

LAKE NATOMA PARK

20-Year Conceptual Plan



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Cal•Hydro

California Water Imaginarium



*“Place is not just a spot on a map...
Place is what makes my hometown different from your hometown”*

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Lake Natoma Park 20-Year Conceptual Plan

‘Place’ is not just a spot on a map.¹

INTRODUCTION

The Lake Natoma Park 20 Year Conceptual Plan is being developed by the Friends of Folsom Preservation (FFP) for the consideration of the City of Folsom, the Folsom Lake State Recreational Area, Sacramento County, the residents of Folsom, and the people of the State of California. It is a long-range planning document for Lake Natoma Park, a fictitious Park composed of lands under many jurisdictions and governed by many Master Plans and focused on the enjoyment of current and future residents of Folsom, along with the people of the State of California.

The origins of FFP’s planning effort began with the Folsom City Council’s desire to add a River District to the City of Folsom in 2018. The adopted General Plan Update 2035 called for the forming of an ad hoc Citizens Advisory Committee to envision a River District and develop a River District Master Plan. Part of the

¹ McMahan, Ed, “*Where am I? The Power of Uniqueness*,” speaker Ed McMahan, TEDX Jacksonville, 2017

land owned by the City within the River District boundaries was 16 acre parcel called the Corporation Yard.

Even before the City of Folsom appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee to envision a River District Master Plan, the FFP was already in the process of researching, conducting meetings, and developing plans to address the eventual development of the Corporation Yard. FFP’s focus on the Corporation Yard was on what current and future resident’s would enjoy, spending time in an iconic, new park complex filled with cultural amenities and focused on Folsom’s water and natural environment.

The City Council called for interested stakeholders to serve on the River District Master Plan’s Citizen Advisory Committee. FFP volunteered and worked through the Committee process while independently developing its own version of a distinctive River District. This is FFP’s concept, Lake Natoma Park.

PURPOSE

The purpose of creating Lake Natoma Park is to identify a ‘place’ that can be developed as an iconic tourism destination for contemplative recreation and education serving both current and future residents of the City of Folsom and the people of the State of

California. This document uses the term ‘place,’ in the sense of a general location, the proposed boundaries of which include Lake Natoma, the American River, the Historic District of the City of Folsom, and some portions of the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. This is a special area that is rich in symbolism and history. “‘Place’ is not just a spot on a map. ‘Place’ is what makes my hometown different from your hometown...”¹”

The Conceptual Plan acknowledges that Lake Natoma Park is the ‘place’ of the Nisenan people. From time immemorial, the Nisenan were the original stewards of the land and of the American River. The word Natoma is attributed to the Nisenan language meaning ‘clear water.’ That part of the American River that runs through Folsom is now known as Lake Natoma, a man-made afterbay of the Folsom Dam. The Nisenan have maintained their role as environmental stewards of this region by continuing to advocate, protect, respect, and undertake its revitalization.

Fittingly, we have chosen to call this ‘place’ Lake Natoma Park.

The contents of this 20 Year Conceptual Plan are composed of existing amenities and projected amenities to be developed in the future. In overview, the Plan is organized as follows: SCOPE

¹ Ibid

and Map of the proposed Lake Natoma Park; History of the effects of Folsom Dam and Reservoir on the City of Folsom; History of the Effects of Folsom Dam and Reservoir on the City of Folsom; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Folsom Dam and the American River; History of the City of Folsom’s ‘Old Chinatown’ aka Corporation Yard (topographic elevations of the Corporation Yard; renderings and scaling the concept of Cal·Hydro: California Water Imaginarium), Welcome to Cal·Hydro: California Water Imaginarium!; Lake Natoma Park Destination Stewardship Plan & Council; Appendix A. 2035 Folsom General Plan Update River District Description.

