



**City of Santa Barbara**  
Community Development Department

**Memorandum**

**DATE:** March 14, 2024  
**TO:** State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC)  
**FROM:** Tess Harris, State Street Master Planner  
**SUBJECT:** State Street Advisory Committee Meeting – March 18, 2024

Dear State Street Advisory Committee Members,

Thank you for all your work during the Create State Master Plan process so far. We appreciate the collaboration and expertise that each of you bring to this Committee, and we hope to continue to use your expertise in various subjects to refine and enhance the draft and final Master Plan in 2024.

Our meeting on March 18, 2024 will consist of the following:

- General update on the Create State Master Plan process and timelines
- Recap of the vision, role of the SSAC, and three district concept
- Feedback to staff on the guiding principles and core strategies that set the foundation for the Master Plan and recap of small working group sessions
- Updates to sketches and graphic elements to help convey design ideas based on work by MIG and feedback from SSAC and the public, including preliminary block sketches and vignettes
- Review of the paseo system downtown including paseo block studies and vignettes

During our meeting, Staff will seek the SSAC's feedback on the guiding principles and core strategies, process and effectiveness of small SSAC working groups, thoughts on district naming, and feedback on the various architectural drawings that will be presented, including whether the drawings evoke the Santa Barbara character, and what additional ideas you want to see in sketch form for the draft Master Plan.

**Update on Create State Master Plan Process and Timelines**

Over the last few months, staff has been working on drafting the Create State Master Plan, including working with MIG on the existing conditions and technical reports

(economic conditions, stormwater management and infrastructure, and multi-modal circulation) and writing the Plan, including the following sections:

## **Master Plan Sections**

### Executive Summary:

- Why We Need a Plan
- Scope and Purpose
- Community Priorities and Vision
- Guiding Principles and Core Strategies

### Introduction and Context

- History
- The Evolution of Downtown
- What We Heard from the Community

### People and Placemaking

- Guiding Principle
- Strategies
- Implementing Actions

### Economic Vitality

- Guiding Principle
- Strategies
- Implementing Actions

### Mobility, Function, and Supportive Utilities

- Guiding Principle
- Strategies
- Implementing Actions

### Sustainability and Resiliency

- Guiding Principle
- Strategies
- Implementing Actions

### Streetscape Design Scheme (in progress)

- The Grand Paseo
- Entertainment Zone
- City Center
- Arts District

### How We Make It Happen (in progress)

- Cost Estimates & Funding Strategies
- Implementation, Phasing, and Governance
- Ongoing Maintenance, Operations, and Safety

The draft Master Plan will be available for SSAC review in full as well as the public in Summer 2024. The following timeline highlights the milestones left to complete this project:

### **Timeline**

Staff plans to adhere to the following dates through 2024 so that the final Master Plan can go to Council for a vote in early 2025.

- SSAC on March 18, 2024: Discussion of high-level considerations for the Master Plan, process, graphic elements, and paseo network
- SSAC Small Working Groups between April – July 2024: Review discreet elements of the draft Master Plan
- SSAC in Summer 2024: review of draft Master Plan
- Public Review Period between August – October 2024: Public review and feedback opportunity including review by City Commissions and Committees
- SSAC in November – December 2024: Review of the Final Master Plan and recommendation to Council
- Council – Early 2025: Council to vote on the final Master Plan

### **Draft Guiding Principles and Core Strategies**

Staff and the SSAC have identified four guiding principles for the draft Master Plan that make great public space:

1. People and placemaking are key to downtown's success
2. Economic vitality downtown is critical to city-wide economic vitality
3. Mobility and utilities provide essential function downtown
4. Sustainable design provides long-term resiliency

Each of these guiding principles includes major strategies along with approximately 5-10 implementing actions that identify how to accomplish each strategy.

The SSAC met in small working groups to discuss the principle, strategies, and implementing actions associated with the topic area of the group. Specifically, there were groups on the following topics: economic vitality, housing, placemaking, and mobility and utilities. Staff will continue to work with these small working groups during the Master Plan drafting process to refine the implementing actions and continue to enhance other key sections of the Plan, such as the design scheme, implementation, and phasing. The following includes the principles and strategies discussed with the

small working groups, along with examples of implementing actions for each strategy. The list and descriptions of implementing actions that were refined with the small groups will be included in the draft Master Plan.

Guiding Principle #1: People & Placemaking are Key to Downtown's Success

The project area should first and foremost be designed and maintained with cleanliness, safety, and comfort at the top of mind. Bringing more people to the space as well as providing a unique Santa Barbara experience, including public gathering areas, expanded sidewalks, enhanced outdoor dining, spaces to sit, rest, and relax, children's play areas, preservation of the historic quality of Downtown Santa Barbara, and inviting ground floors of buildings is exactly what can make Downtown Santa Barbara a world-class destination and the place people want to get together and celebrate, further attracting more investment Downtown and more interest in neighborhood development.

