

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

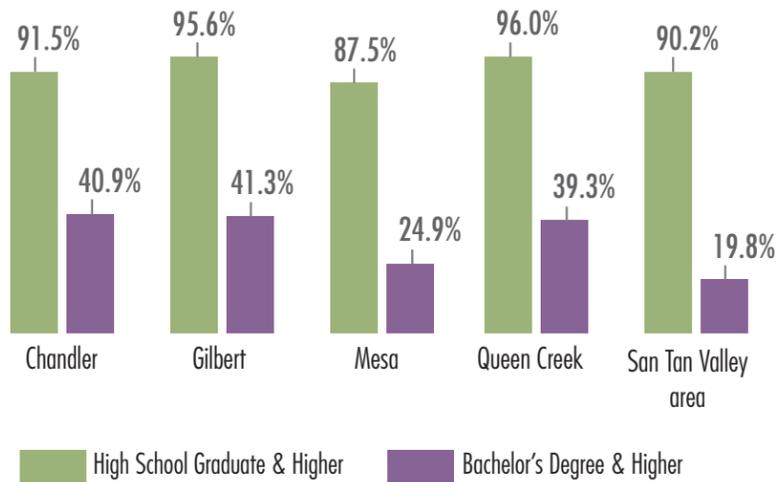
This Element focuses on several key areas that will improve the quality of life for Queen Creek’s residents by:

- Generating job growth within industry groups by maximizing existing assets.
- Promoting job creation and revenue generation for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Guiding infrastructure and capital projects to stimulate private sector development.
- Encouraging commercial activity in the Town Center.

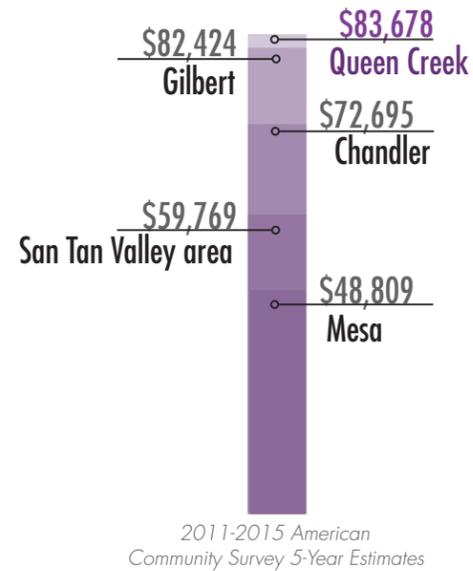
Queen Creek has evolved from a small farming town of 4,000 residents in 2000 to a bustling community of 41,200 persons in 2017. This growth trajectory is expected to continue with a 2027 population forecast of 73,200 (Town of Queen Creek forecast). Queen Creek’s rapid population growth has stimulated the development of a number of retail centers that provide services to residents of the Town as well as the surrounding region. The Town Center of Queen Creek has become a hub of commercial activity that includes education, healthcare and entertainment.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

PERCENT HIGHER EDUCATION



2015 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Queen Creek’s residents are an important asset that will assist in economic development efforts. High-skilled employment and technical jobs often require a workforce with higher educational attainment and can provide higher income levels. Residents are highly educated with nearly 40% of all persons over 25 years of age having a bachelor’s degree or higher. Among major cities in Greater Phoenix with a population over 15,000 persons, Queen Creek households have the highest median income at more than \$83,000.

The Town’s adopted Economic Development Strategic Plan has identified five target industry groups that will promote job creation and complement the Town’s strengths. Those groups include:

Queen Creek’s 5 Target Industry Groups



**Agritainment & Tourism**



**Healthcare & Biotechnology**



**Higher Education**



**Software & Info. Technology**



**Manufacturing**

Within these industry groups, entrepreneurship and small business growth are important components of economic development.

## Planning Considerations

While Queen Creek has achieved significant success over the past two decades and developed a highly recognizable brand, challenges and the growing pains of a young community persist.

