



TOWN OF CLIFTON

GENERAL PLAN

Executive Summary



Where the Trail Begins!



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August 15, 2019

Town of Clifton General Plan Executive Summary

Prepared for:

Town of Clifton
Mayor and Council
510 N Coronado Boulevard
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Barbara Ahmann, Vice Mayor	Melissa Loya, Member
Laura Dorrell, Council member	Walter Mares, Member
John Freida, Council member	Clark Hardcastle, Member
Ray Lorenzo, Council member	Laura Dorrell, Alternate Member
B Waddell Reyes, Council member	
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Introduction and Overview

The Town of Clifton (Town) is located in southeast Arizona in a deep narrow canyon divided by the San Francisco River within Greenlee County. The Town is approximately 15 miles west of the Arizona/New Mexico border and 120 miles north of the U.S./Mexico border. The nearest metropolitan area is Tucson which is approximately 110 miles southwest of Clifton. Prior to 1984, the Town covered an area of seven and one-half square miles surrounded by public or corporately-owned lands. Its corporate limits have since been expanded to 15 and one-half square miles. Clifton serves as the seat of Greenlee County.

Historical Context

Since its inception in the early 1870's, Clifton has been inextricably linked to the copper industry. Historically a mining town where miners settled in the canyon near the confluence of the San Francisco River and Chase Creek, Clifton grew with the expansion of mining and smelting operations. In 1874 the Longfellow Copper Mining Company built a larger and more efficient smelter at the point where Chase Creek emptied into the San Francisco River. Known originally as Goulding's Camp, named after one of the early miners, and founded in 1873, Clifton incorporated in 1909.¹

Historic Attractions

At the heart of the Clifton Townsite Historic District is Chase Creek with some of the best-preserved examples of Arizona Territorial architecture. This area offers opportunities for redevelopment, revitalization and historic preservation. In its heyday, Chase Creek's numerous saloons and gambling halls gave Clifton a reputation as the "town tougher than Tombstone." The museum and walking tour allows visitors to appreciate the spirit of those days. Town is recognized as the "gateway to the Coronado Trail" or "where the trail begins."

Scenic Attractions

Clifton's unique setting in a canyon surrounding a year-round river provides prime habitat for a wide variety of birds. From northern cardinals and red-tailed hawks to cliff wrens and great blue herons, Clifton is one of the finest areas for seeing a wide diversity of birds. Three new easy-to-access riverside nature trails provide ample opportunities for bird watching.

The San Francisco River flows through Clifton while the Gila River runs south through the grass-covered meadows of the Gila and Duncan valleys. Eagle Creek and the Blue and Black Rivers offer recreation sites. Popular activities are hunting, fishing, birding, rock climbing and rockhounding.



The Coronado Trail cuts a path north through the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest which rises to 9,000 feet at the Mogollon Rim. Designated a National Scenic Byway, the Coronado Trail winds for more than a hundred miles from the twin cities of Eagar and Springerville in the north to the Town of Clifton and Morenci Townsite in the south. In between, the four-hour route follows the trail used in 1540 by Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado as he searched for the fabled “Seven Cities of Cibola.”

Connecting Clifton to Alpine, the Coronado Trail is one of the great classic rides in the nation. The spectacular roadway retraces the steps of the Spanish Conquistadores of the 1500s, offering some of the most breathtaking scenery in the Southwest. Cool in the summer, delightful in the winter, the curves, vistas and wildlife of the Coronado Trail attract hikers, nature lovers and rock climbers. The trail offers opportunities for fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, cross-country skiing and many other outdoor activities.

In addition, Clifton is located at the northern entrance to the Black Hills Back Country Byway. In the past, this unpaved 21-mile scenic drive was the only road from Safford to the mines at Clifton. It connects Clifton to Solomon via US Highway 70 near Safford. The Byway crosses the Gila River several times and offers travelers many campsites and picnic areas.

