



City of Santa Barbara

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

APRIL 18, 2024

1:00 P.M.
City Hall, Council Chambers
735 Anacapa Street
SantaBarbaraCA.gov

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

John M. Baucke, *Chair*
Devon Wardlow, *Vice Chair*
Brian Barnwell
Lucille Boss
Donald DeLuccio
Sheila Lodge
Lesley Wiscomb

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON:

Mike Jordan

STAFF:

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney
Megan Arciniega, Senior Planner
Mariah Johnson, Commission Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

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

I. ROLL CALL

Chair John M. Baucke, Vice Chair Devon Wardlow, Commissioners Brian Barnwell, Lucille Boss, Donald DeLuccio, Sheila Lodge (until 5:11 p.m.), and Lesley Wiscomb

Absent: None

STAFF PRESENT

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney
Megan Arciniega, Senior Planner
Jessica Grant, Supervising Transportation Planner
Patsy Price, Contract Planner
Christopher Bell, City TV Production Supervisor
Janet Ahern, City TV Production Specialist
Mariah Johnson, Commission Secretary

II. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

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

No requests.

B. Announcements and appeals:

No announcements.

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

1. March 14, 2024 Planning Commission Minutes
2. March 21, 2024 Planning Commission Minutes
3. Planning Commission Resolution No. 004-24
1533 Shoreline Drive
4. Planning Commission Resolution No. 005-24
531 E Ortega Street
5. Planning Commission Resolution No. 006-24
324 W Montecito Street

MOTION: DeLuccio / Wardlow

Approve the minutes and resolutions as presented.

The motion carried by the following vote:
Ayes: 7 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

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

No public comment.

III. NEW ITEM

ACTUAL TIME: 1:03 P.M.

3805 STATE STREET

Assessor’s Parcel Number: 051-010-012, -013, -014
 Zoning Designation: C-G (Commercial General) / USS (Upper State Street Area Overlay)
 Application Number: PRE2022-00216
 Owner: MCP Santa Barbara, LLC; Matthew Taylor, Managing Member
 Applicant: Gelare Macon, Flowers & Associates, Inc.

The 14.9-acre site is currently developed with a multi-story commercial structure (Macy’s), four commercial structures that are part of La Cumbre Plaza, and on-site parking. The proposed project involves demolition of the Macy’s building and on-site parking and construction of a 642-unit mixed-use housing project under the City’s Average Unit-Size Density (AUD) Incentive Program, including moderate- and very-low-income affordable units, senior option units, market-rate units, and a variety of retail, dining, commercial and public spaces. A subdivision of the single legal lot into two parcels, thereby creating a new 8.7-acre site for the new development, is proposed. The project includes approximately 27,748 gross square feet of commercial space, 76 studio, 341 one-bedroom, 205 two-bedroom, 20 three-bedroom units, a total of 1,039 parking spaces, 13 loading spaces, 642 bicycle parking spaces, and an open yard design area of

approximately 36,727 square feet with common shared amenities. The project would consist of six separate buildings at varying heights from one to six stories. The project qualifies for a density bonus and incentives and concessions under State density bonus law and is proposing several development standard waivers. Site grading in the amount of approximately 104,000 cubic yards of cut and 15,000 cubic yards of fill would be required to establish appropriate site drainage, infrastructure, and access throughout the site. Sidewalks, walkways and bicycle facilities would be enhanced and/or installed as well as enhancements to multiple ingress/egress points for vehicle entry.

The project is being presented to the Planning Commission for AUD concept review and comments only, pursuant to SBMC §30.150.060; no decisions will be made at this meeting, nor will any determination be made regarding environmental review of the proposed project.

Patsy Price, Contract Planner, gave the staff presentation and Jessica Grant, Supervising Transportation Planner was available to answer questions.

Matthew Taylor, MCP Santa Barbara, LLC, Managing Member gave the applicant presentation, and was joined by Brian Cearnal, Architect, Cearnal Collective; Chelsea Johnson, Architect, David Baker Architects; Scott Capps, Landscape Architect, EPTDesign; Christine Pierron, Architect, Cearnal Collective; and Daniel Simons, Principal, David Baker Architects.

