

Chapter 1

1.1 General Plan Basics

What is a General Plan?

A general plan is the primary long-range policy and planning document that California cities and counties create to guide future development, conservation, and enhancement of the built environment. According to state law, each local jurisdiction must adopt a general plan that addresses mandatory subject areas, often referred to as the General Plan Elements.

General Plan Requirements

Local jurisdictions have significant flexibility in developing their general plans, as long as the plans meet state requirements. California law provides three-main guidelines for the preparation of general plans:

- **Comprehensiveness.** A general plan must be comprehensive and consider the local jurisdiction's entire planning area, the regional context, and address a broad range of issues relevant to the planning area.
- **Internal Consistency.** A general plan must not contain policy conflicts between components of the planning document such that there is consistency between and within elements, consistency between text and diagrams included in the plan, and consistency between the general plan and any related area plans.
- **Long-Term Perspective.** A general plan must take a long-term perspective because the plan will affect both current and future generations. A plan should determine and use objectives-based analysis of current and future conditions and establish long-term policy to achieve those objectives.

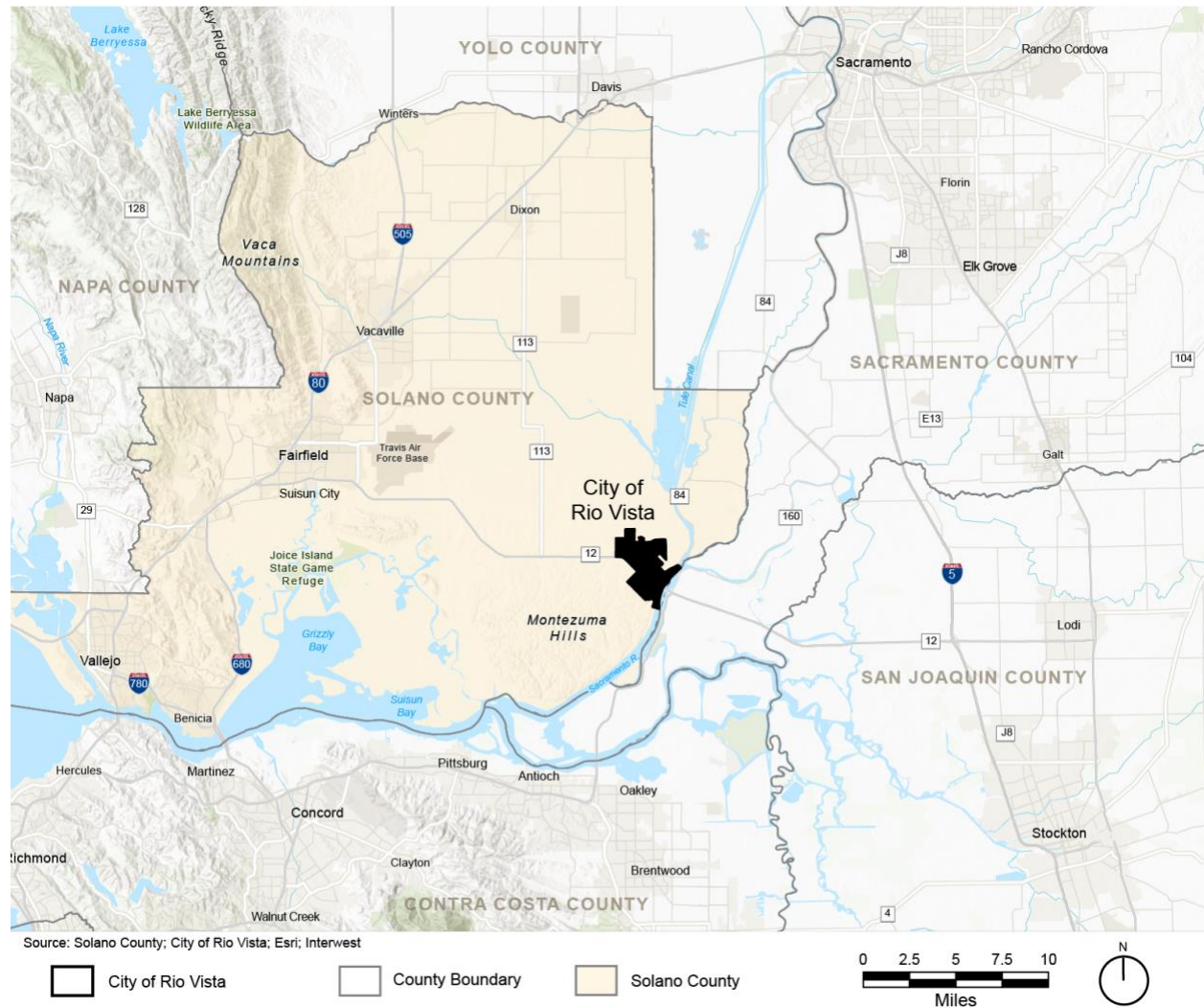
Using a General Plan

The general plan is implemented through administrative actions by City staff, by decisions made by the Planning Commission and City Council, and through the plan's consistency with the zoning code and any specific plans. Goals and policies outlined in the general plan will guide policy and planning decisions, the creation of budgets, the prioritization of planning tasks, and future capital improvements. Similarly, City staff and departments will reference the general plan when considering other policy and planning decisions, such as development applications, services programming, and budgeting, to ensure that decisions are aligned with the community's visions and goals.

1.2 Rio Vista Profile

Rio Vista is a small community located in the heart of the Sacramento River Delta, situated about 65 miles northeast of San Francisco and about 50 miles southwest of Sacramento (see Figure 1,1, Regional Location). State Route 12 (Highway 12) runs through Rio Vista, providing a corridor from Lodi and Stockton in the Central Valley to Suisun City, Fairfield and the counties of the northern Bay Area. Residents often note the access to surrounding urban centers combined with the small town character, rural setting, and location along the Sacramento River as some of Rio Vista's greatest qualities.

