

Focus Groups

The Focus Groups for the General Plan Update will be starting in September and continuing for the next three to four months. There are nine separate groups with very different issues they will be addressing. Each of the groups needs participation by the public. If you are interested in one or more of the groups please contact the Community Development Department at 639-2500.

1. Land Use/ Annexation Policy/ Facilities

The land use element functions as a guide to planners, town staff, the general public, and decision makers as to the ultimate pattern of development for the town at build-out. The land use element has perhaps the broadest scope of all the elements. In theory, it plays a central role in correlating all land use issues into a set of coherent development policies. Its objectives, policies, and programs relate directly to the other elements. In practice, it is the most visible and often-used element in the general plan. Although all general plan elements carry equal weight, the land use element is often perceived as being most representative of “the general plan.” The land use element has a pivotal role in zoning, subdivision, and public works decisions. The element’s objectives and policies provide a long-range context for those short term actions.

The Focus Group tasked with this topic will address many aspects of the future quality of life and development issues associated with :

Population Density
Building Intensity
Development Standards
Appropriate Mix of Uses

Time line: Start after all other elements start to meet to utilize their information. Meeting period approximately two months.

2. Circulation and Transportation

The circulation element is not simply a transportation plan. It is an infrastructure plan addressing the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications. By statute, the circulation element must correlate directly with the land use element. The circulation element also has direct relationships with the housing, open-space, cost of development and growth area elements.

The Focus Group tasked with this topic will address the inter-relationships with development issues, the movement of people and infrastructure issues associated with :

Assess the adequacy and availability of existing community drainage facilities and the need for expansion and improvements.
Assess the adequacy of existing on- and off-street parking, particularly in urban and commercial

Time line: Start at the same time as the other focus groups. If the town is successful in their traffic plan grant, this focus group will split their meeting schedule to work with the consultant. Meeting on a as needed base would work for focus group but have the meeting spread out over a longer period of time.

3. Open Space

Along with the housing element, the open-space element has the most detailed statutory intent and, next to land use, is the broadest in scope. Because of this breadth, open-space issues overlap those of several elements. For example, the land use element's issues around natural resources, recreation, enjoyment of scenic beauty and, to a certain extent, public grounds are covered by open-space provisions.

The Focus Group tasked with this topic will address many aspects of the future quality of life and development issues associated with :

Open space for the preservation of natural resources or for the management of natural resources
Open space for outdoor recreation and areas that require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions, such as, unstable soil areas, floodplains, watersheds.
Historical natural hazard boundaries, such as inundation areas, sites of wildfires.

Timeline: It is important for this focus Group to start as soon as possible. Much of what they will review and develop will have a direct effect on other focus groups and their missions. It is anticipated that this group will meet every two weeks for three months.

4. Water Resources Element

Water and water resources have moved to the forefront of Clarkdale's priorities. Since purchasing the private water company, Cottonwood and Clarkdale have been in discussion about the status of the existing system and the development of future water resources. Where we go and how we get there is one of the overriding questions of this element.

The Focus Group will be examining state law and a regional approach to:

Needs assessment analysis should be done for future water demands based on general plan land use build-out and projected cumulative demands of the region.
Assessment of future opportunities for water use conservation, recycling of water, water transfers, and additional storage or water development projects.
Assessment of the studies available listing the availability of reliable water supplies for existing and future needs under changing hydrologic conditions
What policies are in place that can protect local groundwater supplies from water quality degradation or excessive extraction?
The protection, use and development of land adjacent to the Verde River.
Erosion control and sedimentation reduction.
Protection of watershed and aquifer recharge areas.
Expansion alternatives for new reliable water supplies.

Timeline: there is a major learning curve for those who participate in the work of the Focus Group charged with water resources. This will be the first time that the general plan has addressed the issues from a water supplier's perspective. The focus Group will be very involved in their topic but it is anticipated that the issues coming forward will be of greatest interest to the Land Use Focus Group. It is expected this group will meet every two weeks for as long as needed. Their schedule will be driven by the issues brought to the table by the group.

