

DEL·RIOPLAN

Chapter One Introduction

The Del Rio Plan is designed as a blueprint for the growth of the City and its five-mile planning jurisdiction over the next 20 years and beyond. It is intended to guide the community's decisions regarding its future physical and economic development. This plan identifies goals, objectives, policies, and actions for elected and appointed officials, members of advisory committees, civic groups and organizations, directors and staff, and citizens to use as decisions are made and the community's vision is achieved.

Beginning in 2005, citizens and leaders of Del Rio initiated a process to proactively determine the future of their community. This undertaking was necessitated by both recent and expected future development and significant infrastructure improvements such as the outer loop, that will greatly influence the development pattern and visual character of the community. Therefore, a decision was made for the community to determine a course of action on its own terms. To do so, a shared vision is an essential first step to guide the community and its leaders in their decision-making over the next two decades and beyond.

In response to present circumstances, the City initiated a process to develop this Comprehensive Plan. The plan development process was designed to enable residents and community leaders alike to come together and decide how they would like the community to develop. This process addressed critical considerations such as the pattern and sequencing of development throughout the City and *extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)*; timely provision of adequate facilities and services; coordination of infrastructure improvements; and community appearance enhancements. The intended result of this process is to craft a Statement of the community's vision, which will be a reflection of the expectations and desires of the residents. This vision of what the community aspires to achieve is the first step in charting a path to address the complex decisions that will face Del Rio in the near and distant future. Rather than simply reacting to events as they unfold, a shared vision will enable the community to develop a proactive plan for achieving the ideal future imagined by the community.

Planning is about implementation. The costs of implementation and the community's willingness to pay for them will be at the heart of this plan's success.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is the unincorporated area that is contiguous to the corporate boundaries of the City. The size of the ETJ is ordinarily determined by the number of community inhabitants. However, since Del Rio has a population of more than 5,000 and is located in a county bordering the Rio Grande River, the ETJ extends to five miles beyond the City limits. Therefore, Del Rio has subdivision authority within this expanded area.

1.1 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process will result in a vision Statement. A group of residents known as the Citizens' Delegation led the visioning effort. Their involvement, in addition to those who participated throughout the process, was essential to the success of this plan. The planning process began with an intensive three-day reconnaissance and public input process in January 2006. City staff and consultants met with special interest groups and toured the City to understand and appreciate the community's assets and planning challenges. During this initial public input process, the consultants made presentations to the Rotary Club and Chamber Board

at their monthly luncheons to explain the planning process and the opportunities for them and others to be involved in such an important planning process for the future of the community. A Citizens' Congress was also held in January 2006 to provide an opportunity for citizens to discuss their concerns about Del Rio's future. The issues and comments discussed during the input process are presented in **Appendix A, Summary of Meeting Outcomes.**

The Citizens' Congress was an essential part of preparing this Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the plan reflects the values and priorities of this community.

1.2 ABOUT THE DEL RIO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Del Rio Plan offers a strategic policy framework for both the corporate limits and the City's five-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The objective of the plan is to provide guidance for decisions relating to the future use and character of land, management of community growth, adequate provision of transportation infrastructure and public facilities and services, economic development, and parks and recreation. The horizon of this plan is the Year 2025.



Del Rio has chosen to embark on a new path – one that is guided by a blueprint for the future. It is the intent of this Comprehensive Plan that the policies and associated goals, objectives, and recommended implementation strategies serve as a framework for community decision-making. To ensure growth that is both wise and sustainable, decisions should be based on sound policy and an integrated approach to analyzing community issues and identifying realistic solutions, as set forth in this plan.

1.3 VALUE OF THE PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Undertaking this comprehensive planning process is valuable for the community because it provides an opportunity to think beyond the normal day-to-day issues. This process allows citizens to think “outside the box.” They examined projected growth and development, not only within the City, and perhaps more importantly, throughout the entire planning area. The nature

of the planning process requires that the community consider the interrelationships among a variety of long-range planning issues.

Further encouraging broad, integrated thinking, the planning process provides a means for members of the public to identify the community they want now and, more importantly, in 5, 10, and twenty years. An important step in this process is to allow citizens opportunities to identify their vision and encourage their participation in planning for the future. Successful implementation of this plan is directly correlated to the amount of citizen participation and the sense of ownership derived from the development process.

