

**NOTICE OF A REGULAR MEETING
OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF CLARKDALE**

In accordance with Resolution #215 of the Town of Clarkdale, and Section 38-431.02, Arizona Revised Statutes,

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the Town of Clarkdale will hold a REGULAR Meeting Tuesday, June 19, 2012, at 6:00 p.m., in the Men's Lounge of the Clark Memorial Clubhouse, 19 N. Ninth Street, Clarkdale, Arizona.

All members of the public are invited to attend.

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of this notice was duly posted on the Town Hall bulletin board, located at 890 Main Street, Clarkdale, Arizona on the 11th day of June, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.

Dated this 11th day of June, 2012 by:

Vicki McReynolds

Vicki McReynolds
Administrative Assistant II

ALL ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA ARE SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION,
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

2. ROLL CALL:

3. PUBLIC COMMENT: - The public is invited to provide comments at this time on items that are not on this agenda. Action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing staff to study the matter, or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision on a later agenda, as required by the Arizona Open Meeting Law. Each speaker is asked to limit his or her comments to **FIVE MINUTES**.

4. MINUTES: Consideration of the **Regular Meeting Minutes of May 15, 2012.**

5. REPORTS:

Chairperson and Members Special Events Report:
Director's Report:

NEW BUSINESS

6. WORKSESSION: Discussion regarding adding agricultural uses as permitted uses in residential zoning districts.

OLD BUSINESS

7. WORKSESSION: General Plan Implementation Strategies.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Reasonable accommodations may be requested by contacting Town Hall at (928)-634-9591, (TTY: 1-800-367-8939) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF CLARKDALE HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2012, IN THE MEN’S LOUNGE OF THE CLARK MEMORIAL CLUBHOUSE, 19 N. NINTH STREET, CLARKDALE, AZ.

A Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of the Town of Clarkdale was held on Tuesday, May 15, 2012, at 6:00 p.m., in the Men’s Lounge of the Clark Memorial Clubhouse, 19 N. Ninth Street, Clarkdale, AZ.

Planning Commission:

Chairperson	Jack Van Wye	Present
Vice Chairperson	Vic Viarengo	Absent (Excused)
Commissioners	Jorge Olguin	Present
	Karen Daniels	Present
	Dave Puzas	Present

Community Development Staff:

Community Development Director	Jodie Filardo
Senior Planner	Beth Escobar

Others in Attendance: None.

- 1. AGENDA ITEM: CALL TO ORDER:** The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- 2. AGENDA ITEM: ROLL CALL:** The Community Development Director called roll.
- 3. AGENDA ITEM: PUBLIC COMMENT:** The public is invited to provide comments at this time on items that are not on this agenda. Action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing staff to study the matter, or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision on a later agenda, as required by the Arizona Open Meeting Law. Each speaker is asked to limit his or her comments to **FIVE MINUTES**.

There was no public comment.

- 4. AGENDA ITEM: MINUTES:** Consideration of the **Regular Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2012**. The Chair entertained a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Olguin motioned to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2012. Commissioner Puzas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. AGENDA ITEM: REPORTS:

Chairperson & Members Special Events Report:

Chair Van Wye reported that he attended an open house at the Discovery Channel Telescope in Happy Jack on Saturday, May12. The 53 million dollar telescope is part of Lowell Observatory.

Commissioner Olguin commented that the Focused Future Mini-Summit on April 27 was a successful event with three interesting presentations, especially the one by Ed Fox of APS.

Commissioner Olguin appreciated the presentation of a holistic approach to sustainability and hopes that Mr. Fox can come back to discuss these concepts in greater detail.

Commissioner Daniels attended the 'Plant-a-Vine' event at Yavapai College.

Director's Report:

The Community Development Director provided a brief summary of the report provided in the packet.

NEW BUSINESS

6. AGENDA ITEM: DISCUSSION / POSSIBLE ACTION: Regarding the Final Revised Subdivision Ordinance.

After a brief presentation by staff summarizing the last round of revisions, the Commission requested the following changes/corrections:

- Correct a typing error on page 77.
- Investigate the engineering requirement for the circumference of a cul-de-sac and correct the ordinance if necessary.
- Add verbiage to Section 12-3-3.F regarding how compliance with this requirement will be monitored.

Commissioner Puzas moved to recommend to Town Council approval of adoption of the revised ordinances as Chapter 12 of the Town Zoning Code, with the above corrections being made, and deletion of the existing Chapter 12 – Subdivision Regulations of the Town Code. Commissioner Olguin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. AGENDA ITEM: WORKSESSION: General Plan Implementation Strategies.

The Commission and staff discussed a work plan for the implementation strategies. It was agreed that the Commissioners would submit their priorities to staff. Staff will then analyze these priorities based on current workload, and present to the Commission, at the June meeting, a list of activities that could reasonably be completed within the next year.

This being a worksession only, there were no actions taken.

8. AGENDA ITEM: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Consideration of adding agricultural uses to the residential districts in the Zoning Code.

Staff presented an outline of information that will be brought forward to the Commission in June to begin discussions regarding amending Section 3-1, 3-2, 3-3 & 3-4 of the Zoning Code to include agricultural as a permitted use.

9. **AGENDA ITEM: ADJOURNMENT:** Commissioner Puzas motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Daniels seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

SUBMITTED BY:

Jack Van Wye
Chairperson

Beth Escobar
Senior Planner



Director's Report

Agenda Item: Department Update
Community Development Department

Staff Contact: Jodie Filardo

Meeting Date: June 19, 2012

1. **Development Impact Fees:** Senior Planner Beth Escobar attended a training session sponsored by the Arizona League of Cities and Towns regarding Development Impact Fees and SB1525. Information was presented regarding the history of the current legislation and how municipalities are responding to the new regulations. Some interesting points from the presentation by the League's attorney:

- Municipalities are encouraged to be consistent throughout the state in how they comply with the new regulation. The League has crafted a draft ordinance to be used to help achieve this end.
- The majority of municipalities in the valley have begun work on the Infrastructure Improvement Plan that is required under the legislation. Several of the bigger cities have hired consultants to assist with this process. Consulting costs are ranging between \$55,000 and \$70,000.
- The estimated time frame to complete the process, which includes formation of the advisory committee and completion of the IIP, is 273 days.
- At least two communities, Lake Havasu and Sahuarita, have decided to abandon the collection of development impact fees. Sahuarita has adopted a special construction tax that is 3 times their regular sales tax rate to collect money for necessary improvements.