Figure 1.1: Regional Location



1.3 Planning Context

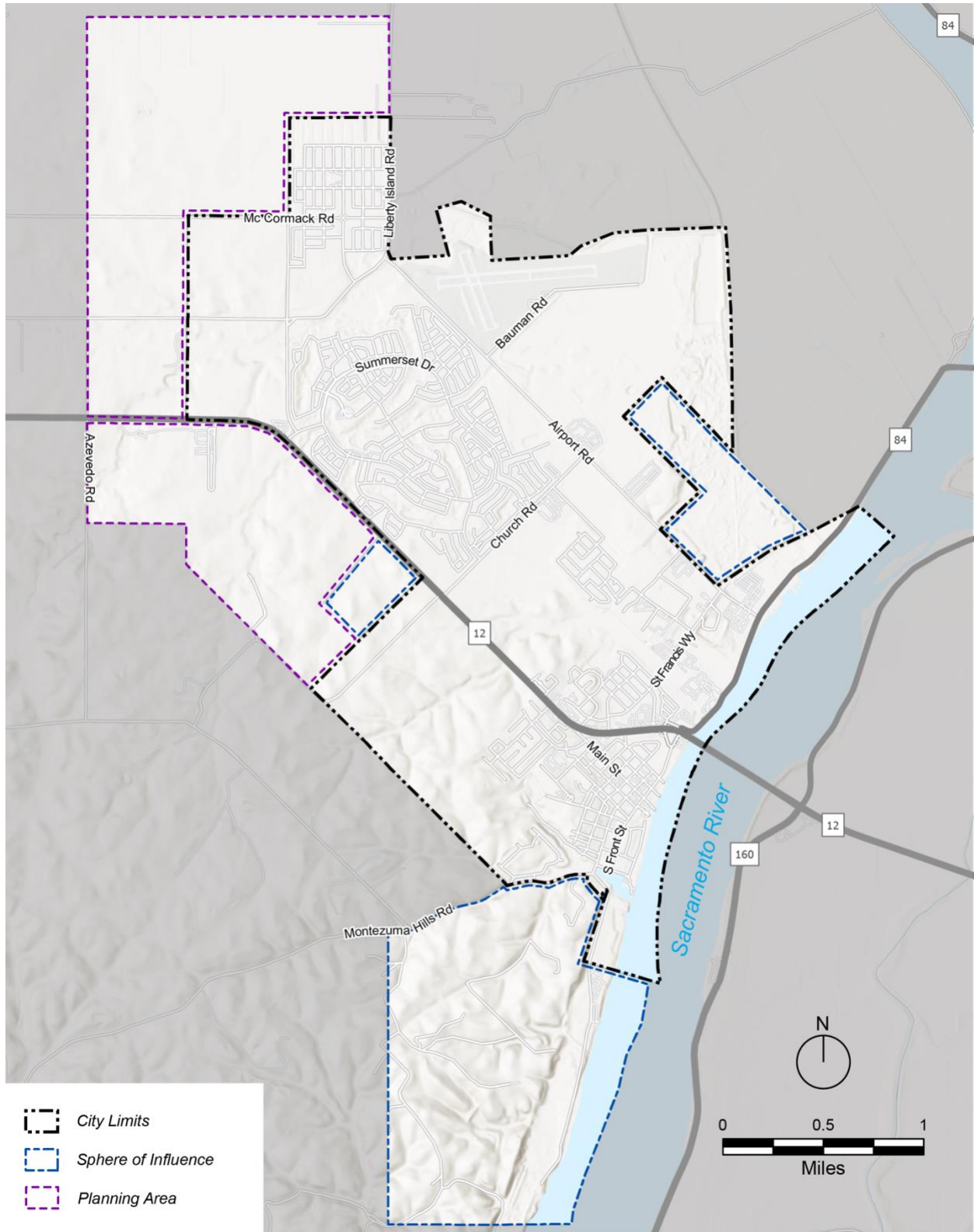
Population and Growth

In 2022, Rio Vista's population was 10,553 people. The City's population has roughly doubled since the year 2000 with most of that growth in the Trilogy and Summit at Liberty developments, which are largely age-restricted communities. Employment growth in the City has been somewhat slower: in the year 2000 there were approximately 1,980 jobs in Rio Vista, and as of 2022, there were approximately 2,500 jobs in the City.

Planning Boundaries

Key planning boundaries for the City include the Planning Area, the Sphere of Influence, and the City Limit (see Figure 1-2, Planning Boundaries). The Planning Area is a boundary established by the City that includes land that influences the City's planning decisions and that might be considered for future City expansions. The Sphere of Influence identifies lands that the Solano County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) has determined would be appropriate for annexation to the City. The City limit identifies the incorporated boundaries of Rio Vista that are subject to the City's land use regulations.

Figure 1-2: Planning Boundaries



Source: Solano County 2022, US Census Bureau 2022, Interwest 2023, ESRI

1.4 Planned and Potential Communities

In addition to the East Solano New Community, there are several significant projects and properties located in Rio Vista that may develop during the term of this General Plan. These projects, described below and depicted in Figure 1-3: Planned and Potential New Developments, are referenced throughout this General Plan.

East Solano New Community