The vision expressed by residents was transcribed and formed into a series of goals, objectives, and recommendations, each of which is contained within the respective chapters of this plan. Collectively, they will serve as a guide for the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and other boards, committees, and groups in their decision-making and administrative activities over both the short and long terms.

1.4 BENEFITS OF THE PLAN

The Del Rio Comprehensive Plan provides long-term policy direction in the areas of land use, growth capacity, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation. It also offers community leaders and residents the following benefits:

- ◆ Establishes policy direction for future development and redevelopment and for providing decision-making guidance to members of the Planning Commission, City Council, and City staff, as well as the community at-large.
- ◆ Identifies a program of work to be implemented by the departments of the City, as well as boards and commissions, civic groups and organizations, business and land owners, and other private investors and residents.
- ◆ Identifies improvement needs and priorities for use by City management to guide budgeting and capital programming decisions.
- ◆ States the municipality's intentions regarding the planning area's physical development and infrastructure investment plans, ultimately creating an improved level of certainty for land owners and developers.
- ◆ Communicates to citizens the type, pattern, and character of future development, thereby flagging the impact of development on private property.
- ◆ Coordinates transportation and infrastructure improvements with development, creating an integrated development framework.
- ◆ Lays out the future economic and physical development of the community, which is useful to other local, State, and Federal agencies engaged in the provision of programs, services, and facilities.

The objective of the plan is to provide direction over a 20 year planning period in the areas of land use, parks and recreation, and growth policies.

1.5 ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Community Visioning

As used in planning, visioning is a process by which a community envisions its preferred future. It chronicles the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a community and helps citizens agree on what they want their community to become.

-Michael Chandler

A vision describes the community's preferred future, offering direction for the goals, objectives, and policies that provide a framework for future planning, development, and programming decisions.

THE VISIONING PROCESS

The first step in the visioning process was to assess where the community has been in the past. This effort involved a review of planning documents and demographic and socio-economic information. This will serve as the basis of **Chapter 2: Community Snapshot**, which offers a historical glimpse of Del Rio and where it is today. This analysis sets the tone for community discussions.

CITIZENS' CONGRESS

A principal event of the visioning process was a Citizens' Congress, held January 11th, 2006. During this public forum, over 50 residents from throughout the community came together to identify their concerns for the future and explore possibilities for making Del Rio an even better place to live and work. The meeting began with a presentation explaining the role of the

Comprehensive Plan in guiding the community's decisions as to how, when, and where Del Rio grows. Following the presentation, the attendees chose between three small group discussions focusing on each of the plan elements, including: Land Use & Future Growth (land use pattern and density, development constraints, and compatibility), Transportation and Infrastructure (streets, sidewalks and trails, public transportation, water and wastewater facilities, and drainage infrastructure); and Livability (parks and recreation, community character, and appearance). In each of the discussion groups, participants expressed their thoughts concerning the future of the community. The community dialogue was then used to prepare the goals, objectives, and strategic directions of this plan.



The Citizens' Congress generated the identification of key planning issues, which formed the organization and content of this official plan document.

CITIZENS' DELEGATION

Key to the success of the process was the establishment of a Citizens' Delegation. The Delegation was made up of 16 committee members representing a diversity of community interests. These interests included: local business, tourism and economic development, property owners and developers, neighborhoods, and government officials. The role of the Delegation was to provide input into the development of the plan to ensure that it accurately reflects the priorities of Del Rio. The development of the community's vision, through identification of its core values, strengths, and weaknesses, was critical in understanding the priorities of the citizenry and

identifying the emphasis of this plan. Each element of the plan was thoroughly reviewed by the Delegation. Specific input was given to staff and the consultant regarding additions, modifications, and changes. This iterative process ensured that members of the Citizens' Delegation are vested in planning for the future.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Focus Group interviews were conducted to solicit input into the long-range planning of Del Rio. There were seven focus groups each consisting of five to ten community members who shared similar interests. For example, one group was made up of local business leaders and bankers, another consisted of community service organizations, and a third was real estate agents. These participants shared valuable input toward understanding the needs of the community. The input gained through these small focus group meetings was used to supplement the feedback solicited through the Citizens' Congress and other public input mechanisms toward the development of a vision Statement that is reflective of community.

1.6 OUR VISION AND MISSION

A vision Statement identifies what a community strives to achieve in the future to meet the needs of its residents. It incorporates a shared perception of the nature of the community and uses this understanding to guide it toward a greater purpose.

