



City of Santa Barbara

Community Development Department

Memorandum

DATE: June 19, 2024

TO: State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC)

FROM: Create State Team

SUBJECT: State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC) Meeting – June 26, 2024

In advance of the June 26 SSAC meeting, we are distributing this memo to help guide the conversation. We look forward to building support and agreement on the design concept and mobility strategy that will be incorporated into the public release draft. If there is consensus from the SSAC around the general design concept and mobility strategy, then staff will present these to Council at an upcoming meeting later this summer before proceeding to develop the public release draft.

Background and Meeting Purpose

The Create State Master Planning team has been tasked with reimagining how the public right-of-way downtown can be transformed into a vibrant community space that supports economic and social vitality, while balancing adopted City policy, community feedback and State Street Advisory Committee input, industry standards and best practices, financial and logistical feasibility, impacts to transportation networks, and evolving downtown land uses that will feature more residential development in the future.

Over the past several months, staff has incorporated feedback received during the last SSAC meeting into the draft Create State Master Plan, further developed technical reports with MIG, drafted new architectural drawings in collaboration with a local volunteer architect group, and further refined the design framework and mobility concepts.

During its June 26, 2024 meeting, the State Street Advisory Committee will discuss how the design framework and mobility concepts for State Street support the shared vision and achieve district needs while recognizing that the right-of-way is finite (80 feet) and trade-offs necessary. After the staff presentation, SSAC members will break into small groups for facilitated discussions, which will be followed by a report-out period, public comment, and a discussion period that will conclude with a series of straw polls. The structure of the agenda item will be as follows:

1. Staff presentation (15 min)

2. Facilitated small-group discussion (30 min)
3. Report out (20 min)
4. Public comment
5. SSAC straw poll (30 min)

The feedback received during this meeting will inform the administrative draft Master Plan that will be posted for a three-month public review period later this summer. During this time, the draft plan will be circulated and reviewed by several of the City's boards and commissions. Staff anticipates convening the next SSAC meeting toward the end of the year, when the committee will review the final draft of the Master Plan and make a formal and official recommendation to City Council. City Council is expected to act on the final Master Plan in early 2025.

Our Community Vision for Downtown

As Hal Conklin, former Santa Barbara Mayor, once said, "Santa Barbara's downtown should invoke a sense of place, a sense of history, and a sense of celebration."

Our emerging Create State vision for downtown is a "Grand Paseo" that functions as a magnetic destination and showcases the best of Santa Barbara. Its foundation is a "people first" design philosophy that leverages Santa Barbara's diverse community, rich history, and world-class architecture to attract visitors and locals alike. The envisioned Grand Paseo serves a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood and becomes a place that is exciting to leave near and easy to start or grow a business, which will catalyze economic vitality citywide. The Grand Paseo is anchored by a pedestrian-focused core that is the epicenter of civic life in Santa Barbara and is well connected to the destinations around it. It features new public spaces for gathering and performances that create the social vitality and community celebration that will continue to define civic life in a post-pandemic world.

This vision strives to enhance the El Pueblo Viejo Historic District and the rich architectural traditions that make our downtown so iconic and memorable. It seeks to advance the work of civic leaders who came before us, like Pearl Chase and Bernard Hoffman, who envisioned a paseo network that would weave through downtown and connect iconic destinations like City Hall, De la Guerra Plaza, Paseo Nuevo, El Paseo, the courthouse, the Presidio, and the Santa Barbara Historical Museum. This network of expanded alleys, paths, and plantings will create new opportunities for commerce, public art, and social activity, while enhancing the experience of exploration and wonder that already exists in pockets of our city.

This vision prioritizes flexibility to maximize long-term resilience and advances our community's dedication to environmental stewardship by integrating climate change adaptation measures and prioritizing sustainable land uses and transportation modes. This includes employing a "less is more" philosophy that limits private vehicle use,

decreases carbon emissions, and reduces the consumption of valuable energy and water resources.

Our Community's Values

The vision for the Grand Paseo represents ideas developed by our community during extensive outreach conducted throughout the city over multiple years. These efforts required meeting our stakeholders where they were, and holding over 60 events at community grocery stores, churches, schools, parks, the weekly Farmer's Market, and on State Street itself. The outreach included a project website with over 20,000 views, social media feeds, and a survey that engaged 6,000 people. The team also made local media buys and produced a newsletter with over 2,000 subscribers. Additionally, the team hosted multiple open houses and design workshops, led targeted stakeholder interviews and small-group discussions, and participated in more than 20 agenda meetings with the City's boards and commissions.

