



## SCOTTSDALE DOWNTOWN PLAN UPDATE “DESIGN AND CHARACTER” DISCUSSION GROUP



### DISCUSSION RESULTS

Originally adopted by the City Council in 1984, the existing Downtown Plan still serves as the long-range policy document that guides growth and development decisions for Downtown Scottsdale. Over the past twenty years, the plan has framed public policy and development with regard to Downtown Scottsdale.

The **Downtown Plan Update** will review the 1984 policies and consider Downtown’s future for the next twenty years. Like the City’s General Plan, the Downtown Plan takes a *broad* look at the future, setting *goals and policies* that will shape future Downtown development and investment. In considering the discussion questions, participants were asked to think of them from the “10,000 foot level,” thus establishing the *vision* for the future of Downtown.

## CORE QUESTIONS – *Asked of every group*

### 1. What do you see as the **strengths** of Downtown Scottsdale – in other words, things you want to keep the same or have maintained?

- Diversity
  - Variety of districts and characters
  - Diverse architecture
  - Variety of styles, destinations
  - Brand new mixed with the old
  - “Downtown is not yet rigid; it is still open to some change”
- Urban Form
  - Like the low building height
  - Small lots and small parcels
  - Closeness of open space to adjacent areas
- Art and Culture
  - Art galleries
  - Public art
  - Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA)
  - Scottsdale Center for Performing Arts (SCPA)
  - The Artists School is a best kept secret
  - Library
- Circulation
  - Abundant foot traffic
  - Downtown is “almost walkable”
  - Downtown is walkable
  - Like the trolley
- Climate
- Character
  - Southwestern character
    - Reminiscence of old west
    - Appreciate old- old doesn’t get over shadowed by the new
  - Shaded walkways
  - Downtown is the City’s governmental center, which is a psychological strength
  - “Urban small town” feel
  - Open air cafes
  - Like the western theme
- Destination
  - Tourism is a good thing
  - Historic destination for visitors
  - Previous press and media has labeled Downtown as a “destination”
- Old Town

- Old Town shops are unique to Scottsdale
  - Keep Old Town the “West’s Most Western Town”
- Entertainment
  - Restaurants
    - Range
    - Caliber
    - Variety
    - Number of
  - The Ballpark [Scottsdale Stadium] is good for the Economy
- Safety
  - Personal safety is good
  - Downtown feels safe
  - We have a Police Station with twelve on the squad. They are on bikes, mounted, in patrol cars, etc.
- Civic Center Mall
- Appearance
  - Landscaping
    - Ponds
    - Fountains
    - Trees
    - Nature
  - Cleanliness and maintenance
    - Garbage pick up
    - Sink hole repair
    - Quick response
    - Code enforcement is great!
- Shopping
  - Fashion Square Mall keeps Downtown’s economy stable
  - Eclectic shopping
    - Mix of chains, small unique stores and the Mall
  - Like that there are few chain stores downtown
- Canal
  - It diagonally cuts through Downtown and creates interest
  - Water in the desert is a precious commodity
  - I like the canal area development for its variety in form
- Hospital
  - Largest employer
  - Close to major medical facilities
  - It is a high quality facility
- History
  - Concentration of historic buildings and places
  - Historic advantage. Downtown is already a historic destination

2. What would you like to see **changed or improved**; what is your vision for the next ten years?

- Design
  - Make Old Town consistently as western as it can be
  - Accept contemporary desert architecture
  - More continuity between the old and the new [architecture styles]
  - The Galleria is a monstrosity
- People
  - More people should be living downtown
- Circulation
  - Walkability
    - There are many areas that are unfriendly to pedestrians  
Downtown
    - Need more pedestrian walkways
      - From Waterfront to Fashion Square
      - Connect major destinations
      - Connect Optima Camelview Development to other areas
      - “Need the basic needs in walking distance” [grocery store, drug store, hardware store]
  - Need a better pedestrian environment, “There is too much car culture”
  - Mass transit should link to other communities
    - Use light rail
    - Create the ability for “outsiders” to come in without driving
  - Traffic
    - Need new traffic routing in other directions [besides the main thoroughfares]
    - One way streets are an idea to consider
    - Improve parking and traffic
    - “Traffic is horrendous. What are we going to do about traffic?”
    - On Main Street, East of Scottsdale Road sidewalks were widened which causes traffic problems today; it is too narrow because of the parking and sidewalks
  - Want the ability to park close to attractions
  - The 101 Freeway causes people to pass Downtown
  - Scottsdale Rd needs an upgrade from Chaparral to Earll
    - Consistent elements along it
    - Add on-street parking
  - Need less pavement
    - Emphasis is on cars now, should be on people
    - Need better street crossing buttons
    - Need narrower streets
    - Need a rail trolley or street car

