

Growth

Element 5



INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Arizona legislature enacted a state law addressing the impacts of “urban sprawl” by requiring a new general plan element entitled “Growth,” to focus on areas a city can target for future expansion. These target areas should include a mix of land uses, provide retention of open space, support multiple modes of transportation, and provide efficient public infrastructure.

In 2002, the City and Cochise County signed a Joint Planning Area Agreement that allows the establishment of a development plan that covers areas extending 20 miles beyond the City limits. Such a plan includes the full-range of planning issues permissible under law.

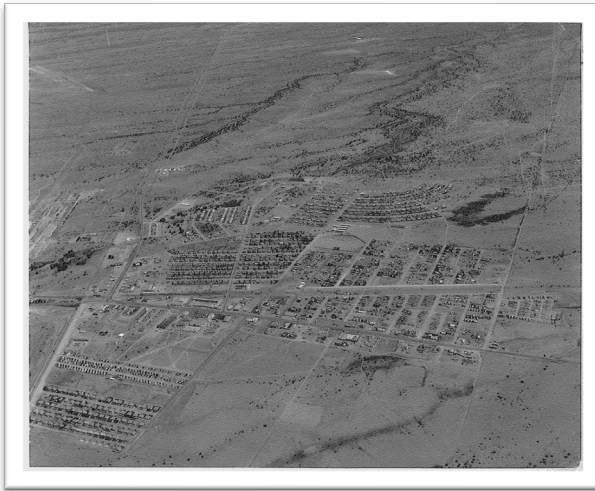


Circa 1930 looking north to Fry Townsite

During the “Dream Your City” public visioning process, there were many discussions regarding the growth of the community. Some citizens wanted additional growth so that the City could attract additional amenities, businesses, and better medical care. Others in the community stated that increased growth would have negative environmental effects and would overburden public infrastructure and public transportation systems. The City’s goal is to provide intentional and planned growth to meet the needs of the community. This Element will consider the community’s comments in the goals and objectives section.

BACKGROUND

Communities throughout the State, including Sierra Vista, are coping with both the real and perceived impacts of growth. Some of the concerns arising from local growth include increased traffic, the quantity and quality of the water supply, losses of open space and wildlife habitat, infrastructure, and school financing. Outside the City limits, the County faces the same concerns with the added issue of “leap frog” development and urban sprawl.



Sierra Vista circa 1962



Sierra Vista 2010

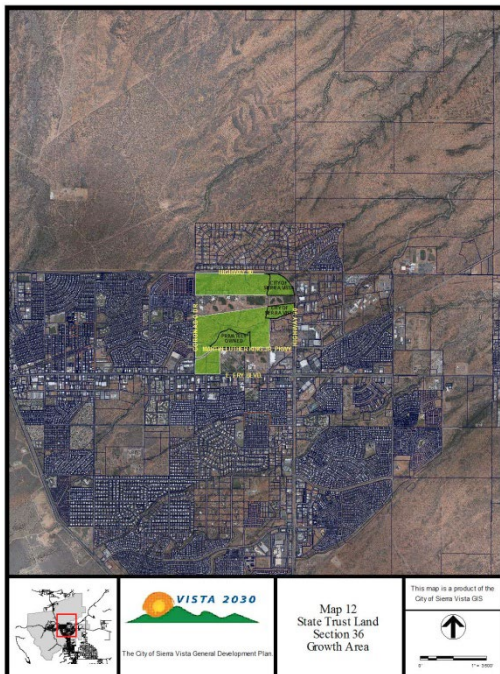
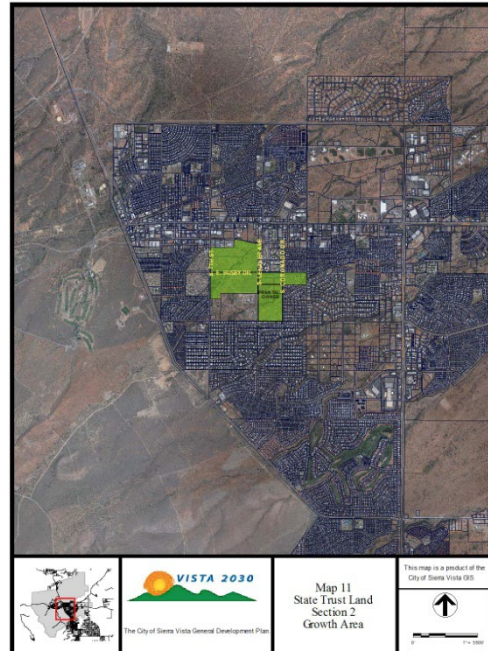
The City encourages infill development as a method to avoid urban sprawl (*infill development* is new development constructed within already developed areas). One of the advantages of infill development is that it uses existing infrastructure and services, which decreases the City’s infrastructure maintenance costs. Section 2 and 36 are examples of infill areas in the City.

