



3/11/2019

VIA EMAIL

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

RE: The Boulevard (P17-031)

Dear Mr. Hanebutt:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the second revised project routing for The Boulevard (P17-031) from January 2019. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the project.

The project is located at the northwest corner of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Howe Avenue and proposes a commercial mixed-use development with office and retail. The project will include one two-story building with ground-level retail and office space on the second floor and one single-story building with retail providing a total of approximately 21 retail spaces. Pedestrian plazas and courtyards encourage pedestrian circulation throughout the site. The project is adjacent to the University Avenue office developments and is northwest of the Campus Commons residential neighborhood. Northwest of the project across Fair Oaks Boulevard is a mixture of multifamily residential, office, and commercial retail.

WALKSacramento would like to commend the project for incorporating aspects of healthy design, such as dynamic exteriors, tree shading along sidewalks and throughout the parking lot, spacious sidewalk and patio areas around the storefronts, windows, and placement of stairs and pedestrian amenities. Unique exteriors with interesting facades encourages walking by creating a pleasant and enjoyable environment for pedestrians. Trees improve walkability by reducing the impacts of heat, improving air quality, and providing aesthetic and mental health benefits. A spacious sidewalk area around the storefronts provides room for pedestrians to walk and linger through the provision of seating areas and other sidewalk amenities. Large windows, as well as the placement of patios and rooftop decks, facilitate "eyes on the street" by activating spaces throughout the site. "Eyes on the street" helps create a safer environment that encourages pedestrian activity throughout the site. Lastly, the prominent placement of stairs in Building A encourages use of stairs instead of the elevator, providing health benefits to employees and visitors.

While these elements promote a walkable development, WALKSacramento would like to offer several additional recommendations to further support a convenient and comfortable pedestrian environment that promotes health and economic vibrancy for the project and surrounding community.

Widen the sidewalk from the southwest property line to the storefronts. The project narrative envisions the project as a major pedestrian destination for employees of the University Avenue office

complex which borders the project site to the southeast. The project site also has potential to draw pedestrians from multifamily residential and office developments west of Fair Oaks Boulevard, as well as from Campus Commons, a residential neighborhood to the southeast. Pedestrians from these locations will most likely access the site from the first driveway at the southwestern portion of the project, however the segment of Fair Oaks Boulevard leading to the project site currently discourages active travel due to a narrow, four-foot sidewalk and close proximity to high speed, high volume traffic.

Widening the sidewalk to six feet from the southwestern edge of the property line up to the storefronts creates a safer, more comfortable pedestrian environment that encourages active travel from the University Avenue office complex and other nearby locations. Additionally, pedestrians traveling along Fair Oaks Boulevard may choose to utilize the wider sidewalk along the storefronts rather than the sidewalk fronting the street, potentially stopping to patronize businesses along the way. It appears that the project plans to reconstruct a few hundred feet of the sidewalk in order to create a right-turn pocket into the first driveway, meaning that there is an opportunity to widen the sidewalk along this segment. As this is likely to be a major pedestrian access point, widening the sidewalk in this area will support the project's goals of becoming a pedestrian destination that enhances the quality of life for neighboring employees and residents.

Enhance connectivity between the project site and adjacent retail project. There is an opportunity to extend the sidewalk on the northeast side of Building A about 16' to the property line and connect with a proposed sidewalk as part of the adjacent University Office Park Retail project. Currently, the site plan shows that the sidewalk ends prior to reaching the property line. However, on the University Office Park Retail site plan, the sidewalk extends to the property line. Connecting the sidewalks from both developments would encourage visitors to walk a short distance between stores rather than drive and re-park. Additionally, the proposed bike parking in this location should be relocated in order to maintain a clear path of travel between projects. The Boulevard project may consider removing one parking space in order to provide space for the extended sidewalk and relocated bike parking.

Ensure that the sidewalk and plaza areas around the storefronts are spacious, have clear paths of travel, and are overall attractive places to walk. The existing sidewalk on Fair Oaks Boulevard creates an unsafe and uncomfortable environment for pedestrians due to proximity to high speed, high volume traffic. Reconstructing the sidewalk to be detached with a landscaping buffer is not currently feasible due to costs and good condition of the existing sidewalk. However, the pedestrian "boulevard" along the project storefronts offers a safe, attractive place to walk and could be designed as a preferable alternative. Attracting pass-by pedestrian traffic along Fair Oaks Boulevard may also generate additional business for retail tenants as pedestrians are more inclined to patronize businesses that front sidewalks. The sidewalk area should remain spacious and have a clear path of travel that is not blocked by furniture and other amenities in order to attract pedestrians.

Provide a direct pedestrian connection to the corner of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Howe Avenue. A direct pedestrian connection to the corner of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Howe Avenue should be provided in order to improve pedestrian access to the project site, particularly for pedestrians traveling from the bus stops on Howe Avenue and the residential and employment areas north of Fair Oaks Boulevard and east of Howe Avenue. A direct pedestrian connection to the corner also supports the goal of upholding the project's sidewalk as the preferable safe route along this segment of Fair Oaks Boulevard.

Consider creating an all-way stop at the intersection in front of Building A. Unrestricted left-turning vehicle movements into the parking lot may mean that drivers may not be attentive to pedestrians in

the crosswalk, leading to potential collisions. Because this crosswalk is the primary pedestrian access point to the development for pedestrians travelling south on Fair Oaks Boulevard, it is imperative that conflict between vehicles and pedestrians be minimized. Creating an all-way stop at the intersection may help drivers be more aware of pedestrians crossing before turning. If an all-way stop is infeasible, other measures should be implemented to make the crosswalk more visible and maintain clear sight lines at both ends of the crosswalk. This may include different colors or pavement materials, ensuring views of pedestrians are not blocked by landscaping or sidewalk furniture, and providing pedestrian-scale lighting at both ends of the crosswalk.

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, yet 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. 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 employee and 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,

Alicia Brown
Project Coordinator