5. Environmental Planning

Preservation of our existing natural environment has always been a priority for the residents of Clarkdale. Its requirements overlap those of the open-space, land use, and circulation elements. The Environmental

Planning element is distinguished by being primarily oriented toward natural resources. Population growth and development continually require the use of both renewable and nonrenewable resources. One role of the Environmental Planning element is to establish policies that reconcile conflicting demands on those resources.

The policies and strategies to be developed under this element shall be designed to have community-wide applicability and shall not require the production of an additional environmental impact statement or similar analysis beyond the requirements of state and federal law.

Timeline: Work on this element will start slightly later than the open space and other elements because this Focus Group will utilize the planning work done by the other focus groups in their examination of the issues. They will be one of the last groups to finish.

6. Cost of Development /Growth Area/CIP & Facilities

The cost of development is an element unique to Arizona. State law requires this element to “identify policies and strategies that the municipality will use to require development to pay its fair share toward the cost of additional public service needs generated by new development. This Focus Group will review the issues of the other groups, look at the costs of each element’s goals and identify funding mechanisms or issues.

Identifying the growth areas is directly tied to costs of development and should be covered by the same Focus Group; however, this is a separate element under Arizona state law with specific requirements that will have to be met.

Numerous communities accentuate the importance of planning for capital improvements and public facilities by adopting a separate capital improvements and/or public facilities element. Capital improvements, such as roads, drainage facilities, sewer and water lines, treatment plants, are the framework that supports development. Their availability plays an important part in determining the pattern of land uses within the community, as well as the direction and intensity of growth. Public facilities, such as police and fire stations, town offices, libraries, and parks, are important to residents’ safety and quality of life. The ability to provide these facilities is important to the well-being of the community. Technology infrastructure, such as wired and wireless communication systems, also affect development patterns, quality of life, and economic opportunity.

Timeline: This will be the last focus group formed. They will review the work of the other groups and try to identify costs and funding sources to cover those costs. They will work on a Capital Improvements Program that will be part of the General Plan and reflect town policy issues.

7. Housing

Housing element allows local governments to adequately plan to meet their existing and projected housing needs including their share of the regional housing need. The most critical decisions regarding housing development occur at the local level within the context of the general plan. In order for the private sector to adequately address housing needs and demand, local governments must adopt land-use plans and regulatory schemes that provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development for all income groups.

Timeline: This is a new element for Clarkdale. It is anticipated that this Focus Group will start at the beginning of the focus group work as their element will have a direct impact on the Land Use element, and could have impacts on other elements.

8. Economic Development

This is also a new element for the General Plan. It is not intended to develop a detailed economic development plan for Clarkdale but to review the work that other organizations have done in this area and to help guide the town in addressing some policy questions and concepts. There is a recognition that Clarkdale does not have a strong housing/jobs balance nor a strong retail tax base. How the town wants to address those issues may well determine how the town addresses all the issues identified in the General Plan. The Focus Group charged with work on this element will examine those basic issues and propose some policy issues that will need to be addressed by the council.

Timeline: This group will start meeting at the start of the process and it is anticipated that they will meet every two weeks throughout the three month process.

9. Community Design

Community Design will be part of the Form Based Codes charge that the Planning Commission is presently examining. They will be identifying districts within the town that they feel would benefit from a form based code approach. They will be conducting design charretts involving property owners and the public at large in the hope of developing specific plans for the identified districts and design criteria based on those plans. This element is taking a parallel path with the Focus Group process but will likely be extended beyond the three months identified for the first meeting schedule. Ultimately, a zoning ordinance will come forward based on a Form Based Code approach for specific districts once the General Plan is ratified by the public.

Throughout this process there will be multiple points for public involvement in the process and examination by the public of the plans as they unfold. The Planning Commission would welcome continued participation by anyone interested in working on this project.