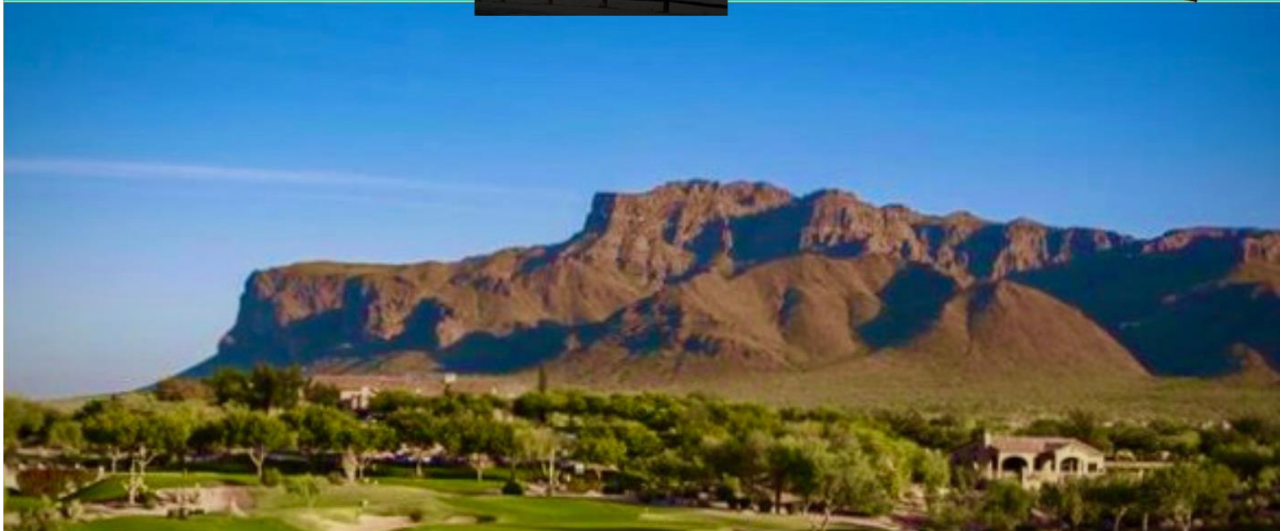

Gold Canyon Community, Inc.

COMMUNITY PLANNING DOCUMENT 2023

A comprehensive plan developed by residents of
Gold Canyon in coordination with Pinal County
and the Arizona State University



Gold Canyon Community, Inc.

Community Planning Document

Executive Summary: Mission & Vision

VISION	Gold Canyon is a community defined by the surrounding natural beauty and heritage that offer open space, recreation, and quiet residential amenities to its residents, businesses, and visitors.
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MISSION	We will focus on and invest in quality of life and sustainable improvements for serving residents, businesses, and visitors.
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Executive Summary

The **Gold Canyon Community Plan** was developed over a two-year period and was spearheaded by Gold Canyon Community, Inc. (GCCCI). Resident and business inputs were obtained through community surveys and community-wide meetings. A 2022 ASU graduate class focused on the environmental, circulation and land use chapters. From the start, Pinal County encouraged the development of this long-term plan and envisioned it to serve as a model for other non-incorporated areas.

In addition, working with the Arizona State Land Department to develop a coordinated plan is critical.

The **Gold Canyon Community Plan** has been developed as a tool to guide future growth and change by community stakeholders,

elected officials and developers. Each chapter contains specific goals and policies. These baseline plans represent the consolidated residents' visions for long-term growth and change in Gold Canyon.

These community goals will require coordinated planning on a sustained basis. Integrating the **Gold Canyon Community Plan** into the **Pinal County Comprehensive Plan** is critical since Gold Canyon is unincorporated. As we move forward, the Gold Canyon citizens, businesses, service providers, and Arizona State departments will need to be synchronized. Maintaining a shared view in harmony with the wishes of the community will require deliberate and structured annual planning with Gold Canyon and neighboring communities.

It is expected that the **Gold Canyon Community Plan** will be updated at a minimum of every 10 years.

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Key Stakeholders Gold Canyon Homeowners Associations, Businesses, Pinal County Government, Arizona State Land Trust, Private Land Owners, Service Providers, Superstition Area Land Trust, and various local service organizations/non-profits including ADOBE, GCCI, and the Gold Canyon Chamber of Commerce.

COMMUNITY PLAN ELEMENTS & GOALS

1. Community Profile

- a. Population
- b. Land Ownership
- c. Housing Characteristics
- d. Economy, Jobs, Demographics
- e. Existing Land Usage
- f. Conservation Assets
- g. Trail Systems

2. Conservation: Natural Resources/Open Space/Dark Skies

- a. **Goal 2.1:** Protect Gold Canyon's unique environmental assets
- b. **Goal 2.2:** Preserve biodiversity in the Gold Canyon area
- c. **Goal 2.3:** Conserve existing habitat; recreate habitat where it has been destroyed; and provide new habitats where appropriate
- d. **Goal 2.4:** Protect Dark Skies in Gold Canyon
- e. **Goal 2.5:** Encourage low impact development practices to mitigate the negative impacts of urbanization
- f. **Goal 2.6:** Support sustainable growth that minimizes the impact on environmental quality and human health
- g. **Goal 2.7:** Reduce the amount of solid waste and minimize illegal dumping
- h. **Goal 2.8:** Protect the irreplaceable, legendary landscapes and lifestyle of the community and region

3. Parks and Recreation

- a. **Goal 3.1:** Develop a system of parks, trails and open space to meet the recreational and health needs of Gold Canyon residents and visitors
- b. **Goal 3.2:** Take a leadership role in the community for execution of a

diverse parks and recreation program and services strategy

- c. **Goal 3.3:** Promote the parks, trails and open space system as a quality-of-life asset to attract new employers, residents, and visitors to the community
- d. **Goal 3.4:** Utilize multiple funding sources in order to maximize services, programs, and facility amenities for community residents

4. Neighborhoods and Housing

- a. **Goal 4.1:** Maintain and attract a quality housing stock in condition, design, and construction standards
- b. **Goal 4.2:** Incorporate sustainable practices in all housing developments

5. Gold Canyon Business District

- a. **Goal 5.1:** Develop a comprehensive downtown master plan
- b. **Goal 5.2:** Establish architectural branding, place-making, and encourage tourism
- c. **Goal 5.3:** Improve walkability and way-finding in the downtown core.
- d. **Goal 5.4:** Identify redevelopment opportunities
- e. **Goal 5.5:** Create a "main street" along Kings Ranch Road
- f. **Goal 5.6:** Provide a balance of land uses
- g. **Goal 5.7:** Attract a diverse mix of business types

6. Sustainable Economic Development

- a. **Goal 6.1:** Attract quality sustainable investments that will add value to current and future residents of Gold Canyon as a desirable place to live, work, and play
- b. **Goal 6.2:** Align resources and priorities to support new facilities; resort/tourist oriented sustainable

- development; expanded small business opportunities; and maintain large open spaces
- c. **Goal 6.3:** Continue development efforts to create a downtown Gold Canyon that supports small business
 - d. **Goal 6.4:** Enhance the image and brand of Gold Canyon to raise the awareness of all this community has to offer beyond the East Valley
 - e. **Goal 6.5:** Maintain the unique sense of place and rich history of Gold Canyon. It is a place for outdoor activities, the cultural arts, and enjoyment of the pristine Sonoran Desert landscape
 - f. **Goal 6.6:** Continue to promote sustainable economic development in balance with community values. Rein in uncontrolled growth and short-term visions. Encourage, retain and strengthen small business growth

7. Public Safety Services and Facilities

- a. **Goal 7.1:** Continue to advocate for additional policing from the Sheriff's department
- b. **Goal 7.2:** Continue to study and advocate for additional public facilities to serve the local community
- c. **Goal 7.3:** Continue to conduct comprehensive community planning
- d. **Goal 7.4:** Support local art and cultural throughout the community
- e. **Goal 7.6:** Support local schools and local educational activities

8. Circulation

- a. **Goal 8.1:** Identify and prioritize transportation projects
- b. **Goal 8.2:** Develop an Active Transportation Plan (ATP).
- c. **Goal 8.3:** Promote regional transportation planning

9. Utilities: Energy, Sewer, Communications, Electric Vehicles

- a. **Goal 9.1:** Energy Conservation
Preserve renewable energy resources and incorporate innovative preservation strategies.
- b. **Goal 9.2:** Advance Water Quality and Quantity Policy
- c. **Goal 9.3:** Strengthen water conservation

10. Growth Area

- a. **Goal 10.1:** Increase financial sustainability
- b. **Goal 10.2:** Plan for an appropriate geographic mix of residential, small business, and recreational uses in the business district
- c. **Goal 10.3:** Effectively plan for the development along US 60
- d. **Goal 10.4:** Support sustainable growth

11. Land Use Study

- a. **Goal 11.1:** Promote land use patterns that ensure long-term sustainability
- b. **Goal 11.2:** Prioritize the conservation of natural resources and landscapes
- c. **Goal 11.3:** Foster a sense of community through high-quality places and engagements
- d. **Goal 11.4:** Broadening economic opportunity for local populations
- e. **Goal 11.5:** Improve and expand physical infrastructure to support growing populations and needs

12. Intergovernmental Cooperation

- a. **Goal 12.1:** Protect the landscapes and lifestyle of Gold Canyon and the surrounding Sonoran Desert
- b. **Goal 12.2:** Foster Collaboration, communication, and collegiality

Chapter 1

Introduction and Community Profile

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PLAN?

The term “community plan” describes a general, comprehensive, long-range statement of goals and related objectives to guide future growth and development within a community. This *Gold Canyon Community Plan* is comprehensive because it coordinates the interrelated systems and land uses within the unincorporated community of Gold Canyon. While the plan aims to guide physical development, it also deals indirectly with social issues. This community plan is not intended to be a rigid or static document, nor meant to replace Pinal County zoning ordinance or its Comprehensive Plan for the area.

WHY GOLD CANYON NEEDS A COMMUNITY PLAN

Gold Canyon has over 12,000 residents and is a popular tourist, second-residence, and retirement community. It is surrounded by a unique Sonoran Desert viewsapes, including the Superstition Mountain range, which caters to tourism and outdoor activities, and provides an excellent quality of life. On the other hand, it is near the fifth largest city in the US in a rapid-

growth county, and Gold Canyon will see increasing population and business growth around its boundaries.

Thus, a community plan is a critical component to articulate the future goals and establish reasonable limitations for growth to preserve the best for the community, the County and the State for generations to come. Each chapter provides a longer-term view with a clear expression of development goals to guide land use and development decisions.

GOLD CANYON PLAN ORGANIZATION

The *Gold Canyon Community Plan* is designed for use by all residents, businesses, property owners, developers, and elected and appointed officials. The document is divided into chapters that address land use, circulation, growth areas, energy and environmental planning, parks and recreation/open space, water resources, public services and facilities, housing, economic development, and intergovernmental cooperation.

The chapters addressing plan elements including goals and policies to guide future decision-making as defined below:

Goal: A desired end or target that, if pursued over the long-term, will contribute to the attainment of the community vision and overall general plan.

Policy: A specific statement that guides decision-making to implement and accomplish the Goal.

WHAT IS THE GOLD CANYON COMMUNITY PLAN IMPACT?

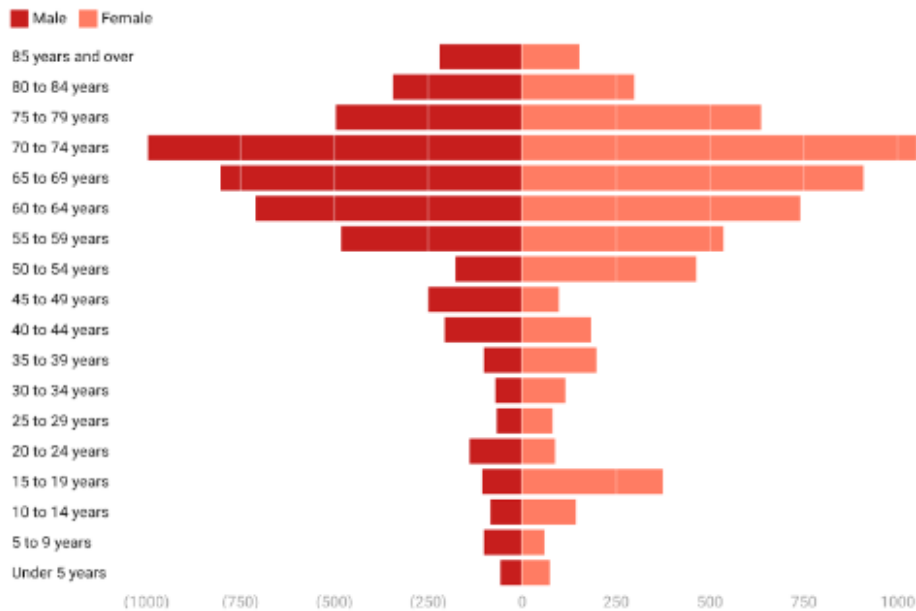
This Plan does not change existing zoning. If a property is currently zoned and not in

guidance to public and private entities about the types and locations of amenities, public facilities, private development, and infrastructure. Since the Plan elements are related to one another, elements should be considered collectively in the decision-making process.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Data was pulled from the 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Gold Canyon has a large population of 55+ residents. The median age is between 65-69 years old. Gold Canyon is an aging community with a small proportion of residents under the

Figure 2.11 Population Pyramid for Gold Canyon CDP, Arizona (2019)



Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates • Created with Datawrapper

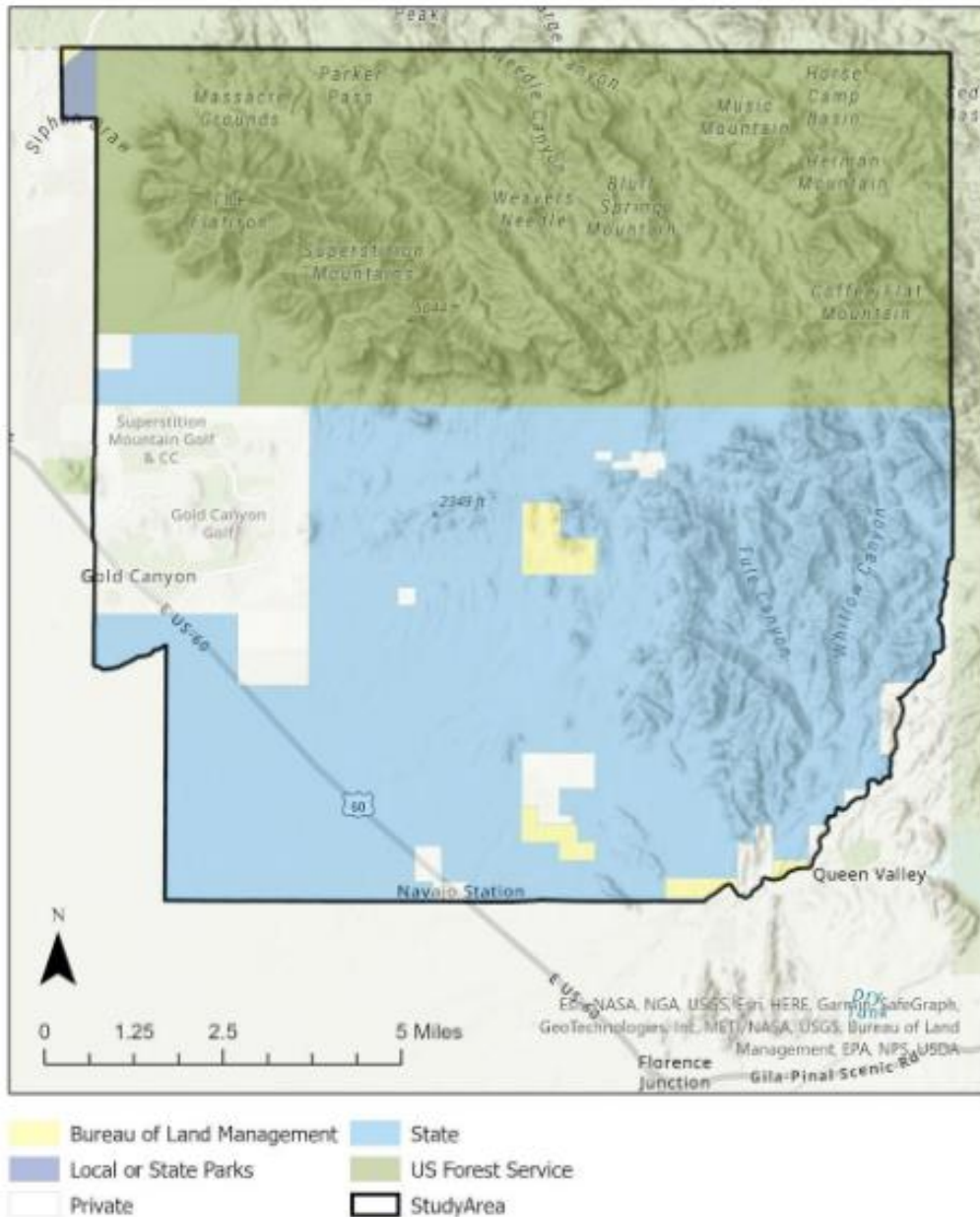
conformance with the adopted plan, the property may be developed according to the in-place zoning.

While proposed zoning must conform to the adopted plan, the plan is not set in concrete. The new community plan affects every resident and business in Gold Canyon. It provides

age of 30 years old. Additionally, there is a much larger population of female residents from 15-19 years old than male residents of the same age. Gold Canyon had a total population of 11,612 in 2019. In 2019, the majority of Gold Canyon residents were white, making up 89% of the population. The second largest population was Hispanic or Latino at 8%.

Land Ownership

Much of the study area is State Trust Land owned by the Arizona State Land Department. Additionally, to the north, a significant amount of land belongs to the US Forest Service. There is also a small portion owned by the Bureau of Land Management and set aside for local or state parks. There is only a small amount of current land allocated for private development.



Housing Characteristics

Gold Canyon is predominantly residential. Residential development encompasses almost 44% (3195 acres) of all community areas. The average parcel size for single-family residential is around 0.46 acres, compared to 0.25 acres for

multi-family residential. Housing in Gold Canyon is mainly along the Superstition Freeway (US-60) and King's Ranch Road. Newer developments along Peralta Road (Peralta Canyons) and El Camino Viejo (Entrada Del Oro) are being built out. The earliest housing settlements were on the eastern boundary of

the Gold Canyon Golf Resort, and several were part of golf course developments. The south of the highway contains Recreational Vehicle and Trailer Parks with a mix of single-family residential. The mean Full Cash Value (FCV) of all properties in Gold Canyon is around \$305,683, and the mean home value is \$298,100 (ACS, 2019).

Gold Canyon has around 6,628 residential properties, making up 95% of all properties, while condominiums (115) and townhouses (92) are the most common properties, with around 200 properties between them. Although, as per data, there are only 21 mobile home properties, there is a possibility of having unaccounted mobile home units within those properties. Duplexes and triplexes make up the remaining housing types with 17 and 5 properties each.

As expected, since the majority of Gold Canyon properties are single-family residences, the urban area of Gold Canyon is predominantly low. One-story buildings make up most of the properties, with around 6,371 properties, whereas 2-story facilities make up just 428. Twenty-two properties are classified as three stories which are commercial buildings, condos, or townhouses. 1,345 unclassified properties are either vacant parcels or mobile homes. The few three-story buildings are clustered along Kings Ranch Road closer to the US-60. The rest of the two-story buildings are scattered across Gold Canyon, primarily two-story residential homes. Gold Canyon is a low-density, primarily residential community that has no buildings over three stories tall.

Two data sources helped to determine whether Gold Canyon residents were classified as primary full-time or secondary part-time residents. Primary and secondary residents are

owners, while renters are a separate classification. The first data source comes from the 2021 GCCI survey of Gold Canyon residents. That survey found that over 70% of the 1100 residents (approximately 800) are primary home owners. A little over 300 residents or around 30% were second-home owners. The rest were visitors or short-term renters.

