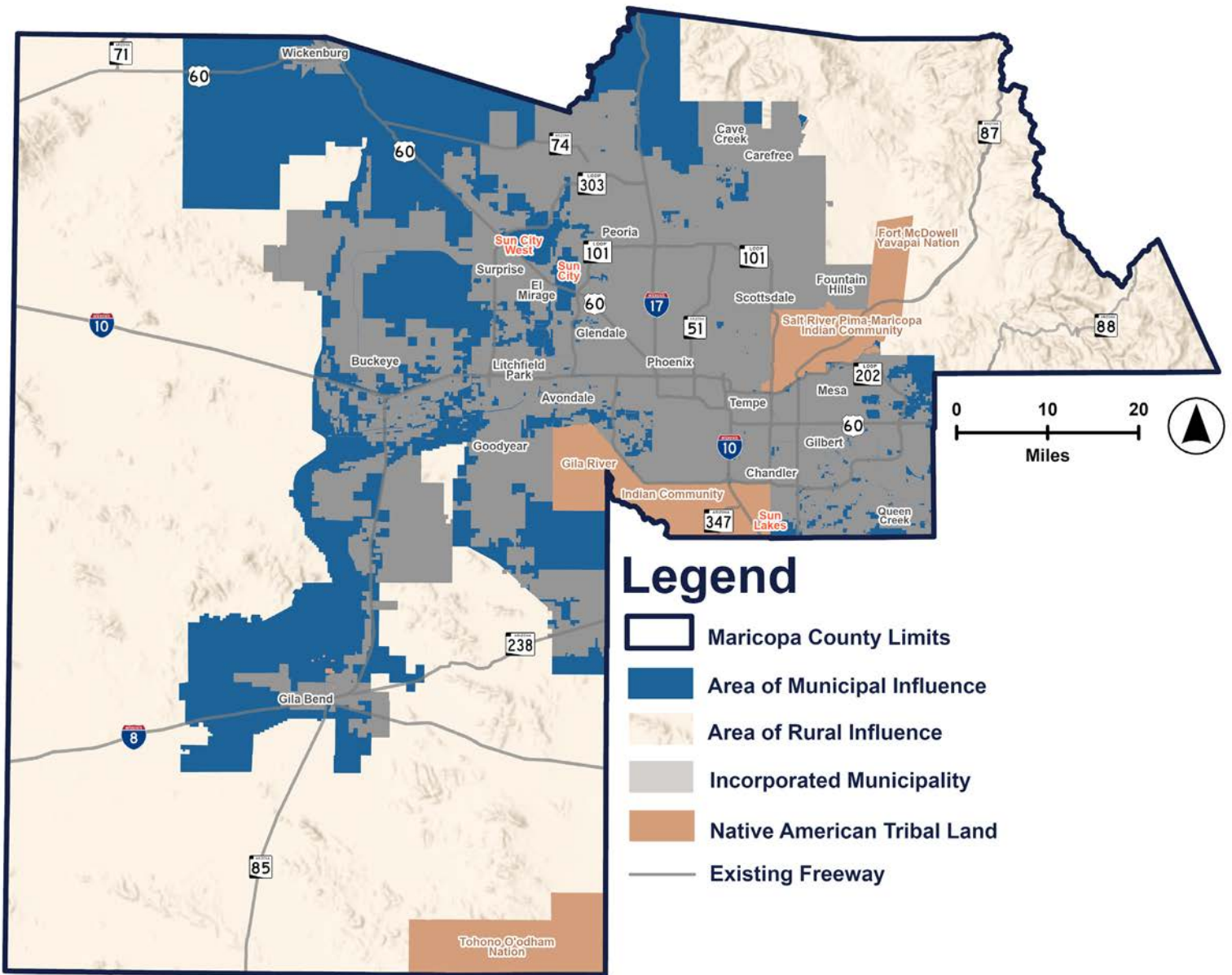
Maricopa County recognizes the importance of coordinating land use planning efforts across jurisdictions to promote consistency and long-term efficiency. The previous Comprehensive Plan emphasized the need to align land uses in unincorporated areas with those in adjacent municipalities, particularly within County Islands and municipal planning areas. This coordination has helped reduce land use conflicts, improve service delivery, and support cohesive community development.

Coordinated land use planning across jurisdictions reduces conflicts and supports cohesive community development.






Collaboration with federal and state agencies has also been a longstanding priority and has yielded positive outcomes. Maricopa County has actively engaged these agencies in its planning processes, and in turn, has been invited to participate in planning efforts for federally and state-managed lands. As growth pressures intensify and land use decisions become more complex, continued coordination among federal, state, and local entities is essential. Maricopa County remains committed to working collaboratively to ensure land use compatibility, protect shared resources, and advance regional planning goals. In addition, the County will continue to monitor and participate in discussions regarding the potential disposition or transfer of federal lands, as such actions can significantly influence future development patterns and land use priorities.



Map 14. The Areas of Municipal Influence and Rural Influence in Maricopa County



Legend

-  Maricopa County Limits
-  Area of Municipal Influence
-  Area of Rural Influence
-  Incorporated Municipality
-  Native American Tribal Land
-  Existing Freeway

Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

Municipal–Rural Influence Framework



Framework 2040 introduces a new strategic Framework for managing both urban and rural development across the County’s vast and varied landscape. It is titled the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework, and will function as the starting reference regarding development decisions. At the core of this Framework is the identification of two distinct divisions of Maricopa County:

- The Area of Municipal Influence
- The Area of Rural Influence

The Area of Municipal Influence encompasses all of Maricopa County’s unincorporated land that falls within the current limits of a Municipal Planning Area, within a County Island, or within an Improvement Association. The Area of Rural Influence is comprised of Maricopa County’s unincorporated land that is not within the Area of Municipal Influence. **Map 14** shows the extents of the Area of Municipal Influence and the Area of Rural Influence in Maricopa County.

These two influence areas serve as organization tools for classifying land and how it can be developed and potentially annexed. These classifications are not administrative boundaries. Rather, they serve as guides in determining where urban or rural development is most appropriate in Maricopa County’s area of jurisdiction. **Figure 11** on pages 98-99 is a graphical representation of the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework. The Framework is described in full detail in the subsequent sections.



The Area of Municipal Influence

The Area of Municipal Influence is the initial point for determining where urban development is appropriate in unincorporated Maricopa County. Any unincorporated area within the Area of Municipal Influence that has an urban land use designation (see Municipal-Rural Influence Framework Step 2 on page 98) from either the Comprehensive Plan or an Area Plan is part of the County's Urban Growth Area. Relatedly, any unincorporated land within the Area of Municipal Influence that has a rural land use designation (which is only either the Single Family - Rural or Rural Retail land uses) from either the Comprehensive Plan or an Area Plan can be considered part of the County's Urban Growth Area provided the unincorporated land satisfies all of the following criteria:

- The applicable municipal general plan has designated the parcel(s) for urban uses;
- The parcel(s) meets the applicable Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy requirements; and
- The parcel(s) have an assurance of annexation from the applicable municipality.

Any unincorporated area with a rural land use designation that can be categorized in the Urban Growth Area is eligible to explore a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to an urban land use designation. Unincorporated areas with a rural land use designation within the Area of Municipal Influence that cannot be categorized in the Urban Growth Area fall into the Rural Service Area. The Rural Service Area accommodates rural land uses and allows for rural industrial or certain commercial land uses that would both not be considered part of the County's Urban Growth Area.

Industrial activities permitted in the Rural Service Area are rural in nature and may include electric generating and distribution facilities, vehicle proving grounds and test facilities, mining and extraction operations, and agriculturally-oriented businesses. These uses are well suited to rural areas due to their need for large parcels of land and limited reliance on public infrastructure. Their inclusion in the Framework reflects a thoughtful approach to economic development that balances land capacity with the preservation of rural community values.

Commercial development in the Rural Service Area is subject to more stringent review but may be allowed without a formal amendment to the Comprehensive Plan if the site is under 40 acres and satisfies alternative criteria to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy. This flexibility allows small-scale commercial sites that steward the character of the rural landscape.

The Area of Rural Influence



The Area of Rural Influence contains all the unincorporated land that is outside of a Municipal Planning Area, a County Island, or an Improvement Association. All of this unincorporated land, if outside of an Area Plan, is designated for rural land uses (which are only the Single Family - Rural or Rural Retail land uses) in the Comprehensive Plan and is categorized into the Rural Service Area. Within an Area Plan, a parcel with an urban land use is categorized into the Urban Growth Area, and a parcel with a rural land use is categorized into the Rural Service Area. As discussed above, exceptions to allow for rural industrial or certain commercial land uses apply in the Rural Service Area.

Assurance of Annexation

Assurance of annexation is an essential step for guiding land use changes from rural to urban in Maricopa County. The Municipal-Rural Influence Framework necessitates obtaining an assurance of annexation from the appropriate municipality to determine the likelihood of municipal services before urban development occurs. This works to ensure that a Comprehensive Plan Amendment aligns with municipal planning efforts and prevents the indefinite formation of unsupported County Islands and leapfrog development. An assurance of annexation is either an executed pre-annexation agreement or an executed municipal services agreement. Effective annexation assurance planning requires close coordination between the County and municipalities and depends on the availability of infrastructure and services needed to support urban development. For its part, development will need to coordinate with municipalities and seek support through an assurance of annexation.

Figure 11. Municipal-Rural Influence Framework

STEP 1 Identify if subject parcel is located in the “Area of Municipal Influence” or the “Area of Rural Influence.”

Area of Municipal Influence

Encompasses all of Maricopa County’s unincorporated areas that fall within the current limits of a Municipal Planning Area, within a County Island, or within an Improvement Association.

Area of Rural Influence

Encompasses all of Maricopa County’s unincorporated areas that are not a part of the “Area of Municipal Influence.”

STEP 2 Utilize the current Maricopa County Land Use Plan/ Area Plans to determine if the subject parcel has an “Urban Land Use” or “Rural Land Use” designation.

Urban Land Use

Refers to the designation of unincorporated land in Maricopa County that does not have a rural land use designation. All land use designations available in unincorporated Maricopa County besides Single Family - Rural and Rural Retail would be urban land uses. A previously approved Development Master Plan outside of an Area Plan may be determined to be an urban land use by the Planning & Development Department Director.

Rural Land Use

Refers to the designation of unincorporated land in Maricopa County that has a rural land use designation, which includes either Single Family - Rural or Rural Retail.

STEP 3 Determine if the subject parcel is in an “Urban Growth Area” or “Rural Service Area.”

Urban Growth Area

Any unincorporated land falling into the Urban Growth Area has the ability to be re-designated through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process to an appropriate land use (urban or rural relative to surrounding context and infrastructure).

Within the “Area of Municipal Influence”, a subject parcel with a rural land use designation can be determined to be a part of the Urban Growth Area if it is designated as an urban land use in the Municipal Planning Area of the applicable municipal general plan, satisfies the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy requirements, and has an assurance of annexation.

Outside of the “Area of Municipal Influence,” a subject parcel with an urban land use designation in an Area Plan is determined to be a part of the Urban Growth Area.

Rural Service Area

Any unincorporated land falling in the Rural Service Area accommodates rural land use designations.

Rural industrial land uses that require large amounts of land, but not urban services and infrastructure, are acceptable in the Rural Service Area. These uses could include electric generating and distribution facilities, proving grounds and test facilities, mining and extraction operations, agriculturally-oriented businesses, and other rural-type industrial uses on a case-by-case basis.

Certain commercial land uses that do not require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and can prove alternative satisfactions to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy requirements are acceptable in the Rural Service Area.

STEP 4 Ability to now evaluate if an urban land use or rural land use is appropriate for the subject parcel.

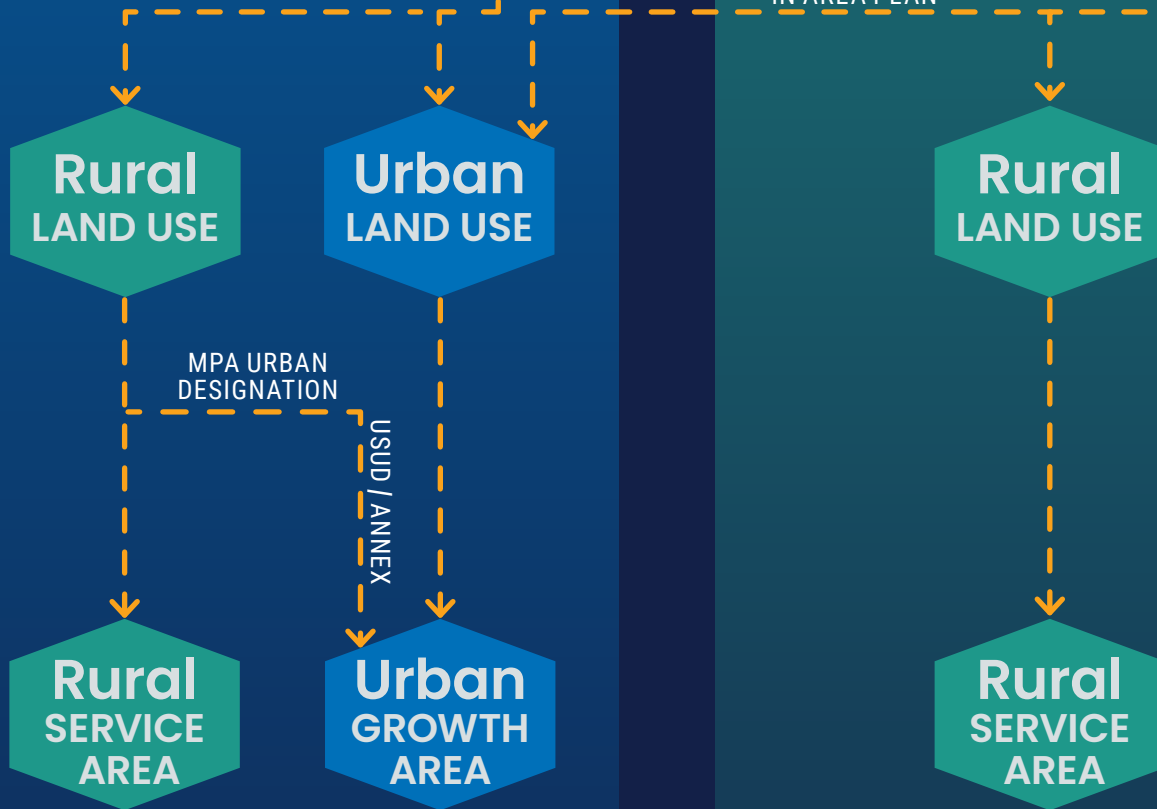
The evaluation process will consider consistency with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan as well as meeting the applicable Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD) strategy requirements and whether the land in question has an assurance of annexation with the applicable municipality to prevent the formation of a new County Island.

Area of Municipal Influence



- Municipal Planning Area
- County Island
- Improvement Association

Area of Rural Influence



Urban Solutions for Urban Development Strategy

The Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD) strategy is a policy approach used to evaluate the availability and accessibility of infrastructure and services when considering urban development. This strategy helps inform decisions related to a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or Zoning District Change by identifying whether infrastructure and services can support proposed development over time.

The USUD strategy is advisory and is not a regulatory requirement. It does not establish conditions of approval or require that infrastructure or public facilities be constructed or in place prior to development approval.

The following factors may be considered as part of the evaluation of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Zoning District Change for urban development. These considerations are used to inform staff analysis and decision-making. Not all factors will apply in every case, and they are not intended to function as minimum thresholds or approval criteria. These factors are not applied uniformly and will vary based on the type, scale, and location of the proposed development.

1 The availability of potable water service, including confirmation of infrastructure, a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity, and verification by the service provider of the ability to adequately serve new residents and businesses

2 The availability and capacity of sewer service, including verification by the service provider

3 The capacity of the roadway network to accommodate expected traffic increases

4 The presence of regional flood control infrastructure, where necessary

5 The availability of dry utilities (electric, telephone, natural gas), as applicable

6 The availability of law enforcement and fire service

7 Access to hospital or emergency medical facilities, where applicable

8 The availability and proximity of elementary, middle and high school capacity, as appropriate

9 The availability and proximity of adequate parks, recreation, and community facilities

10 The availability and proximity of libraries and other community facilities, as applicable

11 The availability and proximity of alternative transportation facilities, as applicable

12 The availability of other urban services and infrastructure, as applicable and based on the specific development proposal

Not all urban development requires these services or infrastructure, so **Table 6** identifies which services and infrastructure should be confirmed to exist or be readily available prior to a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Zoning District Change (note: the numbers in **Table 6** correspond to the paragraph numbers listed above). However, not all of these listed urban services and infrastructure are expected to be present or resolved at the time of application.

Considering the listed urban services and infrastructure in **Table 6** achieves several important objectives:

- Protecting taxpayers as well as public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Identifying which unincorporated areas are able to support urban development;
- Implementing an important county policy: having orderly, timely, and efficient urban development; and
- Helping the county determine when and where urban development is appropriate.

Table 6. Urban Service and Infrastructure Considerations by Land Use Type*The numbers in Table 6 correspond to the paragraph numbers listed on page 100.*

Service / Infrastructure	Urban Residential	Urban Commercial	Urban Industrial
1 Water	YES	YES	YES
2 Sewer	YES	YES	YES
3 Roads	YES	YES	YES
4 Flood Control	YES	YES	YES
5 Dry Utilities	As Applicable	As Applicable	As Applicable
6 Police & Fire	YES	YES	YES
7 Medical	YES	NO	NO
8 Schools	YES	NO	NO
9 Parks & Recreation	YES	NO	NO
10 Libraries	As Applicable	NO	NO
11 Alternative Transportation	As Applicable	As Applicable	As Applicable
12 Other Services	As Applicable	As Applicable	As Applicable

*Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development Department**Note: This table illustrates typical service relationships by land use type. It is not a set of requirements and is not used as a checklist for development approval.*

The USUD strategy is used to inform staff recommendations and Board of Supervisors' decisions by identifying infrastructure conditions, service availability, and long-term planning considerations. It does not operate as a checklist or pass-fail test for approval. Final decisions are based on the full range of adopted goals, policies, and case-specific factors.

Coordinated Pattern of Development

Achieving a coordinated pattern of development is essential to supporting Maricopa County's long-term strategic goals. Coordinated development can help produce balanced and economically efficient land use patterns that include a well-integrated mix of residential, retail, office, industrial, employment centers, open space, and community amenities. This approach advances several key objectives, including the implementation of the County's Strategic Priorities, enhancement of overall quality of life, expansion of the economic and tax base,

maintenance of fiscal stability, and reduction of reliance on residential development as the primary source of growth. In addition, balanced land use contributes to public health by increasing access to recreational opportunities, shortening travel times, and allowing residents more personal time.

This planning approach is especially important in unincorporated areas, where long distances between homes, workplaces, services, and recreational spaces are common. Land use imbalances in these

areas can result in increased traffic congestion, longer commutes, and limited access to essential services. Achieving balance in these settings is often challenging due to differing community expectations, infrastructure constraints, and the evolving nature of growth at the edge of urban development. As expansion continues, new challenges arise in areas where urban and rural lifestyles converge. These urban and rural interface zones require thoughtful planning and practical solutions to maintain compatibility and livability.

Key strategies for these transitional areas include consistent decisions about land use compatibility and addressing the diverse expectations of rural and urban residents. This involves managing the externalities of agricultural activities, including impacts from large animal livestock, on nearby suburban neighborhoods, while also preserving the ability of rural residents to continue traditional practices. It is important to determine appropriate land use densities and

intensities and to recognize the range of lifestyle preferences among residents. Some individuals prefer a rural environment with large lots and minimal services, others seek a suburban setting with low-density development and access to amenities, and still others desire an urban lifestyle with higher density and full access to services and opportunities. Establishing realistic expectations for infrastructure and service delivery in remote areas is essential. The County

must also consider whether and when it is appropriate for residents of cities and towns to contribute to the cost of enhanced services in unincorporated communities, such as law enforcement, animal control, and street maintenance. These decisions will play a critical role in shaping the future of growth and governance across Maricopa County.

Maricopa County Land Use Plan

In order to work toward accomplishing a coordinated pattern of development in the unincorporated area, Maricopa County uses a land use plan to guide how the coordinated pattern should develop based on the availability of current infrastructure, the suitability for future infrastructure, the potential for future annexation, feedback from the unincorporated residents in the Area Plans, and environmental considerations. Maricopa County recognizes 35 different land use designations as listed and described in **Table 7**. The designations can be grouped together under the following 7 broader categories:

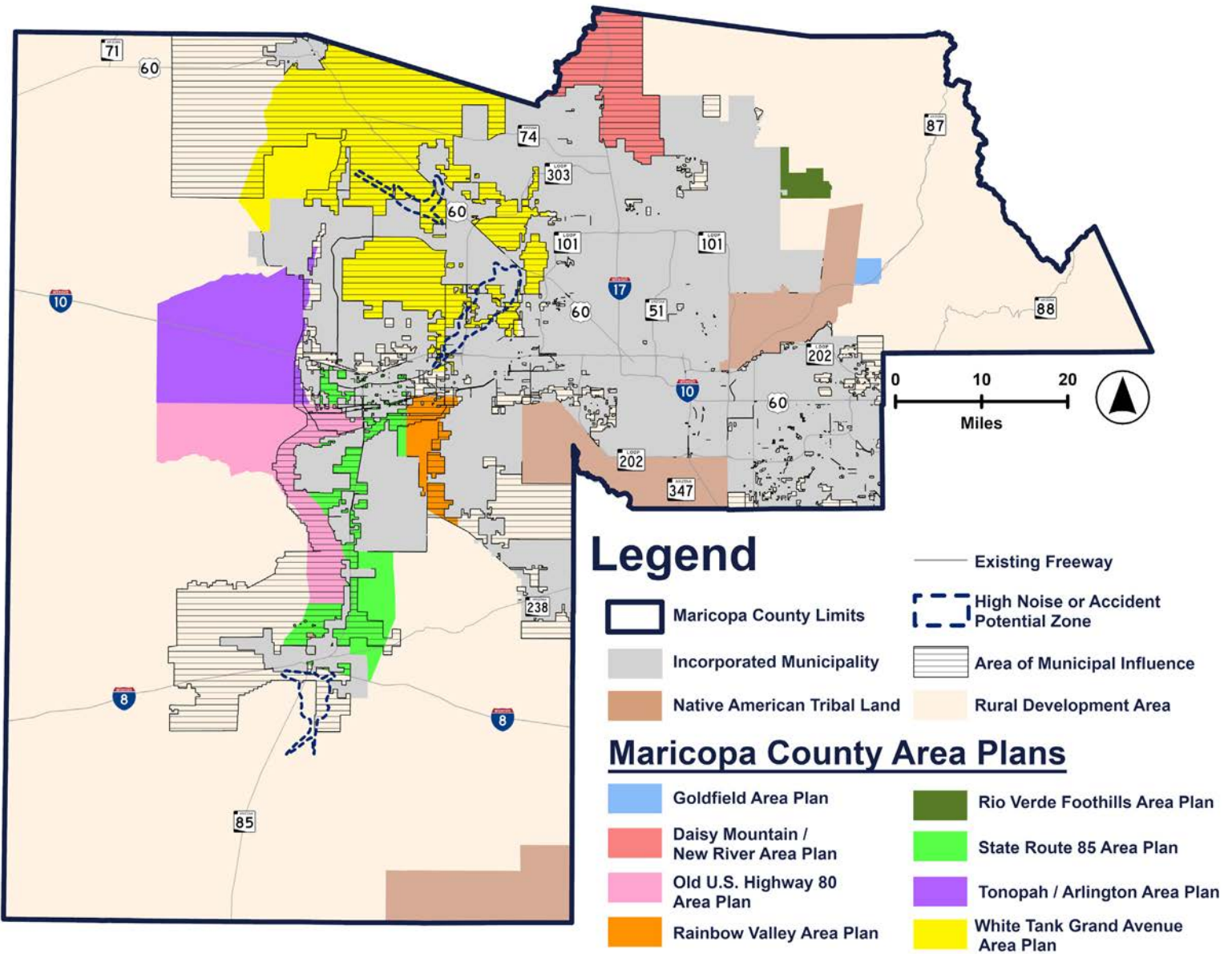
- Residential – Single Family
- Residential - Multiple Family
- Residential - Other
- Retail Commercial
- Employment
- Recreation
- Other

The 35 land use designations are primarily used in the individual land use plans of the 8 Area Plans. The White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan is the only one of the Area Plans that pulls its land uses solely from the Land Use Designations shown in **Table 7**. The other Area Plans utilize land uses that are similar to those found in the Land Use Designations Table in this Plan, but they do differ in name and description. In the effort of standardization across the County going forward, each Area Plan Update or new Area Plan must utilize the land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan in their respective land use plans. The rest of the unincorporated County outside of the eight Area Plans is designated as Rural Development Area. **Map 15** shows the organization of Maricopa County's land use plan by Area Plans as well as the Rural Development Area and Area of Municipal Influence.

Rural Development Area

The Rural Development Area is the portions of the unincorporated County outside of an Area Plan. This designation encompasses the two rural land uses: Single Family - Rural and Rural Retail. Single Family – Rural is a residential land use with a density of one dwelling unit per acre or less and Rural Retail is a commercial land use that has retail uses such as commercial plant nurseries, public riding/boarding stables, feed stores, kennels, and large animal medical clinics. Open Space and Parks land use designations intended for public use or benefit are also accommodated with the Rural Development Area where appropriate. There are unincorporated areas with the Rural Development Area designation that fall within the Area of Municipal Influence.

▶ **Map 15. Maricopa County Land Use Plan**



Source: Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2026

Land Use Plan Map Notes

1. Unincorporated areas outside of County Area Plans are designated Rural Development Area and accommodate rural land uses and rural zoning (with allowances for rural industrial land uses and certain commercial land uses) unless considered as part of the Urban Growth Area within the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework.
2. Portions of an Area Plan that are outside of the Area of Municipal Influence function under their own unique and respective Area Plan. These portions can be considered for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment within the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework.
3. All land designated under a previously approved Comprehensive Plan Amendment shall remain designated in accordance with the amendment unless or until the amendment has been rescinded through an action by the Board of Supervisors.
4. In accordance with ARS § 11-804(E), any Arizona State Land Department Trust Land designated as open space, recreation, conservation, or agriculture shall have a default minimum development density of 1 dwelling unit/acre. Any higher density/intensity designation shall require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Land Use Designation Table

Table 7 lists the designations recognized by Maricopa County for future planning purposes. In keeping with state law all changes in zoning district boundaries must be consistent with and conform to this Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, each designation includes an equivalent zoning district to help ensure consistency.

Table 7. Land Use Designations

Land Use Designation	Designation Description and Characteristics	Appropriate Zoning District***
RESIDENTIAL – SINGLE FAMILY		
 Single Family - Rural*	Density of 1 primary dwelling unit or less per gross acre	Rural-190, Rural-70, Rural 43
 Single Family - Large Lot	Density greater than 1 primary dwelling unit per gross acre, but not more than 2 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R1-35
 Single Family - Suburban	Density greater than 2 primary dwelling units per gross acre, but not more than 3 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R1-18
 Single Family - Transitional Lot	Density greater than 3 primary dwelling units per gross acre, but not more than 5 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R1-10
 Single Family - Small Lot	Density greater than 5 primary dwelling units per gross acre, but not more than 8 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R1-8, R1-7, R1-6
RESIDENTIAL – MULTIPLE FAMILY		
 Multiple Family - Low	Density greater than 8 primary dwelling units per gross acre, but not more than 12 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R-2
 Multiple Family - Intermediate	Density greater than 12 dwelling units per gross acre, but not more than 20 dwelling units per gross acre	R-3
 Multiple Family - High	Density greater than 20 primary dwelling units per gross acre	R-4, R-5

Land Use Designation	Designation Description and Characteristics	Appropriate Zoning District***
RESIDENTIAL – OTHER		
 Mobile Home Community	One or more mobile homes on a parcel of land that typically comprises a mobile home park or mobile home subdivision	Special Use Permit, or R-5 (which is the least intensive zoning district to meet requirements)
RETAIL COMMERCIAL		
 Rural Retail*	Commercial plant nurseries, public riding & boarding stables, feed stores, kennels, and large animal medical clinics	Special Use Permit, or least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
 Convenience Retail	Gas stations, convenience grocery/drug, and other small stand alone stores of similar character; total retail space: ≤ 30,000 sq. ft; typical site area: up to 5 acres	C-1
 Neighborhood Retail	Lead tenant single supermarket or specialty retail store along with small-scale secondary stores; total retail space: 30,000 - 150,000 sq. ft (anchor ratio: 30% - 50%); typical site area: up to 15 acres	C-S or C-1 (least intensive zoning district to meet requirements)
 Community Retail	Lead tenant of one or more department, warehouse, or specialty retail stores along with small-scale secondary stores typical of a Power Center; total retail space: 100,000 - 400,000 sq. ft (anchor ratio: 40% - 60%); typical site area: up to 40 acres	C-S
 Regional Retail	Lead tenant of more than one department store along with small-scale secondary stores typical of outlet or enclosed malls; total retail space: 400,000+ sq. ft (anchor ratio: 50% - 70%); typical site area: up to 100 acres	C-S
 Miscellaneous Retail	Stand-alone commercial uses that do not meet any other commercial land use category, and are intended to serve local or community needs	Least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
EMPLOYMENT		
 Office	Office space for administrative, professional, semi-professional, and support activities where no retail trade is conducted	C-O
 Light Industrial	Warehouse, distribution, and large-scale storage activities as well as manufacturing and assembly of small goods intended for end users. Noise, odor, dust, glare, and other side effects are completely confined within an enclosed building	IND 1

Land Use Designation	Designation Description and Characteristics	Appropriate Zoning District***
 Heavy Industrial	Manufacturing, assembly, and fabrication of large goods requiring heavy raw materials; processing and refinement of natural resources; data centers	IND-2 or IND-3 based on uses (least intensive zoning district to meet requirements)
 Business Park	Large area specifically designated for office, research, warehouse, and direct support employment uses of similar types that are grouped together and located in close proximity or on the same lot. Uses are developed under a coordinated plan with integrated infrastructure. Residential, general retail, and industrial uses involving assembly, fabrication, and processing are not allowed	C-0
 Industrial Park	Large area specifically designated for either light industrial and support uses or heavy industrial and support uses of similar type, and developed under a coordinated plan with integrated infrastructure. Residential and general retail uses are not allowed	IND 1, IND 2, or IND 3 (least intensive zoning district to meet requirements)
 Mixed Use Employment	Mix of office, research, warehouse, light industrial, and support employment uses on the same or adjacent parcels. Residential and general retail uses are not allowed	Least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
RECREATION		
 Golf	Golf courses and driving ranges	Any (golf course); Special Use Permit (driving range)
 Parks	Active recreation areas improved with playfield, exercise, picnic, and general recreation facilities. Sub-categories include mini-parks (¼ mile service area, approximate size 1 acre); neighborhood parks (1 mile service area, approximate size 15 acres); community parks (1-2 mile service area; approximate size 25 acres)	ANY
 Open Space	Unimproved areas specifically designated for preservation in an unaltered, natural state and which only offer passive recreation	ANY
 Resort & Campground	Guest ranch, RV park, campground, resort	Special Use Permit as applicable, or least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
 Zoo	Zoo, wildlife preserves, exotic animal farms	Special Use Permit as applicable, or least intensive zoning district to meet requirements

Land Use Designation	Designation Description and Characteristics	Appropriate Zoning District***
OTHER		
 Mixed Use	Mix of single and multiple family residential, office employment, parks and open space, appropriate community services, and retail commercial uses within the same building, same parcel, and/or same area under a single, integrated plan that emphasizes close proximity and pedestrian orientation	Least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
 Public Assembly	Stadiums, arenas, amphitheaters, race tracks, rodeo facilities, auctions and swap meets, amusement parks, convention facilities, amusement parks, miniature golf course, commercial dormitories, and other uses involving large assemblage of people	Special Use Permit as applicable, or least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
 Community Service	Facilities for government, education, religious worship, cemeteries, social gathering, public safety, residential care, and large-scale medical care which serves the general public	Special Use Permit as applicable or least intensive zoning district to meet requirements
 Utilities	Electric generating plants, water and wastewater treatment facilities, and associated offices and accessory equipment	IND 2
 Transportation	Airports, transit centers, rail yards	Special Use Permit as applicable; IND 2
 Waste Disposal	Landfills, waste transfer and recycling facilities	Special Use Permit as applicable; IND 3
 Storage	Mini-warehouse; storage & impoundment of vehicles, homes, aircraft, & boats; general outdoor storage	C-2 as applicable; special use permit as applicable; IND-3 as applicable based on use (least intensive zoning district to meet requirements)
 Proving Grounds**	Facilities for testing equipment and products	IND-2 or SUP
 Military Compatible	Applicable only within state statute-defined High Noise or Accident Potential Zones, it includes only those uses determined to be compatible and consistent with the high noise or accident potential of a military airport or ancillary military facility	Military Airport & Ancillary Military Facility Overlay Zoning District

* Unincorporated areas outside of County Area Plans are designated Rural Development Area and are only appropriate for rural land uses and rural zoning (with allowances for rural industrial land uses and certain commercial land uses) unless considered as part of the Urban Growth Area within the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework.

** This Comprehensive Plan recognizes permanently entitled Proving Grounds locations within the Area Plans. Although not shown on Maricopa County Land Use Map, the Proving Grounds designation is applicable for all proving grounds locations within this Plan or within the Area Plans, except for areas that fall within land designated as Military Compatible.

*** For guidance only based on gross project density and as applicable to current zoning districts. Other zoning districts may be appropriate on a case-by-case basis via the UPD process. This does not prevent the addition of new zoning districts to the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring growth is coordinated, high-quality, and inclusive.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals reinforce Stewardship by promoting responsible land use and environmental protection.



PROSPERITY

These goals collectively support Prosperity by fostering economic stability and growth with fiscal responsibility.

Land Use Goal 1: Achieve a coordinated pattern of development.

Goal Statement: Ensure that development across the County is well-planned and cohesive, promoting efficient land use and infrastructure, and leading to a more organized growth pattern.

Land Use Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports phasing plans for new urban development to coordinate such development with new urban services and infrastructure.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports market feasibility studies, cost/benefit where warranted to help determine when new urban development in unincorporated areas is appropriate.
- 1.3** Maricopa County supports considering the existence or readiness of urban services and infrastructure as a factor in the approval or denial of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Zoning District Change in accordance with the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.

1.4 Maricopa County supports carefully evaluating development in areas where infrastructure and public services are limited or not planned, with consideration of long-term service delivery and fiscal impacts.

1.5 Maricopa County supports coordinating land use and infrastructure planning with state agencies, other counties, municipalities, relevant utilities, federal agencies, and other regulatory bodies.

1.6 Maricopa County supports annexation of urban development in unincorporated Maricopa County by municipalities.

1.7 Maricopa County supports annexation of any unincorporated area of the County that is within a municipal planning area and completely surrounded by a municipality or municipalities.

1.8 Maricopa County supports the prevention of forming new County Islands.

1.9 Maricopa County supports planning coordination with adjacent municipalities, landowners, and neighboring public community members for proposed development within County Islands or municipal planning areas.

1.10 Maricopa County supports considering the plans and projects of overlapping or neighboring agencies in the planning of unincorporated lands and invite comments and coordination when appropriate.

1.11 Maricopa County supports flexible design and zoning techniques within County Islands or municipal planning areas through pre-annexation agreements, as needed, to align future development with the standards and service expectations of the adjacent municipalities.

1.12 Maricopa County supports directing new urban development to the Urban Growth Area identified in this Plan and complying with the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.

1.13 Maricopa County supports balanced land use patterns that include various residential, retail, non-retail employment, and public and civic land uses when appropriate urban services are available.

1.14 Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new urban development on existing rural land uses, including but not limited to, agriculture, mining, and forestry.

1.15 Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new rural development and new agriculture on existing urban land uses.

