

1. CHARACTER & CULTURE



INTRODUCTION

Scottsdale is a special place. It is first and foremost a residential community and southwest tourist destination. By geographic size, Scottsdale is a large community, and its topographical diversity has resulted in a variety of development patterns—from large estates reminiscent of rural communities, to compact, pedestrian-oriented urban areas. Among this collection of living environments, Scottsdale has worked to provide access to nature; protect large, pristine mountain and desert areas; and offer an assortment of employment and creative opportunities while minimizing potential conflicts between differing land uses.

Scottsdale’s image is strongly derived from its role as the premier southwestern tourist destination and that of a sophisticated city infused with small town charm. The image of the city is also largely shaped by the Sonoran Desert environment, mountain views, iconic art, culture and architecture, and a walkable, vibrant downtown. Beyond tourism, Scottsdale’s neighborhoods offer a variety of choices for residents, each with its own sense of place.

Recognizing the unique mosaic of places that make up Scottsdale, the community has implemented character-based general planning, which provides a three-tiered planning approach: citywide, character area and neighborhood levels. This three-tiered approach to planning will ensure that community participation continues to shape the consistency of the character, land uses, and development quality in the community.



The Character & Culture Chapter emphasizes the community's continued commitment to quality design, authentic arts and culture, and the protection of Scottsdale's special places. Through the General Plan, Character Area Plans, and Neighborhood Plans, Scottsdale will continue to be held in high regard locally, nationally, and internationally.

ELEMENTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

- Character & Design
- Land Use
 - General Plan Amendment Criteria
- Arts, Culture & Creative Community

"Scottsdale's lifestyle and character embrace the beauty of our natural features, including the desert, mountains, and washes; and our contributions to the physical environment, such as quality residential development, distinctive commercial and employment centers, and pleasing public amenities."

- CityShape 2020 Comprehensive Report (1996)

Character & Culture Chapter

CHARACTER & DESIGN ELEMENT

- Goal CD 1** Determine development appropriateness
- Goal CD 2** Develop, maintain, refine Character Area Plans
- Goal CD 3** Foster quality design
- Goal CD 4** Enhance streets and public spaces
- Goal CD 5** Promote character through landscaping
- Goal CD 6** Minimize light and noise pollution
- Goal CD 7** Honor western/equestrian lifestyle

LAND USE ELEMENT[‡]

- Goal LU 1** Enhance economic viability and character
- Goal LU 2** Sensitively integrate land uses
- Goal LU 3** Maintain a balance of land uses
- Goal LU 4** Develop land use patterns that support mobility
- Goal LU 5** Promote land use patterns that conserve resources[‡]
- Goal LU 6** Improve economic well-being
- Goal LU 7** Protect the Scottsdale Airport
- General Plan Amendment Criteria[‡]**

ARTS, CULTURE & CREATIVE COMMUNITY ELEMENT

- Goal ACC 1** Support arts and cultural programs
- Goal ACC 2** Build on arts, culture, and creativity
- Goal ACC 3** Promote creative placemaking
- Goal ACC 4** Protect historic and cultural resources
- Goal ACC 5** Promote a creative community

[[‡] = State-required]



CHARACTER & DESIGN ELEMENT

Scottsdale residents and visitors place extraordinary value on the diverse character and unique design qualities of our Sonoran Desert community. Each neighborhood setting holds an important image that, when grouped together, completes the Scottsdale mosaic. Whether in urban, suburban, rural, or native desert settings, the community provides a broad palette of experiences, visual expressions, and quality design.

Scottsdale's rich design heritage is a product of proactive, creative, and inspired solutions to community design opportunities and issues. Examples include strong signage and landscaping standards, the Development Review Board, the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO), the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt, Scenic Corridors, and Scottsdale Sensitive Design Principles.

