

# The Sherwood Heights Area Neighborhood Plan

**FINAL DRAFT**



November 13, 2002

# **THE SHERWOOD HEIGHTS AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In December of 2001, the City of Scottsdale initiated a Neighborhood Planning Program intended to serve as a tool to maintain and enhance the vitality and character of existing neighborhoods and to provide a framework for harmonious development of new neighborhoods. The Scottsdale City Council's number one stated policy priority is to "promote livability by enhancing and protecting neighborhoods", and to maintain a "diverse family oriented community where neighborhoods are safe and protected from adverse impacts."

Scottsdale's neighborhoods are the building blocks of the community, they encompass 90 percent of the developed land area and their future will define the character and quality of the City's built environment. In the past decades Scottsdale has faced rapid population growth and added thousands of acres of developed land in the northern half of the community. During the same period of time, more established areas in the central and southern portions of the City are experiencing the effects of age and maturity. Neighborhood Plans will provide tools to examine how new growth and infill development can be accommodated in ways that allow for preservation and strengthening of established neighborhoods.

The Sherwood Heights Area Neighborhood Plan is the first plan developed as part of the Neighborhood Planning Program in the City of Scottsdale and is considered the prototype plan that will examine issues and priorities of a mature neighborhood in the City and set standards for the development of future neighborhood plans.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN CONTEXT**

Neighborhood planning is a strategic process that complements the comprehensive General Plan and Character Area planning work already established in Scottsdale as envisioned by Scottsdale Vision and Cityshape 2020. Subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan in March of 2002, Character Area Plans have been consolidated into 7 Strategic Areas encompassing the entire City. Within this revised context, Neighborhood Plans continue to address the third tier of the framework established initially by the Scottsdale General Plan.

Neighborhood planning results in the development and implementation of issue-based, action-oriented local plans that address neighborhoods' physical environment, land use and infrastructure issues. Neighborhood Plans generate a framework for partnership between residents, businesses and the City, encouraging collaboration and resulting in an enhanced sense of community. Through the establishment of common goals, neighborhood plans can identify issues and priorities as well as alternative solutions to be addressed in short, mid, and long range implementation schedules. The solutions may result in the need for action by the city, by property owners in the neighborhood or by a variety of collaborative means.

Among the outcomes of a successful Neighborhood planning program are:

- 1) empowering citizens to make positive contributions to the life of their community
- 2) building city-to-citizen partnerships
- 3) ensuring government is responsive to the common needs of the community; and
- 4) encouraging each neighborhood to determine and celebrate its identity