1.16 Maricopa County supports periodic reviews of the Area Plan Program and the individual Area Plans to assess relevance, implementation progress, and alignment with the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan.

1.17 Maricopa County supports decommissioning an individual Area Plan upon Board consideration and approval if the amount of unincorporated land within the area equals less than 50% of the original total Area Plan limits.

1.18 Maricopa County supports requiring any Area Plan Update or new Area Plan to use the land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Goal 2: Protect public health, safety, and well-being within unincorporated Maricopa County.

Goal Statement: Implementing land use policies that prioritize the health, safety, and overall well-being of residents is essential for creating desirable developments and destinations and maintaining a high quality of life for existing residents.

Land Use Policies:

-
- 2.1** Maricopa County supports considering response times for public safety, fire, and other emergency responders in determining the feasibility of new development in unincorporated areas.
-
- 2.2** Maricopa County supports public safety and security features included in the design of new and existing development to promote safe and active communities.
-
- 2.3** Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new development on Maricopa County's regional parks, the Maricopa Trail, and other public open spaces.
-
- 2.4** Maricopa County supports interconnected trails, parks, preserves, open space, recreation centers, and similar features in new development areas where feasible.
-
- 2.5** Maricopa County supports the preservation of known and potential sources of aggregates and related mining operations within its area of jurisdiction from sterilization by proximate incompatible land uses.
-
- 2.6** Maricopa County supports land use buffers and land use transitions in urban/rural interface areas, including near aggregate mining operations, military installations, proving grounds, and the County's regional parks.
-
- 2.7** Maricopa County supports the restoration of land to a beneficial condition on post-aggregates mining reclamation sites, that may include future development if feasible considering site conditions and the compatibility of nearby land uses.
-
- 2.8** Maricopa County supports flexible design and zoning techniques when used to establish balanced and efficient land use patterns, and when used to protect important environmental and open space areas and the connections between these areas.
-
- 2.9** Maricopa County supports the use of land use buffers and compatible land use strategies near existing and future high voltage electric utility line corridors in coordination with power utility companies.
-
- 2.10** Maricopa County supports land use compatibility within the High Noise or Accident Potential Zone of Luke Air Force Base, Auxiliary Airfield #1, and the military auxiliary airfield near the town of Gila Bend.
-
- 2.11** Maricopa County supports land use compatibility in the influence area of a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site.
-

Land Use Goal 3: Encourage high-quality development.

Goal Statement: Development projects that meet high standards of design and construction are key for enhancing the County's aesthetic appeal and long-term viability.

Land Use Policies:

-
- 3.1** Maricopa County supports mixed housing options.
-
- 3.2** Maricopa County supports residential development that contributes to maintaining a long-term level of high quality of development.
-
- 3.3** Maricopa County supports locating housing in areas served by transportation networks, in close proximity to job centers, and where public services and infrastructure are available or readily available.
-
- 3.4** Maricopa County supports rehabilitation and/or abatement by private parties of substandard, nuisance, vacant, and/or abandoned homes, buildings and land to protect neighborhoods and property values.
-
- 3.5** Maricopa County supports subdivisions rather than unregulated land divisions otherwise known as "wildcat" lot splits.
-
- 3.6** Maricopa County supports high-quality commercial centers and well-designed office, business, and industrial parks in the Urban Growth Area with a preference for these developments to annex into a municipality.
-



Land Use Goal 4: Exercise sound financial management in land use decisions.

Goal Statement: Land use decisions that strengthen the County's fiscal health and ensure long-term financial stability are important and central to the financially responsible planning aims of the County.

Land Use Policies:

- 4.1** Maricopa County supports compliance with its capital improvement and other funding programs, except when reimbursement is made to the County for unplanned costs or when private capital is used for the provision of services and infrastructure.
- 4.2** Maricopa County supports using homeowners' associations and related organizations and improvement districts to manage and maintain services, infrastructure, and amenities to help limit impacts to taxpayers where appropriate.
- 4.3** Maricopa County supports using development agreements for large-scale urban development to help limit financial impacts to the County.



Land Use Goal 5: Provide regional leadership on land use issues.

Goal Statement: The County seeks to take a proactive and leading role in addressing land use challenges and setting standards for development in the region among the various jurisdictions in order to promote best practices in land use planning.

Land Use Policies:

- 5.1** Maricopa County supports promoting awareness about the unique aspects of living in unincorporated areas.

- 5.2** Maricopa County supports periodic reviews of the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance and the initiation of specific amendments on an as needed basis.

- 5.3** Maricopa County supports periodic comprehensive updates of the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance on an as needed basis.

- 5.4** Maricopa County supports coordinated planning efforts between local, state, and federal agencies.

- 5.5** Maricopa County supports coordinating with the Arizona State Land Department in the planning and design of large-scale urban development in or adjacent to State Trust Land.

- 5.6** Maricopa County supports working with state and federal agencies and utility companies on any changes to their land ownership boundaries that could lead to acquiring land for local public use.

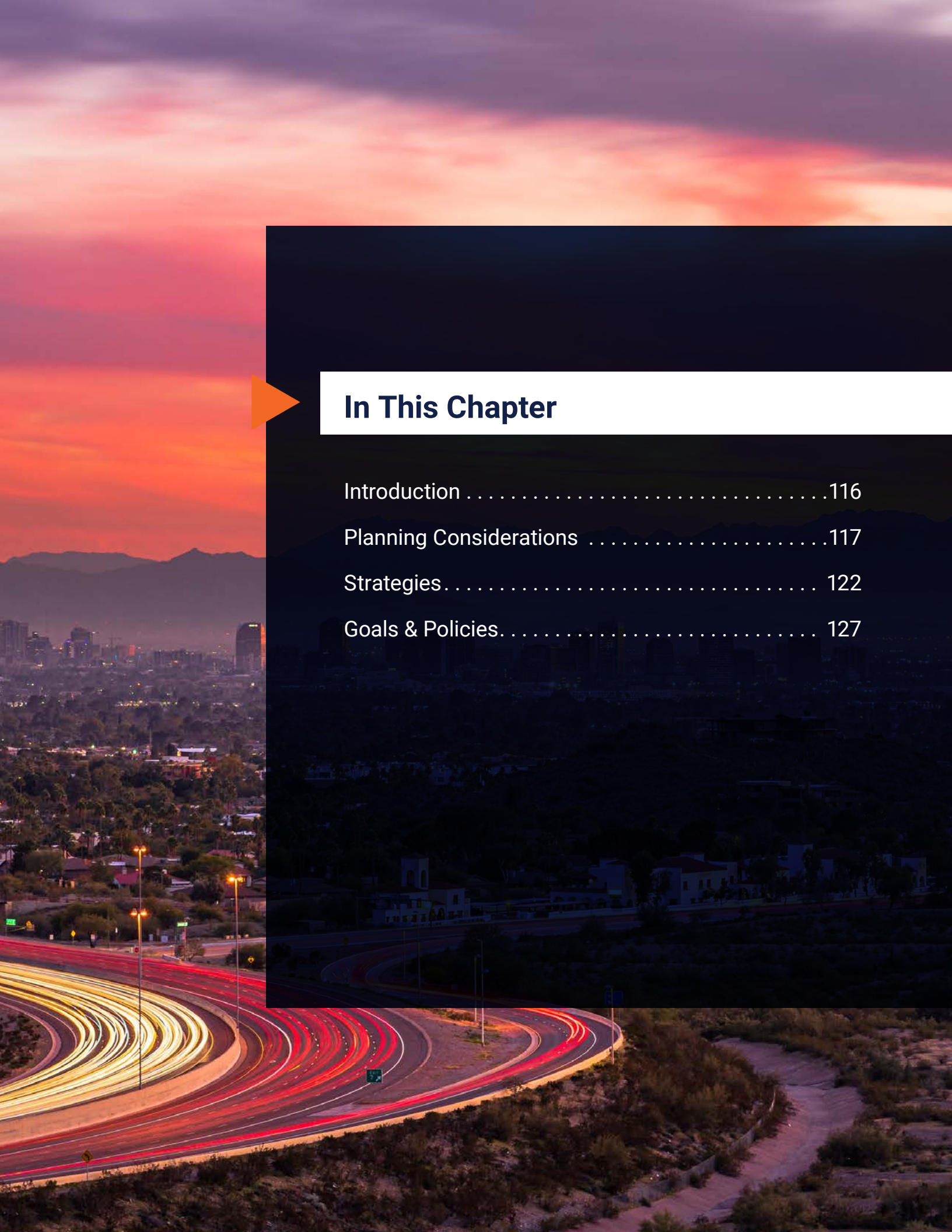
- 5.7** Maricopa County supports coordinating with state and federal agencies and utility companies to address safety and security issues associated with new development near the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station.

- 5.8** Maricopa County supports the incorporation by developers of both on-site utility infrastructure for large-scale urban developments and the designated utility corridors necessary to provide essential utility services to those developments.



6

Transportation



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The Transportation element establishes Maricopa County's support for coordinating future growth with a safe and comprehensive transportation system. The Transportation element also emphasizes the importance of an efficient transportation system to the region's economy.

Introduction

A robust, efficient, and high-quality transportation system is vital to the movement of people and goods throughout Maricopa County. It serves as a cornerstone for economic competitiveness, regional connectivity, and quality of life. This element delineates the general location and extent of existing and proposed transportation infrastructure in unincorporated Maricopa County which includes:

- Highways
- Arterial and collector streets
- Bicycle lanes and routes
- Other multimodal transportation facilities or options

It is important to note this is a list of transportation infrastructure existing in unincorporated Maricopa County and not what the County's transportation department is responsible for planning, prioritizing, and maintaining.

This element also supports broader regional initiatives aimed at developing cohesive roadway transportation networks and supporting multimodal facilities where appropriate and feasible. It also identifies barriers to improving transportation infrastructure, that are especially relevant in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Maricopa County faces a dynamic set of transportation challenges, including rapid population growth and limited financial resources. These factors will continue to shape the County's transportation landscape for years to come. However, they also present opportunities to implement innovative solutions that address the needs of residents and businesses.

While the Comprehensive Plan cannot resolve every transportation issue, it does promote a coordinated approach that aligns transportation planning with land use decisions. This integration is essential for enhancing mobility, fostering viable and balanced growth, and ensuring that transportation investments yield long-term benefits for the County.

Planning Considerations

Existing Roadway Network

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is responsible for maintaining roadway infrastructure within County-owned right-of-way. This typically falls within the unincorporated areas of the County that are outside the jurisdiction of municipal and state transportation networks. This system encompasses approximately 2,458 centerline miles of roadways, forming a critical component of the County's overall transportation framework. Since 2010, there has been a total of 10 miles of new freeway frontage added to the state system in unincorporated Maricopa County.

MCDOT documents its long-range planning through its Transportation Systems Plan (TSP). This plan outlines how limited financial and physical resources will be allocated to maintain and improve the existing roadway network while addressing the increasing demand for new infrastructure driven by population growth and economic development. The TSP encompasses a broad range of topics, including:

- Engineering and roadway design standards
- Infrastructure financing strategies
- System performance and capacity planning

The TSP provides the analytical foundation for transportation decision-making and supports the County's efforts to deliver a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation system.

MCDOT organizes its roadway network within the TSP through a hierarchical functional classification system. This system classifies roads based on several criteria, including:

- Type of service provided
- Desired Level of Service (LOS)
- Target Maximum Operating Speed Limit
- Roadway design features

2,458 Miles

Miles of roadway that form a critical component of Maricopa County's overall transportation framework.



The functional classifications used by MCDOT are Parkway, Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, Minor Collector, and Local. These functional classifications are described in **Table 8**. The higher classifications, such as parkways and arterials, tend to support longer-distance travel and connect to regional traffic generators. Lower classifications, such as collectors and local roads, facilitate shorter and more localized trips. The MCDOT’s functional classifications of the County-maintained roadway network, including

both existing and future facilities, are displayed in **Map 16**. MCDOT’s functional classification system is separate from the functional classification that influences a roadway’s eligibility for federal and state funding.

Roadways within Maricopa County Regional Parks are under the purview of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (MCPRD). As part of the parks master plan update process, MCPRD is preparing circulation plans for each of the twelve Maricopa

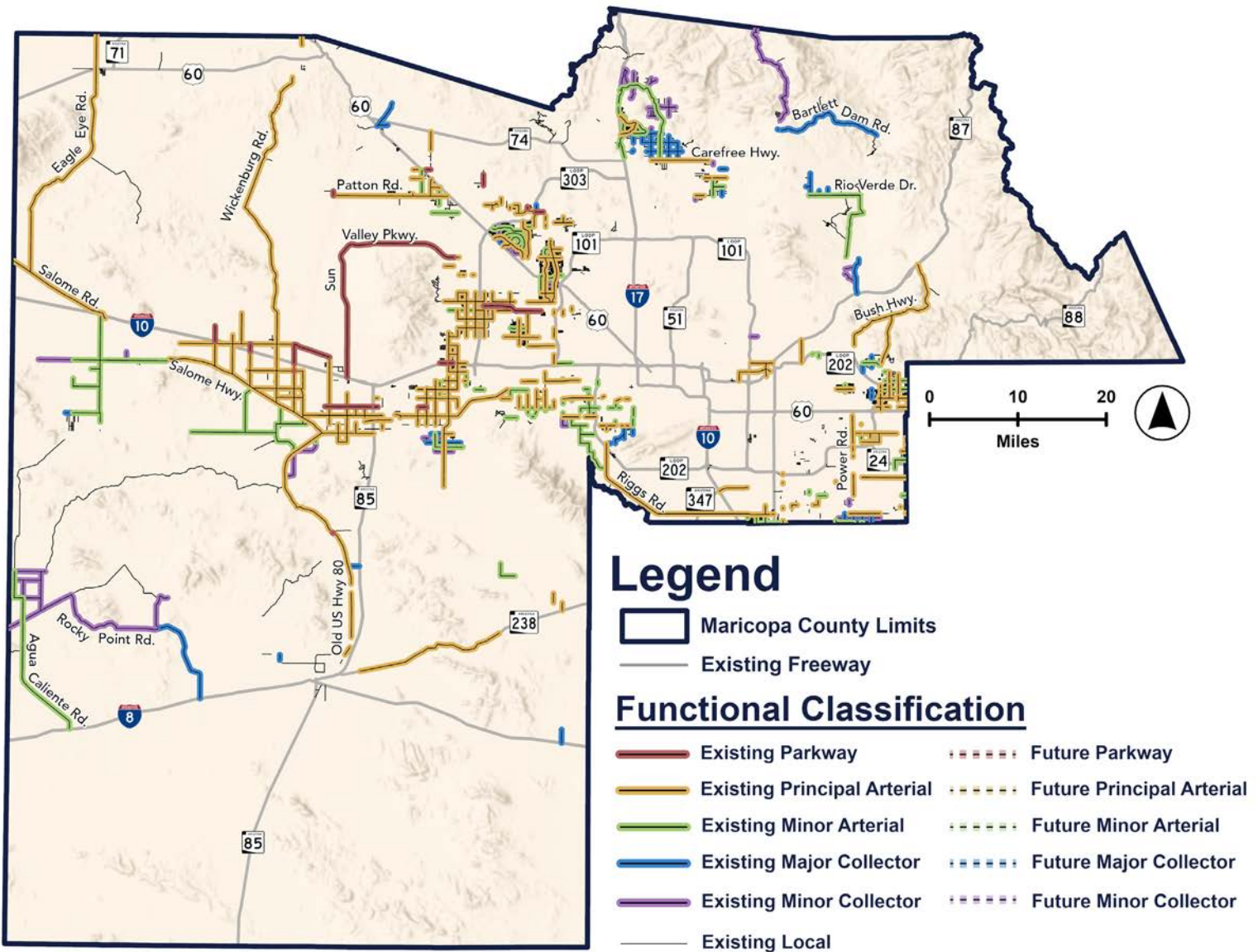
County Regional Parks Master Plans. These circulation plans guide roadway improvement strategies to provide optimal interconnectivity, accessibility, and a balanced park roadway system. While park roadways account for only a fraction of land within the parks and preserves, they serve an important role in connecting visitors to park facilities. County Regional Park roadways use separate functional classification criteria and are not included in this map.

Table 8. MCDOT Roadway Functional Classifications

Roadway Type	Context	Target of Maximum Operating Speed	Minimum Right-of-Way
Parkway	Urban	55 mph	200 feet
	Rural	65 mph	200 feet
Principal Arterial	Urban	45 mph	130 feet
	Rural	55 mph	150 feet
Minor Arterial	Urban	45 mph	110 feet
	Rural	45 mph	130 feet
Major Collector	Urban	30 mph	80 feet
	Rural	40 mph	80 feet
Minor Collector	Urban	30 mph	60 feet
	Rural	55 mph	60 feet
Local Road	Urban	25 mph	50 feet
	Rural	25 mph	50 feet

Source: Maricopa County Roadway Design Manual, 2025

▶ **Map 16.** MCDOT Functional Classification (Existing and Future)



Source: Maricopa County Department of Transportation, 2025

The MCDOT network includes roadways classified from parkways and arterials to collectors and local roads, each serving distinct travel needs.

Active Transportation



The Maricopa County active transportation network includes bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the unincorporated areas of the County. The MCDOT Roadway Design Manual (RDM) provides guidelines for the development standards for this network.

Bicycle facilities include, but are not limited to, dedicated bicycle lanes, signed bicycle routes, and paved shoulders. These facilities are located in both rural and urban areas of unincorporated County. New bicycle facilities are routinely added to the County’s transportation system during roadway construction and maintenance projects. **Table 9** lists the types of bicycle facilities in unincorporated Maricopa County as reported in the MCDOT Asset Management System. Bicycle lanes are located both in residential and commercial areas, as well as on rural roads which lead to parks and recreation areas. Paved shoulders are primarily found on regional corridors at the edge of the County’s more urbanized areas.

The pedestrian facilities in the Maricopa County transportation network include, but are not limited to, sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, median refuge islands, pedestrian under/overpasses, and signalized crossings. Traditionally, sidewalk width standards are a minimum of five feet. In 2021, MCDOT implemented a six-foot or greater requirement for all new sidewalk projects. According to the MCDOT Asset Management System, unincorporated Maricopa County has 1,276 miles of sidewalks, located primarily in residential developments. Approximately 59% of all sidewalks that are located in unincorporated Maricopa County are in Sun City and Sun City West. Anthem has just about 10% of all sidewalks in unincorporated Maricopa County. Unincorporated communities near Waddell, Litchfield Park, East Mesa, and Laveen also have extensive sidewalk networks. **Figure 12** shows the summary of sidewalk locations in Maricopa County as reported from the MCDOT Asset Management System.

Beyond providing a safe and designated space for walking, the County works to adhere to standards from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to build a network that emphasizes inclusive and independent mobility. To evaluate and prioritize ADA facilities, MCDOT created the Neighborhood Facilities Analysis (NFA) studies to analyze neighborhoods in unincorporated Maricopa County and provide recommendations to develop projects for future implementation.

Table 9. Maricopa County Bicycle Facility Inventory

Facility Type	Centerline Miles
Bike Lane	160
Bike Route	30
Paved Shoulder	144
Unidentified	53
Total	387

Source: MCDOT Asset Management System, 2026

Figure 12. Summary of Sidewalk Facilities in Unincorporated Maricopa County



Source: MCDOT Asset Management System, 2026

Multimodal and Alternative Transportation

Maricopa County does not operate or provide regional transit services. However, MCDOT does provide accessible connections to the overall Valley Metro network that provides alternative transportation options for residents of Maricopa County to access nearby and regional destinations. There are a total of 17 different operating bus routes and 119 bus stops in the Valley Metro system located along roadways maintained by MCDOT.

The need to support multimodal and alternative transportation is a reasonable strategy to address multiple challenges, including Maricopa County’s air quality concerns and the

economic, social, and environmental impacts of traffic congestion. However, it is important to clarify that although Maricopa County contributes funding to public transit, it is not a direct provider or operator of such services nor does the County have the funding for substantial contributions to multimodal facilities. Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the County’s role in advancing multimodal options where feasible such as bicycle, pedestrian, and other low-volume alternative transportation mode facilities. This regional role is where the County can exert direct influence and provide meaningful support.

Transportation Improvement Plan

Maricopa County updates its Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) annually to outline and prepare for the next five years of enhancements to the MCDOT transportation system. The TIP prioritizes these improvements, with the highest-priority projects scheduled first. While the TIP covers a five-year span, only the projects listed for the first year receive immediate funding due to the county’s single-year budget approach. However, as projects rise in priority, they typically secure funding over time.

Since the TIP aligns available funding with the highest needs, deviations from it can be challenging. Therefore, when new development necessitates infrastructure improvements not included in the TIP, Maricopa County assesses the mechanisms for how the development should cover these costs. This scenario is common in unincorporated areas, particularly where large urban developments are situated within the County’s area of jurisdiction. Moreover, this scenario highlights the importance of ensuring that new growth does not strain the County’s financial resources and that future improvements are planned strategically and rationally.

Strategies



Future Network Growth and Maintenance

MCDOT looks to meet future needs for its transportation network through implementing carefully planned solutions that maintain a safe and efficient transportation system. Following the predominant land use patterns, a majority of the future growth of new roadways under the County's jurisdiction is planned in the western portion of the urban fringe with a noticeable concentration of planned future roadways north of Interstate 10 near Tonopah.

As growth continues throughout unincorporated Maricopa County, development of the transportation system should consider a level of sensitivity to the surrounding landscape, especially in the rural areas of the County. Scenic corridors

are a helpful tool to contribute to community identity and tourism appeal by highlighting of the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique desert landscapes. Relatedly, wildlife habitat linkages, identified with collaboration from state and federal agencies, are critical for maintaining biodiversity and safe animal movement across natural landscapes fragmented by development. The Comprehensive Plan supports transportation planning that considers the impact of the growth of the transportation system on scenic corridors and determined wildlife habitat linkages. The aim is to minimize habitat disruption, preserve viewsheds, and incorporate other potential mitigation measures to strike a balance between mobility growth and stewardship of the natural landscape.

Preserving Road Alignments

In order to accommodate increased traffic on its roadway network from growth and new development in an efficient and cost-effective manner, MCDOT relies on the identification and preservation of roadway alignments where new or expanded roads are anticipated. Identifying future road alignments can present challenges because of environmental, economic,

legal, political and engineering considerations. However, the overall alignment preservation process results in long-term plans that provide guidance for the preferred locations for future roads, highways and bridges.

Municipal Annexations of Roadways

Typically, roads operated by Maricopa County are in unincorporated areas and travel through rural and often remote locales. Compared to municipally operated roads, County roads are likely to be missing urban features such as streetlights, fully built-out roadway conditions, fully-controlled drainage, and pedestrian facilities.

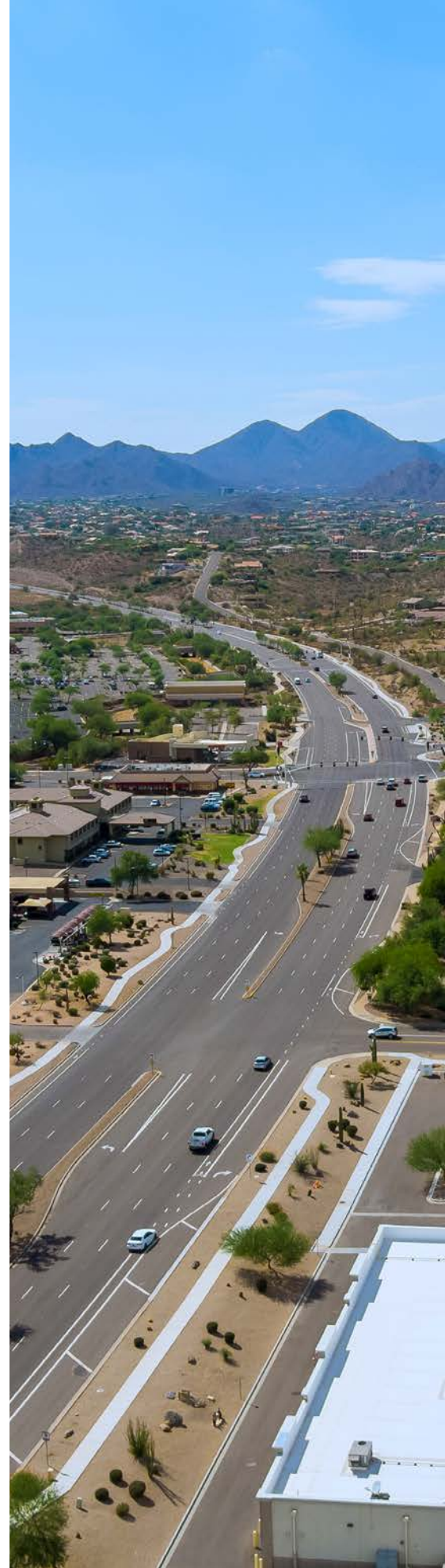
As the incorporated municipalities in the County continue to grow and expand, Maricopa County places importance on its goal of having both land and the adjacent roadways be annexed. In the past, municipalities often annexed only the land and left the adjacent roads behind still under the County's operation, which hindered these roads from being brought up to the standards of the annexing municipality. These County

roadways were quickly surrounded by an increasingly developing urban area resulting in transportation needs that a municipality is more appropriate to address. This led to scalloped streets that are a hazardous condition in many County Islands where short roadway segments change their configurations as the pavement crosses between the boundaries of incorporated and unincorporated areas. Frequently, these scalloped street configurations do not meet the surrounding municipal standards so they are effectively rural roads within urban areas that are costly to maintain, may not have adequate street lighting, and are difficult to eliminate. Maricopa County highly encourages municipalities to annex adjoining roads to reduce scalloped streets and help reduce financial burden on County taxpayers.

Intelligent Transportation Systems and Connected Vehicles

Maricopa County supports the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Connected Vehicle (CV) technology as a means to support and enhance the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the region in a manner that does not increase surveillance of drivers' habits. Through its nationally recognized SMARTDrive Program, MCDOT has been a leader in advancing CV technology since 2008, collaborating with partners such as ADOT, the University of Arizona, and the Institute of Automated Mobility. These efforts include the development of a 5.3-mile test bed in Anthem, Arizona, featuring eleven signalized

intersections equipped to exchange real-time data between vehicles and infrastructure, improving emergency response and reducing crash risks. MCDOT also plays a key role in the Arizona Connected Vehicle Program, which integrates ITS architecture across jurisdictions to support seamless communication and traffic and safety management. By investing in these technologies, Maricopa County is building a smarter transportation network that reduces congestion, enhances safety, and prepares the region for future mobility innovations.



Transportation Funding

MCDOT receives the majority of its revenue from funds delivered out of the Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF), which is made up of revenue collected from gasoline and use-fuel taxes, motor vehicle registration fees, motor-carrier taxes, vehicle-license taxes, motor vehicle operators' license fees, and other miscellaneous fees. The State of Arizona's Vehicle License Tax (VLT) is a property tax based on vehicle assessments that also funds a portion of MCDOT transportation initiatives.

The MAG Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP) provides over 12% of MCDOT's annual revenue. These funds originate from the Proposition 479 half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2024 and started in 2026 to fund

transportation projects on the MCDOT system, as well as funding improvements for other jurisdictions in the region. Just under 20% of MCDOT's remaining revenue sources come from a combination of intergovernmental charges, permit fees, interest earnings, asset sales, grants, partnership revenue, and other miscellaneous revenue.

It is important for MCDOT to understand the sources of its annual funds and analyze the projections of available funds into the future. This way MCDOT can put together its annual TIP using a data-based process to match funds to the needs of its entire transportation system.

Planned and Conceptual Future Highways in Maricopa County

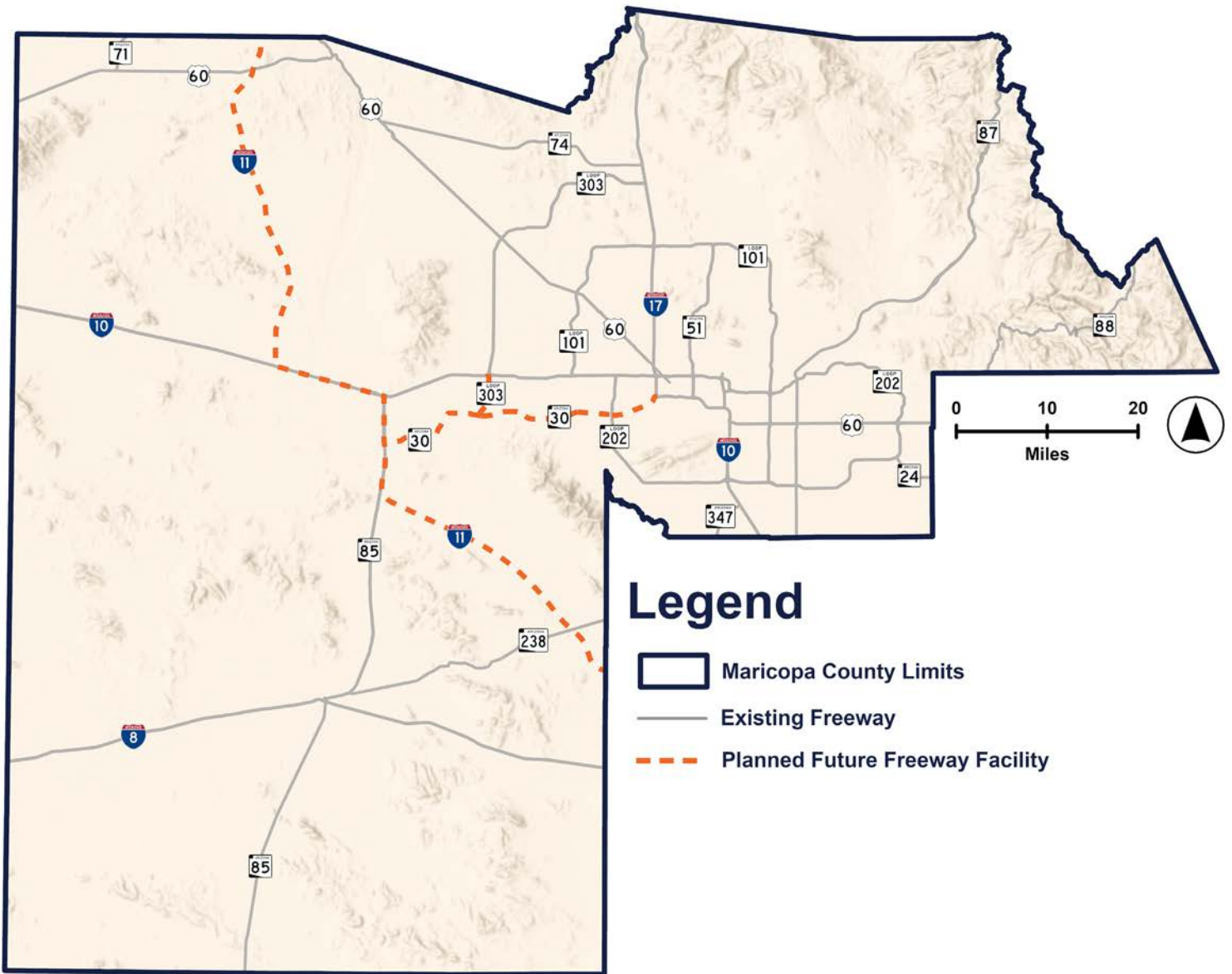
Beyond Maricopa County's transportation system, there are planned future freeway facilities (see **Map 17**) within the County's limits that will travel through unincorporated areas and likely bring about transformative impacts to them. Interstate 11 (I-11) is a planned new freeway corridor that will ultimately run from the US-Mexican border in Douglas, AZ to Las Vegas, NV. In Maricopa County, I-11 will traverse between the City of Goodyear and the Sonoran Desert National Monument and head north toward Wickenburg west of the White Tank Mountains. At the time of adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, I-11 in Arizona has no secured funding and no construction timeline.

State Route 30 (SR 30) is another planned freeway in the Phoenix metropolitan area that will be a second east-west reliever, south of Interstate 10 starting at the Interstate 17 at the Durango Curve travelling through Laveen and ending at State Route 85 southwest of the City of Buckeye. The future construction of SR 30

is slated for funding under Proposition 479. When completed SR 30 will most definitely have implications for the development of the unincorporated areas it travels through near Laveen, Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye.

Other planned freeway facility improvements that will have an effect on unincorporated Maricopa County are the furthering of State Route Loop 303 (Loop 303) to the planned SR 30 alignment and improvements to State Route 74 that include widening and intersection upgrades. These improvements to State Route 74 do have an additional consideration of balance due to the facility's designation as a regulatory scenic corridor. Both of these improvements to Loop 303 and State Route 74 would likely prompt and advance development in the unincorporated areas adjacent to these facilities.

▶ **Map 17. Future Planned Freeway Facility Map**



Source: ADOT 2021; FHWA 2021; MAG RTP MOMENTUM 2050 Update

Future highways shaping Maricopa County include State Route 30, an extension of Loop 303, improvements to State Route 74, and Interstate 11.

Partnering with Jurisdictions in the Region

Maricopa County plays a vital role as a collaborative partner in regional transportation planning, working closely with municipal governments, state agencies, and federal entities to ensure a cohesive and efficient transportation network. Through its active participation in regional planning organizations such as the Maricopa Association of Governments, the County helps shape long-range transportation strategies that align with local priorities and broader regional goals. This partnership enables coordinated investment in infrastructure, data sharing, and policy development that supports multimodal transportation, safety enhancements, and efficient growth across jurisdictional boundaries.

At the state and federal levels, Maricopa County maintains strong working relationships with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), among others. These collaborations facilitate the integration of county transportation projects into statewide plans and ensure compliance with federal funding and regulatory requirements. By leveraging these partnerships, the County is able to secure resources for critical improvements, contribute to regional mobility initiatives, and advocate for policies that reflect the needs of its diverse communities. This cooperative approach strengthens the overall transportation system and reinforces Maricopa County's role as a proactive and reliable partner in shaping Arizona's overall mobility future.

Maricopa County does recognize the importance of strategic partnerships with municipalities to ensure the effective maintenance and improvement of the regional transportation network. Through cost-sharing arrangements and mutual financial support, the County has the ability to work with local jurisdictions to address roadway repairs and enhancements that benefit County residents and neighboring communities. These cooperative efforts maximize the impact of limited public resources, reduce duplication, and promote consistent service delivery across jurisdictional boundaries. By aligning funding priorities and leveraging shared investments, Maricopa County helps create a more resilient and interconnected transportation system.

Additionally, Maricopa County supports the use of intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) that facilitate the construction of roads within or through County Islands to the standards of the surrounding municipality. These agreements enable municipalities or private entities to build infrastructure that meets local design and operational expectations, particularly in areas slated for future annexation. This approach ensures continuity in roadway quality, safety, and aesthetics, while streamlining the transition of jurisdictional responsibility. By endorsing IGAs, the County promotes efficient development practices and reinforces its commitment to regional coordination and long-term planning.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring accessibility and connectivity for all residents.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals promote Stewardship by encouraging efficient transportation systems that reduce congestion and environmental impacts.



PROSPERITY

These goals ensure Prosperity through infrastructure investments and strengthened economic competitiveness.

Transportation Goal 1: Provide a comprehensive transportation system.

Goal Statement: Developing an integrated transportation network that meets the needs of all users is vital to ensure that the system is accessible, efficient, and well-connected.

Transportation Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports compliance with the County Department of Transportation’s currently adopted Transportation System Plan and its successor plans.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports adherence to its Transportation Improvement Program and its successor programs.
- 1.3** Maricopa County supports using the preferred funding methods identified in the Cost of Development element to pay for transportation improvements necessary for new development.
- 1.4** Maricopa County supports new development funding unanticipated, accelerated and nonprogrammed improvements where such development requires deviation from the Transportation Improvement Program.

1.5 Maricopa County supports the preservation of rights-of-way, as necessary, to maintain and extend the grid system, to support the state’s development of the highway-interchange network, and to preserve the scenic corridors.

1.6 Maricopa County supports roadway planning that promotes identified scenic corridors and wildlife habitat linkages and connectivity where necessary.

