

RIVER ROAD AND SANTA CLARA TRANSITION PROJECT

FINAL REPORT



*River Road/
Santa Clara*
TRANSITION
PROJECT

Prepared for

The City of Eugene

by

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Executive Summary

Project Overview

The River Road/Santa Clara (RR/SC) Transition Project is an outgrowth of a long-standing effort to address governance and service delivery challenges in the River Road and Santa Clara communities within City of Eugene's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). In April 2004, the City of Eugene contracted with David Reed & Associates to work with residents and service providers to prepare a transition plan that incorporates the themes identified by a committee of RR/SC residents in 2002 – *Trust, Voice, Equity, and Collaboration*. Twelve stakeholders, representing diverse community interests, served as an advisory "Task Force" to assist the consultants in developing a plan.

History

River Road and Santa Clara have evolved as independent communities almost since the City of Eugene was founded in 1853. The Metro Area General Plan determined in 1982 that the City of Eugene would provide urban services to the River Road and Santa Clara communities upon annexation. Yet, most of River Road and Santa Clara still remain outside the Eugene City limits.

Service Providers

In addition to the City of Eugene and Lane County, six local institutions provide urban services in the RR/SC area including two water districts, two rural fire districts, a park and recreation district, and the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). Since 1982, as properties have annexed into the City of Eugene, the local service districts have experienced a loss of tax revenue and changes in service patterns and demands, creating questions and challenges about the future of River Road and Santa Clara and the quality of these services.

Issues

Residents and service providers identified issues of concern during interviews with the consultants: River Road and Santa Clara are a patchy, complex mosaic of incorporated and unincorporated areas; urban services are provided by multiple jurisdictions and agencies in a fragmented and confusing way; rapid growth and infilling are viewed as a threat to livability and neighborhood character; hostility and distrust have built up over many years; and residents feel they have little voice in decisions that affect their quality of life.

Project Scope

The scope of the Transition Project was initially to create better communication between residents, community organizations, and special district, City and County service providers; and to prepare a transition plan for the unincorporated areas of River Road and Santa Clara. However, after interviews with stakeholders and involvement of the RR/SC Task Force, these project goals were also included – creating a vision for the future of River Road and Santa Clara, examining ways to preserve the existing character that make the communities unique and livable, and amending the 1986 "River Road-Santa Clara Urban Facilities Plan" to include new vision and goal statements.

Outcomes

To achieve these goals, the Task Force and Transition Team worked together to develop a transition "**Framework**" by identifying "transition" themes and qualities that help define the heritage of the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

A “**White Paper**” developed by the consultants outlined 55 potential transition and heritage initiatives and options for River Road and Santa Clara, and provided a structure to efficiently address complex service delivery issues as well as consider transition alternatives for the two communities. The White Paper also served as the foundation for developing the **RR/SC Transition and Heritage Framework**. The Task Force identified three “unifying themes” described in the White Paper as having the most applicability to priorities for River Road and Santa Clara residents:

Landscape – to sustain the visual and functional “look and feel” and rural heritage of the River Road and Santa Clara communities

Institutions –to sustain and in some cases expand key community institutions

Governance – to sustain and strengthen the longstanding tradition of local government and self-determination

These themes also responded to major objectives of the White Paper: to preserve *heritage qualities* that are highly valued by the two communities, and to achieve a smooth and orderly *transition of services*.

Key elements of the Transition and Heritage Framework include a **Uniqueness Statement** – qualities that make the two communities distinctively different from other Eugene neighborhoods; a **Vision Statement** – a preferred vision of the future, reflecting residents’ core values and beliefs; **Goal Statements** – ten goals that provide guideposts to fulfill the preferred vision; and **Strategies and Actions** – 11 specific directions to achieve the goals and 38 actions to facilitate execution and implementation.

The Transition Team also engaged in 11 “**neighborhood conversations**” with residents in the RR/SC area to better understand their concerns and ideas about the future of the area. Almost 150 residents participated in these meetings, and two major themes emerged: the River Road community is cohesive and clear in terms of two priorities: land use and governance; and the Santa Clara community’s priorities are more varied – in addition to land use and governance, priorities also include transportation and parks and recreation.

Amending the Community Plan

One of the most important recommendations of the Transition Project is for the City to consider amending the 1986 “River Road-Santa Clara Urban Facilities Plan,” including a new vision statement, goals, and policies that acknowledge more current and targeted priorities and sensibilities of residents.

What’s Next

At the request of Task Force members and the two Community Organizations, the final year of the Transition Project will be organized and led by the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations. Their goals are to create a more neighborhood-led approach, including refinement and implementation of the Framework Transition Plan, and to create more neighborhood support for a Transition Plan, and more neighborhood control over the details of implementation. David Reed & Associates is providing this final report as its primary deliverable for use by the City of Eugene, the two Community Organizations, and the local service providers as they continue to develop a transition plan for the RR/SC area.





Acknowledgements

River Road/Santa Clara Transition Team

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Project Background and Scope

Purpose of the Project

The River Road/Santa Clara Transition Project is an outgrowth of a long-standing effort to address governance and service delivery challenges in the River Road and Santa Clara communities within City of Eugene's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Since the mid-1850s, River Road and Santa Clara have grown as independent communities, and over time have developed their own local service institutions.

In 1982, the Eugene/Springfield regional plan (MetroPlan) established the City of Eugene as the ultimate provider of urban services to the River Road and Santa Clara communities upon annexation, determined that all new development inside the UGB would be annexed to the City, and called for existing special service districts to eventually be dissolved. With incremental annexation, a patchwork of annexed and unincorporated areas has emerged, resulting in enormous challenges and confusion with respect to service delivery and future governance, and creating a legacy of acrimonious interactions with the City of Eugene for residents and local service providers alike.

The River Road/Santa Clara Transition Project is the City of Eugene's response to a milestone report that a group of residents prepared in 2002, after examining complex service delivery and urbanization issues in River Road and Santa Clara. The Urban Services Committee Report recommended that a transition manager be retained to facilitate development of a transition plan for the two rapidly urbanizing communities.

In April 2004, the City of Eugene contracted with David Reed & Associates as an independent third party with responsibility for working with residents and service providers to prepare a transition plan that incorporates themes identified by the 2002 Committee – ***Trust, Voice, Equity, and Collaboration***. This report is the result of the work of the Transition Manager to prepare a plan for the future of River Road and Santa Clara.

Transition Team

The Transition Manager assembled a Transition Team to fulfill contractual obligations of the project. Jim Carlson, Assistant City Manager, was the City of Eugene's Project Manager. The consulting team included:

David Reed – RR/SC Transition Manager
Paul Hoobyar – Facilitator/Project Planner
Julie Fischer – Community Planner
Jim Rapp – Municipal Governance Specialist

Citizen Task Force

After conducting a series of stakeholder interviews culminating in a Community Roundtable meeting in December 2004, twelve stakeholders were invited by the Transition Manager to serve in an advisory capacity as the RR/SC Transition Task Force. Criteria for selecting Task Force members included representation of diverse community interests and stakeholder groups, former members of the Urban Services Committee, elected officials of the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations, residency in the two communities, and knowledge and expertise to bring to the transition planning process. The selection process included nominations from local residents.

The Task Force included both chairs and board members of the two community organizations, business owners, a small-scale developer, community farmer, accountant, registered nurse, a former board member of the RR/SC Property Owners Association, community volunteers, and former teachers in local schools. (See Appendix A for Task Force member background information).

One criterion for creating the Task Force was not achieved – a balance of residents living in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas. All but three of the members were non-City residents.

