

I. INTRODUCTION



A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The last time the City of Scottsdale addressed trail planning on a citywide basis was 1991. Adopted as an element of the General Plan, the trails plan map included approximately 300 miles of unpaved, non-motorized, multi-use trails. The 1991 plan reflected historic trails throughout the City that had been documented starting in the early 1970s, and then refined during the 1980s.

The City has seen tremendous change since 1991. From 1991 through 1992, the “Scottsdale Visioning” process asked citizens what they thought created the special character of Scottsdale. This was followed by CityShape 2020 in 1994 through 1996, where the community identified trails, among other factors, as being a unique part of the Scottsdale lifestyle and an important public amenity. The results of CityShape 2020 provided a basis for the 2000 bond election, which included \$2.5 million for trail acquisition and development. Then in 1999 through 2001, Scottsdale embarked on an update of the General Plan in a process known as “Future in Focus.” Policies regarding trails appear in a number of elements of the General Plan, although primarily located in the Open Space and Recreation and Community Mobility Elements. Upon completion of the Trails Master Plan, it will become a “sub-plan” to the General Plan.

The purpose of this study is to develop a vision, goals and objectives to guide the development and prioritization of a citywide trails master plan that will be implemented through the expenditure of the 2000 bond funds and beyond. The project team, including City staff and consultants, has a simple mission. It is to create a great trail system for the citizens of Scottsdale. In order to accomplish this, the study must first accurately gauge citizen wants and needs, next establish a hierarchy of trails according to location and purpose, and then create a cohesive trails system that establishes links between neighborhoods and recreation opportunities, and provides an alternative transportation mode. The trails related policies from the Scottsdale General Plan provide excellent direction for this effort. It is worth noting that the public feedback obtained during this master plan process has been consistent with these policies, and has provided a touchstone to assure this study remains true to the community vision that has evolved over many years.

B. BENEFITS

Using trails is one of America’s fastest growing recreational activities. In the Arizona State Parks Trails 2000 Survey conducted by Arizona State University, it was determined that more than 90% of the state’s population uses trails, and nationwide the American Hiking Society reports almost one-third of Americans, more than 67 million, went hiking in the year 2000. In fact, the USDA Forest Service is predicting steep increases in participation in backpacking and hiking, including an 80% increase in hiking in the Southern and Pacific Coast areas, over the next 50 years.

Recreational trail use is often associated with backcountry areas and camping, but as trail use grows and more trails are developed near population centers, communities are recognizing the economic, social and health benefits of trails. A 2002 study by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (Washington, DC) identifies six primary benefits of trails, including transportation, economic, public health, open space, education and social capital.



1991 General Plan

Communities, businesses, health care professionals, and policy makers are recognizing the personal, social, economic and environmental benefits of having recreational resources readily available to people. The benefits of trails include improvements to a person's physical and emotional health and quality of life, increased property values, individual and community revenues from trail users' purchases of goods and services, and a greater appreciation and stewardship of the natural environment, to name just a few (National Park Service, 1991; Bruns Study, 1998).

The benefits of trails and greenways expand dramatically when municipal and regional transportation planning concepts and trail design work together to increase usage rates of a community's trails and greenway infrastructure. Trails and greenways help to create neighborhood interaction, bringing residents into contact with one another. Trails offer easy-to-access options for increased physical activity and desirable off-street connections to schools, work, shopping, and other recreational facilities.

Increased use of trail corridors can be magnified by such factors as air quality improvement, physical and mental health benefits derived from physical activity and positive economic impacts. Increased usage, in turn, leads to increased benefits and the expansion of trail systems can help ensure the benefits are more equitably distributed among all residents of the community.

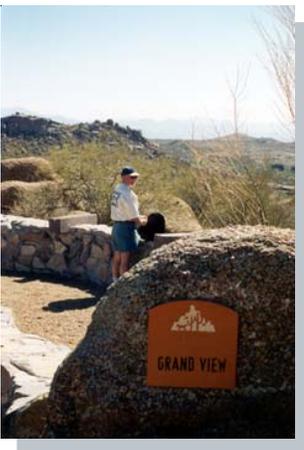
In a 2001 study by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the total costs of poor air quality associated with motor vehicle emissions range from \$28 billion to \$531 billion for health, and \$2.5 billion to \$4.6 billion for crops each year in the United States. Considering the spiraling health care costs in the nation today, any reduction in motor vehicle emissions through the increased use of community trails would bring welcome health benefits to any urban area laced with motor vehicle transportation.

And, finally, several significant trail studies have consistently found that the majority of people owning homes immediately adjacent to a trail (as well as real estate professionals) believe that the presence of a trail near their home will make it easier to sell and those that sold were valued an average of six to nine percent more, and sold faster than those homes not immediately adjacent to a trail. (Moore, 1992; National Park Service, 1995; Brown County, 1998.)

In the 2000 Arizona State Parks Trails Survey of 10,000 randomly selected participants, an overwhelming majority of Arizona residents said they agreed with these following four statements:

1. Trails benefit my community and state (96%)
2. The presence of trails enhances my quality of life (92%)
3. Trails benefit Arizona's economy (88%)
4. Trails benefit me directly (77%)

With this strong citizen support in Arizona, and with all of the other demonstrated benefits of trails and greenways combined, the City of Scottsdale's Trails Master Plan clearly documents the civic leaders' interest in, and the importance of, providing these benefits to the community and its citizens.