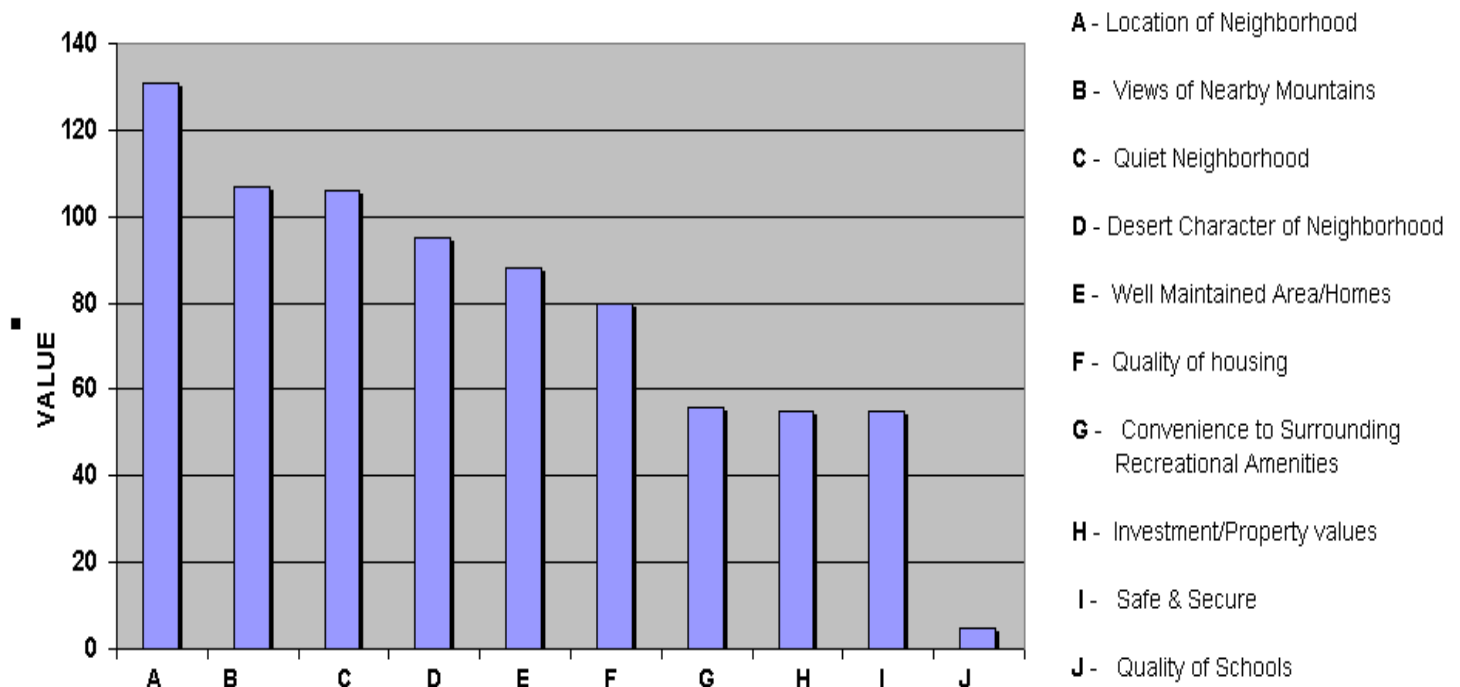
## SHERWOOD HEIGHTS AREA PLANNING PROCESS

Between the months of February and September of 2001, various departments in the City were contacted by Sherwood Heights Area residents with questions and concerns regarding traffic and recent development activity in their neighborhood. In response to the numerous inquiries received, the City's Comprehensive Planning staff organized a series of meetings with a core group of citizens to discuss neighborhood issues and assess the interest in developing a neighborhood plan for the area. Discussions were constructive and encouraged staff to work collaboratively with neighborhood leadership to formulate a survey questionnaire as a first step in the development of a plan. The survey was mailed out to every neighbor in the area and included questions related to demographic and ownership profiles as well as open-ended questions regarding values and perceptions related to physical environment, traffic and infrastructure. (See Appendix A). Results of the survey were tabulated and analyzed by staff and were presented to the neighbors in an Open House meeting in March of 2002. Held at St. Stephens Episcopal Church, this Open House meeting was attended by more than ninety residents and resulted in highly positive feedback and interest.

