

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Civic Center Revitalization Report and Implementation Roadmap

Hon. Members of the San Diego City Council

On behalf of the Downtown San Diego Partnership and the Prebys Foundation, we are pleased to share the report “San Diego Civic Center Revitalization: Quantifying Transformative Impact” and the accompanying Implementation Roadmap developed with U3 Advisors, as requested.

Together, these materials outline a compelling opportunity to reimagine the Civic Center as a dynamic hub for education, housing, culture, and civic life. The analysis demonstrates the scale of potential impact, including more than \$14.4 billion in one-time economic activity, over \$400 million in annual economic impact, nearly 80,000 temporary jobs, approximately 1,000 permanent jobs, increased annual City revenues, and more than \$325 million in potential facilities cost savings.

The Implementation Roadmap advances this vision into action through a clear, phased approach. The initial phase centers on redevelopment of the Golden Hall site as an education and cultural hub, anchored by the San Diego Community College District, alongside new housing and revitalized public space. A second phase would expand mixed-use development and adaptive reuse across surrounding Civic Center properties.

To support execution, the roadmap recommends a governance structure anchored by a Joint Powers Authority with a dedicated nonprofit entity to ensure coordinated leadership, accountability, and long-term stewardship across partners.

The findings also point to a timely opportunity for the City to consider relocation of City Hall and other priority uses. Given current market conditions and fiscal considerations, this approach may offer a cost-effective path forward while unlocking the Civic Center site for redevelopment.

At the same time, these materials highlight important infrastructure considerations. The Civic Center complex functions as an interconnected system, and redevelopment of Golden Hall may affect the structural stability of the Central Administration Building, as well as shared mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. A subsequent engineering study led by WSP is underway to identify a path forward that maintains essential operations while enabling redevelopment.

Taken together, this work reflects both the scale of the opportunity and a practical path to move from vision to implementation.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continued collaboration on the future of downtown San Diego.

Sincerely,

Betsy Brennan
President & CEO
Downtown San Diego Partnership

Grant Oliphant
CEO
Prebys Foundation

performing

ARTS

San Diego Civic Center Revitalization

quantifying transformative economic impact: implementation roadmap

April 2026



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A Once In A Generation Opportunity

The Civic Center redevelopment opportunity is a **once-in-a-generation chance** to rethink the core of Downtown. It must be considered differently from traditional urban redevelopment projects and instead stewarded by a cohort of civic-minded stakeholders to ensure the right mix of uses (including civic, cultural, and educational tenants), world-class design, long-term implementation, and thoughtful phasing and integration.

1. executive summary

In January 2026, the Prebys Foundation and the Downtown San Diego Partnership, in collaboration with U3 Advisors, released a report entitled San Diego Civic Center Revitalization: Quantifying Transformative Impact. The outcomes of that report demonstrated that there is a tremendous amount of economic opportunity that can be generated at the Civic Center site. Estimated impacts include more than **\$14.4B in one time economic impact**, more than **\$400M in annual economic impact**, almost **80,000 temporary jobs** and **1,000 permanent jobs**, an **increase in City revenues of more than \$7.2M** annually, **4,500 new residents** downtown, and **more than \$325M in facilities costs savings** for the City.

The January study also found that **the City stands to save at least \$325M by relocating City Hall** and other priority uses. Recent developments in the City's fiscal position, a real estate market that currently favors lessees and purchasers, and broader economic trends offer a distinct opportunity to re-assess near term strategies for City Hall, specifically through the **purchase or lease of vacant office space downtown**. Relocation would not only be **more cost-effective for the City in the long run**, but it would also free up the southern portion of the Civic Center site to catalyze implementation of the revitalization vision.

Direct Impacts

\$428M annual economic impact

\$5.3B construction-related impacts

1,000 new permanent jobs created

4,500 new downtown residents

28,000 temporary construction jobs

400+ new students engaged in learning programs

Catalytic Impact on Downtown Transformation

6.9M square feet in additional development

\$14.4B in total construction-related impacts

\$9.1B in new indirect construction impacts

49,000 temporary jobs within a 1/4 mile radius

1. executive summary

The Civic Center vision is closer to becoming reality than ever before. The mayor's recent announcement that the City would enter an exclusive negotiating agreement with the San Diego Community College District for the redevelopment of Golden Hall has renewed excitement across the San Diego community. SDCCD would not only bring its renowned **Mesa College World Art Collection and Museum Studies program** and potentially other programs to the site, but it also has the opportunity to build **several thousand units of affordable housing** downtown through its partnership with the San Diego Unified School District and the recently created Regional Housing Finance Authority. The School District and San Diego State University have also expressed interest in **co-locating complementary educational programs** at the reimagined Civic Center site, furthering their longstanding commitments to serve San Diegans across the city. There is growing momentum to realize this **once-in-a-generation opportunity** to reimagine the core of Downtown.

This report builds on the findings from the January study, focused on advancing the Civic Center vision into implementation. It focuses on two specific components: phasing and governance, while also considering infrastructure and financing implications.

Phasing

The Civic Center redevelopment can occur in two major phases:

1. **The first phase focuses on establishing an education/culture hub with residential units on the Golden Hall site**, transforming the underutilized Civic Plaza into an iconic public space, and renovating/expanding the Civic Theater with a new hotel once City Hall moves out of CAB. This first phase can be subdivided if needed, focusing on just the Golden Hall site as Phase 1A.

2. **The second phase will transform the blocks that currently house the Parkade, CCP, and the King Chavez High School** into a diverse mix of housing and active ground floor uses.

Other projects, including the adaptive reuse of 101 Ash Street (currently underway), the redevelopment of the COB site once a new home for the fire station is identified, and the renovation of the Parkade, will occur independently of the phase 1 and 2 timelines. The phased approach to development is flexible to accommodate the timeline of City Hall relocation and infrastructure redevelopment requirements.

Long-term leadership and stewardship

To effectively guide the project's long-term vision and ensure a holistic outcome, **we propose establishing a dedicated implementation organization governed by a cohort of deeply civic-minded stakeholders that helps drive the site development forward.** This organization will be vital in guaranteeing the right programmatic mix of uses that serves the public good and adheres to the Civic Center vision.

We recommend that this organization be governed by representatives from local government, educational partners such as the San Diego Community College District (and other potential partners), local philanthropy, cultural institutions, and downtown leaders.

We recommend a Joint Powers Authority with a non-profit as management to advance the Civic Center redevelopment. This JPA would serve as the primary institutional vehicle for implementation, drawing on the collaborative powers of the participating governmental entities, including the City and County of San Diego, the Community College District, and the Regional Housing Finance Authority. We also recommend that day-to-day management, project development, and execution be delegated to a dedicated non-profit organization



Illustrative view of vision for San Diego Community College District's World Art Collection Gallery

specifically established to manage the project. This structure is intended to leverage the public authority and financing capabilities of a JPA while utilizing the operational efficiency, specialized expertise, and potentially greater flexibility of a non-profit entity to drive the project through its planning, financing, and construction phases.

To ensure long-term continuity, we recommend that the non-profit entity be led by an executive director and dedicated staffing support governed by a board comprised of representatives from the project's partners: the City of San Diego, the San Diego Community College District, the Regional Housing Finance Authority, the Downtown San Diego Partnership, the Prebys Foundation, and other funders and potential partners.

The strength of this model is that it **brings together various committed stakeholders under a central coordinating body and leaves room and flexibility for future partnerships or project concepts to emerge.** Through its operational structure, it can drive the project forward quickly while being flexible to market dynamics and partnership needs.

