

connect.



photograph by Ron Scott


**MARICOPA
COUNTY**
PARKS & RECREATION

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photograph by Kevin Buettner

PARKS VISION
2030
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

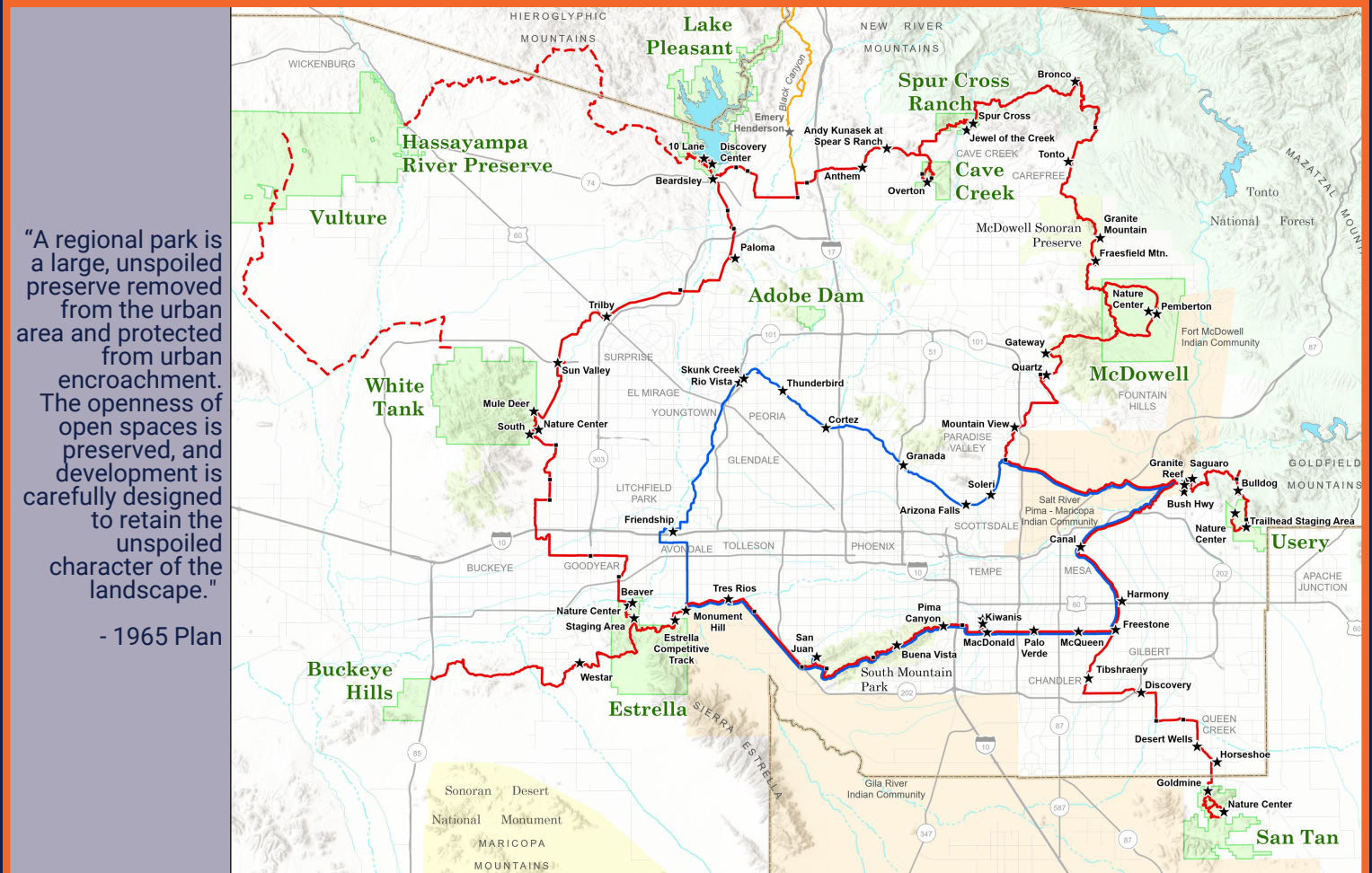
Maricopa County has one of the country's largest and most unique regional park systems. With approximately 120,000 acres, the system is rich with natural and cultural heritage, attracting nearly two million visitors and growing. The Sonoran Desert has distinct beauty, natural biodiversity, and unique cultural history. The rugged landscape has drawn people to the region for centuries and continues to draw people today.



