



9. OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

The General Plan's Open Space & Recreation Element examines open space within the city and in adjacent areas and establishes policies intended to help accomplish local objectives for active and passive recreation and for protecting natural and scenic areas and wildlife habitats. The element provides a conceptual framework to meet the City's projected needs for open space and recreation. It also includes discussion of the key issues facing the community, goals and objectives and an Action Plan for implementing those goals.

A. VISION AND FOCUS

As the result of regional development patterns, the City of Cottonwood bears an unusually high demand for recreation for a community of its size. Part of the reason is that most of the local residents are located outside the City limits. Riverfront Park, the City's most prominent recreational facility, experiences significant use by non-residents.

Perhaps in view of the abundant open areas offered by adjacent forestlands, the needs for internal open areas, or to actively program the development of recreational facilities and amenities, are often undervalued. Inside Cottonwood's boundary, open space is already at a premium. Based on projections, the City is only at about half of its potential build-out at present, given the current zoning pattern. Although opportunities exist for the development of trails and other recreational amenities, funding to develop those resources as recreational facilities is minimal.

Clearly, open space and the other natural amenities associated with this region could play a big role in providing relief from urbanization, preserving views, community separation and the other "small town qualities"

which are so highly valued by the City's residents. Nicely developed parks, trails and landscaping could provide many other small town amenities by improving the public realm, enhancing pedestrian uses, helping to preserve historic sites and providing places of community interaction, events and tourism. These facilities can also help to provide a better sense of place and bring better definition to neighborhoods, also benefiting home values.

Numerous opportunities continue to exist for both active and passive recreation as the City continues to grow. The focus of this element is to inventory those resources and establish policies for conserving and utilizing open space for recreation that benefits all portions of the City in a manner that fits with the community's vision.



B. RELATED LEGISLATION AND STUDIES

Under ARS § 9-461.05.D.1, the State of Arizona requires that Cottonwood's General Plan shall have, "an open space element that includes:

- (a) A comprehensive inventory of open space areas, recreational resources and designations of access points to open space areas and resources.
- (b) An analysis of forecasted needs, policies for managing and protecting open space areas and resources and implementation strategies to acquire additional open space areas and further establish recreational resources.
- (c) Policies and implementation strategies designed to promote a regional system of integrated open space and recreational resources and a consideration of any existing regional open space plans.

VERDE VALLEY REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLANNING

In 1996, the Planning and Zoning Commissions and staff representatives of the various Verde Valley jurisdictions began meeting on a quarterly basis to share information and discuss topics of regional importance. By mid 1998, this cooperative effort had evolved into a full-fledged, although somewhat informal commitment to pursue a regional plan. Recognizing that there were numerous hurdles and many unknowns relative to resources available to facilitate this monumental task, staff representatives collaborated on the preparation of an interim resolution titled: "Common Bonds and Principles for Regional Cooperation and Coordination in Land Use Planning and Development Decisions." By the end of 1998, four of the five Verde Valley municipalities, Yavapai County and several local property owners associations had all adopted similar versions of the original resolution. Staff later consolidated these resolutions into a common vision statement and goals and objectives. By the end of 2000, a Memorandum of Understanding to pursue a Regional Plan and a general Scope of Work to conduct the planning effort had been signed by both Yavapai and Coconino County and all of the Valley's municipalities. The US Forest Service also drafted a letter in support of the regional planning effort.

The new "Growing Smarter" legislation now requires that the counties and municipalities prepare open space elements for their general

plans that are developed in a regional context. In order to meet this requirement, the planning departments of the Verde Valley, with participation from the US Forest Service and Arizona State Land Department, began working on open space issues in September 2000. A draft document and map was presented to Verde Valley Planning and Zoning Commission representatives and the general public on March 15, 2001. In this meeting it was emphasized that this draft report provided a starting point for further dialogue on open space issues by the public and appointed and elected officials in the update of their general plans. Although this report is only a first step in the preparation of a Verde Valley regional open space plan, this planning effort has thus far resulted in a number of accomplishments. A few of these include:

- ◆ Improved and strengthened regional coordination among jurisdictions, including the US Forest Service.
- ◆ Beginning of a dialogue on open space issues.
- ◆ Identification of general opportunities and constraints relative to open space.
- ◆ Mapping of Verde Valley-wide areas that may have special open space significance.



- ◆ Identification of levels of interest from potential future participants in this process.

While this attached Open Space Report prepared by the regional planning staffs will be a valuable resource in the preparation of open space elements for each jurisdiction's general plan, it is not a regional open space plan. It identifies issues and raises more questions than answers. A comprehensive open space plan for the Verde Valley will require broad-based community support and direction through an organizational structure that is agreed upon by all the jurisdictions. This organizational plan should include an advisory body, neutral facilitation, on-going contact with key stakeholders and the financial and technical resources to ensure that this regional effort is successful. It is our sincere hope that Yavapai County and other policy makers of the Verde

Valley will continue to move this planning process forward by taking these important next steps.

CITY PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Cottonwood's Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for development and maintenance of City owned open areas and recreational facilities. The Department maintains a an improvements plan for recreational development within the City, which is coordinated with the City's Capital Improvements Program. Since 1995, the City has conducted public surveys that address recreational needs within the City. The input from those surveys supports capital improvements and other General Plan recommendations related to recreation.

C. REGIONAL SETTING

The Verde Valley represents an area generally bounded by the crest of the Black Hills on the west, the Mogollon Rim on the east and north and the Verde River Canyon on the south. National Forest lands make up approximately 80% of the land area; private lands about 17%; and State Trust lands about 3%. Most of the developed portion of the valley straddles the Verde River and the tributary streams of Oak Creek and Beaver Creek. Most of the region lies within Yavapai County, the fastest-growing rural county in the United States. There are five incorporated municipalities within the Valley, three of which have populations between 9,000 and 11,000 year-round residents. One has approximately 3,400 and the other, about 350. There are also four major unincorporated communities with year-round populations ranging from more than 3,300 to 10,610. According to the 2000 Census, 55,908 live in the Verde Valley. *Over 98% of the population lies within these nine communities.*

The vastness of public land bases not only characterizes the Verde Valley, but also provides its residents with opportunities for recreation. For the most part however, these lands are also generally located outside the City limits and under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, the State of Arizona, or a variety of private landowners. The City's ability to encourage the retention of these lands as open areas is therefore limited and may be further challenged by increasing pressures for development as time passes. Regional coordination is essential.

There already exist substantial pressures for exchange of National Forest land along SR 260 between Cottonwood and Camp Verde, a possibility that could infringe on local objectives to retain separation between communities. However, other potential also exists for continued development of Mingus Mountain adjacent to Clarkdale and Jerome, an area that includes the vast bulk of undeveloped private property in the upper Verde Valley. Continued development of these lands could threaten the integrity of this scenic resource. Obviously, some choices may need to be made.



Given the likelihood that local pressures for development will continue, it may be unrealistic to expect that much of these lands will remain open space. As an example, the Arizona Department of Transportation recently announced plans to develop another bypass route that connects SR 260 and US 89A east of the City. Such a redirection of traffic could have substantial impacts on the character of land use adjacent to the new route.

The ability of the City to define a "hard edge" of urban development is also hampered by the existence of 10 square miles of State Trust Land, located east of the City and across the highway from the current and future phases of the Verde Santa Fe development. Together with the recent widening of US 89A to 4 lanes and the ultimate location of ADOT's planned connection of the bypass route, the future complexion of this area is highly questionable.

As a result of regional planning efforts initiated among the Verde Valley communities and various land agencies, underway since 1996, local sentiments for retention of at least a portion of the State Trust block as open space have been well established. A prime consideration is retaining an open swath of undisturbed terrain along US 89A. Opportunities to accomplish these objectives may be looming in association with the "Growing Smarter" legislation. In 2000, Arizona voters approved a \$20 million set aside, known as the Arizona Preserve Initiative, to provide matching funds to communities willing to participate in the acquisition of State Trust property for open space purposes. However, the ability of Cottonwood to make use of the funding is limited by a number of factors, including insufficient financial resources to cover even the match associated with an API grant for any significant amount of State Trust land.

Initially, the City's boundary must be located within one mile of the targeted property acquisition, a requirement that was accomplished with the recent Dead Horse annexation. Also, the State Land Department does not have to sell the property. As part of their management plan, the lands are not subject to sale until the value of the property has matured to its potential. With the extension of the Mingus Avenue corridor east to the Cornville

Road intersection along US 89A, the value of these lands may begin to appreciate.

There is also the possibility that Dead Horse State Park could acquire a portion of this property as part of a future (unplanned) expansion. Other opportunities may exist under the Land and Water Conservation Fund; other future funding sources; or future legislative changes regarding Forest land exchanges (presently unauthorized).

In view of these considerations, it may be prudent for regional planners to begin the identification of "strategic open space" as a means to assist with the evaluation of these lands as exchanges and/or sales are considered. As an example, there exists an 80-acre parcel west of SR 260 between Cottonwood and Camp Verde that overlaps Black Canyon Wash. The acreage is amid the large block of National Forest lands that currently separates these two communities. Black Canyon Wash provides the only uninterrupted view shed between the highway and Mingus Mountain. It may be logical to support the acquisition of this parcel by the Forest Service to maintain that view shed.

The Verde Valley is a very special place to many residents and visitors. With the last free-flowing river in Arizona and five additional free-flowing perennial streams, many believe it has special value to the entire state and the southwest and must be recognized in that context. Over the past five years, concerns about growth and growth management have moved to the forefront in response to growing pressures on the Verde Valley environment residents hold so dear. These pressures are reflected in concerns regarding traffic congestion, groundwater depletion, loss of open space, rising housing costs and other areas as well.

The Verde Valley communities, characterized by some as "balkanized," are now coming together to address these concerns. The many jurisdictions of the Valley are beginning to realize that the region's growth issues are shared by all and cannot be addressed if each community operates in a vacuum. Four of the five Valley municipalities and Yavapai County have adopted resolutions that contain common regional planning goals. Two of these goals are



significant to the preparation of an open space plan:

- Maintain significant open spaces between communities and along highway corridors throughout the Verde Valley.
- The urban environment should have a distinct boundary or "edge". Support a development pattern that limits urban densities and other urban land uses to within or immediately adjacent to corporate limits and unincorporated urban centers.