SCOPE

The Conceptual Plan of Lake Natoma Park is based on an evaluation of the Folsom 2035 General Plan description for the development of a River District Master Plan; on the area’s existing water and natural resource amenities; on the conditions of existing resources throughout the Park boundaries; on a series of monthly meetings with individuals and groups of nonprofits specializing in environmental preservation; on local history; by gathering research and comments gathered from several California museums and botanical gardens; on brief

Proposed Region of LAKE NATOMA PARK

LEGEND

PROPOSED

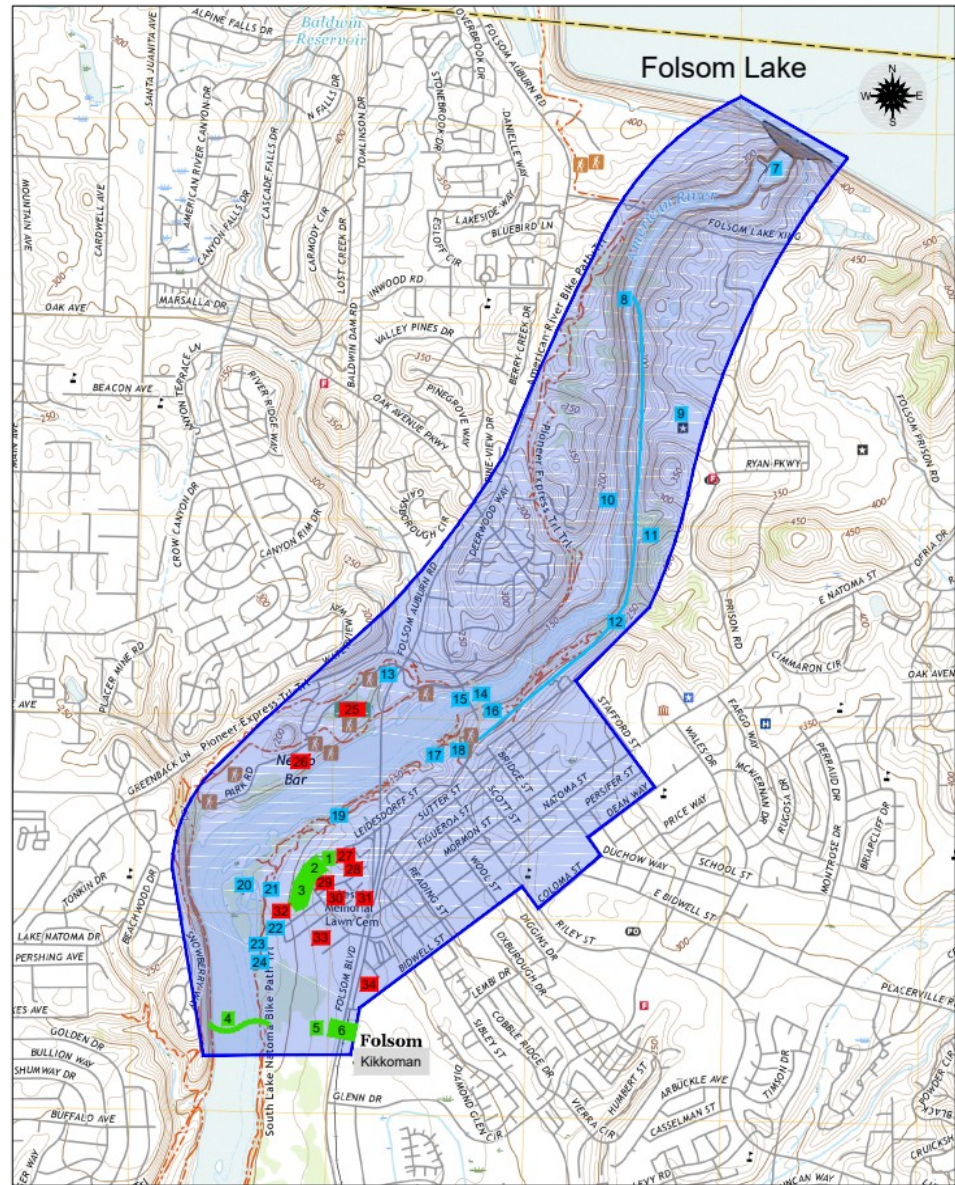
1. Proposed Kindel Nature Center
2. Proposed USACE Folsom Dam Visitors Center
3. Proposed Cal Hydro Water Imaginarium
4. Proposed Chinese Wind & Rain Bridge
5. Proposed Dredger Tailings Nature Reserve
6. Proposed Kikkoman Wildlife Crossing

LAKESIDE

7. Folsom Dam & Folsom Lake Reservoir
8. Original Folsom Dam Historic Site
9. Folsom State Prison (Represa)
10. Stockton Gristmill
11. East End Scenic Overlook
12. Sawmill Diversion Canal & Flume
13. Hinkle Creek
14. Historic Truss Bridge
15. Historic Rainbow Bridge
16. Livermore Sawmill Scenic Site
17. Nisenan Grinding Rocks Cultural Heritage Site
18. Folsom Powerhouse State Park, NRHP
19. Historic Meredith Gold Mine
20. Dredger Tailings Tidal Estuary
21. Original Black Miners Bar, CPHI Cultural Heritage Site
22. East Lake Natoma Trailhead
23. Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail
24. Eagles Aerie West End Scenic View