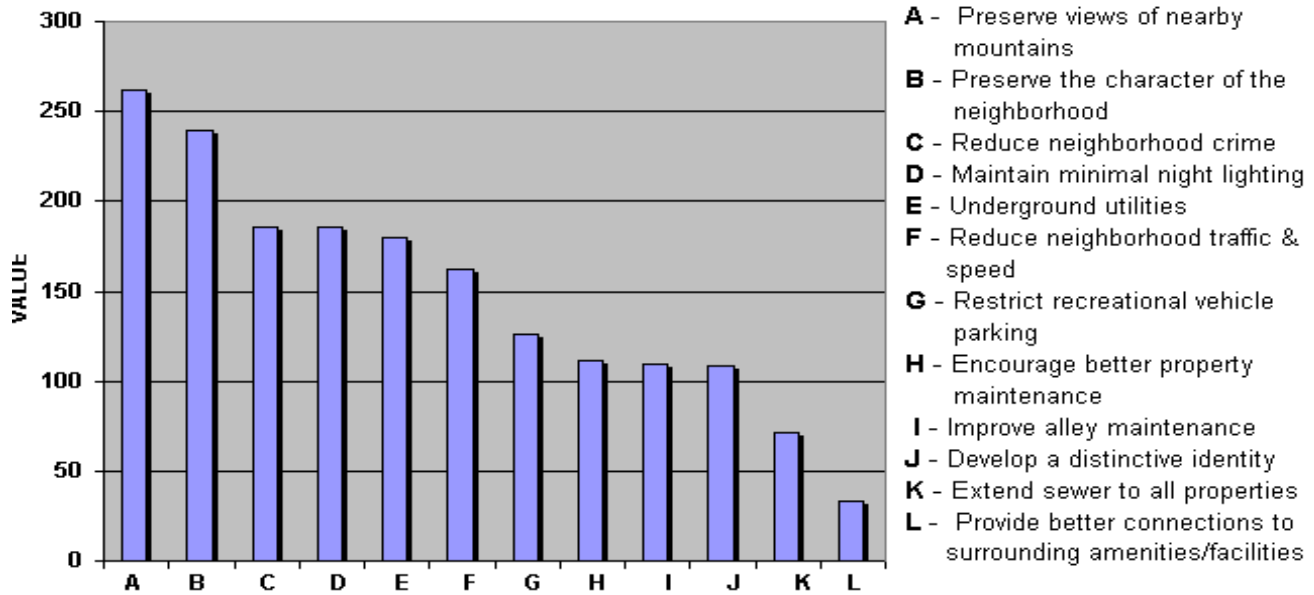
The principal issues identified by the survey respondents were:

- Character preservation.
- Neighborhood Traffic – (speeding and cut-through.)
- Septic tank to sewer conversion.
- Undergrounding of power and telephone lines along the alleys.

### REASONS YOU CHOSE TO LIVE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD



### WHAT ARE THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENTS THAT SHOULD BE MADE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



In the following month, staff maintained contact with numerous neighbors who were interested in expanding their responses and eager to learn more about the planning process. Staff continued research, documentation, and produced electronic maps to complete a neighborhood inventory and associated databases. Technical information and findings were compiled into presentations and handouts to help the neighborhood tackle the issues identified.

In early May, 2002 staff determined that the most effective way to explore the issues and communicate the findings of the research was to address the issues in two workshop format meetings. The first neighborhood workshop was held in late May 2002 to address the infrastructure and traffic issues, the second workshop dealing with character preservation and beautification issues was held in June of 2002. Both workshops were organized in collaboration with a core group of residents; they were well attended and demonstrated a high level of interest and involvement by neighbors of the four subdivisions.

Considering the diversity of issues and opportunities to serve this neighborhood staff began dialogue with key staff members of the city's Transportation, Capital Projects, Water, Sewer and Citizen & Neighborhood Services Departments to form a neighborhood action team. Throughout the process, members of this team were valuable resources, actively participating in meetings, presenting technical information and preparing work elements for the plan's future implementation phases. Participation of team members from the Citizen and Neighborhood Resources has also given the opportunity for neighbors to be informed about the services provided by the Citizen Service Centers and has introduced them to new programs offered to neighborhoods throughout the City.

As part of the workshop format, staff facilitated a consensus building exercise that allowed them to prioritize the issues identified. Neighbors engaged in open discussion and productive dialogue that resulted in a well-defined list of prioritized issues, goals and objectives to be explored in subsequent meetings. By early July of 2002, neighborhood leaders organized a mass mailing to

the entire geographic area, calling for volunteers to form a Working Group. Following staff's recommendations, leaders looked for equitable geographic representation as well as diversity of opinions regarding the issues. In response to the mailing, a thirty-member Working Group, representing the area was formed by mid July of 2002.

