



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: September 15, 2009

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Planning Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara to Adopt Updated Design Guidelines for the Upper State Street Area.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed design guidelines for the Upper State Street Area encourage designs which will be compatible with their surroundings, facilitate connectivity, manage traffic, and enhance circulation and Santa Barbara's distinctive built environment. The guidelines were developed to carry forward the results of the City Council's *2007 Upper State Street Study* (USS Study) recommendations and to help implement the goals and objectives outlined in the Study. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide additional direction for how property owners, both public and private, can make improvements to their properties to collectively improve the visual character and circulation of the Upper State Street Area. When applied, these guidelines will help to ensure against fragmented or incompatible development and prevent uncoordinated design decisions.

Background. The original Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines were adopted in 1992 to work with the existing SD-2 (*Special District Zone*) development standards. The guidelines provided general direction for development design of architectural style and elements, color, exterior finishes, roofs, site planning, building heights, lighting, landscaping, and neighborhood compatibility. The proposed September 2009 Guidelines (USS Guidelines) serve as a new edition of the 1992 Guidelines, with new emphasis on design and streetscape development, working in conjunction with the intent of the S-D-2 overlay zone to ensure appropriateness of development and to mitigate traffic impacts where possible.

In April 2006, in recognition of community concerns about development proposals in the Upper State Street Area, the Santa Barbara City Council directed staff of the Planning and Transportation Divisions to undertake a study of the Upper State Street commercial corridor working with the public, city commissions and consultant teams. The purpose

of the USS Study was to identify changes that could improve traffic circulation and urban design in the study area.

City Council specified that the USS Study effort be focused on roadway improvements and amendments to development and design standards that could occur within the existing City policy framework. Larger citywide policy issues such as land use changes, housing density and affordability, commercial growth, regional traffic, and environmental sustainability were not addressed in the study and are not addressed in the guidelines. They will be studied as part of the City General Plan update ("Plan Santa Barbara") process. On May 8, 2007, the Council adopted Resolution Number 07-032 for the USS Study.

Approach To Updating The Guidelines.

A more comprehensive update to the USS Guidelines was planned but delayed due to budget constraints. This would have included long-term transit options for the street. On October 21, 2008, the Finance Committee directed staff to indefinitely postpone funding of a comprehensive update to the USS Guidelines per the full scope of implementation of the USS Study. Instead, staff was directed to complete a simplified guideline document based on the USS Study. On November 11, 2008, City Council concurred with the recommendations of the Finance Committee. The attached guidelines communicate the design recommendations which were the result of the Upper State Street Study and public review process.

Council also directed staff to return with the estimated cost of a staff level study of possible future transit right-of-way-needs on Upper State Street. After consulting with the Council Ad-Hoc Transportation Committee, staff determined that, at this time, the most cost effective strategy to reserve space for future transit expansion was to include references to transit needs and possibilities in the guidelines. Accordingly, Chapter 4 states "The City is also interested in reserving space along Upper State Street for current and potential future transit expansion needs and possibilities." Also, Guideline 4 lists projects "compatible with current and potential future transit expansion needs and possibilities" as more likely to constitute appropriate development where a front setback modification is requested.

Using a streamlined approach to update the guidelines, in general, the guidelines content is derived from the following sources:

- 2007 Upper State Street Study (USS Study) and final Council Resolution
- 1992 Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines
- Key passages from the City's Urban Design Guidelines
- 2009 Upper State Street Subcommittee suggested text and photos

After Planning Commission (PC) and Architectural Board of Review (ABR) draft guidelines comments in June 2009, at their request, a subcommittee of PC and ABR members met with staff three times and revised three guidelines drafts. A resulting August 2009 version of the Guidelines was reviewed by the ABR on August 10, 2009.

Both the ABR and the USS Guidelines Subcommittee, which includes three PC members, recommend Council adopt the Guidelines (see ABR minutes, Attachment 1 and Attachment 2, which provides further detail regarding the USS Guidelines update process).

Guideline Highlights. Topics addressed in the Guidelines include area character and openness, landscaping and “streetscape” design, scenic views, open space and creeks, building heights and setback distances from the street, site layouts which can improve the area’s circulation and parking, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and connectivity in the area.