The vision Statement was developed through input from Del Rio citizens. The vision for Del Rio is as follows:

*By the Year 2025, Del Rio will be a community that will offer its citizens: a **diverse** tax base providing them with ample economic opportunities; **business-friendly** programs and incentives that will foster **growth** of **locally-owned businesses**; a skilled, **productive** work force; **youth-oriented** community outreach programs that instill a sense of pride in Del Rio; a **vibrant** Downtown where visitors can tour art galleries and residents can live, shop, and dine; **flexible** land use provisions that nurture **compatibility** among uses, while offering affordable housing and livable neighborhoods reflective of the residents' shared heritage; **progressive** educational opportunities for life-long learning; a well-maintained system of parks and trails where the **serenity** and beauty of the community's natural resources can be fully appreciated; and, finally, a sense of **passion** for the place they call home.*

A mission Statement is a more detailed Statement of the vision. It States the role, or purpose, by which the community intends to serve its residents. The mission Statement describes what the community does, who it serves, and what makes it unique. Del Rio's mission Statement is as follows:

Community Strengths

To initiate the visioning process, the Citizens' Delegation was asked to identify what they consider to be the strengths of Del Rio. Their opinions included:

- ◆ People
- ◆ Water
- ◆ Recreation
- ◆ Affordable
- ◆ Small – slower pace
- ◆ Diverse industry/business
- ◆ Lush natural environment
- ◆ Community
- ◆ Safe
- ◆ Good infrastructure
- ◆ Clean air
- ◆ Climate
- ◆ Friendly
- ◆ Multi-cultural
- ◆ Multi-lingual
- ◆ Stability of government employment
- ◆ Laughlin AFB
- ◆ Internally convenient
- ◆ Border community
- ◆ Solvent
- ◆ Point of destination
- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Arts and culture
- ◆ Border relations
- ◆ Tourism (1.5M visitors annually and #1 bass fishing)
- ◆ Community values
- ◆ Volunteerism
- ◆ Amtrack

Community Weaknesses

Similar to identifying strengths of Del Rio, the community's weaknesses are considered to include:

- ◆ Number of government employees
- ◆ Summer climate
- ◆ Border perception – safety
- ◆ Lack of higher education curriculum
- ◆ Limited funding
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Incompatible land uses
- ◆ Street conditions
- ◆ Flooding and drainage – no master plan
- ◆ Inconsistent sidewalks
- ◆ Social services
- ◆ Unemployment
- ◆ Lack of skills training
- ◆ Lack of truck bypass/relief route
- ◆ Narrow residential streets
- ◆ Lack of sidewalks
- ◆ Vacant land in town
- ◆ Awareness of resources
- ◆ Lack of programs for at-risk youth
- ◆ Easements – junk
- ◆ Downtown vacancy rate
- ◆ Traffic flow (north/south)
- ◆ Strip development
- ◆ Lack of community character
- ◆ No landscaping standards
- ◆ Under use of the creek and canal system
- ◆ Lack of Downtown as a destination
- ◆ Lack of rail service

The City of Del Rio will continue to invest in its infrastructure to ensure long-term adequate provision of quality public facilities and services. The integrity of neighborhoods will be strengthened and character enhanced through replacement of aging infrastructure, rehabilitation of “tired” structures, and empowerment of residents. The tax base will be stabilized and diversified by helping businesses grow, adapting to new economies, and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, which will offer employment and advanced opportunities for all ages. Improved work force training opportunities attract more industry to the City and provide more employment opportunities, thereby increasing community wealth and spending and, hence, expanding the market for retail and service-related businesses. Our public and parochial schools will positively contribute to educating our youth and future work force. The quality of life will be further enhanced with the development of a first-class parks and recreation system. There will be heightened attention to preserving open space and the environmental assets that contribute to the unique identity and character of the community.

DISCOVERY

The first step in the planning process was to conduct a discovery and reconnaissance phase, which was intended to bring the most significant issues and concerns of the City into clear focus. This provides a basis for necessary refinement and revision of the plan's content, thereby ensuring that the most important issues are identified and thoroughly addressed, with adequate attention and direction to resolve them. Too often, the causes that are at the heart of the issues are not sufficiently discovered and, hence, not adequately dealt with in the plan. Unfortunately, such occurrence handicaps the ultimate implementation and success of the plan.