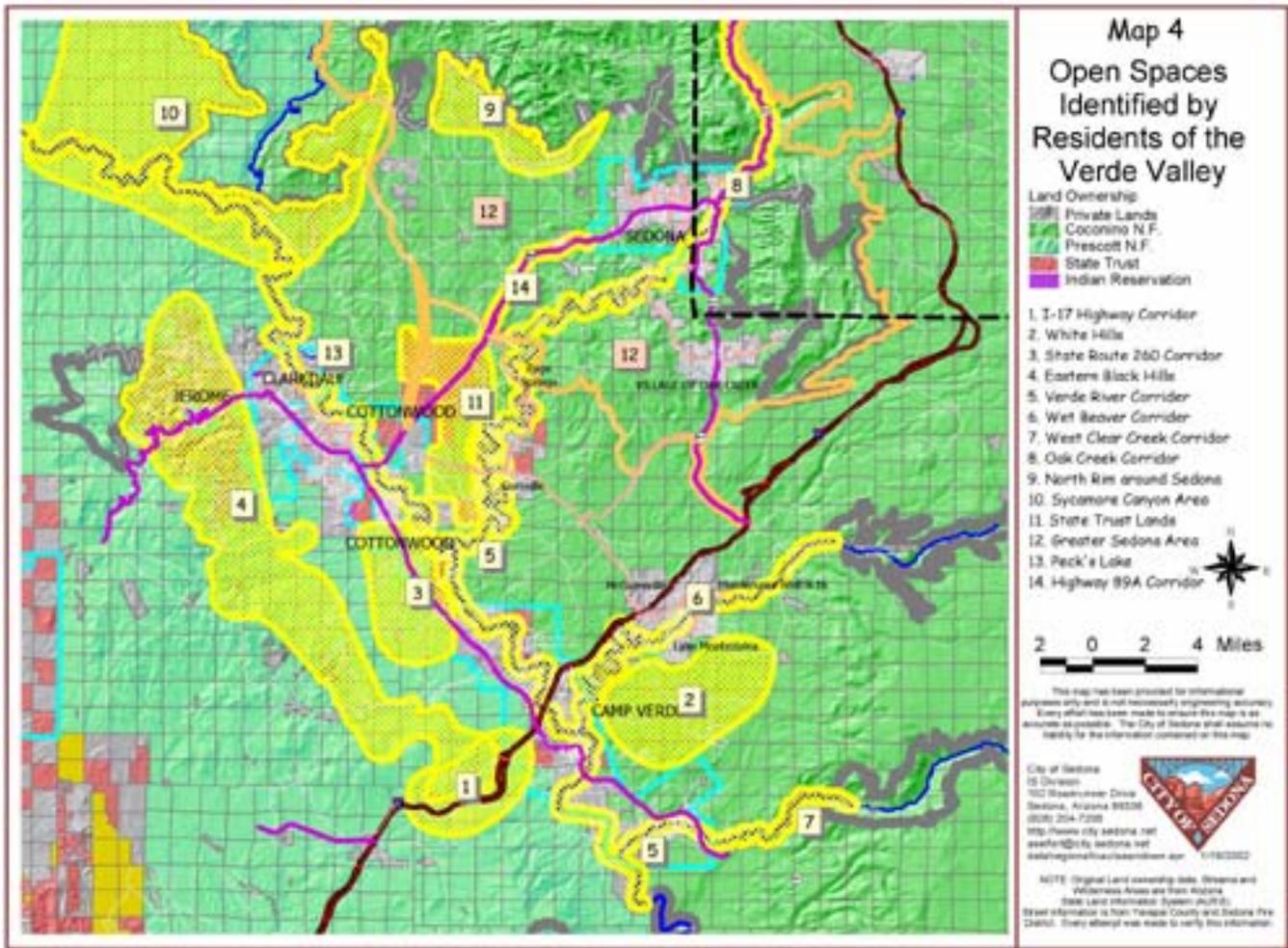


Fig. 9-1 A map of open space areas identified by residents of the Verde Valley as part of the Verde Valley Forum on Open Space issues.

REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLANNING

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The state of Arizona is the second fastest growing state in the nation, having grown 40% from 1990 to 2000. The Verde Valley is not isolated from this growth with a population increase of 51% over the last 10 years. Tourism has also increased significantly in the region during this period. Where and how the area grows, how the influx of visitors is accommodated and how the quality of life for the Valley's residents will be preserved, presents a special challenge to the region. The following

are some of the key concerns facing the Verde Valley:

- ◆ Decisions made in one Verde Valley jurisdiction will impact other communities, other jurisdictions and the region as a whole. Moreover, land use decisions made without regional perspective and outlook will tend to create unintended and undesirable consequences.
- ◆ The lack of adopted specific area land use plans for portions of the unincorporated



areas in the Verde Valley make it difficult for policy makers and the general public to respond to specific rezoning or development proposals.

- ◆ The planned widening of the existing State highways within the Verde Valley and the development of new highway corridors will result in more development pressure along these corridors.
- ◆ The disposition of the approximately 16 square miles of Arizona State Trust Lands for private development will have a major impact on the Verde Valley, especially Cottonwood.
- ◆ The imbalance between jobs and housing in the Verde Valley communities presents major social and economic ramifications.
- ◆ The US Forest Service is considering land exchanges in the Valley that could impact existing open space and result in approximately 8 square miles of additional development in the Valley.

Maintaining undeveloped areas as open space, including National Forest and State Trust lands is also of great importance to the citizens of the Verde Valley. Verde Valley community plans and surveys demonstrate that people are concerned about the loss of open space through USFS exchanges or by private development.

OPEN SPACE CHALLENGES

The various governmental entities in the Verde Valley region operate at different levels and with different accountabilities -- city, county, state, Indian Nation, and federal government. Open space preservation presents some challenges that are shared by these entities and some that are unique to each. While local governments are managed under the direction of local elected officials, 80% of the land in the region lies within the Prescott and Coconino National Forests and is managed by the Forest Service for the benefit of all the people of the

United States, including, but not limited to the people of the Verde Valley region.

CITIES, TOWNS AND COUNTY

Private lands comprise about 17% of the Valley's land area. If every private parcel is developed based on the current zoning, the estimated regional population could approach 200,000 persons in the long run. Accommodating the needs of this fourfold population increase will create major growth management challenges in the years ahead, especially in areas of water resources.

Lot splits present one of the most significant growth management challenges. This development pattern can negatively affect existing open space by spreading development impacts over large areas. Lot splits also create a need for infrastructure, such as overhead power lines and roads that often compromise National Forest and other open space lands. County government has little regulatory authority over lot splits at the present time. Subdivided areas in cities, towns and the county also tend to create impacts on the National Forest. In many cases, uncontrolled pedestrian or unauthorized vehicular access can degrade the adjoining public lands. Well-planned buffer areas and established trail access points can help minimize the negative impacts of private development adjacent to National Forest lands.

Local government expenditures for open space acquisition have been limited to traditional community parks for the most part. The use of incentives for open space or agricultural preservation is also very limited in the Verde Valley.

STATE TRUST LANDS

State Trust Lands are owned by the State of Arizona and managed by the Arizona State Land Department. These lands are sold or leased to generate revenue for education and other public beneficiaries in the State. Although State Trust Lands comprise only 3% of the Valley's total land area, the majority of these lands is located adjacent to the major highway corridors and therefore has the potential to significantly impact open spaces between Valley



communities. Recent legislation prohibits the designation of State Trust lands as open space without the written consent of the State Land Department unless another, alternative use, no less intensive than one unit per acre is also proposed. State Trust lands may be acquired for open space preservation through the Arizona Preserve Initiative (API) with 50/50 matching funds. However, at the present time, the majority of these lands are not eligible for consideration under the requirements of the Initiative. Only land within or immediately adjacent to an incorporated city or town can be considered under API.

NATIONAL FOREST

Although 80 percent of the lands within the Verde Valley are National Forest, the areas of concern for open space retention are usually related to lands adjacent to private lands. While the Forest Service is mandated to manage National Forest for all of the people of the United States, they are also responsible for managing lands for "wild land" character, not as community open space or parks. Verde Valley community plans and surveys indicate that many residents would like to retain all areas of National Forest as their community open space. However, many areas of National Forest lands have lost their values as "wild land" due to nearby private development. A great paradox exists. Many people seek to live adjacent to National Forest lands. This creates the need for new utility corridors and roads across the Forest and introduces fences, outdoor storage, sheds and backyard social trails to the Forest boundary. As the Verde Valley communities have grown, so have problems with late night parties, littering and inappropriate ATV use.

Local communities want to see the National Forest retained in public ownership and not become a "land bank" for acquisition of private property elsewhere in the State. But the National Forest mission to protect "wild land" values, such as wildlife habitat and corridors, riparian preservation, watershed stability, native vegetation, scenic vistas and primitive recreation opportunities are being compromised as private properties are developed. While it is not the primary objective of the Forest Service to

convey National Forest lands, land exchange is one of the primary tools to acquire other key private properties within the State of Arizona such as riparian corridors, threatened and endangered species habitat, cultural resources, and wilderness lands. Private land development without restrictions to limit or mitigate effects to adjacent National Forest result in these National Forest lands being considered for conveyance through a land exchange. Other means for acquiring key private parcels, such as direct purchase through Land and Water Conservation Fund are limited, very competitive across the Nation and tied to Congressional priorities and budget.

Although each government entity has different responsibilities and accountabilities, we recognize that through cooperative planning we can best manage our lands and reach optimum solutions to our shared regional goals.

OPEN SPACE PRINCIPLES AND IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The purpose of this report is to identify, in general, areas that are most critical for preservation, regardless of land ownership and then strategize the best way to acquire key private lands and to promote effective management of the National Forest.

The FIRST PRINCIPLE: The first and highest priority for open space preservation is to acquire key private and State lands in the Verde Valley. This strategy could be implemented through the following mechanisms:

- ◆ Formation of a Verde Valley Trust, to receive private donations such as land, financial contributions, appreciated stock, proceeds from fund-raisers and volunteer work, and other valuable considerations. The Trust could also provide management staff to provide full time dedicated regional planning, write grants, lobby for assistance from federal, state, and private organizations, and potentially provide management staff for regional open space lands not managed by any other entity.
- ◆ A Countywide sales tax to be specifically applied to acquisition of open space. We



recommend this tax not be on food or "high ticket" items so regional retailers will not be penalized in competition with out-of-region retailers.

- ◆ General obligation bonds, backed by a property tax.
- ◆ Grants.
- ◆ Conservation easements.
- ◆ Arizona Preserve Initiative matching funds.
- ◆ Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.
- ◆ Acquisitions by conservancy organizations like the Grand Canyon Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Archaeological Conservancy.
- ◆ Land Exchange for the addition of National Forest lands within the Verde Valley in exchange for disposal of National Forest lands of lesser open space value elsewhere in the state.
- ◆ In addition to the potential acquisition of private lands through USFS land exchanges, private lands may be acquired by other jurisdictions/entities for open space preservation or for public park/recreation sites.
- ◆ Open space can also be preserved through subdivision and planned development zoning, retaining key open space areas as a part of a specific development plan.

Every effort should be made to implement an acquisition strategy that enhances the ability of the USFS to effectively manage existing National Forest lands within the region.

SECOND PRINCIPLE: Identify National Forest lands that might be suitable for exchange in order to acquire key private parcels that have greater importance as open space.

