



City of Santa Barbara California

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: June 4, 2009
AGENDA DATE: June 11, 2009
ITEM: Draft June 2009 Upper State Street Design Guidelines
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Division, (805) 564-5470
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I. INTRODUCTION

The attached proposed urban design guidelines for the Upper State Street Area (boundaries depicted in Chapter 2, Figures 1 and 2) encourage designs which will be compatible with their surrounding neighborhoods and also enhance Santa Barbara's distinctive built environment. It is recognized that Upper State Street is a special and distinct area of the City where specific commercial corridor development patterns have developed adjacent to several unique neighborhoods, a variety of architecture, and a desire to possess its own identity within the context of Santa Barbara's identity and character.

These guidelines were developed to carry forward the results of the Upper State Street Study and to help implement the goals and objectives outlined in the study. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide additional direction for how property owners, both public and private, can make improvements to their properties to collectively improve the visual character of the Upper State Street area. When applied, these guidelines will ensure against fragmented or incompatible development and will help prevent uncoordinated design decisions.

II. BACKGROUND

The original Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines were adopted in 1992 to work with the existing SD-2 (*Special District Zone*) development standards. The guidelines provided general direction for development design of architectural style and elements, color, exterior finishes, roofs, site planning, building heights, lighting, landscaping, and neighborhood compatibility. These July 2009 Guidelines serve as a new edition of the 1992 Guidelines.

In April 2006, recognition of community concerns about development proposals in the Upper State Street area, the Santa Barbara City Council directed staff of the Planning and Transportation Divisions to undertake a study of the Upper State Street commercial corridor between Highway 101 and Calle Laureles, working with the public, City commissions, and consultant teams. The purpose of the Study was to identify changes that could improve traffic circulation and urban design in the study area. Issues

addressed in the Study included area character and openness, landscaping and “streetscape” design, scenic views, open space and creeks, building heights and setback distances from the street, vehicle traffic, circulation and parking, and pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity in the area.

City Council specified that this effort be focused on roadway improvements and amendments to development and design standards that could occur within the existing City policy framework. Larger citywide policy issues such as land use changes, housing density and affordability, commercial growth, regional traffic, and environmental sustainability were not addressed in the study. They will be studied as part of the City General Plan update process.

A more comprehensive update to the Upper State Street Design Guidelines had been planned, however, budget constraints have delayed that process. On October 21, 2008 the Finance Committee directed staff to indefinitely postpone consultant funding of a comprehensive update to the Upper State Street Design Guidelines per the full scope of implementation of the Upper State Street Study (Study). Instead, staff was directed to complete a simplified guideline document based on the Upper State Street Study. On November 11, 2008, City Council concurred with the recommendations of the City Council Finance Committee. These guidelines communicate the design recommendations which were the result of the Upper State Street Study and public review process.

III. APPLICABILITY OF THE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines shall be applied to projects that involve the construction or exterior alterations of non-residential, multi-family, mixed use buildings or structures within the subject area. Infrastructure improvements that require review and approval by the City, including, but not limited to, street furniture, lighting, transit facilities and bicycle facilities must also comply with these guidelines.

IV. APPROACH TO UPDATING THE GUIDELINES

To update the 1992 Upper State Street Guidelines, staff completed the following tasks.

- First the Upper State Street Study (USS Study) was reformatted into a guideline format with “guidelines” replacing “recommendations”, the “Background Chapter” was revised, and recommendations for changes to the Zoning Ordinance were deleted.
- Also, portions of the USS Study not relevant in guidelines were not included in the guidelines document: public discussion summaries, extensive background information about the USS Study.
- Many of the potential transportation improvement projects described in the USS Study are not included in the Guidelines. However, transit improvement projects related to individual private project designs or which may be implemented through public-private partnerships are either described or referenced in the guidelines.
- The 1992 Upper State Street Guidelines text was incorporated into the document in appropriate chapters.
- Staff incorporated key passages from the Urban Design Guidelines in the document on the following topics: Site Planning & Building Setbacks, Automobile Parking Facilities, Open Space and Creeks. Staff did not incorporate potentially applicable compatibility text from

the Urban Design Guidelines into the document, as Staff plans to incorporate those concepts into the Architectural Board of Review Guidelines.

- In general, staff preserved the sequencing, format, and majority of text of the USS Study in the creation of the Upper State Street Design Guidelines. However, Chapter 3, Urban Design, became lengthy, and so a new Chapter focused on site design, building setbacks and parking was created. A separate chapter on that topic also helps to provide emphasis on those important topics.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff and the Environmental Analyst determined that the updates of guidelines would not result in significant impacts to the environment, and would be Categorically Exempt from further environmental review procedures under CEQA Guidelines section 15308, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment. The proposed updated guidelines are the type of provisions identified by City Council Resolution as consistent with this exemption category and therefore would require no further CEQA review:

“Creation of minor new, and minor amendments to existing land use plans, ordinances, guidelines, regulations and/or development standards for the protection of the environment which may result in changes in land use or density. Protection of the environment includes any project or activity which would prevent or reduce the degradation of air resources, water resources, land resources, mineral resources, biotic (flora and fauna) resources, cultural resources, aesthetic resources, and ambient noise. Examples of this exemption include, but are not limited to:

...

“(B) Guidelines to improve aesthetics

“(C) Development review process ordinances

“(D) Ordinances to create, expand, or amend special design districts (e.g., Hillside Design District, Highway 101 Design District, etc.)”

[From: List of City Determined Examples of Activities/Projects Qualifying as Ministerial or Categorically Exempt, 1999]

Following adoption of the updated guidelines, subsequent discretionary approval actions on individual projects would continue to be subject to CEQA environmental review procedures.

VI. NEXT STEPS

Subsequent to Planning Commission Review, the guidelines will be reviewed by the Architectural Board of Review. A new draft of the guidelines will then likely be published for final Architectural Board of Review comment and recommendation to City Council for adoption.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission Review and comment on the June 2009 Draft Upper State Street Design Guidelines and recommend and adopted by Council after the draft document is reviewed by the Architectural Board of Review.

Exhibit:

- A. June 2009 Draft Upper State Street Design Guidelines



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***** NOTE*****

Attachment A: June 2009 Draft upper State Street Design Guidelines will be distributed separately.

ATTACHMENT A

