

## *Acknowledgements*

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# I. Introduction

The Town of Thatcher sits in the high desert of southeast Arizona between Mount Graham and the Gila River in the Gila River Valley. Settled in 1881 and incorporated as a municipality in 1899, Thatcher was built around an agriculturally driven economy and a community focused on education. New opportunities and challenges influenced by mining operations, retail and tourism are now further diversifying Thatcher's economy. Residential and commercial development, capitalizing on the region's growth, is beginning to reshape the Town.



This General Plan is a vital document to the decision makers in Thatcher as the Town moves forward. It supplies the outline needed to plan for healthy economic development, orderly growth and support of Thatcher's desired community character.

This Introduction Section contains:

- Guidance for using the General Plan document,
- Town-Wide Planning Vision,
- Basic assumptions for organizing Thatcher's planning principles, and
- Directions for administering the General Plan.

**Figure 1—Location Map**

## **A. Preface**

The **Thatcher General Plan Update** represents a statement of what the community expects their Town to become over the next twenty years. It is driven by citizen input, as it is a tool to help guide and shape the physical development of the Town.

Required by State Statutes, the previous Thatcher General Plan was created and adopted in 1997 and is required to be updated as needed and re-adopted at least once every 10 years. The Thatcher General Plan Update conforms to the letter and spirit of “Growing Smarter Plus” legislation established by the State of Arizona in 2000 to guide municipal planning and growth management with enhanced public involvement.

Included within the Thatcher General Plan Update are four major elements: Land Use, Circulation, Public Services and Facilities and Economic Development. These elements are intended to support the future needs of the community.

The Thatcher General Plan Update is intended as a guide. All General Plan Elements are interrelated and intended to be considered collectively. Users are strongly urged not to rely on select, excerpted statements; but, rather, are encouraged to consider all the subject matter of the Thatcher General Plan Update as a whole. It is important that the Plan Elements do not stand alone.

The Thatcher Planning Area expands the geographic base of Thatcher’s influence beyond the present Town limits. Coordination with jurisdictions abutting the planning area, including Graham County, Pima and Safford, plays a fundamental role in ensuring compatible and efficient development needed to provide for orderly growth and adequate provision of essential infrastructure and services. The Thatcher Planning Area includes approximately 14 square miles currently in unincorporated Graham County. The Town hopes to exert a positive influence on growth and development issues under Graham County’s jurisdiction. A strong, cooperative relationship between the Town and the County is crucial in implementing necessary growth management practices.

**Figure 2—Planning Area**

## Local History

Human activity in the Gila Valley region can be traced back over 15,000 years to the Hohokam, Mogollon and Anasazi Indian tribes. From this time on, the area experienced culturally diverse people from Spanish explorers, Franciscan missionaries and early European traders and trappers who traversed the valley until U.S territorial claims were established in the 1850's. Early inhabitants left the land rich with archeological burial grounds, villages and sacred sites.

An expedition to view the "Valley of the Gila" in the late 1800's brought pioneers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the area. Satisfied by the fertile soil and water rich lands, homesteads were soon established south of the Gila River. In 1883, a Mormon pioneer and businessman named Christopher Layton was appointed as head of the Gila Valley settlers. President Layton was instructed to see that the settlers in the area did not sprawl throughout the land, that surveys existed for townsites and that these localities had adequate facilities and protection against brigands and other hostile intruders.

The Thatcher townsite received its name in commemoration of a visit by apostle Moses Thatcher in December of 1882. Along with Thatcher's settlement, Layton established the St. Joseph Stake Academy, eventually becoming the first two-year community college in Arizona, now known as Eastern Arizona College.

In the early years of Thatcher's establishment, Layton and his family worked to develop the Town as "...shade trees were set out for a mile along Main Street and the sidewalks cleared and leveled, which added much to [Thatcher's] beauty as well as the convenience of walking."<sup>1</sup> The Valley settled rapidly. By 1895 homes marked the region and the completion of the railroad named the Gila Valley, Globe and Northern brought life to Thatcher.

A major economic force in the Gila Valley became its downfall for a few years around 1910. Farms throughout the area were on the brink of abandonment due to careless operations at the Clifton-Morenci mining mills. Finely pulverized rock (tailings) flowed into the Gila River and spread over the farmland during irrigation, making agriculture nearly impossible. Valley settlers joined together, taking the matter to the courts. The United States Supreme Court confronted the mining companies, forcing their operations to change.

While development of the community has continued to evolve in important ways, present day Thatcher is reminiscent of earlier times. Area population has remained dedicated to agriculture and diversifying the local economy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of Christopher Layton*, Cannon, John Q., The Deseret News; Salt Lake City Utah, 1911

## **B. How to Use This Plan**

The **Thatcher General Plan Update** outlines a vision for Thatcher’s long-range physical and economic development reflecting the aspirations of the community. It is a general, comprehensive expression of the future Town of Thatcher. The Plan provides specific focus through the creation of an overall vision and the identification of strategic goals, objectives and specific implementing policies and recommendations to guide public and private decisions related to growth and development of the Town and in the Thatcher Planning Area. The General Plan provides guidance to citizens regarding the physical development of the community. It allows public agencies and private developers to design projects that will enhance the character of the community, preserving and improving the overall quality of life for Thatcher residents. The Plan is a guide to Town management, Town departments, Town Council and the entire community.

The Town of Thatcher General Plan Update is divided into three sections, these are:

**Section I: Introduction** including:

- A. Preface
- B. How to Use This Plan
- C. Thatcher’s Vision
- D. General Plan Update Purpose
- E. Planning Assumptions and Principles
- F. Plan Administration
- G. Statutory Plan Requirements

**Section II: General Plan Elements** including:

- A. Land Use
- B. Circulation
- C. Public Services and Facilities
- D. Economic Development

**Section III: General Plan Implementation** highlights policy coordination, specific actions, General Plan monitoring and provides guidelines for land use decision-making.

- A. General Plan Policies
- B. Plan Monitoring
- C. Land Use Decision Criteria

The General Plan is intended to provide a framework for all of the interrelated functions of the Town of Thatcher. To define the General Plan we can say:

The General Plan *is*:

- *an expression of the preferences of residents and property owners*
- *a statement of Town policy*
- *a framework for future decision making*
- *a means of enhancing the quality of life of the citizens*
- *a legal requirement under Arizona State Law*

The General Plan *is not:*

- a tool to promote special interests
- a rigid, unchanging or inflexible document
- a detailed policy or ordinance for specific properties or areas
- a zoning map

Thatcher welcomes users of **The Thatcher General Plan Update**, and Town staff stands ready to assist in any way possible. Inquiries regarding the **General Plan** should be made to:

Town of Thatcher (928) 428-2290  
3700 W. Main St. Thatcher, AZ 85552

## C. Thatcher's Vision

Thatcher's vision for the future reflects the values of Thatcher citizens. Understanding growth is a regional reality; the public wants to be sure that future Thatcher is known as the 'best of the best' and envisions their community to retain its small Town attributes. Emphasis is placed on friendliness, respect for community heritage, family-oriented, safe neighborhoods and traditional civic events. The following Vision statement uses the perceptions and expressions identified by Thatcher citizens to describe the future Thatcher.

### **Our Vision for the Year 2025:**

The Town of Thatcher is recognized as 'the Best of the Best' in maintaining and improving a proactive, family-oriented and safe community. From our agricultural heritage to our role as an educational center, Thatcher provides diverse opportunities for employment, education and recreation. We encourage and support sustainable economic expansion including desirable jobs and improvements to educational and community facilities.

## D. General Plan Update Purpose

The primary purpose of the 2008 **Town of Thatcher General Plan Update** is to provide a tool for the community to guide and coordinate development efforts over the coming 20-year period. The General Plan also fully responds to Arizona's Growing Smarter/Plus requirements.

Anticipating population growth and development as a result of economic changes in the region, Thatcher citizens participated in the **General Plan Update** planning process. They assisted in the development of a plan that embraces their vision of an economically prosperous, family-oriented community with adequate supporting services.

In its adopted form, this comprehensive planning document, the **Thatcher General Plan Update**, shall serve as a general guide for the Town Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town staff, as well as public and private interests regarding development and growth in and around the Town of Thatcher.

## E. Planning Assumptions and Principles

The General Plan Update for Thatcher includes recommendations and analyses of current and future conditions. Because the Town has little or no control over many external forces that will influence its future, it is necessary to identify some of the more significant general conditions that appear likely to prevail in the future. There are a few fundamental assumptions which assist in organizing Thatcher's General Plan principles. If the following assumptions prove to be incorrect, it may be necessary for Thatcher to re-evaluate goals and objectives identified in the **General Plan Update**. Town development policies coincide with these basic directions.

### Assumptions:

- ❑ The Town of Thatcher and the Thatcher Planning Area will continue to experience an increase in total population. Citizens of Thatcher expect a higher growth rate during the initial phase of construction and new mining operations in the area. Modeled on recent, local growth rates, the "high" growth increment, adding over 6,000 new residents to the Planning Area, is a supportable assumption.
- ❑ Residents of Thatcher will continue to require high quality residential, working and recreational facilities. As population continues to increase, so will the demands of citizens.
- ❑ Thatcher's character will continue to support an important, unique small-town culture. The natural setting and lifestyle of the Town meets the needs of individuals and families seeking the characteristics of a rural lifestyle.
- ❑ Agriculture will continue to be replaced as the principal economic activity of the Town. The area is transforming from predominately farm and cattle operations to more suburban development as focus within the community shifts to economic diversification. Agriculture will remain an important part of the local economy.

- Traffic will increase on US Highway 70 (Main Street) along with safety and access concerns. As Thatcher, along with Graham County, continues to grow, average daily traffic on Main Street in Thatcher, as the only through corridor, will significantly increase.
- Economic development should emphasize job creation, business retention and expansion, and municipal revenue generation. The Town plans to attract quality jobs and businesses and understands that helping local businesses grow is important. New employment contributing higher-wage occupations are, also, specifically targeted.
- Development proposals are expected to coordinate with and participate in costs of infrastructure and services. A fair-share approach is preferred with new development expected to construct or fund infrastructure, including major off-site improvements needed to support its residents.

### **Principles:**

Thatcher's comprehensive planning approach establishes basic principles that assist in translating Assumptions and Element Goals into progressive community action. These principals cannot be assumed; the Town must actively support them.

- *Seek balanced land use and a diverse economic base benefiting all citizens.*
- *Actively recruit and facilitate the location of quality jobs in the Town of Thatcher.*
- *Ensure new development projects fit the character of Thatcher and include supporting facilities and public improvements.*
- *Require new development to pay its "fair-share" for infrastructure and Town services.*
- *Guide growth and development patterns to follow Town policies.*
- *Support surrounding jurisdictions, Graham County, the Town of Pima and the City of Safford, in guiding appropriate residential, commercial and industrial development.*

## **F. Plan Administration**

The purpose of this section is to provide administrative direction, criteria and procedures for compliance with State Statutes, including Growing Smarter/Plus legislation, and a template for local zoning ordinance consistency.

### **1. General Plan Adoption**

In accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes (9-461.06-J), the **Thatcher General Plan Update** is effective for up to ten years. The General Plan can be updated or readopted at any time at the discretion of the Town; however it must be updated or readopted within ten years from the date of adoption. As conditions change, including demographic shifts or the emergence of new economic trends, the General Plan will require a comprehensive update.

The **Thatcher General Plan Update** is adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Town Council. At a minimum every ten years, a new General Plan or the currently effective General Plan shall be submitted for adoption or re-adoption. Major amendments to the General Plan must also be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Town Council as further detailed in the following Major Amendment subsection.

The process of General Plan adoption entails three key steps. The Plan is provided to outside agencies including Graham County, the Southeastern Arizona Association of Governments (SEAGO), and the State Department of Commerce for a review period of at least 60 days. The Thatcher Planning and Zoning Commission will review the General Plan at a public hearing. Finally, the Thatcher Town Council holds a public hearing for final public comment and adoption.

## 2. **Relationship to Other Plans**

The General Plan provides comprehensive direction across four Plan Elements. Future, detailed functional “Plans”, economic development or parks and trails plans for example, can serve to implement the General Plan, should be consistent and provide refinements for individual functions, disciplines or geographic areas of the Thatcher Planning Area.

All adopted Plans are intended to integrate with the General Plan. Where greater detail and direction is provided in these Plans, such directions shall prevail and will be followed.

## 3. **General Plan Amendments**

Frequent changes to the adopted General Plan are both ill-advised and, statutorily restricted. The General Plan was prepared with public input and analysis of existing conditions and community needs. Permitting multiple, uncoordinated alterations undermines the community’s investment in the planning process and is counter-productive to achieving the long term, agreed upon vision for Thatcher.

There are two types of General Plan Amendments, Major and Minor. A Major Amendment is a revision to the **Thatcher General Plan Update** text or Land Use Map that has far-reaching consequences on the use of land areas, demand on available infrastructure and/or substantially alters or is inconsistent with specified residential density or development intensity. A Minor Amendment is any other revision to the General Plan map or text that does not meet the criteria for Major Amendment as explained below.

### **Major General Plan Amendment**

General Plan Major Amendments are governed by Arizona Statutes, ARS 9-461.06, D and G. The statutes allow Major Amendments to the General Plan once per year. The Planning and Zoning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the Major Amendment(s). A two-thirds vote by the Town Council is required to approve a Major

Amendment. Furthermore, the statute defines a General Plan Major Amendment as a substantial alteration of the municipality's land use mixture or balance as established in the municipality's General Plan land use element.

Planning Statutes require municipalities to define the criteria to be used in determining if a proposed plan amendment effects a substantial alteration of the municipality's land use mixture or balance as established by the adopted General Plan.

Major Plan Amendments may be proposed to the **Future Land Use Map** and **text** of the General Plan.

**a. Major Map Amendment**

The determination, if a map amendment is a General Plan Major Map Amendment, are by two criteria. The criteria include *land use* and *infrastructure*.

**Land Use Criteria**

A Major Amendment to the **Thatcher General Plan Update** is any proposal that would result in a change of such significance as to impact substantial portions of the entire Town and/or its Planning Area. The criteria for determining whether or not a prospective development that differs from the adopted General Plan text and map will require a Major Amendment are based upon the relative size, in land area, and extent of change proposed. Criteria for determining a Major Amendment to the Thatcher General Plan Update include:

- **Size** in land area, and
- **Extent** in terms of development intensity or density and relationship to surrounding land uses.

