

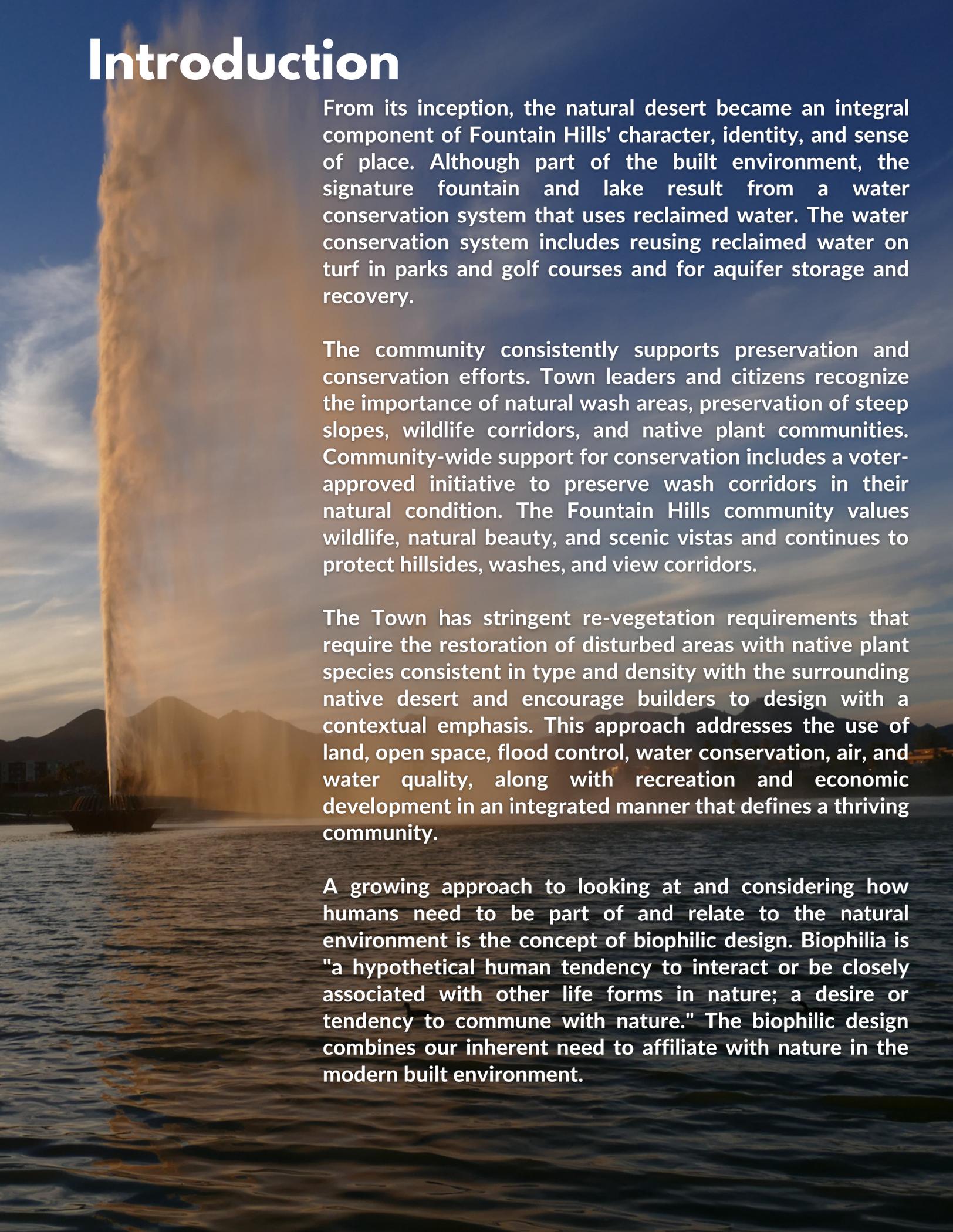


# TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2022

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# Introduction



From its inception, the natural desert became an integral component of Fountain Hills' character, identity, and sense of place. Although part of the built environment, the signature fountain and lake result from a water conservation system that uses reclaimed water. The water conservation system includes reusing reclaimed water on turf in parks and golf courses and for aquifer storage and recovery.

The community consistently supports preservation and conservation efforts. Town leaders and citizens recognize the importance of natural wash areas, preservation of steep slopes, wildlife corridors, and native plant communities. Community-wide support for conservation includes a voter-approved initiative to preserve wash corridors in their natural condition. The Fountain Hills community values wildlife, natural beauty, and scenic vistas and continues to protect hillsides, washes, and view corridors.

