



# Town of Carefree Village Center Master Plan



May 2015

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INTERNATIONAL

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# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

Over the last fifteen years the Town of Carefree has undertaken a number of public projects as a way to encourage development and support the ongoing success of Carefree's Village Center. Yet, with all this investment, the Village Center still struggles to enjoy the economic prosperity that it once maintained. As a result, Town leaders initiated the development of this Master Plan document to help focus community efforts and identify a revitalization framework that will allow the Village Center to reach its full potential.

This Chapter provides essential information about the components of this Master Plan, including its purpose, study limits, and planning process. At the end of this Chapter is a user's guide. This guide should be used by all interested parties to better understand how to most effectively use this Master Plan.

## Project Purpose

The primary purpose of the Carefree Village Center Master Plan is to function as a unifying guide to help Town officials and community stakeholders enhance and restore the economic vibrancy of the Village Center in a way that supports the long term viability and sustainability of the entire Carefree community. Through significant public engagement, data collection, analysis, and resulting recommendations; this master plan is intended to establish a framework that builds off the progress already achieved in the Village Center and define comprehensive short and long range revitalization strategies.

## Regional Context

The Town of Carefree is located along the northern edge of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, approximately 10 miles north of Loop 101 and 10 miles east of Interstate-17. Situated around picturesque Black Mountain, Carefree is 9 square miles in size and is one of three communities that combine to form the area known as the Desert Foothills. Generally land locked, Carefree is positioned between the communities of Cave Creek to the west, Scottsdale to the south and east, and a small pocket of mountainous unincorporated land to the north. The Town also serves as the gateway to Bartlett Lake, which is located approximately 16 miles east of the Carefree town limits. *See Figure 1 - Regional Context*

## Study Area

The Carefree Village Center (study area) is sited in the geographic center of the Town and encompasses approximately 68 acres and over 403,000 SF of building floor area. With input from the Steering Committee, the Village Center was determined to be defined by Tom Darlington Drive to the west, Cave Creek Road to the north and east, and Bloody Basin Drive to the south. *See Figure 2 - Study Area*

## Planning Process

The Carefree Village Center Master Plan is the product of a multi-phased, community driven process that was designed to provide opportunities for community input at a variety of levels. The process included technical advisory committee meetings, one-on-one interviews with key project stakeholders, and multiple community workshops. Following is a brief summary of each element of the process:

**Village Center Steering Committee** - A 19-member Steering Committee (SC) was appointed by the Town to provide oversight to the planning process. Over the course of the project the SC met four times to review and discuss materials presented by the planning team and to provide feedback and direction. SC membership was designed to represent a broad cross-section of the community and included: Town residents; downtown business and property owners; Town staff and elected officials; members of the development community; and members of the local Chamber.

**Stakeholder Interviews** - Project team members conducted numerous one-on-one interviews with key project stakeholders over the life of the project. These meetings were held to gather background information and to obtain a variety of perspectives on the issues impacting the Village Center.

**Community Open Houses** - Two Community Open Houses were held during the visioning and draft concept review portions of the planning process (November 18, 2004 and December 13, 2004) to increase awareness of the committee's ongoing efforts and to solicit feedback on various aspects of the Downtown Plan.

*Figure 1 - Regional Context*

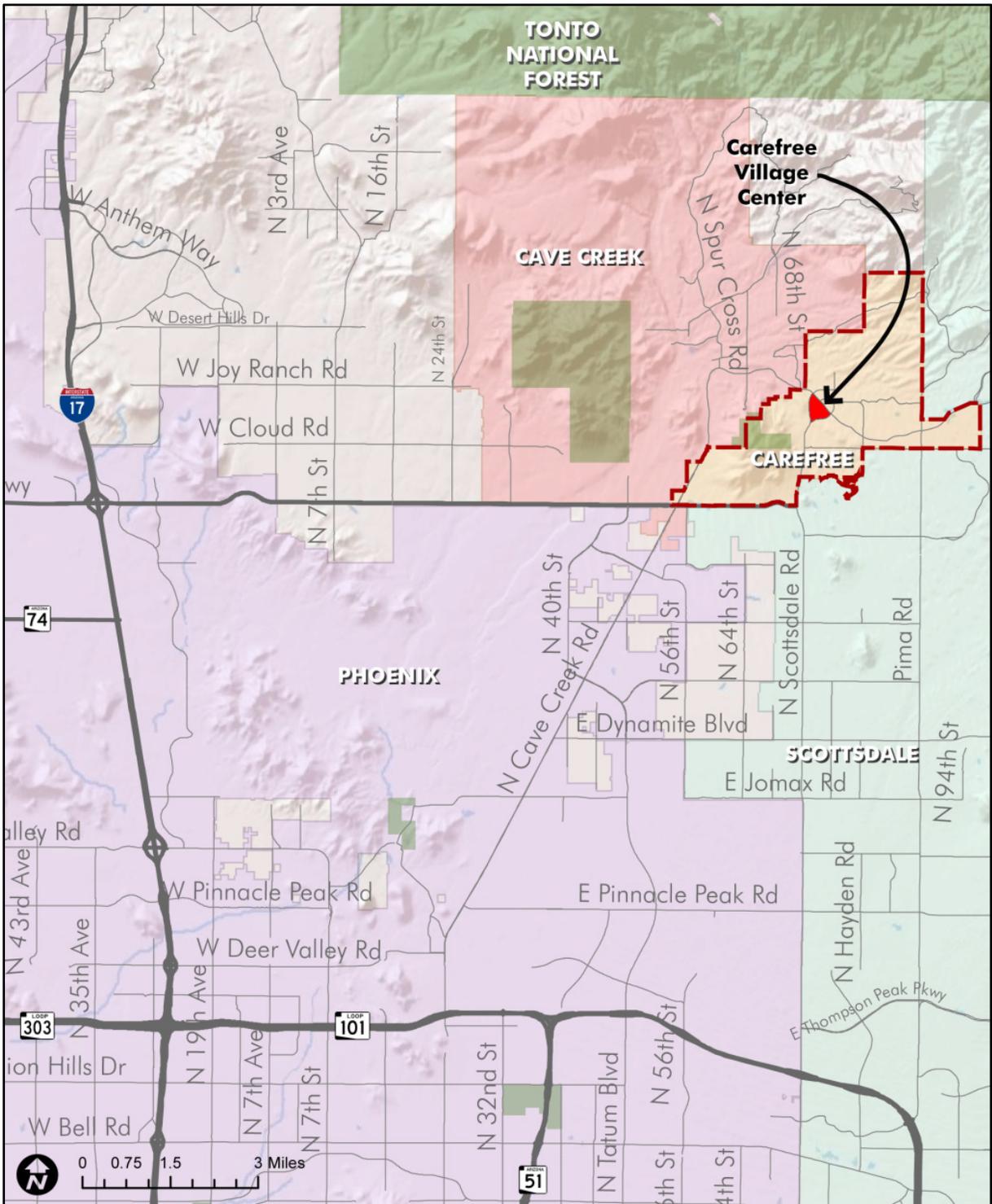


Figure 2 – Study Area



## User's Guide

Since the Master Plan will be used by a variety of users (such as property owners, Town staff, business owners, residents, and elected and appointed officials), this user's guide was developed to help quickly direct a reader to portions of the plan that are of most interest to them. The Village Center Master Plan consists of the following mutually supportive Chapters:

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This Chapter provides a summary of the plans purpose and overview of the regional and study area context along with an outline of the projects planning process.

### Chapter 2: Carefree Today

This Chapter provides detailed background information related to conditions that are currently present in the Village Center such as, historical context, land use, urban form, mobility, marketing, promotions and organization.

### Chapter 3: The Vision

This Chapter describes the overall vision for Village Center, guiding principles, and presents the Carefree Village Center Vision Plan.

### Chapter 4: The Master Plan for Action

This chapter outlines the planning framework for revitalizing the Village Center, including identification of primary strategies, recommendations, and supporting action items. Maps, illustrations and photos in this section help outline the major concepts for achieving the Village Center vision.

### Chapter 5: Implementation Programs

This chapter provides a framework for implementing the Master Plan. The framework includes a detailed matrix that outlines and prioritizes the timing of specific recommendations, as well as identifies those priority projects that should be implemented first.

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# Carefree Today

The foundation of an effective revitalization plan begins with a clear understanding of where the Carefree community is today. This chapter includes a comprehensive overview of existing conditions in the Carefree Village Center Area relative to Past History, Land Use, Urban Form, Mobility, Market, Promotion, and Organization conditions.

## Historical Context

### The Town

Despite having only been incorporated as a town for 30 years, Carefree's history is nearly twice as long. The Carefree area was originally a goat farm until the mid-1950s, when K.T. Palmer and Tom Darlington purchased the farm and conceived the development of a master planned community. The Town's name originated from the lighthearted development company formed by the pair, the "Carefree Development Corporation." The name Carefree stuck and was enhanced by the whimsical street names, such as Tranquil Trail, Easy Street, and Ho Hum Drive. At the same time they maintained its Western heritage with street names like Long Rifle, Stagecoach and Bloody Basin. Planning for Carefree's various subdivisions began shortly after, and in 1959 the first home was built and sold. After several attempts, Carefree incorporated as a town in 1984.

### The Village Center

The Village Center has served as Carefree's center of social and economic development since its inception. The Village Center continued to gain importance as both the central business district and the Town's primary source of revenue from 1984 to today, suffering recently during the economic recession. The Village Center was conceived as the center of a master planned community of unique residential subdivisions surrounding a Spanish Colonial village of eclectic shops and restaurants. Strategically positioned along the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive, which became a very popular day trip for seasonal tourists, the Village Center benefited from its ideal location. However, the remote picturesque drive that initially enticed visitors to the area has slowly vanished in place of residential and commercial development. The Village Center, which has historically relied upon the seasonal in-migration of tourists for its success, must now evolve to compete with the Desert Foothills market place.



Carefree Village Center (1959) – This aerial image displays the original natural setting of the Village Center and the prevalence of a well-defined two-lane divided main entry drive that connects directly to the sundial in the foreground.



Carefree Village Center (2014) – This existing aerial photo shows the level of development that has occurred within and around the Village Center, as well as shows how the original main Carefree Drive entry experience has been altered.

## Recent Improvements

Since 2000, the Town has taken several proactive steps to enhance the Village Center and position it for success in the future. In 2000 and 2001, three documents were created to help enhance the Village Center. These plans include “The 2000 Town Center Specific Plan”, the “2001 Town Center Parking Analysis” and the “Town Center Improvement Plans”. These involved the construction of the Carefree Desert Gardens, Pavilion, on-street parking, traffic circles at Village Center entrances, a drainage system, and outdoor lighting, among other features. Recent improvements include gas lamp period lighting and new business directory signs. Subsequent efforts to update the Town’s 2002 General Plan included a new section on Economic Development, which outlines the Town’s goal to refocus its efforts in the Village Center. The impetus behind this goal was to ensure the Village Center continues to develop in a manner consistent with the Town’s ideals and unique character.

## Material Review

The Town of Carefree has undertaken a number of plans and policy documents in the recent past that specifically, or in part, relate to the Village Center. Each of these documents was extensively reviewed to help inform this master planning effort. A partial list of these plans include, the Carefree General Plan 2030, Carefree Zoning Ordinance, 2014 ULI AzTAP Summary Report, 2000 Town Center Specific Plan, Carefree Economic Development Strategic Plan, MAG Cave Creek/Carefree Transportation Framework Study, Commercial Design Guidelines, as well as various existing and past private development plans.

## Land Use

### General Plan

The Carefree General Plan estimates the potential for 100 future residential dwelling units located within the Village Center. This assumes development of approved mixed use projects. When multiplied by 1.49 persons per housing unit (based on the 2010 Census), the estimated new population at build-out in the Village Center would be approximately 149 residents. Planning for the development of residential units directly in the Village Center is a positive objective of the General Plan, because a permanent population base that actively lives in the Village Center, is a key ingredient to developing a more vibrant Town core environment.

The U.S. Census identifies there are currently a total of 1,152 jobs in Carefree compared to a workforce of only 1,012 people. 98.2% of the existing workforce in Carefree out commutes to work, in turn, over 98% of the existing jobs in Carefree are filled by non-Carefree residents. The General Plan estimates at build-out the total number of jobs in Carefree will increase to between 4,343 to 4,922 jobs. Consequently, a large number of future jobs in Carefree are expected to continue to be filled by workers who live outside of Carefree. These existing and future workers, particularly in the Village Center, represent a consumer base that should not be overlooked for their potential contribution to creating a more active Village Center. *See Appendix B for a more detail workforce analysis.*

The current “Town Center” (TC) land use designation identified for the Village Center promotes many of the components needed for a vibrant Village Center; however it is important to note that the inability to develop stand-alone residential development possibilities in the TC district (without a General Plan Amendment) greatly limits the development flexibility and potential population/ customer base expansion needed to drive increased market potential for commercial use in the study area. *See Figure 3 – General Plan Land Use*

## Zoning

A detailed review of the Carefree Zoning Ordinance identified numerous opportunities to strengthen existing zoning standards in order to promote economic vitality in the Village Center. This may include, but is not limited to; introduction of form based codes to encourage greater design flexibility; development of shared parking standards that reduce parking requirements by accounting for different peak parking demands; as well as creating additional zoning districts or updating development standards that account for the unique identity and development potential of the Village Center. In addition, a review of existing Commercial Design Guidelines relative to development within the Village Center found them to be appropriate and beneficial to the urban fabric, but could benefit from some additional enhancements to further improve the function and form of the built environment. *See Figure 4 – Existing Zoning*

Figure 3 - General Plan Land Use

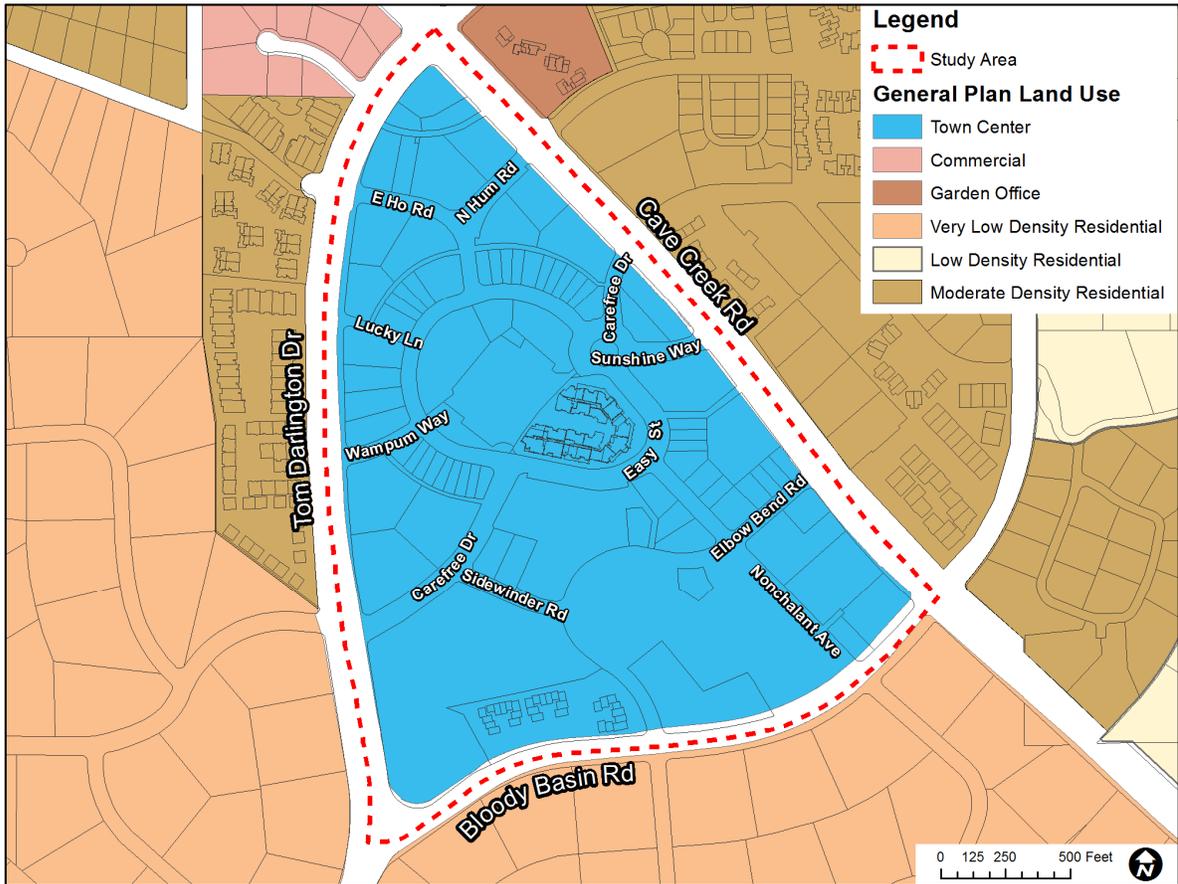
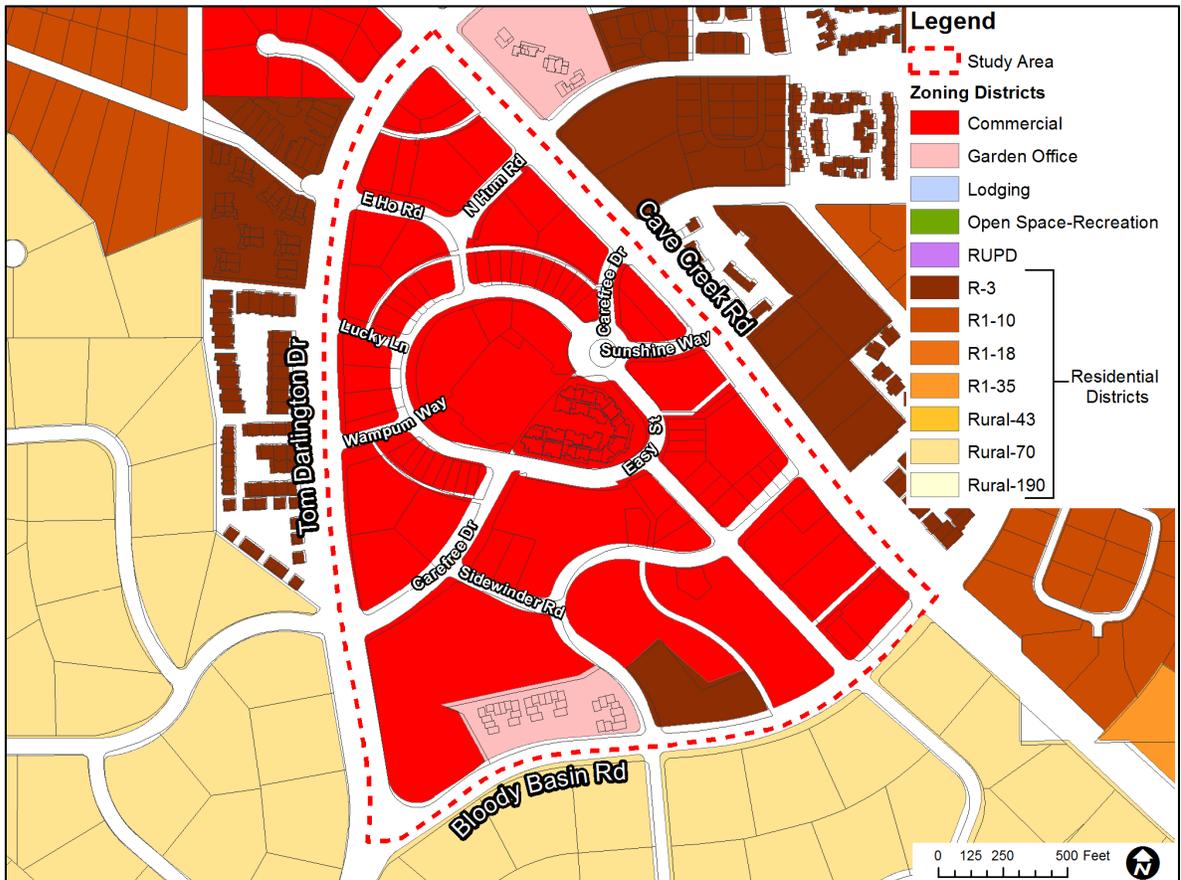