A universal theme from the engagement process is that State Street is a place that our community holds dear. When asked to share their priorities for the long-term design, our community consistently emphasized several points:

- Safety and cleanliness are paramount.
- At least a portion of downtown should remain car-free.
- Deliberate consideration for pedestrian safety in spaces that include bicycles is essential.
- Experiential transit is needed on State Street.
- Housing and economic development must be a core focus and integrated into long-term solutions.
- Fundamental changes to the permitting process are necessary to facilitate adaptive reuse and spur economic activity.
- Different portions of downtown and State Street have different needs and identities.
- The heart of the city should be reimagined as a vibrant community space and event venue.
- The 400 block of State Street should be integrated into the blocks above it and serve as a key gateway to the waterfront and the Grand Paseo.
- The existing trees are well-loved, and more should be planted.
- There must be spaces and design elements for all ages and abilities.
- Outdoor dining is extremely popular and needs to be integrated into State Street's fabric intentionally.
- The El Pueblo Viejo Historic District must be celebrated and respected.

Our Guiding Principles to Reimagine Downtown

"You can't rely on bringing people downtown. You have to put them there."

—Jane Jacobs

The following guiding principles were developed in partnership between staff and the SSAC over the course of many meetings. These principles were informed by the feedback received during the community engagement process and encompass the foundational pillars of great public spaces that focus on people and place, economic vitality, mobility and function, and sustainability and resilience. Each of these guiding principles relates to corresponding core strategies and implementing actions that will identify how each guiding principle can be accomplished. Together, these guiding principles provide the foundation for the recommended design framework and mobility concept discussed in this memo.

Guiding Principle #1: People and Placemaking Are Key to Downtown’s Success

Downtown must be designed and maintained with cleanliness, safety, equity, accessibility, and comfort at the top of mind. It must be a magnetic destination that is heavily programmed and well managed to ensure that the visitor experience is interesting, vibrant, and fun. Downtown should celebrate and reflect Santa Barbara’s uniqueness, the El Pueblo Viejo landmark district, paseo network, culturally diverse population, ideal climate, scenic mountains and coastline, historic architecture, visitor-serving amenities, and rich history.

Guiding Principle #2: Fostering Economic Vitality Downtown Enhances Overall Economic Vitality Citywide

Downtown is a key economic driver for the city and region due to its concentration of jobs, businesses, institutions, and key destinations, with State Street serving as the primary commercial corridor. This area has faced economic challenges and higher vacancy rates in recent times that are magnified by changes in market conditions, the loss of major retailers like Nordstroms and Macy’s, increased competition in the region, a housing shortage, and a challenging permitting process. State Street is, however, a resilient area that has weathered previous economic cycles and will thrive again by repositioning its regional competitiveness and fostering inclusive economic growth. The project specifically looks at sustainable economic drivers and focuses on investment in placemaking strategies, retention and expansion of existing business, recruitment of market sectors not currently downtown, cultivation of a business-friendly government, new entrepreneurial investment, transformation of downtown into a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood, and a new critical mass of activity in the city center.

Guiding Principle #3: Mobility and Utilities Provide Essential Function

For downtown to be successful, there must be a safe, connected, accessible, and balanced transportation network with a diverse range of transportation options for people of all ages and abilities who want to travel to and through downtown. Transportation speed and space allocation play critical roles in how public spaces operate and feel, so careful thought should be given to which modes are allowed in which areas, what the appropriate speeds are for key users, and how much of the finite right-of-way should be allocated for each mode. To implement the Create State vision, the design should include opportunities for areas that restrict private vehicles to create more

programmable space and a more pedestrian and bike-friendly environment. Utilities also provide a critical function downtown, by supplying energy, sewer, water, communication, refuse, and other core services that must be integrated into Create State and strategically expanded to provide for additional residents, expanded business, and programming.

Guiding Principle #4: Flexibility, Adaptability, and Sustainability Increase Long-Term Resilience

Flexibility must be a core design intention to maximize downtown's function today and enhance its ability to adapt to future needs, priorities, market shifts, and economic cycles. This adaptability will strengthen downtown's long-term positioning since it facilitates a broader range of uses and functions without requiring substantial reinvestment. Threats from fire, heat, drought, flood, and sea-level rise are present and growing. Downtown must be designed to build on our rich environmental heritage and respond to these environmental hazards by emphasizing climate change adaptation and long-term resiliency. Downtown must also be designed with a "less is more" philosophy that reduces private vehicle, energy, material, and water use and also reduces environmental impacts, carbon emissions, and project cost.

