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**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION  
AND BACKGROUND**

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## Introduction and Background

### History

The settlement of the Town of Chandler started in 1912 as Dr. Alexander John Chandler began to subdivide and sell commercial and residential lots surrounding the San Marcos Hotel. Since then, commercial activity has emerged on the town square as well as along Arizona Avenue and Chandler Boulevard, with residential neighborhoods developing around the core business areas. Historically, a variety of factors have contributed to the social and economic decline of Downtown Chandler since the inception of the original vision, as is the case with most American Cities.

In 1987, the Chandler City Council adopted the city's first comprehensive plan (Chandler Area and Redevelopment Plan) to redevelop the city center and revitalize the surrounding neighborhoods. The planning area boundary, encompassing approximately 1.75 square miles, was determined by the presence of documented slum and blight conditions, socioeconomic conditions, and the need for economic stimulus. Since then, some progress has occurred. Significant improvements include the reopening of the San Marcos Hotel shortly thereafter, the restoration of the storefront facades and colonnades for the town square in 1992, the creation of several major festivals, the *rehabilitation of more than 200 homes*, and the *approval of more than 1,000 new housing units*, either completed or in active review stages.

In February 1994, the City Council appointed a citizen's task force to update the city's 1987 Redevelopment Plan. Although there had been previous studies conducted for the downtown area, none had actually offered a complete vision of the overall potential of the downtown or a specific implementation guide. The Task Force realized the need for specific action steps while working through the planning process, and they developed those steps while adhering to the following guiding principles:

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- That the economic and leadership soundness of the redevelopment efforts relies on joint private and public funding contributions, management, cooperation, and City commitments in fulfilling the vision;
- That the plan capitalize heavily on the existing amenities, strengths, and landmarks, and establish additional themes such as the establishment of a strong environment of recreational, entertainment, and service oriented businesses to attract nighttime and weekend use throughout the business core, and provide a strong pedestrian linkage to the Center for the Arts.
- The importance of neighborhood appearance, improvements, and stability to enhance the viability of these neighborhoods;
- Since the various districts within the Redevelopment Area have individual planning issues and considerations, strategies should be adopted for each area;
- That downtown Chandler represents the cultural, civic, business, and historic hub of Chandler, containing a balanced mix of land uses providing expanded business activity, employment, housing, and recreation;
- The 1987 Redevelopment Plan represents an excellent guide for orderly growth and general land use; however, more emphasis needs to be placed on defining the implementation measures.

## Scope and Authority

### *Scope of the Plan*

This plan has been prepared to fulfill the following missions:

- Provide goals, objectives, and policies for redevelopment;
- Identify various land use categories by location;
- Provide a workable and comprehensive action plan;
- Provide a guide for property owners, elected officials, and potential developers for future redevelopment proposals;
- Reaffirm the City's *commitment* to downtown redevelopment;
- Provide individual planning strategies for the area's planning districts/areas;
- Identify where further studies and specific plans are needed to fulfill the recommendations of this plan;
- Establish the importance of ongoing neighborhood involvement.

### *Authority and Legal Basis*

In accordance with the Urban Environment Management Plan, Title 9, A.R.S., Arizona municipalities with resident populations over 50,000 shall incorporate ten General Plan Elements, including a Redevelopment Plan, into their General Plans. This authority gives Chandler the legal basis to pursue redevelopment projects, assemble or facilitate the assembling of land, and to execute other redevelopment powers provided by the Statute.

This plan replaces the Chandler Area and Redevelopment Plan adopted by the City Council in January 1987. Any further amendments and updates are subject to the same articles and provisions governing the use of this plan; however, updates of the background information such as the demographic profile or market analysis will not require a formal plan amendment.

### **Plan Formation**

The Redevelopment Area Strategic Plan Task Force conducted their initial meeting on March 22, 1994 to begin the plan update process. During the next several months, the task force met on several occasions to formulate preliminary issue categories and possible strategies. These were presented at two community workshops, on May 25 and June 15, 1994, where they were further refined by the over 100 people that attended.

### **Workshops**

Participants at the workshops identified specific issues and outlined general policies necessary to resolve the issues. To simplify this effort, the Task Force categorized some general issue groups which were reviewed before the workshop activities. Groups formed at the initial workshop to focus on various issue categories. The summaries were refined during open forum discussions held during both workshops. There were at least four or five consensus recommendations identified for each of the seven issue categories, summarized as follows:

#### ***General Redevelopment***

- Replace substandard housing
- Encourage new housing opportunities
- Encourage development of a downtown "superblock"
- Identify all potential funding sources
- Adopt a specific physical plan

#### ***Business and Economic Development***

- Revitalize and expand downtown businesses
- Expand service-oriented and entertainment establishments
- Create a mechanism (such as a management group) to combine Public and private commitments
- Provide a strong destination point(s) downtown
- Promote and support a wide range of small businesses

