



COTTONWOOD STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2026-2028



Executive Summary

The City of Cottonwood, through ethical, accountable, and professional leadership, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for its diverse community while preserving its unique environment and character. Guided by its mission of *“Inspiring a Vibrant Community,”* the City embraces a vision focused on sustainability, community well-being, and thoughtful growth—honoring its people, natural resources, and hometown atmosphere. It is focused on conserving critical assets like the Verde River, strengthening its role as the economic hub of the Verde Valley and fostering a community where people and nature thrive.

As part of this commitment to proactive governance and long-term sustainability, the City launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to prepare for an evolving future. This initiative began with the development of forward-looking assumptions grounded in staff expertise, professional insights, and observable trends. These assumptions address anticipated changes in population growth, economic dynamics, infrastructure needs, housing availability, and overall quality of life.

Understanding that these future conditions present both opportunities and risks, the City’s leadership team conducted an impact analysis of each assumption. This analysis considered social, economic, environmental, and operational implications, ensuring that Cottonwood remains resilient and adaptable in the face of change.

Based on these findings, targeted strategies were developed to mitigate potential risks and capitalize on emerging opportunities. These strategies focus on expanding infrastructure, improving public services, fostering economic vitality, and protecting the City’s character and livability.

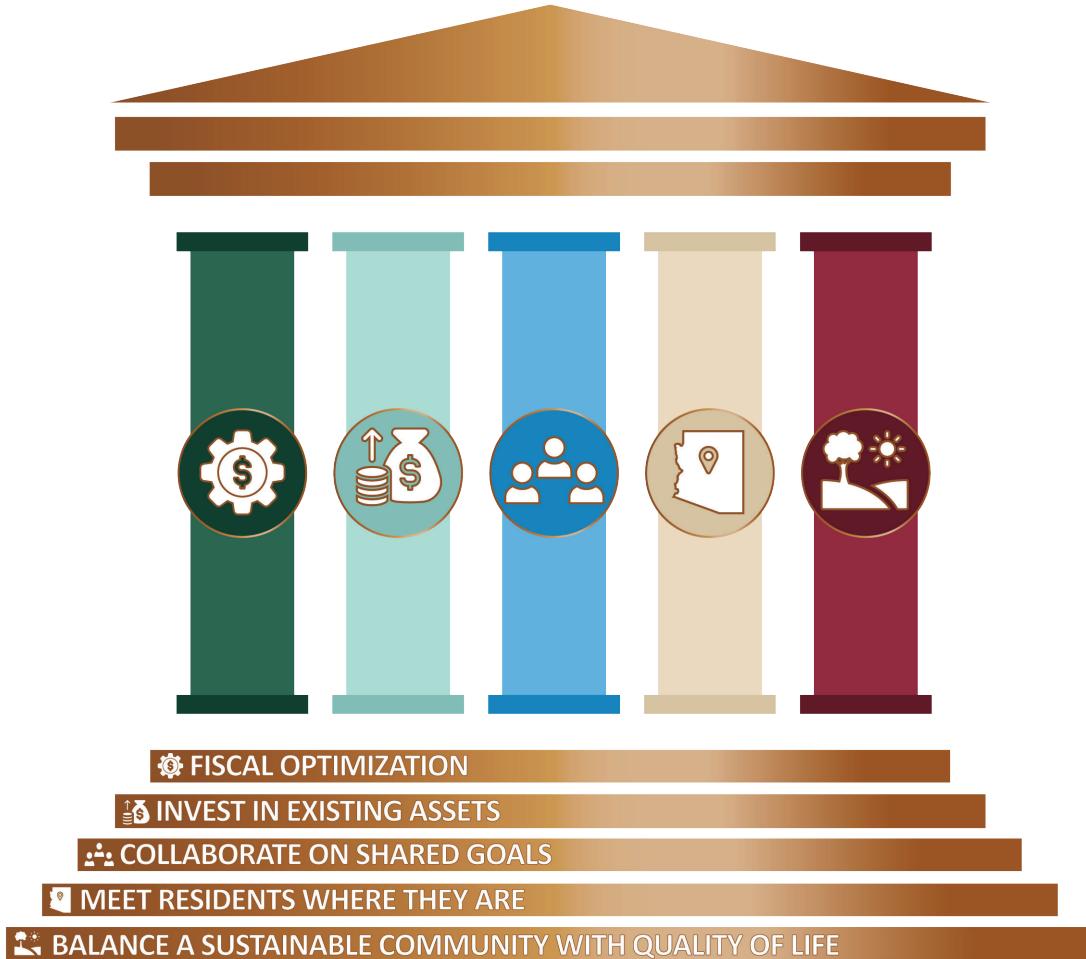
To drive effective implementation, staff across all departments collaborated to translate these strategies into specific, measurable action items tied to timelines and strategic goals. This organization-wide approach ensures accountability and alignment throughout the City, providing a clear roadmap for Cottonwood’s future.

The FY 2026-2028 Strategic Plan begins with a focus on action items that address assumptions already underway or anticipated within the next five years. Longer-term assumptions projected beyond 2030 have also been evaluated and are included for context, with corresponding strategies and action items to be developed in future updates of the plan. The plan will be evaluated annually to adjust assumptions and actions accordingly.

This strategic framework reflects Cottonwood’s dedication to comprehensive planning, interdepartmental collaboration, and a shared vision for a vibrant, resilient, and forward-looking community.



Strategic Pillars



The City of Cottonwood City Council participated in a focused two-day retreat in 2025, facilitated by Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom of Bloom Facilitation, to develop a unified strategic direction for the City. The purpose of the retreat was to clarify the Council's shared vision, identify high-priority issues, and collaboratively establish strategic pillars that will guide governance, resource allocation, and policy development over the coming years.

Throughout the retreat, Council members engaged in facilitated discussions, reflective exercises, and structured planning sessions. They examined current and future community needs, assessed organizational strengths and limitations, and explored opportunities for improvement and innovation across City operations.

A key outcome of the retreat was the creation of five strategic pillars, developed through consensus and informed by community input, council dialogue, and facilitator guidance. Each pillar represents a core focus area that the City Council agreed to prioritize.

These guiding principles reflect Cottonwood's desire to grow responsibly while protecting the attributes that make it unique. The strategic pillars will serve as a compass for future decision-making, budgeting, and departmental alignment—ensuring that the City's efforts are unified, forward-looking, and community-focused.