Most of these Task Force members worked with the Transition Team for 16 months and actively participated in 14 meetings from February 2005 to May 2006. All Task Force meetings were conducted consistent with Oregon public open meeting requirements. Agendas were distributed to an Interested Parties list of over 100 individuals, and meeting summary notes were recorded and distributed to all parties. City staff including the Assistant City Manager and a principal planner attended meetings, as well as elected officials from the City of Eugene and Lane County.

Project Area

The communities of River Road and Santa Clara extend from the Willamette River on the east, Chambers Connector at the south, Northwest Expressway/Prairie Road to the west, and Beacon Drive on the north. Approximately 41% of Santa Clara households are incorporated in the City of Eugene, and 29% of the River Road households.



River Road and Santa Clara Communities
 Grey = Annexed White = Unannexed

History of River Road and Santa Clara

As noted previously, the River Road and Santa Clara communities have been neighbors to the City of Eugene almost since the City was founded in 1853. The River Road thoroughfare was once part of Oregon's first overland link between Portland and California – the Old Territorial Highway. This stagecoach road connected the southern Willamette Valley to the rest of the region in 1865, and the fertile agricultural lands in River Road and Santa Clara were immediately attractive to settlers. Fruit and nut orchards as well as large farms defined landscape patterns for decades. (See *"Eugene's Historic River Road"* for settlement patterns of River Road and Santa Clara).

However, significant change began redefining the River Road and Santa Clara communities as early as 1950. Houses replaced many of the filbert and walnut groves in the River Road area, and by 1975 subdivisions with curved streets, cul-de-sacs, and urban lot sizes became common in many parts of Santa Clara. Yet, most of River Road and Santa Clara has remained outside the Eugene City limits.

In 1982, the "Metro Area General Plan" determined that the City of Eugene would provide urban services to the River Road and Santa Clara communities upon annexation. Subsequently, the City mandated connections of all properties to the regional sewer system. With incremental annexation, the transition from a rural to urban development pattern has created a patchwork of City and unincorporated properties, and in turn has fueled community distrust and hostility, particularly among longer-term residents.

In 1986, the "River Road-Santa Clara Urban Facilities Plan" was adopted by the City of Eugene and Lane County with elements including sanitary sewer service, land use, transportation, and public facilities.

Service Providers

To provide services to the unincorporated areas, a number of local institutions have evolved including two water districts, two rural fire districts, a park and recreation district, and the Eugene Electric and Water Board (EWEB). Lane County also provides police, transportation, road maintenance, and stormwater management services. For properties that are incorporated, the City of Eugene provides a wide range of urban services. Three school districts also serve the area. By agreement with Lane County, the City of Eugene provides both City and unincorporated property owners with planning, permit, and historic preservation services. Public safety and transportation responsibilities are shared between the City and County jurisdictions. (See Appendix B for the matrix of service providers in both annexed and unannexed areas).

Service Providers in River Road and Santa Clara

River Road Park and Recreation District
 Lane Rural Fire and Rescue District
 Santa Clara Rural Fire Protection District
 River Road Water District
 Santa Clara Water District
 Eugene Electric and Water Board
 Bethel School District
 Eugene School District
 Junction City School District
 City of Eugene
 Lane County

As properties are annexed to the City, special service districts are affected by a loss of tax revenue and customers as well as changes in service patterns and demands, creating many challenges for planning the future of River Road and Santa Clara and providing quality urban services.

Project Scope

Moreover, under the MetroPlan, River Road and Santa Clara have evolved into a complex mosaic of residences and businesses with a fragmented system of services for police, fire, water, parks and recreation, and transportation. This disjointed system has created duplication, inefficiencies, and frustration for both residents and service providers. At the same time, rapid growth of the area is creating new demands for urban services.

In October 2004, ECONorthwest prepared a “Fiscal Analysis of Urban Services in River Road and Santa Clara” for the City of Eugene. This report provided facts about service provision in the two communities including levels and costs of services, as well as what residents pay for those services in both annexed and unannexed areas.

Initially, the primary objective of the Transition Project was to establish a plan for orderly transition of services to an urban level for unincorporated properties in River Road and Santa Clara. Secondary objectives were to undertake studies and programs to improve urban services, and to create better communication between residents, community organizations, and service providers including special districts, the City of Eugene, and Lane County.

A mission statement provided direction for the project and work plan development.

Transition Plan Mission

To establish a partnership with residents of River Road and Santa Clara, City and County staff and elected officials, and special district service providers, for the purpose of preparing a comprehensive Transition Plan. The Plan will enable a smooth and orderly transition of urban services in ways that preserve community and neighborhood values, retain where feasible community institutions, and forge new and creative methods and practices for the most effective and efficient delivery of urban services.

Primary goals are to build stakeholder trust, provide ample opportunities for residents to have a voice in shaping their future, strive for innovative ways to ensure equitable delivery of urban services, and create a collaborative forum for mapping the preferred future.

Planning benchmarks are themes and recommendations from the Final Report and Recommendations of the River Road and Santa Clara Urban Services Committees (September 2002): *Trust, Voice, Equity, and Collaboration.*

After conducting interviews with stakeholders and based on several meetings with the Task Force, it became apparent that the another set of objectives were considered equally important for the project:

- To create a vision for the future of River Road and Santa Clara
- To examine ways to preserve existing character, qualities and values that make River Road and Santa Clara unique and livable
- To amend the “1986 River Road-Santa Clara Urban Facilities Plan” to include new vision and goal statements

Public Participation

Given the complex environment in River Road and Santa Clara and long history of distrust toward the City of Eugene, a variety of opportunities were considered essential to engage residents and create a transparent public process. The core of the public outreach effort was the Neighborhood Conversation project. Implementation of the

Public Participation Plan and outcomes of the neighborhood conversations are detailed in the Public Outreach Chapter.

Transition and Heritage Framework

A two-step strategic approach was taken to provide a structure for the Task Force to efficiently identify options and strategies and develop a “framework” for preparing a transition plan. This approach included not only the notion of “transition” but also a “heritage” theme to address concerns for preserving community values and local institutions, retaining neighborhood character, and loss of control and governance.

Step 1: Community Transition and Heritage White Paper

An initial planning and assessment document, referred to as the “White Paper,” identified 55 transition and heritage initiatives and options for twelve service delivery areas; the White Paper also served as a working document to facilitate discovery and for brainstorming creative solutions for governance and community livability.

Step 2: Framework Development

Using the White Paper as a guide, the Task Force helped develop a strategic Transition and Heritage Framework document. The Framework is designed to become the foundation for preparing a transition plan, facilitating a collaborative process with service providers and the Task Force to prepare a vision, goals, priorities, and strategies for transition of River Road and Santa Clara to an urban level of service, while preserving heritage qualities.

Shift in Scope

Upon completion of the Framework, six members of the Task Force proposed a shift to a neighborhood-based approach for the remaining year of the transition project. Using the Framework as a foundation, the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations would exercise greater authority and opportunity to engage residents in completing the transition plan and focus on community planning issues. While details have not been worked out with the City, David Reed and Associates completed its work and submitted this final report to the Eugene City Council on June 21, 2006.

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“No one has made any sense of this and how to bring all of the pieces together.”

“If the City will assure me that my street will not be widened with curbs and gutters, I will be glad to be annexed.”

“We need to straighten out immediate problems and develop a new path that has mainstream endorsement, and make transition work.”

Issues and Findings

In the spring and summer of 2004, David Reed & Associates interviewed 38 River Road and Santa Clara stakeholders, service providers, and elected officials. The purpose of the interviews was to frame the results as issues and findings, prior to preparing a work plan for the Transition Project (see Appendix C for the complete report).