Infrastructure Considerations

As the City explores a phased redevelopment strategy for the Civic Center, **understanding the structural and utility interdependencies among Golden Hall, the Central Administration Building (City Hall), the Civic Theatre, and the shared central plant is critical.** These facilities are connected through underground utility systems, and key mechanical infrastructure serving multiple buildings is housed within Golden Hall. Given the age and condition of the buildings and systems, demolition or redevelopment of Golden Hall may directly affect the continued operation of adjacent facilities.

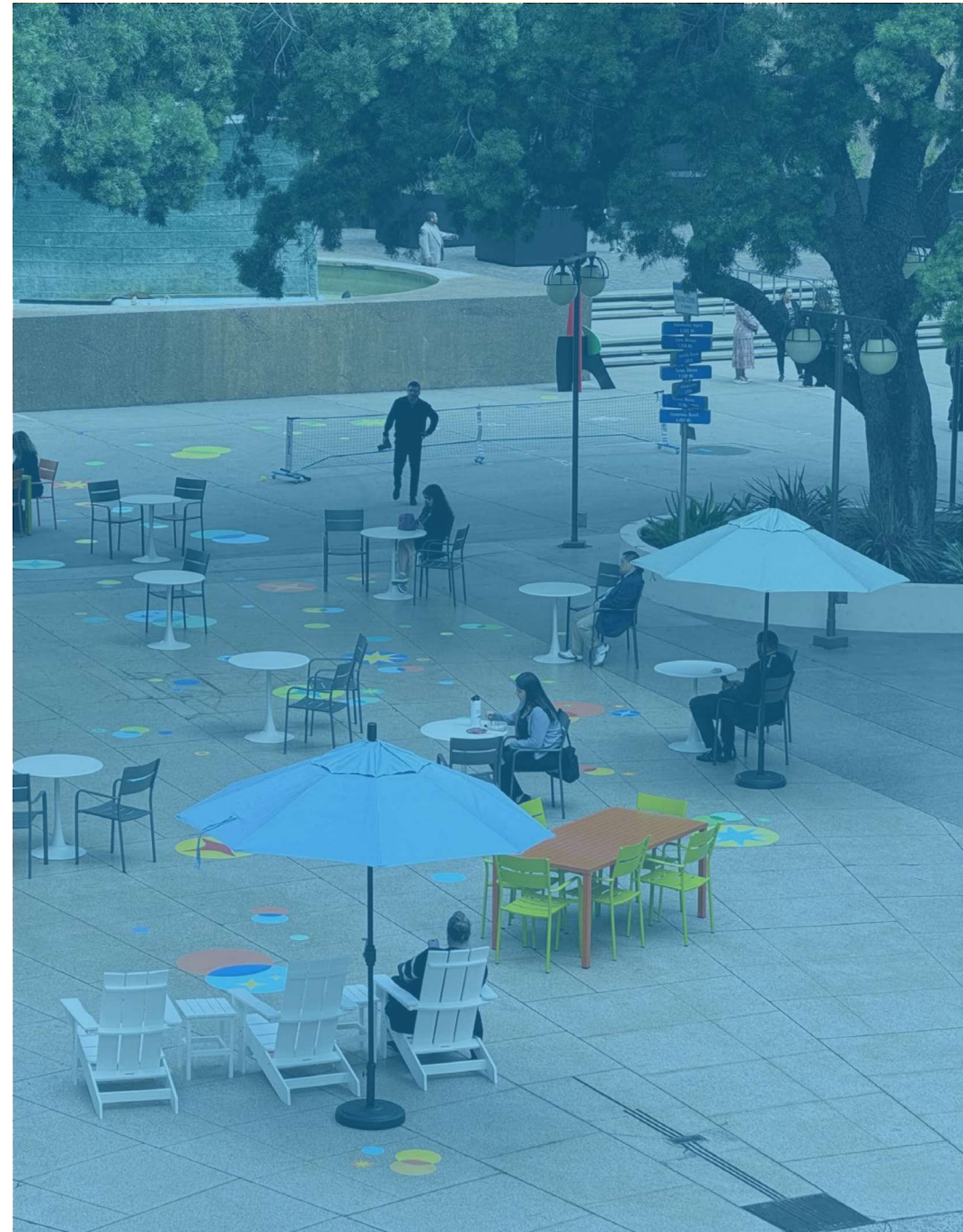
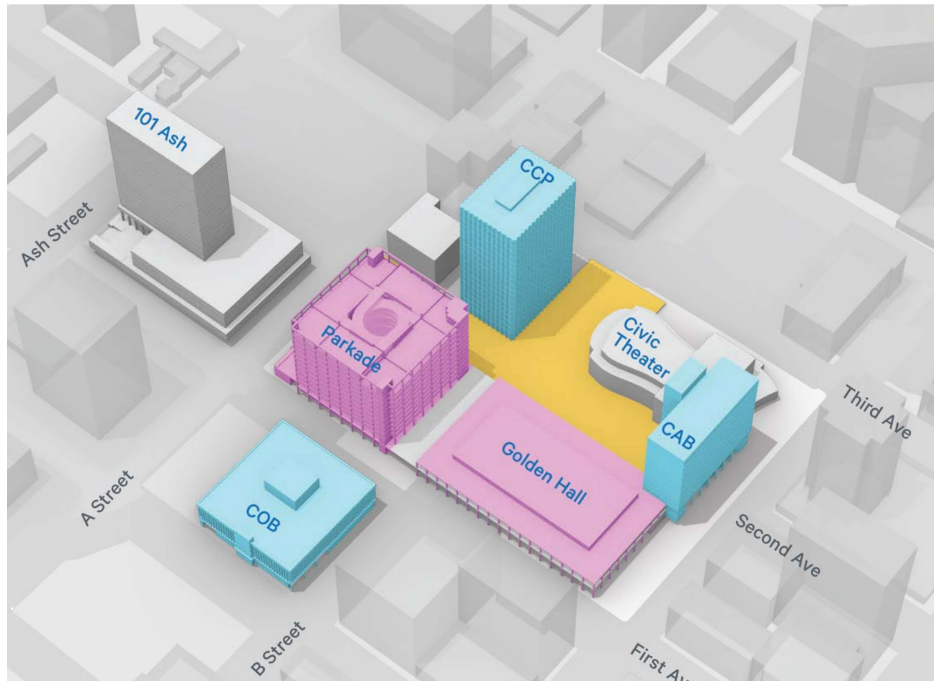
U3 Advisors partnered with WSP's San Diego office to develop a preliminary study to identify structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical impacts and challenges of proposed demolition of the entire Golden Hall structure.

Findings from this study identified potential impacts to the Civic Center complex primarily related to the central plant in the basement of Golden Hall and associated equipment located on the roof. The study found that

1. executive summary

demolition of Golden Hall may affect the structural stability of CAB, requiring mitigation measures to support portions of the structure currently supported by Golden Hall. The study also identified challenges across mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems due to the interconnected nature of the complex.

A subsequent engineering study by WSP is currently underway to identify a pathway to redevelop the Golden Hall site while maintaining the central plant, cooling towers, and other essential systems to keep the other buildings operational.



