Town of Carefree General Plan



Ratified

November 5, 2024

Adoption

Planning and Zoning Commission
May 13, 2024

Town Council Adopted
July 2, 2024

Ratified by Carefree Voters
November 5, 2024

CAREFREE
ARIZONA

Acknowledgments

Town Council

John Crane, Mayor
Cheryl Kroyer, Vice Mayor
Sheila Amoroso, Councilmember
Vince D'Aliesio, Councilmember
Stephen Hatcher, Councilmember
Michael Johnson, Councilmember
Clint Miller, Councilmember

Planning & Zoning Commission

Tom Cross, Chairperson
Mary Roberts, Vice Chairperson
Peter Burns, Commissioner
Karen Dahlman, Commissioner
Susie Dymoke, Commissioner
Lon Johnson, Commissioner
Sharon P. Smith, Commissioner
(Ralph Ferro, past Commissioner)

Town Staff

Gary Neiss, Town Administrator
Kandace French Contreras, Town Clerk
Stacey Bridge-Denzak, RLA, CA, Planning Director & Zoning Administrator
Samantha Gesell, Planning Clerk
Madisyn Garrett, Communications Manager
Steve Prokopek, Economic Development Director

Greg Crossman, Carefree Water Company

Consultant

Michael Baker International

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1 Introduction



The Sonoran Desert at its Finest

Foreward

"Someday I would like to plan and build a town from scratch," said Tom Darlington to K.T. Palmer in 1946. Carefree's two founders had a "dream of a completely planned model community (which) could not be forced upon an existing settlement, however small"... Fifteen years later, with the community laid out, Palmer stated that Carefree was "even if I say so, an unusual town. The character of its residents, the construction of its homes and even its businesses are different than those found in the average community of its size." (Palmer, For Land's Sake, 1971: pp. 319, 352)

The intent of Tom Darlington and K.T. Palmer in planning Carefree and the aims and expectations of the General Plan set forth in 1988 have been well borne out to date. The Town Council's and the Planning and Zoning Commission's intent in the General Plan update continues to be consistent in perpetuating the visions of the Town's predecessors with only modest modifications as needed to address changing circumstances, primarily externally caused.

Purpose & Scope

What is a General Plan?

The General Plan acts as the primary foundation for advancing the Town into the future. Centered on a desired community vision, the General Plan is supported with subsequent Goals, Policies, Actions and Framework Plans to help inform decision-making in a manner that is consistent with the long-term aspirations of the Town. The General Plan also informs the development and management of various Town codes, regulations, departmental plans, initiatives, and areas of focus to further ensure near-term decisions are aligned with the 10-20 year planning horizon of this plan.

Why do we need it?

As established by Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS §9-461.05), the primary purpose of a general plan is to institute guiding policies for the management and future growth of the Town across a series of required elements (i.e. topics). Shaped by extensive public engagement this plan serves as the community's expressed foundation for land use and zoning decisions while also providing an outline for public investment and private development. State Law requires every community to have a General Plan and to update it every 10 years. The Town of Carefree's last General Plan update was completed in 2012. This state mandated update process was conducted in conformance with all statutory requirements as outlined in ARS §9-461.06 including the incorporation of the following required (indicated with *) and elective elements : Land Use*, Growth*, Circulation*, Open Space*, Environmental Planning*, Water Resources*, Cost of Development*, Economic Development, and Public Services & Facilities.

How will it be used?

Per Arizona law, the General Plan guides land use and zoning decisions by the Town. While the General Plan does not change existing zoning, future zoning changes must conform to the General Plan. The public is encouraged to consult the General Plan, as it provides specific information concerning the types of land use, transportation, and open spaces the Town encourages, as well as provides information and recommendations to Town decision-makers regarding the existing quality of life and lifestyles enjoyed by residents and visitors. Beyond the Town's government, the General Plan may also be used by various other stakeholders such as residents, local businesses, and community groups to understand the future vision for the Town.

Planning Area & Regional Context

The Town of Carefree is located at the northern edge of the Phoenix Metropolitan Region in Maricopa County at the base of the local landmark peak, Black Mountain, and bordered by Continental Mountain to the north. Carefree sits between the Town of Cave Creek to the west and the northern neighborhoods of the City of Scottsdale to the east. Cave Creek Road, Tom Darlington Drive, Pima Road, and Carefree Highway provide direct access to the community from surroudning areas.

Figure 1: Regional Context

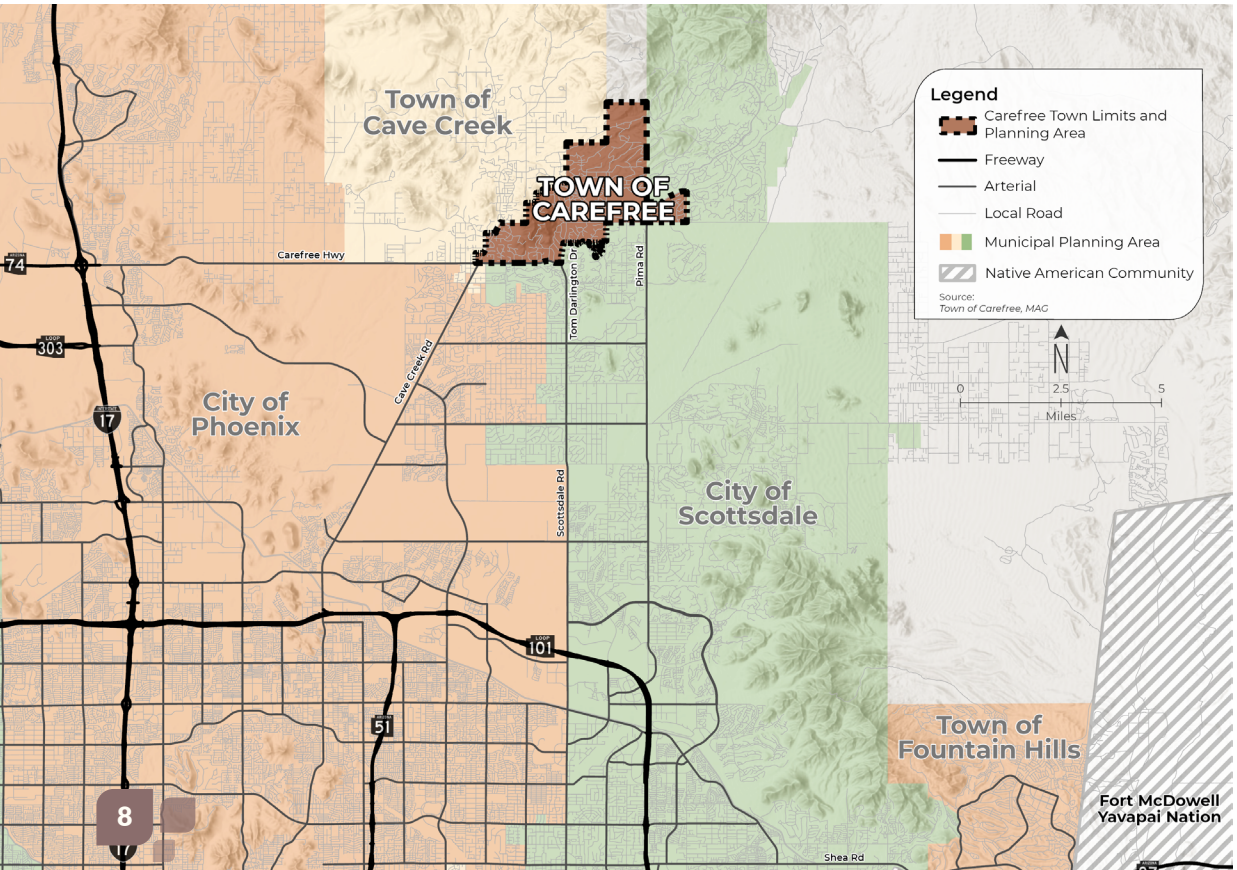
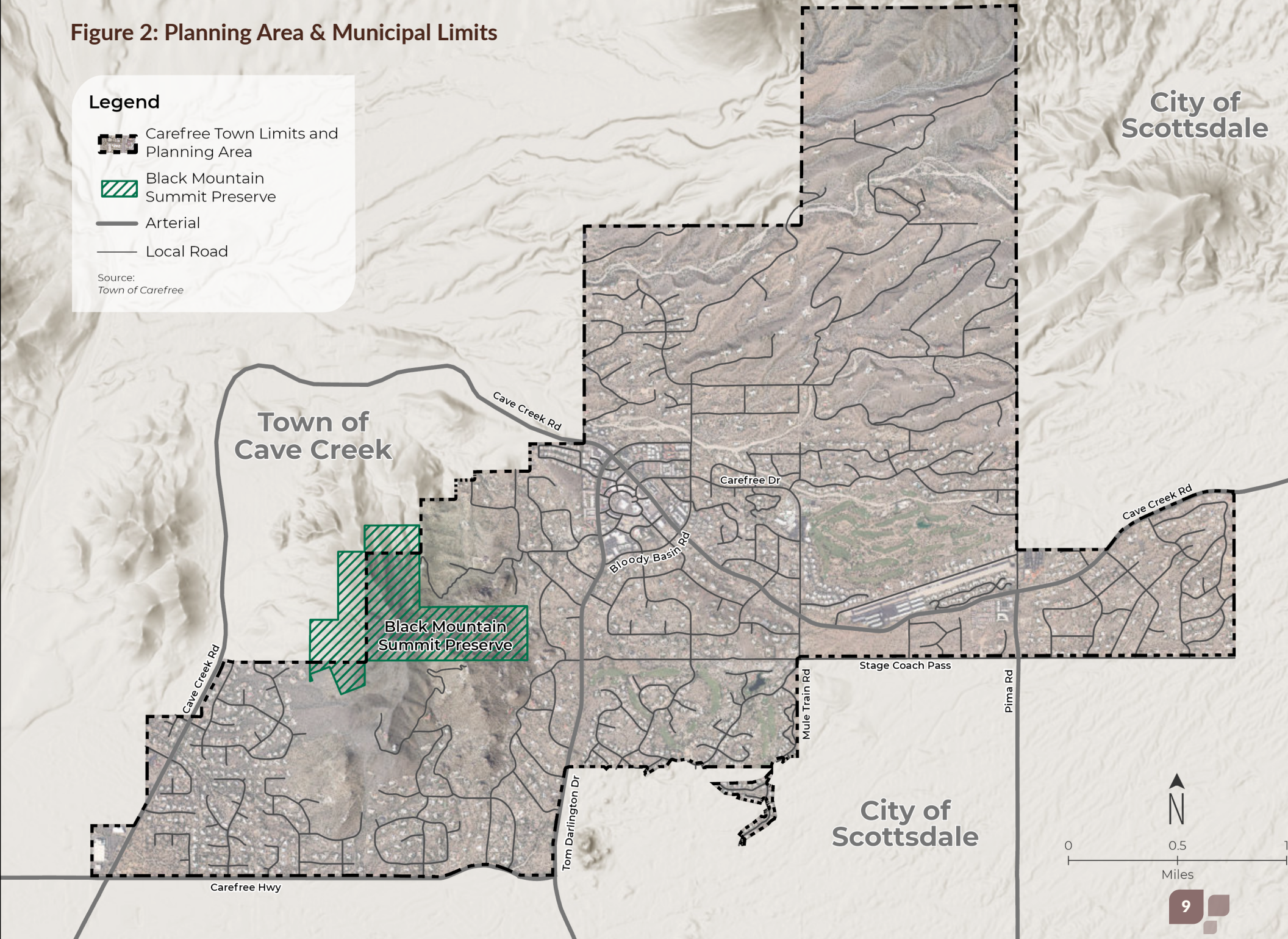


Figure 2: Planning Area & Municipal Limits

Figure 2: Planning Area & Municipal Limits





Tom Darlington & K.T. Palmer

Town History

Thomas D. Darlington (1904–1969) was originally from Centreville, Idaho. After graduating from Stanford University, he worked as a publicity agent in Delaware, then became General Manager for Hillspaugh Ltd. in Sheffield, England. He became the plant manager for Garrett Corporation's Air Research in Phoenix during World War II and decided to stay in Arizona after the war.

Kenyon Turner (K.T.) Palmer (1899–1976) was born in Columbus, Mississippi and came to Arizona in 1920 from Illinois, expecting to die of tuberculosis within four or five years. After graduating with a law degree from the University of Arizona, in 1934, he homesteaded a 640-acre ranch on the western slope of Pinnacle Peak. Palmer owned and operated the largest second-hand merchandise and gun store in Arizona, became a respected lawyer, ran for U.S. Senator on the Republican ticket and traveled the world.

In 1946, Tom and K.T. met at a Kiwanis luncheon in the Adams Hotel in Phoenix, where the seminal idea of Carefree was born. Years later, both men found themselves working in a Scottsdale real estate office and their previously monumental dream was rekindled. Despite their differences, they both lived by the ideals of thrift, industry, honesty and loyalty. They carried out many expensive joint ventures on a simple handshake.

In 1955, a 400-acre goat farm north of Scottsdale was found with an abundant well, and 2,200 surrounding acres were secured. K.T. named their joint business venture the Carefree Development Corp., and the name "Carefree" was regularly used to describe their vision of the Town they proposed. In 1958, the Darlington-Palmer building was finished in the downtown area (that building is now Town Hall) and in 1959, the iconic Sundial was completed.

History Timeline

1955 - Tom Darlington and K.T. Palmer open their first real estate office in Cave Creek, Darlington Palmer Realtors. They purchase the land that will become the Town of Carefree for $44,000.

1956 - The Carefree Development Corporation is created.

1958 - The Town's whimsical street names come to life during a dinner party in Phoenix. Palmer mentioned to the group that they had not yet selected names for the streets, and party guests began providing 'colorful' names for the new Town. Easy Street, Ho Hum Road, Lazy Lane, Nonchalant Avenue and Wampum Way (among others) allow the new venture to generate publicity for the unique development.

1959 - Architect Gerry Jones designs and builds the first home in Carefree, the DeMille house (Lot 139) on Bloody Basin Road. Jones wrote the Architectural Guidelines for Mountainside Design, setting out building principles for the community. He is credited with developing the extreme mountain architectural style, used to build many of the homes on and around Black Mountain.

1959 - The Sundial is completed. Commissioned by K.T. Palmer and designed by solar engineer Dr. John Yellott and architect Joe Wong, the metal gnomon (shadow-casting arm) points directly to the North Star, measures 62 ft. long and rises 35 ft. off the ground. The Carefree Sundial is the largest in North America, and the third largest in the world. When the sundial was installed, Carefree promoters adopted the slogan, "Where the sun marks time." - Frances C. Carlson, Cave Creek and Carefree, Arizona: A History of the Desert Foothills. Encanto Press, 1988.

1961 - Skyranch Airport opens as the first Arizona airport to offer residents fly-in access to their homes.

1962 - Desert Forest Golf Club opens. Designed by Robert "Red" Lawrence, it was the first desert golf layout in the Southwestern U.S., and the first course in the West to incorporate the desert itself into the course design, rather than imposing eastern designs onto the desert landscape.

1963 - Carefree International Restaurant opens. The 25-thousand square foot restaurant featured six dining rooms, each with unique cuisine options, a wine cellar, a central kitchen and a lobby. The concept was revolutionary but was only open for two years.

1963 - The Desert Forest Inn (Carefree Inn) opens for business in December. Designed as a high-end resort with 125 rooms, it was marketed to out-of-towners and celebrities. The hotel's Aquamaids were a popular draw for the upscale resort.

1968 - Arizona Film Commissioner Fred Graham builds Southwestern Studios. The 160-acre desert property featured three state-of-the-art soundstages, edit bays, a 35mm screening room, make-up and production facility, a Western Street and a back lot. Stage 1 was used to film The New Dick Van Dyke Show, starring Town resident Dick Van Dyke.

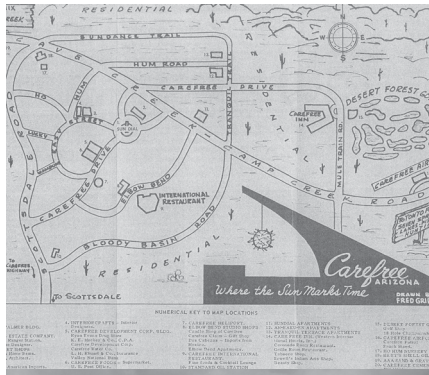
1968 - Spanish Village, a commercial project in the downtown area, was built by K.T. Palmer and Rex Howard. While the building was under construction, Dr. Levy (first name unknown) a physician from Milwaukee, WI, asked if he could purchase the future enterprise. Not wanting to sell, the entrepreneurs came up with an outrageous sales price – well above market value. Dr. Levy accepted the bloated sales price without a counter-offer. Dr. Levy's son managed the distinctive center and owned the Spanish Galleon and Cantina Restaurant.

1969 - Hugh Downs builds the first fly-in home at Skyranch Airport, designed by architect Gerry Jones.

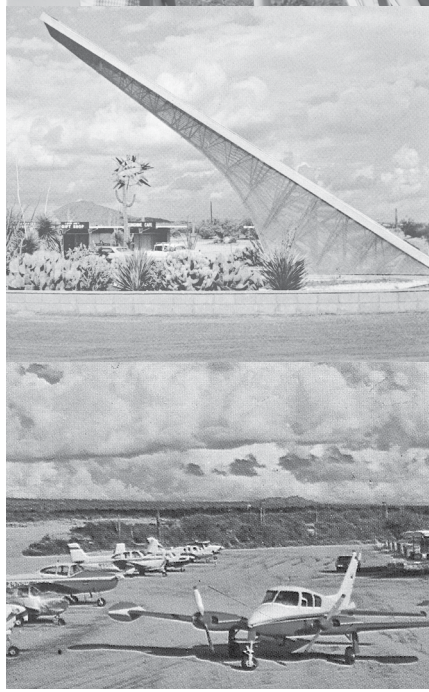
1969 - Tom Darlington, while having dinner with friends, collapses and dies in the Spanish Galleon and Cantina in Spanish Village.

1950's

1960's







History Timeline

1970 - Gerry Jones designs the Slingman House, sited on three-and-one-half acres of boulders. He "bridged" the house over the boulders, creating the first bridge house in Arizona by moving one small boulder. His design saved thousands of dollars, as he used the boulders for bearing in lieu of a standard foundation.

1971 - Henry VanderHorst Berry joins Carefree Development Corporation as President and CEO. During his two years tenure, he completed the purchase of 160 acres from the State of Arizona to develop the planned mixed-use resort community "The Boulders".

1974 - Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot pens the song "Carefree Highway", the second single released from his album, Sundown. In October, it peaks at #10 on the Billboard Hot 100 and spends one week at #1 on the Easy Listening chart.

1976 - On Friday, March 26th, the Carefree Sundial is donated to the Town by the Kiwanis Club of Carefree. Two days prior to the deed transfer, the Kiwanis Club moved to dedicate the Sundial area to the only living founding father of Carefree, K.T. Palmer. As it stands today, the area surrounding the Sundial is officially named "K.T. Palmer Sundial Circle."

1976 - K.T. Palmer dies in Scottsdale.

1984 - Concerned about encroachment by the City of Scottsdale, Carefree incorporates as a Town. Merritt Bigelow becomes the Town's first mayor.

1992 - The Labyrinth at the Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center is completed. Located at 7415 East Elbow Bend Road, it is a part of a larger retreat center originally called the Estrem Center, as it was built upon land donated by Maybelle and Malcolm Estrem.

1993 - Thunderbird Artists hold their first Fine Art and Wine Festival in downtown Carefree.

1999 - Carefree Studios (formerly Southwestern Studios) is demolished and replaced with a retail center.

2001 - A dirt lot in the center of Town is transformed into the Carefree Desert Gardens, featuring walkways, bridges, water features and an amphitheater.

2008 - The Town's new Fire Station No. 1 and Emergency Operations Center is completed. The building is designed to meet the future needs of the area, and aesthetically relates to its natural surroundings.

2009 - Carefree celebrates its 25th anniversary on Saturday, October 3. The Town's motto is "Carefree. Where the sun marks time."

2011 - Carefree Desert Gardens are renovated as a gift from Mark and Juanita Wdowiak of Desert Foothills Landscaping. Their contribution allowed for the addition of a greater variety of plants, identification signage and a tour map.

2016 - In April, the Kiwanis Splash Pad opens in the Carefree Desert Gardens. Featuring a unique water scorpion, the nature-inspired play area was donated to the Town by the Kiwanis Club of Carefree.

2022 - Hampton Inn by Hilton opens in Carefree Town Center.

2024 - The Town of Carefree celebrates its 40th Anniversary and the 65th Anniversary of the Sundial.

1970's 1990's-1980's 2020's-2010's-2000's







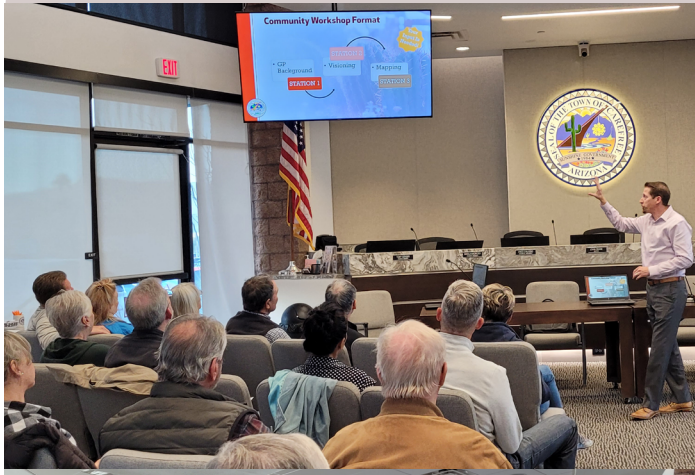


Public Engagement

Public input is critical to the development of this General Plan. As part of the larger planning process, the General Plan update included a comprehensive public engagement strategy. This strategy employed the use of a community survey, four community workshops, four virtual workshops, and pop-up booths at the Town Post Office.

