

A large, stylized letter 'V' in a dark brown color, positioned on the left side of the page. The 'V' is partially enclosed by a dark brown square that extends to the right, creating a graphic element that frames the start of the text.

VISION, INTRODUCTION
& EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1. VISION FOR GROWTH

The vision for the physical development of the City of Rio Rancho emerged from a series of workshops held during the development of the Vision 2020 Integrated Comprehensive Plan (ICP), adopted in 2001. While some aspects of the updating of the Comprehensive Plan have changed, the idea of higher intensity and density growth nodes introduced in the Vision 2020 ICP has not changed. Since the Comprehensive Plan is organized with individual elements that can stand on their own, the Development Services Department will review each element no less than every five years and amend the plan elements as necessary.

The key elements of the Vision include:

- Gateways or entries into the city. More specifically, the identification and creation of gateway and corridor streets where high traffic volumes exist or will exist and specific design criteria will be applied to the type of landscape treatment, intersection details and the types of land uses that are appropriate along gateway and corridor streets to implement the vision conceived during the Vision 2020 ICP workshops.
- The preservation and enhancement of arroyos as an open space corridor is necessary to allow citizens the opportunity to connect with the natural environment. Likewise, utility easements

play an important role in the development of open space via multi-use trails. Utilizing arroyos and utility easements allows benefits the City by creating multi-use facilities which are addressed in the City's Strategic Plan and Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority's (SSCAFCA) Quality of Life Master Plan. Arroyo preservation also contributes to aquifer recharge, flood control, and provides wildlife habitat all of which are sustainability issues that support the City's Strategic Plan which was adopted in March 2009.

- Community wide facilities such as parks, schools, libraries, and senior centers, etc. were deemed important during the Vision 2020 ICP workshops. Where possible, the Vision of the Comprehensive Plan is to link trails, to community facilities in order to increase Rio Rancho's walkability.
- As Rio Rancho grows, the development of higher intensity nodes with high-density residential land uses will be necessary to create transit opportunities, walkable neighborhoods, and complete streets (landscaped medians and sidewalk buffers, transit and bicycle lanes etc.).



1.1 ANTIQUATED PLATTING

Along with water availability, antiquated platting is one of the most significant issues that inhibits the City of Rio Rancho's ability to plan for roads, public facilities, economic development, and many of the quality of life topics addressed in the City's Strategic Plan and SSCAFCA's Quality of Life Master Plan. This issue affects land that was prematurely platted and sold in the 1960s and 1970s. Problems that continue due to the platting of Rio Rancho Estates include but are not limited to: fractionalized land ownership and the lack of off-site improvements like paved roads, sewers, and drainage facilities.

The topic of antiquated platting is discussed throughout the Comprehensive Plan because it crosses all of the City's lines of business, including Economic Development, Public Works, Planning, and Parks and Recreation. Therefore, a number of goals, policies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan address antiquated platting.

1.2 URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

Rio Rancho has been and continues to be a rural to suburban community. However, as the City continues to grow and as land becomes more valuable, it will be necessary to increase residential densities in order to provide efficient services and affordable housing. Additionally, increasing residential densities is necessary for transit services to become successful. The following design criteria came out of the Vision 2020 ICP workshops:

1.1.1 LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:

Sites should be developed in an environmentally sound approach with respect to storm water management by: reducing the impervious areas on an individual lot, utilizing rainwater collected in a gutter system for landscape irrigation, plants, trees, shrubs, and groundcover to encourage infiltration, and require on site retention and use of water collected. Additionally, the proper siting of buildings on a lot to take advantage of the natural systems such as: solar orientation to heat the house in the winter, location of the appropriate plant material to shade a house in the summer, but allow the sun to penetrate through windows in the house during the winter, and the use of trees to protect structures from the prevailing winds throughout the year. Discourage, where appropriate, the use of walls around the perimeter of lots, with the exception of horse fencing.

Encourage the use of development envelopes to determine the maximum extent of development allowed on a lot. This will allow for the preservation of the rural character of the area and the preservation of the natural landscape.