- Need fewer empty parking lots
- Landscaping
  - Need more shade
  - Civic Center Mall Fountains should be improved
  - Canal area should be improved
  - Need more benches
  - Plants should be properly maintained
  - Bring desert vegetation back
- Infrastructure
  - [Tap] Water needs to be cleaner and should smell better
  - Fix the smell at the Waterfront area
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility on Goldwater Boulevard, Third and Fifth Avenues needs to be improved
- Cleanliness and Maintenance
  - Need better maintenance in all of Downtown
  - The “back” of Old Town looks gross. Need better maintenance in addition to new development there.
- Entertainment
  - Need more attractions for full-time residents
  - Need more theaters and entertainment venues
  - Nothing is going on in the Stetson Area Downtown
- Connectivity-
  - Connect the old to the new
  - Need more connectivity between new development and Old Town
  - How does everything fit together? It is so confusing.
  - Need to add public art to join areas north and south areas of Wells Fargo Bank in Downtown
- Wayfinding
  - Wayfinding should be improved
  - There should be an obvious transition between districts, and the districts should each have a sense of arrival or a gateway
    - Contrary view: districts should not be differentiated but should have corresponding signage
  - Need more signage and wayfinding
- Revitalization
  - Revitalize downtown south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street
  - Do not want more holes in the middle [of the pedestrian way] like that of the Galleria
  - Dead zones are:
    - Stetson East of Scottsdale Road
    - North of Indian School Road
    - East side to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue
  - Area south of Osborn has been ignored and needs to be revitalized
- Safety

- Concerned about the behavior of late night activity-goers
- Urban Form
  - Add small shaded courtyards
  - Need shaded parks of all kinds
  - Need a large community gathering space
- Old Town
  - Keep Old Town upgraded

**3. The existing Downtown Plan encourages smaller scale character and design in the core area of downtown, with larger scale character surrounding that core. How does this land use philosophy benefit downtown? Detract from downtown?**

[Participants cite Type 1 and Type 2 development areas in this question. Type 1 refers to compact, pedestrian scaled development and Type 2 refers to intermediate, mixed-use development].

- Benefits:
  - Areas outside the core have better variety [Type 2 has better variety]
  - Interior [Type 1 area] is more pedestrian scaled
  - Sense of continuity (doesn't add to complexity in a bad way)
  - Waterfront is the hotspot and a focal point
  - High rise residences are beautiful
  - "It is inevitable that we will get bigger and bigger, and we want that. Leaving a core of Type 1 surrounded by Type 2 can only benefit the Type 1. It is a natural progression."
  - "Building up [increased density] is not negative to me. Live-work seems to fit. It fits the idea of Scottsdale."
  - Living above a shop, makes them [the residents] ambassadors.
  - High rises, when well done, help with bringing people Downtown
- Detractions:
  - Closeness of heights to single family homes needs to be a smoother transition
  - Canyon effect could be created with too much Type 2
  - There are no transitions
  - The appropriate ratio of scale needs to be defined
  - Edges are being blurred, areas of Type 1 and Type 2 are not being followed
  - Club scene can be a problem next to neighborhoods because of noise, smell, etc
  - In some cities, Type 2 can take over and can harm Downtown
  - "My biggest fear is that everyone is going to focus on the bigger and newer, and with that, the old gets left behind."
  - Type 1 is an endangered species