1.7 Maricopa County supports public education efforts that assist in reducing air pollution.

Transportation Goal 2: Manage the transportation system to provide continual improvements in reliability, efficiency, and safety.

Goal Statement: Continuously improving the reliability, efficiency, and safety of the transportation system through active management is crucial to meet the community’s evolving needs.

Transportation Policies:

2.1 Maricopa County supports coordinating decisions on land use patterns and transportation investments that aim for a safe, efficient, and fiscally solvent transportation network.

2.2 Maricopa County supports designing new roadways to include pedestrian facilities separated from vehicular traffic with multimodal crossings on arterial roadways as necessary.

2.3 Maricopa County supports the inclusion or connection to alternative transportation in the design of existing and new urban development, as feasible and effective. Alternative transportation can include, but is not limited to, sidewalks, the Maricopa Trail and other trail connections, bicycle facility infrastructure, park-and-ride/public transit facilities, and other appropriate practices.

2.4 Maricopa County supports using Intelligent Transportation Systems and Connected Vehicle technology for efficient and safe movement of people and goods.

Transportation Goal 3: Support regional and interagency collaboration.

Goal Statement: Fostering collaboration among the transportation agencies in the region is critical to create and maintain a more effective, integrated, and functionally competitive transportation system.

Transportation Policies:

- 3.1** Maricopa County supports partnerships with municipalities in cost sharing and mutual financial support for road repairs and improvements.
- 3.2** Maricopa County supports municipal annexation of roads that are adjacent to County Islands.
- 3.3** Maricopa County supports intergovernmental agreements that allow for municipal or private construction of roads in and passing through County Islands to the standards of the surrounding municipality where these roads are intended to be annexed by the municipality.
- 3.4** Maricopa County supports partnerships with federal, state, and local governments and agencies for interjurisdictional traffic operations and management for the benefit of regional safety and mobility.
- 3.5** Maricopa County supports coordination between property owners to establish an agreement to maintain private ingress/egress.





Environment



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The Environment element identifies Maricopa County's foremost concerns with respect to environmental issues, and potential strategies for lessening the impact that development has on its environment. Particular attention focuses on air quality, water quality, wildlife protection, natural and cultural resources, and natural and environmental hazards.

Introduction

The Environment Element identifies Maricopa County's natural resources and highlights the importance of their retention, enhancement, and responsible development to improve quality of life and environmental health. Protecting and managing all of the critical resources and conditions that exist across the County such as our air, water, wildlife, and other aspects of the natural landscape are essential for a healthy future. Likewise, preserving remaining areas of undisturbed plant and wildlife habitats is critical. Without careful planning, new development can lead to depletion of limited water and energy supplies, increased air and water pollution, and harm to biological resources.

This chapter establishes a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the unique natural assets and ecological systems that define Maricopa County's desert environment. Defined goals promote responsible growth, while addressing challenges such as heat exposure, wildfire risk, air and groundwater quality, and habitat fragmentation. Additional planning policies further help to prioritize conservation, efficiency, and environmental protection in order to mitigate these risks. The following sections summarize these key natural resources that must be considered as the county experiences continued growth and development.

Protecting and managing critical resources like air, water, energy, and dark skies is essential for a healthy future.

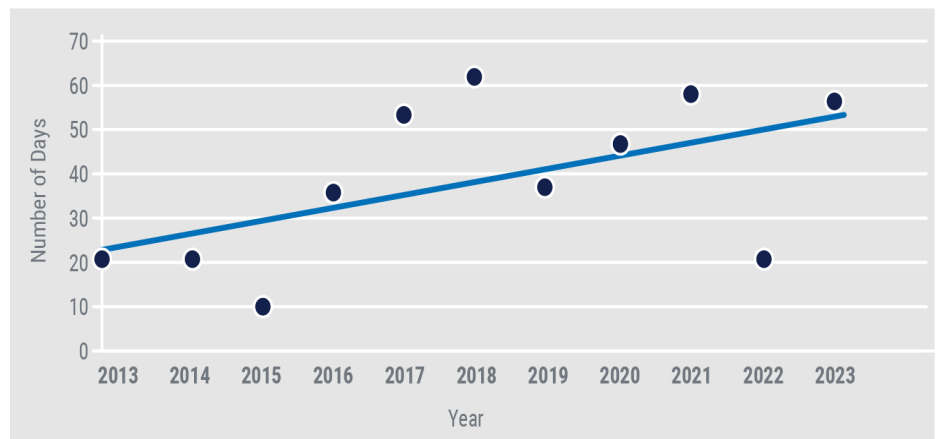
Planning Considerations

Maricopa County carries a critical obligation to safeguard its environmental and natural resources while ensuring their use and enjoyment remain viable for future generations. This balance supports economic vitality, public health, and quality of life across both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Shaped by the Sonoran Desert's distinctive landscapes, rugged mountains, and riparian corridors, the County's natural environment provides critical ecological functions, habitat for diverse species, and cultural and recreational value. Yet these resources face growing pressures from urbanization, weather-related phenomena, and invasive species, underscoring the need for proactive management and thoughtful planning.

Air Quality

Air quality in Maricopa County has improved significantly over the past two decades, largely due to the efforts of the Maricopa County Air Quality Department (MCAQD). The department monitors pollution levels and enforces regulations to reduce emissions from vehicles, industry, and construction dust. Despite progress, challenges remain with high ozone levels, fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from smoke and exhaust, and coarse particulate matter (PM₁₀) from dust and soot, pollutants that pose health risks to sensitive groups and the general population. **Figure 13** illustrates the annual exceedance days for these pollutants as the County's population has grown. MCAQD also promotes cleaner air through community education and outreach. Continued efforts are essential to maintain and further improve air quality in the region.

Figure 13. Ozone, PM_{2.5}, and PM₁₀ Exceedance Days in Maricopa County per Year



Source: Maricopa County Air Quality Department, 2024

Noise Quality

Maintaining healthy noise levels contributes to the quality of life in Maricopa County. Noise pollution is a significant concern, particularly in urban areas and near major transportation facilities. The County implemented a comprehensive Noise Ordinance to address excessive, unnecessary, and disruptive noise, recognizing its detrimental effects on residents' health and welfare. This ordinance aims to balance the needs of commerce and property enjoyment with environmental quality and public peace of mind. Enforcement is primarily handled by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office which intends to keep noise levels within acceptable limits to promote a high quality of life. Additionally, specific regulations are in place to control noise from construction activities and military airports, further mitigating the impact of noise pollution.

Water Quality

The Maricopa County Environmental Services Department (MCESD) plays a key role in protecting water quality and safety in unincorporated areas. The department monitors water resources, enforces regulations, and promotes conservation through public education and community engagement. By integrating the management of surface water, groundwater, and reclaimed water, Maricopa County works in coordination with the State of Arizona to support the state government's goal of creating a resilient water supply system capable of meeting the needs of a growing population and diverse economy.



Flood Control

The Maricopa County Flood Control District (FCD) plays a crucial role in safeguarding the residents of Maricopa County from the dangers of flooding. Established to address the unique challenges posed by the region's desert climate, the FCD is responsible for managing and mitigating flood risks that arise during the summer monsoon season and winter rainstorms. It is also responsible for floodplain management and regulation in unincorporated Maricopa County, as well as in the following incorporated communities:

- Buckeye
- Carefree
- Cave Creek
- Chandler
- El Mirage
- Gila Bend
- Guadalupe
- Litchfield Park
- Mesa
- Queen Creek
- Surprise
- Tolleson
- Wickenburg
- Youngtown

The Maricopa County Flood Control District plays a crucial role in safeguarding residents from the dangers of flooding.

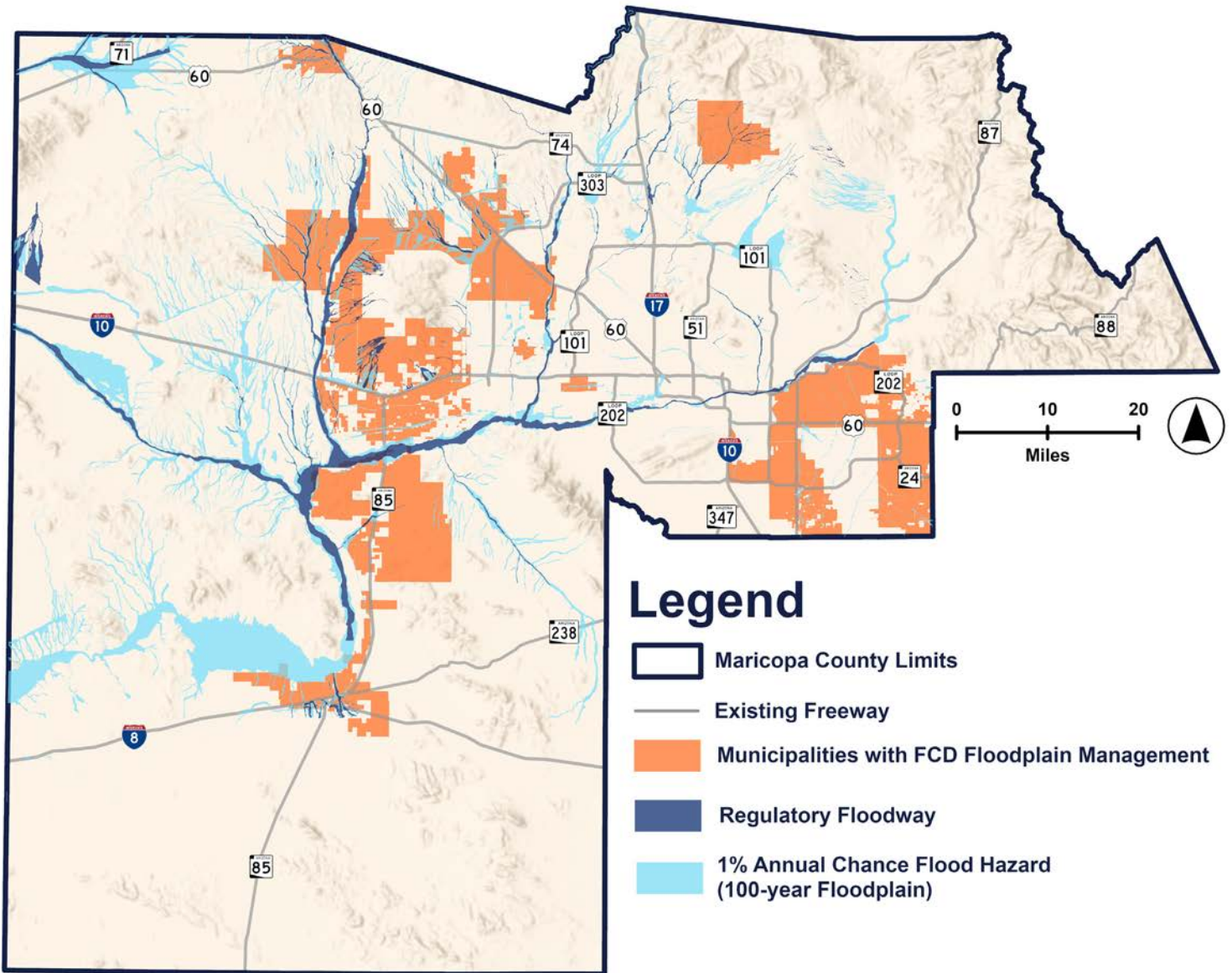
Map 18 shows the areas of the County where the Maricopa County Flood Control District has the responsibility for floodplain management, along with regulatory floodways as well as the areas of a 1% annual chance of a flood hazard (or the 100-year floodplain) within the County limits.

The District employs a team of engineers, hydrologists, and other professionals who design, construct, and maintain an extensive network of dams, basins, and channels. These structures are essential in controlling floodwaters and protecting both urban and rural areas from potential damage.

In addition to physical infrastructure, the FCD places a strong emphasis on community education and preparedness. They provide valuable resources such as floodplain maps, technical studies, and permitting information to help residents and businesses understand their flood risks and take appropriate measures. The district also engages in public outreach efforts, offering workshops and informational sessions to ensure that the community is well-informed about flood safety and prevention strategies. By fostering a culture of awareness and preparedness, the FCD aims to minimize the impact of flooding on people's lives and properties.

Furthermore, the Maricopa County Flood Control District is committed to high-caliber and innovative water management practices. Recognizing stormwater as a valuable resource, the District works on projects that not only mitigate flood risks but also enhance water conservation and environmental stewardship. These initiatives include the development of infrastructure, such as rain gardens and permeable pavements, which help to recharge groundwater and reduce runoff. With this approach to flood control, the FCD contributes to the long-term resilience and well-being of the Maricopa County community.

Map 18. Floodplain Management in Maricopa County



Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2024

The Maricopa County Flood Control District plays a crucial role in safeguarding residents from the dangers of flooding through floodplain management and regulation.



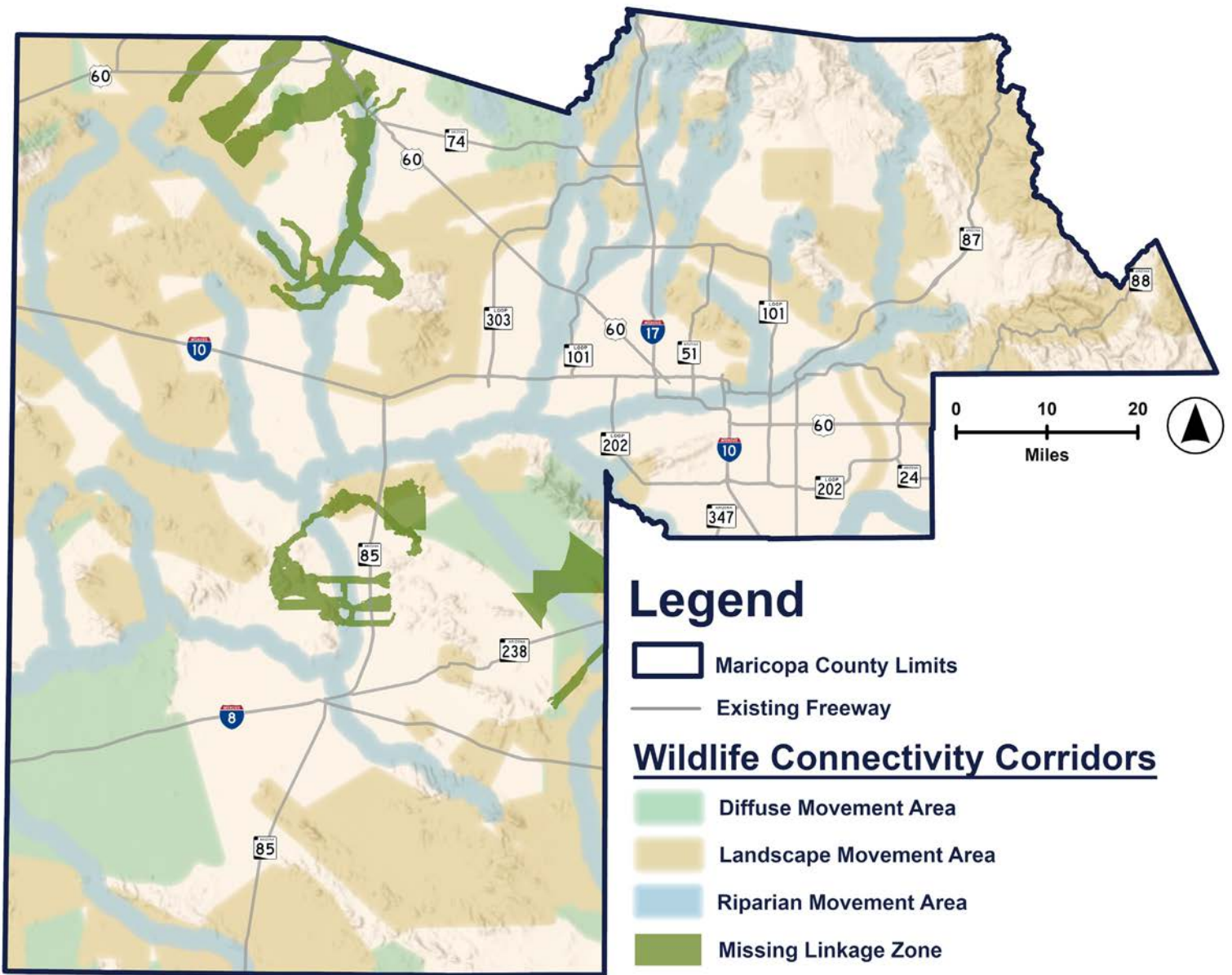
Wildlife Connectivity Corridors

The 2012 Maricopa County Wildlife Connectivity Assessment, conducted by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), identified wildlife habitat blocks and movement areas and key missing linkage zones that could overcome barriers to wildlife movement. This assessment helps guide conservation efforts and land use planning to encourage that development projects give consideration to wildlife connectivity corridors where appropriate, thereby working to reduce habitat fragmentation and promoting ecological health.

Wildlife connectivity corridors in Maricopa County are essential for maintaining the movement, population and genetic diversity of wildlife across the region. The corridors are categorized as either diffuse, landscape, or riparian movement areas. Diffuse movement areas generalize wildlife movements within habitats, landscape movement areas generalize wildlife movements between habitats, and riparian movement areas generalize wildlife movement through ecosystems associated with bodies of water or perennial or ephemeral surface or subsurface water. These corridors, shown in **Map 19**, link fragmented habitats, allowing animals to travel between different areas for food, water, and breeding.

These corridors are crucial for species such as mule deer, mountain lions, and various smaller mammals and reptiles. By identifying these linkages, Maricopa County supports biodiversity and helps mitigate the impacts of urbanization on wildlife. Efforts to maintain and enhance these corridors to coexist with new development include constructing wildlife overpasses and underpasses, implementing wildlife-friendly fencing, and engaging in habitat restoration projects. These initiatives not only benefit wildlife, but they also enhance the quality of life for residents by preserving the natural heritage and beauty of the region.

▶ **Map 19.** Wildlife Connectivity in Maricopa County



Source: Arizona Game & Fish Department, 2026

Wildlife connectivity corridors in Maricopa County are important for maintaining the movement, population, and genetic diversity of wildlife across the region.



Hillside Development

Maricopa County defines any development that occurs on land with a slope, or grade, of 15% or greater to be hillside development. The grade percentage is determined as the rise in height measured in feet over a horizontal distance of 100 feet. So, a 15% slope would be land that rises 15 feet over a 100-foot horizontal distance. Rugged areas with such slopes do exist within the County's jurisdiction, particularly in the northern unincorporated areas. These areas do attract certain types of development, mainly custom homes that offer low densities, rural character, unobstructed and expansive views and privacy.

However if not designed carefully, hillside development can damage and cause dangerous conditions to occur that affect the very features these individuals seek. Some of the potential problems and hazards can include:

- Destruction of scenic quality;
- Increased stormwater runoff and flooding;
- Loss of plant and animal habitat;
- Erosion;
- Soil/slope failure;
- Wildfire hazards;
- Lack of safe access for people and emergency vehicles; and
- High utility and infrastructure/maintenance costs

Hillside stability has increasingly likelihood of degrading as slope increases above 15%, making development financially unfeasible due to difficult and costly engineering requirements. Maricopa County recognizes the right to develop private hillside property, but it also acknowledges its responsibility to protect the health and safety of other residents that may be affected by such development. To help minimize potential dangers Maricopa County discourages development on hillside grades above 15% and favors the following general design characteristics:

- Clustering development in areas below 15%;
- Retaining trees and native vegetation for slope and soil stabilization;
- Minimizing scarring from infrastructure cut and fills;
- Minimizing building footprints;
- Minimizing hillside disturbance and allow for appropriate landscaping and natural stormwater runoff; and
- Using appropriate materials, shapes, and colors that allow buildings to blend into the environment.





Urban Heat

Urban heat is a pressing issue throughout all of Maricopa County, particularly in developed urban areas, where the urban heat island effect exacerbates already high temperatures and persists through the night reducing the time for an effective cooling period. This phenomenon occurs because urban areas have more surfaces like roadway pavement, concrete, and buildings that absorb and retain heat, leading to higher temperatures compared to surrounding, less developed rural areas, which are more prevalent in the unincorporated areas. There has been a significant rise in heat-related medical concerns correlated with the growth of the areas of the County affected by urban heat. Efforts to mitigate urban heat include planting more trees for shade, testing reflective pavement coatings, and providing cooling centers and water distribution during extreme heat events. These measures aim to reduce the impact of heat on residents as part of the goal of high standards for public health and safety.



Dark Sky

More population and development often leads to increased nighttime lighting, which is a result of misdirecting, a lack of shielding, or excessive use. This light pollution in the aggregate across an urban area causes obstructing glares and glows that interfere with astronomical observations and stargazing.

The County recognizes the importance of protecting the night sky and has incorporated a Dark Sky Ordinance in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance. This ordinance includes provisions to control the use of outdoor, artificial illuminating light fixtures during the hours of the night. This ordinance encourages good light practices that conserve energy and money, while also increasing safety, security and productivity. While the ordinance is an important part of nighttime sky protection, mitigating light pollution is regional issue that requires working partnerships with the other jurisdictions in the County.



Cultural/Archaeological Sites

Maricopa County is home to numerous archaeological sites linked to the Hohokam and other early inhabitants. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and the Arizona State Museum maintain inventories of significant cultural resources across the state. Additionally, agencies such as the Arizona State Land Department, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Defense Department, Bureau of Land Management, and various Native American communities manage inventories for the areas they oversee. The presence and importance of these archaeological sites can influence the timing, location, and feasibility of development projects.

Wildfires

Maricopa County faces increasing wildfire risks due to prolonged drought, invasive vegetation, and rapid urban expansion into wildland areas. The “wildland-urban interface” (WUI)—where homes meet desert landscapes—has grown by over 50% since 1990, creating more ignition points and complicating fire suppression efforts along these edge environments. Areas in northern Maricopa County such as the Tonto National Forest edge and areas with dense vegetation such as the Gila River corridor are particularly vulnerable. Red Flag warnings (which signal that critical fire weather conditions are occurring or expected soon) have become common.

Maricopa County addresses wildfire risks through a comprehensive, multi-layered strategy that emphasizes prevention, preparedness, and collaboration. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) serves as the cornerstone, focusing on fuel reduction, fire prevention, and community engagement, with progress reviewed regularly. The Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) provides a coordinated framework for wildfire response, utilizing the Incident Command System (ICS) to ensure efficient interagency operations. Complementing these efforts, the Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies high-risk areas and prioritizes projects that reduce wildfire impacts

and recovery costs. Public education is central to the County’s approach, with the Ready, Set, Go! program guiding residents through preparedness and evacuation protocols, especially during Red Flag conditions. Additionally, Maricopa County collaborates with state and federal agencies to secure grants for fuel reduction, firebreak construction, and CWPP updates, reinforcing regional resilience against wildfire threats.



Strategies

Air Quality & Public Health

Improving air quality is a central goal of the Environment Element in the Comprehensive Plan, especially as population growth and transportation emissions contribute to elevated ozone and particulate matter levels. Dust from construction and unpaved surfaces further exacerbate these conditions, making compliance with the County’s dust abatement programs and promotion of clean air technologies essential. Future planning should pair these efforts with balanced, efficient land use patterns and expanded opportunities for non-motorized transportation to support regional air quality improvement. At the same time, strategies must address water quality, adaptation, and hazard preparedness.

Habitat Connectivity, Biodiversity & Invasive Species Management

Urban expansion fragments wildlife corridors, limiting species movement and reducing genetic diversity, while invasive plants such as stinknet, Sahara mustard, buffelgrass, and tamarisk further threaten ecological health by displacing native vegetation and increasing wildfire risk. Future development should prioritize habitat connectivity through green infrastructure, conservation easements, and strategic open space planning to maintain biodiversity and support pollinators, which are vital for ecosystem stability. At the same time, long-term invasive species management, including early detection, rapid response, and restoration with native plants, must be paired with public education and volunteer engagement to amplify these efforts and reduce reinfestation.

Dust from construction and unpaved surfaces further exacerbates elevated ozone and particulate matter levels, making compliance with the County’s dust abatement program and promotion of clean air technologies essential.

Community Engagement & Regional Collaboration

Building a culture of environmental stewardship requires active participation and strong partnerships. Public education programs should emphasize the importance of air and water quality, habitat protection, and adaptation, empowering residents to make informed choices that support regional goals. Volunteer initiatives, such as invasive species removal and habitat restoration projects, provide hands-on opportunities for community involvement and foster a sense of shared responsibility.



Collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies is essential for addressing complex environmental challenges that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Coordinated efforts can advance compliance with air quality standards, implement dark sky protections, and strengthen hazard mitigation planning. These partnerships also support integrated resource management, ensuring that strategies for water conservation, wildlife connectivity, and cultural resource preservation are aligned across the region.



Finally, recreation infrastructure and cultural resource stewardship must remain priorities to balance public access with environmental protection. Thoughtful design of trails, facilities, and interpretive programs can minimize ecological impacts while enhancing visitor experiences. By combining education, engagement, and collaboration, Maricopa County can lead a unified approach to environmental quality that benefits both people and nature.





Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring that growth occurs in a way that preserves natural assets and enhances livability.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals strongly embody Stewardship by focusing on responsible management and ecological protection.



PROSPERITY

These goals collectively support Prosperity and ensure a high quality of life, supporting economic growth while maintaining ecological balance.

Environment Goal 1: Enhance the regional environmental quality for the overall well-being of the community.

Goal Statement: Improving the overall environmental quality through improvements in air quality and water quality and through the protection of natural resources is a benefit to the overall health of the region.

Environment Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports providing education, regulatory guidance, permitting, inspection, and enforcement services through the County Air Quality Department's Strategic Plan and its Compliance Assurance model to assist in achieving compliance with federal air quality standards.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports the achievement and maintenance of federal air quality standards, including National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

1.3 Maricopa County supports incentive programs that promote implementing clean air technologies and addressing air quality issues throughout Maricopa County where feasible and effective.

1.4 Maricopa County supports compliance with its Drinking Water program and its Water and Wastewater Treatment program to protect water quality.

1.5 Maricopa County supports a comprehensive program to control dust (PM₁₀) particularly from unpaved roads, alleys, and parking lots.

1.6 Maricopa County supports noise reductions in new development design and in the construction of new buildings where necessary or otherwise where feasible.

1.7 Maricopa County supports enforcement of its Dark Sky Ordinance and supports regional efforts to limit excessive nighttime light.

Environment Goal 2: Support the protection of sensitive lands and environments.

Goal Statement: The County aims to safeguard environmentally sensitive areas from the impacts of development in order to preserve natural habitats and rural landscapes while accommodating growth in the future.

Environment Policies:

2.1 Maricopa County supports planning future development while considering the prohibition of development within floodways and, where necessary, 100-year floodplains as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

2.2 Maricopa County supports the Military Compatible land use designation for High Noise or Accident Potential Zones, and compliance with state laws relating to land use compatibility and consistency with the high noise or accident potential of Luke Air Force Base and the ancillary military facilities.

2.3 Maricopa County supports the Military Compatible land use designations within the influence area of a military installation or range or Arizona national guard site, and compliance with state laws relating to land use compatibility and consistency with the operation of the installation, range, or site and its influence area.

2.4 Maricopa County supports flexible zoning techniques when used to keep new development below the 15% hillside slope and to protect riparian areas.

2.5 Maricopa County supports using the hillside general design characteristics identified in this element.

Environment Goal 3: Protect the natural biodiversity of the region.

Goal Statement: Protecting and promoting the region’s natural biodiversity is critical to conserving diverse species and habitats within the County to preserve an ecological balance.

Environment Policies:

-
- 3.1** Maricopa County supports reducing the impacts of new development and urbanization on environmentally sensitive areas, including the habitats and migration corridors of native wildlife (both flora and fauna).

 - 3.2** Maricopa County supports innovative project design and development techniques that protect important plant and animal habitats, desert washes, and migration corridors.

 - 3.3** Maricopa County supports completing resource and biological surveys and establishing needed mitigation measures prior to new development as directed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the State Historic Preservation Office.
-

Environment Goal 4: Strengthen the County’s preparedness for hazards.

Goal Statement: Strengthening the County’s ability to respond to hazards through effective planning and preparedness reduces regional risk and builds resilience to foreseen and unforeseen environmental threats.

Environment Policies:

-
- 4.1** Maricopa County supports compliance with watercourse master studies and plans and area drainage master studies and plans.

 - 4.2** Maricopa County supports fire and wildfire prevention and mitigation measures in the design of development and in recreational lands and open space where necessary and appropriate.

 - 4.3** Maricopa County supports public education about the risks and limitations of developing in hazard-prone areas.
-

Environment Goal 5: Provide regional leadership to promote all aspects of regional environmental quality.

Goal Statement: Leading efforts to promote environmental quality across the region is a key objective to steering beneficial environmental stewardship.

Environment Policies:

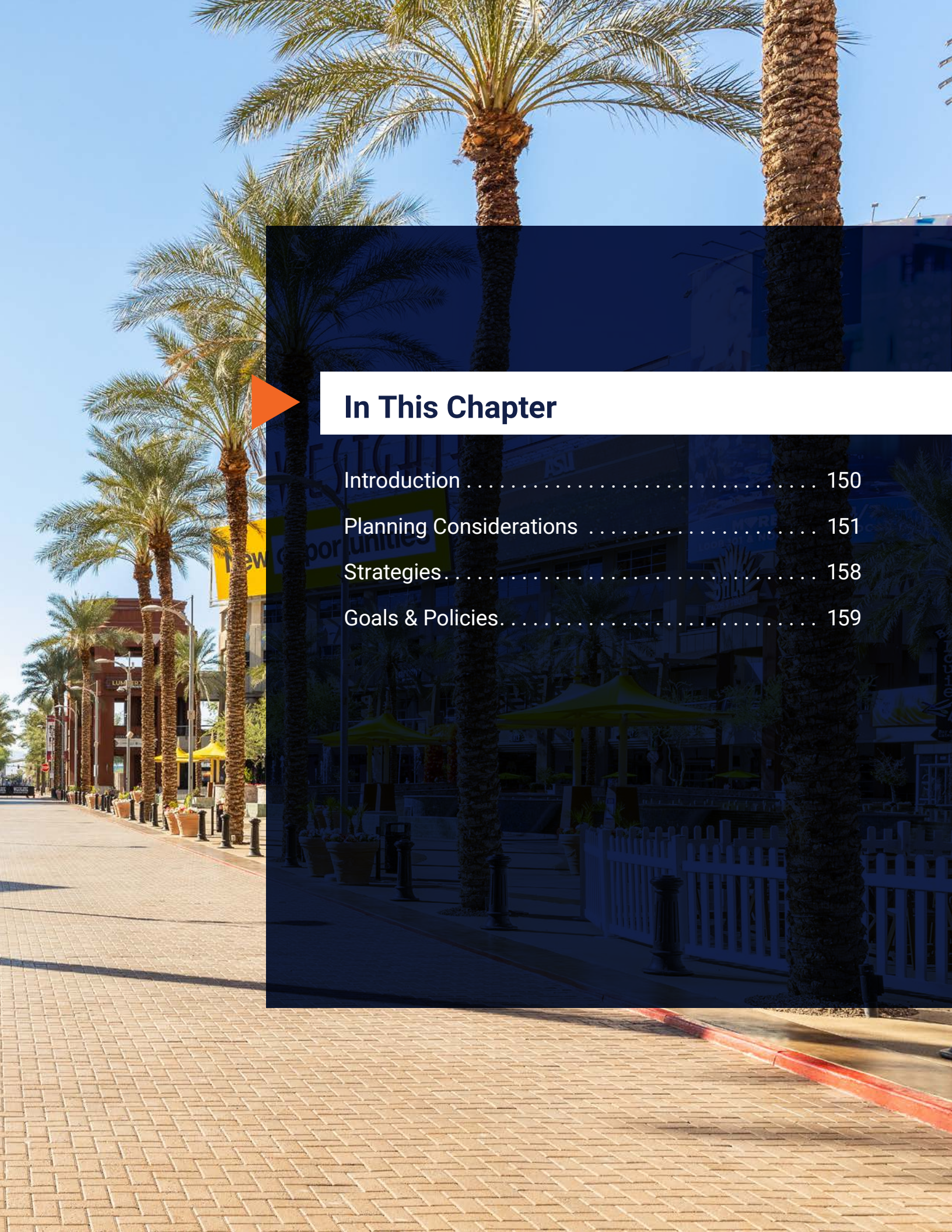
- 5.1** Maricopa County supports participating with local, state, and federal agencies on developing solutions for State Implementation Plans that have not been addressed.
- 5.2** Maricopa County supports continuing to build relationships and collaborations between the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and other partners in the effort to preserve ecosystems.
- 5.3** Maricopa County supports its Department of Emergency Management continuing to work closely with local, state, federal partners, and community organizations.
- 5.4** Maricopa County supports implementing the Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan to ensure a comprehensive and effective emergency management strategy for the region.





8

Economic Growth



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The Economic Growth element includes strategies that Maricopa County can use to help create a diverse and resilient economy. Opportunities focus on locating employment proximate to where people live, supporting small and start-up businesses, and supporting industries that require a lot of land but not urban services or infrastructure.

Introduction

Between 2010 and 2020, Maricopa County accounted for over half of Arizona's total population growth

Maricopa County stands as one of the most dynamic economic regions in the United States. With a population exceeding 4.5 million and growing rapidly, the County has become a magnet for both domestic migration and business investment. Between 2010 and 2020, Maricopa County accounted for over half of Arizona's total population growth, and projections suggest it could reach 6.5 million residents by 2060. This demographic expansion is reshaping the county's labor market, housing demand, and infrastructure needs.

The County's economic base is primarily service-oriented, yet it boasts robust goods-producing sectors that drive innovation and competitiveness. Key industries include healthcare and biosciences, finance and insurance, and advanced manufacturing, which encompasses aerospace, semiconductors, and electric vehicle components. Information technology is rapidly expanding, fueled by software development, cybersecurity, and data center growth, while transportation and logistics benefit from Maricopa's extensive infrastructure and rail-served industrial areas. Construction and real estate remain strong due to population growth and housing

demand, and tourism continues to thrive with world-class resorts, sports venues, and cultural attractions. These sectors collectively position Maricopa County as a dynamic and resilient economy with competitive advantages in workforce talent, innovation ecosystems, and a favorable business climate.

Unincorporated Maricopa County presents unique opportunities and challenges. These areas of the County are experiencing increased development pressure as municipal; and urban centers expand outward. While unincorporated land typically offers flexible zoning and lower land costs, they often lack critical infrastructure such as sewer systems, improved roads, and comprehensive broadband connectivity. Strategic planning is essential to ensure that growth across unincorporated Maricopa County is balanced with infrastructure development and aligned with broader county goals.

The purpose of this Economic Growth Element is to establish a comprehensive framework that guides policies and investments to sustain long-term prosperity.

Planning Considerations

As the fourth most populous county in the United States, Maricopa County plays a critical role in shaping Arizona’s economic future. Its strategic location, robust transportation infrastructure, strong tourism, recreation, and sports options and proximity to other major markets position Maricopa County as a hub for commerce, technology, and global trade. The following analysis highlights specific considerations that inform the development of supporting economic strategies.

Key Findings

- Employment projections indicate a faster rate of employment growth within the unincorporated county at nearly 95 percent compared to Maricopa County at nearly 65 percent.
- The largest employment gains through 2032 are anticipated to be in health care and social assistance, construction, arts, entertainment and recreation and professional, scientific and technical services.
- The top two industry sectors employing the most people within unincorporated Maricopa County and the County as a whole are retail trade and healthcare/ social assistance.

Partnerships and Programs

The County supports economic development through its various departments and in conjunction with its community partners. In 2025, Maricopa County established the Office of Economic Development and a new Economic Development Coordinator role to develop partnerships with business; economic development, workforce development, community-based, industry trade, and labor organizations; boards and commissions; and other jurisdictions to support and grow the regional economy. A select review of some of these partnerships and programs include:

- **The Maricopa County Industrial Development Authority (MCIDA)** is a nonprofit conduit issuer established under Arizona law to provide lower-cost financing for qualified projects through the issuance of revenue bonds. These bonds are exempt from Arizona income tax and, when compliant with the Internal Revenue Code, may also be exempt from federal income tax.

