

# Santa Barbara Happenings



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## **Santa Barbara City Council Votes in Support of 2% Annual Rent Cap**

In a 4-3 vote, lame duck mayor Cathy Murillo and City Council voted to start development of an ordinance that would cap annual residential rent increases at 2% annually, plus the percentage change in cost of living. The potential ordinance would not apply to duplexes or single-family homes...yet.

Current State Law (Assembly Bill 1482 also known as the Tenant Protection Act of 2019) already limits annual residential rent increases to 5%, plus the percentage change in cost of living or 10%, whichever is lower.

The proposal came from Mayor Murillo in her second-to-last-meeting as Santa Barbara Mayor. Councilmembers Gutierrez, Harmon, and Sneddon also supported the 2% rent cap. The ordinance will return to the City Council in March 2022 for a final vote and will require 4 votes for approval. On January 4, 2022, Randy Rowse will replace Cathy Murillo as Mayor. Rowse has indicated he is not in support of the proposal.

Census data reveals that in the last 10 years, 388 new housing units have been constructed within the City of Santa Barbara. In that same time, 454 units of housing were taken off the rental market, generating a net reduction in the number of housing units available within city limits.

Editor's Note: Rent control causes this this kind of damage. Further limiting the amount landlords can charge in rent will force more and more property owners to sell or repurpose their properties and discourage the construction of new units, ultimately decreasing the amount of rental housing available. As Swedish economist Assar Lindbeck reported, "In many cases, rent control appears to be the most efficient technique presently known to destroy a city – except for bombing."

## **Changes to State Legislative and Local Legislative Districts**

Each decade after Census data is released, the

boundaries of our Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts are redrawn so that the districts accurately reflect the State's population. The California Independent Redistricting Commission has released preliminary maps that indicate significant changes coming to Santa Barbara County.

At the Congressional level, the local District will shift south. Currently, the 24<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (held by Salud Carbajal) includes the majority of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. After the boundary line is redrawn, the 24<sup>th</sup> Congressional District will likely include the southern portion of San Luis Obispo County, all of Santa Barbara County, and added land from western Ventura County.

The State Senate District (held by Monique Limon) is set to follow a similar proposed redistricting with even more land included from western Ventura County.

As for the State Assembly District, Santa Barbara County will likely have a new Assemblymember. Santa Barbara County is currently split, with the southern portion included with Ventura County and the northern portion included with San Luis Obispo County. Since the average Assembly District in the State will have approximately 493,000 residents and Santa Barbara County alone has 446,000 residents, the redistricting Commission decided to put Santa Barbara County in a newly formed district and pull the additional 47,000 residents from either San Luis Obispo County or Ventura County. The campaign for this Assemblymember is wide open.

On the local level, Santa Barbara County's Redistricting Commission also redraws boundaries for election districts based upon the Census data. This year, the Redistricting Commission decided on a final map that redefines the County's five supervisorial districts. The biggest changes came in the second and third districts. Isla Vista and UCSB are now in District 2. Most of Goleta and almost all of Lompoc are now in District 3.

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Santa Barbara City Council Votes to make New State Housing Laws Allowing Subdivision of Single-Family Lots Inapplicable to the Foothills

Effective January 1, 2022, Senate Bill 9 allows homeowners to split their lots zoned for single-family residences into four separate units. However, the Santa Barbara City Council voted to create an emergency ordinance making the state law inapplicable to homes in high/extreme fire areas. In the foothills, for example, the increased density would create health and safety hazards for residents if there were to be a fire due to the narrow yet crowded streets.

Additionally, the ordinance will require that any homeowner who splits their lot and rents the units must rent at least one unit at or below moderate-income levels.

The emergency ordinance was unanimously passed on December 14, 2021 and will go into effect January 2022.

### **Santa Barbara County Planning Commission Unanimously Supports New Goleta Area Apartment Project**

A proposed project consisting of a three-story, 27-unit apartment building located at 5317 Calle Real near the intersection with North Patterson received unanimous approval from the Planning Commission. The project will now go to the Board of Supervisors for review. If approved, the units would be market-rate rentals. The Commissioners also recommended that the Board of Supervisors add a crosswalk and beacon lights to the driveway of the project.

The building plans allocate 60 vehicle parking spaces with additional covered bicycle parking. Under the new state housing laws, the developers could have proposed more units with less parking. Editor's Note: Fortunately, the developers agree with us that it is not feasible to have apartments and expect residents not to have cars.

### **Santa Barbara Founders Sell Remaining Habit Burger Grill Locations**

After years of nationwide success, Habit Co-Founders Brent and Bruce Reichard are selling the last eight of their restaurants to Yum! Brands. In 2007, the Reichard Brothers sold the rest of the chain, but held on to the Santa Barbara County locations including the original Habit Burger in Old Town Goleta. The brothers bought the original Habit

location in 1980, expanded to another location in Ventura in 1996, then opened 24 locations throughout California. The sale will be effective on March 1, 2022.

Editor's Note: We love talking about our clients' successes. The Reichard Brothers had vision and commitment and provided years of great service to our community.

### **University of California Regents Refuses to Release UCSB Mega-Dorm Agreement**

In November, The Independent filed a public records request with the University Office of the President for a copy of the agreement between UCSB and Charlie Munger who agreed to donate \$200 million towards the project only if his blueprints were followed precisely. General Counsel for the University Office of the President responded that the agreement is not releasable because there is only a conceptual, preliminary agreement between UCSB and Munger.

If followed, the dormitory would be the largest in the world. Construction is anticipated to begin Spring of 2022 and conclude by fall 2025. Mesa Road and Stadium Road would be at least partially closed for the duration of those three years. As part of the project (because the dormitory would not include any parking spaces), UCSB would implement a campus-wide requirement generally prohibiting first-year students from bringing cars to campus.

Negotiations are still pending, and the project must still go before the UC Regents and the California Coastal Commission.



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