Environmental Review. Staff determined that the update of guidelines would not result in significant impacts to the environment, and would be Categorically Exempt from further environmental review procedures under CEQA Guidelines section 15308, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment. The proposed updated guidelines are the type of provisions identified by City Council Resolution as consistent with this exemption category and therefore would require no further CEQA review.

Following adoption of the updated guidelines, subsequent discretionary approval actions on individual projects would continue to be subject to CEQA environmental review procedures.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

In the immediate term, the streamlined staff approach to updating the guidelines saved substantial costs which would have been allocated to consulting contracts and additional staff time on this project. However, there is still an expectation among the hearing review bodies and the public for a more comprehensive update of the guidelines to occur once the Plan Santa Barbara process is completed.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

This update to the USS Design Guidelines support sustainability in the following ways:

- Alternative transportation via pedestrian amenities, bicycle parking and circulation and mass transit accommodations are encouraged.
- Efficient/compact parking lot layouts encouraged.
- Development to preserve and enhance area creeks is encouraged.
- Appropriate landscaping and open space provisions are encouraged. Also, references to environmentally inappropriate plant species encouraged in 1992 version of the guidelines have been removed from this version.

NOTE: A copy of the proposed USS Design Guidelines, 2007 Upper State Street Study Report, and May 8th, 2007, Upper State Street Council Resolution are available for public review at the City Clerk's Office and on the City's website at: www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/Home/Guidelines/#USSGuidelines.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Minutes Excerpt: Architectural Board of Review August 10, 2009
2. Update Process Details for USS Guidelines

PREPARED BY: Heather Baker, AICP, Project Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office

**Minutes Excerpt
Architectural Board of Review
August 10, 2009**

CONTINUED DISCUSSION ITEM:

(3:10)

REVIEW OF REVISED AUGUST 2009 DRAFT OF UPPER STATE STREET DESIGN AREA GUIDELINES.

City Staff Presenter: Heather Baker, Project Planner; and Bettie Weiss, City Planner.

Staff reported edits and updates made to the August 2009 Draft of the Upper State Street Design Area Guidelines (Guidelines).

Public comment opened at 3:13 p.m.

Paul Hernadi (submitted letter from Naomi Kovacs-Citizens Planning Assoc.): expressed concern regarding further reinforcement of S-D-2 Zone; requested a general statement be included on need to improve air quality; requested the square footage of all required open spaces, sidewalks, and driveways be subtracted from a two-story structure's buildable size; and requested a change on the statement regarding "community benefits."

Regarding the requested "community benefits" phrasing, Staff recommended replacing the phrase "with the provision of substantial community benefits..." for "with the inclusion of benefits for the community at large, provided in quantity and quality beyond customary requirements..." on Page 5-4 of the final draft of the Guidelines to be consistent with Guideline 24. The Board concurred.

The Board acknowledged public comment email and letters from Richard Solomon (regarding the S-D-2 Zone required 20-foot setback) and Paula Westbury.

Public comment closed at 3:24 p.m.

Staff confirmed the Draft Guidelines will be ready for review by City Council after comments are incorporated from this meeting.

Discussion held.

Board Suggestions and Comments:

1. Table of Contents: Change Chapter 3 to new title "Design Elements".
2. Clarify a statement that photo examples are to be reviewed in the context of what they are illustrating only, but not to consider each building or site layout pictured as a complete appropriate solution.
3. Clarify that although City transportation and other public improvement projects are subject to these Guidelines, the Guidelines mainly address development projects on individual properties.
4. Page 1-6: Delete reference to "North State" in the text, since it is not illustrated.
5. Chapter 3: Correct pagination/formatting in Chapter 3, and on Page 3-2.
6. Page 3-2: Correct Figure 5 to show Mac Kenzie Park as on the south side of the street.
7. Page 4-2 Guideline 59: Soften this language regarding removing parking lot barriers. The practicality of suggestions such as linking parking lots together and removing barriers between lots is questionable, and cannot be legally enforced in adjusting private and commercial property lines.
8. Page 4-3 - Goal: Delete or clarify the phrase "or district" in the goal.
9. Examine Guideline 11 on page 3-4 and compare to reference on Mediterranean architecture on Page 3-14.
10. It would be better if the Guidelines could provide guidance to assist in "fine-tuning" Board decisions on land-use and density issues. Guidelines could provide a stronger "vision" for the area.
11. Some contradictions exist in the Guidelines and the lack of clear direction provided for possible future situations such as encouragement and provision for outdoor pedestrian-friendly environments. In some cases, it provides over-broad direction regarding "key characteristics" mentioned. In addition, some graphic diagrams (Fig. 3-3) should be clarified.
12. Correct the name of Loretto vs. San Roque Plaza.