Critical Issues

Five critical issues emerged from this interview process:

- ❶ **River Road and Santa Clara have evolved into a patchy, complex mosaic of incorporated and unincorporated areas.**
- ❷ **Urban services are provided by multiple jurisdictions and agencies in a fragmented way that is confusing and frustrating to residents and service providers.**
- ❸ **Rapid growth and infilling are perceived as a threat to community livability, existing neighborhood character, and sense of place.**
- ❹ **Hostility and distrust have built up over many years, in part from mandatory connections to the sewer system in the 1980s, and in part from the City’s incremental annexation practices.**
- ❺ **Residents feel disenfranchised with little voice in decisions that affect their quality of life.**

Opportunities

In spite of the contentious, cumbersome, and complex environment in River Road and Santa Clara, the interviews also revealed a number of opportunities:

- ❶ **River Road and Santa Clara provide opportunities to explore new and creative approaches to urbanization, and in turn build community trust and confidence.**
- ❷ **River Road and Santa Clara have unique qualities including a rich history, and special natural, scenic, and open space features including proximity to the Willamette River.**

Conclusions

Interview results provided direction for the Transition Project:

Stakeholder Interview Conclusions

- ▶ **Need for Sensitivity and Adaptation.** The project will require patience and willingness to take risk. There will be failures mixed with success.
- ▶ **Long-term and Short-term Solutions.** Long-term vision and short-term results will be needed to address complex issues and community sensibilities such as livability.
- ▶ **Strategic Approach.** Focused pathfinding and navigating will be required.
- ▶ **Quid Pro Quo.** Essential to success will be community buy-in to solutions proposed

Public Participation Plan

Public Outreach

Inclusiveness and transparency were major underpinnings of the transition planning process. Special effort was made to effectively and efficiently operate within the complex environment and to be sensitive to the long history of distrust in the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

Early in the project, a Public Participation Plan was prepared including goals adapted from the public participation “Spectrum” developed by the International Association of Public Participation.” The goals ranged from keeping residents informed to empowering stakeholders to explore creative ideas and solutions. (See Appendix D).

Public Participation Goals

Providing Information – keeping stakeholders informed to the highest degree possible, including better understanding of existing services and programs.

Consulting – maintaining openness and soliciting feedback, actively listening to concerns and aspirations.

Involving – ensuring that public input is reflected in alternatives and solutions

Outreach Methods

A variety of public participation methods provided opportunities for residents to become engaged according to their own preferences, interests, schedules, and availability. These methods included:

- Stakeholder interviews – 38 persons with confidentiality
- Roundtable meeting – launching the project
- Citizen task force – 14 meetings open to the public
- Web site postings (www.rrsctransition.info)
- Interested parties list – over 100 stakeholders received monthly information including elected officials
- Neighborhood conversations – 11 workshops hosted by residents, community organizations, and Task Force members
- Project information brochure
- Urban services guidebook – 20-page booklet with information on urban services
- Community organization participation including newsletter information and updates on the transition project
- Project library – housed at the River Road/Santa Clara Volunteer Library

The Transition Team planned to conduct a public opinion survey later in the project to gain a broad understanding of resident perspectives through statistical sampling. The survey was scheduled to occur after completion of the Draft Framework. However, with David Reed & Associates’ involvement ending in the second year, the survey was not conducted.

It should be noted that the Osprey Group recently conducted stakeholder interviews for the proposed West Eugene Parkway, and the consultants found issues of distrust and lack of openness that complicate collaborative planning in the community. When dealing with complex issues, Osprey Group noted that Eugene residents tend to “rather fight than find a solution.” The RR/SC Transition Project encountered similar

Neighborhood Outreach Context

issues with respect to community trust and willingness to engage in a collaborative process. These issues were validated through extensive public outreach efforts that were maintained throughout the duration of the planning process.

Concurrent with the beginning of the Transition Project, two proposed City projects were vetted in River Road and Santa Clara at public meetings, which contributed to the level of distrust between the City and RR/SC residents. These proposals became very controversial, reflected the difficult history between residents and the City of Eugene, and illustrated at the outset that conducting neighborhood outreach for transition planning would be daunting.

First, the City project proposed a land swap that would have resulted in a new community park in Santa Clara as part of a large neighborhood development project. Although the proposal was subsequently withdrawn due to intense opposition from local residents, a positive outcome of the controversy was the creation of a group of citizens who formed the Santa Clara Committee for Sensible Parks and Open Spaces. This group became a very organized and committed and infused the Santa Clara Community Organization with new members and enthusiasm for community involvement.

The second City project was a proposal to improve to urban standards a major collector street, River Avenue, located in the River Road community. Extensive opposition to the proposed design resulted in a negotiated design process, with major stakeholders working collaboratively with City staff to come to agreement on a preferred alternative.

The Outreach Challenge

These controversial projects, plus the fact that past efforts to gauge public opinion in River Road and Santa Clara focused only on the issue of annexation, gave direction to the Transition Team for planning a neighborhood outreach process. In particular, it became evident that ***no formal structure exists for involving the two communities in an open and transparent public process***. It was also apparent that residents want opportunities to become engaged and have a voice in decisions that affect the future of their communities – whether they are in-City or non-City residents.

And herein lies the challenge for the City of Eugene. Nine city-funded projects were underway in River Road and Santa Clara during the Transition Project including extensive park and open space acquisition, a stormwater basin management plan, a history survey for the River Road community, a natural resource conservation plan, and a draft comprehensive park, recreation, and open space plan. Yet, if most of the residents live in unincorporated areas, how does the City not only maintain open communications but also actively engage all community residents in these projects?

Community Organizations – Limited Recognition and Newsletters

Early in the Transition Project, the Transition Team recognized that existing City policy gave limited recognition to the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations, with reduced funding that prohibited newsletter distribution to non-City residents who comprise the majority of the population of the two communities. The Transition Team made a formal request to Lane County commissioners for newsletter funding assistance, without success. Subsequently the Eugene City Council provided additional funding and for the first time the two community organizations distributed newsletters to all residents in River Road and Santa Clara, whether they resided within the City limits or not.

Neighborhood Conversations

Given the fact that no prior organized public outreach process had taken place in River Road and Santa Clara, a Task Force subcommittee and the Transition Team's community planner worked for several months designing a public outreach approach tailored to the needs of the Transition Project. Task Force members and neighborhood leaders were engaged in hosting and participating in a series of small neighborhood

conversations. Special effort was made to achieve balanced representation including social and economic diversity, and a workshop was specially designed for under-represented, minority residents. Two pilots were conducted early on to test the format and obtain feedback from participants.

In the winter of 2006 the community planner worked with the RR/SC Task Force to conduct 11 public workshops involving 149 residents. Slightly more participants were from Santa Clara (54%), and 69% of those attending reside in unincorporated areas inside the Urban Growth Boundary. The goal of the outreach process was to identify core values and priorities of River Road and Santa Clara residents in relation to their neighborhood.

The project asked residents to answer three questions about their neighborhood:

1. What do you like or value?
2. What would you like to change?
3. What is your most pressing hope or concern for the future?

Workshop Results

Resident responses identified land use, governance, parks and recreation, and transportation as priority issues. Results show that residents in both River Road and Santa Clara share these values and opinions.

Summary Results of Neighborhood Conversations

Residents value friendly neighbors, rural qualities, current density levels, and alternative transportation (walk, bus, bike)

Residents would like to see changes in development patterns and traffic.

Residents identify these pressing issues for the future: development, density, rural qualities, representation, and annexation.

The results also indicate that there are distinct differences between the priorities of the two communities. In the past ten years, Santa Clara has experienced fast-paced development of large-scale residential subdivisions. Residents are concerned about traffic and the lack of parks and recreation facilities. Two main priorities for Santa Clara residents are annexation issues and the scope and impact of development.