General Plan Purpose

The Town of Clifton General Plan (General Plan) manages growth within the Town's planning boundary in a manner consistent with the community's vision. It guides future growth and annexation decisions while balancing economic development and conservation of resources. It also encourages development, redevelopment and revitalization efforts that support the quality of life desired by Clifton's residents and the long-range viability of the Town. The General Plan includes the vision, guiding principles, goals and policy framework guiding such efforts. Under State law Planned Area Developments (PAD), specific plans, master plan communities, rezonings, subdivisions, public agency projects and decisions impacting the use and management of land must be consistent with the General Plan.

General Plan Planning Process

Public involvement is fundamental to the Town of Clifton. ARS 9-461.06 requires municipalities to adopt written public engagement procedures that provide for:

- The broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives
- The opportunity for written comments
- Public hearings after effective public notice
- Open discussions, communications programs and information services
- Consideration of public comments

ARS 9-461.06 also requires municipalities to consult with, advise and provide an opportunity for official comment by public officials and agencies, the county, school districts, associations of governments, public land management agencies, other appropriate government jurisdictions, public utility companies, civic, educational, professional and other organizations, property owners and citizens to ensure that plans and the provision of infrastructure and public services are coordinated in an integrated manner.

The Town of Clifton began the General Plan process in March 2018. In compliance with ARS 9-461.06, the Public Participation Plan (PPP) was adopted on May 10, 2018. The Town recognizes the importance of public engagement to the General Plan process and has made a concerted effort to engage the broadest segment of the Town's and region's population to participate in the General Plan. Completed in October 2018, the Community Vision Report documents and analyzes the comments and values of the Town of Clifton obtained through multiple visioning exercises and meetings.

Also prepared at early stages of the planning process, the Town of Clifton Background and Current Conditions Report summarizes physical and regulatory opportunities and challenges impacting development within the Town of Clifton and the General Plan Designated Planning area. Such report also assessed demographic and socio-economic trends.

The Community Vision and the Background and Current Conditions reports guided the preparation of the Vision, guiding principles, goals, policies and implementation strategies included in this General Plan.



General Plan Organization

The General Plan includes the following documents:

1. **Executive Summary** summarizes the General Plan planning process and serves as a marketing tool for the Town of Clifton.
2. **The Public Participation Plan** adopted by the Mayor and Council at early stages of the General Plan process, this plan outlines the community engagement and outreach program that guided the planning process in compliance with the State of Arizona Revised Statutes.
3. **The Community Vision Report** summarizes the input received at the various community meetings, workshops and visioning efforts.

4. **The Background and Current Conditions Report** contains all pertinent analyses supporting the General Plan policies. In compliance with all applicable Revised Arizona Statutes, this document assesses background and conditions and identifies the physical, regulatory, demographic, socioeconomic and fiscal opportunities and challenges impacting development within the Town of Clifton. This technical report and the public input gathered during the community engagement process serve as the foundation to the goals and policy framework in the General Plan. The General Plan Map Atlas includes all the maps prepared during the general plan process as part of the Background and Current Conditions Report.
5. **The General Plan Policy Plan** is the road map or policy document guiding development, redevelopment, infrastructure, economic development, historic preservation, and resource conservation efforts within the Town of Clifton. The Policy Plan includes the community vision and plan elements in compliance with all applicable Arizona Revised Statutes. Each element includes goals and policies. This volume also includes the administrative tools to manage, monitor, amend and implement the General Plan.