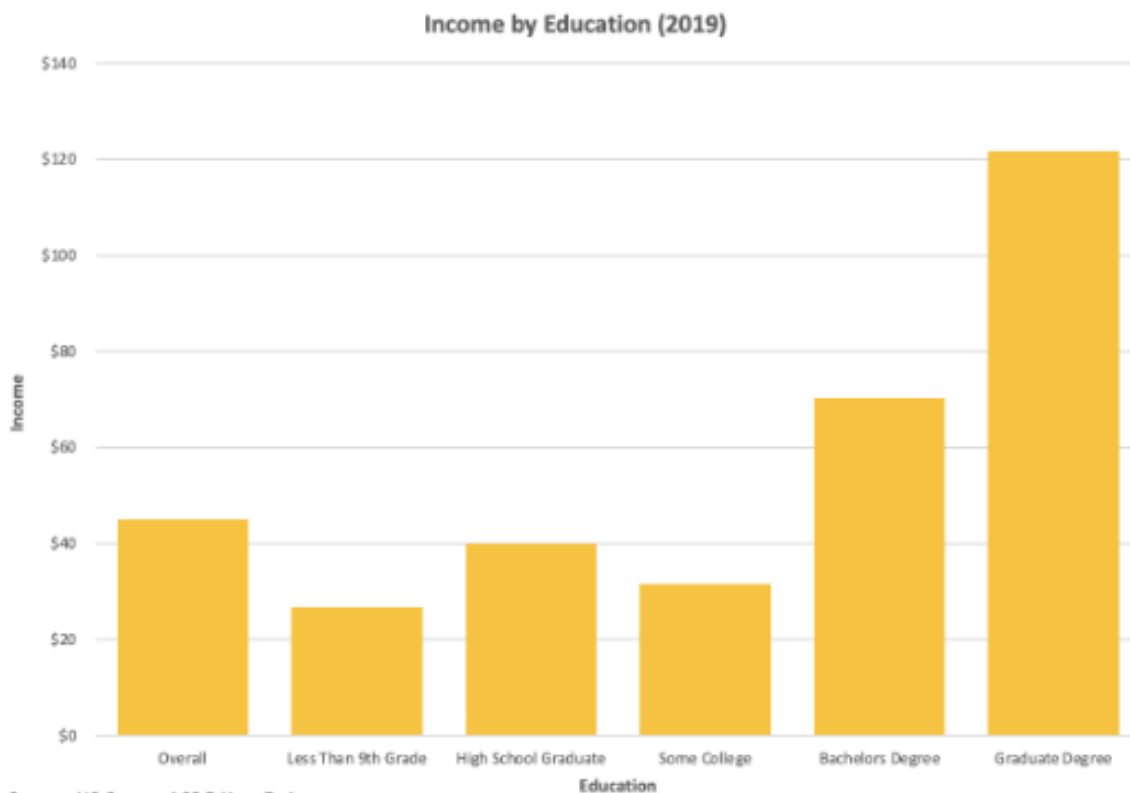
The second data source used the Pinal County Assessor's Office data. The total resident house count was just over 7,000, with just over 4,000 or 60% of them being primary homeowners. 38% or about 2,500 homes were classified as secondary residences, while the rest of the homes were rentals. Winter visitors in Gold Canyon make up 30-40% of the population. This seasonality is extremely valuable in infrastructure planning to plan for the winter peaks including the annual Renaissance Festival, the Lost Dutchman Marathon, and nearby events like Country Thunder.

Economy, Jobs, and Demographics

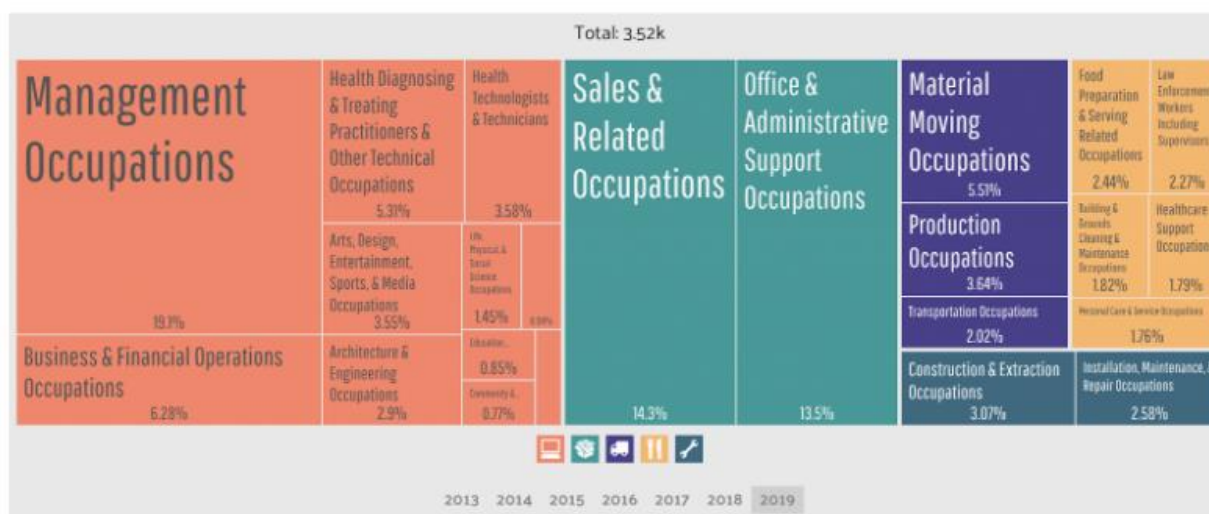
Gold Canyon's median household income is \$75,518 with a 3.98% increase in 2022. There are multiple job opportunities for its residents today and are expected to increase as business and economic development surges in the East Valley.

The largest industries in the area include healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and professional, scientific, and technical services. The 3 largest ethnic groups in the area are White (non-Hispanic), White (Hispanic), and Black or African American. The 2019 graph below illustrates income by education for Gold Canyon residents:

Income by Education in Gold Canyon, AZ



Employment by Occupation in Gold Canyon, AZ



Data Source: U.S. Census

Existing Land Use

Over 80% of the buildings in Gold Canyon are in residential areas. According to the Pinal County Assessor's Office, there are 6,926 residential

units that take up over 3,000 acres of land in Gold Canyon. However, while residential uses make up 80% of the buildings, they take up only

44% of all the land in Gold Canyon. The average parcel size is 0.46 acres and most homes are close together. There are 12 acres of land in Gold Canyon that are dedicated to multi-family residential uses.



Gold Canyon is a relatively new community with the average building age of 17.9 years. The new Peralta Canyons developments added 750 new homes in 2019-2021. There are over 1,000 vacant buildable parcels available. Most of these vacant parcels are on the east and southeast sides of the community.

There are over 2,000 acres of vacant land which is natural open space. There are 31 acres targeted for residential use; 22 acres (110 parcels) for commercial development; 33 acres dedicated to religious use; 6 acres for municipal uses; and 100 acres designated agricultural. The State has ownership of over 20,000 acres of land, and the County has 89 acres.

The existing commercial properties are close to the US-60.

Conservation Assets

Gold Canyon is on the edge of the beautiful Superstition Mountains. The terrain borders the Tonto National Forest and is part of the greater Sonoran Desert ecosystem. The Sonoran Desert features a wealth of biodiversity including plants and animals found nowhere else in either

North America or the world, and Gold Canyon is home to various special-status species.

The undisturbed foothills of the Superstition Mountains are a tourist and naturalist's delight. The nearby vistas and access to trailheads are the cornerstone of the community. Maintaining this natural integrity is the highest priority.

Trails System

Gold Canyon is a prime location for a mix of paved or groomed urban trails and rough recreational trails. Hiking enthusiasts from Gold Canyon and surrounding communities have easy access to the Tonto National Forest through the Wave Cave Trail, Peralta Trail, and Hieroglyphic Trail. In 2002, the Superstition Area Land Trust, with Pinal County, completed the Lost Goldmine Trail which runs parallel to the wilderness boundary and connects Lost Dutchman State Park with Peralta Trail.

Within the developed areas, there is a loose network of multi-use biking and pedestrian trails which provide recreation opportunities for local residents to enjoy Dinosaur Mountain, Silly Mountain, and Don Donnelly vistas and surrounding landscapes. GCCI is working with HOAs, cycling and hiking clubs, and the County to expand these trails and connect the community in a pedestrian-friendly manner for residents and visitors.

Chapter 2

Conservation, Natural Resources, and Open Spaces



Credits: The Environmental Planning chapter relies primarily on information from the Superstition Area Land Plan (SALT), the Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan, the Apache Junction General Plan, and the Coconino County Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, data from the AZ Game and Fish Department and documented community sources were integrated.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

The pristine natural environment with its spectacular mountain vistas is Gold Canyon's most important asset and a vital factor for its residents' quality of life. Adjacent to the northern community boundary lies Peralta Regional Park, and beyond that extends the Superstition Wilderness Area and the Tonto National Forest. These uniquely scenic areas offer both environmental and recreational benefits, the impact of which cannot be overstated. The majestic and scenic stature of the mountains can be seen from almost anywhere in the community, and residents greatly enjoy nature-related activities.

In 2021, the GCCI community survey identified the **natural environment, dark skies, and parks and open spaces** as their **top three priorities** for living in the area. Their primary concern is preserving these natural assets to sustain this legacy to benefit current residents, visitors, and future generations to come.

The community strongly advocates stewardship of these distinctive resources by incorporating a holistic approach to environmental planning. Environment-centric planning promotes the maintenance of a healthy environment for ecosystems and both residents and visitors. It also emphasizes the importance of a nature-based infrastructure that is resilient to ongoing climate change. New growth in Gold Canyon needs to be balanced with preserving as much open space as possible. This can be accomplished by ensuring that growth enhances sustainability and does not degrade the environmental quality.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Environmental preservation is the highest priority of Gold Canyon residents. As the community grows, development should complement and enhance natural resource areas that are exclusive to Gold Canyon. However, effective preservation

and sustainability cannot be achieved unaided. Working with and engaging both the public and private sector must be approached in an inclusive manner in order to implement a comprehensive environmental strategy.

Change will require collaborative and dedicated efforts from public and private agencies, non-profits, developers, land owners, and residents to direct the community towards a long-term ecologically mindful standard of living.

Anticipated expansion and improvement in the region will create various opportunities for innovative responses that will foster progress toward the environmental planning goals outlined in this plan. By utilizing strategies presented in the community plan, County officials and staff will be able to confidently address environmental opportunities and concerns. This sustainable approach will keep environmental and community priorities in balance with achievable ideas, which in sum, will positively benefit the future of the community.

Protecting Environmental Assets

Gold Canyon continues to work toward preserving the natural desert landscapes, spectacular mountain views, and dark night skies for which it is famous. As demands for growth increase, key aspects of the natural environment are vulnerable to irreparable damage or destruction. The following assets are critical:

Asset 1: Open Space & High Quality Habitat

The **preservation of open space** is one of the top three priorities of Gold Canyon residents as per the 2021 community survey. Gold Canyon is surrounded, especially to the north and east, by large expanses of open desert area on vacant State Trust land. Open space is generally associated with mostly passive recreation activities and provides a continuous network of areas for trail linkages, viewshed preservation, wildlife habitat, preservation of cultural and historic sites, park facilities and wash corridors.

The area north of US-60 is considered "**high**

quality” habitat (see Pinal County Open Space & Trails Master Plan, p. 10), while the area south of US 60 has a rating of “medium quality” habitat. It fits the definition of two of Pinal County’s open space classifications: Transitional Open Space and Conservation Open Space.

Transitional Open Space Areas consist of areas that abut or are adjacent to currently protected or planned open space areas such as State and National Parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, and national forests, and areas identified within the Gold Canyon Community Plan. Preserving the edge of these dedicated state and national lands will ensure equitable access to all. Every effort shall be made to extend the natural environment of the protected lands, and to provide a natural integration to surrounding protected landscapes. Facilities such as parks and stormwater storage areas within transitional open space areas allow for public access and the preservation of view corridors

Conservation Open Space Areas are areas that have a demonstrated and important ecological function. Areas that have a high to medium habitat value, which includes substantial vegetation, important natural or geologic features, and biological movement corridors, should be preserved in an effort to maintain the ecological health of the region. Examples of high-quality habitat include areas designated as critical habitat, and large undisturbed expanses of land, such as mountain ranges, river corridors, perennial streams, and open desert areas. Medium-quality habitat may include washes nearer to developed areas, where land may be more fragmented but where water and food may be available.

Habitat values in Pinal County are assigned as “high,” “medium,” and “low.” *High-value areas* are typically undisturbed (relatively pristine), with good wildlife movement corridors, and provide optimal cover, food, and water resources. *Medium-value areas* can be either undisturbed or disturbed (fragmented) and provide less than optimal cover, food, and water for wildlife. Areas ranked as medium are enhanced by the presence of adjacent high-value habitat. Disturbed, highly fragmented areas with poor cover, food, and water availability are valued as low. Examples of high-quality habitat include areas designated as

critical habitat, and large undisturbed expanses of land, such as mountain ranges, river corridors, perennial streams, and open desert areas. Medium-quality habitat may include washes near developed areas where land may be more fragmented but where water and food may be available. *Low-quality habitat* includes highly developed areas like agricultural fields where the natural vegetation is highly disturbed or non-existent, limiting food and water resources.

Preserving and possibly improving habitat should be one of the first ecological considerations for open space conservation. Most of the high-quality habitat can retain its value simply by remaining undeveloped, while medium-quality habitat can retain its value by keeping users in designated areas and on marked trails while minimizing vegetative disturbances.

Asset 2: A Thriving Desert Fauna

The desert surrounding Gold Canyon is teeming with wildlife. **Big game species** documented in the area include mountain lions, mule deer, white-tail deer, and javelina. **Small game species** include cottontail rabbits and black-tailed jackrabbits. Numerous **other mammal species** are resident, including coyotes, gray fox and kit fox, skunks, bobcats, 11 species of bats, and rodents such as kangaroo rats, ground squirrels, mice, and wood rats. There are occasional sightings of coatimundi and of Arizona’s state mammal, the ringtail cat.

To the delight of bird watchers, **birds** are abundant in Gold Canyon. Documented sightings include Gambel’s quail, roadrunners, white-winged and mourning doves, ravens, various hummingbird species, various hawk and owl species, two vulture species, desert cardinals, Gila woodpeckers, cactus wrens (Arizona’s state bird), and many more. Regular eagle sightings have been reported. A local list identifies 66 different bird species. The abundance and diversity of birds makes the Gold Canyon area a prime candidate for inclusion in the **Arizona Birding Trail network**.

Prominent among **reptiles** are the desert tortoise, various species of lizards (including Desert Spiny, Eastern Collared, Western Whiptail, Greater Short Horned, Zebra-tailed, Long-nosed Leopard, Sagebrush, Desert Horned, Ornate Tree, Western Banded Gecko, Iguana, Western Fence, Skink, and Chuckwalla), the Gila monster, and several snake

species, including gopher snakes and diamondback rattlesnakes. Amphibians such as desert toads are ubiquitous after monsoon rains.

Wildlife Management Recommendations:

The data from various studies indicate that the biodiversity is greatest in undeveloped areas throughout the county and lowest in the urban and suburban areas. Generally, fragmentation of habitats by development is the greatest contributor to the loss of biodiversity. Although bird species are less affected by the fragmentation of habitats, the mammal and reptile species show a dramatic reduction in species density in the urban and suburban areas. Overall, the density is greatest in mountainous, riparian, and large areas of undeveloped Sonoran Desert.

Special Status Wildlife Species* in the Gold Canyon Area:		
Federal Status (Species of Concern)	California Leaf-nosed Bat Cave Myotis Yuma Myotis Lesser Long-nosed Bat Arizona Myotis Pale Townsend's Big Eared Bat Spotted Bat	Sonoran Desert Tortoise (candidate for conservation) Western Burrowing Owl Bald Eagle American Peregrine Falcon
Federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act	Bald Eagle	Golden Eagle
US Forest Service (Sensitive)	Pale Townsend's Big Eared Bat Spotted Bat Western Yellow Bat	American Peregrine Falcon Bald Eagle Sonoran Desert Tortoise Western Burrowing Owl
US Bureau of Land Management (Sensitive)	Sonoran Desert Tortoise California Leaf-nosed Bat Cave Myotis Arizona Myotis Western Burrowing Owl	Gilded Flicker Pale Townsend's Big Eared Bat American Peregrine Falcon Bald Eagle Golden Eagle
AZ Game & Fish Department (Vulnerable)	Sonoran Desert Tortoise Gila Monster California Leaf-nosed Bat Cave Myotis Yuma Myotis Arizona Myotis Pocketed Free-tailed Bat Pale Townsend's Big Eared Bat Spotted Bat Western Yellow Bat Lesser Long-nosed Bat Kit Fox	Bald Eagle Golden Eagle Wood Duck American Peregrine Falcon Harris' Antelope Squirrel Western Burrowing Owl Variable Sand Snake Gilded Flicker Sonoran Whipsnake Tiger Rattlesnake Sonoran Desert Toad Sonoran Coral Snake

*Some species are listed by multiple agencies.

Asset 3: A Lush Desert Flora

The natural vegetation of the Gold Canyon area is characteristic of the Sonoran Desert scrub (Arizona Upland Division).

The dominant *perennial* species include foothills palo verde, creosote bush, and triangle-leaf bursage along with numerous cacti from the prickly pear, cholla, and barrel cactus groups. Landscape elements receiving additional runoff water also support more mesic species including mesquite and ironwood. Healthy stands of Saguaro cacti are a visually dominant component of the flora.

The *annual* component of the vegetation communities is also ecologically very important to wildlife species and varies greatly from year to year depending upon precipitation patterns. A significant part of the annual flora is now non-native, introduced species.

A particularly important component of the vegetation is the *riparian* type, which occurs both near springs and along ephemeral streams. Both riparian woodlands (higher elevations and higher stream flows) and riparian scrub lands (lower elevations and lower stream flows) are present around Gold Canyon. Species that occur in the riparian woodland include cottonwoods, willow, and desert hackberry. Riparian scrub lands support populations of mesquite and higher densities of species characteristic of the surrounding upland communities.

These riparian communities play critical roles in the feeding, nesting, resting, and travel of wildlife species. While the geographic size of the riparian communities is small, their ecological importance is immense. Riparian communities form ecological corridors through the desert scrub matrix, which are both very important and very susceptible to fragmentation.

Asset 4: Spectacular Viewsheds

The scenic quality of most of the Gold Canyon area ranges from exceptional to outstanding. The majestic mountain range of the Superstitions is visible from almost everywhere in the community, including from US-60. Scenery ratings are classified as follows:

1. Exceptional Scenery Areas

These areas combine the most outstanding characteristics of the physiographic region's landforms, vegetation, water, color, and adjacent scenery, with no roads or structures.

2. Outstanding Scenery Areas

These areas include a combination of some outstanding characteristics, and some that are fairly common to the physiographic region, with few roads or structures.

3. Typical Scenery Areas

These areas include features which are fairly common to the physiographic region and have many dirt roads and developments.

In order to maintain the scenic vistas visible from US-60 to the north and from the Superstition Wilderness to the south, great care should be exercised so as to not negatively impact foreground and background views. Vistas out from Peralta Trailhead would be negatively impacted in the foreground and middle ground if development were to occur anywhere in its viewshed. Vistas of the Superstitions from US-60 would be negatively impacted if development were to occur in the foreground of the viewshed. Adequate buffering will be critical. **Scenic Highway designation** may be necessary to provide restrictions to development proximity and visibility.

The Gold Canyon area is a prime location for wildflower viewing in the spring.

Asset 5: Dark Skies



Gold Canyon residents much enjoy living in a dark-sky area. Like many communities close to urban centers, however, Gold Canyon is affected by urban nightglow through nearby light pollution, most significantly from the west. Light pollution is a side effect of suburbanization and the inappropriate and excessive use of artificial lighting. Inefficient outdoor lighting not only prevents residents from experiencing a natural night, but also wastes the electricity used to power those lights. This form of pollution can have detrimental effects on wildlife; therefore, it is important that the County support planning that will protect ecosystems.

Gold Canyon, in cooperation with the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), intends to proactively protect the nighttime environment by further promoting quality outdoor lighting, integrating sound outdoor lighting practices, and educating the community on responsible lighting and dark-sky stewardship. To this end, a formal request to designate a larger area in eastern Pinal County as a “Dark Sky Reserve” was submitted to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) on December 20, 2022.

Asset 6: Watersheds and Floodplains

The area’s drainage is characterized by washes (ephemeral streams) that drain out of the Superstition Mountains into the valley floor through fan-shaped areas of alluvial (sand, mud, gravel, etc.) deposits. Washes within the alluvial fans are not always clearly defined and have a tendency to meander. As a result, their floodplains are not easily determined. The direction of drainage is generally southwesterly.

Several of these drainages are considered areas of potential flood hazard by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Zone A Flood Areas

FEMA designates “Zone A” drainages as 100-year flood prone, or where flooding has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year. The Zone A drainages in the area are Queen Creek, Whitlow Wash, Navajo Wash, and Peralta Wash.

Zone B Flood Areas

FEMA designates “Zone B” drainages as between the limits of the 100-year floodplain and the 500-year floodplain; or those subject to 100-year flooding that is less than one foot in depth; or, in an area where contributing drainage is less than one square mile; or protected by levees from a base flood. The only Zone B area in the region is the Queen Valley area, which is protected by Whitlow Ranch Dam. Queen Valley’s Zone B covers part of Donna Drive, Queen Valley Drive, and Diane Drive.

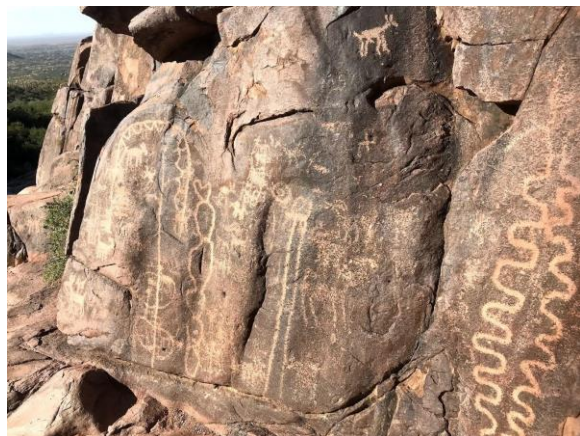
Zone C Flood Areas

The remainder of the area is designated “Zone C” by FEMA.

Besides drainage, the value of the washes for the area’s ecosystems cannot be overstated. Should any future development of the area occur, the washes should be fully maintained without any artificial alterations. Any planning in the area should include generous riparian **buffer zones of a minimum of 100 feet.**

Finally, in a time of concern about the future availability of water, further study is recommended to assess the value of the alluvial fan structure of the floodplains as an aquifer recharge area.

