



**City of Santa Barbara**  
**Transportation & Circulation Committee**  
*Staff Report*

**DATE:** April 22, 2010

**TO:** Transportation & Circulation Committee (TCC) Members

**FROM:** Rob Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner *RD*

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

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Transportation & Circulation Committee (TCC) forward initial comments regarding the Draft General Plan Update and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of *Plan Santa Barbara*.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This will be the fifth in a series of Plan Santa Barbara TCC meetings related to the development and use of Santa Barbara's travel model. The City's travel demand model has been used to evaluate the 2030 traffic ramifications of various land use and policy decisions being considered within the *Plan Santa Barbara* process and newly submitted Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). TCC members received both of these draft documents in the second week of March. These documents can be found at [www.youplansb.org](http://www.youplansb.org). At this meeting, staff will answer questions regarding these documents and receive initial comments to pass on to the Planning Commission.

In May of 2008, Fehr and Peers presented an overview and expectation of the travel demand model in a Joint PC/TCC meeting. In August of the same year, Fehr and Peers presented the modeling assumption and validation process undertaken to develop the model. In March, Fehr and Peers showed how the model calibration process had resulted in the City's model meeting and exceeding industry standards for predicting travel demand. They also presented the level-of-service (LOS) results for the 2030 "No Project" scenario. Finally, in October of last year, the consultant presented the travel model findings, which are now summarized in Section 16 of the DEIR.

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 and trade-offs and the opportunity for decision makers to reach conclusions.

### **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 December 2008, 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.

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.

Attachment

RD/ks

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)