

SECTION III: PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS



CHAPTER 4 OPEN SPACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A. Introduction

The North City Specific Plan (2009) includes a thorough discussion of significant opportunities for new development while protecting Cathedral City's cohesive community character, scenic desert environment and critical natural habitat. This Specific Plan, like the original North City SP, is also located within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP); *however, this area is not located within a Conservation Area of this Plan.* (Property located directly to the north of this Specific Plan is located within the Tribal Habitat Conservation Plan for the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation (2010.)

References to the MSHCP in the original North City Specific Plan are applicable to the resources and characteristics of lands within that plan. Lands with this Specific Plan do not possess the same resources and characteristics. However, Chapter 4 outlines sound planning design principles to further the goal of resource protection, and is hereby incorporated in its entirety by reference. The applicable key findings and recommendations of the North City Specific Plan:

- Maintains existing Cathedral City General Plan open space designations in North City Extended;
- Recognizes and enhances natural drainage channels and existing utility rights of way;
- Enhances open space connections and views from the freeway; and
- Captures the potential for water features in the Specific Plan;
- Implements the "90 percent conservation goal" of the MSHCP within the conservation area.

B. Environmental Setting

Chapter 4 of the North City Specific Plan is incorporated by reference into this SP, inclusive of the following sections except as noted:

1. Topography
2. Climate Considerations
3. Connections to the rest of the City
(*Specifically to the proposed Valley Center Boulevard and Varner Road connections with the North City area of Cathedral City.*)
4. Parks
5. MSHCP Conservation Area
(This section not applicable to this Specific Plan)

C. Open Space Framework

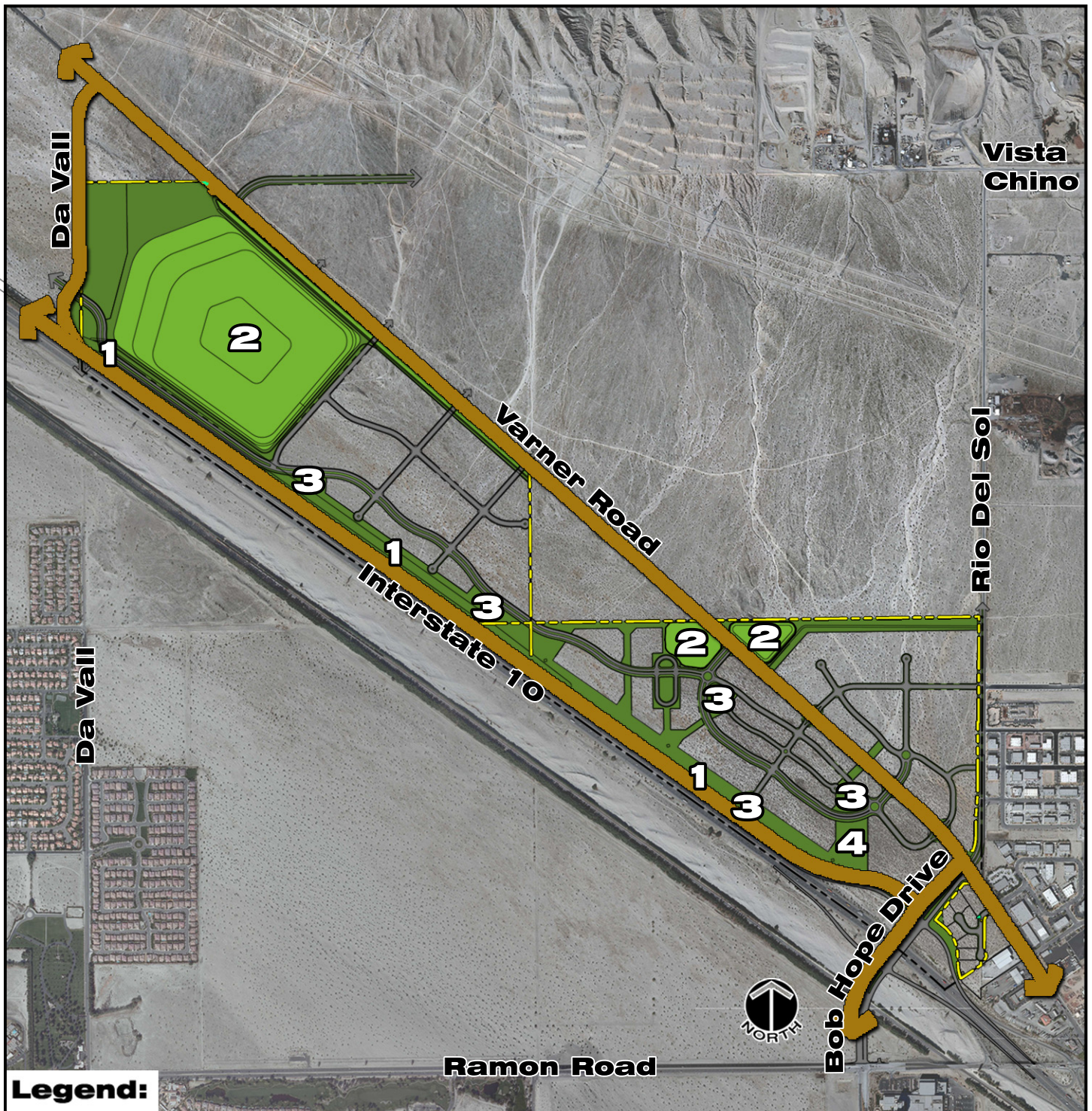
The open space framework of the North City Specific Plan as it applies to this document is illustrated in Figure 4-1 and includes the incorporation of sustainable design practices within development projects and the creation of an overall landscape design theme for the North City Extended Specific Plan. The applicable sections of the original SP are referenced as follows:

1. Sustainable Site Design

This Specific Plan continues the sustainable approach to site development and applicable landscape design as presented in the North City Specific Plan. Current technologies and best management practices are to be followed to create projects that are responsive to site specific environmental conditions and to assure that development respects the existing natural systems and minimizes long-term negative impacts. Examples of applicable landscape practices to be applied include:

- Preserving natural drainage processes to the extent possible;
- Retaining storm water on site allowing percolation into aquifers;
- Minimizing cut and fill of slopes;
- Using efficient irrigation systems and recycled water in the landscape; and
- Respecting the climatic conditions in landscape plant choices.

Guidelines set forth by state and local government agencies, national organizations such as the U.S. Green Building Council and the Sustainable Sites Initiative should guide the approach to site planning and development throughout the North City Extended Specific Plan.



Open Space Framework

Figure 4-1



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2. Overall Landscape Design Theme

This Specific Plan recognizes that good landscape design has an important role of performing many ecological functions and creating a visually integrated cohesive community which expresses a well-themed sense of place and identity. A **“Desert Oasis”** landscape theme that recalls the naturally occurring palm oases in the Coachella Valley should be applied to unify development in the North City Extended Specific Plan. Oasis design features include: landscape compositions that may feature higher densities of drought tolerant plant materials to provide a lush look as well as shade; accents of unique color or form; and water features using reclaimed water or captured site drainage. Desert Oasis landscape should be located at:

- High traffic visible locations as a focal landscape element;
- Gateways and entries throughout the Specific Plan as described in Section D of this chapter;
- Major commercial/mixed use centers at entryways, pedestrian promenades, and/or plazas;
- Vehicle and pedestrian entries to housing developments;
- Public park and recreation centers; and
- Industrial/business park entries.

The Desert Oasis theme establishes materials and design features that can be carried throughout the landscape design of streetscapes and master planned development projects to create continuity and visual unity. Inherent in the Desert Oasis theme is the contrast to the arid expanses around the Oasis. Landscaping outside the oasis elements should be composed of sparse planting and naturalistic landscape in order to transition into the surrounding natural desert landscape.

*All landscape design will be required to use drought tolerant, native and adapted species listed in the Coachella Water District’s publication **“Lush and Efficient Landscape Gardening Guide”** and in the North City Specific Plan recommended plant palette (Chapter 12, Table 12-1, and pages 12-33 through 12-36).*



D. Open Space Elements

The key components of the open space framework, as previously illustrated in Figure 4-1, are described below:

