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See 11 major new housing projects that will redefine life in Sacramento’s central city

BY RYAN LILLIS
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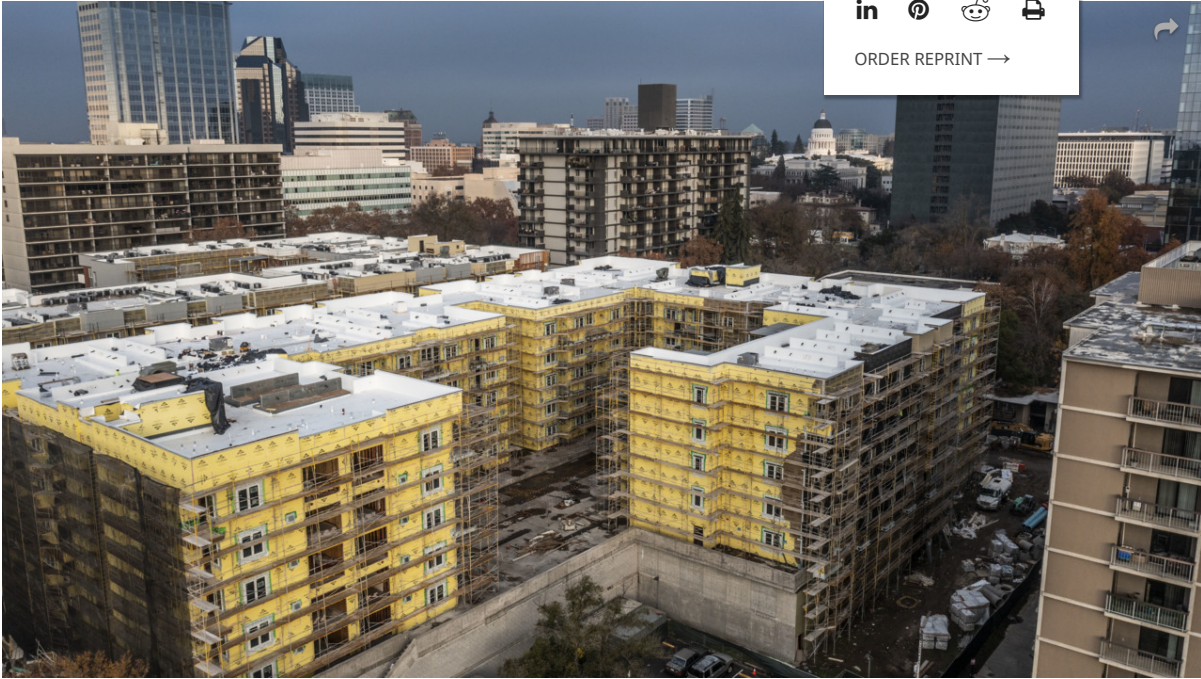
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The Sacramento Commons development, seen Dec. 7, 2021, will ultimately add 436 housing units to the mega block bounded by Fifth, Seventh, N and P streets – replacing garden villas built in the 1960s next to Capitol Towers. BY [HECTOR AMEZCUA](#) ✉️

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Building booms in the urban cores of Portland, Ore., and Austin, Texas, have long left Sacramento leaders envious. But the capital city’s big moment may finally be on the horizon.

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Hundreds of residential units will open next year in the central city grid — and even more are in advanced planning stages. From locally-designed projects taking over long-ignored blocks to [ambitious developments led by multinational companies](#), the downtown building boom will reimagine life in Sacramento’s urban core.

This does not appear to be a fad, developers and urban planners say. As residents flee more expensive coastal cities such as Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles, they’re heading for “secondary” cities, including Sacramento, that are more affordable. Yet the supply of housing in downtown and midtown is years behind the

X

“This is not a momentary blip,” said Riaan De Beer, vice president of development for [Anthem Properties Group](#).

De Beer’s Vancouver-based development company is a symbol of the bold bet that builders are taking on Sacramento. Anthem is days away from beginning construction on 15S, a 137-unit apartment building on S Street. It’s already building Cathedral Square, a six-story apartment building on J Street downtown.

And it’s not stopping there.

“Our long-term vision is to have thousands of units in the rental market, not hundreds,” De Beer said.

[Ron Vrilakas, a Sacramento architect and developer](#), is also bullish on the central city. His firm is behind a handful of new apartment buildings along the S Street and Broadway corridors.

