

Fountain Hills



Downtown Area Specific Plan

The Town of Fountain Hills

Downtown Area Specific Plan

Adopted
December 17, 2009

This Downtown Area Specific Plan is a direct descendant of the Downtown Vision Plan prepared by Swaback Partners in cooperation with the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Fountain Hills.

WELCOME



SWABACK PARTNERS pllc
Architecture • Planning • Interior Design



The Town of Fountain Hills

Downtown Area Specific Plan

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-40

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE DOWNTOWN FOUNTAIN HILLS AREA SPECIFIC PLAN.

WHEREAS, on September 17, 2009, the Mayor and Council of the Town of Fountain Hills (the "Town Council") approved the Downtown Fountain Hills Vision Plan (the "Downtown Vision Plan"); and

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires to adopt the Downtown Vision Plan as an Area Specific Plan as provided in ARIZ. REV. STAT. § 9-461.09, as amended, to be known as the "Downtown Fountain Hills Area Specific Plan" (the "Area Specific Plan"); and

WHEREAS, the proposed Area Specific Plan provides for appropriate land uses for the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Area Specific Plan satisfactorily addresses the issues of traffic circulation, adequacy of public utilities, transition to existing development, economic development, the preservation of open space and all of the elements of the Town's adopted General Plan; and

WHEREAS, notice of the public hearings on the proposed Area Specific Plan before the Planning and Zoning Commission (the "Commission") was provided in the Fountain Hills Times on November 4, 2009 and November 11, 2009; and

WHEREAS, notice of the public hearings on the proposed Area Specific Plan before the Town Council was provided in the Fountain Hills Times on November 18, 2009; and

WHEREAS, public hearings on the Area Specific Plan were held by the Commission on November 30, 2009 and December 10, 2009, and by the Town Council on December 17, 2009.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS as follows:

SECTION 1. The Area Specific Plan contained in file ASP2009-01, including narrative text that clarifies and supports modifications in land use and changes to the area shown on the Land Use Map, as described in Exhibits A and B, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby adopted.

SECTION 2. If any provision of this Resolution is for any reason held by any court of competent jurisdiction to be unenforceable, such provision or portion hereof shall be deemed separate, distinct and independent of all other provisions and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Resolution.

Analysis

SWOT Analysis

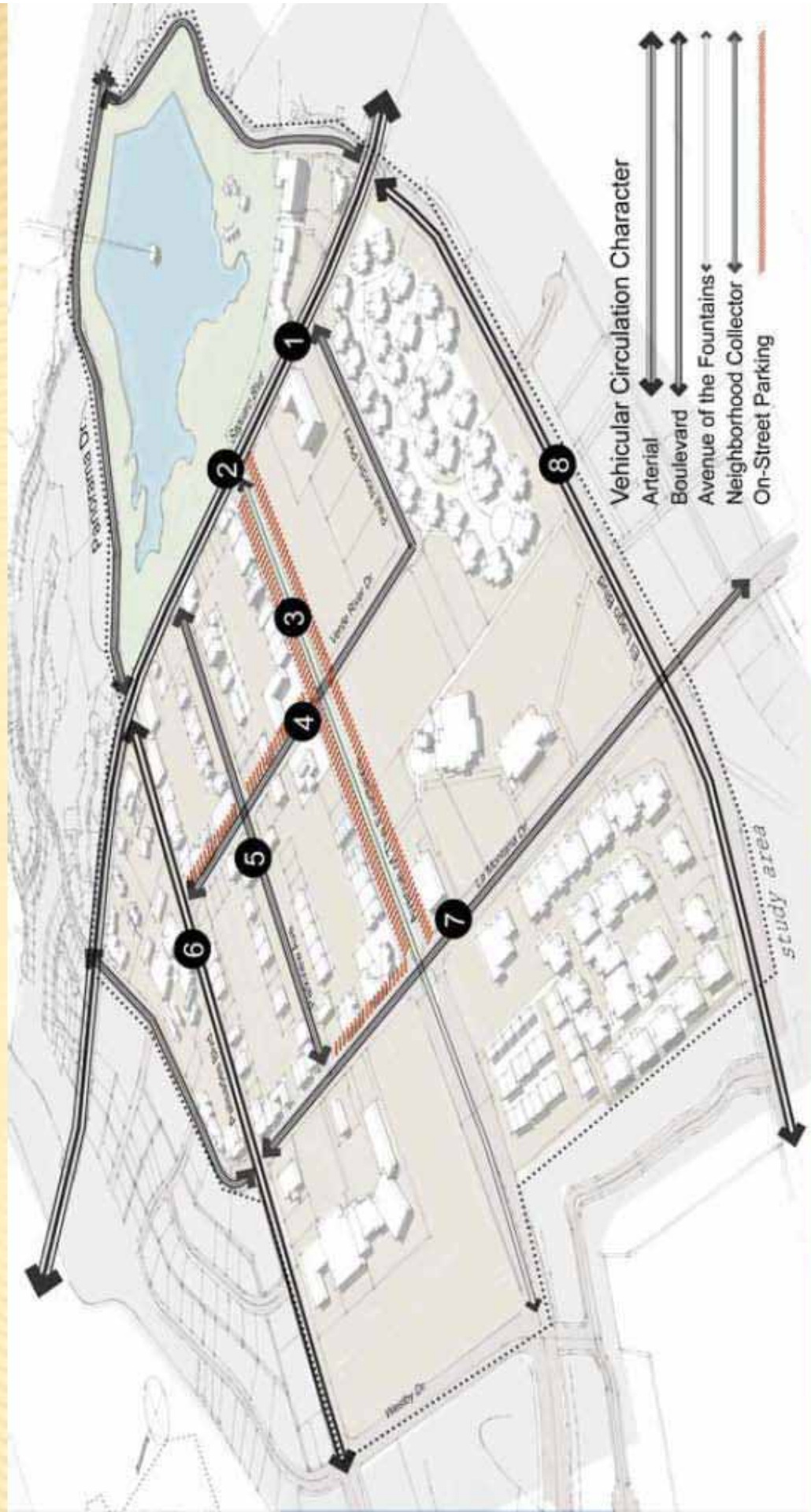
Strengths

- Scenic beauty
- Icon of “The Fountain”
- Outdoor recreational offerings
- Small town appeal
- Native American & southwest cultures
- Superb golf opportunities

Weaknesses

- Community dispersion
- Lacking desired depth of retail and restaurants
- Perception of being “Far Away”
- Difficult pedestrian access
- Town Center has unclear ultimate orientation
- Lack of current image/brand