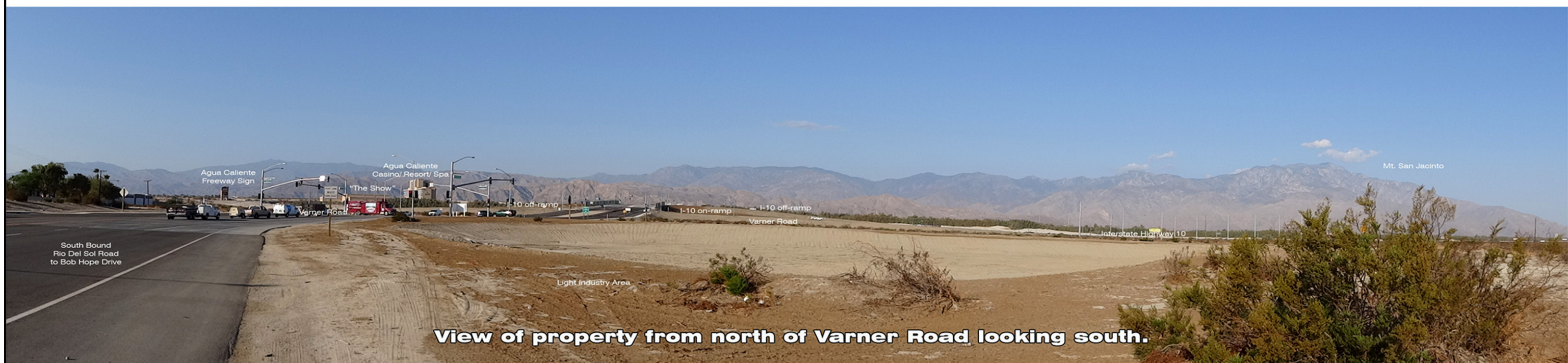
1. View Corridors

Flat Top Mountain and Edom Hill are important natural landmarks in the North City Specific Plan Area that lend identity to Cathedral City and should remain visible to travelers along the I-10 corridor as they pass through the North City Extended Specific Plan. Preservation of views to these focal points is an important goal of Cathedral City.

On-site views and vistas within this North City Extended Specific Plan should optimize the focus toward Mt. San Jacinto to the southwest, but should also capture the uniqueness of a 360 degree panoramic vista in all directions from the property. Refer to the following Figure 4-2.

2. Drainage Courses

The topography and soil conditions of this Specific Plan contribute toward significant runoff and drainage issues, but also offer the opportunity for creative approaches to site drainage, such as creating active and passive water elements for the area. Drainage courses or flood control channels are viewed not only as storm drains but also as opportunities for development of wildlife corridors and as improved open space for hikers and cyclists. Any development proposal for property through which drainage courses pass and retention/ detention structures are required should incorporate them into the overall site design while minimizing disturbances to the existing natural drainage. Drainages can become attractive site visual amenities with naturalized edges planted in riparian vegetation. Figure 4-3 illustrates pertinent examples of this approach.



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**Panorama Views of
 Specific Plan Area**

