

Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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City of Rio Rancho

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Submitted to:

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Executive Summary

The City of Rio Rancho has since its inception been one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. Today, not even 25 years of age, the City is close to becoming the third largest municipality in the State of New Mexico. As the City gives its own definition to this growth – some officials refer to it as the Dallas to Albuquerque's Fort Worth – places of recreation have become even more important as oases in a rapidly developing landscape of new homes and commercial enterprises. Parks and recreational activities also function as key catalysts of an evolving sense of community for new residents moving here from around the country. The mission of the City of Rancho's Department of Parks and Recreation is *to create and maintain spaces and activities that grow a greater sense of community and enhance the quality of life in the City of Rio Rancho*. Toward this end, the City's Department of Parks and Recreation has undertaken to generate a Master Plan to guide the development of its facilities and programming to meet the needs of growing community in Rio Rancho over the next 20 years.



9/11 Memorial Created by Members of the Rio Rancho Community at the Rio Rancho Sports Complex

Goals of the Master Plan

The following goals were formulated for the Master Plan and for the Parks and Recreation Department:

- *Promote and enhance sense of community in Rio Rancho*
- *Create diverse recreational programs to meet the needs of the growing community*
- *Create quality recreation facilities to meet the needs of the growing community*
- *Promote environmental sustainability*
- *Ensure fiscal sustainability of facilities and programming*
- *Become a regional center of excellence in recreation*

The Master Plan was initiated in 2003. The process of the Master Plan started with input from the community and the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff. A summary inventory and assessment of programs and facilities was conducted, as was a survey of residents to determine the needs of the Parks and Recreation system. This input and information was then combined with demographic projections to develop an overall needs assessment with respect to parks and recreation in Rio Rancho. The Master Plan was developed to fill those needs. From the Master Plan, a capital improvement plan was developed and implementation strategies outlined. The Master Plan is consistent with the Rio Rancho Vision 2020 Plan.

Growth and New Development

Recent estimates put Rio Rancho's population at over 60,000, which is ahead of growth projections generated in 2000, and the city continues to grow ahead of projections. The rate of growth and its character have important implications for the parks and recreation system:



- *Rio Rancho will continue to grow, exceeding 120,000 people by 2025 adding to the burden on existing facilities, especially multi-purpose facilities, which are already at or over capacity.*
- *Most of the growth is projected in the northern and western parts of the City away from the current population centers and current multi-use facilities.*
- *Although the city continues to be a popular retirement destination, the majority of the new residents are young families – both demographic groups have specific and distinctive recreation needs that will need to be met by the future parks system.*

A large portion of the new development will take place through larger subdivisions (upwards of 100 acres), such as the Cabezon, Mariposa, and Quail Ranch developments, and recent trends suggest that developers will build a number of neighborhood parks to satisfy development agreements or impact fees. These will generally meet the need for neighborhood facilities, however, in general these developments will not meet the community's need for larger multi-use facilities.

Recreation Programming

The following were the key findings of the inventory of Parks and Recreation Programming:

- *Rio Rancho offers a great range and diversity of programs given the size of the community and the limited number and type of facilities.*
- *Programs drawing the most participation are: aquatics, childcare after-school programs and summer camps, Van Go!, Sphere Dance Club, team sports and instructional sports classes, dance and gymnastics. Participation numbers were unavailable for large special events. Childcare programs account for 59 percent of total program participants.*

- *The principal limit on programming currently is the limited number and type of facilities available for use for programs, e.g. the lack of an indoor pool or gymnasium constrains the Department's ability to offer activities that require those facilities.*
- *Few programs are offered in the northern part of the city, because there are no multi-use facilities in this part of town*
- *The registration process is cumbersome. Enabling residents to register over the phone or on-line might improve participation.*

Recreation Facilities

The following were the key findings of the inventory of Parks and Recreation facilities:

- *Parks and Recreation has made remarkable use of private grass roots efforts to complete the facilities they currently have.*
- *The Existing recreation centers are increasingly unable to meet the recreational needs of the community, and with the likely loss of Sabana Grande, the situation is likely to only become more challenging.*
- *Pools are increasingly unable to meet recreational needs of the community, and there is no public indoor aquatic center in Rio Rancho.*
- *Playing fields for organized sports are increasingly over-used, and some Rio Rancho based teams and clubs are forced to play games in neighboring communities.*
- *Neighborhood parks are largely accounted for in the process of new development, however some established neighborhoods do not have adequate neighborhood parks, and the development process is not addressing the need for larger, more expensive multi-use and specialized use facilities.*



- *Parks and recreational facilities are not distributed equitably throughout the City. All of the special use parks, pools, recreation centers and the sports complex are located in the south part of the City. No facilities of these types are located in the rapidly growing neighborhoods north of Northern Boulevard.*

Public Process & Community Input

A series of public meetings and meetings with important stakeholders were held in the spring of 2003. These were followed up in the fall with a second series of meetings to obtain feedback on the draft plan. In the interim, a community-wide survey was undertaken. The following were key findings from the community and stakeholder process:

- *Overall, there is a great deal of satisfaction with the current Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.*
- *Members of the public, survey respondents and representatives of swimming groups expressed a need for an indoor aquatic facility.*
- *Private user groups and facilities managers indicated that turf areas, especially those dedicated to game play are stressed and there was a need for more such areas to accommodate growing sports programs.*
- *There was a consensus among managers and respondents to the community survey that there is a need for additional recreation centers, which would be state-of-the-art recreation facilities with appropriate sized class rooms and a gymnasium and studio space.*
- *There was a consensus that there is a need for a festival grounds or community park, which could be used for special events (for example Fourth of July, Luminaria Festival, and Easter Egg Hunt), outdoor performances, and ballooning events, and which could relieve some of the stress on turf areas at Rio Rancho Sports Complex and Haynes Park.*
- *Overall, there is a willingness to support the Parks and Recreation Department through volunteer time and donations in the future.*

- *Overall, there is widespread support for a bond issue to fund priority recreation facilities.*

Needs Assessment

The goal of the Parks and Recreation department is to provide seven (7) acres of developed park land per 1000 residents. This number is in the middle of what most cities around the country provide. Currently, the City of Rio Rancho provides approximately three (3) acres per thousand people.

The needs assessment included the following additional key findings with respect to near term needs (present day to 2010):

- *There is a need for an additional 203 acres of developed park land is needed to meet the goal of 7 acres per thousand residents.*
- *There is a need for approximately two more community recreation centers to provide classrooms, gyms and other lacking facilities for more programming.*
- *There is a need for an indoor aquatics facility for programming needs: currently swimming can only happen 100 days out of the year.*
- *There is a need for more sports game fields and turf areas, such as what is found at the sports complex to accommodate a growing number of sports teams organized in Rio Rancho. Approximately another facility comparable to the existing Rio Rancho Sports Complex is needed at the present time.*
- *There is a need for neighborhood parks in older parts of the city*
- *There is a need for more multi-use community parks, especially a festival grounds. Approximately 2 community parks are needed currently.*
- *There is a need to develop an open space system, including an acquisition strategy and management plan, while much of the core of the future City is still undeveloped.*



Implementation

A full capital improvement plan is outlined in the final section of the Master Plan, with various facilities and planning efforts prioritized and identified by Service District and Council District. Parametric costs have also been generated and potential Federal, State and municipal funding sources identified. The projected cost to the city for development of these new facilities is in the range of \$56 million to \$91 million. Developers will contribute in the range of \$48 million to \$78 million in facilities. Planning and program development projects are projected to cost from \$100 thousand to \$250 thousand.

Implementation of the Master Plan will more than quadruple the number of facilities and acreage of developed park land. As a result, over time the operational budget is likely to increase between \$4 and \$5 million and the number of staff tasked with managing the new facilities is likely to increase by between 50 and 70 people, which is more than triple the current staff.

Completion of the Master Plan will take many years, and may well go beyond 2025 depending on fiscal limitations and the rate of development. However, in the near future, the City of Rio Rancho's parks and recreation system is likely to become the second largest system in the State of New Mexico. If the facilities are built that are envisioned by this plan, Rio Rancho will become a center in the State for recreational excellence with facilities capable of hosting major regional events. In addition, to having sports complexes and aquatic centers that support major sporting tournaments, specialized facilities such as the Festival Grounds and Environmental Park will play host to other kinds of events that enrich the quality of life for Rio Rancho residents, and are also a boon to tourism and local business. Some day, if you believe what some residents and commentators have said, Rio Rancho will even have its own Central Park. In the interim, the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation system will continue to be the heart of civic culture and community spirit in the City of Rio Rancho.

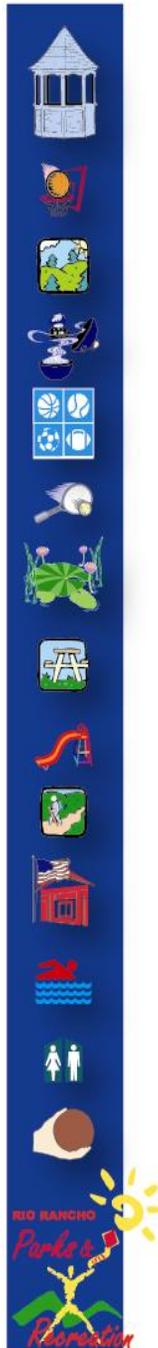


Skate Park Ribbon Cutting – November 2003



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Technical Appendix (Under Separate Cover)

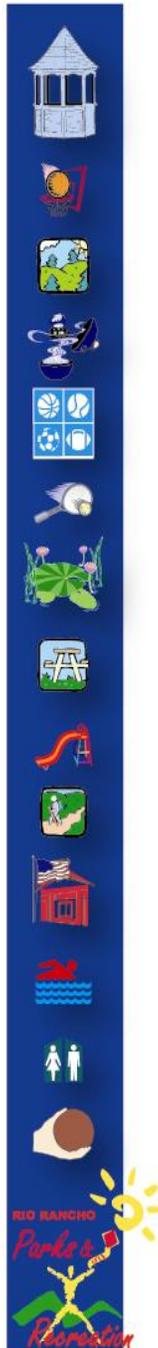


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- Provide recycling facilities and programs in parks
- Build an environmental park
- Offer programs and to enhance community knowledge of the desert environment
- Adopt park design guidelines and specifications for developers of new subdivisions

6. Ensure fiscal sustainability of facilities and programming

- Promote resource conservation in facility design
- Use community-based public-private partnerships to build and maintain facilities
- Draw on interagency partnerships to share costs
- Generate funding through a variety of Federal, state and local sources
- Expand management and programming capacity as the system grows

7. Become a regional center of excellence in recreation

- Create facilities and activities that are a regional draw
- Increase desirability of Rio Rancho as a residential community
- Market the park and recreation system as an attraction for new businesses and retirees

E. What was the Process for Developing this Plan?

Because of the importance of the Master Plan to achieving the mission of the Parks and Recreation Department, the key to developing the new Master Plan was community involvement. The process of generating this Master Plan began and ended with input from the community. Along with meetings with the community and the Parks and Recreation staff, the initial stages of the planning process involved gathering information about Rio Rancho and its future development. Both residents and staff were asked: How and where is Rio Rancho growing now and over the next decade? What groups with special recreational needs are there and where are they concentrated?



Figure 2. Planning Process



From this initial assessment, the existing goals and objectives were reviewed and updated with the input of the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff. Thereafter, the planning team completed an inventory of existing and proposed (funded) recreational facilities and programming and compared it with recreation planning standards, evolving recreation trends and the programs of similar size and growth patterns. Members of the community were also surveyed as to what they felt was missing and could be added to the facilities and programs of the Parks and Recreation Department to enable it to meet the needs of Rio Rancho's citizens and families.

From this information, the planning team completed a needs assessment and series of recommendations for the parks and recreation facilities and programs. These were in turn presented and reviewed with the Parks Commission, the City Governing Body and the community. Based on the feedback that was received, the final plan was developed and presented for adoption by the Parks Commission and the City Council in early Fall 2004. The overall process is shown in Figure 2.



2. Rio Rancho Today and Tomorrow

Rio Rancho is currently the fourth largest and fastest growing city in New Mexico. Planning for this explosive growth is a key ingredient of the Master Plan. A first step in any planning process is an assessment of current and future demographic and land use trends and their impact of these trends on the Parks and Recreation system. The following questions need to be answered:

- How many people live in Rio Rancho today and who are they?
- How is Rio Rancho projected to grow?
- What is the current and future land use pattern of Rio Rancho?
- Where are new subdivisions being built?

To enable the project team to plan for an equitable distribution of facilities and programs, they carved the City into nine service districts, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department. Major arterial roads, Census tracts and Governing Body District Boundaries, and current growth conditions played a role in setting District boundaries. The planning team aggregated data from both the U.S. Census and the Mid-Region Council of Governments for comparison purposes. The nine districts area shown in Figure 3: District 1 includes Northern Meadows and the new Mariposa subdivision. District 2 is primarily the Enchanted Hills area. District 3 is a newer development area west of Highway 528. District 4 is the Rivers Edge subdivision area. District 5 includes some of the older neighborhoods such as Star Heights and Cielo Vista. District 6 is the current heart of the City with Vista Hills, Western Winds and other subdivisions, as well as the sports complex. District 7 includes Corrales Heights and the Intel facility. District 8 has both some of the oldest (Haynes Park neighborhood, City Hall area) and newest (Cabezon) neighborhoods in the City. Finally, District 9 encompasses Quail Ranch.

A. How Many People Live in Rio Rancho Today and Who Are They?

According to the current U.S. Census estimate, the population of Rio Rancho is 60,000. For the purposes of the Master Plan, however, Census 2000 numbers have been used. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, the City of Rio Rancho had a population of 51,765 people, an increase of 59.3 percent over the 1990 figure of 32,505 people. Population growth in Rio Rancho has been significantly faster than the State of New Mexico as a whole, where growth for the same 10-year period was 20.1 percent. Population characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. 2000 Population Characteristics of Rio Rancho

Population Characteristics	Rio Rancho		State of New Mexico	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total
Total Population	51,765	100.0%	1,819,046	100.0%
Sex and Age				
Male	25,106	48.5%	894,317	49.2%
Female	26,659	51.5%	924,729	50.8%
Under 5 years	3,861	7.5%	130,628	7.2%
5 to 9 years	4,265	8.2%	141,171	7.8%
10 to 14 years	4,457	8.6%	147,309	8.1%
15 to 19 years	3,791	7.3%	145,751	8.0%
20 to 24 years	2,369	4.6%	121,291	6.7%
25 to 34 years	7,075	13.7%	234,091	12.9%
35 to 44 years	9,500	18.4%	282,009	15.5%
45 to 54 years	6,765	13.1%	245,819	13.5%
55 to 59 years	2,074	4.0%	87,410	4.8%
60 to 64 years	1,550	3.0%	71,612	3.9%
65 to 74 years	2,937	5.7%	117,745	6.5%
75 to 84 years	2,357	4.6%	71,174	3.9%
85 years and over	764	1.5%	23,306	1.3%
Median age in years	35.1		34.6	
18 years and over	36,659	70.8%	1,310,472	72.0%
21 years and over	34,875	67.4%	1,227,546	67.5%
62 years and over	6,922	13.4%	253,786	14.0%
65 years and over	6,058	11.7%	212,225	11.7%

