

City Planning Commission
Sacramento, California

Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Section 65402(a) Review for General Plan consistency of the abandonment of five pedestrian easements at the end of Deer Glen Way, Spike Court, Doe Court, Deer Court, and White Tail Way at Mack Road in the Standard Single Family (R-1) zone. (P92-050)

SUMMARY: The applicant (City of Sacramento) is requesting to abandon the pedestrian easements connecting Mack Road and the single family residential development in order to construct a new masonry sound wall and increase the safety within the area.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

General Plan Designation:	Low Density Residential (4-15 du/na)
South Sacramento Community Plan Designation:	Residential (4-8 du/na)
Existing Zoning of Site:	R-1
Existing Land Use of Site:	Single Family

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning:

North:	Vacant; R-2A-R
South:	Residential; R-1
East:	Vacant; OB-R
West:	Residential; R-1

PROJECT EVALUATION: Staff has the following comments:

A. Land Use and Zoning

The pedestrian easements are within a single family residential development zoned R-1. The General Plan designates the site Low Density Residential (4-15 du/na). The South Sacramento Community Plan designates the site Residential (4-8 du/na). The surrounding land use and zoning includes vacant land, zoned R-2A-R, to the north; residential, zoned R-1, to the south; vacant land, zoned OB-R, east; and residential, zoned R-1, to the west.

B. Applicant's Proposal

The City of Sacramento is requesting an abandonment of the pedestrian easements for the single family development. The request is proposed by the Public Works Department in conjunction with the reconstruction of the sound wall along Mack Road. The legal description of the easements to be abandoned is attached Exhibit B.

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C. General/Community Plan Consistency

California Government Code, Section 65402(a), requires the City Planning Commission to make a finding of general and community plan consistency with regard to the pedestrian easement abandonments. Staff has reviewed the proposed abandonments for consistency with the City's General Plan and South Sacramento Community Plan. The project is a proposal to close the pedestrian access points in an existing subdivision wall along Mack Road, which is presently served by Regional Transit bus service.

The South Sacramento Community Plan (SSCP) addresses the issue of subdivision walls in the Residential Land Use and Housing Section-Policies and Implementation Measure, (pp. 30-33). Policy 2 "Encourage high quality residential development. Walls between residential subdivisions and major streets are not encouraged. In the event walls are utilized, some mechanisms for on-going maintenance must be established". Also, Policy 7 - "Avoid extensive use of subdivision walls, and improve the appearance of those that are already installed". The intent of these policies is to foster a greater sense of "neighborhood environment" among residents, as well as to avoid the spread of elements of urban blight which may result from a siege mentality "walled enclave". The net result of such policies may be to increase neighborhood communication, and as such to lessen the atmosphere of anonymity which is so conducive to suburban crime, i.e. daylight burglary.

The City General Plan also speaks to encouraging the pedestrian link between residents and transit. The Residential Land Use Element-Policy 6 states "Prohibit the intrusion of incompatible uses into residential neighborhoods, through adequate buffers, screening and zoning practices that do not preclude pedestrian access to arterials that may serve as transit corridors. The Housing Element, Section B, Housing-Jobs-Transportation Link encourages the efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure. It also makes the point that planning which acknowledges the inter-relationships of jobs, housing and transportation is in the long-term best interest of the City. The Circulation Element-Pedestrianways Section puts forth Goal A - Increase the use of the pedestrian mode as a mode of choice for all areas of the city. Policy 1 - Require...safe pedestrian walkways that provide direct links between streets and major destinations such as bus stops, schools, parks, and shopping centers. The intent of these General Plan policies is to influence a change in behavior from automobile orientation towards an increase in the application of the pedestrian mode.

In summation, there is a conflict in General and Community Plan policies between pedestrian access to transit and safety. The General Plan and Community Plan promotes subdivision design which provides safe pedestrian access to transit. The subject subdivision, however, was not designed with safety in mind when the pedestrian accesses were installed. The lots adjacent to the access easement are side-on lots which do not allow adequate surveillance. The homes also have the primary living area in the rear which discourages any viewing of the street.

Public Works, Planning, and Police staff have reviewed other alternatives to the closure of these pedestrian easements. One alternative included continuing the cul-de-sac through to Mack Road.