In this case, land exchange within the Verde Valley could be used as a tool to further the goals of both the USFS and the Verde Valley community. It is desirable that both acquisition and disposal of National Forest lands have some kind of relationship to each other within the Verde Valley as a whole or a significant portion of the Valley – similar to the policy of Amendment 12 to the Coconino National Forest Plan. Exchange of National Forest lands in these instances should be examined relative to each community's "hard edge boundary" as discussed in the regional resolution (see Appendix). Local communities and organizations should coordinate with the Forest Service on land exchange proposals to ensure consideration of:

- ◆ Whether the proposed exchange includes lands to be acquired within the Verde Valley or provides other benefits (e.g. affordable housing opportunities).
- ◆ Municipal or county public needs (e.g. wastewater treatment/effluent disposal, water treatment, well sites, park sites, schools).
- ◆ Appropriate zoning and infrastructure needs (e.g. opportunities to decrease residential densities adjacent to National Forest where higher densities currently exist).
- ◆ Existing uses of National Forest that could be displaced or have created conditions that conflict with USFS management goals.
- ◆ The status of adjacent private lands (e.g. subdivided, unsubdivided, parcel size, built or vacant).
- ◆ Values of the lands to be acquired and conveyed (i.e. riparian, biodiversity, adjacent lands, road-less areas).
- ◆ Acquisition of lands by local jurisdictions (i.e. City of Sedona/Woo Ranch land exchange).
- ◆ Identification of the process for the local jurisdictions to be involved in the land exchange proposal.



THE THIRD PRINCIPLE: Implement methods of protecting “wild land” character of National Forest lands adjacent to private development using various techniques such as:

- ◆ Buffer zones on new development.
- ◆ Requirements of land survey and marked boundaries for private development along NF boundaries prior to construction and coordination with the US Forest Service by local jurisdictions.
- ◆ IGA's between local jurisdictions to help administer NF within incorporated boundaries, including delegation of enforcement authorities to local police.
- ◆ Development of urban trails plans that would delineate access points to NF trails, both through private lands and NF lands.
- ◆ Development of partnerships, volunteer organizations and other groups that would assist in management activities and preservation of National Forest lands.

OPEN SPACE ISSUE AREAS

STATE ROUTE 260 CORRIDOR:

It is critical to preserve the approximately three square miles of National Forest within the Cottonwood City limits.

- **Goals:** Maintain a large corridor of National Forest linking the Mingus foothills to the Verde River. Provide a good continuous link to other Prescott National Forest lands.
- **Issues:** Acquisition of private lands within this area, particularly along Black Canyon, would enhance its future management potential. The ADOT Access Control Plan proposing full access/interchange locations on the National Forest should include policies that do not allow private development in these locations.

Although it is desirable to maintain the 640-acre State Trust land parcel (Section 32) as open space, it is critical to maintain significant open space along the highway corridor (view-shed).

- **Goals:** Provide a contiguous open space link to the National Forest east of the highway.
- **Issues:** The State Land Department will probably not support 640 acres of open space unless it could be acquired under the Arizona Preserve Initiative. However, a plan that integrates open space into a future development plan based on the adopted resolutions of the Verde Valley communities might be supported.
- **Alternatives:** Public use designation in conjunction with future wastewater treatment facility; development agreements with private development for significant open space retention along highway front or concentrate uses adjacent to existing commercial/industrial area while retaining balance as open space; and require a 160 acre minimum size for any future development plan so that open space decisions can be viewed in context with the development proposal.
- **Short-term Action:** Partnering between State Land Department, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, USFS and ADOT. It is also critical to preserve the National Forest section where the Hayfield Draw ATC facility is located. This represents the only National Forest between Steve Coury and Camp Verde Town limits.

STATE ROUTE 89A CORRIDOR

The City of Cottonwood recently annexed a portion of the highway frontage as part of the Dead Horse Ranch Annexation effort. National Forest land between Bridgeport and Cornville Road and the land exchange in process that will add National Forest adjacent to the Mingus Avenue extension will likely remain National Forest due to cliff rose habitat.

- **Goals:** Provide a contiguous link to National Forest lands to the north and limit development



to the Cornville Road intersection area and the vicinity of Verde Santa Fe.

- **Issues:** An agreement for cooperative future management of this area would help to mitigate USFS management difficulties. The zoning/development review process can also provide appropriate mitigation to protect cliff rose and National Forest resources.

STATE TRUST LAND

Although it is desirable for the 10 square miles of State Trust lands within this area to remain as open space, it is critical to preserve a substantial open space corridor along SR 89A, a north/south wildlife corridor with access to the Verde River and significant open space between Verde Santa Fe and Cornville.

- **Goals:** Provide a continuous link to adjacent National Forest lands both east and west of the highway. Provide a corridor for wildlife in prime antelope habitat, including the Spring Creek area. Provide an open space separation between Cottonwood/Verde Santa Fe and Cornville as provided in the Regional Resolutions.
- **Issues:** If most of the 10 square mile area cannot be preserved, retention of a visual corridor may be difficult due to relatively flat topography, particularly in the western half. The State Land Department would not support open space preservation of the entire 10 square miles unless it could qualify and be acquired under the Arizona Preserve Initiative. At a minimum, development agreements for at least 160 acre planned developments should be required. Development should be prohibited at or near existing and planned intersections. Retention of open space corridors could also break up the area into multiple, developed tracts thereby creating a sprawling development pattern.
- **Preferred Alternative:** Concentrate all development in the western portion of the contiguous 10 square mile State Trust Land block only. Advantages include keeping development closest to the existing urban

areas, concentrating development in the flattest terrain where it would be difficult to provide a visual buffer anyway and keeping a continuous open space corridor in the eastern and most scenic portion. The disadvantage would be that development would be very visible from the highway in the western portion. Although development in the eastern portion could be more effectively screened from the highway corridor with the existing topography, the disadvantage would be that it could constitute a separate urban environment that is not adjacent to other urban areas. Wide distribution of development throughout the 10 square miles of State Trust Lands with open space corridors along the highway and north and south through the area could be another option, however, the resulting open space may have questionable value, particularly if development impacts the scenic quality of the area and if it creates a questionable management situation. Acquisition of private parcels in this area could also further the goal of providing a wildlife corridor and protecting sensitive riparian areas.

THE WHITE FLAT AREA.

The White Flat area is identified in Amendment 12 of the Coconino Forest Plan as a potential land exchange area for disposal of National Forest lands in exchange for National Forest acquisition of sensitive "Red Cliffs" area parcels. A large contiguous area of National Forest is subject to Amendment 12 of the Coconino National Forest Plan. This amendment does not allow any land exchanges except those that result in acquisition of high priority parcels in exchange for disposal of National Forest lands in the White Flat area. The City of Sedona is in the process of acquiring approximately 360 additional acres as part of a USFS land exchange in the White Flats area for additional effluent disposal in exchange for USFS acquisition of sensitive Red Cliffs parcels. This reduces the potential area that could become privately owned through additional land trades.

- **Goals:** It is critical to retain National Forest lands between the 10 square mile State Trust block and the Sedona Cultural Park/High



School. It is also critical that the Page Springs Road/SR 89A intersection not be developed. State Trust lands in this vicinity should be preserved as open space if at all possible, perhaps in conjunction with the provision for concentrated development on the western portion of the 10 square mile contiguous State Trust block.

- **Issues:** Additional private lands may be created in the White Flats area consistent with Amendment 12 policies. If this occurs, development should be prohibited on or near the highway in the White Flats area.

VERDE RIVER RIPARIAN CORRIDOR

It is critical to preserve National Forest in this area to provide a continuous large corridor of National Forest linking the Mingus Mountain foothills to the Verde River and to National Forest lands east of the River. The Archeological Conservancy parcel at the Oak Creek confluence provides for additional preservation in this area.

Goals: Provide a good contiguous link to other Prescott National Forest lands. The existing National Forest lands in this area currently provide the largest contiguous National Forest frontage on Verde River between Tapco and Beasley Flat.

Issues: Private parcels at Oak Creek confluence and others to the north could provide a better Prescott/Coconino contiguous Forest connection adjacent to the Verde River if acquired. Relocation of 69 KV line between Black Canyon confluence and Lower Oak Creek Estates on National Forest land may create some disturbed areas in this vicinity. Although it is desirable to maintain the 640-acre State Trust land parcel as open space, it is critical to maintain significant open space along the Verde River. This is possibly more critical than along highway corridor if highway corridor open space is not an option.

Goals: Same as highway corridor

Alternatives: Public use designation. Development agreements should be provided with private development to establish Verde River Greenbelt and corridor to existing USFS lands to west and south.

VERDE RIVER FLOODWAY.

The entire floodway should be preserved as open space.

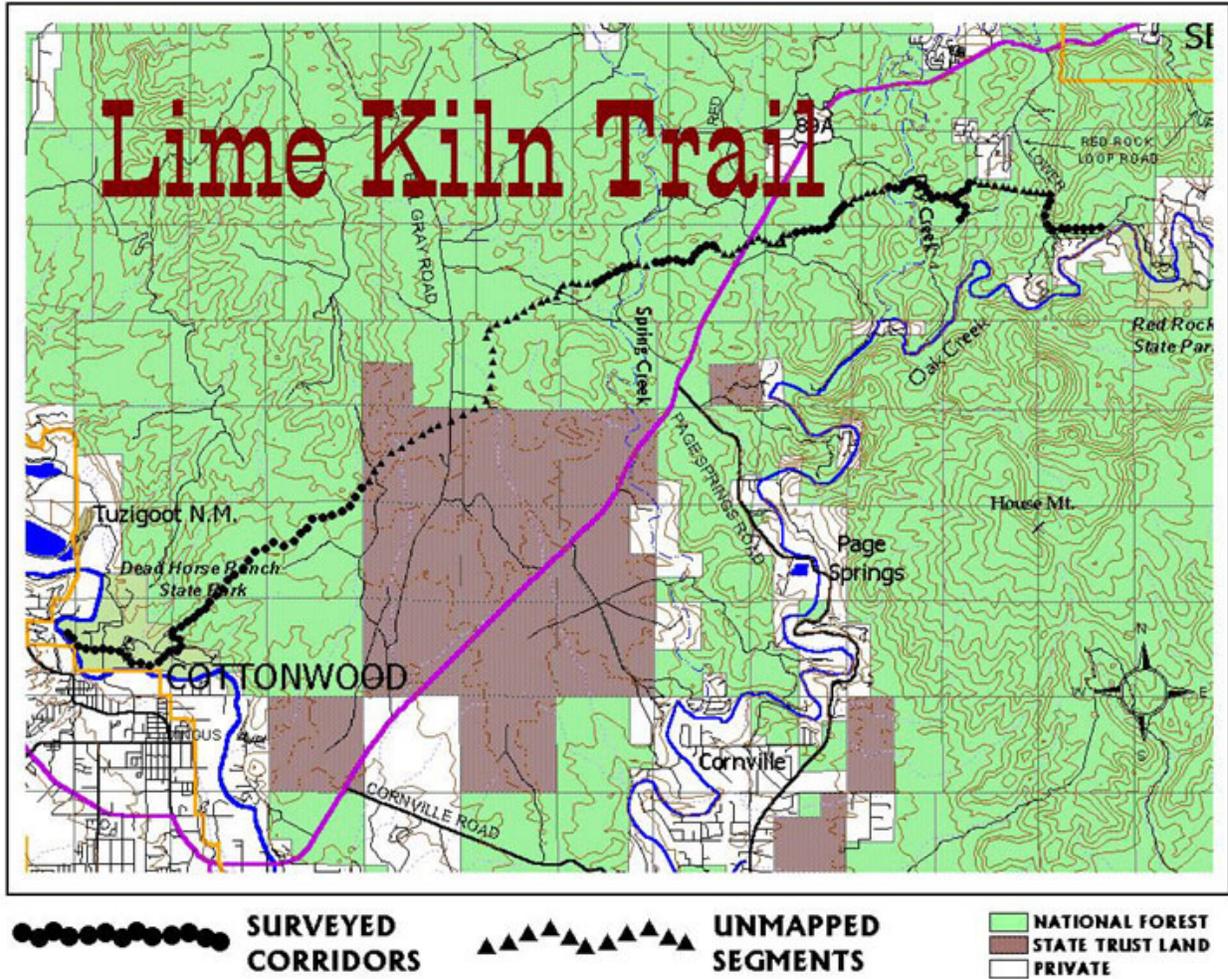
EASTERN BLACK HILLS FRONT

The eastern face of Mingus Mountain has a significant amount of private, undeveloped land with very high scenic value. Visible throughout much of the Valley, future development on these steep slopes could have significant visual impacts. Development of these areas could also make existing National Forest lands between Mingus Mountain and Clarkdale/Cottonwood more difficult to manage and therefore more desirable to trade. If traded, continuous development could occur from Clarkdale/Cottonwood to Allen Springs Road and Jerome and even higher up the mountain in the area north of Jerome (or halfway up the mountain). Although ideally, all of this area should be preserved as open space, acquisition of some of the private land area should be a priority. The Black Canyon and Grief Hill Inventoried Roadless Areas lie between Mingus Mountain and I-17. The US Forest Service is actively seeking to acquire private lands between these two Roadless Areas.

