



Downtown Buckeye

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	About the Urban Land Institute
4	Acknowledgements
6	AzTAP Panelists
7	Study Area Focus
8	Downtown Buckeye
10	Market Potential
11	Narrowing the Focus
12	Sense of Place
13	Leveraging the Arts
14	Business Inventory and Community Engagement
15	Forward-Thinking Infrastructure Improvements
16	Developing a Financial Plan
17	Government Offices as an Anchor
18	Land Use, Planning and Design
18	Articulating a Bold Vision
18	Community Engagement and Inclusive Planning
19	Historic Preservation and Flexible Tools
20	Tool Box: Guidelines and Incentives
21	Weighing the Impacts
23	Building Trust Through Strategic Planning
24	Staffing for Success
26	Development Strategies
27	Housing
28	Land Acquisition and Development
29	Identifying Priority Parcels
30	Mechanisms to Support Development
31	Recommendations and Next Steps

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute has members in 95 countries worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI Arizona District Council

The ULI Arizona District Council was formed in the early 1980s as a direct response to the need for educational forums and events at a local level. ULI Arizona brings public and private sector leaders together to share and exchange ideas, information, and experiences to shape the way communities grow.

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ABOUT ULI AzTAPS

The ULI Arizona Technical Assistance Panel (AzTAP) Program is a service offered by ULI Arizona to assist Arizona municipalities, counties, regions, and nonprofits in the preliminary study of complex land use planning, development, and redevelopment issues. Drawing from a seasoned professional membership base, AzTAPs provide objective and responsible guidance on a variety of land use and real estate strategic decisions ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions.

AzTAP was initiated by the ULI Arizona District Council in 2003 as an extension of the time-tested national ULI Advisory Services Program that was established in 1947 with proven success for its comprehensive, pragmatic approach to solving land use challenges.

Technical assistance interdisciplinary panel teams are carefully chosen for their specific knowledge and the holistic lens that they provide to help resolve local issues.

Communities gain valuable insight and direction from highly qualified industry professionals who volunteer their time. Professionals who bring their expertise to bear also receive an intimate understanding of the unique development opportunities and challenges facing communities. The interaction among panel experts, local communities, and residents strengthens the community fabric and builds opportunities for strong public and private sector collaboration to promote thriving Arizona communities. The focus and scope of issues defined by the local sponsoring community make each AzTAP unique, so the approach is intentionally flexible to tailor it to the specific needs presented. Past ULI AzTAP reports are available to view and download at www.arizona.uli.org.

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** Special Thanks to ULI AzTAP Committee Member Angie Grendahl for being the Lead for this AzTAP.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dedicated team from the City of Buckeye was instrumental in making this AzTAP a reality. ULI Arizona gratefully acknowledges the Buckeye Team for their enthusiasm, support and commitment throughout this process.

In addition, ULI AzTAP Committee members conducted interviews with stakeholders to help the panelists learn about the experiences, needs and opportunities in Downtown Buckeye. We extend our gratitude as we recognize the stakeholders listed on the next page for providing input.

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” —

Margaret Mead, cultural anthropologist

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Study Area Focus

The City of Buckeye has partnered with ULI Arizona's Technical Assistance Program (AzTAP) to develop actionable recommendations to advise leadership decisions on project prioritization and resource allocation within historic Downtown Buckeye. ULI Arizona conducted an AzTAP for Buckeye in 2011 relating to general development trends and the City found the information very useful in formulating its strategic development plan. Since that time, Buckeye has consistently been one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. and has seen its population more than double (approaching 120,000 presently). Similarly, the amount of employment and commercial space has quadrupled during that time. Now it is facing new challenges as a result of the development that has occurred, and the City is looking for positive strategies and insight into the issues they are facing over the coming decades.

One of those issues is the redevelopment of Buckeye's historic downtown, primarily along Monroe Avenue from roughly Baseline Road to the east, to Miller Road to the west. Very little investment has occurred in this area in the last 50 years. As new development flourished in other parts of the City, investment and attention gradually shifted away from the historic downtown, leaving it in need of renewed focus and revitalization.

Held in August 2025, this report chronicles the process undertaken by a panel of professionals in the fields of urban planning, real estate, finance, transportation, and architecture, and summarizes actions to date, and offers recommendations for next steps.



Downtown Buckeye

Buckeye is a community juggling the preservation of its rich history, economic growth, population shifts, and the impacts from rapid change.

Like many communities in Arizona, Buckeye has been impacted by the expansion of the interstate system, first in the early 1960's as new highways stretched across the lower United States linking the East Coast with communities along the California coast and northward, then again in 1980 when expansion of I-10 eliminated the need to travel down SR80 linking to I-8 to reach the coast.

Downtown Buckeye is a place where the historic and modern worlds come together, offering visitors a glimpse into the West unlike anywhere else in Arizona. Once a major stop for travelers transversing Arizona, the realignment of I-10 placed Downtown Buckeye more in the “a bit out of the way” category than the “great place for a meal or break” stopover it once was.

The expansion of I-10 created longer-term impacts as the new route drew focus and investment away from the downtown core. This resulted in the City of Buckeye refocusing their revitalization efforts for this historic area.

At the same time, areas situated directly along the expanded I-10 corridor experienced increased development, with new housing, commercial centers, and infrastructure projects springing up to accommodate the influx of travelers and residents. This transformation contributed to the expanded suburban ethos seen in the region today and set the stage for challenges in balancing growth with historic preservation.

