

Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1 Introduction



Rio Vista is a special place. The City is located 48 miles southwest of Sacramento and 65 miles northeast of San Francisco, in Solano County—one of the fastest growing Bay Area counties (*Figure 1-1*). Rio Vista is also located in the heart of the Sacramento River Delta, a region of abundant natural resources and recreational opportunities. In fact, Rio Vista is known to many as the “Gateway to the Delta.”

Few small communities located within the influence of two major metropolitan regions have managed to retain the same basic physical and community character at the beginning of the 21st century that was present several decades ago. Rio Vista represents what once was the “typical” small town across California and the nation. Some of the most striking features about Rio Vista now are the things one doesn’t find here—characteristics all too common elsewhere in the Bay Area and Sacramento regions. Missing from Rio Vista are large chain “superstores” on the edge of town, coupled with a dying or deserted downtown core, and an unending series of housing tracts with little to distinguish them from each other except for the entries that reveal the name of whatever natural or historic feature the tract replaced.

Rio Vista still relies in large part on the same economic base that has sustained it for more than a century—agriculture and (since the 1930s) natural gas production and related businesses. Rio Vista remains a balanced community, with a complete and self-sufficient economy that provides almost as many jobs as its number of working residents. Unlike almost every other municipality in eastern Contra Costa and Solano Counties, Rio Vista has not become another “bedroom” suburb to the Bay Area or Sacramento, areas where most working residents face hours of daily commutes to their work.