Our Key Policy Considerations

The City has many adopted plans, policies, and programs that directly relate to State Street and that must be considered when reimagining the design possibilities downtown.

For instance, the city's General Plan provides the blueprint for growth and development in Santa Barbara. In fact, the 1964 General Plan suggested that a portion of State Street be converted to a "pedestrian-oriented shopping street" that "allows the pedestrian to wander at will." The current General Plan prioritizes multi-unit housing development and encourages higher-density projects downtown. It also envisions a safe and integrated multi-modal transportation system with enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

The city's Climate Action Plan is a roadmap to achieve City Council's aspirational carbon neutrality goal and helps frame the sustainability and resilience objectives. It aims to eliminate emissions from the building sector, promotes zero emission transportation options, leverages natural systems to remove carbon from the atmosphere, and seeks to reduce material and water use.

The city's Pedestrian Master Plan provides guidance on how to enhance the City's pedestrian system, expand walkability and safety, and increase connections. It envisions enhancing the paseo network, maximizing opportunities for children to walk and bike to school safely, safeguarding our community's health by promoting walking, and expanding pedestrian facilities as more people live, work, and visit downtown.

Additional transportation direction is provided in the city’s Bicycle Master Plan, which includes a framework to improve bicycle safety and infrastructure citywide. It designates State Street as the “spine” of the bicycle network and primary connection between downtown and the waterfront for bicyclists.

Relevant design guidance is included in the El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines, which include a toolkit of appropriate design elements for the El Pueblo Viejo Historic District and will serve as the standard of review when the resultant projects from Create State are reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

The city’s Vision Zero strategy also provides a mobility design lens through its aim to eliminate all fatalities and severe injuries in Santa Barbara by 2030 while enhancing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. Creating the State Street Promenade and limiting private vehicle use advances this strategy by significantly improving bicycle safety along a portion of State Street that previously had a concentration of bike and vehicle collisions.

Our Recommended Design Framework and Mobility Concepts

The recommended design framework for the “Grand Paseo” balances the Community Vision, Guiding Principles, and Key Policy Considerations. It aims to catalyze the De La Guerra District with a highly programmed and community-focused pedestrian core that is supported by the flanking Entertainment and Arts Districts, which provide transitional areas and create unique experiences that reflect an elevated version of their existing character, identity, and successes. The mobility concepts for each district balance the envisioned character, and vitality from the design framework with the very practical and pragmatic transportation and operational needs of downtown stakeholders.

Entertainment District (Highway 101 to Ortega Street)

The design framework for the Entertainment District aims to enhance its existing identity as a vibrant entertainment area that features lively restaurants and bars that energize the area day and night, with new spaces for street performers and games that provide additional life and activity. The mobility concept provides delivery and service access for food and experiential-based businesses, critical public safety access, a defined connection to the Funk Zone and waterfront, customer drop-off, and mobility options that are compatible with outdoor dining.

300 Block of State Street (Highway 101 to Gutierrez Street)

As part of the Vision Zero State Street Undercrossing Project, this block will be reconstructed to nearly double the sidewalk width, expand and protect the bike lanes on either side of the street, reconfigure the vehicular lanes, provide space for art, and improve lighting. This block will continue to be managed to always allow all modes. There are no recommended changes to this project, as it is in direct alignment with the Create State vision and will likely be completed by late spring 2025.

400 Block of State Street (Gutierrez to Haley Street)

The recommended design for this block emphasizes its role as a primary gateway to and from the Waterfront and the Grand Paseo. The 400 block will maintain its critical link for public safety access between the waterfront and downtown areas of the city by providing separated space for all modes, including two lanes of vehicular traffic. Sidewalks will be expanded to allow for additional pedestrian space that is seamless with the 300 block and to denote a change in space as someone enters the Grand Paseo. This block will also include the separated bike lanes provided on the 300 block. The 400 block will consist of an artistic entrance and/or gateway on Gutierrez and State Street to draw users into this new area and artistic elements and pedestrian focused lighting will be included throughout the block. Additional amenities along the sidewalk that are consistent with residential and commercial use will be included, such as enhanced landscaping, art, and seating. This block will continue to be managed to always allow all modes.

The 500 and 600 Blocks of State Street (Haley to Ortega Street)

The recommended design for these blocks is a flat and flexible configuration that maximizes flexibility and pedestrian-exclusive space. This design would allocate 60 of the 80 feet of corridor width for pedestrian facilities, outdoor dining, interactive games, and small-scale performances. These blocks would be managed to allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and pedicabs or micro-transit in the 20-foot emergency access lane. Vehicles would not be permitted in this space outside of a defined service and delivery window in the early morning hours. Full-size transit would operate on Chapala and Anacapa Streets. Limiting the mobility on State Street to low-intensity transportation modes enhances safety and compatibility with outdoor dining and other district uses.

