



9/4/2019

VIA EMAIL

Daniel Abbes, Assistant Planner  
City of Sacramento Community Development Department  
300 Richards Blvd., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95811

**RE: Broadway Apartments at The Mill (DR19-226)**

Dear Mr. Abbes:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the project routing for Broadway Apartments at The Mill (DR19-226) and we offer the following comments. The project proposes to construct three apartment buildings containing a total of 84 dwelling units, three surface parking areas for 84 vehicles, 9 short-term and 42 long-term bike parking spaces, and amenity areas for residents.

This project supersedes The Mill at Broadway Phase 3 (West) (DR19-022) project. Although the site plan for Broadway Apartments at The Mill resolves the former project's difficulty of providing pedestrian access via sidewalks to all units, several walkability deficiencies have been introduced.

**Building Orientations to The Street**

The Northwest Land Park PUD Design Guidelines requires that buildings face the street. The design guidelines states on page 25 that "The front façade and primary entrance front on a street, open space tract, or courtyard," and on page 31 it states "Front Façades shall be oriented to a street, public open space, and/or courtyards."

Each side of the proposed buildings have unit entrances and stair entrances for half of the building units on each side. Facing the buildings toward the street would provide convenient pedestrian access for half of the residences, walking along the street would feel more comfortable, and the view would be more interesting to pedestrians.

**Private Courtyards**

The Northwest Land Park PUD Design Guidelines Private requires courtyards for multi-family residential projects that don't have individual private lots and where a residential building doesn't front a street, open space or park. The design guidelines also states that "courts are planned to provide the access linkage from the public rights-of-way and private streets," that "courtyards shall be planned and developed to provide a clear delineation of the space boundaries and make a clear distinction between the public and private realms," that "courtyards provide outdoor spaces for residential units that have limited or no private outdoor yards," and that "courtyards also act as the

front yard and primary pedestrian access way to individual residential units that do not front directly onto a street or a public park."

Since none of the proposed buildings front the street, each of the buildings should have private courtyards for entrances. The ground level plans for each of the buildings group either two patio entrances with a stairwell entrance or two patio entrances on their own. By providing sidewalk-connected courtyards for each of the entrance groupings, three on each side of the Building and two on each side of the Buildings 2 and 3, the project may then be in conformance with the courtyard requirements in the Design Guidelines.

## **Parking**

The Northwest Land Park PUD Design Guidelines (page 20) states that "Parking areas serving private development within the community should be secondary and less prominent than the primary uses and open space areas of the neighborhood." The setbacks from the street for the three parking areas are less than the building setbacks, so cars may be closer than buildings. This orientation, since cars are smaller than buildings, may somewhat reduce the prominence of parking compared to buildings, but the parking areas will not be secondary to the buildings.

The Design Guidelines also establish that "Parking lots shall be buffered from the public right-of-way with a continuous hedge or non-opaque wall/fencing" (page 20) and that "parking areas should be adequately screened through either landscaping or other feature" (page 32). The project proposes double-loaded parking areas with drive aisles that are perpendicular to the street. The landscape plan shows only plantings between the rows of parking spaces and the street. Appropriate choices of plantings could provide screening of parked cars closest to the street, but it will be difficult to screen the driveways and the view beyond of parked cars.

## **Floor Plans**

The layout of floor plans is important to providing natural surveillance, or "eyes on the street." Residences that provide a view from active living spaces of the surrounding area can help people feel comfortable walking and biking in front of or around buildings, improve the social connections between residents, and limit the attractiveness for perpetrators to commit crimes.

All three building have inadequate "eyes on the street" because the ends facing the street have only bedroom windows on the first and second levels. Although the third levels have living rooms and kitchens on the building ends, the windows are narrow and the window sill heights may limit line of sight to the street, and the ground level and second level windows provide better natural surveillance than windows on the higher third level.

The side elevations, either of which is effectively the front of each building, have good "eyes on" and should be oriented to face the street. Currently, though, Building 1 will have good "eyes on the community garden" and Building 3 would have good "eyes on Setzer Run Trail" if the building wasn't separated from the trail by four rows of parking and two drive aisles.

## Recommendations

- Orient the buildings to face the street.
- Provide sidewalk-connected courtyards for each of the building entrance groupings that don't face the street.
- Place the parking behind the buildings or screen the parking areas from the street using landscaping.

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.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm  
Project analyst