1.1.2 MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Landscape streets with appropriate plant materials, the placement should create a sense of enclosure and enhance the continuity of the route.

To the extent practical, community facilities such as schools and parks should be part of a development node and surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Develop environmentally sound approaches to storm water management on each lot. This may include: reducing the impervious areas on an individual lot, utilizing rainwater collected in a gutter system for landscape irrigation, plant trees, shrubs, and groundcover to encourage infiltration, require on site retention and use of water collected at the subdivision level. Parking shall be on-site.

Where practical, locate development within a quarter mile of a community center, park, school, or other public facility. Sidewalks, walkways, and bikeways shall be incorporated into the development design so that more direct and convenient access will encourage their use. Cul-de-sacs should include a walkway/bikeway access to provide convenience for the pedestrian and bicyclist, yet still provide cul-de-sac insulation from auto traffic. Provide for multiple sidewalk/bikeway access points along the perimeter of a development to increase convenience for the user, yet still provide neighborhood insulation from through auto traffic. Connect walkways and bikeways directly to adjacent shopping centers, schools, churches, employment centers, and other public facilities to provide the opportunity to facilitate replacement of some auto trips. Connect the residential path system to the city-wide multi-use paths within the arroyos, easements, and arterial roadway system. Create the opportunity or flexibility to allow neighborhood serving commercial to be located within a residential area.

1.1.3 HIGH-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Locate high-density residential areas on collector or arterial streets within 1/8 mile walking distance of a commercial center, employment center, or other community facility. Incorporate sidewalks, walkways, and bikeways into the development design so that more direct and convenient access will encourage their use. Sidewalks, walkways, and bikeways shall be incorporated into the development design so that more direct and convenient access will encourage their use. Cul-de-sacs should include a walkway/bikeway access to provide convenience for the pedestrian and bicyclist, yet still provide cul-de-sac insulation from auto traffic. Provide for multiple sidewalk/bikeway access points along the perimeter of a development to increase convenience for the user, yet still provide neighborhood insulation from through auto traffic. Connect walkways and bikeways directly to adjacent shopping centers, schools, churches, employment centers, and other community facilities to provide the opportunity to facilitate replacement of some auto trips.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT NODES

The creation of development nodes where a higher concentration of land uses exist in the form of commercial, multi-family and mixed-use developments helps to develop a sense of place. In order for a node to function as a vibrant and diverse development, nodes tend to be created with a mixture of land use types (both horizontal and vertical) are more pedestrian in scale, and the focus, from a physical design sense, is one of building details and creation of the public realm by placement and relationships of the built form.

Incorporating public spaces and mixed-uses into a development is an important aspect to creating a vibrant and diverse node. By promoting creative site planning and design via floor area ratio (FAR) bonuses for exceptional quality planning and design developers are more likely to incorporate public spaces, community facilities and attractive design elements into a development. Increasing residential densities for projects that offer mixed uses with a diversity of housing opportunities including the provision of affordable housing also creates a more vibrant and diverse development.

Developing visual terminuses with changes in color/texture/materials, plazas and other design elements within a development enhances the sense of a place created by a mixed-use development. Avoiding freestanding pad site developments with large setbacks and allowing on-street parking helps reduce the size of the on-site parking areas increasing a pedestrian's sense of security by providing a pedestrian scale to a development that helps to foster human interaction. Reducing building setbacks to allow for on-site parking located behind buildings also promotes a pedestrian-scale development.

Because crosswalks are an integral part of encouraging pedestrian activities throughout the city, minimizing the distance a pedestrian has to travel when crossing a street is an important aspect to creating walkable, complete streets. On-street parking with extended curb lines is one way to accomplish reduced crossing distances. Additionally, incorporating well marked and appropriately sized bicycle lanes is an important aspect to a complete street. Another aspect to complete streets is the integration of dedicated transit lanes where practical.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF RIO RANCHO AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

2.1.1 EARLY HISTORY OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

It is commonly held that the Rio Grande Valley was inhabited approximately 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. The remains of a hunting campsite, located within the current City limits of Rio Rancho, reveal that the first indigenous residents lived in the Rio Rancho vicinity approximately 11,000 years ago. These early inhabitants were hunters and gatherers whose tools of the trade were arrowhead-like artifacts called “Folsom Points” named after the location where similar artifacts were first located in New Mexico in 1927.

