



Citizens Planning Association

COMMENT LETTERS & STATEMENTS

September 8 – October 23, 2009

This document includes:

- a. **Request for Council Deliberation of Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines** (City of SB)
9/14/09 South County Land Use Committee letter & 9/15/09 statement to City Council
- b. **617 Bradbury Ave.** (Neighbor's Appeal) (City of SB)
9/16/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to Planning Commission
- c. **Plan Santa Barbara** (City of SB)
9/24/09 South County Land Use Committee letter & statement to Planning Commission
- d. **Entrada** (City of SB)
10/07/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to Planning Commission
- e. **Hillside House** (1235 Veronica Springs Rd.) (City of SB)
10/15/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to Planning Commission
- f. **Plan Santa Barbara – Traffic Model Results** (City of SB)
10/22/09 South County Land Use Committee statement & handout to Planning Commission
& Transportation and Circulation Committee

Request for Council deliberation of the Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines
9/14/09 South County Land Use Committee letter & 9/15/09 statement to SB City Council
Statement made by Paul Hernadi (CPA Board member)

September 14, 2009

Mayor Blum & Councilmembers
Santa Barbara City Council
Santa Barbara, CA

Sent via email to:

Re: Request for Council deliberation of the Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines

Dear Mayor Blum and Councilmembers,

The Citizens Planning Association's South County Land Use Committee welcomes several recent changes in the Draft Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines. In particular, we appreciate that the September 2009 revision reflects some of our comments on the June 2009 and August 2009 versions. We believe, however, that this major planning document could greatly benefit from more attention to certain details ranging from substantive to grammatical and typographic. We also believe that the public's perusal and Council's consideration of the latest 52-page version should not have been limited to four full days of the document's availability, including Saturday and Sunday. We request, therefore, that Council decline to adopt, by reading of title only, the proposed resolution adopting the Upper State Street Area Design Guidelines and that the public be given adequate opportunity to provide input into full Council deliberation at a future meeting.

As soon as the date for the hoped-for next and final hearing is announced, members of at least one CPA committee will study the latest version then available and submit detailed comments for Council's consideration. At the present time, we would only like to highlight four areas in which, we believe, the document should be further improved before it is adopted by City Council:

1. The legislative intent of the S-D-2 building height and front setback requirements was "to prevent the volumes of traffic on State Street from exceeding acceptable limits and to limit increased air pollution, due to vehicular traffic." It is important to realize that the increased financial feasibility of large-scale underground parking was not envisioned by the framers of the SD-2 ordinance. Indeed, the newly introduced Guideline #32 points in the right direction when it suggests: "Projects with underground parking should explore opportunities to create additional open space on the ground level." But we urge the adoption of a more explicit design requirement to the effect that a considerable segment of any project's building area which is no longer needed for surface parking shall be used as landscaped open space. In the absence of such a requirement, the intent of the SD-2 ordinance could be easily thwarted by dense overdevelopment leading, precisely, to increased traffic and air pollution.

2. Air pollution is an especially serious urban design concern if we want to increase the number of people walking, biking, and residing along Upper State Street. This transit corridor features congested mid-day and PM peak hour traffic in four travel lanes and up to three additional turning lanes. The potential health gains due to working, shopping, and living in walkable urban centers must not be compromised by greatly increased risks to the respiratory system of “sensitive receptors” including children. The September 2009 Guidelines deserve praise for conveying several health-related insights about landscaping, creeks, setbacks, and other open spaces. It would be desirable to distill the widely scattered pertinent remarks into a specific guideline promoting urban design characteristics that aim to lessen the health impacts of air pollution in the Upper State Street area.
3. Concerning building heights, the SD-2 ordinance provides that a three-story building be permitted only if it does not exceed the total floor area of a two-story building “which could be constructed on the lot in compliance with all applicable regulations.” In our opinion, the final version of the Guidelines should insist on realistic calculations that subtract from the hypothetical two-story structure’s buildable lot size both (a) the square footage of all required open spaces and the square footage of the sidewalks and (b) driveways needed for adequate internal circulation.
4. Compared to the August version, the current final section of the Guidelines about “Modification Approvals” includes a welcome clarification concerning community benefits but has become unduly restrictive in its applicability to “front setback modifications to development standards” (rather than to “modifications to development standards” in general). Another safeguard against overbuilding has been removed in the September version of Guideline 24 (p. 3 - 8) which no longer says that “proposed structures over two stories [...] are expected to include benefits for the community at large, provided in quantity and quality beyond customary requirements.” Such changes between the August version (which received adequate public scrutiny) and the September version (which did not) make the proposed Council adoption “by reading of title only” problematic.