Staff presented this information to the Town Council at their June 12 meeting. Also discussed at this meeting was the possibility of adopting capacity fees for water and wastewater to compensate for the loss of impact fees. This proposal has been endorsed by our Town Attorney and other legal firms that have reviewed this approach. Council directed staff to proceed with crafting an ordinance to adopt water and wastewater capacity fees and bring back to Council for further discussion.

A team of Clarkdale staff members will continue to explore possibilities for funding other capital improvements, such as Town facilities and parks. Council endorsed the suspension of collection of development impact fees until a plan to proceed is in place.



Director's Report

2. **Subdivision Regulations:** The draft revised subdivision ordinance was presented to Town Council at the June 12 meeting. Council provided some feedback on the proposed changes, including three specific changes, and directed staff to return on June 26 to continue the discussion regarding the proposed changes.
3. **Focused Future II:** Four focus groups were held on Wednesday, May 30th in the Men's Lounge. Facilitated discussions were held on the topics of education, health and wellness, business support, and tourism/recreation with a total of 15 participants. The responses to the questions were compiled and presented to the Action Team. On Wednesday, June 6, an Opportunity Tour of the upper Clarkdale business district was conducted. This tour was well attended, including a representative from the Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce and Old Town Association. After the tour was conducted, the Focus Future II Action Team meeting was conducted. This meeting focused on preparation for the Economic Development Town Hall scheduled for June 21 from Noon to 5:00 p.m.
4. **Centennial Plaza:** The project is nearing completion. All plants should be in the ground by June 14. Limestone rocks donated by Salt River Materials Group will be spread around the plants and donated slag boulders from Clarkdale Metals will be scattered around the Plaza. Components remaining to be completed include placement of pavers in the central plaza area, installation of two benches and one waste receptacle and installation of the sign and time capsules.
5. **Crossroads at Mingus:** Staff will be attending a meeting to be scheduled with the principals of this development and the Yavapai County Assessor's office regarding the recording of the amended final plat for this project. The developer has been unable to obtain affidavit signatures from all of the property owners who purchased parcels prior to the plat amendment. They want to discuss alternatives with the Assessor's Office. The project cannot proceed until this final plat is recorded. This meeting should be scheduled before the end of June.

The final draft revisions of the proposed park at Tract F will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review at their June 13 meeting. The formal site plan review will then be scheduled for the Design Review Board, possibly in July or August.

6. **Mountain Gate Subdivision:** Staff met with John Andreotti of BC Land Group on May 23 to continue negotiations regarding a new development agreement. BC Land Group is proposing a structured payment schedule for wastewater capacity fees that pays for 90 connections and reserves 90 connections over a time period of three years.



Director's Report

- 7. Economic Development:** Director Filardo and Senior Planner Escobar attended a meeting at the Phoenix office of the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) regarding potential industrial development in and near the Town. The ACA has a variety of funding available to help businesses locate in rural area, including start-up loans and training funds. Mr. Casey Rooney, Economic Development Director for the City of Cottonwood accompanied staff to this meeting, further strengthening the bonds of regional cooperation to spur economic development.



Staff Report

Agenda Item: Discussion regarding proposed changes to Chapter 3: Zoning Districts of the Town of Clarkdale Zoning Code

Staff Contact: Beth Escobar

Meeting Date: June 19, 2012

Background:

In Clarkdale, agricultural uses are first permitted in the Suburban Residential (RS3) Zoning District. The only area where this zoning exists is the National Forest property located on the south end of Clarkdale's municipal boundary.

The Clarkdale Zoning Code has consistently been interpreted as a hierarchical code. This means uses permitted in one district are determined to be permitted in the subsequent districts. Therefore, even though agricultural uses are not listed specifically as permitted uses in the Central Business District, Commercial and Industrial Zones, they can be interpreted as permitted since they appear in a previous zoning district. In staff's opinion, this is an appropriate interpretation since agricultural uses are no more intense than the permitted uses specified in these zoning districts.

The opposite interpretation also applies. Since agricultural uses first appear in the RS3 zone, it is clear that it is not a permitted use in any of the preceding residential zoning districts.

The question that staff would like the Planning Commission to begin discussing is whether agricultural uses should be considered for residential zones.

Staff has had contact with two separate developers who are interested in creating subdivisions that include vineyards throughout the development. In staff's opinion, this could be accomplished through a Planned Area Development (PAD). Per Section 6-2 of the Zoning Code, a PAD is intended to:

'Provide for various types and combinations of land uses.'

A PAD is a project specific zoning designation, so in order to create a PAD the property owner must first receive approval for a zone change. The project, if it is for a residential subdivision, would need to complete the subdivision approval process also.

The review process required for a zoning change to PAD would allow the Planning Commission and Town Council the opportunity to apply specific conditions regarding agricultural uses.



Staff Report

In order to streamline the process, the Commission may wish to consider whether agricultural uses should be included in residential zoning districts, either as a permitted use or with a conditional use permit. Property could be subdivided and/or developed to include agricultural uses without the requirement of a zone change. One advantage of permitting agricultural uses is that it creates a method for preserving open space in residentially zoned areas.

For the purposes of this discussion, agricultural uses can be defined as:

The use of land, either as a primary or secondary function, to produce a crop, for consumption and/or commercial sale or use.

Home gardens, greenhouses, etc. are permitted uses and are not part of this discussion. What defines an agricultural use is the commercial component, where the crop being grown, whether grapes or vegetables, is converted to a commodity that is sold.

