

## **Introduction**

The City of Chandler is crossing the threshold toward new community directions. An extended period of rapid growth transformed the rural town into a vibrant City. The civic focus is changing to capitalize on the City's success -- to achieve long-term stability.

This General Plan updates the 2001 General Plan.

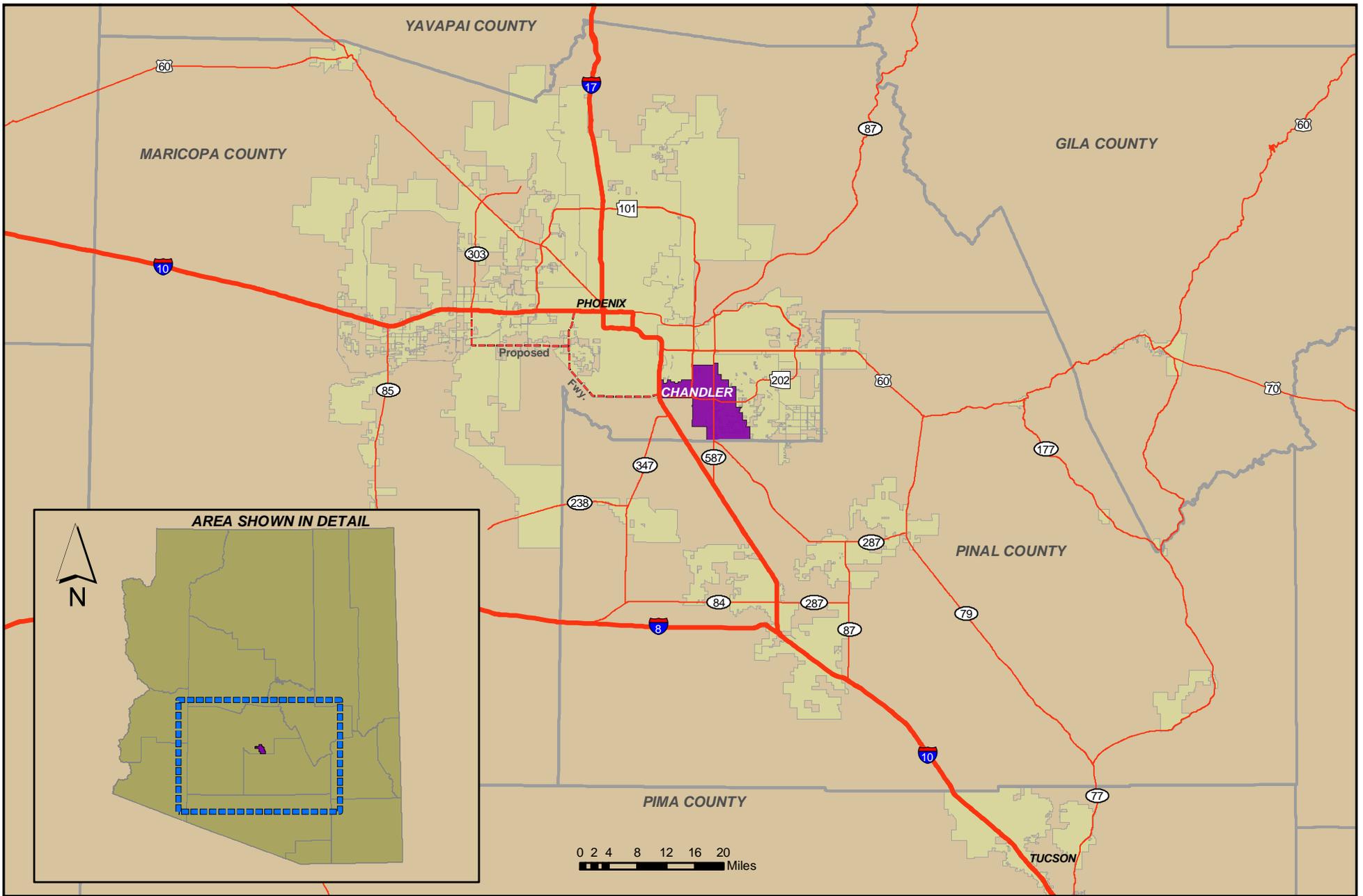
Since the previous Plan adoption, there are signs of a fundamental shift in the ways the community is preparing for the future. As Chandler matures, with less land available for development, planning decisions of every type -- from transportation to public facilities to land use -- must be made more carefully. Residential growth will become slower, more deliberate as land inventories for housing shrink. Economic development -- for jobs and revenue -- is needed for balance before vacant acreages are gone. These "Build-Out" themes run through all of the General Plan's Elements.

This General Plan update was prepared with the guidance of a Citizens' Oversight Committee. The diverse make up of the Committee made their contributions invaluable and inclusive of various geographic, ethnic and economic areas of the City. Heavily based on citizen input, many General Plan goals and objectives were derived from citizen participants attending numerous public forums, comments submitted through the City's Website, as well as from various City board and commission meetings. In addition, several concepts in this General Plan have been adapted from recommendations in the "Next Twenty", a report commissioned by the City in 2004 that studied the broad implications of reaching build-out. As a whole, the policies in the General Plan are based upon a compilation of input received from a richly diverse community, effectively forming a common vision for Chandler's future.

