



2025 GENERAL PLAN

THE FUTURE TODAY



ADOPTED JUNE 23, 2014

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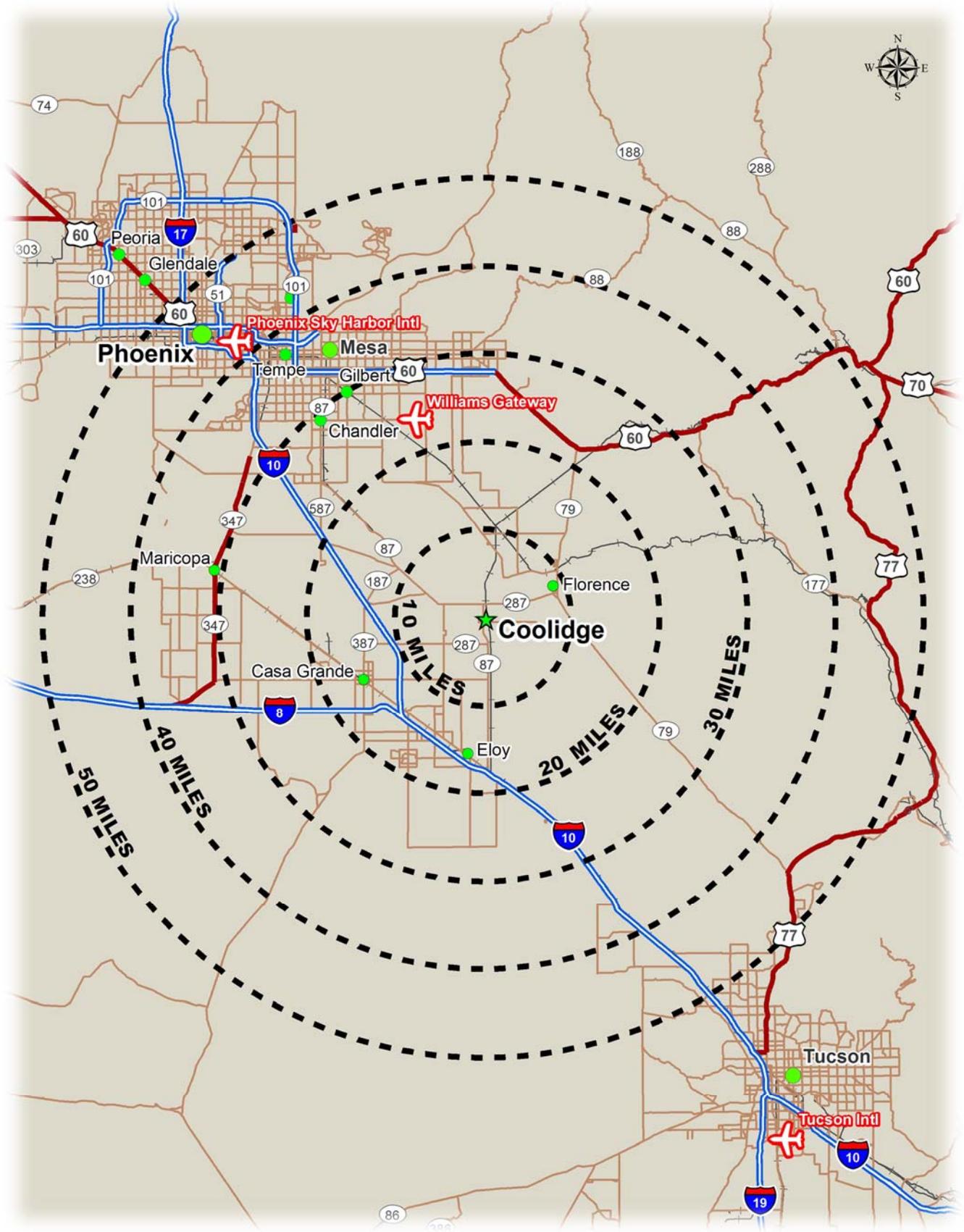
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



Introduction

GENERAL PLAN PROCESS & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



The Mayor and City Council directed City staff to seek public input and prepare a new City of Coolidge General Plan to replace the General Plan Update adopted on November 10, 2003. This sixteen month planning effort began in January 2013 with a General Plan Kick-off meeting and discussion about Land Use. Every month thereafter through July the Growth Management Department held public meetings to review and receive comment on the six other elements of the plan including Circulation, Growth Areas, Parks, Open Space and Trails, Cost of Development, Water Resources and Environmental.