Good design sensitively responds to and strikes a balance among the character of the surrounding natural and built settings and the community's historical, cultural, and environmental resources. The beauty of our natural features, including the Sonoran Desert, mountains, and desert washes, provides a unique backdrop to the community. Our well-designed neighborhoods, businesses, recreational and cultural facilities, and public spaces combine to further make Scottsdale a desirable and memorable community.

The goals and policies of the Character & Design Element focus on the important aspects, connections, transitions, and blending of characters that ensure our community evolves as an integrated mosaic.

CHARACTER TYPES

Character Types describe the general pattern, form, and intensity of development. Character Types are distinct from zoning districts and land use categories. The Zoning Ordinance will govern specific development standards, such as building height, by zoning district. Per State Statute, Scottsdale must designate and maintain a broad variety of land uses and include density standards pertaining to land use categories that have such. Please reference the Land Use Element for that information.

- **Urban Character Types** consist of higher-density residential, non-residential, and mixed-use neighborhoods, including apartments, high-density townhouses, business and employment centers, and resorts. Development in Urban Character Types should have pedestrian orientation, shade, activity nodes, and useable open spaces that encourage interaction among people. Building form and heights typically transition to adjacent Rural and Suburban Character Types. Taller buildings may be appropriate in Growth Areas, depending on context (see Growth Areas Element). Examples include Old Town Scottsdale, a mixed-use center of distinct urban districts; mixed-use portions of the Greater Airpark, particularly along Scottsdale Road; areas within the Scottsdale Road and Shea Boulevard Couplet; and the HonorHealth hospital/medical campus near Shea Boulevard and 90th Street.



- A portion of the Old Town Urban Character Type, the Downtown Core, as identified, described, and defined by specific boundary in the Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan, incorporates the primary pedestrian areas in Old Town. The Downtown Core is a resident and tourist destination that includes downtown's historic legacy and heritage, specialty retail, art galleries, restaurants, public art, and the highest concentration of individually designated historic buildings found in the city. In contrast to the majority of the area, the Downtown Core is comprised of the lowest intensity of development in all of Old Town. The small lot development pattern, active ground level land uses, and pedestrian focus of the Downtown Core are some of the primary elements that give Old Town its most identifiable character.



[Cross-reference Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan]

- **Employment Cores** are primary employment centers for the city. These areas are predominately concentrated in the Greater Airpark Character Area, a mixed-use employment core with primary freeway access, as well as around other major employment campuses, such as the Mayo Clinic and General Dynamics. Employment Cores support a wide range of activities, such as aviation, light-industrial, and regional- and community-level employment uses. These areas consist of multi-functional buildings with an emphasis on technology and corporate character. Taller building heights are found within the core, and low-scale building heights are typically found within the transition areas adjacent to Rural and Suburban Character Types. The Greater Airpark Character Area Plan denotes appropriate locations for height and intensity in the Airpark area. (See also: Growth Areas Element).
- **Tourism/Recreation Areas** consist of major natural and developed open spaces and recreational amenities located primarily along the Central Arizona Project (CAP) aqueduct. The character of developments in these areas should accentuate the open space and resort-like amenities located within and surrounding the area. Existing facilities include, but are not limited to, the Tournament Players Club (TPC) golf courses, Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort, WestWorld Equestrian Park, and Taliesin West.
- **Suburban/Suburban Desert Character Types** contain medium-density neighborhoods, which include a variety of residential, commercial, employment centers, and resorts. Suburban Character Types incorporate a wide variety of recreational and leisure opportunities. Likewise, pedestrian and bicycle linkages weave these neighborhoods together to create a livable community. The physical character of these areas varies widely throughout the community and is based on period of construction, surrounding topography, and natural features. Taller buildings may be considered within designated Activity Areas with appropriate transitions to adjacent development (see Growth Areas Element).



