

## **PUBLIC BUILDINGS TOWARD BUILD-OUT**

The Public Buildings Element shows locations and addresses needs for civic and community facilities including but not limited to libraries, schools, police and fire stations. In addition to the City of Chandler, other agencies such as the local school districts operate many public-serving facilities.

One of Chandler's traditional points of pride is the excellent school systems serving the community. As build-out approaches, quality educational institutions -- including campus and building quality -- are recognized as an essential pillar of a balanced community supporting continued employment expansion and diversification.

As taxpayers, residents want public buildings to be energy efficient and economical to maintain. Architectural design that blends with neighborhood and community character was important to General Plan workshop participants.

The General Plan Public Services and Facilities Element is necessarily closely associated with this Public Buildings Element. Goals and Objectives, along with strategic recommendations provide logical overlap and internal consistency for the General Plan. Other Elements integrated with Public Buildings: Energy, Land Use, Open Space/Recreation, Conservation and Environment and Safety Elements.

Goals are derived from citizen input, statutory requirements and build-out priorities.

### **GOAL: PROVIDE PUBLIC BUILDINGS THAT ADEQUATELY SERVE COMMUNITY NEEDS.**

*Objective:* Create a wide distribution of public buildings to maximize service to residents and visitors.

*Objective:* Assure consistency between public building use and the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and service areas.

*Objective:* Include public architecture, site design and public art that are complementary to and consistent with neighborhood character.

### **GOAL: ENSURE PUBLIC BUILDINGS ARE ACCESSIBLE, SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE.**

*Objective:* Assess general public and employee safety conditions at all City buildings.

*Objective:* Implement public building preparedness in accordance with appropriate emergency response plans and information.

*Objective:* Provide full ADA accessibility to City facilities.

*Objective:* Design new public buildings to meet USGBC Green Building standards, attaining LEED Certification when feasible.

*Objective:* Assess and implement energy efficient retrofits for existing buildings.

### **GOAL: SUPPORT THE EVOLVING ROLE OF SCHOOLS DURING BUILD-OUT.**

*Objective:* Cooperate with school districts in adapting existing buildings for alternative administrative and community-serving uses.

*Objective:* Maximize opportunities for shared-use facilities that serve citizens.

*Objective:* Communicate with school districts regarding development proposals that impact school services and facilities.

**GOAL: PROVIDE A PROGRESSIVE, DIVERSE LIBRARY SYSTEM.**

*Objective:* Evenly distribute library facilities within the City.

*Objective:* Utilize libraries as a focal point for community activities.

*Objective:* Improve access to computing technologies and digital information for all Chandler residents and visitors.

*Objective:* Provide literacy, informational and lifelong learning programs at all library facilities.

**Existing Conditions**

Chandler operates many public buildings that serve citizen needs including City Hall, the Community Center, libraries, Chandler Center for the Arts, senior center, police and fire stations, street and other maintenance facilities. Figure 20 depicts the distribution of these facilities throughout the City.

Expansions to City Hall and the Fire Department are underway and will result in two green buildings in downtown Chandler. The Fire Department now includes a total of ten stations serving Chandler. The Department also has a Fire Training Facility on South Dobson Road and a Fire Support Services building on South Price Road.

Police facilities now include the Main Station downtown and two substations. The Police Department has a Property and Evidence Facility on Pecos Road and two undeveloped properties planned for a crime laboratory/training facility and a driver training facility.

Chandler Public Library has served community needs for more than fifty years. The downtown Library is now supported by three branches: Hamilton, Sunset and Bashas. The Hamilton Branch and the recently completed Bashas Branch are shared facilities located at their respective High Schools in south Chandler. The Sunset Branch provides additional service for west Chandler.

**Schools.** The community is served by Chandler-Gilbert Community College, located in southeast Chandler. Chandler is currently served by five public school districts: Chandler, Gilbert, Kyrene, Mesa Unified and Tempe Union High. Figure 22 identifies school district boundaries and the location of school buildings. The Chandler School District has historically been one of the fastest growing in the State, with 27 elementary, three middle schools and three high schools including Bashas High School, Chandler's newest high school campus, located near Riggs Road and Val Vista Drive. Charter schools serve an important role in the community education system in Chandler. Public school enrollment is summarized in the table below.

**Figure 21  
Public School Enrollments\***

<b>School District</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
Chandler	31,000
Gilbert	500
Kyrene	5,800
Mesa Unified	4,000
Tempe Union High	2,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,500</b>

*Enrollment of schools located within Chandler's City Limits.*

*Based on 2007 School District data*

**Assets.** Various City facility master plans and studies have provided direction on the development of municipal facilities in the downtown area where the highest concentration of public buildings exists, centered around A.J. Chandler Park.

