



# City of Santa Barbara

## PLANNING COMMISSION

### MINUTES

OCTOBER 15, 2020

1:00 P.M.

City Hall, Council Chambers

735 Anacapa Street

[SantaBarbaraCA.gov](http://SantaBarbaraCA.gov)

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Deborah L. Schwartz, Chair  
Lesley Wiscomb, Vice Chair  
Roxana Bonderson  
Gabriel Escobedo  
Jay D. Higgins  
Sheila Lodge

#### STAFF:

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney  
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner  
Heidi Reidel, Commission Secretary

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### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schwartz called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

### I. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Roxana Bonderson, Gabriel Escobedo, Jay D. Higgins, Sheila Lodge, Deborah L. Schwartz, and Lesley Wiscomb

### STAFF PRESENT

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney  
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner  
Robert J. Dayton, Transportation Planning and Parking Manager  
Jason Harris, Economic Development Manager  
Joshua Haggmark, Water Resources Manager  
Dakota Corey, Administrative Analyst II  
Ellen Kokinda, Planning Analyst  
Timmy Bolton, Associate Planner  
Tony Ruggieri, City TV Production Supervisor  
Heidi Reidel, Commission Secretary

### II. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

A. Requests for continuances, withdrawals, postponements, or addition of ex-agenda items:

Ms. DeBusk announced that the agenda order was revised to have the Visioning the Future of Downtown State Street item appear before the Water Supply Planning Overview item.

**B. Announcements and appeals:**

Ms. DeBusk announced the following:

1. The Planning Commission's denial of the Paseo Nuevo Development Agreement was appealed to City Council and will be heard on December 8, 2020. A Planning Commission representative is required to attend.
2. Heidi Reidel accepted a position with the Planning Department as a Planning Technician for the Sign Committee.
3. City Council upheld the Planning Commission's decision on the Olive Mill Roundabout on Tuesday, October 13, 2020.

**C. Review, consideration, and action on the following draft Planning Commission minutes and resolutions:**

1. September 10, 2020 Planning Commission Minutes
2. Planning Commission Resolution No. 008-20  
2814 Serena Road

**MOTION: Lodge /Wiscomb**

Approve the minutes and resolution as presented.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 7 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

3. September 17, 2020 Planning Commission Minutes
4. Planning Commission Resolution No. 009-20  
635 E Gutierrez Street

**MOTION: Wiscomb /Bonderson**

Approve the minutes and resolution as presented.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 Noes: 0 Abstain: 1 (Reed) Absent: 0

**D. Comments from members of the public pertaining to items not on this agenda:**

Public comment opened at 1:10 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed.

**III. DISCUSSION ITEMS****A. ACTUAL TIME: 1:11 P.M.****AIA DESIGN CHARRETTE OVERVIEW**

Presentation by the Santa Barbara Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) on their 2020 Design Charrette to Reinvigorate, Reinvent, Reimagine, and Repurpose our Downtown with housing, energy, and life.

Detlev Peikert, AIASB, gave the Applicant presentation, and was joined by Ellen Bildsten, AIASB; and Cassandra Ensberg, AIASB.

Public comment opened at 1:33 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed.

**Discussion held.**

**\* THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 1:59 TO 2:05 P.M. \***

**B. ACTUAL TIME: 2:05 P.M.****VISIONING THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN STATE STREET**

Discussion and feedback to the State Street Subcommittee on the Planning Commission's vision for a redesigned State Street.

Robert J. Dayton, Transportation Planning and Parking Manager, gave the Staff presentation. Jason Harris, Economic Development Manager was available to answer questions.

Public comment opened at 2:34 p.m.

Written correspondence from Francesca Galt, Nancy Mullholland, and Pamela Boehr was acknowledged.

Public comment closed at 2:36 p.m.

**Commissioner comments:**

Commissioner Lodge:

- Pleased that people want to see State Street closed.
- Believes we should create a community living room like Boulder, Colorado.
- Should be a place at all times with generations of family walking down the street.
- We need to find a reason for locals to come downtown – it can't be all about retail.
- Planning must be realistic and not expect retail to return to the way it was.
- Believes it's important to keep side streets and cross streets open.
- Canopy trees and landscaping will make it more inviting.
- Concerned about bicycles on State Street.
- Recommends changing the name to Paseo Estado.

## Commissioner Bonderson:

- Downtown was seeing issues before the pandemic, which are now being addressed, such as retail moving on-line and a need for affordable housing.
- Supports closing State Street and restricting vehicular traffic in favor of walking or biking.
- There is a conflict between walking and biking. Cyclists have made pedestrian spaces feel unsafe.
- Promenade should be accessible and worth the time and money of busing or parking.
- Public transportation schedules can be a limitation for customers.
- Disabled parking availability is also an important concern.
- State Street is the spine of downtown center and revitalization will enhance a sense of community and connection. State Street is a main artery that ties our urban fabric together.
- We need a city center point or attraction as a place to gather; a “heart.”
- Appreciates the surveys and data collection.
- Downtown needs an entry way and a gateway.
- Glad that the budget for downtown revitalization was approved.