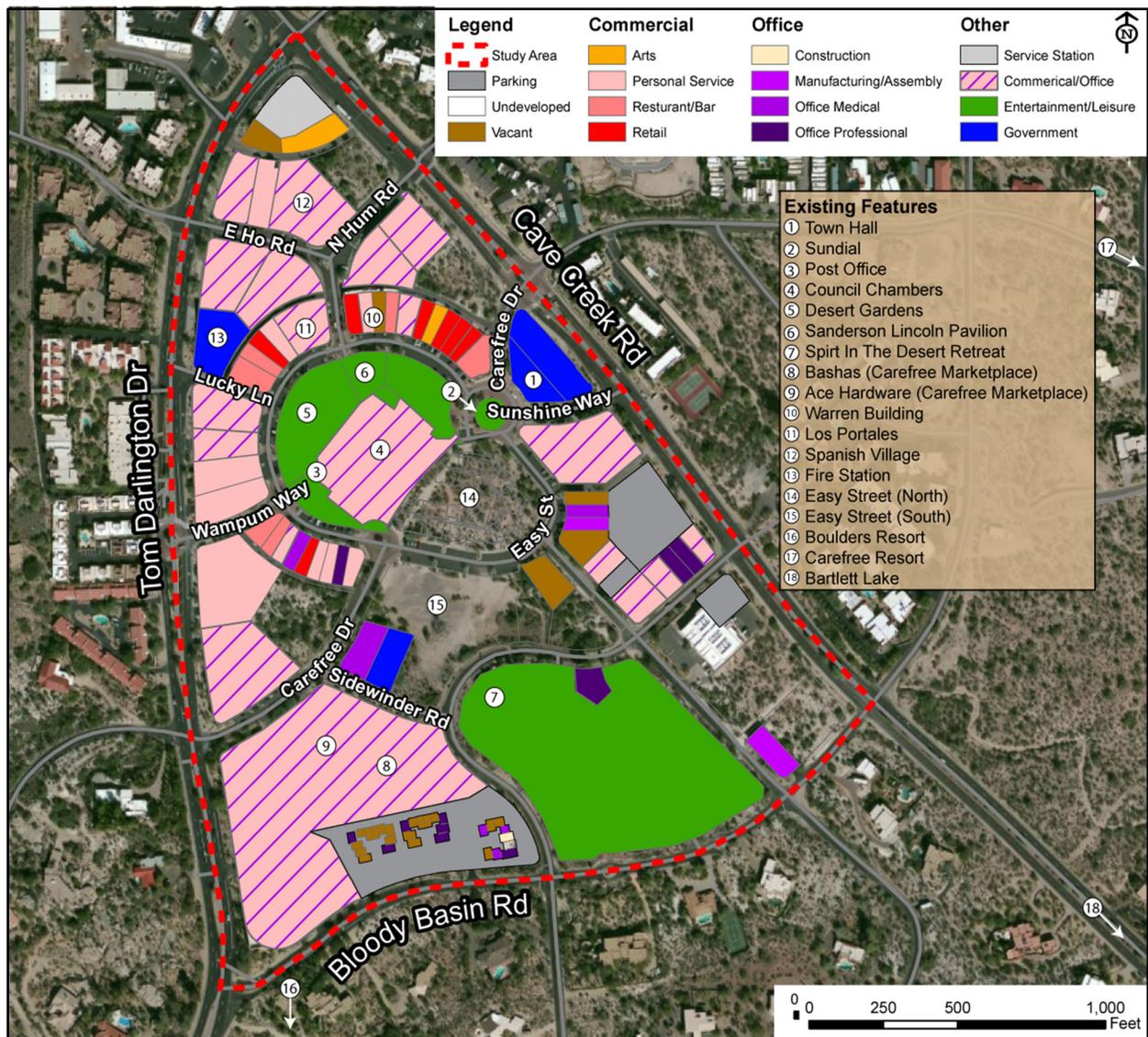
Figure 4 - Existing Zoning



**VILLAGE CENTER** – Non-retail type businesses including medical, personal and professional office uses account for over half of the establishments within the Village Center; while retail and restaurant/bars only account for one quarter; and government uses, religious centers, and leisure uses combine to comprise the remaining quarter. To attract new and return visitors, the distribution of businesses in the Village Center must be improved to provide a higher concentration of commercial services (e.g. retail, restaurants, entertainment) that support the needs of this desired consumer group. See Figure 5 – Existing Land Use/Business Inventory

There is currently a very limited amount of housing in the Village Center, with only a couple second floor apartments located along Tom Darlington Drive. While there are several residential developments that exist around the periphery of the Village Center, housing within the Village Center is a critical part of infusing energy into a downtown area. In addition, over 41 percent of community survey respondents indicated they would consider living in the Village Center, so there is a clear demand in the market place that is currently not being met.

**Figure 5 – Existing Land Use/Business Inventory**



A large number of non-retail uses are intermixed within the retail and restaurants located along Easy Street. While office uses are an important anchor to any downtown, the non-retail nature of these uses can detract from creating an active streetscape during peak evening and weekend periods.

There is no home mail delivery in Carefree; all residents must pick-up their mail at the post office. This unique situation is one of the charming qualities of Carefree and causes the post office to function as an important social hub of the community that promotes opportunities for impromptu shared interaction. While creating opportunities for casual social meetings fulfills one of the key elements of a healthy downtown; the Post Offices' preeminent location, non-retail nature, and need for constant vehicular access by residents can be in direct conflict with the retail demands and frequent special event activities that occur in the Village Center.

Another important element regarding the composition of land uses within the Carefree Village Center is the presence of a large number of "Lifestyle" businesses. The lack of consistent traditional retail business hours that these establishments maintain deflate the potential for added energy/vibrancy in the Village Center which in turn reduces the shopping experience and the potential of attracting return visitors.

**COMMUNITY SETTING** - The abundant, unique, and diverse amenities that surround the Carefree Village Center should also be viewed as a beneficial opportunity. The Village Center is fortunate to have convenient access to a high concentration of adjacent residential condominium neighborhoods as well as two full service resorts, the Carefree Resort and Conference Center and the Boulders Resort. However, non-vehicular connectivity to these adjacent uses is lacking. Elements such as dedicated paths to these adjacent uses or bike rentals at these nearby resorts could be developed to capitalize on this "built-in" residential and tourist base. The Village Center is also a gateway to Bartlett Lake, Spur Cross Ranch, and the Tonto National Forest. Establishments that offer access to these exceptional amenities, such as jeep tours, boat rentals, or guided hikes should be introduced to expand the services of the Village Center beyond its physical footprint.



Easy Street has an eclectic mix of retail, office restaurant, and recreational uses. Providing an environment where people can shop, eat, work and play is important to creating a vibrant "downtown"; however, the physical placement of these uses is just as important in order to promote and maintain an active streetscape.



The Town Mall is an integral part of the Village Center due to its central location and use as the Town Post Office; unfortunately, these qualities also conflict with many of the special events held in the Village Center.



Many businesses in the Village Center do not maintain traditional or consistent business hours, which deflate the vibrancy of the Towns retail core and reduces the potential of attracting return visitors.

### Property Ownership

A large part of the Village Center is controlled by a select number of individuals or entities that own more than one parcel within the study area. This fact is important to note as partners are sought in the future that may be able and willing to improve/assemble their properties to make a proposed development option not only more feasible but a significant component in the revitalization of the Village Center. See Figure 6 – Property Ownership

### Underutilized Sites and Spaces

Despite the presence of several successful businesses within the study area, there are a number of underutilized or vacant spaces that currently detract from the Village Center’s overall character, appeal, functionality and economic vitality. There is a noticeable concentration of vacant and/or majority vacant parcels located along Easy Street and Hum Road. These

vacancies are predominantly found within the developments of Los Portales, the Warren Building, and Spanish Village. The prominent location of these developments within the study area causes these parcels to have the highest need and greatest opportunity for enhanced utilization.

The two most prominent undeveloped pieces of land in the heart of the Village Center are commonly referred to as Easy Street North and Easy Street South. A new mixed-use project is currently being proposed for development on the south parcel. The proposed retail component of this project would be in harmony with the existing economic character of the Village Center and the planned residential and cultural anchor elements would be an attractor destination that could be a catalyst in creating an animated 24-hour, seven-day a week environment. See Figure 7 – Property Status

Figure 6 – Property Ownership

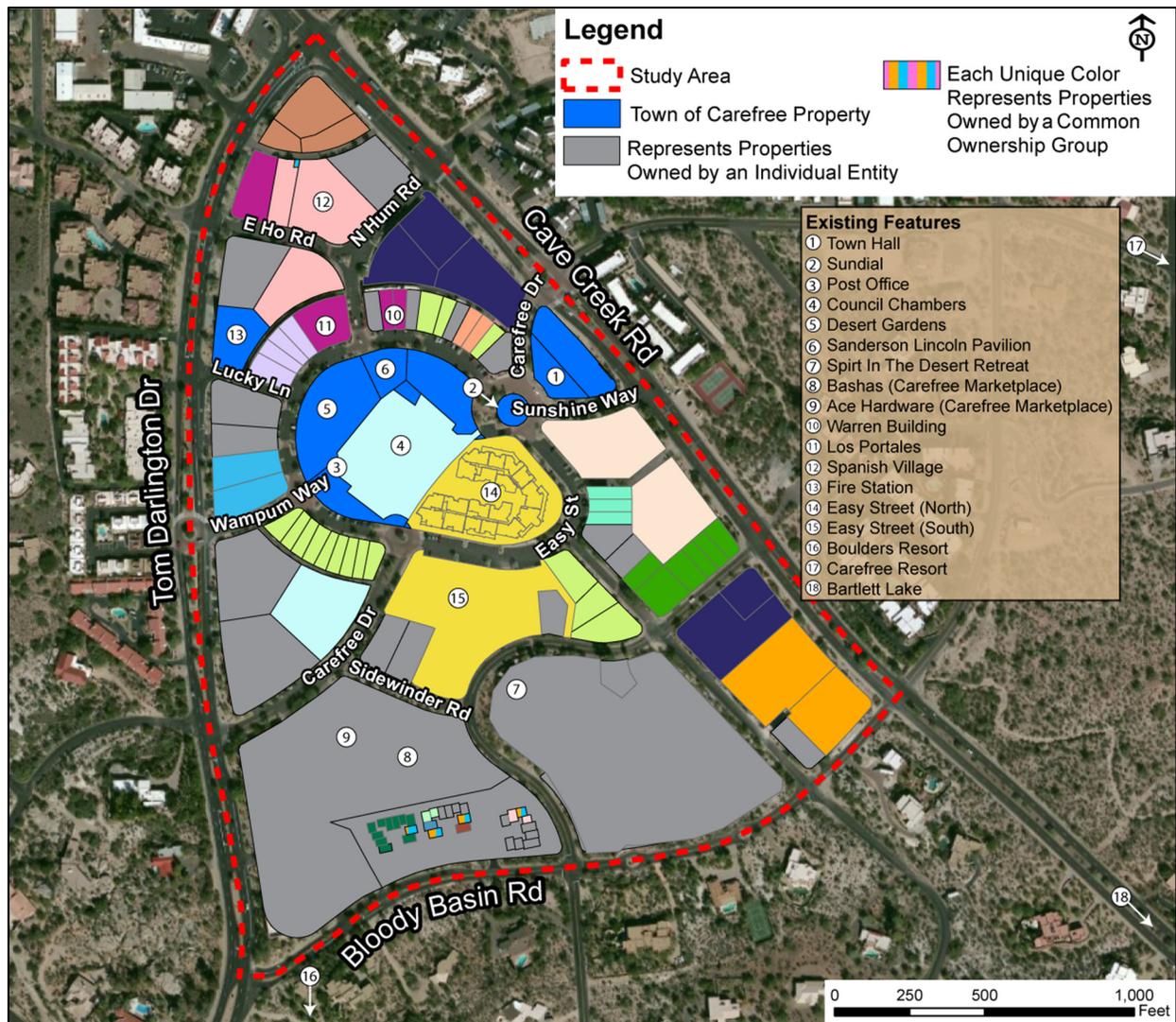
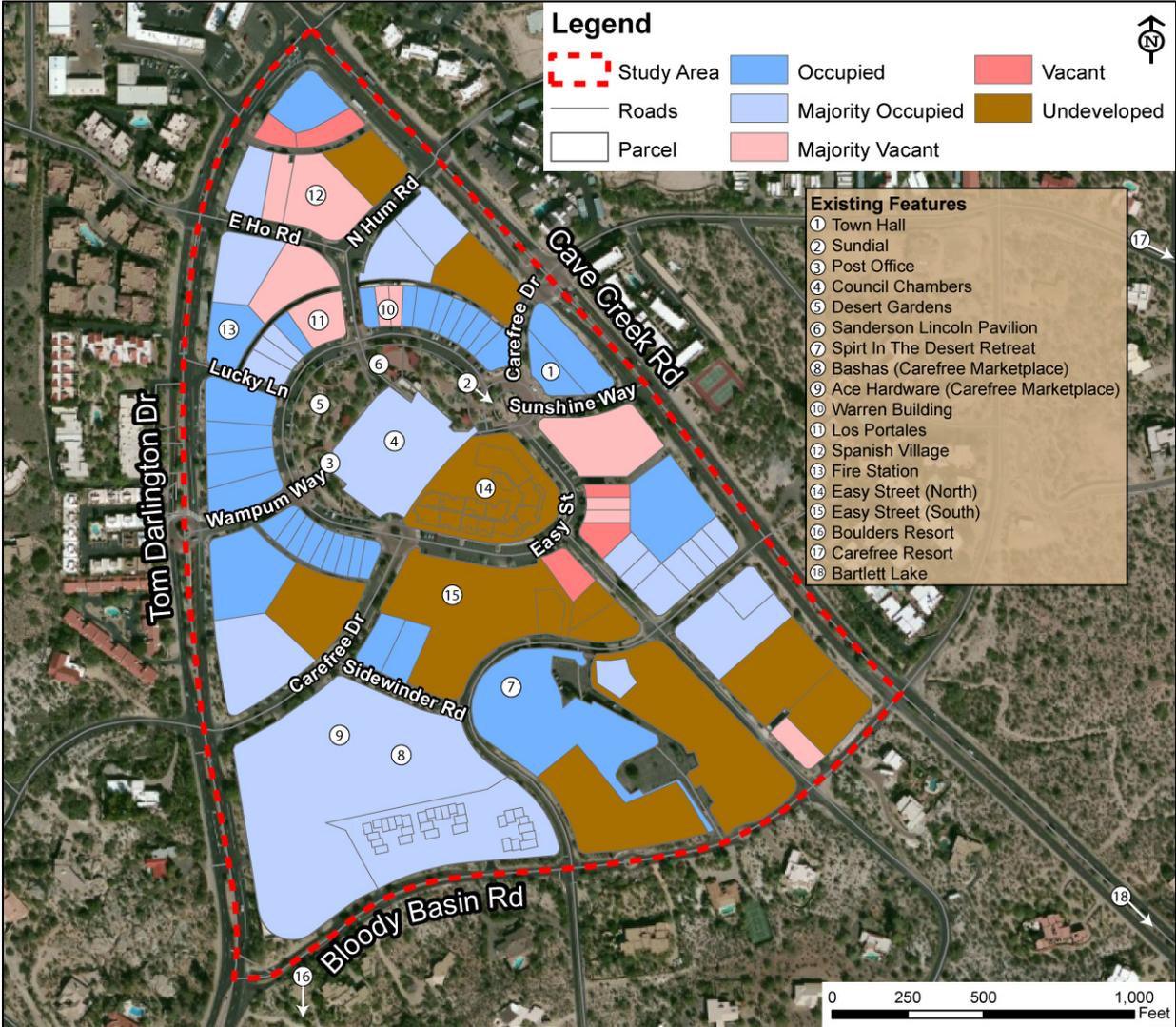


Figure 7 - Property Status



### Urban Form

#### Physical Design

The internal, circular design of the Village Center is one of its most uniquely defining characteristics, but also causes many visitors to believe the businesses along Tom Darlington Drive represent the extent of “downtown Carefree” and/or overlook the presence of the larger Village core due to a lack of direct vehicular visibility from the perimeter roadway network. Consequently, the matter of how the Village Center physically connects/interfaces with Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road is a critical issue.

#### Architectural Character

The Carefree Village Center is fortunate to exhibit a solid architectural design aesthetic. The diverse yet complimentary mix of Spanish Colonial and modern mid-century style buildings, particularly along Easy Street, creates a visually appealing and inviting environment. Although, just beyond Easy Street within the southeastern portion of the study area, the distinctive character of the Village Center is significantly diminished due to a lack of consistent architectural style, complimentary building materials, and pedestrian friendly design elements.

**Building Facades**

A community’s overall image is instrumental to its success in the competitive marketplace. Many participants who attended community workshop #1 commented that the various commercial developments located in the Village Center looked “tired”. Comments received noted that there were a number of empty storefronts, and that some buildings and facades needed repair – from minor cosmetic improvements (paint, new awnings and/or repair of window and door casing) to “major overhauls”.

**Building Heights**

The historic community support for strict control of building heights in the Village Center has maintained the quaint Village feel of the study area and effectively protected external views of Black Mountain. However, a possible unintended consequence of limiting building heights prescribed in the zoning ordinance is the lack of visibility of the Village Center from the edge of the study area.

**Streetscape**

Many locations along Easy Street and Hum Road have wide, ample sidewalks, shaded arcades, and verdant landscaping. These design qualities combine to create an inviting public space that offers room for a leisurely stroll, opportunity for outdoor dining areas, casual places to sit, and protection from the desert heat. This is in contrast to other sections of the Village Center streetscape that are unappealing due to a car centric design, constricted sidewalks or no sidewalks at all, lack of shade, improperly placed seating, and poor landscaping. Improving this condition is complex because unlike many communities where the sidewalks and streets are all located within the public right-of-way, many of the sidewalks in the Village Center are located on private property and the public right-of-way only extends to the edge of the street or parking areas.

