

THE CAPITAL

"Preserving Santa Barbara's historic sites of enduring community value"

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DECEMBER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting at the Santa Barbara Carriage and Western Art Museum, 129 Castillo Street, December 11 at 3:30 p.m.

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

City meetings are broadcast live on City TV channel 18 and streamed live [HERE](#), where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

City Council

Tuesdays at 2 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). December 2, 9, 16

Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). December 4, 11, 18

Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). December 3, 17

Architectural Board of Review

Alternate Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). December 2, 8

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

County Board of Supervisor Meetings and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on CSBTv20. They are also streamed live [HERE](#) where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

County Board of Supervisors

Three Tuesdays of the month at 9 a.m. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara in the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room, 105 East Anapamu Street, 4th Floor. The second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. December 9 (SB), 16 (SM)

County Planning Commission

Three Wednesdays of the month at 9 a.m. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara at 123 East Anapamu Street, Room 17, and the second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. December 8 (SB), 10 (SM)

County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 a.m. at 123 East Anapamu Street, Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). December 8

News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

Longtime members of the Pearl Chase Society will remember years of heroic efforts by community members to work with the City to find a way to protect and preserve the house that was gifted to the city, along with the parkland, by Alden Freeman in 1931. Despite those efforts, its restoration has been deemed impossible, and in 2018 the City Council voted to demolish the house and replace it with an open-air memorial.

The City's plans for the "reimagining" of Franceschi House at Franceschi Park was one of the topics of discussion at the Riviera Association meeting on October 12. An update about the planned demolition of the historic home and plans for its replacement and memorialization was presented by Holly Garcin project planner with the City of Santa Barbara, Parks and Recreation and Kevin Dumain project architect who works with DesignARC.

They presented current plans for the memorial that include the creation of a new terrace at the second-story level of the existing house with many of its distinctive medallions placed around the perimeter of the terrace.

They also offered plans under consideration that were subject to much vocal pushback during the meeting. They include the removal of existing public restrooms and the removal of picnic tables that are well-used by workers and visitors who enjoy their lunch with a view in the public park.

The Pearl Chase Society has a responsibility to add its insights and expertise in the creation of a proper memorial on the site that will properly honor the intentions of those who donated to the preservation of the house many years ago. Members are encouraged to offer suggestions.

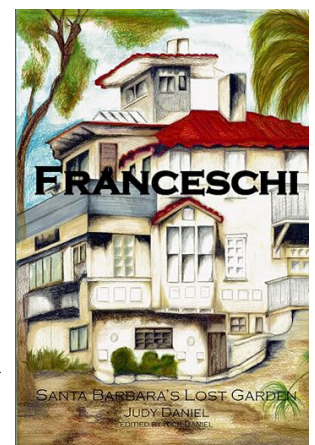
We also have concerns about ensuring the appropriate salvage efforts for the reuse, repurposing and recycling of valuable features and artwork and materials in the house. Questions arise about the stained-glass windows, the unique woodwork, the herms, the medallions and other facets of the historic property that might find new life elsewhere.

The project is scheduled to be presented to the Historic Landmarks Commission early in the New Year.

Review the city's plans [HERE](#)

For a first-hand account of the history of the house, check out *Franceschi: Santa Barbara's Lost Garden* by Judy Daniel. [HERE](#)

The hidden treasures of Franceschi House [HERE](#)



**Want to get involved, or have submissions for
The Capital? Email us at PCS@pearlchasesociety.org.**

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Please direct inquiries
and comments to:

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY
P.O. Box 92121
Santa Barbara, CA 93190-2121
For information, call
(805) 961-3938

NewsletterCheri Rae, *editor*Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

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Holiday Happenings a Hundred Years Ago: The Recreation Center Served Provided a Place to Go, Entertainment for All

By Cheri Rae

In 1925, Santa Barbara welcomed the holiday season with a sense of gratitude and a spirit renewed. Just six months after the earthquake devastated the downtown commercial district and the iconic Mission, the community was well on its way to fulfilling its promise of a "bigger, better Santa Barbara," and continuing its treasured traditions.



One of those had been established in 1919 by Pearl Chase and her friend Adele Herter, who were determined to provide a sense of spiritual comfort and a bit of joy for those in need. They established the "Annual Christmas celebration, with its tree, its carols and its exquisite tableaux, given at Recreation Center, in order that strangers within the city may have some participation in the Christmas spirit," reported *Western Woman* magazine.

The Morning Press reported about the 1925 Christmas Day festivities in greater detail: *Recreation Center will climax its Christmas week of celebration and parties by keeping "open house" all day with big log fires burning and staging a real community dance this evening.*

Greenough's orchestra will furnish the music for the dancing tonight and it is free for all who care to come—and old-time community get-together affair for everyone to have a good time.