Vrilakas said Sacramento is “experiencing a long-delayed building boom” – he said he thinks Sacramento is two decades behind cities such as Portland when it comes to downtown housing.

“We’re in a year of catching up,” he said. “There’s a percentage of the population that desires to live in an urban setting and for the last 30 years, we’ve not met that demand. If you’re a student of cities, then you come to realize pretty quickly that Sacramento has lagged behind on some fundamental things that make cities work and now we’re seeing some of those things come to pass.”

Will the momentum be enough to transform the urban core into the 24-hour neighborhood city leaders have long sought?

The pandemic has been brutal on the downtown economy — thousands of state workers continue to work from home — and just this week [downtown grocery store Market 5-ONE-5 announced it was closing](#). A spokeswoman cited “significant changes in nearby office occupancy downtown, including an absence of daytime workforce, as well as stalled development of urban housing around the store location.”

The following are 11 significant projects either planned or under construction in downtown and midtown Sacramento. Combined, the projects could add hundreds of housing units to the central city over the next few years.



New apartment buildings are being built in midtown and downtown Sacramento, California. Some are affordable but most are market rate for rent. BY [DAVID CARACCIO](#) 📧

Few blocks have symbolized Sacramento's attempt to remake its urban core more than the stretch of J Street between 10th and 11th streets. It's been mostly vacant for years.

Drive down J Street today, however, and it's becoming a different story. A large red construction crane stands over the growing foundation of [Cathedral Square](#), Anthem's major downtown project.

When it's finished in late 2023, Cathedral Square will add more than 150 residential units to downtown.



The proposed Anthem Cathedral Square project would consist of 153 housing units and ground floor retail on J Street, between 10th and 11 streets, in downtown Sacramento. HRGA ARCHITECTURE, ANTHEM

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This is Anthem's "other" downtown project — a 137-unit apartment building that will take up much of the block on the south side of S Street between 15th and 16th streets.

Crews are finishing soil clean-up at the site and [construction on the eight-story building](#) will likely start before the end of the month, De Beer said. The apartments will range in size from 490-square-foot studios to two-bedroom units of 1,156 square feet, according to city planning documents. Debeer said the project should be finished by early 2024.

While few of the major projects being planned for the central city are restricted to low-income earners, De Beer said adding any housing will help in a market that has seen ["massive rental increases."](#)

"So many people are vying for every rental," he said. "There needs to be a massive increase in supply."



Anthem Properties Group is about to start construction on an eight-story apartment building on the 1500 block of S Street in downtown Sacramento, California. *ANTHEM PROPERTIES GROUP*

THE IRONSIDE

The area around Southside Park has some interesting projects in the works, including [the Ironside, a mixed-use building proposed by Vrillakas Groen Architects](#).

A cluster of small buildings at 1008 S St. would be demolished to make way for the four-story building with 23 housing units. The new building gets its name from its neighbor: Old Ironsides, a bar, restaurant and live music venue that's been part of the downtown Sacramento scene for nearly 90 years. Construction should start late next year, Vrillakas said.

Vrillakas sees S Street as one of the next focal points for urban living in Sacramento, following in the footsteps of the nearby R Street corridor.



A new apartment building at 1008 S St. in downtown Sacramento is planned to have 23 apartments. It's called the Ironside, a tribute to the long-time bar, restaurant and music venue Old Ironsides on the same block. *VRILAKAS GROEN ARCHITECTS*

1629 S ST.

The project will also have just under 9,000 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor and a roof deck for tenants. Construction should begin early next year, Vrillakas said.

Apartments will range from 495-square-foot studios to 1,040-square-foot two-bedroom units.



A four-story building with 47 apartments is proposed for S Street between 16th and 17th streets in midtown Sacramento. *VRILAKAS GROEN ARCHITECTS*

1717 S ST.

This project is rare in that it is focused on adding affordable housing to midtown. It's yet another legacy project for [Ali Youssefi, a prominent developer of affordable and workforce housing who died in 2018 at the age of 35.](#)

The Capitol Area Community Development Corporation and [CFY Development](#), run by Youssefi's father, Cyrus, are partners on the \$69 million project that backs up to the Ice Blocks neighborhood. Construction is well underway.

CADA said on its website that the new building will have [more than 150 units of affordable housing restricted to those earning low or very-low incomes.](#) It's expected to be finished in 2023.



A new affordable housing apartment building is under construction at 1717 S St. in midtown Sacramento,

ICE BOX

One of the last pieces is almost in place for the Ice Blocks.

