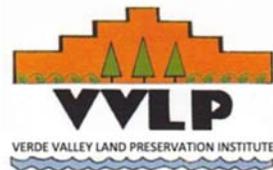


# Verde Valley Region Town Hall Forum Task Force



## *Verde Valley Land Use: Making Collaborative Decisions*

**Saturday, November 9, 2019  
Beaver Creek School  
Lake Montezuma, AZ**

# **Verde Valley Land Use: Making Collaborative Decisions**

## **Saturday, November 9, 2019 – Lake Montezuma, AZ**

Verde Valley residents gathered at Beaver Creek School in Lake Montezuma on November 9, 2019 to consider community processes for land use planning and decision-making. A list of participants is included at the end of this report, along with the agenda, discussion questions, and background information provided to participants. Following are the summary results of the day-long event.

### ***Verde Valley Land Use Planning and Decision-Making***

Many stakeholders play an important role in land use planning and decision-making in the Verde Valley. Those stakeholders include Verde Valley residents from all generations and backgrounds in both incorporated areas and unincorporated areas; landowners; governmental bodies and individual elected officials; businesses (developers, farmers/ranchers and others); visitors to the region; and other interested parties.

Effective land use planning requires informed participation from the earliest stages of the process. Stakeholders must take responsibility for educating themselves and their fellow citizens. They have a responsibility to use the structures already in place to facilitate engagement in the process, and they need to listen and be willing to compromise. As a region, we should consider ways to more effectively disseminate information about land use planning processes and decisions, including through several different media. That information must be neutral and unbiased.

In making decisions, governmental bodies and elected officials should be responsive to citizen input in land use planning processes. As part of that effort, we need mechanisms to validate that citizen input has been “heard” and considered in connection with decisions, and governmental bodies should strive for consensus.

Ultimately, all stakeholders are “in it together” with respect to collaborative land use decisions in the Verde Valley. Every voice counts and has an equal role in the process. Working together, the stakeholders must reach a consensus on their fundamental values to develop consistent and integrated land use planning processes for the region.

### ***Collaborative Planning and Decision-Making for Land Use in the Verde Valley***

The Verde Valley needs a regional plan that articulates core values reflecting all of its constituent communities. This plan must be built on a shared vision that leads to better cooperation and collaboration, and can serve as a key mechanism to develop a stakeholder-built, cohesive regional land use plan that takes into account the needs of individual communities, economic development, sustainability, culture, schools, roads and transportation, etc. We need to increase early participation in planning, move beyond traditional silos and update existing local, community, and county plans. This may require a regional organization that builds on shared values and fundamental principles, and may require funding to implement.

We need education and information on land use issues, including existing statutes and regulation – some of which may need to be examined and updated.

Equal collaboration between and among all stakeholders is critical, and begins with earlier and more highly proactive notification. Notification to the community should not rest so heavily on the shoulders of developers. As decisions are made, it is especially important that those with the greatest proximity and impact from the use be informed, represented, and have their voices truly heard.

## ***Achieving Effective Collaborative Land Use Planning and Decision-Making in the Verde Valley***

To achieve effective collaborative land use planning and decision-making in the Verde Valley, the region needs to enhance and better utilize existing processes, and consider new ways to collaborate, including the following:

1. Reviewing and Updating Land Use Plans. Good land use plans, developed with broad stakeholder input, help expedite the decision-making process and lead to better outcomes. To that end:
  - a. Existing community plans have been effective, but they need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Town councils should use this process to solicit input from all stakeholders, and incorporate that input in updated plans, which should be codified.
  - b. Community plans should form the foundation for consistent and integrated regional plans, which in turn should inform the County's comprehensive land use plan.
  - c. The County should increase funding and staffing levels to support these planning efforts, including providing resources to support planning efforts at the local and regional level within the Verde Valley.
  - d. Scalable criteria should be developed to guide the decision-making process at all levels. Relatively smaller projects that are clearly consistent with applicable plans should be approved quickly. Larger-impact projects that are not clearly consistent with applicable plans should require additional collaboration and stakeholder input before decisions are made.
2. New Regional Collaborative Organization. Verde Valley stakeholders should consider creating a regional council, non-governmental organization or similar body to enhance collaboration in land use planning processes and decision-making across the region. This would allow the region to formalize a process for jurisdictions and communities to provide input on projects or decisions outside their boundaries that nevertheless impact them in meaningful ways. The body could also take a leadership role in informing and facilitating stakeholder input at all appropriate levels. Existing organizations, such as the Verde Front or the Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization (VVREO), could provide a model for such a regional council, which would need to be adequately funded and staffed to be effective.
3. General Strategies. In all land use planning and decision-making processes, the Verde Valley should emphasize:
  - a. Identifying shared values and concerns, with a view toward preserving the way of life in the region.

