



11/3/2017

VIA EMAIL

Ethan Meltzer, Assistant Planner
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Blvd., 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 98811

RE: River Oaks Phase 2 (P17-051)

Dear Mr. Meltzer:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the project routing for River Oaks Phase 2 (P17-051) and we offer the following comments. The Sacramento region has too many people that do not achieve the Surgeon General's recommended minimum physical activity to reduce their risk of chronic disease, such as heart disease, cancer or diabetes. Designing our communities to improve walkability makes it more likely and possible that people will be physically active. River Oaks can be a walkable community connected to schools, shopping and employment if it's designed to be so. WALKSacramento makes the following recommendations to help create a more walkable and health supportive project.

River Oaks Phase 2 proposes a new map to change the housing product types. All 341 of the 10-pack houses have been eliminated, 156 townhouses have been added, the remainder of the proposed front-loaded and alley-loaded lots are slightly larger than on the approved map, the two parks totaling 8.8 acres has been replaced by a single 2.9-acre park, and the clubhouse has been eliminated.

Block Sizes

The paseos radiating northeast and northwest from the park reduce the effective block size for the two blocks containing lots 317-347 and 348-386, but there are three very large blocks that don't have paseos to improve connectivity. The blocks containing lots 177-222 and 260-316 are each about 5 acres, and the block containing lots 157-176 and 221-259 is about 6 acres. Policy LU 4.1.4 of the 2035 General Plan requires that all new neighborhoods be designed with traditional grid block sizes. Blocks within the City's downtown grid are approximately 3.4 acres.

To encourage and facilitate more walking trips, the River Oaks Phase 2 large blocks should have paseos through them to shorten pedestrian travel distances and to provide more routes between destinations. Lots Y, CC, DD, HH, II and JJ appear to be included to provide pedestrian connectivity through the two L-shaped blocks by the park and the two 5-acre blocks mentioned above. For these to work effectively, we recommend the following: 1) add a paseo lot between Alley 17 and Riverdale Drive in line with Lot Y, and 2) add paseos on Lots LL and 270 to connect the Lot JJ paseo to both L Street and the Lot V trail. The project should also be conditioned to provide traffic calming at the street and alley crossings between paseos.

In addition to the large Phase 2 blocks, Phase 1 may present what is effectively a 12.3 acre block. Sheet 1 of the *Proposed Substantial Conformance Map* exhibit shows a "Temporary EVA" on part of Lot F between Orchard Lane and E Street. If this is to be a permanent pedestrian easement with a sidewalk, then the block will be effectively partitioned for pedestrians into one 4 acre block and three

smaller blocks. We strongly recommend the Tentative Subdivision Map identify Lot F as a paseo and that it includes a corresponding cross section.

Street Network

The River Oaks Phase 1 and 2 street network is laid out in somewhat of a grid fashion, but the large blocks, as mentioned above, the cul-de-sacs in the southeast corner and the “lollipop” design of the revised Phase 1 area in the southwest corner limit the connectivity of the project. The link-node ratio of River Oaks Phase 1 and 2 appears to be slightly better than the 2005 plan, but it’s still low enough that improvements to the ratio could substantially reduce driving which should increase the potential for walking.

River Oaks Way, with alley loaded homes on both sides, is an impervious boundary between the southeast and southwest areas of the project. This requires that all traffic, other than access to homes on the block, must go by the neighborhood park on Lot EE. This creates unnecessary pass-by traffic that puts pedestrians using the park at greater risk of collision and reduces the pedestrian-orientation of the “neighborhood park” environment. We recommend that the River Oaks Way T-intersection be placed further south such that C Street is uninterrupted along the south side of the park between H Street and N Street.

Parks

River Oaks Phase 2 proposes one 2.9 acre park, a significant reduction from two parks totaling 8.8 acres in 2005. The proposed park size, if accompanied by other small parks nearby, would be appropriate for denser urban areas but not for this lower density project. While the approved plan would provide 5.5 park acres per 1,000 residents, the proposed project will provide only 1.9 park acres per 1,000 residents.

