



2026 Town of Queen Creek Legislative Guiding Principles

The following goals and objectives have been established by the Queen Creek Town Council for 2026 as it relates to the Town's guiding principles for the legislative session. The goals and objectives, in conjunction with the Council-adopted Corporate Strategic Plan, provide direction to the Town's government relations team in advocating for the needs of the community at the Arizona State Legislature.

Overarching Goals:

- Represent the Town's vision, mission and values.
- Encourage other levels of government to work collaboratively with cities and towns on issues of mutual interest.
- Protect local funding and self-determination, as well as enhance opportunities to improve the Town's economic sustainability and provide for necessary infrastructure development.
- Advocate for access to availability of secure, long-term sustainable and fiscally responsible water resources for the current and future growth of the community.
- Promote economic development opportunities in partnership with the State consistent with the best interests of the Town.

Objective:

Protect local funding.

The Town of Queen Creek continues to maintain a balanced, fiscally sound budget. We have taxed ourselves to pay for critical infrastructure and services, adopted a primary property tax to offset some of the costs of public safety and diversified revenues to ensure fiscal sustainability in the coming years.

As part of these efforts, the Town receives a share of several funding streams based upon taxes that our residents have already paid, known as, state shared revenue. It is imperative to the fiscal health of our municipality that the distribution of those funds be maintained and protected. Any cuts to funding, the elimination of the model city tax code or its local options could limit our ability to continue to provide essential services to a rapidly growing and dynamic community.

Additionally, the Town supports efforts to make mid-year budget

adjustments when additional revenues are received from the federal or state government or when the long-term financial impact of the expenditure benefits the community collectively.

Objective:

Ensure adequate funding of state agencies as to not shift funding obligations for state services onto local government.

During times in which state revenues have not met budgeted forecasts, the Arizona Legislature has reduced or shifted funding to critical agencies such as the Arizona Department of Highway Safety, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and the Arizona Department of Water Resources. In order to continue essential state services, the Legislature has allowed state agencies to significantly raise fees to cover the cost of the loss of general fund dollars or diverted critical revenue streams, such as Highway User Revenue Funds, received by local governments.

Many of these fees remain in place today. While the Town acknowledges the need to pay our fair share of services from these agencies in the course of conducting business, disproportionate cost sharing should not be shifted from the State's general funds to those of local governments. Additionally, the Town would oppose the shifting of any Highway User Revenue Funds, approximately \$6.4 million annually, to fund the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

Objective:

Maintain local self-determination and oppose unfunded mandates.

The Town of Queen Creek is a publicly accountable entity that is governed by a duly elected body of Council members, according to the State of Arizona Constitution and laws.

It is important that the laws defining the space in which cities and towns were created to govern are clear, consistent and allow for self-determination on local issues. Queen Creek continues to ensure it is operating within the bounds of the proper role for local government. In recent years, disagreement with local decisions at the State level has subjected cities and towns to punitive action, the withholding of state shared revenues and the re-allocation of local self-determination to oversight by the State. With the geographical diversity of municipalities across Arizona, the Town believes implementing voters' vision for the community by establishing policy on issues best left to local decision makers should be maintained.

The Town continues to prioritize infrastructure and public safety for our residents. Mandates from the State to cities and towns without

appropriate funding to implement them has the potential to threaten core necessary community services, especially at a time when the Town recently began providing its own law enforcement services through our new Police Department in 2022.

Objective:

Support efforts to keep the cost of housing affordable while maintaining local zoning authority, providing the opportunity for public input and allowing us to balance our agricultural roots with suburban development.

Recently, the Arizona Legislature has taken an interest in addressing the lack of affordable housing prices. While the merits of this effort are noble, voter-adopted General Plans, including the land use element required by state statute, must be honored and not usurped with mandatory, by-right housing options. It is critical that residents retain their right to voice their support or opposition for proposed zoning changes that may impact their property, through local Planning & Zoning and Council hearings. Additionally, the ability for the Town Council to implement the General Plan through its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance and consider amendments to these at the local level, must be maintained.