Chandler is situated in the center of Arizona's emerging Phoenix-Tucson mega-region, one of ten in the nation, that stretches across Maricopa, Pinal and eastern Pima Counties. Located on the southern edge of the Phoenix metropolitan area (See Figure 1), Chandler is well-positioned near the heart of Arizona's mega-region. Over the next decade, growth in Phoenix and Tucson will lead to merging urbanization along the I-10 corridor. Chandler's strategic position sets the stage for improved connections to not only Phoenix but also suburban growth in Pinal County and the economic power of Tucson. Freeway, rail and aviation access is excellent as the City is served by multiple freeways, the Union Pacific Railroad, international and regional air facilities.

The City recognizes its neighboring jurisdictions as part of a greater planning area with common interests extending beyond the municipal limits. Gilbert, Mesa, Tempe, Phoenix and the Gila River Indian Community (together with unincorporated Sun Lakes) form a continuous border, landlocking Chandler. Inside the City limits, there is a number of county islands, unincorporated tracts under Maricopa County jurisdiction. As illustrated by Figure 2, there is little opportunity to expand the City's 71.5 square mile municipal planning area.

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Source: City and town incorporated boundaries obtained from Arizona State Land Department as of April 2008.  
 City of Chandler boundary represents the City's Municipal Planning Area.

# REGIONAL CONTEXT

FIGURE 1

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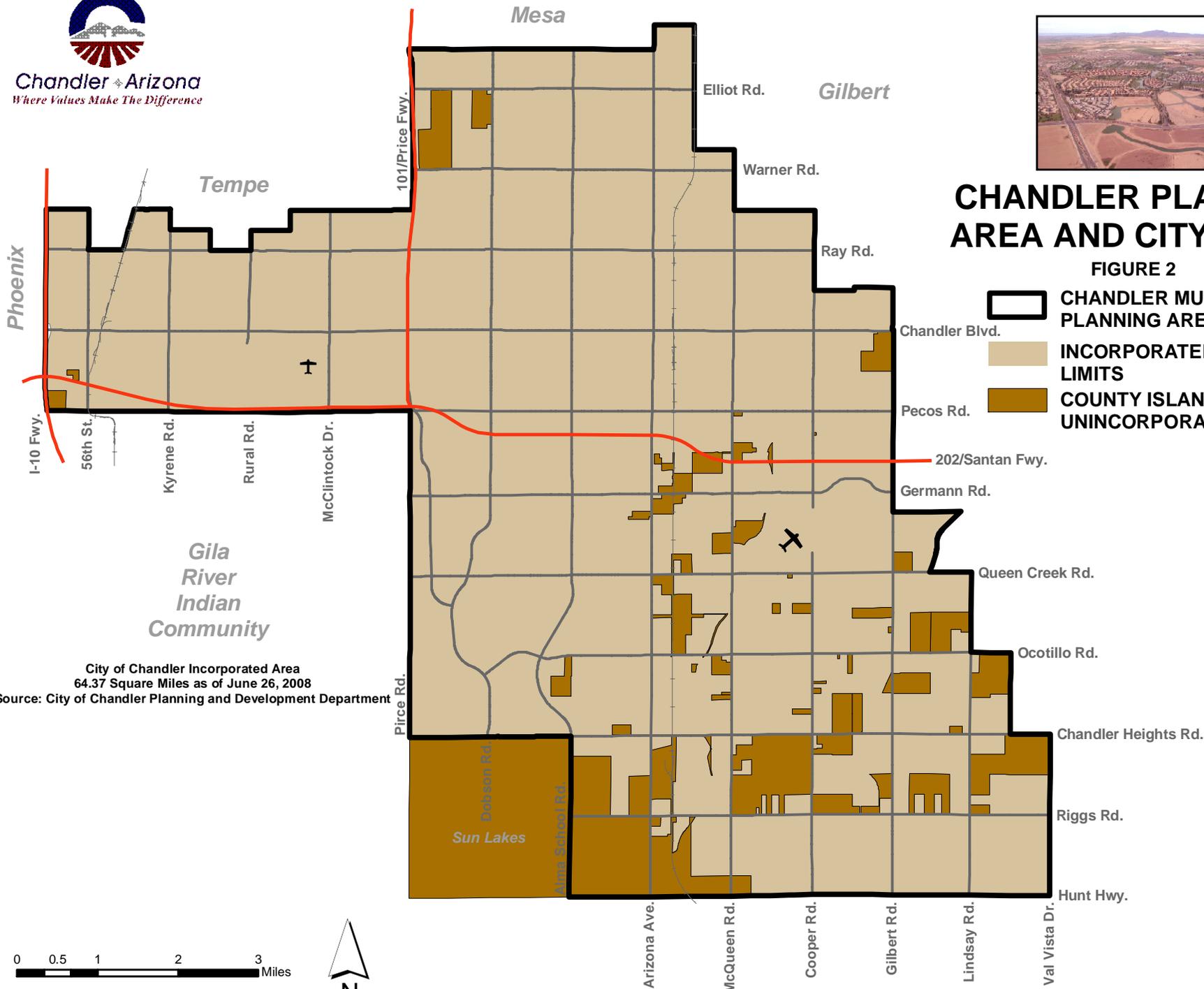
Chandler Arizona  
Where Values Make The Difference