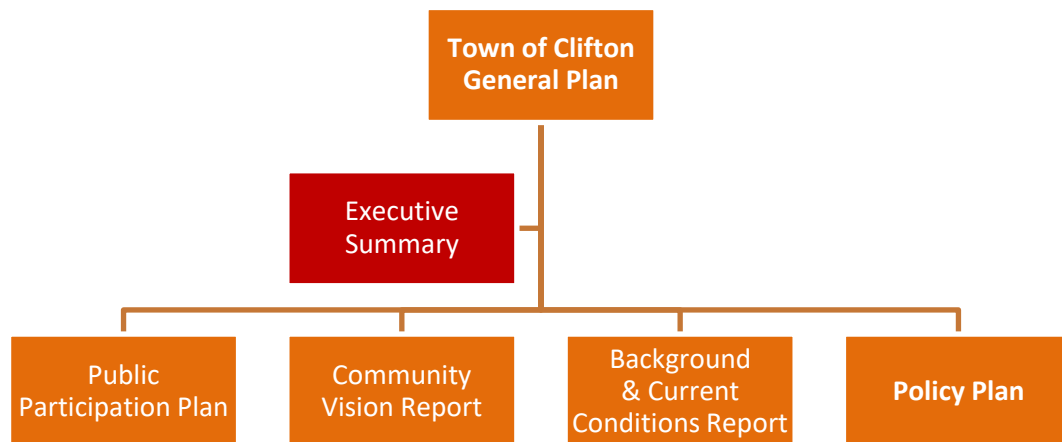


Figure 1: General Plan Organization

General Plan Framework

Comprised by the community vision, elements, guiding principles, goals, policies, and implementation strategy, the General Plan framework creates the structure that will guide and support the Town's decision-making in all aspects related to the General Plan. Key General Plan definitions include:

- **Community Vision:** a concise statement of the desired outcome supported by guiding principles and goals.
- **Element:** a chapter of the General Plan addressing Arizona Revised Statutes requirements.
- **Guiding Principle:** a statement of intent guiding the vision of Clifton as it relates to each element of the General Plan. A guiding principle leads each element of the General Plan and connects each goal to the overall Community Vision.

- **Goal:** a general statement expressing the desired objectives the community of Clifton seeks with regards to future development within the Town and its designated planning area.
- **Policy:** an action statement supporting a goal, providing a framework for present and future decisions and guiding the formulation of specific programs and strategies enumerated under the implementation strategies.
- **Implementation Strategy:** a specific action or strategy required to carry out a policy or group of policies of the General Plan to achieve or implement its goal. Located in the Implementation chapter, implementation strategies enumerate responsible parties, funding mechanisms, and proposed timeframes.

General Plan Elements

This General Plan exceeds the statutorily required elements and includes the following elements:

1. Growth Areas
 2. Land Use
 3. Transportation and Circulation
 4. Housing & Neighborhood/Community Beautification
 5. Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space
 6. Economic Development
 7. Heathy Community
 8. Public Facilities and Services
 9. Water Resources
 10. Environmental Planning
 11. Cost of Development
- Plan Administration and Implementation

General Plan Approach

As summarized in the Background and Current Conditions Report available separately, topography, hydrology and land ownership present major opportunities and challenges. Delineating growth areas and designating land uses within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area requires clear understanding of the major land owners, which include the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), two public agencies managing large tracts of lands, and Freeport McMoRan, a major regional employer and land owner. **Exhibit 1** shows land owners owning large tracts of lands within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area.

Major Land Owners Within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area

BLM-owned Lands

The BLM administers the Recreation and Public Purposes Act revised in 1996 and is responsible for the balanced management of public lands and resources under it. The act authorizes the sale or lease of public lands for recreational or public purposes to State and local governments and to qualified nonprofit organizations. Examples of typical uses under the act are historic monument sites, campgrounds, schools, fire houses, law enforcement facilities, municipal facilities, landfills, hospitals, parks and fairgrounds.

Any state, State agency, or political subdivision of a state, including the Town of Clifton, may purchase up to 6,400 acres annually for recreation purposes and up to 640 acres annually for each public purpose program other than recreation. For municipalities, these lands must lie within convenient access to the municipality. Nonprofit organizations may purchase up to 640 acres annually for recreation purposes, and an additional 640 acres for other public purposes.

The BLM manages public lands based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; a combination of uses that consider the long term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources. These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness and natural, scenic, scientific and cultural values. Traditional recreational uses of BLM lands include hunting, fishing, and a variety of recreational opportunities. To manage resources, BLM prepares land-use plans known as Resource Management Plans (RMPs). The Safford District Resource Management Plan addresses planning and management of BLM lands. The Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area is located within the Safford RMP.

The BLM is a key partner in the establishment of Clifton as a major recreation and community-based eco-tourism destination.



