

**City of Rio Communities, New Mexico  
Ordinance No: 2017-56**

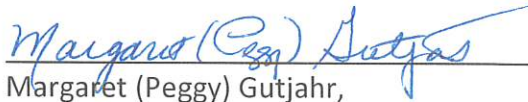
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF RIO COMMUNITIES, NEW MEXICO,  
HEREBY PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 24<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JANUARY 2017.

City of Rio Communities Governing Body



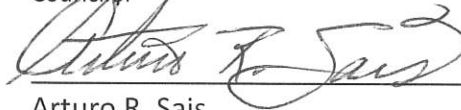
Mark Gwinn,  
Mayor



Margaret (Peggy) Gutjahr,  
Councilor Mayor Pro-tem



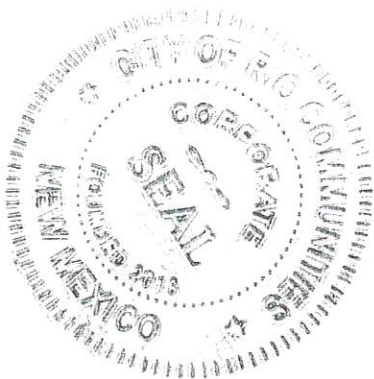
William (Bill) Brown,  
Councilor



Arturo R. Sais,  
Councilor



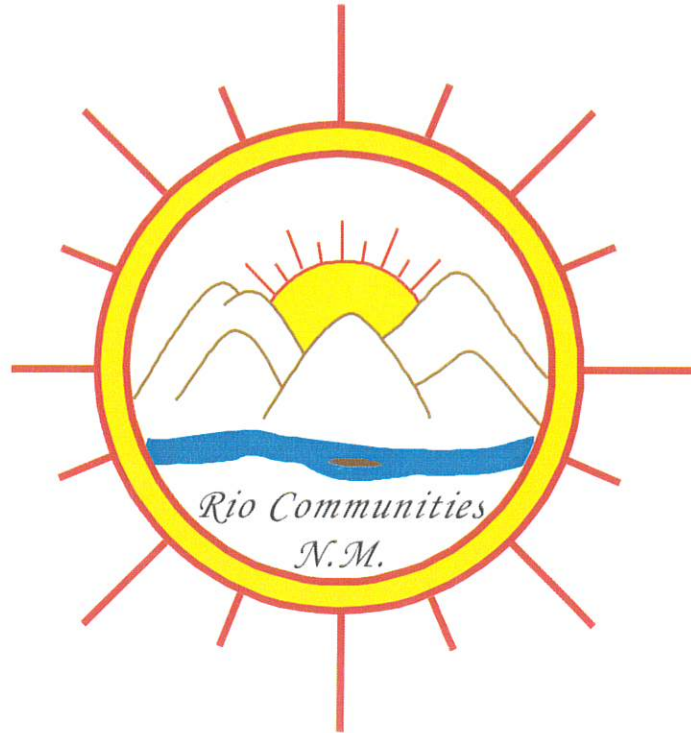
Thomas Scroggins,  
Councilor



ATTEST:



Elizabeth (Lisa) Adair,  
Municipal Clerk



**City of Rio Communities, New Mexico  
Comprehensive Plan 2015  
Amended January 2017**

**City of Rio Communities, New Mexico**  
**Chapter 5 of Municipal Ordinances**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2017**  
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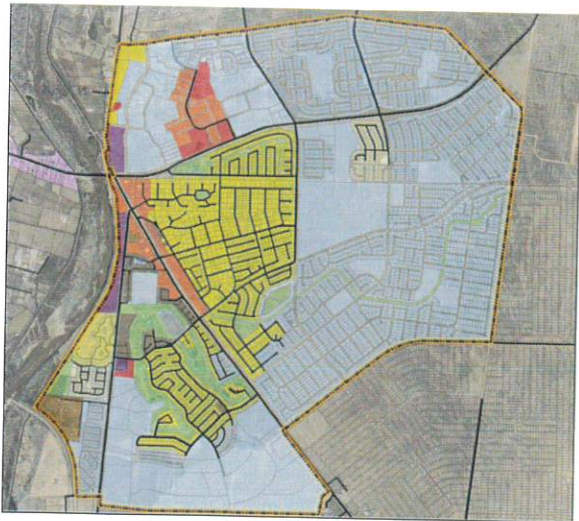
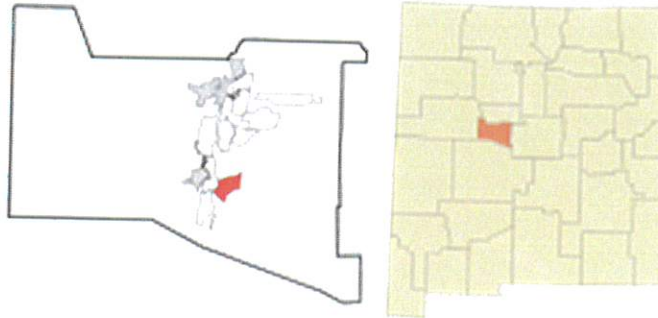
# City of Rio Communities, New Mexico

