



# WHERE WE'VE BEEN

# 01



## HISTORY

The Town of Queen Creek was founded on a deep-rooted history in agriculture. The community's founding families were drawn to this portion of the Sonoran Desert, known as Rittenhouse, in the early 1900s to farm cotton, corn and potatoes. Building upon the area's rich agricultural and equestrian heritage, the Town of Queen Creek was incorporated on Sept. 5, 1989. Identifying the importance of helping shape the community's future, five individuals, known as the Queen Creek Five, were instrumental in the Town's successful incorporation and establishing the vision for the community.

Over the years, the Town has adopted several award-winning plans designed to guide future growth, planning and land use as well as provide amenities. The Town has grown from rich rural roots to become one of the most innovatively planned, family friendly hometowns in Arizona.

## GEOGRAPHY

Queen Creek is located primarily in Maricopa County, with eastern portions of the Town in Pinal County. The Town's planning area, which includes areas located outside the



Founding Fathers Plaque at Picket Post Square

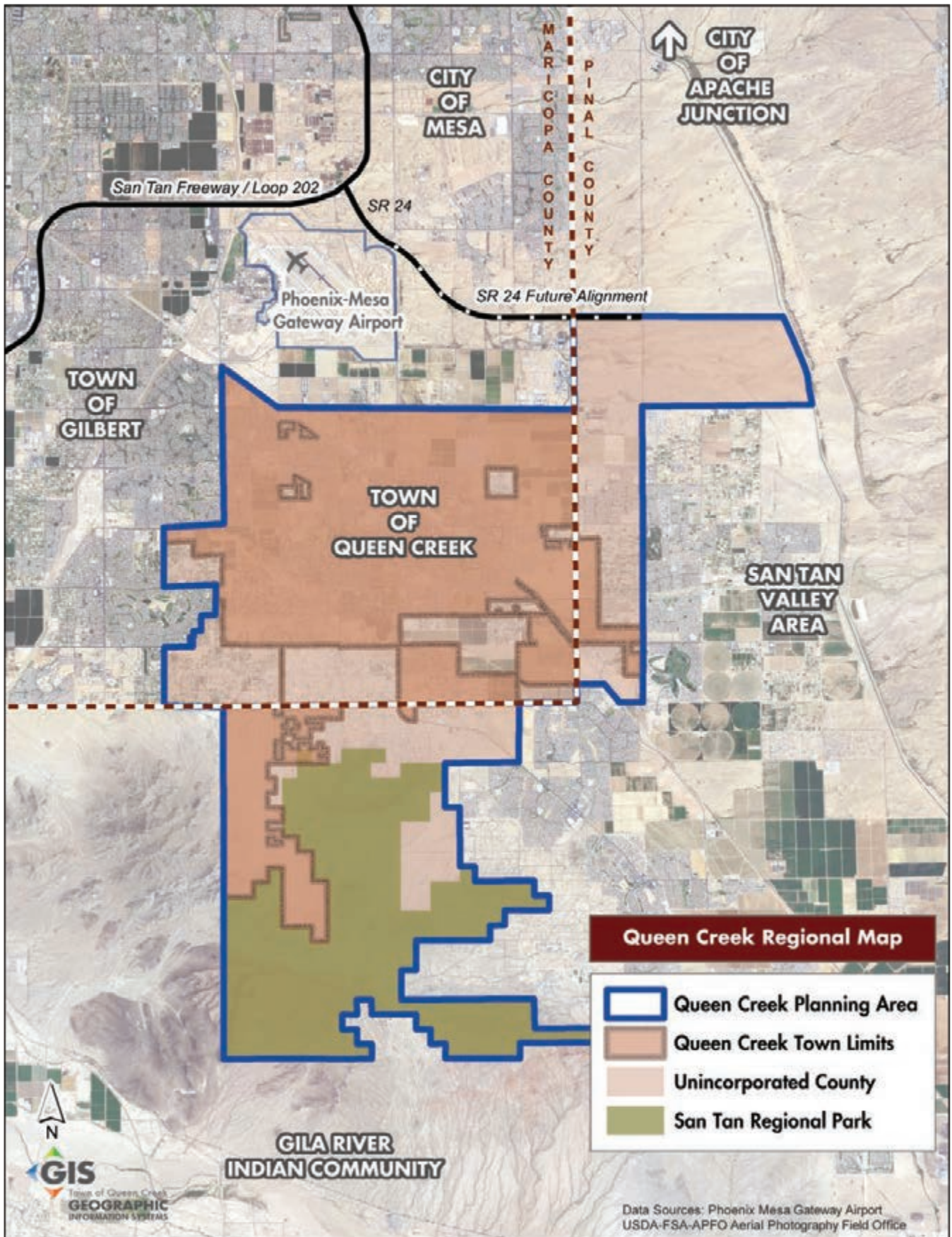
Town's municipal boundary and that the Town anticipates annexing in the future, is located in both Maricopa and Pinal counties.

The Town's planning area is bordered on the north by the City of Mesa, including the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, to the west by the Town of Gilbert, to the northeast by the City of Apache Junction planning area and to the southeast by the Town of Florence's planning area. The east is bordered by an unincorporated area of Pinal County, San Tan Valley, and the south is bordered by San Tan Mountain Regional Park, a 10,200-acre park managed by Maricopa County.



View of the San Tan Mountains

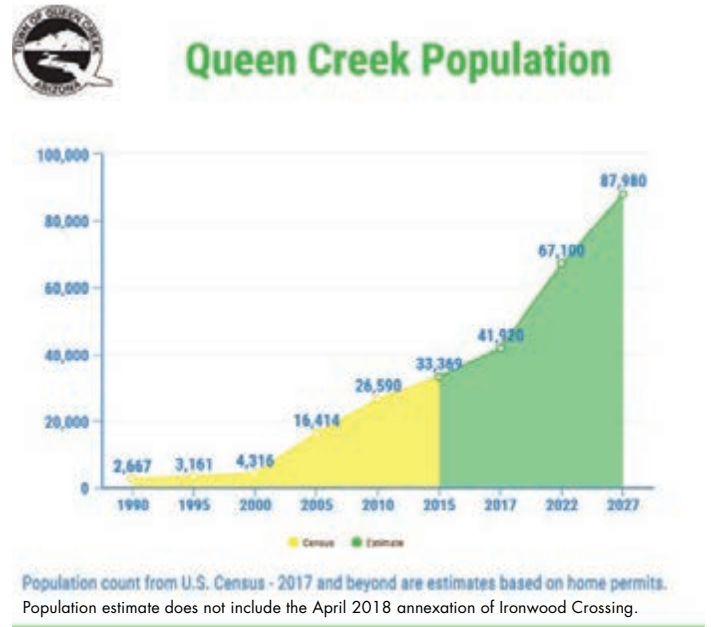
Figure 1.1: Queen Creek Regional Map



## POPULATION GROWTH

In 1990, just after the Town incorporated, Queen Creek's population was just over 2,500. The next 10 years experienced a relatively rapid growth rate, with the Town's population escalating significantly by 2010. The Great Recession tempered growth for several years, but by 2015, Queen Creek was one of the fastest growing communities in Arizona<sup>1</sup>. The Town's population continued to increase at a steady, manageable pace, with an estimated population of 41,980 in 2017. This rate of growth is anticipated to continue until the buildout population reaches 110,000. The majority of newer residents to Queen Creek come from larger cities and towns in the West, and are accustomed to amenities that are typically found in established municipalities.

Figure 1.2: Queen Creek Population



Founders' Park



Desert Mountain Park

## HISTORY OF PARKS IN QC

Parks have played an instrumental role in the success of Queen Creek since incorporation. The Town's first park, Founders' Park, was built prior to the Town's incorporation in 1989, and acquired by the Town in 1997. Located on Ellsworth Road in Town Center, Founders' Park is an 11-acre park. Understanding how parks contribute to an increased quality of life, economic growth, and overall health of the community, Queen Creek strategically planned for future parks. In 2003, five properties were purchased by the Town as future park space. In 2005, the Town completed the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan to identify parks and recreation needs for the community. Also in 2005, the Town opened its second park, Desert Mountain Park, an award-winning 29-acre park located on Ocotillo and Hawes roads, adjacent to the Queen Creek Wash.

1 United States Census Bureau's 2015 mid-decade Census

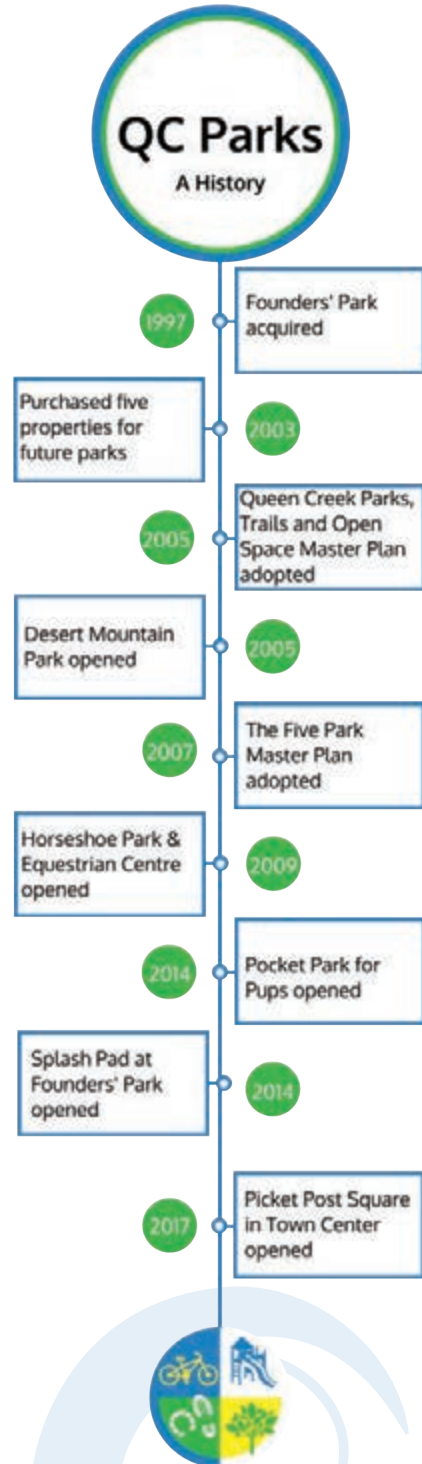


Splash Pad at Founders' Park



Pocket Park for Pups

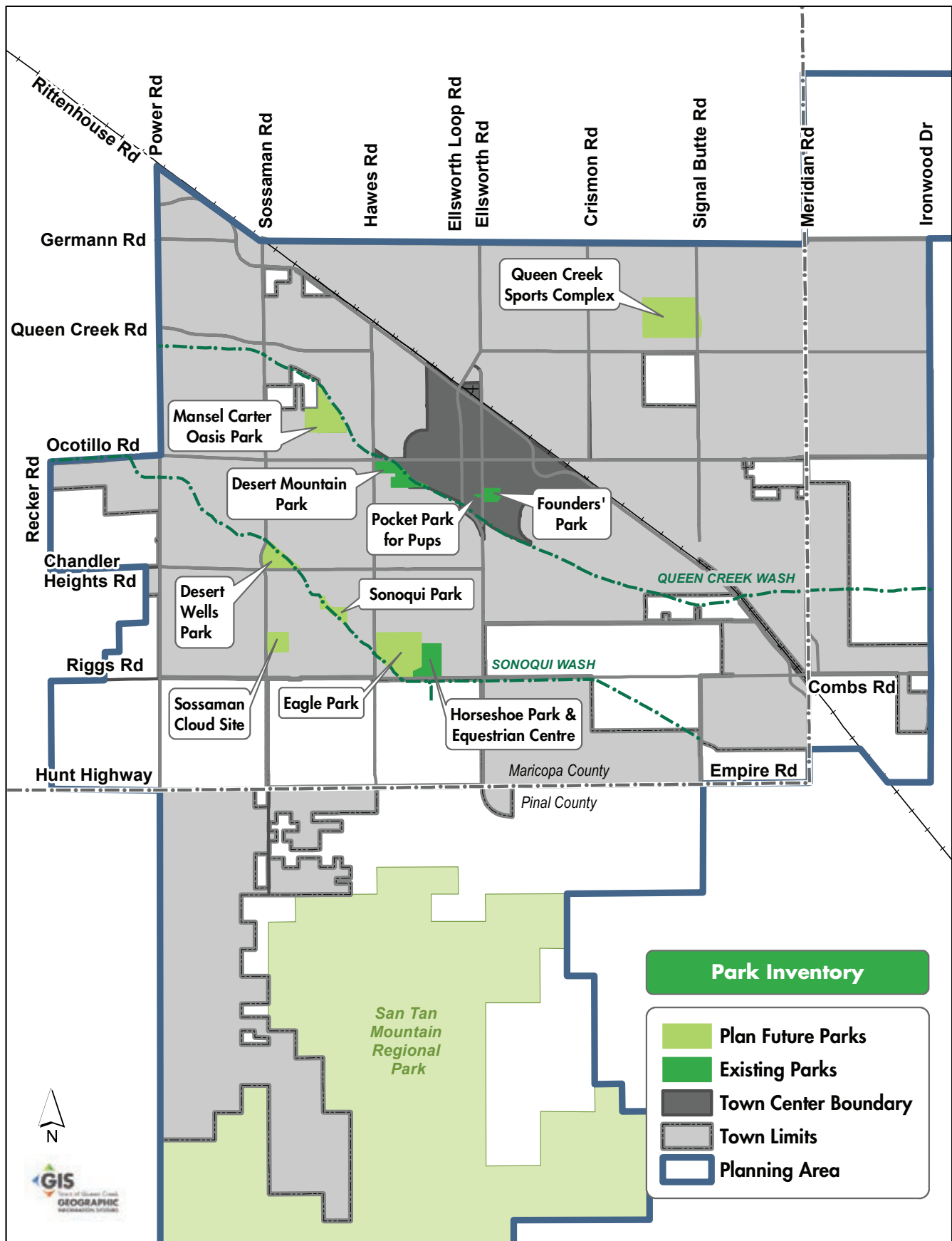
Figure 1.3: QC Parks – A History



In 2007, the Five Parks Master Plan was established to create master plans for the five properties purchased in 2003, Mansel Carter Oasis Park, Desert Wells Park, Sossaman Cloud Site, Queen Creek Sports Complex and Sonoqui Park. Embracing the community's equestrian roots, Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre, a 38-acre commercial event venue, was opened in 2009. Pocket Park for Pups, a one-acre temporary dog park was opened in 2014, and a splash pad was added to Founders' Park in 2014.

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Figure 1.4: Park Inventory





Desert Wells Park and Historic Stage Stop



Historic Community Picnic

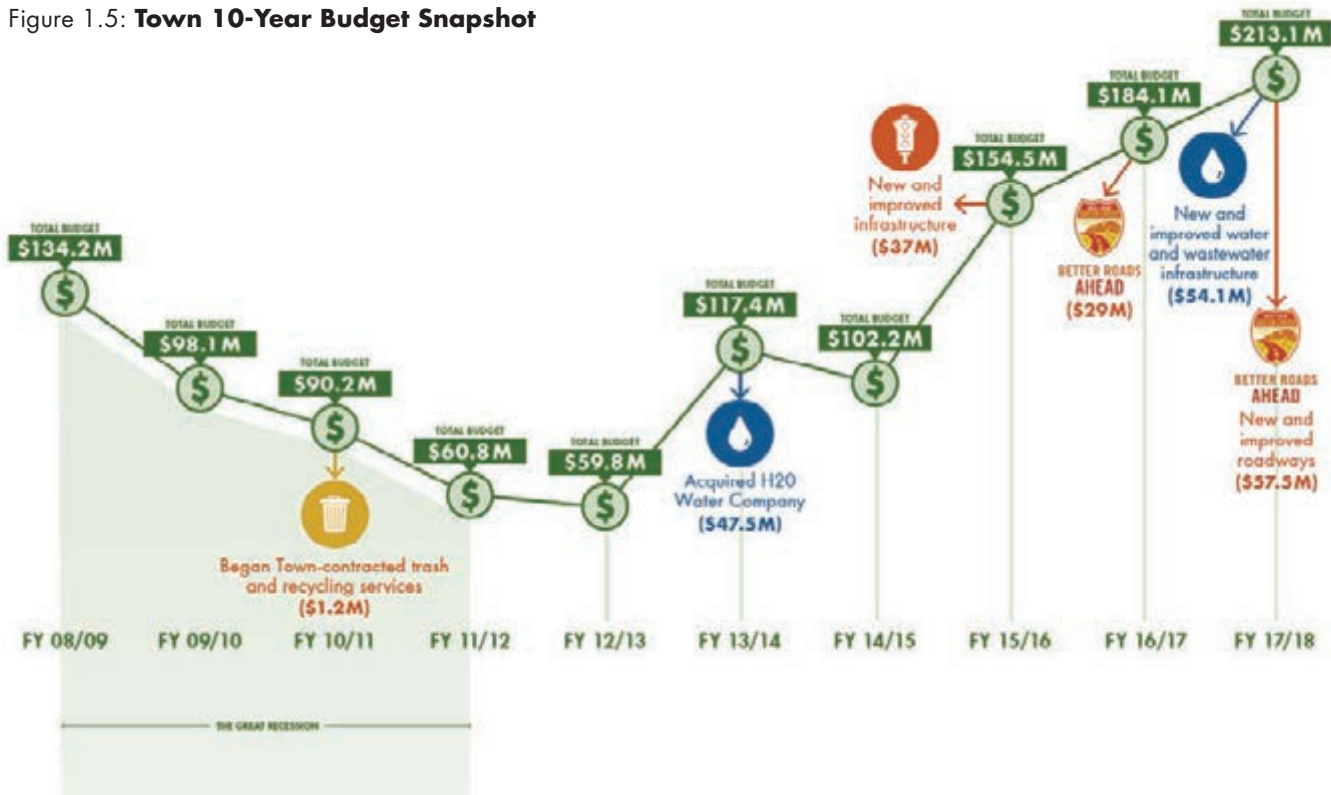


Block Party on Ellsworth Road

From gatherings to celebrate the watermelon harvest to Schnepf Farms' long-standing, u-pick peach festival, Queen Creek's history of community special events dates back to the days of the earliest settlers. That tradition continues today in parks throughout the community, and in the Town Center. Major improvements were completed in Town Center from 2015 through 2017 to enhance the festival-friendly infrastructure. A small parklet, Picket Post Square, was also added, which serves as a gathering space in the heart of the community and displays a bronze plaque honoring the Town's Founding Fathers. Each year, thousands of residents and visitors enjoy opportunities to have fun and make memories with family and friends at community events.

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Figure 1.5: **Town 10-Year Budget Snapshot**



## LEGISLATIVE IMPACTS

While the Five Park Master Plan was created in 2007, changes made to the State laws governing the use of development impact fees have changed how those park lands can be funded. In 2011, Senate Bill (SB) 1525 was approved, which brought significant statutory changes to development impact fees, which are used to pay for growth's proportionate share of new infrastructure needs, including parks and trails. The new legislation only allows impact fees to be used to develop parks less than 30 acres. SB 1525 also prohibited the use of impact fees to develop aquatic centers or multi-generational centers. As a result, the Five Park Master Plan was no longer feasible with impact fees under Arizona State law.

## GREAT RECESSION

In addition to the changes implemented by SB 1525, the Great Recession also dramatically impacted the Town's plans for parks. The Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan estimated a population of 90,000 by 2010. The Great Recession, which began in 2007, substantially slowed the Town's population and revenues. The Town took a fiscally conservative approach, dramatically restructuring the organization. The Parks and Recreation Department was dissolved, with the Parks Division shifting under the Public Works Department, and the Recreation Division shifting first to the Management Services Department and then merging with the Communications and Marketing Division in 2014 to create the Communications, Marketing and Recreation Department.