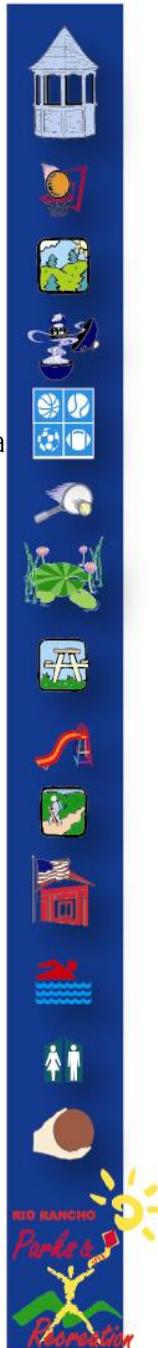
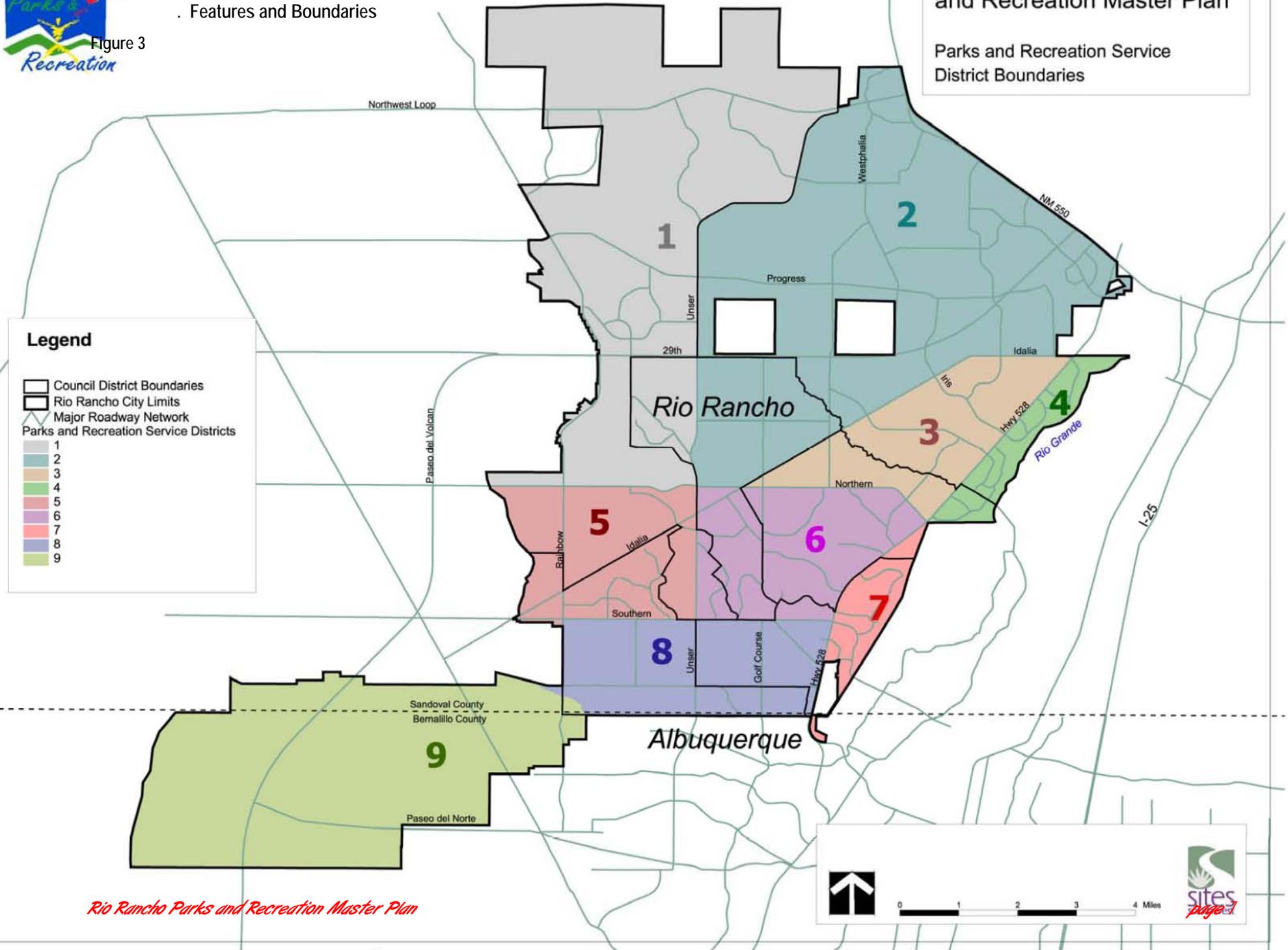




Figure 3 Features and Boundaries

Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Parks and Recreation Service District Boundaries



Legend

- Council District Boundaries
- ▭ Rio Rancho City Limits
- ▬ Major Roadway Network
- Parks and Recreation Service Districts

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0 1 2 3 4 Miles

The median age for residents of Rio Rancho was 35.1 years, slightly higher than the statewide figure of 34.6 years; however, the City has a higher percentage of residents under 18 than the state average. City residents 18 years or older accounted for 70.8 percent of the total population, compared with 72.0 percent for the state as a whole. Residents 62 years and older comprised 13.4 percent of the total population, compared with 14.0 percent statewide.

The average City of Rio Rancho household had 2.70 persons and the average family household had 3.14 persons, which is very similar to the statewide figures of 2.63 persons and 3.18 persons, respectively. Rio Rancho had a total of 18,995 households in 2000. Of these, 74.3 percent were family households (the members are related by blood or marriage) and 25.7 percent are non-family households. This ratio is fairly similar to that of the state as a whole, where 68.8 percent of households are family households and the remaining 31.2 percent are non-family households. In 2000, 40.3 percent of all families had their own children under 18 years of age living in the house, which is somewhat higher than the statewide figure of 34.7 percent. Household data is shown in Table 2. Over half of Rio Rancho's households earned between \$40,000 and \$100,000 in 1999. The community is predominately middle class, which is different than much of the rest of the state.

The data indicated that on the whole there is a greater proportion of young families in Rio Rancho than in the rest of the state. This trend suggests a shift for Rio Rancho from being a retirement destination to becoming a community of new homeowners with children, which has major implications for parks planning. Young families with young children need parks. As this new influx of young families ages, their recreation needs will shift, and the parks and recreation system will need to accommodate these new needs. The senior population continues to be a key demographic group for Rio Rancho. Seniors, like younger children, have special recreational facilities needs and tend to be less mobile. They also vote more consistently than any other single demographic group.

Table 2. Household Characteristics of Rio Rancho

Household Characteristics	Rio Rancho		State of New Mexico	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total
HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE				
Total households	18,995	100.0%	677,971	100.0%
Family households (families)	14,112	74.3%	466,515	68.8%
With own children under 18 years	7,651	40.3%	235,030	34.7%
Married-couple family	11,283	59.4%	341,818	50.4%
With own children under 18 years	5,871	30.9%	157,745	23.3%
Female householder, no husband present	1,962	10.3%	89,622	13.2%
With own children under 18 years	1,238	6.5%	56,133	8.3%
Non-family households	4,883	25.7%	211,456	31.2%
Householder living alone	3,994	20.8%	172,181	25.4%
Householder 65 years and over	1,499	7.9%	55,852	8.2%
Households with individuals under 18 years	8,168	43.0%	261,684	38.6%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	4,113	21.7%	151,722	22.4%
Average household size	2.70		2.63	
Average family size	3.14		3.18	

Table 3 shows the overall break down by age for each of the nine service districts. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show how these break down geographically. The pie charts on the maps also show overall population and age cohort share. Size of the pie is a function of overall population for the District, and wedges of the pie reflect the distribution of that population by age cohort. Because of the importance of seniors and younger children as demographic groups with specialized recreational needs, Figure 4 and 5 on pages 9 and 10, respectively portray the relative number of these two groups by intensity of color (seniors = red; children = green), with darker values indicating larger numbers of the identified group.



Table 3. Population Age Cohorts by Park Service District for Rio Rancho

AGE COHORT BY SERVICE DISTRICT																		
Districts																		
Age	1	% of District	2	% of District	3	% of District	4	% of District	5	% of District	6	% of District	7	% of District	8	% of Total	9	% of Total
0-4	627	11.3%	269	9.9%	71	6.1%	339	6.4%	860	8.3%	1,137	6.6%	222	4.5%	286	6.6%	9	9.2%
5-14	999	18.1%	501	18.4%	233	19.9%	950	18.0%	1,915	18.4%	2,952	17.0%	516	10.5%	663	15.3%	23	24.2%
15-19	309	5.6%	173	6.3%	84	7.2%	355	6.7%	869	8.4%	1,404	8.1%	262	5.3%	354	8.2%	5	5.0%
20-34	1,555	28.1%	605	22.2%	132	11.3%	739	14.0%	2,227	21.4%	2,822	16.3%	628	12.7%	652	15.0%	21	21.7%
35-54	1,472	26.6%	879	32.2%	470	40.3%	1,977	37.4%	3,250	31.3%	5,609	32.3%	1,219	24.7%	1,474	33.9%	25	25.8%
55+	574	10.4%	298	10.9%	176	15.1%	924	17.5%	1,273	12.2%	3,433	19.8%	2,082	42.2%	913	21.0%	14	14.2%
Total all ages	5,537		2,724		1,167		5,285		10,394		17,356		4,929		4,342		96	100.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

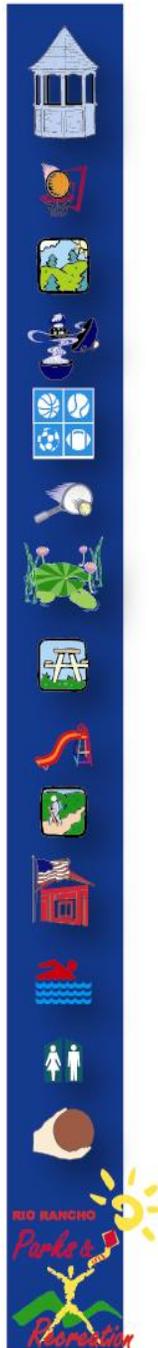


Figure 4. Overall Population Rank, Age Cohort Percentages, 55+

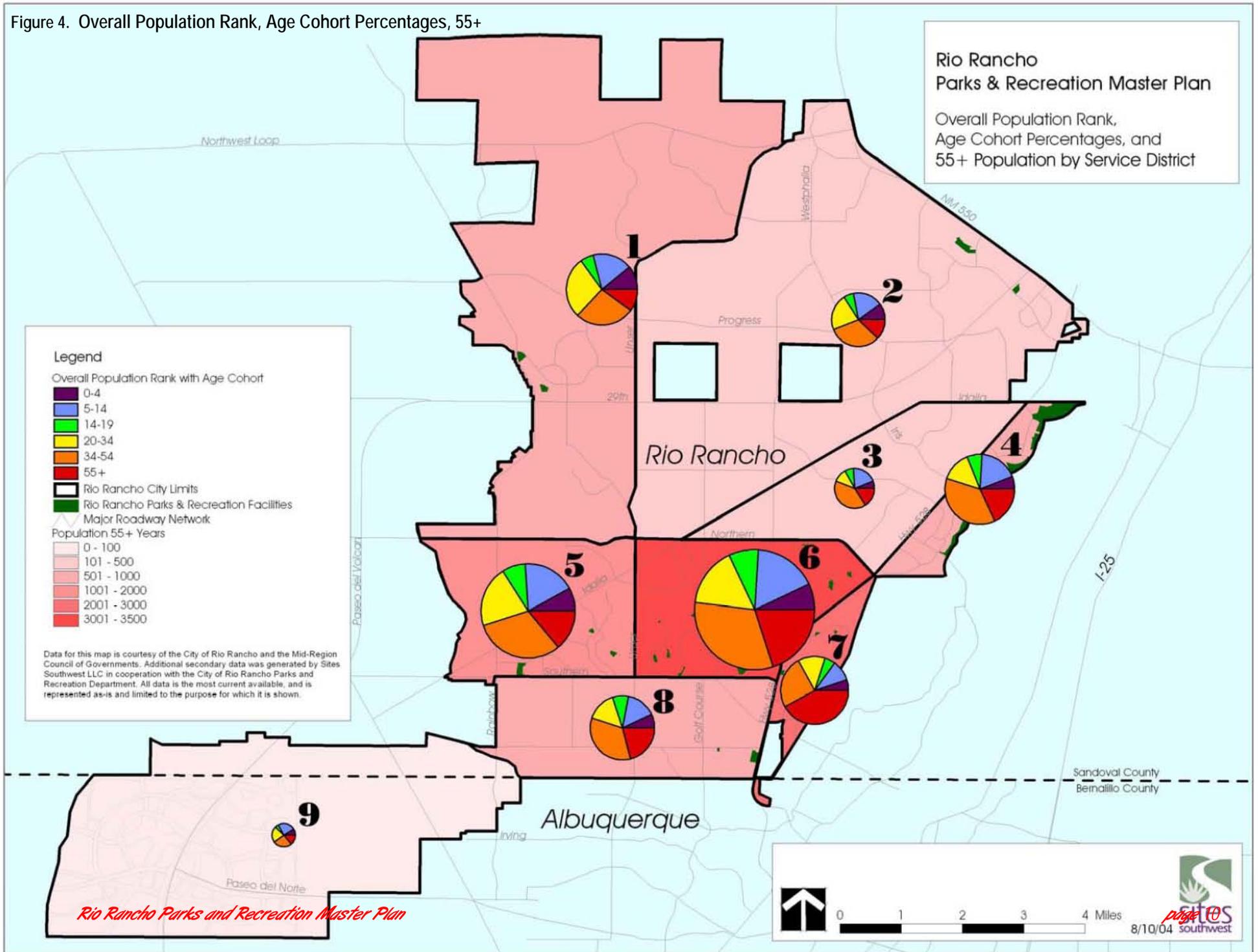
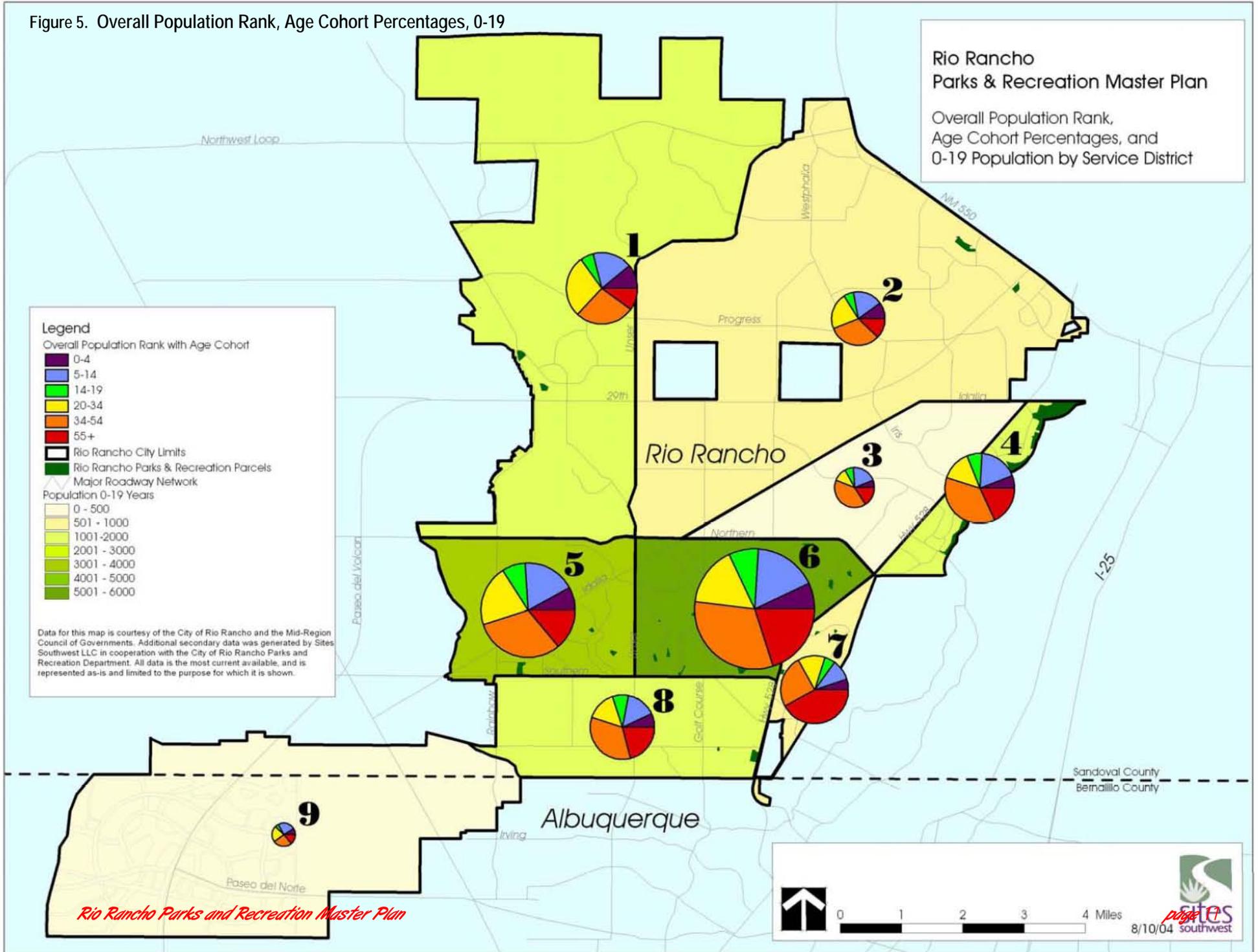


Figure 5. Overall Population Rank, Age Cohort Percentages, 0-19



These maps indicate that over half the City's population is in Districts 5 and 6. High concentrations of both seniors and children live in this area. Seniors are concentrated in Districts 6 and 7, whereas the largest number of children is located in Districts 5 and 6. District 7 has the highest proportion of seniors, where they constitute over 40 percent of the total population in that area. This is partly due to the concentration of senior apartments in this area. In Districts 6 and 8 seniors account for approximately 20 percent of the population. Overall, children (ages 19 and under) appear to be approximately a third of each District's population. Significantly, pre-school children are approximately 10 percent of the population in Districts 1 and 2, but there are no recreation facilities with day care or specialized programming in those areas.