Two Working Group meetings were held at the City's Community Design Studio in the summer of 2002, one in July and one in August. At these meetings, staff outlined the group's roles and responsibilities as well as defining staff's role as resource, facilitator and guide throughout the process. Neighbors expressed a strong interest in exploring a zoning overlay to address the character and view preservation issues. In response to that interest, staff presented them with research findings, technical information and alternatives to help them in the decision making process. Results of a custom multi-viewshed model (See Appendix B) were included in a presentation to help the Working Group estimate the impact of higher building density and height in the neighborhood. The Working Group was also informed about the City's zoning overlay procedure as stated in the Zoning Ordinance as well as the required petition campaign and the approval rates required for a hearing by the City Council.

Feedback from members of the Working Group was very positive. They expressed that the information presented was timely, meaningful and that it helped them as they considered different alternatives. The group asked staff to present this information, including the results of the multi-viewshed analysis to the entire neighborhood at the following meeting. On September 12, 2002, a neighborhood-wide Workshop Meeting was held in which residents conducted an anonymous "straw" poll among attendees to assess the interest in the issue delineated in the proposed petition. Eighty percent of the neighbors present voted for limiting building heights as a means of preserving mountain views.

A third Working Group meeting was held September 28, 2002 in which staff distributed a draft Neighborhood Plan for comments. This first draft was supplemented with Appendices illustrating the neighborhood inventory, research findings and model results. The Plan includes a detailed account of issues, priorities and alternatives identified in the process as well as action items, necessary resources and a suggested implementation schedule. Potential funding sources are identified as well as future responsibilities of other city departments that will oversee the implementation of the plan. Emphasis is given to coordination with the citywide Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Indian Bend Strategic Plan. Members of the Working Group drafted language for the petition and asked for staff review to verify adherence to legal formats and standards. After a short review period, a final draft of the Plan will be available for city staff review and circulation. During this final draft review period, neighbors will be circulating the PRD Zoning Overlay petition and working with Project Coordination Staff to follow the development application process.

## **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

The Sherwood Heights Area encompasses eight subdivisions: Sherwood Heights I, II and III, Sherwood Estates I and II, Fairway Park and Heritage East I and II. It is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods of its size in Scottsdale. It was platted between 1954 and 1957, and built between 1955 and 1972 in an area bounded by Thomas Road to the north, Oak Street to the south, 56<sup>th</sup> Street to the west and 62<sup>nd</sup> Street to the east. The eight subdivisions, located in Quarter Sections 142 and 143, were originally located in the Maricopa County unincorporated urban area and were later annexed by the City of Scottsdale in April of 1956 after much debate and contentiousness between the cities of Phoenix and Scottsdale. The R1-10 zoning designation

grandfathered from the County jurisdiction remains in place for all the single family detached residential portions of the neighborhood. The zoning designation along the strip to the north of the neighborhood fronting Thomas Road includes C-1, S-R, R-4 and R-5. In the 1950's large portions of this land area and its surroundings were purchased by two realtor partners: K. T. Palmer and Tom Darlington who also had purchased and developed land in Paradise Valley, the Sunyslope area in Phoenix and sections of Cave Creek. Later in 1954, this land was bought and subdivided for residential development.

Between the years of 1954 and 1957, a semi-custom merchant builder, D. D. Castleberry platted and built approximately 150 homes in this area, maintaining the original topography and vegetation. After the initial subdivision was platted and the first phase was built, homes continued to be built in the remaining vacant lots well into the 1970's.

Fairway Park, Sherwood Estates and Sherwood Heights were developed between 1955 and 1962. CC&R's were in place from the onset, restricting building development to 16 feet for building height, among other things. These deed restrictions have now expired and all subdivisions are currently under no private regulatory provisions. This residential area was considered unique even at the time of its original development due to its large size parcels, street cross section, rural character and quality views of Camelback Mountain and Papago Buttes. Heritage East was the last subdivision developed in this area, the majority of the homes were built between 1969 and 1972, lots sizes are smaller and several properties have lawn front and back yards. Families with children quickly populated the area, becoming a strong neighborhood in South Scottsdale, conveniently located near amenities and major arterials.