Prior to and during the preparation of this General Plan, the proponents of the East Solano New Community (Flannery Associates LLC/California Forever), began acquiring land in southeast Solano County. In September 2023, the group began publicly describing plans to build a new city on its land holdings (see Figure 1-3, Planned and Potential New Developments). **The proponents began the process to place a ballot initiative before Solano County voters in 2024 that, if approved, would have amended the County general plan to allow a 17,500-acre first phase of development. The ballot initiative identified the location of the first phase of development as immediately west of Rio Vista and extending toward Suisun City. The project proponents have since withdrawn the ballot initiative and have not yet stated how or when they will proceed with the project. Given the location of the first phase and the project proponents ownership of land surrounding Rio Vista, the East Solano New Community project continues to have the potential to significantly affect Rio Vista.**

Trilogy

The Trilogy project is located between Highway 12, Church Road, Airport Road and Liberty Island Road and is fully built. Trilogy is an age-restricted community that includes a variety of private recreation facilities and is the single largest project developed in Rio Vista. The project received its original approvals as Marks Ranch in 1991 and received various subsequent approvals as Trilogy with the final Site and Architectural approvals in 2007.

Riverwalk

The Riverwalk project includes 236 acres located generally between Highway 12, Church Road and Harris Road. The project includes 783 single-family homes, 240 multi-family homes and a mixed-use commercial cluster at Highway 12 and Church Road. A final map creating lots for an initial phase of development has been recorded, but no development of the site had occurred as of 2024. The Riverwalk project was approved for development in 2008 and the project approvals include a Development Agreement which vests and protects the approvals through 2033.