We thank you in advance for considering our input.

Sincerely,

Naomi Kovacs
Executive Director

CC: Paul Casey, Community Development Director <pcasey@santabarbaraca.gov>
Bettie Weiss, City Planner <bweiss@santabarbaraca.gov>
Jaime Limon, Senior Planner <jlimon@santabarbaraca.gov>
Heather Baker, Project Planner <hbaker@santabarbaraca.gov>

PH:nk

617 Bradbury Ave. (Neighbor's Appeal)

9/16/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to SB City Planning Commission

16 September 2009

Chair Larson & Commissioners
Planning Commission
City of Santa Barbara, CA

Sent via email c/o: PCSecretary@santabarbaraca.gov

RE: Appeal of 617 Bradbury Ave.

Dear Chair Larson & Commissioners,

The South County Land Use Committee of the Citizens Planning Association would like to express its **support of the appeal** before you on September 17 regarding the proposed project at 617 Bradbury Ave. We would like to point to the following concerns, in particular.

1. The matter of **neighborhood compatibility** has not been adequately addressed.
 - A) The proposed project is not in keeping with its surrounding neighborhood.
 - B) The building would be built without adequate setbacks (except front setback). (See section 2 below for more on this matter.)
 - C) Historic aspects of the neighborhood have not been considered.
 - D) The height would be way beyond the neighbors', which would impact views, and the roof would be flat.
 - E) The size of the project is not in keeping with the size of neighboring buildings.
- 2) This project requires **modifications** if it is to be built as proposed. Why should it not have to adhere to current guidelines? It should be built to current standards and not require modifications. As the appellant has pointed out, "The primary purpose of modifications is to prevent unreasonable hardship for a homeowner or developer when an existing, non-conforming feature is part of or is accommodated by a project. In the proposal for 617 Bradbury, the project area is essentially a vacant lot [...]. There is no reason to grant a modification when there are no barriers to complying with the zoning ordinance."

As the appellant has stated in her letter to you dated July 25, 2009, the SHO's justification for granting a modification on setbacks disregards the language and intent of the Zoning Ordinance, section 28.21.081.A. The project applicant is required to provide a minimum amount of setback for private outdoor living space, open space, and common open area. Granting a modification that eliminates these setbacks is not acceptable.

We urge your commission to make sure that these concerns, and the other concerns expressed by the appellants and neighbors, are adequately addressed and that appropriate relevant changes are made to the project prior to its approval.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Naomi Kovacs
Executive Director

Plan Santa Barbara

9/24/09 South County Land Use Committee letter & statement to SB City Planning Commission
Statement made by Paul Hernadi (CPA Board member) & Mary Louise Days (Board member)

September 23, 2009

Chair Larson and Commissioners
Planning Commission
City of Santa Barbara

Sent via e-mail to: PCSecretary@SantaBarbaraCa.gov

Dear Chair Larson and Commissioners:

The Citizens Planning Association's South County Land Use Committee recognizes that staff has made impressive progress in two crucial areas of the Plan Santa Barbara. At the same time, we wish that the public had been given more time to study the 106-page document under review tomorrow. We request that a deadline be set for submitting additional comments about both the Housing Element and the Adaptive Management Program for your full consideration.

In the present highly selective commentary, we can only focus on a few details which mainly relate to the Adaptive Management program:

- (A) We believe that the monitoring of growth should be explicitly coordinated with the monitoring of changes in resource availability -- for example, whether sufficient funds have been appropriated to enhance public transportation, to increase sewer capacity, or to improve the quality of recycled water. As for desalination, we support the Water Commission's recommendation not to consider the now dormant plant as contributing to the "base line" of available water resources since no funding allocation has been made for its very costly refurbishing and subsequent operation.
- (B) We applaud the emphasis on community design that encourages healthy lifestyles. The walkable proximity of schools and residences to sources of healthy food, to public transportation, and to parks and other open spaces will serve as fine indicators of the city's efforts to help stemming the nation-wide "epidemics" of obesity and related health problems. Similarly quantifiable indicators are needed, however, for safeguarding against the nation-wide spread of asthma and other respiratory, as well as cardiovascular, diseases associated with traffic-generated air pollution. If we want to increase the number of people walking, biking, and residing in the urban core and near transit corridors, we must monitor the air quality in those congested areas of particularly harmful stop-and-go traffic so that we can measure our progress toward a healthier community design achieved through generously landscaped building setbacks and other open spaces.
- (C) Some aspects of the proposed monitoring are unduly restricted to the city when, in fact, the attainment of the city's stated goals heavily depends on regional developments. For example:
 2. Conclusions drawn from ascertaining the "annual gasoline and diesel purchase in the city" or from estimating the "annual vehicle miles traveled by Santa Barbara residents" (see Exhibit H, p. 1) will not reflect the full extent of green house gases generated in the city. After all, city residents often