Sitting along a connector for travelers taking the northern segment of I-10 west to I-8 toward California or a northern route from Mexico into the Phoenix Valley and beyond, Downtown Buckeye became an ideal stopping point, spurring business and residential development. Unfortunately, with the expansion of I-10 west completed, an east/west connection dramatically decreased the frequency of travelers along SR80.

Existing Conditions

Panelists were provided with a guided tour of the area included in the Downtown Specific Area Plan that highlighted the historic significance of the planning area, prevalent issues in redeveloping historic properties, plans for future roadway and infrastructure improvements, and private investments in various stages of planning and implementation. Special emphasis was placed on the progress made toward recommendations provided in the original ULI AzTAP report done for Buckeye in 2011, the large scope of work included in that report still under consideration.

Plans and projects developed over the past decade have focused on addressing infrastructure needs, transportation routes, and property uses while maintaining the historic charm and unique southwestern character of the community.

The City is focusing efforts, anticipating that proposed transportation projects and investment in expanding outdoor recreation in the area will directly impact major intersections in the city's core and are driving focused investment. Property owners, private investors, non-profit entities, and other community partners are working closely with the City in coordinated efforts to preserve and redevelop existing structures, spur economic growth, and foster the arts.

The walking tour also highlighted the underutilization of alleyways in the downtown area. These spaces offer opportunities for alternative traffic flow or as venues for public art and community engagement.

The walk resulted in discussions about reviewing current and future infrastructure needs for short- and long-term planning.



Market Potential

Defining a clear value proposition for downtown Buckeye is essential. Residents have expressed a strong desire for retail options, yet the City must balance these expectations with current market realities. Strategic investments in retail anchors such as food and beverage establishments and entertainment venues can stimulate activity, followed by support for small, independent businesses. Large retail tenants may be less feasible, but nearby developments, like the Desert Ridge Marketplace-style center currently under construction, should be considered in planning.

There are several financial and non-financial incentives that have proven effective for attracting and retaining desired businesses. These include public-private partnerships, housing development, changes in public policy, and investment in capital improvements. A market study is necessary for Buckeye to understand the housing needed in this area and the commercial businesses required to serve those residents, leading to an integrated downtown.

Proximity to new employment opportunities is a significant draw and is bringing a younger demographic to Buckeye. The City has a real opportunity to expand its focus in supporting this group. The downtown area needs to provide family-friendly activities, drawing in multi-generational households.



Narrowing the Focus Area

One critical question raised is whether the scope of downtown improvements is too large to manage effectively, especially from a financial perspective.

Concentrating investment in smaller, well-defined areas increases efficiency, helping build momentum. Given the existence of multiple distinct areas within Buckeye's downtown, the City may want to limit the initial focus to a smaller, more manageable area, narrowing the north/south and east/west from 4th to 6th Streets, rather than the broader 1st to 9th Streets. The alleys should be reviewed and considered to allow flexibility with the infrastructure improvements.

This focused approach makes it easier to secure funding and show visible progress. Efforts should include branding initiatives, improvements to parks (including replanting trees), and creative uses for small public spaces.

The school is a major focal point in the middle of downtown, with opportunities to activate the space with community events.

Understanding that the fence around the school provides

security, perhaps conversations can be had to determine how to open the space up to community members.



4th Street holds particular promise and could help redefine Buckeye's traditional "drive-thru town" identity, becoming a hub of activity with potential for festival plazas and curated events beyond just farmers markets. Alignment between differing visions is needed, and with SR30 a mile from downtown, vacant land near 4th Street offers possibilities for residential redevelopment and improved connectivity.

Sense of Place: Embracing Agricultural Identity

Downtown Buckeye features a concentration of original buildings, lending to its authenticity and undeniable western history. Unique architecture and original features from its agricultural heritage are assets that should be celebrated in downtown branding and revitalization efforts.



With over 25% of downtown considered historic, and more than half the building stock over 50 years old, a historic preservation ordinance or the designation as a historic neighborhood (district) will provide a tool for property owners and the City to seek available grant funding, potentially creating a sustainable fund for preservation.

Programs such as the Downtown Catalyst Program can assist with front façade improvements, ADA upgrades and tenant improvements, but additional support may be needed for more extensive structural and infrastructure work. Repairs and upgrades are often critical to project feasibility. By pursuing grant opportunities Buckeye can create a grant program to fund downtown redevelopment infrastructure improvements, façade restoration, tenant buildouts, ADA compliance and other capital improvements needed to foster private investment.

Existing and new gateway elements will help define and signal entry into the downtown space and offer opportunities to slow down vehicles and prioritize pedestrian safety.

