



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 16, 2013

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: City Administrator's Office

SUBJECT: Request From Councilmember Francisco And Councilmember Rowse Regarding Alternatives To Narrowing Lower State Street

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council consider the request from Councilmember Francisco and Councilmember Rowse regarding alternatives to the narrowing of Lower State Street.

DISCUSSION:

Attached is a memorandum from Councilmember Francisco and Councilmember Rowse requesting that Council receive community and staff input on the advisability of narrowing Lower State Street. Also attached is a memorandum from Community Development which outlines the history of the La Entrada project and the various design considerations. The City Attorney will also be submitting a separate memorandum to Council outlining key legal issues related to the street improvements that are part of the La Entrada project.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memorandum from Councilmember Francisco and Councilmember Rowse
2. Memorandum from Community Development dated April 9, 2013, regarding Entrada Project and Narrowing Lower State Street

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Jennings, Administrator's Office Supervisor

SUBMITTED BY: Jim Armstrong, City Administrator

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office




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.



City of Santa Barbara
Community Development

Memorandum

DATE: April 9, 2013

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Allison De Busk, Project Planner

SUBJECT: Entrada Project and Narrowing Lower State Street

This memo provides background information that the Staff believes is appropriate for the City Council to have in connection with the request from Council members Francisco and Rowse to agendaize a discussion of the public improvements required as part of the Entrada project approval.

A. Entrada Project Time Line and City Approval History Concerning Project Related Street Improvements

- May 22, 1998 – Project submitted for review.
 - July 1998 – Planning Commission Concept review
 - September 1998 – HLC Concept review
 - December 1998 – Planning Commission Scoping Hearing; at completion of hearing City Planning Commission directs staff to prepare a Mitigated Negative Declaration instead of a EIR focused on public view concerns as had been recommended by City Planning Staff.
 - February 4, 1999 – Planning Commission hearing on Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (First Revision to Initial Study)
 - March 16, 1999 – Planning Commission/City Council/Redevelopment Agency Joint Workshop on Lower State Street Improvements, as related to Entrada de Santa Barbara project. Council indicated support for the proposed public improvements.
 - March 23, 1999 – City Council public hearing on Lower State Street Improvements, as related to Entrada de Santa Barbara project.
City Council also conceptually approves encroachment permit request for arcade entry feature in public right of way on Mason Street (Site A)
 - March 25, 1999 – Planning Commission public hearing on City discretionary land use permits for the Entrada project
 - April 8, 1999 – Continuation of Planning Commission public hearing on Project
 - April 14, 1999 – Planning Commission/Historic Landmarks Commission First Joint Work Session

- April 22, 1999 – Planning Commission/ Historic Landmarks Commission Second Joint Work Session
- May 27, 1999 – Planning Commission hearing on Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (Second Revision to Initial Study)
- June 24, 1999 – Continued Planning Commission public hearing on discretionary permits needed for the Project
- July 1, 1999 – Planning Commission approves Entrada MND and the permits necessary for the Project.
- August 10, 1999 – City Council hearing on appeal of Planning Commission approval of Project.
- August 17, 1999 – City Council denied appeal of Planning Commission’s approval
- September 1999 – Appeal filed with California Coastal Commission. Issues included protection of public views, traffic and congestion, and loss of lower cost visitor serving uses. Coastal Commission staff recommends Project approval with special CCC conditions of approval to address loss of lower cost visitor serving uses, maintenance of parking facilities and restrictions on changes of use.
 - November 4, 1999 – Coastal Commission hearing on determination of Substantial Issue relative to appeal of City approval of project by Environmental Defense Center and “Cars R Basic.”
 - January 13, 2000 – Coastal Commission hearing on appeal by Environmental Defense Center and Cars R Basic appeals.
 - April 12, 2000 – Coastal Commission hearing continued after Santa Barbara Superior Court ruling invalidates Entrada MND and orders the preparation of a focused EIR.
- May 30, 2000 – Superior Court final judgment that focused EIR was required for views; previous City land-use approvals vacated.
- Spring 2001 – local group calling itself “Streets R Us” begin circulating a proposed City initiative measure which would adopt a City ordinance banning any changes to the existing design of lower State Street, Cabrillo Boulevard, or Shoreline Drive without the approval of City voters.
- May 8, 2001 – Joint Planning Commission/HLC Workshop on Redesigned Entrada Project
- June 19, 2001 – Elizabeth Donati and “Streets R Us” file Superior Court declaratory relief action against the City seeking a judicial determination that the initiative measure they circulated for signatures in an effort to qualify for the November 2001 City election is a constitutionally appropriate initiative measure.
- July 11, 2001 – Planning Commission certifies EIR focused on public view impacts and approved project.
- August 21, 2001 – City Council denies appeal of Planning Commission’s Project approval through the adoption of comprehensive “Findings” Resolution - Santa Barbara City Council Resolution No. 01-103.
- August 24, 2001 – Santa Barbara Superior Court Judge Anderle determines that the proposed “Streets R Us” initiative measure is preempted by the state Vehicle Code and, thus, constitutionally impermissible. “Streets R Us” & Elizabeth Donati appeal this decision to the Second District Court of Appeal.

