

**Chapter 2**  
**Community Vision**

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## Chapter 2 Community Vision



The City of Rio Vista is located on the expanding urban edge of two major metropolitan regions—Sacramento to the northeast and the San Francisco Bay Area to the southwest. Both regions are influencing the character of Rio Vista in rapid and sweeping ways. The City annexed enough land in the early 1990s to grow to over 22,000 population in 2020. Rio Vista has gained approximately 750 homes and 2,000 people 1995. In 1998, the City undertook this comprehensive General Plan update to ensure that this growth is properly directed and benefits the community.

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 topics, including history, growth, and existing facilities; physical and environmental constraints and opportunities for parks, recreation, and community amenities; and economic development strategy and potential. Over 300 persons attended at least one of the four meetings.

Residents and interested individuals participated in a community image survey. They viewed a number of slides, portraying different characteristics, styles, and types of development and representing several approaches to residential and commercial development. Participants rated the slides by using tally sheets that were collected and totaled for each image. Through the ratings, attendants communicated preferences about how the community should look and function as growth occurs. This process was repeated at each of the first three Town Hall meetings. At the fourth meeting, the aggregated ratings from all three meetings (over 150 rating sheets were tallied) were shown.

Strongest positive ratings were assigned to images of the farmland and hills surrounding the town; older neighborhoods and building styles; and newer commercial and residential developments with a traditional architecture and street scene, especially when open space and

neighborhood parks were included. The most negative ratings went to strip commercial and “typical” newer shopping centers—especially those with large, dominating parking lots and “chain store” appearance. Relatively low ratings also went to newer subdivisions that lacked in landscaping and street trees and where autos and garages typically dominated street frontages.

Many other subjects were discussed at the Town Hall meetings. Questionnaires were circulated and attendants were asked to identify the “top ten” things that they liked and disliked about Rio Vista.

The dominant issues of concern to Rio Vista residents included:

- How to preserve Rio Vista’s small-town character and sense of community.
- The need for improvements to the riverfront and downtown.
- The need for public services and facilities, especially recreation opportunities.
- A desire for better shopping opportunities and choices.
- How to improve appearance and maintenance—both public and private.
- How to accommodate new growth that supports the community’s positive qualities and addresses the areas that need improvement.

The Rio Vista Principles are directly related to the community issues and concerns identified through the Town Hall meetings. Some of these principles 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. The principles below frame the goals and policies of the *Rio Vista General Plan 2001*.

## **RIO VISTA PRINCIPLES**

### **PRESERVE RIO VISTA’S SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER**

- *Rio Vista should still be recognizable to today’s residents 30 years from now. New development should reinforce the characteristics that make Rio Vista unique. Existing neighborhoods should be examined and strengthened.*
- *Farmland and nature are important elements of the community. A clear edge between urban development and agriculture should be maintained.*
- *The Sacramento River and related natural areas should be showcased and enhanced. These resources should be recognized as vital and essential to the community.*
- *New development should create complete neighborhoods rather than a series of subdivisions that are indistinguishable from those in other communities.*
- *Parking lots should not dominate street frontage, public spaces, or buildings.*

- ❑ *Community identity should be strengthened with attractive entryways on Highway 12, Main Street, and River Road.*

#### **PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN, WATERFRONT, AND HISTORIC PLACES**

- ❑ *The existing downtown and waterfront should be strengthened and retained as the central focus of the community. Cultural, civic, entertainment, and specialty retail uses – and supporting uses and activities should be located in the downtown and adjacent areas.*
- ❑ *Redevelopment of Rio Vista’s downtown and waterfront should create economic vitality and an atmosphere for walking and shopping. Historic building facades should be restored, and new projects should be linked to their surroundings.*
- ❑ *The Sacramento River should be made an accessible resource for the enjoyment of Rio Vista residents and the general public.*
- ❑ *Commercial development along the Highway 12 corridor should not displace or preempt investment from the downtown or along the existing developed corridor.*

#### **PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES THAT DEFINE RIO VISTA**

- ❑ *New development should accommodate and showcase natural features as community amenities. New development should respect the contours of hillsides, valleys, and drainageways as important recognizable features of Rio Vista. Key hilltops to be preserved for public use and vistas should be identified.*
- ❑ *The community should seek to connect the existing town to new developments and the Sacramento River waterfront by an extensive and interconnecting trail system. The natural drainageways, hills, and sensitive vegetation areas should be the basis for designing such a system.*

#### **PROVIDE ADEQUATE LEISURE AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RIO VISTA RESIDENTS**

- ❑ *A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ball fields and parkways, should be distributed within all of Rio Vista’s neighborhoods. Existing parks should be maintained and new parks should be provided as new neighborhoods are developed.*
- ❑ *New development should provide adequate recreation opportunities. Standards for parks, recreation facilities, and trails – and financial mechanisms for their operation and maintenance should be developed by and required of every new development.*

#### **CREATE AND MAINTAIN ECONOMIC VITALITY; PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE, WORK, AND SHOP IN RIO VISTA**

- ❑ *The Rio Vista community should be planned for a balance of jobs and housing. Rio Vista should not become another bedroom suburb like so many neighboring communities.*
- ❑ *A broad range of housing should be available throughout the community to match job opportunities and community needs. No one style or price range of housing should take precedence over any other, so long as an adequate supply is available for each.*

- ❑ *Commercial development should occur in locations and configurations that complement existing business. New retail projects should:*
  - *Provide goods and services not currently available or for which an unmet demand clearly exists, and*
  - *Be sized in proportion to market demand.*

**PROVIDE ADEQUATE AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO ALL RIO VISTANS IN A FISCALLY HEALTHY AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER**

- ❑ *Growth should pay for itself. New development should ensure that sufficient public services are provided without additional burden to existing residents or over-extending current capacity.*
- ❑ *Rio Vista should continue its tradition of cooperation with private nonprofit agencies and other public agencies, to provide essential services for youth, seniors, the economically disadvantaged, and those in crisis.*
- ❑ *Adequate public facilities – sewer, water, transportation, public safety, parks, recreation, education, and others – should be in place or assured in a timely fashion before new development projects proceed.*
- ❑ *The Rio Vista Airport is a vital public facility and economic resource; new residential development must take steps to ensure that its viability is not threatened.*

**ENSURE EASE OF MOBILITY FOR ALL RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND BUSINESSES**

- ❑ *Accessible, easy, and convenient circulation systems for autos, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike should be designed into all new developments.*
- ❑ *Convenient and accessible truck routes for delivery and shipping of goods and services should be provided, while minimizing the impact to residential neighborhoods and sensitive districts.*
- ❑ *The development of the connecting trail system suggested by the above principles should be pursued as a key circulation facility, as well as a natural resource opportunity.*
- ❑ *Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance of each other. This design allows independence and safe movement for those who do not drive, especially seniors and young people. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking and reduce the number and length of automobile trips.*
- ❑ *The needs of automobiles and pedestrians should be balanced. It is a fact of modern life that development must adequately accommodate automobiles. However, pedestrian accessibility should not be sacrificed or made less important than automobile accessibility.*
- ❑ *Streets, thoroughfares, and public spaces should be:*
  - *Safe, comfortable, attractive, and interesting to the pedestrian and motorist alike; and*
  - *Free of barriers and designed with multiple connections to various parts of the community.*

The Rio Vista Principles were identified as a means to implement the community's vision and frame the goals and policies for the new General Plan. These principles articulate community concerns and objectives, and are the basis for the elements and diagrams in the following chapters.