There are many things to consider. Typically, with a commercial use, such as the production of grapes, the crop needs to be planted, maintained and harvested. Sometimes this means the use of heavy equipment on the property.

For other agricultural uses, a market component might be attached, to distribute excess crops.

Also, agricultural uses typically include the use of products such as fertilizer and pesticides.

Water uses for viticulture have been shown to be comparable to residential water uses; however other crops, such as lettuce or berries, tend to need greater amounts of water.

To control all of these parameters, the Commission might wish to consider requiring a Conditional Use Permit for agricultural uses in residential zoning districts.

The Commission may also like to consider allowing agriculture as a stand-alone use on residentially zoned property. In other words, the land is used for agriculture only, with no associated residential use. It is staff's opinion that this use may not be supported by the General Plan. The Land Use Map does not indicate any agricultural uses.

However, the Land Use Map does indicate a variety of residential uses. If agriculture is folded into permitted uses in a residential zone, this may not conflict with the General Plan. Staff will pursue a legal opinion from the Town Attorney if the Commission wishes to pursue this option.

Other Communities:

Staff researched how other communities in the Verde Valley address agricultural uses:



Staff Report

The City of Sedona does not list agricultural uses as a permitted use. Recently, a community garden proposal on residentially zoned property was required to complete a Conditional Use Permit.

The City of Cottonwood does not include agricultural uses in their zoning districts; however they support agricultural uses in their General Plan. The Cottonwood Community Garden is on property owned by the City of Cottonwood and therefore exempt from zoning regulations.

Yavapai County allows for agricultural uses in their Open Space District. Also, any agricultural use on over 5 contiguous commercial (35,000 sq ft) acres is exempt from their zoning code

PROP 207 Exposure:

In staff's opinion, there are no Prop 207 issues with this consideration. As a reminder, A.R.S 12-1134, the Private Property Rights Protection Act, adopted by the state legislature in 2006, states:

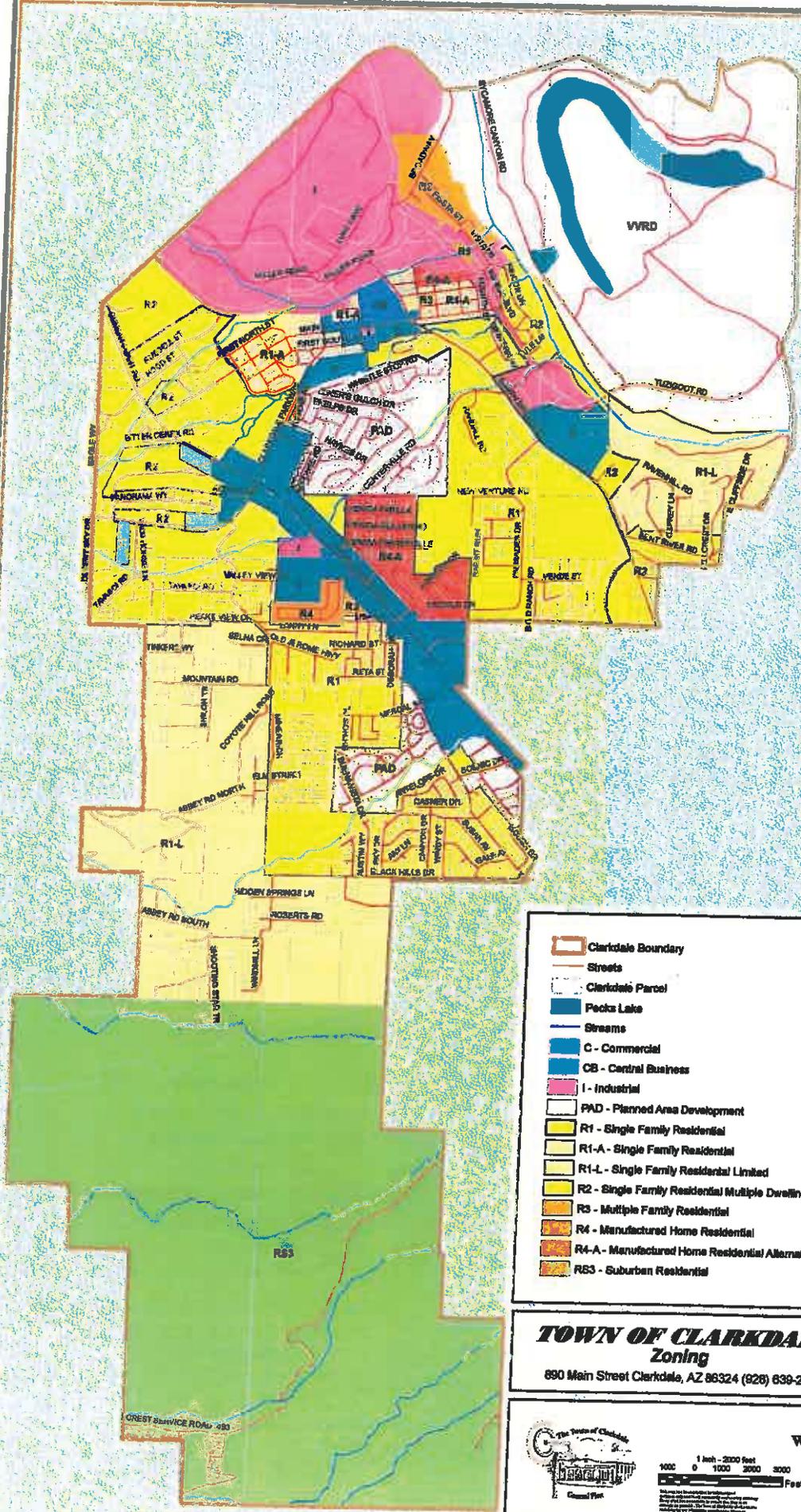
'If the existing rights to use, divide, sell or possess private real property are reduced by the enactment or applicability of any land use law enacted after the date the property is transferred to the owner and such action reduces the fair market value of the property the owner is entitled to just compensation from this state or the political subdivision of this state that enacted the land use law.'

