



RANCHO VIEJO MASTER PLAN-FINAL REPORT

Developed by the Rancho Viejo Strategic Planning Committee
Adopted 4/07

Statement of Identity and Need

Updated from October 2006 report

Rancho Viejo, Texas is a family oriented, semi rural, incorporated bedroom community developed around the privately owned Rancho Viejo Golf Course. As common among small towns it lacks (yet many residents and property owners have expressed a desire and need for) a Comprehensive Strategic or Master Plan for the future. As the committee moves forward it is believed that the majority of Rancho Viejo residents and property owners wish to maintain a small town atmosphere with limited light commercial and multi-family facilities, increase a sense of community and realistically face the challenges of growth and change in and around Rancho Viejo.

Rancho Viejo Vision Statement 2020

Adopted January 2007

Rancho Viejo will be a properly groomed and maintained, family oriented, protected and safe community with high quality housing, a comprehensive zoning plan which will protect property values, a solid infrastructure including recreational and green areas and a diversified economy based on sound financial planning and a limited number of light commercial public or private businesses or service establishments.

Vision Statement Continued:

Predominant Objectives:

- (1) To retain Rancho Viejo's small/resort town atmosphere.
- (2) To protect/maintain property values
- (3) To protect the quality of life as population increases.
- (4) To maintain the safety of Rancho Viejo's residents.
- (5) To retain a solid infrastructure.

Committee History

The Strategic Planning Committee was formed in July of 2006 and is in its 8th month of existence. It currently consists of a small group of Rancho Viejo residents or property owners. Each member of the committee brings diverse talents and skills to the table. Input from the community at large continues to be needed and welcomed. All meetings are open and take place at the Rancho Viejo Town Hall. The members of the committee are:

Alderman Carla Lootens, Chairman
Alderman William Dorsett
Miguel Ortiz
Sonia Richardson
Bobby Duffy
Maria Garza (added 9/06)

Synopsis:

July 2006 – Committee assignment
July 27, 2006- First Full Committee Meeting
August 7, 2006-Second Full Committee Meeting
August 27, 2006-Third Full Committee Meeting
September 2006-Interview of San Benito Planner by Mayor Flood
September 22, 2006-Small Work Session (Lootens and Garza)
October 9, 2006-Small Work Session (Lootens and Garza)
October 13, 2006-Small Work Session (Lootens and Garza)
December 7, 2006-Fourth Full Committee Meeting
January 4, 2007- Meeting with Town Attorney, Mr. Dan Rentfro (Lootens and Mayor Flood)
January 9, 2007-Fifth Full Committee Meeting w/ Gonzales Engineering
January 9, 2007- 2020 Rancho Viejo Vision Statement Adopted by Board of Aldermen
January 15, 2007-Small Work Session (Lootens and Garza)
February 12, 2007-Small Work Session (Lootens, Garza and Richardson)
March 1, 2007-Small Work Session (Lootens, Garza)

March 8, 2007-Meeting with Mayor Flood, Gonzales Engineering and Lootens
March 8, 2007-Small Work Session (Lootens and Garza)
March 13, 2007-Small Work Session (Lootens, Richardson, Garza)
March 16, 2007-Meeting Mayor Flood and Lootens
April 2, 2007-Meeting Mayor Flood and Lootens
April 10, 2007-Master Plan Adopted by Board of Aldermen

Rancho Viejo's Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses

Resident and property owner input dating from March 2006-present indicates the following informal community inventory:

Perceived Strengths:

- Development of Rancho Viejo Vision Statement 2020/Adopted 1/07
- Developing Strategic Master Plan (ongoing since July 2006)
- New mapping of Rancho Viejo (ongoing since 1/07)
- Development of Rancho Viejo Street Rehabilitation Plan (Adopted with exception of drainage portion or study 2/07)
- Low crime rate/overall safety
- Highway accessibility
- Small population size
- Uniqueness
- Resacas/scenic views/wildlife viewing
- High water quality/VMUD #2
- Rancho Viejo Golf Course
- Volunteer Fire Department and new fire house
- Great family town
- Great retirement town
- Potential for growth
- Proximity to cities of Harlingen and Brownsville
- Proximity to airports of Harlingen and Brownsville
- Quietness
- Affordability
- Town wide trash and brush pick-up
- Low tax rate
- Hurricane/emergency preparedness
- New town hall and police department building
- Dedicated police force
- Dedicated town hall employees