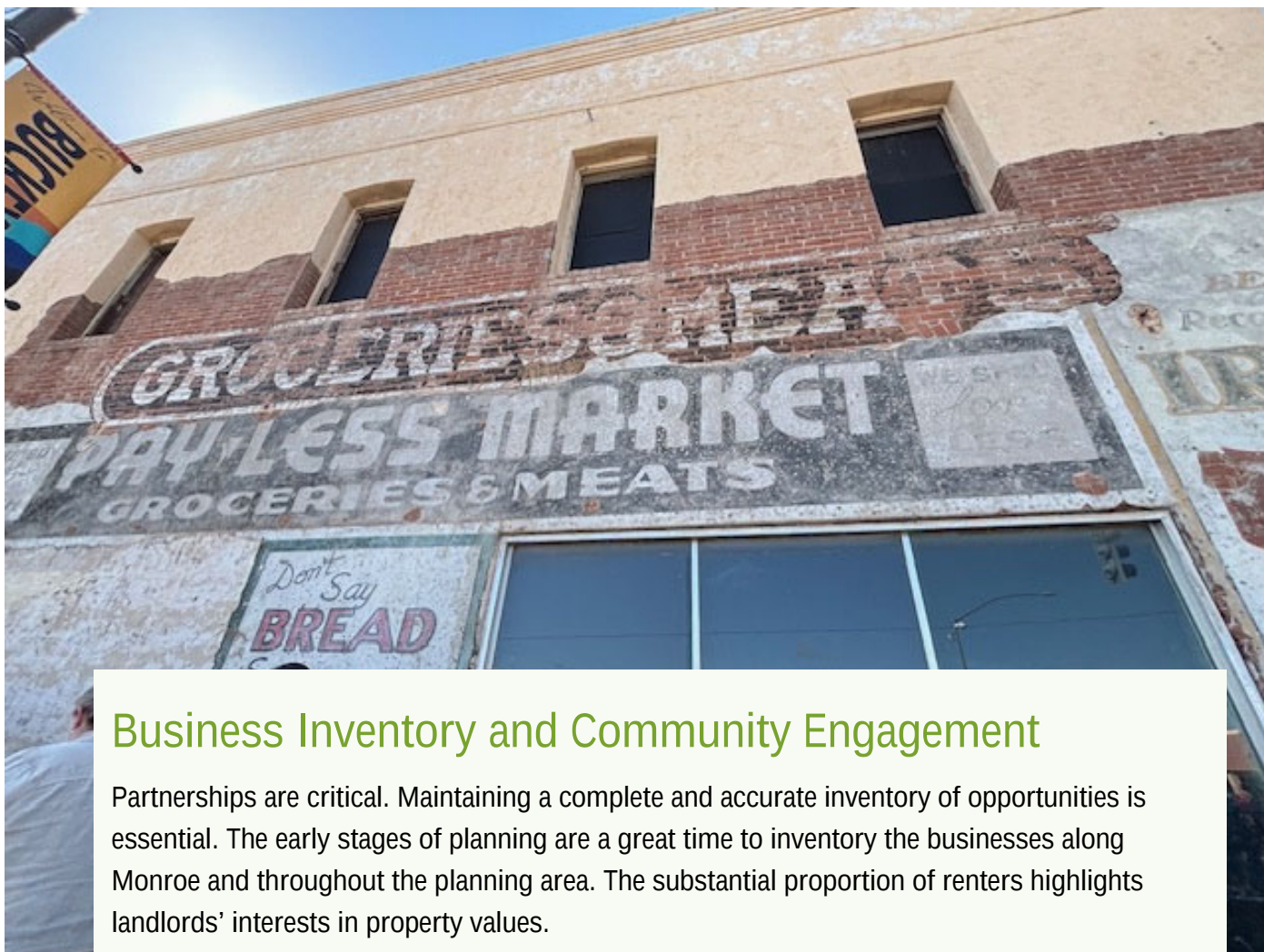


Leveraging the Arts

Non-financial incentives, particularly in the arts, can enhance downtown's appeal. Eliminating restrictions on murals—within decency codes and without signage—can foster creativity and community engagement. Partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce to manage art initiatives, such as mural festivals or Paint Days, can energize public spaces and strengthen branding. Administrative approvals should ensure projects adhere to historical and thematic guidelines.

Hosting three to five annual events downtown can help build momentum, attract visitors, and foster community pride. These efforts, when concentrated in a small area, are likely to gain traction and expand over time.

Creative use of public spaces, such as repurposing fenced school grounds as community destinations, can add vibrancy and support incremental change. These efforts should be guided by an overarching strategy with clear objectives, accountability metrics, and phased timelines.



Business Inventory and Community Engagement

Partnerships are critical. Maintaining a complete and accurate inventory of opportunities is essential. The early stages of planning are a great time to inventory the businesses along Monroe and throughout the planning area. The substantial proportion of renters highlights landlords' interests in property values.

The planning process must engage land and business owners to understand their short-term and long-term plans. Both inform development efforts and foster community by establishing a conduit between the City and stakeholders for future conversation and the dissemination of information. This also helps planning by providing a complete inventory of assets. Vacant buildings could be repurposed as community hubs, supporting creative uses and economic activity.

These efforts need to be coordinated with broader developments occurring throughout downtown as momentum builds.

Forward-Thinking Infrastructure Improvements

Ongoing and future infrastructure work presents both challenges and opportunities. Timing and scope of infrastructure projects is critical to long-term cost savings, while if completed earlier rather than later can be a key tool in attracting new investors.

Infrastructure projects should be forward-thinking, incorporating necessary underground replacements and upgrades and providing tie-ins for future users to prevent repeated disturbances. Consideration needs to be given to water lines and other underground utilities in alleyways rather than the main street to minimize disruption and maximize visibility for the community. Integrate traffic mitigation and beautification into projects. For instance, Monroe currently lacks a bike lane, showing an area where infrastructure could be improved.