In July of 1987 a group of residents interested in the preserving the character of the neighborhood formed an association representing approximately 300 homes. The Sherwood Heights Neighborhood Association has been active at various times in the past decades to address community issues related to proposed changes in zoning and uses in the adjacent area as well as issues with School Districting. The association is still active and it sponsors social events and a very active neighborhood watch program. It is important to note that the Association is not a formal incorporated Homeowners Association, but that it operates with voluntary membership and involvement of its residents.

Throughout the years this neighborhood has sustained its cohesiveness, maintained its original character and demonstrated pride of ownership.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS – NEIGHBORHOOD INVENTORY**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

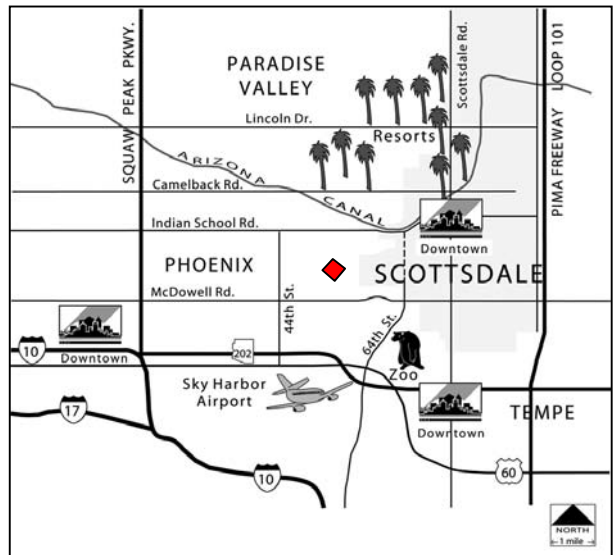
Approximately 20 percent of the residents of this neighborhood area are original owners, currently retired citizens with no children living at home. A significant portion of this neighborhood, approximately 50 % is comprised of baby boomer families, who purchased the homes from the late 60's to the 80's. Most of these households have two income earners and young adult or grown children not living at home. There is a small but growing number of younger residents, some single and some families with no children or young children who have generally purchased their home in the last three or four years. These newer residents are generally the most interested in investing in their newly acquired properties and gradually renovating the housing stock in the neighborhood.



As revealed by the mail-out survey conducted at the initial phase of the planning process the majority of residents in the area own their home and only one percent of the residents rent.