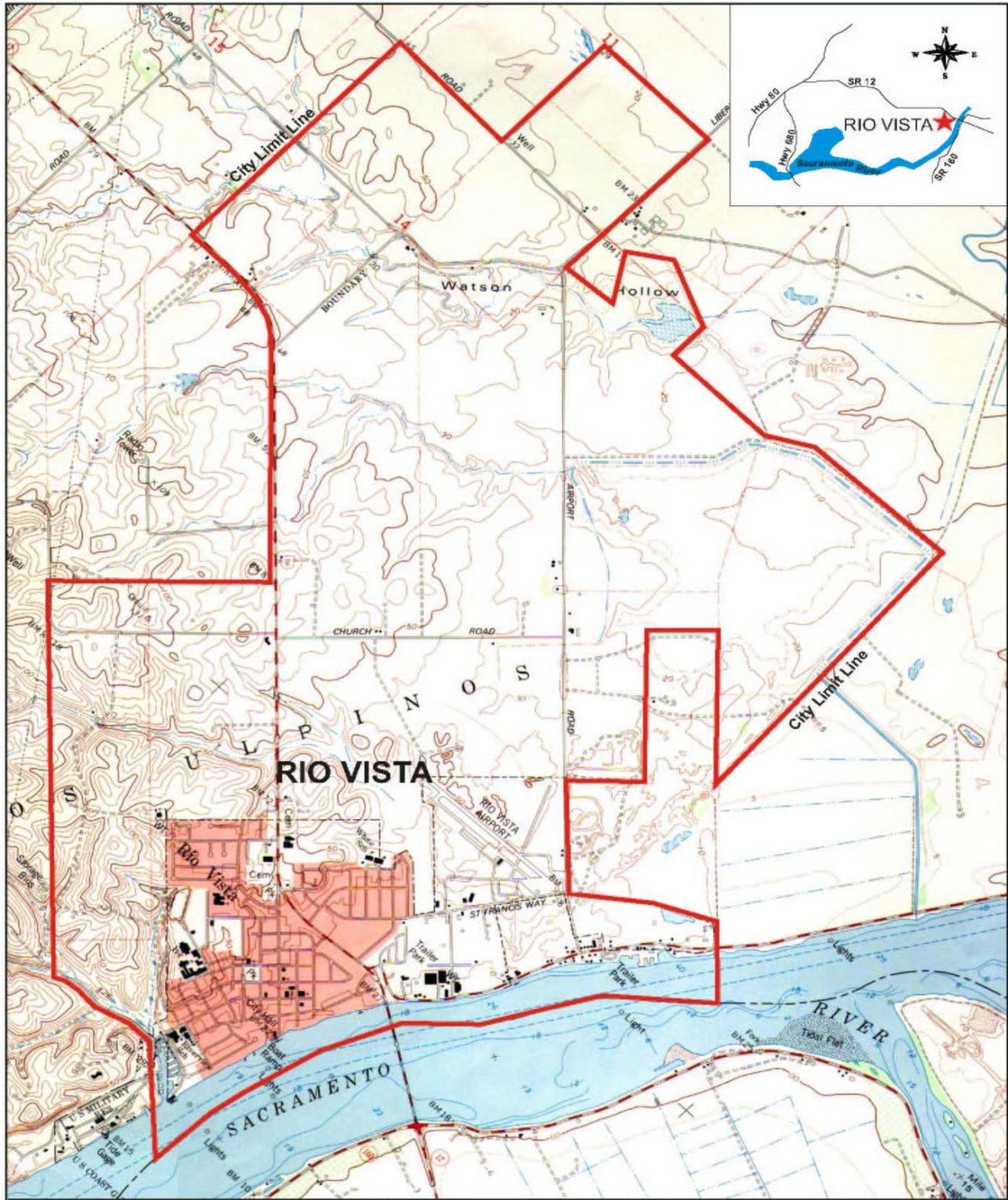
A. Community Background

The traditional settlement patterns of the community have not been overwhelmed by the new subdivisions of the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike most of Solano County and neighboring jurisdictions, growth in Rio Vista developed slowly over the last four decades. For the most part, new neighborhoods were located contiguous to the existing built areas and in a relatively compact form, more or less evenly distributed around the traditional downtown business district and State Route 12 (commonly known as Highway 12). Downtown is still relatively healthy, although strip commercial uses on Highway 12 and the loss of retail variety have occurred here as elsewhere.

Rio Vista is at a crossroads. A number of occurrences and trends of the past decade now point toward dramatic change over the next two decades. In the mid-1980s, the city was almost forced to disincorporate after a devastating loss of revenues due to the downturn in the natural gas industry. The Rio Vista City Council adopted a General Plan Amendment (GPA) in 1990 that expanded the sphere of influence (SOI) and annexed 2,509 acres of open land into the City. This annexation represented a 250-percent increase in urban land and a six-fold increase in capacity for residential development within the city limits, with a corresponding proposed increase in population from 3,700 in 1990 to 24,500 in 2005. The GPA identified lands that are “appropriate for urbanization” and established land use patterns and residential densities for the annexation area.

The Association of Bay Area Governments’ (ABAG’s) 20-year projections now show Rio Vista with a population of approximately 21,600 in the incorporated limits and 24,100 in the SOI by 2020. The annexed lands can accommodate over 7,500 new homes and multi-family residences at buildout under current zoning and development agreement requirements that were executed in the mid-1980s.

Rio Vista has gained approximately 750 homes and 2,000 people since 1996. Recent development has resulted in large tracts and planned development districts that are not presently contiguous or well connected to existing development patterns. These large tracts of land under control of major developers leave little opportunity for infill except on a scattering of vacant lots in the older sections of town.



Rio Vista General Plan 2001

0 1500
Approximate scale in feet



Rio Vista, CA USGS
7.5 minute topographic quadrangle

Base map is 1978 USGS and does not reflect current landmarks or facilities.

Figure 1-1
VICINITY AND LOCATION MAP
Rio Vista General Plan
City of Rio Vista, California

B. Guiding Principles and Direction

Opportunities still exist to retain many of the small-town qualities lost by other communities. This General Plan serves as a defining step in that direction. The General Plan initiates a new approach to future development that focuses on managing growth. The approach to the production of new homes and business accommodates growth by strengthening the qualities of the community that are attracting new residents. The *Rio Vista Principles* were the outcome of an extensive series of Town Hall meetings that initiated the General Plan process. Some are closely related to the *Ahwahnee Principles* established by the Congress for the New Urbanism in 1995. Most are derived from Rio Vista's own community concerns. These principles have guided the development of the goals, policies, and implementing actions set out here. In following these principles, the General Plan establishes the following major directions:

- Rio Vista will not pursue further annexations or expansion of urban boundaries beyond the current city limits and two small areas within the existing LAFCO SOI, as delineated in an urban growth boundary (UGB) established in Chapter 3. Within the UGB, no further annexations will be considered until a large percentage of the total capacity of existing lands within the city limits and the two large tracts of land located nearest the traditional community have been substantially developed. The only exceptions are the 28-acre Rio Vista Army Reserve Center currently in the process of conveyance by the Department of the Army and the City's wastewater treatment plant on Beach Drive. This direction will establish a compact and contiguous growth pattern that reinforces past development patterns and limits the threat of urban development on the agricultural economy and environmental resources.
- From this point forward, all new developments will establish multiple connections both to adjacent neighborhoods and internally.
- New developments will use a street pattern, building and parking siting arrangement, scale, and landscape character that builds on and extends Rio Vista's traditional street grid and character where feasible.
- Adequate public services, facilities, and recreational opportunities will be ensured before new development projects proceed.
- New commercial projects will not be allowed to "preempt" the market by developing before sufficient aggregate demand exists to support both the new and existing businesses.
- Industrial lands will be provided in areas and amounts sufficient to allow for a balance of job and housing growth.
- Environmental resources and characteristics that define the community, such as the riverfront, hillsides, drainageways, and swales that are significant and visible landmarks, will be respected when development occurs. New development will

- preserve these features in a way that maintains their current function and visible characteristics.
- The quality of the built environment will be improved with every new building or development project.

