



City of
EL MIRAGE

Arizona

GRAND HERITAGE, BRIGHT FUTURE!

D O W N T O W N



REVITALIZATION PLAN

August 2023

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INTRODUCTION

A cornerstone to any community is a downtown area. Growing from agrarian roots, El Mirage's downtown area has evolved around the original townsite at the intersection of El Mirage and Thunderbird Roads. As such, the desire to have a more vibrant downtown that functions as a community destination and gathering place has emerged within the city. As El Mirage continues to grow and evolve in the future, the City is hoping to capture the potential of the original townsite and surrounding neighborhoods by complementing them with a more urban retail and dining experience along Thunderbird Road and the US-60. This Downtown Revitalization Plan acts as a first step towards a more tangible and defined downtown area to intentionally foster local businesses and a unique gathering place at the heart of El Mirage.

DOWNTOWN HISTORY

El Mirage was first settled in 1937 by migrant farm workers adjacent to the Agua Fria River, and south of a major travel thoroughfare that would later become Grand Avenue and US Route 60. The area was prime for establishing the agricultural operations that would be a cornerstone of the City's economy for decades to come. The community incorporated as a Town in 1951 with the original townsite consisting of the residences along El Mirage Road north of Thunderbird Road. A series of municipal facilities were built adjacent to Bill Gentry Park including the original City Hall and municipal court in the 1970's and 1980's. These facilities would adapt to include a Senior Center, Community Garden, and branch of the Maricopa County Library System (before it was relocated) further solidifying the park and surrounding area as the heart of El Mirage. More recently, the City has invested in streetscape improvements and wayfinding along El Mirage and Thunderbird Roads, paving the way for continued revitalization of the Historic Downtown Area.

PURPOSE

This Downtown Revitalization Plan is part of ongoing efforts by the City of El Mirage to promote economic development and neighborhood stabilization in the downtown area. This Plan is intended to create a strategic planning and decision-making framework to guide more effective community investment decisions.

What is this Plan for?



Guiding Downtown Advocates



Creating Local & Regional Partnerships



Identifying Grants & Funding Opportunities



Establishing Policy Guidance to Inform Decisions



Informing CIP Investment Priorities



A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN

What Does This Plan Include and Not Include?

The Downtown Revitalization Plan is comprised of an assessment of existing conditions, survey results from the public, and recommendations of revitalization concepts, strategies and Actions to guide and inform policy direction for future decisions.

INCLUDES:

- Public Engagement Results
- Existing Conditions Assessment
- Broad Revitalization Concepts
- Specific Revitalization Strategies and Actions
- Funding and Resource Opportunities

DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Condemnation of Property
- Amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance, General Plan or Building Code
- Private Land Acquisition
- Relocation of Residents

WHERE IS DOWNTOWN EL MIRAGE?

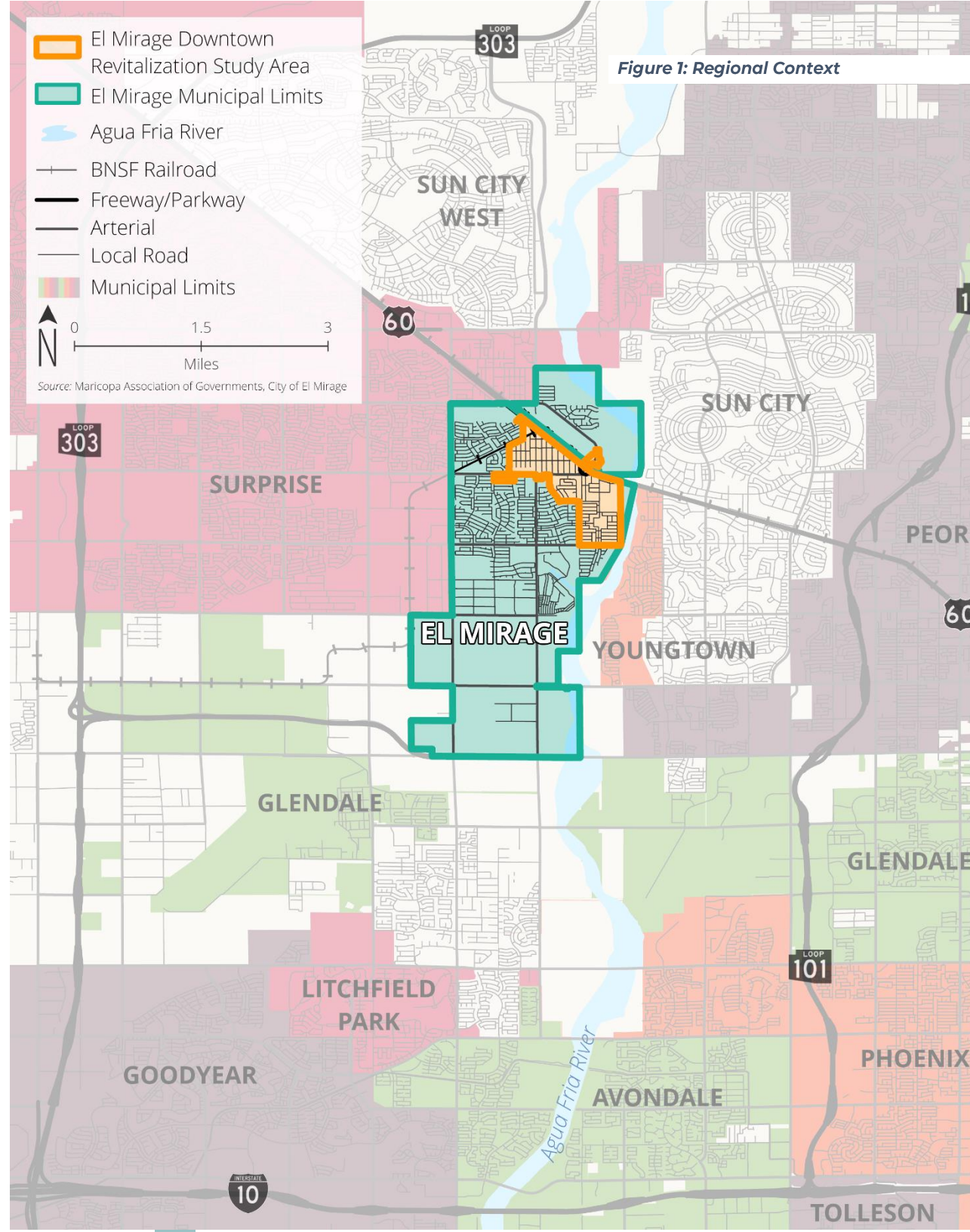
Regional Context

El Mirage is located along the Agua Fria River in the Northwest Valley of the greater Phoenix Metropolitan Region. Grand Avenue/US Route 60 and Northern Avenue/Parkway provide direct access to the community from surrounding areas. The BNSF Railroad travels along Grand Avenue/US Route 60 and bisects the community. Downtown El Mirage is located in the northern part of the City, roughly along Thunderbird Avenue as it approaches Grand Avenue to the east.

Study Area

The Downtown Revitalization Plan Study Area is bounded roughly by Grand Avenue/US Route 60 to the northeast, the BNSF rail spur/Santa Fe Lane to the northwest, 5th Avenue to the west, Thunderbird Road to the south, 119th Avenue to the west, and Cactus Road to the south.

Inclusive of the original townsite, the study area comprises the following neighborhoods: West Downtown El Mirage, East Downtown El Mirage North Thunderbird, East Downtown El Mirage South Thunderbird, Casa Mirage Apartments, Sunnyvale, Plaza Manuel Ortega Apartments, Pueblo Futuro, Arizona Brisas and parts of Grand Village.









-  El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
 -  Study Area Parcel
 -  El Mirage Municipal Limits
 -  Agua Fria River
 -  US Route
 -  BNSF Railroad
- 0 1,000 2,000
Feet
- Source: Maricopa County Assessor

Figure 2: Downtown Revitalization Study Area

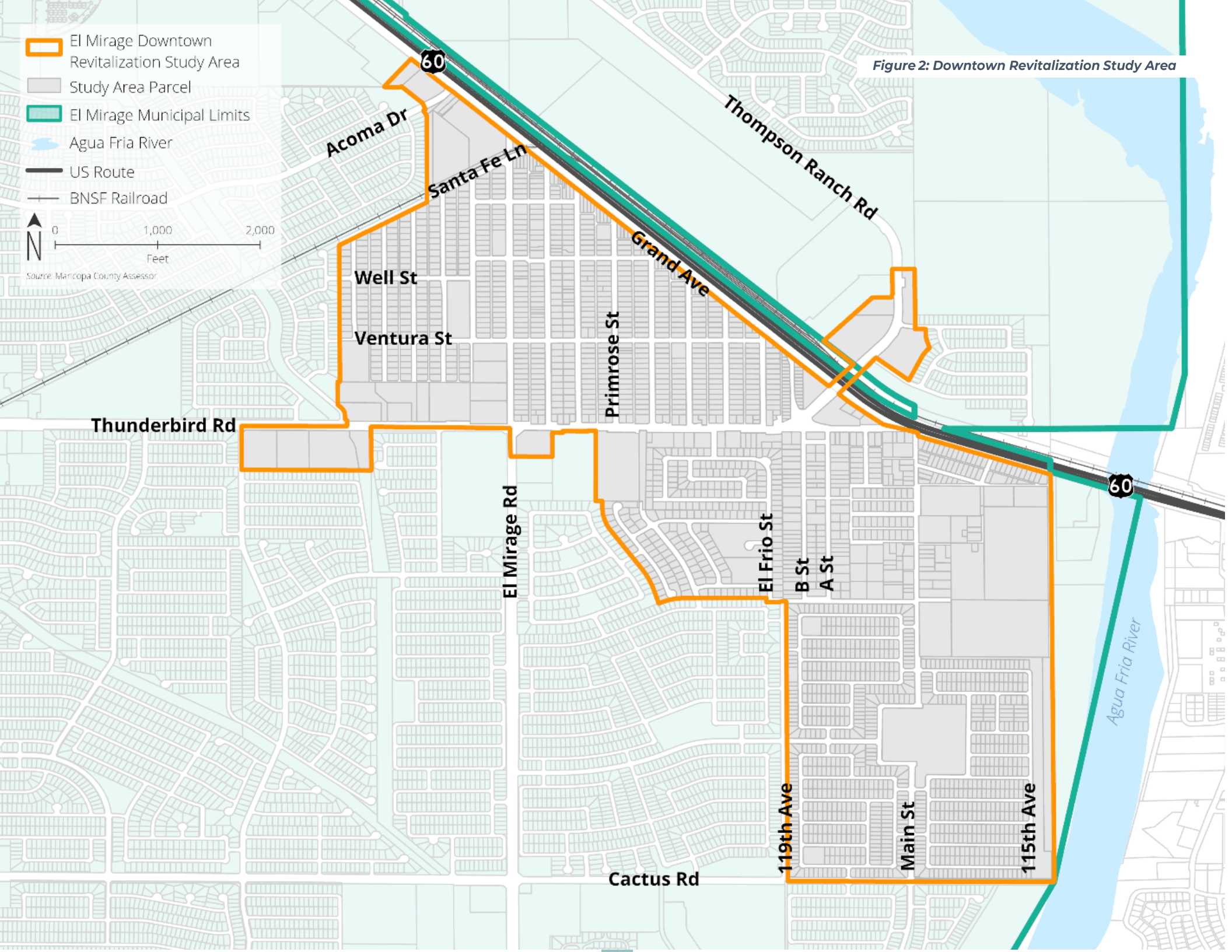
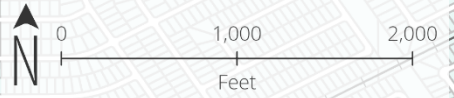
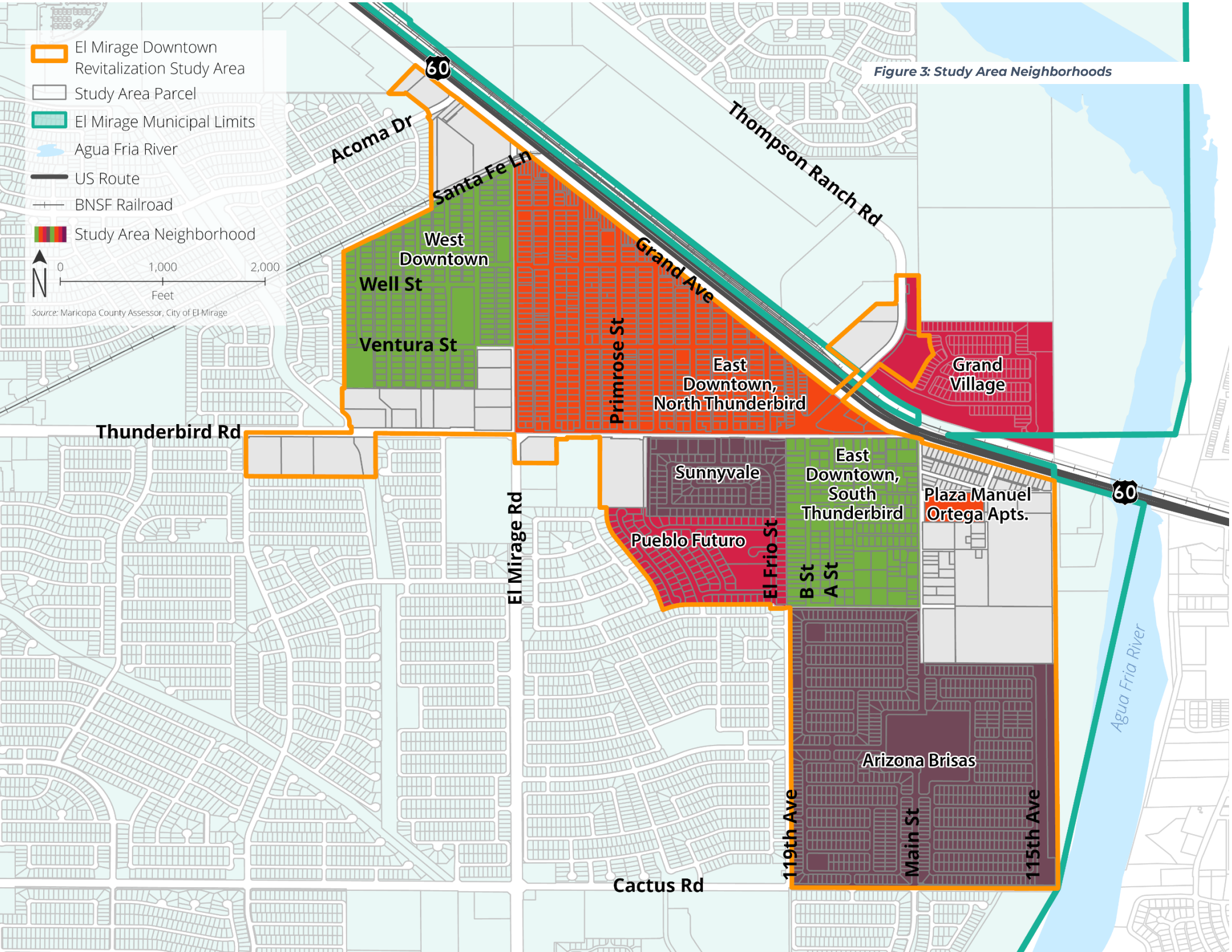


Figure 3: Study Area Neighborhoods

- El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
- Study Area Parcel
- El Mirage Municipal Limits
- Agua Fria River
- US Route
- BNSF Railroad
- Study Area Neighborhood



Source: Maricopa County Assessor, City of El Mirage



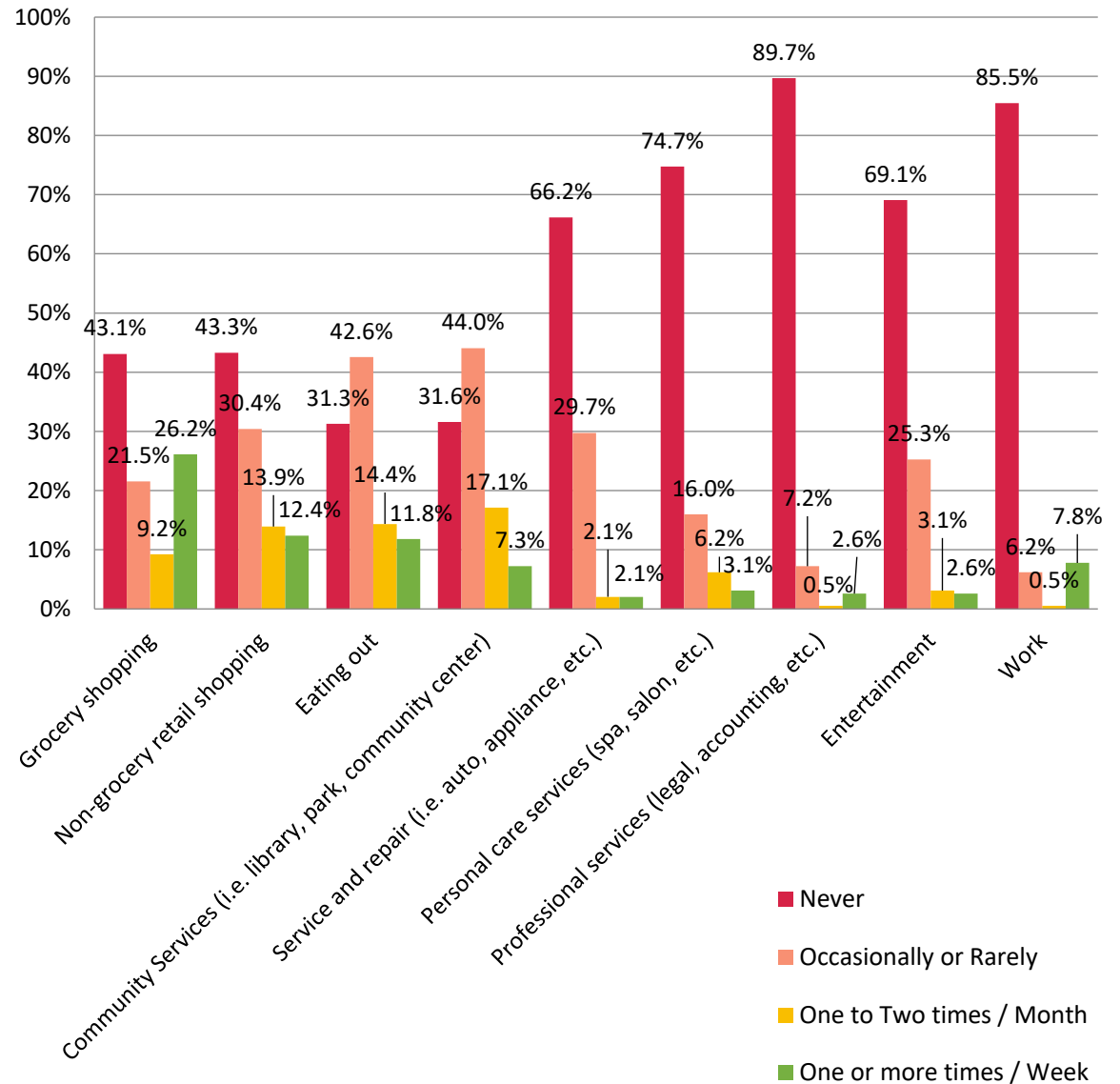
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public outreach for the Revitalization Plan centered on community workshops, pop-up workshops at City events, local business and property interviews, and stakeholder meetings with the City.