The discovery and reconnaissance phase of the process solicited the concerns of public officials and residents to gather relevant input and assemble an in-depth understanding of the key – and often underlying – issues. The result of this effort sharpened the focus of this plan, allowing attention to be directed toward the aspects that will most significantly affect the outcomes of the plan. While principal attention will be focused on the resolution of these issues, there are other issues that are also important and necessitate attention. These, too, will be addressed with guidance and recommendations, albeit not as comprehensively as those considered to be the primary issues.

The plan focuses on resolution of the key issues, providing more thorough research and recommendations in these areas, with less emphasis on the areas that have already been addressed or are not as relevant to this community and its plan. A Statement as to the purpose of each plan element is provided first to establish its basis in the context of the plan. Subsequently,

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the primary issues are outlined, which will be further researched and addressed in the respective plan chapters.

Land Use (Chapter 3) - Necessary policy guidance will be established for use in making decisions about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments within the context of the larger community. The land use plan will be based somewhat on community character, which does a better job of providing policies for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, and protecting neighborhoods. The land use plan map will be supplemented by goals and objectives for the future development pattern, plus more specific policy Statements and land use planning criteria that can later be cited as the basis for development review recommendations and decisions for potential zoning or other ordinance revisions.

Primary Issues

- ♦ **Long-term sustenance and protection of Laughlin Air Force Base.** Laughlin AFB has an economic impact of \$285 million dollars annually on the City of Del Rio. If the base were to close, there is nothing in the foreseeable future that could replicate its financial contribution to the community and surrounding area. An issue that is particularly prominent for the Department of Defense in conducting their Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) review is the long-term viability of the base. The criteria used in making the decision about closure includes its second highest criterion on the “availability and condition of land, facilities, and associated airspace at both existing and potential receiving locations,” which related to the protection of airspace from encroaching, incompatible land uses. Therefore, this issue is of critical importance for sustaining the Air Force Base.
- ♦ **Management of future growth.** Concern was explicitly expressed over the future development of land in relation to the outer loop that is scheduled to begin construction later this year. Such a major transportation improvement will greatly impact the type and pattern of development and, thus, causes concern for prematurely extending facilities and services to support sprawling, non-compact development. Additionally, growth in Del Rio is being increasingly influenced by the amount of development occurring in Ciudad Acuna, which must be considered and addressed through the formulation of this plan.
- ♦ **Downtown enhancement and economic reinvigoration.** Downtown Del Rio has become “tired,” with vacant store fronts, empty upper floors, and less-than-potential visitor traffic. Its active revitalization was voiced repeatedly as a desire during the Citizens’ Congress and Focus Group meetings. Therefore, the City must find creative ways and proactive means to strengthen Downtown's economic base and, particularly and perhaps most importantly, overcome the many obstacles and constraints that stand in the way of redevelopment for willing investors. This can be accomplished through the identification of its target market and the development of specific strategies and programs to meet the identified needs and vision. Growth policies, such as continued community development at the edge, must be addressed to realistically sustain the Downtown area. Downtown needs to be safe,



Businesses along the commercial strip compete with Downtown for economic exposure and traffic.

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The San Felipe Springs are an environmental treasure, offering endless opportunities for nature tourism and recreation.

attractive, and economically feasible for it to become the type of destination envisioned and preferred. At the same time, preservation of its historic presence and fabric will be essential to retain its innate character and charm.

- ♦ **Environmental consciousness and sensitive planning.** This issue presents a so-called fine line for the City. On one hand, residents recognize the value and importance of the aquifer and realize that it is a unique asset that requires protection. Yet, at the same time, there is a feeling that full protection of this resource may limit the community's economic potential. The protection of the aquifer must be appropriately handled through plan policies, flexible zoning provisions, and other environmental restrictions to avoid the potentially harmful and irreversible effects of development.
- ♦ **Community character and appearance.** General impressions of the community address such items as property maintenance; care of public ways, buildings, and grounds; aesthetic treatments and amenities like quality open spaces, landscaping, and resource preservation; and effective management of the built environment.
- ♦ **Historic preservation.** There is great pride for the community's history and heritage. Remembering the past must be embraced to sustain valued historic buildings and places, such as the Downtown area and older neighborhoods and homes. There is also a direct relationship between historic preservation and community character that simply cannot be replaced once gone. This plan must, therefore, remain sensitive to the community's past.

Transportation (Chapter 4) - A multi-modal transportation plan is a vital component of a Comprehensive Plan to ensure adequate preservation of rights-of-way and other coordinative opportunities concurrent with new development. The purpose of this element is to ensure orderly development of the transportation system, considering not only facilities for automobiles, but also other modes of transportation, as well, such as pedestrian and bicycle improvements, freight movement facilities, commercial air transportation, and public transit.