C. What is a General Plan?

A general plan serves as long-term policy guide for the physical, economic, and environmental growth of a city. It is a statement of the community's vision of its ultimate physical characteristics and growth. The general plan describes the desired character and quality of new development, as well as the process for how development should proceed.

State law requires that every county and city prepare and adopt a comprehensive long-range plan as a guide for the development of the community. The plan must consist of an integrated and internally consistent set of goals, policies, and implementing actions. In addition, the plan must focus on those issues that are of the greatest concern to the community and must be written in a clear and concise manner. City actions, such as those relating to land use allocations, annexations, zoning, subdivision and design review, redevelopment, and capital improvements, must be consistent with the general plan.

The City of Rio Vista General Plan serves to:

- Enable the City Council and Planning Commission to establish long-range development policies;
- Provide a basis for judging whether specific private development proposals and public projects are in harmony with the policies; and
- Guide public agencies and private developers in designing projects that are consistent with City policies.

The Plan is designed to be:

Long-range. However imperfect the vision of the future, almost any development decision has effects lasting more than 20 years. To create a useful context for development decisions, the General Plan looks toward the year 2020 and beyond.

Comprehensive. The General Plan provides direction to coordinate all major components of the community's physical development.

Community-based. The General Plan is both general and specific. For example, the Land Use element provides general land use designations and densities but relies on the Zoning Ordinance for implementation. Other elements, for example Community Character & Design, Open Space & Recreation, and Circulation & Mobility, furnish more specific standards and guidance that are needed to preserve Rio Vista's unique characteristics.

D. Historical Context

THE LAND OF (CHIEF) SEM-YETO

In the decade preceding the Gold Rush, Mexican colonization of northern California was extensive under General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. Through various combinations of force, negotiation, and friendship, General Vallejo was able to acquire large properties in the region north of San Pablo Bay, including the area we now call Solano County.

Chief Sem-Yeto was a Native American who became friendly with Padre Altimira (the Franciscan founder of the mission at Sonoma, Francisco de Solano) and later made the acquaintance of General Vallejo. When Chief Sem-Yeto became a Christian, the Franciscan friars named him "Solano."

When the California Legislature created the original 27 California counties in the year after the Gold Rush, the land of Sem-Yeto and his people passed into history. The county was named Solano in their memory.

Solano County's unusually rich soil and mild climate contributed to its growing reputation as a fruit-growing region. As Solano and its neighboring counties grew in the late nineteenth century, Solano County's contribution to the Bay Area economy included rock for San Francisco's buildings and city streets, fruit, cattle and feed, tomatoes, onions, sugar beets, pears, grains, alfalfa, and asparagus from the rich Rio Vista area farmlands.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE MARSHLANDS

During the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the Sacramento River was the primary shipping route for agricultural goods to the markets of San Francisco, Oakland, and beyond. The rail lines were located on higher ground around the valley perimeter. The farmers working the land in the center of the valley relied on the Sacramento River as their main transportation route. Hundreds of landings along the river's edge served as drop-off locations for the agricultural goods produced in the immediate area.

Steam-powered tugs pulled barges north and south along the river, and stopped at these landings to pick up and deliver goods. Rio Vista, like Sacramento and other river cities, grew from these original landings. Today, the Ports of Sacramento and Stockton serve the same function of the original river landings, but at a much larger scale.

To the early settlers of the Central Valley, the marshlands along the Sacramento River were in the way of progress. The marshlands prevented extensive agricultural development and caused occasional flooding and crop damage. Land values remained low and many settlers lived in houseboats or temporary shelters less vulnerable to the inevitable floods. In less than 50 years, this marshland ecosystem was transformed into the dredged slough and levee system that defines much of the Central Valley today. The early settlers used the inexpensive labor of Chinese immigrants to build levees and drain the marshlands for use as agricultural land. Chinese laborers built most of the levees by hand for more than 30 years, until the widespread use of the steam-powered dredge boat in the 1800s.