The first community workshop was centered around the desired community vision and establishing an understanding of existing conditions in the Town. This round also included the community survey completed by 362 people. Following the visioning and existing conditions, the second workshop focused on evaluating the existing General Plan goals and identifying critical topics in the community. From the community survey, the top 4 major trends that emerged focused on traffic congestion, open space preservation, maintaining semi-rural character, and Town fiscal responsibility. The third community workshop dived deeper into the policies related to the goals that were of greatest concern to residents. The fourth community workshop functioned to have a more in-depth conversation and focus on community open space. Topics explored types of open space, where open space should be preserved, and what expectations the community had around open space. Each in-person community workshop was accompanied with a virtual workshop component that shared the same information and allowed for the same feedback opportunities for residents to complete at home.

The project also had regular notifications via the Carefree Connection app and social media accounts, updates in the community newsletter, handouts in the mail, small group meetings with Town residents and stakeholders, and a comprehensive website page to reach out and inform the greater community.







Planning Framework

Carefree is a unique semi-rural small town nestled among vegetated sloping foothills of the Upper Sonoran Desert. The Town was master planned to be entirely distinctive from the surrounding communities. This distinction is reflected in many of the local street names, such as Easy Street, Ho Hum, Nonchalant and Peaceful Place. The Town is a community where residents enjoy a lifestyle that blends into the quiet of the natural desert. At the heart of Carefree is the Village Center and Sundial, where residents and visitors gather to work, shop, visit, eat, and recreate.

Carefree's founding fathers thoughtfully planned the community to include within its fabric select amenities, including a resort, a private airport, a private golf course and a unique shopping district located in the geographic center of the community. Complementing these land uses are a rich assortment of residential lifestyles, from townhomes and condominiums situated in its shopping district, to magnificent homes harmoniously placed within the splendor of the Upper Sonoran Desert.

Looking forward, the Town can address its evolving challenges and preserve its unique lifestyle by striving for sustained economic, social, and environmental prosperity. New economic opportunities should be targeted which enhance the community's sales tax base that provides additional security for the fiscal health of the Town. Residential and commercial neighborhoods should continue to be maintained and enhanced through appropriate infrastructure investment. Socially, strong community bonds should be supported by providing opportunities for enhanced citizen involvement. Additionally, development should be cognizant and reflective of its impact on the sensitive nature of the Upper Sonoran Desert. In doing so, the Town will be more capable of bringing to fruition its goals and objectives towards becoming an even more exceptional place to enjoy its diverse amenities and tranquil environment.

Vision

This vision statement reflects the desires and needs of the community as determined through the comprehensive planning process and results of the public outreach efforts. The vision statement reads as follows:

Carefree aspires to maintain its characteristics of a community with a high quality of life, a vibrant Town Center, and peaceful, well-designed semi-rural neighborhoods that blend into the natural terrain in a manner that is sensitive to native vegetation and wildlife.

From public input and components of the existing General Plan vision statement, the following values were further derived that represent more detailed aspects as to what Carefree holds to be important.

In realizing our Vision, it is important to our community that:

- We are a distinct, authentic, and welcoming Town.
- We respect our environment and are stewards of our open space and scenic amenities.
- We enjoy healthy, active lifestyles that are focused around our natural recreational opportunities.
- We are a safe place to live by meeting the community's need for connectivity and services.
- We all benefit from a prosperous economy and fiscal Town stability.

General Plan Organization

Scenic Community Character

- Land Use*
- Growth*
- Circulation*

Open Space & Environmental Stewardship

- Open Space*
- Environmental Planning*
- Water Resources*

Prosperity & Fiscal Responsibility

- Economic Development
- Public Services & Facilities
- Cost of Development*

Themes

In order to achieve this vision and emphasize the importance of the community's values, the General Plan utilizes a comprehensive theme approach to organize the document. This approach integrates traditional General Plan Elements to better highlight the true interconnected facets of the community that go beyond individual topics and speak to the inherent values of the Town. Collectively, each Theme addresses multiple General Plan Elements and emphasizes the true interdisciplinary nature of planning and more comprehensively addresses community needs.

Developed from public input around the vision, three collective themes emerged:

- Scenic Community Character
- Open Space & Environmental Stewardship
- Prosperity & Fiscal Stability

Each Theme is comprised of Elements or "topics", as seen to the left, related to planning, operation, and development. State mandated General Plan Elements are indicated with an "*".

Every Theme is supported with a series of Goals, Policies, and Actions that work to implement the desired Town Vision:

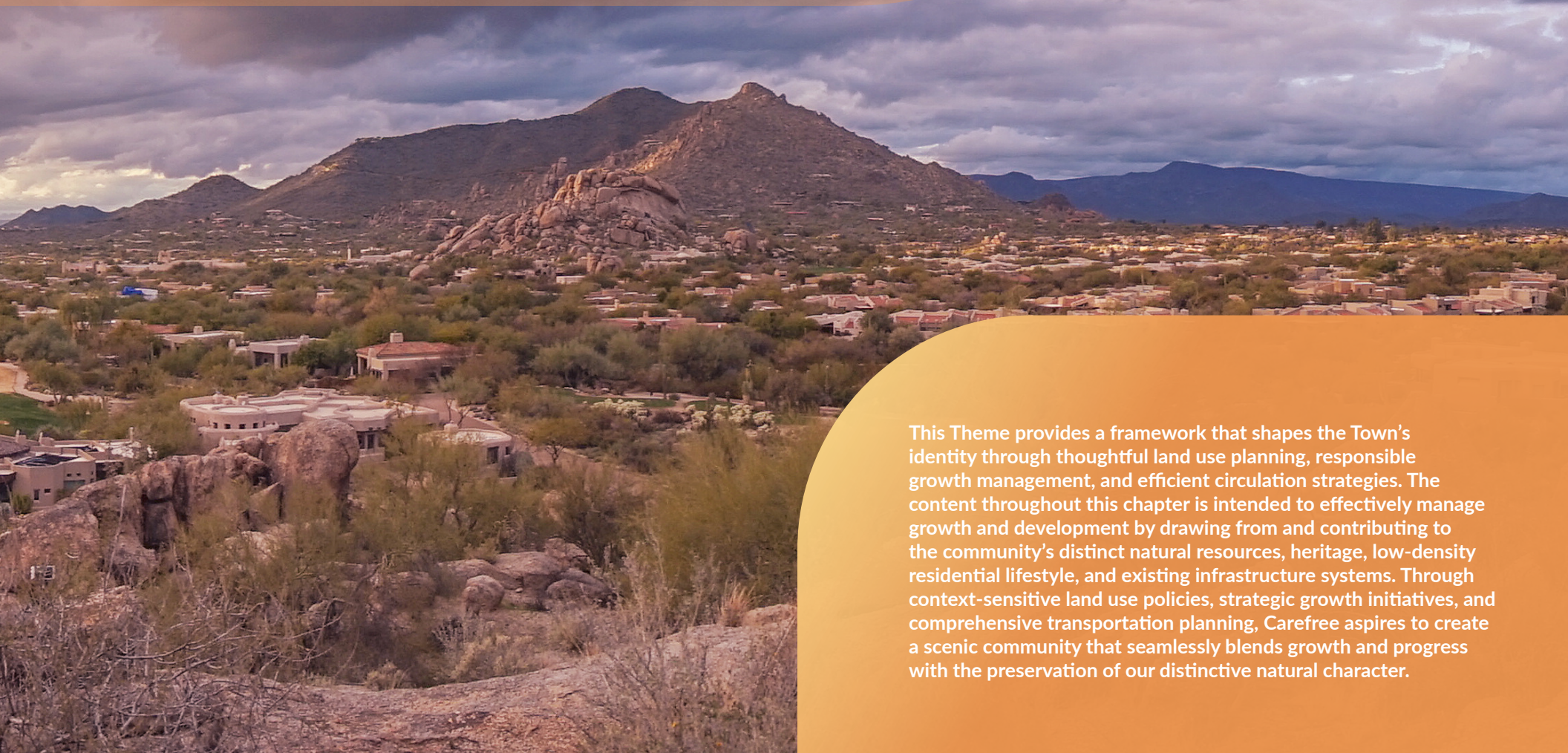
Goals – Goals are intended results, expressed in simple terms, for the plan's primary themes and elements. They represent overarching desired results of the plan.

Policies – A specific statement that guides activities in the Town, informs decision-making, and directs implementing actions to achieve a goal.

Actions – A measure, procedure, technique, or strategy intended to implement one or more policies to help reach a specified goal.

*State Mandated General Plan Element

2 Scenic Community Character



This Theme provides a framework that shapes the Town's identity through thoughtful land use planning, responsible growth management, and efficient circulation strategies. The content throughout this chapter is intended to effectively manage growth and development by drawing from and contributing to the community's distinct natural resources, heritage, low-density residential lifestyle, and existing infrastructure systems. Through context-sensitive land use policies, strategic growth initiatives, and comprehensive transportation planning, Carefree aspires to create a scenic community that seamlessly blends growth and progress with the preservation of our distinctive natural character.

Existing Conditions

Population Projections

The Town of Carefree has seen moderate, but steady growth for the past decade. Being landlocked by Cave Creek and Scottsdale, the Town's population is projected to start leveling out by 2040 as available vacant land becomes more limited. Per the most recent decennial census, Carefree's population in 2020 was 3,690.

Age

The largest age cohorts in the Town of Carefree fall within the ranges of people age 65 to 74 and 75 to 84 years as shown in **Figure 4**. These age cohorts make up 24.5% and 26.2% of the Town's population, respectively. This aligns with the Town's median age which is 69.4 and older than the State, County, and surrounding jurisdictions' median ages (see **Table 1**). Only 7.4% of the population of Carefree residents are under the age of 45.

Table 1: Age Comparison

Jurisdiction	Median Age
Carefree	**69.4**
Cave Creek	53.3
Fountain Hills	58.6
Paradise Valley	54.9
Phoenix	33.9
Scottsdale	47.7
Maricopa County	36.6
Arizona	37.9

Figure 3: Population Projections

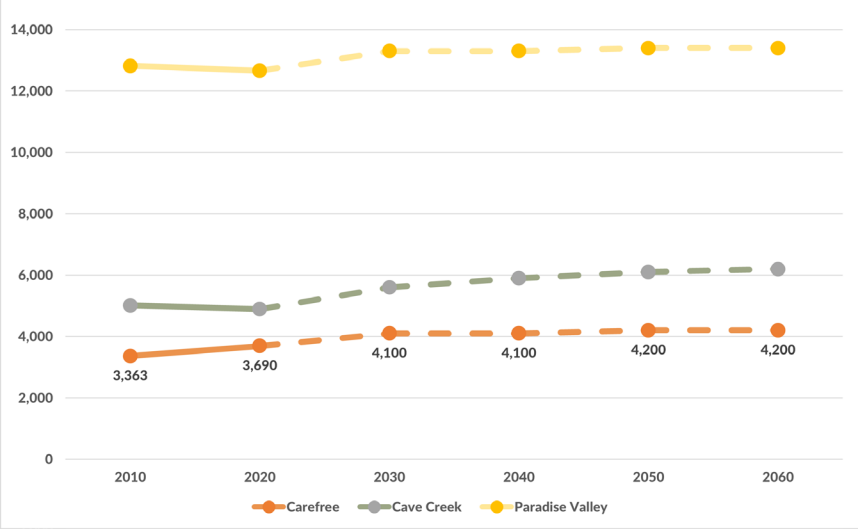
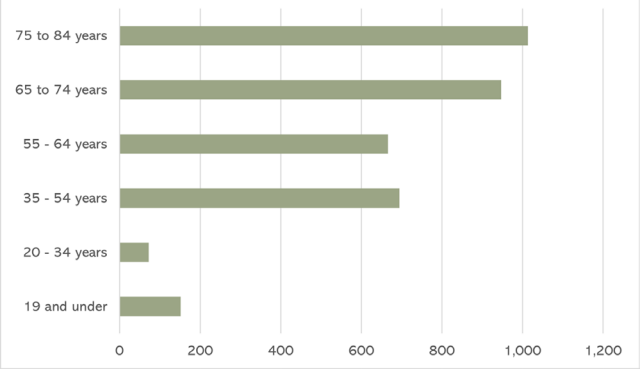


Figure 4: Age Cohorts



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, MAG June 2023 Socioeconomic Projections-Population & Employment.

Figure 5: Land Ownership Map

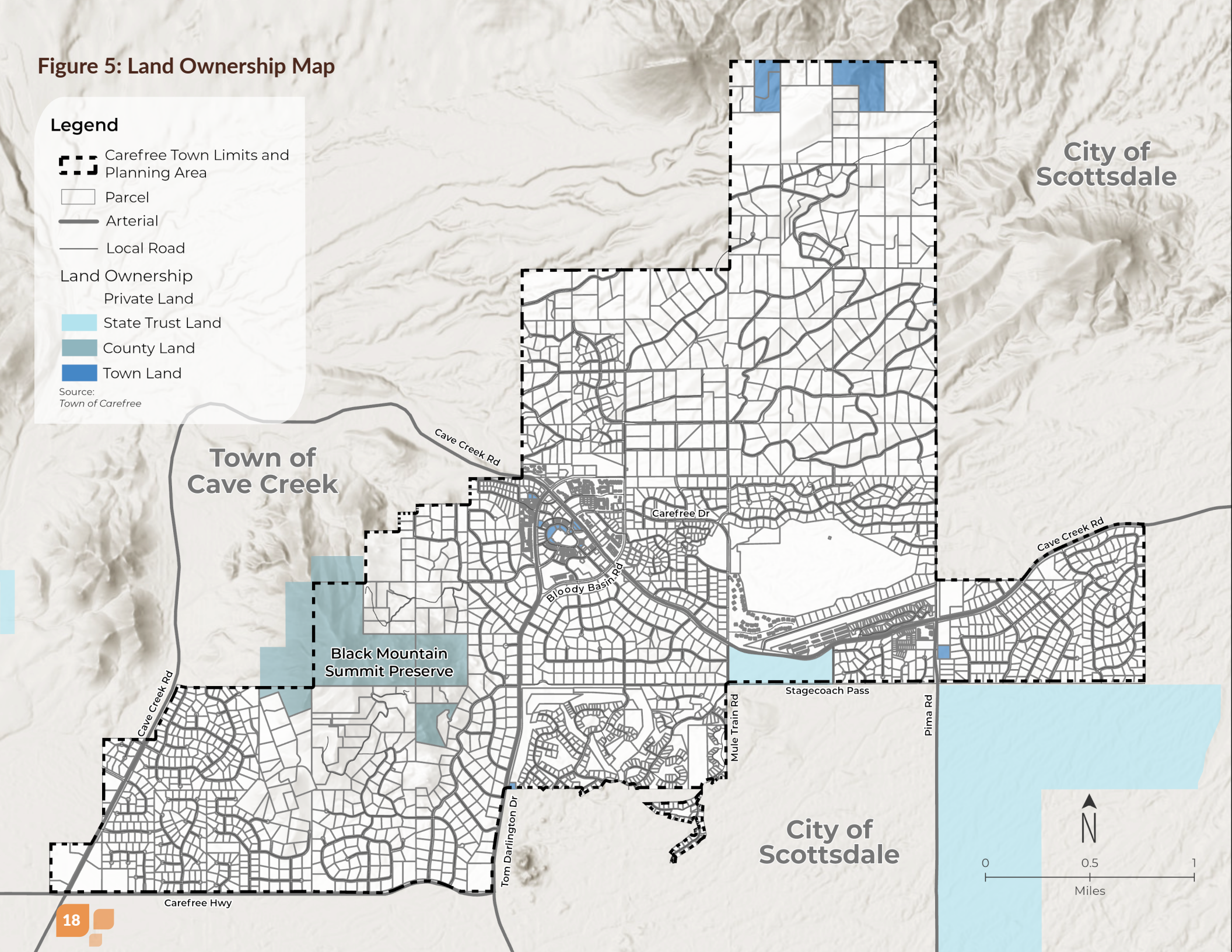


Figure 5:
Land Ownership Map

Race & Ethnicity

Of the 3,690 people who live in Carefree, approximately 98.8% identify as White. The remaining 1.2% of the residents in the Town include those who identify as Black/African American, American Indian/ Alaskan Native, Other, and Two or More Races. Given that the U.S. Census specifies that race and ethnicity are two separate and distinct attributes, evaluation of Carefree showed around 1.0% of the Town's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 6: Race

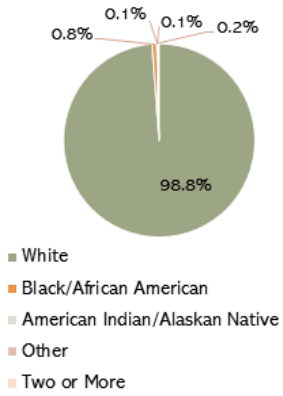
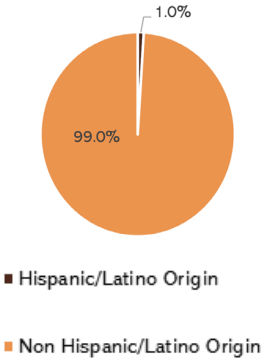


Figure 7: Ethnicity



Land Ownership

Land ownership across the Carefree Planning Area is primarily privately owned accounting for 93.7%. The Black Mountain Summit Preserve comprises 3.1% of the total 3.4% of Maricopa County owned land within the planning area. Town owned land accounts for approximately 2.1% of the planning area. Finally, the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) manages State Trust Land, which encompasses the remaining 0.8% of the planning area just south of the airport and Cave Creek Road.

Table 2: Land Ownership

Description	Acres	% of Planning Area
Private Land	5284.73	93.7%
State Trust Land	45.31	0.8%
County Land	190.73	3.4%
Town Land	116.92	2.1%
Total	**5637.69**	**100.0%**

Households

Carefree has 1,918 total households. The Town's average household and family size is smaller than both the State and County and other comparison communities except Cave Creek.

Table 3: Households

	Total Households	Average Household Size	Average Family Size	Family Households
Carefree	**1,918**	**1.99**	**2.15**	**1,349**
Cave Creek	2,990	1.93	2.14	2,245
Fountain Hills	11,408	2.2	2.67	7,724
Paradise Valley	5,798	2.49	2.81	4,588
Phoenix	580,835	2.82	3.51	370,384
Scottsdale	117,974	2.15	2.77	65,823
Maricopa County	1,596,784	2.73	3.33	1,047,899
Arizona	2,643,430	2.65	3.26	1,720,736

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates. Land Ownership Data sourced from the US Bureau of Land Management.



Housing

Housing Age

Nearly two thirds of the housing stock in Carefree was built between 1960 and 1999.

Housing Type

Single unit housing types account collectively for 89.7% of the housing stock in Carefree. The remaining 10.3% accounts for the multiple unit housing located in few select locations throughout the Town.

Housing Tenure

The vast majority of the housing stock in Carefree is owner occupied, accounting for nearly 86% of total housing units. Renter occupied units only account for 14%.

Housing Occupancy

Nearly three quarters of the housing units in Carefree are occupied. The US Census Bureau categorizes vacant housing units inclusive of seasonal/2nd home units. Of the estimated 25.8% vacant units in Carefree, 19.4% are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, 1.4% are other vacant and 5% are for sale.

Figure 8: Housing Age

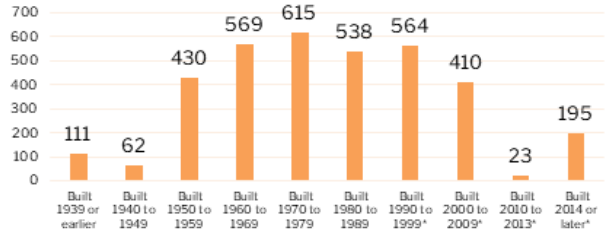


Figure 9: Housing Type

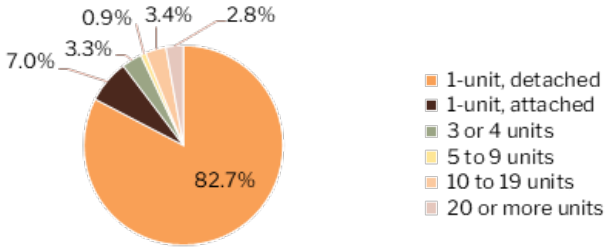


Figure 10: Housing Tenure

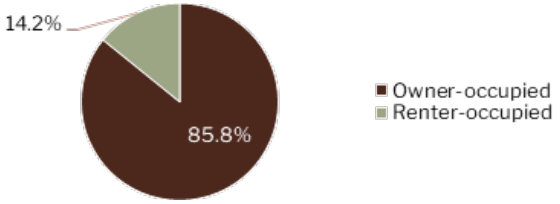
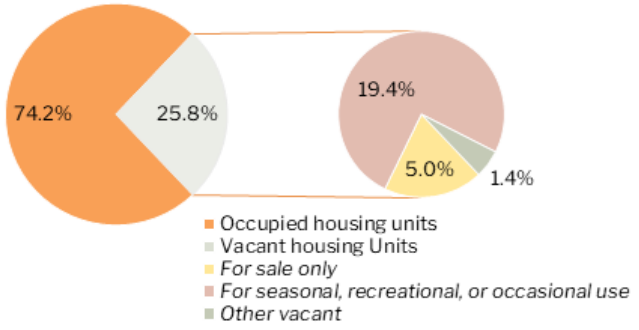


Figure 11: Housing Occupancy



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates. NOTE: Housing Age Data supplemented with Town records.

