

# Sacramento California



**Urban Land  
Institute**

**Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use**

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# Sacramento California

Redeveloping the Railyards to Strengthen the Urban Core

January 25–28, 2011  
A ULI Daniel Rose Fellowship Program City Study Visit Report

Urban Land Institute  
Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use  
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW  
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# About the Urban Land Institute

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**T**he mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;

- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has nearly 30,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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# About the ULI Rose Center

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The mission of the ULI Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use is to encourage and support excellence in land use decision making by providing public officials with access to information, best practices, peer networks, and other resources to foster creative, efficient, practical, and sustainable land use policies.

Daniel Rose, chairman of Rose Associates Inc., in New York City, in 2008 committed \$5 million to the Urban Land Institute to create the center. Rose Associates operates throughout the East Coast as developer and manager of more than 30 million square feet of major office towers, commercial retail centers, mixed-use complexes, and high-rise residential buildings. Rose has pursued a career involving a broad range of professional, civic, and nonprofit activities.

The Daniel Rose Fellowship is the flagship program of the Rose Center. The Rose Fellowship is a yearlong program (from fall of the first year to fall of the next) intended to benefit the individual fellows through leadership training and professional development opportunities and to benefit their respective cities through technical assistance on a local land use challenge. The Rose Fellowship focuses on leadership, integrated problem solving, public/private collaboration, and peer-to-peer learning.

For the 2010–2011 fellowship year, the Rose Center invited the mayors of Charlotte, Detroit, Houston, and Sacramento to participate. Each mayor selected three additional fellows and a coordinator to serve as the Rose Fellowship team from his or her city. Each city's Rose Fellowship team selected a specific land use challenge on which they receive technical assistance.

During the city study visits, two assigned Rose Center faculty members, one fellow from each of the other three cities, and additional experts spend four days visiting each of the fellowship cities to learn about their land use challenge. Modeled after ULI's Advisory Services panels, these visits include briefings from the host city's fellows and other local officials, a tour of the study area, and interviews with stakeholders. The visits conclude with a presentation of initial observations and recommendations from the visiting panel of experts, as well as ongoing assignments for the fellowship team. Each city's fellowship team also works with its assigned faculty at the ULI Fall Meeting and at two working retreats, and Rose Center staff and faculty return later in the year to conduct a follow-up visit.

The Rose Center also holds forums and workshops on topical land use issues for public sector leaders. Recent subjects have included implementing approaches to green building, responding to multifamily foreclosures, and finding creative solutions to local fiscal challenges. In addition, the Rose Center provides a limited number of scholarships for public sector officials to attend the annual ULI Fall Meeting.

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# Acknowledgments

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The ULI Rose Center would like to thank Sacramento mayor Kevin Johnson, assistant city manager John Dangberg, Hodgson Company president John Hodgson, and Sacramento Area Council of Governments executive director Mike McKeever for agreeing to be Daniel Rose Fellows. The Rose Center also thanks Sacramento Community Development Department infill coordinator Desmond Parrington for serving as the fellowship team coordinator and all the above for hosting this Rose Center city study visit panel.

Special thanks go to Fran Halbakken of the Sacramento Transportation Department, Greg Taylor of the Sacramento Community Development Department, Bob Graswich and Daniel Lopez of the Sacramento Mayor's Office, Kathy McAllister and Kathleen Sall of the Sacramento City Manager's Office, Elena Fong of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, and Mary Sater and Allen Folks of ULI Sacramento for their time and assistance during the panel's visit.

Interviews were conducted with numerous stakeholders, including elected officials from the city of Sacramento; community and business organizations; Inland American and Thomas Enterprises; representatives of the real estate, community development, and urban design professions of ULI Sacramento; staff from the city of Sacramento and numerous California state government agencies; and transportation officials at local, regional, and state agencies. These stakeholders provided invaluable information and diverse perspectives that greatly aided the panel's understanding of the city's land use challenge. The panel thanks all those who gave their time to be part of the process.

# Land Use Challenge and Summary of Recommendations

The city of Sacramento, with 466,488 residents, is the capital of California, the most populous state in the United States. Located near the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers, Sacramento is in the northern half of California's Central Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. The Central Valley produces 8 percent of U.S. agricultural value on less than 1 percent of the nation's agricultural land.

With nearly 2.2 million people, the Sacramento metropolitan area is the 24th-largest in the country. It grew by 20 percent from 2000 to 2010. At 15 percent over the same period, the city's growth lagged that of its suburbs but was still strong, according to the U.S. Census. Sacramento is the 35th-largest U.S. city, but as only the sixth largest in California, it tends to get less national publicity than its bigger sisters. The sheer size of California—if it were a country, only eight others would have a larger gross domestic product—tends to obscure the significance of its cities beyond Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, and San Francisco, which rank between second and 13th nationally in population.

Its role as the state capital (which was moved here in 1854, four years after the city was incorporated and California was granted statehood on the heels of the Mexican-American War), however, keeps Sacramento embedded in the consciousness of Californians. That role has a huge effect on Sacramento's economy: its top three employers—the state, Sacramento County, and the University of California, Davis, Health System—are all public sector, and employment by the state dwarfs all others.

Sacramento also played an important part in U.S. history: the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on the American River east of Sacramento in 1848 started the California Gold Rush, leading to massive migration and immigration and a frenzied pace of economic development. Following the Gold Rush, construction of the transcontinental railroad began,

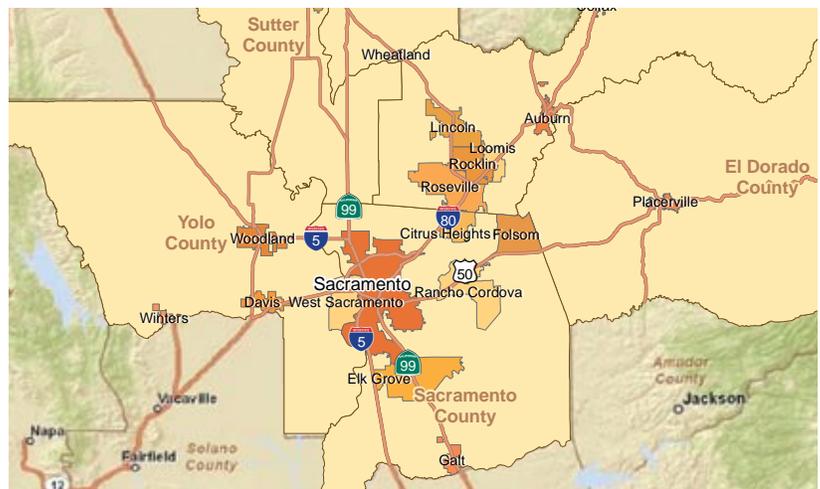
with Sacramento as its western terminus. The Central Pacific Railroad—which later merged into the Southern Pacific—built a massive rail yard at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers as a principal fabrication and maintenance facility for the fabled rail connection to the East that was completed in 1869.

## Land Use Challenge

For their land use challenge in the Daniel Rose Fellowship program, Mayor Kevin Johnson and the Sacramento Fellowship team asked the Rose Center to help the city determine what actions would position the Sacramento Railyards to attract a significant share of regional development over the long term—and what activities or investments could be early catalysts—that complements investment in Sacramento's downtown.

The Sacramento Railyards became the largest railroad complex west of the Mississippi, and at its peak in the 1940s it employed more than 7,000 workers in its machine shops, steel foundry, and lumber mill. It was the Sacramento area's largest employer for more than 80 years, at one point providing jobs for one-third of the metropolitan workforce. But by the 1990s, the railroad began moving jobs to more modern facilities

Sacramento lies at the confluence of the American and Sacramento rivers, midway between San Francisco Bay and Lake Tahoe, anchoring the northern part of California's Central Valley.





The Railyards occupy a critical piece of real estate adjacent to Sacramento's central business district and the Sacramento River.

in other areas, and Union Pacific (which acquired Southern Pacific in 1996), finally closed the Railyards' Central Shops complex in 1999.