Figure 4-2

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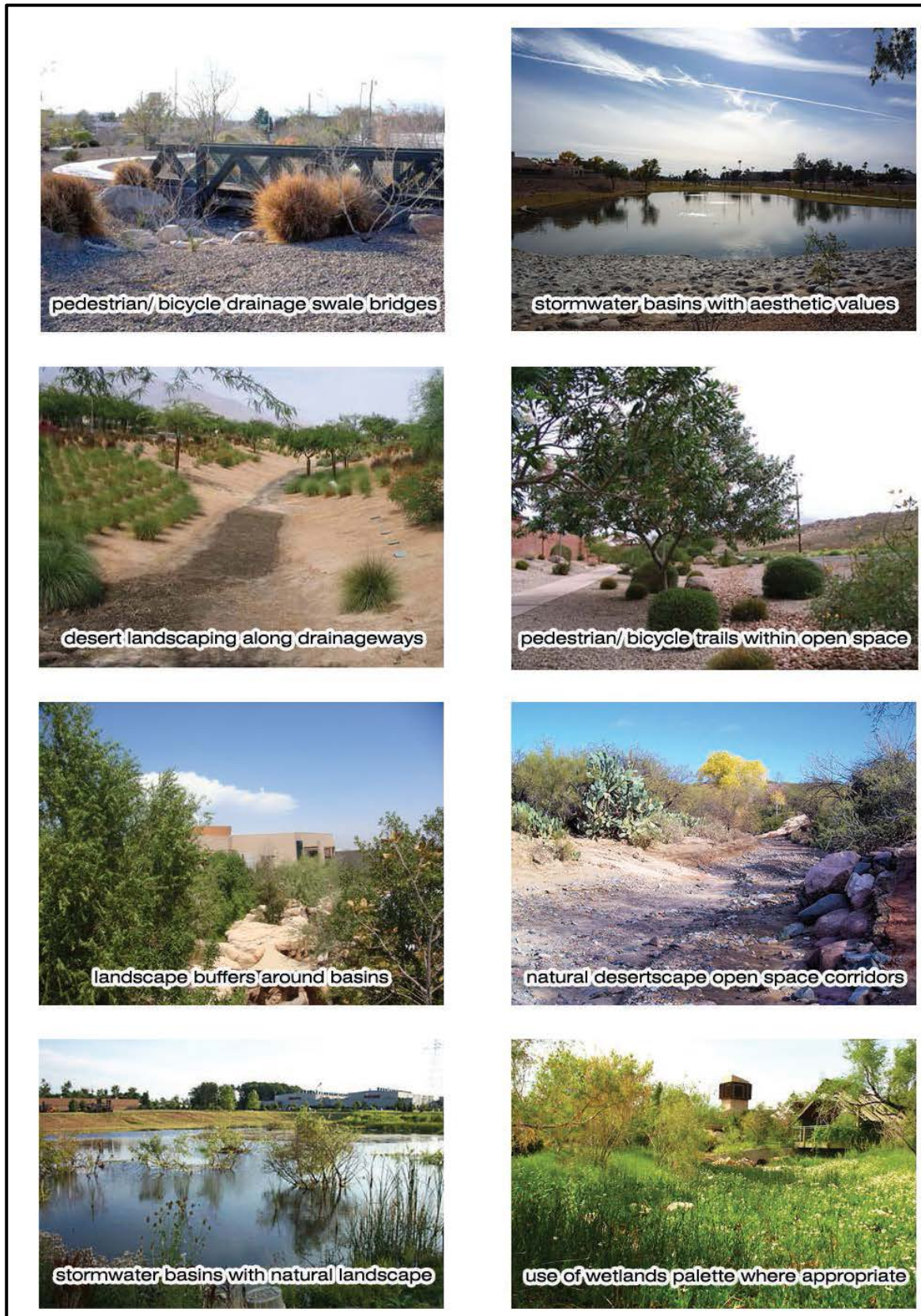


Figure 4-3: Stormwater Drainage

3. Water Features

Water features in the Specific Plan present an opportunity to provide for an ecologically sound design approach that also results in an attractive landscape element and landmark. This Specific Plan advocates that water can be showcased in the landscape as part of a permanent feature or as a seasonal event that is channeled into a landscaped swale and/or basin, then allowed to percolate into the Coachella Valley Aquifer. Water features should avoid blow sand and use water from site drainage or filtered reclaimed water. Features using reclaimed water are required to post signs informing the public about the source of water and that it is not permitted for swimming or drinking.

4. Parks and Open Space

The City's goal is to provide at least three (3) acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, as reported in the 2005 Cathedral City Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the City's adoption of the State of California's Quimby Act Ordinance. *At this level of service, a minimum of 24.1 acres of land in the North City Extended Specific Plan will need to be dedicated to Public Park and Recreation Facilities at buildout of the Specific Plan.*

Figure 4-1 illustrates the "Open Space Framework" for this Specific Plan. Within this overall system, the following will be dedicated by the developer to Park and Recreation facilities:

- One (1) Community Park @ 7.0 acres;
- Four (4) Neighborhood Parks @ 8.6 acres (combined); and
- A minimum of 8.5 acres shall be dedicated as park land within the 49.7 acre "Freeway Buffer".

Park land should be obtained and recreation facilities built through a combination of land dedications and developer in-lieu fees established as a condition of subdivision map approval per the Quimby program as outlined in the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Park land and recreational facilities to be dedicated within this Specific Plan should be located, planned and funded based on the following community service standards, functional considerations, community needs and community design considerations:

- Proximate to, or as part of, an existing or planned local or regional bikeway or pedestrian trail system;
- To fulfill distribution, size and service radii for neighborhood and community parks;

- Where they can best serve the area's hydrologic process by providing water filtration in wetlands, storm water catchment areas and/ or retention basins;
- Contiguous to larger parcels of dedicated open space when possible, for increased views, improved ecological function and positive environmental impact;
- Where they can mitigate development impacts by providing drainage catchment areas, planted screens (visual, noise, wind, and or buffers between different types of land uses; and
- To preserve view corridors.

Figure 4-4 illustrates desirable qualities of parks and open space features within this Specific Plan, with an emphasis on outdoor activity centers and gathering spaces for local residents.



