

Chapter 4. Community Vision

The City of Mesa has a long history characterized by its agricultural roots and suburban beginnings. Mesa continues to evolve and thrive as one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. Mesa’s growth, in particular, has been focused on the burgeoning area surrounding the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport (“Gateway Area”). As part of this evolution, a new vision has emerged for Mesa’s Gateway Area. This vision leaves behind the Gateway Area’s former identity as a sprawling airport-related industrial area and instead embraces a holistic approach to land use that promotes a sustainable and integrated mixed-use environment that focuses on creating a nationally recognized place for people to live, work, learn and recreate. An important component of the Gateway Area vision includes the creation of high quality residential environments strategically located in close proximity to existing and future job centers. The PPGN Community Plan is designed to respond to this vision by establishing the structure for a master planned community in close proximity to jobs and regional transportation corridors that is built upon a framework of compact, connected and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods. PPGN, as a New Traditional Community, balances modern planning ideals with market trends, and is a perfect complement to the Gateway Area vision.

4.1. The Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan.

The New Traditional Community ideal shares much in common with the general goals and objectives of the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan. The PPGN Community Plan is designed to promote these goals and objectives; most specifically, the sustainable community concept that is the foundation of the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan. The PPGN Community Plan supports the following key sustainability planning principles from the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan:

MIXED USE COMMUNITY DISTRICT

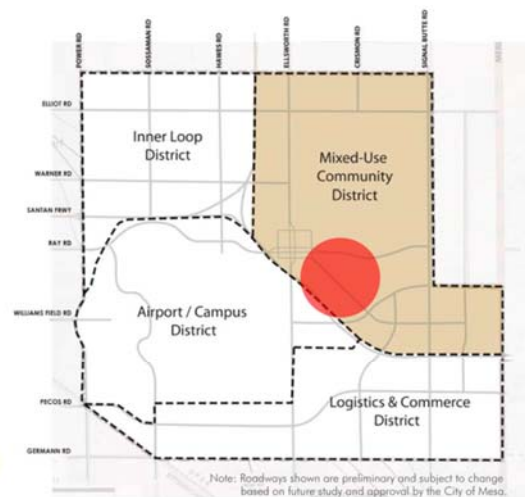
Focus

This district is envisioned to be the area that solidifies the goal to balance land uses and provide sustainability through the creation of a live/work/play community. It will contain the widest variety of land uses within the planning area, with ultimate development including low- to high-density residential, commercial, employment, civic, and recreational uses to provide a complete community experience. While the other districts allow for residential uses, this district will be the primary area for residential development. Providing for residential use is critical to attaining the balance that is sought within the Mesa Gateway area amidst the employment, education, commercial and industrial uses found primarily within the other districts. This district will also include walkable mixed-use “urban core” areas to provide focus and identity.

The boundaries of this district are existent or planned freeways that serve as a transition zone to the other districts. Development in this transitional area can take advantage of freeway frontage and access. Business park, light industrial, and other higher-intensity employment uses, as well as regional community commercial uses, are compatible with this designation. High-density residential will be integrated with commercial and employment uses in urban cores and other mixed-use development areas.

Form

Development will include a wide range of building forms that provide for activities ranging from light industrial to single-family residential, with an emphasis on walkable streetscapes and environments. The most intense development patterns are expected in urban cores at Ellsworth and Elliot Roads and Ellsworth and Ray Roads. Structures in these cores will generally be built to the right-of-way line and are expected, over time, to be as tall as allowable with respect to the flight activity generated from the airport. While development throughout the Mesa Gateway area will be cognizant



of the pedestrian, this area in particular will be designed to be especially pedestrian-friendly, with building entries, windows, and doors facing the street. Also within the western portion of this district, development adjacent to the freeways will be designed to be attractive when seen from the freeway as well as from the adjacent surface streets. This will create interest from the freeway on the part of those driving through. As development moves east, a transition to less intense development activity will be seen through increasingly less intense residential buildout to the planning area’s eastern boundary.

4.1(a) Economic Viability.

1. **Marketability:** PPGN will encourage the use of marketable and cost-effective sustainability strategies and technologies that do not burden homebuilders or decrease the affordability of homes. This may include the use of new technologies, energy efficient building methods and materials, and green building techniques.
2. **Local and Regional Economy:** PPGN will provide housing in close proximity to employment opportunities and transportation corridors to promote a “live, work, play and recreate” environment.
3. **Stability Through Diversity:** PPGN will include diversity in housing types, densities and lot sizes, and will accommodate a wide spectrum of living opportunities.

4.1(b) Resource Efficiency.