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2015

As adopted by the City Council  
June 23, 2015  
Revised September 8, 2015  
Amended February 2017

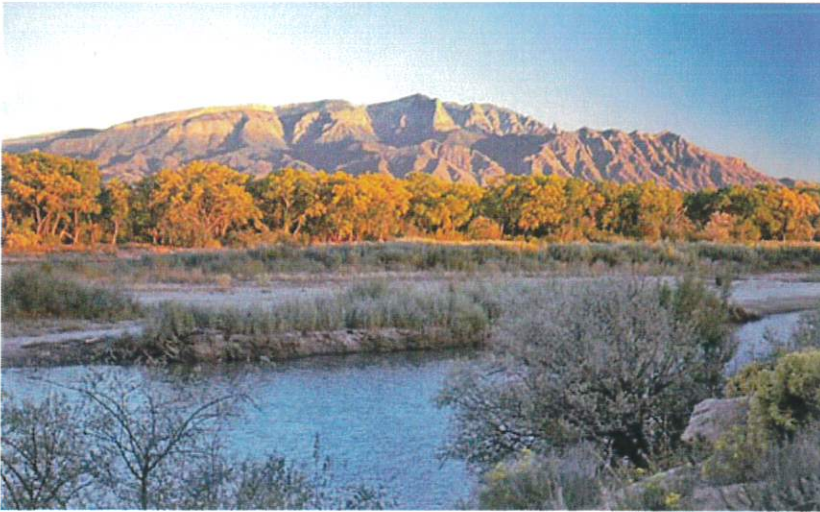
### ARTICLE 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located in the southern part of Valencia County at coordinates: 34°38'31"N 106°43'37"W/34.64194°N 106.72694°, Rio Communities, as of the 2014 American Community Surveys has a population of 5,476, a 15.9% increase since the 2000 census of 4,723 and occupies 7.63 square miles in area. MRCOG 2013 "Population and Housing" shows a population of 5,558, a growth of 17.7% from the 2000 census.



### Incorporation

Bounded on the north at Sherrod Rd, east to Escobar Street, south to Navajo Loop on the East Side of State Highway 47 and Rio Grande Stables Road, and to the west side of State Highway 47; Rio Communities was originally a "census-designated place" (CDP), but in January 2013, residences of Rio Communities voted by a margin of 67% to incorporate; effectively ending this nearly half century issue.



## Rio Communities

Nestled along the winding Rio Grande and sheltered by 10,000 foot peaks of the ranging Manzano Mountains, yet only 30 minutes from the bustle of Albuquerque, Rio Communities, was founded nearly fifty years ago as a predominately bedroom and commuter community, and until recently, had remained a dormant bud of possibilities. Located in the heart of Valencia County, one of the fastest growing counties in New Mexico, Rio Communities is the embodiment

for growth. Situated on 6 square miles that are presently devoted to large one-of-a-kind homes on spacious lots, affordable housing is abundant when compared to the surrounding areas of Los Lunas and Albuquerque.

With its natural resources, a rich history founded in cultural diversity and a citizenry commitment to volunteerism, Rio Communities stands poised to renew its vision and promise as a distinctive small town of many vistas, where idyllic community living abounds, the independent spirit thrives, and the potential for prosperous economic growth is unmatched.

### The Horizon Days:

In the early 1960s, Horizon Corporation bought 241,000 acres of undeveloped land in Valencia County along the east bank of the Rio Grande and 35 miles south of Albuquerque. They named the development Rio Communities. With high hopes, they subdivided the land into quarter-acre and half-acre lots, suitable for spacious and unique custom homes, with some situated along a professional 18-hole golf course. Within this grand design would emerge a host of smaller communities with such names as *Tierra Del Sol*, *Rio Grande Estates*, *Rancho Rio Grande East and West*, *Enchanted Mesa* and *Playa Verde*. And, only a few miles south was the development of *Tierra Grande* that featured full ranch sites of an acre or more.

