

Report of the

DOWNTOWN SCOTTSDALE
TOWN HALL

November 15, 16 & 20, 2006

As one of the first steps in an extensive public outreach effort to develop a comprehensive update to Scottsdale's 1984 Downtown Plan, the Scottsdale City Council worked with the Arizona Town Hall to produce a Downtown Scottsdale Town Hall. The goal of the Town Hall was to develop a beginning consensus to help guide the future evolution of Downtown Scottsdale.

Approximately 100 community leaders, business owners and residents participated in three days of intense discussion and debate. The participants were specifically selected as part of an extensive application process designed to elicit a diversity of interests and viewpoints. Although this report represents the general consensus of those attending the Town Hall, it is important to note that not every participant agreed with every point set forth in this report.

Framework for the Future

Set against the beautiful backdrop of the McDowell Mountains, Papago Buttes and Camelback Mountain, Downtown Scottsdale represents tradition and a sense of community, where people gather to enjoy the city's beautiful weather. Aspects of business and entertainment have evolved over the years but Downtown continues to stand proudly amidst a beautiful natural setting. Downtown must continue to function and thrive while maintaining its character and

quality and adapting to its changing demographics as well as increased local and regional competition.

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Town Hall participants appreciate that Downtown Scottsdale fuses the old and the new, the historic and the contemporary in distinct districts. Downtown Scottsdale's features appeal to tourists and residents of all ages. Some of its best features include great weather, open skies, an established reputation, pedestrian accessibility in some areas, safety, spectacular dining, a nationally renowned healthcare campus, modernized baseball facilities, arts and culture venues, convenience and small town family friendly charm. National retailers mix with unique boutiques, while shopping and nightlife co-exist with multi-generational recreational and cultural opportunities. In short, Downtown Scottsdale offers something for everyone.

All of these qualities give Downtown Scottsdale distinct opportunities as a burgeoning urban center and a hub for vibrant surrounding neighborhoods. There was discussion concerning whether to respect the existing Downtown boundaries conceptually but there was no clear consensus developed. The city should regularly review existing boundaries with an eye to future needs, while respecting existing residential areas. To capitalize on Downtown Scottsdale's great qualities and improve other quality of life aspects, the Town Hall participants addressed the issues that follow.

Image

Downtown Scottsdale is the "art" and soul of Scottsdale and should be on the "must do" list for tourists and residents and a regional draw. Scottsdale should continue to promote Downtown Scottsdale as the primary cultural, civic, retail and governmental center of the city.

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Downtown Scottsdale is also the historical anchor of Scottsdale and an oasis for independent shops, nightlife and other unique businesses. Downtown Scottsdale should

recognize the distinctiveness and historic nature of individual districts and take advantage of their exceptional charm in competing with other regional areas.

Although the phrase “The West’s Most Western Town” does not accurately describe the full image of Downtown Scottsdale, the slogan should be honored as a vital part of Downtown Scottsdale’s history. Downtown Scottsdale’s nostalgia and historic western culture should be maintained as part of Downtown Scottsdale’s promotional campaigns. However, it should not dominate other great characteristics.

While Scottsdale has an established international reputation, the evolving diversity and unique districts of Downtown open avenues for numerous promotional opportunities. Downtown Scottsdale offers several diverse districts for the arts, entertainment, retail, government, business and medicine interspersed with residential opportunities. To the extent that Downtown Scottsdale cultivates a “unified” image, the image should be one that promotes the unique characteristics of Downtown Scottsdale.

Downtown Scottsdale should explore the concept of a cohesive downtown model that capitalizes on the distinct individual identities of each district, recognizing the necessity for districts to work together with one voice to support the success of the whole of Downtown. Identifying signage, architecture and other features should be utilized to differentiate each of the districts.

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Arts, Culture and Entertainment

Among the most powerful magnets for Downtown Scottsdale are the vibrant arts, cultural and entertainment opportunities. The arts and culture district in Downtown Scottsdale is a significant economic engine for all of Scottsdale. To continue to realize the economic and

social benefits from the arts and culture available in Downtown Scottsdale and to successfully compete with other venues in the Valley,

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the City should initiate creative private/public partnerships. The City also should build additional venues in Downtown Scottsdale, provide more financial support for

existing venues and increase the promotion of the arts and cultural opportunities in Downtown Scottsdale. Some suggested building a new and larger performing arts center; however, others believed that zoning restrictions might impede such a project in Downtown Scottsdale. Participants support locating a western museum in Downtown Scottsdale, and encourage the creation of other venues such as a children's museum and film center.

