

June 14, 2006

Jeffrey Beiswenger  
Planning Department  
City of Rancho Cordova  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Re: Design Review for Old Placerville Road Residential (Project RC-05-183) and Office (Project RC-06-217)

Dear Mr. Beiswenger and Ms. Hersch:

WALKSacramento offers comments on the Design Review for the Old Placerville Road proposal to build 49 single family residential lots, totaling 71,103 square feet, on 5.3 acres and on the Design Review for the Old Placerville Road Offices proposal to build 18,711 square feet of offices on 2.15 acres. We are commenting on both projects in the same letter because there are many issues pertaining to the relationship between the two proposals and both come from the same applicant. You will each receive an original, signed letter.

WALKSacramento is a member of the Partnership for Active Communities, an Active Living by Design project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 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. One way that the Partnership is doing this is through the review of proposed development projects in Natomas and Rancho Cordova. The benefits of such active environments include improved physical fitness, less motor vehicle traffic congestion, better air quality, and a stronger sense of cohesion and safety in local neighborhoods.

While we appreciate the intent of this in-fill proposal, we question whether there is sufficient space to achieve a quality environment for both the office and the residential components as designed. The residential portion in particular is tightly packed behind the offices, with houses close together, narrow streets, no sidewalks, minimal yards, and no community open space. WALKSacramento recommends redesigning the residential portion, and perhaps also the office

portion if necessary, in order to create room for sidewalks and a shared open space which will create a greater sense of community and quality housing.

After reviewing the projects' site plans and drawings, and inspecting the project sites and the surrounding neighborhood, we offer the following additional comments and recommendations:

1. Include internal sidewalks: WALKSacramento strongly recommends that sidewalks be added throughout all of the streets in the residential project in order to meet the City of Rancho Cordova's Design Guideline 2:16 which states that pedestrians are a priority in the design of projects. Sidewalks should have a 5' minimum width (the minimum needed to allow two people to use the sidewalk at the same time), vertical curbs, and separation from the roadway, preferably by a landscape buffer. The sidewalks are needed to foster a safe walking environment within the development. The sidewalk area will also create space where interaction with neighbors is encouraged, creating a greater sense of community. Please note that if a picket fence is placed directly next to a sidewalk, an additional two feet of space is needed for pedestrians to make up for the "shy space" immediately adjacent to the fence that cannot be used.

We recommend a 6' minimum width walkway to link the residential units to Old Placerville Road along the east edge of the project area to conform with Design Standard 2:16.2. WALKSacramento also recommends a walkway running along the western edge of the office project that would connect to a sidewalk along Old Placerville Road. Please refer to Attachment "A" for clarification.

2. Include sidewalks along Old Placerville Road: There is currently a gap in the sidewalk network where this property fronts on Old Placerville Road. Completing the sidewalk network should be required as part of this project. If an attached sidewalk is installed along Old Placerville Road, we strongly recommend a 6' width minimum, which is what currently exists on either side of the project. If a detached sidewalk with a landscape buffer is installed, 5' sidewalks would be the minimum width.
3. Add open space for residents: According to Design Standard 2:40.2, a minimum of ten percent of all new residential development is set aside as open space that is accessible. There does not appear to be any space set aside for this in the residential proposal. WALKSacramento strongly recommends that the site plan be reconfigured to accomplish this.

One potential solution is to expand upon the green space provided in the office portion. Centered around the old oak tree between Offices 1 & 2, we recommend a redesign that reconfigures parking to allow for additional open space to the north, so it would also act as a buffer between the residential and office projects. This would be a location for benches, tables, and facilities for children. This would also provide an attractive location for employees of the office project to take a break and get some fresh air.

4. Include link to adjacent uses: The project does not currently meet Design Guideline 2:26, which asks for connections between neighboring residential and non-residential uses. It is likely and desirable that people living in the residential units will want to access the grocery store, coffee shop, restaurants, and other retail on the adjoining property to the west. One key location for a pedestrian link would be located where the proposed roadway runs separates the office and residential units. The site plan shows that the road dead-ends on the west edge of the property, but it could easily connect to an existing driveway along the east edge of the retail plaza and provide much greater connectivity.

In addition, we recommend establishing pedestrian and bicycle links in the northwest and northeast corner of the project. On a site visit, there were signs that people are jumping the wall along the east edge of the property, walking through the overgrown field, and have broken a hole in the fence along the west edge of the property in order to access the shopping center. Pedestrian access points in the north corners would help facilitate this desired travel. A pedestrian link in the northwest corner in particular would greatly increase the chance that a resident of the proposed development would walk instead of drive to the retail center. Please refer to Attachment "A" for clarification.

5. Maximize use of floor plans that provide eyes on the street: Of the nine floor plans included in the proposal, four stand out as providing a good degree of "eyes on the street" which contributes to creating a quality neighborhood by allowing homeowners to visually keep track of what is happening on their streets. The layouts for B1, B3, C1, and D orient activity areas on the street side of the homes and include porches. We encourage using these layouts as much as possible. A1 provides the least eyes on the street and we do not recommend using that floor plan.
6. Include visible, accessible, convenient bicycle parking: Bicycle parking was not included in the office site plan and we ask for it's inclusion. Bicycle parking is indicated as appropriate in Design Guideline 4:4.3. The most effective way to ensure that dedicated space for bicycle

parking is used is for it to be visible, accessible, convenient, and easy to use. It needs to be out of the way of pedestrians and motor vehicles. If any of these aspects are not met, there is a good chance cyclists won't use what is provided and park wherever they think their bike will be safe. See Attachment "B" for the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates' recommended bicycle parking rack styles.

We recommend a rack at the primary entrance of each office and we encourage the inclusion of bicycle lockers for employees within the project site. If each office is built with a shower unit for bicycle commuters, then the stage is well set for creating a bicycle-friendly environment.

7. Reconfigure driveways: If the project is built as proposed, there will be 4 driveways over a distance of about 100', counting the driveways on adjoining properties. This seems to run counter to Design Standard 2:12, stating that the number of driveways shall be minimized for purposes of traffic safety. In addition to creating traffic hazards, excessive driveway entrances are visually unappealing and present additional exposure to pedestrians. We recommend an alternative; keep the eastern driveway, eliminate the center driveway, and connect to and establish shared use of the existing entryway at the development to the west. In addition, any driveways constructed need to be designed as driveways and not intersections. For clarification, please see Attachment "C", an illustration from the 2006 Federal Highway Administration's Pedestrian Safety Planning course.
8. Add parking lot crosswalks: In order to facilitate movement between office buildings, we recommend marking crosswalks in the parking lot. Suggested locations are indicated in Attachment "A."

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and recommendations. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Scott Clark or me at (916) 446-9255 or via email at [sclark@walksacramento.org](mailto:sclark@walksacramento.org) or [ageraghty@walksacramento.org](mailto:ageraghty@walksacramento.org).

Sincerely,

Anne Geraghty  
Executive Director

Cc: Ted Kopecko, Tower Development  
Rich Bell, Active Living by Design  
Jeane Borkenhagen, Sacramento Metro Air Quality Management District  
Traci Canfield, Sacramento Regional Transit  
Matthew Cummings, Lincoln Village Neighborhood Association  
Teri Duarte, Sacramento County Department of Health  
Rebecca Garrison, 50 Corridor TMA  
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Sharon Sprowls, Odyssey  
Paul Zykofsky, Local Government Commission