

Rio Rico Vitality District

INTRODUCTION

As one of the fastest-growing areas of Santa Cruz County, Rio Rico is attracting individuals and families who love the beautiful landscapes, the affordable housing, the growing number of job opportunities, and the overall community feel. Yet many residents still find it necessary to leave Rio Rico for all but the simplest errands. They often drive upwards of 45 minutes each way to meet their needs. Over 90 percent of the respondents to March 2021's survey would like to stay in Rio Rico for shopping, dining and entertainment more often than they are currently able. To address these concerns and desires, Santa Cruz County chose to create this master plan for an area within central Rio Rico. The purpose of this master plan is to create a framework for a vibrant place for residents, businesses, and visitors, that in turn helps build an even stronger community.

This type of planning document is used to inform future public projects, discretionary development (rezoning cases), updates to codes and regulations, and to generally incentivize the type of built environment that the community wants to see. This planning document does not change existing entitlements without further action, it does not commit County resources, it does not compel private property owners to develop a particular building, and it does not influence applications that are already under review.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Master Plan is organized around three phases. Each phase building upon the last and needing input from the people that know the area best. Phase 1 informs the existing conditions, Phase 2 creates a vision and Phase 3 creates strategies that help implement the vision.

Phase 1

During Phase 1, the project first needed public input to determine the community's perceived assets, opportunities, and concerns for the specific master plan area. In lieu of an in-person meeting (since COVID19 was a limiting factor), an online survey was created. A letter was mailed to all study area property owners and all property owners within an approximate 1,000-foot radius of the project extents. The letter briefly explained the project and invited them to the online survey. Emails with similar content and the survey link were sent to all known interested groups and individuals. This list of potentially interested people was determined through some initial background research on the area, common groups that most geographies have (i.e. Chambers of Commerce), and with the help of Santa Cruz County staff based on their previous experience and knowledge. The survey was open between March 10 and March 24, 2021. Overall, 321 people participated in the survey. A combination of this survey, background research in the area, and an economic study created a Site and Area Analysis that establishes existing conditions.

Phase 2

The second public participation opportunity was an in-person Open House and Workshop to solicit feedback and new ideas for a vision of master plan area. Anyone that participated in the

Phase 1 online survey or otherwise expressed interest was contacted via email with the details of the visioning meeting. The posters displayed at the meeting can be seen below. The topical-specific posters show the participants' reactions to a variety of ideas. Green dots were ideas they liked, red dots were ideas they didn't like, and each person was given one blue dot for their favorite idea.

Phase 3

Phase 3 is for refining the vision, reviewing the Concept Plan showing the vision, and creating strategies to successfully implement the vision. The third public participation opportunity will be to evaluate the overall master plan. It will seek feedback on the more-refined vision and the strategies to get there. It will also be in-person with consultant and County staff facilitating discussions alongside graphics and posters with strategies. It will likely be held in July, if you have participated in this planning process and provided your email, you will be notified with more details as the details get determined. If you have not participated so far and would like to be added to the email list, or have any other questions on the study, please contact Carlton Johnson (cjohnson@norris-design.com).