

Character and Vision

The El Rio corridor is characterized by a scenic and diverse southwestern desert riparian environment. The vision for the corridor is to leverage its remarkable resources in order to create a unique destination that is environmentally and economically sustainable.



Avondale





2.1 Purpose

The El Rio corridor is characterized by a scenic and diverse southwest desert riparian environment which contains significant natural, cultural and historical assets. Collectively, the participating jurisdictions believe that broad policy and development guidance through best practices can help retain and enhance these assets, while supporting development that is appropriate for its context.

El Rio Watercourse Master Plan

The primary goal of the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC) is to reduce the risks of flooding and minimize the impacts of floods on human health and safety, as well as to preserve and restore the natural beauty and benefits of the river corridor.

In 2006, Maricopa County, along with the City of Avondale, the Town of Buckeye and the City of Goodyear completed the "El Rio Watercourse Master Plan" (WCMP). The purpose of the WCMP was to examine the benefits, opportunities and impacts of flood control management in the study area and to recommend a preferred design alternative. This would provide a flood protection strategy that preserves the cultural and archaeological heritage of the river and enhances the long-term multi-use vision of the river corridor.

El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards

The *El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards* is the next stage of implementation of the WCMP.

Understanding the primary goal of the District, the focus of this document is to identify land use design guidelines and planning standards that take into consideration both structural and non-structural flood control alternatives for future development.

In order to promote consistency in development within the corridor, the *El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards* are intended to apply across the multi-jurisdictional boundaries of Maricopa County, the City of Avondale, the City of Buckeye and the City of Goodyear. The *El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards* were developed to meet the following goals:

1. Reduce the risks of flooding, by maintaining proper conveyance and minimizing the potential impacts of flooding on human health and safety through safe, appropriate development
2. Restore and preserve the natural wash systems and constructed drainage features to provide a physical and visual connection with the Gila River and its associated wildlife habitat, thereby protecting and enhancing the quality, character and amenity value of the area and setting
3. Coordinate multi-jurisdictional planning and design of pathways, trails and land use that will focus on the proximity and access of the Gila River as an asset in development layout and site design. Promote the responsible development of the diverse land use categories



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| permitted within the corridor | the corridor that provide physical access to the Gila River and foster a sense of public ownership |
| 4. Demonstrate the value of, and commitment to, the corridor by identifying and promoting economic development opportunities that leverage public support | 6. Build a sense of place by enhancing the natural, cultural and historic resources of the area while respecting the natural environment |
| 5. Initiate sponsored pilot projects within | |

2.2 Character Area Planning

What is Character Area Planning?

Character Area Planning is the term given to an 'area-based' approach to land use planning. It is a technique that identifies and interprets the notable qualities and historic features that unite like neighborhoods and/or land areas. Recognizing these qualities and features gives the present day landscape a connection to the past while defining a way forward for future development.

Conventional land use planning looks first at the use, then defines where it should go and what it should look like. Character Area Planning first understands the inherent character of an area then describes the context in which a proposed use can be compatible with the area in which it is proposed. In short, Character Area Planning reveals the underlying setting within a place. That setting then sets the context in which residents prefer to see future development.

The benefits of this approach are many:

1. It enables a community to identify and value its natural, built and social environments, thereby more effectively managing change.
2. It safeguards the natural and historic environment which contributes to an area's sense of place.

3. It enhances the existing quality of those places that are important to a community.
4. It is more flexible and business friendly than the conventional approach to planning by allowing design and context to moderate compatibility.

Why Use Character Area Planning?

Character Area Planning better assists a community in recognizing, retaining and replicating the values it considers meaningful and worth preserving. It offers a broader and more inclusive approach than those used for designation-based control. Because it is area-based, it can take into account all aspects of a place and thus provides a basis for an integrated approach to its planning and management.

Additionally, because it can be undertaken at different scales and in ever-greater detail at successive planning and design stages, it can flexibly guide both rural and urban development, from individual types of development through large growth area projects. Finally, because it is essentially about place, it can provide the basis for local planning that empowers communities to protect their desirable features.



Character Area Determination

The corridor was reviewed to identify areas with distinct characteristics. It was apparent that there were many distinct areas but it was determined that 12 areas could be identified as sharing common features and/or characteristics. These formed the 12 Character Areas identified on the Character Area Map on the following page.

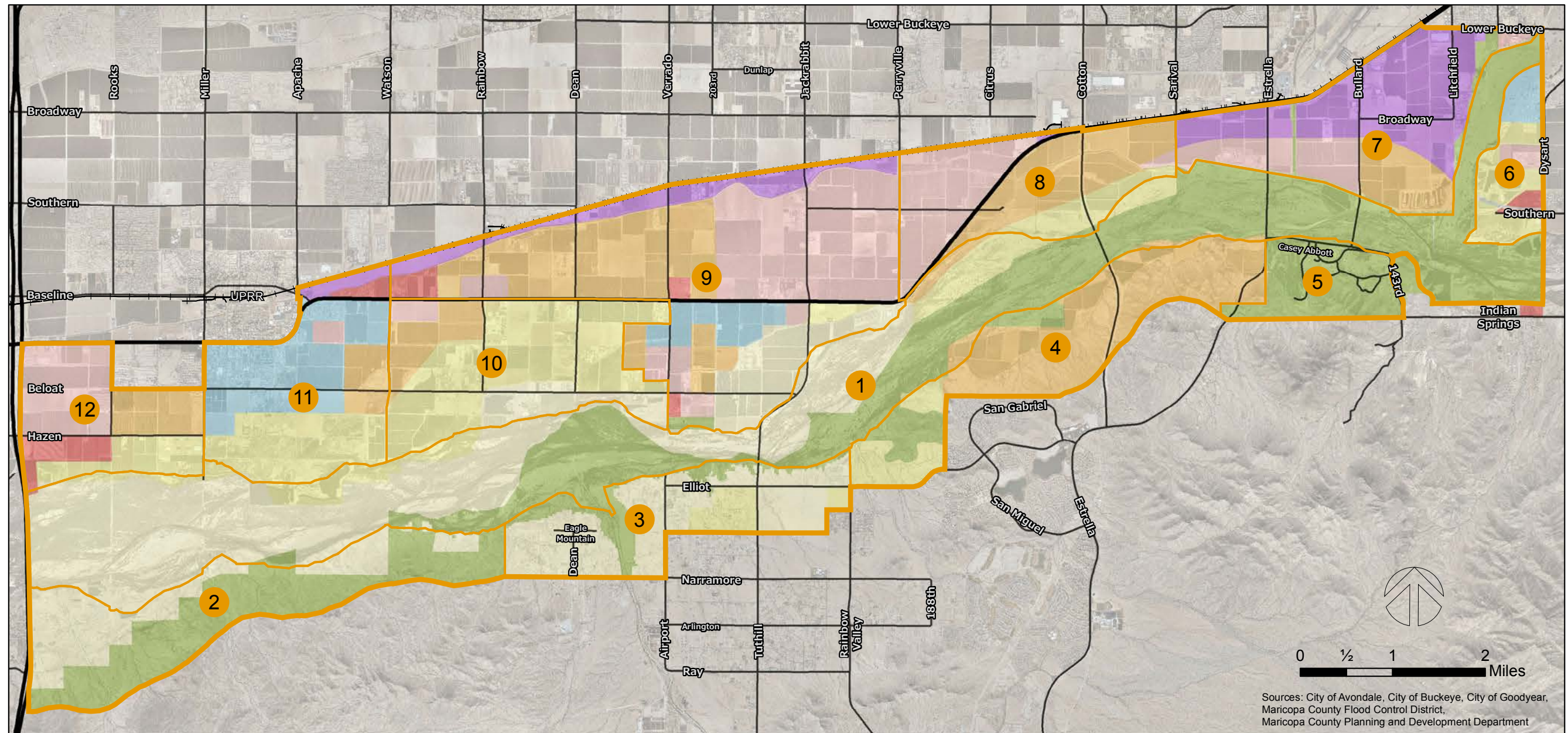
A character area description which best expressed the unifying features of the character area was then drafted. This description was based on a number of factors, including current land-use patterns, future planned land uses, surrounding community assets, natural and man-made

features, historical and cultural assets, topographical features and floodplain and floodway delineations.

The description for each of the 12 Character Areas will not restrict future densities or intensities, but will provide guidance to future development with the expectation that it will maintain and enhance the established character of the area.