Agricultural uses are not currently permitted in residential zoning districts. To allow the use adds value to the property, so crafting specific requirements for this additional permitted use does not diminish property values.

Recommendation: Staff is requesting that the Planning Commission direct staff as to whether to continue crafting a revision to the zoning code to include agricultural uses.

Attachments:

1. Zoning Map
2. General Plan Land Use Map
3. Clarkdale Zoning Hierarchy
4. Arizona Republic article regarding Scottsdale farm
5. Article regarding Agritopia development in Gilbert

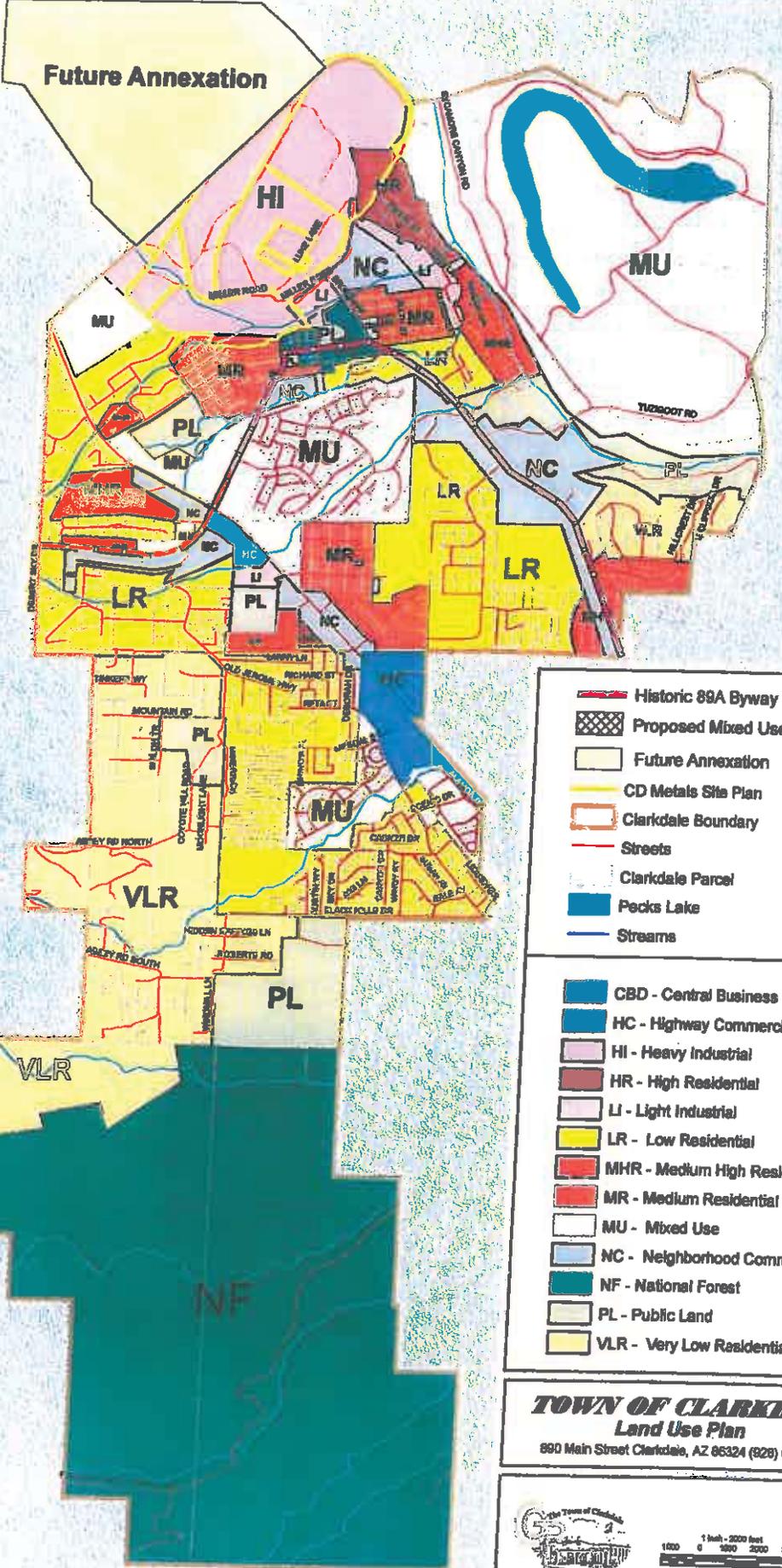


- Clarkdale Boundary
- Streets
- Clarkdale Parcel
- Pecks Lake
- Streams
- C - Commercial
- CB - Central Business
- I - Industrial
- PAD - Planned Area Development
- R1 - Single Family Residential
- R1-A - Single Family Residential
- R1-L - Single Family Residential Limited
- R2 - Single Family Residential Multiple Dwelling Units
- R3 - Multiple Family Residential
- R4 - Manufactured Home Residential
- R4-A - Manufactured Home Residential Alternate
- R5 - Suburban Residential

TOWN OF CLARKDALE
Zoning
 890 Main Street Clarkdale, AZ 86324 (928) 839-2500

1 inch = 2000 feet
 0 1000 2000 3000 Feet

N
 W — E
 S



- Historic 89A Byway
- Proposed Mixed Use
- Future Annexation
- CD Metals Site Plan
- Clarkdale Boundary
- Streets
- Clarkdale Parcel
- Pecks Lake
- Streams

- CBD - Central Business Dist.
- HC - Highway Commercial
- HI - Heavy Industrial
- HR - High Residential
- LI - Light Industrial
- LR - Low Residential
- MHR - Medium High Residential
- MR - Medium Residential
- MU - Mixed Use
- NC - Neighborhood Commercial
- NF - National Forest
- PL - Public Land
- VLR - Very Low Residential

