



# 2030 VISION CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## PRESENTERS:

RJ Cardin, Executive Director – Maricopa County Parks

Jennifer 'Jenn' Waller, Deputy Director – Maricopa County Parks

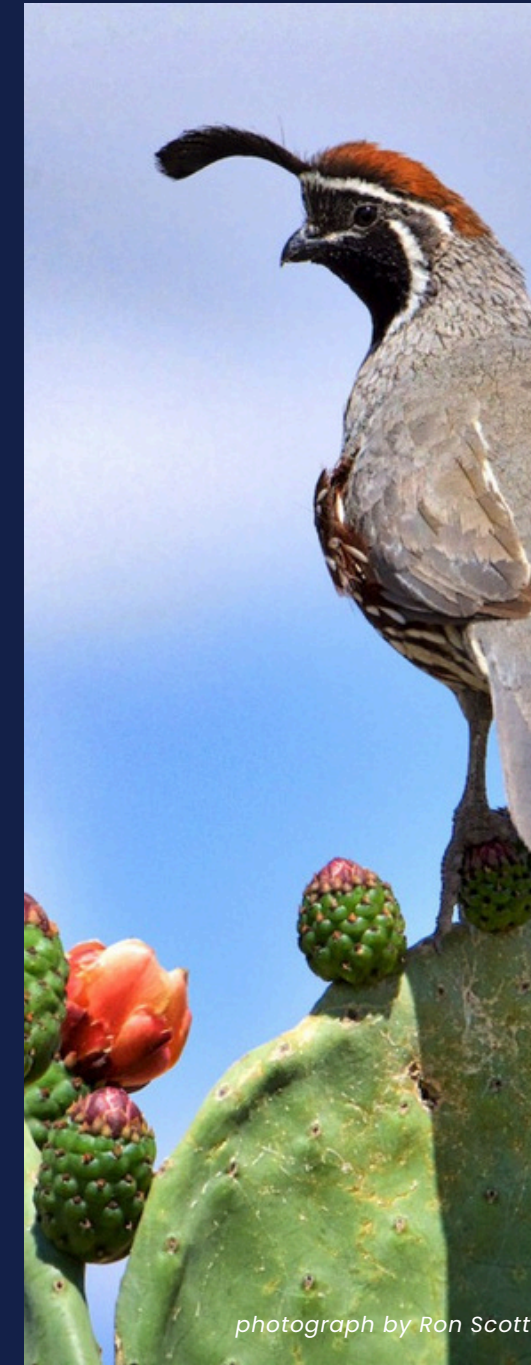
Sheri Simmons, Management Analysis – Maricopa County Parks

Arizona Parks & Recreation Association  
August 27, 2024





# connect.



*photograph by Ron Scott*

  
**MARICOPA  
COUNTY**  
PARKS & RECREATION

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*photograph by Kevin Buettner*

**PARKS VISION**  
**2030**

**APPROVED DECEMBER 2023**



# OVERVIEW

This workshop will share how Maricopa County's Parks Vision 2030 plan provides guidance in caring for existing parks while seeking opportunities for new parks and open spaces.

## Today's Topics:

- Our Parks Vision 2030 – System Master Plan
- The Parks Master Plan, 3-Year Project
- Maricopa County Parks Management

## Learning Objectives:

1. Seeking future areas for park expansion,
2. Maintaining and improving existing facilities and infrastructure, and
3. Balancing natural resource management with recreational opportunities.





# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS – ABOUT US



- Maricopa County has approximately 120,000 acres and attracted nearly two million visitors per year.
- The County is home to one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world and currently manages
  - eight (8) regional parks,
  - two (2) conservation/preserve areas,
  - one (1) education center,
  - two (2) concession parks,
  - and one (1) regional park under development