The following changes in land use designations within the Town limits on the Future Land Use Plan require a major amendment to the Town’s General Plan:

**Table 1**  
**Major Plan Amendment Land Use Criteria Within Town Limits**

<b>Current Designation</b>	<b>Proposed Designation</b>	<b>Acres to Trigger a Major Amendment</b>
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	Employment, Public/Institutional	160
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	Parks/Open Space, Agriculture	320
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial	60
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR)	More intense Residential Category (example: MDR to HDR)	80
Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial	Any	40
Town Center Mixed Use	Any	10
Employment	Any	40
Public/Institutional	Any	20
Parks/Open Space	Any	20
Agriculture	Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	80
Agriculture	Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial, Employment, Public/Institutional	60

\*Please reference the Future Land Use and Land Use Legend in the Land Use Element for descriptions of land use designations.

Table 1 represents the land use criteria for determining a major amendment for areas inside the Town limits and is separate from the infrastructure criteria. If the above thresholds are not exceeded, the amendment to the General Plan is considered Minor and will be processed in accordance with the Town’s procedures for a Minor Amendment. Any aggregate change (total of all requested changes) of 160 acres or more will require a major amendment.

The Town has only an advisory role to Graham County regarding planning and zoning decisions in the unincorporated portions of the planning area. Town staff should request copies of zoning, plan amendment, subdivision plat and site plan applications for property located within, at a minimum, 3 miles of the Town. A response letter should be provided back to the County addressing Thatcher’s planning and development-related comments on the proposed project. Table 2 lists the Major Amendment criteria for areas outside the Town limits and is

intended to provide Town staff with guidance for input to Graham County when reviewing land use changes.

**Table 2**  
**Major Plan Amendment Land Use Criteria Outside Town Limits**

<b>Current Designation</b>	<b>Proposed Designation</b>	<b>Acres to Trigger a Major Amendment</b>
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	Employment, Public/Institutional, Parks/Open Space, Agriculture	320
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR)	Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial	80
Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR)	More intense Residential Category (example: MDR to HDR)	90
Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial	Any	40
Employment	Residential (VLDR, LDR, MDR, HDR), Neighborhood Commercial, Commercial	320
Public/Institutional	Any	40
Parks/Open Space	Any	40
Agriculture	Any	320

\*Please reference the Future Land Use and Land Use Legend in the Land Use Element for descriptions of land use designations.

**Infrastructure Criteria**

Infrastructure must expand to keep up with residential development. Land use changes and amendments to the General Plan can have a range of impacts on public infrastructure. A General Plan amendment and rezoning request that would place significant cost burdens on municipal or private utility systems may be considered a Major Amendment. That is, where available capacities or funded capital investments for expansion (such as roads, bridges and drainage control) are insufficient to support the proposed development, the applicant would be required to pay for necessary improvements. A Major Amendment would be called for if infrastructure needs are not demonstrated to be covered.

A Major General Plan Map/Text Amendment will be required when infrastructure demands are not offset by private investment or extensions to public systems. This applies in cases where the proposed amendment does not meet the minimum acreage criteria in Table 2 to trigger a Major Amendment, and the proposed amendment does not offset infrastructure demands as determined by the Town Manager or their designee.

**b. Minor Map Amendment**

General Plan Minor Map Amendments may be processed independently or concurrently with applications for rezoning subject to Town policies and procedures. Minor Map Amendments are all General Plan map amendments not deemed as major using the land use and infrastructure criteria described above.

**c. Text Amendment**

Revisions to the General Plan text that help to clarify and implement the General Plan are a General Plan Minor Text Amendment. However, any text amendment that would change the dwelling unit density or intensity of any Land Use Category would be a Major Text Amendment. The General Plan Major Text Amendment would be required to follow the same process as a General Plan Major Map Amendment. General Plan Minor Text Amendments will follow the policies and procedures as set forth by the Town.

**d. General Plan Major Map/Text Amendment Process**

The Town of Thatcher, in accordance with Arizona Statutes, will consider General Plan Major Map/Text Amendments at a single public hearing during the calendar year the proposal is made.

Application for a General Plan Major Map/Text Amendment will be in accordance with Town policies and procedures. The Town will provide the necessary forms and information and will process the amendment request.

Public participation is critical to the processing of a General Plan Major Map/Text Amendment. A Public Participation Program, similar to the one applied to the General Plan Update process, will be followed to achieve a high level of citizen participation.

The following is the basic process for a General Plan Major Map/Text Amendment:

- ❑ Applicants will attend a pre-application meeting prior to submitting an application.
- ❑ Applications will be accepted from January 1 to June 30 for processing within that calendar year.
- ❑ At least sixty days before the Major Map/Text Amendment is noticed for Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing, the Town will transmit the proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council and submit a copy, for review and further comment, to Graham County Planning and Development Department, City of Safford, Southeastern Arizona Association of Governments, Department of Commerce, and anyone who requests it.

- ❑ All Major Map/Text Amendments require a Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing prior to the Town Council public hearing.
- ❑ Town Council public hearings to consider Major Plan Map/Text Amendments will occur between October 1 and December 31 within the calendar year the application was submitted.
- ❑ State Statutes require a two-thirds majority vote by Town Council to approve a General Plan Major Map/Text Amendment.

#### 4. **Biennial General Plan Report**

The Thatcher Town Manager or his designee is responsible for compiling a biennial report monitoring the status of the General Plan. Included in the report should be an assessment of the validity of the goals and objectives and a progress statement on their incremental achievement. Problem areas or suggested updates should be detailed. The timing of the Biennial Report shall be established by Town policy.

The Planning and Zoning Commission actively participates in the review of the General Plan. (See: Chapter III - Implementation) The Commission should provide recommendations to Town staff and officials on suggested Plan refinements. Upon Commission review of the biennial report, it should be forwarded to the Town Council.

#### 5. **Plan Updates**

In accordance with Arizona Statutes, ARS 9-461.06-J, the **Thatcher General Plan Update** is effective for up to ten years upon its adoption. The Plan can be re-adopted and/or updated at any time at the discretion of the Town. As conditions change the plan may require a comprehensive update.

### G. **Statutory Plan Requirements**

The **Town of Thatcher General Plan Update** has been prepared according to Arizona Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus statutory requirements.

The **Thatcher General Plan Update** contains the requisite two elements needed to satisfy the Growing Smarter/Plus requirements. The required elements are: **Land Use** and **Circulation**. The Town of Thatcher has also prepared **Public Services and Facilities** and **Economic Development** Elements, above and beyond minimum Growing Smarter/Plus requirements. All required Plan Elements respond to Planning Statute specifications including:

**Land Use.** The element designates the proposed general distribution, location, and intensity of residential, commercial, industrial, public and open space and agricultural uses. The Element supports redevelopment in underutilized areas.

**Circulation.** The element identifies the conditions and location of existing and proposed arterial routes, collector streets and other street classifications. The element discusses pedestrian, bicycle and transit services and facilities. The Circulation Element supports the proposed land use pattern outlined in the Land Use Element of the plan.

**Public Services and Facilities.** This element details the current status of public infrastructure and provides planning strategies. Plans for police and fire service and utilities are also discussed. The Element specifies the intent and ability of the Town to ensure that new development pays its fair share of costs of new public services and facilities.

**Economic Development.** This element provides a framework for promoting the Town's economic and fiscal health. The Economic Development Element addresses areas of opportunity and identifies strategic targets.

## II. General Plan Update Elements

Plan Elements are the subject matter components that provide a logical, comprehensive structure for local jurisdiction planning. In Arizona, smaller municipalities like Thatcher are required to address two topical areas: Land Use and Circulation. The Town of Thatcher has chosen to address two additional Elements, including Public Services and Facilities and Economic Development that are beyond the State's requirements. All Elements are considered to be interrelated parts of the whole framework for Thatcher planning.

### A. Land Use Element

The Land Use Element establishes an outline for goals and objectives with following policies and implementation that will guide the Town's physical form and development. Intended to direct orderly growth, this element designates the location and extent of public and private uses of land. In addition to addressing the intensity and distribution of land uses, this chapter addresses other closely related topics, including population, demographics and housing.

Land Use planning considerations include preserving Thatcher's agricultural character by providing appropriate areas for municipal growth and influencing thoughtful land use decisions



throughout the Thatcher Planning Area. The aim is to preserve the Town's history while enhancing the quality of living for its residents. Based on public input, Thatcher citizens believe in a balanced

community with educational excellence, safe neighborhoods with ample recreational provisions and "fair-share" responsibility for needed infrastructure due to new development.

Growth assumptions for Thatcher are summarized in Table 3, signifying two scenarios. A low growth rate is based on a continuance of historic growth patterns and a high, 5 percent sustained growth rate is based on a continuance of the recent acceleration in residential development seen throughout the Thatcher area. All population projections utilize 2.7 persons per dwelling unit. Growth in the range of 6,500 to 12,750 for the Thatcher Area is projected. Current patterns and trends indicate Thatcher's 2025 population will likely be close to 9,000 people, representing a 45 percent increase from 2006.

**Table 3  
2025 Growth Assumption\***

	<b>2006 July Estimate</b>	<b>2025 Low Projection</b>	<b>2025 High Projection</b>
Population	4,970	6,536	12,750
Dwelling Units	1,841	2,421	4,722
Employment	2,762	3,632	7,083
Commercial (sq. ft.)	1,016,857	1,245,617	1,463,107

\*Data provided by SEAGO; projections by Willdan

## 1. **Current Conditions**

Agriculture is a mainstay of Thatcher’s economy and as such, defines the fundamental character of the landscape. Supporting new population growth, Thatcher’s planning focus has shifted to accommodating a growing community with new jobs, retail and recreational opportunities.

### **General Development Patterns**

Residential development has become a priority in recent years, as the Town has seen an increase in population. New residential development can be seen throughout the Thatcher Planning Area, concentrated in the northern half of the Town, north of Frye Creek Dam. Medium and high-density residential areas have been established within Thatcher’s Town core.

Regional commercial areas along US 70 (Main Street) are a reflection past and present planning efforts with significant commercial development emerging along Thatcher’s eastern edge.

Thatcher’s Planning Area on the east abuts the City of Safford with a 2000 Census population of 9,232. West of Thatcher’s Planning Area is the unincorporated area of Central with an estimated population of 700 people and the Town of Pima with a 2000 Census population of 1,989. The surrounding communities maintain similar agricultural character to Thatcher; Safford with slightly higher density development.

### **Existing Land Use Allocation**

Table 4 illustrates the composition of Thatcher’s current use of land. The data shows the allocation of land use in July 2007, which reflects Thatcher’s predominately agricultural character (38%). Residential uses (26%) and vacant or open space uses (24%) make up about half the town’s land use. Ten percent (10%) of all land in Thatcher is occupied by commercial and public or institutional uses. Commercial land use at 3 % is somewhat lower than what is traditionally seen in mature communities with 5-7% commercial. Public/Institutional land uses (7%), which consist of schools and public facilities, reflect Thatcher’s focus on higher education with the Eastern Arizona College campus comprising most of the category. Industrial uses make up 2 % of all land in Thatcher.

**Table 4  
Land Use Composition\***

Type	Existing Use%	Acres
Agriculture	38	1,365.418
Residential	26	932.079
Vacant/Open Space	24	860.542
Public/Institutional	7	267.316
Commercial	3	116.719
Industrial	2	56.014
Total	100%	3,598.088

\*Data provided by the Town of Thatcher, 2007

## 2. Growth Accommodation

One of the primary functions of planning is to understand and accommodate various types of land use activities that are currently needed as well as those that will be needed in the future. Land use activities need to be properly situated to enhance public health and safety, assure adequate public facilities exist and protect property values.

As growth occurs, land absorption will be guided in a manner consistent with General Plan Goals. Although residential development will remain the largest user of land, the Future Land Use map is intended to reflect the established development pattern of Thatcher along with recently approved new development. The Future Land Use Map translates the Goals and Objectives of the Land Use Element, along with all other Elements (Circulation, Public Services and Facilities, and Economic Development) into a desired, balanced future community.

### Town Growth

Thatcher has seen accelerated growth as a result of economic diversification in the area. The Town’s expected population increase in the current decade (1,478) is 5.7 times greater than the population increase experienced between 1990 and 2000 (259). By 2009, the Town’s population is expected to well exceed 5,000 residents.

Table 5 reflects two population projection scenarios over five-year intervals. A low population projection is based on a continuation of existing growth rates and a high population projection with a moderately high growth rate of 5 percent is based on continuation of recent residential development trends.

**Table 5  
Town Population Projection\***

<b>Low Projection</b>	<b>Low Projection</b>	<b>High Projection</b>
2008	5,057	5,334
2010	5,231	6,134
2015	5,666	7,827
2020	6,101	9,990
2025	6,536	12,750

\*Data provided by Willdan.

Currently, build-out projections in Thatcher’s Town limits would allow for a population of about 7,586, an increase of 2,616 residents. At an assumed growth rate of 4 percent, Thatcher’s residential lot inventory would be sufficient for growth into the year 2018.

**Land Use Patterns**

The general distribution and location of future land uses in Thatcher build on existing land use patterns. The Town’s desire to meet employment and service sector needs has created an emphasis on job creation and an enhanced retail base. Along with preparing for expected growth, maintaining low-intensity residential and agricultural land uses in the surrounding planning area is an intended reflection of citizen preferences during the Thatcher General Plan Update.

The Town of Thatcher grew from a grid system where a range of land use designations exists. Development of the Town spread primarily south towards the Pinaleno Mountains and east toward Safford. US 70 (Main Street) runs through the Town’s core serving as the area’s primary transportation and commercial corridor. A mix of land uses, including single and multi-family housing exist in Thatcher with a large portion designated for public/institutional land uses, three blocks of which represent the Eastern Arizona College Campus.

Residential growth is occurring throughout Thatcher, mainly in the northern half of Town, which includes areas around Eastern Arizona College. The only area to see no residential growth is the commercial area along the eastern edge of Town. Employment land uses are focused primarily along Main Street and at several nodes through the center of the planning area.

The Thatcher planning area is approximately 18.8 square miles or 12,032 acres. Based on a year 2025 population assumption of 10,000 in the planning area, demands for future land uses will likely include: Residential- 1,461 acres; Commercial- 144 acres; and Industrial- 64 acres. These figures are general guides relating the use of land based on existing and projected intensities of development. Thatcher’s current build-out capacity of the planning area far exceeds the projected population of 10,000. Additional planning by Graham County and the Town of Thatcher will serve to better define ultimate land use and development patterns.

### 3. **Future Land Use Map and Land Use Legend**

The Future Land Use map includes land use designations to describe the types of land uses accommodated within Thatcher's Planning Area. The following categories describe the land use designations used in the Town's General Plan Update and shown on the Future Land Use map. These designations do not represent zoning districts. While each designation identifies the intended range of land uses, the Zoning Ordinance will identify specific uses and development standards. In some cases, a change of zoning will be necessary to use property as designated by the General Plan.