With the advent of the dredge boat, the Central Valley marshlands rapidly were transformed and new lands were opened for settlement and agriculture. The levees forced greater and greater quantities of water into the stream and river channels. The water level in these channels rose, and the newly created agricultural lands were often 10 - 20 feet below the surface of the adjacent stream or river.

Any levee failure is disastrous to the agricultural settlement areas below the levee. Many times throughout the history of the Central Valley, levee failures have destroyed crops and towns.

The growth of the Central Valley economy, prompted by the discovery of gold, brought thousands of new settlers to the region in the mid-1800s and dramatically increased the demand for agricultural land. The water cannon process of gold extraction contributed to the transformation of the ecosystem and, in combination with levee construction, eliminated most of the marshlands before 1900.

The incredible life of the marshlands that had supported the native populations of the Central Valley for thousands of years was overwhelmed by the rapid migration of settlers from 1850 to 1900. Early settlers reported seeing herds of tule elk estimated at over 10,000 and migratory bird populations in the millions living in the marshlands ecosystem. The settlers of the Central Valley were so enveloped in environmental diversity that they were unconcerned with the impacts of levee construction or mining practices. They were eager to transform the marshlands into agricultural land and control the threat of flooding.

In 1857, when Rio Vista was established in its current location, levees were under construction along the river in many locations throughout the Central Valley. These levees opened up the vast, rich agricultural lands around Rio Vista and enabled this small river landing settlement to grow and prosper.

The delta environment at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, just east of Rio Vista, remained as marshlands into the 1920s. This was the low point in the Central Valley drainage system just before entering the waters of Suisun and San Francisco Bays. The delta was the last remaining vestige of the original marshland system.

FOUNDING OF RIO VISTA

The City of Rio Vista was founded in 1858 by Colonel N. H. Davis. Colonel Davis purchased a portion of the 17,752-acre Los Ulpinos Mexican land grant from John Bidwell, the legendary Chico pioneer. Davis founded Rio Vista at a site 4 miles upriver from its present location, at the junction of Cache Slough and the Sacramento River.

Rio Vista originally was called Brazos del Rio (Spanish phrase meaning "arms of the river") because of its location at the confluence of three branches of the Sacramento River. The City was renamed Rio Vista (Spanish phrase for "river view") in 1860. Although floods obliterated the community in 1862, the City was rebuilt at its present location. The main street of Rio Vista apparently defines the boundary between two former historic ranches owned by Joseph Bruning and T. J. McWorthy. The oldest structures in the City date from the early 1860s. Many

of the levee and other waterway features in the area date from the nineteenth century. The City was incorporated on December 30, 1893.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The original urban plan of Rio Vista is similar to the Spanish colonial design principles referred to as the “Law of the Indies.” The character of the street and alley grid, the public square sited one block off Main Street, and the orientation of the streets, so that a line connecting north and south on the compass diagonally bisects a city block, are similar to “Law of the Indies” design principles.

The City’s original urban structure is a grid 250 feet square, with 15-foot-wide alleys bisecting the block in both directions. The grid is oriented 45 degrees west of north and has a strong orientation to the edge of the Sacramento River. Main Street leads directly to a landing and ferry dock at the edge of the river, and a public square is located one block south of Main Street. After the flood that destroyed the original city, the identical plan was used at the City’s current location 1 mile south.

The original road and alley structure of the City is an accessible and walkable urban environment. The structure is legible, and the residential neighborhoods are well connected to the commercial activities along Main Street and the river edge. This accessibility is a function of scale and the road and alley grid. As one moves along a road or alley, there is an opportunity to change direction every one-half block. The character of numerous intersections and rights-of-way contribute to a fine-grained residential and commercial building fabric. Today, as in the early years of Rio Vista, the primary commercial activities are located along Main Street and the edge of the Sacramento River, in addition to highway commercial uses along Highway 12.

By 1903, the majority of the original urban plan was completed, and the grid extended to its current limits. The original grid supported the modest growth of the town between the early 1900s and the end of World War II. After the war, several annexations were approved that began a process of urban expansion influenced by the widespread use of the automobile. Highway 12 created a barrier between the developing residential areas to the north and the existing urban core along Main Street. Residential development after World War II was auto-oriented. Developers often stretched blocks into long rectangular patterns to reduce road construction and increase lot yield. Cul-de-sacs appeared, and the character and interconnectedness of the urban structure began to change; however, the new growth of this period still maintained a general scale and proportion that is compatible with and connected to the existing neighborhoods. (*Refer to Community Character & Design element for further discussion.*)

E. Planning Area

The General Plan land use policy focuses on the City's primary planning area. Rio Vista's planning area includes approximately 4,800 acres of incorporated lands and an additional 6,455 acres of unincorporated lands. *Figure 4-1* and *Table 4-1* in the Land Use element graphically represent the City's planning area and the acreages of each sub-planning area.

