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October 19, 2016

Via Email

City of Sacramento Planning Commission
C/O Elise Gumm
Development Manager
City of Sacramento, Planning Division
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RE: The Park (P15-048)

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the September 8, 2016, plans of the Park shopping center project (P15-048), formerly the Land Park Commercial Center.

First, we understand from the Final Environmental Impact Report that the original Raley's neon sign will be incorporated into the project design and would like to thank the applicant and the city for ensuring the preservation of this historical landmark to preserve the character of Freeport Boulevard and the adjacent communities. Please ensure that this feature remains part of the project.

The Hollywood Park Neighborhood Association (HPNA) supports the project. However we have remaining reservations and recommend additional modest changes to improve the livability of this portion of the Freeport Boulevard corridor.

The HPNA's mission is to improve the livability of the Hollywood Park and Carleton Tract neighborhoods bordering Freeport Boulevard on the West, Sutterville Road on the North, 24th Street on the East, and Fruitridge Road on the South. Virtually every single one of our residences is located within one mile of the project, a 20 minute walk. In fact, many of us moved to Hollywood Park specifically in order to be able to walk to commercial establishments and Raley's, as the high quality supermarket it is, is understandably the primary destination. As the neighborhood directly facing the project, we are also uniquely positioned to engage with the project in some way or another on a daily basis, even if it is simply to travel by it on our commutes, whether via car, bus, foot or bike.

For these reasons, the HPNA has consistently been concerned with the manner in which the project facilitates pedestrian access and improves the walkability and livability of the entire Freeport Boulevard corridor. As such, our primary concern has been with improving the activation of the buildings that are directly adjacent to our neighborhood along Freeport Boulevard (e.g., in the current site plan, shops 3 and 4) and have previously recommended similar changes to the building along Wentworth Ave. (shops 5). While the project is designed in a manner to facilitate activity via inviting promenades and store fronts, all of these features are oriented towards the parking lot. As a result, we are concerned that the adjacent neighborhoods, including Hollywood Park, are being excluded from the life and energy of the project.

Through conversations with the applicants, we understand that the alternative site plan we previously recommended to move the supermarket to be perpendicular and adjacent to Freeport Blvd. and allow for improved pedestrian access to the most heavily used business would: a) not be commercially viable; and b) have negative consequences to the neighbors located behind the development. We also understand from the applicants that a mixed use type development of a more urban nature was similarly ruled out. As a result, we understand that the proposed site plan is the only feasible option.

That being said, even without changing the site plan itself, we believe the following modest changes would vastly improve the manner in which the project engages with the adjacent neighborhoods.

1. In order to ensure compliance with the letter and spirit of the requirements for the City's Urban Corridor Low designation, ensure that the facades and entrances directly address the street. While the Final Environmental Impact Report concludes that the building entrances are oriented towards Freeport Blvd., the applicants have indicated that while there may be rear entrances that tenants can utilize along the street, the storefronts will face the parking lot. We do not believe that such an orientation sufficiently activates Freeport Boulevard or the adjacent neighborhoods nor do we believe that such an orientation would be in compliance with the 2035 General Plan. As a result, we suggest the following:
 - a. Provide the best side of the project, the true "facade" or front, to actually face the street and neighborhoods by improving the eastern facing elevations of shops 3 and 4 and the southern elevation of shops 5 to ensure that the view from the street is at least as inviting as the view from the parking lot.

We assume this could be a cost-neutral change by simply exchanging design elements so that the current street-facing features are moved to

the parking lot and vice versa. If costs are deemed to provide sufficient benefits, both elevations could be equally as inviting.

- b. Re-orient the design of shops 3 and 4 to move the main entrances (with double doors) for the northern and southern units to the northern and southern elevations. Similarly re-orient the design of shops 5 to move the main entrances (with double doors) for the eastern and western units to the eastern and western elevations. An alternative to this recommendation and the following recommendation for these units would be to provide inviting corner entrances at the corners closest to the street.

Such a change would ensure that the main activity of these units is at least visible from the street, even if the tenant chooses not to utilize the patios envisioned by the current plans. While we understand that the tenants desired by the applicant prefer their entrances to be oriented toward the parking lot, the northern elevation of the northern unit of shops 4 and the eastern elevation of the eastern unit of shops 5 meet this requirement and all other units are at least as close to the parking lot as several units in shops 2.

- c. Enhance the secondary street-facing entrances for all units in shops 3, 4, and 5 to ensure that those entrances are as equally as inviting and practical as the main entrances (e.g., if the main entrances have double doors, the street entrances should also have double doors). Make any other necessary changes to allow those tenants who so desire, to easily shift the orientation of their store to face the street (e.g., reconsider the placement of the utility closet from the middle unit of shops 3 or any similar unit to allow for such flexibility).

Tenant preferences may change in the future as the most favored modes of customer transportation also change. In the meantime, although the street front is not guaranteed to be activated through customer utilization, the back door (facing the street) would at least have the bona fide look and feel of a front door.

2. Widen the proposed sidewalk on Freeport Boulevard to the upgraded level as described in the Sacramento Pedestrian Master Plan.

To accomplish this, we recommend reducing the width of the planter strip between the sidewalk and street curb on Freeport Boulevard from 7.8 ft and instead widen the sidewalk from 6 ft to 8-9 ft. This would encourage and facilitate two people actually walking side-by-side on the sidewalk without having to stop

for people that may be walking on the sidewalk in the opposite direction and allow for window shopping at shops that front the street.

3. Provide additional enhancements along Freeport Boulevard to facilitate and encourage intermodal transportation to and from the center and to further activate the street front. While the rest of the Freeport Boulevard corridor provides street parking that also serves to activate the street, we understand that street parking will be removed for this stretch to provide room for a protected bike lane and support this change. However, we would appreciate consideration of the following changes to preserve the vitality of the street and to align with a future with many more transportation options:
 - a. Move the southbound Freeport Blvd. and Meer Way bus stop a few yards south in front of shops 4 and make the necessary curb improvements to allow for an exclusive carve out for buses similar to what has been accomplished further north as a result of the Freeport Blvd. bike lanes project.
 - b. Make similar changes via an exclusive carve out to allow for a passenger loading zone in front of shops 3 along Freeport Blvd.

We believe that such a change might be prudent in order to prepare for a future of transportation that may well involve many more trips via shared automobiles, either because of the advent of autonomous vehicles or increased efficiencies by ride-sharing solutions like Uber and Lyft.

4. Create a more bicycle-friendly landscape and access to the interior of the shopping center. Add a bicycle-only entrance from Freeport Blvd. at the northeast corner of the development, to allow cyclists to enter and exit without engaging with the vehicle traffic at the main Freeport entrance. Create a safe and well-marked route for cyclists to cross the parking lot from Freeport to the Raley's, with road paint, signs, or even a separate walkway access route between the parking lanes.

We believe that such a change will increase bicycle traffic to the development and promote safety for bicyclists. Due to the large expanse of parking lot between the street and the shops on the west side of the development, special precautions must be taken to ensure that cyclists are not put in danger when crossing the parking lots and navigating parking cars, pedestrians, and shopping carts.

We admit that we are not experts in land use, architecture or commercial development. However, as homeowners and families, some of whom plan to live out our lives in this neighborhood, we believe we have a long term stake in the future of Freeport Blvd. and that our thoughts and views deserve some consideration. To the extent that our recommended changes are not feasible for one reason or another, we trust that the commission and the city council, as our representatives, have the knowledge and resources to make that determination on our behalf.

Thank you for all your work to make Sacramento such a great place to live.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors

Hollywood Park Neighborhood Association

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