*Core Strategies*

- Make it Equitable, Accessible, & Safe
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Implement Universal Design and Design for All Ages and Abilities. Implement Universal Design standards in all public improvements by reducing barriers and increasing accessibility for all. Design public improvements to accommodate all ages, from a young child to a retiree, and provide a range of amenities that are free and accessible for all ability levels.
    - Enhance Cleaning and Maintenance. Allocate additional resources to enhance public space cleaning, vegetation management, and pavement maintenance.
- Make it Interesting, Vibrant, & Fun
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Actively Program State Street. Provide interesting, engaging, and ever-changing programming throughout the day and year to provide a new, unique, and memorable experience for locals and visitors alike.
    - Design Walkable Districts that Build to a Grand Paseo. Emphasize three distinct districts that are of a comfortable strolling distance and have a unique sense of place, look and feel, and site layout to break up the linear nature of the promenade. Include at least one central plaza in each district to serve as the district's central node, identity, and gathering place.

- Make it Uniquely Santa Barbara & Deliberately El Pueblo Viejo
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Celebrate Historic Resources. Celebrate the El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District and historic resources. Ensure that public improvements honor historic resources and are designed to preserve and enhance the distinctive architectural and urban character of the Landmark District.
    - Highlight the Paseo Network. Accentuate connections to the paseo network and subtly highlight paseo connections providing multiple ways for people to experience Downtown when designing and siting public improvements Downtown.

#### Guiding Principle #2: Fostering Economic Vitality Downtown Enhances Overall Economic Vitality City-wide

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 Macys, increased competition in the region, lack of housing, 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 with investment in placemaking strategies, retention and expansion of existing business, 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.

#### *Core Strategies*

- Grow Existing Businesses and Cultivate New Investment
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Cultivate a Business-Friendly City government. Streamline the permitting process, encourage a flexible and creatively focused government culture, and enhance customer-service around business development and retention. Review objective and discretionary permitting processes to identify opportunities to reduce process and permitting timelines for new or expanding businesses in Santa Barbara.
    - Provide More Certainty for Investors, Businesses, and Property Owners. Establish a clear vision for the future of Downtown, with

timelines for public infrastructure improvements, advanced noticing for construction disruption, and consistent rules, regulations, and standards.

- Catalyze Housing Construction Downtown
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Facilitate Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structures. Provide incentives, promote flexibility, and encourage creativity for adaptive reuse projects that convert existing structures Downtown to multi-unit housing to reduce construction waste and extend the life of existing buildings. Develop a conversion template with expedited and simplified permit review that allows unlimited density for housing projects that convert existing interior floor area.
    - Encourage a Diversity of Housing Options and Affordability Levels. Encourage a range of housing options and types to suit a diversity of user-groups and affordability levels. Prioritize housing for Downtown workers. Encourage creative configurations and development structures like employee-sponsored housing, housing consortiums, co-op ownership structures, co-living configurations, micro-units, and live-work development.
- Activate the City Center
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Test, Evaluate, and Implement. Embrace creative ideas and opportunities to try new things Downtown. Establish a streamlined pilot project process with defined timelines, evaluation criteria, review procedures, and pathway for permanent implementation.

### Guiding Principle #3: Mobility & 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 when determining 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.

#### *Core Strategies*

- Create a Safe, Connected, Accessible, and Balanced Transportation Network
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Emphasize Gateways. Highlight the gateways to Downtown from key destinations, such as the Waterfront, Amtrak Station, MTD transit center, Highway 101 underpass, and neighborhoods, with elements like wayfinding signage, pavement patterns, and site design. Design the 400 block of State Street to serve as a primary gateway to and from the Waterfront with design elements that signify to someone that they are entering a different public space.
    - Design Infrastructure for Future Needs. Consider an increase of Downtown users when siting and designing infrastructure improvements, including expanded pedestrian facilities to meet future demand for walkable space and sidewalk amenities such as outdoor dining, street furniture, landscaping, lighting, public art, performance spaces, bike share, and bike parking.
- Strategically Increase Utility Capacity
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Coordinate with Utility Providers. Coordinate with public and private utility providers (e.g., water, wastewater, gas, electric, internet) to time public infrastructure improvements with utility infrastructure improvements to minimize construction disruption, reduce costs, and increase utility capacity. Encourage utility providers to upsize infrastructure to match anticipated future demand.
    - Consider Maintenance. Ensure that reasonable access is provided for public and private utility maintenance and that appropriate pavement or ground coverings are used above buried utility infrastructure.

#### Guiding Principle #4: Sustainable Design Provides Long-Term Resiliency

Threats from fire, heat, drought, flood, and sea level rise are here and growing. How to anticipate and respond to them is a central question that should inform how we plan for Santa Barbara's future. Downtown must be designed with a sustainability lens that

celebrates the City's rich environmental heritage and focuses on adaptability to climate change to provide long-term resiliency. Emphasizing the need to manage energy and materials use, reduce Downtown's carbon footprint, and address adaptation and resiliency is critical to long-term success.