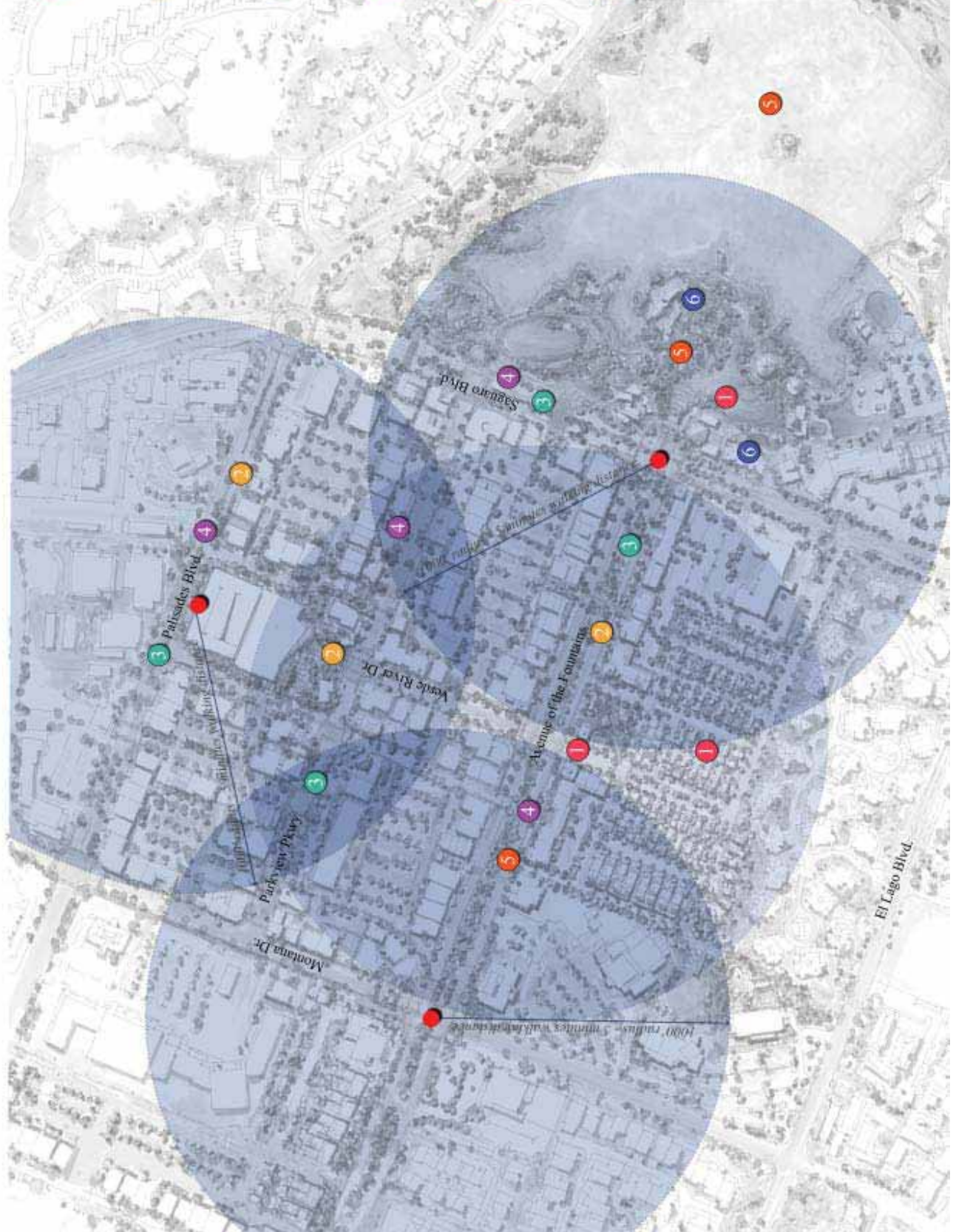
Traffic



Walking Distance

Key Ingredients

- 1 Compact Development**
 - How can we right-size downtown.
 - Connection to civic center
- 2 Integrated Mixed-Use**
 - How can we find the right mix of uses
 - No more auto uses
 - Bring visitors in
- 3 Green Streets**
 - Widen sidewalks
 - More landscaping
 - Outdoor activities
 - Boulevards
 - Places to sit
 - Appropriate trees
- 4 Friendly sidewalks**
 - Meandering sidewalks
 - Shorter blocks
 - Misters/Shade
 - Irrigating side areas
 - Places to seat
 - More artwork
- 5 Brand Identity**
 - Subtle place-making
 - More fountains
 - Subtle views of water
 - More art work
 - Fountain Replicas
 - Don't pretend
- 6 Destination Program**
 - Strategic Implementation
 - Funding
 - Public/Private phasing





Nine Districts

Districts



The Downtown Fountain Hills Vision Plan / Area Specific Plan is the product of months of research, staff reviews, Town Council reviews, focus groups, and public forums. The resulting vision plan that is now being proposed takes a comprehensive look at the entire downtown area and outlines a number of possible scenarios for both it's current and long-range development, vitality, and sustainability.

The Downtown Vision Plan /Area Specific Plan has been designed with the aim of developing a flexible and pro-active framework in which the Town can work on its own, or with future developers to create comprehensive design concepts that provide district themes, opportunities for events, environmental sensitivity, safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and recommended ordinance amendments.

Nine districts are fully outlined in the Area Specific Plan and described briefly below:

The Business District -

This will be the center of downtown commerce that promotes entrepreneurship through a variety of commerce related opportunities and business related uses.

The Avenue District -

The core of the downtown with a comfortable atmosphere for strolling, sight-seeing and shopping. This district will evolve into a premier shopping destination for residents and a must-visit magnet for visitors.

The South End District -

Envisioned as a mixed-use downtown residential neighborhood that is complimented with small neighbor-hood-oriented commercial, second story offices, and specialty shops. This district will contain a "village square" that will provide the downtown with a prominent park.

The Residential District -

This district is currently developed as condominiums and is a vital component in providing an infusion of people into the downtown area and enhancing the vitality and quality of the downtown experience.

~ **The West Side District -**

A true mixed-use district where residential infill as well as retail, offices, and services will be encouraged. This is also a possible location for a future large entertainment anchor.

The Civic District -

The current home of the Town Hall, Community Center, Library, and Museum. This district will be enhanced with future additional artwork and possibly infill development such as a community pool or similar uses that will enhance the quality of life for the town residents and visitors.

The Service District -

This is an existing commercial area and the current location of Fountain Hills Plaza (aka Basha's Plaza). Community oriented businesses in this area will be maintained as an important component of the downtown and the community as a whole.

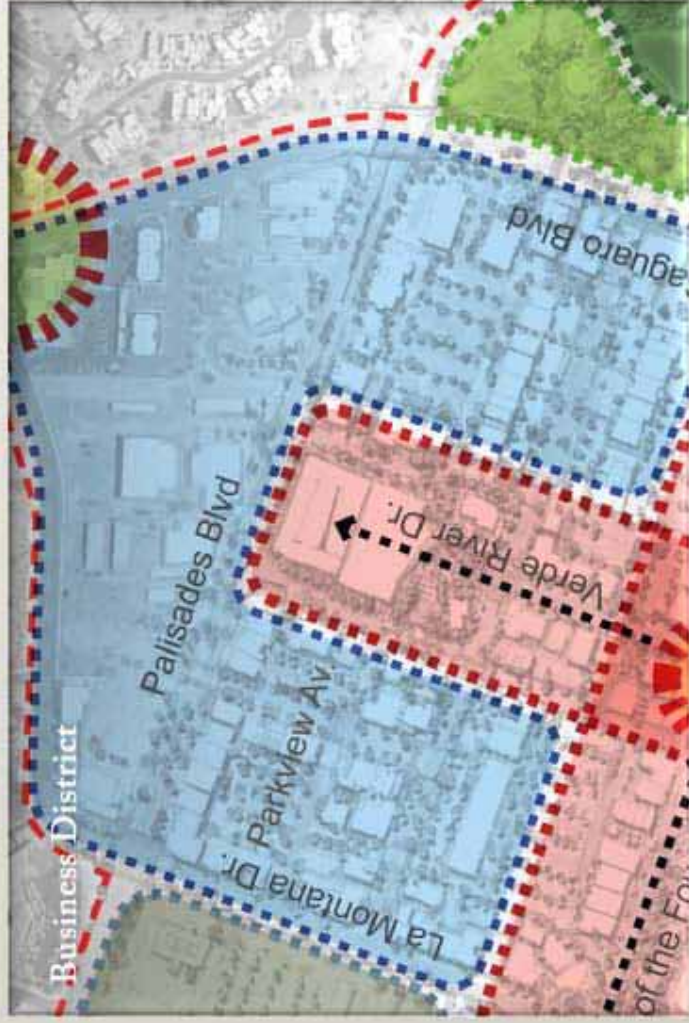
The Lakeside District -

Provides a dynamic transformation of a portion of the existing Fountain Park. This district will become a unique, amenity-oriented open space environment with a prominent performance venue and the possibility of some specialty retail shops, café's, and other appropriately sized businesses.

The Park District -

The majority of Fountain Park will remain as it is. Potential improvements include more trees, decorative park lighting, seating areas, signage, and park furnishings. The park will remain as a primarily passive recreational area.

Each district will have its own unique character and yet each district will also blend harmoniously with the other downtown districts to create the "Downtown Vision" . The Downtown Vision gives the Fountain Hills downtown it's unique character and appeal while providing for an invigorated business climate as well as an increased quality of life for the town residents and visitors.