In 2006, after four years of negotiations (mostly related to the costs of and liability for environmental cleanup), the Georgia-based real estate developer Thomas Enterprises acquired the 240-acre site (about the size of Sacramento's entire central business district) with plans for one of the largest urban infill projects in the nation. The \$5.3 billion redevelopment would have been built out over 20 years, during which time the city's population was expected to grow by another 100,000. The plans included 12,000 residential units, 1.8 million square feet of retail space, 2.3 million square feet of office space, 1,100 hotel rooms, 485,000 square feet of cultural uses, and 42 acres of open space in scattered small parks. It called for many mixed-use buildings, with retailing at street level and housing on upper stories along with a mix of low-rise and high-rise apartment buildings. The seven remaining historic Central Shops buildings would have been restored and adapted to cultural and entertainment uses anchoring a historically themed retail district, including a performing arts center for the California Academy of the Arts and a new California State Railroad Technology Museum.

The Southern Pacific Railyards in its heyday during the 1950s.



The project seemed to dovetail with the region's existing plans to build a new \$300 million intermodal transportation hub in the southwestern section of the Railyards, which

includes the historic 1926 Southern Pacific depot building. Thomas worked with the city and other institutional stakeholders on an infrastructure plan for the site to relocate a half-mile of the existing railroad tracks 500 feet to the north and build two new bridges over the tracks along Fifth and Sixth streets to connect it to downtown. The total infrastructure costs for the Railyards' redevelopment and intermodal facility were estimated at \$745 million.

Despite its high price tag, the Railyards project seemed integral to Sacramento's future: it would direct a large portion of new growth into the urban core adjacent to downtown (which has struggled to find its retail footing) and connect to a new regional intermodal transit hub planned for inclusion in the state's intercity high-speed-rail network—the very definition of smart growth. It would also put hundreds of acres of abandoned, polluted land back into productive use. Beyond its \$5.7 billion in construction-related economic output (combining direct costs and indirect spending), a 2007 study commissioned by the city forecast that the direct, indirect, and induced effects of the Railyards redevelopment would create about 19,000 jobs by the time it was built out.

In 2007, the city approved a land use plan, entitlements, and a financing plan for the project, which included \$222 million in city and redevelopment agency funding and assumed \$354 million in federal and state funding. Since that time, of course, the local and national economies have undergone a dramatic transformation. As the \$225 million first phase of construction began in 2010 (relocating the track and building the two new bridges and three pedestrian tunnels, among other street and infrastructure improvements), Thomas Enterprises found that it could not afford to pay its lender, Illinois-based Inland American Real Estate Trust, nearly \$200 million it owed in debt, and Inland took ownership of the project. City officials worked with Inland to honor Thomas's financial commitments and consider how to move ahead with the development plans in light of the new financial, fiscal, and real estate market realities.

## Summary of Recommendations

The panel was impressed with steps leaders have taken to address this challenge, committing \$225 million so far for constructing bridges and tunnels, relocating tracks, and building new roads as part of a new street network. The change in economic conditions, however, presents an opportunity to examine the entire Railyards development program, which was quite ambitious, in relation to its surrounding areas. Large-scale redevelopment projects such as the Railyards typically take a very long time to build out. Their phasing needs to be market driven because

of their extended time frame. As public/private partnerships around the country have demonstrated, public development partners sometimes carry the additional risks of being committed to infrastructure funded with public dollars regardless of whether the private partner can deliver on its development phases.

In that spirit, the panel offers a critique of the overall context of the Railyards site plan and the intermodal facility to help the city and its partners understand how they can best use investments in infrastructure and amenities to achieve their vision for the Railyards under current market conditions. Rather than build a large facility that concentrates all the transit activity and connections, the panel recommends that the city consider separating the various transit modes (intercity rail, bus, and light rail) within an area that not only is accessible for travelers who need to make connections but also takes advantage of this activity by allowing development to occur around it and create actual destinations beyond the transit access itself.

The panel also recommends that the city and the rail operators consider ways to share high-speed and Amtrak service on tracks at the same level or to relocate the high-speed-rail terminal. With its overarching canopy, the conceptual facility proposed by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) would be about 30 feet taller than the new Fifth and Sixth street bridges, completely overwhelming the massing of the historic Central Shops buildings and obstructing their view from downtown or even from the Depot District on the other side of the tracks.

The city and its partners should be mapping out and committing to completing a network of linked open spaces and great streets in discrete phases that together create an amenity that guides and shapes development but can accommodate incremental growth over time that could manifest in many different scenarios depending on the market.

The current land use plan, while allowing mixed use in many places, seems to reinforce a segregated overall pattern. Rather than look at the site as a series of district plans, the panel recommends that the city look at it as a series of component neighborhoods within a larger site that connect to their adjacent neighborhoods and can grow incrementally over time. Building neighborhoods, as opposed to districts, means building places that

- Are seamless, without hard edges, and held together by strong public spaces and streets;
- Create a strong open-space system by framing parks with development; and
- Celebrate the Central Shops buildings and other focal points within the site.

On the basis of current market trends, neither office or retail is likely to be the driver of development in the Railyards. Furthermore, the Railyards would have to absorb about one-third of projected urban residential development demand in the next 25 years to achieve buildout under its current land use plans. What is important is to target public investments, along with private investments, to create small, manageable, and complete projects that will sustain themselves from one real estate market cycle to the next and that will inspire activity and interest at each step of the way.

One strategy is building from the inside out, starting by creating a place at the Central Shops and working outward. That will be the more costly and capital-intensive approach, but with the right opportunity, such as the State Railroad Technology Museum, as a catalyst, it should be looked at. The alternative is to go from the outside in, eating away at the edges with organic growth from the city and moving into the site as opportunities become available. These approaches are not mutually exclusive; the city should keep the net cast wide and try to use both, if possible.

Although no one silver bullet is likely to be found, opportunities for catalysts will clearly arise. Some that are already being contemplated for the Railyards include the intermodal hub, an entertainment/sports arena, and a new county courthouse. Rather than provide any kind of back-of-the-envelope evaluation of their feasibility, the panel offers some criteria to evaluate them within the larger context of the Railyards site:

- Does the project add value to the overall experience or draw of the Railyards, especially considering who would use it?
- How would the project affect future phases of development?
- What would be the return on current or planned investments?

Finally, the panel offers suggestions for how the city can create low-cost, engaging interim uses that draw people to the Railyards and create interest in the site. The panel recommends working with organizations to plan events relating to arts and culture, sports and wellness, or education both in and around the Central Shops buildings to bring people to the Railyards and get them interested in the site and its history, creating public awareness of its special opportunities and providing opportunities for revenue streams as well.

# The Panel's Observations

The panel was briefed by Sacramento's Rose Fellowship team and then toured the Railyards site and its historic Central Shops buildings; the existing Sacramento Valley Station and its historic Southern Pacific depot; and adjacent areas such as Old Sacramento, Westfield Downtown Plaza, and the downtown K Street corridor. The panel also interviewed elected officials from the area, representatives from state and local government agencies and regional organizations, downtown business leaders, transportation officials, community organizations, members of the private real estate sector and urban design professions, and representatives of Inland American, the current private owners of the Railyards.

The panel at work.



The panel was greatly impressed with the incredible amount of progress that has been made through the collaboration of numerous elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels; city departments and state agencies including Caltrans and the California

Transportation Commission; regional entities such as the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, Sacramento Regional Transit, and the Sacramento Transportation Authority; Amtrak; community organizations and the Downtown Sacramento Partnerships; and the current and former owners of the Railyards property. Although the public is just starting to see the results in the form of the first phase of infrastructure improvements, nothing could have been accomplished in the Railyards without these years of hard work to build a vision, align it with adopted policy, and then create the legal and financial framework for its implementation. An isolated, unbuildable site will soon be able to be used, and that is no small achievement.

