



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 27, 2019

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department
Engineering Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Project

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a brief presentation on the proposed De La Guerra Revitalization Project and appoint two members of the Commission to the De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Subcommittee.

DISCUSSION:

Background

De La Guerra Plaza (Plaza), designated City parkland, currently includes a horseshoe-shaped paved road, curbed sidewalks, and an open lawn area with planted palm trees. The Plaza functioned as an open public space from 1855 to 1874, when Santa Barbara's first City Hall was constructed in the middle of the Plaza. The Plaza reopened in 1924 after the removal of the old City Hall and the construction of the current City Hall located on the northeastern corner of the Plaza. The open lawn currently serves as a community park and hosts events and festivals, most notably the Old Spanish Days Fiesta Mercado.

The Plaza has seen little change since the 1920s despite numerous proposals to improve the area. Some early concepts included installing a central water fountain, a band stand, a statue facing De La Guerra, and mixed landscaping with flagstone paving. Further attempts to restore the plaza dropped after the devastating 1925 earthquake, since more public attention was placed on rebuilding the collapsed parts of Santa Barbara. The next plans for improving the Plaza emerged in the 1960s when the newly formed Downtown Organization of Santa Barbara (now Downtown Santa Barbara) presented conceptual plans to revitalize downtown by closing off De La Guerra Street between Anacapa Street and State Street to create a pedestrian enclosure adorned with plantings and a fountain. In the 1990s, architectural firms proposed other renditions for revitalizing the Plaza and adjacent Storke Placita, the passageway between the Plaza and State Street, including installing elaborate statues, decorative paving, and water fountains reflecting the Spanish revival architectural style. Further attempts to renovate the Plaza occurred from 2004 to 2011 with funding by

the City's former Redevelopment Agency (RDA). All work to address the Plaza renovation ended with the dissolution of the RDA.

Opportunity to Revitalize De La Guerra Plaza

The opportunity to revitalize the Plaza was identified in 2018 as a result of the site evaluation process for the new Santa Barbara Police Station. One of the two potential sites for the new Police Station includes the Cota Commuter Parking Lot at Cota Street and Santa Barbara Street. Since selection of this location by the City Council would displace the regular Saturday Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market, staff and Farmers Market representatives reviewed a number of potential City sites to relocate the Saturday Market. These included Parking Lot 11 (Anacapa and Haley Streets), Parking Lot 5 (Victoria and Chapala Streets), Louise Lowry Davis Center/Spencer Adams Park, Parking Lot 3 (Figueroa and Chapala Streets), De La Guerra Plaza, and Plaza Vera Cruz. Of these, De La Guerra Plaza is most feasible due to its size and shape, access, central location and long term stability. Revitalization of the Plaza would also provide the opportunity to bring De La Guerra Plaza back to its prominence as a public square and central focus of the Downtown area

Community engagement is a key first step in developing revitalization concept plans. Connections to State Street via Storke Placita, the City Hall Parking Lot, and De la Guerra Street would be part of the scope to revitalize the area. The Plaza project will require vision, forward thinking, and attention to detail, along with consideration of historic resources and existing uses.

De La Guerra Plaza Adhoc Subcommittee

In order to facilitate discussions and receive input from property owners, stakeholders, and the public regarding the potential revitalization of De La Guerra Plaza, on January 15, the City Council approved contract funding for Suzanne Elledge Planning and Permitting Services to design and implement a public outreach program. A Request for Proposals for Architectural Services is currently underway. On February 5, Council established a subcommittee of representatives of the Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission. The subcommittee would meet up to four times during the development of the conceptual plans during spring 2019.

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