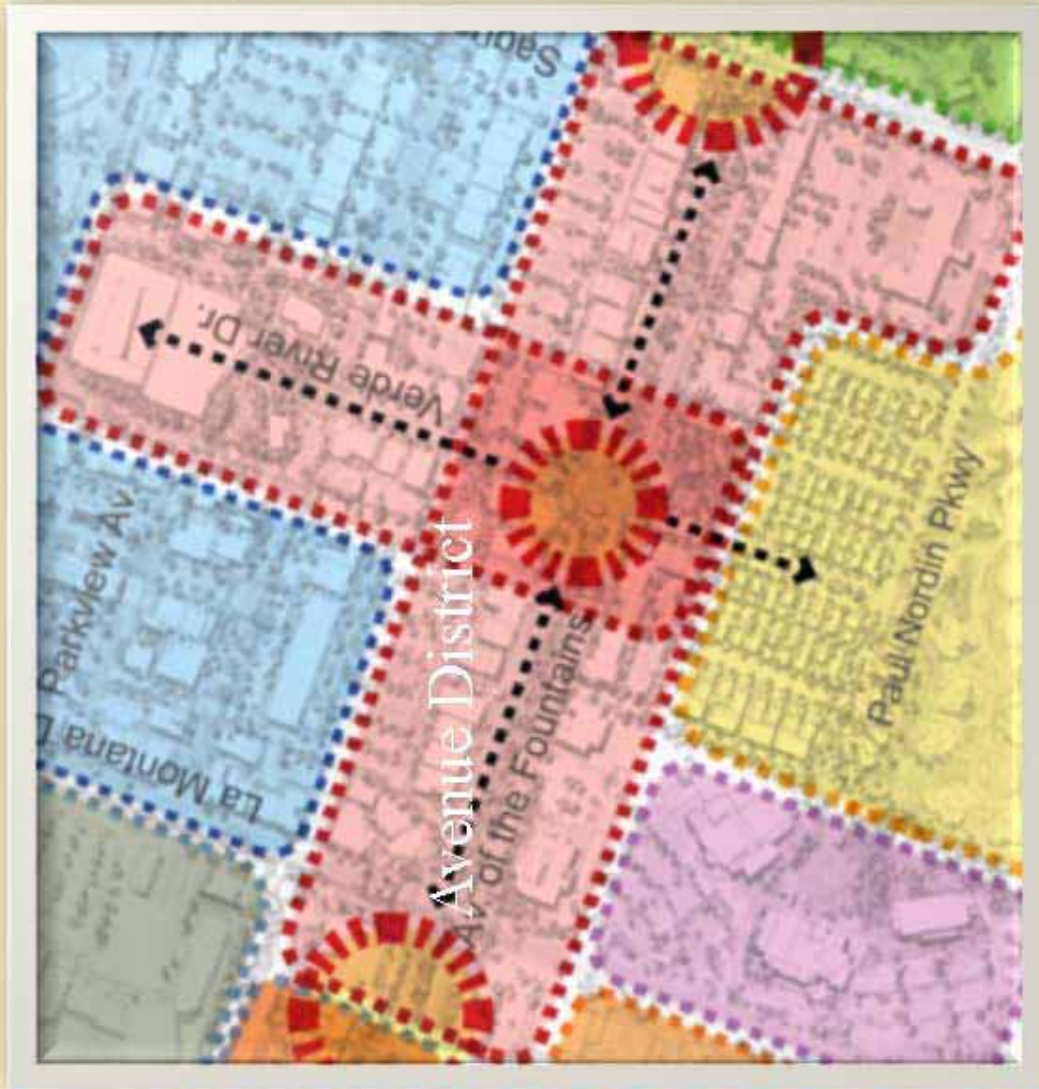
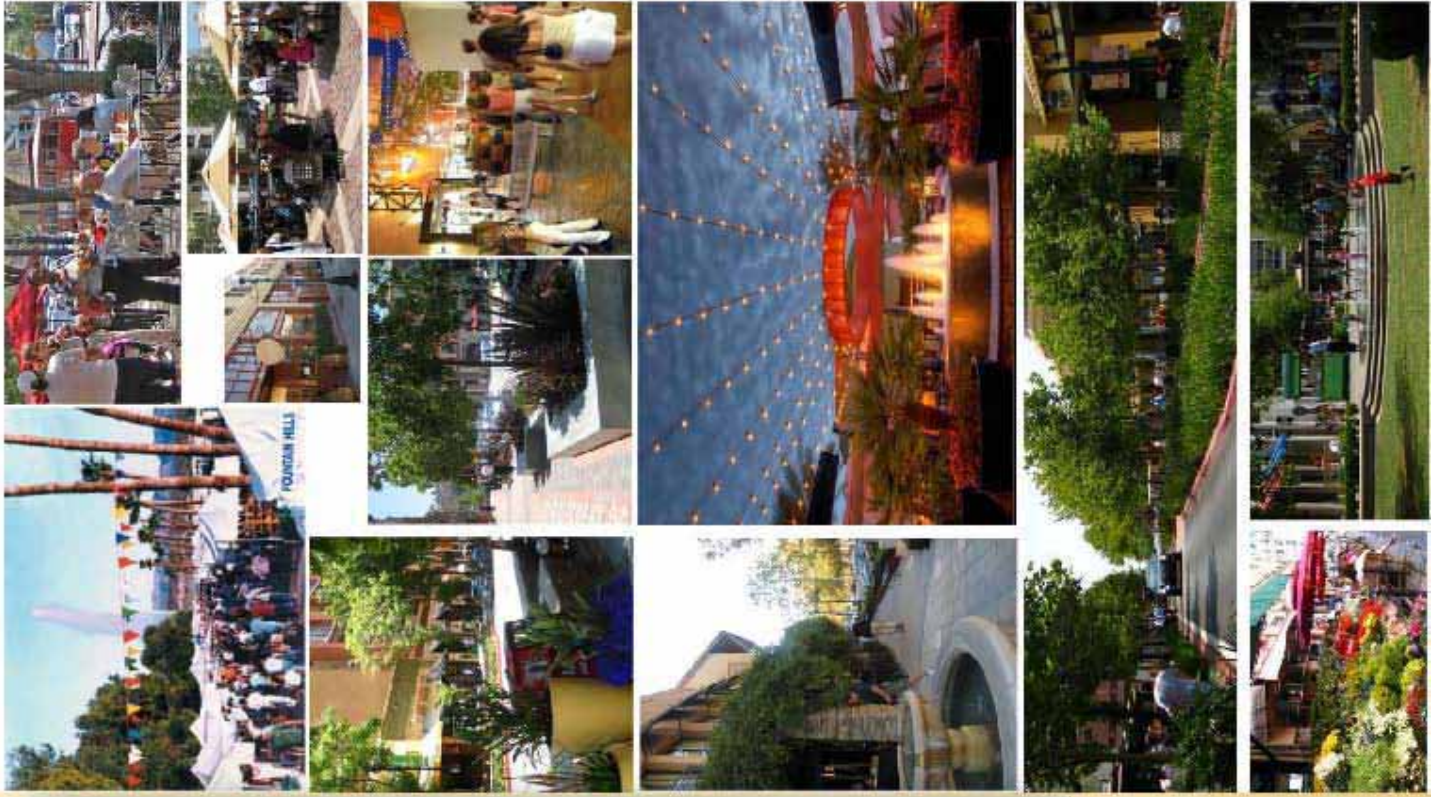
- Center of Downtown Commerce
- Promotes Entrepreneurship
- A Variety of Commerce Opportunities & Business Uses

Business District: The Business District is envisioned as the center of commerce for Fountain Hills. The Business District is a place to promote entrepreneurship through a variety of commerce related opportunities. Business oriented uses may range in size, shape and character from small-scale office suites to stand-alone office buildings. Service oriented commercial uses may also be a major component of the Business District that can complement the overall downtown. The Business District is also suitable for more traditional retail and service uses that may not as appropriate in other districts.

While generous shaded store front sidewalks will not be a mandate in this district; safe, attractive and functional pedestrian connections should be put in place in order to connect the Business District with all other parts of the downtown. It will be critical to provide clear and easily accessible areas for both on-street parking and off-street parking lots. Special attention should be given to the treatment of parking areas including attractive landscape buffers and covered parking where appropriate. Future consideration should also be given to the incorporation of a central parking structure that may serve the Business District as well as other areas of downtown.

Creative opportunities for redevelopment of existing parcels should be considered with future mixed-use environments that may include live-work scenarios. Short-term initiatives should be considered for improving the visual character of vacant lots with landscape treatments.





- Core of the Downtown
- Comfortable Atmosphere
- Shopping Destination
- "MUST VISIT" Magnet for Visitors

The Avenue District: The Avenue District is envisioned as the core of the downtown with a wonderful and comfortable atmosphere for strolling, sight-seeing and shopping. This corridor is designed to evolve into Fountain Hills' premier shopping destination for residents and a "must-see" magnet for visitors. A variety of unique eating experiences that reinforce the one-of-a-kind nature of Fountain Hills is intended to compliment the range of specialty shops and boutique stores. These restaurants will be of a quality that not only caters to local residents but also attracts the attention of visitors and guests. The Avenue District is designed to accommodate a degree of other uses including second story office space, condominiums and small-scale businesses along with limited neighborhood services. If designed appropriately, a small percentage of brownstone style housing could be integrated into The Avenue District. Traffic calming measures such as crosswalks, additional on-street parking, and narrower travel lanes are planned to provide easy and safe access to all areas of the downtown for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Special attention should be given to creating sidewalks with an abundance of shade. Sidewalk design should allow for generous space for seating as well as storefront "presentations". Outdoor sidewalk cafés and dining will be highly encouraged.