Whether it's the numerous art galleries, unique architecture, Thursday night Art Walks or the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts; or, whether it's the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, the Scottsdale Culinary Institute, the Scottsdale Artists School or the Civic Center Library, the quality and variety of arts and cultural opportunities are unlike other downtowns and attract local, national and international visitors. The arts and cultural opportunities available in Downtown Scottsdale extend beyond the western and contemporary art for which Scottsdale is famous. Downtown Scottsdale offers a full spectrum of experiences including poetry readings, music in the park, film festivals and theater, but it should be expanded. Scottsdale should be proud of and promote the fact that it has the finest nightlife experience in the Southwest. Local and visiting artists from all genres should be encouraged to contribute to the arts and culture of the community.

A bond proposal supporting the arts and culture within Downtown Scottsdale should be presented to the voters in the earliest appropriate election

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cycle. This will ensure citizens can make a meaningful investment in a more vibrant, culturally diverse and sustainable arts community. In

addition to government funding, individuals, businesses and organizations should be given incentives and otherwise encouraged to support and promote arts, culture and entertainment within Downtown Scottsdale. Another suggestion to augment the arts and culture funds was to develop a city arts-related tour by expanding the current trolley system and earmarking profits back to Downtown public arts. The tour would start in Downtown Scottsdale.

Parks and Open Spaces

Scottsdale is blessed with magnificent natural beauty and views of Camelback Mountain, Papago Buttes and the McDowell Mountains. However, Downtown Scottsdale has only one traditional park, the Scottsdale Civic Center Mall, along with a number of smaller pocket parks and courtyards. Participants supported the creation of more parks and memorable open or gathering spaces between and as connectors to the distinct districts within Downtown Scottsdale. Participants also support the visual enhancement of the canal system and the SRP substation at Camelback Road east of Scottsdale Road.

As Downtown Scottsdale becomes more residential, more urban open spaces - such as plazas, outdoor restaurant patios, roof parks and pocket parks - should be developed in conjunction with and connected to the pedestrian and bicycle routes between the various Downtown Scottsdale districts and the surrounding areas of Scottsdale, especially Indian Bend Wash. These open spaces (including plazas, roof patios, pocket parks, outdoor restaurant patios and a linear canal park) embrace and engage the various Downtown Scottsdale districts and the surrounding areas of Scottsdale.

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While the government plays a critical role in creating the parks and open spaces, private businesses should be encouraged to participate and could receive incentives for creating and maintaining quality open spaces. With the current rapid development of Downtown Scottsdale, it is imperative that government and community leaders take immediate action to insure that land is preserved and improved for such open

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spaces while maintaining Downtown Scottsdale's aesthetic appeal. Shade trees should be added for climate control and pedestrian comfort. Public art and lighting should also be added. These features should be carefully selected to compliment Downtown Scottsdale's current character.

Although the Scottsdale Civic Center Mall functions as a great open space inviting formal and informal community gatherings, the name should be changed to delete the term "Mall." For example, it could be designated the "Scottsdale Civic Center," the "Scottsdale Civic Center Plaza" or the "Scottsdale Civic Center Park." This area should be better promoted and utilized to attract people to Downtown Scottsdale. The west entry (near "The Yearlings") should be better accessible to persons with disabilities and signage should be improved to encourage pedestrian entry.

Residential and Commercial Development

Development in Downtown Scottsdale is often a positive contribution to the character and economy but it also raises several important issues such as diversity of use, height of structures and density limitations that may be necessary to sustain Downtown Scottsdale's mountain views, open spaces and residential and commercial needs. To meet the challenge of maintaining each individual district's character, integrity and connectivity, as well as the arts and culture, the city should be flexible and encourage high quality

revitalization and innovative quality developments while respecting existing height limits in the old town and traditional shopping districts.

