

City of Rancho Cordova & HMCI Partner with Niantic Spatial to Build Digital Twin of Rancho Cordova, First in the Region

Niantic Spatial joins the AiR Ecosystem, bringing its Physical AI technology to Rancho Cordova.

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The City of Rancho Cordova and the Human Machine Collaboration Institute (HMCI) announced a new partnership with Niantic Spatial to build a digital twin of Rancho Cordova, a new project within the city's AI & Robotics Ecosystem.

A digital twin is a detailed digital model of a real place, built from actual measurements rather than illustrations or estimates. Because it reflects real geometry, it can be used to run scenarios, such as how traffic moves through an intersection, without altering anything in the physical world first. For a city, that means planners and stakeholders can test ideas against an accurate model before committing time and budget to them.

Niantic Spatial has completed the first step: capturing drone footage and reconstructing a roughly four-square-kilometer area of the city into a 3D model detailed enough to read building signage and measure street dimensions. HMCI will now build out that reconstruction into a working digital twin that enables traffic simulation to support city planning decisions, as well as other real-life simulations.

"Innovation happens when great ideas have the right environment to grow. That's what we're creating in Rancho Cordova. Our partnership with Niantic Spatial helps strengthen the foundation of our AI and robotics ecosystem, giving companies a place to develop and test new technologies in real-world environments, said Micah Runner, Rancho Cordova's City Manager. "The same technology will also help the city better understand our built environment, model different scenarios, and make more informed, data-driven decisions that benefit our community. It's another example of how we're turning our vision into action. "A digital twin is only as useful as its data foundation. For a city that has historically meant survey crews and years of lead time. This partnership works differently. Over a few days, Niantic Spatial flew the area by drone and reconstructed it into a model precise enough to measure real distances and read signage, not just approximate the layout. Doing that at city scale in days, not years, is the technical piece Niantic Spatial brought to this partnership.

Our mission is to build real-world foundational models for physical AI, so people and machines

can work efficiently and safely together, and Rancho Cordova is a clear example of what that looks like in practice," said Thomas Gewecke, President and Chief Operating Officer of Niantic Spatial. "Deploying AI in the real world depends on accurate simulation and a model that reflects the world as it actually is. In a few days, our teams captured and reconstructed roughly four square kilometers of the city by drone, precisely enough to measure real distances and read street signage. That's the foundation HMCI now builds on, and it's exactly the kind of real-world proving ground physical AI needs to earn trust at scale."

With the reconstruction complete, the work now shifts to HMCI: turning that data into something planners can use, running traffic scenarios, and seeing the consequences of a decision before making it. This is the capability HMCI is now building for Rancho Cordova, starting with traffic simulation.

"At HMCI, we have always believed that the path to AGI will require more than building a better digital brain. We must also build machines that can act, create an accurate understanding of the physical world, and connect all three," said Sadie St. Lawrence, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of HMCI. "This digital twin is an important step toward that larger vision. Niantic Spatial is making Rancho Cordova machine-readable, while Rancho Cordova is giving us something equally rare: a city willing to become a real-world laboratory where researchers, companies, and the community can safely build, test, and shape the future of physical AI together."

What is AiR Rancho Cordova?

This digital twin is part of AiR Rancho Cordova, the AI and robotics ecosystem HMCI operates with the City of Rancho Cordova, the nation's first city-driven initiative of its kind. AiR brings together companies, researchers, educational institutions, and civic partners to give AI and robotics innovation a real place to develop, test, and deploy. Learn more at <https://cityofranchocordova.ai/>.

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