1. **Land Use:** The PPGN Community Plan emphasizes a compact, pedestrian development as a primary planning goal. A mix of housing types and sizes will be developed to accommodate a strong demographic cross-section of residents. Further, the Community Plan is designed to encourage a mix of non-single residence land uses that includes high density residential, commercial and employment as supported by market demand. While a primary emphasis of the Community Plan is development form, an integrated mix of land uses is encouraged.
2. **Transportation:** Streets within the PPGN community will be designed to take into consideration the needs of pedestrians. Bike and pedestrian connectivity will be provided throughout the community.
3. **Water:** Efficient use of water will be encouraged through landscaping techniques such as plant selection and efficient irrigation systems.

4.1(c) Response to Context and Location.

1. **Open Space:** PPGN will provide a continuous community open space system that includes a balance of passive and active open spaces areas. Open space areas will be conveniently accessible from all areas within the community. Further, PPGN encourages compact and efficient development forms to allow more opportunities for community open space areas throughout the community.
2. **Solar Intensity and Temperature:** Development projects within PPGN will be planned to take into account solar orientation to maximize efficiency. This includes consideration regarding the solar orientation of single residence lots as well as individual buildings. Thoughtful consideration in the selection of building materials and colors is encouraged to reduce overall heat gain.
3. **Landscaping:** Landscaping guidelines for PPGN encourage the utilization of plant materials to provide natural shade and cooling.

These sustainability planning principles are an important foundational element of the PPGN Community Plan. Future, more detailed Development Unit Plans will provide specificity with regard to these sustainability measures. Sustainability guidelines will be included in future Development Unit Plans, and will include implementation strategies as well as discussion regarding development form and building types.

4.2. New Traditional Community.

A New Traditional Community reflects a modern, marketable and livable community planning ideal that draws influence from modern smart growth principles as well as uncomplicated and timeless American neighborhoods that are designed to respond to the core needs of residents. In a New Traditional Community, the simplicity of these early American neighborhoods has been combined with modern smart growth principles such as compact, walkable neighborhoods, dynamic streetscapes that have a positive influence on the public realm, strong pedestrian and bicycle systems to maximize mobility, integrated and accessible open space, and community centers within walking distance. The result is a modern planning ideal that responds to consumer and market expectations, and fulfills municipal planning goals. This New Traditional Community planning ideal is the basis for community design at PPGN.



4.2(a) PPGN Planning Framework.

The planning framework for PPGN is built upon four core structural elements that help define PPGN as a connected and integrated New Traditional Community.

- a. **Neighborhoods:** *Compact, Walkable Neighborhood Design.*
- b. **Streets and Pedestrian Systems:** *Active Streetscapes and Interconnected Pedestrian Systems.*
- c. **Parks and Open Space:** *Parks and Open Space as Community Focal Points.*
- d. **Architecture:** *Purposeful Architectural Design.*

4.2(a)(i) Neighborhoods. The Neighborhoods within PPGN form the core of the overall community design and are planned to create a compact and walkable environment that offers a diversity of housing opportunities and integrated commercial centers. Tree-lined streets will provide a shade-laden vegetated canopy complimented by homes, businesses and outdoor spaces oriented towards the street to foster a socially interactive community. The community will be designed so that residential lots and other adjacent land uses front to the street or open space areas directly. The placement of rear yards next to streets and open spaces should be minimized. Each residential neighborhood will be organized around a focal park that functions as a strong organizing element and community identifier. Further, residential neighborhoods will have strong linkages to larger community parks and the community recreation center. Smaller pocket parks and playgrounds will be tucked throughout the residential areas. Streets and pedestrian pathways will provide connectivity throughout the entire community and will be designed to provide walkable and bikeable connections to other neighborhoods, the community recreation center, and community retail centers.

A key characteristic of PPGN neighborhood design will be compact block lengths and uncomplicated neighborhood layouts to promote efficient use of the land and foster a more intense pedestrian experience. Block sizes, open spaces, parks and neighborhood amenities will be scaled at a walkable, pedestrian scale (ideally at 300 to 400 feet between nodes) to provide frequent choices of activities, and encourage alternate connections. When feasible, perimeter walls will be discouraged, and activities will be encouraged to front or side next to one another, with streets, parks and open spaces being used as the “places between.”

Neighborhoods within PPGN will include a variety of single residence homes at varying densities and on varying lot sizes as well as opportunities for

attached single residence homes and multi-residence apartment homes. The residential areas within PPGN will be complimented by retail centers that are visually integrated and physically connected to the community. The creation of a seamless transition between differing land uses is a primary neighborhood planning goal within PPGN. In order to foster a community environment that encourages a mix of uses, the PPGN Community Plan also provides opportunities for home occupations as well as neighborhood serving retail in places such as the community recreation center and adjacent to larger community parks. **Neighborhoods** are discussed more fully in Chapter 7 of the PPGN Community Plan.