CREATING A LEGACY

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, a group of visionaries, including elected leaders and officials from federal, state, County, and city governments, along with influential community leaders, worked to develop a comprehensive park system plan to address the future recreational needs of an expanding region. One of the plan's primary goals was to preserve the mountain areas for future generations to enjoy. This plan laid the foundation for the Regional Park System we have today.

MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS & TRAIL SYSTEM



"A regional park is a large, unspoiled preserve removed from the urban area and protected from urban encroachment. The openness of open spaces is preserved, and development is carefully designed to retain the unspoiled character of the landscape."
- 1965 Plan

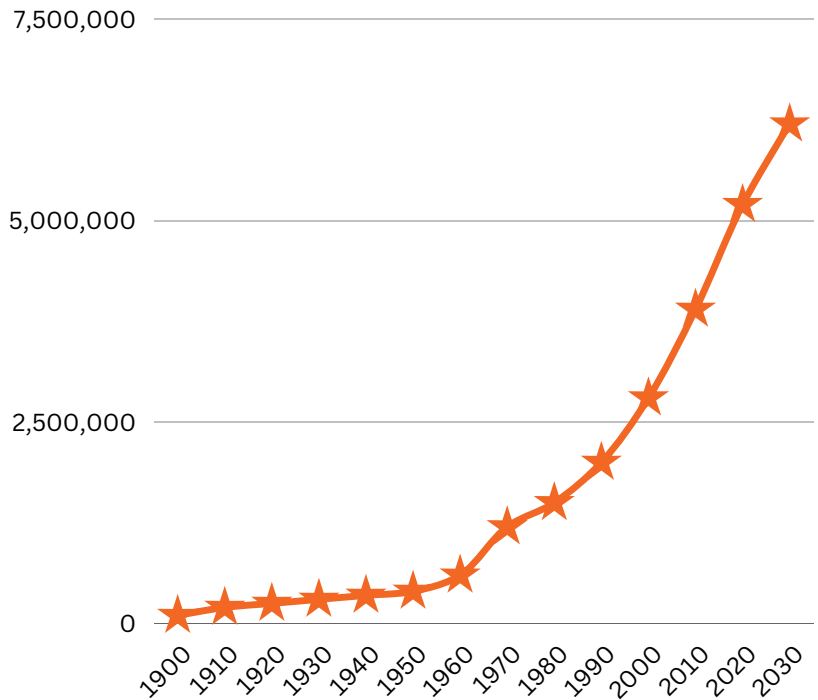
PURPOSE: PARKS VISION 2030

Parks Vision 2030 builds on the legacy of the previous master plans and the many park system enhancements that have occurred during the last 50-plus years. The current planning effort focuses on expanding park and open space opportunities. In 2022, MCPRD'S attendance grew to 2,720,806, an increase of over three-quarters of a million visitors since 2012. Over the next ten years, attendance is projected to reach 3.7 million, taxing the capacity of the existing natural resources and facilities.

Parks Vision 2030 Plan aims to identify the qualities and characteristics of a high-quality regional system of parks, open spaces, and trails. Protecting important landscapes or places for people to enjoy and recreate is critical.

