

9/20/2022

Mayor Rowse and City Council
City of Santa Barbara
PO Box 1990
Santa Barbara, CA, 93102

RE: State Street Interim Operations Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

Dear Mayor Rowse and Councilmembers:

The Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, from Goleta to Carpinteria, would like to express our support for the State Street Interim Operations Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations, with a few minor exceptions and suggestions. The Ad Hoc Committee has attended and held multiple meetings with city staff, downtown stakeholders, and themselves to discuss this important issue, amounting to many hours of outreach. We hope that the council will take this into consideration as they review these recommendations.

Regarding the proposed design requirements, based on our multiple meetings and discussions with State Street business owners, we feel that these requirements are generally considered fair by local businesses. Design requirements should be limited, allowing businesses to express their individuality, instead focusing on establishing quality and design standards that will ensure a vibrant State Street Promenade. These design requirements accomplish that. There are two recommendations we would like to offer. One, that there be further clarity for business owners regarding the platforms section, specifically what "the area underneath any platform must be accessible for cleaning" entails. And two, that business be given until January 1st, 2023, at the earliest, to comply with design requirements. December is a very busy month for downtown businesses, as well as a difficult time to make arrangements with third parties to make any required modifications to outdoor business facilities due to the proximity to the holidays. January is one of the quieter months, making February 1st, 2023, a much more ideal deadline. The Chamber would also like to express our continued support for local businesses complying with ADA standards, and the City's efforts to ensure compliance.

Regarding fees for In-Street Outdoor Business facilities, it is clear that staff has taken the time to develop fee options which account for the city's needs without placing too high of a burden on businesses. However, \$5 per square foot, while affordable for some businesses, may prove burdensome for others, bringing up the issue of equity. Outdoor business facilities boost individual business, but they are also a greater investment into the overall promenade. Creating a situation where some businesses can afford to utilize and provide these beneficial facilities is not conducive to a thriving State Street. The current \$5 per square foot may require further review.

Additionally, these fees are based on current costs of maintenance for the State Street promenade and the current square feet of public right-of-way being used by these facilities (with attrition considered). The Chamber suggests that the City plan to revisit these fee structures periodically to ensure fees remain fair if predicted attrition turns out to be far off from the truth, or other considerations change in the future.

Regarding portability, we appreciate the recommendation that portability not be a requirement for in-street outdoor business facilities. The two main arguments for the need for portable facilities has always been parades on State Street, and storm water management. Both of which have been addressed in the recommendations before you.

First, the requirement that outdoor business facilities allow for a clear space between the curb and the facility that is accessible for cleaning is an equitable and simple solution to this issue. The Chamber recommends that a set time for cleanings be established, similar to how street sweeping is handled.

Second, we understand that the recommendations state that if parades were to resume on State Street during the interim operations period, on-street outdoor business facilities would be required to be portable. However, the Ad Hoc committee also recommends that parades to not return to State Street during the interim operations period. In every meeting the Chamber has attended with parade organizers present, they have stated that they are happy to find workarounds that allow for parade-like celebrations while not disturbing the business facilities on the State Street promenade. The Chamber fully supports each of our community's unique parades and recognizes the important benefits these festivities bring to our entire region. However, the Chamber also recognizes that there are alternative parade routes and locations that will allow our parades and festivities to continue without disrupting the promenade, as we have already seen.

We hope that the Council will consider the thorough and extensive work the State Street Interim Operations Ad Hoc Committee and city staff has put into preparing the recommendations before you, as well as the minor suggestions we have provided, as you make these important decisions.

Sincerely,



Kristen Miller
President & CEO
Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce