



Keep Sedona Beautiful Vision Statement
For the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan



May 28, 2021

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Keep Sedona Beautiful Vision Statement

Purpose of this Document

To further our mission *to protect and sustain the unique scenic beauty and natural environment of the Greater Sedona Area*, Keep Sedona Beautiful (KSB) submits this Vision Statement to Yavapai County as the County updates its Comprehensive Plan. This Vision Statement reflects the concerns and priorities of KSB, along with partner groups who assisted in its creation.

This document addresses the 8 required elements of the Comprehensive Plan and also includes new elements on:

- *Fostering a Sustainable Economy and Environment*
- *The Importance of Our Cultural Resources*
- *Accounting for Infrastructure*

These new elements should be included in the updated Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan either as separate sections or embedded and clearly identified in one of the 8 required elements.

The next decade will be a time of significant change and transformative technological advances. Yavapai County needs to be prepared for the changes ahead. A well-planned and well-crafted County Comprehensive Plan will be the foundation for a prosperous future.

Vision for the Future

The first paragraph of the State of Arizona statute requiring each county to develop and update their Comprehensive Plan states:

“The Comprehensive Plan shall be developed so as to conserve the natural resources of the county, to ensure efficient expenditure of public monies and to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the public.”¹

Growth: We envision a County where the demands of economic and physical growth and the sustained health of the environment are each fairly considered as planning decisions are made. These are complementary considerations; a healthy environment fosters economic growth, while smart growth provides the economic resources needed to sustain a healthy environment.

Changing Climate: We believe that the sustained health of the environment depends on how the region responds to the changing climate. Yavapai County must recognize the various impacts that climate change will impose and plan to mitigate those impacts. The health, wealth and wellbeing of County residents are dependent on the health of the environment. In arid

¹ <https://www.azleg.gov/ars/11/00804.htm>

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Northern Arizona, this requires the long-term availability of adequate, clean and safe water.

Planning: We believe that conservation-based planning will ensure the most robust economic future for Yavapai County, for which tourism and outdoor recreation are already key economic drivers. By carefully considering and integrating the environmental impact of growth in planning decisions, Yavapai County can continue to provide a high quality of life for its residents.

Self-sufficiency: We envision a future of greater self-sufficiency, with the County generating much more of its own electricity, renewably. Ranchers and growers can produce more of our food, which can be processed here, instead of shipped out of the County, thereby increasing the vitality and diversity of the economy.

Diversification: Overall, the economy will become more diversified, as Yavapai County attracts new businesses, including a significant increase in those teleworking from home. These changes will produce a range of higher-income jobs, increasing the average household income and helping decrease the poverty rate.

Transformation: The ongoing transformation to a green economy has the potential to rival the Industrial Revolution in terms of its impact on economies and lifestyles.² Yavapai County should collaborate broadly to embrace and benefit from this transformation. Businesses, Chambers of Commerce and non-profits throughout the County will be key partners in a collaborative effort to benefit from the green economy.

Housing: As the goals and priorities of the Comprehensive Plan are reflected in changes to the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Ordinances, we look forward to an increasing stock of workforce housing becoming available. This housing will attract younger workers to the area and help retain residents who might otherwise move away for potentially better economic opportunities.

Values and Principles

This Vision Statement reflects the following values and principles.

Conservation-based Planning: We strongly believe that Yavapai County should take a conservation-based approach to land use planning and development. Such an approach is focused on supporting sustainable and appropriate growth that benefits local communities and residents. By ensuring good stewardship of environmental resources, responsible growth can continue far into the future. Responsible growth must embrace environmental sustainability and resiliency.

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1089952>

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Protecting Private Property: Arizonans are rightfully proud that the State of Arizona protects private property rights. However, in recent years the state legislature has imposed its will on local jurisdictions, while insisting that the federal government not impose its will on Arizona. We believe that Yavapai County, in collaboration with other jurisdictions, must lobby the State of Arizona to permit the County to exert more control over local issues, such as considering the impact on water availability when making land use decisions.

Safeguarding Public Interests: While private property rights must and will be respected, so must larger public interests. This balancing act is reflected in planning documents and the County zoning code. The Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan is an objective guide that defines the limits placed on development of private property. Zoning code will then be updated to reflect those limits. For example, if a developer proposes a new 500-unit subdivision in rural Williamson, the zoning code and density map will make clear this is a prohibited use.

Protecting Cultural Resources: Yavapai County contains abundant cultural resources left by people who inhabited this area for thousands of years. It is the responsibility of the County, in collaboration with indigenous nations and state and federal agencies, to protect these cultural resources for current and future generations.

Collaboration: Yavapai County shares responsibility for protecting the health, wealth and wellbeing of residents. As the goals, policies and action items proposed in this document indicate, success in implementing the Comprehensive Plan depends on deep collaboration with jurisdictions, agencies, indigenous nations, governmental entities and non-governmental organizations.

Embracing Change: The coming years will see significant technological advances that will require the ability to rapidly adjust. For example, at some point in the not-too-distant future, autonomous electric shuttles will become affordable and widely used. The shift away from internal combustion vehicles is gaining momentum with each passing month. The use of electric bicycles is on the verge of explosive growth. Solar panels and battery storage are becoming the cheapest and most efficient way to power homes and buildings. Enormous amounts of money are being directed to research and development aimed at transitioning to a sustainable and green economy. Yavapai County must be prepared to support cost-efficient new technologies as they are proven successful.

Incentivizing Change: Yavapai County can play a key role in facilitating the rapid changes that are occurring by providing a range of incentives including but not limited to such things as modifications to zoning and building codes, expedited permitting, publicity for forward-looking developments, technical assistance programs and green building density bonus programs.³

³ <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/greener-cities-how-cities-across-us-are-incentivizing-sustainable-development/25175/>; http://resources.cleanenergyroadmap.com/SCPP_Z_green-building-incentives.pdf

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Incentives do not necessarily require subsidies or other financial contributions from the County in order to be effective. The County should build on the success it has had with incentives such as the 441 Open Space and Sustainable Development Option, the 442 Cluster and Open Space Option and the County's "A Home of My Own!" program.

Accountability: We believe that accountability needs to be built into the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan must include measurable goals that are defined and to which the County is committed to pursuing and achieving. The County should regularly update residents on progress toward meeting these goals and on their associated action items. Where applicable, the goals and policies committed to in the Comprehensive Plan should be reflected in the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Ordinance so residents, developers and County planners have the guidance needed to make legal and appropriate proposals and decisions.

Planning for Action: The Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan should identify a host of actions that the County commits to take during the coming years. Development Services and other County departments must be given sufficient resources to plan for and then accomplish initiatives. For example, Yavapai County should invest in hiring a grant writer or contracting for grant-writing services. Effectively staffed, such a position will become a profit center for the County. In addition to grants, significant funding is available from the federal government. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture recently announced that it *"is investing \$487 million in critical infrastructure that will help communities in 45 states build back better and stronger while prioritizing climate-smart solutions and environmental stewardship. USDA is making the investments under the Water and Environmental Program, the Rural Energy for America Program, the Electric Loan Program and the Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program."*⁴

Quality of Life: The updated Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan will guide development decisions for the next decade. It must focus on preserving and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Yavapai County administered an initial survey that solicited resident input. While that survey was completed by a small percent of county residents, some of the comments the respondents provided are pertinent to the discussion. Those comments included the following (spelling errors have been corrected in the quotes):

- *'We are living in a critical time here and if we do not protect what we all know and love about this County it will quickly be lost to inappropriate development and a decrease in the quality of life.'*
- *'Clean air & water are essential to high quality of life.'*
- *'Growth and tourism need to pay for all the impacts that they create. Quality of life considerations are at least as important as revenue.'*

⁴ <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/04/22/earth-day-usda-invests-487-million-rural-water-energy-and-biofuel>

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- *'Keeping a low population density, protecting the natural environment, and maintaining dark skies should be priorities. Growth needs to be managed to maintain the environment and keep quality of life high.'*
- *'The roads are already too congested and I am concerned about impacts on water, wildlife, quality of life, and safety.'*
- *'Tourism should be better managed so that residents can maintain our quality of life.'*
- *'We love the quiet nature of our community. As our communities develop, please consider the role noise plays in quality of life.'*

Community Character: We believe that preserving the character of communities like Cornville, Black Canyon City and Williamson must be a primary goal of land use planning. While change is inevitable as new developments are proposed and built, those developments should complement the fundamental nature and character of existing communities.

The Importance of Community Character

Yavapai County is geographically vast, with the overwhelming majority of the land either publicly owned, or rural and unincorporated. Since the Comprehensive Plan focuses primarily on unincorporated areas, the needs and desires of the residents of those areas are paramount.

Over the decades, many have relocated to unincorporated rural areas specifically because they want to live a rural lifestyle. Others have been born and raised in rural areas, enjoying that lifestyle their entire lives. They want some space between themselves and their neighbors and want to avoid the more hectic pace of urban life.

Others have deliberately moved to the more urban parts of the County. While nothing like the sprawl of Phoenix, the cities in Yavapai County offer more amenities to those who desire them. These residents are willing, and sometimes eager, to live in denser communities where the pace of life may be quicker.

Many in the County live in incorporated cities and towns governed by their own sets of zoning codes and regulations. Yavapai County has significantly less influence over these areas, but must recognize that the boundaries where these incorporated areas meet up against unincorporated areas require special consideration. Development decisions made by Yavapai County in these boundary areas can have a major impact on nearby residents.

In order to reflect the needs and aspirations of all residents of the County, the Comprehensive Plan should incorporate the Community Plans developed by unincorporated communities. This will require communities and the County to make certain that any Community Plan that is incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan does not contradict the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan.

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The Community Plans of incorporated communities should be referenced in the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan as the applicable planning documents for those communities.

We believe the concept of *placemaking* should be applied throughout the County. Placemaking⁵ is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. It capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote the wellbeing of residents. Placemaking is both a philosophy and a process, making use of urban design principles. By planning and creating gathering places and community centers, placemaking builds and reinforces community character. While it has been traditionally used in urban settings, the approach has become more universal in its application.

As more communities in the County are Dark Sky certified by the International Dark Sky Association, it has become clear that dark skies are a significant economic asset and have become a defining aspect of the community character. Many visitors specifically seek out our area because of the dark skies and clear air. We strongly support efforts by the County to become the first dark sky certified county in the nation.

Community character in the County is also defined in many areas by the landscape and by the ability of residents to enjoy expansive views. The County must protect these scenic views and viewsheds as new development is considered.

Complementary to the protection of scenic views is the protection of rivers, lakes and streams. Yavapai County is fortunate to have the only two Wild and Scenic Rivers in Arizona - the Verde River and Fossil Creek. These rivers and their associated riparian resources are priceless and must be protected to the fullest extent.

Our County is fundamentally a quiet place where many residents enjoy this aspect of a more rural lifestyle. However, in recent years noise has intruded on many communities as a result of an exponential increase in the use of Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and the general intrusion of noise from increased tourism. The County should evaluate the possible implementation of a County-wide noise ordinance to address this growing problem. The County should also aggressively explore options for controlling the proliferation of OHVs because of the damage they inflict on the environment and the carelessness of too many drivers.

While tourism is a key part of the economic engine, the exploding growth of tourism and local population growth has resulted in degradation of community character: trash and litter pile up on roads and trails, graffiti defaces many of these trails and gridlock on popular highways sometimes rivals rush hour in Phoenix. OHVs cause unwanted noise and create dust clouds that kill vegetation and threaten the safety of both visitors and residents. Overuse and overtourism⁶

⁵ <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/creativeplacemaking/>

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overtourism>

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threaten the quality of life for residents of Yavapai County, which will diminish significantly if these trends continue unchecked.

The County must evaluate the detrimental impacts of rapidly increasing and largely uncontrolled tourism before the character of communities is irreversibly harmed. In particular, the County must cooperate with other counties along with cities and towns to roll back the prohibition by the State of Arizona on regulating overnight rentals. The housing inventory is quickly eroding away as investors purchase properties and convert them into overnight rentals, rather than making them available for residential housing.

These and other issues related to preserving community character are addressed throughout the elements in this Vision Statement in goals, policies and action items that we believe should be incorporated into the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan.

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Fostering a Sustainable Economy and Environment

This section addresses economic and environmental sustainability. As previously noted, we believe that the health of the economy is linked to and dependent on the health of the environment. The mega-drought that currently impacts the American Southwest is expected to become more severe, taxing resources and threatening the foundations of the economy.⁷ In collaboration with jurisdictions around Arizona, Yavapai County must take prompt and decisive action to address the impacts of climate change. We must adjust to ecological and technological change, and we must transition to a more sustainable and diverse economy.

The Impact of Drought

Climate data for the Southwestern United States demonstrate that we are in a prolonged mega-drought, referred to in the scientific literature as *ecological drought conditions*.⁸ When such severe conditions occur, they pose both economic and physical risks. Environmental systems supporting the web of life begin to fragment due to the continual stress. The on-going drought, along with hotter, drier and longer summer seasons are part of the complex climate challenge we face. The drought increases threats to infrastructure, food production, water supplies, human health and the economy. We believe that an all-hazard approach to risk mitigation should be developed in order to mitigate the risks we face.⁹ An all-hazards approach is an *“integrated approach to emergency preparedness planning that focuses on capacities and capabilities that are critical to preparedness for a full spectrum of emergencies or disasters.”*¹⁰

The Need for a Climate Action Plan

Yavapai County should develop and implement a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in collaboration with stakeholders. This plan should identify adaptation and mitigation strategies and set measurable goals for carbon reduction. Those goals should align with scientific studies for reigning in high temperatures and erratic weather events. Delayed reaction to these events will require far more than preventive measures. Heatwaves, drought and wildfire have direct costs for Yavapai County, including heat-related deaths, higher electricity bills, crop loss and habitat loss. While measures to alleviate the stressors due to rising temperatures and drought increase budgets and expenditures, implementing a Climate Action Plan will save money. For example, electrical vehicles cost significantly less to maintain. Building climate-ready and retrofitted housing and replacing inefficient appliances and lights will save residents energy costs.

Some Arizona communities have already developed (or are in the process of developing) Climate Action Plans, including Phoenix, Tempe, Flagstaff, Tucson, Sedona and the University of

⁷ <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2020/04/16/climate-driven-megadrought-emerging-western-u-s/>

⁸ https://www.usgs.gov/ecosystems/climate-adaptation-science-centers/ecological-drought-across-country?qt-science_support_page_related_con=2#qt-science_support_page_related_con

⁹ https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/National_Preparedness_Guidelines.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Downloads/FAQ-Round-Four-Definitions.pdf>

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Arizona. These plans incorporate adaptation and mitigation strategies into budgets to meet the challenges of the changing climate. They also can serve as tool boxes, shortening the time and effort needed to formulate a Yavapai County Climate Action Plan.

Sustainability

Sustainable economic growth requires a sustainable environment. One of the most direct examples of this relationship is tourism, particularly in Yavapai County where tourists flock for outdoor recreation.

- According to the 2015 Prescott Visitor Survey,¹¹ *“approximately \$289 million of regional purchases were made by out-of-region visitors, and ... resulted in a total economic contribution of \$340 million for Yavapai County. This economic activity supported some 3,618 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. The regional economic impact of visitors to Prescott is substantial and significantly contributes to the greater regional economy.”*
- According to the Sedona Chamber of Commerce,¹² *tourism attracts “visitors that contribute \$1 billion to the region’s economy annually. This spending accounts for 77% of the City’s sales tax revenues – an estimated \$17 million in FY18. Tourism supports approximately 10,000 jobs in the region, providing \$240 million in wages to area residents.”*

In 2016, the Sedona Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau engaged the Global Sustainable Tourism Council to undertake a destination assessment, resulting in the Sedona Sustainable Tourism Plan (SSTP). The SSTP addressed 4 strategic “Pillars”:

1. Environment
2. Resident Quality of Life
3. Quality of the Economy
4. Visitor Experience

Within each of these categories, specific objectives and tactics were developed in order to build a strong foundation for long-term sustainability.

The dynamics of growth, as evaluated by the Chamber, came to the following conclusion:

“While this growth brings many advantages, it also generates negative elements such as congested roadways, overuse of the Uptown area, a reduced range of affordable housing and competition for services between residents and visitors. Given Sedona’s unique natural environment, the overuse of sensitive lands and waterways is also a concern.”

In 2021, Sedona’s City Council directed the Chamber to target its spending toward Sustainable Tourism instead of Destination Tourism. Funds that had previously been spent attracting more

¹¹ <https://tourism.az.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Prescott-Visitor-Survey-2014-2015.pdf>

¹² https://sedonachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SED-STP_4-17-19-HR-UPDATE.pdf

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tourists will instead be spent on ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism as a driver of the economy. This priority shift demonstrates the positive role that government can play in moving an economy in the direction of long-term sustainability by clearly acknowledging that growth brings both advantages and challenges.

Economic Diversification

In another example of proactive initiatives by local government, the City of Sedona recently adopted an Economic Diversification Strategic Plan.¹³ The Economic Diversification Plan uses data from the Regional Economic Development Center (REDC) at Yavapai College in Prescott Valley¹⁴ to explore local economic landscapes and job growth.

The following visions and values drive that plan:

1. **Work towards Sustainability**, which includes reducing the impact on the environment, while increasing the number of policies that lead to economic diversification and improvement in quality of life.
2. **Embrace change** that looks toward a diverse economy. A diverse economy is more adaptive to change. As mentioned in the introduction to this Vision Statement, the pace of technological change is rapidly increasing. As new technologies prove themselves to be viable and economically sound, we need to be able to adopt them.
3. **Welcome diversities** that drive sustainability and change, leading to a stronger community.
4. **Leverage assets** by using all existing resources through businesses and residents, health, education and cultural sources for innovation.
5. **Focus on local**, recognizing local needs and strengths of existing and future economic networks and sources.
6. **Creative Placemaking** is the cultivation of community coherence through access to safe, clean public spaces and shared social activities.

Strategic Growth

Many cities, towns and counties are recognizing that it is cost effective to plan strategic growth goals as outlined above. When leaders focus on mitigating the problems resulting from past growth, they often tap into new resources and generate important new civic habits and practices.

The analysis done through Yavapai College points to these core challenges:

1. Lack of affordable and diverse housing
2. An aging population
3. Lack of existing buildings and shovel-ready sites to accommodate new and expanding businesses

¹³ <https://www.sedonaaz.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=41504>

¹⁴ <https://www.yc.edu/v6/regional-economic-development-center/?locale=en>

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4. Transportation congestion coupled with inadequate public transportation
5. Inadequate broadband coverage

Science-based Planning

Planning for economic and environmental sustainability requires applying science to government decision making. Hard science identifies data-driven practices, whereby key indicators are documented and tracked. The social and economic sciences help identify policies that adhere to cultural and economic diversity - with fairness and respect.

Because we are living in a time of significant ecological change and disruption and a time of significant technological innovation, plans must be adaptable. The plans we adopt now are certain to require modification as conditions evolve and change. All sustainability planning should incorporate scheduled periodic review and adjustment by applying the techniques of adaptive management.¹⁵

We strongly recommend that Yavapai County establish a Science Advisory Committee to critique and help formulate the emerging updated Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan and to lay out a process for adapting to changes as they occur. Now, more than ever, planning must be science-based and data-driven.

Collaboration

Finally, in order to sustain economic growth, while also sustaining environmental resources, government agencies must collaborate broadly, both internally and through outreach, into the private, educational, nonprofit and tribal sectors. These partnerships will help to contain costs, while developing a common vision for the future. This vision should embrace economic growth and individual wellbeing by balancing the needs of residents with the long-term environmental sustainability.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal SE1: Mitigate the risks to residents posed by environmental factors, including a changing climate.

Policy SE1.1: Assist residents and businesses in unincorporated areas to identify and implement home improvements that increase resilience in the event of an emergency. These include such things as Firewise inspections, identifying flammable roofing materials and septic tank inspections.

Policy SE1.2: Reduce County-generated carbon emissions and encourage

¹⁵ <https://www.blueaccounting.org/article/adaptive-management-and-collaborative-adaptive-management>

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residents and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.

Action Item SE1.1: Develop and implement a County-wide Climate Action Plan.

Action Item SE1.2: Develop and implement an All-hazard Risk Mitigation Plan.

Action Item SE1.3: Incorporate adaptation and mitigation strategies into the County budget to meet the challenges of the changing climate.

Goal SE2: Promote economically and environmentally sustainable development.

Policy SE2.1: Facilitate and incent development that reduces the impact on the environment while improving the quality of life for residents.

Policy SE2.2: Strive for further economic diversification so that the regional economy is more adaptive to change.

Policy SE2.3: Welcome economic diversity that drives sustainability, leading to a stronger community and improved quality of life.

Policy SE2.4: Welcome new technologies that provide better and more cost-effective solutions to the challenges faced by the County and its residents.

Policy SE2.5: Support the process of Creative Placemaking, the cultivation of community coherence through access to safe, clean public spaces and shared social activities.

Action Item SE2.1: Provide incentives for establishing community gardens through collaboration with Tribes, unincorporated areas and cities, including, but not limited to, incentives like subsidizing watering and composting systems.

Action Item SE2.2: Form a Science Advisory Committee to help formulate the updated County Comprehensive Plan.

Action Item SE2.3: Ensure the County uses energy-saving techniques and materials in new and remodeled County buildings, providing an example of reducing the overall carbon footprint.

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The Importance of Our Cultural Resources

The purpose of this section is to emphasize the importance of the cultural resources found in Yavapai County, as well as the need to identify methods to protect those cultural resources within the development process.

Yavapai County is fortunate to include some of the most significant cultural resources in the State of Arizona. This irreplaceable heritage must be preserved. While much of these cultural resources reside on federal or state land, cultural resources can also be found on private land throughout the County.

In consultation with the Yavapai-Apache Nation, the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, the Hopi Nation, other interested Tribes and archeologists, Yavapai County should include in the updated Comprehensive Plan a discussion of both the early inhabitants of this area and of current indigenous communities. The Comprehensive Plan should include this information in order to emphasize the necessity of protecting and preserving non-renewable cultural resources and to recognize the vital role that indigenous people play in Yavapai County.

A Finite Resource

Our wealth of cultural resources is non-renewable and finite. Once gone they are gone forever. The ability for scholars to reconstruct the past depends on proper context and in-place preservation. Cultural resources are unique and include both prehistoric and historic period artifacts, archaeological and historic sites, structures, features, pottery, projectile points, rock art sites, as well as earth features, such as canals, roads and foot trails. In addition to material culture, cultural resources also include traditional cultural properties and sacred landscapes.

Protection of cultural resources must be an integral component to the County's Comprehensive Plan. Compiling an in-depth knowledge of the cultural resources in the county is critical to successful protection. Yavapai County should develop a county wide database that indicates culturally sensitive areas to avoid during phases of construction/development. That database is not intended for general distribution due to the sensitivity of the information. Ongoing partnership with Yavapai County Cultural Resources Department during the planning phase of construction will be imperative to achieve this goal.

It's equally important to develop and maintain relationships between government agencies, Native American groups, volunteer agencies, towns/cities, private landowners and others so that information within the boundaries of the law can be shared with others for planning purposes.

Using this information, an historic context document can be developed for community cultural resource land use plans that will assist in the development of a range of management prescriptions, emphasizing preservation of the cultural assets that will benefit the community. This effort must include civic coordination and listening sessions with Native American tribal

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councils.

Preservation of cultural resources goes hand-in-hand with preservation of open space. Cultural resource sites provide natural settings for cultural and environmental education. It is critical to protect cultural resources in place, providing for open-air classrooms and rare glimpses into the past. The legacy of the peoples who have inhabited this area before us give meaning and context for how we view and use the land.

Besides protecting and preserving these cultural assets for their own sake, we need to also recognize their economic value. Tourists visit the County for its inherent beauty and recreational opportunities, but also to experience and learn about our rich cultural heritage. The County should identify and implement means to inform both residents and tourists on how best to preserve cultural artifacts by practicing “Leave No Trace” – look but never touch.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal CR1: Collaborate with stakeholders, including federally recognized Native American tribes and nations, county, state, federal agencies and private land owners to identify goals and policies for cultural resources conservation and protection.

Policy CR1.1: Support efforts to conserve Native American traditional cultural properties, cultural landscapes, heritage areas and sacred sites in consultation with local and regional Native American Tribes.

Policy CR1.2: Recognize the overlap between some environmentally sensitive features and their importance as traditional tribal, sacred and cultural sites, including but not limited to springs, caves, eagle nests and plant gathering places.

Goal CR2: Promote, support and participate in the celebration of county-wide cultural heritage and Native American programs, meetings and events.

Policy CR 2.1: Promote county-wide civic programs and events focusing on Native American, environmental education and cultural heritage programs that celebrate the County’s rich prehistoric and historic past.

Policy CR 2.2: Collaborate with Native American groups, public agencies and volunteer organizations whose goals and objectives promote cultural resources expression, stewardship and conservation.

Policy CR 2.3: Support the protection and preservation of traditional tribal cultural areas, sacred sites, and landscapes.

Action Item CR2.1: In consultation with Native American Tribes, develop and implement civic programs and events focusing on Native American, environmental education and cultural heritage

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programs.

Action Item CR2.2: Develop outreach partnerships with Native American groups, public agencies and volunteer organizations.

Goal CR3: Preserve and protect highly significant prehistoric cultural resources.

Policy CR 3.1: Develop a county wide database that indicates culturally sensitive areas to avoid during phases of construction and development. Coordinate with government agencies, Native American Tribes, volunteer organizations, towns/cities and private landowners in this effort.

Action Item CR 3.1: Establish outreach partnerships with land management agencies, tribal governments, private land owners and volunteer organizations to advance the planning for conservation, preservation and protection of the County's rich cultural resources.

Goal CR4: Preserve and protect significant historic period cultural resources.

Action Item CR 4.1: In consultation with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, continue to nominate significant historic sites to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Action Item CR 4.2: Evaluate creating a Yavapai County Register of Historic Places for important historical sites. This may be accomplished with a Yavapai County Landmark Program that offers tax incentives to private landowners for participating, and may provide a pathway to NRHP designation.

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Protecting Our Water (Water Resources Element)

The state-mandated Water Resources Element of County Comprehensive Plans requires counties to conduct a basic assessment of known water supply and current and future water demand. The legislation also requires a plan to meet those future water demands internally or by obtaining additional water supplies. Building on previous work, this section recommends a general approach for conducting that analysis.

This section also covers the need for more science-based and local control of water resources, in particular tying water management that protects existing users and water-dependent natural resources to County land use decisions. This will require analysis of the impact of new development on the existing known water resources and on projected future water resources. Such analyses should take into consideration climate change, warming temperature and the philosophy of Smart Growth as documented by the City of Prescott¹⁶. Recent analysis indicates a continuing and significant use of groundwater resources that exceeds the capacity of natural recharge. This overuse results in depletion of those groundwater resources at an alarming rate¹⁷.

The Prescott Active Management Area (Prescott AMA) is not addressed in this document other than to suggest that a community discussion of whether or not AMA or INA designation for the Verde Valley is desirable.

Updating Water Supply and Demand

In 2008, the Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Arizona Department of Water Resources, began a study to assess current and future water supply and demand and evaluate alternatives to meet future demand in the Verde River watershed. Utilizing data from 2006, a shortfall of between 45,000 and 80,000 acre-feet per year by 2050 was projected¹⁸. The comprehensive study encompassed several years of work on the part of numerous professionals.

To meet the basic requirements of the Water Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan update, Keep Sedona Beautiful recommends that the County hire a qualified professional to update the study to the most recent available data. This would not involve a new study but would instead simply provide an update of the existing study. Such an update would serve many purposes.

Water Resource Impacts of New Development

The availability of an adequate supply of clean water is rapidly becoming the most critical factor in planning for the future. Balancing the needs of economic growth and the environment in the

¹⁶ https://www.prescott-az.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2015_draft_general_plan_adopted_04_14_15.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2021/05/13/arizona-is-depleting-groundwaterin-many-areas-researchers-warn/5059471001/>

¹⁸ <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/phoenix/programs/CYHWRMS/CYHWRMSSStudy.html> (accessed 5/21/2021)

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face of an ever-increasing population and climate change promises to be complex and challenging, particularly in an arid land. Yavapai County needs to embrace and employ the full range of tools and authorities at its disposal to meet these challenges.