- b. Soliciting public input and gauging community support for particular projects or decisions early in the process, including through new strategies that make it convenient for stakeholders, such as online forums, polling and social media.
- c. Providing a mechanism for developers to engage with the community before a decision on a particular project is finalized; the harmonization process should be facilitated by neutral parties.
- d. Considering the impact of a particular project or decision in evaluating and prioritizing the process through which it should be considered for approval.
- e. Considering whether the 300-foot threshold for notification regarding a particular project or decision should be expanded in certain cases.
- f. Considering all relevant factors, such as age diversity, water use, transportation issues, long- vs. short-term impacts, etc.
- g. Regularly having “post-mortem” evaluations of particular projects or decisions, including why they were—or were not—successful.

### ***Priorities and Action Steps for Achieving Effective Collaborative Land Use Planning and Decision-Making in the Verde Valley***

Land use planning and decisions are not limited by community boundaries. They impact us on a regional basis. Right now, each municipality should be encouraged to review and update their land use plans. We should also consider what other regions and communities have done, including the Tucson regional plan.

Local, community and regional plans—for incorporated and unincorporated areas—should be developed within the context of local community forums in which local vision and values are expressed and, if a land use decision is presented, if it is consistent with the forums’ policies, it should result in fast-tracking decisions.

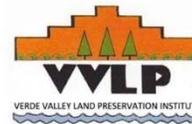
We should create a citizen advisory group or planning organization that would help define regional land use planning vision and strategy; would foster robust community engagement; would directly interact with the county; and focus on the upcoming 10-year comprehensive plan—the immediate critical path for land use issues. This should be placed on the agenda of an appropriate intergovernmental organization and can be modeled after other Verde Valley regional organizations, including the Verde Valley Technical Advisory Committee, Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization, and Verde Front. Also, consideration should be given as to whether the Verde Valley Land Preservation Institute could be a basis for this group.

We need a basic fact sheet on how land use planning and decisions are made, along with a list of organizations and contacts with interests in land use. Land use issues could be communicated through the public schools and non-profit organizations.

Whether through the county, municipalities or a new organization, the work should reflect shared values, provide early notice, offer neutrality in the harmonization process, and increase the proximity threshold for notification.

Land use decisions should be bifurcated into those which follow local, community, regional, and county plans—which should be fast-tracked through the decision-making process—and those which do not, and should be subjected to more notification and in-depth review.

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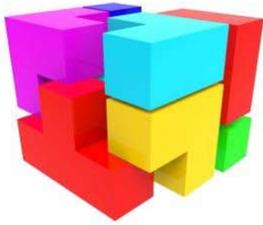


## APPENDICES

- Background Information
- Discussion Questions
- Program Agenda
- List of Participants

## Verde Valley Town Hall 2019

*Collaboration toward a better tomorrow*



## Verde Valley Land Use: Making Collaborative Decisions



## The Purpose of the Verde Valley Town Hall 2019 Meeting

The purpose of the Verde Valley Town Hall 2019 meeting is to examine the three types of collaborative processes that are being used to guide Land Use within the Verde Valley, in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness:

- The collaborative **Planning** processes that are used by residents, land owners, and other stakeholders to create local Land Use Planning documents.
- The collaborative **Harmonization** processes between developers and local residents, land owners, and other stakeholders, to identify and resolve incompatibilities between the Land Use Planning documents and proposed development plans.
- The collaborative **Decision-making** processes that are used by Planning and Zoning authorities to approve or disapprove proposed development plans.

Recent events have brought into question the effectiveness of the first two of these three collaborative processes. For example, during the last year the following two development proposals were strongly opposed by citizens of the Verde Valley during the final **Decision-making** process, suggesting that they were not adequately engaged earlier in **Planning** and **Harmonization** processes.

