

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Originally adopted by the City Council in 1984, and updated in 2009, the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan (formerly Downtown Plan) has served as the comprehensive policy document that guides growth and development decisions for Scottsdale’s downtown. Since its adoption, the plan has been successful at shaping the growth, both financially and physically, of Old Town Scottsdale over the past three decades. During that time, the majority of the goals, policies and implementation programs established by the community have also been successfully accomplished.

“One of the reasons that Scottsdale is such a special place is our citizens — caring, involved people who take an active part in the development of our city.”

~ Mayor Herbert R. Drinkwater, 1985

In addition to the community achievements under the plan, public policy, market conditions, building technologies, and community composition have and continue to change. Further, with any long range plan, periodic evaluation and assessment is important in order to ensure that the downtown’s vision, goals and continued success are realized over the next twenty years.

Community Involvement

2009 Downtown Plan Update

To ensure that an updated Downtown Plan would reflect the community’s vision and goals for Downtown Scottsdale, an extensive public outreach process was conducted over a period of eighteen months. During this time, more than 1,200 community members participated in the Downtown Plan update process. The culmination of this extensive public input was an updated, community based, Downtown Plan that City Council adopted in 2009.

2018 Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan Update

Beginning in 2016, city staff conducted a mid-term evaluation and assessment of the Downtown Plan. Per the plan evaluation, staff determined that since 2009, a majority of the implementation items in the plan had been completed, and a variety of other strategic plans had been adopted by the Council, thus necessitating the need for a targeted update.

2023 Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan Update

In 2021, City Council initiated an update to the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan to engage the community on various topics such as Development Type designations, locations, and transitions - with a focus on maintaining quality development and redevelopment in downtown. The 2023 Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan process consisted of broad public outreach including one-on-one individual meetings, community group meetings, open houses, online feedback, and public hearing opportunities.

Scottsdale General Plan – Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan

The Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan is an adopted Character Area Plan per the City of Scottsdale General Plan 2035. The General Plan establishes Character-based Planning with three distinct and interrelated levels:

- **LEVEL 1 – CITYWIDE PLANNING:** Incorporates all policies that apply to the city as a whole.
- **LEVEL 2 - CHARACTER AREA PLANNING:** Develops Character Plans that speak specifically to the goals and special attributes of an identifiable and functional area such as its land uses, infrastructure, broadly defined urban architectural design philosophy, and transitions.
- **LEVEL 3 - NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING:** Neighborhood Plans identify and implement efforts to improve specific neighborhoods within the city.

As an adopted Character Area Plan, the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan incorporates community goals and policies consistent with (but not duplicative of) both the State mandated General Plan elements and the additional Scottsdale General Plan elements, as well as goals and policies that speak specifically to the special attributes of Old Town Scottsdale and how it functions. Furthermore, Old Town Scottsdale is also designated as a General Plan Growth Area - specific locations within the community that are most appropriate for development focus, and to best accommodate future growth, new development, and redevelopment.

Plan Purpose

The Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan establishes the vision for Old Town and will continue to provide the basis for downtown decision making over the next twenty years. The plan contains explanatory goals, policies and illustrative graphics to articulate and act as a bridge between the vision for Old Town and the implementation programs necessary to achieve the vision. The plan serves several functions including to:

- Guide policy decisions related to private and public projects in Old Town Scottsdale;
- Maintain Old Town Scottsdale as the commercial, cultural, civic and symbolic center of the community comprised of districts that operate together as a highly functional mixed-use center;
- Establish the structure within which the private sector can provide a strong leadership role in the future success of Old Town Scottsdale; and
- Establish the framework for private and public implementation programs.

“Downtown represents all of Scottsdale. Downtown is our Town Center.”

~ Focus Group Participant, 2007

Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan Chapters

The components of the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan have been integrated into a vision page and five primary chapters. The content of the chapters and how they implement the community's vision for Old Town is described below:

V – VISION FOR OLD TOWN SCOTTSDALE – describes the community's primary vision regarding Old Town Scottsdale and establishes the values that guide and support the vision.

CHAPTER 1 – LAND USE – presents the overall concept of Old Town Scottsdale as the commercial, cultural, civic, and symbolic center of the community comprised of a collection of interconnected, mixed-use districts. A mix of land uses and the provision of a variety of open space and public realm areas are encouraged. The need for private sector provision of public amenities and benefits in relation to the consideration of development flexibility is identified in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 – CHARACTER & DESIGN – describes contextually sensitive planning, architecture and urban design goals that will help strengthen Old Town's southwestern pedestrian character. This chapter includes the Public Spaces and Connectivity Map, which is a collection of primary open space and event areas connected by a series of improved pedestrian connections.

CHAPTER 3 – MOBILITY – presents mobility for Old Town Scottsdale as twofold: to provide fluid connectivity in and out of Old Town; as well as within and between Old Town's districts. The primary focus of the mobility chapter is on pedestrian circulation and comfort, including the identification of a pedestrian space hierarchy – to help achieve a superior pedestrian environment for Old Town Scottsdale, in conjunction with the public spaces and connectivity master plan.

CHAPTER 4 – ARTS & CULTURE – recognizes the importance of arts and culture, and defines the direction for existing and future arts and culture amenities and programs that will help to continue the creative place-making in Old Town Scottsdale and sustain it as a “museum without walls” and interactive arts and culture hub.

CHAPTER 5 – ECONOMIC VITALITY – underscores Old Town's economic role as a destination for arts, culture, retailing, entertainment, tourism, events, and major employment; and provides for economic vitality that is supported by public/private partnerships.

Old Town Scottsdale's Future

The future of Old Town Scottsdale can be even brighter than its past. The level of commitment that the community exhibits is critical in promoting goals and policies which will benefit Old Town over the long term. The community cannot afford to be complacent, by relying on the past successes to ensure a bright future. Merchants, property owners, and civic leaders need to make strong and innovative decisions within the context of the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan to insure a continually vital and sustainable downtown, “where the new west meets the old west”, for generations to come; and to achieve the community’s vision of a “vibrant city center which maintains its Distinctive Character and recognizes its western heritage, while boldly looking to its future.”