- **Resort Villages** include concentrations of major resorts and master-planned communities with high-amenity tourist and residential accommodations. These Character Types are located in the northern portions of Scottsdale, as well as, in the “Resort Corridor” located along Scottsdale Road north of Old Town. These areas consist of major resorts and supporting uses, such as quality office, specialty retail, recreation, and compatible high-amenity housing. Building heights are typically lower scale for Resort Village Character Types in Desert Districts (see bullet below).
- **Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Desert Districts** include areas of all Character Types in the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO) overlay zoning district, and may include significant environmental amenities or hazards. Special care should be taken to minimize the impacts of development in these districts. Sensitive areas in these character types should ultimately be preserved as natural open space, and all areas follow the regulations of ESLO.
- **Rural/Rural Desert Character Types** contain low-density and large lot development, including horse privilege neighborhoods and areas with particularly sensitive and unique natural environments. The rural lifestyle of these areas further emphasizes preservation of the desert and equestrian character. Building heights are typically low scale. The identity and natural desert character of this Character Type should be strengthened and maintained.



- **Native Desert and Mountain Districts** include the McDowell and Continental Mountains, as well as the mountainous regions of northern Scottsdale. Steep mountainsides, boulder features, mountain peaks, ridges, and incised washes characterize these areas. Development regulations should offer incentives to preserve land in these areas and to transfer any allowable density to adjacent land containing few environmental constraints. Any development permitted in this district should be low-density and special care should be taken to minimize the impacts of development on the natural character of the land. Low-impact recreational opportunities may be considered for these areas, including hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails.

- These districts also include the **Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve**, which has outstanding scenic value; valuable wildlife habitat and migration routes; lush desert vegetation; significant environmental conditions, such as sensitive desert washes, riparian areas, and mountain peaks and valleys; archaeological and historic sites; and opportunities for suitable passive recreation in designated areas. Preserve land will remain as permanent open space with limited permanent construction. The Recommended Study Boundary (RSB) of the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve includes mountain and desert land designated by the City Council as suitable for preservation.



Goals and Policies

Goal CD 1

Determine the appropriateness of all development in terms of community goals, surrounding area character, and context.

Policies

- CD 1.1** New and revitalized development should respond to the regional, citywide, and neighborhood contexts in terms of:
- Scottsdale’s southwestern, Sonoran Desert characteristics, such as climate, native plants, topography, and history/culture.
 - Scottsdale as a part of a larger metropolitan area with a unique image, character, and identity within the regional setting.
 - Relationships and sensitivity to surrounding land forms, land uses, and transportation corridors.
 - Compatibility with and sensitive integration into established neighborhood character, including historical preservation policies.
 - Contributions to citywide linkages of open space, Growth Areas, and Activity Areas.
 - Creation of new or reinvention of the existing character of an area, when necessary.
 - Physical scale relating to human experience.
 - Visual impacts on and accessibility to public settings, significant natural features, and neighboring properties.
 - Impacts on and sensitivity to the natural environment.
 - Public buildings and facilities that demonstrate the above principles.



[Cross-reference Environmental Planning; Conservation; Arts, Culture & Creative Community; Land Use; Circulation; Bicycling; Open Space; Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization; Growth Areas; Conservation, Rehabilitation, & Redevelopment; Healthy Community; Public Buildings; Housing; and Recreation Elements]

CD 1.2 Consider the effects of building height, overall development density, and building orientation on adjacent neighborhood character, privacy, and viewsheds. *[Cross-reference Land Use; Open Space; Growth Areas; Energy; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]*



CD 1.3 Ensure that all development is a part of and contributes to established Character Types.

CD 1.4 Encourage transitions and blending of character between Character Types, including, open space areas, building height, massing, and orientation. *[Cross-reference Open Space; Environmental Planning; Energy; Growth Areas; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]*



Goal CD 2

Develop, maintain, and refine Character Areas and Character Area Plans to foster quality development and consistent character and context within various areas of the community.

Policies

CD 2.1 Set priorities for the creation and updating of Character Area Plans.

CD 2.2 Character Area Plans should address “edges,” places where two Character Areas meet or places where Scottsdale’s boundaries abut other governmental jurisdictions, to ensure compatible transitions of character and connections.

