STAFF REPORT
OLD SACRAMENTO STATE HISTORIC PARK
GENERAL PLAN AND EIR

(REVISED 4-18-14)

I. DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

California State Parks recommends that the State Park and Recreation Commission (Commission) adopt the proposed resolution to approve the General Plan (GP) for Old Sacramento State Historic Park (the park).

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Old Sacramento State Historic Park (OSSHP) is a contiguous part of the Old Sacramento Historic District (Old Sacramento) and came into existence in concert with the redevelopment of Old Sacramento, formalized in the *General Development Plan* (State Parks 1970). This *Old Sacramento State Historic Park General Plan and EIR* (General Plan or General Plan/EIR) evaluates properties owned by California State Parks (State Parks) in Old Sacramento and includes properties on the Railyards site (to be used for the proposed Railroad Technology Museum) and more than 12-miles of railroad right-of-way (used by the Heritage Sacramento Southern Railroad excursion train) which is mostly owned or provided easements to State Parks by the City for use***. Implementation of either excursion line will require further refined study, design and environmental analysis. A four-mile segment of the continuous rail line right of way to the town of Hood is owned by Sacramento Regional Transit and has been removed from the project description.***

Classified as a State Historic Park, OSSHP encompasses an area of approximately 14 acres, generally bound by the Sacramento River, I Street Bridge, Commonwealth Alley, and J Street. OSSHP consists of a historic half-block site, the 1849 Scene, located on Front Street between I Street and J Street, and features buildings that are primary contributors to the National Historic Landmark District status of Old Sacramento, as well as other noteworthy historic structures and/or points of interest.

This General Plan is the first tier of a tiered General Plan/Environmental Impact Report that will guide the development and management of this park for public use and resource protection for the next 20-plus years. The plan establishes goals and guidelines to assist in the daily and long-term management of the park to ensure that its resources are protected, while encouraging a variety of recreation activities and providing additional facilities to help State Parks achieve its mission. Projects proposed by this plan have been reviewed at a

program level pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. However, project-level, second tier evaluations of the potential impacts of specific development projects will need to be completed in the future, before implementation of specific projects can begin.

III. PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS

The General Development Plan (GDP) referenced in Section II. above was approved by Director, William Penn Mott Jr. This GDP was a one page graphic depiction of Old Sacramento without associated text or descriptions and no evaluation of potential environmental impacts that could result from development. There is no documentation that a GDP was approved by the California State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) in or around 1970. ***This GP/EIR was brought before the Commission on January 24, 2014, staff was directed to re-engage stakeholders and gather additional input regarding the excursion line proposals.***

IV. PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

The General Plan process for OSSHP began in October 2010 with a public scoping meeting and workshop at the park. Two public workshops were held at the park in February 2011, and April 2011 with an additional public input meeting held in *April 2014*. An Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the City of Sacramento, the Old Sacramento Business Association, the Railroad Museum Foundation and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation added to the stakeholder input and reviewed the planning concepts. The planning team also gave presentations to inform and gather input from nearby resident organizations, project partners, and a local cycling advocacy group. Additionally, interagency input was obtained through agency scoping as part of the environmental review process and from in-person meetings with the City and various other agencies, upon request or to review information in the General Plan.

Public outreach conducted to inform stakeholders and residents of the General Plan included a variety of methods: three public workshops; one public input meeting; a webpage on State Parks' website; and mailing materials, including emails, postcards, and flyers. Notices of the public meetings were placed at OSSHP and in local business storefronts.

All comments received on the plan and during the planning process were fully considered, ensuring that community members, agencies, planning partners, and other stakeholders were fully vested in a transparent planning process.

State Parks posted the Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR (PGP/DEIR) for a public 45-day review period beginning on May 30, 2012 and ending on July 16, 2012. A revised version of the PGP/DEIR to address significant stakeholder/resident issues was published in December 2013 and posted for review on the California State Park website.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

To date, there is no approved General Plan for OSSHP. The development philosophy for OSSHP, guided by the GDP and *Interpretive Prospectus* in the 1970s, was to recreate the physical appearance of the structures, streets, and open space present during the City's Gold Rush heyday. However, conveying the essence of Old Sacramento in the Gold Rush-era is challenged and compromised by the fact that the 1849 scene has been modified and the city's relationship to the river is quite different from what it was in 1849. Regular floods that plagued the city in its past are responsible for the appearance of the city today with streets and buildings that now sit one story higher than originally constructed, to avoid floodwaters, changing Sacramento's connection to the river and its historic landscape.

