



# City of Santa Barbara

## PLANNING COMMISSION

### MINUTES

### AUGUST 12, 2021

1:00 P.M.

This Meeting was Conducted Electronically  
[SantaBarbaraCA.gov](http://SantaBarbaraCA.gov)

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Deborah L. Schwartz, Chair  
Gabriel Escobedo, Vice Chair  
Roxana Bonderson  
Jay D. Higgins  
Sheila Lodge  
Barrett Reed  
Lesley Wiscomb

#### STAFF:

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney  
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner  
Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary

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#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Schwartz called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

#### **I. ROLL CALL**

Chair Deborah L. Schwartz, Vice Chair Gabriel Escobedo, Commissioners Roxana Bonderson, Jay D. Higgins (until 3:00 p.m.), Sheila Lodge, Barrett Reed, and Lesley Wiscomb

Absent: None.

#### **STAFF PRESENT**

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney  
Renee Brooke, City Planner  
Daniel Gullet, Principal Planner  
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner  
Megan Arciniega, Project Planner  
Adam Nares, GIS Technician  
William Russell, Planning Technician II  
Tony Ruggieri, City TV Production Supervisor  
Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary

#### **II. PRELIMINARY MATTERS**

A. Requests for continuances, withdrawals, postponements, or addition of ex-agenda items:

No requests.

B. Announcements and appeals:

Ms. DeBusk announced that City Council denied the appeal of 2 S. Quarantina Street and upheld Planning Commission's approval of the project.

Ms. Brooke announced Susan Reardon, the City's Staff Hearing Officer (SHO), will be retiring on August 19<sup>th</sup> and Ellen Kokinda will be taking over for Ms. Reardon as SHO for the foreseeable future.

C. Comments from members of the public pertaining to items not on this agenda:

Public comment opened at 1:06 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed.

Written correspondence from Allied Neighborhoods Association, Sascha Anya, and Richard Yates was acknowledged.

### III. NEW ITEM

A. **ACTUAL TIME: 1:04 P.M.**

**630 CHAPALA STREET, 25 W. ORTEGA STREET AND 17 W. ORTEGA STREET;  
ZONE: M-C (MANUFACTURING-COMMERCIAL); LAND USE DESIGNATION:  
COMMERCIAL/HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL/PRIORITY HOUSING OVERLAY;  
APN: 037-131-001, -002, -022; PLN2021-00189; APPLICANT/OWNER: TOM MEANY  
& MARY REICHEL MEANY/GRETA CLAIRE MEANEY REVOCABLE TRUST**

The proposal is for construction of a new three- and four-story mixed-use development. The project includes 5,119 square feet of commercial space and 31,617 square feet of residential space consisting of 39 rental units proposed under the Average Unit-Size Density (AUD) Incentive Program. A voluntary lot merger between 630 Chapala Street and 25 W. Ortega Street is proposed, as well as an ingress/egress easement with 17 W. Ortega Street. In order to effectuate the proposed easement, the demolition of a 1,102-square-foot storage building on 17 W. Ortega Street is also requested. The existing sandstone wall separating 25 W. Ortega Street and 17 W. Ortega Street would be reconstructed as a privacy wall along the south property line. The proposed density on the 27,492-square-foot merged site is 63 dwelling units per acre. The project requires Concept Review by the Planning Commission (SBMC §30.150.060), as well as a Community Benefit Height Exception (SBMC §30.140.110.B) to allow the project to exceed 48 ft. in height (50 ft. 11 in. proposed).

Megan Arciniega, Project Planner, gave the Staff presentation.

Tony Meaney, Architect, gave the Applicant presentation.

Public comment opened at 1:39 p.m., and the following individuals spoke:

1. Linda Honikman
2. John Campanella

Public comment closed at 1:45 p.m.

Written correspondence from Bob Stout & Dawn Manolakos, Vijaya Jammalamadaka (League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara), Katie Peters, Kelli Peters, Greta Meaney, Alex Hacker, The Novakovic Family, and Kirby was acknowledged.

**Commissioner comments:**

Commissioner Higgins:

- Congratulates the applicant and his family for providing the Commission with a regulatory unicorn which he believes is a project without parking.
- After hearing from the green-building community, housing and pedestrian advocates, believes that we ought to be okay with providing housing without required parking when it is located Downtown because it can rely on the unused parking in the evenings.
- Can make the findings for the height exception because not providing parking inherently reduces the price on the market.
- Has heard from developers that there is an added price associated with a unit that comes with parking and since this project doesn't, it should drop the price.
- Wishes the applicant the best of luck and hopes to see it built as soon as possible.