SYCAMORE / VERDE RIVER CONFLUENCE

As the gateway to the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, this riparian area has great value as an open space resource. Private lands within this area should be a priority for acquisition to the National Forest

Fig. 9-2



D. LOCAL OVERVIEW

One of Cottonwood’s most obvious amenities is its proximity to the Verde River and the abundant open areas that result from its location amid the Coconino and Prescott National Forests. In tandem with its scenic views, Riverfront Park, Dead Horse Ranch State Park and the Verde River Greenway the City boasts priceless natural amenities. Much of this open space provides habitat for local flora and fauna, as well as opportunities for casual recreation. Hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, camping and other outdoor sports all require undeveloped open space. Continued development of improvements such as parks, trails and other amenities will no doubt benefit Cottonwood’s economic climate and pose significant improvements to neighborhoods in need of revitalization. The following summary offers some insights into the related issues:

INTERIOR OPEN SPACE AND ACCESS

In addition to regional open space issues, the City also faces challenges in meeting the needs of interior open space and recreation.

The recreational experiences available to the community are varied by the type of park or recreational resource available. Open space



occurring in and around Cottonwood also influences the other recreational activities that result. For example, the Prescott National Forest surrounding Cottonwood furnishes significant open space containing thousands of acres. A 1993 survey, completed by researchers from the University of Arizona, in Yavapai County showed that about 75% of those surveyed used public rangelands for recreational activities. Hiking was the primary activity, photography came second and hunting was third in frequency of recreational activities. The Recreation Park & Open Space Standards and Guidelines (1979) was published by the National Recreation and Park Association and established modern criteria for parks and open space. As a rule of thumb, 10 acres of Park space for every 1000 residents was required in urban areas. Further, it was stipulated that no resident should be further than one quarter of a mile from a park. As Cottonwood's riverside and other recreational facilities also experiences a substantial overlay of regional use, the City may want to take a closer look at this ratio.

A nationwide trend toward "smart growth" policies was experienced regionally when Arizona adopted the Growing Smarter legislation in 1998 and 2000. Related policies encourage compact communities in order to provide more localized open space and parks, facilities and amenities that can also serve to enhance the overall sense of community.

Optimally, all residents should be located within a five-minute walk of outdoor recreation.

There is also an emphasis on paying closer attention to public places, and developing them as opportunities for people to gather. The City could encourage the incorporation and maintenance of certain design elements into required buffer areas. An emphasis on sidewalks and bike routes may not only help to offload City streets, but also provide opportunities for landscaping and other amenities that encourage their use. When established, these areas can become enjoyable places of casual social interaction. As the City has very little funding for these sorts of improvements, they should be closely evaluated.

Cottonwood's mix of cultures and age groups suggests a need for active as well as passive recreation types. Examples of active recreation might include playgrounds, baseball fields and volley ball courts. Passive recreation refers to things such as undisturbed riverside and park benches.

In view of Cottonwood's diverse population and low budget for recreational facilities, it may be important to ensure that parks and trails offer multi-use opportunities. For similar reasons, it may be important to ensure an appropriate ratio of open space is usable open space," while undisturbed, "natural open space" is also provided.



EXISTING FACILITIES AND USAGE

The Cottonwood Department of Parks and Recreation organizes and manages formal recreation space and facilities in the City. The City maintains 104 acres of park and 2-1/2 miles of trails, a 20% increase since the 1995 General Plan was developed. Three-quarters of City parkland is located at Riverfront Park. Various recreational programs are also administered through this department. These include softball leagues, volleyball leagues, recreational classes, summer youth programs, tennis clinics, swimming lessons, and basketball leagues.

However, due to the lack of park space in the surrounding areas (Verde Village) and since existing park acreage is concentrated in a relatively small area, effectiveness of park space may be questioned. Garrison Park, for example, is constrained by the establishment of the new city library and the restricted use of the baseball field, which will eventually be eliminated in favor of a parking lot expansion for the adjacent Yavapai County administrative building. In addition three schools, Mingus Union High School, Cottonwood Middle School and Cottonwood Elementary provide additional recreation facilities. The city also has an outdoor pool, tennis courts, a civic center with a stage and an activities building which contains a weight room and a large space suitable for dance classes, etc.

The city's only social and cultural facility is the historic river rock Cottonwood Civic Center, which is also in need of renovation. In addition, the school districts and Yavapai College in Clarkdale offer space for some cultural activities. There is no multi-purpose meeting space that functions for social, rather than sport related activities.

TRAILS

Obviously many opportunities exist for the development of trails within and around the City of Cottonwood. In fact, Yavapai County is in the process of developing a trails system. Two notable trails segments are being developed at this time, including the Trans Verde trail south to Camp Verde and the Lime Kiln Trail, which is the old wagon road between Sedona and Jerome,

a historic route recently recognized at the federal level. The Lime Kiln Trail passes through Dead Horse Ranch State Park, which is a convergence area for numerous other trails that extend north and east of the park. The Dead Horse Trails Coalition is a group of local volunteers, State Park, Forest Service and City staff that works to coordinate nearby trails development.

As noted, the Verde River Greenway provides a significant green space and recreational opportunity for Cottonwood residents. Community members often utilize trails near the river for walking, horseback riding and fishing. The recent annexations of Dead Horse State Park and Riverfront Park brought a half-mile stretch of the greenway within the corporate limits of Cottonwood. Continued acquisition of land or trail easements between Tuzigoot and the Bridgeport bridge is the top open space/ trail priority of the City. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Verde River in March of 1994 as part of the critical habitat for the Razorback Sucker, the Spikedace and the Loach Minnow. This designation further focuses federal attention on a river already designated as a Wild and Scenic River from Beasley Flat (near Camp Verde) south for a distance of 39.5 miles. From the Tuzigoot National Monument to the Bridgeport Bridge, over 800 acres of land along the river is managed by Arizona State and National Park Services.

The State Park is also in the process of acquiring additional lands along the river and opening more riverside to the public. A recent acquisition adjacent to the Old Jail in Old Town provided a new access point at the north end of Old Town. The City also recently acquired a pedestrian easement across private property that enabled a continuous connection along the Verde River Greenway to Riverfront Park.

Interior washes and gulches that form the natural drainage system create an opportunity to increase recreational opportunities through the creation of trails and interpretive areas. There are about 513 acres of land inside the City that are part of the 100-year flood plain. As development within floodplains is often difficult



and encumbered by significant requirements, these corridors pose great opportunities for designation of trails. Although the 1995 General Plan had designated them as "open space," the state has since rendered that designation illegal without property owner permission. As part of the current plan, that designation has therefore been eliminated in favor of new guidelines which encourage acquisition of pedestrian easements along those routes, generally in concert with new development.

The 1995 Plan also demonstrated opportunities for development of on-street bicycle routes. To some extent, those routes were also recognized as part of the traffic study that supports the Circulation Element. The study also suggests the development of an initial loop throughout the City. It may be advantageous to identify other opportunities for open areas in near proximity to the loop in order to ensure connectivity. Continued special area planning by the City could also identify opportunities for

linear parks and open areas which connect larger facilities such as schools, government buildings and the fairgrounds. Left over areas could be incorporated into this system, as well as buffer areas and retention basins. There may also be potential to include additional portions of the Verde River, as well as portions of the Cottonwood Ditch, and trail segments developed as part of existing subdivisions. Cottonwood Ranch, as an example, has over five miles of trails, a testament to the benefits of comprehensive planning. Subdivision codes should be amended to require interior pedestrian routes that connect to the larger system. Parks should also be open to the public.

Adjacent to Cottonwood Ranch is a substantial wash corridor known as Del Monte Wash. As part of the recent expansion to the City's wastewater management plant, reclaimed water is now being discharged into the wash and should help to support a riparian zone.