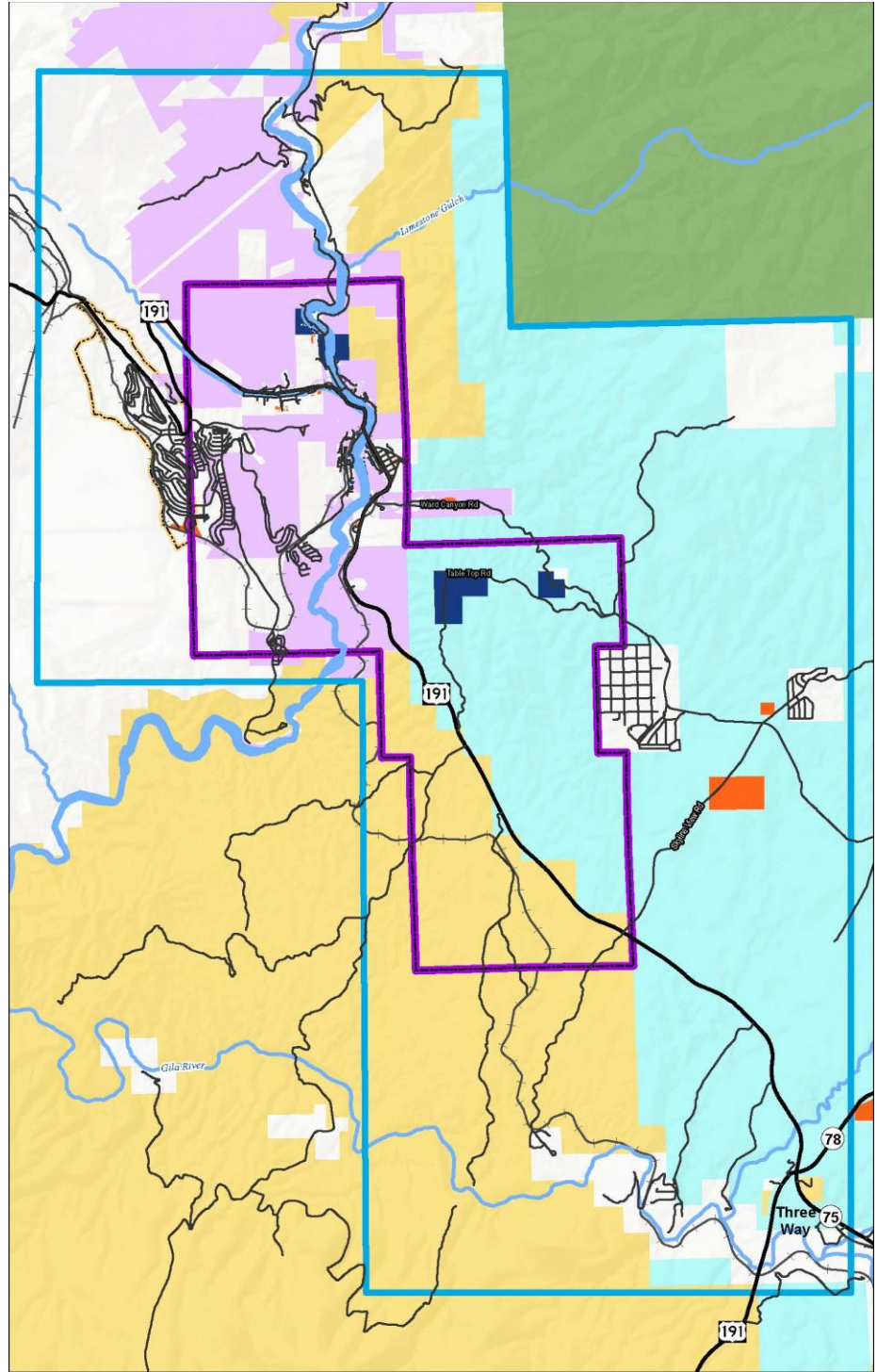
ASLD-owned Lands

ASLD manages State Trust lands and resources to enhance value and optimize economic return for the Trust beneficiaries. Consistent with sound business management principles, prudent stewardship and conservation needs, ASLD supports socio-economic goals for current and future generations that act in the best interest and preserve the long-term value of State Trust lands. Development within State Trust Lands requires advanced coordination with ASLD and concurrency with a conceptual land use and circulation plan depicting highest and best use and the preparation of feasibility analysis to determine viability prior to the release of those lands for sale. In addition, ASLD lands located outside of the Town's corporate boundary must meet all applicable annexation laws. ASLD also awards multi-year lease agreements on their land for a variety of uses and easements.

