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Pinal Comprehensive Plan Available for Review

Arizona continues to grow, and much of this growth over the next 30 years will occur in Pinal County. The county has been working over the last 15 months to create the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. Arizona counties are required by state law to adopt comprehensive plans and the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, when adopted by the Board of Supervisors, will replace the 2001 Comprehensive Plan.

Almost 2,000 people participated in the 46 public events held to date and over 100 community leaders served on 8 different working groups providing their voice to craft the future vision and policies outlined in the Plan. All of the municipalities and Native American communities within Pinal participated in the process. The Plan is intended to reflect and honor the local jurisdictions' planning authority while ensuring a coordinated, regional effort. The County provided three key directives when embarking on this update process in 2007: *Preserve Open Spaces, Improve Mobility and Attract Living Wage Jobs*. The vision-based plan addresses these concepts and is now available for review on the project's website.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines how and where Pinal County should grow and develop over time. The Plan addresses where open space will be preserved, identifies locations for employment-related uses and residential areas, and designates where commercial or services should be located. The Plan strives to create robust and healthy communities, both physically and fiscally within Pinal County, by encouraging orderly development. The principles of smart growth and sustainability provide the framework for the Comprehensive Plan.

Fundamental to the Plan is the Pinal Vision. The Plan is a direct reflection of the Vision that Pinal residents, business owners, landowners, agency representatives, and stakeholders assisted in developing, reviewing, and fine-tuning. The seven vision components are chapters within the Plan, and used to organize the various Plan elements.

Sense of Community The Land Use and Growth Area elements are included within this chapter. Land Use provides guidance to how and where development should occur in Pinal County. It is intended to provide a balance between residential, commercial, and employment uses fostering a live, work, and play atmosphere. The Growth Area element identifies four different growth areas where the County will focus its efforts on planning for new development and infrastructure over the next ten years. Pinal's Growth Areas are: Gateway/Superstition Vistas, West Pinal, Red Rock, and Tri-Communities (along SR 77 corridor in southeastern Pinal County).

Mobility and Connectivity The Circulation element is within this chapter, and it outlines a safe and efficient transportation system that is directly tied to land uses. The Plan presents an integrated transportation system that will support Pinal County's multimodal approach. These modes include vehicular travel and transit options, including commuter and local systems of rail, pedestrian, and bicycle routes. The Plan identifies a potential future commercial airport and airport expansion area for employment uses in central Pinal.

Economic Sustainability In this chapter, the Economic Development element ensures that there is adequate land for Pinal County to develop as a major regional employment center, offering diverse business opportunities that expand the local economy and allow residents to have quality employment close to where they live. Over and over again Pinal citizens have said that they want to be sure that these jobs will be available in Pinal for their children and grandchildren. Pinal County lags significantly behind Pima and Maricopa Counties in jobs to population balance.

The new Draft Plan shows many new job centers. Some are located along a planned north-south freeway which will link Mesa with Florence and Coolidge before connecting to Interstate 10. There are also job centers planned throughout the County, typically in areas with good existing and planned transportation access. In total, the Plan identifies 39 mixed use activity centers that contain residential, office, medical, education, and general employment activities and targets an employment balance of 500 jobs to 1,000 population.

Open Space and Places The Open Space element is included in this chapter. The *Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan* was adopted by the Pinal County Board of Supervisors in 2007. Throughout the process, the protection of open spaces and access to trails and recreational opportunities was important to Pinal citizens. That Plan shows large swaths of land set aside as open space, as well as regional parks, wildlife corridors, and trails throughout the County. The new Plan strengthens this commitment by making open space an essential part of the overall land use planning effort.

Environmental Stewardship This chapter includes the Environmental Planning, Water Resources, and Energy elements. The Environmental Planning element strives to protect the environmental integrity that makes Pinal unique by fostering efficient use of resources. The Water Resources element ensures that the growing demand for water will continue to be met and the Energy element outlines how energy resources are allocated to support future land use patterns and energy conservation.

Healthy, Happy Residents This chapter includes the Housing and Cost of Development elements. The Housing element builds upon the recently completed *Pinal County Affordable Housing Plan* to ensure that Pinal can support a full range of quality housing and neighborhoods. The Cost of Development element identifies the various mechanisms allowed by law that can be used to fund and finance additional public services necessary to serve development.

Quality Educational Opportunities Unique to the Pinal Comprehensive Plan is the inclusion of an Education element. Quality educational opportunities were identified as critical to the long-term economic sustainability of Pinal as well as an important quality of life component.

The Draft Pinal County Comprehensive Plan is available on the project website www.PinalCountyPlan.com. In keeping with the sustainable ethic, Pinal County is striving to reduce paper, and thus, comments will be received via the website starting on Monday July 7th through an input form. Printed review copies of the Plan are also available at several locations; contact Ashlee Hanna at 520.866.6642 or ashlee.hanna@co.pinal.az.us for more information. There will be additional public outreach events held this summer before the formal public hearing process begins in fall 2008. These events will be announced soon. To receive information about these upcoming events, sign up to be included in the database on the project website www.PinalCountyPlan.com.

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