CITY OF PHOENIX
CITY CENTER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ELEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

To build a city center where individuals take responsibility for the community, contributing to the betterment of all is an ideal that goes back to the ancient Greeks. Strong city centers have traditionally been built by people who acknowledge the center's potential as a place to bring residents together to form a community.

The importance of the City Center as a place where residents meet informally to socialize, undertake business, and shop has been devalued in recent years by single use shopping centers that are primarily for the convenience of retailing and car parking, rather than personal interaction. The shopping center disperses people, segregating them by activity, shoppers, city business, entertainment, recreation etc.

This dispersal, made possible by the motorcar has reduced our potential for human interaction and the satisfaction it can offer. Consequently our ability to test publicly a diversity of ideas and opinions has been diminished. This relative isolation has meant that people have become less social and less tolerant.

The Phoenix City Center Plan will provide a traditional interactive Center where individual activities overlap, bringing diverse people together. The development over time of a place that residents consider the Center of their city, a place to go, in close proximity where celebrations, recreation, entertainment, business and shopping are within walking distance of their home is the goal.

In order to accomplish this goal, residents will need to continue to develop and use the opportunities of the City Center Plan. The challenge is to make the Center an active and vital place that reflects the concerns and ideas of Phoenix. The Plan is a beginning but it will require stewardship and innovation to bring the ideas to fruition.

A concept land use plan for the City Center was adopted in 1997; a market study was not prepared at that time. When the market study was done it identified flaws in the proposed land use mix. The problem was that the concept plan was too aggressive in terms of the intensity of development that could be realized in the downtown. Given this scenario, the land use plan was amended to reflect a plan that could be realistically implemented.

1. **DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS**
   The planning process for the City Center Plan began in 1997. Citizen participation included interviews with stakeholders, workshops, and a charrette. The draft plan was approved by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council in 1997.

In 2001 the City received a grant for a market study and financial plan for the City Center. This study in its entirety is available in the Planning Department at City Hall. The City Center's market study and implementation plan was reviewed and amended. The 2001 update and amendment process included the original Citizen Advisory Committee, public workshops, and public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. The main ideas that came out of the 1997 and 2001 public meetings and workshops were:

- The character of Phoenix should remain like a farm community – with new buildings supporting this image.
- New commercial buildings with mixed uses including offices, and housing, that support strong public activity in the Center should be encouraged. Other types of uses desired are a health Center, craft Center and light industry.
- Phoenix's position between Ashland and Medford provides an opportunity that should be addressed by City Center improvements to the public and private realms. Tree plantings, widened sidewalks, better parking could be undertaken by the City. While individuals could maintain their own buildings to a higher standard and bring in new businesses.
- The Bear Creek Greenway should have a strong connection to the Center of Phoenix.
- The Bear Creek Wetlands should be incorporated into the new City Center Plan.
- Traffic on Main Street should be slowed down and additional parallel parking returned to the street by reducing curb cuts.
- Develop new places for off street parking in the Center.
- Develop places for markets that will bring people into Phoenix to serve residents and visitors. Types of markets could include fruit and vegetable, crafts, art, antiques, fairs and flea markets.
- Develop places for public buildings near the Center to support the public places and commercial activities. Required are meeting facilities, day care, social services Center and a senior Center.
- Encourage businesses that support local needs.
- Enhance the level of upkeep and aesthetic appeal of the City Center area using public and private investment in landscaping, sidewalks, lighting and open spaces.
- Encouraging non-auto oriented businesses that focus on serving the local community rather than catering to the tourists.

Additional ideas that came out of the 2001 amended plan were:

- Moving the market plaza location from 2nd Street to an area along the wetland park and the transit area along 1st Street.
- De-emphasizing pedestrian access across Main Street at 2nd Street. Focusing pedestrian crossings at intersections with planned traffic signals rather than mid-block locations.
- Refocusing pedestrian amenities and open space features along 1st Street, particularly linkages to the wetland and open space areas.

- Include an at-grade crossing to the Bear Creek Greenway, rather than a pedestrian underpass.
- Allow transit-oriented development to be integrated into the City Center in both vertical and horizontal patterns.

To respond to these and many more ideas the Plan developed includes places for new commercial buildings (retail and offices), public market, public buildings, cottage industrial and housing.

2. BASIC CONCEPTS:

These basic concepts are principles that are specific to Phoenix. Many of these concepts came from residents in discussions that were part of the workshops and charrette. These concepts will give prospective developers an insight into the most important ideas of the Plan.

