



City of Santa Barbara

DE LA GUERRA PLAZA REVITALIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 26, 2021

8:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

This meeting was conducted electronically

SantaBarbaraCA.gov

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

City Council

Kristen Sneddon *Chair*
Meagan Harmon

Planning Commission

Lesley Wiscomb *Vice Chair*
Barrett Reed

Historic Landmarks Commission

Michael Drury
Steve Hausz

Parks and Recreation Commission

Beebe Longstreet
Roger Perry

Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market

Sam Edelman

Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation

Anne Petersen, Ph.D.

ALTERNATE MEMBERS:

None

STAFF:

Brad Hess, Principal Project Manager
Sara Iza, Senior Planner
Norma Cervantes, Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Sneddon opened the meeting at 8:32 a.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Kristen Sneddon, Lesley Wiscomb, Meagan Harmon, Steve Hausz, Michael Drury, Beebe Longstreet, Roger Perry, and Anne Petersen, Ph.D.

Absent: Sam Edelman

STAFF PRESENT

Rebecca Bjork, Interim Community Development Director
Joshua Haggmark, Acting Public Works Director
Brian D'Amour, City Engineer
Brad Hess, Principal Project Manager
Sara Iza, Senior Planner
Beth Anna Cornett, Project Planner
Kathleen Kennedy, Project Planner
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner II

INVITED SPEAKERS

Lief McKay, RRM Design Group

II. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

A. Announcements

Michael Drury stated he needed to leave at 09:50 AM. No other announcements were made.

B. Agenda review/Changes

No changes

III. AGENDA ITEMS

TIME: 8:34 A.M.

A. Discussion on Feedback from Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC). Chair Sneddon gave an opening remark regarding the format for the meeting and turned it over to Mr. Hess to begin the presentation.

Mr. Hess gave a summary of the Historic Landmark Commission's review of the project and the goal for today's meeting. To take the comments from HLC and evaluate with new perspective why the design elements are in the plan and assess how strongly the Committee feels about them in order to understand the path forward. Mr. Hess noted that Committee member Longstreet had a great idea to have a joint work session between the Committee and the HLC to have a broader discussion, and will be coordinated by Community Development.

The presentation was divided into three sections: Those in Green were items that were generally agreed upon; the Orange were those that need to be studied, modified or refined, and; those in Red were those with which the HLC had issues..

Green: Arcade, Pedestrian only, no grass – single level surface.

Orange: Water Feature, consider single fountain in middle, consider different tree species and layout.

Red: Water Feature; strengthen connection to Casa De la Guerra; simplify layout/pattern of surface materials.

The topics for the day: Simplification of Design, Water Feature, Focal Points and Trees.

Mr. Hess invited Mr. Drury and Mr. Hausz to speak about their perspective on the HLC Meeting..

Simplification of the Design

Mr. McKay began his presentation discussing the existing layout and how to simplify the design, providing visual options of materials and patterns, the arcade revision, and some ground level perspective renderings.

Committee Discussion followed. Some of the highlights from the discussion are as follows:

- Connection to State Street;
- The simplification of the design was suggested due to over-emphasized patterns;
- Two focal points may be better changed to 1 or 3 to balance emphasis;
- Pavement patterns with same tone or material can add richness;
- This will help ADA requirements; and
- Functionality takes priority – not too simple.

Water Feature

Mr. McKay presented on a reduced size feature in the same location. He showed pictures of water features in other locations that are designed to be hidden blend in, and still achieve the goal.

Committee Discussion followed. Some of the highlights from the discussion are as follows:

- An at-grade fountain that will not interfere with other features;
- Vertical/Traditional Fountain would not be approved by City Council; too many issues;
- Cooling feature for the space;
- Creates activation;
- A-traditional is okay;
- Combination of art and water; Historically significant as well;
- Attracts/brings Families;
- Not a play area or play environment; it's a business environment;
- Not a destination location for most; and
- Consolidate some of the ideas – art, water, history.