Among other accomplishments is broad community and political support for redeveloping the Railyards. Environmental remediation has largely been completed, environmental review under state and federal regulations has been completed, and entitlements have been awarded for the development of the property. Funding was secured for the initial phase of infrastructure improvements, and the city has adopted a solid set of principles in its plan for the Railyards to guide future buildout.

Like many large-scale developments around the country, the Railyards project has run into today's market realities. The economic slowdown has significantly dampened market demand for many real estate products—especially multifamily ownership (condominiums) and retail space, as well as office—and severely impaired access to both private and public capital. The result of these market conditions is that Thomas's original 20-year buildout plan is now infeasible and will not be built anytime soon. The initial development phases—creating a cultural and entertainment-themed retail district in the Central Shops, followed by residential mixed use in the adjacent west end of the site—certainly now need to be rethought.



Construction of the Fifth and Sixth street bridges, linking the Railyards to downtown Sacramento.

This change in conditions, however, presents an opportunity to reexamine the entire Railyards development program, which was quite ambitious, in relation to its surrounding areas (Old Sacramento, the Sacramento River, downtown, Alkali Flats, and the River District). Large-scale redevelopment projects such as the Railyards typically take a very long time to build out, even in growing regional real estate markets such as Sacramento. Their phasing needs to be market driven because of their extended time frame, which usually results in different developers building different parts under different market conditions. The public sector can incentivize the market, but it cannot create it. This highlights the need for flexibility in the development plan; the plan should establish an overall framework but allow development to take place incrementally and adapt to evolving market demand. Cities are healthiest and most sustainable when they grow incrementally and evolve over time.

It is also desirable for large-scale development projects to achieve synergies with their surrounding districts. At worst, they should do no harm (in the case of the Railyards, for example, the retail program should not compete with downtown Sacramento, which has its own retail challenges). At best, they should add value to the adjacent areas and complement those goals with their own.

With large-scale developments, the desire is often to find a catalyst or silver bullet that creates new demand and in turn speeds up the buildout time frame for the entire project. Although such catalysts do in fact sometimes emerge because of the rare development opportunities afforded by large-scale sites, making the success of a project contingent on a silver bullet is usually a recipe for failure because it sets unrealistic expectations.

In the case of the Railyards, ideas ranging from an entertainment/sports arena to a county courthouse have been floated as potential catalysts for opening up the rest of the site. Although the city needs to be positioned to take advantage of these and other proposals as they become feasible, it should not make the Railyards development contingent on any one such idea. The original development program phasing is now in doubt, but the underlying plans for the site offer a strong framework for its long-term development. That vision, which was created through a public process and voted on by the city's elected officials, should not be abandoned lightly—especially in favor of a scheme that seeks to trade off timing for desired public outcomes. That is why the city should carefully consider what criteria it uses to evaluate any such opportunities.

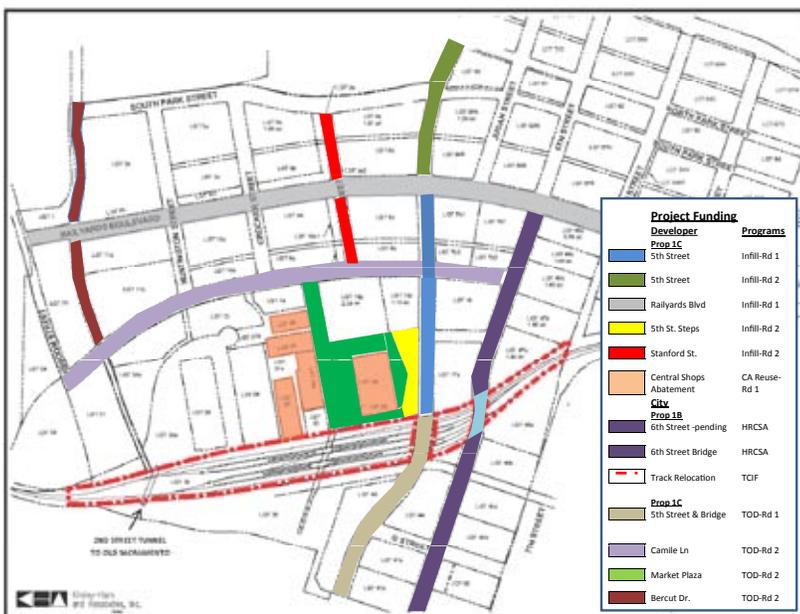
Time may be money, but large-scale development projects almost always take a very long time, especially the ones that are done well and create truly lasting public and private value. The city and region seem to recognize that the Railyards is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that deserves to be done right, which may mean taking the long view on maximizing the return on public investment and achieving its expressed goals.

# Framework for Growth

The adopted Railyards plans and the funded initial infrastructure projects create an excellent framework for the ultimate buildout of the site. From its tours and interviews, the panel recognized that connectivity is the key concept all parties have been trying to address: the Railyards is physically separated from other parts of city.

The panel was impressed with steps leaders have taken to address this challenge, committing \$225 million so far for constructing bridges and tunnels, relocating tracks, and building new roads as part of a new street network. But for a city to grow it needs market demand, the right infrastructure in place, and amenities that can attract people and businesses with location options. The panel offers a critique of the overall context of the Railyards site plan and the intermodal facility to help the city and its partners understand how they can best use investments in infrastructure and amenities to achieve their vision for the Railyards under current market conditions.

Funded infrastructure in the Railyards.



## Infrastructure: Build an Intermodal District—Not a Facility

In addition to the track relocation project, tunnels, and Fifth and Sixth street bridges, the first phase of infrastructure projects include funding to build east-west streets Camille Lane and Railyards Boulevard and north-south streets Bercut Drive, Fifth Street (through the site), and Sixth Street (up to Railyards Boulevard). It also includes funding to build the Market Plaza in the Central Shops area adjacent to Fifth Street and steps connecting it to the street, and to conduct environmental abatement and stabilize five of the Central Shops buildings.

After the heavy-rail and light-rail tracks are relocated and tunnels are built to connect both sides of the tracks, the Depot District was envisioned to function as an intermodal hub, with connections between intercity heavy rail; light rail; and local, regional, and intercity buses—as well as pickup/dropoff activity and parking—all occurring at street level in the area between the historic depot and the relocated tracks. As a next phase in its development, this area was envisioned to be built out with joint development sharing parking resources with the intermodal station and a new terminal building linking the historic depot to the heavy-rail tracks. Plans also call for the light rail to extend from its new location at the intermodal facility and loop through the Railyards along Seventh Street, extending to the station on Richards Boulevard in the River District to the north of the Railyards, and eventually terminating at Sacramento International Airport.

Amtrak’s existing Capitol Corridor service between Sacramento and the Bay Area, with more than 1.7 million riders in fiscal year 2011, is currently the third-highest ridership intercity route in the nation, behind only the Northeast Corridor (Washington–Boston) and Pacific Surfliner (Los Angeles–San Diego). By 2025, 15 million passengers a year are expected to



Original intermodal facility concept.

use Sacramento’s intermodal transportation hub. The California HSRA is also planning to provide service to the intermodal district along the heavy-rail tracks as the northern terminus of its Central Valley route between Sacramento and Merced, with eventual service all the way to Los Angeles and San Diego.

A conceptual rendering by the HSRA of its potential Sacramento terminal envisioned a second level of heavy-rail tracks built over the relocated tracks to be used by the Capitol Corridor, resulting in a high, overarching canopy. This conceptual facility would be about 30 feet taller than the new Fifth and Sixth street bridges, completely overwhelming the massing of the historic Central Shops buildings and obstructing their view from downtown or even from the Depot District on the other side of the tracks. The panel believes this location and design could have the unintended consequence of creating a physical barrier between the heart of the Railyards and downtown, partially counteracting the benefits of the track relocation project.