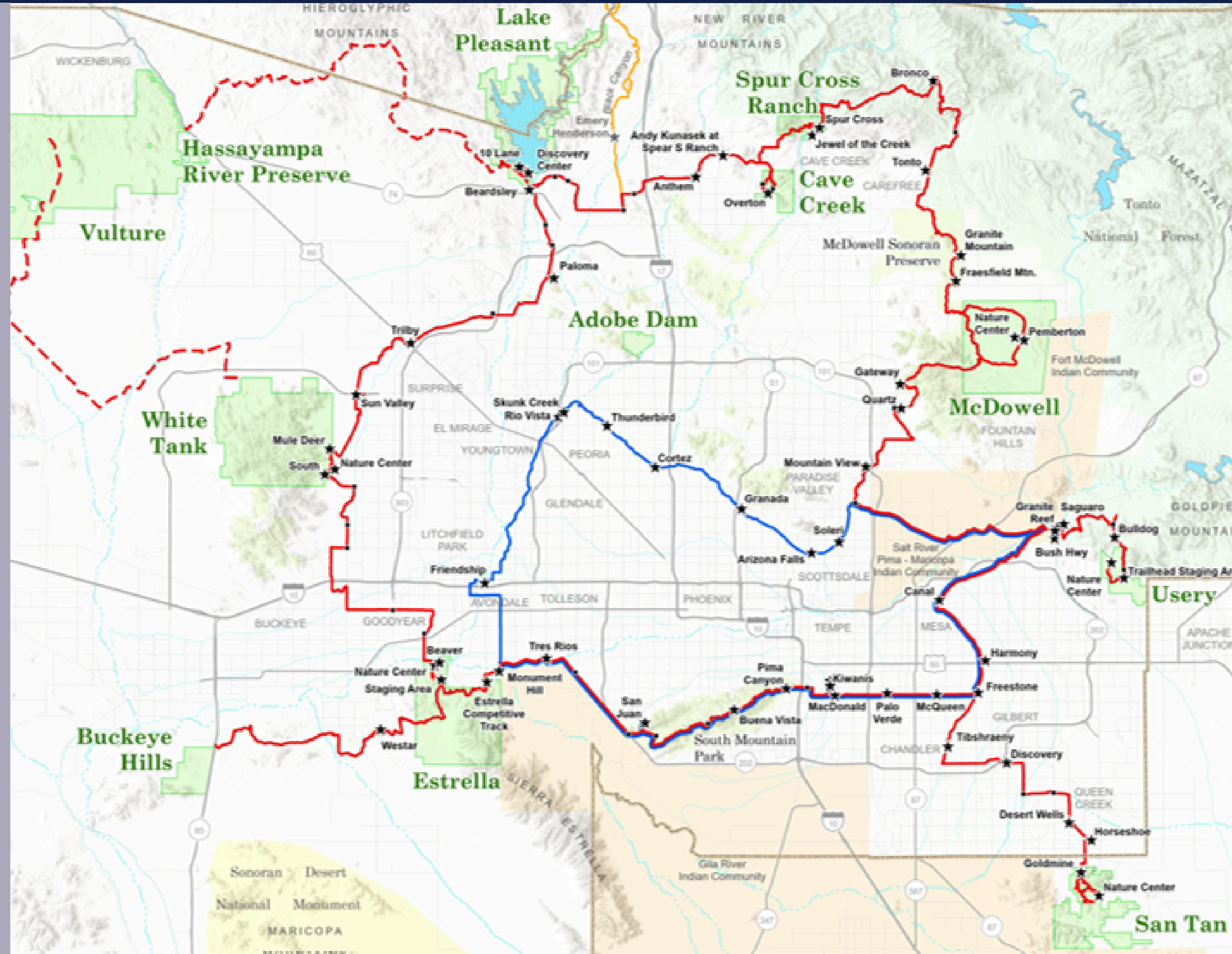


# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS & TRAIL SYSTEM

## PARKS VISION 2030 – SYSTEM

### MASTER PLAN:

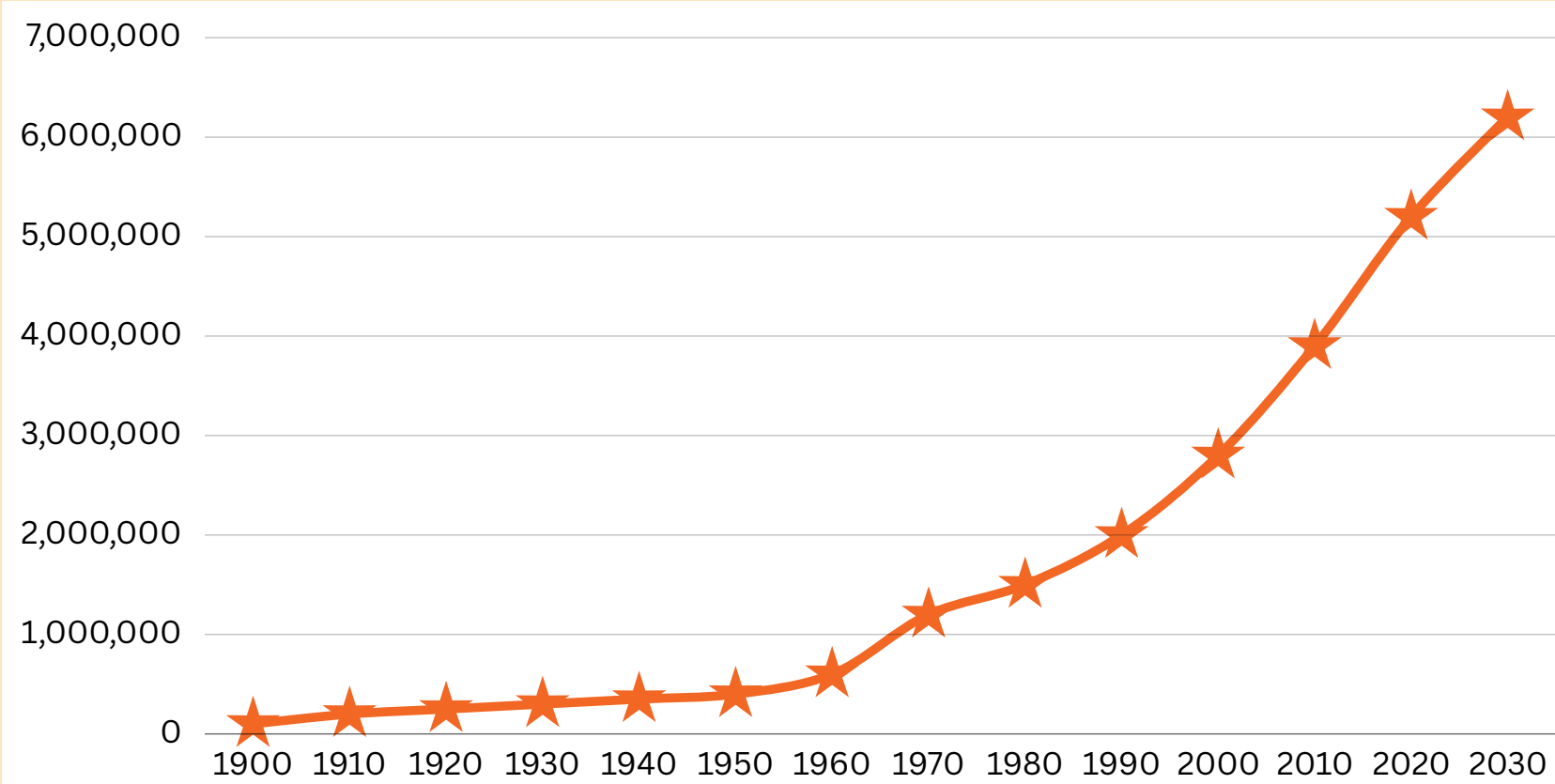
- Larger regional system