Planning Considerations

Preserving Community Character

By looking to its past a community can learn a lot about the vision its founders had when the community was first established. For Carefree, the Town's founders, K.T. Palmer and Tom Darlington, envisioned a fully planned community that was unlike those that surround it. In order to maintain the characteristics envisioned by the founders, the Town must find a balance of preservation and growth that is consistent with those visions, while also responding to the ever-changing circumstances in the world around it.

Cut-Through Traffic and Congestion

Continued growth in Carefree and surrounding areas in Cave Creek, Scottsdale, Phoenix and unincorporated areas in Maricopa County will continue to impact the Town, especially in terms of increased traffic on major streets. Additionally, with the use of mapping technology, drivers will continue to utilize alternative routes to get to their destination faster, likely at the expense of the Town's residential areas and local streets. Managing the increase in traffic as the Town and other municipalities around it continue to grow will be a vital part of maintaining the long-term vision of the community.

Approaching Buildout & Responsible Growth Management

As Carefree approaches build-out of available vacant land, the Town must take an effective approach to growth management that respects the Town's unique character and small-town charm all while focusing on ensuring development prioritizes open spaces and preserving the scenic desert landscape. Additionally, careful planning of infrastructure investments that support this growth will go a long way to ensure that Carefree remains a haven for residents and visitors who have come to appreciate its tranquil atmosphere and stunning surroundings.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element is often the most visible Element of the General Plan; however, it is only one part of the Plan. The Land Use Element establishes goals, policies, and actions which further describe the general distribution, location, type, and relationship of all land uses within the Town. The supporting Land Use Map visually depicts the distribution, location and type of planned land uses within the community. It is important to note that the Land Use Map is not a Zoning Ordinance or Zoning Map. The Zoning Ordinance and associated Zoning Map are the legal instruments used to implement the Land Use Element by defining the more detailed parameters for the development of a parcel of land.

Figure 12: Land Use Distribution

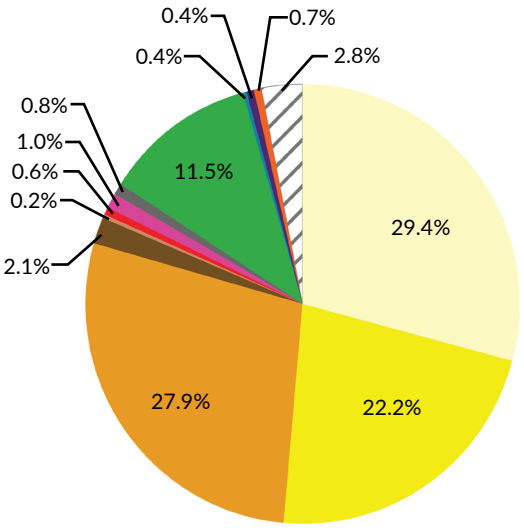


Table 4: Land Use

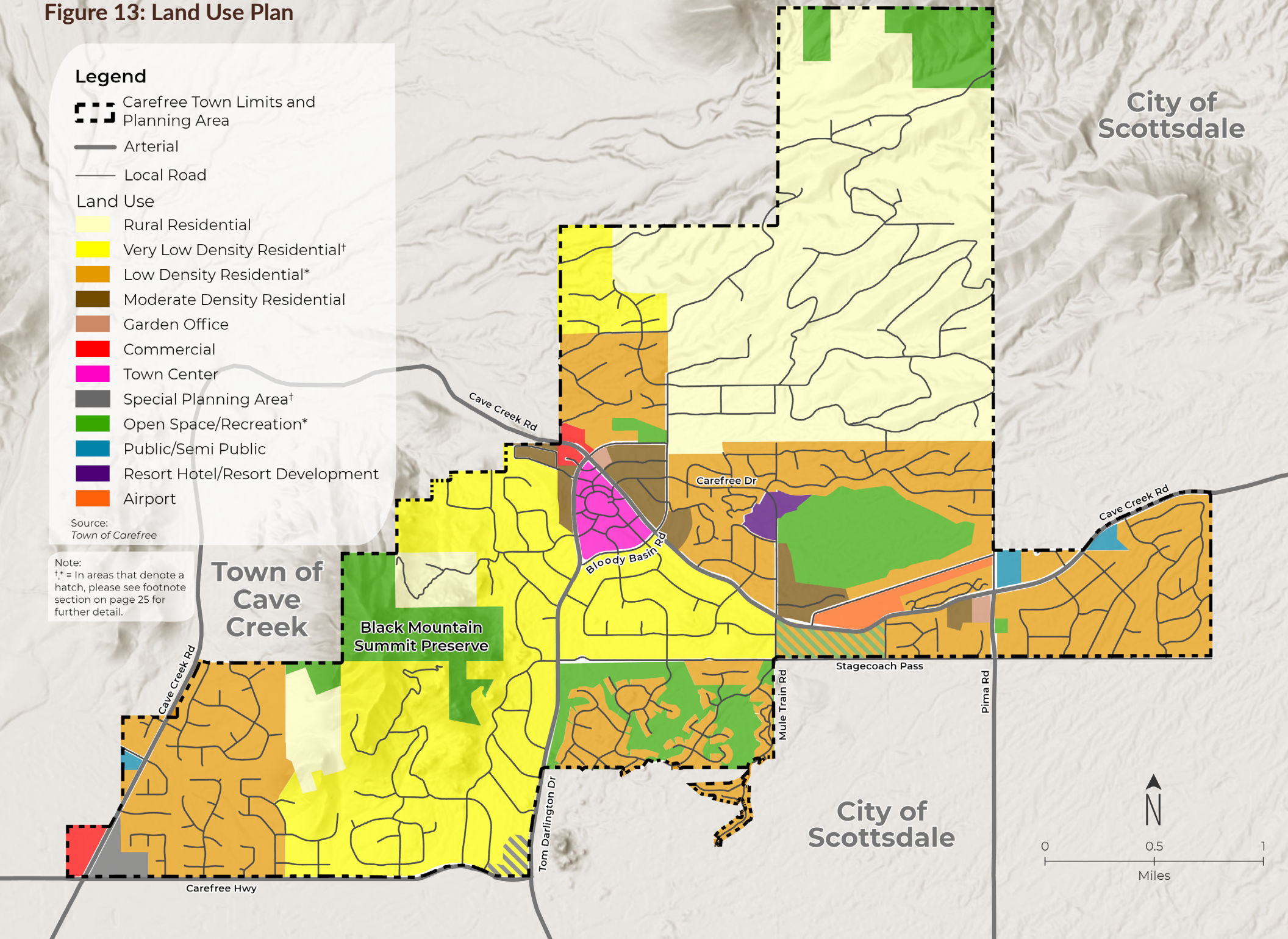
Designation	Acres	SQMI	Percent of Planning Area
Rural Residential	1,658.47	2.59	29.4%
Very Low Density Residential	1,249.04	1.95	22.2%
Low Density Residential	1,574.39	2.46	27.9%
Moderate Density Residential	119.71	0.19	2.1%
Garden Office	9.69	0.02	0.2%
Commercial	31.97	0.05	0.6%
Town Center	57.62	0.09	1.0%
Special Planning Area	43.02	0.07	0.8%
Open Space/Recreation	650.64	1.02	11.5%
Public/Semi Public	23.04	0.04	0.4%
Resort Hotel/Resort Development	21.72	0.03	0.4%
Airport	37.57	0.06	0.7%
Right of Way (not a land use)	160.68	0.25	2.8%
Total	5,637.68	8.81	100.0%

Source: Town of Carefree

Figure 13: Land Use Plan

**In areas that denote a hatch, please see footnote on page 25 for further detail.*

Figure 13: Land Use Plan



Land Use Categories

Residential Land Uses

The following four Categories define the pure (no mixed use) residential land use designations within the community.



Rural Residential

Provides for large lot residential development.

Density: Approximately 5 acres per residence.



Very Low Density Residential

Provides for large lot residential development.

Density: Approximately 2 acres per residence.



Low Density Residential

Provides for large lot residential development.

Density: Approximately one acre per residence.



Moderate Density Residential

Provides for apartments, condominiums and townhomes.

Density: Maximum of approximately 7 units per acre.

Non- Residential Land Uses

Non-Residential Land Uses include all land uses that are not residential or that are intended to provide associated services to residential uses.



Garden Office

Small areas of garden offices provide medical/dental and other professional offices and ancillary uses to supplement the Town Center in servicing residents.



Commercial

Includes a wide range of commercial, office and service uses.



Town Center

This category allows mixed uses and offices and public/ semipublic uses within the area bounded by Bloody Basin, Cave Creek Road and Tom Darlington Drive.



Resort and Resort Hotel

Provides for a major resort or resort hotel, with associated retail, service and recreational uses.



Public/Semi-Public

All special land uses that are Public/Semi-Public land uses, such as fire and police stations, places of worship, libraries, museums, other public buildings and/or compatible special land uses.



Airport

A land use category designated for airport and airport storage, service and maintenance uses.



Open Space/Recreation

This designation is for publicly or privately-owned land utilized primarily for environmental protection or recreational purposes. In most instances, this land is to be preserved in its natural state unless minimally developed as more specifically defined and regulated by **Figure 17** – Open Space Map. *See "Type of Open Space" on page 48 for more detailed descriptions of specific open space land use types.*

Special Planning Area (SPA)

SPAs denote unique areas within the Town that based on their attributes require more detailed master planning efforts to ensure for compatibility with the goals and policies of this plan. Detailed planning for such areas, including development and design standards in more specific detail, shall be completed in tandem with a zoning or development request for the subject area. The enhanced planning process shall at minimum consider:

- The surrounding context in which the area exists, and any external influences that will affect future growth or investment.
- Current and future market conditions that may affect investment activity and specific ways that they can be harnessed or reversed.
- Unique environmental conditions such as important natural features and viewsheds that may need to be worked through or around.
- Unique architecture, or design features, that need to be incorporated into proposed development.
- Key linkages between the subject area and other neighborhood and/or activity centers in town.
- Regulatory provisions that may discourage, impede or prevent context-sensitive, low-impact, smart growth development initiatives.

The Carefree General Plan identifies two unique SPAs as annotated on the Land Use Map: The 1) Northeast Corner of Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road and 2) Northwest Corner of Carefree Highway and Tom Darlington Drive. As such, the Plan further recognizes that each SPA may require enhanced planning and community engagement in order to protect adjacent uses and meet the goals of this document. Therefore, any rezone effort associated with any SPA shall provide for extensive public outreach to ensure all community voices are heard and acknowledged. The rezone process shall also ensure a high quality, architecturally significant development as Carefree residents expect. See the Growth Element on page 26 for further detail regarding these specific planning considerations associated with these defined areas, as well as Goal SC-10 and Goal SC-11.

Footnote

†In this area that denotes a hatch of two land use types, Very Low Density Residential and Special Planning Area. Either land use type may be acceptable based on a formal zoning or development request for the subject area.

*This area denotes State Trust Land. Zoning entitlement for this land currently allows for single-family residential development. This plan does not remove this existing development ability and maintains a Low-Density Residential land use designation. If through future public auction this land is acquired at fair market value by a conservation focused group for the benefit of Carefree, this hatch reflects the intent to dedicate this land as Conservation Open Space as further detailed on page 48.

Growth Element

ARS 9-461.06 requires “specifically identifying areas, if any that are particularly suitable for planned multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements designed to support a planned concentration of a variety of uses such as residential, office, commercial, tourism and industrial uses.”

Given Carefree’s limited size, semi-rural character, and overall development pattern, no such areas exist within the Town. However, the Growth Element addresses the need to protect the Town’s identity through planning for compatible and efficient development, within areas experiencing growth pressure. Through the analysis of undeveloped portions of the Town, infrastructure conditions, previous growth areas, business make-up, and economic growth estimates, this element does not seek to concentrate intensity, but rather guide and manage future development within select areas that maintain unique qualities, such as their location and size, availability of developable land, non-residential tax base potential, compatible zoning, transportation systems, and infrastructure to potentially serve the anticipated needs of the Town in collaboration with the local needs of the identified area itself.

New growth should be coordinated to promote the interests of the Town overall by becoming more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. To that end, development within the following identified areas should be individually evaluated to ensure the area is particularly suitable for existing or expanded infrastructure and accessible to compatible land uses whilst maintaining the Town’s commitment to preserving and protecting the beauty of the surrounding environment.

Growth Management

Town Center

The Town Center (a.k.a Village Center) is Carefree's primary commercial core and comprises a diverse array of businesses. This commercial and residential area contains shops, restaurants, a grocery store, hotel, hardware store and a variety of service businesses, which primarily serve residents and visitors in the local region. Opportunities continue to exist in the Town Center for a mix of uses that would allow for a quality live-work-play relationship.

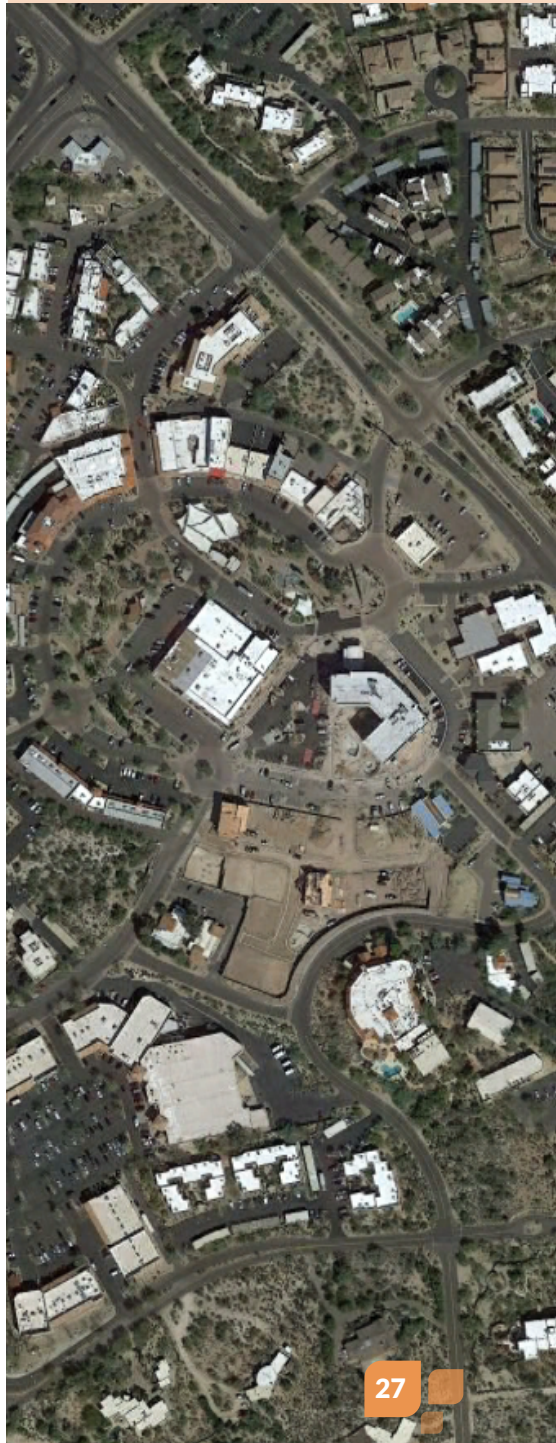
Northeast Corner of Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road

This area originally contained approximately 220 acres. Subsequently, much of this land has developed as low density residential, with the exception of the immediate northeast corner of this intersection, which now comprises approximately 23 acres. Given the recent rezonings in nearby Phoenix and Cave Creek to more intense commercial uses, a more compatible residential and/or non-residential land use is expected that: (1) provides for the preservation of the natural wash in accordance with floodplain regulations, (2) establishes an adequate open space buffer to the low density residential uses on the north and east, and (3) provides an economically sustainable land use that would complement the evolving commercial uses in surrounding Phoenix and Cave Creek.

Northwest Corner of Carefree Highway and Tom Darlington Drive

The area is comprised of approximately 16 acres (3 parcels) with frontage along Tom Darlington Drive and/or Carefree Highway. While the property is currently zoned for low-density residential (i.e. R-70) and thus can develop in this manner, given the proximity to more intense uses to the south and the east, and primary access via arterial streets, a more economically sustainable, destination-based resort/hospitality use, such as a low-profile casita style resort, with limited compatible commercial retail uses could be appropriate, provided that the development:

1. Establishes a robust, mature, native open space buffer to the very low density residential neighborhood to the west;
2. Provides for the continued preservation of the natural wash in accordance with floodplain regulations and the Carefree 3B Final Plat;
3. Supports the Town's fiscal and economic development goals, and aligns with the evolving commercial nature and resort lifestyle found in the area;
4. Utilizes high quality architectural character contextual materials, desert colors, all sited uniquely into the existing landforms complementing the existing adjacent and nearby uses, and avoiding prototypical and/or commercially branded architecture to provide a unique and cohesive design character;
5. Utilizes massing, building heights of 30' or less unless adjacent to residential, which will not exceed 24', density to minimize site disturbance and is thoughtful of adjacent homeowner views to prominent land forms;
6. Focuses retail components east and south of the existing wash, or where not to have an impact on existing residential;
7. Incorporates the natural Sonoran Desert landscape;
8. Prohibits any access to Whileaway Road and Languid Lane. Parking fields are located and dispersed, and effectively screened with landscaping, berming, screen walls, or a combination of these elements;
9. There shall be no drive through uses, gas stations/car washes/garages, storage facilities, box stores, fast-food pads, and/or outdoor recreational courts.
10. Lighting throughout the site will adhere to Dark Sky requirements incorporating landscape lighting, low-level pathway luminaries with lighting bollards, and pedestrian scale light poles where needed.



Circulation Element

The Circulation Element contains general information on existing streets, pedestrian, and bicycle routes. It presents a framework which correlates with the Land Use Element, and outlines the community's desire to provide safe, efficient, quality streets and pathways that serve local residents and businesses, preserve Carefree's unique character, and increase opportunities for safe and efficient pedestrian and non-motorized mobility.

Regional Transportation System

The regional transportation system links Carefree to the Phoenix Metropolitan Area by the following north-south arterials managed by adjoining municipalities: Cave Creek Road, Tom Darlington Road/Scottsdale Road and Pima Road, which provide access to the Loop 101, located approximately 10 miles to the south. Carefree Highway is an east-west arterial that links Carefree to Interstate I-17 approximately 10 miles west of Town. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Regional Transportation Plan includes a program supported by regional funding for improvements and maintenance of these regional roads outside of Town limits.

Roadways

Arterial Streets

Arterial streets are principal roadways for accessing the Town and its commercial areas. The typical right-of-way width varies from 110 feet to 130 feet with up to 72 feet of pavement, 2 lanes in each direction and up to 16 ft. wide medians landscaped with drought-tolerant plants and native vegetation.

Arterial streets located within Carefree's municipal boundaries include the following:

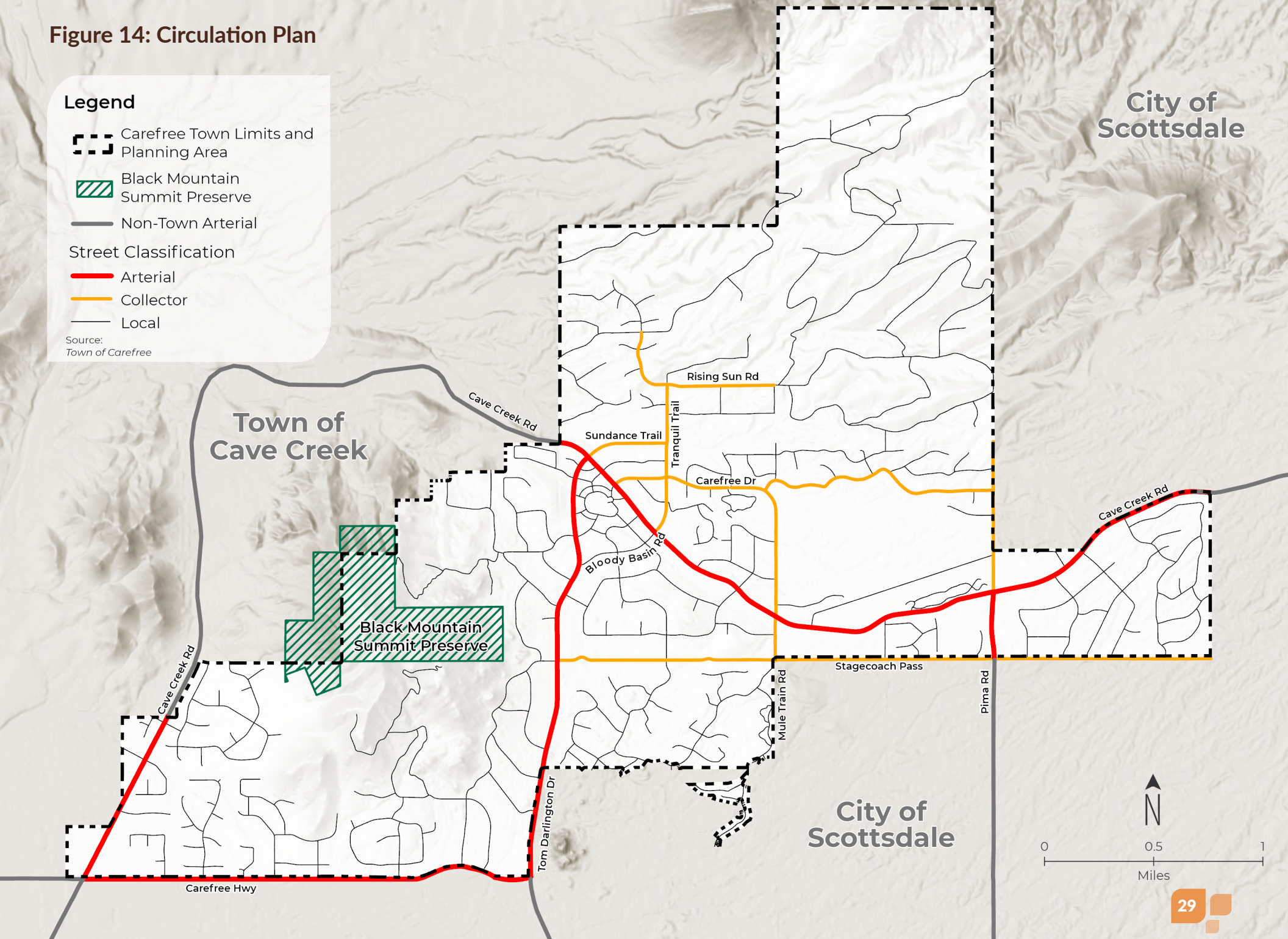
- Tom Darlington Drive north of Leisure Lane to Cave Creek Road
- Cave Creek Road West of Scopa Trail to the Town's eastern boundary
- Cave Creek Road north of Carefree Highway to the Town limits
- Pima Road from Cave Creek Road to the Town's southern boundary

Carefree Highway, though not located in or maintained by Carefree, is still considered an arterial street because of its nature as a primary access route into Carefree.