River Road has experienced few large-scale residential subdivisions and more small-scale infill developments. River Road residents are motivated to protect what they value: current density levels, rural qualities, and the River Road Park and Recreation District. Residents are primarily concerned about development and their priorities are density issues, annexation, and preserving rural qualities.

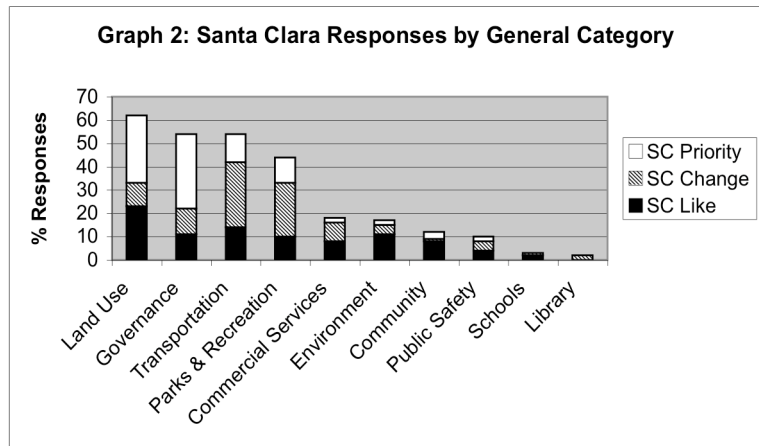
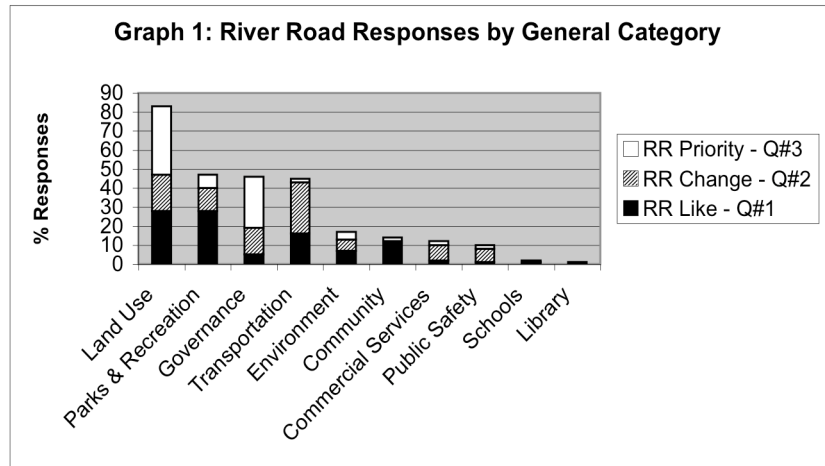
Annexation as a governance issue surfaced as the second highest priority for residents in both River Road and Santa Clara. Unincorporated residents worry about the future, including higher tax rates affecting the viability of special service districts such as the River Road Park and Recreation District. City residents are concerned about the

quality of urban services and equitable tax rates.¹ Although the River Road and Santa Clara communities are experiencing a profound shift with an influx of new City residents, community spirit is strong and residents remain positive about their neighbors.

Outcomes of the public outreach process provide critical information for community leaders working on strategic plans for the future of River Road and Santa Clara (see Graphs 1 and 2 below and Appendix E for the complete Public Outreach Report):

The River Road community is cohesive and clear in terms of two priorities: land use and governance.

The Santa Clara community priorities are varied – in addition to land use and governance, priorities also include transportation and parks and recreation.



Integrating Outreach Results

Results of the Transition Project’s public outreach program were combined with information from the Transition and Heritage White Paper and several months of Task Force deliberations to prepare the River Road/Santa Clara Transition and Heritage Framework. To integrate public outreach information, outcomes were distilled and core beliefs and values were identified. The core beliefs then became the basis for determining unique qualities of River Road and Santa Clara, preparing vision and goal statements, and developing strategies and actions outlined in the Framework.

¹ Currently about 29% of the households in River Road and 41% of the households in Santa Clara are in the City. Property tax rates for City residents in River Road and Santa Clara are about \$8.80 per \$1000. Unincorporated residents in River Road pay \$5.50 per \$1000, and unincorporated residents in Santa Clara pay between \$1-\$2 per \$1000, depending on which fire district they are in. Source: ECONorthwest. 2004. “Fiscal Analysis of Urban Services in River Road and Santa Clara.”

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Transition and Heritage White Paper

Purpose and Objectives

The Community Transition and Heritage White Paper was initially prepared by the Transition Team's municipal governance specialist during the summer of 2005, and refined in early 2006. The White Paper outlined 55 potential transition and heritage initiatives and options for River Road and Santa Clara. The purpose of the White Paper was to structure a process for the Task Force, the City of Eugene, local special service districts, and other service providers to efficiently address complex service delivery issues, and to creatively consider transition alternatives for the two communities experiencing rapid urbanization. (See Appendix F for the complete Transition and Heritage White Paper).

The goal of the White Paper was to find common ground by identifying initiatives that foster and support a real sense that urbanization and eventual future annexation do not necessarily mean an absolute loss of heritage, control, and community. Most of the service options outlined in the White Paper are "annexation neutral" – they could be viable strategies for the community or local governments under any circumstances including those influencing the pace of annexation.

To foster creative dialogue on urbanization impacts, and to reach mutual agreement on the most effective ways to accommodate needs of service providers and the River Road and Santa Clara communities, transition and heritage objectives were emphasized:

Heritage: to preserve and/or enhance traditional community governance, character, appearance, and historic institutions as urbanization and annexation take place

Transition: to achieve a smooth and orderly transition of services, exploring creative methods and practices for the most effective and efficient delivery of urban services with minimal impacts on residents

Transition Issues

Prior annexation and urbanization in River Road and Santa Clara have been driven by factors such as the demand for extending urban services to new developments, utility extensions, development of individual existing lots, property owner preferences, City growth management policies, and needs of local governments and service providers. The result is a checkerboard of gerrymandered and sometimes isolated incorporated territory, often as small as individual 5,000 square foot residential lots.

For the City of Eugene and other service providers, this situation can make service delivery difficult to manage, and raise issues of service and tax equity between in-City and unincorporated residents and property owners. Matters are further complicated by the number of service providers in the two communities, sometimes with overlapping and/or confusing responsibilities.

The range of land uses across the two communities is also diverse, including large residential lots, agricultural lands and homes, newer subdivisions, commercial centers and older business uses, aging and new public institutions, public parklands, river floodplain and riparian areas, and an adjacent railroad maintenance yard (outside the study area boundary).

Annexation and urbanization often bring new and more reliable water and sewer services, paved roads, improved public safety services, and new community facilities such as libraries and parks. Nonetheless, urbanizing areas can also spell change in

**Structure,
Process, and
Outcomes**

the form of more noise, busier streets, higher density, loss of trees and vacant areas valued for their open space, demise of long standing institutions, and “forced” connections to sewer and water lines based on public health concerns. For those already living in areas recently annexed or where annexation is eminent, these changes can quickly “sour” whatever positive benefits annexation can bring. Development may exacerbate feelings of an erosion of livability and community heritage that may have come with prior annexations.

As the City of Eugene, other service providers, and the River Road and Santa Clara communities contemplate future incorporation of remaining territory in the Urban Growth Boundary, the transition and heritage initiative was viewed as an optimum way to assure that when and if these communities join the City, that they do so with the least dislocation and discontent possible.