- 10 to 50-year window
- Addresses growth and development
- Sustainable
- Plan for economic impact in the new economy





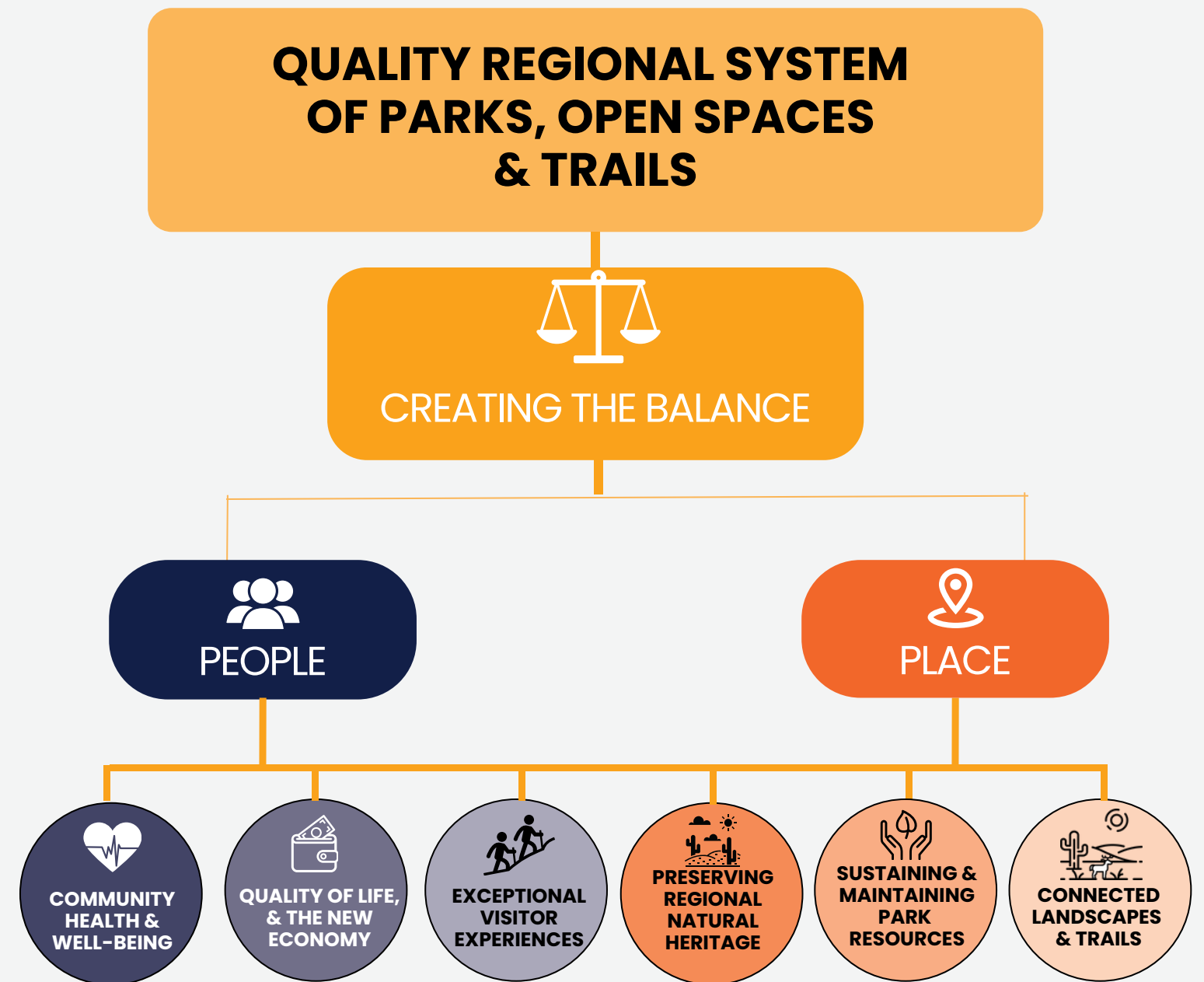
# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS – PURPOSE