The retreat marked a pivotal moment of collaboration and strategic alignment, reinforcing the Council's collective leadership and commitment to shaping a resilient and vibrant future for Cottonwood.



FISCAL OPTIMIZATION

ASSUMPTION - DEMAND FOR CITY SERVICES WILL EXCEED REVENUE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

City services will decrease, slow, or be eliminated • Cottonwood becomes a less desirable place to live • Negative impacts on staffing levels • Deferred maintenance and capital projects • Increased demand for third party services

STRATEGIES

- Promote infill development to maximize existing infrastructure
- Optimize City services by defining responsibilities and aligning core functions
- Promote economic vitality through business recruitment and retention efforts
- Diversify City revenue sources for fiscal stability
- Host regular community engagement events to communicate policies and priorities
- Maintain sustainable tourism while mitigating the impacts of overtourism
- Determine appropriate tax and fee adjustments to support consistent service delivery and growth
- Strengthen legislative advocacy and intergovernmental relations

ACTIONS

- 1.1** Consolidate City services in a centralized City Hall
- 1.2** Liquidate City-owned Property
 - 1.2.1** Contract with real estate company for increased market exposure
 - 1.2.2** Include City-owned parcels in the Old Town Master Plan
 - 1.2.3** Utilize Brownfields Program for the 6th St. land sale
- 1.3** Explore and utilize tax incentives to support development
 - 1.3.1** Explore establishing an Industrial Development Authority (IDA)
 - 1.3.2** Evaluate Opportunity Zone and Foreign-Trade Zone designations
 - 1.3.3** Assess benefits and implications of implementing a sales tax rebate program
- 1.4** Invest in new and existing infrastructure to encourage development
 - 1.4.1** Ensure infrastructure is shovel-ready to qualify for state and federal funding
 - 1.4.2** Continue to pursue all sources of funding for an advanced water purification facility
- 1.5** Reduce development barriers
 - 1.5.1** Continue to update and clarify zoning codes in accordance with the General Plan
 - 1.5.2** Explore options for additional administrative design review opportunities to reduce application times
 - 1.5.3** Conduct annual review of City codes and policies to further development
 - 1.5.4** Promote the City for current ease of development
- 1.6** Finalize and implement Commercial Business Attraction contract
- 1.7** Identify projects appropriate for bonding
- 1.8** Educate the public on regional services provided outside City limits
- 1.9** Increase tourism revenue
 - 1.9.1** Hire a full-time Social Media Manager through the Destination Marketing Organization
 - 1.9.2** Update Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) tagline, logo and website
 - 1.9.3** Host and promote sports tournaments
 - 1.9.4** Conduct hotel feasibility study
- 1.10** Promote Insurance Services Office (ISO) Fire Rating
- 1.11** Explore the possibility of including the Council's Strategic Pillars in council communication documents
- 1.12** Ensure City priorities are communicated to state and federal representatives
- 1.13** Update recreation program software
- 1.14** Promote the Verde Valley regionally for increased development opportunities

General plan objectives alignment: 1-5, 1-13, 2-1, 2-2, 3-6, 3-7, 4-1, 5-2, 5-5



INVEST IN EXISTING ASSETS

ASSUMPTION - 40% OF INFRASTRUCTURE WILL NEED REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Less funding for non-essential services • Limit development • Increase City debt • Increased maintenance costs • Service disruptions • Negative public perception

STRATEGIES

- Diversify City revenue sources for fiscal stability
- Invest in planning/scheduling assessments and systems to promote efficiency
- Conduct fee assessments across all departments to maintain consistent service delivery
- Improve interdepartmental communication and collaboration

ACTIONS

- 2.1** Increase competitive grant engagement
 - 2.1.1** Hire a grant writer or consultants
 - 2.1.2** Partner with Local First AZ
- 2.2** Conduct facility needs assessment and maintenance plan
 - 2.2.1** Improve inputs on 5-year Capital Improvement Plan
- 2.3** Conduct a comprehensive parking study to include parking fee assessment
- 2.4** Complete Water/Wastewater Master Plans
 - 2.4.1** Adjust user rates
 - 2.4.2** Identify areas for future development
- 2.5** Evaluate Airport rates and fees
 - 2.5.1** Evaluate hanger lease and tiedown rates
 - 2.5.2** Evaluate fuel pricing
 - 2.5.3** Develop a Request for Proposal for vacant airport land
 - 2.5.4** Evaluate implementation of landing fees
- 2.6** Explore tax incentives for vacant commercial property development
- 2.7** Evaluate Improvement Districts and Revitalization Zone funding
- 2.8** Improve interdepartmental coordination
 - 2.8.1** Internal training on CloudPermit
- 2.9** Streamline and review development codes, ordinances, and fee structures
 - 2.9.1** Analyze our current restoration limits for utilities in the Right of Way (ROW)
- 2.10** Increase public-private partnerships
 - 2.10.1** Explore and expand sponsorships
- 2.11** Complete Fire Master Plan
- 2.12** Implement Firewise Program at City facilities



MEET RESIDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

ASSUMPTION - INCREASED DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Increase in public information requests • Increase demand for online access to information • Increase in political division • Increased civic engagement • Improved accountability and performance • Enhanced community collaboration • Slower implementation timeline

STRATEGIES

- Enhance access to City services and information
- Strengthen community engagement and participation
- Promote transparent and effective internal communication
- Advance department-wide planning and policy development

ACTIONS

3.1 Implement internal Communications Plan

3.2 Citizen engagement programs:

- 3.2.1** Citizen's Leadership Academy, Police Academy
- 3.2.2** Coffee with Council, Coffee with a Cop
- 3.2.3** City Podcast or Inside Cottonwood
- 3.2.4** Council visits to community organizations
- 3.2.5** Create and implement Ad Hoc Airport information groups
- 3.2.6** Implement Rave community communications system
- 3.2.7** Establish Citizen's Advisory Board

3.3 Improve civic engagement infrastructure:

- 3.3.1** Community satisfaction and budget priority survey
- 3.3.2** Audit/update website annually
- 3.3.3** Make commission meetings available via video
- 3.3.4** Create Social Media Strategy

