

Santa Barbara Happenings



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No Macy's by 2028 as Housing Shakeup Continues



Image: J.Molina, newshawk.com

The 31-acre site of La Cumbre Plaza will likely undergo massive changes in upcoming years, beginning with the fall of iconic department store Macy's. The future of the mall remains murky after the city of Santa Barbara was denied \$1.1 million in funding to redesign La Cumbre Plaza from the Santa Barbara County Association of Government Board of Directors.

Mayor Rowse wants to create a specific plan with developers to build 2,000 housing units on the site. In opposition, current owners of the Macy's site, Matthew and Jim Taylor want to build a separate, 700-unit project outside of the city process. Further complicating the project, Macerich Company holds a long-term lease on the mall through 2077 and the owners of the Sears building have different plans.

The rejection of the funding request by the board could be a missed opportunity as the project will be more difficult to approve as several separate projects with different owners, but it seems clear that change is coming.

New Hotel Plans Depend on State Street Reopening to Historic Traffic Uses



Image Noozhawk.com

Hotel developer Jim Knell has come out against the State Street parklets and the lack of vehicular traffic. In order to build a hotel on State Street, Mr. Knell requires facilities so that his guests can drive up, park and register like they do at other luxury hotels. The project and approval process have been controversial as Mr. Knell originally planned a residential apartment development on the same site before withdrawing because of affordable housing and parking restrictions as well as frustration with the city approval process.

The new proposal is on the same lots currently providing space for The Pressroom at 15 E. Ortega St. and Restoration Hardware at 710 State St. The proposal for a 32,799-square-foot hotel with restaurant/bar and conference rooms would go on six lots totaling more than 30,000 square feet. The Santa Barbara Historic Landmarks Commission was impressed by the hotel proposal and sent it to the Planning Commission but according to the owner, he is not going forward until vehicle traffic is restore to State Street.

City of Santa Barbara's Historic Landmark Commission Reviews 4-Story Housing Project



Image Noozhawk.com

The Historic Landmarks Commission has switched its tune from earlier in the summer concerning the multifamily housing project on the current Santa Barbara Jiffy Lube site at Carrillo and De La Vina Streets. The new proposal has 22 units, down from the original 36.

Significant changes include the building being recessed back and the design becoming Spanish Colonial. There was still opposition to the project from neighbors who believe their properties and views could be negatively impacted. Concerns about increased traffic circulation and so-called "property

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line to property line” buildings were also shared but not taken into consideration as the City referred to the reality of the new Santa Barbara. This latest step was a pre-application review so changes can still be made before a formal proposal.

City of Santa Barbara’s Planning Commission Approves 6-Unit Condo Project

The Santa Barbara Planning Commission has approved a six-unit project on the upper Eastside. The project passed on a 5-1 vote despite neighbor concerns and will create a 45-foot, six story building on a current parking lot. Santa Monica did not used to be the model for Santa Barbara but I shas become the goal of the current City Council.

The project is Spanish Colonial design and will feature 47 parking spaces and a new multi-story, lifted parking garage that will serve the project and two other units next to the site. Neighbors say the corner lot is already impacted by illegal parking and more vehicle traffic will inevitably come as a result of the project in addition to concerns about the height. The Planning Commission pointed out that views will always be impacted by building on vacant lots. The project has been scaled down in size from the first version put forward and the Commission said pedestrian circulation will improve.

Outdoor Dining Fees Approved by Santa Barbara City Council

After many months spent deliberating, the Santa Barbara City Council approved a variable design fee structure for outdoor parklets on State Street. In a variable design structure, rates vary based on design and less-permanent and smaller structures will cost less.

The fees go into effect on May 1 and rates will vary but a portable setup with a platform and no roof would cost \$4 a square foot. Structures that are not portable, have no roof, but have a platform would be \$4.50 a square foot, and structures not portable with a roof would be \$5 a square foot.

Santa Barbara Councilwoman Gutierrez Says ‘I Am Not Going to Make Decisions out of Pressure From a Party



Santa Barbara Councilmember Alejandra Gutierrez

Gutierrez surprised the council by pushing for the full council to vote on outdoor dining fees. She also helped swing Mayor Rowse’s vote to break the deadlock because of an urgent need to decide on the look of State Street. Without a decision, Gutierrez would open State Street and pushed to use the City administrator’s fee options in the vote. She spoke about how this may have lost her favor with the Democratic Party but valued the help it would give her constituents. Gutierrez doesn’t sugarcoat and won’t make decisions out of pressure from a party.

Federal ESG Investment Rules Threaten Your Retirement Savings

The Labor Department recently announced a new environmental, social, and governance investing rule. It allows retirement fund managers to choose stocks of companies based on their social and environmental issues. Retirement savings can now be used as leverage to force companies to reduce their carbon emissions, unrelated to securing the best investment return.

Two of the highest performing stocks last year were Exxon and Chevron and investors will miss out. The issue lies not with individual shareholders choosing stocks to fit their values but in trillion-dollar retirement funds injecting bias into their decisions. BlackRock, an ESG proponent, points out that since 2017, ESG funds have an annual rate of return of 6.3%, compared with 8.9% for the stock market as a whole.

There is good news as Vanguard has withdrawn from the Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative.

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