The panel recommends that the city and the rail operators consider ways to share high-speed and

#### High-speed-rail station concept.

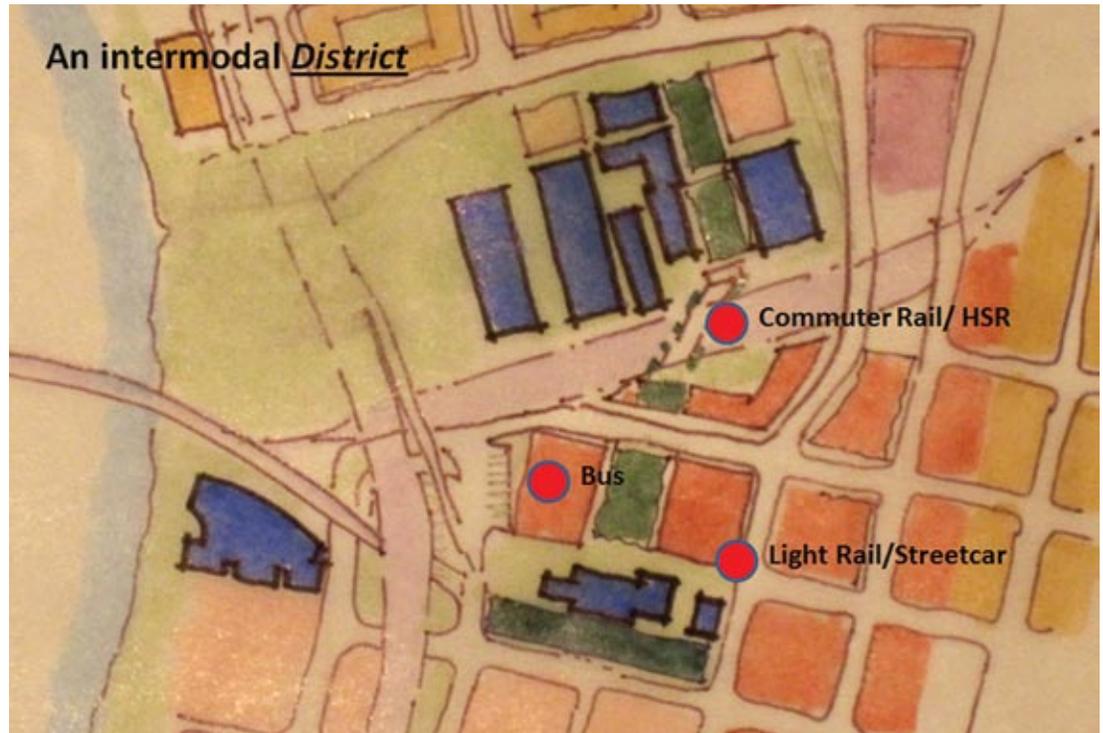


Amtrak service on tracks at the same level or relocate the high-speed-rail terminal. Specific recommendations for the latter suggestion were addressed in a Rose Center follow-up visit to Sacramento on July 13–14, 2011, which are summarized in the “Conclusion and Next Steps” section of this report.

The current site plan for the ultimate buildout of the Depot District, which includes a large new intermodal terminal building, also raises concerns about the creation of physical and visual barriers between the Railyards and downtown. The panel questions the economic feasibility of the planned joint development sites and the certainty of financing the transit infrastructure envisioned in the third phase of the project.

Rather than building a large facility that concentrates all the transit activity and connections, the panel recommends that the city consider separating the various transit modes (intercity rail, bus, light rail) within an area that not only is accessible for travelers who need to make connections but also takes advantage of this activity by allowing development to occur around it and create actual destinations beyond the transit access itself. A good analogy is the design of Denver’s Union Station (in another former yard), which relocated its existing light-rail platforms two blocks from the planned commuter- and intercity-rail platforms to capture the human energy, real estate market, and place-making potential of travelers connecting between the two modes.

A transit district, rather than a large, central facility, will likely lower the cost of the transit facilities (funding for which has not yet been completely identified) and help make joint development opportunities much more



An intermodal transportation district would generate more activity through transfers from one travel mode to another, which in turn can generate commercial land value and cost less to build than a single, large facility.

attractive, which in turn could provide greater sources of private financing for transit infrastructure.

### Amenities: Open Space and Great Streets—the Public Realm

The greatest amenity the built environment can provide is the larger network of connected open spaces and great streets that make up the public realm. A local example in Sacramento is its pedestrian-scale, tree-lined streets and network of public parks. Because no one has the ability to predict the highest and best land uses by parcel or district for such a large site, or what silver-bullet catalyst projects might emerge in the future, the best approach is to create a larger public-realm framework that ensures adopted principles are followed through in the future that can provide multiple buildout alternatives.

Other than addressing some concerns about functional and economic links to downtown, current plans for the Railyards do not speak with great fluency to its surrounding context: the Sacramento Riverfront to the west, the National Historic Landmark Old Sacramento district to the southwest, the historic Akali Flats neighborhood to the east, and the redeveloping River District to the north. These surrounding districts all have different strengths and weaknesses and are undergoing various changes or development pressures. The Railyards plan needs to recognize these conditions and relate to these adjacent districts.

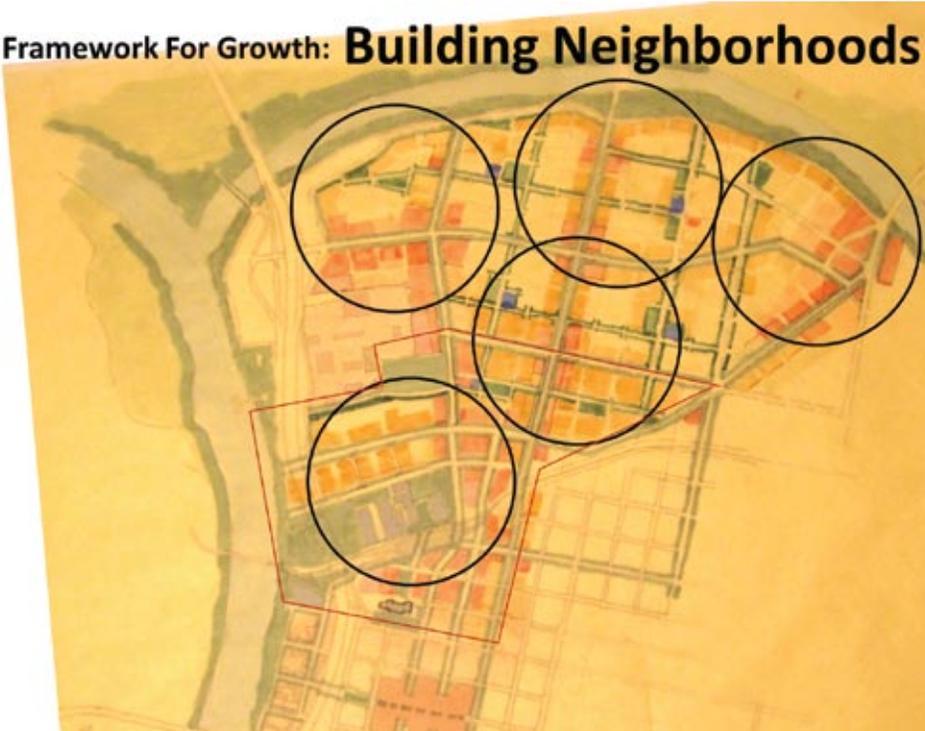
The city and its partners should be looking at this larger context, from downtown to the opposite shores of both rivers, and thinking about all the resources that can be connected so that at the end of the development process for these areas (which will go on for multiple generations), the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. This means mapping out and committing to completing a network of linked open spaces and great streets in discrete phases that together create an amenity that not only guides and shapes development but also can accommodate incremental growth over time that could manifest in many different scenarios, depending on the market.

### Build Complete Neighborhoods—Not Development Districts

One example, for illustrative purposes, differs from the existing land use plan in that it looks organic, as if it were built up over time, because uses are mixed throughout. A hierarchy of uses exists, such as more residential density near transit and more commercial near highway interchanges, but each neighborhood or subdistrict is largely complete as a place and could be built in an intermediate time frame.