The five areas where growth will likely occur within the City are:

- State Trust Land, Section 2
- State Trust Land, Section 36
- Tribute Specific Plan
- Ventana De Flores Specific Plan
- Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan

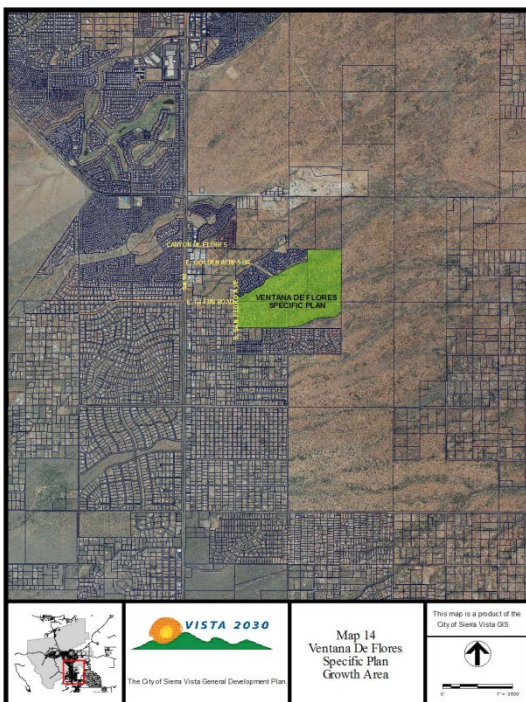
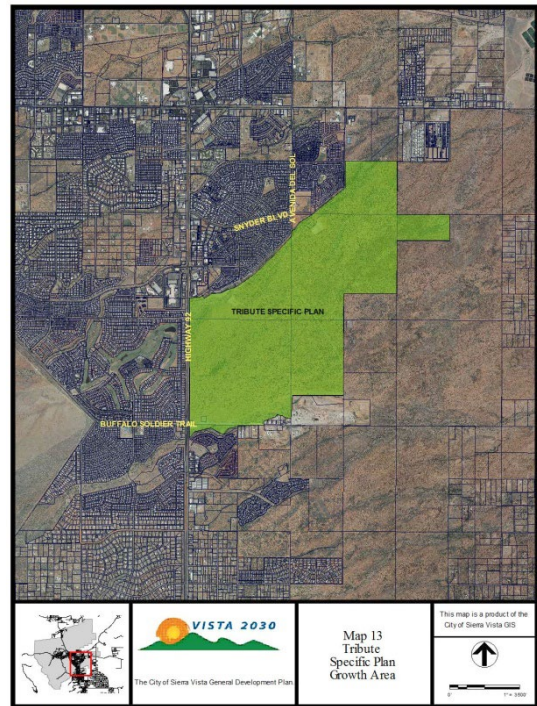
(Find these maps in a larger scale at the end of this Element.)

Section 2 includes 180 acres (as of 2014) of existing undeveloped State Trust Land. In 2006, the State Trust Land Department sold 60 acres to a private developer. There is existing infrastructure serving Section 2 including Coronado Drive, Wilcox Drive, Lenzner Avenue, and a main sewer line. However, the widening and improvement of Coronado Drive to five lanes and the construction of a multi-use path along Coronado Drive, will be required at the time any of the land in this area is developed. The State Master Plan for Section 2, as of 2014, includes a mix of medium- to low-density residential development and low-intensity commercial development.



Section 36 includes 230 acres (as of 2014) of mostly undeveloped State Trust Land. The City approved, by a General Plan Amendment, the State Master Plan for Section 36 in 2009. The Master Plan includes a mixture of land uses that will provide the highest and best use as defined by the Arizona State Land Department. A private developer purchased 38 acres from the State Land Department. And, in 2011, the City purchased another 48 acres of the State Trust Land for recreational use and the extension of Avenida Escuela. Again, the City has already invested in infrastructure within this section such as the construction of Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway and has completed a plan that would provide improved access to the existing recreational amenities.

The Tribute Specific Plan, which was approved by City Council in 2006, consists of 1,916 acres and is located in the southeast portion of the City. The Plan proposes a mix of uses and residential densities and cannot exceed 6,959 homes. In addition, land is identified for the possible construction of a Fire Station, Police Substation, and branch Library. There will be two community parks (5 to 40 acres), several neighborhood and linear parks, and a multi-use trail system. The larger community parks can also function as detention basins. The Tribute Specific Plan was adopted in 2006 and the developer projected building would take 20 years to complete. However, as of 2014, no development has occurred. Once construction has begun, the current development rate suggests a longer timeframe is likely.

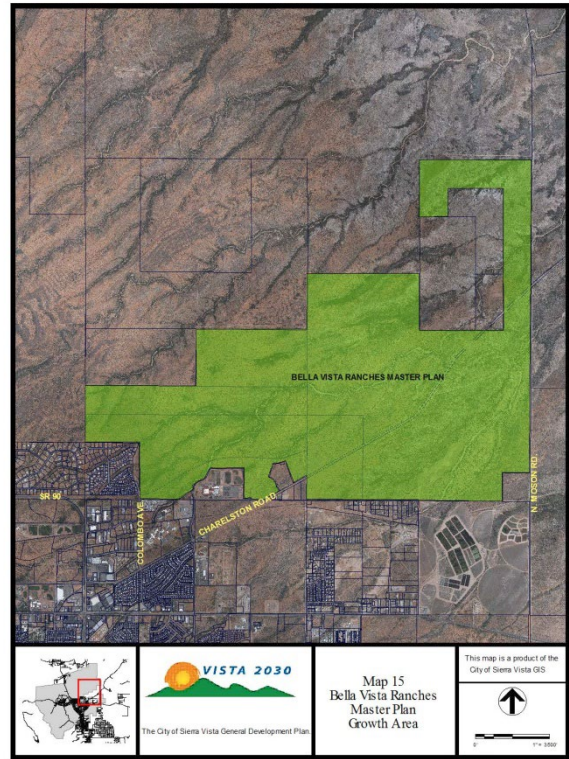


The Ventana De Flores Specific Plan, approved by City Council in 2007, contains land located in the southeast portion of the City and consists of 335 acres. The Plan proposes a mixture of residential densities and cannot exceed 1,480 housing units. In addition, there will be a regional and neighborhood park and a multi-use trail system. As of 2014, there has been no development in the Specific Plan area. When Council adopted the Ventana De Flores Specific Plan, the developer projected building would take 10-20 years to be completed; however current development rates suggest a longer time frame.

The Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan area is located in the northeast portion of the City and contains approximately 4,000 acres. A large portion of the Master Plan area remains under the jurisdiction of Cochise County. The owners of the property sold approximately 2,900 acres to an entity that has placed the property into a conservation easement, protecting it from development. The current Master Plan proposes a mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential zoning.

The City considers the Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan area in its growth area, even though most of the property remains within Cochise County. Potential annexations and impacts on public infrastructure, public utilities, and transportation systems

requires the City to be proactive and be involved with additional amendments to the Master Plan or the proposal of a new Master Plan to ensure minimal negative effects on the community.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 5-1 Ensure growth areas are developed meeting community expectations

- Strategies**
1. Encourage the use of Specific Plans for development in future growth areas.

The City has not received any additional Specific Plans since the adoption of VISTA 2030. As stated in this Section there are three existing Specific Plans, the Tribute Specific Plan, the Ventana De Flores, and the Bella Vista Ranches Specific Plan. Specific Plans are encouraged because their flexibility can provide a tool for developing a community's "sense of place" and making vibrant and livable neighborhoods. They can also facilitate significant new housing development, often including various housing densities, to include mixed-use development and affordable housing units.

The property encompassing the Tribute Specific Plan remains undeveloped. It is expected that the portion of the Plan that is adjacent to Highway 90, which is designated for commercial, will be developed first. Castle & Cooke are working on the final phase of Holiday and will be looking to develop the residential portions of the Plan soon, which would require a separate subdivision platting process.

The land encompassing the Ventana De Flores Specific Plan also remains undeveloped. There has not been any activity with this Plan since adoption. Similar to the Tribute Specific Plan, subdivision plats would be required to proceed with development.

The land encompassing the Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan continues to remain undeveloped. Again, there has been no activity since Plan adoption.

2. Encourage the retention of open space.

As stated in the text above, the property owner of the Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan sold approximately 2,900 acres to the Nature Conservancy to allow for conservation of this property.

The Tribute Specific Plan includes 156 acres or 8 percent of the total land area, dedicated to open space. These open space areas will be used for parks and drainage areas.

The Ventana De Flores Specific Plan includes 39 acres or 12 percent of the total land area, dedicated to open space. The open space areas will include drainage and park areas.

Development Code Article, 151.23, Planned Area Development (PAD) does require that PAD's provide a minimum of 25 percent permanent open space. However, there have not been any PAD developments in the City since the inception of the code provision. Specific Plans do not require a minimum open space requirement.

The Development Code Article 151.18, Site Plans requires that any new commercial development provide at least 15 percent open space on the site. This is often used for drainage and landscape purposes. There have been 15 site plans constructed since the adoption of the General Plan in 2014.

3. Encourage infill development.

The City Council adopted the Infill Incentive District Policy in 2005 which provided development incentives as a tool to encourage investment in the Sierra Vista West End and Cloud Nine Planning Areas. Some of the incentives include expedited zoning or rezoning procedures, expedited processing of plans and proposals, waivers of municipal fees, and relief from development standards. Implementation of the incentives is approved by City Council. The number of new commercial projects developed in these areas since Plan adoption is four.

The City has approved Development Code Amendments since the adoption of the Plan to help encourage development. In 2018, amendments were approved that reduced front yard setbacks for commercial development located in the Infill Incentive District Area. In addition, requests for administrative modifications of setbacks for front yard setbacks in the Infill Incentive District can be requested, whereas, front yard setback modifications are not allowed for all additional properties.

At the February 27, 2020 City Council meeting, the Council designated a portion of the West End as an Entertainment District. This designation eliminates buffering requirements between liquor retail establishments and churches, schools and associated recreational areas. The removal of the buffer allows for additional investment opportunities in the West End that otherwise would be prohibited.

4. Develop land systematically and adjacent to existing infrastructure to prevent “leapfrog” development.

As stated previously, the City does encourage Infill development through numerous incentives such as expedited reviews, reduced setbacks and reduced buffers. In addition, the Specific Plans and the growth areas will be required to connect to all municipal utilities and connect to existing public infrastructure. For example, The Tribute Specific Plan will be required to extend Buffalo Solider Trail, Greenbrier Road, and Avenida Del Sol as part of their overall circulation plan. Connections and extensions of multi-use paths will also be required.

Goal 5-2 Coordinate with other government agencies when developing in the growth areas

Strategies

1. Work with the State Land Department to preplan roads and curb cuts on vacant State Trust Land.

There have not been many opportunities to work with the State Land Department on preplanning roads and curb cuts since 2014 because much of the state trust land is still vacant and the existing State Master Plans remain in effect.