Currently, the impacts of new development on water resources are not considered in land use decision making and permitting in Yavapai County. By increasing the amount of water resource information used to make land use decisions, Yavapai County could help ensure that the full consequences of development are understood.

In Yavapai County, any discussion of water needs must consider natural discharge from aquifers that sustain the year-round flow in many rivers, creeks and springs. Decisions about trade-offs can then be made by an informed public, leading to greater sustainability of the environment, economy and quality of life.

An adequate water supply will keep rivers flowing and riparian areas green for future generations. The alternative is dry sections of the Verde River and Oak Creek in the summer and die-back of riparian vegetation. Long-term, unwise development will threaten continued access to groundwater supply for human communities. Such outcomes would negatively impact the long-term economic and social health of Yavapai County.

While state law may constrain Yavapai County's authority to make decisions based on water availability, the County can consider the impact on water resources when evaluating new development proposals. For example, in 2008, Pima County amended the Water Resources Element of their Comprehensive Plan to integrate a more comprehensive Water Resources Element into their policies¹⁹. The updated policies more adequately measure and mitigate impacts of proposed development on water supply. Yavapai County should undertake a similar effort, which would strengthen the interrelationship of water resources and land use planning consistent with water conservation efforts and water use ideals set out in the 2012 Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan.

100-Year Adequate Water Supply

Arizona Department of Water Resources' Assured and Adequate Water Supply provisions²⁰ link the subdivision approval process to water demand and supply. These provisions are one of the most important aspects of the 1980 Groundwater Management Act, ensuring consumer protection and sufficient water supplies needed for growth.

Outside an AMA, development is subject to the Adequate Water Supply rules. However, developers have the option of applying for either an adequate or inadequate determination. Thus, adequacy is not mandatory prior to recording a plat and initiating lot sales. If a developer

¹⁹ <https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?pageId=351192> (accessed 5/21/2021)

²⁰ <https://new.azwater.gov/aaws#:~:text=The%20Arizona%20Department%20of%20Water,limited%20groundwater%20supplies%20in%20Arizona.&text=It%20is%20designed%20to%20sustain,long%2Dterm%20water%20supply%20planning.>

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opts for an inadequate determination, the water supply situation must be disclosed only to the first land buyer.

In 2007, the Arizona Legislature passed Senate Bill 1575²¹ which provides authority for cities, towns and counties to adopt an ordinance requiring new subdivisions to obtain a determination of an adequate 100-year water supply prior to obtaining final plat approval. This removes the inadequacy option for developers, providing certainty for land buyers that they will have sufficient, good quality water. Yuma and Cochise counties and the towns of Clarkdale and Patagonia have adopted this provision.

Through a unanimous vote of the Board of Supervisors, Yavapai County can require new Subdivisions and Planned Area Developments to obtain a determination of an adequate 100-year water supply from ADWR as a condition of obtaining final plat approval. This is a most basic requirement for ensuring that residents and new home buyers are protected from misunderstandings and an inadequate supply of water.

A Call to Collaborative Action

Meeting the water supply challenges of a growing population in an arid land, without sacrificing flow in rivers and creeks, is daunting. To address the significant water-related issues facing Yavapai County, particularly considering the multiple jurisdictions involved, collaboration is essential. Such collaboration must be based on a common understanding of shared challenges. Yavapai County previously had a regional water collaboration group, which effectively leveraged local, state and federal funding to complete seminal water resources studies. The time has come for formation of a new regional water group, capable of addressing Yavapai County water resources planning in the 21st century.

To jumpstart that process, we strongly recommend that Yavapai County reach out to municipalities and water suppliers and invite them to join the County in participating in a Growing Water Smart²² workshop conducted by the Tucson-based Sonoran Institute. These intensive 3-day workshops are provided free of charge by the Sonoran Institute and require only a commitment of time by participating entities. Keep Sedona Beautiful recommends that this workshop be held as soon as practical, so that the knowledge gained can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

To move towards a more water-secure future, Yavapai County should:

- Update the existing water supply and demand study to account for current conditions.
- Integrate a more comprehensive Water Resources Element into the Comprehensive Plan, which specifies County authority to require analysis of the impacts on water resources of new developments.
- Make water adequacy a requirement for new subdivisions.

²¹ https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/48leg/1r/summary/s.1575nrra_adoptedbySenate.doc.htm

²² <https://sonoraninstitute.org/files/GWS-Workbook-1.7.19-Update.pdf>

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- Increase collaborative long-range planning and cross-jurisdictional water management, especially with respect to more sustainable water management and use approaches.
- Advocate for common-sense modifications to regional and state water policy by lobbying for more local control of water resources.
- Promote and incentivize water conservation and reuse.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal WR1: Provide long-term water security for human and natural communities.

Policy WR1.1: Evaluate water resource impacts of new development when considering a comprehensive plan amendment or rezoning request.

Policy WR1.2: Require that new developments outside the Prescott Active Management Area document a 100-year adequate water supply.

Action Item WR1.1: During the County Comprehensive Plan Update, integrate a more comprehensive Water Resources Element into the policies to adequately measure and mitigate impacts of proposed development on water supply.

Action Item WR1.2: Through a unanimous vote of the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors, require new Subdivisions and Planned Area Developments to obtain a determination of an adequate 100-year water supply from ADWR as a condition of obtaining final plat approval.

Action Item WR1.3: Inform the public on the need for required water adequacy through news articles and informational offerings.

Goal WR2: Ensure sustainable water supplies for future generations and the natural environment.

Policy WR2.1: Collaborate with the appropriate agencies to pursue local, regional and/or state policies that support sustainable water management by allowing for the analysis of cumulative impacts to long-term groundwater supplies.

Policy WR2.2: Ensure that no new development or policy degrades the water resources of existing water users.

Policy WR2.3: Collaborate across jurisdictions, utilizing the most recent data and available tools, such as groundwater models, to implement water management that recognizes the growing population, the warming and drying climate and the depletion of groundwater and surface water supplies.

Policy WR 2.4: Consider the water needs of water-dependent ecosystems in all

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water planning, water use projections and water management decision making.

Action Item WR2.1: Reconstitute a water committee that is broadly representative of regional jurisdictions and land managers as well as professional hydrologists and water managers.

Action Item WR2.2: Update existing data sets and groundwater models to develop realistic projections of future water demand and impacts to groundwater and surface water resources. Involve the public, so they can understand the consequences of various future development paths and make informed decisions about their preferred future.

Action Item WR2.3: Always include water demand for water-dependent ecosystems in the early stages of water planning.

Goal WR3: Maximize efficient use of water in all settings, considering maintaining base flow for the Verde River, its perennial tributaries and other perennial waters and water-dependent ecosystems throughout the County.

Policy WR3.1: Support rainwater fed landscapes in residential and commercial settings.

Policy WR3.2: Support water conservation by investing in reclaimed water infrastructure.

Policy WR3.3: Encourage gray water use in residential and commercial settings.²³

Action Item WR3.1: Provide information and assistance to residential and commercial residents who would like to develop rainwater-fed landscapes.

Action Item WR3.2: Coordinate with Friends of the Verde River on their “River Friendly Living” program.

Action Item WR3.3: Supply reclaimed water to public park areas and byways under County jurisdiction to grow trees for shade and promote community health and well-being.

Action Item WR3.4: Provide information and assistance to residential and commercial residents who would like to utilize gray water for landscape irrigation.

²³ Please see the section below on Protecting our Natural Environment for more information about gray water.

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Using Our Land Wisely (Land Use Element)

This section considers how best to retain the character of communities, how density of new developments can be controlled, how land use regulations should protect the environment and cultural resources, how workforce and affordable housing needs are a priority and how the County must be allowed to exert more local control over land use decisions.

This section will not address the history of land use in the County, current zoning regulations, land use categories or demographic trends or projections.

Yavapai County is 8,123 square miles, larger than Connecticut, Delaware, Rhode Island and New Jersey. Nearly 75% is public land. Of the remaining 25%, the vast majority of the land is rural, with a small portion being tribal land. Preserving the rural character and existing way of life in the County needs to be a high priority, as discussed above.

Yavapai County must carefully manage growth using enforceable policies and regulations in order to conserve rangeland and working farms and to protect low-density unincorporated areas from the encroachment of large-scale, high-density developments.

Density Limits

Reasonable and appropriate density limits must be established throughout the County, particularly surrounding unincorporated communities, consistent with their approved Community Plans. Buffer zones should be established around incorporated cities and towns so that the density limits in those buffer areas reflect the character of those cities and towns. Inserting high-density, urban-like developments in low-density rural areas is inappropriate and should be limited using approved density maps. These density limits must apply to both subdivisions and planned area developments (PADs).

When evaluating proposed new PADs, Yavapai County should require developers to submit site plans that are sufficiently detailed so the full potential impact on the land can be determined. This should apply to both residential and commercial developments.

Maintaining the rural character of Yavapai County's unincorporated areas will become increasingly difficult. When an historic ranch is placed on the realty market, bought and sold by urban-centered developers, the change for surrounding communities can be profound. Applying density limits will prevent the development of an urban island where a ranch once existed, as well as the potential cascading negative impact on surrounding open spaces. Such recognition and support will mitigate ranch land sales' impact on water resources, fire danger, commuter traffic and rural quality of life.

Population Growth

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The Arizona Commerce Authority projects that by 2050 the population of Yavapai County will approach 300,000,²⁴ nearly triple the 1990 population. The additional residents will be housed in new developments and homes that need to reflect the character and sense of place of the surrounding areas. To that end, development standards need to be established that limit building on hillsides and prohibit building on ridgelines. Additional standards should limit building near rivers, streams, natural washes and drainage areas. Commercial developments should be prohibited on inholdings surrounded by public land. Wilderness areas on public land must be protected from encroaching high-density development.

As the population increases, additional pressure will be put on the affordability of existing housing stock. Yavapai County should provide incentives to developers who provide workforce and affordable housing. These incentives may include such things as an increase in density entitlements, while staying within the limits set by the County density map.

Increases in population will also put additional pressure on natural resources and the ability to sustain the quality of life. Yavapai County should ensure that land use policies focus on sustainability, integrated conservation design, resiliency and urban regeneration.

- The Oxford Dictionary defines economic sustainability as *“the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level”* and environmental sustainability as the *“avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance.”*²⁵
- Integrated conservation design encourages conservation areas to be set aside and protects environmentally sensitive land.²⁶
- Resiliency refers to land-use planning that considers natural hazard risk as an important mitigation measure in minimizing the increase in future disaster losses in areas of new development.²⁷
- Urban regeneration is a way to reorganize and upgrade existing places rather than planning new urbanization.

Land use policies in Yavapai County should manage growth in a way that minimizes environmental impacts, while still offering residents a range of choices.

Fair and Objective Zoning

The zoning process must be fair and equitable. It must be seen by residents as an objective process by which a set of clear rules, set forth in the zoning code, are applied without favoring any particular interest. This is a key reason why the policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan must be reflected in the zoning code.

²⁴ <https://www.azcommerce.com/oeo/population/population-projections/>

²⁵ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/Sustainability>

²⁶ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/azgfd-portal-wordpress/PortalImages/files/wildlife/planningFor/wildlifeFriendlyGuidelines/WildlifeFriendlyDevelopment.pdf>

²⁷ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-land-use-planning>

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The process of ‘speculative zoning’ poses particular concern from a fairness perspective. Speculative zoning is when the County is perceived to be assisting an owner to sell their property by changing its zoning. Rezoning must adhere to the objective policies stated in the Comprehensive Plan that are enacted as rules and regulations in the zoning code.

Collaboration

The State of Arizona has placed limits on the ability of counties, cities and towns to enact local policies and regulations. The most glaring example of this is the inability of local governments to regulate short-term rentals. In addition, the County has limited ability to control lot splits. Yavapai County should collaborate with other counties, communities, tribal governments and municipalities to lobby the State of Arizona to allow more local control over these and other critical issues. The Arizona Legislature should reassess the laws that curtail the ability of local leaders and community members to preserve healthy, vibrant economies and community life.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal LU1: Encourage and assist communities to create or update their Community Plans.

Policy LU1.1: Advise and aid unincorporated communities as they develop their Community Plans.

Policy LU1.2: Ensure that the County Comprehensive Plan and Community Plans do not conflict with each other and that adhering to Community Plans also adheres to the County Comprehensive Plan.

Action Item LU1.1: Establish a liaison relationship between Yavapai County Development Services and unincorporated community groups.

Action Item LU1.2: Adopt Community Plans into the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan.

Action Item LU1.3: Reference the Community Plans from incorporated communities in the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan.

Goal LU2: Preserve the character and way of life within the rural regions in Yavapai County.

Policy LU2.1: Work with property owners using a variety of strategies to maintain working ranches as a viable method of land management, to maintain open space and to preserve landscape integrity.

Policy LU2.2: Protect sparsely populated, unincorporated areas from the encroachment of large-scale, high-density developments.

Policy LU2.3: In collaboration with incorporated communities, establish buffer zones around those communities where density limits

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are compatible with the applicable Community Plan.

Action Item LU2.1: Create a county-wide density map that documents the maximum development density within each locality.

Goal LU3: Ensure that new developments reflect the character and sense of place of the surrounding area.

Policy LU3.1: Limit building on hillsides and prohibit development above a 15 percent slope (contour) and on ridgelines.

Policy LU3.2: Limit building near rivers, streams, natural washes and drainage areas.

Policy LU3.3: Prohibit commercial or industrial developments on inholdings surrounded by public land.

Policy LU3.4: Protect designated Wilderness Areas on public land from encroaching development through the use of adequate buffer zones.

Policy LU3.5: Require uses that are compatible in intensity or density with those adjacent areas when approving development near incorporated and unincorporated communities.