- The proposed development of a 650-unit Manufactured Home and RV park on a 172-acre ranch, just outside of Sedona. (Over 3000 *Letters of Opposition* and 3 *Letters of Support* were received by the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Commission during the Decision-making process.)
- The proposed development of the multi-story Hilton Garden Inn at the intersection of SR 179 and Jack's Canyon Road, in the unincorporated Village of Oak Creek. (Over 1000 *Letters of Opposition* and 7 *Letters of Support* were received by the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Commission during the Decision-making process.)

### The Existing Planning Processes

There is no coordination between the various Land Use Plans within the Verde Valley.

- The Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan was developed in 2006.
- Seven of the 11 communities within the Verde Valley have developed Community Land Use Plans since 2011.
- The Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan was developed in 2012.
- None of the nine Land Use Plans listed above were developed in collaboration with any of the other eight Land Use Plans.

### The Existing Harmonization Processes

The Harmonization Process is to be conducted by the *developer*. For example, Section 209 of the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Ordinance specifies that the developer is required to:

- Invite citizens, property owners and interested parties within the target area to attend at least one scheduled meeting.
- Record the number of people who attended the meeting.
- Deliver to the Yavapai County Planning Division a list of concerns, issues and problems that were expressed by the attendees, and what changes the developer will make (if any) to address those.

## A Timeline of Land Use Planning in the Verde Valley

### 2006

- The *Verde Valley Technical Advisory Committee* is formed.
- It includes representatives from Camp Verde, Clarkdale, Cottonwood, Sedona and Jerome
- The Committee agrees on a collaborative process to develop a land use plan for the Verde Valley.
- The Committee schedules neighborhood workshops across the Verde Valley.
- More than 150 residents from Sedona, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, Clarkdale, Jerome, Big Park, Cornville, Lake Montezuma, Verde Village, Beaver Creek, Bridgeport, and the Red Rock/Dry Creek attend, and participate.
- Based on this collaborative effort, a 92-page *Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan* is published

- All 5 incorporated Towns in the Verde Valley, plus the Yavapai-Apache Nation officially adopt the Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan.
- The Yavapai County Board of Supervisors officially adopt the Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan.
- Yavapai County Development Services creates a dedicated web page to download the Plan.  
<http://www.yavapai.us/devserv/verde-valley-regional-land-use-plan-work-group>
- The Advisory Committee schedules monthly meetings "to maintain momentum of regional cooperation".
- Proposed development projects are reviewed and discussed, to address community concerns within the Verde Valley.
- Advisory Committee members report back to their respective jurisdictions after each meeting.
- 18 monthly meetings are held from May 2008 through September of 2009
- Subsequent to September of 2009, five more monthly meetings are scheduled, but 4 of those meetings are cancelled.
- Since that time, there has apparently been no further activity.

#### 2011

Beaver Creek publishes its 90-page Community Plan (the **Beaver Creek Vision 2020**)

#### 2012

Yavapai County publishes its 113-page Comprehensive Plan, which says on Page 88:

- "In the past, Community Plans were... adopted by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors."
- "In March of 2010, a Moratorium on Community Planning was adopted by the Board of Supervisors."
- "A Community Vision Statement [is] a document describing how [residents] envision their community growing."
- "A Community Vision Statement... created by the residents of the community... is not adopted by Yavapai County, and is therefore not binding."

#### 2012

Clarkdale publishes its 123-page Community Plan (the **Clarkdale General Plan**)

#### 2014

Cottonwood publishes its 313-page Community Plan (the **Cottonwood General Plan**)

Sedona publishes its 155-page Community Plan (the **Sedona Community Plan**)

Red Rock / Dry Creek publishes its 33-page Community Plan (the **Red Rock - Dry Creek Vision statement**)

#### 2016

Camp Verde publishes its 182-page Community Plan (the **Camp Verde 2016 General Plan**)

#### 2018

Town of Jerome publishes its 62-page Community Plan (the **Town of Jerome General Plan**)

### Issues to Consider Prior to the Town Hall Meeting

- What can be learned from the five incorporated Towns within the Verde Valley, who have developed collaborative processes for Land Use Planning, Harmonizing, and Decision Making within their own municipal boundaries?
- Should there be a collaborative process by which residents within the Verde Valley (including those in unincorporated communities) can update the Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan, or create a new Land Use Plan to take its place?
- Are changes needed to the current Harmonization processes, to better identify and resolve incompatibilities between the various Land Use Planning documents and proposed development plans.