**Civic Spaces/Landmarks**

Certainly key features of the Village Center are the Desert Gardens and Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion. These civic spaces are extremely well designed, landscaped, maintained, lit and the public restroom amenities are also very clean and in good working order. One critique of the lush vegetation in the gardens and the structures associated with the pavilion is that they obstruct the viewshed through the Village core and prohibits visitors from identifying the existence of additional shopping destinations in the Town Mall.



The inward facing design of the core retail area causes many visitors to overlook the Village Center due to the lack of direct vehicular visibility from the primary perimeter access roads.



The composition of Spanish village and modern mid-century style architecture combine to create a diverse, yet visually appealing, environment that is distinctive to Carefree.



This view along Wampum Way, towards Easy Street, demonstrates the current lack of verticality in the Village Center, which contributes to the limited visibility of the retail core from the primary access routes located along the fringe of the study area.



One critique of the Desert Gardens and the Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion is the lush vegetation and ancillary structures can obstruct views through the Village Center, making it difficult to identify the existence of additional shopping destinations

Another element of the Village Center that is synonymous with Carefree is the Sundial. While it certainly is an iconic symbol of Carefree, the sentiment shared by many residents and business owners is the Sundial does not capture visitor's attention for very long. This condition brings to light the need for additional features in the Village Center that will extend a visitors length of stay and evoke a positive experience that encourages return visitation.

**Mobility**

**Access and Gateways**

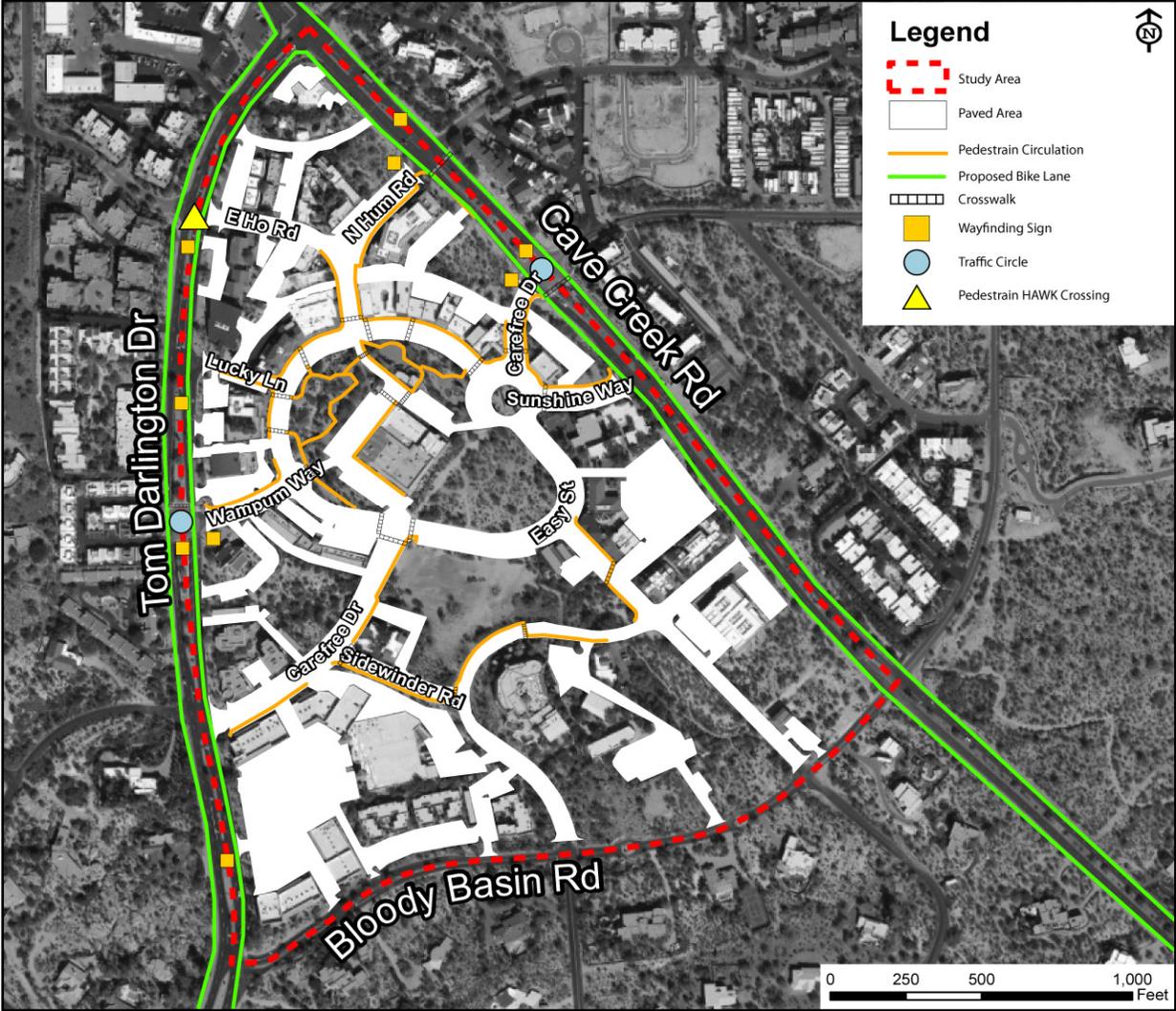
One of the primary obstacles that must be overcome in order to ensure successful revitalization is addressing the lack of a sense of entry into the Village Center from Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road. Travel along each of these roads, also shows they are congested with a large number of roadway intersections and parking lot driveways. This prevalence of vehicle access points is confusing and makes it difficult for the typical visitor to discern the true "entrance" to the Village Center.

Carefree has facilitated the placement of several well designed wayfinding signs at each entry road to direct visitors into the Village Center. Unfortunately, the traffic circles are not entirely effective in directing passerby's into the Village Center and appear to only promote the misconception that the commercial strip along Tom Darlington Drive or Cave Creek Road is the sum total of "Downtown" Carefree. Similarly, while very attractive and widely accepted by residents, the sundial wayfinding signs actually blend into the surrounding landscape and thus are overlooked by many visitors as they drive by.

**Street Network**

The study area's existing internal street pattern forms a pinwheel configuration that radiates out from Easy Street, creating a confusing web of collector streets, local streets, alleys, and driveways. Creating a defined street hierarchy within the study area will help to accentuate the gateways into the Village Center. See Figure 8 - Street Network

Figure 8 - Street Network



**Non-Motorized Network**

Outside of the Easy Street corridor and Desert Gardens; which is a very walkable, safe environment that generally incorporates wide sidewalks, defined crosswalks and sidewalk bulb-outs; the Village Center contains very few sidewalks along roadways or adjacent to on-street parking. The limited areas that include sidewalks frequently contain large gaps, dead ends, or do not provide connections from common points of origin to desired destinations. Improving this condition is necessary to encourage residents to experience the Village Center on foot rather than a vehicle and to allow visitors the ability to explore all the shops the downtown has to offer.

**Parking**

Carefree’s current zoning code identifies parking requirements and demand ratios that are fairly standard for a small suburban community. However, applying these universal parking standards to the Village Center does not adequately address the unique shared parking needs of this multi-use core area.

Beyond reviewing the existing parking requirements associated with the Village Center, the planning team also completed a general analysis of its physical parking conditions to determine if existing and future parking demands are being met. The parking analysis of the Village Center determined there are more than enough parking spaces within the Village Center to accommodate current demand based on the existing levels of occupancy. Furthermore, this analysis found that if the same parking demand and shared use ratios that were applied to the Easy Street South project are applied to projected future development in the Village Center, public parking will be adequate.

Through the public outreach efforts of this project, comments relating to inadequate parking surfaced as a frequent complaint of residents, businesses and property owners. After further review of the current parking condition, it was determined that the primary parking issue is not associated with the availability of vehicular parking; rather it is focused on the location and placement of that available parking. In the Village Center, when the limited public spaces located in front of a particular business become occupied, there is a perceived issue that sufficient parking does not exist, even though the Village Center overall has adequate capacity.

The availability of parking during special events and/or direct access to parking for a specific business (e.g. the post office) during special events was also a frequent comment by residents during public outreach efforts. The recently completed Cave Creek/Carefree Transportation

Framework Study reviewed this existing issue and proposed a series of recommendations to improve parking during special events. A selection of these recommendations includes:

- Improve shoulder parking along Tom Darlington Drive between Bloody Basin Road and Cave Creek Road;
- Improve shoulder parking along Cave Creek Road between Tom Darlington Drive and Bloody Basin Road;
- Encourage private businesses to open parking lots to the public during larger special events, and
- Consider establishing priority lots for special event visitors that carpool.

**Note: See Appendix A for a detailed analysis of Existing Conditions in the Carefree Village Center.**



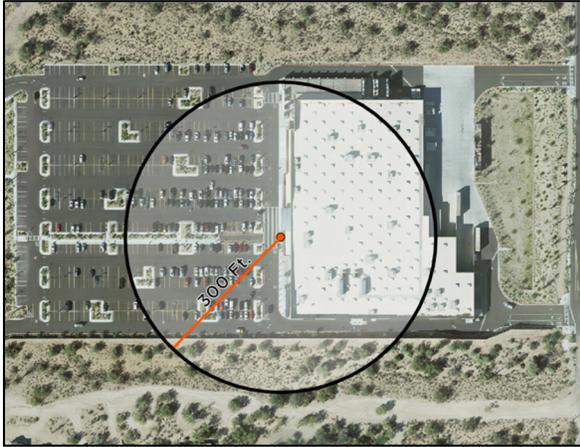
Several streets are car-centric and lack pedestrian amenities, which discourage visitors from exploring the Village Center.



The Town has invested in the placement of many attractive wayfinding elements along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road to enhance the visibility of the Village Center; unfortunately many of these features blend into the landscape and are often overlooked by visitors as they drive by.



Outside of the Easy Street corridor, the lack of sidewalks and/or bike facilities between common points of origin and desired destinations, create an uninviting environment.



An analysis of a typical walking distance from a parking spot to the front door of a big box store (left image) and that same distance in the Village Center (right image) shows that even if a visitor is unable to park directly in front of their desired Village Center destination and must park elsewhere, they will still probably walk a shorter distance than they would visiting a big-box store.

## Market Analysis

This market study assessment provides a summary of information obtained and analyzed on existing and future market dynamics for Carefree, including socio-demographics, retail trade leakage, real estate supply and demand, and a consumer survey of residents and visitors to Carefree. This survey was conducted to understand existing shopping patterns and identify potential opportunities that attract and retain the types of businesses that complement the Carefree Village and meet consumer demands.

### Socio-Demographics

Research was conducted on the socio-demographics of the Town of Carefree and a geographically defined trade area. The Market Trade Area for Carefree encompasses 148 square miles and includes Cave Creek, and portions of the cities of Phoenix and Scottsdale, as depicted in Figure 9. The current population of the trade area is 82,150 compared to the Town of Carefree at 3,451. Carefree population projections were compared against the Market Trade Area and Maricopa County as a whole by decade. The population growth rate varies by region and shows that the greatest rate of growth for Carefree will occur between 2020 and 2030 at nearly 13 percent and then drops sharply between 2030 and 2040. The Trade Area outpaces the County' projected growth rate for the periods between 2010 through 2030. See *Figure 10 – Population Growth Rate*

Residents of the Town and Carefree and the Market Trade Area are among the most affluent in the metro Phoenix area with a median household income of

\$87,938 and \$102,972 respectively. Carefree residents are higher educated than the County with 61 percent, more than double, having a Bachelor's Degree or higher compared to the County at 30 percent.

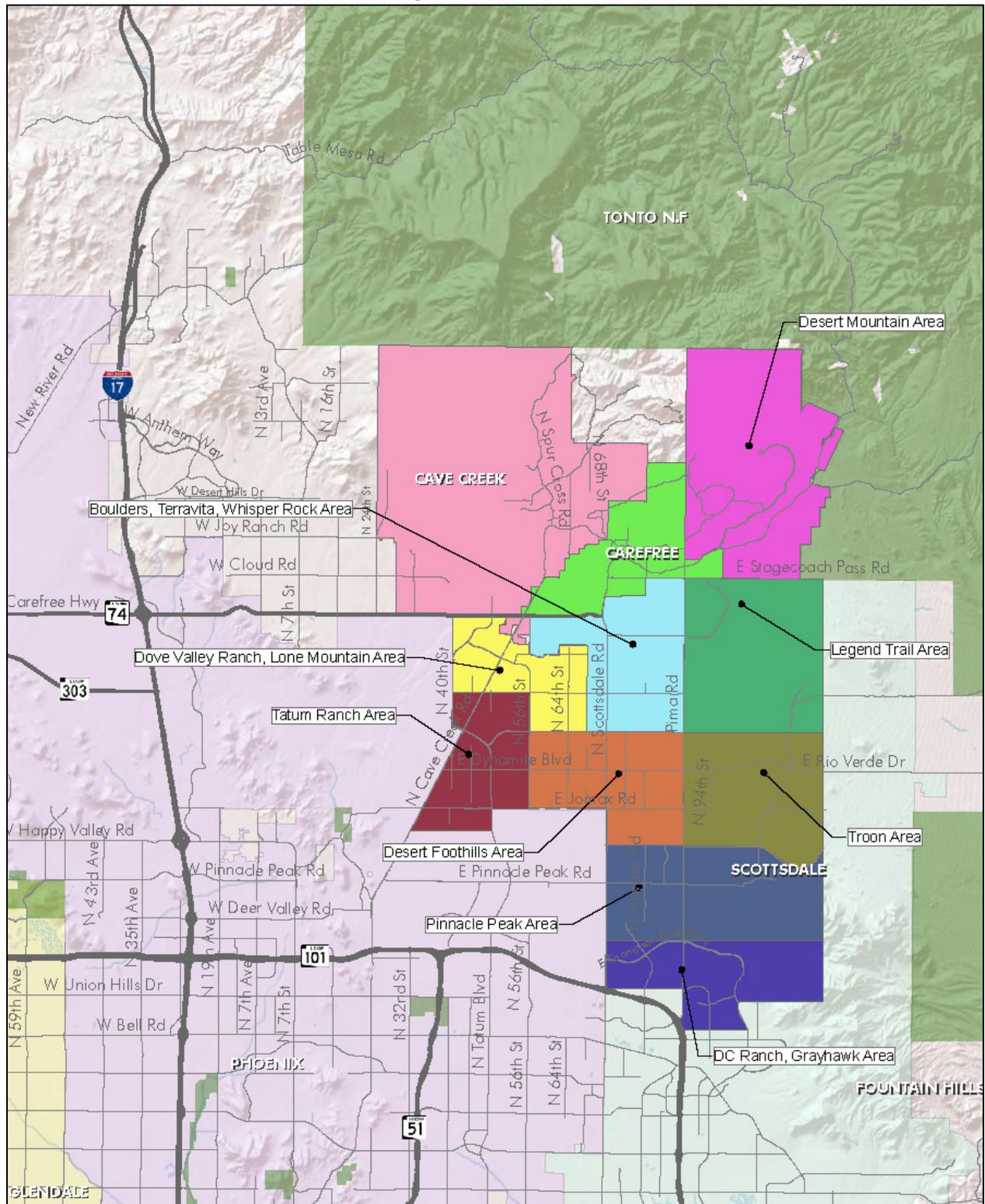
When it comes to income and net worth, residents in Carefree and the Market Trade Area hold an impressive amount of wealth. Their disposable income is significant and they spend it on dining, specialty food and luxury items, household furnishings, and travel and leisure activities. They are generous supporters of charitable organizations and the arts.

On a workday basis, there are nearly an equal number of people out commuting to work as in commuting to Carefree for jobs. These workers who come to Carefree represent a potential customer base for the restaurants, bars and retail in the Carefree Village, and are included in the retail demand model.

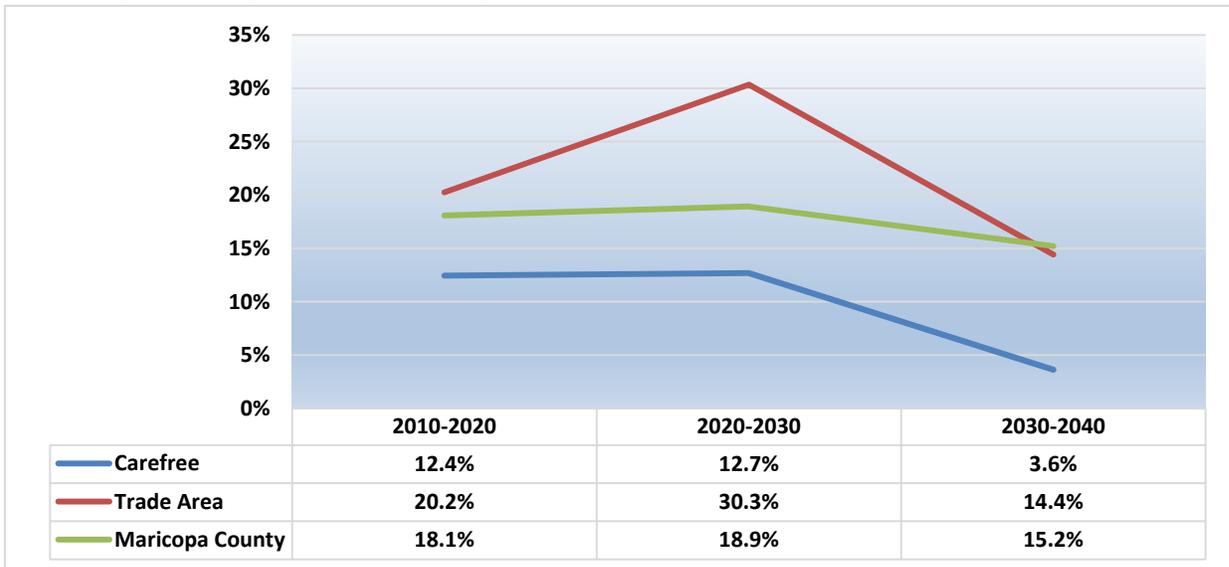
### Survey Results

Obtaining original research was a cornerstone of the market analysis to understanding shopping patterns, buying habits, and opinions about the Carefree Village, as well as desires for the type of retail and improvements needed. To accomplish this, an internet based survey was conducted that yielded a total of 505 responses received from primarily Carefree and Cave Creek residents, but also residents in Scottsdale and Phoenix.