In the winter of 1540 Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led Spanish conquistadors to the Rio Rancho vicinity in search of the fabled, “seven cities of gold,” while conquering native peoples along the way.

Instead of the Seven Cities of Gold, Coronado’s party found an agrarian society of more than 60,000 persons living in 12 to 16 inhabited pueblos along the Rio Grande between present-day Bernalillo and Isleta Pueblo.

The Spanish explored New Mexico as a combination of exploration and missionary efforts by the Catholic Church of Spain. The Spanish entered the middle Rio Grande valley and mandated catholic teachings in every pueblo they encountered. This was in direct conflict with the Native Americans’ traditional religions and eventually led to unrest and the ensuing Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

In 1706, colonization increased and Albuquerque was founded by Governor Don Francisco Cuervo y Valdes and named in honor of the Duke of Albuquerque, viceroy in Mexico City. Four years later the Town of Alameda Land Grant, land upon which Rio Rancho is built, was officially conveyed by the Spanish Crown. It stretched from the Rio Grande to the Rio Puerco, and included present day

Alameda, Corrales, Paradise Hills and Rio Rancho. Within the grant, the land was divided by varas: long, parcels that extended westward from the Rio Grande and connected each farmer to his neighbor through a network of acequias or irrigation ditches. This parcel platting is still evident in the ownership pattern and street pattern visible in the adjoining community of Corrales, New Mexico.

In 1821, Mexico won its independence and the Santa Fe Trail was opened as a major commerce route between Mexico City and Missouri. The route parallels the Rio Grande corridor adjacent to present day Rio Rancho.

In 1846, President Polk declared war with Mexico under the direction of General Stephen W. Kearny. Santa Fe was subsequently captured and the American Period began with New Mexico was organized as a territorial entity. At the close of the Mexican War two years later, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed commencing the process of formally adopting New Mexico, as a Territory of the United States.

After the establishment of the American territorial government in 1848, private land holdings, such as the Alameda Land Grant, were challenged in the United States Court leading to a number of lawsuits resulting in disputed boundaries for many years. In 1864, the Office of the US Surveyor General surveyed the Town of Alameda Land Grant followed by the creation of Sandoval County in the early 1900’s. The total population of the entire State of New Mexico was estimated to be approximately 327,300 persons. President William Howard Taft signed the legislation that made New Mexico the 47th state of the union in 1912.

2.1.2 RIO RANCHO ESTATES PRIOR TO CITY INCORPORATION

The San Mateo Land Company purchased the property in 1919 for \$0.19 per acre as an investment and sold the property in 1948 to Brownfield & Koontz to become the “Koontz Ranch” with over 500 head of cattle grazing on the property. In 1959, the property was sold to Ed Snow a local investor and developer. The land, located immediately north and west of the City of Albuquerque, continued to increase in value as the Albuquerque metropolitan area grew to just over 200,000 persons in 1960.

In 1961, Rio Rancho Estates, Inc. (hereinafter, “AMREP”) purchased an estimated 55,000 acres as an investment. AMREP’s success in New York City as a rose flower mail order business afforded the company the financial ability to purchase the property for approximately ten million dollars. In the years immediately following the purchase, a plan was created to subdivide the property into tens of thousands of lots and sell them using mass marketing and mail order techniques. AMREP platted and sold this land as Rio Rancho Estates in half acre and one acre lots to thousands of absentee property owners through mail order sales in the 60’s and 70’s. AMREP sold 77,000 lots to 40,000 buyers for \$200 million at \$795 for one half acre and \$1,495 for one acre, while retaining over 25% of the acreage for future development.

In 1966 the 100th family moved into the community and by 1970, “Rio Rancho Estates” had grown to 91,000 acres with the purchase of an additional 35,000 acres of King Ranch property. AMREP continued its interest and involvement in the community and established its role in the development of the emerging City as builder, land developer, economic development coordinator and leader in the construction of affordable housing.

