



A Message from Board President Steve Forsell

Your Upper East Association Board has been busy and diligent over the past year regarding several important issues affecting our neighborhood. Updates on several of these matters are included in this newsletter.

The UEA membership remains strong and our budget balanced but strained. We maintain a reserve in case of emergencies, are sensitive to rising costs, and are always aware of upcoming expenses. Information about a modest dues increase is included elsewhere in this newsletter.

The annual UEA meeting is set for Saturday, December 6, 2025, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary of the First Presbyterian Church, 21 East Constance Avenue. We are pleased to have Councilmember Kristen Sneddon as our guest speaker. Plan to join your neighbors for a time of fellowship and information.

Your Board continues to monitor issues that affect our neighborhood and will provide input to elected officials as appropriate. If you have issues or ideas or would like to serve on the Board, you can reach us at [sbuppereast.org/contact](mailto:board@sbuppereast.org).

Some of the current issues and other events we have been involved with this year include the proposed multi-family housing at 505 East Los Olivos Street (The Hazard property) and at 1609-1615 Grand Avenue; the State Street Master Plan; the 2025 Commemoration of the 1925 Earthquake; our Summer Garden party on July 3, 2025; and the State Street Historical Landscape Parkway. Thank you to all our board members and staff for their work this year. We hope everyone has a pleasant holiday season and a

healthy new year. Meanwhile we look forward to seeing you December 6 at the annual meeting.

Please Join Us for the UEA Annual Membership* Meeting
Saturday, December 6, 2025, 3-5pm
First Presbyterian Church (Sanctuary)
21 E. Constance Ave.
Featured speaker: Councilmember Kristen Sneddon
RSVP by November 30 to:
board@sbuppereast.org
** New members may join at the door for \$50*

Status Updates: Proposed Housing Projects for East Los Olivos Street & Grand Avenue

The Projects: Recap and Update

As many of you know, there are two enormously large projects being proposed for areas in or near our Upper East neighborhood. These projects are proposed by the same property owners using two limited liability companies and are what are classified "Builders Remedy" projects.

The first of these projects is proposed for 1609-1615 Grand Avenue on the Lower Riviera. This project proposes 53 units in a 72-foot-high building. The other project is proposed behind the Santa Barbara Mission at 505 East Los Olivos Street, but it is two to three months behind the Grand Avenue project in the city's review process.

The focus at this time is on the Grand Avenue project because what happens with it will likely set the stage for both projects. The application for the Grand Av-



enue project was deemed "complete" by the city in February 2025, and in March 2025 the city issued a "Consistency Letter" outlining 35 items that will need to be addressed before any building permit is issued. Public input on potential environmental impacts was accepted by the city through September 2025. Over 400 emails/letters were submitted by community members including a detailed letter from a new non-profit called SAGE-SB (see below). By October 30, 2025, the city will issue the scope of a focused Environment Impact Report (EIR) that is expected to be released for public review late in 2025 or early in 2026.

The project proposed for 505 East Los Olivos Street is now on a slower track for processing due to a last-minute bill introduced by State Senator Monique Limon and signed by the Governor that requires full environmental review. This proposal includes a 127-foot-high building with 270 units on a hill overlooking the Mission and Mission Creek. This eight-story building will sit atop a three-story 445-space parking structure. The EIR on this project is expected to address many issues including emergency access, archaeological resources, endangered species in Mission Creek, flooding, construction impacts, and aesthetics.

New Non-profit Created to Address These Projects

A new non-profit organization – SAGE-SB (Smart Action for Growth & Equity - Santa Barbara) – has been brought together to address both these projects. This organization is also providing input on other large housing projects elsewhere within our city such as the one proposed for Paseo Nuevo downtown.

SAGE-SB held its first workshop on September 15, 2025, with about 120 community members attending. SAGE-SB is also conducting a fundraising campaign to cover attorney's fees and the hiring of expert consultants to ensure that the city has unbiased and expert information before any decisions are made on these proposals. Its website includes information about the projects and additional resources and links.

What YOU Can Do

One or both of these projects could have a huge impact on Santa Barbara and UEA is closely monitor-

ing both. The UEA and SAGE-SB urge everyone to sign up on the SAGE-SB website. In this way SAGE-SB can indicate that it represents thousands of community members when it speaks to the city decision-makers who will determine whether these projects should be approved and built. Sign up and donations can be made at the website SAGESB.org.

Short History of the Upper East Association

By Fred Sweeney, with thanks to Joe Howell, Lisa Burns, and Bob Kennedy

The Upper East Association (UEA) has been around for a number of years, even with a hiatus during the late 1980's and 1990's. The association was formed in the 1950's when many new homes were being built on the unoccupied lots occupying many open areas along upper Anacapa, Santa Barbara, and Garden Streets.