TOWN OF CLARKDALE
Land Use Plan
 890 Main Street Clarkdale, AZ 86324 (928) 638-2500

1 inch = 2000 feet
 1000 0 2000 3000 Feet

N
 W — E
 S

Zoning Districts

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Section 3-3	Single Family Residential Limited (R1L) - - - - -	4
Section 3-4	Single Family and Limited Multiple Family Residential (R2) -	5
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STORY / HISTORY



ABOUT

Agritopia® community is something of a modern day village set within the urban fabric of the Phoenix metro area. The name says it all: Agritopia® is about preserving urban agriculture and integrating it into the most neighborly, well-designed community possible. It is a principle-driven development that puts people and relationships ahead of money and trendiness. We believe that a simple life with friends and family is a rich life. The design of the community is intended to breakdown traditional barriers between people to encourage formation of real community among people of varied backgrounds .

LOCATION

Agritopia® is located at the Northwest corner of Higley and Ray Roads. Freeway access is easy. The San Tan Freeway (Loop 202) forms the northern border of the property and has an exit at Higley Road. The community is 160 acres and has 1/2 mile of Higley Road frontage and 3/4 mile of Ray Road frontage.

Agritopia® is in close proximity to [ASU Polytechnic](#) (2 mi), [Chandler-Gilbert Community College](#) (2 mi), [Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport](#) (2 mi), [Crescorads Park](#) (1/2 mi), [San Tan Village Regional Mall](#) (1 mi), [Mercy Gilbert Hospital](#) (2 mi), and the award-winning [Cosmo Dog Park](#) (adjacent).

The community is comprised of 450 residential lots along with commercial, agricultural, and open space tracts. Agritopia is gridded with tree-lined streets and pathways to make the entire project accessible to pedestrians. The major connector street within the community is Agritopia Loop, which arcs its way from Ray Road north and east to Higley Road.

The farm office is on Ray Road, one-quarter mile west of Higley Road in the Agro-commercial area.



HISTORY

During the early 1900's, Gilbert was known as the "Hay Capital" of the world due to the dominance of alfalfa hay on the local farms. In 1927, the Reber family homesteaded a farm on the dirt roads named Higley and Ray. They built barns, sheds, and a small home and began farming hay. By 1960, when the Johnston family bought the farm, the crops of choice had changed to cotton and wheat. Jim Johnston and his wife, Virginia, thought that this farm would be the perfect size for a family farm and an ideal place to raise their three boys, Joe, Steve, and Paul.

They built a home on the farm (which is now [Joe's Farm Grill](#)) and lived a very rural, independent life. The boys all attended Higley Elementary School and Gilbert High School and worked on the farm during the summers and as needed by Jim. After Steve and Paul graduated from University of Arizona, majoring in agriculture, they returned to the farm and continued the family farming tradition. By the late 1990's, Gilbert was growing rapidly and it became clear that the farm would soon be surrounded by housing. The family made the decision to start planning what would become of the farm after nearly 40 years of farming.



AGRITOPA ON FACEBOOK

Like Send 135 likes. Sign Up to see what your friends like.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT



Welcome to the new Agritopia® web site. Please contact us with any changes or stories you'd like to see on the site.

FROM THE BLOG

[U-Pick Peaches Starting This Weekend](#)

[Shaken, Not Stirred: May 19](#)

[Phoenix Magazine Features Agritopia® In "Neighborhoods We Love"](#)

[Epicenter Rezoning Is Approved](#)

[FOX 10 Visits the Agritopia Community Garden](#)

FLICKR STREAM



LINKS

[Higley Unified School District](#)

[Mercy Gilbert Medical Center](#)

The eldest son, Joe, had taken a different path and had become an engineer. He spearheaded the design of what would become Agritopia®. Working with a land planner, landscape architects, and others in the development community, a land plan that met the family's goals was created. It preserved urban agriculture, was very walkable, neighborly, broke down barriers between people, and had many use categories. In 2000, the Town of Gilbert approved the zoning and land plan for Agritopia® and construction began.

Today, all of the homes in the residential portion of the community have been built, as well as some of the commercial properties. The Johnston family still lives in Agritopia®.

agritopia

US 60 Loop 202

The Agritopia Project is located on the Johnston family farm at the Northwest corner of Higley and Ray Roads.

San Tan Freeway

a

Higley



A SIMPLER LIFE. A PLACE YOU CAN LOVE.

Agritopia and the Agritopia Logo are registered trademarks of Johnston Properties LLC. © Johnston Farms 2008-2012

Site by Drewbackwards



Agritopia Farm

located across the back street of Joe's Farm Grill and The Coffee Shop, this farm has plots for rent. I'm thinking of renting one to grow my own produce. It's also the working farm for Joe's organic produce which gets used in his restaurants. There are walking paths back which are open to the public during the



<http://agritopia.com/story-history/>

AZ Living

Peace and produce in the middle of suburbia

Tiny Scottsdale farm producing harvest of good food, goodwill

by **Scott Craven** - Jun. 6, 2012 02:30 PM
The Republic | azcentral.com

Recommend

23 recommendations. Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.

Tweet 3

Which is exactly what the Simple Farm has been doing in the relatively short time the Ledners have been carefully working the land: drawing people in.

Just three years ago, all drivers saw here was a vacant lot overgrown with weeds and oleanders. Those forced to slow for a traffic jam might have noticed the 1940s ranch house on the back of the lot but wouldn't have considered it remarkable.

Now, after just two years' cultivation, much of the land is bursting with life. Closest to Cactus Road are the container beds; next comes an eclectic collection of vegetables, flowers and fruit trees. In the back, the goats and chickens thrive.

The Simple Farm's marketing plan is, well, simple: People tell one another about it. A mom tells another mom. A volunteer recruits another volunteer. Scottsdale bloggers rave over it, one after another. And, always, drivers pull in to see just what's up with all these sunflowers growing here.

