

DRAFT

APRIL 16, 2026



 **CREATE
STATE**
STATE STREET MASTER PLAN

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

FOR THE STATE STREET MASTER PLAN STUDY AREA

We formally acknowledge the Chumash Peoples, their Elders, past and present, and their future generations. The State Street Master Plan recognizes that the Chumash people are the First People that inhabited this area we call Santa Barbara today.

Pointing to the Pacific Ocean, our Channel Islands, as their place of origin, the Chumash depended upon resources from land and sea to advance their culture with boat making, stone cookware, and the ability to harvest and store food. Santa Barbara is the oldest known, continuously occupied city in all North and South America because of the Chumash.

Cave markings, from sacred religious ceremonies, illustrate the immense bond that the Chumash hold with the environment. Documentation by scholars guesses that the Chumash people first settled in the Santa Barbara area approximately 13,000 years ago, but through their continued oral history and stories, we recognize that the Chumash know that they have been part of this land for time immemorial.

The modern-day City of Santa Barbara was carved out of the original Chumash territories. The Spanish arrived

in the region in the 18th century to claim ownership and occupy an already inhabited, thriving, and abundant area. They established the original Spanish fort, El Presidio, and five Spanish missions throughout Chumash territory leading to a drastic decline in the region's Chumash communities. The City was founded upon the exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose lands Santa Barbara is located, the villages and unceded lands of the Chumash people.

This acknowledgment is just a beginning. It demonstrates a commitment by the City of Santa Barbara, to create a stronger relationship with the local Chumash and Indigenous Communities and work to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism, as well as to continue to elevate and promote the many histories and cultures of this place we all call home.

We come together today to acknowledge and give voice to the unceded lands and waters of the Chumash and all their peoples. Together, we can acknowledge the mistakes and atrocities of the past and move forward in remembrance and relationship with the local Chumash peoples and other Indigenous peoples, to facilitate their process of healing by making sure



that our planning practices at the City make room for Chumash and Indigenous voices to be heard, their ecological knowledge of these territories to be listened to, and their peoples to be a part of the healing of these lands and waters, as well as themselves.

The State Street Master Plan project boundaries are within the traditional territory of the Chumash Peoples. Recognizing and sharing the Chumash history and relationship with the land is of utmost importance to ensuring that the Chumash are celebrated in the future State Street design.

If you would like to learn more about the Chumash and opportunities to support them, please visit their websites:

Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation: CoastalBand.org

Su'nan Protection, Art & Cultural Education,
The SPACE: Sunan-The-Space.org

Barbareño Band of Chumash: BBC-Indians.com

Barbareño/Ventureño Band of
Mission Indians: BVBMI.com

Santa Ynez Chumash: Chumash.gov

Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation: Wishtoyo.org

Northern Chumash Tribal Council: NorthernChumash.org

YTT Northern Chumash Tribe:
YTTNorthernChumashTribe.com

LETTER FROM A CITY LEADER

Dear Community Members,

It is my honor and delight to introduce this Master Plan: a document that reflects not just a vision for a street, but a shared aspiration for the very heart of our beloved downtown Santa Barbara.

Let me say this plainly: this is the most exciting transformation State Street has ever seen. And I mean that not as boosterism, but as someone who has watched and worked on the evolution of this corridor over many years and who understands deeply what it means to our community. What lies ahead is something truly generational—a reimagining of State Street that the people of Santa Barbara, and their children, and their children's children, will enjoy and cherish for decades to come.

Big Visions Take Time And That's Okay

If there is one lesson history teaches us about great urban transformations, it is this: they are never accomplished overnight. The changes that have shaped State Street into what it is today each unfolded over the course of decades—the result of sustained community will, civic investment, and the quiet accumulation of good decisions made year after year.

Consider the arc of State Street's own story. The original streetcar lines that once defined the corridor gave way to the automobile era over the span of a generation. The historic rebuilding after the 1925 earthquake, which gave us the gorgeous Spanish Colonial Revival architecture we now cherish, was itself a multi-decade endeavor of vision and perseverance. The pedestrianization experiments, the landscaping investments, the outdoor dining expansions that have ebbed and flowed with the times. Each of these shifts took years to conceive, years to implement, and years more to mature into the fabric of daily life.

The lesson is not that change is slow. The lesson is that meaningful change is patient and layered. When it is done right, it becomes so thoroughly woven into the life of a place that future generations cannot imagine the street any other way. That is the standard to which we hold this Master Plan.

Flexible, Fun, and Built to Evolve

What excites me most about this vision is its extraordinary flexibility. Rather than locking State Street into a single fixed design for all time, this Master Plan embraces the idea that a truly great street must be adaptable—capable of

changing with the times, responding to new community needs, and welcoming uses we haven't even imagined yet.

At the core of this approach is a commitment to maximizing pedestrian space—reclaiming the street for people in the most generous and inventive ways possible. Wide, flowing walkways. Generous gathering zones. Seating that invites lingering. Shade and greenery that makes the outdoors welcoming in every season. The design does not simply tolerate foot traffic; it celebrates it, elevates it, and builds an entire urban experience around it.

And critically, this flexibility is not just aesthetic—it is structural. The plan is designed to allow for incremental change over time, with improvements that can be built upon, refined, and adjusted as our community grows and evolves. We are not building for the Santa Barbara of today alone. We are building for the Santa Barbara of 2050, of 2075, and beyond—trusting that each future generation will bring their own ingenuity and energy to this canvas we are creating together with a neighborhood that continues to grow around this space.

State Street as the Heart of Downtown

Downtown Santa Barbara is only as alive as its main street, and State Street is only as alive as the community that claims it. This Master Plan is, at its deepest level, a plan about community building—about creating the conditions for people to gather, to connect, to discover, and to belong.

We envision State Street not merely as a corridor for commerce or transit, but as a place—a destination, a stage, a front yard for the entire city. A place where a child has their first ice

cream cone and a grandparent remembers the street as it was. Where a new resident discovers the character of this city and a longtime local finds something surprising and new. Where art and culture and everyday life coexist in joyful, unplanned ways.

Events and programming will be integral—not afterthoughts—to how this street is designed and operated. The physical transformation and the activation strategy are conceived as one, because a great public space is defined as much by what happens in it as by what it looks like. State Street should be buzzing with life: with music, with markets, with performances, with community rituals that accumulate into tradition over time.

This is the downtown experience Santa Barbara deserves: an ever-evolving heart that beats at the center of everything we love about this city.

A Moment Worth Celebrating

The State Street Advisory Committee is proud to have played a role in shaping this vision, and we are grateful to the community members whose input and energy made it possible.

The road ahead will require patience, partnership, and perseverance—just as every great chapter of State Street's history has demanded. But I am confident that when we look back on this moment, we will recognize it as the beginning of something genuinely extraordinary.

With enthusiasm and gratitude,

Dave Davis

*Chair, State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC)
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Under Seprate Cover



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State Street is the civic spine of Santa Barbara and has existed for over 110 years as the city's commercial, cultural, and community heart.

The State Street Master Plan charts a long-range vision for the next 20 to 30 years, building on Santa Barbara's heritage while confronting the structural pressures reshaping downtowns across the nation.

The Master Plan covers the 400 through 1300 blocks of State Street (between Gutierrez and Sola Streets), a space that spans approximately one mile, in addition to the adjacent paseos, plazas, parking facilities, and cross streets that make up the broader downtown fabric. It is grounded in extensive community engagement, technical analysis, and a respect for the history, culture, and aspirations of Santa Barbara.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

State Street's current identity was forged in the aftermath of the 1925 earthquake, which destroyed much of the downtown core and enabled the comprehensive Spanish Colonial Revival reconstruction that defines the city's architectural character today. Santa Barbara established what is recognized as the nation's first architectural review board, creating mandatory design standards that have produced one of the most visually cohesive historic commercial districts in the United States.

The late 20th century plaza streetscape investments and parking expansion transformed the corridor by widening sidewalks, reducing vehicle lanes, and creating the paseo network that remains one of State Street's most distinctive features. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic spurred a transition of the use of State Street: in 2020, State Street was converted to a pedestrian and cycling promenade, a temporary intervention that has demonstrated measurable benefits and has since become the starting point for a permanent redesign.

The Master Plan also acknowledges the histories that have been overlooked or erased, including displacement of the Chumash people on whose lands Santa Barbara stands. These histories are central to an honest and complete understanding of the corridor.

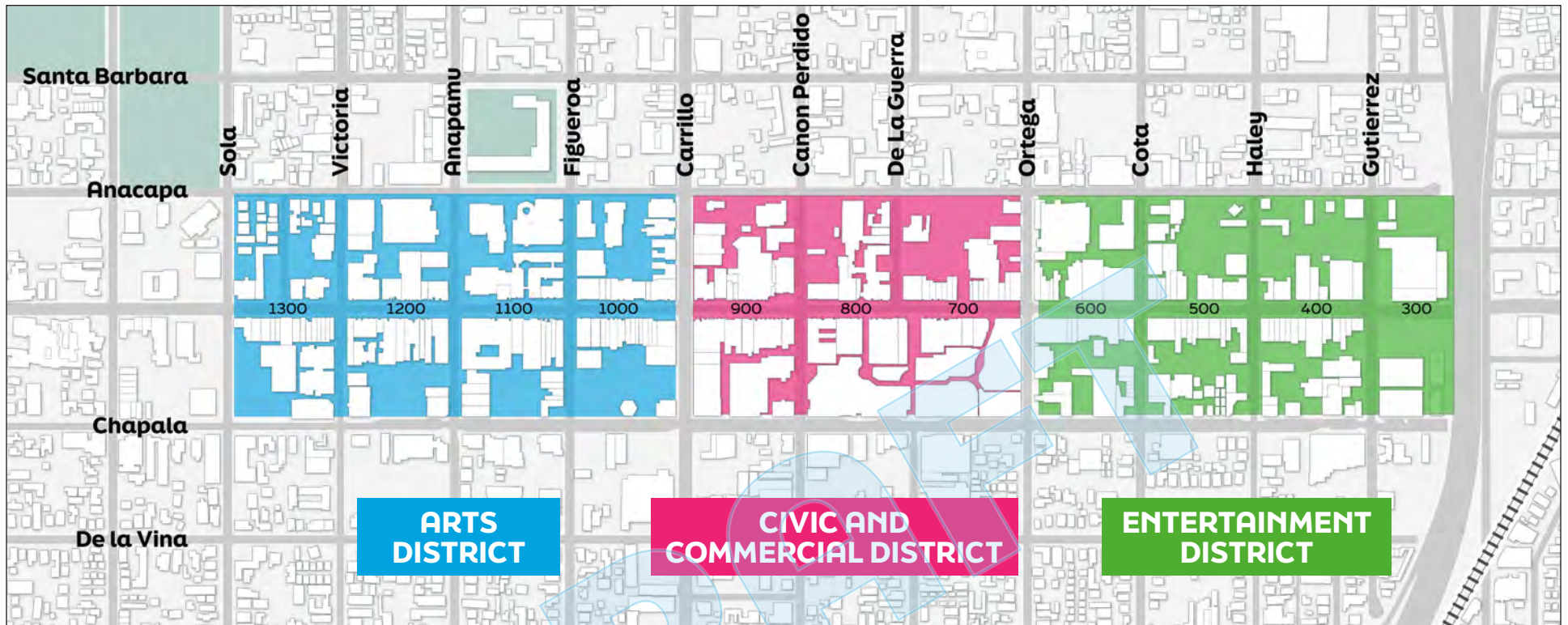
A LIVING STATE STREET

State Street's history is a story of recurring reinvention rooted in enduring civic values, from Chumash trading routes and the Spanish presidio trail through post-earthquake reconstruction, the Paseo Nuevo



development, and now the Master Plan. Each generation has renewed the corridor's meaning while upholding consistent principles: prioritizing the pedestrian experience, maintaining Spanish Colonial Revival design standards, sustaining public investment, and grounding planning decisions in broad community participation.

The State Street Master Plan carries this tradition forward. Responsive to present conditions and oriented toward a 20- to 30-year vision, it aims to honor a century of civic stewardship while remaining flexible enough to meet challenges not yet known.



STATE STREET TODAY

The study area encompasses three distinct districts, each with its own character:

Entertainment District (400–600 blocks)

A vibrant concentration of bars, restaurants, wine tasting rooms, and nightlife venues under a lush tree canopy. Generally regarded as one of the more economically healthy segments of the corridor.

Civic and Commercial District (700–900 blocks)

Anchored by Paseo Nuevo, City Hall, Casa de la Guerra, and Plaza de la Guerra. This is the priority area for revitalization, especially since it currently struggles with activation, particularly in the evenings when retail uses are closed.

Arts District (1000–1300 blocks)

Home to the Granada Theatre, Arlington Theatre, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the Public Library. Cultural programming, including the First Thursday Art Walk, makes this a regional destination.



Key Challenges

- **Retail shifts and residential undersupply:** E-commerce drove the closure of major retail anchors (Macy's, Saks, Nordstrom). A 2019 study identified a structural oversupply of 400,000–500,000 square feet of retail space. Less than 350 residential units exist in the study area, which includes just 3% of the city's multifamily housing stock.
- **Mobility conflicts:** The current Promenade configuration has produced benefits but leaves unresolved tensions between cyclists and pedestrians, inadequate transit access, and unclear mode hierarchy.
- **Infrastructure deficiencies:** Aging drainage infrastructure, flooding during rain events, worn paving, and fragmented landscaping

reflect decades of incremental patching rather than a comprehensive strategy.

- **Activation gaps:** The relative absence of evening-oriented uses in the central 700–900 blocks creates a dead zone that disconnects the two active ends of the corridor after retail hours.

Demonstrated Strengths

Despite these challenges, State Street's foundation remains strong. Tourism spending in Santa Barbara County reached \$2.1 billion in 2022. The nonprofit arts and culture sector contributes an estimated \$200 million annually to the county economy. Retail sales per establishment increased above pre-pandemic levels in 2021. And critically, safety has improved dramatically: vehicle-versus-pedestrian and cyclist collisions fell by more than 50% since the street was converted to a promenade.



THE MASTER PLAN VISION

The State Street Master Plan establishes a permanent street design rooted in pedestrian and cyclist priority, flexible programming, and a high-quality public realm that honors Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial Architecture. The design is built around a clear organizing principle: **a flexible 80-foot right-of-way that adapts to the needs of different users at different times of day.**

Street Design

The proposed cross-section allocates space as follows:

- Two 30-foot pedestrian sidewalks (~60 feet total) on either side, organized into a Frontage Zone (outdoor dining up to 12 feet), a Through Zone (minimum eight feet, clear of obstructions), and a Furnishings Zone (trees, lighting, seating, bicycle parking).
- Two 10-foot central travel lanes (~20 feet) reserved for cyclists, transit, emergency

vehicles, and, during overnight hours, service, delivery, and private vehicles.

- A retractable bollard system at each intersection (8 retractable and 16-24 fixed bollards per intersection, at eight intersections) enables block-by-block control of vehicle access with a 3–8 second retraction time for emergency response.

Access Schedule

The street operates under a time-based access schedule:

- **10 AM – 10 PM (Daytime Peak):** Pedestrian and cyclist priority. Bollards raised. Transit vehicles and small shuttles are equipped with technology that automatically retracts the bollards upon approach, allowing them to pass through the central lane while maintaining the street's pedestrian-priority character. Emergency access maintained at all times.
- **10 PM – 10 AM (Overnight Off-Peak):** Bollards lowered. Vehicles allowed for deliveries,



refuse collection, maintenance, and private access. A City appointment system will accommodate special construction and delivery needs outside normal windows.

The Public Realm

Permeable pavers and trench drains address flooding and stormwater quality. Mature specimen trees throughout the corridor are protected in the redesign. Consistent with the Spanish Colonial architecture, pavement materials reinforce the pedestrian character and extend cohesive design language through the corridor, including onto Anapamu Street as a gateway. New large trees providing shade will be introduced as an allée of trees in the Civic and Commercial

District to differentiate the space and create a distinctive character for the center of downtown.

Santa Barbara's network of downtown paseos, the shaded walkways and semi-public passages that connect State Street to surrounding blocks, has long been recognized as one of the corridor's most distinctive and underutilized assets. While a system of paseos already exists downtown, it remains somewhat fragmented, presenting a clear opportunity for the Master Plan and subsequent projects to strengthen these connections into a coherent pedestrian network. That vision was brought to life in part through volunteer efforts of a team of locally rooted architects who stepped in to develop sketches and paseo studies grounded in Santa Barbara's character, and their work can be found in Appendix H.



DISTRICT STRATEGIES

While the Master Plan establishes a consistent design framework across the full corridor, each district receives a tailored approach to address its specific conditions and opportunities.

Entertainment District

Preserve and enhance the existing tree canopy and evening energy. The bollard system enables block-by-block closures during peak nighttime activity. The 400 block maintains two-way vehicle access as the primary emergency route via the Highway 101 underpass.

Civic and Commercial District (The Heart of Downtown)

The priority for intervention. Flexible plaza design supports year-round markets, festivals, and civic

events. Plaza de la Guerra is being revitalized, and the planned pedestrianization of De la Guerra Street will create a signature civic space directly connected to State Street. Paseo Nuevo represents a key redevelopment opportunity that could yield significant new housing and commercial spaces and activate the block's ground-floor uses.

Arts District

Reinforce the cultural programming anchor. The design is extended on Anapamu Street with consistent State Street paving materials and rolled curbs to unify the cultural campus. The 1300 block maintains two-way vehicle access to preserve Arlington Street connections.

THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN

The blocks of State Street between Ortega Street and Carrillo Street form the civic and commercial core of Santa Barbara, a concentrated stretch where City Hall, the main post office, the Presidio Neighborhood, Casa de la Guerra, El Paseo, and Paseo Nuevo sit within steps of one another, creating a density of civic purpose found nowhere else in the region, with the County Courthouse and the Central Library also just a short distance away.

This corridor is where residents conduct the business of government, access essential services, and move through a streetscape defined by landmark Spanish Colonial Revival architecture that has shaped Santa Barbara's global image for a century. Because so much institutional weight is concentrated here, the health of these few blocks carries outsized significance for the broader downtown.

Renewed investment on State Street between Ortega and Carrillo is therefore central to any serious revitalization strategy. The civic anchors are already in place, but the surrounding commercial and residential fabric must rise to meet them. Vacant storefronts and underutilized ground-floor spaces along this corridor drain energy from blocks that should be among the most active in the city. Targeted investment, whether through improvements to historic buildings, flexible retail programming, hospitality and dining activation, residential development, or public realm enhancements, would leverage existing civic infrastructure to produce returns felt across the entire downtown.



IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The Master Plan identifies a set of near- and long-term implementation priorities that span infrastructure, programming, and policy.

Infrastructure

- Install the retractable bollard system at all identified intersections (500–1200 blocks plus De la Guerra), resolving the current ambiguity around vehicle access and permanently establishing pedestrian-priority daytime operations.
- Reconstruct drainage infrastructure to address recurring flooding; evaluate utility relocation to Anacapa and Chapala Streets to reduce future disruption to State Street businesses; identify a stormwater alternative compliance program for downtown development projects immediately adjacent to State Street.
- Repair and upgrade paving throughout the corridor with a durable, permeable material palette consistent with Santa Barbara's heritage aesthetic. Pave the Civic and Commercial District with different permeable pavement material to provide an additional visual differentiation for this area. Connect De La Guerra Street and De La Guerra Plaza to the Civic and Commercial District with similar design materials.

Economic Development & Housing

- Support conversion of excess retail space to housing, office, and mixed-use development. The City has planned for 8,001 new units under the California Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) by 2030; the downtown core, including the Master Plan area, should accommodate 1,000–2,000 of those units.
- Pursue redevelopment of City-owned parking lots and Paseo Nuevo Mall as catalytic housing opportunities, bringing permanent residents to the heart of the corridor.
- Simplify permitting for outdoor dining, pop-up retail, buskers, and small performances to lower barriers to encourage economic and cultural activation.
- Create green spaces for play, dog walking, urban-nature interaction.

Programming & Events

- Reinforce the Saturday Farmers Market, recently relocated to the 0 blocks of Carrillo Street and the 900–1000 blocks of State Street, and the Tuesday Farmers Market, located on the 500–800 blocks of State Street (from Cota to Canon Perdido Street), as central programming anchors.
- Design the Civic and Commercial District's flexible plaza to be event-ready from day one, supporting weekly markets, seasonal festivals, family-friendly programming, and major civic celebrations with minimal additional setup.



CONCLUSION

Every generation of Santa Barbarans has been called upon to renew the meaning of this corridor for its own time: the Chumash who created community and traveled it for millennia, the civic visionaries who rebuilt it after the 1925 earthquake, and the community members who shaped it through the Plaza improvements and the pandemic-era Promenade. This Plan carries forward that tradition.

The path forward does not solely depend on the return of national retail chains or the recovery of pre-pandemic office populations. It builds on Santa Barbara's unmatched cultural, historical, and experiential assets, temperate climate, and on the quality of the public realm that draws people to the street in the first place. A safe, beautiful, activated, and equitable State Street is the foundation for a resilient downtown economy and a thriving civic life for the next generation.





1



1

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Santa Barbara's downtown and its central spine, State Street, have long served as the civic and cultural heart of the region.

Understanding the historical, architectural, economic, and civic forces that have shaped this corridor is essential to inform any long-range vision for its future.

The State Street Master Plan is not a break from the past, but a continuation of a deeply rooted tradition of purposeful, community-driven stewardship of Santa Barbara's most defining public space.

A CHANGING CORRIDOR: REFLECTING AND HONORING THE PAST AND PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

The history of State Street and Santa Barbara's downtown is, at its core, a story of recurring reinvention in service of enduring civic values. From the Chumash trading routes and the Spanish presidio trail to the post-earthquake reconstruction, the Plaza improvements, Paseo Nuevo development, and now the State Street Master Plan, each generation of Santa Barbarans has been called upon to interpret and renew the meaning of this corridor for its own time.

Several themes recur across this history and remain directly relevant to the Master Plan:

- » **The primacy of the pedestrian experience.** From the paseo network envisioned after the 1925 earthquake to the 1969 Plaza streetscape to the pandemic-era promenade, Santa Barbara has repeatedly prioritized the walking environment as the foundation of a vital downtown.
- » **The role of design standards in place identity.** The establishment of the nation's first architectural review

board following the 1925 earthquake, the establishment of the Historic Landmarks Commission in 1993, and the maintenance of the Spanish Colonial Revival character for a century, demonstrates that consistent design stewardship is a long-term economic and civic asset.

- » **The importance of public investment and institutional capacity.** From the Redevelopment Agency to the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the history of downtown Santa Barbara reflects the critical role of dedicated institutions and dedicated funding in sustaining the vitality of the public realm.
- » **Community as co-author.** The planning processes that have shaped this corridor, including the current Master Plan and work of the State Street Advisory Committee, have consistently drawn on extensive public participation. The community's voice, expressed through thousands of conversations and survey responses, is not incidental to the plan; it is its foundation. The State Street Master Plan carries forward this tradition. Grounded in the city's history, responsive to present-day conditions, and oriented toward a long-range vision of 20 to 30 years, it aspires to be worthy of the century of stewardship that preceded it and flexible enough to respond to the future unknown today.



ORIGINS: FROM CHUMASH HOMELAND TO SPANISH SETTLEMENT

Long before the arrival of European settlers, the Santa Barbara coastal plain was home to the Chumash people, who occupied this territory for as many as 6,000 years. The Chumash maintained sophisticated trade networks, maritime traditions, and permanent village settlements throughout the region. Their presence shaped the ecological and cultural landscape that later generations would build upon.

Spanish soldiers arrived in the late 18th century, establishing El Presidio de Santa Bárbara in 1782 as a

military outpost to protect the Alta California coastline. The founding of Mission Santa Bárbara in 1786 followed shortly thereafter, cementing the area's importance within the Spanish colonial system. The Presidio and the mission trail, running roughly along what would become State Street, established the north-south civic axis that defines downtown Santa Barbara to this day.

Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, at which time Santa Barbara had a population of approximately 1,300, including the surviving Chumash. Following the Mexican-American War, Santa Barbara began its legal existence as an American city on April 9, 1850, and the first commercial district emerged between 1850 and 1851 when the first business licenses were issued.



THE 19TH CENTURY: GROWTH ALONG STATE STREET

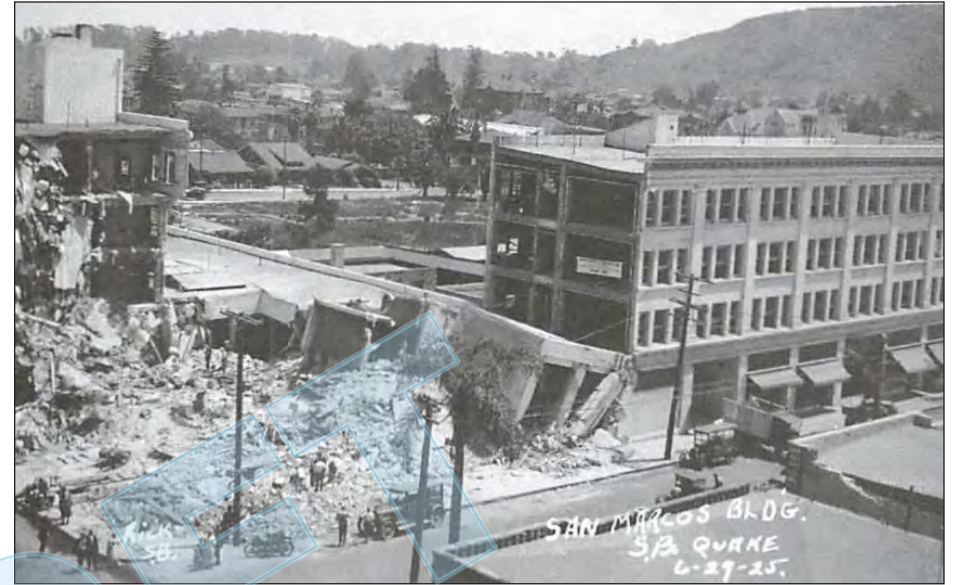
The discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada in 1848 reshaped California almost overnight, and Santa Barbara felt the ripples of that transformation. The Gold Rush brought an influx of merchants, speculators, and settlers, changing Santa Barbara from a quiet rancho community into a more commercially active town. State Street, as the primary route connecting the waterfront to the inland, became the natural location for the emerging commercial district.