Character and Vision





Date: 9/27/2015

Legend

 Character Areas (with #s)	Standardized Land Uses	 Very Low Density Residential
 Project Boundary	 Commercial Center/Regional	 Low Density Residential
 Railroad (UPRR)	 Light Commercial/Office	 Medium Density Residential
 Arterial Streets	 Mixed Use	 Passive/Conservation Open Space
 Highways	 Industrial	

Character Areas

1. High Value Habitat	7. El Rio East Employment Recreation Core
2. Scenic Rural Development and Open Space	8. Goodyear North Bank Development
3. Waterman Wash Rural Development and Recreation	9. Buckeye North Bank Development
4. King Ranch Development and Recreation	10. El Rio Historic Rural
5. Estrella	11. El Rio West Urban Core
6. Tres Rios Scenic Confluence	12. Buckeye Commerce Corridor

El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards – Character Areas Map

2.3 Character Area Descriptions

1 High Value Habitat

Location

The High Value Habitat Character Area is located in the City of Avondale, the City of Buckeye, the City of Goodyear and unincorporated areas of Maricopa County. It runs the full length of the 17.5-mile corridor from east to west and corresponds directly with the Agua Fria and Gila River floodways.

Key Resource Features:

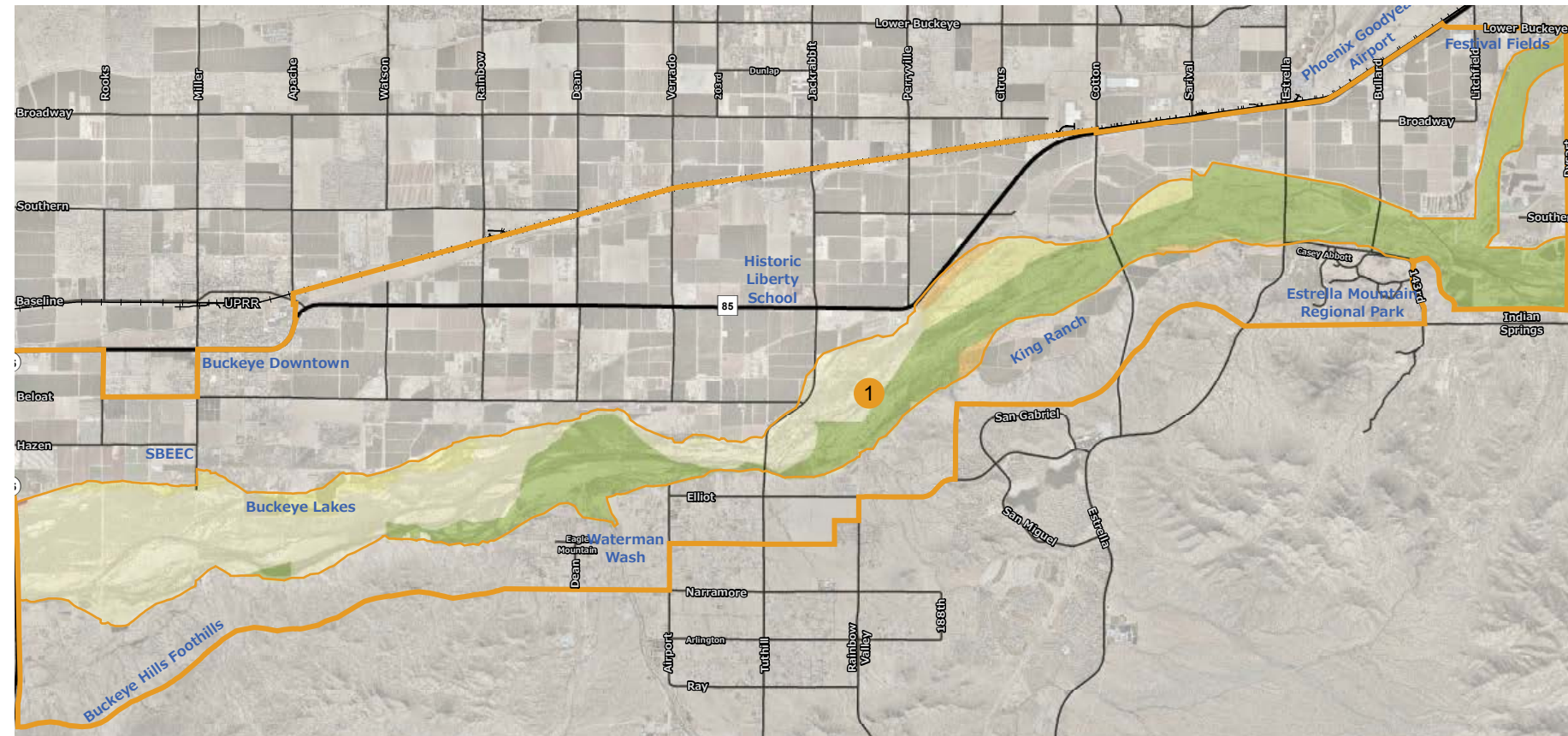
1. Habitat
2. Conservation
3. Recreation
4. Sand and Gravel
5. Scenic Views

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area consists primarily of rugged river bottom interspersed with flowing water. The land slopes lower to the west. There are large stands of trees fed by perennial water flow. The existing land use is part passive conservation open space and part very low density residential. Some sand and gravel mining operations have rights to operate in the area.

Future Land Use

The High Value Habitat Character Area is designated very low density residential and passive conservation open space. The entire character area is in the floodway, so development opportunities



are limited.

This character area is the floodway, therefore, new residential will be prohibitively difficult. New non-residential private development may include mining operations. New mining activity in the High Value Habitat Area, within municipal boundaries should:

1. Be sensitive to the surrounding environment and existing development
2. Include noise, dust, and glare mitigation
3. Provide a detailed restoration plan

Character Area Description

This character area consists of the Gila River, which, in the El Rio plan area, has a perennial water flow that is generated from reclaimed water, agriculture tail water, and from natural ground water. This flow has helped to develop a rich riparian ecosystem. The vegetation and perennial flow now supports high value habitat for wildlife which has the potential to provide significant economic value to the region through opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature-based specialty travel and wilderness experiences.



Character and Vision





2 Scenic Rural Development and Open Space

Location

The Scenic Rural Development and Open Space Character Area is located in the City of Buckeye and includes areas of unincorporated Maricopa County. The western edge follows the State Route (SR) 85 alignment. The eastern edge corresponds with the Rainbow Road alignment. It is bounded on the north by the Gila River and on the south by a line approximately one quarter mile from the river bank.

Key Resource Features:

1. SR 85
2. Cultural Resources
3. Buckeye Hills Foothills
4. Scenic Views
5. Mining Lakes

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area consists primarily of many small desert hills. The western end of the area flattens out on the north side. There are multiple small washes that intersect the area. There are some small agriculture uses and scattered large lot residential and ranch uses. Most of the area is undeveloped natural desert.

Future Land Use

The Scenic Rural Development and Open Space Character Area is designated very low density residential and passive/conservation open space.

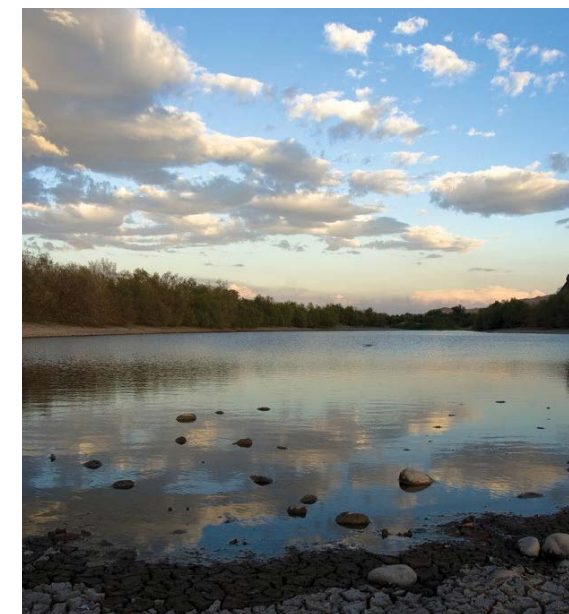
1. Development should consider the natural desert landscape in its architectural style, color, and materials.
2. Colors, materials forms and massing should reflect the natural foothills of the Sonoran Desert.
3. Building forms and sites should follow the terrain of the natural hillside and washes.
4. Balance between the buildings and the landscaping should substantially favor the landscaping. In general, open space and vegetation dominate. Rural uses such as horses, view fencing hedgerows along property boundaries, and generous setbacks from the street will visually contribute to the rural and estate character.
5. Lots should have well defined construction envelopes so that encroachment into natural areas is minimized.
6. Indigenous and rustic types of building materials are preferred in order to maintain a rural character.