The next seven months of the planning process involved monthly public meetings on the evening of the regularly scheduled Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. A series of monthly newsletters were published and distributed throughout the City. Every General Plan meeting was televised and these recordings are available on the City of Coolidge website at www.coolidgeaz.com. The Coolidge Examiner was also instrumental in keeping the public informed through detailed reporting of each planning meeting.



Most City General Plans including the November 2003 update are filled with text and data that can be useful but difficult to read. This General Plan is going to be an exception to that rule. The Growth Management Department has made a special effort to introduce more pictures, graphics and charts and limiting the text. It is said "a picture is worth a thousand words" so this plan will be full of illustrations.



Formal 60 day review of the draft plan was held from March 5, 2014 through May 1, 2014 with the formal adoption of the plan by City Council on June 23, 2014. Following the statutory 120 day waiting period from City Council approval, the General Plan 2025 will be presented on the ballot during the City of Coolidge General Election on November 4, 2014.

Community Vision Statement

The preparation of the City of Coolidge General Plan-2025 began in January 2013 during a kick-off meeting attended by a diverse group of eager participants. Three questions were asked:

- How would you describe Coolidge as it is today to someone who has never been to the City?
- What word, or one line sentence, would you want to be able to use to describe Coolidge in the future?
- What challenges do you think Coolidge may face in achieving those future visionary statements?

The answers to these questions were integrated into the following "Community Vision Statement" that describes the city we are proud to call our home:

Historic Coolidge, Arizona is:

Located midway between Phoenix and Tucson in the heart of the Sun Corridor. It is a safe community built on a solid foundation shaped by faith and family values. This home to the early ancestors of the Pima Indians is an up and coming cultural arts hub within Pinal County and continues to be a major agricultural center and a great place to start a business. It is rich in educational programs including the Coolidge Unified School District, Imagine Charter School, Central Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology and Central Arizona College.

In 2025 Coolidge will be:

A warm, inviting, and beautiful City with prospering individuals, strong families and active seniors. It is a well planned and managed city having strong and capable leadership. Cultural and recreational opportunities flourish and it is the epicenter of educational excellence. It is a city that has attracted quality businesses and industry creating jobs to keep our young people working, prospering, and growing a strong tax base that is re-invested here. The City is a wise steward of its natural resources and continues to be capable of delivering the necessary public services to support new growth. It is a City with acceptable laws and regulations that are sensitive to business and promote quality development.



Community History and Regional Setting

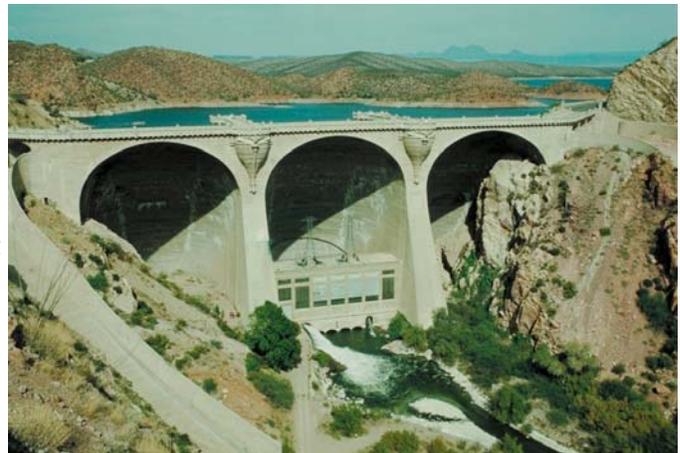
Archaeologists date human occupation of the Coolidge area as early as 300 A.D. beginning with the Hohokam who lived in Central Arizona for hundreds of years. The Hohokam established farming communities that included irrigation canals. The extensive irrigation system diverted water from the Gila and Salt Rivers for agricultural purposes throughout the Gila River Valley. Between 1200 – 1450 A.D., the Hohokam built walled villages, including the Casa Grande Ruins, during the 1300s. Around 1450 A.D., the Hohokam villages, including the Casa Grande Ruins, were abandoned.