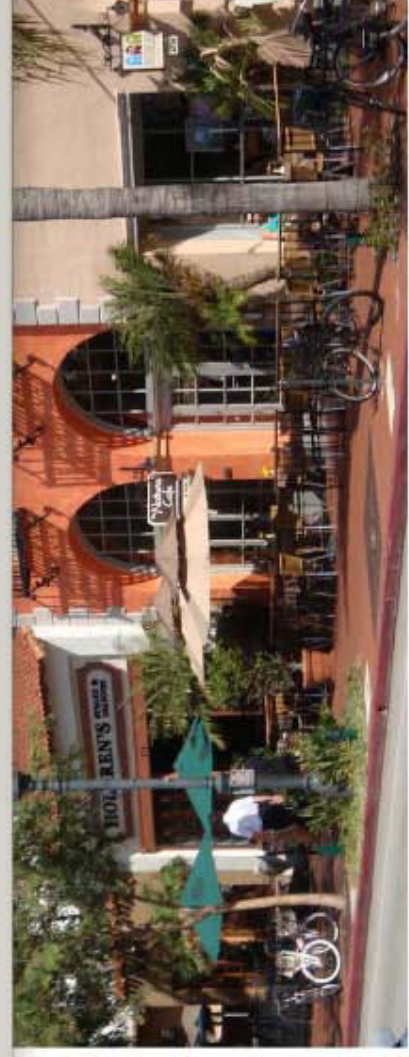
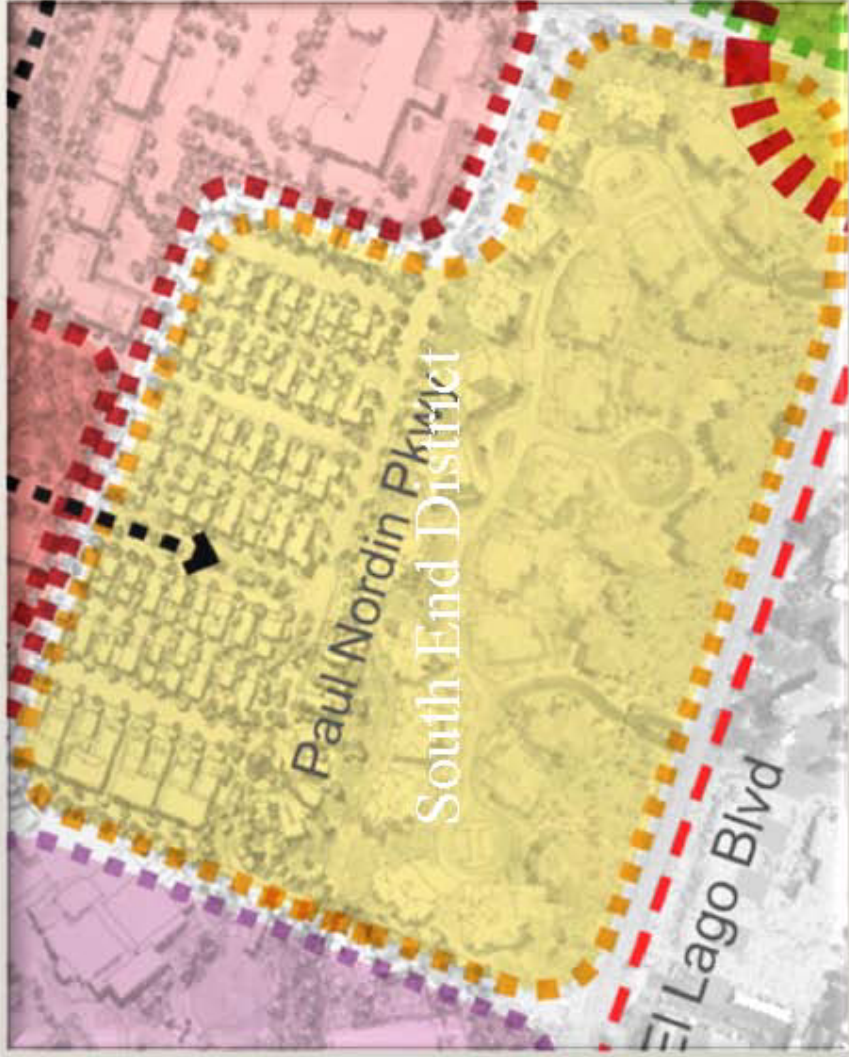
On-street parking needs to be convenient and balanced with a real focus being placed on pedestrian activity. Access to parking lots should be efficient for patrons. Pedestrian portals to "interior" parking lots will be enhanced with appropriate architecture and design treatments that are both attractive and safe.

Special attention should also be given to the architectural massing and specific treatment along all intersections. Appropriately designed street scenes at intersections will bring building mass and uses closer to the street corners. Placing parking behind the building frontages will also help.

The Avenue District character and quality should be expanded to include both sides of Verde River Drive northeast of The Avenue of the Fountains. This linkage and treatment may be anchored by a specialty entertainment and retail component if future economic conditions warrant greater density and intensity in the area. This entertainment component may take the form of a traditional multi-screen movie theatre, a specialty small-scale movie house, a performance venue, or some other theatre use. These uses would likely require that a parking structure be thoughtfully integrated into the overall design.

The central green mall will be enhanced with a better integration of updated fountain features and amenities (Art Walk) as well as specialty small-scale retail uses that may take the form of enclosed kiosks. Such features, along with improved sidewalk crossing environments will result in a seamless transition from one side of the Avenue of the Fountains to the other. This connectivity from The Avenue District to The Lakeside District is a most important consideration.

- Small Neighborhood Oriented Businesses
- Mixed-Use Residential
- 2nd Story Offices
- Specialty Shops
- A "Village Square" Park



South End District: The South End District is envisioned as a mixed-use downtown neighborhood with a predominance of residential living opportunities. These residential uses should be complimented by small-scale neighborhood oriented commercial, second story offices, and other specialty shops and businesses. The Area Specific Plan calls for The South End District to be anchored by an iconic village square that will provide a civic presence for the downtown and a prominent park for neighboring residents.

Residential development is intended to incorporate an active street front with parking and garages strategically located to the rear of lots with access from alleys. The range of residential products may include single-family detached homes, townhomes, brownstones, row homes, condominiums and apartments. The fabric of the neighborhood should be complimented with small streets, comfortable sidewalks, generous street trees for shade, on-street parking, and pocket parks that provide strategic open space for adjacent development.



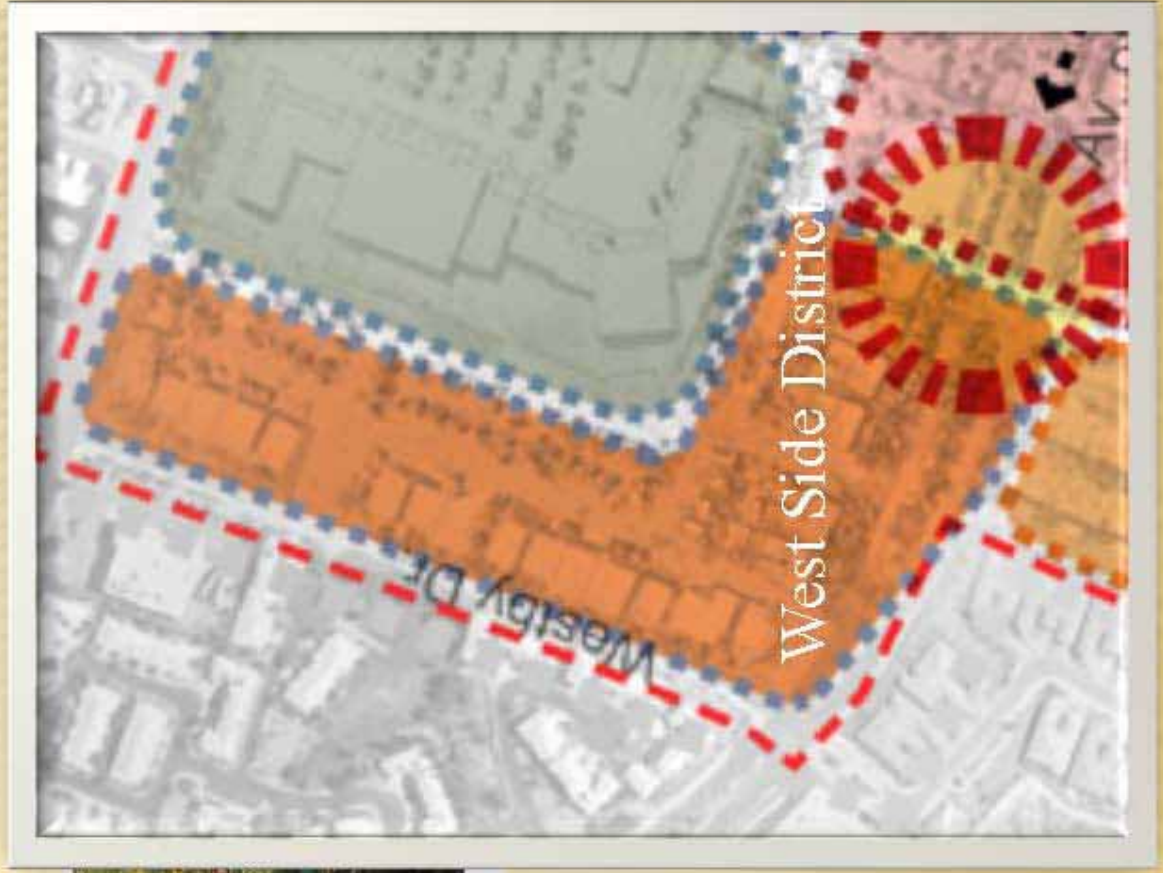


- Condominium Developments
- Provides a Resident Population for the Downtown Area



Residential District - The Residential District is on the west side of La Montana Dr. This district is currently fully developed with multi-family dwellings. The Residential District provides a population base for the downtown area.





