



See Sacramento's River District as a Place to Live and Work

COMMENTARY OCT 30, 2017 By *Patty Kleinknecht*

Business leaders in the River District want Sacramento businesses, investors and city officials to take a second look at this long-time commercial area that at one time was focused on the outward movement of goods via rail and water. It is now time to create an inward movement, attracting business and talent to the area's historic, authentic environment, which is ideally positioned to feed 21st century jobs and industry.

The district comprises 830 acres located at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers and serves as the northern entry to Sacramento's central city. With the historic brick buildings featured along the North 16th Street corridor, it has the potential to become a desirable workplace for the next generation.

As part of the "North 16 Street Business Strategy" prepared for the City of Sacramento by revitalization consultant Rod Stevens, of the business strategy firm Business Street, members of the River District community had the opportunity to dig deep into the district to identify the features that set us apart from other areas in the region:

We have an inventory of historic brick buildings that provide the authenticity the next-generation workforce seeks to grow their business. Not every business fits the attitude of a typical office building. The new, tech-savvy worker is mobile and does not need pricey, premium office space. They seek space that has character, is inexpensive, flexible and adaptable to allow for computers or high-tech production equipment as their needs dictate.

Nearby housing offers the option for employees to work near where they live, with those homes situated in a highly-desired metropolitan setting. With Township Nine and Twin Rivers developing homes in the River District, we can offer a place to work and live within a short bike ride to recreation, restaurants, entertainment, other businesses and the California State Capitol.

To find an urban lifestyle with a vibe, one needs to look no further than Sacramento Pipeworks, the most recognized climbing gym in the area; Vintage Monkey, the only motorcycle-themed lounge in the area with mechanics on staff; and the proposed Pintworks microbrewery as proof that new and interesting things are happening at the River District.

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As a new generation of talent flocks to urban locations across the country, major employers and innovative startups want to base their operations near those urban centers. Business and industry are seeing an urban renaissance as a talented workforce seeks to locate their creative, technical and production operations in close proximity to their homes and near the attributes they find desirable: brew pubs, climbing gyms, trendy restaurants and nightlife.

How will those urban denizens merge with the machine shops, printers, distribution centers and others that now call the River District home? The union of the two lifestyles should work well as the mixture of old industry and new is what makes the area attractive as an incubator for future industry. The area may be particularly well-suited for artisanal production of specialty foods, fashion and furnishings that are made and sold locally; marketing and design firms that thrive in non-traditional space; and the new businesses that will likely include software, agricultural technology, high-tech engineering and the fabrication of products yet to be conceived.

As we imagine the future, we recognize the obstacles. Perhaps most notably in the River District is the high concentration of social services. Sacramento City, County and business leaders should seek to decentralize social services, both to reduce the adverse impact on any one neighborhood and to provide better access for the people they serve, closer to their home communities; the River District is working closely with City and County leaders to make this happen.

Business and industry are changing. We will see more local crafting and manufacturing taking place in non-traditional settings. Often, engineering and design professionals comprise 90 percent of product development while actual production is the final 10 percent, and the workplace needs to allow for flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing technology.

The 21st century is here and the River District deserves a second look. It's up to our district, our business leaders and the City of Sacramento to take the necessary steps. We must first identify our current assets so we can then understand how to create an urban environment that provides space for homes and jobs near transportation, urban parks, the riverfront and open space.

In the decades to come, the River District can become an impressive northern gateway to the central city, but we need to take the first steps and we should take those steps now. Please pay attention to what is happening in the River District, consider us for the expansion of your business and join us on the adventure.