The Hohokam ruins were discovered by Europeans during the 1600s but were left undisturbed until the 1900s when active settlement of the area began. At the time of the European discovery, the Pima, thought to be descendants of the Hohokam, were living in the area. In 1694 A.D., Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, a Jesuit Missionary, discovered and named the Casa Grande Ruins, which translated means “Big House” or “Great House”.

In 1884 A.D., a petition was submitted to protect the ancient ruins of Casa Grande. By this time, weathering and the removal of artifacts had already damaged the ruins. In 1918, the Casa Grande Ruins were officially proclaimed a National Monument and the Country’s first archaeological preserve.

In 1924 the San Carlos Irrigation Canal was completed and the area around Coolidge became a major agricultural area. By 1925, the Southern Pacific Railroad was completed through the community and the City of Coolidge was founded. Richard J. Jones platted the original 80-acre town site that was later named after President Calvin Coolidge who dedicated the Coolidge Dam on the Gila River in 1930. Also in the 1920s the Coolidge-Picacho link of the Tucson-Phoenix highway was completed.



The City’s economic base continued to be based on farming through the 1950’s. The City grew as the commercial center of Arizona’s cotton industry until the late 1940’s when mechanization of cotton production slowed population growth of the area. Retail shifted during the 1950’s from servicing the needs of cotton farmers into manufacturing and mining. Interest in the Casa Grande Ruins placed a greater emphasis on the tourism industry. The

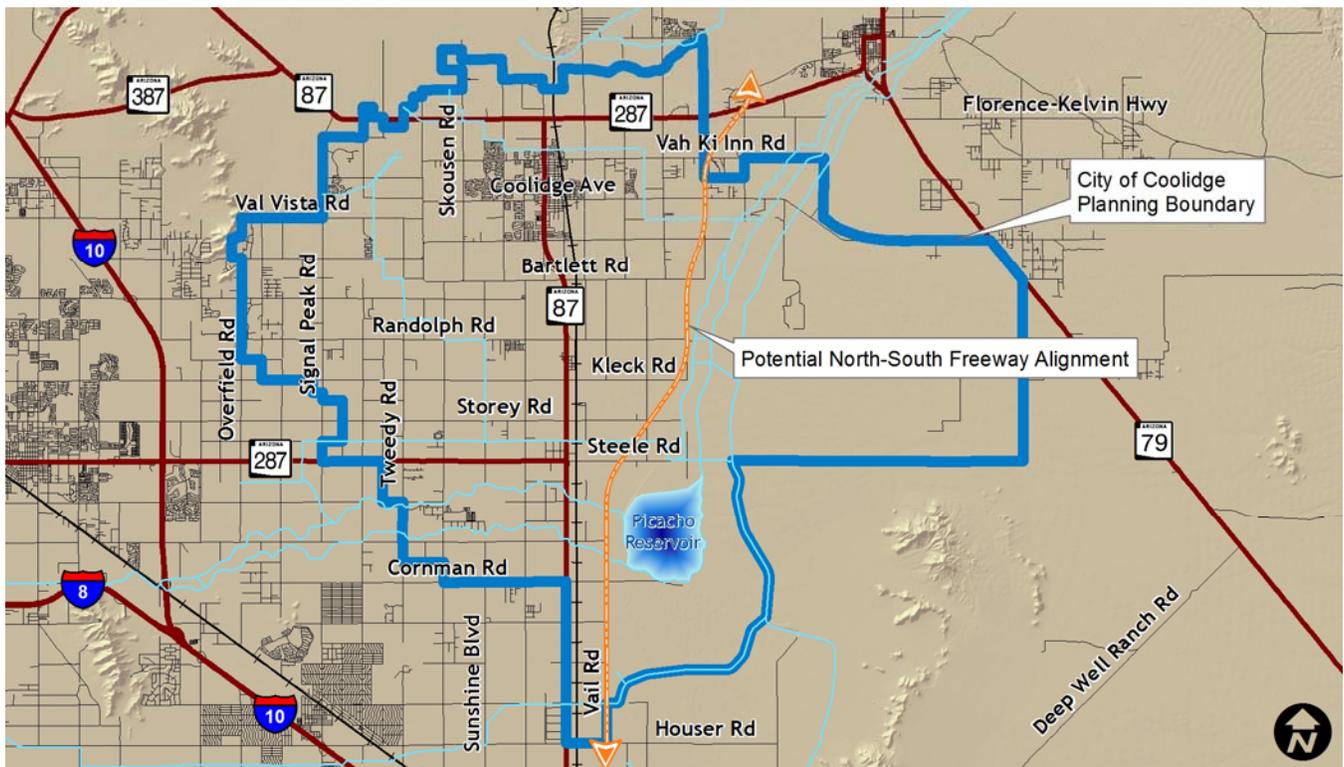
City continued to maintain its importance as a regional trade and service center until the shift to discount retailing, which was established in Casa Grande during the 1980's.

