




**City of Santa Barbara**  
Mayor and Council Office

## Memorandum

**DATE:** March 26, 2013

**TO:** James L. Armstrong, City Administrator

**FROM:** Dale Francisco, Council Member   
Randy Rowse, Council Member

**SUBJECT:** Alternatives to Narrowing Lower State Street

---

- Summary of Information to be Presented to the City Council

Twelve years ago the City Council approved a plan to narrow State Street from four lanes to two lanes between the railroad tracks and Cabrillo Boulevard. This was part of the Entrada project.

Now a very different Entrada project is going forward. Commercial and retail activity is exploding in the adjoining Funk Zone. The area has changed enormously from what it was twelve years ago, and there is concern in the community that the proposed narrowing of State Street may result in traffic gridlock.

We want to bring together all the interested parties, including particularly the environmental community and waterfront area businesses, to discuss whether this idea still makes sense, and if not, what are the possible alternatives. (See attached document for more information.)

- Statement of Specific Action the Council will be asked to take

Listen to community and staff input on the advisability of narrowing State Street, and based on discussion, give direction to staff on how or whether to proceed.

- Statement of the Reasons Why it is Appropriate and Within the Jurisdiction of the Council to Consider this Subject Matter and to Take the Requested Action

Transportation policy is of vital importance to the social and economic health of the city, and is within the purview of City Council.

## **Entrada and the Narrowing of State Street**

The long-anticipated, long dormant “La Entrada” project now finally seems to be becoming a reality. In the twelve years that have passed between the original conception and the latest iteration, much has changed about the project and its surroundings. The City Council that originally approved this project viewed a vastly different use (fractional unit ownership vs. the now proposed luxury hotel), adjoined on one side by a group of low-intensity or “ocean-use related” properties known as the Funk Zone.

The Funk Zone has now for some time been in the midst of a commercial and retail explosion, with no end in sight. New development will bring with it traffic impacts that were not anticipated twelve years ago. Many in the community are concerned that the old plan to narrow State Street between the railroad tracks and Cabrillo Boulevard from four lanes to two now has the potential to create significant traffic congestion and a major bottleneck, particularly during weekends in the peak tourist season.

Some have argued that this narrowing simply continues the changes that were made many years ago to the State Street “Plaza” north of Gutierrez without any serious problems. This ignores the glaring fact that State Street north of Gutierrez is supplemented by Chapala Street and Anacapa Street for commercial deliveries and customer parking. No such alternative routes exist below the freeway.

The existing wide boulevard creates an open vista that allows for pedestrian, motorist, and cyclist views of our mountain skyline. Narrowing the roadway, combined with the construction on both sides of new multi-story buildings, will likely result in a constricted urban “canyon” effect.

The city has committed to enhancing public safety by rejecting hardscape constrictions on major arterials. The De la Vina Y and Cliff Drive re-stripings are excellent examples of this. The Tsunami Impact Zone overlays the Entrada development area; the restriction of egress from the coastal zone is antithetical to established efforts and policies.

Lastly the narrowing of this primary gateway to the city creates a physical and psychological barrier to both vehicular and pedestrian transit to our downtown, and would be a further detriment to a commercial zone that already suffers from the impacts of restricted parking, traffic congestion, and street crime.

We believe that the entire community and all the various stakeholders deserve an open forum to discuss whether this major change to State Street still makes sense, and what superior alternatives might exist.