City-Owned 62.5 Acre Property

The City owns a 62.5 acre property located between Airport Road, Church Road and Harris Road. This property was previously zoned for industrial use but this General Plan has identified the property for residential uses. A planning effort was undertaken in 2023 (Housing Opportunities Site Entitlement Report, October 2023) that considered how

residential uses might be developed on the site. The Entitlement Report was a planning study and did not result in the approval of a specific development plan. However, based on the analysis of the report land uses of Neighborhood Residential, Medium-Density Residential, Multi-Family Residential, and Parks. It is estimated this site could accommodate up to 400 homes.

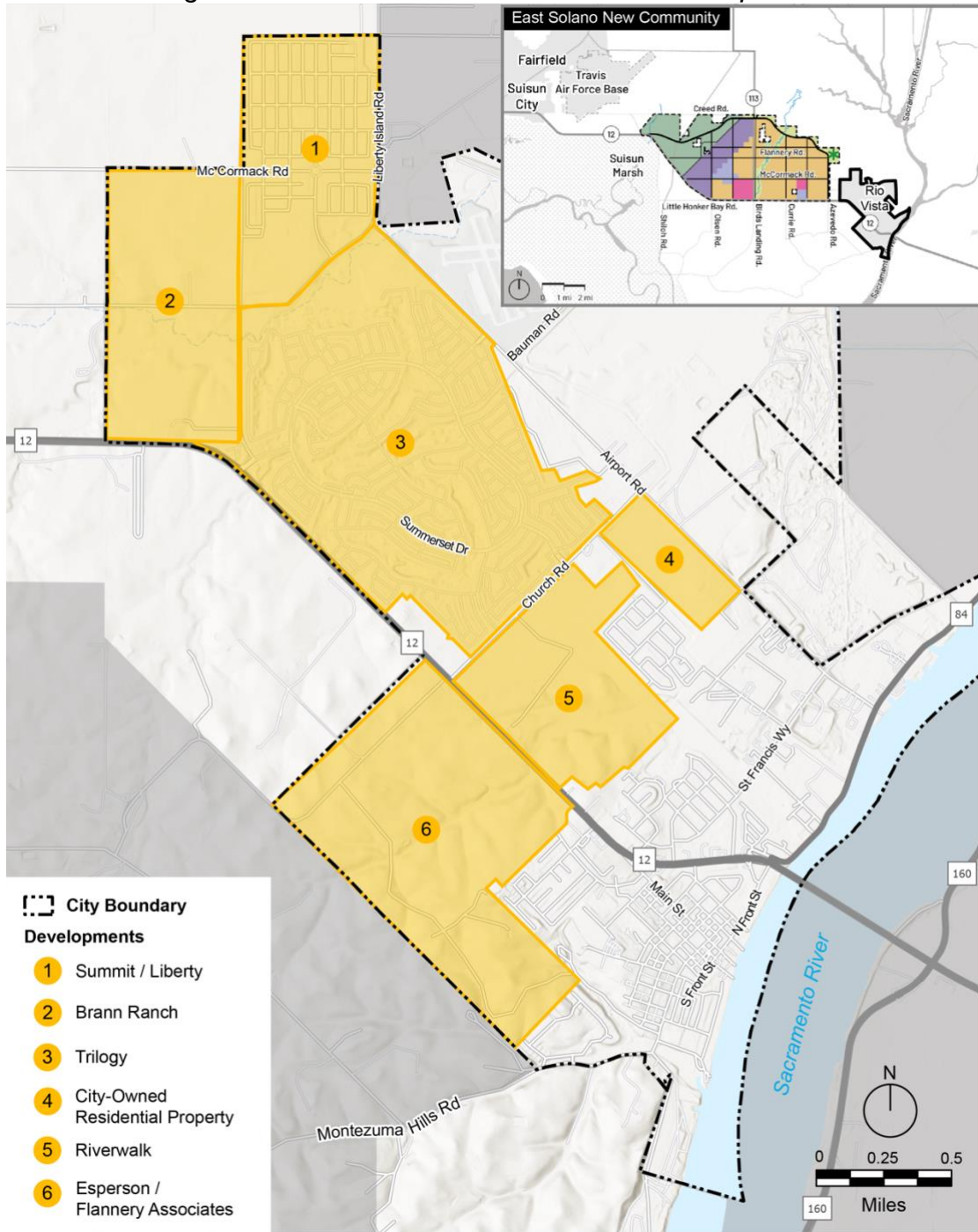
Brann Ranch

The Brann Ranch project is located north of Highway 12 and west of Province Path, adjacent to the Trilogy and Liberty projects. Brann Ranch received project approvals in 2006 but those approvals lapsed and the property reverted to the zoning assigned at time of annexation to the City. In 2024, the review of an amended Brann Ranch project was underway, with approximately 1,200 homes proposed.