2. implementation recommendations

Recommended Phasing Approach

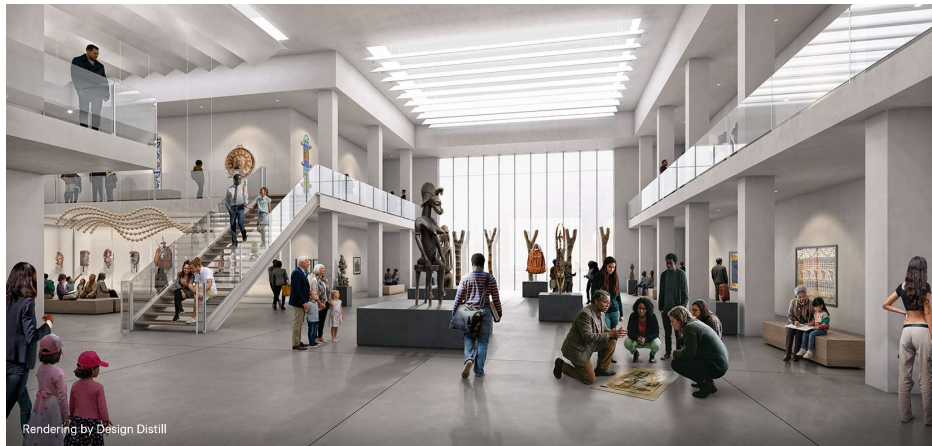
The Civic Center redevelopment vision will transform the outdated six-block government complex into a thriving center for learning, culture and civic activation in the heart of downtown San Diego. The proposed program comprises almost 4 million square feet of mixed-use development at full build out, with a variety of housing options, educational and cultural uses, underground and structured parking, as well as supporting retail and other active ground floor uses. At the heart of the new development is an iconic public space that will anchor the development and is intentionally reconnected to downtown's public realm network.

The development strategy calls for a phased approach to development that accommodates existing constraints like the timing of when City Hall will relocate and the unfolding of infrastructure improvements. The phasing will accommodate some flexibility to allow

for these unresolved variables. The following phasing recommendations outline the big moves to navigate the build out of the Civic Center redevelopment in the years to come.

Phase 1: Cultural/Education Core

The first phase of redevelopment will focus on the transformation of the core Civic Center blocks from 1st and 3rd avenues between C and B streets. A new educational center anchored by the San Diego Community College District will join a renovated and expanded Civic Theater with residential, hotel and retail uses surrounding an iconic new public plaza. If City Hall remains in CAB for the foreseeable future, the Education/Culture Center can proceed ahead of the redevelopment of the CAB site, notwithstanding requirements for updating infrastructure and structural integrity of existing buildings.



Illustrative view of vision for San Diego Community College District's World Art Collection Gallery

New Education/Culture Center

The new Cultural/Education building on the Golden Hall site will be centered around the SDCCD Mesa College World Art Collection and Museum Studies program. SDCCD will lead the way, and other academic partners could be invited to collocate. A campus "commons" activating the new plaza will provide gathering space for students, faculty, the community and visitors.

The Golden Hall site can accommodate approximately 140-175,000 square feet of academic and cultural space in 2 to 3 levels with an additional residential capacity of 275-600 units above. The new building will be transparent and welcoming, creating a seamless transition between the common indoor spaces and the adjacent public plaza. Service and loading will be located off 1st Avenue.

CAB & San Diego Theatres

Once City Hall relocates, the site of the City Administration Building (CAB), including the low-rise back of house and loading structure for the Civic Theater can accommodate theater addition/renovation and a new hotel.

The removal of CAB allows for a generous reorientation of the plaza towards C Street at the 2nd Ave corridor. The San Diego Theatres can undertake the renewal, renovation and expansion of the existing theater building, creating a more welcoming lobby facing B Street, expanded office, rehearsal rooms, loading and other essential improvements. A new hotel, possibly

combined with the Civic Theater redevelopment, can house up to 400 rooms. The ground floor will have street-facing retail and accommodate the theater's loading and storage needs as well.

Iconic Public Plaza

Transforming the Civic Plaza into a world-class public space is an essential component of the redevelopment vision. During phase 1, the public plaza will be reshaped and extended to C Street and the B Street corridor restored to improve connectivity to adjoining downtown streets. Welcoming, active and transparent ground floors of new and renovated buildings will flank the western edge of the public plaza, creating a dynamic, well-lit and activated public space that is welcoming to all. The construction of the phase 1 plaza will be designed as a complete project although implementation will align with the construction of adjacent buildings.



Iconic Public Plaza Inspiration: Dilworth Plaza, Philadelphia



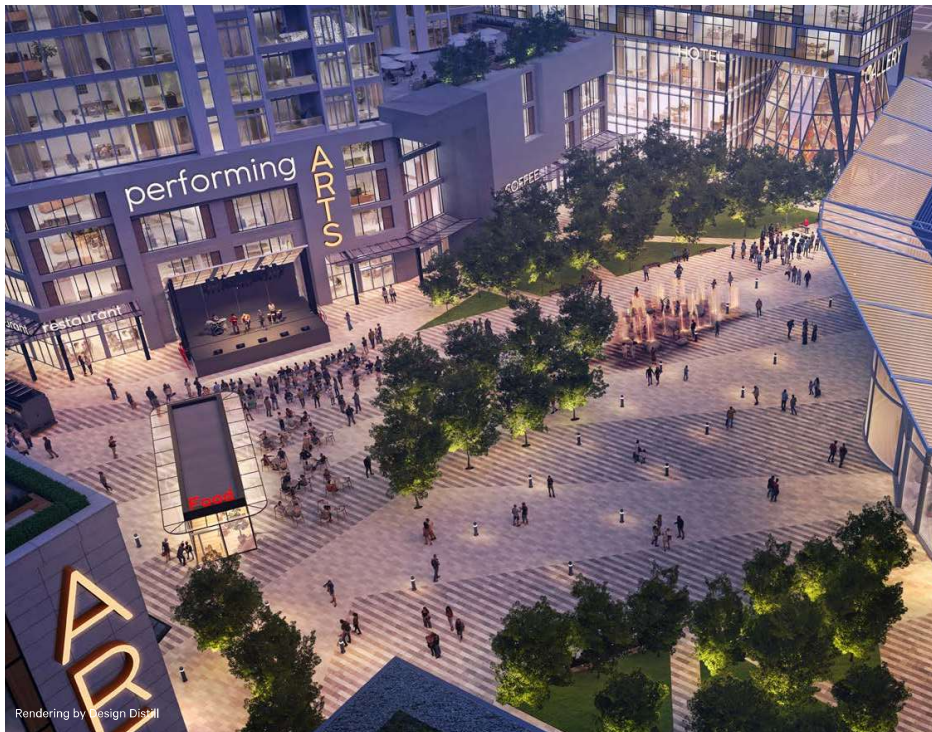
Iconic Public Plaza Inspiration: Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia

2. implementation recommendations

Essential Infrastructure Investments

Golden Hall, Civic Theater, City Administration Building, Evan Jones Parkade and the Civic Plaza were built as one building complex with a central plant. The central plant, located just outside the building footprint of Golden Hall beneath the plaza, provides heating hot water and chilled water to Golden Hall, CAB, the Civic Theatre, and—via the service tunnel—to COB and the

fire station. Associated mechanical equipment is also located on the roof of Golden Hall. Redeveloping one building site will require understanding infrastructure and structural implications for the other buildings. Detail on infrastructure and structural implications is included later in this report.