Figure 14: Circulation Plan

NOTE: Stagecoach Pass east of Mule Train Road is in the City of Scottsdale Right-of-Way and not within Carefree

Figure 14: Circulation Plan



There are opportunities for non-vehicular routes to be implemented along arterial streets to service local residents, draw bicyclists and visitors from surrounding communities to Carefree's Town Center, and improve linkages between CIVANA Wellness Resort and/or the Boulders Resort and the Town Center and between residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Collector Streets

Collector streets collect traffic from the local street system and deliver it to the arterial street system. Primarily, they service residential uses, but in some cases they abut non-residential uses such as the CIVANA Wellness Resort. Collector streets typically consist of 50 to 80-feet right-of-way width, 28 to 48 feet of pavement width and one lane in each direction.

The following is a list of Carefree's collector streets:

- Carefree Drive from Cave Creek Road to Mule Train Road
- Sundance Trail
- Tranquil Trail from Cave Creek Road to Rising Sun Road
- Rising Sun Road from Stevens Road to Cow Track Drive
- Stagecoach Pass from Tom Darlington Drive to eastern boundary
- Mule Train Road from Stagecoach Pass to Carefree Drive
- Pima Road north of Cave Creek Road

There are opportunities for non-vehicular, multi-use trails to be implemented along certain segments of collector streets to improve linkages between the Town Center and nearby resorts and between residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Local Streets

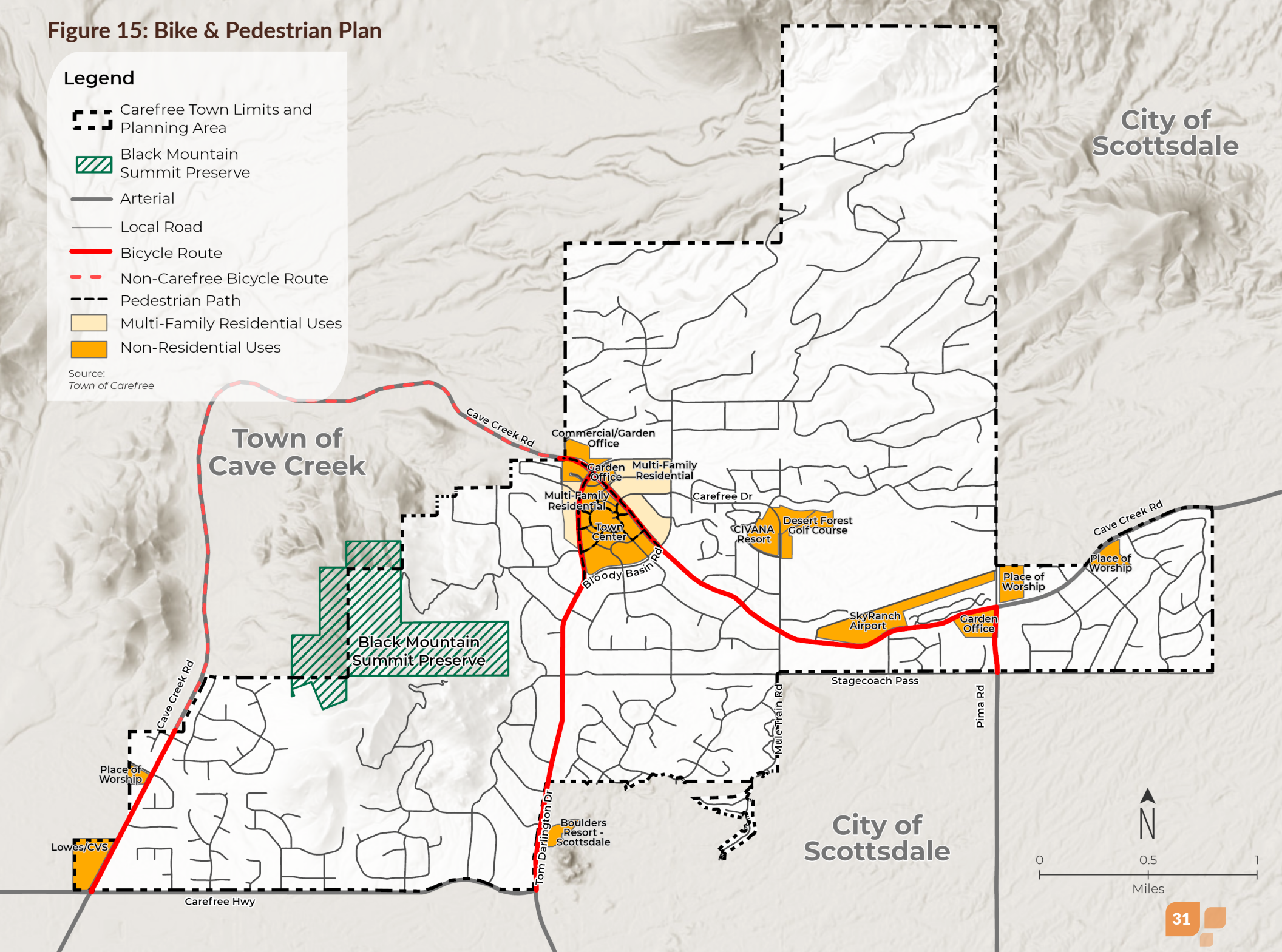
Local streets are the first tier of the Town's public roadways. They service primarily residential uses, but in some cases they abut non-residential uses, as is the case in the Town Center. Local streets typically consist of a 50 foot wide right-of-way, 28 feet of pavement width and one lane in each direction. They experience low traffic counts and offer ample opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian travel.

Bikeways

As part of the circulation framework Carefree will plan for the development of additional bikeways throughout the Town. Bikeways will be considered along roadways, including Carefree Highway between Cave Creek Road and Tom Darlington Drive (within City of Scottsdale), as well as along Mule Train Road and Carefree Drive. The design for each new bikeway will take place as funding is available, public access is approved, and coordination with adjacent municipalities and Maricopa County comes to fruition.

Figure 15:
Bike & Pedestrian Plan

Figure 15: Bike & Pedestrian Plan



Scenic Community Character Goals & Policies

Goal SC-1: Retain and strengthen the Town's unique identity, scenic rural character and small community feel.

Policies:

1. Support a range of land uses that balance maintaining the Town's low density scenic rural character with near-term and long-term revenue needs.
2. When applying land uses, utilize a gradual transition when locating less intense uses (i.e. residential) adjacent to more intense uses (i.e. commercial).
3. As development occurs, protect low density residential uses from the effects of any potential adjacent non-residential uses through application of natural open space buffers.
4. Promote the highest quality of development with excellence in architecture, construction, and appearance of all buildings.
    a. Ensure that all residential and non-residential development respect the Town's unique character in both architectural form and in site planning.
5. Manage the Town's Community Design Standards and Guidelines to require that the appearance and design of all new development promotes the Town's village center character and overall rural atmosphere.
    a. Ensure regulations and ordinances concerning the design and appearance of new development will use effective and precise language to ensure such requirements achieve their desired intent.
6. Ensure residential areas will enjoy peace and privacy as non-residential properties are developed by mitigating the impact of such uses (i.e. noise, traffic, lighting, etc.) on residential areas.
7. Encourage commercial development that meets the needs of residents and visitors and maintains the quality of life for residents to help promote the Town's village character and community feel.
8. Ensure that any zoning changes are consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

Goal SC-2: Integrate open space and promote sustainable design in the development of the Town that is conscious of environmental impact to preserve quality of life and the natural environment.

Policies:

1. Integrate natural open spaces into development, such as preserving significant washes, applying conservation easements, and planting native desert landscaping.
2. Encourage a native tree shade canopy using drought tolerant trees such as mesquites, ironwoods and palo verdes.
3. Promote the placement of buildings on lots to optimize access to incident solar energy and passive solar design.
4. Explore opportunities for rainwater harvesting, permeable pavement, solar water heating, and other sustainable development practices.

Goal SC-3: Protect scenic views (i.e. viewsheds) of regionally significant mountains and natural features, in or adjacent to the Town.

Policies:

1. Maintain the panoramic views throughout the Town with specific limits on development conditions such as building and wall heights, grading, disturbance areas, lot coverage, and setbacks so as not to impede significant views of surrounding mountains, ridgelines, boulder piles or other natural features in a manner that is consistent with private property rights.

    a. Consider viewsheds as part of the development review process, recognizing that mountain and natural scenic views are both a community and an individual asset.

    b. Continuously monitor the effect of, and adjust where necessary and possible, Town Codes (e.g. Mountainside Development Review Manual) intended to minimize the impact of new development on mountain views and prominent natural features from both public rights-of-way and neighboring properties.





Stagecoach Pass Road

Goal SC-4: Value arts and culture as an expression of community character as well as an economic generator.

Policies:

1. Promote public art and performing art throughout the community to enhance the quality of life, promote the reputation of Carefree as an arts community and add interest to the Town's visual appearance.

Goal SC-5: Optimize transportation infrastructure by providing a balanced approach to mobility.

Policies:

1. Analyze public parking provided by the Town (e.g. on-street parking) in the Village Center, and seek opportunities to expand to support both average day demand and special events.
2. Ensure vehicular traffic flows through Carefree on arterial roads in an efficient manner that does not create negative impacts on street networks within residential areas.
3. Traffic calming improvements should be incorporated, as appropriate, along major arterial roads and collector roads, as well as in existing neighborhoods that experience cut-through traffic or consistent excessive speeds.
4. Provide and maintain adequate and compliant street signage to improve safety, mobility, and overall wayfinding.
5. Consider long-term functionality and maintenance obligations when developing right-of-way design standards and reviewing development proposals.
6. Maintain implementation of regional Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) standards for disability accessibility with paved path facilities and streetscape infrastructure.
7. Require and evaluate traffic impact assessments as new development takes place to mitigate potential negative impacts.

Goal SC-6: Develop an integrated active transportation network that connects to adjacent communities, recreational open space, and the Village Center.

Policies:

1. Where feasible and as funding is available, promote and enhance walking, hiking and biking trails throughout the Town.
2. Develop a network of multi-use pathways to connect with local and regional trails in adjacent communities.
3. Maintain naturally shaded bike and pedestrian facilities in the Village Center and along Cave Creek and Tom Darlington Roads.
4. Plan for the design and development of pedestrian and bicycle pathways along arterial streets and between strategic Town destinations.
    a. Provide pedestrian/bicycle links between the Village Center and nearby resorts.
    b. Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle access routes to the Village Center and other commercial areas.
    c. Enhance bicycle linkages between the Town's boundaries, open space, and the Village Center.
5. Connect significant open space areas to the Village Center with a natural trail system along washes, right-of-ways, and conservation easements.
6. Promote safety through enhanced roadway markings, signage, design elements and enforcement measures.

Goal SC-7: Anticipate and prepare for emerging and future transportation innovations.

Policies:

1. Assess the expansion of privately funded electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
2. Evaluate issues surrounding autonomous vehicles and prepare for the impacts they could have on the Town's transportation system.





Goal SC-8: Ensure growth pays for itself and minimizes physical, economic, traffic, and environmental impact on the Town.

Policies:

1. Evaluate vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility to and from proposed development in conformance with the Circulation Plan (**Figure 14**) and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (**Figure 15**), and incorporate necessary near-term and long-term improvements.
2. Ensure infrastructure and public service extensions are cost efficient, properly funded, and sustainable.
3. Uphold Town regulations and policies for subdividing property, including:
    a. Planning for efficient circulation and infrastructure.
    b. Access to existing transportation infrastructure, utilities and other public services.
    c. Ensure that development responds to the natural conditions of each site and adheres to open space preservation and mountainside standards.
    d. Preserving natural washes and drainage areas, boulder outcroppings, significant stands of vegetation and other environmentally sensitive features during the platting process.
    e. Subdividing of larger properties must be in conformance with the Future Land Use Map.
4. Ensure infrastructure financing for new development activity is funded by the developer and will support existing and planned infrastructure improvements.

Goal SC-9: Manage the unique Village Center as a vibrant, mixed-use destination for residents, tourists, retailers, restaurants, and businesses.

Policies:

1. Promote revitalization/redevelopment of the Village Center to provide a safe and charming walkable village center amidst a well-maintained native garden.
2. Manage the Village Center as the daily gathering place of locals and a favorite for guests and visitors to return often to shop, dine, and refresh in nature's beautifully preserved and peaceful setting.
3. Implement the Village Center Redevelopment Plan that defines current and future land uses, design elements, and other conditions that reflect the unique character of the Village Center.
4. Develop and maintain public improvements, including streetscape, street furniture, landscape, and lighting that are focused on safety, enhanced focal points, and flexible public activity areas.
5. Promote an annual schedule of events that brings the community together and attracts tourists to the Village Center area. Use technology to advertise these events well in advance to maximize numbers.

Goal SC-10: Support growth in the SPA area at the northeast corner (NEC) of Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road in a sensitive and select manner that conforms with this Plan.

Policies:

1. Within the provisions of existing entitlement for this area, encourage development where context-sensitive design and overall town livability are prioritized.

2. Recognize that neighbor concerns, site features, development trends, and economic conditions will require consideration in adapting and approving future residential, commercial, open space, and/or destination-based uses in this area.

3. Direct growth to where infrastructure capacity is available, or committed to be available in the future, and require developers to install the infrastructure needed to support their development.

Goal SC-11: Ensure future development within the SPA area at the northwest corner (NWC) of Carefree Highway and Tom Darlington Drive may only occur in a focused manner that conforms with this Plan.

Policies:

1. Development shall balance the need for the Town's fiscal health against a steadfast commitment to protect the Town's semi-rural character.

2. In addition to the measures outlined in the Growth Element, require development to provide any necessary mitigation through context and scale, architectural design, setbacks and buffering, use programming, and sound and light moderation. Design guidelines specific to the development shall be included with any rezone application. Prototypical and/or commercially branded architecture is not permitted.

3. This area impacts more than just the residents in the typical 500-foot notification area as specified in the Citizen Participation Ordinance. Therefore, any rezoning of the area shall require an enhanced notification process outlined in a required Citizen Participation Plan to include at a minimum:
    - All homes and HOA contacts within Carefree 3B, Grandview Estates 1&2, and Black Mountain Foothills. Additionally, all notifications will include the Boulders North HOA;
    - Minimum 3 Neighborhood Meetings;
    - Minimum 2 large sign postings legible from the public right-of-way;
    - Press release issued by the Town once a formal application has been submitted to the Town;
    - Town shall send out additional email notifications and post on social media posts all neighborhood and public meetings;
    - The applicant shall design and maintain a current project web page.





3 Open Space & Environmental Stewardship

This Theme exemplifies the Town's unwavering commitment to preserving the natural beauty and ecological integrity of Carefree. In order to safeguard our precious open spaces, develop thoughtful environmental planning strategies, and ensure the responsible management of our invaluable water resources, this section serves to forge a path toward long-term well-being of the Town. Through careful preservation and sustainable practices, Carefree endeavors to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same pristine Sonoran Desert landscapes and abundant resources that define the Town today.

Existing Conditions

Existing Open Space Inventory

Black Mountain Summit Preserve

The Black Mountain Summit Preserve is the largest area of reserved open space in Carefree. The preserve is an area of regional conservation owned and managed by Maricopa County, with about 175 acres within Carefree's jurisdiction. There is a trail that leads to the summit of the peak that can be accessed in Cave Creek at the end of School House Road.

Town-Owned Open Space

The Town of Carefree owns approximately 50 acres along the edge of the municipal limits north of Grapevine Wash. These areas have been intentionally set aside for the preservation of open space in the foothills of Continental Mountain. At the present time this land is not accessible to the general public.

Carefree Desert Gardens

In the Carefree Town Center near the Sundial reside the Carefree Desert Gardens. There are a variety of features in the Desert Gardens, including botanical gardens, playground and water play equipment, an outdoor amphitheater, restrooms, fountains, walkways, ramadas, and art sculptures. Carefree Desert Gardens is accessible to the nearby residential areas via pedestrian and bicycle connections. It is also located less than 4 miles from the most distant subdivisions.

Sundial Circle Plaza

Serving as the focal point of the Town Center, the Sundial Circle Plaza has been the home of the Carefree Sundial since 1959. It is currently claimed to be the third largest sundial in the Western Hemisphere, measuring over 90 feet in diameter. The plaza is frequently incorporated into local events that take place in the Town Center.

Carefree/Cave Creek Memorial Cemetery

The Carefree/Cave Creek Memorial Cemetery is owned and managed by the Town of Carefree. The approximately 2.5 acres of the cemetery is considered open space because of its natural setting.

Golf Courses

Desert Forest Golf Club

Desert Forest Golf Club is a private golf and country club that features a full 18-hole golf course in the middle of Carefree. While only open for members, the land of the golf course does serve as an important and large area of open space within the Carefree Town Limits as it blends into the natural environment. Another unique aspect is the encouragement from the club for golfers to walk the course, minimizing the use of golf carts.

Boulders Golf Club

The Boulders Club is another golf course that sits at the southern edge of Carefree. Only 9 of the 36 holes of the two golf courses are within the Town Limits. It is a semi-private country club and golf course that serves as another important open space area by blending into the natural environment in Carefree.

Desert Foothills Land Trust

Committed to preservation of areas unique to the Upper Sonoran Desert ecosystem, the Desert Foothills Land Trust (DFLT) was established in 1991. Since then, the organization has preserved over 1,100 acres protected in perpetuity to ensure the land remains in a natural state. DFLT owns multiple parcels of land within the Town including larger parcels along Galloway Wash and north of Grapevine Wash around the Town owned open space in this area. Additional parcels include land north of the Town's Planning Area along Continental Mountain, as well as ridgelines along Black Mountain connecting adjacent County owned land to the Black Mountain Summit Preserve. At the present time this land is not accessible to the general public.

Table 5: Water Regulating Agencies

Regulatory or Contracting Entity	Impact on Carefree's Water System
Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR)	Water supply regulatory oversight. Annual water use reporting requirements. Agency established by the Groundwater Management Act of 1980.
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)	Drinking water quality regulatory oversight generally delegated by the US EPA through the Safe Drinking Water Act.
Maricopa County Environmental Services Department	Drinking water quality regulatory oversight as delegated by ADEQ.
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)	Contracting authority for the Central Arizona Project (CAP) which delivers water from the Colorado River. Federal agency that operates the dams on the Colorado River and controls water allocations and deliveries from these Federal projects.
Central Arizona Project (CAP)	Operator of the CAP canal that delivers Colorado River water to central and southern Arizona, including Carefree. CAP charges for the delivery of untreated CAP water by taking multiple delivery cost components into account.
City of Scottsdale	Potable water Treatment and Transportation Agreement with Carefree. Scottsdale takes delivery of a portion of Carefree's CAP water and treats it to potable standards, delivering it for distribution to our customers. Scottsdale charges Carefree for the treatment and delivery of our CAP allocation.
Town of Cave Creek	Potable water Treatment and Transportation Agreement with Carefree. Cave Creek takes delivery of a portion of Carefree's CAP water and treats it to potable standards, delivering it for distribution to our customers. Cave Creek charges Carefree for the treatment and delivery of our CAP allocation.

Existing Water Conditions

Carefree Water Company

The Carefree Water Company (CFWC) operates Carefree's water system under the authority of the Town of Carefree, Arizona Utilities Community Facilities District (UCFD), a special utility district formed by the Town under the laws of the State of Arizona. The Carefree Town Council serves as the board of directors for both the UCFD and the CFWC. The CFWC is responsible to meet current water demand within a defined service area, collect fees to cover the costs of water service, forecast future needs, and secure the water to service new and existing developments through build-out. CFWC also pursues policies to promote a quality potable water supply, encourage water conservation, and sustain efforts to minimize the use of our groundwater resources.

Various complex regulations and agreements impact Carefree's water supply and the operation of Carefree's water distribution system. The following **Table 5** summarizes entities that have either regulatory oversight or contractual agreements with the CFWC. CFWC balances all of these influences to ensure that Carefree residents and businesses receive safe, healthy, and reliable potable water that meets our current and projected water demands.

Water System

Carefree's surface water supply, which comes from the Colorado River via the CAP canal, is treated and transported to us by our two neighboring municipal partners, Scottsdale and Cave Creek. Carefree's surface water supply is supplemented by groundwater pumped from our local aquifer, the Carefree Subbasin. The current overall blend of surface water and groundwater is about 70% surface water and 30% groundwater.

Water is distributed to CFWC customers through a network of water pipelines made up of water mains, laterals, and service lines, that include fire hydrants, control valves, and other appurtenances. In addition to pipelines, water booster pump stations are required to provide adequate flows and pressures in the system, and water storage reservoirs are in-place to meet peak demands and fire flow requirements. Wells are used to pump groundwater from the local aquifer, the Carefree Subbasin, and supplement Carefree's surface water supply.

The following **Table 6** shows a summary of major water facilities that make up the CFWC system.