Primary Issues



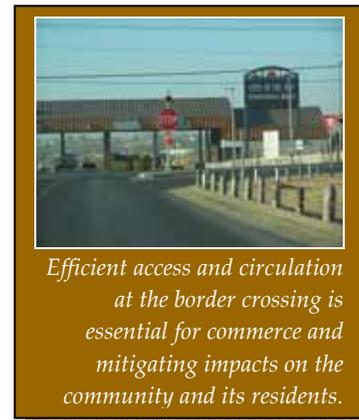
While located in the County, Frontera Road was often cited by businesses within the City's industrial park for its poor condition and need of improvement.

- ♦ **Maintenance of existing roadways.** Many of the streets in the community, particularly in the well-established areas, have not had the level of investment required to provide regular maintenance. In addition to the street surface, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, and lighting are in need of repair and improvement. Recognizing the investment necessary to bring road conditions up to an acceptable standard, an annualized capital plan and program of routine maintenance must be developed with an appropriate commitment of funds. Adding to the City's burden would be premature development on the fringe and in outlying areas, thereby increasing the amount of road surface and responsibility for maintenance and repair. Therefore, this issue is directly influenced by the management of future development in a fiscally responsible manner.

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- ♦ **Efficient, safe, and convenient local transportation network.**

Community residents cited congestion on existing roadways, a lack of north-south thoroughfares, and a need for better truck routing as some of the local transportation issues. With the outer loop about to begin construction, the existing street system must be integrated to ensure improved local mobility. As a result of the border crossing, the transportation system is of heightened importance to the local economy. The ability to facilitate efficient truck movement across the border and within and through the community has an immediate influence on economic development. Equally important, though, is free-flowing traffic along each of the major arteries, which must be realized through effective access management controls. Calming traffic within neighborhoods and around schools and parks also warrants attention.



- ♦ **Multiple modes of transportation.** An effective transportation system involves multiple modes, including means for walking and bicycling, transit service for those who have limited transportation options, and accessibility outside of the region. The local bus service currently operates on a demand-response basis, which limits timely access. Several residents voiced their desire for a fixed route circulator or possibly a short-notice service to improve access for transit dependent persons. Residents also articulated that they would like to see a City-wide trail system, with a good network of sidewalks providing linkage between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other public areas. With the recent provision of commercial air service, residents are intent on sustaining the airport and pursuing expanded service. Doing so will require strategies for increasing enplanements/deplanements through increased business use and marketing. Rail service is also of importance to support cost-effective freight movement into and out of the region.

Parks and Recreation (Chapter 5) - The purpose of this element is to ensure that the City “catches up” on any deficiencies in the provision of parks and recreation areas and facilities and then keeps pace with the requirements to support new development. A system plan will serve as the basis of this analysis, which will be supplemented by the future land use plan and growth strategies. The analysis will include an adequacy assessment to determine if the current system meets the needs and desires of the population, as well as a needs assessment to determine the future needs for additional acreage and improvements.

Primary Issues

- ♦ **Balanced, convenient, and accessible parks.** An adequate parks and recreation system is characterized by an assortment of different park types and sizes distributed evenly across the community, allowing convenient access to all persons. The system must include mini-parks for intensive development like apartment complexes, neighborhood parks serving residents within one-quarter to one-half mile, and larger community parks with more significant facilities to serve the broad interests of the community. Today, the park system is in need to both improvement and expansion to adequately meet the demands and desires of the community. Residents voiced a desire for more parks, better maintenance, and improved facilities such as an indoor recreation center, 18-hole golf course, and hike/bike trails. The 275

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The walk along San Felipe Creek exemplifies the natural beauty of this resource as well as its potential for recreational purposes.



Nearby Lake Amistad is a resource that offers nearly endless opportunities and benefits to Del Rio – both directly and indirectly.

acres of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buy-outs from the 1998 flood present a unique opportunity for the City to develop parks, public gardens, nature exhibits, and passive open spaces. Since one-third of the population is under the age of 18, a variety of active facilities and recreational programs are needed to serve their interests. Furthermore, as the number of Winter Texans and other retirees increase in the coming years, passive facilities must also exist to meet their expectations, as well.