INLAND

25. Southern Nisenan Homeland
26. Black Miners Bar State Park
27. Young Wo Temple Cultural Heritage Site
28. Oak Chan's Livery Stable Cultural Heritage Site
29. VFW Post 6604
30. Young Wo Cemetery, CPHI Cultural Heritage Site
31. Murer House Museum, NRHP Cultural Heritage Site
32. 'Old China Town' Cultural Heritage Site
33. Chung Wah Cemetery & Lakeside Cemetery Cultural Heritage Sites
34. Southern Pacific Railroad Superintendants House (Wye), NRHP



discussions with State and Federal water authorities; on engaging a former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers consultant, and on discussions with Folsom residents.

Lake Natoma Park is composed of federal lands owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and leased by the California State Parks Department; municipal lands owned and governed by the chartered City of Folsom; and land in private ownership. The lands under State and City jurisdiction have Master Plans in place with governing criteria for development and recreation.

But all of the lands within Lake Natoma Park have one thing in common – the ever-evolving history of the ‘place’ they occupy. As summarized by Ed McMahon, an Urban Planner with the Urban Land Institute, “Physical space is whatever makes our surroundings worth caring about...While we have been saving landmarks, we have been losing the larger sense of their meaning...There is a social and psychological value tied to our history. Our sense of identity and well-being is tied into a stand of trees, wild animal habitats, buildings, and scenic views in profound ways. These items are invested with rich symbolic identity and well-being... We are suffering from the fact that we have too-often

been creating socio/economic places that just aren’t worth caring about...The key to economic development is “distinctiveness.”²

Every tourism destination should have a motto, a branding. The City of Folsom’s motto is “*Distinctive by Nature*,” referring to the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features of the earth. This motto imbues Lake Natoma Park with environmental and earth-friendly values and represents the two compatible themes running through the Park Conceptual Plan: the natural environment and water!

Lake Natoma Park is an ambitious proposal and involves the creation of an iconic tourism destination, distinctive from any other in the State of California, a proposal worth caring about. The history, natural environment, contemplative recreation possibilities, and the ‘clear water’ of the American River give Lake Natoma Park a competitive edge over other similar sites.

The “*Distinctive by Nature*” amenities of Lake Natoma Park contain environmental, historic and cultural interpretations, and economic infrastructure, some existing and some projected to be built as follows:

² Ibid

Natural Environment

- Folsom Lake State Recreation Area
- Lake Natoma and the American River
- Re-wilded riparian forest in ‘Old Chinatown’*
- Wildlife Overcrossing, from State Park Dredger Tailings over Folsom Blvd to Willow Creek Wetlands behind Kikkoman Factory*
- Guangzhou Province-type Wind and Rain Bridge connecting multi-use trails on both sides of Lake Natoma, with benches, shaded picnic area, fishing piers, kayak tie-ups, and bathrooms, crossing central Lake Natoma*
- Nisenan and Black Miners Bar interpretive areas
- East Lake Natoma Trail Head
- trails and picnic tables*

“Old Chinatown”

- Dragon Gate*
- Cal•Hydro: California Water Imaginarium*
- Waterarium Theater*
- Water Library*
- Nature Center*

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Class A Visitors Center*
- Dining and museum retail shops*
- Boutique Hotel*
- Event Facilities*
- Bathrooms, drinking fountains, picnic tables, benches*
- Way-finding signs, cultural and historic heritage interpretations*

Historic District

- Folsom History Museum
- Pioneer Village Makers Space, Black Smith Shop, and Railroad Museum
- Railroad Turntable and Round House
- Saturday Farmers Market
- Restaurants, Bars and Shops
- Lake Natoma Inn and The Bradley House
- National Register of Historic Places & Sites
- Chamber of Commerce Store and Visitors Center

***Note:** Yet to-be-built Plan environmental, tourism, and economic engine amenities (more details soon).

HISTORY OF THE EFFECTS OF FOLSOM DAM AND RESERVOIR ON THE CITY OF FOLSOM

Long before the Folsom Dam was built to control the American River, the Nisenan people lived along its banks in large villages.



