

## 1.6 Core Concepts

**Yuma County Character**—A primary intent of the Plan is to reflect the unique characteristics of the county and to enhance and preserve those qualities. These characteristics include its rural heritage, strategic location, river corridor and a diverse economy supported by bi-national activities including retirement communities, military facilities, government employment and tourism.

**Public Participation**—In updating the Plan, it was understood that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, combined with a lack of common goals, posed a threat to the future quality of life enjoyed by Yuma County residents. Hence, in adopting *Growing Smarter Plus*, broad-based citizen participation was required to ensure the public's interest was incorporated throughout the process. The Plan includes policies, priorities and actions proposed through extensive citizen participation and designed to be representative of county residents.

Important concepts and high priority items suggested by county residents to provide a framework for the Plan are as follows:

- **Agricultural Lands**—Preserve rural character, encourage the conservation of agricultural lands, and discourage uses that conflict.
- **Transportation**—Encourage efficient and effective transportation systems based on regional priorities and coordinated with county, municipal, State, military and Federal management agencies.
- **Growth Management**—Promote development in areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or could be provided in an efficient manner.
- **Open Space**—Encourage conservation of open space, retention of open space sites and expansion of recreational resources.
- **Property Rights**—Ensure the property rights of landowners are protected.
- **Environmental Resources**—Protect, conserve and enhance environmental resources, access to natural resource lands, air and water quality and availability of water.
- **Economic Development**—Encourage a stable and enduring economic base by planning for adequate land use development.
- **Financial Resources**—Ensure the efficient spending of public funds by analyzing the fiscal impacts of land use decisions.

## Section Two—Introduction

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### 2.1 Purpose

The county’s annual average population growth over the last decade has been 0.42 percent. This growth rate is far lower than the previous decade that saw growth in population annually. If the growth rate returns to what it was previously, the character of the county would change in ways that reflect the ongoing urbanization and growth in all communities. This will include demographic changes, increased ethnic and cultural diversity, land use densities, land costs, traffic and a need to preserve the natural environment.

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#### Yuma County Population Projections

- 2020 population 239,451 (Arizona Department of Economic Security)
  - 2030 population 256,489 (Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity)
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**Figure 1: Population Projections<sup>1</sup>**

Given the previous trends and changes in the county, maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of life will require considerable foresight, ongoing cooperative efforts and broad-based planning. Once development occurs, it cannot be easily reversed. The results of the decisions the community makes, or fails to make, will be with us for generations to come. Therefore, it the purpose of the Plan to be a basic document that provides a rational decision making framework to aid in these decisions.

### 2.2 Evolution of the Plan

The Plan is written to fulfill mandates of the State and the Growing Smarter legislation. The *Yuma County 2030 Comprehensive Plan* provides an updated foundation for long term growth and development in the county. The *Yuma County 2020 Comprehensive Plan* was adopted by the Board of Supervisors February 22, 2012. Arizona Revised Statutes Title 11, Chapter 6, Article 1, states as follows: “A county comprehensive plan, with any amendments, is effective for up to ten years from the date the plan was initially adopted or until the plan is readopted or a new plan is adopted pursuant to this subsection and becomes effective. On or before the tenth anniversary of the plan’s most recent adoption, the board shall either readopt the existing plan for an additional term of up to ten years or shall adopt a new county plan as provided by this article.”

The county was divided into Development Study Areas (DSAs) to handle the organization, allocation of resources and writing of the 2020 Plan. Ten Development Study Areas Background Studies and Community Assessments were completed to provide a base of information for the development of the 2020 Plan. No new Development Study Areas Background Studies and Community Assessments were not completed for the development of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>1</sup> 2018 Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) Yuma Population Projections: 2018-2055, Low Series.

The 2020 Plan further evolved through a series of public participation efforts conducted from the kick-off of the Plan's update that started with the creation of Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs) from the first annual meeting held on November 16, 2006 in the Dome Valley/Wellton Planning Area. The last CAG meeting took place on May 25, 2011.