The construction of Stearns Wharf in 1872 was a turning point in the city's economic development. For the first time, oceangoing vessels could unload building materials, freight, and passengers directly in Santa Barbara, bypassing the difficult surf landings that had long constrained commerce. The wharf accelerated

growth along State Street as goods moved from the harbor up through the downtown corridor.

The first rail tracks for horse-drawn streetcars were laid along the west side of State Street from Sola Street to Stearns Wharf in the late 1800s. Around the same time, State Street was paved and twelve-foot-wide wooden sidewalks were constructed. Electric trolleys operated along the corridor from 1896 to 1929, when they were replaced by motor buses.

The completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad connection in the early 20th century, linking Santa Barbara to Los Angeles to the south and San Francisco to the north, effectively ended the city's geographic isolation and cemented its future as a resort and residential destination. With reliable rail access, tourism flourished and State Street anchored the retail, hospitality, and civic life of a growing city.



THE 1925 EARTHQUAKE AND THE BIRTH OF SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL

The single most consequential event in the architectural history of Santa Barbara's downtown occurred in the early morning hours of June 29, 1925, when a major earthquake destroyed much of the State Street corridor. The disaster was devastating in its immediate impact, but it created an extraordinary opportunity: the near-total reconstruction of the downtown core.

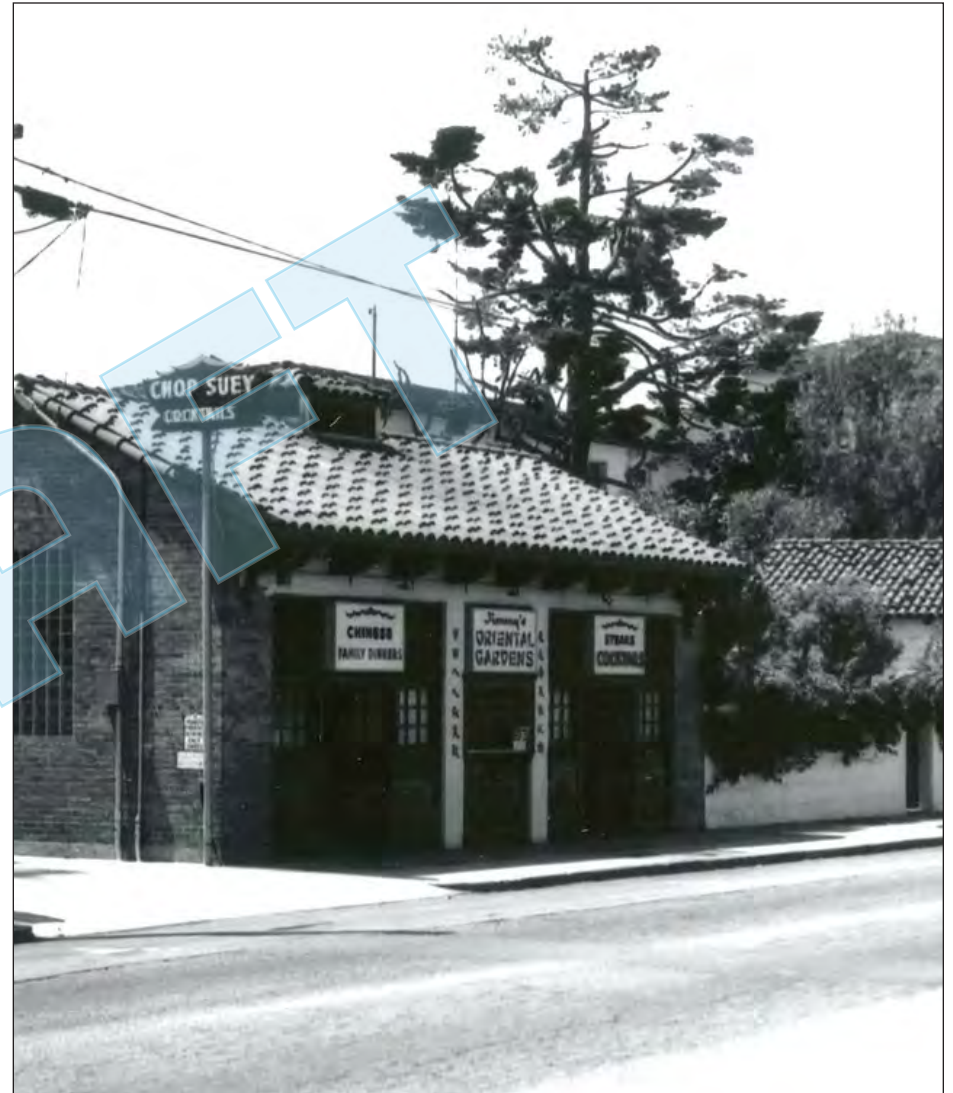
At the time of the earthquake, a civic movement was already underway in Santa Barbara, led by visionaries including Bernard Hoffman and Pearl Chase, to establish a unified architectural identity for the city rooted in its Spanish and Mexican heritage. The earthquake's destruction swept away the patchwork of Victorian and vernacular commercial buildings

that had accumulated along State Street and opened the way for a coherent rebuilding effort.

“El Pueblo Viejo” — the city’s core historic district — rose from the rubble and serves today to set Santa Barbara apart.

The rebuilt downtown reflected the ideals of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, characterized by red tile roofs, white stucco walls, decorative wrought ironwork on windows and balconies, arched colonnades, and lush landscaping. Santa Barbara established what is recognized as the nation's first architectural review board, with mandatory design standards for new construction in the downtown district. This institutional commitment to architectural coherence has been maintained and enforced ever since, resulting in one of the most visually cohesive historic commercial districts in the United States.

The planners and civic leaders who guided the post-earthquake reconstruction also envisioned a network of pedestrian paseos, shaded pathways threading through the blocks connecting State Street to interior courtyards, civic buildings, and historic landmarks. This paseo network, connecting destinations such as City Hall, De la Guerra Plaza, the Courthouse, and the Presidio, remains a defining characteristic of the downtown experience and a key framework for the current Master Plan.





THE LOSS OF CHINATOWN AND JAPAN TOWN

The post-earthquake rebuilding campaign, while transformative in many ways, also erased communities that had been integral parts of Santa Barbara's civic life. The block of Canon Perdido Street between State Street and Anacapa Street served as the cultural and residential hub for Chinese immigrants, who began arriving in Santa Barbara as early as the 1860s. Chinatown included rooming houses, several businesses, a school, place of worship and community meeting spaces. During the rebuilding that took place after the 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake, the Downtown Chinatown area was dismantled to create a cohesive Spanish Colonial Revival aesthetic in Downtown Santa Barbara.

E. Canon Perdido, between State Street and Santa Barbara Street, was also once the cultural, commercial, social, and religious center of Santa Barbara's Japanese American community. By the 1920s, Japan Town included boarding houses, bathhouses, restaurants, a cleaner, churches, pool hall, and grocery store. These businesses served Santa Barbara's Japanese American population, which numbered about 500 before the start of World War II. The last known building constructed for Chinatown dates to 1947, and Japantown saw no additional construction after World War II. The displacement of these communities represents a significant and often overlooked dimension of the history the Master Plan must acknowledge.



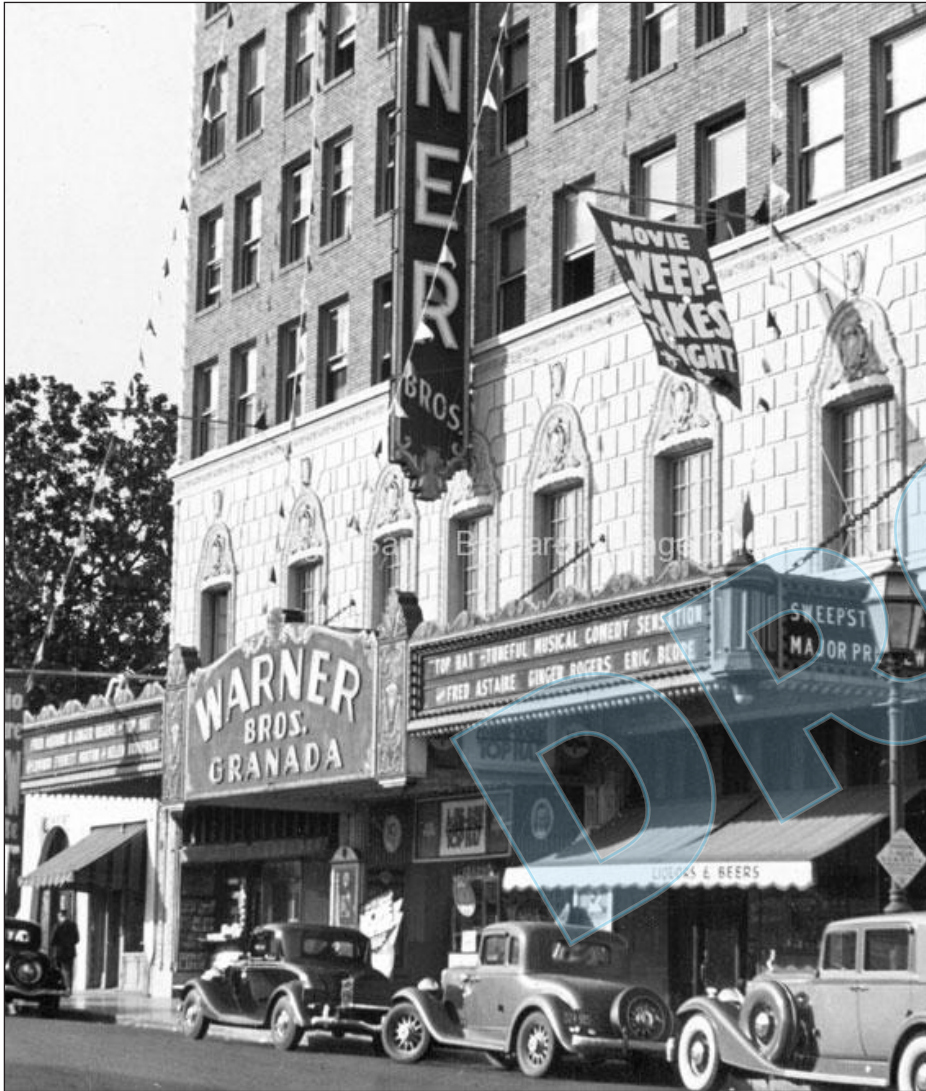
MID-CENTURY COMMERCE AND THE RISE OF THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

From 1912 to 1921, the City served as a significant center of silent film production, a precursor to Hollywood, resulting in early cosmopolitan energy downtown.

Through the 1930s and into the postwar decades, State Street consolidated its role as the region's premier commercial address. By the 1940s, downtown State Street had established itself as the primary commercial, financial, cultural, and governmental center of Santa Barbara County — a vibrant retail district and regional destination for residents and visitors. During this period, the corridor was characterized by narrow sidewalks, four lanes of vehicle traffic, and on-street parking.

The postwar decades brought mounting competitive pressure. Population growth shifted toward suburban areas driven by the postwar housing boom, highway construction, and development of the Goleta Valley. This suburbanization was enabled, in part, by the creation of Lake Cachuma, which made it possible for the Goleta Valley population to triple in size. The University of California, Santa Barbara expanded, and the research and technology sector grew along the South Coast.

Two commercial developments in particular redirected spending away from downtown. The Fairview Shopping Center opened in Goleta in 1964, spurring further development along that corridor. Then, closer to home, La Cumbre Plaza opened in Santa Barbara in 1967. La Cumbre Plaza was the region's first mall, which resulted in department stores leaving downtown, drew residents and visitors away from the downtown



core and accelerated a pattern of disinvestment that was playing out in downtowns across the country.

In response to the rise of suburban retail and the opening of La Cumbre Plaza, downtown businesses formally organized as the Downtown Organization of Santa Barbara in 1967, establishing a unified voice for the district and launching retail promotions and community events that continue to this day. Building on this momentum, the City established Santa Barbara's first Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) in 1975, followed by a second BID for the Old Town District in 1976, creating a stable, self-assessed funding base to support ongoing organizational work.



PLANNING AND REINVESTMENT: 1969 - 2000

Recognizing the need for public investment to sustain the vitality of the historic core, city leaders undertook a series of strategic planning and infrastructure initiatives during the final decades of the 20th century that continue to shape the character of downtown today.

The Plaza Streetscape

One of the most enduring investments in the downtown public realm, “The Plaza” was designed by architect Robert Ingle Hoyt in 1969, acting on the 1964 General Plan’s recommendation to reduce State Street from four to two vehicle lanes. The six-block streetscape improvement spans Victoria to Ortega Streets, featuring tile sidewalks, palm trees, benches, and widened

pedestrian walkways while retaining and incorporating the historic buildings that define State Street’s character.

The Plaza project required a fundamental restructuring of downtown parking. On-street parking was eliminated from State Street entirely, with access shifted to the parallel streets of Chapala and Anacapa. Funded by Parking District assessments on surrounding properties, five new surface parking lots and one parking structure were constructed behind the commercial frontages to replace the lost on-street supply. To connect shoppers from these new off-street facilities back to State Street, the City developed the paseo network by threading pedestrian pathways through existing alleys and, in some cases, through buildings themselves. The paseos were therefore not an independent design amenity but a functional necessity of the parking strategy, one that over time evolved



into a distinctive network of retail-lined pedestrian connections unique to downtown Santa Barbara.

Working in partnership with the Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency, which was active from 1972 to 2012, the City expanded the supply over subsequent decades through the construction of additional “almost invisible” parking structures designed to be compatible with the downtown streetscape. To compete with La Cumbre Plaza’s “Free Parking” campaign, in 1970 the Downtown business community partnered with the City to form a Parking and Business Improvement Area (PBIA), which helped offset a portion of the cost of operating the City’s public parking system, enabling the City to offer a period of “free” parking in public lots. Former Mayor Sheila Lodge credited this system as essential to keeping downtown competitive against the suburban mall development that threatened the corridor in the late 1960s and

1970s. Today the system comprises ten parking lots and five parking structures totaling over 3,000 stalls, serving more than five million vehicles annually.

The Plaza was expanded in the 1990s with additions of public art, new street furnishings, and the State Street Flag Program, which remains a visible symbol of downtown identity.

While the City Council discussed a pedestrian streetscape in the 1964 General Plan and closing blocks of State Street to vehicles entirely as early as the 1980s, no formal action was taken.

Santa Barbara’s downtown evolution has been decades in the making. The 1964 General Plan first articulated a vision for a pedestrian-oriented State Street, sparking early conversations about traffic calming, parking supply, and the creation of a vibrant public plaza environment that would define the corridor’s character.



The establishment of the Redevelopment Agency in 1972 provided the financial and institutional mechanism to begin translating that vision into reality, funding public improvements and laying the groundwork for private investment. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the vision expanded further by extending the pedestrian realm from the State Street Plaza to the freeway, anchoring the retail district with the development of Paseo Nuevo and its department store tenants, and financing the cultural and arts facilities that gave downtown its civic richness. Each of these milestones was the product of planning cycles, public debate, and patient investment stretched across generations. More than fifty years elapsed between the articulation of that original vision and its fullest expression. With that foundation now firmly in place, the moment has arrived to look forward: to build on what those

decades of effort produced and define what downtown Santa Barbara will become in the next fifty years.

Business Improvement Districts

Downtown Santa Barbara pioneered one of California's first Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in 1975, establishing a self-assessment mechanism to provide stable, recurring funding for downtown programs and services. A second BID was created for the Old Town District in 1976. These structures gave the downtown organization a reliable financial foundation and a model that was subsequently adopted by cities across the state.

The Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency

Established in 1972, the Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency (RDA) became the primary force for public investment in the downtown core over the following four decades. The RDA extended the six-block State

Street Plaza to include the city blocks between Haley to Ortega Streets, with landscaping and sidewalk widening. In the mid-1990s, the 400 block of State Street (East Haley to Gutierrez Streets) was also improved, though with narrower sidewalks than those above Haley Street. The RDA built approximately 1,000 additional parking spaces in new downtown facilities.

The RDA's most visible investment was construction of Paseo Nuevo in 1990, an approximately 460,000-square-foot open-air shopping center at the heart of downtown, developed as a public-private partnership. The RDA also funded rehabilitation of cultural infrastructure, including the Granada Theater and the New Vic/Ensemble Theater, in the 1990s and early 2000s. This sustained commitment to cultural and commercial investment helped maintain downtown's position as a regional destination through a period of broad suburban competition.

The abrupt elimination of California's redevelopment agencies in 2012, as part of the State's budget restructuring, ended the reliable flow of public investment that had sustained downtown Santa Barbara for forty years. The loss of the RDA, combined with structural shifts in the retail economy driven by

e-commerce and changing consumer habits, created increased vacancies and reduced maintenance capacity in parts of the corridor, which are challenges that provide important context for the current Master Plan.

The Historic Landmarks Commission

Santa Barbara's commitment to architectural preservation dates to 1959, when the City Council adopted a resolution establishing El Pueblo Viejo (EPV) in the downtown and waterfront areas, followed in March 1960 by an ordinance that formally designated EPV as a district and defined its allowable architectural styles. A Landmarks Committee was formed shortly thereafter in May 1960 to steward this vision. These early efforts reflected the community's dedication to preserving the city's Spanish Colonial Revival character. Decades later, Santa Barbara voters cemented this commitment by approving a Charter Amendment in November 1993 (Section 802), which formally established the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) and granted it authority over the design and alteration of all structures within El Pueblo Viejo, which is a mandate that continues to guide the built environment of downtown Santa Barbara today.

CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE: 2000 – 2019

The first two decades of the 21st century brought a succession of challenges that tested the resilience of the downtown district. The Great Recession of 2007- 2009 increased retail vacancies and reduced tax revenues, straining both businesses and the public agencies that supported the district. The elimination of California's redevelopment agencies statewide in 2012 abruptly ended the flow of redevelopment funds that had sustained public investment in downtown Santa Barbara for forty years, marking the end of a significant era of publicly-sponsored urban reinvestment.

Historically, parking revenues also supported maintenance of the Plaza and paseo system, and other downtown amenities such as the Downtown-Waterfront Shuttle. However, increasing costs combined with flat revenues has meant that these costs have had to shift to the City's General Fund.

Broader structural shifts in the retail economy such as the growth of e-commerce, the continued dominance of regional growth, and changing consumer habits also reduced foot traffic and altered the tenant mix along State Street. The rise of competing commercial corridors

in neighboring communities, from the Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta to Coast Village Road in Montecito and the retail offerings in Carpinteria, has steadily drawn shoppers and spending away from State Street, fragmenting the regional retail market that downtown Santa Barbara once dominated. Vacancy rates in formerly prime retail blocks increased, and the physical environment of parts of the corridor began to show the effects of deferred maintenance and reduced activation.

Despite these pressures, downtown Santa Barbara demonstrated considerable resilience. The arts, restaurant, and entertainment sectors continued to draw visitors and residents. The district's cultural infrastructure includes the Granda Theater, Lobero Theater, Center Stage Theater, Arlington Theater, The New Vic/Ensemble Theatre Company, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara Historical Museum, Casa De La Guerra, and The Presidio. This cultural infrastructure sustained foot traffic and reinforced State Street's identity as a destination rather than merely a shopping corridor. The number of businesses in the greater downtown area grew from approximately 400 in 1975 to more than 1,420 by 2015, reflecting the vitality of the broader district even as the core retail corridor faced headwinds.



THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE STATE STREET PROMENADE: 2020 – PRESENT

The COVID-19 pandemic, which arrived in California in early 2020, produced an unexpected catalyst for the reimagining of State Street. In response to public health guidance requiring the separation of restaurant diners from enclosed indoor spaces, the City of Santa Barbara closed an eight-block stretch of State Street to vehicle traffic in 2020, allowing restaurants and businesses to expand into the right-of-way with outdoor dining parklets and gathering spaces.

What began as a temporary public health measure quickly revealed latent demand for a different kind of downtown street. Families, pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors responded enthusiastically to the car-free promenade and to new outdoor dining

opportunities downtown. The closure, implemented with low-cost quick-build materials including moveable bollards, planters, and street markings, became a demonstration project that generated sustained community support and a robust public conversation about the future of the corridor.

The City piloted several different configurations over this period. Bicyclists were initially channelized into the center of the street; an 8-block designated bike lane was subsequently established to separate cyclists from pedestrians. The 1200 block was opened to one-way vehicular traffic in November 2023 to accommodate guest drop-off at the Granada Theatre. Decorative lighting and public tables and chairs were tested in various segments. All of these modifications, however, were explicitly designed as temporary measures until a downtown vision could be realized.



The success of the temporary closure presented the City with a pivotal question: to what extent should these changes become permanent?

The State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC) was established to guide this process, charged with advising the development of a comprehensive Master Plan for the corridor. Shortly after, a State Street Master Planner and Project Planner were hired, tasked with managing consultants, conducting extensive community outreach, and synthesizing public input into a long-range vision.

EARLY PLANNING DISCUSSIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

AIA Design Charette

In the summer of 2020, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Santa Barbara Chapter organized a design charrette that engaged more than 160 design professionals in exploring concepts for the State Street corridor and downtown. The charrette examined design approaches to the street, policy frameworks for downtown housing production, and long-range visions for the corridor's future. The energy and ideas generated by this effort directly catalyzed the City's decision to initiate the formal Master Plan process.

A COMMUNITY VISION FOR *Downtown Santa Barbara*



AIA Santa Barbara

Design Charrette
2020

RE: INVIGORATE
INVENT
IMAGINE
PURPOSE



State Street Subcommittee

Building on the momentum of the promenade and the AIA charrette, the City Council established a State Street Subcommittee, which included three City Councilmembers, to oversee a structured public outreach effort to evaluate the long-term future of State Street. The Subcommittee met numerous times from July 2020 through February 2021, guiding outreach and visioning activities. On March 9, 2021, the City Council adopted the Subcommittee's recommendations, which included: adopting vision principles for the master planning process; initiating amendments to the General Plan Circulation Element to support permanent closure of certain blocks to motor vehicles; initiating the planning and environmental review processes necessary to prepare a Master Plan; and establishing a new State Street Advisory Committee to oversee that process.

State Street Advisory Committee

On July 20, 2021, the City Council appointed 14 community members and business representatives and three City Councilmembers to the State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC). The SSAC was charged with guiding the production of the Master Plan, including providing input and recommendations on topics related to the plan as it develops. The SSAC reviewed concepts, evaluated tradeoffs, and refined recommendations throughout the planning process. The SSAC met from August 2021 through July 2024, building a public record of deliberation that reflects the depth and breadth of community engagement the Master Plan process has entailed. Their input helped ensure that the Plan reflects a balanced approach to mobility, economic vitality, public space, and inclusivity, while remaining grounded in the needs and priorities of the Santa Barbara community.

Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association

The Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association (DSBIA) is a nonprofit organization established to replace the former Downtown Organization, creating a more sustainable and long-term model for managing and improving the downtown district. The DSBIA's formation was made possible by the Downtown Santa Barbara Community Benefit Improvement District (CBID), approved by property owners in July 2024, which provides dedicated assessment fee funding to support expanded maintenance, security, and beautification services across the downtown core. The DSBIA serves as the primary organizational voice for downtown's property owner and business community and is a key partner in shaping the corridor's ongoing revitalization. The DSBIA has remained active throughout the State Street Master Plan process, investing in interim improvements including daily maintenance services, a window beautification program for vacant storefronts, new string lighting in paseos, and expanded security services.

Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce

The Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, which represents over 1,100 businesses from Carpinteria to Goleta, has been a consistent voice in downtown Santa Barbara's long-term planning and revitalization efforts. Through its Public Policy Committee, a diverse group of business leaders from across industry sectors that meets monthly to research, review, and take positions on issues impacting the community, the Chamber has engaged directly with matters

affecting State Street's economic health and physical future. The Chamber has consistently championed policies that support a walkable, commercially active, and economically resilient downtown corridor.

Friends of State Street

Friends of State Street is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that formed in 2020 with the goal of reimagining the future of State Street in partnership with the broader community. Organized as an explicitly neutral civic body that is dedicated to community process rather than any particular design outcome, the organization has served throughout the Master Plan process as a bridge between City staff, community stakeholders, and the general public. Early efforts focused on supporting the promenade through parklet guidance, planter installation, and volunteer improvements. The group later co-hosted a Community Conversation Series to gather input from a wide range of local voices by bringing together downtown business owners, nonprofits, the arts community, realtors, and mobility advocates in separate sessions to ensure each constituency had space to share perspectives freely.

Friends of State Street has also advanced pilot projects, such as the State Street Loop shuttle, which was a free, electric golf cart shuttle service providing slow-paced transit along the promenade. The organization also partnered with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden on a native plant pilot at the 1200 block of State Street and worked to activate underused storefronts, connecting property owners with creative tenants to spark long-term commercial interest in vacant spaces.



