

## The Future of State Street

Like many of you, State Street and our Downtown Area is one of my favorite things about our community. I often enjoy taking 30 minutes or so and walking several blocks of this iconic area, looking at the visitors and locals interacting with each other, stopping to look in the windows of retail stores along the way, checking out the restaurants and bars lining the street to see what's new and what's hot.

I thought a lot about those walks as I attended the recent gala dinner for Downtown Santa Barbara, watching the amazing video about the history of our downtown core that was created for the event. [You can check out that video here](#). I found the video very educational, helping me understand how our downtown was changed and developed into the wonderful area we now enjoy.

The current version of State Street, which we'll call State Street 3.0, (1.0 being pre-earthquake and 2.0 being post-earthquake) was developed and planned through the hard work of the citizens of Santa Barbara, who came together to decide how a declining downtown area could reinvent itself in response to the opening of the La Cumbre Mall on Upper State Street. The narrower street, wider sidewalks, brickwork, off street parking, and highlighting of the theater district are just some of the things that the transition brought us, all of which add to the destination for today's visitors, be they locals or from just about every corner of the planet.

Not all Santa Barbarans are in agreement as to the current status of State Street. Some believe vagrancy and declining retail have created an untenable situation that is draining this iconic area of its allure. Others see large crowds still coming downtown both during the day to shop and at night for entertainment as a sign of strength that we can support and build on for the future.

But the one thing that I think everyone can agree on is that it's time for the community to begin thinking about the future of State Street, and what steps we as a community need to take to ensure its health and vitality for another 50 years.

It is time for State Street 4.0.

As we go through the course of this Mayoral and Council election, it is clear that the future of State Street will be a topic of the highest priority. I believe the successful candidates will be those who don't highlight the negatives they see downtown, but who call for the community to come together and plan for the future.

Do we push for more residents downtown? Do we look to make physical changes to the area? Do we expand to lower State Street and the Funk Zone, making the area one district working together? How should the City focus its investments into the downtown area, already totaling over \$650,000 per year?

These questions and many more will need to be answered, but it needs to be done together. As with so many things in Santa Barbara, outcomes exceed our expectations when we work together to create them. What better way to ensure the long term health of State Street than by working as a community to ensure its rightful place as the crown jewel of the American Riviera?