



8/4/2016

VIA EMAIL

Michael Hanebutt, Assistant Planner
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: 19J (DR16-202)

Dear Mr. Hanebutt:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the Development Project Routing (July 8, 2016) for 19J. Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comment on the project.

The project is located at 1827 J Street and proposes an 11-story mixed-use building on 0.29 acres in a General Commercial zone (C-2-NC). It will accommodate 173 residential units and approximately 7,000 square feet of ground retail space, and will require the demolition of two existing single-story commercial buildings. The project sits at the northwest corner of the J Street and 19th Street intersection, with many destinations and amenities within walking distances, including restaurants, services, retail, and transit stops. In such a dense and walkable area, building design can greatly affect the pedestrian experience of both the occupants of the new development and patrons of nearby amenities.

WALKSacramento would like to commend the development for considering many aspects of healthy design within the project. The development promotes alternate modes of transportation by limiting car parking and providing bicycle parking on-site. On-site car parking is accessed through the alleyway which eliminates driveways on J Street and 19th Street and associated conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists. Ground floor retail, outdoor seating, and bay windows along the ground floor promote street activation while also adding to “eyes on the street,” enhancing neighborhood safety. The replacement of three trees to be removed as well as the green walls along the exterior of the building will add a new and interesting street landscaping component.

There are a few items, however, that we believe should be addressed and improved upon.

STAIRWELL DESIGN

The project narrative promotes 19J as a sustainable building and a model for sustainable living. Healthy residents are an important element of sustainability and 19J is proposed to be within a walkable corridor and walkable neighborhood. Designing stairs into buildings in ways that promote physical activity has been shown to greatly reduce risk for

chronic conditions such as obesity,¹ and would additionally fit the developer's vision of sustainable urban living. 19J has two stairwells – one on the J Street end of the building and one on the Improve Alley end – each of which include some design elements that can increase stair use and some design elements that may discourage stair use.

Elements that can encourage stair use include location (such as direct access and prominence compared to elevators), environment (such as windows and interior finishing) and stair dimensions (such as width).

For the stairs to fully usable as part of daily physical activity, residents must be able to use the stairs both leaving and arriving. Stair #1 and Stair #2 should allow both ingress and egress on the ground floor. A bigger issue is that Stair #1 doesn't have a door in the lobby, which means that residents returning to their home who stop at their mailbox in the lobby will have to exit and re-enter the building to use the stairs. Stair #1 ideally should have a door in the lobby, but at minimum there should be an interior hallway to the stairwell. There is a similar situation with Stair #2 in that residents that use the ground floor bike parking will have to exit and re-enter the building to get to the stairs. There should be a hallway between the bike room and the stairwell.

External windows encourage greater stair use by providing daylighting and views of the outside. Internal windows in the stairwell hallway doors or wall can help people feel less isolated in the stairwell, it enhances the connection between the hallway and the stairwell, and it can provide views to the outside from the hallway. Interior access to Stair #2 on floors 3-10 not only requires passing through two doors with a vestibule in between, but it isolates the stairs from the hallways. We recommend eliminating the vestibules at Stairs #2, and adding interior windows to Stairs #1 and Stairs #2.

The stairwells appear to be about 48' wide, but another six or eight inches would provide adequate room for two people to walk comfortably side by side. Design is known to greatly affect a person's perception of their environment and overall comfort level within a space. Stairwells should be designed with this intention.

SIDEWALK AND ALLEY ACTIVATION

While outdoor seating can be great for sidewalk activation, its current location on the design may impede pedestrian traffic as they may need to maneuver around the fenced-off private area. A space is more pedestrian-friendly when the street front is permeable, where pedestrians can interface with activities occurring within and around the building.² Permeability can be included in the design through outdoor seating in a way to allows pedestrian travel to be straight and without obstructions, such as fencing. Putting outdoor seating at the curb or trees in street planters rather than in the sidewalk can result in an unobstructed pedestrian pathway, while replacing adjacent parking spaces with parklets or bicycle corrals can activate the sidewalk.

¹ Ishak A. Mansi, MD, FACP, Nardine Mansi, AIA, Hayam Shaker, MD, and Daniel Banks, MD, MS, FACP, "Stair Design in the United States and Obesity: The Need for Change", Southern Medical Journal 102 no. 6 (June 2009): 610-614.

² Vikas Mehta and Jennifer K. Bosson, "Third Places and the Social Life of Streets", Environment and Behavior 42:779 (October 2009).

Additionally, this development has the opportunity to activate the alleyway. The City of Sacramento is currently promoting alley activation. Doing so in this project would make it safer for residents to access the rear entrance late at night and/or early in the morning. The back entrance could be designed to have as much visual prominence as the front entrance. Planters, again, would be a quick way to create a welcoming environment around the back entrance.

BICYCLE PARKING ACCESS

There is ample bike parking located on-site of the project, which is a significant asset for residents. However, access to bike parking on the second floor does not seem to be easily accessible, which may discourage bicycle usage.

Only the front entrance has an elevator to the second floor parking, and it is not clear from the plan whether bicycles will easily fit in these elevators. On both the front and back entrances, there is a stairwell leading to the second floor parking. These stairwells, however, seem very narrow (approximately 4 feet wide) and would be difficult to maneuver a bicycle up and down the steps, especially if more than one person is in the stairwell.

From the back entrance, it is unclear whether bicyclists will also be able to use the ramp to the second floor. If they are intended to share this ramp, it may be unsafe and too steep to easily navigate. Furthermore, the doorways to the building as well as the bicycle storage rooms on the first and second floors appear to be very narrow (4-foot opening for the building door and 3-foot opening for the bicycle room door). Again, this will make maneuvering bicycles difficult, especially if multiple residents try to access it at one time, as might be the case in the morning before going to work. To avoid these access issues, doorways should be widened and the majority of bicycle parking should be available at ground level.