ATTACHMENT 1

Ms. Weiss requested the Board to specifically review the "compatibility" section of the Draft Guidelines in Chapter 5.

Motion: To forward the Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines to City Council with a recommendation for adoption with the recommended minor changes incorporated:

- 1) The Board looks forward to the Plan Santa Barbara process creating a comprehensive vision for the Upper State Street area and a future update to the Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines to communicate that vision.
- 2) The Board has concerns regarding implementation of draft Guideline 59, regarding removing parking lot barriers, and would like to see a revision and softened language for this Guideline.

Action: Zink/Rivera, 4/0/1. Motion carried. (Aurell abstained, Sherry/Mosel/Gilliland absent).

**Update Process Details for
Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines**

Staff Work to Prepare for June 2009 Draft Guidelines

- The Upper State Street Study (USSS) was reformatted into a guideline format. “Guidelines” replaced “recommendations”, “Background Chapter” was revised, and recommendations for changes to the Zoning Ordinance were deleted. Portions of the USSS not relevant in the guidelines were deleted: public discussion summaries, extensive background information about the USS Study, and transportation details.
- 1992 Upper State Street Guidelines text was incorporated.
- Especially relevant passages from the Urban Design Guidelines were incorporated into the document on the following topics: Site Planning & Building Setbacks, Automobile Parking Facilities, Open Space and Creeks. Staff did not incorporate potentially applicable compatibility guidelines from the Urban Design Guidelines into the document, as Staff plans to incorporate those concepts into the Architectural Board of Review Guidelines.
- In general, staff preserved the sequencing, format, and majority of text of the USSS and May 2007 City Council Resolution in the creation of the Upper State Street Design Guidelines, although some USSS urban design text was moved into a new chapter, Chapter 2, titled “Site Planning, Building Setbacks & Parking”.

Subcommittee Review Process

After the Planning Commission's (PC) review of the guidelines on 6/11/09 and the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) guidelines comments on 6/15/09, a subcommittee of PC and ABR members was formed to meet with staff and revise the draft guidelines. The subcommittee and staff met three times and worked on three interim drafts of the guidelines (6/25, 7/9 and 7/23), with Subcommittee and staff comments and edits resulting in an August version of the Guidelines which were reviewed by the ABR on August 10, 2009. Changes which the Subcommittee worked on included:

In general:

- Map corrections
- Photos additions
- Re-numbering of guidelines to be continuous throughout the document (1-66)
- General fine editing to reduce typos/ grammar errors/ increase clarity

ATTACHMENT 2

Ch. 1: Introduction re-write, elimination of “Sub Neighborhoods” section.

Ch. 2:

- More detail added to front setback modification considerations (Guideline 4)
- Introductory language regarding parking needs / issues / goals improved.
- Minimized repetition in guidelines through cross-referencing (ex. rear parking, parking lot barriers, etc.), the total number of guidelines was reduced.
- Three photo examples of rear parking lot site layouts included.

Ch 3:

- More detail added regarding design consideration when three-story buildings are proposed. (Guideline 24)
- Emphasis placed on not just view corridors, but also viewing locations / viewing opportunities
- Creeks section re-reviewed by Creeks Division
- Guidelines regarding windows & street facades refined. (Guidelines 45 & 47)
- Tree planting and protection guidelines reorganized.

Ch 4: Expanded list of potential public/private transportation improvement projects (Guideline 66).