The riverbanks contained wetlands, riparian forest, shrubs, acorns, buckeye, deer, mountain lion, and bald eagles, together with large populations of Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout in the River. There was a thriving tribal community that depended on the natural environment and the River for sustenance, resources, and transportation.

Later, prospectors, miners, businessmen, and inventors relied upon the American River to fuel the economy and spur innovative growth. The River supplied potable water to the town and surrounding settlers; brought diverted water to prospectors panning and mining for gold along the Natomas Water and Mining Company ditches; supplied hydro power to turn the Stockton Grist Mill water wheel; allowed for flotation of logs from forests upriver down to Folsom; and to cut logs into planks at the Livermore Sawmill; irrigated the orchards and fields of citrus farmers and dairy ranchers; provided water to Folsom's rail hub and to the 27 stagecoaches arriving with new gold seekers ready to try their luck in the fields; and transported the Pony Express and U.S. Mail by flat bottom boat down the American River to Sacramento. The River also inspired inventions and innovations like the first railroad West of the Mississippi, (the Sacramento Valley Railroad), the first United States hydro powered, long-distance commercial application of electricity which lit up the capitol City of Sacramento and the Folsom Prison. In short, over the years the American River has supported life, attracted new cultures, and inspired invention and technological innovation.

U.S. ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS, FOLSOM DAM AND THE AMERICAN RIVER



However, this progressive change for the City of Folsom encountered a roadblock in 1949. In that year, Congress reevaluated the nation's ability to bounce back from WWII and, to do so, looked in great part to agriculture to provide jobs and revenue. California was rich in both arable land and water to accomplish that end, but unfortunately, the rich agricultural land was located mainly in California's Central Valley whereas most of California's great rivers were in Northern California.

Congress looked for ways to harness the great rivers for hydro power and to supply water for agriculture in the Central Valley, and, as a result the City of Folsom was identified to be the recipient of a dam and reservoir that could be used by the State for hydro power, flood control, and water diversion for agriculture in the Central Valley and the San Francisco delta bay region.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in constructing the dam and reservoir, took a significant portion of Folsom's area of dairy and cattle ranches, orchards, and vineyards and built the Folsom Dam and Reservoir upstream on the American River. By the time of the Dam's completion, the federal government had also taken the riverbanks, including those running through Folsom's Historic District, and declared them flood plains under federal control.

At that time, Folsom had two small bridges that crossed the American River, Rainbow Bridge and the old trestle bridge. Rainbow Bridge was used for automobile traffic, and the trestle bridge was used for foot traffic and annual cattle drives to the train in Roseville which took the dairy herds up to Truckee where the cows could spend the summer grazing in cool mountain meadows. However, these cattle drives came to an end when the dairy farms were confiscated to build the Folsom Dam Reservoir, and,

additionally, no building was allowed along the riverbanks (to ensure that no communities along the American River would ever suffer the loss inhabitants or businesses due to flooding).

But the taking of the riverbanks as a safety measure resulted in the inhabitants of the area losing touch with the rhythm of the river and its natural resources, together with its heritage and cultural resources that has existed from 1849 – 1949. And there were other societal effects, too. Within 10 years, the municipal government, library, post office, pharmacy, and larger merchants had moved their places of business inland, away from the American River and Folsom’s once-thriving Historic District. The Southern Pacific Railroad died, leaving a railyard in the Historic District full of broken down equipment and tracks, and the once thriving Chinatown area west of the railroad yard along Leidesdorff Street became derelict and turned into the town dump. In 1957, the ‘Old Chinatown’ properties were taken by the City of Folsom to use as sewage disposal ponds. Mounds of municipal waste accrued, new and old City vehicles and road equipment were parked there. It was during this time that the 16 acre parcel became known in Folsom as the Corporation Yard, erasing any memory of ‘Old Chinatown.’