## MARICOPA COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS: 1900 – 2030



1. Parks Vision 2030 builds on the legacy.
2. Growth is a driving factor.
3. Focuses on expanding park and open space opportunities.
4. Essential to protect high-value natural resources for the future.

## PLAN ELEMENTS





# IDENTIFYING WHAT'S IMPORTANT - **FEEDBACK PROCESS**



## **1** PUBLIC

- How often are you engaging with members of the public?
- What types of research have you done?
- What types of references are you relying on for information?
- Are you hosting public meetings?



## **2** STAKEHOLDERS

- Who are your stakeholders (representatives from local agencies, nonprofits, organizations, state and federal organizations, etc.)?
- How do you engage with them?
- Are you benchmarking against similar agencies?
- Are you conducting reviews with your stakeholders?



## **3** COUNTY STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & LEADERSHIP

- Are you engaging with staff members, focus groups, volunteers?
- Are you utilizing questionnaires to gather information?
- Did you conduct a SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat)?
- Are you keeping your officials and board members updated on the project on a regular basis?



# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS – BIG PICTURE

## PARKS VISION 2030 PUBLIC OUTREACH FEEDBACK FORM



**95.5%**

Wildlife corridors and open space are important to protect for the health of the ecosystem now and in the future.



**93.4%**

Access to regional parks, natural areas, and trails is important to my health and well-being.



**92.9%**

Natural resource conservation efforts to protect native plants and animals throughout the park system and Maricopa County is important.



**87.8%**

Increased funding to provide for expanded regional park, recreation, trail, and open space opportunities is important.



**86.4%**

Restoration of the river corridors throughout the metropolitan Phoenix is important to provide increased public access to nature.



# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS – PRIORITIES

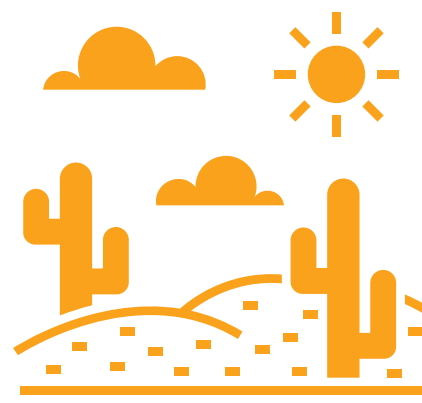
Parks Vision 2030 aims to meet the current population's needs, protect important resources and identify new opportunities for future generations. The plan outlines five priority areas with associated goals:



**Acquire and manage new parklands and corridors.**



**Parks and open space role in community health and well being.**



**Reinvest, protect, and continue improving the existing park system.**



**Leadership in conservation and preservation matters for our future.**



**Developing sustainable and diversified funding is critical.**



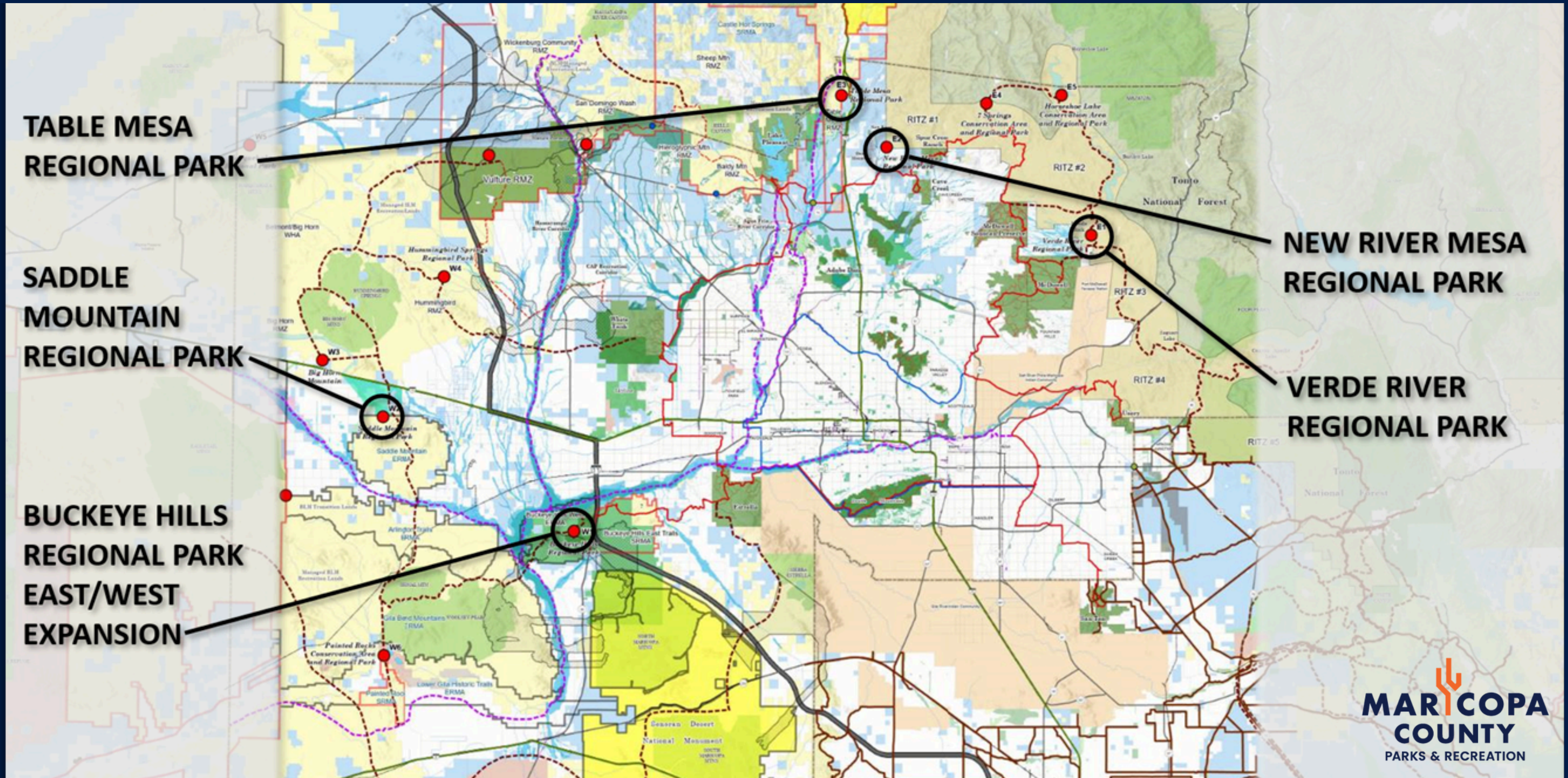
# ACQUIRE AND MANAGE NEW PARKLANDS



- **Goal 1:** Identify and prioritize new parklands, corridors, and connections.
- **Goal 2:** Protect critical open space and expand the regional park and trail system proportionately with population growth.
- **Goal 3:** Continue to develop new partnerships in the acquisition and management of new parklands and open space

