



By Jim MacRae,  
Design Workshop, Inc.

PHOTO CREDIT: DESIGN WORKSHOP, INC.

# Made for Shade –





# The Scottsdale Quarter

January 2023





Scottsdale Quarter is a 28-acre, mixed-use development, incorporating the best elements of Arizona's arid climate and Scottsdale's prestigious location to create a premier experience of luxury shopping, employment, and living. Design Workshop was retained by the client to do the landscape and urban design to create an establishment that stood out from the saturation of other ambience-oriented projects in the region, and to help provide residents some relief from the heat.

Previous Page: A 10-acre site in Scottsdale, Arizona, where the Dial Soap headquarters used to sit, was at the heart of what eventually became a 28-acre, mixed-use development known as Scottsdale Quarter. The landscape and urban design of the project was awarded to Design Workshop, which was founded in 1969 in Raleigh, North Carolina, and now has eight studios throughout the U.S. The overarching goal of the design was to maximize shade and other elements that would help counteract the area's infamous heat.

Above: Compact streets kept the buildings, some of which were 60 feet tall, the highest allowed by the city, close to each other, thus creating more shaded areas. Since the streets were designated to be no more than 75 feet from building face to building face, the design team had to receive special approval from the city.



Right: Palm Court, also known as The Quad, is at the center of Scottsdale Quarter. The 135-foot-wide and nearly 500-foot-long area features closely-planted date palms. The paving design included poured-in-place standard (gray) concrete for the area surrounding the fountain and the steps at the bottom left of the photo, and colored concrete (Yosemite Brown) for the large, dark bands. In between are 2' x 2' sandstone pavers in the tone of Arizona Sunburst.



### The Backdrop

According to data from the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Association, the average daily temperature in the state of Arizona has increased 2.5 degrees since the turn of the century. Nighttime lows have risen 5.7 degrees in the Phoenix Metropolitan area since 1970 and forecasters are projecting that daytime temperatures will continue to rise by another 10 degrees by 2100, making heat and carbon emissions two of the most life-threatening factors for people in the region.

Coupled with the increase in temperatures, the on-going drought in the southwest is causing

concern because Phoenix is dependent on water from the Colorado River Basin, and recently the Federal Government mandated that Arizona needed to prepare for receiving 20% less water in the coming years. Despite its environmental challenges, the Phoenix metropolitan region is still attracting new companies requiring real estate developers to plan and build new housing, office complexes, and mixed-use districts.

### The Project Commences

In 2006, Glimcher Realty bought the former Dial Soap headquarters building, a 10-acre site in the heart of Scottsdale's emerging retail and resort area, north of its historic downtown.

Above: The first phase of the construction, of which there were three, began in 2008. The final phase was completed in 2018. Outdoor furnishings include benches made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified lpe wood and aluminum. Large flower pots were specified to have annuals that the owner could change out depending on the season. The bicycle racks are the city of Scottsdale's standard model.





Above: A highlight of the design is an interactive pop-jet water feature. To help conserve water, the fountain uses recaptured water and has limited operation times.

Above: Along this path of decomposed granite are hanging flower pots planted with rosemary. The ground plantings include a variety of herbs and succulents such as small aloes and sempervirens (hens and chicks). The garden wall is constructed of form-liner, poured-in-place concrete.

From the time the development and design team was formed, they knew that the plan for this site was to be a mixed-use project that anticipated the impacts of climate change through the inclusion of buildings and streets that were compact in order to create shade, and which would be unlike anything done before in the region. To understand how to create a tight, urban district, the team visited several cities, ultimately using Manhattan's meat packing district and Boston's Italian neighborhood as benchmarks.

### **The Construct**

Working closely together, Design Workshop, a landscape architecture, land planning, and urban design firm, and the developer, Nelsen Partners, envisioned Scottsdale Quarter guided by three primary goals. The first was to maximize building

density by designing all the structures to the maximum height that the city would allow, which is 60 feet. The second goal was to designate that all streets be no more than 75 feet from building face to building face to ensure maximum shading, especially in summertime. And the final goal was to design a monumental public space as the icon for the district that would become a civic destination for Scottsdale's growing population.

To achieve these goals, the design team worked closely with city offices to allow for narrower street cross-sections than were typically allowed, to make it comfortable to be outside all year long. The project was constructed in three phases, starting in 2008 and culminating in the last phase which was completed in 2018.





## Making the Construct a Reality

Design Workshop, which has been providing design and planning services for nearly five decades to developers, property owners, government agencies and other clients, knew that creating a dense, urban project like Scottsdale Quarter would require the accommodation of a large public space so that people from the city and the region could enjoy a civic plaza designed with shade, human comfort, and community activities at the top of the priority list. The culmination of that design idea is the Palm Court, which offers patrons shade, food, and sculptural water features that create civic scale and outdoor activities.

Known affectionately as the Quad, the space is approximately 135-foot-wide and nearly 500-foot-

long and designated for pedestrian use only. One of the aspects that makes the Quad different from any other public plaza in the Phoenix Metropolitan region are the tightly-spaced date palms that effectively provide a green canopy over people, creating soft shade and cooler plaza temperatures for all that come out to participate in the amenities the Scottsdale Quarter has to offer.

Additionally, the Quad features an interactive water feature for kids and families to enjoy that utilizes recaptured water and only operates for certain periods of the day as an effort to conserve the precious resource.

Finally, the Quad was designed to host formal events such as concerts, farmer's markets and

Above: This bench is fabricated from concrete inlaid with native Arizona sandstone. Its backing is made from perforated Corten steel. Native succulents and desert plants such as Weber agave, aloe vera, and ocotillo were installed in the planting area filled with a local, chocolate brown gravel mulch. The young trees are honey mesquite.





Left: This Palm Court was intended to be a public space that could serve as a destination venue for the area where concerts, farmer's markets, corporate parties, and other events will provide a revenue stream for the property's owner and the city of Scottsdale. The paved area where the band is staged is scored colored concrete in 2' x 2' sections in the tone of Southern Blush.

Above: The lighting was designed by a separate member of the team and included recessed up-lights on the palm trees, street lighting for interior streets, and lighting strung across key areas such as the Quad and some of the interior streets.



corporate parties, providing additional revenues for the owner and city.

The final outcomes of the project, according to Design Workshop, were in large part due to the firm's DW Legacy Design® concept, a comprehensive approach to planning and design focused on delivering measurable project outcomes in the areas of environment, community, economics, and art - four values that the company feels are essential to human meaning and the spirit of place.

### Reaping the Rewards

Approaching its 15th year in business, Scottsdale Quarter has been extremely successful for the owners, the city, and the community, and viewed as a gold standard for mixed-use development in the Phoenix Metropolitan Region. Its success, in part, can be attributed to the original goals that the developer and design team established, which was to make this project comfortable for people to use year-round, knowing that climate change was happening and would become worse in time.

The project exemplifies that design is a key element in dealing with climate change by planning mixed-use projects like Scottsdale Quarter that are smart, resilient, comfortable, and attractive to people who want to live outside as much as they can. 🌿