- ◆ **Resource conservation and preservation.** Del Rio is home to a variety of ecological treasures. There are unique plant life and bird migration patterns that attract tourists to this region of the State. Increasing public awareness and educating residents and visitors about the ecology and environment are opportunities yet to be capitalized upon and realized. Preservation of the springs and watershed protection for the aquifer are of significant value and of potential consequence to the community. However, conservation and preservation are not without imposition on individual properties to the benefit of the whole. There are methods and means, though, to provide incentives and benefits such that land set-aside may be both viable and attractive.

- ◆ **Lake Amistad and the Amistad National Recreational Area.** While situated a short distance from Del Rio, Lake Amistad is now, as a result of a recent rating as the number one bass fishing lake in the world (according to ESPN magazine), a well-known destination. Immediately, the demand for bass fishing on the lake began to skyrocket (125 tournaments scheduled during the first two weeks of 2006). The amount of increased public awareness of this nearby resource must be leveraged to derive maximum benefit for Del Rio. Benefit may be gained through the local economy as a result of more visitors, ties to the National Park Service (thereby expanding recreational opportunities), exploitation of the rich eco-tourism opportunities, direct linkage via a nature trail, and attraction to its own amenities such as the San Felipe Springs and Creek.

- ◆ **Coordination, collaboration, and adequate funding.** Funding the improvements that the City would like to pursue will continue to be a challenge. One of the ways to overcome the challenge is to form partnerships. No individual jurisdiction can be held solely responsible for providing parks and recreation programs and facilities. Rather, meeting increasing demands necessitates joint efforts between the City and other providers, such as Val Verde County; the Del Rio Independent School District; public, quasi-public, and private entities such as churches, private schools, and civic clubs; private sector entities; and the State and Federal governments.

Growth Capacity (Chapter 6) - In order for the community to seize its economic development potential, it must be forward-thinking to ensure that it has the capacity of community facilities and services to sustain its future development. Within this element is analysis of the existing infrastructure systems and programmed future improvements to determine the current and

forecasted future capacities and ability to support and sustain future development. At the same time, it includes an evaluation of the prevailing pattern of growth relevant to the impacts on community form and fiscal responsibility.

Primary Issues



Expanding continuing education programs like that offered at Sul Ross State University and the Southwest Texas Junior College will be essential for work force training and development.

- ♦ **Sustainable provision of quality, reliable infrastructure facilities.** The scale of the currently needed infrastructure improvements - such as a new wastewater treatment plant - warrants community dialogue as to the overall pattern of growth. Major improvements, such as the outer loop, will generate development pressure in an area removed from current service provision, which may stretch the City's fiscal resources should development be allowed without sound growth management policies. At the same time, to support its economic development objectives, the City must be able to provide the necessary infrastructure. Without long-range strategic planning, the economic potential may be constrained by their ability to extend and maintain the required facilities and services. Given the strain to maintain its infrastructure system, compact development may be a more suitable and feasible option. Such development form will require policy

formulation and strategic direction as to the provision of services and consideration of new development.

- ♦ **Sequential pattern of development, concurrent with the adequate infrastructure provision.** A majority of the community's new development to date has occurred along U.S. 90 North, stretching the City limits to encompass the corresponding non residential development. With the proposed 3,100 acre mixed-use SE Ranch development situated south of U.S. 90 adjacent to the west of Laughlin AFB, the limits of service will be significantly extended. Furthermore, the amount of large lot development happening around the periphery of the community raises concern for an inefficient growth pattern, which warrants near-term attention. Rather,

the overall pattern of near- and long-term development must be staged concurrent with the availability of adequate facility and service provisions, with due consideration of development infill.

- ♦ **Adequate public facilities and services to meet growing needs.** Community growth and shifts in national policy and security require increased attention by local authorities. This, in turn, necessitates expanded capabilities, availability of new technologies, and increasing space needs of the police and fire departments. In addition, there will be increased demands over time for additional administrative office space, libraries, and other public service facilities. The provision of public services in pace with increasing demands will also be a focus of this analysis.



Continued development in the rural areas around Del Rio will require service provision to an expanding area thereby pressuring fiscal resources.