Public comment opened at 1:58 p.m., and the following individuals spoke:

1. Dustin Hoiseth
2. Steve Fort
3. Nick Storr
4. Pedro Toscano
5. Fred Sweeney
6. Steve Johnson

Written correspondence from Steve & Celia Fort, Kasey Downey, Dennis Doordan, Steven Johnson, Carson Bruno, Rebecca Tannebring Tucker, Patricia Saley, Nina Meyer, Paulina Conn, M Banister, Gerrie Fausett, Strong Towns Santa Barbara, Tatiana, Dylan Casey & James M. Lloyd, and Tamara & Jim Diamond was acknowledged.

Public comment closed at 2:17 p.m.

*** THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 3:19 TO 3:28 P.M. ***

Commissioner comments:

Commissioner Wiscomb:

- Agrees with the public commenter that said this is not a housing project, but it is creation of a new neighborhood. She believes that the applicant team is on its way to a thoughtful and exciting design.
- At the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) Conceptual Review, Board Member Six appropriately stated that this development should provide a high standard of livability. She does think it is making great progress towards that.

- Although the open yard is deficient, the open space provided in lieu of building C2 and the community plaza are exciting and more than adequate. It will be well used by not only the people that live in the development, but also the public. She is fine with a reduction in open yard given the other open space included in the development.
- During the Planning Commission (PC) site visit, Ms. Pierron mentioned that the paseos have been widened based on a comment made by an ABR member at their Conceptual Review. This is a great change and the shade studies in the applicant presentation show there are not cavernous spaces.
- Appreciates the thoughtful work that has gone into the transit vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections throughout and adjacent to the development. As time goes on the City's transportation is going to change, so she is grateful for the work that has been done.
- Agrees with the comment from ABR Board Member Six at their Conceptual Review that connections to the remaining retail should be stronger. There might be a way to highlight them even though they are not part of this project.
- Appreciates the communal areas throughout the project being open to the public; it's given the project a true neighborhood feel that includes the central plaza, community plazas, pedestrian paseos, and pedestrian corridors.
- Many details haven't been worked out yet to make this development special. At the site visit, Commissioner Barnwell mentioned that if the olive trees must come out, the wood should be used by artists. She thinks that is a great idea. As the project evolves, take advantage of any valuable materials that come from the demolition of Macy's that can be reused in the project. Take advantage of any trees that may be relocated on or off site.
- Identify opportunities for art throughout the site. Consider using local artists.
- Encourages the applicant to continue working with the Housing Authority. There is a great opportunity to partner with them to manage the affordable deed restricted housing.
- Thinks the diversity in the size of the retail spaces is interesting and well thought out.
- Appreciates the flexibility of the central plaza.
- Appreciates the new park. Some public commenters mentioned amenities for the park. There is an opportunity to have a play area or something for neighborhood kids to utilize.
- Over a thousand parking spaces sounds immense, so she hopes for a reduction in parking.
- The relationship of the project to the surrounding area in terms of the transportation, framework plan, etc. is important.
- With the magnitude of this project there are opportunities to provide other forms of deed restricted housing and workforce housing beyond the required 81 units for the City.
- Commissioner Lodge mentioned that PC is not the decision-making body on this important land use project. There is no reason PC should not be the decision-making body on this particular project, it's incredibly frustrating.
- Concurs with Chair Baucke's suggestion to make the corner of State and Hope more prominent.

Commissioner Lodge:

- During the General Plan update process in 2010, she was on PC and proposed what became the AUD Priority Overlay and included La Cumbre Plaza in the overlay. She thought then, and still thinks, it is an appropriate place for housing. However, the ordinance says that ABR will be the final decision maker which reduces PC to commenters. ABR can't make land use decisions because their role is only related to aesthetics and neighborhood compatibility. Over 2 years ago the City Council directed

staff to amend the ordinance so that PC would be the final decision maker on AUD projects over 15,000 square feet. A formal ordinance amendment has never been before the PC due to other Housing Element priorities, and this ordinance amendment is not on the priority list for this year. She understands staff has been working hard and it was more important to get the Housing Element approved, but she can't believe that changing a few words in that ordinance is a time-consuming process. She thinks the process is flawed and hopes it gets changed.