Perceived Weaknesses/Concerns:

- No master plan, no vision statement *Vision Statement adopted 1/07 see Appendix B, Master Plan adopted 4/07
- Empty strip mall/commercial areas
- Lack of landscaping in commercial/retail areas along Carmen Avenue
- Poor planning of commercial development and parking areas/lots along Carmen Avenue *Addressed and corrected Fall 2006
- Lack of cohesive planning for both commercial and residential development
- Uniform application of ordinances has not been applied to all developers, builders and property owners
- Some ordinances are not clear, are too lengthy and appear to be in conflict with each other
- Granting of variances appears inconsistent to some.
- Poorly maintained and/or dilapidated properties. El Dorado apartment and the nearby warehouse area are of concern.
- No design standards appear to exist. Are mobile or manufactured homes allowed?
- VMUD #2 wooden fencing along Hidalgo is in poor repair and maybe in violation of the fencing ordinance.
- Other wooden fencing and barriers along Carmen and Santa Ana is in poor repair.
- No recreational areas/parks/safe areas for children to play *Note, as of 2006 a private party is developing a park which they hope to donate to Rancho Viejo. The donation will have to be approved by Rancho Viejo Board of Alderman.
- Empty lots/subdivisions (noted slump in real estate market)
- Illegal dumping of brush and residents putting brush out early continues to be a problem. (Unsightliness and health-fire concerns were expressed). Brush dump on Villa is of special concern.
- No animal shelter or contract with outside group
- Lack of adequate communication between town officials and residents. There is no daily or weekly newsletter or paper.
- Poor street lighting in some areas (Alvarado and Escandon) due to growth of trees as well as number of feet between light poles.
- Expressway (and railroad) noise. The area from Rancho Viejo Drive south to Cortez are of particular concern
- Speeding on town streets (Pizarro and Carmen) *Speed traps have been set up to monitor the situation 1/07
- Large/heavy trucks are allowed on town streets that cannot support the weight. *This area is being addressed in the new Rancho Viejo Street Rehabilitation Plan 1/07

- Lack of networking with other small Texas towns. It seems Rancho Viejo looks inward to solve its problems rather than outward.
- Lack of networking with other county services (i.e. social)
- Signage ordinance **As of 1/07 the sign ordinance is in review.*

Threats Based on Perceived Weaknesses/Concerns

- Development
 - Unplanned Development
 - Careless planning
 - Over development
 - Loss of open land/green areas
 - Uncontrolled spread of Brownsville north and west. What will this mean to Rancho Viejo ETJ?
 - Possibility of commercial businesses that may not be appropriate in the view(s) of Rancho Viejo residents i.e. arcades, sexuality orientated businesses, warehouses. This may be of special concern as Rancho Viejo ETJ develops.
- Traffic/Safety
 - Speeding/safety-Pizarro and Carmen (*Speed is being carefully monitored by the Rancho Viejo Police Department 1/07*)
 - Traffic control patterns (*The Rancho Viejo Street Rehabilitation Plan adopted 2/07 provides for N/S and E/W Connectors*)
 - Damage to streets due to over weight trucks and equipment (*The Rancho Viejo Street Rehabilitation Plan adopted 2/07 provides restrictions*)
 - Increased noise from expressway and railway due to increase in traffic and removal of previous vegetation barrier.
- Overall Property Values
- Overall Quality of Life

Goals:

In accordance with the latest “*Comprehensive Planning for Small Texas Cities, 3rd Edition*” guide developed by The Texas Chapter of American Planning Association and Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs, and after consideration of all views shared, meeting with Attorney Mr. Dan Rentfro and Gonzales Engineering as well as careful review of the current Rancho Viejo Ordinances and Policies and in accordance with the Rancho Viejo Vision Statement 2020 now on file, the following goals are suggested. These goals are meant to promote orderly growth which would provide for the stabilization and conservation of property values, protect Rancho Viejo streets and utilities from overloading and contribute to over all safety and quality of life of residents in Rancho Viejo. The suggested goals are not made to necessarily increase tax revenue although when addressing the above it would

naturally follow that they may do so. Objectives to achieve each goal will be developed as work proceeds.