Economic Development (Chapter 7) - The purpose of the economic development element will be to assess the current economy its strengths and inherent weaknesses, and to outline the strategies necessary to strengthen the community's position within the region and support the demands

placed on the local economy by new development. Policies will be recommended for growing the economy in a way that is both feasible and compatible with the character of the community. Of particular emphasis are the physical planning components that contribute to the City's readiness to accommodate new development. Key considerations will include the provision of sufficient space in appropriate locations on the future land use plan for commercial business parks and industrial districts; ensuring provision of adequate public facilities and services; providing available, affordable, adequate, accessible, and quality housing to meet future demands; and creating a sustainable living environment for all residents of the community.

Primary Issues

- ♦ **Training and work force development.** This is of paramount concern if the City is to be able to attract economic development. The San Felipe - Del Rio Independent School District was recently rated "acceptable" by the State for the 2005-06 school year. The community must work with the school board in finding ways to improve the local schools. Secondary educational opportunities need to be developed for those who do not pursue a college degree. There are a number of technical training programs that would benefit the community. An example of one such program was recently initiated by Sul Ross State University at their Del Rio Campus, a Law Enforcement Academy that concentrates on small town and rural law enforcement in West Texas. This is definitely a step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done if the community wants to be able to offer a skilled work force for potential industry.
- ♦ **Expanding and promoting tourism.** Del Rio is working to benefit from the valuable opportunities surrounding Lake Amistad. The lake, recently rated the No. 1 Bass Fishing Lake in the world by ESPN, has been booked by 125 different fishing tournaments within the first two weeks of the year. Obviously, there are a number of professional fisherman who are aware of the lake, but there is an even larger pool of novices that would travel to Del Rio to enjoy the lake and its' surroundings. This plan needs to identify strategies to capture the significant visitor population coming to Lake Amistad. Del Rio is very fortunate to have an active arts community. They have organized monthly gallery walks and a number of programs for the children of Del Rio. There are a large volume of visitors to Laughlin AFB, and a need to develop strategies on how the City can better capture people who are in and out of the base.
- ♦ **Growing existing businesses and attracting new industries.** Strategies for supporting the expansion of existing businesses and facilitating entrepreneurship should be given the highest priority. Since the majority of new jobs in any region typically come from expansions and not new locations, an existing business program should supersede outside marketing. Existing businesses are also your best marketers for the community. If the City takes care of its existing businesses, then they will be more likely to tell a positive story to their peers (customers, suppliers, and competitors), thereby enhancing opportunities for new locations. There does exist, however, unique opportunities for marketing the community for new locations. For example, since the economy of Del Rio is influenced by the maquila industry, attention should be given to opportunities for both expansions and new locations on both sides of the border. With the new Toyota assembly plant locating in San Antonio, there may

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be opportunities for automotive suppliers and services to support them. This strategy is further supported by the existing automotive testing grounds near Del Rio.

- ♦ **Laughlin Air Force Base.** The base remains a critical economic driver for the Del Rio economy, and opportunities for leveraging its presence should be pursued. While the base has survived recent rounds of BRAC, nothing should be taken for granted. As the military "transforms" and seeks new solutions in the current and future defense environment, Del Rio should remain abreast of both challenges and opportunities for the base. One asset of the base that should be explored is opportunities for spousal employment. Another asset is consideration of the skill sets of the personnel that are terminating service and have potential to remain in the Del Rio area because of family ties or retirement.
- ♦ **Del Rio Airport.** Access to Del Rio has historically been its primary barrier to economic growth. Air access has helped overcome this barrier and, as a consequence, is critical to Del Rio's continued success. Opportunities related to air cargo should be explored. Executives and staff that are flying in and out of Del Rio also represent a target marketing opportunity.
- ♦ **Business infrastructure.** The competitive environment for business attraction makes having key infrastructure paramount to success. This means having fully-served sites for new industry, offering a competitive incentives package, and having professional staff to support the location process. Each of these elements will be reviewed and recommendations for improvement made as part of this planning process.
- ♦ **Image and marketing.** One of the key challenges facing businesses across the country is the retention and attraction of talent. People are choosing to live in areas that offer a "quality of life" defined by many of the amenities that Del Rio has to offer, such as Lake Amistad, access to Mexico, and entertainment. But these assets are not known outside of the Del Rio region. There exists an opportunity to position the community in the Dallas and Houston regions as a destination for living and working.



Local scenes such as that along San Felipe Creek contribute significantly to the image and character of the community, leaving a lasting impression on tourists and visitors.