Commissioner Wiscomb:

- Appreciates the presentation made by Ms. Arciniega, especially the Process Steps slide.
- Likes the scale of the 4-story element because it is small and screens the elevator tower from the street.
- Believes that the project is thoughtfully designed, considers it a lovely project, and believes it will be an asset to the community.
- Would like there to be more than the 39 required spaces for bicycle parking since more projects are moving away from providing car parking and this being a test project, the infrastructure and accommodation of people, particularly those who will live in the two-bedroom units that might have two bikes, needs to be solidified.
- Believes there is a need to develop infrastructure for electric and electronic shifting bicycles and would like to see that incorporated in the project.
- Appreciates the solar installation and the no gas appliances.
- Agrees with Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) on the need for some landscaping in the driveway and parking area.
- Concerned about what is going on with the bike path along Ortega Street that Staff has said will be developed in 2022, but hopes that the applicant works with Staff to develop it appropriately.
- Able to make all four findings for the exception to the height limitation without any difficulty.

Commissioner Reed:

- Finds the Ortega frontage in compliance with Pedestrian Master Plan and thinks it is exciting that someone is already thinking about right-of-way improvements.
- In the context of what is happening with the State Street and Downtown planning efforts, would like to comment to Staff and HLC to consider pumping the brakes

on any bike improvements on the zero blocks and really integrate and incorporate these improvements into the plan that is under consideration and hopes that applicants, such as Mr. Meaney, can take advantage of that.

- Believes that sidewalk widening in a public promenade is spectacular.
- Would love to see more bike parking since the residents will almost entirely rely on bikes for transportation.
- Loves Commissioner Wiscomb's suggestion about electrifying the bike storage areas for charging and considering other alternatives for transportation.
- Exciting that this is one of the first projects to take advantage of the parking maximum.
- Loves the first floor enclosed patios with historic sandstone being relocated to the south side and hearing more about the live-work units and the reuse of that incredible building.
- Finds that the covered patios are fantastic
- Would really stress the importance of residential pedestrian access alongside the vehicle ingress and egress and making that accommodating, safe, and practical.
- In terms of apartment studios 101, 102 and the two bedroom at 107, it would be great to see some private patio space there and a reconfiguration of the project to accommodate if possible.
- Looking at apartment 108 and its close proximity to the trash facility, would like to see if there is a way to move the trash to an alternate location so it doesn't interfere with commercial, residential, or public views.
- Finds the elevations to be fabulous.
- Believes this is a cool thing for a legacy family and legacy project.
- Can make the findings for height exception.
- Would like to note that the Planning Commission is limited from considering additional affordability in terms of making this height exception.

Commissioner Bonderson:

- Commends Ms. Arciniega for providing the City process slide and would like to ask City Staff to regularly provide this slide in their presentations because it assists the Planning Commission with staying on task and helps the public follow along with what the Commission is required to do and their limitations.
- Finds that the project fits the need that has been clearly demonstrated and that it is a beautiful way of adding housing to the City's urban fabric.
- Appreciates the loggias and believes that it is a wonderful way of bringing in some Santa Barbara history and encouraging attention to detail for the pedestrian experience.
- Believes that HLC made several interesting comments in terms of size, bulk, and scale and that Mr. Meaney was very successful in managing and returning with beautiful solutions that were appropriate and thoughtfully designed.
- Appreciates the elevations, especially the Chapala elevation with providing some beauty on that block.
- Finds that the private outdoor space/open space provided for the residents has been thought through and looks like a very beautiful place to live.

- Believes that the applicant has resolved the difficulty of appropriately bringing air and light into each space of the very high density project with the articulation of the elevations and the openness in the hallways, the bridge, and exterior elevations with the balconies.
- Commends the design and the architect because this is the first project that has really knocked it out of the park.
- Suggests adding an accessible residential parking space as a nice amenity for residents who may need an accessible parking spot on either a temporary or permanent basis.
- Would like to support the idea of increasing the regular and electrical bicycle parking spots.
- Hopes that the introduction of housing doesn't endanger nightlife and would like to remind the Commission that people have the choice where they choose to live.
- Believes that this is a wonderful project that sets a precedent for more of these and can make the findings for the height exception.
- Wishes the Commission could see more neighboring property owners working together to accomplish projects.