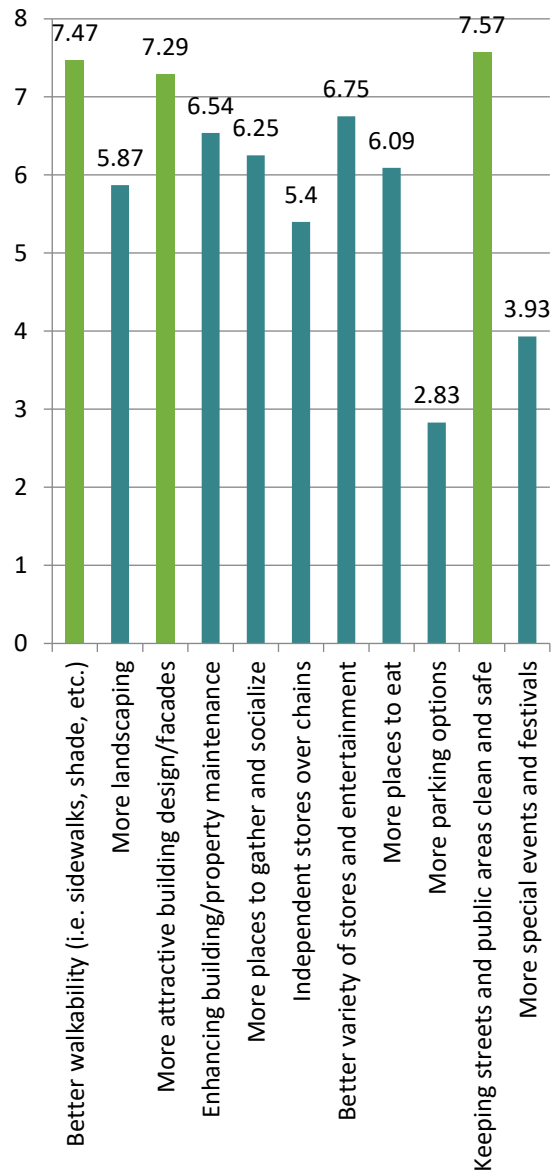
Community Survey

The cornerstone of the public engagement efforts was the Downtown Revitalization Plan Survey which was open from the City's Winterfest Event in December 2022 through the end of June in 2023. The 12-question survey included 7 questions specifically related to Downtown perception, vision, and challenges, followed by 5 demographic questions. 195 residents completed the survey and the results have been tabulated with the following charts.

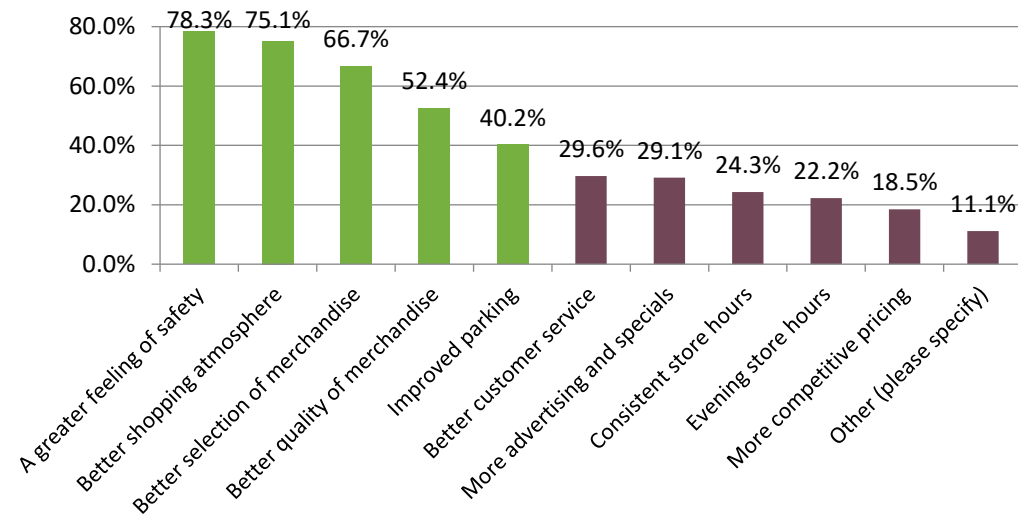
Question 1: How often do you visit Downtown El Mirage for the following?



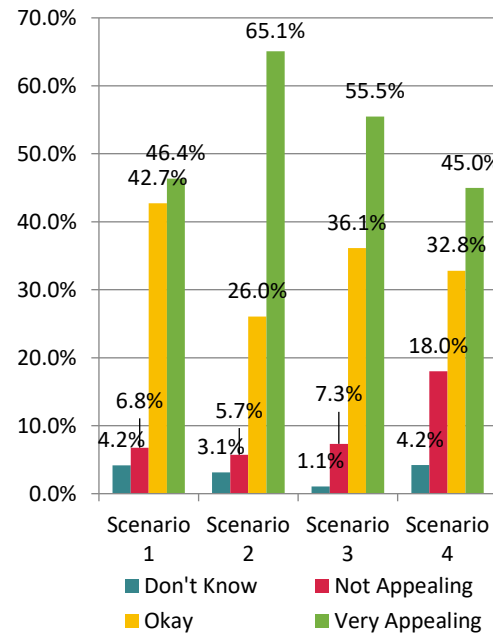
Question 2: When focusing on downtown revitalization, what is most important to you? (please rank in order of importance)



Question 3: Considering Downtown El Mirage, check five (5) changes that are necessary for merchants to get even more of your business.



Question 4: Imagine Downtown El Mirage in ten years. How appealing are these future scenarios?



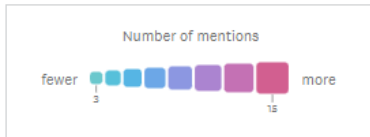
Scenario 1: An attractive place to call home with new living options that appeal to a wide variety of residents from young adults to retirees.

Scenario 2: A meeting place and the center of community activities with a mix of coffee shops, brew pubs, cultural and recreation spaces.

Scenario 3: A niche place where authentic/local stores, merchandise, and neighborhood convenience retail stores are within walking distance.

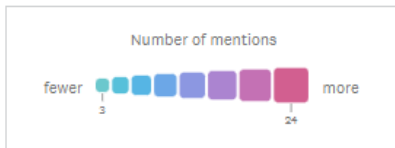
Scenario 4: A destination retail center attracting people from a distance with a mix of retailers.

Question 5: What do you like most about the Downtown area of El Mirage?



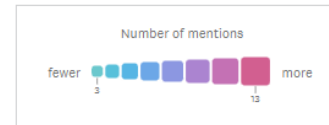
Key Themes: Small Town/Community Feel/Local Businesses, Potential, Proximity, Recent Improvements, Bill Gentry Park, History, Culture

Question 6: What do you dislike most about the Downtown area of El Mirage?



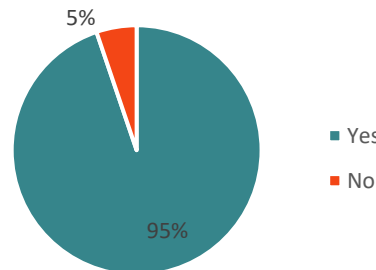
Key Themes: Aesthetics/cleanliness, homelessness, unsafe/crime, Vacant/undeveloped lots, lack of retail/entertainment/destinations

Question 7: Please share any other thoughts, comments, ideas or suggestions that you have regarding Downtown El Mirage or this planning project.

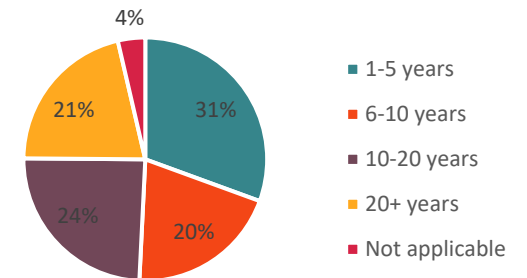


Key Themes: Greater variety of retail/entertainment options, more restaurants coffee shops and brew pubs, outdoor recreations (pool, trails/ bike paths), Concerns about Safety, cleanliness/façade improvements

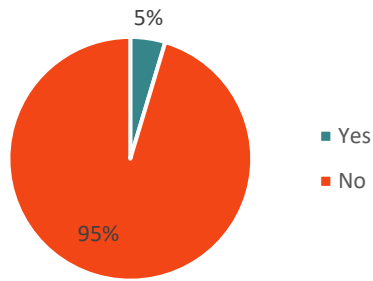
Question 8: Do you Live in El Mirage?



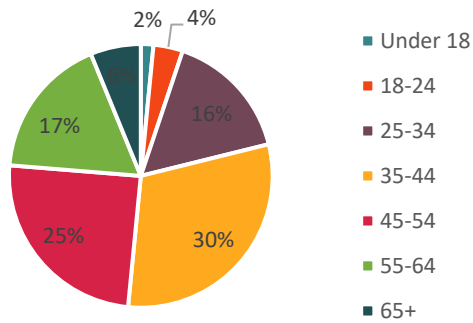
Question 9: How long have you lived in El Mirage?



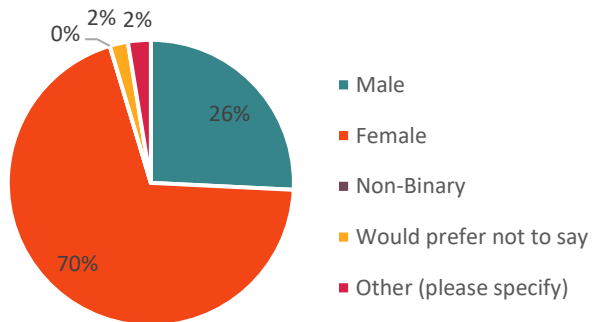
Question 10: Do you own a business in El Mirage?



Question 11: What is your age range?



Question 12: What is your Gender?



Community Workshops & Event Pop-Ups

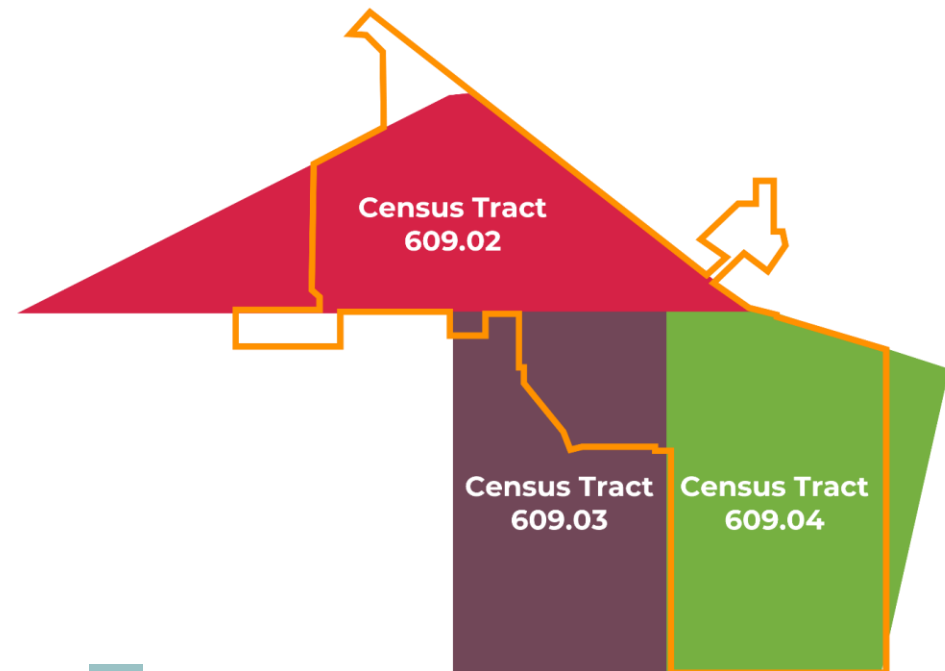
The Winterfest Event Pop-Up kicked off the survey on December 9, 2022 and also presented a map for community desires and concerns with Downtown. Of the 58 map comments received, the top 5 emerging themes were safety, aesthetics and cleanliness, more dining/entertainment/recreation options, creating a community gathering place, and appreciation of culture and heritage. A Survey Pop-Up was also present at the City’s Spring Faire on March 24, 2023. Community Workshop 1 was on March 16, 2023 and provided an overview of existing conditions to the public. Participants also had the chance to review the draft revitalization concepts and provide feedback. The second Community Workshop took place on May 24, 2023. This workshop presented the overarching plan and revitalization strategies that were reviewed by the public.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section evaluates the status of the Downtown Study Area as it exists today. Demographics, Housing Statistics, Redevelopment Factors, Economic Indicators, and a Business and Economic Development inventory, serve to provide a pulse on the current status of the Downtown Area. Collectively, when coupled with public outreach these insights inform the Revitalization Plan's direction, identifies trends, and serves to outline the foundational improvements for a successful Downtown.

Due to limits in data availability at a smaller geographic scale, the following three census tracts were analyzed in association with the existing conditions assessment: census tract 609.02, census tract 609.03, and census tract 609.04. These three census tracts cover most of the extent of the Downtown Revitalization Plan study area, with the exception of the undeveloped land northeast of US Route 60/Grand Avenue. Part of census tract 609.02 includes additional adjacent neighborhoods north of Thunderbird Road and south of the BNSF railroad spur. Census tract 609.03 includes additional neighborhoods south of Dalia Drive and north of Cactus Road.

Figure 4: Study Area Census Tracts



DEMOGRAPHICS

Race & Ethnicity

Approximately 13,196 people live in the Downtown Revitalization study area census tracts. Of the total population of all three downtown census tracts, 57.5% identify as White followed by 13.9% as Two or More and 14.7% as Other. More than half of the study area (62.7%) identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

Age

El Mirage has a younger median age than both the State and County. Census tracts 609.03 and 609.04 have a younger median age than the City while census tract 609.02 has a higher median age than the State's overall median. Over one third of the study area is age 19 or Under, followed by one quarter being age 35-55.