Rendering by Design Distill

Illustrative rendering of Conceptual Vision for the Civic Center Redevelopment

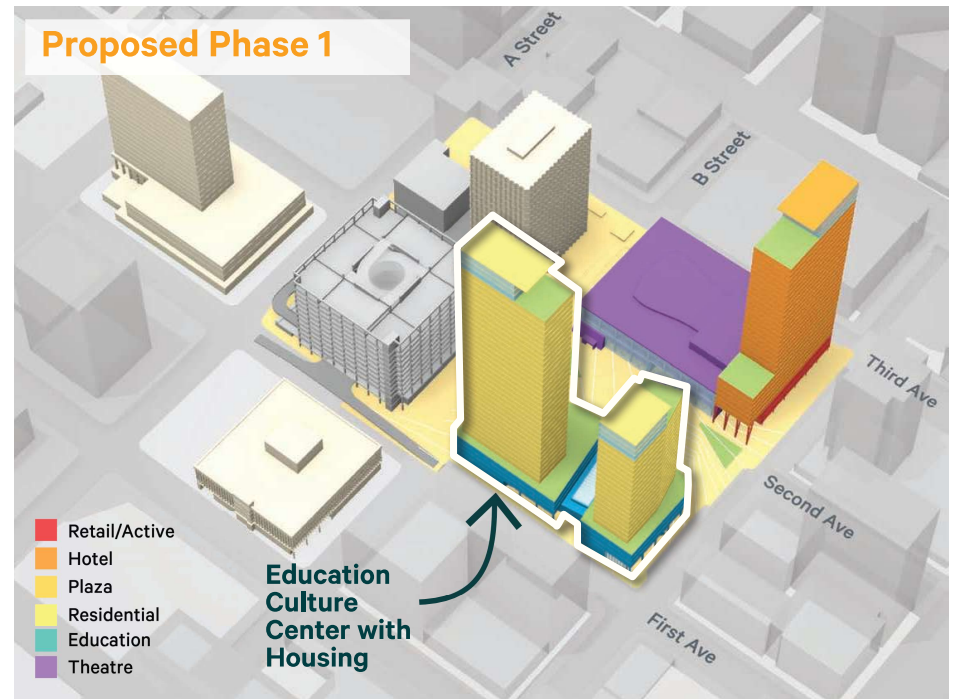


Diagram identifying Phase 1 buildings

Phase 1A:

A feasibility study is currently underway to understand the implications of the Golden Hall site redevelopment on the central plant and associated systems that provide utilities to several buildings in the Civic Center complex. These findings may require an alternate approach in which the Golden Hall redevelopment is broken into additional phases as required to limit disruption to the other buildings currently served by the central plant and associated systems. In this scenario, the Cultural/Education building and associated housing would be broken into two phases to allow for the physical plant located in the south end of Golden Hall to remain operational in the short term. Additional detail on the preliminary feasibility study findings is included later in this report.

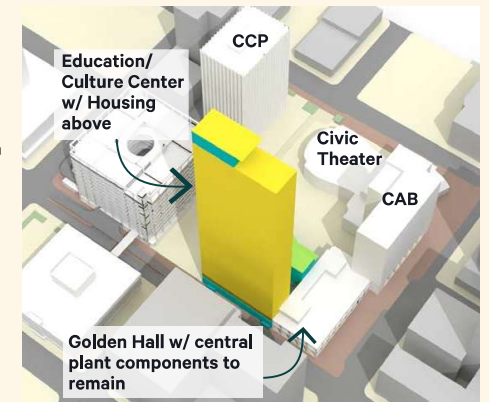


Diagram of Phase 1A Option with partial Golden Hall demo

2. implementation recommendations

Other Independent Projects

Several opportunities for renovation and redevelopment exist within the six-block complex that can proceed independently and are in different stages of implementation.

1. 101 Ash Street

The redevelopment of 101 Ash Street is underway as a mixed-use development with 247 units of 100% affordable housing, 25,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and a 4,000 sq. ft. childcare center. The adaptive re-use of this Modernist building has been awarded to a developer and will provide much needed affordable housing and

amenities to the downtown area in the short term.

2. Parkade renovations

Upgrades and renovation of the Parkade are needed and can also happen independently of other phasing constraints of the redevelopment project.

3. City Operations Building (COB)

The City Operations Building has been vacant for several months. The COB site has gone through the surplus lands process and will be available for redevelopment, likely with a mixed-use housing program. Fire Station #1 is also located on the site and will need to be relocated.

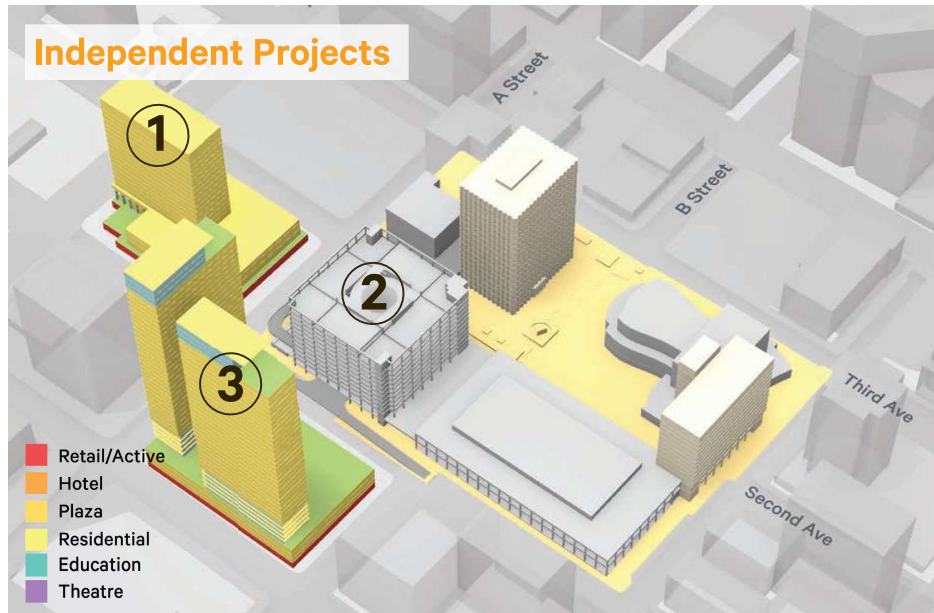


Diagram identifying development opportunities that will be undertaken independently

Phase 2: Full Build Out

Future phases for the Civic Center include redevelopment or renovation/adaptive reuse the Civic Center Plaza building (CCP), the King Chavez High School site and eventually, the Evan Jones Parkade as a mix of housing types with active ground floor uses. During this phase, the imposing parking ramps on A

Street as well as 1st and 2nd avenues will come down and the public sidewalks and spaces will be completed, including the extension of 2nd Avenue as a pedestrian "mews". The two blocks between B and A streets and 1st and 3rd avenues will ultimately accommodate up to 1,200 units of new housing.