purchase some of their fossil fuels outside the city and the pollution generated by the daily influx of many thousand nonresidents (commuters, shoppers, visitors, medical travelers, etc) will not be captured by those indicators.

3. Upper State Street will continue to serve as one of the City's few connecting routes, via Hollister Avenue, to and from Goleta and the unincorporated Eastern Goleta Valley. New residential and commercial developments in those areas will thus join their Santa Barbara counterparts as significant generators of new traffic and should be included in the monitoring of the City's road capacity. Furthermore, we note that the present staff report pays insufficient attention to the already very high number of Average Daily Trips in Upper State Street between Highway 101 and De la Vina Street. For example, Exhibit I makes no mention of the uptown business district on pp. 14-15 where the relatively low ADT of 17,320 is listed for State St. between Alamar St. and Mission St. as one of seven "selected street segments." By contrast, the comprehensive "Upper State Street Traffic, Circulation, and Parking Study" of February 2007, p.8, acknowledges 32,000 vehicles as the daily traffic volume just east of Las Positas Road; it also states that the Average Daily Trips (ADT) on "State Street west of Las Positas Road generally range from 24,400 to 30,800 vehicles per day."

4. Our next and final comment addresses the topic of historical preservation whose significance remains largely unrecognized in the 106-page staff report. You will probably recall the public concern about the shut-gun wedding whereby "Historic Resources" and "Community Design" were forced into a single Element in the proposed new structure of the General Plan. Many of us feared that such an unholy union would result in the unequal treatment of the two spouses. Those worries will prove to have been justified unless the next iterations of both the Housing Element and the Adaptive Management Program undertake to remedy the situation. We request that the city grant a "divorce" or afford equal treatment to the "spouses" by monitoring the progress (if not indeed the regress) of historical preservation in Santa Barbara. At least two issues raised in our previous communications would lend themselves to quantification:

- (a) The annual ratio between the respective numbers of demolition and rehabilitation or adaptive re-use could be easily established, and
- (b) the impact of the de facto transformation of historically established single-family neighborhoods into more crowded R - 2 zones could be monitored by traffic counts and by resident surveys about the number of vehicles per city block that cannot be parked on site.

The environmental superiority of adaptive re-use (over demolition) and of the current system of metering water, gas, and electricity for separate billing to individual customers (over the proposed shift to the potentially waste-inducing joint billing to the primary and secondary units) hardly needs to be pointed out.

We thank you in advance for considering our input.

Paul Hernadi, for the CPA South County Land Use Committee

Entrada

10/07/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to SB City Planning Commission

Santa Barbara City
Planning Commission
October 7, 2009

RE: Substantial Conformance Determination (SCD) for Changes - Entrada Project

The South Coast Land Use Committee of Citizens Planning Association has some concerns with the changes to this project. However, we would urge you to support at a minimum the imposition of all of the Conditions for the SCD as put forth in the October 1, 2009 Staff Report on pages 10 and 11. We believe that the condition requiring a bond with a date certain for meeting pre-determined timelines is an absolute necessity.

Cathie McCammon
Acting Chair, South Coast Land Use Committee of Citizens Planning Association

Hillside House (1235 Veronica Springs Rd.)

10/15/09 South County Land Use Committee letter to SB City Planning Commission

October 15, 2009

Peter Lawson, Associate Planner
-and- Chair Larson & Commissioners
Planning Commission
Santa Barbara, CA

Sent via email to: Peter Lawson, Associate Planner <PLawson@SantaBarbaraCA.gov>
Planning Commission Secretary <PCSecretary@SantaBarbaraCA.gov>

RE: Hillside House (1235 Veronica Springs Rd.) – EIR Scoping

Dear Mr. Lawson, Chair Larson & Commissioners,

The Citizens Planning Association's (CPA) South County Land Use Committee met on October 5th and discussed the land use issues relating to the Hillside House project. We are deeply concerned what happens in the Las Positas Valley, often described as "the lungs" of Santa Barbara, which affects not just the immediate area. Any development in and affecting the Las Positas Valley must undergo the highest scrutiny. The committee voted to have on record for the Scoping Hearing these considered concerns.