Table 6: CFWC Production and Distribution Facilities

Facility	
Pipelines (miles)	96
Fire Hydrants	412
Active Wells	5
Booster Pump Stations	8
Water Storage Reservoirs	5
(million gallons)	2.16
(acre-feet)	6.63
Interconnections (Scottsdale)	4
Interconnections (Cave Creek)	1

Source: Carefree Water Company 2023

Water Users

In 2021, prior to the acquisition of Cave Creek served customers, the CFWC was providing potable water to 2,000 water accounts. Of that those 2,000 customer accounts, 1,770 were residential units, representing 89% of the total water accounts serviced by the CFWC. The remaining 11% were primarily comprised of commercial accounts, with a small number of miscellaneous accounts including governmental, irrigation, construction, and bulk water accounts.

By mid-2023, the acquisition of the Cave Creek served customers was 95% complete and CFWC's total number of customer accounts had risen to 2,579, an increase of 29%. Of those 2,579 customers, 2339, or 91%, are residential customers.

Since the recent acquisition of approximately 550 water accounts within Carefree that previously received potable water service from the Town of Cave Creek, nearly all Carefree residents and non-residential customers now receive water service from the CFWC. A few residences, primarily in the more distant northern regions of Carefree, remain on private wells. **Figure 16** shows the newly expanded boundaries of the CFWC.

Other large water users include two golf courses; one being entirely within Carefree and the other being partially within Carefree. The Boulders Golf Course, which is partially within Carefree, is currently not a customer of the CFWC and utilizes effluent from Scottsdale which at times is supplemented with untreated CAP water. The Desert Forest Golf Club, which is entirely within Carefree, owns two wells that draw groundwater from the local Carefree Subbasin aquifer. Under an exchange agreement with the CFWC, Desert Forest Golf Club is delivered water for turf irrigation from a CFWC well that is high in arsenic. In return, CFWC is delivered low arsenic water from one of the two Desert Forest wells for potable deliveries.

Water Demand

Water demand in Carefree exhibits daily and seasonal variations. On a daily basis, the highest water demand occurs in the morning, primarily between 5 AM and 9 AM, driven mainly by residential customers. There is a smaller peak in the evening, from 5 PM to 9 PM, while the lowest demand is during the late night and early morning hours, from 11 PM to 3 AM. Seasonal fluctuations in water demand are influenced by outdoor temperatures, with outdoor irrigation needs contributing to up to 70% of residential water usage. The peak seasonal demand occurs in the summer when temperatures are at their highest and the climate is driest, while the lowest demand takes place during the winter, coinciding with wetter periods. Carefree's annual water demand data is presented in **Table 7** for the three most recent calendar years before the acquisition of customers previously served by the Town of Cave Creek. The last column in the table projects these demands to 2024, marking the first full year when all acquisition customers will be included in the CFWC system demand figures. It's important to note that the transition of these 550 customers occurred over a two-year period from 2022 to 2023, making those two years not entirely representative of post-acquisition water demand.





Carefree Water Company

Table 7: Annual Water Demand – Acre-Feet (AF)*

User Classification	2019	2020	2021	2019 thru 2021 Average	Post-Acquisition (2024) (Estimated)
Residential	778.20	883.15	862.87	841.41	1,160.65
Commercial	101.32	87.65	95.84	94.94	100.94
Other	76.70	75.10	73.99	75.26	77.52
Total	956.22	1,045.90	1,032.70	1,011.61	1,339.11

**Includes Prorated System Losses*

Water Production & Supply

For the CFWC, water is produced from 3 sources; the City of Scottsdale, the Town of Cave Creek, and our groundwater wells. Both the City of Scottsdale and the Town of Cave Creek accept a portion of Carefree's CAP allocation (surface water from the Colorado River) and treat it to potable standards prior to delivering it to key locations within the CFWC system. This is done via separate contracts, called Treatment and Transportation Agreements, with each entity. Based on these contracts Carefree is billed on a volumetric basis for treated potable water delivered from each entity.

Table 8: Annual Water Production By Source – Acre-Feet (AF)*

Water Source	2019	2020	2021	2019 thru 2021 Average	Post-Acquisition (2024) (Estimated)
CAP-Scottsdale*	557.65	617.50	627.95	601.04	928.57**
CAP-Cave Creek*	68.40	0	0	22.80	
Groundwater	330.17	428.40	404.75	387.77	410.54
Total	956.22	1,045.90	1,032.70	1,011.61	1,339.11

**Does not include treatment and transportation loses within the Scottsdale and Cave Creek systems.*
***Production split between Scottsdale and Cave Creek of Carefree's CAP water has not yet been determined for 2024.*

Currently, the CFWC has two primary water supplies available to it; Colorado River water delivered through the CAP canal; and groundwater pump from the local Carefree Subbasin aquifer.

Source: Carefree Water Company 2023

CAP Water Rights

All CAP water rights are derived from contractual arrangements among the CAP water user (in our case the CFWC), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the CAP. As noted in **Table 9**, there are different types of CAP water rights, or allocations, reflecting different delivery priorities when the Colorado River and the CAP are in shortage conditions. Municipal and Industrial (M&I) water generally has a high priority for delivery through the CAP canal even under shortage conditions. Non-Indian Agricultural Water (NIA) on the other hand, has a fairly low priority for delivery through the CAP under shortage conditions and is one of the first types of water to be reduced when shortage conditions exist.

Both of CFWC's Treatment and Transportation Agreements (Scottsdale's and Cave Creek's) have a maximum limit on the total volume of CAP water each entity will treat for Carefree. That maximum limit for both entities is 2,000 AF per year, for a combined total treatment capacity of 4,000 AF annually, significantly more than our current annual CAP allocation of 1,790 AF which includes 112 AF of NIA Water allocation.

Groundwater Rights

All groundwater pumped for use by the CFWC comes from our local aquifer; the Carefree Subbasin. All of Carefree's wells pre-date the Groundwater Management Act of 1980 and have grandfathered usage rights. While this condition provides CFWC with greater flexibility in the manner it utilizes groundwater, it does not eliminate the need to protect the long term health of the Carefree Subbasin. For example, if all of CFWC's wells were to run at maximum capacity for a full year, they would be capable of producing 3,400 AF, about 2-1/2 times Carefree's annual water demand including our newly expanded service areas. This is an extreme scenario which is unlikely to ever occur, but it does point to the fact that during emergency situations, Carefree's wells could be used to meet most, it not all, of our potable demand. If this type of emergency were to occur, the CFWC would most likely look to return to using CAP water as quickly as possible to avoid undue stress on our local aquifer.

It is important to note that the CFWC has available to it 4 potable water production wells. These 4 potable production wells meet all Federal and State drinking water quality standards without any required treatment.

Table 9: CFWC Water Supplies/Water Rights

Water Supply	Type*	Annual Amount (AF)	Notes
CAP Water	M&I	400	Original CAP allocation received in 1990.
	M&I	900	Additional CAP allocation purchased from BHP Copper. Allocation confirmed in 2001.
	NIA	0**	Allocation of 112 AF received in 2021. See footnote below.
	M&I	378	CAP allocation transfer from Cave Creek to support acquisition customers. Transfer approval was obtained in September of 2023.
CAP WATER (TOTAL)		1,678	
GROUNDWATER		500	See groundwater discussion above. Annual groundwater pumping shown is the maximum non-emergency volume established in the Scottsdale Treatment and Transportation Agreement.
TOTAL WATER SUPPLY		2,178	

**M&I = Municipal and Industrial Water, NIA = Non-Indian Agricultural Water*

*** Because CAP NIA water is one of the first CAP supplies to be cutback in times of shortages on the Colorado River, for purposes of this analysis, it will be assumed to be unavailable as a CFWC supply until a "back-up" has been identified for use during shortage conditions.*

Source: Carefree Water Company 2023



Figure 16: Carefree Water Company Service Area Map

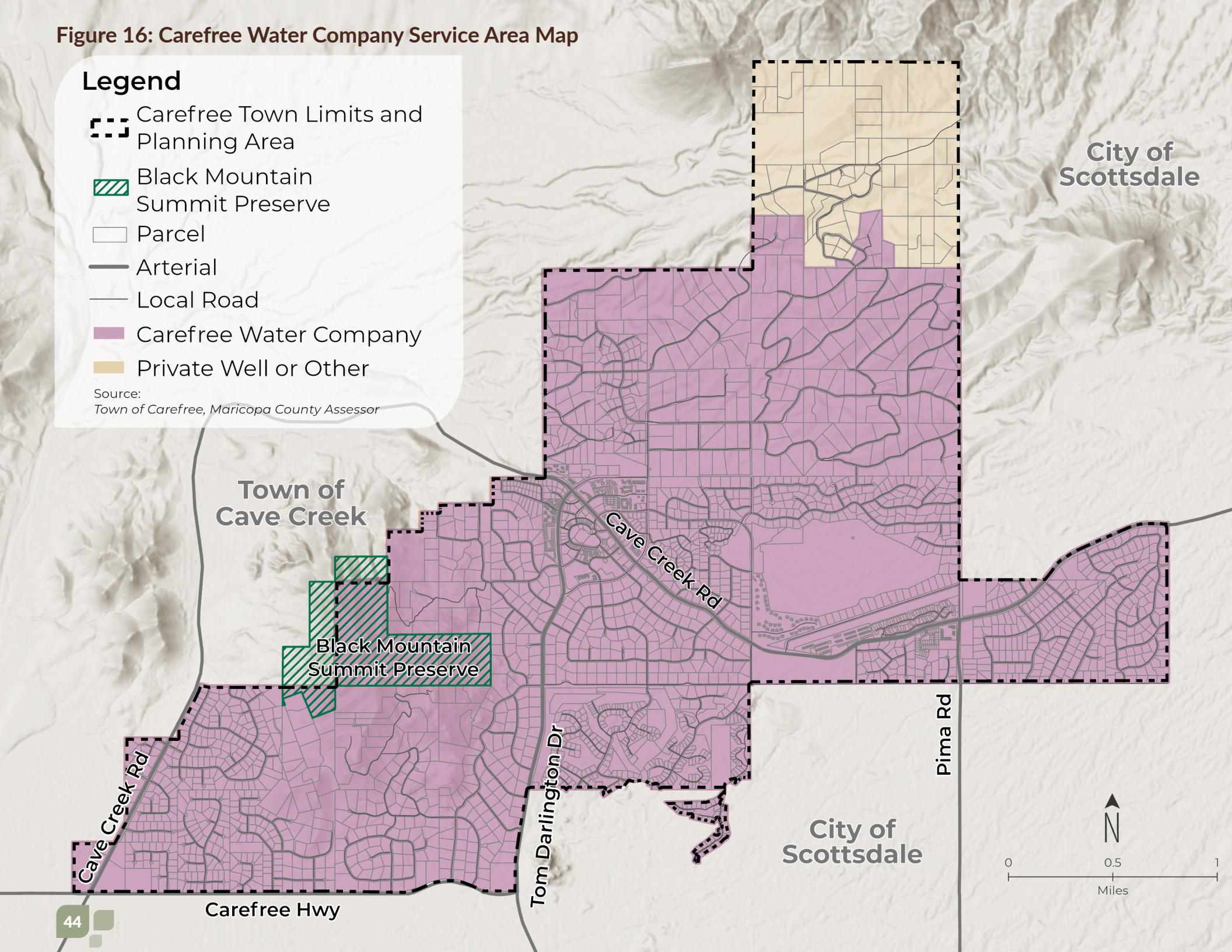


Figure 16: Carefree Water Company Service Area Map

Planning Considerations

Continued Commitment to Open Space Preservation

One of the biggest points of pride in the community is open space throughout the Town. While prevalent throughout Carefree via the preservation of natural undisturbed land within various neighborhoods, the natural washes traversing the community, and the picturesque vistas of Black Mountain, Continental Mountain, and the Boulders, residents desire more accessible open space that is available for public use and enjoyment. As the Town continues to evolve into the future, further efforts to preserve open space in all forms: preservation, conservation, as well as active and passive open space will be a priority moving forward. Important to this process will be identifying areas that are centrally located and readily accessible to residents, as well as capitalizing on expanding ongoing land assemblage efforts in the northern portions of the Towns planning area.

Conservation of Our Environmental Resources

The Upper Sonoran Desert ecosystem in Carefree is exceptionally delicate, characterized by a rich diversity of plant and animal species. To protect this environment while accommodating the Town's growth, careful development techniques are employed in environmentally sensitive areas. This includes the Town's mountainside ordinance and other zoning criteria that limit ground disturbance of properties. Also, desert washes play a crucial role as habitats, providing food, shelter, and migration corridors for many wildlife species. Conservation of washes and areas with significant massing of the characteristic Sonoran Desert environment is important to ensure bio-diversity and overall ecosystem health.

Protecting Our Water Supply

Prolonged drought in the southwestern United States has placed continued strain on water resources in the Colorado River Basin. In August of 2021, the United States Secretary of the Interior declared the first ever Tier 1 Water Shortage on the Colorado River Basin. The Town of Carefree has enough water allotted to serve current residents up to projected build-out. While the situation regionally continues to evolve, the Town is committed to water conservation and advancing regional solutions to ensure long-term availability of water for residents now and in the future.

Extreme Heat and Hazard Mitigation

Carefree, for the most part, is worry free in regards to impacts from most natural hazards. However, extreme heat in the desert southwest is a concern as temperatures continue to rise and maintain for prolonged periods of time. The Maricopa County Health Department keeps track of heat related illness and consistently shows an increase in reporting around the summer months in the greater Phoenix Region. More recently, wildland brushfires have also proved to be of greater concern as prolonged drought has led to very dry conditions increasing the frequency and severity of wildfires in the desert land surrounding the Town. In order to safeguard the community for long term resiliency against these natural hazards, the Town is committed to collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, Maricopa County, and MAG to more comprehensively address emergency management and preparedness.

Open Space Element

Open space preservation contributes to the social, environmental, and economic well-being of the Town. It contributes to a healthy lifestyle and creates opportunities for improving the sense of community identity, where residents and visitors can gather and unite in common events and experiences. In addition, open space provides recreational opportunities for individuals and families with different interests. It benefits local businesses and helps strengthen the local economic base. Furthermore, open space protects the natural flora and fauna of the Upper Sonoran Desert, thereby preserving one of the foremost characteristics of the Town.

The Open Space Element provides an inventory of open space areas and recreational resources, and addresses access to and ongoing maintenance of these resources. It also outlines the Town's goals and policies to address forecasted needs and strategies for protecting and strengthening open space resources. Implementation actions are also incorporated to promote a townwide system of integrated open space and recreational resources that aligns with the larger regional system.

Forecasted Need

With a total of approximately 549 acres of dedicated open space and a projected future population of 4,300 by 2055, Carefree's existing open space areas combined already exceed the national average of 12.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (source: 2022 National Recreation and Park Agency Performance Review). As outlined in the "Existing Open Space Inventory" subsection (**see page 39**), these open space areas are spread throughout the town and reflect a variety of both public and private options, including mountain preserves, botanical gardens, playground and water play equipment, golf courses and a cemetery.

However, there is not a single set of standards for open space and parks that could possibly encompass the uniqueness found in every community across the country. Communities vary greatly by size, demographics, needs and desires, land availability and accessibility, funding, etc. so too then should their open space and park offerings. To account for this variation, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends "benchmarking" peer communities with common attributes to better determine and right size open space and park planning, budgeting, and facility management needs.

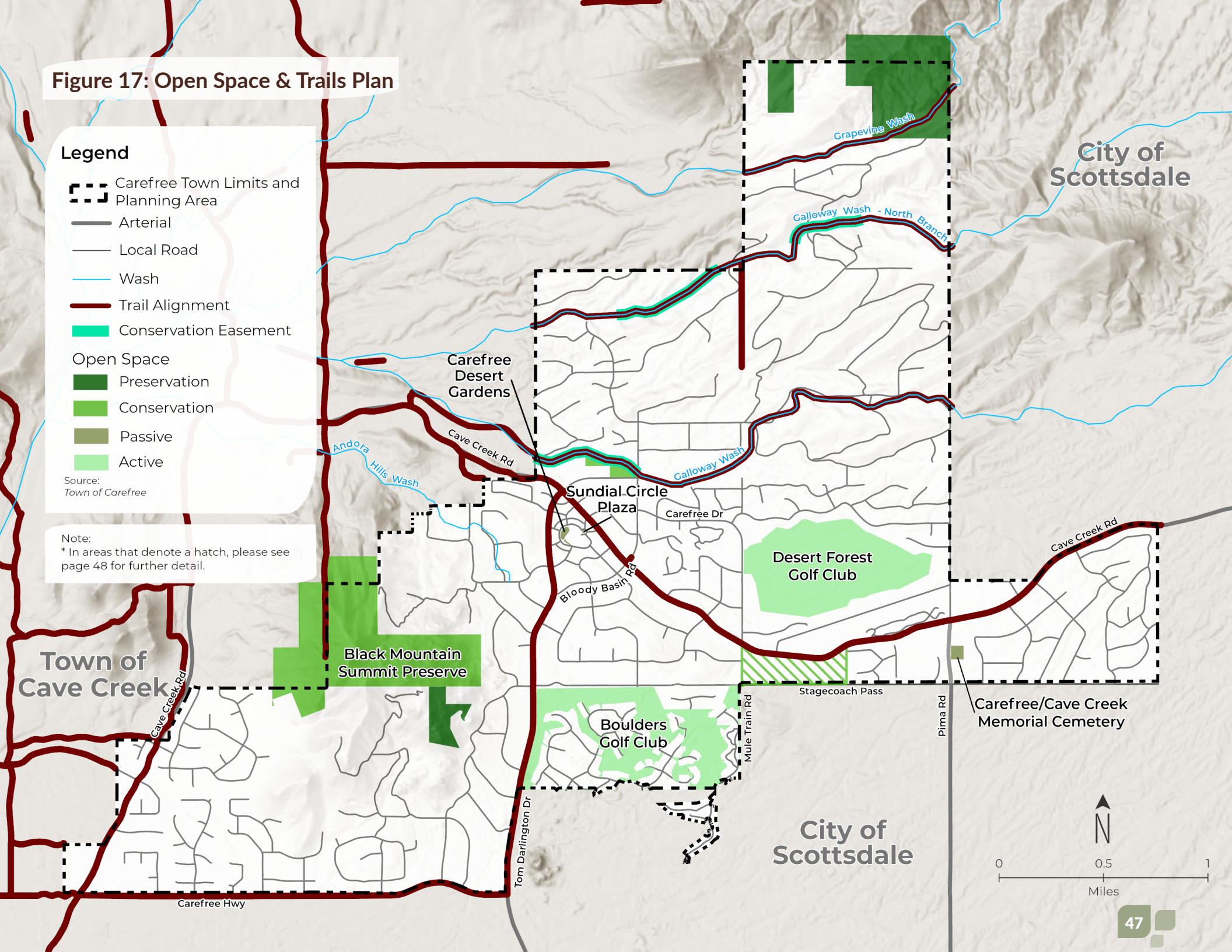
While Carefree benefits from a robust portfolio of open space, much of this land is not accessible to the general public. During public outreach, residents routinely expressed a strong desire to improve upon this condition through acquisition of more accessible open space and/or enhancing accessibility to existing open space.

Consequently, as Carefree continues to evolve, it will be important to utilize further benchmarking evaluation to capture the health, social, environmental, economic, and aesthetic benefits that open space provides for residents and visitors and set aside and/or establish areas for additional open spaces or recreation to meet current and future needs. This is necessary in areas that are most accessible, like the Village Center, but is particularly important for environmentally sensitive areas, such as lands in the northern portion of town and areas experiencing growth pressure, including the 48-acre State Trust Land parcel, which was frequently referenced during public outreach discussions.

Figure 17: Open Space & Trails Plan

**Hatched area signifies potential open space based on disposition of Trust Land through the Arizona State Land Department.*

Figure 17: Open Space & Trails Plan



Open Space & Trails Framework

The Open Space & Trails Framework establishes a foundation for working towards a comprehensive long-term solution for community open space. Recognizing the importance of open space to the community, this framework identifies four types of open space that cater to the various needs of the Town and desires of community members which were identified through the public outreach process. While all of these open space types may not currently exist within the Town, the Town desires to evaluate and pursue opportunities to increase open space and recreational resources through the zoning and platting processes, donation, and/or purchase in alignment with the goals, policies and actions established within the Plan.

48-Acre State Trust Land

One of the tracts of land desired for preservation through the public outreach process was the approximately 48-acre State Trust Land managed by the Arizona State Land Department, located at the southeast corner of Mule Train Road and Cave Creek Road. The property is currently zoned for single-family residential units and has a land use designation as Low Density Residential. Should the property be pursued as open space, there are various strategies that may be used to purchase this property at public auction for preservation in the future.

Types of Open Space

Preservation (Natural) Open Space:
Preventing most human usage of land and natural resources. Such areas are predominantly void of physical improvement or human impact, except in association with supporting land management activities like fire management or invasive species removal.

Conservation Open Space:
Protecting natural land and resources for use by current and future generations. Such areas may include limited recreation facilities that are secondary to the primary natural environment. Potential supporting and complimentary uses include hiking/biking trails, benches, ramadas, restrooms, and primitive parking areas.

Area identified with hatch denotes State Trust Land. Zoning entitlement for this land currently allows for single-family residential development. This plan does not remove this existing development ability. If through future public auction this land is acquired at fair market value by a conservation focused group for the benefit of Carefree, this hatch reflects the intent to dedicate this land as Conservation Open Space.

Passive Open Space:
In passive-based open space areas, emphasis is placed on enjoyment of a natural resource through placement of supporting and complementary facilities. Passive open space areas may include picnic tables, benches, ramadas, observation areas, educational/performance/play spaces, botanical gardens, walking/running/biking paths or trails, improved parking areas, and restrooms.

