



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
Joint Downtown Parking Committee

and

Transportation & Circulation Committee Meeting
Staff Report

DATE: May 13, 2010

TO: Downtown Parking Committee (DPC) Members and the
Transportation Circulation Committee

FROM: Robert J. Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: ***PLAN SANTA BARBARA – REVIEW OF THE DRAFT GENERAL
PLAN UPDATE AND ENVIORNMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (DEIR)***

RECOMMENDATION

That the Downtown Parking Committee (DPC) forward initial comments regarding the Draft General Plan Update and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of *Plan Santa Barbara*.

INTRODUCTION

This meeting will be the third in a series of updates to the DPC regarding *Plan Santa Barbara* to keep the committee informed and to receive input. At the last *Plan Santa Barbara* update in February of this year, staff reviewed the traffic model results that would be forthcoming in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The committee has since received the environmental document. This meeting will serve to answer more questions regarding the specific data and analysis that went into the document and give the committee an opportunity to comment. The Transportation Circulation Committee received a similar report and presentation in April.

With the release of the General Plan Framework document and the DEIR, 2010 has been called the "Year of the Decision" (See Attachment). This year will see the final review of the impacts, the trade-offs, and the opportunity for decision makers to reach conclusions. This report briefly summarizes the Draft General Plan Update, the DEIR structure and impacts related to transportation, as well as the key decision points.

DRAFT PLAN SANTA BARBARA DESCRIPTION

Policy Preferences Report - Recommended Changes

Since the Plan Santa Barbara *Draft Policy Preferences* Report was approved by City Council in January 2009, a number of policy and map recommendations have been developed and are now reflected in the draft policy documents released on March 18, 2010. These recommendations are a result of either further policy development or changes resulting from community and/or Planning Commission feedback during the intervening period.

Draft General Plan Update Description Highlights

The *Plan Santa Barbara* General Plan Update proposes new and amended policies to protect and enhance community development values within the City of Santa Barbara over the next 20 years to the year 2030. The Draft documents under review include the following:

Draft General Plan Framework

Part of the City Council's direction for the *PlanSB* process in 2005 was to consolidate the City's environmental standards within a coherent set of General Plan goals and policies. As the public input process unfolded in 2007, this environmental approach took-on greater significance to the point that a sustainability framework was proposed to guide the entire General Plan. A set of sustainability principles was then developed that include established General Plan tenants such as Living within Our Resources and the importance of maintaining Santa Barbara's small town feel.

The proposed General Plan Framework is comprised of an introduction, a conceptual policy framework, and a background and setting for the entire document (which are currently sprinkled throughout various elements). Effectively, only the draft *Land Use* and *Housing* Elements are being comprehensively updated. The remaining five elements have been reorganized around a single document format and partially updated to reflect the Goals, Policies, and Implementation actions that emerged from the *PlanSB* process. In addition, formal goals and policies have been established to address the topics of Public Participation and Regionalism.

Draft Land Use Element

The update of Measure E (Charter Section 1508), which managed non-residential growth for 20 years through December 2009, was one of three primary *PlanSB* objectives together with the update of the draft *Land Use* and *Housing* Elements. This update has largely been achieved through the Growth Management goals and policies in the draft *Land Use Element*, and the analysis of the growth scenarios in the draft EIR. The range of square footage analyzed, from 1 million to 2.3 million square feet within the city proper, was established through the public outreach process. The final decision as to how much non-residential growth will be allowed over the next 20 years will rest with the City Council.

The production of more affordable housing, as discussed below, continues to be a high priority for the community. In fact, during the *PlanSB* process, the community identified affordable housing as the number one priority for resource allocation above all other types of developments. Santa Barbara does have the zoning capacity to meet the State's required "fair share" regional housing allocation, as identified in the draft *Housing Element*. The draft *Land Use* policies require that the City's resources be closely monitored through the Adaptive Management Program to ensure all development does not out pace available resources.

The four residential growth scenarios analyzed in the Draft EIR, ranging from 2,000 to 4,360 units within the City proper over the next 20 years, are based on assumptions within a zoning build-out capacity of approximately 9,990 additional units.