- A True Mixed-Use District
- Possible Location for a Future Large Entertainment Anchor

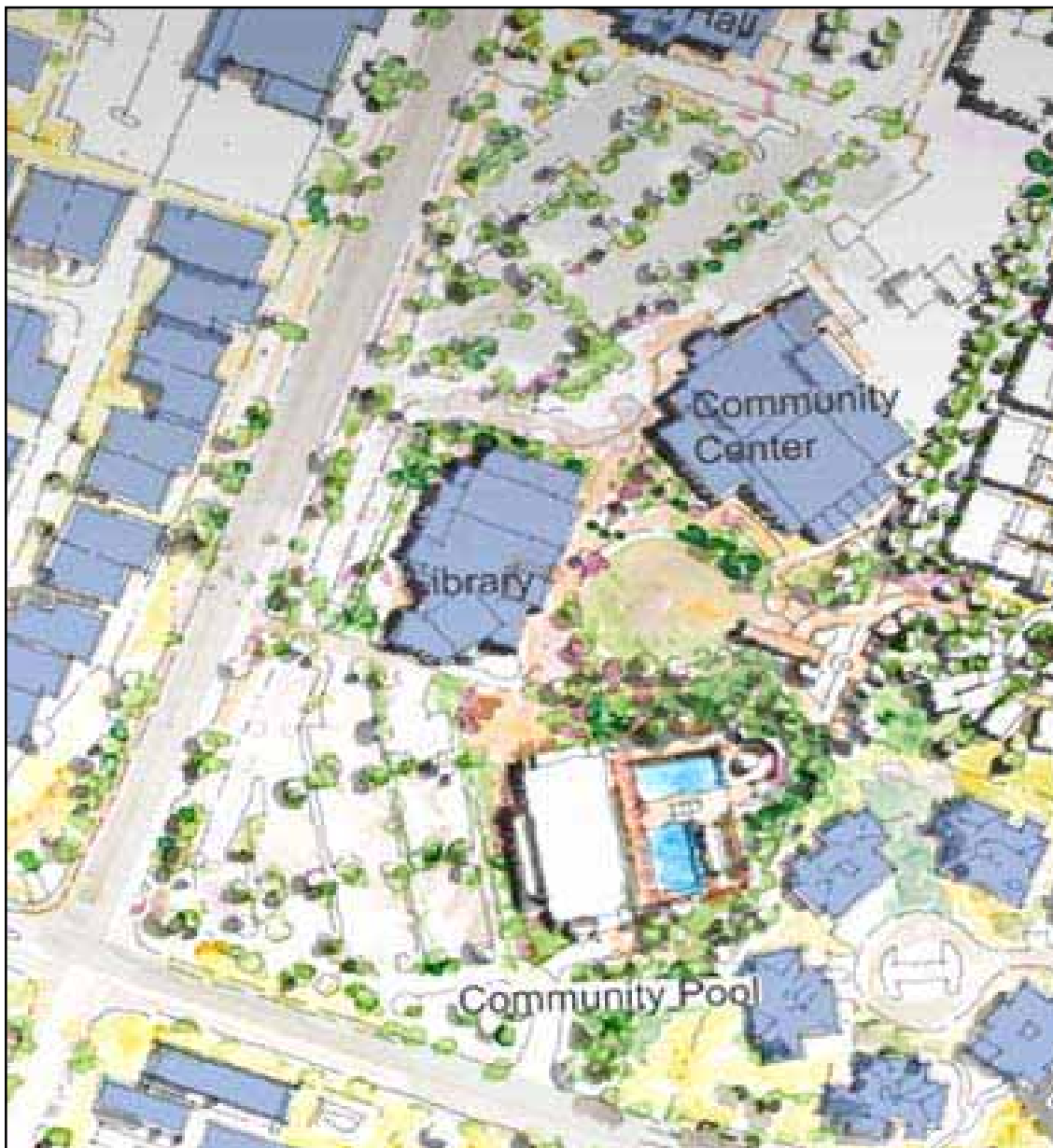
West Side District: The currently vacant West Side District is envisioned as a true mixed-use environment that compliments the range of activities throughout the downtown. Residential infill as well as retail, business and service uses will be encouraged. Because of its location at the western “end” of the Avenue of the Fountains, a future possible consideration may be for an entertainment anchor.



- Current Home of Town Hall, Community Center, Library & Museum
- Possible Future Location of other Community Resources such as a Pool

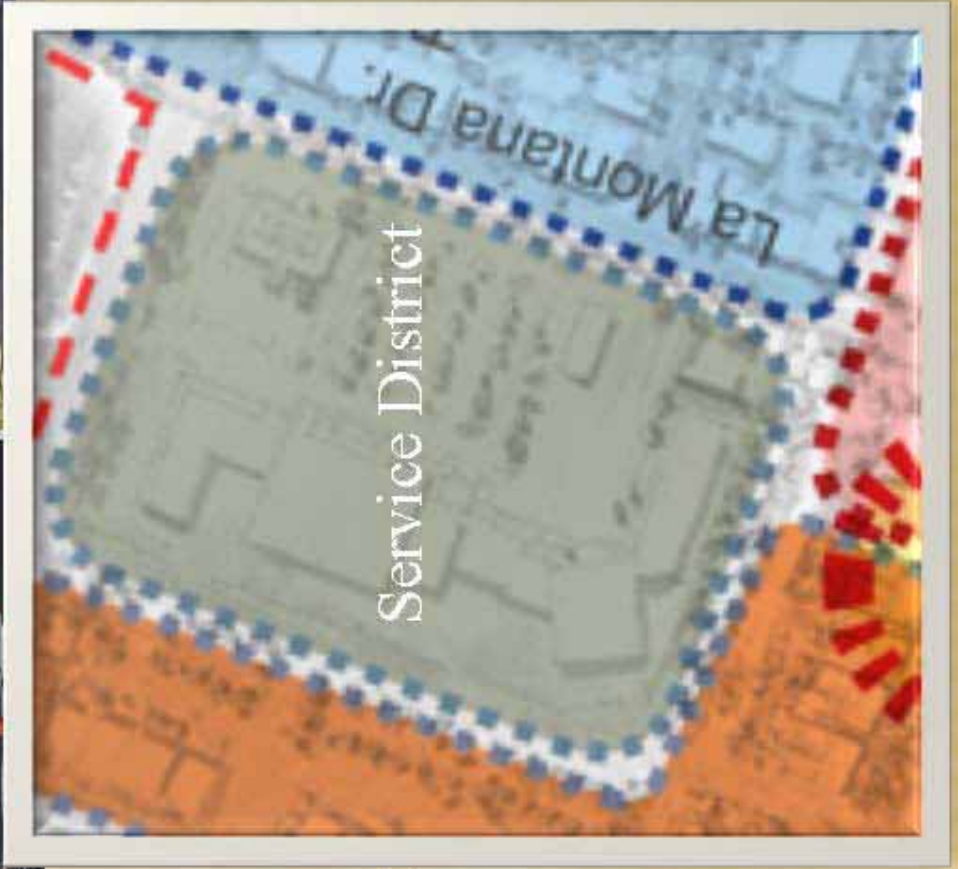


Civic / Cultural District: The existing character and quality of the Civic / Cultural District should be enhanced with future infill development that expands overall quality of life opportunities for the residents of Fountain Hills. In addition, any opportunity to expand access and acclaim to the Art Circle and public art collection in and around the district is highly encouraged. The strategy for an art walk could be creatively connected with The Avenue District and the variety of planned design themes.



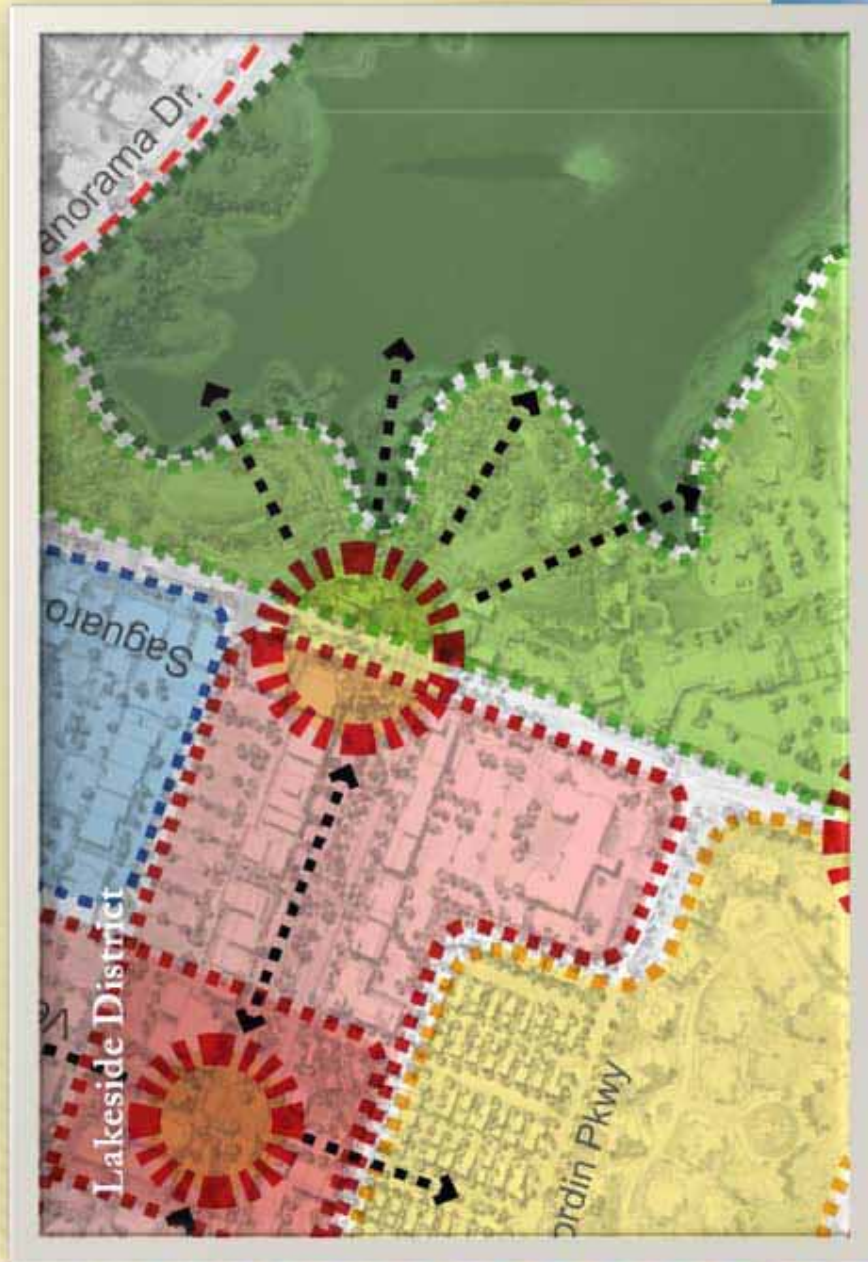


- Existing Commercial Plaza (Bashas)
- Community Oriented Businesses
- Important Component of the Downtown and Community as a Whole

