

# Foreword: A Perspective from 2025

## From Past to Present

*I first came to Citrus Heights from Washington State with my family back at the turn-of-the-century. My parents told us that we were moving to be closer to grandma who was getting older and lived in California because of the warm weather. Dad had always liked the idea of being his own boss, so he bought an auto supply shop on Auburn Boulevard and we moved into a three-bedroom ranch-style house two blocks from the store. My twelve-year-old sister Megan wasn't thrilled about telling her new friends at the Sylvan Middle School that her dad owned an auto parts store, but I was a coming-of-age fourteen-year-old boy and to me all things combustible were cool. It's kind of ironic that today, twenty-five years later, my wife drives the family car and I rely primarily on regional transit to visit clients in downtown Sacramento or I take my two girls on the Whisper Transport for the 30-minute trip to downtown Auburn to visit their aunt and uncle.*



***Residential and commercial uses have been designed to support our pedestrian experience on The Boulevard.***



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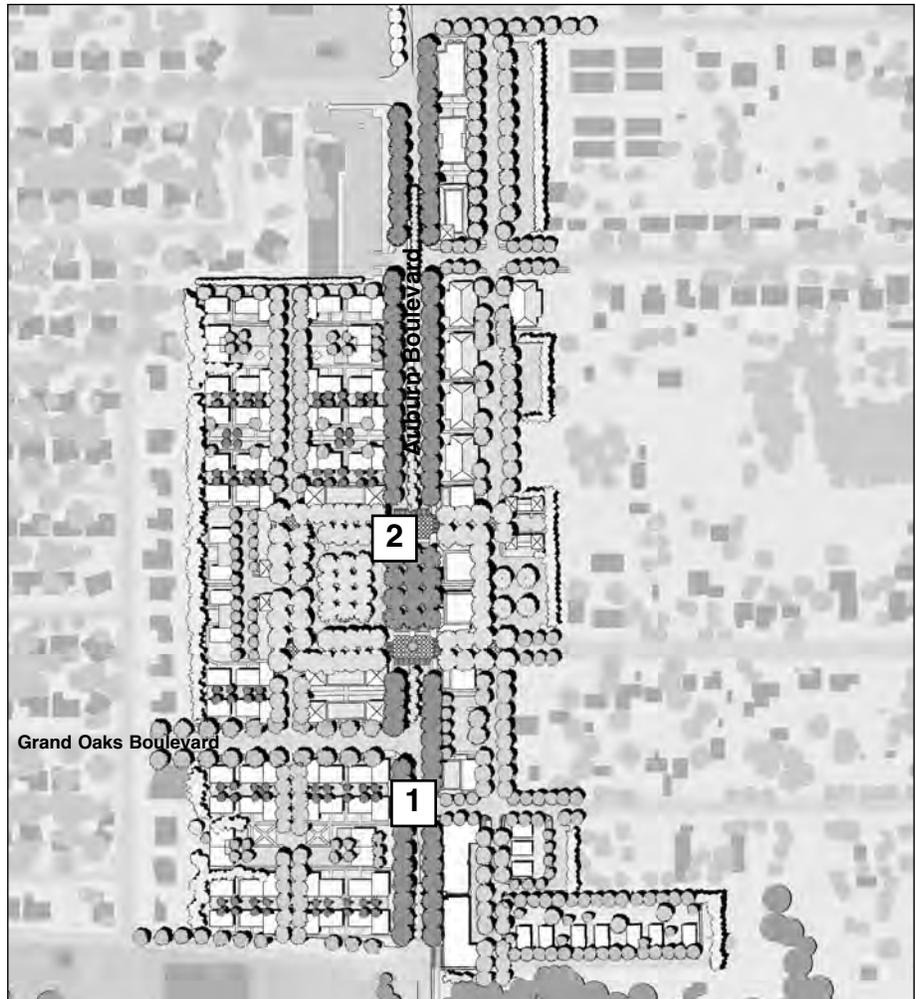


***The Boulevard has new life. Even older buildings have been renovated and cleaned up. Our street trees make our neighborhood cooler and has really changed the look of the street.***

***Our Rusch Park neighborhood has been a new destination for the surrounding community. Our cluster of townhouses and pedestrian-oriented shopping provide a place to visit friends, sit and people watch, and get our laundry done.***

*Back in 2000, my mom worked as a teacher at Citrus Heights Elementary, and though I'm not sure how she felt about becoming the first-lady of an auto parts store, I do remember the interest she developed in learning about the Boulevard which she tried to instill in us as young residents, particularly, when it came time for the community to participate in the process of designing a plan for the Boulevard's future. I remember this as a long process of workshops and meetings held after hurried microwave dinners she would prepare for us before rushing off to City Hall. Looking back as an adult with my own vested interest in the community, I can see that it was a process designed to merge varied community interests into one shared vision, and it was a successful one as you can see by walking the Boulevard today. I wish she was able to see the results of her efforts now twenty-five years later. I know she would be pleased.*