In 1975, AMREP ceased mail order land sales and began concentrating on housing and commercial development. Beginning in 1977, AMREP marketed most of its early subdivisions to retirees, but it soon shifted its focus to providing affordable housing for young families.

In the late 1970s, some local residents began an effort to incorporate a portion of Rio Rancho Estates into a city. On the third attempt on September 3, 1980, the residents voted approval of incorporating an area of approximately 8,194 acres into the City of Rio Rancho. A total of 3874 votes were cast with 2330 residents voting for incorporation.

2.1.3 THE CITY OF RIO RANCHO AND RIO RANCHO ESTATES SINCE CITY INCORPORATION

On February 23, 1981, with 10,208 residents the City of Rio Rancho was officially incorporated. Ordinances covering zoning and subdivisions were approved by the newly elected Governing Body making Rio Rancho one of New Mexico’s youngest cities.

AMREP continued being the builder of Rio Rancho residences, emphasizing affording housing and began promoting economic development to provide a more favorable jobs/housing balance for the area and an economic base to generate high paying jobs and tax revenues for the growing City. In 1980, the City had 1,500

jobs, less than one third of which were economic base jobs that export goods and services out of the area and bring in money. By 2000, employment in the City had increased to over 19,000 jobs, over 10,000 of which were in the economic base category.

The 1990s were marked by Rio Rancho’s monumental steps forward with respect to its ability to mature as a City – from bedroom community to a self-sustaining City. The City acquired the water and wastewater utility, established its own school district, solicited the development of several post-secondary educational facilities, elected to become a “Home Rule” chartered community, achieved the second lowest crime rate in the State of New Mexico and encouraged the development of a variety of businesses through the development of efficient public/private partnerships and through incentives such as industrial revenue bonds.

In the last decade, the City has continued its rapid growth, becoming the third largest City in the state, annexing two state land parcels, and attracting several large economic development projects. Throughout this period while Rio Rancho was maturing as a governmental entity, it was also growing physically, annexing more of the Rio Rancho Estates and even land in Bernalillo County into the City limits.

2.2. THE PURPOSE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The need for a Comprehensive Plan serves both a practical need and a legal need. A comprehensive plan serves these roles in the following ways: a) The Comprehensive Plan is a statement of City Development policy, b) The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for future development decision making, c) The Comprehensive Plan fulfills a legal requirement that justifies land use decisions adopted by the Governing Body.

The Comprehensive Plan is a statement of how community desires to grow. It becomes the basis for approving zone changes and other land use approvals. The Comprehensive Plan is composed of the following Elements, all of which relate to one another:

- a) Conservation & The Natural Environment,
- b) Land Use,
- c) Population & Housing,
- d) Transportation,
- e) Public Facilities,
- f) Parks & Recreation,
- g) Urban Design,
- h) Economic Development,
- i) Antiquated Platting, Annexation & Addressing.

Of particular note in this Comprehensive Plan is the Land Use Element. The Land Use Element includes a Land Use Map which is a key tool in determining whether or not a request for rezoning land is deemed appropriate or not. Because the Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan does not identify a specific land use to every parcel within the City, the City will rely on the development of Specific Area Plans and Master Plans for identifying a specific land use at the parcel-level. Specific Area Plans and Master Plans are a part of the Land Use Element and are used as a statement of policy to guide land-use decision making by the Governing Body.

This document and all of its elements, including Specific Area Plans and Master Plans will serve as the official Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rio Rancho and will hereafter be referred to in the document as the Comprehensive Plan. The City of Rio Rancho initially implemented a comprehensive plan in 1988. The 1988 Comprehensive Plan outlined goals and objectives for three areas—Land Use, Transportation and Public Services. Then, like now, several goals in the Comprehensive Plan stated the need for having a self-sustaining community, a variety of housing choices and enhancing the visual and environmental qualities of the city.