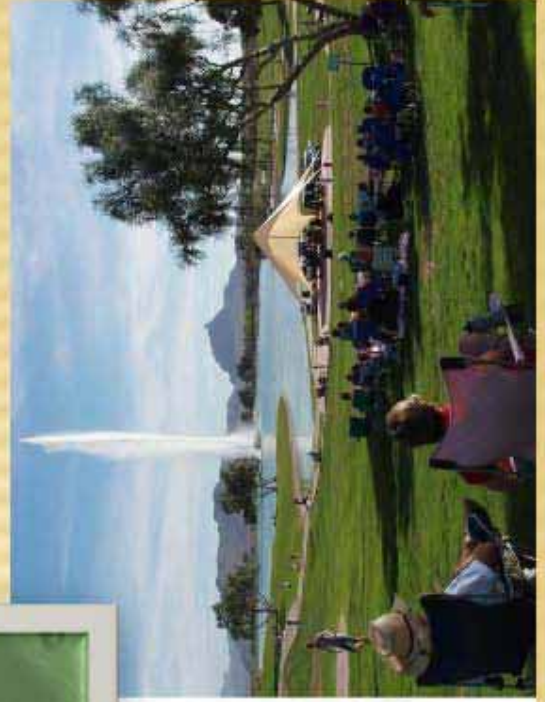


Service District: The existing community/neighborhood-oriented service businesses found in the existing shopping center should be maintained as an important component serving downtown and the community. Better opportunities will be considered for providing safe and attractive pedestrian connectivity to the market. Special consideration needs to be given to appropriate buffering and access related to any future development opportunities at the adjacent West Side District.





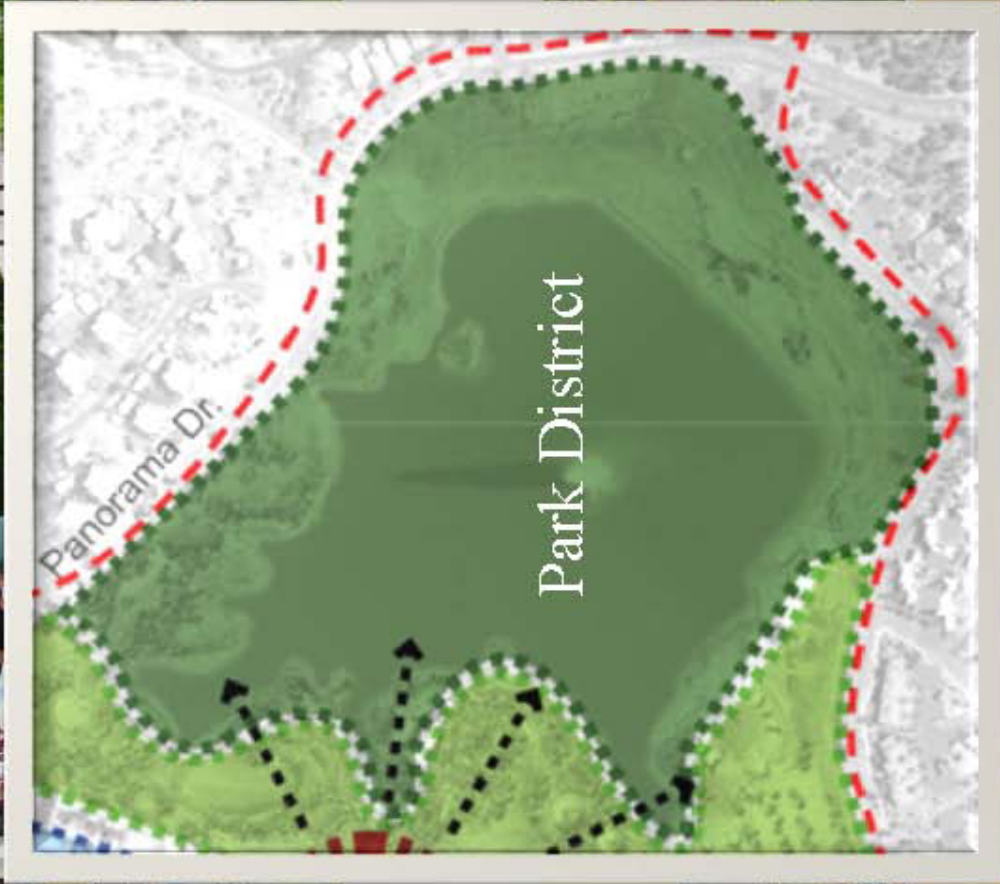
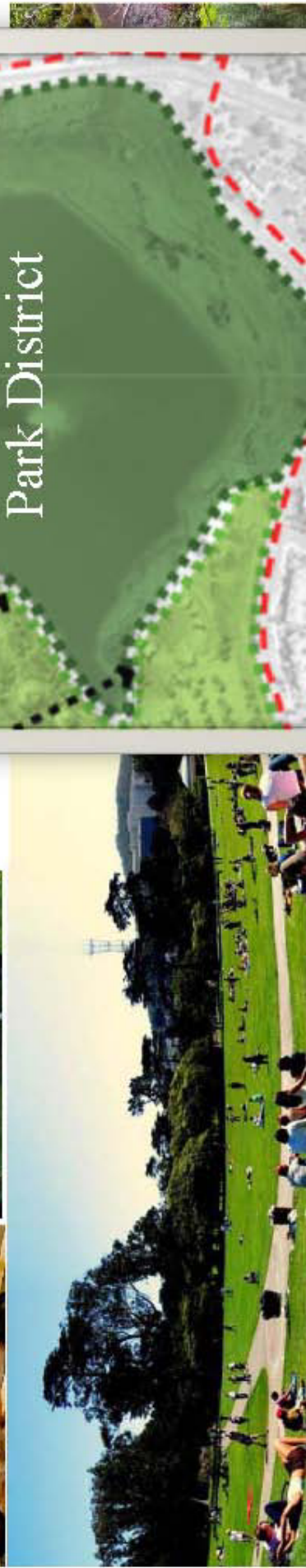
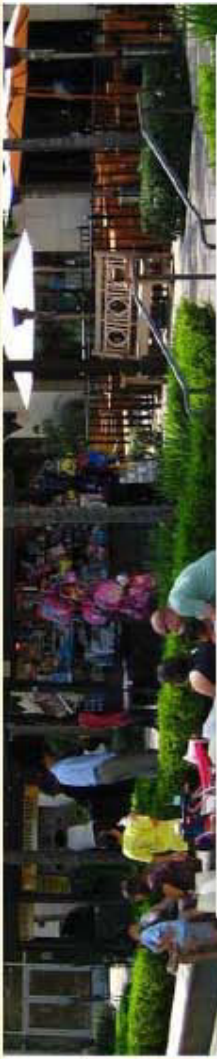
- Dynamic Transformation
- Amenity Oriented
- Public Open Space
- Performance Venue
- Small Specialty Shops, Retail & Cafés