At the outset, we want to emphasize our highest respect for the work of Hillside House. Our concerns are land use and planning issues, related to the Las Positas Valley as a whole, including the effects any new or increased development may have. Our primary concerns are as follows:

Economic Feasibility of the Project

The economic feasibility of this project is of great concern and we recommend there be an independent study. This project was proposed, with the same density, several years ago. The economy of the county, as well as the city, has changed substantially since then. Is this project fiscally feasible? This needs to be ascertained through an independent study.

Examination of the Total Las Positas Valley Environs

The total Las Positas Valley environs needs to be examined. Considerations should be:

- The physical constraints of the steep slope and the creek;
- The presence of two retirement homes, Valle Verde and Vista del Monte, along with their hospital facilities;
- The private residences (single family homes, duplexes, condos, and apartments) in the area;
- The uncertain future of Earl Warren Showgrounds and associated traffic effects;

- Noise impacts on the quality of life; and, especially,
- The overall transportation/traffic issues.

To expand and be more specific:

Density

Portions of the property in question have 30- and 20-degree slopes. That being the case, the Slope Density Ordinance applies to the overall density of this proposal. How will this affect the project?

Also, Santa Barbara's policy is that density should be downtown, not at the city's boundary, as is so for this project. Because of the sometimes 30-degree slope on this property, it is unclear to us what will be the actual density on the built portion.

Our lack of clarity over the actual density on the built portion of the property is further exacerbated by the fact that the density figures provided by the applicant only include calculation of the 121 residential units. What portion of the property will be taken by the administration and common facilities to be used by the residents and visitors?

Traffic and Transportation

Traffic and transportation issues are significant and are related to our concerns about density. The number of bedrooms proposed translates into the number of people living in the project and that, of course, directly affects the traffic impacts. CEQA requires that the cumulative effects of all the projects in the area be addressed in the EIR. With that in mind, projects that need to be considered with regard to cumulative impacts in the Hillside House EIR include:

- The Elings Park addition facilities;
- The Veronica Meadows project (status uncertain);
- The Baptist Church (status unknown);
- New units for Valle Verde;
- Two properties which are currently not being considered for development, but could in the future:
 - The public school property at Palermo Drive
 - The Parks property
- Hillside House itself

In addition, the intersections at La Cumbre/Modoc, 101/Modoc, and Calle Real/Las Positas are already at Level of Service (LOS) "D" at certain times of the day, with Las Positas/Cliff at LOS "F" – and the times when these intersections are impacted have increased as traffic has increased. What will be the effects of this increased development on these intersections?

Furthermore, there has been a proposal discussed by the City to direct the southbound-101 SB Cottage Hospital-bound traffic off at Las Positas, have it cross the freeway, and continue down Calle Real to SB Cottage Hospital. If that occurs, it would really put these intersections at LOS "F".

If mitigations are proposed to address the cumulative traffic impacts, particularly at the intersection of Las Positas/101, which is the chokepoint for traffic in the Las Positas Valley, the feasibility of those mitigations (financial or otherwise) must be examined in the EIR.

Safety

Residents' safety is a prime concern. The retirement homes, single family homes, apartments, and duplex residences all funnel onto Modoc or onto narrow Veronica Springs Road, a substandard County road. The Painted Cave fire showed how critical is the need for prompt evacuation of residents of the Las Positas Valley. Of great concern is how to deal with the inevitable increased traffic caused by the residents, as well as those people servicing the residents, of an additional 121 units in this area.

Creek & Archeological Issues

Additional concerns that must be addressed in the EIR are:

- Possible effects of increased population on the creek; and
- Archaeological aspects relating to the pathway along the creek, said to have been used by Native Americans for access to the ocean.

Annexation & Charter Section 1507

Because this project requires an annexation, Council must find (by a supermajority vote) that the project is consistent with Charter Section 1507, which clearly states that "It is [...] the policy of the City that its land development shall not exceed its public services and physical and natural resources. These include, but are not limited to, water, air quality, wastewater treatment capacity, and traffic and transportation capacity." For this project, traffic (including emergency access and safety), water supply and demand, and creek impacts are especially pertinent. Indeed, the matter of water is especially concerning since the Initial Study's coverage of both demand and supply is weak.

The plans and policy consistency analysis in the EIR has to explicitly deal with Charter Sec 1507 and provide the factual basis that the project can live within the city's environmental and infrastructural resources.