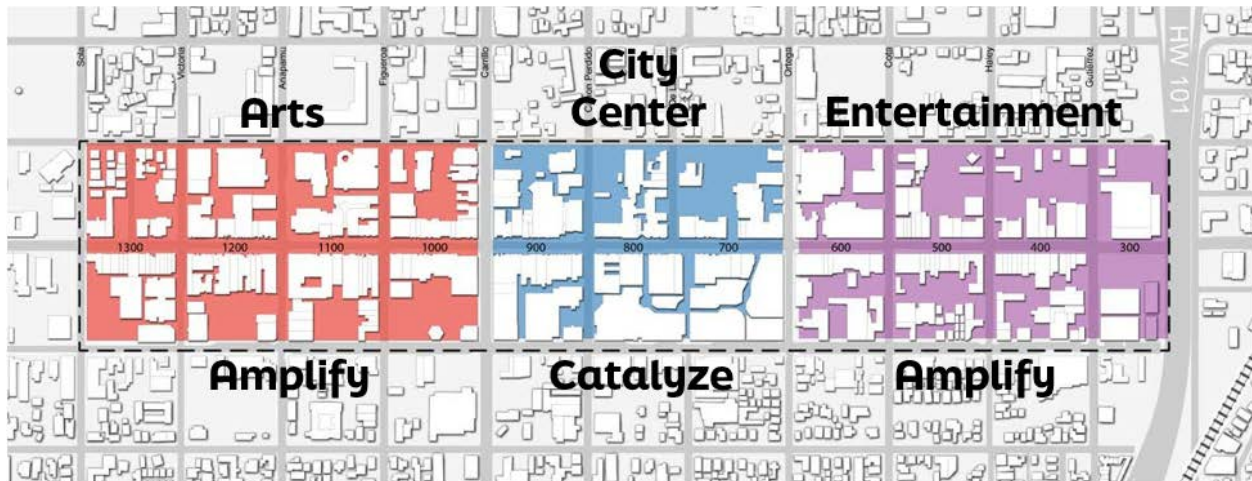
#### *Core Strategies*

- Make It Flexible, Adaptable, and Sustainable
  - Examples of Implementing Actions:
    - Use Flexible and Adaptable Design. Select infrastructure improvements that maximize the flexibility, adaptability, and number of ways that public space can be used Downtown. Prioritize easily changeable design elements, such as retractable bollards, moveable planters, and flexible street furniture. Where feasible, flatten State Street to one level between buildings, with a gentle slope for drainage and considerations for ADA loading, particularly in the City Center and Entertainment Zone, and expand from there as warranted. Maintain flexibility in implementation through phasing of the Master Plan, specifically by addressing immediate, short-term, and long-term actions.
    - Cool Downtown. Cool Downtown and reduce the urban heat island effect and improve comfort with shade elements and nature-based solutions like greenery to increase tree canopy and vegetative cover, channeling and cooling wind flows, and using cool materials and coatings.
    - Maximize Permeable Surfaces. To the extent practical, maximize the use of permeable surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff. Prioritize use of materials that retain permeability through their lifetime and require minimal maintenance.

#### **Districts**

As a reminder, the three distinct areas within the Create State project area that the SSAC has agreed upon include the following:





Each area includes State Street as well as the adjacent side streets and Chapala and Anacapa Street. The naming of each area has been debated during SSAC discussions and public comment, and staff will seek feedback from the SSAC and the public on potential naming options.

The SSAC will also be reviewing draft plan views and architectural drawings for one block in each district as part of the presentation by the local architect group.

### **Sketches and Graphic Elements to Help Convey Design Ideas**

After the last SSAC meeting, the SSAC Chair suggested that staff connect with Anthony Grumbine, as the Historic Landmarks Commission Chair. Staff have been discussing the visual aspect of the Plan with Mr. Grumbine, and he has brought together a few local architects that were involved in the 2020 AIA Design Charette to help with design refinement, including renderings, plan views, and vignettes, that complement the SSAC's work efforts and resonate visually with the Santa Barbara community.

The volunteer group has been working with staff since November 2023 and will present various architectural sketches, plan views, and paseo block studies. Their work is intended to reflect some of the various ideas that the community, SSAC, and MIG have discussed and presented to date. Draft sketches to be shown include ideas for a gateway, potential landscape strategies, plan views of three State Street blocks, a paseo analysis of strong, weak and potential paseos, and vignettes from three blocks within the project area that show how a paseo could be enhanced.

These sketches are in draft form and will be refined and added to prior to the release of the draft Master Plan this Summer.

The following architects have generously volunteered their time for this effort: Anthony Grumbine, Qing Xue, and Alexis Stypa from Harrison Design; Marc Appleton and John Margolis from Appleton Partners; Fred Sweeney; Thomas Sekula from DMHA; and Justin

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Manuel from Arcadia Studios. The City thanks this group for their time and effort to enhance the visual aspect of the draft Plan. The SSAC will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the draft visuals.

We look forward to a productive meeting with the SSAC and to hearing from the public on March 18, 2024.