Governed by a nine-member volunteer Board of Directors appointed by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, IDAMC operates with oversight and final approval from the Board of Supervisors. The Board meets regularly to ensure responsible stewardship of resources and compliance with statutory requirements. For more than 45 years, IDAMC has played a vital role in promoting economic growth, increasing affordable housing, creating jobs, and enhancing the overall economic vitality of Maricopa County.

- **Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC)** is a nonprofit partnership founded in 1989 to attract and grow quality businesses and enhance the region’s competitiveness. GPEC collaborates with 22 member communities, Maricopa County, and over 170 private investors to drive economic diversity and smart growth. Over its history, GPEC has helped more than 1,075 companies expand or relocate, creating nearly 195,000 jobs and generating over \$76.5 billion in capital investment for the Greater Phoenix region.





Maricopa County is a core member of GPEC’s regional partnership model. The County works with GPEC to coordinate business attraction and expansion efforts across the region; provide resources for projects requiring county-level support; and collaborate on strategic initiatives that strengthen competitiveness, such as workforce development, infrastructure planning, and industry cluster growth.

- **The Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone (GMFTZ No. 277)** was established in 2010 to serve Western Maricopa County and promote international trade and economic development. As part of the U.S. Foreign Trade Zone program, GMFTZ allows businesses to import goods duty-free, defer customs duties, and benefit from property tax reductions through reclassification to a Class 6 property instead of standard property tax assessments. These incentives help reduce operating costs and attract global manufacturers and distributors to the region.

Maricopa County plays a key role in supporting the Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone by providing planning and zoning authority for unincorporated areas within the zone’s service area. The County collaborates with GMFTZ and local economic development offices to secure letters of concurrence from taxing entities and facilitate applications. Additionally, Maricopa County promotes FTZ designation as part of its broader economic development strategy to attract investment and create jobs in the West Valley.

- **The Workforce Development Division (WDD)** is facilitated by the Maricopa County Human Services Department and is responsible for providing comprehensive workforce services for adult and youth job seekers and employers across the County. Services are available

through two comprehensive career centers, partner sites in cities and towns across the Valley as well as all Maricopa County Library District locations. WDD helps the community by providing a wide range of activities designed to assist career seekers, many with significant barriers to employment, in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for self-supporting employment.

- **The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)** uses federal HUD funds to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing, improve community facilities, and create economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents. Funds are distributed annually through a competitive process to participating Urban County communities and nonprofit agencies. Projects include infrastructure improvements, public safety enhancements, and community services that directly benefit residents in smaller municipalities and unincorporated areas of the County.

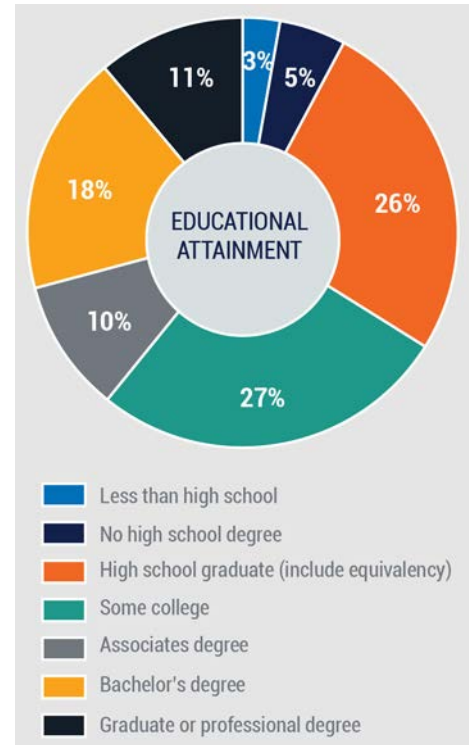
- **The HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)** provides HUD funding to increase the supply of safe, decent, and affordable housing for very low- and low-income families. Administered through the Maricopa HOME Consortium, funds support activities such as housing acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, and tenant-based rental assistance. The program strengthens public-private partnerships and leverages local and private resources to expand affordable rental and homeownership opportunities across the County.

Educational Attainment

Over 65% of the population has attended college, which is lower in comparison to incorporated Maricopa County. Nearly 29% completed a Bachelor's or Post-Graduate Degree Program which is higher in comparison to incorporated Maricopa County, shown in **Figure 14**.

When comparing educational attainment levels for individuals aged 25 years and older between 2010 and 2022, there are notable increases in higher education levels as shown in Table 8. The proportion of high school graduates rose from 21% to 26%, while those with some college education, but no degree increased from 20% to 27%. Additionally, the percentage of individuals holding an associate's degree grew from 6% to 10%, and those with a bachelor's degree increased from 12% to 18%. The most significant growth occurred in the category of graduate or professional degrees, which rose from 6% to 11%. Overall, the data indicates a significant upward trend in educational attainment over the 12-year period. This trend is encouraging given that higher overall educational attainment greatly contributes to fostering economic development through attracting leading industry, which supports the growth of more advanced and diverse employment opportunities. Economic development resulting from rising educational levels not only expands economic activity for both professional and working-class industries, but it also opens pathways for residents into skilled trades, technical certifications, and personal career advancement. As a result, this type of widespread economic development and expanded economic activity strengthens the local labor market, reduces economic vulnerability among households from external factors, and strives to ensure that prosperity is shared across the broad spectrum of career options in Maricopa County.

Figure 14. Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Employment Projections

Unlike population projections, MAG's data for employment is based on Regional Analysis Zones (RAZ) across the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). **Table 10** shows that by 2030 Maricopa County is projected to have three million jobs, with 1.4 percent in unincorporated Maricopa County. By the year 2060 forecasted employment reaches 3.5 million jobs, of which 1.6 percent are within unincorporated Maricopa County.

Employment growth for Maricopa County and unincorporated county by decade is presented in **Figure 15**. The rate of job growth within unincorporated Maricopa County in the years 2030 and 2040 nearly matches the county as a whole. By 2050 and beyond the forecasted job growth for unincorporated Maricopa County more than doubles Maricopa County as a whole. This long-term projection of increased employment growth in

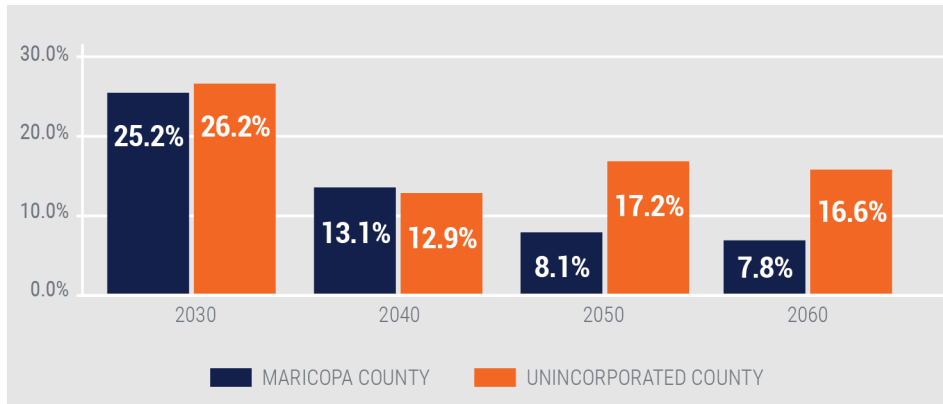
unincorporated Maricopa County is largely based on limited availability of developable land within incorporated areas. As incorporated communities annex additional lands in the future, it is anticipated this stark imbalance will reach more equilibrium as near term growth projections indicate.

Table 10. Employment Projections by RAZ by MPA, 2020-2060

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	Change % 2020-2060
Total Maricopa County	2,139,150	2,677,370	3,028,141	3,272,994	3,526,978	64.9%
Incorporated Cities	2,084,500	2,599,456	2,940,219	3,175,608	3,417,164	63.9%
Indian Reservation	25,856	41,576	46,888	49,288	56,739	107.8%
Unincorporated County	28,794	36,338	41,034	48,098	56,075	94.7%
Unincorporated as % of Total	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%	---

Source: Maricopa Association of Governments Socioeconomic Projections, 2023

Figure 15. Employment Growth Rate per Decade, 2020 - 2060



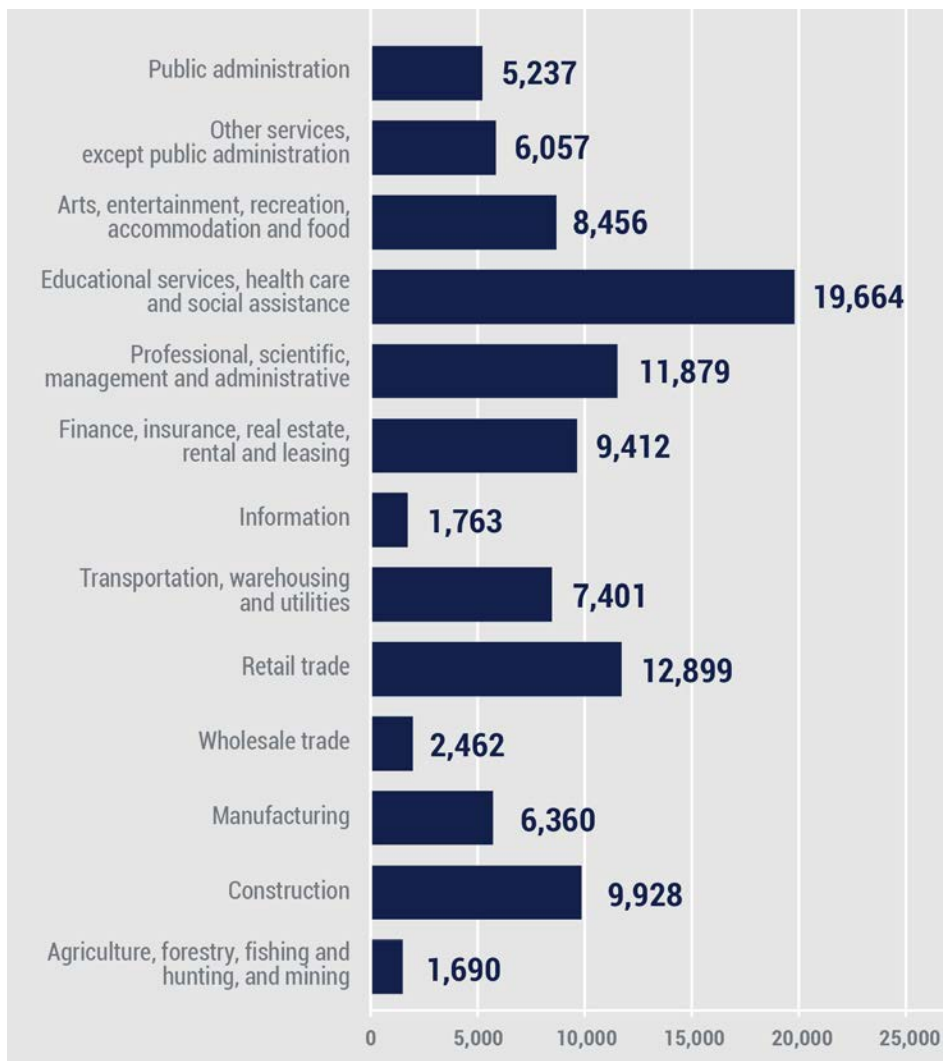
Workforce Distribution by Industries

Table 11 shows a workforce of 2.4 million people in Maricopa County overall. The sectors employing the greatest percentage of people include health care and social assistance with 13.5 percent followed by retail trade with 9.7 percent. Other top employing sectors include accommodation and food services (8.5%) and admin/support/waste management (8.0%). There is also a large percentage of people within the County who are self-employed at 7.1 percent.

When analyzing industry employment data specifically for unincorporated Maricopa County, nearly a fifth (19%) of unincorporated Maricopa County's workforce is employed in the Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance industry. This is followed by Retail Trade (12%) and Professional, Scientific, Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services (12%). Construction; Finance and Insurance, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing; and Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services round off the next three largest industries accounting for another 27% collectively of workforce industries (**Figure 16**).

Unincorporated Maricopa County has a greater percentage of people employed in retail trade, construction, transportation/warehousing, public administration, wholesale trade, and utilities and equal or less people in health care/social assistance, professional and educational services, accommodation/food services than Maricopa County overall.

Figure 16. Workforce Industries



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 11. Maricopa County Employment by Industry Sector, 2022

Total Employment	2,478,214	100.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	332,999	13.4%
Retail Trade	239,326	9.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	209,524	8.5%
Admin/Support/Waste Management	199,424	8.0%
Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	175,743	7.1%
Construction	166,491	6.7%
Educational Services	150,137	6.1%
Finance and Insurance	150,660	6.1%
Manufacturing	141,813	5.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	141,759	5.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	111,592	4.5%
Wholesale Trade	95,486	3.9%
Government	81,328	3.3%
Other Services (Except Government)	75,327	3.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	47,768	1.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	47,581	1.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	41,023	1.7%
Information	39,644	1.6%
Utilities	16,672	0.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	11,507	0.5%
Mining	2,410	0.1%

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity, 2022

Table 12. Maricopa County Industry Employment Projections by Sector, 2022-2032

	2022	2032	% Change
Total Maricopa County Employment	2,478,214	2,880,320	16.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	209,524	241,271	15.2%
Admin/Support/Waste Management	199,424	214,194	7.4%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	11,507	10,191	-11.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	47,768	58,377	22.2%
Construction	166,491	210,252	26.3%
Educational Services	150,137	156,840	4.5%
Finance and Insurance	150,660	162,311	7.7%
Government	81,328	86,735	6.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	332,999	443,894	33.3%
Information	39,644	42,880	8.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	41,023	49,315	20.2%
Manufacturing	141,813	166,777	17.6%
Mining	2,410	2,714	12.6%
Other Services (Except Government)	75,327	85,317	13.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	141,759	172,663	21.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	47,581	50,820	6.8%
Retail Trade	239,326	269,695	12.7%
Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	175,743	195,678	11.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	111,592	133,360	19.5%
Utilities	16,672	17,033	2.2%
Wholesale Trade	95,486	110,003	15.2%

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity, 2022

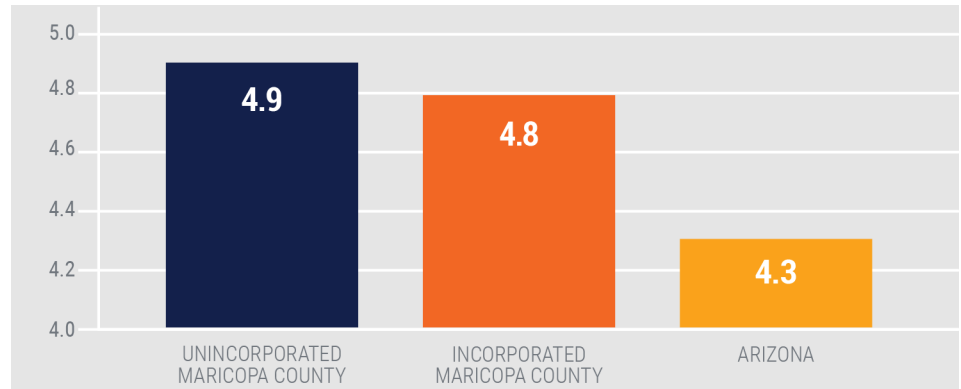
Industry Employment Projections

The Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity projects employment growth by the industry sector (**Table 12**). By the year 2032 Maricopa County is expected to see a 16.2% overall increase in employment. Strong employment growth is expected in health care and social services (33.3%), construction (26.3%), arts, entertainment and recreation (22.2%) and professional, scientific and technical services (21.8%) sectors.

Unemployment Rate

Unincorporated Maricopa County's unemployment rate (4.9%) is comparable to incorporated Maricopa County (4.8%) and slightly higher than the State unemployment rate (4.3%) (**Figure 17**).

Figure 17. Unemployment Rate

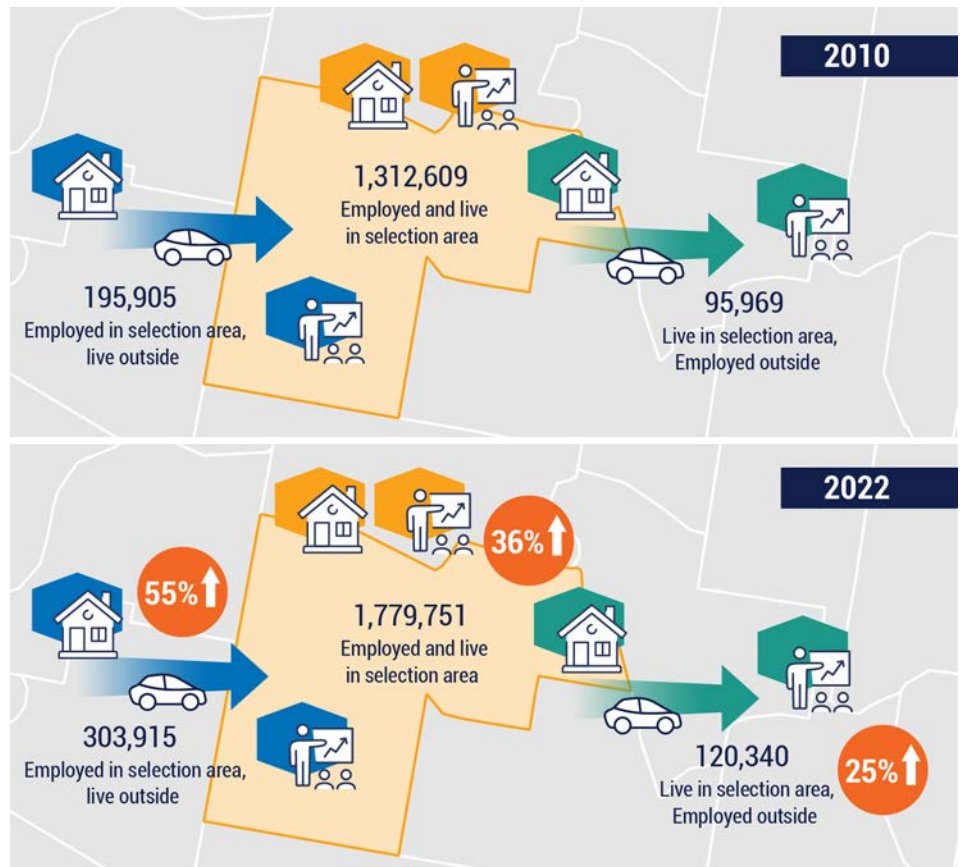


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Worker Commute Flows

Between 2010 and 2022, the number of people who live and work in Maricopa County grew by 467,142 (36%), while those who work in Maricopa County but live elsewhere grew by 108,010 (55%) as exhibited in **Figure 18**. Conversely, the number of people living in Maricopa County and working elsewhere only increased by 24,371 (25%). Given that most workers across all income brackets work within the County, these factors support a strong local job market within Maricopa County. In addition, given workers are driving further distances to reach employment within Maricopa County, this demonstrates the County's importance as a central economic driver, but also may be an indicator that workers are having to or are willing to drive further distances to access housing.

Figure 18. Worker Commute Flow



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics 2019, Inflow Outflow Analysis

Strategies

Entering the 21st century, Maricopa County's economy has been driven by rapid population growth, construction, and a diverse mix of industries including healthcare, finance, technology, and advanced manufacturing. For decades, Maricopa County has served as the economic hub of Arizona, accounting for the majority of the state's GDP and employment. Despite this success, the County faces challenges such as workforce skill gaps and the need to ensure increased access to high-paying jobs. To address these issues, Maricopa County is taking a leadership role in promoting strategic economic development. The County's long- and short-term objectives are to work collaboratively with cities, the private sector, and regional organizations to retain and expand existing businesses, encourage the growth of innovation-driven and value-added industries, attract new employers, improve workforce skills, and accelerate the creation of higher-paying jobs at a rate that outpaces population growth. These efforts aim to strengthen Maricopa County's competitive position, elevate employment rates, and raise wage levels for residents across the region.



Population Growth Management: With Maricopa County accounting for the majority of Arizona's population growth, managing this expansion is a top priority. Long-term planning efforts focus on ensuring adequate housing, healthcare, and educational infrastructure to meet the needs of a projected 6.5 million residents by 2060.



Industry Diversification: Maricopa County is actively working to broaden its economic base by fostering growth in sectors like leisure and hospitality, education and health services, and professional business services. By supporting small businesses and nonemployer enterprises (i.e. single employee businesses), the county aims to build a more resilient and inclusive economy that can adapt to changing market conditions.



Workforce Development & Training: Maricopa County has prioritized equipping its workforce with the skills needed for a rapidly evolving economy. Through programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the county partners with local employers and educational institutions to provide training in high-demand fields such as healthcare, information technology, and construction. These efforts aim to create clear career pathways and ensure residents are prepared for future job opportunities.



Real Estate & Construction Support: To meet rising housing demand, the county is streamlining development processes and encouraging new home construction. By updating zoning regulations and simplifying permitting, Maricopa County is assisting in the development of residential and non-residential projects that align with community needs.



Fiscal Responsibility & Innovation: Maintaining a strong financial foundation is central to the county's strategy. Maricopa County has a low debt burden and employs performance-based budgeting to ensure efficient use of public funds. This data-driven approach allows the county to invest strategically while maintaining transparency and accountability.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by creating pathways for residents and businesses to thrive.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals support Stewardship by emphasizing responsible and balanced economic development.



PROSPERITY

These goals strongly embody Prosperity by driving economic competitiveness and fiscal health.

Economic Growth Goal 1: Foster a diverse and balanced economy to promote long-term economic stability and economic resiliency.

Goal Statement: Aiming for a diverse and resilient economy to ensure long-term stability and growth is integral to creating a balanced economic environment that can withstand various economic challenges locally and externally.

Economic Growth Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports coordinated and balanced land use patterns that allow for both Basic and Non-basic sector businesses.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports assessing its regulations and processes to enhance effectiveness, ensure quality service, increase efficiency, and establish a competitive advantage.

Economic Growth Goal 2: Support the growth of opportunity in the local and regional economies.

Goal Statement: Promoting initiatives that create economic opportunities for residents and businesses is crucial in elevating job creation, entrepreneurship, and economic mobility.

Economic Growth Policies:

- 2.1** Maricopa County supports partnerships with a variety of entities and stakeholders to increase business success and address community needs.

- 2.2** Maricopa County supports efforts to recruit prospective businesses and industries to the County and efforts to retain existing businesses and industries.

- 2.3** Maricopa County supports the continuation and expansion of vocational, technical, and emerging career workforce training in the region.

Economic Growth Goal 3: Cultivate a thriving business environment that incubates and retains innovative companies.

Goal Statement: Attracting, retaining, and supporting innovative companies and a skilled workforce drives a dynamic and competitive business climate.

Economic Growth Policies:

- 3.1** Maricopa County supports implementing the Comprehensive Plan in a clear and consistent way to help businesses make long-term investment decisions.

- 3.2** Maricopa County supports an economic environment that promotes entrepreneurial activities and business formation.

Economic Growth Goal 4: Contribute to partnerships that advance an effective and integrated regional economy.

Goal Statement: Strengthening the County’s role in the broader regional economy through effective collaboration and integration emphasizes the importance of partnerships for regional economic success.

Economic Growth Policies:

4.1 Maricopa County supports programs that provide citizens with the education and training necessary to attain careers in emerging and high-demand fields.

4.2 Maricopa County supports organizations and programs that attract a variety of Basic Sector industry clusters that have long-term, stable growth prospects.

4.3 Maricopa County supports the Maricopa County Industrial Development Authority, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Community Development Block Grant program, and other economic opportunity incentive programs.



Growth Areas



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The Growth Areas element pinpoints areas suitable for urban growth in unincorporated Maricopa County because they have appropriate and efficient levels of urban services and infrastructure. The Growth Areas element also explains where and when urban growth should occur to help establish sensible and efficient land use patterns.

Introduction

ARS 11-804.(C)(2) requires that the Comprehensive Plan identify growth areas in Maricopa County. These are areas that are suitable for planned multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion to support concentrations of urban land uses. The law also requires this Plan to include policies and strategies that:

- Make multimodal transportation more efficient;
- Make infrastructure expansion more economical;
- Provide for rational land development patterns;
- Conserve significant natural resources and open spaces within identified growth areas, and coordinate and connect their locations to similar areas outside growth areas; and
- Promote timely and financially sound infrastructure expansion

Steady, well-managed growth is essential to the long-term prosperity and livability of Maricopa County. However, the pace, location, and form of that growth have far-reaching implications for the natural environment, transportation infrastructure, fiscal sustainability, and overall quality of life. This Growth Areas Element plays a critical role in guiding development to occur in a manner that is also efficient and orderly.

By strategically identifying areas where growth is occurring or likely to occur, the County seeks to utilize its Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy to guide urban growth and development in these areas in the most suitable fashion. Other aims include reducing traffic congestion, mitigating air pollution, and ensuring that new growth aligns with infrastructure capacity and community needs. Planning for suitable growth and development in appropriate locations also helps preserve open space, protect natural resources, and enhance the effectiveness of public investments.

Planning Considerations

Previous County Comprehensive Plans have identified several constraints that affect the location and extent of new urban growth in unincorporated areas of Maricopa County. The constraints fall into these categories:

- **Physical constraints:** steep slopes, riparian areas, floodplains, land subsidence, Earth fissures, water availability and important plant and wildlife habitat.
- **Built constraints:** the lack of infrastructure and services, and the location of noise sources like airports, automobile proving grounds, racetracks and highways.
- **Ownership considerations:** public land managed by federal, state and local governments and land held in trust for Native American communities.
- **Attitudinal considerations:** public sentiment leading the decision-making on development.

Growth Constraints

Physical Constraints

Soil

Although often overlooked, soil characteristics play a critical role in shaping land use and infrastructure development. Properties of soil such as permeability, compaction, shrink-swell potential, plasticity, salinity, erosion susceptibility, and corrosiveness can significantly influence the feasibility, cost, and long-term stability of construction projects. Understanding and mitigating these challenges are essential for feasible growth and development.

Topography

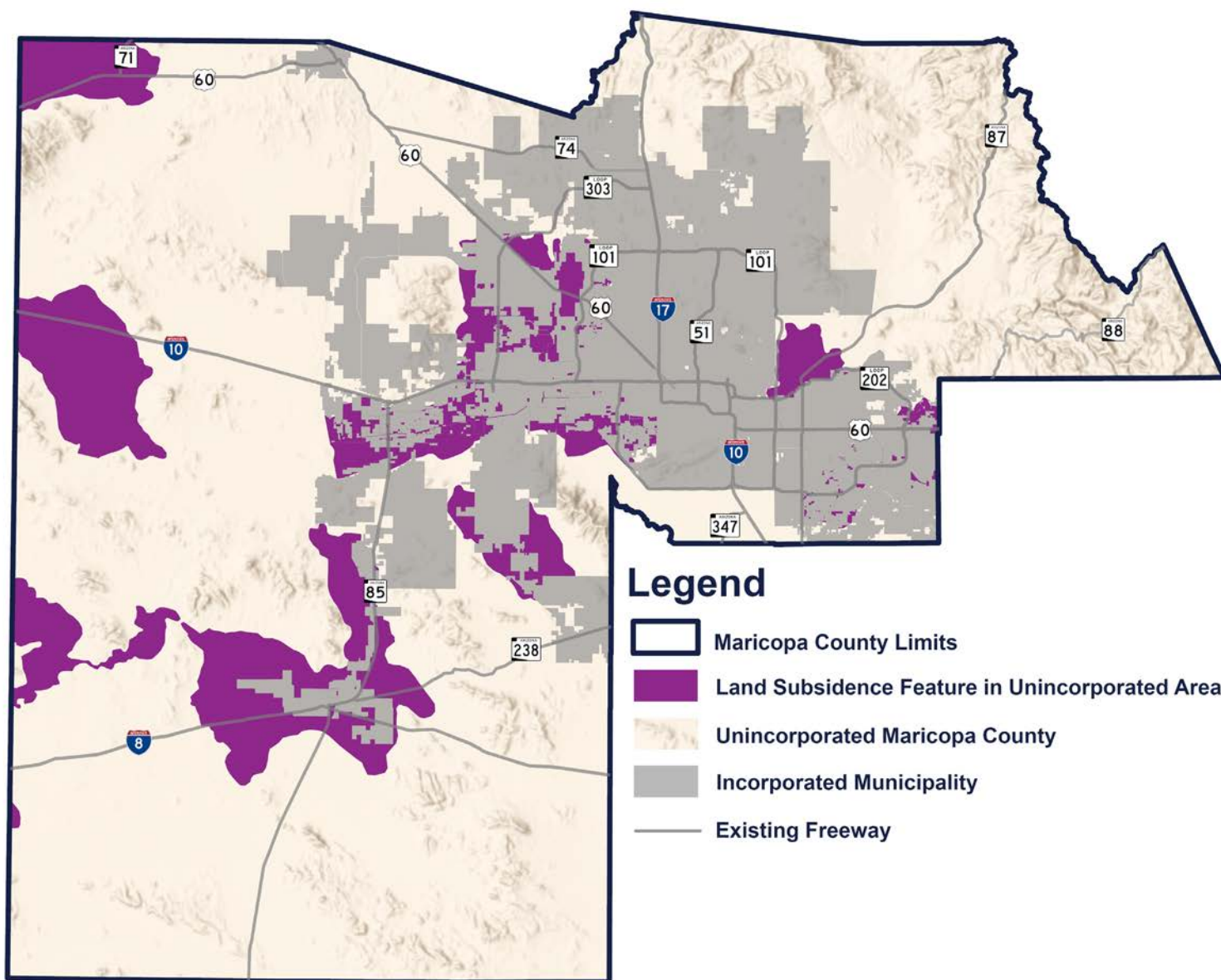
Maricopa County's diverse terrain presents notable challenges to development. Elevation and slope variations range from less than 2% on the desert floor to over 20% in mountainous regions. Steep and rugged areas often require costly engineering solutions or are avoided altogether. This results in rugged and steep areas being either bypassed for less challenging locations or developed at very low densities and intensities. It should be noted that any development occurring on a natural slope of 15% or greater is subject to the Hillside Development Regulations found in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance in addition to standards of the applicable zoning district.

Floodplains

Floodplains, particularly those designated within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 100-year floodplain, pose significant risks to development. These areas have a 1% annual chance of experiencing certain flooding, though actual events may occur more frequently and with greater severity. Development within floodplains is often hindered by insurance requirements, engineering complexities, and regulatory constraints, making it both technically and financially challenging.

Subsidence/Earth Fissures

Land subsidence in Maricopa County is a significant geological issue that is a side effect of extensive groundwater pumping withdrawal. An overly high amount of groundwater withdrawal can lead to the gradual sinking of the ground surface, known as subsidence, which has the potential to result in the formation of earth fissures. These fissures are pervasive cracks that can extend for miles and pose risks to infrastructure, property, and public safety. The Arizona Geological Survey has identified multiple areas in Maricopa County affected by subsidence, with some fissures reaching depths of up to 90 feet and hundreds of feet in length. The impacts of subsidence include damage to roads, canals, and buildings, as well as potentially reducing water quality through contamination of groundwater aquifers. **Map 20** shows the extent of known land subsidence features in Maricopa County. Note that the existence of these features do not imply that fissures will happen in these areas but only indicate the gradual setting or sinking of the Earth's surface.



Source: ADWR, 2026

Land subsidence in Maricopa County is a significant geological issue that is a side effect of extensive groundwater pumping withdrawal.

Water Quality/Availability

Water resources in Maricopa County are derived from both groundwater aquifers and surface water systems such as the CAP Canal and regional reservoirs. Availability is closely tied to precipitation patterns, particularly winter snowmelt in the higher elevations of Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. Variability in water quantity and quality across the County influences the scale, location, and viability of future development, necessitating careful resource management and planning.

Vegetation/Wildlife Habitat and Linkages

The Sonoran Desert ecosystem supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life, many of which are protected under federal and state legislation. These protections can limit or condition development activities, particularly in areas with sensitive habitats and key wildlife linkages. Preserving biodiversity and complying with environmental regulations are key considerations in the planning process.

Cultural/Archaeological Sites

Maricopa County is home to numerous archaeological sites linked to the Hohokam people and other early cultures. Inventories maintained by the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Arizona State Museum, and various federal, tribal, and state agencies help identify and protect these cultural assets. Depending on their significance, such sites may restrict or delay development, requiring coordination with preservation authorities and adherence to legal safeguards.

Built Constraints

Infrastructure and Services

The availability of infrastructure and public services is one of the most critical factors influencing urban development in Maricopa County. These foundational elements such as water, wastewater, transportation, energy, and emergency services directly shape the type, timing, and location of new growth. Unlike rural development, which may function with limited infrastructure, urban development requires comprehensive systems to safeguard public health, meet community needs, and promote orderly and fiscally responsible growth.

This principle is central to the County's Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy. As such, any proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or changes to zoning district boundaries must first confirm the presence and adequacy of the infrastructure and services outlined in the Land Use Element. Ensuring infrastructure readiness not only supports efficient development but also helps prioritize growth in areas where public investment can be maximized and long-term community benefits achieved.

Noise-Generating Land Uses

Persistent, loud, or continuous noise can negatively affect public health, sleep quality, learning patterns, and property values. While noise can originate from many sources, several are particularly influential in shaping land use decisions and determining appropriate growth areas in Maricopa County.

■ Airports

Airports are significant sources of noise and potential safety hazards, making them key considerations in land use planning. Maricopa County is home to a variety of airport types, including major commercial hubs such as Sky Harbor International and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway, general aviation airports serving private aircraft, and residential communities designed for light aircraft access. Although airports generate noise and safety concerns, they also provide substantial economic benefits. Therefore, ensuring compatible land use around airport facilities is essential when identifying suitable locations for future development.

■ Automobile Proving Grounds

Automobile proving grounds are specialized facilities where manufacturers test vehicles and components under controlled conditions. Several such facilities exist in Maricopa County, taking advantage of the region's dry climate for performance testing. Noise generated by these operations, along with security

concerns related to proprietary technologies, must be considered when evaluating the types and intensities of development appropriate for surrounding areas.

■ Major Roads and Highways

Roads and highways produce continuous noise but are indispensable to the region's economic vitality and mobility. Their presence influences land use compatibility and plays a role in determining where growth can occur. Planning for development near major transportation corridors requires careful consideration of noise impacts and mitigation strategies to ensure livability and long-term efficiency.

■ Railroads

Railroads contribute to brief but intense noise events due to train speed, horn use, and track conditions. Despite these impacts, rail infrastructure is essential for the movement of goods and people. As with highways, land use compatibility near rail corridors is an important factor in identifying appropriate areas for growth and development.

Hazardous Areas

Hazardous conditions can also dictate the types and intensities of new development. Two of these hazards, floodplains and subsidence/Earth fissures, are discussed earlier in this chapter, but there are other potentially hazardous conditions that determine growth areas:

■ High Noise or Accident Potential Zones

State law identifies specific areas surrounding military installations as High Noise or Accident Potential Zones. These zones include land near Luke Air Force Base, Luke Auxiliary Airfield Number One in northwest Surprise, and the auxiliary airfield located south of Gila Bend. These designations includes both the noise contours surrounding these facilities and the accident potential zones that extend from the ends of their runways. The purpose of these zones is to ensure that future development remains compatible with the operational impacts of military aircraft, which may pose risks to public health and safety.

Arizona has in place legislation to strengthen protections for Luke Air Force Base and its ancillary facilities. It requires local governments including Maricopa County, Surprise, Glendale, El Mirage, Goodyear, Youngtown, Buckeye, and Gila Bend to adopt land use plans and zoning regulations that address properties within

these designated zones. These plans must ensure that development is compatible with the noise and accident potential associated with military operations. State law limits the types of land uses permitted in these areas to those deemed compatible by the state, although other uses may be allowed with mutual consent from Luke Air Force Base and Maricopa County.