Conclusion

We recognize the value of the Hillside House and their important services, and we hope they continue to work in our community for years to come. Nevertheless, due to the points raised in this letter, along with the need for an annexation, this project requires a heightened scoping scrutiny.

Sincerely,

Naomi Kovacs
Executive Director

JO,BC,NK

Plan Santa Barbara – Traffic Model Results

10/22/09 South County Land Use Committee statement to SB City Planning Commission
& Transportation and Circulation Committee

Statement presented by Paul Hernadi (CPA Board member) & Naomi Kovacs (Executive Director)

Note: A shortened print version of the statement was handed out to PC/TCC at the worksession

Good evening Chair Larson, Chair Pritchett, Commissioners and TCC Members,

I'm Paul Hernadi, speaking on behalf of the Citizens Planning Association's South County Land Use Committee. Perhaps the most important request we would like to make tonight is that you give us and other members of the public a few more days to submit written comments on the consultant's presentation we have just heard before you make up your minds about the merits and demerits of the Travel Model Results that were presented tonight.

Prior to this evening's work session, our committee discussed the very recent staff report and even more recent Summary of Existing and Future Intersection Levels of Service. Based on those documents, we have the following questions:

1. Why is the summary given in terms of LOS grades instead of the underlying quantitative terms of Volume to Capacity ratios, which are much more precise? Using the more precise measurements would have been especially important within grade C because of the city's environmentally relevant target for signalized intersections is 0.77 or better.
2. Will the occasional discrepancies between the LOS grades cited for existing conditions in the modeling project and earlier studies be explained and justified? (We will provide examples in our written submission.)
3. Is the frame of reference provided by intersection levels of service subtle enough to capture actual traffic conditions in transit corridors through commercial areas where frequent curb cuts and bus stops result in stop-and-go traffic and mid-block congestion?
4. What assumptions were used regarding the availability of sufficient funds to "expand pedestrian and bike paths" and to "support local and regional transit" under the various scenarios?
5. With regard to local transit, what assumptions were used regarding MTD, its services, and its funding?
6. There is reference to local and regional transit and TDM programs. Which, specifically, are they?
7. With regard to multi-modal transportation, exactly what kind of city "support" is intended and to what degree? Is it financial, other, or both?
8. For multi-modal transportation, what do the vague terms "somewhat," "gradually," and "substantially" actually mean? Furthermore, why do half the scenarios use quantitative terms but not timing terms, while the other half use just the opposite? Shouldn't all scenarios use – and define – both?

I'm Naomi Kovacs, Executive Director of CPA, finishing our Land Use Committee's remarks for this evening. To continue where Paul left off, we have the following further questions:

9. Where the term "gradually" is used, how closely will the timing of increased support for multi-modal transportation parallel the timing of the projected residential and commercial growth?
10. What assumptions were used to project the respective percentages of affordable housing (35%, 30%, 20%, and 40%) under the various scenarios?
11. What assumptions about the number of current commuters moving back into the city are used to justify the estimated reduction of Vehicle Miles Traveled from the "historic rate"? In particular, did the consultant consider the following two questions when estimating the traffic impacts of the various scenarios?

First: If many commuters move back into the city, how many local car trips will be generated by them and by their families (now living elsewhere), and how much *new* commuting will be generated by the demand for new *workers* (such as teachers, nurses, and service workers) created as a result of the increase in number of new residents? And:

Second: In case of multiple earners, will there be some "reverse commuting" by members of households with continued employment elsewhere?

12. Will the differential treatment of height limits and MODA size under the various scenarios not skew the modeling results given that height limits are likely to be identical for each scenario after Measure B is voted up or down and the size of the MODA (if any) will be the same for each scenario once City Council makes its pertinent decision?
13. Won't there be unintended consequences for the radical reduction of onsite parking standards in Plan Santa Barbara (and especially in the Increased Housing Alternative) in the following areas?:
 - An adverse impact on handicapped persons, and what appears to be the violation of federal ADA law in at least one of the scenarios (the Increased Housing Alternative) if not more;
 - An adverse impact on businesses and tourism;
 - An adverse impact on the salability of new residential and commercial units which have either reduced or no parking provided for residents and/or guests; and...
 - An adverse impact on traffic (since drivers will likely have to circle blocks and slow down in search of available curbside parking).

We appreciate this opportunity to ask these questions and your consideration of them. We further appreciate the chance to elaborate on our comments in a written submission in the next day or so.

Thank you.

PH:nk,jo