



February 15, 2012

Arwen Wacht, Associate Planner
City of Sacramento
Community Development Department, Planning
300 Richards Blvd., 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

VIA EMAIL

RE: Greenbriar (P11-093)

Dear Ms. Wacht:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the January 11, 2012 Neighborhood Project Notification for the Greenbriar project. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the project.

Greenbriar is a proposed project for a 577 acre master planned community with approved General Plan and zoning amendments, PUD Schematic Plan, and PUD Guidelines. The current application is requesting entitlements for Tentative Master Parcel Map, Small Lot Tentative Subdivision Map (Phase 1, north of Meister Way), Subdivision modifications, additional General Plan amendments, PUD Schematic Plan amendment, PUD Guidelines amendment, and a Development Agreement.

The project is promoted as a pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented development within the northwest corner of the City, with I-5 on its southern edge and SR 99 on its eastern edge. The community will have direct roadway connections to North Natomas and the City via the existing W Elkhorn Boulevard and the future Meister Way.

Due to its limited external connectivity, isolation by freeways, and distance from services in North Natomas, it is critically important to provide the best environment that will support walking, biking, and transit so that short trips do not require automobiles. Daily active transportation, such as walking and biking, improves public health by increasing physical fitness and lowering morbidity, reducing automobile emissions and noise, and providing more social contact. WALKSacramento makes the following comments to improve the future community of Greenbriar.

1. Promote walking – Do not reduce the density near destinations

People in urban areas tend to walk more when there are a variety of reasons to walk. When destinations, such as stores, community facilities, gathering spots, parks, and friends are close, transit is nearby, and walking routes are convenient and pleasant, people will walk more.

The *Neighborhood Project Notification* indicates the applicant is requesting fewer single family homes in Villages 6, 8, 10, 11, and 13, resulting in net density reductions of 24%, 14%, 1%, and 38%, respectively.

A majority of the homes in all five villages will be within ¼ mile of the light rail station, and all are within ½ mile or 10-minute walk of the LRS. The requested density reductions will likely reduce walking and the number of light rail transit boardings.

Adjacent to the light rail station is land designated as Community Commercial. This six acre shopping center will be within a 10-minute walk of most of the homes within the villages proposed for density reductions. More than half the homes are within a 5-minute walk of the 7-acre shopping center proposed for the northern entrance into Greenbriar. One community park and two neighborhood parks are also within a 10-minute walk of all the homes and each home is within a 5-minute walk of at least one of the three parks. All of the homes are also within a 5-minute walk of a walking path.

Any reduction in the number of homes or the reduction of density should not occur within walking distance of the destinations discussed above so that walking is not reduced.

2. Add two pedestrian bridges over the lake (Phase 1)

The Greenbriar PUD Guidelines emphasize the transit orientation of the development and the walkability of the TOD, but the entire community should be walkable. The Project Justification/Statement of Intent included in the recent project application states that the “gridded street pattern encourages walking and the short blocks allow many options for pedestrian travel.” This would be true except for the fact that the lake presents a barrier to walking that is over two miles long with only five crossings.

The lake will make walking distances longer for many trips. For example, there is a private recreation center planned for the northwest corner of the lake in phase 1. The distance from the center to the nearest home on the other side of the lake is about 200 feet, but the walking distance is about a half mile! This relationship will not only discourage walking trips to the recreation center, but to most destinations where the lake lies between them. Walking trips to the homes of friends, to stores, to school, to transit, to parks will be longer because of the lake.

This barrier can be overcome, though. We strongly suggest that pedestrian bridges be constructed across the lake to provide crossings no farther apart than 800 feet.

3. Provide a complete and red-lined copy of the PUD Guidelines for public review prior to Planning Commission hearing

The project application has “Guidelines Amendment” checked as a planning entitlement and the Project Justification/Statement of Intent includes PUD Guidelines Amendment as a requested entitlement. In conflict with those entitlement requests, the “GREENBRIAR PUD GUIDELINES Outline for Revisions to Document” provided with the application includes the statement “however please note that for the initial entitlement submittal **no changes have been made yet to the PUD Guidelines contained herein**, they are included simply for reference as a ‘point of beginning’ for the future changes and additions outlined below.”

Additionally, Chapter 7 Design Guidelines in the current PUD Guidelines has only section headings. The project application provides only new section and sub-section headings.

The project application is requesting approval of changes to the PUD Guidelines that have not been made, yet. We would like an opportunity to review changes to the PUD Guidelines in the form of a complete and red-lined version well in advance of the Planning Commission hearing.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Holm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Holm
Project Analyst