- There are some good things about the project, but she is concerned about the open space and usable area for the residents since the density is 74 dwelling units per acre. Two General Plan policies she doesn't see as being met in this proposal are: 1) access to public open space within a half mile radius, and 2) dedication of public open space on the site. She does appreciate that one building was removed and a park is being proposed in its place, but there are still 642 units with very little per person space outside. There is also the potential for almost 1,400 more units on the remaining property. She is concerned about livability and is not satisfied in terms of outdoor space for the residents.
- The paseos are well thought out given the number of units.
- Appreciates the change in the architecture with varied setbacks at the corner of Hope and State, but she is dismayed by the change from Spanish Colonial to contemporary architecture. David Gebhard, former member of Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) and Architectural Historian, said, "when you look at a building here you should know you are in Santa Barbara, it should say Santa Barbara." The current version of this project does not say Santa Barbara at all.
- The percentage of affordable housing that is proposed is pitiful. There will be new residents in town that will generate a need for more affordable housing. To keep the current imbalance the City has between jobs and dwelling units requires 20% affordable. The City is falling further and further behind.

Commissioner Boss:

- Disappointed that the project won't come back to PC because there is a lot that is unresolved. It's important to consider affordable and workforce housing, benefits to surrounding schools, biological and creek resources mitigation measures, having an engaging and open park space for residents and neighbors, and most importantly, community outreach.
- The applicant talked a lot about working with the Chamber and the Housing Authority on workforce housing but disagreeing with the moderate-income requirements and not providing more affordable units tell her that they are not committed to adding the supply of housing that is needed in the City, and that is a great concern.
- In terms of community outreach, she checked a box on the applicant's interested parties sign-up that said "please keep me informed" at the applicant's open house, and she was not kept informed as a community member. She is sure there are hundreds of others, whether they support the project or wanted to learn more, that were not kept informed. This is concerning.
- She came in hopeful thinking that progress could be made as it is a great opportunity in this area, but at this point she is not holding her breath.

Commissioner DeLuccio:

- In terms of open space, he appreciates the open plaza and park. They are about 10,000 square feet each.

- He is hoping the applicant will come to resolution with staff on affordable housing and that at least 81 units will be provided instead of the proposed 54 units. The 81 units would be deed restricted, but he suggests the applicant continue to work with the Housing Authority and Chamber to create additional affordable units.
- The applicant has done some studies on parking, traffic, and circulation, but hasn't looked outside of the property. The project is going to have impacts outside of the property on traffic and circulation. Macy's has not been busy for years, so it concerns him that studies may understate the traffic conditions moving forward.
- He is hopeful the project will come back to the PC as part of the environmental review process.
- Agrees that the process is backwards. Having a Conceptual Review is great, but at the end of the process the project should come back so the PC can review the conditions of approval.
- Supportive of Board Member Six's comments made at the ABR Conceptual Review.
- Suggestion for public art throughout the site which could include murals.
- Hopes that there will be some neighborhood uses as part of the retail.
- He understands the applicant may have some limitations but suggests that the parking and circulation near the Plaza Avenue and La Cumbre Plaza Lane intersection needs to be addressed because the current configuration is chaotic.
- Suggestion to add sidewalks or something that connects the project to the existing retail across Plaza Avenue.

Commissioner Wardlow:

- Thanks the applicant for their efforts and presentation. She is excited to see this mixed-use development adding 642 rental units bringing much needed rental housing to the City.
- Believes that ensuring varied levels of affordable units will be a critical component of the success of this project for the City. Appreciates the applicant's comments and willingness to work with the City and community partners to increase the number of affordable and workforce units in this project. She hopes that as this project continues to evolve that the applicant will continue to prioritize the importance of varied affordable units and will thoroughly explore all opportunities to significantly increase the number of affordable units available and hence play a meaningful role in addressing the City's affordability crisis.
- Supportive of the size, bulk, and scale.
- Appreciates the work the applicant has done to make this project open and beneficial to the broader public.
- Believes this project is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and is an appropriate site for this mixed used high-density project.
- Supports the waiver for open yard considering residents will utilize and benefit from the open space that will be available to the public.
- Supportive of height waiver given the design includes staggered buildings that visually break up the masses in a way that she thinks is visually appealing.
- Supportive of the design and approach with paseos, plazas, and meandering streets to replicate some aspects of Santa Barbara. Thinks this is a great example of combining retail, dining, and housing. It is a prime opportunity for what a lot of cities are striving for, which is a "work, live, play" environment centered around housing. She specifically appreciates the approach to plazas and the ability to create a sense of community that the applicant mentioned through farmers markets, movie nights, etc.