In those early years, the boundaries of the neighborhood included the city blocks from Roosevelt School to upper State Street and from Constance Avenue/Garden Street down to Valerio Street. Many of the young families settling in those newer homes sent their children to Roosevelt School, with many of their teachers also living in the neighborhood. Several neighborhood residences participated actively when it came to sponsoring city council election forums at Roosevelt School. Longtime residents will remember the leadership of Sara Coulter in keeping the spirit of UEA alive during the lean years of the late 1990's.

The UEA was re-formed as a new non-profit organization in January 2007. In early 2010 the city adopted a new city General Plan and redefined the map of recognized neighborhoods across the city. In that context, the city recognized the 1950's definition of the upper east area but stretched the southern boundary to Sola Street to include all the blocks closer to

Upper East Association Mission Statement
To preserve and enhance the spirit and essence of this historic neighborhood and its quality of life.

downtown. This newly defined area included Roosevelt School and added the Mission and the Natural History Museum property, which by then were part of the city annexation in the 1960's.

Over the last 20 years the membership of the association has grown from a small number of households to over 240 households in a neighborhood with about 1000 homeowners. The UEA has addressed many concerns particularly at city council meetings and other decision-making bodies, judiciously using our voice when necessary. During the city's 2010 general plan update many of our residents attended several meetings regarding so-called "granny" units because of concerns about density, parking, and traffic. Later the UEA board addressed vacation rentals, the homeless vehicle parking in neighborhood streets, and the traditional use of front yard hedges to define properties. Because of the UEA participation, along with other neighborhood associations, ordinances were adopted to address the homeless parking challenge, and the area was allowed to retain its use of home-defining hedges that abound in our neighborhood. The latest challenges facing our neighborhood are ones that many beyond our area are also concerned about. Because of new California housing laws, a formidable effort is being assembled to address the two proposed exceptionally large housing projects that if allowed would destroy the very nature of our area, particularly the setting around California's Queen of the Missions.

We continue to work to meet our UEA mission of preserving our neighborhood, a recent victory being the designation of the center parkway of State Street from Mission Street to Constance Avenue as a city historical cultural landscape landmark. The UEA has become a dynamic part of our city and a voice for its residents.

History Corner

Junipero Plaza

by Michael O'Connor

Everyone on the upper eastside of Santa Barbara knows the imposing – and handsome – arched gates



that face Laguna Street and serve as an entrance to Junipero Plaza. But no one knows the name of the master mason who designed and built them or when exactly they were built. Or why they were built. A pair of smaller gates stand at the other end of the block-long Plaza, a part of the mystery that encompasses this single block of the Upper East.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Thomas P. Wood and his partner Edward Vail purchased land formerly owned by the Mission fathers from the bishop of Monterey and Los Angeles. They then carved out Junipero Plaza in the middle of this tract and laid it out as a broad street with wide sidewalks that were lavishly planted with windmill palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) originally from China. Windmill palms are known as a hardy small tree with shaggy trunks and capable of growing to 40 feet in California. Some of those palms still survive on the street.

Clearly, Wood and Vail had designs for Junipero Plaza. This part of Santa Barbara was growing into a desirable part of the small city. The railway from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara had been completed in 1887, easing travel to it. And the Crocker block, on Garden Street, was built in the following decade. The large iron gates attached to both sets of the Junipero stone gates suggest that an exclusive sort of community, like modern "gated communities," was envisioned for the wide, palm-lined street. And sure enough, three large craftsman-style houses, numbers 302, 320, and 326, were built on its south side in the next five years after the arches went up (1905 is the

best guess). On the north side the street, in 1909, the "Dibblee House," designed by Francis Townsend Underhill, was constructed in Greco-Roman style, single story, with a central interior atrium and elaborate gardens. Originally it faced on Los Olivos Street, but in 1987 the entry was changed to 333 Junipero Plaza.

Was a posh street worthy of the stone arched gates finally achieved on Junipero Plaza? Perhaps yes. Certainly the three craftsman houses on the south side are large and fine examples of early 20th century California architecture. The Dibblee house, after its about face onto the Plaza, is even more architec-

turally distinguished.

But perhaps no, not entirely. The plot on the south side, the Laguna Street end, nearest the beautiful gates, remained vacant until the late 1940's, when four humble one-bedroom cottages were built. Two of them now face on Laguna and one on Padre. The renter of the humble cottage on Junipero Plaza can still enjoy the view of a pair of the windmill palms and the largest and most distinguished pair of stone gates in Santa Barbara.

And the mystery of the builder, master mason and architect, remains.

Upper East Association
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Join or Renew Your Membership

We live in one of the most beautiful neighborhoods in the city of Santa Barbara. We invite you to become a new member* or to renew your membership in the Upper East Association. Annual dues are **\$50 per household.**

Annual dues beginning in 2026 reflect a modest increase from \$35 to \$50 per household. Like most households, the UEA is faced with rising and sometimes unpredictable cost increases. This additional

revenue will allow the UEA to continue its active engagement on behalf of our neighborhood.

***Membership is open to all property owners in the Upper East.**

Sign up here to join or renew:

sbuppereast.org/membership