



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Issue History

This section summarizes current planning issues identified by Rio Verde Foothills residents, land owners, and other stakeholders during the planning process.

Issue Identification Workshops and Survey Results

On September 25, 2003, Maricopa County Planning and Development Department hosted the first public workshop for the Desert Foothills Area Plan update. Approximately 200 people attended this workshop at the Tonto Verde Clubhouse in Rio Verde, which introduced the area plan update project and identified citizen issues. Based on this meeting and other methods of public participation, over 200 issues and comments were identified for land use and growth areas; transportation; environment; economic development; open space and water resources. Issues and comments were also received through a second public workshop in September 2004; a three-page comments and questions survey; meetings, emails, and phone conversations with representatives of the Rio Verde Horsemen's Association and the Rio Verde Foothills Alliance; meetings or other communications with the City of Scottsdale, McDowell Sonoran Land Trust, and Tonto National Forest staff. These issues are listed in **Table 23: Issue Identification**.

Issue Analysis

Regarding land use and growth areas, there is a strong desire to maintain the existing low-density residential character and not allow commercial, retail, or industrial business. A smaller number of survey respondents would consider allowing some small commercial businesses if limited to Rio Verde Drive. In addition, most residents feel that subdivision development should be limited. Many residents want to maintain the rural, equestrian-oriented nature of the area, and some assert that non-horse people need to be considered as well.

The principal transportation issue is whether to pave dirt roads or leave them unpaved. Slightly more survey responses favor minimal paving in the area, or support paving section-line roads only. Residents feel that more equestrian trails need to be established in the community. Many expressed the need for bicycle lanes on Dynamite Road/Rio Verde Drive. Some stakeholders feel that Dynamite Road/Rio Verde Drive needs to be widened to four lanes, but should not be extended to the Beeline Highway. The open range situation is noted as a significant hazard on Rio Verde Drive. In 2005, the Maricopa County Assessor's Office determined that the Rio Verde Foothills area no longer meets the qualification criteria as "open range" grazing area. A "high density" grazing policy will be phased in to take the place of open grazing, requiring property owners to fence the boundaries of their property to confine livestock to their property. Residents believe public buses



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

should be used on main roads only, for school children and transportation for the elderly. Some think that ATVs need to be restricted, for noise/dust/safety reasons, and separated from equestrian riding areas. Many stakeholders support pursuing scenic corridor status for Rio Verde Drive.

Water availability and air quality are the key environmental issues, followed by protection of wildlife habitat and natural vegetation. Residents want to preserve the desert environment, and keep the night sky dark by minimizing lighting. Many stakeholders would like more roads to be paved to reduce dust. Water quality protection is also an important issue.

Most residents feel that economic development and associated commercial or office development is not appropriate or necessary, with the exception of rural and equestrian-oriented facilities, through special use permits. Economic development and employment opportunities are available in Scottsdale, according to survey comments. Some stakeholders believe that schools are needed or will be needed in the near future.

Preserving existing open space and planning for future open space and trails are important issues to stakeholders. Residents want to maintain access to surrounding public lands and develop a coordinated trail system that links open space for equestrian use, biking, and hiking. Some residents feel that separation of ATVs from other recreational uses is important. Several stakeholders want to see more planning for non-horse activities such as bicycles, hiking trails, ATVs, and motorcycles, in addition to equestrian activities.

The majority of survey respondents believe that an alternative supply of water will be needed in the future. Residents are concerned about the impact of large developments and private wells on the community's water supply, and recommend a comprehensive water availability study be conducted for the area.

Other comments include adding cellular/telephone service, concern over county services, and wanting to keep urban-type development out of the community. Several area plan names were suggested, with *Rio Verde Foothills* receiving the most support.

Community Issues:

The City of Scottsdale identified several important long-range issues which could potentially impact Scottsdale and Fountain Hills. Although some of these issues may not come into play with the current area plan update, they will need to be re-



evaluated with each plan update. Scottsdale is concerned that if population in the planning area reaches 15,000 or more and there are few or no services such as retail, recreation, water, sewer, and transportation-related services in the planning area, then Scottsdale's and Fountain Hills' roads, parks, and neighborhood services may potentially be overburdened. With future plan updates, the development of neighborhood services such as parks, neighborhood level professional offices, grocery stores, churches, etc. should be reconsidered if population and market conditions justify.