Commissioner Escobedo:

- Would love if the Slide 5, Process Steps, was in as many Staff presentations as possible.
- Commends Ms. Arciniega on her presentation and believes it was clear and easily digestible for the Commission and the public.
- Believes that this is a very thoughtful project and enjoys the fact that it is built for the pedestrian.
- Believes that it will be interesting when this project is built being the first project with no parking.
- Believes that this is a gorgeous building and that it's going to be a very beautiful addition to the Downtown area.
- Supports adding more bike parking and having the electric bike infrastructure in the bike parking storage area.
- Would like to see battery storage if possible because it makes sense for the City since the City is susceptible to Public Safety Power Shutoffs or losing energy due to wildfires.
- Can make the findings for the height exception.

Commissioner Lodge:

- Agrees with colleagues on the overall design, particularly likes the arcades and the paseos.
- Reminds the Commission that this is not the first project without car parking.
- Tenants should be advised of possible noise disturbance so that they are fully informed.
- Cannot make the finding that the additional height is necessary for the project.
- As of last April, there had been 639 units proposed or built within 45 feet and the architects were complaining about not being able to build projects within 45 feet,

but down the street the project at 414 Chapala Street is four-story and within 45 feet.

- Believes that the project has a very attractive design and that it follows the General Plan and AUD program.

Chair Schwartz:

- Appreciates the property owners for choosing a hybrid of new and adaptive re-use. Believes that it is both a way to retain part of the City's built environment heritage and is an environmentally superior approach.
- Hopes that the back and forth compromises between the applicant and HLC paves the way for more cooperation and flexibility so that we can get to the finish line and provide more housing.
- Can making the four findings for the height exception.
- Believes that improvements to the Ortega Street right-of-way are important and that this project brings the aesthetic aspect along with the pedestrian experience into full focus and will be able to lead the way for future projects.
- Believes that the City has plenty of unused parking spaces in the Paseo Nuevo parking structure and would like to see the applicant possibly forge an agreement with the lease holder of the parking structure to offer parking on a monthly basis to tenants that may need it.
- Believes that within a project that is 39 units, it's going to be a micro-community of its own, so to the extent that those who are renting the smaller units and are paying less still feel that they have the same level of appreciation as tenants and as community members. Believes that this project will strike that equitability balance in terms of the beauty of the design in the light, air, and ceiling height and commends the applicant for that commitment because that is not always the case.
- Believes that the applicant is deeply invested in the community and that this is going to be a wonderful anchor of change to the Downtown area now that the policies are in place.

**MOTION: Higgins / Escobedo**

**Assigned Resolution No. 004-21**

Approve the project, making the findings for the Community Height Exception as outlined in Section X of the Staff Report dated August 5, 2021 and finding the proposed design and improvement of the project is acceptable and the project is consistent with the City's General Plan.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 Noes: 1 (Lodge) Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

**\* THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 3:00 TO 3:10 P.M. \***

**B. ACTUAL TIME: 3:10 P.M.****GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (GMP) NONRESIDENTIAL ALLOCATION**

The Planning Commission will determine whether unused, expired or withdrawn Small Addition floor area from the years 2019 and 2020 will be retained as Small Addition floor area or reallocated as Community Benefit floor area under the City's Nonresidential Growth Management Program (SBMC Chapter 30.170).

Adam Nares, GIS Technician, gave the Staff presentation. Dan Gullett, Principal Planner was available to answer questions.

Public comment opened at 3:18 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed

**MOTION: Wiscomb / Lodge**

Approve the allocation of 26,879 square feet of unused Small Addition floor area to the Community Benefit Category and recommend automatic annual allocations to City Council in the future.

**AMENDED MOTION: Wiscomb / Lodge****Assigned Resolution No. 005-21**

Approve the allocation of 26,879 square feet of unused Small Addition floor area to the Community Benefit Category and *recommend to City Council that all unallocated Small Addition floor area automatically roll over to the Community Benefit Category each year.*

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1 (Higgins)

**IV. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA****ACTUAL TIME: 3:31 P.M.****A. Committee and Liaison Reports:****1. Staff Hearing Officer Liaison Report**

No report.

**2. Other Committee and Liaison Reports**

- a. Commissioner Lodge reported on the August 10, 2021 City Council meeting.
- b. Commissioner Bonderson reported on the August 11, 2021 meeting of the State Street Advisory Committee.
- c. Commissioner Reed reported on the August 12, 2021 meeting of the Downtown Parking Committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Schwartz adjourned the meeting at 3:36 p.m.

Submitted by,

*Gillian Fennessy*

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Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary