



12/31/2013

VIA EMAIL

Stacia Cosgrove, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
City of Sacramento
300 Richards Blvd, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Sacramento Entertainment and Sports Center (P13-065)

Dear Ms. Cosgrove:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the application for the Sacramento Entertainment and Sports Center (P13-065) and the materials presented by City staff and the applicant team to the Planning and Design Commission on December 12, 2013.

WALKSacramento is working to support increased physical activity in Sacramento and the surrounding region by advocating for built environments that support and encourage walking and biking. Development projects that lead to more walking and active travel are critical to our community's future. If more people could obtain daily exercise by walking and bicycling to many of their regular destinations, in lieu of driving, it could yield significant health improvements to the resident population of this area.

Several of the ESC project goals adopted by the City Council support a more walkable downtown environment. These goals include "Sustainable Project" that encourages walking and biking, "Connect Downtown" so the ESC will not be a barrier between destinations in the area, and "A Multimodal Place" that complements walking in addition to other modes of travel.

Our comments are primarily related to the ESC Building site plan, the Special Planning District and the Planned Unit Development. The ESC Building site and PUD documents appear to be preliminary and missing many details. Consequently, many of our comments will be in the form of observations and questions for clarification.

The ESC Building Site Plan

The ESC building site plan, with the bowl "dialed left" and having a smaller footprint, has better pedestrian circulation and access. The mixed-use or retail store fronts on L Street at the base of the arena will better activate the street and provide more "eyes on the street" compared to the wall in the previous version. Steps on the slope along 5th Street between L Street and the entry plaza can provide a social gathering place independent of the arena activity.

The success of the plazas and public open spaces will depend on details in the landscaping plan which we look forward to reviewing when they are made available.

The Special Planning District

The proposed Special Planning District modifies the site plan and design review planning process established in City Planning and Development Code Section 17.808.130 by subjecting review to the planning director rather than the Commission level. We strongly believe that a project as large and important as the ESC should have the public involvement that commission level review would provide.

The Planned Unit Development

1. The PUD *Plan Overview* (page 6-21) states that potential development phasing is described in the chapter but there is no information included.
2. PUD *Fig. 7: Building Footprint Diagram* (page 6-30)
 - a. The east-west public access easement starting at 4th Street ends at the west side of 5th Street. Why doesn't the easement continue to the east side of 5th Street? This is in conflict with *Fig. 6: Sustainable Land Use Map* (page 6-25) which shows the easement extending over 5th Street.
 - b. The main building envelope for the structure bounded by J Street, 5th Street, K Street alignment, and 4th Street is shown extending over 5th Street for approximately the central third of the distance between J Street and L Street. This would cover the sidewalk over 5th Street and interrupt the view corridor along 5th Street. The pedestrian experience might be better if the crossing matched the areas on either side of 5th Street and was open to the sky.
 - c. The main building envelope for the structure at the southwest corner of J Street and 7th Street provides a pedestrian access point to the ESC building site that is over 200 feet wide. The tentative maps and the site plan indicate a much narrower access of 80 to 90 feet. Although the wider access would handle peak pedestrian flows better and provide a better connection between the arena plaza and St. Rose of Lima Park, a width somewhat larger than 100 feet would help differentiate the three spaces and allow room for furniture and amenities.
3. PUD *Small Public Spaces* (page 6-31) refers to Planning and Development Code Section 17.600.135 for standards and definitions. That language should be included in the PUD and customized to apply to public space. The section should also clarify that PUD common and private open space is exclusive of the ESC Building open space.
4. PUD *Sidewalk and Building Interface Area Guideline DG1.5*. allows for sidewalks as narrow as 10 feet with a minimum clear zone of 6 feet for pedestrians. The Central City Urban Design Guidelines states that "Whereas sixteen (16) feet is the typical sidewalk width in the CBD, high activity areas should have sidewalk widths of 20 feet or more. Sidewalk widths in the CBD should not be less than 14 feet." The ESC-PUD site should be a high activity area, so the PUD guidelines should be at least as strong as the Central City Urban Design Guidelines.

SABA has suggested that adding a new guideline to provide separate pedestrian and bicycle pathways on the 5th Street sidewalks using paint or paving materials. We think such a treatment could make the sidewalk safer for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

5. PUD *Street Furnishings and Amenities Guideline DG1.7*. refers to the whole block, but shouldn't it be the ESC-PUD site?
6. PUD *Street Furnishings and Amenities Guideline DG1.9*. should state that bus pullout areas should be integrated into the public amenity zone, not the pedestrian zone.
7. PUD *Landscaping Guideline DG1.12*. refers to the whole block, but shouldn't it be the ESC-PUD site?
8. PUD *Public Spaces Guideline DG1.14*.
 - a. Paragraph *a*. should identify the "common open space" as "public space." The Planning and Development Code definition of common open space reserves the use to adjacent tenants or property owners and includes landscaping and other outdoor use features.
 - b. Limiting street furniture and amenities as described in paragraph *b*. might make it difficult to create "an interesting and dynamic pedestrian experience" as in paragraph *d*.
 - c. Paragraph *d*. has good intent, but how will it work with loading access in paragraph *a*?
9. Add to PUD *Siting and Orientation Guideline DG2.3*. that building residents should also utilize the subterranean level for vehicle access and use only the existing ramp on J Street between 5th and 6th. This is needed to minimize vehicle travel across the sidewalks.

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