Investment is crucial; and a phasing plan should be created. Lessons from cities like Gilbert and Mesa demonstrate the need for infrastructure investment and municipal ownership of key properties. Infrastructure plans must be aligned for consistency. Standard roadway profiles including options such as bike lanes should be considered. Utility and design considerations, such as reconfiguring Roosevelt Street instead of Monroe, may provide practical solutions. Likewise, a unique cost consideration is the presence of a concrete slab under Monroe, which increases the expense of utility upgrades. The stormwater line should be prioritized for upgrades before water and sewer lines are upsized.



Developing a Financial Plan

A significant investment in time and capital will be required to reach the vision established in Buckeye's Downtown Specific Area Plan (DSAP). The City needs to both develop a realistic funding plan and explore ways to invest in downtown.

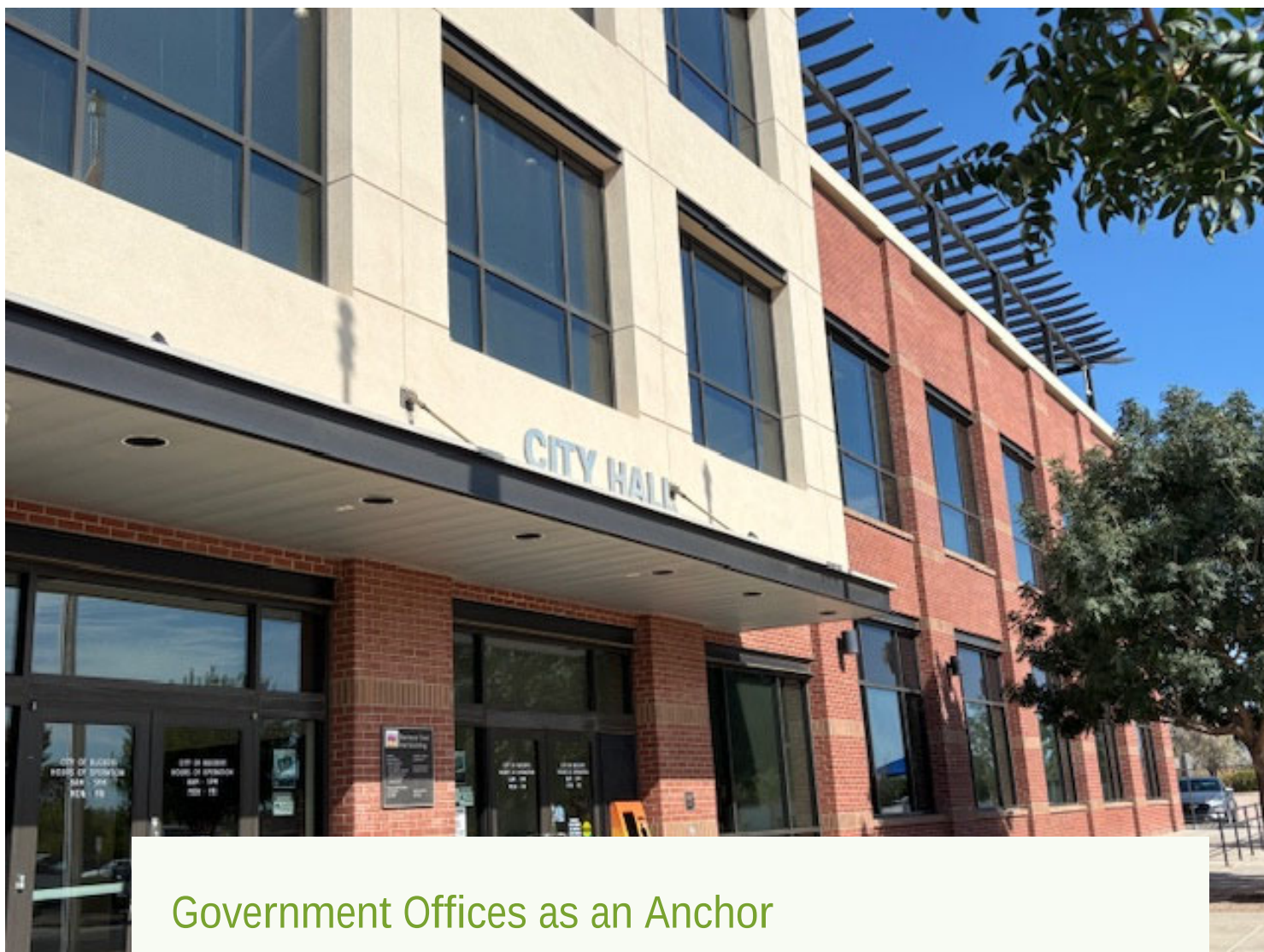
As Buckeye experiences significant growth beyond its downtown core, it will be important to ensure downtown does not get left behind. Drawing inspiration from Tempe Town Lake, the creation of a defined district could allow incremental growth to be captured and funnel dollars into a dedicated fund for downtown improvements. It will be important to communicate the redevelopment goals throughout the community, drawing a nexus between growth across the community and the need for a viable downtown. Explore options for establishing an ongoing funding mechanism to allow the entire city to contribute to the costs of downtown improvements, recognizing that downtown revitalization benefits Buckeye as a whole.