Finally, while there are two bus stops within two blocks of the development, these stops serve a single bus route which heads east on J Street, away from the Downtown core, where there are many offices. This underscores the importance of designing the building to ensure that it is easy to leave and return to the building on bicycle for those who cannot rely on public transportation to go to work. This will capitalize the project's emphasis on urban living and use of alternate modes of transportation.

Development projects that lead to more walking and active travel are critical to our community's future. Human beings need moderate exercise, such as walking, for about 30 minutes a day in order to prevent the development of chronic disease and overweight. Only 30% of the population in the Sacramento region is active at this minimal level, often due to limitations placed by a built environment not suited to walking and other types of physically active travel. A 30-minute walk is about one and a half miles. If more people could obtain regular exercise by walking and bicycling to their regular destinations, in lieu of driving, it could yield significant health improvements to the resident population of this area. Reduced driving would also decrease vehicle emissions and the prevalence of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and other air pollution-related conditions. More trips by walking and bicycling could help reduce the current expensive

burden on the health care system of providing medical care to more and more people with chronic conditions due to inactivity and poor air quality.

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. 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.

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.

Sincerely,
Chris Holm
Project Manager

cc: Nikky Mohanna, M.H. Mohanna Development, Inc.

Attachment: Development Checklist for Biking and Walking

DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST for BIKING and WALKING

*Prepared by WALKSacramento and SABA (Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates)
September 2012*

This checklist is provided to give an indication of design, engineering, and policy elements that we consider when reviewing development projects.

POLICIES

- Walking and biking is a priority
- Adopted a policy to develop a full multi-modal and ADA accessible transportation system

Project Review and Comment

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Pedestrian Master Plan
- Bicycle Master Plan
- Regional Blueprint
- Regional Blueprint Consistent General Plans
- Adopted Climate Action Plans
- Subdivision ordinances to support pedestrian and bicycle access and safety
- Zoning ordinance to support pedestrian and bicycle access and safety

ENGINEERING

- SIDEWALKS & BIKELANES ON BOTH SIDES OF MAJOR ROADWAYS**
 - Pedestrian Level of Service "C" or better on arterials
 - Bicycle Level of Service "C" or better on arterials
- SAFE CROSSINGS FOR PEDESTRIANS**
 - every 300-600 feet on major arterials
 - well lit, marked crosswalks
 - audible signals & count-down signals
 - median refuge islands
- SPEED MANAGEMENT**
 - Speed limits based on safety of pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Implement "road diets" where there is excess lane capacity
- STREET DESIGN STANDARDS**
 - Maximize pedestrian and bicyclist safety
 - Sidewalks buffered by trees and landscaping on major arterials
 - Vertical curbs
 - 5' minimum sidewalk widths, 8' in front of schools
 - 6' minimum bike lanes on busy streets

- ❑ **INTERSECTIONS**
 - Median refuge islands for pedestrians
 - Signal timing to enable safe passage
 - Signal detection for bicyclists
 - Crossings on all 4 legs of intersections

- ❑ **ELIMINATE BARRIERS**
 - Freeway, railroad, river and creek crossings
 - Obstructions in sidewalks and bike lanes

NEW DEVELOPMENT – REQUIRE

- ❑ Walking & bicycling circulation plans for all new development
- ❑ Direct and convenient connections to activity centers, including schools, stores, parks, transit
- ❑ Mixed uses and other transit supporting uses within ¼ mile of light rail stations or bus stops with frequent service
- ❑ Minimum width streets
- ❑ Maximum block length of 400'
- ❑ 4-lane maximum for arterials; Recommend 2 lanes wherever possible

NEW DEVELOPMENT – DISCOURAGE

- ❑ Cul-de-sacs (unless it includes bike/ped connections)
- ❑ Gated and/or walled communities
- ❑ Meandering sidewalks
- ❑ Inappropriate uses near transit (gas stations, drive-thru restaurants, mini storage and other auto dependent uses)

BUILDINGS – REQUIRE

- ❑ Direct access for pedestrians from the street
- ❑ Attractive and convenient stairways
- ❑ Bicycle parking – long & short term
- ❑ Shower & clothing lockers

OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS

- ❑ Improve street crossings
- ❑ Reduce speeds
- ❑ Provide new connections
- ❑ Create short cuts for walkers and bicyclists by purchase of properties or other means
- ❑ Provide sidewalks on both sides of major streets

Policy Review and Comment

ENFORCEMENT & MAINTENANCE

- ❑ Enforce speed limits
- ❑ Enforce crosswalk rules – conduct crosswalk sting operations
- ❑ Enforce restrictions against parking on sidewalks
- ❑ Enforce bicycle rules including riding with traffic, lights at night, stopping at red lights
- ❑ Implement CVC 267 setting speed limits based on pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- ❑ Sweep streets and fix hazards
- ❑ Repair and replace broken sidewalks

EDUCATION

- ❑ Train staff on pedestrian and bicycle facility design.
- ❑ Train development community about pedestrian and bicycle planning and safety issues
- ❑ Bicycle skills training

FUNDING

- ❑ Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in capital improvement programs
- ❑ Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities as a part of roadway widening and improvement projects
- ❑ Support Measure A pedestrian and bicycle facility allocation
- ❑ Set priorities based on safety and latent demand
- ❑ SACOG Community Design grants & Bike/Ped grants
- ❑ California Bicycle transportation Account
- ❑ Safe Routes to School

www.walksacramento.org

www.sacbike.org

WALKSacramento
909 12th Street, Suite 203
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 446-9255

Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates
909 12th Street, Suite 116
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 444-6600