### Lack of Freeway Access

Cities to the west and north of Queen Creek are served by major freeways which provide sites for retail, office and industrial uses. Increasingly over the decades, freeways have become the primary determinant of employment opportunities in Greater Phoenix. While the Town is adjacent to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, most of the current development near the airport is occurring to the north of Queen Creek near existing freeways. The SR 24 freeway currently extends to Ellsworth Road and is planned for extension to Meridian Road sometime between 2027 and 2035. That future freeway alignment will adjoin the State Land within the Town’s Planning Area. The lack of freeways near Queen Creek will be a competitive disadvantage in the near term for future office and industrial growth in the Town.

Currently, the largest employers in the Town are government, education and retailers. The long-term economic development outlook for Queen Creek is positive due to the Town’s proximity to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, which will become a major employment center. However, in the near to mid-term the forecast jobs-to-population ratio for Queen Creek is expected to lag well behind the Maricopa County average and those of Chandler and Gilbert.

### Commuting

Approximately 95% of Queen Creek’s workforce commutes out of the Town to jobs in other cities. While this is not unusual for a young, growing community, it places stress on workers’ quality of life and on the Town’s transportation infrastructure.

### Infrastructure

Queen Creek’s infrastructure needs, particularly for transportation, are extensive. The conversion of two-lane county roads to five-lane arterials is needed to accommodate traffic generated by both current and future residents. The Town has limited resources to address these needs that are critical to economic development.

### Land Availability

Queen Creek possesses land assets that can provide for future employment growth. However, the lack of shovel-ready sites for office and industrial prospects hinders job creation in the near term.

### Town Center

Strategic development of privately-owned and Town-owned sites in the Town Center is crucial to creating a vibrant, walkable downtown. The Town Center has seen significant investment over the past several years. Attracting office employers and hotel users to complement existing retail in Town Center would strengthen the Town’s economy and quality of life.

**Public Investment**

In order to promote economic development, investment of public dollars in infrastructure must be prioritized to generate the greatest impact through the leveraging of private investment.

**Housing**

Low density single family homes dominate the residential housing market. The lack of diversity in the housing market could affect the recruitment of prospective employers to Queen Creek if affordable and varied housing options are not available for employees.

**Agritainment**

A primary component of economic development is tourism and the tax dollars that flow from those uses. The Town’s agritainment and agritourism assets, which include Schnepf Farms and the Queen Creek Olive Mill, need to be supported and expanded through the addition of complementary uses.