Figure 5: Race

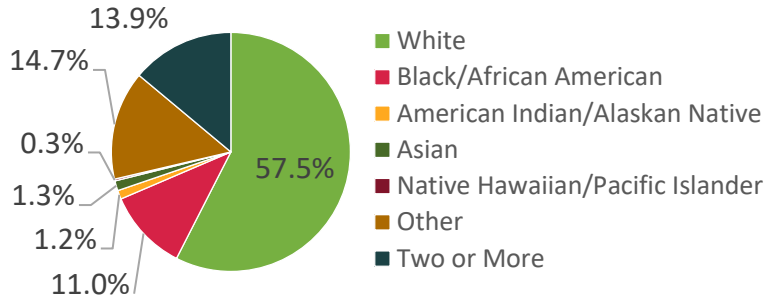


Figure 6: Hispanic/Latino Composition

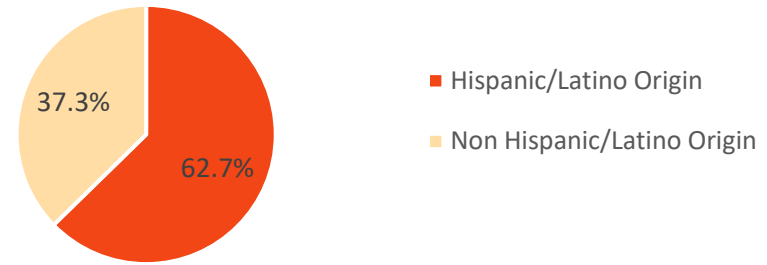


Figure 7: Age Cohorts

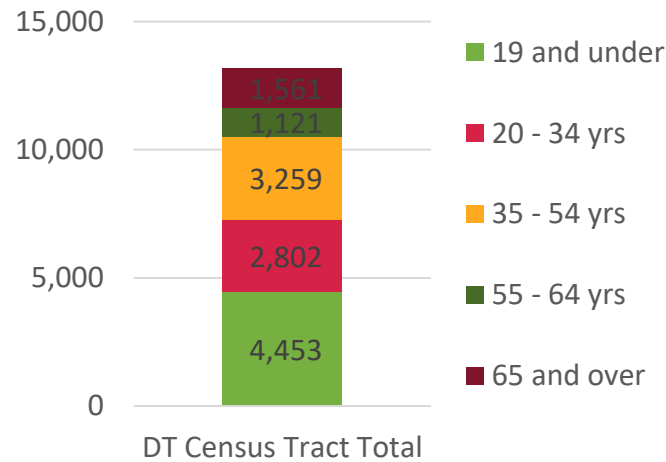


Table 1: Median Age

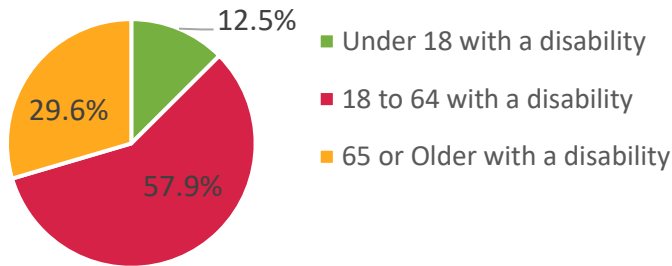
	Median Age
Census Tract 609.02	40.9
Census Tract 609.03	28.4
Census Tract 609.04	30.5
El Mirage	32
Maricopa County	36.6
Arizona	37.9

All data on this page is sourced from: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates

Disability

1,478 people with a disability live within the study area accounting for 31% of El Mirage’s total disability population. Nearly one third of those people are minors or seniors with a disability.

Figure 8: Age of People with a Disability



Households

The study area has 3,750 total households. El Mirage’s average household size is larger than both the State and County at 3.28. The study area census tracts have even higher average household sizes with the highest (3.64) being in Census Tract 609.03.

Table 2: Households

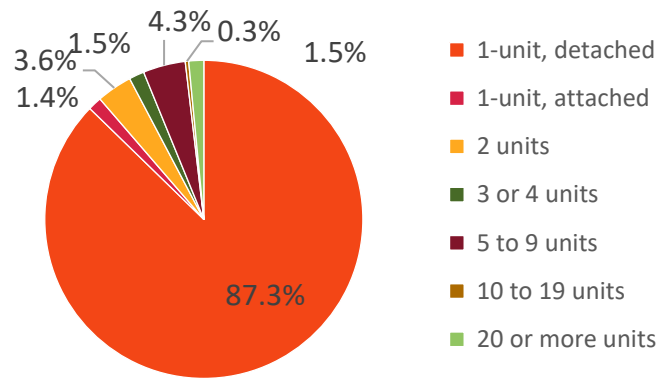
Geography	Average Household Size
Census Tract 609.02	3.51
Census Tract 609.03	3.64
Census Tract 609.04	3.37
El Mirage	3.28
Maricopa County	2.73
Arizona	2.65

HOUSING

Housing Type

Of the 4,016 total housing units in the study area, 3,505 are detached single family accounting for 87.3% percent of the total housing stock.

Figure 9: Housing Type



All data on this page is sourced from: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates

Figure 10: Building Age Map

- El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
- Study Area Parcel
- El Mirage Municipal Limits

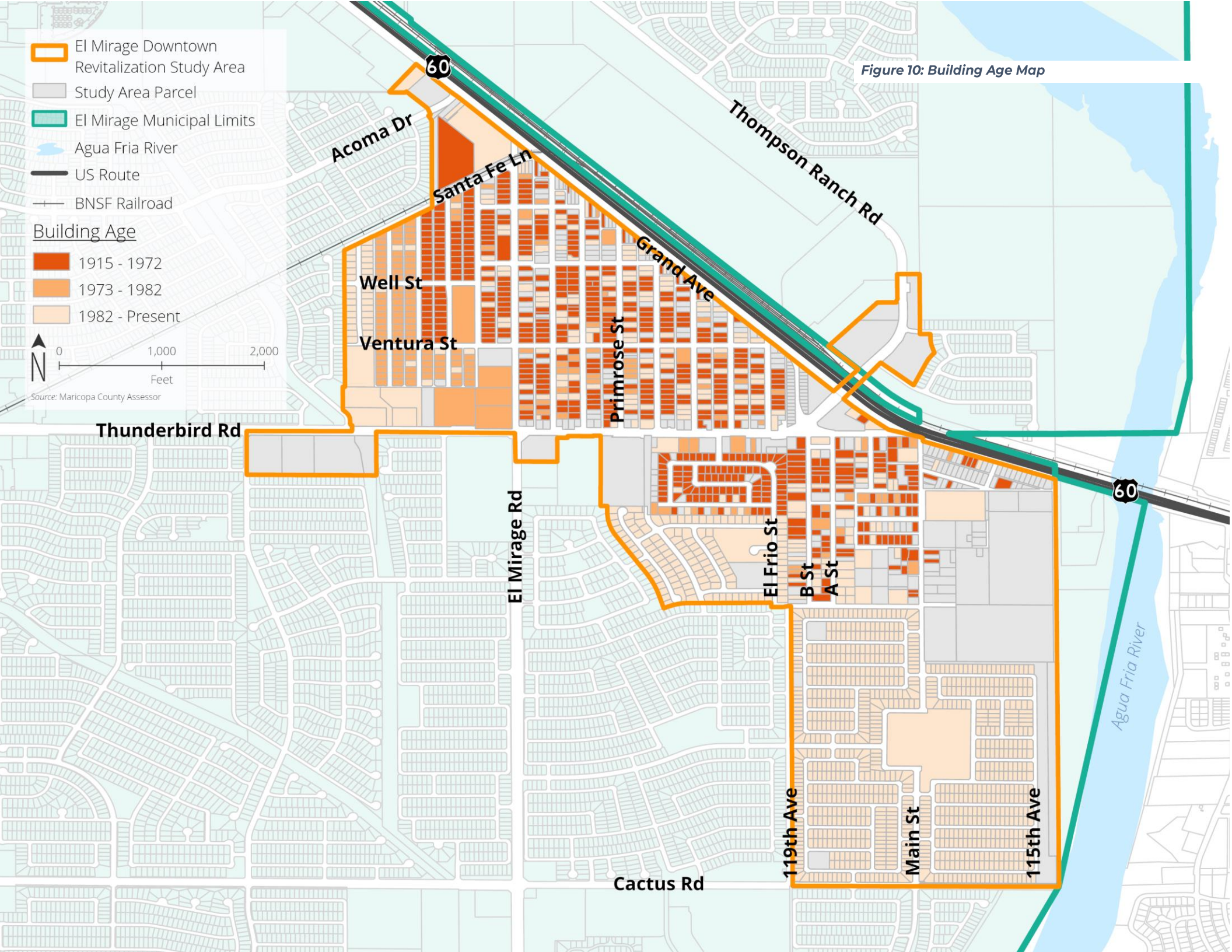
- Agua Fria River
- US Route
- BNSF Railroad

Building Age

- 1915 - 1972
- 1973 - 1982
- 1982 - Present



Source: Maricopa County Assessor



Housing Age

50% of the housing stock in the study area was constructed between 1950 and 1959. Nearly an additional quarter (23.8%) was built the following decade in the 1960's. Since then, the largest addition (8.7%) in housing units was constructed in the 1990's. As seen from Maricopa County Assessors data, much of the older housing stock is located in the West Downtown, East Downtown North Thunderbird, East Downtown South Thunderbird, and Sunnyvale neighborhoods. Pueblo Futuro and Arizona Brisas were developed much later in the 1980s and beyond.

Figure 11: Housing Age

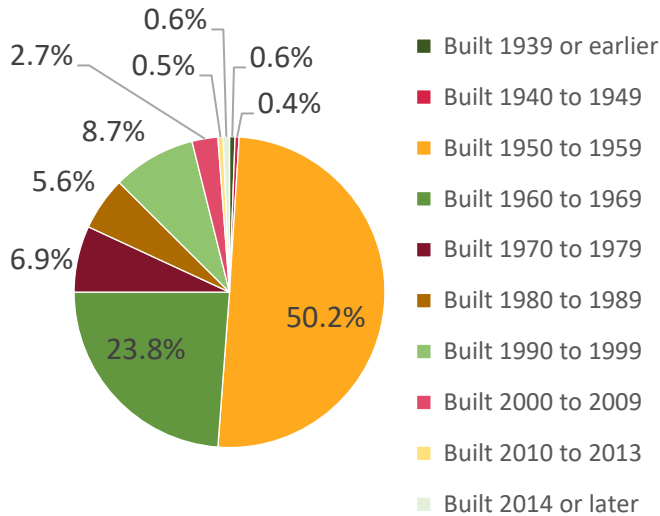
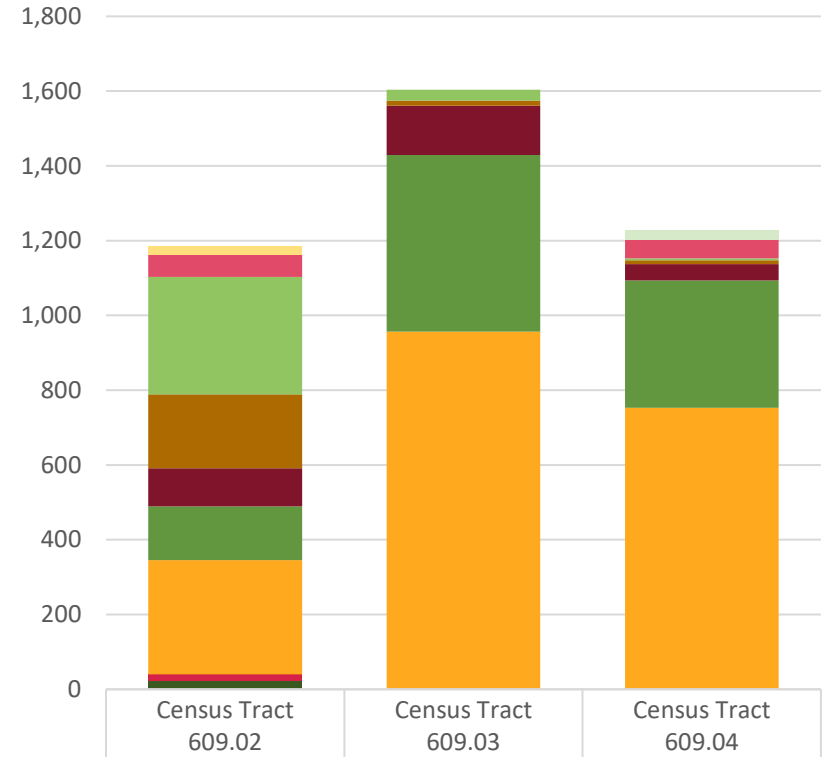


Figure 12: Housing Age Distribution by Census Tract



	Census Tract 609.02	Census Tract 609.03	Census Tract 609.04
Built 2014 or later	0	0	26
Built 2010 to 2013	22	0	0
Built 2000 to 2009	59	0	49
Built 1990 to 1999	314	29	5
Built 1980 to 1989	198	14	11
Built 1970 to 1979	102	132	43
Built 1960 to 1969	143	472	341
Built 1950 to 1959	306	957	753
Built 1940 to 1949	17	0	0
Built 1939 or earlier	23	0	0

All data on this page is sourced from: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates

Vacancy and Occupancy Type

The study area has a 93% occupancy for total housing units. Almost 60% of the study area's housing is owner occupied, with the remaining 40% renter occupied.

Figure 13: Housing Vacancy

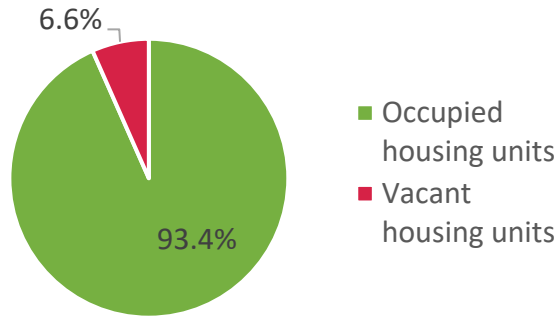
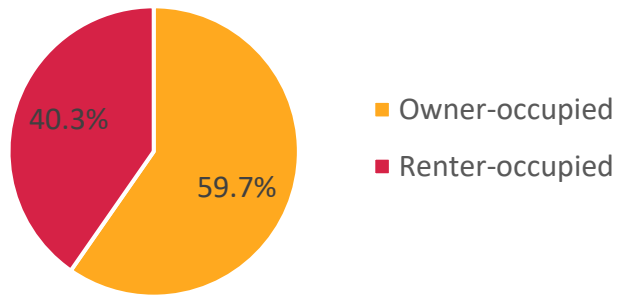


Figure 14: Housing Occupancy

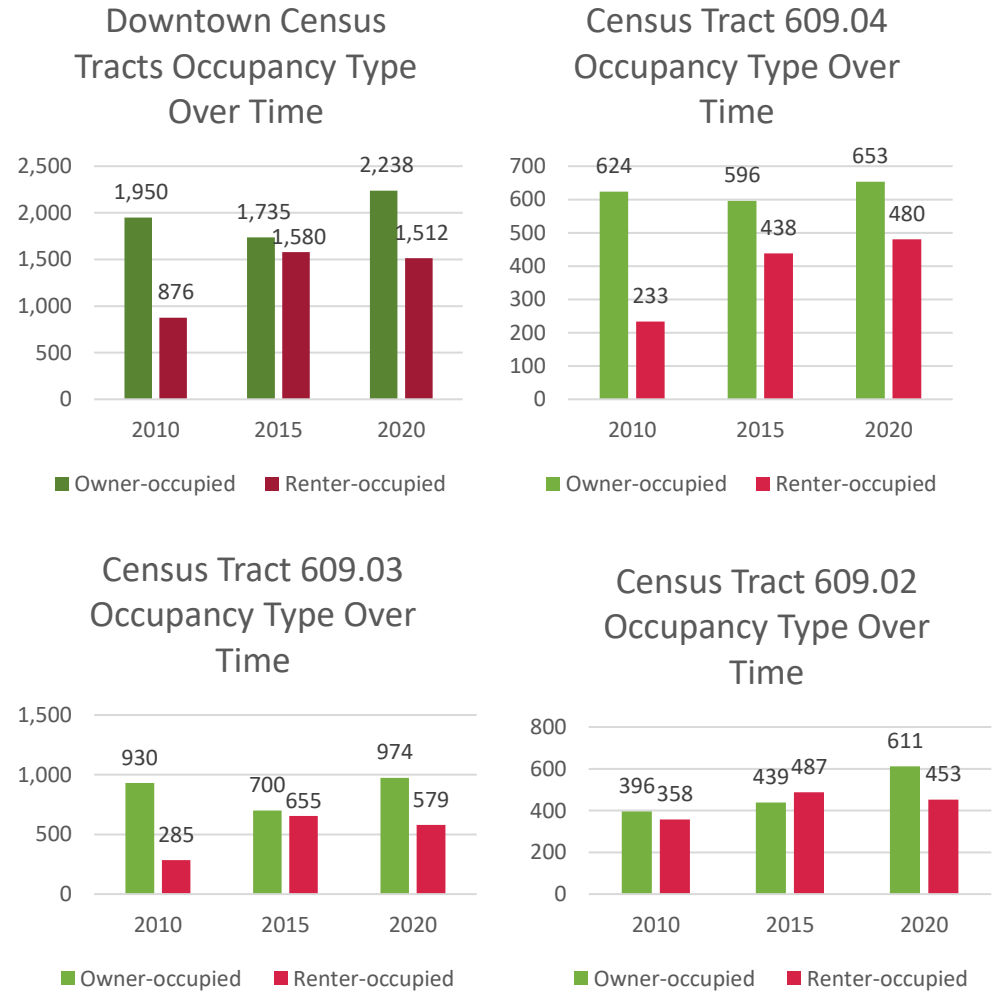


Sources: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates.

Occupancy Over Time

While the overall study area has seen an increase and slight decrease of rental occupied units overtime, census tract 609.04 has seen a steady increase in rental units while the 609.02 and 609.3 has seen a more recent decrease.

Figure 15: Housing Occupancy Over Time

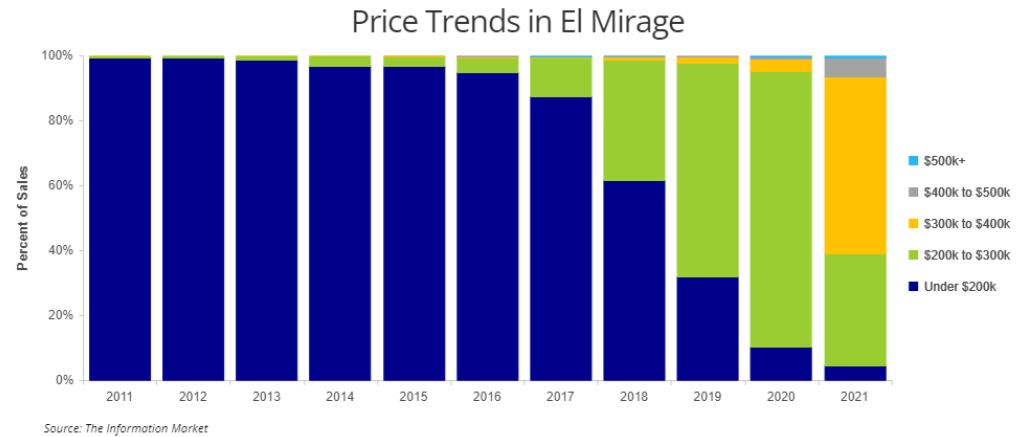


Sources: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2010, 2015, and 2020 5 Year Estimates.