"I've lost count of the number of times someone has said, 'I've driven by this place hundreds of times and finally had to stop,'" Michael said. "No one expects to see something like this here."

Perhaps no one expected to see these possibilities in that overgrown lot of just a few years ago. But it wouldn't surprise anyone who knows the deep hippie roots of Michael, 59. As a senior in a Long Island, N.Y., high school, he attended the Woodstock music festival in 1969. He went by himself but was in the company of hundreds of thousands of like-minded souls, and he would share a life path similar to many.

Michael later hitchhiked across the country and settled in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, which was ground zero for the counterculture. He became a songwriter and musician, living on the road (where, by the way, he met Lylah at a concert in Tucson, leading to a long-distance romance and then marriage. The two will celebrate their 25th anniversary in August).

Although the hippie within doesn't die, it does settle, and Michael and Lylah did just that when they married, anchoring themselves in the suburbs and raising a family. They fit nicely there for years. Michael became a pastor, and Lylah's life was full with cooking, gardening and spending time with her two daughters, now grown, from her first marriage.

But when Lylah came across a video about a couple in Pasadena, Calif., who had turned their tenth-of-an-acre backyard into a microfarm, she thought it was interesting enough to show her husband. She couldn't have known she was planting a seed that would change their lives.

Michael watched the video and knew he had found his purpose. He wanted to live off the land, get his hands dirty, commune with nature.

"I realized, what better way to connect with God than through the earth?" he said. "To plant and grow something is very spiritual. I knew right away it was something I needed to do."

Michael shared his going-to-ground epiphany with Lylah, who at first thought perhaps they could buy another container or two for the backyard and let her husband plant to his heart's content. But it was clear his mind was set, so Lylah decided to give it a shot.

"I was a little resistant at first," said Lylah, 57. "I really liked our house, our neighborhood. But it was clear how important this was to Michael. It took me awhile, but I was able to get my head around it."

They already had the land. The spot on Cactus Road -- one of the few plots that retained its original agricultural zoning designation as custom homes sprouted around it -- had been purchased 15 years before by the Ledners' church. The home hosted various church-related activities throughout the week, in a converted three-car garage. Spirits were nurtured but the grounds were not.

The Ledners' home was just minutes away. But when church membership -- and the activities with it -- dwindled, the house on Cactus Road was empty much of the time.

So the Ledners moved in, paying rent to the church. (Their previous home remains on the market.) And since taking up residence at what now is the Simple Farm, the land is theirs in spirit if not in name. After more than two years, they have become part of the landscape.

"This is where we belong," Lylah said.

She was not quite as on board when they moved in on Thanksgiving 2009. One would be forgiven for referencing Oliver and Lisa Douglas from the late-'60s sitcom "Green Acres." Michael knew farm living was the life for him. But Lylah wasn't so sure.

What she remembers are oleander, weeds, oleander, an impossibly large African sumac tree and more oleander.

But the property had treasure lurking hundreds of feet below -- water, and lots of it. Without the well, which allows the property to remain off the city's water grid, farming would be financially impossible, the Ledners said.

The couple plowed tens of thousands of dollars into the house and land, and now with goats, chickens and more than an acre of food-producing gardens, they're catching up on their bills. The lower grocery bills and plentiful goat's milk help. But most notable is the Simple Farm's small, once

-a-week market (housed in the renovated horse barn), where the Ledners sell their produce, honey from a Mesa beekeeper and bread baked by a Chandler mother of four.

Although the two now derive their income from the farm (Michael gave up his pastor's salary), the real payoff comes with each sunrise, as goats are milked, strawberries picked and eggs gathered.

Sometimes Lylah will rise early, brew a cup of coffee and just sit in the middle of a garden and listen to the farm's morning symphony: a bleating goat, the wind ruffling the leaves of a fig tree, a faint whoosh of traffic that might as well be a million miles away, and a background of clucking chickens.

"Those are my favorite times," she said. "It hits me how far we've come, and how much I appreciate what we've done."

That sense of rightness, of belonging to a patch of land set incongruously amid suburbia, does not belong to the Ledners alone.

Others stepping out of their cars -- and almost into days gone by -- often feel it as well.

David Warble of Scottsdale was exploring around back, near the chicken coop, when he felt it.

"This energy and sacredness filled me," he said. "It came from the space they'd created. It was like a message from God."

For many who visit, there is a nurturing of the soul amid this fertile ground. Warble was so struck by it when he visited in the fall that he asked if there were volunteer opportunities.

Indeed there were. The Simple Farm thrives on the kindness of strangers, who then become volunteers, and who then become friends.

The next week, Warble was back, cleaning out the chicken coop. And yes, the energy and sacredness were present there, too, he said.

Every Wednesday, a half-dozen or so volunteers show up with the sun still low in the sky, ready for a few hours of planting or trimming or raking or weeding. Michael and Lylah direct them to where they're most needed, teaching as they go. The couple embrace their role as stewards of the land.

"I've gotten so much out of this that I want to pass it on," said Michael, who is easy to spot in his \$5 wide-brim straw hat (one of his first purchases when the Simple Farm began to grow). "Spreading the word is as important as anything we do." You can still hear the preacher in his voice.

Sara Lettiere of Scottsdale devotes several hours each week to getting dirty. She prefers to dig and plant, enjoying the fruits (and vegetables) of her labor.

The Simple Farm also is her escape. Last fall, she visited the farm for the first time, bringing her 83-year-old father. She'd hoped it was something they could enjoy together. Such activities had become rare as dementia strengthened its grip on him.

Her father complained of the heat and flies and sweat. But Lettiere found only beauty and, later, a feeling of salvation.

"I look forward to coming here each week," she said. "Caring for someone with dementia takes so much of your time. At times it is overwhelming. But when I come here, I feel everything fall off my shoulders. I just don't love this. I need this."

Britt Archer of Scottsdale also visits weekly. But it's more for her 20-month-old daughter, Ainsley, a spinning top who bounces between the chickens and the goats. Archer follows slowly behind, allowing her daughter to explore at her own frenetic pace.

