



November 17, 2015

Dirk Brazil  
City of Davis  
City Manager's Office  
23 Russell Boulevard, Suite 2  
Davis, CA 95616



Re: Proposed Plan for the Nishi Gateway Project

Dear Mr. Brazil:

On behalf of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), I am submitting to you our comments on the proposed Nishi Gateway Project, a 58-acre site adjacent to downtown Davis and the UC Davis university campus, located within unincorporated Yolo County. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project as it relates to the Blueprint Preferred Scenario and growth principles. The Preferred Blueprint Scenario is a conceptual map based on the principles of smart growth. This Preferred Scenario is not intended to direct how a specific parcel should or should not be developed in a particular manner, but rather give some direction on how the region needs to develop generally to reap the benefits of the Blueprint.

### **Proposed Project**

The Nishi Gateway Project includes 345,000 square feet of research and development (R&D) and supporting retail, up to 650 units of multifamily residential and 23 acres of open space. The project also includes rezoning of the parcels within West Olive Drive to allow for future redevelopment. The project is a result of an ongoing collaboration between the City of Davis, UC Davis and Yolo County to develop a Downtown University Gateway District.

### **Findings and Evaluation**

SACOG staff evaluated the proposed project as identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Report for consistency with the Blueprint Preferred Scenario and growth principles. Our general reaction is that the project is supportive of all of the Blueprint principles (mixed use, compact development, housing choice, transportation choice, quality design, use of existing assets and natural resources conservation). The project includes the following Blueprint-supportive elements:

- The Nishi Gateway illustrates the Blueprint principles of mixed use and compact development. Districts that are both compact and mixed in uses are efficient in their use of land and resources, but also function as local activity centers,

*Auburn  
Citrus Heights  
Colfax  
Davis  
El Dorado County  
Elk Grove  
Folsom  
Galt  
Isleton  
Lincoln  
Live Oak  
Loomis  
Marysville  
Placer County  
Placerville  
Rancho Cordova  
Rocklin  
Roseville  
Sacramento  
Sacramento County  
Sutter County  
West Sacramento  
Wheatland  
Winters  
Woodland  
Yolo County  
Yuba City  
Yuba County*

where people tend to walk or bike to destinations, use transit more frequently, and take shorter auto trips. A community designed with a good, or balanced, mix of uses creates destinations for residents, workers and students. Furthermore, when these uses are mixed in close proximity, as in the Nishi project, then the community not only supports but encourages walking, bicycling, short car trips and transit use.

As the city works to attract new employment it is also important to keep in mind the current imbalance of jobs to housing from Davis and UC Davis. We are happy to see housing proposed in the Nishi Gateway project and we encourage the City and UC Davis to plan for denser housing on the UC Davis campus, on the other side of the UP railroad tracks.

It is important that the Davis and UC Davis community have a balance of jobs and housing so that neither jobs nor households have to be imported or exported beyond the normal out- and in-commuting that happens in a mobile society. All else being equal, areas with high or low jobs-housing balance are likely to generate longer commutes for workers.

- Housing choice is an important Blueprint principle for ensuring that multiple segments of the housing market can be served. SACOG's recent research on housing demand and preferences indicates that demand for both multifamily and rental housing products in walkable, mixed use communities will increase over time. In support of this principle, the Nishi Gateway includes 650 multifamily for-sale and rental housing units to support both the educational and employment uses of the project and the neighboring UC Davis campus.
- Consistent with the Blueprint principle of transportation choice, the proposed project supports non-motorized transportation options in its mix of uses, site design and complementary internal circulation plan. Shared walk/bikeways are included throughout the project between closely-sited housing, employment and open space uses to make pedestrian and bicycle travel viable options within the district. The plan also incorporates bicycle amenities, including bicycle parking, into all of the buildings. We are pleased to see that a goal of the TDM program is to reduce the need for some of the planned parking structure spaces. This is a particularly important goal because the project as proposed includes traditional suburban parking ratios that may be higher than necessary after accounting for the types of households and innovation businesses targeted for the project, the walkable urban design of the project, and the trip reduction benefits of the TDM strategies.
- Illustrative of both quality design and transportation choice, the Nishi Gateway proposes two access points into the project site in addition to an existing Putah Creek bicycle/pedestrian trail. We understand the City is also examining an access scenario that provides only one roadway into the project site at West Olive Drive. We strongly encourage the City and UC Davis to approve and implement two roadway access points into the project. The two access points as proposed would not only support travel into and within the Nishi Gateway, but multimodal travel through the city. The benefits of that circulation network go beyond the project and exemplify the multiple mobility benefits that can come from infill sites that are designed to connect with the surrounding community. Furthermore, should the University pursue more housing on campus, the roadway connection between the campus housing and Nishi Gateway will be critical.
- By appropriately utilizing a large infill site next to downtown Davis and UC Davis, the Nishi Gateway supports the Blueprint principle of using existing assets – developing on vacant or underutilized infill sites to take advantage of and improve upon existing infrastructure. Both downtown Davis and UC Davis are activity centers rich in transportation infrastructure, and

community amenities. The Nishi site is able to support viable transportation choices in part because of its adjacency these two activity centers.

- The proposed plan also includes parks, open space, and natural resource buffers consistent with the Blueprint natural resource conservation principle. While the project will convert agricultural land to urban uses, the site is already bordered on two sides by urban development and Interstate 80 on its third. Additionally, the Blueprint envisioned the need for some small, targeted expansion of the city limits in order to accommodate some of its future growth.

In conclusion, the Nishi project meets the spirit of the Blueprint growth principles, which describe development patterns that improve quality of life for both residents and workers. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mike McKeever  
Chief Executive Officer

MM:KL:pm

cc: Don Saylor, Supervisor, Yolo County  
Lucas Frerichs, Councilmember  
Mike Webb, Assistant City Manager/Director of Community Development & Sustainability  
Katherine Hess, Community Development Administrator