B. How is Rio Rancho Growing?

The City of Rio Rancho is growing rapidly. Based on growth projection estimates developed by the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (MRGCOG), the City is expected to grow from 51,765 people in 2000 to 134,734 people in 2025, 3.9 percent per year, approximately double that of the City of Albuquerque. This is an overall 25-year growth rate of 160 percent. As of 2004, it appears that Rio Rancho is currently exceeding the projected rate of growth with greater than 4% annual growth since 2000.

Based on population estimates and grouped according to demographic regions in the City, Districts 1, 2, and 9 are expected to grow the most in the next 25 years. Service District 9 in the southern part of Rio Rancho in Bernalillo County is expected to see the most growth; from 96 people in 2000 to 15,063 people in 2025. District 2 in the northeast section of Rio Rancho is projected to grow from 2,724 people in 2000 to 37,353 people, a 1,271.3 percent increase. District 1 is projected to grow from 5,537 people to 26,423 people, an increase of 377.2 percent. In total people added, Districts 1 and 2 are projected to increase the most with over 55,000 people, collectively. Other substantial areas of growth include District 3 with an estimated growth rate of 168 percent, District 8 with a projected growth of 84.1 percent, and District 6 with a projected increase of 23.8 percent. Population projections are included in Table 4 and on Figure 6.

This number and corresponding figures show that the population and density of the city of Rio Rancho will radically shift during the next 25 years from being concentrated in the south to having over half the population in the north of the city. The parks and recreation system will need to accommodate this shift, providing facilities to meet the needs of these new populations.

Table 4. Rio Rancho Population Growth and Percent by Demographic District, 2000 to 2025

Demographic District ID Number	2000 Census Population	2025 Estimated Population	Population Growth Increase 2000 to 2025	Percent Growth from 2000 to 2025
1	5,537	26,423	20,886	377.2%
2	2,724	37,353	34,629	1,271.3%
3	1,167	3,130	1,963	168.2%
4	5,285	5,510	225	4.3%
5	10,394	11,958	1,564	15.0%
6	17,356	21,486	4,130	23.8%
7	4,929	5,818	889	18.0%
8	4,342	7,993	3,651	84.1%
9	96	15,063	14,967	15,590.6%
Total	51,830	134,734	82,904	160.0%

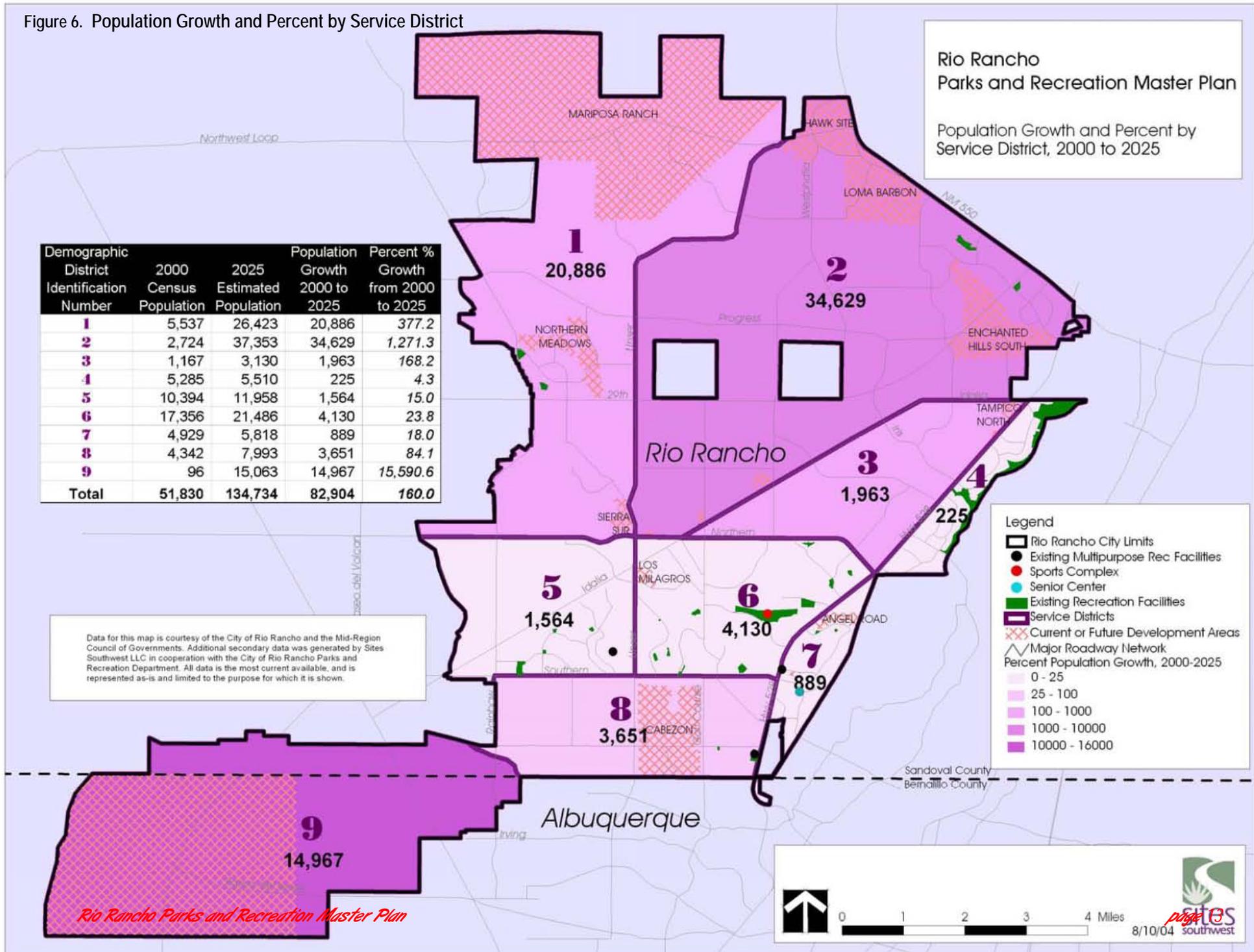
C. What Are the Current and Projected Future Land Use?

Land use maps show how people, businesses and institutions are using the land in an area, and how those uses are distributed within the community landscape. Key colors to help understand the maps are yellow for single family residential, red for retail commercial, fuchsia for various institutional uses, lavender for industrial, green for parks and opens space areas and mauve/pink for range land. Historically, the predominant use of the land in Rio Rancho was as range land. Current land use is shown in the map inset in Figure 7. Projected land use based on the MiRCOG's projections is also shown in Figure 7.



Figure 6. Population Growth and Percent by Service District

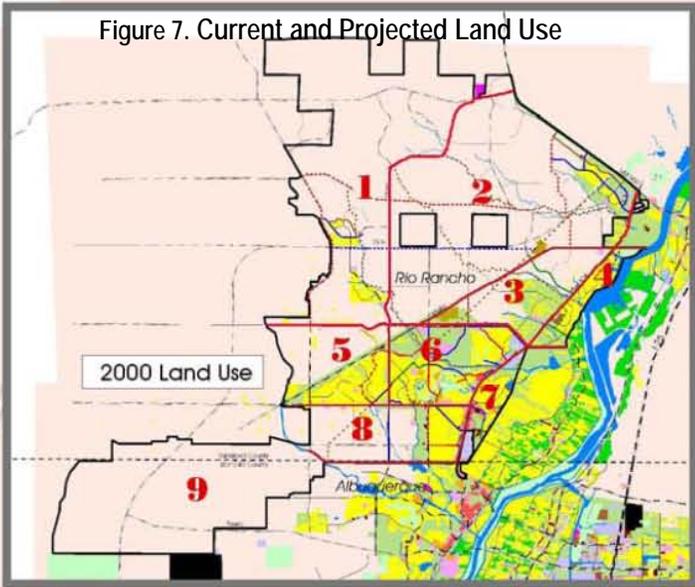
Demographic District Identification Number	2000 Census Population	2025 Estimated Population	Population Growth 2000 to 2025	Percent % Growth from 2000 to 2025
1	5,537	26,423	20,886	377.2
2	2,724	37,353	34,629	1,271.3
3	1,167	3,130	1,963	168.2
4	5,285	5,510	225	4.3
5	10,394	11,958	1,564	15.0
6	17,356	21,486	4,130	23.8
7	4,929	5,818	889	18.0
8	4,342	7,993	3,651	84.1
9	96	15,063	14,967	15,590.6
Total	51,830	134,734	82,904	160.0



Data for this map is courtesy of the City of Rio Rancho and the Mid-Region Council of Governments. Additional secondary data was generated by Sites Southwest LLC in cooperation with the City of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department. All data is the most current available, and is represented as-is and limited to the purpose for which it is shown.

Figure 7. Current and Projected Land Use

Rio Rancho
Recreation and Parks Master Plan
2025 Projected Land Use



Legend

- Rio Rancho City Limits
- Demographic District Boundary
- Existing Recreation Facility
- Existing Multipurpose Facility

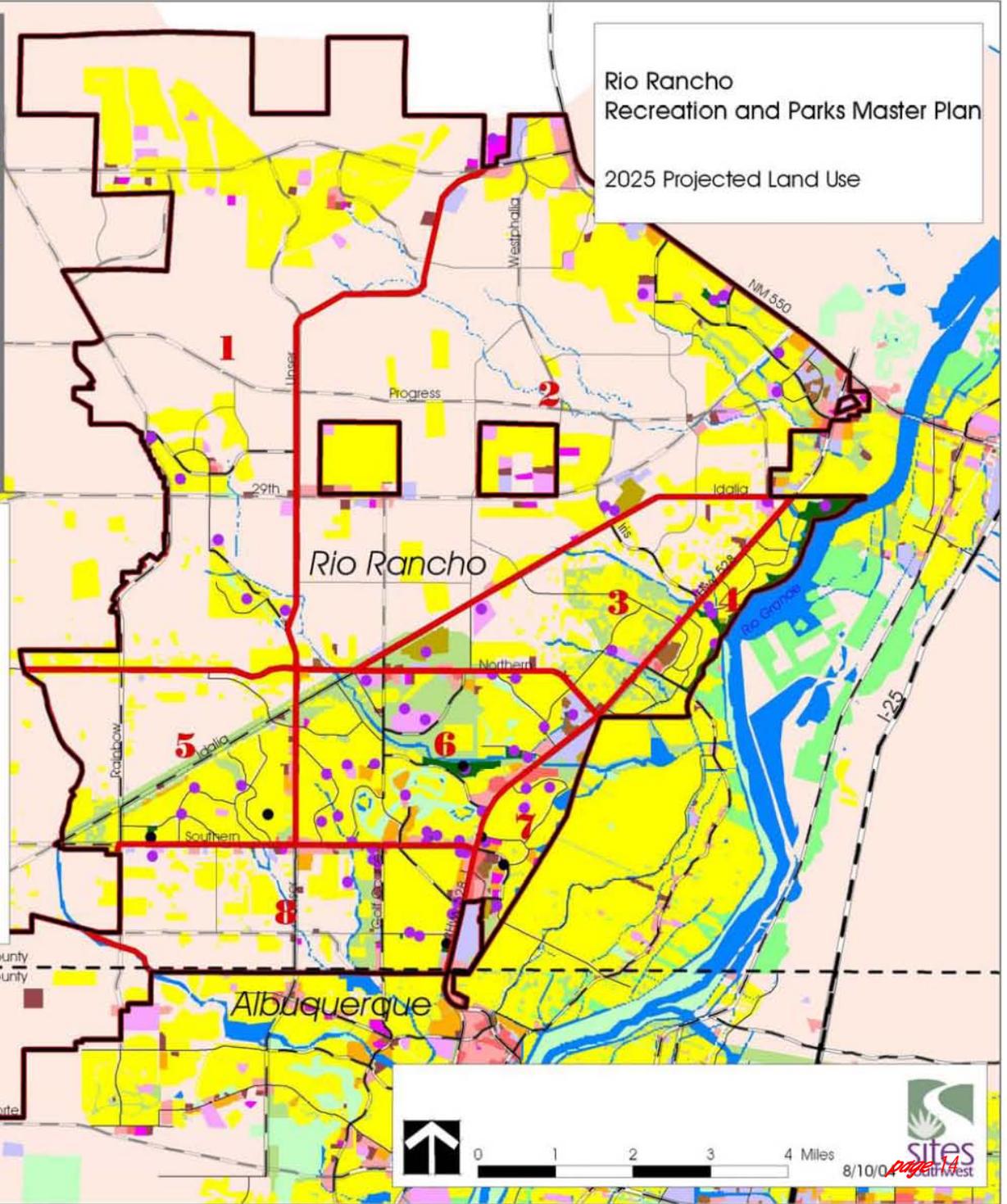
Major Roadway Network

- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Interstate
- Proposed Principal Arterial
- Proposed Minor Arterial
- Proposed Collector

Land Use Category

- Residential - Single Family
- Major Retail Commercial
- Mixed and Minor Commercial
- Office
- Industrial / Wholesale
- Institutions
- Schools / Universities
- Airports
- Transportation and Major Utility Corridors
- Agriculture, Irrigated
- Rangeland / Dry Agriculture
- Major Public Open Space, Parks & Rec
- Natural Drainage / Riparian Systems
- Urban Vacant / Abandoned
- Landfills / Sewage Treatment Plants
- Other Urban Non-residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- KAFB

Data for this map is courtesy of the City of Rio Rancho and the Mid-Region Council of Governments. Additional secondary data was generated by Sites Southwest LLC in cooperation with the City of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department. All data is the most current available, and is represented as-is and limited to the purpose for which it is shown.



D. Where are the New Subdivisions Happening?

The land use maps illustrate the growth that is projected in the north and southwest parts of the City. There are six major subdivisions and approximately 30 other subdivisions in various stages of planning and development occurring within the City. With each new subdivision, more community amenities such as parks, sports complexes, and community centers will be added to Rio Rancho. Below is a summary of the community amenities and parks proposed by developers for some of the new subdivisions.

- **Cabazon** – The 845.6 acre Cabazon subdivision in Service District 8 is located at the southern boundary of Rio Rancho. Included in the development of Cabazon are three neighborhood-style parks totaling 15 acres, one community center with park totaling approximately 15 acres, a 19.8-acre elementary school, and 60.5 acres of open space.
- **Hawk Site** – The Hawk Site subdivision encompasses over 516 total acres and is located in Service District 2 at the northern boundary of Rio Rancho. Upon build-out, Hawk Site will contain two neighborhood-style parks totaling 15.2 acres.
- **Loma Barbon** – Loma Barbon, 600 acres of land owned by the State of New Mexico Land Office, is planned for residential, commercial, and recreational uses. The Master Plan features a mixed-use town center, parks, and a school site linked by a trail system. The master plan includes 14.4 acres of park land and 81.8 acres of open space.
- **Mariposa** – Located in Service District 1 at the northern boundary of Rio Rancho, the Mariposa subdivision is over 6,500 acres in size. More than 162 acres of parks, 1,357 acres of open space, a 2,185-acre nature preserve, and 39 miles of trails are proposed. A large sports complex is planned as well as a community center and community parks.
- **Quail Ranch** – The first major development in Service District 9, Quail Ranch encompasses over 6,600 acres. Of that acreage, 747 acres is planned as open space, 60 acres for a community center, 55 acres for a sports complex, and 350 acres in two golf courses.

Table 5 provides a breakdown on the acreage totals for each subdivision according to their development agreements:

Table 5. Acreage Totals by Subdivision

Subdivision Name	Total Acreage	Total Open Space Acreage	Total Park and Public Use Acreage	Total School Acreage
<i>Cabazon</i>	845.6	60.5	30	19.8
<i>Hawk Site</i>	516	0	15.2	0
<i>Loma Barbon</i>	600	81.8	14.4	
<i>Mariposa</i>	6,581	3,542 (includes 2,185 NRA)	162	0
<i>Quail Ranch</i>	6,692	747	115	0
Totals	15,952.6	4,349.5	291.4	19.8

The table suggests that parks and recreation needs of the new residents in these areas will in part be accommodated by the build-out of these new developments, if they are completed as currently planned.

In addition to the above, there are major subdivision development efforts by AMREP underway in the Enchanted Hills and Northern Meadows. The city currently negotiating an agreement with AMREP with respect to parks.

E. What Can We Conclude?

- Rio Rancho is growing rapidly, and the parks and recreation system will have to expand to meet the needs of the growing population.
- There is a burgeoning young family population and a significant senior population with specific recreation and facilities needs.



- Population growth in the north and southwest part of town will create needs in developing areas over the next 25 years. The shift of the population to the north may affect the best location of new regional facilities.
- Neighborhood parks are typically being provided in new subdivisions larger than 25 acres by developers.
- There will be a significant increase in the amount and proportion of land developed for residential use, creating a corresponding increase in the need for open space and parks.
- Several of the larger developments have included recreational facilities in their master plans, but the recreational needs of residents in these developments must still be accounted for in the City's recreational planning process.
- Although the need for neighborhood parks is substantially met through the development process, the City depends on its Capital Improvements Funding to pay for community and special use parks that will be used by all residents. This need is not being met.