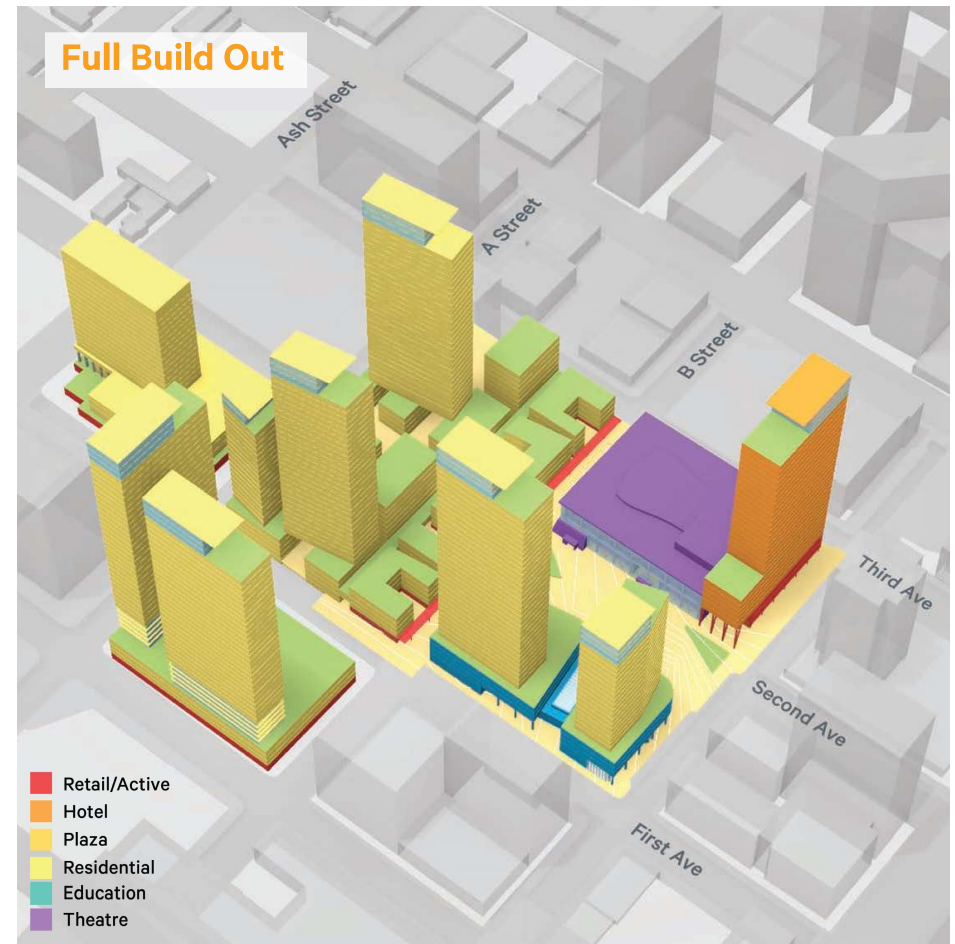


Diagram of Full Build Out for the Civic Center Redevelopment Conceptual Vision

3. long term leadership & stewardship

Creating A Dedicated Organization

The redevelopment of the Civic Center has been discussed and planned for by San Diegans for the last 30 years, with various attempts made to renovate the complex and rebuild City Hall. While these efforts have had momentum at times, the Civic Center remains as is, falling deeper into disrepair. Changes in administrations, budget shortfalls, market changes, and other challenges have prevented forward progress. In addition, critical tools once available to Cities in California such as the ability to create and manage Redevelopment Authorities was revoked in 2012 - robbing San Diego of a tool used to create successful urban redevelopment projects such as Petco Park.

The new vision for the Civic Center presents a different path forward that will require long-term stewardship and careful planning. This initiative must not be approached as a conventional urban redevelopment project with a traditional developer/land owner partnership leading the planning and development of the site. This construct, which often prioritizes purely commercial metrics, may diminish the creative thinking and approach around redeveloping and implementing planned civic assets - such as the Community College District's plans and the renovation of the Civic Theatre. Instead, its stewardship demands a higher level of civic ambition and engagement.

To effectively guide the project's long-term vision and ensure a holistic outcome, **we propose establishing a dedicated implementation organization governed by a cohort of deeply civic-minded stakeholders that helps drive the site development forward.** This organization will be vital in guaranteeing the right programmatic mix of uses that serves the public good and adheres to the Civic Center vision.

We recommend that this organization be governed by representatives from local government, educational partners such as the San Diego Community College District (and other potential partners), local philanthropy, cultural institutions, and downtown leaders. We also see a major opportunity to include the Regional Housing Finance Authority recently established by the San Diego Community College District and San Diego Unified School District - which has the potential to finance a significant amount of affordable and workforce housing at the Civic Center. These partners will help ensure the site's development includes investment in civic facilities such as the renovated plaza and the Civic Theatre, a mix of housing, active ground floor uses such as retail, and new educational tenants such as the San Diego Community College District that integrate academic life into the urban fabric. Beyond these essential programs, the governance model must help ensure that the project is defined by world-class design standards, ensuring that the resulting architecture and public realm are iconic, sustainable, and truly reflect San Diego's aspirations.

Bringing these uses together under one governance model in California is not simple. There are several models to consider:

Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs)



JPAs are formed exclusively by public agencies but can be administered by non-profits and leverage citizens/ advisory committees for guidance. Specific state legislation can be used to authorize private or non-profit entities to partner with a JPA, providing clarity on governance, roles, and public benefits.

Special Districts



Governed by elected or appointed boards, Special Districts are empowered to acquire property, enter contracts, issue bonds, levy assessments or special taxes, and charge user fees. While they are strong financing tools, they are less commonly utilized as full-scale development authorities.

Joint Development (P3)



A joint Development P3 allows the public landowner to enter into agreements with a master developer (or development partners) through a public-private partnership. The conditions of this partnership would need to be negotiated by the parties. This model is the traditional approach for public entities working with a private developer.

Community Development Corporations (CDCs)



A CDC is typically structured as a non-profit public benefit corporation with the capacity to own or ground-lease land, borrow funds, and execute development projects. However, a major hurdle in California is that public land conveyance to a CDC must generally comply with the Surplus Land Act or fit a very narrow statutory exemption. Consequently, CDCs often rely on master stewardship agreements instead of direct conveyance.

3. long term leadership & stewardship

Recommendation: JPA with Non-Profit Manager

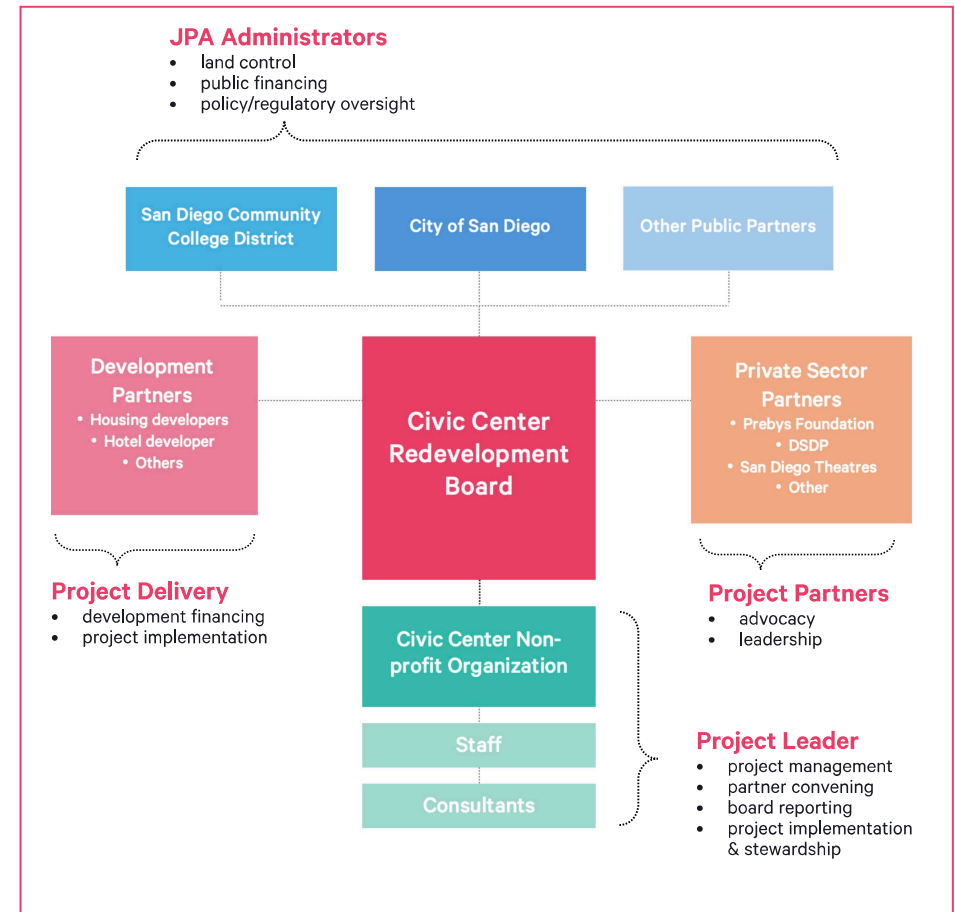
Because of the complexity and phasing strategy of the project, public land ownership, potential public sector partners, and private sector interest, **we recommend a Joint Powers Authority with a dedicated non-profit as management to advance the Civic Center redevelopment.** This JPA would serve as the primary institutional vehicle for implementation, drawing on the collaborative powers of the participating governmental entities, including the City of San Diego, the Community College District, and the Regional Housing Finance Authority. We also recommend that day-to-day management, project development, and execution be delegated to a dedicated non-profit organization specifically established to manage the project. This structure is intended to leverage the public authority and financing capabilities of a JPA while utilizing the operational efficiency, specialized expertise, and potentially greater flexibility of a non-profit entity to drive the project through its planning, financing, and construction phases.

