



City of Santa Barbara
Community Development Department

Memorandum

DATE: March 28, 2007

TO: Park and Recreation Commission

FROM: Beatriz E. Ramírez, Project Planner, Planning Division
Community Development Department

SUBJECT: UPPER STATE STREET STUDY

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive a staff presentation on the Upper State Street Study Report, and public comment.
- B. Provide Commission comments and recommendations on public open space issues discussed in the *Upper State Street Study Report*, to be forwarded to Planning Commission and City Council.

DISCUSSION:

Background and Overview

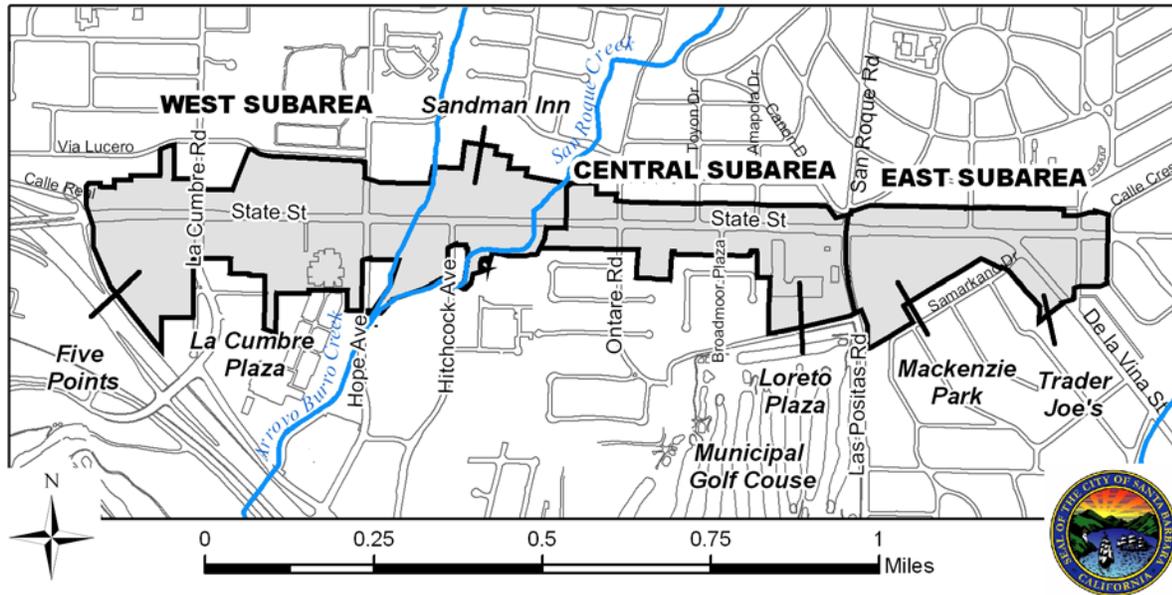
The Upper State Street Study is a focused study to identify near-term improvements to benefit urban design and traffic circulation in the State Street commercial corridor between Highway 101 and Calle Laureles. City Council initiated the study with consideration of community concerns about pending development activity in the corridor.

The Planning and Transportation Divisions, along with two consultant firms, have conducted a study process that included discussions with City advisory boards (Park and Recreation Commission last May 17), a public walking tour, two community workshops and numerous public comment letters, preparation of an independent traffic, circulation, and parking study, and a joint Planning Commission/TCC traffic work session last November 9th.

The *Upper State Street Study Report* (March 2007) has been issued, along with the associated traffic consultant report *Upper State Street Traffic, Circulation, and Parking Study* (Meyer, Mohaddes Associates, February 2007), and copies are available via the

City web page or at the Planning Division office.

Upper State Street Study Area



The *Study Report* discusses existing traffic, circulation, and parking conditions in the Upper State Street commercial corridor, summarizes public input received to date, and recommends physical and operational improvements, and amendments to development design standards.

Because the Upper State Street area is already developed, it is recognized that improvements would occur over time as opportunities arise and funding becomes available, and that some identified measures (such as trail additions) present challenges in already developed areas and may not be feasible in all locations.

It is expected that Study recommendations will inform the review of development proposals in the area. Following City Council action, there will be follow-up implementation activities that could include amendments to existing Special District (S-D-2) Zone provisions and the *Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines*, and capital improvements programming.

Larger related citywide issues such as highway traffic, land use and density changes, commercial and residential growth, and environmental sustainability are outside the scope of this focused study, and will continue to be addressed through other City programs, the development review process, and the upcoming City General Plan update process.

Study Recommendations

While the Study Report includes a number of recommendations for both urban design and traffic and circulation, this memo includes a brief summary of those recommendations most relevant to the Park and Recreation Commission.

Public Streetscape and Open Space

Streetscape

One of the key elements that surfaced through the public process was maintaining and enhancing the unique character of Upper State Street. The public agreed that an improved streetscape would enhance the character and pedestrian experience, making it a more desirable place to walk. The public was very interested in incorporation of passive open spaces or pocket parks via individual projects, along creek corridors, or through dedication for public park areas where feasible. Landscaping along building frontages and outdoor activity spaces are recommended to enhance the aesthetics and pedestrian environment (Page 3-7).

There was a general feeling that people would walk more if the pedestrian environment were improved so that the pedestrians were buffered from traffic and parking areas. Therefore, parkways and landscaping along property frontages need to be carefully considered when reviewing individual projects.