3. Recreation Programming

The City of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department offers an extraordinary range and diversity of programs given its small community size: more than 130 throughout the year.

Computerized tracking of the number of classes offered, program registrants, and classes cancelled—a recommendation from the 1998 Master Plan—allowed a more extensive analysis of participation in Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation programs. The City staff compiled the data for a full year from Fall 2002 through Summer 2003 into a database and spreadsheets for each season. The project team analyzed the data to determine which programs seemed the most and least popular based on the number of participants. The analysis also examined the types of programs offered and how equitably they are geared to different age groups, genders, and interests as well as their space and facility needs.

A. What Kinds of Activities are There and How Popular are They?

Programs were classified into seven categories for more meaningful analysis: **Childcare**, **Field Trips**, **Classes**, **Sports/Fitness** (including team and individual activities), **Aquatics**, **Ongoing Social Opportunities**, and **Special Events**. There were nearly 7,500 registrants for these programs during the 2002 – 2003 year, or about 14 percent of the Rio Rancho population. These figures exclude pool attendance at large special events.

The outdoor pools at Haynes Park and Rainbow draw the highest use of any program—90,000 visits in the summer months. This number of participants is not directly comparable to the number of participants in other programs, as pool users are counted every time they go, whether

or not they are repeat visitors. For other programs, the number of participants is counted just once at registration. Regardless, visitation averages 1,000 pool goers a day over three months, a substantial number.

Also heavily used are programs that offer activities for children and youth during the times they are not in school, fitting a general category of **Childcare**.

- *SportzCamp* (1,502 participants)—a daily summer program for children 6-11, which emphasizes sports-related skills, knowledge and values in traditional and non-traditional sports and arts and crafts; and *Higher Ground Teen Camp* (388 participants) for youth 12-15 in the summer, designed to build leadership and teamwork and stimulate creativity. Pre- and post-camp related programs provide full work-day coverage (632 participants).
- *Kidszone* (1,111 participants)—a 3-hour program generally meeting twice a week to provide playtime and arts and crafts for 3 to 5-year-olds, without their parents.
- *After School Recreation Club* (353 participants, weekly and daily)—educational and recreational activities for school children ages 6 to 14 after school until 6 p.m. Parks and Recreation provides transportation from the schools to the community centers.

Also among the most popular programs is *Van Go!* (343 participants) an all-season series of day and overnight **Field Trips** around the region that range from taking in local theatre performances to touring Carlsbad Caverns. Available to all ages, the majority of users are seniors.

In the **Sports/Fitness** category, the 41 program offerings ranged from traditional team sports such as basketball, softball, baseball, football, volleyball, and cheerleading to individual sports such as ice skating, swimming, golf, tumbling, judo, lacrosse, and tennis, depending on the



which met twice a month on Thursdays for half a day. *Friday Fun Nights* grew out of recommendations in the 1998 Master Plan and drew 98 participants; the quilters had 62 ongoing members. Other programs offered in this category were *Teen Scene* (ages 13 to 17) at Haynes Community Center and *Tots Together*, a twice weekly playgroup for preschoolers, which drew 44 participants.

Table 6. Program Registration Fall 2002 – Summer 2003

Program	Number
Childcare	4452
Sports/Fitness	1,208
Dance/Gymnastics	510
Classes/Education	402
Special Events*	323
Field Trips	402
Social Opportunities	200
Aquatics Classes	3844
Total	10,341
As a Percent of 2000 Population	17%

* Special events counts only person registered for a particular event; it excludes the thousands of participants that come to such events as holiday parades, festivals, etc.

The remaining programs fell into the categories of **Field Trips**, **Special Events**, or were sponsored by Keep Rio Rancho Beautiful

Under **Field Trips** were at least seven offerings (beyond what is offered by Van Go): two Saturday hiking trips to the Sandia Mountains and Jemez Hot Springs, a weekend fly fishing clinic, an excursion for ages 12 and up, a Friday sledding and tubing day in the Sandias for ages 7 and up offered by Outdoor Adventures, and an Extreme Adventures snowmobiling trip to Red River. Participation data was scant for these offerings, but appeared to be under 50 for two of the trips. The previously mentioned and popular *Van Go!* also falls into this category.

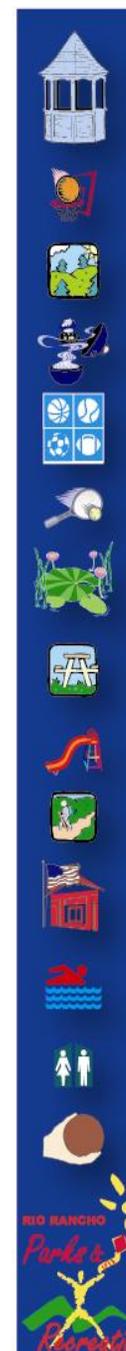
Parks and Recreation also helped sponsor at least 15 **Special Events**— events staged once a year for a day or weekend. Registration data for some of these events, which typically were geared to middle school ages and up or for all ages, was not available. Events included the following:

- Easter Egg Hunt (March/April)
- Holiday parades (Memorial Day)
- Car show/dance/social
- Football Contest
- Battle of the Bands (February)
- Bark in the Park (May)
- Luminaria Festival (December)
- Jinglefest (December)
- Fourth of July Fireworks (July)
- Pork and Brew Fest (March)

Participation numbers are only one indicator of a program’s usefulness or popularity, however, and may not tell the whole story. For example, summer *SportzCamp* offered at Haynes Community Center has a waiting list while two other *SportzCamps* that offer the same program at other locations have empty slots because Haynes offers convenient child drop-off for parents who work in Albuquerque as well as shade trees, aquatic and other facilities. A second center with a pool and shade in the north end or center of town could relieve some of the demand pressures on Haynes.

B. What Other Programs are Part of Parks and Recreation?

Keep Rio Rancho Beautiful (KRRB), which is also a part of the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, sponsors a number of clean-up events to build community spirit, respect and connection as well as keep the City well groomed and environmentally safe. KRRB sponsors



drop-off days for hazardous wastes and reusable clothing, contests to promote responsible waste management, and general citywide clean-up days.

Another part of the Department is Rio Rancho PEG Channel 51, a public access television channel. Here one can find information about City Council meetings, local events, interviews and call-in shows about current events and many other offerings.

C. What Activities do Private Groups Offer at City Facilities?

In addition to the City Parks and Recreation offerings, a number of private groups offer programs that utilize Parks and Recreation facilities. These groups are primarily sports club organizations, such as the Young American Football League (YAFL), Sunset Baseball League, and the Rio Rancho Soccer Club (RRSC). The Cottonwood School currently hosts a kick-ball team competition in the spring, which also utilizes city facilities. In many ways, these activities complement and extend Parks and Recreation offerings, however, they do add to the



YAFL Practice

level of usage at City Facilities and need to be factored into the overall needs assessment for the Department. Facilities also need to be adequate to provide service for all Rio Rancho user groups. Currently, YAFL must use City of Albuquerque facilities for games.

D. What Programs Were Cancelled and Why?

Cancellation can be another important indicator of relative interest. A number of classes, sports/fitness activities, and childcare activities were cancelled during the Fall 2002-Summer 2003 year because too few people enrolled by the deadline. The most programs—14—were cancelled in the fall. These included:

- Two classes: hand-building with clay (ages 16+) and weeknight puppy training (ages 18+);
- Five physical activity programs: table tennis, Tai Chi Ch'uan, adult tennis, youth tennis, and *Funtastic Fitness*;
- Six holiday programs that either offered childcare over the school break or for a Saturday shopping excursion or provided an opportunity to search for a holiday tree in the National Forest or make holiday florals. Breakfast with Santa, however, drew at least 51 participants.

Only eight programs were cancelled in Spring 2003 and five in Summer 2003 for lack of registrants. These included:

- Five classes: (Spring) hand-building with clay, introduction to photography for teens and adults, and a teenage drama class; (Summer) puppy training and composting;
- Five physical activities: (Spring) adult sand volleyball, adult and youth team tennis, and *Tang Soo Do Self-Defense Clinic*; (Summer) *Tiny Tumblebugs*—Intermediate, and adult basketball.
- *Teen Scene* was also cancelled in Spring.



Cancellations are a fairly good indicator of lack of interest in a program, but could also be the result of an inconvenient time slot or facility or season, or difficulty in learning about new programs and registering. Program catalogs are posted on the City website, mailed directly to all residents of the City, and are available at City Hall. Registration however, must be done in person either at City Hall, or, more recently, Sabana Grande, Star Heights, and Haynes Community Centers. An exception is summer swimming lessons, where enrollment is also held at the pools. Participants have complained about not knowing what programs are available or about difficulty in registering. The centers just recently acquired the capability to accept credit cards. During small group meetings, Parks and Recreation staff said they thought the ability to register on-line would improve publicity for the programs as well as residents' ability to register and pay by the deadline.

E. Who is Being Served by the Current Programming?

One broad indicator of how well various segments of the population are being served by Parks and Recreation programs is to compare each age group's share of the population with its share of programs. This is a crude measure, as it counts only the total number of programs and does not differentiate among those offered once a year and those offered weekly or monthly. It also excludes aquatic programs.

The results indicate, however, that the largest share of the programs are designed for elementary and middle-school-aged children, arguably the groups most in need of and available for programs. Thirty-eight percent of programs were targeted to elementary school-age students ages 5 to 11, which made up about 12 percent of the total Rio Rancho population in 2000. Similarly, 34 percent of programs were aimed at middle school-aged students ages 11-14, which made up 7 percent of the population. (A number of these programs were designed for both elementary and middle school ages and are counted in both shares.)

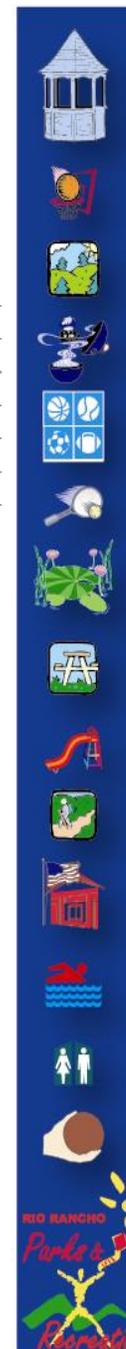
Those of high school-ages 14 to 18 could choose from 22 percent of the program offerings, although this group comprised 8 percent of the population.

Table 7. Parks and Recreation Program by Population

	% of total population	% of programs
Babies (6 mos-3 yrs)	6%	5%
Pre-School (3-5)	5%	7%
	12%	38%
	7%	34%
	8%	22%
	59%	23%
	0%	0%
	100%	13%

Note: Age categories overlap for both population and programs

The percentages of programs designed for babies and pre-schoolers were roughly equivalent to their share of the total population. Adults of working age (18 to 64) made up 59 percent of the population, but had only 22 percent of programs specifically geared to their interests. On the other hand, they could be considered the group least available to participate in programs. Added to these shares were another 13 percent of the programs that were open to all ages. Senior programs are not provided through the Parks and Recreation Department. Separate programs for seniors traditionally have been offered through the Department of Senior Services. Their programs are described in Section 5.



4. Parks & Recreation Facilities

The Parks and Recreation Department provides and maintains parks and facilities for the residents of Rio Rancho. These facilities are key to the delivery of the activities and programming described above. Facilities must provide space to meet the needs of current and future programming. The following section describes the existing recreation facilities and provides general definitions, highlights the areas these facilities serve, the uses and activities available, current conditions, management and maintenance, analysis of Service Districts, and includes detailed maps showing existing and proposed facilities. It is not an all-encompassing inventory, but rather a snapshot of existing facilities in order to update the overall Master Plan.

A. What are Parks and Recreation Facilities?

Parks are classified based on their use and size. Classifications for parks and recreation facilities were derived primarily from the standards set forth by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). These were modified and simplified to be consistent with Rio Rancho's facility definitions, to work with available data and to utilize the Mid-Region Council of Government's transportation model to determine service area coverage:

- **Neighborhood Park (NP)** – Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Larger facilities listed below may also function as a neighborhood park, depending on their location and the type of facilities they have. Generally, neighborhood parks range from 1 to ten acres in size and have a service area of 10 minutes walking distance.

- **Community Park (CP)** – Community parks are larger in size than neighborhood parks and serve a broader purpose with multiple facilities present. The optimal size of a community park is 10-20 acres, although it should also be based on location and functionality. For example, Haynes Park with all its facilities currently functions as a community park, although it is a neighborhood park. Optimal service area for community parks is 10 minutes drive or less.
- **Multi-Purpose Recreation Center (RC)** – A recreation center is a structure that accommodates multiple recreational activities and events programming. Typically, such structures will include a variety of spaces ranging from general use auditorium/gymnasium spaces, to more specialized spaces such as swimming pools. A 10 minute drive is the optimal service area.
- **Sports Complex (SC)** – This facility consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities at larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community. The minimum size is 40 acres, with 80 to 150 acres being optimal, with a 10 minute drive is the optimal service area.



