

## Introduction

The adoption of the *Eye to the Future 2020, the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan* in October 1997 required that all existing area plans be updated to conform with the Comprehensive Plan. The ***Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan*** update includes changes in text, improved maps, more recent data, changes in citizen issues and an Agenda for Action. Refinements and changes to this plan will be required as continued development in the planning area occurs. The ***Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan*** will therefore be reviewed and updated periodically as needed.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This document represents the results of the area plan update process for the Tonopah/Arlington planning area and is organized to follow the guidelines found in the *Eye to the Future 2020, Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan*. The ***Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan*** is an update of the existing *Tonopah Land Use Plan* and has been reorganized and rewritten to give detailed direction for development of the planning area.

The *Introduction* to the Area Plan describes how the plan is organized, how to use the plan, a brief history of the planning area and an overview of the Area Plan process in Maricopa County.

*Inventory and Analysis* is a presentation and analysis of data elements that detail existing conditions in the Tonopah/Arlington planning area.

*The Issues Identification* summarizes important land development and planning issues raised by both the citizen steering committee members and area residents.

The *Plan Elements* define the specific goals and policies, which the Board of Supervisors adopted with regard to growth and development in Tonopah/Arlington planning area.

The *Action Plan* is an outline of how the Area Plan will be implemented and establishes the strategies and programs for achieving the vision of the community. By design, these plans are flexible documents that can adapt to changing conditions. The amendment process highlights this and will facilitate the plan's evolution.

The *Appendixes* section contains a glossary of terms, a list of acronyms and by reference, other supporting documents.

The ***Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan*** presents a plan that includes land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development elements. Unlike the "Land Use Plan" that it updates and supersedes, this Area Plan provides more detailed information to accommodate growth.

### Update Process

The ***Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan*** is intended to be a responsive document that reflects current issues, increases in resident population, and land use changes. As conditions change,

the Area Plan will be reviewed to respond to those changes. The review will update the planning document, maps, and data.

Each time the Area Plan is updated, it will be considered for adoption at public hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

### **How to Use the Plan**

The *Tonopah/Arlington Area Plan* is a guide for decision making for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors concerning growth and development in the planning area. While it is to be used by policy makers to guide their decisions, it also serves as a reference for the private sector in making informed investments and development decisions.

The *Plan Elements* contain a series of goals, objectives and policies used to define development standards and guide public investment, as well as public and private decision making. The overriding goals are those outlined in *Eye to the Future 2020, the Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan* and the objectives and policies are specific to the area plan.

### **HISTORY OF TONOPAH AREA**

By Jodey Lynne Elsner

For more than five thousand years, the Tonopah desert has been a place to stop and rest for people travelling. The earliest known archaeological sites in the area date back as far as 3000 BC. Much later, such groups as the Hohokam, Patayan, Hakataya and Yavapai traveled through the area to and from the Colorado River. At Tonopah, they stopped to hunt and gather wild plants.

Roughly two hundred years ago, the first pioneers crossed the desert. In 1811, a traveler carved his name on a rock outcropping northwest of Tonopah. There are many prehistoric petroglyphs in the Saddle Mountain region and histograms from some early settlers dated 1856 and 1862.

Permanent settlement of the area began just prior to World War I. Most of the settlement was the direct result of homesteading. The first homestead in Tonopah was filed in 1916 by Elbert Winters. In 1920, Winters proved-up and received official ownership of his tract of land. A number of homesteaders that followed were World War I veterans.

Many of the former soldiers had been exposed to mustard gas while in Europe and suffered with respiratory problems after being gassed. Other veterans had contracted tuberculosis. The dry desert air in Tonopah helped to ease their health problems and let them lead productive lives. Not all homesteaders were World War I veterans, some were simply people looking for a fresh start in an undeveloped region and a plot of land all their own. Not all homesteaders were men, either. In at least one case, a woman was made entryman on a property after her husband deserted her, she later proved-up on the acreage.

North of the settlement, the Tonopah-Belmont mine began mining lead and silver in the area around 1920. It was named for the large (and famous) mine in Nevada and the Belmont

mountains in which it was located. The mountains were named after the mine in 1963. Approximately 50 miners were employed at the mine and lived in the area from 1924 and 1930. When a permanent settlement developed south of the mine, it too was called Tonopah (although the two were not directly related).

