About Sacramento County

Sacramento County was where the California Gold Rush began in 1849. Today it a county of about 1.5 million people, the core of the Sacramento metropolitan area of about 2.2 million people. In Sacramento County about 22% of the residents are Hispanic, 14% are Asian, 10% are African American, and 16% are other races or a mixture of races.

There are seven cities in Sacramento County, including Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Rancho Cordova. More than a half-million people live in Sacramento County, outside any municipal government. Planning for these areas is carried out by the County.

About North Watt Avenue and Nearby Neighborhoods

The North Watt Avenue Corridor Plan states that “the North Watt Avenue corridor is one of many commercial corridors in Sacramento County that reflects a historical pattern of development common throughout the county for several decades from approximately the 1950s through the present. These corridors typically represent a range of shopping and services arranged in strip centers extending along a thoroughfare.” Today the neighborhoods near North Watt Avenue are racially and ethnically diverse. Incomes are below the average for the county.

North Watt Avenue is a primary access point for the McClellan Business Park, which was established as a major redevelopment project following the decommissioning of McClellan Air Force Base in 2001.
Project Scope

The project is focused on carrying out elements of the North Watt Avenue Corridor Plan, which was adopted in order to “implement new land use and transportation development that produce less greenhouse gas emissions than existing forms; builds on the priorities set by the community; and supports the County’s commitment to revitalize its older commercial corridors. The Corridor Plan defines goals and objectives that will lead to the corridor’s transition to a series of mixed-use urban villages and residential neighborhoods supporting the County’s objectives for infill development.”

Challenges to Overcome

- Previous auto-oriented development of the corridor has limited safe and pleasant access for nonmotorists

Project Goals

- Concentrate development at 3 transit-oriented, mixed-use centers with land densities and intensities sufficient to support regional transit
- Revitalize vacant and underutilized sites to promote vibrant district centers and neighborhoods
- Create a balanced circulation system with multimodal transportation opportunities serving local and regional users
- Coordinate the development of the Corridor Plan area in conjunction with McClellan Business Park to foster a regional employment center offering a range of job opportunities
- Preserve and enhance the quality of air, water, sensitive species habitat, and other natural resources within the Corridor Plan area to promote its long-term sustainability and that of the North Highlands community
- Promote the rich and varied character of the North Highlands community to encourage a strong, local sense of place and attract visitation
- Endorse exemplary and sustainable urban design and construction techniques that will result in high-quality buildings and an inviting public realm
Redevelopment

Development will be concentrated in three centers along the corridor that are to be transit-oriented and mixed-use. Several of the plan’s land use goals focus on choosing intensive instead of extensive development along the corridor. The County will encourage infill development and reuse of existing properties in the district centers that can ultimately support rapid transit along the corridor. It will also encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites as housing where appropriate.

Green Design & Infrastructure

The plan utilizes green design to address water and energy. It is a policy of the plan that low impact development practices shall be employed to manage stormwater drainage through waterways to promote groundwater recharge, maximize water quality, and protect and enhance habitat along waterways. Building and landscape design that minimizes water use and provides for the reuse of water where feasible should be utilized and opportunities shall be identified during redevelopment of properties to daylight creeks and drainageways that have been undergrounded to promote connectivity of open space corridors. All buildings shall be constructed in compliance with State of California Title 24 energy conservation standards and the County will emphasize building and landscape design and construction that encourage energy efficiency.

Transportation Choices

The corridor plan advocates for a wide range of transportation choices. One aspect of the plan is to implement complete streets accommodating multiple modes of transportation appropriate to the type of street or trail. The plan also promotes a flexible system that can incorporate new transportation systems and technologies as they become available. Plan goals include expanding local bus service to meet the needs of new development and providing bus rapid transit service through the corridor area in the future. The County seeks to coordinate with private entities to develop a consistent program of transit incentives to encourage transit use and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. Other goals of the plan include creating a bicycle and pedestrian circulation system and a neighborhood electric vehicle plan.

Equity

Because incomes are lower in the neighborhoods along the North Watt Avenue corridor than in the county as a whole, it is important to make sure that residents can continue to afford to live there as development begins. One of the plan’s housing goals is to provide a range of housing types addressing the diverse needs of existing and potential residents, including employees at McClellan Business Park. One of the housing policies is that housing reflecting a broad range of income levels, including affordable housing and market rate housing, shall be constructed to fully serve the housing needs projected in the plan.
North Watt Team

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Judy is a Principal Planner and the Sustainability & Infill Development Coordinator for the County of Sacramento. She has over 20 years of experience with local government, community planning, and development.

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Adrian is a Project Manager for Mark Thomas and Company, a Civil Engineering Consulting firm with over 85 years in California. He leads his office’s Complete Streets practice, specializing in providing planning and design services for multimodal streetscapes and transportation enhancement projects.

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Paul has 31 years of professional experience in a variety of areas including research, construction, land development, public finance, storm water, waste water, and solid waste.

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Alan Hersh is responsible for coordinating environmental remedial activities, project entitlement, community outreach, government relations, engineering, infrastructure, and building construction.

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Mike McKeever, CEO, Sacramento Area Council of Governments*
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Mike McKeever has led the Sacramento Area Council of Governments since December 2004. 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 multi-jurisdictional projects. He has been instrumental in developing cutting-edge planning techniques to integrate land use and transportation planning.

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Kacey Lizon is a land use planner and manages SACOG’s long range transportation plan and land use forecasting and analysis program. She received her BS and MRP from Cornell University.

*The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is an association of local governments in the six-county Sacramento region, which includes the Cities of Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova and Sacramento County. SACOG provides transportation planning and funding for the region and serves as a forum for the study and resolution of regional issues. California Senate Bill 375 added a new regional planning requirement called Sustainable Communities Strategy that integrates land use and transportation planning and SACOG has organized the three local governments’ participation in the USA program to help achieve this new requirement.