The Rio Rancho Sports Complex





Figure 9. Existing Recreation Facilities

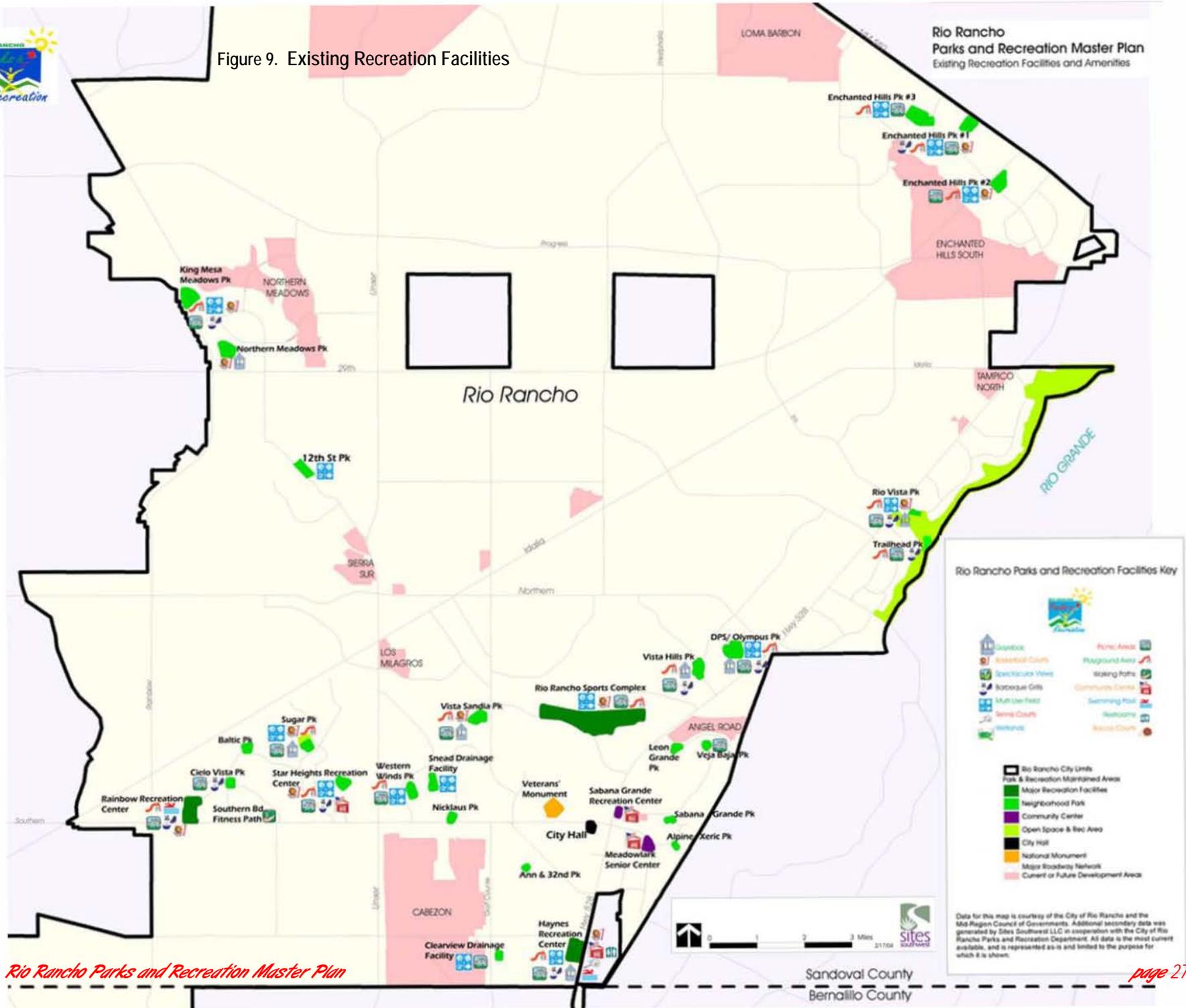
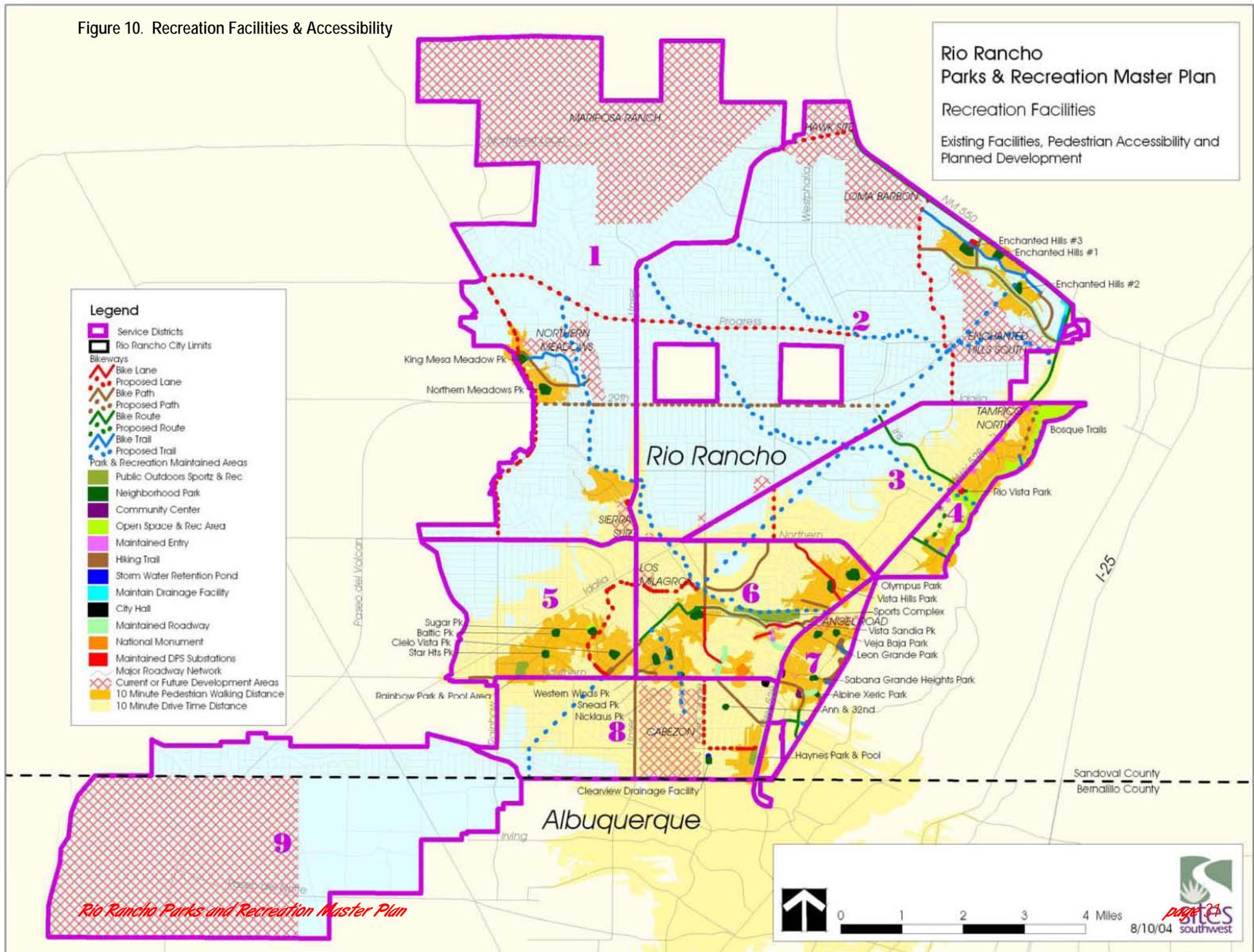


Figure 10. Recreation Facilities & Accessibility



C. How Well Are Each of the Service Districts Served by Facilities?

As was noted above, the boundaries of the planning Districts were determined based on current population, Table 10 describes the existing recreation facilities by planning District.

1. District One

This area of the City is expected to have significant growth over the next twenty years, growing to approximately 26,000 residents. The District has two developed parks, Northern Meadows and King Mesa Meadows Park which together are nearly 16 acres. King Mesa Meadows Park is a community level park with a large parking lot and turf grass playing field

that could easily support scheduled games play for either football or soccer. It is infrequently scheduled for game play, because most users feel the park is too remote or too faraway. Both parks were built within the last five years. King Meadows experiences some vandalism due to its relative isolation, but is otherwise in good condition.

2. District Two

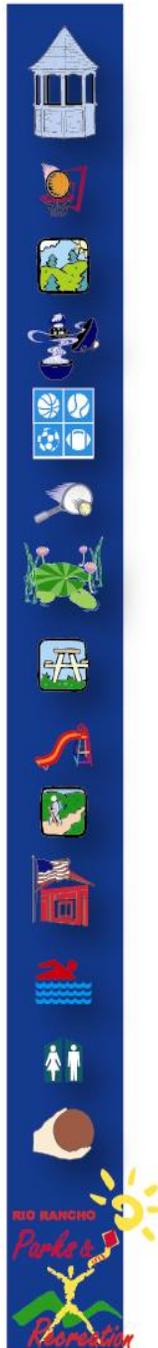
District Two is also located on the growing northern edge of Rio Rancho and is projected to grow to approximately 37,000 residents by 2025. This District includes three Enchanted Hills Parks (22.6 acres), which are new and in good condition. While this area has developed neighborhood parks, and as of the 2000 Census is the only District that meets the level of service goals, there are no pools or recreational facilities.

Table 10. Existing Facilities, Developed Parkland and Current Level of Service by Service District

DISTRICT	Sports Complex	Community Park	Neighborhood Park	Special Use Park	Rec. Center	Senior Center	Swimming Pool	Open Space	# of Facilities	Current Acres
1			2						2	26
2			3						3	35
3			0					1	1	0
4			2						2	7
5			4		1		1		6	17
6	1		4	1					6	72
7			2		1	1		1	5	7
8			2		1		1		4	13
9			0						0	0
Total Existing	1	0	19	1	3	1	2	2	29	176
*Level of Service Existing	2	3	20	0	3	2	3	0	33	379
Deficit	1	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	203

Notes:

* Based on Level Service Standard in Table 9 and using 2000 Census population.



7. District Seven

District Seven is located in the southeastern most section of the City. The current population stands at approximately 4,900 people, with expected growth to increase this to 5,800 people. This area has two small neighborhood parks, totaling about four acres. This area is also home to the Sabana Grande Recreation Center.

The Sabana Grande center has two indoor components at this leased facility. A large portable building in the back area of the site houses an office, kitchen area, and one classroom. With the sale of a portion of the site, this facility lost a pool and a large area used for the storage of seasonally used items. In the main building are two offices, three classrooms, minimal storage, and an auditorium. This center supports the majority of the department's programs in a very small area. The outdoor area contains playground equipment, but overall is considered too small for the facility's needs.

8. District Eight

District Eight has some of the oldest developed neighborhoods in the City. There are approximately 4,300 residents, mostly located east of Golf Course Road. Along with the Clearview Drainage Facility, this



Stressed Turf at Haynes Park

District contains the most popular and widely used park in the City, Haynes Park. Conveniently located off of Hwy 528, and near Intel, Haynes Park has a large number of amenities for a park of its size. Although less than 10 acres, this site houses an outdoor pool, water slide, basketball, bocce courts, turf grass practice field, two parking lots, play areas, shelters, a recreation center, horseshoe pits, and constructed wetlands. With the only tennis courts in the City, all of Rio Rancho's tennis programs are located at this site. The over-used turf grass field has been closed to allow for repairs to the over used field. There is some debate as to the classification of this park. Its size and amenities indicate that it could be a community park. However, due to a lack of adequate parking and poor vehicular access, the popularity and over use of this park is a disruption to the surrounding neighborhood. The recreation center itself is quite small. Though little more than one classroom and a kitchen, the center hosts as many as ten special events and socials geared to the entire City. The site lacks adequate electrical power and water for the Luminaria Tour, which is one of the citywide events hosted here.

9. District Nine

This region of the city is anticipated to grow to approximately 15,000 residents by 2025. There are currently no parks or facilities in this area, although parks are included in the master plan for Quail Ranch. Table 10 is a summary of all the developed parks and recreation lands and facilities. In most of the Service Districts, the City of Rio Rancho does not meet the goal of 7 acres developed park land per 1000 people established by the Parks and Recreation Department. Overall, for the year 2000 there are approximately 3.2 acres per 1000 citizens. District 2 is above the goal level of service. Districts 1, 6, 8 are at about half the level of service goal. Districts 3 and 9 currently have no parks, while Districts 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are significantly under the goal. Applying the 2025 projected population figures from the Mid Region Council of Governments, all the districts and the overall figure (1.6 acres per 1000 people) are well under the goal level of service.



5. Public Process & Key Input

A. Overview

The project team sought input from the general public and Parks and Recreation management staff in a variety of ways. The team first held a facilitated meeting with the staff, splitting them into two groups that focused on either program management or maintenance, to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Parks and Recreation programs and facilities and consider future threats and opportunities. The team also presented the project to the Parks and Recreation Commission for comment.

An initial round of community meetings was held early in the process at different locations, spread among the six Parks Commission Districts, to encourage residents to assess their satisfaction with parks facilities and recreation programs and to voice what additional activities or facilities they would like to see in Rio Rancho. The project team and staff handed out written questionnaires and comment forms at these meetings and at several other public events to supplement the meeting input. Answers from these sources were used to help design a telephone survey that was administered to a larger, more random number of residents to obtain a broader range of opinions and validation. A 300 person telephone survey was conducted by Research and Polling, Inc. during May 2004. Meetings were also held with private user groups to obtain their input regarding the needs of organized sports leagues.

Finally, a series of public meetings were held to present and obtain feedback on the final plan and its recommendations. A summary of this input is found in Section 7 Master Plan. The Technical Appendix contains agendas and sign-in sheets from all the public meetings

B. What are the Priorities of Parks Management

Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation and facility program managers are creative and dedicated. They are proud of the variety and quality of programs offered, particularly for children, and they are constantly changing and improving the programming. Fostering a sense of community in Rio Rancho, which because of its newness is in the process of creating its culture and history, is seen as a key focus for their programs. With this in mind, the department programs are free or offered at a low cost. Nevertheless, managerial staff believes their department is considered the "essential non-essential" and says they are the first to be cut when budgets are tight. A lack of indoor facility space limits the number of program participants. Given more funds and facilities, the staff would expand their program offerings.

The top staff priority would be to have a multi-purpose, indoor recreation center including space for a gym, weight center, indoor pool, exercise room, classes, and kitchen. While Rio Rancho has two outdoor pools at Haynes Community Center and Rainbow Pool, the only indoor pool is located within Defined Fitness, a private club. The City sometimes shares gym space at Rio Rancho Schools, but is constrained by school activity schedules. Staff also mentioned a recreation center at the north end of the city, a central recreation center off Unser, a drop-off facility for recycling, space for a community gardens, and more parking at the Sports Complex. In great demand is more storage space: a central team storage check-out and check-in at the north end of town where staff could perform these and other tasks, small buildings for storage and shade at parks hosting SportzCamp, and general storage at each of the centers. Staff said people at the edges of the city and people with special needs are not served as well by the program as those living



organizations indicated that school facilities were not a viable alternative given their level of utilization for school programs. There was also common awareness that the level of use in recent years has stressed existing Parks and Recreation facilities at the Sports Complex and Haynes Park, and has necessitated periods at no-use, which has impacted schedules. A desire was expressed by all three organizations for an additional Sports Complex and additional turf fields for practice use.

Other private user groups that gave input to the planning process included the Rio Rancho Balloonists Association and various representatives of private swim clubs. The balloonists currently have no adequate facilities in the City of Rio Rancho, and they expressed an interest in a facility for balloon takeoff and landing that was large enough to host invitational events. The swimming user groups were very vocal in their desire for an indoor aquatic facility. Currently, there are only outdoor facilities, which limit use to approximately four months of the year.

Another point raised by the user groups was their willingness to participate in the creation of new facilities. All of these groups and others (Sunset Little League) have played a key role in building the current facilities through volunteer effort and donations. This kind of public-private partnership will also be of critical importance in the implementation of new facilities pursuant to this plan. These groups with their large memberships can also be a key catalyst for generating support for a bond issue.

D. What do the Residents Who Attended the Public Meetings Want?

A series of four public input meetings was held during the spring of 2004. The first two meetings were held at Sabana Grande and Star Heights Recreation Centers, the third in Enchanted Hills at Mountain

View Middle School, and the last was held at City Hall in the television studio operated by the Parks and Recreation Department. A second set of meetings was held to review a draft of the Master Plan, which are further described below in Section 7. All meetings were lightly attended, although the meetings were well publicized in print, on the radio and via Rio Rancho public access. Participants suggested that this was a function of the overall satisfaction with Parks and Recreation programming and facilities, as well as the number of public functions being held during the same time period for the election and other projects. However, more participation would have provided broader input.

Several top priorities emerged from the public meetings and surveys: an indoor swimming pool and another multi-purpose recreation/community center with a gym were the most frequently mentioned as needed facilities. Suggested locations for these were at the Loma Colorado sports area or the northern end of town. More swimming pools and skate parks, particularly in the north end of town, were also high on the list. Several people suggested a community theatre, a dog park, and trails in various vicinities; for example, to the Sports Complex and on to the high school, within the Mariposa development, along major roads and to the bosque. One resident requested more designated horse trails. Trails take on an added emphasis in Rio Rancho as there is no public transit except for a senior citizen's van service.

As the meetings were held in various districts around the city, residents from those Districts not surprisingly suggested facilities they felt were lacking in their area. Residents in Northern Meadows requested a pool. Those in Enchanted Hills suggested a pool, skate park, and dog park. River's Edge III residents called for a park and facilities and a skate park. A work-out place was suggested for Unit 17 and a park for Vista Hills as nearby soccer fields had been fenced and were now inaccessible.

The skate parks at the Sports Complex and particularly Rainbow Pool generated substantial discussion. Drawbacks to the Rainbow skate park



are that the ramps and obstacles are movable, which makes them less secure to ride on and easier to steal. Riders prefer the concrete park at Los Altos in Albuquerque and suggested a similar course, which could accommodate BMX as well, for a central location in Rio Rancho. Using lights, designed to focus the lighting on site, could extend the available hours of the Sports Complex skate park. Problems with drug use and bullying at Rainbow were brought up; one resident suggested locating skate parks adjacent to Department of Public Safety (DPS) facilities to provide some supervision.



Ongoing input from everyone is essential to Parks and Recreation everyday operations

In general, most meeting participants gave the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation facilities a rating of 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The exception was Rainbow, which received several ratings of 2. Recommended general improvements for neighborhood parks focused on finishing parks in older areas that have none, creating shade, and installing water fountains, restrooms, gazebos and

barbeques. Lights here could also extend the time available for use. Other diverse requests ranged from providing meeting space for groups and organizations, and mentoring programs to involve seniors with teens, to separating ATV user areas from other open space areas and improving the teacher-student ratio for swimming lessons.

Most residents said the Parks and Recreation programs met their needs fairly or very well. Obstacles to more frequent participation included a lack of suitable transportation; facilities were located too far from their residences (particularly for residents of Enchanted Hills and River's Edge), not knowing registration deadlines, limited interesting adult courses, and a general lack of time. They proposed a number of program ideas and facilities: girls' softball, recreational dance (Latin, hip-hop), art for middle school ages, dance and ballet during the week, yoga/Pilates, natural building techniques (for example, straw bale), mosaic-making, adult theatre productions, basketball and handball courts, summer midnight basketball, a mid-week teen nightclub in the summer, and classes and organized competition at skate parks for "bikes, boards, and blades."

Rio Rancho residents also use private programs and public programs in other jurisdictions to supplement the recreational facilities in their city. Those at the meetings tend to use the indoor pool at Defined Fitness, private gyms, private dance and art classes, the Sunset Little League and the YAFL (Young American Football League). They also go to the Corrales pool, the skate park at Los Altos because it is concrete and lighted, and the theatre and open space in Albuquerque.

