October 31, 2010

Elise Gumm, Associate Planner
City of Sacramento Planning Division
300 Richards Blvd, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: 2500 R Housing Project (P10-058)

Dear Ms. Gumm:

*WALK*Sacramento has reviewed the September 1, 2010 and October 26, 2010 routings for the 2500 R Housing project (P10-058). We appreciate the opportunity to submit the following comments.

The City of Sacramento - the "City of Trees", the "Walking Capital" - needs trees in both public and private spaces to improve air quality, reduce heating and cooling energy demands, and present an attractive and pleasant environment to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

The hot, sunny summers and autumns in Sacramento make it important to shade walking routes with deciduous trees. It's also important to have vegetated areas and permeable areas that provide additional cooling of the air near ground level. The private area of the 2500 R Housing project is a half-block parcel which will include the buildings, driveways, landscaping, and walkways. The public area associated with the project is the public right-of-way, which includes the sidewalks, roadways, and planters.

The public area should be fairly well shaded in the future; assuming canopy trees are planted at appropriate spacing along 25th Street, 26th Street, and R Street. The 10/22/10 drawings show the sidewalks on 25th Street and 26th Street as eight feet wide – two feet wider than on the 6/21/10 drawings. The wider sidewalk is a plus for pedestrians as it provides more room for movement, but it's at the expense of the landscaping areas between the sidewalk and portions of the houses. It also puts the building facades up against the sidewalk. The effective sidewalk width is about 6 ½' after subtracting the typical shy distance of 1 ½' feet.

The street planter centerlines will be only twelve to fourteen feet from the fronts of the three-story houses. Twenty feet from the planter centerlines to the buildings would allow for fairly natural tree growth. *WALK*Sacramento recommends that the applicant

1. **Increase the building setbacks to 6 feet behind the sidewalk to provide more room for tree canopy growth and small front yards.**

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The private area doesn't appear as though it will be well shaded. Almost 80% of the project site is covered by buildings and driveways – the type of urban form that contributes to the urban heat island effect.

If the landscaped areas and walkways attain 50% shading, the project site would have a canopy cover of about 10%. The percentage of canopy cover for the project site plus the adjacent streets to the centerlines is about 25%. This is less than the average for downtown and east of downtown areas (30% and 34%, respectively[1]).

The on-site tree canopy could be increased by providing additional room for trees along the private alleys or between the buildings. *WALK*Sacramento recommends that the applicant

2. **Reduce the private alley widths and add shade trees, and**
3. **Increase the side-yard widths to allow for landscaping and tree plantings.**

*WALK*Sacramento 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. *WALK*Sacramento reviews land-use development proposals and provides recommendations to create neighborhoods, schools, shopping centers, office buildings, streets, and parks more walkable, bikeable, and transit friendly.

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 or cholm@walksacramento.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Analyst

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[1] Hashem Akbari, L. Shea Rose, and Haider Taha, *Characterizing the Fabric of the Urban Environment: A Case Study of Sacramento, California*, http://www.osti.gov/bridge/servlets/purl/764362-xyarUa/webviewable/764362.PDF (accessed September 2010).