2.1 Retention of Existing Buildings

In developing the City Center Plan as many of the existing buildings as is practicable were retained. Retention of existing buildings will give continuity to the Center, even where the buildings retained are not historically important. Where buildings were not of significant character or economic value* they were not retained.

> * The criterion for removal would be – if the value of the building in question did not equal the land value.

2.2 Building Character

Residents strongly supported the idea of retaining the qualities and elements of existing historic buildings. Simple clapboard buildings of two and three floors with large vertical windows, bays, covered porches are favored. New buildings need to be compatible in terms of character, elements and scale with the historic buildings.

2.3 Topography and Natural Features

Existing topography and natural features were taken into consideration in the design of the new Center. All of the existing major natural features, the change in elevation across the site, the wetlands and the Bear Creek Greenway are significant components of the design and the economic strategy.

2.3.1. Wetlands will be included in the new development as a wetland park with water related vegetation. This park can be used as a public destination exhibit that educates visitors about wetlands and draws people into the downtown. The wetlands can also be used to filter storm water from City streets before going back into Bear Creek.

2.3.2. The Bear Creek Greenway is potentially a destination for visitors and an opportunity for recreation. The planning response is to provide entrances from the Greenway into the Center.

2.4. **Concentration of Major Buildings**
The new commercial and public buildings of the Center are strongly connected to the existing Library and Grange buildings, which can work as anchors for the new Center. The new Center includes a new market square, public and commercial buildings, cottage industrial and housing.

2.5. **Parking** will be included adjacent to a new street between Main and Bear Creek Drive and small parking lots behind buildings. The new street will provide significant new parking between the concentrations of new development. Stairs and street access will connect the new parking with the Market Square and Main Street.

2.6. **Housing** is an important component of the center. A variety of sizes of housing units for diverse income groups provides a resident population in the center. The idea that the center will always have people in it is a significant economic and safety issue for the City. This resident population will tend to support activities and shops and to work in the center. The people living in the center will also provide "eyes on the street" to make the downtown a safer place.

3. DESIGN / CHARACTER OF CITY CENTER:

In the planning workshops and charrettes held for Phoenix the residents', the consensus was for the downtown to have the character of a rural center. The concept plan as shown at the beginning of this element is a result of both the 1997 and 2001 workshops. It suggests that buildings planned for the Center should have many characteristics of the best historic buildings currently found in the center. For example, the new buildings should be two to three stories in height, located close to the back of the sidewalk, with generous windows, porches, bay windows and clad mainly with wood siding. New buildings should be of comparable scale and size to existing buildings and should not present excessive visual mass or bulk to public view or to adjoining properties. New buildings should be visually interesting in the frequent use of architectural elements such as large windows bays, covered porches, layering of facades and natural materials. New buildings should enhance visual and literal connections to adjacent or surrounding natural elements. New buildings should enhance connections to streets and market square. Ground floor shop windows and entrances in commercial areas should be generous and conducive to their commercial functions. Mixed-use projects containing commercial, light industrial and housing are encouraged. Building materials should have a durable, permanent quality, be of natural materials and support the character of a rural center described above.

The proposed Center is mainly mixed use (commercial and housing) buildings. This mix of uses will have a significant impact on the character of the Center. The mixture of uses also ensures activity and "eyes on the street" for safety in the Center during most of the day. The mixture of uses in the center of Phoenix makes the downtown safe and attractive for pedestrians.

The major component of pedestrian usage of the Center is slowing the traffic along Main Street and Bear Creek Parkway. This can be accomplished by making these two arteries less like highways and more like city streets. Encourage parallel parking on Main Street by reducing curb cuts. Consider curb extenders, landscape, and other traffic calming methods. These methods will change the perception of the appropriate speed along downtown streets. In addition wide sidewalks will encourage pedestrians to use the streets and shops, and cafes and restaurants will spill out on to them.

Significant additional parking is proposed in the form of a landscaped parking street between Main and Bear Creek Drive. This two block long street will have head in parking to maximize the amount of parking available. The close proximity of this street to the Center will enable it to be a visible and effective place to park.

Bicycle lanes on Main Street and Bear Creek Drive and frequent bicycle parking are also proposed in the new Center.

4. MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The position of Phoenix between and in close proximity to Ashland and Medford, adjacent to Jacksonville and Talent brings a significant resident and tourist population in close proximity to Phoenix. Since it is on the route between Ashland and Medford, the Center of Phoenix can become a destination for people visiting the area. When Phoenix can distinguish itself by hosting events and supporting shops and services, people will consider it a destination. Phoenix should not emulate its neighbors, but should develop its own character and events to make it unique and memorable.