Recreation Center has been busy all well, with Miss Bertha G. Rice and her force of workers moving about actively to supervise and take part in everything going on.

Wednesday afternoon the annual party for 260 children of the poorer families of the city was held, with ice cream

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and apples for the youngsters and their mothers. Horns were also given the youngsters so that there was no need of an orchestra. Several reels of pictures were shown, including one of the "Felix the Cat," which these youngsters always request as a part of their Christmas entertainment.

The affair revolved around a magnificent Christmas tree, which has in fact furnished the central setting for all affairs in the Center this week, including the carol singing by the Community Arts group last night. There are several other smaller trees, nicely decorated, scattered about Recreation Center in cosy corners and convenient spots and holly and the red Christmas streamers are everywhere, so that the atmosphere of cheer is apparent throughout the building.

Wednesday night a number of boys and girls from the night school who have no homes in Santa Barbara were guests of the Center at a Christmas party, and one night this week members of a gym class in charge of Recreation Center workers were entertained in the temporary Salvation Army home.

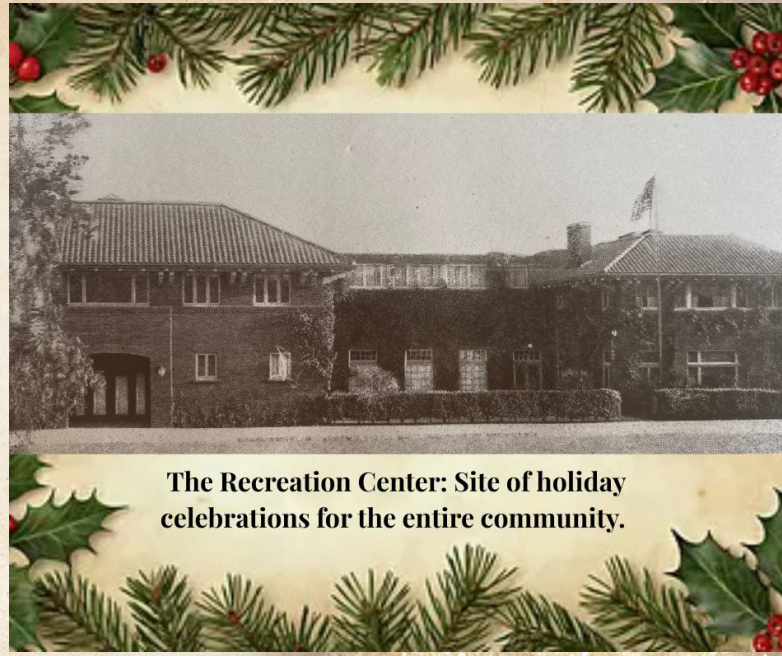
An accompanying article, was titled, "Tableaux are Witnessed by Two Thousand: Hundreds Turned Away from Recreation Center as House Fills." It described two separate performances, each seating one thousand: *With the conclusion of the performance in the center, the choir marched to the giant pine tree in the courthouse yard which was lighted with hundreds of colored lights. Here they sang Christmas carols.*

Hundreds of persons lined the sidewalks and blocked the streets in the vicinity of the huge Christmas tree and it was necessary to put several extra police officers on duty to keep the traffic moving.

The report continued with a description of the musical performances and series of tableaux that depicted "the complete Christmas story." It added, *Santa Barbara's community Christmas celebration has not become an institution and is being taken up by many communities in southern California...and has attracted nationwide attention. A number of persons in the cast last night have played the same parts since the first production.*

Those cast members were treated well, as noted in *The Morning Press*, "Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard Hoffmann gave a supper last evening in El Paseo de la Guerra for all the people in the tableaux and the Carol singers in the Community Christmas entertainment in Recreation Center. This is an annual hospitality which Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman dispense."

As Vie Obern, one of "Pearl's Girls" described it, "Every Christmas Day, Miss Chase personally planned a friendly reception at the Recreation Center for those who are alone." Pearl's vision for providing special holiday experiences and warm memories and support for those in need continued with the Council of Christmas Cheer and today as the year-round Unity Shoppe.



The Recreation Center: Site of holiday celebrations for the entire community.

I
think
that we
shall
always
see
God's gifts
upon our
Christmas Tree.
You cannot touch
them with your hand,
yet they are there
at your command:
There's joy and faith
and hope renewed; there's
laughter for a happy mood:
There's gratitude for
each new day...A time to think,
A time to pray....The Christ
idea with holy light shines clear
to make your pathway bright.
These things are yours if you can see
God's gifts upon your Christmas Tree.