Housing Sales Price

The following analysis of home sales price and rent price trends for the City were identified from the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Housing Data Portal. In January of 2015, the median sales price for a home in El Mirage was \$127,500 and rose steadily until about December of 2020 where prices then saw a steeper increase until peaking at \$360,000 in November of 2021. Over the past 10 years, the City has seen a significant shift in sales price from being predominantly under \$200,000 to a majority of sales prices being in the \$300,000-\$400,000 range. Between the fourth quarter of 2020 and the 4th quarter of 2021, El Mirage saw a 41% increase in median sales price, ranking 3rd highest among MAG member agencies.

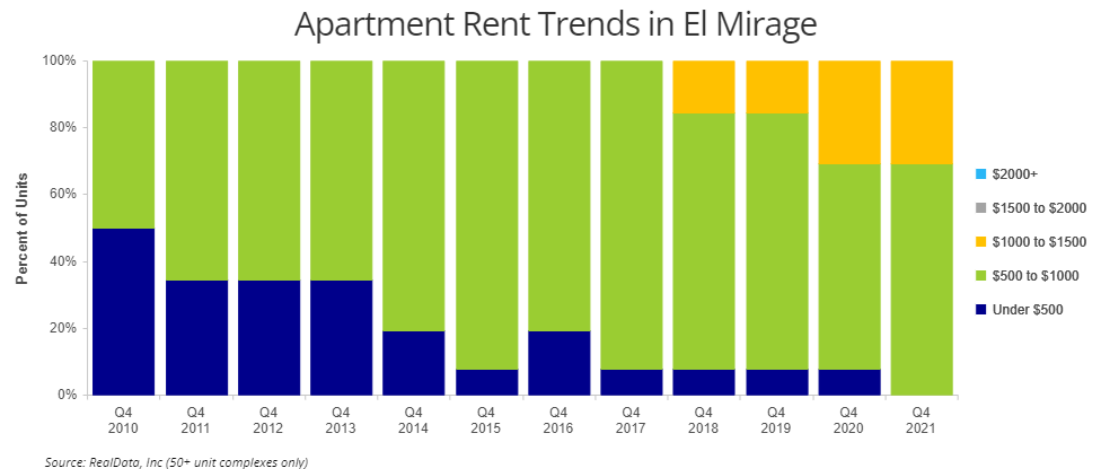
Figure 16: El Mirage Home Price Trends 2011-2021



Housing Rent

Median rent for El Mirage overall is \$813 in the fourth quarter of 2021, with two bedroom units median rent being \$968 and three or more bedroom units having a median rent at \$1091. Over time, the City has seen increasing rent prices and over the past 10 years, with rents under \$500 becoming virtually no longer existent. Higher rents in the \$1000-\$1500 range have taken up a larger market share within 2021.

Figure 17: El Mirage Rent Trends Q4 2010-Q4 2021



Source: Maricopa Association of Governments Housing Data Portal

REDEVELOPMENT FACTORS

Land Use

When reviewing the City’s General Plan, over half (62.3%) of the study area is categorized within the Neighborhoods land use type. The Thunderbird Core (TC) land use type covers most of the commercial and vacant lot frontage along Thunderbird Road, and accounts for 13.4% of the study area. The Mixed Use (MU) land use type covers most of the study area north of Thunderbird Road and east of El Mirage Road roughly covering the remaining study area (22.3%).

Figure 18: General Plan Land Use Distribution

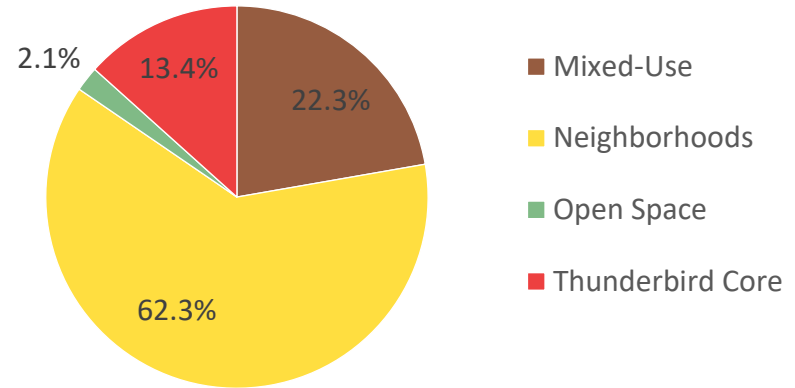


Table 3: General Plan Land Use Acreage

LU Code	Land Use	Acreage
MU	Mixed-Use	150.9
NB	Neighborhoods	422.3
OS	Open Space	14.3
TC	Thunderbird Core	90.5
Total		678.0

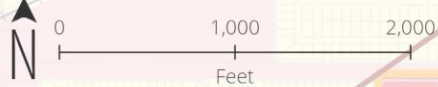
Sources: City of El Mirage

Figure 19: General Plan Land Use Map

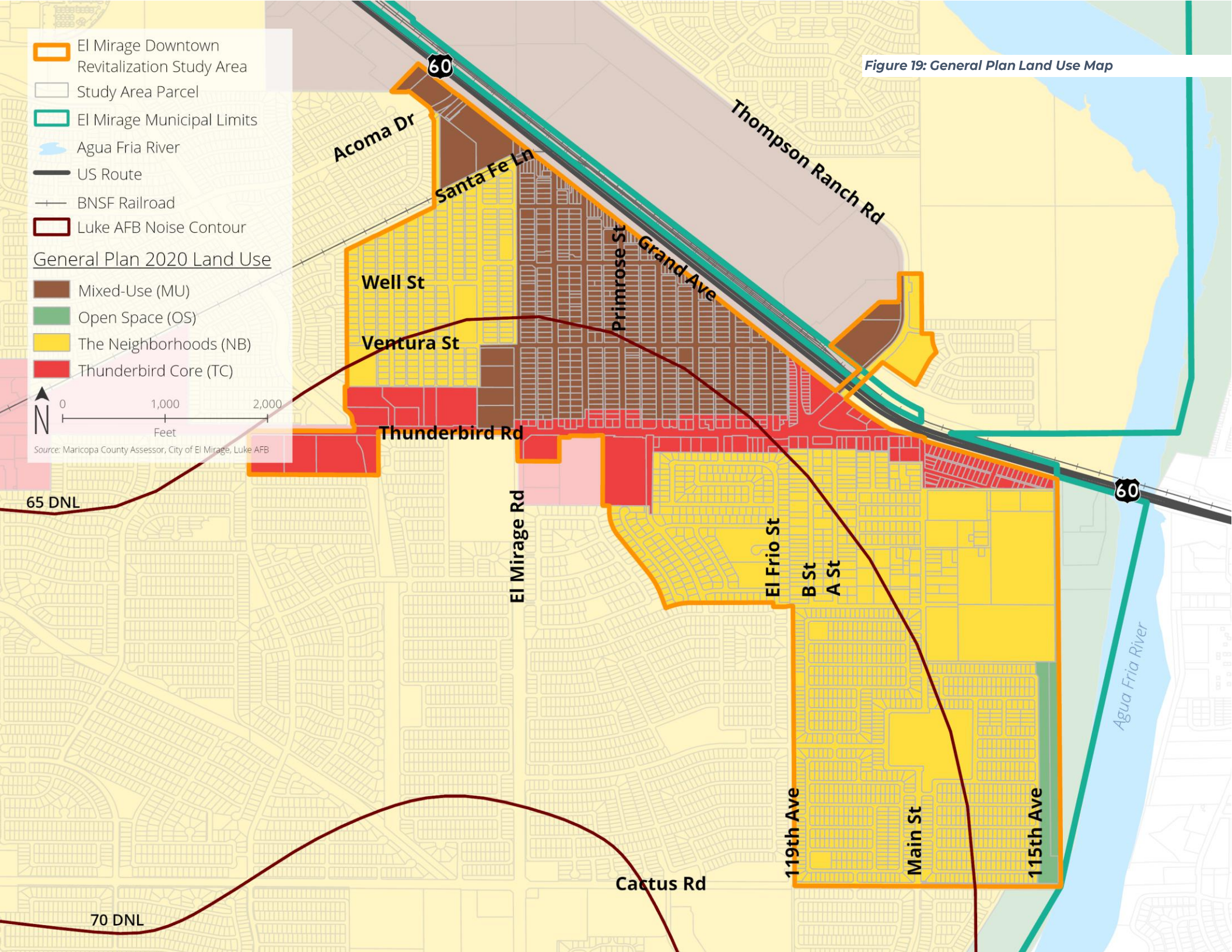
- El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
- Study Area Parcel
- El Mirage Municipal Limits
- Agua Fria River
- US Route
- BNSF Railroad
- Luke AFB Noise Contour

General Plan 2020 Land Use

- Mixed-Use (MU)
- Open Space (OS)
- The Neighborhoods (NB)
- Thunderbird Core (TC)



Source: Maricopa County Assessor, City of El Mirage, Luke AFB



Zoning

Grand Avenue and Thunderbird Road are the primary commercial corridors in the study area and are zoned Urban Corridor (UC). The area of the original townsite north of Thunderbird and roughly east of El Mirage Road is zoned for Mixed Urban (MU). Larger undeveloped parcels on the east side of the study area are also zoned MU. The rest of the study area is predominantly zoned Suburban Neighborhood (SN) with the exception of the Natural Reserve (NR) zoned parcel for Bill Gentry Park and the one parcel northeast of Grand Avenue zoned for Transit Development (TD). Collectively 50% of the study area is zoned for SN, 30% is zoned for MU, and 18% is zoned for UC.

Figure 20: Zoning Distribution

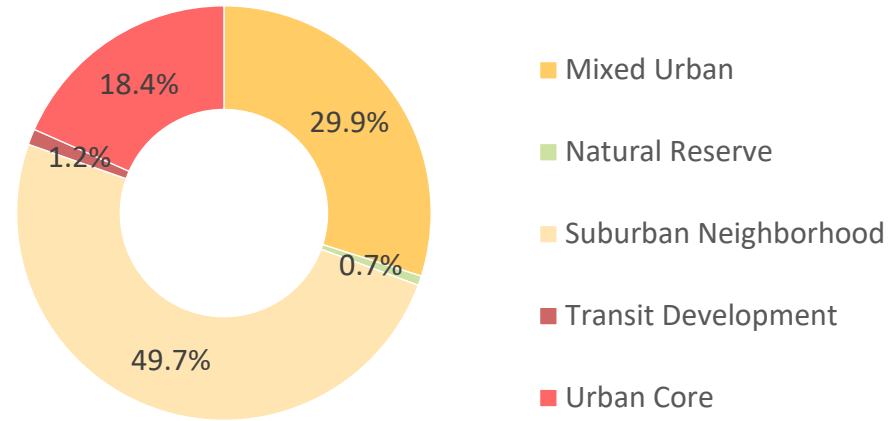


Table 4: Zoning Acreages

Zoning Acronym	Zoning Category	Acreage
MU	Mixed Urban	159.5
NR	Natural Reserve	4.0
SN	Suburban Neighborhood	265.0
TD	Transit Development	6.5
UC	Urban Core	98.0
(N/A)	Right-of-Way Acreage	145.0
Total		678.0

Source: City of El Mirage

Figure 21: Zoning Map

- El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
 - Study Area Parcel
 - El Mirage Municipal Limits
 - Agua Fria River
 - US Route
 - BNSF Railroad
 - Luke AFB Noise Contour
- Zoning**
- Mixed Urban
 - Natural Reserve
 - Suburban Neighborhood
 - Transit Development
 - Urban Core
- 0 1,000 2,000
Feet

Source: Maricopa County Assessor, City of El Mirage, Luke AFB

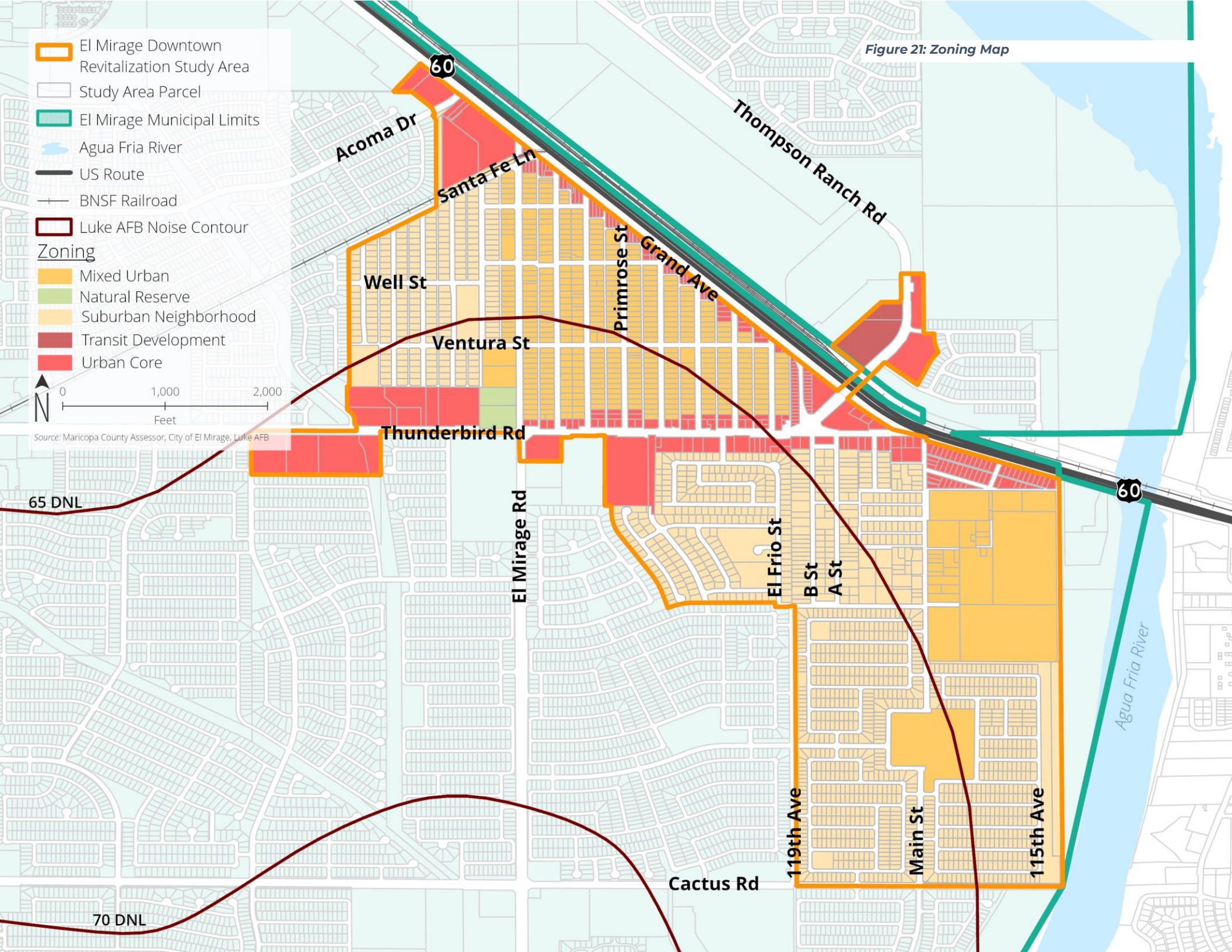
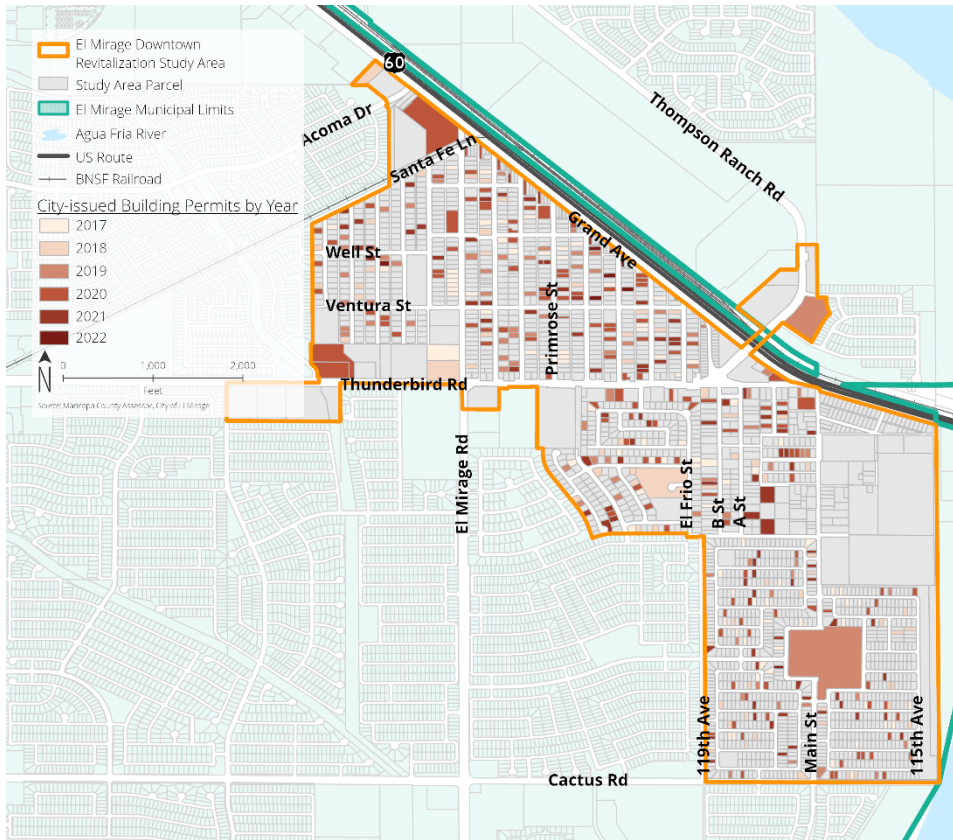