#### **Very Low Density Residential – VLDR**

The **Very Low Density Residential** category promotes the continuation of the rural character that is common across much of the planning area. Rural areas may include farming and small-scale livestock operations along with low-density residential uses. The density range of this category is 1.0 dwelling units per acre or less.

#### **Low Density Residential – LDR**

The **Low Density Residential** designation accommodates a range of residential products including semi-rural large lot development with generous distances to streets and between residential dwelling units and a viable semi-rural character setting. Limited livestock privileges may be a part of this character for areas where lot sizes are a minimum of one acre. Low-density residential areas comprise the majority of residential land in the Town. Smaller lot sizes, less than 10,000 square feet within planned neighborhoods are also supported. The density range of this category is 1.0 to 5.0 dwelling units per acre.

#### **Medium Density Residential – MDR**

The **Medium Density Residential** category provides for planned, single-family residential neighborhoods with a mixture of dwelling unit types, which include significant open space, recreation and cultural opportunities, including schools, churches and neighborhood facilities. Medium density residential developments are expected to immediately create infrastructure demands for roadways and utilities. The density range of this category is 5.0 to 10.0 dwelling units per acre.

#### **High Density Residential – HDR**

The **High Density Residential** designation provides for multi-family dwellings that may be multi-story buildings. This category includes townhouses, condominiums and apartments. Substantial common open space, recreational amenities and on-site support facilities should be included to serve residents. High-density uses should be appropriate in mixed-use developments. The density range of this category is 10.0 or more dwelling units per acre.

#### **Neighborhood Commercial – NC**

The **Neighborhood Commercial** land use category provides for commercial nodes within the Town. The intent is to provide neighborhood and community scale shopping, offices, medical facilities, and subordinate multi-family residential uses which incorporate pedestrian and neighborhood needs through site planning, architecture, access, lighting and parking design. Single-family residential uses are not supported.

**Commercial – C**

The **Commercial** category provides for larger scale commercial, including Regional Commercial uses that serve the greater Thatcher area. This category would provide for larger scale retail stores, heavy equipment dealers, hotels/motels, automobile service and subordinate multi-family residential uses which incorporate pedestrian and neighborhood needs through site planning, architecture, access, lighting and parking design. Single-family residential uses are not supported.

**Town Center Mixed Use – TCMU**

The **Town Center Mixed Use** designation is intended to foster a mixture of commercial retail, service and residential uses within the same building and/or project site located within Thatcher's core area. Higher density residential (such as apartments and condominiums) is expected in Town Center Mixed Use projects. The density range of this category is up to 10.0 or more dwelling units per acre.

**Employment – E**

The **Employment** category designation is intended to provide areas for the development and perpetuation of employment activity involving offices, manufacturing, machining, warehousing, freighting, wholesale, and retail activities and support uses. Areas designated for **Employment** have adequate transportation and infrastructure access with an emphasis on minimal conflict with existing adjacent land uses.

**Public / Institutional – PI**

The **Public and Institutional** category provides for public, semi-public or institutional uses such as school campuses and their attendant uses (playgrounds, ballfields, parking lots, etc.), hospitals, churches, public library facilities, Town offices, public cemeteries, infrastructure, utility sites, and water treatment facilities.

**Parks / Open Space – POS**

The **Parks and Open-Space** category designation identifies open-space sites and corridors intended for public recreation and resource conservation. The General Plan Future Land Use map does not locate future neighborhood park sites. The General Plan recognizes the need for parks, recreational areas and open areas, which add to the attractiveness of the community, the quality of life of the residents and the expectation that park sites will be reserved and developed within new development projects.

**Agriculture – AG**

The General Plan recognizes farming and other agriculture activities as one of the principle land uses in the planning area. Agricultural uses have secondary effects to immediately adjacent properties making lower intensity land uses such as low-density residential appropriate transitions adjacent to agriculture. The density range of the **Agriculture** category, in accordance with statutory requirements, is up to 1 residence per acre; however, the continuation of lower densities as required by existing zoning is supported.

**Figure 3—Future Land Use**

Table 6 is provided as a guide to the Town’s current zoning districts. Each land use designation shows appropriate residential density range in dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and potential zoning. General Plan users are encouraged to contact Thatcher’s Town staff to determine actual zone designation for specific land uses.

**Table 6  
Land Use Designations**

<b>Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Residential Density (du/ac)</b>	<b>Potential Zoning</b>
<b>Very Low Density Residential – VLDR</b>	1 or less	A-R R-1
<b>Low Density Residential – LDR</b>	1 – 5	R-1 R-2
<b>Medium Density Residential – MDR</b>	5 – 10	R-2, R-3 MHS, C-MH
<b>High Density Residential – HDR</b>	10 – 18	R-3
<b>Neighborhood Commercial – NC</b>	1 or less	C-2
<b>Commercial – C</b>	1 or less	C-1
<b>Town Center Mixed Use – TCMU</b>	1 – 18	R-1, R-2 R-3, C-1
<b>Employment – E</b>	0	IND-1
<b>Public / Institutional – PI</b>	0	NA
<b>Parks / Open Space – POS</b>	1 or less	NA
<b>Agriculture – AG</b>	1 or less	A-R

#### **4. Land Use Considerations**

Broad planning considerations for land use in Thatcher include:

- ❑ *Livable neighborhoods with ample access to quality jobs, shopping and recreation.*
- ❑ *Expansion of industrial development and the reservation of suitable land for later-developing non-residential uses.*
- ❑ *Development of Town-wide parks and trails systems.*
- ❑ *Strategic preservation of agricultural land.*
- ❑ *Implementing appropriate design standards for commercial, residential, institutional and industrial development projects.*

- *Cooperative planning efforts with Graham County, Safford and Pima.*

## 5. **Goals and Objectives**

Thatcher citizens desire planned growth with a clear intent to preserve the Town’s existing rural character. Identified issues for land use planning includes maintaining agricultural land and low-density residential land uses while establishing a strong, quality employment base and attractive retail centers that contribute to Thatcher’s economy.

Thatcher’s land use goals and objectives promote the Town’s vision to enhance current assets moving toward a full-service, balanced community for the future. They stress the importance of retaining a distinctive identity as positive change is accomplished. The Town’s image as an excellent place to live is promoted and expanded in the overall strategy for preserving, adding and blending compatible types of residential and non-residential development.

**Goal 1: Proactively manage and direct growth to suitable areas for residential, commercial and industrial uses.**

- Objective a:* Promote development that is consistent with the General Plan Update land use designations.
- Objective b:* Provide locations for all public, utility and community activities that are compatible with the area.
- Objective c:* Ensure quality growth and development through the implementation of zoning and development regulations and community design standards that are compatible with the general plan.
- Objective d:* Monitor development proposals in the Planning Area and north of the Gila River and coordinate planning and infrastructure needs of new development with Graham County.

**Goal 2: Assure high quality housing is available for residents of Thatcher and the growing student population of Eastern Arizona College.**

- Objective a:* Maintain high standards for new development with attention to maximizing the supply of affordable housing.
- Objective b:* Provide a mix of housing types, densities, affordability levels, and designs for a wide range of income and age levels.
- Objective c:* Encourage infill on existing Town lots currently served by infrastructure.
- Objective d:* Require environmental quality compliance with Graham County standards for all activity in the Town.
- Objective e:* Promote solar access, solar energy use and efficient solar orientation of buildings to reduce energy needs.

**Goal 3: Preserve the agricultural heritage of the Town of Thatcher for future generations.**

- Objective a:* Support the continuing viability of agricultural operations in the most suitable portions of the Thatcher Planning Area.
- Objective b:* Promote Thatcher’s agricultural character.
- Objective c:* Employ land use transitioning techniques to ensure compatibility between developed and agricultural land.

**Goal 4: Maintain existing neighborhoods and residential areas.**

- Objective a:* Support revitalization and preservation of mature housing.
- Objective b:* Pursue demolition of existing structures when rehabilitation is not possible.
- Objective c:* Ensure that all residential areas are safe and attractive places to live.

**Goal 5: Expand commercial and employment uses that supply local and regional needs.**

- Objective a:* Support the vitality of existing businesses.
- Objective b:* Promote high quality development opportunities that enhance Thatcher’s employment and retail base.
- Objective c:* Reserve prime locations for future commercial/office development.
- Objective d:* Integrate employment and retail uses and site designs where appropriate.

**Goal 6: Build a clean, well-kept image for the Town.**

- Objective a:* Improve the visual quality of all areas of Town.
- Objective b:* Incorporate community excellence as a theme in community activities.
- Objective c:* Identify, restore and preserve historic buildings in Thatcher.

**6. Land Use Recommendations**

Consistent with Land Use Goals and Objectives, the following suggestions may translate into action steps for the Town. Specific policies related to Land Use are included in the Implementation chapter of this Plan:

- ❑ Ensure land use planning, rezoning and land development approvals go hand-in-hand with infrastructure planning, financing and construction.
- ❑ Prepare and adopt Design Guidelines for residential and non-residential development to preserve and enhance the character of the Town.
- ❑ Provide for infill development in the Town core area that includes high quality design and site planning techniques.
- ❑ Include the Town’s business community in planning efforts.
- ❑ Address opportunities for partnership with neighboring jurisdictions in assuring land use compatibilities.

## B. Circulation Element

The Circulation Element is intended to support the land use goals and recommendations described in the Land Use Element. It is integral to all other plan elements and has key implications for future growth and development in Thatcher and the surrounding areas.



The Circulation Element generally focuses on the issues most relevant to the Thatcher Planning Area, taking external factors into consideration. The element recognizes areas where existing improvements need to be implemented to ensure full mobility for the community, including roadways, bikeways and trails systems.

An Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Small Area Transportation Study (SATS) is underway and will address circulation issues in greater detail. This Study is scheduled to be completed in early 2009.

### 1. Current Conditions

In Thatcher, transportation is mostly dependent on the automobile. Travel occurs mainly on one highway and a series of arterial and collector roadways. Congestion is low and current levels of service are generally excellent. Constraints to expansion of the circulation system include Arizona Eastern Railroad with limitations on new rail crossings as well as the topography of the Pinaleno Mountains to the south and the floodway of the Gila River to the north.

#### Regional Connections

U.S. Highway 70 is the principal roadway serving the planning area. US 70 (Main Street) provides access to central Arizona including Globe and the Phoenix metropolitan area, 160 miles to the northwest. US 70 connects to US 191 in Safford to the east and provides a link to Interstate 10, located about 35 miles to the south. Interstate 10 provides direct connections to Tucson, about 120 miles southwest and to New Mexico and Texas to the east.

**Roadway Network**

The Town of Thatcher, Graham County and ADOT all own and maintain roadways in Thatcher and its planning area. The primary roadway through Thatcher is US 70 (Main Street), bisecting the north end of Thatcher’s town core. As the principal arterial serving regional and local traffic, Main Street is a five-lane roadway, converging to two lanes outside incorporated areas. Main Street is an ADOT maintained facility entering Thatcher’s planning area on the west from the Pima area and on the east from Safford.

Circulation through central Thatcher and through Daley Estates at the most southern end of the Town primarily runs on a grid system with local streets providing direct residential access. Reay Lane, First Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue serve as the main north-south connections between these two main areas. Reay Lane located on the west side of Town is the only roadway providing access north across the Gila River. First Avenue provides important access to many of Thatcher’s residential areas and maintains connections to Safford with intersections at Main Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Golf Course Road. Each of the three intersecting roads connects with 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, providing an important link to Town services.

**Traffic Volumes**

Limited information is available for traffic volumes on roadways through Thatcher. However, traffic counts included in the 2006 ADOT Traffic Reports<sup>2</sup> indicated approximately 12,600 average daily trips at the intersection of Main Street and First Avenue. As Thatcher’s main thoroughfare, potential congestion on Main Street is inevitable with continued growth. Traffic volume data for other streets in Thatcher have an estimated average daily traffic as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7  
Traffic Volumes\***

Roadway	Average Daily Traffic (ADT)
Main Street (US 70)	12,600
First Street	500-2,000**
Stadium Avenue	500-2,000**
Reay Lane	1,000-2,000**
First Avenue	2,000-4,000**
Church Street	3,000-4,000**
Golf Course Road	1,500-2,000**
20 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	12,000-15,000

\*Data provided by the Town of Thatcher \*\* Estimate and ADOT

<sup>2</sup> Arizona Department of Transportation, AADT Reports (Traffic Counts), July 2007

## 2. Functional Classification

Roadways in the Thatcher Planning Area are classified according to their primary function. The Town has designated classifications for four types of roadways.

The designations of Arterial/Minor Arterial, Collector, Major and Local are described in detail in the Town’s Subdivision Ordinance. These designations are unchanged by this General Plan Update.

Arterials are described as four to six lanes, moderate speed facilities, generally located on a one-mile grid, serving major traffic within Thatcher. Two levels are identified, the first, Arterials, have a high level of access control to support large traffic volumes and connections to the regional system, and the second, Minor Arterials, have more access points and provide local service.

Collector streets are two to four lanes in width, lower-speed facilities often located midway between arterials. Collectors provide internal circulation within neighborhoods and connections to the arterial roadway system.

Major and Local Streets refer to one or two lane streets serving local facilities and residential neighborhoods.

The following are examples of Thatcher streets and their functional classifications:

**Table 8  
Road Classifications\***

Street Name	Functional Classification
Main Street (US 70)	Arterial
First Street	Collector
Stadium Avenue	Collector
Reay Lane	Minor Arterial
First Avenue	Major Street
Church Street	Major Street
Golf Course Road	Major Street
20 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Arterial

\*Data provided by the Town of Thatcher

### 3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

There are currently no designated pedestrian or bicycle path systems within the Thatcher Planning Area. A plan for multi-use paths has been developed by the Town. Anticipated projects include: pedestrian/bike pathways- from 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Reay Lane along Golf Course Road, along Reay Lane from Golf Course Road up to Main Street with a connection path from Reay Lane to Stadium Avenue along the Highline Canal.

In addition, the Town of Thatcher and the City of Safford have been jointly awarded a grant to build multi-use paths on 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Relation Street to US Hwy 70. This project will establish important pedestrian routes connecting Thatcher and Safford.

### 4. Transit

Public transit service in Thatcher is limited. SouthEastern Arizona Community Action Program, Inc. (SEACAP), located in Safford, provides senior citizens and disabled residents throughout the Thatcher area free shuttle service for shopping and medical needs.