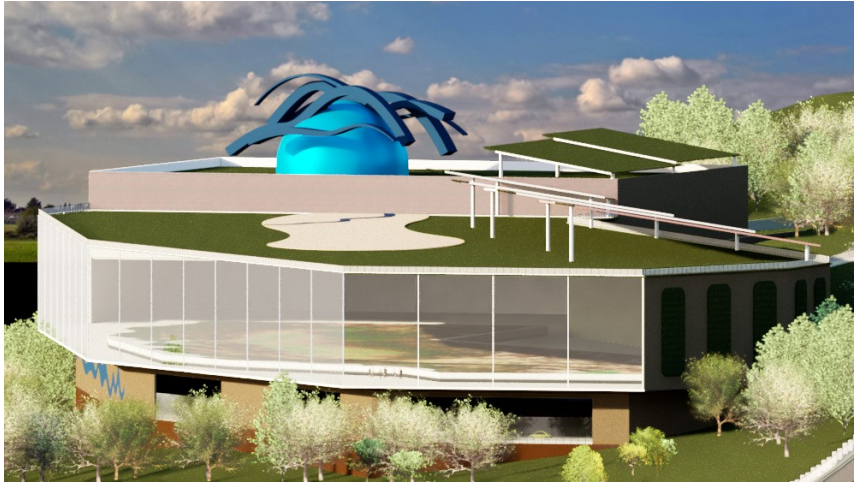
HISTORY OF THE CITY OF FOLSOM’S ‘OLD CHINATOWN’ AKA CORPORATION YARD

The year 2024 is the year of the Water Dragon on the Chinese zodiac. The dragon is symbolic of one who leads, and they are a strong and magical presence that inhabit all bodies of water: rivers, lakes, oceans, and sky. The Chinese build facing large bodies of water, seeking protection and strength from the dragon that inhabits them, as did Folsom’s four Chinese benevolence association: the Sam Yup, Sze Yi, Young Wo, and Hakka. The year of the Water Dragon comes about once in 144 years, and this is a Dragon year.

The Corporation Yard property was formerly known as ‘Old Chinatown.’ As previously stated, the property was acquired by the City of Folsom in 1957. Now would seem to be an auspicious time to engage in planning an iconic tourism destination that has ‘water’ at the heart of its reason for being – a nod to Folsom’s ‘Old Chinatown’ and the Year of the Water Dragon.

The gateway entrance into Old Chinatown should make a statement, like the spectacular gates in China. They are adorned with symbolic meaning, and anyone entering through a grand gate anticipates entering a very special place. The focus and branding

of Lake Natoma Park will emanate from ‘Old Chinatown’ and the Water Dragon. Accordingly, a Dragon Gate would set the proper mood for entering Cal·Hydro.



**WELCOME TO CAL·HYDRO:
CALIFORNIA WATER IMAGINARIUM!**

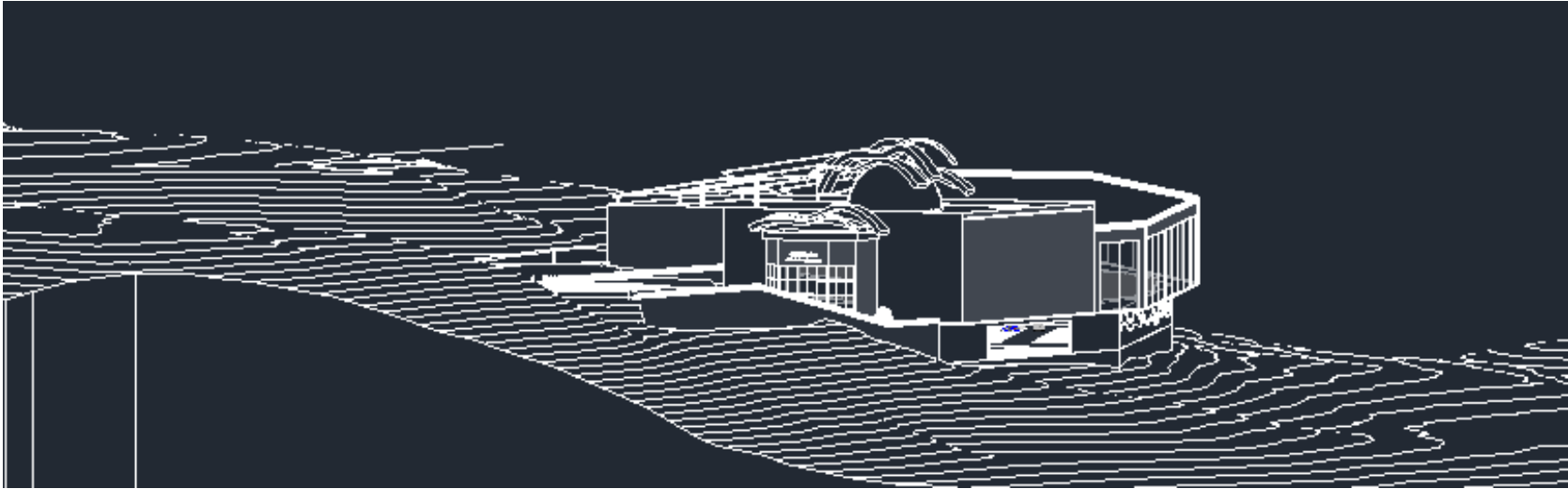
Museums like Cal·Hydro play an essential role in the cultural and social life of their cities in which they are located. They tell our stories, preserve our heritage, interpret the past, and explore the future. In these ways, museums enrich our lives daily, feeding a hunger for knowledge and igniting our imaginations.