Implementation (Chapter 8) - The implementation plan utilizes the recommendations of the individual plan elements to identify the overall strategy for executing the plan. Paramount to implementation of the plan is the recommendations for the City's implementing regulations, including its zoning and subdivision ordinances. Amendments necessary to implement the plan will be outlined. In addition, the organizational framework necessary to carry the plan out will be of vital importance, including strategies for staffing, roles of boards and commissions, and ongoing reporting. An implementation program will identify action priorities and timeframes and assign responsibilities, which may then be used to gauge the progress achieved toward ultimate implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Primary Issues

- ♦ **Intergovernmental coordination.** Many of the issues in Del Rio cross jurisdictional boundaries, involving other governmental entities such as Val Verde County, San Felipe - Del Rio Independent School District, State of Texas, National Park Service, and other Federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, General Services Administration,

and Homeland Security, among others. Fostering relationships with each of these and others will be essential to effectively carry out the plan.

- ◆ **Sufficient organization and continuous planning.** A plan as important as this to the future of the community merits continuous and ongoing attention. As such, there must be a champion that maintains the presence and viability of the plan in decision-making at all levels. Whether this is an individual staff person or an implementation task force, there must be means established concurrent with the adoption of the plan to sustain its momentum and immediately initiate programs and projects. The procedures of the City must also be altered to include quarterly implementation status reports and annual reviews and updates of the plan to ensure it is being followed and continues to represent the vision of the community.
- ◆ **Adequate and up-to-date regulations and standards.** In order to effectively implement the plan, the City must have regulations and standards that are consistent with the policies and recommendations of the plan. This may require minor amendment or possible redrafting of the zoning and subdivision ordinances, as well as possible new ordinances. This too, must be tended to immediately after consideration and adoption to avoid an implementation lapse. Often, interim regulations are put in place to span the time necessary to draft or redraft new ordinances and standards. This issue cannot be overlooked if the City is committed to following through on its investment in this process.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This plan is organized into eight elements that address existing conditions, key issues, goals and objectives, and recommendations. The chapters include:

- **Introduction** - This chapter explains the purpose of planning and the value that will be accrued from undertaking a comprehensive planning process in Del Rio. The chapter also outlines the public participation program that served as a foundational element to the planning process. The vision and mission Statements are identified, giving expression as to the expectations for the future.
- **Community Snapshot** – This chapter offers an in-depth introduction to the City and its planning area, which documents existing socioeconomic conditions and demographic characteristics pertaining to its historical and current population; the age, gender, and educational attainment of its people; and the economic position of the community and its businesses. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the community has grown and to identify its current characteristics and resources that will contribute to the envisioned future, and to analyze where the community appears to be headed in the future.
- **Land Use** - This element provides a vision for the future physical development of the community and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance for decisions concerning the compatibility and appropriateness of development within the context of the larger community. An essential component of this chapter is the land use policies, which will help the City in deciding the

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Chapter One
Introduction

means by which it can manage its future land use and development. In addition, this chapter outlines policies and strategies for enhancing the community's character and appearance.

- **Transportation** – The purpose of this chapter is to address community-wide mobility needs on all levels, from sidewalks and trails, to local streets and neighborhood access, to arterial roadways and highways. This element of the plan includes a Thoroughfare Plan, which is the long-term plan for developing an overall system of thoroughfares for the City and its planning area. The Thoroughfare Plan is to be used as a guide for securing rights-of-way and upgrading and extending the network of local, collector, and arterial roads and highways in an efficient manner.
- **Parks and Recreation** – The purpose of this chapter is to determine the community's current and future needs for parks and recreation facilities. This plan element provides policy direction pertaining to the timing of park development, park siting within the City and planning area, the type and quality of facilities, and the method by which improvements are funded.
- **Growth Capacity** – This element provides policies to guide decisions relating to timely extension of adequate infrastructure, provision of quality municipal services, and a logical sequencing of future development. The chapter also sets forth policies for managing future development in a manner that is wise and fiscally responsible.
- **Economic Development** - The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance about how the community can achieve its vision, while being proactive about economic development. This chapter contains an economic assessment and outlines ways to support and retain existing businesses, attract and grow new businesses, and train the community's work force - all with a view to achieving improved livability.
- **Implementation** - The purpose of this Plan is to identify a course of policy direction for the community. The implementation element identifies the means by which this policy will be actualized. This chapter includes a five-year action plan that identifies exactly who is responsible for what by linking the different elements of the plan with the department or agency responsible for the action and the timeframe in which the task will be completed. This chapter also identifies a process for an annual evaluation and a five-year review of the Comprehensive Plan.