The purpose of the Mobility Oriented Development Area (MODA) Principles is to help identify where and how to further encourage affordable housing in a most sustainable manner. Originally, the MODA was conceived as a physical district but proved to be a lightning rod during the process as to where exactly the boundary should be drawn. Rather than a district, MODA principles simply re-enforce existing land use and circulation patterns that were established in the 1850s, and sound planning practice, to locate higher density housing adjacent to public transportation and within easy walking and biking distance to commercial services, parks and open space.

The neighborhoods of Santa Barbara provide a high quality of life for most residents and are one of the defining characteristics of the City. Little or no change is proposed for the single family and duplex neighborhoods, with the exception of more future planning at the neighborhood level.

Draft General Plan Map

A General Plan map, required by State planning law, identifies where future growth will occur and at what residential densities. The draft General Plan map changes range from simple to more complex, and include: a more accurate, digitized map; updated land use designation categories and transitions; corrected land use designation and zoning inconsistencies; the resolution of policy issues stemming from the existing General Plan map; and *PlanSB* policy recommendations.

As noted above, the basic land use patterns are not proposed to be altered but rather re-enforced with more explicit mixed-use designations to better define land use transitions, with modestly higher densities in the center of the city and along select commercial corridor locations.

A clearer definition of land use designations helps to better define land use transitions, and particularly with residential uses where the highest densities are located in the city center and along commercial corridors and gradually lessen as one moves out to the multi-family neighborhoods, the single family neighborhoods,

and finally to the open spaces of the ocean and mountains. As each of these land uses transition from one use to another, comes less intense uses, smaller buildings, greater setbacks, and greater amounts of open space – a better defined system of buffers.

Approximately 6,000 notices were sent to all potentially affected property owners based on the proposed land use and zoning changes to the draft General Plan map. During the Open House on March 18, over 200 citizens attended throughout the day long event most of whom had questions relative to their respective parcels and the proposed changes.

Draft Housing Element

State law requires Housing Elements to be updated at least every five years and is the only element of the General Plan that requires review and certification by the State. Housing Elements are required to identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs for all segments of the community, and identify goals, policies and quantified objectives to meet those needs. The draft *Housing Element* is an update to the previous 2004 Element and contains new and revised policies and implementation actions focused on affordable housing opportunities with emphasis on increased rental and non-subsidized affordable housing units.

The City has a long standing commitment to the production of affordable housing. Residents of Santa Barbara recognize the need to provide housing to our local workers. There is a deep concern that not providing housing for our workforce has and will result in a loss of community diversity and lead to increased traffic congestion and air quality impacts due to commuters traveling from other jurisdictions to jobs in the City. As such, the draft *Housing Element* includes policies and implementation actions that promote housing opportunities for all segments of the community, including workforce housing.

In response to input from the Planning Commission and the public, the draft *Housing Element* pursues a multi-prong approach including: 1) new standards for smaller, market-rate units; and 2) the creation and preservation of rental housing for larger families. With the impending expiration of the Redevelopment Agency in 2015, providing non-subsidized affordable housing units will be essential in order to meet the City's affordable housing needs.

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (DEIR)

Under provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the *Plan Santa Barbara* General Plan Update is subject to environmental review prior to its approval. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an informational document to allow the public and decision-makers to consider the environmental consequences of proposed actions, along with any measures that could feasibly avoid or lessen significant environmental effects.

A Draft Program EIR has been prepared to evaluate potential effects on the physical environment from the proposed *Plan Santa Barbara* policy amendments and forecasted future growth in the City to the year 2030. The Draft *Policy Preferences Report* initiated for environmental review by City Council (January 2009) provided the EIR project description. The analysis assumed development of up to an additional 2,800 residential units, and up to an additional two million square feet of commercial and other non-residential development within the City by 2030. In general, the DEIR recognizes that additional growth occurring incrementally over the next two decades has the potential for significant impacts cumulatively citywide by 2030. In many instances existing City policies and proposed *Plan Santa Barbara* policy amendments would reduce these environmental effects. The DEIR also identifies mitigation measures as needed to reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels. Mitigation measures would become additional policies and programs in the General Plan.

The DEIR also analyzes comparative environmental effects of alternative policy and growth scenarios (“No Project”/Existing Policies, Lower Growth, and Additional Housing alternatives), and considers regional environmental effects and longer-range effects.

The Draft EIR analysis identified the following environmental transportation impacts associated with additional development to the year 2030 under draft *Plan Santa Barbara* General Plan policy amendments. Required mitigation measures are identified to reduce potentially significant impacts. Recommended measures are also identified to further address potential impacts identified as less than significant.