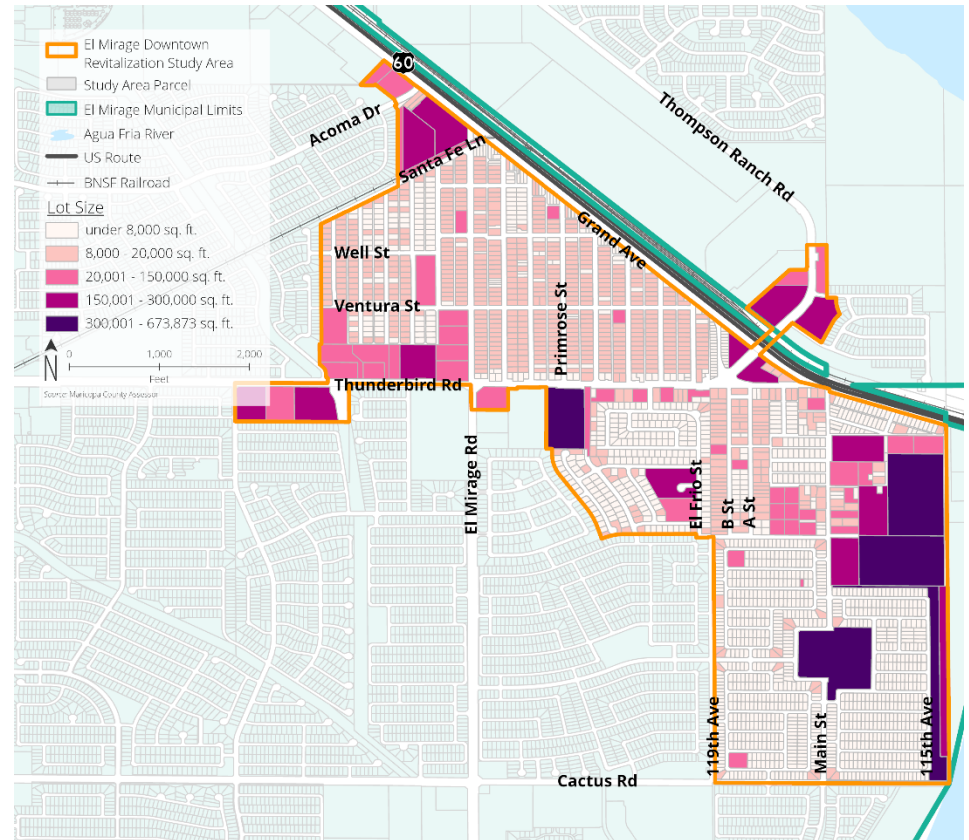
Figure 22: Building Permits



Building Permits

Over the past six years building permits have generally been distributed across the study area. However, many of the larger commercial parcels in the study area were issued building permits in 2020, while many of the building permits in Pueblo Futuro, Sunnyvale, and Arizona Brisas neighborhoods were issued more recently within the past three years.

Figure 23: Lot Size Map



Lot Size

Lot sizes in the study area can roughly be broken down into 3 categories: original townsite residential, 1990s Suburban residential, and larger commercial lots along Grand Avenue and Thunderbird Road. The largest lots are clustered along the east and north periphery of the Study Area as well as at the east and west gateways to Downtown along Thunderbird Road.

Vacant Land

There is a cluster of larger undeveloped lots in the eastern study area adjacent to the former active land fill site. Larger Lots of existing community scale commercial are located at key intersections along Thunderbird Road and Grand Avenue/US Route 60. The largest vacant lots exist northeast of Arizona Brisas neighborhood along the eastern study area boundary with the exception of the large vacant lot along Thunderbird Road adjacent to the Casa El Mirage Apartments. Smaller vacant lots line the north side of Thunderbird Road from El Mirage Road to the junction with the US-60. More than half of the existing vacant parcels are zoned Urban Core (UC). Followed by nearly a third being zoned for Mixed Urban (MU).

Figure 24: Vacant Land Parcel Zoning

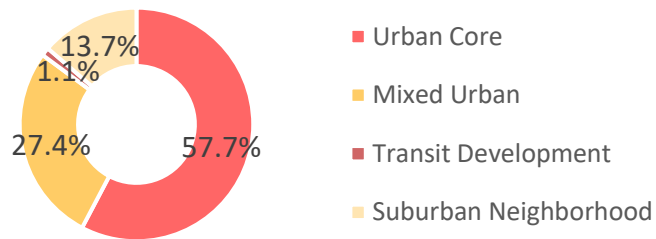
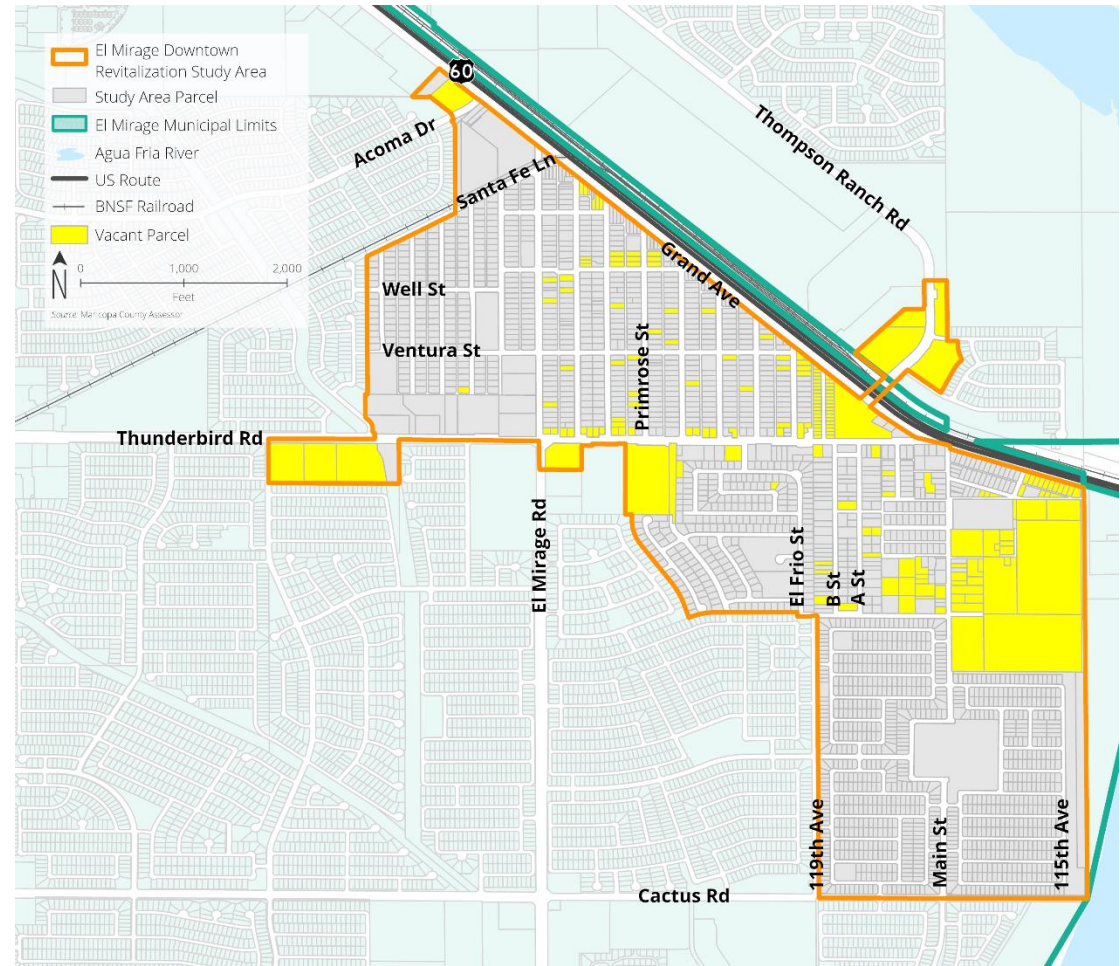


Table 5: Vacant Land Parcel Zoning Distribution

Zoning Acronym	Zoning Category	Number of Vacant Parcels
UC	Urban Core	101
MU	Mixed Urban	48
SN	Suburban Neighborhood	24
TD	Transit Development	2
Total		175

Figure 25: Vacant Land Map



Source: City of El Mirage

Gentry Park Master Plan 2022 Update

As the premier open space amenity in the study area, Gentry Park is a vital component of Downtown El Mirage. The Gentry Park Master Plan was recently updated by the City in 2022. The updated plan focuses on reprogramming the park space to be more effectively utilized as a regional park destination from the results of the Recreation Facility Assessment and Level of Service Analysis.

Crime

Crime counts were evaluated from January 1, 2021 to November 31, 2022. 166 incidents involving Drug Violations accounted for nearly one third (27%) of the crime in the study area. Simple Assault (14%), All other Larceny (11%), Aggravated Assault (6%), and Drug/Narcotic Violations (5%) round off the top 5 crime counts.

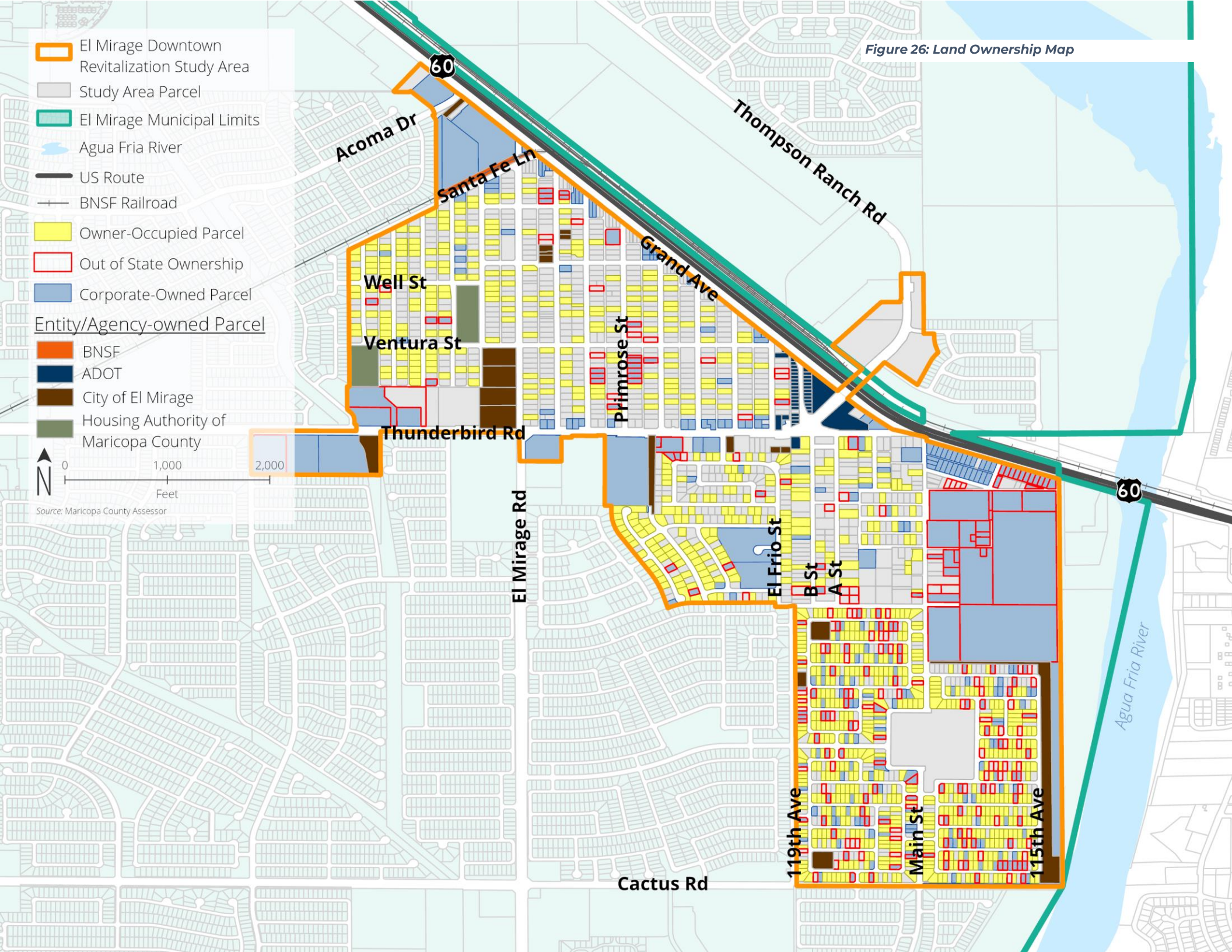
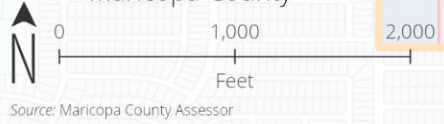
Land Ownership

The vast majority of the study area is privately owned. El Mirage owns select parcels in the study area inclusive of Bill Gentry Park, the Municipal Court, Senior Center and El Mirage Community Garden as well as a parcels along Alto Street for Public Works Administration and water utility infrastructure. The City also owns the parcel to the west of the US Post Office, Water tank parcels south of Thunderbird Road and the parcels for North and South Brisas Parks. Linear parcels along the wash alignment, Cesar Chaves Drive alignment and the drainage channel to the east of Arizona Brisas neighborhood are also owned by the City. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) owns a cluster of parcels at the southwestern intersection of Thunderbird Road and Grand Avenue/US Route 60. The BNSF Railroad owns the parcel just north of Santa Fe Lane for the rail spur on the northern side of the study area. The Housing Authority of Maricopa County owns two parcels of public housing located in the West Downtown neighborhood.

While Limited Liability Companies (LLC's) and out-of-state owned residential parcels are scattered across the study area, the Arizona Brisas neighborhood has a greater concentration of these non-owner occupied housing units than other neighborhoods in the study area.

Figure 26: Land Ownership Map

- El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area
- Study Area Parcel
- El Mirage Municipal Limits
- Agua Fria River
- US Route
- BNSF Railroad
- Owner-Occupied Parcel
- Out of State Ownership
- Corporate-Owned Parcel
- Entity/Agency-owned Parcel
 - BNSF
 - ADOT
 - City of El Mirage
 - Housing Authority of Maricopa County



Development Constraints

Floodplain

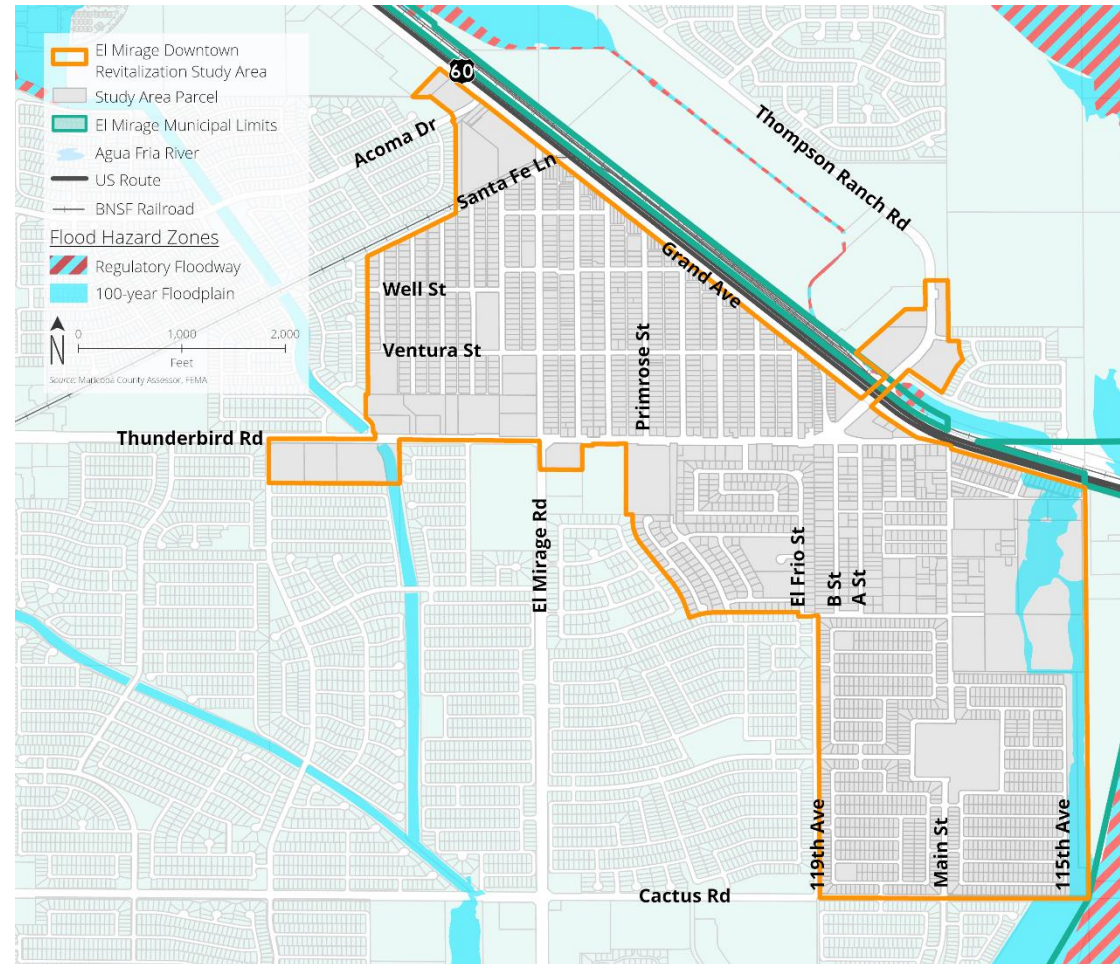
The Agua Fria River is a major floodway within El Mirage and the greater West Valley. While the river abuts a corner of the study area, it does not pose any direct limitation to the development within the study area. Scattered parcels along the eastern side of the study area fall within the 100 year flood plain as well as one parcel in the western portion of the study area south of Thunderbird within a wash that bisects the community.