F. Rio Vista General Plan Update

In 1973, the City of Rio Vista jointly adopted with Solano County and updated the *City of Rio Vista – Southeastern Solano County Planning Areas General Plan 1990* (City of Rio Vista and Solano County Planning Commissions, 1974). This plan updated the existing 16-year old General Plan, including all mandatory elements for a general plan. In addition, the update included development of a comprehensive general land use guide to 1990 for the City and the remaining southeastern Solano County area.

In 1985, the City undertook a general plan revision program that culminated in the adoption of new land use, circulation, and parks and recreation elements for the City's *General Plan 1985*. The revision process involved a review and clarification of the City's goal to facilitate a program of managed, controlled, and coherent urban growth (City of Rio Vista, 1987).

In April 1990, the 1985 Rio Vista General Plan was further revised. The City proposed General Plan amendments to amend the City's SOI and permit the annexation of lands into the City that were appropriate for urbanization within the next 10-15 years. As a result of this action, approximately 2,509 acres were annexed into the City in order to incorporate the properties commonly referred to as Del Rio Hills (now known as the Esperson property), the Marks and Gibbs Ranches, a portion of the waterfront area that lies between the Sacramento River shoreline and Solano County line, and State lands that were acquired by the City from the State of California. This action also included the adoption of three specific plans (for Del Rio Hills, the Marks Ranch, and the Gibbs Ranch), including zoning and reclassification. More detailed information regarding these annexations are contained in the *Amendments to the 1985 Rio Vista General Plan* (City of Rio Vista, 1990).

In 2001, the City now proposes a new breed of General Plan for the City that is the culmination of a 3-year effort. This General Plan, which can be likened to an "area plan" or possibly a "specific plan" in terms of its detailed performance standards, was developed largely through the workings of a General Plan Steering Committee (GPSC), comprised of representatives from the City Council, the Planning Commission, business owners, and residents. Development of the General Plan involved an extensive process of public hearings and workshops led by this advisory group. The GPSC's work extended from October 1998 to August 2001. Staff from the City's Community Development Department and consultants assisted the Committee.

Rio Vista conducted four General Plan Town Hall meetings, on April 29, June 15, July 30, and September 2, 1998. The meetings were held to solicit community concerns and identify issues that would be the focus of the planning effort. Meetings addressed a variety of issues, including history, growth, and existing facilities; physical and environmental constraints and opportunities for parks, recreation, and community amenities; and economic development strategy and potential. Newsletters were mailed to all Rio Vista residents and businesses. The newsletters advertised the Town Hall meetings and contained questioners and survey results. Through the Town Hall meetings, developers, business owners, and all interested community members participated in the planning process. These Town Hall meetings are further described in Chapter 2.

The GPSC was presented with background reports or information for the General Plan element areas and was asked to make policy recommendations for each element. Draft General Plan elements were prepared based on the Committee's direction. The GPSC reviewed the draft elements between January and September 2001. The document was revised to incorporate GPSC input and the General Plan was released for public review, in conjunction with an environmental impact report (EIR), in December 2001.

An EIR was prepared for the General Plan pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR includes a project summary, impact analysis, and associated mitigation measures. The document also addresses other State-mandated components of an EIR for a General Plan.

Public hearings on the Draft Rio Vista General Plan and the Draft General Plan EIR will be held at the City's Planning Commission. Following circulation of the draft documents, responses will be prepared to the comments received, and the Final EIR will be certified prior to adoption of this General Plan. The City Council will take final action on both documents.

G. Plan Organization and Application

The primary components of the Rio Vista General Plan are officially adopted maps and an accompanying text, including:

- The General Plan document text, which incorporates a setting and outlook section and the goals, policies, and implementing actions for each element.
- The Land Use Map, which graphically represents the City's existing and planned land use mix and pattern. This map is required by State law and clearly designates the type of land use (e.g., residential, commercial, and industrial) and the applicable maximum residential density for each property within the planning area.
- The Circulation Map shows existing and proposed roadways and their status (e.g., arterial and collector) and the components of the City Trails and Pathways Plan Map.
- The Sensitive Local Resource Areas Map is also an official map of the General Plan that shows the location of known sensitive areas within the planning area, including biological, visual, and topographical resources.
- The document contains other diagrams and maps that provide specific direction and clarify or illustrate policies and issues discussed.