Figure 9 - Market Trade Area



**Figure 10 – Population Growth Rate per Decade, Carefree, Market Trade Area and Maricopa County**



Source: MAG

Overall, the respondents expressed a need for more variety in retail and restaurant offerings within the Carefree Village. Below is a summary of the key findings for all respondents:

**Village Center Consumer Survey Results Summary:**

- 53% eat out 2 or more times per week
- 20% frequent the Village Center to eat out once or more per week
- The top 3 reasons for coming to the Carefree Village are dining, grocery shopping, and attending festivals.
- 32% shop at the Basha's Center more than once per week
- 40% shop at Kierland Commons once every few months
- 78% want a greater variety of stores and 60% want more restaurants
- Of the top five business that respondents desire, the top three are food related and include restaurants, specialty food store, and bakery
- The top two type of restaurants that respondents would like include Mexican and delicatessen
- 73% would like to see concerts and shows in the amphitheater
- 41% would consider or might consider living in the Village Center
- 68% indicated that the most appealing scenario for the Carefree Village is “a meeting place and the center of community activities with a mix of coffee shops, brew pubs, cultural and recreation spaces.”

Survey data was also tabulated to carve out Carefree residents from total respondents in order to identify any significant differences in their responses. The findings of the survey conclude that a larger percentage of Carefree residents eat out once a week or more than nonresidents; and 27% of Carefree residents visit the Carefree Village once a week or more, and want more competitive pricing and better quality merchandise. Changes that nonresidents want include evening store hours, consistent store hours and improved parking.

**Demand Analysis**

Several tasks were undertaken within the demand analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer spending, and trade leakage and gaps. Commercial real estate trends for Carefree and the Market Trade Area were analyzed and the future demand for square feet was forecasted. These findings, coupled with the Tapestry Lifestyle data provide the market intelligence to identify potential commercial and entertainment activities for the Carefree Village.

Over the last five years, retail tax collections have experienced a steady decline from \$347 per capita to \$332 per capita. The biggest amount of trade leakage occurs within the retail-grocery category at \$12.6 million followed by arts and entertainment at \$10.8 million and restaurant and bar at \$5.6 million. Carefree residents spend \$69.4 million annual on all retail items of which 58.4% percent of the spending remains in Carefree.

A Leakage/Surplus index was calculated across several retail product categories to compare the supply and demand. Out shopping is taking place in nearly every

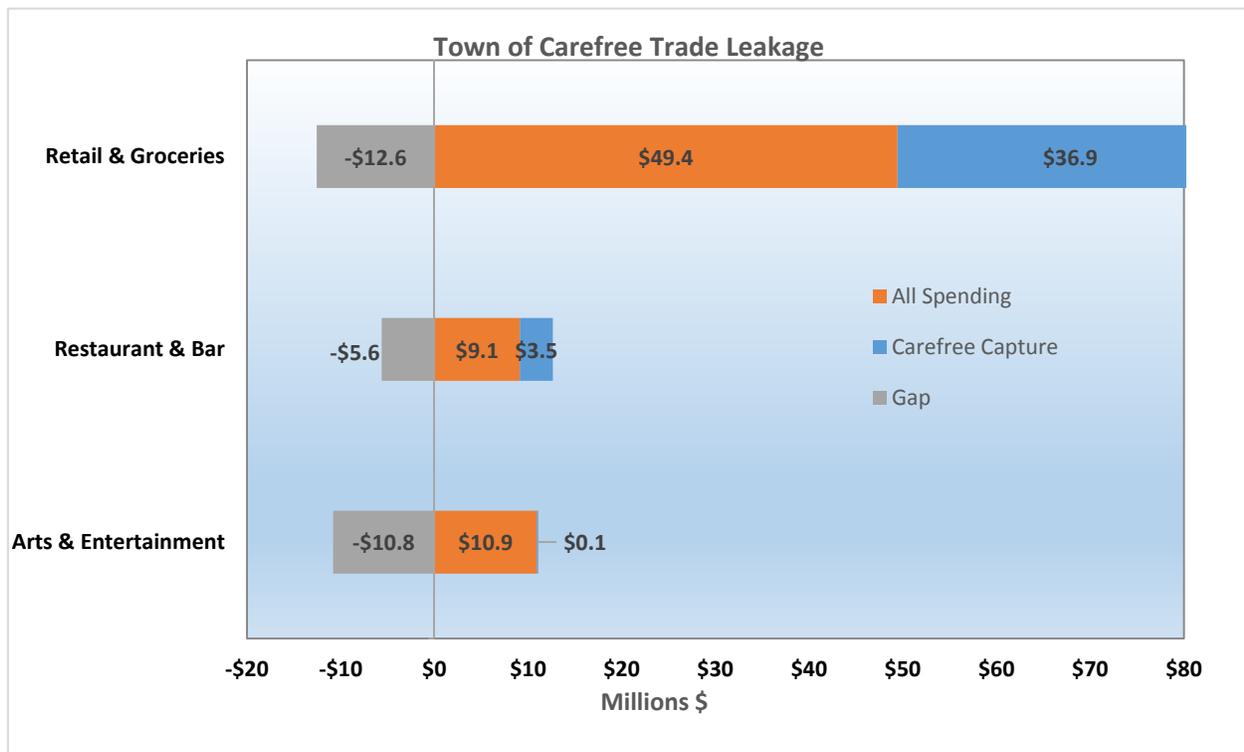
category with the exception of lawn and garden equipment and supplies and beer, wine and liquor. In these two categories, Carefree is capturing resident spending from outside the Town of Carefree. See Figure 11 – Carefree Trade Leakage

The demand for retail and office space was analyzed beginning with a baseline year of 2014 and projecting square feet of demand for 2020, 2030 and 2040. In 2014 the Carefree market can support a total of 261,598 square feet of retail space. However, when compared to the total inventory of retail space in Carefree (286,081 square feet)

there is a calculated surplus of 24,483 square feet of space. By 2020 the market is presumed to support 289,013 square feet showing a shortage of 2,932 square feet. Over the 26 year time horizon, the net new demand for retail space amounts to 82,165 square feet. See Figure 12 – Carefree Retail and Demand Analysis

What the analysis does not take into consideration is the amount of existing square footage that is not desirable to retail tenants due to its location or size. Meaning, that the market may very well be likely to support additional retail if existing space was redeveloped or new space built.

**Figure 11 – Trade Leakage**



**Figure 12 – Retail & Office Demand Analysis**

	2014	2020	2030	2040
<b>Retail</b>				
Total Forecast Demand in sq. ft.	261,598	289,013	327,261	343,763
Existing Square Feet	286,081	286,081	286,081	286,081
(Excess)/Shortage	(24,483)	2,932	41,180	57,682
<b>Office</b>				
Total Forecast Demand in sq. ft.	197,596	236,344	252,358	239,684
Existing Square Feet	231,579	231,579	231,579	231,579
(Excess)/Shortage	(33,983)	4,765	20,779	8,105

## Market Segments

It is important to bear in mind that there are a variety of variables that will influence the outcome of these findings, including existing and future competition, growth in the market and area demographics. In addition to the site location criteria of population threshold, many retailers and restaurants also have additional location criteria including: a minimum number of cars per day, a targeted demographic group (age, income, etc.), type of location, and preferred co-tenants such as grocery/supermarket, entertainment, fashion, etc.

Utilizing the findings of the consumer expenditure gap analysis combined with the Carefree consumer survey and Tapestry Segmentation information there appears to be a variety of commercial and entertainment related activity that Carefree should target, as noted below. *See Figure 13 – Carefree Commercial & Entertainment Potential*

The current mix of retail uses in the Carefree Village is not in line with what consumer’s desire, as concluded from the consumer survey. Getting the right mix of retail that consumer’s demand will invigorate the Carefree Village and allow it to compete with other comparable retail destinations. The challenge will be encouraging landlords to recruit appropriate high-quality tenants that match the interests of Carefree residents and the Market Trade Area, rather than leasing space to whomever is willing to pay the rent.

Office uses are demand anchors for retailers and restaurants, especially in the morning and at noontime. Professional practices that include medical, legal and financial services are also desirable as they steadily attract visitors and employ office staff, all who are potential shoppers.

Civic, cultural and entertainment anchors also attract a high number of visitors and create the opportunity for cross marketing with area restaurants and retailers. Nighttime uses such as restaurants and theaters can help make up for the smaller daytime population from office workers.

Adding residential living to a downtown or urban village has proven to be successful in other markets. New housing opportunities add excitement and help create a sense of place. In addition, a residential component provides a built in customer base that can support existing retail and restaurants and serve as a draw to attract new business. Finally, the survey findings indicated a desire for living in the Carefree Village.

**Note: See Appendix B for a detailed Market Analysis of Carefree and the Village Center.**

**Figure 13 – Town of Carefree Commercial & Entertainment Potential**

<p><b>Restaurants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mexican</li> <li>• Delicatessen/casual cafes and bistros</li> <li>• Organic/healthy</li> <li>• Seafood</li> <li>• Brew pub/wine bar</li> <li>• Organic/healthy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Retail</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothing and Accessories</li> <li>• Pet supplies and services</li> <li>• Luggage and leather goods</li> <li>• Sports/recreation/exercise equipment</li> <li>• Health and personal care stores</li> <li>• Book, periodical and music stores</li> </ul>
<p><b>Specialty Food Stores</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bakery</li> <li>• Wine and artisan cheese</li> <li>• Organic/healthy</li> <li>• Butcher/specialty meats</li> </ul>	<p><b>Entertainment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing arts</li> <li>• Culinary festivals</li> <li>• Concerts and shows in the amphitheater</li> <li>• Art festivals</li> </ul>

## Promotion & Organization

This assessment summary of Carefree's Village Center promotions and organizational structure provides findings and general observations covering the marketing, events and organizational structure of the Village Center. This assessment is based on the review of past documents and survey results, interviews with various festival coordinators as well as non-profit organization leadership, one-on-one interviews with a cross-section of the Center's businesses, in-depth discussion with Mr. Owens from Owens Harkey, and results from the Community Workshop.

### Marketing

- The Village Center has NO unified or common "tagline" to support a "brand" for the Village Center. On the other hand, the Town's website ([www.carefree.org](http://www.carefree.org)) and marketing collateral as well as the Town's companion visitor website ([www.VisitCarefree.com](http://www.VisitCarefree.com)) interchangeably use three very short taglines- "The Best Small Town in Arizona", "Life As It Should Be" and "Carefree – Experience the Difference!"
- The Town has contracted for the last few years with the Phoenix based advertising agency, Owens Harkey Advertising to implement a marketing and public relations campaign on behalf of the entire Town of Carefree. The firm has primarily focused on (1) developing relationships with the local businesses to help market their services, (2) launching and maintaining a visitor website ([www.VisitCarefree.com](http://www.VisitCarefree.com)) along with a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/TownOfCarefree](http://www.facebook.com/TownOfCarefree)) and (3) generating coverage with the regional media outlets covering "newsworthy" events and activities.
- There are several websites that contain current and adequate information about Carefree; however some are harder to navigate than others.
- There appears to be a variety of printed marketing collateral with NO one agency responsible for all of the Village Center marketing information.
- Both the Town and the Chamber provide a visitors center. The Town provides limited marketing material, while the Chamber is setup more like a traditional visitor center.



### Events

- Carefree's strongest asset is their robust Calendar of events; however, there is a gap in events during the hot (and lean) summer months and some residents felt there was an overabundance of art focused events.
- Many also felt that there was opportunity to leverage the Desert Gardens more, the quality of any events should be maintained and there needs to be more consistency in overall guidelines, layout and scheduling of the events.
- The Town currently does not produce any of the events but rather relies on professional promoters or nonprofit organizations to coordinate and implement them. However, the Town is an active partner with the events that are held in the Village Center providing access to the public restrooms, use of the new sound system at the Pavilion and helping promote and market the activities on the Town's website, Facebook page and VisitCarefree.com.
- The three annual Thunderbird Fine Arts & Wine Festivals are considered by most as Carefree's "Signature Events" drawing visitors regionally as well as from out of the State. Some businesses expressed frustration with the street closures and the impact it has on their customer's parking as well as the tents blocking access to their businesses. However, when attending the actual event, it appeared that the promoter worked very hard to layout the artist space to allow enough flow to those businesses that were open as well as there was more than ample parking available for both event attendees as well as customers coming to Carefree to visit a particular business.



- The four events organized by Magic Bird Festivals are FREE to the public and no streets are closed – vendors are actually placed strategically within the Desert Gardens. The vendors in two of these events are juried and some individuals who attended the community workshop felt that the overall quality of the “artists” was not up to par compared to the Thunderbird events.
- The Carefree Christmas Festival & Electric Light Parade is by far one of the most popular events from the local resident’s perspective and is sponsored by the Town of Carefree who expends significant resources and man hours to bring the community this holiday favorite. The Carefree Cave Creek Chamber assists the Town with organizing the light parade as well as reaches out to the community for donations and business sponsorships to offset the costs of the parade. The event draws about 20,000 in attendance. It is the only event that draws families and young children.



- The Desert Foothills Theater (DFT) and Desert Foothills Youth Theater (DFYT) is celebrating its 40th year presenting award-winning theater in the far north valley. Both DFT and DFYT are programs of the Foothills Community Foundation. The theater has seven productions per year with four being adult and three youth oriented. Although all the productions are currently being held at the Cactus Shadows Fine Arts Center (which consists of a 400 seat theater and a 150 black box theatre) they have been hosting cabaret shows in partnership with Venus Café and have sold out all three shows. The Theatre Advisory Board has been exploring options of building and/or relocating into new space that would open up new opportunities for the Theatre as well as the ability to expand its season.
- There appears to be no formally organized Town/Village Center business promotions, such as Customer Appreciation Month, Employee Discount Card/Days, Restaurant Week, etc. It appears that some of the businesses do organize small “in business” promotions within their own establishment

## Organizational Structure

- Like most communities there appears to be no one entity that is solely responsible for all aspects of maintaining, promoting, and managing the Village Center. Town Hall takes a much more active role in the promotion and marketing of the community than other towns typically do. The Carefree/Cave Creek Chamber of Commerce on the other hand has shifted from being the organization perceived in the community as “that organization that does parades” to being more of a business and membership driven organization. The Chamber assists with coordinating the Christmas Light Parade as well as overseeing the volunteers for the Thunderbird Fine Art Festivals. Over the years, it was indicated that there have been many versions of a Carefree Business Association but currently there is not a formally formed organization.
- In order to be competitive in the marketplace the Town must have a framework that does not rely on one entity, but includes the Town, Chamber, a volunteer business group and/or a Downtown Association group with dedicated staff. However, it appears that there are still some attitudes among the community of not truly understanding the function or “mission” of key organizations and/or agencies. This type of attitude can result in a community being less effective with its revitalization efforts and can actually undermine the hard work and momentum it takes to sustain a thriving, vibrant commercial district in today’s competitive marketplace.
- The Town’s recently filled position for an Event/Public Relations Coordinator is a great step in the right direction for creating a position that will be solely dedicated to helping coordinate activities in the Village Center.
- It appears that there are a few electronic communication venues (the Town’s COINS notice and the Chamber’s e-newsletter and e-blasts) that are currently being used to communicate with the residents and business owners. In addition, there may be some face-to-face conversations between the Town, the Event promoters and the business owners; however, many of the businesses that were interviewed indicated that communication between all entities could be greatly improved.

**Note: See Appendix C for a detailed assessment of the Village Centers Promotion & Organizational structure.**

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# The Vision

Before actions can be taken to revitalize the Carefree Village Center, there needs to be a clear vision that describes the physical outcomes this plan is intended to bring about. This section provides a direct response to this need by establishing what the Village Center should be 10 or 15 years from now. This chapter also provides supplementary guidance by describing the key principles the planning team focused on to effectively develop a plan to achieve this desired vision. In the following Chapter – Master Plan for Action, these guiding principles are translated into a series of five strategies, each encompassing a set of recommendations that form the comprehensive “Master Plan” for the revitalization of the Village Center.

The desired outcomes and principles outlined below came out of a public involvement process organized around a series of steering committee meetings, community survey, stakeholder interviews, and community workshops that were focused on clarifying the community’s aspirations for the Village Center.

## Community Participation

At the onset of the project the planning process undertook an initial public consultation process which included three components: a community survey (reviewed in Chapter 1), stakeholder interviews, steering committee meetings and community workshops.

When combined, these outreach methods provided rich and meaningful feedback in the process of developing preliminary and ultimately final revitalization concepts. Following are the major themes that arose from the combined outreach:



## Steering Committee Input – SLOT Analysis

<p><b>Village Center STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Design/Layout *</li> <li>● Business Mix</li> <li>● Community Character</li> <li>● Desert Garden/Pavilion</li> <li>● Pedestrian Friendly</li> <li>● Setting/Geography</li> <li>● Special Events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Village Center LIMITATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visibility/Exposure*</li> <li>● Land Use Mix*</li> <li>● Building Age</li> <li>● Demographic Profile</li> <li>● Design</li> <li>● Funding</li> <li>● Marketing/Positioning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Village Center OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Business &amp; Uses *</li> <li>● Culture &amp; Arts</li> <li>● Location to Natural Settings</li> <li>● Physical &amp; Visual Character</li> <li>● Promotion &amp; Marketing</li> <li>● Special Events</li> <li>● Specific Target Markets</li> </ul>	<p><b>Village center THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical, Design, Infrastructure*</li> <li>● Economics &amp; Seasonal Influences</li> <li>● Leakage &amp; Competition in other Cities</li> <li>● Organization &amp; Promotion</li> <li>● Policies &amp; Branding</li> </ul>

\* Identified as highest priority issue



## Community Workshop – Café Discussion

### Vision Discussion

What will the Village Center be known for in the future?

- Gathering place for people
- Culture (arts/music/theater)
- Museum
- Desert garden
- Unique experience

What is missing from the vision statement?

- More diverse restaurants
- Festivals need to be balanced
- More traffic in summer
- Incorporate arts and music for kids

### Urban Design Discussion

Main Themes from the Urban Design Discussion:

- The Village Center needs something unique/visually appealing/iconic to help Carefree stand out; could be something whimsical
- Walkable streets and wanted more to enhance that experience, including shading or misting the sidewalks and adding more trees and plants
- Outdoor uses should be encouraged and increased, including outdoor dining, night time events and live music
- Mixed use development would enhance the overall Village Center experience

### Special Events Discussion

Ideas on different types of events from the Special Events Discussion

- Car/Motorcycle Show
- Film Festival
- Music Festival
- Tax-Free Day
- Derby Day
- Food Festivals (“Farm to Table”, Baking Contest, Chili Cook-off, Taste of Carefree, Oktoberfest)

### Circulation/Access Discussion

Ingress/Egress – Best Access and Least Needed

- Primary access points:
  - Pedestrians: Wampum and Ho
  - Vehicles: Carefree, Wampum, Lucky
- Streets that could be eliminated:
  - Sunshine: One resident thought this would make a nice greenbelt
  - Lucky Lane

### Economic Base Discussion

Potential Business/Uses (and Partnerships)

- Theater (Herberger, ASU, Desert Foothills)
- Museum (Heard, Musical Instrument Museum)
- Education (ASU, Maricopa County Community Colleges)
- Film House/Movie Theater
- Garden/Greenbelt (Desert Botanical Garden)
- Gathering Hall for meetings/wedding receptions





## Vision Statement

The Carefree Village Center vision statement was developed to serve as the foundation for decisions made throughout the master plan process. A vision is a broad statement which communicates where the Town would like to be in the future. Written in the present tense, the vision describes the Town's accomplishments 10 to 15 years from now for the Village Center. The following represents the community vision for the Village Center:

*“Carefree’s Village Center is the heart of a progressive community that is also a regional magnet for activity. Entry to the Village Center is distinct and beckons visitors and locals alike to wander and discover new goods, services and entertainment within. A diverse mix of specialty shops, art, and dining opportunities leverage the unique design and natural setting of the Village Center to thrive and prosper. Selected cultural amenities and exceptional annual events showcase the authentic character of the community and attract new residents who choose to live in the Village Center and enjoy the true “Carefree” lifestyle.”*

## Guiding Principles

To further refine the vision statement into directionable items, a series of guiding principles were developed. Guiding Principles, like a vision statement, are broad in nature but usually provide a level of specificity which seeks to give purpose or define results.