Published materials including the 2002 River Road/Santa Clara Urban Services Committee Report and the ECONorthwest Fiscal Analysis were reviewed and factual summaries prepared for selected urban services. Service providers were then asked to review the summaries for accuracy and to update them. The consulting team also gleaned information from observations and concerns of the RR/SC Task Force, and monitored other community forums where service delivery questions and issues were discussed and debated.

Service options were identified for their potential to address issues and concerns based on the consulting team’s expertise and experience; by considering existing services, activities and programs of each of the service providers; by researching and understanding applicable solutions developed in other communities in Oregon; and by listening carefully to concerns expressed at RR/SC Task Force meetings as well as in other public meetings. (See Appendix F for assumptions and limitations of the White Paper).

Fifty-five potential options emerged from this process spread across twelve different services, including a list of advantages and challenges for most of the options, and several with sections describing approaches taken by other communities.

- Transition & Heritage White Paper
Service Type**

 - Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services
 - Recreation Services
 - Library Services
 - Land Use Planning
 - Neighborhood Governance
 - Streets
 - Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas
 - Surface Water Management (Stormwater)
 - Public Safety (Police Protection)
 - Water Supply Sanitary Sewer
 - Solid Waste Collection and Recycling

All local service providers were provided an opportunity to review drafts of the White Paper, and to make comments on the accuracy and feasibility of the options presented. The next step was for the RR/SC Task Force to review the options and to make choices that would best support community transition and heritage priorities (See Transition and Heritage Framework Chapter).

**Unifying
Themes**

After undertaking research for the White Paper and identifying initiatives and options that may work for the City of Eugene, other local service providers, and the communities of River Road and Santa Clara, six categories were suggested as potential “unifying themes” for additional consideration. These categories were described as having promise for organizing preferred options that cut across one or more service areas.

Unifying Categories or Themes

Governance – options that preserve or perhaps create processes that provide residents, business owners, and landowners in the River Road and Santa Clara neighborhoods with a sense of community and insure they have a voice over their future

Institutions – options that preserve or create institutions such as community centers, volunteer fire brigades that sustain or strengthen distinct neighborhood identity

Communications – options that preserve or create outlets and processes for communicating within neighborhoods, not only to inform but also to foster a sense of neighborhood identity

Landscape – options that allow urbanizing areas to preserve some of the physical attributes of a more rural or suburban community such as differing street standards, open space, preservation of agricultural lands, lot and housing types

Phasing – options to phase or time incorporation within the benchmark of feasibility under Oregon statutes. Not necessarily limited to physical phasing – for example phasing of a City fee or deferring an assessment to a future date

Services – options for services that are designed primarily to enhance current provisions in urbanizing areas in ways that address existing community needs, not those of the fully developed “post-incorporation” community

Benchmarks

As identified in the 2002 Urban Services Committee Report, the four benchmarks of *Trust, Voice, Equity, and Collaboration* were used to test relevance and potential effectiveness of each of the options and initiatives listed in the White Paper. These benchmarks provided a unique opportunity to filter results of the White Paper through the lens of community stakeholders who gave considerable thought in their discovery process to urbanization and annexation issues and what is perceived as being unsatisfactory in the past.

A fifth benchmark used was *Statutory and Policy Feasibility*.

The Transition and Heritage Framework

Purpose and Process

The Transition and Heritage Framework is the foundation for guiding the future of the River Road and Santa Clara communities, based on the strategic planning process managed by David Reed & Associates and in collaboration with the 12-member RR/SC Task Force, City of Eugene staff, and other service providers.

The Framework planning process provided a structure for better understanding of complex governance and service delivery issues, and for selecting and organizing a set of possible options either identified or stimulated by the Transition and Heritage White Paper. Through a series of iterative exercises, the Task Force developed an initial template of potential themes, strategies, and actions, and refined them over a nine-month period.

Concurrently through extensive public outreach meetings including 11 neighborhood workshops, community priorities and sensibilities were integrated into the Framework process through deliberations of the Task Force. This approach resulted in testing, validating, and refining the Framework in order to reflect the community vision and goals for the future. The Task Force conducted two separate work sessions to generate ideas for a community vision and goal statements. Task Force brainstorming and neighborhood outreach results showed significant similarity.

Importantly, the Framework provided an efficient way for local service providers to engage in the process, to add their input to Task Force ideas, and to develop consensus or general agreement on strategic initiatives based on factors such as feasibility, urgency, and importance to the community and to service providers. The Framework was distributed to all service providers including the special service districts, Lane County, and the City of Eugene.

To obtain direct feedback and involvement of service providers, the Transition Manager and the Transition Team's municipal governance specialist reviewed the Draft Framework with staff of the River Road Park and Recreation District, the Santa Clara Fire Protection District, Lane Rural Fire and Rescue District, and City of Eugene staff and executive managers. City staff prepared a 20-page report responding to all proposed strategies and options outlined in the Draft Framework, rejecting only two strategies outright and expressing willingness to further explore others. (See meeting notes in Appendix G).

Framework Themes

The Task Force identified three of the six “unifying themes” described in the White Paper as having the most applicability to priorities for River Road and Santa Clara residents:

Landscape – sustain the visual and functional “look and feel” and rural heritage of the River Road and Santa Clara communities

Institutions –sustain and in some cases expand key community institutions

Governance – sustain and strengthen the longstanding tradition of local government and self-determination

Amending the Community Plan

These themes responded to the two major objectives of the White Paper: to preserve **heritage qualities** that are highly valued by the two communities, and to achieve a smooth and orderly **transition of services**.

The 1986 “River Road-Santa Clara Urban Facilities Plan” emphasized land use and public infrastructure, and was based in large part on existing land use, designated uses, goals, and policies in the Metro Plan. A 15-member citizen advisory committee helped prepare the Plan, which includes findings, policies, and actions. However, since the Facilities Plan did not include a community vision statement or goals, the Transition and Heritage Framework provides vision and guidance for amending the plan to reflect outcomes of the Framework planning process, especially the preferred future for River Road and Santa Clara.

Key Elements

Key elements of the Framework include:

Uniqueness Statement – five qualities of River and Santa Clara that make the two communities distinctively different from other Eugene neighborhoods

Vision Statement – a preferred vision of the future, reflecting core values and beliefs held by River Road and Santa Clara residents

Goal Statements – ten goals that provide guideposts to fulfill the preferred vision

Strategies and Actions – specific direction, initiatives, tasks, activities, or mechanisms to either achieve the goals or to facilitate execution and implementation

The River Road and Santa Clara communities exhibit a number of special attributes that should be considered as underpinnings for the following Vision, Goals, and set of Strategies and Actions for the two communities. These “Uniqueness” attributes include the following:

Community Uniqueness

Community Growth and Governance

Unlike other areas of Eugene, the City expanded out to the previously existing communities of River Road and Santa Clara, which developed for many years as independent, unincorporated areas. As a result, the River Road and Santa Clara communities formed and continue to support several local institutions to meet local needs. Residents value the five special service districts that still operate today with their legacy of public service and neighborhood governance.

Yet, the future of these districts is tenuous, given an eroding tax base as new development is annexed to the City. Reflecting this history of independent growth, River Road and Santa Clara are also larger in physical size than most areas of Eugene formally identified by the City as “neighborhoods.” Incremental annexation and rapid urban growth continue to dramatically change River Road and Santa Clara. According to City of Eugene and Metro area plans, the River Road and Santa Clara Basin is projected to be 51% covered with impervious surface at UGB “build-out,” a figure that is higher than for any other area of Eugene.

Checkerboard Development

The River Road and Santa Clara communities are also unique because of historical and contemporary checkerboard settlement and development patterns. Today these characteristics are evidenced by:

- Remaining visages of a rural heritage include distinctive architectural styles of buildings, large lots, orchards, heritage trees, “country-style” drainage and streets, and older neighborhoods, with a growing overlay of new subdivisions and infill development.

