



March 30, 2011

Matthew Sites, Associate AIA
City of Sacramento, Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

VIA EMAIL

RE: 800 Block Project (P11-009)

Dear Mr. Sites:

*WALKS*Sacramento appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 800 Block Project. The following comments are based on the February 28, 2011 project routing.

The 800 Block Project proposes development for 800 K Street at the southeast corner of 8th and K Streets, and 801 L Street at the northeast corner of 8th and L Streets. 800 K consists of a new six story building with 11,837 square feet of ground-level retail space, 134 residential units on floors two through six, and 137 parking spaces on the basement, ground, and mezzanine levels. 801 L Street consists of a renovated three-story building and a new five-story building. The combined buildings will contain 10,000 square feet of ground-level retail, 66 residential units on floors two through five, and 47 parking spaces on below-ground and mezzanine levels.

1. *WALKS*Sacramento recommends giving greater prominence to the stairs.

Stair climbing can easily be a part of daily physical activity for many people resulting in better fitness, higher aerobic capacity, weight loss, and improved levels of “good” cholesterol. Studies have indicated a significantly lower risk of mortality for those climbing more than fifty-five flights per week.

The location and design of stairwells can have a major impact in promoting stair use. Factors associated with stair use include the distance from the stairs to the nearest entrance and elevators, and the number of turns from the stairs to the closest entrance. Both lobbies in this project promote elevator use and effectively discourage stair use. The 800 K Street entrance points directly to the elevators. The path to the stairs is around several corners, alongside the ground-level parking, and through another door. The elevators in the 801 L Street building lobby are just inside the entrance and the stairs are hidden behind a doorway and wall. These locations are certainly not promoting stair use.

Stair use can also be affected by the building occupant’s awareness of the stairs and the environment in the stairwell. Placing an informational or motivational sign near the elevator can encourage use of the stairs instead of the elevator. This sign should be specific to using the stairs – not a fire exit map.

The stairwells should be designed to provide an environment similar to the hallways, including flooring, wall coverings, artificial lighting, and signs indicating the floor number. Clear doors or doors with windows and side windows can provide “eyes on the stairs” and a better connection between the hallways and the stairs. Natural lighting provide by windows is highly recommended.

The great potential for the 800 Block Project to receive LEED certification might be improved by making the project “stairway friendly”. Several projects in New York City have applied for LEED Innovation in Design Credit: Design for Increased Health Through Physical Activity. Design strategies include accessible floors, stair door operation and location, circulation signage, stairwell design, and access to active spaces.

2. WALKSacramento recommends eliminating the parking driveway on L Street.

L Street is a busy corridor with high volumes of both vehicles and pedestrians. The driveway to the subgrade parking in the 801 L Street building will present frequent vehicle-pedestrian conflicts that are unnecessary if vehicular access can be provided from the alley.

3. WALKSacramento recommends reducing the number of parking spaces for 800 K Street.

There are 137 parking spaces proposed for 134 residential units in the 800 K Street building. Since walking should comprise a significant percentage of trips due to the projects proximity to light rail and buses, employment, shopping, dining, and entertainment, this seems to be a high ratio. We suggest using car sharing or shared parking to reduce the number of spaces in the building while still serving this exorbitant number of cars.

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 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. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me at (916) 446-9255 or cholm@walksacramento.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Analyst