## Regional Land Use Plans around the Nation

The Verde Valley is not alone in facing land use issues impacting an entire region. Several areas of the United States have used a variety of strategies to address regional land use issues, which have included creating organizations charged with collaboratively creating and coordinating comprehensive Regional Land Use Plans, as well as collaborative strategies for monitoring and implementing those plans - some of which are outlined in the five regional examples below.

**Kentucky “Bluegrass communities”** approached coordinating land use strategies by:

- forming an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization called “Bluegrass Tomorrow” governed by a geographically, technically, and culturally diverse Board of Directors and Executive Committee, to combat “sprawl” development. and to maintain and cultivate unique identities by modifying the growth pattern.
- forming partnerships with leading corporations who believe in ensuring a better quality of life for Kentuckians.
- sponsoring a forum titled “Conversations with the Region on Land Use Planning”
- forming a Bluegrass Regional Land Use Committee to continue their efforts, including drafting principles of agreement and a Vision Statement for the Region.

**The Madison, Wisconsin area** addressed regional land use issues by:

- forming the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission, which prepares and adopts Land Use and Water Quality plans.
- making local and regional plans consistent - especially where communities must coordinate land uses along their borders.

**The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIPRC)** established a Land Use Committee in 2008 that was given responsibility to:

- assemble and analyze land use data, for use in preparing and implementing the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan.
- facilitate planning processes and partnerships, to build links along jurisdictional boundaries.
- provide advisory input to the NIPRC Board and other committees on existing and proposed regional plans and land use related projects.
- mobilize the region, through coordinated leadership and a common vision, to implement the 2040 plan.
- understand long-term development trends, to allow decision makers to assess the implications of past development directions, and to decide whether they should be continued or changed.
- encourage local jurisdictions to understand the recommendations of the regional plan, so their planning and practices will be viewed in a broader context
- promote an educational process that emphasizes the importance and the interdependency of regional issues.
- review and verify the validity of population trend and forecast data.
- develop and review strategies from the Comprehensive Regional Plan.
- coordinate and comprehensively examine what other groups/committees are undertaking.
- promote related-land use programs, strategies, and policies
- continue to review zoning and land use maps
- continue to oversee regional comprehensive plan reviews and updates.

**The Sacramento Area Council of Governments** (SACOG) Board of Directors created the Sacramento Blueprint, which is a smart growth vision for the region. The purpose of the Blueprint is to:

- integrate land use and transportation planning, to curb sprawl
- cut down on vehicle emission and congestion, to improve the quality of life for residents of the region.

SACOG's Blueprint Implementation activities include:

- education and technical assistance activities
- blueprint development reviews
- monitoring land use activity
- providing financial assistance.

SACOG works with:

- their agency staff
- governing boards
- technical committees
- advisory committees

Advisory committees typically include representatives of:

- citizens' advocacy groups
- the private sector
- major colleges and universities
- transportation management professionals
- private citizens, unaffiliated with any of the above groups.

Committees are augmented, restructured, added to, or discharged from time to time, based on the issues and concerns faced by the Board.

**The Springfield, Massachusetts area** formed a "Pioneer Valley Planning Commission" that authored a *Valley Vision 4: The Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley* which sought to create a more sustainable region by:

- managing growth and development, to reduce sprawl.
- supporting and strengthening urban and town centers.
- reducing vehicle miles travelled, and the resulting air emissions.
- promoting availability of affordable housing for all.
- reducing water pollution.
- protecting farmland, open space, and natural resources.

The main purposes of the Land Use Plan were to update and expand on strategies in the prior Valley Vision, for managing the region's growth and development, using innovative new approaches such as:

- transit-oriented development.
- integration and consistency between the region's land use and transportation plans.
- specific actions to advance equity, and address environment justice.
- comparison of the recommendations of the Valley Vision with strategies in the neighboring Capital Regional Council of Governments, to promote by-state consistency.