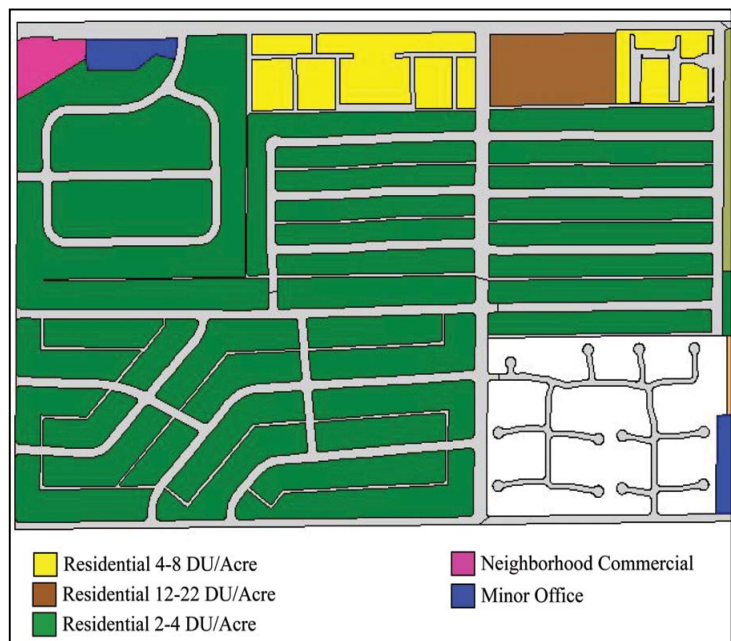
## URBAN CONTEXT

The Sherwood Heights Area is the westernmost neighborhood in the City of Scottsdale, bounded to the south and to the west by the City of Phoenix. Located south of Thomas Road, and east of 56<sup>th</sup> Street, this neighborhood is atypical in Southern Scottsdale because of its very low density and that despite urban growth around it, through the years it has maintained its original desert environment, vegetation and character. The surrounding residential areas have continued to develop under a denser urban model, with multifamily uses, smaller single family parcels, lawns and an urban street cross section. One of the stated assets of this area is its proximity to amenities and regional destinations such as Arizona State University Main, Sky Harbor Airport and Scottsdale Fashion Square Mall.



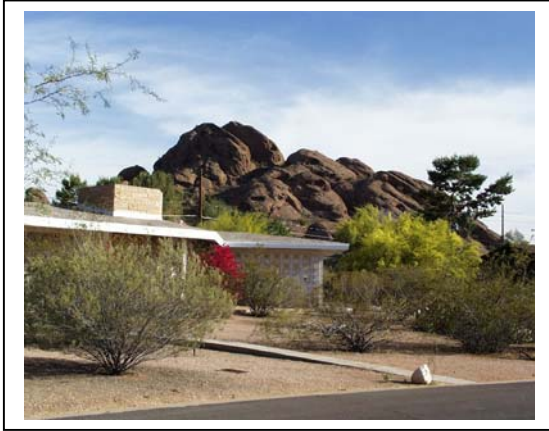
## LAND USE

The Sherwood Heights Neighborhood Area, including the eight subdivisions covers a total land area of 170 acres. Land use is single family residential and the zoning category is R1-10. Residential uses are flanked by a strip of commercial, townhouse and multifamily uses along Thomas Road, between 56<sup>th</sup> St and 62nd Street. Development is low-density and the majority of the residences are built in large lots, with service alleys. Most of the homes were built according to pre-designed plans, nevertheless, the builder offered custom variations to the buyers as an option. In Sherwood Heights and Fairway Park the typical parcel size is larger than half an acre. In Sherwood Estates and Heritage East lots vary in size from .25 to .30 of an acre.



## RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of residential buildings are single story ranch style semi-custom homes with attached carports. Exterior and structural walls are built primarily of concrete block or brick. Predominant roof construction is structural wood trusses with asphalt shingles. Foundations and stem walls are poured concrete. Average home size is 2,000 s.f. Styles and floor plans vary slightly, with some exteriors having façade embellishments and details that give the homes individual character. While the majority of homes have not been altered from their original configuration, approximately 30 homes have added area to their original floor plans.