**OUTSTANDING LAND BARGAIN!**  
**IN BOOMING NEW MEXICO**  
 31 MILES SOUTH OF ALBUQUERQUE  
**BIG WESTERN-SIZE HOMESITES**  
 21,780 Sq. Ft. of FABULOUS SUN COUNTRY  
 WITH THE BEST OF RANCH HOME HERITAGE

**Rio Grande Estates**  
 FOUR SEASONS OF SUNSHINE

**TOTAL PRICE \$199**      **PAY ONLY \$10 DOWN \$10 MONTHLY**

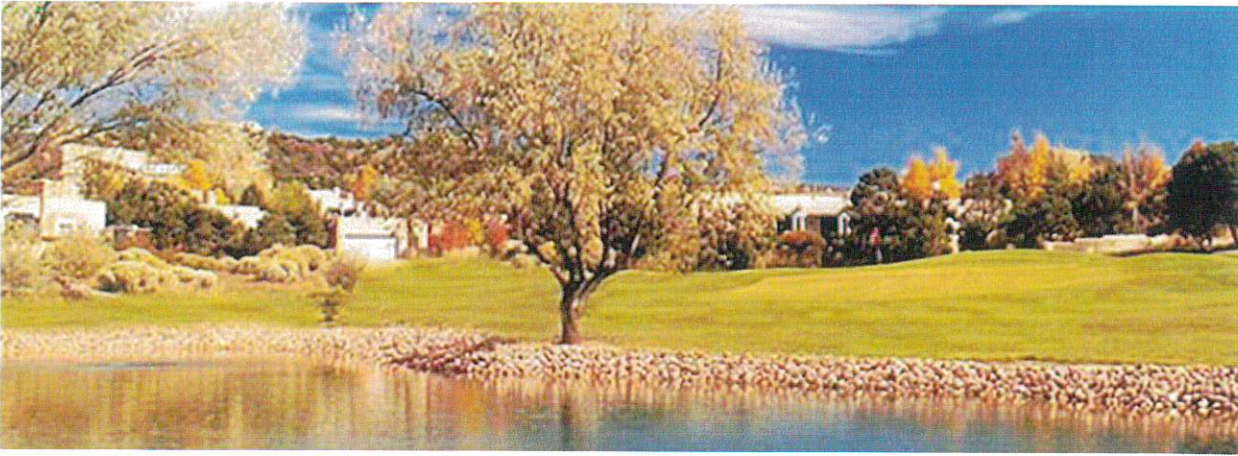
**NO INTEREST! NO OTHER CHARGES!**

**ABSOLUTE MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!**

**RUSH COUPON TODAY!**

**HORIZON LAND CORPORATION**  
 HORIZON LAND CORPORATION  
 1000 N. 10TH AVENUE  
 ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. 87102

In its heyday of the 1970s, people of all stripes thronged to Rio Communities as it offered affordable homes to young families, an unsullied splendor to established professionals and a quiet retreat for retirees. Governments also realized the city's potential as the U.S. Postal Service, and local sheriff and fire departments established substations. Likewise businesses thrived as the Valley Plaza shopping mall located along Highway 47 offered a pizzeria, a hardware and paint store, an office supply store, a clothing store, various business offices, branches of the First National Bank and Ranchers Bank, and an active community center.



Not to be outdone, the Playa Verde subdivision offered the requisite Horizon Country Club that provided good food and drink to weary duffers at the end of the day and a splendid venue for evening social functions.



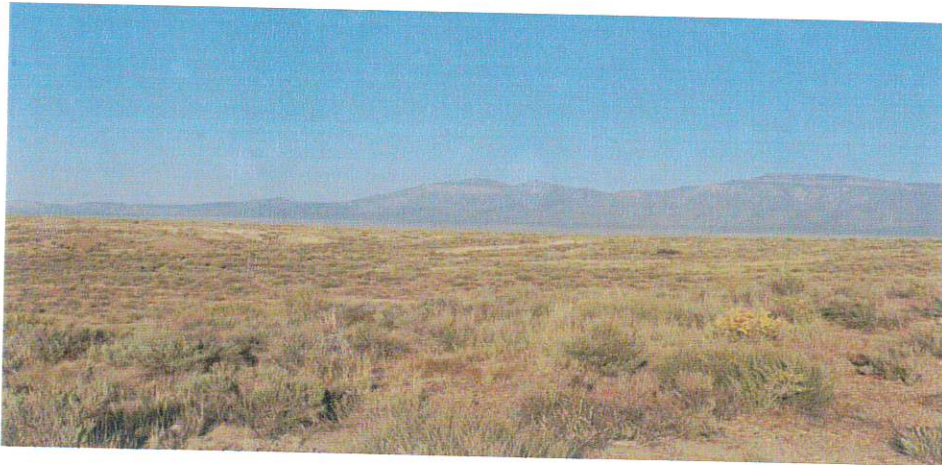
As a newly incorporated municipality, with a vision towards responsible growth, the City of Rio Communities proposes the following Comprehensive Plan.