THE STATE STREET MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The State Street Master Plan represents the beginning of a new planning effort undertaken for the downtown corridor in the post-earthquake era. It builds directly on the momentum generated by the pandemic-era promenade while situating the corridor's future within the long arc of its history.

The planning process has been extensive and deliberately inclusive. Community outreach activities included more than 60 community events, 20 public meetings, and a citywide survey that received nearly 6,000 individual responses, approximately twice the participation rate recorded in comparable planning processes in larger cities. Results from this outreach documented strong public support for a pedestrian-oriented State Street, with 79 percent of survey respondents indicating a preference for a corridor free of private vehicle traffic, with bicycle infrastructure and a flexible street surface.



Conceptual designs for the Master Plan have been prepared by the urban design firm Moule and Polyzoides, whose work reflects the Spanish Colonial Revival tradition and the paseo network established in the 1925 reconstruction. The emerging plan envisions State Street organized into three distinct zones, including a Grand Paseo, the highly walkable civic core between Ortega and Carrillo Streets featuring updated landscaping and shaded tree canopy, new pavement texture and patterns, expanded sidewalk with room for amenities and outdoor dining, and

a plaza-like center that is primed for a community gathering space. The design consciously echoes the vision of post-earthquake planning with an emphasis on weaving and prioritizing pedestrian connections through the heart of downtown. As of early 2026, the Master Plan is advancing through its review process.



RECENT AND ONGOING PROJECTS IN THE DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR

A number of significant capital improvement projects are underway within or adjacent to the Master Plan area, representing both the City's ongoing commitment to downtown investment and the physical context into which the Master Plan must integrate.

De la Guerra Plaza, designated as a Public Square in 1853, has served as Santa Barbara's symbolic center of town for more than 170 years. The plaza presents a renewed opportunity for revitalization through structural and aesthetic improvements designed to better serve the community's arts, cultural, and civic events throughout the year. Of particular importance

is its integration into the State Street Master Plan design to further emphasize one cohesive civic core.

Related capital projects include the Vision Zero State Street Undercrossing between Gutierrez and Yanonali Streets, completed in 2025; improvements to Library Plaza, completed in November 2024; and the Santa Barbara Police Station, which is expected to be complete in 2027. The Saturday Farmers Market was also successfully relocated to the 0 blocks of Carrillo Street and the 900–1000 blocks of State Street in September 2024, bringing significant weekly activation to a key segment of the corridor.

These projects, taken together, represent a substantial public investment in the downtown fabric and should be recognized as integrated components of the broader vision for State Street's future.

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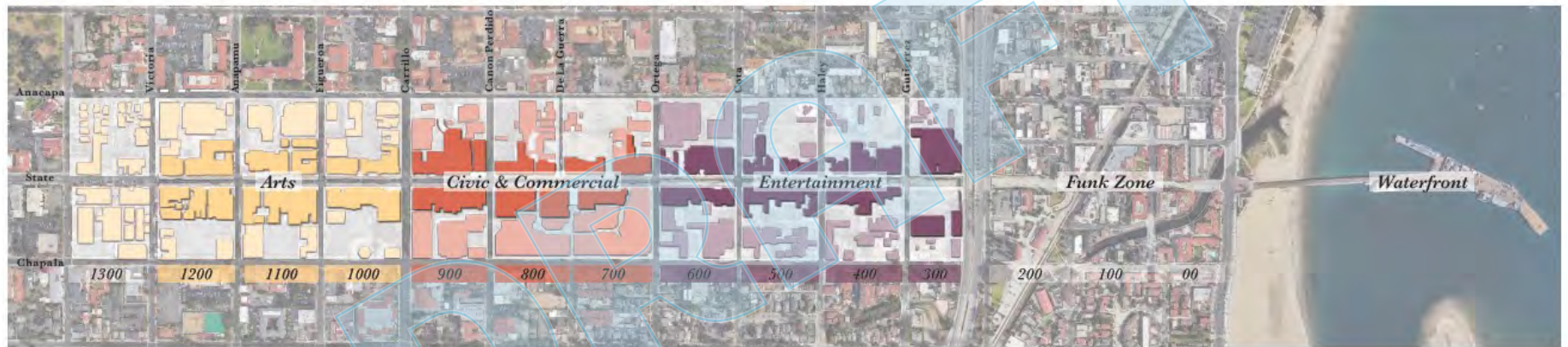
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2 STATE STREET TODAY

The urban fabric of Downtown Santa Barbara is a defining aspect of its culture and identity, characterized by human-scale, mixed-use buildings and vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streets.

State Street has served for more than 110 years as the city's commercial and pedestrian core, functioning as both the economic backbone and symbolic heart of Santa Barbara. It reflects the city's rich history and provides a strong foundation on which to build a transformed future.

This section provides an overview of existing conditions along State Street, organized around the key systems and dynamics that shape the downtown environment: land use and urban form, districts and character, mobility, economic vitality, public space and activation, and planning context. It identifies both the enduring strengths that make State Street resilient, and the pressing challenges that require coordinated intervention.



Chapala 1300 1200 1100 1000 900 800 700 600 500 400 300 200 100 00

Retail Area	202,320 sf	384,360 sf	204,120 sf	= 790,800 sf TOTAL
Parking Stalls	1,367 parking	1,617 parking	1,008 parking	= 4,000 parking stalls TOTAL





STUDY AREA

The State Street Master Plan study area is centered on State Street and the surrounding downtown blocks. It is bounded by Anacapa Street and Chapala Street on the east and west, and Gutierrez Street and Sola Street on the south and north. This area encompasses the 400 through 1300 blocks of State Street, which is a corridor stretching over three-quarters of a mile, and includes the paseos, on-street bike lanes, cross streets, public plazas, and parking facilities that form the broader downtown fabric.

Based on analysis of the study area and community feedback, there are three distinct districts along State Street, each with its own character, land uses, and user base. Community feedback has consistently affirmed that while the two anchor districts are relatively successful, the central Civic and Commercial District is the priority area for intervention and activation.



Entertainment District: 400 to 600 Blocks

The southernmost district is characterized by a vibrant concentration of bars, restaurants, wine tasting rooms, and nightlife venues under a lush tree canopy. It draws a diverse mix of locals and visitors and is generally regarded as one of the more economically healthy and active segments of the corridor. The clustering of evening-oriented uses generates sustained foot traffic and street energy well into the night. The 400 block is configured differently than the rest of the Plaza, with narrower sidewalks and vehicular traffic open in both directions to facilitate emergency response access to the Highway 101 underpass and Haley and Gutierrez Streets.



Civic and Commercial District: 700 to 900 Blocks

At the geographic center of downtown, this district is anchored by the Paseo Nuevo Mall, connections to Plaza de la Guerra, Casa de la Guerra, City Hall, the Music Academy of the West, and the Santa Barbara Film Center. The District also hosts the Tuesday Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market, and Paseo Nuevo hosts various art markets. While the most civic in character, it has struggled with activation — particularly in the evenings when the predominantly retail uses in the district are closed. The relatively small number of restaurants and visitor-generating evening uses creates a notable vibrancy gap that disconnects the more active ends of the corridor. Community input consistently identifies this as the priority area for revitalization, which would also complement the De La Guerra Plaza Revitalization Project



Arts District: 1000 to 1300 Blocks

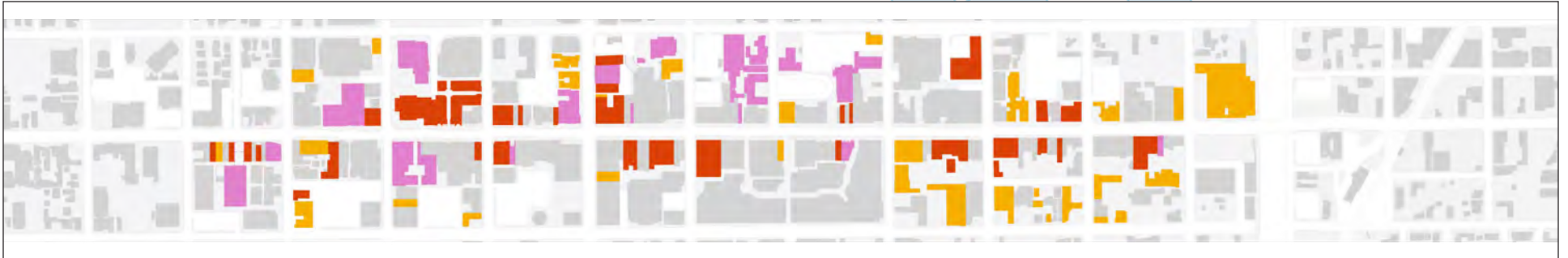
The northern anchor is home to the city's most prominent cultural institutions: the Granada Theatre, the Arlington Theatre, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, New Vic/Ensemble Theatre Company, and the Santa Barbara Public Library. On the 900 block of State Street, near the Arts District, is the Music Academy of the West and the Santa Barbara Film Center. These destinations attract significant patronage and generate synergistic activity at surrounding restaurants and galleries. The district's

cultural programming, including the First Thursday Art Walk, makes it a regional destination and a cornerstone of State Street's identity. The 1200 block is currently open to vehicles traveling northbound with two-way on-street bike lanes. The 1300 block is a transition block with two-way vehicular traffic and bike lanes. Having not been included in the earlier State Street Plaza, the 1300 block is configured differently than the rest of the State Street Study Area, with narrow, concrete sidewalks and parallel street parking on both sides.

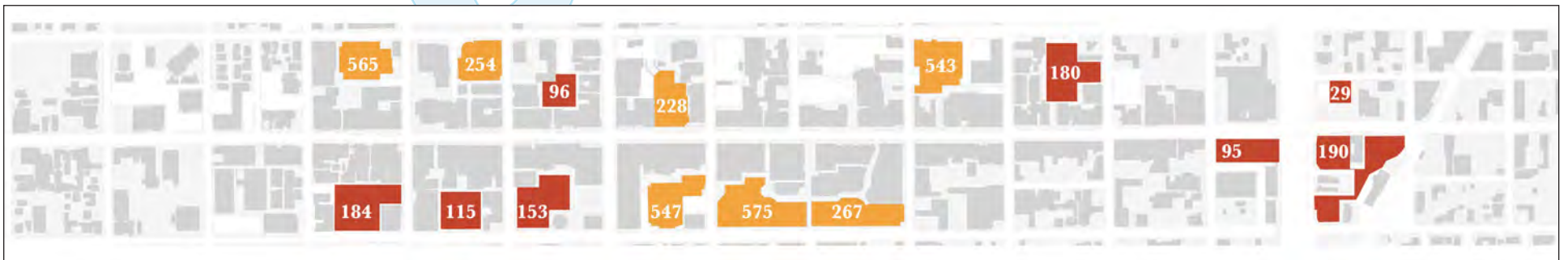
LAND USE



CIVIC & LANDMARK BUILDINGS



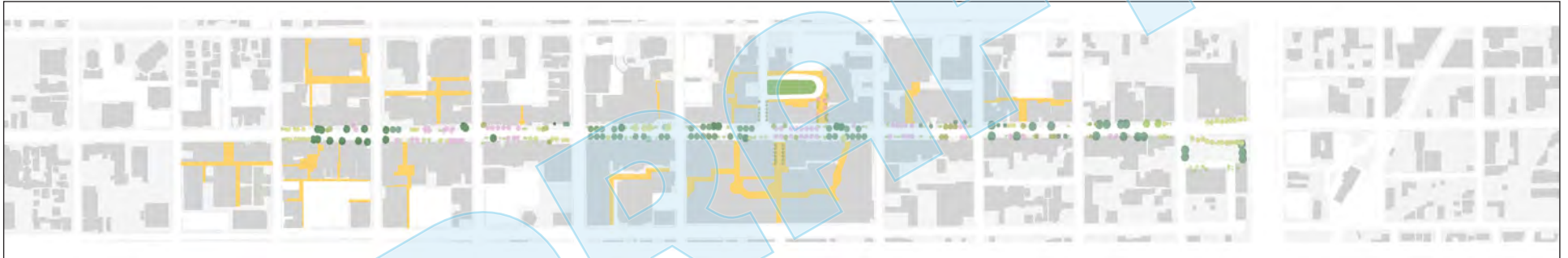
PARKING



BUILDING SERVICE ACCESS



OPEN SPACE & STREETScape



PUBLIC TRANSIT



BICYCLE NETWORK





EXISTING CONDITIONS

Supported by tremendous public and private investment, State Street remains the economic and symbolic center of the city. State Street is at a critical point in its evolution from a pre-COVID, car-oriented corridor to a pedestrian- and bicycle-focused Promenade, toward a long-term urban vision. A successful redesign must reconcile the often-competing demands of mobility, economic vitality, and urban form while preserving its historic charm.

Land Use

The study area is predominantly zoned C-G (Commercial General), a mixed-use zone which permits a broad range of retail, office, and residential uses. The General Plan identifies most State Street parcels as Commercial/High Density Residential (28-36 units per acre base density) with a priority housing overlay that allows 37-63 dwelling units per acre downtown. Downtown is the most concentrated and intensively used district in the city, and most parcels allow the widest range of commercial uses.

Most buildings in the study area are single-story or two-story, with a concentration of multi-story buildings between the 700 and 1100 blocks of State Street. Seven buildings reach five stories or higher, including the Granada Theatre, the Balboa Building,





and Hotel Santa Barbara. Buildings and entries are concentrated along State Street, creating a nearly continuously active street wall. Narrow building widths, frequent entries, storefront windows, and patios create an appealing and active street environment.

Retail uses are distributed consistently along the length of State Street, while restaurants cluster toward each end — in the 400 to 500 blocks and the 1100 to 1300 blocks. This creates a structural activation challenge: the relative absence of evening-oriented uses in the central 700 to 900 blocks produces a dead zone that disconnects the two active ends of the corridor, particularly after retail hours. Banks and office spaces are present in limited numbers; while they do not currently diminish overall vibrancy, limiting their future concentration along key frontages will be important as the leasing environment evolves.

Over 88 percent of building floor area in the State Street Master Plan study area is dedicated to retail and office use. As of 2025, less than 350 residential units exist within the study area — representing just 3 percent of the city's multifamily housing stock.

Civic and Landmark Buildings

State Street is anchored by a remarkable collection of civic and cultural institutions that generate consistent foot traffic and define the corridor's identity. The Granada Theatre, Arlington Theatre, and Lobero Theatre serve as major performing arts venues and are among the most architecturally distinguished buildings in the city. The Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the Santa Barbara Public Library provide additional cultural anchors in the Arts District. City Hall, Casa de la Guerra, El Paseo, and Paseo Nuevo anchor the core of the Civic and Commercial District.

These landmark buildings reinforce the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural character that defines Downtown's identity, including terra-cotta roofs, white plastered arcades, traditional glazed tiles, and ornate facades that distinguish State Street as one of the most cohesive historic main streets in the United States. The El Pueblo Viejo District designation governs design review for future improvements and establishes the standard for any changes to buildings or public spaces along the corridor.



Housing

Housing is critical to the future of Downtown. The existing housing supply in Downtown is very low. The City's 2023–2031 Housing Element, adopted by City Council on December 12, 2023 and certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in February 2024, establishes the policy foundation for housing growth citywide. The Housing Element addresses Santa Barbara's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 8,001 units for the 2023–2031 planning cycle—a significant increase over prior cycles reflecting the State's response to California's housing crisis. Notably, the City's analysis found that existing zoning is sufficient to accommodate this allocation without the need to rezone parcels for higher density.

Within the Downtown area specifically, the 2023–2031 Housing Element identifies 1,349 pending and potential residential units, based on analysis of available and underutilized sites. This represents a meaningful opportunity to

grow the downtown residential population, but realizing that potential will require strategic public investment, policy support, and coordinated land use decisions along and near State Street.

The redevelopment of Paseo Nuevo Mall represents the single largest near-term housing opportunity along State Street. The City is advancing a mixed-use plan that would transform the shopping center into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented district in the heart of downtown. The current proposal includes an office headquarters, revamped retail, and 112 rental units on the former Nordstrom's site, including 10% income-restricted affordable units.

The City also owns several parcels as part of its Downtown parking program. Currently, the parking areas are not fully utilized, and the existing surface parking lots are a potential opportunity to create additional housing, in particular affordable units. This could be done while retaining the existing parking supply on each parcel, by structuring parking as part of a new building development. This model of air-rights or podium-style development over publicly owned parking is consistent with the Housing Element's goals and the City's recently established Local Housing Trust Fund, which was created in 2024 to help finance affordable housing production. Redeveloping underutilized city-owned parking sites could serve multiple public objectives simultaneously: increasing the downtown housing supply, delivering income-restricted units, activating underused parcels, and generating long-term revenue for the City.



State Street as a Third Place

Beyond its function as a commercial corridor, State Street has long served as the community's primary "third place" – a shared public environment distinct from home and work, where Santa Barbara residents gather, celebrate, and connect. This role has deepened in recent years as programming and activation on the Promenade have expanded. State Street is simultaneously a civic commons, a recreational destination, a cultural venue, and a social gathering space that serves all residents of the city as well as the region's two million annual visitors.

1. Farmers Market

The State Street Farmers Market is one of the most beloved and well-attended recurring events in downtown Santa Barbara. Held weekly on Tuesday afternoons and Saturday mornings, is a vital anchor of activity on the corridor that draws residents from across the city and region. The market activates the public realm,

supports local agricultural producers, and reinforces State Street's role as a community gathering place accessible to people of all incomes and backgrounds.

2. Parades and Festivals

State Street has historically been the site of the city's major parades and festivals, including the Summer Solstice Celebration, the Old Spanish Days Fiesta parade, and various holiday and cultural events. These gatherings draw thousands of participants and spectators, temporarily transforming the entire length of the corridor into a community celebration space. When the city converted the 500 through 1200 blocks of State Street to a car-free promenade during COVID, it created a structural conflict with parades. Traditional large parades, which require a wide, clear corridor for floats, horses, and marching bands, became logistically incompatible with the outdoor dining parklets, planters, and furniture that now occupy the former roadway.



Parades that used to run on State Street now operate along Cabrillo Boulevard and Santa Barbara Street, where the road can accommodate carriages, wagons, floats, and animals. Similarly, the sidewalks are not impeded by outdoor furniture and can accommodate large spectator crowds. The City has re-evaluated parades on State Street and established criteria that allows parades or events downtown if the event meets certain criteria for safety reasons (e.g., no motorized vehicles/walking only, no animals, etc.).

3. Meeting/Gathering Space

State Street and its adjacent paseos and plazas serve as informal meeting and gathering spaces throughout the day and evening. The current State Street configuration has eliminated vehicle conflicts and expanded usable street space for gathering events that could take place on State Street. Outdoor seating, planter areas, and open stretches of the Promenade provide places for

residents to linger, meet friends, and engage with the public life of the city. Plaza de la Guerra, currently being revitalized, and the planned pedestrianization of De la Guerra Street will add a significant formal gathering space to the corridor's civic infrastructure.

4. Safe Space for All to Recreate

The Promenade has created an expanded opportunity for residents and visitors to use State Street as a recreational space, including for walking, cycling, jogging, and informal play in a way that was not possible when vehicles occupied the roadway. This shift has been particularly meaningful for families with children, elderly residents, and people with disabilities for whom a car-free environment offers greater comfort, accessibility, and safety. However, ensuring that the space is welcoming to all requires continued attention to design, programming, maintenance, and the management of behaviors that make some users feel unwelcome.



Economic Evolution and Retail

State Street has been the economic and cultural hub of Santa Barbara and the Central Coast since its earliest days. Despite its unique qualities, it is not immune to the structural forces reshaping commercial corridors nationwide. Key economic issues include:

- » Impact of e-commerce: rapid growth in online shopping has driven the closure of traditional retail anchors, including Macy's (2017), Staples (2018), Saks Fifth Avenue (2019), and Nordstrom (2020). By 2024, online sales accounted for approximately 16 percent of all U.S. retail.
- » High vacancy perception: while underlying retail vacancy (excluding anchor-scale voids) is near the healthy 5–10 percent range, the perception of vacancy, which is amplified by prominent shuttered storefronts, diminishes the corridor's vibrancy and consumer confidence.
- » Declining rents and leasing uncertainty: rents have declined from historical highs, and the prolonged uncertainty around the Promenade's permanent configuration deters new tenants and investment commitments.
- » Retail oversupply: the 2019 Kosmont study identified an oversupply of 400,000 to 500,000 square feet of retail space downtown, which is a structural mismatch that cannot be resolved simply by filling existing spaces with more retail. This mismatch should be corrected by turning retail space into mixed-use developments, housing supply, and/or office space.
- » Loss of office population: prior to the pandemic, the City supported an estimated 23,000 jobs located in the downtown submarket. The shift to hybrid work has significantly eroded this daytime population.



- » Housing deficit: with fewer than 350 residential units in the study area, State Street lacks the year-round resident base that would stabilize demand, support neighborhood-serving retail, and reduce reliance on tourism and office traffic.
- » Long, narrow building footprints: historic ground-floor spaces are efficient for creating street-level interest but inefficient for modern retail formats, and current building code limits their subdivision or alternative use, increasing effective occupancy costs.
- » Minimally Activated Ground Floor Uses: A significant contributor to the perceived vacancy on State Street is not limited to empty storefronts. Ground-floor office and bank uses also diminish street vitality by presenting opaque, frosted, or non-transparent facades that eliminate visual connection between the interior and the sidewalk. Unlike active retail, these uses generate little to no pedestrian traffic,

- foot dwell time, or window interest. The effect is most pronounced at corner locations, where the loss of activation is visible from two street frontages simultaneously, compounding the sense of emptiness on the block and reducing the corridor's overall sense of vibrancy and commercial health.
- » Legacy Ownership and Generational Land Holding Patterns: A share of State Street properties are held by long-term family owners or generational trusts that acquired their parcels during the corridor's peak retail years. Rather than accepting current market rents or investing in tenant improvements to attract new uses, some owners continue to hold vacant or underutilized properties in anticipation of a return to historic lease rates that the current market is unlikely to support. This pattern of speculative inaction creates persistent gaps in the corridor's commercial fabric, suppresses the incentive to adapt properties to contemporary

retail formats, and effectively removes otherwise viable ground-floor spaces from the active leasing market.

Strengths: Retail sales per establishment increased above pre-pandemic levels in 2021. Tourism spending in Santa Barbara County reached \$2.1 billion in 2022, with over \$700 million on food service and retail. The nonprofit arts and culture sector contributes an estimated \$200 million annually to the county economy, which is a durable foundation that many downtowns lack.

Conclusion: The quality of the downtown experience, not just the return of traditional large retailers, is what will attract patrons, motivate workers and tenants to return, and build a resilient urban neighborhood. The path forward builds on Santa Barbara's unmatched cultural, historical, and experiential assets while diversifying land uses and reducing reliance on retail and office markets vulnerable to structural disruption.

Circulation, Access, and Mobility

State Street's mobility environment is in a period of transition, and the current configuration, which was established as a temporary Promenade response to the pandemic, has produced both benefits and unresolved tensions. Key mobility issues include:

- » Bicycle and pedestrian conflict: pedestrian and cyclist volumes are high, and the loose apportionment of modes within the shared Promenade environment creates friction, particularly with e-bikes traveling at speed through pedestrian-dominated spaces. Recommended to separate pedestrians and cyclists.



- » Mode prioritization: the current configuration does not clearly delineate space for pedestrians, cyclists, service vehicles, and emergency access.
- » Service and delivery access: Vehicular access for construction activity, refuse collection, and commercial deliveries must be carefully integrated into the corridor's design to ensure that service operations can function efficiently without disrupting the pedestrian experience or conflicting with other modes of travel along State Street.
- » Transit legibility: the operation of the electric shuttle (State Street Loop) is visually lost within the current street environment; improved wayfinding, stops, and visual identity are needed.
- » Parking wayfinding: access to downtown parking is not consistently signed, creating opportunities to better guide visitors who are unfamiliar with the system.
- » Corridor length: At over three-quarters of a mile, State Street's full length exceeds a comfortable walking distance for many users, underscoring

the need for a reliable and frequent transit service to link the corridor end to end.

Driving Experience

Prior to COVID, State Street served as a drive-through plaza for vehicles. The beautiful architecture, outdoor cafes, shoppers, and street layout made the Plaza a popular cruising destination for drivers. The actual utility of driving was negligible since there was no on-street parking on State. When the temporary State Street Promenade opened to pedestrians and cyclists, the level of traffic congestion that was added to the parallel streets of Chapala and Anacapa Streets was minimal. Chapala and Anacapa Streets are the north and south bound streets carrying traffic in Downtown and connect to the rest of the City's road network, including, the nearby highway interchanges at Carrillo, Castillo, and Garden Streets to U.S. Highway 101 (the only major highway bisecting the City).

Chapala and Anacapa Streets and the streets perpendicular to the Plaza currently provide on-street parking and commercial loading/unloading operations. Vehicular access for deliveries and commercial loading/unloading operations are currently limited on State Street to the morning hours before 10am.

Parking

The downtown parking system began in 1963 and expanded over the next 30+ years, and it provides public parking throughout the study area. It is comprised of 12 City-operated facilities (five parking structures and seven surface lots, one of which is located outside of the Study Area) and one privately-operated public parking structure in the Paseo Nuevo Mall. All parking areas are located

within one block of State Street. Once parked, visitors navigate through the paseo network and adjacent sidewalk system to reach State Street destinations.

On-street parking on Anacapa Street, Chapala Street, and cross streets supplements off-street capacity. Cross-street parking management provides tiered time limits with 15-minute zones for quick trips and 75- and 90-minute zones for longer stays, while encouraging employees and residents to use off-street facilities. On-street restrictions end at 6 pm to accommodate overnight parking for residents.

The creation of the temporary State Street Promenade in 2020 did not produce a measurable increase in traffic congestion on surrounding streets because Downtown State Street does not have any on-street parking or driveways to off-street parking. The circulation network was established by the State Street Plaza, with Chapala and Anacapa Streets continuing to function effectively as the primary north-south routes. Parking revenue in the City's parking facilities declined significantly during the pandemic years as downtown visitation patterns shifted, but early indicators in 2026 suggest a gradual rebound as workers return to in-person employment and foot traffic slowly recovers, which is a trend that, if sustained, will be an important factor in assessing the long-term financial sustainability of the parking system.

Pedestrian Experience

Downtown Santa Barbara is laid out on a grid with blocks measuring approximately 500 feet, making it ideally scaled for walking and rolling to destinations, work, and services. The scale of existing architecture, relatively narrow streets, and mostly tree-lined sidewalks



create a comfortable and inviting pedestrian experience throughout the district. On average, there is a building entry approximately every 40 feet along State Street, meaning at a typical walking pace, pedestrians encounter a new point of interest every 7 to 10 seconds.

The dedicated pedestrian travel way along State Street is generally eight feet in width with additional area for landscaping, benches, bike racks, and streetlights and other utilities. Each block of State Street features a signalized mid-block crosswalk. Intersections are signalized and include marked crosswalks, supporting safe and accessible pedestrian crossings at key decision points across the network. Through community engagement it was affirmed that the pedestrian area needed to be expanded given current and anticipated demand.

Paseo Network

One of State Street's most distinctive assets is its paseo system, a network of intimate walkways and courtyard

spaces that penetrate the interior of the downtown blocks behind the primary street frontages. There are sixteen paseo entries along State Street alone, with additional connections on cross streets. The most activated paseos are lined with shops and cafes featuring storefront windows and bistro seating that open onto lush, sheltered courtyards. This network is rarely found in North American cities at this scale and quality.

The paseo system creates a layered pedestrian realm that rewards exploration and provides shelter, intimacy, and a respite from the primary street. However, its full potential as a connected pedestrian network has not yet been realized. Creating safe and comfortable pedestrian connections between blocks and encouraging more active uses within the paseo interiors would transform the downtown into a true multi-layered pedestrian environment.



Biking Experience

State Street serves as the spine of the citywide bicycle network, providing a continuous route from Highway 154 to Stearns Wharf. On-street bike lanes on Cota, Ortega, and Haley Streets connect to the Downtown State providing critical connections from Lower West, West Downtown, Laguna, and Eastside neighborhoods. In 2024, a bike friendly street was created on Sola Street connecting the Westside, Oak Park, West Downtown, Upper East, Laguna, and Eastside neighborhoods to Downtown and is one block north of the temporary State Street Promenade. Protected bike lanes were also added in 2025 to the State Street Undercrossing between Guterrez and Yanonali Streets, which strengthened the connection between Downtown and Waterfront – the City’s most active neighborhoods.

Since 1992, Downtown State Street has had two on-street bike lanes. Unfortunately, there was a frequent pattern of collisions due to right turning vehicles into

cyclists at intersections. The temporary State Street Promenade was initially shared between pedestrians and cyclists but conflicts arose between modes, particularly with the faster moving cyclists. In 2023, a two-way bike lane was established in the center of street, with pedestrians having space in the shoulder areas and existing sidewalks. The number and severity of vehicle to bicycle collisions have decreased since the Promenade opened mainly because the Promenade eliminated the right turning conflict. Because Downtown State has no vehicle parking or driveways, it has provided a safe environment for cyclists of all ages to enjoy Downtown. It encourages healthy social interactions and creates a welcoming environment for teens to connect. Since closing to vehicle traffic, cyclist volumes on State Street have averaged approximately 2,000 riders per day (based on video traffic counts taken between August 2022 – March 2026).



Given the high number of pedestrians and cyclists frequenting Downtown, it is recommended to have separation between these modes on State Street during prime biking hours to get to work, school, and Downtown destinations.

Public Transit

Downtown is well connected to the city and broader region via bus service provided by the Metropolitan Transit District (MTD). The Downtown Transit Center on Chapala Street, one block west of Carrillo Street and State Street, serves as the hub of the transit network, with routes connecting Downtown to Westside, Lower West, Eastside, Upper State, Oak Park, and Mesa neighborhoods, as well as Goleta, Carpinteria, UCSB/Isla Vista, and Santa Barbara City College.

From 1991 through 2020, MTD electric shuttles ran between Downtown and the Waterfront neighborhoods, with multiple stops along State Street. These shuttles enabled visitors to park once and move freely between shopping and destination areas without relocating their vehicle. Immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, summer service on the Downtown shuttle operated every 10 minutes between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily, with 15-minute headways between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. The Waterfront shuttle operated with the same summer schedule but with 15-minute headways all day. Outside of summer, between Labor and Memorial Days, the Downtown Shuttle ran every 15 minutes, and the Waterfront Shuttle ran every 30 minutes, both from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Fares were .50 cents per ride for the rider (.25 cents for riders



62 years or older and for people with disabilities), with a subsidy by the City based on service MTD was providing. Ridership of the shuttle began to decline in the 2010s, paralleling the decline of business activity on State Street, the end of the Redevelopment Agency, and the shift towards online retail and big box stores in other parts of the region. The annual shuttle ridership in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-2013 was 341,891 on the Downtown shuttle and 82,036 on the Waterfront shuttle. By FY 2018-19, ridership had dropped to 207,201 on the Downtown shuttle and 44,537 on the Waterfront shuttle. In April of 2020, the City suspended service due to the opening of the temporary State Street promenade and the City not having funding to sustain the shuttle.

Since the end of the pandemic, community demand for a restored Downtown-Waterfront shuttle has been high. MTD's Short Range Transit Plan, developed through broad community outreach in 2021 and 2022, identifies a combined Downtown and Waterfront shuttle circulator as a key priority. The proposed circulator would operate along Anacapa and Chapala Streets between Gutierrez and Sola Streets, reconnecting Downtown and the Waterfront.

Separately, the City has launched the State Street Loop, which is a popular pilot program providing free, accessible transportation along State Street in electric golf cart-style vehicles, as a near-term proof-of-concept for corridor mobility. The Loop shuttle had 16,000 riders in six months with hours of operation from 12 – 7pm from Thursday through Sunday,



signifying a need for transit service. The smaller carts help provide easy access on State from Downtown to the Waterfront, while the Downtown and Waterfront shuttles help connect the public to State from the larger Downtown and Waterfront destinations.

Traffic Safety

The City of Santa Barbara is a Vision Zero city, committed to eliminating all fatalities and severe injuries on city roadways by 2030. A comprehensive citywide collision analysis was completed as part of the Council-adopted Vision Zero Strategy in 2018.

Pre-pandemic, State Street's Downtown area had a documented collision pattern involving right-turning vehicles and cyclists at intersections and a high number of pedestrian collisions. When State Street was converted to a pedestrian and cyclist environment in May 2020, these conflicts were significantly reduced. Comparing the five years prior to closure (May 2015 through April 2020) to the period following (June 2020 through December 2023), average annual collisions



downtown dropped from 17.6 to 5.9, and average annual injuries from collisions fell from 10.2 to 5.0. This reduction reflects the direct safety benefit of removing vehicle versus cyclist and pedestrian conflicts.

Service Access Needs

Service vehicle access, including commercial deliveries, refuse collection, and construction vehicles, has remained generally consistent since the temporary State Street Promenade. Title 10 of the City's Municipal Code prohibits vehicles over three tons (most commercial vehicles) from accessing State Street between Haley and Victoria Streets, except between 6:00 AM and 10 AM, with an exception for construction-related deliveries.

The current configuration allows for deliveries and service vehicle access between 10 PM and 10 AM each day, or outside of those hours by request for activities such as public and private construction work. Because there is no other vehicular traffic on the street, the current layout gives delivery trucks more flexibility to load and unload along the curb rather than being

confined to designated loading zones. Bollards at the end of each block are flexible and allow emergency vehicles to drive onto the closed portion of the street at any time. On the 00 blocks of cross-streets, large yellow loading zones accommodate 30-minute commercial loading and 3-minute passenger loading at all times.

A consideration for the State Street design is to maintain access for continued loading/unloading operations in the early morning or late evening hours. While adjacent north/south and east/west streets carry the major operations, service on State Street should be maintained since there are no alleys immediately adjacent to the State that would otherwise provide access for maintenance, service, deliveries, and construction. Emergency access along State Street will be maintained at all times through the use of retractable bollards, allowing police, fire, and other emergency services immediate and unimpeded entry to the corridor twenty-four hours a day.

Landscape

The existing streetscape reflects multiple improvements since 1969, with palm trees, widened brick sidewalks, street furniture, and historic architectural facades defining the physical character of the public realm. Existing sidewalks along State Street range from 16 to 24 feet in width, with café spaces and retail displays animating building facades and large planting areas providing separation from the roadway. The general character of the planting along downtown State Street aligned with Southern California's 1960s–70s municipal landscape conventions. This era favored a lush, subtropical



aesthetic that mixed ornamental exotics without a strong ecological or coherent thematic rationale.

The current condition of the landscape is uneven and outdated, requiring significant ongoing maintenance. Irregular planting, worn hardscape, and inconsistent maintenance create a fragmented visual impression in several segments. Irregular raised planting in some locations disrupts pedestrian continuity. Several specimen trees of significant maturity and community value are present throughout the corridor and require conservation in any future redesign; however, the remainder of the tree species along State Street do not have consistency and no street tree species has been specifically identified for State Street. The overall impression is of a streetscape that is functional but has not been comprehensively maintained or upgraded to match the ambitions of a signature urban corridor.

The existing landscape of State Street needs comprehensive attention. Key landscape issues include:

- » Condition and maintenance: the existing streetscape is worn and requires better ongoing maintenance to reflect the quality of a signature civic corridor.
- » Color: The planting palette, where present, skews toward evergreen species that offer little variation in bloom, foliage color, or seasonal interest.
- » Fragmented planting: irregular planting creates the impression of a random, unplanned streetscape rather than a cohesive design.
- » Pedestrian continuity: irregular raised planting in some locations disrupts the continuity of pedestrian movement and accessibility.



- » Specimen tree conservation: numerous mature specimen trees are present throughout the corridor and represent significant ecological and aesthetic value requiring protection in any redesign.
- » Undifferentiated character: the streetscape is currently uniform across the full length of the corridor but lacks landscape uniformity, missing an opportunity to reinforce the distinct character of each of the three downtown districts.

Civil: Paving and Drainage

The physical infrastructure of State Street reflects decades of incremental investment and patching rather than a comprehensive strategy. Key civil engineering issues include:

- » Flooding: the street has experienced flooding during recent winter rain events, highlighting the



inadequacy of the existing drainage system for a corridor with significant impervious surface.

- » Aging infrastructure: drainage is unevenly addressed by systems assembled and patched over many decades without a holistic approach.
- » Roadway configuration: the roadway cross-section was designed for vehicles and bicycles, creating conflicts for the bicycle and pedestrian-focused uses it now accommodates.
- » Sidewalk condition: paving is relatively uniform throughout the corridor and is worn in many locations; brickwork and landscape repairs have been identified as a near-term priority.
- » Lack of a comprehensive strategy: the accumulation of piecemeal improvements has produced an inconsistent streetscape quality that does not reflect the status or ambitions of the corridor.

Gaps in Programming

While State Street's role as a community gathering place is one of its greatest strengths, there are significant gaps in programming, infrastructure, and management that limit the full realization of this function. Key issues include:

1. *Farmers Market*

The Farmers Market is among State Street's most successful activations and a model for the kind of community-oriented, locally rooted programming that distinguishes the corridor. The permanent redesign of the street should explicitly accommodate and reinforce the Farmers Market as a central programming anchor.

2. *Parades and Festivals*

State Street's historic role as the city's primary parade and festival route is a defining community asset. As the permanent design takes shape, maintaining the



operational flexibility to host major civic events will require deliberate design choices regarding surface materials, utility placement, and temporary closure infrastructure as well as a distinction between the types of events that can happen along State Street versus other downtown locations. The balance between permanent placemaking elements and event-operational flexibility is a key design challenge. Recognizing this, an interdepartmental working group, including representatives from the Police Department, Fire Department, and other relevant city Departments, has been convened to evaluate the operational requirements, safety protocols, and logistical considerations for future parades and events on State Street. The State Street Master Plan will require the development of a comprehensive events and festivals plan that establishes a clear, predictable pathway for future gatherings on the corridor, ensuring that



Santa Barbara's civic traditions can continue to be celebrated safely and successfully as the street evolves.

3. Meeting/Gathering Space

Despite State Street's importance as a gathering place, it currently lacks a dedicated, signature public plaza or park directly on the corridor. The planned revitalization of Plaza de la Guerra and the pedestrianization of De la Guerra Street will begin to address this gap, but the plaza's limited direct connection to State Street constrains its potential as an event hub. A long-term opportunity exists, as envisioned in the AIA charrette, to expand the plaza and create a signature public space that connects directly to the State Street Promenade and becomes the civic heart of Downtown.

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3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



The State Street Master Plan was built on a foundation of robust community engagement.

As one of the community's most iconic and beloved corridors, the future of State Street required meaningful participation from the residents, businesses, visitors, and stakeholders who live and work along it every day. This chapter describes the engagement process and timeline, summarizes key methods used to reach a broad cross-section of the community, and presents the major themes and takeaways that emerged from public participation.



ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community engagement program for the State Street Master Plan was designed to be inclusive, iterative, and transparent. Engagement tools were selected to reach both engaged community members who seek out public participation opportunities and harder-to-reach populations who may not typically attend formal public meetings. This included traditional formats such as open houses and public hearings, as well as digital tools, pop-up events at community gathering places, and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups with over 100 engagement events and opportunities.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS

The project attracted broad participation with meeting announcements and project updates provided through a variety of channels, including a dedicated project website with over 25,000 views, an Instagram account, Downtown canvassing, English/Spanish community event announcements, Santa Barbara's City News in Brief newsletter with over 2,000 State Street subscribers, citywide utility bill inserts, radio ads, and television.

Thousands of community members voiced their opinions through a range of popular events and activities for all ages. Over the course of the project, community members found project information and opportunities for input at traditional venues like public open houses and workshops, as well as in more localized settings, such as schools, grocery stores, parks, and other popular neighborhood destinations. Interactive exercises, tie-dye activities, an “on the go” outdoor library, artistic light displays, and more—kept the process fun and stimulated new ideas. Activation events right on State Street allowed the participants to test design concepts, enjoy games, and contribute their ideas via surveys and posters.

The State Street Master Plan included a multi-layered engagement strategy that consisted of the following methods:

- » Community Open Houses: Two in-person public events were held at a vacant storefront along the State Street corridor, with over 1,000 attendees. These events featured informational displays, interactive mapping activities, and small-group



- discussions. Events were held during the day and in the evening to maximize participation.
- » Design Workshops: Two in-person design workshops were held at a vacant storefront along State Street, with over 500 people stopping by to participate. These events included a presentation and small group discussions and presentations to the larger group. To encourage broad participation, events offered free on-site childcare, materials in English and Spanish, and Spanish-speaking translators. A partnership with the County of Santa Barbara Arts Fund set the tone for creative design thinking, presenting an art show, evening projections on the building, and a State Street Ballet performance in conjunction with the design workshops. The events were held in the evening and over the weekend.
 - » Online Survey: A bilingual (English and Spanish) online survey was deployed to gather input from residents, workers, business owners, and visitors. The survey was promoted through City channels, social media, local media, utility bills, radio, and community partner networks, reaching over 5,700 respondents.
 - » Stakeholder Focus Groups: Focus group discussions were conducted with targeted constituencies including downtown business owners and merchants, property owners, residents of neighborhoods adjacent to State Street, cyclists and active transportation users, transit riders, youth, arts and cultural organizations, hospitality and tourism businesses, and social service providers serving vulnerable populations.
 - » Pop-Up Engagement Events: In order to connect with community members in locations convenient to their daily routines, the Project Team implemented an “intercept” approach by encouraging informal conversations with community members at popular destinations and events, such as grocery stores, parks, churches, Santa Barbara Junior High, Harding Elementary School, Santa Barbara Charter School, Monte Vista Elementary School, the Downtown Organization’s monthly block parties, the Neighborhood Navigation Center, and the Tuesday and Saturday Santa Barbara Certified Farmer’s Market. Through a partnership with the Santa Barbara Public Library, unique activation events created an on-the-ground test of how the



700 block of State Street could be activated with the “Library on the Go” van and community games. Participants at more than 60 different events learned about the project and provided input on the types of activities and transportation options they would like to see on State Street in the future.

- » Key Informant Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with more than 50 stakeholders including City department staff, property owners, cultural institutions, anchor employers, and community organizations. These conversations provided valuable context on operational constraints, opportunities, and long-standing community concerns.

- » State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC): A community representative-based committee provided diverse perspectives and strategic guidance throughout the process. The 17-member committee was made up of representatives from City Council, commissions, businesses, community organizations, foundations, and agencies across Santa Barbara. All Advisory Committee meetings were open to the public, in-person and online, and included formal public comment periods at the beginning and end of each meeting, with 20 public meetings held throughout the project.

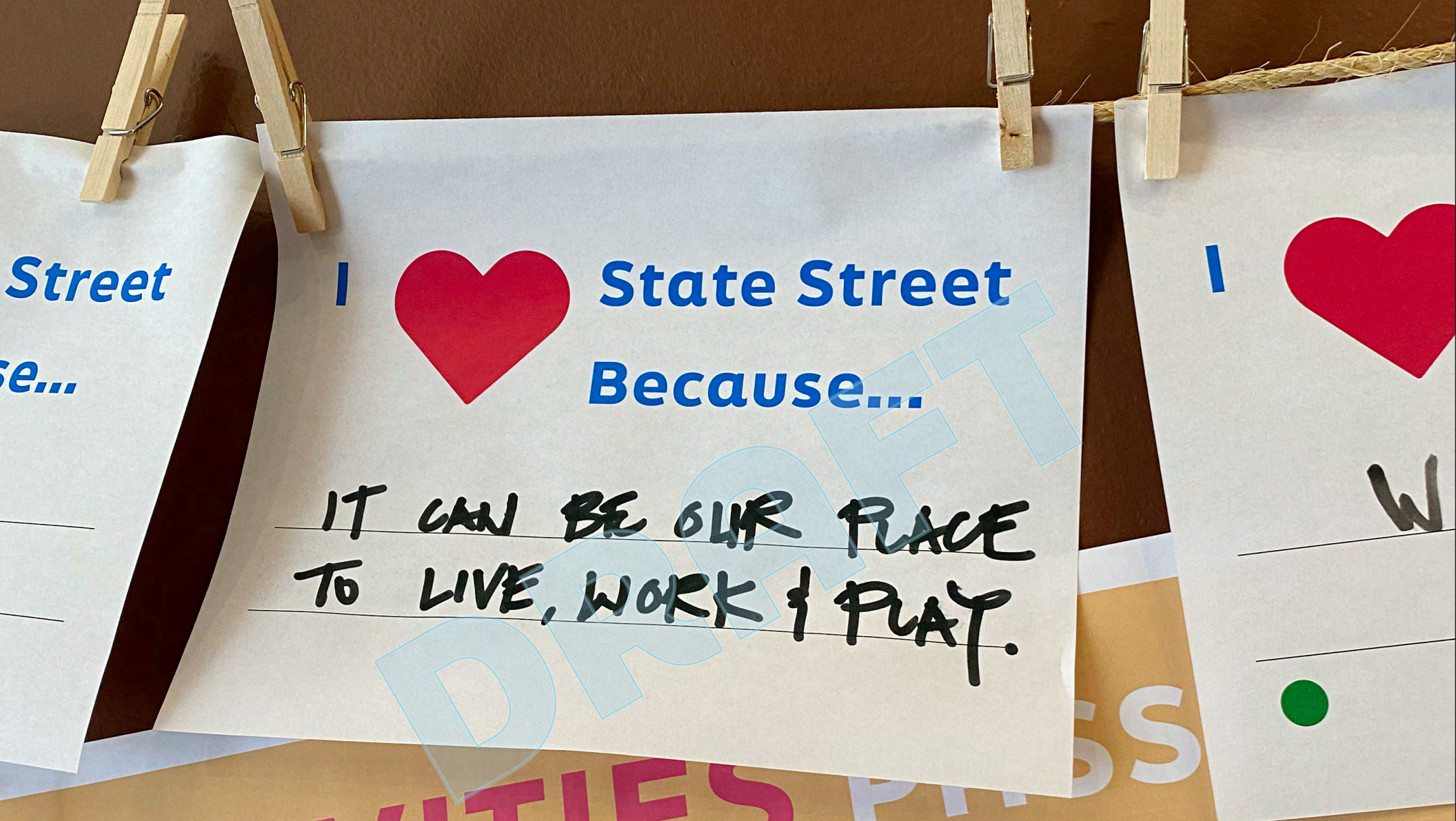
Common threads from the community input formed the basis of a vision and goals that set the Master Plan direction. The Master Plan summarizes key messages from the community input.

ENGAGEMENT EVENT	QUANTITY	ABOUT THE EVENT
Community Open Houses and Design Workshops	4	Public in-person events held along the corridor
Online Survey Responses	5,700+	Residents and visitors participated via web survey
Stakeholder Interviews	50+	Key informants from business, community, and City staff
Focus Groups Conducted	14	Including business owners, cyclists, transit users, and youth
Pop-Up Engagement Events	54	Intercept engagement at markets, parks, and events
Advisory Committee Meetings	20	State Street Advisory Committee sessions throughout the process
Other Committee and Commission Meetings	11	Meetings with City Commissions and Committees throughout the process

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Throughout the planning process, the Project Team, along with Friends of State Street, created a Community Conversation series of events to present information about the Master Plan and gather input from non-profit organizations and special interest groups. The State Street Advisory Committee met regularly to guide the planning process while other committees and commissions met at key junctures. While not an exhaustive list, the Master Plan concepts were discussed during meetings with the following organizations or committee groups::

- » Access Advisory Committee
- » County of Santa Barbara Arts Fund
- » Downtown Business Owners
- » Downtown Parking Committee
- » Friends of State Street
- » Historic Landmarks Commission
- » Move Santa Barbara County and the Bicycle Community
- » Non-profit Organizations
- » Performing and Experiential Art Community
- » Santa Barbara Association of Realtors
- » Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce
- » Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association
- » Strong Towns



ENGAGEMENT KEY TAKEAWAYS

Analysis of feedback gathered across all engagement activities revealed a set of consistent and recurring themes. While perspectives on specific design

solutions varied, there was strong and broad consensus around core community values and priorities for State Street. The following section presents the major themes that emerged.

Key Takeaway #1:

What We Heard: Enhancing Walkability and the Public Realm

- » The pedestrian experience on State Street should be its defining characteristic: wide, comfortable sidewalks and gathering spaces were consistently identified as a top priority.
- » Community members strongly supported expanding outdoor dining, seating, and activation in the street right-of-way, building on the enthusiasm for temporary pandemic-era enhancements.
- » Improved lighting for safety, aesthetics, and nighttime ambiance was one of the most frequently cited improvements needed.
- » Shading, noted primarily through street trees, canopies, and structures was identified as essential for comfort given Santa Barbara's sunny climate.
- » Residents and visitors alike valued State Street as a place to linger, not just pass through, and sought more opportunities for public gathering, performance, and spontaneous social interaction.

Key Takeaway #2:

What We Heard: Balancing Access for All Modes

- » There was broad support for prioritizing walking, cycling, and transit over private vehicle through-traffic on the core of State Street.
- » Cyclists consistently identified the need for protected, low-stress bicycle facilities that connect State Street to the broader active transportation network.

- » Transit riders and transit-dependent community members stressed the importance of maintaining and improving bus access and stops along the corridor.
- » Business owners and customers expressed concern about maintaining adequate short-term parking and loading access for retail viability, particularly for older residents and visitors with mobility challenges.
- » Delivery and service access for businesses was identified as a critical operational need that must be addressed in any redesign.
- » Community members were receptive to vehicle-free or reduced-vehicle zones on State Street.

Key Takeaway #3:

What We Heard: Supporting a Thriving Downtown Economy

- » The community expressed deep concern about storefront vacancies and the long-term economic health of the State Street commercial corridor.
- » There was strong support for physical and programmatic improvements that would draw more visitors and activity to the corridor throughout the day and evening.
- » Business owners valued flexibility in how the street right-of-way could be used, including for outdoor seating, retail display, markets, and events.
- » Small and independent businesses expressed a need for the planning process to consider the phasing and sequencing of construction to minimize disruption.
- » The community recognized that long-term economic vitality depended on making State

Street a destination and supported investments in placemaking and programming.

- » Participants expressed interest in attracting a more diverse mix of uses, including arts, entertainment, hospitality, and neighborhood-serving retail.

Key Takeaway #4:

What We Heard: Celebrating What Makes State Street Unique

- » Community members expressed strong pride in State Street's Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and wanted design improvements to complement and celebrate this distinctive character.
- » There was enthusiasm for expanding public art, cultural programming, and events as strategies to activate the street and strengthen its identity.
- » Participants valued the street's role as a civic gathering place for the entire Santa Barbara community, not just downtown workers or tourists.
- » Many respondents expressed a desire for improvements that feel authentically Santa Barbaran and reflect the community's diverse cultural heritage.
- » Green infrastructure, including expanded tree canopy and landscape features, was widely supported as a means of enhancing character and environmental quality.
- » Participants cautioned against design solutions that feel generic. The street's individuality and human scale were consistently described as assets to be protected.

