

## CHAPTER 2 - THE OPPORTUNITY

### Assets

The corridor has a number of assets that bode well for activation of South Arizona Avenue, the downtown and the neighborhoods:



*Santan Freeway Development*

- **Wal-Mart:** The new shopping centers at the Loop 202 and Arizona Avenue can only have a positive effect on the Arizona Avenue Corridor, primarily due to increased traffic that will be brought to the southern end of the Corridor.

Wal-Mart will generate traffic along Arizona Avenue and increase exposure for other retailers on the street. Wal-Mart is not a competitor with these stores. Since Wal-Mart will be constructing Super centers in this region of Phoenix, the trade area for the Arizona Avenue Wal-Mart will likely be very large, stretching as far south as Hunt Highway. Wal-Mart and Sam's Club will be destinations that will bring a large consumer population to the southern end of the Arizona Avenue Corridor.

As a result, Wal-Mart and the related retail centers at the Loop 202 will increase traffic along Arizona Avenue and provide more traffic for Corridor retailers. It will also change the image and perception of the area in the minds of many consumers.

- **Historic Downtown Square:** The northern portion of the Arizona Avenue Corridor (north of Boston Street) is attractive and possesses the historic character that should translate into a successful downtown. While still in its infancy and needing to mature, with additional redevelopment efforts by the City, the northern Corridor should be a success that can be grown to the south.



*San Marcos Resort / Hotel*

- **Competition:** Retail uses currently existing along Arizona Avenue do not, for the most part, compete with the types of retail uses found in the Loop 202 shopping centers. Most of Arizona Avenue retailers provide services to the immediate neighborhood or target a different trade area for retail or restaurant services.

- **Trade Area Demographics:** As the Metro Phoenix Market Report states, the trade area (3 mile and 5 mile radius) surrounding the Arizona Avenue Corridor is very large with high incomes. Both Gilbert and Chandler have some of the highest household incomes in the County. Disposable incomes in this part of the Valley will attract a wide variety of retail uses. There is much potential for retail development throughout the trade area and Loop 202 corridor; but not for the Arizona Avenue corridor itself.



Dr. A.J. Chandler Park



Site 6

- **Other Current Redevelopment:** Construction is moving ahead on the first phases of the residential development at Chandler Boulevard and Arizona Avenue. When complete, this will be a sizeable mixed use residential and commercial development encompassing several blocks at that location.

- **The Chandler Civic Center and City Hall Relocation:** The civic uses of Chandler and the new county courts bring in people and activities during the day. More people and activities are expected when the new courts building opens. The site for both the City Hall relocation and the History Museum, as approved by the Council, is south of Chicago Street. The presence of both these facilities will improve the prospects for redevelopment efforts in the middle and southern half of the corridor.

- **Chandler Park and Walkways:** This historic park and the walkway system with its overhead trellises—plus the historic buildings surrounding the park—create a unique and positive image in the Downtown. This environment or other means of shade can be extended throughout the district to create positive pedestrian conditions and an enhanced sense of place to an area that already has some identity.

- **Neighborhoods:** A mix of residential areas is key to success of the retail stores on South Arizona Avenue. While the neighborhoods on either side of South Arizona Avenue need improvement, there are many houses on both sides of the Avenue that could be reinforced by addition of other residential units on vacant parcels.

- **Developable Land Parcels:** The City has assembled land parcels into a consolidated vacant block (Site 6) just south of Downtown. There are other vacant and under utilized parcels which may be assembled as development sites, particularly on the east side of South Arizona Avenue.

- **Urban Living Lifestyle:** Downtown Chandler is in a unique position to fill this lifestyle niche that has risen in popularity nationwide, by creating new downtown housing and providing pedestrian-oriented amenities and services.

- **Urban Form:** From a retailing perspective, the Arizona Avenue Corridor is taking on the shape of a bookend from the perspective of retail activity. On the north are the City Hall Complex and San Marcos Resort. To the south are the new shopping centers at the Loop 202. The retail uses and restaurants in the A. J. Chandler Park area will not compete with the national chain retail and restaurant uses located in the southern shopping centers. With these two destinations at either end of the Corridor, particular attention must be focused on intervening uses between Boston Street and Pecos Road.