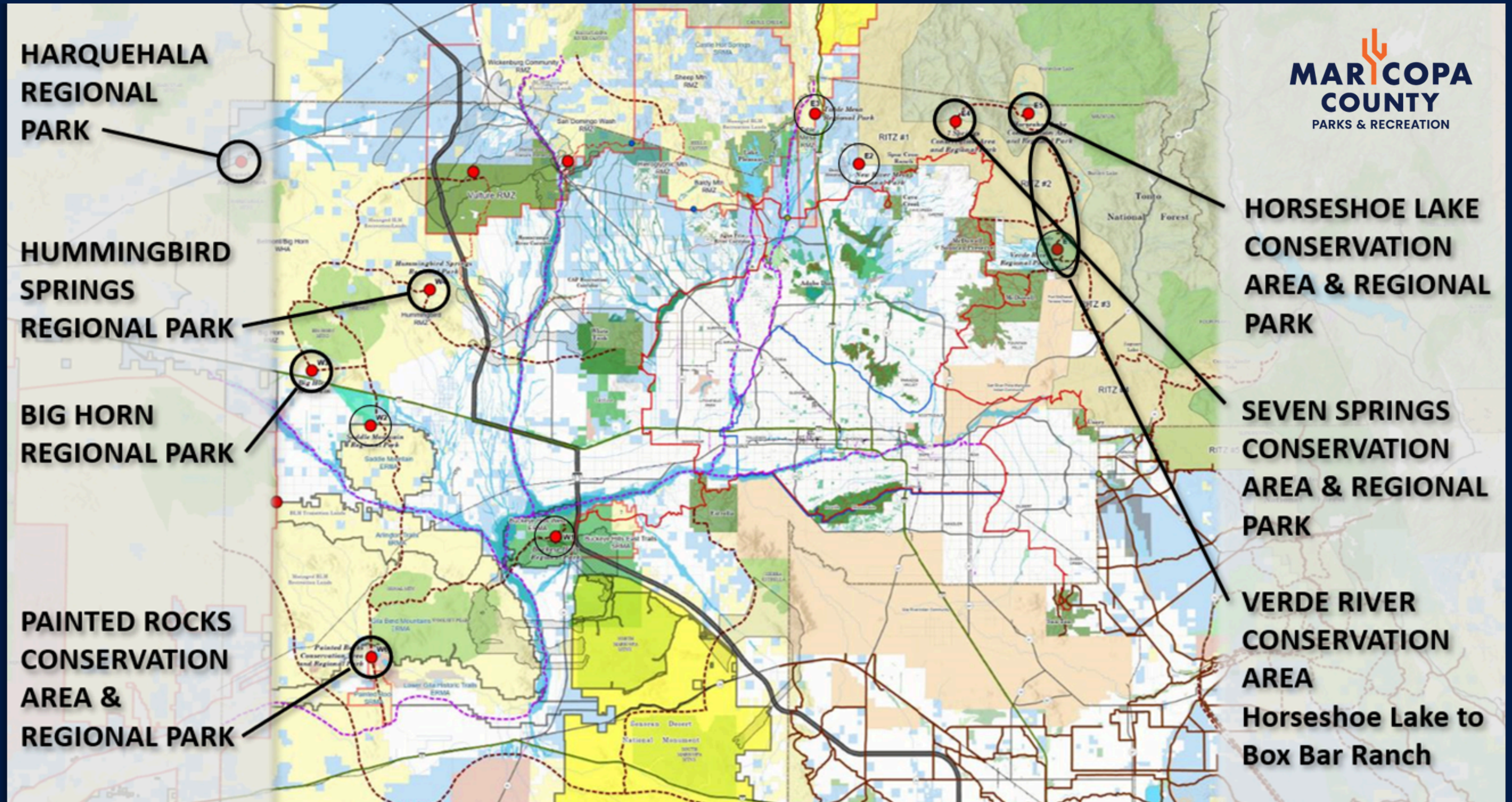


# PRIORITY NEW REGIONAL PARKS – NEXT 10 YEARS





# FUTURE REGIONAL PARKS NEXT 20-30 YEARS





# ENHANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- **Goal 1:** Promote the Regional Park system as a place where visitors experience the natural environment.
- **Goal 2:** Expand natural open space park and trail experiences.
- **Goal 3:** Develop parks, amenities, and programs that consciously address improved physical fitness and mental health.





