



August 30, 2009

Dave Defanti, Senior Planner
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Via email to defantid@saccounty.net

RE: Draft Land Use Element for the County of Sacramento General Plan Update

Mr. Defanti:

The Land Use Element has many laudable policies directing the county to improve, expand, and integrate the pedestrian environment. The discussion in the Land Use Elements recognizes the importance of walking and the pedestrian environment and infrastructure. Examples include:

Research is showing that land use decisions can have a direct positive effect on physical and mental well being, most specifically by design features that promote physical activity such as walking and biking.

Slowing traffic, adding bike lanes, establishing well-defined crosswalks, building wide sidewalks and buffering pedestrians from traffic can all help to make walking and biking much safer.

Encouraging physical activity is critical to controlling today's public health challenges, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and other conditions related to a lack of physical activity.

Improving transit options and pedestrian accessibility can alleviate congestion and create accessible and inviting environments.

WALKSacramento submits the following comments on the Draft Land Use Element for the County of Sacramento General Plan Update.

BUILD-OUT OF INFILL SITES

WALKSacramento supports the County's infill strategy goals which include promoting walking and biking as viable transportation alternatives. We suggest the following modification to policy LU-6 to clarify that the policy applies to infill and to eliminate conflict with policy LU-9 (residential densities for planned communities):

1. LU-6 All residential infill projects involving ten or more units on sites within existing urban areas that have infrastructure capacity available, excluding remainder lots and Lot A's, shall not have densities less than 75% of zoned maximums, unless physical or environmental constraints make achieving the minimum densities impossible.

NEW GROWTH AREAS

The new areas selected for urban uses were selected based partly on their "potential for public transit service and creating neighborhoods that encourage walking and biking." Leapfrog development could easily result in residential neighborhoods without retail and jobs close by. The automobile would be the only convenient option for travel and walking, biking, and transit would not be possible for residents. At best, leapfrog development would result in communities with only recreational walking or house- to-house trips by foot. *WALKS* Sacramento strongly opposes leapfrog development and recommends the following policy statement to manage macro-scale development.

2. LU-13 The County will promote new urban developments within identified growth areas and prohibit Master Plan area land use projects which are for noncontiguous development, including specifically proposals outside of the Urban Policy Area (i.e. leapfrog development).

Management of growth within the new growth areas is also important at the micro scale (parcel level). The County should encourage phasing of growth within Master Plan areas so that residents in developing communities do not have to drive to everything for the first five or ten years of the development. This policy would try to establish as complete as possible communities from day one of development.

3. LU-XX The County will promote phasing that discourages scattered development within Master Plan areas, and provides walkable and bikeable access to a mix of commercial, employment, parks, and school uses over the entire development lifecycle.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Policy LU-24 should not be limited to just specific and community plans, and it should not apply to areas outside of the Urban Policy Area where development is prohibited.

4. LU-24 Specific Plans, and Community Plans, Corridor Plans, Comprehensive Plans, or any other long-range plan for areas within the Urban Policy Area Service Boundary should provide a balance of employment, neighborhood services, and different housing types wherever feasible.

PUBLIC HEALTH / LAND USE CONNECTION

Several important patterns of land use development included in the discussion that should be in the policy LU-28 were omitted. The first two bullets should be revised to read as:

LU-28 When planning for new development in either new or existing communities, the following features shall be considered for their public health benefits and ability to encourage more active lifestyles:

5. • Compact, mixed use development and a balance of land uses, including schools, parks, jobs, retail and grocery stores, so that everyday needs are within walking distance of homes, ~~including schools, parks, jobs, retail and grocery stores.~~
6. • Grid- or modified grid-pattern ~~S~~streets, integrated pathways and public transportation that connect multiple destinations and provide for alternatives to the automobile.

ENERGY EFFICIENT DEVELOPMENT

This section does not discuss energy used for transportation resulting from development. A policy should be included to promote sustainable, energy efficient land use. We suggest changing the section title and adding a policy.

7. Energy Efficient Buildings, Site Plans, and Development
8. LU-XX Consider transportation energy when planning new growth.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION AND WALKABILITY

Providing a walkable environment will further the County's efforts to increase physical activity, provide full access for people that may not drive, improve air quality due to reduced vehicle trips, and reconnect neighborhoods. Buffers between street traffic and pedestrians improve the safety of pedestrians and increase their comfort level. Landscape planters with canopy trees provide an excellent buffer that also beautifies the streetscape, improves the physical comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists by shading the sidewalk and bike lane, and reduces street maintenance costs by extending the lifetime of the asphalt. On-street parking is sometimes substituted for landscape buffers, but because cars are usually parked temporarily and at night on residential streets, it is only a partial substitute. *WALK*Sacramento recommends adding residential and collector streets to LU-44.

9. LU-44 Master planning efforts for new growth areas shall provide for separated sidewalks along all residential streets, collectors, arterials and thoroughfares to make walking a safer and more attractive transportation option.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ALONG TRANSIT CORRIDORS

The opportunities for development along transit corridors are discussed, but the policy doesn't specify what the appropriate land uses and densities should be. We recommend revising LU-94 as follows.

10. LU-94 Support planning and development of more compact and walkable residential and retail development around transit corridors to

advance the construction of a bus rapid transit system and light rail expansion.

The built environment along transit corridors will have many similarities to commercial corridors, and therefore should have similar implementation measures. We recommend adding the following implementation measure adapted from the Commercial Corridors section.

11. B. Develop form-based codes for transit corridors whenever feasible to concentrate on form and function of development to encourage mixed use, pedestrian and transit-friendly environments.

WALKSacramento encourages people to walk and bicycle in their communities. The benefits include improved physical fitness, less motor vehicle traffic congestion, better air quality and a stronger sense of cohesion and safety in local neighborhoods. *WALKSacramento* is a member of the Partnership for Active Communities, formerly the Safe Routes Sacramento Partnership. The Partnership is working to support increased physical activity such as walking and bicycling in local neighborhoods as well as helping to create community environments that support walking and bicycling.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Chris Holm
Project Analyst

cc: Leighann Moffitt, Principal Planner