General:

Goal #1: Develop Rancho Viejo's Vision Statement 2020.

Target Date: 1/07 Date Completed: 1/07

Goal #2: Develop Rancho Viejo's Strategic Master Plan.

Target Date: 5/07 Date Completed: 4/07

Goal #3: Annex, as petitioned or applied for, all Rancho Viejo ETJ.

Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #4: Consider changing to City Manager or Planning Supervisor form of government: A Rancho Viejo City Manager's duties could include, but not be limited to the following:

(1) Preparing or assisting in the preparation of any Capital Improvement Plan or Budget to be approved and submitted by the Rancho Viejo Mayor and approved by the Rancho Viejo Board of Aldermen.

(2) Implementation

- Administering Zoning Ordinances
- Administering Subdivision Regulations

Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #5: Develop an ordinance requiring the permit of and limiting the frequency of garage and/or estate sales (per residence) for any given calendar year.

Target Date: Date Completed:

Development:

Goal #1: Obtain up to date mapping of Rancho Viejo and current ETJ. This will allow for future planning and/or zoning changes.

Target Date: 3/07 Date Completed: in process

Goal #2: Consider updating and approving a new policy for financing of residential or commercial development that clearly defines any role the town might play in facilitating such. This may include contracts with property owners, obtaining bonds etc.

Target Date: 3/07 Date Completed:

Goal #3: Consider developing and approving a policy that requires the planning of streets, utilities (including sewage, water and electric) be submitted, as well as a plan for paying for such, prior approval of a plat submitted by any property owner or developer. This also then would allow the builder or developer to recoup costs through the future sale of properties.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #4: Re: Ordinance 18 Article XVI. Consider developing and approving a policy addressing criteria for variance requests brought before the Board of Adjustments and Appeals for their consideration.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #5: Consider deleting Ordinance 20 C dated May 11, 2004, allowing the Board of Alderman to grant an exception to previously platted but unpaved streets to be developed without curb and gutter.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #6: Re: Ordinance No. 26-A dated May 15, 2001. Consider and approve increasing the minimum lot size from 15,000 sq. feet to 18,000 sq. ft. for future development. Consider and approve increasing the minimum size of a residential home from 1,500 sq. feet to 2,350 sq. feet for all future residential homes.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #7: Develop and approve separate size ordinances for single family “jewel box/garden homes and multi-family residences. This would address the problem of zero lot size or “jewel box/garden homes” which have fallen under the zoning category of multi-family (corner of Carmen and Escandon). Multi-family and jewel box/garden homes could remain at a minimum of 1,500 square feet, but a cap could be suggested.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #8: Review and update if needed Ordinance 18, Article IV, Section 1 Set Back Regulations, Section 2 Maximum Height, Section 4 Seawall Regulations, Section 6 Maximum Lot Coverage, Section 7 Additional Setback for Structures over 20 feet, Section 11 Swimming Pools and Spas.

Target Date: 4/07

Date Completed:

Goal #9: Review La Hacienda Phase One Report to consider the incorporating of standards, some higher than Rancho Viejo ordinances, into the town’s current ordinances. This may include, but not be limited to, topics of basketball nets, definition of single family residence, no out buildings, two stall garages facing the side lot line and the limiting of the number of pets allowed at any single residence.

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #10: Consider developing and adopting an ordinance that requires that the developer of each new subdivision be required to set aside a minimum of 10% as green/common area (s).

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #11: Consider developing and adopting an ordinance that requires a barrier/buffer (natural or manmade) be created between residential and commercial areas. This could also extend to homes that would be erected back to back.

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #12: Consider developing and adopting a Landscape Ordinance. This would be to address in detail the permitted use of vegetation fencing/barriers for back to back homes, requiring the removal of dead/decaying tree stumps, overall maintenance etc. This ordinance would not be intended to restrict the creativity of landscaping but to enhance it.

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #13: Review and update Ordinance 18, Article IVD – Fence and Wall Regulations.