De La Guerra District (Ortega to Carrillo Street)

The design framework for the De La Guerra District seeks to catalyze downtown vibrancy with a new, pedestrian-prioritized area for community programming and special events. It is the heart of civic and community life in Santa Barbara and features urbanized park-like spaces for families and gathering, includes flexible spaces that create a venue-like setting, and is highly programmed for special events such as art exhibits, concerts, and other programming put on by local organizations. It celebrates the paseo network and connects State Street to De La Guerra Plaza, City Hall, El Paseo, and Paseo Nuevo. The mobility concept supports the ability to host large-scale special events and limit areas exclusively to pedestrian use. It is to be integrated with the redevelopment of Paseo Nuevo into a mixed-use residential and commercial anchor, and it is compatible with the mobility concepts for the redesign of De La Guerra Plaza as currently envisioned.

The 700 to 900 blocks of State Street (Ortega to Carillo Street)

The recommended design for these blocks is a flat and flexible configuration that maximizes flexibility and pedestrian-exclusive space. This design will allocate 60 of the

80 feet of corridor width for pedestrian facilities, outdoor dining, play elements, and community gathering spaces. City staff continues to evaluate how often the 700 and 800 blocks could be managed to allow exclusively pedestrian use (including in the 20-foot emergency access lane) without presenting significant trade-offs. If these blocks are generally restricted to pedestrian use, an alternative bicycle facility will need to be provided on Chapala Street, with connections to State Street. This requirement will substantially increase project costs, reduce zero-block access by eliminating curb space for loading and delivery on both sides of Canon Perdido and Ortega Streets, reduce a travel lane and/or remove parking on Chapala Street, and result in a less-safe bicycle facility than would exist on State Street.

Because transportation needs vary based on the season and time of week, there may be a time-based solution to create an exclusively pedestrian core that won't require the bicycle reroute and associated trade-offs. Weekday travel is typically more utilitarian and defined by commuters and business-servicing, which requires greater access and efficiency for people traveling to and through downtown and creates less management flexibility. During weekends, and especially during peak tourist season, travel needs are typically more recreation-based, which creates more management flexibility and allows a greater ability to slow speeds, limit access for certain modes, and repurpose streets for large-scale community events without disrupting core network function. With that framing in mind, there may be an opportunity to manage the 700 and 800 blocks of State Street exclusively for pedestrian use during dedicated times of year without requiring the bicycle reroute. Examples of dedicated times include but are not limited to weekends, summer months, and major holidays.

In all scenarios, vehicles would not be permitted in this space outside of a defined service and delivery window. Only pedestrians would be allowed during large-scale events; pedicabs or micro-transit could be allowed on State Street when special events are not occurring; and full-size transit would operate on Chapala and Anacapa Streets. Limiting the mobility on State Street to low-intensity transportation modes enhances safety and compatibility with community gathering and other district uses.

Arts District (Carrillo to Sola Street)

The design framework for the Arts District aims to enhance the district's established identity as a location that is animated by its concentration of vibrant arts and cultural destinations, including the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Arlington and Granada Theaters, the Santa Barbara Public Library, and historic courthouse. The design is elevated with interactive art exhibits, sculptures, small performance spaces, and additional outdoor dining. The design framework is structured to require less active management, programming, and construction cost to improve project feasibility and right-size for social and economic vitality in Santa Barbara. The mobility concept includes areas for patron drop-off at cultural institutions, enhanced pedestrian connections to the MTD Transit Center, accommodation for any type of transit, and critical public safety access.

1000 to 1200 blocks of State Street (Carrillo to Victoria Street)

The recommended design for these blocks expands the existing curbs to provide roughly 40 to 45 of the 80 feet of corridor width for pedestrians, interactive art exhibits, outdoor dining, and other placemaking elements that implement the district vision. It includes separated spaces for all modes, including a bi-directional bicycle path that will connect to the Westside Community Paseos network at Sola Street and a one-way northbound travel lane with drop-off areas at key destinations, like the Granada Theater. These blocks will be managed to always allow all modes.

1300 block of State Street (Victoria to Sola Street)

The recommended design for this block emphasizes its role as a primary gateway to and from Upper State and maintains its critical link for public safety access between the Upper State and downtown areas of the city by providing separated space for all modes, including two lanes of vehicular traffic. This block will continue to be managed to always allow all modes.