The City has access to various financial incentives, such as federal grants, the Government Property Lease Excise Tax (GPLET), which offers property tax abatement for eight years, and Opportunity Zones.

Programs like the Catalyst Program should be expanded to support more than just façade improvements. The City must assess developer interest and clarify its position on partnerships and assistance.

Bond funding, especially for public safety, can be leveraged to support downtown improvements.





Government Offices as an Anchor

City Hall is Downtown Buckeye's anchor tenant. The City needs to weigh the balance between fostering growth and presenting an image of instability. Local governments possess inherent economic strength through their permanence and stability, which can be leveraged to attract and retain desired businesses. The presence of government services draws residents and visitors to Downtown Buckeye on a regular basis. If the City decides to move central services out of the area, a strong anchor is lost.

Although a long-term consideration for repurposing City Hall is years away, it is built to serve multiple functions with flexibility for future uses as development efforts progress and the demand for space intensifies. The building's design allows for street level reuse intended to serve as a catalyst for downtown development. Upper floors have the flexibility to retain commercial uses or easily convert for residential use.

Land Use, Planning and Design

Articulating a Bold Vision

Clear direction is essential for effective land use design, planning, resource allocation, and investment. By defining a vision for Downtown Buckeye and communicating it well, a strong area plan can be developed with flexible tools and incentives. Involving all City departments and broad community representation in a comprehensive capital improvement plan builds cohesion and deters reactive decision-making.

Community Engagement and Inclusive Planning

Successful downtown planning requires the establishment of shared objectives and the coordination of plans across municipal departments and with the broader community. This collaborative approach fosters alignment and streamlines decision-making, helping to avoid conflicts and ensure unified progress toward common goals.

A successful redevelopment area requires a ten-year plan, regularly updated to reflect the community vision. Boards and commissions, such as historic preservation, arts, and economic development, need to be galvanized with dedicated leadership and community involvement.

Engaging the community in the planning process is essential, even though it can be challenging due to competing priorities among stakeholders. Meaningful community involvement ensures that a diverse range of voices are considered, leading to more effective and inclusive development outcomes. Community leaders play a critical role in advocating for the shared vision helping to build broad-based support for downtown growth initiatives.

Recognizing that change can be difficult for everyone, it is important to acknowledge concerns and provide community members with opportunities to express their perspectives. Offering a platform for dialogue helps support forward momentum and reduces resistance to individual projects, ensuring smoother implementation of development plans.

Historic Preservation and Flexible Tools

Preserving historic downtowns takes both flexibility and the right tools, focusing not just on buildings but also on maintaining their unique sense of place. Heritage-focused initiatives should encourage adaptive reuse and support small businesses, guided by integrity-oriented standards.

Authenticity and Investment

Authenticity is key to successful downtown development. Planning efforts must be informed by an understanding of existing assets, cultural heritage, and demographic characteristics. Staff and officials should consistently convey Buckeye's unique identity, rather than attempting to emulate other cities.

Developers interested in historic tax credits for preservation projects typically require significant investments, generally \$5 million or more. Establishing districts enables individual properties access to grants for historic preservation.

Buckeye can capitalize on its historic downtown identity by anchoring redevelopment efforts around food and beverage establishments and supporting mom-and-pop shops. Incentivizing small business owners requires a well-developed toolbox of resources and a targeted marketing strategy. Utilize relationships with local organizations that can provide expertise, such as Local First Arizona.

Unified messaging across the City, Chamber of Commerce, and The Buckeye Main Street Coalition is vital to ensure all stakeholders are aligned in promoting Downtown Buckeye. The Main Street Coalition, supported by City funding, plays a key role in marketing and social media outreach. Engaging small businesses through accessible programs and clear definitions of Downtown's identity will help bridge the gap between City vision and community reality.



Tool Box: Guidelines and Incentives

Buckeye should collaborate with stakeholders, including the community and investors, to clearly define requirements and incentives. Guidelines should be implemented as a *program* rather than rigid code to enhance adaptability, supporting both investor interests and municipal and community objectives in shaping financially viable projects consistent with the vision. Sustained commitment to a clear vision is crucial, regardless of political transitions. Purpose statements should be included in plans and guidelines to provide context for future stakeholders and policymakers, clarifying the rationale behind design choices.

- Establish enforceable development guidelines that articulate the vision while allowing for necessary flexibility. This is essential to moving Downtown Buckeye planning forward.
- Incorporate adaptable development tools with incentives such as bonuses to encourage density and promote sustainability.
- Provide flexibility, including the ability to build to lot lines, shared parking, block-by-block utility consolidation, and innovative trash solutions.
- Avoid unnecessary constraints, e.g., restrictive height limits that may hinder incremental growth.
- Clearly identify preferred features, such as linear arrangements of shade trees or architectural elements reflecting local agricultural heritage.
- Establish a separate Adaptive Reuse Program with specialized staff from the initial pre-application process through review and approvals to inspections.

Weighing the Impacts

Evaluate the impact of each program component thoroughly. While policies restricting specific land uses can enhance walkability, they must be weighed against potential trade-offs. Anchor retailers can bolster smaller businesses, and integrating mixed uses demands strategic approaches—such as use permits and demographic analysis—to facilitate successful development of vibrant community spaces.