As the Town is only at approximately half of its buildout population, it is critical we continue to maintain the right to determine key design aesthetics and standards that dictate the look and feel of a community, consistent with existing architecture and our agricultural roots. Queen Creek values our long standing relationship with the development industry and is committed to continuing to partner in further process improvements and efficiencies.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, the Arizona Legislature passed two bills which alter the Town's ability to regulate accessory dwelling units and once population thresholds are achieved, the location of "middle housing" such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and townhomes. These measures should be given implementation time to ensure they meet their intended outcome before other broad sweeping preemptive measures are considered by the State. Furthermore, it would be in the State's interest to monitor their implementation and partner with municipalities to resolve any unintended consequences, especially those which may result in life safety impacts.

Objective:

Ensure that any changes made to the construction sales tax system adhere to the principles established by the League of Arizona Cities and Towns' 2018 Construction Sales Tax Task Force final recommendations.

Changes to the calculation of construction sales tax could have significant impacts to Queen Creek. The adopted Fiscal Year 2026 budget included an estimate of \$38.9 million in sales tax revenue from construction-related activity, of which \$18 million is from the Town's additional 2% surcharge on construction activities exclusively dedicated to the construction and improvement of transportation infrastructure.

In recent years, there has been a desire to make reforms to the current system. The Town agrees with the following principles as established by the League of Arizona Cities and Towns Task Force:

- Ensure tax revenues are remitted to the jurisdiction in which the activity occurs.
- Maintain the integrity of other tax systems and policies.
- Provide fairness for all similarly situated taxpayers.
- Ease in determining tax obligation and compliance with remittance.
- Prevent tax avoidance by relocating or restructuring businesses.

Finally, any reform should not result in a significant reduction in revenues for the State or local governments.

Objective:

Promote sound fiscal policies that reduce unfunded pension liabilities resulting in the health of the system and for policies that appropriately balance fiscal constraints with benefits provided to employees.

The Town has taken action to completely eliminate the unfunded liability for all employees including our firefighters and members of the public safety personnel retirement system. At the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2026, the Town's public safety pension plans are expected to be fully funded, with no unfunded pension liability in either of the police or fire pension plans. Additionally, the Town will have set aside in reserves an amount equal to the Town's estimated share of the ASRS unfunded liability, as required by Town policy. Further benefits extended to public safety employees need to balance recruitment and retention efforts with budgetary controls which will allow the Town to continue to fully fund our police and fire pension plans.

The Town supports efforts to continue to extend the benefits of the Craig Tiger Act to peace officers, firefighters, 9-1-1 dispatchers and add emergency medical services personnel relative to job affiliated post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, the Town supports the extension of workers' compensation benefits to firefighters and police officers when traveling to and from their professional duties and an injury or death occurs in which they are not criminally liable.

Objective:

Promote economic development opportunities in partnership with the State consistent with the best interests of the Town.

Innovative land use and economic development strategies are critical to strengthening the well-being of our community and meeting the needs of our current and future residents, businesses, and visitors. The State is a vital partner in attracting and retaining economic development opportunities, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, tourism and the tools available to cities and towns to attract new and expand existing opportunities.

In August of 2019, the Town, in partnership with the Arizona State Land Department, annexed approximately 4,150 acres of State Trust Land in the northeastern portion of the community adjacent to State Route 24. While it was originally envisioned this land would be developed largely for residential purposes, the Town has received significant interest from several high-profile advanced manufacturing businesses, including the construction of LG Energy Solution's battery manufacturing facility, bringing 2,800 strong wage jobs. The Town supports continued partnerships with the Arizona Commerce Authority, the State Land Department and the Arizona Department of Transportation, to attract, secure water resources and build the necessary infrastructure to support these large-scale users, including the acceleration of the extension of State Route 24.

The Town supports mechanisms for counties and municipalities to receive full and equitable entitlement up to 80% reimbursement from state construction sales tax for the building of necessary infrastructure for advanced manufacturers who meet the required statutory qualifications and necessary adjustments to the program in consultation with the Arizona Department of Revenue.