"This is a few minutes from our house, but it seems like it's out of the city," Archer said. "It's almost like a mini vacation every time I come."

The reason for Ron Rubin's weekly appearance boils down to a single word: peace.

Well, maybe the coffee, too.

Each Thursday morning, the Scottsdale lawyer arrives just as the weekly market opens at 9, settling at one of the patio tables with a cup of coffee and a magazine from the rack.

"I was looking for a morning place that didn't have people on laptops and cellphones," Rubin said. "I never thought I'd find it here, though, off a busy road in Scottsdale. It's perfect."

A casual visitor to the Simple Farm might notice that the rows of some plots run east and west, others north and south. Some patches boast such an explosion of greenery that all semblance of organization is lost.

But each garden has a name based on its contents or nearby topography -- the English Garden, or the Pine Tree Hill Garden. It's a sort of Google Map of the property that lets Lylah and Michael know what the other is talking about.

"It beats, I need you to go over to that thing, in the corner, sort of in back of the coop but not all way in back," Lylah said. And when she says the beds in Pallet Fence Garden need watering, Michael knows exactly what she means.

Those names also give the Ledners a sense of place, of ownership. And they take their own sustenance from people who visit and relationships formed. On a recent Wednesday, when a light breeze carried away the sheen of sweat formed in prenoon heat, Lylah motioned to two women chatting near the Vintage Garden.

"This is the first time here for the woman on the left," Lylah said. "The other has been here since we started. Look at them talking like they've known each other awhile.

"That's what's magical here. The farm is a bridge between people. We get people from all walks of life, all cultures, all religions. When they come here, they all have something in common."

A few years ago, Lylah was happy in her Scottsdale home with her backyard garden. But it took her husband's insistence to lead them to the place they belonged.

"Michael wanted to start a community garden, and I really wasn't on board with that," Lylah said.

"Now this is the community's garden. I can't imagine being anywhere else."

Especially not a few hours from now, when rush hour will begin again.

Reach the reporter at scott.craven@arizonarepublic.com.

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1	A	B	C			D	E	F	G				J	
			POLICY						ACTION	TIME FRAME	JVW	VV		KD
2	ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE												
3	LAND USE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	Preserve and enhance the unique aspects of the character of Clarkdale.	Encourage development practices that preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods.	Support historic preservation of residential, commercial and institutional buildings	Promote the preservation and revitalization of the original town site by establishing a variety of housing, civic, recreational, cultural and business opportunities.	Amend the zoning code to provide for blending of new development with existing neighborhoods.	1 to 3 years	#2						
4						Amend the zoning code to provide for historic preservation design codes.	1 to 3 years	#1						
5						Working with the Parks and Recreation Committee to encourage and/or develop events and public places in the Old Town area.	1 to 5 years	#3						
6		Encourage orderly patterns of growth and development.	Encourage development located near existing utility and transportation infrastructure.			Amend the Town Code to require dedicated public access to all development.	1 to 2 years				X			
7			Support well designed, mixed-use master planned community developments and planned subdivisions.			Develop the Form Based Codes Standards and work to encourage involvement in that process.	1 to 5 years						X	
8		Promote the development of commercial, business park and industrial development areas which are compatible with existing land uses and which serve the economic needs of the community.	Develop standards to address shared access, architectural compatibility and locally appropriate landscaping for commercial areas along arterial and major collector corridors.			Revise existing development codes to reflect the desire for limiting access to commercial development, encouraging cluster development and landscaping requirements that reflect the best use of native vegetation.	1 to 3 years							
9	CIRCULATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	Emphasize live, work and play land use relationships to optimize the use of town wide systems and reduce the strain on regional and local/neighborhood systems.	Emphasize the relationship and balance of land uses within general areas of the town to determine if an appropriate mixture exists that will reduce the demand on regional and local systems.			Analyze existing land uses and street classification relationships and provide recommendations for achieving a good transportation balance.	1 to 3 years				X			
10			Ensure that land uses, site designs and street improvements do not limit future mobility options. Unless there are convenient parallel facilities, all major roads that are not highways should safely accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians and transit.			The evaluation criteria considered by the Planning Commission, the Design Review Board and the Town Council should contain an analysis of the traffic patterns generated by any development and the land uses involved.	0 to 1 year							
11			Require new development to provide pedestrian and bicycle access and facilities as appropriate including connected paths along washes.			Amend the existing codes to require these facilities and infrastructure.	1 to 3 years							
12		Develop and maintain a comprehensive transportation system that efficiently carries a variety of modes of traffic within and through the community.	Maximize connectivity between streets to increase travel options.			Amend the Subdivision Code to require connectivity.	1 to 2 years							