Asset 7: Archaeological Sites



There is inherent and undeniable value in Arizona's heritage, and it is important that we identify, manage, and protect the integrity of archaeological resources. Community growth should not dwarf historic landscapes and their cultural significance. Preservation is necessary to create a sense of place and understand the history of that place.

The larger Gold Canyon area contains numerous archaeological and historically significant locations, including culturally sensitive sites located throughout the foothills, around springs, and along washes. They are primarily Hohokam petroglyph sites, campsites, grinding sites or areas of shard and lithic scatters, located on ridgelines, rock outcroppings, around springs, along washes, and within floodplains. The historically significant sites include primarily ranching cabins, corrals, and the like, or mining pits and artifacts.

When considering prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in the planning process, **avoidance is generally considered the prudent approach.** Future projects may require a Class III cultural survey to determine the presence of NRHP-eligible sites and properties (Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan).

Conservation: Revisiting the 2002 Superstition Area Land Plan



The Superstition Area Land Plan, based on a comprehensive study commissioned by the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT) in 2000, is widely accepted as authoritative regarding which lands surrounding Gold Canyon should be designated for development and which lands should be conserved as open space for future generations.

The SALT study area included approximately 105 square miles, bordered on the north by the Superstition Wilderness Area, on the east by the Tonto National Forest, and by a mile southwest and south of US-60. The majority of the study area--approximately 82% --consists of Arizona State Trust Land, which is managed by the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD).

The SALT study presents a compelling argument that 53% of the state trust lands in the study area **meets all of the Arizona State Land Department criteria to be reclassified for conservation** and recommends doing so. Twenty years after its publication, the Superstition Area Land Plan is still the "gold standard" for Gold Canyon planning and should be the basis for all environmental planning considerations in the area.

The following pages summarize the findings of the SALT study and reiterate its recommendation for a large, unfragmented conservation area to be included in future planning in order to protect Gold Canyon's unique environmental assets:

ASLD Criteria	SALT Study Findings
<p>1. Open Space</p> <p>Existence of substantially undisturbed open space values that make the land's conservation an asset to the community, or to other adjacent developable state trust lands.</p>	<p>Substantial undisturbed open space exists to make conservation of the state trust lands proposed as preserve to be an economic and environmental asset for the future development of the remaining, adjacent state trust land, while continuing grazing as an economic asset. These lands would also serve as a buffer and open space asset for the Superstition Wilderness Area, the Tonto National Forest, and Pinal County.</p>
<p>2. Unique Scenic Beauty</p> <p>a) existence of a natural community landmark, such as a significant mountain vista; or b) existence of a scenic vista on, or through, the land under petition from nearby major roadways or pathways, in addition to the mere existence of undeveloped open space.</p>	<p>Many natural geologic landmarks exist throughout the area proposed as a preserve, and these lands provide a stunning scenic vista through which the Superstition Mountains can be seen from US-60.</p>
<p>3. Wildlife and Vegetation</p> <p>a) existence of significant vegetation or wildlife, native to the region, and worth of protection due to the relative lushness, health and diversity of the vegetation, or the number and diversity of the wildlife; b) existence of endangered, threatened, or protected plants, or endangered or threatened wildlife species, as identified under federal or state laws; c) existence of significant stands of a signature plant characteristic of the location.</p>	<p>Significant native wildlife and vegetation do exist within the proposed preserve lands and are worthy of protection due to the number and diversity of the wildlife, and the lushness, health, and diversity of the vegetation.</p> <p>Also, several endangered and threatened wildlife species, including the Pygmy Owl, do exist throughout the proposed preserve area, as do many protected plants.</p> <p>Significant signature riparian areas do exist along the major washes of the proposed preserve area, as well as stands of Saguaro Cactus.</p>
<p>4. Cultural Resources</p> <p>a) existence of a prehistoric or historic archaeological site; b) existence of a historic structure; or c) comparative costs of mitigation, data recovery, or preservation compared to potential revenue production of the land.</p>	<p>Many known Hohokam archaeological sites exist throughout the proposed preserve lands, and there is likely a high potential that many other archaeological sites remain to be discovered.</p> <p>There are also a few historic ranching and mining structures around the proposed preserve area.</p> <p>The probable cost of mitigation, data recovery, or preservation of known and likely archaeological sites, in addition to the high cost of building on the proposed preserve lands, would render potential development revenues questionable.</p>
<p>5. Wildlife Habitat</p> <p>a) existence of sufficient acreage and habitat quality to support populations of endangered, threatened, or other particular species; b) interconnection between the land under petition and nearby public lands, for wildlife movement; c) diversity of plant communities, or bio-diversity of plant or animal species; d) habitat condition, whether intact or degraded; or e) distance from an existing or proposed roadway, utility line, or urban environment.</p>	<p>Sufficient acreage and habitat quality exists within the proposed preserve area to support the existing populations of endangered and threatened species, with the exception of the Pygmy Owl, and offer a significant wildlife movement connection to the Superstition Wilderness and Tonto National Forest.</p> <p>These lands also contain a biodiversity of plant and animal species, and the condition of habitat within the proposed preserve is intact.</p> <p>Also, the proposed preserve area habitat is several miles from US 60 and the existing electric transmission corridor.</p>

ASLD Criteria	SALT Study Findings
<p>6. Geologic or Topographic Features</p> <p>a) existence of a significant wash, slope, or other topographic feature; b) existence of a unique rock outcropping, formation, or other unusual geologic feature; and c) know soil conditions unsuitable for development purposes.</p>	<p>Several significant washes, foothills, and valleys exist within the proposed preserve area, as well as many unique rock outcroppings and formations.</p> <p>The proposed preserve area consists substantially of soils and slopes which are unsuitable for development purposes.</p>
<p>7. Watershed Integrity and Floodplain Management</p> <p>a) relationship of the land to maintenance of the integrity of one or more watersheds b) impact of the 100-year floodplain on the land</p>	<p>The proposed preserve lands would maintain the integrity of several important watersheds and would protect several 100-year floodplains.</p>
<p>8. Surface and Groundwater</p> <p>a) existence of a spring or other wetland; b) occurrence of perennial or intermittent stream flow; and c) potential for groundwater recharge</p>	<p>Many springs exist throughout the proposed preserve area, and many intermittent streams flow through it as well.</p> <p>There may be some potential for groundwater to recharge within the proposed preserve area.</p>
<p>9. Long Term Viability of the Land for Conservation Management</p> <p>a) viability of the land based on its size, configuration, and location, for successfully conserving the resources it seeks to protect; and b) relationship of conservation of the land to resolving wildland fire issues, particularly in the urban-wildland interface.</p>	<p>The proposed preserve area is clearly viable for conserving its resources because it is 45 sections of mostly contiguous configuration, and adjacent to the Superstition Wilderness and the Tonto National Forest.</p> <p>Continued grazing in this proposed preserve area would substantially control the vegetative fuels for wildfire protection.</p>
<p>10. Local, Regional, or Other Planning Considerations</p> <p>a) relationship between the proposed conservation designation and adopted local and regional plans and policies; and b) relationship of conservation of the land to other federal, state, local, or private land trust preserves, holdings, or plans.</p>	<p>Pinal County has adopted this study's proposed preserve area as "Public Resource" land use in the county's 2001-2011 Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>The area is immediately adjacent to the Federal lands of the Superstition Wilderness Area and the Tonto National Forest.</p>
<p>11. Recreation</p> <p>a) existence of proposed trail-based or other low-impact recreation opportunities; and b) existence of direct access to or from adjacent public or private lands used for recreational purposes.</p>	<p>The proposed preserve lands provide many trail-based and low-impact recreational opportunities, and would protect and provide direct access to many important trailheads of the Superstition Wilderness Area.</p>
<p>12. Accessibility</p> <p>a) public accessibility and nature of that accessibility to the land; and b) impact of accessibility, based on the purpose of conservation of the land.</p>	<p>The proposed preserve area would also protect Peralta Road as a dedicated public access from US 60 to the Superstition Wilderness Area, and the preserve itself, and would provide for a wilderness experience accessibility without the negative impact of driving through an urban development.</p>

ASLD Criteria	SALT Study Findings
<p>13. Scientific Education</p> <p>a) historic use of the land for scientific research purposes; and b) opportunities for scientific education</p>	<p>Arizona State University has used these proposed preserve lands for scientific study over the years, and preserving these lands would enhance the opportunity for ASU to continue with its scientific education.</p>
<p>14. Types of Multiple Use</p> <p>a) multiple use potential of the land; and b) impact of specific multiple uses on the Land Planning & Design Consultant</p>	<p>The multiple-use potential of these proposed preserve lands consists of recreation and scenic resource management, grazing management, wildlife management, riparian vegetation management, watershed management, and cultural resource management.</p> <p>The impacts of these multiple uses would all be favorable to the lands "preserved," as well as to the adjacent remaining lands left for development.</p>
<p>15. Resource Production Preservation</p> <p>a) existence of grazing lands under petition that a conservation designation may help to protect; b) existence of prime agricultural areas under the petition that a conservation designation may help to protect; and c) protection of the resource production component (such as grazing, agriculture, mining, and timber) of the local or regional economy.</p>	<p>A conservation designation of these proposed preserve lands would help protect the existing grazing activities currently permitted on these lands, thereby protecting some of the resource production of the local economy.</p>
<p>16. Relationship to Other State Trust Lands</p> <p>a) proximity to other state trust lands; b) development capability of adjacent state trust lands; and c) anticipated timing of development activity on adjacent trust lands.</p>	<p>The proposed preserve lands are north and east of the other state trust lands that lie north of US 60.</p> <p>The adjacent remaining state trust lands have an excellent capability for development – market indicators suggest that these adjacent remaining state trust lands would likely be developed in the next ten to twenty years.</p>
<p>17. Pre-Existing Protections</p> <p>Existence of any federal, state, or local law requiring protection by existing lessee of proposed conservation values.</p>	<p>The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had imposed a Pygmy Owl Endangered Species overlay corridor over a portion of these proposed preserve lands. Though repealed in a court appeal, there is the likelihood that this overlay corridor will eventually be reinstated.</p>
<p>18. Tourism</p> <p>Impact on local or regional tourism.</p>	<p>Tourism from Arizona, the nation, and the world to the Superstition Wilderness provides a substantial economic benefit to the local and regional area – the proposed preserve would increase tourism to the area.</p>
<p>19. Benefit to the Trust</p> <p>Whether, and for what reason, reclassification is in the best interest of the Trust.</p>	<p>Reclassification of the proposed preserve lands to conservation would substantially increase the value of the adjacent remaining state trust lands, which are the most suitable areas for development.</p>

Balancing Conservation and Sustainable Development

The conservation of ecosystems is of paramount importance. With increased population growth and development, it is imperative to manage and protect native species residing in Gold Canyon. As part of the Sonoran Desert, there are unique and fragile communities in the area that deserve to be conserved for current and future generations. These communities are teeming with wildlife that perform numerous ecosystem services, such as regulating pests and diseases, pollination, climate regulation and nutrient cycling. Maintaining local ecosystems through responsible planning ensures that wildlife habitats and their benefits persist for decades to come.

Conserving a maximum area of open space would not only be beneficial to wildlife but is also central to livability for residents. An enjoyable green network of open space and trails provides opportunities for walking, biking, nature study and more, thus benefiting the community's overall public health and promoting a more active lifestyle.

Any new development should be mindful of the considerable natural assets and carefully planned to protect and complement these natural assets rather than destroy them. The following strategies are recommended:

- **Low Impact Development**

With increasing temperatures bringing about hazardous droughts and increasing populations demanding more water, it is imperative to find solutions that are cost effective and environmentally beneficial. **Low Impact Development (LID)** is a sustainable practice that can be used to alleviate issues surrounding pollution, flooding, groundwater recharge, and infiltration. LID has been slowly implemented in Arizona because of the desert climate and lower rainfall than other regions of the country. Currently, the County does not require implementation of LID practices on new development and instead focuses on retention and detention. However, Gold Canyon hopes to foster a changing mindset by initiating a system

highlighting a framework for implementing LID practices.

The term *low impact development* (LID) refers to systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat. The EPA currently uses the term green infrastructure to refer to the management of wet weather flows that use these processes, and to refer to the patchwork of natural areas that provide habitat, flood protection, cleaner air and cleaner water. At both the site and regional scale, LID/GI practices aim to preserve, restore and create green space using soils, vegetation, and rainwater harvest techniques. LID is an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features, minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. There are many practices that have been used to adhere to these principles such as bioretention facilities, rain gardens, vegetated rooftops, rain barrels and permeable pavements. By implementing LID principles and practices, water can be managed in a way that reduces the impact of built areas and promotes the natural movement of water within an ecosystem or watershed. Applied on a broad scale, LID can maintain or restore a watershed's hydrologic and ecological functions.

- **Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO)**

Gold Canyon would greatly benefit from the adoption of a set of special zoning ordinances to guide future development. The City of Scottsdale has had a model ESLO in place since 1991 and describes its goals as follows:

The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO) is a set of zoning regulations adopted by the Scottsdale City Council in 1991 (amended in 2001, 2003 and 2004) to guide development throughout the 134 square miles of desert

and mountain areas of northern Scottsdale.

Purpose

The intent and purpose of the ESLO is to identify and protect environmentally sensitive lands in the City and to promote public health and safety by controlling development on these lands. The ordinance requires that a percentage of each property be permanently preserved as Natural Area Open Space and that specific environmental features be protected, including vegetation, washes, mountain ridges and peaks, to assure appropriate development.

Goals

“The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance has been established in order to:

- *Encourage the protection of unique and sensitive natural features in the Upper Sonoran Desert, including but not limited to the mountains and hills, large rock formations, native landscape, archeological and historical sites and significant washes,*
- *Encourage development that blends with the character and nature of this special desert setting, Protect the public and property from the special hazards that can be found in this desert setting, and*
- *Minimize the costs to build and maintain the public infrastructure needed to sustain the use of the land.*
- *This ordinance is not intended to deny the reasonable use of the land, but rather guide its use in ways that are sustainable and recognize the unique opportunities this setting provides.*

Community Benefit

The ESLO has a direct impact on the residents of Scottsdale by determining the location and design of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development in almost two-thirds of the City. Application of the ESLO has resulted in the preservation of over 9,000 acres of Sonoran Desert open space while protecting

our residents from potential flooding, erosion and detrimental visual impacts.

Like Scottsdale, Gold Canyon has an ongoing interest in preserving the unique qualities of the Sonoran Desert, in particular the approximately 12,000 acres of state trust land east of Peralta Road. This includes native vegetation, scenic corridors, animal habitats, boulder outcroppings, and washes. Gold Canyon contains an abundance of diverse native plant and animal species that contribute to its character and beauty. They merit protection under an Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO).

An important part of ESLO regulations is the **Natural Area Open Space (NAOS)** requirement. The NAOS requirements are designed to preserve the desert in its natural state. NAOS is an effective preservation tool, but its integrity can only be protected and maintained with the assistance of a well-informed public.

● **Rethinking Residential Zoning Classifications**

Gold Canyon’s residential zoning classification currently is “moderate low residential” (1-3.5 dwelling units per acre), including undeveloped ASLD land that could be sold and developed in the future. Given the area’s high biological habitat value and outstanding scenic features, the preservation of open space should be the primary development tool.

Appropriate growth and preservation will be vital towards a smart growth approach. The careful planning of low-density development (small development clusters surrounded and permeated by large natural buffer zones) along with a proactive conservation approach will make the community even more unique and will serve as a lasting legacy for many generations to come.

Gold Canyon has significant and unique environmental assets that are integral to the desirability of the area. The County can help support ecosystem services by encouraging the use of integrated conservation design, which should emphasize the protection of significant

environmental corridors for recreation and wildlife movement. There should be a coordinated regional approach to protecting such resources, led by the Pinal County and community organizations.

- **Green Building**

Green building is the method of designing structures in a sustainable manner with minimal negative effects on human health and the environment. Overall, green buildings have less environmental burden than conventional buildings by saving resources, generating less waste, and costing less to operate. An important function of sustainable building is to reduce energy consumption through architectural design. Techniques such as installing more efficient insulation, heating and cooling systems, placing windows where they can best take advantage of solar energy, and weatherizing can dramatically reduce the amount of energy we consume. Many of these measures can be implemented at minimal additional cost to conventional construction and can help ensure the long-term affordability of operating and maintaining homes and buildings. Finding a way for the built and natural environment to coexist harmoniously will be beneficial for the general health of Gold Canyon's residents.

- **Energy Efficiency**

Energy is a vital infrastructure component and the principles of proper energy management should be reflected in the community's planning and design to ensure long-term sustainability. To become a model in sustainability, Gold Canyon plans to preserve renewable energy resources and promote innovative preservation strategies for future plans and designs. Efficiently utilizing available energy resources and supporting the development of renewable energy sources will be beneficial to both residents and visitors.

- **Water Conservation**

Gold Canyon residents are gravely concerned about the safety of Arizona's and the community's future water supply in light of

continued growth. The state's *Growing Smarter* legislation seeks to connect water resources availability and cost implications with the land use planning process. Water is a natural resource that is enjoyed by the public throughout the natural and built environment and is necessary for the sustenance of life. It is a critical limited resource that must be managed effectively in the desert environment. Therefore, a sound water resources plan and portfolio that considers a balance between public and private uses will ensure a long-term, safe, and reliable water supply. Such a plan can also efficiently and effectively manage the reuse of water to provide greater resilience against environmental impacts.

Gold Canyon, in 2022, has partnered with AZ Water Company to roll out a water conservation campaign. The program, *Water: More Precious Than Gold*, is a demand management program built specifically for Gold Canyon with the intention to educate residents about the importance of water conservation and to encourage water-saving techniques.



The content is geared towards empowering residents and businesses to do their part to make sure they are using water efficiently.

- **Air Quality**

Gold Canyon's high air quality is a source of pride for residents. Excellent air quality contributes to human health, outdoor recreation, dark skies, tourism, and community character. Recognizing the impacts of air pollution on our environmental, economic, and community health is important in making decisions about land use and transportation.

With ongoing residential and infrastructure development, a special effort should be made to require construction-related dust control.

- **Solid Waste Reduction and Illegal Dumping**

Improper waste management can negatively impact both resident and environmental health. Accumulation of solid waste leads to water and air pollution and soil contamination. Existing waste management systems should be efficiently combined to decrease waste generation as the population increases. With the Apache Junction Landfill slated to close in 2035, it is vital that the region focus on providing the proper infrastructure to equitably serve all residents. However, while it is important to maximize current best practices regarding solid waste, for example, by comprehensive recycling, Gold Canyon should also attempt to move closer to a “zero waste” system.

Gold Canyon has a serious problem with illegal dumping in the surrounding desert areas. One of the key ways to mitigate this issue is to make disposal of large items and recycle as easy as possible for residents. Dumping is usually driven by the cost and difficulty of disposal of large items. Gold Canyon needs a free transfer station located in a discrete location near the community.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Gold Canyon and its surroundings have significant and unique environmental assets that are integral to the desirability of the area

A collective effort between the County and community organizations will be needed while reviewing and facilitating future projects in Gold Canyon.

A conscious focus on environmental sustainability will be key in the success of related goals and policies. This, in turn, will provide residents of Gold Canyon a community with minimal impact on its natural surroundings and the preservation of natural treasures.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 2.1: PROTECT GOLD CANYON'S UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS

Policy: Encourage land owners, property owners, and developers to preserve the environment by:

- a. Leaving areas of sensitive lands in their natural state
- b. Clustering residential units where appropriate
- c. Prohibiting new development within floodways.

Policy: Carefully integrate changes to drainage in a master stormwater plan that recognizes existing drainage and wash patterns, discharge locations, and storm water flows.

Policy: Emphasize non-structural flood control techniques where feasible. Choose and foster flood control methods that retain beneficial functions and maintain natural flooding and riparian vegetation while minimizing damage to private property.

Policy: Encourage creative design for storm water harvesting and detention ponds to reduce increased storm water flows and provide an opportunity to channel storm rainwater to native Sonoran Desert plant material.

Policy: Integrate large buffer zones of natural vegetation along roadways, washes, and around residential development to protect viewshed.

Policy: Work with the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT), the ASLD, and local community organizations to conserve ASLD assets and maintain their natural character.

Goal 2.2: PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY IN THE GOLD CANYON AREA

Policy: Educate citizens and encourage awareness regarding the preservation of habitats and species existing within the area.

Policy: Implement a set of “environmentally sensitive lands” ordinances similar to the Scottsdale ESLO, including a NAOS requirement.

Goal 2.3: CONSERVE EXISTING HABITAT, RECREATE HABITAT WHERE IT HAS BEEN DESTROYED, AND PROVIDE NEW HABITATS WHERE APPROPRIATE

Policy: Encourage the use of integrated conservation design, zoning, and other land use strategies to conserve wildlife habitat, wildlife movement corridors, and environmentally sensitive features.

Policy: Conserve corridors along significant ephemeral washes to preserve habitat with the greatest value for wildlife. Include the floodway, floodplain and appropriate buffer zones to allow a transition to urbanized areas.

Policy: Promote planting and maintenance of indigenous vegetation along washes, the US 60, and other public spaces to enhance use by native wildlife.

