

A Specific Plan for the Development of West Sacramento

VOLUME 1: Vision, Plan, and Procedures

West
Sacramento
Bridge District
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Sacramento
Bridge District

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Volume 1: Vision, Plan, and Procedures

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Preface

This document is an update to the Triangle Specific Plan, which was originally adopted in 1993 to provide a planning framework for the area bounded by State Route 275 (now Tower Bridge Gateway) to the north, US-50 to the south, the Sacramento River to the east, and the junction of Tower Bridge Gateway and US-50 to the west.

Following the adoption of the Plan and the associated environmental document, many obstacles prevented the desired development from occurring. Active rail spurs separated the bulk of the Triangle from the riverfront, divided properties and prevented intersection improvements. Soon after the adoption of the Plan, the economy went into a multi-year recession. The state of California had rules that precluded the location of state offices west of the Sacramento River, substantially constraining the market for Class A office space in West Sacramento. In the context of prevailing market conditions, neither the City nor the property owners had the financial capacity to implement the infrastructure envisioned by the original Plan.

Despite these challenges, the City and property owners continued exploring how to facilitate development in the Triangle. Raley Field and the Ironworks projects were constructed, each of which necessitated minor modifications to the Plan. The Triangle was renamed the Bridge District to better reflect the area's location and character. The City and Bridge District property owners developed a close working partnership, which yielded its first tangible fruits in the agreement to remove the riverfront rail spur, a joint effort through which the City paid \$11.5 million and the property owners contributed \$5 million by forming Community Facilities District #23. Staff and the property owners have continued this close relationship, which has resulted in the frank, ongoing and detailed dialogue that precipitated this revision of the Triangle Specific Plan.

Today, many of the obstacles that had formerly impeded development in the Bridge District have been eliminated, and the area is poised to realize the development potential that was first envisioned in the 1993 specific plan. Over one mile of railroad track has been removed. The state has occupied hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space in West Sacramento, and has included West Sacramento sites on its short list for future office locations. The City and property owners have developed infrastructure plans that economize on costs, while maintaining the commitment to quality that was a hallmark of the original specific plan. Perhaps most significantly, the City has been awarded a \$23 million grant through state Proposition 1C for the construction of needed infrastructure in the Bridge District.

The Proposition 1C grant carries with it the obligation for the City and property owners to begin production of the first high-density residential units in the Bridge District by 2012. To facilitate this and other development, it is necessary for the City to provide clear, up-to-date planning guidance that incorporates the results of the City's ongoing dialogue with property owners, and responds to current and expected market conditions. Recommended for approval by the Planning Commission on June 18, 2009 and adopted by the City Council on November 18, 2009, this document is intended incorporate the many changes that have occurred in the Bridge District since the adoption of the 1993 specific plan, and to provide the framework that property owners and developers will use to plan, design, construct and operate development projects that embody the bold vision laid out by the City Council for the Bridge District.

1. VISION

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

This plan is based upon the twin principles that urban development forms have economic, environmental, social, and aesthetic advantages that are worth the cost of planning and developing them; and that the Bridge District is an ideal location for development of urban intensity to benefit West Sacramento and the region.

There are many reasons to facilitate an urban development model in areas, like the Bridge District, where it will be supported by the market. Urban development yields higher rents and more tax revenue per square foot than similar suburban development. Urban development is more compact, so it uses less land than suburban models. Transportation costs are minimized, as larger ridership make mass transit feasible in urban environments, while proximity of housing to jobs reduces the need for automobile commuting. Urban environments encourage social and economic integration, as housing and job opportunities at various economic levels can be located in close proximity, in many cases in the same building. Recognizing these advantages, the SACOG Blueprint project, Portland's Urban Growth Boundary, and other regional planning efforts have universally encouraged more compact development models and the avoidance of sprawl as a recipe for improved quality of life.

Given the obvious benefits of compact development models, and the success of those models just across the river, it is curious that the Bridge District is not already developed as an extension of downtown Sacramento's urban fabric. West Sacramento's Bridge District is located less than one mile from the state capitol and features beautiful river frontage, excellent highway access, and ample available land, yet to date it has not shared significantly in the development that has shaped the growth of downtown Sacramento. An aerial photograph of the Bridge District and adjoining areas is a study in contrasts, with high-density office and retail development abounding immediately to the east of the Sacramento River, juxtaposed against expanses of bare dirt currently found in the Bridge District.

The development pattern that exists today is an artifact of obstacles that historically thwarted growth along West Sacramento's riverfront, but which have now been largely eliminated. The purpose of this document is to establish the guidelines whereby the Bridge District's real estate potential can be realized, allowing it to become a regional asset, providing jobs, new housing opportunities, and recreational and entertainment opportunities.