Character Area Description

This character area is rural with very low density/intensity development with expansive passive open space views of the Gila River Corridor to the north and the Buckeye Hills to the south. The area contains both ecological and archeological assets that merit protection. This character area benefits from the proximity of the diverse terrain of the



mountain foothills and river corridor and can naturally provide wildlife corridor linkages to the Gila River. Close proximity to SR 85 provides access to regional transportation corridors.



3 Waterman Wash

Location

The Waterman Wash Character Area is located in unincorporated Maricopa County. It is bounded on the north by the Gila River, the west by the Rainbow Road alignment, the east by Rainbow Valley Road and the south by Narramore Road.

Key Resource Features:

1. Waterman Wash
2. Recreation
3. Waterman Ranch
4. Mesquite Bosque

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area consists primarily of sandy, low flat land sloping northward to the south bank of the Gila River. Waterman wash dominates the area. Existing land uses consist of large lot, rural residential with agricultural and ranch type uses.

Future Land Use

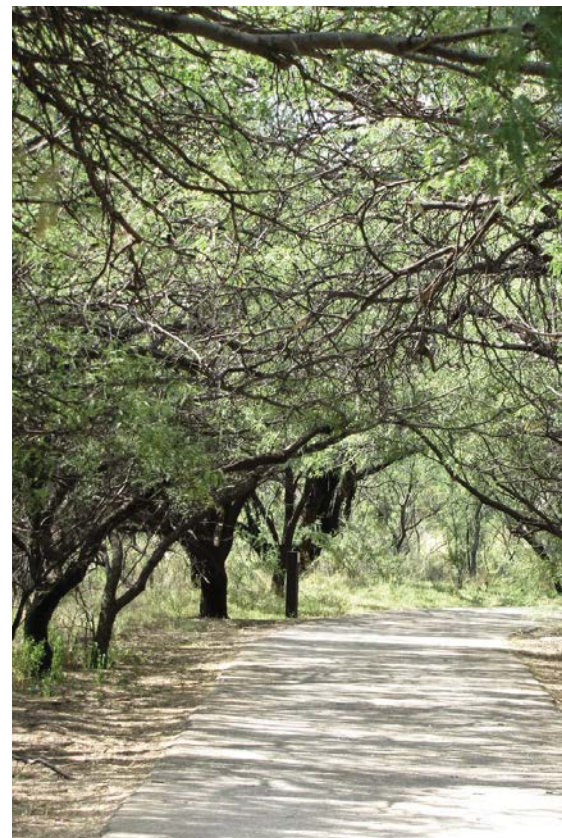
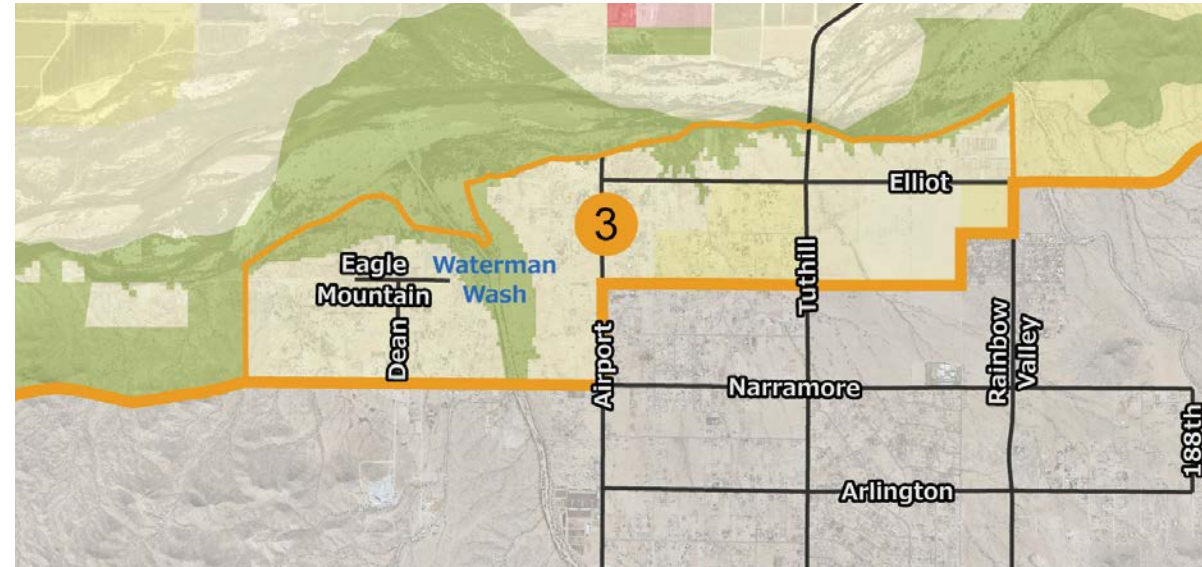
The Waterman Wash Character Area is designated low and very low density residential.

1. Development should consider the natural desert landscape in its architectural style, color and materials.
2. Colors, materials forms, and massing should reflect the natural foothills of the Sonoran Desert.

3. Building forms and sites should follow the terrain of the natural hillside and washes.
4. Balance between the buildings and the landscaping should substantially favor the landscaping. In general open space and vegetation dominate. Rural uses such as horses, view fencing hedgerows along property boundaries, and generous setbacks from the street will visually contribute to the rural and estate character.
5. Design should incorporate traditional Arizona ranch design and materials, blending with the desert and rural character.
6. Buildings should be sited to maintain openness and preserve view corridors.

Character Area Description

Waterman Wash is an ephemeral wash that drains several smaller desert washes in the area to the south of the Gila River and serves as a wildlife corridor for the area. The area is open rural desert with very low density/intensity rural, large lot residential development. This character area has a feeling of openness through the natural washes and large lot development.



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4 King Ranch

Location

The King Ranch Character Area is located in the City of Goodyear and includes areas of unincorporated Maricopa County. It is bounded on the north by the Gila River, the west by Rainbow Valley Road, the east by Estrella Parkway and the south by the Estrella Mountain Ranch master planned community.

Key Resource Features:

1. King Ranch
2. Fertile Agricultural Land
3. Cotton Lane Bridge
4. State Land
5. Scenic Views
6. Estrella Foothills

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area ranges from low flatland directly adjacent to the south bank of the Gila River to hilly terrain created by the foothills of the Estrella Mountains and several desert washes that dominate the southern portion of the area.

Future Land Use

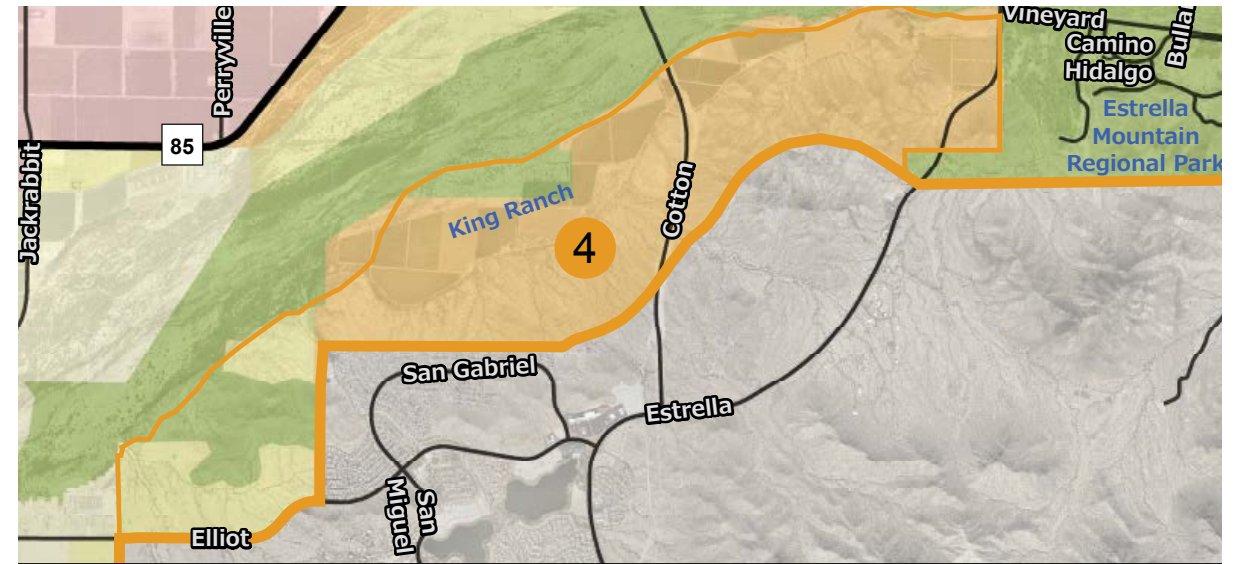
A large portion of the future land use is governed by the King Ranch PAD. The King Ranch PAD is designed as a master-planned community that encompasses approximately 1,860 acres directly adjacent to the south bank of the Gila River. The community plans approximately 4,250 units. This PAD is generally designated as medium density residential, with some

low density residential designated in the area's west end.