Esperson Property

Approximately 504 acres of land located in the City of Rio Vista generally southwest of Highway 12 was formerly owned by the Esperson family. This land, as well as other Esperson parcels outside the City, were acquired by Flannery Associates during the land acquisition efforts associated with the East Solano New Community project. The property was the subject of a development project application identified as Del Rio Hills. However, the Del Rio Hills Project was never approved and the underlying zoning that was established when the property was originally annexed to the City remains in effect.

Figure 1-3: Planned and Potential New Developments



1.5 Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

The General Plan Vision Statement expresses the community's key values and aspirations for the future of Rio Vista. The Vision Statement is a description of an ideal future for the community to work towards.

Guiding Principles serve as guideposts for the creation of goals, policies, and implementation programs of the General Plan. The Guiding Principles expand on the main ideas of the Vision Statement to clarify and define important values.

Vision Statement

In 2045, Rio Vista will be a thriving waterfront community with small-town charm and a strong sense of community. We will be a diverse, inclusive and safe place to live, learn, work, and play for all generations. Rio Vista will support and value local businesses, the arts, and community events welcoming visitors from around the region. We will be stewards of the environment and honor our agricultural and cultural heritage in the Sacramento River Delta region. We will remain true to these values to maintain a high quality of life, economic prosperity, and opportunity for our residents.

Guiding Principles

As Rio Vista looks to the General Plan 2045 horizon, the community's potential to grow outward is limited by physical constraints such as the Sacramento River and historic natural gas facilities. **However, new development will focus mostly inward within the existing City limits and prospects for new development will occur in the Sphere of Influence next to the future East Solano New Community.** The following Guiding Principles will inform City decisions to promote the quality of life, economic prosperity, and opportunities desired by our residents and visitors to Rio Vista:

1. Revitalize Downtown and the Waterfront District.

- Promote a downtown that is a vibrant destination with unique retail, entertainment, arts, dining, and lodging options.
- Support and attract businesses. Provide the infrastructure needed to support growth in the downtown and waterfront area.
- Promote, incentivize and foster the expansion of retail, commercial and housing uses in the downtown and waterfront area.
- Preserve the historic character of downtown while supporting new development.

2. Improve Mobility and Access for All Users.

- Provide a safe, efficient, and accessible roadway system that serves the mobility needs of all users.

- Improve the City's circulation network to provide safe travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and trucks.
- Efficiently move people and goods without compromising quality of life, safety, and smooth traffic flow for residents and businesses.

3. Support a Variety of Housing Options.

- Encourage a mix of housing types to create diverse neighborhoods that meet the demands of all Rio Vista residents.
- Promote the building, retention, and renovation of housing to meet the needs of all incomes, ages, and abilities.

4. Foster a Sustainable Community.

- Plan for public facilities that respond to the community's growing needs and a changing environment.
- Ensure today's needs are met without jeopardizing the community's ability to meet future demands.
- Promote high-quality, long-lasting development that allows residents to meet daily needs, such as education of our children, shopping, employment, and recreation, in close proximity to their homes.
- Encourage resource-efficient building techniques, materials, and other principles of green building design in new building construction and renovations.

5. Offer Recreational Opportunities.

- Ensure all residents have easy access to recreational opportunities, such as parks, play fields, river frontage, boating, fishing, walking, and biking paths and trails.
- Expand parks and recreational programs to serve both residents and visitors. Provide a variety of sports and activities for Rio Vista residents of all ages.

6. Foster Economic Growth.

- Promote a strong local economy by fostering the growth and expansion of a diversified business community.
- Support businesses that create a wide range of jobs for Rio Vista's resident workforce.
- Make forward-thinking investments that position Rio Vista to respond successfully to an evolving economy.