A Graham County Transit Feasibility Report<sup>3</sup> completed May of 2007 found citizen concerns regarding the lack of transit service in Thatcher and the surrounding area. The report identifies needs for increased transit service for the growing senior population, students attending Eastern Arizona College and the growing number of Freeport McMoRan workers. Additionally, the study recognizes alternatives to single occupant vehicles will likely be important to mitigating congestion, pollution and accessibility issues as the Town’s population increases.

### 5. Rail Service

Arizona Eastern Railway (AZER), an Iowa Pacific Holdings company, operates a single-track rail line through the Town of Thatcher. The railroad began operating in 1899 headquartered in Globe approximately 75 miles northwest of Thatcher. AZER operates a total of 135 miles of railroad connecting Miami/Globe to an interchange with the Union Pacific’s transcontinental mainline at Bowie, Arizona. The railroad serves the copper mining region of southeastern Arizona



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<sup>3</sup> Ostrander Consulting Inc. and RAE Consulting Inc., *Graham County Transit Feasibility Review Draft Final Report, May 2007*

and the agricultural Gila River Valley primarily moving copper products, chemicals, building supplies and grain.

Currently, two freight trains pass through Thatcher daily; once in the evening and once in the early morning. The trains run at approximately 10 miles per hour through the Thatcher area. Major track improvements, expected to be completed by the end of 2008, will allow trains to run at 20 to 25 miles per hour.

Construction of a new 12-mile spur line from Safford to the Freeport McMoRan mine northeast of Thatcher began in 2006. The mine, expected to open spring of 2008, will develop the San Juan and Dos Pobres copper ore bodies. Once in operation, an additional train is expected to run through Thatcher daily and the current Class I designation will increase to a Class II.

## 6. Air Service

There are two international airports providing service for Thatcher residents and visitors. The Tucson International Airport (TIA) is located in Tucson about 120 miles southwest of Thatcher and the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) is located in Phoenix about 160 miles northwest of Thatcher.

The Safford Regional Airport serves the Thatcher area for business and private use seven days a week. The airport was originally constructed as a training facility for the U.S. Air Force in 1941 and has since become a full service facility with two (6,800-foot and 4,800-foot) paved, lighted runways with UNICOM radio. Owned and operated by the City of Safford, the airport can accommodate charter planes and large aircraft. Shuttles to area restaurants and motels and both courtesy car and car rental services are provided.

## 7. Circulation Considerations

During the planning process the community identified circulation related issues including the following:

### □ Traffic Growth

*As growth continues in the Thatcher area, planning for new east/west and north/south corridors should be addressed.*

### □ Highway – Rail Crossings

*Development of new rail crossings should be planned ahead of growth needs, as the approval process is slow and uncertain. Approval must be coordinated with the Federal Railroad Association (FRA), the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) as well as the Arizona Eastern Railway.*

### □ Safety Concerns

*With the growing number of residents in Thatcher, traffic speeding through neighborhoods is a concern for pedestrian safety. Limited sidewalk availability was identified as a concern as well.*

□ **Control and Lighting**

*Traffic control and street lighting improvements need to be identified and installed to help traffic flow and improve safety.*

□ **Retail and Job Related Transit**

*Transit is needed to improve accessibility to retail areas and jobs for residents with limited mobility, including students and seniors and to reduce traffic volumes.*

## **8. Circulation Plan**

Future circulation patterns and increased roadway volumes will be closely coupled with future land use patterns. As illustrated in the Land Use Element, future development for a large portion of the Town is anticipated to occur along the Main Street and along the Town's common boundary with Safford. Anticipated new roadway development includes the extension of Church Street to the east curving south to connect with Main Street (Highway 70) at the traffic signal at the old Wal-Mart center. Connections across the Gila River will be important future links in supporting development to the North. To further assess transportation needs, the Arizona Department of Transportation is conducting a Small Area Transportation Study for the Graham County Region, expected to be completed in early 2009.

The Circulation Plan indicates existing and future roadways along with multi-use pedestrian and bicycle path locations.

**Figure 4—Circulation Plan**

## 9. Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives of the Circulation Element reflect priorities addressed by citizens participating in the General Plan workshops and public meetings along with input from professionals and Town, County and ADOT staff. The vision for the Town's transportation system includes timely expansions to the roadway network serving the community, improvements to intersections and the expansion of transit service to increase mobility for older and younger segments of the population.

**Goal 1: Provide for the safe, efficient and convenient movement of people and goods within and around Thatcher.**

*Objective a:* Implement appropriate recommendations from local transportation studies.

*Objective b:* Identify existing and potential safety concerns for automobile, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

*Objective c:* Protect residential areas from disruptive and unsafe cut-through traffic.

**Goal 2: Develop and maintain an efficient roadway system.**

*Objective a:* Expand major and minor roadways, including new connections to existing roads, to keep pace with growing traffic volumes and new development.

*Objective b:* Maintain and upgrade existing streets to meet the needs of Town residents.

**Goal 3: Create bike and pathway links between housing, employment, educational and recreational facilities.**

*Objective a:* Ensure new development designs include interconnected sidewalks and pathways.

*Objective b:* Prepare a bicycle and pedestrian master plan to coordinate the development of non-vehicular facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

*Objective c:* Provide pedestrian access to schools, churches, employment, and shopping throughout the community.

**Goal 4: Encourage a multi-modal transportation system including transit.**

*Objective a:* Support regional planning efforts to establish and expand transit service.

*Objective b:* Encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation to reduce vehicular traffic impacts.

## 10. Circulation Recommendations

Improved transportation efficiency in the Town of Thatcher can be attained through implementation of the General Plan Update Goals and Objectives. The following strategies have been identified to guide implementation:

- ❑ Transportation improvements and maintenance of facilities are among the most expensive services provided by the Town. Cooperation and teaming with other jurisdictions and agencies provides the best opportunity to increase Thatcher's voice in transportation decisions.
- ❑ Developers are expected to participate in financing and/or constructing new transportation facilities, including bridges and drainage structures that serve their projects.
- ❑ Plan for and secure adequate rights-of-way for future road widening and for new roadway alignments.
- ❑ Develop a plan for alternative routes through Town to alleviate future congestion on Main Street.
- ❑ Assess the need for additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities identifying the most important routes and connections.
- ❑ Support transit service between the Town and regional destinations for shopping, medical and other services, improving accessibility for residents.
- ❑ Connect future transit service to concentrated retail and government service areas including 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue along Main Street.

Specific policies for positive actions to achieve the Goals, Objectives and Recommendations of the Circulation Element are included in the Implementation chapter.

## C. Public Services and Facilities Element

Ensuring high quality services for residents, local businesses and visitors enhances the identity of the Town and reinforces Thatcher’s commitment to the community. Addressing the needs of



the community through carefully planned and implemented policies and programs supporting quality libraries, adequate recreation, first-rate police and fire services and well-maintained infrastructure are essential to meet community needs and expectations.

Thatcher’s population is anticipated to increase and strong demand for public services will require continued investment by the Town and other service providers in new facilities. As future development occurs, a focus on developer provided

infrastructure, coordinated with the Town’s efforts will allow Thatcher to better serve community needs while directing growth in desired areas.

### 1. Existing Conditions

The Town of Thatcher strives to offer high quality services to its residents. Public safety functions, such as police and fire protection, rank among the highest in the State. The Town recognizes the importance of providing recreational opportunities to meet the demands of a growing population and has begun initiating plans with neighboring communities to incorporate interconnecting trail systems, parks, and open space areas throughout the region.

Thatcher currently relies on neighboring communities to help meet certain service needs of its residents. Potable water and solid waste services are provided through the City of Safford. Shared facilities in close by communities meet some recreational needs for Thatcher residents.

Most neighborhoods in Thatcher are served by the Thatcher sewer system and basic street systems designed for their level of need. The preservation and maintenance of these neighborhoods will require infrastructure improvements. Continued expansion of Thatcher’s land area through future annexation, coupled with population increases and requests for various types of services, will require the Town to consider the strategic location of facilities throughout the planning area to maximize limited resources.

**a. Community Facilities**

Town of Thatcher offices including Administration, Engineering, Planning and Zoning, Building and Utilities as well as the Thatcher Police Department and Thatcher Municipal Court are located in the Town Hall facility located at 3700 W. Main Street between Stadium and College Avenues.

The Town of Thatcher maintains three public parks and one cemetery within the planning area. The Thatcher Town Park near the intersection of Main Street and Reay Lane, the Thatcher Ball Park located south of Eastern Arizona College and the Daley Estates Park located at the southern tip of the planning area together comprise approximately 5 acres of recreational space. Existing community programs include little league teeball, baseball, softball, basketball, junior league wrestling, women’s volleyball and an annual summer basketball and volleyball camp.

Thatcher residents currently utilize Eastern Arizona College, City of Safford or the Town of Pima for swimming pool facility needs.

**b. Emergency Services**

**Fire Prevention/Suppression**

The Thatcher Fire Department provides emergency rescue services and fire protection for all areas within Thatcher town limits, north of the Gila River and the Central/Jackson Heights Fire District including the Safford Mine. The Department consists of 28 trained volunteer firefighters qualified to do extrication and HAZMAT First Response. In addition, mutual aid agreements exist with Safford, Pima and Graham County, which enable all jurisdictions to share resources.

The 12,000 square foot firehouse facility, located at 1150 N. College Avenue has been expanded to hold five pumper trucks with 500 to 1,250 gallons per minute (GPM) capacity, a 500 GPM quick attack 4X4, a 3,000 gallon tanker with a 1,000 GPM pump, three quick dumps and a 3,500 gallon fold-a-tank, a high pressure truck with two hose reels for brush fires, and two rescue vehicles loaded with rescue equipment. Plans to purchase two replacement vehicles with higher capacity pumpers and CAFS systems (Compressed Air Foam Systems) should take place within the next two years.

The Thatcher Fire Department has approximately 4.5 firefighters per 1,000 population, well above the median national average of 1.34 firefighters per 1,000 population. By the year 2009, the Department anticipates the number of trained volunteers to increase to 35 people in an effort to maintain current levels of service.

The Department’s emergency response preparedness meets the needs of the growing community with a current Class 4 ISO rating for rescue operations, increased from a Class 6 ISO rating in 1997, and an average response time of

four (4) minutes in Town and seven (7) minutes to Daley Estates, the furthest portion of Thatcher Town limits. Future relocation of a portion of existing equipment into a second fire station facility near the southern end of the Thatcher planning area has been discussed in an effort to maintain the national response time standard of nine (9) minutes for volunteer firefighters.

Fire prevention education has been initiated by the Thatcher Fire Department to create public awareness in area schools and during special events. In conjunction with Eastern Arizona College's Fire Science classes, the Department teaches Firefighter I and Firefighter II classes at their facility each year.

**Police**

The Thatcher Police Department, located at 3700 W. Main Street, employs 12 full time officers, two reserve officers and 10 volunteers in neighborhood watch to serve the community on a 24-hour basis (9-5 dispatch and on-call). Officers are trained to assist in search warrants, entry and crime scene management, investigations and D.U.I. enforcement. If needed, the Thatcher Police Department has additional support through mutual aid plans between Safford, Pima and Graham County.

Current staffing of 12 full-time officers equates to a ratio of nearly 2.5 officers per 1000 population, surpassing National Standards of 2.0 patrol officers per 1,000 population. Average response time for the Thatcher Police Department is 3 to 5 minutes. The Department is working to maintain and improve response times by increasing staff as needed.

Additional advanced training in entry techniques is planned by the Department to be applied to threats in Thatcher schools should they occur.

**Medical Services**

Thatcher residents utilize complete medical facilities located in the City of Safford. 24-hour emergency services are provided by Mount Graham Regional Medical Center, located at 1600 S. 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Center offers 59 beds and 21 physicians staffed to perform a wide range of inpatient and out patient services.

**c. Courts**

The Thatcher Municipal Court is located at 3700 W. Main Street in the Thatcher Town Hall facility. The facility houses the Thatcher Police Court and the Magistrate's Court with one clerk and one magistrate judge serving the Thatcher jurisdiction.

**d. Library**

The Town of Thatcher does not maintain a public library. Residents utilize facilities at Eastern Arizona College (EAC) and in Safford. EAC in Thatcher maintains a 50,000-volume library for its students and Graham County citizens.

The Safford Public Library is considered the central facility for all of Graham County. It is maintained and funded (96%) by the City of Safford, with the remainder of support from Graham County and state taxes, federal grants, and local donations.

**e. Educational Facilities**

Within Thatcher's incorporated area, the Thatcher Unified School District (TUSD) operates four public schools. The Jack Daley Primary School serves kindergarten through third grade students; Thatcher Elementary School serves fourth grade through sixth grade; Thatcher Middle School serves seventh and eighth grades; and Thatcher High School serves ninth through twelfth grade students. Also located in Thatcher is one public elementary charter school-Discovery Plus Academy-and one private school-Safford Seventh Day Adventist School (SDA), each serving various elementary grades. A regional vocational district, Gila Institute For Technology (GIFT), is also located in Thatcher and serves students from the area high schools.

The Thatcher District participates in a regional consortium serving students with special needs. Graham County Special Services located in the neighboring community of Pima currently enrolls 95 area students, including 39 from TUSD.

The Thatcher USD Office is located at 3490 W. Main St. The district has a teaching staff of 68, a support staff of 82, and a current student enrollment of 1,308. During the period from 2002-2007, enrollment first declined moderately, then increased moderately, with the upward trend continuing, most notably at the lower grades. Forecasts prepared by the District and the Arizona School Facilities Board project enrollment will increase by 27% during the next five years at the primary, elementary and middle schools; and by 16% at Thatcher High School, bringing District enrollment to a record high of 1,580.

TUSD's service area overlaps with surrounding jurisdictions. Consistent with Arizona's Open Enrollment law, the District accepts out-of-district students within capacity limitations. Approximately 15 percent of Thatcher's enrollment is made up of students who reside outside of District boundaries. Other districts serving Thatcher's Planning Area include Bonita Elementary District, Fort Thomas Unified District, Klondyke Elementary District, Pima Unified District, Safford Unified District, Solomon Elementary District, Triumphant Learning Center and Discovery Plus Academy located throughout Graham County.

The District has begun to plan for facility expansion, beginning with additional classrooms at the primary and elementary schools. At this time, Thatcher Middle School and Thatcher High School have adequate facilities to accommodate increasing enrollment. Capacity limits, whether in space or staffing, have caused the District to occasionally limit out-of-district enrollment at various grades in recent years.

Eastern Arizona College (EAC) provides local higher educational opportunities for residents throughout Graham County and Arizona. EAC, Thatcher campus is a two-year college with a current student population of 2,850. While most students are 18-19 years old, enrollment age at EAC ranges from under 18 to over 65.