# REINVEST, PROTECT, AND CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

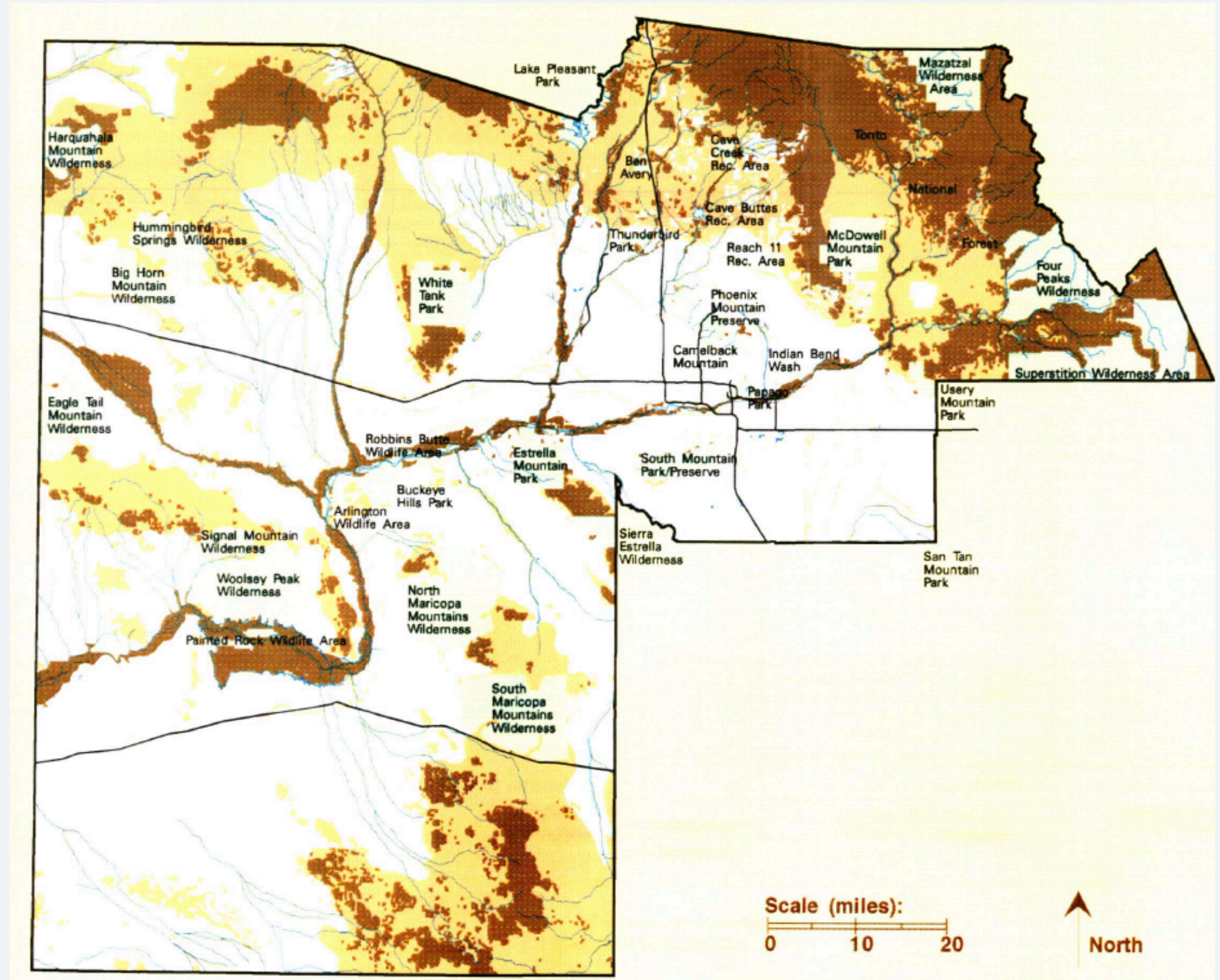
- **Goal 1:** Expand the visitor capacity and recreation opportunities of parks.
- **Goal 2:** Promote and protect public health, safety, and well-being.
- **Goal 3:** Promote and expand the regional trail system as both a nature-based recreation opportunity, and an alternative regional transportation.
- **Goal 4:** Refine and standardize park operations and management.
- **Goal 5:** Attract and retain quality staff.





# PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION & PRESERVATION

- **Goal 1:** Develop and implement a Natural Resources Plan.
- **Goal 2:** Provide leadership in balanced, economically efficient land use patterns and infrastructure.





# DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING SOURCES

- **Goal 1:** Identify and promote a diversified and sustainable funding portfolio.
- **Goal 2:** Attract new and retain current visitors, thus growing revenue streams.
- **Goal 3:** Update Park User Fees to cover 100% of park operations.
- **Goal 4:** Develop sustainable funding sources for natural resource restoration, cultural protection, and conservation.
- **Goal 5:** Contribute to the regional economy by promoting recreation opportunities.







# **MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLANS**



**WHAT DO YOU  
THINK A PARK  
MASTER PLAN  
NEEDS TO  
INCLUDE OR  
CONSIDER?**



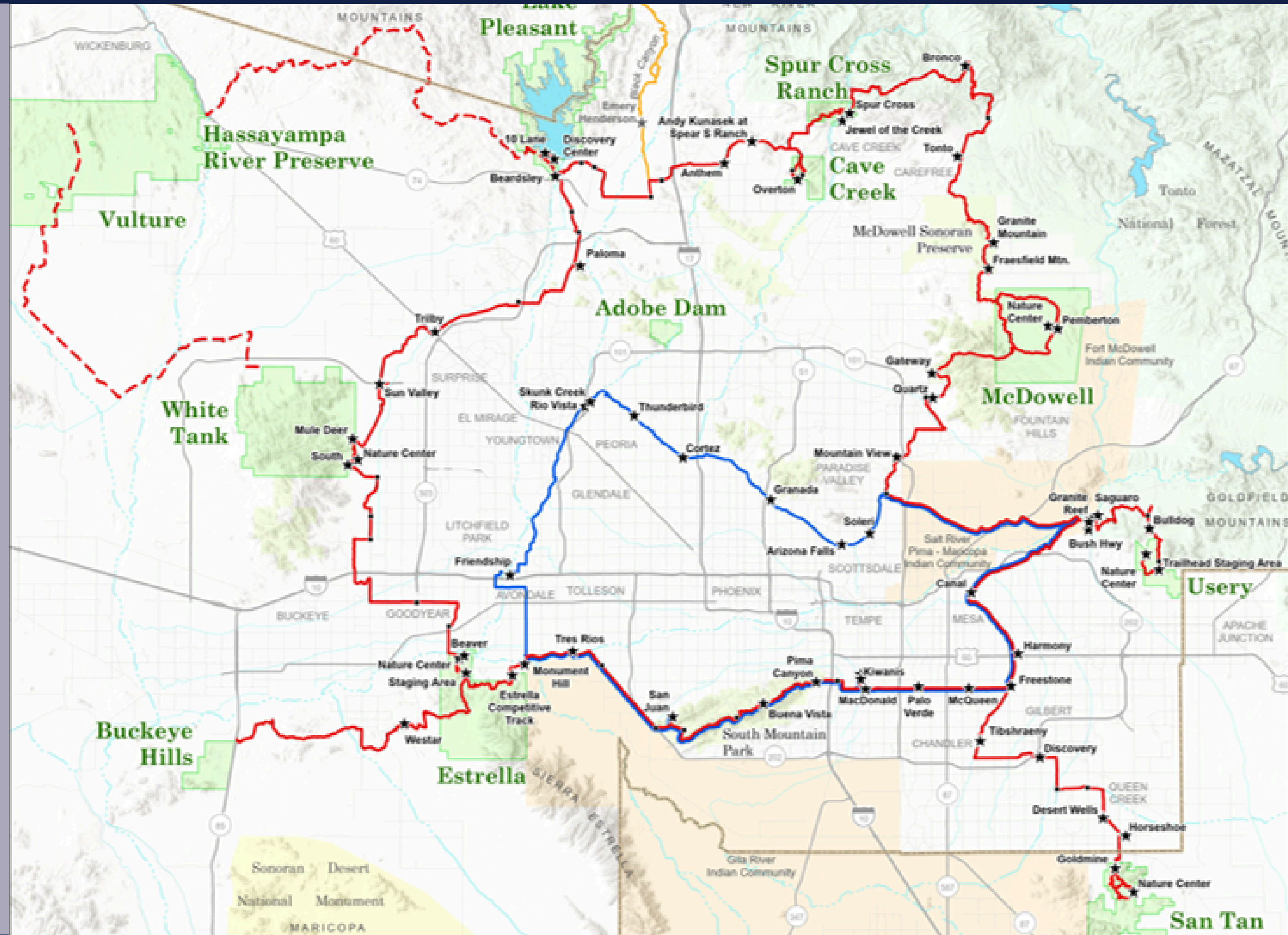


# MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLANS

## PARKS MASTER PLANS:

Long-range strategy for specific parks will be used to examine the future of:

- each park,
- recreational facilities,
- open spaces, and
- trends over the next 10-15 years.