Figure 4-4: Parks and Open Space

5. Parkway along Interstate Highway 10

The North City Extended Specific Plan's adjacency to the north right-of-way line of I-10 presents a unique opportunity to create a visually appealing and inviting environment along the freeway frontage, continuing the parkway proposal included in the North City Specific Plan. In addition, new development will benefit from a landscaped noise buffer/ parkway corridor along this right-of-way line throughout this Specific Plan.

This parkway shall be established in a combination of three ways: 1) as part of the master developer's park and open space land dedication; 2) as a requirement of developing parcels of land the freeway through building setbacks; and 3) through City coordination with Caltrans to improve the land within the I-10 right-of-way for the length of the Specific Plan.

Features of this parkway are to include:

- A naturalistic desert landscape theme comprised of irregular clusters of native trees, shrubs, grasses and rock;
- A multi-use recreational trail;
- Shaded rest stations for trail users;
- Naturalistic drainage channels;
- Neighborhood and community park facilities (see Figure 4-1);
- View preservation and screening where necessary; and
- A protective barrier from freeway traffic with the arrangement of trees and rock.

In addition, a "trail adoption" program should be implemented to assist in the construction funding and maintenance of this parkway. Design criteria for the parkway along I-10 are included in Section V: "Circulation and Streetscape Improvements" of this Specific Plan. Provisions to establish a "trail adoption" program shall accompany implementing subdivision plans.

6. Gateways and Entryways

Gateways and entryways note the entry points of distinct environments and are marked by unique design features that clearly communicate identity for an area of the community. This Specific Plan, like the original North City SP, is also located within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP); *however, this area is not located within a Conservation Area of this Plan.* (Property located directly to the north of this Specific Plan is located within the Tribal Habitat Conservation Plan for the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation (2010).) A menu of varying combinations of landscaping, public art, monument signage, theme towers, special lighting and paving treatments

(including pervious interlocking concrete pavers) can be employed in this regard. A hierarchy of gateways and entryway is proposed for the North City Extended Specific Plan as follows:

- A primary gateway at Bob Hope Drive / Interstate Highway 10 on and off ramps;
- Secondary gateways at the Valley Center Boulevard intersections at Varner Road (2); and
- Entries to major developments.

The gateways are to feature oasis-themed streetscape treatments and signage, with development frontages at a scale appropriate to their intended impact as a gateway statement and to the street/ intersection in which they are located.

7. Primary Gateway

The primary gateway statement for this Specific Plan is proposed to be located at the Bob Hope Drive overpass within the north CalTrans right-of-way line of I-10. Refer to Figure 4-5. This should be coordinated with the design of the primary gateway for the North City Specific Plan to be located at the I-10 on-ramp and Date Palm Drive. This gateway will incorporate the frontages of both the I-10 on and off ramps and will frame the entry to the Specific Plan for northbound traffic on Bob Hope Drive. This gateway is intended to make a dramatic impact in relation to both I-10 and Bob Hope Drive, signifying entry into North City Extended area. As illustrated in Figure 4-5, the design concept for this gateway is to include the following elements:

- A landmark freeway signage obelisk/ theme tower (up to 100' high) at the I-10 off-ramp featuring stainless steel letters spelling "CATHEDRAL CITY" in a horizontal alignment. The letters should be visible from I-10, be lit at night and should be coordinated with the future signage of the Bob Hope Drive freeway bridge. This landmark element should be lighted from the ground in a manner consistent with Dark Sky guidelines;
- A Desert Oasis landscape feature in the Bob Hope Drive median consisting of a naturalistic rock formation and a simulated "water feature", or a dry "waterfall" where water is implied in the design's composition of boulders, river rock, crushed glass and stone, and plant materials. Small desert trees in a silver and blue-gray color palette such as Blue Palo Verde and Velvet Mesquite should be planted to provide a backdrop to the "water feature";
- The gateway treatment should be carried into the freeway buffer area on both sides of Bob Hope Drive with a dry stream bed of light colored cobblestones delineated by darker color boulders. This would suggest