- Approximately 29% of River Road residents and 41% of Santa Clara residents live in the City, but within a varied and greatly non-contiguous pattern of annexed properties.
- Services are provided by two local water districts, two rural fire districts, a neighborhood park and recreation district, a regional water authority, and by the City of Eugene and Lane County. Three school districts also serve the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

Landscape Qualities

Landscape qualities of the River Road and Santa Clara communities are also distinctive:

- Six miles of the Willamette River with its sloughs and floodplain form the eastern boundary of River Road and Santa Clara north to the confluence with the McKenzie River. This is valued as a unique and high quality natural area and for the special recreational opportunities it provides to the two communities.
- Agricultural lands and remnant orchards, streams and riparian corridors, stately street and heritage trees, and rural streets and neighborhoods help River Road and Santa Clara retain much of their original rural character.
- Santa Clara is surrounded by and integrated with more high-value agricultural lands than any other part of the City.
- Remaining streams, pervious soils, and older surface water drainage features in the two communities are a special opportunity to retain and create sustainable, non-piped drainage systems for the future.

Parks and Open Space

Compared to most of Eugene's official neighborhoods, River Road and Santa Clara lag far behind in developed neighborhood parks and accessible open spaces. Including City and non-City residents, about 18% of the population within the Eugene UGB currently resides in River Road and Santa Clara, whereas only about 4% of the total park system (113 acres) serves this area. No community park that fully meets City standards exists in either River Road or Santa Clara. Only two small boat launches provide public access to the Willamette River adjacent to the Santa Clara community, and the Willamette River Greenway is limited to the River Road community.

Opportunity for Future Collaboration

River Road and Santa Clara are unique because of the historically contentious relationship with the City of Eugene, rooted in part by the debate in the 1980s over the "forced" extension of sanitary sewers to the two communities. River Road, Santa Clara and the City have also been at odds over other issues, and the continued strong opposition by some residents to annexation reflects tensions built up over many years. Yet, residents are passionate about the future of their communities, have a high interest in sound planning, and seek resolution through collaboration with public officials. This River Road and Santa Clara Transition and Heritage Framework represents a first major step in such collaboration.

The River Road/Santa Clara Task Force crafted a vision statement for River Road and Santa Clara, based on sensibilities and priorities generated by the neighborhood conversations, consideration of five unique qualities of the two communities, and Task Force brainstorming.



Community Vision

This community vision statement that emerged for the Transition and Heritage Framework reflects core values and beliefs common to River Road and Santa Clara residents. It is also recognized that there are distinct landscape qualities and priorities that are inherent to the two communities. For example, in Santa Clara the Willamette River is outside the Urban Growth Boundary, while it is totally within the UGB in the River Road community. These discrete characteristics and values should be recognized as the Framework is refined and community planning continues.

River Road and Santa Clara Vision Statement

River Road and Santa Clara are communities where residents value their rural and agricultural heritage and their independence, responding to change with passion, imagination, and can-do spirit. The City of Eugene, Lane County, and neighborhood-based special service districts work in harmony with River Road and Santa Clara residents to provide for responsive governance and efficient provision of public services as the neighborhoods grow and urbanize.

River Road and Santa Clara communities maintain and foster healthy, safe, and green neighborhoods that are family friendly, promote neighborliness, and respect and preserve community heritage, diversity, and landscape qualities. This is reflected in a large network of parks and open spaces, abundance of trees, gardens and natural areas, high quality soils, healthy streams, and other natural drainage systems. Older and newer homes and businesses are harmoniously integrated into community neighborhoods, and there is diversity and choice in community services and transportation.

River Road and Santa Clara are connected to the Willamette River as a special place for walking, bicycling, and enjoying nature. Neighborhoods are also inter-connected with local streets and sidewalks, pathways and bikeways, and parks and open spaces. River Road and Santa Clara each contain several attractive and authentic-feeling neighborhood centers that are pedestrian friendly and provide basic neighborhood services within a one-mile walking distance of most residents, as well as public spaces and amenities that encourage neighborhood civic interactions, social gatherings, shopping, and entertainment.

River Road and Santa Clara residents are proud of the partnership they have developed with other local and regional decision-makers, working in collaboration to maintain a strong sense of community and unique neighborhood identity.



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Goals

The following ten Goals were developed and agreed upon in order to provide direction for achieving ideas embodied in the Vision Statement. These goals were refined through extensive discussions, and finally a vote, of the Task Force.

1. Sustain long-established community traditions of self-governance and self-determination in River Road and Santa Clara, explore creative options and alternative strategies, and help to sustain and where possible expand long-established community institutions such as the parks and recreation and fire protection special service districts.
2. Create an environment for achieving the highest level of public trust, actively engaging residents to resolve past issues, strengthening and building community identity, fostering inclusive public decision-making, and working in partnership toward the preferred future for the River Road and Santa Clara communities embodied by this Transition and Heritage Framework.
3. Develop and adopt neighborhood-based community plans and programs for the River Road and Santa Clara communities, including a common vision, goals and a set of strategic implementing actions.
4. Strengthen and expand the roles of the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations in local governance and decision-making.
5. Establish and maintain stable and livable neighborhoods that sustain distinct community character, connections, and heritage; and that provide for diverse housing choices, inviting open spaces, recreational opportunities, social activities, and neighborhood-based commercial and other services in a child and family friendly environment.
6. Guide growth in a way that strengthens and preserves the character of existing neighborhoods, and supports sustainable development with design excellence and creative, environmentally sound planning.
7. Acquire and preserve parks, natural areas, and open spaces; and protect remaining agricultural lands, and heritage features and patterns.
8. Preserve and restore the Willamette River and Greenway as an open space corridor and enhance to the maximum degree possible the visual, physical, social, and pedestrian connections between the river and the River Road and Santa Clara communities; preserve and restore local stream corridors, smaller drainage ways, roadside ditches, and the soils and trees that function as the area's natural drainage system.
9. Make the River Road thoroughfare the central unifying rather than dividing element of the River Road and Santa Clara communities; and provide for other improvements that make neighborhoods connected, safe, accessible, and walkable.
10. Ensure the provision of quality public services, by partnering with and between residents, local special service districts, the City of Eugene, Lane County, and other groups and jurisdictions to implement this Transition and Heritage Framework.



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Strategies and Actions

Eleven strategies (numbered) and 38 actions (lettered) provide specific direction for implementing the River Road/Santa Clara Transition and Heritage Framework, organized within the three themes of Community Governance, Community Landscapes, and Community Institutions. Refinement of these strategies and actions could include a sorting exercise, identifying priorities and determining if they apply to both communities.

Community GOVERNANCE

Sustain and strengthen the longstanding tradition of local governance and self-determination in the River Road and Santa Clara communities by partnering with appropriate parties and implementing the following Framework Strategies and Actions:

1. Develop and Adopt Community Plans(s), Agreements and Programs

- A. Continue the River Road & Santa Clara community planning process.-
- B. Develop and adopt plan(s) and implementation actions for the River Road and Santa Clara communities in partnership with local institutions, such as the City, County, and community-based special service districts.
- C. In addition to developing and adopting new community plans(s), negotiate and execute necessary intergovernmental agreements and the other policies, plans, agreements, and programs needed to implement said community plan(s) and these Framework Strategies and Actions.