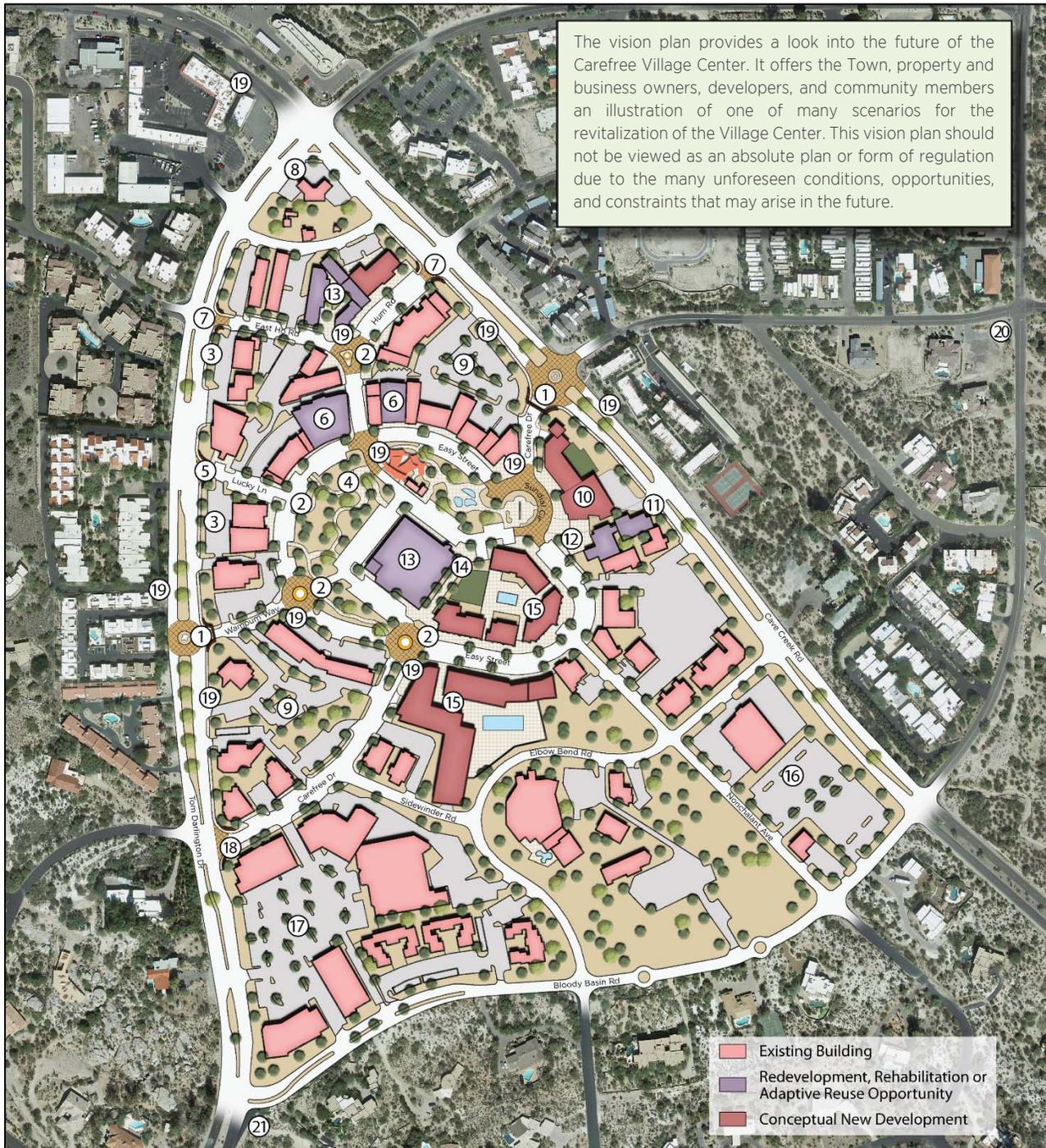
Each Guiding Principle represents some part of the vision and begins to provide direction for what the community should focus on to realize the desired end state. In the next Chapter, these Guiding Principles were then shaped into a set of more specific actionable Strategies and Recommendations.

- *Aggressively market a “Village” image that is unique, yet readily identifiable as Carefree.*
- *Create a cultural anchor and community focal points that repeatedly attract local residents and regional visitors.*
- *Improve the economic viability of the Village through enhancement of the mix of retail, business, arts and culture.*
- *Enhance the physical visibility of the Village while preserving its architectural and pedestrian character.*
- *Thoughtfully regulate development of vacant land and promote repurposing of underutilized buildings.*
- *Strengthen public-private partnerships to achieve mutual goals.*

## Vision Plan

The vision plan provides a look into the future of the Carefree Village Center. It offers the Town and community stakeholders an illustration of one potential scenario for revitalization within the Center. It is possible that revitalization could occur in a different manner than that which is shown on the plan. Therefore, the vision plan illustration should not be viewed as an absolute plan or form of regulation. There are many unforeseen conditions, opportunities and/or constraints that may arise in the future. Instead, this vision plan should serve as an initial guide for where and how future development within the Village Center may occur and provide a common purpose that all investors can rely upon, contribute to, and derive value from.

Figure 14 – Vision Plan



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Place Vertical Landmark Feature &amp; Enhanced Gateway Entrance</li> <li>② Create Iconic Focal Point</li> <li>③ Reduce Number of Entrance Drives</li> <li>④ Activate Desert Garden During Non-Event Periods</li> <li>⑤ Create Enhanced Gateway Entrance</li> <li>⑥ Repurpose Building as Incubator or Pop-Up Retail</li> <li>⑦ Create Enhanced Gateway Entrance and Street Enhancements</li> <li>⑧ Provide Landscape Islands to Enhance Intersection</li> <li>⑨ Develop Future Parking Lot</li> <li>⑩ Develop Anchor Destination</li> <li>⑪ Remove Entrance Road</li> <li>⑫ Explore Potential to Develop Outdoor Private Event Space</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑬ Explore Potential Redevelopment/Reuse Opportunity</li> <li>⑭ Place Pedestrian Corridor to Reestablish Original Carefree Drive Alignment</li> <li>⑮ Develop Residential and Ground Floor Retail/Restaurant Space or Anchor Destination</li> <li>⑯ Develop Surplus Parking Lot for Use During Special Events</li> <li>⑰ Continue to Promote as Daily Retail Neighborhood Services Center</li> <li>⑱ Place Enhanced Gateway Entrance and Right Turn Lane</li> <li>⑲ Place Improved Wayfinding Signage</li> <li>⑳ Enhance Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity to Carefree Resort</li> <li>㉑ Enhance Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity to Boulders Resort</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

# The Master Plan for Action

Revitalization of the Carefree Village Center will not be achieved through a few simple policy changes or one “silver bullet” development project. Rather, successful improvement of the Village Center will occur through initiating a series of complimentary, well-defined strategies that build upon one another to set the course for real change.

The following “Master Plan for Action” establishes the blueprint for achieving this desired change by outlining a framework of **strategies** that focus on achieving the community’s vision for this critical area of the Town. Each strategy includes a summary of its importance to the Village Center, key **recommendations** toward which planning efforts should be directed, and detailed **action steps** that could be undertaken to advance each recommendation.

## Strategy 1 – Improve the Village Center’s visibility and access

The manner in which a visitor approaches the Village Center directly establishes their first impression of the area. A favorable first impression is important to fostering an enjoyable experience for visitors, because ultimately the more comfortable a visitor is the more likely they are to patronize businesses and directly contribute to the success of the Village Center. Therefore, promoting and maintaining an environment that is welcoming to existing and new visitors is critical to the Village Center revitalization efforts.

The Village Center today is relatively compact and offers a pedestrian friendly inward facing design. However, the Center has no formal gateways and many tenants shared concern that visitors have trouble finding it. In fact, many consumers in the larger trade area expressed they were unaware that Carefree has a Village Center at all. Compounding this issue is the fact that vehicular circulation routes are not well defined, pedestrian connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods is limited, several directional signs intended to provide guidance to visitors lack visibility, and a perception of a parking problem exists.

These following recommendations provide gateway enhancements to help infuse life into the Village Center; improved auto, pedestrian, and bicycle connections to create a more cohesive Village Center identity; and signage and parking modifications to support these visibility and access improvements.

## Recommendations

- a. **Celebrate the points of arrival into the Village Center to counteract the inward facing design.** Enhancing the character and appearance of these points are important factors in establishing the overall visibility and perception of the Village Center to new and unfamiliar visitors.
  - i. Place vertical landmark elements in the traffic circles located at Tom Darlington Drive and Wampum Way as well as Cave Creek Road and Carefree Drive to establish a visual contrast from the existing monochromatic desert landscaping and attract both planned and unplanned visitors.
  - ii. Designate at least one street that leads into the Village Center from Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road as primary gateway entrances. Design and place arched gateway features across each street to create a sense of arrival into the Village Center. These primary arched gateways are intended to be used by those visitors who are new to or unfamiliar with the Village Center.
  - iii. Designate all other entry drives into the Village Center from Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road as secondary gateways. Design and place entry features that are similar in character to the primary arched gateways, but simpler in form such as monument pillars or low half-walls. These alternative entry points are intended to be used primarily by those who are already well oriented to the Village Center, such as residents and current workers of the area.

*Figure 15 – Conceptual Approach Experience (Tom Darlington Drive)*



Existing Conditions: The approach to the Village Center includes attractive natural desert landscaping and appealing wayfinding signage, but these subdued elements do not establish a sense of arrival and cause many visitors to drive right by the Village Center or believe the few shops located along Tom Darlington Drive represent “Downtown” Carefree.



Conceptual Rendering: Placing vertical landmark features within the existing traffic circles on Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road will help to attract visitors attention from a greater distance and visibly denote a change in character from the surrounding natural desert landscaping. As visitors progress along their route, enhanced gateway features will clearly establish the desired Village Center entrance locations and relocated wayfinding signage will help inform travelers well in advance of decision points.

*Figure 16 – Conceptual Gateway Entrance (Wampum Way)*



Existing Conditions: Like the approach, the lack of verticality or identifiable features along the entrance streets that lead into the Village Center provide visitors with no indication as to the presence of the retail core beyond.



Conceptual Rendering: Developing an arched gateway and complementing this feature with additional elements of the Master Plan including; improved sidewalks, seasonal plantings, outdoor dining, increased building height limits and iconic public art, will combine to create an entrance character that is inviting and unique to Carefree.

- iv. Enhance seasonal plantings at each entry point to further distinguish from the surrounding natural landscape.
- v. Allow the public to review and comment on gateway design alternatives. The final design of each gateway type (primary and secondary) can take on many forms and incorporate a variety of material options, however; preferred design features shared by residents and stakeholders included an artistic arched gateway that relates to the Village Center’s existing rustic desert and Spanish Colonial character.
- vi. Improve the visual character of the Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road intersection by placing enhanced wayfinding signage and landscape islands.
- vii. To fully achieve these improvements, portions of private property at each intersection may need to be acquired, consolidated with Town owned right-of-way, then cleared and improved.

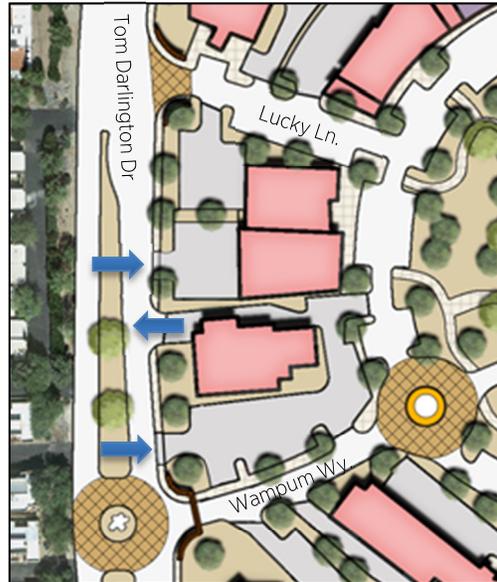
**b. Decrease the number of entry drives along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road.** At first view from Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road, the Village Center struggles to look well defined or inviting to visitors given the prevailing number of entry roads and driveways located along these auto-oriented corridors.

- i. Identify opportunities to consolidate the number of existing entry drives along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road to reduce confusion to visitors and encourage entry to desired primary and secondary gateway entrances. Possible alternatives include, abandoning Sunshine Way and relocating driveway entrances along Tom Darlington to adjacent side streets.

**c. Establish a hierarchy of street typologies.** The arrangement of streets, driveways, and alleys should be legible and attractive. Well-designed, appealing, and navigable streetscapes will help provide clarity to the Village Center as well as contribute to visitors enjoying their stay, which encourages return visits and positive referrals to others.

- i. Clearly define primary streets over secondary service streets (i.e. alleys, private drives) to guide visitors to desired points in the Village Center.

- ii. Primary Streets include: Carefree Drive, Wampum Way, Lucky Lane, East Ho, Hum Road, Ho Hum Drive and Easy Street.
- iii. Design and provide common streetscape elements such as vertical curbs, alternate paving material, on street parking, sidewalks, seasonal landscaping, signage and street lamps to clearly denote these primary streets as preferred travel routes.



Existing Conditions: Currently there are several entry roads and driveways along Tom Darlington Drive that impeded traffic flow and clutter access to the Village Center



Conceptual Rendering: Creating cross-access connections and relocating entry drives to side streets reduces the number of entry drives along Tom Darlington Drive and helps encourage visitors to utilize desired primary access points when entering the Village Center.

*Figure 17 – Street Hierarchy Improvements (E. Ho Road)*



Existing Conditions: In many areas of the Village Center, the circulation system lacks clarity, making it difficult for a visitor to discern what is a roadway, driveway or alley.



Conceptual Rendering: Establishing a more complete street cross-section along key entrance drives, that has clearly defined travel ways, sidewalks, artistic focal points, wayfinding, lighting, and landscaping will create a more inviting environment and bring needed order to the circulation system within the Village Center.

**d. Build-upon the Village Center’s pedestrian and bicycle friendly design.** Studies have proven that successful pedestrian and bicycle environments contribute to increased usage and enjoyment of downtown areas. Greater ease of non-vehicular movement to and within the Village Center will also allow the area to become a more integral part of the Desert Foothills. Therefore, long-term revitalization success depends upon integrating the Village Center’s limited pedestrian and bicycle amenities with surrounding neighborhoods and the larger trade area.

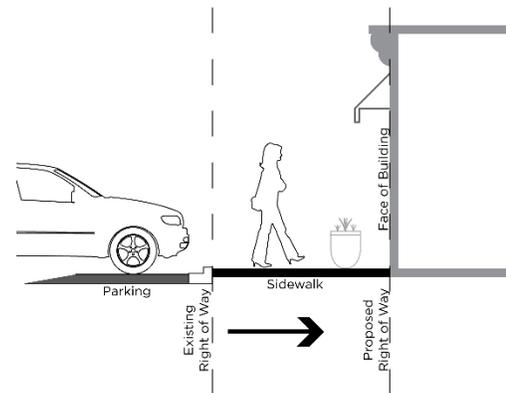
- a. Construct sidewalks along identified primary streets to create stronger pedestrian connections between destination points, including adjacent residential neighborhoods, Carefree Marketplace, Spanish Village, and Sundance Center.
- b. The usage of bicycles should also be supported and accommodated, especially given current plans to develop bike lanes along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road, which will connect to the greater Desert Foothills region. Enhanced elements should include posting Wampum Way and Carefree Drive as bike routes, locating additional bike racks in the Village Center, and coordinating bike rentals with adjacent resorts.

c. Create additional access to the Village Center by developing an urban trail system to connect to the existing Carefree and Boulders resort destinations.

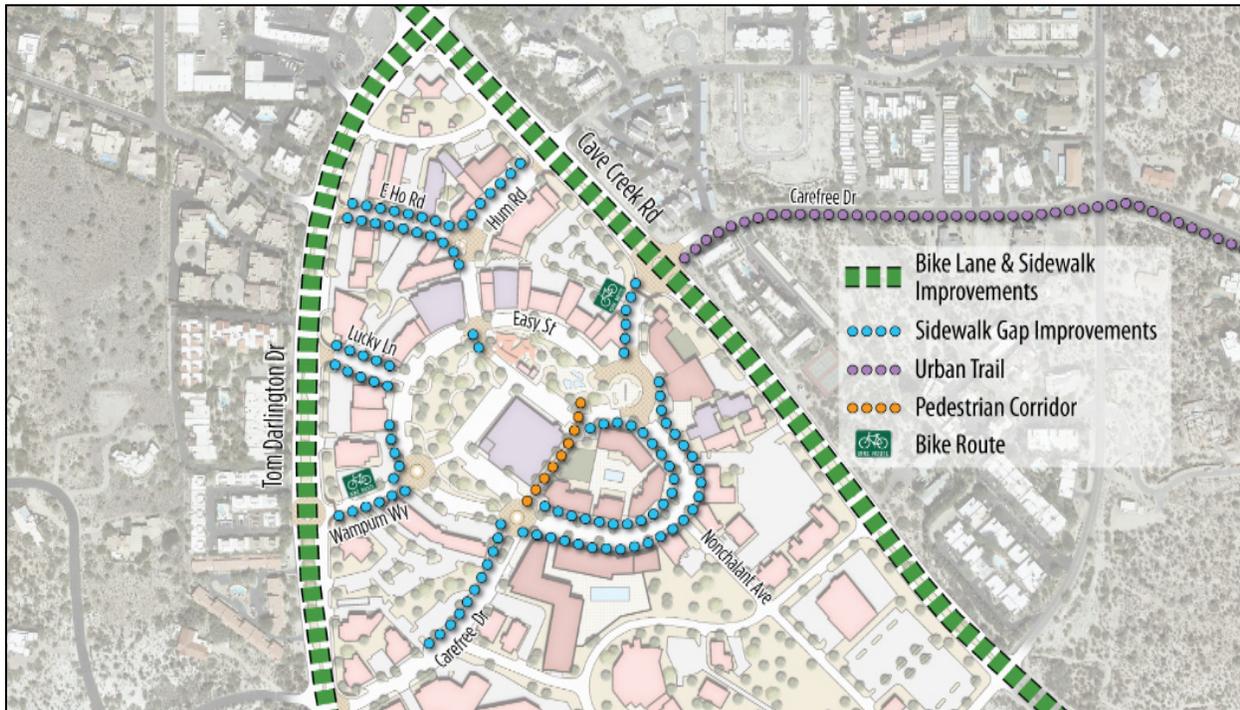
d. As development occurs, ensure appropriate cross-access connectivity between businesses along Easy Street by placing a pedestrian corridor along the original Carefree Drive alignment.

e. Improve the public realm during summer months by placing pedestrian friendly amenities such as misters, shade trees, and arcades.

f. Explore ability to work with existing property owners to place sidewalks into the public right-of-way.