Parks are important for the health of residents and the closer parks and greenery are to residents, the healthier they will be. Although the proposed park is centrally located and, therefore, closer to more residents on average than the two approved 2005 parks, it is small for the future River Oaks population. The pedestrian bridge proposed to cross the Natomas Main Drainage Canal will provide access to Barandas Park on the east side of the canal. Easy access to Barandas Park would alleviate some of the River Oaks park acreage deficiency. We recommend increasing the size of the Lot EE park, moving it slightly north, and adding additional pedestrian connections to the pedestrian bridge in order to improve park access and use.

Pedestrian Bridge for Transportation and Recreation

The Natomas Main Drainage Canal runs north-south adjacent to the entire half-mile plus eastern edge of River Oaks. West El Camino Avenue, which borders River Oaks on the south, is the only existing project-adjacent canal crossing other than the RD-1000 utility access road where the canal goes under I-80 near the northeast corner of the project. The sidewalk on West El Camino will provide access to Barandas Park on the east edge of the canal, and the shopping centers and offices about a quarter-mile away at the W El Camino at Gateway Oaks Drive intersection. The bike trail along the east side of the canal is part of a nearly continuous route from the northern City limit along Elkhorn Boulevard to Downtown.

Destinations east of the northern end of the River Oaks site include the I-80 pedestrian/bike bridge to North Natomas, and Metro Center which includes three higher education facilities offering bachelor and graduate degrees, single- and multi-family residential, and several mid-rise offices building campuses on Gateway Oaks Drive. The 2005 approved plan has the pedestrian bridge over

the canal landing on the east side about close to Gateway Oaks Drive but Phase 2 proposes to move the bridge location about 1000' south. This would add up to a half-mile more walking distance to the 300' between River Oaks and Metro Center. We recommend adding a pedestrian bridge at the location close to that in the approved River Oaks 2005 plan to provide access to the major bike trail corridor and destinations on the east side of the canal.

Freeway Buffer Multi-Use Trail

There's a 15' Trail Corridor approximately 12.5' from the ends of the alleys and paseos shown in the Typical Townhouse Detail on the August 2017 Tentative Subdivision Map. However, the overall map doesn't show a trail within Lot E between the freeway and the townhomes, but it does show a 12' sidewalk or trail within Lots SS, R and V along the west side of the canal from West El Camino Avenue to near the K Street elbow at Riverdale Drive. The Lot E trail pavement and connections to the townhome paseos on Lots H through U should be shown on the map. We also recommend extending the 12' trail within Lot V so that it connects to the Lot E trail to provide greater connectivity by allowing continuous off-street movement between the two trail corridors.

SRTS Crossing of W El Camino Avenue

The schools nearest the Rive Oak site are Two Rivers elementary school, about an 8-minute walk to the southwest, and Leroy Green Academy, a 6-12th grade charter school, about a 5-minute walk to the south. The greatest number of students from River Oaks will walk to these schools if the route is convenient and safe. W El Camino Avenue has a 40-mph speed limit and is four lanes, expanding to five and six lanes at the Orchard Lane intersection. Orchard Lane is the primary vehicular route to the two schools and the neighborhoods south of W El Camino Avenue. The most direct route with the least traffic to the schools would be via W River Drive, which has a 13' shorter crossing distance of W El Camino Avenue on the west leg, and is also the street on which both schools have their entrances. A signal, such as a pedestrian hybrid beacon, at the W El Camino and River Oaks Way/W River Drive intersection could provide a safe crossing.

The crosswalk at on the west leg of the W El Camino and Grasslands Drive intersection will also be a desire path for future River Oaks residents. The crosswalk provides the most convenient, though slightly out-of-path, crossing of W El Camino for users of the bike trail along the Natomas Main Drainage Canal. This location is also a potential candidate for a pedestrian hybrid signal that would directly benefit the River Oaks project.

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.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Manager

Attachment: Development Checklist for Biking and Walking

cc: Zarah Lacson, Transportation Division, Department of Public Works

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

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

www.sacbike.org

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