Historical Context

The Bridge District had been an active industrial area for over 70 years before entering the slow decline that led to the vacancy and underutilization characteristic of the area at the time the 1993 specific plan was adopted. The Rice Growers Association operated large storage silos near Highway 50 for many years, before the structures were demolished in the 1990's. The CEMEX (formerly Lone Star) cement terminal located just south of the District was constructed in the 1950's, and brought dozens of rail cars to per week to its facility just south of Highway 50, storing empty cars on track located between the river and South River Road. The CEMEX terminal ceased rail operations in 2009. Weyerhaeuser, Inc. operated a paper recycling facility that made extensive use of the same rail spur, also ceasing operations in 2009. Other legacy industrial users

included State Box Company, which was acquired and ceased operations as part of the Raley Field land transactions in the late 1990's. By 1993, many industrial users in the Bridge District were in serious decline, setting the stage for the development of the original specific plan and a new vision for West Sacramento's waterfront.

Why the Bridge District?

Of the City's ten miles of frontage on the Sacramento River, the Bridge District is the best suited for new urban-scale development. The Bridge District touches the West Capitol Avenue and Washington neighborhoods, areas that have seen substantial public and private investment in the past decade. The District is also bracketed by two of the major entries to the city, giving it a prominent role as a gateway to the City from points east. The Bridge District is adjacent to downtown Sacramento, and, in combination with it, can provide a stronger, more vibrant heart for the Sacramento region, providing jobs and new housing for West Sacramento residents. Finally, the Bridge District's prominent location along the Sacramento River will allow the City to reclaim its historic role as a water edge community.

The geography of the Bridge District provides a natural location for the development of an urban waterfront district. The defining feature of the District is its mile-long frontage on the Sacramento River. In addition to the prime waterfront location, the Bridge District rests upon a bluff that raises most of the area out of the floodplain. The raised elevation distinguishes the area from many other waterfront properties in the Sacramento region where abrupt levees limit development potential and cut off water views. In the Bridge District, the broad bluff along the river provides an opportunity to develop buildings of an urban scale that can capitalize on views across and along the Sacramento River.

Goals of this Plan

The intent of the Bridge District Specific Plan is to provide a framework for the development of a well-planned, waterfront-oriented urban district for the City of West Sacramento, complementing established residential and commercial districts within the City with a balanced mix of uses. The Plan sets forth goals and objectives that the City of West Sacramento would like to achieve as the Plan is implemented. It also establishes a framework for how the public and private sector will work together to achieve the goals through identification of responsibilities. The policies establish the City's approach to implementation of the goals and describe the specific commitments of the City to stimulate and guide desired development of the district. The City will evaluate projects against the relevant goals and policies, recognizing the unique contribution of each project. The specific goals of the plan are:

- Develop a place of civic significance that recognizes the City's current and historic ties to the Sacramento River.
- Provide capacity for and attract new business to enhance the economic vitality of the City.
- Encourage and facilitate development of affordable high quality, residential uses.
- Create new open space, river access and recreational opportunities.
- Expand and enhance the role of West Sacramento in the region.

-
- Establish the Bridge District as a vibrant urban area.
 - Promote and implement alternative modes of transportation.
 - Promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses and compact development forms that are environmentally responsive.
 - Provide adequate parking while respecting other Plan goals.

The City of West Sacramento expects that achievement of these goals will produce a vibrant riverfront for the City, benefiting existing residents and the larger region. The Bridge District Plan provides property owners with the ability to address multiple real estate markets simultaneously and to accommodate a range of land uses. The Plan provides for moderate to high-density residential, office-commercial, retail-commercial, service commercial, commercial-lodging, medical campus, industrial, government and institutional uses. This broad array of uses and activities is essential to the establishment of an urban waterfront district and community center with vitality. The cohesive planning framework found in this Plan is intended to facilitate accelerated development activity in the Bridge District by clearly articulating the City's expectations, thereby reducing the uncertainty frequently encountered in emerging development areas.

1.1.1 Scope of this Plan

The Specific Plan for the Bridge District will have four components: *Volume 1* is an overview of the Plan and policies; *Volume 2* includes design guidelines and development standards for streetscapes including the public and quasi-public realms; *Volume 3* contains the implementation strategy, which defines the scope of public improvements and identifies the means, requirements and conditions by which desired development can be encouraged to occur; and *Volume 4*, to be finalized at a later date, will contain architectural design guidelines.