## ARTICLE 2 INTRODUCTION

### 5-2-1 PURPOSE

This Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rio Communities is an official yet fluid document, developed in concert from broad public inputs and recommendations, in the form of *goals, objectives and policies* that are intended to guide the physical and financial development and long-range planning (20 to 30 years) of this community. Accordingly, this Plan will consider in part:

1. Effective, appropriate and efficient land use;
2. Public safety, transportation, health, education, and recreation services;
3. Community design;
4. Commercial growth;
5. Capital investments in infrastructure;
6. Protecting natural resources; and
7. Preserving the city's cultural heritage.



And, though land use is the dominate element considered in this Comprehensive Plan, equal importance is given to other resources and infrastructure, such as water, sewage, wastewater facilities, utilities, alternative energy initiatives and other public-use services.

### 5-2-2 LEGAL FOUNDATION

1. In accordance with Section 3-19-9(A) NMSA, 1978, “[a] municipal planning commission shall prepare and adopt a master plan [hereafter “Comprehensive Plan”] for the physical development of the municipality and the area within the planning and platting jurisdiction of the municipality...”
2. Moreover, the Comprehensive Plan shall be a guide for “accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality which will,

in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development." *Id.* at § 3-19-9(A).

3. Together with "maps, plats and charts; descriptive and explanatory matter; and [public] recommendations, the Planning Commission shall consider:
  - a. the general location, character and extent of streets, bridges, viaducts and parkways; parks and playgrounds, floodways, waterways and waterfront development, [helipads] and other ways, grounds, places and spaces;
  - b. the general location of public schools, public buildings and other public property;
  - c. the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned;
  - d. the general location, character, layout and extent of community centers and neighborhood units and the re-planning of blighted areas; and
  - e. the acceptance, widening, removal, extension, relocation, narrowing, vacation, abandonment or change of use of any of the foregoing public ways, grounds, places, spaces, buildings, properties, utilities or terminals." NMSA 1978, § 3-19-9(B).

### 5-2-3 PLANNING PROCESS AND PRINCIPLES

1. **Planning:** At the outset, the City, as a collective of concerned residents, City Governance and the Planning Commission shall articulate and reach consensus on a vision for its future; an idealized sense of what it wants to be.
2. **Process:** Based on its vision, the collective shall develop:
  - a. **Specific Goals:** Fundamental statements of purpose that describe the directions the City wants to go.
  - b. **Objectives:** Statements of intent that describe how each goal should be attained. To be effective, each objective should be:
    - 1) Specific descriptions of required actions that will achieve each goal;
    - 2) Measurable, in that each objective is expressed in terms of quality, quantity, frequency, costs or deadlines;
    - 3) Achievable, in that each objective can be realistically completed in light of existing experiences, knowledge, and resources;
    - 4) Relevant, in that each objective is appropriately aligned with each goal, while addressing its potential impact;
    - 5) Time-orientated in that each objective is tied to a specific start and end date.
3. **Policies:** Statements of action clearly describe specific directions or approaches that should be taken to achieve each objective.

4. **Strategies (optional or as applicable):** Like policies that clearly describe specific actions that should be taken, strategies specifically identify and delegate who will implement a specific policy, while specifying a time frame in which the action should occur, and providing necessary details as necessary.

**5-2-4 Notification of Public Hearing:** In accordance with Section 3-19-10(A)(2), NMSA, 1978, before adopting any part of this Comprehensive Plan, subsequent additions, changes, or amendments, the Planning Commission shall schedule a public hearing respectively.

1. Notice shall be published conspicuously at seven (7) public locations at least fourteen (14) days before each scheduled hearing.
2. Each notification shall give the date, time and place of the hearing.
3. Copies of the proposed Comprehensive Plan shall be made available to the public at the City Clerk's office before publication of the notice.

