

City of Sacramento
Parks and Community Enrichment Commission Report
915 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814
www.cityofsacramento.org

File ID: 2026-01124

6/4/2026

César Chávez Plaza Renaming Kickoff

File ID: 2026-01124

Location: District 4 & Citywide

Recommendation: Review and comment.

Contact: Jason Wiesemann, Park Planning and Development Services Manager, (916) 808-7634, jwiesemann@cityofsacramento.org, Department of Youth, Parks, & Community Enrichment

Presenter: Jason Wiesemann, Park Planning and Development Services Manager, (916) 808-7634, jwiesemann@cityofsacramento.org, Department of Youth, Parks, & Community Enrichment

Attachments:

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Cesar Chavez Park Location Map
- 3-Presentation

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: The City is launching a community led process to rename César Chávez Plaza, reflecting Sacramento's commitment to transparency, inclusion, and culturally representative public spaces. YPCE has developed a process that aligns with the City's naming policy, and an engagement framework that centers community voice and leads to a final decision by City Council.

César Chávez Plaza is an existing 2.5-acre special use community park located at 910 I Street (District 4).

Goals:

- Ensure the new name reflects Sacramento's values, history, and cultural diversity.
- Conduct a transparent, accessible, inclusive engagement process.
- Engage diverse communities, including multilingual and underserved groups.

Parks & Community Enrichment Commission Role:

- Public kickoff venue for announcing the renaming process.
- Charged with helping promote community participation in survey and outreach process.
- Reviews engagement summary and recommended name.
- Forwards the final recommended name to City Council.

Timeline (subject to change):

- Online Survey will open on Friday, June 12th and close on Friday, July 24th.
- Staff Review & Subcommittee Alignment - *August - September 2026*
- Commission Recommendation - *October 2026*
- Council Consideration & Adoption - *October - November 2026*

Policy Considerations: On February 26, 2008, City Council adopted Resolution 2008-112, establishing a Facility Naming Policy. The policy contains guidance when naming facilities or portions of facilities. The proposed name shall be consistent with the City Facility Naming Policy.

Economic Impacts: Not applicable.

Environmental Considerations: Not applicable.

Sustainability: Not applicable.

Commission/Committee Action: Not applicable.

Rationale for Recommendation: Renaming César Chávez Plaza shall be consistent with the City's Facility Naming Policy.

Financial Considerations: Not applicable.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.

Background:

César Chávez Plaza is important in the records of Sacramento Valley's human habitation, as the general location of Native American settlement that has been documented as a long as 8,000 years ago.

The site, historically called *City Plaza* or *Plaza Park*, was dedicated in 1848-1849, by John Sutter Jr. during his designation of 12 public squares as part of Sacramento's original urban plan. It is one of the oldest parks in Sacramento. The park site occupies a full city block (2.5 acres) in downtown Sacramento (between I & J Streets and 9th & 10th Streets). It was intended as a central civic space

for the growing Gold Rush-era city.

In the 1850s, there was a proposal to construct the California State Capitol on the site, but the plan was ultimately abandoned as it was proven to be unconstitutional (deed restrictions). During its earliest years, the Plaza Park remained largely undeveloped and was described as an informal gathering space rather than a landscaped park. It became a visual focal point for the downtown area. The plaza functioned as a gathering place for community activities and development. Notably, it served as a place where emigrants were dropped off, and a settlement for circus workers and their wagons during performances in Sacramento.

The first formal design plan was introduced in 1872 to shape the informal plaza into a landscaped park. The park site was raised to match the high-raised street borders to bypass flood concerns. The Street Commissioner at the time, John Rider, who worked on the redevelopment of Plaza Park hired developer and landscaper John Keating to create the park design plans, which became the framework for the park's overall appearance. The landscape plan was the first introduction of structured walkways and prominent features; the establishment of the plaza as a civic and social hub; and increasing the use for public gatherings, markets, and events. Notable features of the park included circular and cross-axial walkways, large trees and grassy open areas, the Coleman Fountain, the A.J. Stevens Statue, a 1932 marker by the Native Daughters of the Golden West, a bandstand, a comfort station, and a flagpole (removed). By the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, the park had become a central gathering place for Sacramento residents (including livestock auctions and farmers markets), reinforcing its role as the city's "front yard" and an important setting for the city's major civic building.