In addition to these zones, state law also defines a broader area known as the Territory in the Vicinity of a Military Airport. This area extends outward from the center of the main runways at Luke Air Force Base and Luke Auxiliary Airfield Number One. Although land uses within this territory are not restricted, construction of occupied buildings must incorporate noise reduction measures. These requirements may influence the types and densities of future development.

■ Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station

The Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station near Tonopah is the largest power producer in the United States. When the facility was constructed several decades ago, the surrounding area was sparsely populated. Although population levels remain relatively low, several master-planned communities are proposed within the ten-mile Plume Exposure Pathway Emergency Planning Zone. This zone is established to facilitate protective actions in the event of an unintended release of radioactive material. A secondary safety zone, known as the Ingestion Exposure Pathway Emergency Planning Zone, extends an additional fifty miles from the facility.

It is uncertain whether significant residential growth will occur in the Pathway zone before the facility is eventually decommissioned. If such growth does take place, protecting public health and safety becomes a critical priority in the unlikely event of a radioactive incident. Although the probability of such an event is low, the consequences of delayed evacuation could be severe. Therefore, careful planning and a reliable transportation network are essential. Additionally, the need to secure high-profile facilities such as nuclear power plants remains a priority for federal, state, and local authorities. Future homeland security considerations may influence or restrict the type, intensity, or location of development in this part of Maricopa County.

Ownership Constraints

Federal Land

The federal government is the largest land holder in Maricopa County, managing approximately 484,000 acres of the Tonto National Forest, nearly 508,000 acres of Wilderness areas, and about 1.5 million acres of military and other miscellaneous property. Most federal land is not available for development although in certain instances land managed by the BLM can be acquired for development via land trades or outright sales. While some discussions on transferring federal land holding to private ownership have been prompted at the federal level for the purpose of alleviating housing shortages, opponents of such action warn that this would undermine conservation efforts and public access. Presently, since most federal land is not available for development it is not considered a growth area.

The U.S. Department of Defense is the largest land holder primarily because of the Barry M. Goldwater Range located approximately 70 miles southwest of Phoenix. The Goldwater Range includes approximately 2.7 million acres – approximately one-third of which is in Maricopa County – for air and ground training. Only a small portion of the Goldwater Range is actually used for training operations meaning the vast majority remains undisturbed desert. The entire range is off limits to private development, and therefore is not a growth area.

State Trust Land

The Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) oversees more than 600,000 acres of Trust land in Maricopa County on behalf of beneficiaries like public and specialized schools, colleges, hospitals and charitable institutions to ensure that when land is sold or leased it

receives the highest value-added return possible. State law mandates that fair market value be obtained for all Trust land sales and commercial leases. All revenue derived from the sale of Trust lands are placed in a fund administered by the State Treasurer, and revenue derived from commercial leases are distributed directly to the beneficiaries. Whether Trust land is considered a growth area depends on several factors, including when such land is made available for auction or lease, the status of ASLD land management plans, and available infrastructure and services.

Native American Communities

There are approximately 200,000 acres of land controlled by various Native American communities within the boundary of Maricopa County. These include land held in trust for the Fort McDowell-Apache, Salt River Pima-Maricopa, Gila River and Tohono O'odham tribal communities. While development can occur in these areas each respective nation controls the location, type and intensity of growth within their borders. Therefore, for the purpose of this Plan these communities are not considered growth areas.

Maricopa County Regional Parks

Covering approximately 120,000 acres Maricopa County's twelve parks and conservation areas comprise one of the largest regional park systems in the nation. Each park offers various levels of recreation for the more than 1.2 million residents and guests that visit the system annually. Except for recreational enhancements, development in the parks is prohibited meaning these are not growth areas.

Attitudinal Constraints

Public attitudes toward development play a pivotal role in shaping the type, scale, and location of future growth across unincorporated Maricopa County as discussed in the earlier Public Engagement section. Preferences vary widely, with some residents favoring newer urban-context environments while others advocate for preserving rural desert character and open desert landscape spaces. These divergent views are especially pronounced in unincorporated areas, where land use decisions often spark strong community sentiment.

Understanding and responding to these perspectives is essential for crafting workable growth strategies. Whether supporting higher-density development or maintaining low-intensity rural landscapes, public opinion continues to influence planning outcomes and remains a key factor in determining how and where growth occurs.

Growth Pressures

Due to the availability of lower-priced rural or undeveloped land at the fringe of urban development in the Phoenix Area, unincorporated Maricopa County experiences significant growth pressures. As the population increases and demand for housing rises in the region, developers are increasingly drawn to these exurb areas due to lower land costs and fewer regulatory constraints often found in municipalities. The outward expansion and rate of development can strain existing infrastructure and services, creating challenges for coordinated planning and efficient service delivery.

Growth in the unincorporated exurban fringe can also strain regional systems such as transportation, water supply, and emergency services. As development pushes outward, the cost of extending roads, utilities, and public safety infrastructure increases, often outpacing the revenues generated by new growth. This dynamic underscores the importance of aligning fringe development with long-range planning goals, including the designation of appropriate growth areas, the integration of multimodal transportation options as feasible, and the preservation of critical natural and/or cultural assets.

Finally, growth in unincorporated fringe affects the existing residents who have already built up their homes and livelihoods in these portions of the County. Agricultural operations, open space preservation, and rural lifestyles frequently come into conflict with suburban development proposals. Residents in these unincorporated areas often express concerns about traffic congestion, loss of natural landscapes, and changes to community character. At the same time, local governments face pressure to accommodate growth while maintaining fiscal responsibility and protecting environmental resources. Balancing these interests requires thoughtful land use strategies that prioritize infrastructure readiness, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

Effects on Area Plans

This analysis indicates that growth pressures in unincorporated areas of Maricopa County are increasingly concentrated along the western urban fringe, particularly near the Interstate 10 Corridor toward Tonopah. This finding aligns with the fact that the four existing Area Plans in this part of the County have not been updated in nearly two decades. There is a high likelihood of a need for timely reassessment of these four Area Plans to reflect current development dynamics and community issues.

This growth pressure analysis provides a valuable basis for prioritizing the update sequence of existing Area Plans. By identifying areas experiencing heightened development interest, the County can ensure that planning efforts are responsive, proactive, and strategically targeted. Additionally, the analysis serves as a tool for identifying new regions with suitable conditions that may warrant consideration of the creation of new Area Plans.

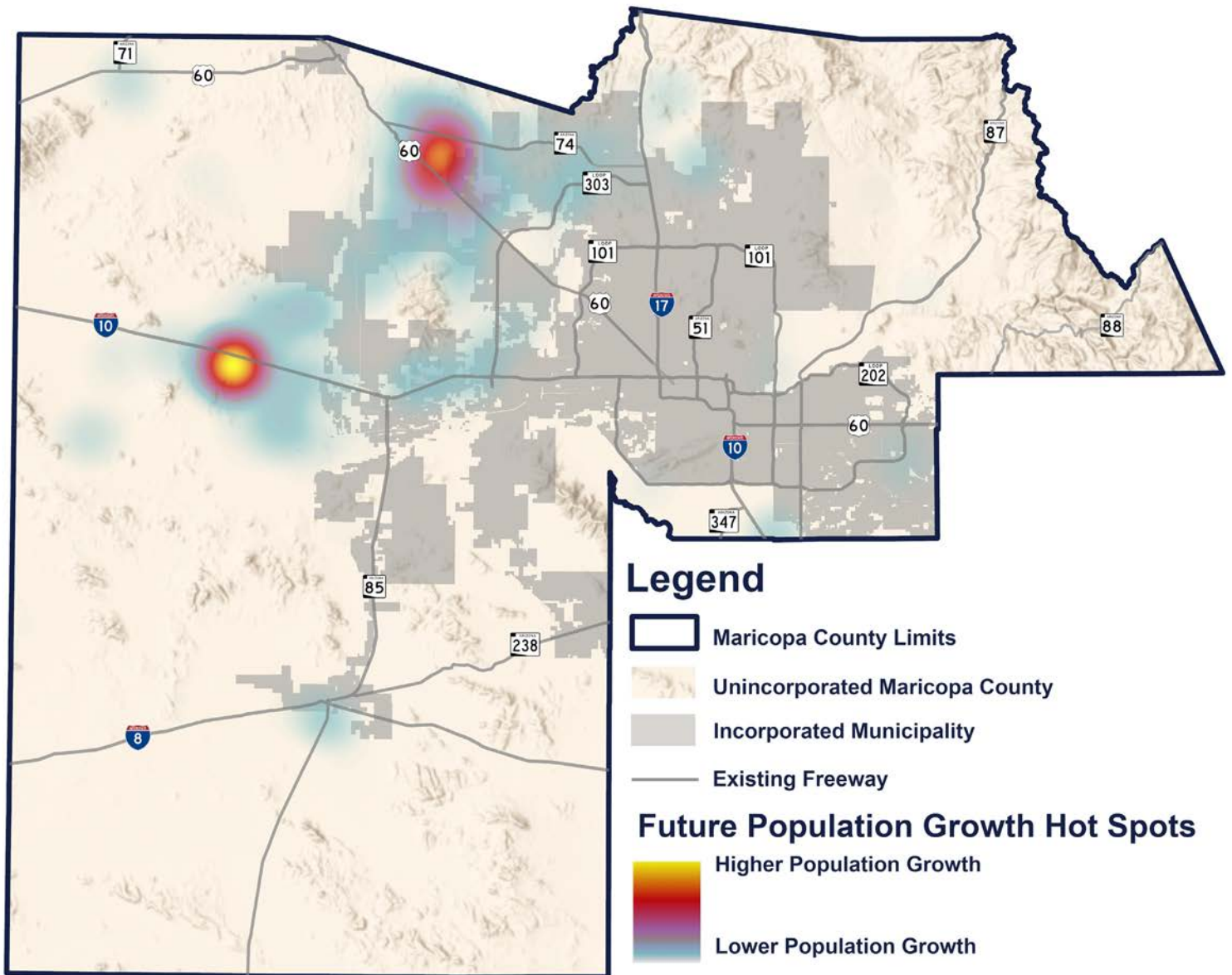
Utilizing a similar approach for the Area Plan Program could enhance the County's ability to manage growth effectively, support timely development, and maintain alignment with long-range planning objectives. This approach also reinforces the importance of regularly evaluating and updating planning documents to ensure they remain relevant and actionable in the face of evolving growth patterns.

The Comprehensive Plan analyzed several factors that are common drivers of growth pressure found in unincorporated Maricopa County, including:

- Proximity to existing development;
- Proximity to planned future employment centers;
- Proximity to approved master planned communities; and
- Zoning and/or future land use that allows for new development

This growth pressure analysis resulted in these factors driving a greater potential of development growth in unincorporated Maricopa County, particularly on the western urban fringe of the Phoenix metro area. Through this analysis, two notable hot spots of projected future growth are evident. The first projected future growth hot spot is in the Tonopah area within the extent of the Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan, and the second hot spot is near Wittmann close to the US-60/SR 74 intersection. **Map 21** captures the results of the projected future growth analysis for unincorporated Maricopa County.

▶ **Map 21. Future Growth Hot Spot Growth Projection in Unincorporated Maricopa County**



Source: Maricopa County Office of Enterprise Technology, 2025; Michael Baker International Analysis, 2026

Unincorporated Maricopa County experiences significant growth pressures as developers are drawn to lower-priced rural land at the fringe of urban development.

Strategies

The previous Comprehensive Plan introduced the term Urban Growth Area, identifying where urban growth is most suitable to occur. This area encompasses unincorporated land in Maricopa County that is planned for urban development within either a County Area Plan, a Development Master Plan/Master Planned Community, or a Municipal Planning Area from a municipal general plan within the extent of Maricopa County.

Under the new Municipal-Rural Influence Framework that this Comprehensive Plan puts forth, unincorporated land can be considered as part of the Urban Growth Area or the Rural Service Area.



Urban Growth Area

When not hindered by the previously mentioned constraints, there are opportunities for growth in unincorporated Maricopa County. Any land determined to be in the County's Urban Growth Area, as detailed in the Municipal-Rural Influence Framework, has the ability to propose a land use designation change or rezoning to an urban land use regardless of the land's initial designation. However, being determined to be in the Urban Growth Area does not automatically allow for approval of any land use designation change or rezoning request. The formal definition of the Urban Growth Area in Maricopa County is as follows:

Any unincorporated land designated for an urban land use in the Comprehensive Plan, the respective County Area Plan, or an applicable municipal general plan if the requirements of the Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD) strategy can be satisfied and assurance of annexation can be obtained. Unincorporated land designated for rural land use in the Comprehensive Plan or a County Area Plan could also be considered the Urban Growth Area if that land is designated for urban land use in an applicable municipal general plan, provided that the requirements of the USUD umbrella policy can be satisfied and an assurance of annexation can be obtained to avoid forming new County Islands. Any area that does not meet these criteria is part of the Rural Service Area, which allows for rural land use. Moreover, urban growth is unsuitable anywhere that the constraints identified in this chapter, as applicable, cannot be properly addressed.

While the Urban Growth Area does allow for urban-context development in unincorporated areas assuming the USUD requirements are satisfied and the other conditions in the above definition are also met, Maricopa County does affirm that such urban development, especially urban residential development, should annex into the appropriate municipalities to avoid the endurance of County Islands or the creation of new ones and to ensure urban services, urban infrastructure, and a locally elected government are available. If, for whatever reason, annexation is not possible, then any proposed urban development in the County's Urban Growth Area shall seek an assurance of annexation with the appropriate municipality.

Certain industrial land uses that require large amounts of land, but not urban services and infrastructure, are acceptable outside the Urban Growth Area in the Rural Service Area. These uses could include electric generating facilities, proving grounds and test facilities, extraction industries, agriculturally-oriented businesses and other rural-type industrial uses on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, certain commercial land uses that are under 40 acres do not require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and can prove proportionally-scaled satisfactions to the USUD requirements are acceptable outside the Urban Growth Area in the Rural Service Area.



Rural Service Area

The Rural Service Area in Maricopa County encompasses regions characterized by low-density land use, limited infrastructure, and a strong emphasis on preserving open space, agricultural operations, and the rural lifestyle. These areas are not in the Urban Growth Area and are not intended for intensive urban development. Development in the Rural Service Area is guided by policies that prioritize compatibility with the natural landscape, minimize infrastructure demands, conserve regional resources, and maintain the integrity of rural communities. As such only rural land use designations and their associated zoning districts are expected in the Rural Service Area with the exception for certain industrial and commercial land uses previously mentioned.



Urban/Rural Transitional Areas

Urban/rural interface transition areas in unincorporated Maricopa County represent dynamic zones where urban or suburban expansion meets traditionally rural landscapes. These areas are characterized by a mix of land uses, including low-density residential development, agricultural operations, and emerging infrastructure. These transition areas are often included within the limits of the current Area Plans. As growth continues to extend outward from incorporated municipalities, these transitional zones face increasing pressure to accommodate new housing, commercial activity, and public services. However, the lack of municipal governance and limited infrastructure in the County can complicate planning efforts. This is why Maricopa County supports planning for these areas between its Urban Growth Area and its Rural Service Area to ensure smooth and cohesive transitions.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring strategic and orderly development that supports livability and accessibility.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals strongly support Stewardship by directing growth to appropriate areas and reducing environmental impacts.



PROSPERITY

These goals reinforce Prosperity by creating a stable and efficient framework for economic growth.

Growth Areas Goal 1: Address growth strategically to ensure orderly, compatible land use and reasonable development.

Goal Statement: Ensuring orderly and reasonable growth through effective development planning practices is crucial for providing the appropriate infrastructure needed to maintain a high quality of life.

Growth Area Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports assurance of annexation, where feasible, of new urban development and redevelopment sites within its Urban Growth Area.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports planning for urban/rural interface transition areas between its Urban Growth Area and Rural Service Area.

Growth Areas Goal 2: Have urban growth that is consistent with the County’s Urban Growth Area, meets statutory requirements, and implements the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy.

Goal Statement: The County’s Urban Growth Area allows for the growth of infrastructure, services, and development according to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy in order to protect the public’s health, safety, and well-being.

Growth Area Policies:

2.1 Maricopa County supports consistent implementation of and compliance with its Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy in its Urban Growth Area.

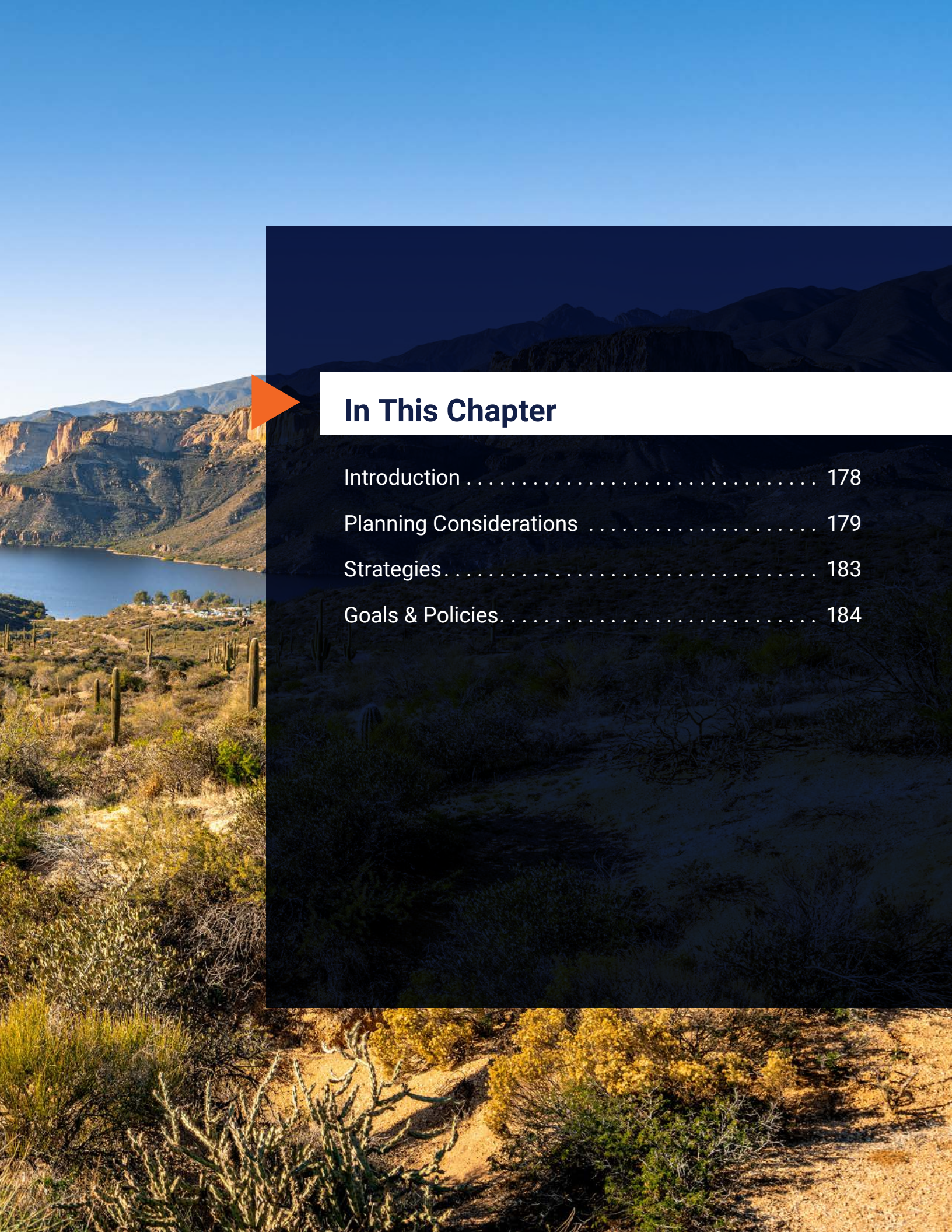
2.2 Maricopa County supports periodically evaluating the development constraints and considerations identified in this element to determine how they impact the Urban Growth Area, and whether they require reconsideration or modification.





10

Open Space



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The Open Space element recommends ways to increase the amount, quality, and variety of open space in unincorporated Maricopa County, and ways to link open space into interconnected systems.

Annual visitation to Maricopa County Parks is expected to rise from

2.7 million

in 2022 to

3.7 million

by 2032

Introduction

Open space and recreation are fundamental components of a healthy and livable community. Across the United States, research consistently demonstrates that parks, trails, and natural areas provide critical environmental, social, and economic benefits. They improve air and water quality, mitigate urban heat islands, and support biodiversity, while offering residents opportunities for physical activity, mental restoration, and social interaction. In urbanized regions, open spaces provide essential green infrastructure where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather. Open spaces also contribute to the aesthetic character of urban areas, offering visual relief from built environments and preserving distinctive landmarks that strengthen a region's identity. However, as urbanization intensifies and development pressures grow, protecting and enhancing open space becomes a critical consideration to ensure future generations enjoy equal and widespread access to nature and recreation.

Maricopa County manages one of the largest regional park systems in the United States, covering more than 120,000 acres of Sonoran Desert landscapes. The system's mission is to preserve open space, protect sensitive ecosystems, and provide diverse recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. It includes 12 regional parks and conservation areas along with miles of multi-use trails all offering unique amenities.

This chapter establishes a vision for an interconnected system of parks, trails, and natural areas that reflects County priorities and responds to emerging challenges. It outlines goals and policies to conserve natural resources, expand recreational opportunities, and integrate open space planning with housing, transportation, and economic development strategies. In doing so, the Comprehensive Plan elevates open space and recreation as core components of a dynamic, healthy, and attractive Maricopa County.

Planning Considerations

Maricopa County's Parks Vision 2030 outlines a comprehensive approach to managing and expanding its regional park and open space system in response to rapid population growth and evolving community needs. The County, home to over 4.4 million residents in 2020, is projected to surpass five million by 2030 and reach 6.4 million by 2055. This growth will significantly increase demand for parks, trails, and natural open spaces, with annual visitation expected to rise from 2.7 million in 2022 to 3.7 million by 2032. To maintain the current standard of 27 acres per 1,000 residents, the County must acquire approximately 15,000 acres every decade. Public input strongly supports reinvesting in existing parks, protecting wildlife corridors, and acquiring new open spaces.

Open Space

Maricopa County deems the preservation and development of open spaces in general as essential for maintaining the quality of life for its residents, promoting physical activity, and fostering a sense of community. Overall, there are 4,850.3 square miles, or 3,104,190 acres, of open space land in unincorporated Maricopa County. This total includes the 120,000 acres in the 12 regional parks in the County system, the 684,000 acres of recreation land under BLM management, the 655,000 acres of the Tonto National Forest, and the 97,350 acres of dedicated or proposed open space from the County's area plans. The remaining acreage of open space in the unincorporated County are either not planned to remain open space or are under the operation of other agencies that do not permit recreational use. As the population continues to grow and development follows, the importance of balancing development with the conservation of open spaces remains a key priority for Maricopa County. The recreational opens space land in the County is shown on **Map 22**.



Available Recreational Resources

Trail System - Multi-use trails for hiking, biking, equestrian use, competitive tracks, ADA/barrier-free trails.

Camping Facilities - Developed RV and tent sites, primitive camping areas, group/youth campgrounds.

Water Recreation - Lake Pleasant: boating, fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding; boat ramps, marinas.

Amenities&Facilities-Nature centers, amphitheaters, playgrounds, picnic ramadas, restrooms (flush/vault), dump stations, equestrian staging areas, archery ranges, shooting ranges, observatories, event venues, interpretive signage, retail/gift shops.

Programs & Education - Interpretive education, guided hikes, bird walks, moonlight hikes, fitness events, volunteer programs, youth education at Desert Outdoor Center.

Parks

Maricopa County manages one of the largest regional park systems in the United States, encompassing approximately 121,185 acres of protected land. All the regional parks the County manages are shown in **Map 22**. The park system is designed to balance recreation, conservation, and connectivity. It offers extensive open space areas, diverse recreational resources, and a well-planned network of access points. The system includes:

■ Regional Parks (12 total including Conservation Areas)

- Adobe Dam Regional Park – 1,454 acres
- Buckeye Hills Regional Park – 4,453 acres
- Cave Creek Regional Park – 2,934 acres
- Estrella Mountain Regional Park – 19,837 acres
- Lake Pleasant Regional Park – 23,662 acres
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park – 20,472 acres
- San Tan Mountain Regional Park – 10,119 acres
- Utery Mountain Regional Park – 3,529 acres
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park – 29,557 acres
- Vulture Mountains Recreation Area – 1,046 acres (with 70,000+ acres under cooperative management with BLM)

■ Conservation Areas

- Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area – 2,174 acres
- Hassayampa River Preserve – 776 acres

■ Education Center

- Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant

■ Linear Parks & Greenways

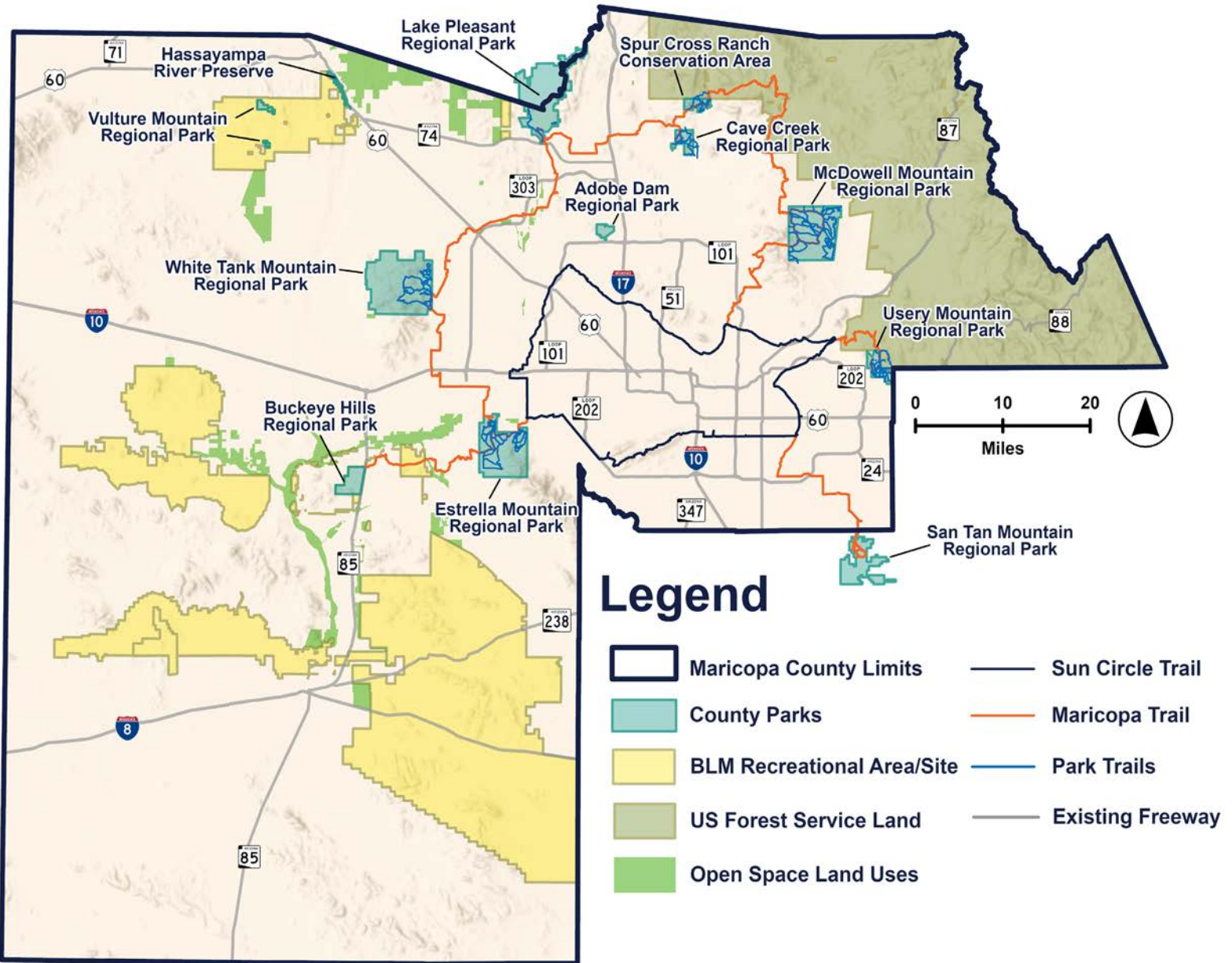
- Maricopa Trail – 315+ miles (regional loop connecting parks)
- Sun Circle Trail – 35 miles (National Recreation Trail)

■ Future Expansion Targets

- Verde River, New River Mesa, Buckeye Hills East, Saddle Mountain, Big Horn Mountains, Harquahala, Eagletail, Hummingbird Springs, Painted Rocks, Lake Pleasant West, Seven Springs, Horseshoe Lake, Bartlett Lake, Table Mesa.

Local and neighborhood parks similarly play a crucial role in maintaining the stability of communities by offering spaces for recreation, social interaction, and promoting healthy lifestyles. Unlike cities and towns, Maricopa County does not manage local parks. Instead, parks in unincorporated areas are privately managed by homeowners' associations or similar entities. Nevertheless, Maricopa County recognizes the importance of having local parks with adequate and appropriate amenities as a vital part of the community.

▶ **Map 22. County Parks and Trails Map**



Source: Maricopa County Parks & Recreation, 2025; Maricopa County Planning & Development, 2025; BLM, 2024

121,185 acres

Protected land managed by Maricopa County, forming one of the largest regional park systems.



Trails

Maricopa County manages an extensive trail network spanning more than 651 miles, with 290 miles located within its regional parks. These trails wind through diverse landscapes, including desert terrain, canal paths, and mountain foothills, offering a scenic and interconnected system for outdoor recreation. Designed for multiple uses, the trails accommodate hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding, with select paved segments supporting wheeled sports.

Beyond the trail paths within the 12 regional parks, the Maricopa Trail and the Sun Circle Trail are extensive trails that traverse the County connecting urban spaces to nature. Both of these trails are integral to Maricopa County's efforts to enhance the recreational opportunities available to residents. The Maricopa Trail and the Sun Circle Trail are shown in **Map 22**.

The Maricopa Trail is a 315-mile loop that encircles the Phoenix metropolitan area, connecting ten of Maricopa County's regional parks and various municipal parks. This extensive trail system offers a unique opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to explore the diverse landscapes of the Sonoran Desert, from open desert expanses to urban centers. The trail is designed for multiple uses, including hiking, biking, and horseback riding, making it accessible to a wide range of users. With numerous trailheads and community access points, the Maricopa Trail provides a comprehensive tour of the County's natural beauty and recreational opportunities. The trail also includes spurs that link to outlying mountain parks and other regional trails like the Arizona Trail.

The Sun Circle Trail is a scenic and versatile trail that spans approximately 110 miles (35 miles maintained by Maricopa County), creating a similar loop that connects various parts of the Phoenix metropolitan area. Like the Maricopa Trail, the Sun Circle Trail is designed for multiple uses, including hiking, biking, and horseback riding. However, it often follows canal paths, providing a unique urban trail experience and additional recreation opportunities for wheeled sports. The Sun Circle Trail links several parks and natural areas, offering users a chance to explore diverse landscapes, from desert vistas to lush green spaces. It serves as an important recreational resource, promoting outdoor activities, and connecting communities in unincorporated Maricopa County.

Strategies

Overall, Maricopa County seeks to be a regional leader in recreation, conservation, and community engagement, ensuring access to natural spaces, promoting health and wellness, and preserving the Sonoran Desert's natural and cultural heritage while adapting to future growth and environmental challenges. Maricopa County's future strategy for managing open space and recreation centers on preserving and expanding a connected system of natural areas, parks, and trails while balancing rapid population growth with ecological protection. This is expected to be achieved through reinvesting in existing parks to maintain quality visitor experiences and protecting wildlife corridors and river greenways to ensure biodiversity and connectivity. Framing open space not only as a recreational amenity but as critical infrastructure for health, water conservation, and economic vitality, ensuring that future growth supports a high quality of life while protecting the County's unique desert heritage.

Park Master Planning:

Maricopa County anticipates updating all Park Master Plans within two to three years. These updates will address emerging recreation trends, visitor capacity challenges, and urban encroachment, ensuring parks remain relevant and resilient.

Development Guidelines:

Future development will incorporate low-impact design and green infrastructure while maintaining buffer zones to protect sensitive landscapes. Continual review of zoning policies will help preserve riparian areas and hillside slopes.

Edge Treatments:

The transition from urban development to open space along the edges of County's regional parks is a critical issue for the park system. Effective edge treatment works to minimize the effects of this transition and shapes the parks' quality, accessibility, security, and durability. Hard edges, such as walls and fences, diminish scenic value and isolate parks from surrounding areas. In contrast, soft edges, like natural landscaping and larger building setbacks, protect scenery and integrate parks with nearby communities. Maricopa County supports working with municipalities to apply soft edge treatments on a case-by-case basis and endorses guidelines for unincorporated areas.

Hazards and Conservation:

To reduce drought and wildfire risks, the County prioritizes habitat restoration, invasive species management, and adaptation measures. This conservation leadership will be strengthened through regional collaboration with federal, state, and municipal partners.

Land Acquisition:

The County plans to acquire and manage new parklands and corridors ahead of growth. Priority areas include the Verde River and New River Mesa in the East Valley and Buckeye Hills and Saddle Mountain in the West Valley. Four new regional parks are planned by 2050, along with river corridor restoration for recreation and wildlife movement.

Strategic Partnerships:

Collaboration with federal and state agencies, cities, and nonprofits will be essential for land acquisition, stewardship, and program development. These partnerships will help share resources and responsibilities.

Diversified Funding Portfolio:

Funding will come from a mix of sources, including general obligation bonds, development impact fees, grants, dedicated taxes, concessionaire investments, and volunteer programs. This diversified approach ensures financial sustainability for operations and future growth.

Recreation and Visitor Experience:

Access points will be managed through a variety of means including primary park entrances with controlled entry stations, regional trailheads, and secondary/remote trailheads. These measures will improve connectivity between parks, communities, and wildlife corridors. Visitor satisfaction will be monitored through surveys, economic impact studies, and capacity management strategies supported by technology.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by providing residents with the ability for health, leisure, and social interactions.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals strongly reflect Stewardship by preserving and protecting the unique Sonoran Desert environment and its ecological integrity.



PROSPERITY

These goals contribute to Prosperity by supporting local economies and regional attractiveness.

Open Space Goal 1: Protect and expand the regional park system proportionately with population growth.

Goal Statement: Ensuring that the regional park system grows and integrates in proportion to meet the needs and demands for recreational opportunities in the natural landscapes and spaces of an increasing population in both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of Maricopa County.

Open Space Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports implementing the County Parks and Recreation Department's currently adopted Parks, Open Space & Trail System Plan, and any successor plan.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports soft edge treatments and buffers along the perimeter of its regional parks, regional trail system, the El Rio corridor, and open space in unincorporated areas of the County.

1.3 Maricopa County will coordinate with planning initiatives that seek to revitalize the Salt and Gila River corridors as vital ecological, cultural, and economic assets.

1.4 Maricopa County supports the mission and ongoing efforts of the Lower Gila River Collaborative, a voluntary partnership focused on restoring the Lower Gila River ecosystem while promoting stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

Open Space Goal 2: Support access to both local and regional recreational opportunities and open space.

Goal Statement: Supporting appropriate public access to recreational lands and open spaces in the region outside of the County’s jurisdiction is important for providing opportunities for exercise, relaxation, enjoyment, and social interaction, while also supporting environmental conservation and local economies.

Open Space Policies:

2.1 Maricopa County supports supports new residential developments using the local park ratios identified in this Plan as a guide for the provision of local recreational amenities.

2.2 Maricopa County supports user-based funding options for its regional park system and regional trail system to help maintain high-quality amenities and access.