3.4 Increase access to City codes and ordinances:

- 3.4.1** Update Municode
- 3.4.2** Implement record retention system

3.5 Develop AI Use/Transparency Policy

3.6 Leverage City events for public engagement

- 3.6.1** Coordinate with all City departments for cross-departmental program promotion

3.7 Host election forums

3.8 Implement Emergency Operations Plan

- 3.8.1** Update and implement Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training



BALANCE A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY WITH QUALITY OF LIFE

ASSUMPTION - LOSS OF LOCAL CONTROL OVER RESIDENTIAL ZONING

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Reduced ability for City to manage growth • Reduced public input and transparency • Substandard housing • Conflicting neighbors • Limited planned area development (PAD) • Reduction in property value • Increased demand on City services • Increased housing inventory

STRATEGIES

- Educate stakeholders on policy and regulatory impacts
- Strengthen legislative advocacy and intergovernmental relations
- Develop sustainable funding alternatives to offset reduced development fees

ACTIONS

4.1 Engage with the Greater Arizona Mayors Association (GAMA) and the League of Arizona Cities and Towns for advocacy on zoning issues

4.2 Participate in state discussions related to zoning issues

4.3 Investigate development limits due to infrastructure and safety concerns

4.4 Decide on absorbing infrastructure costs to incentivize housing

4.5 Explore Improvement Districts

4.6 Seek state/federal infrastructure funding

4.6.1 Apply for annual appropriations

4.7 Raise thresholds for off-site improvements

4.8 Public education:

4.8.1 Coffee with Council on housing

4.8.2 Educational materials on the Affordable Housing Ordinance

4.8.3 Growth/annexation/water limitations

4.9 Collaborate with developers and landowners to identify barriers to development





COLLABORATE ON SHARED GOALS

ASSUMPTION - INCREASED DEMAND FOR HEALTHCARE ACCESS

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

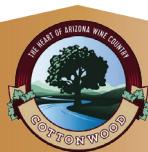
Citizens traveling for healthcare • Less desire to live in Cottonwood • Fewer high-quality jobs • Substandard community health • Increased demand on public services

STRATEGIES

- Foster collaborative partnerships with local healthcare providers
- Assist in improving awareness of available healthcare options
- Incentivize development of attainable housing options
- Expand Healthcare Related Transportation Services
- Improve strategic relations with Northern Arizona Healthcare (NAH) and Yavapai County Community Health (YCCCH)
- Promote community health and wellness initiatives
- Encourage development of additional senior living facilities
- Promote competition in healthcare services and encourage market diversity

ACTIONS

- 5.1** Expand healthcare-related transportation options
 - 5.1.1** Partner with Verde Valley Caregivers
- 5.2** Attract assisted living developments
- 5.3** Link housing development to healthcare workforce
- 5.4** Increase telehealth infrastructure
- 5.5** Integrate healthcare into emergency management
- 5.6** Engage with healthcare providers:
 - 5.6.1** Promote Cottonwood healthcare
 - 5.6.2** Collaborate on health-related community programs
- 5.7** Support and encourage programs that develop healthcare professionals such as nurses
- 5.8** Build NAH board and philanthropy relationships
- 5.9** Include outdoor fitness in parks
- 5.10** Provide core services to attract and retain providers
- 5.11** Advocate for federal and state health infrastructure grants
- 5.12** Improve programs for seniors to prevent healthcare needs



FISCAL OPTIMIZATION

ASSUMPTION - THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD WILL UNDERGO AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Deferred maintenance on buildings/infrastructure • Loss of reserve funding • Elimination of non-profits • Loss of small businesses • Increased number of available workforce • Impact on tourism and hospitality sector • Population shifts to more urban areas

STRATEGIES

- Define and optimize City services
- Improve and strengthen public and private partnerships to maximize impact
- Promote economic growth by attracting a wide range of new businesses
- Expand access to job training, workforce development, and remote work resources

ACTIONS

- 6.1** Assess fees and core services
- 6.2** Create budget cutback plan
- 6.3** Encourage cross-training
- 6.4** Maintain strong reserves update Reserves Policy
- 6.5** Adjust operating hours for efficiency
- 6.6** Expand online capabilities for public use
- 6.7** Invest in cost-saving technology
- 6.8** Identify opportunities for public and private partnerships
- 6.9** Prepare to absorb nonprofit services
- 6.10** Attract remote and digital economy businesses
- 6.11** Review annexation policy
- 6.12** Monitor services beyond City limits
- 6.13** Explore citywide efficiency assessment
- 6.14** Partner with Yavapai College for support
- 6.15** Share resources with community partners



BALANCE A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY WITH QUALITY OF LIFE

ASSUMPTION - THE CITY WILL HAVE A SHORTAGE OF ATTAINABLE HOUSING

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Homeless population will increase • Qualified workforce recruitment challenges • Increased mental health issues • Higher demand on social services • Overcrowding and poor living conditions • Reduced school enrollment and community participation

STRATEGIES

- Incentivize development of affordable housing
- Advocate for increased local authority of short-term rentals (STR)
- Enhance regional collaboration to improve services and solutions for the homeless and unhoused individuals
- Invest in modern infrastructure
- Work with nonprofits, land trusts, and mission-aligned developers to expand housing options
- Educate residents about the connection between housing supply, affordability, and the local economic vitality

ACTIONS

- 7.1** Update housing study with an emphasis on incentives
- 7.2** Gather STR/corporate ownership data
- 7.3** Coordinate on STR preemption repeal
- 7.4** Attract new businesses and housing developers
 - 7.4.1** Assess the feasibility of adding a housing component to business attraction efforts
- 7.5** Assess the feasibility of land purchase for deed-restricted housing
- 7.6** Evaluate dedicated revenue stream for housing
- 7.7** Partner for affordability incentives
- 7.8** Explore Improvement Districts
- 7.9** Analyze approved housing projects that have been stalled
- 7.10** Engage in regional housing discussions
 - 7.10.1** Contribute to regional efforts for affordable housing
- 7.11** Educate developers and the public on the Affordable Housing Ordinance and Zoning
 - 7.11.1** Developer outreach and education
 - 7.11.2** Public education on community benefits and zoning
- 7.12** Continue Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) coordination with developers
- 7.13** Connect potential developers with private employers with housing interests
- 7.14** Promote the Down Payment Assistance and Critical Home Repair programs
- 7.15** Utilize Development Incentives & Guidelines for Affordable Housing (DIGAH) where appropriate
- 7.16** Apply to participate in the National League of Cities Housing Accelerator Program