The Town has stringent re-vegetation requirements that require the restoration of disturbed areas with native plant species consistent in type and density with the surrounding native desert and encourage builders to design with a contextual emphasis. This approach addresses the use of land, open space, flood control, water conservation, air, and water quality, along with recreation and economic development in an integrated manner that defines a thriving community.

A growing approach to looking at and considering how humans need to be part of and relate to the natural environment is the concept of biophilic design. Biophilia is "a hypothetical human tendency to interact or be closely associated with other life forms in nature; a desire or tendency to commune with nature." The biophilic design combines our inherent need to affiliate with nature in the modern built environment.

# Environmental Plan

The Fountain Hills General Plan 2020, adopted by the Town Council and voters in 2020, contains goals, policies, and action items related to maintaining the environment in Fountain Hills. This Environmental Plan pulls the information and elements of that Plan into one readable document. This Town of Fountain Hills Environmental Plan 2022 summarizes the vital environmental factors, followed by the details contained in the General Plan.

Fountain Hills is a town developed within the natural Sonoran Desert that provides a high quality of life to those who want to live in natural settings with great views, night skies, wildlife habitats, and outstanding recreational amenities. The Town seeks to provide a healthy living environment that residents and visitors can readily enjoy. To that end, the goals, policies, and actions of the General Plan, as contained in the Town of Fountain Hills Environmental Plan 2022, are:

- Continue to provide guardianship and stewardship of the natural desert by:
  - Implementing existing ordinances, policies, and practices that limit disturbance of natural areas.
  - Developing educational materials to encourage use of trails and discourage the off-trail activities.
  - Protecting our dark skies.
  - Embracing environmental initiatives with neighboring communities, the County, State, and Federal governments.
  - Encouraging water conservation.
  - Developing strategies for preserving or restoring predevelopment flow of water.
- Provide and maintain an open space network throughout the community and beyond by:
  - Protecting washes and providing wildlife corridors.
  - Continuing to support unpaved trails in the Town that provide connectivity to the surrounding desert.
  - Updating and providing maps and information on the trails.
- Identifying and preserving historical and archaeological resources.
- Promoting programs that encourage environmentally-friendly alternatives and improve air quality by:
  - Utilizing native, drought-tolerant landscapes that eliminate use of gasoline-powered landscape equipment.
  - Providing for and encouraging bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the Town.
- Support waste reduction programs and proper management of hazardous waste.
- Incorporating biophilic design goals and principles into Town practices and development within the community.

# Guiding Principles

Continue to preserve and conserve the natural desert, support open space, identify and protect historical and archaeological resources, and develop and implement programs and policies that encourage water and energy conservation and reduce water and air pollution.

**GOAL 1: Continue to promote the vigilance and guardianship of the natural desert.**

## POLICIES

*Continue to support the following Town policies:*

1. Require all newly platted or re-platted hillside properties to provide a Hillside Protection Easement for each parcel as required by ordinance;
2. Identify where appropriate trails should be located per the direction provided in the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Map and the Social Environment goals and policies and develop public educational materials to discourage off-trail use and protect wildlife habitat and vegetation;
3. Discourage un-permitted grading or dumping and require re-vegetation for violators;
4. Encourage redevelopment, revitalization, and rehabilitation to reduce land consumption;
5. Continually update the approved low-water use plant list to ensure that all plants on the list are suitable for the community;
6. Continually protect dark skies; and
7. Update the Land Disturbance Regulations when appropriate.

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Continue to enforce and update all applicable ordinances, including Land Disturbance Regulations, to conserve the natural desert, protect open space, hillsides, unpaved trails, wild habitats, and dark skies, and encourage low-water-use, drought-tolerant landscapes
2. Require observance of all applicable requirements through the Development Review Process.

## ***GOAL 2: Provide and maintain an open space network throughout the community.***

### **POLICIES**

- 1. Continue to protect the existing natural washes within the platted portions of the community as permanent natural desert open spaces.**
- 2. Continue to identify and evaluate all wash/wildlife corridors in unsubdivided areas and encourage landowners to ensure those corridors are rezoned to one of the Open Space (OS) Zoning Districts.**
- 3. Continue the development of land trusts and taxing mechanisms that have community support to accomplish open space acquisition and management programs.**
- 4. Continue to require new development to meet recreational/open space needs as part of site design through the development plan review process.**
- 5. Encourage the private development of a neighborhood park as a part of subdivision design, which may or may not be conveyed to the Town or other public entities even though its status as a permanent open space is secured.**
- 6. Continually support unpaved trails within the Town limits that provide connectivity and opportunities for recreation, enjoyment, and use of the Sonoran Desert subject to the appropriate findings and studies in places where they have little impact on residential developments and natural wildlife.**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. Continue to protect natural washes, wildlife corridors, open space, and the unpaved trail network through established mechanisms, including subdivision regulations, Open Space (OS) Zoning Districts, available space acquisition, and DRP.**
- 2. Support the creation of neighborhood parks and continued development of unpaved trails through the DRP and subdivision regulations approval processes**