Open Space Goal 3: Maintain the Maricopa Trail and the Maricopa County Regional Trail System.

Goal Statement: Continue to protect and enhance the Maricopa County Trail System in addition to working with regional municipalities to connect the trail system to their parks, preserves, and open space systems..

Open Space Policies:

- 3.1** Maricopa County supports dedication and improvement of trail right-of-way within new development, including the Maricopa Trail and Maricopa County Regional Trail System.



Open Space Goal 4: Provide regional leadership to promote the preservation of the desert landscape through protected recreational lands and open space.

Goal Statement: Leading efforts to preserve and conserve the natural landscape and wildlife habitats and corridors through protected recreational lands and open spaces is a primary objective for the flourishing of the unique environment of the Sonoran Desert for future generations.

Open Space Policies:

- 4.1** Maricopa County supports the protection of scenic corridors and views as outlined in adopted scenic corridor plans and in the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance.

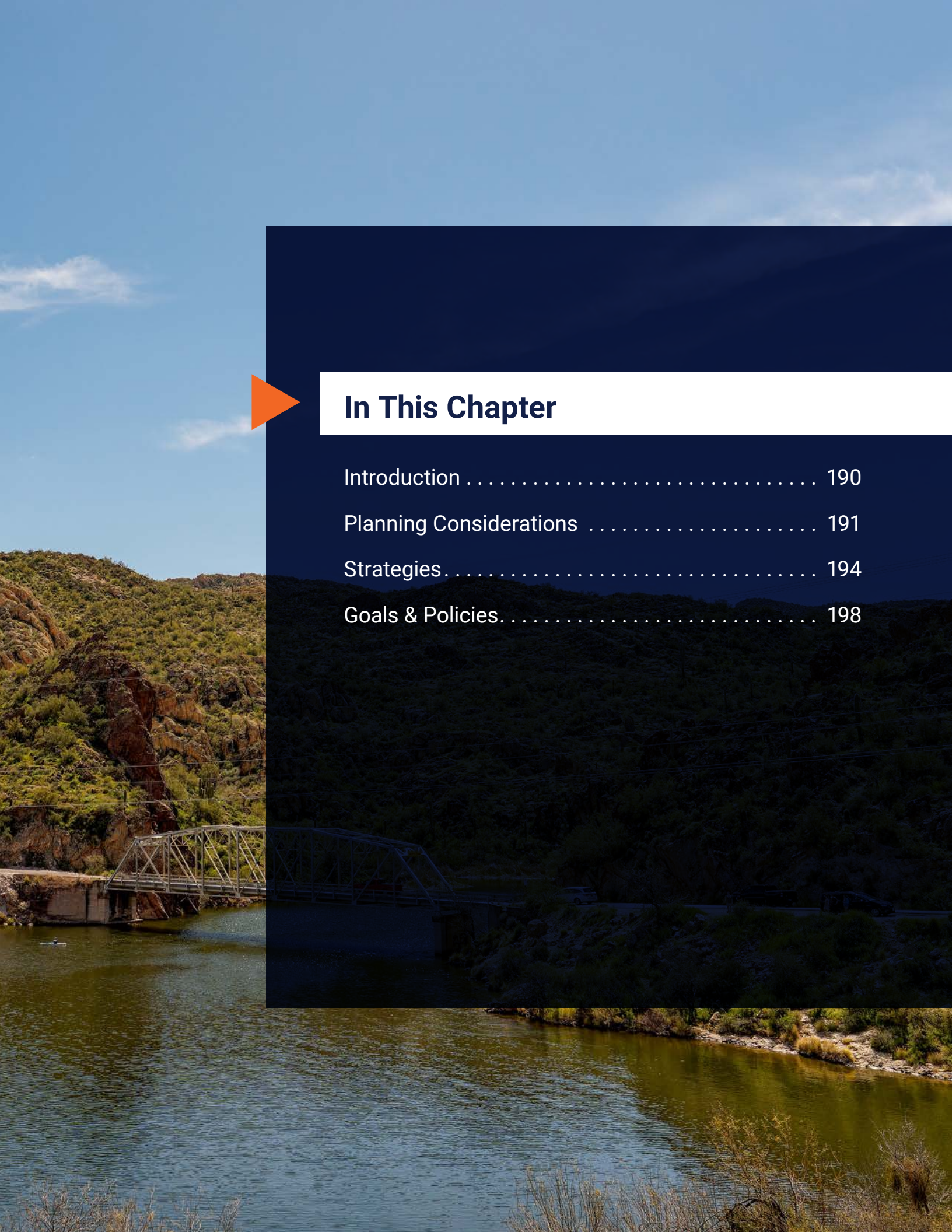
 - 4.2** Maricopa County supports partnering with municipalities to address edge treatments along the perimeter of regional parks and the regional trail system.

 - 4.3** Maricopa County supports partnering with adjacent federal and state agencies to expand recreation opportunities and protect and preserve existing open space from development pressures where feasible.

 - 4.4** Maricopa County supports partnering with adjacent federal, state, and local agencies to promote responsible recreational activities and opportunities that aim to protect and preserve existing parks, recreation areas, public lands, and open spaces.
-



Water Resources



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The Water Resources element focuses on strategies to help ensure that an adequate water supply is available to meet future growth. Since water supply and allocation are regulated at the state level, strategies in this element target water conservation and water quality protection efforts that Maricopa County can implement at a local level.

3

main sources water providers within Maricopa County rely on (Surface Water, Groundwater, and Effluent/Reclaimed Water)

Introduction

Managing water resources is one of Maricopa County's most pressing challenges as growth continues and the unincorporated areas depend on a mix of surface, ground, and reclaimed water to fulfill demand. As long as people have lived in this region, there has been an understanding that with the dry climate, careful planning and responsible use of water are essential. That same mindset continues today in the County, allowing millions to call the desert home.

As Maricopa County grows, so does the challenge of providing enough water for everyone. Weather patterns can shift from year to year, making water supplies unpredictable. To keep up with demand and ensure long-term efficiency and supply, we need to find new ways to use water more efficiently and make the most of what we have.

Recognizing this, state law requires Maricopa County to include a Water Resources section in its Comprehensive Plan. This section looks at how much water is available, how much we'll likely need as the population grows, and how we can meet that demand. The goal is to offer practical policies and recommendations that support smart, balanced water use for the future.

The water providers within Maricopa County rely on three main sources:

- **Surface Water:** Includes rivers, lakes, and water delivered through the Central Arizona Project (CAP) Canal.
- **Groundwater:** Water stored underground in aquifers.
- **Effluent/Reclaimed Water:** Treated wastewater that can be reused for certain purposes.

The next section provides a closer look at each of these sources.

Planning Considerations

Surface Water and the CAP Canal

Surface water is from sources such as rivers, lakes, and streams. This is Arizona's main renewable water source. However, as surface water replenishment depends on annual rainfall and snowmelt, its availability can vary widely from year to year. To help manage this variability, reservoirs and dams along the Salt, Verde, Gila, and Agua Fria Rivers collect runoff from northern and eastern Arizona. This stored water helps stabilize supplies during both wet and dry periods.

A major source of surface water for Maricopa County is the CAP Canal. Managed by the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, the CAP Canal stretches nearly 340 miles from Lake Havasu to the San Xavier Indian Reservation near Tucson. It delivers about 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water each year to Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties, making it a critical lifeline for all who live in its service area.

The Colorado River's water is divided among seven western states under the 1922 Colorado River Compact. Arizona, California, and Nevada make up the Lower Basin, while Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico form the Upper Basin. Each division receives 7.5 million acre-feet annually, with Arizona allocated 2.8 million acre-feet. Some of this water is used directly, while the rest is stored in underground aquifers to help buffer against future shortages. The Arizona Water Banking Authority oversees this storage process.

As of 2025, Arizona is grappling with a Tier 1 shortage in the Colorado River Basin, resulting in a 512,000 acre-foot reduction, impacting 30% of the Central Arizona Project's supply and nearly 8% of the state's total water use. With the threat of deeper Tier 2 or 3 cuts looming, municipalities are looking to groundwater reserves, conservation efforts, and collaborative drought planning. Arizona has proposed a "supply-driven" model that ties water allocations to actual river flows, aiming for fairer distribution amid recent water level declines. However, negotiations among the seven basin states remain tense and unresolved, with Upper Basin states wary of shifting burdens. The cuts affect agriculture, tribal lands, and recreation, prompting environmental advocates to push for long-term water strategies. Meanwhile, the century-old Colorado River Compact faces mounting pressure as 30 tribes assert their water rights, adding complexity to an already strained system.



Groundwater

The primary source of water in the Phoenix AMA portion of Maricopa County is groundwater at 748,000 acre-feet annually

Groundwater is water that has slowly seeped into underground aquifers over many years from rain and snowmelt. As it takes so long to naturally refill these aquifers, groundwater is considered a limited and mostly non-renewable resource. The Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) oversees the regulation and management of groundwater sources to ensure short-term use and protect long-term availability. In 2024, ADWR published an update of its Groundwater Model and 100-Year Assured Water Supply Projection that estimated the volume of groundwater in storage above 1,000 feet at the end of the historical simulation (simulated over 122 years, from 1900-2022) to be 126,750,000 AF. The cumulative storage change (decline) for this same 122-year historical period is 21,470,000 AF. Also following the 2024 update to incorporate the latest data, the 100-year Assured Water Supply projection reported that the unmet demand at the end of the 100-year projection period is estimated to be 3,604,500 AF, which is a reduction from the previous projection estimate of 4,862,000 AF. The majority of the unmet demand is within the so-called “unprotected” sectors, which include agriculture, industrial, and other uses. Since the supply of surface water sources are annually variable or restricted through the Colorado Compact, this projected unmet 100-year demand will likely be served through a combination of converting land from high-consumption water uses to lower-demand water uses and increased water reuse to limit the rate of increase in pumping groundwater in the Phoenix AMA.

In unincorporated Maricopa County, water management faces unique challenges due to diverse land ownership and varying levels of infrastructure. Unincorporated areas often rely heavily on groundwater, which is regulated under the state’s Active Management Areas, which were established under the 1980 Arizona Groundwater Management Act to prevent over-extraction and ensure safe yield. Over-extraction, also referred to as overdraft, occurs when more water is pumped from the aquifer than is replenished, and can lead to land subsidence, causing the ground to sink and potentially damage infrastructure. Maricopa County has 48.8% of its land area in the Phoenix AMA, 4.1% in the Pinal AMA, 5.3% in the Harquahala Irrigation Non-expansion Area (INA), and 41.9% outside of an AMA or INA. AMAs implement strict groundwater management plans, aiming to balance groundwater withdrawal with natural and artificial recharge.

Effluent / Graywater

Graywater is wastewater from everyday activities like showering, laundry, and handwashing. Once treated, it can be reused for things like supporting agricultural and landscaping irrigation, supporting industrial cooling and processes, and other non-drinking purposes.

The region has 92 wastewater treatment facilities producing around 324,000 acre-feet of treated graywater annually. As Maricopa County continues to grow, graywater has and will continue to be a vital source of water for non-potable uses as a means to preserve the regional groundwater and surface water sources for uses that require potable water.

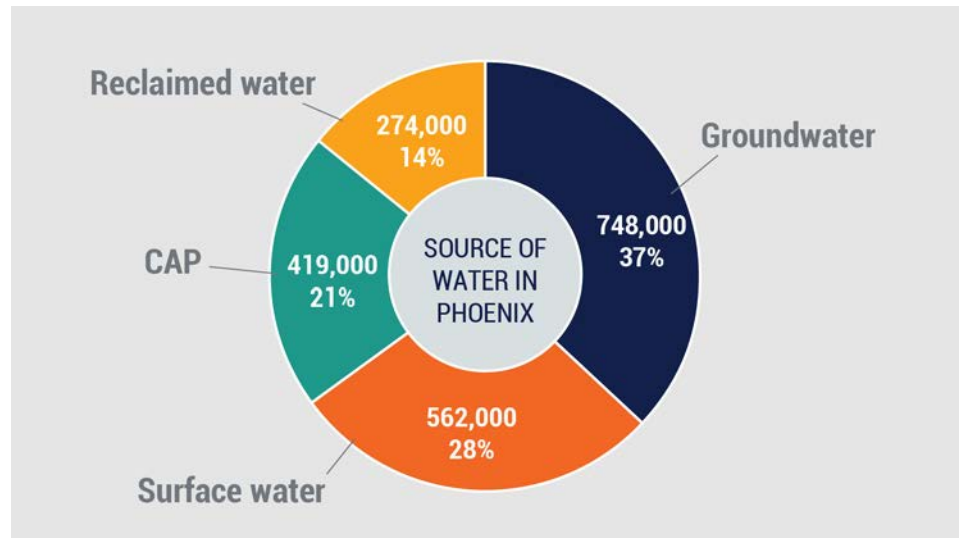
Water Scarcity’s Effect on Agriculture

Agriculture remains Arizona’s largest water consumer, but reductions in CAP deliveries and new conservation mandates are accelerating changes in cropping patterns and irrigation practices. Farmers are adopting precision irrigation, soil moisture sensors, and crop switching to maintain productivity under constrained supplies. However, continued farmland conversion to urban development, especially in Maricopa County, raises concerns about regional and national food security, given Arizona’s role as a major winter vegetable producer. Balancing water conservation with the need to sustain agricultural output will remain a critical challenge moving forward.

Supply of Water Sources

The primary source of water in the Phoenix AMA portion of Maricopa County is groundwater at 748,000 acre-feet (AF) annually. Surface water is the second largest source for water in the Phoenix AMA at 562,000 AF annually. The CAP Canal, which transports Colorado River water, is the third largest source in the County at 419,000 AF annually. Effluent or reclaimed water is the smallest source of water in the Phoenix AMA at 274,000 AF annually. **Figure 19** illustrates the sources of water in the Phoenix AMA.

Figure 19. Source of Water in Phoenix AMA (in acre-feet), 2019 Data

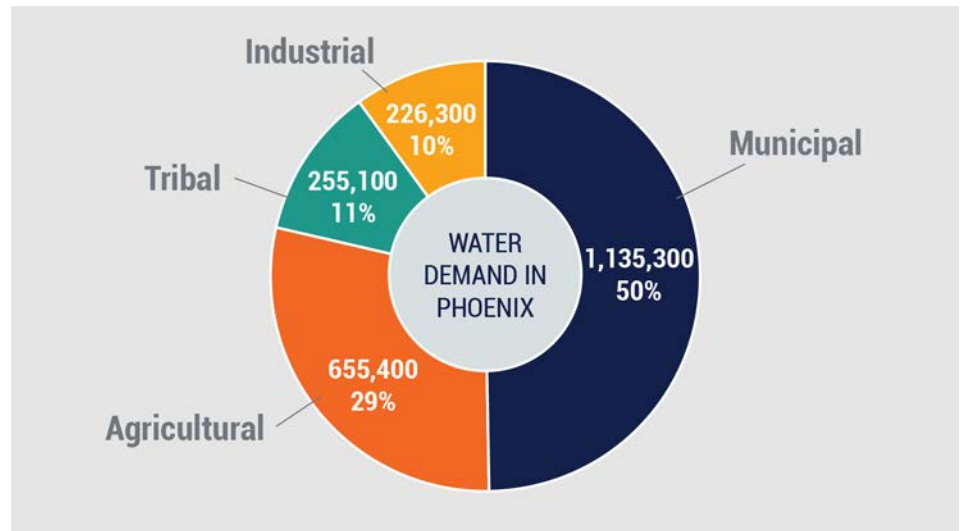


Source: Phoenix Active Management Area – 5th Management Plan 2020-2025

Demand for Water Sources

As urban development expands into farmland, the demand for water is moving away from agriculture production towards residential and industrial uses. Until 1999, more water was used in the Phoenix AMA for agriculture than for cities. Since that time, water demand has gradually shifted to where in 2019, agriculture accounted for only 29% of the Phoenix AMA overall water use, while municipal use accounted for 50% and industrial use accounted for an additional 10%. The Native American Tribal communities account for the remaining 11% of water demand in the Phoenix AMA. **Figure 20** displays the percentage splits of how water is used in the Phoenix AMA.

Figure 20. Water Demand in Phoenix AMA (in acre-feet), 2019 Data



Source: Phoenix Active Management Area – 5th Management Plan 2020-2025

Strategies

Water Quality

Ensuring access to safe and clean water remains a foundational priority for Maricopa County. In alignment with state and County health regulations, the County plays a critical oversight role by reviewing infrastructure plans, conducting inspections, and issuing permits for water services.

Two key programs that manage oversight are the Drinking Water Program and the Water and Waste Water Treatment Program. The Drinking Water Program regulates public water systems to ensure compliance with federal drinking water standards. It also provides technical assistance, educational outreach, and regulatory guidance to system administrators, helping them maintain safe and reliable water delivery. The Water and Wastewater Treatment Program oversees the regulation of water and wastewater treatment facilities, reclaimed water operations, and reuse water systems. While Maricopa County does not own or operate these facilities, its regulatory role is essential in safeguarding public health and environmental quality. Together, these programs reflect Maricopa County's proactive approach to water safety, emphasizing collaboration, compliance, and community well-being.

Adequate Water Supply

In areas designated as AMAs, Arizona law requires land developers to prove an Assured Water Supply (AWS) through securing a Certificate of Assured Water Supply (CAWS) before subdividing land. This certificate ensures that there is a long-term, reliable water source to support the proposed development. For water providers, a Designation of Assured Water Supply (DAWS) is issued to prove an AWS for all of a provider's customers.

Outside of AMAs, water use was less regulated prior to 2007. At this time the State of Arizona gave municipalities and counties the authority to require a Water Adequacy Determination for new subdivisions. While this determination is not as stringent as the certificate required within AMAs, it still plays a critical role in responsible growth.

To receive a Water Adequacy Determination, developers must demonstrate:

- That water is physically available, legally accessible, and consistently reliable.
- That the subdivision has the financial capacity to deliver water to residents.
- That the water quality meets all required health and safety standards.

Maricopa County views Water Adequacy Determinations as a practical and necessary tool for promoting sustainable development outside AMAs. They help ensure that new communities are built with a clear understanding of their water resources and responsibilities.



Starting in 2023, the state government issued a moratorium on issuing any new AWS, pausing the approval of new subdivision plats that solely relied on groundwater. This decision was made due to modeling showing future shortfalls for groundwater, forcing developers to use other water sources to proceed with development. With approvals for new groundwater supplies suspended and surface water sources like CAP already stretched, housing construction halted in areas of Maricopa County that had not already been issued an AWS.

In October 2025, EPCOR was officially awarded the first Alternative Designation of Assured Water Supply (ADAWS) by ADWR. Following a new 2023 rule, the ADAWS offers flexibility by allowing water providers to secure an AWS through evaluating demand in its entire service area, which is now subject to AWS rules, and proving a 100-year water supply with a comingling of a provider's water supplies. This means that all groundwater pumped and delivered within that service area must be made consistent with the management goal of that particular Active Management Area. As part of the ADAWS, EPCOR has also become a member in the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGR), which requires EPCOR to replenish all excess groundwater it delivers to customers within its CAGR-enrolled service areas to ensure groundwater pumping is made consistent with AWS rules. EPCOR's attainment of an ADAWS secures water reliability for more than 140,000 in its service area and unlocks the potential for 60,000 new homes.

Harquahala INA

Given that certain areas within the Phoenix AMA continue to experience water level declines from groundwater pumping, the state also initiated a moratorium on the issuance of permits for proposed subdivisions that are not served by a designated water provider and would rely on local groundwater as a primary water source. In response to these restrictions, transporting additional groundwater to the Phoenix AMA from the Harquahala INA Basin has become a realistic possibility over the near-term period if needed.

The Harquahala INA is one of the groundwater basins in rural Arizona set aside specifically to import water to the Phoenix AMA, and to other AMAs, once water gets scarce. It is approximately 766 square miles and located in the westernmost portions of Maricopa County and in La Paz County. Public and private entities from outside the Harquahala INA have purchased groundwater rights from landowners within the INA for at least a decade. It is now increasingly common that municipalities within Maricopa County are purchasing groundwater rights or even land for those same rights to support their own plans for growth and development. Challenges with this strategy include the cost of buying the land (and groundwater rights), the treatment of the groundwater, and the transport of the groundwater to the entities holding rights to it.

Water Conservation

Water conservation is fundamental to maintaining growth and quality of life in Maricopa County. As a desert region facing long-term water supply challenges, the County must lead efforts that promote efficient water use and resource stewardship. This includes fostering a culture of conservation through public education and outreach, ensuring residents and businesses understand the benefits and necessity of reducing water demand.

Collaboration among municipalities and regional partners is equally important. Coordinated planning and shared best practices can help implement strategies such as expanding reclaimed water use, encouraging low-water landscaping, and improving efficiency in both urban and agricultural settings. By integrating conservation principles into land use decisions and infrastructure planning, Maricopa County can support responsible growth while protecting its most limited resource for future generations.

Recently enacted state legislation has, perhaps, introduced a more efficient agricultural to urban land conversion program in the spirit of groundwater conservation while supporting increasing housing supply to address housing affordability. Senate Bill 1611, signed in 2025, created the “Ag-to-Urban” program, a voluntary pathway for farmers in Active Management Areas (AMAs) to retire irrigated farmland and transfer groundwater rights to urban developments. At the core of the law is a groundwater savings credit system, which allows agricultural landowners to permanently surrender their irrigation grandfathered rights and provide these rights to developers in the form of calculated credits. These credits can be applied, by a developer, toward the assured water supply requirements for new subdivisions. This legislation establishes a clear, regulated process for converting agricultural water rights to urban use while maintaining conservation standards and provides a framework to balance housing demand with groundwater protection, shaping growth in water-limited regions like Maricopa County.



Leadership on Water Resources

Maricopa County plays a leading role in tackling regional water challenges by working closely with cities, towns, tribal nations, and state agencies across Arizona. Recognizing that water is a shared and limited resource, the County actively collaborates on long-term planning, infrastructure development, and conservation strategies that benefit the entire region. Through partnerships with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, the Central Arizona Project, and other regional stakeholders, Maricopa County helps coordinate efforts to protect groundwater, manage drought conditions, and expand the use of reclaimed water. Water conservation is a central focus of these efforts whether through promoting efficient water use in new developments, supporting public education campaigns, or investing in technologies that reduce waste.

Water conservation is a central focus of these efforts whether through promoting efficient water use in new developments, supporting public education campaigns, or investing in technologies that reduce water.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring reliable and high-quality water access for residents and businesses.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals strongly reflect Stewardship by emphasizing responsible water management in a desert environment.



PROSPERITY

Water security is foundational to Prosperity, and these goals ensure economic stability.

Water Resources Goal 1: Contribute to the endurance of the region’s water supply and its delivery.

Goal Statement: Supporting the local water providers’ efforts to secure the reliability and endurance of the region’s water supply ensures stability in water delivery necessary for planning future development and the needs of the community.

Water Resource Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports residential development that is subject to the requirements of the Arizona Department of Water Resources Assured and Adequate Water Supply programs.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports water adequacy determinations for new subdivisions outside Active Management Areas.
- 1.3** Maricopa County supports water conservation techniques in the planning and design of new development.
- 1.4** Maricopa County supports low water use and drought-tolerant landscaping.

Water Resources Goal 2: Promote and protect regional water quality.

Goal Statement: Focusing on initiatives and best practices to maintain and improve water quality for all users.

Water Resource Policies:

2.1 Maricopa County supports compliance with its Drinking Water Program and its Water and Wastewater Treatment Programs.

2.2 Maricopa County supports renewable water use for landscape, park and common area irrigation; artificial lakes; and decorative water features.

Water Resources Goal 3: Support and provide leadership for water conservation in the region.

Goal Statement: Leading initiatives to promote water conservation practices across the region is vital for supporting the efficient and prudent management of water resources in the desert Southwest.

Water Resource Policies:

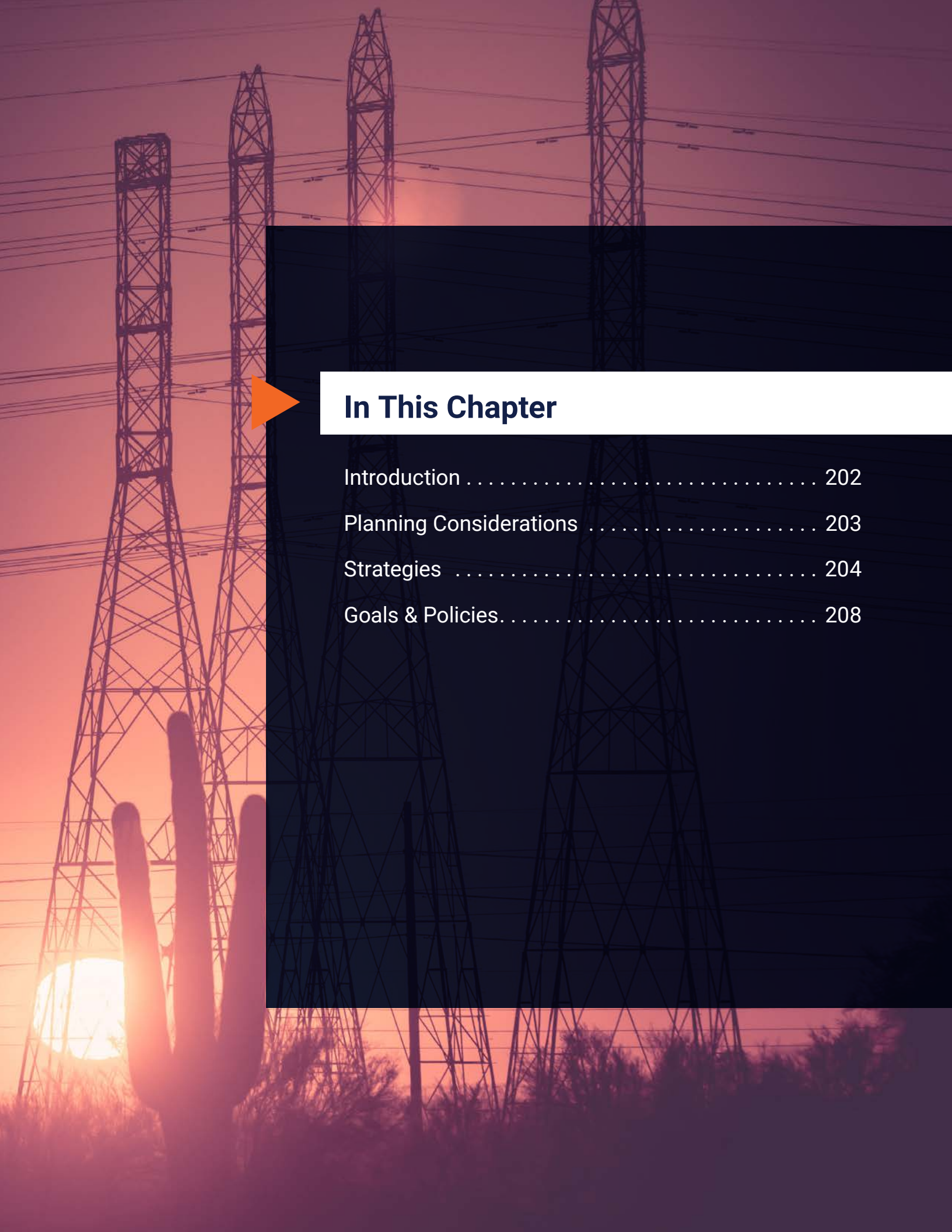
3.1 Maricopa County supports informing the public about the importance and benefits of water conservation.

3.2 Maricopa County supports the collaboration of municipalities to implement best practices for water planning and conservation.



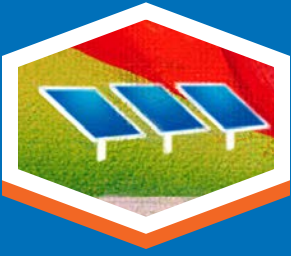
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Energy



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The Energy element includes policies to promote energy production to meet rising demand, renewable and clean emission energy, energy conservation and overall more efficient energy use.

Introduction

Energy use is integral to nearly every aspect of society, powering homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure. As environmental concerns grow and the long-term costs and availability of natural resources become more pressing, energy efficiency has emerged as a critical priority. Promoting the use of efficient and renewable energy sources is not only sound environmental policy but also a wise economic strategy.

Maricopa County is committed to fostering energy practices that ensure a reliable energy future for the region to continue its growth and quality of life. The majority of the power generated in the County comes from natural gas and nuclear sources. The emphasis on advancing alternative energy technologies over the past 50 years (alongside continued traditional energy development) has led to the development of solar energy production plants and projects in Maricopa County that seek to harness the abundant solar resources. These solar power projects are concentrated in the western desert portions of the County that are flatter and have better transportation access.

Under the previous County Comprehensive Plan, the energy element had a focus on alternative energy development (particularly solar power) for resource management purposes. However, the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and data centers has triggered a significant surge in electricity demand across the United States. As AI technologies become more sophisticated and widely adopted, they require immense computational power, usually delivered through energy-intensive data centers. According to the International Energy Agency, data centers already consume about 1.5% of global electricity, and this figure is expected to more than double by 2030, surpassing the current electricity use of entire nations like Japan. Domestically, the U.S. Department of Energy projects that electricity demand from data centers could double or triple by 2028. This growth is driven by the rise of generative AI, cloud computing, and machine learning applications, all of which rely on high-density server farms. Utilities in Arizona and across the western states are now grappling with how to meet this escalating demand while

maintaining grid reliability and future capacity. As a result, energy planning and infrastructure investment are becoming increasingly urgent priorities for high-growth regions. The County sees energy development supported through technological innovation, as a way to grow energy capacity to meet demand without further strains on regional resources. These efforts position Maricopa County as a leader in cost-effective energy production, balancing economic opportunities and prosperity with environmental stewardship.

Planning Considerations

Energy Generation Profile in the County

Maricopa County's energy system is supported by a diverse mix of generation facilities that power one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Unincorporated areas host major plants fueled by nuclear, natural gas, hydroelectric, and solar sources. The distribution of these 22 energy generation facilities is shown in **Map 23**. At the center is the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station in Tonopah, the largest nuclear plant in the United States, producing about 31,000 gigawatt-hours annually and serving over one million homes across the Southwest. Its innovative use of treated wastewater for cooling

helps conserve water in Arizona's arid climate. Natural gas plants in the County provide essential baseload and peak capacity, while solar facilities continue to expand, reflecting the region's commitment to renewable energy and diversification.

Maricopa County also actively continues to develop its renewable energy generation capabilities, particularly focusing on solar energy sources. In reviewing the County's Comprehensive Plan Amendment data, the County approved 69 Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs) that involved a solar energy

project between 2008 and 2023. The total land area for all of these approved CPAs is 92 square miles, concentrated around both the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station and the Harquahala Generating Facility. While some of these approved CPAs are over a decade old, not all of the solar energy generating facilities have made it past the finish line to construction. These initiatives align with Maricopa County's strategy to support the development of renewable energy as a means of growing the overall energy generation portfolio.

Energy Development on Federal Lands in the County

The Bureau of Land Management released the Record of Decision (ROD) for its updated Western Solar Plan in 2024. This plan update guides BLM's management of solar energy proposals and projects on public lands. It makes over 31 million acres of public lands across 11 western states available for application for potential solar energy development, driving development closer to transmission lines/corridors or on to previously disturbed lands. This plan also excludes sensitive areas from solar development like specially protected lands, important cultural resources, and critical wildlife habitat. Siting projects away from areas where they may conflict with other resources and uses is expected to help ensure responsible development, speed the permitting process, and provide greater predictability to the solar energy industry on BLM land. This is important for Maricopa County to consider since over 35% of its total area is under BLM management.

Land Patterns Effect on Energy Consumption

While generation capacity remains strong, energy demand is growing rapidly as population and land use patterns evolve. Single-family homes in master-planned communities drive higher electricity use for cooling and electric vehicles, while multi-family housing near transit offers efficiency, but it also adds to overall consumption. Additionally, commercial and mixed-use developments increase peak daytime loads, and industrial corridors are emerging as the most significant growth area with data centers and advanced manufacturing facilities now representing the fastest-growing load segment, with some facilities consuming 50–100 megawatts each. All these factors have created unprecedented challenges for infrastructure planning and underscore the need for a coordinated approach that links land development with energy planning.





Strategies

Broad-Based Energy Development Strategy

Maricopa County is facing a dramatic rise in electricity demand, driven by rapid population growth, regular heatwaves, and the proliferation of energy-intensive technologies such as data centers, artificial intelligence, and electric vehicles. Experts have recently underscored the urgency of a comprehensive strategy to ensure that grid reliability and long-term capacity increase do not hinder local and regional growth plans. Extended summer heat waves beyond typical durations have amplified the need for dependable cooling systems, placing additional strain on the power grid.

To meet these challenges, Maricopa County encourages the adoption of an all-of-the-above energy development approach that embraces a diverse mix of traditional fossil fuel sources and clean emission sources, including solar, wind, nuclear, natural gas, and battery storage. This strategy should be supported by investments in transmission infrastructure by developers responsible for such developments, distributed generation, and energy efficiency across all sectors—residential, commercial, and industrial. Through supporting the expansion of the energy produced locally and diversifying the generation types, the County can allow for an energy future that has the ability to manage peak loads and leverage technological innovation for greater efficiency in service of building a strong energy future that aligns with both the demands of a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Energy Efficient Development

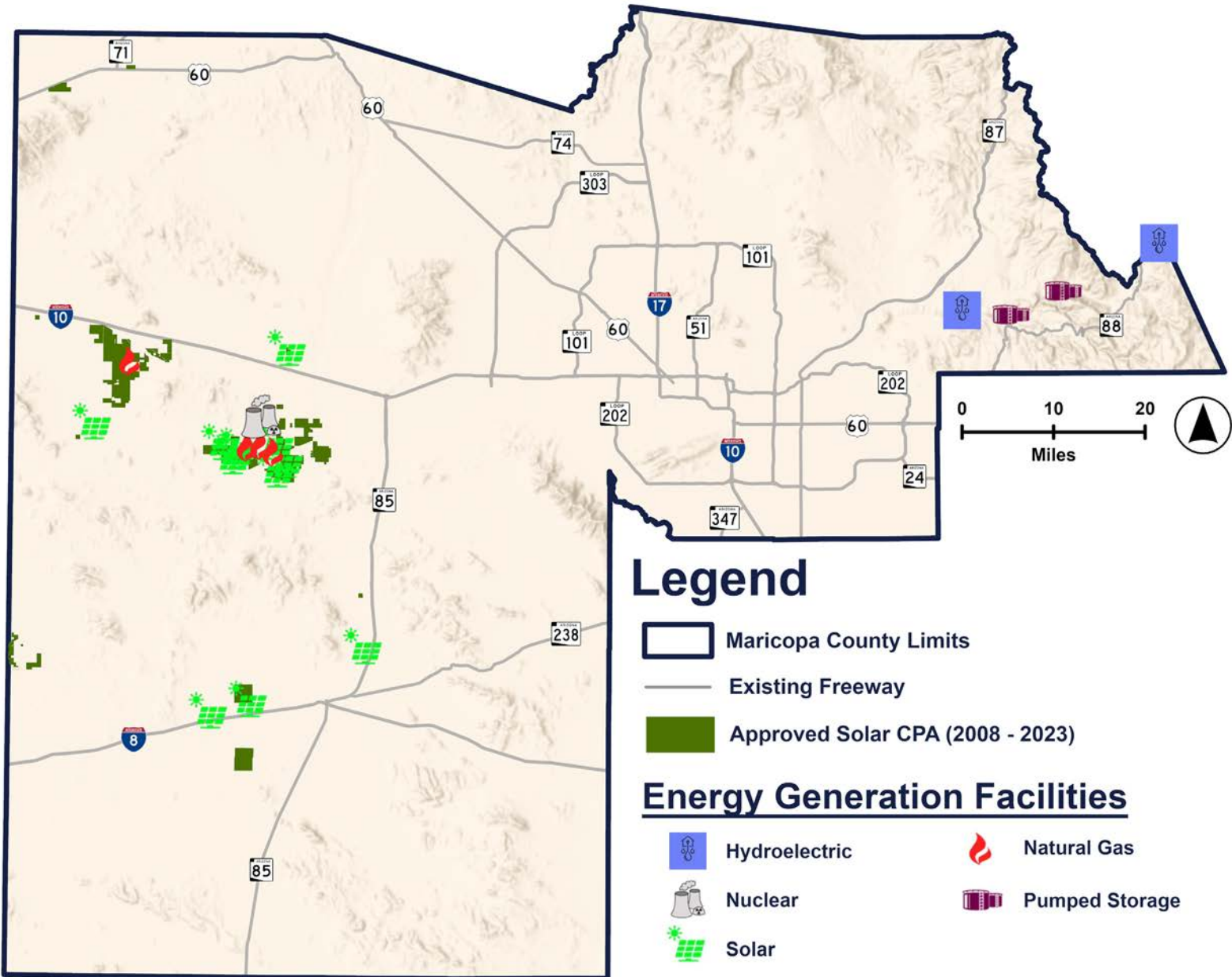
The most cost-effective way to achieve energy efficiency is at the initial planning and building design stages which is why Maricopa County supports innovative techniques that help conserve energy. Although Maricopa County reviews plans to determine if energy conservation is included in project design, it also continuously assesses its design and construction requirements to ensure they do not impede energy conservation. Going forward, Maricopa County could also consider incentives to help increase energy efficient design and construction.