Some parcels adjacent to the study area northeast along Grand Avenue/US Route 60 and the BNSF Railroad are part of the regulatory floodway. While technically not within the study area, the close proximity of the floodway to vacant parcels within the study area may require further technical considerations and drainage studies for final development.

Luke Airforce Base

Luke Airforce Base is located southeast of El Mirage. Due to the close proximity to the air force base, the City is greatly impacted by the base high noise contours and accident potential zones. Land uses within these areas are greatly limited by state statute A.R.S. §28-8481 to prevent interference with base operations and ensure civilian safety. Nearly half of the study area falls within the 65Idn High Noise Contour of Luke Air Force Base which has significant limitations on new or additional residential development

Figure 27: Floodplain Map



ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Educational Attainment

Over one third of the study area has less than a high school diploma, 29% have a High School Diploma and 10.2% have a Bachelor's Degree or Higher.

Unemployment

El Mirage's City unemployment rate is lower than the State overall and on par with the County overall. Census Tract 609.04 has a similar rate of unemployment around 5-6%. Census Tract 609.02 is higher at 7% and Census Tract 609.03 is nearly twice as high at 9.5% when compared to the City overall.

Poverty

In census tracts 609.03 and 609.04, the amount of people and families experiencing poverty is fairly consistent with the City overall. However, the poverty levels for people and families in census tract 609.02 are significantly higher, nearly double the rates of the City.

Income

The median household income for all three downtown census tracts is lower than the City, county and state median household income. Census tract 609.02 has the lowest median household income at \$43,650 where census tract 609.03 is just below the City's overall median.

Figure 28: Educational Attainment

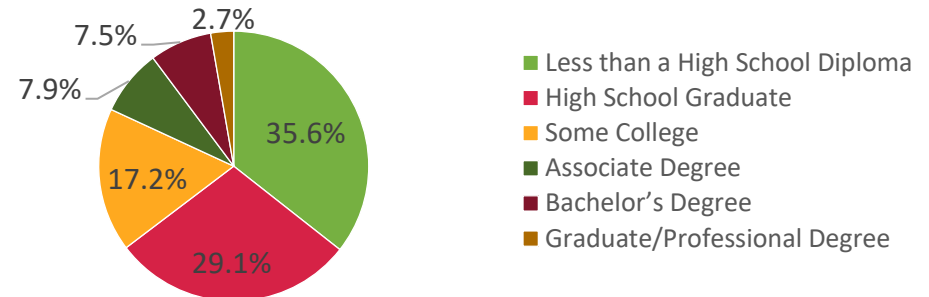


Figure 29: Unemployment Rate

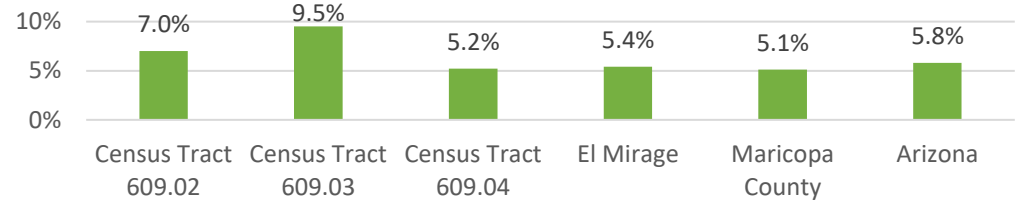


Figure 30: Poverty

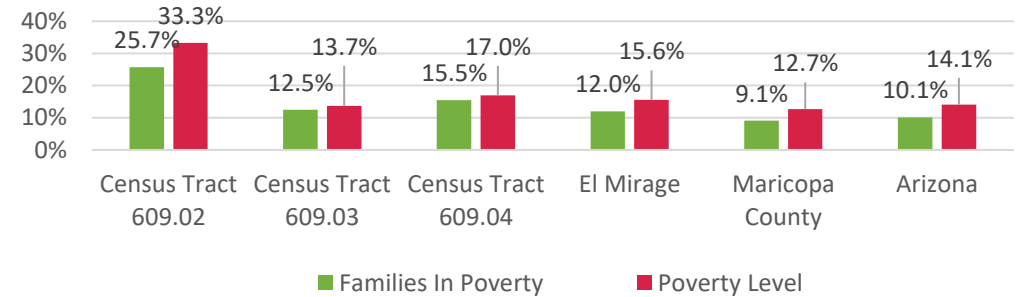
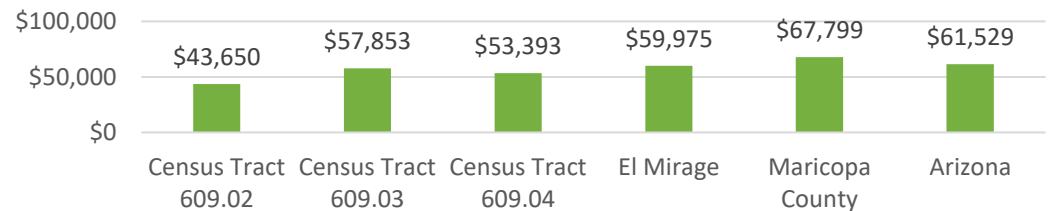


Figure 31: Median Household Income



All data on this page is sourced from: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates

Workforce by Industry and Occupations

32% of the City's workforce lives within the study area. Service Occupations account for 28.9% of the workforce in the study area followed by Management, Business, Science and Arts Occupations accounting for nearly one fourth of the workforce as well as Sales and Office Occupations at 20.7%. Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services industries employ the most workforce in the Study Area. Other significant workforce industries include Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate; Other Services except Public Administration; Transportation and Warehousing; and Wholesale Trade.

Figure 33: Workforce Occupations

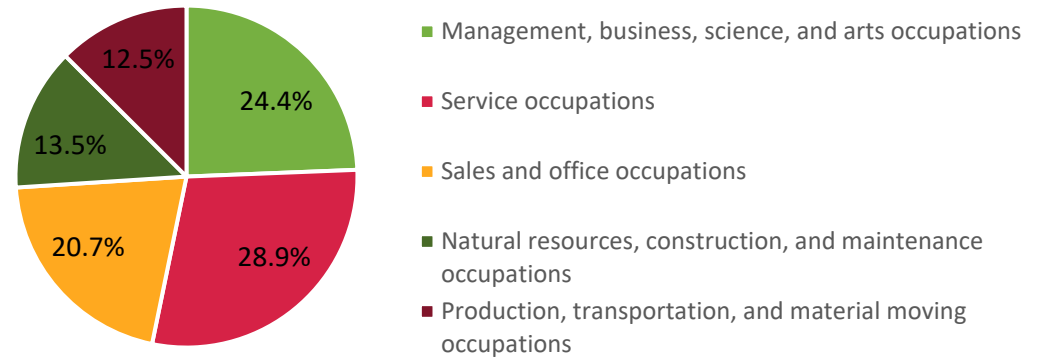
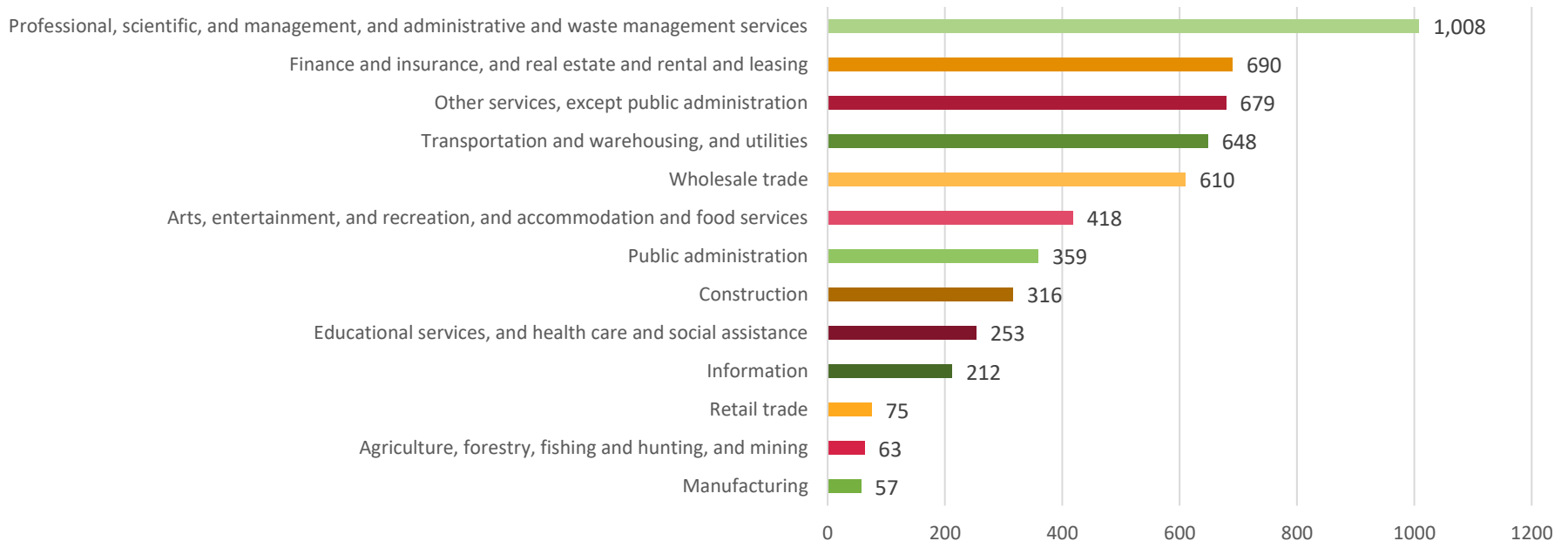


Figure 32: Workforce Industry Distribution



All data on this page is sourced from: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 5 Year Estimates.

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY

Retail Conditions

El Mirage Downtown commercial area provides the basic goods and services for the surrounding neighborhoods. The overall business mix consists of retail, service and food establishments. Coury's Grand Plaza is the main shopping center located in the study area with Food City as the main anchor. The remaining commercial enterprises within the Study Area are primarily scattered along the Grand Ave frontage road and Thunderbird Road. Old City Hall is located in the original townsite which now houses the Fellowship Church. Using a windshield tour for general reference, the overall condition of the commercial building stock in the study area ranges from needing minimal improvements (signage, paint, window replacements) to major façade renovations. El Mirage Road between Thunderbird Road and Santa Fe Lane is primarily residential on the east side of the road with Bill Gentry Park, the El Mirage Senior Center and the El Mirage Community Garden anchoring the west side of the street. The streetscape in this section of the project area has been reduced from four lanes to just two lanes of traffic with bike lanes, new sidewalks and landscaping added, all creating a friendlier and more walkable experience for residents and visitors. Just south of the project area along El Mirage Rd is the relocated new El Mirage Library which also adds to the synergy of this area.

Thunderbird Corridor consists of a mix of several shopping centers including Walmart anchoring the west boundary (at Dysart Rd. and Thunderbird Rd.) and the West Thunderbird Plaza and Plaza El Mirage. West Thunderbird Plaza is anchored by Domino's with a variety of other smaller shops and appears to be vibrant and in good physical condition. Plaza El Mirage appears to be underutilized and somewhat vacant with only one pop up restaurant operating in the parking lot. The Bill Gentry Park is located at the intersection of El Mirage and Thunderbird and adjacent to Plaza El Mirage. On the east end of Thunderbird Rd. there are a variety free standing business that are in varying condition from the new Family Dollar store to some needing major renovations.

There are a number of infill opportunities along the Thunderbird Corridor ranging from less than an acre to over 8 acres. All of the sites are currently in private ownership with the City owning no parcels within this section of the project area.

Buildings of Note

- City Building/Facilities
 - Bill Gentry Park (14010 N El Mirage Rd)
 - El Mirage Senior Center (14010 N El Mirage Rd)
 - El Mirage Community Garden (14010 N El Mirage Rd)
 - El Mirage Public Works Utility Customer Services (14011 N 1st Ave) (pending move)
 - El Mirage Community Services - Cada Uno Building (14406 N Alto St) (pending move)
 - Municipal Court (14010 N El Mirage Rd)
- US Post office (11925 W Thunderbird Rd)
- Community Health Center (12428 W Thunderbird Rd, El Mirage, AZ 85335)
- Dysart Community Center (14414 N El Mirage Rd)
- Retail Plazas
 - Coury's Grand Plaza (Food City Plaza) (12321 NW Grand Ave)
 - West Thunderbird Plaza (12500 W Thunderbird Rd)
 - Plaza El Mirage (12420 W Thunderbird Rd)
 - Blue Retail Building (12102 W Thunderbird Rd) (See #4 on Table 6)

Building Vacancies

There are currently five building vacancies identified by the City’s Economic Development Department for business attraction. Four of those sites are zoned Urban Core, with the remaining site zoned Mixed Urban. Sites 3 and 4 are retail plazas and sites 1, 2, and 5 are light industrial uses. Site 5 has been identified for redevelopment from the City. The Mercado, also known as Plaza El Mirage (12420 W. Thunderbird Road), is only 25% occupied. A real estate report prepared for the City lists the building constructed in 1980 with a total of 48,000 sq ft.

The two largest commercial areas are Thunderbird Plaza and Coury’s Grand Plaza, both of which are fully occupied. Auto Zone purchased a vacant building near Walmart and has expansion plans for the space. Coury’s Plaza rents month-to-month and is primarily Spanish speaking businesses. Food City is the anchor and total square footage for the plaza is 62,000 sq ft. The plaza was built in 1976. The City currently has approved plans for a Rally Burger, Jiffy Lube, and El Mirage Car Wash within the study area.

Figure 34: Map of Building Vacancies

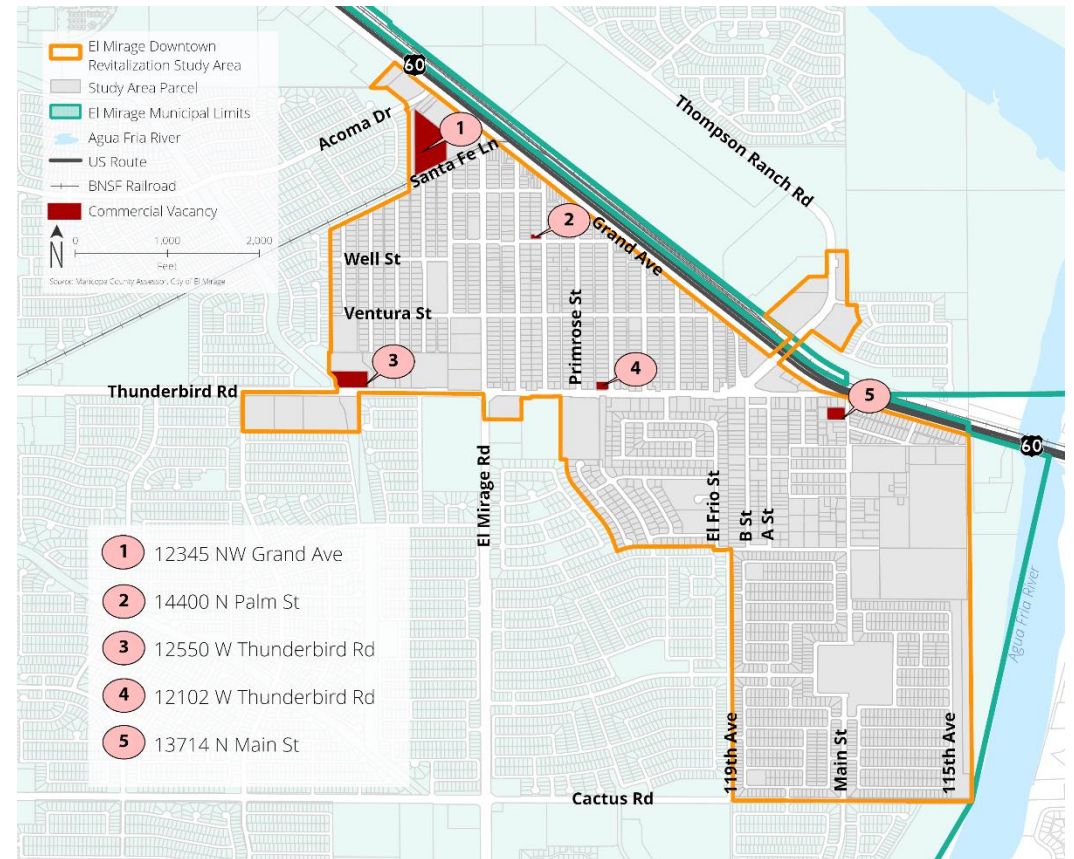


Table 6: Vacant Buildings in Study Area

Site #	Address	Type of Space	Min. Size	Max Size	Zoning	Year Built	Total Acres	Opportunity Zone	Status
1	12345 NW Grand Ave	Industrial	12,000 sqft	12,000 sqft	UC	1969	5	No	For Sale
2	14400 N Palm St	Industrial	2,200 sqft	2,200 sqft	MU	2012	0.18	Yes	For Sale
3	12550 W Thunderbird Rd	Retail	950 sqft	2,176 sqft	UC	2004	2.01	Yes	For Lease
4	12102 W Thunderbird Rd	Retail			UC	2005	0.35	Yes	For Sale
5	13714 N Main St	Industrial	32,670 sqft	32,670 sqft	UC	2022	0.75	No	For Sale

Source: City of El Mirage

MAG Employment Data

The Maricopa Association of Governments compiles regional employment data via a survey of businesses with five or more employees. From this survey the Top 5 Ranking Employers in the study area are identified in **Table 8** with ties for 4th and 5th place. Significant employment clusters for the study area are within Retail, Business and Consumer Services (*See Table 7*).