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Table 23: Issue Identification (7 pages total)

The following issues are listed in order of most frequently cited to least frequently cited:

1. Land Use & Growth Areas

- ◆ Maintain Low Density

Recommended Densities: 1.0-acre minimum lots; 1.25-acre minimum lots; 2.5-acre minimum lots; 1.5-acre minimum lots; 2 to 5 acre minimum lots

- ◆ No commercial, retail, or industrial businesses
- ◆ Maintain rural character
- ◆ Keep area equestrian-oriented
- ◆ Limit subdivision development
- ◆ Limit commercial/business developments to Rio Verde Drive only
- ◆ Limit special use permits to Rio Verde Drive only
- ◆ No multi-family apartments, condos, etc. (single-family only)
- ◆ Allow horse-related non-retail businesses only
- ◆ Be aware of non-horse people
- ◆ Encourage businesses to locate at Alma School Rd/Dynamite Blvd
- ◆ No two-story homes
- ◆ Do not annex
- ◆ Eliminate open range
- ◆ Need a community center for children/adults

Other Issues:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ◆ Continue open range | ◆ Rural-43 zoning for the majority of the planning area would be too dense overall for this large area to be compatible with Scottsdale's rural residential zoning of one to 5-acre lots |
| ◆ Limit golf courses | ◆ No street lighting |
| ◆ Continue to allow home businesses | ◆ Require developers to provide some infrastructure |
| ◆ Coordinate information and existing policies between county agencies (Planning & Dev., Drainage Review, FCDMC, Environmental Services, and MCDOT) | ◆ Consider not including Vista Verde DMP in area plan boundaries |
| ◆ Include Rio Verde and Tonto Verde communities in area plan | ◆ No national forest land trades to private sector |
| ◆ Consider potential of annexation by Scottsdale | |
| ◆ Refer to 1979 Desert Foothills Area Plan guidelines for use in the update | |



2. Transportation

- ◆ Minimize paving or do not pave dirt roads (slightly more favor minimal paving)
- ◆ Pave all dirt roads or just section-line roads off Rio Verde Drive (opposite opinion)
- ◆ Establish equestrian trails within community
- ◆ Bicycle lanes needed on Dynamite Road
- ◆ Widen and/or make Dynamite/Rio Verde Drive 4-lane
- ◆ Do not extend Rio Verde Drive to the Beeline Highway
- ◆ No mass transit needed
- ◆ Concern about increasing traffic
- ◆ Consider scenic corridor status for Rio Verde Drive
- ◆ Establish clearly defined horse trails on roads within community
- ◆ Public buses for school children and elderly on main roads only
- ◆ Restrict ATVs

- ◆ Eliminate open range
- ◆ Establish hiking and walking trails through open land and/or road rights of way
- ◆ Preserve access to open space areas
- ◆ Need access along McDowell Mountain Park for horses and bicycles
- ◆ Do not widen Rio Verde Drive to 6 lanes (leave as is or widen to 4 lanes)
- ◆ Need to separate equestrian trails from dirt bike/quad/ bicycle trails
- ◆ Need connecting trails in area for horseback riders and bicyclists
- ◆ Dust problem

- ◆ Fences are cutting off access to trails
- ◆ Need to extend Rio Verde Drive to Beeline Highway
- ◆ Heavy commercial traffic a problem
- ◆ Maintain rural nature
- ◆ Need some stop signs/street signs

Other Issues:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ street grading needed ◆ Need ATV lane on Dynamite/Rio Verde Dr. ◆ Use 136th Street as model for paving dirt roads ◆ Install cattle guards to keep livestock off Rio Verde Dr. ◆ Horseback riding access to Tonto National Forest needed ◆ Add center turn lane to Rio Verde Dr. ◆ Limit road access ◆ No stop signs or traffic lights on Rio Verde Dr.; Limit stoplights ◆ Plan access and improvements to Rio Verde Dr. with care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Need to plan to delete any east/west through streets in county's planning area that would enter Scottsdale's Preserve area ◆ Maintain wildlife corridors ◆ Consider Scottsdale's transportation guidelines for equestrian uses ◆ Create buffer of desert between roads and trails (on section line roads) ◆ Consider safe wildlife and trail crossings across Rio Verde Dr. ◆ Extend certain north/south cross streets to Rio Verde Dr. to improve mobility |
|---|--|



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

3. Environment/Environmental Effects

- ◆ Concern about water availability in area and excessive well drilling
- ◆ Concern about air quality in area, especially dust