The current land use plan, while allowing mixed uses in many places, seems to reinforce a segregated overall pattern: residentially dominant in the East End, retail dominant in the West End, open space in the Central Shops area, transit in the Depot District, and

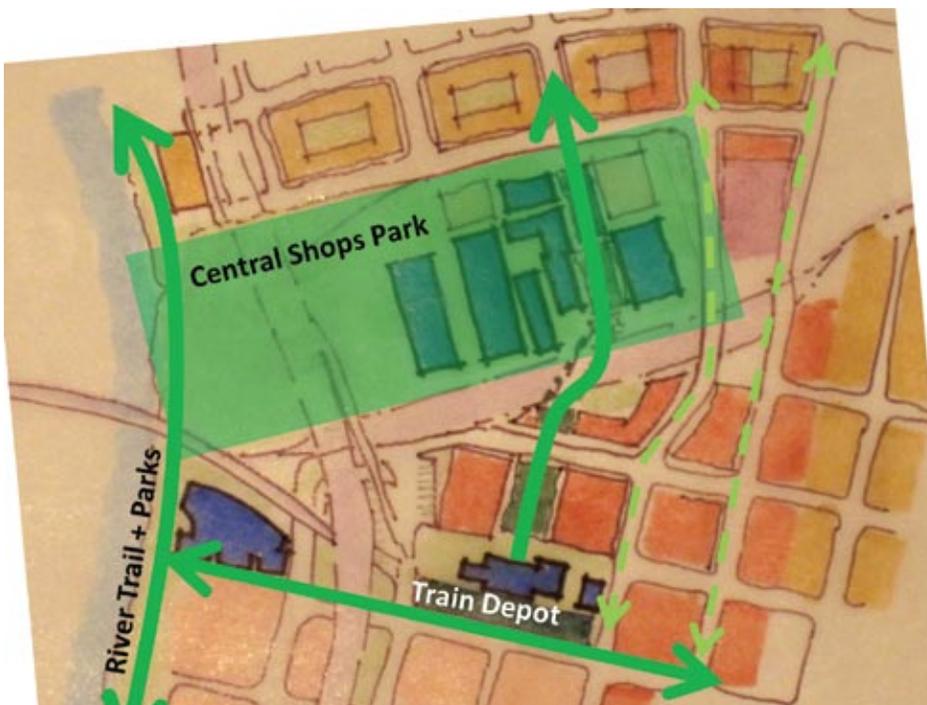
## A Framework For Growth: **Building Neighborhoods**



Each neighborhood or subdistrict should be largely complete as a place and could be built in an intermediate time frame.

employment adjacent to downtown. The large open-space areas, Vista Park in the north and Riverfront Park in the south, gave the panel the impression of being leftover development sites rather than acting as organizing principles that add value to the adjacent property, as open space does when it is well planned and well designed.

Rather than looking at the site as a series of district plans, the panel recommends the city view it as a series of component neighborhoods within a larger site that connect to their adjacent neighborhoods and that can grow incrementally over time. Building neighborhoods, as opposed to districts, means building places that have the following qualities:



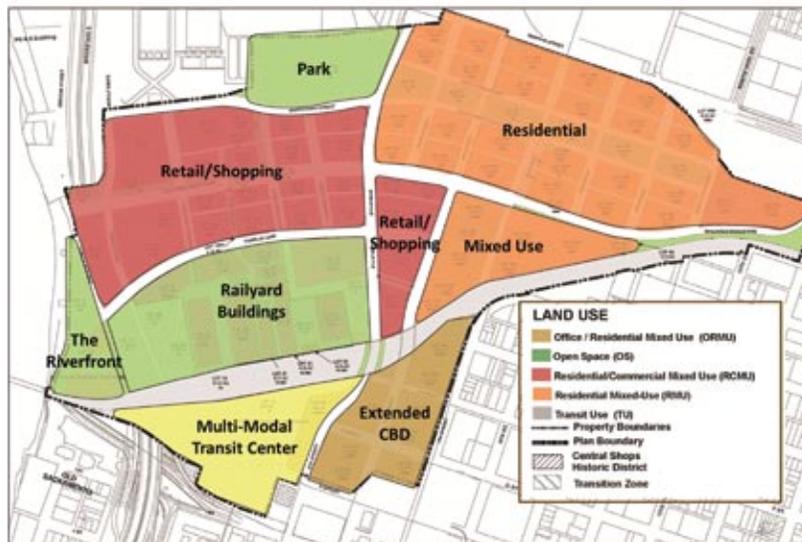
An open-space system that connects to the river and frames the historic buildings and new development areas can develop signature places that sustain identity, value, and investment.

## A Framework For Growth – The Adopted Plan

The current land use plan, while allowing mixed use in many places, seems to reinforce a segregated overall pattern.



## A Framework For Growth – Resultant Pattern



- Are seamless, without hard edges, and held together by strong public spaces and streets;
- Create a strong open-space system by framing parks with development; and
- Celebrate the Central Shops buildings and other focal points within the site.
- Sharing the Railyards' assets with downtown;
- Providing a flexible, physical framework to encourage incremental growth;
- Developing signature places that sustain identity, value, and investment—such as an open-space system that connects to the river and frames the historic buildings and new development areas; and
- Creating an intermodal district, not a single, large transportation facility.

The city should keep in mind the following key principles throughout the development time frame:

- Extending and connecting the Railyards to downtown;

# Initial Development Strategy

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The panel took a step back to try to understand the market dynamics at play in Sacramento and to provide the city with some strategies for an initial approach to development in the Railyards. It also offers guidance on catalytic projects and provides some ideas for how to create immediate interest in the site today with interim uses.

## Understanding the Market

On the residential side, the metropolitan area is predicted to grow by about 300,000 units in the next 25 years. About 35,000 of that growth is projected to be urban dwelling units built in the region's center, an area encompassing Sacramento's downtown and West Sacramento. With the competition between the Railyards, River District, downtown, and midtown (perhaps the most successful urban core neighborhood, which is growing organically), plus West Sacramento across the river, the Railyards would need to absorb about one-third of that total to achieve full buildout in the current development plan.

Sacramento is a second-tier office market. It is not Los Angeles or San Francisco. As in other second-tier markets (such as Denver), competition is stiff on the corporate office side. About 11 million square feet of office is available in the central business district submarket, compared with 42 million in outlying and suburban districts, but the lion's share is government (state, county, and city). The remainder is predominantly professional services firms that are supporting government users. No single Fortune 500 company is headquartered in the city. The downtown vacancy rate of 15 percent is better than in most other regional submarkets, and downtown rents are generally higher per square foot than in other regional submarkets. But until Sacramento is able to grow its opportunities for corporate headquarters downtown (where a lot of land is available for infill development), the panel does not believe that office is going to be the driver of development in the Railyards.

The original plan had 1.4 million square feet of retail development, a lot of it large format. Given the development principles that have been adopted (which the panel believes are very sound), large-format retail is probably not the best way to approach development of the site. Retail development has clearly slowed. Sacramento has a soft market with a lot of vacancy. Some time is going to be needed for retail to come back, and it, too, is unlikely to be the major driver of development in the Railyards, given the competition and amount of vacancy in existing buildings.