Specifically, we recommend that the non-profit entity be led by an executive director and dedicated staffing support

governed by a board comprised of representatives from the project's partners. This would include the City of San Diego, the San Diego Community College District, the Regional Housing Finance Authority, the Downtown San Diego Partnership, the Prebys Foundation, and other funders and potential partners.

The strength of this model is that it brings together various committed stakeholders under a central coordinating body and leaves room and flexibility for future partnerships or project concepts to emerge. Through its operational structure, it can drive the project forward quickly while being flexible to market dynamics and partnership needs. Specifically, it can lead the Civic Center's site planning to ensure coordination and manage any developer solicitations to find appropriate developer partners. It can also support the project through fundraising for parts of the project that will require it, including the renovation of the Civic Theatre and the redesign, construction, and programming of the iconic public space at the center of the project.

Proposed Organizational Structure



3. long term leadership & stewardship

Case Studies

The following case studies examine three joint powers authorities used to deliver large-scale redevelopment and infrastructure projects in California. Each represents a distinct structural model:

Transbay Joint Powers Authority: The Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) is a single-purpose regional infrastructure delivery authority that leveraged value capture without directly taking on vertical development risk

Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority: Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority: The the Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority is a City-County land alignment JPA that unified fragmented public ownership across a civic corridor to present a single negotiating posture to the private market

San Diego North Embarcadero Visionary Plan: The San Diego North Embarcadero Visionary Plan JPA is a lightweight coordination agreement among a port district, city, and redevelopment agency that attempted to align overlapping jurisdictions on public tidelands without creating an independent governance body.

Together, these cases demonstrate that a JPA's effectiveness depends less on its label and more on how authority is structured—who owns the land, who controls financing, who selects developers, who holds regulatory power, and where risk ultimately resides. The cases also surface recurring tensions in California redevelopment governance: the vulnerability of multi-cycle projects to the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in 2012, the tradeoffs between political insulation and democratic accountability, and the challenge of maintaining a public vision when revenue pressures shift institutional priorities.



Image of the North Embarcadero Esplanade, completed via the San Diego North Embarcadero JPA

Transbay Joint Powers Authority: An infrastructure-first JPA within a redevelopment framework

The TJPA was created in 2001 after nearly 70 percent of San Francisco voters approved Proposition H, directing the City to extend Caltrain into a rebuilt downtown Transbay Terminal. Following the demolition of Embarcadero Freeway ramps damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, approximately forty acres of state-owned land in the South of Market area became available. What began as a transit extension evolved into a district-scale urban transformation. TJPA was conceived as a single-purpose regional delivery authority focused on the construction of the Transbay Terminal by aggregating funding, issuing bonds, managing complex design and construction, and operating with continuity across political cycles.

Governance: TJPA was formed under California's Joint Exercise of Powers Act by the City and County of San Francisco, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, and Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board. In 2017, the California High-Speed Rail Authority joined. The board consists of eight members (seven voting), all appointed by member entities. A 2006 ballot measure that would have shifted control to elected officials failed decisively, signaling public acceptance of a technocratic, insulated board. The Transbay Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) advises the City and County of San Francisco's redevelopment successor agency (the Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment (OCII)) on matters of public interest but has limited interface with TJPA.

Management: TJPA operates as a lean capital delivery authority with ~15 staff, focused on financial management, contract oversight, and intergovernmental coordination, relying on external program managers and consultants.



Redevelopment: District redevelopment was led not by TJPA but by the OCII, which prepared the master plan, adopted development controls, structured parcelization, and conducted competitive developer selection. Private developers delivered high-rise office and residential towers including Salesforce Tower. Approximately 2,600 housing units were delivered, roughly 35 percent affordable.

Funding: Federal and state transportation grants provided early capital. Land sales from state parcels and tax increment from the redevelopment area were pledged to the Transbay Terminal. A Community Facilities District (CFD) supports bond issuance. Over \$726 million in Climate Bonds Initiative-certified financing was issued. TJPA enjoys substantial operational independence with primary jurisdiction over financing, design, construction, and long-term operation.

Function	TJPA	OCII
Transit Center design & construction	Primary	Consultative
District master planning	Consultative	Primary
Developer selection/parcel disposition	No	Yes
Land sale proceeds/tax increment	Beneficiary	Administrator

Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority

Civic core redevelopment JPA

The Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority was formed in September 2003, as a joint powers authority by the County of Los Angeles and the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA). Its purpose was to coordinate development of four properties—two owned by the County and two by CRA/LA—in the vicinity of Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles, adjacent to the Civic Center and Music Center. The effort grew out of the Grand Avenue Committee, a public-private partnership that had worked for three years to identify land uses and improvements for the remaining undeveloped Bunker Hill sites. The entire project was estimated at \$1.2 billion, with approximately \$300 million for public infrastructure and \$900 million for real estate development.

Governance: The Authority is governed by a five-director board: the County Supervisor for the First District, the County Chief Executive Officer, the City Councilperson for the district, the CRA/LA Administrator or an appointment by the CRA Board, and one Governor-appointed non-voting director. The Chairperson rotates annually. Operations were funded equally by the County and CRA/LA at \$375,000 each per year, with an additional \$100,000 contributed by Eli Broad (Los Angeles philanthropist), for a total annual budget of \$850,000.

Management: The Authority is “legally separate and fiscally independent” from its member entities. It can enter contracts, execute land lease/sales agreements, issue RFQs/RFPs, and evaluate developer responses. The Grand Avenue Committee (a California nonprofit



public benefit corporation) served as its Real Property Negotiator. The County Auditor-Controller serves as the Authority’s Treasurer. Legal services are provided by County Counsel and the City Attorney.

Redevelopment: The Related Companies was selected as developer in September 2004 after a public process. The Authority’s DDA is the core instrument defining obligations, phasing, public benefits, and performance requirements. The developer operates through project entities (e.g., Grand Avenue L.A., LLC). The Conceptual Development Plan envisioned up to 1,000 residential units, a 400-room hotel, up to 1,000,000 sq ft of office space, and up to 600,000 sq ft of retail/entertainment, plus renovation of the Civic Center Mall into a 20-acre park. Net revenues are shared based on relative fair market value of contributed properties (approximately CRA 45% / County 55%).