**Figure 18 – Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements**



Improving non-vehicular connectivity will help to promote the compact, pedestrian friendly design of the Village Center as well as encourage customers to park once and convert single-purpose trips into multi-purpose trips.

- e. **Create additional parking opportunities.** While a parking analysis indicated that there is adequate parking to meet the current demand in the Village Center, the perception by many residents and property owners of limited parking is still a real concern.
- i. To combat this perception problem, Carefree should invest in wayfinding signage to clearly identify and direct visitors to existing parking options.
  - ii. Seek opportunities to acquire undeveloped land to preserve future parking options when needed. Consider vacant land at southwest corner of Cave Creek Drive and Carefree Drive and east side of Carefree Drive at Sidewinder Road.
  - iii. As development occurs on Easy Street South, identify and construct overflow parking areas for use by special event vendors and visitors as well as double as an event staging area. Consider vacant land at southwest corner of Bloody Basin Road and Cave Creek Road.

## Strategy 2 – Foster development of a strong retail, residential, entertainment, and service core in the Village Center

Developing a strong relationship to the local economy is a necessary step toward formulating a successful Village Center. However, the current land use and tenant mix of the Carefree Village Center does not meet the needs of residents, future residents and customers in the greater trade area and must change in order to maximize its potential and ability to increase market share and subsequently retail sales.

As noted in the consumer survey, residents and trade area consumers desire a variety of commercial related uses including restaurants, a specialty food store, and a bakery; a better and wider selection of merchandise; and entertainment venues for concerts, culinary festivals, live theater and independent films. Moreover, survey results showed a strong support/demand for residential opportunities in the Village Center.

The following recommendations address how to organize to help existing businesses succeed, attract new business and engage/encourage property owners to envision and work toward a vibrant, unified Village Center.

## Recommendations

- a. **Identify and pursue key anchor or cultural center projects in strategic locations that can be a catalyst for economic change.** In order to further attract new and repeat visitors, Carefree needs to establish anchor destinations that provide reasons for people to visit the Village Center. Attracting the right “anchors” to increase foot traffic was a key theme noted in the ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report which would help support existing establishments and enhance the viability of the Carefree Village. A thriving Village Center sometimes requires uniting public and private interests and resources to accomplish a variety of goals.
- i. Utilize Appendix D – Cultural Facility Evaluation Guidelines, to assist in evaluating, planning, siting, and programming all proposed cultural facilities in the Village Center.
  - ii. Continue to engage with ASU to explore collaboration opportunities. Consider creative alternatives to developing a museum space, like a phased implementation approach or joint use space with other local (Sonoran Arts League), regional (Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum), or national (International Arts & Artists) cultural institutions.
  - iii. Continue to gauge the interest of a performing arts group to determine its short term capital cost and long term operational viability. Outline supporting/community oriented uses for the facility that can be programmed during “dark” times to ensure consistent foot traffic. This could include a café, theater summer camp, shared community event space, or flexibility to show movie screenings. Identify a potential location(s) within the Village Center that is compatible with the adjacent land uses.



**Case Study – Santa Fe, NM:** Iconic downtowns, such as Santa Fe’s, utilize multiple anchor destinations (i.e. cathedrals, museums, performing arts venues, exhibition spaces, lodging and public plazas) to attract new and repeat visitors.

- iv. Evaluate the Town Mall (post office) location and create a vision for a higher and better use of this strategic Village Center parcel.
  - v. Conduct a feasibility study for the siting of a boutique hotel in the Village Center.
  - vi. Based on community input, a demand exists for a small independent movie theater. However, this market segment has been dominated by larger regional megaplexes. An alternative could be to attract a theater that acts as both a restaurant and movie theater or develop a multi-use cultural facility that can also preview movies.
  - vii. Before public review, all discussions regarding key anchor projects should be conducted in a business appropriate environment that allows for open dialogue and fosters collaboration.
  - viii. Ensure a thorough project proforma, business plan and funding strategy is completed for any project utilizing public funds. A clear memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be created that defines the business relationship, responsibilities, and exit strategy of each project.
- b. Help foster the growth of existing Village Center business establishments.** Statistics show that it is far more cost effective to retain an existing business than to attract a new one. Carefree should implement a comprehensive business strengthening strategy focused on business retention/expansion.
- i. Develop a Business Retention and Expansion program (BRE) that hosts business visitation meetings to communicate strongly to businesses that the community is interested in their challenges and in keeping them in the area. It is recommended that the Town of Carefree, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, consider conducting systematic business visitations as one of its priorities for the next 18 months to build a stronger network among the business community and help link businesses with resources and technical assistance.
  - ii. The Carefree/Cave Creek Chamber of Commerce has a number of programs targeted at supporting small business education. Using the information gathered through the business visitations, expand programs tailored to meet the needs of the Center's business owners as indicated as well as consider focused assistance in the areas of hospitality training, customer service, displays/presentation, social media, and e-marketing.
- iii. Explore the feasibility of creating a special assessment district, like a Business Improvement District (BID), within the Village Center. Services that BID's can provide include marketing and promotion, planning, recruitment and retention, parking and enhanced security services, to mention a few. In the early stages of plan implementation, it is not advisable to pursue the BID option, because assessments may confer an economic disadvantage on business owners until the inherent value of the area is built up.
  - iv. Work with developers and building owners to cluster businesses together with similar customer bases to boost sales. By grouping together a mix of businesses that can benefit from each other's sales, customers, and market, the Village Center could create a stronger identity causing it to stand out in customers' minds amongst the various shopping choices.
  - v. Help businesses compete locally as well as regionally. (Cross reference with "Strategy 4 – Market and Promote the Village Center")
- c. Revitalize existing commercial areas/buildings through redevelopment, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse.** Improvements to revitalize existing commercial space has been widely used in other markets to help upgrade an area's image, allow modern retailing to exist in an aged downtown environment, and or make it more convenient for shoppers. There are buildings in the Village Center that have some historic significance to the history of Carefree, but are not performing at the level that they used to. These buildings do not meet retailers' standard models in terms of square footage, frontage and other assorted requirements.
- i. Review and assess opportunity sites to identify priorities for redevelopment. Priority redevelopment properties include: Los Portales, the Warren Building, Spanish Village, the Town Mall, and the Sterling Bank building.
  - ii. Collect data on each opportunity site and work to fill vacancies with appropriate reuse and/or rehabilitation concepts. Consider redeveloping underutilized buildings as incubator spaces for small start-up or niche businesses (i.e. indoor food market, maker studio and art incubator, home and hearth retail, etc.). Investigate alternative reuse possibilities, such as a boutique hotel, culinary school, or housing. Resident feedback also strongly supported the development of an independent movie theater.

*Figure 19 – Adaptive Reuse Concept (Los Portales)*



Existing Conditions: The charming character and design of the Los Portales building makes it a great asset to the Village Center. Unfortunately, it largely sits vacant because most of the interior spaces do not meet today's retailers' standard model in terms of square footage, frontage and other requirements.



Conceptual Rendering: Repurposing the building as an incubator space for small start-up culinary or niche artist businesses is one concept that could be implemented to capitalize on the buildings existing design as well as offer a more flexible retail space in the Village Center.

- iii. To help facilitate reuse concepts, explore opportunities to team with experienced developers who can help curate vendors, merchants, or operators.



**Case Study – Anaheim Packing House:** The City of Anaheim repurposed a historic packing plant into a food hall and teamed with LAB Holding to help curate the 28 gourmet food and beverage vendors. *(Source: [www.planetizen.com](http://www.planetizen.com))*

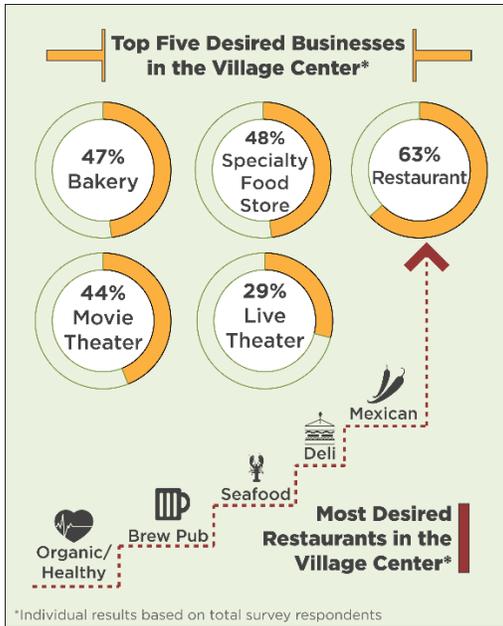
- iv. Work with building owners and developers to create larger retail floor plates in new developments and renovations.
- v. Consider providing a redevelopment incentive for qualified projects by reimbursing a percentage of the construction sales tax, which could help the property owner defray some of their expenses making redevelopment financially feasible.
- vi. Develop an Infill Incentive District that would allow expedited processing of plans, waiver of permit fees, and relief from development standards to encourage redevelopment and construction of new spaces. Additionally, the property owner could consider joint venturing with a development company who could structure a financial arrangement that would mitigate the financial impact of the lost revenue stream.
- vii. Allow pop up retail to take place to; take advantage of underutilized space, expose small entrepreneurial talent, build brand awareness, and drive additional foot traffic to the area. Identify empty space in the Village Center that can be programed during peak seasons. Meet with the property owner(s) to talk about the concept and obtain their participation. Prepare a list of potential business establishments that you

would like to include and issue an invitation. Consider soliciting retail prospects from the list of exhibitors at the various Town festivals, and/or research and identify desirable pop up retail in other commercial venues in the Valley.



**Case Study – Grand Rapids, MI:** The City of Grand Rapids coordinated with Middle West a retail co-op to develop a two-day pop up retail store in their downtown that featured products only made in Michigan. *(Source: [www.mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com))*

- d. **Develop a recruitment campaign targeting specific restaurant and retail business establishments.** One of the key ingredients of a successful downtown is providing a retail mix that meets the needs of the desired consumer base. The market demand analysis shows that sales leakage is taking place in nearly every major category in Carefree, which is a clear indicator that consumer needs are largely not being met. This also suggests there is solid potential for expanding the existing commercial base. However, to adequately support a larger commercial base (particularly restaurants), Carefree will need to broaden its appeal and embrace the larger trade area.
  - i. Capture a larger share of regional spending and investment by promoting businesses that cater to the demographic and lifestyle trends of the larger trade area such as childless households, families and local workers.
  - ii. Utilize the findings of the gap analysis and community survey to create a list of potential retail and restaurant prospects to pursue. Focus on local chains or independently owned and operated “fine casual” restaurants, boutiques, specialty stores and services. Assess each retailer’s site location needs including space requirements, median household income, parking, etc. Determine potential Village Center locations for each retailer on the list.



- iii. Develop marketing materials that showcase the vision for the Carefree Village Center, its location, area amenities, demographics and potential commercial demand. These materials should be available on the Town's web site and in hard copy format.
  - iv. On an ongoing basis, work with developers, and building owners to collect all information on vacant retail space within the Village Center, including floor plans, photos, terms, timeframes, and contact information.
  - v. Target commercial real estate brokers and developers who specialize in retail and present information to begin to educate them on business opportunities in the Carefree Village Center.
  - vi. Identify local/regional prospects by conducting site visits to similar neighborhoods or downtowns and make the business call directly from the Town.
  - vii. Collaborate with existing building owners in the Village Center on the Master Plan Vision and share the findings of the gap analysis. Encourage them to develop and agree on a leasing plan and collaborate on defining appropriate high-quality tenants that match the vision and interests of Carefree residents and the Market Trade Area.
  - viii. Assign Town staff person to develop and maintain a prospect database that keeps track of calls and conversation details.
- e. Establish the Village Center as the next great neighborhood.** People are drawn to the energy of living downtown and they have a powerful multiplier effect on an areas economy by providing businesses with a “built-in” customer base. A component currently missing in the Carefree Village Center is housing, at a density high enough to achieve a critical mass, which would bringing people to the area and help to activate the street during daytime and evening periods. The results of the consumer survey show that people want to live in the Carefree Village Center, and are primarily interested in condo ownership.
- i. Build a captive audience that can help support businesses during day and evening hours by adding housing to the mix of uses in the Village Center.
  - ii. Continue to work with property owners to create additional high density living options through new construction and work with existing building owners to develop upper story renovations.
  - iii. Utilize the findings of the market analysis which shows the mix of housing and price points that are desirable.
  - iv. Increase permitted building height limits for residential uses to encourage higher density development.
  - v. Plan for adjacent amenities that are desirable to residential development such as grassy areas or walking paths.
- f. Consider Town acquisition of available properties to directly guide/seed redevelopment efforts.** Investing directly in a project that contributes to achieving a community's vision for their downtown is a common approach used by cities to get a revitalization process off the ground and to build the critical momentum needed to spur a long-term cycle of private development and investment.
- i. Identify opportunities where the Town can acquire/assemble property to directly create development opportunities that are consistent with the Master Plan Vision.
  - ii. Consider developing a Municipal Property Corporation to assist in implementing this recommendation where appropriate.
  - iii. Utilize a formal request for proposal process and a public/private partnership to identify potential

development partners that can help to achieve the desired end use for these opportunity sites.

**g. Modify existing land use policies/development standards.** Setting a clear vision for preferred enhancements in the Village Center is important to the revitalization effort, but Carefree must also be open to doing what it takes to help create the right environment for desired private sector development and investment.

- i. Create a special Village Center zoning district and/or utilize a form based code approach that establishes development standards that carry forward the Vision for the Village Center. Assist property owners by facilitating rezoning efforts to this new zoning district.
- ii. Require ground-level activity generating, retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses and avoid placing ground-level, street facing office uses.
- iii. Improve development standards including; requiring additional right-of-way to allow placement of sidewalks within public realm, reduce front setback from 10-feet to 0-feet, increase “by right” height limits for mixed use residential projects, and enhance shared-use parking guidelines.
- iv. Increase and promote sidewalk cafes and outdoor dining. Create an easier outdoor dining permit process and encourage developers designing new space or renovating existing locations to include an area for outdoor dining.
- v. Further refine the Village Center design guidelines to promote attractive, high quality architecture and public spaces.

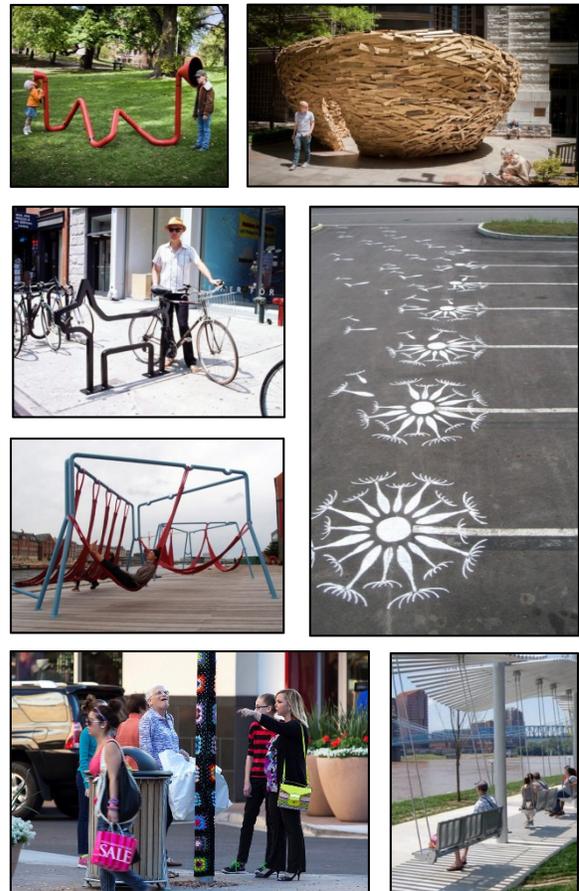
**Strategy 3 – Enhance the Village Center experience**

While diversifying the types of land uses within the Village Center will foster a distinct community destination, urban design principles need to be applied to achieve a unified and “exciting” urban atmosphere. Historically Carefree was a destination within the region and functioned as a popular day trip for shopping and culture. A key strategy of this plan is to renew the reputation as a focal point in the region by fostering lively street activity for all to enjoy. To achieve this, the Village Center should have attractive design elements, great open spaces, vibrant streetscapes, public art, programming of activities and attractive architecture.

This section outlines recommended design elements and encourages attention to detail. In order for the Village Center to function as both a local and regional destination, it should not be conceptualized as a place for “cookie-cutter” development; rather, one that is authentic, exceptional, and unique.

**Recommendations**

- a. Foster characteristics that set the Village Center apart from other places in the Valley.** The legacy of Carefree and the Village Center itself should be highlighted wherever possible. This is not to suggest that projects should replicate the past or past styles, rather that the area should highlight the past through interpretive means that are unique, distinguishable, and memorable.
- i. Be audacious, move away from “sameness” and exploit Carefree’s historic qualities, like the whimsical street names, to develop a character that is unique to Carefree.
  - ii. Utilize common public elements such as seating, shade canopies, bike racks, trash cans and parking areas as opportunities to promote this unique “Carefree” atmosphere.



**b. Enhance the Village Center’s prominence through iconic imagery.** Public art provides an opportunity to make a place exceptional, to celebrate local identity, to stimulate social interaction, and to honor heritage. Carefree has had a successful history in celebrating arts and culture and strong support for building upon this identity was provided by residents during the public involvement process.

- i. Build on the historic whimsical character of Carefree and the original design qualities of the Sundial to provide interesting experiences through public art.
- ii. Introduce new works of iconic public art that make an impact at critical nodes in the Village Center (i.e. Wampus Way, Carefree Drive and Ho Hum Road). Allow these nodes or focal points to act as a “Trail of Interest” that draws the visitor into and through the Village Center.
- iii. Establish criteria related to the size, type and quality of the public art. “Plop art”—art that is put down simply to fulfill a requirement with no relation to context—should be avoided.
- iv. Consider interactive art that incorporates the viewer, artistic lighting, sustainable art, “SmartArt” that takes advantage of smartphone technology and provides self-guided tours, or transitory art that is situated on a temporary basis.
- v. Create a Public Art Program to help develop and administer the effort, and explore utilizing crowdfunding to launch the campaign or create an open design competition to increase exposure.