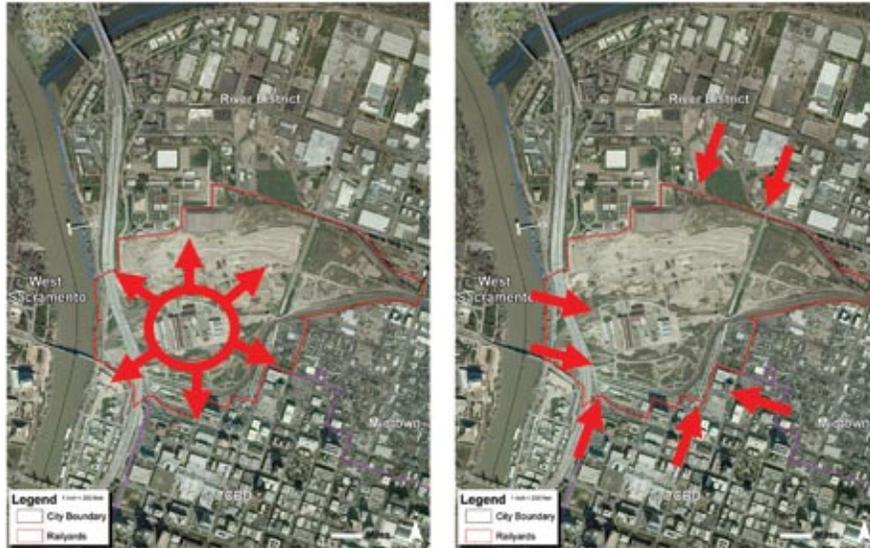
## Outside In versus Inside Out

Sacramento should not worry overly about these conditions; most other metropolitan areas are no different. When a city takes on ambitious redevelopment projects, they do not happen overnight, or in one fell swoop—they are done incrementally. What is important is to target public investments, along with private investments, to create small, manageable, and complete projects that will sustain themselves from one real estate market cycle to the next and to create areas of activity and interest at each step of the way. Such projects link public and

The built sections of Denver's Riverfront Park feel complete even though more development sites are around them.



Outside-in or inside-out strategies do not have to be mutually exclusive.



private investment in focused areas that create a place on day one. Even if empty buildings exist beyond the initial phase, the project can be designed so that it feels like a completed place.

So how can this be done? Where does one start? The answer can be approached in different ways. One is going from the inside out, starting by creating a place at the Central Shops and working outward. That will

be the more costly and capital-intensive approach, but with the right opportunity, such as the State Railroad Technology Museum, as a catalyst, it should be explored. The alternative is to go from the outside in, eating away at the edges with organic growth from the city and moving into the site as opportunities become available. But these approaches are not mutually exclusive. The city should keep the net cast wide and try to use both, if possible.



In Denver, the Central Platte Valley was a rail yard of similar size to Sacramento's through the 1980s. In 1983, then-mayor Federico Peña (who later was secretary of transportation and then of energy under President Clinton) had a vision for turning this area into a riverfront park development that extended from downtown Denver. It took three mayoral administrations and strong, committed, visionary leadership and staff to make this transformation happen. It went through multiple iterations of property ownership to get where it is today. But through public investment and strategic private investment, Denver consolidated the rail corridor into a single set of tracks, tore down the viaducts, reclaimed the riverfront, put in streets and infrastructure, and is now investing in a half-billion-dollar multimodal facility. This is now the highest-value, fastest-growing residential neighborhood in the entire Denver region and the most desirable office address in metro Denver. But that took more than 30 years from the time Mayor Peña asked Denver to "imagine a great city."

Denver's Central Platte Valley as a rail yard (above left) and being transformed into an urban neighborhood connecting its downtown (left).

## Catalytic Projects

Although no one silver bullet is likely, opportunities clearly exist for catalysts. Some that are already being contemplated for the Railyards include the intermodal hub, an entertainment/sports arena, and a new county courthouse. Any of these may be viable projects for the Railyards, but rather than provide any kind of back-of-the-envelope evaluation of their feasibility, the panel offers some criteria to evaluate them within the larger context of the Railyards site:

- Does the project add value to the overall experience or draw of the Railyards, especially considering who would use it?
- How would the project affect future phases of development?
- What would be the return on current or planned investments?

The panel also affirms some guiding principles that it heard from stakeholders during the interview process for the city to keep in mind as it moves forward in the development process:

- As one of the largest infill sites in the country, the Railyards need to fulfill this opportunity to create something special.
- The Railyards development needs to complement and connect to what is occurring in downtown, midtown, and the River District and not compete with those markets.
- Planning decisions need to be based on market realities and conditions.
- The Railyards should provide both a local and regional draw to bring people to the site and activate it.
- Although enough land is available to allow a typically suburban site plan to develop, because the Railyards is located in the urban core, becoming an urban place is important.
- The historical significance of the Railyards should be celebrated in the development.

## Creating Interest with Interim Uses

The Central Shops will be the last living link from the history of the Railyards to its future, which is intertwined with the city's history. This also presents the opportunity for a "wow" factor in the Railyards neighborhood around the Central Shops. For example, in Denver's Central Platte Valley, a former railroad maintenance shop was converted into a unique REI



In Denver, a former railroad maintenance shop was converted into a unique REI store with an indoor climbing facility that creates a regional draw.

store with an indoor climbing facility that creates a regional draw.

Other than workers involved in the environmental cleanup and infrastructure projects, very few Sacramentans have been in the heart of the Railyards because access has been restricted for many years. How can the city create low-cost, engaging interim uses that draw people to the Railyards and create interest in the site? A group that is interested in the Railyards could be used to plan events on the site related to arts and culture; sports and wellness; and educational and large-scale tented entertainment events, both inside and outside the buildings. From street festivals to fashion shows, these events would bring people to the Railyards and get them interested in the site and its history, creating public awareness of its unique opportunities and providing opportunities for revenue streams as well.

# Concluding Thoughts and Next Steps

The panel gave Sacramento's Fellowship team several homework assignments for the remainder of their time in the program:

- Define the guiding principles more precisely for determining the inclusion, siting, and design of the near-term opportunities (e.g., intermodal district, courthouse, arena).
- Investigate interim uses, operators, and programming that can bring people to the site in a low-cost way as soon as publicly accessible and safe.
- Integrate the plans for the River District, the Railyards, and adjacent areas for open-space and transportation networks so they can be understood as a system.
- Identify a cohesive first phase of development that leverages the committed infrastructure and creates a complete place on its own, whatever its size.
- Develop alternative plans for future infrastructure based on funding availability and development opportunities.

The city has to anticipate activity and not just react in terms of looking at the development opportunities. Owners and developers may come and go, but the city

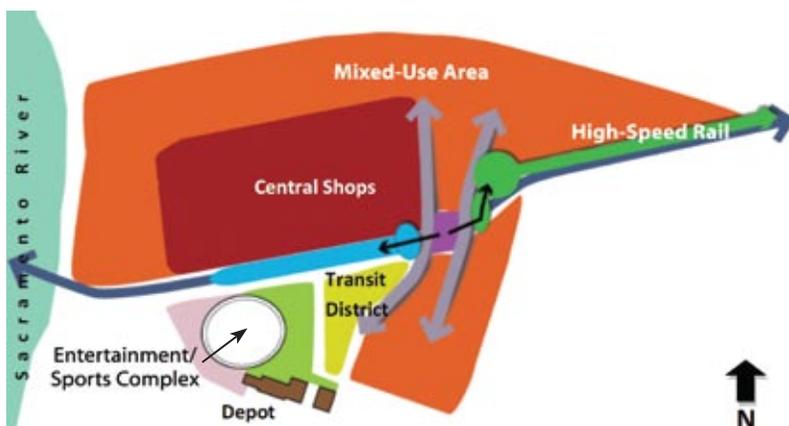
will be the steward for the principles and goals of the Railyards for a very long time.

## Follow-up Visit on Entertainment and Sports Complex

Following the January 25–28, 2011, study visit, plans were approved to build a new Sacramento County Courthouse in the southeast corner of the Railyards, adjacent to the central business district. As a follow-up to the study visit, the Rose Center organized a July 13–14 panel visit to address the most recent proposal concerning an entertainment and sports complex in the Railyards. This follow-up panel found that the intermodal transit facilities and entertainment and sports complex can both be accommodated in the southern section of the Sacramento Railyards in a symbiotic way that creates public space, provides connectivity to, and achieves synergies with surrounding districts. Although the city's goals of building an entertainment and sports complex and intermodal transit facilities in the Railyards are achievable and desirable, policy makers will need to commit to resolving key design challenges if they are to attain the public benefits envisioned in the adjacent districts of downtown, the future redevelopment of the Railyards, and the region as a whole.