Mandating ground-floor commercial use across all areas may result in vacancies; therefore, alternative interim uses—including art galleries, co-working spaces, offices, residential units, or community-focused commercial venues—should be considered to foster vitality. Leveraging educational institutions and intentional hybrids of community and commercial spaces draws visitors and increases activity downtown, broadening its appeal.

Understanding which incentives to prioritize is crucial; for instance, Chandler's initial focus on incentivizing multi-family housing projects led to increased density, which in turn stimulated retail growth and allowed the city to gradually reduce incentives. Buckeye should evaluate its own priorities, considering whether to focus on multi-family development downtown and how to leverage its size and state mandates, such as the missing middle housing requirement with a one-mile overlay from downtown.

Development guidelines must balance investor needs with adherence to the established vision. Development processes should prioritize collaborative customer service and technical support. Thoughtful neighbor engagement and effective review procedures contribute to optimal planning outcomes.

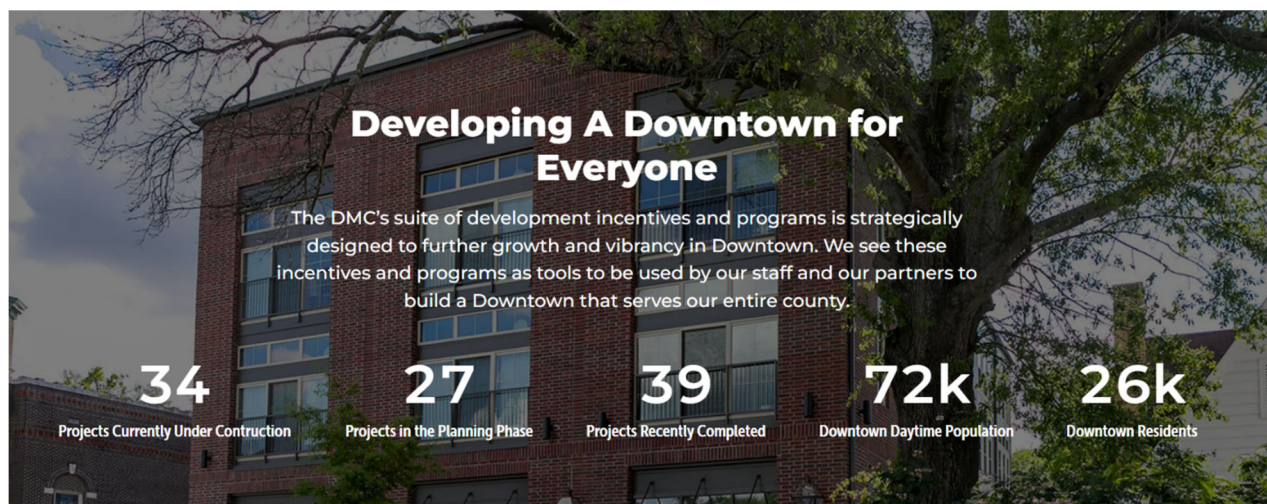
Regular review of plans and program elements ensures ongoing relevance in changing market conditions. Removing outdated projects and concepts streamlines prioritization and resource management.

Case Study: Downtown Memphis Commission

The Downtown Memphis Commission is an example of effective incentive management, supporting both external developers and residents interested in investing in downtown. Programs such as tenant improvement (TI) grants and white box initiatives help bring buildings up to code and are transferable, lifting up the community and counteracting gentrification.



With the support of the Commission, a well-known Memphis restaurant Catherine & Mary's is undergoing a transformation that blends modern comfort with nostalgic charm, all while staying true to its roots and remaining open for business. The Commissions Dashboard (below) reports progress offering transparency for the community and investors.



Building Trust Through Strategic Planning

Enhancing planning outcomes depends on fostering a neighborly environment and implementing thorough review processes. Building trust within the community is fundamental; strategic planning should be guided by lessons from recent initiatives and should actively engage community members in meaningful conversations. The process of conducting a business inventory offers staff valuable opportunities to establish relationships and cultivate a pool of engaged residents who can serve as ongoing partners in development efforts.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” —

Henry Ford, entrepreneur

Technical Assistance

Many investors lack the expertise to navigate review processes or understand how code or development guidelines impact their specific project. Clarification and technical assistance at the project level supports investment and encourages collaboration. Assigning a point of contact to provide technical assistance reduces instances of multiple review and shortens approval times, lowering costs for both the development and City.

Phoenix, for example, adopted an adaptive reuse program with tiered guidelines that are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Staffing for Success

It is essential for the City to maintain adequate staffing levels, ensuring that personnel possess a robust and diverse set of skills. Each development initiative should be assigned individuals equipped with the appropriate knowledge and tools necessary to drive success. By matching skilled staff to specific projects, Buckeye can more effectively support its goals and foster positive outcomes in the downtown.

Building officials play a critical role in supporting development initiatives within the city. When these professionals adopt an economic development perspective, they bring unique value to the development process by facilitating growth and ensuring that regulatory requirements support, rather than hinder, targeted development initiatives.

One of the foundational elements of a successful inspection program is the maintenance of a competent and well-trained inspection division. Ensuring that inspection teams are highly skilled and knowledgeable not only upholds safety and code compliance but also builds trust among developers, investors, and the community. Furthermore, achieving cross-departmental consensus is crucial for the distinct treatment of targeted areas, allowing for streamlined processes and more collaborative decision-making when it comes to priority projects.