### *Neighborhoods*

- Eliminate blight and encourage neighborhood maintenance
- Continue using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for residential rehabilitation
- Encourage expanded neighborhood involvement
- Create more opportunities for home ownership

### *Land Use*

- Continue the current development pattern along the Commonwealth Mall
- Strengthen the area surrounding the San Marcos Resort
- Attract a major department store and a food store downtown
- Attract new employers to locate downtown
- Build strong, stable neighborhoods

### *Image/Appearance*

- Continue historic architectural themes
- Create a strong cultural theme
- Create design treatments at building and path entryways
- Follow a vision (the preferred niche is a destination oriented center of high quality service and entertainment establishments)

### *Quality of Life Issues*

- Continue festivals and other community building signature events
- Create a festive, nighttime and weekend atmosphere
- Expand the presence of the arts
- Provide more pedestrian amenities, places to relax or gather
- Develop a museum of industry, technology and heritage

### *Management and Implementation*

- City needs to commit to a plan and see through tough decisions
- Plan should be sustainable and long-range
- City should provide incentives to develop in the downtown
- Establish public/private partnerships to combine resources
- Be bold and creative

### **Goal Statements**

Following the workshops, the Task Force framed the general vision by adopting a set of goals that form the basis of this plan's Action Plan. The goals are summarized as follows:

#### ***General Redevelopment***

- 1) Promote the revitalization of downtown Chandler and surrounding neighborhoods through the mechanisms of sound land use planning, financial investment, public and private cooperation, neighborhood maintenance, and economic development strategies.
- 2) Develop downtown Chandler as the community's cultural, civic, business, and activity center. To accomplish this vision, downtown should be developed as a diverse, balanced community attracting people to live, work, shop, play and gather.

#### ***Business and Economic Development***

- 3) The downtown should provide a viable mix of commercial retail, service, leisure/entertainment establishments, and office/ industrial employers to serve as an active destination point for residents, visitors and employees.

#### ***Land Use and Neighborhoods***

- 4) Maintain stable, viable neighborhoods in the residential areas of the downtown and utilize sound land use planning principles to accomplish the vision of the downtown as a diverse community of many uses.

***Environment and Appearance***

- 5) Create and maintain a strong identity for the downtown that reflects the city's historical, cultural, and architectural influences.
- 6) Capitalize upon the downtown's primary physical attributes, features, and landmarks.

***Management and Implementation***

- 7) The City, in cooperation with other community groups, should commit to a sustainable and consistent redevelopment effort to assure the delivery of timely, appropriate, and realistic solutions to achieve Chandler's redevelopment goals.

**Plan Formation**

In 1984 the City Council adopted Resolution 1226 declaring that slum and blighted conditions existed in the Redevelopment Study Area. This determination followed a study of the area that documented a significant evidence that the area was in a clearly declining state. Primary indicators included many instances of structural decline and substandard living conditions, obsolete platting and infrastructure, land use conflicts, a number of vacant or abandoned properties, and poor socioeconomic factors. According the 1990 Decennial Census the same area exhibited:

- A high percentage of low income households;
- Many households below the poverty level;
- A high percentage of households headed by females;
- A low average level of formal education;
- A high level of unemployment;
- A relatively high percentage of units without plumbing or complete kitchens;
- A high number of people per household (and room);
- Relatively depressed housing conditions and values;
- High vacancy rates; and
- A high percentage of renter-occupied homes.



### Demographics

#### *Socioeconomic Conditions*

Since 1984, socioeconomic conditions have not improved. Census information allows a comparison of selected conditions with respect to the rest of the City. According to current figures:

	Chandler	Redevelopment Area
<b>Population</b>	122,000	12,519
<b>Families</b>	43,693	4,173
with female head	13.8%	25.1%
householder 65+	7.7%	21.7%
owners	73.8%	23.2%
<b>Age of Home</b>		
over 10 yrs. old	37%	82%
over 25 yrs. old	6.7%	35%
<b>Education</b>		
high school diploma	87.8%	49.2%
college degree	28.2%	7.9%
<b>Work</b>		
unemployment	4.6%	10.8%
income (household)	\$45,000	\$19,000
poverty status	8%	33%

### **Population**

According to recent population estimates, approximately 16,500 people reside in a one-mile ring surrounding and including the Redevelopment Area, with about 67,000 people residing within a 3-mile radius. Projections for 1998 show 16,750 and 77,000 residents, respectively. These figures suggest an established population density near the city center, with a modest four (4%) percent annual growth rate anticipated within the 3-mile ring.

### **Income**

Average household income in the one mile ring is \$29,151. The entire market area average is \$42,762. This compares with the regional market area (5 mile radius) average of \$49,131 per household.