Policy LU3.6: Identify and maintain significant resource areas, such as wildlife corridors, hydrologic recharge areas, floodplains, geologic features and known historic or cultural resources as map layers in Yavapai County's mapping software. Make that information available stakeholders for consideration when developing new regulations, Community Plans or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy LU3.7: Maintain overlay zoning districts as part of the County's official map set and make that information available to stakeholders.

Policy LU3.8: Collaborate and cooperate with land trust organizations to maximize the preservation of open space.

Policy LU3.9: Promote mixed-use activity centers and cluster development that provide a mix of housing types and land uses, while maintaining community character and densities, consistent with Community Plans.

Action Item LU3.1: Enact zoning regulations that limit building on hillsides and prohibit building on ridgelines.

Action Item LU3.2: Enact zoning regulations that limit building near rivers, streams, natural washes and drainage areas.

Action Item LU3.3: Collaborate with community liaisons on new development proposals to ensure compatibility and acceptance by the community.

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Goal LU4: Ensure that land use policy addresses the need for workforce and affordable housing.

- Action Item LU4.1:** Identify and implement a range of incentives to promote development of workforce and affordable housing.
- Action Item LU4.2:** Apply for grants, aid and funding from regional, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to support a Yavapai County Affordable Housing Initiative.
- Action Item LU4.3:** Acquire and designate funds for an Affordable Housing Initiative to develop incentives supportive of workforce and affordable housing.

Goal LU5: Ensure that land use policy focuses on sustainability, resiliency, regeneration and environmental stewardship while nurturing tourism, agricultural and ranching economies.

Policy LU5.1: Land use policies will manage growth in a way that protects private property rights and minimizes environmental impacts.

Policy LU5.2: Foster sustainability by promoting commercial projects in designated commercial zones, attracting employment and shopping uses to those areas.

Policy LU5.3: Discourage inappropriate land uses by rejecting high-density developments in unique, sensitive, watershed areas and in areas with inadequate infrastructure.

Policy LU5.4: Promote regional collaboration by partnering with federal and state agencies, communities and private landowners on the protection of environmentally sensitive lands and open space, and on the preservation of dark skies.

Policy LU5.5: Reduce the impact of new development on environmentally sensitive areas, including native wildlife habitat and corridors.

Policy LU5.6: Support integrated conservation design, clustered subdivisions, density bonuses and transfer of development rights to conserve portions of a property that are environmentally sensitive or for designation as shared public use or open space purposes.

Action Item LU5.1: Seek certification as a Dark Sky County.

Action Item LU5.2: Establish uniform lighting codes that are dark sky compliant.

Action Item LU5.3: Collaborate with other counties to lobby for and enact change at the state level, including but not limited to, legislation that supplants local control such as regulating unplanned lot splitting and unregulated wells.

Action Item LU5.4: Mediate the cooperative management of public lands and archaeological resources between communities and public lands within the County.

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Action Item LU5.5: Identify sites of scenic interest and recreational opportunities to help ensure they are preserved for future generations and serve as powerful economic engines for the tourism-based sector of our economy.

Goal LU6: Concentrate new development near existing infrastructure and services, while conserving ecosystems, open space and landscapes.

Policy LU6.1: Strongly support compact infill development in existing higher density urban, suburban and rural activity centers before more remote lands are considered for development.

Policy LU6.2: Direct new higher density development to the growth areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy LU6.3: Seek and consider input from the municipality during the decision-making process if a development proposal is within a designated growth area adjacent to an incorporated city or town.

Policy LU6.4: Support market feasibility studies, cost/benefit analyses and broad public input to help determine when new large-scale development in unincorporated areas is appropriate.

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Protecting the Natural Environment (Environmental Element)

This section focuses on how the natural environment can be preserved, while at the same time fostering a robust economy. The discussion emphasizes the value of collaboration and the need to prepare for a more uncertain climate future. Other sections of this Vision Statement discuss the value of open spaces, water resources, supplying clean energy and instituting land-use planning and groundwater policies, all of which relate to protecting the health of the natural environment.

Yavapai County stakeholders must work together based on a shared vision for a prosperous future. Keep Sedona Beautiful believes that protecting the County's natural environment is a necessary element of long-term economic vitality. It is the richness of the natural world that attracts residents and visitors to the region. Residents want to live in a healthy and safe environment, while the money spent by visitors helps to maintain and sustain that environment.

Science-based Analysis

Science-based solutions to the regional challenges of climate change and drought are needed to protect habitats and landscapes, so the cumulative effects of human activity remain in balance with the needs of the natural ecosystem. Recent studies characterize the changes in the Southwest due to rising temperatures and prolonged mega-drought as potentially transformational.²⁸ In strategizing to protect the natural environment, Yavapai County should use the most recent science-based research and programs. For example, the University of Arizona Climate Assessment for the Southwest²⁹ focuses *"on bringing science research and applications to the people of the state of Arizona."*

As noted previously in the section on sustainability, Arizona cities are adopting science-based sustainability measures such as climate action plans and sustainability plans. Corporations are aggressively moving to limit their carbon footprints and are investing in regions that provide stable and renewable energy. Yavapai County will save taxpayer money by collaborating with other counties and cities in the development and implementation of a climate action plan.

Preserving Riparian Areas

The current prolonged drought presents a direct threat to economic health. Water is our most vulnerable resource as this pattern of hotter and drier weather persists. The Verde River watershed provides water filtration and essential groundwater recharge that supports the regional economy and life itself. For science-based decision making, we need to utilize existing studies and data that identify critical habitat areas and the effect of climate stressors. Using that information, we must prioritize actions to mitigate the adverse changes that are projected for the region.

²⁸ <https://www.swcasc.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/SWCSCworkshop%20FactSheet.pdf>
[https://www.cell.com/one-earth/fulltext/S2590-3322\(20\)30428-0](https://www.cell.com/one-earth/fulltext/S2590-3322(20)30428-0)

²⁹ <https://climas.arizona.edu/>

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Streams, springs, and wetlands in Yavapai County, along with their associated wetlands, riparian areas and floodplains, all rely on discharge from groundwater to maintain base flow, shallow alluvial groundwater in the near vicinity and a natural flood regime. This includes, but is not limited to, the Verde River, the Hassayampa River, Granite Creek, Oak Creek, Wet Beaver Creek, West Clear Creek, Sycamore Creek, Spring Creek and the Agua Fria River.

Riparian and wetland areas comprise less than 0.5% of the surface area of Arizona, yet they support 80% of Arizona's wildlife species within their floodplains. These riparian areas also serve as wildlife movement corridors and provide vital habitats for a variety of invertebrates and plants - many of which occur nowhere else in North America. The Verde River, one of the few remaining rivers that flows year-round in Arizona, supports these ecosystems. The river is vital to Yavapai County's economy, providing a significant number of jobs in agriculture and recreation. Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of riparian areas for both the economy and ecosystem.³⁰

Water sources can easily be degraded by human activities. Ground disturbance can degrade aquatic environments through changes in hydrology and water quality. When groundwater levels drop because of human use and reductions in precipitation, springs, streams and parts of perennial rivers can dry up. Community groups in Prescott and the Verde Valley continue to study the Verde River and its watershed. In 2020, Friends of the Verde River presented the Verde River Watershed Report Card³¹ that provides a roadmap for a healthy river system. They rate the current health of the Verde River as only C+. The Report Card also documented the continuing decline in river water flow.

County leadership, in collaboration with local organizations, is needed to provide guidance, incentives and support to private landowners for adopting and using conservation and restoration practices. The County should bring the unincorporated areas together to manage human-caused impacts on land, water and natural processes. *River Friendly Living*³² is an exemplary program being developed by Friends of the Verde River that will include a certification system to evaluate protection of Verde River water quality and quantity.

Yavapai County includes the only Wild and Scenic Rivers in the State of Arizona: Fossil Creek and the Verde River. In addition, Oak Creek has been designated an *Outstanding Arizona Water*.³³ These priceless resources bring considerable tourist revenue to the region along with supplying water for the built and natural environments.

Threats to the Land and Its Inhabitants

³⁰ <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1432.pdf>;
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/Water-Summary-Reports/National-Water-Summary-Wetland-Resources-Arizona.pdf>

³¹ <https://verderiver.org/watershed-report-card/>

³² <https://verderiver.org/river-friendly-living/>

³³ <https://legacy.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/download/oaw.pdf>

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As Yavapai County becomes ever more attractive to tourists seeking outdoor adventure, effective planning is needed to save wildlife and habitat from destructive practices. For example, intrusion by Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) onto National Forest land is causing significant environmental damage. Due to the fragile nature of the soil and vegetation, the impact of this abuse is long lasting. The County should collaborate with federal agencies to identify and implement robust enforcement methods that limit this degradation, as well as to establish educational and monitoring programs.

The County must identify and preserve rare and critical habitats, as well as the endangered and threatened species³⁴ that live there. Collaboration with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, can play a vital role in identifying these habitat areas. These areas should be designated for special protection on the Yavapai County land use map.

Species are threatened by both natural changes and human activity. A countywide commitment to fostering agriculture based on non-toxic practices will protect water, land and vegetation from harmful pesticides and herbicides, adding to species diversity rather than reducing it. The County should also encourage non-toxic herbicides and pesticides for both commercial and home use.

Native, low-water-use plantings are best suited to the soil, temperature range and moisture within the County. Plantings of locally native plants will reduce groundwater pumping for thirsty non-native species, reduce erosion, provide food for migrating and local birds and help retain the regional sense of place. The County should encourage use of locally native plants in landscaping and provide incentives to developers who commit to exclusive use of such plants and/or xeriscaping.

Yavapai County forests were stressed following the 2002-2003 Pine Bark Beetle infestation³⁵ particularly in the Prescott area. This infestation was due to both natural and human activity: dense forest stands, fire suppression, reduced precipitation, ongoing urbanization and past grazing practices. Today, trees are dying due to on-going reduction of snow and rain, leaving the standing and fallen trees more susceptible to fire. Ecosystem health challenges will continue during this period of rising year-round temperatures. Additionally, unusually strong winds, torrential rain, dust storms and dry lightning are occurring more frequently. These novel conditions challenge preparedness. Some trees in the region are experiencing the stress of a shift in the climate, while wildfire is an increasing threat where parched rangeland abuts tinder-dry forests.

Wildfire

While wildfires play a role in limiting fuel build-up and maintaining ecosystem health, planning must consider the ever-growing threat of wildfire to already developed areas. The County must provide residents safe exit from areas of potential fire by enforcing zoning that focuses

³⁴ <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-listings-by-current-range-county?fips=04025>

³⁵ <https://cals.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/fh/PrescottBarkBeetles.pdf>

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development in fire-manageable zones. The recent fire in Paradise, California is an example that community planners should heed. A July 2019 article published by AZ Central highlighted the extreme risk of wildfire faced by smaller communities in the American West.³⁶ Fire destroys habitat and disrupts natural systems. Fire degrades air quality while it is occurring and increases erosion during the next rainstorm or run-off event. A recent study³⁷ has demonstrated that wildfire smoke is one of the worst forms of air pollution. Land use planning should limit development in the most fire-vulnerable pockets of the County.

Air Quality

Air quality is an essential part of a healthy ecosystem. Yavapai County currently has exceptionally clean air. That stated, human-caused pollution in all forms compromises the wellbeing of residents. The nation and the Country are on the brink of a renewable energy revolution. Auto manufacturers are committing to phasing out internal combustion engines. The County will need new infrastructure to support this transition. Yavapai County should play a key role in promoting the development of this new infrastructure and the transition to the use of electric vehicles.

Use of Gray Water

Gray water (also called greywater) is a resource that can and should be tapped to reduce use of potable water.

“Greywater is water that has been used for washing dishes, laundering clothes, or bathing. Essentially, any water, other than toilet [and kitchen sink] wastes, draining from a household is greywater. Although this used water may contain grease, food particles, hair, and any number of other impurities, it may still be suitable for reuse [such as irrigating backyard landscaping]. Reusing greywater serves two purposes: it reduces the amount of freshwater needed to supply a household, and reduces the amount of waste water entering sewer or septic systems.”³⁸ (text in brackets is added for clarity)

Arizona Administrative Code § 18-9-D701³⁹ establishes specific conditions for the residential use of gray water, simplifying the task of promoting its use in Yavapai County. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has created a brochure that assists in understanding the use of gray water in the home.⁴⁰

Collaboration

It is essential that the County work collaboratively with federal land use agencies, tribal and town governments, unincorporated communities and private landowners to minimize the

³⁶ <https://www.azcentral.com/in-depth/news/local/arizona-wildfires/2019/07/22/wildfire-risks-more-than-500-spots-have-greater-hazard-than-paradise/1434502001/>

³⁷ <https://phys.org/news/2021-03-fine-particulate-wildfire-pollution-sources.html>

³⁸ https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_m/M106/welcome.html

³⁹ <https://legacy.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/download/rules/1.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://legacy.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/download/graybro.pdf>

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negative impacts of future development on environmentally sensitive features, wildlife habitat and water resources. This is simply good business practice.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal NE1: Lead collaborative efforts among County stakeholders to address opportunities and challenges for a thriving, healthy natural environment, recognizing the resources that all County residents share.

Policy NE1.1: Apply for grants and fund community outreach programs supporting healthy environmental practices and recognition of diverse cultural values.

Policy NE1.2: Hold stakeholders accountable for playing a proactive role in protecting the agricultural and tourist-based sectors of our economy through protection of natural resources: water, air, soil, species diversity, scenic features and cultural resources.

Action Item NE1.1: Collaborate with government, tribal, business and non-profit interests to procure funding to mitigate degradation of riparian and forested areas through best practices, such as reduction of invasive species, planting native plants, tree thinning and use of downed timber.

Action Item NE1.2: Inform the public on cost-effective means to reduce potable water consumption through the appropriate use of gray water and treated wastewater.

Action Item NE1.3: Collaborate with federal land agencies to develop a system to monitor and prevent abuse (trash, speeding, fire rings, OHV proliferation) on public lands.

Action Item NE1.4: Work collaboratively with local organizations to provide guidance, incentives and support to private landowners for conservation and restoration practices.

Goal NE2: Enact policies that protect sensitive ecological systems.