EAC is working to expand campus capacity and increase technological capabilities for its students. EAC is developing a partnership with Northern Arizona University to create opportunities for four-year degrees in multiple study areas. In 2005, EAC built the Wayne M. McGrath High Technology Center installing some of the most advanced computer technology in the Southwest.

**f. Lodging and Meeting Facilities**

Thatcher offers three motel/hotels for visitors with about 200 rooms. Eight motels with more than 350 rooms and various meeting facilities are located in Safford.

**g. Water**

Thatcher's domestic water supply is provided by the City of Safford. Water is drawn from a variety of ground water sources for a service area of approximately 135 square miles. A storage capacity of 12.5 million gallons is expected to meet future development demands. As distribution extensions occur, plans will proceed for additional storage.

The City of Safford Community Development Department, (928) 348-3100, provides information on availability of water service and required improvements.

**h. Wastewater Service**

The Town of Thatcher Wastewater Treatment Plant services Thatcher residents. Approximately 90 percent of all buildings within Town limits are connected to the sanitary sewer system. Fees collected for sewer use and new connections currently fund the operation of the lagoon system treatment plant.

The plant was originally designed in 1999 with a capacity of 800,000 gallons per day to meet Town needs for a 20 or more year span. Projected wastewater demand shown in Table 9 indicates current plant capacity will cover projected population growth into the year 2020 based on a 72 gallon per person per day use.

**Table 9  
Projected Wastewater Demand\***

Year	Population		Needed Capacity (gallons per day)	
	Low	High	Low	High
2008	5,057	5,334	364,104	384,048
2010	5,231	6,134	376,632	441,648
2015	5,666	7,827	407,952	563,544
2020	6,101	9,990	439,272	719,280
2025	6,536	12,750	470,592	918,000

\*Data provided by Willdan

In addition, the City of Safford has a plant capable of receiving wastewater from the Town of Thatcher and has expressed their willingness to accept wastewater from Thatcher.

A study of the sewer collection system has been initiated by the Town to determine the capacity remaining in the critical sewer collection mains and to study the possibility of increasing the size of those mains and/or building an additional treatment plant. Per Town policy, any new main extension built to provide service to a new development would generally be at the expense of the developer.

**i. Solid Waste Collection and Disposal**

The Town of Thatcher provides solid waste collection for Thatcher residents. Unincorporated areas within the Thatcher planning area are served by Vista Recycling or a self-service method. Currently, fees collected for garbage collection do not cover all expenses associated with Thatcher’s solid waste removal and the Town funds the remainder.

Graham County collectively shares the landfill, owned and operated by the City of Safford, located north of the Gila River. The landfill, at 2.05 million cubic yards, utilizes 80 acres of a 440-acre site. Without further expansion, the landfill is believed to have a life span of 25 or more years. The additional 240-acres located at the northern end of the site can be developed by Safford through capital improvement funds supported by user fees as necessary.

**j. Flood Control**

The Town of Thatcher has floodplain areas shown on the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) floodplain maps. These areas are generally associated with Fry Creek Wash, the Fry Creek Retarding Dam and the Gila River. Other major drainage courses and canals impacting the planning area include the Freeman Wash (Freeman Wash Retarding Dam), Highline Canal, Union Canal and Smithville Canal. Stormwater management requirements can be found in the Town’s drainage policy and ordinance. Regional flood control management is through the Graham County Flood Control District.

**k. Electric Service**

Electrical power is provided to the Thatcher Planning Area by Thatcher Municipal Utilities, operating one sub-station and the Graham County Electric Co-Op, operating two sub-stations. Adequate electrical capacity exists for expected growth and neither company has current plans to build a new sub-station or expand existing stations.

Currently there are no underground transmission lines in the Thatcher Planning Area. Subdivisions, apartments, large-scale developments, etc. are required by the Town to provide underground electric. All electric infrastructure required for new development is at the expense of the developer and Thatcher design standards must be followed.

**l. Natural Gas**

Graham County Utilities services the entire Thatcher area with natural gas and maintains gas lines within Town.

**m. Telephone and High Speed Data**

Both U.S. West Communications and AT&T provide basic telephone and cable services to the Town. High-speed data links are available through Cable One and Qwest.

The Public Services and Facilities Map indicates locations for existing institutional and utility facilities throughout Thatcher.

**2. Functional Plans**

In order to understand the magnitude and timing of needed services and facilities, Thatcher can prepare functional plans that relate to specific public services and facilities. The plans could include Master Plans for Emergency Services (police, fire, EMS), Wastewater, Floodplain, Transportation, Libraries, Park, Trail and Open Space Systems. Each of these plans can provide detailed information on existing facilities, assess current and projected needs based on desired levels of service, and make recommendations for future public and private actions.

**3. Cost of Development**

The ability to sustain facilities and services for the community are affected by the rate of growth and the balance between residential and non-residential uses. The Town of Thatcher does not collect property tax to pay for ongoing facilities maintenance and operation. Maintaining a strong retail sales tax base is important to the community to help fund the operating expenses of the Town.

Costs need to be equitably apportioned and assessed to new growth with appropriate exceptions when in the public interest. Identifying guidelines by which development pays for itself will assure preparedness for increasing costs of additional public service needs. Three basic steps include:

- 1) Establish service and facility standards, such as 2.5 police officers per 1,000 population, to help identify needed future capacities and facilities based on growth projections from new development.
- 2) Recognize and quantify impacts resulting from new development on public services and facilities as more residents create more demand for services, such as parks and roads.
- 3) Where applicable and to the extent possible, require growth to pay for itself. Developers contribute to costs of police, parks, roads, sidewalks, etc.

Other mechanisms available to the Town for funding expansion of services include but are not limited to:

- Primary and secondary property taxes
- Specialty Industry Tax
- Improvement Districts
- Community Facilities Districts (CFDs)
- User Fees
- Voter approved bonds
- Municipal Property Corporation Bonds
- Payback Agreements

#### **4. Public Services and Facilities Issues**

Broad planning considerations for public services and facilities in Thatcher include:

- ❑ *The expansion of infrastructure, especially roads and utilities needs to keep pace with growth.*
- ❑ *The provision of high quality services, particularly emergency services, to residents, businesses and visitors is essential.*
- ❑ *Cooperative planning efforts with the City of Safford, Thatcher Unified School District and other service providers will help build a better and stronger community.*
- ❑ *New development is expected to pay its own way in terms of costs for infrastructure and services for which it creates the need.*
- ❑ *In coming years, a portion of the community's recreational needs may be met through private recreation areas within new developments.*
- ❑ *The community has expressed a desire to have new electrical lines built underground.*

## 5. Goals and Objectives

The following Goals and Objectives reflect the community's desired directions for the provision and financing of public services and facilities.

**Goal 1: Ensure the provision of adequate public services and facilities.**

*Objective a:* Determine the appropriate long-term financing and resources to adequately fund services and facilities.

*Objective b:* Plan for needed community facilities for existing and future residents of Thatcher.

*Objective c:* Preserve and maintain neighborhoods and the facilities that serve them.

**Goal 2: Support high quality public safety services and facilities.**

*Objective a:* Establish acceptable minimum levels of service, including response times, that meet or exceed national averages for public safety services.

*Objective b:* Ensure a high level of preparedness and adequate resources for public safety services.

*Objective c:* Maintain mutual aid agreements with nearby jurisdictions and service providers.

**Goal 3: Carefully manage and direct the maintenance and expansion of infrastructure systems.**

*Objective a:* Direct growth through strategic placement of infrastructure systems.

*Objective b:* Ensure development pays its share of public facilities and services needed by new development.

*Objective c:* Require all new developments to provide recreation facilities proportional to the needs they create.

*Objective d:* Ensure developers install all needed utilities and improvements to municipal and state standards, as required by the Town, Graham County or the State of Arizona.

**Goal 4: Ensure new development participates in needed expansion to the Thatcher School District.**

*Objective a:* Work closely with Thatcher Unified School District in implementing strategies to ensure that educational facility needs are met when new development occurs.

*Objective b:* Require school impacts to be addressed prior to new development approvals by the Town.

## **6. Recommendations**

Consistent with stated Goals and Objectives, summary recommendations provide further direction in ensuring adequate public services and facilities.

- ❑ Maintain current levels of public services for existing residents by requiring new development to provide needed new facilities and/or pay for expansion of facilities and services.
- ❑ Ensure all development approvals address impacts to the Thatcher Unified School District to participate as appropriate in necessary improvements.
- ❑ Utilize funding tools as provided by Arizona law to assure equal footing for Thatcher when competing to attract new employment, commercial services and quality housing.
- ❑ Assess Town-provided family-based services such as day care.
- ❑ Anticipate and plan for suitable and desirable locations for needed facilities and services.

Specific policies for positive actions to achieve these goals, objectives and recommendations are identified in the Implementation Chapter.

**Figure 5—Public Services and Facilities**

## D. Economic Development Element

Economic development is a critical aspect of maintaining Thatcher as a sustainable and balanced community and is therefore included in the General Plan Update as a separate Element. Jobs, revenue and financial stability contribute to a Town’s economic health and as such, one of the Town’s goals is to ensure Thatcher has a sound economic base built on quality and desirable employment.

The Economic Development Element seeks to promote these attributes by planning for



increased household incomes, increasing the number of quality jobs and employment choices, and by attracting desirable retail, commercial and industrial facilities to the Town.

Thatcher’s economy has grown from strong agricultural roots, and is now in a transition with service sector, government and education,

employment dominating. The community envisions maintaining agriculture as an important economic element while growing suburban neighborhoods and an economically well-balanced community conscious of its small town agricultural heritage. Over the span of this Plan’s horizon – to 2025 – forecasts point to continued residential growth with increasing emphasis on expanding commercial services.

Presently there is about one full time job for every home in Thatcher. Recent data indicates about 1925 jobs and 1,850 dwelling units in town; or a jobs to housing ratio of about 1 to1. Typical Arizona households include one full time and one part time wage earner, or about 1.5 jobs per home. Based on this statistic, Thatcher is exporting jobs to the surrounding region (residents leave Thatcher to find work).



Experience from other communities demonstrates that citizens can make conscious choices to attract employers in growth industries and promote tourism, shopping and recreation.

The General Plan recognizes the importance of retaining local businesses and fostering expansion. The community is under-served in service sectors particularly specialty retail and medical facilities. Growth in the planning area, including new residential projects, provides a catalyst for private sector enterprises.

## 1. Current Conditions

As with most southeastern Arizona communities, Thatcher's climate and other natural amenities including Mount Graham and the Pinaleno Mountains, contribute to Thatcher being a pleasant and 'livable' community. Its small-town feel and personable residents have created a desirable place to live and work.

Thatcher is not close to any major metropolitan area, with Tucson being the closest at over 100 miles away and Phoenix about 160 miles away. Recent growth and growth in general, has been driven by local economic activity, particularly the mining industry. A recent spurt in growth is attributable to mining construction and expansion northeast of the Town at the Safford and Morenci mines.

U.S. 70 provides access to Thatcher from Safford and the Tucson area, and from Globe and the greater Phoenix area to the northwest.

### Employment Structure

Whereas definitive data is hard to come by, and conditions are changing due to growth, data and estimates from the 2000 Census and the Arizona Department of Economic Security allow for general comparisons. It should be noted that the figures included herein represent a 'snapshot' in recent history.

Agriculture is the primary driving economic activity in Thatcher. Eastern Arizona College is Thatcher's largest employer.<sup>4</sup>

### Agriculture

Agriculture largely is a basic industry that includes agricultural support activities as well as farming and ranching. Agriculture employment in the Thatcher area in 2001 was estimated to have been close to 250, the third-largest employment sector.

### Government/Institutional

Close to 750 government/institutional employees worked in Thatcher in 2001-02, the most employment of any sector. Some of the government/institutional employees in Thatcher in 2001-02 worked for Eastern Arizona College. Northern Arizona University also had some employment in the community. The Thatcher Unified School District employed nearly 175 — the third largest employer in the town.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Arizona Department of Commerce, *Economy of Thatcher, June 2004*

<sup>5</sup> Arizona Department of Commerce, *Economy of Thatcher, June 2004*

**Household Income**

Based on U.S. Census data, median household income in Thatcher was \$ 32,412.<sup>6</sup>

**Labor Force**

As of 2004, a total of 1,913 full time jobs existed in the Thatcher and Central area. In the Thatcher area (zip codes 85531 and 85552) employment by sector<sup>7</sup> includes:

**Table 10  
Employment by Sector\***

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Government/Institutional	737	38.5
Retail Trade	591	31.0
Agriculture	240	12.5
Non-AG (private sector)	224	11.7
Services	121	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,913</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data provided by the Town of Thatcher.

**2. Assets and Advantages**

Understanding assets is essential to identifying local advantages and developing a productive economic development program. In the list below, Thatcher’s assets are tied to specific areas of comparative advantage.

**Location Advantages**

- ❑ Isolated from large urban areas
- ❑ Offers opportunity for small-town lifestyle without threat of urbanization

**Climatic Advantages**

- ❑ Desert climate; mild winters
- ❑ Strong attraction/incentive for many prospective employers

**Natural Environment Advantages**

- ❑ Wide-open spaces, scenic views, night-sky viewing
- ❑ Maintains high-level of environmental quality, clean air

**Network Advantages**

- ❑ Situated on US Highway 70
- ❑ Arizona Eastern Railroad (connects to transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad)
- ❑ Proximity to Freeport McMoRan mining activity
- ❑ Access to interstate highway network (I-10)

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Census 2000; Table DP-3

<sup>7</sup> Arizona Department of Commerce, *Economy of Thatcher, June 2004*

**Residential Advantages**

- ❑ Low to moderate housing costs, attainable housing
- ❑ Small-town ambiance, safety, desirable living quality
- ❑ Access to metropolitan goods, services and amenities

**Commercial Advantages**

- ❑ Easy access to Southeastern Arizona labor market
- ❑ Good access to goods and services regionally and nationally
- ❑ Low to moderate site and operating costs
- ❑ Vibrant, clean commercial and civic areas
- ❑ Land available/zoned for commercial and industrial use

**3. Economic Challenges**

All communities and regions have economic challenges to overcome and Thatcher is no exception. Some of these impediments are more correctable than others.

**Under-Served Population.** Some of Thatcher's biggest needs are for expanded retail services and quality jobs. Presently, a significant portion of resident demands for consumer goods are met outside Thatcher, thereby economically 'leaking' revenues to other communities.

**Proximity to Metropolitan Areas.** The fact that Thatcher is over 120 miles from either the Tucson or Phoenix metropolitan area limits market credibility. While Thatcher does not have to compete with greater metropolitan commercial sectors, larger market goods and services will remain distant.

