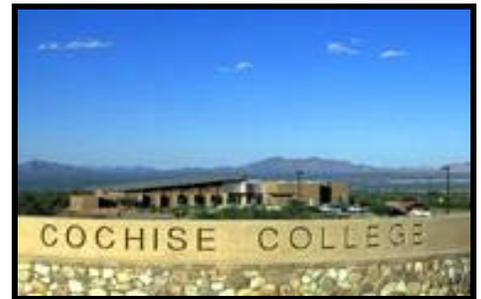




City of Benson Economic Development Strategic Plan



July 2009

Cover pictures:

4th Street & San Pedro Street, 1906.....	Historical Society
Gracie's Station.....	Robert Nilson, City of Benson
City Swimming Pool.....	Robert Nilson, City of Benson
Benson Visitor Center.....	Robert Nilson, City of Benson
Benson Bobcats Football.....	Luke Messer, Wick Communications
Birding Trail.....	Robert Nilson, City of Benson
Cochise College.....	Flavio Beltran, Cochise College Marketing & Creative Services Dept.
Benson Long Jump.....	Linda Lamb
Housing Development.....	Robert Nilson, City of Benson

PART I: BENSON TODAY

1. BACKGROUND

Rich in History: Since 1880, Benson has been the center of transportation for Cochise County, when the Southern Pacific Railroad was built making Benson the only town with transcontinental connection in the area. In the 1920's the Federal Highway 80 was built from Washington D.C. to San Diego running through downtown Benson on what is now 4th Street. Benson is rich in tradition, starting with the Butterfield Overland Stage in 1847 and continues today as Benson positions itself to become a community known for its high quality of life.

Mayor and City Council: The Mayor and Council of the City of Benson are charged with providing the leadership and direction for the City's Economic future. The Mayor is directly elected by the citizens every two years while the Vice-Mayor is selected by the Council. The Council members are also elected and serve four year overlapping terms in the manner prescribed by the City Code. The City of Benson Mayor and Council are charged with the hiring of the City Manager. The Mayor and City Council provide policy direction for the City through the City Manager with the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures. The City Council-Manager form of local government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong professional experience of an appointed local government administrator to implement its policies. This appointee serves at the pleasure of the Council and has the responsibility for preparing the budget, directing day-to-day operations, hiring and firing personnel, and serving as the Council's Chief Policy Advisor.

Economic Development Sub Committee: The Mayor and Council formed the Economic Development Sub Committee in December of 2007 to provide a clear direction for the City's Economic Development future. This subcommittee is charged with creating a policy statement in the form of a Strategic Plan. This plan will define the City's Economic Development goals.

Position for Success: Neighboring the metropolitan Tucson area, the City of Benson is the gateway to Cochise County. Benson is positioned along Interstate 10 and the transcontinental railroad travels through the City. This close proximity to Tucson combined with Benson's quality of life puts the City in the position for growth with a projection of over 54,000 residents at build out. The City enjoys robust tourism and welcomes its winter visitors. Benson's surrounding community population is more than 30,000, serving as a shopping hub for the surrounding communities of St. David, Pomerene, Mescal, J-Six, Cascabel, and Dragoon. Thus, Benson's economic vitality is due in part to the surrounding communities and to its strategic location. Benson is a "full service" City providing all the services that are needed for a prestigious quality of life. Additionally, Benson's Mayor and Council are committed to increasing that quality of life for the City residents and visitors. This high quality of life will attract the experienced work forces required for the City to achieve long term economic vitality.

Focused on the Future: The City of Benson recognizes that environmental protection and Economic Development are essential components in building a livable community. The City of Benson is on the right track, focusing on the future by asking the hard questions: Will Benson become a bedroom community of Tucson? What resources will it take to build a competitive economy? With the leadership of the elected officials, Benson can position itself to take advantage of employment opportunities and stay focused on building a quality community. This Strategic Plan for Economic Development demonstrates the Mayor and Council's commitment to stay focused on the future.

2. VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

On September 9, 2005 the Mayor and Council held a planning retreat to begin development of “*The Strategic Plan for 2006 and beyond...*” This document was adopted by Mayor and Council on June 12, 2006. The plan includes the following vision statement:

CITY VISION STATEMENT
Serving the people of Benson by effectively planning for growth, providing a safe environment, quality transportation, reliable utilities, enhanced recreation opportunities, competent administration, a healthy business climate, a positive self image, and cooperation with other levels of government while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

3. DEFINITION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An Economic Development vision should address a broad range of elements and issues facing the community: areas such as education, public safety, transportation, environment, and government practices. Although many of these areas are addressed in this plan, the City does not manage some of these areas, but they are directly related to the quality of life. The challenge of this plan is to stay focused on specific outcomes the City can accomplish. The following definition of Economic Development was developed by the subcommittee.

The purpose of the Economic Development effort in Benson is as follows:

- To plan infrastructure to support new business growth.
- To develop a strategy to diversify the local economy and assist existing businesses to grow and thrive.
- To create a more entrepreneurially supportive environment.
- To assist the City of Benson to evolve its “Quality of Life” through expanding the local economy.
- To identify and target quality businesses based on a realistic evaluation of what types of enterprises can and should be supported.

The definition of Economic Development that will guide Benson’s efforts is as follows:

DEFINITION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Economic Development is a process for creating employment opportunities for individuals, growth opportunities for enterprises thereby raising residents’ standard of living.

4. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the City of Benson’s Economic Development Strategic Plan is to develop a policy statement for Economic Development. This plan presents a clear picture of the current economic environment. Additionally, this plan sets the City’s direction for Economic Development for the next five years. Objectives of the Strategic Plan are to:

- Clearly define the services provided by the City.
- Define the current economic environment.
- Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that will affect the City of Benson’s Economic Development.
- Provide a list of long term Economic Development goals for the next five years.
- Build a clear policy and direction for the City of Benson’s Economic Development.

Benson's New City Pool**5. SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CITY**

The City of Benson's professional staff provides outstanding customer service while focusing on the safety of the residents and visitors of the City. The services provided by the City are organized in four sections: Administration, Public Safety, Leisure and Public Works.

A. ADMINISTRATION:

City Administration: The City Manager is responsible for providing professional leadership in administering the programs and policies established by the Mayor and Council. The Manager informs and advises the Council on the affairs of the City, studies and proposes alternative solutions to community needs for Mayor and Council consideration. City administration includes the City Clerk's Office, Finance Department, and Human Resource Department.

Economic Development: The Economic Development function provides a variety of important services to the City Council, staff, residents and existing and new businesses. The Mayor and Council's Economic Development goal for the Strategic Plan is to encourage a healthy business climate by providing incentives to new and existing businesses. Another goal is to encourage community groups and other organizations interested in community development to be involved. Economic Development will diversify and expand the development of the local business sector in the community. The City has demonstrated its commitment to direct support of economic development by creating a web based information system that serves as one-stop shopping for Economic Development needs. Economic Development tools presented in this web page include an asset inventory and links to other sources of useful information about the community.

Development Services: Development Services is designed to be one-stop shopping for prompt review of all phases of development. This comes from the Mayor and Council's continuing commitment to provide qualified staff and experienced professional input. Development Services is comprised of the Planning and Zoning Department, the City Engineer and Building Official.

The primary task of the Planning and Zoning Department is to administer and enforce the City of Benson Zoning Code, as well as implementing the City of Benson General Plan and Specific Plans for master planned areas. The Planning Director serves as the Subdivision Coordinator by coordinating plan reviews on all new subdivision plats and commercial development plans, and processing applications for General Plan Amendments and Zoning changes.

One of the predominant responsibilities of the City Engineer is to manage the development review process by overseeing the submission, review, and approval of private development plans. Services include review of plats, development plans, rezoning cases, and improvement plans. With the emphasis on the safety of the public, the City Engineer will focus on the technical aspects of the infrastructure; such as roadway design, drainage, and traffic engineering.

The main goal of the Building Official is to safeguard the health, safety and general welfare of the public, through Adopted Building Codes. The Building Official issues building permits after the examination of plans, calculations and specifications that show compliance with Building, Electrical, Plumbing, Mechanical, Outdoor Lighting and Pool Codes. The Building Official provides inspections of all aspects of construction and components that become part of the structure.

B. PUBLIC SAFETY:

Police Service: The Benson Police Department consists of the Chief of Police and as many police officers as approved by the City Council in order to ensure the safety of the City's residents. The goal of the department shall be realized by the contributions and positive attitudes of its members and the community. It draws upon the community through the City Council to give it the power and authority to provide quality professional service. The Animal Control Division of the Benson Police Department is dedicated to the safety of the community while respecting and preserving the lives of dogs and cats through adoption. The Animal Control Division has an Intergovernmental Agreement with Cochise County which expands its capability to reach animals in need in both the City and the County.

Fire Service: The Benson Fire Department's mission is to provide its customers (residents, businesses and visitors) protection from natural and manmade causes of loss of life and property. It strives to provide this service through community education, fire suppression, rescue and emergency management services, hazardous material mitigation and fire code compliance. Additional duties include Community Education and active recruiting of new Volunteer Firefighters.

Utilities: The City of Benson provides the following services: Natural Gas, Water, Wastewater and Sanitation. Further information on these services can be found under Section D. Public Works. Along with these services the City of Benson provides an adequate certified trained staff.

C. LEISURE SERVICES:

Library: The business of the library is to meet the information, knowledge, and reading needs of the people. The public library supports this mission by providing services, materials, and Internet access to meet the needs of the adult and youth in the community. The Benson Library service area extends beyond the City limits, including surrounding communities and rural residents of Cochise County. There are currently 7,000 registered cardholders. The City library is part of the Cochise County Library system.

Parks: The Parks Division provides municipal Parks services to the residents of the City and the surrounding areas. Three public parks facilities: Lions Park, Apache Park and Union Street Park provide residents with a variety of leisure opportunities. Park amenities include a swimming pool, sports fields with lights, a basketball court, horseshoe pits, a volleyball court, a skate park, walking trails, several ramadas, barbeque grills, a playground and restrooms.

Recreation: The Recreation Division works closely with our local and surrounding public schools and sports leagues. The City of Benson's programs are operated at the highest level of quality to ensure a safe environment to develop lifetime residents. The program provides a pool program including lap swimming, open swim and swimming lessons for adults and youth, as well as senior citizen programs, adult fitness programs and after school programs. In conjunction with the Benson Unified School District, our summer recreation program provides camps, activities and trips.

Tourism: The Tourism Division provides relevant and interesting information to local residents, City employees, and to business and leisure travelers that will result in improving their access to city services, programs and amenities, enhancing the image of the City of Benson. One of the key elements is the tourism web-site that includes a regional calendar of events. The number of tourists that travel through Benson to get to local destinations exceeds 500,000 annually. The Tourism Center promotes Benson and local businesses by utilizing many forms of advertising, which in turn supports workforce development potential.

Special Events: The City is committed to hosting and sponsoring special events. With the strong leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and the support of special committees, the City of Benson has a variety of annual special events. For example, the 4th of July Celebration, Butterfield Overland Stage Days, Christmas on Main Street, Bluegrass in the Park and the Biker Rodeo. The City investment in these special events not only pays dividends to our local merchants but also contributes to the image of Benson, helping housing sales and supporting our workforce development.

RV Parks: The City has 14 RV parks with approximately 1,800 recreational vehicle spots; many of these spaces are occupied by retirees with occupancy ranging from 3 or 4 months each year to year-round residency.

D. PUBLIC WORKS:

Streets: The Public Works Street Division maintains all streets and roadway drainage-ways to ensure that the facilities function in the manner in which they were designed. The Streets Division oversees traffic operations, streets maintenance, and maintains drainage structures.

Natural Gas Utility: The City of Benson's Gas Utility Division provides the majority of gas services in Benson; while Southwest Gas provides services in the Highway 90 area. The Gas Utility provides outstanding customer service, providing the most effective and economical methods for the distribution of Natural Gas. The Gas Utility provides maintenance to ensure a safe, effective and operational system, ensuring that Federal, and State standards are met or exceeded.

Water Utility: The primary function of the Water Utility Division is the protection of public health and safety through the production and efficient delivery of water that meets and/or exceeds water quality standards and in sufficient quantity to meet customer demands. Responsibilities include regulatory compliance, customer service, promotion of water conservation, efficient use of available water resources and coordination with the development community.

Wastewater Utility: The Wastewater Utility Division provides outstanding customer service, while providing the most effective and economical methods for the collection and treatment of wastewater. The Wastewater Utility provides maintenance to ensure a safe, effective and operational system while ensuring that Federal, and State environmental standards are met or exceeded.

Sanitation Utility: The Sanitation Fund accounts for the City's solid waste (garbage pickup) service. Southwest Disposal has contracted with the City for the past five years to provide this service. The City recently entered into a new contract that will fix the price for their services for the next five-year period.

Airport: The Benson Municipal Airport (E95) is equipped with a 4,000 foot long, 75 foot wide runway (10/28). The airport is located 120 nautical miles from Sky Harbor International Airport, and 30.5 nautical miles from Tucson International Airport. The Benson airport is a full service airport with fuel, maintenance operations, car rental, flight training, and aircraft rental and sales. The City will continue to aggressively deliver airport projects, maximizing the use of Federal Aviation Administration and Arizona Department of Transportation Grants along with matching City funds.

6. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

A. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Long-Term Population Projection

The long term population projection demonstrates Benson is in the path of growth. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), *City of Benson, Small Area Transportation Study*, October 2007 predicts that Benson could have 25,000 new housing units or a population of 78,210 by 2030. This ADOT projection is based on future annexations. The City of Benson, *General Development Plan, Technical Appendices*, provides a population projection of 53,622 people within the incorporated area. Since the time of the publishing of the appendix to the general plan population estimate, the City has annexed additional lands.

Available Lots

The City of Benson has a large inventory of available lots that are ready to build on. The current July 2008 estimate for ready to build lots is 935 which includes master planned communities with custom lots that have utilities. In addition, there are six approved subdivisions that have infrastructure improvements to be completed within two years for an additional 771 lots. This demonstrates that Benson is in the position to take advantage of future growth.

Sales Tax Revenues

The City's primary sources of locally generated revenues are the local Transaction Privilege Taxes. The City's Tax Code mirrors Arizona's "Model City Tax Code", which most communities in the State follow. The tax has several components, as described below.

The **General Sales Tax** is 2.5% on all sales of tangible personal property, including food products. One half cent of the tax is restricted for wastewater treatment plant debt retirement and other wastewater infrastructure projects. The remaining 2% of revenue generated from the tax accrues to the General Fund, which supports the City's basic services, such as police, fire and parks.

The **Construction Sales Tax** rate is 4% on commercial and residential construction activities. The tax is paid based on 65% of the sales price of the construction activity. The revenues generated by the tax are restricted to capital projects identified in the City's Capital Projects Fund.

The **Bed Tax** rate is 2% on all accommodations rented for less than 30 days. The bed tax revenues accrue to the General Fund, but are informally tied to City activities that support tourism and the local Chamber of Commerce.

The **Major Purchase Incentive Sales Tax** rate is 1%, in lieu of the regular 2.5% sales tax, on all single purchases of tangible personal property in excess of \$5,000. Proceeds from the tax accrue to the General Fund.

Impact Fees: All impact fees are to cover the effects the growth will have on manpower, street repair, police, fire and parks. Additional information can be obtained from the Building Department at (520) 586-2003.

Cochise College, Center for Economic Research (CER)

Cochise College, Center for Economic Research (CER) produced an annual economic review and forecast publication: *Benson Economic Outlook*. The CER provides economic information and forecasts to assist community leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in making informed decisions. The *Benson Economic Outlook* provides an independent and detailed review of Benson's demographics, including employment, retail and trade, housing and real estate, as well as agriculture, and tourism in Mexico, Ft. Huachuca, and Cochise County. The *Benson Economic Outlook* is a

valuable resource to understand Benson’s economic environment and is available and updated yearly.

B. CITY OF BENSON GENERAL PLAN

The City’s Vision Statement challenges the City’s elected officials to lead the City into the future by balancing economic vitality with quality of life issues, and by understanding that economic success can negatively affect the environment, decreasing quality of life. The unique characteristics of Benson’s environment are important to protect. The environmental planning portion of the General Plan goal is to maintain the overall environmental quality while preserving the area’s natural resources. This is best expressed in the General Plan’s land use designations of Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Wildlife Corridors, Open Space, and Low Density Residential use. Following the City’s General Plan, we can achieve economic vitality while still maintaining our unique environment. The General Plan determines where appropriate residential, commercial, industrial development should occur. The General Plan land use designation in the Commercial and Business Park/Industrial Park areas are generally clustered. It is important to note that the General Plan is a dynamic document designed to grow with the City’s needs, and from time to time General Plan amendments will be needed to support the continued economic vitality of the City. The following two sections give a description of the Commercial and Business Park/Industrial Park area in the City. The Current General Plan and Zoning Maps are available on the City website www.cityofbenson.com or upon request at (520) 586-2003. The City of Benson requires an impact fee for all new Single Family Residences, Multi-Family dwelling units and Commercial Buildings. Impact fees are determined from the infill zone map (Chapter 16-4 of the City Code). There are three types of impact fees: infill, non-infill and commercial. The infill zone is a flat rate to encourage growth in the city proper. Non-infill zone rates, Multi-family and commercial impact fees are determined from a work sheet.

Commercial: Commercial land was designated in the General Plan as any area or parcel containing mercantile, retail or other business activity, including associated parking and ancillary structures. Commercial land use is divided into two designations: Community Commercial (CC) and Regional Commercial (RC). Several commercial areas have developed in the City of Benson over the years; five main areas can be categorized into major commercial areas.

City of Benson Commercial Area

Designation	Main Commercial Areas
CC	The SR 80/Fourth Street Corridor. This strip comprises Benson’s “Main Street” and extends roughly from Exit 303 to the City’s eastern boundary.
CC	Eastern portion of SR 80. Several commercial concerns are located along the SR 80 corridor as it heads out of the City toward St. David.
CC	Ocotillo Street. Ocotillo Street, running north/south, intersects I-10, Fourth Street and Union Street and contains a range of commercial activity.
RC	The Exit 302 node. Intersection of I-10 and SR 90; this area is already developing rapidly and contains tremendous potential for future growth.
RC	SR 90 Corridor. This area extends from Exit 302 to the Cottonwood Canyon Wash.

Business Park/Industrial Park

The Business Park/Industrial Park (BP/IP) general plan designation provides for the orderly development of industrial and non-retail commercial activity within the City. Retail and wholesale activity are in no way prohibited from locating in the BP/IP designation; however, the preferred use is for industrial use, light manufacturing and business/office park development.

City of Benson Business Park / Industrial Park

Designation	Main Business Park / Industrial Park Areas
BP / IP	Airport Industrial Complex. The City looks to take advantage of its airport and its prime location to both rail and roadway connections. Access to the site is presently gained via Aviation Drive.
BP / IP	Ocotillo Street Sites. Just off the eastern side of Ocotillo, two BP/IP sites are designated, the first presently contains the El Paso Gas facility and the second is presently vacant.
BP / IP	The proposed Cochise College Business Park Site. This site is situated just south of the Cochise College Campus and continues to Commerce Drive; it has prime access to SR 90.
BP / IP	SR 80 Site. This site along SR 80 forms the southeastern entry way to the City of Benson, the Business Park for this area has been carried over from the Benson General Development Plan adopted in 1993.
BP / IP	Union Pacific Holdings. This area is bounded by SR 80 on the west, Fourth Street to the north, and the City Limits to the east. The site is ideal for development with its rail and roadway access.

Benson Municipal Airport



PART II: COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

7. COMMUNITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

In assessing a community's ability to support and sustain Economic Development, the City's Economic Development Subcommittee conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The subcommittee did this utilizing several sources of information, including examination of the existing General Plan, *Benson Economic Outlook 2008*, Capital Improvement Program and other studies, documents, and relevant reports.

These results are helpful for setting goals and objectives in the following chapters.

A. EDUCATION

There are many educational opportunities in Benson. Benson's excellent primary and secondary education institutions have always produced outstanding students. Below is a brief description of the education providers in Benson.

Benson Unified School District: The high performing Benson Unified School District provides education at the following levels: high school, middle school and primary school. Benson Public Schools is a learning community that effectively uses its resources to provide a quality system of curriculum, instruction and assessment that ensures avenues of success for all students. For more information please visit their website at: www.bensonsd.k12.az.us

St. David School District: The St. David School District is situated on a two-school campus and serves students from pre-school through high school. Academics are the primary focus at all grade levels, and both the elementary and high school recently received a highly performing label from the Arizona Department of Education. For more information please visit their website at www.stdavidschool.net.

Charter Schools: In addition to the Benson and St. David School Districts, the Benson area also has three charter schools: Visions Unlimited Academy, San Pedro Valley High School and New West Charter School. Each of the three charter schools received an Arizona Learns rating of Performing for the 2005-2006 school year.

The City of Benson also contains various small private schools and pre-schools.

Cochise College, Benson Center: The Benson Center of Cochise College is located on State Route 90 just off I-10 at exit 302. It places special emphasis on computer aided learning. Cochise College was established in 1961 as the second Community College in Arizona. The Benson Center is committed to serving citizens throughout the county for all educational needs. Cochise College offers Associates Degrees in General Education, Early Childhood Education, Nursing and General Electives. In addition, the Benson Center has established a winter schedule of non-credit short term classes offered in January, February and March to meet community needs.

University of Arizona: Benson is in close proximity to the University of Arizona and the University Medical School, with these being located approximately 40 miles from Benson. The University of Arizona, South Campus is located in Sierra Vista, approximately 30 miles from Benson.

B. WORKFORCE

A qualified workforce is the key to the attraction of new businesses, especially high-quality, high-paying jobs. To attract people to Benson, the City must have the basic services that people are accustomed to and the City must market its unique charm and outdoor environment. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the City to provide information on the existing local and regional workforces.

Local Work Force: Benson is the commercial and service hub for a population of 30,000 residents, which includes the communities of St. David, Pomerene, Mescal, J-Six, Cascabel, and Dragoon. The residents of these communities shop in Benson and contribute to the available workforce for the City of Benson.

Proximity of Major Work Forces: Benson’s close proximity to Pima County’s population centers is a great opportunity in terms of workforce development. In the metropolitan Tucson area two emerging population centers are Corona de Tucson and the Vail Area. Residents can drive to Benson in 30 minutes from these areas. The following table provides the distance in miles and time to major surrounding points.

Distance to Benson

	Mileage	Time (min.)
Tucson, Downtown	48	45
Tucson, I-10 & Houghton	28	35
Tucson International Airport	43	40
Sierra Vista	22	30
Ft. Huachuca	25	32
Willcox	36	30

C. HEALTH CARE

Because Benson enjoys the regional medical facilities of the Benson Hospital, regional psychiatric healthcare facilities SEABHS, Benson is a service hub for the surrounding community. Many of the doctor’s offices, dental offices, and chiropractic care offices are located in Benson. Additionally, Benson also has a 60 bed nursing home, Quiburi Mission Samaritan Center located at 850 S. State Route 80.

Benson Hospital: Benson Hospital is a 22-bed facility with a 24-hour physician staffed emergency service equipped with a helicopter port. Benson Hospital employs both resident doctors and dentists, with additional physicians/specialists visiting the hospital at various times during the month. In March 2007, the hospital opened its newly expanded, 3,000-square-foot emergency room. The expanded emergency room accommodates 12 beds, secured admitting, CT scans, an isolation room with separate entrance, and an urgent care unit. For more information please visit their website at: www.bensonhospital.org

D. TRANSPORTATION

As a transportation hub, the City of Benson is the gateway to Cochise County. The vast majority of people traveling into or through Cochise County pass through Benson. This section will provide a brief overview of the highway system, the surface street, air transportation and the rail system. A review of Benson’s transportation system makes it clear that the transportation system can support future growth.

Highways: The City of Benson is located on Interstate 10 with four traffic interchanges that bring motorists into the City. The State Highway system is crucial to Benson because it provides linkages from Benson to rural areas and to other Arizona cities. State Route 90 is on the west end of town and

is the primary access to the growth belt of Benson which leads to Kartchner Caverns State Park, Sierra Vista and Ft. Huachuca. Fourth Street (B-10) functions as the City’s “Main Street”. State Route 80 continues south at the east end of town to Tombstone and Bisbee. Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has jurisdiction over these highways and has taken a proactive approach to transportation planning and programming for improvements to the highway system in Benson. Examples of these are: ADOT just completed the resurfacing of I-10 running through Benson; the I-10 / SR-90 Traffic Interchange Improvement and B-10 / SR-80 Junction Final Design Concept Report were recently completed.

Surface Streets: As mentioned in the above section, I-10, SR 80, and SR 90 are the major roadways in Benson. Additional arterial roadways in Benson are Ocotillo Street and Pomerene Road. A north and south corridor utilizing Ocotillo Street runs north to serve the airport and south to serve the City’s Medical Center, Benson Schools, the Community Center and the City Pool. The City of Benson’s guiding document for its future transportation system is the General Plan and is supplemented by the *Small Area Transportation Study*, September 2007. This study defines the projected need of transportation for the next 30 years. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in Benson has provisions to improve the traffic circulation system. Included in the program is the extensive pavement management program and major roadway improvement projects. In particular, the CIP has included the Ocotillo Street Phase I (4th street to Union Street) and Ocotillo Street Phase II (4th Street to I-10) projects. These roadway improvements and pavement management projects are planned to take place in the next five years to help improve the efficiency and quality of traffic flow throughout the community. Benson is being proactive in addressing the threat that rapid population growth can bring, and is striving to maintain an excellent transportation system throughout the community. Traffic Volumes were taken in the winter of 2006. For additional traffic counts see the *Small Area Transportation Study* pages 46 and 47.

Traffic Volumes

Road Section	Average Daily Traffic
SR 90 North of Jennella Drive	12,224
SR 90 North of Post Road	8,710
4 th Street (B-10) West of Ocotillo Street	9,467
4 th Street (B-10) West of Patagonia Road	12,292
4 th Street (B-10) West of Pomerene Road	3,839
Ocotillo Street North of I-10	2,610
Ocotillo Street North of 4 th Street (B-10)	3,505
SR 80 North of Post Road	8,907
Pomerene Road North of I-10	2,399

Air Transportation: Benson’s proximity to air travel is a plus for the community, with three airports located within a 45 minute drive to Benson. The Benson Municipal Airport is located at the far northwest area of the City, and is accessible from Ocotillo Street. Tucson International Airport is located west of Benson, just south of I-10, and is only a 40 minute drive. Sierra Vista Municipal Airport is located south of Benson. Having both an international airport and two municipal airports at such a close proximity makes air travel a convenience, and these airports can service almost any air travel needs that Benson residents and businesses may have. The City completed the Airport Master Plan in 2007; this comprehensive plan defines the airport projects that will lead the City for the next 20 years, this is in addition to over \$7,100,000 in airport construction funding since 1995.

Rail Transportation: The City of Benson has a variety of rail opportunities including Amtrack service. The Union Pacific Railroad travels east-west through the City, tracking along the south side of Interstate I-10. The Union Pacific Railroad provides a transport route from Los Angeles and eastward to Chicago and New Orleans. The presence of the major railroad within and proximate to Benson makes rail service readily available and conveniently located for the City. The Union Pacific Railroad

has a spur in Benson which connects with the San Pedro Railroad. The San Pedro Railroad Trans-load spur operates seven miles of track that runs south to the Apache Nitrogen Plant. The Union Pacific Holding listed in the General Plan has designated 234 acres along the San Pedro Railroad Trans-load spur as Business Park/Industrial Park.

E. UTILITIES

As a utility provider, the City of Benson provides Water, Wastewater, Sanitation and Natural Gas services. Providing adequate municipal services for existing and future business establishments is critical to the success of Economic Development in Benson. Benson has the potential for extremely rapid population growth. While advantageous in many areas; this can be a potential threat when it comes to infrastructure and utility issues. The City is presently working to stay ahead of the curve to continue to provide services at the level of which Benson residents are accustomed. To address population growth, Benson is actively developing master plans and designs to expand capacity of both the water and wastewater systems. The City will aggressively deliver projects programmed into the approved 2007-2011 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP lists the planned projects for the next five years.

Potable Water:

The City of Benson Water Utility is also taking a proactive approach to ensure the City has a sustainable water supply now and far into the future. This comprehensive approach to water resource management includes water conservation and the use of reclaimed water. For example, the Water Conservation Plan was approved by Mayor and Council in July of 2007. The City is also committed to infrastructure planning and this is best demonstrated by the Water Distribution System Model, completed in October 2006; which developed a hydraulic model to evaluate the performance of the current system and recommended improvements to the system.

On October 12, 2005, the Arizona Department of Water Resources issued the City the Decision and Order Number 21-401803 on the Designation of an Adequate Water Supply. As a result of this decision, the City was granted 12,784 acre feet of groundwater use per year.

The City has a current water capacity of 5.3 mgd with peak demand at 1.5 mgd. Currently the average daily demand is 0.7 mgd with required storage at 1.0 mgd. Programmed in the Capital Improvement Plan are six water supply construction projects. The City is currently in the process of developing one additional well, 1.5 million gallons of reservoir capacity, and 1.0 mgd of delivery capacity to meet its future demands.

Wastewater: The current capacity of the primary wastewater treatment facility is 1.5 mgd and an average daily inflow of 0.5 mgd, leaving an excess of capacity of 1.0 mgd. An expansion study is programmed in the CIP to address the wastewater treatment plant's ability to process an average of 3.0 mgd. The wastewater treatment plant expansion would produce a high quality reclaimed water system so that potable water resources may be supplemented through groundwater recharge or indirect reuse. To better understand the wastewater collection system, the Council approved CIP Project WW-07-01 on the Wastewater Skeletal Model. It is clear the City has an excess of wastewater treatment plant capacity today, and has positioned itself to meet future needs if the City experiences rapid population growth.

Natural Gas: The City of Benson Gas Utility provides the vast majority of service in Benson with Southwest Gas providing service along the Highway 90 area. Southwest Gas is positioned to serve the areas of the City that have the potential for rapid population growth.

Electric Utility: Electric distribution services are provided by Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SSVEC), which maintains a branch office in Benson. Arizona G&T Cooperatives

are headquartered in Benson and provide SSVEC and other cooperatives and small utilities in the Southwest United States with generation and electric transmission services.

Telecommunication: Benson is serviced by both Cox and Qwest for high-speed internet and telephone service. With the exception of the airport area, all of the existing business parks in the community have advanced telecom infrastructure. Fiber optic lines are available in some areas of the City.

F. ATTRACTIONS:

The City of Benson is known as the Home of Kartchner Caverns, and places to explore immense outdoor wonders. As the gateway to Cochise County, Benson is a perfect place to explore a variety of cultural and historic points of interest in southern Arizona. Additional resources: Appendix A, *Benson Economic Outlook 2008*, Tourism Section Pages 49 through 55 provides more detail of tourist opportunities in the Benson area.

Kartchner Caverns: Kartchner Caverns State Park is located on 550 acres at the foothills of the Whetstone Mountains, 12 miles south of I-10 along State Route 90. Kartchner Caverns is home to one of the world's longest soda straw stalactites, and some of the most extensive and unusual cave formations ever found. Between 2000 and 2005, an average of over 192,000 people visited the park each year. www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/kartchner.html

San Pedro Golf Course: San Pedro Golf Course is a championship, 18-hole course 30 minutes southeast of Tucson which opened for play January 2003. The very unique "River – Wilderness" terrain sets the course apart from any other course in southern Arizona. Golfers will remember the San Pedro for a front nine that plays along the San Pedro River and over natural washes, and a back nine playing through natural canyons with a distinct links feel. The back nine travels through canyons and concludes with the 457-yard par four split fairway/dual lake eighteenth hole. The golf course stretches out to 7,313 yards from the Championship tees and there are five sets of tees to accommodate golfers of all skill levels.

Turquoise Hills Family Golf Center: Turquoise Hills Family Golf Center offers 18 challenging, executive-length holes for golfers of all ages and experience levels. Elevated tees and greens afford glimpses of our five-tiered waterfall, surrounding mountains and Arizona's only Triple Green. They offer an 18-hole, par 58 "executive style" golf course that is challenging and fun for golfers of all skill levels. With holes as short as 79 yards or as long as 348 yards, you will need every club in your bag on this beautifully designed golf course. There is also a 5,000 square foot putting green and a 30 yard chipping green. 18 holes can be completed in less than 3 hours.