General plan objectives alignment: 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, 4-7, 4-8, 4-9, 5-2, 12-4



BALANCE A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY WITH QUALITY OF LIFE

ASSUMPTION - THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD WILL EXPERIENCE A REDUCTION IN QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Increase in pay to skilled workforce • Decrease in quality of services • Require more on the job training • Companies won't want to relocate to Cottonwood • Cottonwood will continue to be a hospitality and tourism economy • Rely on older workforce • Reduced tax revenue • Increase in cost of services • Erosion of community vitality

STRATEGIES

- Engage and empower local youth through civic and career pathways
- Recruit and retain talent within Cottonwood and Verde Valley
- Extend recruitment outreach to regional metropolitan areas
- Expand internship and career development opportunities
- Leverage technology to enhance efficiency and service delivery
- Foster a culture of recognition and employee appreciation
- Invest in workforce development and competitive employee benefits
- Improve succession planning for organizational resilience
- Strengthen educational partnerships with Yavapai College
- Improve quality of life through public enhancements
- Expand diverse and attainable housing options for all residents

ACTIONS

- 8.1** Invest in technology and employee trainings
 - 8.1.1** Create monthly supervisor training program
- 8.2** Partner with schools for internships
- 8.3** Invest in employee morale and development
 - 8.3.1** Investigate benefits, compensation and specialty pay
 - 8.3.2** Explore internal mentorship and training programs
 - 8.3.3** Promote education reimbursement program
 - 8.3.4** Continue monthly employee appreciation events
- 8.4** Collaborate with Yavapai College for City specific certification programs
- 8.5** Visit youth groups to promote City careers
- 8.6** Promote volunteer leave program
- 8.7** Continue to promote and utilize Verde Valley Leadership Program
- 8.8** Create and implement standard recruitment timelines for all open positions



COLLABORATE ON SHARED GOALS

ASSUMPTION - 90% OF THE VERDE VALLEY WILL HAVE BROADBAND ACCESS

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Residents will have improved ability for remote work • Increase in online shopping • Negative impacts to local retail • Improved telehealth options • Improved opportunity for education and training • Increased internet crime • Increased opportunity for civic engagement

STRATEGIES

- Improve cybersecurity systems across all departments
- Increase and expand cybersecurity training and awareness for all City staff
- Transition to fully online City services with community and staff training
- Ensure mobile friendly access to services and Information
- Promote digital literacy to increase community access and equity

ACTIONS

- 9.1 Market Cottonwood as a remote work destination
- 9.2 Partner with schools for remote work readiness programs
- 9.3 Encourage remote workers in Cottonwood to participate in local events
- 9.4 Support youth tech and e-learning
- 9.5 Support online business via the Verde Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- 9.6 Develop remote work spaces and telehealth hubs
- 9.7 Digitize public services (permits, records, etc.)
- 9.8 Expand virtual meetings and engagement tools



General plan objectives alignment: 3-15



INVEST IN EXISTING ASSETS

ASSUMPTION - 10% OF CITY EMPLOYEES WILL WORK REMOTELY

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Less need for physical facilities • Wider recruiting area • Increased employee retention and recruitment • Cultural and communication shifts • Equity and morale concerns

STRATEGIES

- Optimize City technology systems and cybersecurity infrastructure
- Explore integration opportunities for artificial intelligence (AI) to improve services and efficiency
- Modernize supervision and performance management tools
- Extend recruitment outreach to regional metropolitan areas

ACTIONS

- 10.1** Create IT Strategic Plan
- 10.2** Modernize network and software platforms
- 10.3** Adopt cybersecurity protocols
- 10.4** Implement remote work policy and job description changes
- 10.5** Conduct remote work assessments
- 10.6** Train managers in remote supervision
- 10.7** Plan shared office space in new City Hall
- 10.8** Leverage tools like Microsoft Teams

- 10.8.1** Train employees on shared technology tools



General plan objectives alignment: 8-1



MEET RESIDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

ASSUMPTION - OLD TOWN COTTONWOOD WILL UNDERGO ENHANCEMENT EFFORTS

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Improved circulation • Increased business opportunity • Central area for people to gather • Non-Old Town businesses will be concerned • Increased demands on streets, sidewalks, and parking • Improve quality of life for residents and visitors • Risk of gentrification • Increased sales tax, job creation, and business attraction • Stronger sense of place

STRATEGIES

- Sustain investment in the maintenance and enhancement of Old Town
- Preserve and enhance pedestrian friendly design in Old Town
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Main Street Beautification and Master Plan
- Balance growth with the preservation of Old Town's unique character and vitality

ACTIONS

- 11.1** Partner with businesses for Old Town Master Plan
- 11.2** Formalize agreement with Old Town Association (OTA)
- 11.3** Educate the public on historic preservation benefits
- 11.4** Increase applications to historic home grants
- 11.5** Amend Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) code for clarity
- 11.6** Relocate City Hall out of Old Town
- 11.7** Promote events and programs in Old Town
- 11.8** Provide information on Entertainment District benefits
- 11.9** Enhance efforts to support code and traffic compliance
- 11.10** Attract local residents to shop in Old Town



General plan objectives alignment: 3-6, 3-7, 7-2, 11-8, 11-11



Looking Ahead

Assumptions for 2030-2035

1. Mingus Wastewater will exceed capacity
2. Motor Vehicle traffic will increase by 30%
3. Claims and lawsuits against the City will increase by 10%
4. Sales tax revenue will be negatively impacted by Camp Verde
5. Increased desire to live in Cottonwood due to the quality of life
6. Destination, recreation, and tourism continue to be the primary industry
7. Access to AI and other technology will drastically increase
8. Petitioned by Verde Santa Fe for annexation
9. City will grow by 20% and have 290 full-time employees
10. Drinking water standards for arsenic and other contaminants of emerging concern will be more stringent
11. Cottonwood Area Transit (CAT) will serve a larger geographic region
12. Electric vehicle use will double
13. Training flights in and out of Cottonwood Municipal Airport will continue to increase