A portion of State Trust Land Section 2 has been subdivided as the Canada Vista subdivision. The City previously upgraded Coronado Drive to four lanes in anticipation of the increased traffic created by the subdivision. In addition, Lenzner Avenue will be widened to 40 feet.

With regards to State Trust Land in Section 36, the City will be extending Avenida Escuela to the athletic fields on Tacoma Street to allow for a secondary ingress and egress to the fields. As part of a Development Agreement, Walmart is responsible for 50 percent of the cost for the extension and bridge crossing. The roadway is currently under design.

2. Partner with Cochise County on growth issues within the Joint Planning Area.

In 2015, The City collaborated with both the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Cochise County on the extension of Buffalo Soldier Trail, which was proposed to extend to Moson Road. After numerous public hearings and the voicing of neighbor concerns, it was decided to postpone discussion of the extension until sometime in the future.

3. Coordinate with Fort Huachuca to ensure growth does not encroach on or affect the missions of the Fort.

Per standard policy, the City sends notification to Fort Huachuca on all new development within the City to ensure preservation of the Fort's missions. Any comments received are forwarded to the developer to ensure compliance. Projects are not approved until the Fort grants approval.

4. Partner with property owners to minimize development impacts within the High Noise/Accident Potential Zones as defined in the Land Use Element. The City has made it a priority to work with potential developers to ensure that the proposed project has minimal impacts in the High Noise/Accident

Potential Zone. Since the adoption of the General Plan in 2014, the City has not received any requests for projects in these areas. However, the City will continue to ensure impacts are minimized in the future.

Goal 5-3 Create strategies that ensure economic diversity within the growth areas

- Strategies* 1. Ensure there is an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, and industrial zoned property to allow for growth within each economic sector.

As of this update, there are approximately 5,000 acres of developed and 23,200 acres of undeveloped Residential zoned property. The residential zoning district consist of Urban Ranch, Single Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, and Manufactured Home Residential. A large percentage of the undeveloped acreage is represented by the large Urban Ranch zoned parcels located east of town. These parcels are primarily owned by government agencies such as the Arizona State land Department, Bureau of Land Management, and the City of Sierra Vista. The Urban Ranch zoning designations are holding designations until such time as the property is developed. VISTA 2030 has a commercial land use designation for many of these areas to reflect the future growth of the parcels. In addition, there are some washes and drainageways which also have a residential designation which would not be viable for development. When reviewing total parcels, there are a total of 13,854 developed and 378 undeveloped residential parcels.

Regarding Commercial zoned properties, there are approximately 670 developed and 760 undeveloped acreage. Commercial zoning districts consist of the General Commercial, Office Professional, Limited Commercial, and Neighborhood Commercial. In reviewing the number of total parcels, there are a total of 492 developed and 378 undeveloped commercial parcels.

In looking at the total acreage for Industrial zoned property, there is approximately 110 developed and 283 undeveloped acres. Industrial zoning districts consist of the Light Industry, Industrial Park, and Heavy Industry districts. In analyzing total parcels, there are a total of 32 developed and 48 undeveloped Industrial zoned parcels.

Since the adoption of the General Plan there has been only two rezonings. One rezoning changed from Neighborhood Commercial to General Commercial. The other rezoning changed from Neighborhood Commercial to Single Family Residential-8. This property was only 8,100 square feet.

The Tribute Specific Plan proposes to designate approximately 1,385 acres to residential development not to exceed 6,959 dwelling units. The dwelling units will be a mixture of low, medium, and high density residential to include townhomes, condominiums, and apartments. The Plan also proposed 174 acres of commercial development. The Ventana De Flores Specific Plan will consist of approximately 273 acres for residential development not to exceed 1,480 total residential units which will also include a mix of residential densities.

Based on the above information, there appears to be adequate available land for future economic growth within the residential sector. However, there appears to be an over saturation of commercial properties. In addition to the undeveloped commercial properties, as stated previously, the current business inventory indicates a total of 287 vacant suites and buildings within the City.

The current inventory of land zoned industrial does not provide for growth within the industrial sector. As previously stated there is approximately 283 acres of undeveloped Industrially zoned property. The largest vacant parcel is approximately 200 acre parcel located on Fort Huachuca. The 190-acre parcel was rezoned in 1987 with the understanding that Fort Huachuca would transfer title of the property to a private entity. However, the property is still owned by the federal government. Exempting this property from any viable development in the near future, the largest industrial zoned property is the former Young block site on State Highway 92 which is 17 acres. Clearly, there should be a greater expansion of the industrial sector and a reduction of the commercial sector to ensure the economic viability of both sectors. To increase industrial zoned properties, some opportunities for the City to explore include annexation, land exchanges, overlay districts, and opportunity zones.

STATE LAW REQUIREMENTS

Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 9-461.05 D 2

“A growth area element, specifically identifying those areas, if any, that are particularly suitable for planned multi-modal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements designed to support a planned concentration of a variety of uses, such as residential, office, commercial, tourism and industrial uses. This element shall include policies and implementation strategies that area designed to:

(a) Make automobile, transit and other multi-modal circulation more efficient, make infrastructure expansion more economical and provide for a rational pattern of land development.

(b) Conserve significant natural resources and open space areas in the growth area and coordinate their location to similar areas outside the growth area’s boundaries.

