

5.5 Environmental Sustainability

Rio Rancho is rapidly converting the natural environment into a built urban environment. This transformation must be undertaken with great care, given the limitations of the natural environment insofar as its quality and ability to accommodate growth are concerned. This is commonly referred to as "sustainability," or the maintenance of a habitable environment over multiple generations. Sustainability is borne by new technology and technological advances that allow it to be defined in terms of a process rather than a fixed or predetermined outcome. Hence, the concept of "sustainability" evolves over time as an ideal to work toward rather than an end product to be achieved

The impacts on natural resources such as water, air, open space, habitats and ecosystems shall be considered as managed growth is implemented to achieve a balance between the built and natural environment.

Environmental Sustainability Principle: Preserve and protect Rio Rancho's natural resources & environment from existing and potentially harmful conditions to ensure that the environment is protected for future generations.

Environmental Sustainability Policies -

Promote environmental sustainability within Rio Rancho by supporting environmentally friendly lifestyles to include recycling, water conservation & recycling, low-impact transportation alternatives and the use of renewable resources.

Protect, maintain and enhance Rio Rancho's natural and physical environment.

Maintain and improve air quality in the City of Rio Rancho.

Encourage reduction, reuse, recycling and the proper disposal of solid and hazardous waste materials including household hazardous waste.

Preserve and protect significant view corridors that are accessible to the public.

Natural habitat/ecosystems (arroyo network & riparian areas – "Rio Grande bosque"), critical and sensitive areas shall be protected and enhanced within Rio Rancho's built environment.

Comply with local, state and federal environmental regulations concerning the protection of the environment.

ACTIONS:

Within the land use development review process, consider the extent to which local and regional environments are impacted by growth and development within the following areas of interest:

- 1.) Air –
Minimize air pollution generated within Rio Rancho by establishing programs to reduce motor vehicle emissions, by promoting “clean industries,” by regulating commercial and industrial source emissions, and by utilizing vegetation or soil stabilization techniques to control dust and particulate pollution.

Support the use of alternative fuel vehicles (AFV) including gasoline-electric hybrids and dedicated electric vehicles (experimental fuel-cell vehicles).

Participate in local and regional air quality planning and programs.
- 2.) Renewable Resources -
Continue to support recycling, reuse and reduction efforts through the City's “*Keep Rio Rancho Beautiful*” Program.
- 3.) Views -
Tall or massive structures that dominate the visual environment should be situated in Growth Nodes to preserve solar access and to minimize visual disruption of common view areas where practical.

During the development review process, consider views and the visual impact of proposed development.

Plan, fund and prioritize the beautification of public projects for the purpose of maintaining an aesthetically pleasing community environment.
- 5.) Noise -
Adopt community noise standards that are enforceable, quantifiable, realistic and discerning.
- 6.) Light –
Through the development review process, continue to implement and promote the Dark Skies Legislation.
- 7.) Open Space -
Establish a citywide network of publicly accessible open space areas that are linked to RRPS and Parks and Recreation facilities.
- 8.) Vegetation & Wildlife -
Natural habitat/ecosystems (arroyo network & riparian areas – the “bosque”), critical and sensitive environment areas shall be identified, inventoried and protected within Rio Rancho’s jurisdiction.
- 9.) Energy -
Encourage & promote energy conservation and the use of renewable resources.
- 10.) Pollution Prevention -
Apply pollution prevention strategies to all environmental resources, including air, soil and water.

11.) Built vs. Natural Environment –

Minimize adverse effects of growth and development on the environment by creating “building envelopes” and limiting development on severe slopes and limiting soil & vegetation disturbances through mass grading.

12. Water –

Pursue and promote water conservation, reuse and recycling measures such as, aquifer re-injection methods, use of grey water, and effluent recycling alternatives.

Utilize our limited water resources wisely. Where feasible, use recycled water in lieu of drinking water supplies to support turf watering, construction, park and amenity features such as entryway fountains or decorative water features.

Meet newly mandated criteria for drinking water standards by reducing the naturally occurring arsenic through specialized treatment systems.