Assumptions for 2035-2040

1. Drilling new wells will be prohibited and pumping will be capped at 3,400 acre-feet of groundwater annually
2. Cottonwood's population will increase to 20,000, of which, 35% will be 65+
3. Cottonwood will continue to experience an affordable housing shortage
4. Spring Creek will be developed
5. 20% of vehicle traffic will be self-driving

Assumptions for 2040+

1. Cottonwood's population will reach max build out at approximately 45,000 people
2. In 2045, Cottonwood will continue to support affordable housing initiatives and the availability of affordable housing will be improved
3. In 2050, there will be a hyperloop system connecting Cottonwood to Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Las Vegas
4. 10% of area tourists will arrive by air taxi



Acknowledgements

City Council

Ann Shaw, Mayor

Felicia Coates, Vice Mayor

Stephen DeWillis, Council Member

Chris Dowell, Council Member

Bob Marks, Council Member

Joy Mosley, Council Member

Debbie Wilden, Council Member

City Staff

Tom Whitmer, Acting City Manager

Sandra Salas, Executive Assistant to the City Manager & City Council

Ryan Bigelow, Director of Strategic Initiatives

Heather Rowe, Management Analyst

Laura Herrera, Marketing & Public Information Specialist

Helen Bartels, Budget Analyst

Executive & Leadership Teams

Jesus Rudy Rodriguez, *Former* Deputy City Manager

Gary Davis, *Former* Senior Planner

Additional Thanks To

Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom, *Bloom Facilitation*

Astrid Darlington, *Bloom Facilitation*

Blushing Cactus Photography



Index - Referencing City of Cottonwood General Plan

1-5 Mixed Use: Medium and High Density Residential and Neighborhood Commercial Designations. Locate multi-family residential uses and light commercial uses together in the NC land use designation, to promote bicycle and foot traffic for the commercial uses, convenience for the residential uses, easy access to transit, and shared parking opportunities. Neighborhood commercial uses include small-scale retail, service, restaurant, and office uses. While adequate on- or off-street parking is required, features such as highly visible parking lots and drive-through facilities are not appropriate in these designations. Locate multi-family residential uses in MR and HR designations adjacent to NC designations, in areas served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

1-13 Infill Development. Consider incentive programs to encourage infill development, as described in the Growth Areas and Cost of Development elements of this plan.

1-15 Community Engagement.

- Provide citizens with ample opportunity to review and comment on proposed land use actions considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council, including variances, conditional use permits, and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, the Zoning Map, and the General Plan, in accordance with state law and the procedures established in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Meet or exceed state law's additional requirements for notification and approval of decennial General Plan updates and major amendments to the General Plan, including adoption of written procedures to provide effective, early, and continuous public participation.

2-1 Growth Areas. Plan the general character of future development on large tracts of developable land designated as Growth Areas, as described in the Growth Areas table and shown on the Infill and Growth Areas map. Incentivize infill development in Growth Areas where wastewater service is already available, as shown on the same map. To facilitate infill development, the City may abandon or vacate unneeded rights-of-way to adjacent property owners to create parcels that are more developable.

2-2 Revitalization Plan. Encourage revitalization of Cottonwood's core residential, commercial, and industrial areas within the designated Revitalization Area (designated on the Infill and Growth Areas Map) by incentivizing and facilitating infill development and redevelopment, and by prioritizing construction and maintenance of City infrastructure, including utilities, roadways, sidewalk, trails, and bicycle facilities.

2-3 Annexation. Consider annexation petitions only in instances where annexation would not create a significant financial burden to the City in terms of services and infrastructure, and where a large majority of affected property owners have demonstrated support for annexation. If requested, the City will provide property owners in proposed annexation areas information on the annexation process, and the pros and cons of being annexed into the City. Because Cottonwood is surrounded primarily by undevelopable public land, developed private land, and state trust land that is not planned for annexation in the near future (Growth Area GR-12), this plan does not include policy objectives on land uses, densities, infrastructure, or services outside the City boundary.

2-4 Community Engagement. Provide citizens with ample opportunity to review and comment on proposed land use actions in Growth Areas.

3-1 Business Attraction and Retention. Continuously plan and implement programs to encourage existing businesses to stay and expand, and to recruit new businesses that will diversify the economy and be compatible with the environment and Cottonwood's character. Continuously plan and implement programs to develop an educated and skilled local workforce.

3-2 Local Business. Help locally-owned businesses thrive by providing resources and programs that focus on small business development needs, and promotional programs to encourage residents and visitors to shop and dine in Cottonwood.

3-3 Wine Country. Retain Cottonwood's branding as "The Heart of Arizona Wine Country" and collaborate with local trade organizations to support and maintain the presence of wine-related businesses.

3-4 Outdoor Recreation. Promote outdoor recreation opportunities such as hiking and bicycling for use by residents and visitors through marketing and by continually improving the bicycle and trail network, as described in the Circulation element and the Open Space and Recreation element of this plan.

3-5 Tourism. Promote tourism to benefit the small, locally-owned businesses that depend on visitors, but carefully strategize marketing efforts to avoid over-use and congestion that can detract from the small-town character valued by residents and visitors.

3-6 Old Town Character. Retain Old Town's vitality and unique character by permitting and encouraging adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and permitting Cottonwood General Plan 26 March 27, 2025 new buildings that are compatible with existing architectural and historic context. Ensure development regulations support a wide range of retail, entertainment, office, and residential uses.

3-7 Old Town Streetscapes. Preserve and enhance the character of established streetscapes to promote a high-quality walkable environment in Old Town, with amenities such as street trees, on-street parking, sidewalk café space, street furniture, reduced crosswalk lengths, public restrooms, and pedestrian-scale lighting and signage. Alleviate parking shortages by increasing number of spaces and improving parking management. Consider replacing the City-owned buildings at the southeast corner of Main and Pima Streets with a revitalized Old Town Activity Park, an open street-side gathering place designed for events and daily use, with the parking area moved east and enlarged. Coordinate with Old Town business owners and residents to develop a parking plan and a streetscape master plan for implementing this objective, in accordance with current best practices.

3-11 Archaeological Resources. Enact and enforce development regulations that meet or exceed state and federal law regarding the treatment of pre-historic and historic archaeological resources. Ensure resources are treated according to the highest standards of respect and

current best practices, and assist land management agencies in preserving archaeological resources on public lands.