Water and the natural environment will be the primary foci of Cal·Hydro. It will be a cultural attraction specific to the State of California, showcasing information, education, and entertainment on water and the natural environment. It will be the defining icon of the Historic District of the City of Folsom and the main hub of activity that creates a great deal of tourism, coordinates reservations for accommodations, food, and the contemplative recreation that emanates from Old Chinatown into the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area.

Cal·Hydro will attract visitors and tourists from throughout the State. Reservations will be required for Cal·Hydro in order to assure visitor capacities don't exceed the threshold of peak enjoyment and that there will be adequate parking available. Cal·Hydro will be the extraordinary highlight of any trip to Folsom.

The Cal·Hydro complex will be nestled in the sloping topography³ of Old Chinatown, and housed in a structure of biophilic⁴ design that will connect visitors to the natural

- 3 Museum of Modern Art, Emerging Ecologies: Architecture and the Rise of Environmentalism, Malcom Wells & Beverly Willis, pages 186-195
- 4 Biophilic design is an architectural and interior design approach that aims to connect people to nature by incorporating natural elements into buildings and living spaces. Biophilic design has been seen in architecture from as far back as the hanging Gardens of Babylon.



environment. Surrounding the building will be a re-wilded riparian forest that will serve as a public park with picnic tables, water fountains, and bathrooms. Foot paths will lead in and out of the riparian forest and connect to the East Lake Natoma Trailhead of the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. Public transportation amenities will be coordinated and consist of Light Rail and City shuttle services to various areas of Lake Natoma Park and to Cal·Hydro. In addition, Cal·Hydro will be partnered with a boutique hotel that will combine overnight packages for visitors (a co-marketing partnership) and a parking agreement for guests and events in the underground parking garage Cal·Hydro will be a forum for learning adventures and a place for enjoyment and

escape. Within the complex, there will be interactive water and nature displays that will provide new perspectives on the connectivity between water and nature.

Cal·Hydro will be an experiential place. It will be home to five separate entities within the building: the Planetarium Waterarium Theater; the Water Library; the Nature Center; the Folsom Dam Visitor Center; and the California Fly Over. The building will also contain an ambitious complex of dining, retail, and event venues. Parking will be accommodated in the bottom floor parking garage of the complex. Visitors will require advance reservations for entrance into the building and/or on-site parking garage.

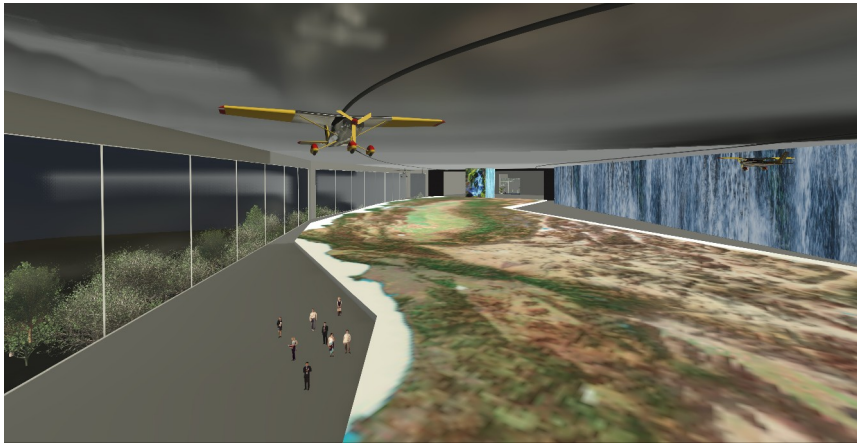
It will be essential that each visitor feels that they play an important part in the exhibits, to engender a personal connection to water and nature. When a visitor enters Cal·Hydro, each visitor (over the age of 5) will have the opportunity to pick an avatar. The avatar will introduce itself to the visitor on a screen, or cell phone, and show the visitor how to summon them for interaction as the visitor progresses through the complex and needs assistance. The avatar will guide their enjoyment at each exhibit and individually enrich their exploration of the water-nature connection. If a visitor wishes, the avatar will tell them where the bathrooms and drinking fountains are, supply a pop-up a map to guide them around, and tell them what's good for lunch. The avatar can even help make a lunch reservation and show them where the restaurants in the complex and Historic District are located!