Target Date: 3/07

Date Completed: in process

Goal #14: Review and update Ordinance No. 18AA dated November 11, 2003 as it relates to the minimum parking spaces required and adequate vehicle maneuvering space for current and future retail/commercial properties.

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #15: Develop ordinances for light commercial businesses to include their buildings and parking lots.

Target Date: 5/07

Date Completed:

Goal #16: Re: Ordinance 18 Article III, Multi Family Dwellings, Consider developing specific building ordinances for apartment buildings.

Goal #17: Consider developing ordinances pertaining to the prohibition of mobile homes, mobile home parks and manufactured homes.

Goal #18: Consider developing ordinances pertaining to warehouses.

Streets/Roadways:

Goal #1: Develop and approve a Street Rehabilitation Plan/Policy

Target Date: 2/07

Date Completed: *2/07

*Recommendations of the Street Rehabilitation Plan adopted with the exception of the portion on drainage.

Goal #2: Work with VMUD #2 to develop a drainage plans
Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #3: Study speeding on Pizarro and Carmen and if needed develop recommendations to remedy such. This may include the possibility of installing speed bumps and/or installing cameras to monitor speed.
Target Date: Date Completed: in process

Goal #4: Consider replacing street light poles on Escandon and Alvarado with concrete poles that will support extended arm lights. This would remedy the low light concerns in those areas.
Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #5: Review and update if needed the minimum number of feet required between street lights in new areas of development.
Target Date: Date Completed

Quality of Life:

Goal #1: Prior to approving the donation of park properties to the town of Ranch Viejo, consider developing and approving a park ordinance.
Target Date: 5/07 Date Completed:

Goal #2: Review and update the sign ordinance.
Target Date: 3/07 Date Completed: in process

Goal #3: Work with TXDOT and/or the railroad to create a minimum of a natural buffer between the expressway/railroad and golf course along Hidalgo (south) between Rancho Viejo Drive and Cortez.
Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #4: Develop a list of social service organizations that service Rancho Viejo:
Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #5: Research contracting with county animal shelters and rescue organizations.
Target Date: Date Completed:

Goal #6: Research the feasibility of a weekly newsletter to be available to all Rancho Viejo residents and property owners.

Target Date:

Date Completed:

Items/Topics Suggested for Continued/ Future Review by the Committee:

Lighting and landscaping of commercial properties and parking lots

Height limitations of commercial properties

Ordinances pertaining to sexually oriented businesses

Warehouses/storage buildings

Apartment buildings

Pet boarding facilities

Building add-ons

Wireless Transmitters

Appendix A

Current Demographics

Area: Approximately 2.27 square miles not including ETJ

Population trend: The population appears to be increasing and will most likely continue to do so based on the number of new subdivisions that have been created. However, please note that at the time of this progress report the real estate market appears sluggish.

The 2000 census was approximately 1,754. Current census numbers are approximately 2,100. The projected census based on all properties being developed and occupied is approximately 4,500.

Median Age: The age of residents appears to be changing from retirement age to a median age of 43.

Household Composition:

Average Income:

Current housing:

- 915 single family residents

- 386 multi housing units including town homes and condominiums

- 0 mobile or manufactured homes

- 0 HUD/CDBC homes

Rental vs. Owner Occupied: Approximately 98% owner occupied (as per Cheryl Kretz 10/12/07)

Commercial:

- 10 Public (2 real estate, 1 liquor store, 1 cleaners, 1 arcade, 1 gas station/quick mart, 1 fast food, 1 deli, 1 insurance, 1 survey company)

- 1 Private Golf Course/Club (includes 2 restaurants, 1 pro-shop, 1 clothing shop).

Utilities: 1 (VMUD #2)

Appendix B
Rancho Viejo Vision Statement 2020
Adopted 1/07

Rancho Viejo will be a properly groomed and maintained, family oriented, protected and safe community with high quality housing, a comprehensive zoning plan which will protect property values, a solid infrastructure including recreational and green areas and a diversified economy based on sound financial planning and a limited number of light commercial public or private businesses or service establishments.

Predominant Objectives:

- (1) To retain Rancho Viejo's small/resort town atmosphere.
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