3-14 Community Participation. Strengthen the sense of small-town community character and cohesiveness by encouraging a culture of active and civil participation in City government. Provide clear and timely information on upcoming topics to be discussed, and meet or exceed state law requirements for notification and access to public meetings of the City Council and the City's boards and commissions. Provide information on how to fill volunteer roles, serve on boards and commissions, apply for City employment, or run for elected office

3-15 Telecommunications. Maximize citizen access to the internet and City government by pursuing options to increase broadband and wi-fi availability in Cottonwood, and continually improving the functionality of the City's website

3-16 Community Engagement.

- Promote public awareness of Cottonwood's history and historic assets through various activities, including walking tours, property tour events, signage, interpretive displays, marketing, and recognition of National Historic Preservation Month in May of each year.
- Produce and widely distribute promotional materials include brochures, videos, events calendars, and newsletters.
- Share resources with the business community through various programs and publications, and coordinate tourism activities with the Tourism Advisory Committee.
- Schedule and publicize periodic open houses where citizens can meet with Council members and other City officials to discuss budget priorities and other topics of interest.
- Hold workshops where citizens can receive information on volunteer opportunities and the Mayor and Council election process.

4-1 Housing Availability. Improve the economic viability of potential housing developments to help the housing supply keep pace with demand, especially multi-family and smaller single-family units, which are in short supply. Options include:

- Allowing flexibility in development standards such as building setbacks and parking requirements to increase the potential number of units on a parcel within the permitted density of the zoning, and to encourage creativity in project design and neighborhood compatibility,
- Reducing development fees for multi-family and smaller single-family units in infill areas, and
- Coordinating with nonprofits or governmental agencies that supplement rents, providing affordable rents for tenants while providing adequate income to property owners.

4-2 Housing Affordability. Incentivize development of dwelling units that are affordable to households with low or moderate incomes. Potential affordable housing incentives include modification of development standards and fees for developments in which a specified proportion of affordable units is guaranteed through a development agreement. Publish a written policy that describes the available incentives, and ensure the Zoning Ordinance allows for implementation of those incentives.

4-3 Housing Continuum Partnerships. Coordinate with nonprofit organizations and other government agencies in the region in establishing a continuum of housing

opportunities that provides a path from homelessness to permanent housing. This continuum includes emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and permanent affordable rental and ownership opportunities.

4-4 Special Needs Housing. Ensure special needs housing is permitted within residential neighborhoods, including housing for people with physical and developmental disabilities, and senior independent living and assisted care, provided the character and scale of the housing is compatible with its surroundings.

4-5 Accessory Dwellings. Consider adding flexibility to the development regulations to allow additional housing units in single-family residential areas in a way that is consistent with the neighborhood's established character.

4-6 Neighborhood Preservation. Maintain and enhance the vitality of established neighborhoods by preserving the supply of older housing stock in those neighborhoods, which tends to be the most affordable. Potential actions include home maintenance assistance for income-qualified households, and activities to encourage neighborhood cohesiveness, such as Neighborhood Watch.

4-7 Manufactured Homes and Recreational Vehicles. Ensure that housing in manufactured home parks and recreational vehicle parks is safe and well-maintained housing by enforcing development standards and property maintenance codes. Incentivize existing nonconforming parks to bring themselves into compliance with current standards.

4-8 Short Term Rentals. Discourage the proliferation of short-term (vacation) rentals (STR's), which can reduce the supply of housing units and have negative impacts on neighborhoods. Potential actions include encouraging private restrictions on STR's, lobbying state lawmakers to reverse state pre-emption of cities' restriction of STR uses, informing property owners about the responsibilities of operating STR's under City regulations, and ensuring that those regulations are effectively enforced.

4-9 Community Engagement.

- Provide information to people looking for housing on how to find housing that is affordable to them
 - Recruit builders and nonprofits who might provide housing on a smaller scale than larger developers
 - Number of building permits for completed residential units of varying types and sizes by year
 - Completed studies on the financial and regulatory conditions that inhibit development of smaller, more affordable dwelling units, and possible ways to change those conditions by increasing potential number of units, reducing costs, and supplementing rents
 - Number of building permits for completed residential units with and without affordability thresholds
 - Number of units/beds available for each step in the housing continuum
 - Estimated number of housing units affordable to low-income households
 - Estimated number of unsheltered people in Cottonwood
 - Number of spaces in manufactured home and recreational vehicle parks
 - Number of permits for manufactured home and RV park renovations
 - Number of occupied and unoccupied housing units, by age

(year built)

- Number and locations of registered short-term rental units

5-1 Funding. Use various mechanisms to fund and finance public services necessary to serve new development, in accordance with state law. It is the City's policy that all funding mechanisms adopted by the City to pay for the costs of development result in a beneficial use to the development, bear a reasonable relationship to the burden imposed on the City to provide additional necessary public services to the development, and otherwise are imposed according to law.

5-2 Infill Incentives. Consider tools such as Infill Incentive Districts to reduce development fees and allow greater flexibility in development standards for infill projects in areas where public roadways and City utilities.

5-5 Community Engagement.

- Provide clear information on City development fees and any available incentives for infill development.
- Encourage public participation in the City's budget adoption process.

6-1 Highway Corridors. Prioritize mobility over access on arterial roadways whose primary function is to allow high-speed vehicular traffic between destinations. The number of driveway entrances to businesses from the roadway should be limited to create the fewest conflict points possible, with preference given to driveways onto intersecting side roads. Shared driveways and cross-access between businesses should be encouraged to reduce conflict points. Businesses may be set back from the roadway to allow for parking in front. Large private driveway and parking areas are typical, but should be kept to only what is required, so that valuable commercial acreage is not unnecessarily kept out of productive use. While fewer pedestrians and bicyclists are typically present in a highway corridor, safe and accessible accommodation will be provided. Bicycle facilities should be separated from through lanes by physical barriers, and pedestrians should be separated from high-speed vehicular traffic by use of wide sidewalks or landscape strips separating the sidewalk from the curb.

6-6 Corridor Planning. In each corridor, plan the ongoing development and redevelopment of roadways and bicycle/pedestrian facilities in harmony with the planned land uses, as described in the table below. For development in Highway corridors where the right-of-way and roadway is owned by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), coordinate with ADOT to ensure City policy is consistent with their access requirements.