Policy NE2.1: Protect sensitive watershed zones (riparian areas and grassland sponges) using science-based methods that apply knowledge of ecological stressors, such as drought, higher temperatures and groundwater pumping.

Policy NE2.2: Reduce the impact of commercial development and housing encroachment on sensitive surface-water areas (rivers, streams, springs, seeps, marshes) by setting aside and preserving habitat-sensitive and water-sensitive features.

Action Item NE2.1: Use scientific and cultural studies of sensitive zones to apply

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area-specific protection policies, including overlay zones, that protect habitat for endangered and threatened species, as well as connective corridors that help ensure species and ecosystem health.

Action Item NE2.2: Maintain low-density zoning in rural areas to provide for wildlife corridors, fire safety, prevent habitat loss and promote ecological adaptation and balance.

Action Item NE2.3: Evaluate and implement science-based regulations to protect surface water sources by reducing groundwater pumping. These will include native plant landscaping, xeriscaping, gray water uses and treated water use.

Action Item NE2.4: Identify, adopt and enforce mitigation actions for dealing with the ongoing mega-drought.

Action Item NE2.5: Identify, adopt and enforce mitigation actions to reduce carbon and particulate air pollution.

Action Item NE2.6: Establish monitoring systems to provide air quality data in sensitive areas, such as in urban zones for vehicle emissions, in rural zones for dust and in communities for wood fire particulates.

Action Item NE2.7: Use a county-wide map to limit development in the most fire-vulnerable pockets of the County.

Action Item NE2.8: Use county-wide, area-specific data to enforce local air quality control measures, such as restrictions on fires and wood burning.

Action Item NE2.9: Collaborate with federal agencies to identify and implement methods to control destructive OHV use and to establish educational and monitoring programs.

Action Item NE2.10: Provide incentives for the expansion of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the County.

Action Item NE2.11: Enact a county-wide noise ordinance.

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The Importance of Open Space (Open Space Element)

Yavapai County's outstanding scenery and healthy natural environment attract people who enjoy its diverse recreational opportunities, as well as its many historic and cultural sites. Outdoor recreation is a driving economic force in Yavapai County. Residents and visitors experience the many benefits provided by open spaces, including running, biking, birding, fishing and hiking, as well as the economic benefits to their property values and the environmental benefits of protecting biodiversity and ecological health. Accordingly, the County should strengthen protection of open space and develop additional recreation opportunities that include parks and trails.

As the County's population increases, there will be a greater need to manage open space, providing recreational opportunities, while guarding against overuse. Key issues include:

- The management of the wildland/urban interfaces
- Accommodating diverse uses
- Protecting natural, historic and cultural resources
- Protecting and conserving natural habitats
- Ensuring that management agencies collaborate and cooperate

The discussion below presents a vision of an integrated system of recreational areas and facilities that are developed and maintained through public/private partnerships, to serve local residents, as well as visitors to the County. The policies identified here will promote the need to provide diverse recreational opportunities, while preserving and protecting the County's scenic character and ecological systems.

Yavapai County Parks

Yavapai County maintains community parks across the County. These parks provide benefits to the communities in which they are located. A study by the National Association of Realtors found there was a premium for homes near parks, trails and open space.⁴¹ The market value of a home so located is generally higher than those that are not, approximately 20% for those adjacent to open space. Parks and open space not only provide opportunities for recreation, but also contribute measurable economic benefits to residents and local communities.

These parks often provide venues for a variety of recreational and educational experiences. However, the County does not schedule events in the parks. All events must be scheduled by outside entities. The County should seek public-private partnerships to add value to these

⁴¹ <https://www.nar.realtor/blogs/spaces-to-places/10-minute-walk-close-to-home-parks-create-long-term-value>; [https://www.nar.realtor/smart_growth.nsf/docfiles/ocg_winter09.pdf/\\$FILE/ocg_winter09.pdf](https://www.nar.realtor/smart_growth.nsf/docfiles/ocg_winter09.pdf/$FILE/ocg_winter09.pdf)

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public parks and offer an expanded array of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to these communities, including a regional trail system, with trailheads at these parks.

Open Space and Public Lands

Open space on public lands comes in many forms in Yavapai County, including natural areas, national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, designated wilderness areas, state parks and national monuments. Virtually all federal lands surrounding existing communities are natural open space and are available for recreation. Many of these lands draw national and international attention as tourism destinations. These natural areas include hiking trails and wildlife observation areas. Some include educational experiences.

Some state and private lands feature important cultural or recreational assets, or scenic viewsheds, regarded by the public as high priorities for retention as open space. The County should play an important role in establishing coordinated efforts among jurisdictions, local residents, scientists, public land agencies and other organizations to identify lands with the most significant resources. The County should then seek funding for conservation and permanent protection of these lands.

The County should also play a key role in coordinating with local volunteer organizations to create a regional trail system that connects recreational open spaces. The regional trail connectivity between these spaces should provide access points to local communities. The result would be a network of public lands connected through scenic trail corridors that provide recreational opportunities, economic development and public enjoyment.

Trails

Nonmotorized regional trails throughout the County can be used to connect people to parks, wilderness areas, open space, neighborhoods, schools, shopping and work. They can be used for recreation, exercise and commuting, and used by walkers, equestrians, hikers, backpackers, runners, birders and bicyclists.

Large areas of open space appeal to many tourists, making these regional trails increasingly important and relevant economically. The popularity of these hiking and biking trails can be increased by access to services such as campgrounds, hotels, stores and restaurants at portal points along the trail routes. Providing accessibility to and a variety of experiences in remote and protected pristine areas can add to Yavapai County's environmentally based economy.

The County should begin to create a regional trail system by taking an inventory of existing county-wide trails that are recognized or maintained by a land management agency, such as the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Many primitive trails (hiking or equestrian) lie within designated wilderness areas that are closed to bicycles and other forms of wheeled transportation. The

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result of the inventory will likely show a need to provide a range of trail opportunities for people of varying capabilities and interests, with connections to trails and trailheads closer to where people live. Focus should be placed on upgrading and maintaining existing highly used formal trails.

The Wildland/Urban interface is of particular concern, as 'social trails' tend to evolve, creating a maze of routes through open spaces along adjacent neighborhoods. These user-created trails are not sanctioned or maintained and are often poorly located, leading to unwanted erosion and adverse scenic impacts, as well as disturbance to wildlife and their habitats.⁴² This can be in part corrected by creating designated trailheads, removing unwanted trails and improving existing trails by relocating or redesigning them. The result will be a logically connected system of trails, along with a signage system.

Access to regional trails should be addressed before approving new subdivisions or other large developments. Developers submitting proposals should work with the County to coordinate with the Parks Department, federal agencies, sovereign tribal nations and/or other management agencies to address these needs. In many cases, access can be provided through trail easements that connect new developments to adjacent open space, natural areas and parks.

Recreation: Collaboration & Coordination

Most public recreation and open spaces within the County are managed by the federal government, through the USFS, BLM and the National Park Service (NPS). Additional lands are managed by Arizona State Parks, Yavapai County, local municipalities or tribal nations. The NPS manages a variety of sites, including national monuments. The BLM and USFS manage vast amounts of undeveloped lands. Additionally, because of the checkerboard nature of land ownership between private and State Trust lands, ranchers often provide access to their lands for recreational purposes, which is particularly important to hunters.

Future planning to support enhanced recreational opportunities will require a coordinated effort among recreation providers. Collaboration is essential to identify, protect and interpret historic routes and trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries. The County is in a unique position to help coordinate land managers, trail users, neighborhoods, developers and interest groups in finding common solutions for expanding responsible recreational opportunities, while protecting natural resources.

⁴² <https://modernconservationist.com/sustainable-vs-social-trails-why-you-should-ignore-psychology-and-take-the-road-most-traveled/>

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Creative solutions will require innovative funding mechanisms. The Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience⁴³ is a prime example of a collaborative partnership between the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the Arizona Wildlife Federation and USFS that has proven very successful in expanding outdoor opportunities within open space, using shared resources and grant funding.

Natural Open Space

A developer of a subdivision or a planned area development can meet their open space requirement by simply not placing structures on tracts of land, even if that land has been significantly disturbed by the building process. However, the most valuable open space is land left in its natural state, as undisturbed as practical. Native flora and fauna continue to thrive in such places. Natural viewsheds are preserved.

While there are reasons to promote the modification of some natural open spaces, such as to remove invasive non-native species, Yavapai County should provide incentives through the zoning code for developments that leave open space in its natural state.

Permanent Protection

Critical environmentally or culturally sensitive areas should be permanently protected from development. When the County develops its land use density map, these areas should be clearly identified and set aside as non-developable land. Candidate areas include, but are not limited to, riparian habitat, wildlife corridors, hydrologic recharge areas, ephemeral streams, floodplains and habitat for endangered and threatened species.

Goal OS1: Plan for and provide a variety of recreational, cultural, historic and educational opportunities throughout the County, in parks, as well as in natural areas.

- Policy OS1.1:** Model exemplary service levels and conservation practices in park and facility development, management, maintenance and operations.
- Policy OS1.2:** Explore a variety of alternative development and management methods for parks and natural areas, including collaborative efforts in order to reduce the costs of managing the facilities and land.
- Policy OS1.3:** Seek and consider public input in the development of new park plans, the acquisition of open space and regional trail planning to ensure that needs of residents are being met.
- Policy OS1.4:** Include public recreation amenities in the design of new housing developments.

⁴³ <https://www.azwatchwildlife.com/>

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Action Item OS1.1: Secure reliable funding to ensure adequate resources for parks, trails and natural areas.

Goal OS2: Build upon the cooperative opportunities between county, federal and state agencies, sovereign tribal nations, cities and private land managers to increase the outdoor tourism economy, while preserving high-value natural and cultural resources in the County.

Policy OS2.1: Promote and support collaboration between trail managers, trail users, neighborhoods, governments and tribal nations to improve trail safety and access, user information, volunteer stewardship and the connectivity of a regional trail system.

Policy OS2.2: Explore creative methods to fund a significant open-space system that meets the needs of residents and visitors and builds an interconnected network of scenic regional trails that provide recreational and commuting opportunities.

Policy OS2.3: Value scenic views and viewshed corridors that are part of an integrated regional trail system that connects parks, open space and recreation opportunities.

Action Item OS2.1: Collaborate to provide connectivity of regional trails between existing open spaces and across jurisdictions.

Action Item OS2.2: Support and help coordinate volunteer groups that work on conservation, parks and open-space projects.

Action Item OS2.3: Coordinate with the Arizona State Land Department, the Arizona Department of Transportation and tribal nations for the acquisition of easements to provide and enhance regional trail connectivity between areas of high resource and scenic value.

Goal OS3: Provide for the conservation and stewardship of important natural areas, and to support the protection of public lands that provide open space and recreation value.

Policy OS3.1: Support the conservation of important natural resources through collaboration in acquiring and managing natural areas.

Policy OS3.2: Encourage the protection of environmentally sensitive features, cultural resources and cultural sites located in natural areas, or on public lands.

Policy OS3.3: Support access to open spaces for all residents and visitors, where suitable.

Policy OS3.4: Support a scenic corridor approach to connecting and growing the existing system of natural areas and public lands.

Policy OS3.5: Manage the recreational use of County-owned lands in a manner that reduces adverse impacts to communities and the

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- environment, and increases opportunities for educational and economic benefits.
- Policy OS3.6:** Strive to connect open space and places of recreation with a system of regional trails to create an interconnected recreation network.
- Policy OS3.7:** Collaborate with partners from across the County in a multi-agency, multijurisdictional effort.
- Action Item OS3.1:** Identify environmentally sensitive features, cultural resources and cultural sites, and protect them from development.
- Action Item OS3.2:** Provide incentives to developers to set aside open space in its natural state.
- Goal OS4:** Enhance the existing regional trail system by promoting more access and managed access between communities, public lands and activity centers in order to create a network of linked open space, trails and recreational areas.
- Policy OS4.1:** Support a comprehensive approach to addressing the need for public lands access, continuity of trail networks, provisions for nonmotorized circulation and natural resource protection through community trails plans.
- Policy OS4.2:** Coordinate with communities to identify and develop portal points between local trails and a regional trail system that will promote access to high-value recreation and scenic lands.
- Policy OS4.3:** Protect environmentally sensitive features, cultural resources and cultural and historic sites. To this end, a regional trail system should accommodate an appropriate level of use, while minimizing adverse impacts to natural resources.
- Policy OS4.4:** Proposed new development projects must provide for public land access, by including the design and maintenance of local trails and trailheads to access the regional trail system, in coordination with community groups, land management agencies and the Arizona State Land Department.
- Policy OS4.5:** Encourage regional planning of a nonmotorized circulation infrastructure, with trails and bike lanes that link destination areas, community activity centers and designated access points to public lands.
- Action Item OS4.1:** Remove and rehabilitate social trails and non-designated trails.
- Action Item OS4.2:** Require the developers of new subdivisions to provide access to regional trails on adjacent public lands, when feasible.
- Action Item OS4.3:** Require trail development to access parks, schools, neighborhoods, community forums and markets, and to encourage exercise and promote general wellness, as part of

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the community planning process.

Action Item OS4.4: Provide opportunities to for non-vehicular circulation by adding trails separated from vehicular traffic.

Action Item OS4.5: Provide new regional trail routes, linking areas of open space that have high recreational value.

Goal OS5: Ensure critical environmental and cultural areas are permanently protected.

Action Item OS5.1: Identify on the County density map critically sensitive areas, such as cultural areas, riparian habitat, wildlife corridors, hydrologic recharge areas, floodplains and habitat for endangered and threatened species, and exclude them from development.

Action Item OS5.2: Use open space buffers to separate communities and preserve their identities.

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Ensuring Effective and Efficient Mobility (Transportation Element)

This section addresses the responsibility of the County to support needed infrastructure that is well planned to serve residents and visitors with transportation systems that support healthy and efficient travel opportunities. Those systems should minimize adverse impacts to the natural environment.

In this discussion, we do not address state or federal laws that may apply.