Active Open Space:
Active-based open space areas promote physical participation and rely on the presence of recreational facilities that enable certain activities to function. Without the provision of such facilities, the activity would either be limited in quality or altogether eliminated. Active-open space areas may include sports fields or courts, concessions, recreation centers, golf courses/club house, exercise and/or playgrounds, dog parks, walking/running/biking paths or trails, picnic tables, benches, ramadas, paved parking areas and restrooms.

Trails

Trail corridors connecting to facilities in Cave Creek provide direct connectivity to adjacent regional open spaces and access to Black Mountain. Beyond the trails along major arterials in the Town, there are three noteworthy washes that traverse or cross Carefree that may allow hiking, biking, and horseback riding if easements are granted by applicable property owners. These washes are within floodplains as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and they cut across both private property and local streets. The Town of Carefree and Maricopa County Flood Control District regulate development in these FEMA floodplains. The Town additionally regulates development within non-FEMA floodplains to preserve the natural properties of the washes.

Environmental Planning Element

The Environmental Element sets forth plans to maintain the Town's vision as a unique community, carefully planned to be in harmony with the natural environment. This element contains analysis, goals, policies and actions the Town will undertake to address anticipated effects of future development on air quality, water quality and natural resources. The Town's rugged Upper Sonoran Desert foothills environment presents many challenges as well as opportunities for aesthetic, compatible land development. Environmental preservation is an important goal for Carefree. It is part of a planning approach that balances environmental considerations with the Town's economic and social goals and policies.

Flora & Fauna

The Upper Sonoran Desert features a unique blend of flora, with a striking landscape dominated by tree-like species such as the Ocotillo and Saguaro cacti, making it one of the most visually captivating Sonoran Desert areas. Native tree species include Foothill Palo Verde, Acacia, Ironwood, and Mesquite, while shrubs like Creosote, Bursage, Brittlebush, and Fairy Duster thrive in the region. Various cacti, such as Barrel, Hedgehog, Prickly Pear, and Chain Fruit Cholla, contribute to the desert's distinct character.

The region is also home to a diverse array of wildlife, including White-tailed Deer, Javelina/Collared Peccary, Coyote, Bobcat, Desert Cottontail, Gambel's Quail, Mourning Doves, Cactus Wren, as well as various raptors, migratory songbirds, and reptiles.

Hillsides

The entire Town has dramatic vistas and mountain views. Black Mountain is the most prominent visual feature of both the northern Phoenix Metropolitan area and of Carefree. In general, the terrain consists of rolling hills with some steep slopes and mountainous areas, interspersed with flatter areas. Severe slopes in excess of 15% present major constraints to development. The largest sections of Town with severe slopes are located on Black Mountain, in the highlands area north, and the foothills northeast of the Town Center.

Flood Hazards

Various washes of different scales bisect the Town's terrain. Drainage flows from the northeast to southwest across Carefree to Cave Creek Wash located in Cave Creek. Portions of Grapevine, Rowe, Galloway and Andora Hills Washes and two washes bisecting the southeast and south sections of Town are in a FEMA Floodplain. Various tributary washes drain the remainder of the Town, some of which include sufficient flow during storm events to be classified as protected floodplains.

Aggregate Resources

State Law requires that the General Plan shall contain identified sources of aggregates. Aggregate resources include land which is primarily used for active mining of crushed rock or stone, decomposed granite, granite, cinder, pumice and sand. Currently, there are no such aggregate resources within the Town of Carefree.



Bartlett Lake

Water Resources Element

The Growing Smarter/Growing Smarter Plus requirements, as outlined in A.R.S. §9-461.05, establish specific criteria for the Water Resources Element. This element is designed to address Carefree's existing surface water and groundwater resources. Notably, it does not encompass effluent supplies, as Carefree does not have access to them. In addition, it analyzes the current water consumption patterns from the Existing Conditions section of this Chapter and outlines strategies to meet both current and anticipated future demand. Most importantly, it evaluates how the projected growth outlined in the General Plan can be sustainably supported by the legally and physically available water supply. If necessary, it outlines a plan to secure any required additional water resources.

Future Build-Out Water Demand

An analysis has been performed using the best available data to determine Carefree's water demand at build-out. This analysis takes into account the following:

- Current water demands as of calendar year 2024 when the transition of all customers previously served water by the Town of Cave Creek will be completed.
- Development of all vacant (undeveloped) single family lots within the original and the expanded CFWC service area.
- Development of all vacant lots within platted, but completely or partially unbuilt subdivisions that have ADWR Certificates of Assured Water Supply.
- A reasonable range of assumptions for potential future water demand on four large undeveloped parcels within Carefree. Low estimates and high estimates of this potential water demand have been utilized to establish the range shown in the following Table 10.

Reasonable assumptions for large undeveloped parcels within Carefree using existing zoning to determine water demand. If current zoning does not give clear guidance on what water demand might be, the most recent prior zoning was utilized.

Table 10: CFWC Build-Out Water Demand (1)

	Water Demand Acre Feet (AF)	
Existing Demand (2024)	1,339.11	
Future Development (At Build-Out) • Currently Vacant Single-Family Lots	129.15	
• Unbuilt Platted Subdivisions	54.47	
• Large Undeveloped Parcels[2]	Low Est.[3] 31.02	High Est.[3] 79.74
Total Water Demand at Build-Out	1,553.75	1,602.47
Total Water Supply Available (see Table 9)	2,178.00	2,178.00
Water Supply "Buffer"[4]	624.25	575.53

(1) Includes calculation of build-out water demand for the newly expanded CFWC service area.

(2) Includes NEC Cave Creek Road & Carefree Highway, NWC Tom Darlington Drive & Carefree Highway, State Trust Land, SEC Pima Road & Cave Creek Road.

(3) Low and High estimates account for the variability in the type of development that may occur in association with this plan.

(4) Water "Buffer" reflects the estimated surplus between Total Water Supply Available and the Total Water Demand at Build-Out.

Adequacy of Water Supply

The build-out water demand for the CFWC has been shown in **Table 10** above. "High" and "low" range scenarios have been established to acknowledge the uncertainties associated with the development of the few remaining undeveloped large parcels within Carefree. Even under the "high" build-out water demand scenario, Carefree is in a strong position of having a water supply "buffer" as we move into the future.

This "buffer" fits well into Carefree's current focus of protecting water supplies for the Town's existing residents and businesses while selectively encouraging appropriate new commercial development that will bolster the Town's sales-tax driven revenue stream. Much of the vision for new commercial development is expected to occur within two areas; 1) on the few remaining large undeveloped parcels within Carefree, and 2) on parcels in and around the downtown core based on redevelopment and revitalization. This water supply "buffer" has the potential of allowing the flexibility needed to evaluate a variety of end users on a case by case basis.

The positives associated with having this water supply "buffer" available for Carefree must be tempered based upon the water supply situation that currently exists throughout the west. The 20+ year drought in the Colorado River watershed has accentuated the vulnerability of all water supplies in the desert southwest and keeps us mindful that we must use all of our water resources wisely.

So much so, that the CFWC/UCFD Board of Directors implemented in FY 22-23 a Water Supply Fee that all future development must contribute to. The collection of this fee will bolster our efforts to keep Carefree's water future secure. These future efforts will emphasize the wise use of our current water supplies, especially those that could go into shortage conditions, such as our Colorado River supplies, and that these supplies will have reasonable back-ups that do not put our local aquifer at risk.

One such effort that Carefree is participating in is the potential to raise Bartlett Dam on the Verde River. This would allow floodwaters that would normally pass through the spillways to be captured and put to beneficial use. This Bartlett Dam discussion is multi-faceted, but is focused two important points 1) "backing-up" Arizona's CAP Colorado River supply, and 2) reducing Arizona's dependence on groundwater.

One other ADWR regulatory footnote has an impact on only subdivision development within Carefree. Once Carefree's expected build-out water demand reaches our CAP M&I allocation (1,678 AF/year) no additional subdivision development will be allowed, i.e., subdivisions will not be approved that rely upon our local groundwater supplies. This could change based upon a detailed analysis of the Carefree Subbasin, but as yet, this type of analysis has not been performed nor approved.

Source: Carefree Water Company 2023

Open Space & Environmental Stewardship Goals & Policies

Goal OE-1: Preserve and protect the Town's Sonoran Desert environment and its unique geological, ecological, archaeological, and historical sensitive features.

Policies:

1. Protect lands with outstanding preservation and conservation value through a community-based acquisition process or direct dedication by the respective property owner as part of an integrated Town-wide open space system.

    a. As part of the Town's commitment to ecosystem protection, acquire select properties for preservation or conservation while balancing local social interests with the financial capacity of the Town.

2. Continue the policy of limiting the total amount of disturbed area on private property.
3. Preserve archaeological and historical features found within the Town limits.
4. Continue to support the preservation of the Black Mountain summit.
5. Support the efforts of regional entities and other communities to preserve the Tonto National Forest and other nearby regionally significant natural resources.
6. Collaborate with the land conservation and management efforts of the Desert Foothills Land Trust, Carefree Park, and other like-minded non-profit organizations.

Goal OE-2: Increase inventory of passive and active open space throughout the Town to promote a healthy lifestyle and improve the well-being of residents and visitors.

Policies:

1. Evaluate the passive and active open space and recreation needs of the Town and potential sites for acquisition through a variety of means, including partnering, dedications, donations, easements, and purchase.

    a. Decisions for acquisition of property shall be based on a specific defined public purpose/ benefit; the identification of acquisition, operation, and maintenance funding sources; and/or the prevalence of significant environmentally sensitive features, such as major washes and floodplains, rock outcroppings, stands of native vegetation, archaeological features, conditions of historical significance, wildlife habitat and corridors, and erosion protection.

    b. Recognize the wide range, variety, and functions of open spaces and continue to include all types in designation and acquisition efforts.

2. Manage and maintain public open space areas designated on the Future Land Use Plan for the use and enjoyment of Carefree residents and visitors.

    a. Prioritize the management, programming, and maintenance of the Carefree Desert Gardens to provide a safe, accessible, and healthy year-around amenity to residents and visitors.

3. Assess and prioritize the development of safe public access to appropriate open space or conservation areas.

4. Work with the Maricopa Association of Governments, Maricopa County and surrounding communities to support establishment of appropriate regional open space and recreation connections (i.e. hiking and bicycle trail corridors) in Carefree.





Goal OE-3: Ensure development is integrated and compatible with surrounding environmental conditions.

Policies:

1. Ensure that all development has natural undisturbed areas and that they are maintained and managed properly by homeowners and/or homeowner associations or other responsible entities.
2. Preserve the maximum amount of natural desert at the time of land development, with special emphasis on protecting environmentally sensitive land areas such as mountainside slopes, boulder outcroppings, significant stands of vegetation, wildlife habitat/corridors, and major washes in their natural state.
    a. Continue to utilize development incentives to conserve on-site environmentally sensitive areas/features.
    b. Further protect off-site environmentally sensitive areas/features by requiring adjacent development to be thoughtfully designed for compatibility.
3. In new residential subdivisions, promote an open, natural desert appearance along subdivision boundaries.
4. Avoid mass grading or blading, and minimize retaining walls, steep banks and large cut and fill areas.
5. Locate buildings on the flatter portions of the site and away from ridgelines.
6. Efficiently plan for utilities to minimize site disturbance.
7. Encourage use of indigenous materials and plants.
8. Encourage the use of building materials and colors that blend into the natural environment.
9. Require the restoration of disturbed areas to a natural look. This includes rock staining and re-vegetating with plant types, numbers and sizes consistent with the natural undisturbed desert environment.

Goal OE-4: Prioritize preservation of washes and floodplains in their natural state.

Policies:

1. Limit development within 100-year floodplains in compliance with Flood Control District of Maricopa County requirements.
2. Except for required streets and/or driveways, restrict grading or disturbance of existing plants within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated 100-year floodplain areas.
3. Limit impacts on major washes to road and utility crossings. Where wash crossings are necessary, ensure they are designed to minimize disturbance to the natural desert.
4. To the greatest extent possible, uphold the preservation of floodplains and natural drainage areas/ patterns in new subdivision plats and development proposals.
5. Emphasize non-structural flood control techniques, such as integrating natural drainage into development plans, when possible.
6. Prioritize flood control techniques that use and retain natural vegetation.
7. Conserve washes by including an appropriate upland buffer to allow transition to building development.

Goal OE-5: Encourage methods for preserving wildlife populations, habitats, and corridors.

Policies:

1. Maintain undisturbed wildlife corridors that are continuous and linked to larger natural areas.
2. Ensure development is wildlife friendly by minimizing building envelopes and disturbance to natural habitat areas, providing wildlife access through the property, promoting wall and/or fence design that does not disrupt wildlife movement, using appropriate outdoor lighting and native landscaping.
3. Design roads and wash crossings to minimize impacts on wildlife movements.
4. Educate residents and visitors on proper etiquette around wildlife and discourage feeding of any wild animals within the Town.





Black Mountain

Goal OE-6: Promote the protection, conservation, and long-term sustainability of the fragile natural environment in which we live.

Policies:

1. Promote alternative forms of energy and energy conservation and use reduction measures.
    a. Participate in programs that encourage the use and development of renewable and sustainable alternative energy resources such as solar.
    b. Promote energy efficient measures in public facilities in conformance with Town financial priorities.
    c. Pursue external funding for energy efficiency programs according to the needs of the community through government grants, matching funds and public-private partnerships.
2. Encourage responsible and efficient (i.e. green) building practices.
    a. Assess updates to Town codes and ordinance that will continue to encourage development, but in a more environmentally sustainable manner (i.e. construction waste reduction, energy efficient building materials, etc.).
    b. Support educational and outreach endeavors to disseminate information about sustainable building practices, recycling and energy efficiency measures.
3. Establish invasive species prevention measures and education resources to continuously monitor, manage and remove invasive species.
4. Preserve the dark sky as a defining characteristic of the Town.
    a. Update measures to reduce light pollution in the Town caused by uplighting, excessive lighting, glare, light trespass, and inconsistent light.
    b. Provide community outreach and education programs to promote the importance and value of protecting the night sky.
    c. Enforce existing standards to ensure lighting is adhering to Town requirements such as specifying lighting to be shielded and pointed in a downward direction.
5. Preserve the natural quiet in Town through continued enforcement of noise ordinance regulations and community outreach.

6. Protect air and water quality in the Town.

    a. Assist the Maricopa County Air Quality Development, Maricopa County Environmental Services Department, and Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in the enforcement of regulations geared toward improving air and water quality.

    b. Minimize negative impacts on air quality by maintaining public streets and reducing particulate matter (PM)-10 particulates in association with Maricopa County's non-attainment area.

    c. Take a proactive approach to minimizing any impact from development and monitor point source pollutants along major wash corridors.

    d. Support non-vehicular modes of transportation to reduce vehicular traffic and air pollution.

7. Encourage best practices of planting and maintaining drought tolerant trees in public spaces and rights-of-way while minimizing conflicts with utility infrastructure and preserving necessary sightlines for public safety and major viewsheds.

    a. Utilize tree plantings to mitigate the urban heat island effect by cultivating a mature tree/shade canopy townwide.

Goal OE-7: Maintain a reliable and efficient water utility system that services the needs of all residential and non-residential uses.

Policies:

1. Continue to evaluate the water system and strategies for improving the efficiency of existing facilities and expanding service.

2. Utilize the subdivision ordinance standards to support the efficient, both physically and financially, extension of water services to new developments.

3. Support the Arizona Department of Water Resources in its regulations concerning water allocation.

4. Regularly coordinate with the Carefree Water Company to align water planning and management efforts in local, regional, and State priorities and regulations.

5. Review the Town and Water Utility capital improvement plan (CIP) and master water plans such that extensions of service capacity do not induce inappropriate development.

6. In accordance with State law, ensure new development will complete its reasonable and fair share of providing for new water facilities that directly service the respective development.

7. Foster innovations in technology to enhance water services.





Goal OE-8: Promote and protect a high-quality, abundant, and long-term dependable water supply that meets or exceeds federal and state regulatory requirements.

Policies:

1. Continue to monitor water sources to ensure that quality potable water is available for distribution to local residences and businesses.
    a. Participate in regional and local strategies, programs, and efforts to ensure sustainable water supplies in the area.
    b. Work with Salt River Project (SRP), Central Arizona Project (CAP), and other municipal agencies to create additional water capacity and allocations using the Verde River Watershed by increasing the capacity of nearby Bartlett Lake.
    c. Explore the economic benefits and feasibility of acquiring treated effluent for direct or indirect use from other sources outside the planning area.
2. Monitor water demand within the Town municipal planning area to ensure it can meet current, committed, and future projected population and use demands.
    a. Review development proposals to ensure that they will not result in potential adverse impacts to the Town's water resources portfolio or to the physically available water supplies.
    b. Ensure new developments possess water resources to serve planned uses.
    c. Support the implementation of approved Water Supply Fee Policy Statement No. 4) which requires review for potential water supply requirements of any project that has an annual water demand greater than 15 AF.
3. Support the land use designations on the General Plan Future Land Use map, which encourage low density residential uses in the majority of the Town.
4. Support the efforts of the Carefree Water Company to protect water lines from breakage and infiltration of contaminants.
5. During development review, promote measures in developments to mitigate ground water contamination.
6. Support the Arizona Department of Water Resources and the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department in their regulations concerning water quality.

Goal OE-9: Promote water conservation and water reuse.

Policies:

1. Encourage and assist the Carefree Water Company in identifying opportunities to conserve water and educating the public on water conservation strategies.

    a. Monitor water use and contact customers when irregular peaks occur in the amount used.

    b. Promote the use of controlled irrigation methods to reduce over-watering.

2. Encourage the implementation of alternative water conservation methods for new and existing developments, including conversion and/or installation of stormwater collection systems such as green infrastructure and Low Impact Development (LID) principles.

3. Maintain xeriscape landscaping and native plant material on public property.

4. Continue to require use of drought-tolerant plants in landscape plans for new construction.

5. Promote products and technologies that use an efficient amount of water in the home and for irrigation systems that improve water efficiency.

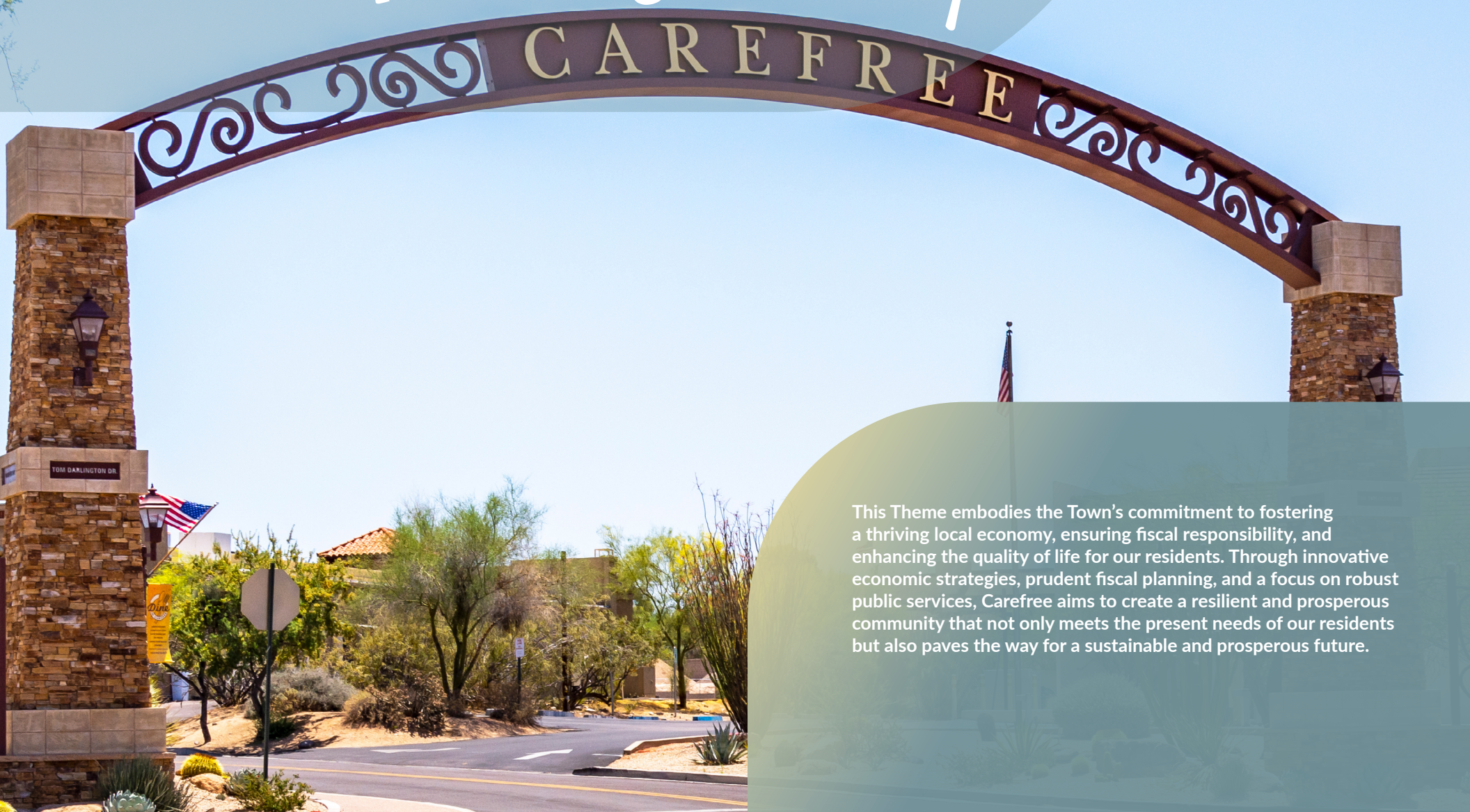
6. Pursue policies to limit the use of natural turf in public and private developments.

7. Where developments occur in or near washes, emphasize non-structural flood control techniques where possible to limit the amount of impervious surfaces.