The content of the General Plan is in accordance with Section 65302 of the Government Code, with seven mandatory elements and additional optional elements, as illustrated in *Table 1-1*. The City of Rio Vista considers this General Plan, incorporating the Land Use Map and Circulation Map, to meet all the State-mandated requirements for the substance and content of a General Plan.

**Table 1-1
COMPARISON OF STATE-MANDATED ELEMENTS TO THE
RIO VISTA GENERAL PLAN**

State-Mandated General Plan Elements	Rio Vista General Plan Elements
Land Use	Introduction
Housing	Community Vision
Circulation	Planning Constraints & Boundaries
Open Space	Land Use
Conservation	Community Character & Design
Safety	Housing
Noise	Economic Development
	Circulation & Mobility
	Open Space & Recreation
	Resource Conservation & Management
	Safety & Noise
	Public Facilities & Services

The Rio Vista General Plan was developed as a hybrid general/specific plan. The City’s intent was to take a more detailed approach to comprehensive planning of this small and largely undeveloped community. Unlike most general plans, Rio Vista’s General Plan incorporates “performance” policies, standards, and implementing actions that dictate levels-of-service, performance thresholds, and other specific indicators, including design criteria, to achieve the type of community the City is seeking. Like a Specific Plan, it is intended that this General Plan be used to supplement or even substitute for, existing policies and ordinances when reviewing both private and public development proposals until such time as the policies, criteria, standards and guidelines can be incorporated into more specific ordinances, specific plans and regulations. Successful implementation of these performance standards will be paramount in achieving Rio Vista’s desired quality of life.

The General Plan utilizes a combination of specific standards and more general guidelines, as appropriate. Guidelines are usually delineated by the presence of the word "should" and represent principles which are generally expected to be followed unless the applicant or proponent can demonstrate that a deviation would still accomplish the intent of the Guidelines. Standards are delineated by the use of prescriptive verbiage, such as "shall", "must", "required", or "prohibited". Standards may be deviated only where it can be demonstrated conclusively that an equivalent or superior solution would result.

READING THE GENERAL PLAN

In the Rio Vista General Plan, each element is organized in the same fashion. *Table 1-2* describes the format for most chapters in the General Plan.

Table 1-2
FORMAT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Introduction addresses the need for and purpose of the individual element, and summarizes its key components.

Purpose and Authority describes the federal, state, and local laws and regulations that empower the element or regulate its use.

Rio Vista Principles are directly related to the community issues and concerns identified through the Town Hall meetings. Each element includes the principles that are most applicable to its specific content. The complete list of these principles is found in Chapter 2, "Community Vision."

Setting describes the existing conditions; plans, regulations, and standards currently in place; and current issues for the key topic areas of the specific element.

Outlook sets the direction and context for the goals and policies that follow. Outlook also contains the proposed standards and project evaluation criteria for the key components of the element.

*Each element contains applicable goals, policies, and implementing actions.**

Goals state the overall desired conditions that the City would like to achieve as part of its vision. Goal statements are general.

Policies indicate an action or direction that the City must take as a step toward achieving the desired condition or goal. Policies are more specific statements of how a goal will be interpreted or implemented. Policies may include guidelines, standards, and maps.

- **Guidelines** are policy statements that provide a set of detailed instructions about how to conduct some aspect of land use or design regulation.
- **Standards** are policy statements that include a specific, quantified measure of performance.
- **Maps** are graphic expressions of policy, typically showing geographic base data and thematic information.

Implementing actions are more specific and include precise actions to implement the stated policies.

* Chapter 13 lists all policies, goals, and implementing actions contained in the General Plan; in addition, the chapter identifies the responsible parties, time frame, and funding source(s) for each implementing action.

To understand the full intent of the General Plan, the goals, policies, and implementing actions must be reviewed together and in combination with the Land Use Map. In addition, many individual issues have implications that are contained in more than one element of the Plan. Readers of the General Plan should review other parts of the document where references are made to additional information.

H. General Plan Content

The general content of each element is described below:

- *Chapter 1, "Introduction,"* relates the function and intent of the General Plan; the community background and historical context of Rio Vista; and the development, content, and organization of the General Plan.
- *Chapter 2, "Community Vision,"* describes the public involvement process that identified the concerns of Rio Vista residents, business owners, and other interested individuals for the future of the community.

The Rio Vista principles and its community vision are directly related to the community issues and concerns identified through the Town Hall meetings that were conducted as part of the General Plan update. These seven key principles and vision statements frame the goals and policies of the *Rio Vista General Plan 2001*.