Benson Birding Trail & Waterfowl Viewing Pond: Benson has its own Birding Trail right on the San Pedro River as well as a Waterfowl Viewing Pond. Southern Arizona and the San Pedro Valley, offer some of the best bird watching areas in the world. Not only are there many species of birds and waterfowl, but there are many varieties of mammals, reptiles and plant life. The San Pedro River flows north out of Mexico and attracts a large number of diverse wildlife to its wetlands. The Benson Birding Trail is located between the San Pedro River and the San Pedro Golf Course.

San Pedro Valley Arts & Historical Society: Today's Museum is housed in a 1920's store building. Take a trip back in time and experience many "one-of-a-kind" displays celebrating local history. View maps of the "the way we were" and have an interesting time deciding how long ago old dental tools, mining tools, and household goods were used. The History of the cattle and mining industry abounds. Our museum is staffed by knowledgeable and friendly volunteers under the guidance of a board of directors.

The Amerind Foundation: The Amerind Foundation is located 12 miles east of Benson in Texas Canyon. The foundation is an anthropological and archaeological museum and research center dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of Native American cultures and their histories.

Gammons Gulch Ghost Town, Movie Set: Gammons Gulch Ghost Town / Movie Set is located north of Benson in the High Desert of Cochise County. Gammons Gulch has a collection of antiques, old cars, and movie memorabilia. The movie set location offers self-guided tours or personalized tours of the set's Old West Town. www.gammonsgulch.com

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area: The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, extends from St. David (just south of Benson along State Route 80) to Naco, Mexico. The San Pedro House is located just off State Route 90 between Sierra Vista and Bisbee.

Cochise Stronghold: Cochise Stronghold, a historic site located within the Coronado National Forest, is the rocky fortress where the famed Chiricahua Apache Chief Cochise and about 1,000 of his followers held out against the U.S. Cavalry in the 1860s. Found within the Stronghold are hiking/equestrian trails and an Interpretive Trail consisting of a short loop among the oaks and junipers.

Benson Historic Walking Tour: The Visitor Center or Benson Museum can supply the Benson Historic Walking Tour brochure. This walk through Benson's past will tell you a bit about the town's architecture and its people. Benson has been a trade and transportation hub for Southwestern Cochise County since 1880. At one time, stages rumbled into town loaded with passengers and silver bars from the Tombstone mines and the Southern Pacific Railroad kept its huge turntable busy with railroad traffic. The different architecture styles left throughout the 19th and 20th centuries makes for an interesting tour.

Singing Wind Bookshop: The Singing Wind Bookshop is located in a compact ranch house about two miles North of Benson. This is both the business and the home of Winifred Bundy, who opened the book shop a quarter of a century ago. Sturdy wooden shelves reach to the ceiling with intriguing titles. If you can't find what you are looking for, the owner or manager will be happy to help you in your quest. The Singing Wind Book Shop holds several special events during the year where the authors come read from their books.

Triangle "T" Ranch: The Triangle T Guest Ranch is located 14 miles east of Benson in the foothills of the Dragoon Mountains. One of the oldest ranches in Arizona, its unique setting in the beautiful Texas Canyon, amidst gigantic boulders piled high in startling formations, offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the southwest. At an elevation of 4500 feet, temperatures at the Triangle T Guest Ranch are moderate year round. Guest Casitas are available by the night and the week.



**Benson's Butterfield Rodeo
Held During Butterfield Overland
Stage Days**

PART III: STRATEGIC PLAN**8. STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS****A. ECONOMIC VITALITY DEPARTMENT**

The elected officials provide the leadership and direction for the City's Economic future. The City Manager is responsible for coordinating and implementing the City's economic development efforts. This is accomplished with assistance from various departments. In order to focus on all of the overarching strategies of Economic Development, the City Manager must provide guidance and ensure that proper resources are available. Therefore, the City shall develop adequate human resources to ensure Economic Vitality and focus on general economic development, tourism, revitalization, and business services.

Goal A1: Improved partnerships: a regional approach

The City should foster cooperative relationships with all parties involved in the ultimate goal of providing for long-term economic sustainability. This will involve reaching out to our neighboring communities, local school districts, utility providers, and other agencies. It will also involve reaching out to the private sector, such as the Chamber of Commerce, in order to ensure that the business community understands the City's interests, and that the City understands business interests. The City of Benson understands the importance of regional partners such as Cochise County, Tucson Regional Economic Organization (TREO), and other regional economic groups.

Goal A2: Establish Data Base of Shovel Ready Property

The City will provide a GIS mapping for shovel ready property including the availability of utilities. This GIS based mapping would include a zoning and general plan layers.

B. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The City of Benson must market and recruit targeted employers and support targeted existing businesses in order to provide sustainable employment opportunities in Benson. Important as well, is the assurance that new employers' pay scales accommodate working and living in Benson. Economic Development efforts will focus attraction and expansion efforts on small to mid-sized companies that generate high wages and provide minimal negative community impacts. They will also assist new employers with the City's development review processes (such as zoning, design review, building permits, business licenses).