Key Takeaway #5:

What We Heard: Addressing Safety and Quality of Life

- » Perceptions of safety were raised frequently as a barrier to visiting and spending time on State Street.
- » Community members expressed concern about street homelessness and the need for compassionate, service-oriented approaches to addressing the needs of vulnerable residents.
- » Improved lighting, activated storefronts, and increased foot traffic were identified as the most effective strategies for improving the sense of safety.
- » Cleanliness and maintenance of the public realm were identified as foundational to any successful revitalization effort.
- » Participants expressed support for community-based stewardship models and ambassadorship programs to help maintain a welcoming environment.

Key Takeaway #6:

What We Heard: Building a Greener State Street

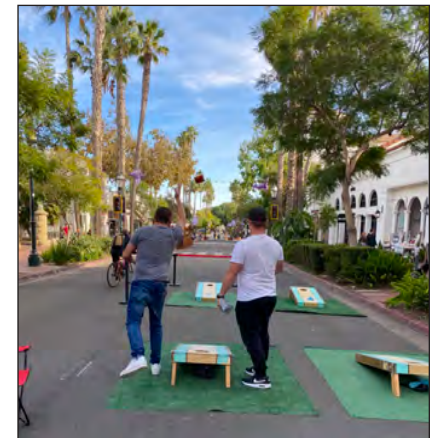
- » There was strong community support for green infrastructure improvements, including expanded street trees and drought-tolerant landscaping.
- » Many participants connected improvements to State Street with broader goals around climate action, active transportation, and reducing vehicle miles traveled.
- » Community members supported design approaches that prioritize passive cooling, shade, and pedestrian comfort in response to increasing temperatures.

» There was interest in incorporating sustainable materials, low-impact development practices, and opportunities for renewable energy integration where feasible.

The community engagement process revealed a community that is deeply invested in the future of State Street and strongly aligned around a shared vision: a walkable, vibrant, safe, and authentically Santa Barbaran corridor that serves residents, workers, and visitors alike. While tradeoffs, particularly around

vehicle access, will be required, the engagement process established a clear mandate for meaningful physical transformation paired with sustained programming and economic development strategies.

These findings directly informed the project's Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles, which are discussed in the next chapter, and continue to anchor the design recommendations and implementation strategies presented throughout this Master Plan.





DEPT

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4 A RENEWED VISION

“Santa Barbara’s downtown should invoke a sense of place, a sense of history, and a sense of celebration.” – Former Mayor Hal Conklin

THE VISION

To revitalize downtown Santa Barbara, there must be individuality, and surprise, and whim. There must be a Santa Barbara flavor all its own that differentiates itself from any other downtown, and what makes it special is the place and the people that choose to spend their time here. While this Plan creates a strong foundation for State Street to thrive as an economic engine, it recognizes that Downtown must also become a destination for community and civic life. A successful plan creates a State Street where people visit to see others and be seen, kids meet up with their friends, couples stroll to and from the ocean, families run weekly errands, friends stop for ice cream, and people experience art in all its forms. It draws you in simply by being a place that does not exist anywhere else but in Santa Barbara. It delights and inspires.

At the center of this vision is the State Street Paseo, a flexible corridor between Gutierrez Street and Victoria Street along State Street, that reflects Santa Barbara’s culture, history, and local character. As the



primary spine through Downtown, the State Street Paseo connects the existing paseo network and links major public spaces, cultural institutions, and commercial areas. The State Street Paseo creates a people-centered environment that supports walking, cycling, gathering, and local commerce, while reinforcing the historic character of El Pueblo Viejo.

The design centers on flexibility. Rather than choosing between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles, this Plan shifts that prioritization over time to meet the neighborhood's changing needs. Wider sidewalks, approximately 30 feet on each side, frame a 20-foot shared travel lane at the center. During the day, this lane serves cyclists and transit. In the evenings and early mornings, it opens to private vehicles, deliveries, and service operations. At all times, it enables emergency access. Retractable bollards make this possible, keeping vehicles out when foot traffic is highest and allowing access when it's needed most.

The community has been clear: a pedestrian-focused space for walking, dining, play, and events

is the priority, but some vehicle access remains necessary for business operations. This flexible scheme honors both. It ensures the pedestrian is always the primary user, while preserving the access that sustains businesses and residents.

Of all the blocks along the corridor, those within the Ortega-to-Carrillo stretch, where the civic and commercial district is located, stand to benefit most from this approach, and represent the highest priority for reinvestment, activation, and the concentrated public and private resources needed to restore State Street's vitality from the inside out. The civic and commercial district is the Heart of Downtown.

This adaptability serves a longer horizon. As mobility technology, climate conditions, and community needs evolve over the Plan's 20- to 30-year horizon, the design and operation of the street can evolve with them. This capacity for change is not compromise – it is one of the Plan's greatest strengths.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES

The State Street Master Plan is guided by three intersecting sets of planning objectives that acknowledge the diverse interests, values, and aspirations of the Santa Barbara community. These objectives emerged from extensive community engagement and reflect the perspectives of residents, business owners, cultural institutions, and civic leaders.

State Street: Community Hub and Front Yard for Downtown Living

This set of objectives emphasizes State Street's role as the community's front yard — a crucial shared public space that serves the needs of all Santa Barbara residents while functioning as a major destination for visitors. Key priorities include strong community placemaking; mobility, safety, and accessibility for all ages and abilities; and economic health supported by increased downtown housing. There is broad community support for a car-free, people-focused State Street, evidenced by public input, business surveys, and petition activity.

State Street as a Commercial Destination

The redesign of State Street must deliver a destination environment capable of attracting a wide variety of people, improving leasing performance, and providing certainty for property owners and retailers making long-term investment decisions. Key priorities include resolving the current configuration impasse, improving retail visibility and service access, and facilitating the housing development that will

support long-term commercial viability. An urgent and clearly communicated implementation timeline is essential to restoring business confidence.

State Street as a Civic Core

This set of objectives emphasizes State Street's role as the civic, cultural, and historical heart of Santa Barbara. Key priorities include clarifying the form and operations of the entire corridor from Gutierrez Street to Sola Street; leveraging the city's key civic institutions as generators of economic and cultural vitality; and completing major catalytic projects including the redevelopment of Paseo Nuevo. With two million visitors annually and some of the oldest buildings in California, State Street's potential as a prosperous and beloved civic commons is significant.

Guiding Principles

Four guiding principles, drawn directly from community input, anchor every element of this Plan. They serve as the evaluative lens through which design concepts, mobility strategies, and programming decisions should be assessed.

- » People and placemaking are the key to Downtown's success
- » Downtown is critical to city-wide economic vitality
- » Connections increase vitality
- » Adaptability and sustainability increase long-term resilience



GOALS

Ten goals translate the vision and guiding principles into the actionable aspirations that shape the Plan’s design and policy recommendations. Each goal reflects themes heard consistently across the community outreach process.

» **Be Distinct**

Offer a memorable, sophisticated, distinctly Santa Barbara experience of place that reflects the people, history, and geography of Santa Barbara and the diversity of the community.

» **Be Inclusive**

Maintain a safe, clean, and inclusive environment with activities that are suitable for all people, ages, incomes, and abilities; engage the widest variety of visitors throughout the day, week, and year.

» **Be People-Centric**

Create a pedestrian-focused “State Street Paseo” in the heart of Downtown with spaces for walking, restaurant/café patios, public seating, small green spaces, children’s play, and community events.

» **Be Adaptable**

Develop a right-of-way design that can adapt to evolving preferences for mobility and programming.

» **Be Creative**

Continue to build on the strength of arts and entertainment rooted in the area, integrate small spaces for arts and performances, display temporary and permanent public art, and encourage innovation.

Foster partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to redevelop downtown.

» **Be Tree-Oriented**

Grow the urban tree canopy, increase opportunity for shade, and add green spaces for respite with comfortable places for sitting, playing, and people watching.

» **Be Connected**

Expand safe, comfortable pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to and within Downtown with improved connections between State Street and nearby neighborhoods, the waterfront, and other destinations.

» **Be Thriving**

Attract, retain, and grow a diverse and intentional mix of businesses to fuel the local economy. Enhance opportunities for each district or block to create a unique identity.

» **Be Livable**

Catalyze Downtown housing to help meet housing demands, better activate Downtown, and expand the customer base. Prioritize new housing development, encourage greater density Downtown, and allow for a range of housing styles and sizes.

» **Be Sustainable**

Become a model of sustainable infrastructure and make Santa Barbara more resilient to climate change and economic disruption. Build a city where all residents can meet essential needs within a short walk, bicycle trip, or public transportation ride.

WELCOME TO THE STATE STREET PASEO

The objectives, guiding principles, and goals are not competing aspirations. A flexible, pedestrian-first State Street Paseo is deeply rooted in the city's history and is the direct expression of values long embedded in Santa Barbara's foundational planning documents, from the General Plan and the Climate Action Plan to the Pedestrian Master Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan, reflecting decades of consistent community commitment to sustainability, mobility, public health, and vibrant urban life. A street that is leafy and beautiful can also be a place where commerce flourishes. A public space that is inclusive and family-friendly is also, by definition, one that businesses want to be adjacent to.

The Santa Barbara community has spoken clearly. They want a downtown that feels like no other place. Not a generic promenade, not a shopping mall without walls, but a living, layered, distinctly Santa Barbara experience: one that honors the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture above, activates the sidewalks below, and fills the space between with the kind of daily life that makes a city worth living in.

Flexibility allows all user types to exist at different times in the same space. That is what the State Street Paseo provides: a space made for everyone. What follows in this Plan is the roadmap for realizing that vision.







DRAFT

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STATE STREET REDESIGN

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

State Street Design

A flexible street design can reconcile conflicting community priorities about mobility and use, creating a place that is useful, beautiful, and enjoyable for all local stakeholders and visitors. Flexibility enables the street to adapt its functionality and emphasize certain types of users during specific times of day or year, enabling activities such as deliveries, loading, outdoor dining, and events to dovetail or coexist peacefully.

Clear Access Schedule

A defined and predictable schedule establishes when the street prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist movement and when the street is open to vehicles. To maintain clarity, the access schedule should not switch based on days of the week, unless for one-time events, but rather the schedule should set specific times each day for each user type to be the primary user of the 20-foot roadway, resulting in timing being the only variable in

the schedule. A clear schedule also provides greater certainty for property and business owners as to when they can receive deliveries, and customers interested in experiencing downtown based on the mobility options have the certainty that the space will be a certain way at a particular time each day. Based on the number of pedestrians and cyclists that State Street has experienced since the change in street operation, the recommended access schedule will allow for pedestrians at all times on the sidewalks, and will prioritize cyclists and transit vehicles in the 20-foot right of way lanes during daytime hours (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.), while providing a street environment appropriate for deliveries, garbage collection, and construction service during nighttime hours (10 p.m. to 10 a.m.). Emergency vehicles have 24-hour access to all parts of State Street. The evening hours also allow for private vehicle access along the street.

While the street will generally operate under a consistent access schedule based on time of day, certain limited exceptions apply.

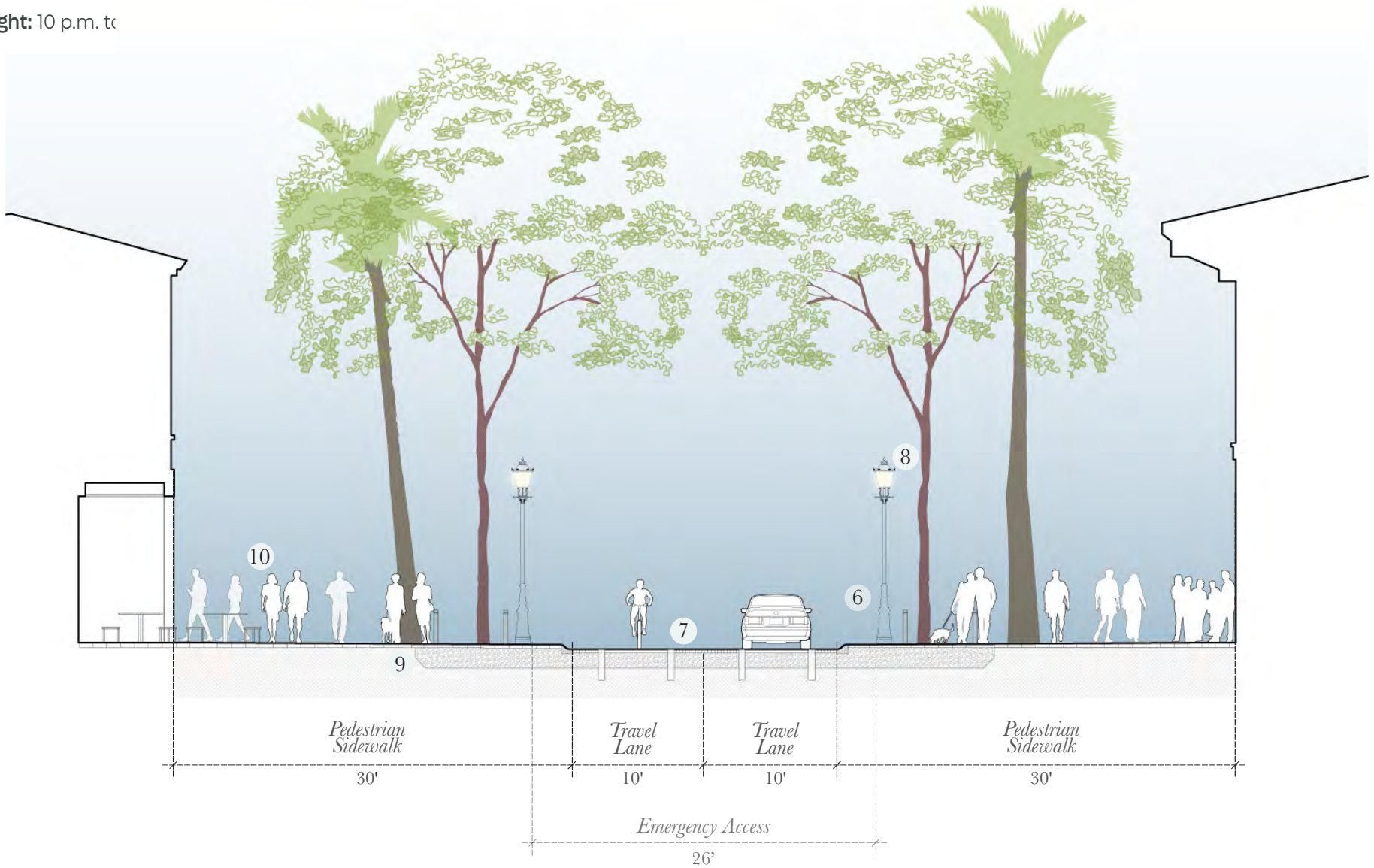
ACCESS SCHEDULE

Day: 10 a.m. to 1



ACCESS SCHEDULE

Night: 10 p.m. to





Emergency services, in coordination with the City Administrator's Office, have the authority to restrict or reduce vehicle access on State Street as conditions require. For example, blocks with a high concentration of nightlife businesses, such as those in the Entertainment District between Haley and Ortega Streets, may require that vehicle access be restricted beyond standard hours until after those establishments close, to avoid conflicts between large pedestrian crowds and vehicles in an area where alcohol service is prevalent. Additionally, there may be times when large deliveries and/or construction equipment need access outside of normal service and delivery hours. A City appointment system can be created for these situations.

However, any regular expansion of vehicle travel during hours designated for pedestrian and cyclist priority, such as modifications that would allow more vehicle traffic during peak daytime use, would

require review and approval by the City Council. Because such changes could meaningfully affect the design intent and safety of the shared roadway for all users, they are treated as significant policy decisions rather than administrative adjustments.

Event-Ready Infrastructure

The daytime configuration supports markets, festivals, and other programmed activities with little to no additional setup. Depending on the event and its size, bollards can be used to cordon off zones for longer periods so that activity can happen within the 20-foot right of way and/or along the expanded sidewalk.

Reduced Conflicts

Separating vehicle and pedestrian/cyclist activity by time of day minimizes safety conflicts without requiring full-time enforcement. Prior to the street's closure

to vehicles, the average number of vehicles per day traveling on State Street in the Downtown core was less than 10,000. Currently, State Street experiences a range of 8,000 to 11,000 pedestrian crossings per intersection per day and approximately 2,000 cyclists per day with up to 20% more pedestrians and cyclists on weekends.

Widened sidewalks and two 10-foot travel lanes for cyclists during peak times will allow for the continued trend of fewer vehicle-versus-pedestrian/cyclist collisions and minimize existing friction between pedestrians and cyclists. Collision data comparing the period before State Street was closed to vehicular traffic (May 2015 – April 2020) and after (June 2020 – December 2023) shows a reduction in average collisions per year from 17.6 to 5.9, and a reduction in average annual injuries from 10.2 to 5, which is over a 50% decrease.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Priority

Daytime and evening closures create a safer, more comfortable environment for walking, biking, dining, and everyday use. With 12 public parking lots and garages within one block of State Street, State Street provides a unique pedestrian experience, encouraging people to park once and walk, or use public bikeshare or transit to their destination. The Downtown parking system contains 3,215 existing public parking spaces, providing approximately one parking space for every 200 square feet of retail in the downtown core. In today's downtown environment, people often arrive with a

destination already in mind, using map applications and mobile devices to locate shops, restaurants, and services before they arrive. Because visitors are less reliant on slowly driving along the street to discover businesses, streets can function successfully as people-focused environments where walking, biking, and gathering become the primary ways people experience downtown. State Street functions as one of the few places in Santa Barbara where people of all ages regularly gather and spend time for different purposes. Because the corridor supports a mix of everyday activities, such as walking, dining, biking, meeting friends, attending performances, and participating in community events, it serves as a shared civic space where multiple generations use the street at the same time but often for different reasons.

Business and Service Access

Overnight vehicle access supports deliveries, maintenance, and service without disrupting peak pedestrian activity. Allowing vehicles during off-peak hours provides businesses with the access they need. For operational needs that fall outside the standard access window, such as construction vehicles, equipment servicing, or specialized deliveries, the City can implement a managed appointment system, ensuring that vehicle activity remains controlled and predictable.

FLEXIBLE DESIGN SCHEME

Streets are the most ubiquitous and accessible public spaces in any city. They accommodate the multimodal circulation of pedestrians, cyclists, public transit, vehicles, and service functions. The adjoining drawings illustrate a flexible street typology designed to respond to State Street's current and future demands.

Streets serve as essential infrastructure, supporting circulation while accommodating the systems and maintenance required for functional public spaces. They integrate utilities, stormwater management, lighting, and service access to ensure the street remains safe, durable, and operable.

The flexible street typology is designed to address both current and anticipated technical and operational needs.

Cross Section and Plan View

The cross section illustrates the relationship between the building frontage zones, pedestrian sidewalks, furnishings zones, and the central 20-foot travel corridor. Pedestrian spaces occupy approximately 60 feet of the 80-foot space between buildings, with each sidewalk expanding to approximately 30 feet from building frontage to sidewalk edge. The remaining

two 10-foot travel lanes in the center of the street serve cyclists, transit, and service and emergency vehicles.

Street Zoning

Frontage Zone

The Frontage Zone is located between the Through Pedestrian Zone and adjacent buildings or property lines. It provides a buffer that creates comfortable space between pedestrians and building fronts. Temporary uses including outdoor dining are limited to 12', as long as the Through Zone remains clear. The outdoor dining may be enclosed with city standard fencing where required to maintain a clear pedestrian zone.

Through Zone

The Through Zone is the area intended for pedestrian travel. This zone should be entirely free of permanent and temporary objects. As a general rule, the zone should be at least 8 ft. Clearance should be provided in a generally straight path for the convenience of all pedestrians, but especially for the sight-impaired. Where existing trees are preserved, the Frontage Zone may reduce its width as needed to maintain a required 8-foot Through Zone. Tree grates are recommended, especially under these conditions, to allow for safe, unobstructed travel around trees.

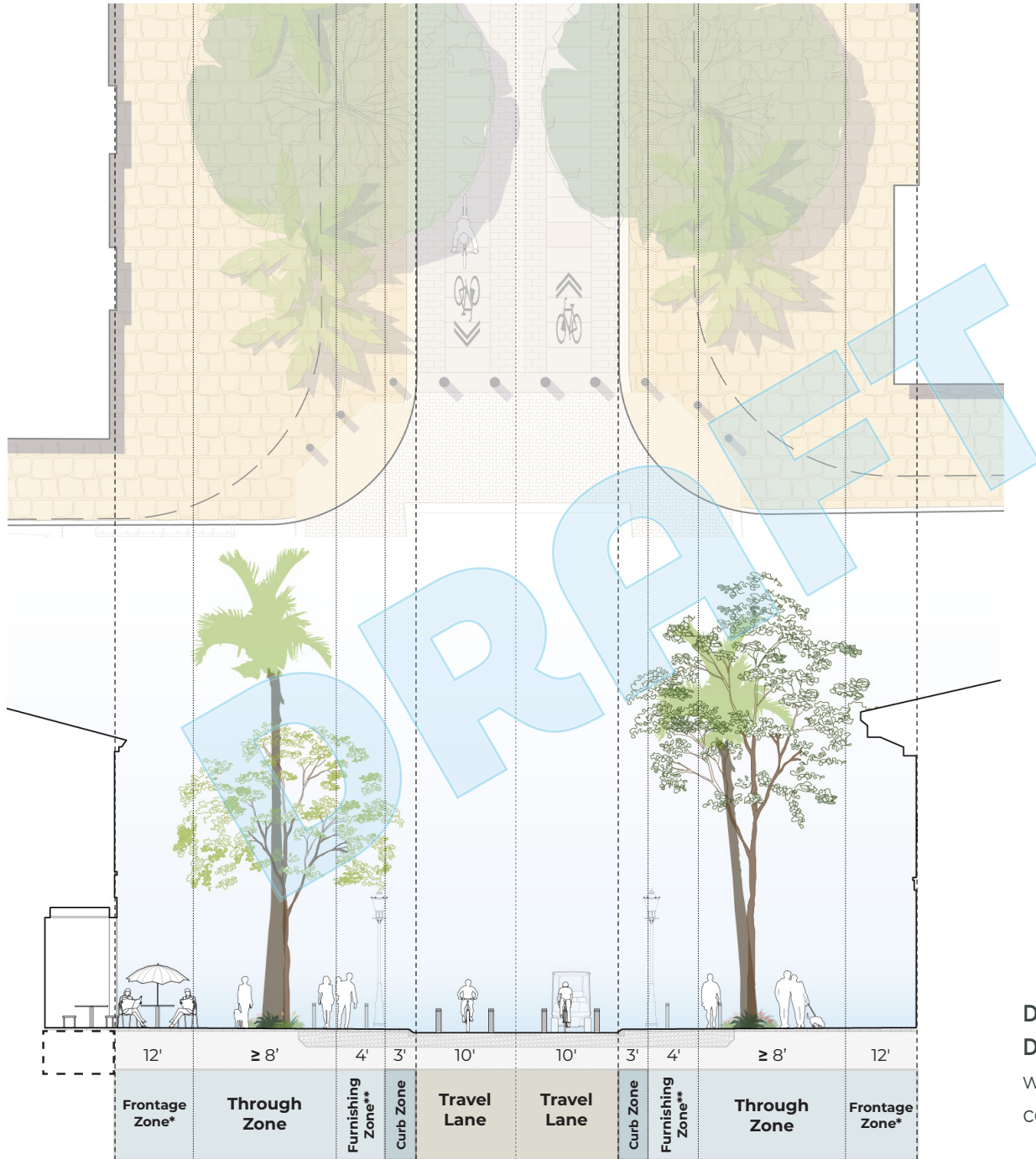


Furnishings Zone

The Furnishings Zone acts as a buffer between pedestrians and the roadway, accommodating streetscape elements such as street trees, lighting and utility poles, signage, and other public amenities. The zone ensures a clear path for pedestrian movement. Transit access is provided in this zone via curb cuts. Typical features include proposed landscaping, benches, bicycle parking, kiosks, and way-finding signage. Signage should be consolidated on existing poles or fixtures to reduce visual clutter.

Curb Zone

Curbs define the pedestrian environment and prevent stormwater infiltration in buildings. The existing 6-inch curb will be extended and sloped to transition smoothly into a 4-inch rolled curb. In this zone 3 additional feet are reserved to maintain a 26-foot clearance for emergency vehicles.



Details of the Civic & Commercial District: The proposed zones will be applied to all blocks covered under this plan



DETAILS OF THE FLEXIBLE DESIGN

Bollards

Bollards are a central component of State Street's flexible design strategy, providing the physical mechanism for transitioning the street between pedestrian-priority and vehicle-accessible configurations. The bollard system serves multiple critical functions: pedestrian safety, operational flexibility, emergency access, transit passage, and delivery management.

Retractable bollards, installed at each intersection along State Street, provide a dependable system to safely close streets to vehicular traffic. During peak bicycle and pedestrian activity, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., the bollards remain raised to protect pedestrians and cyclists. Designed to withstand vehicle impacts, they help create

a secure and welcoming environment, allowing people to move, gather, and enjoy the street with confidence.

One of the key advantages of retractable bollards is their operational flexibility. Individual blocks can be closed or opened as needed to accommodate festivals, fairs, and outdoor community events, allowing the street to transform between everyday pedestrian use and larger, special-event programming.