The Coolidge Municipal Airport, located southeast of the City, is a general aviation airport serving Coolidge and Florence. This historic airport was originally constructed in the early 1940's for the Army Air Forces as an air transport command base and served as an auxiliary operating base to Williams Airfield during World War II. The City owns and operates the Airport which will become a significant employment center as the region builds out.



The City of Coolidge is located in central Pinal County between the metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. It is situated in the heart of what many call the "Sun-Corridor" which is one of the fastest growing Mega Regions in the Country over the past few decades. The Arizona Department of Transportation has been studying routes for a future North South freeway corridor connecting the East Valley at the US 60 in Apache Junction with Interstate 10 just south of Eloy near Picacho Peak State Park. The economic impact that a North South Freeway will have on the City is significant and one of the most important transportation and land use goals that must be addressed by local, county and state leaders as well as private property interests.

Figure 1.1 : North-South Freeway



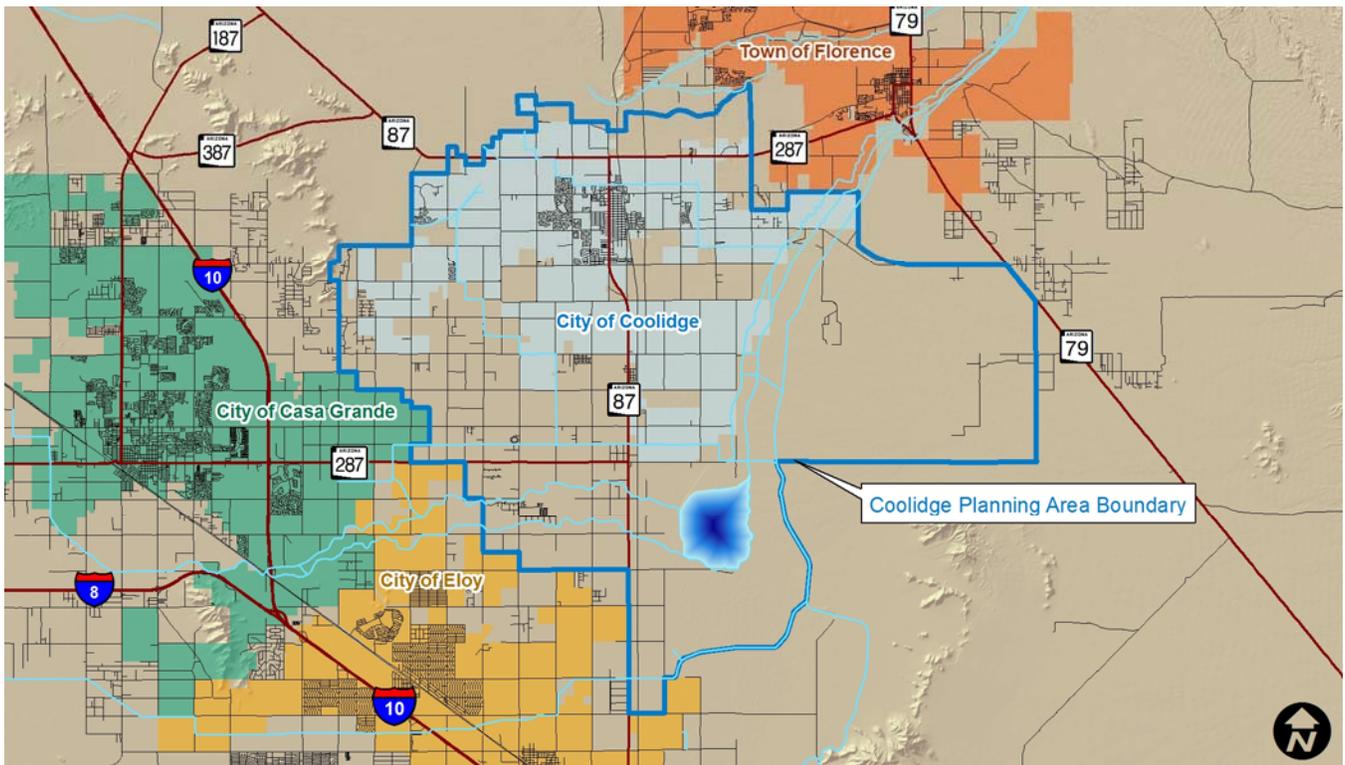
Planning Area Boundary

The City of Coolidge Planning Area Boundary is approximately 117,026 acres or 183 square miles. A Planning Area Boundary defines the area which the City will establish long range planning goals and policies including but not limited to: pre-annexation development agreements, annexation, infrastructure planning, zoning facilitation, subdivision facilitation, specific area planning etc.

It should be noted that the Planning Area Boundary may be expanded upon request by property owners to expand the City limits boundary beyond the existing Planning Area Boundary. Efforts by the City to extend the Planning Area Boundary are considered to be minor amendments to the General Plan and will be coordinated together with annexation of property that necessitates the expansion of the Planning Area Boundary.