Yavapai County collaborates with state and federal agencies, as well as with private transportation companies, to meet access and mobility needs: roadways, transit services, infrastructure for alternatives to single-passenger vehicle travel and multimodal corridors. In these coordinated efforts, the County should balance the needs of a growing population with the responsibility to preserve the County's rural and scenic character and sense of place.

The Future is Electric

The transportation sector contributes a large share of emissions that adversely affects both public health and safety. As part of its Climate Action Plan, Yavapai County should implement a countywide effort to reign in greenhouse gas by first developing a greenhouse gas inventory and then by setting goals for its reduction. The County should aggressively support the transition of the fueling infrastructure away from fossil fuels by promoting EV charging stations for private and public transport. Nearly all vehicle manufacturers are in the process of transitioning to an all-electric fleet. This transition is inevitable and should be strongly encouraged by the County.

Public Transportation

Public transportation serves commuters and visitors by reducing traffic congestion and building community spirit. In 2018, residents of Yavapai County had a median age of 53.4, an age when being a tourist becomes especially appealing. With the assistance of public transit vans, residents can become tourists within their rural region, without having to drive for hours to shop in community centers or to explore its natural wonders.

As tourism grows within the region, some areas of Yavapai County are impacted more than others. The impacts present opportunities, as well as perils. Increased traffic brings air pollution to the more urbanized zones, while dust and noise plague the rural areas. Increased revenues help local economies and support some traffic reduction strategies. An improved non-motorized circulation network within Yavapai County will help meet the increasing traffic challenges.

Air Transportation

While Prescott has a regional airport located at the periphery of the city, both Cottonwood and Sedona experience significant noise pollution due to the location of their airports. In

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collaboration with the communities in the Verde Valley, Yavapai County should explore the possibility of creating a Verde Valley Regional Airport that can serve the area.

Environmental Impacts

Conservation-based transportation planning⁴⁴ is an appropriate way to enhance the growing tourism industry, while reducing pollution, preventing habitat fragmentation, not compromising scenic viewsheds or degrading watersheds and reducing excessive noise and dust pollution.

The County should develop non-vehicular pathways as byways to avoid main thoroughfares and provide connectivity between open spaces for commuting purposes. An example of this is along Williamson Valley Road. Wide, graded surfaces with a buffer between the trail and roadway will provide safe travel and relieve traffic pressure. Electric bicycles fall into the category of transport that could use these paths, and can be used by residents and visitors to save on fuel cost for shopping trips and other purposes. In fact, there is likely to be explosive growth in the use of electric bicycles as more companies enter this space, prices fall and quality increases dramatically. Permeable, but dust-inhibiting surfaces should be used on non-vehicular paths whenever possible and compatible with surrounding environmental conditions. Equestrian connections should be considered in planning these pathways.

The County should develop a dust proof, permeable road standard with countywide application of a non-toxic, dust-inhibiting road treatment on unpaved county roads that are frequented by OHVs.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal EM.1: Develop a circulation infrastructure that promotes energy efficiency, protects air quality and preserves historic, scenic, cultural and environmental resources.

Policy EM1.1: Pursue county-wide, inter-city mass transit to help visitors and transit-dependent residents with their lifestyle needs, while promoting a reduction in single-passenger vehicle use.

Policy EM1.2: Encourage the expanded use of electric vehicles.

Policy EM1.3: Encourage the expanded use of electric bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation.

Action Item EM1.1: Promote park-and-ride infrastructure, ride-sharing businesses, van transport and a bus transit system based on a growing electric vehicle (EV) support system.

Action Item EM1.2: Develop a strategic plan to link ride-sharing, rural on-demand transit vans and commuter bus service to regional employment centers and services.

⁴⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-transportation>

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Action item EM1.3: Promote the use of existing parking lots to support a park-and-ride system to keep cars out of congested centers and to transport passengers between communities and rural destinations.

Action Item EM1.4: Seek funding from the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and other funding sources to improve public transit throughout the County.

Action Item EM1.5: Enact and enforce a County-wide covered-load ordinance.

Goal EM2: Improve non-motorized circulation networks and provide more opportunities for alternative modes of travel.

Policy EM2.1: Provide a range of conservation-based, non-motorized vehicle use options that are safe and efficient, and complement local communities and the natural environment.

Action Item EM2.1: Develop non-vehicular pathways as byways to avoid main roadways, and encourage the County to create alternative connectivity between open spaces for commuting purposes.

Action Item EN.2.2: Develop a dust-proof, permeable road standard.

Action Item EN.2.3: Offer to apply non-toxic dust inhibiting road treatment on unpaved roads the County maintains that are frequented by OHVs.

Action Item EM2.4: Expand and extend the existing non-vehicular circulation network within the County to provide a practical alternative to vehicular travel.

Goal EM3: Support air travel opportunities, while minimizing the impacts on human and natural communities.

Policy EM3.1: Engage in collaborative efforts to provide community and environmentally sensitive air travel.

Action Item EM3.1: Explore alternative routes for freight and passengers, which reduce air and noise pollution in sensitive areas.

Action Item EM3.2: Collaborate with agencies to renovate and/or expand existing facilities so lighting does not adversely impact dark sky or residential areas.

Action Item EM3.3: Collaborate with appropriate companies and agencies to specify no-fly zones and/or limits on flight hours to protect communities and sensitive, scenic areas.

Action Item EM3.4: Explore creation of a Verde Valley Regional Airport.

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Goal EM4: Coordinate town and County plans and infrastructure investments with regional vision for public health and safety.

Policy Item EM4.1: Support a coordinated transportation approach providing for residents' safety in unincorporated towns and on connecting roads.

Action Item EM4.1: Add sidewalks, curb extensions, crosswalks and parking that connect neighborhoods to create more walkable and economically viable communities.

Action Item EM4.2: Support litter lifting programs and other similar efforts by coordinating with ADOT.

Action Item EM4.3: Collaborate with ADOT to require Adopt-a-Highway volunteers to provide roadside trash pickup on a frequent, regular basis in response to increased roadside trash.

Action Item EM4.4: Collaborate with ADOT and local stakeholders to provide timely removal of roadside fire hazard brush.

Action Item EM4.5: Aggressively transition away from fossil fuels by promoting EV charging stations for private and public transport.

Action Item EM4.6: Transition the County vehicle fleet to all-electric as soon as it is financially viable.

Action Item EM4.7: Seek funding and collaborate with the USFS for enforcement of speed limits for all vehicles, especially OHVs on county-maintained dirt roads.

Action Item EM4.8: Improve bicycle safety along highways by collaborating with ADOT to improve bike lane markings and signage with protected roadside bike corridors wherever possible.

Supplying Clean Energy (Energy Element)

Electrical Energy

Yavapai County can be a leader in innovative and responsible energy and natural resource management, while supporting secure and clean energy technologies for its residents. This section addresses ways to support vibrant economic growth and balancing that growth with the protection of the County's natural resources and the quality of life for residents. It outlines the County's strong interest in increasing local energy resources by:

- Articulating goals that promote energy conservation and energy efficiency in new and existing buildings
- Providing support for the development of locally produced energy with renewable energy projects

Specific goals for energy conservation and locally produced energy projects are shown below along with policies that:

1. Support the development of local renewable energy sources, including, but not limited to dispersed solar generation (rooftop) and use of parking lot shade structures for solar placement.
2. Provide guidance for the expansion of renewable energy sources, while avoiding, minimizing and mitigating adverse impacts.
3. Account for the value placed on distinctive natural landscapes
4. Promote the conservation of natural resources to sustain the unique ecosystems of our region
5. Encourage sustainable development and measure progress toward goals

Conservation and Energy Efficiency

One way in which Yavapai County can have a direct impact on the future of its energy needs is by strengthening provisions in its building codes that promote energy conservation and energy efficiency. In addition to reducing the demand for energy, these provisions will reduce residential, commercial and industrial utility costs, reduce the need for upgrading existing utility infrastructure as growth occurs and reduce emissions from fossil fuel energy plants.

To encourage energy efficiency in new construction, Yavapai County should consider adopting the most current International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)⁴⁵, which increases efficiency compared to the 2006 code through increased requirements for insulation, air tightness of exterior walls and increased lighting and heating system efficiency. Building codes should also be enhanced to allow and encourage energy conservation technologies, such as solar water heaters and small-scale geo-exchange systems, which use the constant earth temperature at shallow depths for home heating and cooling. This process requires digging onsite trenches into

⁴⁵ <https://energyefficientcodes.org/iecc/>; <http://www.florenceaz.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Directory%20of%20Documents/codes/International%20Energy%20Conservation%20Code%202012%20Edition.pdf>

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which exchange systems are placed, and the trenches are then backfilled. These systems can be laid under landscaping, parking lots or driveways.

Yavapai County should also:

1. Require builders to use the ENERGY STAR standard
2. Provide a checklist of sustainable building materials and technologies to builders
3. Offer a Sustainable Building Award to builders who use such materials and technologies or who retrofit existing buildings using them, based on energy audits
4. Publicly recognize builders and developers who use passive solar, thermal mass, insulation, overhanging eaves and vegetation to significantly reduce a building's energy consumption

Dark sky ordinances also provide energy conservation by requiring more efficiently directed night lighting and by capping their lumen output.

Distributed generation of energy⁴⁶

Coal-fired power plants are being phased out throughout the nation. The coal-fired Navajo Generating Station located outside of Page produced 2.2 GW of energy for Arizona, New Mexico and California, making it one of the largest coal plants in the country. The plant ceased commercial generation in November 2019, with the complete decommissioning projected to take approximately three years.

In addition to the reduction of energy consumption through conservation, alternative energy sources are needed to meet projected future energy demands within Yavapai County. Fortunately, new distributed power generation technologies are emerging. These clean and renewable technologies are a rapidly growing segment of the energy sector. In addition to providing power, distributed power generation technologies provide a higher level of resilience and security to the power grid by diversifying and localizing energy production.

Photovoltaic technology is rapidly becoming more efficient and affordable. The installation of distributed residential solar energy systems within Yavapai County has expanded greatly due to falling costs, combined with state and federal subsidies and the availability of more than 300 days of sunshine per year. The County should encourage and incentivize further development of residential and small-business solar.

In addition to residential and small-business solar energy installations, there is now an emergence of localized utility-scale solar energy systems. As more and more distributed energy sources come online, new energy systems will reduce the need for new transmission lines by making more efficient use of existing transmission lines and corridors. In doing so, they also reduce the adverse impacts to wildlife and other natural resources.

⁴⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/energy/distributed-generation-electricity-and-its-environmental-impacts>

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The County can reduce barriers to the installation of distributed solar energy systems on homes and small businesses by allowing the installation of solar panels with only a building permit. In low-density residential areas, the County should also allow the installation of distributed, residential, wind-energy systems with a building permit.

In addition, use permits should be used to allow net-energy-generating systems on buildings. Such buildings could combine conservation and efficiency measures with on-site solar power production to generate more energy than they use. This power could then be distributed via the existing grid to neighboring areas. A provision should also be made for issuing conditional use permits that allow subdivisions and multifamily residential units to install shared solar energy systems and community micro-grids.

“A Community Microgrid is a coordinated local grid area served by one or more distribution substations and supported by high penetrations of local renewables and other distributed energy resources (DER), such as energy storage and demand response.

Community Microgrids represent a new approach for designing and operating the electric grid, relying heavily on DER to achieve a more sustainable, secure, and cost-effective energy system while providing indefinite, renewables-driven backup power for prioritized loads. Community Microgrids provide communities unparalleled economic, environmental, and resilience benefits.”⁴⁷

By generating significantly more of our energy locally, we can increase our energy security, provide greater resiliency and reduce emissions.

Utility-scale generation of energy

As part of their ongoing AZ Sun program, APS plans to develop 500 MW of utility-owned photovoltaic solar power plants in Arizona by 2025. APS has already installed a 20 MW photovoltaic solar power plant in Chino Valley. That power plant has over 80,000 solar panels and spans 235 acres north of Prescott.

These utility-scale solar energy projects impact surrounding communities and the natural environment much more than smaller solar energy systems on residences and small businesses. Adverse impacts include disturbing large land areas, constructing new roads and other infrastructure and obstructing scenic viewsheds, as well as impacts on neighbors, such as noise, lighting, introduction of noxious weeds, existing views, dark skies and reduction of property values.

The siting of these projects will involve tradeoffs between the need for clean, renewable energy and the costs to wildlife, vegetation and mitigating erosion. Ground-mounted, utility-scale, solar facilities may require extensive clearing of vegetation, grading and fencing, which can

⁴⁷ <https://clean-coalition.org/community-microgrids/>

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fragment large areas of habitat and disrupt wildlife movement. Fortunately, these adverse impacts can be mitigated by mounting options that allow elevated solar panels to reduce impacts to the land and wildlife.

The installation of needed new substations and transmission lines on utility-scale solar energy projects also has adverse impacts. Building fewer substations and shorter transmission lines can considerably reduce these impacts. Therefore, it is preferable for utility-scale projects to be sited as close as possible to existing transmission lines and power substations.

Utility-scale energy production is not limited to solar farms. The collection of gases created from decomposition in landfills is also a utility-scale energy source. The combustible gases are pumped to an engine, which powers a generator connected to the grid. Benefits include reducing the amount of methane released into the atmosphere and turning a waste byproduct into a marketable asset.

Utility-scale, short-term power storage systems

APS is now adding batteries to their Chino Valley solar farm to provide short-term power storage for its customers after the sun sets.⁴⁸ Battery storage does provide some limited amount of short-term power storage. While battery technology is not yet adequate to meet the large-power storage needs of utilities such as APS, that technology is rapidly advancing and prices are dropping.

Pumped water storage is another technology that is being used to supply electricity when renewable sources like solar cannot.⁴⁹ While the Big Chino Valley Pumped Storage Project has been proposed and may be built in Yavapai County near Seligman, building additional such facilities in a water-poor area is inappropriate and should be opposed. The large amounts of water needed for both initial and ongoing operations would come from our aquifers. Such facilities are excellent solutions for water-rich areas, but not for Northern Arizona.

Goal EE1: Reduce energy consumption, by increasing energy conservation and efficiency.

Policy Item EE1.1: Recognize and incent reduction in energy consumption.

