

Goal 12 *ESTABLISH A PROCESS TO INCLUDE NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE EFFECTS OF TRAFFIC ON RESIDENTIAL STREETS*

Develop a mechanism for monitoring changes to all neighborhoods and for addressing those changes if appropriate. The mechanism should take the form of a methodology or procedure for assessing and responding to neighborhood traffic impacts both during periodic reviews and upon neighborhood request. Any review and discussion of neighborhood through traffic should be addressed on an area-wide basis so that all segments of the community, including persons representing commercial and industrial areas, can participate in creating solutions to a given traffic problem.

ESTABLISH A PROCESS TO INCLUDE BUSINESS AND NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE EFFECTS OF TRAFFIC ALONG BUSINESS CORRIDORS

Establish a process to include businesses and non-residential property owners in the discussion of the effects of traffic along business corridors. Opportunity to comment on the effects of traffic on business would provide assurance that future transportation policies support economic vitality. Any review and discussion of traffic in and around business areas should be addressed on an area-wide basis so that all segments of the community including persons representing surrounding residential areas, can participate in creating solutions to a given traffic problem.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to give residents, business owners, property owners, and commercial and residential tenants the opportunity to provide input and help find solutions to address traffic problems and mobility issues. This chapter suggests that a cooperative approach between people in an affected area is the best approach to finding a workable solution to these issues. In this way, people who share common paths of travel and have different needs, such as residents, business owners, industrial users, or service providers, can be considered as one planning area.

Over the years, some of Santa Barbara's residential neighborhoods have experienced a steady increase in traffic volumes which have affected the livability of many neighborhoods. Consequently, the use of the residential street as an interactive community space has declined. For example, as traffic volumes increase, the ability of children and adults to use the street for recreational activities diminishes. Many City residents have already expressed concern regarding high levels of noise pollution along freeway and major transportation corridors. In response, people may open front windows less and may not use front rooms to sleep. In addition, the speed of passing cars affects the livability of streets and affects access to and from the area, as well as in and out of driveways. Automobile traffic also creates a barrier to visiting neighbors on the other side of the street. Studies have shown that on high volume streets, fewer neighbors know each other and there is general perception of unfriendliness.

Traffic issues also continue to arise in commercial areas. The widening of streets and the increased speed of passing cars are detrimental to the free movement of people and goods in commercial areas. Ease of access to business corridors and free mobility between them are highly important to the economic vitality of an area. Congested streets and high speeds make access to commercial areas difficult, and the associated air and noise pollution makes them less attractive to patrons.

Due in part to these increasing traffic volumes, the number of requests to respond to traffic problems in residential, commercial, and mixed/multiple use areas has also increased. The negative effects of traffic on the quality of life and the economic vitality of an area are clear, and the City must provide leadership and be proactive in addressing related concerns and issues. However, a cooperative effort between all property owners and tenants in a given area is imperative to reach an equitable and workable solution for all.

CONSTRAINTS

The desire to use the automobile for transportation directly conflicts with a desire to reduce traffic volumes on City streets. The City of Santa Barbara is largely made up of a grid roadway system with few cul-de-sac streets. The benefit of this type of layout is the ability to effectively limit the number of arterial streets necessary to carry City traffic. However, as traffic volumes increase and arterials become congested, drivers in commercial areas become frustrated resulting in traffic spreading to neighborhood streets or drivers avoiding congested areas. Although closing such streets to through traffic would certainly enhance the livability of neighborhoods, the corresponding traffic congestion on arterial streets (e.g. streets in predominantly commercial areas) causes problems for business owners and patrons. In addition, there are many areas of the City where streets were not developed in the grid pattern (e.g. the Foothill, Las Positas, and Samarkand areas), which aggravates existing traffic flow problems because of a lack of alternative routes.

The City's inability to handle more automobile traffic is a growing concern. Increases in traffic are caused by commercial and residential growth both inside and outside of the City. Although much of the City's increased traffic has been attributed to commercial growth, neighborhood growth is also a factor. With each additional household, approximately 10 new trips are added to the street. Streets "down stream" from new residential developments are also affected. While the traffic generated by one new home is seldom noticed, the development of numerous residential units over time can dramatically change the character of a neighborhood.

This Chapter looks at ways that community members can work together to find solutions to traffic problems generated by increased automobile use. These solutions to address traffic issues in an area will be called a Neighborhood or Business Area Mobility Plan. As initiated by the public, the City will assist area groups in developing Neighborhood or Business Area Mobility Plans. These plans are described below.

OPPORTUNITIES

A major goal of this element is to create transportation options that effectively reduce dependency on the automobile. It is envisioned that the increased utilization of transit and alternate forms of transportation throughout the City will go a long way toward relieving increasing levels of automobile traffic and traffic congestion. However, vehicular traffic may continue to increase and the car's presence may continue to create livability problems. The City has an opportunity to design a community process to address the negative effects of the car without dramatically reducing mobility and accessibility. This community process shall be known as the Traffic Management Program.

The Traffic Management Program will be designed to guide neighborhoods, businesses, and mixed use areas in the development of specific plans addressing mobility and traffic issues. The Traffic Management Program will present a range of options to help address specific mobility and traffic issues, present the methodology for implementing the desired actions, explain the potential costs and benefits of the desired actions, and explain the public process required to implement desired actions. In essence, this program will present a method to address community mobility and traffic issues with an emphasis on community participation, education, and ownership.