This, however, results in too many intersections within close proximity along Mack Road. Another alternative is to reorient the houses to be in a front-on situation. This, obviously, is also an impractical solution. A third alternative is to provide locked gates at the pedestrian easements which would allow selective access. This alternative is a problem in regards to maintenance of the gates, the ability to control access to the distribution of the key or combination, and it does not adequately attenuate the noise resulting from the busy Mack Road. Even though closing the pedestrian easements are not the ideal solution and in complete compliance with the General Plan, the overriding concern is for safety. Pedestrian connections should be maintained where feasible, and where all the other alternatives have been explored.

Therefore, staff finds the proposed abandonments consistent with the General Plan and South Sacramento Community Plan. Staff, however, recommends the Planning Commission support efforts to develop new subdivisions with designs that accommodate pedestrian activity and access, without the safety problems which are associated with the subject subdivision. This could include subdivisions with no back-on or side-on lots for major streets. Subdivisions could be designed with wider front-on lots which allow surveillance. There could be alleys behind the front-on lots to alleviate any safety concerns for driveways on a major street. Another option is to have cul-de-sacs in the interior of subdivisions and not abutting the arterials.

E. Agency Comments

The proposed project was reviewed by City Utilities Planning Division, City Electrical Design Engineering, City Traffic Engineering, City Fire Department, City Police Department, Pacific Bell, Pacific Gas and Electric, SMUD, Sacramento Cable Television, and Regional Transit. The following comments were received:

City Utilities Planning Division

1. No objection to the proposed abandonment provided an easement be retained for maintenance of existing 36" main that runs between Deer Glen and Mack Road. This main needs to be able to be accessed for maintenance purposes.
2. Note: The County is responsible for the sanitary mains in this area.

City Electrical Design Engineering

No objection to the proposed abandonment.

City Traffic Engineering

Abandonment of the pedestrian easements would make it more difficult for pedestrians to walk to Mack Road. Presently on Mack Road is the RT express route #7 to downtown. The abandonment of the pedestrian easements may make the walk to the bus stops on Mack Road and shopping centers east of Franklin Boulevard longer and more circuitous for pedestrians. The

abandonment of the pedestrian easements may have an effect on Regional Transit. regional Transit should comment on the proposed abandonments.

City Fire Department

No objection to the proposed abandonment.

City Police Department

No objection to the proposed abandonment. The Police Department supports the closing of these pedestrian easements as a crime prevention measure.

Pacific Bell

No objection to the proposed abandonment provided an easement is retained. Pacific Bell presently maintains underground communication facilities within a 12.5 foot P.U.E. lying within those lots adjacent to Doe court, Spike Court, Deer Court, White Tail Way and Deer Glen Way. Pacific Bell requires these P.U.E.s be retained.

Pacific Gas & Electric Company

PG&E has gas facilities in the subject area and has no objection to the proposed abandonment without reservation.

SMUD

This District is presently occupying the pedestrian easement and public utility easement abutting the northerly end of Deer Glen Way with electric power facilities. However, provided the usual "continuing-use" clause as cited in the State of California Streets and Highways Code is incorporated in the abandonment ordinance, reserving all rights for the District to construct, reconstruct, operate and maintain all electrical facilities within this area, SMUD will not object to the abandonment.

Sacramento Cable Television

Sacramento Cable Television has no conflict with the proposed pedestrian easements at Deerfield Unit #1.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: 65402(a) reviews by the Planning Commission are not discretionary actions, therefore, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not apply.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the staff report and find the abandonment consistent with the General Plan and South Sacramento Community Plan and forward the above agency comments to Public Works for City Council approval.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joy Patterson
Senior Planner

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MACK ROAD MASONRY WALL

Project Purpose: The existing six foot wall along the portion of Deerfield Unit No. 1 Subdivision fronting Mack Road is in a structurally deteriorated condition. This project provides for the construction of a new masonry wall within the street right-of-way. Construction of the new wall is also proposed across five existing pedestrian easements to provide a greater degree of security for residences within the subdivision.

Project Description: Construction of approximately 1550 feet of a six and one-half foot (6.5') high by eight inch (8") wide concrete masonry wall and replacement of the existing sidewalk.