In 1966, Landscape Architect Philip Schaff, Jr., designed and worked on the redevelopment of Plaza Park. The design and look of the park were altered to add support amenities and infrastructure improvements, but a majority of its plaza has remained unchanged. A small building was constructed in 1991-92 to house public restrooms and a restaurant/café, which is visible today. Another feature/marker added to the plaza was a historical marker commemorating the Pony Express' centennial and significance in Sacramento history. Sacramento was one of many U.S. cities used as stops along the Pony Express.

Recent improvements to the park reflect downtown revitalization efforts of the 1980s: Comprehensive redesign based on the park's historic layout; fountain restoration, cafe and seating areas, performance stage and event infrastructure, and the introduction of public-private partnerships to help fund improvements and programming. These efforts restored the park's role as an active urban space.

In the 1990s, the park was renamed César Chávez Plaza in honor of labor leader César Chávez. A statue commemorating César E. Chávez was erected in the early 2000s on the plaza grounds and small renovations were made. A concrete stage was built on the north lawn to serve as a concert

venue and a continued site for a farmer's market. Trees were planted to replace older trees and follow an almost circular design of trees at the center of the plaza.

The park continues to play an important, even central, role in Sacramento's downtown business community. Today the park occupies an adopted historic district, called [César Chávez] Plaza Park/Central Business District. The historic district includes such structures as the Central Public Library, City Hall, and the United States Postal Service building. Many of the buildings within the district reflect the early twentieth century period of Sacramento's history. Other structures within the district were constructed prior to the twentieth century. Some structures have their original foundations from the era Sacramento's streets were raised. Currently, there is an effort to revise the name of the Plaza Park/Central Business Historic District. During Sacramento's touchstone historical markers, the park continues to function as what it was intended for, a symbolic central civic space reflecting Sacramento's cultural and political life.


Cesar Chavez Plaza





Cesar Chavez Plaza Park Renaming Kickoff

Parks & Community Enrichment Commission
City of Sacramento
June 4, 2026



Renaming Overview

Process

- ▶ Parks & Community Enrichment Commission to serve as kick off and conduit for promotion
- ▶ Clear and transparent community led process
- ▶ Equitable outreach
- ▶ Clear path to City Council approval

Goals

- ▶ Ensure the new name reflects Sacramento's values, history, and cultural diversity.
- ▶ Conduct a transparent, accessible, and inclusive public engagement process.
- ▶ Engage diverse communities, including multilingual and underserved groups.



History of the park

Historically called City Plaza or Plaza Park, it was dedicated in 1848-1849 by John Sutter Jr. during his designation of 12 public squares as part of Sacramento's original urban plan. The park site occupies a full city block (2.5 acres) in downtown Sacramento.

Landscape designer John Keating created a plan for the park in 1872 to shape the informal plaza into a landscaped park.

In the 1980s, a comprehensive redesign involved fountain restoration, cafe and seating areas, performance stage and event infrastructure, and the introduction of public private partnerships to help fund improvements and programming.