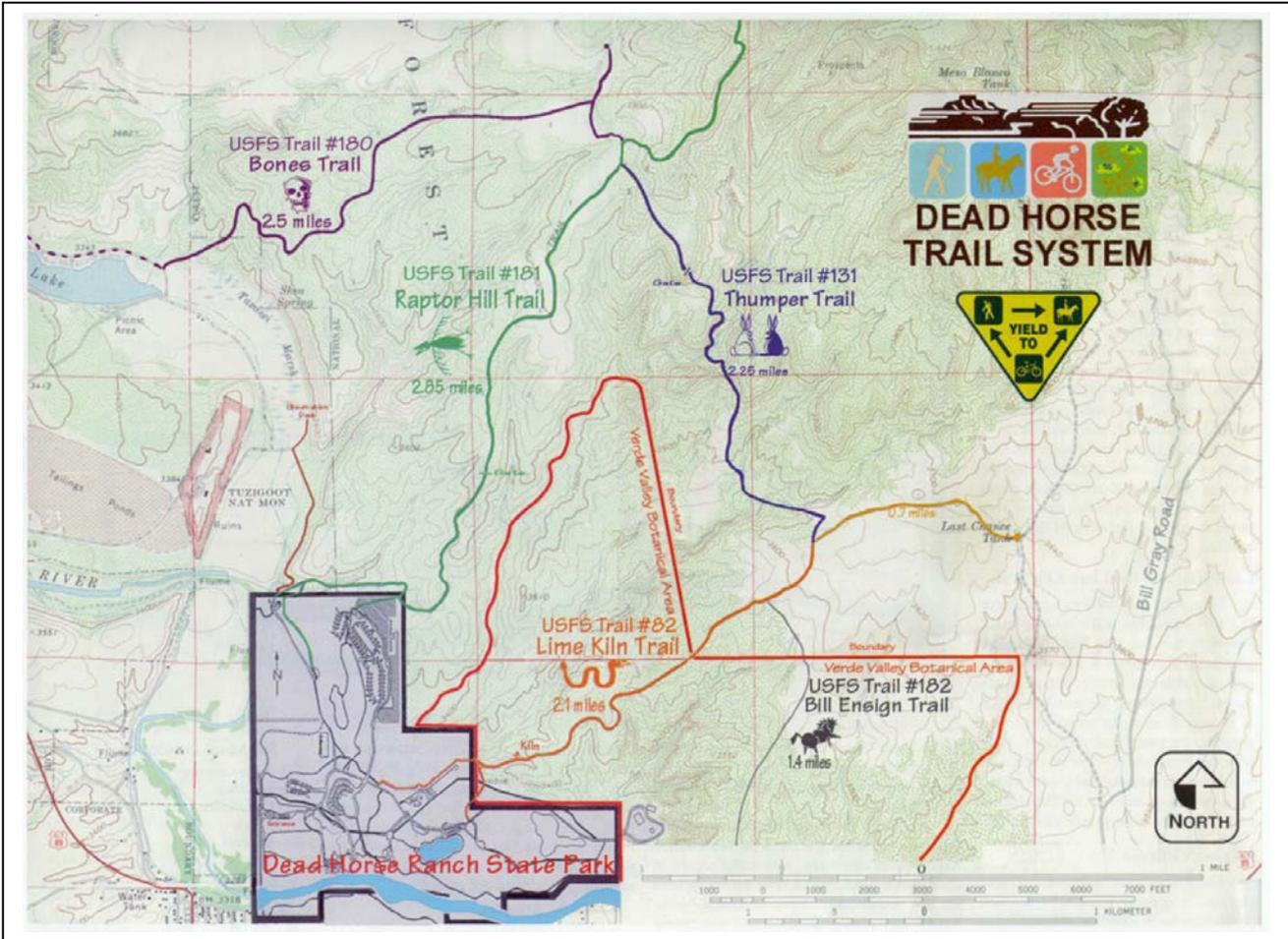
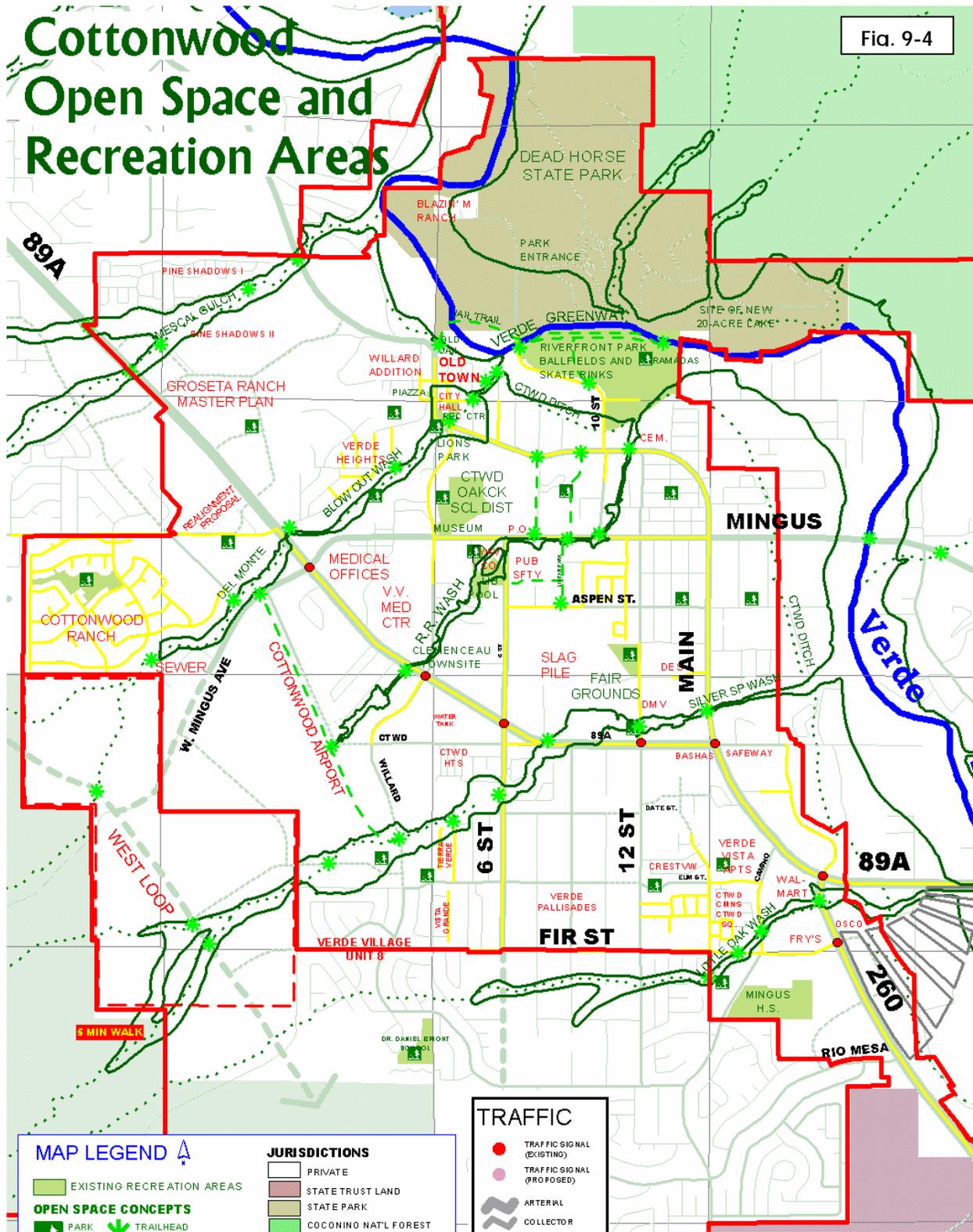


Fig. 9-3: The trail system established as part of Dead Horse State Park, located at the north end of the City.



Fig. 9-4

Cottonwood Open Space and Recreation Areas



MAP LEGEND

- EXISTING RECREATION AREAS
- OPEN SPACE CONCEPTS
 - PARK SITE
 - TRAILHEAD
 - TRAIL
 - 100-YEAR FLOOD BDRY AND STREAM CHANNEL
 - TRAIL OPPORTUNITY
- JURISDICTIONS
 - PRIVATE
 - STATE TRUST LAND
 - STATE PARK
 - COCONINO NAT'L FOREST
 - PRESCOTT NAT'L FOREST
 - SIDEWALKS
 - CORPORATE BOUNDARY

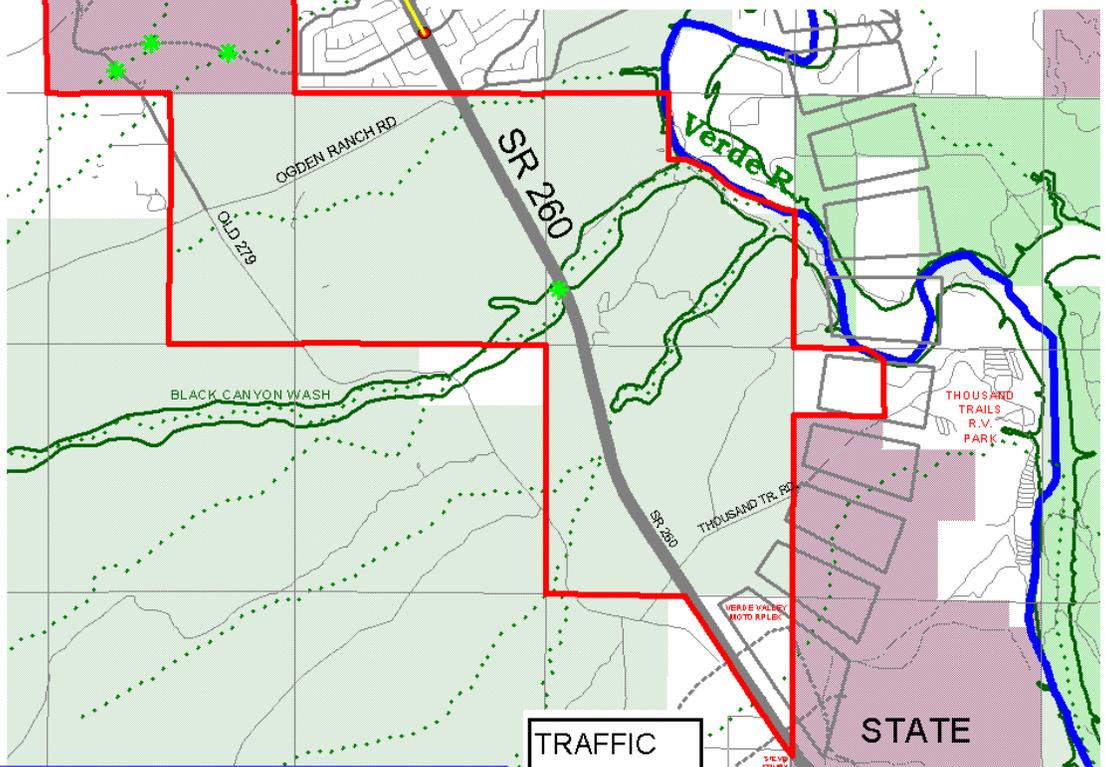
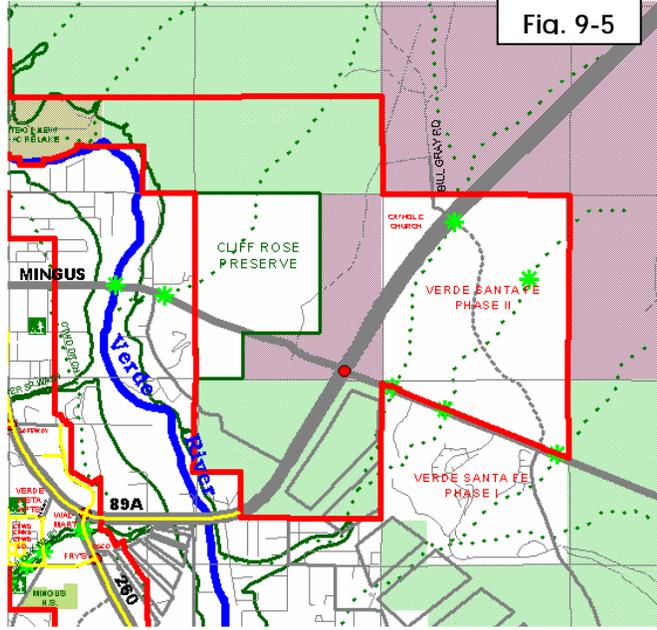
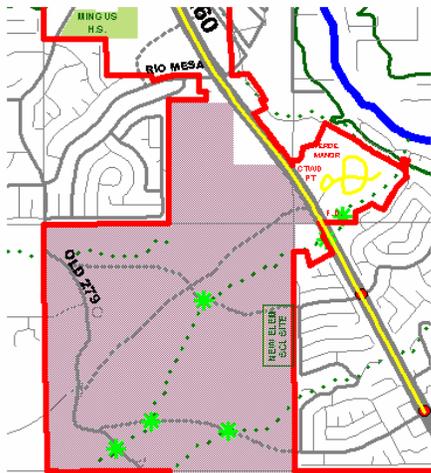
TRAFFIC

- TRAFFIC SIGNAL (EXISTING)
 - TRAFFIC SIGNAL (PROPOSED)
 - ARTERIAL
 - COLLECTOR
 - COLLECTOR
 - LOCAL STREET
- BROKEN LINES ARE CONCEPTUAL ROUTES ONLY. NO IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMED AT THIS TIME.