Health of Business Mix

In the Retail Leakage and Surplus Analysis report completed for the City by Buxton, the quantitative comparison of retail leakage and surplus in the twelve major store types indicated that El Mirage has an estimate retail sales leakage of \$57,175,373. Retail leakage means that residents are spending more for products than local businesses capture suggesting that there is unmet demand in the trade area and that the community can support additional store space for all twelve of the major store types.

Table 7: Employment Cluster Summary

Cluster	# of Employers	# of Employees
Business Services	1	140
Consumer Services	11	120
Retail	7	110
Education	2	80
Transportation & Distribution	3	50
Construction	3	30
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate (FIRE)	3	20
Government, Social, & Advocacy Services	2	20
Telecommunications	3	20
Health Care	1	7
Media, Publishing & Entertainment	1	5

Table 8: Top 5 Employers by Number of Employees

Rank	Employer Name	# of Employees	Cluster	NAICS Description
1	Parks & Sons of Sun City Inc	140	Business Services	Solid Waste Collection
2	Dysart Unified School District 89	80	Education	Elementary and Secondary Schools
3	Food City	70	Retail	Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores
4	Rio Mirage Cafe Y Cantina	30	Consumer Services	Full-Service Restaurants
	United States Postal Service	30	Transportation & Distribution	Postal Service
5	Mario's Pizza	20	Consumer Services	Limited-Service Restaurants
	Grand Enterprises Inc	20	Construction	Residential Remodelers
	Dominos Pizza	20	Consumer Services	Limited-Service Restaurants

Sources: Maricopa Association of Governments Employers of 5+ Employees Database

Small Business Roundtable Discussion

On August 17, 2022, The City of El Mirage held a roundtable discussion and conducted small business visitations. Two of the 11 businesses in attendance of the roundtable meeting were located in the study area. Flyers, social media, digital boards, and personal visits were employed to notify 49 businesses about the meeting. The City also spoke to 17 Spanish speaking businesses to gather information on training needs and encouraged them to attend the roundtable event. Comments from businesses in the study area from the meeting and visits include the following:

- Property crime to include graffiti, illegal dumping, shoplifting, and loitering are the prime issues small businesses face.
- Inadequate parking east of El Mirage Road on Thunderbird is an issue.
- No businesses took advantage of PPP or Idle Loans during the pandemic.
- Many businesses struggle with hiring and keeping employees.
- Businesses are very concerned with rising costs from suppliers.
- Most businesses have recovered from losses due to the pandemic.
- Auto repair is doing better because people are holding on to their old vehicles.
- RV sales have increased as a result of the pandemic.

Economic Development Incentives

Opportunity Zone

The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act created the Opportunity Zone tax incentive program to encourage public and private investment into economically distressed areas. This designation encourages capital investment into select census tracts in each state. Census tract 609.02 in the City of El Mirage has been identified as an Opportunity Zone and covers the northern portions of the study area roughly from Thunderbird Road North to Grand Avenue and the BNSF rail spur/Santa Fe Lane.

HUBZone Program

The US Small Business Administration facilitates the HUBZone program for fostering small business growth in historically underutilized business zones. The program aims to award at least 3% of federal contract dollars to HUBZone certified companies each year. All three census tracts within the study area are SBA HUBZone designated. Qualified businesses within these census tracts may qualify for set-aside contracts from the federal government.

Other Incentives:

- New Market Tax Credits
- No Development Impact Fees – Savings can reach to more than \$600k
- Accelerated permitting process
- No Additional Construction Sales Taxes
- Pre-Approval Foreign Trade Zone – Up to 75% property tax reduction
- Arizona Job Training Program – Up to \$5k per eligible new employee
- Qualified Facility Tax Credit Program – Provides a refundable tax credit
- Accelerated depreciation on real property
- Quality Jobs Tax Credit – Qualifying companies may receive up to a \$9k income tax credit for each new “quality job” created over a three-year period.
- Private Activity Bonds – Issued by local industrial development authorities on behalf of local government entities for private users.
- Programs – The City has offered classes designed to help small businesses and entrepreneurship at the new library.

Organizational Structure Supporting Commercial Revitalization

Many economic development organizations contribute to the long-term success of communities and their downtowns. El Mirage is an active participating member of International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), Urban Land Institute (ULI), and WESTMARC. The City does not have an official business association or Chamber of Commerce specific to El Mirage. However, the Surprise Regional Chamber of Commerce serves five communities of the northwest Valley: Surprise, Sun City, Sun City West, El Mirage and Youngtown since 1963. The nearest Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is located at Glendale Community College in Glendale.

Marketing and Promotional Activities

Community Events and Programming

El Mirage has a well-developed community programming schedule. The City hosts four large community events: Fall Harvest Festival (October), Winterfest (December), Public Safety Day (February), and Spring Faire (April). The City offers businesses the opportunity to apply to be a community vendor and/or a food vendor in addition to sponsorship opportunities for each of the events. It was estimated that 5,000 attended the 2022 Fall Harvest Festival.

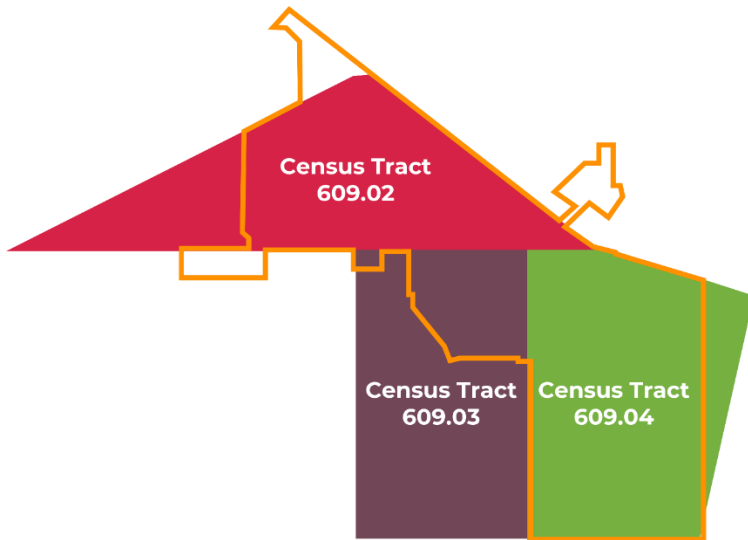
Communication and Social Media

The City Quarterly Newsletter, “El Mirage Connect”, is printed and mailed quarterly to all El Mirage households and businesses as well as made available electronically on the City’s website. The City also maintains a Facebook page (4.8k followers); Twitter (2,124 followers); Instagram (1,297 followers), YouTube Channel (26 subscribers), Next Door account and LinkedIn Business Profile (582 followers).

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

This section provides recommendations based on the key findings from the study's existing conditions and public input. Opportunities and Constraints are identified to form a foundational starting point for the Study Area.

Figure 35: Study Area Census Tracts



KEY FINDINGS

The overwhelming majority of the study area's housing stock is detached single family units that were built during the 1950's and owner occupied. Much of the housing stock in the West Downtown, East Downtown North Thunderbird, East Downtown South Thunderbird, and Sunnyvale neighborhoods is at least 50 years of age, making them eligible for potential registration and designation as historic properties. Census tract 609.04 has seen a greater increase in rental housing units over time than compared to the other two downtown census tracts specifically in the Arizona Brisas neighborhood. Both sales prices and rents have increased in El Mirage over the past decade with a significant shift in affordability. The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic caused a surge in housing prices in 2020 that has only been further exacerbated in 2021 and 2022 with more housing market volatility.

Census tract 609.02 has consistently different economic indicators than the other two downtown census tracts. This is inclusive of a lower median household income, higher median age and average household size, as well as higher rates of poverty and unemployment.

Overall, the higher median age and larger household sizes are indicative of older families and multi-generational families living within the study area. This is further represented with the larger populations of under 19 years of age and the 35-54 Age Cohorts.

The study area has a workforce highly specialized in Service Occupations within Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services Industry. Most people within the study area have a high school education or higher.

Land Use and Zoning overall are fairly conducive to promoting redevelopment and should not pose a significant impediment to development potential. Existing commercial development is localized along Thunderbird Road and Grand Ave/US Route 60. The Thunderbird Core Land Use promotes a more pedestrian friendly character along Thunderbird Road, a key commercial corridor in the study area. The East Downtown North Thunderbird neighborhood and the large cluster of vacant parcels along the eastern boundary of the study area south of Plaza Manuel Ortega Apartments hold more flexibility in development potential with their current land use and zoning designations.

The Floodplain of the Agua Fria does not impede the development potential of the study area, however some parcels remain greatly impacted by 100 year flood plain hazard inclusive of the wash parcel in the western study area and the cluster of large vacant parcels along the eastern boundary of the study area. Special considerations for drainage may be needed due to the close proximity of a regulatory floodway to the vacant commercial sites north of Grand Avenue/US Route 60.

Nearly half of the study area falls within the 65 DNL Noise Contour of Luke AFB greatly limiting further residential development along most of Thunderbird Road and the Pueblo Futuro, Sunnyvale, and Arizona Brisas neighborhoods.

Most of the vacant land in the study area is centrally located along Thunderbird Road and Thompson Ranch Road. Other significant clusters of vacant parcels exist northeast of the Arizona Brisas neighborhood along the eastern study area

boundary and smaller clusters along Grand Avenue/ US Route 60 and in the East Downtown North Thunderbird neighborhood. Vacant lot sizes along Thunderbird are conducive to retail development but may require shared parking solutions to maximize developable space. One of the biggest challenges for commercial growth in the revitalization area is lack of leasable space. Most retail buildings are occupied and the cost to build is too high at this point in time.

ADOT owns a significant cluster of vacant parcels at essentially the gateway to the downtown area at Thunderbird Rd. and Grand Avenue/US Route 60.

All three downtown census tracts are designated in the SBA HUBZones and census tract 609.02 is designated as an Opportunity Zone both of which have great potential for expanding investment into local businesses in the area.

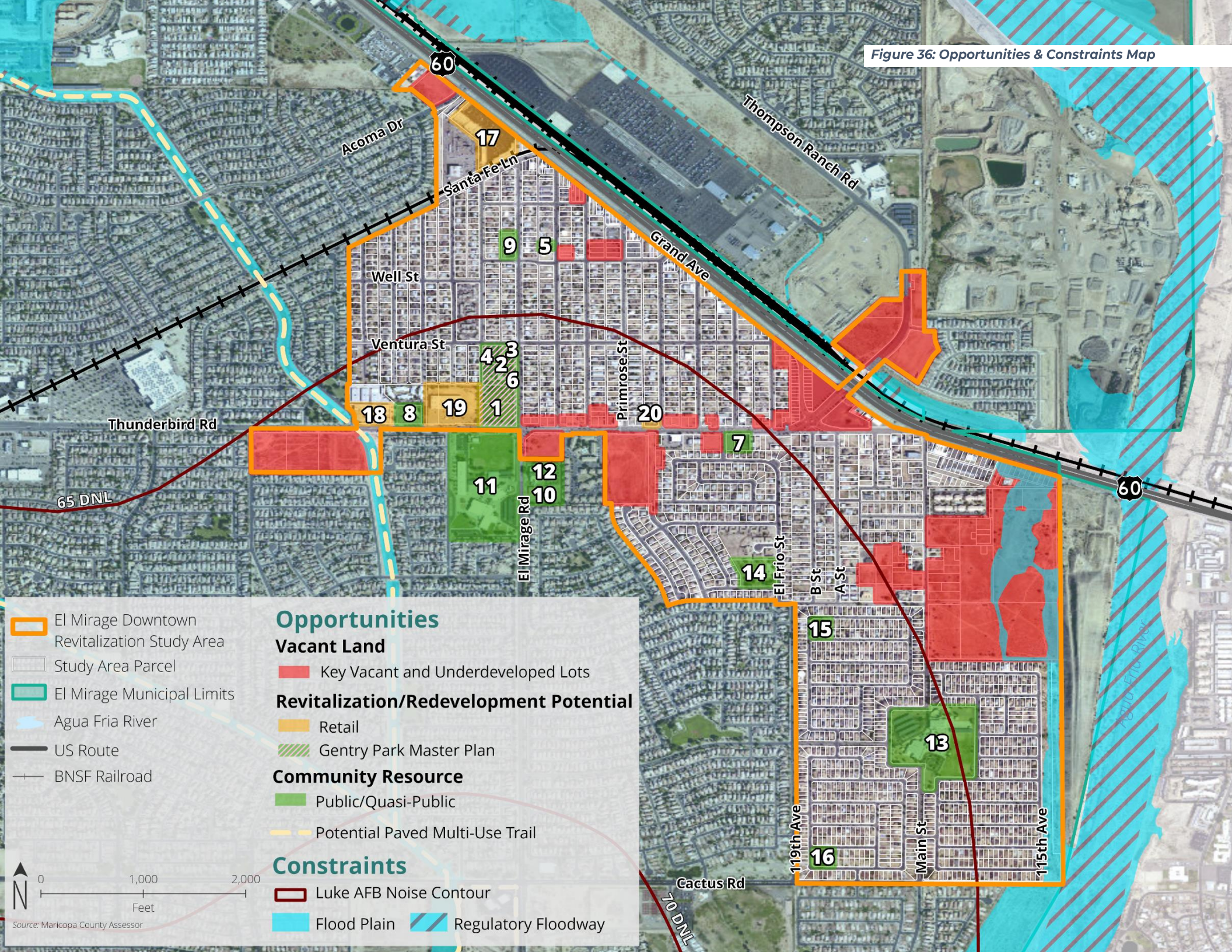
Study Area Assets

In terms of regional transportation, the study area is well connected regionally with both the US-60 and BNSF Railroad, which could possibly support commuter rail in the future, presenting significant assets to the Downtown Area. Proposed trail alignments along the wash corridors through the City could also provide additional multi-modal connectivity. The study area also contains a variety of assets inclusive of public/quasi-public community resources and retail plazas that are currently vacant. Collectively, these assets provide opportunity for more consistent foot traffic with regular and specialized trips to downtown. These assets are identified in the following table and map.

Table 9: Study Area Assets Inventory

#	Asset	Asset Type
1	Bill Gentry Park	Public/Quasi-Public Community Resources
2	Senior Center	
3	Community Garden	
4	Public Works Utility Customer Services	
5	Community Services - Cada Uno Building	
6	Municipal Court	
7	US Post office	
8	Community Health Center	
9	Dysart Community Center	
10	Library	
11	El Mirage Elementary School	
12	Fire Station	
13	Riverview Elementary School	
14	Pueblo Futuro Neighborhood Park	
15	North Brisas Park	
16	South Brisas Park	
17	Coury's Grand Plaza (Food City Plaza)	Retail Plazas
18	West Thunderbird Plaza	
19	Plaza El Mirage	
20	12102 W Thunderbird Rd	

Figure 36: Opportunities & Constraints Map



El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Study Area	Opportunities
Study Area Parcel	Vacant Land
El Mirage Municipal Limits	Key Vacant and Underdeveloped Lots
Agua Fria River	Revitalization/Redevelopment Potential
US Route	Retail
BNSF Railroad	Gentry Park Master Plan
	Community Resource
	Public/Quasi-Public
	Potential Paved Multi-Use Trail
	Constraints
	Luke AFB Noise Contour
	Flood Plain
	Regulatory Floodway



Source: Maricopa County Assessor

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

Created using information obtained through the existing condition assessment and priorities identified through the community engagement process, the Revitalization Strategy outlined in this section is intended to provide an implementation roadmap for Downtown El Mirage.

The organization of this section has been broken out into two components, Downtown Vision – “Where we are headed” and Revitalization Concepts – “How We’ll Get There”. Each Concept is defined by a set of strategies that are then supported by specific actions that can be carried out by the City, local stakeholders, private investors and/or residents. While many of the strategies and actions outlined within the section can be addressed through independent efforts, the greatest level of success will most likely be achieved through collaborative partnerships.

Through public input and coordination with key stakeholders, the following vision statement was drafted to form the basis for the El Mirage Downtown Revitalization Concepts described and illustrated within this section.