Goal 2.4: PROTECT DARK SKIES IN GOLD CANYON

Policy: Enforce the Pinal County lighting ordinance for Zone 1 (low ambient light areas) that includes a standard to encourage residential, commercial and industrial property owners to install lighting only for safety, security and utility purposes to minimize light pollution of neighboring properties.

Policy: Promote regulations similar to those found in Flagstaff and Tucson, which are recommended by the International Dark-Sky Association.

Goal 2.5: ENCOURAGE LOW-IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF URBANIZATION

Policy: Incorporate LID into the community’s design standards and describe detailed methods about how to incorporate these practices.

Policy: Educate the community about the benefits and necessity of LID practices.

Goal 2.6: SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THAT MINIMIZES THE IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND HUMAN HEALTH

Policy: Promote education on solid waste, nontoxic pest management, green buildings, solar power, dark skies, xeriscape, and rain gardens.

Policy: Protect and enhance Gold Canyon’s air quality.

Policy: Encourage the use of “green building practices” for developers/builders.

Policy: Require the use of low-impact development practices for all new development.

Policy: Conserve for future generations permanent open space to connect the natural resources that are the essence of what defines the community of Gold Canyon.

Goal 2.7: REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF SOLID WASTE AND MINIMIZE ILLEGAL DUMPING

Policy: Require trash collection companies to include comprehensive recycling of standard recyclables (glass, plastic, paper, etc.) and green waste (grass clippings, weeds, etc.).

Policy: Promote “zero waste” practices.

Policy: Enforce local laws against illegal dumping.

**Goal 2.8: PROTECT THE IRREPLACEABLE
LEGENDARY LANDSCAPES AND LIFESTYLE OF
THE COMMUNITY AND REGION**

Policy: The community will lead by example by requiring development to leave the lightest footprint possible on the landscape.

Policy: The community will convene regional partners to define the metrics and agree to a regional compact for the protection of the resources that define the region and the quality of life for our residents.

Draft

Chapter 3

Gold Canyon Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space



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INTRODUCTION

This parks, recreation, and open space element is a comprehensive representation of the Gold Canyon's Community Plan. It is intended to be the best reflection of the preferences and needs of the Gold Canyon community. It is also a guide for the future expansion, addition, and preservation of Gold Canyon's recreational space. The community's recreational and open space assets are managed by a number of entities, including, but not limited to, Pinal County, Homeowners Associations, and State and Federal Agencies. The community recognizes that quality recreation programs and well-maintained facilities are essential community components that improve the quality of life of residents and visitors. Tourism, business, industry, and new residents are drawn to communities with well developed recreational programs and amenities.

National Park & Open Space Benchmarks

The National Recreation and Park Association ("NRPA"), identifies national benchmarks for communities and suggests that the national average is 1 park for every 2100 residents and 10 acres of park land for every 1000 residents. According to Gold Canyon's current population of approximately 12,000, the targeted park facilities is 5-6 and targeted park land is 120 acres. It is this community plan's goal to meet this suggested community standards.

Existing Parks, Trails, and Facilities

Mini Parks

Mini-parks are small neighborhood parcels less than two (2) acres in size and set aside for a children's play area (i.e., tot lot) or adult amenities that are compatible with surrounding residential uses. Mini-parks in Gold Canyon are generally found in planned residential subdivisions and maintained by a HOA.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are typically two to ten acres in area. These parks may include basketball courts, multipurpose fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, and open spaces. The following identifies and describes an example of one of the community's neighborhood parks:



- Dinosaur Park: This park is a Pinal County park. The park rests in the shadows of the famous and beautiful Gold Canyon Dinosaur Mountain. This park is where citizens can relax and enjoy the serenity of this superb location. The park includes multiple picnic ramadas, a short walking path and pollinator garden, and playground equipment and swings.

Community Parks

- Silly Mountain Park: This 200-acre park, managed by the City of Apache Junction, is located very near Gold Canyon on BLM land at 5203 E. 36th Ave just north of US-60 on Silly Mountain Road. The park provides hikers with over three and a half (3.5) miles of trails varying from easy to



difficult to hike up and around Silly Mountain, offering excellent views of the city as well as the Valley. Additionally, there is an Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA ") accessible interpretive

trail which showcases a variety of native Sonoran Desert plants maintained by Apache Junction. There are also several amenities planned for future development in the Silly Mountain Park Master Plan.

Within Gold Canyon, a number of parks and recreational facilities exist within neighborhoods, many controlled and maintained by individual Home Owner Associations (HOAs). Details regarding the use of these parks and recreational facilities can be obtained through the individual HOAs.

Open Space and Trails

Open space and trails are also a vital part of the community's "park" system serving to protect the Sonoran Desert character of the community, enhance right-of-ways, as well as preserving native desert and providing flood protection. Abundant areas of accessible open space exist in, and around, Gold Canyon. There are numerous trails available near the Gold Canyon area. Examples include the Hieroglyphic Canyon Trail, Peralta Canyon Trail, Wave Cave Trail, Lost Goldmine Trail, etc. Information regarding these and other trails can be found on county and state websites or through many of the existing hiking applications available online.

Within Gold Canyon, a number of trails exist within and between neighborhoods, many controlled and maintained by individual Home Owner Associations (HOA). Details and maps of these trail systems can be obtained through the individual HOAs.

Regional Parks

In addition to the city's many park facilities, there are a few larger, regional parks located outside the community that are operated by Pinal County, the State of Arizona, or United States Forest Service. The following identifies and describes the regional park regional park nearest to Gold Canyon:

- Peralta Regional Park (opened in 2023). This facility was built and is operated by Pinal

County. The park is designed and constructed for a backcountry primitive camping experience. Campsites are set up for car and tent camping only. Parking spaces are 10 by 20 feet, no vehicles longer than 20 feet are permitted in the camping area. The park is situated in the incredible Superstition Mountains foothills and will include an equestrian staging area, 9+ miles of multi-use non-motorized trails with varying degrees of difficulty, 18 picnic sites and 2 large group picnic sites, a stargazing node for setting up telescopes, 31 remote campsites, and an interpretive trail with educational panels.

The goal of this community plan section is to advocate for an overall healthy community through access to parks, recreational facilities, trails and active neighborhoods designs. These efforts will help create a dynamic community while reducing health problems through activity.



GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 3.1: DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE TO MEET THE RECREATIONAL AND HEALTH NEEDS OF GOLD CANYON RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Policy: Encourage and facilitate public participation in planning and expanding the parks and trail system through various means,

including regularly scheduled community meetings.

Policy: Consider development of community sponsored facilities such as: off-leash dog parks, expansion of pickleball courts, open space expansion and bicycle facilities.

Policy: Coordinate with developers to incorporate potential sites for parks, trails, open space and other recreational facilities in their development master plans. Continue to require residential developers to construct neighborhood parks and place operation and maintenance responsibilities on HOAs.

Policy: Coordinate with other public and private groups to promote joint acquisition, use and public/private participation in the development of new parks and trails and recreational facilities.

Goal 3.2: TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY FOR EXECUTION OF A DIVERSE PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES STRATEGY

Policy: Maintain existing youth and adult volunteer programs and develop new programs to further enhance youth programs and facilities.

Policy: Maintain and develop special events that attract visitors and residents to parks and recreation facilities and downtown business district.

Policy: Develop and promote programs and facilities that are inclusive in nature that enhance the lives of individuals with special needs.

Policy: Improve community hiking, biking and pedestrian safety. Enhancement of signage, marking and community knowledge of State pedestrian and biking statutes.

Goal 3.3: PROMOTE THE PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM AS A QUALITY OF LIFE ASSET TO ATTRACT NEW EMPLOYERS, RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO THE COMMUNITY

Policy: Maximize participation in programs through improved marketing and offering multiple registration options.

Policy: Develop a community-related online tool that provides information on recreational opportunities and facilities (e.g., trail information).

Policy: Maximize the public use of facilities through improved marketing and customer-oriented reservation processes (e.g., online tool).

Policy: Utilize a multi-modal marketing approach to include print, electronic, social media sources, and events in the community.

Goal 3.4: UTILIZE MULTIPLE FUNDING SOURCES IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND FACILITY AMENITIES FOR COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Policy: Work with business leaders, Federal and State agencies to maximize use of grants, gifts, and corporate partnerships.

Policy: Periodically evaluate community demographics to reevaluate recreational policies and goals. Conduct periodic community surveys/polls to keep current in community interests and values.

Chapter 4

Gold Canyon Neighborhoods



INTRODUCTION

Gold Canyon is a small residential community just east of Apache Junction. Nestled at the foot of the iconic Superstition Mountains, the community remains one of the eastern most residential areas within the Phoenix valley. Most of the vast Sonoran Desert surrounding the community is owned and managed by the Arizona State Land Department.

The community is primarily developed as a series of housing developments mostly organized as Homeowner Associations (HOAs). Several HOAs are large, self-contained communities with local recreational facilities, golf courses, and meeting venues managed by property management groups. Some are gated and private communities unto themselves, which leads to a lack of community cohesiveness. There are no what some would call neighborhoods, but more a collection of housing developments with no cohesive overall community plan.

There are pockets of commercial properties with small businesses and professional services located in two areas. One is along the Kings Ranch Road corridor where most of the remaining open commercial property is located. The other is in the shopping center at the northeast corner of US-60 and Superstition Mountain Drive.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gold Canyon seeks to have housing and neighborhoods that address the community's values of accessibility, prosperity, quality of life, and maintaining the natural environment. The community's residents boast a generous and caring spirit for nature, animals, and each other.

Services are needed to be made available to the community including varied programs through the parks and recreation opportunities, social services addressing the homeless population, community and neighborhood outreach, senior

services, community recycling, and improved County services.

The community does not have a public transportation system, which places its residents at a disadvantage for economic opportunities and accessing services. GCCI and ADOBE, two local citizens groups, are working with ADOT and the Pinal County Transportation Advisory Committee to address local road circulation issues.

Solving public transportation infrastructure issues takes time. In the absence of this public benefit, this community plan is exploring a variety of transportation options for the community, encouraging a more walkable and bikeable approach to future transportation. With this approach, connecting neighborhoods to commercial and job centers will promote sustainability in the community.

Housing variety requires affordable housing options for all income levels and needs. This may range from social security disability income of less than \$10,000 per year to earnings over \$100,000 per year. Housing should include size variations from studio to family-sized homes and rental versus ownership. Gold Canyon's small businesses often struggle finding workers since housing costs do not allow low-wage earners opportunities to live in our community. Instead, many have to commute long distances to work in Gold Canyon.

Statewide, rentals average \$1,200 per month, and the average mortgage is \$1,400 (source: Arizona Department of Housing). Nationwide, the homelessness epidemic is directly related to the lack of affordable housing. In order to maintain an affordable housing stock, the state provides a variety of programs which the County could participate in or promote. These programs include the low-income housing tax credit, HOME funding, community development block grants ("CDBG") funding, public and private partnerships, Section 8, and County public housing opportunities. Pinal County completed the Pinal County Consolidated Plan

for housing in 2019. This plan will assist the County on directing CDBG funding.

Large new housing development and expansive growth could ascend on Gold Canyon primarily to the east of the community core. There are few in-fill opportunities. Responsible development is a critical component to maintaining the standards of housing and diversifying the housing stock in the community.

Gold Canyon is working with various organizations and surrounding communities to plan towards the future growth of the area. These organizations focus on smart growth, sustainable practices, and the livability of the community.

These plans include:

- Active Transportation Plan
- ASU Land Use Planning
- Apache Junction Impact
- Pinal County Consolidated Plan
- Apache Junction Homeless Strategic Plan and Housing Assessment

GCCI has conducted a variety of community meetings and seeks to incorporate the wishes of the community in all future growth and development in order to create a diverse, walkable, livable community which maintains the surrounding natural beauty and heritage. To accomplish this goal, a variety of housing options are essential.

Other areas the community should focus on are to provide accessibility and diversity to the housing stock which may include:

1. Compliance with fair housing laws through planning and zoning
2. Encouraging sustainable features in housing development such as:
 - a. Infill
 - b. Xeriscape
 - c. Green building techniques and incentives,
3. Consideration of transportation options ensuring walkability of neighborhoods and providing connectivity.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 4.1: MAINTAIN AND ATTRACT A QUALITY HOUSING STOCK IN CONDITION, DESIGN, AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

Policy: Develop design guidelines and standards such as energy efficient “green” designs for all new housing construction.

Policy: Strengthen and implement housing quality standards for existing housing units by enforcing the property maintenance code to include standards of care requiring trash removal, landscape requirements, and sewer hook-ups.

Goal 4.2: INCORPORATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN ALL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Policy: Maintain the natural environment, views and access to greenspace by establishing connectivity and walkability between existing developments and commercial areas while ensuring connectivity to future development.

Policy: Encourage infill, redevelopment, while preserving low-density housing development in areas designated on land use plans.

Gold Canyon is comprised of the following neighborhoods (arranged by size):



Mountain Brook Village

- 55+ active adult community
- 1,695 homes and casitas
- Golf course, tennis, community pool
- HOA: yes

Superstition Foothills

- 1,058 homes within several communities
- 1,200 to 4,000+ sqft
- Community pool and spa
- Integrated trail system
- No street lights

Peralta Trails

- Gated community around Peralta Trails Elementary School
- Approximately 800 units
- Open space desert landscaping with integrated trail system
- Pool and clubhouse available to some owners
- No streetlights
- HOA: yes

Peralta Canyon

- Built 2019-2023
- Approximately 800 units
- No community pool; some amenities
- HOA: yes

Gold Canyon East

- Community includes several neighborhoods (Superstition Vistas, Tesoro Townhomes, Thunder Ridge, Toscano Villas, and custom homes)
- Approximately 650 units
- No street lights
- HOA: yes

Tesoro Townhomes

- Gated townhome community
- Four one- and two-story complexes around Gold Canyon Golf Resort golf course
- Community pool and clubhouse
- HOA: yes

Toscano Villas

- Townhouse community
- 75 units
- Community pool, spa, clubhouse
- HOA: yes

Entrada Del Oro

- Near El Camino Viejo
- Approximately 500 units
- HOA: yes

Superstition Mountain Golf and Country Club

- Luxury homes on 890 acres
- Part of Superstition Foothills community
- Approximately 200 units
- Private club, two golf courses, community pool and spa
- No streetlights
- HOA: yes

Sunrise at Gold Canyon Ranch

- Single-family, ranch-style homes near Kings Ranch Rd
- Approximately 170 units
- 1,200 to 1,900 sqft
- No community pool or amenities
- HOA: yes

Vista Del Corizon

- Luxury custom gated community
- Approximately 160 units
- HOA: yes

Sierra Vista

- Two small gated communities
- 110 units
- 1,200 to 1,900 sqft, ranch style
- Small yards
- No community pool or amenities
- HOA: yes

Hermosa Hills

- 116 lots
- Custom built homes
- No community pool or amenities
- HOA: yes

Vista Point

- Hillside gated community across from Gold Canyon Golf Resort
- Approximately 90 single and two-story homes
- 1,100 to 1,900 sqft
- Community pool
- HOA: yes

Mesa Del Oro

- Equestrian-friendly, horse privileges
- 204 single family homes on 1-3 acres
- 79 homes on 3+ acres
- No street lights
- No HOA



Casas of Mesa Del Oro

- Townhome community near Kings Ranch Road
- Approximately 80 units
- Community pool
- HOA: yes (no management company)

El Mirador

- Gated community on 60 acres
- Approximately 50 units
- Custom homes on 0.5-2.5 acre lots
- HOA: yes

Fairway Views

- Gated community near Kings Ranch Rd
- Approximately 50 units (townhomes)
- Community pool
- HOA: yes

Gold Canyon Estates



- Gated custom-home community
- Attached to Fairway Views
- Approximately 50 units
- HOA: yes

Mountain Whisper

- Gated community of custom homes
- Approximately 30 units
- Large lots; home size 2,500-3,200 sqft
- No community pools or amenities
- HOA: yes

Quail Canyon

- Gated community of custom homes
- Approximately 30 units
- 3,000+ sqft on large lots
- No community pool
- HOA: yes

Hieroglyphic Trails

- Gated community near Kings Ranch Rd
- Approximately 30 units
- Custom homes 2,300 – 3,600 sqft
- No community pool or amenities
- HOA: yes

Pasion

- Gated hillside community
- Approximately 30 units
- 3,500+ sqft custom homes
- No community pool
- HOA: yes

Golden Springs

- Small community along Kings Ranch Road
- Multi-family and single family homes
- Single- and 2-story homes
- No HOA



In addition, Gold Canyon is home to the following RV and mobile home communities:

Gold Canyon RV and Golf Resort

- 55+ age restriction
- Controlled access
- Approximately 750 sites
- Community pool, clubhouse, and resort amenities

Montesa

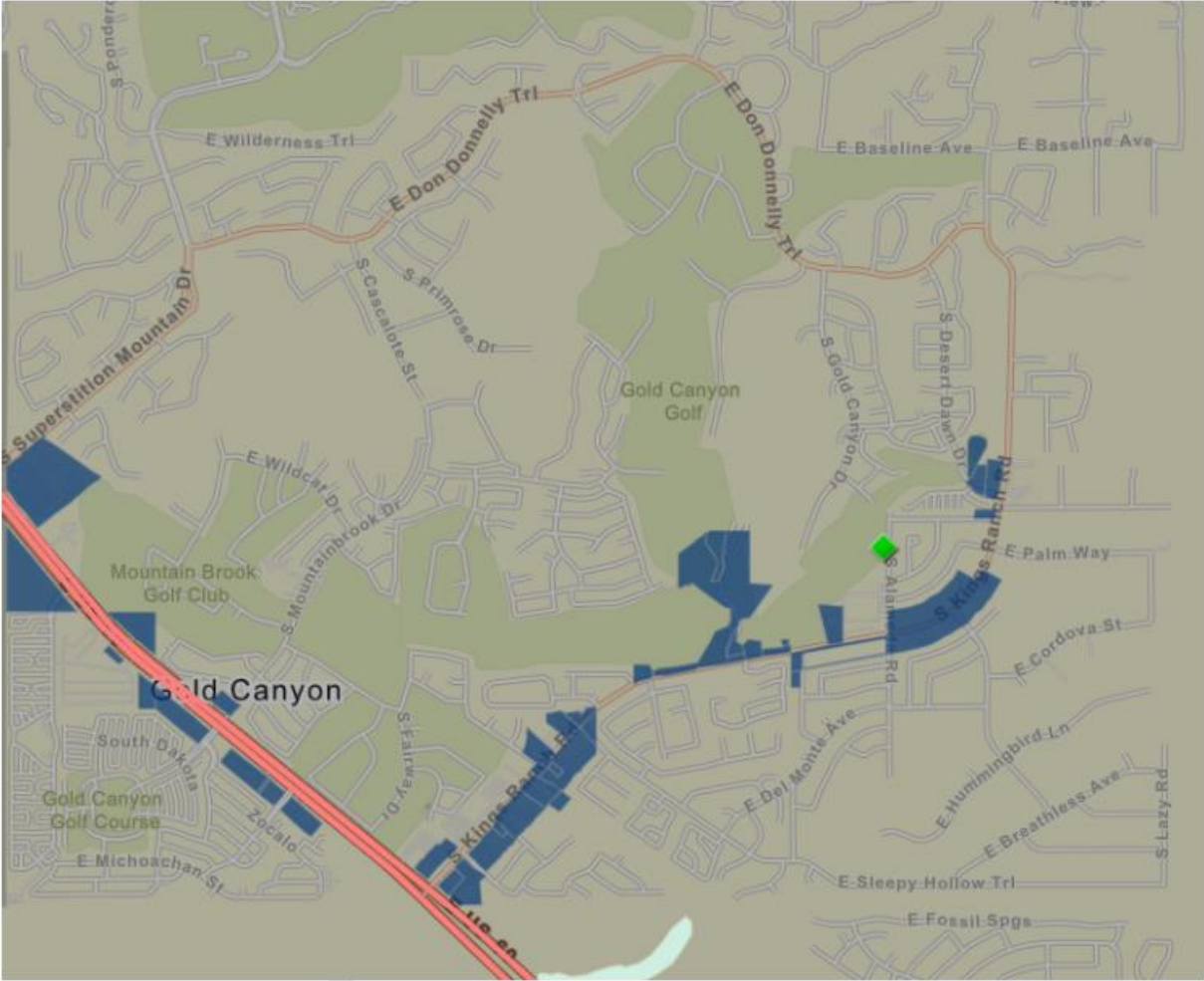
- 55+ age restriction
- Luxury park model homes with optional RV pads
- Controlled access
- Approximately 200 sites
- Community pool, clubhouse, and resort amenities

Arizonian RV Resort

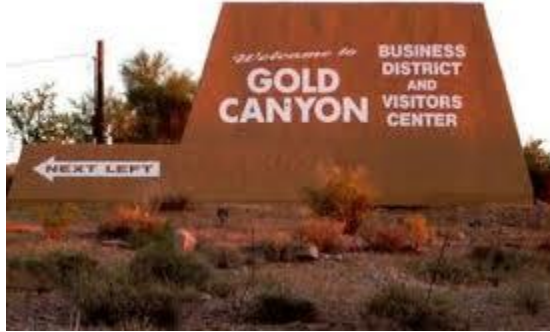
- 55+ age restriction
- Approximately 400 sites
- Community pool, clubhouse, and amenities

Chapter 5

Gold Canyon Business District



INTRODUCTION



Gold Canyon has an assortment of small businesses that provide most everything a person needs on a regular basis, from a grocery store, coffee shops, a bakery, restaurants, churches, health and wellness services including immediate care facilities, dry cleaners, a gas station, car wash, multiple banks, insurance companies, real estate agencies, an auto service station, and more.