Around 1930, Tonopah and Winters Well (Wintersburg) saw a small population boom. Homesteading had become quite popular. The area's first post office located at Winters Well. On February 21, 1931, Marc Kentch became the first postmaster. Ten years later, mail service was discontinued and the post office closed. Wintersburg residents traveled to Arlington for their mail (oddly enough, not to Tonopah). The Tonopah post office opened on June 15, 1934 with John Beauchamp (a major landowner in the area) as postmaster. The Beauchamp homestead house still stands near the corner of Indian School and 411<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Although farming was not entirely successful in the early years, homesteading was. The United States Government relaxed the homesteading laws: entrymen still had to make "improvements" to the property, but they were no longer required to spend the entire four years on the property. The government issued a leave of absence to the desert dwellers during the summer so they could seek employment and more comfortable residences elsewhere. "Dry farming" was also allowed. Considered an improvement to the land, it constituted planting seeds or seedlings and waiting for Mother Nature to water them with rainstorms. If the weather was favorable and the crops grew, the homesteader took the produce to town (Phoenix, Buckeye or Hassayampa, most often) and sold it. These small operations were called "truck farms."

Some enterprising settlers decided they could market Tonopah as a resort and destination. Mineral waters beneath the area with temperatures of anywhere between 116 and 122+ degrees were some of the hottest in the southwest. Contrary to popular belief, these waters are not springs but wells and the hot water must be pumped to the surface. The Lamoreaux family built a tiny resort just north of Indian School Road where I-10 is now and touted their mineral well for its healing and soothing powers. The Saguaro Health Resort located on 411<sup>th</sup> Avenue just south of the Tonopah post office also uses the hot mineral waters. The modest hotel, first called the Saguaro Sanitarium, was officially dedicated on June 17, 1934. George W.P. Hunt, the first governor of Arizona, attended the groundbreaking ceremony.

Tonopah in the 1920s and 30s was a humble tourist destination and farm community. With more and more families settling in the area, schools were needed for their children. By most accounts, the Winters Well (Wintersburg) School was the first of its kind in the Tonopah Desert in 1929. Twelve years later, Ruth Fisher arrived to teach the children of Wintersburg and remained at the school for twenty-three years. She made such a strong impression on people that when the new elementary school at Indian School and Wintersburg Road was built in 1964, it was named after her. The Winters Well school was not the only one in the area. An accommodation school was built east of downtown Tonopah near the banks of the Old Camp Wash in 1931. The school would open to "accommodate" an increase in the number of children as needed. The school building moved closer to the "downtown" area in later years.

The area continued to grow throughout the 1940s and 1950s. With improvements in irrigation and farming technology, it was possible to run a successful farming operation in the area. In 1951, Otis “Mitch” Mitchell harvested the first cotton crop in the Tonopah Desert. The intrepid farmer irrigated his fields with hot mineral waters pumped from his well. Raising cattle and other stock also became a way for area farmers to make a living. Homesteading had allowed property ownership for many residents that otherwise might never had the opportunity. Some families, after proving up on their land, continued to live a transient lifestyle, but many settled in Tonopah. Improvements in the area followed with the addition of gas stations, restaurants, and other services. The construction of the Ruth Fisher School in 1964 showed the determination of the settlement.

In the early 1970s, progress came to Tonopah from the west. Interstate 10 slowly cut its way across western Arizona on its way to Phoenix through Tonopah. When it reached tiny Brenda, travelers had a choice of which route to take to Phoenix and beyond. They could either continue along US 60 to Wickenburg and then on to Phoenix or take US 60 to Salome and then head south on the Buckeye-Salome Highway to Buckeye and Old US 80. With construction of the interstate moving gradually, the government decided to pave and maintain the Salome Highway as a route for the myriad of travelers and truckers. When I-10 reached Tonopah in mid-June of 1973, travelers exited the freeway at 411<sup>th</sup> Avenue and headed toward the Salome Highway. Thousands of semi-trucks, autos and other vehicles rumbled through “downtown” Tonopah everyday. The once sleepy desert community became a boomtown.

The boom did not last long. Construction on I-10 did not stop at 411<sup>th</sup> Avenue but continued on to Phoenix. Tonopah area residents did not have to wait long for another large project to start. Construction of the \$9.3 billion Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station began in 1976. It took eleven years to complete. At the height of the plant’s construction in 1980 and 1981, 8,500 people were employed. Among the 200 present at the official dedication in December of 1987 was then Governor Evan Mecham. Units 1,2, and 3 were fully operational in 1988. With the area’s continued growth, the Ruth Fisher School became overcrowded. In 1983, a \$9 million school building was built. It was originally intended to be used as a high school. The high school was not needed at the time and the school remained an elementary school. The newer building housed the upper grades, while the older structure held the lower grades. During the last decade, the elementary school complex has continued to grow.