6-7 Community Engagement. Notify and invite participation from interested residents, property owners, and community groups in developing detailed plans for any corridor

7-1 Connectivity. Plan for a well-connected system of roadways, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks that provides safe and efficient circulation among existing and planned land uses. Ensure the roadway system makes connections that provide additional route choices, to prevent severe congestion at critical intersections. New highway connections would be owned and maintained by ADOT. New collector roads will be designed and built by developers per City standards, and dedicated to the City of Cottonwood for ongoing maintenance. New local roads that do not provide connectivity will be privately owned and maintained, will

feature pedestrian connections where vehicular connections are lacking, and will be designed and maintained to accommodate emergency response. Along existing and new roadways, add bicycle facilities and sidewalks to close gaps in the existing multimodal system. Add trails to close gaps in the trail system and to provide pedestrian connections where roadways and sidewalks do not exist. Dedication of needed rights-of-way for planned roadways, and easements for planned bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities may be required as part of development approval process. Development should be planned so that public roadway access is available to adjacent developable land. All conceptual roadways, shared use paths, and trails shown on the Circulation Plan are intended to plan for potential future connectivity, not to set final alignments, and they are subject to change. More specific planned alignments will be determined during the land use and transportation planning process in coordination with property owners, ADOT, the U.S. Forest Service, Arizona State Parks, Arizona State Land Department, and the City.

7-2 Comprehensive Roadway Design. Design all City or state roadway projects, including pavement construction, sidewalk construction, or restriping, to be appropriate to the context of the corridor, and in accordance with current best practices. The design process will involve interested citizens, multiple City departments, and, when appropriate, ADOT or other jurisdictions. All project designs will consider and include multiple elements of the roadway, including through lanes, bicycle lanes, crosswalks, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, wayfinding signage, posted speed limits, and accessibility for those with disabilities. To assure adherence with current best practices, hire consulting firms with experience in designing for safety, accessibility, and multimodal use in the applicable corridor type. The design can be implemented throughout an entire corridor, or parcel-by-parcel, with required off-site improvements for individual developments.

7-3 Safety-Oriented Design. Comprehensive roadway design (per Objective 7-2) will prioritize the safety of drivers, bicyclists, transit passengers, and pedestrians, by designing for vehicular speeds that are appropriate to the corridor and consistent with the planned posted speed limit.

7-4 Signalized Intersections and Roundabouts. Coordinate with ADOT to identify measures to reduce crash rates and vehicular congestion at signalized intersections on state highways, while making them safe and accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians. Measures may include adjusting signal timing, changing signal or lane configuration, or conversion to roundabouts. On City-owned roadways, study potential locations for roundabouts where current or future safety or congestion problems may occur, in coordination with adjacent property owners and other stakeholders. Intersections where signalization or roundabout studies may be needed are shown on the Circulation Plan.

7-5 West Loop Road. Participate in a regional study with Yavapai County, the Town of Clarkdale, Prescott National Forest, Arizona State Land Department, ADOT, and any other affected jurisdictions, to evaluate the potential benefits, costs, and alignment options for a connector road between Ogden Ranch Road and West Mingus Avenue. Add the conceptual road alignment to the Circulation Plan if all affected parties concur the road project is needed, and are willing to participate in design and construction.

7-6 Maintenance. Regularly maintain and sweep roadway

surfaces to prolong their lifespan and minimize hazards to drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

7-8 Regional Transportation Planning. Help plan and maintain an effective regional transportation system for all transportation modes through ongoing coordination with the Verde Valley Transportation Planning Organization (VVTPPO), ADOT, Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG), the Bicycle Advisory Committee, and neighboring jurisdictions.

7-9 Transit Service. Provide reliable, efficient, and convenient transit service throughout the Verde Valley in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions, and promote ridership among a wide variety of potential passengers. Service will include fixed-route services as well as flexible programs such as paratransit.

7-10 Transit Operations Planning. Adopt and implement a Transit Development Plan that evaluates current transit service, and identifies ways to improve customer relations and to enhance service to meet the community's needs in future years.

7-11 Transit Stops. Build safe, comfortable, and accessible transit stops within walking distance of senior and high-density housing, and frequently visited commercial and healthcare destinations. Stops with high number of boardings, where waiting is most common, will be the priority for benches, trash receptacles, lighted shelters, and bicycle racks. Pull-out bays should be limited to locations with a high number of boardings, and where a bay would significantly help alleviate traffic blockages. Easement or right-of-way dedication for planned stops and pull-out bays will be required as part of development approval process on adjacent land.

7-12 Community Engagement:

- Notify and invite participation from interested residents, property owners, and community groups in developing detailed plans for roadway projects.
- Invite the public to participate in transit service planning, including route and schedule changes, and the drafting of the Transit Development Plan.

8-1 Airport Facilities. Periodically update the Airport Master Plan and Airport Capital Improvement Program, and program facility improvements to the airport in accordance with the plan.

8-2 Leased Land. Maximize development of remaining available airport property to support aeronautical activities at fair market value rates.

8-3 Noise and Safety. To the greatest extent permitted by FAA regulations, incentivize pilots to follow requested noise abatement practices to mitigate aircraft noise (consistent with safety), and seek agreements with flight schools to limit the number of aircraft using the airport at the same time, and the hours of training flights to reduce the potential negative effects of air traffic on residents.

8-4 User Fees. Explore the costs and benefits of implementing a user fee system to generate landing fee revenue from transient aircraft flights (i.e. those not "based" at CMA).

8-6 Aviation Easements and Disclosure Notices. Request new developments and modifications to existing properties to enter into an aviation easement with the City. Require buyers and renters of housing units within the CMA's air traffic area (as defined by state law; see Circulation and Land Use map) to be notified of proximity to the airport and possible aircraft noise.

8-7 Land Use Conflicts. Limit land uses and structure heights in the vicinity of the CMA, in accordance with FAA airspace requirements. Require airspace analyses (7460 process) to be completed as required during the Code Review process.

9-1 Riparian buffers. Require protective open space along the Verde River and its tributaries to retain open space and wildlife corridors, and to prevent non-point source pollution.

9-3 Slopes. Ensure that development regulations provide standards for construction on steep hillsides and flood areas that help preserve key natural resources while allowing for appropriate levels of development in these areas.