*Today, we are a community made up individuals and families of mixed socio-economic backgrounds, living in connected mixed-use neighborhood districts that have grown out of historic regional 19th century roads and 1950s suburbs. The sidewalk cafes, intimate shopping, and network of transit services attract many of our regional neighbors. Yet, despite the regional traffic, the Boulevard remains Citrus Heights's most pedestrian-friendly street, which is especially important if you are car-less, like I am on weekdays.*



*Many local residents appreciate the alternative to auto-oriented living.*

*As a kid, I thought only old people and European capitals had histories, but my mom introduced me to the idea that Auburn Boulevard had a past like everything else in life. She told us how approximately 175 years ago, Auburn Road (as it was called then) cut through Sacramento County's Central Township (what is present day Citrus Heights) to connect Auburn and Sacramento. In the 1860s, Sylvan School and Sylvan Corners became the educational, civic, social, and religious center of this early settlement. Each morning, as I watch my two girls board school transit for the mile trip down the Boulevard to Sylvan Corners, I think about the generations of children who have had ties to the Boulevard. From the first motorists that traveled down the Lincoln Highway, to Megan and I, who tried to ride our bikes down a disconnected 4-lane road back in 2000, to my girls, who can walk or ride public transportation up and down a modern Boulevard of wide, well-lit sidewalks, with broad street trees and interconnected districts, Auburn Boulevard has continued to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of the community.*

***My favorite restaurant has a shady place to sit outside. I run into friends most weekends around our shopping street or at the swimming pool in the park.***



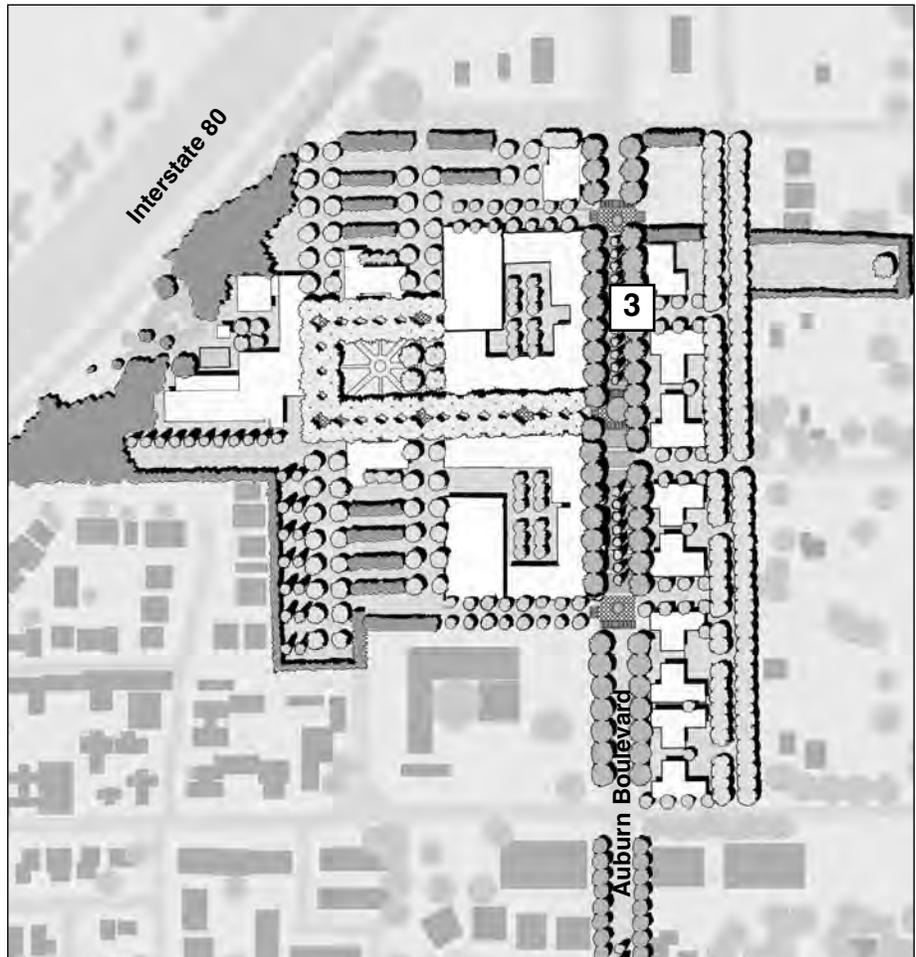
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***The new hotel facing the park in the Gateway District has been an important addition to our business community. Its visibility from Interstate 80 has heightened the regional presence of Citrus Heights.***