Located between J and I Streets and 9th and 10th Streets

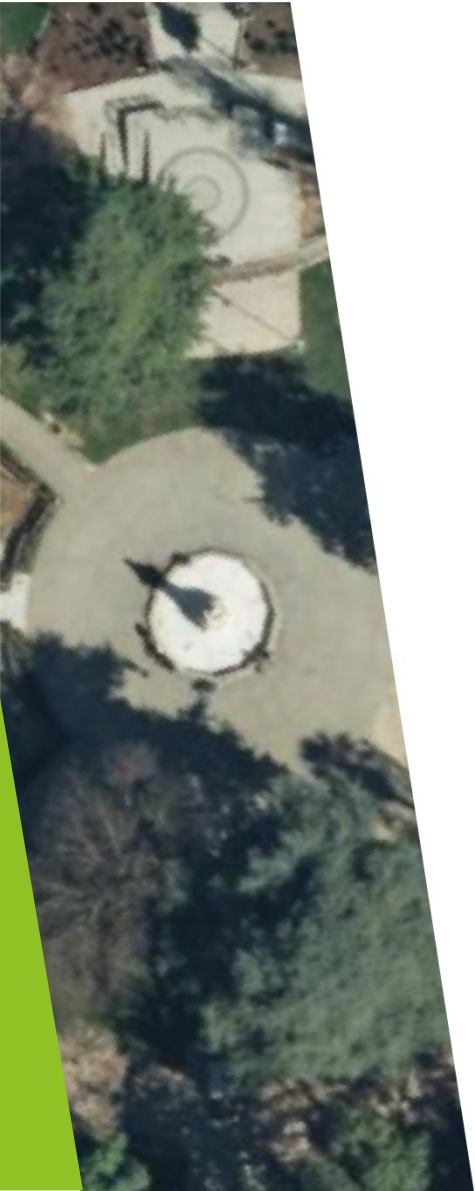
What the City hopes to achieve

A process that centers listening, learning, and community participation

A stronger connection between the park and the communities who use it daily.

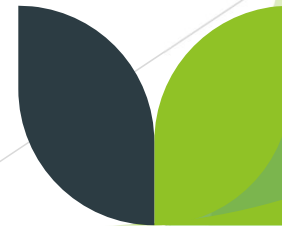
A name that reflects Sacramento's culture, history, and shared values.



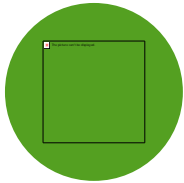


Engagement Plan

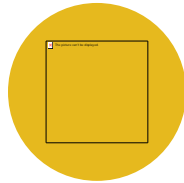
- ▶ Multi-phase engagement plan starting now:
 - Phase 1 – connect through multimedia formats, in person and online
 - Phase 2 – Survey with equitable outreach and promotion
 - Phase 3 – Staff and subcommittee analysis and seek input
 - Phase 4 – Commission review and forward recommendation to City Council
 - Phase 5 - City Council review and adopt new name
 - Phase 6 – Public announcement through engagement efforts and signage. Unveiling event.
- ▶ Focus on accessible materials throughout engagement
- ▶ Support from PCEC and City Council sub-committee



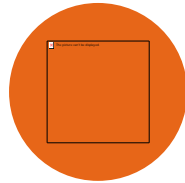
How you can support



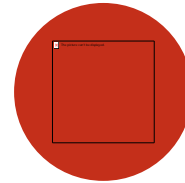
SHARE
OUTREACH
OPPORTUNITIES
IN YOUR
NETWORKS AND
DISTRICTS



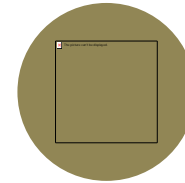
ENCOURAGE
PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION
IN SURVEY



HELP ENSURE
PROCESS
REMAINS
INCLUSIVE,
RESPECTFUL,
AND
COMMUNITY
DRIVEN



PROVIDE
FEEDBACK ON
ENGAGEMENT
APPROACH



RECOMMEND
FINAL NAME FOR
COUNCIL
CONSIDERATION



Let's Get Started!

This is a unique opportunity to shape a central public space that has been serving Sacramentans since 1849.

Commitment to a transparent, community-driven process, reflecting community voices of Sacramento.

Thank you for your partnership in supporting this important milestone for the park.