CD 2.3 Ensure the involvement and participation of Character Area residents, businesses and property owners in planning and implementation. *[Cross-reference Community Involvement Element]*

Goal CD 3

Foster quality design that enhances Scottsdale as a unique southwestern desert and tourism community through development review processes.

Policies

CD 3.1 Strengthen Scottsdale’s economic and environmental attributes, distinctive character, and attractiveness through collaborative site planning and design.

[Cross-reference Open Space; Environmental Planning; Economic Vitality; Healthy Community; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]

CD 3.2 Use existing, and adopt new comprehensive polices, guidelines, and design standards for use in the design and development review process, to ensure public and private development responds to and enhances the diverse character and contexts within our Sonoran Desert community.

[Cross-reference Open Space; Environmental Planning; Conservation; Energy; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]

Goal CD 4

Enhance the design of streets and public spaces to improve Scottsdale’s visual quality, experience, Sonoran Desert context, and social life.

Policies

CD 4.1 Promote contextually compatible streetscapes that correspond with the following classifications:

- **Urban Streetscapes** encourage pedestrian comfort, safety, and accessibility using decorative elements, such as arcade-covered walkways, shade, pedestrian lighting, decorative paving and street crossings, transit shelters, seating, waste receptacles, and landscaping. Urban Streetscapes strive for equality among pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles in the design of the public realm. *[Cross-reference Safety; Bicycling; Environmental Planning; Conservation; Public Services & Facilities; and Circulation Element]*
- **Suburban Streetscapes** strive to achieve compatibility and safety between automobile traffic, neighborhood amenities (schools and parks), pedestrians, bicyclists, and recreational activities through the use of landscape areas, consideration of sidewalk alignment, and incorporation of a broad tree canopy. *[Cross-reference Land Use; Safety; Recreation; Open Space; Bicycling; Environmental Planning; Conservation; Neighborhood Preservation; Revitalization; and Circulation Element]*

- **Transitional Streetscapes** serve as buffers between traffic and adjacent land uses in medium- to low-intensity development areas. These streetscapes incorporate native plants or desert-adapted plants and non-motorized pathways. Existing natural features and contextual character of the immediate area are also considered in the design. *[Cross-reference Land Use; Environmental Planning; Conservation; and Circulation Element]*
- **Natural Streetscapes** embody the natural state of the Sonoran Desert environment to the greatest extent possible, while incorporating non-motorized paths in the public realm. Native plants and plant densities should buffer adjoining uses, protect view corridors, and preserve rural and desert contexts. *[Cross-reference Circulation; Open Space; Environmental Planning; and Conservation Element]*

- CD 4.2** Blend different streetscape categories where they join to prevent a marked difference between opposing sides of streets.
- CD 4.3** Establish new, and maintain existing, guidelines and policies for the design and maintenance of Visually Significant Roadways and major city streets, including Scenic Corridors, Buffered Roadways, Desert Scenic Roadways (in ESLO districts), and streets with themed streetscape designs. *[Cross-reference Open Space Element]*
- CD 4.4** Form and apply policies to guide landscape maintenance and infrastructure placement in the public rights-of-way and easements consistent with the desired streetscape character. *[Cross-reference Open Space Element]*
- CD 4.5** Identify and establish consistent entrances to Scottsdale and, as appropriate, key gateways to neighborhoods and Character Areas so that residents and visitors have a sense of arrival. *[Cross-reference Circulation Element]*
- CD 4.6** Establish and enhance the visual identity and physical function of Scottsdale’s developed open space corridors. *[Cross-reference Open Space and Circulation Elements]*
- CD 4.7** Ensure environmental sensitivity and consideration of aesthetics in the design and retrofit of transportation systems, infrastructure, and public facilities. (e.g., Scottsdale redesigned the Loop 101/Pima Freeway to include public art and aesthetic treatment). *[Cross-reference Open Space; Environmental Planning; Conservation; Circulation; Public Services & Facilities; and Arts, Culture & Creative Community Elements]*



Goal CD 5

Promote the value and visual significance landscaping has on the character of the community.