It is anticipated that the Arizona Legislature will take up consideration of various policies the session as it pertains to the location, regulation and incentives in place for data centers. Typical data centers are generally large water meter users and are therefore required to comply with the Town's sustainable water allocation

regulations. Consistent with these regulations and local control, the Town would oppose any efforts to preempt the Town's ability to determine the appropriate zoning for these facilities. Furthermore, in a time when the State budget is operating a deficit, the Town believes the removal of economic development incentives for the location of traditional data centers should be eliminated.

Objective:

Support transportation improvements and funding that benefit the Town, region and the State.

Transportation infrastructure is a critical issue for the Town of Queen Creek. The Town's neighboring areas use our streets to access the valley freeway system. The current traffic volume through Queen Creek exceeds capacity and the Town's ability to accommodate it is limited given current available funding. The Town has invested approximately \$159 million in transportation improvement projects over the last five years and earmarked an additional \$209 million in our forecast for the next five years. Despite this, more transportation needs remain to be funded so that Queen Creek is not disproportionately funding demand outside of our community boundaries.

A high functioning transportation system is vital to economic development, safety and well-being. Connecting markets and communities allows for greater economic opportunity and mobility. The Town remains committed to working with the region, Maricopa and Pinal Counties and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure funding and the ultimate construction of State Route 24, corresponding interchanges and connecting arterial access that promotes safe travel and reduces congestion. The movement of people and goods to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, Arizona State University Polytechnic Campus and the State trust lands is critical as an educational, job and activity hub.

Strong transportation systems locally, regionally and statewide remain a top priority. It is of critical importance for not only local governments, but the State, to ensure an effective roadway network is designed and improved for the efficient and effective flow of the region's traffic and commerce. The Town will continue its coordination and partnership with both Maricopa and Pinal Counties in building out the Town's arterial network.

Additionally, the Town supports the work of the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council to seek funding for roads of regional significance located in rural areas which provide key access in and out of communities or connect to major freeways, such as Ironwood.

Objective:

Support policies that provide access to secure, long-term sustainable and fiscally responsible water resources that contribute to an assured water supply and reduce groundwater dependence.

The Town recognizes its long-term fiscal responsibility is inextricably linked to a safe, reliable and locally controlled water supply for the current and future build out of Queen Creek. Unlike our fellow Valley municipalities, the Town relies on the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District. Queen Creek, being a newly established town in the late 1980's, was only awarded a small portion of Central Arizona Project subcontract water which forced the community to seek other supplies of surface water for future growth. These factors place the Town at a competitive disadvantage to certification of renewable sources.

In an effort to be responsible stewards of the Groundwater Management Act and diversify our sources consistent with long standing Arizona water policy, the Town is exploring additional water resource options that would ultimately reduce and eliminate our reliance on groundwater pumping (moving customers away from the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District), while maintaining sustainable costs for ratepayers. The Town supports policies that provide enhanced access to more reliable sources and opposes efforts that would circumvent existing public processes to evaluate the merits of obtaining alternative sources or their financing mechanisms, such as the use of water-related capacity fees.

The Town supports legislative efforts that contribute to the goals of an alternative assured water supply designation, reduce costs to the taxpayers for participation and furthers the efforts of the newly established agricultural-urban conversion program, providing a pathway for continued residential growth while contributing positively to the aquifer.

Objective:

Support innovative partnerships with the State to prevent and mitigate missing-from-care incidents in youth affiliated group homes.

Canyon State Academy and Desert Lily Academy, both located in Queen Creek, are at-risk residential youth group homes in the State. Canyon State Academy provides educational based programs, family and community aftercare as well as rehabilitation treatment for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Unfortunately, the

Town has experienced a significant rise in missing-from-care incidents from campus and other group home environments. The Town supports innovative partnerships in collaboration with the State for programs which would result in specialized police officers dedicated to prevention, rapid response and proper investigations of incidents involving youth in group home settings.

Objective:

Support administrative campaign finance changes that allow for the proper closure of candidate accounts upon their death.

Arizona State Statutes permits candidates to be the Treasurer of their own candidate account. Upon their death, no procedure exists for the proper closure of candidate accounts. The Town supports legislation that would allow the executor of the estate, trustee, spouse, next of kin or legal representative to dispose of the surplus funds in accordance with current procedure and terminate the committee. Additionally, the Town supports amending statute to waive reporting penalties associated with a deceased candidate's account.