Cottonwood Open Space and Recreation Areas

Fig. 9-5



MAP LEGEND

EXISTING RECREATION AREAS	PRIVATE
OPEN SPACE CONCEPTS	STATE TRUST LAND
PARK SITE	STATE PARK
TRAILHEAD	COCONINO NAT'L FOREST
TRAIL	PRESCOTT NAT'L FOREST
100-YEAR FLOOD BDRY AND STREAM CHANNEL	SIDEWALKS
TRAIL OPPORTUNITY	CORPORATE BOUNDARY

TRAFFIC

	TRAFFIC SIGNAL (EXISTING)
	TRAFFIC SIGNAL (PROPOSED)
	ARTERIAL
	COLLECTOR
	COLLECTOR
	LOCAL STREET

BROKEN LINES ARE RECORD OPTICAL NOTED ON R.V. NO IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMED AT THIS TIME.





TABLE 9.1: CITY OPEN SPACES AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES*			
AREA / FACILITY	TYPE	JURISDICTION	ACRES
CTWD-OAKCK SCHOOL DIST.	INCLUDES CLEMENCEAU MUSEUM AS WELL AS FULL SIZE BASEBALL, SOFTBALL, SOCCER FIELDS, BASKETBALL COURTS, SHADED PICNIC, OPEN AREA AND PARKING.	SCHOOL DIST	17
COTTONWOOD RANCH SUBDIV.	PUBLIC PARK FACILITY DEVELOPED IN ASSOCIATION WITH COTTONWOOD RANCH. INCLUDES DEVELOPED AND UNDEVELOPED OPEN AREA.	C.O. CTWD	11
DEAD HORSE STATE PARK	STATE PARK FACILITY LOCATED ALONG THE VERDE RIVER GREENWAY. INCLUDES DAY USE AND OVERNIGHT CAMPING FACILITIES, FULL SERVICE R.V. AREAS, RIVERSIDE FISHING AND LAGOON. ADDING A 20-ACRE LAKE IN 2003 AND 100 ADDITIONAL CAMPSITES.	STATE OF AZ	600+
DR. DANIEL BRIGHT SCHOOL	INCLUDES YOUTH BASEBALL, FOOTBALL AND SOCCER FIELDS, OPEN AREAS AND PARKING	SCHOOL DIST.	8
FAIR GROUNDS	OPEN AIR EVENT FACILITY WITH EXHIBIT ENCLOSURES AND PARKING.	V.V. FAIR ASSOC.	26
FAIR GROUNDS SLAG PILE	SLAG PILE RECLAMATION SITE / BROWN FIELD.	V.V. FAIR ASSOC.	16
FAIR GROUNDS SOCCER PARK	SOCCER FIELDS, PICNICING AND PARKING.	C.O. CTWD	5
FLOODPLAIN	100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN ESTABLISHED BY F.E.M.A. AND ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY. DESCRIBES AREA WITHIN WHICH A TRAILS SYSTEM MAY BE DEVELOPED AS THE PRODUCT OF PEDESTRIAN EASEMENTS OBTAINED BY THE CITY IN ASSOCIATION WITH PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT OF ADJACENT AREAS.	C.O. CTWD, PRIVATE	512
GARRISON PARK HERRIDGE FIELD	INCLUDES KIDDIE PARK, COMMUNITY LIBRARY, POOL, TENNIS COURTS, PICNICING, OPEN AREA AND BASEBALL (HERRIDGE) FIELD AND PARKING. HERRIDGE FIELD, CURRENTLY DEVELOPED AS A COMBINATION SOFTBALL / LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD, IS OWNED BY YAVAPAI COUNTY AND SCHEDULED TO BE DEMOLISHED IN FAVOR OF ADDITIONAL PARKING AREA FOR EXPANDING COUNTY COMPLEX.	YAVAPAI CO., C.O. CTWD	5.5
LIONS PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK WITH PICNIC FACILITIES. ALSO INCLUDES A PORTION OF THE DEL MONTE STREAM CHANNEL. POTENTIAL TRAIL HEAD.	C.O. CTWD	0.3
MINGUS UNION HIGH SCHOOL	SPORTS FACILITY WITH TWO FULL SIZE BASEBALL FIELDS, SOFTBALL FIELD AND FOOTBALL FIELD.	SCHOOL DIST.	22.5
OLD JAIL TRAILHEAD	INCLUDES DEVELOPED JAIL SITE, OUTDOOR AREA AND TRAILHEAD. JAIL TRAIL PROCEEDS NORTH ACROSS STATE LAND TO JOIN VERDE GREENWAY.	STATE OF AZ., C.O. CTWD	0.25
OLD TOWN REC CENTER	INCLUDES W.P.A. CONSTRUCTED REC CENTER AND CIVIC CENTER BUIDLING (IN NEED OF RESTORATION), INCLUDES GYM / ASSEMBY AREA AND STAGE, ADJACENT BASKETBALL COURTS AND OUTDOOR	C.O. CTWD	1.5



	PICNIC AREA. REC CENTER ALSO HAS WEIGHT ROOM, DANCE STUDIO; AND ADJACENT LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD. PROPOSED: RENOVATION OF LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD INTO CULTURAL PARK.		
OLD TOWN PKNG PIAZZA	CURRENTLY DEVELOPED AS PRIMARY DOWNTOWN PARKING AREA. PROPOSED: RENOVATION INTO OUTDOOR PIAZZA TO BETTER ACCOMMODATE FARMERS MARKET, CONCERTS AND OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS AS WELL AS PARKING.	C.O. CTWD	0.15
RIVERFRONT PARK	MULTI-USE CITY PARK LOCATED ALONG THE VERDE RIVER GREENWAY AND DEAD HORSE STATE PARK. INCLUDES CONSIDERABLE HIKING TRAILS, 3 SOFTBALL FIELDS, BATTING CAGES, SKATE PARK, IN-LINE HOCKEY RINK, PICNIC RAMADAS. PROPOSED: 3 NEW LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS, A FOURTH SOFTBALL FIELD AND LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS	C.O. CTWD	90
VERDE RIVER GREENWAY	RIVERSIDE AREAS TARGETED AS PART OF THE VERDE RIVER GREENWAY PLAN, MANAGED COOPERATIVELY BETWEEN ARIZONA STATE PARKS, THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE, YAVAPAI COUNTY AND THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD. CURRENTLY THERE ARE ABOUT 200 ACRES OF THE GREENWAY LOCATED INSIDE THE CITY LIMITS, OVERLAPPING DEAD HORSE STATE PARK, RIVERFRONT PARK AND A FEW PRIVATE PARCELS NORTH OF OLD TOWN.	STATE OF AZ., YAVAPAI CO., C.O. CTWD, PRIVATE	200

* DOES NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE OPEN AREAS OR CHURCH FACILITIES.

ADDITIONAL LAND FOR RECREATION

There may be opportunities to tap into the public land base that surrounds the City for the purpose of recreation and park site development. In addition, the Townsite Act provides communities with the ability to purchase adjacent forest service lands when the purchase of such lands are within the interest of the community and outweigh the benefits of continued federal ownership. Under the Arizona Preserve Initiative, potential also exists for acquisition of State Trust property located along SR 260. The Dead Horse annexation would also qualify portions of the 10 square mile State Trust block east of the City adjacent to US 89A. Portions of State Trust land located along the planned Mingus Avenue extension will also be dedicated as a preserve for the Arizona Cliff Rose. Other lands could also be leased for recreational purposes. An advisory board should be established in order to accomplish site selection and evaluation.

PUBLIC INPUT REGARDING NEEDS

In 1995, the City developed a Capitol Improvements Plan that included references to several recreational improvements. As part of that process, a community survey was conducted in 1995 and again in 1998 to demonstrate support and demand for various recreational facilities and programs.

The Parks and Recreation Commission met with Planning and Zoning Commission on May 20, 2002 to discuss needs and opportunities. One of their observations was that Riverfront Park is maxed out. Discussion encouraged proactive planning and development of needed recreation City wide. The commissions suggested the City could benefit from more localized parks and open areas that allow for a variety of open space types, particularly new parks in old neighborhoods. A dog park is also needed. One obvious suggestion was to find a new use for the slag heap and fairgrounds property. The site is centrally located and very large. Other suggestions highlighted the need for bike lanes and to develop parks in a manner



that also conserved water and to preserve natural areas along the River to help filter pollutants.

Many comments showed concern for the eventual development of public activity centers, including a new recreation center. There has been much discussion about the development of a new multi-use recreation center for the City of Cottonwood. Interests include special programs for teens as well as for the elderly. Based on the initial concept, the facility would cost about \$5 million, a price tag that may be unrealistic for a community of this size. The proposal also relies on grants through the Heritage Fund, which could be raided at any time by the State Legislature. Other partners may be willing to get involved, including regional teen center administrators and their current list of supporting agencies. The historic Smelter Machine Shop on Sixth Street is an opportunity for development of a senior center and/or performing arts center. The airport also has much vacant land and buildings, which may provide opportunities.

Other suggestions included rehabilitation of the Civic Center and development of an outdoor amphitheater, perhaps in association with a cultural park and "piazza" in Old Town and in association with the host of City properties

and administrative offices which exist there. An outdoor area is needed for non-competitive activities, such as concert bands, theatre groups, community and civic organizations. The space could also act as a central gathering place for community residents. Complete with grassy knolls, mature trees, shady benches, walkways, a socially focused "park" would be an asset to both residents and visitors to Cottonwood. There was even a suggestion that the old gas station in Old Town could be purchased and either demolished or renovated as part of an expansion to Lions Park.

The commission also speculated on the development of a fund for park site and rec facility development and the possible application of existing sales tax revenues after the sewer tax is retired in 2007. However, there could be much competition for use of that money in the administration of many other City needs (streets, etc.). It was also suggested the City may need to establish a special fund or foundation for acquisition and development of new park sites.

As a means to begin the identification of potential park sites, a subcommittee was formed to plot vacant land and identify critical locations and opportunities for new park sites and trail heads

ANTICIPATED RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS

The Parks and Recreation Department suggests improvements for incorporation into the City's Capital Improvements Plan. The table on the adjacent page demonstrates the current project list as described by the CIP. Priorities include a new recreation center and expansions to Riverfront Park facilities, including an additional softball field, Little League fields and skate park. In addition, the City anticipates some parkland acquisition and development of soccer and football fields, urban trails, equestrian and bull riding facilities, aquatics center, cultural park and Civic Center rehabilitation in Old Town. The Capital Improvements Plan should be amended to include the following recent additions:

- **Little League Ball Park:** Four field design (200 foot radius). Includes lighting, 40,000 square

feet of asphalt parking, irrigation system, backstops, fencing, infield / outfield design / construction, combination concession stand, restrooms, and 2nd story observation deck.

