



10/11/2021

VIA EMAIL

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

RE: Innovation Park

Dear Jose Quintanilla:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Innovation Park project routing. The infill project proposes a mix of commercial, residential, health, education and park uses on the 183-acre Sleep Train Arena site in North Natomas. Development on the site will be able to capitalize on existing immediately-adjacent development, transportation facilities, and the variety of land uses nearby.

The City of Sacramento has been working to reduce GHG emissions for more than a decade. The City's 2012 Climate Action Plan, 2035 General Plan, and 2016 update to the Climate Action Plan for Internal Operations have contributed to emissions reductions. The magnitude of the climate crisis motivated the City Council to adopt two important resolutions in 2019: one committing the City to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, and the other declaring a climate emergency and emergency actions towards emissions elimination by 2030. At this time, City staff has concluded that additional strategies and resources will be needed to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.

Innovation Park is a project of significant size, and the development requirements, policies, and guidelines applied to the project through the PUD and other City documents will have a effect on the City's overall emissions. **It will be critically important for Innovation Park to prioritize active transportation, transit, and shared mobility in the planning of the PUD's mobility network and land uses.**

We question whether the requested General Plan amendment from Urban Center High to Urban Center Low will advance or hinder the City's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality. While we expect the EIR will analyze the GHG emissions and VMT for the two General Plan designations, we suggest immediately conducting and publishing an initial study to compare the performance of the project under Urban Center High and Urban Center Low designations.

Our remaining comments are arranged in two sections. The first section refers to the September 2021 Innovation Park Planned Unit Development public review draft, and the second section refers to the September 2021 California Northstate Hospital plan set.

INNOVATION PARK PUD

Connections to Surrounding Land Uses

The Innovation Park PUD will have a good mix of residential, commercial, medical, office, and education land uses, but many daily trips will be to surrounding land uses. Within a 15-minute

walk or bike ride are three community shopping centers, the North Natomas educational complex (library, high school, and community college), regional park (ball fields, dog parks, aquatics complex, and community center), several neighborhood shopping centers, a highway commercial area, several parks, and a charter TK-5 school. There is also a significant amount of employment uses immediately surrounding the PUD that will be within walking distance of all residences in the PUD.

Providing convenient connections to the surrounding land uses will influence more residents and employees within the PUD to use active transportation for those local trips. Although the immediately adjacent retail and employment uses are on parcels that back up to the existing and/or proposed segments of Sports Parkway or are several hundred feet or less from the proposed Sports Parkway South, the parcels were not designed to provide direct access to the PUD. **We recommend identifying and incorporating mid-block connections to surrounding land uses that will facilitate shorter walking trips.**

Innovation Park will be located between a major bikeway (Jackrabbit Trail along the East Drainage Canal) and the neighborhoods on the west side of I-5, where bike trails along the freeway with connections to South Natomas and downtown Sacramento have been constructed or are planned. Since the arterial crossings of I-5 (Del Paso Road and Arena Boulevard) do not include bicycle-friendly facilities and funding of the Natomas Crossing I-5 overcrossing is highly uncertain, the only crossing of I-5 that will appreciably benefit Innovation Park will be the future Snowy Egret overcrossing. **We recommend that planning for bicycle and pedestrian circulation in Innovation Park consider optimizing access to D Street/West Entrance Road. In addition, we recommend adding the Snowy Egret multi-modal bridge over I-5 to the update of the City's Bicycle Master Plan, in addition to the Innovator Loop trail and Class IV facilities on the collector streets,**

The existing arterials that effectively surround the Innovation Park site – Del Paso Road, Truxel Road, Arena Boulevard, and East Commerce Way – were sized to accommodate the very high peak traffic volumes of a large sports/events arena. These wide and high-speed arterials discourage pedestrian and bicycle travel along the roadway and make it inconvenient and dangerous to cross for pedestrians and bicyclists. **We strongly recommend evaluating the need for the current number of traffic lanes and associated speed limits, with the goal of downsizing the arterials and converting some of the space to safer separated or buffered bicycle facilities.**