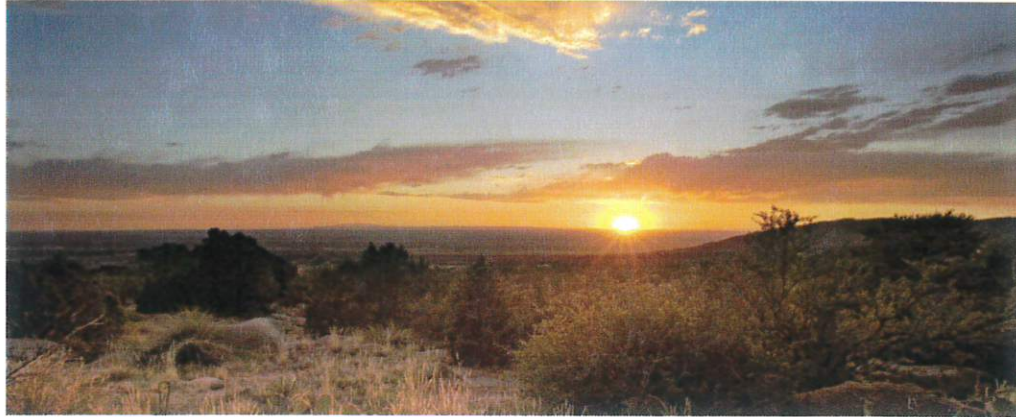
**5-2-5 Adoption:** In accordance Section 3-19-10(B), NMSA, 1978, adoption of any part of this Comprehensive Plan "or any part, amendment or addition shall be by a resolution approved by a majority of the members of the Planning Commission."

1. The resolution shall expressly reference specific maps, descriptive matter and other material used by the Planning Commission in the development of this Comprehensive Plan.
2. The adoptive action taken by the Planning Commission shall be recorded on the Comprehensive Plan (or any part, amendment or addition as applicable) and shall be endorsed by the chairman and the secretary of the Planning Commission.
3. A certified [endorsed] copy of the Comprehensive Plan or any part thereof approved by the Planning Commission shall be given to the governing body of the municipality.

**5-2-6 Public Access:** Certified copies of the City's Comprehensive Plan shall be made available at the City Clerk's office and can be obtained at a reasonable price.

**ARTICLE 3 VISION STATEMENT**

The governance of Rio Communities is committed to fostering an informed citizenry by actively engaging and being responsive to all residents, young and old, in the planning and development of a safe and aesthetic community with a diversified local economy that offers varied sources of goods and services that sustains and improves our infrastructure; provides quality health options and resources; expands educational

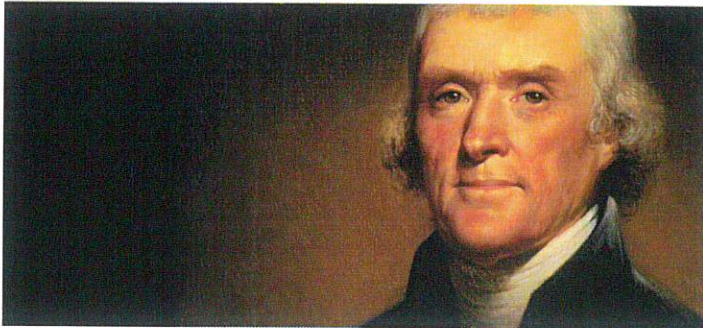


opportunities and enhances youth activities; encourages diversity of housing for all income levels; improves public transportation and recreational activities; recognizes the importance of preserving our past and protecting our natural resources; and revitalizing the shared qualities that we all ascribe to community and home.



ARTICLE 4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

5-4-1 FOSTER AN INFORMED CITIZENRY BY ACTIVELY ENGAGING AND RESPONDING TO RESIDENTS



*“We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”* Thomas Jefferson

**Objective:** *Establish and apply clear intercommunication methods that inform residents in the workings of city governance, and engage and solicit their input about current and planned City programs and projects.*

