



June 13, 2016

VIA EMAIL

David Hung, Associate Planner  
City of Sacramento Community Development Department  
300 Richards Boulevard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 959811

**RE: Fire Station 14 (DR16-128)**

Dear Mr. Hung:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the routing for Fire Station 14 (DR16-128) and offer the following comments. The proposed fire station will replace the existing station on North C Street and provide improved public service in the River District and adjacent areas. The project site, located at the southeast corner of North N Street and Ahern Street, is within the North 16<sup>th</sup> Street subarea of the River District Specific Plan which is planned to transition from light industrial and commercial to residential.

There are three aspects of the project design on which we would like to comment. The first two, windows and trees, are aspects of the built environment design and we recommend a substantial change to resolve the issues. The third aspect that we'll comment upon is bike parking.

The River District Specific Plan states "The public safety of the River District can be improved by encouraging "more eyes on the street" than are available with current industrial uses which become vacant after work hours." The River District Specific Plan also includes "Policy LU2e: Implement "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED) standards to design and implement streetscapes and sites that promote safety and livability." However, the Fire Station 14 building design and site layout provide only a weak contribution to these design elements for reducing crime.

Windows or balconies should provide direct views of the street for natural surveillance, a CPTED element, but only the north side of the proposed Fire Station 14 overlooking North B Street gets close to this. The apparatus bay doors when open will provide good views of the street and a connection between occupants and pedestrians, and there are windows in the Captains Room and Lobby that may function for natural surveillance, assuming the Captains Room windows are not covered by blinds and the Lobby has unobscured clear windows. The rest of the building has poor "eyes on the street" – the west side has no windows or doors, the east side has three windows and a door behind an 8'-high brick wall plus two lobby windows and the lobby door. The south side has eleven windows and three apparatus bays doors, but they're over 150 feet from North A

Street. The views onto 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Ahern Street may be diminished by the wrought iron fencing, parking lot and landscaping.

Additionally, the effectiveness of the lobby windows could be severely diminished by the potential public art that is proposed. The drawings for the north and east elevations show the public art covering the windows between about four feet above ground and the tops of the windows.

Trees and landscaping are important to pedestrians and building occupants for the greenery and natural environment they provide in urbanized areas. Shade trees provide additional benefit by reducing heat island effects and reducing the generation and dispersion of air pollution. Every pedestrian walking by the project site can benefit from increased tree canopy, too, as they are shaded from direct sun. The River District Specific Plan recognizes this with “Policy LU2b: Ensure a rich urban tree canopy to provide shade and natural cooling for pedestrians.”

The project narrative provided by the architect indicates that Police Department safety concerns require that all trees be planted within the security fence perimeter and that Fire Department operational concerns prevent trees from being planted along North B Street. The proposed project design allows for only a few shade trees – about 75 feet out of the more than 550 feet of sidewalks on the project’s north, east and south edges will be shaded when the trees reach their mature size.

Another result of shade trees may be particularly beneficial to some of the pedestrians that currently frequent the project site area. The Sacramento Tree Foundation Greenprint project found that the amount of tree canopy coverage is associated with higher levels of social adhesion for adults and improved mental health for teens.

The narrow parcel the project is trying to fit into leads to the lack of “eyes on the street” and very little sidewalk shading. In order to fit the two parking lots, two driveways and the building on the parcel, there’s no setback on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the setback on Ahern Street varies from 7’ to 15’. With these small setbacks, the 24/7 occupancy and the private and semi-private uses of the fire station, it’s extremely challenging to create “eyes on the street.” The narrow setbacks also make it infeasible to plant shade trees.

It may be possible to resolve the “eyes on the street” and sidewalk shading issues by using a two-story structure slightly wider than the apparatus bays. Windows into private and semi-private spaces and balconies for outdoor uses such as eating and exercising would allow for extensive natural surveillance of the street. People on the street would be aware they’re under observation, and while they could see people at windows or on the balconies, they wouldn’t have views into the rooms. A narrower building would enable the setback distances to be large enough to plant shade trees that provide both shading of the sidewalks and the building’s eastern side.

The third aspect of the project design that’s deficient is bike parking. The bike parking provided on the site consists of two small bike racks inside the perimeter security fence next to the entry driveway. There doesn’t appear to be hardscape where the racks are located, nor is there a curb cut and sidewalk to the racks. Since the bike racks are likely to be used by firefighters that will be on duty at the station for extended periods of time, the bike parking should be in a protected area, either bike lockers or a room within the

station building. Missing from the plan is bike parking for visitors to the station. There's no bike parking provided outside of the perimeter security fence and there's none provided near the lobby where visitors would enter.

The minimal "eyes on the street"/natural surveillance, inadequate tree canopy, and lack of bike parking for visitors do not present a benefit to the neighborhood other than the location of fire department personnel and equipment. **WALKSacramento recommends that serious consideration be given to revising the project design to include a two story building.**

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,

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*

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

*www.sacbike.org*

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