The Plan is based on the goals and objectives adopted by the City for the Bridge District. It begins with a statement of policies derived from these goals and objectives that provide direction for development throughout the Plan area. Implementation of some public design aspects will require discretion on the part of both property owners and the City; these are provided for through the architectural design guidelines found in *Volume 4*. Other aspects require consistent application of standards; these are presented as development regulations that are to be implemented as standards in the City's Zoning Ordinance.

1.1.2 Location & Existing Character

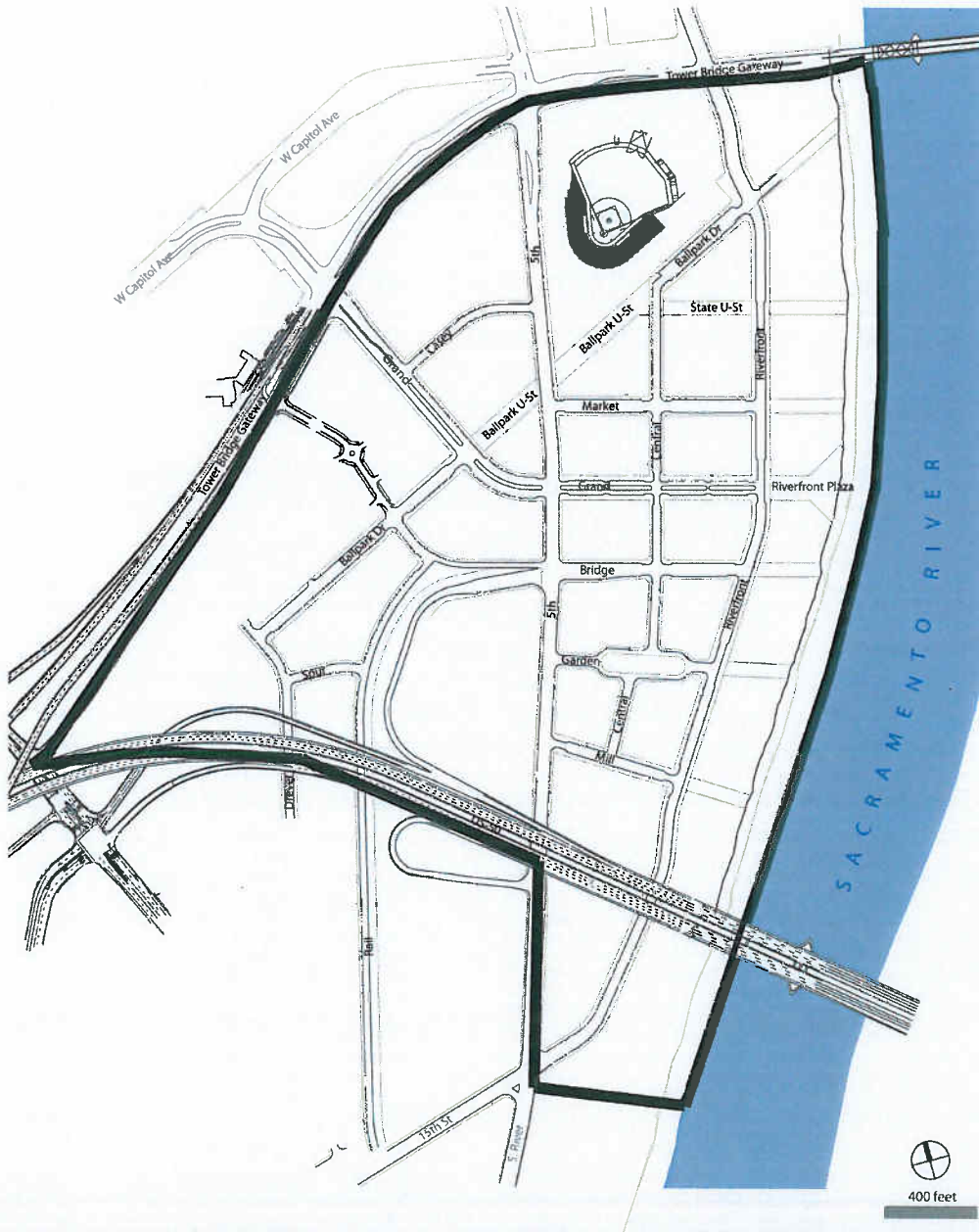
The Bridge District is located in West Sacramento directly across the Sacramento River from downtown Sacramento and the state capitol, allowing easy pedestrian or bicycle access to the amenities found there. The district is bound by Tower Bridge Gateway, Highway 50 and the Sacramento River and includes a small parcel south of Highway 50 that is part of the former Rice Growers Association property. The policies in this plan will also apply to the CEMEX property south of Highway 50. The Bridge District is approximately 188 acres in size. Nearby land uses include a mixed-use, predominantly residential community to the north, the Broderick area; the City's Central Business District and Civic Center to the west, along West Capitol Avenue; and the Pioneer Bluff and Stone Lock districts to the south along South River Road.