**Policies:**

- 1.01 The City will encourage residents to be active participants by taking personal responsibility in the development of the City’s vision.
- 1.02 Cultivate an informed public by disseminating information about their responsibilities on issues of public health, safety and nuisances as identified in the City’s Code of Ordinances. Use Code Enforcement Officer to educate the public on the following topics:
  - 1) Chapter 9: Animal Control
  - 2) Chapter 11: Health and Safety (e.g. open burn, firearms & fireworks)
  - 3) Chapter 13: Public Peace, Morals and Vice (e.g. refuse, waste, illegal dumping, graffiti, noise)
- 1.03 The City will encourage community volunteers and local experts to share their expertise in the development and implementation of City and community projects and programs that advance the City’s vision.
- 1.04 The City will urge residents to form local committees that address issues that directly impact their neighborhoods; build consensus among their neighbors and propose solutions to the City governance.
- 1.05 To encourage public input and ensure adequate lead-time, the City shall post conspicuously at public locations, and at least fourteen (14) days before, notification on information concerning all City initiatives.
- 1.06 City business shall be maintained, updated quarterly, and made available to the public on the City’s web site at: [www.riocommunities.net](http://www.riocommunities.net)
- 1.07 The City shall establish a phone contact listing to notify concerned residents of urgent, or pressing and unscheduled city business.

1.08 City governance shall acknowledge public comments and provide feedback within 10 working days, to all residents who introduce an idea, or provide input about any City related project, program, or other activity.

1.09 The City shall keep informed of residents' preferences and attitudes on current or future issues by conducting on-going climate surveys.

*"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."*

James

Madison



1.10 The City shall evaluate regularly, methods used to communicate between the city government and residents, to ensure or enhance their effectiveness.

1.11 The City shall publish and deliver, or make available to all Rio Communities' residents, a tri-annual newsletter.

1.12 The City shall develop *smart phone* applications that allow public access to city policies, plans, initiatives and all relevant city data.

1.13 The City shall post signage throughout the community of forthcoming public announcements.

#### 5-4-2 PLAN AND DEVELOP A SAFE COMMUNITY

**Objective:** *Enhance public confidence in public safety through increased law enforcement, fire protection and emergency services, enforcement of city ordinances, and the development of safe public thoroughfares for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.*

**Policies:**

2.01 Enhance police presence in Rio Communities by negotiating with the county to increase patrols by Valencia County Sheriff's Department and with the State Highway Patrol local division to increase patrol frequency in Rio



Communities and surrounding areas.

- 2.02 Provide at no cost to the Valencia County Sheriff's Department, a law enforcement substation in the new municipal complex.
- 2.03 Create and support a Neighborhood Watch Program.
- 2.04 Support efforts made by the Rio Grande Estates Fire Department (RGEFD) in upgrading their Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating.
- 2.05 Support efforts made by the RGEFD and associated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to upgrade equipment to current approved standards through the use of appropriate capitalization and depreciation methods.
- 2.06 Support efforts of the RGEFD and associated EMS groups that ensure training and staffing levels are maintained at optimal levels.
- 2.07 Establish a RGEFD substation with a chemical and hazardous material (HazMat) response team in the industrial park district.
- 2.08 Improve response times for fire and other emergencies/911 services through an Address Standardization Policy.
  - 1) Survey and create an accurate list of existing residential and commercial addresses.
  - 2) Identify duplicated, redundant, or ambiguous street names, and non-sequential or haphazard numbered addresses.
  - 3) Apply for federal grant (Department of Homeland Security) to implement the Address Standardization Policy.
- 2.09 Establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the municipal center complex (City Hall), or other appropriate venue. Work with Rio Grande Fire Department (RGEFD) and Emergency Medical Systems to establish administrative offices in City Hall as a first step in setting up this EOC.
- 2.10 Encourage participation with Valencia County's Emergency Operations Center in creating a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan for Rio Communities and its surrounding jurisdictional area. Establish and maintain facilities that support

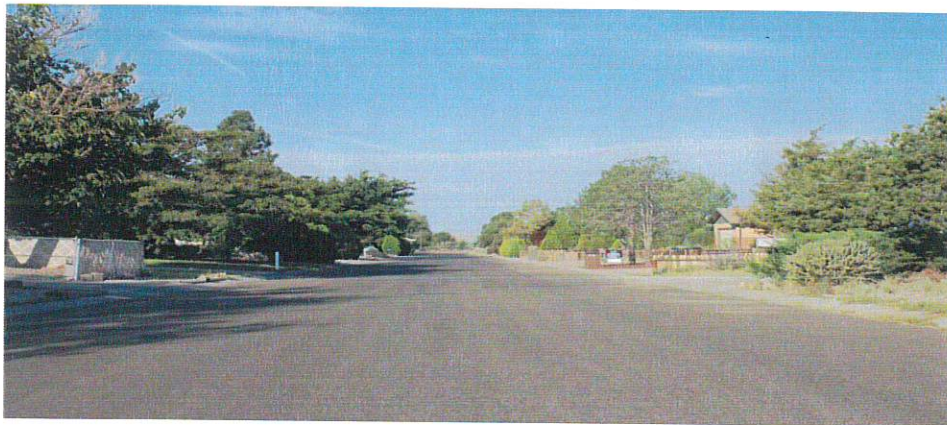


the implementation of this plan.