E. What Did the Community Survey Indicate Residents Wanted?

A survey was conducted by Research & Polling, Inc. of Albuquerque, NM to assess City of Rio Rancho residents' opinions on recreational activities sponsored by the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department as well as about proposed recreational facilities that may



be built in Rio Rancho. Respondents were interviewed by telephone. The survey included a random sample of 300 residents in Rio Rancho. Telephone numbers were generated randomly utilizing the Research & Polling, Inc. database. Interviews were conducted over the phone the week of June 4, 2004. A sample size of 300 at a 95% confidence level provides a maximum margin of error of approximately 5.7%. The full survey and analysis can be found in the Technical Appendix to the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

During the survey, most residents indicated that recreational activities are either *very* (49%) or *somewhat* (35%) important to them or members of their household. In fact, nearly one-fifth (19%) of Rio Rancho residents say they participate in city-sponsored activities at least once a month and one-quarter say they participate in city-sponsored recreation activities at least a few times a year.

Regarding specific events sponsored by Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation, the majority of residents said they or members of their household have attended the Fourth of July celebration (60%) while one-quarter say they have attended the Luminaria Tour within the past two years. In addition, nearly one-fifth (18%) of residents say they have been to the Spring Egg Hunt and 16% of residents say they have been to the Haunted House in the past two years.

The primary reason that residents give for not attending recreational programs more often is a lack of time (43 percent), although 21 percent say they are not interested or don't participate in recreational activities. However, 16 percent say they do not know what is offered and 9% say the city-sponsored programs are not age appropriate. While there is relatively little that Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation can do about encouraging people with little or no time or interest to participate, it can improve communications about the activities they sponsor. It should be noted that many seniors say they do not participate because there are not enough age-appropriate programs available. Although there are also many programs offered through Rio Rancho Senior Services. Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation may want to consider developing and promoting programs specifically targeting seniors.

The City of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation brochure (72 percent) and the Rio Rancho Observer (65 percent) appear to be the most popular sources for information regarding recreational programs. However, a large percentage of residents also say that they have heard about recreational programs from other Rio Rancho residents (56 percent) or read about programs in the Albuquerque Journal, Rio Rancho Edition (49 percent). Other popular sources of information include television commercials (40 percent), radio ads and live remotes (37 percent). A one-in-four resident indicates they have found out about Rio Rancho recreational programs through the Parks and Recreation Monthly Newsletter from school.

In addition to specific events, Rio Rancho residents were asked to rate, on a 5-point scale (where a score of 5 means *very likely* and a score of 1 means *very unlikely*), their likelihood of participating in future programs or activities offered by the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department. Half of residents say they or a member of their household are likely (a score of 4 or 5) to participate in outdoor recreation activities (such as fishing, hiking, or canoeing). Half of the residents say they are likely to participate in cultural or social events (51%). Just under half (48%) of residents say they or a member of their household would likely participate in music activities, while 45% say they or a member of their household would likely participate in sports and athletic activities. Furthermore, residents express interest in literacy activities (40%), basic movement and physical fitness activities (38%), arts and crafts activities (37%), and home and garden activities (35%) as indicated by scores of four or five.

When asked in an unaided, open-ended manner about additional activities or special facilities in particular that should be offered by the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department, 11% mention an indoor swimming pool and 10% mention an outdoor swimming pool, while 5% say they wish Parks and Recreation would offer a facility that contains either a sports complex or park.



Festival Grounds: There is a longstanding need for a major community park that could serve as a venue for special events. This need was identified in the previous Master Plan and was reiterated by members of the community and the Parks and Recreation management team during the current planning process. Such a facility needs to be centrally located to the existing and future community and should provide large lighted turf areas for sports game play to help alleviate over-scheduling of existing facilities. Such a facility could also be designed to meet the needs of other special uses, such as balloon fiestas and outdoor performances (pavilion).

Community Parks: Community parks provide the most in one place and are a key ingredient to meeting Rio Rancho's recreation needs. They also can provide much needed turf area. Turf areas are at maximum capacity use during much of the year and user groups such as YAFL have to relocate games to facilities in neighboring municipalities. Additional multi-use turf areas are needed, especially in the northern part of the City. Turf playing field areas could be joined with other needed and desired facilities in the northern part of the City, such as an outdoor swimming pool, picnic pavilions, trails and a dog park, to create a community park.

Sports Complexes: As noted above, the Rio Rancho Sports Complex is already at capacity and user groups are being turned away. Even with the addition of turf areas discussed above, there will be unmet need in the near term. The City currently has approximately one acre of playing field per 1000 residents and the preferred level of service in other municipalities is closer to four acres per 1000 residents. In the near term there is a need for a Sports Complex comparable in size to the existing Rio Rancho Sports complex (40 acres). The near term need for the sports complex again is greatest in the northern part of the City, and would ideally be placed between Enchanted Hills and River's Edge developments in Service District 3.

Neighborhood Parks: The current need for neighborhood parks is being largely met in the development process. Several subdivisions in development, including Cabezon, North Hills, Northern Meadows, Los Milagros, High Range, Sierra Norte, and Mariposa, have parks planned for the next few years. However, members of the Vista Hills, River's Edge and Enchanted Hills communities expressed a need for additional

neighborhood parks in each of their areas. Based on the accessibility analysis, additional neighborhood parks are needed in Service Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. New parks proposed with subdivisions in Service Districts 1, 3, and 8 should meet the needs of those Districts. However, new neighborhood parks are needed in each of Districts 4, 5, 6 and 7 to meet existing needs. Developing existing park lands in District 5 into fully functional neighborhood parks would meet the need in this area.

Trail & Bikeway Connections: The proposed bikeway and trails plan developed by a volunteer citizen group in conjunction with representatives of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation and Public Works Department should be adopted. An implementation plan needs to be developed with Public Works and SSCAFCA, which identifies priorities and sponsoring agencies. As part of this process, the plan will need to be modified to be more in line with the current and future projected build-out of the City and long-range regional alternative transportation plan efforts of the Mid-Region Council of Governments and recreation planning other public agencies. Adoption of the plan could provide for implementation as part of the development process.

Special Use Facilities: At all of the public meetings, a need was expressed for more extreme sports facilities, especially skate parks, BMX parks and potentially a motorized sports facility. Currently, there is no skate park in the northern portion of the City and there are no BMX courses or motorized sports facilities anywhere in Rio Rancho.

Design and Management Guidelines for Parks: A number of needs and concerns relative to existing parks that are also important to future parks were expressed at the public meetings and by management staff. These included more shade and shade structures, storage areas for equipment, more efficient use of water, better lighting and guidelines for other facilities such as parks, recreation center and community parks. The Draft Design Guidelines of the Parks and Recreation Department need to be reviewed and potentially updated with some of these concerns in mind. In addition, design guidelines need to be developed for other types of facilities, such as community parks, recreation centers, sports complexes and aquatic centers. These guidelines will be reference and regulatory impetus in the implementation of facilities to be constructed by developers under their impact fee arrangements.



2. Programming

The Parks and Recreation programming needs of the community are for the most part being met, especially for youth and early childhood.

However, the following needs were suggested by the planning process:

More Programming Targeted for Adults and Seniors: Current programming is, for the most part, targeted to young children. There is a need for programming targeted to adults and seniors. In addition to providing a missing resource, development of programs for adults and especially seniors may be key to getting them further engaged in the Parks and Recreation system. More programs that involve expanding the range of outdoor recreation activities and social culture outings, as well as other classes target to home, garden, the arts and hobbies were identified as important too. Efforts should be made to coordinate with the Senior Center to coordinate offerings and even offer joint programs for Seniors using Parks and Recreation facilities.

Weekend Programs: Related to the above, there is a need for more weekend programs, when working adults would have more time to participate with or without their children, depending on the type of activity.

More Creative programming for young adults and teenagers: There is also a need for more programming that focuses on the evolving nature of youth interests. Classes in activities popular in other urban and suburban areas such as hip-hop dancing/spoken word/performance, as well as skate board tricks and other extreme sports (for example, Extreme Sports Camp for Teens) would add to existing offerings. Sports programs or competitive programs targeted for teens such as BMX, skate boarding, and even half court basketball. Programs that involve mentoring with professionals, craftsmen, and possibly seniors, where there is integration of work projects for the community, such as signs, benches, shade structure construction landscaping and trails, could also benefit the community and the Parks and Recreation Department.

Sports and Athletic Programs –Related to the above, a need for more sports and recreation programs was suggested by both the community survey and the comparative city survey. According to the latter, even with the private user groups, the city has far fewer sports programs and

per capita participation than other cities. This may be a function of existing facilities, which highlights the need for the Parks and Recreation department to continue to grow the amount of space for sports and athletics, such as playing fields at Sports Complexes and Community Parks and indoor facilities including gyms and a pool. New activities could include enlarging existing adult softball and basketball programs and development of ultimate Frisbee, soccer, triathlon, and competitive swimming programs.

Website Upgrades to enable up-to-date on-line viewing of programs & facilities, on-line programming registration, on-line facilities reservation and continuous feedback process:

Many municipalities around the nation are moving to web-based services, and have an online system for viewing programs and facilities. An on-line set of pages that list programs, facilities and calendars for Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation would enable prospective users, user groups and recreational program leaders to look at different facilities and existing programs. The number of web-visitors could also be tracked to provide another barometer of public interest in Parks in Recreation.

An on-line program registration and facilities reservation process would make it much easier for members of the community to register for programs. Given the increasingly large geographical spread of the Rio Rancho community, this will become necessity in the near future, in order for the registration/reservation processes to be managed effectively without a major increase in staff.

Also, an on-line questionnaire should be developed and implemented as part of the website upgrade. This questionnaire would be designed to provide continuous feedback on existing programming, facilities, and also to provide programming managers with a continual source of new ideas.



B. 2010-2025 Needs Assessment:

As noted above, by 2025 the population of Rio Rancho is expected to more than double. Based on the level of service standards described above in Section Three, the following additional acreages of parkland and types of facilities should be developed in each of the Service Districts in order to meet the Parks and Recreation Department's goal of 7 acres per 1000 people (see Table 12).

Efforts should be coordinated with other planning efforts and development processes to ensure that the Department's goal is met in the development process. Specific facilities to meet these target acreages are outlined below.

Sports Complexes: As noted above, the Rio Rancho Sports Complex is already at capacity, and user groups are being turned away. Even with the near-term addition of playing areas discussed above, based on current growth projections the community will need at least two more sports complexes comparable in size to the Rio Rancho Sports Complex (nearly 80 acres) by the year 2025. One of these should be based in the far northern part of the City and the other in the far southern part of the City or in the Quail Ranch subdivision.

Swimming Pools: There will be a need for two additional outdoor swimming pools in far northern and southern sections of the city. Either of these two facilities could be combined with a recreation center or community park facility.

Recreation Centers: The key limiting factor for Parks and Recreation programming will continue to be the lack of suitable indoor facilities. By 2025, there will be a need for three more of these facilities. The need for this type of facility will continue to be greatest in the northern part of the city (Districts 1-4), which currently has no indoor facilities whatsoever. In addition, a second recreation center will be needed on the west side of the City, and a third one in the Quail Ranch area.

Community Park: Additional multi-use turf areas will continue to be needed in the northern part and southwestern parts of the City. Turf areas could be joined with other needed facilities in the section of the

City, such as a skate park, outdoor swimming pool, picnic pavilions, trails and a dog park, to create additional community parks. Four additional community parks will need to come on line by 2025.

Open Space: Open Space dedications should be pursued with SSCAFCA for major arroyos. An Open Space area on both the growing Northern and Southern portions of the city is needed. Both the Mariposa and Quail Ranch developments have major open space areas shown in their existing master plans that could fill this need. An open space on the west side of the city is also needed in order to provide a permanent venue for motor sports users. Creation of such an area would alleviate the damaging uses of Loma Colorado and other areas by motorized recreational users.

Environmental Park: A special use environmental park was called for by the previous Master Plan. Such a facility would be a major educational, interpretive and passive recreational use asset, and could also provide a recycling center.

Neighborhood Parks: For neighborhood parks, the Parks and Recreation Department has an opportunity to ensure that this need is met through the development process. Application of the development code during the subdivision process and park design guidelines to developer/builders of parks will be the key to success. Approximately 20 new neighborhood parks in addition to those mentioned above, will need to come on line by 2025 to meet demand.

Trail & Bikeway Connections: The trail and bikeway plan will need to be updated and extended to new areas annexed by the City of Rio Rancho. Parks and Recreation should continue to work with Public Works and SSCAFCA to build additional trails and bikeways.

Open Space Facilities: A long range open space facilities plan will need to be developed by the Parks and Recreation in conjunction with SSCAFCA, Sandoval County and the Village of Corrales. A number of new open space opportunities will be coming on line, including the Mariposa Preserve and Quail Ranch Open Space areas which are provided for in approved master plans.



Special Use Facilities: There will continue to be a need for special use facilities, particularly for extreme sports described above in the near-term needs. As open space/vacant land is developed, there will also be an increased need for dog parks, skate parks and zero-depth water facilities, and extreme sports facilities (e.g. climbing walls, BMX courses, etc.). Many of these facilities could be programmed into proposed community parks and sports complexes. There is also an existing need for a permanent open space dedicated to motorized recreation sports, e.g. dirt bike, ATV and OHV (jeeps). Expansion of the city west ward and northward over time will also eliminate much of the undeveloped land and open space which is currently utilized motorized recreationalists.

Programming: The needs for the programming will remain similar to the near term. If the near term needs are met, then the department will only need to keep up with evolving trends in recreation and shifts in community interest. Utilization of the continuous feedback survey process will enable the department to keep abreast of shifting trends and local needs with respect to programming. Management, including program and facility managers should regularly attend regional and national recreation conferences and trade shows, such as the NRPA conference, to learn of new trends and tools.

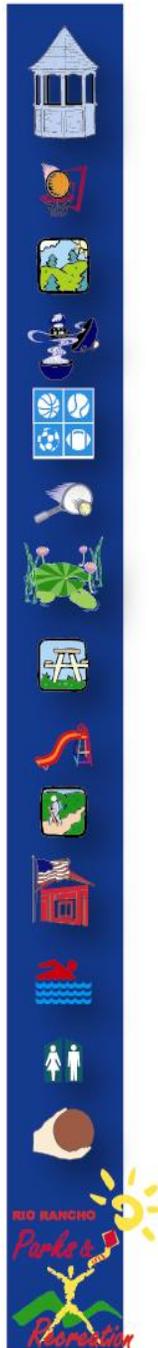


Figure 11. Facility Needs Assessment Summary

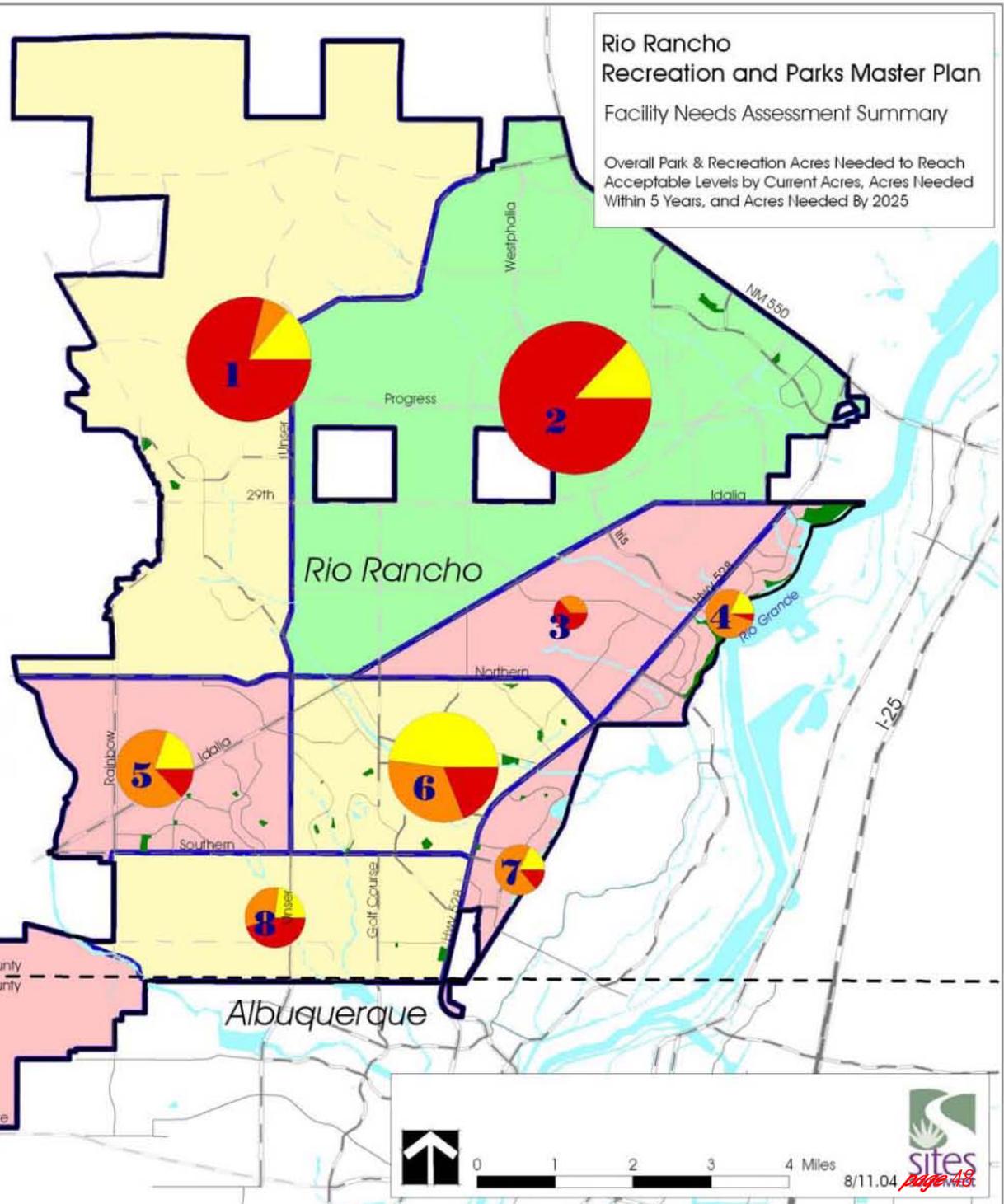
Rio Rancho
Recreation and Parks Master Plan
Facility Needs Assessment Summary

Overall Park & Recreation Acres Needed to Reach Acceptable Levels by Current Acres, Acres Needed Within 5 Years, and Acres Needed By 2025

Legend

- Rio Rancho City Limits
- Service District Boundaries
- Existing Recreation Facility
- Park & Recreation Acres Needed
- Acres Currently in District
- Acres Needed Within 5 Years
- Acres Needed by 2025
- Existing Parks & Recreation Acres per 1000 People
- 0 to 2 Acres per 1000 People
- 3 to 6 Acres per 1000 People
- 7 and more Acres per 1000 People

Data for this map is courtesy of the City of Rio Rancho and the Mid-Region Council of Governments. Additional secondary data was generated by Sites Southwest LLC in cooperation with the City of Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Department. All data is the most current available, and is represented as-is and limited to the purpose for which it is shown.