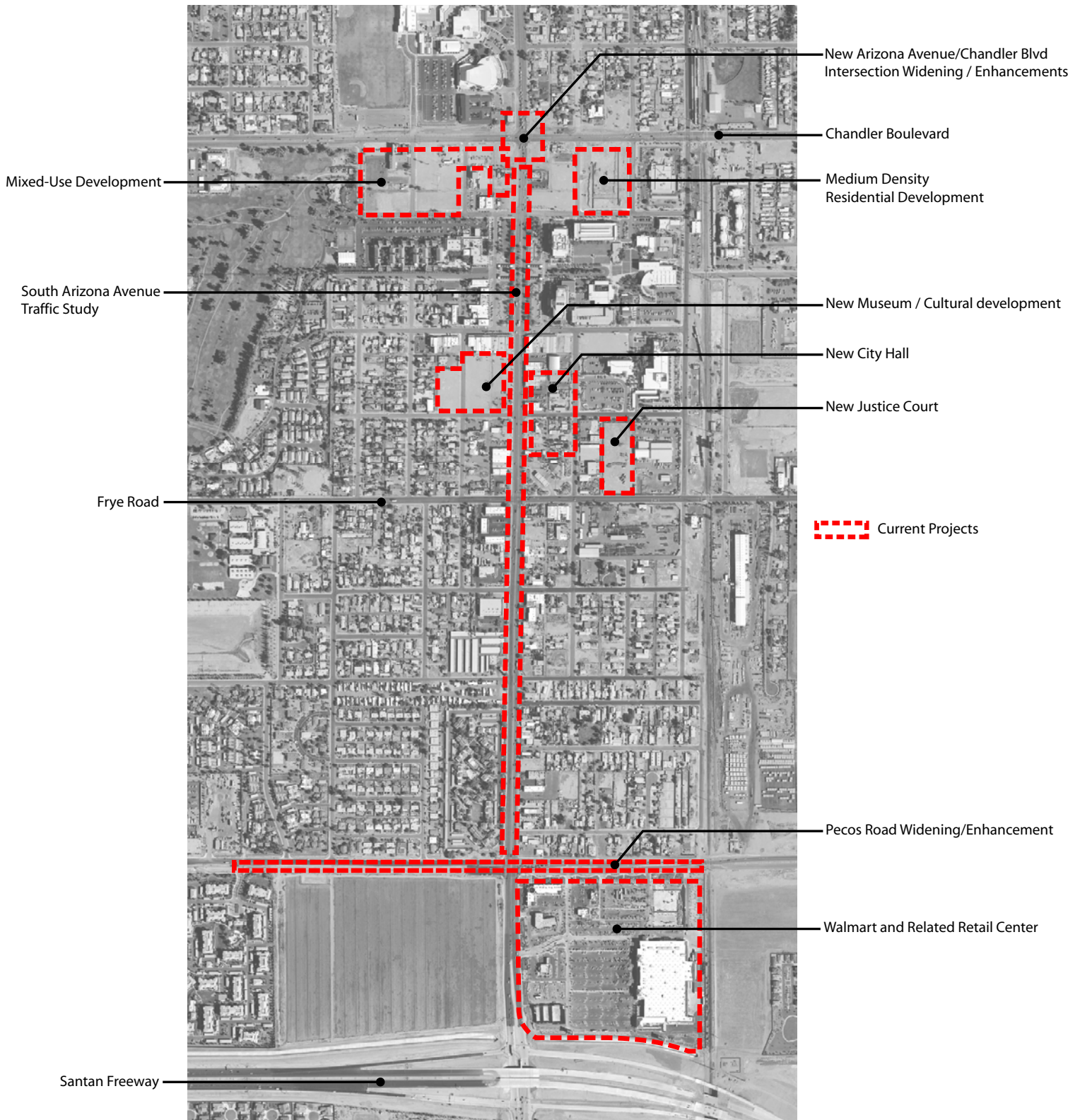


FIGURE 2

Recent and Current Projects



### Issues and Problems

To maximize the benefits of the Corridor, several issues will have to be addressed and a coordinated program of action initiated. The major factors present in today's Corridor are based on analysis of the demographic characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood and the mix of retail and business uses along Arizona Avenue.



Looking north on S. Arizona Avenue from Pecos Road



Typical corridor businesses

- **Public Perception:** The greatest deterrent facing redevelopment of the Corridor is the perception of the area as a low to moderate income area that is not attractive to most of the residents of the City of Chandler. There is a lack of property maintenance, numerous obsolete buildings, and a lack of onsite parking. The presence of day laborers at street corners adds to this image and will continue to deter any significant retail development in the area.