- 2.11 Create safe traffic flow patterns along thoroughfares and intersections, by the adequate and conspicuous posting of appropriate traffic signs.
- 2.12 Identify and maintain lines of sight at all intersections.
  - 1) Clear line of sight intersections at or along school bus routes as first priority.
- 2.13 Construct covered shelters at school and public bus stops.
- 2.14 Provide clearly marked pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, other public pedestrian walkways, and bicycle trails.
- 2.15 Identify and mitigate all potentially dangerous intersections.
- 2.16 Working with the New Mexico Department of Fish and Game, seek a legal ban on the discharge of firearms and all hunting within the jurisdictional boundaries of Rio Communities.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5-4-3 CREATE AN AESTHETIC COMMUNITY

**Objective:** *Develop and implement a plan that systematically advances a clean and visually appealing community, while encouraging unique design concepts and architectural options that are balanced and proportional to the surrounding area.*



- 3.01 Institute a public awareness program of existing nuisance and trash accumulation ordinances.
- 3.02 Develop and maintain a community clean-up program.

- 3.03 Implement graffiti prevention and clean-up program (focus on youth, paid or volunteers).
- 3.04 Encourage cleaning (trash removal), infill and development of vacant lots with suitable low-maintenance landscaping that mitigate weeds.
- 1) Encourage the planting of native plants and vegetation in vacant lots and open spaces.
- 3.05 Develop and implement an abandoned building revitalization program.
- 3.06 Develop and implement a home maintenance program to assist home-owners in need (e.g. seniors, disabled, or low-income families), in the general maintenance of their homes, and upkeep of their property.
- 3.07 Develop and implement a Highway Beautification Plan for roadways, medians, and intersections.
- 1) Maintain and mow roadways and right of ways to property lines.
- 3.08 Pursue grant funding to replace all “STOP” and Street signs with standardized poles and highly reflective materials as approved in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- 3.09 Partner with Belen Public School System and UNM-VC to create a volunteer work force to aid in clean-ups along public right-of-ways.
- 3.10 Support the development of Neighborhood Beautification Programs.
- 1). Identify each neighborhood with signs and encourage unity through distinctive landscaping or other means.



- 3.11 Develop community gardens as a means to improve neighborhood aesthetics and cohesion, and as a source of fresh produce for higher housing density areas.

#### 5-4-4 DIVERSIFY LOCAL ECONOMY

**Objective:** *Develop an economic plan that establishes an environment that is conducive and responsive to diverse and sustainable businesses that provide a full range of goods and services, and gainful employment opportunities.*

**Policies:**

- 4.01 The Economic Development Commission of Rio Communities shall be tasked with creating economic incentives for companies, large and small, to start businesses in Rio Communities through the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA). For direction, see NMSA 1978, § 5-10-1 through 5-10-13.
- 4.02 The Economic Development Commission shall create a plan directed at LEDA activities permissible under New Mexico Statutes.
- 4.03 The Economic Development Commission shall explore methods that increase gross receipt taxes (GRT), property values, and increase the volume of services necessary for the residents of Rio Communities.
- 4.04 Investigate and implement necessary procedures for new zip code assignment for Rio Communities
- 4.05 Create a separate economic development website, linked to city webpage that enhances visibility and advertises new business opportunities.
- 4.06 Develop a *city center* concept around the new municipal multipurpose complex that encourages small service oriented business and specialty shops.



- 4.07 Establish a cultural and tourism “Welcome Center” in or around the new municipal multipurpose complex.
- 4.08 Establish a program that promotes special events, festivals, arts and crafts, fairs, farmers’ markets, and other activities that specifically promote local business.
- 4.09 Develop an industrial and commercial marketing plan that includes projected benefits of the railroad spur in the area.

4.10 Develop a retail stabilization and improvement plan for the city and surrounding area. The plan should comply with the Zoning Code to ensure proper grouping of compatible types of business operations.

4.11 Create a Residential Revitalization Plan that identifies existing residential neighborhood assets and promotes for increased property values and sustained growth.

1) Identify all vacant houses and vacant lots that have potential resale opportunities.



4.12 Conduct an inventory of current and potential workforce needs (expected training levels) at the industrial park, to include salary requirements and acceptable driving/commuting radii.