**Under-Utilized Commercial Properties.** Thatcher has significant capacity to expand commercial properties and uses in key locations in the Town. Substantial new commercial retail development is anticipated for the area near the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Highway 70.

**4. Employment Centers**

The Employment Centers map identifies lands within the community that are suitable for employment-based uses. Many of these sites have necessary industrial or commercial zoning to support retail, manufacturing, office, research and development and similar activities. Existing and planned employment centers are found along Highway 70, at the eastern edge of Town, and along Raey Lane and 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

**5. Goals and Objectives**

Thatcher's economic development goals and objectives envision an expanded and stable economic base for the community highlighted by quality job growth and expansion of retail and commercial services.

**Goal 1: Achieve compatible, high quality, employment growth.**

*Objective a: Utilize a systematic economic development program to promote job growth.*

*Objective b: Attract non-service sector employers in light industrial, high-tech, agri-business, and research and development industries.*

*Objective c: Provide necessary infrastructure, private utilities and new technologies such as high-speed data access to attract industries.*

*Objective d: Partner with Educational providers including Eastern Arizona College, Thatcher Unified School District and other institutions to support job training.*

*Objective e: Utilize incentives to support economic development efforts.*

*Objective f: Support expansion of existing businesses through infrastructure and service improvements and planning assistance.*

*Objective g: Improve the Town's 'gateway' through revitalization and improvement of properties along Main Street (Highway 70).*

*Objective h: Set flexible development criteria for desired growth areas to minimize General Plan amendments and help expedite development approvals.*

**Goal 2: Improve diversity of Thatcher's economy.**

*Objective a: Avoid dependence on single industries, such as mining, or agriculture, by encouraging a variety of office, research and production activities.*

*Objective b: Ensure consistent tax revenues and a stable fiscal base for the Town through a diversified and growing economy.*

*Objective c: Support employment diversification in the Town when making growth and development decisions.*

**Goal 3: Encourage and support heritage tourism and winter visitors.**

*Objective a: Promote recreational opportunities within close proximity to the Town.*

*Objective b: Attract lodging facilities to Thatcher.*

*Objective c: Support facilities and accommodations for seasonal residents.*

**Figure 6—Employment Centers**

## 6. Economic Development Recommendations

Economic development involves attraction of industries but it also involves holding on to what you have, helping existing businesses grow, and finding new ways to meet needs locally by establishing new businesses.

The new developments under construction in Thatcher will attract residents who will bring with them their demands for goods and services. To support and expand on Economic Development Goals and Objectives, and the policies included in the Implementation Chapter, specific recommendations include:

- ❑ Thatcher should target the types of industries it desires through a marketing campaign; developing marketing materials that extol the virtues and benefits of the community. Key features to be accentuated include: the low local operating costs, quality of life, ample sites for development served by infrastructure, access to the local labor market.
- ❑ Thatcher needs to identify its specific “niche” in the region and capitalize upon it. The “niche” it presently occupies is a community with a safe, small-town atmosphere centered on a community college and agricultural roots. Economic Development programs and policies should be designed to fit the realities and constraints of Thatcher and be flexible enough to accommodate the changes on the horizon.
- ❑ Attraction of new businesses is very important, but so too is expansion of existing firms. The Town would be well served to provide a report or analysis of existing businesses, their growth potential, their current and anticipated needs and how they can be promoted for future growth.
- ❑ Economic development is a team sport and Thatcher needs to partner with area communities, local jurisdictions, Graham County economic development efforts and Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO), to promote both its uniqueness and connectivity to the larger region. Cost effectiveness in terms of developable land, infrastructure and labor are attractive pull factors for development in Thatcher.
- ❑ In the long run Thatcher wants to attract industries with high wage rates and a locally based managerial staff. Firms of this sort provide opportunities for upward mobility and for economic security. The sort of job that is being described is a “quality job” that promotes retention in the community of “Thatcher’s best and brightest” and it makes Thatcher a quality destination for outsiders.
- ❑ Use public/private partnerships to promote site selection for firms interested in coming to Thatcher or for expansion by local businesses.
- ❑ Establish sets of incentives that are scaled to the potential economic development contributions- in terms of jobs, sales, municipal revenues- that may be expected from different business types and sizes.

- Short-term strategies will likely involve the creation of often lower-wage service jobs to serve visitors and local residents alike. These service jobs contribute to leakage reduction for local expenditures and this ultimately translates into bigger and better local offerings.

Specific policies for positive actions to achieve these goals, objectives and recommendations are identified in the Implementation Chapter of this Plan.

### III. General Plan Implementation

The Town of Thatcher General Plan Update is intended, in all respects, to guide the Town’s growth and development. Citizens’ vision for their community translates into goals, objectives and recommendations for each of the Plan Elements. These statements of principle now need to be carried out in practice.

Three components work to support Implementation of the General Plan:

- A. **General Plan Policies** that are action-oriented policies to guide daily decision-making.
- B. **Plan Monitoring** for measuring performance.
- C. **Land Use Decision Criteria** to assist in evaluating proposed development projects and assure their consistency with General Plan principles.

#### A. General Plan Policies

General Plan Policies relating to each of the General Plan Elements provide continuity between agreed upon General Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommendations and the day-to-day activities and decision-making effecting the growth and development of the Town.

**Land Use**

*Policy:* Implement consistent review and permitting procedures for all development applications.

*Policy:* Support higher residential densities and use mixes around Eastern Arizona College and along Main Street.

*Policy:* Encourage lower residential densities towards the south, west and north portions of the planning area.

*Policy:* Communicate and work with surrounding jurisdictions to ensure that development outside of the incorporated Town boundaries is consistent with the Thatcher General Plan Update.

*Policy:* Adopt community design standards that recognize and serve to preserve Thatcher’s character.

*Policy:* Consider offering incentives, such as reduced permit fees and/or processing times, for construction on infill lots and for installation of solar energy systems.

*Policy:* Identify incentives for long-term preservation of prime agricultural areas.

*Policy:* Actively discourage development that directly diminishes the viability of prime agricultural land.

- Policy:* Ensure compatibility between developed and agricultural land using landscaped buffers, open space or other appropriate techniques.
- Policy:* Preserve historic structures through voluntary property owner maintenance and, as appropriate, with preservation guidelines and standards.
- Policy:* Encourage property owner investments in existing residences. Promote voluntary property maintenance through a Town Pride Program.
- Policy:* Strengthen and upgrade the visual quality of commercial areas by means of improved maintenance and intensity of landscaping along Main Street.
- Policy:* Create a list of preferred plant materials to be utilized in new development and revitalization efforts to add consistency to community design.
- Policy:* Implement guidelines for public and private properties' appearance enhancements.
- Policy:* Initiate volunteer teams within the community to upgrade and maintain landscaping in visible areas of Town.
- Policy:* Establish a sense of entry to the Town at key east and west locations on Main Street through the construction of gateway monumentation (planters with free-standing signage, decorative medians, flowering trees, etc.).
- Policy:* Allow joint use arrangements pertaining to compliance with parking, access, open space and other requirements.

**Circulation**

- Policy:* Implement recommendations from the Graham County Small Area Transportation Study, 2008.
- Policy:* Support neighboring jurisdiction efforts to implement regional roadway improvements.
- Policy:* Install traffic signals, street lighting and connecting sidewalks where needed.
- Policy:* After adequate study and analysis, install traffic calming devices, including speed bumps, traffic tables, traffic circles, etc. as appropriate to discourage speeding and through traffic within existing neighborhoods.
- Policy:* Develop residential street alignments and designs that provide connectivity to adjacent areas.
- Policy:* Require new development to include adequate road extensions and improvements to meet current and future needs created by that development.

- Policy:* Ensure new development provides vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections with adjacent development. Address this concern at the time of rezoning and site plan or plat approval.
- Policy:* Create pedestrian and bicycle guidelines for new development designs.
- Policy:* Include pedestrian and bike pathway systems as an integral part of all rezoning and development proposals.
- Policy:* Establish links from Eastern Arizona College to planned commercial/retail areas via bicycle facilities and pedestrian pathways.
- Policy:* Partner with Graham County, Safford and other entities to implement a transit system that best serves the needs of the community and the region.

**Public Services and Facilities**

- Policy:* Strategically site parks and recreation facilities to connect neighborhoods and enhance usability.
- Policy:* Include parks and open spaces, integrated as community focal points, in new subdivision designs. Retrofit neighborhood parks, where needed, as opportunities arise.
- Policy:* Assure development pays for needed infrastructure or provides appropriate offsets or contributions proportional to the additional services needed by new development.
- Policy:* Encourage the relocation or undergrounding of all transmission and distribution lines within Thatcher.
- Policy:* Prepare and maintain an annually updated Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Policy:* Institute a “Public Safety Education Program” regarding fire prevention, safety and first aid medical procedures.
- Policy:* Prohibit new development in areas where service needs cannot be met without unjustifiably taxing the existing system or users.
- Policy:* Require school impacts to be addressed prior to new development approvals, including rezonings, by the Town.
- Policy:* At the time of rezoning or site plan/subdivision plat approval, new developments are required to commit to providing needed utilities and facilities proportional to the impacts they create.

*Policy:* Explore matching funds opportunities for all Town funded facilities and services.

*Policy:* Forward the CIP to the Planning Commission for review on an annual basis.

**Economic Development**

*Policy:* Investigate and pursue grants or loans to support the Town’s economic development projects.

*Policy:* Obtain qualified assistance in continuing and expanding Town Economic Development efforts.

*Policy:* Promote and support special community events that serve to enhance Thatcher’s visibility and reputation as a desirable place to operate a business.

*Policy:* Identify and analyze potential sites for industrial/employment development.

*Policy:* Establish a program to recruit employers offering mid to upper-level pay scale ranges.

*Policy:* Promote businesses that support Thatcher’s agricultural industry.

*Policy:* Focus specific recruitment efforts on employment diversification including bringing institutional, office, health care, hospitality and retail uses to Thatcher.

*Policy:* Support institutions and programs that contribute to expansion of an educated and trained labor force in the Thatcher area.

*Policy:* Encourage revitalization of the Town’s older commercial and office centers.

*Policy:* Support Eastern Arizona College campus expansion and renovation projects.

*Policy:* Work with the Thatcher School District and local businesses to insure training program meet employer needs.

*Policy:* Provide General Plan and overall planning guidance and processing assistance for commercial development applications.

*Policy:* Establish an affordable incentive program for attracting new businesses and for expansion of existing businesses.

*Policy:* Process development applications quickly and predictably.

*Policy:* Establish administrative approvals, where allowed by State law, for minor plan amendments and appropriate code variations.

- Policy:* Identify key properties, both non-residential and residential, along Main Street in Thatcher, and establish a specific strategy for their improvement or enhancement.
- Policy:* Publish and distribute a list of recreational amenities and features in close proximity to the Town.
- Policy:* Perform fiscal analysis on all annexation proposals to ensure cost/benefit disclosure.

## **B. Plan Monitoring**

Maintaining General Plan momentum is a responsibility for the entire community. Town leadership should use the Plan as a regular decision-making tool. Town staff should apply the document's principles on a day-to-day basis, keeping track of shortcomings to be remedied. Residents, property owners and developers need to rely on the General Plan and follow its directions. Together, all these stakeholders should be involved in the monitoring responsibility: oversight, updating and following Plan directions.

### **Plan Oversight**

As the Town's appointed advisors on planning matters, the Planning and Zoning Commission is responsible for broad General Plan supervision. Town staff, however, is in the best position to provide regular General Plan upkeep services. Basic information about planning and development activity, especially changes in each of the Element's status, is a fundamental tool in Plan maintenance. It is essential to keep the document current.

Practical ways for keeping the General Plan on track are:

### **Map Revisions**

Periodic revisions to the Future Land Use Plan map should be made to record: approved Major or Minor General Plan Amendments; annexation areas; special planning or target areas; and, where appropriate, cumulative, street pattern extensions or closures, and additions or alterations to open space/pathways.

Preferably, maps would be updated on an annual basis, soon after the annual General Plan Amendment hearing. Retaining outdated maps can provide a valuable "time lapse" tool for observing the progress and transition (e.g., land use, housing, transportation) of implementation activities.

### **Text Revisions**

Amendments to the narrative portions of the Town's General Plan should be inserted regularly into users' copies of the Plan. It is not necessary to republish the document frequently. "Change pages", marked as current updates, may be prepared to replace older versions of sections that have been officially revised.

The Town Clerk is charged with recording changes authorized by General Plan Amendments. Text revisions, as well as legal descriptions of properties involved in map

amendments, should be conveyed to the Town for accurate insertion in regularly updated Plan documents.

### **Record Keeping**

Annual reports on Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and other advisory bodies' activities are helpful in reflecting the Town's development trends. Data on construction activities (e.g., permit valuations, housing starts, commercial square footage) are key to measuring the extent of community growth.

### **Annual Report**

The Planning and Zoning Commission (with staff support outlined, above, under Plan Oversight) shall evaluate General Plan successes and/or shortfalls. Throughout the year, progress reviews may be conducted as discussion or decision items on the Commission's regular meeting agendas.

During the first quarter of each calendar year, the Planning and Zoning Commission is expected to issue a concise report on General Plan progress. The General Plan Progress Report, after presentation to and approval by the Town Council, will be made available to the public.

A record of recent accomplishments, including development activity and major municipal improvements, should be summarized. An overview of progress on Plan Recommendations, together with a statement of activities anticipated for the upcoming year, should be included. The report may also provide information on building permits, code enforcement and disposition of applications to boards, commissions and Council. Data regarding acreages and/or dwelling units rezoned or developed over the past year, according to use type, would be particularly relevant.

### **Changes of Conditions**

Unforeseen circumstances, such as a major development proposal or a significant economic change, should be entered into the progress measurement equation. Critical needs — infrastructure extensions or repairs, responses to flooding or other natural occurrences — would require reallocation of planning and funding priorities.

When “brushfire” requirements alter the Town's use of resources toward General Plan implementation, the diversion of effort should be noted in ratings and reports of progress. Flexibility is a key concept in Plan implementation. When opportunities present themselves, the Town will be prepared to take advantage of them. Mid-year briefing reports from staff or citizen groups could indicate possibilities for tourism attraction or economic development that might be enhanced by additional, special implementation initiatives.

## C. Land Use Decision Criteria

General Plan implementation is an incremental process that includes all plans and improvements to property in the Town. Each property, when it is built upon, redeveloped, or revitalized, can make a positive contribution to achieving Thatcher's planning goals. By observing simple principles in new construction projects, property owners will be assured that their homes or businesses meet community standards -- and that other land uses in the neighborhood are, likewise, encouraged to maintain higher levels of quality.