1. The man-made and open space elements of the community should be balanced.
2. Internal open space and external transitioning should be maximized to provide the necessary balance with the man-made elements.
3. Setbacks for and between buildings and along public ways should be more pronounced.
4. Solid fencing or walls should be partially limited, with the area adjacent to the community open space in a partial-view style of fencing.
5. Meandering shared-use trails along collector and arterial corridors which link to internal and external open space areas, paths and trails should be provided.
6. Development adjacent to arterial streets should maintain view corridors and where possible, provide re-vegetation with native plants and materials.
7. Drainage improvements should blend with the natural desert environment.

Character Area Description

The King Ranch Character Area, situated below the foothills of the Estrella Mountains, has some of the most scenic vistas of the area and includes active farming uses and undisturbed desert. This area is principally made up of the King Ranch



Planned Area Development (PAD). The King Ranch property currently includes active farming operations along the Gila River with a large portion of the property currently within the 100-year floodplain. Abutting the agricultural land to the south are the foothills of the Estrella Mountains, which make up the southern boundary of King Ranch. Between the foothills and agricultural fields the property is fragmented with dry washes which are characteristic of the Sonoran Desert environment.



5 Estrella

Location

Located in the City of Goodyear, the Estrella Character Area is bounded on the north by Vineyard Avenue and on the south by the Indian Springs Road alignment. The eastern boundary is 143rd Avenue and the western boundary is Estrella Parkway.

Key Resource Features:

1. Estrella Mountain Regional Park
2. Estrella Mountain
3. Nature Center
4. Camping
5. Scenic Views
6. BOR/FCD Restoration/Demonstration Project
7. Rodeo Grounds

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area includes the mountainous Sonoran Desert terrain of the Estrella Mountains. The area slopes to the north as it transitions to the rolling foothills of the Estrella Mountains, eventually leading to the south bank of the Gila River. The area is entirely within the Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

Future Land Use

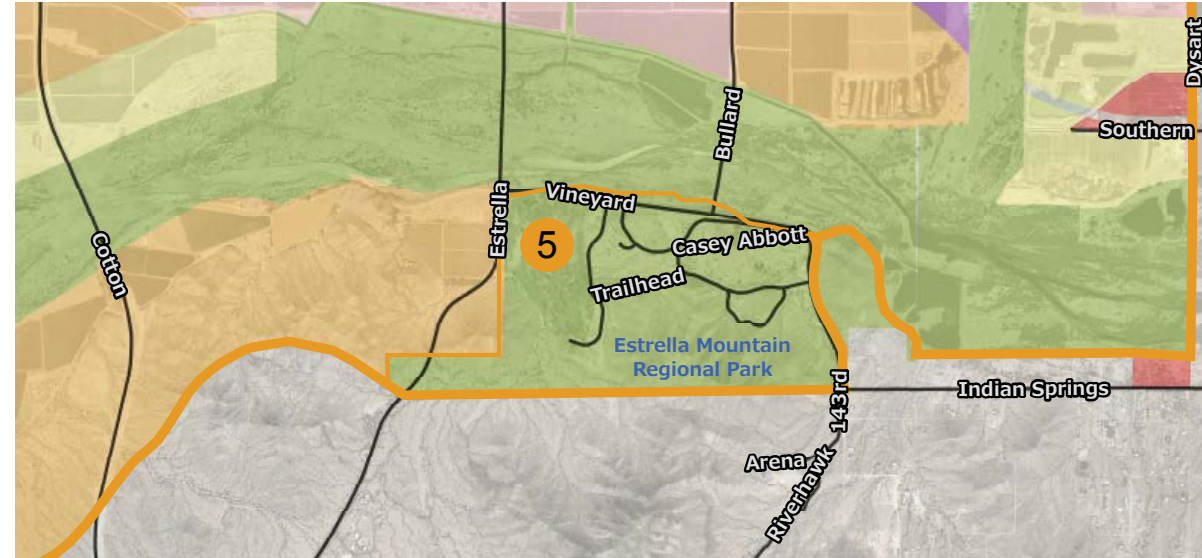
The future land use designation for the area is park and open space.

1. All property within this character area is public park space. New private development is not permitted.

2. New public development shall respect the natural elements and terrain.
3. New structures should incorporate the natural colors and materials of the surrounding area.

Character Area Description

The Estrella Character Area is distinguished by the Estrella Mountain Regional Park which makes accessible the expansive beauty of the natural desert. The park encompasses nearly 20,000 acres and is the second largest park in the Maricopa County park system. The park includes the recent addition of a Nature Center, along with extensive active and passive recreation opportunities, including a 65-acre active turf park, and trails for mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding. The park also has playground equipment, volleyball areas, picnic areas with ramadas and an 18-hole golf course. The park includes a large wetland, or riparian, area. The majority of the park remains pristine desert.



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6 Tres Rios Greenway

Location

Located in the City of Avondale, the Tres Rios Greenway Character Area is bounded by Dysart Road on the east, the north bank of the Gila River on the south and the east bank of the Agua Fria River on the west and north.

Key Resource Features:

1. Sun Circle and Maricopa Trails
2. Tres Rios
3. Sand and Gravel
4. Avondale WWTP
5. Habitat
6. Scenic Views

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography is generally flat with a gentle slope toward the Gila River to the south. The area has no natural desert vegetation or washes. Existing land uses primarily consist of a mix of agricultural and large lot rural residential development. The area includes the City of Avondale's Wastewater Treatment Facility approximately 1/4 -mile south of Broadway Road along the Dysart Road alignment. On its southern boundary, this character area is also impacted by the historic use of the river for sand and gravel production.

Future Land Use

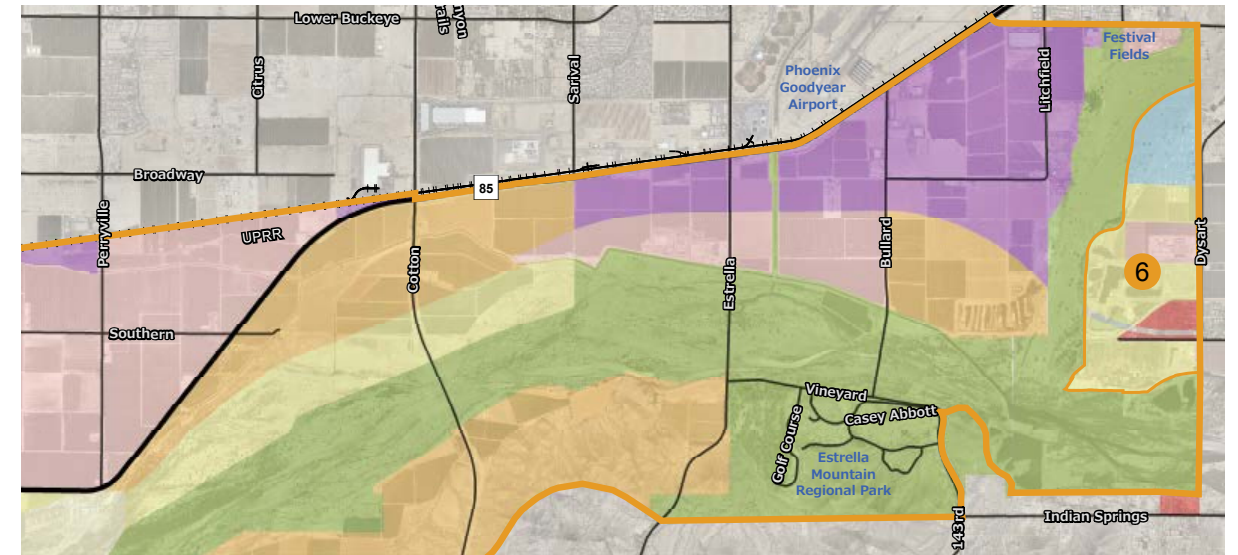
The future land use designations for the area include low density residential with some non-residential uses identified.

The Tres Rios Greenway Character Area is a low lying area that is impacted by flooding. Future development should take this into consideration and consider the many recreational opportunities along the Gila River corridor that could be located within this character area, such as hiking, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, and interpretation or observation of geological, cultural, and ecological features.