At the entrance to the Cal·Hydro complex there will be a 250 seat theater called the Planetarium Waterarium. In this theater a new paradigm of water will be presented, what water really is, and how inconspicuously it supports life. Water as a precious, irreplaceable molecule will be visually presented in many forms from the microscopic point droplet to the great expanse of outer space. The explanation of water's crucial role in climate change

will literally take visitors into the universe and back! With astrophysicists leading the way, visitors will search the cosmos for planets that have water, liquid water. These planets have been described as being in the Goldie Locks Zone - not too hot, and too cold! Earth is in the Goldie Locks Zone¹ At the Planetarium Waterarium, visitors will look at stunning videos of Earth and space, molecules and electro-magnetic fields ,and see what scientists are looking for – signs of liquid water, signs of life!

The Folsom Dam Visitors Center will feature the Folsom Dam and Reservoir, along with much of the major waterway architecture the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has built across America. The Folsom Dam Visitors Center will also feature floor-to-ceiling immersive LED screens of ancient water architecture throughout civilizations of the world. Water reliability and resiliency is a universal, world-wide quest. There will be exhibits of ancient water architecture, showing how world civilizations addressed climate change in their time. The LED screens will create an illusion that the visitor is ascending some of the world's most important and monumental architecture that captured, redirected, stored, recycled, and moved water.

At the California Fly Over, visitors will ride on a jetstream over an enormous diorama of the State of California. The California Fly Over will feature a birds-eye view of the enormous water works, dams, reservoirs, canals, weirs, tunnels, lakes and pipes to showcase the importance of the jet stream and atmospheric rivers. And, the diorama will also show what happens when the jet stream doesn't bring annual atmospheric rivers to California.



Flying over the giant Diorama of California the State's extraordinary topography visitors can choose to fly over their own town, county, or region and see what kind of water system their town relies upon: rainfall, ground water, or river water.

Also, there will be a Water Library that has comfortable chairs and tables where visitors can sit down, relax, and order a tap

water sampler from a list of available waters from different cities, e.g. Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Folsom, and San Diego. Visitors will taste and smell water, look at its color, rate each sample and see if all tap water is created equal. At the Water Library visitors will be able to read their town's annual water report and share water ratings from best to worst, smelliest to cleanest.

Additionally, at the Water Library there will be virtual reality books on the Water Librarian's bookshelves to be "checked out" that specialize in the world's water ways and jet streams in other parts of the Earth. With special virtual reality glasses, the contents of the books will "fly" seated visitors around some of the most spectacular dams and atmospheric rivers in the world!

LAKE NATOMA PARK DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP PLAN & COUNCIL

In conjunction with the implementation of the above-described Conceptual Plan, FFP strongly recommends the creation and implementation of a Lake Natoma Park Destination Stewardship Plan & Council.

The purpose of this Stewardship Destination Plan and Council will be to identify and supply the infrastructure needed to

accommodate and sustain the maintenance framework necessary to support the kind of contemplative recreational tourism to be promoted in the area, nurture the cross-jurisdictional cooperation to facilitate the Plan, and to educate merchants, visitors, and residents of the wisdom and benefits of such cooperation. The Council will have to be in place, with Guiding Principals and a working Vision for Lake Natoma Park, before tourism is promoted, nurtured, and in full swing.

A Destination Stewardship Council will be composed of representatives from federal, state, county and city government, Historic District businesses, and Historic District residents. Cross-sector stewardship will guide infrastructure planning and continue to keep stewardship responsibilities in the forefront to ensure all are respected. In seeking to develop tourism, the Stewardship Council would ensure that the natural environment, historic and cultural resources, businesses, residents, the City of Folsom, and the Folsom Lake State Recreational Park Area all thrive. Visitors and residents, alike, should feel heard and cared for.

The Lake Natoma Park 20 Year Conceptual Plan will depend heavily on a thoughtful process working toward a greater enhancement of each Council Member's controlling Master Plan.