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan served the City for 13 years until the Vision 2020-Integrated Comprehensive Plan (ICP) was adopted in June 2001. The Vision2020 ICP greatly expanded the scope of the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. In addition to addressing Land Use, Transportation and Public Services, the Vision 2020 ICP incorporated sections with policy statements on Urban Design, Sustainability, Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development.

In 2008, the City of Rio Rancho underwent a strategic planning initiative to help focus the operational goals for the City. The Strategic Plan outlined six broad-based goals that were deemed critical to the continued success in the growth of the city. Below are the six goals contained in the Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Infrastructure

Ensure that the City develops new and has well-maintained infrastructure that fosters a quality community, supports a strong economy and meets the needs of current and future residents.

Goal 2: Development

Ensure the City has plans and policies in place to attract and create well-planned high-quality, stable, residential, commercial and industrial development.

Goal 3: Fiscal Health

Ensure that the City's fiscal health is strong with a growing tax base, sound financial policies and economically diverse funding solutions.

Goal 4: Public Safety Services

Provide services to ensure the safety and health of the community through quality police, fire and emergency medical services.

Goal 5: Government Services

Deliver quality services to meet community needs, assuring that the City is sufficiently staffed, trained and equipped overall.

Goal 6: Quality Of Life

Provide quality-of-life services to meet community needs, assuring that there are strong relationships with all sectors of the community and ample opportunities for citizen engagement.

Each of the goals is further broken down into a number of strategies designed to successfully accomplish meeting the goal. Goal 2: Development pertains to land-use planning. Six of the seven strategies in Goal 2 specifically relate to the update of Comprehensive Plan. Strategy B calls for an economic development strategy that was addressed by the development of an Economic Development Plan. The Economic Development Plan is the basis for the Economic Development Element contained within this Comprehensive Plan. Below are the strategies outlined in Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan that specifically relate to the update of Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy A (FY 09-11): Develop a unified vision of the level and type of growth to be allowed in the community, including but not limited to, a diversity of housing, by updating the Vision 2020 ICP.

Strategy B (FY 09-11): Update and implement the citywide comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that targets businesses the community wants and makes Rio Rancho a destination for a variety of events and activities.

Strategy C: Develop and implement a plan for expanding current and building new needed major roads (i.e. formal thoroughfare plans).

Strategy D: Develop and implement a method of reforming the current antiquated platting (including proposing legislative changes at the State level) in order to ensure quality development and proper use of water resources in the future.

Strategy E: Develop and implement a set of approval criteria for new development, based on the Governing Body's vision for future development by updating the Vision 2020 Plan.

Strategy F: Develop, implement and enforce design criteria for new infrastructure associated with new development by updating the Vision 2020 Plan.

Strategy G: Develop and implement a Comprehensive Plan containing clear principles and policies set forth to achieve the City's goals pertaining to public and private development by updating the Vision 2020 Plan.

This comprehensive plan will build upon the past two Comprehensive Plans adopted by the City of Rio Rancho. There are several major changes between this Comprehensive Plan and the 2020 ICP. The layout of this Comprehensive Plan departs from the 2020 ICP in that the existing conditions for all aspects of the plan were separated from the policy statements for each topic. This Comprehensive Plan is structured in plan elements. Each plan element is specific to a topic such as land use, population and housing, etc. and the goals, policies and action statements directly related to the topic being discussed follow the discussion in that element. By organizing the Comprehensive Plan into plan elements, future plan updates will be dynamic because each element is designed to stand on its own and can be updated without updating the entire plan. Moreover, this plan has specific action statements and includes an implementation section that will provide staff with a better basis for monitoring how well the plan is being implemented.