# CHANDLER PLANNING AREA AND CITY LIMITS

FIGURE 2

-  CHANDLER MUNICIPAL PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY
-  INCORPORATED CITY LIMITS
-  COUNTY ISLAND UNINCORPORATED AREA



Gila River Indian Community

City of Chandler Incorporated Area  
64.37 Square Miles as of June 26, 2008

Source: City of Chandler Planning and Development Department

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## Purpose

As required by the Arizona Revised Statutes for all municipalities, the General Plan serves as an expression of development policies used to guide development decisions. Its purpose is to establish clear direction that spells out public expectations and preferences to sustain a desirable community. Through a series of public forums and work sessions, Chandler residents have set Goals and Objectives for seventeen planning Elements (three have been combined with other Elements):

- Land Use
- Circulation/Bicycling
- Growth Areas
- Neighborhood Planning
- Housing
- Redevelopment
- Cost of Development
- Recreation and Open Space
- Energy
- Conservation/Environmental Planning
- Water Resources
- Public Services and Facilities
- Public Buildings
- Safety

Elements are the Plan's fundamental subject area components -- all required by the State; except for one, the Neighborhood Planning Element, which is added by the City. Neighborhood Planning is included to stress a new emphasis on assisting older neighborhoods to maintain their quality of life. The Energy Element, recently mandated by the Arizona legislature, introduces goals to encourage energy efficiency and the utilization of renewable resources.

Policies express intentions to implement goals and objectives and to protect and preserve valuable community characteristics. They seek to persuade and influence preferred development -- not dictate to property owners what they may do with their land. They also invite projects that can fill particular, identified needs. The Plan is meant to be a reference source for residents, business people, neighborhood and civic groups in addition to landowners, developers, City advisory boards and staff.