- **Soccer Field Complex:** Three field design with regulation-sized facilities. Includes new horseshoe pitching facilities (6-8 pits), picnic ramadas, 20,000 square feet of asphalt parking, children's play apparatus and other leisure amenities at Riverfront Park across Riverfront Road from the current batting cage facilities.

- **Softball Complex:** Completion of the fourth field at the Riverfront Park softball complex. Includes installation of all dugouts, irrigation systems, backstop, tiered bleacher system, field fencing and facility lighting. Includes the



completion of approximately 80,000 square feet of asphalt parking between the ball field and the skate park facility.

- **Skate Park Facility:** Systematic installation of outdoor lighting for skate park and roller hockey complex, with parking lot lighting included.



**TABLE 9.2
SUGGESTED RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS**

PROJECT	SHORT TERM	LONG TERM
1. Community recreation center (dual basketball gym with offices, indoor pool, hydrotherapy pool, outdoor lighted basketball courts).	\$25,000 design document	\$5 million (bond election).
2. Ball field expansion project (Riverfront Phase III). 4 th field lighting project / parking lot and infield stabilization, plus three Little League facilities and skate park lighting.	\$150,000†	
3. Park land acquisitions (would include any development including Little League ball field facilities) and/or purchase of parkland for development: soccer facilities expansion project / football fields.		\$220,000¶
4. Verde Village Unit 8 park development.	\$50,000	
5. Urban trail system (renovation of grounds and parking lot around Old Jail).	\$50,000* Trailhead for Jail Trail.	\$200,000 (Del Monte Wash)
6. Equestrian / bull riding arena.		\$150,000
7. Aquatics center, kids water slide and kiddie fountain apparatus and aquatics tot pool and shade ramada.		\$155,000¶
8. Heritage cultural park		\$150,000¶ (Bond election).
9. Civic Center rehabilitation	\$71,000‡	\$136,000‡

† Identifies collaborative effort by County, City and Heritage funds.

‡ Identifies projects that could receive Heritage or State Historic Preservation funds.

¶ Identifies projects or land acquisitions as a Heritage (LRSP) Grant Program designation with the State of Arizona (total funds).

* Identifies CDBG block grant.



E. KEY ISSUES

- 1. Regional Open Space Planning:** The plan cites a number of valid arguments for the City to participate in regional planning as outlined by the City Council's Resolution Number 1702, and to acknowledge the Verde Valley Regional Open Space Plan. Primary objectives include the development of a definable "hard edge" of urban development and the maintenance of separation between communities. Key focal areas exist along SR 260 between Cottonwood and Camp Verde, and along SR89A between Cottonwood and Page Springs Road. The regional planning process should result in an acquisition plan for strategic open space, as identified in the Regional Open Space Report; and address key issues such as the planned new bypass route and any future disposal of State or Federal lands.
- 2. Preservation of Verde Greenway:** The Verde Greenway should be considered a primary local amenity. Acquisition of riverside areas, especially the Verde Greenway should also be prioritized.
- 3. Other Open Space Issues:** Other issues include the impact of open space designations on the developable land base, status of annexed National Forest areas; regulation of access points; and lot splitting outside City limits. An advisory board should be established specifically to review opportunities for land acquisitions through the Arizona Preserve Initiative. Consideration should also be given to other funding alternatives (sales tax, etc.), and to establishment of a trust for acquisition of development rights.
- 4. More Localized Recreation:** The General Plan highlights the importance of localized recreational opportunities and suggests they should occur within ¼ mile of all residents. The plan also cites the potential for new park site development to benefit revitalization of older residential areas. Many of Cottonwood's facilities are concentrated at the north end of the City within Riverfront Park, leaving most of the City beyond the ¼ mile standard. Many neighborhoods also need revitalization.
- 5. Interior Parks and Trails Funding:** Although the needs and opportunities for additional development of recreation within the City are substantial, the available funding is minimal. The City may want to set up a fund or trust for continued development of park sites, trails, bike routes and sidewalks.
- 6. Big Ticket Facilities and Funding:** There are also several large-scale recreational facilities that continue to be suggested by the public, including a multi-use rec center; and a cultural facility, amphitheater and "piazza" in Old Town. As funding for development of such projects is also scarce, they may ultimately have to be considered in conjunction with a bond election.
- 7. Open Space in New Development:** Open space amenities can also be accomplished in association with new development as part of the design review and subdivision review processes. Related City codes should be modified to require open space areas and address amenities associated with pedestrian use, streetscapes and landscaping; and require that interior parks and trails be open to the public; and that lands which border the National Forest address urban impacts so that forest areas are less likely to be designated as exchange bases. Requirements might include suitable buffers and densities; controlled access points; greater regulation of lot splitting; and boundary surveys.
- 8. Continued City Park Planning:** As growth within the region is likely to continue, planning for recreation should also continue. Specific area planning should be conducted throughout the City to better evaluate further open space resources and projects that need to occur beyond the adoption of the General



Plan. Continued planning should also address appropriate mixtures of recreation (active vs. passive) and ensure that facilities are cost efficient, water efficient and provide for multi-use. Plans for anticipated recreation improvements should also be regularly reviewed and consistent with the City's Capital Improvements Plan. The initial multi-

use trail loop suggested by the Circulation Element may provide a good starting point. The City should actively acquire pedestrian and conservation easements adjacent to and within 100-year floodplains and as buffers adjacent to the riverside.

F. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The focus of this element is to highlight opportunities for preservation of open space and the further development of recreation in and adjacent to the City of Cottonwood which may serve to enhance the community by helping to preserve its pristine views and open areas which contribute to its rural character, community separation and relief from urbanization; the quality of its public realm, pedestrian routes, parks, trails and historic amenities; its neighborhoods and home values, sense of place, small town qualities, economy and tourism. Cottonwood's General Plan offers the following goals and objectives pertaining to Open Space and Recreation:

GOAL OS -1 WORKING WITH OTHER ENTITIES, IDENTIFY AND PROTECT KEY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CITY, ESPECIALLY THE VERDE RIVER.

- **OBJECTIVE 1.1 Pursue cooperative regional planning of an integrated system of open space and recreation development with adjacent communities, the U.S. Forest Service, State Land Department, ADOT, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, private land owners, the general public and others. Particular emphasis should be given to the Verde River Greenway.**

1.1A Participate with other communities and entities in identifying and funding the acquisition of key private and State Land parcels in the Verde Valley which have great importance as open space; evaluating the impact of open space designations on the developable land base; status of annexed National Forest lands and other possible exchange bases, development of new bypass routes and access points along highways; and review of lot splitting outside the City.

1.1.B Consider establishment of a local land trust to receive donations in support of land acquisitions.

1.1.C Insure the comprehensive park and open space plan is consistent with the Verde River Management Plan.

1.1.D Encourage cooperative management of National Forest lands inside the City of Cottonwood and suggest any appropriate amendments to the National Forest Management Plans. Encourage that any access/interchange locations on the



National Forest include policies that do not allow private development in these locations.

1.1.E Establish a 160-acre parcel minimum for State Trust lands and National Forest lands.

1.1.F Establish an advisory board to evaluate the feasibility of State land acquisitions under the Arizona Preserve Initiative.

1.1.G Consider annexation agreements for State Trust lands.

• **OBJECTIVE 1.2 Identify key open areas and parcels for acquisition including National Forest lands which may be suitable for exchange in order to acquire those key parcels.**

1.2.A Work to establish a "hard edge" of urban development by providing open space separation between Cottonwood/Verde Santa Fe and Cornville as provided in the Regional Resolutions.

1.2.B Establish continuous open lands north of the City, along US 89A east of the City, and along SR 260 to the south.

1.2.C Priority acquisitions include critical State lands adjacent to the Mingus Avenue extension; the private lands located on the east face of Mingus Mountain; and within the Sycamore / Verde River confluence riparian area, and along the Verde River.

1.2.D Encourage the concentration of all development in the western portion of the contiguous 10 square mile State Trust Land block only. Acquisition of private parcels in this area could also further the goal of providing a wildlife corridor and protecting sensitive riparian areas.

1.2.E Provide a contiguous link to National Forest lands to the north of SR 89A and limit development to the Cornville Road intersection area and the vicinity of Verde Sante Fe. An agreement for cooperative future management of this area would help to mitigate USFS management difficulties. The zoning/development review process can also provide appropriate mitigation to protect cliff rose and National Forest resources.

1.2.F Provide a continuous link to adjacent National Forest lands both east and west of SR 89A. Provide a corridor for wildlife in prime antelope habitat, including the Spring Creek area.

1.2.G Work to preserve the Verde River floodway as open space. Development agreements should be provided with private development to establish Verde River Greenbelt and corridor to existing USFS lands to west and south.

1.2.H Maintain a large corridor of National Forest linking the Mingus foothills to the Verde River. Provide a good continuous link to other Prescott National Forest lands. Encourage acquisition of private lands within this area, particularly along Black Canyon. Encourage a partnership between the State Land Department, Cottonwood, Camp



Verde, USFS and ADOT to preserve the National Forest Section where the Hayfield Draw ATC facility is located.

- 1.2.I Provide a good contiguous link to other Prescott National Forest lands from the Verde River.
- 1.2.J Provide a contiguous open space link to the National Forest east of SR 260. Develop a plan that integrates open space into a future development plan based on the adopted resolutions of the Verde Valley communities. Establish a "Public Use" designation in conjunction with a future wastewater treatment facility.
- 1.2.K Support development agreements with private development for significant open space retention along SR 260 highway front or which concentrate uses adjacent to existing commercial/industrial area while retaining balance as open space

- **OBJECTIVE 1.3 Ensure that open space and recreational facilities are distributed throughout the community.**

- 1.3.A Increase the availability and variety of parks, including a linear park system with connective trails and neighborhood "pocket parks." Emphasis should be placed on the primary loop identified by the Circulation Element.
- 1.3.B Consider redevelopment of the slag pile and fair grounds area as a recreational resource.
- 1.3.C Identify key locations for development (or redevelopment) as park sites in aging areas of the City as part of a neighborhood revitalization program.

GOAL OS-2 PROVIDE A BALANCE OF "PASSIVE" AND "ACTIVE" RECREATION.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.1 Develop a comprehensive City pedestrian system of sidewalks and trails.**

- 2.1.A Encourage the use of perpetual easements, particularly in washes and near the Verde River, to allow public use and access.
- 2.1.B Work with private owners and agencies with interest in the Verde River to establish conservation easements and preserve environmental quality at the river while allowing community use.
- 2.1.C Develop an Old Town linear park connected to the Verde River for use by visitors and residents, in conjunction with State Parks.
- 2.1.D Conduct specific area planning to identify new locations and needs for recreational development. Emphasis should be placed on neighborhoods in need of



redevelopment. Make related revisions to the Capital improvements Plan as appropriate.