(c) Promote the public and private construction of timely and financially sound infrastructure expansion through the use of infrastructure funding and financing planning that is coordinated with development activity.”

ATTACHMENTS

Map 11, Section 2 map

Map 12, Section 36 map

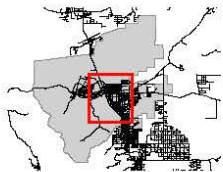
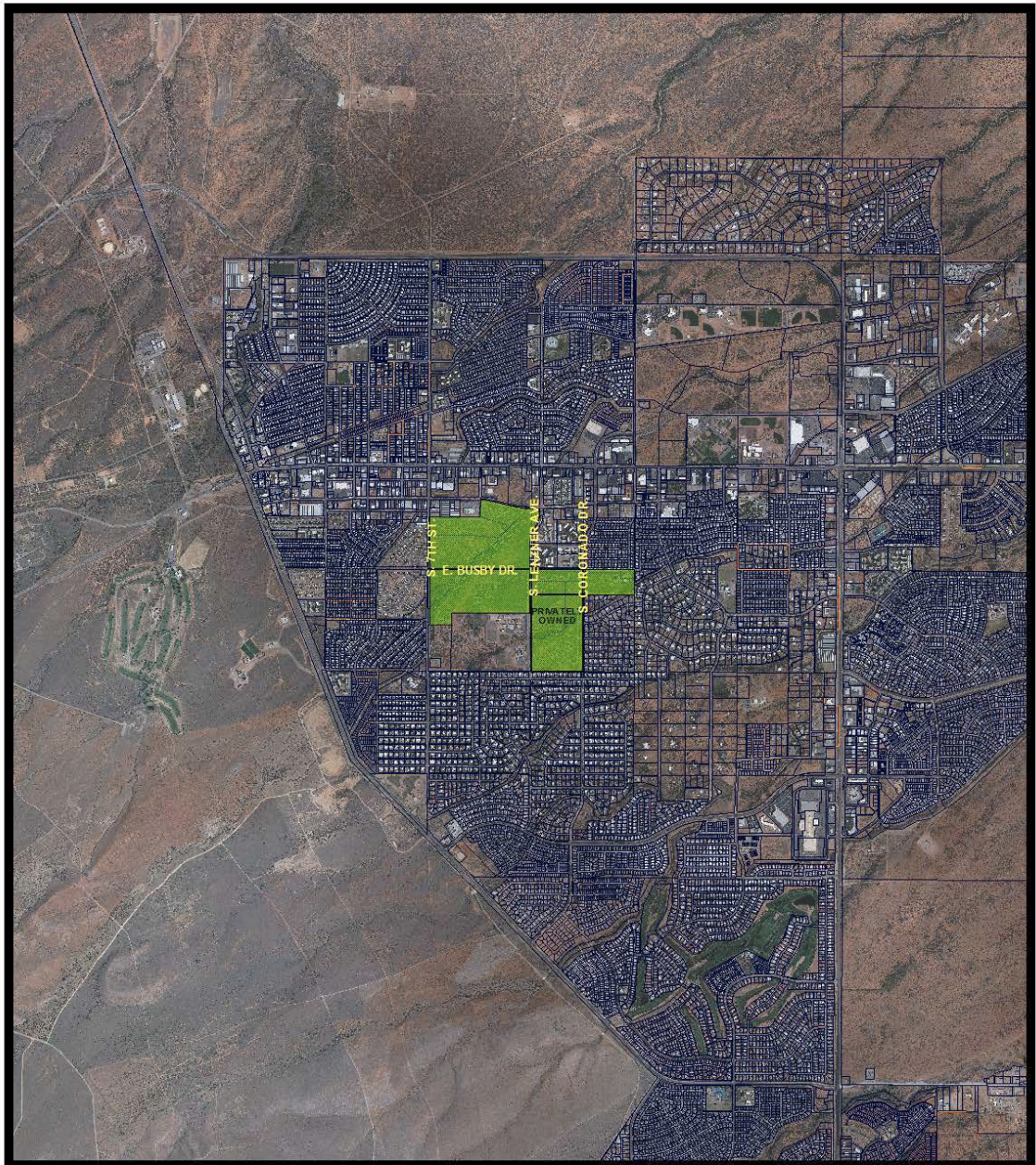
Map 13, Tribute Specific Plan