Policy Item EE1.2: Recognize and incent the construction of new developments (as well as commercial, industrial and multifamily residential buildings) that are energy self-sufficient.

Policy Item EE1.3: Promote energy conservation and efficiency across the County.

Policy Item EE1.4: Support, foster and adopt building efficiency programs and energy standards (including national programs such as ENERGY STAR and LEED) that reduce per-capita consumption.

⁴⁸ <https://www.aps.com/en/About/Our-Company/Newsroom/Articles/APS-moving-forward-to-bring-new-clean-energy-projects-online-for-customers>

⁴⁹ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/pumped-storage-hydropower>

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- Policy Item EE1.5:** Become a model of sustainable design and energy efficiency in the construction of new County buildings and renovations.
- Policy Item EE1.6:** Promote energy conservation in new construction and remodel/retrofits through building codes and incentive programs.
- Action Item EE1.1:** Create a variety of incentives for developers, individuals and businesses to reduce energy consumption.
- Action Item EE1.2:** Institute a program that incents the construction of energy self-sufficient developments and buildings.
- Action Item EE1.3:** Pursue grants and other funding opportunities for weatherization programs.
- Action Item EE1.4:** Collaborate with educational institutions and community partners to promote energy conservation and efficiency across the County.
- Action Item EE1.5:** Update building codes and implement incentive programs that promote energy conservation in new construction and remodel/retrofits.
- Goal EE2:** Develop efficient and appropriate solar and wind energy generation, while avoiding and minimizing impacts to the natural environment, wildlife, human health and community character.
- Policy Item EE2.1:** Review codes and ordinances on a regular basis to assure adaptation to changing technology and best practices in distributed energy systems.
- Policy Item EE2.2:** Facilitate the installation of distributed energy systems by homeowners and small businesses through building code accommodations, and by providing education and resources.
- Policy Item EE2.3:** Encourage job training programs and other educational opportunities to create a local workforce of experts in distributed energy systems.
- Policy Item EE2.4:** Collaborate with agencies, residents, businesses and communities to pilot distributed energy projects.
- Policy Item EE2.5:** Site utility-scale distributed energy systems and utility-scale short-term power storage systems near existing substations and transmission lines to minimize the amount of infrastructure and land disturbance required for energy production and distribution.
- Policy Item EE2.6:** Consider the following when siting utility-scale projects and transmission lines: protecting viewsheds, reducing the potential for noise disturbances to adjacent residential areas, conserving species, habitats and water resources, preserving prehistoric,

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historic and cultural sites, conserving scenic corridors and protecting the character of public lands. In order to protect viewsheds, burying transmission lines is preferred.

- Policy Item EE2.7:** Encourage the siting of utility-scale projects on previously disturbed lands and in areas that are close to existing transmission interconnections.
- Policy Item EE2.8:** Encourage the siting of utility-scale energy projects that allow for continuation of traditional land uses, such as ranching and hunting. The ability to retain multiple uses of the land, such as combining elevated solar installations with agreements to keep ranches intact is recommended.
- Policy Item EE2.9:** Discourage the siting of utility-scale energy projects where they will conflict with critical wildlife habitat, sensitive species, movement corridors, riparian areas and areas of significant topographic relief, such as canyons and cliffs.
- Policy Item EE2.10:** Encourage utility-scale renewable energy projects that employ innovative research and operational procedures that are consistent with current best practices and scientific knowledge. These best practices may include wildlife study designs that utilize off-project comparison sites, wind turbine curtailment during migratory periods and other practices designed to improve the understanding of adverse project impacts. Reduce these impacts.
- Policy Item EE2.11:** Encourage utility-scale energy projects that protect water supplies. Projects using water conservation methods or reclaimed water are preferred over more water-intensive systems.
- Policy Item EE2.12:** Advocate for changes to federal regulations, allowing for visual warning systems using radar to activate aviation safety lights, or other new technologies to protect viewsheds and dark skies. The County will encourage these radar-activated systems for all projects required to install safety lighting by the Federal Aviation Administration.
- Policy Item EE2.13:** Give preference to utility-scale energy projects that can demonstrate significant local and regional benefits. Ask developers to list how they are specifically benefiting Yavapai County in their application for conditional use permits.
- Policy Item EE2.14:** Require mitigation measures concerning air pollution, viewsheds, clear skies, collection methods, land disturbance, dark skies and emissions when considering utility-scale projects.
- Policy Item EE2.15:** Discourage and oppose further implementation of pumped hydro storage facilities.
- Action Item EE2.1:** Facilitate the installation of distributed energy systems and

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community micro-grids by homeowners and small businesses through building code accommodations, and by providing education and resources.

Action Item EE2.2: Site utility-scale distributed energy systems and utility-scale short-term power storage systems near existing substations and transmission lines to minimize the amount of infrastructure and land disturbance required for energy distribution.

Action Item EE2.3: Advocate for legislative changes that allow groups of citizens to create renewable energy districts.

Action Item EE2.4: Collaborate with appropriate federal and state agencies to balance the adverse impacts of utility-scale energy projects on local residents and the natural environment against local benefits.

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Covering the Cost of Development (Cost of Development Element)

This section discusses the need to provide infrastructure as a direct result of new development. New large-scale developments nearly always require additional public infrastructure, resulting in both direct and indirect costs to the County and its residents. These costs should be factored into planning for any new subdivision or planned area development (PAD).

This section will not address the various funding mechanisms that are available to the County.

The Direct Cost of Development

Direct costs of development include, but are not limited to, the following: transportation infrastructure, law enforcement, County administrative services, public health services and education.

While the Arizona State Legislature may place restrictions on the types of impact fees assessed on new development, the County should pursue all available mechanisms to ensure developers pay their fair share of the direct costs of development. Along with other counties and jurisdictions, the County should lobby the State of Arizona to allow more local discretion to levy impact fees.

The Indirect Costs of Development

Yavapai County should recognize and account for the indirect costs of new development. These include but are not limited to: extraction of water, increased pollution (air, light and noise), loss of open space and/or scenic vistas, increased traffic resulting in longer drive times, increased risk of wildfire and additional pressure on landfills. While these indirect costs are difficult to quantify, the larger the proposed new development, the greater the cost to the County and its residents.

The County should identify and implement mechanisms to estimate the cost of these indirect impacts and find means by which developers can offset those costs by providing benefits to the community. For example, increased pollution could be offset by committing to a requisite amount of solar generation and by guaranteeing electric vehicle charging stations are installed. Community recycling and/or composting facilities could be required. Water conservation measures such as rainwater harvesting, storm water capture and re-use of gray water can be designed into the development. Creative options need to be identified and implemented.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal CD1: Identify and account for the direct costs of new development.

Policy CD1.1: Require new subdivisions, PADs and major new commercial development to adequately assess the fiscal and capital cost

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- impacts resulting from proposed new development.
- Policy CD1.2:** Assess the developer a monetary amount equal to the amount determined for the upgrade if additional capacity is needed at any County facility due to a new subdivision, PAD or commercial development.
- Policy CD1.3:** Encourage and incent cost-beneficial infill development that utilizes existing systems and facilities.
- Policy CD1.4:** Itemize all infrastructure costs, including maintenance, before development approval.
- Policy CD1.5:** Provide incentives to owners and developers to rehabilitate derelict properties where infrastructure already exists.

- Action Item CD1.1:** Define appropriate private and public sector costs and responsibilities.
- Action Item CD1.2:** Identify and implement methods to measure the impacts of development on existing services in order to determine reasonable requirements imposed on the cost of development.
- Action Item CD1.3:** Require fiscal impact analyses of proposed projects' infrastructure and service expense into the future.
- Action Item CD1.4:** Add in estimated operations and maintenance expenses to the County when evaluating new development proposals.
- Action Item CD1.5:** Review and update application, development impact and user fees at least annually.
- Action Item CD1.6:** Establish special districts to pay for infrastructure and improvement costs.
- Action Item CD1.7:** In coordination with other counties, lobby for legislation that streamlines the special districting process.
- Action Item CD1.8:** In coordination with other counties, lobby for more local discretion to levy impact fees.

Goal CD3: Identify and account for the indirect costs of new development.

- Policy CD3.1:** Estimate and document the indirect costs of new development.
- Policy CD3.2:** Where allowed by state statute, require developers to offset the indirect costs of new development by providing a range of benefits to the community.
- Action Item CD3.1:** Explore legal mechanisms to recover the indirect costs of new development.

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Accounting for Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the bedrock provided by County government and is intertwined in other sections of this document. It includes transportation, utilities, telecommunications, waste disposal, public health, education, recreation, safety and other public services. This section highlights particular infrastructure categories, addressing policy and actions important to county citizens.

Transportation and energy are not covered in this section because both are addressed in the *Ensuring Effective and Efficient Mobility* and *Supplying Clean Energy* sections. The infrastructure needs of new developments are covered under *Covering the Cost of Development* section.

Telecommunications

Telecommunication infrastructure for wireless and high-speed broadband systems are required for citizens to establish and develop many home businesses, work from home or attend online classes. The County can expedite the process of installing these capabilities through zoning regulations. However, any pole placements should be compatible with Community Plans so placement does not compromise scenic views and reduce home value of nearby homeowners without their input. Utilities should be underground wherever possible and practical.

Wildfires

Wildland fire is a common threat to many Yavapai County residents, particularly considering the Yarnell, Arizona, and Paradise, California, fires. Funding to ensure adequate coordination prior to a wildland fire is critical for disaster preparedness. According to FEMA, Arizona ranks 44th out of 50 states for the number of fire departments. Yet, Arizona is 14th in the U.S. for population. Counties need to coordinate with other agencies to compensate for the lack of adequate fire service coverage. To reach an acceptable level of coordination, the County should assign specific liaisons and schedule yearly emergency drills to ensure interagency cooperation.⁵⁰

A Case in Point

In 2019, there were two Village of Oak Creek (VOC) townhalls held to discuss wildland fires. It was revealed that the Yavapai Emergency Management, Yavapai Sheriff's Office, Sedona Fire Department and Coconino Forest Service each had their own disaster policies and procedures but were not in full coordination with each other. Leaders of these organizations seemed unaware what their sister agencies were covering and repeatedly noted that they needed to "stay in their lane" when it came to their responsibilities. Questions on who was responsible for dealing with potential roundabout traffic gridlock resulting from the hundreds of hotel and short-term rental visitors trying to escape wildfire events were left unanswered, as was resident traffic flow management.

⁵⁰ [Arizona At Risk Communities | Department of Forestry and Fire Management \(az.gov\)](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/reports/fius_2008-2017.html)
https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/reports/fius_2008-2017.html

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At the townhalls, three emergency warning systems were mentioned for wildland fire notification:

1. The Code Red System (guaranteed operational for two hours on backup power, unless the generator is burned)
2. NOAA Weather Radio
3. Golf course sirens

The emergency code red system relies on local generator power, but not everyone has a NOAA weather station radio. If gridlock occurs due to too much wildfire-related traffic, the public needs confidence that Yavapai County is coordinating effectively with all relevant agencies.

The 2006 La BARRANCA wildland fire in the VOC area revealed problems with emergency vehicles trying to access the fire while residents were trying to flee or, in some situations, return to their homes to rescue elderly parents, pets and livestock. Local citizens reported on the chaos that ensued because of the limited access. Now, with thousands of short-term rental and hotel populations, increased elderly and increased traffic, there are pressing reasons for multi-agency drills and meetings to discuss preventive and coordinated action.

Water pressure, working hydrants and flow data are all issues the County needs to address. The Arizona Corporation Commission states that private water companies are not required to adhere to National Fire Protection Association codes. Because of this, local fire departments may not get the data needed to ensure safe, working hydrants are available in an emergency. Unincorporated areas do not test hydrants and rely on local fire departments, but these departments do not perform annual fire hydrant testing.

The local fire department spokesperson could not recall when the last fire evacuation exercise occurred in the department, let alone a coordinated effort among the various agencies. All this points to a lack of adequate countywide coordination.

Flooding

Floods are periodic and seem less destructive than fires. However, flash flood notification is required to keep people away from watercourse crossings, trails and canyons. Severe weather events are occurring more frequently, making potential flooding a more serious issue. With climate change impacting weather patterns, prior identification of 100-year floodplains may be insufficient in coming years.

Protecting the More Vulnerable

Homelessness is a growing issue around the nation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting recession. Disparity in income has increased homelessness in many areas of the country. County support by reducing permit fees would help nonprofits provide or expand services. An example is permit fee waivers of fire suppression systems for homeless shelters that house clients overnight. Addressing mental health issues of shelter clients requires across-the-board coordination with local mental health professionals and those who work with law enforcement.

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Mental health and drug dependency awareness and educating the public on deconstructing decades of mental health and drug dependency stigmas need to occur through local and county government to change perceptions. Mental health issues with the incarcerated and homeless in Yavapai County is important to address. Drug dependencies, such as opioid addiction, costs the County in fractured, unproductive families. The Reach Out Program, managed by the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office and used as a model throughout the state, offers jail re-entry planning, de-escalation, 24-hour mobile crisis response, mental health and substance abuse inmate transitioning, access to recovery, enhanced communication between the courts, correctional health, attorneys, probation and local behavioral health. The state authorized \$500,000 for three years in 2018 to the County Sheriff's Office to fund the Reach Out Program. This program needs on-going funding and support as it has been shown to reduce recidivism.⁵¹

Additional Issues

Libraries and recreational buildings, such as swimming pools, provide citizens the education and exercise they need for health. Walking paths, community gardens and greenspace are all highly desirable to families to keep them physically and mentally healthy, and provide a draw to potential new residents. Planners should identify future activity centers that promote economic health. These centers would help communities create a quality-of-life that is attractive for business retention and preserve a local sense-of-place.

The COVID19 pandemic was a test of Yavapai County's response capabilities with updating daily and weekly statistics, and facilitating vaccine delivery to citizens. In planning for the future, emphasis should be placed on how residents receive vaccine scheduling information.

When China stopped accepting 24 types of material for recycling, the rest of the world's recycling programs were strained and some shut down. Reducing solid waste and minimizing the impact of its disposal will help extend the useful life of the County's landfills. Recyclable materials need to be clean and sorted. Billions of food container types are unrecyclable. Until the food container industry starts managing consumer waste, the public needs to learn what is recyclable. The County should play a significant role in citizen education on how and where to recycle.