Function	County of LA	CRA/LA	Grand Ave. Authority	Developer (Related)
DDA negotiation	Consent (County parcels)	Consent (CRA parcels)	Primary negotiator	Counterparty
Developer selection	Participated	Participated	Led process	Selected
Ground lease / disposition	Consent	Consent	Executes agreements	Enters lease/DDA
Vertical development	No	No	Oversight	Primary builder
Revenue participation	Approvals required	Approvals required	Structures framework	Financial participation

San Diego North Embarcadero Visionary Plan JPA

Multi-agency waterfront infrastructure JPA within a port trust land framework

The North Embarcadero Visionary Plan originated in 1997 when Port Chairman Mike McDade convened five agencies, via an MOU—the San Diego Unified Port District, City of San Diego, County of San Diego, Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC, the City’s redevelopment arm), and the U.S. Navy—into the North Embarcadero Alliance. After extensive public outreach including five community workshops, the Alliance published a 190-page plan in 1998 envisioning San Diego’s one-mile downtown waterfront as a grand civic precinct: a signature oval park at the foot of Broadway, an expansive bayfront esplanade, new public piers, and a redesigned Pacific Highway boulevard. In 2000, the Port adopted core plan elements into its Port Master Plan, giving them the force of law under the California Coastal Act. After 2001 state legislation stripped airport revenue from the Port’s jurisdiction, the fiscal pressure to monetize waterfront parcels intensified. By 2003, the County and Navy had withdrawn from the MOU, taking their proposed funding shares. This has critical context for the project, which was made up of majority Port land, and was originally planned to deliver almost 12 acres of park and open space.

Governance: The formal JPA was signed in 2007 by the three remaining agencies: the Port, City, and CCDC. The JPA operates as a contractual framework without a separately constituted board and outlines the cost sharing arrangement between parties for the construction and maintenance of the project and a financing plan to advance capital to implement the project.

Management: The JPA relies entirely on member agency staff rather than maintaining its own employees. The Port’s Land Use Planning division managed design, permitting, and construction oversight; CCDC provided financial structuring and redevelopment expertise; the City contributed engineering and public works coordination. External consultants were retained for design and construction documents.

Redevelopment: Phase 1 was funded through ~\$28 million in redevelopment tax increment via CCDC. The Port committed to long-term maintenance in perpetuity. Phase 1, completed November 2014, delivered a 9.2-acre esplanade with a 105-foot-wide promenade, jacaranda groves, and a redesigned West Broadway. The full plan was estimated at ~\$228 million. Phase 2 of the NEVP as originally conceived was never funded, in part because the 2012 dissolution of California redevelopment agencies eliminated the primary anticipated funding source. The Lane Field hotel complex, handled through a separate Port lease agreement rather than the JPA, was completed in 2018 (branded “BRIC”) with three hotel towers, 60,000 square feet of retail, and the 1.6-acre setback park that replaced the originally planned waterfront oval park. However, many of the Visionary Plan’s aspirational elements have since been reimagined through the Port’s comprehensive Master Plan Update (PMPU), which the Board of Port Commissioners unanimously approved in February 2024.

Function	Port of San Diego	City / CCDC	NEVP JPA
Visionary Plan adoption	Co-author; Port Master Plan	Co-author via CCDC	Coordination platform
Infrastructure delivery	Lead builder & maintainer	Funding via CCDC TI	Coordinated delivery
Plan alterations	Led by Commissioner Cushman	Limited check on changes	No independent oversight
Coastal Development Permit	Primary applicant	Co-applicant	Joint applicant entity
Developer selection (Lane Field)	Primary	Consultative	Oversight

Spotlight: San Francisco

San Diego is not the only city in California hoping to revitalize its civic core. In September 2025, San Francisco Mayor, Daniel Lurie announced his “Heart of the City” executive directive, which aims to re-invigorate San Francisco’s downtown and create a vibrant community where San Franciscans come together to live, work, play, and learn. Downtown San Francisco, like many downtowns across California and beyond has faced a series of challenges caused or intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely decreased tourism, increased office and retail vacancy, and a general decrease in foot traffic and activity downtown. The effort **brings together a host of public, private, and civic partners to strengthen San Francisco’s downtown and create lasting change**. The plan outlines a series of coordinated efforts including, but not limited to:

- Leveraging more than \$40M in commitments secured by the Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) for **clean & safe programs, small business support, and public space activations**
- Launching a **Downtown Revitalization Finance District** to support office-to-residential conversion projects and encourage housing production downtown
- **Aligning city-owned properties** with downtown revitalization goals
- Identifying opportunities for **policy and code reform** to incentivize development
- Ongoing efforts **bring universities and institutions downtown** and develop opportunities to attract young people and working professionals

While the results of these efforts are still unfolding, it is clear that coordinated collaboration among an array of partners is key to achieving long-lasting change. As stated by SPUR Chief Policy Officer Sujata Srivastava in the mayor’s press release, *“Revitalizing downtown is about more than bringing workers back to offices—it’s about creating a lively, welcoming neighborhood where people from all walks of life want to live, shop, and gather...”*

Source: City of San Francisco Mayor’s Office “Heart of the City” Press Release (Sep 2025)

3. long term leadership & stewardship

Project Financing Considerations

As this project moves forward, different components of the Civic Center will require different financing approaches. Below, we have outlined some potential approaches for each of the project components:

New Education/Culture Center and Housing

The educational component could be financed through the San Diego Community College District’s approved bond, with private fundraising further supporting or enhancing components of the project. Housing associated with this component could be financed through the Regional Housing Finance Authority.

Hotel

This project could likely be achieved through a traditional ground lease with a developer.

Civic Theater

The Civic Theatre’s renovation will require fundraising through private and public sources. The proposed hotel project could be combined with the theatre project to help raise funds for the theatre - using ground rent to bolster the capital project for the renovation.

Iconic Public Plaza

The plaza will require fundraising - through private and public sources. In addition, capital must be identified for long-term programming and management of the plaza.

COB - Mixed Use Residential

This project could be financed through a traditional P3 development or could be part of the Regional Housing Authority’s effort to add additional affordable housing to the site.

Other Projects

Financing for other projects and sites in the long-term redevelopment vision, such as the Parkade, Civic Center Plaza building, and King Chavez High School site is to be determined as the project evolves.

4. infrastructure considerations

Feasibility Study

As the City evaluates a phased redevelopment strategy for the Civic Center, a clear understanding of the structural and mechanical interdependencies among Golden Hall, the Central Administration Building (CAB/City Hall), the Civic Theatre, and the shared central plant is essential. Several of the buildings are connected through underground utility systems, and key mechanical infrastructure serving multiple facilities is consolidated within Golden Hall. Given the age of the buildings and systems, demolition or phased redevelopment of Golden Hall could have significant implications for the continued operation of the adjacent City Hall and Civic Theatre buildings.

To inform a viable phasing strategy, U3 has engaged WSP to conduct a high-level feasibility assessment focused on Golden Hall. The study evaluates the feasibility of demolishing Golden Hall while maintaining operations in CAB and the Civic Theatre, assesses anticipated impacts on the central plant and interconnected MEP systems, and identifies structural implications and site constraints for future redevelopment.

The study is intended to resolve several critical questions:

- Whether Golden Hall can be demolished without compromising the structural integrity or utility service of adjacent buildings.
- What temporary or permanent infrastructure modifications would be required to maintain operations in the City Hall and/or Civic Theatre buildings during redevelopment.
- What potential upgrades to the existing central plant or a replacement system would be required to support remaining facilities.