*It took many years before Auburn Boulevard evolved into its present mix of pedestrian-friendly, commercial, and residential uses. During my childhood, in what is now called the Lincoln 40 District (in reference to the Boulevard's history as part of the historic Lincoln Highway, a.k.a. Highway 40), Auburn Boulevard consisted of a hodge-podge of strip commercial and tract homes. It is hard to tell today that the Boulevard of the late 20th century, with its middle "suicide lane," narrow and poorly lit sidewalks, and seemingly ubiquitous commercial signs, was once a difficult and sometimes dangerous place to drive or walk. Since sidewalks were narrow, irregular, uneven, and in some places nonexistent, tricycles, baby strollers, and wheelchairs were difficult to navigate along the Boulevard. The litter, unsightly overhead utility wires, lack of greenery, and cluster of commercial signs discouraged even the hardiest pedestrians from walking down the Boulevard. Not only is the modern Boulevard more attractive with its tree-lined median and welcoming monument sign, but it is more functional with distinctive districts that connect to adjacent neighborhoods. Storefronts line the edges of the sidewalks and there are places to sit and people watch.*

***The Gateway District has become a regionally celebrated example of how collocating businesses, housing and transit can result in a competitive and livable neighborhood.***



## A Boulevard of Districts

*With the help of the community's vision established through The Boulevard Plan: Reinventing the Auburn Boulevard Corridor, the 1.75 mile Boulevard has evolved into four distinctive districts that have been designed to integrate surrounding residential neighborhoods. Starting at the north is the Gateway District, a mixed-use commercial center that provides a hub of commercial activity. The District includes a wide range of uses, including groundfloor retail shops with apartments on top, townhomes, and professional office buildings, and a hotel. On Wednesdays, I like to walk over to the concert in the park and join many of the area's employees enjoying the shade and refreshments. It is a distinct contrast to the auto-oriented neighboring communities of Roseville and Rocklin, where residents have no choice but to get in their cars and drive.*

*As you travel south down the Boulevard, the storefronts draw in pedestrians with sidewalk cafes and public seating areas. This is known as the Rusch Park Village Center, an area my wife fell in love with after we first were married and where we now live with our two girls. Living in a traditional pedestrian storefront district was an important part of the vision developed by my mom and other community members of that era. The storefronts and the*

***New mixed-use projects have transformed the entry experience for Citrus Heights. Shops and apartments have created a high quality gateway to the city and a destination for area residents.***





**Sylvan Corners has become a fun restaurant district and safer place to walk for students since the streets were improved and sidewalks added.**

*commercial buildings blend well with adjacent condos and live/work lofts. Our three-bedroom condominium faces a mixed-use street of shops and live-work buildings. I have just a one-block walk to my favorite cafe, and, when the girls arrive from school and band practice, we walk a block to Rusch Park where they share with me their day's adventures and play with other neighborhood kids. My neighbors live in two-story townhomes and share a quiet courtyard. Over 650 people live in our 30-acre neighborhood center, some in apartments, some in townhouses, and some in live-work units. The adjacent neighborhoods have adopted our little main-street-scale, commercial district, including a conveniently-located grocery store. There is always a line in front of the cafe on Saturday mornings. Both my wife and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.*

*South of the Rusch Park Village District is the Lincoln 40 District where my Dad's auto parts store was until he retired in 2018. The Boulevard that once specialized in auto products now hosts an eclectic selection of shops in themed commercial district reminiscent of its long history as a regional thoroughfare. In the 1950s there were drive-in restaurants and a variety of combustion-engine businesses like car repair, motorcycle sales, and gasoline-powered lawn mowers. Since then, some of the characteristics of the Boulevard have changed, but the district still has many of the same type of small auto-oriented, owner-occupied stores.*

*At the south end, the Sylvan Corners Village Square District still plays an important role as an institutional cornerstone and commercial center. With the revitalization efforts of the city 22 years ago, Sylvan Corners has been reborn as one of Citrus Heights's most important civic and social focal points. There is a great synergy between the restaurants in the neighborhood and the renovated middle school and auditorium.*

## **How We Got Here**

*The transformation of Auburn Boulevard was the result of Citrus Heights's central location in the region and the vision of the community leaders. Seizing the opportunity to reinvent The Boulevard, the City adopted The Boulevard Plan: Reinventing the Auburn Boulevard Corridor, which called for mixed use developments in an urbanizing environment and was designed to anticipate the change in land uses and the community insistence on quality reinvestment. The Boulevard embodied the civic vision of interconnected neighborhoods; walkable safe streets; and a variety of civic, commercial, and social centers. Most of all, the City ensured that every project made a contribution to the vision of the community and the Boulevard. The results have been popular. There are more jobs, more homes, and better-defined neighborhoods. Today nearly 1,400 Citrus Heights residents have an Auburn Boulevard address and thousands more enjoy the advantages of living within walking distance of social and convenient neighborhood storefront commercial centers.*