

**CITY OF GOODYEAR  
COUNCIL ACTION REPORT**

<b>SUBJECT: Statement of Intent for the Rio Salado Project</b>	<b>STAFF PRESENTER:</b> Joe Schmitz, Long Range Planner
	<b>CASE NUMBER:</b> None
	<b>OTHER PRESENTER:</b> N/A

**PROPOSED ACTION:**

Authorize the Mayor to execute the Statement of Intent for the Rio Salado Project.

**BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS ACTIONS:**

The original plan for the Rio Salado Project was developed in 1966 under the direction of James Elmore, Dean of the University College of Architecture at Arizona State University, and was published in a community report in 1969. Valley Forward (now known as Arizona Forward) joined with the Rio Salado Project Committee in 1976 and developed a master plan for the Rio Salado Project which proposed the redevelopment of approximately 40 miles of the Rio Salado as it traversed metropolitan Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa. In 1980 legislation was passed which allowed creation of the Rio Salado Development District which was tasked with rallying support and preparing the strategic framework plan for the revitalization, funding and implementation of the Rio Salado Project. The Rio Salado Master Plan was presented to the public in 1982.

Since then, some of the Valley's cities and communities have taken action to improve the Rio Salado and its watershed by developing parks, bike paths, bridges, habitat restoration, flood management and associated river enhancements. The Rio Salado has also undergone a number of significant projects related to flood control, water treatment, environmental quality, ecological restoration and public open space amenities, including the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan, Tres Rios Habitat Restoration and Wetlands, Rio Salado Oeste, Rio Salado Phoenix, Rio Salado Tempe, Rio Salado Mesa and Tempe Town Lake. Some of these projects and improvements have had a positive effect on tourism, employment, housing, the tax base, art and culture, recreation, economic development and wetland and riparian rehabilitation, yet the Rio Salado remains significantly underdeveloped given its economic potential.

Recently U.S. Senator John McCain has championed and catalyzed the charge to complete the Rio Salado Project and, with the Assistance of Arizona State University, establish a working group to promote the project and assist in the overall planning, review and approval process for the project. The Rio Salado Project is now envisioned to extend over 45 miles along the river's corridor and up to a mile wide through Maricopa County and span the City of Buckeye, City of Goodyear, Gila River Indian Community, City of Avondale, City of Phoenix, City of Tempe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and the City of Mesa. These communities believe

that the Rio Salado Project has the potential to be the focus of a grand vision for civic identity - an iconic landmark for the Valley - which will promote and provide significant economic, recreational and water conservation value.

It is now the desire of these communities, along with Arizona State University and other stakeholder groups, such as landowners, developers, non-profit organizations, utilities & services, and federal entities, and the greater public, to unite and create a cooperative public-private relationship, and to organize, design and implement the Rio Salado Project to its fullest economic, recreational and water conservation capacities.

Besides promoting the basic themes of economic development, transformation of a neglected river environment into a recreational haven, and water recharge, conservation and flood control, the participants in the Statement of Intent (SOI) agree to work together cooperatively to form a Rio Salado Authority to develop plans and pursue funding opportunities and facilitate development of projects consistent with these themes and goals.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS:**

The Rio Salado Project, as re-envisioned, re-energized, and redefined to include the El Rio portion of the Gila River, has the potential to garner both public and private support for projects that implement the vision for this river corridor. To date much of the effort to implement the vision for the Rio Salado Project has been done by individual communities. By execution of the proposed Statement of Intent, all of the entities with an interest in the future development of the Rio Salado, Tres Rios and El Rio Corridors can work together to a Rio Salado Authority to promote common interests involving development along the river. While the Statement of Intent expresses support for the Rio Salado Project and promotes cooperation, it is not intended to be a binding statement of intent and it is understood that participation in the SOI shall not in any way limit the legislative discretion of the governing bodies of the participating entities. Any entity may opt out of the SOI with 90 days' notice to the other parties.

### **FISCAL ANALYSIS:**

The SOI specifically states that approval of the SOI does not imply any financial obligations or commitment on behalf of the participants, other than the voluntary contribution of staff resources from time to time.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the Mayor to execute the Statement of Intent for the Rio Salado Project as proposed.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Statement of Intent for the Rio Salado Project