



River District Planning Paves the Way for Transformation

Transforming an isolated commercial area into a mixed-use, pedestrian and bicycle friendly community was the ambitious goal adopted by the City of Sacramento and The River District in 2011 for the 830-acre central city neighborhood located south of the American River and north of downtown Sacramento.

In recent years more than \$450 million has been invested in the River District through public and private projects such as the Township 9 infrastructure, the California Lottery and California Highway Patrol headquarters buildings, the Greyhound Terminal, interchange upgrades at Interstate 5 and Richards Boulevard, Regional Transit's Green Line to the River District, the Township 9 signature light rail station, and the North 7th Street connection to downtown. Projects such as these have brought over 1,000 new jobs to the District.

More recently, infrastructure has been completed throughout Township 9 including the extensive streetscape elements on the 7th Street Promenade. Construction is underway on the new Cannery Place Apartments, a 180-unit apartment project that includes a public plaza and ground-floor retail.

Quietly developers are seeking investors and planners, engineers and transportation specialists. Economic development experts are identifying and applying for federal, state and regional funding to finance projects that will continue shape the River District into a well-connected, mixed-use community.

Reshaping North 12th Street

Under a Caltrans planning grant, the City of Sacramento's public works and economic development departments are working to improve the safety, function, accessibility and look of North 12th Street, a major gateway to the city, with improvements designed to benefit pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transit riders.

Called North 12th Complete Streets, the project looks to address concerns that include inbound traffic calming from State Highway 160; improvements to the five point intersection and crosswalks at North 12th, North B and Dos Rios streets; safety of Sacramento Regional Transit light rail tracks; addition of sidewalks on the east side of North 12th; addition of bike lanes; and overall improvements to lighting and aesthetics.

In a companion project to North 12th Complete Streets, beginning in 2014, upgrades to signalization and striping will take place to improve signal performance and safety along 12th Street from Sproule Avenue through J Street. The project will replace antiquated signal poles, introduce more visible signals, and incorporate new striping to better guide vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

Upgrading an Aging Sacramento River Crossing

In 2010, the Sacramento River Crossings Alternatives Study conducted by the cities of West Sacramento and Sacramento prioritized a new northern crossing in the area between C Street and Richards Boulevard. Through research

of funding opportunities, it became apparent that replacing the 100-year-old I Street Bridge would qualify for federal Highway Bridge Replacement funds designed to replace obsolete bridges, upgrade standards and maintain connectivity.

The I Street Bridge, owned by the Union Pacific Railroad, will remain as it is and will continue to service rail traffic, but a new bridge for automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians will be built in the same vicinity, according to Jesse Gothan, an associate engineer with for the City of Sacramento.

Work on engineering concepts, determination of the exact location, and preparation of environmental documents will be underway soon for the project that will also require Coast Guard approval. Final design and engineering are projected to be complete in 2018 with construction to be complete in 2020.

The result will be a first class neighborhood friendly moveable (opens to allow passage of boat traffic) bridge that accommodates all modes of transportation—pedestrians, bikes, cars and, perhaps even streetcars.

Transforming Public Housing

Through a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD), the Sacramento and Housing Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) has been working for the past 18 months on a plan to transform a 218-unit public housing project in the River District into a 650-unit mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with supporting services designed to attract residents who wish to live in the central city.

Area experts and community members serving on one of four task force groups (housing, neighborhood, education and people) focused on a planning area that includes the River District and The Railyards. The process identified desirable housing and neighborhood amenities needed for the transformation: A mixture of market rate, affordable, and public housing; neighborhood supporting retail and services; community parks and amenities; the return of a K-8 elementary school; and the addition of a North 12th Street light rail station in the area. McCormack Baron Salazar, a developer of economically integrated urban neighborhoods, is working to design housing models that will provide for the flexible lifestyles anticipated in the project.

SHRA is preparing an implementation grant application that, if awarded, will help make this vision a reality. The project will become a model for what is possible in transforming the neighborhood and the lives of people living there.

Enhancing American River Crossings

Over the past year, the City of Sacramento conducted an American River Crossing Alternatives Study that identified community values and developed a purpose and need statement for the addition of an American River crossing between downtown Sacramento and South Natomas. Working with dozens of stakeholders ranging from business organizations, American River Parkway organizations, neighborhood associations, and bike, river, fishing, transit, environmental, planning, and transportation organizations, the study considered eight potential connections

which were narrowed to three recommendations that provide solutions to improve connections across this natural barrier:

- Enhancements to Interstate 5 that will add bike and pedestrian accessibility,
- A new crossing connecting the River District to Natomas from Sequoia Pacific Boulevard to Truxel Road (the identified Green Line to the Airport crossing) that includes all modes of transportation: vehicles, light rail, bikes, and pedestrians, and
- Replacement of the Highway 160 Bridge over the American River/American River Parkway coupled with a realigned Northgate Boulevard connection to Highway 160, designed to eliminate closure of Northgate during flood events and provide a safe entryway into Sacramento that will accommodate cars, buses, light rail, bicycles and pedestrians.

All three options provide solutions to improve connectivity by various modes of travel and have the ability to appeal to a variety of transportation funding programs.

Paving the Way for Transformation

The transformation taking place in the River District requires the right timing, planning and financial support to realize the vision. The time is right for Sacramento, and the dedicated talent of many individuals in both the public and private sectors is assuring that proper planning continues to pave the way. Support from investors and work to research, identify, apply for and procure grants and funding from various sources will secure the future of the River District and the central city.

[The River District](#), an 830-acre central city district, is quickly transitioning from a light-industrial, low-density commercial area into one of Sacramento's up and coming vibrant, mixed use, transit oriented communities. The century-old commercial area will combine an eclectic mix of residential, office and commercial land uses designed to take advantage of multi-modal transportation options, riverfront views and open space. www.riverdistrict.net, (916) 321-5599.