Focal Points

Mr. McKay continued the presentation discussing focal points, art, and the many different ways to approach this. Mr. Hess introduced the concept of a walking tour of the plaza using technology to guide those interested in the history, the architecture, the art and other key elements. It was made clear this is not the art discussion but rather part of the overall design. The Committee then discussed this and some of the highlights are as follows:

- Ground level perspectives will be helpful for this topic;
- At Grade medallions that tell a story or educate is exciting;
- In combination with a walking tour capability, this gives exciting opportunities;
- Potentially making them more random in location;
- Accessory art possibilities, such as footprints, that lead others to Plaza;
- Art competition for spaces;

- Art topic needs more voices to weigh in – separate locations from the art;
- Concern for bronze design parameters too rigid in design; more organic in nature with sense of surprise;
- Sense of discovery;
- Combination of art and water may limit both; and
- Focal points could be timeline if linear.

Trees

Mr. McKay presented on the changes made to the tree plan previously proposed.

The species selection and the locations of the trees was discussed. Most plazas are more linear and this allows the middle space to remain open. The species recommendations now are olive trees for their traditional nature, the Palo Verde, and the pink trumpet tree for commensurate size to the olive and beautiful color. The randomness of the trees and the size of the tree wells was noted as a suggestion from HLC.

The Committee discussion followed and some highlights from the discussion are as follows:

- Color is great – color at different times of the year is preferred;
- Randomness is preferred;
- Tree Wells preferred for seating, art opportunity and shade;
- Variety in trees is good;
- Olives are slow growing – anticipate that for shade;
- Mature olive trees preferred – beautiful structure;
- Olives tie into the Casa de la Guerra; iconic tree;
- Potential clusters of trees could work; and
- This discussion reflects the positive input and response from HLC comments and input.

General Comments Roundtable

- Strong support for Joint Work Session with HLC;
- Too early for simplicity discussion in full – need at grade renderings first;
- Joint Meeting needs to have more views of planters, lighting;
- Plan View is challenging – need at grade renderings;
- Randomness of trees and planters should not impede use of space;
- Outreach to businesses on west side to determine what is beneficial;
- Continue to work toward connectivity to Casa de la Guerra;
- Keep surfaces different between Plaza and Casa;
- Simplicity is good and make geometric lines more subtle; and
- Collection of public comments.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment opened at 10:38 a.m., and the following individuals spoke:

1. Anna Marie Gott – warned against a water feature, stating other cities are closing their water features due to health concerns, vandalism, homeless use, and poor behavior. These other cities have needed security for their water feature. She stated it is not clear how one tells the story of the Chumash experience. Lastly, she warned against giving public space for private use in the plaza.
2. Mary Louise Days – Recorded history for a walking tour has been done and links are available at the conservancy downtown. QR codes are available in the El Presidio State Park, if we need examples.
3. Fred Sweeney – Stated that the design we have is more Italian and not Spanish, which is our heritage. Today's needs, such as a water feature, may be important in today's needs but may not be appropriate in the center.
4. Richard Closson – Appreciated what a great meeting this was. He wants the Committee aware of the Paseo Grid and the request to allude to that. Keep the Casa De La Guerra as a focus. Referred to plaza in Sienna, Italy that has no water and does well. The western edge businesses need to be involved with the seating. Walking tour is a good idea for more information to visitors. The twin features in plan view, looks more Italian. Make sure the olive trees are fruitless..
5. Antoinette Cordero – She asked what this project objective is by drastically changing what is there. Wants design to be consistent to what the use will be. Concerned about surface materials not being natural. Taking public space for private use is a concern. Wants a more natural design with concern for heat radiation and water runoff.
6. Anna Marie Gott – She reiterated the concern for businesses allowed to operate in a public space. This means the public is subsidizing private business to operate for free. It appears we are creating additional business space for them and no one else. Look at the misuse of public land for private profit. Insure fair market value is achieved.

Public comment closed at 11:00 a.m.

V. NEXT STEPS

TIME: 11:01 A.M.

- A. Review of City Development Review Process
Steps shown on presentation.
- B. Schedule Joint Work Session with Historic Landmarks Commission.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sneddon adjourned the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

TBD