West Sacramento has access to the regional interstate transportation system via Interstate 80, Interstate 5 and Highway 50. The Bridge District has direct freeway access via on- and off ramps to Highway 50. Arterial streets adjacent to the Bridge District are Tower Bridge Gateway, Jefferson Boulevard, and West Capitol Avenue, each of which gives access to other neighborhoods of West Sacramento and to surrounding communities.

A key feature of the Bridge District is its relatively high elevation. The Bridge District's topography generally slopes up from a low point in the western extremity to a bluff above the Sacramento River in the eastern part of the site, providing an opportunity to extend visibility of the waterfront environment deep into the core of the Bridge District via access corridors. The view of Downtown Sacramento across the river provides a very attractive visual setting for future development in the Bridge District.

The Bridge District has been in a state of physical decline for some years, although development of Raley Field and the Ironworks projects have initiated a redevelopment process that the Bridge District Plan aims to continue. Outside of Raley Field and Ironworks, the existing character of the area is one of under-used industrial land and economically obsolete buildings, but includes a few active businesses. There is no significant vegetation in the interior of the area. Along the river edge, there are intermittent groves of canopy trees and riparian ground cover, although much of it is neglected and misused.

While many of the obstacles that historically impeded development in the Bridge District have been removed, a number of challenges remain. The relocation and demolition of existing incompatible industrial uses will be an ongoing process during implementation of the Plan. The Union Pacific switching yard must be relocated to completely achieve the Plan's goals. New at-grade crossings of Tower Bridge Gateway are required. To assemble developable parcels, land will need to be sold or exchanged among property owners without creating undevelopable "slivers." The Plan is designed to facilitate the orderly resolution of these issues to expedite the build-out of the district in accordance with the Plan.



Triangle Specific Plan: Bridge District Boundary

SERA Architects • URS • City of West Sacramento • Wood Rodgers

1.1.3 The Place the Plan Would Produce

The Specific Plan provides a framework for creation of a mixed-use community that will, over time, become the most urbanized area in West Sacramento. It will be readily accessible to other parts of the City yet will draw its most conspicuous identity from the river. The Bridge District will provide a complementary mix of commercial and residential uses, making it an active place at all hours. A variety of developers will develop projects on land parcels of differing sizes, uses, and physical characteristics, providing a diversity of environments and experiences for residents, workers and visitors.

The organization of streets and open spaces as described in the Plan establishes the basic structure and character of the Bridge District and its neighborhoods, and is designed to create a walkable, human-scale environment that encourages a pleasant pedestrian experience. Streets have been designed to accommodate an evolving urban core with a growing use of transit and alternate transportation modes as the area matures. Early development is expected to provide a mix of housing, offices and retail uses close to the waterfront, while areas west of Fifth Street that are constrained by rail uses will develop more slowly.