Map 14, Ventana De Flores Specific Plan

Map 15, Bella Vista Ranches Master Plan

REFERENCES

Intergovernmental Agreement with Cochise County (Joint Planning Area), July 2002



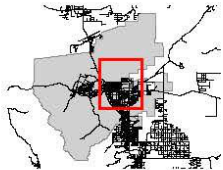
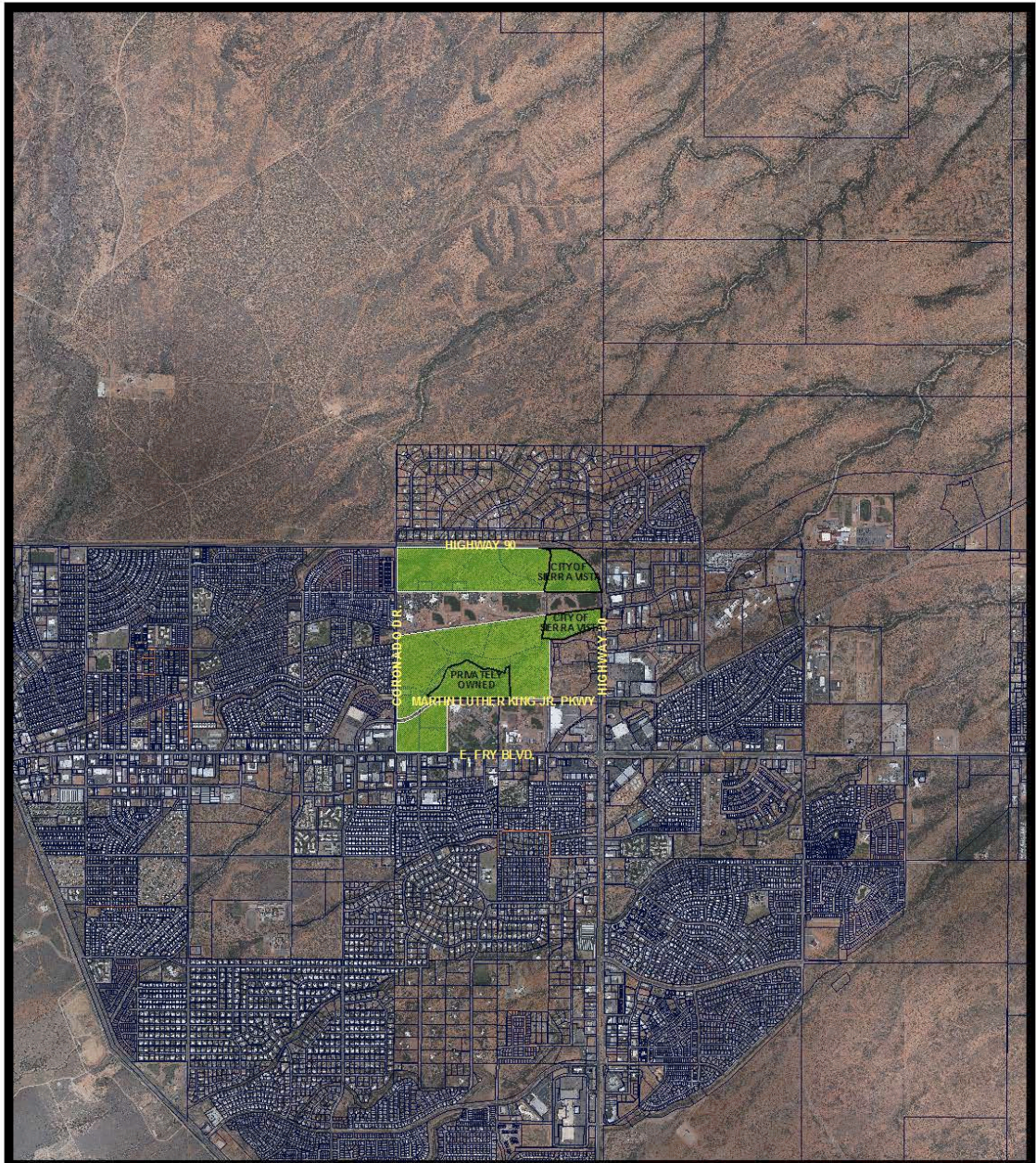
The City of Sierra Vista General Development Plan

Map 11
State Trust Land
Section 2
Growth Area

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City of Sierra Vista GIS



0' 1" = 3500'