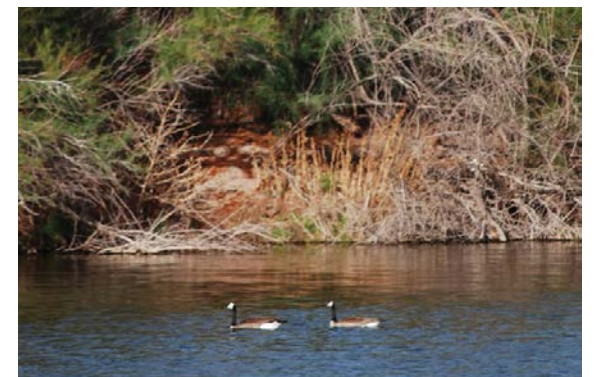
1. New development should be low density/intensity with finished floor elevations a minimum of 2 feet above the 100 year base flood elevation.
2. Development should maintain openness and public access to the river corridor.
3. Solid fencing or walls should be limited.
4. Development should provide opportunities for view corridors and public access.
5. Buildings should be sited to maintain openness and preserve view corridors.
6. Development should provide passive and active opportunities for interacting with the Gila River corridor.

Character Area Description

The Tres Rios Greenway Character Area represents the west end of the Tres Rios project and the beginning of the El Rio project. The Tres Rios project, beginning to the east in Phoenix, is a constructed wetlands project. As a result of the project, the area now supports an abundance



of birds and other wildlife. The Tres Rios Nature Festival is held here every March to celebrate the natural environment. The area has varying development impacts, including active agricultural production, the City of Avondale's Wastewater Treatment Facility and low density, large lot rural residential to small lot manufactured housing. This area is also within the adopted Avondale "Tres Rios Greenway Specific Plan". The objectives of the Tres Rios Greenway Plan are to improve public amenities for trails, recreation, community meeting areas, as well as providing more favorable wildlife habitat where possible and appropriate, while maintaining the ability to safely contain flood waters when such events occur.



7 El Rio East Employment Core

Location

Located in the City of Goodyear, the El Rio East Employment Core Character Area is generally bounded on the north by MC 85 and on the south by the Buckeye Canal. The eastern boundary is the west bank of the Agua Fria River and the western boundary is Sarival Road.

Key Resource Features:

1. Avondale Festival Fields
2. Goodyear BMX Facility and Dog Park
3. Employment Core
4. Proximity to Airport and Rail
5. BID Canal
6. Bullard and Estrella Roadways
7. Bullard Wash
8. Goodyear WWTP
9. Cultural Resource

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography is generally flat with a gentle slope toward the Gila River to the south. The area is primarily in active agricultural production and associated uses, with virtually all natural desert vegetation and washes removed.

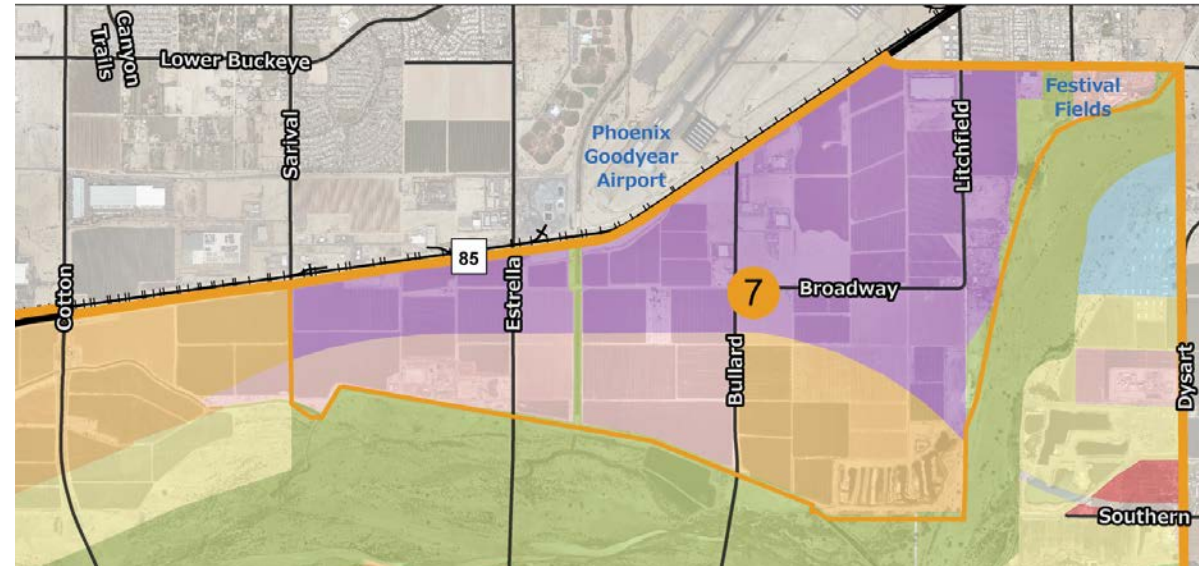
Future Land Use

The future land use designations for the area include a mix of employment, commercial and medium density residential.

1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of El Rio Corridor.
2. Land uses in the El Rio East Employment Core should maintain and expand the land use diversity to provide a range of density and intensity of development.
3. Transitions between different densities/intensities should be incorporated through setbacks, buffers and stepping down densities/intensities where necessary.
4. Non-residential uses adjacent to the Phoenix Goodyear Airport should be prioritized.
5. Development adjacent to arterial streets should maintain view corridors.
6. Provide meandering shared-use trails along collector and arterial corridors which link to internal and external open space areas, paths and trails.

Character Area Description

Anchored by the proximity of the Phoenix-Goodyear Airport to the north and an emerging cluster of aviation businesses, the El Rio East Employment Core is positioned to become a major employment hub of the southwest valley. This position is bolstered by the presence of several existing and planned arterial corridors such as MC85, Estrella Parkway, Litchfield



Road and Sarival Road. The area includes some existing employment uses, but its current use is predominately agricultural. The southern boundary of the area is the Buckeye Canal, which provides some protection from flooding from the Gila River.

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8 Goodyear North Bank Development

Location

The Goodyear North Bank Character Area, located in the City of Goodyear, is bounded on the south by the north bank of the Gila River, on the north by the alignment with both MC 85 and the railroad ROW, on the east by the Sarival alignment, and on the west by the Perryville alignment.

Key Resource Features:

1. Cotton Lane Bridge
2. BID Canal
3. Sand and Gravel
4. Transmission Line Corridor
5. SR 30
6. Loop 303
7. 303 Drainage Corridor

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography of the area is generally flat, with a gentle slope towards the Gila River to the south as well as a gentle slope towards the west. The area is primarily in active agricultural production and associated uses, with virtually all natural desert vegetation and washes removed.

Future Land Use

The future land use designations for the area include light commercial to the west of MC 85, medium density residential to the east of MC 85 and light density residential along the river's edge.

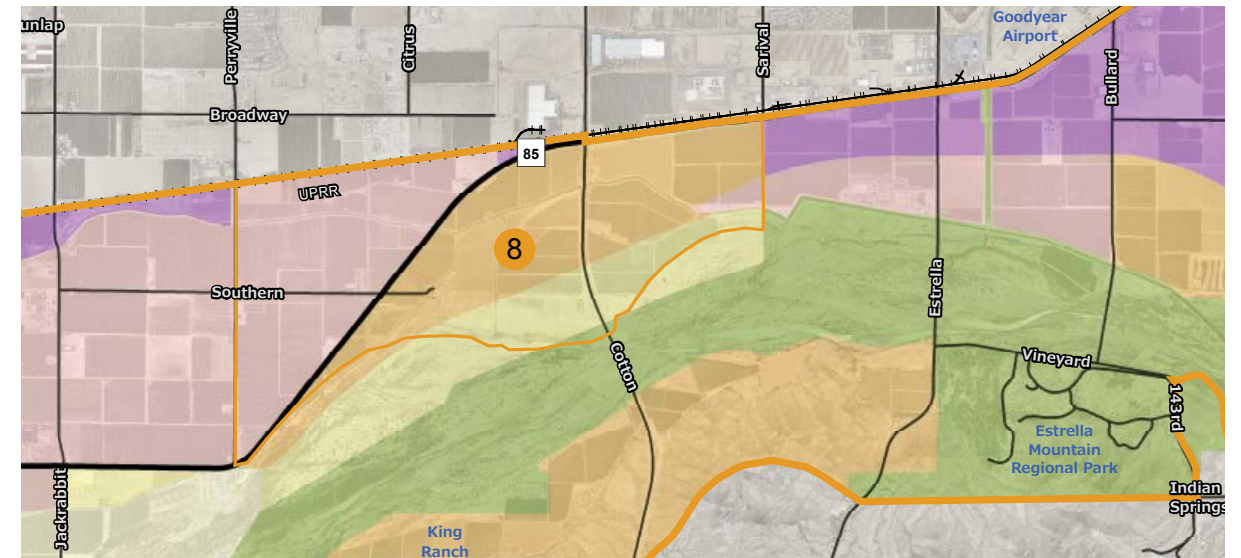
1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west

arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of El Rio Corridor.

