



August 18, 2010

Antonio Ablog, Associate Planner
City of Sacramento
Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: Aspen 1 (P09-038)

Dear Mr. Ablog:

*WALKS*Sacramento submits the following comments on the Aspen 1 project. These comments are based on the project routing of revised plans dated June 9, 2010.

The Aspen 1 project proposes single-family and multi-family residential, commercial, urban farming, parks, and elementary school land uses on approximately 232 acres immediately southwest of the intersection of Jackson Highway and South Watt Avenue.

1. Add roundabouts at various locations

The multi-family, commercial, recreational, and urban farm land uses in the area around the intersection of Rock Creek Parkway and Aspen Promenade will generate relatively high pedestrian activity. This informal town center on both sides of Rock Creek Parkway justifies appropriate infrastructure to provide safe crossings for road users.

Roundabouts provide safe crossings for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers at intersections. Average vehicle speeds through roundabouts are lower and more uniform, and crashes are less severe compared to typical intersections. Because of this, drivers are better able to experience the streetscape, and pedestrians and bicyclists are able to enjoy the environment more. The result is increased safety and potentially more successful retail.

The project routing doesn't indicate what type of traffic control is anticipated for most intersections on Rock Creek Parkway and Aspen Promenade. Each of these roadways has a wide median that complicates vehicle through movements and turning movements. These intersections would be improved with roundabouts because vehicle movements would be simplified.

The intersection of Rock Creek Parkway and Aspen Promenade has been proposed to have a six-way stop. A six-way stop, i.e. using stop signs on each of the four roadway entrances to the intersection and at the two far sides of the median, can be confusing to drivers. Confused drivers can be a danger to pedestrians.

We strongly recommend incorporating roundabouts at the following intersections:

- Rock Creek Parkway at Aspen Promenade and Street 22/Street 30.
- Aspen Promenade at Street 21/Street 22.

We also recommend incorporating roundabouts at the following intersections:

- Rock Creek Parkway at Street 7/Street 16, Street 13/Street 18, Street 11/Street 20, and Street 24.
- Aspen Promenade at Street 19/Street 24.

2. Move school site to a more central location

Elementary schools should be a focal point of neighborhoods as they serve the immediate neighborhood, not only providing education for young children but meeting space for the community and recreational facilities. The City of Sacramento 2030 General Plan states "Schools are encouraged to be located and designed to serve as a centerpiece of neighborhood identity and activity." This is supported by policy ERC 1.1.2 that includes "Locate school sites centrally with respect to their planned attendance areas."

The proposed elementary school site is not centrally located within Aspen 1. If the school's attendance area is planned to extend east of South Watt Avenue, then future young students will be risking their lives on a daily basis if they walk or bike across the six lanes of traffic (92' curb to curb) on South Watt Avenue! Is it likely that parents will allow their children to do this? Most travel from the east of South Watt Avenue to the elementary school will be by private automobile. Many more walking and bicycle trips to school will occur if the school is near the geographical center of Aspen 1.

It also makes more sense to locate the elementary school near the geographical center of Aspen 1 because a major destination for walk and bike trips will be near many other destinations. Shouldn't the center of neighborhood identity and activity be near the town center?

3. Provide shade trees in alleys

The 6' garage setbacks and small rear yards of alley-load houses will not allow for trees large enough to shade the alley pavement. The Alley/Shared Drive street cross section shows there will be barely enough room for the columnar shaped trees included in the drawing. We recommend that alleys be re-designed to allow planting of shade trees.

4. Provide public rights-of-way through Lot C HDR parcel

Lot C is a large parcel with commercial on one side and single-family residential on the other side. The PUD Schematic shows what appear to be three pedestrian pathways making convenient connections between the commercial center and the residential. However, the inclusion of a walkway with landscaping does not

automatically result in an area being viewed as "public space". We recommend that easements be granted for these pathways and the sidewalks and abutting landscaped areas be designed so as to be clearly recognized as public pathways.

5. Provide pedestrian access from northwest corner of Aspen 1 to Jackson Highway

Access to Jackson Highway from the lots in the northwest corner of Aspen 1 is severely limited. For example, the walking distance from Lot 11 to the sidewalk on Jackson Highway behind the lot is over 3000', yet the distance if there was a walking path through the open space Lot U would be about 700'. Private drive Lot LL would be a good location to gain access to a walkway in the open space along the west side of the project site, but it will not be an inviting space for pedestrians. Replacing the private drive with a modified residential street with sidewalk on one side would be sufficient.

6. Add one or two street stubs on the west side of the project

There are no connections to the adjacent properties west of the project site. In the event development occurs and Belvedere Avenue or 14th Avenue is extended east of Florin-Perkins Road, a street stub would be advantageous. Such a street stub could provide pedestrian and bicycle access to the open space on the west side in the near term, and vehicular access to the west in the long term.

7. Replace Class I bikeway along Streets 29 and 30 with detached sidewalk

The Class I bikeway shown on street section B₁ may present problems for pedestrians and bicyclists because there is insufficient differentiation between sidewalk and bikeway. Pedestrians will likely view the bikeway as a sidewalk - it will be closer to the street than a sidewalk and only three feet wider than a sidewalk. Bicyclists will likely view the sections of the Class I bikeway that are adjacent to streets as no different from other sections and expect to have the right of way over pedestrians.

It will be difficult to inform users and encourage appropriate behavior on these short sections of Class I bikeway adjacent to the street. Note, too, that Caltrans design criteria for Class I facilities advises "Dual use by pedestrians and bicycles is undesirable, and the two should be separated wherever possible" and "Bike paths immediately adjacent to streets and highways are not recommended." Also, note that the City of Sacramento Park Planning, Design and Development guidelines for bikeways specify a 12'-wide pavement and street section B₁ shows 8'-wide pavement.

8. Amphitheater should not be surrounded by roadways

The large island at the south end of Aspen Promenade is not a good place for an amphitheater. Appropriate crossing locations are not obvious and pedestrians may be placed at risk.

9. Add commercial or mixed-use land uses along South Watt Avenue and Jackson Highway

South Watt Avenue will not have a chance to be walkable or a place one would choose to walk if the adjacent land use is primarily a buffer to the rear of development. Jackson Highway is a more walkable streetscape than South Watt Avenue as it has four lanes instead of six. But it could also use commercial or mixed-use development to improve the pedestrian experience and safety. We recommend allowing space for future development along the roadway edges that could provide a step-down transition and access between the roadways and the neighborhoods within Aspen 1.

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. Thank you for your consideration of these comments and recommendations. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me at (916) 709-9843 or cholm@walksacramento.org.

Sincerely,



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cc: Mike Isle, Stonebridge Properties, LLC