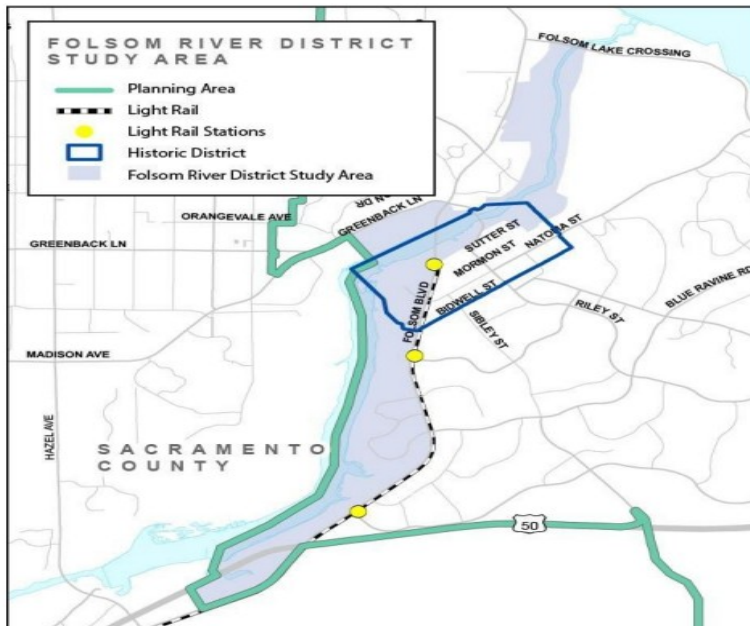
To that end, the Stewardship Council will have a shared Vision that guides the implementation of tourism into the future and roots all decisions in common values, goals, and governments such as:

- Foster a Tourism Economy That Gives Back. Foster a thriving tourism and recreation-based economy that visibly improves quality of life, addresses community priorities, and supports environmental stewardship.
- Turn a Shared Vision into Shared Action. Establish a formal structure to steer Lake Natoma Park's tourism stewardship agenda with a shared commitment to action, transparency, communication, and inclusion.
- Advance a Culture of Caring for Lake Natoma Park. Safeguard and improve Lake Natoma Park's natural environment and neighborhoods by pre-educating visitors and residents in shared responsibilities.
- Improve the Lake Natoma Park Experience for All. Reduce peak demand impacts through resource management, improved infrastructure and enforcement, while continuing to create ways for all to enjoy and connect with the natural area and businesses. (More details soon.)

**APPENDIX A.
2035 FOLSOM GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
RIVER DISTRICT DESCRIPTION**

River District

The riverfront areas of Folsom are great assets that are currently underutilized. While they offer recreational opportunities for Folsom residents, access to the river is limited. Folsom has the opportunity to make the river a more integral part of the community fabric by turning its attention to the river and increasing access. The General Plan policies in this section call for the preparation of a River District Master Plan. Much of the land surrounding the river is controlled by the California State Parks Department, so increasing access to the river will require close coordination with the State. Policies in the Parks and Recreation Element provide further guidance on the enhancement of riverfront areas and increased access for recreation.



Adopted August 28, 2018; Amended August 24, 2021

Goal LU 5.1

Support the appropriate enhancement of Folsom’s riverfront areas for current and future residents in order to increase public access, recreational opportunities, and economic development in consultation with federal, state, and regional public land management agencies.

LU 5.1.1 Vision for the River District

Engage the community, stakeholders, and federal, state, and regional land management agencies in establishing a vision for Folsom’s River District. **MPSP**

LU 5.1.2 River District Master Plan

Consider the preparation of a River District Master Plan for Folsom’s riverfront area, that is based on widespread community engagement as well as coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Sacramento County Regional Parks Department. **MPSP**

LU 5.1.3 Enhance Lake Natoma with Compatible Recreation Uses

Enhance the role of Lake Natoma as a place to recreate and an amenity for Folsom residents, and elevate Lake Natoma’s role in supporting local and regional business and commerce, including tourism, recreation and leisure, while maintaining compatibility with the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area General Plan. Invest in strategically-located sites along the length of Lake Natoma for a diverse mix of passive and active recreation and tourism activities that are compatible with nearby land uses, historically and culturally important sites, significant habitat areas, restoration sites, and native fish and wildlife usage. **MPSP**

LU 5.1.4 Honor Folsom’s Heritage

The River District Master Plan should include a means of honoring and interpreting Folsom’s heritage within the Historic District. **MPSP**