4.2(a)(ii) Streets and Pedestrian Systems. The streets within PPGN have been designed not only to function as movement corridors, but also as an important component of the public realm that contribute to the overall sense of place and social life of the community. Neighborhood planning will be closely coordinated with the streetscape design to promote an active, lively street scene that is complimented by homes oriented towards the street with public places such as porches, patios and courtyards designed to enliven the front yard experience. Non-residential areas will include design elements such as shaded sidewalks, outdoor seating and dining, buffer areas for protection from vehicles, and distinctive and functional design elements that create interesting places along the streets. Parking areas will be visually minimized and located to the side or behind buildings where possible.

The street system will be both formal and simple, providing uncomplicated access to the various land uses and establishing a strong backbone for landscaping throughout the community. Streets will be visually narrowed through the use of classic, formal tree-lined streets and other design elements such as landscape buffering and medians. The signature feature of the PPGN street system is a network of focal roundabouts that will act as both a formal terminus for each internal roadway segment and as an important community identity element. The roundabouts will be complimented by adjacent parks that are positioned to accent these special community features and identify recreational nodes.

The streets are also designed to extend and enrich the open space system and network of pedestrian pathways throughout the community. A comprehensive sidewalk system is planned and will be interconnected to the off-street pedestrian and bicycle pathways. These pathways are designed to promote walkability and provide an amenity for each neighborhood while forging strong links with surrounding neighborhoods.

The hierarchy of internal roads, which include the signature community collector and local streets, give structure to the overall community and are

designed to provide efficient vehicular circulation to the regional transportation corridors, including the perimeter arterials of Ellsworth, Crismon and Williams Field Roads, and future SR 24 freeway. Multiple connections to perimeter streets will be established to promote an even distribution of traffic that minimizes impacts on individual neighborhoods and adjacent communities. **Streets** are discussed more fully in Chapter 16 of the PPGN Community Plan and **Pedestrian Systems** are discussed more fully in Chapter 10.

4.2(a)(iii) Parks and Open Space. The parks and open space system within PPGN is designed as the nucleus of the community and reinforces neighborhood structure and community identity. Every neighborhood will contain a park as a focal point with resident serving amenities and direct pedestrian linkages. Homes within individual neighborhoods will be oriented towards community parks and open space areas, which will become a natural extension of private open space areas and integral to the social structure of each neighborhood. A comprehensive system of passive and active recreational facilities will contribute to a logical hierarchy of open spaces that provide a diversity of spatial experiences for PPGN residents. Large parks and playfields will offer active recreational opportunities. Smaller neighborhood parks will contribute to a sense of community. Open spaces and plazas will provide destinations for social gatherings and informal social interaction. A neighborhood school and community park will act as a unifying element. The community recreation center will function as the social heart of the community. A continuous system of landscaped sidewalks, trails and paseos will provide on and off-street interconnectivity throughout the community and tie the parks and open space systems together. **Parks and Open Space** is discussed more fully in Chapter 10 of the PPGN Community Plan.

4.2(a)(iv) Architecture. Building architecture plays an important role in creating the backdrop for the public places and the streetscape within the PPGN community, but is equally important in establishing the overall community identity. Architecture within PPGN will promote core architectural values that place strong emphasis on function, durability and visual appeal.

1. **Function:** Home designs will be based on simple building blocks and roof forms that have a direct relationship to internal functionality. Homes will be designed with a strong street orientation including porches and front entries designed to foster neighborliness and social interaction among community residents. Shade elements will be thoughtfully integrated to provide protection from the desert sun.
2. **Durability:** Building articulation, materials, landscaping and color schemes will have a relationship to the desert southwest and be selected to create a sense of timelessness within the community.

3. **Visual Appeal:** Traditional design elements and architecture with a local flavor will be complimented by well articulated public spaces including porches and patios, meaningful front door design, and thoughtful design and material selection for garage doors. Minimal setbacks will be utilized to promote a compact, walkable neighborhood and landscaping will play an important role in creating the overall visual landscape for each home, street and neighborhood. Neighborhoods will include a mix of single story and two story homes to provide diversity in the street façade.

This approach to architectural direction will apply to all structures, including schools, recreational facilities and non-residential buildings. It is envisioned that this more honest approach to core architectural values will create a unique and refreshing persona for the PPGN community as well as provide a set of tools for the building designers and architects that allow them to be more respectful to time tested architectural styles. **Architecture** is discussed more fully in Chapters 7 & 8 of the PPGN Community Plan.