- What code-related upgrade requirements may be triggered by demolishing and/or making modification to the existing buildings
- What sequencing constraints or site limitations could affect redevelopment timing.
- What additional investigations would be required to advance from conceptual phasing to full feasibility and design.

WSP has completed a preliminary study to identify structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical impacts and challenges of proposed demolition of the entire Golden Hall structure. The following information is based on visual observations and discussions with facilities staff on February 24, 2026, and a review of the available as-built drawing sets. Further analysis will require additional architectural, structural, and MEP as-built verification as well as additional information on relevant completed renovation projects, as some information was not available at the time of review.

Below is a summary of preliminary findings from this study:

Structural Considerations

The basement of Golden Hall occupies approximately 60% of the building's footprint and extends east into the plaza approximately 30 feet to house the central plant that serves all buildings in the Civic Center Complex. Demolition of Golden Hall will require additional excavation, some basement perimeter walls will need to be retained, and additional columns with foundations will be required to support the existing CAB basement slab. The perimeter walls in CAB will also need to be evaluated for structural integrity and to determine whether CAB walls will be required to retain soil where Golden Hall walls previously abutted them.

Mechanical Considerations

A central plant located in the basement, just outside the building footprint of Golden Hall beneath the plaza, provides heating hot water and chilled water to Golden Hall, CAB, the Civic Theatre, and—via the service tunnel—to COB and the fire station. Associated mechanical equipment is also located on the roof of Golden Hall. These systems are largely original to the building (approximately 60 years old). Demolition of Golden Hall would cripple the central plant and sever the connection between the plant and the other buildings it currently serves.

Plumbing Considerations

Plumbing systems are also mostly original to the building and rely on the central plant for heating and distribution. The sanitary sewer system serving the Civic Theatre and CAB interconnect with Golden Hall within the footprint of the central plant. Demolition of Golden Hall would sever the sanitary sewer system which handles a portion of Civic Centre waste, waste from the central plant, and potentially all waste from CAB.

Electrical Considerations

Electrical systems, also constructed between 1960 and 1964, rely on the central plant as the main electrical distribution for several buildings on the site. Removal of the central plant would create a need to re-establish electrical service to each affected building.

Next Steps

A subsequent engineering study is currently underway to identify a pathway to redevelop the Golden Hall site while maintaining the central plant, cooling towers, and other essential systems to keep the other buildings operational.

5. next steps & project timeline

Phase 1 Conceptual Timeline

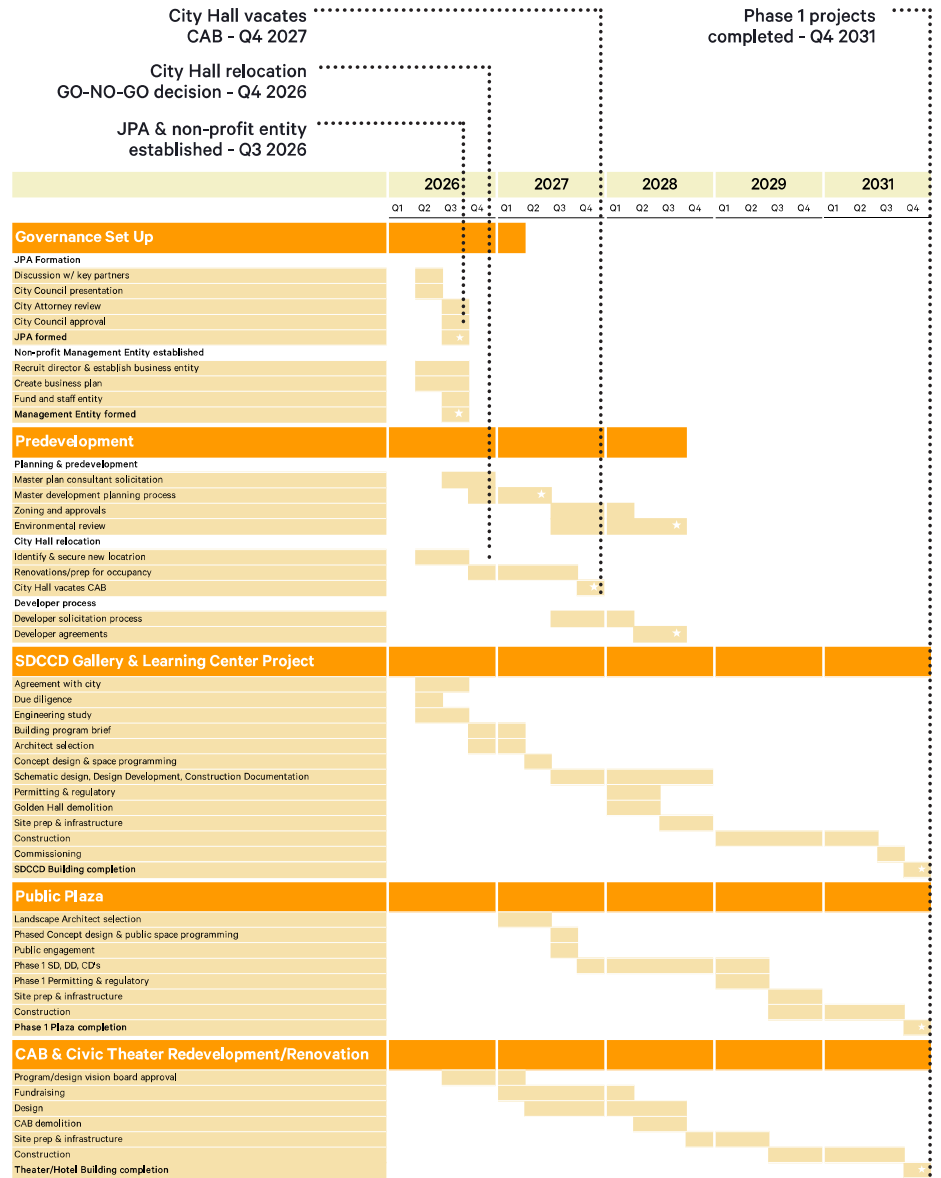
A conceptual timeline for phase one is based on assumptions about the duration and sequencing of tasks and projects. The timeline will have to be further vetted and refined in the coming months. The schedule is organized into five categories with details about specific tasks that can, in some cases, run in parallel. The goal is to have a substantially complete first phase of the Civic Center redevelopment within the next five years.

In broad strokes, the **JPA and Managing Entity** would be set up between now and Q3 2026. Certain **predevelopment tasks** like plan for moving City Hall, engineering studies, other due diligence can proceed right away. Other tasks like master development planning, can begin immediately following the formation of the JPA and managing entity, so approvals can be secured, demolition completed and construction begun by the beginning of 2028. Similarly, in Q2 2026, beginning with an agreement with the city, due diligence for the **SDCCD Education/Culture Center** project can get underway while the design process kicks off in Q1 2027 with a target building completion date of 2031. The **Public Plaza** will likely occur in phases associated with each phase of building. The redevelopment of **CAB and the Civic Theater** renovation/expansion depend on city hall relocation and fundraising efforts and may require additional time in the schedule.

Next Steps

In the short term, as the feasibility study is conducted, the proposed Joint Powers Authority process can begin in earnest. This process would involve discussions with key stakeholders, City Council and legal review and approval, and identifying the board. Following the formal establishment of the JPA, the nonprofit managing entity would be identified. We also recommend the creation of a master development plan shortly thereafter to solidify the Civic Center revitalization vision in a cohesive master development plan for the full site.

Conceptual Timeline





HOTEL

GALLERY

COFFEE



PREBYS
FOUNDATION

DOWNTOWN
SAN DIEGO
PARTNERSHIP