This unincorporated community, which has a population of 11,875 as determined by the 2020 census, does not have a genuine “business district” feel as businesses are scattered throughout the community. Many people consider South Kings Ranch Road to be the Business District where there are a number of business/office plazas. Most of these buildings are not within walking distance of one another, which is where we are lacking the foot traffic that other communities like Superior, for example, offer.

Additionally, the current center of Gold Canyon lacks necessary density and residential development. Successful business districts must provide opportunities for current and incoming residents to live and work. The development of a designated town center in a fragmented community can bring a number of benefits. For example, it can provide a space for people to interact, host community events, and provide a focal point for the community. It can also serve as an economic center, providing employment opportunities, spur local business opportunities, and promote local shopping. Finally, it can bring a sense of identity and pride to a community that can bring people together.

Gold Canyon, with its age-restricted communities and large home owner associations, currently cannot support a traditional business district. In order to increase density and diversity, a mix of high-density housing must be established in close proximity to accommodate people of all ages and demographics within the business district area.

There are many amenities both within the community and nearby that Gold Canyon can take advantage of to draw people to the business district. The scenic views of the Superstition Wilderness, the Peralta Regional Park, extensive hiking trails, and the annual Renaissance Festival provide the opportunities to encourage infill development. In order to bring this vision to life, the community, working with the County, must find a way to adequately fund local programs and infrastructure projects.

Gold Canyon is known as a century-old historical community nestled in the shadow of the Superstition Mountains. It developed from a guest ranch in the late 1940s to become a tourist golf destination in the 1980s. At one



time, it was the home of *Apache Land* where many movies from the mid last century were filmed. This unique history and proximity to the Superstitions defines the community. However, the fragmented business district lacks character and does not preserve nor capitalize on this unique and colorful history.

In order to create a vibrant and successful business district, it must have a sense of place. One way this can be done is through branding. The use of the “Cowboy and his Horse” logo

was the first attempt to implement a branding strategy.

Gold Canyon must revitalize and focus efforts in the branding area to establish itself as a key destination within the greater Phoenix area. A clearly identified and consistently promoted logo is not only a sense of community pride but can also assist to attract people to Gold Canyon and the surrounding area.

In addition to a recognizable brand, the community must strive to create a sense of place. A common sense of place is created through shared experiences for both residents and visitors.

This connection encourages a sense of pride and ownership, which incentivizes residents to help make their community a better place to live, work, and play. It is necessary to revitalize deteriorating spaces, build on vacant lots, and expand local events to encourage both residents and visitors to shop and play in Gold Canyon.

TOURISM

Tourism can bring direct economic prosperity and commercial growth to a community. Today, the limited quantity of commercial anchors, distinct and dispersed HOA communities, a fragmented central core, and a meandering local road system reinforces the town's image as a pass-through community. When tourists visit, they desire an experience that they cannot have elsewhere.

Gold Canyon is surrounded by a variety of local tourist destination spots, including the Superstition Mountains, an expanse of the Sonoran Desert, Peralta Regional Park, world-class golf, hiking, and horseback riding. Finding a way to draw more visitors to the business district would help the local retail economy. The more time people spend in an area, the more money they tend to spend, which in turn generates tax revenue for the County.

It is important to encourage a diverse group of businesses in the business district that appeals to a range of ages, abilities, and interests. This includes more diversity in restaurants, new local shops, a Gold Canyon community center, and targeted advertising. A robust branding and revitalization strategy will set the stage for residents to shop locally and visitors to experience a unique and charming community close to the 5th largest city in the USA.

WALKABILITY

Walkability is an important feature for a successful small business district. It encourages visitors to spend more leisure and shopping, which directly impacts the local economy. A typical walkable business district creates a pleasant experience for pedestrians and provides easy access to stores, restaurants, cultural centers, and amenities. Appealing landscaping, adjacent green space with themed walks, hiking and cycling trail connections, information kiosks, wayfinding signs, plus adequate shade would be ideal.

A well-designed walkable business district includes short block distances, a mix of land uses, low driving speeds, and building entrances oriented to the street. At present, there is a mix of uses: restaurants, churches, medical establishments, small retail shops, and a pharmacy. However, there is a significant distance between these entities and only one crosswalk. More congestion and safety concerns will develop near US-60 with the construction of a new service station on Kings Ranch Road.

An additional crosswalk is planned between the Methodist Church and the Food Bank.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As the business district continues to grow and redevelop, it is important to choose new projects that enhance the business district as an integrated whole, not just an individual site. New development and redevelopment can help change the current Kings Ranch Road mix into a truly vibrant business district. Of course, these

developments need to be well connected and designed to enhance the experience for both pedestrians and vehicle traffic.

There are several vacant, undeveloped lots along Kings Ranch Road that are ready for expansion.

As business grows, older retail strips will have fewer vacant storefronts. Redeveloping these existing sites will bring diversity and vitality to the business district.



PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

In order to continue developing a business district in Gold Canyon, it is vital that the community/County develops a business district master plan before ad hoc expansion develops. A long-term master plan will provide an overall vision and strategy for future tourism growth. This plan can help County staff, land owners, developers and residents conceptualize the attributes of the future of the Gold Canyon business district.



GOALS

Goal 5.1 - DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE BUSINESS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

Goal 5.2 - ESTABLISH ARCHITECTURAL BRANDING, PLACE-MAKING AND TOURISM STRATEGY

Goal 5.3 - CREATE AN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT IN "BUSINESS DISTRICT" GOLD CANYON

Goal 5.4 - IMPROVE WALKABILITY AND WAYFINDING IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICT CORE

Goal 5.5 - IDENTIFY REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Goal 5.6 - CREATE A "MAIN STREET" ALONG KINGS RANCH ROAD

Goal 5.7 - PROVIDE A BALANCE OF LAND USES

Goal 5.8 - ATTRACT A DIVERSE MIX OF BUSINESS TYPES



Chapter 6

Sustainable Economic Growth



INTRODUCTION

The priority Gold Canyon community values state that any new development is mindful of the surrounding Sonoran Desert; the open spaces; and protected vistas of the Superstition Mountain Range. At the core of this sustainable economic development plan encourages favorable site selection or expansion decisions for small businesses that are in harmony with the community values. Similarly, new planned communities will be established in areas that have low impact to the wilderness area and do not destroy the Superstition vistas. Light commercial industry will be clustered around US-60 access points and not simple turn-offs US-60 as is the case between Superstition Mountain Drive and Kings Ranch Road. Diligent and far-sighted planning efforts will ensure the high quality of life for future residents, visitors and small business owners. New development will also contribute their fair share to alleviate the current transportation issues impacting Gold Canyon.

Gold Canyon is on the outskirts of high urban growth. However, both business and residential growth is now right at our doorstep. The swelling of Mesa, Apache Junction, Queen Creek, San Tan and now Florence are straining the transportation infrastructure.

Gold Canyon is an oasis for seasonal visitors, retirees and nature lovers. This is evidenced in today's profile of golf resorts, large HOA developments, large residential lots, and over 40 square miles of open space.

Housing developments in Gold Canyon over the last 15-20 years are a mix of "typical suburban" and "luxury view" homes. This growth has spawned local services and amenities geared toward serving a primarily "retirement community". As the community continues to evolve, ecotourism will become a larger focus. This will have some impact on the housing mix. More importantly, increased tourism will amplify the need to protect the open spaces.

As the Phoenix metropolitan area continues to expand eastward, many open space buffers have shrunk and local parks have evolved. However, protecting the Gold Canyon panoramas need a different gameplan. Yes, growth is on its way. However, the community anchor principle to maintain the local pristine environment cannot be abused. Fortunately, Gold Canyon has assets that encourage meaningful local employment opportunities geared towards ecotourism. As tourism grows, so do jobs and tax revenues increase.

While this may seem to be a significant mindset shift from other East Valley development trends, it is critical to define land uses that have large open areas balanced with a more sustainable economic development plan. The "less dense" strategy will keep the community very desirable. It will emphasize an expanding "tourist corridor" in Pinal County.

The purpose of this chapter is to prioritize tourism growth as the engine to drive business opportunities and simultaneously meet the community's key value to maintain the open space and views while contributing to the local economy. The Land Use Plan (chapter 11) outlines where existing and future business and services are targeted and planned communities will develop.

CONDITIONS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following list of current trends, community values/goals and economic forces need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable economic development plan for the long-term:

- The current hyper-focus on attracting quality business and industry clusters in the East and West Valley is **not** an appropriate business model for the Gold Canyon planning area.
- Maintaining Gold Canyon as a low-density urban community with a high quality of life will attract generations of new community members who all pay property and sales taxes:

- There is a strong local resistance to higher-density residential projects
- There are no incentives to provide in-fill for additional diverse housing options accommodating all ages and income levels.
- There is currently little inventory of modern buildings or commercially zoned lots for local employers.
 - Business economic assistance to support local small business growth is difficult to find.
- The lack of State and County funds for basic infrastructure expansion continues to impede growth.
 - Traffic congestion along US-60 has now reached the critical stage along the Gold Canyon corridor. This chokepoint has been recognized by state and county officials but it needs a higher priority.
 - Collaboration amongst the region for siting, funding, and preparing for regional corridors for SR-24 and a north/south corridor that, if implemented appropriately, can provide tremendous improvement in traffic concerns.
- The zoning on the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) land in the Gold Canyon planning area is designated as low-density residential development which can be balanced with community goals
- The long-term water crisis in the State will also limit growth
- Continued expansion of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and associated businesses serves as a significant economic driver for the East Valley. It will also increase tourism to eastern Pinal County.
- Renewed focus and increased community awareness to strengthen

the local unified school district, community college and entrepreneurial ecosystems is gaining collaborative community-wide support.

- A continued strong local presence of small business ownership and vocal community expression of value placed on protecting our surrounding desert environment.
- The Superstition Mountains will always provide a variety of outdoor recreation venues for residents, visitors and tourists.

GOALS

Goal 6.1: ATTRACT ALL TYPES OF QUALITY SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT THAT WILL ADD VALUE TO CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS OF GOLD CANYON AS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY

Goal 6.2: ALIGN RESOURCES AND PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT FACILITIES, RESORT/TOURIST ORIENTED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, EXPAND SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES, AND MAINTAIN OPEN SPACES

Goal 6.3: CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TO CREATE A DOWNTOWN GOLD CANYON THAT SUPPORTS SMALL BUSINESS

Goal 6.4: ENHANCE THE IMAGE AND BRAND OF GOLD CANYON TO ELEVATE AWARENESS OF ALL THIS COMMUNITY HAS TO OFFER

Goal 6.5: MAINTAIN THE UNIQUE SENSE OF PLACE AND RICH HISTORY OF GOLD CANYON AS A PLACE FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, THE CULTURAL ARTS, AND THE PRISTINE SONORAN DESERT LANDSCAPE.

Goal 6.6: CONTINUE TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT CONSIDERS CURRENT COMMUNITY VALUES AND NEAR-TERM NEEDS, AND RETAINS AND STRENGTHENS OUR SMALL BUSINESSES.

Chapter 7

Public Safety and Services



Pinal County Sheriff's Office 5750 South King's Ranch Rd. Gold Canyon, AZ 85118



Station 265 9294 E. Don Donnelly Trl. Gold Canyon, AZ 85118



Peralta Trail Elementary School



INTRODUCTION

Below is an overview of the public safety services and facilities within the unincorporated community of Gold Canyon. Gold Canyon and its residents rely on Pinal County to provide services to the community. Adequate County services are vital to ensure the safety of current residents as well as to support growth. It is the goal of Gold Canyon to identify opportunities for additional services and facilities to foster responsible community development.

CONDITIONS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sheriff's Office

Law Enforcement services are provided by the Pinal County Sheriff's Office (PCSO). The Mission of the Pinal County Sheriff's Office is *"To Preserve the Peace, Protect Life and Property, and promote Public Safety while upholding the Constitution."*

The department's **core values** include:

Honor- For ourselves and those we are sworn to protect and for the laws and constitution we are entrusted to uphold.

Excellence- In the performance of our duties and our service to the citizens of our County, State and our Nation.

Pride- In our profession, our agency and all that we at PCSO represent.

Dedication- To our principles, values, our positions and the citizens of Pinal County.

Understanding- That we are all part of and serve something bigger than ourselves, and our service to others is selfless.

The Pinal County Sheriff's Office follows a nationally recognized Community Policing philosophy. The approach promotes community, government and police partnerships, proactive problem solving, and community engagement to address the causes of crime, fear of crime, and other community quality of life issues.

Community partnerships are joint efforts between law enforcement agencies and their communities to address the significant crime and quality of life issues that may exist in their general area.

Problem solving is a process for analyzing a problem from several perspectives in order to seek the most thoughtful approach and solution possible. Engaging the community in the problem-solving process provides a sense of joint accomplishment, and working directly with law enforcement to solve community problems strengthens the relationships within the community.

Some of the programs that the PCSO has established within the community to foster the Community Based Policing philosophy (not necessarily Gold Canyon specifically) include: bike patrol, business and community block watch, school resource officers, graffiti removal, and citizens on patrol. Officers work closely with the chamber of commerce, business associations, service associations, homeowner associations and other community programs to strengthen these partnerships, working together for a common goal. Because Gold Canyon is NOT an incorporated city or town and does not have its own police department, it is necessary to foster the relationships within the community to look out for each other until a police presence does arrive when necessary.

The PCSO has divided the County into 3 regions to divide their internal responsibilities and manpower. Gold Canyon is in Region A. The Patrol Bureau is overseen by a Captain and 3 Lieutenants. The Patrol Bureau is responsible for the orderly, smooth, and efficient operation of the three regions and all field and patrol law enforcement functions in Pinal County.

Currently the PCSO has a precinct/substation in Gold Canyon, located at 5750 South Kings Ranch Rd. The office is staffed by administrative personnel Monday-Thursday from 8:00am-5:00pm. Patrol deputies do not staff this building 24 hours a day as they are typically on patrol and respond to calls for service as

dispatched by the 911 call center located in Florence. In case of emergency, dial 911.

Other than the above-mentioned programs, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office has the following units:

- Alarm Unit that responds to False Alarms which are a serious threat to the effectiveness of the Sheriff's Office and the safety of our community
- Cadet Post
- Citizen's Posse which provides a training course to show residents the reality of police work.
- Graffiti Removal
- Juvenile Redirection Program
- Lox Box Program
- Medication Drop-Off sites
- Pink Patch Project
- Shop with the Sheriff
- Rico requests
- Volunteer Services which includes: Chaplains, Victim Service Unit, Cold Case Squad, ID Unit Volunteers, Citizens on Patrol and Professional and Administrative Volunteers

Pinal County Sheriff's Office Calls for Service to Gold Canyon

	2020	2021
Crimes Against Persons*	43	28
Crimes Against Property**	135	139
Traffic Offenses	500	409
Drug Offenses	15	3

Data from Pinal County Sheriff's Office LexisNexis Crime Data site <https://communitycrimemap.com/map>

*Crimes Against Persons include: Assault-Aggravated, Family Offense, Homicide/Manslaughter, Assault-Simple, Kidnapping/Human Trafficking, Robbery, Sexual Assault, Harassment/Intimidation and Sexual Offense.

**Crimes Against Property include: Burglary from Motor Vehicle, Shoplifting, Trespassing, Burglary-Residential, Theft, Vandalism, Fraud/Forgery, Theft-Other, Arson, Burglary-Commercial and Motor Vehicle Theft.

Fire Protection

Fire protection services are provided by the Superstition Fire and Medical District ("SFMD"). This is a political subdivision of the State of Arizona, legally established in 1955 pursuant to ARS §48-261. It is not a city department, and fiscal management of the district is provided by a separate elected five-member board. The fire district encompasses seventy-one (71) square miles and serves the City of Apache Junction, the unincorporated areas of Gold Canyon, Superstition Foothills, Goldfield Foothills, and Entrada Del Oro.

The vision of the Superstition Fire and Medical District is, *"We honor the legacy of the fire service, enrich the community we proudly serve, and strengthen our organization for future generations."*

The department's **core values** include:

Building and Maintaining Relationships- SFMD prides itself on building and maintaining relationships, both internally and externally, with stakeholders, our industry partners, and the community we serve. Through cooperation, support, and teamwork, we will achieve more together than we will as individuals.

Professionalism at All Times- Professionalism at all times is the cornerstone of our service. We commit to putting others before ourselves; value the trust given to us by the community, and serve with the courage to never betray that trust.

Providing Care and Compassion- More than simply doing our job, providing care and compassion to others distinguishes our commitment to service. Providing care and compassion to ourselves ensures we remain at peak ability to dedicate ourselves to Selfless Service.

Pride in All We Do- Serving with pride in all we do demonstrates our commitment to providing exceptional service. The legacy of the fire service was built by those who came before us, and we recognize that we must protect and

build upon that legacy. We acknowledge the opportunity to serve is a privilege which must be continuously earned through our actions.

Commitment to Improve- We recognize the need for innovation, transparency, and openness of thought. Through our commitment to improve, we strive to better ourselves, enhance our abilities and find ways to advance service to the community. We respect that a willingness to change how we do things is the only way to evolve.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusivity- We recognize that every person has value. We embrace diversity, equality, and inclusivity through treating everyone with dignity and respect, actively engaging with perspectives that challenge our own, and fostering genuine community with others.

SFMD utilizes a three-platoon system for emergency operations. Each platoon has a Battalion Chief who directs day-to-day shift operations, while station captains direct station operations. All district fire stations are strategically located throughout the fire district to provide effective coverage, a quick response time and protect critical infrastructure. In January of 2016, the district acquired approval from the State of Arizona to begin operating its own ambulance service which had previously been operated by a private company. The district delivers a wide variety of both emergency and non-emergency services which include:

- Advanced life support medical treatment
- Fire suppression
- Specialized Rescue Operations
- Response to weather-related emergencies
- Hazardous materials incident mitigation

SFMD strives to meet National Fire Protection Association (“NFPA”) 1710 standards. NFPA 1710 standards dictate that the first company should arrive on scene of a fire or medical emergency in five minutes or less 90% of the time.

The district’s average response time is 5:24 minutes. Additionally, the fire district is a

partner in the Phoenix Metro Valley Automatic Aid System. Within this system, no jurisdictional boundaries are recognized between cities when dispatching resources. The closest appropriate fire entity company is dispatched to emergencies through a computer-aided system. Because of this system, it is common to see fire trucks from other cities in the area on a regular basis.

SFMD Overall

- Number of Fire Stations - 5
- Number of Fire Companies - 6
- Number of Ambulance - 4
- Number of populations served – 65,000-95,000 (increase in winter months)
- Number of full-time employees - 135*
- Number of responses in 2020 – 10,729
- Number of ambulance transports – 5,456

SFMD’s webpage is www.sfmd.az.gov for more information.

*96 Sworn Firefighters and 39 civilian staff, of which 24 are ambulance personnel.

SFMD in Gold Canyon

There are two fire stations that serve the community of Gold Canyon. These stations are staffed 24 hours a day/365 days per year. There is no administrative staff at either station at this time. As always in case of an emergency, call 911.

Station 265 is located off Don Donnelly Trail and houses one engine company and one type six brush truck.

Station 264 is located off US-60 and houses one ALS ladder company, one type six brush truck, one ambulance, and one water tender.

SFMD also has additional resources as needed. Some of these include Wildland Response and Technical Rescue Team (which is housed at Station 262 in Apache Junction).

Below are the response times for Ladder 264 and Engine 265 in Gold Canyon.

SFMD Statistics (Annual Report 2021/2022)

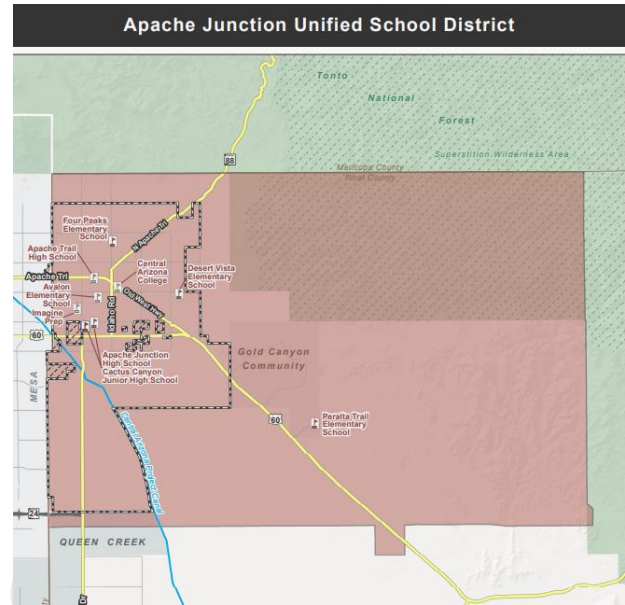
	Processing Time	Turnout Time	Travel Time	Response Time (Turnout + Travel)
Ladder 264	1:00	:46	4:42	5:28
Engine 265	1:07	:49	5:48	6:37

SFMD does not just respond to fire calls or medical emergencies. They are very involved within the communities they serve by providing education experiences, such as AED/CCR and Placing Child Safety Seats demonstrations, Fire Station tours, safety presentations, and school presentations for elementary schools, and by engaging in other community events.