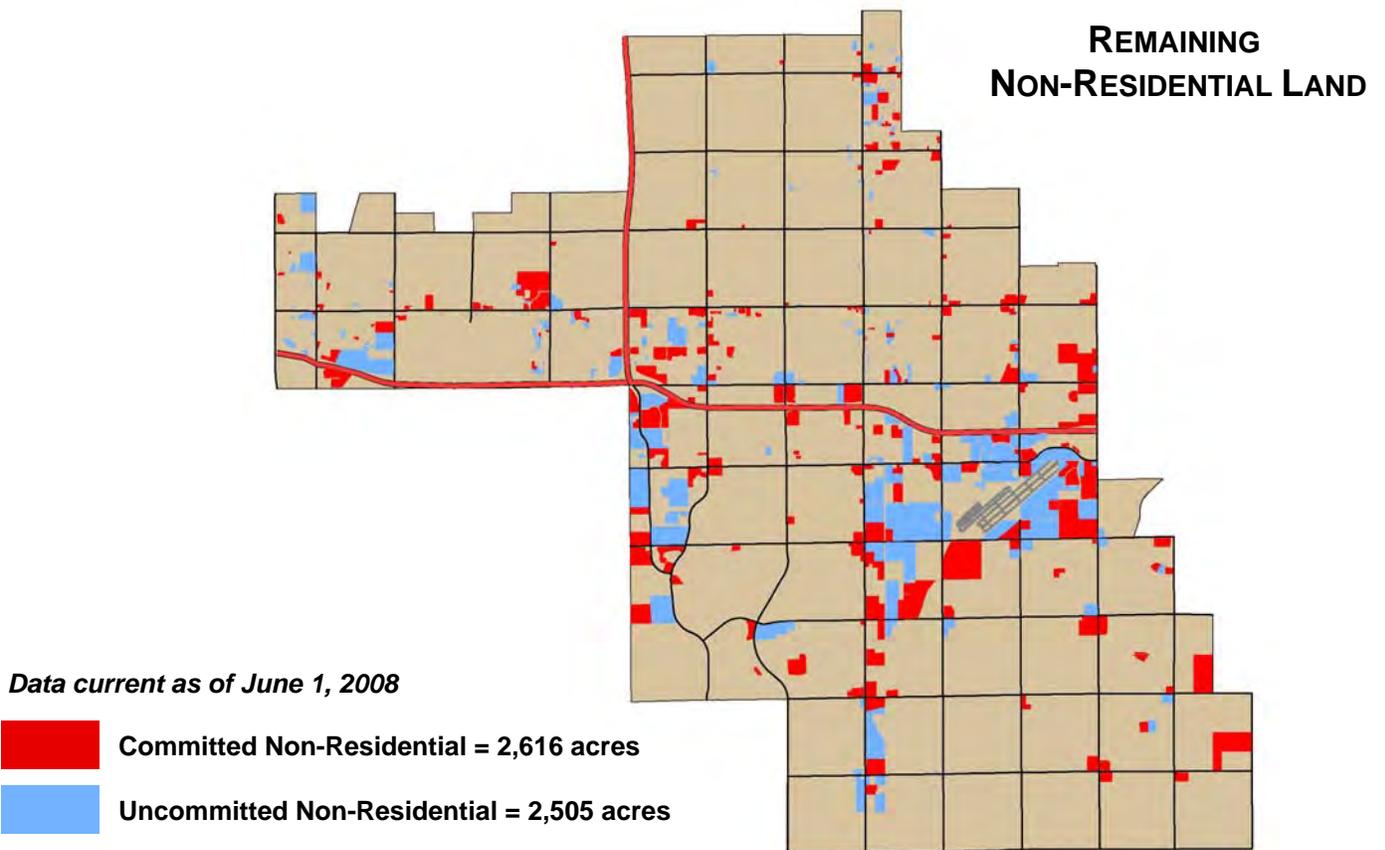
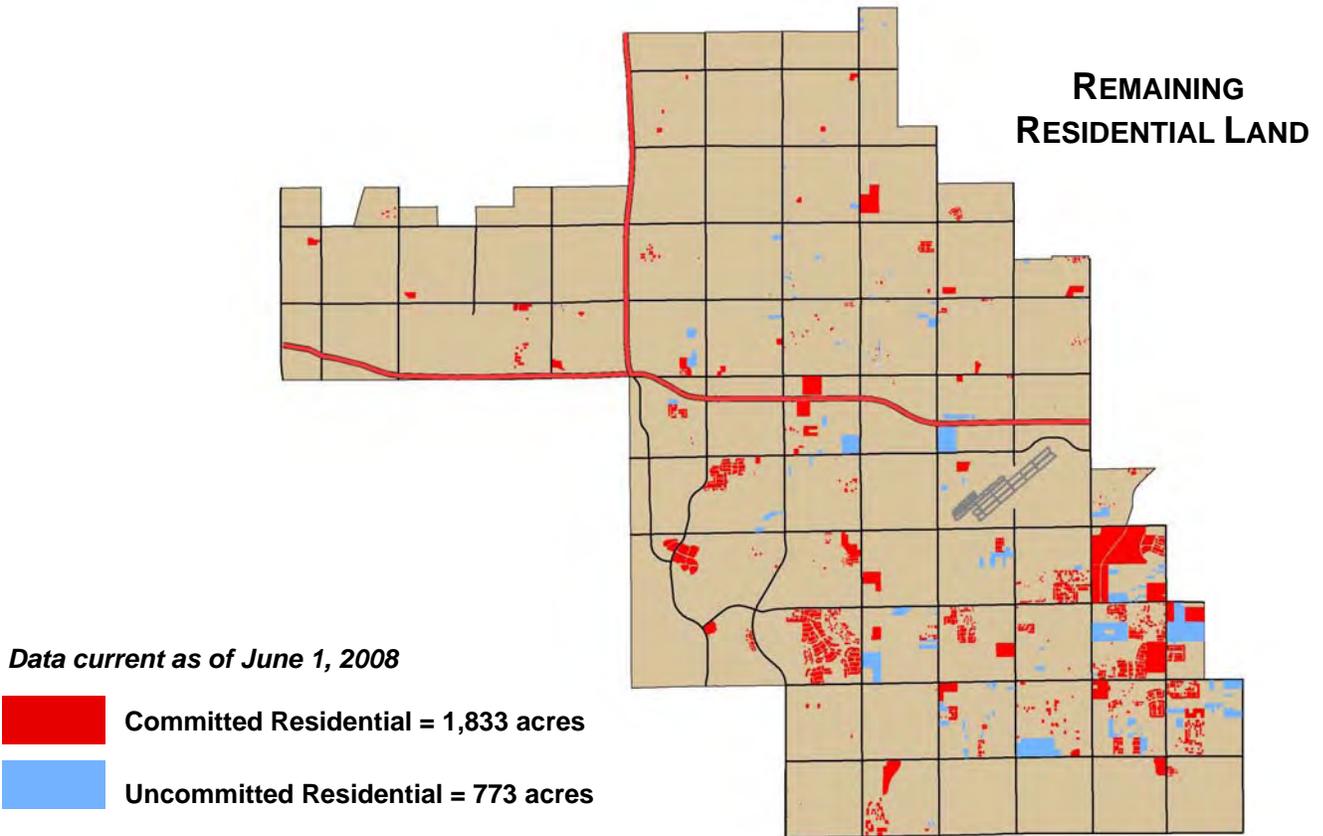
The need for long-term economic stability prompts the policies that comprise the City's Build-Out strategy. Directing the use of its remaining land resource, Chandler strives for a balance of land uses to be able to pay for municipal services on a self-sustaining basis.