7. Recommendations and Implementation

A. Master Plan Description

The Master Plan was developed to meet the needs of the Rio Rancho community through the year 2025. The Master Plan is based on the needs assessment above, and input received from the community at public meetings and through the community survey. Like the needs assessment the plan is divided into near-term and long term concerns. The near term again is defined as implementation occurring in the next five years, and long term. Table 12 shows the proposed facilities and overall acreages associated with them for both the near and long term portions of the plan.

Figure 12 on the next page shows the potential location for many of the facilities. Near term plan facilities are annotated. The map was derived from the previous master plan, current development master plans that have been approved and location of existing publicly owned lands. Many of the locations, especially for the neighborhood parks are approximate. In most cases, the location for a particular proposed facility represents guidance and direction, but not a specific parcel. There are exceptions, such as the Loma Colorado site for the Rio Rancho Central Park and the sanitary landfill site for the proposed Environmental Park – these parcels have been identified.

Table 12. Summary of Facilities Master Plan

DISTRICT	Sports Complex (60 ac)	Community Park (15 ac)	Neighborhood Park (5 ac)	Special Use Park (var.)	Recreation Center (2 ac)	Senior Services Center (2 ac)	Swimming Pool (2 ac)	Open Space (var)	# of Park Facilities	2006 ac	2025 ac	total ac
1	1	2	13		2	1	2	2	23	30	145	145
2		2	16		1	1		1	22	29	102	131
3	1		1	1			1	1	4	62	65	102
4			2					1	3	5	5	10
5		1	4			1		1	7	10	27	37
6		1*	2				1	1	5	32	10	70
7			3					1	4	10	5	15
8		1	5		1			1	8	20	27	47
9	1	1	9		1		1	1	14	0	126	106
totals	3	8	55	2	5	3	5	10	90	198	512	607



Figure 12. Conceptual Master Plan for Facilities

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[\(transparency overlay to figure 12\).tif](#)



Recommendation # 1: Indoor Aquatic Center

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to plan and build an indoor aquatic center. This facility had the most community interest during both the current and previous master planning processes. This facility could be grouped with a Community Recreation Center and/or community park for potential cost savings. As noted above, possible locations for this project are at the Loma Colorado site or in the northern part of the City close to the Enchanted Hills and River's Edge neighborhoods with easy access to highway 528 and 550. The facility should have an indoor Olympic size swimming pool (50 meters) and other necessary facilities to become a regional draw for major events and club teams.

Implementation: As has happened in other growing communities, the Parks and Recreation Department should work with Rio Rancho Public Schools and a foundation of local concerned citizens to develop a partnership to obtain the necessary financial and community support for the construction and long term management of the aquatic center. This way the management of the facility can also be jointly programmed and managed. This facility should be the centerpiece of a one of the next bond issues. In the interim, funds for planning and designing the facility should be sought through the State legislative capital outlay funds and funds raised through private donations. The Parks and Recreation Department needs to identify lands suitable for construction of this facility.

Recommendation #2: Community Park & Recreation Center North

The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to plan and build a Community Park and Recreation Center in the north end of the City. This facility had a great deal of support during both the current and previous master planning processes. Currently, the biggest obstacle to expanding the programming of the city is the lack of adequate indoor recreation facilities, such as a gymnasium, class rooms and studio

space. The Department is also likely to lose the Sabana Grande facility in the near future, putting further stress on the remaining facilities and program offerings. The proposed facility should provide a gymnasium, a small theater, and sufficient space for classes, day care, performance (music) and public meetings. The facility would provide a place for offering a number of classes that currently can't be offered and also satisfy day care/after school care needs for the north end of the city. The center would also become the host of the battle of the Bands even in the future when Sabana Grande facility is taken off-line. The center should also be a part of a community park with a large turf area for sports (game play), a skate park, extensive play structures and outdoor picnic areas to accommodate large events.

Implementation: The Parks and Recreation Department should work with interested private indoor and outdoor user groups, such as theater groups, basketball groups, YAFL and RRS. Funding for the planning and design of the project should be sought through the State legislative capital outlay funds and from private donations from businesses and developers in the community. This project would be a major capital improvement project that should be funded as part of a bond issue.

Recommendation #3: Community Park & Festival Grounds

Description: The City of Rancho should undertake to plan and build a special use park that will function as a large community park, balloon park, festival grounds and outdoor performance space. The City Parks and Recreation sponsor a broad range of special events that have no permanent venue. The sports complex and Haynes Park has been used for several of these events, but neither is set-up for this type of event. The festival grounds would also include an outdoor pavilion to provide a space for out door performances during the summer, including the 4th of July event and potentially an outdoor summer version of the Battle of the Bands event. It would also provide a venue for balloon events for Rio Rancho's growing balloon community. Finally, it would provide some relief for the other heavily used turf areas in the city, with the large



turf area serving as practice, and perhaps even game fields for various sports user groups.

Implementation: The Parks and Recreation Department should work with interested private user groups, such as the Rio Rancho Balloonists Association and event organizers to develop a program and funding strategies. The Parks and Recreation Department should also build on its private partnerships with community groups and corporations, such as Intel to leverage additional funds and donations to help make the project a reality. Parks and Recreation Department will need to work with the Governing Body and the Planning Department to determine the best location for this facility. One prime location is the Loma Colorado site and another possibility is the State Land office lands that will be close the center of the future city of Rio Rancho. In any case, this facility would be a capital improvement project, which could be funded in stages through the city budgetary process, the State legislative process, or through a bond issue.

Recommendation #4: Rio Rancho Sports Complex North

Description: The City of Rancho should undertake to plan and build a second sports complex to be located in Service District 3 along one of the major drainages in that area. As has been noted in several places in this report, the Rio Rancho Sports Complex is currently over-burdened. A new Sports Complex would also provide a venue for the development of more adult oriented sports programming by both private user groups and the Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the Sports Complex North should include an outdoor swimming pool to serve northern communities. Currently, the northern part of the city is under-served by turf areas and swimming pools, and District 3 is ideally situated between the built-out River's Edge and the growing Enchanted Hills communities.

Implementation: The Parks and Recreation Department should work with interested private user groups, such as YAFL and RRS. The Department should also coordinate development efforts with SSCAFCA, so that implementation could be integrated with drainage planning

efforts, leading potentially to sharing of some costs. This project would be a major capital improvement project.

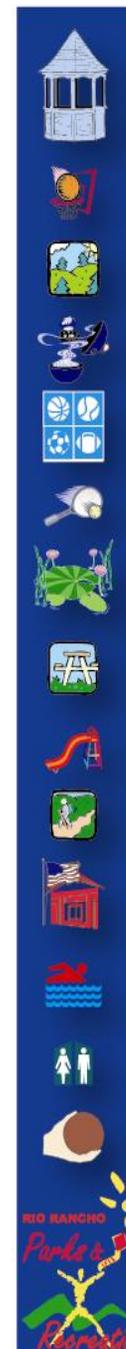
Recommendation #5: Neighborhood Park Development Package

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should ensure that every resident of Rio Rancho has a park within a ten minute walking distance. As each new subdivision comes on-line, parks should be planned, designed and built to meet the needs of the new residents of that subdivision. This is largely be a function of the refinement of the design guidelines given to developers and the working process between the Parks and Recreation department and the developer. In addition, this project would include park enhancements with in older neighborhoods without neighborhood parks such as the north end of District 4 (River's Edge), the northern sections of Districts 5 and 6 and the southeast section of District 1 should have parks developed.

Implementation: In areas lacking in neighborhood parks such as those listed above the Parks and Recreation Department should identify and acquire suitable parcels of land from two to five acres in size, which could serve as a neighborhood park and support a playground and turf play area. To construct these facilities, the city should pursue design and construction funds for capital improvement from the State or during the City budgetary process. As a package, it could also be part of a bond issue. In order to obtain suitable neighborhood parks through the dedication process, the department should endeavor to do the following: 1) have the development code changed to increase amount acreage per 1000 acres of developed land to closer to 8 or 10 acres, and 2) develop a final draft of park design guidelines for developers that provides additional guidance.

Recommendation #6: Community Park & Recreation Center West

The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to plan and build a second Community Park and Recreation Center on the west side of the city in the Northern Meadows neighborhood area. As noted above, the city is



in great need of this type of facility and it also has major public support during both the current and previous master planning processes. This facility would replace the Sabana Grande facility, which as noted above will come off-line in 2005. The proposed facility should also provide a gymnasium, a small theater, and sufficient space for classes, day care, performance (music) and public meetings. The facility would meet the needs of the growing community on the western side of the city, as well as some of the nearby older neighborhoods. The center should also be a part of a community park with a large turf area for sports (game play), a skate park, extensive play structures and outdoor picnic areas to accommodate large events.

Implementation: As noted above, the Parks and Recreation Department should work with interested private indoor and outdoor user groups, such as theater groups, basketball groups, YAFL and RRS. Funding for the planning and design of the project should be sought through the State legislative capital outlay funds and from private donations from businesses and developers in the community. This project would be a major capital improvement project that should be funded as part of a bond issue.

Recommendation #7: Outdoor Aquatic Center North

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to plan and build an outdoor aquatic center in the northern part of the City. This facility also had a great deal of community interest during both the current and previous master planning processes. This facility could be grouped with the Community Recreation Center and Community Park, or the Sports Complex proposed above for potential cost savings. Or, it could be a stand-alone facility. The facility should have an Olympic size swimming pool (50 meters) and other necessary facilities to become a regional draw for major events and club teams.

Implementation: The Parks and Recreation Department should work with user groups and a foundation of local concerned citizens to develop a partnership to obtain the necessary financial and community

support for the construction and long term management of the aquatic center. This way the management of the facility can also be jointly programmed and managed. This facility should be the centerpiece of a one of the next bond issues. In the interim, funds for planning and designing the facility should be sought through the State legislative capital outlay funds and funds raised through private donations. The Parks and Recreation Department needs to identify lands suitable for construction of this facility in the Enchanted Hills area.

Recommendation #8: Central Arroyo and Westend Open Spaces

Description: Development of the city is expanding rapidly both north and west of the original sections of the city. An aggressive open space strategy that involves various user and trail groups, as well as private conservation organizations could preserve areas of nature within the rapidly developing urban fabric. Currently, the City has a unique opportunity to secure open space along the drainage corridors that if planned could connect the river to the new open space area in the Mariposa subdivision. A third open space area on the west side on the edge of District 5 could connect to the Calabacillas Arroyo open space in Albuquerque and ultimately down to the river through the Westside of Albuquerque. A portion of this open space area could be dedicated to structured motorized recreational use. This latter use is continually being pushed further and further west along the fringe of residential development, and will ultimately need to find a place within the greater Rio Rancho community.

Implementation: The Parks and Recreation Department should work with interested private user and open space conservation groups to preserve important open space corridors. As part of the process, the Department should build on the efforts with the Bosque Trail Preserve and form an open space board that would have representatives of many of these organizations on it, as well as key municipal agencies such as SSCAFCA and Public Works. Collectively, this board could then work to identify opportunities, acquisition strategies, strategies for trail development and other usage and long term management of these areas. These areas could be dedicated through the development



process or joint management agreements/leases with other State and Local agencies. Acquisition as well as improvements could also be done through various capital improvement funding processes at the state and local level. Funding could also be sought from private foundation sources, and implementation could be accomplished with public-private partnerships.

C. Planning & Programming Recommendations

Recommendation # 1: Development Ordinance Modifications

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to revise its subdivision ordinance, and in particular, its impact fees assessment to correspond with Parks and Recreation goal of seven (7) acres per 1000 people. In addition, subdivisions of less than 25 acres should no longer be exempted from this requirement. This will enable future developments meet some of the parks and recreation needs of the new residents through the construction of neighborhood parks.

Implementation: Proposed changes would have to be developed by the department in tandem with the planning and development staff. The proposed language and timing would need to be reviewed by the legal counsel of the City, and approved by the City Governing Body. This project could be undertaken by the city staff or by a consultant hired by the City. Funding for the project in either case would come out of the operating funds for the department.

Recommendation #2: Comprehensive Design Guidelines for all Parks & Recreation Facilities

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to develop comprehensive design guidelines for all parks and recreation department maintained facilities. Under the current plan, a number of

park facilities (including neighborhood parks, community centers and parks, sports complexes, recreation trails and open space areas) and aesthetic amenities, such as medians and streetscapes will be designed and constructed by developers to meet development agreements as to satisfaction of impact fee assessments, which underscores the need to develop these guidelines. The guidelines will be the most important insurance that the city will receive quality facilities that are up to the Department's standards. Sub-par parks can radically affect the maintenance and management costs of the department over the long term with the high potential for excessive water usage, plant mortality, and equipment replacement costs. The guidelines will also help expedite planning, programming and budgeting for future facilities and maintenance needs within the department and the City processes. Finally, they can be used to frame community expectations as to what park can provide. The City of Albuquerque recently developed a set of guidelines and prototypes to expedite the park and streetscape design processes.

Implementation: Currently, the City has draft guidelines for neighborhood parks. These should be revisited and further developed with water conservation and department programming needs in mind. Based on the current proposed developments, over time, guidelines should also be developed for the following facility types:

- Sports Complex
- Community Park
- Recreation Center
- Senior Center
- Outdoor Aquatic Centers
- Street medians
- Recreational Trails & Greenways
- Open Space Areas

All guidelines should cover at least the following elements:

- Total acreage and total developed acreage standards



Recommendation #5: Trails & Bikeways Facilities Plan Update

Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to update and further develop the existing bikeways plan into a Trails and Bikeways Master Plan for the City of Rio Rancho. Currently, there is no formal planning document other than the map that was developed years ago by a group of concerned citizens. Alternative modes of transportation will be increasingly important as Rio Rancho is built out. Trails and bikeways also provide key links in the parks, open space and recreation system of the city. Other municipalities and Counties in the region, as well as the Mid-Region Council of Governments have developed trails and bikeways plans. There is an opportunity at this time in its development for the City to establish a plan that would ensure that trails and bikeways would be provided for in future development, including all necessary easements/ rights-of-way and construction costs. Once the plan is adopted, it would guide future street design, trail development and potentially enable the City to have developers to bear some of the cost of this infrastructure.

Implementation: As noted above, the existing proposed bikeways map was developed by a group of concerned community members working with representatives from Public Works and Parks and Recreation. It has never been developed further and adopted as a formally binding planning document for the City. In tandem with staff, the Public Works Department and/or a consultant, the Department should lead an effort to update the existing map and develop a formal master plan and report. This master plan would then be adopted by the Governing Body and become part of the planning documents that guide future development in Rio Rancho.