SFMD personnel also conduct Fire Prevention activities by inspecting businesses, other specialty inspections, renewing permits and reviewing plans. Command values training for personnel and the community, and they participate annually in many types of training: Fire Operations, EMS, Fitness, Administrative, Technical Rescue, Driver/Operator, Prevention/Education and Hazardous Materials.

Public Education

Gold Canyon has a population of 11,875 (2020 Census) with a Median Age of 66.1. We see an increase in population during the winter months when our part-time winter visitors arrive. Due to the lack of a younger population, there is only one school within Gold Canyon. The Apache Junction Unified School District ("AJUSD") provides educational services in the form of an elementary school to students grades K-6. Peralta Trail Elementary School is currently the only school within Gold Canyon. The school's 22 teachers provide education to 369 students.



Public Works

Pinal County is responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of all public streets, floodplain management, stormwater management planning, and street circulation studies. Responsibilities include:

- Right-of-way ("row") encroachment permitting
- 5- & 10-year transportation plans
- Planning and zoning project plan review

Public Library

Gold Canyon has access to the Apache Junction Public Library which is a welcoming destination providing education, technology, information and entertainment, enriching the lives of individuals and families in the community. The library has a collection of over 135,000 items for public use, including books for every age and interest, Blu-ray, DVDs, video games, newspapers, magazines, playaways, playaway Views, playaway launchpads, MP3 players, e-

readers, tablets, music CDs, books on CD, and maps.

The library is, however, approximately nine miles from Gold Canyon. A needs assessment study should be conducted when enough growth occurs within Gold Canyon to warrant consideration of an additional county library facility. Population density, growth projections, demographics and the needs of the community for library services in the area should dictate the size and location of a new branch library.

Other Community Services and Public Facilities

Gold Canyon has limited parks and recreation not provided by homeowner associations (HOAs), and other services, such as development services, business licensing, economic development, public information, media services, municipal court, and county services, are all located in the neighboring city of Apache Junction. Also lacking is a community center facility, a central place for community events, services, and recreation.

The community has other services for residents, such as the private utility companies that serve the area, including Salt River Project, Arizona Water Company, CenturyLink, Mediacom Cable, Southwest Gas Corporation, Liberty sewer district, Waste Management, Waste Connections of Arizona, Republic Services (solid waste collection), cell service providers, and others. Due to the unincorporated nature of Gold Canyon, it falls upon individuals, HOAs, and community groups to work with regulatory agencies and private service companies to enhance services and protect against rate increases.

GOALS

Goal 7.1: CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR ADDITIONAL POLICING FROM THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Goal 7.2: CONTINUE TO STUDY AND ADVOCATE FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FACILITIES

Goal 7.3: CONTINUE TO CONDUCT COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING

Goal 7.4: SUPPORT LOCAL ART AND CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Goal 7.6: SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOLS AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Goal 7.7: ESTABLISH GOLD CANYON AS A FIREWISE COMMUNITY

Chapter 8

Gold Canyon Traffic Circulation



INTRODUCTION

The Circulation Element of the Gold Canyon Community Plan ties together land use and transportation planning to ensure that as Gold Canyon develops, infrastructure for vehicular and active transportation will be available to support safe access for work, school, recreation, and regional travel.

Proper and appropriate circulation improves the quality of life and provides safe and efficient connectivity between homes and services.

The MAG (Metropolitan Association of Governments), located in Phoenix, is the coordinating entity for all ADOT and regional transportation planning.

US-60 has four (4) Gold Canyon intersections managed by ADOT (Arizona Department of Transportation).

- South Superstition Mountain Drive
- South Mountainbrook Drive,
- South Kings Ranch Road
- East Peralta Road

East Donnelly Trail and East Golden Rim Circle provide connectivity from South Superstition Mountain Drive to Kings Ranch Road, from the east side to the west side of Gold Canyon.

Transportation corridors within Gold Canyon are provided by Pinal County. There are some private communities with their own HOA-managed roads.

The major commercial businesses (grocery stores, restaurants, golf courses, hairdressers, medical services, pet services, business services, car washes, etc.) are located along US-60 and/or along one of these major arteries.

Churches are clustered along Kings Ranch Road.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

In both the 2020 and the 2021 Community surveys, traffic safety and congestion was identified as among Gold Canyon's most important issues. GCCI set up a **Transportation**

and Safety Committee to address these community-wide concerns.

Roadways

The highest traffic volumes in Gold Canyon occur along the major arteries of South Superstition Mountain Drive, South Mountainbrook Drive, South Kings Ranch Road, South Don Donnelly Trail, and East Peralta Road.

Airports

Gold Canyon is not served by public bus, air, or rail transportation. The two commercial airports are the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport (25 miles) and Phoenix Sky Harbor (45 miles).

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Walking Trails

Continuous pedestrian/bicycle routes are in HOAs and along parts of South Kings Ranch Road and Don Donnelly.

Hiking trails are sprinkled throughout the HOAs with major trails along the Forest Service northern boundary.

Connectivity

Connectivity is one of the important parts of a communities' growth. **The most important issue facing the area is the congestion and safety on US-60 highway.** In addition to being a choke point at peak seasons, the community only has US-60 access in and out of the community. Unfortunately, US-60 traffic continues to grow, but congestion relief on this corridor is unfunded.

ADOT has made progress improving the circulation and safety in the last 18 months. However, siphoning traffic off US-60 appears to be 10 years out. Developing new arteries that connect Gold Canyon to Gold Canyon, San Tan Valley, Queen Creek, Mesa, and Gilbert are on the drawing board, but also require funding.

Today, there are several peaks that result in extended travel times and restrict essential services such as the police or fire departments:

- During peak winter visitor season (November – April)
- During annual events such as the **Renaissance Festival, Lost Dutchman Marathon**, and the re-start of the **LPGA Tournament**
- Major holidays
- Major traffic accidents
- Nature disasters: wildfires, dust storms, and monsoons

In addition, there are tourist/visitor pressure points:

- Access to the Hieroglyphics Trail on East Cloudview Avenue
- Parking and access to the Peralta trailhead
- The new Peralta Regional Park

There are also local congestion hotspots:

- Walgreens Plaza
- Basha’s Plaza
- Peralta Trail Elementary School
- Sunday church services on US-60 at South Kings Ranch Road and feeder streets

There is no integrated planning for pedestrian or bicycle traffic in the community. Some neighborhoods like Mountainbrook HOA have bicycle and walking lanes on the major arteries. Superstition Foothills HOA and Peralta Trails HOA have extensive internal hiking networks.

GCCI Transportation & Safety Committee

Since its inception, GCCI’s Transportation and Safety Committee has coordinated with ADOT and Pinal County to accelerate safety planning and remediation on US-60.

The ADOT 2021 and 2022 safety studies pinpointed several short-term and long-term improvements. The following completions in 2022 have had significant impact:

1. US-60 has been paved from Mountain View to Peralta Road

2. New safety markings and signage have been added to the four major US-60 intersections

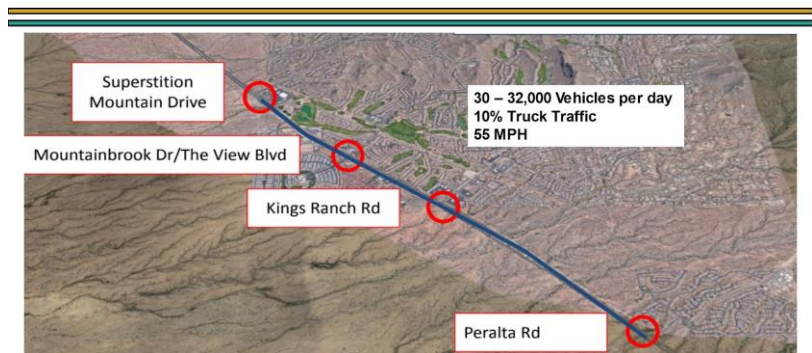
3. Intersection signals have been tied together and homed to the regional ADOT traffic control center in Phoenix

4. The Mountainbrook/The View lights were changed to a single-sequence intersection. The immediate impact reduced intersection wait-time and smoothed speed traffic flow on US-60.

Future options have been developed by ADOT for US-60:

1. Superstition Mountain Drive
 - Extend left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
 - Add an additional left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
2. Mountainbrook Drive & The View
 - Extend left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
 - Add an additional left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
3. Kings Ranch Road
 - Extend left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
 - Add an additional left-hand turn lane eastbound on US-60
 - Establish 2 northbound lanes on Kings Ranch Road
4. Peralta Road
 - Improve the turn lane markings and add safety signage
5. Add a 3rd lane or service road between Superstition Mountain and Peralta Road along US-60

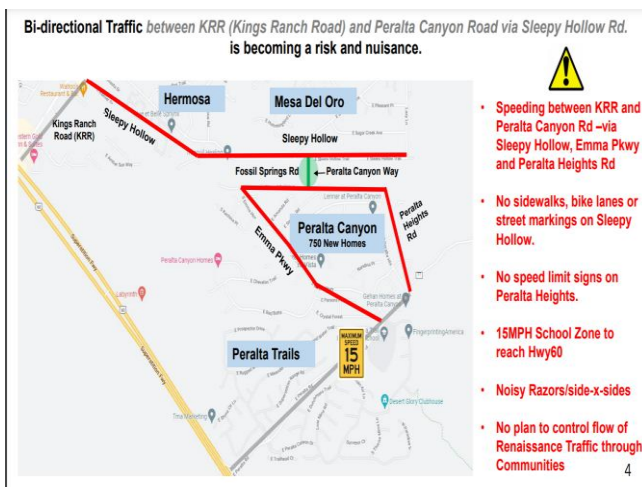
Top Priority Gold Canyon Highway 60 Intersections



Local Arteries and surface streets

Some local roads were prioritized for paving restoration and parking expansion and were completed by Pinal County in 2022:

- Kings Ranch Road was re-paved in 2022
- 2/3 of Mountainbrook local streets
- The Cloudview parking lot was expanded
- A task force was convened to address the full-time opening of Peralta Canyon Way onto Sleepy Hollow to work with the County on circulation and safety improvements.



Pinal County Regional Transportation Plan

US-60

- At present, US-60 is the only artery that connects Gold Canyon to the rest of Pinal and Maricopa Counties.

SR-24

- Long term, Gold Canyon will have direct access to San Tan Valley, Queen Creek, and the Mesa Gateway airport on SR-24.
- Arizona Department of Transportation (“ADOT”) completed SR-24 from Loop 202 to Ironwood in 2022.
- SR-24 connection to the CAP (Central Arizona Plan) canal is projected to begin within the next five (5) years.
- The extension of SR-24 all the way to US-60 will follow.

North-South Corridor

- Start of construction for the North/South Corridor from U.S.-60 to SR-24 is projected to start in 2027 at the earliest.

Funding Issues

- The Pinal Regional Transportation Authority (“PRTA”) proposed a 0.5% sales tax in 2022 to construct multiple major roadway projects throughout Pinal County. Unfortunately, the ballot failed.
- Many of the priority Pinal transportation projects to help meet the transportation needs of the region will be impacted by this loss of potential funds.



On May 16, 2022, the GCCI Transportation and Safety Committee submitted the Gold Canyon transportation priorities to Pinal County for inclusion in their 2022 Five-Year Improvement & Maintenance Program.

Gold Canyon Community, Inc. (GCCI) Input to Pinal County Five-Year Transportation Improvement & Maintenance Budget 2021 – 2026:

“The GCCI Transportation & Safety Committee focuses on Pinal County and ADOT initiatives to improve transportation service and safety to our residents, businesses and visitors.

Attached are comments on your County 5-Year Transportation program:

1. El Camino Viejo Road

We agree this \$800,000 rural project can be **delayed for 2 years, but should not be removed** from the program dashboard.

Dust remediation will soon be required as traffic on this corridor increases. There are 800+ new homes being constructed in Entrada del Oro and this is their only alternate access. In addition, The Ranch 160 project will increase the number of construction vehicles and add 500 new homes. As Queen Valley continues to grow, this “back country road” will soon be a gateway artery with much heavier traffic.

2. Queen Valley Drive

We **concur** with this project.

3. Yaqui Lane

We **concur** with this project.

4. Kings Ranch Road

- Kings Ranch Road is **the major artery** into our community. Improvement to the intersection of King’s Ranch Road and US-60 need to be made to accommodate increased traffic.
- Besides organic residential growth: (750 new homes in Peralta Canyons; and 800 in Entrada del Oro; and the “Gardens” on Kings Ranch Road), business will continue to expand around this intersection.
- Walgreens’ access is sub-optimal and the increased traffic for the proposed Maverik service station justifies extra north-and south-bound lanes for egress/entrance beside Kings Ranch Road and US-60.

We **concur** with the project and recommend that original scope of **this project be expanded to integrate the following factors** into your program:

1. Expand the north-bound traffic to two lanes plus a uniform shoulder from the US-60 intersection to Sleepy Hollow (at minimum).

- The northbound intersection at Walgreens is unsafe
- There are 3 busy driveways before reaching E. Sunrise Sky Drive
- E. Sunrise Sky Drive is very active and an entrance to the Best Western Hotel
- ADOT has plans to establish 2 left-turn eastbound lanes onto Kings Ranch Road

2. Flare the south-bound lanes at the intersection with US-60 to provide 2 right-hand turning lanes. It may be more desirable to make southbound 2 lanes between Sleepy Hollow and US-60, in addition to the flaring at the intersection?

- Sunday church traffic is bottlenecked at this intersection
- Provide a safer access to right-hand-turn on red onto US-60

3. In anticipation of a service station for the intersection at US-60, plans should be created to minimize re-work once approved.

4. A uniform shoulder should be provided for cyclist and golf cart traffic, northbound and southbound between US-60 and Alameda.

5. The elevation needs to be changed at the US-60 intersection – flooding occurs just north of US-60.

6. The new pedestrian safety crosswalk between the Methodist Church and Sunrise Drive will be in place.

5. Peralta Road

Peralta Road is the only artery into the very popular Peralta Trailhead and the new Peralta Regional Park. It also serves the 2000 homes in Peralta.

We **concur** with this project. The preservation project from US-60 to the Elementary School will

connect to planned “chip seal” and some “road straightening” toward the trailhead.

ADOT is proposing intersection changes, similar to Kings Ranch Road, to increase the traffic flow. This will also require adjustments by Pinal County with 2 left-turn lanes off US-60.

6. (New) URGENT need for another entrance from US-60 into Peralta Canyon.

This should be considered TOP PRIORITY to augment the Peralta Trail and Sleepy Hollow access.

7. (New) Mountainbrook Drive

Adding 2 left-hand turn lanes on US-60 eastbound. This project will require lengthening the 2 northbound lanes on Mountainbrook Drive towards Whispering Mesquite.

8. (New) Superstition Mountain Drive

Adding two left-hand turn lanes on US-60 eastbound

9. Countywide Safety Program

a) **Don Donnelly** has a combination of issues all related to walkers and bike riders. Part of the road has paved sidewalks on one side and gravel walking paths on the other. Part of the road has neither. Most of the road has space marked off by striping, but there are no stencils to indicate biking or walking.

- On the curves, it is desired to have small “bumps” in the striping that alerts drivers that they have crossed into a hiking / biking zone.
- Stencil crosswalks at the intersection of Don Donnelly/Superstition Mountain Drive and at Don Donnelly/S. Desert Dawn

b) Kings Ranch Road:

- Add a bike lane or adequate shoulder from Aqua Vista Way to E Golden Rim Circle. Such an addition would greatly

improve the safety of bikers and walkers along that narrow section of road that lacks adequate shoulders.

c) Peralta Road:

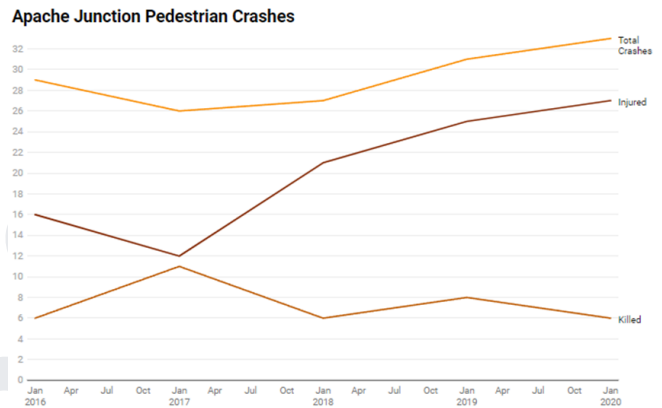
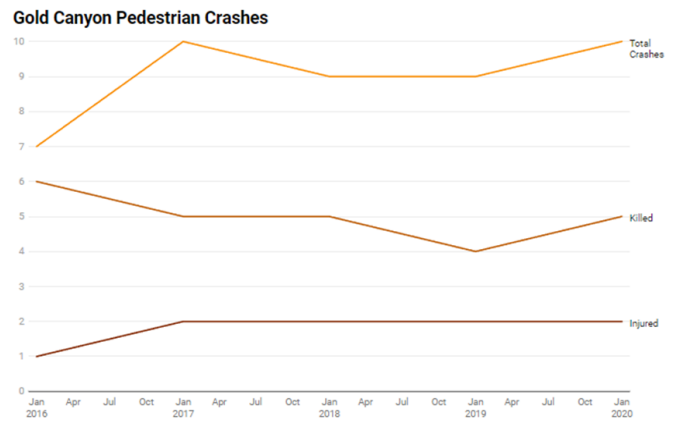
- A bike/pedestrian path or lane would greatly enhance safety for the increasing number of users from Peralta School to the Peralta trailhead.”

Pedestrian and Bike Transportation Infrastructure

Walk Score rates Gold Canyon as “car dependent”: the community’s highest walking score is 30. This means that most, if not all, daily trips must be completed using an automobile. Gold Canyon’s demographics and “health sense” continues to change. Providing an integrated and safe infrastructure for pedestrian and bike travel will meet the needs of today’s more active residents.

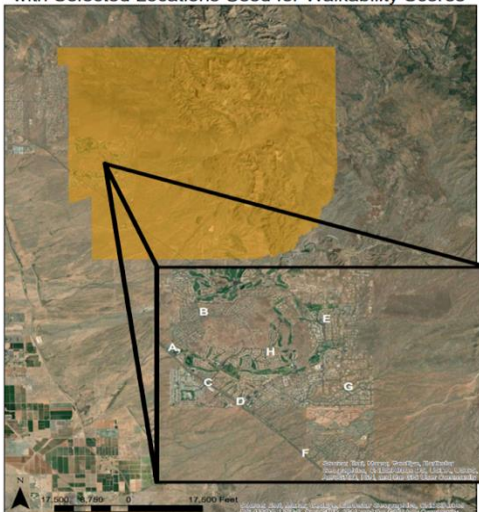
There is a patchwork of sidewalks that start and end abruptly. The objective is to increase paths between subdivisions and along roadways. Pedestrians are left with no choice but to either walk in the dirt or adjacent to high-speed traffic on the shoulder, if one is present. Cyclists are similarly limited. The charts below show an uptick in vehicle-cyclist crashes and deaths in the area.

When designing a pedestrian and bicycle network, shade trees, seating, and wayfinding markers improve the pedestrian experience and capitalize on the community’s various landmarks and viewsheds. Bike lanes, whether buffered or protected, should be considered for main arteries that interconnect neighborhoods and services:

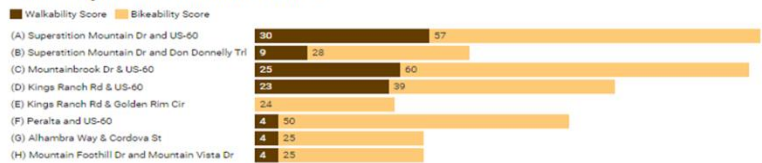


- Kings Ranch Road
- Peralta Trails
- Superstition Drive
- Multi-use path parallel to US-60

Gold Canyon Study Area with Selected Locations Used for Walkability Scores



Gold Canyon Walk and Bike Scores



Source: walkscore.com • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

Walk Score measures the walkability of any address based on the distance to nearby places and pedestrian friendliness.

90-100	Walker's Paradise Daily errands do not require a car
70-89	Very Walkable Most errands can be accomplished on foot
50-69	Somewhat Walkable Some errands can be accomplished on foot
25-49	Car-Dependent Most errands require a car
0-24	Car-Dependent Almost all errands require a car

Bike Score measures whether an area is good for biking based on bike lanes and trails, hills, road connectivity, and destinations.

90-100	Biker's Paradise Daily errands can be accomplished on a bike
70-89	Very Bikeable Biking is convenient for most trips
50-69	Bikeable Some bike infrastructure
0-49	Somewhat Bikeable Minimal bike infrastructure

Regional Transportation Planning

Gold Canyon's transportation system is part of a much larger regional transportation system. These components of the Circulation Element also involve partnering with neighboring communities as well as regional, state and federal agencies.

The Circulation Planning Process

- It is imperative that the recently announced **Regional Transportation Master Plan** be expanded to include Gold Canyon. Gold Canyon will continue to work with the regional framework study group and its partners toward the development of a long-term transportation framework that includes Gold Canyon's circulation and land use goals.
- A Gold Canyon community Transportation Study should be funded and completed by 2024.
- Ongoing improvements on US-60 be prioritized as they proceed through the ADOT project development process
- Gold Canyon will continue to advocate the need for new transportation routes to reduce congestion and improve safety for its citizens
- Gold Canyon transportation enhancements and changes will prioritize the protection of natural resources in and around the Community and surrounding land.
- GCCI will support the next Pinal ballot to approve a ½ cent sales tax for transportation funding.
- GCCI will continue be active in the following organizations:
 - Pinal Partnership
 - East Valley Transportation Initiative
 - Pinal TAC Program
- GCCI will be proactive in working with ASLD (Arizona State Land Department).