2. Sustain and Expand Direct Community Governance

Provide for a more direct voice for all River Road and Santa Clara community residents on City issues through the following actions:

- A. Expand roles and responsibilities for the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations through full City recognition and by expanding involvement and leadership of the Community Organizations in neighborhood issues on their own initiative.
- B. Expand representation for River Road and Santa Clara community residents on City boards and commissions by establishing formal recruitment and nominating processes for such boards and commissions through the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations.
- C. Establish a single City Council Ward for the Santa Clara community, or a single Ward encompassing both the River Road and Santa Clara communities.
- D. Partner on and implement Framework Strategies and Actions to sustain and potentially expand key institutions in the River Road and Santa Clara communities (see the “Community Institutions” section of this Framework).
- E. Develop, promote, and provide for targeted plan(s), incentives, and programs for the River Road and Santa Clara communities, and for both in-City and non-City residents, that recognize and respect the challenges of living in neighborhoods undergoing significant growth and change

Community LANDSCAPES

Sustain the visual and functional “look and feel” and rural heritage of the River Road and Santa Clara communities by partnering on and implementing the following Framework Strategies and Actions:

1. Establish an Extensive Program of Parks, Open Space and Natural Area Protection, Acquisition, and Development

- A. Improve access to the Willamette River Greenway by expanding public ownership and easements; and by improving and expanding Greenway trails and other facilities, including extension of the Greenway to areas north of Beltline Road.

- B. Modify City and County land development standards to require and encourage more open space and natural area preservation.
- C. Acquire, preserve, and restore neighborhood stream corridors, riparian areas, wetlands and other natural areas; and provide for appropriate public access to these natural areas.
- D. Acquire and develop active and passive recreational parks.
- E. Preserve agricultural lands within the established boundaries of the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

2. Develop and Implement “Heritage” Planning and Development Standards and Programs

Streets and Circulation

- A. Develop “context sensitive” street design models applicable to the River Road and Santa Clara communities.
- B. Site and build more pedestrian, mass transit, and bikeway facilities to encourage walking, biking and bussing to work, shop, and play; and to better connect neighborhoods and reduce vehicular travel miles.
- C. Site and build “traffic calming” improvements to reduce vehicular speeds and “short-cutting”, and to improve neighborhood safety.
- D. Limit connectivity to pedestrian/bikeway connections on specifically identified older local streets – primarily but not exclusively in River Road neighborhoods south of Maxwell Street, especially where vehicular connectivity would permit “bypasses” to and from major traffic generators such as schools and commercial centers.
- E. Maintain older local street sections and features “as-is”, and/or blend newer streets with older street features and standards.
- F. To preserve older street features such as trees, “country-style drainage”, and pavement widths, limit and phase upgrades to arterials and major collectors as traffic volumes increase, and/or create exceptions to City street standards for such classifications.
- G. Construct retro-fit improvements such as grade-separated crossings, additional signalized grade crossings, narrowed street sections, and new traffic calming features to major streets, particularly River Road, that create safe, convenient and attractive means for neighborhood residents to visit and patronize both sides of such streets.

Neighborhood Design and Housing

- A. Promote the identification of distinct neighborhoods within the larger River Road and Santa Clara communities; and also promote the development of local neighborhood-based commercial districts and services within such neighborhoods.
- B. Establish neighborhood development standards, including building design, scale, and density provisions for infill and new subdivision housing, which provide for both diversity in housing choice and for compatibility with current neighborhood housing types and styles.
- C. Use development standards and street design to abate and reduce noise and congestion from vehicular traffic and major traffic generating land uses that are adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- D. Use innovative land development standards, street standards and improvements, and pedestrian and bikeway design, and site and design new commercial areas to connect and unite neighborhoods across major streets, particularly River Road.

Historic Resources

- A. Apply recommendations of the City’s River Road community historic sites survey and study; and initiate a similar study for the Santa Clara community.
- B. Develop street tree and heritage tree preservation programs, including the preservation of established orchards and woodlots within the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

- C. Develop other programs and initiatives to preserve and restore historic sites, patterns, properties, and structures in the River Road and Santa Clara communities.

3. Integrate Environmentally Sound Surface Water Management Programs with Open Space and Street/Development Strategies and Actions

- A. Preserve existing stream corridors, drainage ways, and any designated “Goal 5” natural resources (under State land use laws) that are identified in the River Road and Santa Clara communities.
- B. Prioritize stream and associated riparian corridor restoration, and the “daylighting” of streams and drainages that have been previously piped and channelized.
- C. Use “greenstreet” design, bioswale drainage systems, downspout disconnects, impervious surface limits, and other “sustainable stormwater” and “greeninfrastructure” solutions in local housing developments, street and subdivision design and retro-fits, and in major maintenance and rebuilding of local neighborhood infrastructure.
- D. Give “sustainable stormwater” and “greeninfrastructure” solutions preference in developing and redeveloping major surface water conveyance and treatment infrastructure; and integrate surface water quality and quantity features into neighborhood parks, open space, and natural areas.

Community INSTITUTIONS

Sustain and in some cases expand key institutions in the River Road and Santa Clara communities by partnering on and implementing the following Framework Strategies and Actions:

1. Establish New, and Sustain Current, Community Centers and Public Spaces

- A. Sustain existing public community center facilities and public spaces in the River Road and Santa Clara communities such as Emerald Park, other River Road Parks District facilities, and City parks and playgrounds.
- B. Establish a new public community center and recreational facilities and services in the Santa Clara community including potentially partnering with private and non-profit organizations.
- C. Provide for neighborhood meeting and assembly facilities in new or remodeled City, County and special service district facilities and spaces, such as fire stations and public parks, and/or in leased commercial center spaces.

2. Sustain the River Road Parks and Recreation District

- A. Continue City transfer payments to the River Road Parks and Recreation District for the use of District programs and facilities by in-City residents, and retroactively index such payments starting in FY 2003-04 to reflect the impacts of inflation and annexation on the District’s tax base.
- B. Explore a variety of other partnership options between the Parks District and the City to sustain the District for the foreseeable future.

3. Expand Roles and Responsibilities for Official Community Organizations

See the Community Governance section of this Framework – “Sustain and Expand Direct Community Governance”

4. Support and Sustain Viable Fire Service Volunteer Institutions

Provide for the transfer of both the Santa Clara and Lane Fire District volunteer fire brigades to the City Fire service if and when the City assumes fire protection and EMS for all territory within the Urban Growth Boundary previously served by either Lane Fire or Santa Clara Fire Districts.

5. Support Improvements to Library Services in Both Neighborhoods

- A. Continue and expand in-kind support on the part of the City and other community members and institutions for the River Road and Santa Clara Volunteer Library.
- B. Consider other programs and initiatives to improve library services in the River Road and Santa Clara communities, including establishing public library branch facilities.

6. Support Planned and Orderly Transitions for Existing Fire and Water Districts

Identify alternate service providers and financial strategies to avoid any precipitous loss or interruption of service; and develop interim and transition agreements in advance between the City of Eugene, Lane County, and the River Road and Santa Clara community-based fire protection and water supply special service districts

Looking Forward

Framework Intent

Given the history of community anxiety and complexity of service and urbanization issues in the River Road and Santa Clara communities, the Transition Project was managed as a highly strategic and flexible process. Even with this approach, the project was particularly difficult and challenging with the pervasive lack of trust associated with most aspects of dealing with the inevitable shared destinies of the River Road, Santa Clara, and City of Eugene communities.

Upon reaching agreement with the River Road and Santa Clara Task Force and service providers on vision, goals, strategies and actions outlined in the River Road/Santa Clara Transition and Heritage Framework, the original work plan called for administering an opinion survey of residents to validate major features of the document.

Depending on results of the opinion survey and further refinement, the Framework was then intended to become the basis for a River Road/Santa Clara Transition Plan. The next phase of the project was designed to focus on identifying and prioritizing specific implementing actions, and potentially creating separate action plans for each community.