- ◆ Protect native wildlife and plants, wildlife habitat, and wildlife movement corridors
- ◆ Preserve natural vegetation, especially native trees and cacti

- ◆ Preserve the desert environment
- ◆ Concern about light pollution (keep dark night sky)

- ◆ Eliminate open range (cows/horses need to be removed)
- ◆ Concern about well and aquifer water quality

- ◆ Concern about unregulated grading/clearing of properties, roads, and large-scale equestrian facilities

- ◆ Maintain low density housing
- ◆ Pave section line roads to control dust

- ◆ Enforce flood control issues
- ◆ Keep area rural
- ◆ Avoid urban heat island (do not pave roads)
- ◆ Preserve the scenic beauty of the area
- ◆ Do not urbanize area

- ◆ Replenish the desert with more natural plants
- ◆ Need water improvement district for water supply
- ◆ Careful use of groundwater
- ◆ Limit growth because of limited water supply
- ◆ No more golf courses

Other Issues:

- ◆ Look for alternative water sources to replace hauled water
- ◆ Concern over adequate resources for fire control
- ◆ County needs to verify 100-year water supplies
- ◆ Unregulated use of groundwater for agricultural (pasture) and horse facilities
- ◆ Concern over drainage problems
- ◆ Preserve washes as wildlife corridors
- ◆ Concern over trash left by workers on new home construction sites
- ◆ Concern over horse issues (manure, odor, flies, rodents attracted to feed)
- ◆ No restrictions on fencing property
- ◆ Restrict small planes from flying overhead at low level
- ◆ Too many hunters on or close to trails a danger to people in some areas
- ◆ Implement native plant protection plan similar to Scottsdale's program
- ◆ Do not want to be annexed



4. Economic Development

- ◆ Do not want any economic development/employment, business, or retail
- ◆ Economic development and employment opportunities are available in Scottsdale

- ◆ Limit commercial development to rural/equestrian oriented facilities with
- ◆ special use permits (i.e. boarding stables, ranches, feed and tack store)
- ◆ Allow economic development/employment in designated areas along
- ◆ Riio Verde Drive

- ◆ Allow only home-based businesses

- ◆ Maintain low density residential character
- ◆ Horse industry will continue to provide employment opportunities in area
- ◆ Need grocery store/pharmacy in area
- ◆ Need schools
- ◆ No big-box stores, large chain-operated businesses, or Del Webb-like communities

Other Issues:

- ◆ Encourage equestrian activities
- ◆ Need minor retail and business at end of Rio Verde Dr.
- ◆ Encourage farms
- ◆ Need strip malls
- ◆ Preserve the land
- ◆ Place a variety of recreational facilities in McDowell Mountain Park (i.e. golf course, tennis courts, croquet, soccer, baseball fields)
- ◆ Replenish the desert
- ◆ Do not want development with high traffic flows
- ◆ Allow commercial riding stables along Rio Verde Drive
- ◆ Will need gas station in future
- ◆ Need grocery store east of Rio Verde Drive and 180th Street
- ◆ Would like limited small businesses/restaurants similar to Troon North area
- ◆ Need U.S. post office and county services
- ◆ Would like homes and a few condominiums similar to Troon North area



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

5. Open Space

- ◆ Preserve existing open space and plan for more open space
- ◆ Trails and paths needed along easements and roadways
- ◆ Coordinated trail system and access needed to link community to McDowell Mountain Park, Tonto National Forest, and Scottsdale's
- ◆ preserve area for equestrian use, biking, and hiking
- ◆ Protect and expand trail system for hikers, bikers, and equestrian use
- ◆ (no ATVs or ATVs on separate trails)
- ◆ Trail access is important
- ◆ Non-motorized access to McDowell Mountain Park and Scottsdale preserve is important
- ◆ Plan for non-horse activities such as quads, motorcycles, bicycles, and hiking trails
- ◆ Keep large washes and floodplain areas open for equestrian trails and open space
- ◆ Need separate motorized and non-motorized areas
- ◆ Need more neighborhood open space, parks, and trails
- ◆ There is already enough open space

Other Issues:

- ◆ Maintain access to public lands
- ◆ Allow fencing of property
- ◆ Promote/preserve hiking trails
- ◆ Community center for recreation needed within community
- ◆ Develop equestrian trails in areas that are now undeveloped so future homeowners will know of trail use in advance
- ◆ Designate area for community park
- ◆ Preserve wildlife corridors
- ◆ No gated communities (they prevent trail access)
- ◆ More horse trails needed to connect to Tonto National Forest
- ◆ Preserve open space in washes
- ◆ Desert preservation
- ◆ Eliminate free range
- ◆ Less development
- ◆ Consider desert education center
- ◆ Open space along existing property lines and road shoulders
- ◆ Set boundary fences back from property easements to allow for trails
- ◆ Keep equestrian element in entire area
- ◆ Consider the current community trails planning efforts
- ◆ Plan for public recreation facilities in McDowell Mountain Park (i.e. golf course, tennis, etc)
- ◆ Work with the City of Scottsdale to coordinate regional trails and open space efforts
- ◆ Marking of trails in Granite Mountain area should continue
- ◆ Change zoning to 2 ½ acres to help maintain open space



6. Water Resources

- ◆ Alternative supply of water needed in future (i.e. water improvement district, municipal water system, private water company, Indian allocations, Rio Verde community)
- ◆ Concern about effect of big housing developments and future growth
- ◆ on limited water supply (how much water is in the ground?)
- ◆ No more golf courses (too much water being used on golf courses)
- ◆ Current water supply not adequate in some areas (i.e. some wells barely producing)
- ◆ Water availability study needed and policies based on study
- ◆ Protect water resources in the area
- ◆ Keep low-density housing due to water issue
- ◆ Revise policies to prevent waste of water
- ◆ Deny permits to develop if not enough water proven
- ◆ Water is generally available between 144th and 160th Streets
- ◆ (scarce outside of this area)
- ◆ Educate land owners on water conservation

Other Issues:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ◆ Require real estate disclosure of lack of water | ◆ Concern regarding investment in well construction if area if eventually annexed and receives city water services |
| ◆ Determine how much water lost from aquifer due to increased runoff down to Verde River | ◆ Do not allow large subdivisions |
| ◆ Make developers pay for all infrastructure related to their projects | ◆ Promote greywater reuse |
| ◆ Concern about effect of drilled pit wastewater systems on water quality | ◆ Promote the use of low flow water fixtures |
| ◆ How long will the water last | ◆ Do not allow export of water out of area |
| ◆ Water quality unknown | ◆ Encourage technologically advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems |
| ◆ Concern about limited water for fire control (many residents haul water) | ◆ Promote homeowner education on maintenance of onsite wastewater systems |



ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

7. Miscellaneous

- ◆ Keep rural character
- ◆ Maintain low density
- ◆ End open range
- ◆ Cell sites/phone service needed in some areas
- ◆ Preserve Sonoran Desert
- ◆ No businesses/commercial development
- ◆ Maintain dark night sky
- ◆ Keep in mind that this is not just an equestrian community
- ◆ Concern over condition of dirt roads and not knowing who grades them
- ◆ More proactive county inspection needed
- ◆ Don't want to be another Scottsdale
- ◆ Keep city away from this area

Other Issues:

- ◆ Concerned that County resources not sufficient to handle growth of area
- ◆ No more large horse properties
- ◆ County should enforce existing laws and policies
- ◆ Include Rio Verde and Tonto Verde communities in plan
- ◆ Flood Control District too restrictive on drainage and flood control issues
- ◆ Buses for school children will be needed for growing population
- ◆ Flood Control District, Environmental Services, and Rural Metro regulations are difficult to comply with and sometimes conflicting
- ◆ Many services needed including DSL Internet; cable; paved or graded roads; locked USPS boxes, private water company; sewers; additional cellular towers
- ◆ Grading of properties without permit a problem, should fine and make restore with plants
- ◆ Work with Rio Verde Horseman's Association
- ◆ Stop or control development
- ◆ Contact Rio Verde Foothills Alliance, Rio Verde Horsemen's Assoc., and McDowell Mountain Park Assoc. about participating in this study
- ◆ Maintain wildlife and roaming cattle
- ◆ Non-golfers should not be assessed for development and construction of golf courses
- ◆ Need dust control
- ◆ Request for environmental/habitat bulletin board in Granite Mountain area

Area Plan name suggestions:

- ◆ Rio Verde Foothills [most frequently sited]
- ◆ Foothills of the Rio Verde
- ◆ Verde Foothills
- ◆ Rio Verde Equestrian
- ◆ Rural Verde, Rural Rio Verde, Rio Verde Rural