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	VOTES					
							JW	VW	KD	JO	DP	
2	ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	POLICY	ACTION	TIME FRAME	JW	VW	KD	JO	DP		
13		Ensure the circulation system is coordinated with existing and proposed land uses.	Design roadway improvements and facility modifications to minimize the potential for conflict between pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles. Commercial developments are encouraged to coordinate shared driveway access to collector and arterial streets. Develop road standards for existing roads that allow the Town of Clarkdale to accept dedication of existing collector and arterial streets necessary to the town's traffic management plan.	Work with the Public Works Director to develop standards. Develop design standards in conjunction with the Public Works Director.	1 to 2 years 1 to 3 years 1 to 3 years					X		
14		Respect neighborhood and environmental quality.				#1						
15		Provide an adequate, safe, convenient and interconnected system of pedestrian facilities throughout the Town.	Identify walkway engineering standards and design criteria for new development and upgrade to existing neighborhoods. Facilitate open communication between the Town, the school districts and the development community to coordinate development and growth in a way that mitigates impacts to the school systems and provides for the continuation of the existing quality education for school students.	Work with the Public Works Director to develop standards, ordinances and to develop a Capital Improvement Plan for upgrading the pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the Town.	1 to 2 years	#1						
16	EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	To maintain a singular focus in keeping education as a priority in the Town of Clarkdale.		Formalize the existing relationship and establish some guidelines that can enable this process. Build on the existing grant work to address issues the schools or the district may have.	1 to 2 years							
17			Developing joint planning, development and use of school facilities which may result in partnering opportunities for recreation facilities, libraries and community services/program. Provide leadership and participation in supporting efforts of the education community to increase the percent of youth that graduate, attend higher educational programs moving toward higher quality employment in the Verde Valley.	Build on existing relationships and involve other institutions in the planning and development of the Town.	3 years	#3			X	X		
18				Possible programs and plans should be developed during strategic planning sessions of the Town's leadership.	Years???	#2						
19				Continue the process of working with the Parks and Recreation Commission to develop the Parks & Recreation Master Plan in a specific plan format. This action should be part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan developed with the Parks and Recreation Commission.	1 year	#1						
20	OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	Provide an integrated system of open space and natural resource areas to serve the residents of Clarkdale.	Work with the Parks and Recreation Commission to develop a master plan that reflects the Town's commitment to open space and recreational opportunities for all ages and levels of experience encouraging a healthy lifestyle. Evaluate and pursue various funding mechanisms to improve the parks and recreation program.						X			
21					1 year							
22					1 year							

1	A	B	C	D	E	F						J	
						G			H				I
2	ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	POLICY	ACTION	TIME FRAME	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
23		Provide and maintain an open space network of town-owned and private lands throughout the community.	Evaluate open space design with these primary determinants: aesthetics, public safety, maintenance needs, water consumption, drainage considerations, wildlife corridors, multi-use and desert preservation. Encourage the use of development incentives to promote integrated open space networks within future developments. Adopt standards for residential landscaping that preserves native landscaping in new developments, including native plant lists, plant survey methods and related procedures.	This is an ongoing task that should be part of all development review.	Ongoing								
24				This requires specific council policy changes and changes to existing ordinances.	2 to 3 years								
25				Complete work on the Water Conservation Ordinance including single family landscape requirements.	1 to 3 years								
26		Protect significant natural areas within the Town, including floodplains, the Verde River corridor, steep slopes and scenic view area.	Identify and prioritize scenic assets and sensitive lands that should be preserved including major topographic features, natural vegetation, drainage ways, wildlife habitat and travel corridors, riparian areas and vista corridors. Provide adequate land development standards in the Town Zoning Code to address protection of sensitive natural resource areas.	Develop the program and maps to accomplish this priority.									X
27				Review existing codes, amend or revise as necessary to accomplish this protection.	1 to 2 years								
28		Develop parks and recreation facilities and an interconnected system of trails and urban pathways to meet the community's recreational needs and provide access to open space.	Develop partnerships with the school district, private interest, the national forest, other communities, the State and the County to facilitate joint recreational uses, integrated trails and access to open space.	Continue the ongoing efforts to partner in efforts to provide open space and recreational opportunities.	Ongoing								

1	A	B		C		D		E		F		G		H		I		J	
		ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	POLICY	ACTION	TIME FRAME	JWV	WV	KD	JO	DP								
55		Facilitate the provision of a range of housing types to meet the diverse needs of the community.	Mitigate or remove any potential governmental constraints to housing production and affordable design.	Provide high quality housing for current and future residents with a diverse range of income levels. Promote housing that is developed under modern sustainable community standards. Promote higher density housing as part of mixed-use developments.	Work the developers and State and Federal programs to achieve this objective.	1 to 3 years													X
56				Provide flexibility in development standards to accommodate new models and approaches to providing affordable housing.	Review existing codes and modify where necessary.	1 to 3 years													
57				Review the Town's codes to accommodate workforce housing and remove or amend any codes that inhibit the development of workforce housing.															
58		Encourage sustainability and green building in the Town's development ordinances.		Work to continue the culture of sustainability in Town projects while encouraging sustainability in the private sector.	Design a program that identifies Town projects and establishes guidelines for the private sector.	1 year													
59	COMMUNITY DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	Engage the community sub-area stakeholders in the development of the Community Design Parameters.		Engage each sub-area in a design charrette to obtain local stakeholder input.	Schedule the design charrettes and develop the scope of work for the model.	1 to 3 years													X
60				Present a scope of work for the Community Design model.	Review existing standards from other communities and formulate standards and guidelines that are unique to Clarkdale.														
61				Adopt development standards and design guidelines that reflect the character of each individual sub-area.															
62		Develop public realm concepts and public street space standards in conjunction with the Community Design model.		Identify neighborhood and community attributes that can be strengthened to establish connections to the entire town.	Review existing conditions and establish guidelines that accomplish the policy goals.	1 to 3 years													X
63				Work to develop standards that decrease urban sprawl.															
64				Analyze equitable distribution of parks, open space and services, then create standards that provide for balanced distribution.															
65		Develop sustainability standards that provide for preservation of local natural features, historic buildings and culturally sensitive areas.		Develop codes that encourage infill and discourage urban sprawl.	Research and review other examples of codes and standards that accomplish the stated policies.	1 to 3 years													#1
66				Adopt building codes, development codes and design codes that encourage green building and sustainable practices.															
67				Adopt landscape design standards that are reflective of the natural environment and protective of natural resources.															

1	A	B	C			D	E	F	G					J			
			ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	POLICY				ACTION	TIME FRAME	JWW	VOTES					
												W	KD	JO	DP		
81			Help identify the workforce needs of local employers and support efforts to meet those needs.														
82	SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	<i>Establish a Sustainability Commission to advise the council on those factors that may impact the sustainability of Clarkdale.</i>	Adopt policies, standards and guidelines that measure the impact of actions on the sustainability of Clarkdale. Evaluate the studies on sustainability and design a program best suited to Clarkdale.	The Commission and staff need to review the literature for adaptability for Clarkdale, design the program with community input and present it to council.	1 to 3 years	#1						X	X				
83																	