City Departments retain responsibility for building programming, design and maintenance. Chandler has demonstrated sound management skills in matching growing public service needs with additional facilities. For example, expansion of police and fire facilities has typically kept pace with Chandler's rapid growth.

Clearly, the schools serving Chandler are an asset to the community today and will continue to be as build-out approaches. Construction of new school facilities, through notable local efforts, has kept pace with increasing student enrollments and educational program needs. The school districts, in particular Chandler Unified, through district-based strategic planning, are well-prepared to meet the challenges of changing demographics and evolving technology.

Input during the General Plan Update process revealed positive opinions on the quality of City operations and acknowledged excellence in Fire protection and Police services.

**Challenges/Issues.** Maintaining adequate public buildings requires continued commitment of capital resources for state-of-the-art, energy-efficient facilities that supply needed public services. Satellite facilities that provide convenient service and timely responses but tend to increase operating costs, should be evaluated on a range of criteria including cost-benefit and critical needs of the community.

As confirmed by General Plan workshop participants, holding the line on operating expenses for City facilities and reducing energy use in public buildings are worthy goals for Chandler.

**Opportunities.** As Chandler implements build-out policies and strategies, opportunities related to public buildings become evident. General Plan strategies provide direction for decision-making related to existing and future public buildings. As land resources shrink, the number of new public building sites will decline, emphasizing the importance of meeting needs with existing sites and facilities. Certain public space demands can now be deferred as on-line educational programs fill student needs without the use of a building.

Strategic re-use, re-design and retro-fitting will likely become as important, or more so, as new public building design. This opportunity is common to the evolving needs of local school districts and the use of their facilities. Understanding limitations on public resources, fine-tuning building use to the needs of nearby service areas is critical to maximizing benefits to residents.

### **Build-Out Policies**

Providing high quality services and facilities in Chandler is primarily a public responsibility. Build-out policies, derived from citizen input and current conditions, include:

- ◆ Require new public buildings to attain LEED Certification when feasible.
- ◆ Ensure public building architecture and site design compliments neighborhood character.
- ◆ Maintain healthy and safe environments in all public buildings.
- ◆ Utilize cost-effective retrofitting of public buildings to improve energy efficiency.
- ◆ Implement compatible re-use of outdated schools and other public buildings.

### **Implementation Recommendations**

Consistent with Public Building Goals, Objectives and Policies, the following suggestions may translate into recommended action steps:

**Public Needs.** With build-out approaching, the nature of growth in Chandler will change, demographic shifts will occur along with continued special needs.

**Recommendation:** Respond to evolving public building and building utilization needs. Identify needed buildings and any deficiencies in geographic distribution that may exist across Chandler. Integrate compatible site design, architectural character and public art for public buildings with adjoining neighborhoods.

As new facilities are planned and existing facilities are improved, neighborhood compatibility is essential. Although efficient design in new buildings, retrofits in existing buildings and public art may require higher upfront capital investments, the resulting energy savings and contribution to improved living quality are significant.

**Accessibility, Safety and Efficiency.** While new facilities tend to excel, older buildings can have access and safety deficiencies. Ensuring safe, adequate access for all public building users is necessary.

### **Recommendations:**

Assess needs for and implement upgrades to existing building accessibility and safety features.

Employ cost-effective retrofits or upgrades to existing public buildings in order to improve water and energy efficiency. New buildings should be constructed to LEED Standards when feasible.

While the entire community shares the responsibility for conserving energy, new and existing City buildings need to provide building design leadership for Chandler by minimizing energy use and utilizing renewable energy sources when practical. The Energy Element further addresses Green Building Strategies.

**Schools.** In conjunction with community build-out, school facilities commonly transition to specialized, administrative or other uses. This evolution is an important part of the educational and training opportunities needed to support Chandler in the coming decades.

**Recommendation:** In cooperation with school districts, identify opportunities for shared-use facilities and special purpose use of underutilized school buildings.

**Library.** Distribution of libraries across Chandler has recently been improved; however, facilities continue to strive to meet evolving community needs. These buildings' importance as community activity centers is also underscored by the General Plan.

**Recommendation:** Improve access for all segments of the population to library resources including computing technology and digital information. Respond to specific information trends as resources permit. Provide public meeting and activity space within all library facilities.

The General Plan fully encourages the use of public buildings to be closely coordinated with evolving public service needs.