- **Safety:** Consumers shop where they feel comfortable and secure. The typical Chandler consumer does not feel comfortable in the environment found along Arizona Avenue south of Boston Street. North of Boston Street, the civic facilities, the San Marcos Hotel and historic buildings provide a comfortable environment with varied retail and restaurant uses.

- **Street Character:** Arizona Avenue is a very wide street that is designed to carry traffic. There is no center raised median to break up the expansive asphalt, and sidewalks are located directly adjacent to the curb. This design is not conducive to a retail environment and, in fact, the number of curb cuts along Arizona Avenue makes for a large number of traffic movements that curtail retail activity.

- **Land Uses:** Land uses along the Corridor south of Boston Street include a combination of retail businesses catering to the local trade area, quasi-industrial uses, and some uses that would attract a larger trade area beyond the immediate neighborhood. Services catering to the local market include dollar stores, Hispanic groceries, self-service laundries and similar uses. Most of these are contained within older buildings. There are also auto body, auto repair and tire shops that likely provide services to the immediate neighborhood. The mixture and type of uses are not cohesive and do not contribute to a strong retailing environment.

Some of the newer buildings in the area include a Pep Boys auto parts store, mini-storage, and some small office buildings. These types of uses may attract consumers from outside the immediate neighborhood. There are also some specialty businesses that can be classified as commercial uses requiring outside storage (such as an electrical contracting company and an architectural stone company).



Typical corridor businesses

In many respects the land uses along the southern portion of Arizona Avenue are responding to existing market conditions of the adjacent neighborhood. North of Boston Street, uses are clearly oriented toward the San Marcos Hotel and the government complex.

- **Gateway:** The immediate gateway into the southern portion of the Arizona Avenue Corridor is very weak, particularly on the east side of Arizona Avenue. That situation, however, is changing and getting better with the construction of the new shopping centers at the intersection of Arizona Avenue and the Loop 202. The gateway could be much improved by making a seamless transition from the shopping centers at the Loop 202 to the southern part of the Corridor:



Typical corridor businesses

- **Parcel Size:** Lots are generally not conducive to modern development practices due to shallow depths and narrow widths. Assembly of small lots is a task that is necessary to facilitate redevelopment efforts. More assembly of land has occurred on the west side of Arizona Avenue. Several new complexes and buildings have been constructed on the West resulting in an improved appearance. Assembly of parcels and extending the depth of lots along Arizona Avenue, especially the east side, is critical to changing the character of the area.

## CHAPTER 3 - THE STRATEGY

The strategy for improving South Arizona Avenue is a multi-faceted, coordinated approach that begins with a basic premise:

- **Residential is the Key to Everything Else**

The key to downtown redevelopment is the construction of new, dense housing projects rather than encouraging more retail development. Retail development by itself does not create retail sales. People create retail sales and people living in the downtown area are a necessity for a successful redevelopment effort.

Based on the study of many comparable urban downtowns' success factors and the consultants' experience and research, it is recommended that the primary effort of the City of Chandler in redeveloping its downtown be focused on housing rather than refocusing or expanding the current retail environment.

Housing will provide the support and foundation for changing the character of the retail uses along the Arizona Avenue Corridor and strengthening the existing retail businesses that already exist there. More housing—not more or different retail uses—is the key ingredient that, over the long term, will lead to a healthy retail and urban environment in the Corridor.

### The Strategy

Following are the primary elements that should be adopted by the City of Chandler for Downtown redevelopment to implement The Vision.

- **Housing:** The primary strategy for reinvigorating and changing the retail market along Arizona Avenue is to introduce medium to high density housing to the area. A combination of housing types and densities should be considered including high density ownership units (condos) at 30 to 40 units per acre, rental units at similar densities, and medium density single family attached or detached units at 6 to 18 units per acre. This part of Chandler should contain the most urbanized and densest development in the community. Residential uses should be introduced directly onto Arizona Avenue to promote new retail uses.

**As recommended by the Elliott D. Pollack Market Study (see Appendix A), the City should establish a goal of construction of 1,000 new housing units in the Arizona Avenue Corridor over the next 10 years.**

While mixed-use projects are promoted today as the way to incorporate live and work environments within a single building, they have not been successful everywhere and can be highly risky from an investment perspective, particularly in a suburban setting. The inclusion of commercial space within a residential condo project on South Arizona Avenue should be limited and only where it makes sense from the perspective of foot traffic. Chandler should take small steps in redeveloping its Downtown and not overburden private developers in the early stages of the process.