- Appreciates the approach to amenities including communal workspaces, especially given the increase in working from home, as well as the dog parks, because Santa Barbara is such a dog friendly community. Consider adding playgrounds to the interior and exterior park that can be open to the public given the need for more public spaces for the community at large.
- Hopes that as this project continues to progress; that the applicant's original efforts to authentically engage with the community will continue; and that all members of the community that expressed any interest in this project, not just those that indicated support, will be notified of all future hearings.
- Appreciates this discussion and looks forward to seeing substantial progress on the topic of affordability.
- Concurs with Chair Baucke's suggestion to make the corner of Hope and State more pronounced so that people see this as an entry point to a new community.
- Concurs with Chair Baucke on the need for a two-way street connecting to Hope Avenue.

Commissioner Barnwell:

- Thinks the applicant is going in the right direction but is missing some details.
- Agrees with Commissioner Lodge's comment on the process being flawed in terms of the PC's role in this and other projects.
- Doesn't think there is enough open space. Some of the renderings where a large building is shown, did not show the scale of the buildings on State Street to either side.
- The plazas are getting there with the goal of creating a neighborhood. The plazas could have both permanent and temporary spaces for art. Suggestion to include a statue, maybe of a Chumash person. The plazas should have names to create a feeling of a neighborhood atmosphere.
- Connections for automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians have not been worked out to his satisfaction. There are a couple hundred condominiums and houses across Arroyo Burro Creek from La Cumbre Plaza. These houses are close to these stores, but they don't realize that, geographically, they are abutting this project because the area is designed around automobiles. It is imperative that the pedestrian connection between those homes and the neighborhood being provided in this project is addressed. At the ABR Conceptual Review a Board Member mentioned that the project ignores the buildings to the west. It also ignores the east that is residential in nature and those people can use this neighborhood easily. In 100 years, this project has the potential to not just be where the mall used to be, but rather, another downtown.
- Concurs with Commissioner Lodge that the architecture does not have a Santa Barbara feel.
- One of the applicant's images shows that the project is an approximate size of a downtown city block and compares it to the Paseo Nuevo block. In the Paseo Nuevo block there is an art museum and a theatre. None of those things are proposed in this project. Suggestion to add an aspect of a theatre or an art museum to draw people in and make it feel more like a neighborhood.
- Every chance to honor the Chumash should be taken.
- Commissioner DeLuccio mentioned that Macy's is not what it used to be in terms of traffic generation. When this mall was built, traffic was a mess. He is not suggesting using old traffic data, but the data does need to be real. Encourages the liberal use of speed humps because traffic engineers prefer the design to control the speed rather than posted signs. If the design is restrictive to the physical movement of an automobile, then the traffic will be slow.

- The demolition should be done in a way that is environmentally friendly. Suggestion to take pieces of the building and make a monument to the history of the place which is the mall. It would add historical context, which is true to Santa Barbara character.
- The number of affordable units is not sufficient. Continue working with the Housing Authority. There are tax credits available to ensure the applicants don't lose money. There are many possibilities here to work the project so that the City gets the kind of housing it needs.
- Concurs with Chair Baucke's suggestion of the continuation of La Cumbre Plaza Lane to Hope Avenue. In the City's downtown blocks there are roads on all sides and until that happens in this project it will not be comparable.
- Thanks the applicant for all of their hard work.

