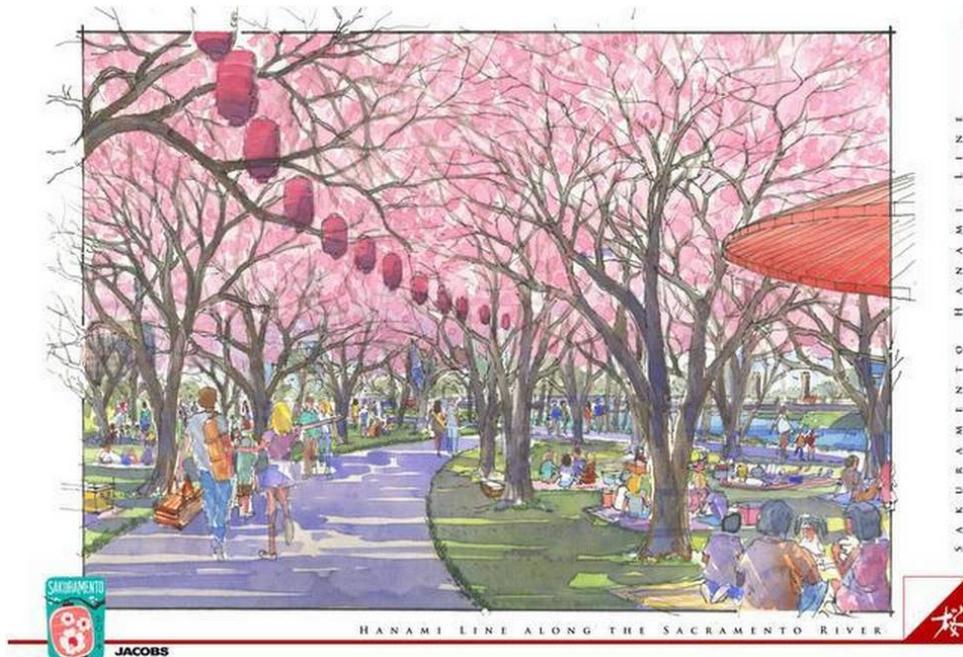




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# Cherry tree park planned for Sacramento Riverfront

Sacramento, the city of trees, could soon be awash in cherry blossoms.



A plan has emerged to create a park on the banks of the Sacramento River north of downtown that will include a line of 200 cherry trees. The park would be the site of an annual festival coinciding with the spring blossom.

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Sacramento, the city of trees, could soon be awash in cherry blossoms.

The Sacramento Tree Foundation and a committee of local business and community leaders announced this week that they intend to plant a line of 200 Pink Flair cherry trees on the bank of the Sacramento River. Supporters had examined many spots around the city, but settled on the mostly vacant plot of land just north of downtown near Matsui Waterfront Park and the planned location of the Powerhouse Science Center.

The park will be called a Hanami Line, a reference to the Japanese custom of gathering under cherry trees during the spring blossom. In addition to the trees, the plans call for adding

permanent lanterns and parasols. The park would be the site of an annual spring festival celebrating Japanese art, music, food and culture.

“It would really become the newest public gathering spot and immediately become a destination,” said Ray Tretheway, the executive director of the Tree Foundation. “It’s such an iconic spot.”

The committee that has been advocating for the park is called Sakuramento. Sakura is the word for cherry blossoms in Japanese. The group has linked its effort to the farm-to-fork movement and is planning to set up a booth at Saturday’s Farm-to-Fork Festival on Capitol Mall.

Before it can break ground on the park, the committee will need to raise money – as much as \$1 million – to fund its effort. Lon Hatamiya, who co-chairs the Sakuramento committee, said the organization will seek individual and corporate donations and is confident it can reach its goal. Organizers have said that no public money will be used.

The group will also need to get a list of permits before it can break ground. That includes getting approval from the Central Valley Flood Protection Board to plant trees on the river levee, according to Tretheway.

The Hanami Line will be designed after similar parks throughout Japan. Inspiration also came from the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., where a large festival is held each spring to coincide with the blossoming of hundreds of cherry trees.

“It’s been so well received in other communities,” said Hatamiya.

Hatamiya, whose family farmed in the Central Valley for generations, said the Hanami Line will also create a strong link between Sacramento and its connection to Japanese history.

“Sacramento has had a long-standing relationship culturally, economically and agriculturally with Japan,” he said.

Other sites were debated for the tree line, including a section of Broadway near the Tower Theatre, Del Paso Boulevard in North Sacramento and 16th Street in midtown. But the river was chosen because of its proximity to current and future development, including the downtown railyard and the Powerhouse museum.

“I don’t think there could be a better site,” Hatamiya said.