Criteria for assessing various types of development may be applied as guides to decision-making by the Town Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town staff. These guidelines may be incorporated, as appropriate, into municipal codes or may be added to or refined in practice without requiring a major General Plan Amendment.

### Residential Criteria

Quality, affordability and variety represent desirable objectives for the Town's housing stock.

**Street access** – should be provided to an appropriately surfaced dedicated public roadway or accepted private street for each dwelling unit, with paved areas for parking and maneuvering. Developments containing forty or more dwellings should have a minimum of two points of emergency ingress-egress.

**Pedestrian connections** – should include sidewalks in all but low-density (less than 3 residences per acre) neighborhoods. For most new, planned residential areas, multi-purpose pathways, improved to acceptable standards and designed to link with the community pathway system or sidewalks for pedestrian connection to schools, parks, shopping or other activities are preferred.

**Useable open space** – subdivisions or complexes planned for forty or more dwellings should consider allocating recreational space (which may include pathway linkages) in proportions similar to those found in planned residential developments. For projects over 40 acres, 15% open space is the community standard.

**Appearance themes** – where tract development occurs, residential designs should reflect variety in house plans and elevations with ample use of native landscaping.

### Commercial Criteria

Retail, service and office establishments are highly visible. They also attract traffic. Appearance and safety considerations may be combined with creative site planning.

**Gateway properties on Main Street** – reflect on Thatcher's image, should contribute to the small town, agricultural themes through landscaping, signage and architectural character.

**Street access** – provides direct ingress/egress from a public arterial or collector roadway. Properties five acres or greater in area should have two or more access driveways.

***Parking and maneuvering*** – retail, food service and other hospitality industry uses, especially, should design street-side or up-front buildings, to separate entry points from parking areas; adequate amount of off-street parking to be provided.

***Pedestrian connections*** – are encouraged to link with community path or sidewalk systems. Centers including multiple or larger establishments should design walkways between stores/designated pedestrian ways in parking lots to separate customers on foot from vehicular traffic.

***Screening and landscaping*** – landscape materials may be planted at the upper edges of drainage swales for appearance purposes, with more dense vegetation or block walls along rear and side property lines that abut residential areas to screen portions of the property containing outdoor storage, loading or parking areas.

***Signage*** – Signs should be well designed as part of the overall site décor and should be no larger than necessary to convey their message or advertisement. Signs must be within compliance of all applicable code provisions. Business signs may be placed near entry driveways in landscaped setback areas. When used, monument signs should be six feet or less in height.

### **Industrial/Employment Criteria**

Industrial and heavy commercial sites should be designed to accommodate business purposes and employee convenience; but, also, to facilitate possible future expansion. Different appearance criteria could apply and would depend upon location: highway frontage, business park and, especially, adjacent to residential zoning.

***Site planning*** – required on all projects, with general siting concepts shown for future construction phases.

***Street access*** – may be by privately maintained roadway or driveway directly served by public arterial or collector street frontage. Special paving considerations may be required for operations involving heavy vehicles.

***Parking and maneuvering*** – dust-proofing and surfacing should be provided as appropriate to the industrial use and its surrounding area; designated parking, loading, storage and maneuvering areas should meet all zoning requirements with additional improvements if necessary for the number and types of vehicles required by the proposed use and its employees.

***Water consumption*** – should relate positively with the contribution made by the industrial use to the local economy. High water-use processes should be encouraged to employ effective water recycling techniques.

***Employee amenities*** – protecting health and safety of workers are regarded as necessary; facilities for work breaks or after-shift recreation are desirable.

**Public or Institutional Use Criteria**

Town of Thatcher projects should lead by example. Municipal uses, schools, churches, government agency or civic organization properties may be exempt from some code requirements; however, they should attempt to follow these criteria.

*Site planning* – to present an orderly, attractive appearance; architectural and landscaping excellence are encouraged.

*Street access* – should be appropriate to the function and scale of the public or quasi-public use. High traffic generators should be expected to observe commercial location standards.

*Parking, Drop-offs and maneuvering* – areas may be designed to facilitate periods of peak use at the facility, including the designation of temporary vehicular use areas and/or joint use with nearby properties for special events.

*Recreational amenities* – should be considered, particularly pathway connections. Useable open spaces should be scaled to the property: playground or tot lot, picnic ramadas, court games.

**Mixed Use Development Criteria**

Plans for developments that include non-residential uses should observe the criteria for each type of use -- as well as taking the opportunity to design features that further enhance safety, marketability, convenience and distinctive project appearance.

*Street access* – entry monumentation is recommended for development identification. A sign theme package is desirable.

*Pedestrian connections* – should include linkages to the pathway system especially from the development's residential areas to its open space, shopping, employment components and to nearby schools or churches.

*Useable open space* – adequate area to serve recreation and leisure needs of employment, shopping and institutional uses.

# **Appendix A**

**Public Information and Participation Program**

**TOWN OF THATCHER**  
**GENERAL PLAN ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT**  
**PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

A. Public Participation Goals

1. Prior to any public hearing on General Plan adoption or major amendment, a Public Information and Participation Program (PPP) shall be conducted. The minimum public participation procedures to be utilized in the adoption or re-adoption of the General Plan, as well as any subsequent major amendment to the plan are outlined herein. The Town seeks to meet the following goals in its public participation efforts:
  - a. Be a professional resource and facilitator for all Town residents,
  - b. Create opportunities for meaningful citizen participation,
  - c. Ensure early and continuous citizen participation in the process of reviewing current and formulating new Town development goals and in the preparation and implementation of the General Plan,
  - d. Maximize collaborative efforts with representatives of appropriate agencies.

B. Core Group Contact List

1. The Town shall create and maintain a core group contact list who shall receive, either through the mail or electronically, all notices of public workshops or hearings, newsletters or other communications about the plan or the planning process. The core group contact list shall include, but not be limited to, the following entities:
  - a. Elected Town Officials,
  - b. Planning and Zoning Commission,
  - c. City of Safford,
  - d. Graham County,
  - e. Town of Pima,
  - f. Southeast Arizona Association of Governments (SEAGO),
  - g. Thatcher Unified School District,
  - h. Eastern Arizona College,
  - i. Key appointed public officials at Federal, State, regional and local levels (i.e. Arizona Department of Commerce, State Land Department, US Forest Service, Arizona Department of Transportation),
  - j. Local homeowner and developer interests,
  - k. Real estate and business interests,
  - l. Large scale property owners,
  - m. Military Reservations,
  - n. Service organizations and places of worship,
  - o. Individuals and groups who indicate an interest in the Town's planning activities,

- p. Any state or federal agencies that have property within the City limits,
  - q. Any person or entity that requests, in writing, a copy of the plan. (There will be a reproduction and/or shipping charge only for the actual costs of providing a print copy of the document.)
- 2. At any time during the planning process, any interested party can request to be added to or deleted from the list.

C. Public Workshops

- 1. The purpose of public workshops is to develop working relationships, establish meaningful lines of communication, spur education, fulfill the community's will to design its own future, and to foster a means to implement the General Plan.
- 2. Public workshops shall be held during the planning process to disseminate information and gather public comment on the plan. One workshop will take place in the early phases of plan development to help identify and emphasize a range of community issues and goals. A second workshop shall serve to present and receive comment on a draft General Plan.
- 3. Public workshops shall be conducted in a manner that maximizes the opportunity for meaningful public comment and dialogue. Each one may be conducted differently depending on the type of information desired from the public. An opportunity will be made at each public workshop for citizens to provide written comment to the Town as well as verbal remarks. Written comments must include full name and mailing address.
- 4. A summary of the findings and comments from each public workshop shall be made available to the core contact list and will be available at the library for public review.
- 5. Notice of public workshops may be through a combination of press releases, public service announcements, inserts in utility mailings, the Town's world-wide website, flyers posted and distributed in major gathering places, inserts provided to community groups for their newsletters and publications, and other means as may be appropriate. All notices shall be published as required by Arizona Revised Statutes. All public notices of workshops shall contain a provision in Spanish for whom to contact if there is need for an interpreter at a public workshop. Every effort shall be made to accommodate the requests of Spanish speaking citizens if notice is provided to the Town prior to the workshop.
- 6. All public workshops will be held in locations that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

D. 60-Day Review Period

- 1. At least sixty days before the General Plan is noticed for public hearing, the Town staff shall transmit the proposed General Plan to the Town Council and:
  - a. Graham County Planning Department,

- b. City of Safford,
  - c. Town of Pima,
  - d. Southeast Arizona Association of Governments (SEAGO),
  - e. Arizona Department of Commerce,
  - f. Arizona State Land Department,
  - g. Arizona Department of Transportation,
  - h. Eastern Arizona College,
  - i. Any State or Federal agencies that have property within the City limits,
  - j. Any person or entity that requests, in writing, a copy of the plan. (There will be a reproduction and/or shipping charge only for the actual costs of providing a print copy of the document.)
2. Any review comments received from the reviewing agencies shall be summarized for Commission consideration at the required public hearing.

E. Public Hearings

1. At least one public hearing, as required by ARS §9-461.06 and Town ordinance, will be held by the Planning & Zoning Commission prior to making a recommendation on the adoption or major amendment of the General Plan to the Town Council. The Town Council, prior to adoption or major amendment of the plan, shall also hold at least one public hearing meeting all State and Town requirements.
2. Public notice of each hearing shall include information about the location where the public can review all plan documents and how the public may acquire a copy of the draft plan. Notice of each hearing shall include time and place and be published at least 15 and not more than 30 calendar days prior to the hearing. Notice shall be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the Town, mailed or electronically sent to the core group contact list, and posted in the same manner as other agendas of the Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council.
3. After the hearing, the Commission shall render its decision in the form of a written recommendation to the Council. The recommendation shall include the reasons for the recommendation and be transmitted to the Council in a form and manner as may be specified by the Council.
4. Prior to rendering a recommendation or a decision respectively, the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Town Council will give due consideration to the testimony of all individuals at the public hearings, as well as the record of all public input received throughout the planning process.

# **Appendix B**

## **GPAC Summary Notes**



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

# THATCHER GENERAL PLAN General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

## MEETING SUMMARY NOTES

June 14, 2007  
Town Hall  
3700 W. Main St.

### GPAC Members in Attendance:

David Griffin  
Doug Hoopes  
Jerry Hoopes  
Ramone Morales  
Eric Merriman  
Heath Brown

Willdan Staff:        David Williams  
                              Stephanie Burroughs

### Members of the Public:

The GPAC Meeting was called to order at 5:35.

#### -Introductions

-Discussion and handout on the Role of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC).

-The group reviewed the General Plan Update project schedule.

-Review of 3 planned meetings and possibly a fourth for the GPAC during the 60-day review

-Next meeting date was scheduled for July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

-An explanation of the data gathering effort supporting the General Plan was provided along with discussion and handout of the socio-economic data gathered to date.

-Explanation and discussion of the Thatcher Planning Area and the importance of looking at what is happening around City limits, as this will have an affect on the Town.

-Review and discussion of the Public Participation Plan (handout).

-And the need to develop a core contact list to share information on the GP Update. Anyone can be on this list.

-Information should be made available at public events including July 24<sup>th</sup>, Pioneer Day and Aug. 7<sup>th</sup>, National Night Out.

-Adjournment 6:00pm



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

# THATCHER GENERAL PLAN General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

## MEETING SUMMARY NOTES

July 19, 2007

Town Hall

3700 W. Main St.

### GPAC Members in Attendance:

David Griffin  
Dennis Martin  
Eric Merriman  
Heath Brown

### Willdan Staff:

David Williams  
Stephanie Burroughs

The GPAC Meeting was called to order at 5:35.

-Recap of Workshop #1.

-Discussion of the General Plan Grant application. Status was unknown at that time.

-Discussion and handout of the draft vision statement.

-GPAC members requested changes include:

- “work, school and play” changed to “employment, education and recreation”
- “well-paying jobs” changed to “desirable jobs”

-Group review and discussion of the Thatcher Planning Area.

-The group agreed that land north of the river (other than BLM land) should be included in the planning area.

-Discussion and handout of updated draft goals.

-Discussion of changing next GPAC meeting date.

-Next meeting date was scheduled for Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

-Adjournment 6:05pm

# Appendix C

## **Survey Results**



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

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### **Updated Land Use Goals & Public Input**

- 1. Maintain and revitalize mature residential housing and viable commercial development in Thatcher.**
- 2. Assure high quality housing is available for residents of Thatcher and the growing student population of Eastern Arizona College.**
- 3. Preserve the agricultural heritage of the Town of Thatcher for future generations.**
- 4. Assure the continued viability of agricultural lands in the Thatcher Planning Area.**
- 5. Identify and promote suitable areas for residential, commercial and industrial development.**
- 6. Proactively manage and direct growth to the most suitable areas of Town.**
- 7. Reserve land for industrial uses.**

### **Identified Land Use Goal Areas:**

- Set aside land for commercial & industrial uses
- Develop to attract commercial development & attractive residential areas
- Controlled growth
- Coordination of fill areas with county
- Business zoning (small)
- Parks & rec. (pools, ballparks lighted), improve existing or build new (2)
- Protect agricultural areas
- Sidewalks & pathways
- Thatcher city limits extended to far reaches (mountain to mountain, north to north)
- Use limited available highway commercial land wisely
- Increase multi-family housing & designate an area near the college & shopping for this
- Larger lots for homes (more space)
- Set aside areas for  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre lots to break up going from R1 & R2 straight to agriculture



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

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### **Identified Land Use Issues:**

- Reverse deterioration of Daley Estates
- Roads – right of ways and lighting
- R.V. areas
- Office building areas
- Parks & rec. (pools, ballparks lighted), improve existing or build new (2)
- Low & high income areas (apartments)
- Use limited available highway commercial land wisely
- Increase multi-family housing & designate an area near the college & shopping for this
- Set aside areas for ¾ acre lots to break up going from R1 & R2 straight to agriculture

### **Updated Economic Development Goals & Public Input**

1. **Encourage compatible employment growth to support a sound economic base for the Town.**
2. **Utilize incentives to attract quality commercial development and to reward existing businesses.**
3. **Work to increase well-paying jobs.**
4. **Ensure consistent tax revenues through a diversified and growing economy.**
5. **Identify and prepare strategic responses to impacts created by mining operations.**
6. **Encourage and support heritage tourism and “winter visitors”.**

### **Identified Economic Development Goal Areas:**

- Beautify & maintain the Hwy frontage
- Give incentives for commercial development
- Give existing businesses same benefits as new
- Take advantage of tourism, winter visitors, Mt. Graham (tram system to top), telescopes, etc. (2)
- Maintain agricultural roots (2)
- Do not allow the mine to have adverse effects on Thatcher
- Light industrial – try to attract businesses
- Provide areas that would be conducive to industry



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

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- Well kept business areas
- Bring more corporate business to Thatcher
- Look at the attraction of middle level businesses (not the “Big Box” type)
- Hotels, motels, offices (2)
- Create diversified economy growth

### **Identified Economic Development Issues:**

- Give incentives for commercial development
- Give existing businesses same benefits as new
- Use E.A.C as an economic draw
- Do not allow the mine to have adverse effects on Thatcher
- Create convenient areas for light industrial & heavy industrial parks

### **Updated Circulation Goals & Public Input**

1. **Provide for the safe, efficient and convenient movement of people and goods within and around Thatcher.**
2. **Develop a coordinated system of major and minor roadways and future corridors that will best serve the Town’s needs in preparation for new development.**
3. **Include inter-connected sidewalks and paths in all new development.**
4. **Create bike and pathway link between housing, employment, educational and recreational facilities.**
5. **Plan for a multi-modal system including transit, bicycle and pedestrian services and facilities.**

### **Identified Circulation Goal Areas:**

- Increase number of traffic lights (where needed)
- Increase parking
- Increase street lighting
- Increase bike pathways & trails (2)
- Major addition of circulation in all directions to relieve current congestion and future congestion (widen streets)
- Plan future streets & corridors so new development does not limit



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

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- Plan to open or extend corridors to create less reliance on Hwy 70 for east/west movement
- Complete sidewalk construction in all areas of Town

### **Identified Circulation Issues:**

- East/West traffic – between Safford & Thatcher
- Eighth Street – east of First Ave.
- Increase number of traffic lights (where needed)
- Major addition of circulation in all directions to relieve current congestion and future congestion (widen streets)
- Complete sidewalk construction in all areas of Town
- Impose sidewalk, curb, gutter, street work on contractors/developers when construction is started (or before)
- ADOT will be adopting an access management policy this December 2007; Thatcher has participated in access designations within Town limits. Thatcher's Plan should reflect these designations for frontage on US 70.