In summary, the panel agrees with the idea of the city and HRSA staffs to move the future high-speed-rail station east of Sixth Street to avoid the cost, complexity, and design issues associated with constructing a terminal over the tracks. In addition, the panel agrees with city staff's idea of moving the entertainment and sports complex as far west as possible and shifting the intermodal transit facilities slightly to the east. The panel recommends that the historic Southern Pacific depot building serve as an iconic front door to the southern Railyards district. But to keep the scale and massing of the entertainment and sports complex from overwhelming the historic depot and Central Shops, the panel encourages the city

Conceptual site plan proposed by the follow-up visit panel for an entertainment and sports complex in the Railyards.



to investigate the feasibility of excavation to address its height and to ensure that access points can be as close to ground level as possible. Building on the panel's original recommendations from its January visit, members concur with city staff's proposal of shifting the main intermodal axis slightly east and creating a transit district rather than a centralized facility that preserves the opportunity for joint development lining the east side of a new street between the entertainment and sports complex and the intermodal facilities.

The panel recommends the entertainment and sports complex have multiple access points to reduce conflicts among users, services, and through traffic and be wrapped in commercial development with active ground-floor uses on the side facing the public plaza. The panel believes enough real estate exists to accommodate these buildings and an appropriately sized public plaza that, if well designed, will help provide pedestrian staging into and out of the complex and feel safe no matter how many people are using the space. The location of the plaza also preserves a visual connection to the Central Shop buildings from the south side of the tracks, which is important to the overall Railyards identity.

The panel urges the city to ensure that access to the district is designed with a hierarchy of users in mind: pedestrians as the first priority, then transit, then private autos. Clear and multiple pedestrian routes are needed from parking, transit, and the surrounding uses and activities with adequate lighting, security, and clear signage, which will also enhance the

development value of the surrounding area. Given the large amount of parking close to the site, the panel recommends using the existing, dispersed parking resources to spread economic activity throughout the surrounding area and use the Railyards site more efficiently.

## Do It Right, or Don't Do It

The panel recommends that the city conduct further analyses of site infrastructure and design costs, but it believes that additional costs are likely to be more incremental than exponential. Above all, the panel emphasizes the need to "do it right or don't do it." Too many design compromises could diminish the functionality of both the entertainment and sports complex and the transit facilities and diminish the regenerative potential of the surrounding areas. For the full follow-up report, visit <http://www.uli.org/rosecenter>.

# About the Fellows and the Panel

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## Daniel Rose Sacramento Fellows

### Kevin Johnson

Sacramento native Kevin Johnson was elected as the 55th mayor of the city of Sacramento in November 2008. He is the first native Sacramentan and the first African American to be elected to the office. His vision is for Sacramento to become “a city that works for everyone.”

In the first year of his administration, Johnson embarked on an ambitious plan to reshape how city government serves the residents of Sacramento by improving public safety, jump-starting economic development, and advocating critical school reforms.

Within City Hall, the mayor established new standards for accessibility and accountability through community office hours, town hall meetings, and an external audit of city finances. Johnson also launched initiatives to reduce homelessness, increase volunteerism, and promote the arts. He is currently focused on his new initiative for a greener Sacramento.

Johnson has also been a contributor on several national television programs, including *CNN Newsroom*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Dateline NBC*, *Larry King Live*, *The Colbert Report*, Fox Business Network, and *Tom Brokaw Presents: American Character Along Highway 50*.

### John Dangberg

John Dangberg is an assistant city manager with the city of Sacramento. His areas of responsibility encompass four departments, including transportation, utilities, community development, and economic development.

These departments and their 1,400 employees provide essential city services and implement the city’s General Plan and Economic Development strategy for growth and prosperity. In addition, Dangberg oversees a number of large urban infill projects.

Dangberg previously served as president of USA Multifamily Development, executive director of the Capital Area Development Authority, and community development director for the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency.

### John Hodgson

John Hodgson is the founder and president of the Hodgson Company. He has headed numerous residential and mixed-use master-planned projects throughout the greater Sacramento Valley area. He also has a strong interest in urban revitalization and mixed-used development in the urban centers of the region.

Hodgson is a full member of the Urban Land Institute and recently served as chair of ULI Sacramento. He served six years as the chair of the Capital Area Development Authority. He currently serves as chair of the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan and is also active in numerous civic organizations.

Hodgson is a member of the State Bar of California and a graduate of the University of California (UC) at Davis, and UC Davis Law School (King Hall).

### Mike McKeever

Mike McKeever was appointed executive director of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) board of directors on December 17, 2004. Previously, McKeever was project manager of the Blueprint Project at SACOG. McKeever was the founder and president of McKeever/Morris for 13 years and then a senior supervising planner for Parsons Brinckerhoff before joining SACOG as blueprint project manager in 2001.

Over his 30-year career specializing in the field of planning, he has owned and managed two private businesses that specialized in working with local governments on innovative multijurisdictional projects. He has been instrumental in developing cutting-edge planning techniques to integrate land use and transportation planning.

More recently, McKeever was the principal creator of PLACE3S planning method and software, designed to help professional and citizen planners understand the connections between land use, transportation, and air quality issues. He has authored several manuals and guidebooks on various aspects of local government collaboration, and has taught “Stretching Community Dollars” seminars throughout California for the City, County, Schools Partnership to help these units of government find creative ways to work together.

McKeever has also been involved in projects with the Sacramento Regional Transit District and regional planning projects in Portland, Oregon; Salem, Oregon; San Diego, California; San Francisco, California; Chicago, Illinois; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Austin, Texas; and Victoria, British Columbia.

He is a native of Nampa, Idaho, and received his BA with honors from the University of Oregon.

## Rose Center Sacramento Faculty and Study Visit Panel Cochairs

### Andre Brumfield

Andre Brumfield is principal in charge of urban design and planning for AECOM’s Chicago office and the master-planning practice leader for AECOM’s Midwest region. During the course of his 16-year career, Brumfield has applied his broad experience in the fields of urban design, planning, and architecture to focus on neighborhood redevelopment and urban revitalization.

In 2007, after ten years as an associate and senior planner at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Brumfield opened the Chicago office for EDAW/AECOM. He has addressed urban design and master-planning issues in a variety of neighborhood and community development efforts that involve large-scale, high-density urban infill projects, public and affordable housing redevelopment, brownfield redevelopment, and citywide master planning efforts. Over the past two years, Brumfield has become involved in national dialogue on how cities deal with severe population loss and the challenge of developing long-range master planning strategies at the citywide scale.

Brumfield has a master’s degree in urban planning from the University of Washington and a bachelor’s degree in architecture from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

### Con Howe

Con Howe is managing director of CityView’s \$150 million Los Angeles Fund, partnering with homebuilders and developers to entitle land and build

workforce housing in greater Los Angeles. CityView, founded by Henry Cisneros, has financed more than 7,000 units of housing in over 40 projects in California and throughout the United States.

Previously, Howe was director of the ULI Center for Balanced Development in the West, focusing on the special land development issues of the fast-growing western United States.

Howe served as the director of planning for the city of Los Angeles from 1992 to 2005. His work included revision of the city’s General Plan to provide a comprehensive strategy for growth, updating the city’s 35 community plans, streamlining the development permitting process, creating new zoning to encourage mixed-use and infill housing projects, and adaptive use of older structures as housing.

From 1987 to 1991, he served as executive director of the New York City Planning Department where he directed a staff of 400 located in a central office and five borough offices. Earlier, as director of the agency’s Manhattan Office, he helped direct major commercial growth to West Midtown and established urban design and preservation requirements for the city’s Theater District and Times Square.

Before coming to New York City, Howe was executive director of the Massachusetts Land Bank, a state redevelopment agency, and served in the Governor’s Office.

Howe received a master’s degree from MIT’s School of Architecture and Planning and an undergraduate degree from Yale, and he teaches a graduate course in planning and redevelopment at the University of Southern California.