- 2.1.E Develop the multi-use trail loop, suggested by the Circulation element, as an initial phase.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.2 Establish standards for open space and recreation facilities.**

- 2.2.A Encourage the development of open space and recreational amenities as part of new development.
- 2.2.B Encourage methods of protecting the wild land character of National Forest lands adjacent to private development, slopes and flood areas; including the development of new standards for buffers and densities adjacent to National Forest areas.
- 2.2.C Where possible, irrigate park space with reclaimed water or use natural vegetation.
- 2.2.D Require that new development provide public parks and connective trails that are open to the public.
- 2.2.E Continue to develop public input regarding facilities development and underserved areas of the community.
- 2.2.F Make specific provisions for usable open space Citywide and in new development.
- 2.2.G Amend codes and subdivision regulations to address new standards for public areas, parks, trails and other open space and recreational development which address issues and amenities associated with pedestrians, bicyclists and other users.
- 2.2.H Inventory public areas, evaluate subject to standards and identify needed improvements.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.3 Develop a multiple use policy for open space and recreational resources.**

- 2.3.A Without exceeding user capacity limits, identify programs that could be added to ball fields, parks, school sites and city buildings to develop more recreational resources available to the community.
- 2.3.B Support the development of neighborhood and non-profit programs at park and city building sites.



- **OBJECTIVE 2.4 Increase cultural facilities and recreational resources for area teens, seniors and other special populations.**

- 2.4.A Develop a community center, recreation center and city park devoted to cultural activities in Old Town.
- 2.4.B Conduct a siting study for a recreation center and identify possible partners, funding and operating.
- 2.4.C Consider development of an indoor pool. This would also benefit seniors as well as allowing development of swim teams.
- 2.4.D Consider development of an equestrian center and trail ways.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.5 Develop a Comprehensive City Bike Route Plan.**

- 2.5.A Work with neighboring communities for bike route connections where possible.
- 2.5.B Include bike routes in the city's five-year street plans.
- 2.5.C Include pedestrian element in all bike path plans with consideration for environmental, health, safety and historical concerns. Insure walking paths are suitable for seniors.
- 2.5.D Develop street section guidelines that include space for bike paths.
- 2.5.E Procure volunteers for work on the development of bike routes, paths or trails where possible.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.6 Develop funding sources for site acquisition, facility planning and development.**

- 2.6.A Adopt impact fees to provide for parks.
- 2.6.B Include purchase of park space, if necessary, in the city's formal Capital Improvement Program.
- 2.6.C Establish a fund for park site acquisition and recreational development that also addresses regional contributions for regional recreational facilities.
- 2.6.D Investigate the feasibility of bonding or sales tax revenues for the larger recreational facilities.
- 2.6.E Develop a volunteer base to operate and maintain recreational facilities.
- 2.6.F Develop programs that encourage a sense of ownership of public spaces.



- 2.6.G Ensure consistency between Parks and Recreation improvements planning and the City's Capital Improvements Plan.
- 2.6.H Consider marketing and sponsorships in support of local parks.



G. ACTION PLAN

OPEN SPACE / RECREATION ELEMENT			
	DO-ITEM	AGENCY	TIMELINE
OS-1	WORKING WITH OTHER ENTITIES, IDENTIFY AND PROTECT KEY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CITY, ESPECIALLY THE VERDE RIVER.		
1.1	Pursue cooperative regional planning of an integrated system of open space and recreation development with adjacent communities, the U.S. Forest Service, State Land Department, ADOT, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, private land owners, the general public and others. Particular emphasis should be given to the Verde River Greenway.		
1.1.A	Participate with other communities and entities in identifying and funding the acquisition of key private and State Land parcels in the Verde Valley which have great importance as open space; evaluating the impact of open space designations on the developable land base; status of annexed National Forest lands and other possible exchange bases, development of new bypass routes and access points along highways; and review of lot splitting outside the City.	City of Cottonwood	ST
1.1.B	Consider establishment of a local land trust to receive donations in support of land acquisitions.	Regional Advisory Board	ST
1.1.C	Insure the comprehensive park and open space plan is consistent with the Verde River Management Plan.	City of Cottonwood	ST
1.1.D	Encourage cooperative management of National Forest lands inside the City of Cottonwood and suggest any appropriate amendments to the National Forest Management Plans. Encourage that any access/interchange locations on the National Forest include policies that do not allow private development in these locations.	City of Cottonwood	ST
1.1.E	Establish a 160 acre parcel minimum for State Trust lands and National Forest lands.	City of Cottonwood	Done
1.1.F	Establish an advisory board to evaluate the feasibility of State land acquisitions under the Arizona Preserve Initiative.	Regional Advisory Board	ST
1.1.G	Consider annexation agreements for State Trust lands.	City of Cottonwood	As Needed
1.2	Identify key open areas and parcels for acquisition including National Forest lands which may be suitable for exchange in order to acquire those key parcels.		
1.2.A	Work to establish a "hard edge" of urban development by providing open space separation between Cottonwood/Verde Santa Fe and Cornville as provided in the Regional Resolutions.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.B	Establish continuous open lands north of the City, along US 89A east of the City, and along SR 260 to the south.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.C	Priority acquisitions include critical State lands adjacent to the Mingus Avenue extension; the private lands located on the east face of Mingus Mountain; and within the Sycamore / Verde River confluence riparian area, and along the Verde River.	Regional Advisory Board	ST
1.2.D	Encourage the concentration of all development in the western portion of the contiguous 10 square mile State Trust Land block only. Acquisition of private parcels in this area could also further the goal of providing a wildlife corridor and protecting sensitive riparian areas. Development should be prohibited at or near existing and planned intersections.	Regional Advisory Board	LT



1.2.E	Provide a contiguous link to National Forest lands to the north of SR 89A and limit development to the Cornville Road intersection area and the vicinity of Verde Sante Fe. An agreement for cooperative future management of this area would help to mitigate USFS management difficulties. The zoning/development review process can also provide appropriate mitigation to protect cliffrose and National Forest resources.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.F	Provide a continuous link to adjacent National Forest lands both east and west of SR 89A. Provide a corridor for wildlife in prime antelope habitat, including the Spring Creek area.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.G	Work to preserve the Verde River floodway as open space. Development agreements should be provided with private development to establish Verde River Greenbelt and corridor to existing USFS lands to west and south.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.H	Maintain a large corridor of National Forest linking the Mingus foothills to the Verde River. Provide a good continuous link to other Prescott National Forest lands. Encourage acquisition of private lands within this area, particularly along Black Canyon. Encourage a partnership between the State Land Department, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, USFS and ADOT to preserve the National Forest Section where the Hayfield Draw ATC facility is located.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.I	Provide a good contiguous link to other Prescott National Forest lands from the Verde River.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.J	Provide a contiguous open space link to the National Forest east of SR 260. Develop a plan that integrates open space into a future development plan based on the adopted resolutions of the Verde Valley communities. Establish a "Public Use" designation in conjunction with future wastewater treatment facility.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
1.2.K	Support development agreements with private development for significant open space retention along SR 260 highway front or which concentrate uses adjacent to existing commercial/industrial area while retaining balance as open space	City of Cottonwood	Design Review
1.3	Ensure that open space and recreational facilities are distributed throughout the community.		
1.3.A	Increase the availability and variety of parks, including a linear park system with connective trails and neighborhood "pocket parks." Emphasis should be placed on the primary loop identified by the Circulation Element.	City of Cottonwood	LT
1.3.B	Consider redevelopment of the slag pile and fair grounds area as a recreational resource.	City of Cottonwood	LT
1.3.C	Identify key locations for development (or redevelopment) as park sites in aging areas of the City as part of a neighborhood revitalization program.	City of Cottonwood	ST
OS-2	PROVIDE A BALANCE OF "PASSIVE" AND "ACTIVE" RECREATION.		
2.1	Develop a comprehensive City pedestrian system of sidewalks and trails.		
2.1.A	Encourage the use of perpetual easements, particularly in washes and near the Verde River, to allow public use and access.	City of Cottonwood	Design Review
2.1.B	Work with private owners and agencies with interest in the Verde River to establish conservation easements and preserve environmental quality at the river while allowing community use.	Regional Advisory Board	LT
2.1.C	Develop an Old Town linear park connected to the Verde River for use by visitors and residents, in conjunction with State Parks.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.1.D	Conduct specific area planning to identify new locations and needs for recreational development. Emphasis should be placed on neighborhoods in need of redevelopment. Make related revisions to the Capital improvements Plan as appropriate.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.1.E	Develop the multi-use trail loop, suggested by the Circulation element, as an initial phase.	City of Cottonwood	ST



2.2	Establish standards for open space and recreation facilities.		
2.2.A	Encourage the development of open space and recreational amenities as part of new development.	City of Cottonwood	Design Review
2.2.B	Encourage methods of protecting the wildland character of National Forest lands adjacent to private development, slopes and flood areas; including the development of new standards for buffers and densities adjacent to National Forest areas.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.2.C	Where possible, irrigate park space with reclaimed water or use natural vegetation.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.2.D	Require that new development provide public parks and connective trails which are open to the public.	City of Cottonwood	Design Review
2.2.E	Continue to develop public input regarding facilities development and underserved areas of the community.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.2.F	Make specific provisions for usable open space City wide and in new development.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.2.G	Amend codes and subdivision regulations to address new standards for public areas, parks, trails and other open space and recreational development which address issues and amenities associated with pedestrians, bicyclists and other users.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.2.H	Inventory public areas, evaluate subject to standards and identify needed improvements.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.3	Develop a multiple use policy for open space and recreational resources.		
2.3.A	Without exceeding user capacity limits, identify programs that could be added to ball fields, parks, school sites and city buildings to develop more recreational resources available to the community.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.3.B	Support the development of neighborhood and non-profit programs at park and city building sites.	City of Cottonwood	On-going
2.4	Increase cultural facilities and recreational resources for area teens, seniors and other special populations.		
2.4.A	Develop a community center, recreation center and city park devoted to cultural activities in Old Town.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.4.B	Conduct a siting study for a recreation center and identify possible partners, funding and operating.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.4.C	Consider development of an indoor pool. This would also benefit seniors as well as allowing development of swim teams.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.4.D	Consider development of an equestrian center and trailways.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.5	Develop a comprehensive City bike route plan.		
2.5.A	Work with neighboring communities for bike route connections where possible.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.5.B	Include bike routes in the city's five year street plans.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.5.C	Include pedestrian element in all bike path plans with consideration for environmental, health, safety and historical concerns. Insure walking paths are suitable for seniors.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.5.D	Develop street section guidelines that include space for bike paths.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.5.E	Procure volunteers for work on the development of bike routes, paths or trails where possible.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.6	Develop funding resources for site acquisition, facility planning and development.		
2.6.A	Adopt impact fees in support of parks.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.6.B	Include purchase of park space, if necessary, in the city's formal Capital Improvement Program.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.6.C	Establish a fund for parksite acquisition and recreational development which also addresses regional contributions for regional recreational	City of Cottonwood	LT



	facilities.		
2.6.D	Investigate the feasibility of bonding or sales tax revenues for the larger recreational facilities.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.6.E	Develop a volunteer base to operate and maintain recreational facilities. Development of programs which encourage a sense of ownership of public space.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.6.F	Develop programs that encourage a sense of ownership of public spaces.	City of Cottonwood	LT
2.6.G	Ensure consistency between Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan and the City's Capital Improvements Plan.	City of Cottonwood	ST
2.6.H	Consider marketing and sponsorships in support of local parks.	City of Cottonwood	LT