Development that has occurred in Old Sacramento since the 1970s has been focused on the establishment and expansion of the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) and the development of the associated railroad theme, as the primary emphasis. Furthermore, future opportunities exist to develop a new Railroad Technology Museum on lands to be acquired by State Parks, and to expand the heritage Sacramento Southern Railroad excursion train experience. Recent progress related to development of the railroad theme has overshadowed the development of the Gold Rush experience or other potential interpretive themes and resources that currently exist in OSSHP. The Sacramento River, also a crucial physical feature and influence on the development of the city, is not yet well interpreted in OSSHP.

V. PLAN ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

The following issues and opportunities were considered in the Preliminary General Plan (Preliminary GP).

Issue #1 - Management Structure: The Preliminary GP explored the concept of splitting OSSHP into two separate State Historic Parks (Old Sacramento State Historic Park and California State Railroad Museum). Park partners and stakeholders were opposed to the concept of two parks as they view the history, resources, and events in the park as closely interconnected. Concerns were also expressed that this would add another layer of management complexity to Old Sacramento. ***The General Plan now proposes to maintain OSSHP as one park with five distinct management zones: Riverfront Zone, Gold Rush and Commerce Zone, Railroad History Zone, Railroad Technology and Shops Zone, and Excursion Railroad Zone.***

Issue #2 - Planning Area: The Preliminary GP included select concepts for plans and activities in Old Sacramento that extended beyond the park's planning area boundary. At the onset of the planning process, members of the public and stakeholders urged State Parks to coordinate with partners in Old Sacramento to think more holistically about plans and programs in OSSHP, in conjunction with the historic district. However, once the Preliminary GP was published, park partners were concerned that some proposed concepts had reached beyond State Parks' planning area boundaries. A four-mile segment of the continuous rail line right of way to the town of Hood is owned by Sacramento Regional

Transit and has been removed from the project planning area. ***The General Plan has been revised to only include those areas either currently owned by State Parks, with planned ownership, or to be coordinated with others in the near future. No planning or improvements are now planned within the Sacramento Regional Transit District 4 mile section of right-of-way through South Land Park.***

Issue #3 - Interpretation: The appropriate interpretive period for OSSHP was explored in the Preliminary GP. Comments from planning partners suggested ensuring the period of significance is consistent with the period of significance identified in the National Historic Landmark District nomination for Old Sacramento (1840's to 1870); they also indicated the desire to see the period of significance better defined for the Gold Rush components, and other resources of the plan. ***The GP now includes different periods of significance for different management zones, consistent with interpretation of the respective resources within these zones and the National Historic Landmark District nomination for Old Sacramento, where applicable. More detailed studies through development of an Interpretive Master Plan for OSSHP or other project development plans are proposed in the future.***

Issue #4 - Visitor Center: The Preliminary GP identified the need for a new/improved visitor center with a Gold Rush theme, event space, and orientation areas and suggested potential use of the Big Four Building for this purpose. Stakeholders and planning partners expressed concerns regarding the use of the Big Four Building as a Gold Rush Visitor Center, including fears that this function would compete with the Sacramento History Museum and that interpretation of the Gold Rush was not consistent with the historic significance of the Big Four Building. ***The GP now calls for a visitor center located somewhere in the Gold Rush and Commerce Zone. The concept of Interpretation of Gold Rush themes in the Big Four Building has been removed from the GP and the building's significance to themes of commerce, railroad, and transportation are emphasized.***

Issue #5 - Sunken Ship(s): Several shipwrecks lie on the bottom of the Sacramento River in Old Sacramento and the Preliminary GP called for developing the opportunity for viewing and interpreting one of these ships. This suggestion sparked discussion with several entities, namely the California State Lands Commission and the City of Sacramento, who have ownership and jurisdiction responsibility for the ships. ***The GP emphasizes coordination of future programs on the riverfront adjacent to OSSHP, including interpretation of the sunken ships along the riverfront.***