**Retail Leakage**

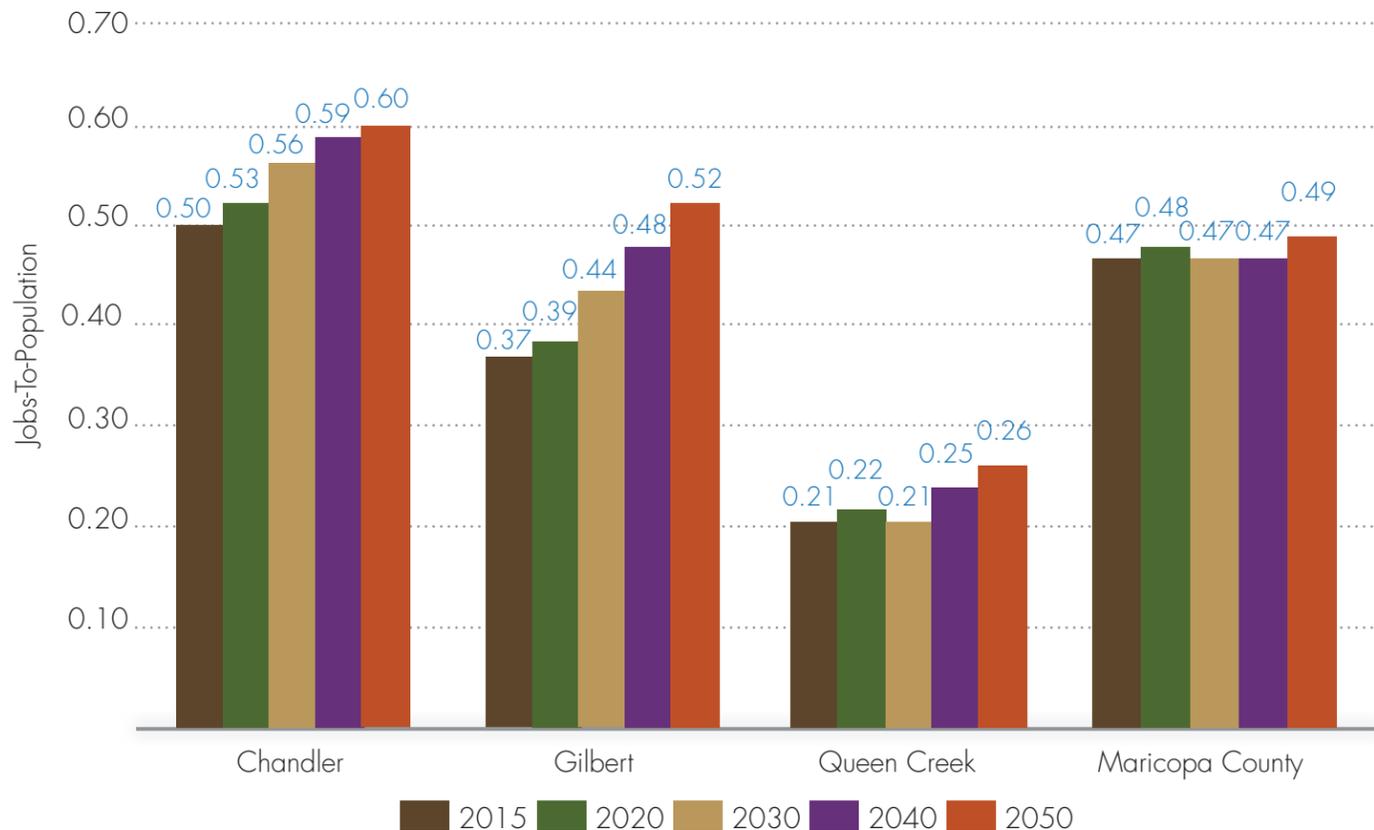
Queen Creek does not currently have a full range of retail services and will experience leakage of retail spending to nearby cities, such as Mesa and Gilbert where regional malls are located along with high value merchandisers such as car dealers and furniture retailers. On the other hand, Queen Creek likely enjoys an influx of retail spending from residents of the San Tan Valley area where retail facilities are under-supplied and not well developed.

**Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport (PMGA)**

The PMGA is located on the northern boundary of the Town Planning Area. As this airport develops, airport-related business may choose to locate in the Town’s designated industrial areas or other areas within the Town Planning Area. This could provide additional high-wage jobs for Town residents.

**Forecasted Jobs to Population Ration**  
Selected Communities

Source: Maricopa Association of Governments 2016



# Goals, Strategies, & Actions

**GOAL 1:**  
**ATTRACT PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND FOSTER JOB CREATION IN QUEEN CREEK.**

**Strategy 1.E: Position Queen Creek as a destination for health and wellness.**

*Action 1.E.1:* Promote Box Canyon as a location for a destination resort and spa.

*Action 1.E.2:* Complete the 11-mile loop to attract tourism activities.

**Strategy 1.F: Determine the market potential for additional higher education providers.**

*Action 1.F.1:* Prepare a market analysis that documents current and future demand for higher education.

*Action 1.F.2:* Leverage the Community by partnering with other institutions to provide classes and other higher-education opportunities with the Town.

**Strategy 1.G: Attract clean manufacturing and sterilization companies to Queen Creek that serve the healthcare industry.**

*Action 1.G.1:* Outreach to large biotech and medical device companies in the area to understand their need for clean manufacturing and sterilization.

**Strategy 1.H: Develop an international strategy in conjunction with already established tourism efforts.**

*Action 1.H.1:* Evaluate data for new international markets. Join relevant trade organizations and participate in appropriate sales missions.

**Strategy 1.A: Foster office development within the Town.**

*Action 1.A.1:* To reduce the costs of site selection and preparation, identify sites within the Town that are fully serviced with infrastructure and are currently zoned for office use and promote these sites to the development community.

**Strategy 1.B: Attract hotel development within Queen Creek and specifically the Town Center.**

*Action 1.B.1:* Develop a tactical marketing strategy to target hotel operators combined with a hotel feasibility/market study.

**Strategy 1.C: Recruit industries identified within the targeted group analysis.**

*Action 1.C.1:* Participate in applicable Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) and Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) prospecting missions or business calls.