A Stop along the Pinnacle Peak Trail

C. PROCESS OVERVIEW

The master planning process was structured in five phases; analyze data, understand the issues, generate ideas, identify plan and implementation strategies, and gain final approval. They are described below:



ANALYZE

In this phase, the inventory and evaluation of existing conditions, plans, procedures, facts, and initial public comment takes place. The purpose of this phase is to:

- ◆ Begin a mailing and email list
- ◆ Review the current status of existing trail database
- ◆ Review current planning documents, both within and outside Scottsdale
- ◆ Review current status of trail signage
- ◆ Initiate photo documentation
- ◆ Identify City staff issues and ideas through a staff and consultant team kick-off meeting
- ◆ Identify citizen's issues and ideas for a great trail and a great trail system through focus groups and a trail ride/hike

UNDERSTAND

This phase includes the identification of additional issues, facts, needs, ideas, opportunities and constraints leading to a clear understanding of how the Scottsdale Trail System currently functions and the preparation of a guiding vision, goals and objectives for how the Trail System will function in the future. The purpose of this phase is to:

- ◆ Produce a comprehensive picture of issues, facts, needs and ideas that affect the City's trails, gathered from within and outside the community
- ◆ Identify the project's guiding themes and goals
- ◆ Document specific opportunities and constraints
- ◆ Better understand citizen opinions on "neighborhood trails" through a statistically valid phone survey and focus groups
- ◆ Provide opportunities for public comment on the City's website
- ◆ Produce and distribute the first project newsletter
- ◆ Share this information at a public open house and a presentation to the Parks & Recreation Commission

IDEATE

This phase involves the review of all existing and potential trail corridors in the City leading to a recommended draft plan and a process for identifying specific improvement projects. The purpose of this phase is to:

- ◆ Further refine goals & objectives
- ◆ Develop corridor suitability attributes using public input
- ◆ Evaluate trail corridor suitability and develop a corridor suitability map
- ◆ Prepare a Draft Trails Plan which includes a trail hierarchy
- ◆ Use the trail hierarchy as a basis for applying the City's existing trail standards to each recommended corridor
- ◆ Produce and distribute the second project newsletter
- ◆ Conduct a Focus Group work session to:
 - Develop a project prioritization methodology
 - Collect citizen comments on the Draft Master Trails Plan



Three Open Houses occurred during the Planning Process

IMPLEMENT

This phase includes production of the final recommended trails plan with implementation strategies. The purpose of this phase is to:

- ◆ Refine and prepare the Recommended Draft Trails Master Plan based upon Citizen comments which includes:
 - Trail improvement projects to spend the \$2.5 million and beyond
 - Management and operations costs for implementing the City-wide trail plan
- ◆ Present the information at the second open house, and the Preserve, Transportation, Planning and Parks & Recreation Commissions
- ◆ Produce and distribute the third project newsletter

APPROVE

This phase includes the final approvals of the Recommended Draft Trails Master Plan thereby creating the Scottsdale Trails Master Plan. These final steps include:

- ◆ Recommended approval by the Parks & Recreation Commission
- ◆ Approval by the City Council

D. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Information was gathered from the public throughout the planning process by a variety of interactive and participatory means. Focus groups, open houses, workshops, Parks and Recreation, Planning, Transportation and Preserve Commission meetings, and personal meetings provided opportunities for direct input and creative ideas at crucial points in the process. Newsletters, the City's Web site, and the media provided information and announcements for upcoming meetings. Participation opportunities were available for the interested public, users and non-users of trails. Residents in four specific neighborhood areas, Mescal Park, Cactus Corridor, Shea Corridor, and Desert Foothills were invited to participate in an in depth analysis of the localized trail issues and opportunities. These activities are briefly described below and more detailed summaries can be found in Appendix A.

FOCUS GROUPS

CITYWIDE FOCUS GROUPS

In April 2002 three focus groups were held throughout Scottsdale. Participants were asked to look ten years into the future and envision a great Scottsdale trail system. They answered the question – what were some of the characteristics they were most pleased about? They offered many specific ideas about the general topics of connectivity, design, street crossing safety, experience, education, operations, and city policies.

NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS GROUPS

Three focus groups were held in May 2002 with residents in the Desert Foothills, Mescal Park, and Cactus/Shea Corridor neighborhoods. Participants provided good information about issues surrounding proximity to trails; impacts on property values, and willingness to support trail enhancements. They also provided specific information on their level of satisfaction with trail system characteristics in their neighborhoods.