2.3. STRUCTURAL VISION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rio Rancho Comprehensive Plan is designed to express the direction of how the city will grow over the next 20 to 25 years. The comprehensive plan serves both a practical need and a legal need by being a statement of policy. As a policy statement, staff is guided by the Comprehensive Plan to support recommendations to the Governing Body. As a guide to decision making it fulfills a legal requirement to justify land use decisions adopted by the Governing Body. The Comprehensive Plan is broken into elements that discuss specific topics such as land use or public facilities. Each element within the plan provides policy guidance to both staff and the elected representatives in the areas of Antiquated Platting, Annexations and Addressing, Conservation, Land Use, Population & Housing, Transportation, Public Facilities, Parks & Recreation, Urban Design and Economic Development. No one element exists in a vacuum. Transportation and housing, for example, are highly dependent upon land use, likewise land use is highly dependent on the natural environment and economic development. Therefore, it is important for all elements in this Comprehensive Plan to relate to one another and have goals, policies and actions in each element that are supportive of goals policies and actions in the other elements. For the purpose of this introductory chapter it is important to identify the vision being portrayed in each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.3.1 ANTIQUATED PLATTING, ANNEXATIONS, AND ADDRESSING

One of the greatest challenges the City of Rio Rancho faces is solving Antiquated Platting that took place in the 1960s and 1970s when land was prematurely subdivided into one-half acre and one-acre lots without the requirement for public infrastructure like paved streets, curbs, gutters, sewers, and drainage. Where contiguous parcels under common ownership exists, the city must devise ways to consolidate lots so planned development can take place. However, property owners with land platted as part of an approved subdivision, property owners of individual lots in these subdivisions have a development right and they are not obligated to put in public infrastructure. Piecemeal development of lots in the Rio Rancho Estates subdivisions only exacerbates the problems of having a lack of public infrastructure. Not only is a lack of public infrastructure a potential safety issue, it is also a quality of life problem defined in the City's Strategic Plan.

As the city continues to grow, at some point, annexation of land within Sandoval County is a possibility. With that annexation, comes additional prematurely subdivided land. In order to avoid the same problems the city faces with fractionalized ownership patterns within the city's jurisdiction, the City must work with and get the buy in of Sandoval County to develop solutions to reduce the amount of prematurely platted land within the County's jurisdiction to ensure land annexed in the future doesn't have the same constraints as land currently within the City's jurisdiction.

In addition to prematurely platted land and annexing land with similar constraints to land within the city's jurisdiction, land within Sandoval County's jurisdiction is addressed opposite that of the City of Rio Rancho. Therefore, land developed with a single-family residence that is annexed into the city from Sandoval County will have an odd numbered address on the same side of the street that a single-family residence within the City of Rio Rancho would have an even numbered address. Therefore, it will be important for the City of Rio Rancho to coordinate with property owners and Sandoval County as plans for future annexation take place to ensure consistency in addressing so that emergency service response is efficient.

2.3.2 CONSERVATION & THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The adoption of the city's Strategic Plan by the Governing Body in March 2009 identified sustainability as a key component for the city's future growth. As the City of Rio Rancho grows it will be important for the city to maintain or improve its air quality and water quality. Additionally, water conservation is an important factor in how the city develops and the types of businesses it attracts. It is equally important for the city to grow in a manner that recognizes the constraints of the geological hazards such as arroyos and erosive soils and the role they play in ecosystem conservation.

2.3.3 LAND USE, POPULATION & HOUSING

The vision for land use, population and housing in the City of Rio Rancho is to ensure the city has a balance of land uses that supports employment (including retail sales), a neighborhood identity, foster human interaction and provide affordable and quality housing for all segments of Rio Rancho's population. Note, two different elements (Land Use) (Population & Housing) have been combined in this section for the purpose of discussing the vision because these elements have a significant amount of overlap in that the Population & Housing Element is dependant upon the Land Use Element.

2.3.4 TRANSPORTATION

With a number of government jurisdictions seeking transportation funding from the Mid Region Council Of Governments (MRCOG), it becomes more important that we create land uses and transportation systems supportive of the goals of MRCOG. Therefore, the City of Rio Rancho must be fully engaged in competing for MRCOG's limited resources. One way of being more competitive is to work more closely with MRCOG in long-range planning. Because MRCOG has a mass transit operation, it is important for the city to develop land uses that are benefited by and supportive of mass transit such as mixed-use development and transit oriented development.