To facilitate implementation of the Regional Land Use Plan, the Valley Development Council (VDC) was established, which includes:

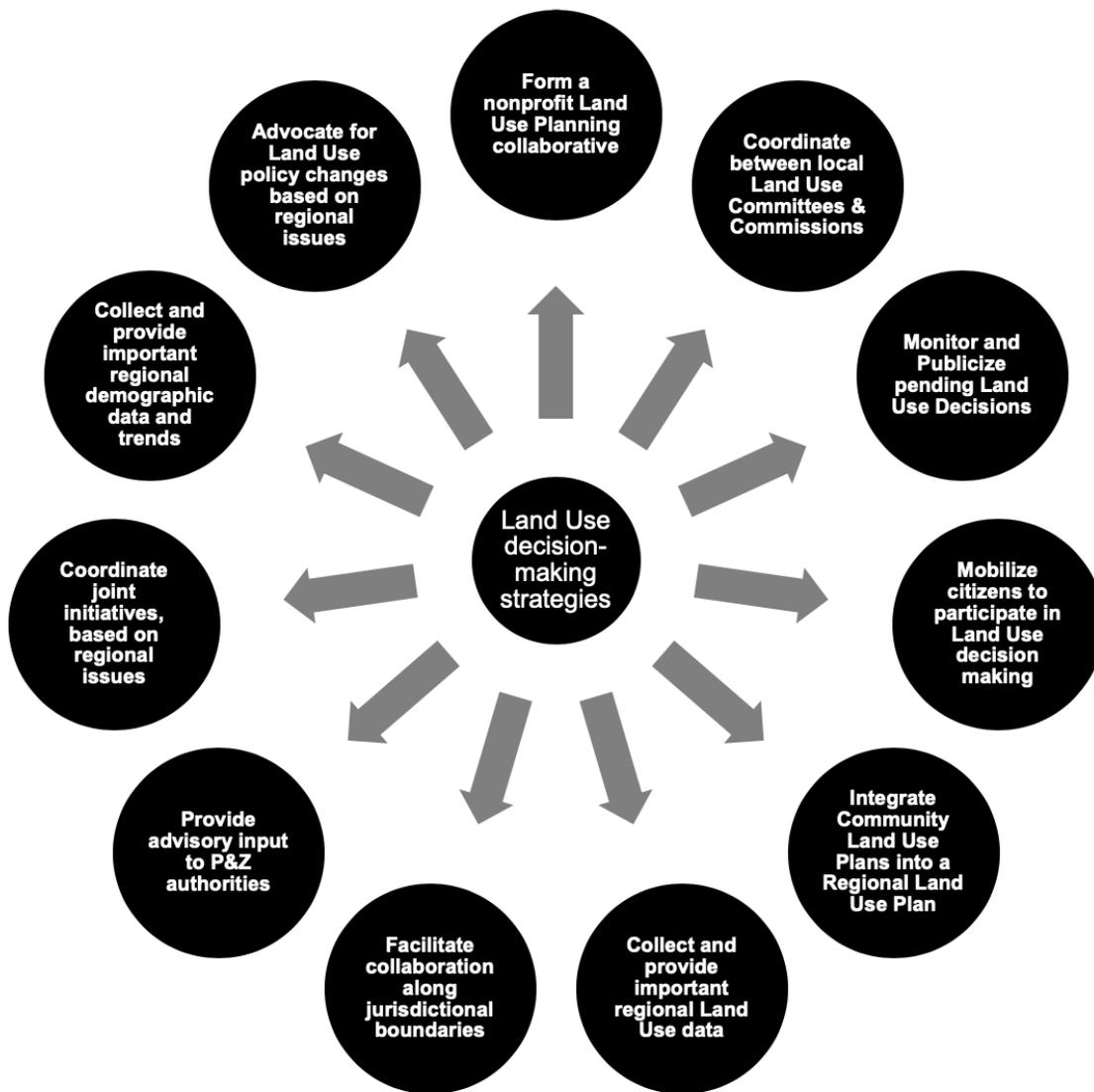
- area builders
- planners
- developers
- housing advocates
- representatives from financial institutions