The bollard system provides 24-hour emergency vehicle access, with typical retraction times of approximately 3 to 8 seconds, enabling rapid emergency response. The spacing and configuration at approximately 5 feet apart are designed to allow small transit to pass through, ensuring continued public transportation service along the corridor. Larger transit vehicles could also pass through the bollard system by using a remote or radio frequency identification tag (RFID).

Bollard Quantities and Configuration

The bollard layout is calibrated to the operational needs of each block while maintaining the visual and functional integrity of the streetscape. The following configuration applies to each intersection:

- » 8 retractable bollards per intersection (4 per side)
- » 16 standard bollards per intersection (8 per side)

Total per intersection = 24 bollards
(8 retractable + 16 standard)

This configuration applies at 7 intersections along the corridor, from the 500 block of State Street (State Street and Haley Street) through the 1200 block of State Street (State Street and Victoria Street), plus the De la Guerra Street intersection, for a total of 8 fully configured intersections.

The 1300 block of State Street, between Victoria Street and Sola Street, presents a special condition due to its proximity to the Arlington Theater and the need to maintain Arlington Street access. This block may be closed to vehicles only for special events rather than on a daily schedule. The bollard configuration for the 1300 block offers two options:

- » Standard bollards only along both sides, or
- » The full combination of retractable and standard bollards as used in the 500–1200 blocks.

The appropriate configuration will be determined during final design based on event programming needs and stakeholder input.

Bollard Types and Examples

Two primary bollard types are proposed for the State Street Master Plan:

Retractable Bollards: Hydraulic or pneumatic retractable bollards that can be raised or lowered remotely by City staff, the Fire Department, or the Police Department. Retraction time is approximately 3 to 8 seconds. These bollards are positioned at entry/exit points of each block to control vehicle access.

Standard Fixed Bollards: Permanent or surface-mounted bollards that provide physical separation between the pedestrian zone and the central travel corridor. These are positioned to delineate the pedestrian realm and reinforce the street's visual character.

Pavement Material

Pavement material plays a critical functional and aesthetic role in the State Street Master Plan, contributing to pedestrian safety, wayfinding, stormwater management, and the overall character of the corridor. The material palette must balance durability, flexibility, sustainability, and compatibility with Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial architectural heritage.

The proposed pavement strategy uses a hierarchy of materials to differentiate zones and guide users through the corridor. The central 20-foot travel lane uses a smooth, durable surface suitable for cyclists, transit, and service vehicles. The pedestrian sidewalk zones feature a higher-quality material that communicates priority and comfort. Intersection crossings extend the pedestrian paving across the travel lane, visually reinforcing pedestrian priority and slowing vehicle speeds.



Permeable pavers are incorporated throughout the streetscape where feasible to support stormwater infiltration. Trench drains run along the street to capture surface runoff, while permeable pavers allow water to infiltrate into a three-foot reservoir course beneath the street. This approach addresses both drainage and water quality goals while reducing the urban heat island effect.

A rolled curb design is used to transition between the roadway and adjacent pedestrian areas, replacing



the existing vertical curb with a gently sloped edge. This supports operational flexibility. During periods when vehicles are allowed on the street, vehicles can temporarily pull to the side for deliveries, passenger drop-off, service access, or emergency needs, while still maintaining a clear central travel corridor.



Landscaping

Landscaping is a defining element of State Street's identity and plays multiple roles: softening the hardscape environment, providing shade and cooling, supporting stormwater infiltration, contributing to biodiversity, and creating a visually cohesive and seasonally rich corridor. Strategic placement of low level planting areas enhances the pedestrian environment while maintaining visibility to storefronts.

The landscaping approach is guided by a spatial hierarchy. Intersection corners and major anchor entries receive the boldest, most saturated planting as 'punctuation marks' that orient people along the corridor. Mid-block plantings repeat a simpler, quieter version of the same palette to create visual flow and draw people toward the next anchor. At the storefront level, fine-textured, fragrant, or touchable plants are encouraged to engage pedestrians moving slowly through the space.

The planting palette takes advantage of Santa Barbara's Mediterranean climate as a significant asset. Unlike most American downtowns that go brown and bare in winter, State Street can support year-round bloom using California natives and Mediterranean-

adapted species while meeting water conservation requirements. The goal is a planting palette immediately recognizable as 'downtown Santa Barbara.'

Landscaping will include designated community garden areas, including along building frontages that lack active storefronts or have long stretches of blank wall, typically when there is more than 30 feet without a doorway or entry point. Removal of existing low-profile landscaping and raised planters improves sightlines across the street, increasing storefront visibility and strengthening the connection between shops and pedestrians. This removal also places more focus on the tree canopy in each district.

Street trees are a critical component of the landscaping strategy, providing shade, carbon sequestration, and visual continuity. Soil cells beneath the pavement create space for uncompacted soil and stormwater infiltration, substantially improving tree health and longevity. New trees are planted in underground systems to maintain flexible plaza spaces and shade impervious surfaces, while existing significant trees are preserved in their existing planting beds.

DIFFERENTIATION OF DISTRICTS

Three Districts: A nine-block stretch of State Street is broken in to three distinct districts

ARTS DISTRICT



CIVIC AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT



ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

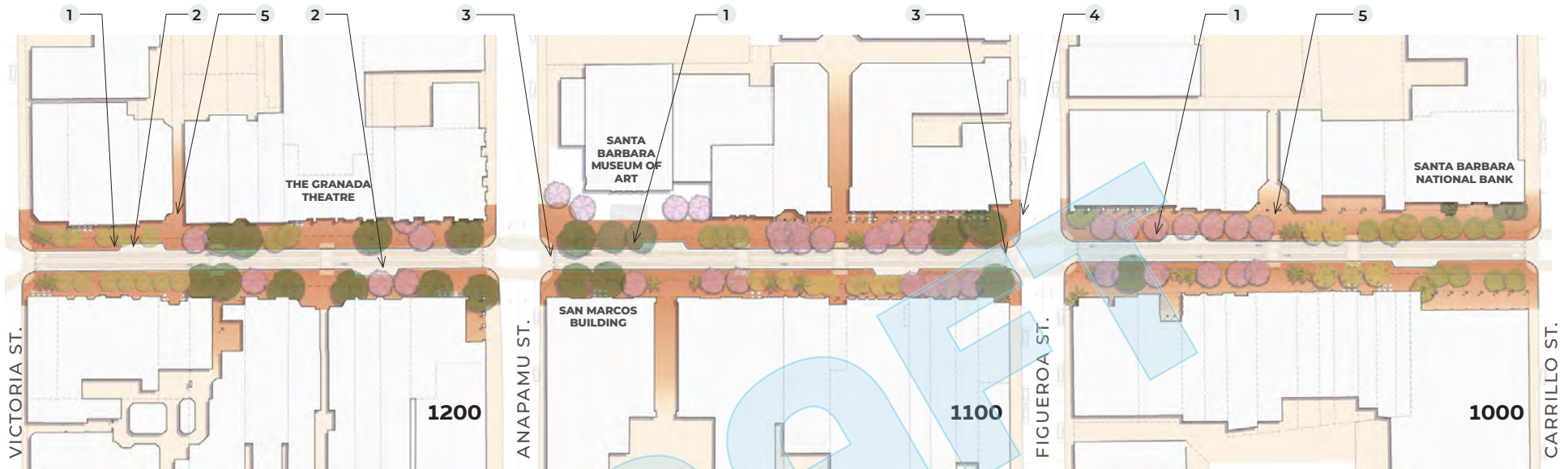


DISTRICT DIFFERENTIATION

State Street is a sequence of distinct districts, each with its own character, anchors, and user community. The State Street Master Plan reinforces and amplifies these existing identities through differentiated design approaches, while maintaining visual and functional continuity along the full length of the State Street Paseo.

The three primary districts are the Entertainment District (400–600 blocks), the Civic and Commercial District (700–900 blocks), and the Arts District (1000–1200 blocks). Each create an array of places that attract a diverse audience and encourage people to explore what's on the next block.

ARTS DISTRICT OVERVIEW



- 1 B-Cycle station
- 2 Designated transit stops
- 3 Retractable bollards at intersections
- 4 Designated drop-off zones before intersections

- 5 Opportunities for more landscape design

--- Existing curb line

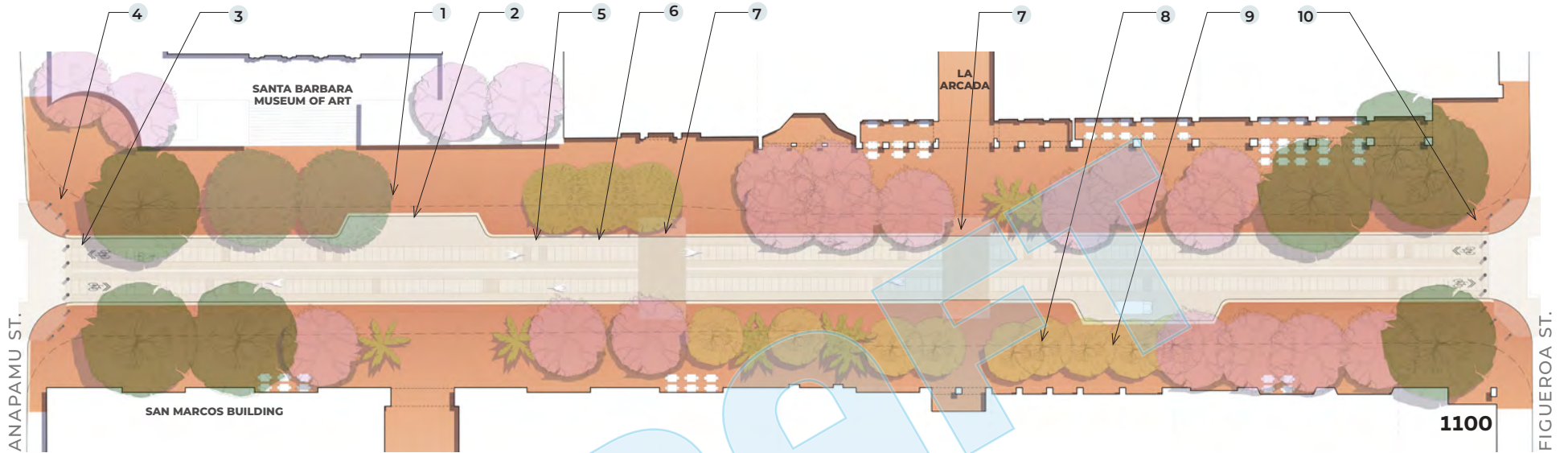


The Arts District

The Arts District is the city's hub for visual and performing arts. A mix of galleries for painting, sculpture, and photography offer creative spaces for artists and attracts visitors to State Street. The Granada Theatre (1924), Arlington Theatre (1930), and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (1941) are

significant landmarks that form the historic downtown and that anchor the Arts District. The district hosts a variety of events throughout the year, including "1st Thursday Art Walk" and provides opportunities for informal performances, art installations, and exhibitions on State Street.

ARTS DISTRICT BLOCK PLAN

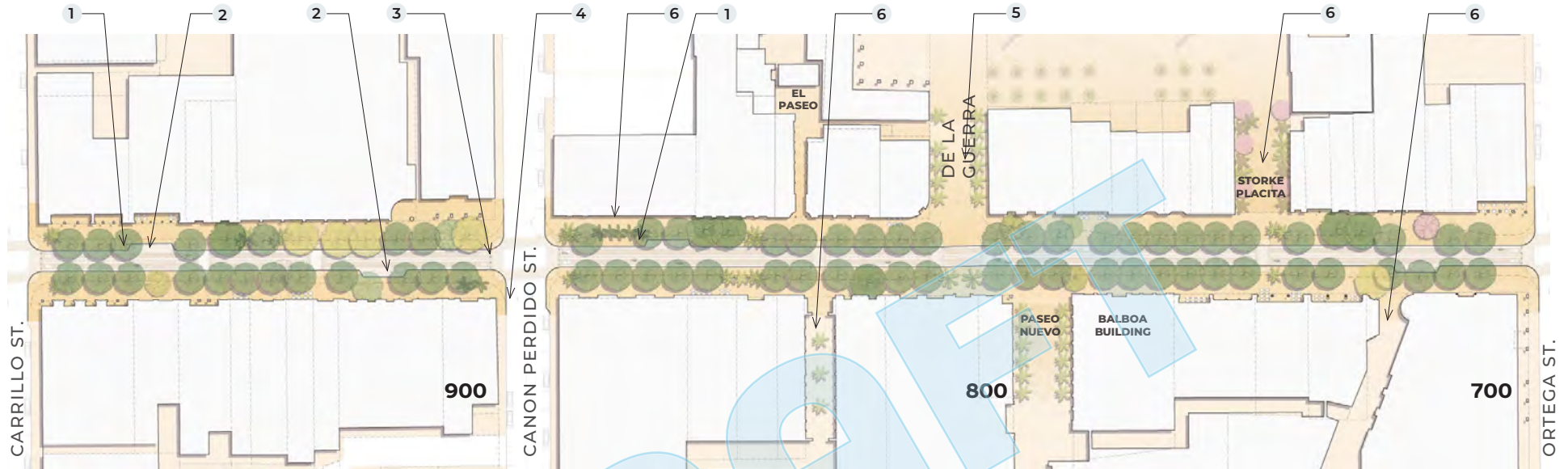


- 1 B-Cycle station
- 2 Designated transit stops
- 3 Retractable bollards
- 4 Fixed bollards
- 5 Smooth 5' wide pavers
- 6 Permeable cobblestone
- 7 ADA accessible mid-block crosswalk
- 8 New trees to compliment existing
- 9 Existing trees of notable status
- 10 New brick to match existing

--- Existing curb line



CIVIC AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT OVERVIEW



- 1 B-Cycle station
- 2 Designated transit stops
- 3 Retractable bollards at intersections
- 4 Designated drop-off zones before intersections

- 5 Pedestrian only
- 6 Opportunities for more landscape design

--- Existing curb line

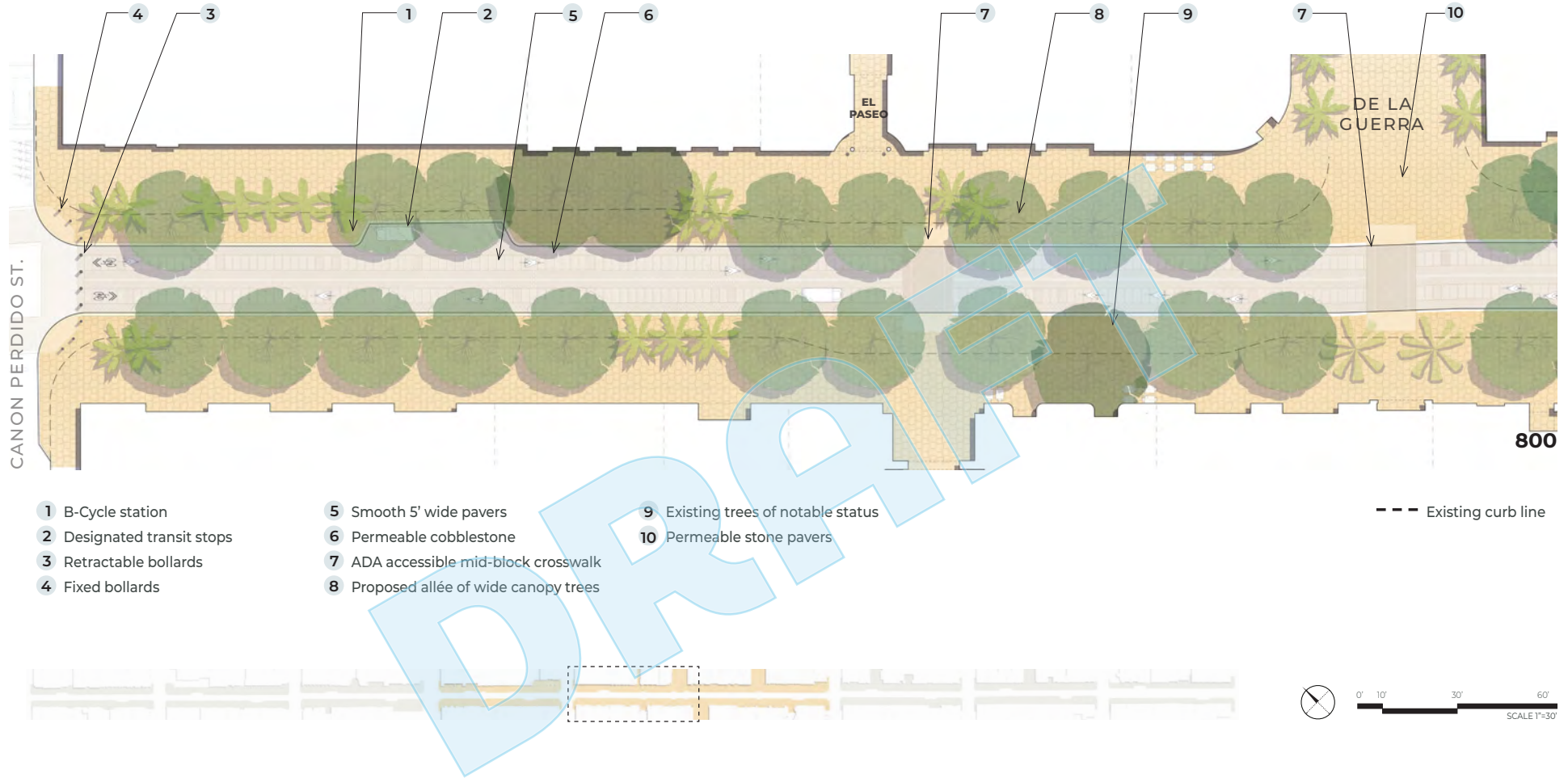


The Civic and Commercial District

At the heart of Downtown, the Civic & Commercial District blends historic architecture with cultural and civic life. The Casa de la Guerra of 1828 is one of the oldest buildings in California. Forming the Paseo Viejo, this historic adobe, along with the Oreña Adobe were at the core of the Downtown's reconstruction after the 1925 earthquake. Plaza de la

Guerra provides a public gathering space, while City Hall and the Santa Barbara News-Press anchor the area as the city's institutional core. Paseo Nuevo, provides the city's longest continuation of retail space. Colorful flags, terra-cotta roofs, white plastered arcades, and traditional glazed Spanish tiles create a vibrant setting for dining and shopping.

CIVIC AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT BLOCK PLAN



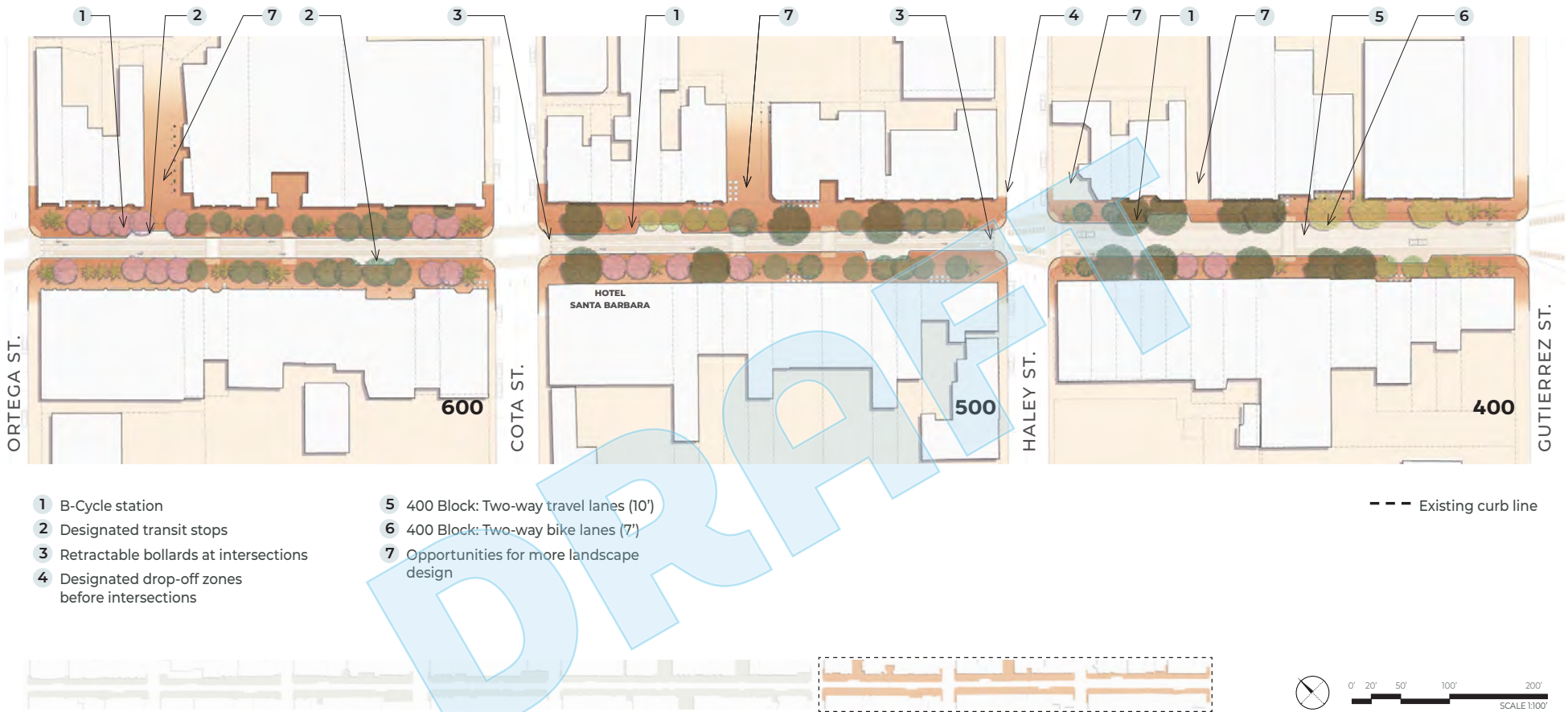
- 1 B-Cycle station
- 2 Designated transit stops
- 3 Retractable bollards
- 4 Fixed bollards
- 5 Smooth 5' wide pavers
- 6 Permeable cobblestone
- 7 ADA accessible mid-block crosswalk
- 8 Proposed allée of wide canopy trees
- 9 Existing trees of notable status
- 10 Permeable stone pavers

--- Existing curb line

The Civic and Commercial District integrates the paseo network and key anchors into a pedestrian-priority District that is the heart of civic and community life in Santa Barbara. The District is envisioned as Santa Barbara's primary venue for markets, festivals, and community celebrations, with a

flexible plaza at the terminus of the new De la Guerra pedestrian street and it is differentiated with different pavement and a more robust tree canopy.

ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

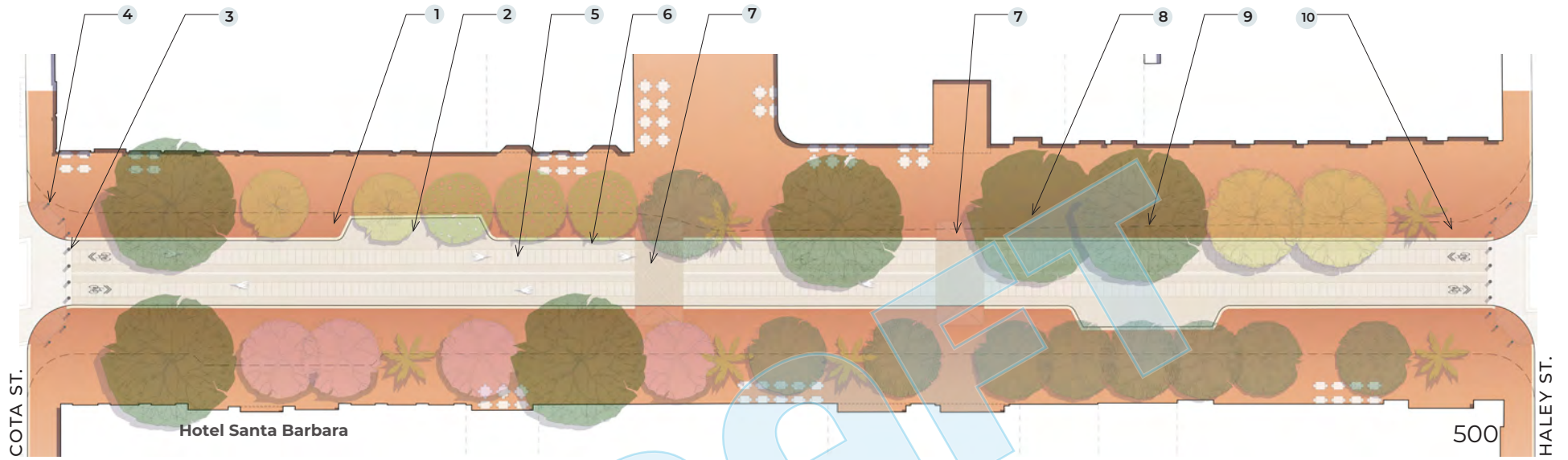


The Entertainment District

Coming from the Funk Zone and Waterfront, the Entertainment District is the introduction to the State Street Paseo and the gateway into Downtown. The Entertainment District offers a wide variety of activities, including live music, theater, art galleries, cinemas, restaurants, bars, wine tasting, and seasonal festivals. These experiences take place among an eclectic mix of

modest storefronts, home to both local businesses and national retailers. Small scale shops and restaurants create visually engaging backdrop for the area's vibrant arts, dining, and entertainment offerings. Restaurants and bars energize the area day and night, and street performers, and expanded restaurant patios provide additional life and activity.

ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT BLOCK



- 1 B-Cycle station
 - 2 Designated transit stops
 - 3 Retractable bollards
 - 4 Fixed bollards
 - 5 Smooth 5' wide pavers
 - 6 Permeable cobblestone
 - 7 ADA accessible mid-block crosswalk
 - 8 New trees to complement existing
 - 9 Existing trees of notable status
 - 10 New brick to match existing
- Existing curb line



Street Transformation

Before: State Street looking southeast towards the State Street Paseo.



After: State Street looking southeast towards the State Street Paseo.



Street Transformation

Before: State Street looking southeast towards the Granada Theatre



After: State Street looking southeast towards the Granada Theatre





Extending the Paseo

Anapamu Street serves as a vital connective thread, linking the State Street Paseo to two of Santa Barbara's most treasured civic destinations: the Santa Barbara Public Library and the Santa Barbara Courthouse and its gardens. This connection elevates Anapamu Street's role beyond a simple cross street, positioning it as an extension of the Paseo experience itself and an important part of the broader downtown pedestrian network.

Two 10-foot travel lanes are maintained to preserve two-way vehicular access, while expanded sidewalks create a more comfortable environment for those traveling on foot. The existing bike route on Anapamu

Street could be upgraded to a protected bike lane located on the west side of the street, offering a safer and more comfortable cycling experience that connects riders to the broader State Street corridor, but this would require on-street parking removal.

To reinforce the character and continuity of the State Street Paseo, paving materials consistent with those used on State Street are extended onto Anapamu Street, visually and experientially unifying the two corridors. Vertical curbs are removed and replaced with low rolled curbs, a design choice that mimics the State Street design and encourages slower vehicle speeds.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

State Street's flexible design depends on a carefully integrated set of operational, physical, and programmatic elements. This section describes the key details and actions that govern how the street functions across all user types, times of day, and conditions.

Sidewalks

Generous sidewalks are provided to support a wide range of human activities, including walking, outdoor dining, play, and social gathering. Pedestrian spaces occupy approximately 60 feet of the 80-foot space between buildings along State Street, with each

sidewalk expanding to approximately 30 feet from building frontage to sidewalk edge, resulting in two 10-foot travel lanes in the center of the street.

Each block is designed with double-loaded sidewalks, activating both the building edge and the curb edge of the pedestrian zone. Different amenities exist on each side of the pedestrian sidewalk. For example, outdoor dining against the building edge and the opportunity for sculptures, benches, or public tables on the side near the travel zone. The design maintains a minimum of approximately 8 feet for a clear through zone for pedestrian travel, ensuring access for businesses and a welcoming, legible space for all users.

The sidewalk is organized into three primary zones: the Frontage Zone (between the through pedestrian zone and adjacent buildings, accommodating outdoor dining up to 12 feet), the Through Zone (at least 8 feet, entirely free of permanent and temporary objects), and the Furnishings Zone (accommodating street trees, lighting, signage, benches, bicycle parking, and other public amenities).

Pedestrian Priority

The State Street corridor is designed so that people on foot establish the pace, character, and experience of the street.

There are ten intersections along the State Street Paseo that account for almost 20 percent of its total length. The experience at these crossings strongly influences the overall experience of the corridor. Curb extensions, directional ramps, and decorative crosswalks are utilized at all cross street intersections to expand pedestrian space and shorten crossing distances.

Mid-block crossings provide convenient and predictable places for pedestrians to cross, while raised mid-block crossings slow transit, bicycles, and service vehicles and also allow a seamless, curbside connection between both sides of the street.

The paseo network is an essential part of the public realm. Where possible, mid-block pedestrian crossings on cross streets are prioritized to create a connected paseo network throughout Downtown.

Pedestrian safety is supported by narrower crossings, clearer sightlines, and visible pedestrian infrastructure at all intersections. Red curb zones at corners maintain clear

sightlines between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. Lighting at crossings and pedestrian-scale lighting along the corridor improve nighttime safety and visibility.

Bicycle Circulation

State Street remains open to cyclists throughout the redesign. Two 10-foot travel lanes in the center of the street serve cyclists during the day, alongside transit. Retractable bollards at all intersections from Haley Street to Victoria Street allow for the flexible closure of blocks to general vehicle traffic, limiting access solely to bicycles and transit.

Due to traffic volumes, limited right-of-way space on Anacapa Street, and frequency of driveway conflicts on Anacapa and Chapala Streets, it is not recommended to create bicycle facilities on those streets due to safety concerns and due to a less comfortable experience for less experienced riders or families with children. Bicycle access is recommended to remain along the State Street Paseo, to maintain connectivity to the broader bicycle network. Future opportunities exist to study protected bike lanes on adjacent streets that could complement the State Street facility.

Cycling provides broad public benefits: almost no noise, no emissions, and requires far less space than vehicles. Importantly, bicycle-friendly streets expand mobility for many community members, such as children, older adults, and residents who do not own a car, and these community members often rely on cycling to travel short distances and run daily errands.

As Santa Barbara works to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of approximately 8,000 new



housing units, the location and design of that growth become critically important. Concentrating new housing downtown, where the highest density is permitted and services are most accessible, offers a meaningful opportunity to reduce automobile dependence, if paired with safe, comfortable, and connected cycling infrastructure. When residents can confidently reach jobs, shops, schools, and transit by bike, the need to own or use a car diminishes. Investing in State Street as a low-stress route is an essential strategy for managing the traffic and parking demands that thousands of new downtown residents would otherwise generate.

The 400 block requires a specific configuration: because State Street is the primary emergency route between Downtown and the Waterfront via the Highway 101 underpass, the 400 block includes two vehicular lanes (one in each direction) and dedicated bicycle lanes on either side. The 1300 block similarly maintains

two vehicular lanes to preserve access to Arlington Street and dedicated bicycle lanes on either side.

Transit Circulation

An 'experiential' shuttle can operate in the State Street Paseo, providing a smaller, more on-demand transit service that complements the MTD Downtown-Waterfront Circulator. This could be bicycle pedicabs, small electric shuttles, or another type of small transit vehicle, and the design could enable multiple different transit options to operate at the same time on State Street. Additionally, MTD could operate on State Street since retractable bollards will be located in each intersection and loading and unloading zones or pullout areas are placed on each block, allowing passengers to board or disembark transit. Any shuttle on State Street must provide ADA-accessible vehicle options and operate safely within the 20-foot emergency access corridor.



Emergency Access and Safety

The State Street Master Plan maintains unobstructed emergency vehicle access along the full length of the corridor at all times. A 20-foot-wide emergency access corridor is preserved free of obstruction. Retractable bollards at the end of each block permit emergency vehicle access within 3 to 8 seconds. Rolled curbs allow transit vehicles and bicycles to pull aside, while a 3-foot clearance beyond the curb provides additional emergency access space beyond the required 20-foot minimum for the Fire and Police Departments.

The bollard system can be controlled at any time by the Fire and Police Departments for emergency access or routine patrols. The 400 block must remain open to vehicles at all times due to its role as the primary emergency route

between Downtown and the Cabrillo Street and Waterfront areas via the Highway 101 underpass.

Pedestrian safety is further supported by narrower crossings, clearer sightlines, and visible pedestrian infrastructure at all intersections. Red curb zones at corners maintain clear sightlines between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. Lighting at crossings and pedestrian-scale lighting along the corridor improve nighttime safety and visibility.

Service, Drop Offs, and Vehicle Access

Overnight vehicle access on State Street supports operations such as deliveries, trash collection, maintenance, and building servicing without disrupting peak daytime pedestrian and bicycle activity. This access window provides businesses with the operational access they need.

Commercial loading and unloading operations, passenger drop-off, and accessible parking loading zones are prioritized at all cross-street intersections, as close as possible to State Street. Drop-off and loading zones on all side streets between Haley and Victoria Streets extend to the mid-block and include a minimum of two accessible spaces at each intersection area, ideally one on each side. Specific lengths and locations vary based on existing conditions on each cross street.

Drop-off locations are provided as pull-out areas on each block of State Street, designed primarily for transit vehicle passenger pick-up and drop-off. These areas may also be used for general vehicle passenger pick-up and drop-off during the hours when the street is open to vehicle traffic, approximately 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.



For operational needs outside the standard access window, the City will implement a managed appointment system. Businesses or contractors will be able to coordinate with City staff to schedule limited vehicle access during designated time slots, ensuring that vehicle activity remains minimized, controlled and predictable while preserving the safety and usability of the corridor.

Slow Speeds

Travel lanes are each 10 feet wide, maintaining a narrow lane width that naturally reduces vehicle speeds. The two 10-foot travel lanes in opposite directions use different pavement type to separate travel directions. For two 10-foot lanes with minimal separation in a pedestrian-oriented downtown setting, a target speed of 20 mph or less is appropriate and consistent with NACTO guidance on urban street design.

All users, including transit, service vehicles, and cyclists, are expected to operate at speeds of 20 mph or less. This flexible lane approach moves away from a lane-segregated street layout and instead allows the corridor to adjust its function over time, with two lanes serving different users depending on the time of day: cyclists and transit during peak hours, vehicles and services during off-peak hours.

Accessibility

The State Street Master Plan aspires to exceed ADA minimum standards to create a truly inclusive experience for all users, including people with disabilities, older adults, and families with children. Expanded sidewalks, rolled curbs, and a clearly defined 20-foot center travel lane create clearer spatial organization. While fully curbside shared street environments can present challenges for people with vision disabilities, rolled curbs provide a physical and visual transition between pedestrian areas and the central travel lane.

Key accessibility features include: curb bulb-outs at crossings to shorten crossing distances; directional indicators (slightly elevated, linear markings detectable



underfoot or with a cane) guiding users with visual impairments; clearly marked crossing points with MUTCD-compliant crosswalk markings; pull-out zones on each block where loading can occur and transit vehicles can pull off for easier passenger boarding; public seating provided on each block; and accessible on-street parking spaces at a minimum ratio of one per 25 designated spaces on each block face of the cross-streets.

Detectable cues are added alongside boundaries between pedestrian-only and shared-use areas, including textured edge treatments detectable underfoot, contrasting colors, and rolled curbs or valley gutters. Auditory cues at defined crossing points can alert approaching cyclists when pedestrians are present. Tree grates must meet ADA requirements with openings no larger than 3/32 inch wide.

Lighting

Street and sidewalk lighting is placed to improve visibility across both the roadway and pedestrian

zones. Pedestrian-scale lighting creates a safe and welcoming environment at night, while crosswalk lighting, including the potential for ground-level lighting at crossings, highlights safe crossing locations. Removal of existing low-level vegetation that previously obscured light fixtures increases the effective light radius along the corridor.

Lighting design will maintain views of the night sky and maximize energy efficiency. Energy-efficient light sources and solar energy are prioritized. Lighting also plays a role in the highlighting of key cultural and architectural features of the corridor, supporting the evening atmosphere and nightlife activity.

Signage

Signage along State Street serves multiple functions: wayfinding, regulatory communication, cultural representation, and visual identity. All signage should be consolidated on existing poles or fixtures to reduce visual clutter and maintain the character of the corridor.

Where new signage is required, it should be consistent with the overall design language of the streetscape.

Wayfinding signage is updated to reflect new destinations and biking/walking distances and/or travel times. Multilingual signage should be provided on all public-facing signage. Informational kiosks in the Civic and Commercial District provide cultural and historical interpretation, business directories, and event programming information.

Directional indicators, which may be slightly elevated, linear markings detectable underfoot or with a cane, guide users with visual impairments along the safe pedestrian route and to safe crossing points, consistent with FHWA Accessible Shared Streets guidance.

Landscaping

Landscaping along State Street serves multiple interconnected purposes: environmental performance, pedestrian comfort, visual identity, and stormwater management. Planting areas are strategically located to enhance the pedestrian environment while maintaining visibility to storefronts and respecting utility locations beneath the street.

Green elements are most effective at intersections, within designated public use areas, and along building frontages that lack active storefronts. The planting palette is suggested to generally consist of the following: 60 percent green foliage creates the calm base, 30 percent of one dominant bloom color provides identity, and 10 percent of a contrasting accent provides visual interest. This approach



prevents planting that includes a random mix of colors that reads as visual noise and signals neglect.

Warm colors, such as reds, oranges, and yellows, measurably slow pedestrian pace and increase time spent on a block, which correlates with retail sales. State Street can achieve year-round bloom using California natives and Mediterranean species that complement the Spanish Colonial white and terracotta architecture, while supporting local ecology and biodiversity.

Landscaping areas should be lower than the surrounding plaza area to function as bioretention zones for stormwater collection. Water-saving irrigation systems with automatic controllers and

weather-based sensors are required for all newly installed and renovated landscapes, in compliance with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO). Landscape elements could serve dual purpose as green play spaces along the corridor.

Stormwater and Drainage

Santa Barbara's Mediterranean climate requires a stormwater strategy that addresses both conveyance and water quality. The State Street Master Plan provides an opportunity to significantly improve the quality of water draining into Mission Creek and Laguna Creek in accordance with the City of Santa Barbara Storm Water BMP Guidance Manual.

The highest elevation in the study area is at the northwest and water generally drains to the southeast



into Mission Creek and Laguna Creek. Most of the study area is located within the Mission Creek watershed. North of Carrillo Street, the 1000-1200 blocks of State Street are within the Laguna Creek watershed. The existing runoff flows on State Street are primarily conveyed within the street. Sidewalks and the crowned roadway slope towards the six-inch curb and gutter, which directs water to end-of-block catch basins and conveyed in piped storm drains.

In addition to the rainfall on State Street, stormwater flows onto State Street come from two additional "tributary" areas.

The first tributary is the area of cross streets one block northeast of State Street, draining from Anacapa Street to State Street. Many of the cross streets do not have catch basins, so runoff flows to State Street.

The second tributary flows from adjacent buildings. Most adjacent buildings show internally routed downspouts which discharge primarily via curb outlet drains. This is true of buildings adjacent to State Street and buildings along the adjacent side streets.

Stormwater runoff drains into the storm sewer and then Mission and Laguna Creeks without any water quality treatment. Reconstruction of State Street provides an opportunity to improve the quality of water draining into these creeks, in accordance with the City of Santa Barbara Storm Water BMP Guidance Manual. Pollutants typically wash off the roofs, streets, and sidewalks during the "first flush" of rainfall. Capturing and infiltrating this runoff into the ground protects water quality in our creeks and oceans and can reduce overall runoff and associated flood impacts.

For the State Street design, trench drains will run along the street to capture surface runoff, while permeable pavers allow water to infiltrate into a three-foot reservoir course beneath the street. Curbs help direct flow, supporting efficient drainage and protecting the roadway and pedestrian area. The State Street Paseo proposes underground storm drains sized to handle existing drainage flows, with pipe sizes between 36 and 42 inches based on existing conditions.

Water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs) applicable to the redesign include: bioretention areas (landscape areas that collect, slow, and infiltrate stormwater); permeable pavements (which reduce stormwater runoff while requiring additional maintenance); and soil cells (modular underground systems that support plaza spaces above and create space for uncompacted soil and stormwater infiltration below).

The goal is for all blocks to capture all water quality volume from the public right-of-way and identify where additional capacity exists to treat runoff from adjacent parcels. This could relieve water quality treatment requirements for adjacent parcels and allow for the implementation of an alternative storm water compliance program that would facilitate potential redevelopment to address housing needs.

The goal of this analysis is to provide conceptual direction to guide budgeting and future decision making. As blocks proceed into design and implementation, additional analysis is needed based on the specific design of the block.



Sustainability

The State Street Master Plan aligns with the City of Santa Barbara Climate Action Plan and its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035. The State Street Master Plan integrates comprehensive sustainability strategies addressing transportation, water, energy, nature, and health.

Transportation sustainability is advanced through infrastructure for walking, cycling, and transit; electric vehicle charging in adjacent parking facilities; and programs to increase active transportation mode share to 6 percent by 2030 and 10 percent by 2035. The plan supports an increase in public transportation mode share to 7 percent by 2030 and 8 percent by 2035.

Environmental sustainability strategies include increasing tree canopy to shade 70 percent of impervious

surfaces, creating pollinator pathways using California native plants, reducing outdoor water use through native and climate-adapted planting, implementing green infrastructure for stormwater management, and utilizing high Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) materials to reduce the urban heat island effect. The plan targets a Net Zero Energy district powered by distributed solar energy.

Carbon sequestration is advanced through expanded street tree planting and soil cells, use of low-carbon construction materials (including low-carbon concrete and mass timber), and exploration of biochar and biobased materials. The City aims to achieve the greatest carbon sequestration possible given the constraints and amenities of the corridor.

Utilities

Several utilities are located under State Street, including City-owned systems (water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer) and privately-owned systems (electric, gas, fiber-optic, telecommunications). The location of these utilities has a significant impact on the type and location of amenities and improvements. Utilities require access for maintenance and repair, which limits permanent construction with below-ground footings above utility mainlines.

Most utility mainlines are in the eastern half of the existing roadway. All amenities and improvements located above utility mainlines must be movable to maintain access for maintenance or repairs. Acceptable elements include moveable furnishings (tables and chairs), surface-mounted fixed furnishings

(benches), planter pots, self-contained kiosks, and temporary or movable play elements.

Construction of the State Street Master Plan offers public and private utility providers the opportunity to upgrade existing utilities. Coordination with utility providers to make upgrades concurrently with construction will reduce costs and minimize disruption. Adding empty conduit in strategic locations will allow for easier utility capacity increases in the future, and consolidating compatible utilities into a joint trench, or utilidor, will reduce conflicts with trees and amenities and make maintenance and servicing easier and less disruptive. Increasing the isolation valves at each intersection should also be explored.

An alternatives analysis should be explored further during the construction planning phase to evaluate the feasibility of relocating utilities to adjacent streets, such as Anacapa and Chapala Streets. Doing so would reduce the likelihood of future repair work disrupting the businesses on State Street. However, utility relocation represents a significant undertaking. Moving utility lines to adjacent streets would require substantial capital expenditure, and property owners along State Street would face additional costs associated with relocating their individual service connections. These financial implications will need to be carefully weighed against the long-term benefits of reduced street disruption before a preferred approach is determined. A thorough cost-benefit analysis, developed in coordination with utility providers and affected property owners, will be an important step in advancing this decision during the project's next phase.

Public Restrooms

Providing publicly accessible restrooms along State Street is an important component of creating a welcoming and functional pedestrian environment. Each district along the corridor presents an opportunity to incorporate well-designed, permanent restroom facilities that serve the full range of visitors, shoppers, diners, and event attendees who activate the street throughout the day and evening.

Delivering public restrooms along State Street will require coordination between the City, property owners, and potential private operators to identify appropriate locations within each district that are accessible, visible, and adequately sized. Facilities should be integrated thoughtfully into the streetscape or adjacent buildings to avoid a utilitarian appearance and designed to meet ADA accessibility standards.

Effective management is essential to ensuring restrooms remain clean, safe, and welcoming to all users. Best practices from other cities demonstrate that attended restroom models, in which a part-time attendant is present during peak hours, significantly improve cleanliness, reduce vandalism, and create a sense of safety that encourages use by the broader public. Automated self-cleaning restroom units with usage timers are another proven approach for off-peak hours. Regular maintenance schedules, adequate lighting, and clear sight lines from the street all contribute to restrooms that feel safe and are used appropriately.

Locations and details of providing additional public restrooms along State Street will

need to be evaluated further before design details can be completed for this use.

Events and Festivals

The State Street Master Plan design is designed to be event-ready from day one. The Civic and Commercial District is envisioned as Santa Barbara's primary venue for markets, festivals, and community celebrations. The flexible plaza and minimal at-grade planting support a wide range of events, such as weekly farmers markets and art fairs to large seasonal festivals and civic celebrations.

Equity and inclusivity are central to the events program. Making State Street welcoming to all means removing economic and cultural barriers to engaging with the street. Low or no-cost uses, including public seating, public art, fountains, play elements, and



public events, should be prioritized alongside paid programming. The City should simplify permitting for small performances, buskers, and pop-up activity, and allow pop-up retail spaces, mobile street vendors, and food trucks through an event permitting program.

Nightlife

State Street's nightlife is a critical component of the corridor's vibrancy and economic vitality. The design supports welcoming nighttime activity through physical design and operational protocols.

Public safety authorities may authorize temporary closure of specific blocks during peak nighttime activity to enhance pedestrian safety and support public events. The bollard system enables block-by-block closures as needed, and the nighttime operating hours (after 10 p.m.) allow vehicles for delivery and service access without creating conflict with pedestrian-priority daytime hours.

Blocks with significant nightlife, such as those in the Entertainment District with lively bars and restaurants, may operate differently to encourage safe behavior, potentially restricting vehicle traffic until after nightlife closes. This operational flexibility is a key advantage of the retractable bollard system, which can be configured by the Police Department in real time as conditions require.

Lighting design, comfortable seating, and a welcoming public realm support safe and pleasant nighttime use. Pedestrian-scale lighting and crosswalk illumination create a nighttime environment that feels safe for a variety of users.

Future Housing Opportunities

The City of Santa Barbara has planned for 8,001 new housing units by 2030 under its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The downtown core, where services, amenities, and higher density zoning already exist, should accommodate a significant share of this growth, with an expectation and support for 1,000–2,000 new units in the Master Plan area.

Key redevelopment opportunities include the Paseo Nuevo Mall, which could yield over 100 units, and City-owned downtown parking lots, which offer potential for housing at a range of income levels. Redevelopment of City controlled sites can bring a substantial increase in housing downtown, adding residents and daily activity to the heart of the corridor. Utility infrastructure upgrades should be coordinated with the State



Street design to support anticipated residential and commercial growth, with the goal of expanding capacity proactively. With additional housing units and higher-intensity downtown use, public transit and bicycle infrastructure connecting to other areas of the City becomes critical. Investment in bicycle infrastructure, transit circulation, and pedestrian connectivity directly supports the goal of reducing vehicle traffic that would otherwise accompany significant housing growth.

The State Street Master Plan is designed to support increased housing capacity

Economic Development

State Street is the foundation for economic health in Downtown Santa Barbara. The State Street design supports economic development through physical improvements, programming, and operational frameworks that attract visitors, support existing businesses, and create new economic opportunities.

Expanded outdoor dining capacity, through elimination of parklets and creation of new patio space where feasible, increases restaurant seating and vibrancy along the street. Programming and design that attracts families, older adults, and visitors of all backgrounds expands the audience for Downtown, driving more foot traffic to businesses throughout the corridor.

Low or no-cost amenities, including public seating, art, fountains, play elements, and public events, make State Street accessible to a wide range of



economic backgrounds and remove barriers to engagement with the street. Making permitting easier for small performances, street performers, and pop-up activity invites a broader economic and cultural spectrum of visitors. Mobile street vendors, food trucks, and pop-up retail spaces could bring new activity and entrepreneurial energy to the corridor.

By expanding the range of activities, amenities, and audiences that the street supports, the State Street Master Plan design creates the conditions for a resilient downtown economy that can adapt to the changing nature of retail, hospitality, and civic life.



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6 IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the State Street Master Plan is a long-term endeavor that will require sustained investment, decisive leadership, and ongoing community engagement.

Throughout its history, Santa Barbara has demonstrated the ability to imagine the city it wants to be and bring those visions to life. This Implementation chapter establishes the tools, strategies, and next steps needed to advance the State Street Master Plan vision.

CAPITAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSTRUCTION

A range of factors will influence capital costs for construction of the State Street Paseo, including phasing decisions, tree planting and stormwater management systems, pavement material selections, and utility coordination.

Phasing and Construction Scope

Construction benefits from economies of scale. Completing the redesign in fewer, larger phases reduces mobilization costs, improves materials and labor efficiency, and limits the temporary construction infrastructure required at each stage. Inflation will also increase costs for phases deferred further into the future, reinforcing the value of moving efficiently from planning to construction.

Stormwater and Subsurface Water Storage

The Master Plan calls for underground soil cells beneath the pedestrian zones to support healthy, long-lived street trees. Best practices require a minimum of 800 to 1,000 cubic feet of uncompacted soil per tree to support root growth. Soil cells also support stormwater infiltration and water quality treatment. While more expensive than

traditional landscape planters or bioretention facilities, these systems are essential to realizing the Master Plan's tree canopy goals, including shading 70 percent of impervious surfaces, and enabling the flexible plaza spaces that define the Civic and Commercial District.

An alternative stormwater compliance program would provide a path for redevelopment projects to meet the City's post construction storm water requirements off-site. Under an in-lieu fee program, the City could construct a centralized storm water management project, which developers could choose to buy in to, rather than installing stormwater control measures individually on each parcel. While a significant upfront capital investment, this type of project could help catalyze housing development downtown and provide a flexible pathway for business and building owners to comply with stormwater requirements.

Pavement Materials

The Master Plan calls for a durable, permeable pavement palette consistent with Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial architectural heritage. High-quality materials, such as concrete unit pavers, natural stone, or brick, in a cohesive pattern, elevate the pedestrian experience and reinforce the corridor's distinctive character. The Civic and Commercial District (700–900 blocks) is intended

to use a differentiated paving material to create a stronger sense of place at the heart of downtown. These materials carry higher upfront costs than cast-in-place concrete but offer long-term durability and aesthetic consistency with the El Pueblo Viejo historic district.

Utility Coordination

Construction of the State Street Paseo provides a critical window to upgrade aging underground utilities, including water, sewer, storm drain, electrical, gas, and telecommunications, concurrently with street reconstruction. Coordinating with utility providers during construction reduces long-term disruption to businesses and prevents future street cuts. Strategic placement of empty conduit and consolidation of compatible utilities into a joint trench (utilidor) will simplify future maintenance. An alternatives analysis should be pursued during design to evaluate the feasibility of relocating utilities to Anacapa and Chapala Streets, which would reduce future service disruptions on State Street.