# THREE-YEAR PROJECT SCHEDULE

- **Year One (2024):**

- Cave Creek Regional Park
- Spur Cross Conservation Area
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- **Year Two (2025):**

- Buckeye Hills Regional Park
- Estrella Mountain Regional Park
- Lake Pleasant Regional Park, including
  - Agua Fria Conservation Area, and
  - Desert Outdoor Center

- **Year Three (2026):**

- San Tan Mountain Regional Park
- Usery Mountain Regional Park
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park





# THE PROCESS OF A PARKS MASTER PLANS

## REVIEW

Review Existing Master Plans and Assessments.

## ENGAGE

Engage stakeholders. Conduct Needs Assessment.

## DESIGN

Design Master Plan based on findings.

## DEVELOP

Develop implementation and action plan. Release final draft.

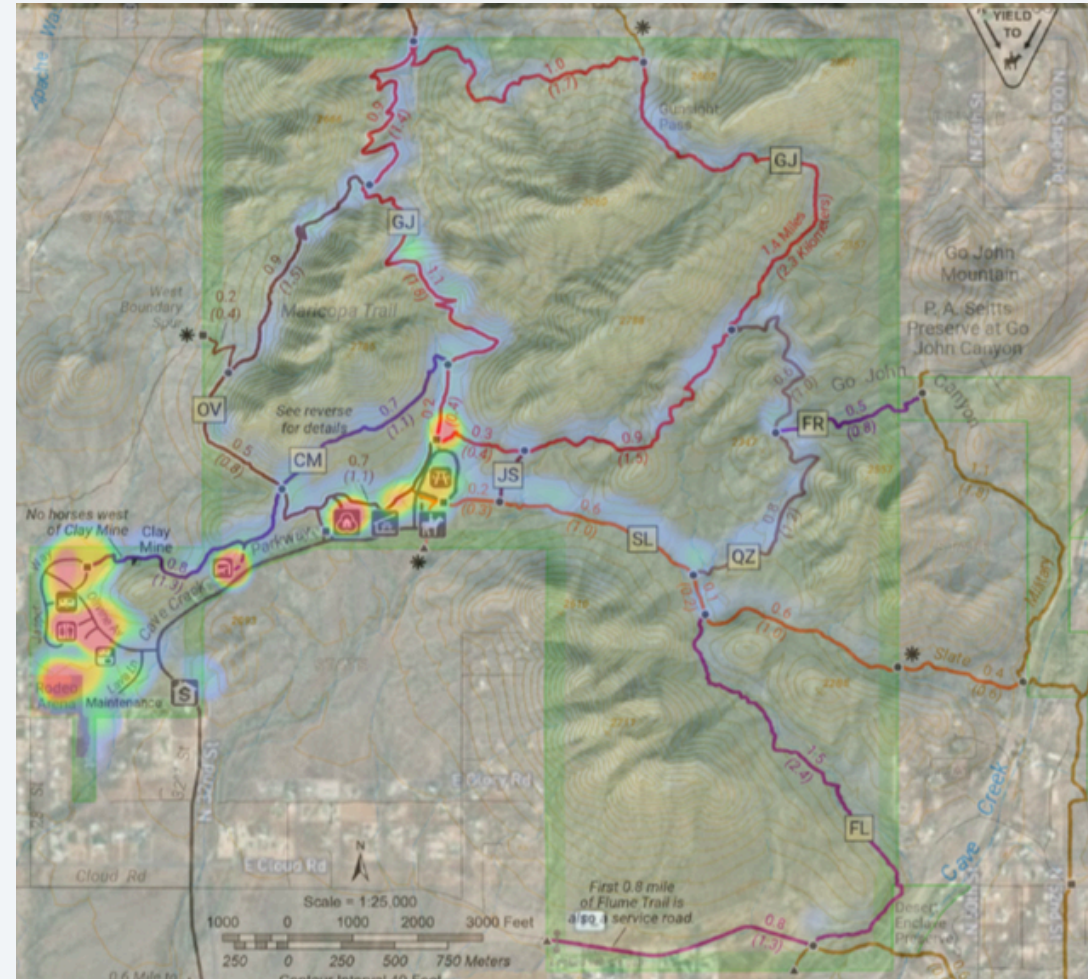




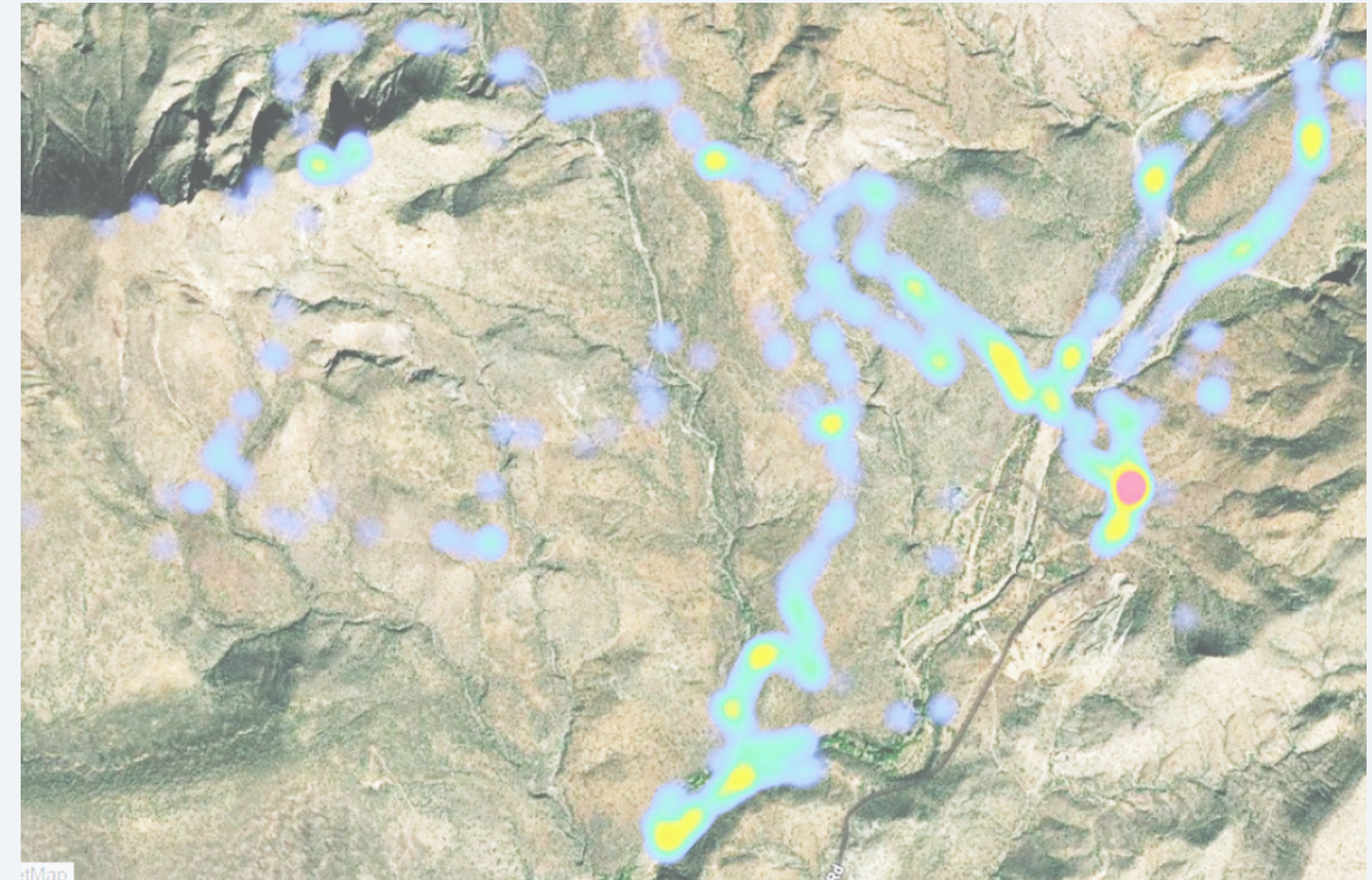
# PLACER.AI – STUDYING VISITORS BEHAVIOR

**Heat Maps** – used to visualize the most popular (hot) and unpopular (cold) elements of park areas using colors on a scale from red (hot) to blue (cold).

- The maps will allow Parks to identify user behavior patterns and trends to make changes accordingly.



*Cave Creek Regional Park Heat Map (Data From Jan – Dec 2023)*



*Spur Cross Heat Map (Data From Jan – Dec 2023)*



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – SURVEYS

SURVEY(S)	DISTRIBUTION METHOD		UPDATE(S)		
ASU – Onsite Survey	450–500 Visitors was contacted onsite at the following parks: <table border="0" data-bbox="869 624 2185 1009"> <tr> <td data-bbox="869 624 1552 1009"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cave Creek</li> <li>• Estrella Mountain</li> <li>• McDowell Mountain</li> <li>• Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1552 624 2185 1009"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Tan Mountain</li> <li>• Utery Mountain</li> <li>• White Tanks Mountain</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cave Creek</li> <li>• Estrella Mountain</li> <li>• McDowell Mountain</li> <li>• Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Tan Mountain</li> <li>• Utery Mountain</li> <li>• White Tanks Mountain</li> </ul>	Goal is to conduct 3,150 total onsite surveys (95% response rate per site): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of June 25: 2,518</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cave Creek</li> <li>• Estrella Mountain</li> <li>• McDowell Mountain</li> <li>• Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Tan Mountain</li> <li>• Utery Mountain</li> <li>• White Tanks Mountain</li> </ul>				
ASU – Offsite Survey	Longer online option/mail-in surveys were offered to park visitors		Goal is to forward 1,230+ surveys (expecting 40–50% response rate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of June 25: 378</li> </ul>		
BerryDunn – Resident Survey	4,500 surveys mailed to randomly selected households (online option available)		Expected Response Rate of 600 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of June 24: 605</li> </ul>		
BerryDunn – SocialPinpoint	Open to Public		Over 400 contributed feedback to the three parks scheduled in 2024.		



**WHAT DO  
YOU THINK IS  
IMPORTANT  
TO YOUR  
VISITORS?**





# SURVEY – IMPORTANT RATINGS

**Please indicate which outdoor recreation opportunities you/your household participated in during the past year.**

- Walking for Pleasure = 77%
- Trail Hiking = 66%
- Nature Experience = 58%

**Please check all the reasons that prevent you/your household from visiting the County's parks more often.**

- Lack of shade = 35%
- Not aware of park locations or facilities = 24%
- Not aware of amenities in park = 23%
- Lack of restrooms = 20%

**Please check all the reasons that prevent you/your household from participating in programs more often.**

- I don't know what is offered = 64%
- Too busy/not interested = 18%
- Program times are not convenient = 13%

**Need for facilities/amenities.**

- Restrooms = 88%
- Shade & Trees = 88%
- Large Regional Parks = 84%
- Regional Trails = 84%
- Nature Preserves/Conservation Areas = 83%