2. Provide meandering shared-use trails along collector and arterial corridors which link to internal and external open space areas, paths and trails.
3. Development adjacent to arterial streets should maintain view corridors and where possible, provide re-vegetation with native plants and materials.
4. Thoughtful and creative residential development that supports the employment and commercial core should be encouraged.
5. A neighborhood trail system that connects local neighborhoods with regional open space, paths and trails should be developed.

Character Area Description

The Goodyear North Bank Character Area is primarily active agricultural production. The area is bisected by two major arterial roadways, Cotton Lane and MC 85. The lack of a levee or defined north bank of the Gila River places a portion of the area within the 100-year floodplain. The Cotton Lane bridge provides one of two primary connections between north and south Goodyear. The area is further impacted by the Buckeye Canal and the presence of a major electrical transmission line corridor. This character area may also be heavily impacted by the future Loop 303 and SR 30, system to system interchange. Developers of this area will need to take all the relevant impacts into consideration prior to development.



9 Buckeye North Bank Development

Location

The Buckeye North Bank Development Character Area is located on the eastern border of the City of Buckeye adjacent to the City of Goodyear and south of the Union Pacific Railroad. Its northern boundary is the railroad ROW, its eastern boundary is the Perryville alignment, its western boundary moves from the Watson alignment east to the Verrado alignment and its southern boundary is MC 85 on the west end, and the Gila River north bank on the east end.

Key Resource Features:

1. MC 85
2. Historic Liberty School
3. Cemetery
4. Proximity to Rail
5. Verrado Way (Access to I-10)
6. BID Canal
7. FCD Bank
8. Perryville
9. Future SR 30

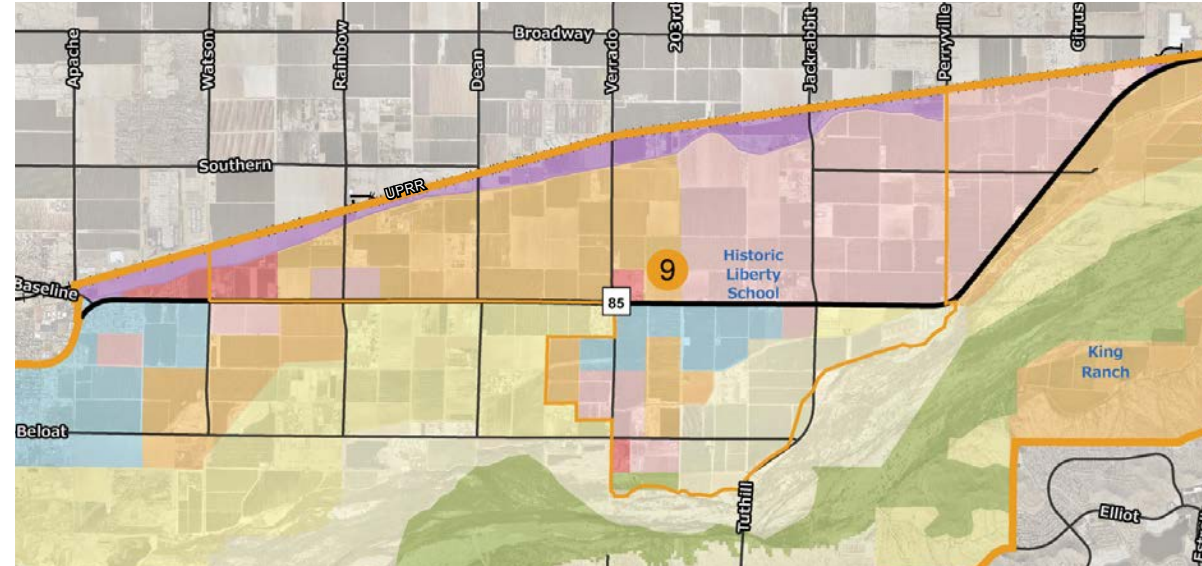
Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography is flat land that gently slopes to the river to the south. Parts of the area are low enough to fall into the 100-year flood zone. The area is primarily in active agricultural production and associated uses, with virtually all natural desert vegetation and washes removed. There are also a few scattered low density residential uses throughout the area.

Future Land Use

The Buckeye North Bank Development Character Area has been designated for several uses, including medium density residential in the west half, light commercial in the north east section, mixed uses in the southeast portion, and industrial along the rail line on the north side.

1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of El Rio Corridor.
2. Mixed-use commercial/residential development, where appropriate, based on flood risk, should be allowed.
3. Development of standards that improve the visual quality of commercial and mixed-use development and create a unified, distinctive, and attractive character along arterial streets should be established.
4. Contributing to the pedestrian environment with standards that integrate residential and non-residential uses should be encouraged.
5. Development adjacent to arterial streets should maintain view corridors and where possible, provide re-vegetation with native plants and materials.
6. A neighborhood trail system that connects local neighborhoods with regional open space, paths and trails should be developed.



Character Area Description

The area has a great deal of potential for growth. It is mostly flat, with great access to the river, to MC 85, and to the railroad. It also has the potential to develop its own independent character. It is far enough from downtown Buckeye and downtown Goodyear to become an independent economic hub, while still being close enough to those areas for all residents to mutually benefit. However, it is also a potential flood risk area. The area has a lower elevation than all of the rest of the non-floodway land in the corridor, and

would be extremely likely to flood in a 100-year flooding event without further flood prevention measures. The potential economic growth that could happen here could far outweigh the cost of permanent flood prevention measures – if the area is utilized to its fullest potential. The risk of flooding may dissuade small-lot, leap frog development, however, a continuation of the low-density, rural development may be appropriate. Large scale development may be suitable with appropriate subdivision design and/or flood mitigation measures to address potential flooding of the area.

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10 El Rio Historic Rural

Location

The El Rio Historic Rural Character Area is located in the City of Buckeye. It is bounded on the west by Watson Road, on the east by Verrado, on the north by MC 85, and on the south by the Gila River.

Key Resource Features:

1. Sand and Gravel
2. Cemetery
3. Lake

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The topography is mostly flat with a slope towards the south and southeast. Parts of the area are low enough to fall into the 100-year flood zone. The area is mostly agricultural, with some scattered low density residential. A South Extension Canal runs through the area from the east to the south.

Future Land Use

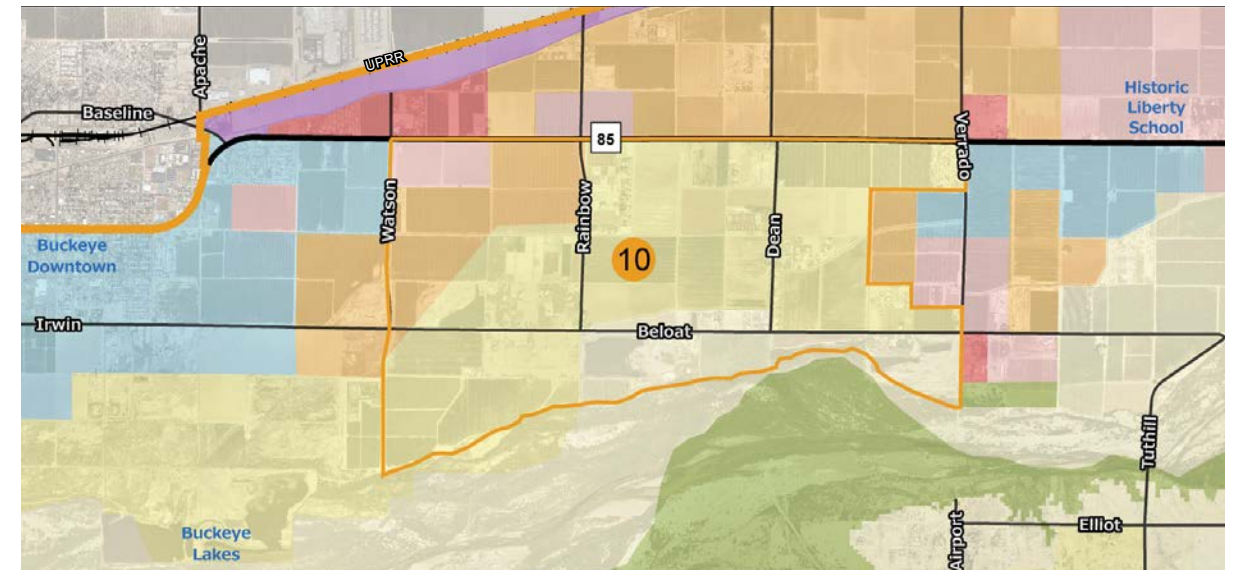
The area is designated for various residential uses increasing in density towards the northwest. A small amount of light commercial has been designated in the northwest corner.