Preservation Watch: State Street Master Plan

The State Street Master Plan is a long-term visioning document for the revitalization of downtown over the next 20 to 30 years. The State Street Master Plan builds on the momentum of the eight-block State Street closure driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and will identify a long-term design for State Street and downtown that transforms the right-of-way into a lively urban place.

The city is focusing on the final stages of the plan, including community feedback on the draft plan, the \$528,170 pedlet pilot project, and short-term actions like e-bike regulations and standardizing outdoor dining furniture. The plan includes key recommendations like a “Grand Paseo” promenade for pedestrians and bikes and a flexible street configuration that maximizes space for people.

The City Council Expressed Frustration with the Prolonged Process, and a Lack of Clarity in a Short-Term Plan. In a rare unanimous decision on State Street, the Santa Barbara City Council approved a plan to terminate the contract with MIG—the consultant originally hired at a cost of \$780,000 to handle the State Street Master Plan—to change course and bring in world-renowned architect and urban planner Stefanos Polyzoides, to lead the city through the final planning stages.

Council and city staff considered the consultant swap a smart move, noting Polyzoides’s reputation as dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, co-founder of the Congress of New Urbanism, and planner behind both Pasadena’s Civic Center Master Plan and the Downtown Los Angeles Strategic Plan.

While the council did not make any major changes, they unanimously agreed to end the contract with MIG, which was paid \$510,000. The city will now reallocate the remaining \$210,000 from the previous contract, plus an additional \$135,000 already set aside for State Street planning, to the new consultant, Moule & Polyzoides. They will handle the final documents, primary architectural designs, and the development of a “flexible multimodal street configuration” that will allow the City Council to decide on a final traffic configuration.

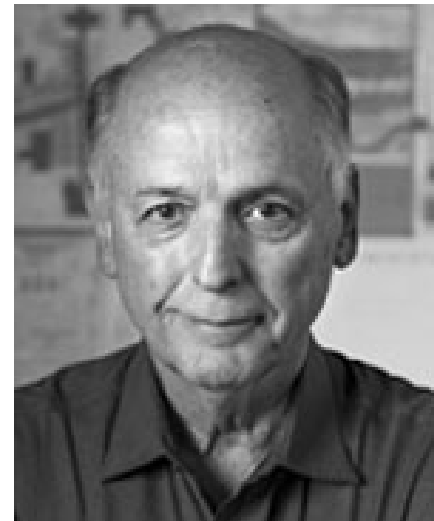
The city explained that the previous consultant did not quite meet the city’s expectations, and city administrative staff made the decision that the best option would be to replace the consultant with a team that can bring a completed draft of the master plan to the public and City Council in early 2026.

Although the council did not officially discuss the traffic plans for State Street, representatives from the two downtown organizations revealed opposing input from the Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association (DSBIA) and Strong Towns Santa Barbara, which asked community members to weigh in on the car-free versus one-way traffic debate.

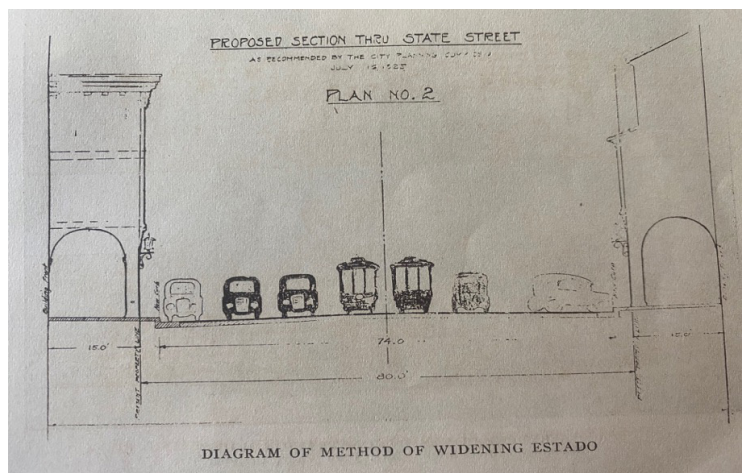
We encourage members to become involved and express their views about the plans for State Street.

The City’s information about “Create State” and the State Street Master Plan [HERE](#)

More information about Moule & Polyzoides [HERE](#)



Now in charge: Architect and urban planner Stefanos Polyzoides.



After the 1925 earthquake, there was much talk about widening the transportation and commercial corridor of State Street and renaming it “Estado.” A hundred years later, it’s a very different story.

Now a promenade (except for the bikes), in the future, perhaps a neighborhood park for increased housing downtown?