Existing toxic sites must be cleaned up and toxic wastes must be recycled or disposed of safely and separately to avoid contaminating landfills, including such things as discarded solar panels, batteries and plastics.

Availability of a sanitary sewer system or a State of Arizona-approved waste disposal system alternative should be a guiding factor in high-density developments.

⁵¹ <https://www.sedona.biz/arizona/yavapai-county/yavapai-county-sheriffs-office-ycco/reach-out-showing-effectiveness-in-reducingrecidivism/>

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Special taxing districts can always provide services in areas which are limited from receiving services. An example is the Red Rock Enhancement Maintenance District that beautifies the Village of Oak Creek's medians. These districts could be fire, road, water, sewer, etc. Special taxing districts could also be used to construct public facilities, such as streetlights, sidewalks, fire hydrants, parks and recreational facilities.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal IS1: Expedite the expansion of wireless communications and high-speed internet while ensuring homeowner scenic vistas are not significantly decreased.

Policy IS1.1: All residents of the County should have access to high-speed internet.

Policy IS1.2: All residents of the County should have access to reliable wireless phone networks.

Action Item IS1.1: Collaborate with internet service providers to reach the goal of every citizen having access to high-speed internet.

Action Item IS1.2: Provide a range of incentives to communication companies to install fiber optic cable.

Action Item IS1.3: Collaborate with telecommunication companies to reach the goal of every citizen having access to reliable wireless communications.

Goal IS2: Maximize coordination with other governmental entities in preparing for and responding to wildfires.

Policy IS2.1: Ensure adequate emergency wildland fire coordination with drills and annual coordination workshops with city fire departments, USFS, sheriff's offices, Yavapai Emergency Management and other stakeholders, and provide public progress reports each year.

Action Item IS2.1: Establish an annual budget for emergency coordination activities, and schedule drills and workshops accordingly.

Action Item IS2.2: Create reports on coordination progress so the public is informed.

Action Item IS2.3: Inform households on how to prepare for the temporary loss of infrastructure, services or other emergencies.

Goal IS3: Ensure the public is provided adequate and timely information on wildfire preparedness.

Policy IS3.1: Provide preparedness information to residents on the ways

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they can receive timely information in the event of a wildland fire, and on the personal protection equipment needed in the home.

Action Item IS3.1: Communicate to the public the Code Red system and how to access NOAA Weather Radio.

Action Item IS3.2: Encourage residents to purchase NIOSH particulate respirators, since many lives are lost due to enveloping smoke.

Goal IS4: Obtain adequate data on hydrant water flow rates.

Policy IS4.1: As a matter of public safety, the County will strive to guarantee that the flow from fire hydrants is sufficient for fire-fighting purposes.

Action Item IS4.1: Lobby the Arizona Corporation Commission to allow counties to procure flow data on hydrants from private water utilities.

Action Item IS4.2: Coordinate with fire departments to ensure yearly flow data is received and fire hydrants are in working order.

Goal IS5: Ensure the public is provided adequate and timely information on flood preparedness.

Policy IS5.1: Ensure that residents and visitors are supplied adequate information on flooding dangers.

Action Item IS5.1: Besides television alerts, ensure cell phones receive flooding messages, similar to amber and silver alerts.

Action Item IS5.2: Install stick gauges, showing feet from grade, in crossing areas prone to serious flooding, so drivers understand the elevation of the rising water and would be more inclined not to drive through.

Action Item IS5.2: Collaborate with other agencies to install signage to keep citizens and visitors from attempting to cross low points, canyons, trails and washes where water is flowing.

Goal IS6: Increase the quality of life for residents.

Policy IS6.1: Dedicate County resources to both the prevention of homelessness and the care of the homeless population.

Policy IS6.2: Provide educational and recreational amenities, such as schools, libraries, swimming pools, walking paths and gardens.

Policy IS6.3: Encourage entrepreneurship and creative home-based work in unincorporated Yavapai County by providing guidelines for

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- work-at-home business practices and assistance obtaining small business low-interest loans.
- Policy IS6.4:** Provide support for stay-a-home parents by offering trainings online through local colleges for certificate and degree programs for reeducation and reentry into the labor force.
- Policy IS6.5:** Ensure on-going funding for the Reach Out Program, which is vital to helping people with mental health and substance abuse with jail diversion and the opportunities for help.
- Policy IS6.6:** Identify future activity centers that promote economic health.
- Policy IS6.7:** Utility pole placements will be compatible with Community Plans and Vision Statements.
- Action Item IS6.1:** Assist homeless shelters with permit fee waivers and mental health therapy coordination/training with local law enforcement agencies and mental health professionals.
- Action Item IS6.2:** Provide opportunities and incentives for low-income housing and help investors supply affordable, tiny houses (with occupancy rules) for low-income individuals and small households.
- Action Item IS6.3:** Survey what residents most desire in county-supplied amenities, and provide methods to achieve those desires, whether it is a community garden, dog park, playground or other amenity.
- Goal IS8:** Provide citizens with instructions on how they can best recycle materials with proper sorting habits.
- Action Item IS8.1:** Inform the public on the best recycling and composting habits.
- Action Item IS8.2:** Incentivize local waste disposal companies to recycle materials that would otherwise end up in landfills.

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How We Can Grow Wisely (Growth Element)

Growth planning is essential for the future of Yavapai County and should be included in all elements of the Comprehensive Plan to mitigate or avoid unnecessary destructive effects of growth, as well as to positively capitalize on the opportunities that growth can provide. This discussion of growth does not include the compilation of detailed statistical analyses found in prior Comprehensive Plans but, instead, outlines growth from a systemic viewpoint with ideas and strategies - past, present and future - to ensure that Yavapai County is a place where people want to live in prosperity or visit for years to come. The Growth Area Element should be used in tandem with all other elements to guide sound planning and growth policies.

Yavapai County grows steadily each year by approximately 3,000 new residents, which is a growth rate of 1.40 percent. Close to 80% of residents are white with a Hispanic population of approximately 15% and a Native American population of approximately 2.2%. The median age is 52.9, which compares to a 38.4 national average. Twelve percent of the population lives in poverty, compared to a national average of 10.5%.⁵²

A mostly older white population continues to move into the County. In the last 10 years, the County's millions of visiting tourists changed the dynamics. Questions remain on how open land is used or preserved and the amount of business growth required to accommodate both residents and tourists.

Efficient planning incorporates many factors, including the economy, the environment, culture and transportation. Modern planners map current infrastructure, such as roads, public lands, open space, towns and large ranch tracts, while taking finite resources, such as water, buildable land and minerals into account. Growth planning should include efficient transportation systems, healthcare, urban/rural abutment and sustainable development. Careful planning for growth helps reduce negative impacts to an existing environment and economy and, therefore, its citizens.

Accounting for Change

Planning should also account for changing environmental, societal and economic conditions and situations, such as home-based businesses and climate change. Planning should also factor in the enormous growth in tourism that places significant stress on County infrastructure and resources. This growth has two factors that need to be accounted for separately:

1. Day-trip tourists who do not overnight in the County
2. Destination tourists who stay at least one night and contribute more to the economy of the County

Global leaders promote immediate changes to carbon emissions to reverse the disruption of earth's delicate climate balance. Only a 30-year window is estimated to make this reversal occur. Every citizen, government and private sector entity should take immediate steps to meet

⁵² ([Yavapai County, AZ | Data USA](#)); ([US Census Bureau](#))

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this aggressive deadline. Yavapai County has an opportunity in the updated Comprehensive Plan to provide examples to citizens of how this balance can be achieved. Responsible growth plays a major role.

Through growth planning, Yavapai County can change attitudes toward development and sustainability in a decidedly positive direction. Embracing change can make a difference with building efficiency, such as adopting development fees, more efficient building codes and offering reduced tax/fee incentives. To ensure fiscal responsibility, the County can encourage nonprofit/governmental alliances, provide living-wage work opportunities and training for previously incarcerated citizens to reverse recidivism rates and their associated high cost and demand zero-waste/recyclable government.

Environmental consciousness can draw potential homeowners to the County, along with visitors who will pay extra for humanely treated farm animals, farm-fresh grains and locally grown and organically processed products. An example is the popularity of organic and health food grocery stores, community supported agriculture groups that offer shares, restaurants and resorts throughout the County.

Yavapai County can ensure, through building codes, that businesses provide electrical charging stations, so new car purchasers will feel more comfortable buying electric vehicles. Providing electrical charging stations at shopping centers, grocery stores, theaters and restaurants will encourage the purchase of more electric cars and bikes.

Goals, Policies and Action Items

Goal G1: Concentrate development and encourage an appropriate range of land uses within Growth Areas in collaboration with and compatible with surrounding communities.

Policy G1.1: Develop and approve specific plans for each of the Growth Areas that identifies the desired future and provides a more detailed study and analysis of the area. This includes specific recommendations on land use, circulation, open space, design guidelines and infrastructure.

Policy G1.2: If Growth Areas are located near municipal planning areas, develop these plans with the municipalities whenever possible.

Policy G1.3: Evaluate within Growth Areas the cost and benefits of all major projects to assist in decision-making.

Policy G1.4: Support economic vitality throughout Growth Areas by monitoring economic vitality indicators, such as the balance of jobs, job compensation and housing mix.

Policy G1.5: As an integral component of planning within Growth Areas, consider the natural environment, including wildlife habitat, washes, surface and groundwater quality and quantity, and air

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- quality.
- Policy G1.6:** Preserve existing stable and distinct neighborhoods by buffering and transitioning land uses.
- Policy G1.7:** Encourage and incent the creation of a balanced multimodal transportation system, less dependent on the private automobile, supported by both the use of emerging technology and smart growth planning principles that encourage the location of jobs, housing and commercial activity in close proximity.
- Goal G2:** Provide affordable housing near hotels, subdivisions, PADs and commercial developments to locate workers near their place of work and reduce vehicle carbon emissions.
- Policy G2.1:** The expansion of affordable housing is a fundamental goal of Yavapai County.
- Action Item G2.1:** Establish and offer a range of incentives to developers for creating affordable housing, such as reduced development fees or reduced taxes for a specified duration.
- Goal G3:** Protect residents in areas where the State of Arizona’s short-term rental law has changed neighborhoods, adversely affecting neighbor-to-neighbor connections.
- Policy G3.1:** Oppose the unlimited expansion of short-term rentals.
- Action Item G3.1:** Study how short-term rentals are changing neighborhood character.
- Action Item G3.2:** Lobby the State of Arizona to allow local jurisdictions to enact stricter rules and higher fees on short-term rentals.
- Goal G4:** Understand the ramifications of unstudied flood plains of large areas of the County.
- Policy G4.1:** Evaluate the potential impact of developments located on unstudied floodplains.
- Action Item G4.1:** Communicate and coordinate with FEMA to conduct additional flood plain studies.
- Goal G5:** Ensure that poorly planned growth does not reduce both quality of life and eventual County revenues if the area degrades tax value.
- Policy G5.1:** Support multi-year phasing for expansion of public utility

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- facilities.
- Policy G5.2:** Locate new cellular communications towers so as to minimize adverse impacts on the value of existing homes and businesses.
- Policy G5.3:** Use a permit ranking system that reduces undesirable and non-sustainable developments.
- Action Item G5.1:** Work with sewer, water, telephone, electrical and gas companies, as well as the Arizona Corporation Commission, to help create and adopt phasing plans.
- Action Item G5.2:** Lobby the State of Arizona to ensure 5G cell towers are placed in locations where home values are not adversely impacted and viewsheds are not substantially degraded.
- Action Item G5.3:** Develop a land-use map and permit ranking system to limit growth to only sustainable developments.
- Goal G6:** Reduce usage of water and electricity.
- Action Item G6.1:** Lobby the Arizona Corporation Commissioners to institute water rates that encourage reduction in water use.
- Action Item G6.2:** Lobby the Arizona Corporation Commissioners to incent installation of rooftop solar more aggressively and encourage less consumption of electricity.
- Action Item G6.3:** Conserve water and electricity in all County facilities.
- Goal G7:** Develop new County revenue sources and lower expenditures in order to help pay for incentives.
- Policy G7.1:** Use grants as a funding mechanism to support County Comprehensive Plan visions.
- Action Item G7.1:** Implement a bed tax on hotels, motels and short-term rentals.
- Action Item G7.2:** Stop employment discrimination against the past incarcerated and help by offering government work and paying a living wage. This will help reduce recidivism and reduce prison costs.
- Action Item G7.3:** Use the USFS's partnership with the Sedona Red Rock Trail Fund as a model to collaborate with non-profits in the County.
- Action Item G7.4:** Explore means and methods of creating a group akin to a "Civilian Conservation Corps" to execute County-designated projects and to provide job training.
- Action Item G7.5:** Develop a County grant position(s) to search for governmental grants to help fund applicable projects and work together. Each position could fund itself through grant proposals. For example, securing grant funding to replace high energy appliances.
- Action Item G7.6:** Encourage county nonprofits to use their grant writing

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resources to secure funding to assist in completing Comprehensive Plan actions. Work together with the nonprofit and private sector to gain momentum in acquiring grant funds.

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Summary

The initiative to update the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan presents an opportunity for Yavapai County to address significant shortcomings in the previous plan and to chart a path that ensures sustainable and responsible growth in the decades to come. Growth for the sake of growth is not a sufficient justification for new development. Responsible and appropriate growth that retains the character of communities and protects natural and cultural resources must be our collective goal.

The County must recognize the impacts that a changing climate is having on the environment and prepare accordingly. As emphasized above, a healthy and sustainable environment must be maintained because it is a key driver of the economic engine.

To accomplish this, the County must be prepared to take advantage of the game-changing advances in technology that are on the horizon. The cost of renewable energy is plummeting. Electric vehicles are poised to take over the market. Remote work is exploding in popularity as high-speed internet becomes universally available.

The pace of change is accelerating. Yavapai County, guided by its Comprehensive Plan, can help ensure a high quality of life for residents by embracing this change and preparing for a prosperous future.