

The Birthplace of Arizona's History
Press Release
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Santa Cruz County Resolicits Public Comment on Three County Plans: Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan, Housing Strategy and Tourism Sector Plan

Santa Cruz County, Arizona is **resoliciting** public comment through Friday, December 8 on three draft plans: the Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan, a countywide housing strategy, and a Santa Cruz County Five-Year Tourism Sector Prosperity Plan.

Santa Cruz County initiated these plans beginning in 2021. The county opened the plans to comment through September 2023, but many members of the public who commented on those plans mistook those proposed by a private developer.

To enhance public understanding of their intent, the county has also produced fact sheets for each of the plans with highlights, key findings and next steps. These county-directed plans rely on data-driven processes that prioritize public input and participation. All are available on the county website at the government/plans and reports tab (<https://santacruzcountyaz.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports>).

Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan

In 2021, Santa Cruz County's Community Development launched a community master planning process for Rio Rico to develop land use plans and associated regulatory tools that reflect local needs.

The first phase informed the existing conditions with community research and an online survey available to the community in March of 2021. The second phase developed a vision. The third phase created and vetted ideas to implement the vision. These phases of involvement culminated in the creation of the concepts, goals, policies, and strategies presented in the Master Plan.

The draft master plan creates a framework for a vibrant place for future retail, services and multi-family housing that accommodates the needs of residents,

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businesses, and visitors. A video with highlights of the plan is also posted on the county website at <https://santacruzcountyz.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports>. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RioRico>

Housing Strategy

In 2022, Santa Cruz County received support from the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) to develop its first housing strategy. The draft strategy identifies needs and guiding principles designed to address the lack of sufficient housing opportunities needed to support the county's growing number of residents, workers and employers.

To guide strategy development, the county worked with NALCAB to host two housing forums (Rio Rico and Patagonia), in which it solicited strategies and input from approximately 40 nonprofit housing developers and the realty and development community.

The county is now soliciting feedback from the broader community. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SCChousing> and is posted on the county website at <https://santacruzcountyz.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports>.

Santa Cruz County Tourism Sector Prosperity Plan

In the spring of 2023, the University of Arizona's Master of Science degree-seeking students in Urban Planning from the College of Architecture, Planning & Landscape Architecture developed a tourism sector strategy as part of their 2023 Capstone Course. Students developed their proposal after reading a [Request for Proposals](#) the county issued in October 2022. Their project produced 17 quality seed project recommendations for tourism, with associated financing strategies.

The county is now soliciting feedback from the broader community. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Tourism> and is posted on the county website at <https://santacruzcountyz.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports>.

Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Pathways Forward

The desire and need for public participation in county planning strategies and priorities is addressed in a recent report issued by the county's Community Development Department, entitled *Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and*

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Pathways Forward.

The report, also available on the county community development website, reviews economic challenges in Santa Cruz County exacerbated by COVID-19 and opportunities to bring economic stability. It describes the rationale and connections across county plans. It also encourages community stakeholders to use the report to center their work and identify potential roles as collaborators, with the county's role as a convener in this work.

All four documents are available for review at the community development department website at <https://santacruzcountyaz.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports>. Hard copies of plans and surveys are also available at the county's community development office at 2150 North Congress Drive.

Opportunities for public comment on the Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan, housing strategy, and Tourism Sector Prosperity Plan will be taken through Friday, December 8. Public comments will be compiled and posted as appendices to these plans. Plans will then go to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors for consideration. If approved, the county will pursue implementation strategies for their adoption.

For more information contact Angie Donelson (angie@scr-analytics.com).

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