4.13 Promote retail growth conducive to and supported by our current 5000+ population that controls retail leakage and encourages satellite consumers.



4.14 Pass LEDA Ordinance as a possible method of funding recruitment of businesses to Rio Communities and overall economic development within the City and surrounding area. Evaluate all available programs within LEDA legislation to encourage relocation of commerce to the city.

4.15 Create an inventory of all potential and readily available commercial property.

1) Identify properties that are easily accessible from main thoroughfares and supported by existing infrastructure.

2) Identify properties that have the potential for being rezoned to commercial or industrial zones.

4.16 Create an inventory of readily available vacant residential property. Work with local with local realtors in developing a strategy for marketing these properties.

4.17 Develop a list of businesses by type that would benefit our population and immediate drawing area from both a labor force and available housing standpoint.

- 1) Develop a plan to actively attract the types of businesses that could utilize a local railroad spur and not overwhelm local traffic patterns.
  - 2) Economic Development Commission of Rio Communities will establish an appropriate list of targets that is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and have the Governing Bodies approval.
- 4.18 Partner with the University of New Mexico, Valencia Campus in developing a strategic plan and mentoring program with the objective of improving economic development.
- 4.19 Through grants, create small business incubators designed to increase opportunities for start-up companies (use Taos and Socorro as templates). Use LEDA, private grants or private investor funding to establish these programs.
- 1) Establish a simple small business incubator-type program by obtaining several small buildings that could be rented inexpensively that promote new small start-up businesses.
  - 2) Establish a common kitchen approach for those who wish to manufacture goods for sale.
  - 3) Establish a garage or shop rental approach for those who wish to rent space on a per hour basis.
- 4.20 Establish relationships with other area economic development groups to find common ground for cooperative programs.
- 4.21 Develop a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT) analysis for Rio Communities. (See Grant County Market Assessment at:
- [http://grantcountynm.com/economic\\_development/Grant%20County%20Market%20Assessment%20FINAL.pdf](http://grantcountynm.com/economic_development/Grant%20County%20Market%20Assessment%20FINAL.pdf))
- 4.22 Review and evaluate a local Economic Development Tax on Gross Receipts as a method to finance initiatives.
- 4.23 Continue updating of development and zoning ordinances, by controlling the mix of land uses in the city. Take advantage of economic changes within the area.
- 1) Current ordinance was passed in 2014.
  - 2) Maintain current and future land use maps of the city and area.
- 4.24 Work with media from Albuquerque to establish a positive image of Rio Communities and distinguish it from negative image of Valencia County.

4.25



4.26 Work aggressively with UNM-VC and Belen School System to provide educational training that will improve salaries of local work force and attract businesses that utilize highly skilled workers.

4.27 Promote the development of Business Associations.

4.28 Work with NMDOT to place signs on Highway I-25 and Business I-25 directing traffic to Rio Communities.

4.29 Establish a renewable energy program that targets both residential and commercial use of sustainable energy sources. Continue working with Solar Overlay Zones to recruit additional clean energy sources to our vacant lands. Establish additional Zones as needed.



4.30 Project future land uses in a plan that includes both present and future development. Projections should include development of industrial zones and annexation of Rio Grande Industrial Park – which is contiguous to Rio Communities boundaries.

#### 5-4-5 SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Objective:** *Inventory, assess and prioritize the condition of all Rio Communities' infrastructure and assets, both public and private.*

**Policies:**

5.01 Use the renovation of the Municipal Multipurpose Complex as the show-piece for how to improve infrastructure.

5.02 Map and dimension all city roadways (e.g. state, county, city and private) within the jurisdictional boundaries of Rio Communities, identifying their type, and assessing their condition.

5.03 Develop a plan that identifies the appropriate method of maintenance or repair for all roadways, and prioritize according to use, severity of damage and estimated cost of repair.



5.04 Identify all city owned real property (to include all parks and open spaces, whether city or privately owned), and assets (e.g. vehicles, equipment, supplies, etc.).

5.05 Develop a plan for the potential development and improvement of *all* vacant land, parks and open spaces.



5.06 Map, Identify and assess the condition of all existing utilities, both city and privately owned, and develop recommendations for funding their maintenance, upgrade, or modernization.

5.06.1 Address long range transportation issues and impacts with potential increased traffic on Manzano Expressway & Hwy 304.

1) Identify the 25 most problematic intersections and roadways.

5.07 Conduct a feasibility study for the possible introduction of renewable and sustainable energy producing sources.