- August 2001 – Second Appeal filed with Coastal Commission over the Entrada Project by group called “Streets R Us,” Citizen’s Planning Association, and League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara.
- October 9, 2001 – Coastal Commission conducts “substantial issue” hearing; Commission finds “no substantial issue” with the appeal as recommended by CCC staff. Commission affirms Project Coastal Act approval with special conditions added by Commission as part of the 2000 appeal process.
- December 11, 2001 – Coastal Commission issues a Final Decision stating “no substantial [Coastal Act] issue” with the second Entrada appeal. [The Coastal Commission specifically references that its decision requires the incorporation of the City public street improvement conditions, among other conditions of approval, as CDP permit conditions of approval and expressly provides that any modification or revisions to these Conditions of Approval will constitute a modification of the Entrada CDP and will thus require the issuance of a new Coastal Development Permit.]
- January 2002 - Santa Barbara Superior Court CEQA Litigation filed regarding the City’s environmental review of the Entrada Project; Judgment is ultimately issued in favor of the Applicant and the City that CEQA compliance was appropriate. (No appeal filed of this judgment.)
- April 29, 2003 – Second District Court of Appeal affirms Judge Anderle’s decision that “Streets R Us” Initiative Measure is unconstitutional.
- December 9, 2003 – City Council authorizes the City Administrator to execute and record (in the official records of Santa Barbara County) the City’s standard form “Agreement for Land Development Improvements” concerning the public improvements for State Street and Mason Street.
- December 9, 2003 – City Council adopts City Ordinance No. 5299 approving the City’s standard form of “Agreement for Land Development Improvements” for the Entrada Project which has an Exhibit A consisting of the “C1” engineering plans showing improvements for all State Street and Mason Street Project street and sidewalk changes.
- April 13, 2004 – City Council formally approves the Final Entrada Subdivision Maps and authorizes the City Public Works staff to execute the necessary and standard Development and Subdivision Map Agreements.
- Early December 2005 – All Entrada/City Project Agreements fully executed by Applicant and City staff.
- December 12, 2005 – Entrada “Escrow” Closes and a City Building Permit for Entrada Area C and all Public Street Improvements is issued. All recordable agreements are recorded in the official records of Santa Barbara County, Final Subdivision Maps recorded with County Surveyor’s office and all related agreements signed and delivered. City receives permit and mitigation fees in the amount of \$1.434 million (not including School District fees and County property tax proration paid by Entrada owner) and City Public Works staff receives payment and performance bonds to secure completion of the required State and Mason Public Improvements in the amount of \$5,497,500.
- April 16, 2009 – Revised “Agreement to Construct and Install Land Development Improvements” is executed with MF (Mountain Funding) Santa Barbara – the successor-in-interest to original Entrada Developer/Applicant is executed by City staff and recorded in

official records of Santa Barbara County. Payment and Performance bonds are renewed and accepted by City for public improvements in accordance with new schedule attached to the City's 2009 Substantial Conformance Determination.

- March 2010 – new Substantial Conformance Determination issued by City to MF Santa Barbara which Determination revises schedule for street and sidewalk Public Improvements.
- December 2010 – Amended Substantial Conformance Determination issued to 35 State Street Hotel Partners LLC (Michael Rosenfeld.) Schedule for Public Improvements revised.
- March 4, 2013 - Amended "Agreement to Construct and Install Stage I Land Development Improvements" is executed by City staff and 35 State Street Hotel Partners LLC (the successor-in-interest to MF Santa Barbara) and recorded in official records of Santa Barbara County. Public Works and City Attorney Staff confirms that existing Developer Public Improvement Payment and Performance bonds issued in 2010 remain in place and secure the obligation to build the public improvements in accordance with the anticipated schedule for Phase II and Phase III Public Improvements to be determined by the City's 2013 Substantial Conformance Determination and to coincide with the construction of the Entrada Project. Phase 1 Public Improvements (west side of State and west block of Mason at State) begin in accordance with December 2010 SCD amendment.