Issue #6 - Bike Circulation: Old Sacramento is connected to the regional bike trail network and is a popular bicycling destination, yet the circulation patterns for bikes through Old Sacramento are not well refined and are dangerous in some places. A potential bike trail linkage between Miller Park and the proposed Northwest Land Park (NLP) mixed-use development exists through the existing tunnel and rail spur which serviced the NLP site. ***The GP includes concepts for future bike routes that are consistent with the City's Bikeway Master Plan and NLP Land Use Plan. These were developed in coordination with the City's bike coordinator, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District and bicycle advocacy groups through a series of meetings and communications.***

Issue #7 - Horse-Drawn Streetcar: The Preliminary GP included the concept of a horse-drawn streetcar loop through Old Sacramento, following I Street, Front Street, L Street, and 2nd Street as a people mover, exhibiting this mode of historic transportation technology. Several planning partners were opposed to the horse-car loop due to concerns regarding vehicular congestion, issues related to equine safe treatment and potential adverse impacts to businesses during the project's construction. Sections of the proposed loop also were located on lands outside State Parks' ownership. ***The GP now includes the potential concept for a horse-drawn streetcar line within the park's planning area boundaries, proposed to travel between I Street and Front Street for exhibition and demonstration rather than as a form of public transport.***

Issue #8 - The 1849 Scene: This area is currently covered by lawn and open space and a small cluster of Gold Rush-themed commercial structures. It is informally used by school and other visitor groups for lunches, picnics, and informal gatherings and also serves as a space for hosting special events. The Preliminary GP described the concept for the development of a historic scene represented in layers, proposing reconstruction of commercial buildings representing the City's post street raising, at present street grade and developing a Gold Rush "underground" experience at the City's historic street grade, interpreting archaeological resources found and located on-site, including the brick buttresses and walls built to support and raise the streets of Old Sacramento. The Preliminary GP included conceptual renderings for illustrative purposes. Concerns expressed regarding this concept included the loss of open space, level of detail, and the interpretation of buildings and density represented in the site concepts. Some feared this development could threaten the designation of Old Sacramento as a Historic District if not constructed to Secretary of Interior standard guidelines***. The GP calls for preparation of a Cultural Resources Management Plan that would ensure future use and development on the site are consistent with the Secretary of Interior standards. The GP also states that open space elements should be incorporated into future plans, designs, and programs for the site or accommodated in other locations such as, the Railroad Technology Museum plaza, to ensure that large flexible event space remains available.***

Issue #9 - Underground Tours: The Preliminary GP described a concept for a restored historic commercial block for the 1849 scene, with an underground level for guided and self-guided archaeological tours of the City's original street elevation. This concept sparked concerns and fears regarding competition with the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation's Underground Tour program. ***The GP focuses on cooperation/ expansion of current underground tour offerings; references to self-guided tours have been removed.***

Issue #10 - Sacramento Delta and River Museum: The desire for such a museum was identified during early public outreach activities. The Preliminary GP identified a potential location for such a museum, in a building located outside of the planning boundary, which sparked ownership concerns. ***The GP now calls for investigating future opportunities to develop a Sacramento Delta and River Museum in Old Sacramento or in the vicinity of the park.***

Issue #11 - I-Street Closure: The Preliminary GP proposed the closure of I Street, between 2nd Street and Commonwealth Alley to vehicles during the day (open to bus, bike, and pedestrian access) to ensure visitor and pedestrian safety; and reopening of this roadway in the evenings. This proposal raised concerns regarding loss of street parking (affecting three spaces currently provided on I Street) and potential circulation impacts from limiting alley access for business and bus traffic. ***This concept is no longer included in the GP.***

Issue #12 - Excursion Trains: The General Plan includes concepts for two excursion train lines: the first line would extend the current excursion train operation running from OSSHP to Baths to the Sacramento Zoo; the second line is proposed as a themed excursion ride for nature viewing and other interpretation from the Freeport area to Hood. Significant and unavoidable environmental impacts were identified for noise. Concerns stated by neighbors include potential environmental impacts, impacts to their properties, trespass, and real estate value. Additional information was also requested. ***The GP has been updated to provide additional description of the conditions along the excursion train right-of-way and frequency of train movements for the excursion train operation from Old Sacramento to the Sacramento Zoo. Implementation of either excursion line will require further refined study, design and environmental analysis. A four-mile right of way segment and a portion of the continuous rail route to the town of Hood, owned by Sacramento Regional Transit District will be removed from the project description . Conclusions regarding environmental impacts have not changed.***

VI. LEGAL ISSUES

There are no known legal issues relating to the Commission's approval of the General Plan for Old Sacramento State Historic Park.