Overall Estimated Cost of Project

Civic and Commercial District: These blocks are proposed to be hardscaped with minimal landscaping to maximize flexibility for events, markets, and community gatherings with a large alée of trees lining each side of the street. This is the more intensive and expensive block type, reflecting the high quantity of soil cells required for tree health and water quality management, as well as the expanded area of high-quality plaza permeable pavement.

Arts and Entertainment Districts: These blocks combine hardscaped areas with landscape, providing a softer character with extended brickwork as the sidewalk configuration.

Typical current cost per block is still being evaluated by the civil engineering team but early estimates indicate each State Street block may cost approximately \$6–\$8 million.

PHASING STRATEGY

The State Street Master Plan is implemented across three phases, each building on the last. Phase 1 focuses on near-term activation, pilot programs, planning evaluation, and critical infrastructure that can proceed with available funding. Phase 2 delivers the signature capital

improvements—the State Street Paseo reconstruction, the stormwater system, and the transit infrastructure—that define State Street for the next generation. Phase 3 consolidates gains, extends improvements to the full corridor, and establishes the long-term institutional and financial frameworks for ongoing stewardship.

FOCUS	PHASE 1 (YEARS 1-3)	PHASE 2 (YEARS 4-6)	PHASE 3 (YEARS 7-10)
Capital Projects	Extended sidewalk pilots; wayfinding; paseo lighting; bollard infrastructure	Civic and Commercial District (700-900 blocks) reconstruction; stormwater system; Entertainment District (400-600 blocks)	1200 block gateway; Arts District (1000-1300 blocks) reconstruction
Programming	Entertainment Zone evaluation and launch; street performer licensing; weekly markets; art installations	Annual festival calendar; arts incubator program; outdoor cinema series; business recruitment campaigns	Endowment for programming; year-round events strategy
Policy & Regulation	Zoning amendments; property maintenance ordinance; outdoor dining furniture standards; vending program; Long-range financing plan; ordinance change for development impact fees, Title 31 update	Property assessment district expansion; stormwater in-lieu fund	Parking revenue reinvestment
Economic Development	Storefront activation grants; expedited permitting; small business technical assistance	Retail recruitment; anchor tenant strategy; office-to-residential conversion incentives	Business improvement district expansion; hotel tax reinvestment
Estimated Cost	\$8-10M (city capital + grants)	\$30-50M (bonds + state/federal)	\$20-30M (TIF + private investment)

Phase 1: Activate and Stabilize (Years 1–3)

Phase 1 builds on the momentum of the short-term action plan adopted in September 2024 and pilots the design concepts that will guide the long-term reconstruction, as well as obtaining funding for the final design. The defining characteristics of Phase 1 are speed, visibility, reversibility, and financing: investments are made quickly, in the public eye, and in formats that can be refined.

Design Approach

The 700–900 blocks (Ortega to Carrillo) are the priority zone for physical improvements. The “flexible” street design, extending sidewalks so the street reads as a 20-foot zone only, can be prototyped with temporary materials before permanent reconstruction in Phase 2. Retractable bollards will allow daytime pedestrian priority (10 AM to 10 PM) with nighttime vehicle access (10 PM to 10 AM), a configuration that can be evaluated using data from the pilot period.

Key Phase 1 projects and actions include:

- » Wayfinding signage and paseo lighting improvements
 - » State Street Loop shuttle continuation and expanded service evaluation (RFP for long-term operator)
 - » Entertainment District formal launch with street performer licensing program
 - » Stormwater compliance feasibility study for 700–900 blocks (concurrent with design)
 - » Pedicab staging, electric shuttle stops, wayfinding, accessible connections
 - » Business improvement grant program launch
 - » Bollard infrastructure installation to enable safe temporary closures
 - » Sidewalk extensions in the Civic and Commercial District, either with paint or decking material similar to the pedlets on 500 block of State Street.
 - » Potential bond issuance to finance Phase 2 and 3 infrastructure
 - » Long-range financing plan adopted: expand property assessment district, hotel tax reinvestment program, parking revenue reinvestment policy; long-term financing for maintenance
 - » State Street programming endowment established (through donations, naming rights, and public-private partnerships)
- Additional transitional projects can be found in Appendix A, which could all be accomplished during Phase 1.

Phase 2: Reconstruct and Invest (Years 4–6)

Phase 2 delivers the transformative capital improvements at the heart of the Master Plan. This phase requires the largest financial commitment and the most complex construction management, but it also produces the lasting physical changes that will define State Street's identity. Phase 2 will implement a block-by-block construction sequencing strategy to keep all businesses accessible, supported by a dedicated business assistance program and robust communications.

Signature Project

The Civic and Commercial District (700–900 blocks, Ortega to Carrillo Street) will be reconstructed as a premier civic space. The concurrent stormwater system will collect runoff through an in-street network, funded in part by an in-lieu contribution program that allows property owners to buy into the shared public system rather than constructing individual stormwater facilities.

- » Civic and Commercial District full streetscape reconstruction (700–900 blocks): new pavement, tree planting, seating, lighting, additional furnishings (e.g., play elements, flexible event infrastructure)
- » Stormwater collection system (700–900 blocks): in-street capture, bioretention features, in-lieu fund program establishment
- » Entertainment District full streetscape reconstruction (400–600 blocks): new pavement, tree planting, seating, lighting, additional furnishings (e.g., play elements, flexible event infrastructure)
- » Anchor tenant recruitment strategy
- » Retail attraction incentive fund with expedited permitting program (City + DSBIA)
- » Conversion of City parking lots into mixed-use spaces, including parking and new housing units

Phase 3: Sustain and Connect (Years 7-10)

Phase 3 extends the benefits of the Master Plan to the full State Street corridor and the surrounding downtown, establishes long-term institutional frameworks, and positions Santa Barbara as a regional cultural destination. Phase 3 aligns major investments with milestone events, including Santa Barbara's existing strengths in the arts, film performances, and food and beverage.

- » Arts District (1000-1200 blocks) streetscape improvements, including pedestrian enhancements, paseo activation, new landscaping
- » Permanent additional cultural anchor(s) in place along State Street corridor (e.g., market hall)
- » Annual monitoring report and five-year plan update cycle initiated by DSBIA and City
- » Facade grant fund

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SPECIFIC PROJECTS

The following projects represent the primary capital and programmatic investments of the State Street Master Plan. Each project is cross-referenced with its implementation phase, lead agency, and primary funding source.

State Street Paseo Reconstruction (400–1300 Blocks)

The entire State Street Paseo will create a unified design that can flex between pedestrian gathering space, outdoor dining, markets, performances, and limited vehicle access.

- » Retractable bollard system: daytime pedestrian priority (10AM–10 PM); nighttime vehicle access (10 PM–10 AM)
- » Street furnishings: moveable seating, shade structures, water features, children's play elements
- » Expanded tree canopy, particularly in the Civic and Commercial District
- » Public art program integrated into paving design and key nodes
- » Phase: 2 (design in Phase 1; construction Years 4–6)

The 700–900 blocks, comprising the Civic and Commercial District, represent the highest priority for investment. This segment is anchored by Paseo Nuevo, City Hall, Casa de la Guerra, and Plaza de la Guerra, but currently lacks the evening activation that characterizes the Entertainment and Arts Districts. Revitalizing this central segment is essential to connecting the two ends of the corridor and establishing State Street as Santa Barbara's premier civic gathering place.

Two phasing options are available depending on funding:

- » Full Entertainment and Civic and Commercial District Phase (400–900 blocks): Starting at Carrillo Street and extending to the 400 block of State Street. Estimated design and construction cost: \$60 million (not including off-site drainage improvements).
- » Priority Civic and Commercial District Phase (700–900 blocks only): The recommended near-term strategy to achieve the greatest impact. Storm sewer upgrades in the 400–600 blocks may be required prior to construction in the 700 block. Estimated design and construction cost: \$30-40 million (not including off-site drainage improvements).

Subsequent phases would address the Arts District (1000–1300 blocks) following completion of Laguna Creek basin drainage analysis and construction funding.

Stormwater Compliance System (700–900 Blocks)

The 700–900 blocks of State Street currently lack a storm drain system, creating a regulatory and infrastructure challenge for new development and streetscape improvements. The Master Plan proposes a shared public stormwater capture system funded through a combination of city capital, state grants, and an in-lieu contribution program.

- » Feasibility analysis underway (authorized October 2025 by City Council)
- » In-lieu fund: businesses contribute to a shared system rather than constructing individual on-site facilities
- » Estimated cost (continuing to be evaluated): \$5–10M (system design and construction); in-lieu fund covers \$2–5M of total cost
- » The system could be expanded to include the 500–600 blocks of State Street if deemed feasible
- » Phase: 2 (feasibility in Phase 1; construction concurrent with Civic and Commercial District)

State Street Shuttle Service

The State Street Loop, launched as a six-month pilot in collaboration with Friends of State Street and Sweep Inc., provides free transportation along State Street from the Waterfront to the Arts District on State Street. Pilot ridership data, including notable accessible usage, has demonstrated demand for a permanent circulator.

- » Immediate action: RFP for long-term shuttle operator (Phase 1)
- » Vehicle type: electric shuttle, open air, or golf cart-style vehicles; pedicab program as complementary option
- » Funding: Hotel/TOT tax reinvestment; private sponsorship; MTD partnership
- » Service hours: daily, waterfront to the Arts District; seasonal extended hours for major events; evaluate frequency to ensure shuttle stops regularly with wait times under 10 minutes
- » ADA accessibility standards required for all vehicles
- » Phase: 1-2 (pilot ongoing; permanent program Years 2-4)

Paseo Activation and Lighting Program

State Street's 16 historic paseos are one of its most distinctive assets, intimate alleys connecting State Street to parallel streets and opening to unexpected courtyards and storefronts. This program will transform underlit, underused paseos into lively, safe extensions of the State Street experience.

- » String light installation in priority paseos (DSBIA, Phase 1)
- » Asphalt Art pavement design at key paseo entries (Phase 1)
- » Ground-floor retail and dining activation in paseo-adjacent spaces
- » Security camera network expansion (DSBIA)
- » Pop-up retail and gallery licensing program
- » Updated landscaping
- » Phase: 1-2

Storefront Activation and Business Recruitment

A proactive economic development strategy, anchored in incentive programs, expedited permitting, and targeted recruitment, is essential.

- » State Street Business Activation Grant or revolving loan program: up to \$50,000 per business for tenant improvements, facade upgrades, signage, and fit-out; administered by City + DSBI
- » Expedited permitting program: dedicated review team for new retail and restaurant projects on State Street (30-day target from complete application)
- » Pop-up retail licensing: low-cost, short-term licensing for kiosks and temporary vendors
- » Anchor tenant recruitment: housing, arts/entertainment/cultural venue in key opportunity sites (e.g., upper-floor spaces, vacant large-format retail)
- » Phase: 1-3 (ongoing)

Public Safety and Cleanliness Enhancements

Public safety is a prerequisite for economic vitality. Across every comparable plan studied, safety and cleanliness investments were prioritized ahead of or concurrent with capital improvements.

- » Ambassador program expansion: increased daytime and evening patrols on State Street and paseos, evaluate existing program and potential for program management to occur with DSBI or jointly with the City and DSBI
- » Security camera network installation and monitoring (DSBI + Santa Barbara Police Department)
- » E-bike speed regular enforcement (ongoing)
- » Coordinated outreach and services for unhoused individuals in partnership with county social services
- » Enhanced public restroom facilities integrated into State Street Paseo design with option for temporary restroom facilities to be explored and managed until permanent design is complete
- » Phase: 1-2

FUNDING STRATEGY

The State Street Master Plan requires a diversified, multi-layered funding strategy that combines city capital with state and federal grants, private investment, assessment district revenues, and new financing mechanisms. The plan's 15-year investment horizon requires building and maintaining multiple funding streams in parallel. The City currently faces a budget shortfall of \$8.7M in 2026 and \$14.6M in 2027, making early action on alternative revenue sources and grant applications especially urgent. The following table includes multiple options for funding for the State Street Master Plan.

Priority Funding Actions (Immediate)

- » Submit Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant application for State Street Paseo reconstruction by next funding cycle
- » Apply for Federal RAISE Grant for State Street Paseo reconstruction (coordinate with Caltrans District 5)
- » Initiate City Council study session on Downtown Development Authority formation and TIF financing

- » Expand DSBI property assessment boundaries and renew five-year assessment plan
- » Negotiate hotel tax (TOT) reinvestment agreement for State Street Shuttle and events programming
- » Pursue Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant for plaza and park elements in State Street Paseo
- » Establish State Street Business Activation Grant or revolving loan program fund using CDBG allocation

Downtown Development Authority

The formation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) could provide important long-term financing for this plan. A DDA can capture tax increment generated by rising property values, issue bonds against that increment, and direct capital toward infrastructure and catalytic development that would not otherwise occur.

DDA Timeline

City Council study session (Phase 1, Year 1) → Formation plan and boundary study (Year 1–2) → Hearing and Council adoption (Year 2–3) → First bond issuance (Year 4–5, aligned with Phase 2 capital program)

FUNDING SOURCE	ESTIMATED AMOUNT	PHASE	ELIGIBLE USES
City Capital Budget	\$8-10M	1-2	Streetscape reconstruction, pedlets, wayfinding, lighting
Option 1: Lease Revenue Bond/Issue Debt (Measure C, does not require voter approval)	\$40-60M	2	State Street Paseo infrastructure, stormwater system
Option 2: General Obligation GO Bond; Item on property tax bill annually to fund (Requires voter approval at future election)	\$40-60M	2	State Street Paseo infrastructure, stormwater system
State Transportation Funds (ATP)	Up to \$80M	1-2	Active transportation infrastructure, bike lanes, pedestrian safety
Federal RAISE / BUILD Grants (if available)	\$5-10M	2	Multimodal corridor, transit, major street reconstruction
Art Grants, e.g. Bloomberg Asphalt Art	\$100K	1	Public art, pavement design, placemaking
CDBG / Community Development Grants	\$1-3M	1-2	Small business support, ADA improvements, affordable retail
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership	\$1-5M	1-2	Park improvements, open space, public amenities
Downtown BID / Property Assessment District	\$1-2M/yr (ongoing)	1-3	Programming, maintenance, ambassador services, marketing
Tax Increment Financing (TIF / DDA)	\$15-25M	2-3	Infrastructure, land assembly, catalytic development projects
Hotel / TOT Tax Reinvestment	\$2-4M/yr	1-3	Tourism promotion, major events, State Street Shuttle
Stormwater In-Lieu Fund (businesses)	\$2-5M	2-3	Shared stormwater system on 700-900 blocks
Private Investment / Development Fees	\$50M+	2-3	Mixed-use development, housing above retail, anchor tenants

ACTION ITEMS MATRIX

The following matrix assigns specific actions to responsible parties, partners, timeframes, and funding sources. Actions are organized by topic area and categorized as Immediate (0–18 months), Short-Term (1–3 years), Medium-Term (4–6 years), or Long-Term (8–10 years).

Drainage Constraints

The State Street corridor drains to two separate basins. North of Carrillo Street, stormwater flows to Laguna Creek. South of Carrillo Street, stormwater flows to Mission Creek. Stormwater infrastructure upgrades must proceed from the lowest portions of each drainage basin upward to avoid backing up flows in undersized lower segments. A detailed drainage study of each basin should be completed concurrently with design development to identify required improvements, which

may include storm sewer upsizing, detention facilities, and outfall improvements at Mission and Laguna Creeks.

This drainage logic supports two principal construction phases: an initial phase addressing the 400–900 blocks (Mission Creek basin) and a second phase addressing the 1000–1300 blocks (Laguna Creek basin). Within each phase, construction should begin at the lowest point in the basin and proceed uphill.

Available Funding

Capital budgets and grant funding will determine how many blocks can be addressed in each phase. In addition to direct construction costs, phased budgets should include allocations for communications, community engagement, and direct business support for properties affected by construction activity. Pre-construction mitigation grants and during-construction stabilization grants should be considered to protect the downtown economy during each construction phase.

Planning and Regulatory Actions

ACTION ITEM	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNDING SOURCE
Adopt State Street Master Plan (final)	City Council	SSAC, HLC, Planning Commission	Immediate	City staff budget
Adopt flexible multimodal street configuration with retractable bollards	City Council	DSBIA	Immediate	City staff budget
Adopt sit-lie ordinance update	SBPD, City Administrator's Office, City Attorney's Office	DSBIA	Immediate	City staff budget
Amend zoning to allow expanded uses	Planning Commission / City Council/Community Development, City Attorney's Office	DSBIA, Chamber of Commerce, property owners	Short-Term	City staff budget
Adopt paseo activation design standards and updated paseo plan	Community Development	DSBIA, City Attorney, HLC	Short-Term	City staff budget
Adopt stormwater in-lieu fee program for 700–900 blocks	Sustainability and Resilience / City Council	Developers, property owners	Short-Term	Measure B, City budget
Initiate Downtown Development Authority formation study	City Council / City Administrator	Finance, City Administrator's Office	Short-Term	City budget, grant
Adopt property maintenance ordinance	City Administrator's Office, City Attorney's Office	Property owners, DSBIA	Short-Term	City budget
Adopt long-range State Street financing plan	Finance / City Administrator's Office	DDA Board, DSBIA	Medium-Term	TIF, assessment district

Capital Projects

ACTION ITEM	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNDING SOURCE
Sidewalk extension installation	Public Works / City Administrator's Office	DSBIA, Friends of State Street		City capital
Planter reduction, 1200 block	Public Works	DSBIA		City capital
Art installations (paseo entries, key nodes)	City Administrator's Office	County Office of Arts and Culture		Grants
Bollard infrastructure for temporary closures	Public Works	SBPD	Short-Term	City capital
Wayfinding and signage system (full corridor)	Public Works	DSBIA	Short-Term	City capital, BID
Paseo string lighting (priority paseos)	DSBIA	Property Owners, City	Short-Term	BID assessment
State Street Paseo reconstruction design (400–1300 blocks)	Public Works / Moule & Polyzoides / City Administrator's Office	SSAC, HLC, DSBIA	Short-Term	City capital; design fees
Stormwater system design (700–900 blocks)	Public Works	Engineers, property owners	Short-Term	Stormwater fund
Chapala Street bicycle facility (construction)	Public Works	Caltrans D5	Long-Term	ATP, City capital
Grand Paseo reconstruction (construction)	Public Works (design-build)	DSBIA, businesses, RTD/MTD	Medium-Term	GO bonds, RAISE, TIF
Stormwater system (construction)	Public Works	Property owners (in-lieu)	Medium-Term	City
400–600 block Entertainment District reconstruction	Public Works	DSBIA, property owners	Medium-Term	GO bonds, TIF
Arts District (1000–1200 blocks) streetscape	Public Works	Neighbors, Businesses, DSBIA	Long-Term	TIF, City capital
Gateway improvements at northern terminus	Public Works	DSBIA, community	Long-Term	CDBG; City capital
Utility relocation analysis	Public Works	Property and business owners, other City Departments	Short-Term	City capital

Economic Development and Programming

ACTION ITEM	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNDING SOURCE
Launch Business Activation Grant program or revolving loan program	City Administrator's Office	Chamber of Commerce, DSBIA	Immediate	CDBG; City budget
Establish expedited permitting program for State Street	Community Development/ City Administrator's Office	Public Works, Sustainability and Resilience, Fire Departments	Immediate	City staff budget
Issue RFP for long-term State Street Shuttle operator	City Administrator	MTD, Friends of State St., DSBIA	Immediate	TOT reinvestment. City capital
Establish Entertainment Zone programming calendar	DSBIA	Arts orgs, event producers	Short-Term	BID, sponsorship
Develop pop-up retail licensing program	City Administrator's Office	Community Development and Parks and Recreation Departments	Short-term	City staff budget
Conduct tenant recruitment	City Administrator's Office	Property owners, brokers, DSBIA	Short-Term	City budget, TIF
Launch State Street Retail Attraction Incentive Fund	City Administrator's Office	DSBIA, DDA (when formed)	Medium-Term	TIF, City budget
Develop State Street programming endowment	City Administrator's Office	Donors, City Departments, Friends of State Street	Long-Term	Private; naming rights
Align major events with State Street milestones (SBIFF, etc.)	DSBIA / City Events	SBIFF, SB Museum of Art, Visit SB	Long-Term	TOT, sponsorship
Establish incentive program for local companies to open storefront along State Street	City Administrator's Office	DSBIA, DDA (when formed)	Medium-Term	TIF, City budget
Establish a robust economic development team within the City organization	City Administrator's Office, City Council	DSBIA, Chamber of Commerce	Medium-Term	City budget

Safety, Maintenance, and Stewardship

ACTION ITEM	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNDING SOURCE
Expand and/or maximize ambassador program	City Administrator's Office/DSBIA	SBPD	Immediate	BID assessment, City budget
Expand security camera network (paseos and corridor)	DSBIA / SBPD	City IT	Immediate	BID
Continue enforcement of e-bike ordinance on State Street and begin vehicle speed enforcement on State Street	SBPD	Traffic Engineering	Short-Term	General Fund
Coordinate homeless engagement	City Administrator's Office	County HHS, nonprofits	Short-Term	HUD, County, City
Establish maintenance standards for State Street	City Administrator's Office	DSBIA	Medium-Term	BID; City O&M budget
Implement annual State Street monitoring report (pedestrian counts, sales tax, vacancy rates, event attendance)	City Administrator's Office, Finance	Other City Departments, DSBIA, City Council	Medium-Term	City staff, BID
Conduct five-year plan update (2031)	Community Development, City Administrator's Office	DSBIA, City Council	Long-Term	City budget
Evaluate public restroom locations along State Street and begin design phase or leverage Downtown District reimbursement program as an alternative	City Administrator's Office	DSBIA, City Council, Community Development	Long-Term	City budget

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful implementation of the State Street Master Plan requires clear accountability

across City departments, the Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association, community organizations, and property owners. The following table defines primary roles:

ORGANIZATION	ROLE
City Council	Adopts Master Plan; approves major funding authorizations; forms DDA; adopts zoning amendments; provides policy direction
City Administrator's Office (State Street Master Planner)	Day-to-day plan management; consultant coordination; Advisory Committee staff support; grant applications; interdepartmental coordination, overall project management
Community Development Department	Zoning amendments; design review; historic preservation; CEQA compliance; permitting
Public Works Department and Sustainability and Resilience Department	Capital project delivery; streetscape design and construction; stormwater; maintenance standards
Finance Department	Financing strategy; bond issuance; DDA formation; budget coordination; tax revenue monitoring
City Economic Development	Business recruitment; grant programs; incentive funds; expedited permitting
Santa Barbara Police Department	Safety enforcement; e-bike ordinance; ambassador program coordination; event security
City Attorney's Office	Ordinance updates and amendments; legal review of projects
Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association (DSBIA)	Day-to-day operations; ambassador and cleaning programs; programming and events; paseo activation; business liaison; marketing
Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce	Business Liaison
State Street Advisory Committee (SSAC) or other Advisory Group	Community advisory; plan oversight; public engagement
Friends of State Street	Community advocacy; donor cultivation; volunteer programs; pilot opportunities
Downtown Development Authority (when formed)	Tax increment financing; bond issuance; catalytic project investment; land assembly
Property Owners / Businesses	Private investment; stormwater in-lieu contributions; facade improvements; ground-floor activation
Architectural Firm / Moule and Polyzoides	Master plan document; Grand Paseo architectural design; flexible street configuration; Historic Landmarks Commission coordination

MONITORING AND ADAPTATION

The State Street Master Plan is a living document. As pilot programs generate data, markets evolve, and funding landscapes shift, the plan must adapt. The following monitoring framework will help to ensure accountability.

Key Performance Indicators

- » Pedestrian, cycling, and transit counts (daily, by block, by season): target 20% increase over baseline by Year 5
- » Business vacancy rate (target below 10% by Year 5; below 5% by Year 10)
- » Sales tax revenue (State Street corridor): target 20% above 2019 by Year 8
- » Number of events and activations per year (target 200+ events by Year 3)
- » State Street Shuttle ridership, including various transit types such as buses, smaller shuttles, pedicabs (target 50,000+ annual riders by Year 2)

- » Grant funding secured: track against targets in funding strategy
- » Business activation grant or revolving loan program disbursements and recipient outcomes
- » Construction project delivery: on-time and on-budget performance for capital projects

Reporting and Updates

- » Annual monitoring report: prepared by City Administrator's Office; presented to City Council each spring
- » Five-year plan update: 2031 update to evaluate Phase 1 outcomes, adjust Phase 2 priorities, and confirm long-term financing strategy
- » Historic Landmarks Commission: design review at key milestones for State Street Paseo design

CONCLUSION

The Master Plan begins with the Plan adoption and will follow with specific construction projects based on funding, timing of other construction projects in the downtown area, and an understanding of projects that can be accomplished in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term. Implementation as identified in the Master Plan requires the City to commit to resources, including staff time to carry out the listed projects and policy decisions as well as project prioritization. While the Master Plan adoption is the first step in realizing a future State Street and downtown core,

the vision for the Master Plan is an effort that is anticipated to continue over the next 10-20 years.

The implementation of the State Street Master Plan recognizes that transforming the corridor requires a bold vision, as well as a multi-year commitment to sequenced action and sustained funding.

Santa Barbara has the built and natural assets, the community will, and the design talent to write its own success story on State Street. This chapter provides the structure to make it happen. The next step is the first step: City Council direction on the draft Master Plan on April 28, 2026. From that foundation and clear direction, construction of a revitalized State Street can begin.