Learn more: cityofsacramento.gov/parkrenaming

Revisions to the Park Mid to Late 20th Century

- ▶ In 1966, Landscape Architect Philip Schaff, Jr., designed and worked on the redevelopment of Plaza Park to add support amenities and infrastructure improvements.
- ▶ In the 1980s, a comprehensive redesign involved fountain restoration, cafe and seating areas, performance stage and event infrastructure, and the introduction of public private partnerships to help fund improvements and programming.
- ▶ Around this time, a historical marker was installed commemorating the Pony Express' centennial and significance in Sacramento history. Sacramento was one of many U.S. cities used as stops along the Pony Express.
- ▶ In 1992, a small building was constructed to house public restrooms and a restaurant/café, which is visible today.





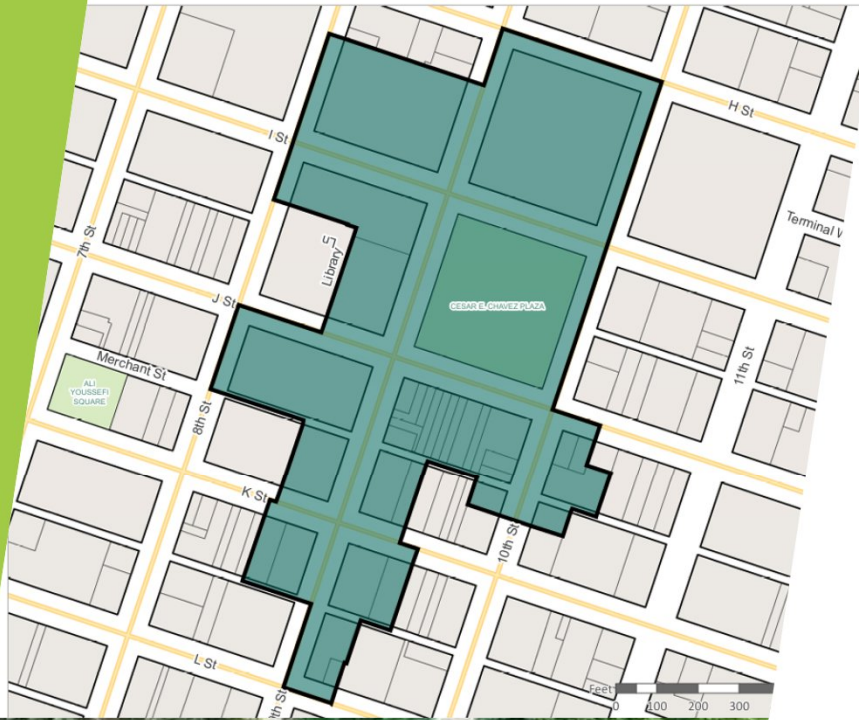
Renaming of the Park to Cesar Chavez Plaza

In the 1990s, the park was renamed Cesar Chavez Plaza in honor of labor leader César Chávez.

A statue commemorating Cesar E. Chavez was erected in the early 2000s on the plaza grounds and small renovations were made.

A concrete stage was built on the north lawn to serve as a concert venue and a continued site for a farmer's market.

Over 148 new trees were planted to replace older trees and follow an almost circular design of trees at the center of the plaza.



- ❖ Today the park occupies an adopted historic district, called [Cesar Chavez] Plaza Park/Central Business District. The historic district includes such structures as the Central Public Library, City Hall, and the United States Postal Service building.
- ❖ Much of the buildings within the district reflect the early twentieth century period of Sacramento's history. Other structures within the district were constructed prior to the twentieth century. Some structures have their original foundations from the era Sacramento's streets were raised.
- ❖ Currently, there is an effort to revise the name of the Plaza Park/Central Business Historic District.
- ❖ During Sacramento's touchstone historical markers, the park continues to function as what it was intended for, a symbolic central civic space reflecting Sacramento's cultural and political life.