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Outside of those districts, projects should be decided on a case by case basis.

With the completion of several condominium and other housing developments within the near future, Downtown Scottsdale must address

development issues as soon as possible. Balancing the desire to encourage a family friendly environment with a vibrant nightlife will be a challenge.

Because of the tremendous influx of residents into Downtown Scottsdale, the area will evolve from what is primarily a destination location to a place where people live, work and play around the clock. The development of a 24-hour/7-day-a-week community will arise from the Downtown Scottsdale businesses, including existing arts venues, entertainment, retailers and restaurants. Moving toward a 24/7 mixed-use community is a wonderful opportunity for Downtown Scottsdale as long as the challenges are addressed. For example, Downtown Scottsdale needs to have certain services available to its residents at extended hours including everything from grocery stores to dry cleaners, from pet groomers to houses of worship. At the same time, cleanliness, enforcement of noise restrictions, congestion, parking and safety must be addressed as Downtown Scottsdale's nightlife expands. Additional police patrols, particularly mounted units, and possibly a police substation, along with security phones should be placed in Downtown Scottsdale. Improvements and activities in Downtown Scottsdale must respect and maintain the livability of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Mixed use buildings may include retail and business on lower levels and housing and office space on upper levels that enhance the market for unique goods and services in Downtown Scottsdale. Although some thought that mixed use structures in Downtown Scottsdale should strive to increase available housing for the significant

portion of Scottsdale's workforce who cannot afford living in Downtown Scottsdale, most thought that such housing would be economically difficult to provide in Downtown Scottsdale and should be considered for areas adjacent to Downtown.

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The rapid growth in Downtown Scottsdale suggests that a great deal of attention needs to be given to existing zoning practices and regulations. Areas to be addressed include district zoning, housing regulations, mixed use structures and open spaces.

Transportation

Development of a comprehensive transportation plan should be accelerated and implemented. It should address both access to Downtown Scottsdale and mobility within Downtown Scottsdale, should be pedestrian friendly; and, it should be supported by a public/private partnership that will develop specific proposed improvements.

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This comprehensive plan may include clean burning and various sizes of buses and trolleys as well as connecting Downtown Scottsdale to other portions of Scottsdale, including the major hotels, North Scottsdale and the 101

Freeway. Even if it requires the removal of existing structures, Chaparral, Thomas and Indian School Roads should be significantly widened to connect Downtown Scottsdale and the 101 Freeway. Although some believe light rail should be part of the plan, others disagreed.

Most agree that certain aspects of Downtown Scottsdale's transportation system, such as the free trolley system, work well. The

trolley system could be improved by adding air conditioning, expanding the routes and increasing the hours of operation and the frequency of stops. Facilitating connectivity between the 101 into Downtown Scottsdale is critical. Access from the corridors of Chaparral, Indian School and Thomas Roads may require modifications. This may include widening Chaparral Road, improved signage and other options to be explored and resolved.

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longer visits by residents and tourists, the non-employee three hour parking limit should be eliminated. Pedestrian walkways and bicycle accommodations are deficient; restructuring or closing off some streets to pedestrian walkways and bikeways with bike lockers should be considered as should restructuring some streets to provide for temporary closure to become pedestrian walkways for special events such as festivals and farmer's markets. Increased lighting, trees and shade, sidewalks, crosswalks and aesthetically pleasing streetscapes must be added to provide safety and direction for users. Other traffic concerns include ease and convenience of access to and within Downtown Scottsdale, vehicle pullouts, signage, and the need for additional bus shelters where appropriate. In addition to public/private partnerships, some suggested exploring sources of funding for traffic and parking improvements.

Looking to the Future

The ideas expressed in this report should serve as the beginning input for the amendment

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of Scottsdale's downtown plan. Our recommendation as a call to action is to establish a private/public partnership within ninety days after the Scottsdale City Council is officially presented with this recommendations report that will regularly meet with the Mayor, and City Council to identify a direction for successfully implementing the suggestions in this report. A minimum of one representative from each panel of the Town Hall should be included in the partnership along with other stakeholders. City officials should continue to seek input from and work with community leaders, businesses, residents, property owners, relevant stakeholders and adjacent communities as Scottsdale's downtown plan is amended.