Today the planning area continues to be sparsely populated but it will likely experience increased development in the coming years. Much of the area remains agricultural, particularly the Arlington area, with areas of large lot residential development. The desert and agricultural properties define the open, rural feeling of the area. Within the past decade, easy freeway access, the availability of land, and the beauty of the wide-open desert have made the Tonopah area a popular area to live.

## **ARLINGTON HISTORY**

Adapted from Mary Ella Murphy’s *Arlington School’s History 1894 – 1994* by Chris Larson

Early pioneers came to the Arlington Valley in the late 1800's and early 1900's and established a community that could and did endure. They built homes for their families, a school, and planned and built a canal that ensured productivity for the valley. The Homestead Act of 1862, allowed 160 acres to all settlers who would come, settle on land, and "prove up" on it. The J.W. Davis and the Clanton families were some of the earliest settlers in the Arlington area. The Davis family is believed to have arrived as early as 1871. Life in the Arlington Valley was not easy. Many settlers stayed on but many did not and sold their land off to others.

Water and water rights have always been important to the community. The Buckeye Irrigation Company began constructing a system of canals in 1887 and the Arlington Valley benefited from those canals. The canals were completed to the Hassayampa River in the latter part of 1886. Settlers below the confluence of the Hassayampa and Gila rivers had difficulty in getting enough water. This made it hard to irrigate the whole of the Arlington Valley. The Gila ran on the south side of the valley, as we know it now, and water could not be taken out. The Buckeye Irrigation Company put a sand dam across the Hassayampa to raise the water level so the water could flow into the ditch that carried water to the valley. In 1890, the Walnut Grove Dam upstream on the Hassayampa River, broke sending water southward down the almost always-dry bed of the river. When the water reached Arlington it was several feet deep and about a mile wide. After the floodwaters receded, the Hassayampa was no longer a creek but a full fledged river and was much the same width and depth as it is today.

With more and more settlers coming to Arlington, there was not enough water to irrigate all of the farms. Often when the Gila flooded, it would wash away the settler's dams and fill their ditches and canals with sand. Settlers living in tents and cabins while they tried to establish homes found life difficult. Families in the new community needed schools, churches, stores and postal service. The roads to Arlington from Phoenix were not paved until the 1920s.

One of the first community buildings was a small one-room school just west of the Hassayampa, near the Gila, built sometime prior to 1890. It was called the Powers Butte School with Powers Butte across the Gila River, looming above the little school on the other bank. The school was shared by the Arlington and Palo Verde communities. Any time the subject of this old school is raised, another story, concerning the school emerges. It seems that the school trustees, living in Arlington, refused Palo Verde's request to move the school to Palo Verde where the majority of students lived. After being refused, some residents of Palo Verde took matters into their own hands. One night, with a flatbed trailer and a team of horses, they drove to the school site and loaded the small, one room school onto the trailer and moved it to a location in Palo Verde. When the teacher arrived in October to start school, the Trustees assured him that they would not pay his salary to teach in Palo Verde. He however, opened the school assuming that he would be paid, but the Trustees, true to their word, refused to pay him, and when he applied to the County School Superintendent for payment, the problem was resolved by dividing the district. The Hassayampa River was to be the dividing line, for the most part, of the two districts. Today, the Arlington School District is one of the largest school districts in Arizona covering roughly 700 square miles.

In 1899, a community meeting was held and the Arlington Canal Company was born. The Company constructed a canal from the Gila River to assure Arlington sufficient water to sustain the land under cultivation. Farmers purchased stock in the canal with one share granted for every 160 acres of land owned. The Arlington canal was completed in 1900 and still serves the community today.

Arlington's first store was built about the same time as the canal and sold everything needed by the settlers, even farm implements. The Arlington Post office was established November 23, 1899 with Moses Clanton as the first Postmaster. The main road ran south from Hassayampa. A hotel was built along the road and provided a welcome place for travelers to stay on their way to Yuma and points west. In 1904 telephone lines extended through Arlington. It has been said that the first cotton gin in Arizona was built in Arlington. At one time there is record of a Woman's Club chapter in Arlington, although it no longer exists. Today the Lions Club and CATS Club are active and lend a great deal of support to the community and school.