Policies

- CD 5.1** Employ appropriate heat island reduction techniques to reduce the effects of reflective heat and glare on buildings and paved surfaces. *[Cross-reference Environmental Planning Element]*

- CD 5.2** To the greatest extent possible, replace dead and dying landscaping with drought resistant plants to maintain or improve density pattern, shade, and area character. *[Cross-reference Environmental Planning and Conservation Elements]*

Goal CD 6

Minimize light and noise pollution.

Policies

- CD 6.1** Support Scottsdale’s dark sky areas and designation as an Outdoor Light Control City by reducing light pollution, glare, and trespass where possible, while still attending to public safety needs. *[Cross-reference Safety; Public Services & Facilities; Public Buildings; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]*

- CD 6.2** Encourage creative, energy-efficient, and high-quality designs for outdoor lighting that reflect the character of the local context. *[Cross-reference Energy; Public Buildings; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]*

- CD 6.3** Integrate noise considerations and abatement techniques into the planning process. *[Cross-reference Land Use; Circulation; Safety; Public Services & Facilities; Public Buildings; and Neighborhood Preservation & Revitalization Elements]*

Goal CD 7

Honor Scottsdale’s western and equestrian lifestyle.

Policies

CD 7.1 Protect equestrian use areas from incompatible development. *[Cross-reference Cactus Corridor Character Area Plan and Open Space; Land Use; and Recreation Elements]*

CD 7.2 Accommodate equestrian users in the design of streets and trails. *[Cross-reference Open Space; Circulation; and Recreation Elements]*

CD 7.3 Celebrate the preservation of western and southwestern art, character, museum works, and architecture, both citywide and within Historic Old Town. *[Cross-reference Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan; and Arts, Culture & Creative Community and Economic Vitality Element]*

CD 7.4 Protect the heritage and Western character of the original Historic Old Town District through both the Character Area Plan and Urban Design and Architectural Guidelines. *[Cross-reference Old Town Scottsdale Character Area Plan; Arts, Culture & Creative Community and Economic Vitality Elements]*



JENNY LIN RD.

CIRCLE MOUNTAIN RD.

HONDA BOW RD.

ROCKAWAY HILLS RD.

DESERT HILLS DR.

JOY RANCH RD.

STAGECOACH PASS

CAREFREE HWY.

DOVE VALLEY RD.

LONE MOUNTAIN RD.

DIXILETA DR.

DYNAMITE BLVD.

JOMAX RD.

HAPPY VALLEY RD.

PINNACLE PEAK RD.

DEER VALLEY RD.

LOOP 101

UNION HILLS DR.

BELL RD./FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BLVD.

GREENWAY PKWY.

THUNDERBIRD RD.

CACTUS RD.

SHEA BLVD.

DOUBLETREE RANCH RD.

McCORMICK PKWY.

INDIAN BEND RD.

LINCOLN DR.

CHAPARRAL RD./CAMELBACK RD.

CAMELBACK RD.

INDIAN SCHOOL RD.

THOMAS RD.

McDOWELL RD.

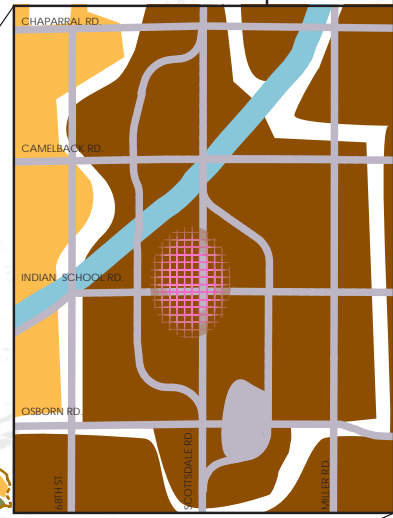
LOOP 202

McKELLIPS RD.

BARTLETT DAM RD.

RIO VERDE DR.

Old Town



CAVE CREEK RD.