**Strategy 1.D: Streamline the permitting process and remove potential barriers and explore innovation in the permitting process. Maintain a culture of customer service.**

*Action 1.D.1:* Monitor the results and tracking performance analytics.

*Action 1.D.2:* Actively communicate improvements to the business community.

**GOAL 2:**  
**CREATE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE THAT FOSTERS NEW IDEAS AND THE CREATION OF NEW BUSINESS.**

**Strategy 2.A:** Provide true collaborative, entrepreneurial co-working space for start-up companies.

*Action 2.A.1:* Provide support for Gangplank and other co-working operations.

**Strategy 2.B:** Provide comprehensive support to those who want to launch a business.

*Action 2.B.1:* Offer training sessions and seminars; identify funding sources for business startups.

*Action 2.B.2:* Create a mentoring program for entrepreneurs using seasoned executives.

**GOAL 3:**  
**POSITION QUEEN CREEK AS THE AGRITAINMENT CAPITAL OF ARIZONA.**

**Strategy 3.A:** Develop and launch a Queen Creek Agritainment promotional campaign.

**Strategy 3.B:** Expand agritainment to include wineries, breweries, distilleries, creameries, bakeries and other value added food business.

*Action 3.B.1:* Identify buildings and sites that may meet the site location needs of the industry.

**Strategy 3.C:** Diversify events at Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre when equestrian events are not taking place.

**GOAL 4:**  
**LEVERAGE TRAILS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION TO ATTRACT VISITORS.**

**Strategy 4.A:** Place trails and parks as a cornerstone for destination recreation and tourism.

*Action 4.A.1:* Complete the 11-mile loop trail to attract a wide variety of tourism activities.

**Strategy 4.B:** Become a destination for league sporting events.

*Action 4.B.1:* Evaluate the demand for league sports and potential gaps in the region that could be addressed by Queen Creek.

**GOAL 5:**  
**PLAN FOR AND INVEST IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

**Strategy 5.A:** Improve the Town’s regional transportation access.

*Action 5.A.1:* Continue working with area governments to advocate regional solutions to transportation challenges, including the extension of SR24 and future development of the north-south freeway.

*Action 5.A.2:* Implement the findings and recommendations of the Transportation Master Plan.

**Strategy 5.B:** Provide shovel-ready sites to attract new business.

*Action 5.B.1:* Implement an infrastructure improvement plan for the Town’s employment areas that includes water, wastewater, streets and other facilities.

*Action 5.B.2:* Work with State Land Department and the City of Apache Junction to conceptually plan the 5.5 square miles of State Land within the Town Planning Area.

**GOAL 6:**  
**GENERATE MORE ECONOMIC SYNERGY WITHIN THE TOWN CENTER.**

**Strategy 6.A:** Enhance the sense of place and attract additional investment within the Town Center.

*Action 6.A.1:* Develop and implement design guidelines for Ellsworth Road.

*Action 6.A.2:* Plan for higher density residential uses at key locations.

*Action 6.A.3:* Evaluate the acquisition of land within the Town Center for the siting of strategic projects and shared parking options.

*Action 6.A.4:* Create a public arts program that adds identity and character to urban spaces.

**GOAL 7:**  
**DEVELOP A ROBUST QUEEN CREEK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING PROGRAM.**

**Strategy 7.A:** Promote a unifying and distinct brand that sets Queen Creek apart as a viable business location.

*Action 7.A.1:* Develop and actively manage a branding strategy.

**Strategy 7.B:** Implement content marketing strategies.

*Action 7.B.1:* Develop and deploy a print and digital marketing strategy leveraging the Queen Creek brand.

*Action 7.B.2:* Create a targeted marketing program on social media.

**Strategy 7.C:** Collaborate and partner with other organizations.

*Action 7.C.1:* Continue the tourism partnership with “Visit Mesa.”

*Action 7.C.2:* Utilize the cooperative advertising programs provided by ACA, GPEC and the Arizona Office of Tourism.

*Action 7.C.3:* Coordinate activities with the Communiiversity, GCCC and ASU Polytechnic to assist with marketing higher education assets.

*Action 7.C.4:* Identify other collaborative marketing opportunities that may assist in achieving the Town’s economic development goals.