



1/23/2018

VIA EMAIL

Meredith Holsworth, Associate Planner  
Sacramento County Office of Planning and Environmental Review  
827 7th Street, Second Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Raj Subdivision (PLNP2016-00356)**

Dear Ms. Holsworth:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the project documents for Raj Subdivision (PLNP2016-00356) and we offer the following comments on the project's walkability. The project proposes to rezone 3.2 acres from SC to RD-15 and construct a gated, 38 single-family home subdivision with two common area lots, one with a tot lot. The Raj Subdivision is located near the intersection of Mack Road-Elsie Avenue at Stockton Boulevard. The roadways are wide with 40-mph speed limits and few pedestrian crossing locations. While there are restaurants and services within a 10-minute walk of the project site, the closest elementary school and park are more than a mile away, with much of the walk requiring travel along major arterials. Therefore, it will be critical to provide excellent external connections and internal circulation for pedestrians.

**Pedestrian access to the project site**

The bus stops on Elsie Avenue and Stockton Boulevard may generate quite a few walk trips. This makes access to the street quite important. The project proposes to provide this access by using the sidewalks and drive aisle crossings in the three commercial parcels between the project site and Elsie Avenue.

The crosswalk from the access driveway entrance next to the 'tot lot' has an indirect path to parcel 115-0061-046-0000. While it may be preferable to use an existing curb ramp in the adjacent parcel, if the access driveway entrance can't be moved to allow a direct pathway, then the pathway should be moved to provide safer crossing of the private commercial road and avoid conflicts at the access driveway entrance.

The private commercial road sidewalks along the building edges to the north at the eastern portion of the project are not designed for pedestrians. Between the narrowness of the sidewalks and the building walls at the back of the sidewalks, pedestrians will not find the travel very comfortable nor will there be much room for people to pass one another.

## **Pedestrian access to the project houses**

The revised site plan requires pedestrians to walk in the access driveway to get to every one of the houses in the project, but there aren't any details provided in the routing to indicate there will be design features to make the shared roadway safe for pedestrians. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recommendations for shared streets includes 1) textured or pervious pavements that are flush with the curb, 2) street furniture, such as benches and planters, to define the space, and 3) signs emphasizing the nature of the environment at the entrance to the shared street.

The original site plan (08.08.2016) provided pedestrian-only access to thirty-two of the houses via paseos through the middle of the blocks with eight houses. This enabled pedestrians to walk to main entrances of the houses at the front or side of the houses without having to walk in the vehicle travelway and crossing the access driveway within marked crosswalks. Although the other sixteen houses had paseos, travel between the paseos and the entrance to the site required walking in the access driveway. Without knowing constraints of the site, it appears that a sidewalk next to the access driveway along the edge of the two blocks could have been added to provide a safe pedestrian route.

The paseos in the original plan would have also contributed to a much more community-oriented neighborhood. Residents would have views of the paseo where their neighbors are walking, or socializing on front porches, and children are playing in the front yards and common space. The revised plan will make the communal area private, likely with fences separating people and blocking views.

Adding to the safety issues of pedestrians using the access driveways as their only access to the houses is the lack of "eyes on the street." Twenty-six of the thirty-eight houses have only the garage and a secondary bedroom facing the access driveway, and the houses that have garage and great room facing the driveway are concentrated at the end of two streets and around one of the blocks. The advantage of providing "eyes on" is that people feel more comfortable thinking they're within view of neighbors and less comfortable committing crimes. In contrast, the original site plan provided extensive "eyes on the paseo" as every house had its great room and master bedroom facing the paseo.

## **Trees**

The revised landscape plan has trees near the access driveway in the area previously occupied by the walkway to the entrance door. While this will provide trees to shade the access driveway asphalt, it creates a pedestrian path that has more turns and requires walking through the driveways at each house that will be used for parking. The smaller rear yards without the paseos will preclude or diminish the planting of trees. It appears the distance between adjacent driveway is the same as in the original site plan, so the original plan could have accommodated the 'street' trees. Thus, the revised plan will have about 50% of the potential number of trees in the original plan.

## **Summary**

Comparing the original plans to the revised plans, it appears the original submission provided greater pedestrian safety and convenience of travel. Revisions to the original plan, if possible, would have

created an even better project. Unfortunately, we don't see many opportunities to elevate the revised plan to create a walkable neighborhood.

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

## **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](http://www.walksacramento.org)*

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

*[www.sacbike.org](http://www.sacbike.org)*

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