In 2005, the City of Coolidge and the City of Casa Grande entered into an intergovernmental agreement to establish a mutual understanding of where the two jurisdictions eastern and western boundaries would extend respectfully. Since 2005, the City of Casa Grande received an annexation request by property owners to be annexed. The mutually agreed upon boundary was revised following the annexation of that property into the City of Casa Grande. The intergovernmental agreement is no longer in place. The City of Coolidge does not have a similar intergovernmental agreement with the Town of Florence or the City of Eloy and will consider annexation request by property owners that expand the Coolidge Planning Boundary into these adjacent community planning areas.

Figure 1.2 : Planning Area Boundary



Environmental Characteristics

Environmental characteristics describe the physical and man-made conditions in the City and the surrounding area, which is presented in the following sub-sections:

TOPOGRAPHY AND SLOPE

The study area geographically falls within the basin and range province of Southern Arizona, consisting of broad, expansive valleys interrupted by rugged mountain terrain. Typically, the valleys consist of a deep alluvial fill, due to erosion of nearby mountains. Elevation ranges from 2,282 feet in the northwestern corner of the study area near Signal Peak to 1,429 feet north of the City near the Gila River.



Topography within the area is gently sloping to the north to the Gila River and to the southwest to the Casa Grande Valley. Slopes range from less than one percent over most of the study area to greater than twenty-five percent on the mountain hillside at Signal Peak. The average elevation of the City is 1,450 feet above sea level, and gently slopes north to the Gila River.