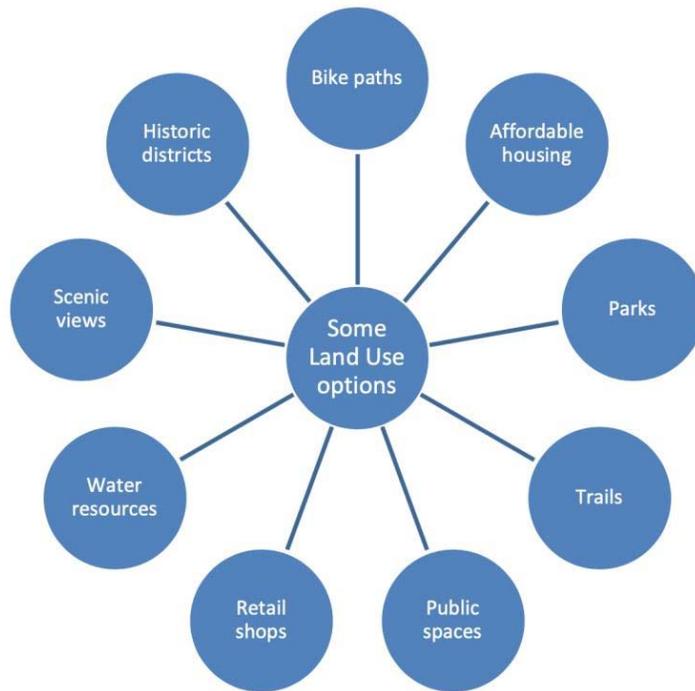
- academics
- land trust staff and volunteers
- transportation and transit planners
- architects
- people committed to promoting smart growth principles in the Pioneer Valley.

The VDC:

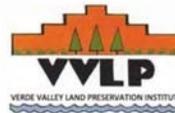
- oversees regular updating of the regional land use plan.
- engages community members, constituents, and stakeholders in the planning process.
- develops and promotes public events and community meetings related to smart growth.

VDC members also serve as community liaisons for advancing the strategies of the Valley Vision Plan within the region.





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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role should Verde Valley residents, landowners, other stakeholders, and the communities in the Verde Valley have in land use planning and decision-making?
2. To what extent should Verde Valley residents, landowners, other stakeholders, and the communities in the Verde Valley collaborate in land use planning and decision-making?
3. What process or processes would best achieve effective collaborative land use planning and decision-making in the Verde Valley?
4. What steps should be taken to begin the process or processes identified in response to question 3?

# 2019 Verde Valley Region Town Hall Forum November 9, 2019

## PROGRAM AGENDA

- 8:00 – 9:00      **Registration and light breakfast**
- 9:00 – 9:10      **Welcome** – Dr. Donna Michaels, Town Hall Forum Chair and VVLP Board Member
- 9:10 – 9:30      **Panel Discussion** – Moderator: Judge Patricia K. Norris (Ret), Arizona Town Hall Board Chair, and Supervisor of Lawyer Development, ASU Law Group  
**Jane Russell-Winiecki**, Former Chairwoman, Yavapai-Apache Nation  
**Linda Buchanan**, Verde Confluence Consulting  
**Stephen Thompson**, Architect/Planner  
**Sandy Moriarty**, Mayor City of Sedona
- 9:30 – 9:45      **Overview of the Program and Town Hall Process** – Pat Norris
- 9:45 – 11:15      **Question 1**  
*What role should Verde Valley residents, landowners, other stakeholders, and the communities in the Verde Valley have in land use planning and decision-making?*
- 11:15 – 11:25      **Break**
- 11:25 – 11:35      **Question 1 Wrap Up**
- 11:35 – 1:00      **Question 2 and Working Lunch**  
*To what extent should Verde Valley residents, landowners, other stakeholders, and the communities in the Verde Valley collaborate in land use planning and decision-making?*
- 1:00 – 2:20      **Question 3**  
*What process or processes would best achieve effective collaborative land use planning and decision-making in the Verde Valley?*
- 2:20 – 2:30      **Break**
- 2:30 – 2:45      **Question 3 Wrap Up**
- 2:45 – 4:00      **Question 4 followed by Concluding Remarks**  
*What steps should be taken to begin the process or processes identified in response to question 3?*

# LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Rob Adams	JeanMarie Haney	Nadine Peltz
Art Babbott	Geni Hart	Jennifer Perry
Alex Barber	Brenda Hauser*	Holli Ploog
Brandi Bateman	Richard Hernandez	Robyn Prud'homme-Bauer*
Harvey Bershader	Jack Hillman	Judy Reddington
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Peggy Chaikin	John Kalember	Pat Seybold*
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Ken Frankel	Judith Miller	David Williams
Marilyn Fredericks	Jane Moore	Ralph Woellmer
Paul Friedman	Sandy Moriarty	Scott Worden
Cecy Gilbert	Brian Myers	
Tony Gioia	Dave Norton	
Don Groves	Kevin O'Connor	
Jan Groves	Ann Orloff	<i>*Table Facilitators</i>