Downtown Vision

Downtown El Mirage is the city’s centerpiece, offering a casual environment where residents and visitors of all ages can gather. New development provides a cultural mixture of uses that enhance the visual quality and capacity of the area, while also preserving compatibility with existing character contributing development. Downtown includes a diverse range of housing types, retail uses, services, public spaces, and recreational opportunities. It functions as the heart of the community, offering opportunity for residents to create stronger social bonds as well as provides destination opportunities for visitors from the greater region.

Revitalization Concepts

The Revitalization Concepts are guided by an overarching vision and then sorted into five topic areas – Perception & Safety, History & Culture, Community Building, Economic Opportunity & Growth, Experiences & Public Realm. Each Revitalization Concept is structured by specific strategies, which are further supported by outlining individual actions that provide more direct implementation guidance. While many of the strategies and actions outlined within the section can be addressed through independent efforts, the greatest level of success will most likely be achieved through collaborative partnerships.

Welcome, Clean & Safe Must be the Baseline

- Perception & Safety -



Celebrate Downtown's existing assets and ensure future growth supports the creation of an attractive and safe district. Businesses should contribute to the overall character of the area, homeowners must feel that ongoing property maintenance and improvement investments will pay off, and residents overall should feel good about living in the downtown area.

DO

Strategy: Keep downtown as clean and visually appealing as possible.

Actions:

- On a quarterly basis, assemble a group of Downtown business/property owners and residents to conduct a thorough assessment of the overall cleanliness of Downtown (including adjacent neighborhoods) and the condition of all public amenities. Create a checklist and forward any issues or concerns to the appropriate agency, property owner, or business owner.
- Hold a "Spruce Up Downtown" event, potentially in late October (fourth Saturday of the month) in conjunction with National "Make a Difference Day".

- Create and distribute a "Downtown Clean and Safe" bulletin that lists clean and safe information relevant to Downtown businesses, commercial property owners, and Downtown residents.

Strategy: Encourage neighborhood/property owner-initiated improvements and beautification work on existing properties.

Actions:

- Coordinate with HUD and other not-for-profit organizations to explore property improvement grants. Promote and utilize funding resources, such as CDBG and HOME program funding, to provide owner-occupied housing rehabilitation assistance and/or advance home repairs to address health and safety hazards. This includes continuing/educating residents on programs such as the Community Action Program (CAP).
- Continue to encourage key property and business owners to improve their storefronts and business signage to enhance downtown's image by promoting and showcasing best practice conditions that contribute to the positive character of the surrounding area.
- Promote high-quality infrastructure and amenity improvements in strategic public areas to further bolster the confidence of property owners to invest in their properties and establish higher standards when they do. Improvements to these public areas will be highly visible to residents citywide and the broader market, so their contributing impact will be greater.
- Continue ongoing and consistent Code enforcement efforts. Code enforcement staff should undertake proactive inspections rather than rely solely on a complaint-based system.

DON'T

Spend too much time or effort ridding select areas of problem properties. All communities have them. Often, focusing limited time and resources on negative conditions is far more costly than leveraging pre-existing strengths.

Tell the Authentic Story

- History & Culture -



Build on the historic and cultural assets of El Mirage and the downtown area to create a place and a culture of inclusivity unlike any other.

DO

Strategy: Position Downtown as a destination by building on El Mirage's heritage and cultural assets.

Actions:

- Downtown needs a better-defined brand that speaks to its unique identity and tells an authentic story. Develop a unified visual concept (logo) and message for both "Thunderbird Blvd." as well as "Downtown El Mirage" and incorporate it in all marketing collateral used for each specific area and encouraging businesses to use the logo in their own advertising and marketing campaigns.
- Implement new Gateway Signage that is specific to Downtown El Mirage.
- Look for opportunities to celebrate Downtown's culture and history in public places (murals, celebrations, streetscape improvements, public amenities). Focus on significant clustering of cultural assets to maximize affect. Consider establishing a citizen led art commission or working group that can help to recommend and prioritize program efforts.

- Welcome opportunity for spontaneous cultural programming. Emphasize temporary, interactive, engaging works that utilize existing infrastructure (bus shelters, utility boxes, light posts, sidewalks and crosswalks). Collaborate with west valley art organizations like WHAM or non-arts community-based organizations like schools, churches, social service agencies, and recreation centers that provide cultural opportunities as part of their programming.
- Look for opportunities to fully leverage new developments for entrepreneurial and business opportunities as well as bringing new markets to downtown.
- In concert with forming a downtown business group, develop a marketing campaign to help promote Downtown and its amenities to locals, new residents, dayworkers, etc.

DON'T

Remove the Downtown area of older homes and buildings, unless buildings are structurally unsafe. Just because an older building is in disrepair, does not mean it should be demolished. Seek federal, state, and/or private grant funding or historic designation status to unlock funds to help facilitate culture and character preservation.

Create Healthy Neighborhoods

- Community Building -



Expand the places and spaces for people in Downtown to connect with one another and create stronger social bonds. Building connections improves a community's ability to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.

DO

Strategy: Through purposeful interactions and design approaches, connect neighbors socially and neighborhoods physically to each other.

Actions:

- Work to create a sense of pride within individual neighborhoods by establishing and/or promoting an identifiable name. Branding neighborhoods can help to create a unique identity and allow for variation of desired character and uses.
- Identify residents or homeowner associations who are active "champions" for the betterment of the downtown area and connect them to each other to increase the social capital of the area and increase shared decision making.
- Assist resident champions in working together on small projects such as blight remediation, facilitation of pop-up block parties, or other such activities to foster neighborhood relationships.

- Explore opportunities to enhance non-vehicular connectivity, by identifying local or collector classified roadways as walkable, multi-modal transportation corridors that can connect to Thunderbird Road and the larger planned community trail system. One example could consist of enhancing 119th Ave and El Frio St, from Cactus Road to Thunderbird Road.

Strategy: Create complete and healthy neighborhoods that provide complimentary land uses and amenities within their borders to meet the lifestyle needs of its residents.

Actions:

- Work with supporting agencies, like Chicanos Por La Causa, to advance affordable housing initiatives and programs.
- In response to community survey results, rather than establish a regional destination center that seeks to attract visitors from the greater region or a niche place that seeks to offer residents with convenience retail stores, promote downtown as a meeting place that is the center of community activities with a mix of coffee shops, brew pubs, cultural and recreation spaces.
- Encourage development of vacant smaller parcels that front onto Thunderbird Road by utilizing on-street parking efficiently and strategically to reduce off-street parking needs.
- Long term, as vacant parcels along Thunderbird Road are developed, consider opportunities to strategically locate public parking on the west side of El Mirage Road adjacent to Bill Gentry Park and on the east side of El Mirage Road in proximity to existing transit stops.

DON'T

Institute efforts that specifically focus on accommodating new populations that ignore the needs of longstanding residents who have sustained the neighborhood over time.

Double-Down on Investment & Entrepreneurship

- Economic Opportunity & Growth -



Bring more buzz to Downtown through promoting small-business investment with emphasis on empowering local entrepreneurs.

DO

Strategy: Continue to balance local small shop operations with select formula-based regional and nationally recognized businesses through a strategic business recruitment program matching type of businesses with appropriate locations.

Actions:

- Look for the highest and best uses for vacancies and infill opportunities that will support the vision for Downtown.
 - Work with land brokers and real estate agents to ensure they are marketing smaller, vacant parcels that are contiguous (particularly along Thunderbird Rd), together as larger parcels to expand their development potential.
 - Be open to flexible, creative ways to activate street-front retail and support smaller shop formats by seeking out cutting edge, newer types of formats (such as pop-up businesses in empty storefronts, vendor kiosks,

merchandise/retail & restaurant mix type of concepts, several businesses sharing same location, etc.)

- Continue to explore the dynamics of downtown's business clusters as they evolve so that new business prospects can be guided to strategic locations
- Establish priority recruitment targets and locations.
 - Utilize the findings from the various market analyses, reports, and surveys to create a list of potential business prospects to pursue. Assess each business's site location needs including space requirements, median household income, and parking. Determine potential Downtown locations for each business on the list.
 - Assemble a business recruitment packet consisting of strategic market data and promotional information. Develop marketing materials that showcase the vision for Downtown El Mirage and its location, area amenities, demographics, and potential commercial demand.
 - Host a biannual broker round table meeting to discuss vacant commercial space, upcoming opportunities, and other related issues or concerns among the Downtown commercial building owners and management companies.
 - Achieve a strong, consistent presence on the Internet that globally markets downtown El Mirage as a great location to establish a business. The City of El Mirage's website should communicate to potential business prospects the desirability of locating future ventures in the Downtown and provide abundant information to help prospects make the decision to do so.
 - Link economic development and business support organizations websites to the City's site.
- Reveal leads for new business prospects by networking inside and outside the community.
- Leverage public facilities and their uses as a means to attracting residents to Downtown.

Strategy: Implement a comprehensive business-strengthening program focused on assisting businesses with sustaining their existing ventures (retention) and supporting their efforts for growing (expansion).

Actions:

- Maintain an accurate database of all Downtown business and property owners.
- Conduct systematic business visitations to build a stronger network among the Downtown business community, help link businesses with resources and technical assistance, and identify any issues or concerns.
- Provide education and technical assistance to enhance business-operating practices, such as connecting small businesses with APS to provide energy efficiency opportunities to reduce operating costs.
- Form a business group that represents the local business community to assist with strengthening the communication and relationships between the City and the downtown businesses.
- Create and distribute a business and property owner electronic — “Downtown News Flash”.
- Host a Downtown business and property owner brown bag lunch to gather feedback from owners regarding their current needs or issues concerning leasing, improving, or selling their properties. Consider periodically having a guest speaker to discuss such topics as the Americans with Disabilities Act, financing available for rehabilitations, and fire and safety regulations.

- Offer an annual “Tour of Downtown” to showcase new openings, redevelopment projects, improvements under way at local properties and buildings and opportunities for investment in Downtown.
- Implement formal groundbreaking and/or ribbon cuttings for new projects and business openings.
- Create and distribute a press release to local, regional, and state agencies about project and/or business, level of investment and responsible organizations/individuals.
- Implement a formal recognition program to honor improvements being made by business and property owners.

DON'T

Work everywhere at once in the downtown area. The overall focus area is fairly large, where the facilitation of sporadic and varying improvement efforts could get lost. To maximize the effectiveness of City efforts, actions should be grouped to create synergies and initial physical improvements that can be easily seen from the location of another should be prioritized.

Be Bold, Challenge Sameness

- Experiences & Public Realm -



Have bold and ambitious aspirations for what El Mirage's downtown can be. Celebrate the downtown as a place of great distinction rather than "more of the same".

DO

Strategy: Support innovation, experimentation and nontraditional forms of land use and design.

Actions:

- Don't be afraid of encouraging new types of activities, businesses, and organization collaborations that can foster a unique sense of place. Some of the most enjoyable and memorable places are a direct result of bold growth elements that combine to create a distinct experience.
 - Focus on building a one-of-a-kind public space where neighbors and visitors can come together. As new businesses open in proximity, they may benefit from, and in turn, expand the activity in the area, allowing for the creation of a signature gathering spot.

- Development efforts often require a certain level of activity in an area to justify the high investment. Tactical urbanism strategies outline low-risk, temporary solutions to help bring more activity to an area and thus incrementally lead to more long-term improvements. Consider pre-vitalization tactical urbanism applications like a food truck corral or pop-up shops for artists in select areas.
 - Working hand in hand with local artists and businesses, develop an "Art in El Mirage" type of event or promotion that aligns artists with businesses. The event could be held as a quarterly event and include all forms of art including dancing, art demonstrations, arts in studio, art in public places, etc. The event could include storytelling be a driving tour with places to stop, scheduled performances during the month, school art exhibits, walking event in downtown where art is exhibited in businesses, etc. The objective of this type of event is to encourage residents to come downtown and support local art, culture and business.

DON'T












Overly restrict design. Upholding minimum design standards is important to promoting a safe and high-quality environment. However, implementing extensive design regulations can stifle creativity and remove opportunity for "successful" accidental outcomes.

REVITALIZATION FRAMEWORK

This Framework Plan works to physically exhibit the transformative actions detailed in this section that can be catalysts for investment and revitalization of Downtown El Mirage.

Revitalization Concepts:

-  **Welcome, Clean & Safe Must be the Baseline**
- Perception & Safety -
-  **Tell the Authentic Story**
- History & Culture -
-  **Create Healthy Neighborhoods**
- Community Building -
-  **Double-Down on Investment & Entrepreneurship**
- Economic Opportunity & Growth -
-  **Be Bold, Challenge Sameness**
- Experiences & Public Realm -

ID#	Action	Revitalization Concept
1	Hold “Spruce Up Downtown” events to maintain a welcoming, clean and safe environment	
2	Explore ability to provide property improvement grants for small businesses	
3	Support high-quality amenity and infrastructure improvements	
4	Continue ongoing and consistent code enforcement	
5	Provide enhanced gateway signage that is specific to the Downtown area/brand	
6	Cluster permanent and temporary art installations that celebrate El Mirage’s culture and history	
7	Brand neighborhoods within the study area to create unique character areas within the Downtown	
8	Enhance non-vehicular connectivity by identifying collector and local streets as walkable, multi-modal corridors	
9	Strategically locate off-street public parking on Thunderbird Rd.	
10	Provide education and technical assistance to existing small businesses	
11	Market smaller, vacant parcels that are contiguous, together as larger parcels	

DOWNTOWN EL MIRAGE REVITALIZATION PLAN

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Figure 37: Revitalization Framework



- 1 Hold "Spruce Up Downtown" events to maintain a welcoming, clean and safe environment
- 2 Explore ability to provide property improvement grants for small businesses
- 3 Support high-quality amenity and infrastructure improvements
- 4 Continue ongoing and consistent code enforcement
- 5 Provide enhanced gateway signage that is specific to the Downtown area/brand
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FUNDING & RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES

Implementing the concepts, strategies and actions expressed in this Plan will require focused, yet broad coordination and cooperation. The City of El Mirage, as well as regional agencies, local non-profits and the private sector must each play distinct and complementary roles in implementing this Revitalization Plan. The following pages provide an overview of various funding and resource opportunities that may be utilized to support and realize the expressed vision for downtown El Mirage.

Grant Opportunities

US Department of Housing and Urban Development – Choice Neighborhoods

- https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn
- The Choice Neighborhoods program leverages significant public and private dollars to support locally driven strategies that address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development – HOPE VI Main Street Program

- <https://www.hud.gov/mainstreet>

- Provides assistance to smaller communities in the development of affordable housing that is undertaken in connection with a Main Street revitalization effort.

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields Grants

- azdeq.gov/brownfields
- Brownfield grants are awarded for properties in which redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the real or perceived presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or some contaminant.

Arizona Humanities Commission

- azhumanities.org/grants/grant-opportunities/
- Project grants up to \$10,000 for program implementation and mini grants up to \$2,000 for innovative public programs.

Arizona Commission on the Arts

- azarts.gov/grants/
- Artist Opportunity Grant
- Creative Youth Grant
- Creative Capacity Grant
- Lifelong Arts Engagement Grant
- Festival Grant
- Youth Arts Engagement Grant
- Research and Development Grant

Arizona Community Foundation

- azfoundation.org/
- Awards grants year-round to support nonprofits, educational institutions, tribal entities, government agencies, and most religious organizations.

Chicanos por la Causa

- <https://www.cplc.org/econ/lending.php>
- Provides small business loans and high-quality technical support services to business owners in underserved communities.

Local Initiatives Services Corp

- <https://www.lisc.org/phoenix/what-we-do/resources/lending-grants/>
- Offers a wide range of grants and loans for affordable housing developers, small businesses and nonprofits.

Main Street America Funding

- <https://www.mainstreet.org/howwecanhelp/fundingopportunities>
- Main Street America offers several grant and funding opportunities throughout the year with the support of corporate partners.

APS Community Impact Grants

- aps.com/en/About/Community/In-the-Community/Community-Impact-Grants
- Through an open, competitive cycle APS funds will benefit & support eligible nonprofits through grants in the areas of arts & culture, community development, education, environment, and human services.

AARP Community Challenge Grants

- <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2023/2023-challenge.html>
- Provides small grants ranging from \$500 to \$50,000 to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages.

T-Mobile – Hometown Grants

- <https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants>
- Funds projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers. T-Mobile awards up to \$50,000 for shovel-ready projects.

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

- <https://pipertrust.org/our-grants/>
- Awards program and capital grants in six core areas: Arts & Culture, Children, Education, Healthcare & Medical Research, Older Adults, and Religious Organizations

Resource & Support Opportunities

Local First Arizona - localfirstaz.com/

Arizona Economic Recovery Center - The Arizona Economic Recovery Center (AZERC) aims to enable eligible Arizona cities, towns, counties, tribal communities, and nonprofits to win and implement competitive federal, state, municipal, or foundation grants. An initiative of Local First Arizona, the Arizona Economic Recovery Center provides an ongoing, updated listing of grants. <https://localfirstaz.com/azerc-grants/>

Fuerza Local – Through Local First Arizona, Fuerza Local is an accelerator program for Spanish-speaking business owners that assists in developing financial literacy and business management skills. <https://localfirstaz.com/fuerza-local>

Food Entrepreneurship - Local First Arizona offers programs made to support new, food-based business owners. <https://www.goodfoodfinderaz.com/food-entrepreneurship>

Urban Land Institute – The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. <https://arizona.uli.org/uli-resources/adaptive-reuse-and-infill-workshop-presentations/>

National Trust for Historic Preservation

- savingplaces.org/

Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

- azstateparks.com/additional-shpo-resources

Arizona Office of Tourism

- tourism.az.gov/

Grants.gov

- <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>