RENEWABLE ENERGY USE

Coolidge is located in an area that receives more than 300 days of sunshine each year, known by many as the “Sun Corridor”. As a result, development within the City is in a good position to take advantage of passive and active solar energy systems. Passive solar systems consist of architectural and site designs that provide for shading of structures and windows during summer months, while providing for sunlight and natural heating during winter months. Simple techniques include orienting a building to lessen the impact of the sun’s heat and installing skylights or clerestory windows to maximize the use of natural lighting. Active solar systems generally include systems for heating domestic and pool water and photovoltaic panels for solar-generated electricity. Use of solar power is encouraged for new development within the City.

DRAINAGEWAYS AND FLOODPLAINS

The Gila River and washes in the southeast part of the study area comprise the major drainage ways and floodplains in the region. The Picacho Reservoir, located within the 100 year floodplain, drains an area of approximately 200 square miles along the western slopes of the Picacho Mountains. Drainage is generally east to west, ending at the Picacho Reservoir and the Florence-Casa Grande Canal. Run-off from the reservoir passes through the Central Arizona Project Salt – Gila Aqueduct embankment, which temporarily detains runoff, and reduces the 100-year storm discharge. The Picacho Reservoir emergency spillway has historically overflowed onto land located west of the reservoir and east of the Union Pacific railroad tracks. The Casa Grande and Florence-Casa Grande Canal extensions have also overflowed. There are no plans to improve the reservoir to provide flood protection to downstream properties; therefore these areas will be subject to infrequent overflows. The Gila River and adjacent areas in the northern portion of the study area are also located within the 100-year floodplain. Runoff from buttes to the southeast and mountain ranges to the north flows into the river. Agricultural activities, roadways and canals have modified the natural drainage patterns.



VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

This sub-section will be further discussed in the Environmental Element found in Chapter 6 of this Plan. Native vegetation of the Gila River Valley, found only on undeveloped or non-farmed land, is generally composed of Lower Sonoran Desert plant species. The lower Sonoran Desert is composed of three distinct plant communities based on elevation above sea level. The Desert Saltbush Community occurs in elevations between 1,000 and 1,500 feet above sea level and was once found in areas now under agricultural use. The Creosote Bush Community occurs in areas with elevations ranging from 1,500 feet to 2,000 feet. The Palo Verde-Saguaro Community occurs where elevations range from 2,000 to 3,000 feet, which in the study area is primarily around Signal Peak to the Northwest and the Picacho Mountains to the Southeast.

As most of the surrounding areas are located within the Desert Saltbush Community some wildlife species associated with the Sonoran Desert may exist. However, since much of the area has been developed for agriculture, any native wildlife would most likely be found in foothills areas or in the area generally east of the central Arizona Project Salt-Gila Aqueduct. In the foothills area located near the Picacho Mountains, Walker Butte, and Black Butte, known as the Creosote Bush Community, larger mammals exist. The Picacho Reservoir, a major riparian area southeast of the City, includes a number of waterfowl and other aquatic birds. The area surrounding the reservoir has a history of providing fishing opportunities and dove and quail habitats. An extended Arizona drought has dried up much of the reservoir, but during heavier rainfalls the reservoir does hold water for extended periods. Pinal County has considered Picacho Reservoir for development as a regional recreation facility including enlargement of the reservoir for recreational boating and waterskiing, camping, etc. As urban development continues, the potential support for the Picacho Reservoir recreational area will gain momentum and have a significant impact on the region. Open space linkages and corridors must be maintained for the renewal of wildlife habitats through wildlife migration from surrounding areas.

AIR QUALITY

The main air pollutant in southern and western deserts is particulates. Sources of particulate matter vary widely in Arizona from region to region and season to season. Farming activity and vehicular traffic on unpaved roads suspends large quantities of dust, contributing to the majority of the particulate concern in the Casa Grande Valley. Other significant dust sources include construction and windblown dust from disturbed soils. The greater Casa Grande Valley has been designated a non-attainment area by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency.



*When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade,
plant trees. When planning for a life, train and educate people.
-Chinese proverb*