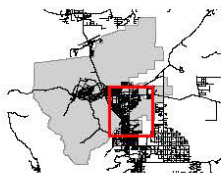
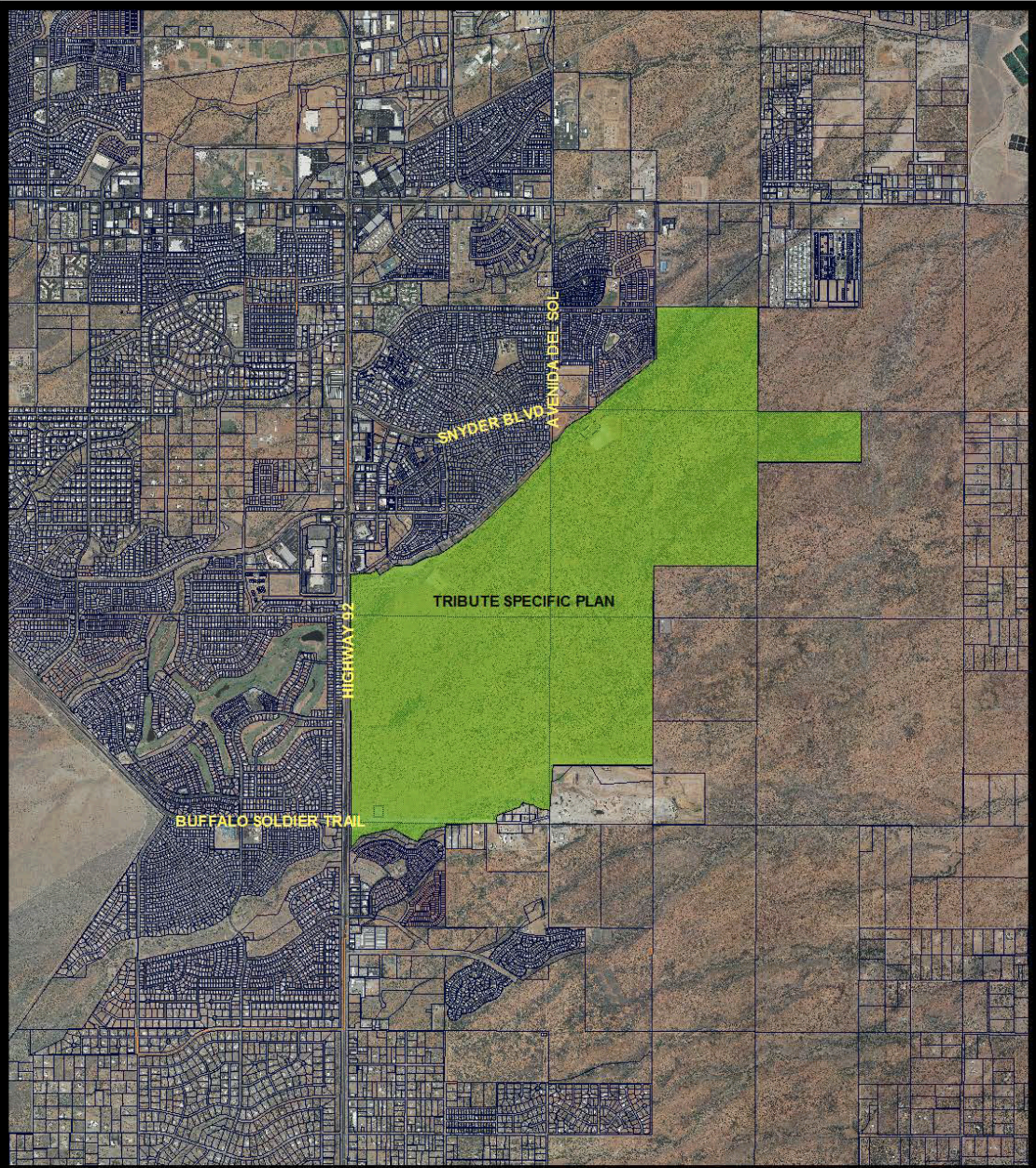
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Map 12
State Trust Land
Section 36
Growth Area

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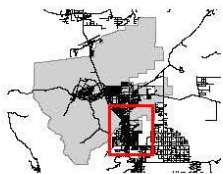
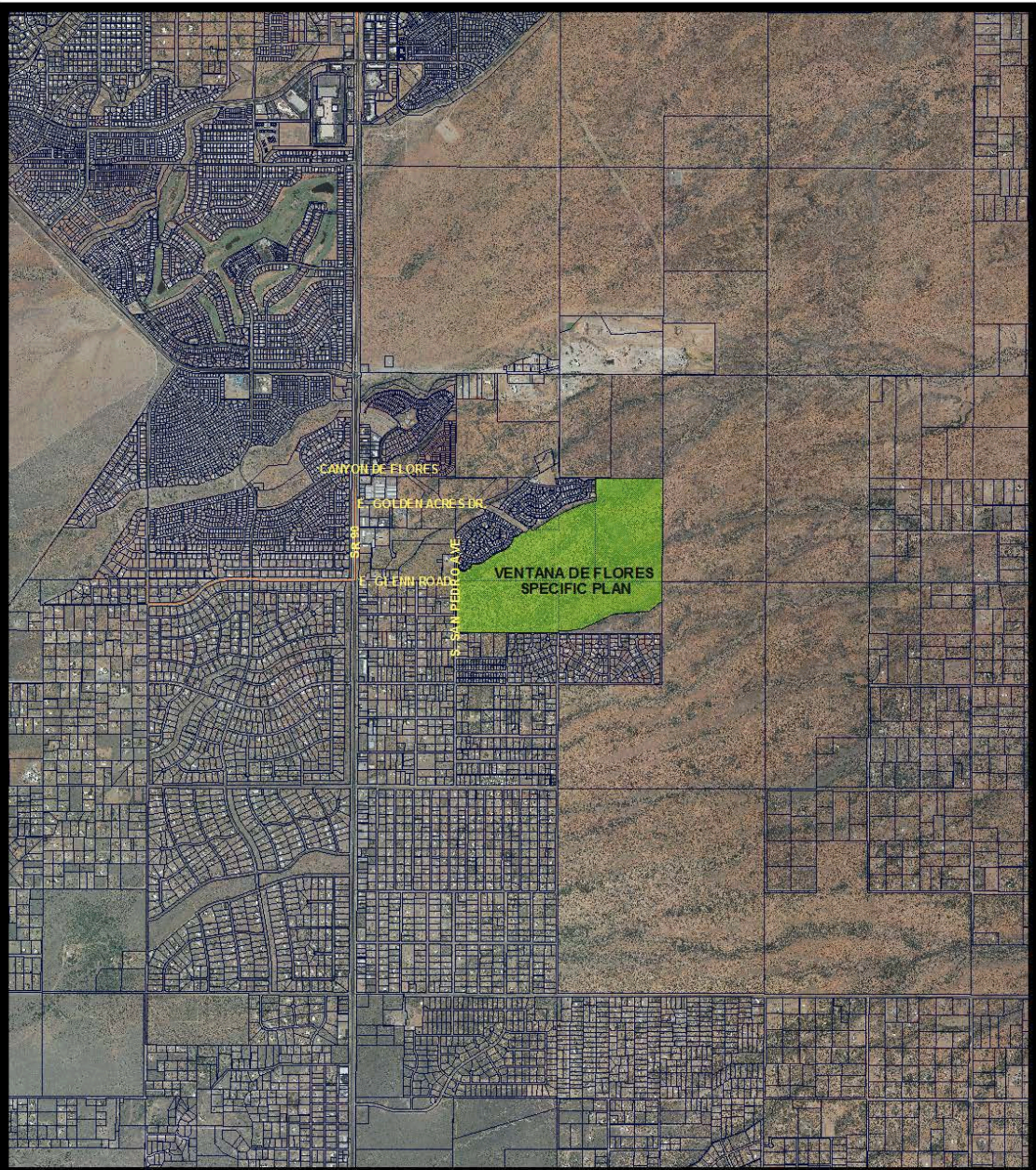
The City of Sierra Vista General Development Plan