7. Promote Fiscal Strength.

- Plan land uses at the appropriate scale, intensity, and location to provide the right balance of revenues and costs to allow the City to deliver a high level of services expected by the community.
- Manage fiscal resources in a responsible, efficient, and effective manner.

8. Promote a Healthy Community.

- Create a community which has options for residents to live a healthy lifestyle for their lifetime and provides access to health care services.

1.6 Structure of the Plan

The Rio Vista 2045 General Plan is organized into the following chapters and elements:

- **Chapter 2: Land Use and Community Character.** The Land Use and Community Character Element addresses the physical form of the City. More specifically, this Element establishes land use categories, maps the land uses of the City, and provides development standards, including building intensity and density. This element also seeks to protect and enhance the character of the community through guidance on the form of the built environment.
- **Chapter 3: Mobility and Circulation.** The Mobility and Circulation Element describes the City's existing transportation network and the network required to serve the community through 2045. The Element identifies improvements for motorized, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation; and the goals, policies, and implementation programs related to these circulation improvements.
- **Chapter 4: Economic Development.** The Economic Development Element describes goals, policies, and implementation programs to support a thriving business environment, job growth and retention, and community revitalization.
- **Chapter 5: Housing.** The Housing Element analyzes housing needs in the City across all income groups and discusses the actions necessary to meet those needs. These actions include an inventory and analysis of adequate housing sites and goals; analysis of potential constraints, and goals, policies, and programs related to the preservation and production of housing.
- **Chapter 6: Parks and Recreation.** The Parks and Recreation Element provides an inventory of existing parks and community facilities that serve the recreational needs of the community and presents goals, policies, and programs related to existing facilities and facilities needed to serve the community through 2045.
- **Chapter 7: Open Space and Resource Conservation.** The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element describes resources that contribute to the general health of and quality of life in Rio Vista. The Element addresses natural resources such as water, air, wildlife, and farmland, as well as historic and cultural resources.
- **Chapter 8: Public Facilities and Services.** The Public Facilities and Services Element describes existing conditions related to infrastructure, utilities, municipal operations, emergency services, and educational facilities. It establishes how the City will maintain public facilities and public services to meet future demands.

- **Chapter 9: Safety.** The Safety Element addresses risks related to fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, climate change emergency response, and evaluates the City's evacuation routes.
- **Chapter 10. Noise.** The Noise Element describes the Rio Vista noise environment and the common noise generators in the community. This section also projects noise levels at year 2045 and provides strategies for minimizing excessive noise levels in the community.

Each element of the General Plan contains a description of existing conditions in Rio Vista pertaining to the topics covered by that element. This description is then followed by:

- **Goals.** Goals are general statements that describe an ideal future as defined by community values. Goals set the direction for policies and implementation programs needed to achieve this future.
- **Policies.** Policies are specific statements that guide public decision-making, indicating the City's commitment to a course of action.
- **Programs.** Implementation programs are actions that carry out policies in the General Plan.

1.7 Community Input and Participation

The General Plan update process began in December of 2021. Initial tasks included preparing a community participation plan to ensure Rio Vista decision makers, residents, property owners, businesses, and other local stakeholders were actively engaged in the General Plan update.

Community engagement in the General Plan update process included:

- **Community Meetings.** City staff and planning consultants held a series of community-wide meetings on March 24 and 26, 2022; June 9 and 11, 2022; and January 26, 2023. These meetings employed a range of formats and engagement tools including small group exercises, round table discussions, image preference surveys, and open houses in order to solicit community input and recommendations on key policy topics.
- **Community Surveys.** City staff and the General Plan team administered a series of paper and online surveys to influence the definition of the community's vision for Rio Vista and to address specific topics related to land use and circulation.
- **Electronic Engagement.** An interactive project website was developed using Mindmixer to solicit input throughout the planning process. This platform included interactive polls and surveys to solicit input from community members.
- **General Plan Working Group Meetings.** The General Plan Working Group (GPWG), was made up of City residents, Planning Commissioners and City

Council members. The City held public meetings beginning on December 9, 2021, and throughout the multi-year updating process in order to discuss project updates, and the results of community surveys and meetings; to draft recommendations in detail; and to review drafts of the General Plan elements.