## Commissioner Escobedo:

- With the decline of retail, State Street has declined.
- The Funk Zone offers a unique, authentic identity which State Street lacks.
- This is a good project to be doing in conjunction with incentivizing housing downtown.
- Agrees with Commissioner Lodge that this should be the living room of Santa Barbara.
- Providing an attractive experience to locals will draw tourists as well.
- Suggests breaking up State Street into districts. For example, a theater district, an arts district, a kid district with input from the Moxi.
- Agrees that there is friction between pedestrians and cyclists currently, but believes we can plan a solution that accommodates both.
- Accessibility should be part of the vision and is critical.
- Need to consider how to keep adjacent streets active.
- Greenery is important; should have a park/plaza feel.
- A successful redesign should be geared toward locals, with local shops and kiosk vendors. Creating a local experience provides 12 months of business. And, if locals are interested, tourists will be too.
- Marry housing to the living room on State Street.
- More than one mode of transportation is ideal.
- The experience should evolve as you move through.

## Commissioner Higgins:

- Economic development and sales tax are reasons to improve State Street.
- We need to reintroduce locals to State Street.
- State Street should be closed to vehicles.
- Riding a bike down State Street is more pleasant now that it is closed.
- A walk-only on the 500 block is sufficient.
- We should focus on bringing locals and families to State Street. It should be a place to see friends.
- As there are bars in the Funk Zone, that doesn't need to be the only way to get people downtown.
- Homelessness is an issue.
- The transition between the 500 and 600 blocks of State Street is stark. There needs to be some form of uniformity.
- Likes the idea of an arch or gateway to let people know they're entering a new part of the city.

## Vice Chair Wiscomb:

- State Street is a key component for a holistic approach to redesigning downtown.
- There is too much retail downtown and a limited opportunity for attracting new retail.
- This is an opportunity for a blended use with residential, office, hospitality, food, and grocery.
- We have an opportunity to create a place with sustainable economic growth.
- Marry public policy changes in the CBD with the private sector in a successful way.
- Likes the concept of a community living room.
- State Street needs an authentic identity.
- State Street should be an attractive, clean and safe place to live, work and play. All are welcome, whether to shop or sit.
- It should be closed to vehicles.
- Would like to see local artists and businesses supported. Live music, art, architecture, landscaping are all highlighted.
- Likes the idea of districts.
- Agrees that State Street must be accessible to all.
- Agrees there should be lots of greenery.
- If we develop State Street to be a sustainable economic autonomy, we're going to have reliable labor force incomes, profitable business opportunities, and adequate tax revenues for maintaining services and infrastructure.
- Provide visual connectivity to the mountains.
- Must provide the flexibility to serve our community's diverse social, cultural, historic, economic, and environmental vitality.

## Commissioner Reed:

- Our downtown needs vision and our community has a rich history of crafting vision.
- We need to give people good reasons to visit and return to downtown.
- Investing in redesign benefits our local economy by creating jobs, increasing property values, and attracting locals and tourists.
- Envisions a mixed-use environment.
- Should be child friendly with child oriented amenities.
- Nice spaces allow and encourage people to connect.
- All senses should tell you you're in the heart of Santa Barbara; rich in culture, rich in history.
- The built environment harmonizes with the natural environment.
- If successfully redesigned, State Street can re-establish an authentic character through a contemporary lens.
- The street must identify with the core values of our City.

## Chair Schwartz:

- State Street has been a dividing point rather than a convening point.
- We've allowed State Street to linger behind societal change and community need. We're overdue to rethink, re-envision it.
- Recommends a holistic approach to the redesign of all of downtown because it will effect everything around it.
- There is a heavy cost to relying too heavily on tourism.
- State Street should not be a corridor; it's not just about the street.
- The experience should be financially, physically and environmentally welcoming for all people; everyone should have a place and a space.
- It needs to be a "home" to locals.
- There needs to be vitality and liveliness; should be experiential.
- There should be an experience available for every income level.
- This is an opportunity to take back the mantle of the birthplace of the environmental movement.
- Every policy and project should consider housing, transportation, and environmental sustainability.
- Likes the idea of districts and suggests a soft, transitional way to go from one district to the next so it doesn't feel like Disneyland.
- We need new vocabulary to help design a new downtown.
- We need a way to move softly from one district to another, and to create excitement and intrigue.

**\* THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 4:16 TO 4:25 P.M. \***

**C. ACTUAL TIME: 4:25 P.M.****WATER SUPPLY PLANNING OVERVIEW**

Presentation on the City's Enhanced Urban Water Management Plan.

Joshua Haggmark, Water Resources Manager, gave the Staff presentation. Dakota Corey, Administrative Analyst II and Michelle Maddaus, Maddaus Water Management, were available to answer questions.

Public comment opened at 5:03 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed.

**Discussion held. Planning Commission comments made.**

**IV. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA****ACTUAL TIME: 5:45 P.M.****A. Committee and Liaison Reports:****1. Staff Hearing Officer Liaison Report**

Commissioner Higgins reported on the Staff Hearing Officer meeting cancellations and withdrawn appeal.

**2. Other Committee and Liaison Reports**

- a. Vice Chair Wiscomb reported on the September 23, 2020 meeting of the Commercial Fisherman Subcommittee and announced the November 20, 2020 Plaza De La Guerra Subcommittee and the October 21, 2020 meeting of the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan Subcommittee.
- b. Commissioner Bonderson announced the October 22, 2020 meeting of the Transportation and Circulation Committee.
- c. Commissioner Escobedo noted that today is the last day to complete the 2020 Census.
- d. Chair Schwartz agreed to represent the Planning Commission at the Paseo Nuevo appeal at City Council on December 8, 2020.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Schwartz adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

Submitted by,

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Heidi Reidel, Commission Secretary

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