- Possible solutions
  - Residents must shop in Downtown to support it
  - Evolution is ok, it is natural to grow
    - The evolution started with the small shops in Old Town.
    - More people causes buildings to change
  - Original Downtown Core, Type 1, should remain same
  - Keep Type 1, allow infill of Type 1, but parking must be dealt with
  - New development must be able to keep area vibrant
  - Increasing density in Type 2 could be good, especially if it adds residences
  - The two types must be attractive and provide incentives to small businesses
  - Property owners have different perspectives than tenants on this issue
  - Concern about imbalance of Type 1 & Type 2
  - Better maintenance of storefronts would help
  - Need better Type 1 district gateways – trolley bridge into Stetson
  - This idea [the existing placement of development types] needs to be made attractive to the business owners. It needs to be attractive to people who own.
  - “I own a business and have always shopped here. There is a need to support each other, and the tenant should not have to fix the stores [that they do not own].
  - “I think the canals need to be cleaned up. It sounds nice in theory, but it is not very attractive.”
  - An archway or gateway from the [Marshall Way] bridge to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue would be nice.

**4. To what extent should architecture and design be used to cultivate the image for Downtown Scottsdale?**

- Design is a positive when others look at us as an example
- Design can help solve some problems
  - Downtown’s image, for example
- The right kind of architecture and design can blend the old and new
  - It can define “us”
  - Let us be a model to other cities
  - People say “oooooh” when you say Scottsdale—let’s continue that
- Frank Lloyd Wright predates other historical elements, like Old Town
- Downtown is the most contemporary place in United States right now
  - Use of home-grown architects makes Scottsdale unique
- Cities are known by the quality of their streets and skylines—Scottsdale needs this
- Need an appropriate fit for the harsh desert environment
  - Need to respond to the climate
- Design defines us

- Want to be about “place” not “event”
- Creating community is important
- Design should be free and not over legislated
  - Choose creative expression over political expression
  - But we don’t want “junk”
  - It’s all in the execution
- We have opportunities with Frank Lloyd Wright
  - Spirit of expression
  - Lends to the uniqueness of the City of Scottsdale
- Buildings have turned their backs to the street, the Medical Complex is an example
  - They do not give anything back to the street
  - No one can build a big structure
  - Context should be considered
  - Need to watch out for larger projects
  - Make sure that developers contribute parks and other things the community needs, and use incentives to do this
- Style is currently “willie nillie.” We need more consistency in style, but should not be as extreme as Santa Fe [All adobe-style buildings]
  - “We need more continuity. North Downtown feels like you are driving into a canyon. I fought the towers and lost, now they are there.”
- Beware of the “canyon effect” of tall buildings
- Like eclectic blends of styles – but maybe only in specific areas
- “I like the different eclectic buildings, I like the Downtown diversity.”
- Needs to be more park-like – some of the contrast between old to new makes the old look run down
- No clear European-type “TownSquare” other than Civic Center, but Civic Center is not easily accessed
  - We need to look for other opportunities to create a “Town Square”
- Variety is good, but need some element of continuity. Maybe a design feature can be adapted for each district
- Districts are okay, but there needs to be some distinguishing feature for all of Downtown
- Need “continuous design threads” that make it apparent you are in Scottsdale
- Design guidelines need to allow for diversity and flexibility
- Design guidelines have been here for a long time
- Downtown is not for “older folks” anymore
- “I would like to see it look more park-like, not like an old Downtown falling apart. It is really ugly. If I were walking by the Waterfront and saw what I see now, I would not go any farther.”
- “I do not want to see Downtown get split apart. The continuity is attractive, but I think it would be nice to see different little areas that are unique.
- Covered walkways are nice and unique to this area.