Goal B1: Regional Airport Industrial and Commercial Area (Target Cluster Employment)

The City will plan the development of the airport to maximize the draw of commercial and industrial users while protecting the long term viability of the airport. Proper land use planning will protect the expansion and economic use of the property. The City will utilize innovative land use planning to integrate residential housing into the land use plan. This goal will be accomplished by simultaneously planning on the micro and macro level. On the micro level, the City will promote the existing development of the airport by maximizing the number of prospective candidates awarded pad leases in the Request For Qualification process. The plan will explore funding sources for future pad development using the airport master plan as a guideline. On the macro level, the existing airport is surrounded by approximately nine square miles of state trust land. The City will work with the State Land Department to develop a land use plan around the airport and expand the existing General Plan to include this area. This land use plan will develop a utility plan to serve water and wastewater to this area. The Plans will be prepared in anticipation of eventual annexation of this area into the City.

Goal B2: Union Pacific Holdings

This area is east of SR 80 and south of 4th Avenue. The area has the distinct advantage of having a rail spur run down the middle of the property. The primary property owner is the Union Pacific

Railroad with the San Pedro Railroad operating this spur. Benson recognizes the Union Pacific rail spur is an ideal location for industrial development and distribution warehouses.

C. TOURISM

The City plans to enhance the economic well-being and quality of life of the community and its residents by strengthening the local tourism industry through a comprehensive tourism development program. The program will consist of tourism research, destination marketing and promotion, support of special events, and the development of destination attractions and tourism infrastructure. The objective of the program is to create a more competitive visitor destination and to aggressively market it. Appendix A, *Benson Economic Outlook 2008*, Tourism Section pages 49 through 55 provides a comprehensive overview of Tourism and illustrates the economic benefits of Tourism.

Goal C1: Event Retention and Development

Major events are one of Benson’s most important tourism marketing tools. They not only attract significant numbers of visitors to the area, but also provide valuable exposure to potential visitors through their media coverage. The City will continue to identify new event opportunities and evaluate the expansion of existing successful events which have the potential to grow and attract regional or national audiences.

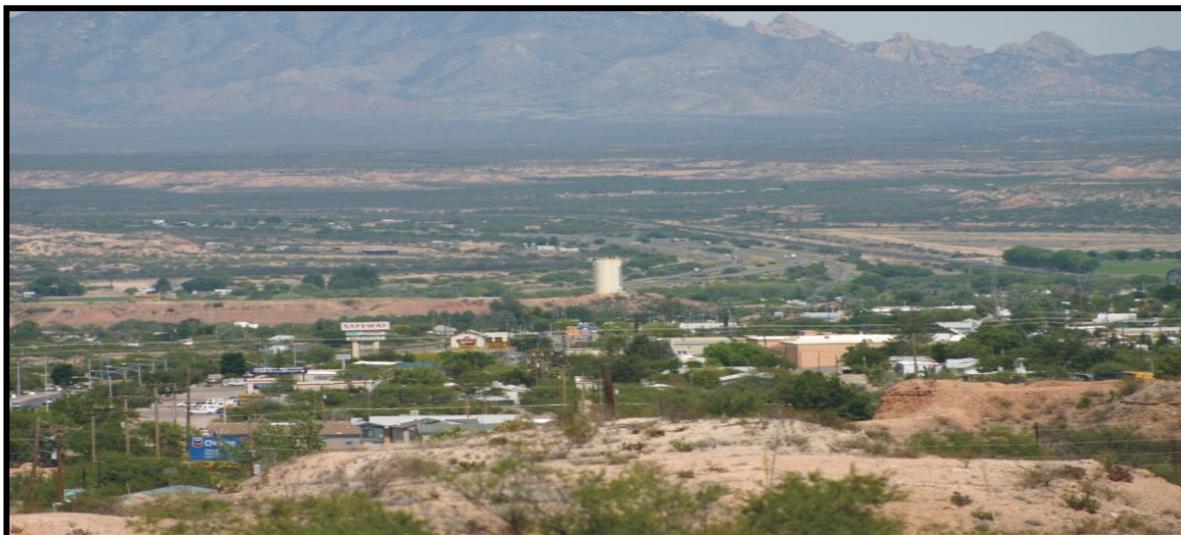
D. BUSINESS SERVICES

The City will enhance the economic well-being and quality of life of the community and its residents by assisting in the retention and expansion of the existing business base, preserving employment, maintaining and expanding the tax base, and reinforcing the positive economic environment of Benson. Encouraging entrepreneurship means helping new and young businesses and organizations thrive.

Goal D1: Small Business Information

The City will continue small business resource education programs. The City’s website will include information on both planned and operating businesses. Additionally, analyses of business licenses and transaction privilege tax receipts will provide valuable insight on the current business climate. The City will also provide assistance to start up businesses, including identification of applicable regulations, where to obtain business counseling, and other agencies they need to work with.

City of Benson



PART IV: CONCLUSION

10. MONITORING THE PLAN

The Economic Development Sub Committee will be responsible for analyzing and evaluating the progress of the plan.

11. CONCLUSION

The City of Benson is the gateway to Cochise County, and being in close proximity to Tucson, combined with Benson’s quality of life, puts the City in the path of growth. The City enjoys robust tourism, welcomes its winter visitors, and serves as a hub for the surrounding communities. Additionally, Benson’s Mayor and Council are committed to increasing that quality of life for the City residents and visitors.

With the leadership of the elected officials, Benson has positioned itself to take advantage of opportunities and stay focused on building a quality community. Further, the community leaders recognize that environmental protection and responsible development are important components of building a community. This plan identifies the resources it will take to build a competitive economy. This Strategic Plan for Economic Development demonstrates the Mayor and Council’s commitment to the development of the City of Benson.

Benson’s Visitor Center



Welcome to Benson