

Rio Vista: Past, Present and Future

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Rio Vista is first and foremost, a river town with its roots solidly planted in agriculture and the Delta.

Rio Vista in 1857 was first known

as Los Brazos del Río (Arms of the River) and located about one mile south of Cache Slough and the Sacramento River. In 1858 the town was renamed Rio Vista (Vista del Río) and quickly became a stop for steamships picking up timber and farm produce. After major flooding in 1861 and 1862 land in the present location on higher ground was acquired from Joseph Bruning. The town became a major steamboat stop between Sacramento and San Francisco and many businesses and homes were established along the river and hills.

In 1892 a fire destroyed every business in most of the town; every business was rebuilt. In 1893 Rio Vista was incorporated as a city. Rio Vista grew into an important agricultural center for grain, corn, asparagus, sugar beets, and ultimately sheep and cattle. Many of the beautiful homes built in the area south of Main



Street continue to be well-tended homes today. Some of these homes are featured in the Bridge to Beach walking map and trail, which can be found at the kiosk outside City Hall at the foot of Main Street.

Rio Vista sits on one of the biggest natural gas fields in California; the first well was drilled in 1936 and the industry became an important cornerstone to the economy of the city. Although natural gas is now of lesser importance financially to the city government, the industry has fostered numerous important businesses that still exist.

Today, Rio Vista is still a vital part of the agricultural community. The addition of wind turbines in the Montezuma Hills has changed the western view. Still, the city leans toward the Sacramento River, welcoming boaters and fishers to its banks. Striper, salmon, sturgeon and other fish abound, and the launch ramp at City Hall gets very crowded at times during the year. Fishers can always be found at the Waterfront Park near the bridge, the fishing pier, along the bank of the river bordering the Promenade between City Hall and the bridge, and on River Road near the Real McCoy Ferry II.

Downtown Rio Vista has struggled through the years, but small businesses continue to line Main Street and provide a pleasant place to walk and shop. Main Street is undergoing a renaissance as a new mural takes center stage at Second Street, the trees in the planters are mature and the planters themselves receive a makeover with new plants and pavers donated by community residents. The historic neon signs on the Striper Cafe and Fosters are completely renovated and glow at night with their original beauty. At the south



end of town a Marina and RV park provide berthing for boats and spaces for RV's. The Point Restaurant offers dining on the Sacramento River. There are a number of engaging restaurants both on Main Street and Highway 12.

In 1995 the Army National Guard conveyed 28 acres of prime riverfront land south of town to the city. The city is working to redevelop this land for recreational use, including research and interpretive centers. The City is working with the State Department of Water Resources to establish an Estuarine Research Station on part of the site and a Fish Technology Center run by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. These plans are finally coming to fruition, as the State has nearly completed an environmental impact review of the site. The city envisions a network of trails, benches, picnic areas and ultimately an interpretive center to welcome residents and visitors to this wonderful area.

Special events are becoming a regional attraction bringing people to the city. Rio Vista has hosted the Bass Derby and Festival in October for over 68 years.

In recent years Derby and Festival has developed major appeal, with a car show, vendors lining Front Street, a carnival, parade and a derby enthusiastically businesses and service



clubs. New events such as the Endive Experience, Slow Food Festival, Hog August Bites, and a Farmers Market continue to bring people here. On the Third Thursday of each month, local merchants along Main Street stay open late, artists display in several stores, and entertainment attracts people to enjoy what Rio Vistas small town ambiance.

Rio Vistas past, present and future has a lot to offer; it is a place everyone can relax, dine, and shop, especially since it is the gateway to explore the wonderful, magical Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.