Public art should not only be utilized to create an identity that is unique to Carefree, but should be interactive and utilize elements such as light, wind, solar energy, and “smart” technology to incorporate the viewer.



**Case Study – Mankato, MN:** The City placed 25 sculptures in their City Center by artists from around the world. Each piece was displayed for a full year and visitors were encouraged to vote for their favorite. The winner was purchased by the City for permanent display. (Source: City Art Mankato)

**Figure 20 – Trail of Interest**



Place iconic public art pieces at key decision points to establish a “Trail of Interest” that draws visitors in and guides them through the Village Center.



**Case Study – Bakersfield, CA:** Bakersfield Downtown Business Development Corporation launched a crowdfunding website to gain funds to launch phase 1 of their downtown plan. (Source: [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com))

**c. Create incentives for commercial building and site improvements.** A community's overall image is key to its success in the competitive marketplace. Consequently, improving the physical aspects of the Village Center buildings, facades and storefronts must be a priority.

- i. Initiate an incentive grant program (i.e. façade improvement program) to spur exterior building improvements. Identify and pursue funding that allows various levels of financial assistance to support simple paint and fix-it projects to more extensive rehabilitations of buildings or storefronts.
- ii. Offer architectural assistance by hiring an on-call architect to design building façade or other cosmetic improvements.
- iii. Create a volunteer "makeover" program. As part of "Spruce Up the Village Center" campaign, develop a competitive program that mobilizes volunteers to make a major difference in the appearance of one property in a day (plus prep time) through repairs, painting, and installation of landscaping.
- iv. Implement a monthly or quarterly "Best Looking Business Façade" award. Showcase the business at a Town Council meeting, feature it in COINS and award the business owner and/or property owner with a "dinner on the Town" for their efforts.

**d. Work with businesses to improve their physical presentation as well as enhance the presentation of empty storefronts.** In tandem with access to the Village Center; storefronts, displays, signage and overall exterior presentation of businesses contribute to a visitor's first impression of the Center. Business owners need to continually be attentive to front entrances, window displays and interior conditions to improve the overall image of the Village Center as well as to help "sell" the Village's economic opportunities.

- i. Encourage cleanup and maintenance. Meet one-on-one with property owners to encourage them to remove old signs, products and junk from vacant buildings and especially from vacant display windows. Create a list of local companies or resources to assist with window cleaning, awning repair, removal of junk or debris, and painting.

- ii. Create a program for displays in vacant storefronts. Create "phantom galleries" to display art, small museum exhibits, merchandise from other Village Center businesses, promote community events or link visitors to local amenities like jeep tours and boat trips on Bartlett Lake.
- iii. Develop and distribute a 12-month window display calendar and guide. Create a calendar to inspire creative window displays. Each month the calendar should suggest themes or ideas. Develop ideas that tie into the season, Village Center Festivals, or other local and civic promotions. Include tips on how to build and maintain exciting window displays, and provide a list of resources available for such items as window cleaners, sources for materials and displays, books or publications. Distribute the guide to all Village Center businesses, including service and professional businesses.
- iv. Consider holding a window display contest. Provide an additional incentive by profiling contest winners in COINS and awarding gift certificates.



**Case Study – Sedona, AZ:** Window display within the Tlaquepaque Arts & Crafts Village

- v. Offer visual merchandising assistance. Working with ASU, SCORE.org and/or the Cave Creek/Carefree Chamber of Commerce, offer one-on-one visual merchandising assistance to help businesses improve their window displays, in-store displays and overall visual presentation of their business. Consider involving an intern from ASU to work individually with businesses to teach them how to build displays.

**e. Encourage exploration by improving wayfinding and signage.** Signage is placed to inform and direct the unfamiliar visitor, so care should be given to develop signs that respect the natural area as

residents identified they preferred, but ultimately must stand out to help guide the desired visitor.

- i. Develop a comprehensive sign package that carries a common design theme through the Village Center.
- ii. Relocate and enhance the visibility of existing signage along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road. Signage should include vibrant earth tones to avoid blending into the background; signs should be placed on the right shoulder of the road; and information should be limited to primary activities and destinations rather than specific businesses.
- iii. Design and place appropriately scaled new signage that directs visitors traveling in vehicles at high speeds (trailblazer signs), low speeds (identification signs), as well as on foot (pedestrian signs/kiosks).

**Figure 21 – Signage Improvements**



Existing Conditions: Existing signage along the periphery of the Village Center is attractive, but blends into the surrounding landscape and does not give visitors proper advance notification.



Conceptual Rendering: Adding brighter earth tones to existing signs as well as relocating them in advance of desired turning movements will help to better guide visitors into the Village Center.

- iv. Place a Village Center directory and location map kiosk in the Desert Gardens to promote visitors to explore beyond Easy Street and discover all destinations in the Village Center.

**f. Activate the Desert Gardens during non-event periods.**

The Desert Gardens are a great and unique asset for special events, but they offer an inherent value to the Village Center that extends well beyond these limited periods. The Desert Gardens qualities should be embraced outside of special events to maximize use of this community asset.

- i. Cater to the needs of Carefree residents, the larger trade area, and the out of state visitor by developing multi-generational public amenities that attract retirees, families, singles and tourists.
- ii. Introduce retail kiosks, moveable seating, activity fountain/splash pad, fireplace, informal street entertainment, and/or a snack vendor for al fresco dining to encourage visitors to linger and extend their stay in the Desert Garden.
- iii. Cluster complimentary elements to create synergy (place a coffee cart, next to outdoor seating, that is next to a fireplace).
- iv. Explore areas for adding pockets of grass to soften the public spaces, provide additional green to the Center, and offer alternative gathering spaces.

**g. Improve sightlines through the Village Center.**

The Desert Gardens must function as a component of the overall pedestrian circulation network within the Village Center. This includes promoting connections between the buildings and businesses that face it by tying the individual blocks together (i.e. connecting Easy Street Shops with Town Mall Shops).

- i. Strategically trim/thin vegetation in the Desert Garden to create specific view corridors that allow visitors to physically see alternative shopping destinations or activities within the Village Center.
- ii. Promote a more desirable double loaded (both sides of the street) retail atmosphere over the existing “single loaded” Easy Street shopping experience.

*Figure 22 – Activating the Desert Gardens*



Existing Conditions: The Desert Gardens is a unique and inviting amenity in the Village Center and hosts several special events. However, during non-event times the Gardens are underutilized and can be a “line of sight” barrier to experiencing other parts of the Village Center.



Conceptual Rendering: Placing complimentary elements within the Desert Gardens such as; a coffee cart, next to moveable seating, next to a fireplace begins to create synergy that encourages visitors to linger and extend their stay in the Village Center. Trimming some of the trees and plantings in the Desert Gardens also will contribute to this synergy by increasing viewsheds, which encourages further exploration by visitors.

## Strategy 4 – Market and Promote the Village Center

The Market Trade Area for Carefree encompasses 148 square miles and includes Cave Creek, and portions of the cities of Phoenix and Scottsdale. The current population of the trade area is 82,150 compared to the Town of Carefree at 3,451. In addition, on a typical workday, there are nearly an equal number of people out commuting to work as in commuting to Carefree for jobs. These workers who come to Carefree, as well as the solid population base in the trade area, represent potential customers the Carefree Village businesses can draw upon. However, a consistent flow of promotions or activities focused on attracting these two markets to the Village Center are limited to almost non-existent. This creates an opportunity for the business community and supporting organizations to explore strategies to pull together, leverage resources and implement a formalized calendar of promotional activities specifically targeted at the local Carefree resident, the families within the market trade area and the day workers within the region.

The following summary provides distinctive recommendations aimed at improving the Carefree Village Center's draw as a destination for tourism. This includes strengthening the Center's existing marketing to attract visitors, building upon the Center's events and promotional calendar, improving the image of the Center's commercial areas and making sure visitors find the experiences they are looking for. Strategies to create a stronger link between local businesses and local customers with focus on the people who live and work in or near Carefree are also included in this section. Guidance on how to involve the community and engage the various organizations in supporting the Village Center Master Plan and making it a reality are provided as well.

### Recommendations

**a. Develop a logo and slogan to strengthen the Village Center's brand.** As the community solidifies their new vision for the Village Center and adopts the Carefree Village Center Master Plan, the community should invest the time and resources in establishing a fresh, new and targeted brand for the Center. A unified visual concept (captured in a logo and label; "The Village Center", "The Shops on Easy Street", etc.) and message (condensed into a slogan or tag line; "Have a Carefree Day", "Experience the Easy Street lifestyle" etc.) should be developed that represents the essence of the Village Center and further supports the commercial area as a special, unique destination on its own within the Town, region and even state.

- i. There are numerous ways that communities can develop a logo/slogan for their downtown area including a formal request for qualifications process, a graphic artists' competition, pro bono work, community surveys, and/or college internships.
- ii. Efforts to get strong support from the Center's business community is imperative so make sure to include their feedback in the process.
- iii. The newly created logo/slogan should be incorporated into as many visual elements as possible including printed marketing materials, advertising, websites, recruitment pieces, banners, kiosks and signage.
- iv. Encourage the Village Center businesses to incorporate the new logo/slogan in their individual advertising as well as be consistent in how they refer to the commercial area as "the Carefree Village Center."

**b. Create a comprehensive Village Center marketing plan.** A downtown's image and ability to attract customers is directly tied to its marketing efforts. Managing a unified, consistent approach to marketing the Village Center's unique qualities can help to establish the desired brand for the Center and can contribute to strengthening consumer confidence in the area, which results in increased commercial activity and investment. Successful shopping centers and malls routinely utilize focused and deliberate marketing plans to distinguish and promote themselves in the marketplace.

- i. Align the data, recommendations, and action steps outlined within the Master Plan with future promotional and marketing strategies.
- ii. Consider creating one, comprehensive, high quality-marketing piece specific to promoting the Village Center, its businesses, venues and events. Incorporate the Village Center logo and slogan as the focal point for the piece.
- iii. Produce a "donut" commercial with a local radio station; for businesses/attractions with websites, explore creating a video commercial for online advertisements.

- iv. Continue to make periodic visits to the local and regional resort/hotel concierges to keep them informed of the various festivals, venues and attractions in Carefree.
- v. Consider hosting a tour of key attractions, restaurants and galleries for the concierges. Put together a “goodie” bag for the attendees and make sure that they go back to their place of work with ample marketing materials about the Carefree in hand.
- vi. Host regular meetings with the businesses, venues and attractions to layout the current advertising campaign being supported, identify how they can leverage the results as well as ideas for future strategies.

**c. Encourage businesses and organizations to tie-in their own advertising efforts with those promoting the Village Center in general.** While utilizing a comprehensive marketing plan is critical to supporting the Village Center’s revitalization efforts, individual businesses must still work to develop/maintain their own consumer base. This reality creates challenges when independent marketing materials are not consistent with the image or quality that the larger Village Center is trying to convey. In contrast, this reality creates opportunities for likeminded or complimentary businesses to collaborate and further strengthen the overall marketing approach for the Village Center.

- i. The Village Center businesses that advertise on a regular basis should collaborate to develop programs with their local advertising media to cluster their advertisement and leverage cooperative opportunities when possible. Once the Village Center logo and tagline is created, include it in all cooperative and cluster advertising as well as including information on upcoming events or activities.
- ii. Working with the local newspaper, prepare quarterly inserts that combine advertising, positive and informational editorial content (including upcoming events), photos, and a listing of all the Center’s businesses. Overruns of this insert can be distributed at the Visitor Center, Town Hall, provided to concierges, etc. Have it available as a PDF on the visitor and Town websites as well.

- iii. Create a Village Center coupon book. The books could offer discounts, 2-for-1 dining opportunities, and service and professional offerings. The books could be distributed at key events in goodie bags, in the event information booth, offered to Carefree Resort and the Boulders to put in rooms and distributed to new residents or explore ways to create a digital coupon book.
- iv. Center businesses should cluster advertising about their businesses in high quality, professionally produced flyers to cross-promote between related businesses and share advertising costs. These flyers should be placed in the advertised businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Carefree and Boulders Resort, Visitor Center, etc.

**d. Enhance web, social media, and e-marketing campaigns.** Simply utilizing nontraditional marketing efforts is not enough to compete in today’s marketplace. When a potential visitor is trying to plan their trip or itinerary to a location, they don’t want to just be able to find relevant web content, they want the web process to be as easy and seamless as possible without having to go to various sites to gather information. Equally important, social media has become one of the most vital, cost-efficient tools in tourism marketing. Effective use of social media has been proven to boost the number and length of visits, as well as visitor satisfaction and number of return visits. Utilizing e-mail marketing has also become a proven method for reconnecting to visitors and “inviting” them back to enjoy the events, activities and venues.

- i. Determine which of the three Carefree based URL’s should be promoted as the “Official On-line Visitor Guide to Carefree, AZ” making it very clear in the consumer’s mind that this is a visitor website. The website should have weekly, content- rich blogs, (which will assist with increasing its search engine optimization), links to the local visitor/tourist based businesses, venues and attractions, and a current calendar of events and promotions.
- ii. The other sites that also contain information relevant to the visitor should cross promote the primary URL as well as link to it accordingly.

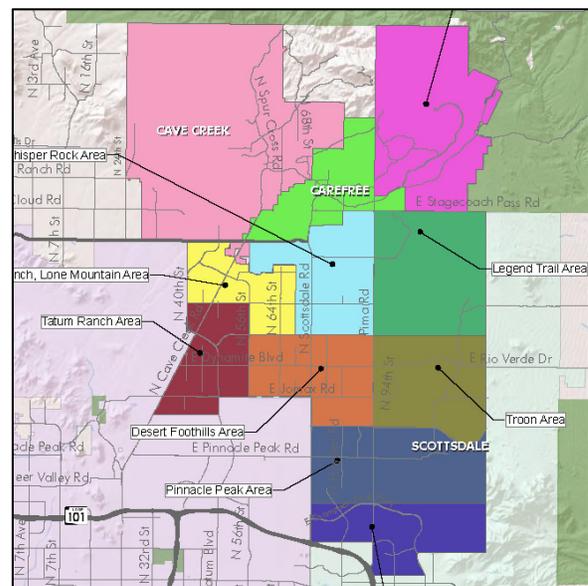
- iii. Explore strategies of how to capture emails during events, through the primary URL portal, and other visitor touch points such as encouraging businesses to have a guest book that asks for comments and email addresses. These databases can then be used for an email marketing campaign.
- iv. The e-marketing campaigns should cross promote other attractions within the region that would also be appealing to visitors such as jeep tours, lake activities, horseback riding, hiking, etc. This helps to begin establishing Carefree as a home base for longer day trips.
- v. Inquire if Carefree Resort and Conference Center and the Boulders would be inclined to share the consumer e-newsletter with their visitor database.
- vi. Visit Carefree’s Facebook campaign has about 1,400 “likes” which is a good start. Attention to aggressively grow the number of individuals that “like” the page should be a priority.
- vii. Explore the value of “boosting” Facebook posts to grow the page’s fan base. To keep people engaged in the Facebook conversation, regular (daily if possible) posts to the Facebook campaign should also be a priority.
- viii. Encourage businesses to use social media. The Chamber of Commerce regularly hosts workshops and seminars on social media. Continue to encourage the Village Center businesses to attend these workshops and engage in social media—especially ratings sites such as Yelp, Foursquare, and TripAdvisor where people may already be posting opinions about their businesses.

**e. Leverage local markets to boost the Center’s Commerce.** The trade area is comprised of many sub-markets or consumer groups that have varied preferences, desired activities, and expendable income levels. By capitalizing on the different needs of the consumer groups in the trade area, businesses can better drive visitors to the Village Center.

- i. Utilize available resources and implement a formalized calendar of ongoing promotions and mini events (like customer appreciation month, “move-in” coupon books, resort room advertisements, restaurant guides, “bounce back promotions”, “Girl’s Night Out” or “Evening on the Town” event’s) specifically targeted at the local Carefree resident, the families within the larger market trade area and the day workers within the region.
- ii. Work with the Chamber to ensure that marketing collateral about the Village Center is always included in relocation packets.
- iii. Develop a “Shop Local” campaign. The majority of businesses located in the Village Center are independently owned, which makes the Center the perfect candidate for capitalizing on the national “shop local” movement. Contact Local First Arizona to come and make a presentation to the local business community on the various ways this organization can support them. <http://www.localfirstaz.com/>



**Case Study – Desert Ridge Marketplace:** During the holiday season Desert Ridge encouraged visitors to take “selfies” in front of their Christmas tree and post them to their Facebook page for a chance to win a Desert Ridge gift card.



The Carefree trade area includes all of Carefree, Cave Creek and Dove Mountain Ranch as well as extends to DC Ranch to the south and Tatum Ranch to the west.

**f. Strategically program and manage the calendar of events.** Special events are important to increasing awareness of and interest in the Village Center. They create a sense of liveliness, build community and provide a safe, inviting atmosphere for visitors to have fun. While they generally do not generate a significant increase in retail sales, they are critically important in creating a positive feeling towards the Village Center. Yet resident and stakeholder input have indicated the current slate of special events in Carefree has lost some of these qualities.

- i. Work to strategically reprogram the existing arts and cultural events to keep key festivals fresh and unique, meeting the expectations of the attendee and building upon the strong arts and cultural brand.
- ii. Compliment the art and culture calendar of events by developing events or promotions that are not primarily art-focused activities. Ideas shared by residents and stakeholders included Farm-To-Table event (leveraging the healthy eating movement), road cycling race, Wellness and Health Fair, “Maker Faire” (<http://makerfaire.com/>), Chili or BBQ Cook off, or a Taste of Carefree.
- iii. Fully leverage the Desert Gardens by continuing to regularly host music performances and movie nights along with other events such as a Spring Garden Festival, Dinner in the Garden, Art in the Garden, Shakespeare in the Garden, etc.
- iv. Carefree should strive to add events or promotions during the months of May through September to balance the current Calendar of Events thus generating a more consistent flow of consumers to the Village for businesses to draw upon.
- v. Due to the summer heat, consider evening events like a Light Festival, Car Show or a Culinary & Wine Stroll. The summer events do not need to be long, drawn out three-day festivals but shorter, indoor or outdoor promotions.



**Case Study – Rome, Italy:** The “whatami” exhibit is an elegant, yet fun, temporary landscape, art, and light installation situated within the piazza of the MAXXI museum. (Source: [www.designboom.com](http://www.designboom.com))



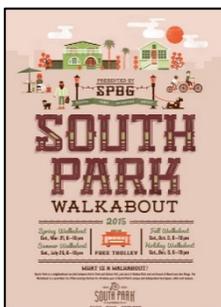
**Case Study – Houston, TX:** The “Bubbles” glowing ornament seasonal art installation was placed in Discovery Green, a civic park developed through a public-private partnership in downtown Houston. (Source: [www.discovergreen.com](http://www.discovergreen.com))

- vi. The Town should encourage the event organizations to provide some type of communication piece that can be given to every business in the Village informing them of days and times of the event, any street closures or parking restrictions and opportunities for participation, sponsorship and/or advertising.
- vii. Due to the fact that there are a number of non-profit organizations as well as professional promoters who wish to utilize the Village Center for their events, it is imperative that the Town develops strong and consistent guidelines to ensure that EVERY event meets the overall standard and quality the community demands.
- viii. Consider having exist surveys from attendees to gather feedback on the event.
- ix. Periodically survey the businesses to capture input on how they leveraged the event to drive customers into their establishments.