Concluding Summary

After considering community input, best practices, transportation needs, vision, and future placemaking elements of each district, the Create State team recommends the following:

- A “Grand Paseo” design framework that showcases Santa Barbara’s diverse community and rich history; emphasizes a pedestrian-focused, mixed-use neighborhood that supports business growth; fosters social vitality through new public spaces; enhances the El Pueblo Viejo Historic District and paseo network; and prioritizes flexibility, environmental stewardship, and sustainability.
- A mobility concept that is anchored by a pedestrian core and supported by a safe and balanced network that prioritizes sustainable transportation and addresses district- and area-specific needs.
- A curbed expanded sidewalk design for the 400 block of State Street that emphasizes its role as a primary gateway to the Grand Paseo, connection to the waterfront, and emergency access corridor. This design includes separated spaces for all modes with enhanced sidewalks, two-way vehicular traffic, and bicycle paths.
- A management strategy for the 400 block that always allows all modes.
- A flat and flexible design for the 500 to 900 blocks of State Street that maximizes pedestrian-exclusive space and ability to host special events. This design includes space for sustainable modes and limited business deliveries in the emergency access lane. Vehicular traffic would not be allowed outside of service and delivery hours.
- A management strategy for the 500, 600, and 900 blocks of State Street that allows pedestrians, bikes, pedicabs or micro-transit, and limited business delivery.
- A management strategy for the 700 and 800 blocks of State Street that creates a pedestrian-prioritized core where programming and large-scale events are concentrated. These blocks would be pedestrian only for at least a portion of the year.

- A curbed design for the 1000 to 1200 blocks of State Street that requires less active management, programming, and construction cost. This design includes expanded space for pedestrians and activation, a separated two-way bicycle facility, and a one-way vehicle lane with limited drop-off locations.
- A curbed design for the 1300 block of State Street that emphasizes its role as a primary gateway, connection to Upper State, and emergency access corridor. This design includes separated spaces for all modes with enhanced sidewalks, two-way vehicular traffic, and bicycle paths.
- A management strategy for the 1000 to 1300 blocks of State Street that always allows all modes.
- Designing an accessible transit network that serves a range of functions with a full-size circulator shuttle that travels primarily on Anacapa and Chapala Streets and is supplemented by a pedicab program or micro-transit on State Street.

Topics for State Street Advisory Committee Discussion

During the June 26, 2024, SSAC meeting, the Create State team will be seeking input from the committee members on the following:

- ***Do you agree that the "Grand Paseo" design framework, which includes a pedestrian core district bracketed by districts on either side that employ different approaches to mobility, aligns with the SSAC's vision for the study area?***
- ***Do you support the recommendation of a curbed design for the 400 block that allows for all modes of transportation and transforms the block into a gateway to the Grand Paseo?***
- ***Should the 400 block include physical features or monumentation to signal arrival to the district?***
- ***Do you support the curbless, flat, and flexible design for the 500 and 600 blocks of State Street? This design includes a 20-foot-wide clear area for emergency access, that would be shared by bikes and transit, and no private vehicles would be allowed outside of service and delivery hours.***
- ***Do you support the curbless, flat, and flexible pedestrian-exclusive core on the 700 and 800 blocks of State Street? This design includes plaza-like spaces, allows for festivals and special community events, and is exclusively for pedestrians at all times, even if excluding bike and vehicle access requires that capacity for bikes and vehicles be provided elsewhere on surrounding streets (e.g., Chapala)?***

- ***Do you support the curbless, flat, and flexible primarily pedestrian core on the 700 and 800 blocks of State Street? This design includes plaza-like spaces, allows for festivals and special community events, and is exclusively for pedestrians during special events, days of the week with high pedestrian traffic, and during peak seasons (e.g., weekends and/or summer)? This time-based solution to create an exclusively pedestrian core may not require the bicycle reroute.***
- ***Do you support a curbed design for the 1000 to 1200 blocks of State Street that reintroduces cars and private vehicles to State St at Carrillo St? If so, do you support the recommended design that includes expanded space for pedestrians and outdoor dining, a separated two-way bicycle facility, and a one-way vehicle lane with limited loading and/or drop-off locations?***
- ***Do you support the recommendation of a curbed design for the 1300 block of State Street that always allows all modes, and emphasizes its role as an emergency access corridor and a primary gateway to Upper State? This design includes two-way vehicle traffic, a bicycle facility, and pedestrian space on the sidewalk.***
- ***Do you support a transit option connecting the Grand Paseo to the waterfront that includes a full-size circulator shuttle that primarily travels on Anacapa and Chapala Streets and is supplemented by a pedicab program or micro-transit on State Street?***