



2/12/2020

VIA EMAIL

Garrett Norman, Associate Planner  
City of Sacramento Community Development Department  
300 Richards Blvd., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95811

**RE: Natomas Town Center East (P18-087)**

Dear Mr. Norman:

WALKSacramento has reviewed the first revised project routing for Natomas Town Center East (P18-087) and we offer the following comments in support of greater walkability within the project and surrounding area.

North Natomas Town Center is within the Town Center in North Natomas. The Town Center was envisioned as a large activity center anchored by transit commercial (North Natomas Town Center shopping center) at the west end, community commercial (Park Place shopping center) at the east end, and civic uses (Inderkum High School, North Natomas Library, American River College Natomas Campus and light rail and transit hub) in the middle. The North Natomas Community Plan describes Town Center as "a high-intensity, mixed-use focal point of the community that includes commercial, residential, employment, park, and civic uses."

The master planning of North Natomas Town Center and Regional Park area divided the Town Center area into five districts, including a Shopping District and a Main Street District, together which comprise the North Natomas Town Center shopping center. The Main Street District, along with the rest of the planning area, was to be developed on a small block grid. "Main Street," the street, was envisioned in the master plan to be one- and two-story retail and restaurant buildings with commercial above - allowing for residential when the market allows - and it would connect the library and other civic uses to the east with retail uses to the west. It's unfortunate there is no existing or planned residential in Town Center beyond the under-construction Homecoming at Creekside South. The Main Street District sits between retail and commercial to the west, civic uses to the east, a regional park developing to the north, and office to the south.

The Natomas Town Center East site is designated Traditional Center in the General Plan. It appears, though, the General Plan guidelines for Traditional Centers are largely ignored. Of the eleven key urban form characteristics listed in the General Plan, only three are followed: building heights ranging from one to four stories (the PUD allows up to two stories), on-street parking (only on Main Street), and moderately wide sidewalks (only on Main Street).

Key urban form characteristics for Traditional Centers that should be implemented in the Natomas Town Center East project include the following.

Small, rectangular blocks, allowing for convenient pedestrian access from adjacent areas. The public streets (Town Center Drive, New Market Drive, Via Ingoglia and Del Paso Road) and the private streets (Main Street and the Del Paso Road driveway) will have sidewalks on both sides, but pedestrian access is limited, especially on the

"pedestrian-oriented" Main Street. Small blocks would improve and complete pedestrian access.

Building entrances set at the sidewalk with preference for corner entrances when buildings are located on a corner lot. Of the six proposed buildings, only the Day Care building has its entrance at a street sidewalk. Pad 1 has its entrance near the Del Paso Road driveway sidewalk. Assuming there's a finer grid of streets with sidewalks, this characteristic would support pedestrian activity.

Rear alleys and secondary streets providing vehicular and service access to reduce the need for driveways and curb cuts on the primary street. Main Street has five driveways with no sidewalks, one driveway with a sidewalk on one side, and the Del Paso Road driveway with sidewalks. Most of the driveways providing vehicular access from Main Street don't function as streets since there's no sidewalks providing pedestrian access.

Parking provided on-street as well as in individual or shared lots at the side or rear of structures, or in screened parking structures. Five of the six buildings have parking lots at the building fronts rather than at the rear. Main Street has diagonal on-street parking, and four of the six buildings have side parking lots.

Transparent building frontages with pedestrian-scaled articulation and detailing. The frontages of the Bank and Day Care buildings have good transparency. Pad 1 has good transparency on its Del Paso Road frontage, but it's set over 80' back from Del Paso Road. The rest of the buildings have no or limited transparency on their frontages. There will be little "eyes on the street" in Natomas Town Center East.

Public streetscapes serving as the center's primary open space, complemented by outdoor seating, plazas, courtyards, and sidewalk dining areas. Although Shops 1 and Shops 2 have sidewalk space at the tenant space entrances that may be used for seating or outdoor dining areas, since the sidewalks are between the buildings and parking lots rather than along public streets they won't function as public streetscape features.

We are pleased to see that the proposed guidelines still envision the Town Center as a dynamic, public focal point for North Natomas with community-oriented retail, entertainment and office space. Unfortunately, the site plan for the project would fail to meet the vision, instead deferring development of a pedestrian-oriented Main Street and Town Center Drive to the future. The following recommendations attempt to bring some immediacy to the project's vision for a walkable town center rather than waiting for the future.

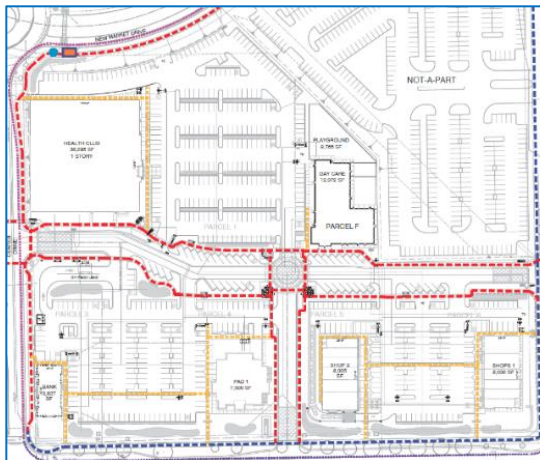
Main Street will be the primary pedestrian and bicycle access to Natomas Town Center East destinations, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists arriving from the surrounding neighborhoods, the education complex to the east, and the community center, aquatics complex and other uses in the North Natomas Regional Park uses to the north. We are pleased to see that the site plan indicates there will be a pedestrian crossing signal at intersection of Via Ingoglia at Main Street. The pedestrian signal will be critical for safety as the intersection, which also includes the driveway into the library parking lot and provides secondary access to the community college campus parking lot. The intersection will not only have significant vehicular traffic, but it will be a desire line for pedestrians walking between the two sides of Via Ingoglia.

