



10/11/2016

VIA EMAIL

Teresa Haenggi, Associate Planner
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: Sacramento Railyards Project (P15-040)

Dear Ms. Haenggi:

WALKSacramento appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the Sacramento Railyards Project (P15-040) in anticipation of the October 20, 2016 Planning and Design Commission hearing of the project. The Railyards project proposes a dense mix of housing, office, retail, hotel, parks, open space, historic and cultural uses, a hospital and medical office campus, and a soccer stadium on 244 acres immediately north of downtown Sacramento.

The project requests entitlements that include, among other items, amendments to the Railyards Design Guidelines and Specific Plan, and site plan and design review of a Tentative Map for Sacramento Railyards. WALKSacramento provides the following comments on these three items.

Parks space within the Sacramento Railyards has diminished with recent revisions of the plan. The approved plan had about 24 acres of parks; the current proposal has less than 20 acres. With this reduced park acreage, maximizing the number, quality and size of trees within public space other than parks becomes more important.

The Railyards Design Guidelines states that "Street trees represent a critical framework element and piece of green infrastructure within the public right-of-way," and subsection 3.D.a.3 recommends that the street tree spacing should support the City goal of at least 50% shading of streets. However, the West End District and the Depot District are specified as 35% canopy coverage of streets and paving. Tree planting in the West End District may be challenging due to the street wall and build-to-line requirements, but trees are critically important for the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

Trees, especially shade trees, provide many benefits to pedestrians: a buffer from traffic, protection from the sun, calming of traffic and wind, and a more pleasant appearing environment. Trees also offer sustainability benefits that also improve the pedestrian environment, such as reduced heat island effects, reduced air and noise pollution, and longer

pavement life. WALKSacramento suggests that the design guidelines recommend a tree canopy of 50% minimum for the West End District.

The Depot District percentage should also be stated as a minimum and it may need to be increased depending on what surfaces in the Depot District are considered to be “paving.” Plaza areas within the Depot District, especially the larger ones including Roundhouse, Market and Museum, are hardscaped pedestrian areas that would benefit from shading provided by trees.

Pedestrian circulation in the Railyards plan as described in the Design Guidelines and the Specific Plan is generally very good. However, the Stanford Walk (the continuous pedestrian/bicycle connection comprised of a series of linear urban plazas and open spaces between Vista Park and Roundhouse Plaza in the Central Shops) shown in diagrams in the Design Guidelines and the Specific Plan doesn't match the Tentative Map depiction. The paseo on the Kaiser Permanente site (Lot 02e) on the north side and Stanford Street on the south side of Railyards Boulevard line up on the tentative map, but the pedestrian crossing appears to be at the intersection about 50 feet east of the two travel paths. We have been informed that the traffic signals at the intersection will be relocated to a mid-block location directly connecting the paseo on the Kaiser Permanente site to Stanford Street. Is there a way to indicate on the Tentative Map the crossing that will be needed when Stanford Street is constructed, perhaps as a crosswalk marked as “Future Pedestrian Crossing?”

7th Street, a north-south arterial street, is the only street in the Railyards that passes under the railroad tracks. It currently serves all modes, but the project proposes it will accommodate only vehicular and light rail traffic. There are some advantages to the proposed route for pedestrians and bicyclists, but it will involve out of direction travel and more challenging elevation changes. WALKSacramento recommends that frontage on the west side of 7th Street be reserved such that a future pedestrian path within the underpass is not precluded.

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 or cholm@walksacramento.org.

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

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