



7/15/2021

VIA EMAIL

Jose Quintanilla
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: Robla Estates (P21-009)

Dear Mr. Quintanilla:

Thank you for routing the Robla Estates project to WALKSacramento. The project proposes 178 alley-loaded single-unit houses and 2.3 acres of public parks on two lots.

Tree Shading We are pleased to see the public streets (Street A and Circle B) proposed for Robla Estates will have 5' detached sidewalks and either 5'-10" or 6-½' landscape planters on both sides of the street. The alleys, which comprise almost 60% of the street hardscape in the proposed development, will have no trees. The unshaded alleys will intensify urban heat island effects and increase localized air temperatures. The higher temperatures, especially climate change extremes, can discourage people from walking and biking, and the higher temperatures can also compound health problems. Coordinated planting of trees in the landscape planters and the side yards of the residential lots along Circle B may allow for a denser tree canopy that will shade the sidewalk, the street, and some of the houses.

Trail Access The existing Sacramento Northern Bike Trail and the planned Robla Creek Trail are adjacent to the Robla Estates site. The Sacramento Northern Bike Trail connects to nearby schools and stores in Robla and destinations in Del Paso Heights, North Sacramento and downtown Sacramento. The Robla Creek Trail will connect to existing bike trails that provide access to South Natomas and downtown Sacramento. However, the project provides only one trail connection, which is at the southern end of the site although eleven alleys and twelve pedestrian paseos terminate within 40' to 75' of the existing and planned trails. Additional connections to the trails would encourage more walking and biking for pleasure, exercise, commuting and/or shopping.

"Eyes on the street" The routing contained plans for only one of the four plans, so our comments apply specifically to that model. The living room, and the kitchen behind it, have views to the pedestrian paseos, but there's only garages and second-story bedrooms overlooking the alleys. The end units will have "eyes on the street" through the window(s) in the dining room with the kitchen in the background, and the living room has no window on the wall facing the street. Only one of the three end-unit configurations with a second floor loft facing the street include a window in the loft, yet each plan includes a window in the laundry room, which will be occupied much less frequently than the loft. We hope the other three house plans have "eyes on the street" at least as good as the plan included in the routing.

It's also notable that the eight houses on Street A have very limited "eyes on the street," relying upon second-story bedrooms for street views. The garages should be accessed by alleys so the active living space in the houses face the street.

Rio Linda Boulevard Crossings A few of the parcels on the west side of Rio Linda Boulevard and just south of the project site are designated Suburban Center. When commercial uses are constructed on those parcels, there will be more Robla Estates residents wanting to cross Rio Linda Boulevard at the proposed roundabout. With a 45-mph speed limit, four traffic lanes, and crosswalks set two car lengths from the yield lines, people may have difficulty crossing at the roundabout. Adding beacons and moving the crosswalks closer to the yield line may improve the crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Single-Story House Plans The plan drawings and the Project Narrative don't indicate whether Robla Estates will have only two-story houses or a mix of one-story and two-story houses. Many people moving into a neighborhood have a desire to stay long term, but if there are only two-story houses with all bedrooms on the second floor, residents will not be able to "age in place" and they'll have to leave the community when they can no longer climb stairs. Adding single-story houses to the development will facilitate "aging in place."

In summary, we recommend:

- Plant trees along the public streets to the densest spacing possible to improve the pedestrian environment and mitigate for the unshaded private alleys.
- Provide additional points of access to the Sacramento northern Bike Trail and the Robla Creek Trail.
- Ensure that all house plans that are side-on to public street Circle B have good "eyes on the street," and the lotting on Street A should be changed so the entry door and living room face the street.
- Improve the pedestrian crossings at the roundabout.
- Add one or more single-story plans to the housing mix.

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 public health and physical fitness, better air quality, a stronger sense of cohesion and safety in neighborhoods, and more sustainable communities and local economies.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Manager