VII. FISCAL IMPACT

There is no immediate fiscal impact as a result of adopting this general plan. However, approving the plan will provide additional revenue and concession opportunities in the future.

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: Proposed Excursion Train Routes

Figure 2: General Plan Management Zones

Figure 3: Conceptual Master Plan

FIGURE 1 – Proposed Excursion Train Route (revised)

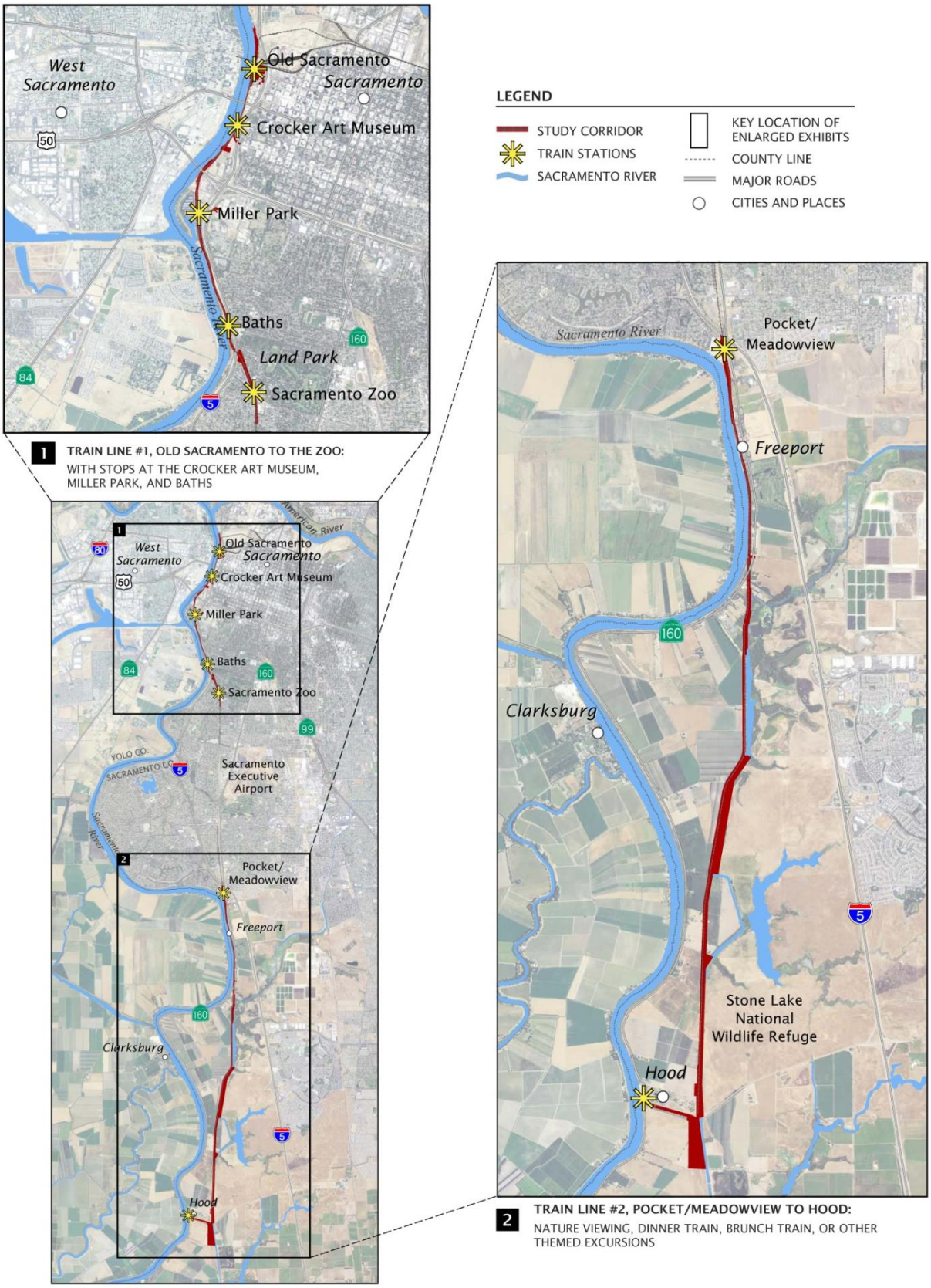

FIGURE 2 – General Plan Management Zones
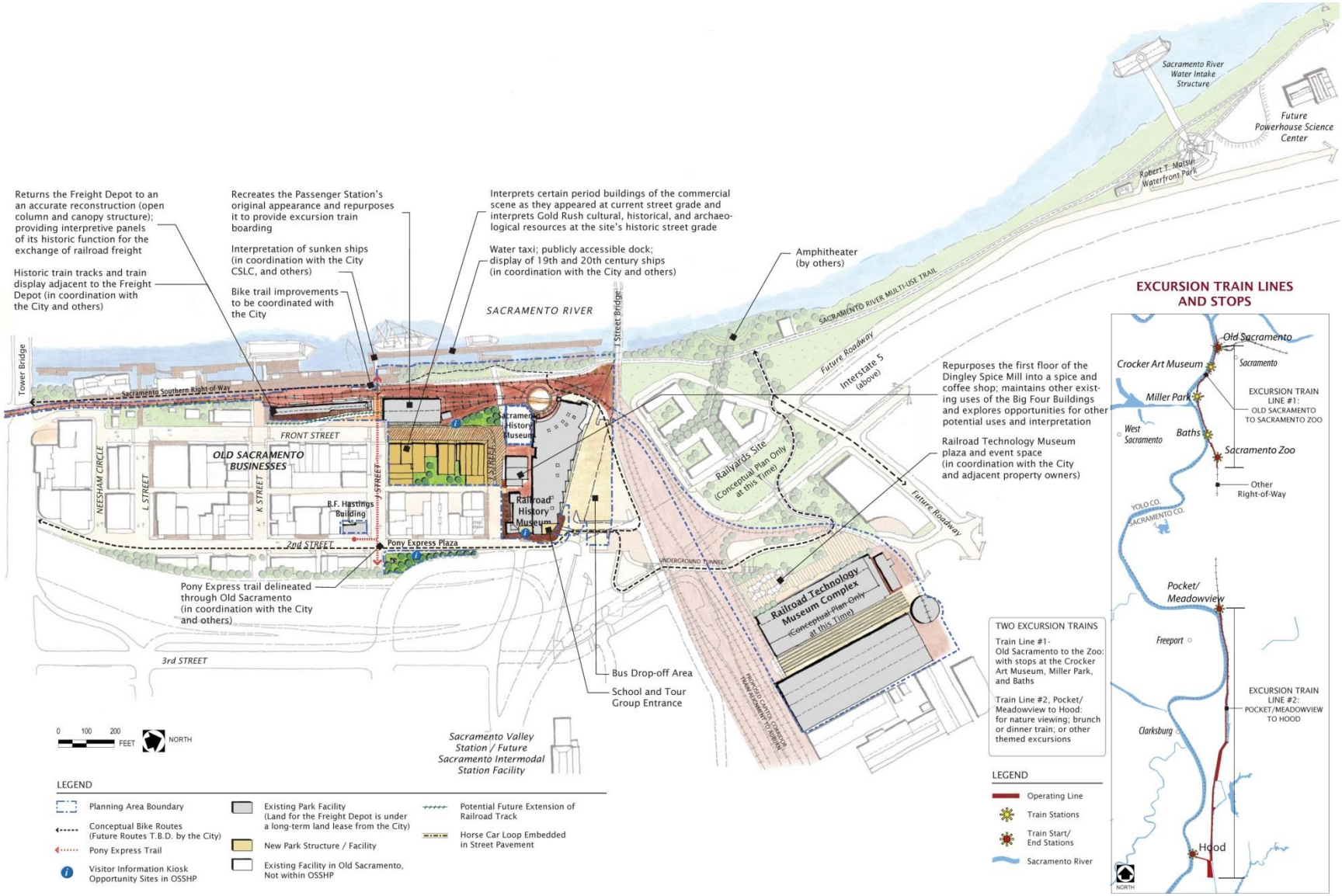
FIGURE 2 – Conceptual Master Plan (revised)