



MEETING SUMMARY FORM

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Meeting Date: June 25, 2007

Plan Santa Barbara representative(s): Bettie Weiss, Beatriz Ramirez, Kate Schwab

Host Organization: Downtown Santa Barbara Child Care Meeting

Number of Participants: 14

This group is made up of employers from various sectors, responding to the expressed needs of employees for greater access to high quality child care services downtown. *The members had prepared the Downtown Santa Barbara Child Care Statement for Plan Santa Barbara at the end of this document..*

The comments provided at the meeting included:

- A subsection of the Plan should be devoted to youth and children. Will the City decide to make youth and children a priority? 100 cities have a committee on youth. Children are the future of our community. The plan should have a separate section devoted to them.
- Recognition that childcare has been in the Land Use Element since 1989.
- "How are the Children" is a traditional greeting in the Masai tribe. We as a community must always consider this, "How are the Children?"
- Employers are very concerned with the high cost of living relative to wages. Very difficult to maintain childcare workforce when housing is so expensive. Housing and childcare very expensive in our community. It is not seen as a friendly environment.
- Childcare is more of a crisis than housing, due to lack of and cost. If not addressed, the town will be seen as for "only newlyweds and nearly dead."
- Families are moving away due to high cost and lack of childcare. There is a large shortage of childcare for infants three months to two years old. Programs are completely full with waiting lists.
- Infant care with a 3-4 to 1 ratio is very expensive. If want accreditation, now requiring a bachelor's degree.
- There needs to be incentives for people to work downtown and to provide childcare downtown.
- An employer present explained that they have 60 employees in Santa Barbara (125 worldwide). Of those, locally approximately 20% had children ~ many infants. While employees have median income wages, they found childcare a problem due to a shortage of care and cost. This can result in losing good quality employees.

- One goal is for existing childcare facilities to be able to expand their capacity. Permitting for expanding existing capacities needs to be streamlined so that there is not so difficult and so that the process is clear.
- There are currently ordinances that make it difficult to develop.
- With the ending of the Redevelopment Agency there needs to be recognition that little time is left for RDA monies to be used for childcare. How can monies that are greatly needed be used for childcare.
- Concerns about action being taken by immigration agencies that result in families being deported and children being left without parents.
- Reggio's principles need to be incorporated into childcare.
- The early years are very important for childhood development and childcare really affects how child will grow and act in their teen years.
- There is not much land left to develop. There needs to be "out of the box" thinking. Need to really look at the barriers and take a strong stand with statements making children the PRIORITY.
- Childcare is an economic development issue. It is people's business and there needs to be opportunity for training. Need to look at it from a provider level and an economic business opportunity.
- There are programs that train the small childcare providers.
- There is very little support for profit childcare centers. There is no financial support. Childcare is an essential service.
- It would be helpful to have an idea of the existing inventory. It is important to evaluate where can site childcare.
- When a large project is moving forward, should consider how the building can accommodate childcare. Need childcare alternatives. A positive thing to bring childcare into the downtown core.
- The City or developers should reserve units for childcare providers.
- Need to increase the partnerships between City and County with the private sector.
- Create incentives for the public benefit such as waiving or reducing Land Use Permit Fees.
- Streamline, expedite and prioritize the LUP permit process.
- Invest CDBG funds in childcare infrastructure.
- Partner with First 5 Children & Families Commission to enhance childcare initiatives for City residents.
- Create a Childcare Development Plan that establishes and validates the City's commitment and investment in Santa Barbara's children.
- Love that Santa Barbara is a progressive City with the right resources to address childcare issues. Santa Barbara should be a model.
- The General Plan needs to emphasize nature and how to get children back into nature when the environment is becoming so urban.

Other general comments:

- Like walk ability of the City.
- Love diversity of Santa Barbara.
- Downtown parking is a problem for employees. There is never enough.

- Not enough restroom facilities downtown. Especially during events like Fiesta. Many people not informed about local business that are in the downtown restroom program. The problem is worse with tourists and foreigners.