- *Chapter 3, "Planning Constraints & Boundaries,"* describes several boundaries and concepts that are used in long-range city planning: city limits, sphere of influence, annexation, urban growth boundary, planning area, and areas of concern. The element also explains the roles of State government and other jurisdictions that affect Rio Vista's planning efforts. In identifying these boundaries for Rio Vista until 2020, this element defines the pattern and development of growth in the community.
- *Chapter 4, "Land Use,"* discusses existing and projected land use conditions, and land use designations and standards. The goals and policies are intended to promote a balanced land use pattern that supports innovative land use approaches while retaining and enhancing the distinct character and identity of Rio Vista.
- *Chapter 5, "Community Character & Design,"* discusses (1) the physical characteristics that lend shape, form, and identity to the Rio Vista community; and (2) the architectural and urban design principles that create the shape, form, and appearances of new and existing neighborhoods.
- *Chapter 6, "Housing,"* identifies the existing and projected housing needs. The element also establishes goals, policies, and implementing actions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing to meet the needs of all economic sectors of the community. This element has been prepared to fulfill the requirements of State housing law.
- *Chapter 7, "Economic Development,"* establishes policies to maintain and enhance economic development opportunities within the City and to define a long-term framework for sustainability. This element focuses on how Rio Vista can direct local resources to retain and assist local business, and to attract new industry. The element identifies actions that will increase the City's tax base and support efforts to strengthen and diversify the local economy.

- **Chapter 8, “Circulation & Mobility,”** identifies the general location and extent of the existing and proposed roadways, highways, railroads, and transit routes. The element identifies policies and programs to reduce traffic congestion, promote alternative forms of transportation, and provide safe travel throughout the City.
- **Chapter 9, “Open Space & Recreation,”** provides for the conservation, development, and use of natural resources; details plans and measures for the preservation of open space; and provides for outdoor recreation facilities. The overall goal of the element is to preserve a comprehensive interconnected system of open space, encompassing preservation and enhancement of natural habitat areas, for the use and enjoyment of the community. The element also integrates related land use, transportation and circulation, transit, and energy issues.
- **Chapter 10, “Resource Conservation & Management,”** provides goals and policies for both traditional “active” park lands and non-traditional “open space recreational” park lands. The element specifies standards and conditions as guidelines for planning parks and recreation facilities, including their size, type, and location.
- **Chapter 11, “Safety & Noise,”** establishes standards and plans for the protection of the community from a variety of hazards, including earthquakes, floods, crime, fire, hazardous materials, and electromagnetic fields. The element also identifies standards for transportation and fixed noise sources to protect the health and welfare of the community.
- **Chapter 12, “Public Facilities & Services,”** identifies facility and service needs of the community and performance standards to ensure that desired service levels are maintained. The element discusses civic facilities, libraries, schools, electric and privately owned utilities, water and wastewater systems, solid waste and recycling, water and energy conservation, and the extension of City services. Emphasis is placed on the fair-share contribution of new development toward the provision of services and facilities.
- **Chapter 13, “Policy & Implementation Summary,”** lists all of the General Plan policies and their associated implementation actions. A matrix for implementing actions includes who is responsible, when the action will be implemented, and how the action will be funded.

The General Plan also incorporates a glossary and a list of references that were used in the preparation of the Plan, along with specific documents that may provide detailed information to supplement the General Plan. All referenced materials are available through the City of Rio Vista’s Community Development Department.

I. Plan Administration and Amendment Procedures

Once adopted, the General Plan is the basis for land use and other municipal decisions. The Plan's purpose is to serve as a framework for detailed public and private development proposals. The Plan provides both general and specific implementation direction in its goals, policies, and implementing actions. It also relies on tools such as the Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision Ordinance; design review process, including design guidelines; Capital Improvement Program; and a variety of special-purpose ordinances and programs. These implementing actions are briefly described and related to General Plan policies in subsequent chapters.

Public Resources Code Section 21083.3 currently provides that if a development project is consistent with the City's General Plan and an environmental impact report is certified with respect to the General Plan, the application of the California Environmental Quality Act to the approval of the development project shall be limited to the effects on the environment that are peculiar to the parcel or to the project and that were not addressed as significant effects in the environmental impact report for the General Plan, or which substantial new information shows will be more significant than described in that prior environmental impact report. Consistent with existing law, the City does not intend to require future development projects to reanalyze significant environmental impacts already adequately addressed by the environmental impact report for the City's General Plan. Environmental analysis of those future development projects shall be limited to the environmental effects that are peculiar to the parcel or the project in a manner consistent with Public Resources Code Section 21083.3, as that section may be changed from time to time.