**g. Continue to work towards all businesses being open year round and consider implementing an “Open All Year Round” campaign to support the goal.** 70% of

all consumer spending (both locals and visitors) takes place after 6:00 pm). If the Village Center is truly going to achieve its vision, there must be a concentrated effort focused at getting the majority of retail, restaurants, and art galleries to be open year round as well as expand the hours that they are open (Saturday, Sunday and later in the evening). As in many traditional commercial business districts that are comprised of independently owned businesses, their biggest weakness is not being open when the consumer or visitor is available or wanting to come down to shop, stroll and visit. The Village Center must be open to capture the “working” resident as well as the day or weekend visitor who might drive up to Carefree to explore the area or attend an event.

- i. One strategy that other communities have implemented to support making the shift toward opening both year round and/or seven days a week is hosting a specific “Open” campaign targeted at driving business to a particular time of the year, day of the week and/or evening hours.
- ii. Have businesses commit to being open during specific summer or special evening hours. Have businesses sign an agreement that they will make the commitment and encourage them to promote it within their own advertising and marketing venues. Plan several “mini” events specifically during these hours such as an evening “walkabout” with refreshments offered at participating businesses or “hot days of summer” promotion. As a group, promote that the Village Center is open during these hours and list participating businesses through a variety of promotional venues such as a display ad in the local media, press releases, websites, flyers, posts on bulletin boards, direct mail, table tents in restaurants, and inserts in visitor packets.



**Case Study – San Diego, AZ:**

The South Park neighborhood in San Diego hosts several walkabouts throughout the year to showcase businesses within the district. The event includes maps, complimentary treats, live entertainment and special promotions. (Source: [www.southparkscene.com](http://www.southparkscene.com))

- iii. Work with, educate, and encourage property owners to incorporate provisions in their lease agreements that promote consistent operating hours and days.

**h. Support the Visitor Center on Easy Street (operated by the Chamber) as the primary visitor information outlet.** When visitors or tourists finally arrive at their

desired location they may still need additional information, brochures or a personal welcome to the area. The Visitor Center that is conveniently located on Easy Street (and operated by the Chamber of Commerce) is designed to function as a typical “visitor center” that visitors can relate too. The center includes ample marketing collateral about the various events, attractions and activities in the town and region, volunteers who meet, greet and answer visitor questions, and artifacts and gift items related to the area.

- i. During the peak season, the Visitor Center should strive to be open on the weekends or consideration should be given to developing a Village Center ambassadors program where volunteers walk the Center and assist visitors as needed.
- ii. The Town Hall can continue to have collateral on hand and answer questions from visitors if needed but efforts should be made to ultimately direct individuals to the Visitor Center on Easy Street.
- iii. Encourage everyone located in the Village Center to cross promote the Chamber’s visitor center as the area’s official Carefree’s Visitor Center on Easy Street.

## Strategy 5 – Develop a strong organizational structure

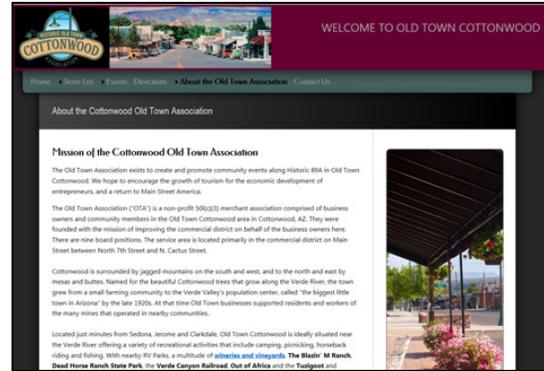
At present, like most communities, there is no one entity or organization that is solely responsible for all aspects of maintaining, promoting, and managing the Village Center. As the Town moves forward in implementing the Village Center Master Plan, there will be ample opportunities for all sectors of the community to be involved in supporting each of the various plan strategies. Strengthening relationships and communication among the various organizations will need to be a priority as well as supporting a structure that engages the business and property owners in the process. In order to be competitive in the marketplace the Town must have a framework that does not rely on one entity, but includes

all of the community with each understanding their function, role and mission.

The recommendations outlined for this strategy provide the necessary focus to bring all downtown organizations and interests together to achieve common goals for the revitalization of the Village Center.

## Recommendations

- a. **Build and sustain a strong downtown network and organizational structure.** To maintain a focus on the Carefree Village Center, develop a strong organizational structure that represents both the private and public sectors. There are many options for organizing the effort, but the approach must reflect the character and resources of the community and have the long-term capacity to properly manage the Center and engage all the various stakeholders and partners. The goal of the organizational framework should involve as many components of the community as possible and not rely on just one entity to single-handedly keep the commercial area “vitalized”. To create a commercial district that is competitive in all aspects, it must have dedicated resources, a strong organizational structure, and dedicated staff to focus just on the Village Center area.
  - i. Facilitate a meeting with the organizations who have a key role in implementing the Village Center Master Plan to discuss each of their function or mission, identify the types of programs or activities they currently support and outline areas of synergy, collaboration and/or overlap. Use this meeting as the base for forming a Carefree Village Center alliance or collaborative that meets quarterly. Encourage members of this collaborative to share information about their current and upcoming activities. Provide opportunities for members to form task groups or committees and work on projects together (such as marketing advisory committee, business development task force, and beautification and aesthetics team.)
  - ii. Support the formation of a Village Center merchant group. In the past there was a grassroots merchant group formed that helped with facilitating cooperative advertising opportunities and promotions for the Village Center. Activate this group again with the focus of carrying the common voice for the Center’s businesses forward and participating in the collaborative meetings.



**Case Study – Cottonwood, AZ:** The Cottonwood Old Town Association evolved from an ineffective organization into a cohesive 501(c)(3) merchant association. Their recent efforts have assisted in obtaining a grant from the Arizona Office of Tourism for three billboard advertisements and they also host the annual Walking on Main and Chocolate Walk events. (Source: [www.oldtown.org](http://www.oldtown.org))

- iii. Continue to expand the community’s knowledge of commercial district development and management. Members of the Carefree Village Center alliance or collaborative, other stakeholders, and supporting agencies should continue to attend conferences and other educational opportunities including field trips to other successful communities.
- iv. Explore the Main Street Four Point Approach® as a possible structure to strengthen the public/private partnerships and help carry forward the key strategies outlined in the Master Plan. The Main Street Four-Point Approach® developed in the early 70’s has been one of the most successful and proven economic development tools to assist traditional commercial districts and downtowns with reaching its full potential both economically and as a community-gathering place. A functioning Main Street program can be viewed as a grassroots business retention program that focuses on helping businesses understand how to stay competitive (economic restructuring), promoting the area as a destination to attract consumers (promotion), keeping the downtown looking attractive (design) and maintaining communication and advocacy on behalf of the businesses and property owners (organization).

**b. Maintain the Marketing and Communication Director position.**

Continue to uphold the Marketing and Communication Director position to help form and work with the Center's merchant group; interface with event promoters to ensure success between all parities; work with businesses to implement specific promotions and initiatives, and assist in bridging any communication gaps between the Town and the Center property and business owners.

- i. Conduct outreach to maintain engagement of the property owners in the Village Center improvement efforts. It will be critical to the overall success of the Village Center to gain the support of various Center property owners and get their buy-in for the overall vision.
- ii. Similar to the business visitation program described previously, initiate a separate outreach program focused on property owners, which will help connect them to resources to improve their properties and participate in efforts to grow and recruit businesses.
- iii. Maintain an accurate database of all Center property owners. Use the database to mail (or email) business newsletters and invitations to upcoming community meetings, and keep property owners informed on what is happening in downtown. Maintain mailing addresses of out-of-town property owners and management companies and make sure they are included in mailings.
- iv. Create and distribute a property owner "news flash." Consider periodically (about twice a year) publishing a one-page downtown property owner "news flash" that covers specific issues and needs related to downtown properties. This could include a current listing of vacancies, properties that were recently leased, new programs or incentives for owners, educational

pieces on keeping properties clean and pristine, and upcoming meetings.

- v. Host a downtown property owner brown bag lunch. Informal brown bag lunches should be held on a quarterly basis and be targeted to gather feedback from property owners regarding their current needs or issues concerning leasing,

**c. Maintain consistent communication regarding the Carefree Village Center Master Plan.**

As Carefree begins to implement the recommendations outlined in the Master Plan, a consistent communication effort will be key to keep stakeholders, partners and the community well informed.

- i. Dedicate a regular section in COINS to promote the Village Center Master Plan. Identify new projects or programs, new businesses, property improvements, incentives or trainings available, educational articles, meetings, and information about how to get involved. Keep the Master Plan "alive" and the community engaged.
- ii. Hold regular community town hall events. Host bi-annual, structured community town hall events to disseminate information about projects and successes related to the Village Center and provide opportunities for input. Send invitations to stakeholders and promote these events to the general public. Include ways to engage passionate individuals such as asking them to volunteer on a committee or support an activity.

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# Implementation

The Master Plan for Action outlines the direction for the Village Center over the next 10 to 15 years. While the plan contains multiple strategies to pursue, each recommendation requires a different set of partners, level of effort, and funding sources; which impacts their timeline for implementation.

## Implementation Guide

To assure the momentum from planning to implementation is clearly directed and not delayed, the following matrix is presented to detail the timeframe, responsibility and partners, and priority actions for each recommendation.

- The matrix is organized according to the five Village Center **Strategies** that were outlined in the previous Chapter of this master plan.
- Individual **Recommendations** associated with each Strategy are then listed and identified as a short (0-2 years), mid (2-5), or long (5+) term effort.
- Within each short term recommendation, **priority actions** are also identified, which represent those specific actions steps that should be undertaken immediately to take advantage of current conditions and/or effectively jump-start the implementation process.

This guide is intended to provide a road map to success and enables stakeholders to also keep track of the community’s progress in implementing the plan’s strategies. However, while this implementation plan provides clear and specific direction to initiate change in the Village Center; project timelines, key players, and priority actions may need to be modified over time as market demands change, behavioral patterns shift, and momentum builds around the Village Center itself.

Ultimately this implementation plan exemplifies that work must be done on the ground every day to ensure that each master plan strategy is met and tangible change occurs. Village Center stakeholders will need to work together to continue to build public and private support for the Master Plan and to ensure that every project is implemented to its maximum extent.

## Implementation Matrix

Strategy	Recommendation	Key Players		Priority Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Long Term (5+ Years)
		Lead Entity	Partners		Implementation Phase		
					On-Going Implementation		
Strategy 1 Improve the Village Center's Visibility and Access	Celebrate the points of arrival into the Village Center to counteract the inward facing design.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team; Business owners; Property owners; local organizations	Designate primary entrances into the Village Center along Tom Darlington Dr and Cave Creek Rd and place gateway features.			
	Decrease number of entry drives along Tom Darlington Drive and Cave Creek Road.	Town of Carefree	Business owners; Property owners				
	Establish a hierarchy of street typologies.	Town of Carefree	Business owners; Property owners; Management Companies				

Strategy	Recommendation	Key Players		Priority Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Long Term (5+ Years)
		Lead Entity	Partners		Implementation Phase		
					On-Going Implementation		
	Build-upon the Village Center's pedestrian and bicycle friendly design.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team; Business owners; Property owners; local Resorts; Organizations				
	Create additional parking opportunities.	Town of Carefree	Business owners; Property owners;	Identify and acquire properties for preservation of future parking alternatives			
<b>Strategy 2</b> Foster development of a strong retail, residential, entertainment, and service core in the Village Center	Identify and pursue key anchor projects in strategic locations that can be a catalyst for economic change.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber;	Continue to collaborate with potential anchor/cultural partners, including ASU, Performing Arts, Hotels or others			
	Help foster the growth of existing Village Center business establishments.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber; US Small Business Administration – Development Centers	Conduct business visitations of all Village businesses and rank highest needs accordingly			
	Revitalize existing commercial areas/buildings through redevelopment, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber; US Small Business Administration – Development Centers	Identify empty space in the Village Center that can be programed for pop up retail during peak seasons; meet with the property owner(s)			
	Develop a recruitment campaign targeting specific restaurant and retail business establishments.	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee; Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber	Create a list of potential prospects to pursue; develop marketing material; meet with local real estate brokers to review			
	Establish the Village Center as the next great neighborhood.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property managers				
	Consider purchasing available properties to directly guide/seed redevelopment efforts.	Town of Carefree	Property owners				
	Modify existing land use policies.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property managers	Amend zoning ordinance and design guidelines to promote Master Plan Vision			

Strategy	Recommendation	Key Players		Priority Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Long Term (5+ Years)
		Lead Entity	Partners		Implementation Phase		
					On-Going Implementation		
<b>Strategy 3</b> Enhance the Village Center Experience	Foster characteristics that set the Village Center apart from other places in the Valley.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team	Be audacious, move away from "sameness" and focus on the whimsical character of Carefree's history			
	Enhance the Village Center's prominence through iconic imagery.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber; Sonoran Arts League	Research the feasibility of creating public art program; review other cities programs on how art is funded and how artists are selected			
	Create incentives for commercial building and site improvements.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber	Launch a volunteer "façade makeover" demonstration project		Formal Incentive program	
	Work with businesses to improve their physical presentation as well as enhance the presentation of empty storefronts.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team; Business owners; Property owners; Property Management Companies; Chamber	Develop and distribute a 12-month window display calendar and guide; Hold a Visual Merchandising Workshop to kick off the Window Display Calendar initiative			
	Encourage exploration by improving wayfinding and signage.	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee; Business Development Task Force	Develop a sign package; repurpose and relocate existing signage to better guide unfamiliar visitors to the Village Center; place a directory kiosk in Desert Garden to direct visitors to Village shops off Easy Street			
	Activate the Desert Gardens during non-event periods.	Town of Carefree	Business Development Task Force	Explore introducing coffee cart (in season) or ice cream kiosk (off season) with seating during weekend periods to energize gardens			
	Improve sightlines through the Village Center.	Town of Carefree	Beautification and Aesthetics Team	Strategically trim/thin vegetation in Desert Gardens to maintain shade and promote key view corridors			
<b>Strategy 4</b> Market and Promote the Village Center	Develop a logo and slogan to strengthen the Village Center's brand.	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee (see Strategy5)	Select a graphic artist or initiate a competition to develop a Village Center logo/slogan			

Strategy	Recommendation	Key Players		Priority Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Long Term (5+ Years)
		Lead Entity	Partners		Implementation Phase		
					On-Going Implementation		
	Create a comprehensive Village Center marketing plan	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee (see Strategy5)	Draft a Marketing Plan identifying key markets and the types of promotional and advertising tactics to reach them. Present the plan to the businesses, supporting organizations and venues for input			
	Encourage businesses and organization to coordinate the advertising efforts	Town of Carefree	Village Center businesses and local organizations	Host a meeting to discuss where, what and how businesses/organizations are advertising and are there opportunities to collaborate			
	Enhance web, social media, and e-marketing campaigns	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee (see Strategy5)	Establish which URL will be used for the primary visitor website, draft recommendations of how to improve engagement and "likes" on facebook page, draft strategies of how to capture emails during events			
	Leverage local markets to boost the Center's Commerce	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee; businesses	Hold a meeting with businesses to identify one initial or a series of promotions to reach consumers. Meet with Local First Arizona			
	Strategically program and manage the calendar of events	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee; Promoters of events; businesses;	Evaluate current calendar of events and draft new recommendations. Look for "low hanging fruit" (such as seasonal events, continue movies in the Pavilion)		Phase in new events	
	Continue to work towards all businesses being open year round	Town of Carefree	Village Marketing Advisory Committee; Businesses	Launch some type of "open one night a week during the summer (i.e. After the Sun Sets)" promotion			
	Support the Visitor Center on Easy Street as the primary visitor information outlet.	Chamber	Town of Carefree; Village Marketing Advisory Committee	Strive to have the Visitor Center open on the weekends during high season			
<b>Strategy 5</b> Develop a Strong Organizational Structure	Build and sustain a strong downtown network and organizational structure.	Town of Carefree	Business owners; property owners; organizations; Chamber; Promoters; citizens	Form a Village Center Alliance or Collaborative; within Alliance create task groups or teams (such as Marketing Advisory Committee; Business Development Task Force; Beautification and Aesthetics Team) to assist with implementation of the Village Master Plan			

Strategy	Recommendation	Key Players		Priority Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Long Term (5+ Years)
		Lead Entity	Partners		Implementation Phase		
					On-Going Implementation		
	Maintain the Marketing and Communication Director Position	Town of Carefree		Continue to maintain a staff point person that can focus on implementing the specific recommendations of this plan and assist in communication between the Town and the Center property/business owners.			
	Maintain consistent communication regarding the Carefree Village Center Master Plan.	Town of Carefree	Leaders of each committee or task force or team	Hold a meeting with the property owners and management companies to discuss Master Plan recommendations and gather feedback of what is important to them; Implement a Village Center Update in COINS			

## Funding

Many of the action items outlined within this Master Plan can be implemented administratively or on a volunteer basis with minimal effort. However, other recommended action items will require financial assistance.

Carefree cannot provide this financial assistance with public funds alone. Ultimately, the implementation of the Village Center Master Plan will depend upon the Town’s ability to access alternative sources to fund public improvements as well as develop programs to incentivize direct private development.

Building off of the various funding sources presented within the **Master Plan for Action** chapter, Carefree should evaluate and consider the following list of assorted funding sources and/or mechanisms to support the specific action items recommended in this plan. It is important to keep in mind that many projects—especially physical ones—will often require unique funding strategies that creatively combine a multitude of these sources to ultimately finance each effort.

## Funding Sources and Mechanisms

- **Public Bonding such as:** General Obligation Bond or Revenue Bond
- **Special Taxing District such as:** Business Improvement District, Municipal Improvement

District, Special Assessment District, Community Facilities District, etc.

- **Infill Incentive District**
- **Municipal Property Corporation**
- **Voluntary Agreements such as:** Development Agreements, Public-Private Partnerships, Payback Agreements, etc.
- **Loans such as:** Greater Arizona Development Authority - GADA loans, Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, Community Facilities Loan & Grant Program
- **Viable Grant Programs such as:** Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Community Facilities Loan & Grant Program, Arizona Office of Tourism, Maricopa County Proposition 302 program, National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town Grant Program, etc.,
- **Partnerships with public agencies or non-profit interests such as:** US Small Business Administration - Development Centers, Main Street Four Point Approach, Local First Arizona, Chamber, etc.
- **Sponsorships with corporate or private interests such as:** naming rights (Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion), product sampling displays, adoption crowdfunding, etc.
- **Creation of non-profit agency such as:** Village Center Association, Public Art program, etc.