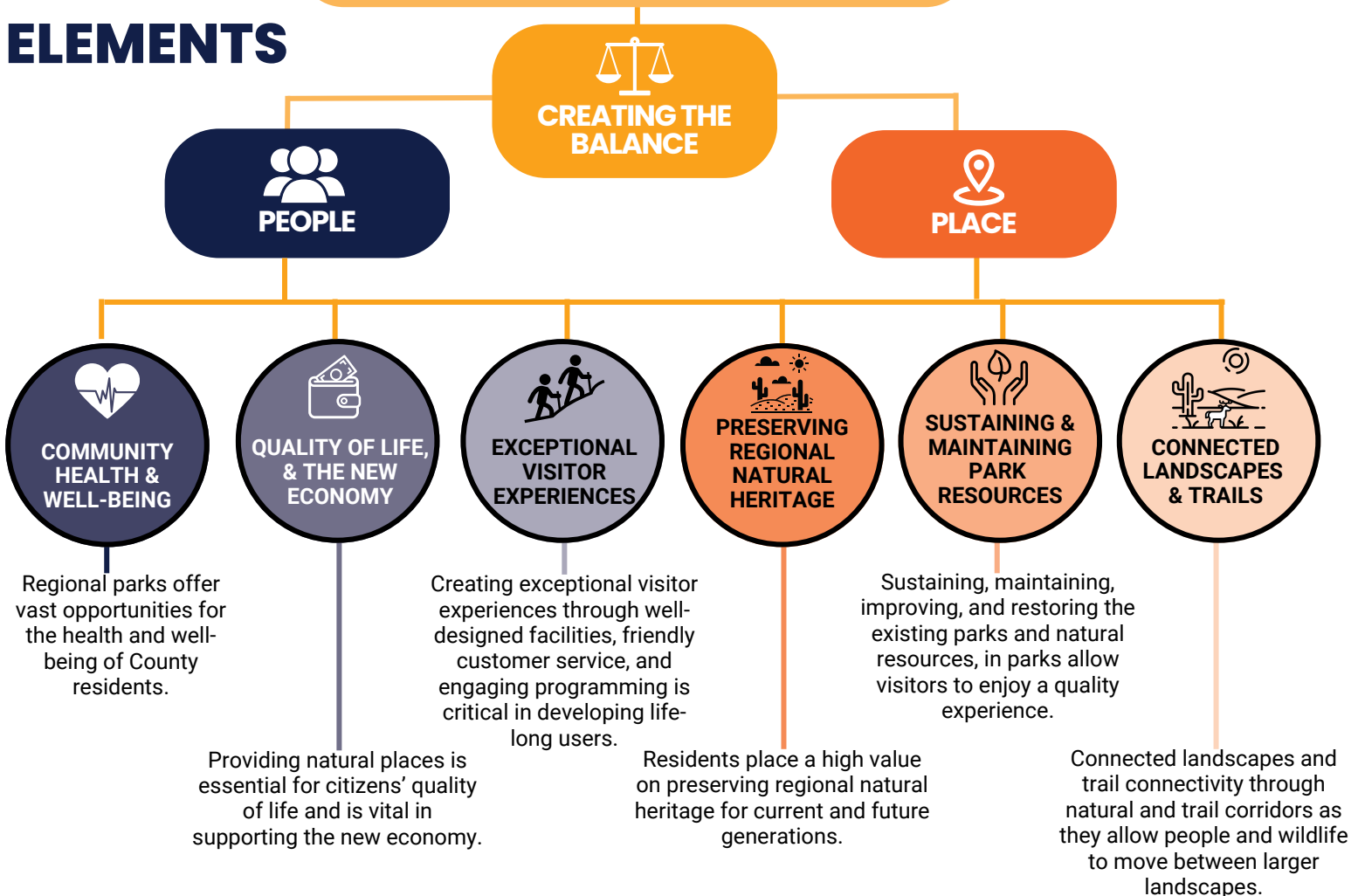
As growth continues and development expands into previously undisturbed native landscapes, it is essential to protect high value natural resources for our future.

MARICOPA COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS: 1900 - 2030



PLAN ELEMENTS

QUALITY REGIONAL SYSTEM OF PARKS, OPEN SPACES & TRAILS



IDENTIFYING WHAT'S IMPORTANT

A critical component of the planning process is gathering input to inform priority goals and objectives. The most credible and valid insights are those from a variety of audiences that have an interest in the planning outcome. Triangulation is a planning method to ensure insights, goals, and objectives are widely supported through multiple input points.

In this planning process, various methods and data sources develop recommendations, goals, and objectives that are central across all or most input sources.

IDENTIFYING WHAT'S IMPORTANT FEEDBACK PROCESS



1 PUBLIC

- Park Visitor Survey
- Visitor Survey - Understanding COVID
- Trends Analysis
- Gallup Poll for Center for the Future of Arizona
- Morrison Institute Poll for Pulliam Institute
- Two Virtual Public Meetings
- Public Feedback Questionnaire (1,420)



2 STAKEHOLDERS

- 135+ representatives from local park and recreation departments, nonprofit organizations, state, and federal recreation organizations, etc.
- Six regional workshops
- Follow-up meetings with multiple Federal and State agencies.
- Peer County park systems benchmark analysis
- Two review periods



3 COUNTY STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & LEADERSHIP

- 85+ staff members - focus groups
- 100+ volunteers - focus groups
- Input questionnaire
- Executive Committee - 25+ representatives from various Maricopa County departments and key partners
- Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat Analysis
- Parks Commission updates and discussions (10)
- Three Board of Supervisors updates

MAJOR THEMES



4.54

Wildlife connectivity



4.42

Identifying/acquiring lands for protection, including park buffers



4.15

Improvements to existing regional parks



4.15

Future areas of expansion of regional parks



4.11

Developing a regional work group dedicated to park and recreation partnerships and funding

On a scale of one (not important) to five (very important).