8. Promote collaboration with other cities and/or water providers to explore methods for using direct potable reuse, where possible.



4 Prosperity & Fiscal Stability



This Theme embodies the Town's commitment to fostering a thriving local economy, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and enhancing the quality of life for our residents. Through innovative economic strategies, prudent fiscal planning, and a focus on robust public services, Carefree aims to create a resilient and prosperous community that not only meets the present needs of our residents but also paves the way for a sustainable and prosperous future.

Existing Conditions

Educational Attainment

Carefree is highly educated with nearly 40% of the community having a Bachelor's Degree and 20% having a Graduate Degree.

Employment

Unemployment Rate

Carefree has a significantly low unemployment rate falling far below the State, County, and all other comparison communities.

Household Income

Carefree has a median household income of $114,469, which is the third highest among comparison communities.

Poverty

Carefree has the third lowest amount of people experiencing poverty among comparison communities and the lowest level of families in poverty.

Figure 21: Poverty

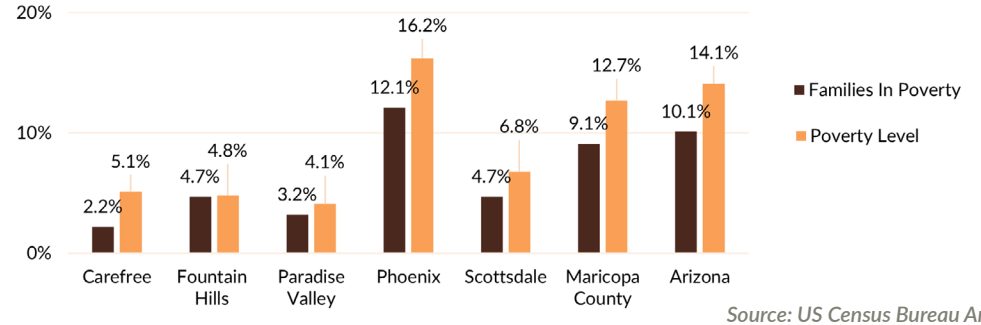


Figure 18: Educational Attainment

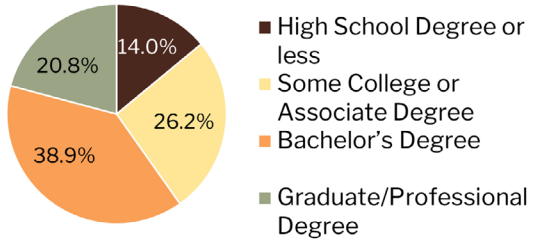


Figure 19: Unemployment Rate

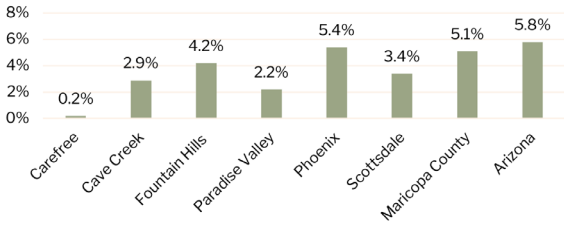
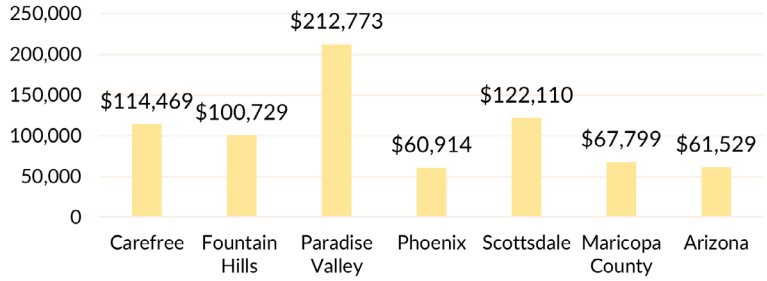


Figure 20: Household Income



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates. Note: Cave Creek omitted from certain figures due to data limitations from impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



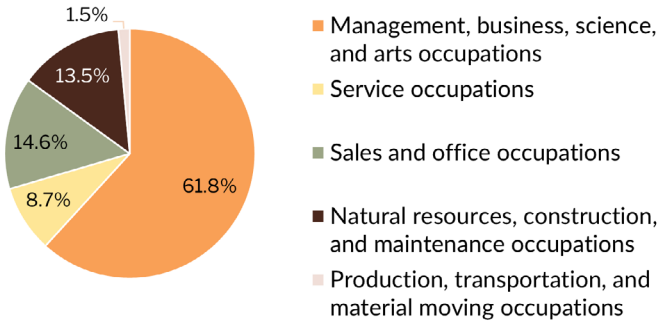
Carefree Town Center

Labor Force

Occupations

Management, Business, Science and Arts Occupations account for over half of the occupation of people living in Carefree.

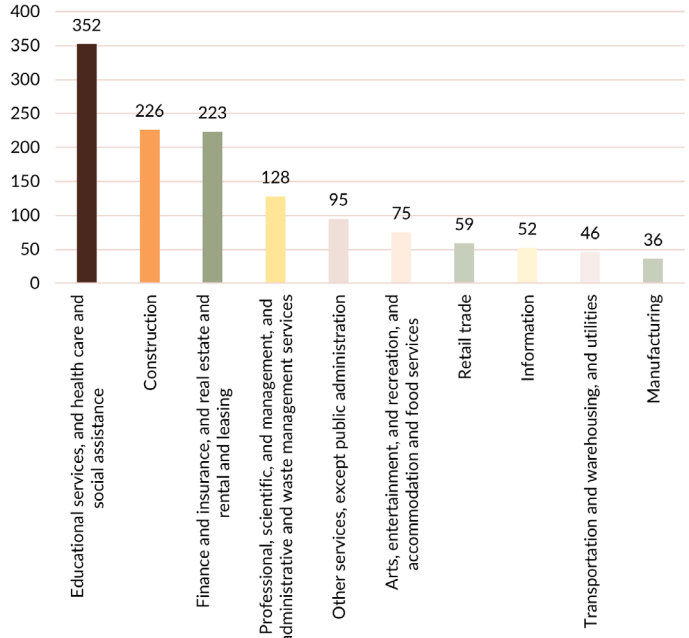
Figure 22: Workforce Occupational Distribution



Industry Distribution

Carefree's workforce is highly specialized in the educational services, healthcare and social services industry closely followed by construction and finance, insurance and real estate. Collectively these three industries account for over 60% of the Town's workforce.

Figure 23: Industry Distribution

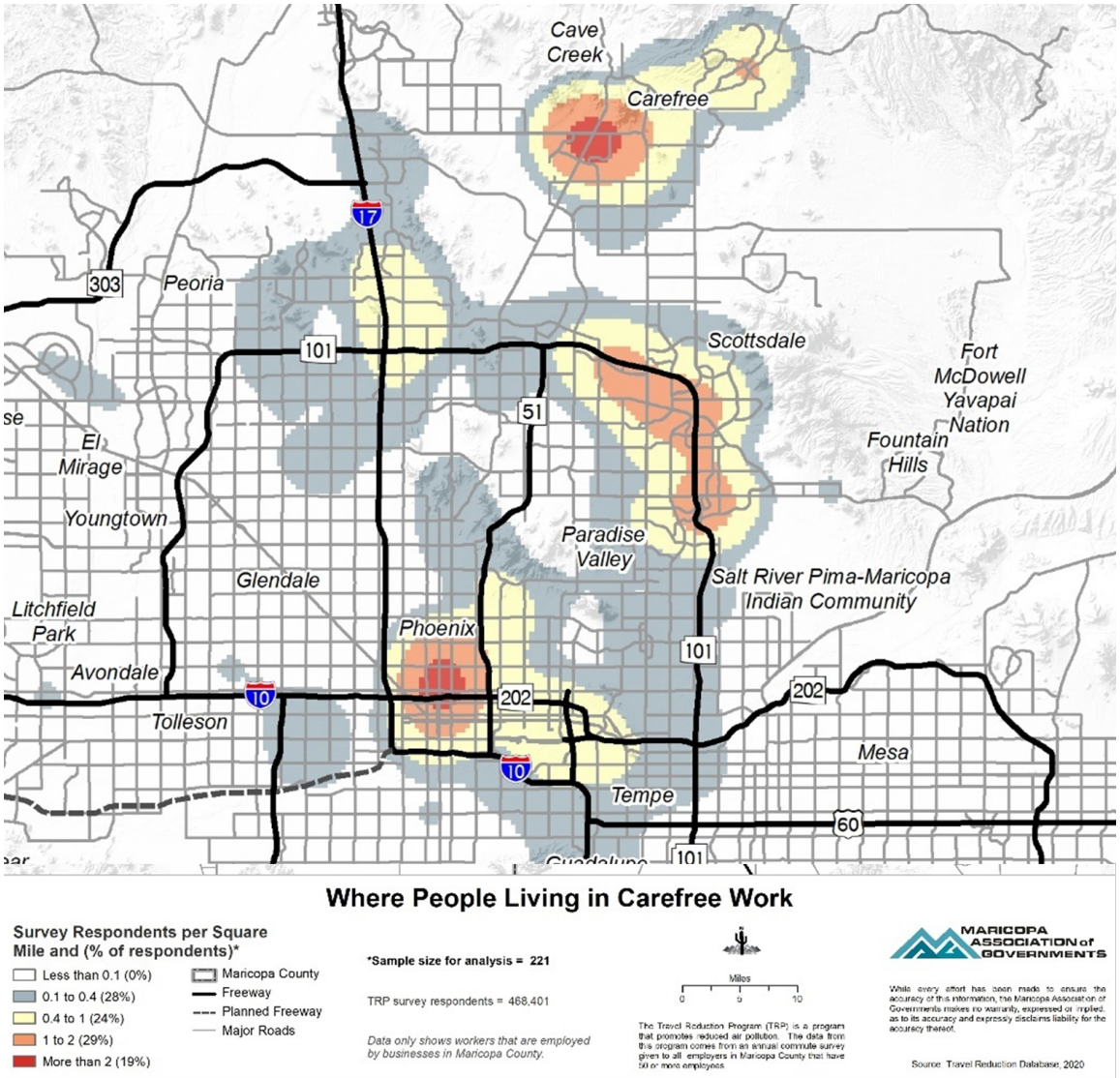


Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates.

Where People Living in Carefree Work

The majority of people living in Carefree work outside of the community. Key employment clusters are located in Central Phoenix, along the Loop 101 Freeway and the Deer Valley Airport area along Interstate 17.

Figure 24: Where People Living in Carefree Work



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments Employment Viewer





Local Utilities & Services in Carefree

Utilities

Water

The following water provider operates within the Town of Carefree with those not served by the provider obtaining their water through wells or other means.

- Carefree Water Company

For a more comprehensive overview of Water, view the Water Resources Element.

Sewer/ Wastewater

The Town of Carefree has a single wastewater service provider that services the Town. Additionally, about half of the Town utilizes private septic systems.

- Liberty Utilities

Electricity & Gas

Carefree's electric provider is Arizona Public Service (APS) Electric. Gas is exclusively provided by Southwest Gas.

Solid Waste/ Recycling

The Town of Carefree does not provide solid waste nor recycling services. Maricopa County's Waste Disposal and Recycling Center takes mingled recycling and waste disposal at its transfer station. The Cave Creek transfer station is the closest one to Carefree at North 42nd Street and Carefree Highway outside the Town limits. The following private companies are permitted to provide service within the Town:

- Waste Management of Arizona
- Republic Services
- Right Away Disposal (RAD)
- Scott Waste Services
- Area Disposal

Public Safety

Fire & Medical

Rural Metro Fire Department, Inc. currently provides fire protection and medical response services under contract as Carefree's Fire and Emergency Services provider. There is a single Carefree Fire Station located in the Town Center. Brush fire season typically occurs from the middle of April through September. Due to the rural, desert nature of Carefree, brush fires can occur within the Town limits. Town residents are encouraged to take the necessary steps to protect their homes and the community from these all too often preventable fires.

Police

Police protection is provided by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office under an intergovernmental agreement with the Town of Carefree. The nearest Maricopa County Sheriff's Office location is in neighboring Cave Creek.

Local Judicial Services

The Carefree-Cave Creek Consolidated Court is operated by the Town of Carefree however it is located in the Town of Cave Creek. This court handles municipal judicial matters and business. Cave Creek pays a service fee to Carefree to cover operational expenses.

Town Center

The Carefree Town Center is the site of many local services for residents including the Town Hall, the Town Council Chambers, the Post Office, the Carefree Fire Station, and the Carefree Water Company Office.

Schools

The Town is served by the Cave Creek Unified School District. There are no public educational facilities within the Town of Carefree.

Community Services

Medical Center

Carefree has a handful of medical service offices, but there is no hospital within its jurisdiction. The nearest hospital is Abrazo Cave Creek Hospital on Carefree Highway.

Assisted Living Facilities

Carefree Manor Assisted Living, Heritage at Carefree Assisted Living, and Dream Street Care provide senior care/assisted living support within the Town limits of Carefree.



Planning Considerations

Town Center Revitalization

As the Town relies heavily on its "core" to generate much of its revenue through sales tax, maintaining a high-quality Village Center is of the utmost importance. The 2023 Village Center Redevelopment Plan set out a plan for action that, among other things, established the blueprint for achieving the desired enhancements within the Village Center by outlining a framework of objectives that focus on achieving the community's Vision for this critical area of the Town. The Town must continue to implement that plan along with the goals of this plan as they will be crucial in ensuring that sales tax revenue stays at a level that allows the Town to maintain and potentially increase the quality of life and services for its residents.

Arts & Tourism

Known for its desert landscapes, vibrant art scene, and relaxed atmosphere, Carefree is a popular destination for visitors from around the globe. Moving forward the Town will need to take a strategic approach to maintain these key industries that place high value on the Town's artistic assets and natural beauty while also ensuring sustainable growth. By fostering the arts, preserving the environment, and continuing to engage the community, Carefree can continue to thrive as a destination that offers both its residents and visitors an enriching and unique experience.

Balancing Economic Development & Fiscal Stability

Finding a balance of economic development and fiscal stability in Carefree will present leaders of the Town with a unique challenge as the need to maintain a robust tax base is essential to the Town's fiscal health. Future economic development initiatives should be carefully crafted to ensure they align with the Town's values and enable the Town to continue to respond to increasing costs for services and maintenance as well as invest in infrastructure that enhances the quality of life for its residents.

Maintaining infrastructure & Level of Services

A high quality of life is something that the Town of Carefree prides itself on and will continue to provide well into the future. Part of sustaining a high quality of life includes maintaining the Town's infrastructure as well as a high level of municipal services. As operation costs continue to increase, Carefree will continue its steadfast dedication to keeping its infrastructure in top-notch condition and maintaining the service levels its residents have come to rely on well into the future.

Economic Development Element

The Town's economy largely relies on the retail and tourism industries, with the next greatest contributor being construction and development. The main center of commercial activity is concentrated in the Town Center, with secondary centers located at specified Town Gateways. Major catalysts for economic success in Carefree are as follows:

- Appeal as a quality place to live, work, and recreate
- Unique Southwest village theme
- Appreciation of the natural desert
- Proximity to arterial streets
- Pedestrian-friendly environment
- Attractive restaurants and businesses
- Sundial, art displays, and other attractions
- A variety of public facilities

Some of the above-referenced public facilities include the Town Center botanical gardens, play areas, and amphitheater; Town Hall facilities; a centrally-located post office; and other amenities.

The Town's secondary commercial centers benefit from some of the above-listed advantages, especially visibility along major arterials with high traffic volumes and spill-over effects of businesses in adjacent municipalities.

There are opportunities for strategic economic development practices to further enhance the business environment and contribute to a sustainable local economy. Some initiatives may include increasing the visibility of the many pedestrian and vehicular connections to the Town core, providing additional way-finding signs and identifiers for local destinations, and implementing additional attractions that complement existing Town Center amenities.

Many efforts are already underway as a result of collaborative efforts by the local business association, property owners, residents, and local government. Some of these efforts include the following: improved signage in the Town Center, an enhanced strategic marketing program, additional special events, continued organization of local businesses, renovation of the botanical gardens, and upcoming projects concentrated in the Town Center designed to attract visitors.

The primary source of the Town's operating revenues comes from local retail sales tax meaning the Town's ability to provide and improve upon desired services for residents is directly connected to the success of local businesses. An economic development plan that targets improvements that make Carefree a more attractive place to visit, draws in additional businesses, and retains current local businesses, will enhance the stature of the Town's business environment and its ability to maintain its programs and services.



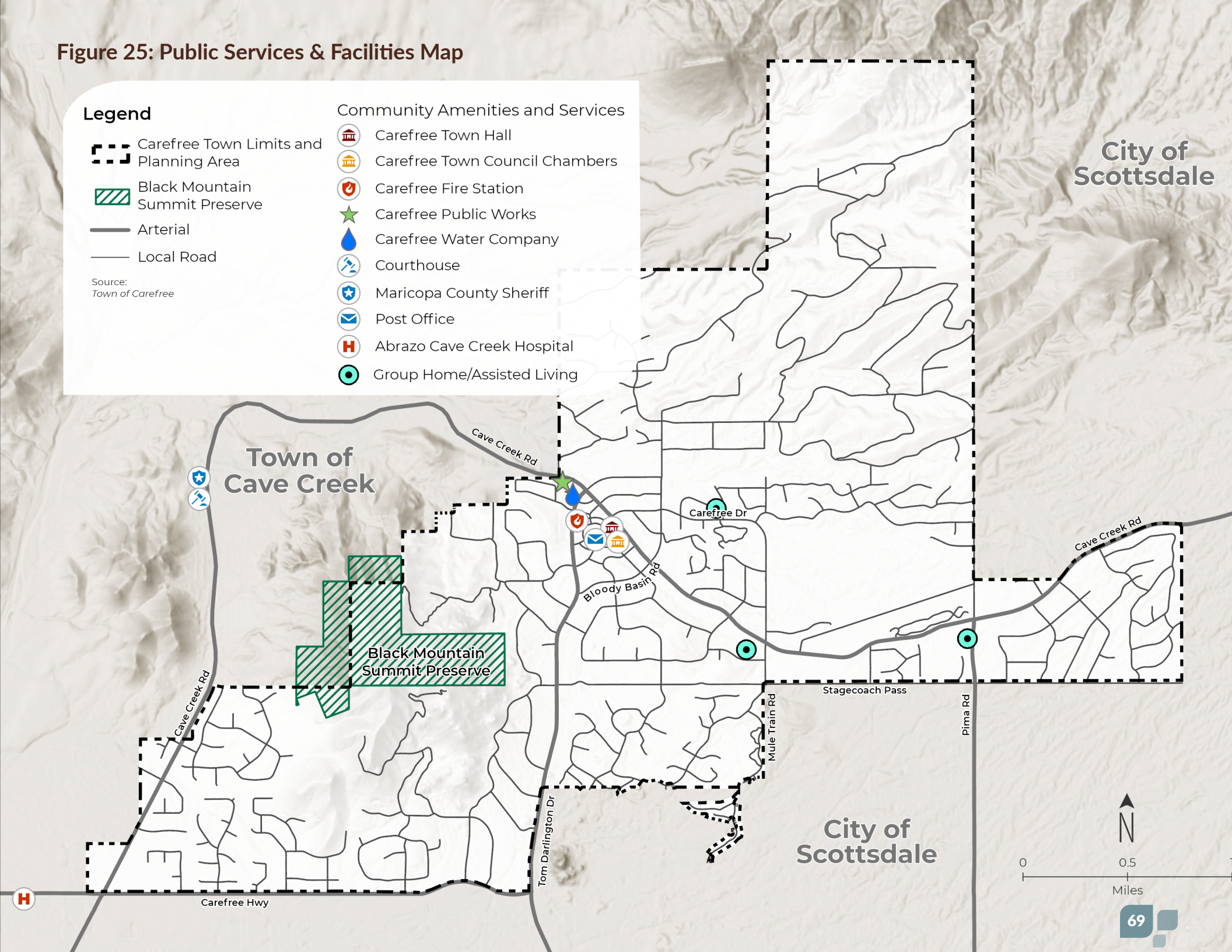
Public Service & Facilities Element

One of the Town's primary purposes is to maintain a small government that provides core, essential services for residents. Presently, these services include town administration, municipal court administration, code enforcement, building and safety, planning and zoning, citizen relations, public works, streets and right-of-way management, and economic development.

Additional public services are either managed by private companies or contracted out to external agencies to reduce the financial burden on the Town and better serve the community. Such services vary and change from time to time. External services currently include public safety, fire protection, emergency medical services, public legal counsel, Town magistrate, sales tax auditing, waste management, water provision (see Water Resources Element), and wastewater.

Figure 25: Public Services & Facilities Map

Figure 25: Public Services & Facilities Map





Cost of Development Element

Continuing to provide municipal services that meet the needs of the Town's citizens is of the utmost importance moving forward. To ensure for the most cost effective application of services and to protect Carefree's semi- rural character, development is encouraged within or directly adjacent to existing infrastructure and service areas. In instances where growth and/or development may require expansion of services, per state law, this element identifies various mechanisms that can be used to fund and finance additional public services necessary to serve the community. In addition it establishes policies that will explain the roles of the public and private sectors to ensure development pays its proportionate share toward the cost of additional public service needs generated by new development, with exceptions where the public's interest is being served.

Cost of Development Framework

The following items outline several options commonly used for funding public projects (i.e. Capital Improvement Projects), as well as mechanisms to ensure any private developer whose project shares in the benefit of such improvement would be responsible for repayment of a determined proportionate amount of the overall cost. Additionally, the Town has flexibility to adjust funding strategies as alternative methods become available or legislative changes occur. Currently available funding options include:

Pay-As-You-Go Out of Current Revenues

Widely considered the optimum way to pay for service expansion, municipalities usually rely on local sales and use taxes, state-shared revenues, user fees, and grants to fund service expansions and day-to-day municipal operations. While all organizations would prefer to pay for items with current revenues, this is not often feasible. This is especially the case for municipalities due to some service expansions needing to occur before or simultaneously with development while revenue will not come in until after development is complete.