B. Entrada Project – Required Public Street and Sidewalk Improvements

The Entrada Project Description, as summarized in the July 11, 2001 Planning Commission staff report, includes the following description of the required Public Improvements:

"At the request of the City and the Redevelopment Agency, the Entrada project proposes an agreement with the Agency for the rehabilitation of three block faces of State Street sidewalk frontage and for extensive streetscape improvements at the intersection of State Street and Mason Street, including along the first blocks of east and west Mason Street. The Entrada Project is proposing a reconfiguration of existing on-street public parking on Mason Street and Helena Avenue, a widening of the State Street sidewalks so that they are at least 15 feet wide from curb to building line, a reduction in the number of vehicle traffic lanes on State Street, and a redesign of the look of the State Street/Mason Street intersection. This reconfiguration of State Street (including the use of new sidewalk paving materials) would be consistent with the City's existing State Street pedestrian "Plaza" as it presently exists in the City's Central Business District along State Street from Gutierrez Street to Victoria Street. All of these streetscape changes would involve design and landscape improvements such as paving the sidewalk with brick pavers, new landscaping, new street trees, new street furniture, and improvements for better disabled accessibility. Similar streetscape improvements are also proposed for Mason Street and Helena Avenue.

Staff supports the Entrada project with or without the proposed State Street narrowing.

A new traffic signal is proposed at the intersection of State Street and Mason Street. In addition, a signalized pedestrian crossing is proposed mid-block on

State Street between the proposed Visitor Information Center and the new public parking lot at 125 State Street.”

This is essentially the same public improvement description which was included with the project in 1999 when it was initially approved by the Planning Commission and City Council. All of the public improvement plans for the improvements described above were issued Public Works permits by the City in December 2005 and those permits remain valid. As indicated in the above timeline, a standard City Agreement for Land Development Improvements was executed and recorded, and improvement security bonds were provided to the City.

As part of the Substantial Conformance Determination that was made in March 2010, the 35 State Street Hotel Partners was required to undertake those public improvements identified above (and outlined in the original project conditions of approval required by the Coastal Commission) within a certain time period. The public improvements were originally divided into 3 phases for construction – somewhat to coincide with the three phase construction of the Entrada Project itself. The first phase was the west side of State Street and W. Mason Street. Updated improvement plans for just this phase were approved by the City in Fall 2012, and construction of the Phase 1 improvements began in March 2013.

C. The Purpose of the Required Public Improvements.

The sidewalk widening/road narrowing was intended to be consistent with the City’s longstanding State Street Plaza design north of Highway 101 to allow for the consistent development of this portion of State Street.

Once the Cross-town Freeway was completed by CALTRANS in the early 1990’s, State Street was no longer a main arterial road to Highway 101. The narrowing of State Street to two lanes below Highway 101 was designed and intended to restore a sense of place to the Waterfront Area. At peak times of use, pedestrians outnumber cars on this portion of State Street. The public improvements focus on increasing the capacity for pedestrians as well as enhancing the pedestrian environment.

These public improvements were found to be consistent with the Local Coastal Plan, Circulation Element and Downtown Waterfront Visioning Report, which encourage pedestrian friendly amenities and decreased dependence on the automobile. As mentioned above, these improvements are now also Project Conditions imposed by the state Coastal Commission in connection with the Coastal Commission’s Fall 2001 decision to find that the appeal of the Entrada Project to the Commission presented “no substantial issue” with respect to its consistency and compliance with the State Coastal Act.

D. Entrada Project Traffic Analysis.

As mentioned throughout the staff reports prepared by Community Development and Public Works Transportation staff for the project review history shown above, congestion at the signal at State Street and Cabrillo Boulevard is the primary limiting factor in the area. Consequently, the proposed narrowing of State Street does not reduce the number of vehicle lanes at the intersection of State Street and Cabrillo

Boulevard or otherwise negatively impact pedestrian access. Currently State Street could deliver more cars to the State/Cabrillo intersection than that intersection can handle (the intersection can accommodate only 600-900 vehicles per hour but the existing two lanes of travel can send 2,800 vehicles per hour to the intersection.)

Even after reducing the number of lanes on State Street at the mid-block points, at peak times State Street will still deliver more cars to the State and Cabrillo intersection (1,400 vehicles per hour) than the intersection can handle due to the existing pedestrian activity. In other words, since the limiting factor is the intersection of State and Cabrillo and the number of pedestrians and vehicles that use that intersection, the Entrada State Street Sidewalk improvements will not increase congestion and congestion levels (at peak times) will continue with or without State Street narrowing. In addition, the Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for the Entrada project noted that the Level of Service (LOS) of the State Street/Mason Street intersection would be reduced from LOS A to LOS B as a result of the narrowing of State Street. This was identified as a less than significant impact. Therefore, the City concluded that the result of the public improvements would be a betterment to the area in the form of an enhanced pedestrian experience without affecting congestion levels.