Property owners and tenants will use the Traffic Management Program as a guide to create either a Neighborhood or Business Area Mobility Plan. These plans, developed with the assistance of City Staff, will detail the desired methods and implementation measures to address a particular mobility or traffic issue. Community members representing both residential and business interests in a given area will convene to address traffic problems and find mutually agreeable solutions. A short video describing the process of developing a Neighborhood or Business Area Mobility Plan will be provided. Developing a traffic plan can be a unifying process that will introduce residents and business owners to one another and create a spirit of community. A successful process will also give residents and business owners a sense of responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

For many years, traffic solutions have focused on accommodating the car, sometimes at the expense of other forms of travel or the surrounding area. When addressing traffic problems it should be recognized that streets have more functions than simply moving cars. Streets are an integral part of the surrounding area and should be treated as such. The residential street right-of-way should be treated as an extension of the home and outdoor living space for the neighborhood. Streets serving commercial areas should be treated as an extension of the adjacent businesses to help attract shoppers. Therefore, policies designed to reduce the automobile's negative effects should not be dictated solely by a traditional traffic engineering approach. Solutions need to include land use planning and encompass a wide range of innovative strategies with an emphasis on community participation, safety, and mobility.

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

12.1 Improve livability and economic vitality by creating a program that describes a process for residents, tenants, property owners, business owners, and other interested parties in an area or corridor, to address mobility issues and mitigate impacts of vehicular traffic.

12.1.1 Create a Traffic Management Program which will:

- detail a process to develop and implement Neighborhood Area and Business Area Mobility Plans that address the traffic and mobility concerns of an impacted area, including the concerns of any residential, commercial, mixed use, industrial, recreational, and service uses in the area. The types of issues that this plan is intended to address include: transit issues; mobility issues; maintenance issues; pedestrian and bicycle connections; through traffic volumes; visual impacts; traffic speeds; noise; safety for children and pedestrians; and collisions,
- detail the process required for education on traffic issues, implementation, potential costs and benefits of various alternatives addressing mobility and traffic issues, conflict resolution strategies, the public hearing and design review process, and future enforcement and monitoring,
- describe various options available to address traffic issues such as:
 - encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation to reduce vehicle traffic,
 - speed humps,
 - chokers,
 - street closures,
 - partial street closures,
 - raised intersections,
 - roundabouts,
 - neighborhood traffic circles,
 - street trees,
 - curb bulbs,
 - loading/unloading areas,
 - distances for vehicles leaving commercial facilities to reduce conflicts with bicycles and pedestrians,
 - providing wide sidewalks for pedestrian travel and outdoor display/activity areas, where appropriate,
 - access ramps,

- landscaping to enhance storefront displays and not distract from or conceal those displays, and
- providing transit facilities,
- encourage community members to identify innovative solutions to address traffic problems,
- include the location of information sources related to traffic, including but not limited to the following:
 - status of current projects or improvements,
 - other applicable area plans, and
 - neighborhood traffic statistics such as traffic counts, speeds, local vs. cut-through traffic, truck traffic,
- describe a process by which concerned community members can effectively organize to address traffic related issues, and
- include video instruction detailing the process for developing Neighborhood Area and Business Area Mobility Plans.

12.1.2 The City shall fund a pilot Traffic Management Program to assess the efficiency/impact of such programs and to quantify the staff and resources needed to implement this program. The City shall dedicate the necessary staff and resources to implement the program.

12.1.3 Schedule a regular review and monitoring cycle of Neighborhood Area and Business Area Mobility Plans to address changing conditions. Prepare the Plans in advance of the Public Works' street maintenance cycle to ensure community input.

NEIGHBORHOOD AREA MOBILITY PLAN

12.2 Improve livability and economic vitality by working with residents, tenants, property owners, business owners, and other interested parties of an impacted area or corridor to mitigate the impacts of vehicular traffic. The City shall consult with residents, property owners, and commercial tenants located in close proximity to any corridor or street before implementing improvements that could result in changes to the existing characteristics of that corridor or street, its traffic patterns or infrastructure. Improvements shall be consistent with Neighborhood Area Mobility Plans.

12.2.1 Work with residents, tenants, adjacent business owners, property owners, and other interested parties to create Neighborhood Area Mobility Plans that:

- address community traffic concerns, including decreased access due to congestion, visual impacts, maintenance issues, traffic speeds, and high volumes that contribute to noise and collisions, and discourage pedestrian activity,
- prevent the diversion of traffic problems from one area to another, and
- facilitate the communication and interaction between the various areas to help coordinate efforts and strengthen the connections and interrelationships.

BUSINESS AREA MOBILITY PLAN

12.3 Sustain or improve economic vitality and quality of life in business areas or corridors by working with property owners, business owners, residents, tenants, and other interested parties to mitigate the impacts of vehicular traffic in business areas. The City shall consult with commercial tenants, property owners, and residents located in close proximity to any corridor or street before implementing improvements that could result in changes to the existing characteristics of that corridor or street, its traffic patterns or infrastructure. Improvements shall be consistent with Business Area Mobility Plans.

12.3.1 Work with residents, tenants, adjacent businesses owners, property owners, and other interested parties to create Business Area Mobility Plans that:

- address community traffic concerns, including decreased access due to congestion, visual impacts, maintenance issues, traffic speeds, and high volumes that contribute to noise and collisions, and discourage pedestrian activity,
- prevent the diversion of traffic problems from one area to another, and
- facilitate the communication and interaction between the various areas to help coordinate efforts and strengthen the connections and interrelationships.