*What is Build-Out? Build-Out occurs when most vacant or agricultural land has been developed.* The City will never be one hundred percent built out since there will always be infill development and redevelopment efforts. However, the City of Chandler is running out of space for new development. Figure 3, on the following page, shows the current supply of land committed and planned for residential or non-residential use. Committed properties in Figure 3 are defined as properties that were either under construction, recently zoned for a particular development, or in the process of requesting zoning as of the date of the maps. Uncommitted properties are those that had not submitted any rezoning application to the City, had agricultural zoning or zoning approval for a specific development, but remained inactive for several years.

*Planning for Build-Out.* The General Plan promotes a balance of land uses to ensure municipal services and a high quality of life. Redevelopment and infill opportunities with higher residential densities are encouraged in select areas contingent upon transportation improvements, particularly public transit, as well as other factors. Build-out also entails increased neighborhood-planning initiatives to revitalize and preserve Chandler's older neighborhoods. All of the Plan's Elements coordinate to supply support services, facilities and programs for Future Chandler.

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**Figure 3**  
**CHANDLER'S REMAINING LAND RESOURCE**



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*Continuing City Sustainability.* Areas designated for non-residential use often do not develop until after surrounding "rooftops" are built. Reserving acreage for shopping, employment and institutional uses helps to ensure Chandler's on-going status as a full-service community. Jobs and commerce also strengthen the local economy for years to come.

## **Plan Organization**

The General Plan consists of the Introduction and separate sections addressing Plan Elements, which are the City's basic planning components.

*Introduction* materials set the stage for the planning evaluations that lead to policy-based recommendations. The Vision Statement is drawn from residents' input at community meetings, and describes aspirations people have for their City. Other information is provided for understanding Chandler's planning approach in response to Arizona's "Growing Smarter" requirements. Explanations include: the citizen participation process, tips on applying the Plan to propose or evaluate projects, General Plan Amendments and other administrative procedures.

Seventeen *Plan Elements* in fourteen chapters meet the requirements of State statutes (ARS §9-461.05). Some Elements are combined because they are closely related (e.g., Circulation/Bicycling; Open Space and Recreation; Conservation/Environmental Planning).

Coordination among Elements is essential to avoid conflicting action strategies. Typically, the narrative for each Element cites others that interact (e.g., Land Use works closely with Housing, Circulation and Growth Areas). Frequent cross-referencing refer to common issues between Elements.

The Chandler General Plan is a strategic plan that uses a consistent format. Each chapter is titled "\_\_\_\_\_Toward Build-Out" (e.g., Growth Areas Toward Build-Out) to underscore the Elements' shared perspective in addressing the City's direction toward a more urban future. In every Element, broad goals and objectives follow a brief introduction. The subject matter is then assessed according to Existing Conditions (including Assets, Challenges/Issues and Opportunities); then more specific Build-Out Policies further refine the Element's goals and objectives. Finally, specific Implementation Recommendations are stated and outlined in box format.

## **Vision Statement**

Chandler citizens recognize that their City has matured into a major urban center. They see prospects for improving upon current living quality. The growth years have accomplished numerous points of pride: strong economic base, outstanding schools, active citizen involvement, fiscal stability, exemplary municipal maintenance and services. The coming decades present a challenge to become more selective as the land resource approaches build-out.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

The City of Chandler leads by example as a strong employment hub with desirable neighborhoods, outstanding public service and, above all, its commitment to sustainability.

As a major City, Chandler will be home to many world-class corporations. A key location for emerging technologies and entrepreneurial enterprises, the City fosters a creative environment that attracts a diverse and well-educated population. The array of employment opportunities and high paying jobs will be Chandler's defining characteristic and main force behind creating a vibrant, sustainable City.

Chandler's neighborhoods will provide a variety of housing types from single-family homes in very low-density areas to urban settings including lofts in mixed-use developments. In all cases, unique neighborhood character, exceptional municipal services and superior amenities including convenient shopping, recreation, and alternative modes of transportation will make Chandler neighborhoods among the most desirable places to live.

Besides a strong employment base and desirable neighborhoods, what will make Chandler stand out from other cities is its commitment to become a sustainable City and to encourage sustainable development. Taller, more intensive developments will take advantage of proximity to transit and freeways. Residents will rely less on automobiles, as walking and mass transit will be more convenient. Chandler will be known for its interconnected system of shaded pedestrian pathways. Many new developments will have incorporated green building practices, reducing water and energy use, and thus improving the surrounding environment.

These thoughts set a foundation for the planning assessments, build-out policies and recommendations that follow. Chandler is preparing for a change in direction, but maintains the City-wide commitment to living quality improvements.

## **Citizen Participation**

This is a citizen-driven General Plan. Public involvement served as an essential component in determining the future directions Chandler should take. Persons of various ages and interests participated in identifying the aspects of community that are most important to preserve, improve or establish.