Class 1 Impacts – Significant

Transportation – Increased peak-hour traffic congestion. (*Mitigation measures MM T-1 road/signal improvements and MM T-2 to reduce peak-hour vehicle trips and increase use of alternative travel modes through modified parking requirements and pricing and transportation demand management measures.*)

Class 4 beneficial impact

Transportation – Reduction in per capita vehicle commute trips from *Plan Santa Barbara* transportation policies on parking, transit, mode shift, bus passes, telecommuting/alternative work schedules, car and van pooling, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

KEY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES FOR DECISION MAKERS

The central transportation issue facing the City is how to accommodate incremental growth while minimizing or avoiding increased congestion at freeway interchanges and major City roads, such as Upper State Street. The DEIR shows that, although

better than the No Project Alternative, Plan Santa Barbara as currently proposed will nearly triple the number of significantly impacted intersections in the City. The traffic model demonstrates that eliminating growth altogether will not eliminate increases in traffic congestion as the trend of less people living and working in the City continues. The analysis shows if people continue to relocate outside the City and drive to work via U.S. Hwy 101, traffic at the freeway interchanges will continue to increase.

The DEIR analysis indicates the most effective measure to combat traffic congestion is to aggressively support Travel Demand Management strategies that include parking pricing management in the Downtown, as well as other strategies described. The analysis shows that the aggressive support of Travel Demand Management strategies analyzed in Alternative 2 (Increased Housing) could be applied to any of the other scenarios described in the DEIR and significantly reduce congestion impacts in each. Additionally, the analysis shows that future development generates the least amount of increased traffic if located within the Downtown core and along major transit corridors north of U.S Hwy 101.

While parking pricing strategies implemented in the Downtown could have the greatest reduction of traffic congestion, implementing such a policy would also have economic ramifications. Therefore, to be successful, parking pricing strategies must be carefully designed to contribute to the economic vitality of the Downtown and implemented over time. Irrespective of the amount of land use growth, decision makers must determine the appropriate balance between future congestion levels and the aggressiveness of the City's travel demand strategies.

Could parking pricing be eliminated from the TDM package?

Some have asked if parking pricing could be eliminated from the TDM package while still achieving similar congestion reductions. The traffic consultant says that the parking pricing strategy accounts for 75% to 85% of the effectiveness of the TDM package. So while parking pricing could be eliminated from the TDM package, the amount of congestion relief would be significantly less than with parking pricing.

If congestion has not changed much over the past 20 years or even improved, how can we expect it to worsen as much as predicted for the next 20?

While traffic volumes have grown significantly over the past 20 years, so have infrastructure improvements to create more roadway capacity, or reduce congestion. The removal of the traffic signals from Highway 101 alone generated significantly more roadway capacity in, out of, and through Santa Barbara. The Crosstown Freeway took volumes of cars off of our city streets. The City also did major reconstruction to the Milpas, La Cumbre, and 154 Interchanges in the 1990s totaling over \$30 million in capacity improvements. We also added capacity to the Carrillo and Las Positas interchanges through smaller widening and lane

additions. So while the traffic volumes have indeed grown, so have our improvements to infrastructure. These improvements have kept the rise in congestion somewhat in check, although many still argue that congestion is worse than it should be with 7 intersections operating worse than our standard.

The next 20 years will not see the type of significant vehicle capacity improvements as the past 20. Not many improvement opportunities remain. We will relieve some congestion with the Cottage Hospital Access Improvements. Most of our interchanges are bigger than the roads that feed them, so making even bigger interchanges does not make sense unless we begin to widen roads like Mission and Garden. The bottom line is even if we grow half as much as we did in the last 20 years, we can still anticipate significant increases in the amount of congestion.

Resources

We are planning on having the traffic consultant from Nelson/Nygaard attend the meeting to address questions that you may have. He was also responsible for the empirical analysis that went into the parking pricing factors that were entered into the traffic model.