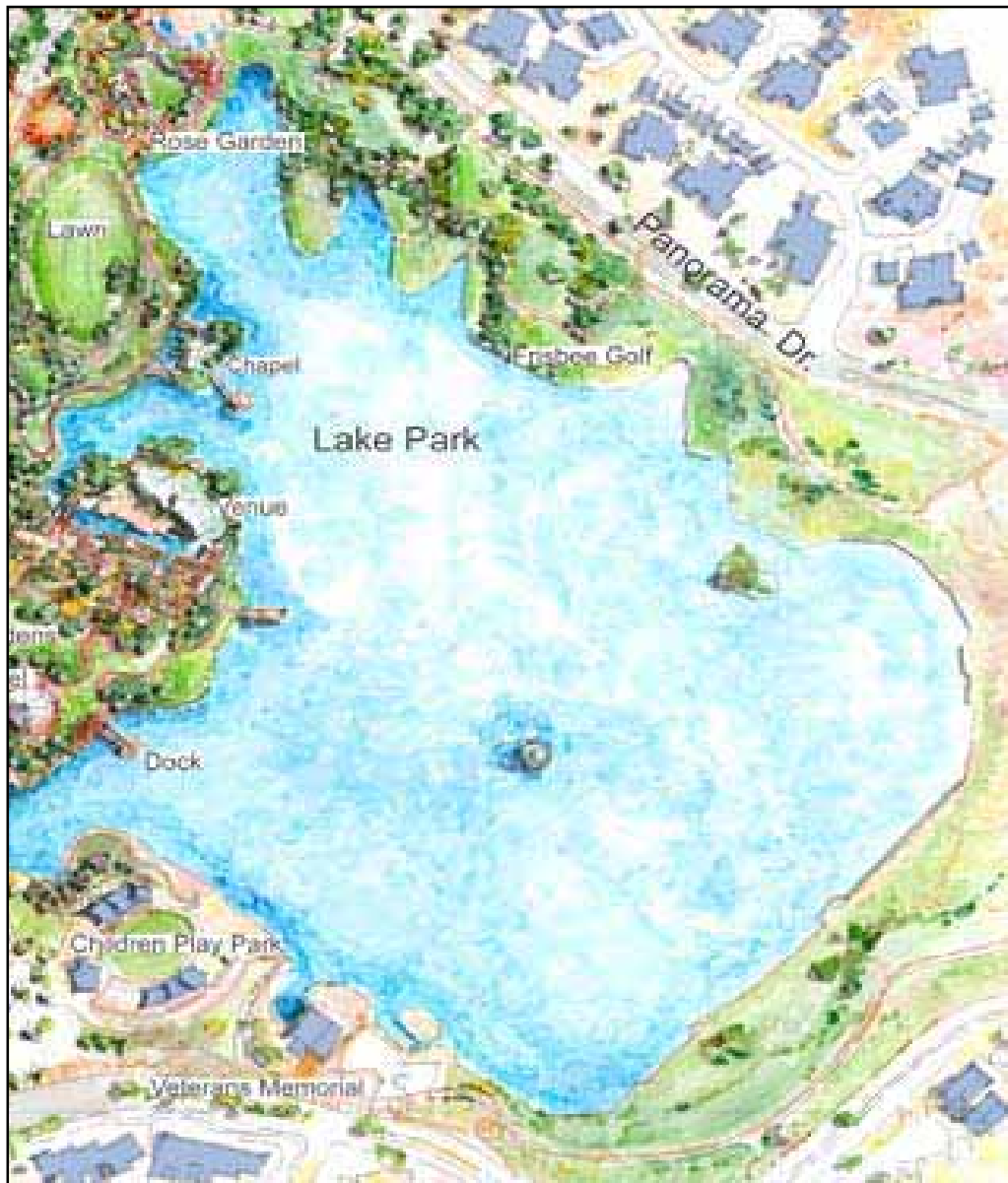


The Lakeside District: The Lakeside District provides a dynamic vision for the transformation of a small portion of Fountain Park into a unique amenity-oriented open space environment with a prominent performance venue and a range of potential uses including specialty retail shops, lakeside cafes and other appropriately sized businesses. Parking will be thoughtfully integrated into the design of this district. The “garden terrace” amphitheatre and “great lawn” envisioned for the venue will provide a beautiful setting that works well for both large and small groups. The vision also suggests a possible location for a future welcome center to greet visitors. The potential center’s strategic location, close to the intersection of Saguaro Boulevard and The Avenue of the Fountains, will allow for easy accessibility to downtown maps and other information about Fountain Hills. The organization of The Lakeside District provides a framework for creating a key connection from The Avenue of the Fountains to Fountain Park. Proposed improvements along Saguaro Boulevard should consider on-street parking, improved and expanded sidewalks, and a limited amount of street-front development to re-enforce the pedestrian connectivity throughout the downtown.

The Lakeside District is conceived to offer an abundance of shade so that the area can be utilized year round. Building orientation, design, covered patios, shade structures and trees should all be carefully incorporated to provide comfort from the desert sun. The proposed “1,000 Tree Program” for downtown should be incorporated into both The Lakeside District and The Park District. Other special features to consider in the future may include an “Art Park” component for sculpture, a waterside dock for small boating access, and other unique activities.



- Majority to Remain as Passive Recreation
- More Amenities such as Trees, Lighting, Seating, Signage, & Other Furnishings



Park District: The majority of Fountain Park is anticipated to remain in its current form including the range of passive uses that already exist. In addition, more shade structures and tree planting (1,000 Tree Program) should be incorporated to provide relief from the harsh summer desert exposure. Additional future improvements to consider are; site lighting, signage, seating areas, park furnishings and the treatment of the lake.

The Greening of Downtown







Street Improvements



3. The Business Corridor



While the Vision Framework Plan provides a snapshot in time of a single preferred scenario for development, it is important that flexibility remains within the context of any future initiatives. No one has a crystal ball with all the answers to future economic factors, conditions and direction; the Town needs to be able to react to possible alternatives in the Vision direction that may impact the physical organization of downtown without negatively impacting the desired outcome. Two specific examples of areas that need to be carefully considered in the future relative to flexibility are the potential for a downtown theatre and a downtown parking structure.

Theatre

The Vision plan suggests one potential location for a theatre for the downtown. This suggestion would work very well with the overall design and planning direction for downtown. There are however, certainly other options and opportunities for the exact location of the theatre. The Flexibility Diagram identifies several other potential locations for the theatre in downtown. Any of these defined locations could have a positive impact on the downtown development.

Structured Parking

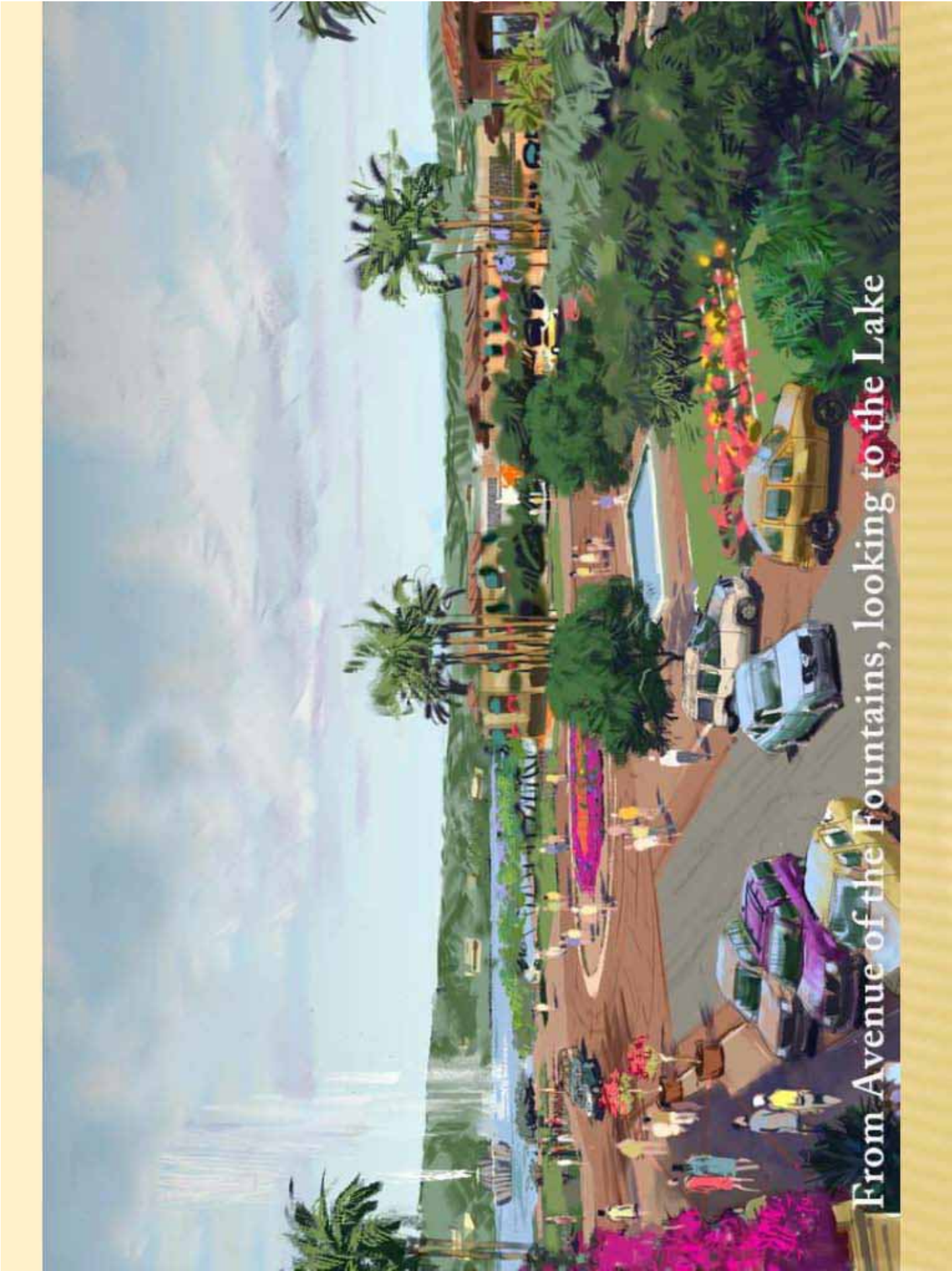
Based on future development in downtown, a parking structure would most likely be necessary at some point in the future. The vision plan identifies a proposed parking structure adjacent to the planned theatre complex. While this recommendation makes a great deal of sense, there are other potential locations for a parking structure as identified on the Flexibility Diagram. In most cases, a parking structure would most likely be associated with the theatre, but organized to allow use for all of downtown. The key for any preferred eventual location for a parking structure is to maximize its accessibility for all who come downtown.