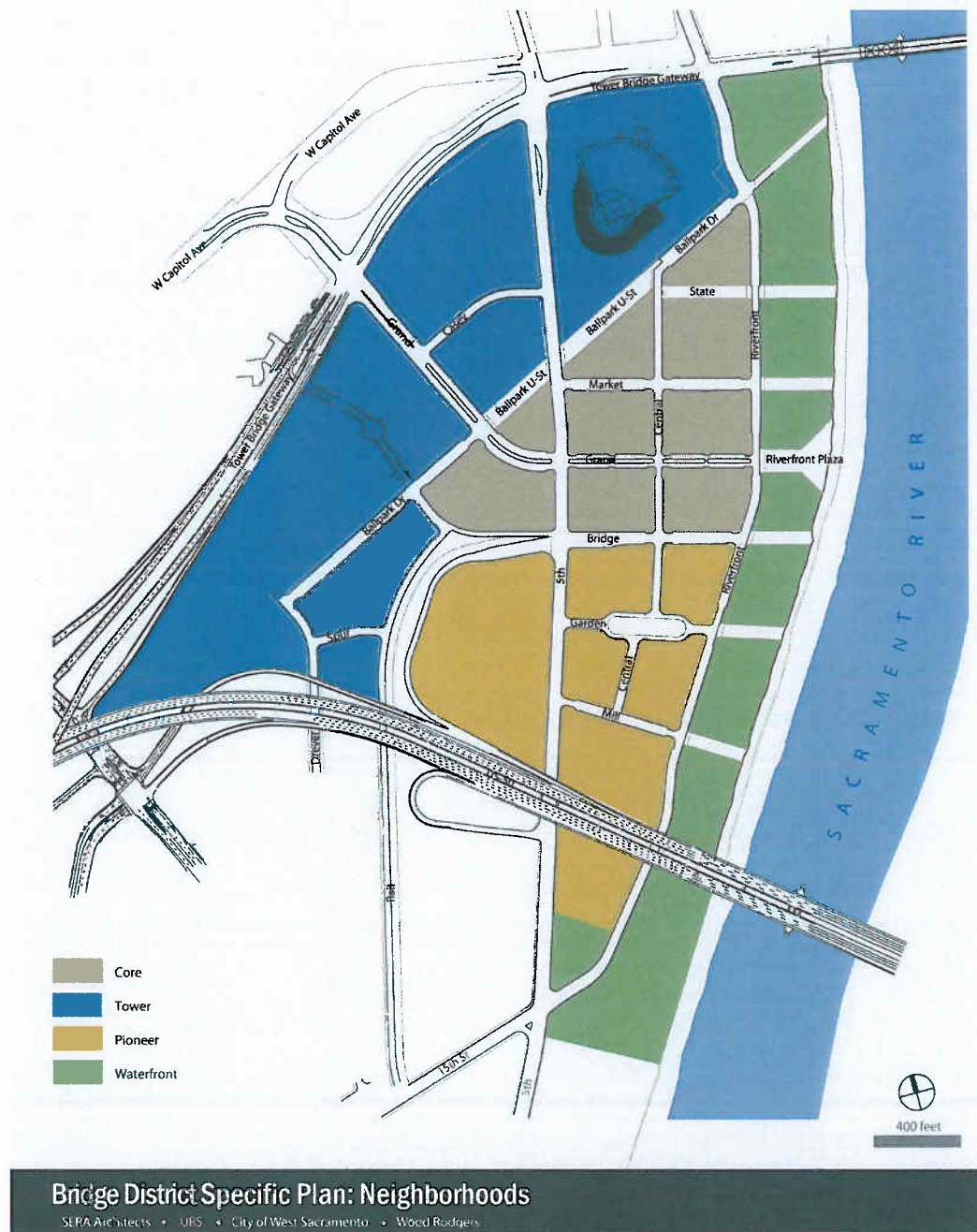
Landscape and open space will play an important role in establishing the character of the Bridge District. The waterfront itself will be largely devoted to public access and its qualities will be extended into the heart of the Bridge District via the east-west streets and associated view corridors. The district will feature four key parks: the River Walk extension, which will traverse the district along the river, connecting in the north to the existing River Walk Park; Ironworks Park, to be located west of Ironworks Avenue; Garden Park, located on Garden Street; and the Core Park, which will provide a green open space in the heart of the district. In addition to these public open spaces, individual development projects are contemplated to include open space and recreational components, assuring that the Bridge District will gracefully bring together the natural beauty of the river with the built environment.

The implementation of the plan will result in the creation of an urban riverfront district that is without precedent in the Sacramento region in terms of the river access it affords; the multiplicity of residential, commercial, retail, recreational and entertainment options it creates; the quality of its infrastructure and landscaping; and its connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods. The Bridge District will be a place where shady, tree-lined streets, gracious parks, and vibrant street-level storefronts will encourage residents and visitors to get out of their cars and interact with each other. Strong pedestrian, vehicular and mass transit connections will make the Bridge District easily accessible. The plan is designed to produce a place with a signature package of amenities and ambiance, a place where people will want to live and work.

1.2 Neighborhoods

The Bridge District is planned to develop as a composite of four distinct but interdependent transit-oriented neighborhoods: the Waterfront, the Core, the Tower Edge and the Pioneer Edge. The 2009 update to the Plan merged the former Park Blocks neighborhood into the Core and Tower Edge. Each neighborhood has a unique character and should recognize and respect the character of abutting neighborhoods. All are encouraged to accommodate a mix of office, residential, ancillary retail and public uses. Hotels may also be developed in some areas. Each neighborhood would accommodate uses differently, thus developing its own image and quality while providing for diversity within the Bridge District.

Bridge District Neighborhoods



1.2.1 The Waterfront

Facing the Sacramento River, the Waterfront is the most conspicuous edge of West Sacramento and will become a recreational focus for the city and the region. The City will develop a central plaza to accommodate the large population that it will attract. The plaza will be flanked by retail uses, and will provide for programmed and unprogrammed events. To the north and south of this active central area, the riverbank will form a green backdrop for riverside condominiums, apartments and businesses. The Waterfront will be the