High density residential housing



High density residential housing



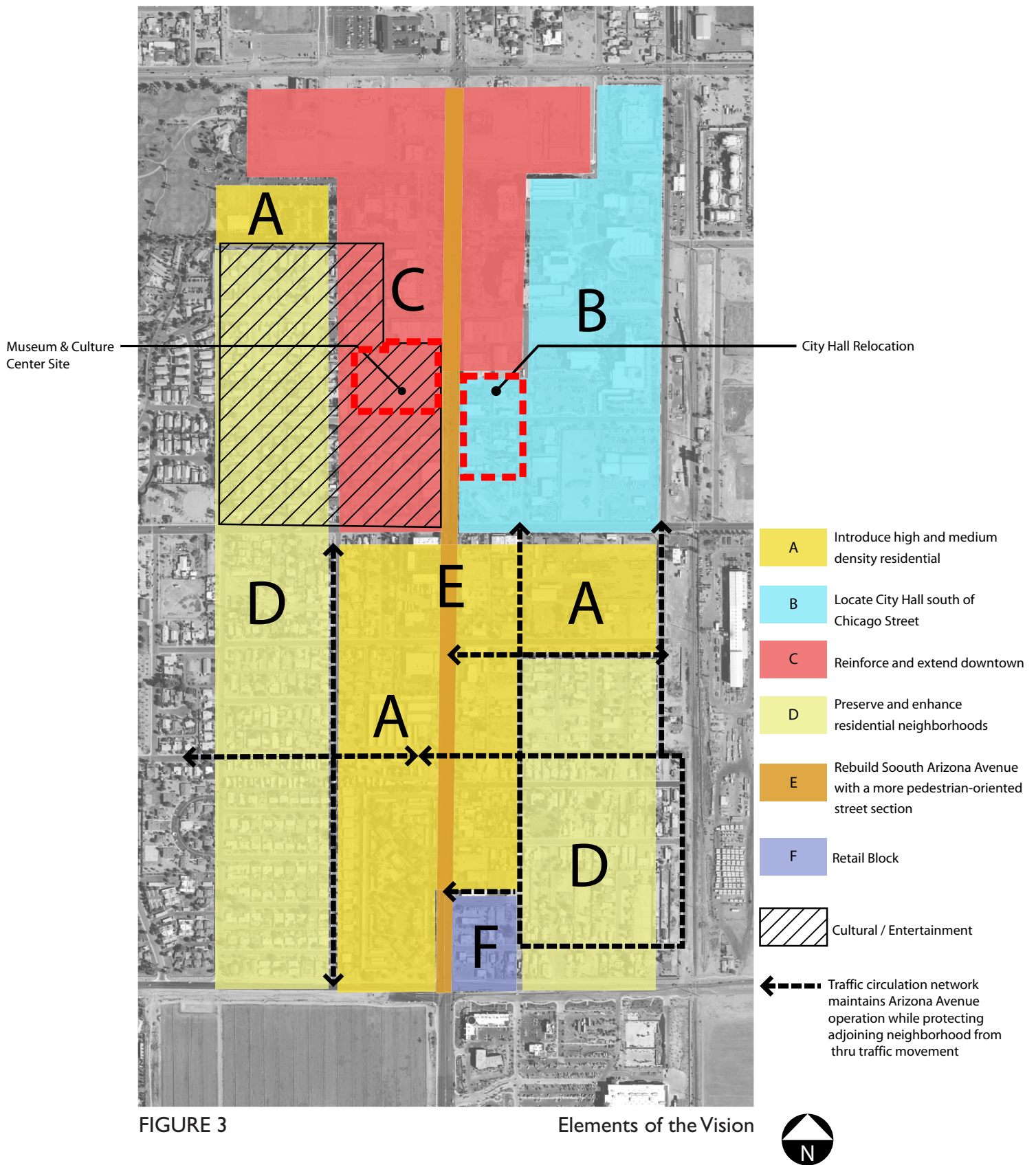
Mixed use development with high density residential



Mixed use development with high density residential

- **Branding:** The Arizona Avenue Corridor should be embellished with a new identity. This should be accomplished through marketing strategies that focus on Downtown Chandler's strengths and a revived character (like "Copper Square" in Downtown Phoenix). Marketing materials should focus on a "live, work, and play" environment, emphasizing a combination of higher residential density mixed with some retail and office.
- **Retail Theming:** While housing is the focus of this strategic vision, opportunities exist for new retail development at the northeast corner of Arizona and Pecos Avenues. This commercial corner should develop a unique theme that will transition from high density residential to the north and commercial to the south while at the same time creating a gateway into downtown Chandler from the freeway.