A six-story apartment building is proposed for a surface parking lot at 18th and R streets at the eastern edge of the Ice Blocks development (the lot is next to the building that houses Philz Coffee and Beast + Bounty). A drawing of the proposed building submitted last month to the city of Sacramento shows it would be called the Ice Box.

The new building would have 65 apartments and a small retail space of 1,065 square feet, according to documents filed with the city. The design “channels the industrial character of the historic R Street corridor alongside modern design,” according to a project narrative filed by Heller Pacific.

Apartments would range in size from 440-square-foot studios to two-bedroom units of 1,165 square feet.



The Ice Box, part of the Ice Blocks neighborhood in midtown Sacramento, is planned for the corner of 18th and R streets. It would have 65 apartments and a small retail space. *HRGA ARCHITECTURE/HELLER PACIFIC*

1617 J ST.

This is one of the biggest projects in the planning stages: a 200-unit, [seven-story building on J Street between 16th and 17th](#). It's notable not only in its size, but its proposed location on one of Sacramento's busiest thoroughfares and across the street from the Memorial Auditorium.

SKK Developments is behind the project. All apartments would be rentals and offered at market rate, meaning they would not be income restricted.

The block is the former site of Lucca Restaurant, a [longtime midtown restaurant that had served as a gathering spot for the politically powerful](#) before it closed near the beginning of the pandemic.



SKK Developments plans to build a 200-unit development on J Street between 16th and 17th streets in midtown Sacramento. The rental units would all be market rate. *C2K ARCHITECTURE*

1901 EIGHTH ST.

Also called the KIND, this project will essentially transform the Insight Coffee Roasters shop at the corner of Eighth and S streets into a three-story, 72-unit apartment building with studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units.

The new building will wrap around Insight and cover a surface parking lot at the corner. Drawings of the project show the coffee shop will remain.

The firm behind the project, Williams + Paddon, requested the city to allow them to provide 17 parking spots on the site, fewer than what the city would normally require. The company said it is providing bicycle parking to make up for the lower automobile parking total.

That request has sparked some neighborhood opposition. The Southside Park Neighborhood Association filed an appeal with the city, calling the approval of a reduced number of parking spots “a de facto subsidy for the developer.” The appeal letter says neighborhood residents “would be adversely affected by additional vehicles” and also raised concerns about “affordability, small unit size, and outsized building design.”



SACRAMENTO COMMONS

Construction is churning along at Sacramento Commons, a multi-building complex on a large downtown block bordered by Fifth and Seventh streets, and N and P streets.

The developers said at a 2019 groundbreaking that the complex would eventually add 436 units of housing to downtown. “This is exactly the kind of project we need more of,” Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg said at the time.

Two new towers on the site will replace 84 garden-style apartments on the mega-block.



Building crews work at the Capitol Towers Tuesday in downtown Sacramento. The project replaces villas built in as part of a redevelopment project in the 1950s and '60s. Paul Kitagaki Jr. PKITAGAKI@SACBEE.COM

1116 18TH ST.

This seven-story building would have retail space on the ground floor and six stories of market-rate apartments. It's proposed by prominent Sacramento developer Sotiris Kolokotronis and would add 24 housing units to the midtown area.

Longtime mechanic Barber's Shop Automotive — an old Alfa Romeo shop that years ago would host Second Saturday events — was the last tenant on the spot. Barber's closed late last year after a “dumpster fire that toasted the inside of the building.” But don't worry; Barber's auto shop moved to 16th Street between F and G — next to their scooter shop — and owner Steve Barber says they're planning to bring back Second Saturday live music in the spring.



An architectural rendering of a planned 30,000-square-foot, seven-story mixed-use apartment complex project at 1116 18th Street in midtown Sacramento. *CZK ARCHITECTURE*

THE GROWER'S DISTRICT

This project is closer to the River District — the largely industrial area along North 16th Street and Richards Boulevard on the northern edge of downtown — but is worth including because of its size: an estimated 540 housing units in three buildings across multiple blocks.

The largest of the proposed buildings would repurpose a century-old produce distribution center, keeping much of the old building wrapped around two residential towers with a combined 350 housing units. Another building across 16th Street would have 120 apartments and a third site facing 16th Street would have 70 units, according to documents filed with the city by Vrilakas Groen.



An architectural drawing shows the view of the Grower's District looking north on North 16th Street in the River District, north of downtown Sacramento. The complex would add an estimated 540 housing units in four buildings. *VRILAKAS GROEN*

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