***GOAL 3: Provide open space linkages within the Town and to the regional systems beyond its boundaries where feasible and appropriate.***

## **POLICIES**

- 1. Continue to encourage the development of trail systems that link Fountain Hills with McDowell Mountain Regional Park, the City of Scottsdale's trail system, and Maricopa County's trail system and potential systems on both the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation to support eco-tourism efforts, provided that such trails do not infringe on the privacy of residential areas.**
- 2. Continue to update and produce mapping and facility information for the public on the Town's website and through printed media regarding recreation, trail, and open space facilities.**

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. Continue to encourage the development of local trails that connect to the regional trail system to increase opportunities for eco-tourism**
- 2. Update the trail system map and facility information on the Town's website and social and print media to inform the public of the availability of these assets, as needed.**

## **GOAL 4: Identify and preserve historical and archaeological resources.**

### **POLICIES**

- 1. Collaborate with studies that aim to uncover and preserve the historical and archaeological resources within the incorporated area.**
- 2. Promote the preservation of archaeological artifacts by applying the latest applicable cultural resource conservation reporting methods working collaboratively with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Arizona State Museum.**
- 3. Continue to support public education programs emphasizing local and regional historical and cultural resources like those provided at the River of Time Museum.**

### **ACTION ITEM**

**Work collaboratively with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Arizona State Museum to protect historical and archaeological resources and support educational programs on historic and cultural resources.**



**GOAL 5: Continue to promote programs that encourage environmentally-friendly alternatives and improve air quality.**

**POLICIES**

- 1. Continue to support the expansion and development of regional and local transit service.**
- 2. Continue to require the utilization of native, drought-tolerant landscapes that eliminate the use of gasoline-powered landscape equipment.**
- 3. Promote environmentally friendly initiatives supported by the 2022 *Fountain Hills Strategic Plan*.**
- 4. Support a walkable Town Center.**
- 5. Encourage bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the Town to reduce automobile dependence, improve air quality and support active and healthy lifestyles.**

**ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. Prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Environment Plan (CEP) that implements the 2022 *Strategic Plan* and the policy direction included in Goals 5 and 6 of this Element**
- 2. Update all applicable regulations and ordinances to meet the directives of the CEP once adopted**

## **GOAL 6: Continue to promote environmental stewardship.**

### **POLICIES**

- 1. Continue to pursue improved communication and collaboration with Federal, State, and local partners on environmental concerns and legislation.**
- 2. Promote environmental stewardship and embrace ecological initiatives in partnership with Maricopa County, the Maricopa Association of Governments, the City of Scottsdale, the Fountain Hills Sanitary District, the Fort Mc Dowell Yavapai Nation, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.**
- 3. Design, construct, and maintain public buildings, infrastructure, and grounds in a manner that is both environmentally sustainable and protects public health and safety.**
- 4. Advance understanding of the environment through the Town's Communications Office, education programs, and media and environmental agencies partnerships.**
- 5. Consider environmental costs, risks, and impacts as integral components of the planning and decision-making processes when feasible and appropriate.**
- 6. Implement and maintain a process/system to evaluate environmental initiatives that seek input from Town Staff, the business community, citizens, and community services providers.**
- 7. Encourage the use of architectural design using active and passive solar heating, shade elements, and energy-efficient insulating materials to reduce energy consumption.**
- 8. Encourage water conservation through:**
  - a. Supporting water use reduction education programs;**
  - b. Continuing use of recycled water for turf irrigation Town parks and golf courses;**
  - c. Encouraging drought-tolerant landscapes that incorporate water harvesting, drip or low-flow irrigation as water use reduction measures; and**
  - d. Encouraging the utilization of low water use features in new development and redevelopment.**