## **2.3 Public Participation Approach**

Public participation was a vital element in the creation of the *Yuma County 2030 Comprehensive Plan*. Multiple public meetings were held by Planning staff at the Department of Development Services at which the Plan was discussed. The Plan was structured around citizen involvement and direction from the Yuma County Board of Supervisors. The Public Information/Public Participation (PI/PP) Program was a central focus to the overall efforts and was designed and coordinated in order to ensure the broadest possible base of citizen and group involvement.

## **2.4 Designated Planning Areas**

The county was divided into nine planning areas for analysis of county resources and growth trends. Additionally, as part of the Plan update, seven Citizen Advisory Group Studies were written to provide a base of information and an in-depth understanding of existing conditions and future development and infrastructure needs for each one of the planning areas.

These Planning Areas include the following:

- 1) North Gila
- 2) Yuma Mesa
- 3) Northwest Yuma
- 4) Gila Valley
- 5) Foothills
- 6) Yuma Valley
- 7) Martinez Lake
- 8) Dome Valley/Wellton
- 9) Dateland/East County

**Planning Area Descriptions:** The nine geographically assigned Planning Areas are described as follows: (*Refer to the Land Use Element for detailed maps of each planning area.*)

- 1. North Gila Planning Area:** The North Gila Planning Area is comprised of the area roughly bounded by California to the west, Yuma Proving Ground and the Gila Mountains to the east, Levee Road to the south and Imperial Dam to the north. The planning area is almost exclusively located in the Colorado and Gila River valley. The confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers is located along the southern boundary of the planning area.
- 2. Yuma Mesa Planning Area:** The Yuma Mesa Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by the East Main Canal and a small portion of the City of Somerton to the west, the Barry M. Goldwater Range and City of Yuma to the east, the City of San Luis and Mexico to the south and Interstate 8 and MCAS-Yuma to the north. A portion of the Cocopah Reservation is located within the planning area; however, it is part of a sovereign nation and not under the land use planning jurisdiction of Yuma County.

3. **Northwest Yuma Planning Area:** The Northwest Yuma Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by Avenue D to the west, the City of Yuma to the south and east and the West Main Canal and 1<sup>st</sup> Street to the north.
4. **Gila Valley Planning Area:** The Gila Valley Planning Area is comprised of the area roughly bounded by Pacific Avenue to the west, Fortuna Wash to the east, Levee Road to the north and the City of Yuma to the south. The planning area is almost exclusively located in the Colorado and Gila River valleys. The confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers is located along the northern boundary of the planning area.
5. **Foothills Planning Area:** The Foothills Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by the City of Yuma to the west, the crest of the Gila Mountains to the east, the Barry M. Goldwater Range to the south and the Gila Gravity Main Canal and County 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the north. Fortuna Wash, which runs in a northeasterly direction, more or less bisects the planning area.
6. **Yuma Valley Planning Area:** The Yuma Valley Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by Mexico to the west, the City of Yuma, Avenue D, the City of Somerton and the East Main Canal to the east, the City of San Luis to the south and California to the north. The planning area is located close to the Colorado River.
7. **Martinez Lake Planning Area:** The Martinez Lake Planning Area is comprised of two geographically separate areas that can be roughly defined as the portion of Yuma County that is located north of Imperial Dam and west of Yuma Proving Ground and the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. The topography of the southern portion of the planning area is dominated by the Colorado River and Martinez Lake which forms the western boundary of the planning area and the County. Development in this area centers around the Martinez Lake shoreline. The northern portion of the Martinez Lake Planning Area is a sliver of land located between the La Paz County line and the Kofa Mountains and the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge.
8. **Dome Valley/Wellton Area:** The Dome Valley/Wellton Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by the crest of the Gila Mountains to the west, the Barry M. Goldwater Range to the south, the crest of the Mohawk Mountains to the east and Yuma Proving Ground to the north. The Gila River runs from east to west, bisecting the planning area.
9. **Dateland/East County Planning Area:** The Dateland/East County Planning Area is comprised of the unincorporated portion of Yuma County that is roughly bounded by the crest of the Mohawk Mountains and Yuma Proving Ground to the west, the Barry M. Goldwater Range to the south, Maricopa County to the east and La Paz County to the north. The Gila River runs from east to west bisecting the planning area. The Eagle Tail Mountains Wilderness Area covers 12 square miles. This area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management in a manner that minimizes as much as possible human impact on the land.