Main Street will also be the preferred travel way between the Shopping District and the Civic District for pedestrians and bicyclists. The proposed revision of North Natomas Town Center Design Guidelines retains the guidance in the original PUD design guidelines for the use of wider sidewalks on the "pedestrian spine" (Main Street) with architecture that creates an urban "edge." This is where the current development effort should focus, rather than fronting Main Street with primarily parking lots and Del Paso Road with buildings and parking.

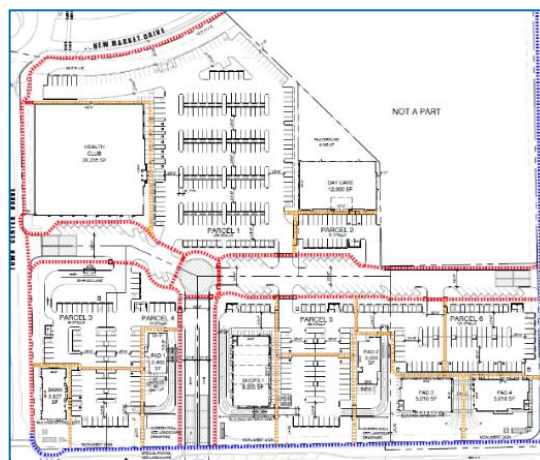
To activate Main Street with pedestrian destinations that will also serve visitors and patrons arriving by car, Shops 1 and Shops 2 should be moved to the south edge of Main Street with their parking fields between the buildings and Del Paso Road. Pedestrian access to the buildings would be greatly improved, while visibility from Del Paso Road would be retained. Future densification of the project site could then occur along Del Paso Road. The Day Care building fronts Main Street with the pedestrian entrance and a wide sidewalk on Main Street, but the Health Club doesn't engage the street and has its entrance facing the parking lot on the side. The buildings to the south side of Main Street should see much greater pedestrian activity, so the sidewalks on the south side of Main Street should be widened to 16', matching the sidewalk minimum width along the pedestrian spine in the Shopping District. **Recommendation #1: Move the Shops 1 and Shops 2 buildings to Main Street and increase the sidewalk width to 16'.**

The proposed site plan (Rev 1) provides pedestrian access to Shops 1 and Shops 2 primarily from Del Paso Road, and to Pad 1 from the Del Paso Road driveway. Overall, the site has three connections from Del Paso Road, one from Main Street utilizing the driveway sidewalk and one from Via Ingoglia, for a total of five connections. It will be beneficial to provide connections from Del Paso Road as the pedestrian environment is undesirable due to the high traffic speeds and volume, but it would be better to provide superior internal circulation that's connected to the corners at Town Center Drive and Via Ingoglia. This would allow pedestrians to avoid the roadway noise while providing access to the buildings.

The original plan provided a total of nine connections – four from Del Paso Road, four from Main Street, one of which utilized the driveway sidewalk, and one from Via Ingoglia – the primary difference being that convenient access from Main Street was provided. An extract from the Rev1 routing *Pedestrian Access Town Center East* drawing and an extract from the original routing *Proposed Site Plan* drawing with pedestrian paths indicated using similar color coding are shown below for comparison.



Rev 1 Circulation



Original Circulation

The Rev 1 site plan eliminated the two buildings (Pad 3 and Pad 4) in the southeast corner of the site. These two buildings, although they faced the parking lot behind them, had a good relationship to Del Paso Road created by the patio between the buildings extending towards the street plus the proximity to Via Ingoglia. The arrangement and street relationship of the original proposal for Pads 3 and 4 are similar to the existing Pad A and Shops G buildings in the southeast corner of the existing Shopping District (North Natomas Town Center West). Main Street could be better activated and pedestrian oriented if the building and hardscape design for the original Pad 3 and Pad 4 buildings were rotated 180° and moved to the south side of Main Street.

**Recommendation #2: Orient Shops 1 and Shops 2 to face Main Street with a shared plaza between the buildings, similar to Pads 3 and Pads 4 in the original routing.**

The Rev1 site plan is greatly improved with respect to the number of drive-through establishments – dropping from four to two. Although the PUD may not have to comply with the City's TOD ordinance which would prohibit drive-throughs within ¼ -mile of the proposed North Natomas Town Center light rail station, incorporating two drive-throughs on the site does not support the City's intent to limit automobile-oriented uses near light rail stations and to encourage the use of transit. Moving and rotating the Shops 2 building to face the Main Street would place the drive-through lane between the street and the building, in opposition to the pedestrian orientation of Main Street. Therefore, the Shops 2 building on Main Street should not include a drive through use. **Recommendation #3: With Shops 2 moved to Main street, remove the drive-through use from Shops 2.**

Should a drive-through use be indispensable to the project, subject to Shops 2 moving to Main Street we recommend a smaller building at the southwest corner of the proposed Parcel 5. With the drive-through lane approaching from the east and the pickup window on the east side of the building, pedestrian access from the driveway sidewalk would be simpler to provide and the building could have transparency and its entrance at the Del Paso Road driveway sidewalk.

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 Manager