OPEN HOUSES

Open houses were held in June and October 2002, and January 2003. Attendees at the first open house provided input on the most important attributes of a trails system. They specified safe street crossings, personal safety, connection to regional trails and destinations, adequate separation and buffering between the roadway and the trail. At the October event attendees reviewed the draft trails plan and concept plans for specific neighborhoods. Comments or suggestions around specific intersections or trail issues were received at both meetings. The third open house was held specifically for those interested in the proposed trail system in the Desert Foothills area. Other attendees came to learn more or voice their concerns about the trail corridor alternates proposed in the Dobson Wash area.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

In September those who had participated in the earlier focus groups were invited to a workshop. They reviewed conceptual neighborhood trail layouts and a draft trails map for citywide trail corridors. They also participated in a session where they helped to prioritize criteria for deciding which trails projects should be built first. Fixing a potential safety problem followed by the opportunity to complete an existing project received the highest priority.

NEWSLETTERS

Three newsletters were prepared. Updates on the planning process, input received from the public, announcements of upcoming meetings and other public involvement opportunities were included. These newsletters were mailed to those on the project mailing list, posted on the City's website, and made available at all public meetings.

WEBSITE

The City's website, www.scottsdaleAZ.gov/trails/plan, provided a quick reference for the project newsletters, general information about places to hike, survival tips, and City staff contact information.

TELEPHONE SURVEY

A random telephone survey was conducted in the same four neighborhoods in May 2002 with residents 18 years or older who had lived in their current neighborhood for more than one year. 78% of the respondents knew of unpaved, multi-use, non-motorized trails in their neighborhood. Of those who were aware, almost 80% had used a trail in the past year. Trails are very important to nearly 60% of users, and 60% reported they would be more likely to use trails if there were more regional destinations.

TRAIL HIKE, BIKE AND RIDE

In April 2002, the City Trail Planner and consultants joined citizens to explore a series of trails in the Shea Corridor. Each citizen participant was provided a map of the route broken into segments that highlighted various planning, development or use issues. A form was provided to write comments per segment.

MEDIA

Many articles about the project appeared in local newspapers, as did notices for the open houses.



Citizens discuss issues at an Open House



The "Trail Hike, Bike and Ride" explored the neighborhoods near Stonegate Equestrian Park

COMMISSION PRESENTATIONS

The nature of a trail system is that of crossing boundaries. Within the City's governmental structure this is also the case where the planning and implementation of trails crosses responsibilities of several different departments. In order to ensure coordination during the planning process and encourage a sense of ownership, various stages of the draft plan were presented to several City commissions. Each provided unique insight and contributions to the plan.

PRESERVE COMMISSION

The Draft Trails Plan was presented to the Preserve Commission on November 7, 2002 during the Implement Phase. The City's existing and proposed mountain and desert preserve system forms the most significant destination for trail users within Scottsdale. Connectivity between the City's preserve trails and the city trails is a fundamental priority of the plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Consultant and staff team made three presentations to the Planning Commission on May 15, 2002, November 20, 2002, and December 11, 2002. The May presentation, conducted during the Understand Phase focused on the project's vision, goals and objectives. The Draft Trails Master Plan was presented at the November and December meetings, where issues of joint interest included street cross-section standards, neighborhood trails, rights-of-way (ROW) and easement abandonments, and relationships between trails and public facilities.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Of all the other services provided by the City, on and off-street transportation coordination clearly has the greatest potential impact on the trails system. The Consultant and staff team presented issues and solicited comments from the Transportation Commission three times during the process on June 5, August 14, and November 21, 2002. The primary purpose of the June 5th meeting and August 14th follow-up meeting, held jointly with the Parks & Recreation Commission during the Understand Phase, was to coordinate issues between the trails planning process and the streets master planning process. Relevant items from the Streets Master Plan included street cross-sections that include trails, off and on-street bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities. Cross sectional standards are expected to vary by character area of the City. The Commissions also recognized the joint benefits of capital improvement project coordination, as funding is available in both departments that would have an impact on the trail system. Several citizens spoke on street and trail coordination issues particularly in the Desert Foothills area of the City. The November meeting, conducted during the Implement Phase included a presentation of the Draft Trails Plan map and discussion of several coordination issues including: cross-section standards; scenic corridors; street crossing safety improvements; planning coordination of trailheads, park & ride lots, and bicycle facilities; and project coordination for upcoming street improvement projects including Cactus Road, 96th Street and Scottsdale Road, all of which include trail improvements.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

The staff and Consultant team brought information forward to the Parks & Recreation Commission four times during the planning process: June 5, 2002, February 5 & 19, 2003 and finally March 5, 2003. The June 5th meeting was held jointly with the Transportation Commission and is discussed above. The February 5th meeting included a presentation of the recommended trails plan map, elements of the draft master plan document, and trail alignment alternatives in the Dobson Wash neighborhood. This neighborhood is located roughly along the 98th Street/Church Road alignments between Pinnacle Peak Road & the Deer Valley Road alignment. Discussion focused primarily on the Dobson Wash trail issues. The Parks & Recreation Commission recommended approval of the map portion and the text portion of the Master Plan on February 19, 2003 and the March 5, 2003 respectively, and forwarded their recommendation to the City Council.

CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

The City Council discussed the Draft Trails Master Plan at a work-study session on February 24th. Discussion focussed mostly on trail alignments in the Dobson Wash neighborhood. The City Council approved the Scottsdale Trails Master Plan on _____, 2003.



The Draft Plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission in February and March 2003