2.3.5 PUBLIC FACILITIES

The City of Rio Rancho provides sewer and water services to its residents while other services such as natural gas, electric, and telecommunications are franchised with corporations. Fractionalized development and land ownership patterns are a very difficult problem to solve because antiquated platting exists in much of the city. Therefore, it is even more critical to focus development into areas of the city that already have well established public facilities so as to not overburden the existing facilities by extending public facilities into disconnected areas with little to no development, this especially as it relates to water availability.

2.3.6 PARKS & RECREATION

In order to attract business development in the City of Rio Rancho, it is also important to factor the amount and quality of the city's Parks and Recreation Facilities. Aside from the business climate of a city, one factor that businesses look at when locating or relocating their company to a city is the quality of the recreational facilities of a city. Therefore, it is important for the City of Rio Rancho to provide parks and recreation facilities at a level of service that is competitive with other cities in the southwest. Parks are an important quality of life aspects addressed in Goal 6 of the City's Strategic Plan. Parks are a gathering place that fosters human interaction, i.e. they are Third Places, which are addressed in the Urban Design Element. A third place is a place (not home or work) where human interaction is fostered on a social level.

2.3.7 URBAN DESIGN

Urban design is best expressed as the visual identity of the built environment of the city. The vision displayed in the Urban Design Element is to incorporate the following design characteristics into future development and revitalization of older developments:

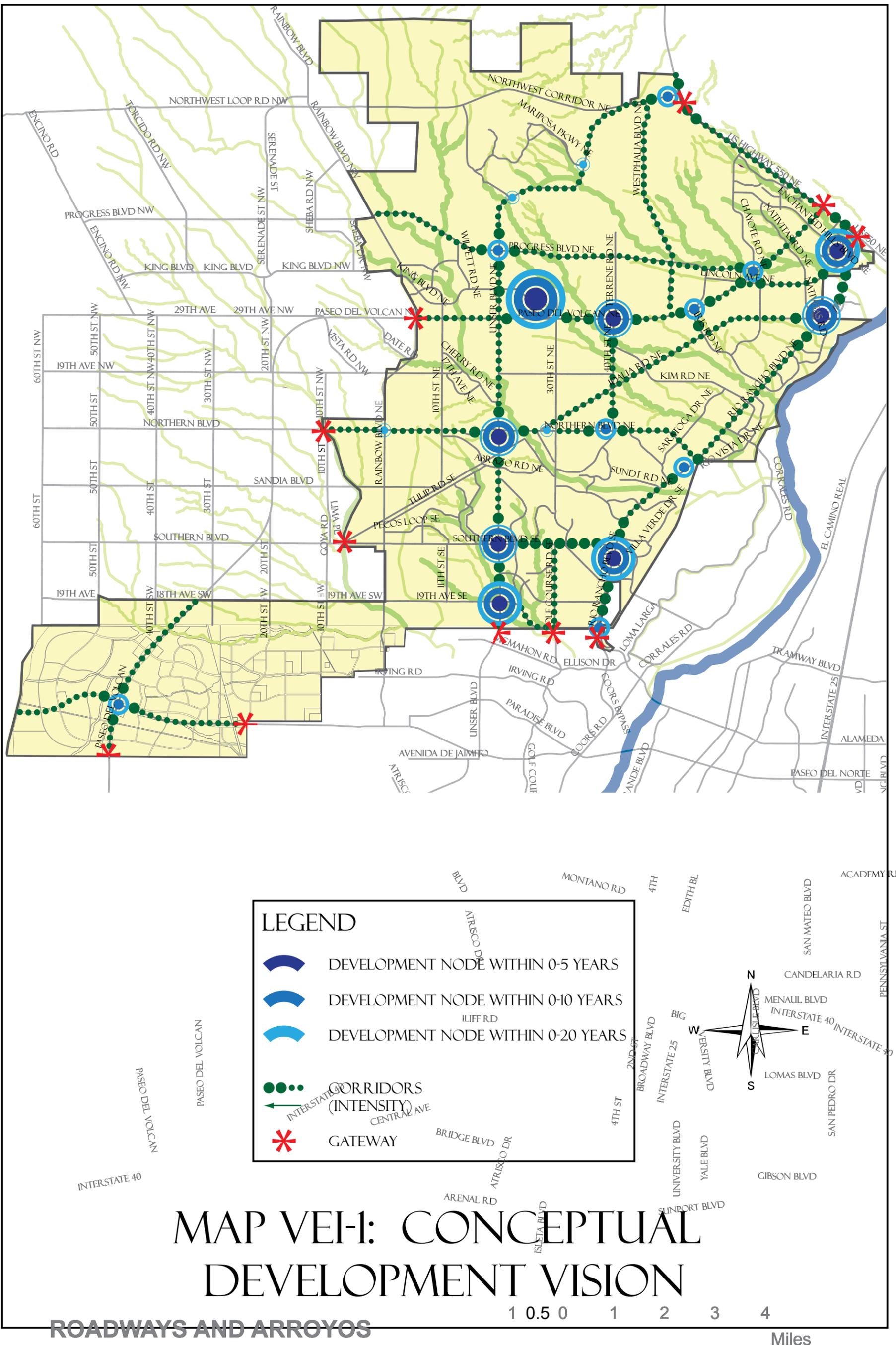
- Focusing growth into areas that the city has available infrastructure so as to not overburden areas that lack adequate infrastructure.
- Create Traditional Neighborhoods that have a balance of land uses and a variety of housing types that are within walking distance of commercial services.
- Develop a Sense of Place through architectural design that fosters human interaction and creates distinct neighborhoods with commercial developments scaled to a neighborhood.
- Create a Complete Street concept in transportation design so that all modes of transportation whether it be walking, transit, or vehicular are accommodated.
- Establish the concept of Third Places such as neighborhood cafes and coffee shops integrating outside dining as part of the Complete Street concept to foster human interaction.
- Ensure developments are safe by utilizing the concepts of CEPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). Using the principles of CEPTED in site development will create defensible spaces by making a site visible throughout the development, which will discourage acts of crime.
- With the challenges Rio Rancho faces with antiquated platting it is important that infill and redevelopment take place to ensure adequate infrastructure is available to a site and to help address drainage in areas that were prematurely platted in the 1960s. Additionally, where practical, the city should encourage Redevelopment along major corridors to revitalize older areas of the city.
- Creating Traditional Neighborhoods (neighborhoods that have a range of housing types, a network of well-connected streets and blocks, humane public spaces, and have amenities such as stores, schools, and places of worship within walking distance of residents).
- Having well designed Traditional Neighborhoods is an important aspect to having Transportation Linkages supportive of Mass Transit. One aspect of doing this is to create Transit Oriented Developments along major transportation corridors where nodal mixed-use developments can be built to support mass transit.
- Rio Rancho has a significant amount of open space in the context of arroyos. The preservation of arroyos in a relatively natural state and the development of an open space network with walking trails, shade structures and trail heads within and adjacent to arroyos.
- Another aspect of development that has become more important in the past few years because of new EPA regulations is Low Impact Development, which is a development approach that implements engineered small-scale hydrologic controls to replicate the pre-development drainage patterns to protect water quality by maintaining drainage on-site as much as possible. With stricter regulations on water runoff from a newly or redeveloped site greater than one acre, applying the principles of Low Impact Development has become one of the factors in determining federal funding for road improvement projects qualifying for federal tax dollars.
- The final component in Urban Design addressed as part of the vision for the City of Rio Rancho is landscaping appropriate to the ecology of a high-desert city and the design of complete streets. With well designed streetscapes that create a feeling of safety, people are more apt to walk along all streets.

2.3.8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City of Rio Rancho has the lowest gross receipts tax generation for a large city in the State of New Mexico. Because Rio Rancho has a lack of retail development in relation to its population, the city experiences revenue leakage primarily to the City of Albuquerque. Therefore, the City of Rio Rancho must expand its retail development and focus retail growth in areas where the city has adequate infrastructure to support new development which will reduce the site development costs for developers.

2.4. MAYOR'S TASK FORCES

The mayor has formed a number of task forces to advise the Governing Body on many critical issues facing the City of Rio Rancho. Task force recommendations will be considered as the Comprehensive Plan is implemented.



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