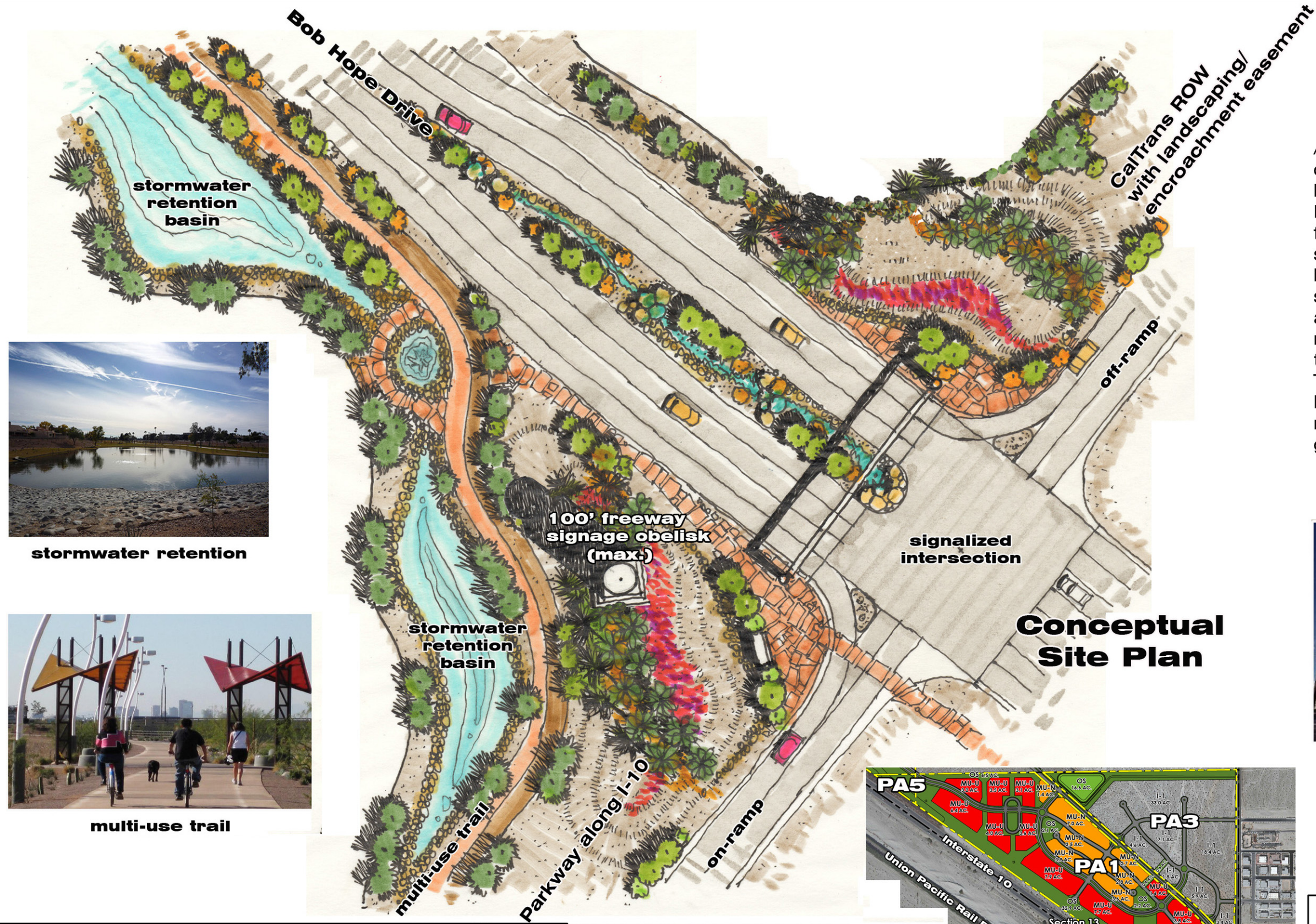
the presence of water and function as a retention basin. It should be planted with grasses shrubs, groundcovers and groves of California Fan Palms. Brightly powder coated steel letters spelling “CATHEDRAL CITY” should be placed in a horizontal alignment so as to appear to float above the boulders. The letters should be lit at night and be coordinated with the future signage of the Bob Hope Drive freeway bridge; and

- Low voltage landscape lighting fixtures should be hidden among the boulders and planting. The lighting should be subtle and only highlight signage and key design elements at night. All landscape lighting fixtures should be on the approved list as compiled by the International Dark Sky Association.

Reference should be made to the following Figure 4-5: “Primary Gateway at Bob Hope Drive”.