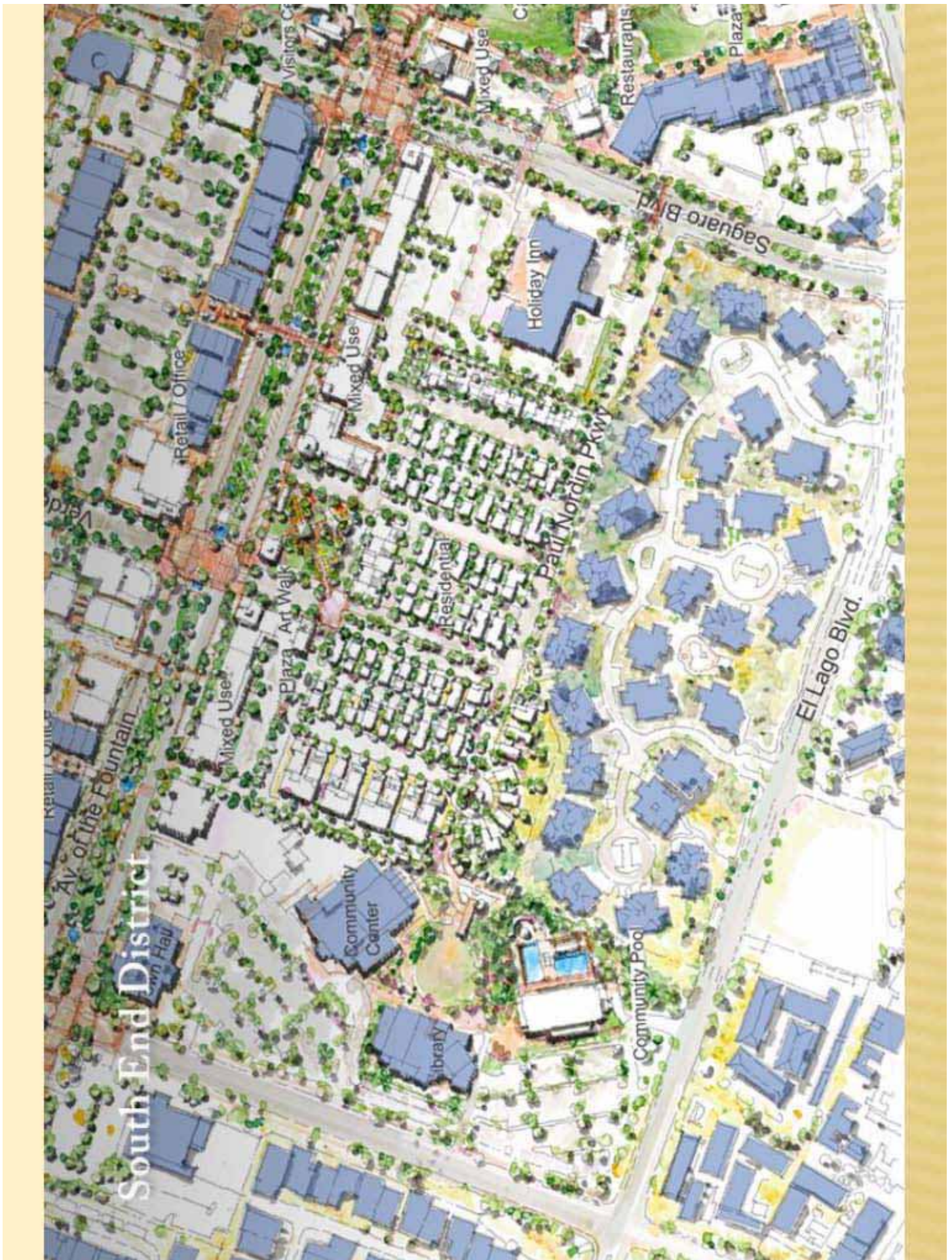
Summary

The Downtown Vision Plan has been designed with the aim of developing a flexible and pro-active framework in which the town can work on its own, or with developers to create a vibrant, safe, and successful downtown. Each district outlined in this vision plan will have its own unique character while still blending with the other districts in the downtown area to provide many benefits including:

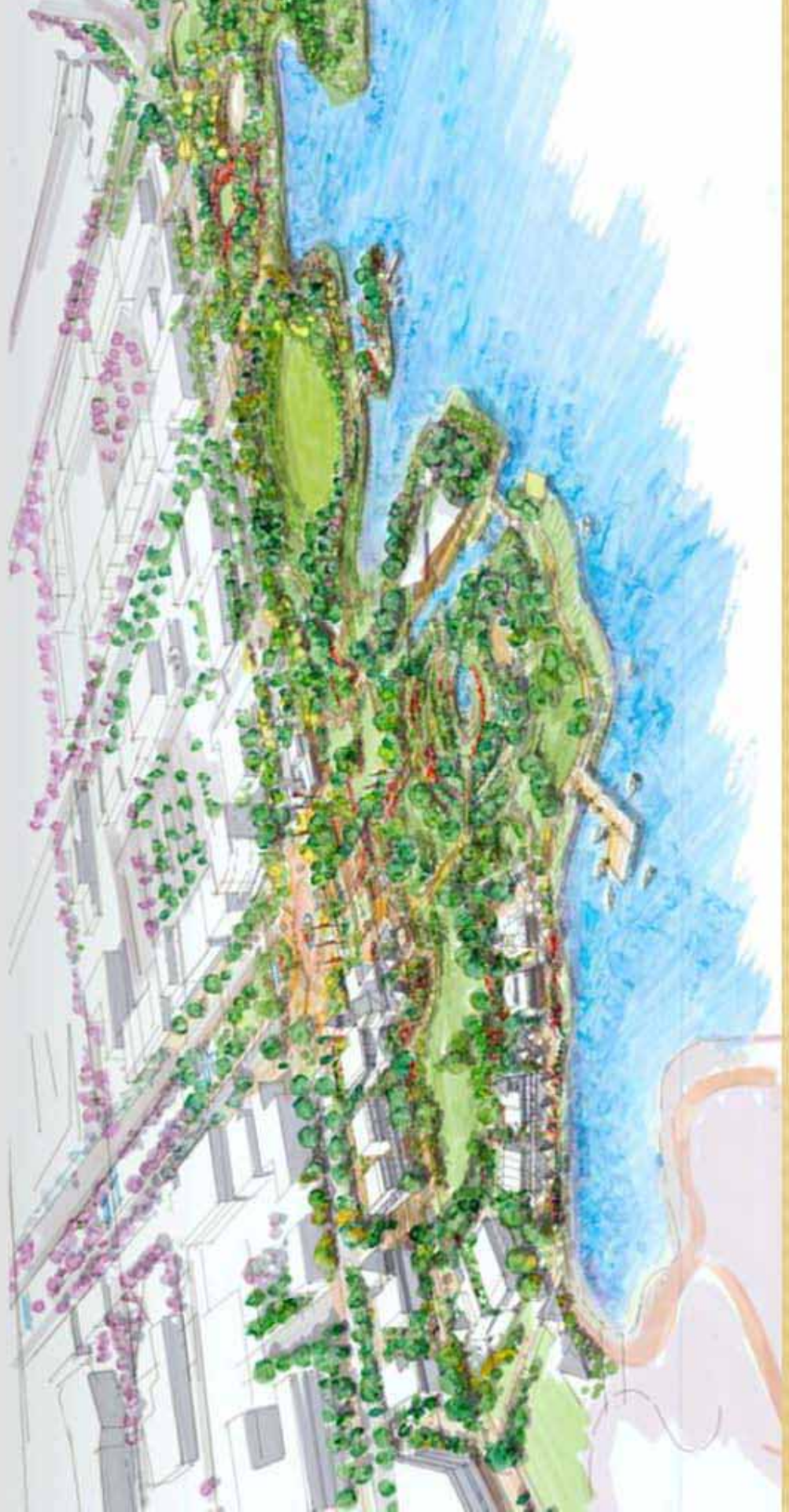
- Allows the Town to take a more precise approach to targeting specific development types and identifying specific locations for the developments.
- A Guide for developers who have done similar projects and Outlines the desires of the Town and its residents.
- Assists in developing a specific outreach package to engage developers and businesses and encourage them to have a Fountain Hills presence.
- Creates an invigorated atmosphere that attracts both local and out of town customers to the area and helps our local businesses succeed.
- Enhances the quality of life for the town residents as well as attracting new visitors.



From Avenue of the Fountains, looking to the Lake



Lakeside District



An aerial photograph of the Lake Park area in San Antonio. The image shows a large body of water, Lake Park, in the lower-left quadrant. Surrounding the lake are various residential and commercial developments. Key streets visible include El Paso Blvd, Saguaro Blvd, and Panola Dr. The area is characterized by a mix of housing styles, from small single-family homes to larger commercial buildings. The overall scene depicts a vibrant, developed urban neighborhood.