To utilize this opportunity of proximity to major centers and travelers, Phoenix should develop a qualitatively improved character, distinctly it's own. It should also sponsor events of interest to residents of the Rogue Valley Region and visitors alike. If the town is physically pleasing and there are strong reasons to stop, then there will be a growing demand for shopping, housing, services and light industry. Significant ongoing events will encourage people to think of Phoenix when they are considering options for recreation and/or shopping. These events should be designed to be somewhat unique and of interest to a large number of people. The advantage of organizing events is that they require little investment and can be profitable, if the right kind of events are planned.

The interaction between the Market Square, Wetland Park, commercial and housing uses is critical for the economic well being, visual quality and character of the Center. Instigating and maintaining this dynamic, by encouraging projects that support particular plan areas, will be crucial in phasing the Center. The Market Square with it's events and Wetland Park will be major draws. The commercial housing will provide services and continuity of people that will increase benefits from the market and park.

The strategy to bring people to Phoenix includes an organized market on a new market square that operates seven days a week, a designed wetland park with an educational display,

greenway access and trout fishing on Bear Creek to be developed by the City of Phoenix. This investment by the City residents (volunteer help) will also encourage development interest.

4.1. Market:
Phoenix has a tradition of weekend markets. The Grange site, parking lots and other places throughout the town are used informally to hold markets. If this interest in public markets can be enhanced, they will become a significant draw from the surrounding area. Numerous types of markets could be regular features. Markets might include used and new furniture, fruits and vegetables, flea markets, crafts, art, antiques cars etc. Events might include ethnic foods, bicycle races, town celebrations, music, etc.

However, to gain economic benefits from holding markets and events in the downtown, there should be new buildings with support services and shops that will encourage market users to spend additional time in Phoenix. For this reason a Market Square, surrounding shops, cafes, restaurants, offices and housing that will support the market are proposed. The Market Square is located along the Wetland Park project and the transit area along 1st Street. When there is no market these tree lined open spaces can be used for sitting, strolling and open space.

4.2. **Public Buildings:**
An important component of the central area includes the development of public uses. Public buildings are significant draws for people and events. As new public uses are contemplated, they should be considered for location in the City Center District. A greater intensity and mixture of uses concentrated in this area will make for a dynamic and interesting Center. People often visit a Center for a particular task or event and become interested in other things that are available there. Public buildings appropriate to the Center could include meeting rooms, social services, craft center, day care, etc. The variety of public and private opportunities is the mark of a successful Center.

4.3. Wetland Park:
The wetland adjacent to Bear Creek Drive will be used to attract people into the center. The present ponds are repositioned and redesigned to provide an Interpretive Center that describes a wetland's role in nature, with living and visual displays interesting to children and adults. The plan shows a boardwalk and trellis surrounding the wetland to facilitate viewing the displays and to provide places to walk and sit in the shade. The wetlands will have a park-like atmosphere with the cooling effects of water. Numerous shops, restaurants, cafes and some housing will also be adjacent to the boardwalk, creating a pleasing place to shop, eat and live.

4.4. Bear Creek and Bear Creek Greenway:
The Bear Creek Greenway is already part of a regional plan. When it is completed, this recreational link with Ashland and Medford will be a significant attraction for people stopping to explore the Center of Phoenix. An entrance to the Center from the greenway is very important to let people know that there are events of interest in the downtown.

In addition, Bear Creek itself can be a source of interest if a section of it were to be made into a catch and release fishing stream for children. Considerable improvement of the stream bed for trout habitat would need to be undertaken, but as a draw for families this would be a significant event.

4.5. Commercial and Cottage Industrial:

During the 2001 amendment process it was determined that the 2001 market analysis did not support the high amount of commercial development envisioned in the 1997 plan. The prior plan estimated the need for 180,000 square feet of commercial space. The more recent market analysis identifies future commercial development potential of approximately 32,500 square feet for retail uses and another 110,000 square feet for office and cottage industrial uses over the next 20 years. There is moderate development potential for several small retail and service establishments with the City Center. Leading demand is anticipated from stores focused on eating and drinking, and miscellaneous retail/services. Without the support for a major retail anchor, the potential retail establishments within the City Center would depend upon their ability to intercept traffic along Highway 99, as well as local patronage. It is unlikely that a commercial retail developer would build a stand-alone retail center without a retail anchor. Hence, the retail development pattern would need to be established through space that is built on a series of out-lots, within flex space (space suitable for retail, office, and cottage industrial), or in the ground floor of mixed-use structures. The market findings indicate favorable conditions for a City Center mixed-use development concept. Recent and ongoing growth in population, households, income and employment serve as a solid foundation for investing in the City Center.

