



City of Santa Barbara California

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: September 15, 2011
AGENDA DATE: September 22, 2011
PROJECT ADDRESS: Plaza de la Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project
 MST2007-00496

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Division, (805) 564-5470
 Danny Kato, Senior Planner *DK*
 Kathleen Kennedy, Associate Planner *KAK*

I. SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL SCOPING HEARING

Public scoping hearing to accept comments from the public, agencies and Planning Commissioners on the Initial Study and proposed scope of analysis for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared for the Plaza de la Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project.

II. PROJECT LOCATION



Vicinity Map

The proposed project is located on a 2.1 acre parcel located in the Downtown neighborhood of the city of Santa Barbara in the block bounded by Anacapa, De la Guerra, State and Ortega Streets. The parcel includes the City Hall building and parking lot, Plaza de la Guerra, and Storke Placita. Plaza de la Guerra (the Plaza) consists of a raised lawn area, a U-road with parking, and the sidewalks surrounding the U-road. The project area is .47 acres and consists of the Plaza and a portion of De la Guerra Street right-of-way.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project includes lowering the grade of the Plaza lawn to be flush with the existing U-road. The width of the lawn area would be reduced by 4.5 feet. The amount of turf would be reduced from 17,332 square feet to 10,748 square feet, with permeable paving replacing a portion of the existing turf. Removable bollards (approximately 18 inches in diameter and 30 inches high) and truncated domes would be installed between the new lawn area and the U-road. The project would involve 2,500 cubic yards of cut and no fill.

The sidewalk on the western side of the Plaza would be widened by approximately 4.5 feet to create a minimum 9 foot wide sidewalk. A new curb would be installed. Because the width of the lawn area was reduced, the width of the U-road would not change.

One new crosswalk would be provided across De la Guerra Street near the U-road entry, and two new crosswalks would be provided near the south end of the U-road. The U-road, all sidewalks within the project area, and the portion of De la Guerra Street fronting the Plaza would be resurfaced with concrete with an historic finish.

There are 13 queen palm trees and one fan palm tree located within the Plaza lawn area. All of the existing queen palm trees would be removed and 22 new queen palm trees would be planted. The one existing fan palm would be protected in place, and one new fan palm tree would be planted. The historic California pepper tree located in front of City Hall would be protected, and a new chain barrier with decorative steel bollards would surround the tree. The plantings located at the north end of the Plaza would be removed.

The California Historical Landmark plaque (rock monument) at north end the Plaza would be relocated to an area adjacent to City Hall, and the three flagpoles would be relocated to the eastern edge of the lawn area. Due to the lowering of the grade, the eight existing streetlights would be removed and relocated slightly.

A new underground utility corridor would be created around the edge of the new Plaza lawn area. The utility corridor trench would be approximately 4 feet in width and 4 feet in depth. Utilities provided would include electrical, gas, water and sewer lines. The existing utilities would be either removed or abandoned in place. The utility connections for booths used during special events would be relocated. An existing electrical panel currently located within the lawn area under a tent, and another electrical panel at the north end of the Plaza would be relocated to the City Hall building. An existing fire hydrant currently located in the lawn area would be relocated to the edge of the lawn area. The Plaza would be re-graded to meet the City's requirements for storm water management.

There are currently 35 parking spaces along the U-road, and 23 spaces along De la Guerra Street for a total of 58 parking spaces in the project area. Two existing parking spaces located next to the lawn

area across from City Hall would be removed in order to provide adequate road width for emergency vehicles. Three existing parking spaces located at the south end of the U-road would be removed in order to open up the view from Storke Placita to the Plaza, and the remaining parking spaces would be reconfigured. The reconfiguration of parking on De la Guerra Street would result in an increase of one parking space. The proposed project would result in a loss of five (5) parking spaces in the U-road and an increase of one (1) parking space along De la Guerra Street, for a net loss of four (4) parking spaces in the project area.

IV. REQUIRED APPLICATIONS

The discretionary applications required for this project are:

1. Certification of Environmental Impact Report by Planning Commission.
2. Approval of development in a P-R zone by Parks and Recreation Commission (SBMC Chapter 28.37).
3. Design Review Approval by the Historic Landmarks Commission (SBMC Chapter 22.22).

V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

An Initial Study was prepared for the project, and a Notice of Preparation for an EIR was issued on September 2, 2011 for a 30-day public review and comment period that extends through Monday, October 3, 2011. Written comments should be sent to the attention of Kathleen Kennedy, Associate Planner, at the City Planning Division, P.O. Box 1990, Santa Barbara, CA 93102-1990, or via e-mail at KKennedy@SantaBarbaraCA.gov. Following the end of the public comment period, Staff will refine the EIR scope of analysis as necessary, and proceed with preparation of a Draft EIR. A subsequent public review period will be held to receive comments on the Draft EIR, followed by preparation of a proposed Final EIR and public hearing before the Planning Commission to certify the proposed Final EIR.

VI. PROPOSED EIR SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

The Initial Study evaluates the potential environmental effects resulting from the proposed project. Potentially significant environmental effects associated with Cultural Resources will be further evaluated in the EIR. Given the ongoing discussion concerning the design and parking/circulation at the Plaza, the applicant has requested that the project's impacts on Circulation also be further evaluated in the EIR. The Initial Study includes proposed measures to mitigate potentially significant impacts to Biological Resources to a less than significant level. All other impacts were determined to be either less than significant or there were no impacts. Mitigation measures and alternatives to the project that can feasibly avoid or reduce significant impacts will also be considered as part of the EIR.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold an environmental hearing to receive comments from the public, agencies and Commissioners on the proposed EIR scope of analysis. No action will be taken at this hearing on the environmental document or the project. Subsequent Planning

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Commission hearings will be scheduled to take comment on the Draft EIR, and consider actions to adopt the final environmental document.

Exhibit: Draft Initial Study (previously provided under separate cover; available upon request or on the City's website: http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/Environmental_Documents/)