1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of El Rio Corridor.
2. The character and scale of the established rural properties should be preserved.

3. Solid fencing or walls should be partially limited, with the area adjacent to the community open space in a partial-view style of fencing.
4. Rural uses such as horses, view fencing hedgerows along property boundaries, and generous setbacks from the street will visually contribute to the rural and estate character.
5. Design should incorporate traditional Arizona ranch design and materials blending with the desert and rural character.
6. Meandering shared-use trails along collector and arterial corridors which link to internal and external open space areas, paths and trails should be provided.

Character Area Description

The El Rio Historic Rural Character Area is positioned between the employment and commercial focused areas to the east, and the historic downtown Buckeye area to the west. The El Rio Historic Rural Character Area is large lot irrigated rural farm and ranch land, reminiscent of the early days of ranching and farming in Maricopa County. The area comprises well-established farm landscapes with expansive views in all directions and particularly good views of the Buckeye Hills to the south. This area is well-positioned to be an attractive place to live. The close river access will promote active living, while the close proximity to regional retail and employment will promote a live, work, play lifestyle. The risk of flooding may dissuade



small-lot, leap frog development, however, a continuation of the low-density, rural development may be appropriate. Large scale development may be suitable with appropriate subdivision design and/or flood mitigation measures to address potential flooding of the area.

11 El Rio West Urban Core

Location

The El Rio West Urban Core Character Area is located in the City of Buckeye and bounded on the west by Miller Road, on the east by Watson Road, on the south by the Gila River, and on the north by both the rail alignment and the MC 85 alignment.

Key Resource Features:

1. Downtown Buckeye
2. Buckeye Lakes
3. Historic Resource
4. Buckeye WWTP
5. Arlington Canal
6. MC 85
7. Government Services
8. Fire Training Facility
9. Established Grid Pattern
10. Sand and Gravel

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The area is flat and slopes to the south towards the river. There are some areas in the southern half that are rugged terrain. The northwest corner is characterized by built out mixed uses, while most of the rest of the area is given over to agricultural uses and passive open space.

Future Land Use

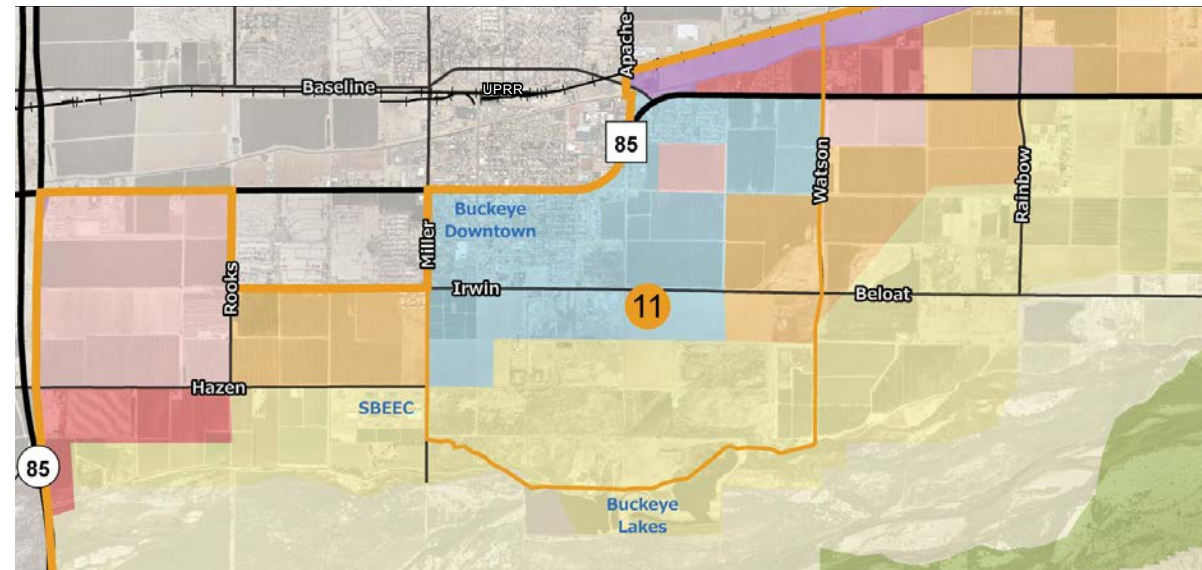
The area is designated as mixed use in the northern half, with some scattered commercial, light commercial, and medium density residential in the eastern portions. The northeast corner has industrial

uses along the rail line, while the southern side is proposed as low density residential.

1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of El Rio Corridor.
2. The El Rio West Urban Core should strive to maintain and enhance Buckeye's historic development pattern.
3. Quality urban design with an emphasis on small town historical character should be promoted.
4. Development should support, enhance and improve the economic viability of downtown Buckeye through a thoughtful mix of residential and non-residential uses.
5. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation should be improved to ensure a pedestrian friendly and safe environment.
6. Development of shaded outdoor spaces for the use and benefit of residents, employees, and visitors should be encouraged.
7. Development should provide neighborhood trails that connect local neighborhoods with regional open space, paths and trails within the Gila River corridor.

Character Area Description

The El Rio West Urban Core Character Area is anchored on the north by downtown Buckeye and on the south by Buckeye



Lakes in the Gila River. Development in the area includes a mix of residential and non-residential development, as well as historic and non-historic properties. The east portion of the area is dominated by active agricultural production while the southern portion, adjacent to Buckeye Lakes, has sand and gravel mining operations. Directly west of this area, and part of Character Area 12, is the South Buckeye Equestrian and Events Center (SBEEC). The long-term plan for this area includes establishing connectivity from downtown to the Gila River and capitalizing on the SBEEC for local, regional and national events.



Character and Vision



12 Buckeye Commerce Corridor

Location

The Buckeye Commerce Corridor Character Area, situated next to the heart of downtown Buckeye, is bounded on the north by MC 85 and Beloit Road, on the west by SR 85, on the east by Miller Road, and on the south by the Gila River.

Key Resource Features:

1. SR 85
2. MC 85
3. South Buckeye Equestrian and Events Center (SBEEC)
4. Arlington Canal

Topography, Land Cover and Existing Land Use

The flat topography of the area slopes towards the south where it meets the river bank. The existing land uses are agricultural in nature with the exception of a few estate residential lots and one apartment complex in the northeast corner.

Future Land Use

The future land use designations for the area are medium density residential in the northeast corner, light density residential along the river, light commercial in the northeast section, and regional commercial in the southwest corner.

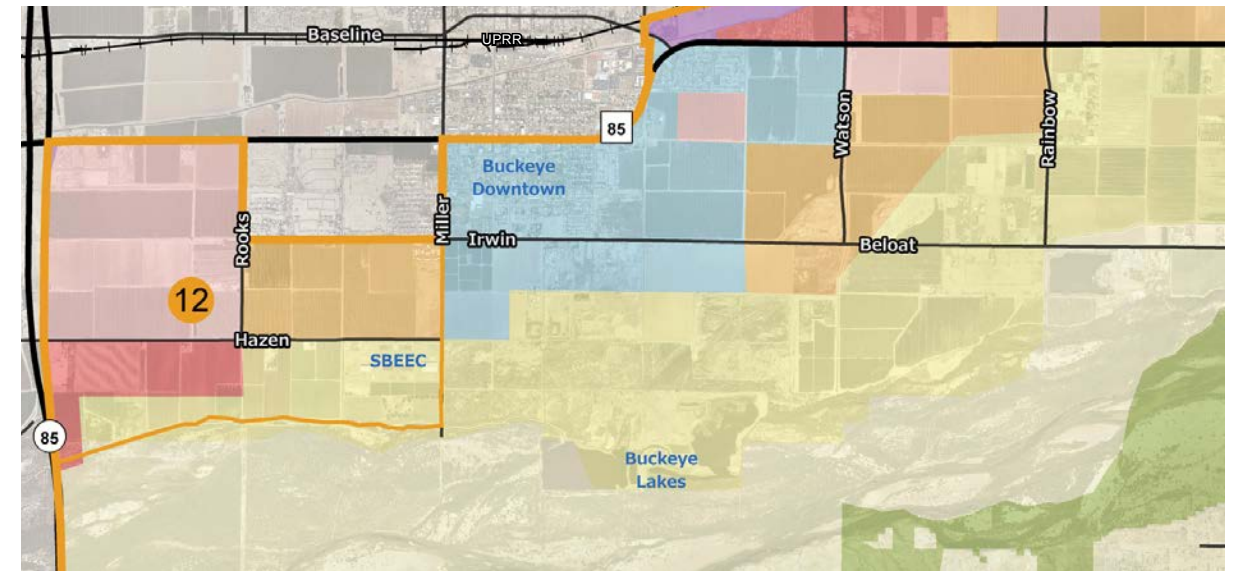
1. Development in this area should incorporate unique entry features within the major north-south and east-west arterial corridors which convey the unique qualities of the El Rio corridor.