Intent of Shift in Direction

Near the end of the second year of the Transition Project, the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations proposed to shift the scope of the project to a “neighborhood-led approach” including “refinement and implementation of the Framework Transition Plan,” and “to achieve more neighborhood support for a Transition Plan, and more neighborhood control over the details of implementation.” (Excerpts from the April 25, 2006 memorandum to the City Council and Budget Committee). Subsequently, David Reed & Associates completed its phase of the project and submitted this Final Report.

From the vantage of David Reed & Associates’ Transition Team, many aspects of this community proposal have merit, especially emphasis on an expanded role for the two community organizations in transition planning that is not only consistent with the City’s Neighborhood Initiative, but is also a strong underpinning of the Transition and Heritage Framework. This shift in approach could also provide an opportunity for implementing earlier than anticipated some of the Framework’s high priority strategies and actions.

Next Steps

Outlined here are possible “next steps” for River Road and Santa Clara community leaders, the City of Eugene, and other service providers to consider in the transition process for FY 2007.

Community Plan Amendment

The Framework vision statement and goals reflect current core values of River Road and Santa Clara residents, and these community sensibilities could be acknowledged as formal amendments to the 1986 RR/SC Urban Facilities Plan. Many of the allied Framework strategies and actions might be framed as policy statements, and in conjunction with additional community planning outcomes, they could be considered as either potential replacements and/or additions to existing policies in the Urban Facilities Plan.

Community Planning and Outreach

On a macro scale, the Framework and public outreach results can be used as a springboard for preparing discrete plans for the River Road and Santa Clara communities. Clearly, outcomes of the neighborhood conversations indicate that River Road and Santa Clara are two separate communities, each with its own priorities. Without plunging into formal refinement planning, a targeted and focused process could engage residents by addressing key neighborhood issues such as infill, density, and development standards.

On a program level, there are several strategies and actions in the Framework that have special merit for continued public outreach for both City and unincorporated residents. Here are several for consideration.

Context-Sensitive Street Design

Preserving the “country-style” of partly improved and tree-lined streets is a high priority for some River Road residents, but there are many design and operational issues that require resolution for the City to implement. Working with City engineers, planners, and public works staff, neighborhood leaders could help organize pilot projects to develop modifications to the City’s street improvement standards, emphasizing natural drainage rather than curb, gutter and pipe; preserving existing street trees and retaining narrow roads, and providing limited additional connectivity.

Stormwater Basin Plan

With a Stormwater Basin Plan nearing completion for River Road and Santa Clara, and the high interest of residents in sustainable stormwater practices that acknowledge the rich, pervious soils in the area, there is opportunity to join City staff in advancing best practices through pilot projects, community education and awareness, and problem solving.

Parks, Recreation, Open Space

Access and connections to the Willamette River, a community park and recreation center in Santa Clara, and sustaining the River Road Park and Recreation District are high priorities outlined in the Framework. These can be points of leverage to infuse local residents with enthusiasm and creative thinking to explore these ideas and develop new ways to sustain or improve parks, recreation and open space in the two neighborhoods.

Special Zoning District

Work with City staff to explore feasibility of a special zoning district similar to the Chambers Mixed Use area for non-subdivided lands generally south of Howard Avenue in the River Road area, which could be designed to maintain the current “neighborhood character” as limited in-fill development is allowed, using strategies and actions of the Framework as design principles.

Mixed Use Centers

Work with City staff to provide ample opportunities for public involvement in planning Mixed Use Centers in River Road and Santa Clara, using strategies and actions of the Framework as design principles.

Historic Preservation

Work with City staff to develop land use protection measures for significant historic properties identified in “Eugene’s Historic River Road Survey.” Encourage the City of Eugene to seek funding for a history survey for the Santa Clara community.

Urban/Rural Interface

Work with City staff to determine ways to preserve the urban/rural interface in the Santa Clara area at the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary.

Transition Implementation

Addressing Issues of Trust

Conducting a large-scale public opinion survey would not only provide context for, and potentially affirmation of, the priorities and goals identified by the Task Force, it would also provide an opportunity to identify major issues of concern and ways to address them from a broad, statistically valid, sector of River Road/Santa Clara residents. In turn, this snapshot of community priorities and concerns may provide the means for tackling the pervasive lack of trust and unwillingness to work in a collaborative context, which must be addressed before success can materialize for any future transition planning between the two communities and the City of Eugene.

Transition Agreements with Special Districts

The Framework identifies both the River Road Park and Recreation District and the Santa Clara Fire Protection District as service providers that are most likely to be negatively impacted by continued urbanization and new development in River Road and Santa Clara. Adopting new intergovernmental agreements should be high priorities for the City of Eugene and the two special districts to creatively address major issues and explore options, give predictability to district staff and boards, and provide for orderly and efficient transitions. To complete the transition process, rational steps should also be developed for dissolving the two local water districts.

Annexation Plan and Policies

Without an opinion survey, there is no basis for scientifically determining how residents in River Road and Santa Clara presently view annexation as a community issue, especially in terms of whether or not the Framework and subsequent implementation of a community vision, goals, strategies and actions could be seen as a “quid pro quo” and good faith effort on the part of the City to become a partner in the transition process.

Nevertheless, it now appears timely for the City of Eugene to prepare an annexation plan and a schedule for both the River Road and Santa Clara communities. The plan should explore feasibility of special incentives for residents such as tax deferment to ease their own “transition.” Clear policies should be vetted and adopted in terms of specific annexation strategies and practices, including street right-of-way annexations. The issue of a public vote has surfaced many times throughout the Transition Project, as well as the City’s intent with respect to islands created by incremental annexation, and these issues should be addressed.

The City’s development of an annexation plan could be an integral part of a continued public outreach process managed by the community organizations, with education and awareness on Metro Plan policies, Statewide Planning Goal 14 (Urbanization), and state law regarding annexation requirements, responsibilities and obligations. Benefits of annexation could also be identified and communicated, including a voice for residents through elected City officials.

Setting Priorities

Setting priorities and identifying achievable projects will be the most difficult decision facing community leaders as they develop a work plan to continue community planning in River Road and Santa Clara. To be successful, one over-riding consideration will be important to evaluate when identifying projects: those that coordinate with State planning requirements and City and Metro Plan policies or programs will have a higher level of potential success than those that would require modifications.

Finally, these criteria served the Framework decision-making process well and should also be considered in setting priorities:

- Feasibility** – realistic ideas, those considered most achievable
- Urgency** – opportunities foregone if not addressed in the immediate future
- Importance** – to the community and to service providers

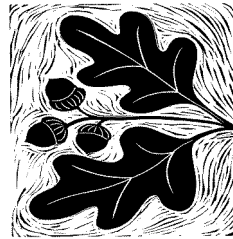
Conclusions

After two years of working in the River Road and Santa Clara communities, the Transition Team has drawn a number of conclusions.

Future planning, negotiations, and discussions in River Road and Santa Clara will likely continue in a distrustful climate. As others have found, there are few examples in Eugene of highly successful, collaborative processes, particularly on complex issues. To move forward, the level of distrust must be lessened to give creative ideas an opportunity to germinate. Some residents seem wedded more to the challenges facing the RR/SC area, rather than engaged in consensus building and problem solving.

As the Osprey Group noted, it is important to engage the “radical middle” – citizens who are well respected, civic minded, who bring obvious credibility and strong commitment to the community.

In this regard, a statistically valid, broad public opinion survey should be conducted to ensure that views of a large sector of residents are captured with respect to issues of concern to the River Road/Santa Clara communities. Without a broad outreach and opinion survey, the future of the transition process is vulnerable to being unduly influenced by a small, vocal, and well-organized group of activists in the RR/SC areas.





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References**

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