# MANAGEMENT PLANS



# HOW DO YOU ENSURE SUCCESS?





# IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT PLANS



# WHY DO A MANAGEMENT PLAN?





# TYPES OF MANAGEMENT PLANS

RECREATIONAL USE

CULTURAL RESOURCES

TRAILS

GENERAL/  
OPERATIONS

VOLUNTEER

PARTNERSHIPS

SOUVENIR

NATURAL RESOURCES

OUTDOOR  
EDUCATION

SOCIAL MEDIA

ADA

PARK PROJECTS

FEES/PRICING

BRANDING

HISTORIC

VISITOR USE

FLOOD

BUSINESS  
MANAGEMENT

FIRE

FACILITIES

TRAFFIC

CAPACITY

CAPITAL

CONTAMINATED  
SITES

# WHO DO YOU NEED TO WORK WITH?



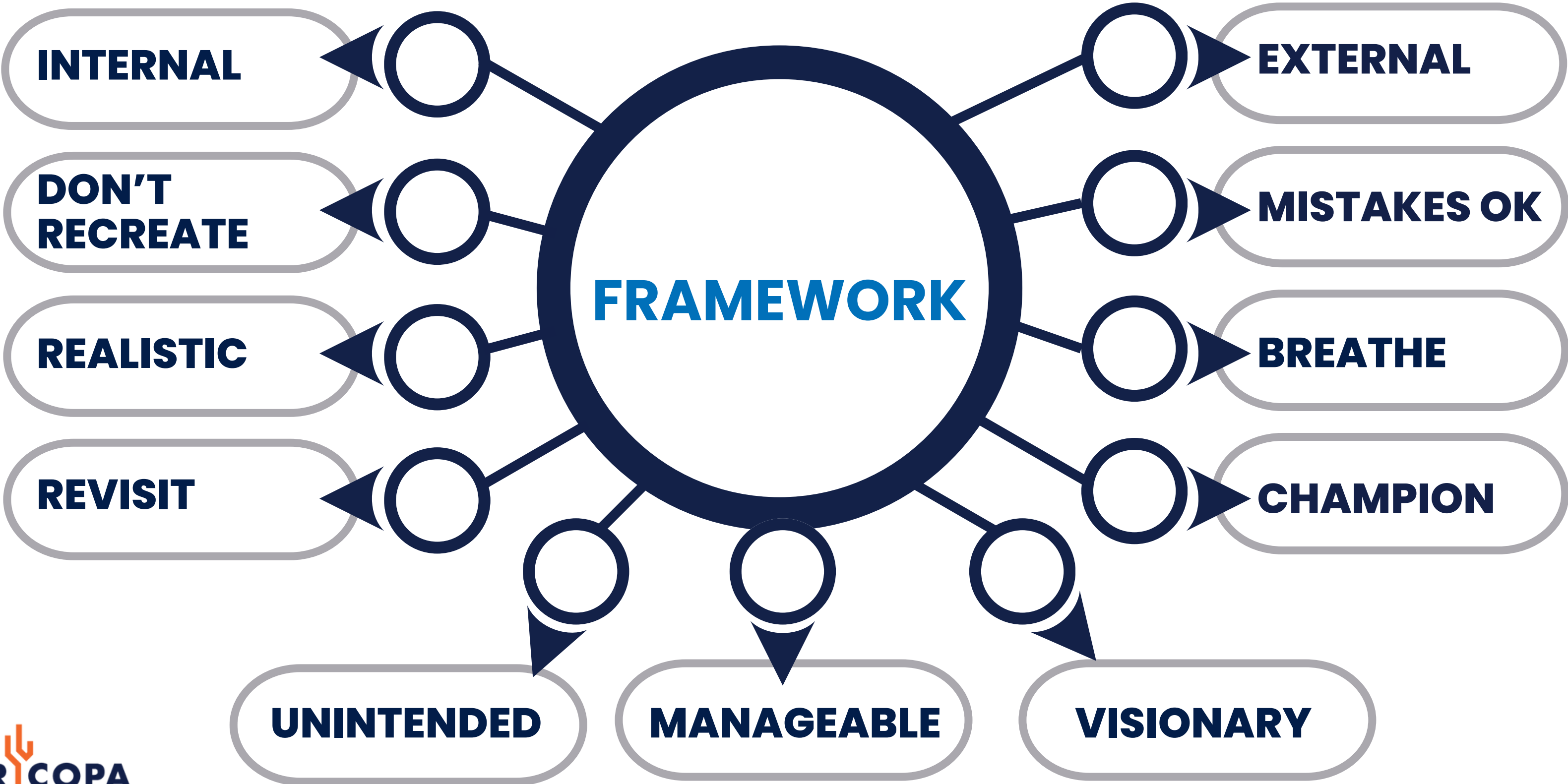


# IMPLEMENT THE PLAN...

Goal #2.4: Refine and standardize park operations and management using best practices and models from federal, state, county, and city agencies and academia.							
Objective #2.4.1: Develop innovative department management and park operation plans							
Review existing management plan efforts and documents	High	Deputy Director			FY24	FY25	Completed
Identify necessary MPRD management efforts	High	Deputy Director			FY24	FY25	75%
Develop a strategy to complete department management plans	Medium	Deputy Director			FY24	FY25	0%
At the park level, incorporate a level of service, cost of service, visitor use management, recreation opportunity spectrum, limits of acceptable change, and other relevant management practices and metrics	Medium	Deputy Director			FY25	FY27	
Research similar types of organizational management plans and benchmark best practices to include staffing practices to attract and retain quality staff	High	Deputy Director			FY24	FY25	0%
Develop a standard template and format with guidelines for completing each element	High	Deputy Director			FY25	FY25	
Complete each operation plan in coordination with the park master plan development and completion	Low	Park Superintendents			FY26	FY30	25%
Review and update the park law and rule enforcement model with the MCSO and develop a Law Enforcement Ambassador program to assist with rule and law education and enforcement	High	Deputy Director			FY24	FY24	Completed
Explore contract maintenance opportunities or shared staffing with other County departments	Medium	Park Superintendents			FY24	FY26	25%

**WHAT DOESN'T GET MEASURED, DOESN'T GET DONE**

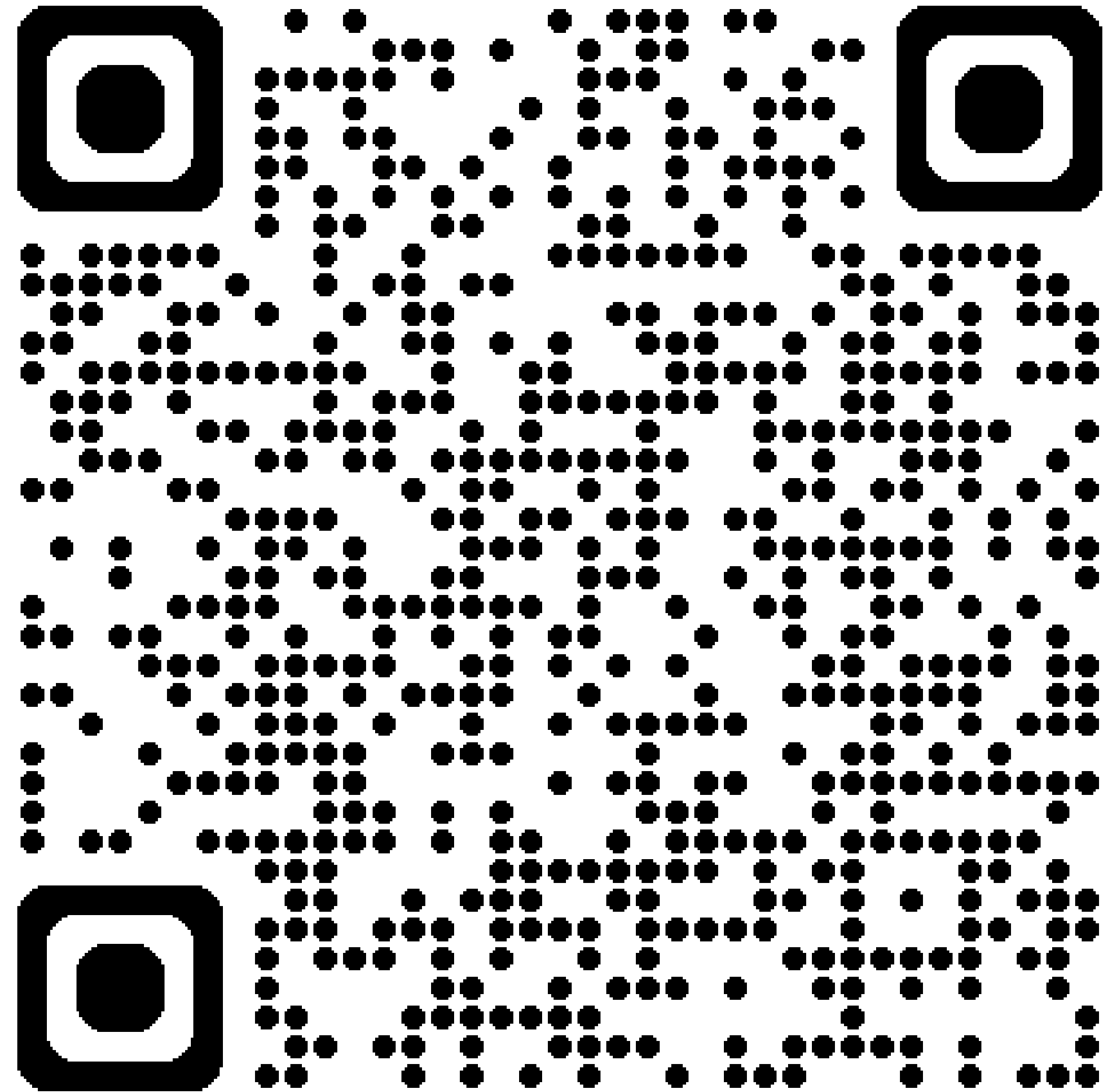
# TAKE AWAYS.....





# QUESTIONS?

TO VIEW THE FULL  
PRESENTATION,  
SCAN THE QR CODE.





**MARICOPA  
COUNTY**  
PARKS & RECREATION

**THANK YOU!**

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