Policies in the Plan provide direction that may require updating of inconsistent existing City regulations. In accordance with California law, the City's Zoning Ordinance and other implementation tools must be consistent with the General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance and other ordinances will need to be reviewed after adoption of this Plan to ensure their consistency with its contents. During the preparation and public review of Zoning Ordinance Amendments, topics such as building height, densities, and allowed uses will be discussed for specific parcels. The general rule is that the Zoning Ordinance can be more restrictive than the General Plan but cannot allow a greater level or completely different type of development than that described by the policies and standards in the General Plan.

Interpretation

A continuing administrative program of monitoring and evaluation will accompany Plan implementation. To remain effective in dealing with changing trends and conditions, the General Plan must maintain some flexibility. Interpretation should follow the guidance of Section G of this Chapter. The reviewing authority for interpretation and implementation is first, staff; or in reviewing development applications upon appeal, the Planning Commission or City Council may be the reviewing authority, as required by City Ordinance or State law. The reviewing authority is responsible for determining if a specific deviation is equal or superior to the policy, implementation measure, performance criteria, standard or guideline in question. Conversely, the reviewing authority may also apply more stringent requirements than those listed, if necessary, to meet the intent of the Goals and Policies stated herein.

Amendments

Regular evaluation may, over time, identify desired amendments to the General Plan. Monitoring and evaluation provide an internal process for ensuring that the Plan remains dynamic and relevant, and also provide background for evaluation of private sector amendments.

The following principles will regulate the administration and amendment of Rio Vista's General Plan:

- The City will regularly evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of the entire General Plan. Such evaluation should occur approximately every 5 years, starting from the date of initial adoption of the Plan, or whenever any significant modification to the General Plan is contemplated. The evaluation will consider the accuracy of data; effectiveness and relevance of goals, policies, and implementing actions; and compliance with relevant legislation.
- Policy and text amendments to the General Plan may be considered by the City only when such amendments do not result in any internal inconsistencies within the Plan.
- Amendments may be considered by the City only when the reviewing authority determines that such amendments involve issues which cannot be resolved by simple interpretation.
- Amendments to the Land Use Map or other diagrams may be considered by the City only when such amendments are consistent with all of the goals, policies, and implementing actions of the General Plan.

The General Plan will be amended only when the City determines that a change is necessary. All General Plan amendments must be adopted by resolution; an amendment requires at least one public hearing by the Planning Commission and one by the City Council. All General Plan amendments will require appropriate environmental documentation in accordance with CEQA.

J. Coordination with Regional Planning Efforts

As the City of Rio Vista grows, local changes will have a greater potential to affect other communities in Solano and Sacramento Counties, as well as the overall region. Therefore, the City carries a responsibility to coordinate its General Plan with regional planning efforts. The City's General Plan must be coordinated with other local government agencies to ensure consistent planning decisions and the attainment of regional circulation, environmental, and housing goals. The General Plan also must coordinate with special districts that provide public services to the City's residents in order to ensure effective and efficient provision of services. The regional agencies whose planning policies may affect the City of Rio Vista are shown in *Table 1-3*.

**Table 1-3
REGIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Agency	Planning Responsibilities
River Delta School District	Plans for and provides school facilities as needed to accommodate population growth.
Delta Fire Protection District	Locates fire protection facilities and provides emergency medical, fire suppression, and protection services as needed to serve developed and undeveloped areas.
Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District	Responsible for reducing and maintaining regional air pollution levels to within federal and state standards; prepares the federal Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) and state Air Quality Attainment Plan (AQAP).
Solano County Department of Environmental Management	Responsible for treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes, as well as the siting and management of hazardous waste facilities; prepares the Solano County Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan.
Solano Transportation Authority (STA)	Responsible for planning a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system in Solano County; prepares the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
SEDCORP	A collaboration of the 7 cities and Solano County, in partnership with business and industry, and education, fosters economic growth, provides current market data, and represent the region on industry issues at the State and extra-regional levels.
Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)	Comprehensive planning agency for the 100 cities and 9 counties of the San Francisco Bay Area; serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for these counties; primarily addresses issues relating to land use, circulation, and air quality; prepares the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Among the many tasks required to complete this General Plan, was the review of general plans and area plans of neighboring jurisdictions – particularly those of Solano County (including the Collinsville-Montezuma Area Plan) and Sacramento County. The City of Rio Vista is

committed to coordinating and working with these regional jurisdictions, to address planning issues that may affect nearby cities and their residents, infrastructure, and environmental/agricultural resources.