Hiring staff and engaging the community in planning efforts is a must that will strengthen new and established working groups, foster local talent and build leadership from within.

Community Examples

Phoenix's approach to product-based training for inspection officials offers a model for other communities. By focusing on specialized training, the City fosters opportunities for small teams to develop expertise, enhances internal culture, and encourages ongoing professional development. This approach enables inspection officials to take on specialized roles, such as overseeing elevator installations or adaptive reuse projects, ensuring that staff are equipped with the specialized skills required for diverse and evolving development needs.



A once abandoned warehouse buzzes with activity. Phoenix's adaptive reuse program is transforming spaces and communities.

Phoenix's adaptive reuse program operates through a tiered system and is managed on a case-by-case basis. Although not codified, the program's process mirrors typical pre-application and site plan review procedures, enabling revitalization of existing structures. Success is enhanced by having a customer service advocate guide stakeholders through each step, particularly since many investors lack necessary expertise and benefit from technical assistance. For instance, alternatives to installing expensive fire sprinkler systems include implementing cost-effective fire rating improvements.

Tempe Town Lake updated its zoning code, incorporating a purpose statement for future reference, which allowed for flexible approaches due to strong staff capabilities.



Paddleboarders enjoy the day at Tempe Town Lake.

Development Strategies

Buckeye is one of America's fastest-growing cities, driving strong investment demand. Now is the time to take specific actions, purchase land for future use, offer incentives, both monetary and non-monetary, to attract investors to its historic downtown.

Increase Activity

Link events and activities to downtown -- or relocate them there -- leveraging existing attractions that bring people to Buckeye.

Focus on getting residents excited about coming downtown. Highlight food, retail, and entertainment opportunities that encourage visitors to extend stays when going downtown to visit the school, library or city offices.



Maximize partnerships like Buckeye Business Builder; utilize it to help grow businesses into brick and mortar in downtown. Support entrepreneurs, using initiatives like Downtown Farmers Markets and shared use spaces as business incubators. Identify small business owners and encourage strategies to increase visitor engagement and retention.

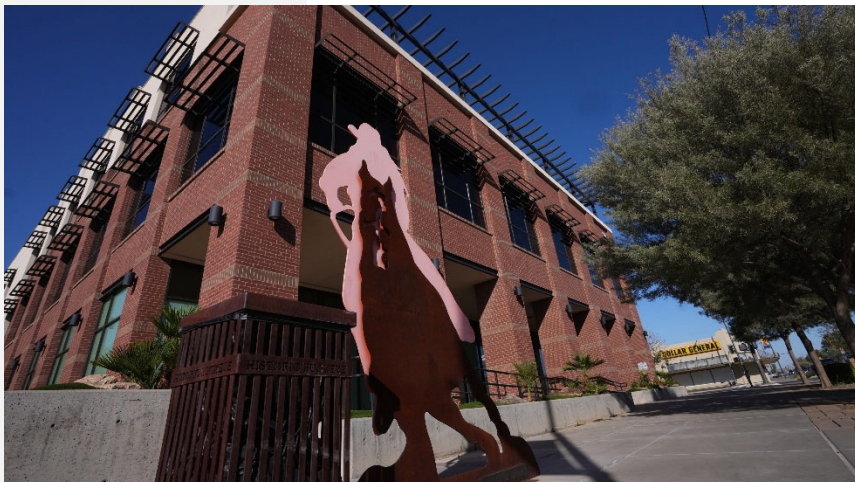
Consider new programs and capitalize on nearby assets, such as the school located in Downtown Buckeye, by promoting relevant shops and services like ice cream parlors, coffeehouses, and dance studios.





Housing

Missing middle housing—such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and small apartment buildings—can serve as a powerful catalyst for growth in Downtown Buckeye. By introducing a wider variety of housing types within the planning area, the City can increase population density, which in turn supports local retail businesses and encourages further investment. This approach not only helps meet state mandates for diverse housing options but also enhances the vibrancy and economic health of the downtown core, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable community.



Land Acquisition and Development

Municipalities that engage in land acquisition signal a strong commitment to redevelopment efforts. The act of purchasing land demonstrates that Buckeye is serious about fostering growth downtown. However, this approach raises important questions about the City's capacity and expertise in acting as a developer.

Typically, the City may hold land until the appropriate opportunity arises, then partner with a developer through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process before ultimately selling the property. While cities often excel at following procedural steps, this approach can create friction with developers, who must invest significant time and money.

An advantage of this approach is that Buckeye does not have to provide upfront funding for development, reducing immediate financial risk and pressure. On the flip side, the City relinquishes some control over the project, which may limit its ability to influence the quality and nature of development. In addition, desired exemplary projects may not materialize, as outcomes are driven by market forces and developer priorities. And challenges such as insufficient population density and lower median household income in the area can further constrain redevelopment success.

It is essential for the City to possess a thorough understanding of market conditions to avoid pursuing unrealistic development goals.

Conducting an independent market analysis is critical to accurately assess what can be achieved on a particular site and to determine the

appropriate timing for action. The focus should not only be on desired outcomes but also on when those outcomes are realistically attainable.

Decisions regarding redevelopment and revitalization must balance the desire for immediate results with the realities of timing and control. While it may not be possible to predict exactly when desired outcomes will occur, incentives do speed up development timelines on many projects. For example, having a designated fund supports investment by deferring upfront costs for redevelopment projects, which can alleviate financial pressure and risk for the investor, often fostering early investment.