TATUM BLVD.

GALVIN PKWY.

SCOTTSDALE RD.

56th ST.

64th ST.

HAYDEN RD.

PIMA RD.

LOOP 101

96th ST

104th ST

112th ST

120th ST

128th ST

136th ST

142th ST

PANSADES BLVD.

BEELINE HWY (87)

Character Types

- Urban Character
- Downtown Core
- Employment Core
- Tourism/Recreation Area
- Suburban Character
- Resort Village
- Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Desert Districts
- Rural Character
- Native Desert and Mountain Districts



JENNY LIN RD.

CIRCLE MOUNTAIN RD.

HONDA BOW RD.

ROCKAWAY HILLS RD.

DESERT HILLS DR.

JOY RANCH RD.

STAGECOACH PASS

CAREFREE HWY.

DOVE VALLEY RD.

LONE MOUNTAIN RD.

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JOMAX RD.

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PINNACLE PEAK RD.

DEER VALLEY RD.

LOOP 101

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McCORMICK PKWY.

INDIAN BEND RD.

LINCOLN DR.

McDONALD DR.

CHAPARRAL RD./CAMELBACK RD.

CAMELBACK RD.

INDIAN SCHOOL RD.

THOMAS RD.

McDOWELL RD.

LOOP 202

McKELLIPS RD.

BARTLETT DAM RD.

RIO VERDE DR.

CAVE CREEK RD.

TATUM BLVD.

PALISADES BLVD.

BEELINE HWY. (87)

Desert Foothills (1999)

Dynamite Foothills (2000)

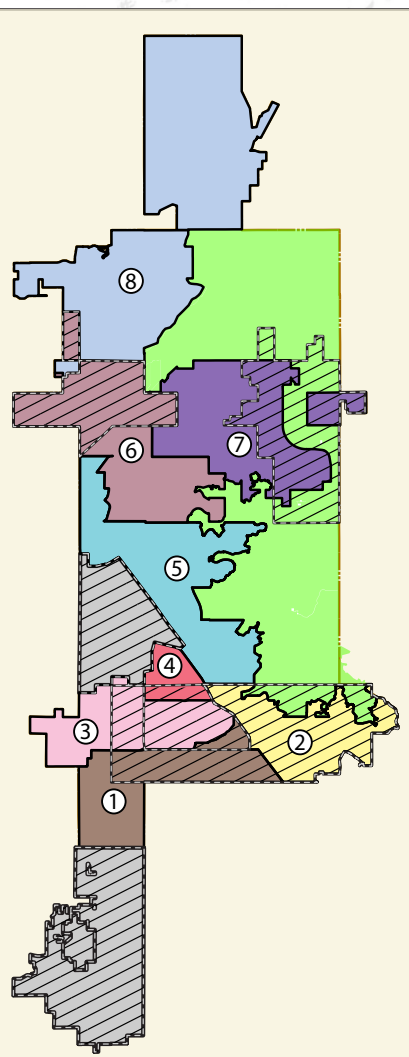
Greater Airport (2010)

Cactus Corridor (1992)

Shea/East Shea Area (1993)

Old Town Scottsdale (2018)

Southern Scottsdale (2010)



Future Character Area Plans*

Character Areas

- Existing/Adopted Character Area
- ① Future
- ② Future
- ③ Future
- ④ Future
- ⑤ Future
- ⑥ Future
- ⑦ Future
- ⑧ Future
- Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve (See Open Space Element)

*Boundaries are subject to change according to community input during Character Area Planning (CAP) process. Currently adopted CAPs remain in effect until a new or updated CAP is adopted by the City Council.



JENNY LIN RD.

CIRCLE MOUNTAIN RD.

HONDA BOW RD.

ROCKAWAY HILLS RD.

DESERT HILLS DR.

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120th ST.

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142th ST.

Streetscapes

- Urban Streetscape
- Suburban Streetscape
- Transitional Streetscape
- Natural Streetscape
- Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve
(See Open Space Element)