In addition to City staff, a Citizens' Oversight Committee (COC) was appointed to serve as advisors for the General Plan update. Committee members represented Chandler interests from a variety of geographic, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. The COC also included a Maricopa County resident living within Chandler's municipal planning area as well as a representative from the Gila River Indian Community. Several members brought experience from serving on the "Next Twenty" visioning group. The Committee met regularly over several months to help guide the Plan's preparation. Together with other citizens who attended review sessions, the Committee acted as a valuable sounding board for build-out planning principles.

The Chandler General Plan process consisted of several public participation sessions during the course of Plan development. A concerted effort was made to include residents from various income levels, neighborhoods/areas of the community, interest organizations and cultural backgrounds.

In August 2007, a series of three Visioning meetings was held in separate, strategic locations in the community. At each of these Visioning sessions, the same material was presented. Attendees received information packets explaining the General Plan process. Breakout sessions gathered residents' ideas on goals for each of the seventeen Elements, and responses from a questionnaire were used to prepare the Vision Statement. Feedback from citizens continued to be gathered throughout the process from persons submitting comments or replying electronically to the questionnaire through the City's website.



Special Area meetings were held with citizens in October 2007 to discuss Neighborhood Planning and Redevelopment. Attendees were first given a synopsis of the General Plan progress to date. Then they were asked to mark on maps noting locations where they thought neighborhood improvements or redevelopment efforts could be made. Various locations were noted (e.g., along transit corridors) and, subsequently, these ideas were included in the Plan's text.

Opportunities to provide additional input were made available throughout the General Plan process. City staff and consultants presented General Plan overviews and provided public input opportunities at a variety of community meetings: Local Initiatives Support Corporation Briefing; Stakeholders' Forum; Congress of Neighborhoods; Intel Community Advisory Panel; Neighborhood Link Group; Maricopa Association of Governments; Chandler Chamber of Commerce; Valley Partnership; Ocotillo Spring Event; Airport Commission; Transportation Commission; Neighborhood Advisory Committee; Economic Development Advisory Board; and the Energy and Green Building Forum, in addition to Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council briefings.

Two public hearings were held by the Planning and Zoning Commission (May 22, 2008 and June 4, 2008), after which the Commission recommended approval of the Chandler General Plan. The City Council held a public hearing on June 26, 2008, at which time the General Plan was approved and adopted for subsequent ratification by Chandler voters on November 4, 2008.

### **How to Use this Plan**

The updated Chandler General Plan brings a new perspective as the City continues to evolve. It presents instructional guidance for coping with the consequences of approaching build-out. This document is not meant to be read from cover-to-cover in a single sitting. However, a user, whether a citizen appearing at a public hearing for the first time or a long-term City official, should become familiar with the Plan's content. A comprehensive planning view encourages the General Plan user to evaluate change on a Citywide basis, directing progress for the good of the community rather than special interests. It is essential to understand what the Plan is and is not:

*This General Plan is:*

- A response to impending build-out
- An expression of citizen preferences
- A statement of City development policy
- A guide to public and private decision-making
- A long-term perspective
- More than a land use map
- A blueprint to improve quality of life in the City
- An invitation for neighborhoods to plan
- A legal requirement under Arizona State Law

*This General Plan is **not**:*

- A zoning map or set of zoning definitions
- A tool to promote special interests
- An unchangeable document
- A detailed policy for specific properties or areas
- A capital improvement program

The General Plan provides references to be used on a regular basis by City decision-makers, advisory boards and staff. Prospective builders and landowners should also consult the General Plan for appropriate types and intensities of use on their properties. The Future Land Use Plan graphic is a generalized description of existing and possible future development. It suggests likely development activity that may be requested by applicants and evaluated by the City on a case-by-case basis.

Arizona Statutes (ARS §9-462.01) require that all zoning regulations and rezoning actions be consistent with the General Plan. Applicants should refer to the document as a whole, not just select, excerpted statements, to support a request for entitlement approval. Several Elements may pertain to a single, suggested development or improvement: land use, cost of development, public facilities, circulation and others. The Elements -- taken into consideration with the goals, objectives, build-out policies and implementation recommendations -- supply a checklist for evaluating any proposed entitlement request for consistency with the General Plan. Chandler's innovative Planned Area Development zoning process allows proposed developments to be analyzed for consistency with the policies within this General Plan and taken through a citizen participation and public hearing process.

The General Plan is meant to be user-friendly. It is likely that most people will access the General Plan electronically -- as has been the experience since the City went on-line with its Unified Development Manual in 2004 (<http://udm.chandleraz.gov>). Frequent notations lead to related documents that provide greater detail or further explanation. A Glossary is also provided.

## **Plan Amendments**

As provided in the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS §9-461.06): A Major Amendment to the General Plan is any proposal that would result in a change to the Future Land Use Plan and/or the Land Use Element that would substantially alter the City's planned mixture or balance of land uses. The Planning and Development Director is responsible for determining major and minor amendment status in accordance with these provisions.