**5. How might signage, architecture, and other features be used to differentiate the districts? Unify the districts?**



- Differentiate:
  - Define the boundaries first:
    - Mall district
    - Ball park district
    - Civic Center District
  - District identity could be stronger
  - Unique signage
  - Districts are not well defined
- Unify:
  - Current districts should be unified, not differentiated
  - Should look at 1950's Scottsdale signs as historic
  - Ease up on the sign ordinance
  - Example: San Diego Gas Lamps
  - Juxtaposition [of architectural styles] is interesting
  - Need more contrast
  - Keep western district different from the rest of Downtown and should have a variety of styles
  - Keep good quality of lighting
  - Need uniform lighting
  - Need well choreographed foot candles
  - Continuous design identification element: "Archway concept"
  - Scottsdale's bucking bronco image [from the City logo] could be a design element
  - Transportation to tie the districts together: trolleys, rickshaws... something unique
    - Trolleys stop running too early to count on using them. Could serve parking nodes with trolleys
  - We need transportation downtown
- Need clearer wayfinding to parking and trolley locations
- Need to distinguish districts and unify entire downtown with design & elements
- Do not want to be Disneyland [ Do not want a bunch of different districts that are unrelated]

## **6. How can design and character enhance the pedestrian experience downtown?**

- Need to market the different districts
  - Each should have its own identity
  - No need for signs, district transitions should be intuitive
- Pay attention to craftsmanship and quality to create authenticity
  - Style of the districts does not matter
- Shaded arcades are authentic
  - True western architecture

- Hanging flowers or window decorations with flowers would help us be unique and would add color
- Beauty makes you feel like you belong
- Diversity in design helps to keep it interesting and create vibrancy, and color helps this
  - Example: Will Bruder's Apartments (Laloma 5)
  - Example: Kierland Commons
    - has little traffic, has on street parking, has flowers overhead, benches, pedestrian crossings, misters, water and grass
    - You don't have to walk far
- Outdoor comfort helps
  - Shaded outdoor dining, for example
  - Art outside, not contrived art
  - Architecture is art
- The lower forty feet [of a building] defines the pedestrian scale
- Need decorative paving and horizontal surfaces that are different in each districts
- Need to create a safe feeling on walks and at crossings. Clear the pedestrian way.
- Building owners and tenants need to be responsible for maintenance, or taxes will go up if city has to take care of maintenance
- Brown Avenue and Main Street old bank [now Bischoff's] is a good example of quality pedestrian environment
- Need better education and usage of couplets [Goldwater and Drinkwater Boulevards]
- Problems with large trucks in Type 1 districts
- Large scale art and round-a-bouts are needed
- Decrease speed Downtown
- Rubberize asphalt and bike lanes Downtown
- "People are slobs. Something needs to be done to clean up the town."
- If owners do not clean up their own buildings, then let the city take over the buildings.
- "I think the Couplets [Goldwater and Drinkwater Boulevards] are useful and ease traffic Downtown."



## 7. Final Thoughts:

- Scottsdale is willing to listen to its citizens while other Cities have a narrow vision
- “This Focus Group is a great experience. When else can the average citizen sit down with architects like Will Bruder and discuss design?”
- Craftsman Court has a sense of place
  - Courtyards
  - Porosity of the street
- Need to possibly finance open space through a bond to get it
- The City leadership needs to listen
- Need a 3-D model showing build-out as a planning tool
  - Something similar to Decision Theater [Arizona State University]
- One Scottsdale [Scottsdale Road and Mayo Drive]- is this another Downtown?
  - Will it create divisiveness?
  - Is a challenge to the process
- Light rail needs more support
  - Should be on Scottsdale Rd with a cross-town connector and a small trolley
- Sprawl has stolen the desert
- [By a show of hands] All people at the table agreed that light rail is something to talk about for further consideration
- “Scottsdale has been uncooperative in the past [with other cities]”
- Affordable or workforce housing is becoming increasingly important
- Confine bars to the south side of Camelback
- Connect Skysong some how to downtown
- “West’s Most Western Town” can survive change, and should be preserved.
- Keep Old Town in existing Type 1 district
- Preserve what we can about equestrian lifestyle in downtown and continue to celebrate horses
  - Keep mounted police, horse art, carriages
- Combine the old with new. The JackKnife sculpture could be used as a possible branding symbol
- Streetscapes with mature saguaro or other native cactus should be enhanced
- The “West’s Most Western Town” is a theme that needs to stay.