### **Updated Public Services & Facilities Goals & Public Input**

- 1. Identify and implement activities and improvements that integrate, unify and protect neighborhoods.**
- 2. Maintain and improve the Town's infrastructure systems including roadways, parks and wastewater system.**
- 3. Construct needed community facilities.**
- 4. Ensure development pays its fair share of public facilities needed by new development.**
- 5. Ensure new development participates in needed expansions to the Thatcher School District and is not detrimental to existing levels of service.**



## Town of Thatcher General Plan Update

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### **Identified Public Services and Facilities Goal Areas:**

- Beautify little league ballpark & cemetery
- Complete sewer system study & improve problem areas
- An additional Town Park will be needed in the near future (2)
- Become proactive in future for planning new growth
- Apply for more grants & seek new business
- Repair & replace sewer lines
- Put Power lines under ground
- Maintain & upgrade infrastructure
- Keep up good, affordable family activities in the Town
- Maintain high level of fire & police service
- Charge impact fees for schools in order to help education keep up with growth

### **Identified Public Services and Facilities Issues:**

- Resolve swimming pool dilemma
- Beautify little league ballpark & cemetery
- Complete sewer system study & improve problem areas
- Repair & replace sewer lines
- Extend electrical services, upgrade, new service office
- Clean up the Town, weed control (presentable at all times)
- Keep up baseball, football, swimming facilities
- Charge impact fees for schools in order to help education keep up with growth

# **Appendix D**

## **Glossary of Terms**

# Glossary of Terms

## **Absorption**

The amount of business, industrial, or residential units that will be necessary to accommodate future growth in a region.

## **ADOT**

Arizona Department of Transportation.

## **Agriculture**

Use of land for the production of food and fiber, including the growing of crops and/or the grazing of animals on natural prime or improved pasture land.

## **Air Pollution**

Concentrations of substances found in the atmosphere that exceed naturally occurring quantities and are undesirable or harmful in some way.

## **Annex**

To incorporate a land area into an existing district or municipality, with a resulting change in the boundaries of the annexing jurisdiction.

## **Archaeological**

Relating to the material remains of past human life, culture or activities.

## **Base (or Basic) Economy**

Those sectors that bring money into the local region. In other words, a sector that exports out of the Town. A sector that has a higher percentage of a region's total employment than that percentage statewide.

## **Bikeways**

A term that encompasses bicycle lanes, bicycle paths, and bicycle routes. Bikeways are divided into three basic categories based on the degree to which they separate bicycles from other travel modes: Class I bikeways (bike "paths") – characterized by completely separate cyclists from motorists; Class II bikeways (bike "lanes") – delineated by signs and striping along street shoulders; and Class III bikeways (bike "routes") – indicated only by posted signs on existing streets.

## **Bonds**

A certificate of debt issued by an entity, guaranteeing payment of the original investment, plus interest, by a specified future date.

## **Buildout**

Development of land to its full potential or theoretical capacity as permitted under current or proposed planning or zoning designations.

**Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

A program, administered by the Town and reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council, which schedules permanent improvements, usually for a minimum of five years in the future, to fit the projected fiscal capability of the local jurisdiction. The program generally is reviewed annually, for conformance and consistency with the general plan.

**Capture**

Amount of retail sales and/or services a region provides to people living outside the region.

**Commercial**

A land use classification that permits facilities for the buying and selling of commodities and services.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Established to account for financing the rehabilitation of homes and government structures. Financing is provided by Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**Compatible**

Capable of existing together without conflict or ill effects.

**Conservation**

The management of natural resources to prevent waste, destruction or neglect.

**Dedication**

The turning over by an owner or developer of private land for public use, and the acceptance of land for such by the governmental agency having jurisdiction over the public function for which it will be used. Dedications for roads, parks, school sites or other public uses often are made conditions for approval of a development by a Town or county.

**Dedication, In-lieu of**

Cash payments that may be required by an owner or developer as a substitute for a dedication of land, usually calculated in dollars per lot, and referred to as in-lieu fees or contributions.

**Density, Residential**

The number of permanent residential dwelling units per acre of land. Densities specified in a general plan are expressed in units per gross acre.

**Detention/Retention Basin**

Dams may be classified according to the broad function they serve, such as storage, diversion or detention. Detention dams are constructed to retard flood runoff and minimize the effect of sudden floods. Detention dams fall into two main types. In one type, the water is temporarily stored, and released through an outlet structure at a rate which will not exceed the carrying capacity of the channel downstream. Often, the basins are landscaped with turf and used for open space or recreation in periods of dry weather. The other type, most often called a **Retention Basin**, allows for water to be held as long as possible and may or may not allow for the controlled release of water. In some cases, the water is allowed to seep into the permeable banks or gravel strata in the foundation. This latter type is sometimes called a **Water-Spreading Dam** or **Dike** because its main purpose is to recharge the underground water supply. Detention dams are also constructed to trap sediment. These are often called **Debris Dams**.

**Development**

The physical extension and/or construction of urban land uses. Development activities include, but are limited to: subdivision of land; construction or alteration of structures, roads, utilities and other facilities; installation of water and wastewater systems; grading; deposit of refuse, debris or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetative cover.

**Expenditures**

Current operating expenses which require the current or future use of net current assets, debt service, and capital outlays. The actual payment for goods and services.

**Expenses**

The total cost of operations during a period of time.

**Family**

A group of two or more related persons residing together. A person maintaining a household alone, or with unrelated persons only, is regarded as a household, but not as a family.

**Fiscal Year**

The Town defines the fiscal year as the 12-month period from July 1 to June 30 inclusive. The annual operating budget applies to this 12-month period. At the end of the fiscal year, the Town determines its financial position and the results of its operations.

**Fund**

A fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts, which are segregated for the purpose of carrying on specific activities or attaining certain objectives in accordance with special regulations, restrictions, or limitations.

**Fund Balance**

Difference between the assets (revenues and other resources) and liabilities (expenditures incurred or committed) of a particular fund.

**General Fund**

The fund used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund. The primary source of monies comes from local property, and sales taxes that are used to pay for general Town services.

**General Plan**

A compendium of Town policies regarding its long-term development in the form of maps and text. The General Plan is a legal document required by each municipality and county local agency by the State of Arizona adopted by the Town Council. In Florence, the General Plan has seven mandatory elements (Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Environmental Planning, Cost of Development, Water Resources, and Growth Areas.)

**Historic; Historical**

An historic building or site is one that is noteworthy for its significance in local, state or national history or culture, its architecture or design, or its work of art, memorabilia or artifacts.

**Historic Preservation**

The preservation of historically significant structures and neighborhoods until such time as, and in order to facilitate, restoration and rehabilitation of the building(s) to a former condition.

**Household**

The person(s) living in a single housing unit. Household is generally synonymous with “occupied housing unit.”

**Industrial**

The manufacture, production and processing of consumer goods. Industrial is often divided into “heavy industrial” uses such as construction yards, quarrying, and factories and “light industrial” uses such as research and development and less intensive warehousing and manufacturing.

**In-Lieu Fee**

(See “Dedication, In- lieu of.”)

**Land Use**

The occupation or utilization of land area for any human activity or any purpose defined in the General Plan.

**Land Use Classification**

A system for classifying and designating the appropriate use of properties.

**Leakage**

Amount of retail sales and/or services sold to residents of a region from businesses outside the region.

**Level of Service (LOS)**

A standard to measure the quality of traffic flow. LOS grades range from “A” to “F” with “A” the best and “F” the worst. The level of service of a roadway segment is determined by comparing the traffic volume to the estimated capacity of the roadway. The higher the ratio of volume to capacity, the poorer the level of service.

**Manufacturing**

The mechanical or chemical transformation of substances or materials into new products.

**Median**

The midpoint in a series of numbers where half the numbers are greater and half the numbers are less.

**Mixed Use**

Properties on which various uses, such as office, commercial, institutional and residential, are combined in a single building or on a single site in an integrated development project with significant functional interrelationships and a coherent physical design. A “single site” may include contiguous properties.

**National Register of Historic Places**

The official list established by the National Historic Preservation Act, of sites, districts, buildings, structures, and objects significant in the nation’s history or whose artistic or architectural value is unique.

**Non-Base (or Basic) Economy**

Service and retailing aimed at meeting the needs of the local residents and businesses. Some goods and services produced by the non-base economy consumed by residents is imported from outside the region.

**Peak Hour/Peak Period**

For any given roadway, a daily period during which traffic volume is highest, usually occurring in the morning and evening commute periods. Where “F” Levels of Service are encountered, the “peak hour” may stretch into a “peak period” of several hours duration.

**Planning Area**

The planning area is the area of influence of the Town and the area addressed by the General Plan.

**Policy**

A specific statement of principle or of guiding actions that implies clear commitment but is not mandatory. A general direction the Town sets to follow in order to meet its goals and objectives before undertaking an action program.

**Recreation, Active**

A type of recreation or activity that requires the use of organized play areas including, but not limited to, softball, baseball, football and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts and various forms of children’s play equipment.

**Recreation, Passive**

A type of recreation or activity that does not require the use of organized play area

**Recycle**

The process if extraction and reuse of materials from waste products.

**Redevelop**

To demolish existing buildings or to increase the overall floor area existing on a property or both, irrespective of whether a change occurs in land use.

**Regional**

Pertaining to activities or economics at a scale greater than that of a single jurisdiction and affecting a broad geographic area.

**Residential**

Land designated in the general plan and zoning ordinance for buildings consisting only of dwelling units. May be improved, vacant, or unimproved.

**Residential, Multiple Family**

Usually three or more dwelling units on a single site that may be in the same or separate buildings.

**Residential, Single-family**

A single dwelling unit on a building site.

**Retail Trade**

All establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise for personal or household consumption and rendering services incidental to the sale of goods.

**Retention Basin**

(See “Detention Basin/Detention Pond.”)

**Riparian Lands**

Riparian lands are comprised of the vegetative and wildlife areas adjacent to perennial and intermittent streams. Riparian areas are delineated by the existence of plant species normally found near fresh water.

**Sanitary Landfill**

The controlled placement of refuse within a limited area, followed by compaction and covering with a suitable thickness of earth and other containment material.

**Septic System**

A sewage-treatment system that includes a settling tank through which liquid sewage flows and in which solid sewage settles and is decomposed by bacteria in the absence of oxygen. Septic systems are often used for individual-home waste disposal where an urban sewer system is not available.

**Service Sector**

Those establishments primarily engaged in rendering a wide variety of services to individuals, business and government establishments, and other organizations.

**Solid Waste**

Any unwanted or discarded material that is not a liquid or gas. Includes organic wastes, paper products, metals, glass, plastics, cloth, brick, rock, soil, leather, rubber, yard wastes and wood, but does not include sewage and hazardous materials. Organic wastes and paper products comprise about 75 percent of typical urban solid waste.

**Storm Water Runoff**

Surplus surface water generated by rainfall that does not seep into the earth but flows overland to flowing or stagnant bodies of water.

**Transit**

The conveyance of persons or goods from one place to another by means of a local, public transportation system.

**Trip**

A one-way journey that proceeds from an origin to a destination via a single mode of transportation; the smallest unit of movement considered in transportation studies. Each trip has one “production end” (or origin –often from home, but not always) and one “attraction end” (destination).

**Trip Generation**

The dynamics that account for people making trips in automobiles or by means of public transportation. Trip generation is the basis for estimating the level of use for a transportation system and the impact of additional development or transportation facilities on an existing, local transportation system. Trip generation of households are correlated with destinations that attract household members for specific purposes.

**Undevelopable**

Specific areas where topographic, geologic, and/or soil conditions indicate a significant danger to future occupants and a liability to a Town are designated as “undevelopable”. These areas generally include floodplain areas and excessive slope areas.

**Use**

The purpose for which a lot or structure is or may be leased, occupied maintained, arranged, designed, intended, constructed, erected, moved, altered, and/or enlarged in accordance with the Town zoning ordinance and General Plan land use designations.

**Vacant**

Lands or buildings that are not actively used for any purpose.

**Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)**

A key measure of overall street and highway use. Reducing VMT is often a major objective in efforts to reduce vehicular congestion and achieve regional air quality goals.

**Wetlands**

Transitional areas between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water. Under a “unified” methodology now used by all federal agencies, wetlands are defined as “those areas meeting certain criteria for hydrology, vegetation, and soils.”

**Zoning**

The division of the Town and County by legislative regulations into areas or zones which specify allowable uses for real property and size restrictions for buildings within these areas; a program that implements policies of the general plan.

**Zoning District**

A designated section of the Town or County for which prescribed land use requirements and building and development standards are uniform.