- GCCI will address the ADOT Board of Directors on selected matters.
- GCCI will engage in joint planning with Apache Junction, Queen Valley, and Superior.
- GCCI will support the North/South corridor and SR-24 and transportation funding initiatives.
- GCCI will engage with State officials and senators on selected matters.

GOALS

Goal 8.1: IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

Goal 8.2: DEVELOP AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (ATP)

Goal 8.3: PROMOTE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Chapter 9

Gold Canyon Utility Services



- Liberty Utilities Waste Water Plants
- SRP Power Lines
- Arizona Water

Utility Providers and Infrastructure

Electricity

- SRP provides electrical services to the plan area.
- The existing grid will continue to serve the Gold Canyon area with service over existing overhead lines and underground along arterial, collector, and local streets.
- Local solar farms are being developed in the area to augment SRP's capacity and to provide for specific customers.
- Solar panels are sprinkled around business and residential buildings.
- EV charging stations will evolve and be supplied by third parties at retail establishments (stores, plazas, golf courses, etc.).

Natural Gas

- Natural gas service is provided to parts of Gold Canyon by Southwest Gas.

Telecommunications

- Gold Canyon is served by the major carriers: AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon.
- Existing telecommunication to the home and office providers include CenturyLink, and Mediacom.
- Fiber optic lines are being expanded to business and residential end points.

Water (see Chapter 9)

- Water is provided by Arizona Water Company throughout the community. This is supplemented by existing personal wells on private property.
- In 2022-23, **Arizona Water Company**, in conjunction with GCCl, is promoting a water conservation program entitled "**Water is More Precious than Gold**"

Wastewater Sewer

- The 2 solid waste management facilities are provided by Liberty Utilities. The facilities beside Mountainbrook Village

and Entrada Del Oro collect and treat wastewater from businesses and residences.

- Many homes have individual private septic systems.

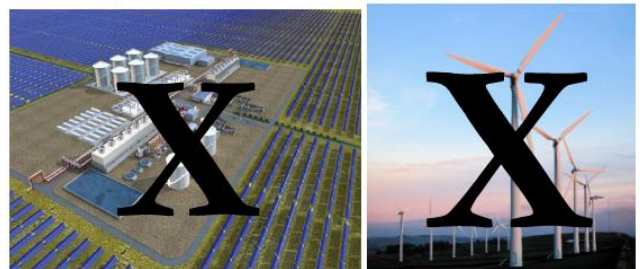
Solid Waste

- There are 3 waste collectors in Gold Canyon who pick up trash and landscape material and transport it to local landfills.
- The Apache Junction landfill is slated to close in 2035.
- Waste Connections has established a new landfill and has recycling operations in Apache Junction.
- Illegal camping and illegal dumping are becoming an issue along Peralta Road.

Utility Rate Management

Due to the unincorporated nature of Gold Canyon, it falls upon individuals, HOAs, and community groups to work with regulatory agencies and private service companies to enhance services and be directly involved in rate cases.

Energy Efficiency



- Future developments should be encouraged to design energy efficient homes and businesses.
- Establish a green building program that uses recognized criteria and standards appropriate for the desert environment to achieve energy efficiency.
- Encourage energy-efficient retro-fitting and remodeling for existing structures.
- Encourage vehicle trip reduction.

- Work with the SRP energy programs to facilitate homeowners, businesses to sell excess energy generated on-site (e.g., photovoltaic cell, co-generation) to the energy grid.

Strategy

- Implement sustainable levels of energy and resource consumption in the community through education
- Plan, design and construct in accordance with best practices for energy and resource consumption
- Limit growth that would impact the quality of life of future residents

Policy: Promote Regional Energy & Resource conservation

Policy: Coordinate with adjacent municipalities and counties to meet both short-term and long-term energy efficiency goals in the Gold Canyon Planning Area.

Water Resources

Currently, water is provided to the Gold Canyon by the Arizona Water Company (AWC). This service provider is regulated as large municipal providers, which is defined as serving more than 250 acre-feet (“AF”) of water per year. AWC meets the requirements of this program through its Designation of Assured Water Supply (“DAWS” or “Designation”), which is issued by Arizona Department of Water Resources (“ADWR”). AWC is a member of the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District (CAGR); making their groundwater use consistent with the Phoenix Active Management Area (“AMA”).

Arizona Water History and Law

In the 1970s, Arizona recognized that substantial groundwater depletion was occurring in the aquifers of central and southern Arizona. Excessive reliance of groundwater in some areas resulted in significant lowering of groundwater levels,

surface subsidence, water quality problems due to intrusion of poor-quality water into the aquifer, and/or loss of aquifer storage space. In response, the Arizona Groundwater Code (“AGA”) was enacted in 1980 to address the long-term management of groundwater supplies in the state. ADWR oversees the use of surface water and groundwater and works to develop the policies to ensure long-term water supplies for the people of Arizona. Enactment of the code additionally created several active management areas (“AMAs' ") within the state, each of which must develop a plan to achieve goals for water management set by the state and to ensure a 100-year water supply. ADWR adopted its Third Management Plan (“TMP”) in December, 1999. ADWR developed the Fourth Management Plan in 2020. The TMP is part of a series of five management plans that were mandated by the 1980 code. The TMP has regulatory requirements for municipalities, particularly in the area of water conservation. The next level of management plans will shift the focus from regulation towards collaborative, long-term water planning. Gold Canyon water providers must comply with the Assured Water Supply (“AWS”) rules, which require that water providers prove a 100-year supply of renewable water that is physically, continuously and legally available, and must be of sufficient quality before any additional residential development occurs. Under current corporate boundaries, Gold Canyon is located entirely within the Phoenix AMA and participates in the Phoenix AMA plan. The management goal of the Phoenix AMA is to attain “safe-yield” by the year 2025. Achieving safe-yield, as defined in the code, means “to achieve and thereafter maintain a long-term balance between the annual amount of groundwater withdrawn in an AMA and the annual amount of natural and artificial groundwater recharge in the AMA (A.R.S. §45-561 (12)).

BACKGROUND

Terrain and Climate

The Gold Canyon area is characterized by a broad, flat-lying alluvial plain cut by low stream terraces and

floodplains located in and adjacent to the Superstition Wilderness Area and unnamed washes. The area is located within the Sonoran Desert Climatic Region of Arizona, which is characterized by hot summers and mild winters. Temperatures range from an average maximum of 105° F in July to an average minimum of 39° F in January. The recorded annual precipitation averages 7.2 inches, with the majority of the rainfall occurring during the summer months of July through September and the winter months of December through March. Typically, little precipitation occurs during the spring and fall.

Water Availability

The water resources available to the Gold Canyon include groundwater wells, Central Arizona Project (“CAP”) water, and treated effluent. The following describes each of these resources:

1. Groundwater. Arizona Water Company. (AWC) currently uses groundwater as their primary source. In 2001, AWC completed a hydrologic study for their service area. Based on this study, ADWR determined that 19,255 acre-feet (“AF”) could be pumped annually by AWC, and that current AWC-committed demand was only 8,346 AF per year.
2. Central Arizona Project. Gold Canyon water providers have CAP allocations for use.
3. Effluent. Two solid waste Management Facilities are provided by Liberty Utilities. The facilities beside Mountainbrook Village and Entrada Del Oro, collect and treat wastewater from businesses and residences. Many older developments and homes have individual private septic systems.

Water Supply and Demand

As the water demand and service area expands, renewable water supplies such as additional CAP water, aquifer storage and recovery wells, groundwater recharge facilities, water conservation, rainwater harvesting and effluent

reuse should become the focus for water supplies for future development.

Additionally, an unquantifiable volume of urban runoff flowed through Gold Canyon’s desert washes during the summer months. In the past, these types of water have been viewed as a liability, or risk to the safety and welfare of our community. Moving forward, efforts must be made to master plan infrastructure to manage water as one combined resource to enable future development.

Water Quality

Water providers must provide a safe water supply that meets all current Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Safe Drinking Water Maximum Contaminant Levels (“MCLs”). A review of the records from AWC indicates that the water distributed meets the current EPA MCLs.

Viability of Effluent Reuse

Effluent production is directly in proportion to the serviced population. Treated effluent is typically used to irrigate the golf courses within Gold Canyon. In early 2018, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (“ADEQ”) approved regulations allowing Direct Potable Reuse (“DPR”). There could be future opportunities for additional effluent reuse for future development.

Water Conservation

Gold Canyon is working with AWC to decrease the per capita water consumption with the implementation of a Gold Canyon Water Conservation Program: “Water is more precious than Gold” This program started in 2022 and is modeled after other community efforts in Superior, Coolidge, and Cass Grande.

A part of this program are audits of the large Homeowners Associations that help to identify inefficient use of water with suggestions for improvement in saving water as well as saving time and money.

It is less likely that significant water conservation can be achieved with existing development. However, the County can require that all new development provide water conservation measures. The County should explore the development of guidelines for industrial use, irrigation, and land development to conserve water use, including the use of low water use landscaping, low-use water fixtures, and water reuse.

Stormwater

As a renewable resource for potable water, stormwater quality is addressed through a number of government regulation programs and acts such as the Clean Water Act (“CWA”), National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (“NPDES”), Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (“AZPDES”). These regulatory initiatives provide the framework AWC to process stormwater in a safe and efficient manner.

Stormwater quantity is also addressed through a number of regulation programs and federal agencies such as the 2002 Stormwater Master Plan, Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”), Floodplains, National Flood Insurance Program (“NFIP”), Apache Junction Floodplain Ordinance, Floodplain Management, FEMA Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (“Risk MAP”) Program and also through an innovative initiative known as the Green Infrastructure-Low Impact Development (“LID”) guidelines where design improvement standards are required in new developments.

Improvements consist of permeable pavements, curb openings for drainage, sediment traps, domed overflow structures and stormwater harvesting basin to name a few. The goal of the Gold Canyon is to encourage designers and developers to utilize these standards on public projects associated with road and street improvements, as well as private projects.

Planning Considerations

In order to ensure water resources to the community of Gold Canyon AWC, Pinal County, and external water managers must educate and work together to keep an end goal in mind at all times. This will lead to smarter water management practices, increased efficiency of operations, resilience against climate change and enriched livable communities.

Goals & Policies

Goal 9.1: ENERGY CONSERVATION - PRESERVE RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES AND INCORPORATE INNOVATIVE PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Policy: Use energy-efficient designs for new homes and facilities

Policy: No large scale solar or wind farms to be established in the Gold Canyon Planning Area

Goal 9.2: ADVANCE WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY POLICY

Policy: Investigate creative partnerships for the supply and delivery of water to existing and new development in Gold Canyon.

Policy: Participate in processes to develop alternative regulations to facilitate the acquisition, development and use of necessary water supplies.

Policy: Encourage the use of scientific/technical studies to reduce negative impacts of the development of new water sources on existing water facilities.

Policy: Maintain a reliable water supply in order to enhance the security and economic sustainability of Gold Canyon.

Policy: Develop a regional approach to water resource utilization that promotes future growth and sustainability.

Goal 9.3: STRENGTHEN WATER CONSERVATION

Policy: Develop and/or participate in existing public education efforts regarding the

incorporation of water harvesting, xeriscape and other water conservation measures into new developments, redevelopment areas and community projects.

Policy: Promote development that conserves water through the type of LID provisions of recharge and use of renewable water supplies.

Policy: Conserve the use of both groundwater and renewable water supplies.

Policy: Require compliance with water conservation guidelines set by the AWC, for all users, including those outside of the AMAs.

Policy: Update or implement a Stormwater Master Plan. Consider stormwater as a renewable water supply.

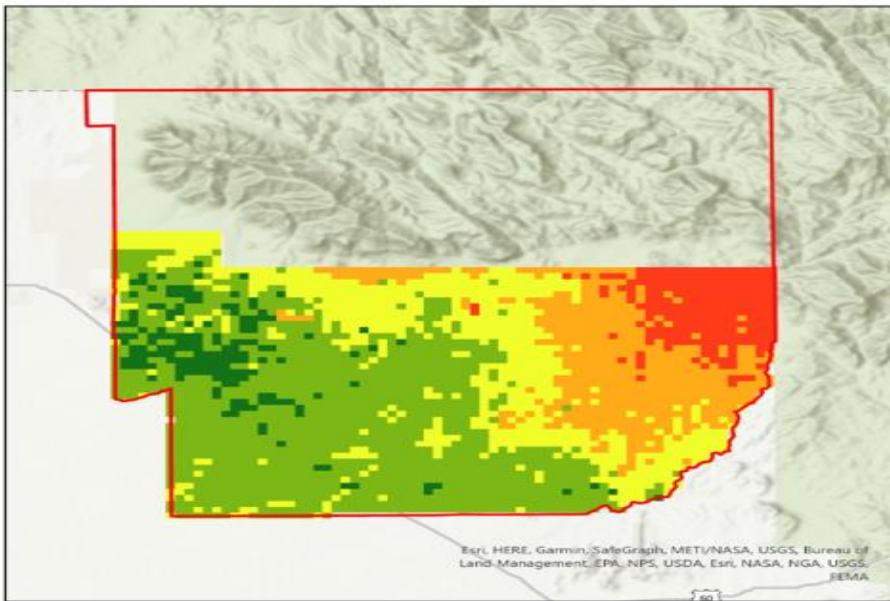
Policy: Adopt LID Standards and incorporate them into the land development code for water quality and managing stormwater as a source of water for landscape irrigation.

Policy: Evaluate the cost/benefit analysis of a stormwater utility to carry out the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (“SWPPP”) and the Stormwater Master Plan.

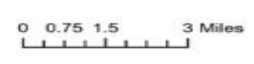


Chapter 10

Gold Canyon Growth



- Study Area
- Land Suitability**
- Natural Breaks**
- Most Suitable
- Moderate Suitability
- Low Suitability
- Very Low Suitability
- Least Suitable



INTRODUCTION

Gold Canyon, Arizona
Unincorporated, within Pinal County,
Supervisory District 5

Land: 28.67 square miles

Population: 11,875 (2020)

When Harold Christ set out in 1974 to develop the area now known as Gold Canyon, there was no water, enough telephone wiring for one telephone, and lots of open desert and opportunities. Today, the 9 square miles of unincorporated area of Pinal County has more than 11,000 people, 23 HOAs, luxury homes, a resort, five golf courses, and its own ZIP code.

Gold Canyon has maintained its pristine views of the Sonoran Desert, Superstition Mountains, and Tonto National Forest. Residents say the biggest challenge for Gold Canyon is maintaining its rural, Sonoran Desert environment while growing and developing in harmony with nature.



As the population of Gold Canyon increases, additional housing, retail, and service areas will need to be developed to support the community. Some of these areas are identified along Kings Ranch Road, the main business district, and areas East and South of Gold Canyon as new development areas, while other areas will be encouraged for infill development. Infill development will be encouraged in the “Downtown Redevelopment Area” along Kings Ranch Road.

Also, Pinal County and the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) will serve as vital development partners when it comes to the development of the ASLD’s extensive holdings. These are bounded by the Forest Service lands on the north, US-60 on the south, and east of Kings Ranch Road and Peralta Trails Road to El Camino Viejo. ASLD partners with local governments and communities to facilitate the sale and planning of state-owned land for new development.

The County will work with ASLD to ensure proper infrastructure is available for future growth while not negatively impacting current levels of service to existing development.

Future Growth Areas

1. **Business District Redevelopment Area**

The current business district is located along Kings Ranch Road. The community and County need to devise a Redevelopment Plan for this area to plan for a variety of uses that are typical and necessary for a successful commercial environment.

- ### 2. **U.S. Highway 60 Corridor** - The US-60 corridor includes the land located along the US-60 interchanges. Since the private market and ASLD will have a strong interest in the development of these interchange nodes, the general plan proposes a spectrum of development types within this area such as commercial services, light industrial, and residential. The community has strongly advocated that any large-scale commercial development be located south of US-60.

- ### 3. **AZ State Trust Land East of Kings Ranch and Peralta Roads** - Partnering with Pinal County and ASLD representatives will be required. Developing a clear land plan for residential and retail development to support tourism and small business growth is a major part of this plan. The general plan

will include a mixture of core uses: parks & recreation activities; preservation of open space; view preservation of the Superstition Mountains; coupled with mixed use of residential and compatible retail and light commercial use.

4. **South of US 60** – This area includes the territory from Superstition Mountain Dr. and East to the HWY 79, South of US 60. It is a combination of privately owned property and AZ State Trust Land. This area will potentially include a range of residential densities, commercial spaces, open space and industrial uses. This area has the potential to be the next big phase of development for the county.
5. **Rural Residential** – This area consists of land generally identified on the land use plan map as low-density residential land use. Most of the land is located on the northern and eastern edges of the town, North of Baseline.
6. **Residential Growth**- It also includes undeveloped privately owned land that could be sold and developed in the future. Pockets of this land are within central Gold Canyon, north of Baseline and east of Kings Ranch Road.

Gold Canyon Growth Overall

Given the unique nature of Gold Canyon, there will be continued investment and reinvestment in the rural type of residential properties and preservation of large lot properties. It will be critical to keep focus on preservation and conservation with parks and open spaces that are the pillar of the community.

Balancing appropriate growth and maintaining the open spaces are vital. Fortunately, careful planning and responsible development is important to Gold Canyon and Pinal County.

The quality of life for Gold Canyon and the preservation of the Superstition Mountain recreational areas are an enviable combination.

This will be the foundation of a joint marketing tool (Gold Canyon, Pinal County,

Arizona Tourism) to promote the values and opportunities for work, retirement and play, having instant access to the magnificent natural environment.

Balancing moderate growth with conservation and tourism is the obvious next step.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Proper infrastructure planning is essential. At present, the lack of infrastructure planning is becoming a barrier to positive change. In tandem with strategic infrastructure planning, investing is a critical step for the Gold Canyon planning area.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 10.1: INCREASE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Policy: Develop Gold Canyon into a shopping and outdoor recreation destination for the region

Policy: Develop plans to capture greater shares of the year-round and seasonal resident expenditures.

Goal 10.2: PLAN FOR AN APPROPRIATE GEOGRAPHIC MIX OF RESIDENTIAL, SMALL BUSINESS, AND RECREATIONAL USES IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

Policy: Develop plans for the business district corridor along Kings Ranch Road for a mix of employment uses, retail uses, higher density residential uses, and a community center for cultural, recreation and multi-purpose uses.

Policy: Link the business district corridor with vehicular, transit, equestrian, bicycle, and pedestrian modes that connect with the external circulation networks.

Policy: Evaluate the use of catalysts to implement the infill policy including, but not limited to, fee waivers,

transfer of development rights and streamlining of desirable projects.

Policy: Evaluate potential use areas where redevelopment or revitalization activities are warranted.

Goal 10.3: EFFECTIVELY PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT ALONG US-60

Policy: Plan for business development along US-60. This will be heavily influenced by congestion on US-60 and future development options east of Kings Ranch Road.

Policy: Jointly plan the US-60 corridor with Pinal County, ASLD and Apache Junction

Goal 10.4: SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

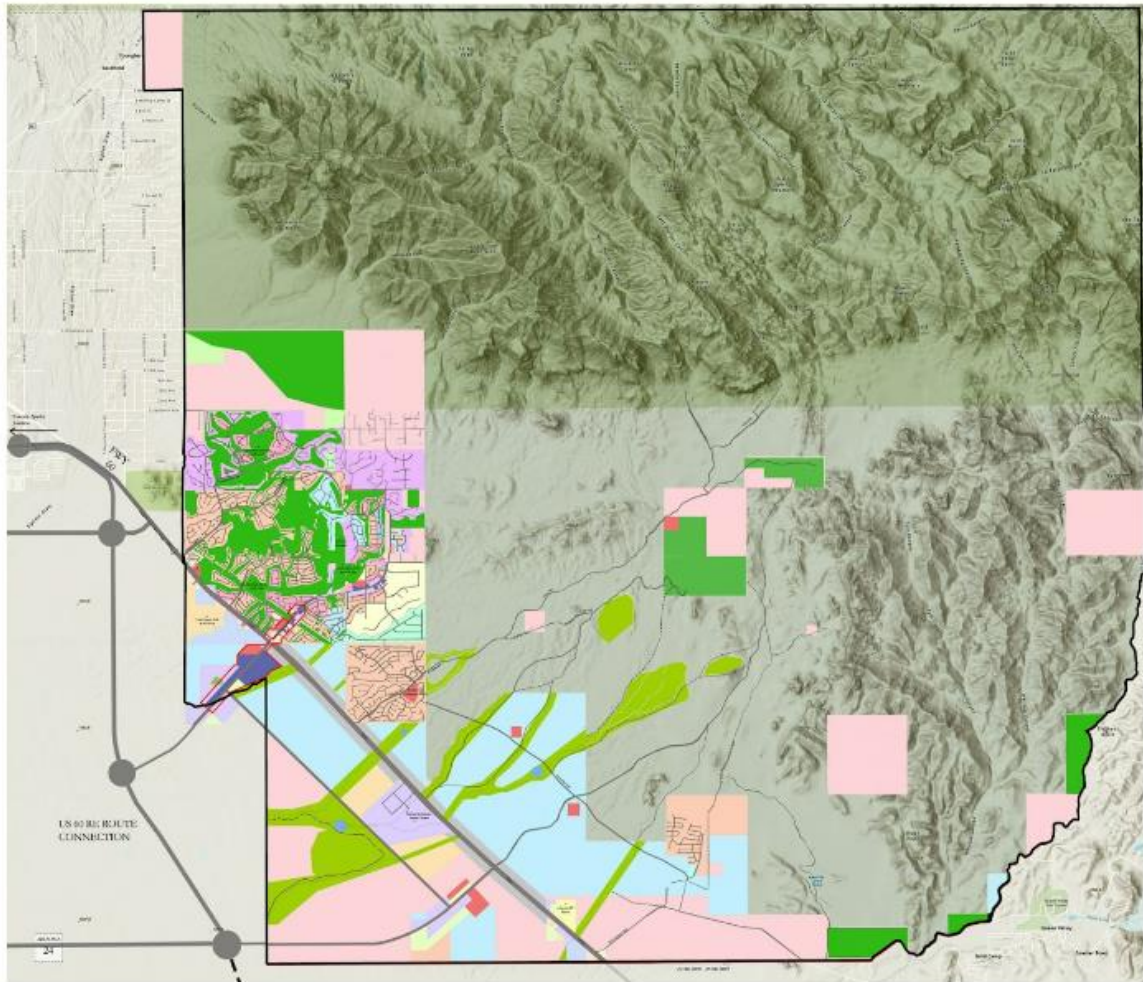
Policy: Encourage the use of “green building practices” for developers/builders, and ensure development of the land has a primary focus for preservation and conservation.