8. Secondary Gateway

Two (2) Secondary Gateways should be located at the intersections of Valley Center Boulevard at Varner Road, their design should be consistent with the “Typical Secondary Gateway” proposed for the North City Specific Plan. Thus, each should feature Date Palm trees aligned in the parkways on each side of the street and a Desert Oasis planting composition in the medians and flanking parkways. The oasis planting should consist of clustered stones, shrubs and accent trees. Sculptural Cathedral City logo entry monument signage should be framed by accent plants in the medians with low voltage lighting located in the landscaping for signage visibility at night. Enhanced paving should mark delineate intersection crosswalks to add color and texture and calm traffic. Reference should be made to the following Figure 4-6 “Typical Secondary Gateway”.



stormwater retention



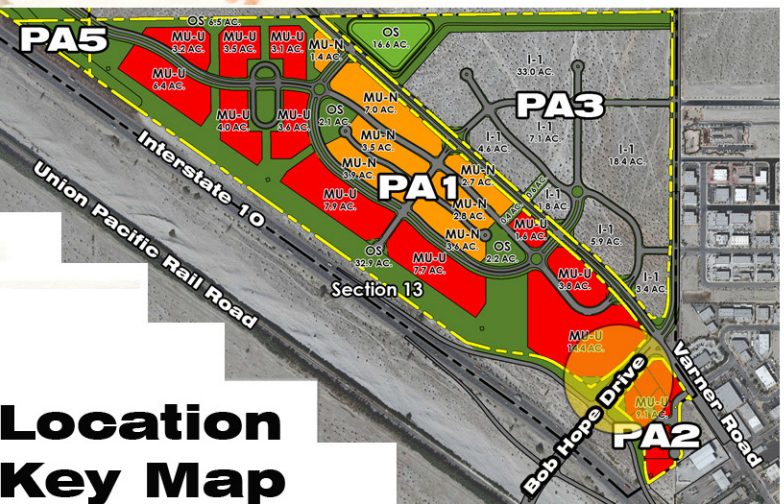
multi-use trail

Freeway Signage Obelisk

A landmark freeway signage obelisk/ theme tower of up 100' in height is to be located at the Interstate Highway 10 on-ramp featuring stainless steel letters spelling "CATHEDRAL CITY" in horizontal alignment. The letters should be visible from I-10, be lit at night and should be coordinated with the future signage of the Bob Hope freeway bridge. This landmark element should be lighted from the ground in a manner consistent with Dark Sky guidelines.



traffic signalization
(illustrative example for primary gateway)