Connections to Transit

The PUD Guidelines observe "Transit will become a catalyst for the creation of an urban environment that will encourage people to walk and bike." Optimizing the PUD for transit, walking, and biking will increase the number of active transportation trips, reduce project VMT, and help the City to attain carbon neutrality. Currently, there are two bus routes that have stops on Truxel Road near Innovation Park, and the locally preferred route for the Greenline light rail service is parallel to the bus routes with a proposed station at the intersection of East Entrance Road and Truxel Road.

Direct and convenient connections to the bus stops and light rail station will have a positive effect on transit use in the PUD by making it easier for people that live or work in Innovation Park to use transit. **We recommend adding a bus stop at East Entrance and providing a pedestrian and bicycle travelway between East Entrance Drive at Sports Parkway/Sports**

Parkway South and the Health District that's more direct than B Street and Sports Parkway South.

Parking

Minimizing land devoted to automobile parking frees up developable land for other uses, thereby increasing the density and facilitating greater active transportation. **We recommend making the following changes to section 5.4, Vehicular Parking.**

Revise the second paragraph on page 5-12 to read "Should surface parking occur, it shall ~~should~~ be located at the rear of structures ~~next to the street~~ and ..."

Revise the third paragraph on page 5-12 to read "Landscape medians between parking rows are recommended, as they can provide space for stormwater management, trees, and pedestrian paths." and "Landscape islands with shade trees are also required at least encouraged every 20 linear spaces and at the end of each parking aisle ~~along~~, in keeping with City of Sacramento Standards for shading."

School Site

We are pleased to see there may be a school within Innovation Park. The nearest existing school is Natomas Charter School Star Academy, which is about 1/2 mile from the southern edge of the PUD and one mile from the northern edge. The long walking distance and the crossing of the high-speed and wide Arena Boulevard will discourage many students from walking or biking to school Star Academy. In addition, the lottery-based enrollment means Star academy will not serve as a neighborhood school for Innovation Park. In consideration of these factors, a school within Innovation Park will contribute to much greater active transportation to school and reduced vehicle trips to schools outside of the PUD.

The school/shared sports field site as depicted in Figure 6-1, Parks and Open Space, is offset from the geographical centroid of the Life District. The site is near the southeast edge of Parcels E and E1, which comprise about one-third of the acreage in the primarily-residential Life District. The proposed location is relatively far from Parcel B in the Life District, but it's also relatively far from residential that may be developed in the Innovation District. A school site location that's more centrally located to Innovation Park residential properties would encourage more active transportation to school, and adjacency to the Nature Park could enhance educational opportunities for the school. We recommend locating the school site near the Innovation Park core area and the residential-density centroid with consideration of the existing and planned residential close to the site (Granite Pointe and Tuscaro to the east, Alira, Villagio and Ashton Parc to the south, and Medley and Bella Rose to the west).

CNU HOSPITAL PLAN SET

The California Northstate Hospital land uses that will attract the most vehicle traffic, i.e. the retail with parking, hospital, medical, university, laboratory/pharmaceutical, and pharmaceutical buildings, are located towards the interior of Innovation Park with driveways on Innovator Drive. Since Innovator Drive will be the primary north-south street for bicyclists, the high volumes of traffic from outside of Innovation Park will diminish the attractiveness and safety of Innovator Drive for bicyclists. We recommend consideration of locating the hospital/educational uses on Sports Parkway South and the residential and admin uses on Innovator Drive.

The distance between pedestrian crossings on the Hospital main entry drive almost 700 feet, with a T-intersection at about the halfway point. It appears there will be a desire line between the hospital buildings on the north side of the driveway and the "Campus Green" and university buildings on the south side. We recommend adding a crossing at the T-intersection on the main hospital entry drive west of Innovator Drive.

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.

Please notify WALKSacramento of future routings or notices for this project.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Manager