PARKS VISION 2030 PUBLIC OUTREACH FEEDBACK FORM



95.5%

Wildlife corridors and open space are important to protect for the health of the ecosystem now and in the future.



93.4%

Access to regional parks, natural areas, and trails is important to my health and well-being.



92.9%

Natural resource conservation efforts to protect native plants and animals throughout the park system and Maricopa County is important.



87.8%

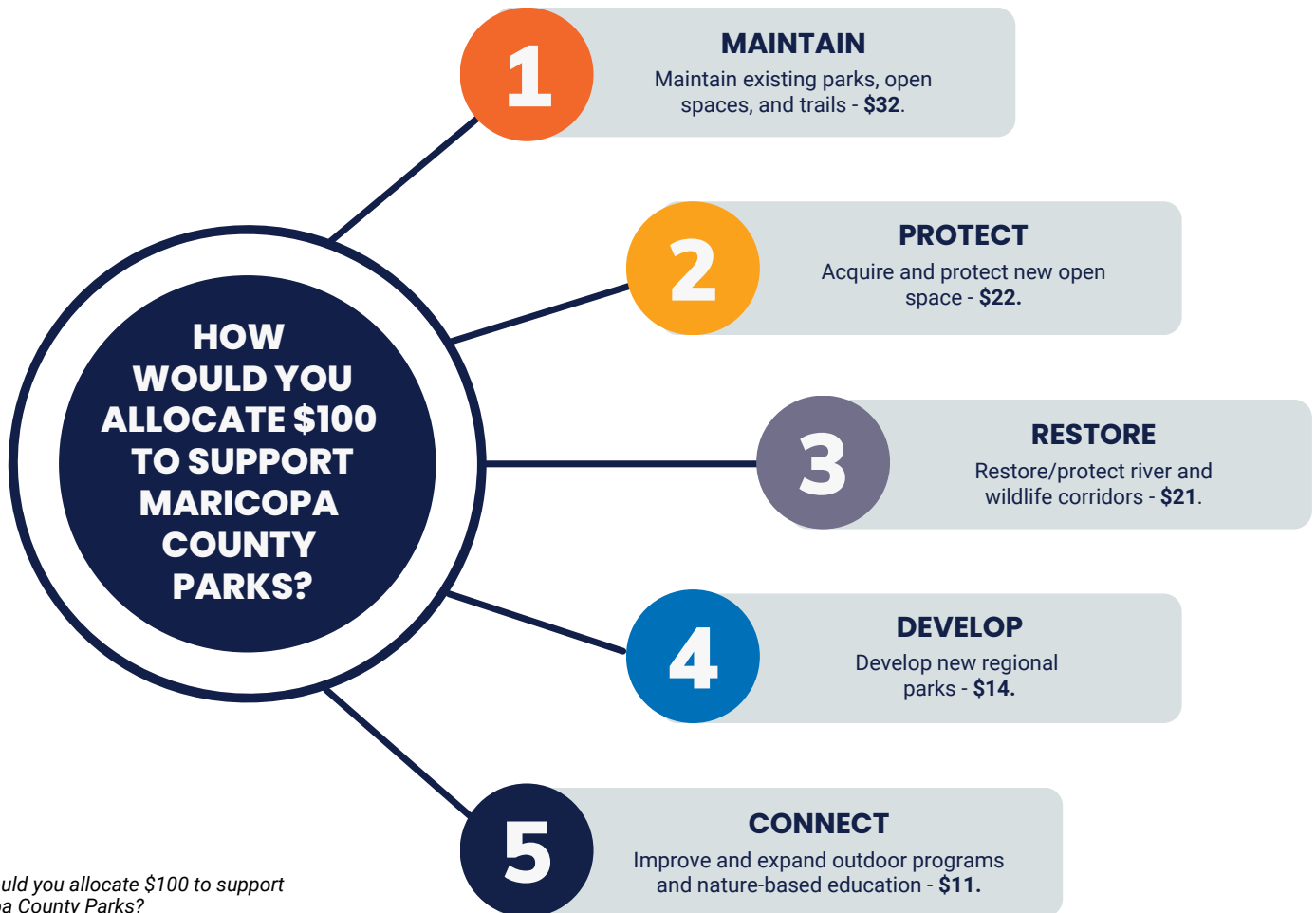
Increased funding to provide for expanded regional park, recreation, trail, and open space opportunities is important.



86.4%

Restoration of the river corridors throughout the metropolitan Phoenix is important to provide increased public access to nature.

