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POSITION STATEMENT
ON THE MASTER PLAN FOR RIO VISTA NATURAL RESOURCE PARK
April 16, 2022

Rio Vista Natural Resource Park is unique in the City of Tucson park system because (1) its primary purpose is to protect the natural ecosystem of the park and (2) it is situated along a major ecological corridor (the Rillito) in the heart of the city.

Friends of Rio Vista is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to uniting stakeholders in preserving this uniqueness. Our mission is to support the City of Tucson Department of Parks and Recreation and the Rio Vista Conservation Project in protecting and enhancing the ecological values of Rio Vista. Our vision is a natural resource park that is a haven for native plants and wildlife, that offers a unique visitor experience of nature in midtown Tucson, and that models collaborative conservation in the City of Tucson park system.

The Rio Vista master plan is part of the Parks + Connections (Proposition 407) bond project for the park. Friends of Rio Vista's core recommendation for the master plan is as follows:

All City of Tucson investment in the park, now and in the future, should support (1) protection of the natural ecosystem and (2) enhancement of visitors' connection with nature there.

Specifically, we urge the city to devote Parks + Connections funds to the following:

- **Rehabilitation of the trail system in the natural area:** marking and improvement of designated trails, closing of rogue trails, planting of local native species chosen in consultation with restoration ecologists, low-impact interpretation of the natural ecosystem
- **Localized land shaping in the natural area** (for example, creation of berms and swales) to promote native plants and wildlife habitat
- **Use of existing infrastructure to enhance opportunities for interpretation of Rio Vista's natural and cultural history:** renovation and repurposing of the "welcome" structure/kiosk, creation of demonstration areas (for example, Organic First Tucson, pollinator garden, rainscaping) on the west side (built environment) of the park

We urge the city **not to devote Parks + Connections funds** to the following:

- A splash pad
- A dog park

- Any new infrastructure in the park that is not directly connected to the core recommendation of protecting Rio Vista’s natural assets and enhancing visitors’ experience of them

We would like to emphasize that, as an urban natural area, Rio Vista needs a long-term **management/conservation plan**, in addition to a master plan. Friends of Rio Vista is working with city staff and with other partners to identify conservation targets, threats, goals, and strategies for such a plan.

In the master plan for Rio Vista Natural Resource Park, the City of Tucson Department of Parks and Recreation has the opportunity to show leadership through demonstrating a fresh perspective on city parks and supporting the city’s initiative to make all Tucson’s communities (human and wild) resilient in the face of the climate crisis and other challenges.