Downtown Santa Barbara Child Care Statement for Plan Santa Barbara

From members of the Downtown Santa Barbara Child Care Employer Group

The availability of high quality, affordable and accessible early care and education services for all families is essential for the wellbeing of children, our society and our economy. Research has shown that high quality early care and education reduces children's involvement in crime, increases their success in school and supports the local economy by reducing the need for social services, providing one of the best returns on investment available. This is especially true for children with high risk factors. High quality child care also allows parents to be productive workers. Low quality or patched-together child care creates stress and worry for parents, reducing their productivity.

For many parents, child care is directly linked to social justice. Access to high quality child care is limited due to lack of financial resources or proximity of the programs to their homes or work. Some of the best quality programs are very expensive, keeping them out of reach for low and middle income parents. Many parents must include a bus ride to the child care center that is available to them, both before and after work, lengthening their day and adding stress. If we want all children to be strong, resilient, productive citizens, we must make high quality early care and education services available to ALL children.

The Downtown Santa Barbara Child Care Employer Group is a consortium of employers from various sectors, responding to the expressed needs of employees for greater access to high quality child care services downtown. We want the City of Santa Barbara to be seen as a great place to live and work, and a city that cares for and nurtures it's youngest citizens and their families. We know that child care is an essential service in creating such a community. With a strong high quality early care and education system in place, children become productive citizens, their families have the support they need and the economic vitality of the city is enhanced.

Child Care Need and Supply: In the City of Santa Barbara, there are not enough high quality child care spaces for the children of working residents. There is just one licensed space available for every four children (ages 0-5) whose parents work. There are additional families who commute to the City to work, increasing the competition for those spaces. Additionally, the quality of those programs varies, reducing even further the actual number of high quality spaces available to parents.

Increasing the number of child care spaces in the City presents many challenges:

- Because the cost of living is very high, it is difficult to attract and retain child care professionals, who typically earn low wages. This leads to empty classrooms that could be serving children, and turnover of teachers, which dramatically lowers the quality of the programs.
- The City has virtually no land available, so that any new child care centers must be created by renovating existing buildings.

- The land use and permitting processes are lengthy, costly and complicated, creating a barrier to developing new programs

We applaud the City's history of support for young children and child care. We further encourage the City of Santa Barbara, through the General Plan revision process, and in daily operations, to think outside the box when planning for child care – the challenges listed above mandate creative thinking. We as employers in the City are here to support those efforts and will work hand-in hand with the City to increase child care access and quality.

We suggest that the City of Santa Barbara consider the following when updating the city's General Plan:

Land Use Planning – maintain existing, and develop new, policies, processes and practices that encourage the development of new and expanded child care programs.

- Keep child care language in the General Plan, and enforce those requirements for new developments
- Incorporate thoughtful zoning opportunities for small child care centers in residential areas where families live.
- Streamline the process for expanding or starting child care centers, reduce fees and fast track child care projects.
- Make Large Family Child Care “by right”, or permit through a simple ministerial permit. Reduce or eliminate unnecessary regulations for Family Child Care.

Funding – There are many opportunities for expanding on the City's current financial support of child care. Some suggestions are:

- Include child care in redevelopment areas and plans
- Provide direct funding to new child care programs that start up – grants or low-interest economic development loans
- Include child care programs in the Neighborhood Improvement Project

Outreach and Economic Development – The following suggestions are just examples of ways in which the City can think broadly about child care, and sometimes include it in already existing efforts:

- Encourage Child Care professionals to work in child care programs and open Family Child Care programs in the City through efforts such as inclusion in City outreach materials, business engagement, and economic incentives.
- Encourage Small Family Child Care Programs to increase to Large, by providing incentives, through outreach campaigns, and by reducing or eliminating regulations.
- Include child care in the lists of Essential Services and Critical Workforce. Ensure that whenever privileges or incentives are awarded to these groups, child care is included

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