Freeport McMoRan-owned Lands

Freeport McMoRan Inc. is a leading international mining company with local headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona. As the largest employer in the region, Freeport McMoRan owns large tracts of land within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area. Its assets include significant mining operations in the large-scale Morenci minerals district in Arizona, adjacent to the Town of Clifton. Mining areas are designated as Aggregate Resource (AR). Development on lands owned by Freeport McMoRan must be initiated by their designated representative unless these lands are sold.





LEGEND

Designated Planning Area	Town of Clifton	Rail
Clifton Town Limits	Freeport-McMoRan	Rivers
Morenci	Greenlee County	Major Roads
BLM	Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	Highway
ASLD	Private Land	

LAND OWNERS

0 0.5mi 1mi

PROJECT: TOC-01 DATE: 06/13/19
FILENAME: TOC-01_LandOwners2.mxd

NORTH

Sources: Arizona State Land Department, 2017
Arizona Department of Transportation, 2018
Arizona Land Resource Information Services, 2013

Exhibit 1: Major Land Owners

Development Potential within Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area

At the request of the Town, Table Top, Three-Way and the U.S. Highway 191 corridor were assessed to determine their development potential during the 2020 General Plan 10-year planning horizon. Due to land ownership, annexation law requirements, steep slopes, lack of infrastructure, or anticipated cost of providing needed infrastructure growth area designation for Clifton required a tier approach:

- **Tier 1 Growth Areas:** includes growth areas inside the Town of Clifton that could be developed within the next 10 years. The Town should focus their efforts on the Tier 1 Growth Area described and delineated in the Growth Areas Element.
- **Tier 2 Growth Area:** includes lands owned by the ASLD in the Table Top area. Development within State Trust Lands requires advanced coordination with ASLD and concurrency with a conceptual land use and circulation plan depicting highest and best use prior to the release of those lands for sale and prior to annexation.

The Three-way area includes land outside of the Town of Clifton corporate boundary located at the intersection of three major transportation routes: US Highway 191; State Route 78; and State Route 75. Although the Three-Way area provides a desirable location at the intersection of three major transportation routes, current annexation law prohibits leap frog development and strip annexation. Some of the land within this area is owned by the BLM, which precludes commercial development. Development on State Trust Lands requires advanced coordination with ASLD and concurrency with a conceptual land use and circulation plan depicting highest and best use prior to the release of those lands for sale and prior to annexation. Based on these, it is recommended that the Three-Way Planning area is reevaluated in 2030 when this General Plan will undergo the next update.

Development potential of the US Highway 191 corridor within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area was also assessed. The area of the corridor with the highest potential for development within the 2020 General Plan planning horizon is identified in the Growth Areas map (included in the Growth Areas Element) and in the Future Land Use map (included in the Land Use Element) as Highway Corridor. The remaining of the corridor within the Town of Clifton Designated Planning Area either lacks the infrastructure needed to support development, presents topographic constraints, or requires close coordination with ASLD and BLM. More in-depth analysis outside of the scope of this General Plan will be necessary to determine feasibility of development on those portions of the corridor.

With some privately-owned parcels, most of the land designated Rural in the Town of Clifton Future Land Use map (included in the Land Use Element) is either owned by BLM, ASLD or Freeport McMoRan. Coordination with these major land owners in future development and map amendments is essential for a successful land use strategy.

The Town of Clifton Community Vision

The Clifton Community Vision was developed based on ideas and input shared by the community members during the General Plan visioning process.

*Clifton will continue to be a vibrant, prosperous and welcoming community with small town charm which embraces its rich historic heritage, while looking toward the future. Capitalizing on its natural resources, Heritage Core, unique geography and topography, Clifton will continue to support healthy people, economy, infrastructure and environment making the Town a destination located **Where the Trail Begins**.*