2. Land uses in the Buckeye Commerce Corridor should leverage the presence of the SBEEC and provide supporting diverse land uses.
3. Transitions between different densities/intensities should be incorporated through setbacks, buffers and stepping down densities/intensities where necessary.
4. Non-residential uses adjacent to the major street arterials should be prioritized.
5. Development adjacent to arterial streets should maintain view corridors.
6. Meandering shared-use trails along collector and arterial corridors, linked to internal and external open space areas, paths and trails should be provided.

Character Area Description

The Buckeye Commerce Corridor Character Area is predominately in active agricultural production, but it has direct access to SR 85 and MC 85, and lies within 1 to 2 miles of downtown Buckeye, giving it prime potential to be a regional commercial hub as well as a walkable, livable neighborhood that supports downtown Buckeye. The river bank is slightly higher here than in parts of the City of Buckeye further east, so the area lends itself to more advanced riverside developments. The northwest corner of the character area is developed as a mixed industrial/employment area.

The southeast corner of the area is the



site of the South Buckeye Equestrian and Events Center (SBEEC), a premier equestrian and events facility. It includes event venues, state-of-the-art boarding facilities, a veterinary hospital and a dining and entertainment establishment. The facility hosts local, regional and national events that attracts riders from throughout the country. Directly east of this character

area and part of Character Area 11 are the Buckeye Lakes in the Gila River. The long-term plan for this area includes establishing connectivity from downtown Buckeye to the SBEEC and to the Gila River, and capitalizing on the SBEEC for local, regional and national events.

2.4 El Rio Corridor Theme

The development of a “theme” for the El Rio Corridor should be based on the extensive research already completed within this corridor, including those areas surrounding it. The project corridor has been extensively studied, including an archeological report issued in 1868 that traced pre-historic activity in the corridor. Since those early stages of research, the project corridor has grown in complexity and importance as development pressures in the cities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear encroach into the project corridor. The theme needs to build out of, and be an extension of, the work completed to date, including the most recent efforts described earlier.

The El Rio Vision

The theme for this project needs to be related to the project vision. The vision for the project was established back in 1999 by a joint committee led by former Maricopa County Supervisor, Mary Rose Wilcox, along with the City of Avondale, the Town of Buckeye and the City of Goodyear, and the Flood Control District of Maricopa County. This task force, aided by multiple state, federal and local representatives and surrounding key stakeholders, developed a vision for the El Rio project corridor. The vision was articulated in five distinct theme objectives:

1. Restore and maintain the natural functions of the river corridor as a riparian habitat
2. Focus on multi-use facilities and functions
3. Maintain, enhance or mitigate flood control elements
4. Focus on public/private partnerships
5. Link functional compatibility outside the riparian habitat limits



Character and Vision





El Rio Theme Guidelines

The theme for El Rio should build from the previously completed studies and have a strong relationship to the corridor's natural surroundings and historical importance. The contextual site information of the El Rio project area is unique in that it presents multiple physiographic conditions in its natural setting. Landform variations include the rocky, mountainous slopes of the Estrella Mountains and Buckeye Hills south of the river, and flat alluvial plains north of the river. There are varied bed form conditions within the river channel that include multiple terrace formations and undulating sand and gravel bars interspersed with discontinuous low-flow channels and areas of open water. Vegetation conditions vary in direct response to the landform variations described above and are dictated by, and subject to, the availability of water within the project area. Hydric riparian or wetland conditions are seen immediately adjacent to any open water areas along low flow channels or sand and gravel excavation areas. Mesic vegetation, like mesquite bosques and salt cedar thickets, are seen on terraced areas where the water table does not lie at the surface. Extensive establishment of salt cedar groves throughout the project limits are an ongoing environmental and site design issue.

Because of these physical influences, the unique archeology and history of this area, coupled with the existing logo for El Rio, we believe that the theme for this project should be multifaceted. It should initiate from the colors, textures and fonts developed with the branding logo and the El Rio name, and wherever possible, include the following broad categories as theming guidelines.



Recycle/Reuse – Use both site-specific and manufactured recycled items in the project as site furnishings and construction materials that are illustrative of the river's history and use. This is the main principle that connects the entire project and should be applied to any restoration aspects of the project and public use facilities where it is cost effective and feasible.



Accessibility – Provide balanced, controlled, safe, and creative solutions for people of all ages and abilities without sacrificing the variety of experiences that a large, multiuse facility will present. Access will be balanced and controlled to ensure it does not negatively impact any planned environmental restoration aspects of the project.



Local Materials – Use indigenous materials and facilities to minimize maintenance challenges for the future and educate the public to the diverse materials and solutions that are both locally and regionally significant and available.



Create Connections – Promote the development of connections between different uses both within and outside the project. This connection should include the development and design of trail linkages to surrounding municipal and private developments, and open space areas.

Character and Vision



Historical Interpretation – Describe, interpret and honor the history of the river, its ancestral peoples, and the villages and cities that grew on its banks in every aspect of the project's design and programming. Position the project as a national, regional, cultural, and recreational resource for the Cities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear and potentially, the nation.



Respect the Settings – Enhance the river corridor so that it is compatible and consistent with its natural habitat and the overall project that is the nucleus of this endeavor. New development should respect the setting of the corridor by maintaining and enhancing viewsheds to the river corridor and mountain ranges.



Create Discovery Zones – Create spaces and areas along the river corridor to serve as discovery zones and destinations that invite and educate the visiting public in a positive and enlightened manner. These may be initiated with the pilot projects described in Section 8 of this report.



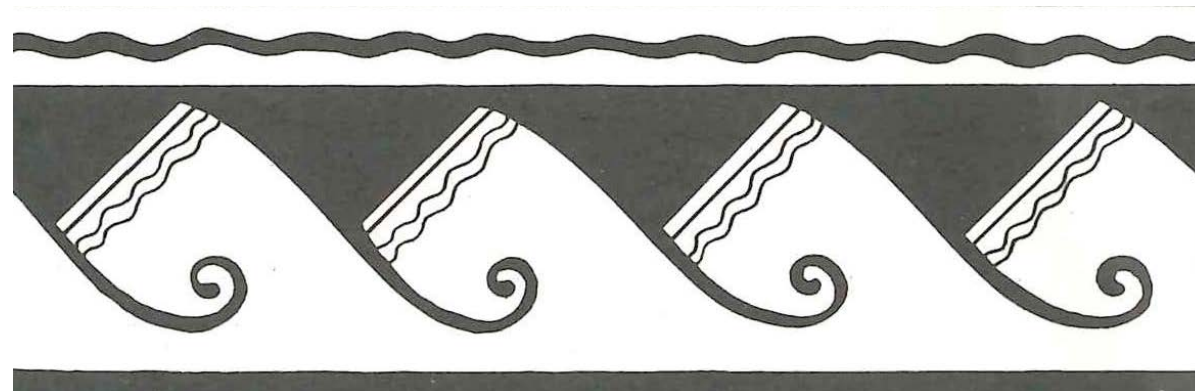
Encourage Frequent and Year-Round Use – Provide a cohesive mix of attractive, safe elements and spaces along the river that tell the story of the river cycle. This story includes the river's relationship to the environment and the desert seasons, which will create a compelling user destination for birding, hiking and equestrian usage along with passive recreational endeavors.



Build upon the colors within the existing El Rio Logo – Use the colors found in the established El Rio logo of blue and rust as foundation colors and the green and yellow colors for accents in signage, site furnishings and other features and elements in the El Rio corridor.



Linkages – The theme for the El Rio corridor should extend beyond the actual river and create the opportunity to make linkages to both private development and public infrastructure through creative connections that reinforce the El Rio theme.



The communities believe that every element associated with the El Rio project corridor needs to relate back to both the vision established in 1999 and the broad theming guidelines presented as part of this project. The approach to applying the vision and theme to the physical elements of the project corridor has to be multifaceted and flexible but based upon, and reflective, of these broad principles.