Being ready is the strategy.

**Buying land
means you're
serious.**

Strategic Land Acquisition & Revitalization Mechanisms

A focused approach to purchasing land in Downtown Buckeye offers significant potential for future development. By combining direct land acquisition efforts with active engagement from private sector stakeholders, Buckeye can maximize the impact of revitalization initiatives.

Identifying Priority Parcels

Assessing which parcels the City should pursue is key to a successful strategy. Special attention should be given to identifying low-hanging fruit—those properties that present immediate opportunities for acquisition and redevelopment. Parcels along Monroe Avenue are highlighted as prime candidates.

Properties located directly behind Monroe Avenue are likely to offer the greatest return on investment with the potential for the City to incrementally acquire and develop them via an RFP process.

As Buckeye pushes for projects that align with both its vision and market demand, it bears the financial burden to make projects a reality. Concentrating purchases within a smaller, well-defined area can amplify the benefits for Downtown Buckeye. By showcasing progress in this focused zone, the City's actions can become a catalyst, demonstrating tangible improvements and encouraging further investment.



Sector-Specific Opportunities

Consideration should be given to the expansion prospects of existing businesses within the area. The importance of building relationships with these business owners and understanding their growth plans assists in retention.

Mechanisms to Support Development

- Create a Redevelopment Area and Fund.
- Construction Sales Tax Allocation: Divert a portion of the construction sales tax revenue from all development activity within Buckeye to Downtown.
- Growth-Funded Redevelopment: Implement policies where growth pays historic preservation, infrastructure retrofits and other redevelopment efforts, ensuring new development contributes to downtown improvements.
- Internal Fiscal Policies: Consider creating a Special Purpose Fund within the General Fund to support acquisition and revitalization initiatives.
- Leverage Opportunity Zones: Opportunity Zones present a significant incentive.
- Utilize Government Property: Employ government-owned properties to offset redevelopment costs and enhance project feasibility.
- Combine GPLET and Opportunity Zone Incentives: Using both GPLET and Opportunity Zone incentives together can offer substantial benefits to developers and further encourage investment in Downtown Buckeye.

Community Engagement

While engaging the community is often challenging due to competing priorities, it remains a vital component of successful planning. Community leaders can be extremely effective in advocating the vision. The approach to downtown growth should prioritize inclusive community involvement, ensuring that all voices are considered in the development process. Likewise, defining shared objectives and coordinating plans across departments and with the community is fundamental.

Enhancing planning outcomes relies on fostering a neighborly approach and implementing effective review processes. Building the community's confidence is essential; therefore, strategic planning should be informed by recent initiatives and actively involve the community through meaningful

conversations. During the business inventory process staff have an opportunity to forge meaningful relationships and create a pool of engaged community members. Change is hard for everyone. Acknowledging the pain and providing a voice supports forward momentum and lessens resistance to individual projects moving forward.



Integrating Funding Initiatives with Community Outreach

The community is a crucial partner in securing support for funding mechanisms such as bond initiatives and other financial resources. Integrating these discussions into broader community outreach efforts raises awareness and maximizes backing for these important, but infrequent, opportunities. Prior to presenting new messaging to the public, it is essential for city officials to reach internal consensus to ensure clarity and consistency in communication.

City Council members should be equipped with clear communication strategies, particularly when addressing issues related to historic preservation, the implications of increased density, and the community's adjustment to growth.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The following are the recommendations of the Buckeye AzTAP Panel.

- ☐ Define a vision for Downtown Buckeye and articulate the story and why – communicate it. Maintain a unified voice and authentic identity throughout all initiatives to strengthen community branding and support consistent progress toward shared goals.
- ☐ Simplify the Downtown Specific Area Plan (DSAP) document and create an executive summary making it a more useful tool with a consistent message.
- ☐ Concentrate on investment in smaller, well-defined areas to increase efficiency and build momentum.
- ☐ Develop and maintain a complete and accurate inventory of opportunities. The early stages of planning are a great time to survey the businesses along Monroe and throughout the planning area.
- ☐ Prioritize infrastructure. Consider land acquisition to bank for infrastructure projects. Re-evaluate existing infrastructure against market potential.
- ☐ Develop a toolbox for development implemented as a program rather than rigid code to enhance flexibility.
- ☐ Increase staff capacity, equipping them with the proper training and tools necessary to drive success.
- ☐ Treat Downtown Buckeye distinctly from other areas, especially regarding inspections, adaptive reuse, and regulatory flexibility. This tailored approach supports innovation, preserves character, and encourages investment.

- ☐ Develop design guidelines that emphasize historic preservation, the protection of open spaces, and coordinated efforts in code compliance, signage, public art, and wayfinding. These standards help maintain the area's unique character and visual appeal.
- ☐ Establish a redevelopment overlay to provide a clear framework for managing future changes and investments within the district.
- ☐ Combine strategic land acquisition with private development to ensure that new developments align with the community vision and foster sustainable growth
- ☐ Curate experiences in public spaces featuring events, local artists, and active community participation. Recognizing and enhancing the activities and uses already present in the area will help support complementary developments, ensuring the district remains lively and relevant.
- ☐ Prioritize housing development to meet community needs and support economic vitality.