## Rose Center Sacramento Study Visit Panelists

### Frank Cannon

Frank Cannon joined Continuum Partners in 2005 and serves as president of the Union Station Neighborhood Company, a joint venture entity created by real estate development companies Continuum Partners and East West Partners that was selected as the master developer for Denver Union Station in November 2006. The Denver Union Station redevelopment is a public/private partnership to develop the \$480 million multimodal transit hub that will serve as the centerpiece of the nearly \$7 billion Denver metropolitan region’s FasTracks system.

As president of the Union Station Neighborhood Company, Cannon is responsible for the planning, design, and development of over 1.5 million square

feet of commercial mixed-use development anchoring the Union Station Neighborhood. In addition to managing the real estate development team, he is a key member of the management team for the design and construction of the \$480 million public infrastructure project.

Cannon is involved in many civic and professional organizations. He was appointed by the mayor of Denver and serves as the current chair of the Denver Downtown Development Authority, a tax increment financing authority assisting in the redevelopment of Denver Union Station and the surrounding downtown area. He serves on the board of directors of four downtown Denver metropolitan districts, special taxing districts responsible for providing public infrastructure and services. Cannon is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and is a member of the ULI Public Private Partnership Council. He is an active member of NAIOP, the Downtown Denver Partnership, and the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Before joining Continuum Partners, Cannon was a principal with Civitas Inc., a national planning, urban design, and landscape architecture firm. While with Civitas, he was principal-in-charge of planning, urban redevelopment, transit-oriented development, and urban design projects in numerous cities across the country and was instrumental in building the firm's national reputation.

Cannon is a graduate of the University of Colorado College of Architecture and Planning with a bachelor's degree in environmental design.

### Marlene Gafrick

#### *Daniel Rose Houston Fellow Alternate*

As Houston's top planning and development official, Marlene Gafrick brings more than 30 years' experience in land development that includes ordinance development, implementation and enforcement, permitting, and coordination with public agencies and special districts. Gafrick joined the department 30 years ago as an associate planner fresh out of school. She was named planning director by Houston mayor Bill White on July 7, 2005, and continues in that capacity today under Mayor Annise Parker.

While her work location has stayed the same, Gafrick's responsibilities and the ways they are fulfilled have seen many changes. She has been instrumental in the creation and implementation of many new and amended ordinances to encourage growth while protecting and preserving neighborhoods. She is

especially adept at harnessing new technologies to improve workflow and accountability.

The department provides tools and resources to strengthen and increase the long-term viability of neighborhoods; regulates land development in Houston and the extraterritorial jurisdiction; and reviews, investigates, and promotes land regulation policies for the changing demands to Houston's growth and quality of life.

Current challenges include changing development rules along transit corridors to increase pedestrian and multimodal connections to adjacent neighborhoods and creating rules to allow mixed-use/pedestrian districts. Gafrick is overseeing the transition to a Regional Enterprise GIS environment that supports the sharing of data, GIS services, and resources among city departments, area governments, utilities, and related agencies. She also is partnering with related city departments and outside agencies to increase regional transportation planning, including the adoption of a citywide mobility plan.

She holds a BS in economics in urban and regional planning from Missouri State University in Springfield.

### Mami Hara

A principal of Wallace Roberts & Todd, during her career Mami Hara has focused on development of sustainability frameworks and civic projects in urban environments that have included waterfronts and water resources, park open-space systems, trail networks, neighborhoods, and cultural institutions.

Hara works with clients to integrate green infrastructure and urban development that enhance ecological function and civic life. She is currently working with the Philadelphia Water Department's Office of Watersheds to mobilize implementation of one of the most ambitious municipal green infrastructure programs in the United States. Her work with Philadelphia Water Department includes program development, program management, policy, and planning as well as advocacy and education for conducting similar projects on a national scale.

Hara earned a BA in design of the environment from the University of Pennsylvania and her master of landscape architecture degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. In addition to her work with Wallace Roberts & Todd, she is an instructor in the University of Pennsylvania's school of City and Regional Planning, a lecturer in the Architecture Department at Temple University, and board chair of the Community Design Collaborative.

## Robert Lane

Robert Lane, senior fellow for urban design at the Regional Plan Association, directs the Centers Program, which is devoted to combating sprawl and promoting compact, transit-oriented development.

Lane's current and recent past work focuses on the relationship between transit, land use, and urban design and emphasizes public participation and communication through visual techniques. Projects include the Somerville (NJ) Station Area Vision Plan, the Hastings-on-Hudson (NY) Waterfront plan, the Newark Vision Plan, Far West Side Redevelopment Alternatives Study, and the Civic Alliance Vision Plan for Lower Manhattan.

Lane is an architect and urban designer who combines urban design and planning research with 20 years of professional practice. Over the last ten years, Lane has initiated and completed three major independent research projects funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the German Marshall Fund. This work has been exhibited at the Municipal Art Society and has been published in *Oculus*, *Progressive Architecture*, and the *Harvard Architecture Review*. Lane also teaches a professional development course for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy called Redesigning the Edgeless City, which focuses on strategies for remaking the suburban and exurban landscape.

Before coming to Regional Plan Association, Lane was an associate at Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects, PC. He received his BA from Cornell University and a master of architecture from Columbia University. Lane was a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design during the 2008–2009 academic year.

## Danny Pleasant

*Daniel Rose Charlotte Fellow*

As director of the Department of Transportation for the city of Charlotte, Danny Pleasant is responsible for road and transportation planning and operations, including policy development and neighborhood traffic projects (street lights, street and sidewalk construction and maintenance, traffic signal operations, pedestrian and bicycle programs, and right-of-way management). He also oversees capital project prioritization.

The department is responsible for 2,100 miles of streets and traffic signals at more than 630 intersections. It also provides planning services for the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization and recently developed a Transportation Action Plan to deal with expected growth in the next 25 years.

Pleasant joined the city of Charlotte in 2002, following a 14-year career as transportation planning bureau chief for the city of Orlando, Florida. He also worked as a transportation planner for the cities of Atlanta, Georgia, and Chapel Hill and Fayetteville, North Carolina.

He received his master's degree in urban planning from Texas A&M University and his bachelor's degree in parks and recreation administration from North Carolina State University. While a student at Texas A&M, he worked as a research associate with the Texas Transportation Institute.

Pleasant is a Fellow of the Institute of Transportation Engineers and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Urban Land Institute, and the Congress for the New Urbanism. He is affiliated with Walkable Communities and has served on several of its expert advisory teams focusing on finding solutions to urban design problems.

## Marja Winters

*Daniel Rose Detroit Fellow*

On May 14, 2009, Mayor Dave Bing reappointed Marja Winters deputy director of the City of Detroit Planning and Development Department. In this capacity, she oversees the operations of nearly 200 employees who staff the department's six divisions: Financial and Resources Management, Housing Services, Neighborhood Support Services, Planning, Real Estate Development, and the Office of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (ONCR), where she served as director the preceding two years.

As director of ONCR, Winters worked with community development organizations, volunteers, entrepreneurs, and local merchants to revitalize older commercial districts in targeted areas and encouraged small business creation and growth. Before she joined the city of Detroit, Wayne County executive Robert A. Ficano appointed Winters as department executive for Wayne County Parks. While serving three years in this capacity, she worked on several special projects, including leading the campaign to renew the Parks Millage; developed the framework for Wayne Reads!, a comprehensive literacy program; and managed a collaboration to reduce violence and promote conflict resolution throughout Wayne County.

A career public servant, Winters displays her commitment to the city of Detroit through her profession and her strong community involvement. Respected among her peers in the young professional community, Winters is a visible and vocal advocate for civil rights, community empowerment, and civic engagement. She is third vice-president of the

Detroit Branch NAACP Executive Committee, chair of the Detroit Branch NAACP's Political Education Committee, coadviser to the Detroit NAACP Youth Council, team leader of the Community & Economic Development Ministry and children's church instructor at Life Changers International Ministries. In January 2008, Winters was appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm to serve a two-year term on the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission.

Winters is a current student of the Urban Ministry Institute, is a graduate of the University of Michigan, and holds a BA in political science and a master of urban planning.



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