Chair Baucke:

- The idea of a block is successful.
- In Santa Barbara paseos are important and a part of the City's DNA. As the new neighborhood is developed more blocks and paseos will be built and pedestrian, bike, and automobiles need to be integrated in a holistic manner.
- The intersection of Plaza Avenue and La Cumbre Plaza Lane is odd. It needs to be fixed to work like a normal intersection. The road needs to be moved farther south past the ground lease boundary or this will not work because it has too many people and intensity of development.
- La Cumbre Plaza Lane needs to be a two-way road system that connects to Hope Avenue. La Cumbre Plaza was built under a suburban model under which there were no blocks and no connectivity. There needs to be a cross street because the more east to west connection over time that can be placed in this project, the better for the community and the better for the livability of everyone in that area.
- At the ABR Concept Review Board Member Six commented about the lack interconnectivity or visual relationship between the existing shopping center and this project. The shopping center is going to be there until 2077. There should be some kind of visual connection. The paseo at La Cumbre Plaza Lane should be brought to the left and tied in better with the activity of the existing retail to focus on the interrelationship between the two projects. Considering the project must work with the existing shopping center and its circulation, having a loopy, slow speed, two-way road around the park is okay but it needs to be a through-circulation element.
- The idea of a park is very positive.
- Appreciates the shadow studies. Wherever the plaza ends up, it needs to be as open and sunny as possible. This may mean moving some buildings around or adjusting the height of some of the buildings.
- At the ABR Conceptual Review Board Member Six made a comment about adding more variety in the height of the buildings. Make it more variable so it doesn't look as massive.
- Suggestion to think about the big picture framework in the long term so there is an end game.
- There needs to be a central plaza element at the corner of State and Hope which landmarks this project. Something that provides an anchoring at that corner and tells you this is a new neighborhood that has a commercial element to it.
- Use Title 25: Objective Design and Development Standards (ODDS) as a guide for the area along State Street. The use of stoops and dooryard frontages are important. The applicant mentioned at the ABR Conceptual Review that they don't want commercial

along State Street because it hasn't been working. Over time this will be an urban district, so it should have a retail ready nature to it.

- Suggestion to use bulb-in parking on Hope Avenue to calm the street. It is a wide street and bulb-in parking might provide a buffer and give it a more pedestrian feel.
- There is an opportunity to create a new neighborhood. Suggestion to reference Lèon Krier's book *Designing the Architecture of Community*. It fits the concept of the project, and he thinks there are ideas that the applicant could pick up on to make it a special place and truly a Santa Barbara project.

*** THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 4:44 TO 5:11 P.M. ***

MOTION: Barnwell / Wiscomb

1. Include the required amount of deed restricted affordable units in the affordability categories required by State density bonus law and the Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program Ordinance and continue to work with community partners including the Housing Authority and South Coast Chamber of Commerce to increase, to the maximum extent feasible, the amount of affordable and workforce housing at varied income levels.
2. The paseos and plazas are good and create a neighborhood feel.
3. Continue to work with staff to improve connections to adjacent areas, both residential and commercial, for all modes of transportation.
4. Connections to the remaining retail in the shopping center should be stronger.
5. Improve the intersection of La Cumbre Plaza Lane and Plaza Avenue.
6. Treat the corner of State and Hope as a landmark corner, consistent with the Upper State Street (USS) Design Guidelines recommendations.
7. Explore a two-way road from La Cumbre Road to Hope Avenue.
8. Support public parks and incorporation of play areas.
9. Support incorporating public art in the project.
10. Like proposed diversity in the size of commercial retail spaces.
11. Consider retail ready spaces along State Street and potentially Hope Avenue frontages.
12. Consider the reuse of existing materials demolished in the project to the extent feasible.
13. Commissioners had varying opinions on the adequacy of open space provided by the project.
14. Continue broad community outreach during the formal application review, beyond standard noticing requirements.

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

ACTUAL TIME: 5:33 P.M.

A. Committee and Liaison Reports:

1. Staff Hearing Officer Liaison Report

No report.

2. Other Committee and Liaison Reports

- a. Chair Baucke reported on the upcoming Planning Commission Lunch meeting of May 2, 2024.

B. Discussion on Subcommittees and Workshops

No discussion held.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Baucke adjourned the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

Submitted by,



Mariah Johnson, Commission Secretary