# SOUTH ARIZONA AVENUE ENTRY CORRIDOR STUDY

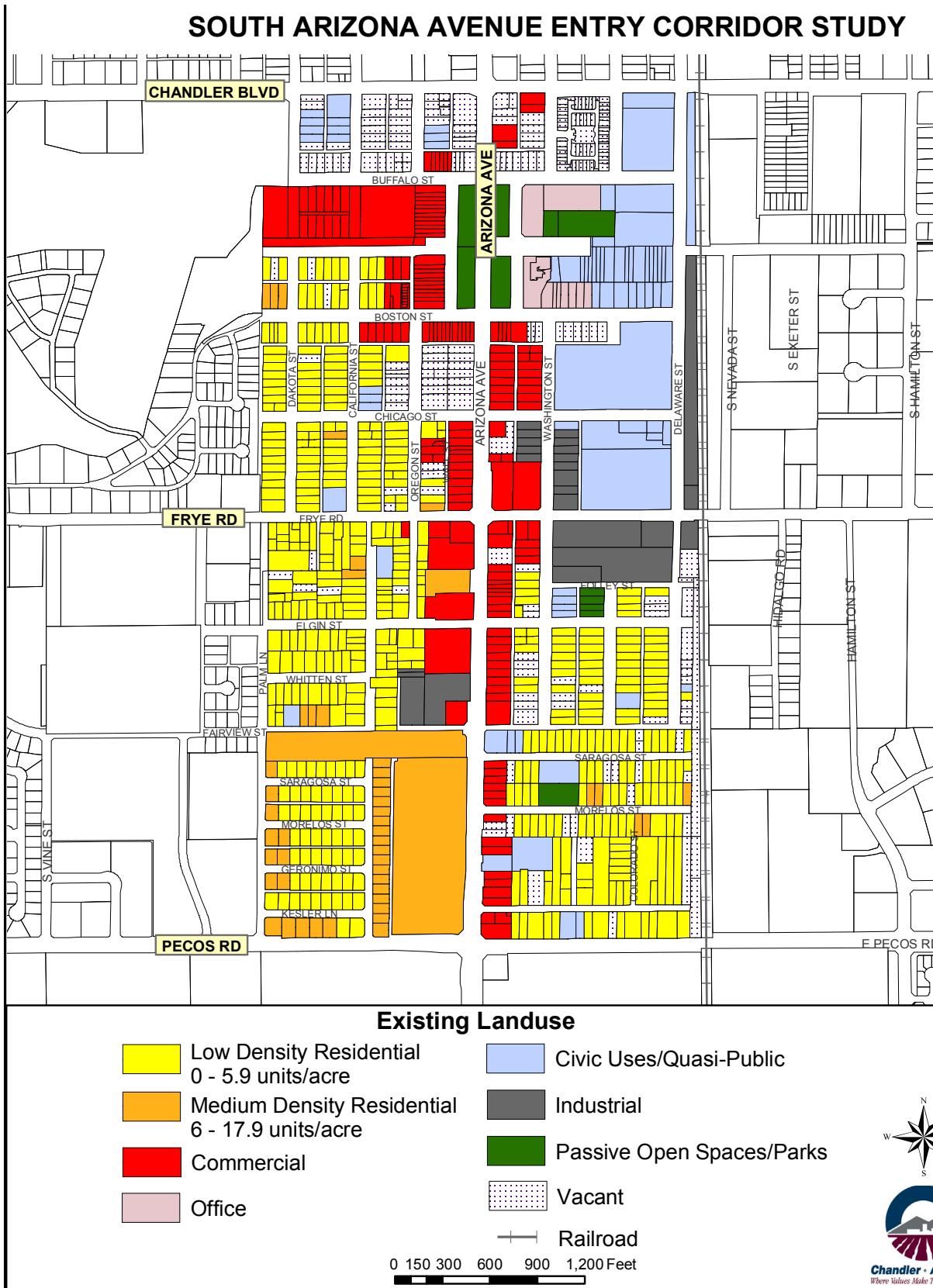


FIGURE 4

Existing Land Use