4.6. Housing

The City Center is well positioned to capture a significant share of the future townhome and multifamily housing demand. Benefits of a City Center location include proximity to the local library and municipal services, access to the planned Bear Creek pathway, and access to local and sub-regional labor markets, amenities, and multimodal transportation bus service. Market conditions could conceivably support a 20-year development program that includes 156 to 188 townhomes and multifamily dwellings, as well as housing that is situated above commercial buildings. Housing of a variety of sizes of units appropriate for low, median and middle-income levels are proposed for rent or for purchase.

4.7. Transportation Modes

The successful town Center will provide for alternative modes of transportation. The Plan establishes a balance between automobiles, pedestrians and bicycles. The parking street will provide for additional cars, increasing automobile access into the City Center. The Market Square, Wetlands Park, Boardwalk and wider sidewalks will make the area attractive for pedestrians. Each part of the Center should provide places for people to sit, in the sun or under cover. Covered bus stops with benches should also be part of the implementation of the pedestrian component of the Plan. Bicycle lanes on Main Street and Bear Creek Parkway and bicycle parking adjacent to mixed use buildings will support bicycle usage.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

5.1. Phasing:

The funding and phasing of public components and new buildings in the City Center is dependent on the economy and marketing. A thorough analysis was done as part of the Marketing and Financial Plan, which is available in the Planning Department at Phoenix City Hall.

For the Market Square to be successful, it needs to have services and commercial and housing around it. For the additional commercial to be successful, it will need the draw of the Market Square and Wetlands Park. It is important that the City take an active role in encouraging development that supports the priorities of the City Center Plan. However, it is an advantage to have a Plan that gives direction to an individual or developer initiated project out of the phasing sequence.

5.2 Goals and Policies for the Center

5.2.1. Support small development projects for individual buildings that occupy a majority of the Center.

Most commercial development today is undertaken by specialist developers. This has the advantage of providing places for shops and offices with a minimum of involvement by merchant or office occupiers. However, the disadvantage of this common arrangement is that there is a tendency for repetitious large scale buildings of dubious quality. Usually specialist developers do not want to undertake mixed use projects because they are outside their expertise.

It is our view that a more successful outcome for the Center can be achieved by encouraging individual buildings. This is a more traditional way to build up a Center; it encourages individual ownership and better quality buildings.

5.2.2. Consider siting new public buildings within the City Center and adjacent to the transportation center. Public services are a major draw in the downtown. This type of use will strongly support the diversity of activities in the Center.

It is also a type of use that ensures activity in the Center and provides assurance to potential developers and owners that the Center will continue to be economically viable. It is difficult to over emphasize the importance of concentrating this type of use in the center if the goal is to make a vital downtown. As discussions on siting public buildings occur, it is important that decision maker's bear in mind the opportunity that these buildings represent to the vitality of the Center.

5.2.3 Develop implementation tools such as Community Development Corporation (CDC), Economic Improvement District, Parking District, and Urban Renewal District.

We recommend that the City of Phoenix assist in the formation of a nonprofit Community Development Corporation. The CDC can be established to undertake nonprofit housing and commercial development that fits the community.

Housing at various income levels is an important component of a successful downtown. A Community Development Corporation would be able to develop housing at various income levels from 60% of median income or below to market rate.

The CDC provides control over the type and quality of housing and commercial development in the Center. It is also conducive to undertaking smaller scale projects with social value.

The City of Phoenix shall examine the potential for an Economic Improvement District, Parking District, and an Urban Renewal District.

5.2.4 Hire a Market Manager to initiate, market and coordinate types of markets and events. This person can also have responsibility for scheduling the market building and maintenance of the Wetland Park. The position can be self supporting from market, and market building revenues and wetland exhibition fees.

5.2.5 Initiate volunteer projects to begin rehabilitation of the Center.

5.2.6 Develop the Market Square Plan

The market square is in the concept phase with the design to be decided upon with the development of anchor buildings. On the concept plan the location is depicted adjacent to the wetland park, close to the institution building and the transportation center.

5.2.7 Develop the Wetlands Park

Hire a wetlands landscape specialist to work with interested residents to design a phased plan for the Wetlands Park.

Action: With volunteer labor undertake the first phase of the park.