Council Action: Project approval.

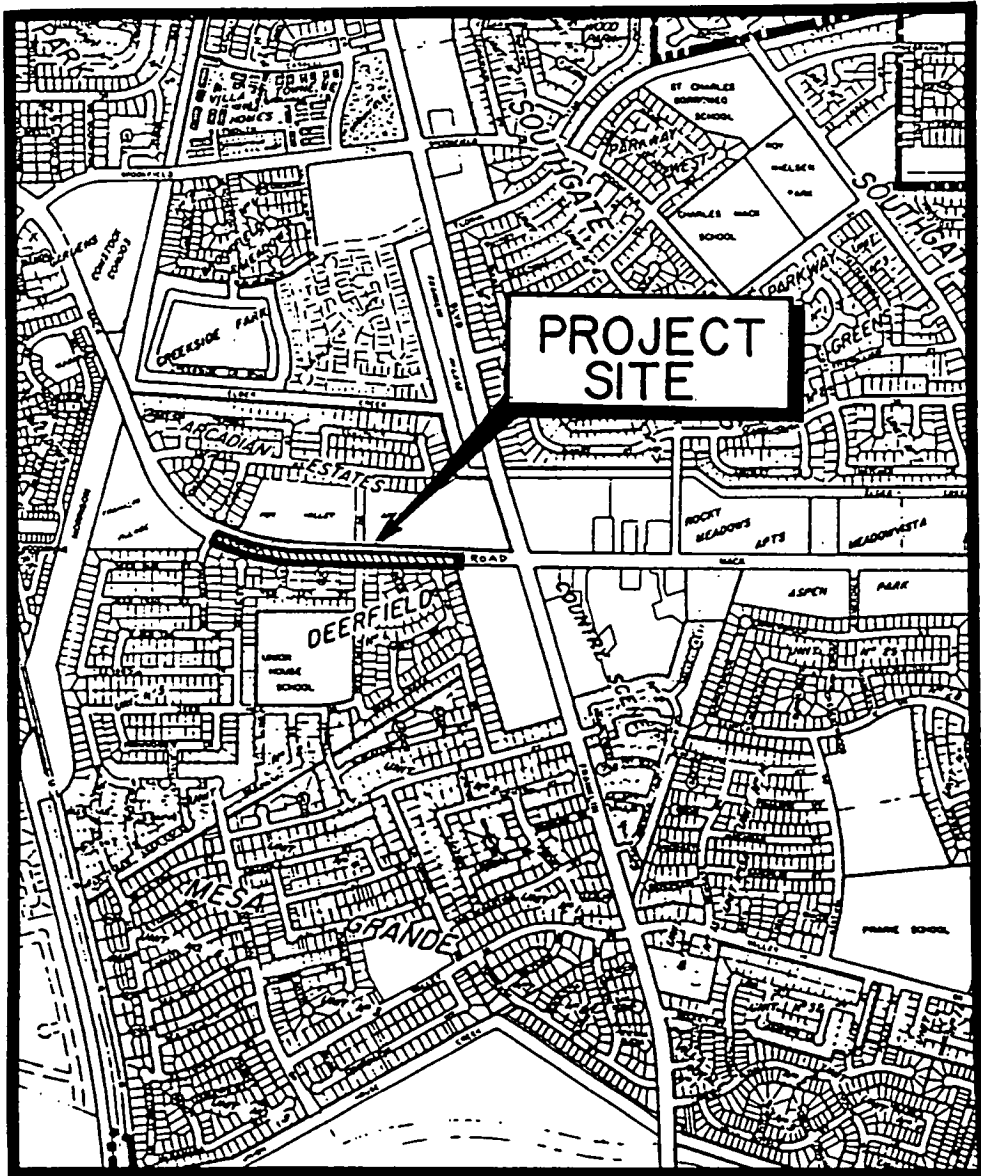
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VICINITY MAP
MACK ROAD MASONRY WALL