Recommendation #6: Open Space Facilities Plan

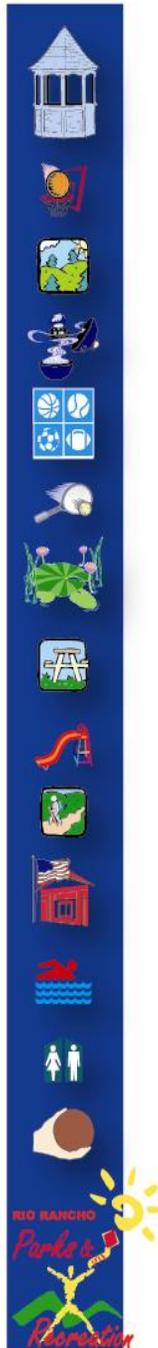
Description: The City of Rio Rancho should undertake to develop an open space facilities plan that establishes guidance and strategies for future open space acquisition and management. Currently, there is only

one major open space, the Bosque Trail preserve, but there are and there will continue to be a number of open space opportunities and needs in the future. Open space areas will become increasingly important as Rio Rancho is built-out: they will provide necessary breathing space in the urban fabric of built-out areas and natural functions such as drainage, aquifer recharge and wildlife habitat in urban areas. They are also a less expensive, more informal alternative to parks development in order to meet some recreational needs of the community, i.e. walking, mountain biking and equestrian trails, linear exercise systems (PAR courses), informal dog parks, and wildlife viewing and interpretation. They can also be managed to provide important outlets for motorized recreational uses common to parts of Rio Rancho today. In some developing areas, Open Space could be converted to parks when necessary. The Open Space plan would need to be coordinated with SSCAFCA's facility plan and Trails and Bikeways Masterplan. Once the open space plan is in place, it will guide the development of this segment of the community's infrastructure, ultimately potentially enabling members of the community to connect from the Rio Grande all the way to Mariposa and the Rio Puerco.

Implementation: In tandem with staff, SSCAFCA, Sandoval County and/or a consultant, the Parks and Recreation Department should lead an effort to develop a formal open space plan and report. The plan would include short and long term strategies for acquisition, partnering, management and funding. This master plan would then be adopted by the City's Governing Body and become part of the planning documents that guide future development in Rio Rancho.

D. What was the Review Process for the Master Plan?

After development of the Master Plan a series of public meetings were held at City Hall, Star Heights Recreation Center and Mountain View Middle School to present the Master Plan to the community and receive critical feedback. The community meetings were well publicized in the

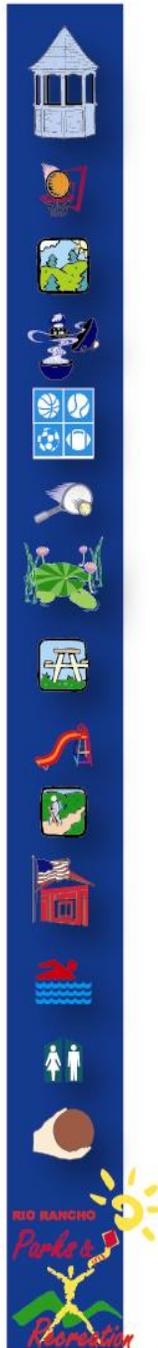


newspapers, on the radio and on television, but were again lightly attended. Two of the community meetings were before the Rio Rancho Parks Commission. The format of the meetings included a short presentation and then an informal question and answer session. On the whole, the community and the Parks and Recreation Commission were very positive in its assessment of the Master Plan. People at the meeting were excited by the prospect of an aquatic center, additional sports fields, additional neighborhood parks, and the creation of Rio Rancho's Central Park. The community members who attended the meetings indicate that the priority recommendations were in synch with their perception of the City's needs and their personal desires. The following major issues and concerns were raised about the master plan:

- In the implementation process, underserved areas already developed should come before newer areas.
- In general, joint development and joint usage/management with Rio Rancho Public Schools and Sandoval County are important in the future.
- The location of the Aquatic Center should be close the high school and not up in Enchanted Hills, and implementation should be a shared effort with the high school.
- And indoor theater should be included in one of the community centers for use by the schools, community theatre company and for events such as battle of the bands.
- The undertaking proposed by the Master Plan will take extraordinary efforts and a large increase in both the capital and operating budget for the Parks Division to implement.
- With respect to Park management, there is need for more preventative measures for vandalism at parks, more effort dedicated to weed eradication in medians and parks, and enforcement of park regulations with respect to dogs.

In addition to the public meetings, a meeting was held with the management and staff of the Parks and Recreation Department to review the Master Plan. There was much discussion about the nature and type of various different facilities, and what would be the specific ingredients for each individual facility. These concerns will have to be addressed in the development of guidelines for each type of facility, which has been identified as important future planning project. The most significant concern raised by the staff was the need for more staff to manage these new facilities as they come on-line. Another concern raised was the relative priority of various facilities and the desire for the Environmental Park to have a higher level priority.

To the extent possible, and within the scope of the planning process, these concerns, as well as the concerns of the community have been addressed in the final draft of the Master Plan. During the meetings, there was also a discussion about relative priority of facilities and this has been incorporated into the selection of the high priority facilities recommended for implementation and in the order of prioritization in the phased capital improvement plan.



8. Implementation & Phased Development Plan

A. How will the Master Plan be Implemented?

Completion of the Master Plan represents only the first step in a long process which will lead to the community having and using the facilities they have given input on. The first step in the implementation process will be adoption of the Master Plan by the Rio Rancho City Council. The second step will be the City Council and the Parks Facilities Division committing to and securing funding for priority facilities, which probably include a bond issue, legislative appropriation and community fund raising. Once funding has been obtained, the third step is to develop design and construction plans and specifications for the facilities. Once plans are completed, reviewed and accepted by the Parks and Recreation Department, construction will start and upon completion the community will have a new facility. Another intermediate step will be the commencement of additional planning and organizational development efforts identified in this plan: 1) to assess resources that could not be fully assessed in this plan process, such as open space, trails and bikeways; 2) develop guidelines for the various types of facilities and programs; 3) to develop a marketing strategy and programming for the new facilities; and 4) to complete operational upgrades such as rewriting the impact fee ordinance and getting the Parks and Recreation registration system on-line. The importance of these efforts can not be under estimated: given the fact that the population of Rio Rancho will more than double in population by 2025, the next five years represent a critical planning and organizational development horizon in order for the Parks and Recreation is to meet the needs of the

The schedule of implementation for facilities is essentially a capital improvement plan. The phased capital improvement plan for the Parks and Recreation Plan is shown in Table 13 below. The facility projects are broken down into two groups, 1) those that will be implemented by

the City of Rio Rancho and 2) those that will be implemented by developers pursuant to development agreements. The facilities to be implemented by the Parks Division are listed in order of priority based on the input received from the community, the Parks Commission and Parks and Recreation Management. The intent is to balance development of facilities in older underserved areas of the community with the need for multi-use facilities close to the fast growing areas of the city. No level of priority is accorded to the facilities to be implemented through the development process, however, that does not mean they are not important. A key role of the Parks and Recreation Department will be monitoring the implementation of the development agreements already in place, and weighing in on the negotiation of future development agreements to ensure that all the facilities are



Ribbon Cutting at the End of Construction of New Sports Field at Haynes Park



completed by developers that are needed to satisfy the recreational needs of the new communities. Completion of design guidelines for various facility types and amendment of the current subdivision impact fee regulation are key components for the success in this effort.

Each facility has a projected location, type, market, parametric cost, potential partners and funding sources for implementation, goal time-frame for implementation and annual maintenance costs. The type, location and market were derived from the needs assessment above in Section V. Projected parametric costs are in 2004 dollars and were developed by researching example facilities recently constructed around the country. Potential partners include various agencies and stakeholders who could share in the cost and administration of implementation and management of the facilities, including City of Rio Rancho Public Works Department, Rio Rancho School District, City of Rio Rancho Planning and Zoning Department, City of Rio Rancho Senior Services Department, City of Rio Rancho Convention and Tourism Bureau, Southern Sandoval County Arroyo and Flood Control Authority. Funding sources include a variety of potential municipal sources and finance tools, as well as Federal, State, County and private sources. Time-frame for implementation was developed using the relative priority and allocating within a five-year bloc. Lower priority items may stretch beyond 2025 in terms of final implementation. Some time frames for facilities being implemented through the development process are longer, because final implementation will depend upon the rate of build-out.

B. What are the Management and Fiscal Implications?

The management and fiscal implications of implementation of the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation Master Plan are significant. When evaluating the numbers and cost of the various facilities it is important to remember the rate of residential growth not only requires this level

investment in order for the future community to be healthy, but also will support this level of investment through increased revenues. Tables 13a, b and c show the estimated capital and operational costs of implementing the plan. The costs were based on a cursory review of new facilities and management costs from various parks and recreation departments around the country. The total projected cost of implementing this plan is between \$125 and \$170 million dollars in capital improvements. In the range of \$56 to \$91 million will be capital projects undertaken by the City of Rio Rancho utilizing various public funding sources. Around \$48 to \$78 million in parks facilities will come from the private sector as a result of development agreements and impact fees. Planning and organizational development projects are projected to cost between \$100 and \$250 thousand depending how much is done in-house or in collaboration with other agencies or institutions.

Implementation of the plan will more than quadruple the number of parks and the acreage of developed parkland that the City of Rio Rancho currently maintains. The new facilities will entail in the neighborhood of \$4 to \$5 million dollars in annual management costs, and will require the addition of between 50 and 70 new full-time employees to properly maintain them. The latter figure will more than triple the existing staff of the Parks and Recreation Department.

C. How Could All this Be Paid For?

There are two primary ways of financing capital improvements: 1) bond issues, and 2) development impact fees. As was noted above, construction of parks by developers will be an important vehicle for obtaining the number and acreage of parks to support a health community in Rio Rancho over the long term. On the city's side, however, the bi-annual bond cycle will be the key financing mechanism. Because of the rate of growth in the City, the resulting growth in the real property tax base, the rate and size of bonds could be increased beyond what the City has traditionally executed.



A key part of this and other strategies outlined above will be to work with partners to broaden support for the bond and share future management costs. Other potential funding mechanisms include the New Mexico Special Legislative Session in January, or other legislative appropriation at the Federal, State or Municipal level. In addition, there are also grants available from Federal and State agencies (CDBG grants, infrastructure grants, environmental improvements/restoration, etc.). There are also numerous private foundations who provide money for park design, development and construction (for a complete listing go to the NRPA website). Finally, there are the methods of community grass roots organization that has been so successful in the past for the Parks and Recreation Department.

D. The Future Rio Rancho Parks & Recreation System

Completion of the Master Plan will take many years, and may well go beyond 2025 depending on fiscal limitations and the rate of development. However, in the near future, the City of Rio Rancho's parks and recreation system is likely to become the second largest system in the State of New Mexico. If the facilities are built that are envisioned by this plan, Rio Rancho will become a center in the State for recreational excellence with facilities capable of hosting major regional events. In addition, to having sports complexes and aquatic centers that support major sporting tournaments, specialized facilities such as the Festival Grounds and Environmental Park will play host to other kinds of events that enrich the quality of life for Rio Rancho residents, and are also a boon to tourism and local business. Some day, if you believe what some residents and commentators have said, Rio Rancho will even have its own Central Park. In the interim, the Rio Rancho Parks and Recreation system will continue to be the heart of civic culture and community spirit in the City of Rio Rancho.



Table 13. Facilities Development (Capital Improvements)

	Priority*	Council	Park Service	Market	Potential	Approximate Costs**	P & D	Approximate	Funding	Goal Time	Est. Annual Cost*****
Indoor Aquatic Center	High	Council District 4	Service District 6	Region	RRSD; RRSS; User Groups	\$ 6.8-8.5 million	\$ 1.2-1.5 million	\$ 8-10 million	GOB; NMSLS	2005-2010	\$200 thousand 3 FTE
Community Park, Festival Grounds & Outdoor PAC	High	Council District 6	Service District 2	Region	RRC&TB; User Groups	\$ 2.5-4.25 million	\$ 0.5-0.75 million	\$ 3-5 million	GOB; RRDIF; RRCP; PPF	2005-2010	\$100 thousand 1 FTE
Community Center & Community Park North	High	Council District 6	Service District 2	Municipal/District	Developer; User Groups	\$ 3.4-5.1 million	\$ 0.6-0.9 million	\$ 4-6 million	GOB; RRDIF	2005-2010	\$150 thousand 2.5 FTE
Sports Complex North	High	Council District 6	Service District 2	Municipal/District	Developer; User Groups	\$ 2.5-4.25 million	\$ 0.5-0.75 million	\$ 3-5 million	GOB; RRDIF	2005-2010	\$250 thousand 3.5 FTE
Neighborhood Parks Package	Medium to High	Council 1,4,5,6	Service Districts 4,5,6,7	Neighborhood	Neighborhood User Groups	\$2-3 million	\$ 0.3-0.5 million	\$ 2.3-3.5 million	GOB; RRDIF	2010-2015	\$100 thousand 1 FTE
Community Center & Community Park West	Medium to High	Council District 2	Service District 1	District	Developer; User Groups	\$ 3.4-5.1 million	\$ 0.6-0.9 million	\$ 4-6 million	GOB; RRDIF	2010-2015	\$150 thousand 2.5 FTE
Open Space Development (Central Arroyos)	Medium to High	All Council Districts	All Service Districts	Region	SSCAFCA; Sandoval County	\$ 2.5-4.25 million	\$ 0.5-0.75 million	\$ 3-5 million	GOB; RRDIF; RRCP; PPF	2010-2015	\$100 thousand 2 FTE
Outdoor Aquatic Center #1 (North)	Medium to High	Council District 6	Service District 2	District	RRSD; RRSS; User Groups	\$ 1-2 million	\$ 0.2-0.3 million	\$ 1.2- 2.3 million	GOB; RRDIF	2010-2015	\$25 thousand .5 FTE
Senior Center #1 (North)	Medium	Council District 6	Service District 2	Municipal/District	RRSS; User Groups	\$ 2-3 million	\$ 0.3-0.5 million	\$ 2.3-3.5 million	GOB; RRDIF	2015-2020	\$100 thousand 2 FTE
Neighborhood Parks Package	Medium	Council Districts 1,4,5,6	Service Districts 4,5,6,7	Neighborhood	Neighborhood User Groups	\$ 2-3 million	\$ 0.3-0.5 million	\$ 2.3-3.5 million	GOB; RRDIF	2015-2020	\$100 thousand 1 FTE
Trail & Bikeway Development	Medium	All Council	All Service Districts	Municipal	RRPW; SSCAFCA Sandoval County; MRCOG	\$4.25-8.5 million	\$0.75-1.5 million	\$ 5-10 million	GOB; RRDIF; RRCP; PPF; SFTF	2015-2020	\$100 thousand 2 FTE
Environmental Park	Medium	Council	Service District 3	Region	KRRB; RRSD; RRC&TB; SSCAFCA	\$1.28-2.55 million	\$ 0.23-0.45 million	\$ 1.5-3 million	GOB; RRDIF; RRCP; PPF	2015-2020	\$100 thousand 2 FTE
Senior Center #2 (Southwest)	Low	Council District 1	Service District 5	Municipal/District	RRSS; User	\$ 2-3 million	\$ 0.3-0.5 million	\$ 2.3-3.5 million	GOB; RRDIF	2020-2025	\$100 thousand 2 FTE

Table 15. Planning & Organizational Development

Project	Priority*	Council District	Park Service District	Market	Potential Partners	Total Costs	Funding Sources	Goal Time Frame
Subdivision & Impact Fee Ordinance Modification	High	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal	RRP&Z	\$ 5-15K	PFOB; NMSLS	2005-6
Comprehensive Design Guidelines for Park & Recreation Facilities	High	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal	RRCE&RO; User Groups	\$ 10-40K	PFOB	2005-6
On-line Recreation Registration & Feedback Process	Medium to High	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal	RRC&TB; RRSD; RRCE&RO; User Groups	\$ 15-25K	PFOB; CE&ROOB;	2007-8
Long Term Business & Regional Marketing Plan for Parks & Recreation	Medium to High	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal/Region	RRC&TB; RRP&D; RRCE&RO	\$ 15-25K	PFOB; CE&ROOB;	2007-8
Long Term Trails & Bikeways Facilities Plan Update	Medium to High	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal/Region	SSCAFCA; Sandoval County; RRPW; MRCOG	\$ 20-45K	PFOB; PWOB; CDBG; SFTF	2007-8
Long Term Open Space Facilities Acquisition & Management Plan	Medium	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal/Region	SSCAFCA; Sandoval County; User Groups	\$ 25-75K	PFOB; SSCAFCA; NMSLS; SFTF	2009-10
Recreation Program Development for Teens, Adults & Seniors	Medium	All Council Districts	City-Wide	Municipal	RRSS; RRC&TB; RRSD; RRCE&RO; User Groups	\$ 10-25K	PFOB; CE&ROOB;	2009-10

Total: \$100-250 thousand

2005-2010