The following criteria are to be used to determine whether a proposed amendment to the Land Use Element of the General Plan substantially alters the mixture or balance of land uses. A Major Amendment is any proposal that meets any one of these criteria:

1. Any change in a residential land use classification of 160 or more contiguous acres (quarter section) described in this General Plan to either another residential land use classification or a non-residential land use classification.
2. Any change in a non-residential land use classification of 40 or more contiguous acres to a residential land use classification. Any change in a non-residential land use classification of 40 or more contiguous acres to a mixed-use development that contains an integrated residential component does not constitute a Major Amendment.
3. Any proposal that would, in the aggregate, include changes in land use classifications of more than 320 acres described in this General Plan.
4. A General Plan text amendment, or modification or elimination of one or more of the stated goals or objectives contained in the Land Use Element of the General Plan that changes any policy or strategy regarding residential densities, intensities or major roadway locations, that would have city-wide implications.

The City of Chandler, in accordance with State Statutes, will consider General Plan major amendments at a single public hearing during the calendar year the proposal is made. Application for a General Plan Major Amendment will be in accordance with City policies and procedures. The Planning and Development Department is the lead agency to process the amendment request. More detailed information regarding Major and Minor General Plan amendment procedures including steps, important deadlines and application forms is available at the Planning and Development Department office and website.

No rezoning requiring a General Plan amendment shall be considered by City Council until a date after the General Plan amendment.

## **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.

*General Plan Adoption.* In accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes (9-461.06J), the Chandler General Plan, once ratified by the voters, is effective for up to ten years. The General Plan can be updated or readopted at any time at the discretion of the City; however, it must be updated or readopted within ten years from the date of adoption. As conditions change (including demographic shifts, build-out of the growth areas, or the emergence of new economic trends), the General Plan may require a comprehensive update.

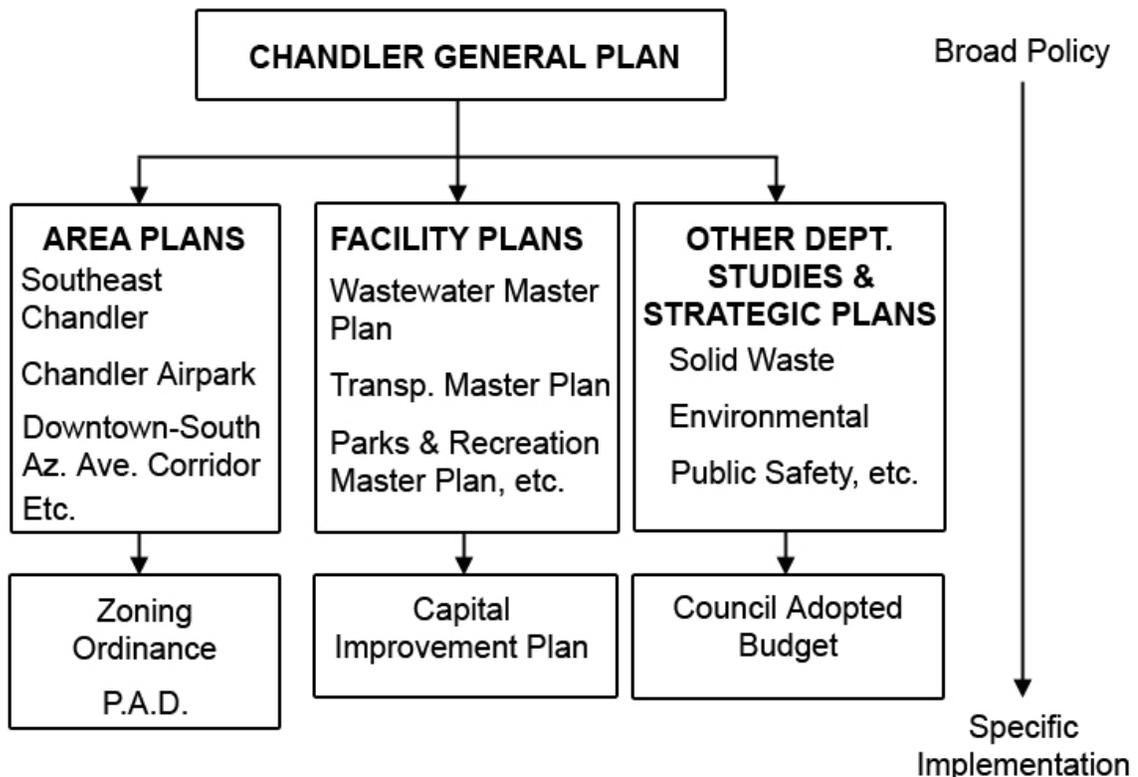
There are four key steps in the General Plan adoption process. First, the Plan is provided in draft form, for a review period of at least 60 days, to outside agencies including neighboring municipalities, Maricopa County, Maricopa Association of Governments, and the State Department of Commerce. The Chandler Planning and Zoning Commission holds two or more General Plan public hearings in different City locations, thereby enhancing citizen accessibility to comment. The Commission then forwards its General Plan recommendations to Council. Third, the Chandler City Council also holds a public hearing for final public testimony and consideration of Plan adoption. Upon City Council approval, the General Plan is submitted to the voters for ratification. If the voters do not approve the proposed General Plan, the current General Plan will remain in effect until a new, revised or resubmitted General Plan gains voter approval.

