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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Background

Originally adopted by the City Council in 1984, the Downtown Plan has served as the comprehensive policy document that guides growth and development decisions for Downtown Scottsdale. The Downtown Plan has been successful at shaping the growth, both financially and physically, of Downtown Scottsdale for the past twenty-five years. During that time, the majority of the goals, policies and implementation programs established by the community have been successfully achieved.

In addition to these community achievements, public policy, market conditions, building technologies, and community composition have changed considerably during the past two decades. Thus, the need to reevaluate and update the Downtown Plan became important to ensure the area's continued success over the next twenty years. Consequently, an update to the original Downtown Plan was initiated by the Scottsdale City Council in 2006.

Community Involvement

To ensure that an updated Downtown Plan would reflect the community's vision and goals for Downtown Scottsdale, an extensive public outreach process was conducted over a period of eighteen months. During this time, over 1,200 community members participated in the Downtown Plan update process. The public had diverse and extensive opportunities to participate, including a three-day Downtown Town Hall, large group workshops, small focus group discussions, one-on-one individual and community group meetings with staff and consultants, business and property owner forums,

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

~ Mayor Herbert R. Drinkwater, 1985

downtown walking audits, a design charrette, and on-line virtual open house and surveys. The culmination of this extensive public input is the enclosed, updated, community based Downtown Plan.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Scottsdale General Plan – Downtown Character Area Plan

The Downtown Plan is an adopted Character Area Plan per the 2001 Scottsdale General Plan. The General Plan established Character-based General Planning with three distinct and interrelated levels:

Level 1 – Citywide Planning: Incorporates all policies that apply to the city as a whole.

Level 2 - Character Area Planning: Develops Character Plans that speak specifically to the goals and special attributes of an identifiable and functional area such as its land uses, infrastructure, broadly defined urban architectural design philosophy, and transitions.

Level 3 - Neighborhood Planning: Neighborhood Plans will identify and implement efforts to improve specific neighborhoods within the city.

*“Downtown represents all of Scottsdale.
Downtown is our Town Center.”
~ Focus Group Participant, 2007*

As an adopted Character Area Plan, the Downtown Plan incorporates community goals and policies consistent with (but not duplicative of) both the State mandated General Plan elements and the additional Scottsdale General Plan elements, as well as goals and policies that speak specifically to the special attributes of Downtown and how it functions.

Plan Purpose

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

- Guide policy decisions related to private and public projects in Downtown;
- Maintain Downtown as the commercial, cultural, civic and symbolic center of the community comprised of urban neighborhoods that operate together as a highly functional mixed-use center;

- Provide the structure within which the private sector can assume a strong leadership role in the future success of Downtown Scottsdale; and
- Establish the framework for private and public implementation programs.

Downtown Plan Chapters

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

V – Vision for Downtown Scottsdale – describes the community's primary vision regarding Downtown Scottsdale and establishes the values that guide and support the vision.

Chapter 1 – Land Use – presents the overall concept of Downtown as the commercial, cultural, civic, and symbolic center of the community comprised of a collection of interconnected, mixed-use urban neighborhoods. A mix of land uses and the provision of a variety of open space and public realm areas are encouraged. The need for private sector provision of public amenities and benefits in relation to the consideration of development flexibility and bonuses is also identified in this chapter.

Chapter 2 – Character & Design – describes contextually sensitive planning, architecture and urban design goals that will help strengthen Downtown's southwestern pedestrian character and establish a Downtown where “the new west meets the old west.”

Chapter 3 – Mobility – presents mobility for Downtown Scottsdale as twofold: to provide fluid connectivity in and out of Downtown; as well as within and between Downtown's urban neighborhoods. The primary focus of the mobility chapter is on pedestrian circulation and comfort, including the establishment of a new concept – a hierarchy of pedestrian spaces – in order to help achieve a superior pedestrian environment for Downtown Scottsdale.

Chapter 4 – Arts & Culture – recognizes the important niche arts and culture bring to Downtown Scottsdale, and defines the direction for existing and future arts and culture amenities and programs that will help to establish Downtown as a “museum without walls” and an “interactive arts district.”

Chapter 5 – Economic Vitality – underscores Downtown’s economic role as a hub for arts, culture, retailing, entertainment, tourism, events, and major employment; and provides for economic vitality that is supported by public-private partnerships.

Chapter 6 – Public Services & Facilities – presents the primary goal of timely maintenance and investment in the public services, facilities and infrastructure programs that are essential to Downtown’s ongoing stability and vitality so as to serve the functional needs of Downtown residents, visitors, businesses, government agencies and others over time.

DOWNTOWN’S FUTURE

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