Attachment

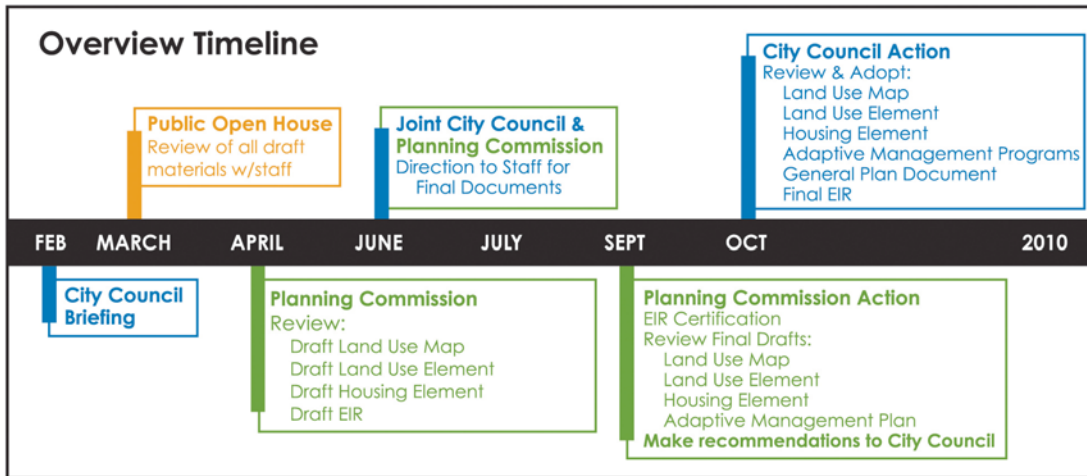
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cc: Browning Allen, Transportation Manager



2010: The Decision Year

Key Steps to a Completed General Plan Update



Plan Santa Barbara Goals (adopted by City Council, 2005)

1. **Live within our resources** by balancing development with available resources and promoting sustainable, pedestrian scale, transit-oriented development.
2. Ensure **affordable housing** opportunities for all economic levels in the community, while protecting the character of established neighborhoods.
3. Provide **safe and convenient transportation** through improved transit, circulation, and parking.
4. Ensure a **strong economy** that provides the revenue base necessary for essential services and community enhancements.
5. Advance **regional thinking**, collaboration, and solutions.
6. Maintain the unique **character and desirability of Santa Barbara** as a place to live, work, and visit.
7. Provide **adequate services** and facilities.
8. Encourage **public involvement** and participation at all levels of city planning and other government activities.
9. Develop **explicit environmentally sustainable policies**.

Key Deliverables

- Updated growth management program (formerly Measure E, 1989)
- Revised & mandated Housing Element
- Updated Land Use Element
- Accurate Land Use Map
- Framework to guide updates of remaining elements (Open Space, Parks & Recreation, Historic Resources, Circulation, Environmental Resources, Public Services & Safety, Economy & Fiscal Health)
- Certified EIR

Progress to Date

- 2009** Planning Commission work sessions, *Economic Study* and forum, *General Plan Framework*, staff prepared drafts of: *Land Use Element & Map*, *Housing Element*, *Adaptive Management Plan*, *Environmental Impact Report*
- 2008** *Development Trends Report*, *Policy Options Report*, youth survey, community survey, public workshops & public meetings, *General Plan Framework: Draft Policy Preferences* approved by City Council, *EIR* scoped
- 2007** Plan SB public outreach: mailings to all city residents, 40 community meetings, 4 public workshops, Plan SB website launched, updates to City boards & committees, City Council adopts *Upper State Street Study*
- 2006** Upper State Street study
- 2005** City Council initiates Plan SB with 9 goals and creates public outreach committee, *Conditions, Trends & Issues Report* published as baseline

Key Issues

Areas of general agreement:

- Regulate future **growth**
- **Economic vitality**
- Live within our **Resources**
- Prioritize **affordable housing**
- Require **smaller units**
- Preserve SB's historic, small town **character**
- Enhance our **active, healthy, and walkable community**
- Plan for sustainable **neighborhoods**

Unresolved issues:

- Building **heights**
- **Density:** Should we allow more units in smaller buildings? Can the building size be controlled with Floor to Lot Area Ratios (FARs)?
- **Parking standards**
- **Priority** of implementation actions
- **Inclusionary housing**

Results of an Updated General Plan

1. Meets State mandate for Certified Housing Element
2. Reduces vulnerability to lawsuits challenging environmental review & climate change
3. Continues State funding programs dependent on EIR and adopted General Plan
4. Meets need for new planning standards re: growth and ways to protect Santa Barbara's character
5. Provides leadership for the future of our city (continuing efforts from 1970's Impacts of Growth and 1990's Measure E)