### Chandler's Planning Hierarchy

The General Plan's broad framework is supplemented by numerous other documents including specific area plans and development policies.

As Figure 4 illustrates, the hierarchy of the Chandler Planning program begins with the General Plan, which provides broad policy direction. Area plans, facility plans and other adopted studies and strategic plans may supply more detail or apply to City sub-areas or municipal systems – all of which are consistent with the General Plan's direction. The zoning ordinance, capital improvement program and the City budget are tools that implement the more specific direction received from the adopted area plans, facility plans and other strategic plans.

**Figure 4 Hierarchy of the General Plan and other City Adopted Plans**



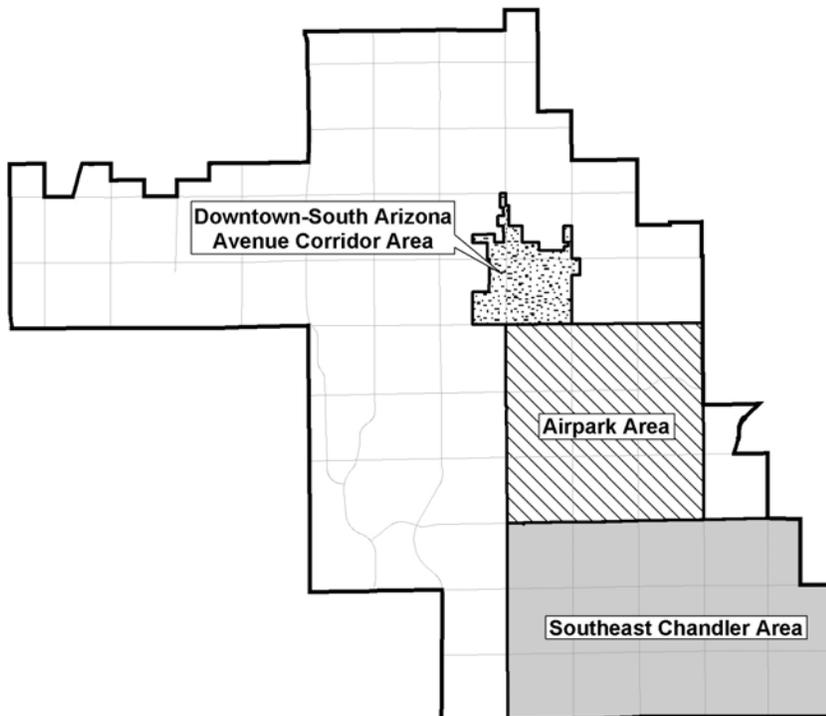
### The Chandler General Plan

The Chandler General Plan provides comprehensive direction across seventeen Plan Elements (some Elements are combined such as: Circulation and Bicycling; Conservation and Environmental Planning; Recreation and Open Space). Other Plans such as Area Plans, Neighborhood Plans and Functional Plans may assist in implementing the General Plan. They are meant to be consistent and to provide refinements beyond the General Plan scope.

All adopted Plans and development policies are intended to supplement the General Plan. Where greater detail and direction is provided in these Plans and policies, such directions will be followed for more precise development guidance. However, when more detailed, specific plans that were adopted by City Council prior to the effective date of this General Plan are found to be in conflict with the goals, objectives, recommendations or provisions of the General Plan, the more specific planning document should be followed. At the discretion of the Director, such specific plan or document may be programmed for subsequent amendment or update as necessary to resolve any identified conflicts. In no instance is the General Plan update intended to amend automatically or supercede any Area Plan or zoning approval previously granted by the Chandler City Council. Final interpretations of consistency are the responsibility of the Planning and Development Director, or the Director's designee.

*Area Plans* have been adopted by the City as the next step to implement the General Plan. Area Plans establish requirements or standards, such as dwelling unit densities, for certain sectors of the community. The three major Area Plans are: the Chandler Airpark Area Plan, the Southeast Chandler Area Plan, and the Downtown-South Arizona Avenue Corridor Area Plan. The City has several other Area Plans that should also be referred to for more specific land use policies (note that some are now built out and are no longer in use).

**Figure 5 Chandler Area Plans**



*Neighborhood Plans*, strongly advocated in the Neighborhood Planning Element, introduce the importance of grassroots participation as Chandler's build-out progresses. The General Plan establishes this additional planning tool as a means for Chandler residents to initiate action plans and establish implementation criteria on a traditional neighborhood or Homeowners Association level.

There are three reasons to recommend planning at this level: 1) to help organize neighbors and identify common goals in existing residential areas; 2) to express ideas prior to build-out development or infill proposals in their vicinity; 3) to establish neighborhood preservation/ maintenance goals and programs.

*Functional plans*, such as the Transportation Master Plan or the Water Plan Update, are plans specific to utilities or municipal systems. These plans are regarded as essential expressions of intended municipal preparedness and/or improvements.