9-5 Air Quality. Enact and enforce dust control measures during construction and grading activity, and coordinate with other jurisdictions and agencies as necessary to ensure air quality standards are met on all land uses. Make reclaimed water available for dust control use.

9-7 Dark Sky. Retain Cottonwood's status as an International Dark Sky Community, and ensure development regulations mitigate light pollution while allowing sufficient illumination for security.

9-9 Community Engagement:

- Support volunteer groups and individuals that adopt natural open space areas to remove trash, beautify, and monitor
- Hold periodic dark sky astronomy events

10-2 Water Management. Follow an integrated water resource management plan that provides guidance for long-term planning, quantifies the needs for water resources, and determines the necessary water, wastewater, and reclaimed water infrastructure needed over time.

10-3 Water Safety. Comply with regulatory agencies' requirements for monitoring water quality in the City water utility's distribution system, and conduct quality base line studies. Regularly upgrade and maintain the water distribution system to maximize efficiency and provide a reliable water supply for all users, including fire flow.

10-4 Water Rights. Pursue acquisition of surface water rights from all available sources, and remain involved with the statewide water adjudication proceedings to protect and enhance Cottonwood's water resources portfolio.

10-5 Water Conservation. Maintain a strong water conservation program, including public education, and recharge/reuse of reclaimed water to the greatest extent practicable. Recharge all unused reclaimed water to offset groundwater pumping and acquire long-term storage credits. Ensure development regulations require landscaping be designed per xeriscape principles, and prohibit large swaths of turf that do not use reclaimed water.

11-2 Trails and Open Space. Connect the developed part of Cottonwood with public open space areas such as Dead Horse Ranch State Park and the Prescott and Coconino

National forests via an extensive trail system open to hikers and, where appropriate, mountain bikers and equestrians.

11-3 Regional Outdoor Recreation Planning. Participate in regional coordination efforts such as Verde Front on regional open space and recreational planning. Expand and improve the regional trail system in coordination with the State Park, U.S. Forest Service, neighboring jurisdictions, and property owners, per the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

11-4 New Recreation Facilities and Open Space. Ensure development regulations require a percentage of land to be reserved for parks or open space as part of large developments, including those within Growth Areas (Objective 2-1), and that connecting trails and bicycle facilities be provided consistent with the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Circulation Plan.

11-5 Trailheads and River Access. Work collaboratively with public and private landowners to locate new trails, trailheads, and river access points, avoiding locations where there would be negative impacts to neighboring residents.

11-6 Access Easements. Coordinate with private property owners to establish public easements for trails, bicycle facilities, and river access, consistent with the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Circulation Plan.

11-7 Parks and Recreation Facilities. Explore ways to implement higher-priority improvements proposed in the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the Riverfront Park Trails and Recreation Master Plan, using xeriscape principles and reclaimed water where possible. Update those plans as necessary.

11-8 Old Town Park Connections. Explore options for improving pedestrian and bicycle connections between Old Town and Riverfront Park, and consider reconfiguring Old Town Activity Park to become a public plaza at the southeast corner of Main and Pima Streets, with increased public parking to the east.

11-10 Facility Maintenance. Keep the Public Library, Recreation Center, and other recreation facilities clean, attractive, and safe places for the community to gather.

11-11 Community Engagement.

- Coordinate with the volunteer Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to develop and prioritize recreation programs
- Coordinate with individuals and citizens groups such as the regional Bicycle Advisory Committee on bicycle facility and trail planning
- Inform and involve the general public in updates of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Riverfront Park Trails and Recreation Master Plan
- Inform and involve adjacent property owners in the location of proposed recreation facilities, including trails, trailheads, and river access points
- Organize volunteer programs to monitor and maintain trails and open space
- Coordinate with schools on programs that promote bicycling and hiking skills
- Work with the volunteer Library Advisory Committee to plan and implement library programs

12-1 Facilities, Equipment, and Service. Continually improve facilities, equipment, training, and technology needed to

provide high quality public safety services by the Police and Fire Departments. Study ways to keep response times low, including planning for new facilities to serve growing areas.

12-2 Crime Prevention. Continue to enhance programs aimed at reducing criminal activity, including Crime Free Multi-Housing, Safe Shopper/Safe Community, Neighborhood Officer, and Neighborhood Watch. Coordinate with school districts to ensure campus security by offering threat vulnerability assessments and threat liaison officers.

12-3 Fire Prevention. Continue to enforce fire restrictions to prevent wildfires, and provide programs that inform citizens on ways to prevent fire, including Fire Wise and Fire Corps.

12-4 Housing Safety. Enact and enforce current building and fire codes and property maintenance ordinances to ensure safe housing and lots, and to prevent neighborhood decline.

12-5 Traffic Safety. Continually explore ways to reduce the frequency and severity of roadway crashes. Actions include mapping the locations of crashes involving drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists, and regularly analyzing recent serious injury crashes, identifying the factors that led to the crash, and what conditions could be changed to prevent similar crashes in the future. Analysis sessions should involve Police, Fire, Public Works, and Community Development staff.

12-6 Roadway Safety and Accessibility Study. Consider conducting a citywide study to identify needed improvements to roadways, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities, focusing primarily on facilities that are not designed per current best practices. Prioritize potential projects based on crash data, ADA compliance, proximity to schools, and greatest improvement to connectivity. Projects can range from major construction projects to minor changes such as restriping. The study should also include any needed changes to the City's engineering design standards for roadways, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks; typical treatments for different types of roadway segments and intersections; and access management standards for adjacent driveways. Resulting projects will be designed through the Comprehensive Roadway Design process (Objective 7-2).

12-7 Health and Wellness. Encourage physical fitness by providing and promoting a range of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and programs as outlined in the Open Space and Recreation element, and improving connectivity of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities as planned in the Circulation element. Consider coordinating with local healthcare providers to create a regional health and wellness program.

12-9 Community Engagement:

- Continue to facilitate and promote fire prevention citizen participation programs including: Fire Wise, Fire Corps, and American Red Cross training
- Continue to facilitate and promote crime prevention citizen participation programs including Neighborhood Watch and Citizen Police Academy
- Promote outdoor recreation and participation in events such as Bike Week



THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD



932.634.5526 | 827 N. Main Street, Cottonwood, AZ | cottonwoodaz.gov