## **GOAL 6: continued . . .**

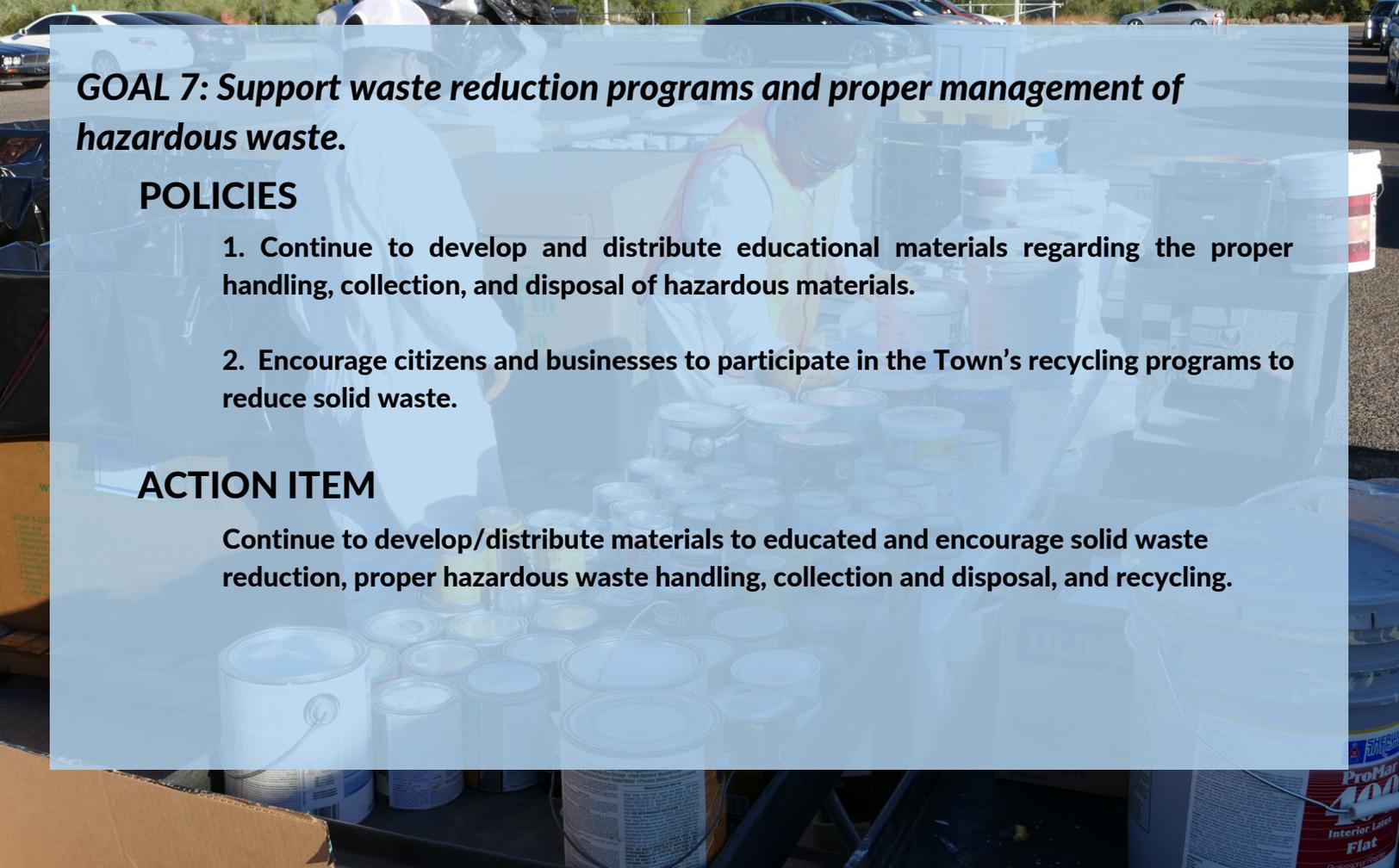
**9. Encourage salt-free water treatment systems to improve irrigation water used at Town Parks.**

**10. Where feasible and appropriate, encourage Low Impact Development (LID) designed to support sustainable stormwater management planning and design practices in their watersheds that either enhance or do not significantly diminish environmental quality by encouraging:**

- a. Practices that preserve or restore predevelopment hydrological and ecological functions;**
- b. Site design strategies that minimize runoff and protect natural drainage patterns;**
- c. Structural methods that filter, detain, retain, infiltrate, and harvest stormwater; and**
- d. Reduce the volume and intensity of stormwater flows.**

### **ACTION ITEM**

**Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include Low Impact Development (LID)**



**GOAL 7: Support waste reduction programs and proper management of hazardous waste.**

**POLICIES**

1. Continue to develop and distribute educational materials regarding the proper handling, collection, and disposal of hazardous materials.
2. Encourage citizens and businesses to participate in the Town's recycling programs to reduce solid waste.

**ACTION ITEM**

Continue to develop/distribute materials to educate and encourage solid waste reduction, proper hazardous waste handling, collection and disposal, and recycling.



**GOAL 8: Incorporate biophilic design goals and design principles into Town practices and development within the community.**

**POLICIES**

1. Consider and, where feasible, incorporate biophilic design into the development of Town facilities.
2. Review and update land development plans, policies, and ordinances to incorporate biophilic design principles.

**ACTION ITEM**

Join the Biophilic Cities network.