In the early 1890's, the Wolfley Dam was built on the Gila River at about the same location as the present Gillespie Dam. The dam was built to divert water into a large canal and irrigate land to the west of Gila Bend. When it was finished, it caused major flooding of farmlands in Arlington, particularly those farms nearest to the river. After the Wolfley dam was washed out many times, the oil rich Gillespie family emerged to build a proper dam. The family had purchased 85,000 acres west of Gila Bend and wanted the water. The Gillespie Dam was constructed and completed in 1921.

The Gillespie dam created a large reservoir behind the dam. As long as the floodgates were opened during periods of high water, damage to the surrounding area was reduced. The dam did eventually create new flooding problems. When the waters settled out behind the dam mud began to collect and eventually became higher than the dam. When water needed to be released, the floodgates were no longer used and water was allowed to just flow over the top of the dam. This allowed the mud buildup above the dam to continue and eventually there was no channel left in the river. When there was heavy rain and releases from the upriver dams, the water level rose higher into the valley. The schoolhouse was flooded several times, and travel on the road, about  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of a mile from the river, was impossible. Homes in the area were also flooded. School buses, moveable equipment, and household belongings were moved to higher ground but the homes often were damaged.

Floods in 1993 recorded the highest water levels in many years. The Gila River overflowed its banks with a loss of hundreds of acres of farmland and soil. An estimated 100,000 cubic feet per second of water flowed in the river. Land that had never flooded before was endangered. The Gillespie Dam, which had been build some 70 years before, broke near the center, losing 60 or more feet of concrete and the furious force of the water poured through the break. It relieved the upstream farms, though the flood left some of the farms so damaged they couldn't be repaired. The floodwaters unearthed two natural gas lines that floated to the surface and were ruptured by the current sending fire high into the night skies.

World War II brought change to the close knit community as young men went off to war, older people either moved away or died. The homesteaded farms were taken over by the younger family members or were sold. When the veterans returned to Arlington, several brought wives from other states with them.

The El Paso Gas Company moved a pumping station into the valley in the 1940s and built housing for 28 families. The company almost created a little town by itself, with homes, a recreation hall, and tennis courts. Later on, El Paso Gas moved all of the families out the area. The station is still in operation but the skeleton crew that runs it no longer lives at the site. The Arlington Cattle Company feed lot was another large employer but it too closed and the employees moved away. The advent of modern farm equipment has also caused families to leave the area because less farm workers are needed for daily operations.

Change has come to the Arlington valley and will continue to do so. Camels no longer carry butter and cheese into Phoenix to market. Dust no longer trails the stagecoach in its effort to get people to places farther west. It is a valley with a great deal of history and stories of interest.

Today the Arlington Valley remains mostly agricultural with homes on large rural lots. It continues to be the kind of community that people remember and probably is why many seem to return here after growing up.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

### **Area Plan Development**

In July 1985, the Maricopa County Department of Planning and Development issued a public "Request for Proposal" to professional planning consultants to prepare seven specific land use plans as part of the Maricopa County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Tonopah/Arlington planning area was one of these specific areas.

For each of the planning areas, the County requested that the consultants provide a collection and analysis of existing data leading to specific goals and policies to guide general land development. Each specific study area was also to be provided with a land use plan.

As each planning process for an Area Plan began, community participation was emphasized. Various methods were used for public outreach. Flyers announcing workshops were prepared and distributed prior to each meeting. In addition, workshops with Planning and Zoning Commission members were held to review the project progress. Coverage by the news media was encouraged creating further awareness of the workshops and participation by the general public in the planning process.

The Tonopah Land Use Plan was first adopted March 21, 1988 and was updated in October 1990. The revisions reflected amendments and changes that affected portions of the Area Plan. This update responds to the need for the Area Plan to follow the format and direction of the Comprehensive Plan.

A 12 person Tonopah Land Use Citizen Committee was formed early in this update process. The Committee met four times and included representatives from the Ruth Fisher School Board, PVNGS, business owners, and private citizens. This citizen committee was formed to review alternatives and provide comments concerning the area plan update process. Focus group sessions with members of the Arlington community helped to gather their concerns, define the subarea, and include information about Arlington to the update. In addition, three open house meetings in the Tonopah/Arlington planning area were held to get the participation of area residents, property owners, business people, and Planning and Zoning Commission members. Meeting summaries provided citizens with reports on the progress of the plan and were distributed prior to each workshop.

Comments were received from citizens, federal, state and local government agencies, interest groups, and the development community. These comments further refined the draft plan prior to it being forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission for formal hearing and adoption by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