Map 13 Tribute Specific Plan Growth Area

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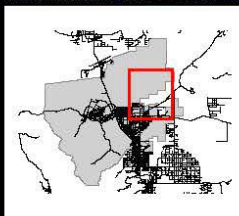
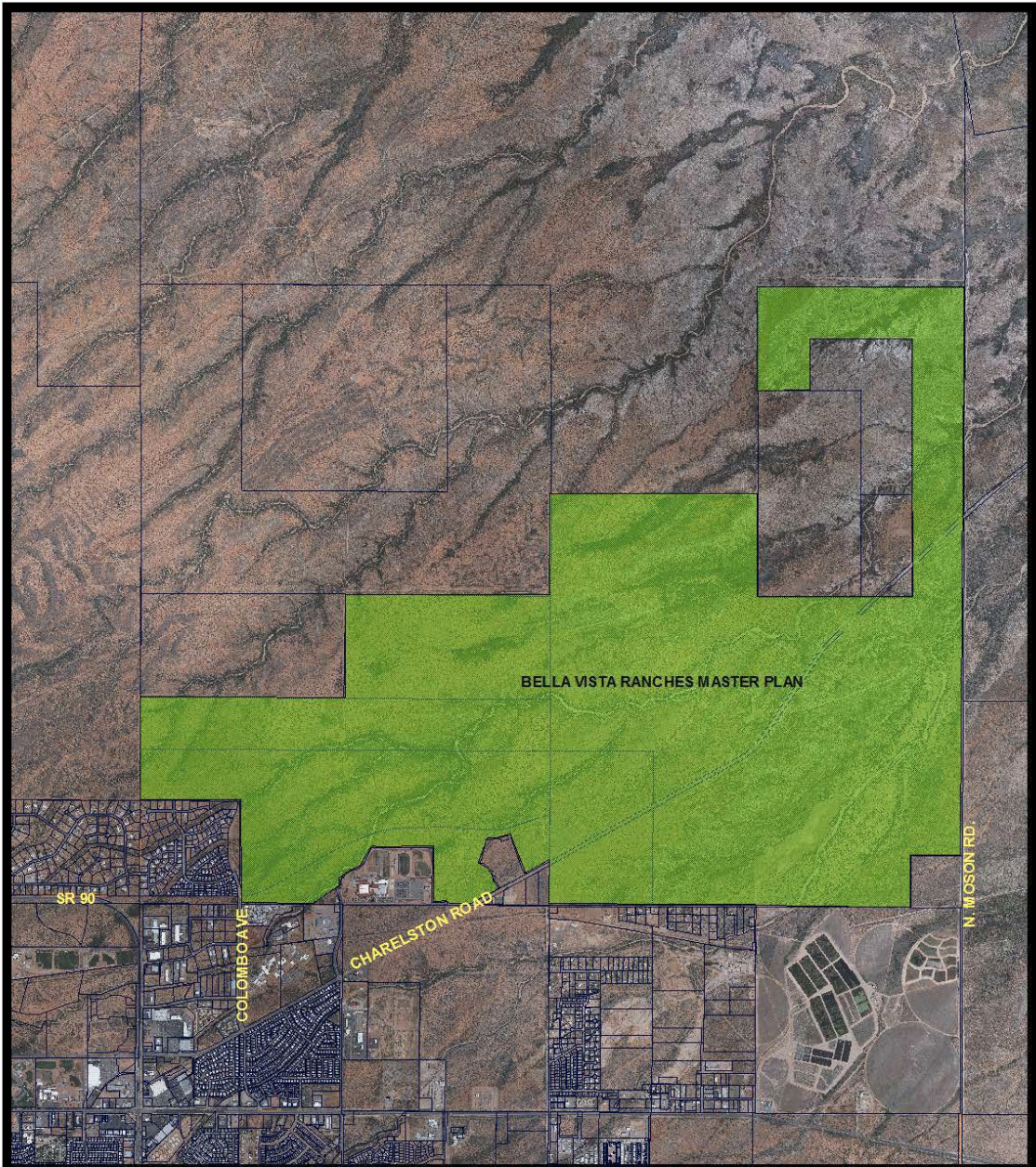
The City of Sierra Vista General Development Plan

Map 14
Ventana De Flores
Specific Plan
Growth Area

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0' 1" = 3500'



Map 15
Bella Vista Ranches
Master Plan
Growth Area

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