Policy: Require the use of low impact development practices for all new development.



Chapter 11

Gold Canyon Land Use Study (ASU Analysis)



INTRODUCTION

The land use strategy in this section was developed by ASU's School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning. It lays out a planning framework that will guide the future use and development of land within the Gold Canyon Community. The land use element will serve as the community's blueprint for growth built on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the existing development patterns, natural resources, environmental constraints, and social and economic needs of the area, discussed in the previous sections. Extensive public feedback through a community survey was used to help define the overall direction of the Gold Canyon Community Land Use Plan.

The main objective of this land use strategy is to promote sustainable land use practices that will balance the needs of different stakeholders and ensure the long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the community. This strategy contains goals and policies that provide direction on how the growing area will develop into the future using tools aimed at guiding land use decisions and managing competing land uses. Ultimately, the goal of this land use strategy is to create a healthy, livable, and sustainable community that meets the needs of all Gold Canyon residents while protecting the natural environment.

Strategic Focus

Based on the extensive community feedback and professional analysis as part of this study, the following strategic core areas are identified to shape the future land use character:

- The future developments shall ensure the rural, small-town character and sweeping views of the Superstition Mountains to maintain the community's distinct character.
- Gold Canyon needs a centrally-binding space along the US-60 and Kings Ranch Road that can bring the community together while offering a range of commercial, social, and recreation services, and business opportunities.
- More convenient and safe connectivity of Gold Canyon to the larger Phoenix Metropolitan area is vital for the community's future.
- Improvements in internal connections within the core of Gold Canyon, especially for hiking, cycling and walking, will provide enduring benefits for the local population and visitors.
- The provision of new community infrastructure, parks, and recreation amenities along Dinosaur Park, Peralta Regional Park, and other strategic areas will enhance the quality of life.

Methodology of ASU Study

Two development scenarios were envisioned as part of the future land use planning exercise that takes into account the strategic themes, goals, and policies derived from community surveys and consultations with the stakeholders and the County. The first scenario harnesses the development potential of the Gold Canyon Community and extended region. The second scenario is **conservation-focused**, enhancing the existing character of the community. Each scenario was designed to depict varying types, distributions, and intensities of land uses. **The community strongly favors the second scenario. Therefore, the first scenario is not included in this planning document.**

A series of Geodesign workshops were held involving the ASU students and members of the Gold Canyon Community to envision the two scenarios and test how they would impact the strategic goals of sustainability, conservation, community building, economic development, and expanding infrastructure. A GIS-based toolkit named 'GeodesignHub' was used as a platform to integrate data regarding the built and the natural environment and enable stakeholders to design collaboratively and realize the optimal solution for community development. The Geodesign technology usage permitted the collation and presentation of key data in a format that allowed stakeholders to engage in "what if" scenario-type activities and see the results of their decisions rapidly.

The ability of the Geodesign framework to produce impact simulations informed by geographic contexts was leveraged to evaluate the conceived changes across urban systems (mobility, environment, economy, society, and more). The collaborative and scientific approach allowed the “people of the place” to have an active voice in the planning discourse along with professionals. The outcome scenarios and their perceivable impact on the community were then shared with the County officials to capture feedback from the leadership and ensure the projected development outcomes aligned with their vision.

Preserving the Nature, Pristine Landscapes, and Distinctly Rural Character (Scenario 2)

Of the two scenarios presented, only Scenario 2 is approved by the community. This land-use planning scenario reflects a vision entrenched in the preservation of landscapes, natural beauty, and the distinct character of the community. It purposefully puts forward the message that Gold Canyon will be a community dedicated to protecting and enhancing the stunning vistas of the Superstition Mountains and uninterrupted views of the night skies with minimal changes to the built environment. The inherent focus of this development scenario is to maintain the rural community character embracing the natural heritage and wide-open spaces of desert landscapes.

The goal is to restrict economic development to smaller businesses that can survive the fluctuation in population between the seasons (large seasonal population) and continue to provide services to the local community. The enhanced town center along the US-60 and Kings Ranch Road intersection can consume these small businesses and offer a space for the community to come together. Under this condition, natural residential growth would continue to expand into currently undeveloped areas, particularly both sides of US-60 along the new SR-24 connector.

The key priority of this development trajectory will be to enhance the available recreational opportunities, with additional green infrastructure south of the US-60 and protection and furthering of green corridors and vistas along the washes, channels, and ecologically sensitive features in a demarcated conservation zone in the wide-open north and eastern spaces, predominantly State Trust land. Active transportation links, recreational amenities, and community center infrastructure shall be added along Dinosaur Park, Peralta Regional Park, and other strategic areas to augment the social and recreational experiences of the local and visiting populations.

Land Use Designations

Conservation

This land use designation refers to areas located on Gold Canyon's northern and eastern parts that should be conserved to protect and enhance the community's character and natural heritage. A conservation designation was chosen as the primary development tool to prevent any tangible development on ecologically fragile land and ensure the preservation of open spaces and vistas.

Low Density Single Residential

This land use designation denotes single-family homes on large lots with significant setbacks between individual homes to maintain a rural character and the natural environment.

Medium Density Multiple Residential

This land use designation denotes areas where traditional single-family homes, cluster homes, duplex dwellings and other types of medium density development are appropriate, with lot sizes that allow for a variety of setbacks depending on the product type. Considering Gold Canyon's rural character, multiple dwellings for less than four families are appropriate.

Mixed-Use Town Center

This land use designation designates a specific area at the center of the community where a variety of uses are permitted. Mixed-use

developments will enable the potential to combine a variety of commercial, office, community health, and recreational land uses to provide a popular, marketable, environmentally friendly, and economically viable place at the heart of the community.

- **Commercial**

This land use designation denotes commercial and office areas with easy access to major roadways near residential areas, with the goal of serving the surrounding community, which includes general retail, restaurants, small businesses, grocery stores, and professional offices.

- **Light Industrial**

This land use designation denotes areas suitable for manufacturing. These uses are typically found in a business park setting with clustered buildings and inwardly focused activity that shall include light industries, professional offices, and other similar uses. Heavy industrial activities should be avoided considering the unique character of the community.

- **Rural Living**

This land use designation furthers the rural character of the community while allowing for commercial agricultural uses, agricultural products packing or processing facilities, livestock sales or auction yards, and occasional housing for seasonal farm labor.

- **Suburban Ranch**

This land use designation permits all uses under the rural living, additionally allowing for a range of athletic, sports, or recreation activities and clubs, guest ranch, commercial riding stable or riding schools, resorts, and golf courses.

- **Public/Institutional**

This land use designation represents areas where public or semi-public uses are most appropriate, including churches, police/fire substations, utility facilities, educational centers, and hospitals.

- **Open Space and Recreation**

This land use designation identifies areas that are to be developed and/or preserved as

natural open spaces, parks, and green vistas for a range of recreational and aesthetic purposes.

- **Manufactured Home and RV Park**

This land use designation denotes areas assigned for a community of prefabricated homes and a range of amenities and services shared by park residents, including landscaped recreation areas, community facilities, laundry, restrooms, offices, service buildings, and storage yards.

GOALS & POLICIES

To address the above strategic focus areas, this plan identifies a set of goals for enhancing sustainability, promoting conservation, fostering the community, broadening economic opportunity, and expanding infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the community. A range of policies and strategies are articulated to achieve these goals through land use planning.

Goal 11.1: PROMOTE LAND USE PATTERNS THAT ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Policy: Shape sustainable development patterns by minimizing incompatible land uses and increasing internal connectivity between the network of community amenities, open spaces, and housing.

Policy: Design and enforce zoning regulations and development standards to encourage green developments and maintain the rural character of the community.

Policy: Support community-wide location of sustainable local food systems, including farmer's markets, urban agriculture, ranching, and community gardens for enhancing food security and resilience.

Goal 11.2: PRIORITIZE THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND LANDSCAPES

Policy: Designate significant natural and cultural assets for conservation and restrict future

development around the designated properties.

Policy: Preserve the sweeping views of mountain and night skies by discouraging increased density and multi-story development.

Policy: Enhance community recreational assets through green landscape design, vistas, and scenic corridors.

Goal 11.3: FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY PLACES AND ENGAGEMENTS

Policy: Create a designated urban center with a cohesive collection of high-quality places and diverse options, where residents can access services and build social networks.

Policy: Develop community centers along Dinosaur Park, Peralta Regional Park, and other strategic areas to augment social and recreational experiences and integrate generations into a balanced community.

Policy: Formulate a mechanism for the community to work with adjacent cities regarding future land use on the shared complex borders for mutual benefits and coordinated growth.

Goal 11.4: BROADENING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL POPULATIONS

Policy: Increase the diversity and number of establishments along the US-60 and Kings Ranch Road intersection, including retail, restaurants, healthcare providers, and more, to enhance local spending and promote locally based businesses.

Policy: Develop the new SR-24 route to offer multiple entries to US-60, enhancing connectivity of the Gold Canyon community to the Phoenix-Mesa region and spurring clusters of economic activities at the intersection.

Policy: Promote diversity of job-producing uses along these corridors, including light industries, professional offices, resorts, and similar functions to increase the tax base and advance the long-term economic position of the community.

Goal 11.5: IMPROVE AND EXPAND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT GROWING POPULATIONS AND NEEDS

Policy: Encourage a more active lifestyle and environment by offering a range of active mobility options, such as hiking, cycling and walking, to offer convenient and healthy mobility choices for all residents and visitors.

Policy: Develop new transport links north of US-60 to support new residential developments and provide an alternative connection to the Peralta Regional Park.

Policy: Extend transport infrastructure, utilities, and community services south of US-60 along the two new corridors, the SR-24 extension and Kings Ranch extension.

The following page shows the vision of Scenario 2 in map format:

Area to be conserved

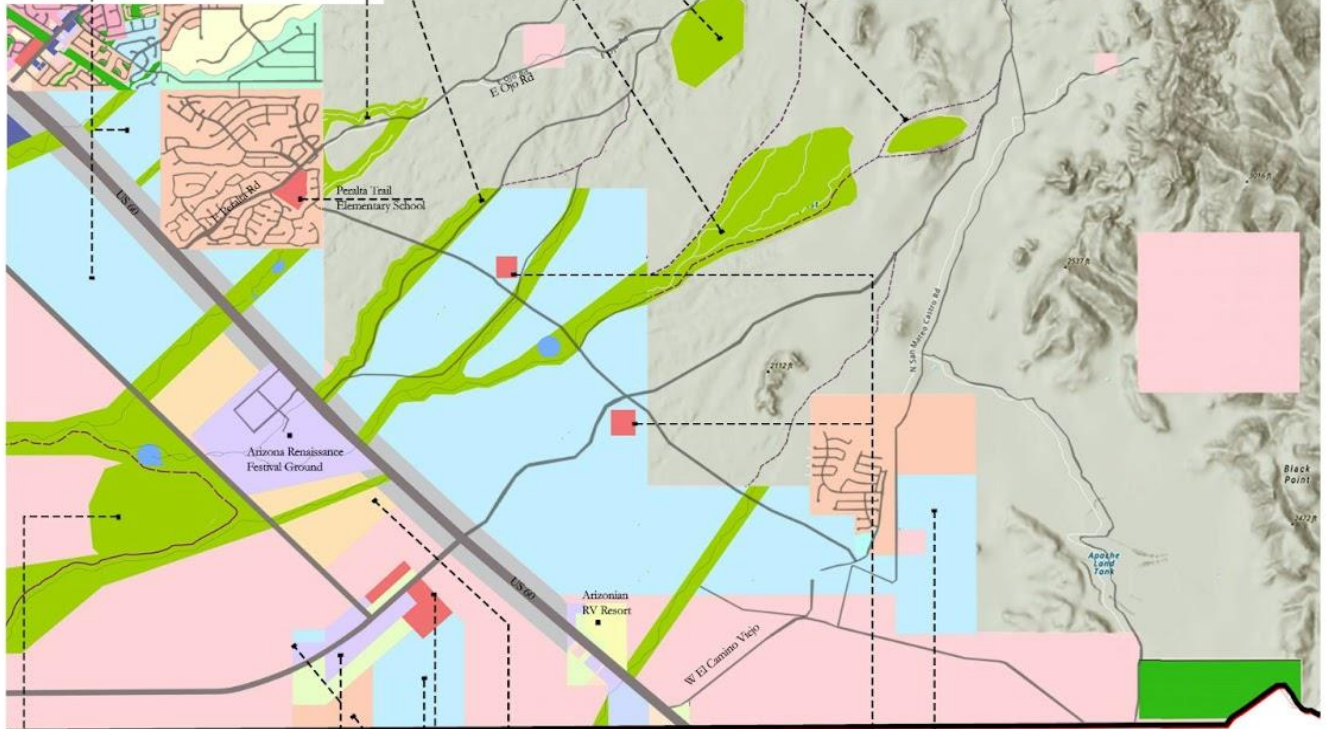
Proposed trails, along the existing flood wash channels and following the terrain of the area.
Introduction of green spaces in the areas encompassed by proposed trails, in the mountainous ranges to contribute to the process of conservation and enhance the experience of hiking through the trails.



Introduction of green spaces along the foothills to contribute to the process of conservation and discourage from constructing too close to the mountain ranges.

Proximity around the natural flood wash and channels, as per the area's terrain to be developed into green belts and maintained to function as green - blue corridors.

Low Density Residential - Balancing the development and growth of the area.



Proposed Green Space (Park), next to the Waterbody and stream channels, with the provision of meandering trails along the Flood Wash.

Strategically placed Commercial and Light industries, along the Proposed Roadway to develop the stretch for the community. Facilities such as Restaurants and Community Halls to be proposed along the particular stretch.

Low and Medium Density Residential - Balancing the development and growth of the area.

Public Building, such as hospital, in close proximity to US 60 for easier commute and greater efficiency.

RV Parking Ground and Manufactured Home Parking next to the Festival Ground, tapping on to the opportunities that the location provides.

Proposed Community Centers for the Locality

Low-Density Residential Zone to maintain the vistas of the surrounding mountainscape and keep a check on creating visual pollution.

LEGENDS

- Conservation
- Low Density Single Residential
- Rural Living
- Medium Density Multiple Residential
- Suburban Ranch
- Public/Institutional
- Commercial
- Manufactured Home and Recreational Vehicles Park
- Light Industrial
- Open Space and Recreation
- Mixed Use
- Water Bodies
- Roads
- - - Trail
- Proposed Mixed Use Town center

(Note: The colors in the Legends are indicative of Proposed Zones only)

Chapter 12

Intergovernmental Cooperation



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Intergovernmental Cooperation plan element is to present Gold Canyon's goals and policies for improving communication, land use decision-making and government service delivery amongst various levels of governments.

This element establishes a framework that the community and surrounding governmental entities must undertake to improve and sustain the quality of life for its residents. The aim is to reduce public costs and redundancy of services and avoid or resolve intergovernmental conflicts. Gold Canyon seeks to continually improve its relationships with neighboring governments, AJUSD, SFMD, Pinal County, regional entities (CAG, MAG, ADOT), the State of Arizona, federal agencies and other governmental units.

Potential areas of conflict often revolve around annexation issues, zoning issues, high impact proposals, and competition for sales taxes. The plan attempts to identify potential areas of conflict and agree on a mechanism for conflict resolution. The accents the need for ongoing joint planning and open communications.

This plan chapter focuses on improving and standardizing regular information exchanges. It is in all stakeholders' interest to engage in cooperative "growing smarter" planning. This requires cross-boundary planning for elements that extend beyond municipal borders (e.g., surface water management and transportation). It also requires ongoing sharing of common resources, such as recreation sites.

Conditions, Issues, and Opportunities

Gold Canyon relies on Pinal County for policing (Sheriff's Department),

Planning and Zoning, and long-range planning for the area using the County's comprehensive plan. The community also has established informal relationships with surrounding towns and agencies mentioned above. These various units of local, regional, state and quasi-governmental entities can be described as either primary or secondary in terms of the community's need for coordination and cooperation.

Additionally, the community is very active in regional organizations including the Pinal Partnership, East Valley Transportation Initiative, Central Arizona Governments, and Maricopa Association of Governments.

Areas of Coordination

Schools

Gold Canyon has one elementary school (Peralta Trails Elementary K-5) which is part of the Apache Junction Unified School District (AJUSD). The school and the surrounding community have had a positive and productive working relationship, including parks and recreation. Both the community and AJUSD have a shared interest in the quality of the public-school system, responsiveness of public safety services, community values, regional employment opportunities, the quality of life, and the cost of living. Cementing the symbiotic relationship between the community and AJUSD is important because great schools create great neighborhoods and vice versa.

The community does not have any public charter schools.

Superior/Apache Junction/Pinal County

Gold Canyon has a very good working relationship with Superior, Apache Junction, and Pinal County. Community leaders have established relationships with staff and heads of government

through informal meetings and working on area-wide issues such as transportation, land use, community surveys, dark-sky designations, and protecting the region's natural environment and quality of life.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Open Space and Conservation of Natural Corridors

Gold Canyon and northern Pinal County have significant and unique environmental assets that are integral to the long-term desirability of the area. The community will continue to emphasize the protection of significant environmental corridors for recreation and wildlife movement. This should be a coordinated regional approach to protecting such resources, led by the USFS, Gold Canyon, and Pinal County. Expanding collaboration and joint operations to conserve key environmental assets such as the Peralta Regional Park, Tonto National Forest, Superstition Wilderness, ASLD lands, and BLM holdings are imperative.

Water Usage/Conservation

Utilizing intergovernmental cooperation among all water managers at the federal, quasi-governmental, state, county, municipal, and districts will transform the philosophy of water to consider all aspects of water (potable, stormwater, treated wastewater) in a coordinated management of water in the Gold Canyon and the region.

Compact Growth

The County should direct new development to areas currently served by public utilities and roads and provide additional infrastructure only when available serviced land in the region has been nearly fully used. Development should support the County's comprehensive plans that direct growth

in an orderly and logical fashion. San Tan Valley is an example of unplanned growth that should not be repeated in the region.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 12.1: PROTECT THE LANDSCAPES AND LIFESTYLE OF GOLD CANYON AND THE SURROUNDING SONORAN DESERT

Policy: The community, federal, state, county, and adjacent cities have an imperative and obligation to protect the Superstition region for future generations. This shall ensure that the region's natural landscapes are not lost or damaged due to irresponsible growth.

Policy: The community will lead by example and leave the lightest footprint possible on the landscape.

Policy: The County will convene regional partners to define the metrics and agree to a regional compact for the protection of the resources that define the region and the quality of life for area residents. The Superstition Region Public Land Managers group is a good vehicle for this effort.

Goal 12.2: FOSTER COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLEGIALITY

Policy: The community will work proactively to avoid conflict on matters pertaining to regional issues and build interpersonal relationships that promote communication and cooperation.

Policy: Put residents first by sharing public resources, services, and facilities that serve residents across jurisdictional boundaries.

Policy: Grow and develop Gold Canyon in a way that benefits the region while conserving the quality of life of existing residents, visitors, and businesses.

Table 12.1

Agency	Areas of Coordination
Apache Junction Superior	Planning, Transportation, Superstition Vistas
Pinal County	Planning, Transportation, Flood Control, Economic Development, Peralta Regional Park
Apache Junction Unified School District	Facilities planning/usage, community involvement
Utilities: AZ Water Company Liberty Utilities SW Gas	Facility Planning, water usage/conservation, Rates and fees
Central AZ Governments Maricopa Association of Governments	Water resources, Transportation, Planning, Economic Development, Land Use
ADOT AZ State Land Department	SR 24, N/S Corridor, State land acquisition
National Forest Service US Department of Interior	Tonto National Forest, Wilderness Area, Open Space, wildlife protection
AZ Water Company SRP Internet/Cable Services	Water Resources, Water Conservation, Rates & Fees