Open Space

The Study recommends creating opportunities for private and public open spaces, including pocket parks and open spaces within redeveloped sites wherever feasible. As a part of the larger General Plan Update process, the City should also consider opportunities to establish public open spaces areas. Two areas identified for possible future public open space are the Army Reserve site and the corner of State Street and La Cumbre Road when the La Cumbre site redevelops in the future (Page 3-12).

Figure 7 on page 3-21, summarizes Urban Design recommendations including open space, park, plaza, and creek corridor improvements.

Staff is recommending amending the S-D-2 Zone (overlay zone in the Upper State Street Area) to incorporate a finding that any modifications to development standards (setbacks, parking, etc.) can only be supported for important trade-offs or community benefits such as preservation or creation of mountain view corridors, provision of creek buffers, enhanced pedestrian streetscape amenities, connectivity between State Street and the surrounding neighborhoods; provision of open space, or maximizing the rear of the site for alley access and/or parking (Page 3-4).

Street Tree Master Plan

One of the recommendations of the study is to update the existing Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines. As a part of that update it is recommended that the existing City Street Tree Master Plan be reevaluated along the corridor to identify most appropriate street tree species to minimize impacts on pedestrians with respect to pedestrian facilities, safety, maintenance, and aesthetics (Page 3-7).

Raised Medians

In order to reduce the number of mid-block conflict points between through-and turning-traffic on State Street, additional medians are proposed in three locations. There are pros and cons to going forward with this recommendation (page 4-9 of Study) including effects on emergency responders' ease of access to specific locations. While there may be opposition to the medians, experience in other communities shows that the added landscape, improved aesthetics and the improved overall traffic flow on the main arterial tend to win out over initial concerns.

New Pedestrian and Bike Routes

The public expressed support for improving pedestrian links within the commercial corridor, and between the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods, including routes across commercial properties. A parallel path to State Street was envisioned along the southerly edge of the corridor.

Near Term: Alternative routes to State Street are recommended for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel between the Five Points and MacKenzie park areas south of State Street. (See Figure 9, Summary Diagram of Transportation Recommendations). The route would largely use existing roadways and sidewalks, connecting a few gaps. There is a recommended pedestrian and bicycle trail between Hope Avenue and Hitchcock Way which could connect to public streets. Park and Recreation Staff have recommended that the paths in this area near the creek be separate, with the bicycle path further from the creek areas.

Long Term: A longer-term improvement identified for consideration is the development of a new pedestrian path/bicycle trail extending between Hope Avenue and Las Positas Road south of State Street to provide non-motorized access between Las Cumbre Plaza and MacKenzie Park. The trail would be paved and provided with security lighting and would include both private and City-owned properties including the western portion of the golf course (see Figure 10).

There is recognition that it would not be easy to add a public trail in this area and a number of constraints and concerns would have to be overcome, including topography,

land ownership, safety, liability, and maintenance responsibilities. Because some of the trail would run adjacent to the back property lines of existing residences, there are concerns about safety, security, liability, trash, noise, and night lighting.

A portion of the route would use the golf course service road, and the City Parks and Recreation Staff has raised similar concerns. Opening the road to public access across the golf course and its facilities could create problems with transient use, facility and equipment security, public safety and liability, and maintenance issues.

Traffic Signal at McCaw/Las Positas

A signal at this intersection is recommended to provide a controlled access point for MacKenzie Park, and if a future pedestrian bicycle route were developed along McCaw Avenue, a traffic signal would provide a controlled crossing point for non-motorized traffic across Las Positas Road (Page 4-14).

Creeks Advisory Committee Recommendations

On March 14, the Creeks Advisory Committee considered the *Upper State Street Study Report*. The Committee supported Study Recommendations to protect and restore creek environments, orient development toward creeks, establish creek side pedestrian paths as feasible in appropriate locations, and improve the “street presence” of creeks along State Street to increase public awareness and provide points of orientation along the corridor.

The Creeks Committee recommended that the Study Report Creeks Recommendation 1 – Creeks Protection include reference to use of water quality Best Management Practices, native plants, and Integrated Pest Management/ pesticide-free practices next to creeks. The Committee recommended that the City find programs and incentives, working with property owners, to achieve the Study goals.

The Committee further recommended that the Upper State Street Creeks recommendations be implemented citywide along all urban creeks, and that City Council see these measures as a stepping stone for developing and implementing more detailed citywide creek-protective development standards. The Committee concurred with including street signage at creek locations along State Street within the City capital improvements program.

A Memo will be forwarded to Park and Recreation Commission from the Creeks Advisory Committee.

Next Steps

The Upper State Street Study Report will continue to undergo public review and consideration by City advisory boards and commissions. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on April 12th to receive community input and provide recommendations. A City Council hearing to consider action on the study recommendations will be held on May 8th.

The report and associated traffic study are available on the City Web Site at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov (under *Quick Links*, click on *Major Planning Efforts*, and then *Upper State Street Study*), or a copy may be picked up at the Planning Division office at 630 Garden Street.

Attachment:

1. Recommendations from Creeks Advisory Committee
2. Copies of the Upper State Street Study Report have been provided to Commission members

SUBMITTED BY: Beatriz E. Ramírez, Project Planner

APPROVED BY: Nancy Rapp, Park & Recreation Director

cc: Nancy Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director
Jill E. Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
Paul Casey, Community Development Director
Bettie Weiss, City Planner
Browning Allen, Transportation Manager
John Ledbetter, Principal Planner
Rob Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner
Barbara Shelton, Project Planner