

city of surprise, arizona
planning and design guidelines manual

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The material contained in this document was developed by the above mentioned planning consultants and members of the City of Surprise Community Development Department, Planning and Zoning Division. The document represents the City's best effort to illustrate as clearly as possible, the standard by which the planning and design of future developments will be evaluated. All drawings, sketches, diagrams and photographs are illustrative in nature and are intended to demonstrate a possible approach to achieving a planning and/or design objective. The City of Surprise, the Surprise City Council, City Staff and their Consultants are not responsible for any errors or inconsistencies in this document.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

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PURPOSE

This Planning and Design Guidelines Manual presents community planning and design principles and guidelines that reflect the type, quality and character of future new development desired by the citizen's of Surprise. The Manual provides insight into, and clarification of, goals and objectives set forth in the voter approved **General Plan 2020**. The guidelines are intended to foster development that will enhance the community's overall physical image, identity, value and appearance; and achieve the integration of well-planned and designed projects into an overall development pattern that supports community goals for a more sustainable and livable community.

The guidelines are also intended to encourage creativity and design excellence in meeting **General Plan 2020** development goals and objectives; and assist the development community, site planners and designers in understanding the City’s minimum design criteria for new on-site development. All guidelines reflect awareness of public safety needs and requirements, and they incorporate a variety of proven, research-based planning and design techniques currently utilized in communities throughout Arizona and elsewhere, to:

1. improve land use compatibility;
2. protect the integrity of existing neighborhoods;
3. preserve sensitive lands;
4. encourage greater pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian amenities and opportunities;
5. provide for transition between urban and less developed lands;
6. strengthen connectivity among and between neighborhoods and key community and regional destinations;
7. improve the overall function and visual quality of the streetscape;
8. enhance neighborhood character and overall community design; and
9. stimulate investment in and strengthen economic vitality of the community.

INTERPRETING THE GUIDELINES

When reviewing guidelines in this Manual, the development applicant should understand the meaning of “should”, “encouraged” and “discouraged”.

Guidelines that use the word “should” are intended to express the City of Surprise’s desire and expectation. However, an alternative approach to the guideline may be considered if it meets or exceeds the intent of the guideline. Guidelines using the words “encouraged” or “discouraged” are meant to express a more or less desirable design solution.

The Manual contains both qualitative (non-numeric based) and quantitative (numeric based) guidelines. The majority of the guidelines are qualitative and use descriptions and graphic illustrations to express how planning and design within the City should be carried out in relationship to a given land use, building type or spatial setting. Qualitative guidelines allow for considerable flexibility and interpretation, provided the intent of the guidelines is upheld.

Some of the guidelines are quantitative and reference a specific numerical component for a particular planning or design element (e.g. width of a sidewalk); while others reference and specify a preferred quantity (e.g. ratio of parking spaces to building occupants). Even though quantitative guidelines are more specific in nature, the numbers specified, in most cases, are tied to a desired image or operational characteristic that enhances the quality of development desired by the community.

USE OF GUIDELINES

The Planning and Design Guidelines Manual is a policy document to be used during the City's development review process to encourage the highest level of design quality. The Manual will serve as a guide to review projects for consistency with overall community planning and design objectives set forth in **General Plan 2020**; as well as for compliance with the City of Surprise Unified Development Code. The guidelines complement mandatory development standards in the Development Code by providing good examples of appropriate design solutions to various mandatory regulations. These guidelines are less quantitative than mandatory standards, and do not negate adopted laws and ordinances of the City of Surprise Municipal Code. Where general guidelines conflict with specific standards provided for in other ordinances or codes, the specific standard will prevail.

The Manual is organized into three (3) distinct sections. The first section, "Community Character and Design", assists the user in understanding the broader planning and design guidelines that generally apply to the entire City in creating the desired community character reflected in **General Plan 2020**. These guidelines provide the user with criteria that an individual development project must address to assure the project contributes to the overall desired community character. The second section of the Manual, "Site Specific Standards", provides guidelines and criteria at the site-specific level for a variety of land use categories. Section three, "Special Design/Developments Areas", provides an additional level of planning and design guidelines to address special, unique or sensitive development areas. Where appropriate, graphic illustrations, sketches and diagrams are included to depict a possible approach or solution suggested by the guideline.

In the initial stages of site planning and design, it is suggested that that the User review and apply guidelines related to the broader community character. In this first review, the User is encouraged to become familiar with area and neighborhood plans that are applicable to the project site. In addition, the User is encouraged to seek ideas and suggestions from adjacent property owners and neighborhood associations concerning such issues as visual privacy and height compatibility, acoustical privacy, noise attenuation and identification and preservation of important view corridors. The User will then want to review the site-specific and/or special design/development area guidelines for the specific type of development that most closely fits the User's own project. By obtaining an understanding and appreciation of the overall community character and design portrayed in **General Plan 2020** and The Planning and Design Guidelines Manual, the developer of a specific site, and his/her team of planning and design specialists, will be in a position to creatively plan and design the project in a manner that contributes to achieving the desired character of development for the City of Surprise.

REVIEW AUTHORITY

The guidelines Manual includes planning and design options and techniques to meet the policy objectives of the **General Plan 2020**, as well as assist the developer to respond to Development Code requirements with a quality project. For each proposed development project, representatives of the Community Development Department, Department of Fire Services, City Engineering and any other City Department or agency to be determined by the Director of Community Development, will review the project in the context of the Planning and Design Guidelines Manual. It is the responsibility of all reviewing departments to thoroughly review each development project submittal to ensure that the planning and design guidelines as set forth in the Manual, have been utilized in site planning and design of the project.

SECTION ONE

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN



COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN

The image and character of a community is derived from the experiences and perceptions of persons living in or passing through the community. As an integral and key part of the City of Surprise General Plan 2020, the Community Design Plan defines those community planning and design components that the citizen's of Surprise believe should be incorporated in future development to shape the image and character of Surprise.

Guidelines included in this section of the Manual apply to all development in the community. They focus on preservation and revitalization of many aspects of the current rural/urban character of the City, while at the same time encouraging new development that is dynamic, creative and imaginative. These guidelines incorporate research-based land use, site planning, land development and public safety techniques and solutions. They specifically address how to utilize parks and open space, equestrian and bicycle trails, vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems, building form and architecture, landscaping, parking, lighting, signage, grading and drainage to encourage the type and quality of new development that the community believes to be essential in achieving integration of new development with existing development patterns of the City.

The guidelines also recognize the need for sensitivity in designing new projects to protect existing neighborhoods, while at the same time encouraging and strengthening connectivity among and between new and existing neighborhoods and key community destinations. When combined with other developments, application of the broader planning and design guidelines at the site-specific project level by the developer and design team, will enhance and reinforce the overall visual and environmental qualities of the community and shape the rural/urban form of the City.