5.2.8 Create a Tree Planting Plan and integrate the Street Scape Plan

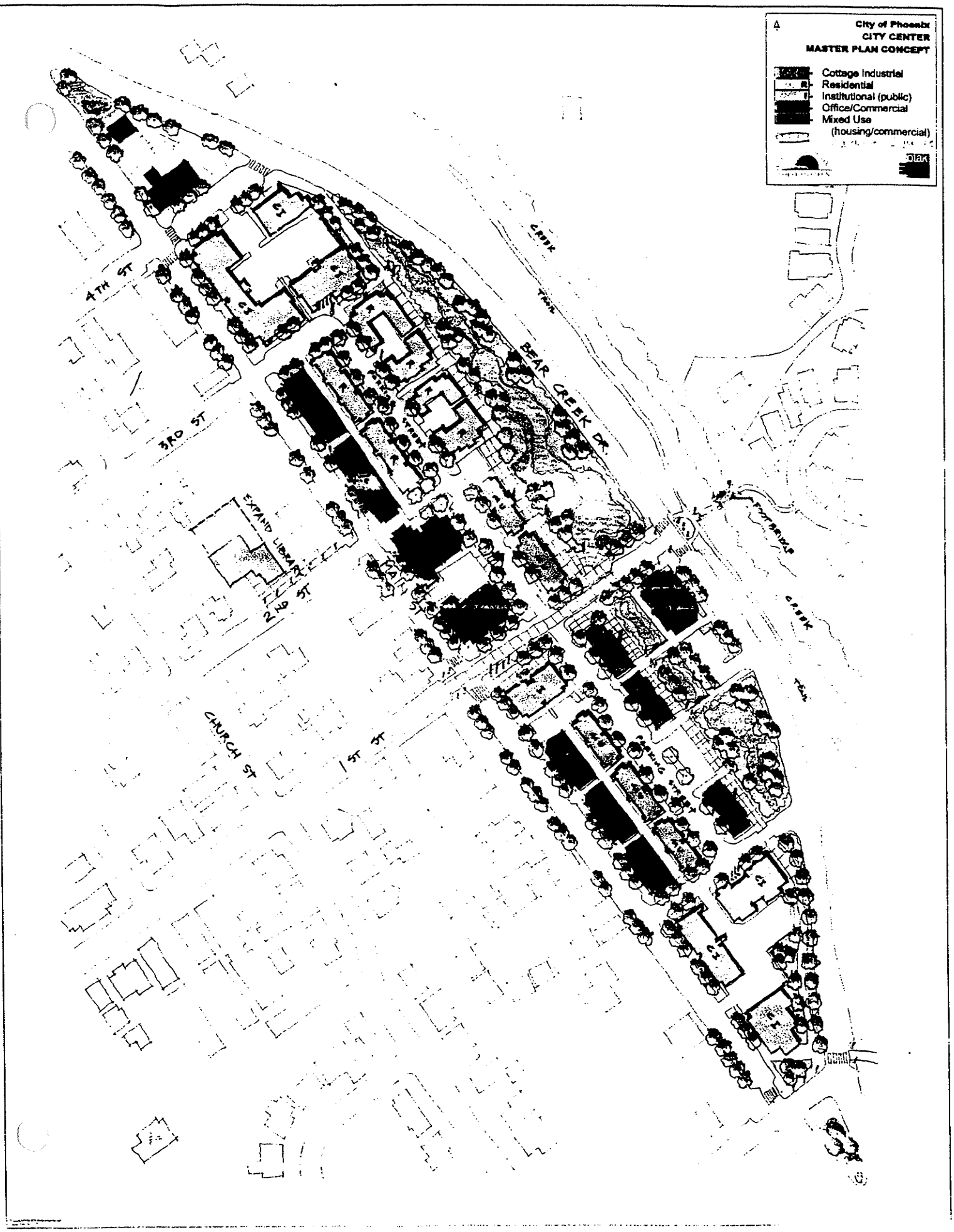
Develop a phased tree planting plan and a timeline for the whole of the City Center Plan.

Action: With volunteer labor undertake the first phase of the tree planting plan.

5.2.9 Integrate the Wet Land Park with a Bear Creek revitalization plan.

Work with the Fish and Game Department, Corps of Engineers, and the Division of State Lands to develop a plan for improving the Bear Creek habitat and access for children.

Action: With Volunteer labor undertake the first phase of the plan.


City of Phoenix
CITY CENTER
MASTER PLAN CONCEPT
Cottage Industrial
Residential
Institutional (public)
Office/Commercial
Mixed Use
(housing/commercial)
4TH ST
3RD ST
2ND ST
1ST ST
CHURCH ST
EXPAND LIBRARY
BEAR CREEK DR.
CREEK
TRAIL
FOOTBRIDGE
PARKING STREET