Parks Vision 2030 Public Outreach Feedback Form Questions.



How would you allocate \$100 to support Maricopa County Parks?

PLAN PRIORITIES

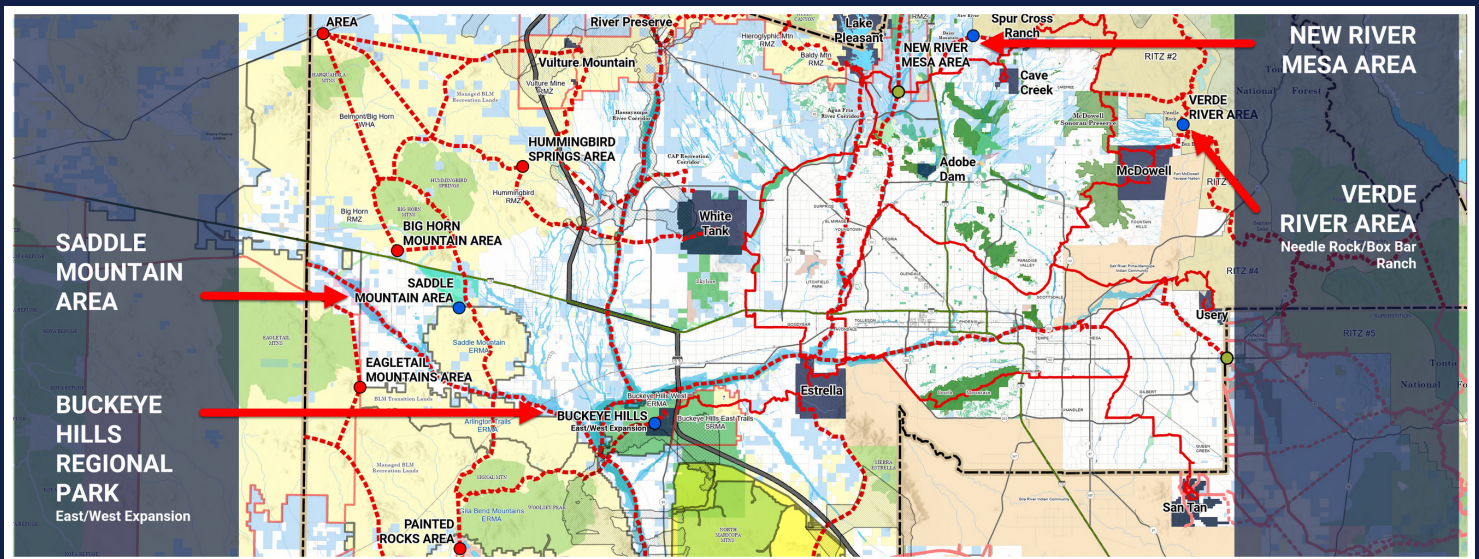
Parks Vision 2030 aims to meet the current population's needs, protect important resources and identify new opportunities for future generations. The plan outlines five priority areas with associated goals:



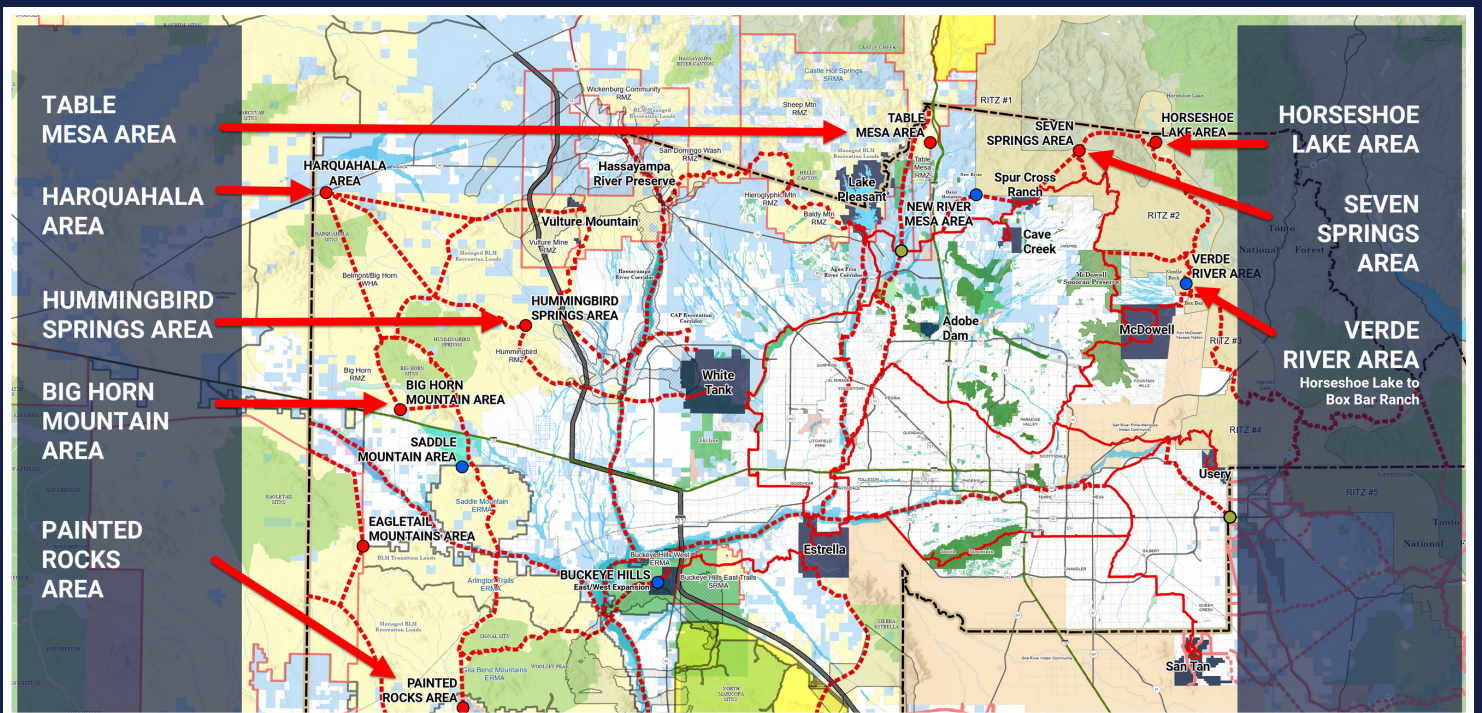
Add new parks and open space lands through acquisition, development, partnership, or management agreements. Also, reclaimed river and wash corridors have considerable wildlife potential and connect those in urbanized areas to nature.

GOALS:

- Protect critical open space and expand the regional park and trail system proportionately with population growth (Map A).
- Identify and prioritize additional future parks (Map B).
- Refine and prioritize linear parks and connected landscapes.



Protect critical open space and expand the regional park and trail system proportionately with population growth (Map A).



Identify and prioritize additional future parks (Map B).

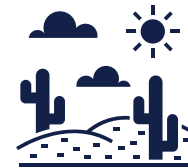


PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ROLE IN COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

As growth continues, regional parks and outdoor programs must grow with the population to ensure a healthy, vibrant, and attractive region.

GOALS:

- Promote the System as a place where visitors experience the natural environment.
- Expand natural open space, parks, and trail opportunities for underserved communities.
- Develop parks, amenities, and programs that consciously address improved physical fitness and mental health through planning, design, and development.



REINVEST, PROTECT, & CONTINUE IMPROVING THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

Build-out and improvements of existing parks, based on the park master plans, will provide immediate capacity relief for pent-up demands. In addition, timely renovation of existing facilities will provide more efficiency in maintenance.

GOALS:

- Update existing park master plans to meet current needs.
- Continue developing, maintaining, and renovating parks.
- Promote and expand the regional trails system.
- Refine and standardize park operations and management.
- Attract and retain quality staff.



LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION MATTERS FOR OUR FUTURE

Expand regional leadership and education by furthering a coordinated planning and landscape-scale natural resource conservation effort.

GOALS:

- Develop and implement a Natural Resource Plan.
- Provide leadership in balanced, economically efficient land use patterns and infrastructure to promote sustainable long-term growth while maintaining a high quality of life.
- Share best practices on parks, trails, recreation, and open space.



DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AND DIVERSIFIED FUNDING IS CRITICAL

Develop a balanced and diversified portfolio to adequately address the needs outlined in a fiscally responsible and timely manner.

GOALS:

- Identify and promote a diversified portfolio to acquire, develop, and renovate existing and new parklands, corridors, and trails.
- Conduct research and visitor surveys to ensure quality control of the parks' efforts to attract visitors, thus growing revenue streams for long-term support of park operations.
- Update park user fees and determine the feasibility of funding direct operating and associated administrative costs.
- Develop sustainable funding sources.
- Evaluate operations and cost containment to ensure a high-quality experience.
- Evaluate revenue-generating business opportunities.