JN: 2843



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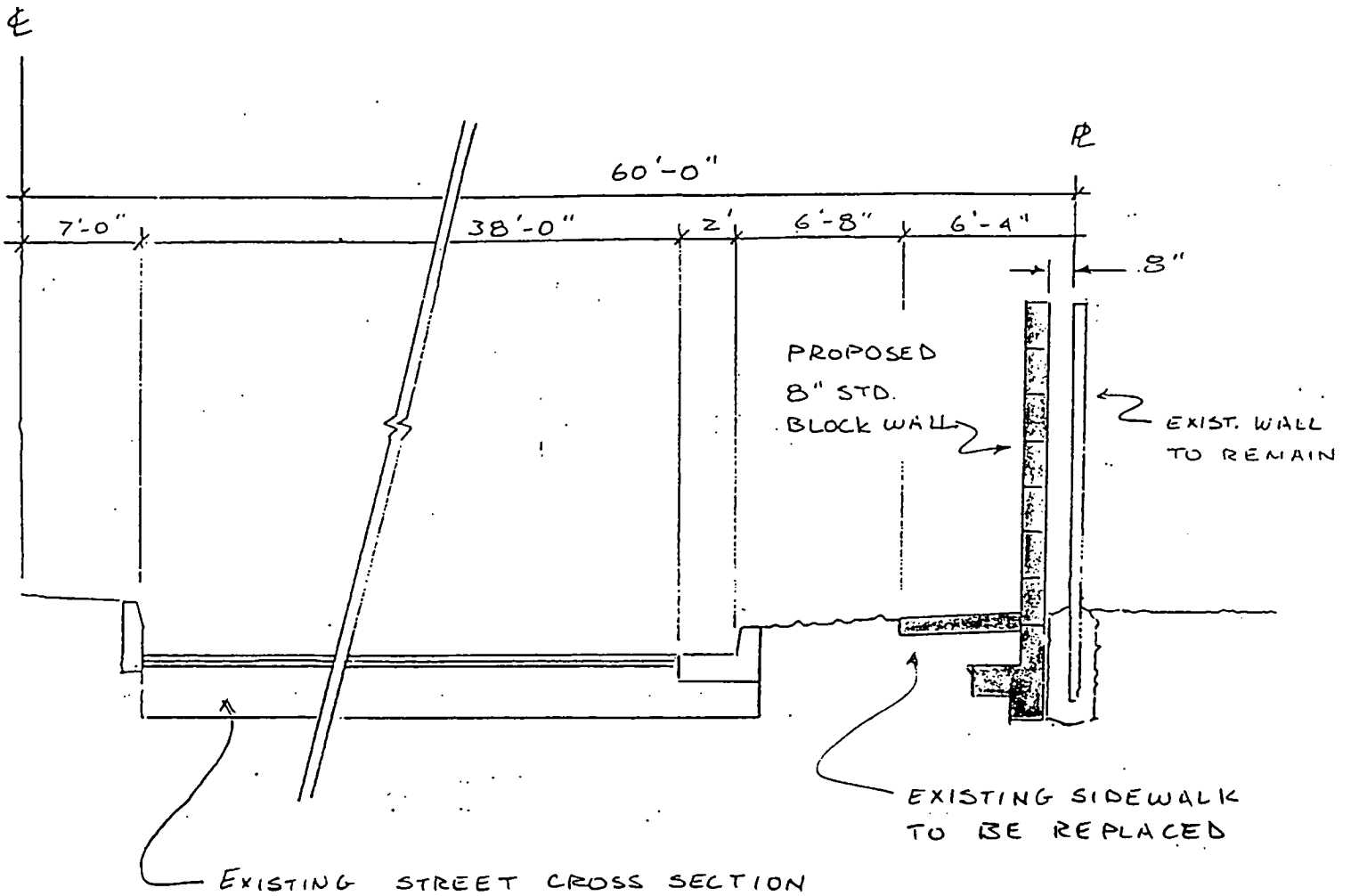
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MACK RD. MASONRY WALL