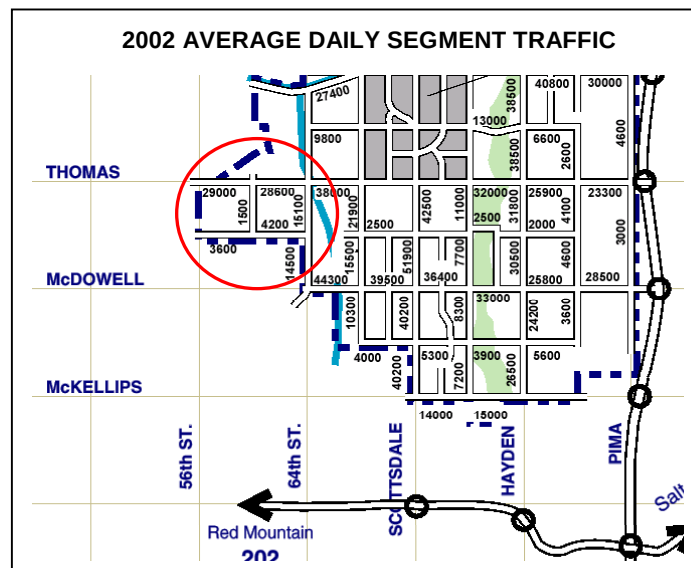
## TRANSPORTATION

Conveniently located adjacent to arterial roadways, this area is accessible to major freeway corridors such as the Loop 202 and the Loop 101. Thomas Road, a five lane major arterial borders the neighborhood along the north and Oak Street, a two lane collector is the boundary to the south. Forming the Western Boundary of the neighborhood, 56<sup>th</sup> Street, a three lane minor arterial, is entirely within the City of Phoenix right of way. Directly east of Sherwood Heights and Sherwood Estates, 60<sup>th</sup> Street connects Thomas Rd. to Oak Street. The eastern border of the neighborhood is 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, ending south of Wilshire Boulevard. Both of these streets are two lanes in cross section and generally carry local traffic with origins and destinations within the neighborhood area. It has been observed that Wilshire Blvd. presents a cut-through traffic pattern which is currently being considered in a Traffic Engineering study.





Average daily traffic counts are listed in Figure 3 for major streets in the neighborhood. In Sherwood Heights, Sherwood Estates and Fairway Park, the streets are rolling as they follow the original topography of the area. The width of the streets, (between 40 and 50 feet) and the adjacent native vegetation give the area a unique rural character, especially due to the ribbon curbs with no sidewalks. In the Heritage East subdivisions, roads follow a more linear pattern, and the perception of street width is narrower due to the presence of concrete sidewalks on each side. While all the residences have front or side facing driveways that lead to garages or carports, residential parallel parking is permitted along all neighborhood streets. Bike and pedestrian traffic is generally recreational and mostly happens during the early morning and early evening hours of the day. A small component of transit riders walk to the bus stop at the southeast corner of 56<sup>th</sup> St. and Thomas Rd.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

Salt River Project delivers electric power to this neighborhood and Qwest Communications is the principal phone line provider. The area is also heavily serviced by different cable television companies. Telephone and power lines run on poles located along neighborhood alleys located behind parcels. Gas main lines are also located along alleys, delivered by Southwest Gas. All alleys are open and accessible for service by municipal and private maintenance staff. Refuse collection by the City of Scottsdale Solid Waste Department is also performed along alleys on a weekly schedule, while recyclable containers are collected along the street frontage.



A few residents within the Sherwood Heights subdivision have contracted with SRP to underground the power and telephone lines in an effort to remove obstructions to mountain views. Water service is provided by the City of Scottsdale to all residences, mains are located along street frontages.

When the neighborhood was originally developed, builders found granite and caliche soil types in the areas adjacent to Papago Buttes. This condition made it difficult to install sewer lines to service 160 homes in the Sherwood Heights and Fairway Park subdivisions. Septic tanks were built in various locations within back and side yards of the mentioned areas. A number of original septic tanks are still in operation, while some homeowners have replaced them with newer septic tank technology.

## LANDSCAPING

One of the principal features that characterizes this area is the presence of desert vegetation, which contributes to the natural aesthetic of this neighborhood. Native species were not removed when the parcels were subdivided and have remained in their original locations on front, side and backyards. Over the years, neighbors have supplemented their landscaping with desert plants and ornamentals that were not found originally at the site. The majority of desert plants have been well maintained by residents and in some cases, desert flowers have been cultivated for added color and accents.

Although there are a large number of parcels that have retained desert plants exclusively, some residents have added non native species, especially on side and back yard locations. In some instances, trees such as Eucalyptus, Jacaranda, African Sumac, Aleppo pine and Palm trees have been planted, principally in Sherwood Heights and Fairway Park. A number of parcels have oleander hedges along the back property line, to provide visual and acoustical separation from the alleys.

Among the desert plants found in the Sherwood Heights neighborhood area:

- Trees: Native Mesquite, Palo Verde, Ironwood, Globe Mallow,
- Cactus and succulents: Saguaro, Barrel, Ocotillo Cholla, Yucca, Cereus, Prickly Pear, Golden Barrel, Hedgehog and various types of agaves.
- Shrubs: Creosote, Sage, Bursage, Acacia, Ruellia, Brittlebush.



## NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The citizens in the Sherwood Heights Area are keenly aware that their neighborhood is located in a mature area of the City and as such, understand the pressures of change and new development. There is a very strong sense of appreciation for the environment they have, and solid commitment to maintain the quality of their neighborhood. They value the open, natural character, views and the native vegetation that makes this neighborhood unique in the region.

## ALTERNATIVES AND ACTION PLAN

The Neighborhood Survey mailed to every resident at the onset of the planning process, was a valuable tool in collecting opinions and perceptions regarding the present and future of the neighborhood. Results of the survey defined concerns and opportunities that were later discussed and carefully considered throughout the outreach phase of the plan development. After three workshops, the neighborhood prioritized their concerns as follows:

### a. Character Preservation.

The presence of natural desert vegetation, the open space between buildings, the street cross section and the mountain views were considered the most important features defining their neighborhood. There is a strong interest in preserving these characteristics for the future. As a result of the series of meetings and discussions, the neighborhood decided that their first priority for action was to initiate a petition to the City Council to create a Planned Residential Development Zoning overlay to prevent future development that would not be compatible with the preservation goals.

### b. Neighborhood Traffic

The Sherwood Heights Area residents want to promote safe and pleasant conditions for all modes of circulation in and through their neighborhood.

Vehicles circulating at excessive speeds over the marked limit have been a recurrent perceived problem along Oak Street, 60<sup>th</sup> Street and to a lesser extent along Wilshire Blvd. The latter has also been identified as a street that experiences cut-through traffic patterns. After having followed the City of Scottsdale's Speed Awareness Program, the City's Traffic engineering department collected count and speed data on several segments along those roads. The purpose of data collection is to determine if the area qualifies for a traffic mitigation/calming program or other traffic improvements. The project is in the evaluation and ranking stages at this time and traffic engineering staff is analyzing data and reviewing the potential impacts of alternative scenarios. Neighbors are aware that there needs to be a balance between the conflicting needs of traffic calming and maintaining emergency response capability. The goal is to resolve the traffic concerns without negatively affecting other citizens and neighborhoods. It is anticipated that data will confirm the need to put into action a program which will be defined in detail in the implementation plan.

c. Septic tank to sewer conversion.

One third of the neighborhood's sewer needs are serviced by individual septic tanks located mostly in the back yards of the properties. Some of these tanks are 40 years old and some have been re-built by their owners in the last two decades. There are indications of a few septic tanks that are malfunctioning and will need to be replaced. City staff provided the neighborhood with technical assistance and information about challenges and opportunities to convert to the City Sewer system. While current capacity would allow for this area to be added to the City infrastructure system, this conversion would represent a cost to the city as well as to the individual owners who would have to provide funding to cover expenses related to the connection within their private property. Staff also presented the Improvement District Process to the neighbors, which describes how the city could help finance the conversion over a period of time. After careful consideration and extended discussion, the neighborhood decided to consider this issue a secondary priority, for a future implementation phase.

d. Electric Power and telephone lines.

In an effort to improve mountain views and enhance the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood, a number of residents expressed their interest in undergrounding power and telephone lines. Initial discussions expressed general support for the improvement until an example of costs borne by the user was presented to the group. In general, the original owners of properties, many of them retired, did not consider this expenditure as critical to their neighborhood. After some debate, consensus was that the neighborhood needed to address other more imminent problems and that the undergrounding would be considered a long term goal.

However, this decision does not preclude those interested to move forward with the improvement. They were encouraged to contact the utility company to initiate the undergrounding work. In the last few years, four contiguous property owners have already completed this undergrounding process along the alleys behind their lots. These neighbors worked with the Salt River Project Utility (SRP) company that services this area as well as with Qwest and Cox cable companies. Engineering staff from SRP was invited to present information about their Improvement District program (See Appendix C) and offered to work with the neighbors on an as needed basis.