In Lieu Of Fees

In Lieu of fees are dollars collected from developers when, for a variety of reasons, dedications are impractical. They are different from impact fees and are not as flexible because the expenditure of those funds is for a particular use. For example, houses in several new developments may pay a fee for the future construction of a regional park in lieu of the developer(s) constructing the park at the time of development.

Development Fees & Capacity Charges

A development fee is a mechanism in which a fee is assessed to new development so as to ensure that the development satisfies its share for the cost of required additional public service needs.

User Fees

These are fees that are charged for services such as water, sewer, park and recreation or facilities venue admissions. The fee structure can not only cover operating costs, but also service the debt for financing expanded services.

General Obligation Bonds

The most commonly utilized large project municipal financing method in the United States is the General Obligation Bond. This is an inexpensive way to finance projects because the bond's repayment is based on the taxing authority of the municipality and backed up by real property. Voters would have to approve a property tax to support the issuance of any General Obligation Bonds.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are a method of borrowing to finance services expansions. The bonds are paid back through future revenues that are legally pledged to the bond issuer. Revenues generally utilized for debt service are privilege taxes (sales tax), Highway User Revenue Funds (payments made to municipalities from state taxes), and user fees.



Improvement Districts

Improvement Districts can be formed to implement a specific improvement for a particular area of the community as a Special Improvement District or more broadly as a Community Facilities District. The property owners in the area to be benefited by the project can agree to assess themselves to pay back the cost of improvements as a “private” property tax. An improvement district can be designated by the Town. This funding mechanism is typically used for neighborhood road improvements, street lighting, utilities and downtown revitalization programs and others.

Certificates Of Participation/ Municipal Property Corporations

These are methods of borrowing that are paid back by municipal revenues. They are usually not legally tied to a specific revenue stream, such as revenue bonds. These methods can be utilized by action of the Town Council and are not generally subject to public vote.

Special Tax Districts

Commonly called Tax Increment Financing in other states, this funding mechanism is typically utilized for redevelopment and revitalization purposes. Arizona Statutes currently limit the availability of this funding mechanism, but changes have been proposed that may allow them to be used more broadly in the future.

Loans

A bank loan is a personal loan that’s issued by either a local or national bank. Recently, local governments have begun to use this financing tool more frequently. Government loans are another source of funds for financing capital projects. Although the number of government agencies that provide loans is diminishing, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Water Infrastructure Funding Authority (WIFA) are still large providers.

Prosperity & Fiscal Stability Goals & Policies

Goal PF-1: Ensure that high quality public services and facilities are maintained in a fiscally conservative manner and are available to meet the evolving needs of the Town.

Policies:

1. Ensure new development will pay its fair share in regard to new infrastructure that serves the respective development.
2. Development will be encouraged within or directly adjacent to existing infrastructure and service aeras to ensure the most cost-effective development.
    a. Only support the extension and connection to utility facilities and services in a manner that benefits Town residents and businesses and is consistent with this General Plan.
    b. Prioritize the development and extension of the Town's telecommunications and fiber optic network.
    c. During the design and development phases for utility projects and line extensions, promote measures to protect sensitive natural resources.
3. Continuously evaluate and improve the overall performance and cost efficiency of Town government and services.
    a. Ensure the public's safety and quality of life by providing a high level of police, fire, and emergency medical services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
4. Align functional plans for Town facilities and services with the General Plan Land Use Plan to ensure the Town, in conjunction with other service providers, can meet the community's short and long-term needs.
5. Incorporate physical, social, and economically sustainable practices into Town operations and maintenance.
6. Maintain and regularly update Town Engineering plans and programs (i.e. Capital Improvement Plan and Pavement Preservation Program) to allow for safe and efficient infrastructure improvements.
    a. Ensure that long term strategic planning balances the needs of the Town with the desires of the community.



Carefree Veterans Memorial

7. Continue to monitor the changing population characteristics of the Town's residents through analysis of Census data and special studies.
8. Continue to explore shared use of other publicly owned facilities and intergovernmental agreements for services.

Goal PF-2: Ensure a range of funding mechanisms are utilized to diversify income streams for Town projects, services, and infrastructure.

Policies:

1. The Town shall seek public-private partnerships and interagency coordination to realize capital infrastructure needs and to foster quality development and redevelopment.
2. Seek creative funding mechanisms for enhancing and revitalizing the Village Center development through public and private partnerships.
3. Continue to require all new development to construct necessary public facilities within or adjacent to the development, consistent with State requirements and Town codes.
4. Continue to plan for and manage the fiscal and capital impacts resulting from new development.
5. Support the regulations in the Subdivision Ordinance and other applicable policies to implement the efficient planning and provision of necessary infrastructure and public services for new developments.
6. Coordinate with service providers to facilitate effective planning, design and implementation of public services.
7. Continue to monitor capital assets to identify and prioritize needed Town improvements.
8. Maintain any revenues from development impact and capacity fees in separate funds and use the funds only to construct facilities for which the fees were collected.

Goal PF-3: Promote economic development activities that help build on the Town's tax base while recognizing distinctions between expectations in select development areas and the preservation of the semi-rural character of the Town.

Policies:

1. Regularly review and update strategies and outreach to attract, maintain, and diversify the Town's economic base.

2. Favor local independent businesses and design conditions over national chains and standardized design conditions.

3. Promote development in areas within or adjacent to existing infrastructure and services, particularly in the Town Center and northeast corner of Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road.

Goal PF-4: Ensure plans and resources are in place for the community to be prepared for and respond to all types of potential natural and human-caused hazard events.

Policies:

1. Maintain an adequate reserve for unforeseen emergencies.

2. Regularly review existing disaster preparedness plans to ensure they are current and include plans for large events, historic events, and all types of natural and human-caused disasters that could potentially impact Carefree.

3. Mitigate potential hazard impacts when building in hazard-prone areas.

4. Educate and inform residents of how to mitigate impacts from wildfires, floods, extreme heat, and other high-risk hazards.

    a. Work with Rural Metro and neighboring jurisdictions to create strong local wildfire prevention measures.

Goal PF-5: Emphasize the "Care" in Carefree.

Policies:

1. Continually improve governmental outreach and information sharing with citizens and businesses.

2. Facilitate open, inclusive, and respectful public participation and engagement with all community members in association with Town business, especially within the planning and development review process to foster better decision-making and an informed community.

3. Explore opportunities to improve the community through intergovernmental cooperation.

4. Customize communication to the needs of residents and use innovative tools in seeking public input.

5. Support community events that bring people together including seasonal holidays, artisan events, and other significant Town events.



5 Implementation & Maintenance



In order to facilitate the implementation of the General Plan over the next 10 year-planning horizon, this chapter outlines adherence to Arizona Revised Statutes element requirements as well as provides a series of Actions to advance progress towards achieving the expressed community Vision. Understanding new legislation and unforeseen challenges or market shifts can happen over a long period of time, this chapter further identifies the State required plan amendment process.

Goals to Element Matrix

To display how the various elements or topics that must be addressed within this General Plan are interconnected, the Goals to Element Matrix provides a visual guide to display all General Plan Goals and their applicability to General Plan elements as required by Arizona Revised Statutes.

	State Required Elements							Elective Elements		
	Land Use	Circulation	Growth	Open Space	Environmental Planning	Water Resources	Cost of Development	Public Services & Facilities	Economic Development	Arts & Culture
Scenic Community Character										
Goal SC-1: Retain and strengthen the Town's unique identity, scenic rural character and small community feel.	●	●	●	●						
Goal SC-2: Integrate open space and promote sustainable design in the development of the Town that is conscious of environmental impact to preserve quality of life and the natural environment.	●	●	●	●	●					
Goal SC-3: Protect scenic views (i.e. viewsheds) of regionally significant mountains and natural features, in or adjacent to the Town.	●			●	●					
Goal SC-4: Value arts and culture as an expression of community character as well as an economic generator.	●	●	●						●	●
Goal SC-5: Optimize transportation infrastructure by providing a balanced approach to mobility.	●	●	●					●		
Goal SC-6. Develop an integrated active transportation network that connects to adjacent communities, recreational open space, and the Village Center.		●		●				●		
Goal SC-7: Anticipate and prepare for emerging and future transportation innovations.		●					●	●	●	
Goal SC-8: Ensure growth pays for itself and minimizes physical, economic, traffic, and environmental impact on the Town.			●					●	●	
Goal SC-9: Manage the unique Village Center as a vibrant, mixed-use destination for residents, tourists, retailers, restaurants, and businesses.	●		●						●	●
Goal SC-10: Support growth in the SPA area at the northeast corner (NEC) of Carefree Highway and Cave Creek Road in a sensitive and select manner that conforms with this Plan.	●		●						●	
Goal SC-11: Ensure future development within the SPA area at the northwest corner (NWC) of Carefree Highway and Tom Darlington Drive may only occur in a very limited manner that conforms with this Plan.	●		●						●	

	State Required Elements							Elective Elements		
	Land Use	Circulation	Growth	Open Space	Environmental Planning	Water Resources	Cost of Development	Public Services & Facilities	Economic Development	Arts & Culture
Open Space & Environmental Stewardship										
Goal OE-1: Preserve and protect the Town's Sonoran Desert environment and its unique geological, ecological, archaeological, and historical sensitive features.	•			•	•					
Goal OE-2: Increase the Town's inventory of passive and active open space throughout the Town to promote a healthy lifestyle and improve the well-being of residents and visitors.	•			•	•					
Goal OE-3: Ensure development is integrated and compatible with surrounding environmental conditions.	•			•	•					
Goal OE-4: Prioritize preservation of washes and floodplains in their natural state.				•	•					
Goal OE-5: Encourage methods for preserving wildlife populations, habitats, and corridors.				•	•					
GOAL OE-6: Promote the protection, conservation, and long-term sustainability of the fragile natural environment in which we live.				•	•					
Goal OE-7: Maintain a reliable and efficient water utility system that services the needs of all residential and non-residential uses.					•	•			•	
Goal OE-8: Promote and protect a high-quality, abundant, and long-term dependable water supply that meets or exceeds federal and state regulatory requirements.					•	•			•	
Goal OE-9: Promote water conservation and water reuse.					•	•				

	State Required Elements							Elective Elements		
	Land Use	Circulation	Growth	Open Space	Environmental Planning	Water Resources	Cost of Development	Public Services & Facilities	Economic Development	Arts & Culture
Prosperity & Fiscal Stability										
Goal PF-1: Ensure that high quality public services and facilities are maintained in a fiscally conservative manner and are available to meet the evolving needs of the Town.	•						•	•	•	
Goal PF-2: Ensure a range of funding mechanisms are utilized to diversify income streams for Town projects, services, and infrastructure.							•	•	•	
Goal PF-3: Promote economic development activities that help build on the Town's tax base while recognizing distinctions between expectations in select development areas and the preservation of the semi-rural character of the Town.	•						•	•	•	
Goal PF-4: Ensure plans and resources are in place for the community to be fully prepared for and respond to all types of potential natural and human-caused hazard events.					•		•			
Goal PF-5: Emphasize the "Care" in Carefree								•		•

Actions

The following actions outline a series of tangible tasks for the Town to advance the vision set forth in the General Plan:

Scenic Community Character Actions:	
SCA-A	Review and strengthen the zoning ordinance and building codes that consider appropriate heights, view access, and mitigate adverse impacts of development to hillsides, washes, and natural landscapes. 1 - Utilize a stakeholder advisory group to assist in developing and reviewing proposed changes prior to the formal adoption process.
SCA-B	Review and update the Town's Community Design Standards and Guidelines to assure Carefree is maintaining its scenic rural character. 1 - Utilize a stakeholder advisory group to assist in developing and reviewing proposed changes prior to the formal adoption process. 2 - Explore the creation of town-wide Community Design Standards and Guidelines and enhanced design review standards for the purpose of maintaining Town character. Focus should be given to maintaining cohesiveness and promoting quality design through elements such as architectural style, use of materials, and application of colors.
SCA-C	The Town shall form Development Stakeholder Advisory Committees to provide citizen guidance and education on the redevelopment of the Village Center and development of any SPA and/or other significant nonresidential project to review site history and current zoning, and to understand future implications and potential restrictions for the proposal.
SCA-D	Explore the creation of a visually significant corridors study to identify and preserve prominent streetscapes that function as important gateways and view corridors within the Town.
SCA-E	Update and maintain a Transportation Plan to inform transportation infrastructure projects and improvements to meet the needs of the Town. 1 - Assess feasibility of alternative intersection management, such as installing traffic circles in lieu of traffic lights. 2 - Analyze bike traffic and pedestrian corridors to determine need for expansion of bike lanes and pedestrian pathways. 3 - Outline parking and curb space management practices. 4 - Incorporate town traffic calming process and procedures. 5 - Consider design regulations to accommodate rideshare, electric vehicles, and emerging transportation technology. 6 - Develop and enable street designs to accommodate future upgrades to their ultimate configurations without requiring major reconstruction of the roadway infrastructure.
SCA-F	Regularly monitor traffic counts on major arterials and key intersections in the Town.
SCA-G	Utilize a public engagement process to enable early and meaningful input on development proposals.
SCA-H	The Town shall form a Public Outreach Stakeholder Advisory Committee to provide guidance on revising the Citizen Participation Ordinance to include enhanced public outreach and notification standards. Encourage broad representation on the Committee from the community.

Open Space & Environmental Stewardship Actions:

OEA-A	Continue to refine and monitor the zoning code to preserve and maintain the maximum amount of existing natural desert, indigenous plant species, steep slopes, natural washes, riparian habitats, and cultural artifacts. 1 - Identify and document within the Town's planning area important environmental amenities such as critical washes, mountain slopes, and archaeological features that should be protected.
OEA-B	The Town will form an Open Space Stakeholder Advisory Committee to coordinate, investigate, and advise on all aspects of open space identification, prioritization, funding, acquisition, and maintenance. Encourage broad representation on the Board from the community.
OEA-C	Through a public process, and with the assistance of the Open Space Stakeholder Advisory Committee, pursue all sources of funding, including but not limited to donated funds, state and federal funding, grant opportunities, and corporate contributions. 1 - Utilize the Open Space Stakeholder Advisory Committee to work in conjunction with likeminded agencies and non-profits such as the Desert Foothills Land Trust, Carefree Park, and other interested groups or residents to define a strategy for funding, acquiring, and preserving open space in perpetuity.
OEA-D	Through a public process, and with the assistance of the Open Space Stakeholder Advisory Committee, prepare an Open Space Designation and Acquisition Strategic Plan to identify and prioritize appropriate locations for open spaces of all types. Set forth realistic recommendations based on community values and applicable metrics, including but not limited to land ownership, appraised land value, ecosystem health, sensitive land status, wildlife corridors, view corridors, accessibility, as well as recreation applicability and need. 1 - Continue to focus on open space acquisition and management efforts of land in the northern portions of the Town as well as the 48-acre State Trust Land parcel.
OEA-E	Consider joining the Tree City US program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation.
OEA-F	Assess and monitor non-compliance of laws prohibiting refuse disposal and motorized vehicular use of washes and develop options for enhanced enforcement.
OEA-G	Revise detailed water use studies so that an updated water resource plan can be made available to the Town. 1 - Ensure a detailed water budget is included for the Town that explains best available information to the public regarding the water supply and existing and projected water demand for developed and undeveloped parcels. 2 - Utilize a Town of Carefree Resident Water Advisory Committee to assist in preparing this plan.
OEA-H	On a routine basis (i.e. annual or bi-annual), ensure the Carefree Water Company provides a report to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council on the supply and demand for water within the Town. 1 - Utilize a Town of Carefree Resident Water Advisory Committee as an independent reviewer of this report and provide their findings to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council.
OEA-I	Prepare a Drought Management Plan, aligned with the Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan, to outline water reduction and conservation measures during drought conditions.





CIVANA Wellness Resort & Spa

Prosperity and Fiscal Stability Actions:

PFA-A	Develop and routinely update plans for all Town facilities, infrastructure, and services to help guide the Town's capital improvement planning and long-term budgeting.
PFA-B	Assess the Town's current development fee policies and modify them as necessary in conformance with state statutes and the Town's interests.
PFA-C	Periodically review existing service agreements with surrounding agencies and private service providers to ensure they meet the needs of residents.
PFA-D	Develop and maintain a 24-month Economic Development Plan. Ensure the plan is developed through comprehensive and diverse community input process.
PFA-E	Continue to maintain the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and update this plan each year. The plan shall be developed within the constraints of the Town's ability to finance improvements.
PFA-F	Audit and publish the annual budget.
PFA-G	Explore opportunities for regional, state, and federal grant opportunities for infrastructure, revitalization, trail construction, and open space preservation.
PFA-H	Explore opportunities for leveraging public-private partnerships for infrastructure and Village Center revitalization.
PFA-I	Periodically facilitate joint public meetings between Town Council and the Town's boards and commissions to promote enhanced and consistent decision making.
PFA-J	Publicize community events broadly through a variety of communication tools that meet the diverse information needs of the community, including local periodicals, social media, newsletters, e-mails, sign kiosks, and Town website.
PFA-K	Collaborate with local first responders to develop an emergency notification system that can be used to keep residents informed during hazard events.
PFA-L	Create and maintain a data base of persons and groups interested in Town affairs such as: neighborhood and homeowners' associations; property managers; non-profits; business associations; and civic groups.
PFA-M	On a biannual basis utilize community surveys to stay informed of resident and business satisfaction with Town services and better understand the general perception of the community.
PFA-N	Continue to have Town Officials accessible to community members through informal, personal interactions and maintain a comfortable atmosphere at public meetings.
PFA-O	Continue to work with the Carefree-Cave Creek Chamber of Commerce, Local First Arizona and other small business organizations to support local entrepreneurship and retail development.

General Plan Administration

Major Amendments to the General Plan

State requirements under A.R.S. §9-461.06 sets forth the requirements for major amendments to the General Plan, as summarized below:

1. The adoption or re-adoption of a major amendment to the General Plan shall be approved by affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the legislative body of the municipality.
2. All major amendments to the general plan proposed for adoption by the governing body of a municipality shall be presented at a public hearing within twelve months of when the proposal is made. At least sixty days before the major amendment is noticed, a copy of the proposal shall be transmitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission, governing body, and required public agencies.
3. "Major amendment" means a substantial alteration of the municipality's land use mixture or balance as established in the municipality's existing General Plan Land Use Element.
4. The municipality's General Plan shall define the criteria to determine if a proposed amendment to the General Plan effects a substantial alteration of the municipality's land use mixture or balance as established in the municipality's existing General Plan Land Use Element.

Procedure

Major amendments to the General Plan are subject to a higher standard than minor amendments in terms of the public process and scrutiny, and shall be in conformance with State requirements.

A major amendment(s) may be requested or proposed by a property owner, the Planning and Zoning Commission, or Town Council at any time during the calendar year. Consistent with State Law and Town policies, measures will be taken to provide for effective Citizen Participation so as to present the request for a public hearing within twelve months from when the original application was submitted.

The application shall be presented at a single public hearing of the Planning and Zoning Commission to provide a formal recommendation to the Town Council. A final decision shall be made by the Town Council in a public hearing in conformance with State requirements.





Carefree Sundial

Criteria for Major Amendments to the General Plan

A major amendment to the General Plan is defined as any one of the following:

1. A change in a land use designation shown on the General Plan Future Land Use Map from Open Space (OS) and/or any single family residential land use designation (Rural Residential - RR, Very Low Density Residential - VLDR and Low Density Residential - LDR) to Garden Office (GO), Commercial (C), and/or Resort Hotel/Resort Development (RH/RD); and the change occurs on any lot that is a minimum of five (5) acres in size.
2. Any expansion of the Town Center (TC), Special Planning Area (SPA) and/or Airport (Air) land use designation shown on the General Plan Future Land Use Map, regardless of the size of the expansion.
3. A text amendment and/or General Plan Future Land Use Map amendment that creates a new land use designation which changes the densities and/or intensities of land uses.

Application Criteria

The applicant shall provide the information listed below in association with a request for a major General Plan amendment. The Town will consider this information when evaluating the request for a major General Plan amendment.

1. Explain how the amendment will constitute an improvement to the General Plan and the community.
2. Explain how the change will affect the proposed alteration of the Town's land use mixture or balance as established in the Land Use Element.
3. Indicate how the amendment will affect the vision, goals, objectives and purposes of the General Plan, and how these aspects of the General Plan support the proposed amendment.
4. Provide information concerning how evolving trends in land development and local market support the proposed amendment.
5. Provide an analysis concerning how the proposal could influence property values and neighborhood stability.
6. If the proposed amendment relates to a specific site, address how the change would be compatible with the surrounding land uses.
7. Provide information concerning how the proposed amendment will affect any existing infrastructure and public services, more particularly the street systems, water and wastewater.
8. If applicable, explain how the amendment will impact the school districts' ability to accommodate any additional children.

Minor Amendments to the General Plan

Any requests that are not determined to be major amendments are minor amendments. Minor amendment(s) may be submitted, reviewed and heard in public hearings at any time during the year in conformance with State Statutes and Town regulations concerning timing, public notification and procedure.

A minor amendment(s) shall be requested or proposed by a property owner, the Planning and Zoning Commission, or Town Council. The same application criteria listed for major General Plan amendments shall be provided in association with any application for a minor amendment(s). Consistent with Town policies, measures will be taken to provide for effective Citizen Participation.

Applications for minor amendment(s) shall be considered at public hearings by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council per State and Town requirements. Any minor General Plan amendment(s) shall be approved prior to the approval of any corresponding application for a rezoning, special use permit, or preliminary plat.