TYPICAL HALF SECTION



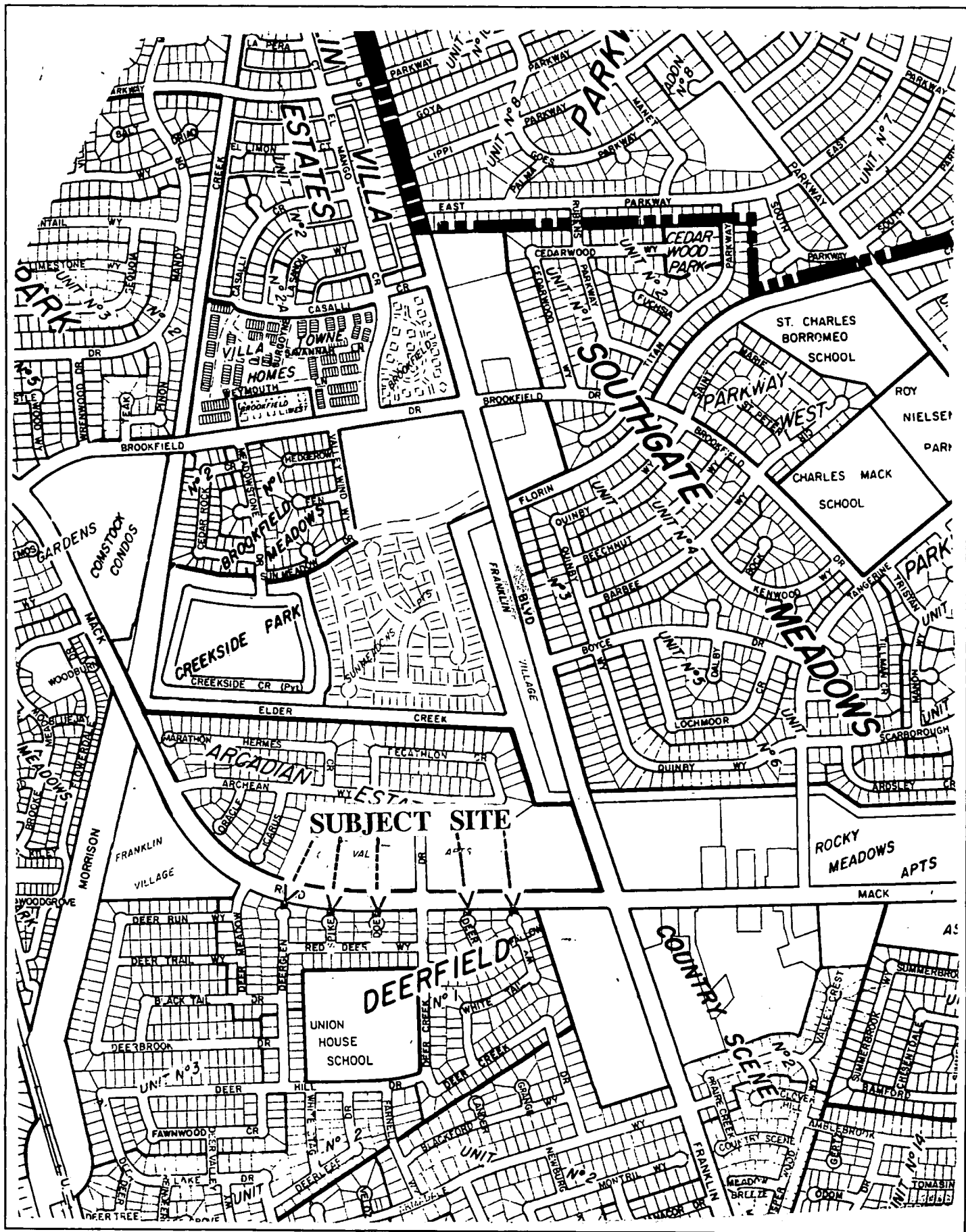
PRELIMINARY PLAN *



* SEE LOCATION MAP FOR WALL CONSTRUCTION LIMITS

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VICINITY MAP

EXHIBIT - B

DESCRIPTION:

EASEMENTS FOR PEDESTRIAN PURPOSES ON, OVER, AND ACROSS THOSE STRIPS OF LAND AS SHOWN ON "DEERFIELD UNIT NO. 1," THE OFFICIAL PLAT OF WHICH IS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE RECORDER OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY, IN BOOK 123 OF MAPS, MAP NO. 11, AND DESIGNATED "PEDESTRIAN EASEMENT."

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