Energy efficiency is also a factor in general land use planning. As energy use in the region continues to increase with more urban development, the County looks to coordinate land use patterns within its jurisdiction that can conserve energy consumption through shortening travel distances.

Energy Costs

Maricopa County has no control over future rises in energy prices, but it can control its own expenses by practicing energy conservation in all aspects of its operations. It can also help reduce residential and business energy costs by supporting energy efficient development techniques and technologies. Maricopa County can also require compensatory power generation for industrial uses that use large amounts of energy and that the construction of infrastructure, long-term maintenance of that infrastructure and long-term use and demand generated by a development is paid for by the development itself.

▶ **Map 23. Energy Generation Facilities**



Source: Maricopa County Office of Enterprise Technology, 2024

Maricopa County encourages the adoption of an all-of-the-above energy development approach that embraces a diverse mix of traditional fossil fuel sources and clean emission sources, including solar, wind, nuclear, natural gas, and battery storage.



Solar Energy Generating Facilities

With abundant sunshine and vast open and flat land, Maricopa County is seen as a natural leader in solar energy development. Solar power offers Maricopa County a promising path toward increasing the amount clean emission energy produced locally, but it also presents challenges that require thoughtful planning. On the positive side, the region's abundant sunshine makes solar energy highly efficient and cost-effective, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lowering long-term energy costs. Solar installations, at both the utility-scale and residential scales, can diversify the energy portfolio and improve grid resilience. However, solar power also has limitations. It is intermittent, producing energy only when the sun shines, which creates a need for storage solutions or backup systems. Large solar farms can require a significant land mass that potentially impacts wildlife habitats and the natural ecology or competes with other land needs. Additionally, the upfront costs of solar infrastructure and the need for grid upgrades can be barriers to widespread adoption. Balancing these benefits and drawbacks is essential as solar power projects continue to develop in Maricopa County.

Planning for the eventual decommissioning of solar facilities is also becoming increasingly important as installations age. Decommissioning involves dismantling panels, responsibly managing materials, and restoring land for future use. Without proper planning, retired solar sites could lead to waste management challenges and underutilized land.

BESS

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are emerging as a critical component of Maricopa County's evolving energy landscape. By storing excess energy during low-demand periods and discharging it during peak hours, BESS reduces strain on generation resources and improves grid reliability. In a region where summer peaks are intensified by cooling needs and data center operations, large-scale battery storage can help stabilize the grid and support renewable energy integration.

By shaping where and how these facilities are introduced and reused, the County can support economic growth, maintain reliable service, and ensure that energy infrastructure evolves in a way that strengthens long-term flexibility.



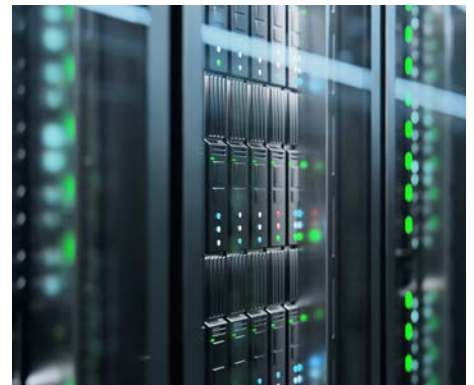
Artificial Intelligence

The rapid use of artificial intelligence is transforming energy demand across Maricopa County. AI systems, particularly large-scale machine learning and language models, require substantial computational resources, resulting in continuous, high-intensity electricity use. As these applications expand across multiple sectors, this Plan provides an opportunity to guide development in ways that strengthen the County's energy future. By anticipating challenges such as grid reliability and resource management, and by establishing land use policies that support necessary infrastructure, Maricopa County can manage AI-driven growth while minimizing environmental impacts and ensuring that progress enhances community well-being.



Data Centers

Data centers are important to the digital economy and a major driver of Maricopa County's projected energy growth, often locating in areas with reliable electricity and cooling resources. These requirements, along with the County's available land, and lower risk of natural hazards compared to other regions, make Maricopa County an attractive destination for data center development. However, because of their high energy consumption, heat output, and need to operate continuously, it is estimated that data centers consume up to 50 times more electricity per square foot than traditional office buildings. Due to that, Arizona Public Service projects that by 2031, data centers will account for 55% of its total power needs, while the Salt River Project anticipates roughly half of its demand through 2029 will be tied to these facilities.



The amount of energy requested in data center development combined with the forecasted energy demand estimates for these facilities also raises the issue of increased energy rates spread across the customers of a given utility's service area. The massive power demand of data centers has often forced utilities to invest in the expansion of power infrastructure because of these developments.

From a planning perspective, the development and proliferation of data centers raises critical considerations for land use, infrastructure capacity, water demand, and environmental impacts that should all be a part of the approval process for digital infrastructure sites. The goals and policies within this Plan seek to balance the economic benefits of such high-energy use growth and expansion with the protection of utility customers by ensuring that the grid remains resilient and accessible to all residents of Maricopa County.



Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by ensuring reliable and efficient energy access for residents and businesses.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals strongly reflect Stewardship by aligning growth with ecological preservation and practices.



PROSPERITY

These goals promote Prosperity by positioning Maricopa County for future energy development.

Energy Goal 1: Support enhancing the stability and the development of the energy grid in the region.

Goal Statement: Improving the stability and reliability of the energy grid through resilient and dependable energy infrastructure to support current and future regional energy needs.

Energy Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports an all-of-the-above energy strategy that incorporates both traditional and alternative sources of energy to ensure that the energy supply is abundant and meets demand.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports expanding the energy generation supply and capacity to meet the increased needs from future growth.

Energy Goal 2: Increase energy efficiency through development patterns.

Goal Statement: Promoting development patterns that enhance energy efficiency is essential to reducing the rate of demand for new energy generation sources.

Energy Policies:

- 2.1** Maricopa County supports energy efficient design and construction of new development.

- 2.2** Maricopa County supports energy conservation through balanced and efficient development patterns where residential, commercial and employment land uses with complementary compatibility are proximate.

- 2.3** Maricopa County supports energy conservation through having new urban development locate in cities and towns, and in the Urban Growth Area of the County identified in this Plan.

Energy Goal 3: Support energy development in the region.

Goal Statement: Encouraging the development of energy resources through investment in local energy projects is requisite to support growth, development, and innovation within the region.

Energy Policies:

- 3.1** Maricopa County supports energy conservation and emissions reduction through allowing new development to provide alternative transportation options or connect to existing alternative transportation infrastructure.

- 3.2** Maricopa County supports the utilization of traditional, alternative, and clean emission energy research and development.

3.3 Maricopa County supports the use of appropriate setbacks and buffers to residential uses from energy generation and/or energy storage facilities to prevent or lessen the impact from potential fires and other potential hazards.

3.4 Maricopa County supports developing energy infrastructure using low-impact construction techniques and, where feasible, siting such energy infrastructure on previously disturbed locations for the benefit of local wildlife (including flora and fauna).

3.5 Maricopa County supports appropriate buffers and setbacks to ecological and riparian habitats found along borders of significant washes and riverbanks from energy generation and/or storage facilities.

3.6 Maricopa County supports responsible and timely decommissioning of solar energy generation and battery energy storage system facilities to ensure public safety, environmental protection, and restoration of land to a beneficial condition.

Energy Goal 4: Coordinate energy initiatives/programs in the region.

Goal Statement: Aligning energy initiatives/programs with jurisdictions both within and outside of Maricopa County ensures coordinated planning partnerships and viable development in the long-term.

Energy Policies:

4.1 Maricopa County supports incentive programs that promote energy efficiency where feasible and effective.

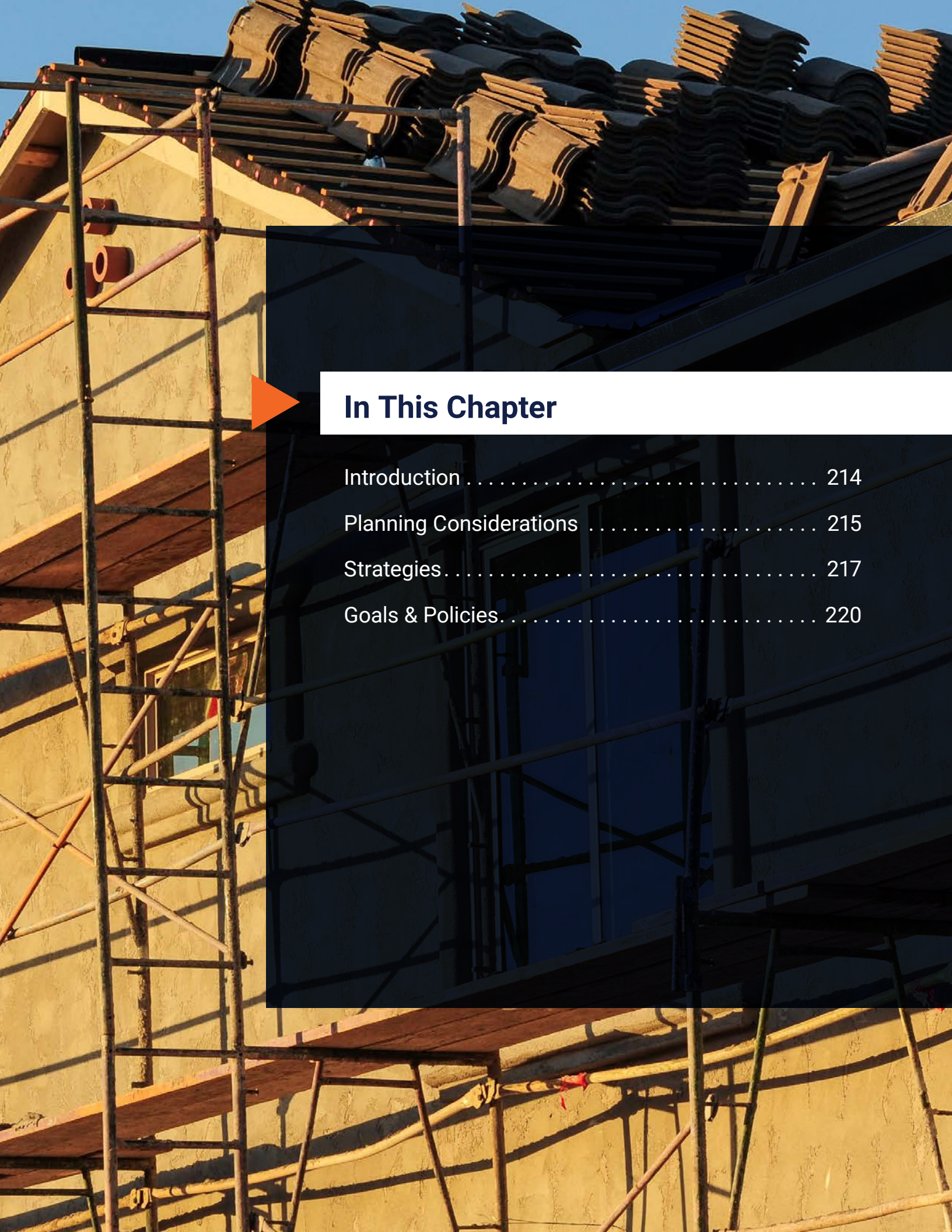
4.2 Maricopa County supports efforts to assist businesses and individuals with renewable energy options and energy conservation.





13

Cost of Development



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The Cost of Development element specifies ways to help ensure that new development pays its fair share towards the cost of additional infrastructure and services needed to serve new development. The Cost of Development element also identifies current cost sharing methods, recommends future cost sharing strategies, and includes ways to ensure reasonable application of the recommended strategies.



ROADS



PARKS



LAW ENFORCEMENT



EMERGENCY SERVICES

Introduction

Maricopa County continues to experience some of the fastest population growth in the nation, bringing both opportunities and challenges. While growth supports economic vitality and community development, it also creates significant demand for new infrastructure and public services—such as roads, parks, law enforcement, and emergency facilities. Meeting these needs requires careful planning and responsible fiscal management to ensure that growth pays its fair share without placing undue burdens on existing residents.

Arizona law mandates that the County include a Cost of Development element in the Comprehensive Plan to identify strategies for funding infrastructure and services necessitated by new development. This chapter outlines Maricopa County’s approach to balancing growth with fiscal prudence, ensuring that development contributes proportionately to the costs it generates. It evaluates funding mechanisms and provides overarching goals and policies that promote efficient land use, mutual cost sharing, and long-term financial stability.

By framing cost of development as a critical component of growth management, Maricopa County seeks to maintain a high quality of life, protect taxpayers, and support a robust economy while adapting to future challenges.

Planning Considerations

Designing and implementing a cost-sharing program for new development is inherently complex, requiring careful consideration of legal, economic, land use, and administrative factors. A well-structured program must balance the need for infrastructure funding with protections for property rights, economic vitality, and compliance with state and federal law. Poorly designed programs risk harming the local economy, exacerbating housing affordability challenges, or imposing unforeseen legal and administrative burdens on the county.

Legal Framework

Arizona law mandates that new development contribute its fair share toward infrastructure and public services. However, these contributions must satisfy constitutional and statutory standards, including:

Rational Nexus and Rough Proportionality: Under Arizona Revised Statutes and U.S. Supreme Court precedents (Nollan, Dolan, and Koontz), any exaction or impact fee must demonstrate an essential nexus between the development and the public purpose served, and be roughly proportional to the impact created by that development. This ensures fees are not arbitrary and remain legally defensible.

Due Process Protections: The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, along with Article 2 of the Arizona Constitution, require both procedural and substantive due process. Procedural due process demands transparent, consistent adoption processes, while substantive due process requires that cost-sharing measures be reasonable and not unduly oppressive.

Takings Clause Compliance: The U.S. Constitution prohibits government from taking private property without just compensation. In the context of cost-sharing, takings claims typically arise when fees lack a rational nexus or fail proportionality tests.

Equal Protection: Programs must apply uniformly and avoid unjustified distinctions between similar developments. While absolute uniformity is not required, any differentiation must be relevant and defensible.

ARS §12-1131 through §12-1138 (Private Property Rights Protection Act): ARS §12-1131 through §12-1138 requires compensation if land-use regulations reduce property value. Although cost-sharing is not a land-use restriction per se, overly burdensome requirements could trigger claims under this law, necessitating careful review of program impacts.



Land Use and Growth Management

Inconsistent cost-sharing requirements across jurisdictions can lead to “jurisdiction shopping,” where developers favor areas with lower fees, resulting in fragmented and inefficient land-use patterns. Maricopa County should align its program with regional planning goals to promote orderly growth



Economics

Cost-sharing programs must avoid discouraging growth or creating imbalances in the local economy:

Residential vs. Non-Residential Development: Residential projects often generate higher service costs than tax revenues, but construction activity remains vital to economic health. Conversely, non-residential development diversifies the tax base and reduces reliance on residential property taxes. Programs should encourage balanced growth without incentivizing inefficient patterns.



Competitiveness and Affordability: Excessive fees can increase housing costs or deter business investment. Best practices recommend conducting economic impact analyses and periodically adjusting fees to reflect market conditions and infrastructure needs.

Administrative and Lifecycle Costs

Beyond legal, growth, and economic factors, the long-term success of a cost-sharing program depends on its administrative feasibility and ability to account for ongoing infrastructure needs. Implementation is not a one-time exercise; it requires continuous oversight, transparent processes, and adaptability to changing conditions. Administrative complexity can lead to inefficiencies, increased compliance risks, and higher operational costs if not properly managed. Equally important is recognizing that infrastructure obligations extend beyond initial construction, because facilities and services incur recurring expenses for maintenance, upgrades, and eventual replacement. Incorporating lifecycle cost analysis into program design ensures that funding strategies remain efficient over time, reducing the likelihood of fiscal shortfalls and deferred maintenance that can burden taxpayers.

Strategies

Designing and implementing a fair and effective cost-sharing program is a complex task that requires balancing multiple priorities. Such programs must ensure that new development contributes proportionately to the infrastructure and services it demands, while avoiding unintended consequences that could harm the local economy, reduce housing affordability, or impose excessive legal and administrative burdens on the County.

A successful cost-sharing framework must be transparent, legally defensible, and economically efficient. It should align with state requirements for a rational nexus between development impacts and associated costs, while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing growth patterns and market conditions. Additionally, the program must consider long-term fiscal implications, including lifecycle costs for infrastructure maintenance, and integrate strategies that promote efficient land use and mutual distribution of costs.

This section presents a range of funding mechanisms that can help Maricopa County manage growth responsibly. It identifies preferred methods for cost recovery, highlights best practices from recent Arizona plans, and establishes guiding principles to ensure that growth pays its fair share without compromising community well-being or economic vitality.



Funding Methods

User Fees: Maricopa County charges fees to individuals, businesses, and other governments that directly benefit from County services. Examples include court filing fees, kennel fees, park entrance fees, vital records, and probation services. The County’s policy is to recover the actual cost of providing these services while ensuring fees do not unfairly burden those most in need. All user fees are set by the Board of Supervisors unless otherwise directed by state law.

Property Taxes: The County may levy taxes on real and personal property through:

- Primary Property Tax: Used to fund general obligations and special overrides.
- Secondary Property Tax: Used to fund voter-approved bonds and overrides.

While a uniform tax rate is established annually, actual tax obligations vary based on assessed property values. Currently, Maricopa County levies only a primary property tax.

Excise and Special Sales Taxes: Excise taxes are locally imposed and limited in scope. At present, Maricopa County administers a voter-approved, temporary jail excise tax of one-fifth of one cent to fund detention facility construction and operations.



Intergovernmental Revenues: Maricopa County receives significant revenue from state programs, including:

- **State-Shared Sales Tax:** Distributed to counties and municipalities based on population and other factors.
- **Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF):** Derived from motor fuel taxes and allocated for transportation infrastructure.
- **Vehicle License Tax (VLT):** Assessed annually on vehicles based on depreciated value.



Additional revenues may come from federal grants and intergovernmental agreements, though these funds often carry restrictions.

Licenses and Permits: Fees for licenses and permits—such as building permits, environmental health permits, and marriage licenses—help offset administrative costs. Rates are set by the Board unless otherwise mandated by state law.

Bond Financing: State law authorizes Maricopa County to issue bonds for capital projects:

- **General Obligation Bonds:** Backed by the County’s full faith and credit.
- **Revenue Bonds:** Repaid through specific revenue streams, such as user fees.
- **Special Assessment Bonds:** Issued for improvements benefiting specific properties, repaid by those property owners.



Conditions of Approval: Conditions attached to zoning changes that require property owners to finance infrastructure improvements or services necessary for their development. This ensures mutual cost sharing and protects taxpayers.

Development Agreements: These legally binding contracts outline terms, conditions, and financial obligations for large-scale or master-planned developments. They may address land dedications, infrastructure phasing, and financing arrangements.

Special Tax Districts: Special districts provide services that local governments cannot or choose not to provide. Examples include districts for parks, libraries, flood control, water, sewer, and fire protection. These districts allow those who benefit from a service to pay for it directly, offering local control and accountability.

Development Fees: Development fees, also known as impact fees, are special charges levied on new development to cover the capital costs of infrastructure such as roads, parks, and public safety facilities. Fees are calculated based on unit type or square footage. State law limits their use to capital costs and requires a supporting Capital Improvement Plan. They cannot fund ongoing operations or maintenance. The County does not charge impact fees currently.

Other Revenue Sources: Additional funds may come from fines, forfeitures, concessions, land sales, and interest earnings. While not major revenue streams, these sources help offset specific service costs.

Preferred Funding Methods

To ensure fairness and compliance with state law, Maricopa County prioritizes a balanced approach to funding infrastructure and services required by new development.

- The County relies on **development agreements** for large-scale projects to clearly define responsibilities and financial obligations between developers and the County.
- For targeted infrastructure improvements, **community improvement districts** are used to provide localized funding solutions that directly benefit the areas served.
- Additionally, **intergovernmental agreements** play a critical role in sharing costs across jurisdictions, ensuring regional collaboration for projects that impact multiple communities.
- Finally, **fee-for-service** models are implemented to recover the costs of regulatory oversight and permitting, maintaining fiscal responsibility while safeguarding public health and safety.





Goals & Policies



OPPORTUNITY

These goals advance Opportunity by promoting growth occurs in a financially sensible and transparent manner.



STEWARDSHIP

These goals reflect Stewardship by promoting responsible resource allocation.



PROSPERITY

These goals strongly support Prosperity by protecting the County's fiscal strength and economic stability.

Cost of Development Goal 1: Exercise sound financial management and build the County's fiscal strength.

Goal Statement: Making fiscally responsible decisions that strengthen the County's financial health is needed to ensure that development projects contribute positively to the County's fiscal stability.

Cost of Development Policies:

- 1.1** Maricopa County supports continuously evaluating the preferred funding methods with respect to the legal, socioeconomic, land use and administrative considerations identified in this element, and making changes when deemed necessary.
- 1.2** Maricopa County supports using the traditional and preferred funding methods identified in this Plan to offset costs of new development.

Cost of Development Goal 2: Ensure transparency in financial reporting

Goal Statement: Providing clear and accurate financial information about the County to residents and stakeholders is key to maintaining transparency in financial reporting that builds public trust and accountability.

Cost of Development Policies:

- 2.1** Maricopa County supports the provision of clear, accurate, and accessible financial information related to the costs of development and to overall County operations.
-

Cost of Development Goal 3: Require that new development pays its proper and reasonable share of the costs of new infrastructure, services, and other public improvements.

Goal Statement: Ensuring that new developments contribute their proportionate share to the costs of infrastructure, services, and public improvements is important for reducing future liabilities and protecting the long-term fiscal solvency of Maricopa County.

Cost of Development Policies:

- 3.1** Maricopa County supports new development contributing its proportionate share of the costs of infrastructure necessary to support the demand for electric, water, sewer, and other services generated and necessitated by the development.
-

- 3.2** Maricopa County supports requiring new development to contribute its proportionate share of long-term maintenance costs associated with the use of all new infrastructure to support the demand for electric, water, sewer, and other services generated and necessitated by the development.
-

- 3.3** Maricopa County supports requiring the provision of infrastructure, facilities, and services needed by new development prior to that development, either directly or through fees. Where appropriate, the construction of infrastructure and facilities may be phased to coincide with project timelines.
-



14

Comprehensive Plan Adoption, Readoption, and Amendments

Maricopa



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Comprehensive Plan Adoption & Amendment Guidelines

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a consistent, predictable, and transparent guide for making land use decisions in unincorporated areas. The goals and policies in this Plan support consistent and predictable decisions, but to remain relevant the Plan must be periodically modified to adapt to changes in State law, the environment, the economy, elected leadership and community priorities. Although amendments are sometimes necessary, Maricopa County reaffirms that any change should improve the County's overall condition and not undermine the Plan's core principles.

Prior to adopting the Comprehensive Plan or a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment, the County is required to adopt a public participation program for Comprehensive Plan adoptions that outlines coordination strategies with County residents. The Board of Supervisors (Board) most recently adopted the Public Participation Program in 2000, prior to adopting the Eye to the Future 2020 Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan. The Board is amending the Public Participation Program (Appendix III) for this current Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan to reflect modern practices.

ARS 11-805 sets procedural requirements associated with the adoption and readoption of the Comprehensive Plan as well as amendments to the Plan. Every 10 years, the County is required to adopt a new Comprehensive Plan or readopt the existing Comprehensive Plan by resolution. The Plan represents the official guide for development within the County and may be amended in whole or in part through successive actions.

At least sixty (60) days prior to noticing the Comprehensive Plan or an element or major amendment of the Plan, the Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission), or staff thereof, is required to transmit a draft of the Plan for review and comment to the Board; each municipality within the County; each contiguous county; and federal, state, regional, and local agencies. Additionally, any person or entity that requests in writing to receive a review copy of the proposal will be included in the transmittal of the draft Plan or amendment. Review copies are now provided digitally.

The Commission shall hold at least one hearing as the recommending body for the Plan. Legal notice of the time and place of the hearing is required to be published in the newspaper of general circulation in the County seat and in a newspaper of general circulation in the area to be affected, or adjacent to the area to be affected, if other than the County seat. The County considers the *Arizona Business Gazette* to be the newspaper of record within Maricopa County which is available countywide in any potential affected or adjacent areas other than the County seat. Publication of the legal notice must occur between fifteen (15) and thirty (30) calendar days prior to the hearing date.

Following the recommendation by the Commission, the Board must also hold one public hearing on the Plan or amendment. Legal notice must be given at least fifteen (15) days prior and published in a newspaper of general circulation in the County seat.

The Board may alter the contents of the Plan or amendment at the public hearing. However, before any change is made, the Board shall re-refer the portion of the proposal to be changed back to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a reissue of its recommendation prior for that portion to be heard for determination again by the Board. The adoption or readoption of the Comprehensive Plan or amendment to the Plan must be approved by at least two-thirds of the Board or four (4) out of five (5) members.

If there is any area within County jurisdiction that is within the High Noise or Accident Potential Zone of a Military Airport or Ancillary Military Facility, notice must be sent to the Attorney General by certified mail with a return receipt requested within three (3) business days of the approval of the Plan's adoption, readoption, or amendment to the Plan. The Attorney General has twenty-five (25) calendar days following notice by certified mail to issue a determination of compliance or non-compliance with ARS 28-8481, subsection J. If the determination is not given, the Comprehensive Plan is deemed in compliance. If deemed in non-compliance, the effective day of approval is thirty (30) days following receipt of the non-compliance notice. During this period, the Board may take new action altering the Comprehensive Plan to be compliant or reaffirm the non-compliant action with the potential for civil action by the Attorney General.

The adopted Plan is effective for up to ten (10) years following the date the Plan is adopted or readopted. Readoptions are permitted prior to the tenth anniversary of the Plan's most recent adoption. Otherwise, a new Comprehensive Plan is required.

If a motion to adopt or readopt fails to pass, the motion may be reconsidered, and the motion to reconsider must also be approved by at least two-thirds of the Board. If Plan passage fails, the prior Comprehensive Plan remains in effect until a new Plan is adopted. The Board must annually consider adoption of the proposed Plan or consider a revised Plan.

County Area Plan Adoption & Readoption

An Area Plan is a plan that accounts for the unique conditions and needs of specific parts of Maricopa County. Arizona Revised Statutes establishes the required contents of a Comprehensive Plan, and the Comprehensive Plan establishes countywide goals and policies. While Area Plans mimic the content of a Comprehensive Plan by including elements, goals, policies and land use designations within the plan extent, such plans are optional.

Area Plans and Area Plan updates are only permitted to be adopted following adoption of the initial Comprehensive Plan or within the effective period of the current Comprehensive Plan. If the effective period of the Comprehensive Plan has lapsed, an Area Plan may not be updated until a new or revised Comprehensive Plan is adopted. Area Plans are neither Comprehensive Plans nor Major Amendments, and therefore do not require complete adherence to the ARS 11-805 procedural requirements summarized in the previous section.

Criteria associated with Area Plan adoption or readoption is established within the Area Plan Program in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The adoption or readoption of an Area Plan shall be flexible in notice and public participation techniques in order to provide innovative outreach. However, a public hearing for consideration of adoption or readoption shall be noticed at least fifteen (15) days prior in the newspaper of general circulation (*Arizona Business Gazette*).



Amendment Procedures

Amendments include changes to the goals, policies and/or land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan or County Area Plan, and changes to previously approved amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or a Development Master Plan. All amendments are processed according to state laws and require approval by the Board. An amendment to the Plan initiated by the applicant is classified as one of the following:

Goal and Policy Amendments – Comprehensive Plan

An amendment to change the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan may only be initiated by the Planning & Zoning Commission, or staff thereof, and approved by resolution by the Board of Supervisors. Such an amendment shall be considered for adoption in accordance with the requirements of ARS 11-805.

Goal and Policy Amendments – Area Plan

Amendments to change the goals and policies of an Area Plan may only be initiated by the Planning & Zoning Commission, or staff thereof, and approved by resolution by the Board of Supervisors. As with the adoptions or re-adoption of an Area Plan, notice and public participation techniques will be flexible. However, hearings shall be noticed at least fifteen (15) days prior in the newspaper of general circulation (*Arizona Business Gazette*).

Major Comprehensive Plan Amendments (including Major Development Master Plan Amendments)

ARS 11-805 permits the County’s Comprehensive Plan to define the criteria which determines whether a proposed amendment effects a substantial alteration of the County’s land use mixture or balance as established within the land use element of the County’s existing Comprehensive Plan.

A Major Amendment applies to changes of more than 640 contiguous gross acres and should include various types, densities and intensities of residential, commercial retail, office/non-retail employment, open space, and community land uses in a master-planned community design. However, a Major Amendment comprised of a single- or limited-use industrial and other large-scale employment projects may be considered eligible for a Major Amendment on a case-by-case basis following a pre-application meeting and subject to the discretion of the Zoning Inspector. A Major Amendment may also be required for a group of non-contiguous properties that exceed 640 gross acres aggregate if part of the same overall development at the discretion of the Zoning Inspector.

A Major Amendment shall comply with the requirements of ARS 11-805 as with Comprehensive Plan adoption and re-adoption. Such amendments will be evaluated for adherence to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy, and consistency with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the applicable Area Plan, if any.

The Major Amendment criteria for a Development Master Plan (DMP) are found within the DMP Guidelines. While obsolete, the DMP application process remains open to amendments of an existing Development Master Plan and for a Modification of Conditions application. Development Master Plans are not zoning, yet are considered a categorical feature of the Comprehensive Plan. The original intent of the Development Master Plan was to provide flexibility in design techniques paired with commitments associated with providing adequate facilities, infrastructure and amenities, and as such associated conditions are valid, enforceable, and remain in effect. Either an Applicant or Staff may initiate a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Major DMP Amendment.

General Comprehensive Plan Amendments (including Minor Development Master Plan Amendments)

A General Comprehensive Plan Amendment applies to changes of 640 gross acres or less. Additionally, land uses over 640 acres determined to be rural industrial within Step 3 of the Municipal-Rural Framework may seek a General Comprehensive Plan Amendment. A General Amendment is a standard amendment that must comply with basic State notice requirements and County public participation requirements and must be approved by the Board. A General Amendment will be evaluated for adherence to the Urban Solutions for Urban Development strategy, and consistency with the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan and the applicable Area Plan, if any. An Applicant or County Staff may initiate a General Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Condition(s) of Approval Modification

The County Attorney's Office has determined that Comprehensive Plan Amendment conditions of approval are no longer enforceable, and may not be established for a future Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Some legacy Comprehensive Plan Amendment conditions may have been previously implemented in a Plan of Development or Zoning District Change application when referenced therein, and modifications to those conditions will occur under those application processes specified within the Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance.

An application may be filed to change the conditions of a previously approved Development Master Plan. Notice of application and notice of hearing shall occur in the same manner as a General Comprehensive Plan Amendment, and the application shall be approved by the Board. An application for modification of conditions may be initiated by an Applicant or County Staff.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application Waived

The Comprehensive Plan's future land use plan map shows general land uses over large areas and not smaller area land uses. As such, Comprehensive Plan Amendment applications shall not be required for zoning amendment requests of 40 acres or fewer in size if it can be demonstrated that a preponderance of the Plan's goals and policies are advanced or implemented and/or the request conforms to the existing land use designation of the site. An applicant's argument for the zoning request will be evaluated by Staff prior to a hearing by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Similarly, a new permanent or semi-permanent (Special Use Permit) zoning amendment request greater than 40 acres in size and without an appropriate land use designation, shall be required to apply for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. A Comprehensive Plan Amendment shall not be required prior to a Temporary Use Permit application or any other application that does not establish permanent or semi-permanent zoning.

Designations of Private or State Land as Open Space, Recreation, Conservation, or Agriculture

Per ARS 11-804(E), "In applying an open space element or a growth element of a comprehensive plan, a county shall not designate private or state land as open space, recreation, conservation or agriculture unless the county receives the written consent of the landowner or provides an alternative, economically viable designation in the comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance, allowing at least one residential dwelling per acre. If the landowner is the prevailing party in any action brought to enforce this subsection, a court shall award fees and other expenses to the landowner. Each county shall incorporate this subsection into its comprehensive plan and provide a process for a landowner to resolve discrepancies relating to this subsection."

In the County, no process is necessary for a landowner to resolve discrepancies related to this subsection as all land use designations, with the exception of the land use designation of "Military Compatible," allow for a minimum of one residential dwelling unit per acre. Should a landowner wish to seek an alternative land use designation, the Major or General Amendment procedures within this Comprehensive Plan shall apply.



Amendment Procedures (continued)

Major Comprehensive Plan Amendments, General Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Application Deadlines, and Hearings.

In accordance with state law, all Major Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Major DMP Amendments will be considered at a single public hearing in the calendar year that the amendment is requested. Since the Board considers Major Amendments at a public hearing in December, the application filing deadline for a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment is the last business day of May of the calendar year in which the Major Amendment is requested.

It is the position of the County that the filing deadline promotes notice and proper public participation in accordance with state law. The deadline also provides Staff and County Officials with sufficient time for review of impactful land use decisions and the long-term considerations regarding potential development projects.

No filing deadline is necessary for General Comprehensive Plan Amendments since they are considered by the Board throughout the calendar year.

Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Rights and Privileges

Comprehensive Plan Amendments do not grant any entitlement or protected development right, do not vest any development right, and do not confer any other rights beyond those outlined in state law. When approved by the Board, Comprehensive Plan Amendments do allow requests for zoning district boundary changes consistent with the approved Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Arizona Revised Statutes, and other applicable County requirements.



Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

Preliminary Discussion (“pre-application” meeting)

Before an official Amendment application submittal, the applicant must participate in a pre-application meeting or discussion with Maricopa County. The pre-application meeting determines the extent of the changes needed, potential issues, considerations, the Amendment process necessary to meet County requirements, and the submittal requirements.

Application

Once the pre-application meeting is complete, an official Amendment application submittal can occur. Submittal and fee requirements are included in the application packet along with information about the required public participation process. Applicants should carefully review these requirements to help avoid potential delays in processing.

Official Review

Upon receipt of the official application and fees, the County Planning and Development Department will refer the application to the appropriate internal and external stakeholders for review. As necessary, official review will also include a technical advisory committee (TAC) meeting where stakeholders will provide comments and recommend changes needed to meet County requirements and/or stakeholder requests. Information and details about the TAC meeting are provided at the pre-application meeting.

Public Hearing – Planning & Zoning Commission

Once TAC requirements are met, the Amendment application will be scheduled for a public hearing by the Maricopa County Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission), or staff thereof. Adjacent landowners, other stakeholders, and affected parties will be notified of the date, time, and place of the hearing based on the applicant’s required site posting and notice in a newspaper of general circulation (*Arizona Business Gazette*). (Note: Additional information about site posting and other notification requirements is available in Maricopa County’s Public Participation Program in Appendix III). If the Commission makes a recommendation of approval or denial of the application, the Amendment application will be transmitted to the Board for final consideration and action.

Public Hearing – Board of Supervisors

As the governing body for land use decisions in unincorporated areas, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors is responsible for making a final determination of approval or denial of the Amendment application. Notice of Board hearing is provided in the same manner as the Commission hearing. The Board may either accept or reject the Commission’s recommendation. If the Board approves the Amendment application, it is effective immediately. The applicant is thereafter responsible for meeting any required conditions of approval.



Appendices



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Appendix I: Glossary of Defined Terms

The following glossary of defined terms is intended to help readers and users of the Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan interpret and implement its content, policies, and recommendations. These definitions are considered applicable only to this Comprehensive Plan and should not necessarily be used in any other capacity. Readers are encouraged to seek additional information on any of these concepts and terms if needed.

100-year Floodplain: A high risk area that is susceptible to a one percent chance of experiencing a 100-year flood event in any given year. The amount of water needed to create a 100-year flood event varies by location.

Acre-feet: A measure of volume equal to the amount of water that is needed to cover one acre of land to a depth of one foot (one acre-foot = 325,851 gallons).

Active Management Area (AMA): Portions of the state identified in the Arizona Groundwater Code as being heavily reliant on groundwater use. Groundwater in such areas is managed to achieve a safe yield, meaning no more groundwater is withdrawn than is annually being replaced.

Aggregates (or Aggregate Resources): A category of raw material such as sand, gravel and stone that is used to make concrete and asphalt.

Alternative Designation of Assured Water Supply (ADAWS): An ADWR rule implemented in 2024 that allows for a new regulatory pathway for municipal water providers (both municipalities and utilities) to demonstrate a 100-year water supply using more flexible criteria than the traditional DAWS process.

Alternative Transportation: Modes of travel other than private cars such as walking, bicycling, carpooling and mass transit.

Ancillary Military Facilities: In Maricopa County this includes Auxiliary Airfield #1 located in the city of Surprise, and the Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Airfield located south of the town of Gila Bend.

Aquifer: An underground geological formation containing saturated materials capable of storing water that can be extracted via a well.

Area Drainage Master Studies and Plans: Prepared by the Maricopa County Flood Control District, these studies and plans identify and recommend strategies to mitigate flood hazards in specific watersheds of Maricopa County.

Area of Jurisdiction: The portion of the County outside the corporate limits of any municipality.

Area of Municipal Influence: A categorization of land in Maricopa County that is comprised of all unincorporated land that falls within the current limits of either a Municipal Planning Area, within a County Island, or within an Improvement Association. Unincorporated land under this category can be determined to be in the Urban Growth Area or in the Rural Service Area.

Area of Rural Influence: A categorization of land in Maricopa County that is comprised of all unincorporated land not in the Area of Municipal Influence.

Area Plan: A subcategory of Framework 2040, these are specific plans for particular areas or regions of Maricopa County..

Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR): State agency responsible for helping protect and ensure long-term, reliable water supplies.

Arizona Fire & Medical Authority (AFMA): A regional fire and emergency medical services organization that provides shared fire protection, emergency medical response, and related public safety services across three fire districts in unincorporated Maricopa County—North County Fire & Medical District, South County Fire & Medical District, and Buckeye Valley Fire District.

Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS): The state laws of Arizona.

Arizona State Land Department (ASLD): State agency responsible for managing State Trust lands within Arizona.

Arizona Water Banking Authority: A system where Colorado River water is stored primarily in underground aquifers for use in times of shortage.

Arterial Road: A major route that carries moderate to high levels of traffic regionally. Arterial roads are normally located at one-mile intervals.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The capability of machines to mimic human cognitive functions enabling them to perform tasks requiring humanlike intelligence, often by processing vast amounts of data to find patterns, generate insights, or create new content.

Assured Water Supply (AWS): The program operating within Arizona’s seven Active Management Areas designed to preserve groundwater resources and promote long-term water supply planning through requiring proof of a 100-year renewable water supply before residential subdivision approval.

Basic Sector: Businesses and industries that export most or all of their products or services, thus creating new incomes and new spending power in the economy of their country or region of origin.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Part of the U.S. Department of Interior, this is the federal agency responsible for sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of America’s 245 million acres of public lands, and for managing public lands and public land resources for a variety of uses.

Capital Improvement Program: A five-year plan that identifies funding priorities for infrastructure and services needed to serve the public.

Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGRD): A division of the Central Arizona Project created to help landowners and water providers within the Phoenix, Pinal, and Tucson AMAs comply with the state’s groundwater laws, primarily through replenishing groundwater that has been pumped by its members for them to meet the AWS requirements for development.

Central Arizona Project (CAP): Steward of central Arizona’s Colorado River water entitlement and delivery.

Certificate of Assured Water Supply (CAWS): Document issued by the Arizona Department of Water Resources which confirms that a water supply will be physically, legally and continuously available for the next 100 years for individual subdivisions or developments.

Clean Air Act: Federal law first enacted in 1970 that authorizes the establishment of regulations limiting stationary and mobile sources of air pollution.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): A program from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development which helps fund local community development activities.

Compliance Assurance (model): A system of methods used by the Maricopa County Air Quality Department to increase air quality compliance rates and remove incentives for non-compliance.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment: Changes to Maricopa County’s Comprehensive Plan or Area Plans.

County Island: Unincorporated area completely surrounded by one or more incorporated municipalities or Native American Community.

Data Center: A dedicated facility often necessitating robust electricity for power, cooling, and security infrastructure to house computer systems, servers, and networking equipment for storing, processing, and distributing large amounts of data for digital services like cloud computing, streaming, and artificial intelligence.

Density: A numerical average of the number of people or dwelling units per unit of land (e.g. a population density of 200 people per square mile; a residential density of 4 houses per acre).

Designation of Assured Water Supply (DAWS): Document issued by the Arizona Department of Water Resources which confirms that a water supply will be physically, legally and continuously available for the next 100 years for municipal water providers (both municipalities and utilities).

Development Agreement: A contract between Maricopa County and a property owner or developer which establishes funding and operational responsibilities for infrastructure and services.

Development Master Plan: A long-range planning tool historically used to guide large-scale, master-planned communities or developments in unincorporated areas that establishes land use, infrastructure, and phasing strategies to ensure timed and orderly growth.

Dust Abatement Program: A MCDOT-administered plan to reduce air pollution (from PM₁₀) primarily by paving roads.

Emergency Response: Safety response from law enforcement, as well as fire and emergency medical services, to appropriate incidents or calls.

Entitlement: The right to develop and use land based on the established zoning district and, as applicable, plan for development.

Firebreak: An area of cleared or plowed land intended to stop the spread of a wildfire.

Floodway: The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to efficiently carry and discharge flood waters.

Framework (or Municipal-Rural Influence Framework): A planning model developed by Maricopa County that categorizes unincorporated land into either the Area of Municipal Influence or the Area of Rural Influence in order to facilitate the County's processes for evaluating the feasibility of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Zoning District Change.

General Plan: A plan that is similar to a comprehensive plan, but is prepared by and for cities and towns.

Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone: A federally designated trade zone serving Western Maricopa County that provides businesses with customs and tax advantages to encourage international commerce.

Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC): A public-private partnership group that works to attract quality businesses to the Greater Phoenix region from around the world, and that advocates for improving this region's competitiveness.

Hazard Mitigation Plan: The plan that identifies natural hazards, assesses vulnerability and risks to people and structures, and identifies and implements strategies for mitigating the identified natural hazards.

High Noise or Accident Potential Zone (HNAPZ): Defined by state law, in Maricopa County this includes all areas within the noise contours and accident potential zones of Luke Air Force Base and the ancillary military facilities.

Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF): A fund consisting of fees and charges relating to the registration and operation of motor vehicles on Arizona highways which are distributed to cities, towns, counties and the State Highway Fund for highway construction, improvements and related expenses.

Hillside Development: Any development that occurs on land with a slope, or grade, of 15% or greater over a horizontal distance of 100 feet.

HOME Investment Partnership Program: The largest federal block grant program in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to creating affordable housing for low-income households. It is administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and provides flexible funding to states and local governments.

Improvement Association: A non-profit homeowners’ association to represent residents of a particular community within unincorporated Maricopa County in the management of common interests and coordination of infrastructure and neighborhood improvements.

Industrial Development Authority of Maricopa County (IDAMC): A political subdivision of Arizona whose mission is to create and maintain jobs within Maricopa County and to assist County residents through financing affordable single- and multi-family housing.

Industry Cluster: A geographic concentration of competing, collaborating and interdependent businesses, suppliers and associated institutions in a common industry sector that helps increase business productivity.

Land Subsidence: The gradual settling or sinking of the Earth’s surface due to natural processes or human activities, most often caused by groundwater withdrawal, mining, or soil compaction.

Land Use Transition: A change in land use pattern to or from a more intense land use such as a commercial or industrial, from or to a less intense land use like residential.

Leapfrog Development: Growth that occurs well beyond existing development and which is separated by a substantial amount of vacant land.

Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG): An organization consisting of local governments that serves as a regional planning agency for the Phoenix metropolitan area, and that convenes to make policy decisions for transportation, air quality, water quality, and human services.

Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT): Maricopa County agency responsible for planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining roads in unincorporated areas.

Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance (MCZO): The primary set of land use regulations adopted by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. It establishes zoning districts, development standards, and administrative procedures to guide growth; protect public health, safety, and general welfare; and ensure orderly development across unincorporated areas of the County.

Master-Planned Community: A wholly and deliberately planned, relatively autonomous community consisting of residential, non-residential, recreational and public land uses.

Mixed-Use: A single building that contains more than one type of use, or a development that combines several different but complementary types of residential, commercial, civic and business uses on a single parcel or area.

Mobile Home: A home placed on a permanent chassis that is capable of being moved to the site it is to be located.

Multi-Family Residential: Development that consists of multiple and separate residential units that are contained within a single building or group of buildings on one lot or parcel. Such housing typically includes duplexes, condominiums, townhouses and apartment buildings.

Multimodal (transportation): A combination of two or more methods of transporting people and goods.

Municipal Planning Area: Unincorporated area that has been identified by a particular municipality for potential annexation with the consent of a majority property owners.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS): A requirement of the federal Clean Air Act, limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with respect to specific air pollutants.

Non-Basic Sector: Businesses and industries that sell their products or services within a community, and thus, are dependent upon local economic conditions since existing money is recirculated locally.

Non-Potable (Water): Water that is not of drinking water quality but can be used for industrial production, irrigation, cooling towers, and other applications not involving human consumption.

Ozone: A colorless, odorless gas formed by reactions with pollutants and found most often in hot, stagnant weather.

Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station: Nuclear power plant in west-central Maricopa County that annually generates approximately 29,000 gigawatt hours of power.

Parcel: A legally recognized, continuous plot of land usually resulting from the division of a larger land area.

Particulate Matter: Air pollutants that vary in size and composition (solid or liquid droplets) and which originate from stationary sources like power plant and industrial processes, from mobile sources like diesel vehicles, and naturally from dust and soil.

Personal Property: Privately owned items that are movable and not affixed to land such as vehicles, watercraft, furniture, collectibles, etc.

Phasing Plan: A deliberate and incremental plan for development based on appropriate sequences and timeframes.

Public Improvement: Infrastructure or service financed by Maricopa County that is for the benefit or use by the general public.

Public Water System: Any water system with at least fifteen service connections, or any system that regularly serves an average of at least twenty-five people daily for at least sixty days a year.

Quality of Life: The social, economic, environmental and physical well-being that an area offers individuals.

Real Property: Buildings, structures, and anything else affixed to land that is not considered movable, including the land itself.

Renewable Energy: An unlimited source of energy that is naturally regenerated over a short time period, including sunlight, wind, rain, tides and waves and geothermal heat.

Renewable Water: Water from sources like rivers, streams and lakes that are continuously and frequently replenished.

Rural Development: Agriculture-related and residential land uses with a density of one dwelling unit or less per gross acre.

Rural Development Area: Any unincorporated land designated for rural land use in the Comprehensive Plan or in the respective County Area Plan.

Rural Industrial Land Uses: Activities and facilities that are appropriate for rural or sparsely developed contexts due to their need for large land areas, operational characteristics, limited reliance on external urban services, or potential incompatibility with urban and suburban settings. Developments of this manner typically generate minimal demand for public infrastructure and are best situated where land availability and separation from residential or commercial development can be maintained. These uses could include, but are not limited to, electric generating and distribution facilities, proving grounds and test facilities, mining and extraction operations, and agriculturally-oriented businesses.

Rural Service Area: Any part of the unincorporated area that is both outside of an Area Plan and the Urban Growth Area characterized by low-density land use, limited infrastructure, and a strong emphasis on preserving open space, agricultural operations, and the rural lifestyle.

Scalloped Streets: Roads with uneven and irregular widths.

Scenic Corridor: A designated area along key highways or roadways meant to preserve natural views, desert landscapes, and community character.

Single-family Residential: Development consisting of separate or free-standing residential dwellings individually intended for occupancy by just one household or family.

Special District: Government unit that is separate and independent from a general purpose government, like a municipality or county, that exists to provide a specific service not provided by a general purpose government.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO): A division of Arizona State Parks, it provides assistance in identifying, evaluating, protecting, and enhancing historic and archaeological properties that have significance for local communities, the State of Arizona, or the Nation.

State Implementation Plan (SIP): Cumulative record of all air pollution strategies, state statutes, state rules and local ordinances implemented in accordance with the federal Clean Air Act by government agencies in Arizona.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP): The five-year planned roadway systems improvements for Maricopa County.

Transportation System Plan (TSP): Maricopa County’s long-range plan for transportation.

Unincorporated: Areas not within a city or town.

Urban Development: Commercial and industrial land uses as well as residential land uses with a density greater than one dwelling unit per gross acre.

Urban Growth Area: Any unincorporated land designated for urban land use in the Comprehensive Plan, the respective County Area Plan, or an applicable municipal general plan if the requirements of the USUD strategy can be satisfied and timely assurance of annexation can be obtained. Unincorporated land designated for rural land use in the Comprehensive Plan or a County Area Plan could also be considered the Urban Growth Area if that land is designated for urban land use in an applicable municipal general plan, provided that the requirements of the USUD umbrella policy can be satisfied and an assurance of annexation can be obtained to avoid forming new County Islands.

Urban/Rural Interface Area: Areas where urban- and rural-type land uses are adjacent to or intermixed with one another

Urban Solutions for Urban Development (USUD): A Maricopa County planning strategy to evaluate new urban development predicated on clearly demonstrating that urban services and infrastructure are available to serve new residents and businesses. This evaluation is deemed vital in order to prevent the creation of new County Islands, create fiscally and environmentally efficient development, and to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

Vehicle License Tax (VLT): A state tax charged in lieu of a personal property tax on vehicles.

“Wildcat” Lot Split: The unregulated division of one land parcel into five or fewer separate parcels. Collections of these “wildcat” lot splits, repeated in a large parcel or area, can lead to a de facto “wildcat” subdivision. “Wildcat” subdivisions are not subject to local subdivision regulations or related health and safety requirements.

Wildlife Corridor: A known area that connects fragmented habitats, allowing animals to move safely between them for feeding, breeding, and migration.

Workforce Development Division (WDD): A division of the Human Services Department providing comprehensive employment and training services to adult and youth job seekers, as well as support for employers across the County.

Zoning District Boundary Change: A change to the boundary of a zoning district which results in property transferring from one zoning district to another.

Appendix II: Acronyms

The following acronyms are intended to help readers and users of the Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan interpret and implement its content, policies, and recommendations. These acronyms are considered applicable only to this Comprehensive Plan and should not necessarily be used in any other capacity. Readers are encouraged to seek additional information on any of these concepts and terms if needed.

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

ADAWS – Alternative Designation of Assured Water Supply

ADEQ – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

ADOT – Arizona Department of Transportation

ADWR – Arizona Department of Water Resources

AF – Acre-Feet

AFB – Air Force Base

AFMA – Arizona Fire & Medical Authority

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ALCP – Arterial Lifecycle Program

AMA – Active Management Area

APZ – Accident Potential Zone

ARS – Arizona Revised Statutes

ASLD – Arizona State Land Department

ATP – Active Transportation Plan

AWS – Assured Water Supply

AZGFD – Arizona Game and Fish Department

BESS – Battery Energy Storage System

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

Board – Maricopa County Board of Supervisors

BOR – Bureau of Reclamation

CAGR D – Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District

CAP – Central Arizona Project

CAWS – Certificate of Assured Water Supply

CDBG – Census Designated Block Grant

Commission – Maricopa County Planning & Zoning Commission

CPA – Comprehensive Plan Amendment

CV – Connected Vehicles

CWPP – Community Wildlife Protection Plan

DAWS – Designation of Assured Water Supply

DMP – Development Master Plan

EOP – Emergency Operations Plan

FCD – Flood Control District

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

Framework – Municipal-Rural Influence Framework

GMFTZ – Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone

GPEC – Greater Phoenix Economic Council

HNAPZ – High Noise and Accident Potential Zone

HOME – HOME Investment Partnership Program

HUD – United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

HURF – Highway User Revenue Funding

I-11 – Interstate 11

ICS – Incident Command System

IGA – Intergovernmental Agreement

INA – Irrigation Non-Expansion Area

ITS – Intelligent Transportation Systems

JPA – Joint Powers Authority

LOS – Level of Service

Loop 303 – State Route Loop 303

MAG – Maricopa Association of Governments

MC 85 – Maricopa County Road 85

MCAQD – Maricopa County Air Quality Department

MCDOT – Maricopa County Department of Transportation

MCESD – Maricopa County Environmental Services Department

MCIDA – Maricopa County Industrial Development Authority

MCPRD – Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

MCSO – Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

MCZO – Maricopa County Zoning Ordinance

MPA – Metropolitan Planning Area

NAAQS – National Ambient Air Quality Standards

NFA – Neighborhood Facilities Assessment

Plan – Framework 2040 Comprehensive Plan

PM_{2.5} – Fine Particulate Matter

PM₁₀ – Coarse Particulate Matter

PSA – Public Service Announcement

RAZ – Regional Analysis Zone

RDM – Roadway Design Manual

ROD – Record of Decision

SHPO – State Historical Preservation Office

SIP – State Implementation Program

SR 30 – State Route 30

TAC – Technical Advisory Committee

TIP – Transportation Improvement Plan

TSP – Transportation System Plan

U.S. – United States

USFS – United States Forest Service

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

USUD – Urban Solutions for Urban Development

VLT – Vehicle Licensing Tax

WDD – Workforce Development Division

WIOA – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

WUI – Wildland-Urban Interface

Appendix III: Public Participation Program

County Initiated Planning

Purpose

Public participation is an important component of successful planning. Citizens need and deserve ongoing communication regarding projects and issues that affect their communities. Through these public participation guidelines, Maricopa County demonstrates its commitment to encouraging early and meaningful citizen input during creation and amendment of the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan. Such participation will help Maricopa County resolve concerns early in the planning process, and promote goodwill between county officials, citizens, property owners, and other stakeholders.

Guiding Principles

The public participation program follows several principles that help ensure planning efforts identify and respond to public issues and concerns. These principles are:

- A sound public involvement plan is critical to the success of any planning process. It must include techniques to share information and create lines of communication among interested parties.
- Citizen participation must be a genuine effort to encourage public involvement in the decision-making process by providing public participation opportunities.
- Information must be disseminated to a broad range of interested parties. This could be achieved through public notices, newsletters, flyers, telephone hotline, newspaper articles, the Internet, and/or other events. Participation opportunities should occur through public workshops, informational meetings, surveys, or other means.
- An effective public involvement process must address issues that arise when planning recommendations do not adequately consider the concerns of the residents affected.
- By hearing what the public expects and responding in the most effective, efficient way possible, an agency will gain respect and support for its decisions and their implementation.

Compliance with State Law

Arizona Revised Statutes §11-806D states that “The Board of Supervisors shall:

- Adopt written procedures to provide effective, early, and continuous public participation in the development the Comprehensive Plan and any Major Amendment from all geographic, ethnic and economic areas of the County. The procedures shall provide for:
 - The broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives
 - The opportunity for written comments
 - Public hearings after effective notice
 - Open discussions, communication programs and information services
 - Consideration of public comments
- Consult and advise with public officials and agencies, municipalities, school districts, associations of governments, public land management agencies, other appropriate government jurisdictions, public utility companies, civic, educational, professional and other organizations property owners and citizens generally to secure the maximum coordination of plans and to indicate properly located sites for all public purposes on the plan.”

Roles and Responsibilities

Maricopa County officials and staff shall be responsible for administering the public participation program. Ongoing duties will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Assist with preparation of public hearings before the Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- Organize and oversee public meetings, focus groups, workshops, and other communication networks.
- Organize and support planning advisory committees.
- Develop and maintain a dedicated email address and website to disseminate information and receive public comments.
- Assist with preparation and dissemination of press releases, public service announcements, and advertisements.
- Prepare and disseminate planning information articles for business, civic, homeowners' association, and other group newsletters and publications.

Process

The public participation process for county-initiated efforts to adopt, amend, or otherwise revise the Comprehensive Plan shall consist of several stages.

Stage 1: Notification and Education

This stage will introduce Comprehensive and Area Plan updates to the public and explain what specific activities the County will undertake. Maricopa County will also explain to citizens the planning process, as well as how they can participate.

Stage 2: Participation and Input

Stage 2 represents the period when significant citizen participation takes place. Most of the techniques discussed in the Public Participation Methods section will be used in Stage 2 to obtain meaningful and significant public input in a plan update process. Although Stage 2 is designed to receive and assemble citizen questions, comments, and suggestions, Maricopa County will continue with Stage 1 efforts to notify citizens about opportunities for participation.

Stage 3: Public Hearing Notification

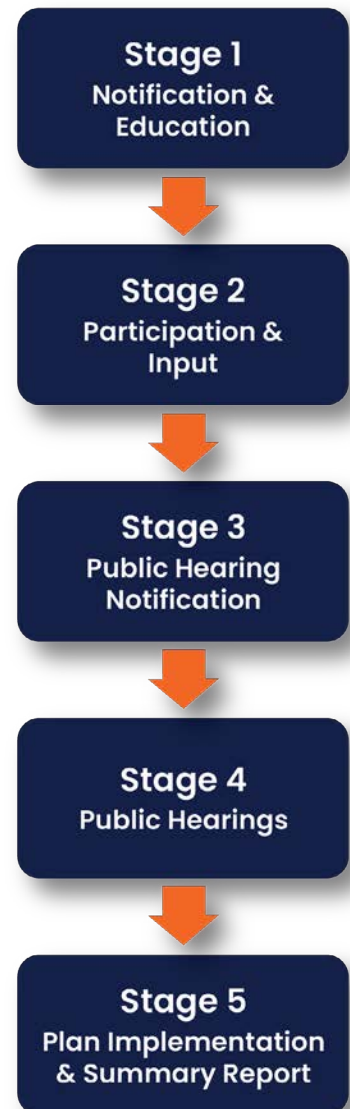
Notification of efforts to adopt, amend, or otherwise change land use plans will be published at least 15 days prior to the scheduled public hearing. Requests will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in accordance with state law.

Stage 4: Public Hearing

Stage 4 represents the process when public hearings are held. Legally required public hearings before the Maricopa County Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors are held on a routine basis. These public hearings give residents an opportunity to publicly express opinions and ideas regarding county-initiated plan updates. Formal notification of public hearings is provided according to applicable state and County regulations.

Stage 5: Plan Implementation & Summary Report

Figure 21. Public Participation Process: County Initiated-Planning





Public Participation Methods

Maricopa County can use many techniques to ensure the broadest possible public participation. However, the effectiveness of each of these techniques is determined, in part, by the unique circumstances of specific planning efforts. While not all methods may be practical or feasible for each project, Maricopa County will use as many as possible to encourage significant participation and to ensure that the guiding principles of this program are maintained.

Although this list identifies many of the options that Maricopa County can use to ensure program success, there may be others that, when feasible, might be appropriate.

Press Releases and Public Service Announcements (PSA):

Notifications regarding proposed projects will be sent to newspapers and other media with general circulation in the subject areas. Press releases and PSAs will describe proposed projects and how citizens can participate in the planning process. Planning Department staff, with the assistance of Maricopa County Communications Office, shall prepare and distribute press releases and PSAs during each stage.

Maricopa County Webpage or Dedicated Plan Webpage:

Maricopa County currently has a web page that is frequently updated with important information. The Planning and Development Department will publish and update information regarding county-initiated planning efforts on its website or a dedicated plan website. This information will describe proposed projects, identify important dates in the process, and explain how citizens can participate in the input process.

Email:

For those interested in receiving information via email, Maricopa County will develop and maintain a database of email addresses to which planning information will be distributed. However, only those individuals and groups specifically requesting information by email will be added to the database. In addition, the Planning and Development Department will establish and maintain a dedicated email address in order to receive citizen comments and recommendations.

Public Meetings:

To provide opportunities for open dialogue, Maricopa County will organize and participate in public meetings. Public meetings, which can occur as open houses, workshops, and focus groups, are widely recognized as an important and effective method of community outreach because they give citizens an informal opportunity to ask questions of county staff, as well as provide recommendations and suggestions regarding plan updates. Public meetings also promote goodwill between citizens and Maricopa County.

All public meetings will be organized and managed by County staff. When feasible, elected and appointed officials should attend and participate in a leadership capacity. Also where feasible, a multimedia approach will be used to further clarify information and promote greater participation. Depending on meeting format, advanced notification can be provided through both print media and direct mailing to potential stakeholders.

In keeping with historic County policy, alternative format materials, sign language interpreter, and infrared listening devices can be provided with a minimum 72-hour advance notice.

Surveys:

Surveys can be very effective at gathering citizen comments and opinions regarding specific issues. When feasible, County staff will produce and mail, email, or fax surveys to potentially affected stakeholders. County staff will also distribute surveys at public meetings. On all surveys, Maricopa County will provide a return mailing address, email address, web site address, and telephone and fax numbers.

Newsletters & EBlasts:

Newsletters will allow county staff to share progress on planning projects, as well as provide a forum for citizens to express opinions. Articles regarding significant planning issues will also be submitted to community, business, and trade organization newsletters as a way to increase information dissemination.

Advisory Committees:

For large-scale planning efforts, Maricopa County will use advisory committees. Committee participants become directly involved in the planning process by agreeing to meet frequently to carefully review documents and provide recommendations. Such committees will consist of potential stakeholders that have an interest in the affected areas. Advisory committees will vary in size depending on the specific project, but will generally not exceed 15 members. Maricopa County staff will provide administrative support to committees, and committee membership will be based upon recommendations from the Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors (or staff thereof).

Public Hearings (Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors):

As required by state law, the Maricopa County Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors periodically hold public hearings regarding planning issues. Planning & Zoning Commission hearings are held in accordance with a published schedule typically on the first and third Thursday of each month. Board of Supervisors hearings are held in accordance with an adopted and published schedule typically on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Citizens are encouraged to attend and express their opinions in a formal setting.

Applicant Initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments (including Development Master Plan Amendments)

Purpose

Public participation is an important component of successful planning. Citizens need and deserve ongoing communication regarding projects and issues that affect their communities. Through these adopted public participation guidelines, Maricopa County demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that applicants pursue early and meaningful citizen input in applications for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Development Master Plan. Such participation will help an applicant resolve concerns early in the process, and promote goodwill between the applicant, county officials, citizens, property owners, and other stakeholders. While these guidelines establish a formal process for citizen participation, applicants are by no means precluded from incorporating additional elements into their public participation program.

Public involvement might increase the time and cost of the planning process, but it can yield greater returns since the outcome will be based on the expressed needs of the public it serves. While the citizen participation program may not produce complete consensus regarding specific applications, it will encourage applicants to make sound investment and planning decisions by listening to and, where feasible, addressing the concerns of their neighbors.



Guiding Principles

The public participation program follows several principles that help ensure planning efforts obtain sufficient public input and support. These principles are:

- A sound public involvement plan is critical to the success of any planning process. It must include techniques to share information and create lines of communication between interested parties.
- Citizen participation must be a genuine effort to encourage public involvement in the decision-making process by providing public participation opportunities.
- Information must be disseminated to a broad range of stakeholders. This could be achieved through public notices, newsletters, flyers, telephone hotline, newspaper articles, the Internet, and/or other events. Participation opportunities should occur through public workshops, informational meetings, surveys, or other means.
- An effective public involvement process must address issues that arise when planning recommendations do not adequately consider the concerns of the residents affected.
- By hearing what the public expects and responding in the most effective, efficient way possible, an applicant will be respected and supported for their decisions.

Process

The public participation process for applicant-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments shall consist of several stages. At a minimum, the public participation program must provide the following information:

- A description of the community involvement area.
- A list of stakeholders that may be affected by the application. While individual circumstances will vary, stakeholders include residents, property owners, homeowners' associations, and any others identified within an area agreed upon by the applicant and the Planning and Development Department. The applicant should also include a description of how and when the identified stakeholders will be notified that an application for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment or a Development Master Plan Amendment has been submitted (proof of notification must be included with the formal application).
- A description of how the applicant will make information available to interested parties, prior to public hearings.
- A description of how the applicant will identify stakeholder's issues and concerns.
- A description of how the applicant will respond to stakeholder's feedback and recommendations.
- A discussion of how the applicant will keep the Maricopa County Planning and Development Department informed of public participation program progress.
- A timeline for the citizen participation program.

Stage 1: Pre-Application Meeting

Prior to submitting a formal application, an applicant is required to participate in a pre-application meeting with Planning and Development Department staff. Pre-application meetings allow applicants to become familiar with the planning process, and also enable the applicant to obtain guidance with the requirements of the public participation program.

Stage 2: Official Application

Along with the official application for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, the applicant must submit an official copy of the public participation plan. Official copies must be submitted in an electronic format. In the public participation plan, the applicant must present evidence that the identified stakeholders have been notified of the application. The applicant will maintain a database of the stakeholders and a log of notifications to stakeholders.

Additionally, a notice of application shall be sent by the applicant to each real property owner as shown on the last assessment of the property within 300' of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Stage 3: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting

In accordance with an established timeline, staff will schedule the application for review by TAC and notify the applicant of the actual date and time that the TAC meeting will take place. In addition to reviewing the application, the applicant may also be asked to provide a verbal report concerning the progress of the public participation plan.

Stage 4: Submit Public Participation Program Results

Prior to Maricopa County providing official notice of public hearing, the applicant must submit a written report which details the results of the public participation program. This report shall include at least the following information:

RECORD OF APPLICANT ACTIVITIES

- The dates, times, and/or locations of:
 - All meetings the applicant initiated with stakeholders.
 - Other contacts with affected stakeholders.
- Description of the approximate number of people that participated in the public participation process, and where they are located in relation to the subject property.
- Discussion of the results of the public participation process. This discussion should include information about the major issues and concerns identified by stakeholders, how the applicant will address the concerns or issues raised by affected stakeholders, and what concerns or issues the applicant cannot or will not address and why.
- Appendix of information, including mailings, fliers, newsletters, handouts, and other pertinent materials that help describe the public participation program.

Stage 5: Public Hearing Notification

For a major Comprehensive Plan Amendment application, the applicant will post notification of an application at the subject property via signs within 30 days of application and post hearing dates on existing application notification signs at the subject property in accordance with staff posting deadlines and at least 15 days prior to the scheduled public hearing. A minimum of two posters is required on the subject property, with at least one notice for each quarter mile of frontage along the perimeter public right-of-way. An assigned planner may alter the location of required sign posting and/or reduce the number of required signs if the purpose is to ensure effective public participation and awareness. The number of signs may be reduced, if, in the assigned planner's opinion, such signs will have little to no benefit to the outreach process. The property shall be posted with at least two signs, the size of which shall be consistent with Staff's current sign size requirements (at least 6 square feet in area) and included in the application packet. The signs shall be designed to accommodate the posting for the required public hearings of both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

The applicant shall notify all of the stakeholders identified in the public participation program of the public hearings by first-class mail. Additionally, a notice of hearing shall be sent by the applicant to each real property owner as shown on the last assessment of the property within 300' of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

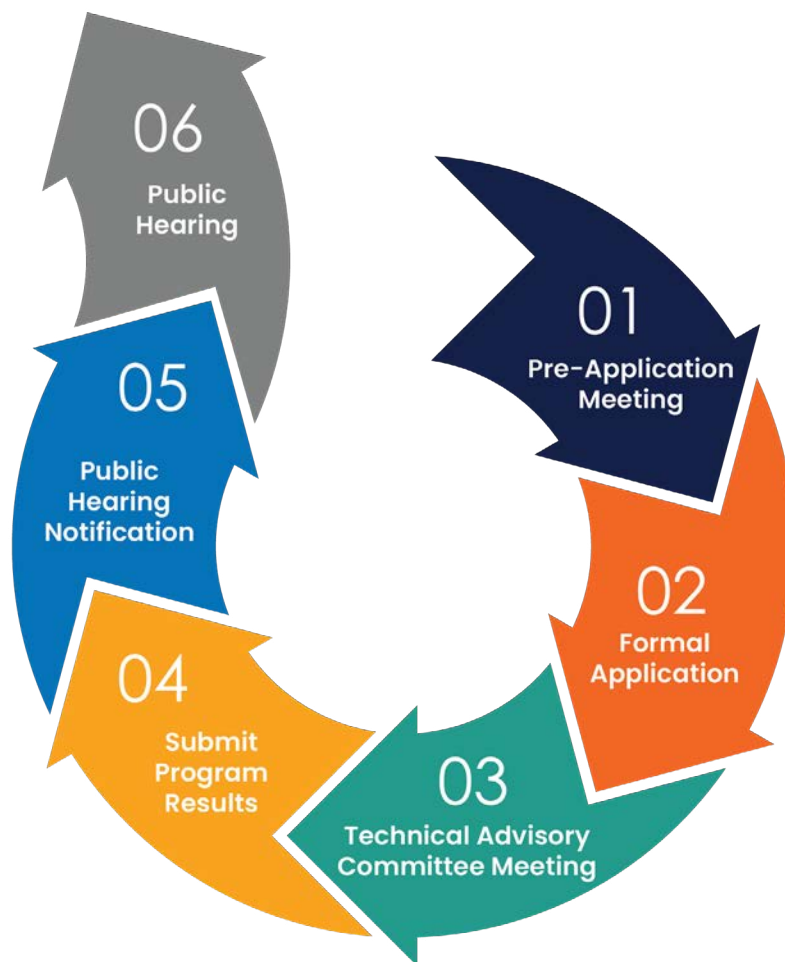
Requests for Comprehensive Plan Amendments will be published 15 days prior to the scheduled public hearing. Requests will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in accordance with state law. In addition, the Planning and Development Department retains the right to use supplemental meetings, such as neighborhood meetings or open houses, for projects as deemed necessary.

Stage 6: Public Hearing

Pursuant to state law, public hearings before the County Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors are held on a routine basis. These public hearings give residents an opportunity to formally express opinions regarding a Comprehensive Plan Amendment application or a Development Master Plan Amendment application. Formal notification of these public hearings is provided according to the guidelines noted in Stage 5: Public Hearing Notification.

Planning & Zoning Commission hearings are held in accordance with a published schedule typically on the first and third Thursday of every month. The Board of Supervisors hearings are held in accordance with an adopted and published schedule typically on the first and third Wednesday of every month. Public hearings before the Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors are required for every Comprehensive Plan Amendment application.

Figure 22. Public Participation Process: Comprehensive Plan Amendments & Development Master Plan Amendments





Contact Agency

If any applicant or resident has questions concerning this program, they are requested to contact Maricopa County at the following address:

**Maricopa County Planning and Development Department
301 W. Jefferson St., Suite 170
Phoenix, AZ 85003
Telephone: (602) 506-3301**