4.3. Community Connectivity and Integration.

As a compliment to the New Traditional Community concept, a primary planning goal for PPGN is to establish a community whose form, functions, and activities are highly connected and integrated resulting in a natural transitions from neighborhood to neighborhood and from land use to land use throughout the community. Connectivity and integration will occur at many levels and is a primary aspect of the overall design, but will start with the design and development of great streets, which are the backbone of the community and will be used to bring people together and create memorable places. The design concepts that will lead to this connected and integrated community are more fully described as:

4.3(a) Land Use Integration. Integration of land uses will occur by ensuring that adjoining land uses are not only compatible, but are configured to minimize hard edges and reinforce a sense of seamlessness throughout the community. Additionally, integration and connectivity will be achieved through the use of shared vehicular access, circulation and pedestrian linkages between uses as well as shared open space and park areas that facilitate social interaction. Land uses will be designed and located to help activate the street life and community open spaces by creating intersections of activity. Integration of land uses is encouraged both vertically and horizontally as market acceptance allows.

4.3(b) Connectivity. PPGN will be a highly connected community by thoughtfully integrating and linking land uses through a multi-modal connectivity network that balances the needs of competing modes of transportation as well as welcomes and encourages walking, jogging, and biking as primary modes of transportation in addition to automotive travel. The connectivity framework will be built upon many

of the American Planning Association’s recognized elements of “great streets,” including:

1. Provides orientation to its users, and connects well to the larger pattern of ways.
2. Balances the competing needs of the street — driving, transit, walking, cycling, servicing, parking, drop-offs, etc.
3. Is lined with a variety of interesting activities and uses that create a varied streetscape.
4. Has urban design or architectural features that are exemplary in design.
5. Relates well to its bordering uses — allows for continuous activity, doesn't displace pedestrians to provide access to bordering uses.
6. Encourages human contact and social activities.
7. Employs hardscape and/or landscape to great effect.
8. Promotes safety of pedestrians and vehicles and promotes use over the 24-hour day.
9. Has a memorable character.

As a complement to the street system, PPGN’s connectivity network will include a clearly delineated off-street trail and paseo system to provide safe and inviting off-street pedestrian opportunities, including off-street connectivity between neighborhoods and differing land uses. The trail and paseo system will also include direct linkages to the on-street connectivity system, resulting in a highly accessible and connected community designed to serve the varying needs of all residents and users.

4.3(c) Public Safety. A connected community is also a community that promotes public safety. PPGN will utilize several design techniques and principles to enhance public safety. A primary tool will be the utilization of traffic calming techniques in the design of streets, including physical and visual measures to encourage people to drive more slowly at locations within the community where vehicular and pedestrian circulation are integrated. These measures include easily policed cul-de-sacs, compact, straight traditional neighborhood blocks, streetscape design, and strategic landscape placement that visually narrows the physical sense of place. The integration of traffic calming roundabouts on the community collector spine street will control traffic speeds at the community level.

In addition to traffic calming, PPGN will utilize widely accepted Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles to create a well-designed safe community by:

1. Providing clearly delineated public, semi-public, and private spaces through the use of pavement treatments, landscaping, art, signage, screening and fences.

2. Creating an environment where there is plenty of opportunity for people engaged in normal behavior to clearly observe the space around them.
3. Designing and placing physical features to maximize visibility, including building orientation, windows, entrances and exits, parking lots, refuse containers, walkways, guard gates, landscape trees and shrubs, use of wrought iron fences or walls, signage and other physical obstructions.
4. Providing minimum maintained lighting standards that provide for nighttime illumination of parking lots, walkways, entrances, exits and related areas to promote a safe environment.
5. Maintaining the landscaping at prescribed standards to minimize the conflicts between surveillance and landscaping as the ground cover, shrubs and trees mature.

4.3(d) Architecture and Design. The impression of a connected and well-conceived community theme is critical to the long-term value and sustainability of PPGN. To establish the framework for this overall design theme, design guidelines that are developed as part of future DU approvals will include an architectural “Kit of Parts” that describes the types of materials, colors and patterns for the community fixtures, spaces, landscapes and buildings. This cohesive design philosophy will reinforce the vision for a socially connected place through a shared appreciation of quality design and attention to sense of place. The general architectural design concepts and guidelines that establish the foundation for these future, more detailed design guidelines are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.2(a)(iv) above, and Chapters 7 and 8.

The aforementioned connectivity and integration concepts will be addressed at all levels of design within PPGN and will be more fully articulated in future Development Unit Plans.