Location Key Map

Primary Gateway at Bob Hope Drive

Figure 4-5

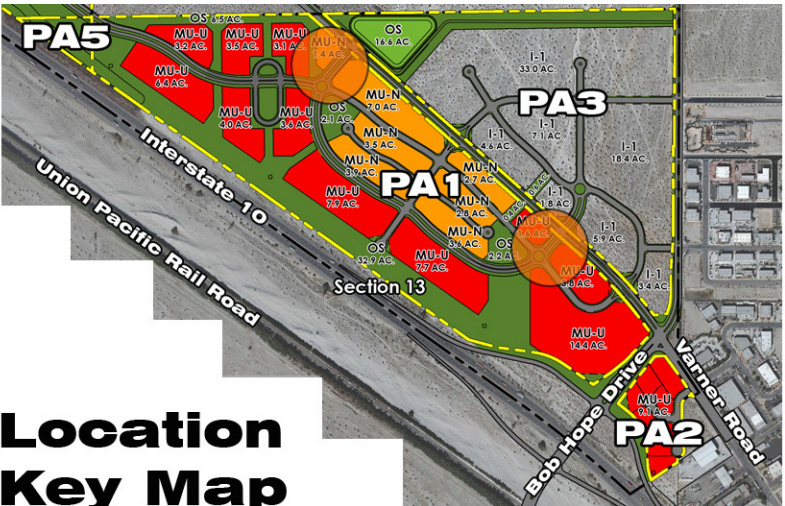


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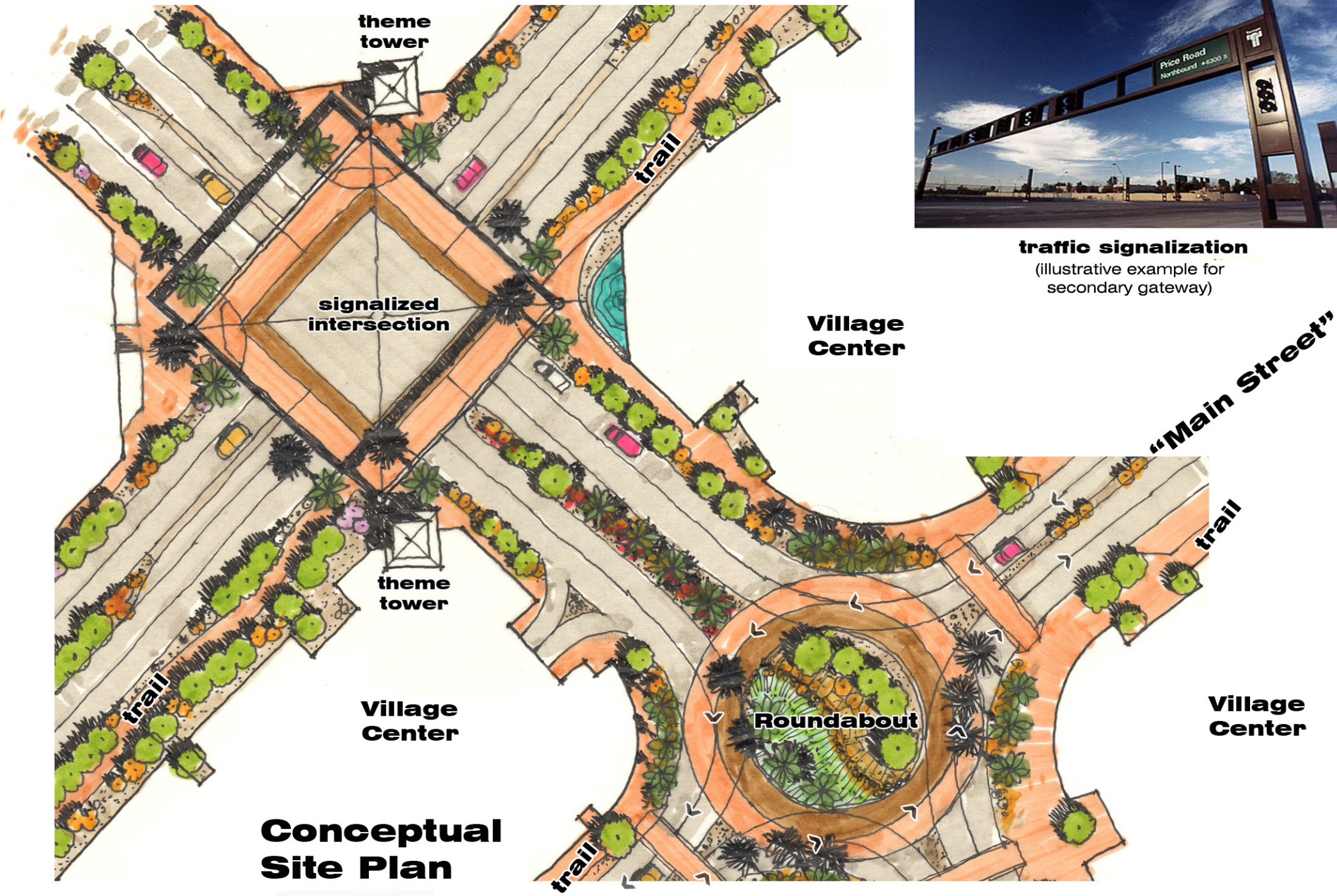
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theme tower



**Location
Key Map**



**Conceptual
Site Plan**



**Secondary Gateway
at Varner Road**

Figure 4-6



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9. Entries to Major Developments

Commercial, mixed use and residential development entries shall include landscaped entry treatments located in the development frontage. Entry treatment design should be comprised of thematic elements such as monument signage, stone groupings, and native plant palettes that carry out the Desert Oasis theme.

Entries from public streets to dedicated pedestrian pathways and bikeways should be marked with a wayfinding signage station that features maps of the local and regional pathway system and amenity/destination locations.

10. Development Buffer Edges

In the North City Specific Plan, this component refers specifically to buffering between zoning districts and the MSHCP Area. Development buffer edges in this Specific Plan area may be appropriate where the Specific Plan boundaries abut natural desert areas. In these cases, buffer zones, terraced walls and native planting should be among the elements used to sensitively address adjacency issues. The elements can also be used to create wind screens for development and prevent unauthorized trespass of light and noise pollution into the MSHCP Area at the Specific Plan edges. *Detailed plans for these buffer edges shall be prepared in conjunction with design plans for specific development projects located adjacent to the SP boundary and natural desert.*

