

# Santa Barbara Happenings



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## **Santa Barbara's Restriction on Rental Unit Improvement Moves Forward**

The City Ordinance Committee recently approved an ordinance that would amend the Municipal Code to allow tenants who must move out for building maintenance and/or improvement to have a first opportunity to re-rent the unit, when it becomes available again after the repairs or improvements, at their old rent increased by no more than 10 percent. The final version will be sent to the City Council for approval. It is not hard to see that this type of ordinance will mean tenants will remain in old and out of date housing because economic incentives for housing providers to fix and improve units are being eliminated (ultimately Tenants will suffer by not having access to improved and modern housing).

## **Lots of New Housing Coming. Board of Supervisors Adopt Housing Plan in 3-2 Vote.**

The County Board of Supervisors sent the 2023-2031 Housing Element to the state for approval. Once it is approved, developers will no longer be able to propose developments under the Builder's Remedy. The Builder's Remedy is a provision of the Housing Accountability Act whereby cities and counties that are out of compliance with Housing Element law are prevented from denying housing development projects based on zoning or general plan standards. The amount of housing that the state requires to be built is significantly greater this cycle. Last cycle (2015-2023) California's regional housing needs allocation for Santa Barbara County's unincorporated areas was 661 units. This cycle it rose to 5,664 units!

## **New Housing for Goleta**

Most of the land being rezoned for housing in the housing element is located in Goleta. Goleta City Council voted unanimously to approve their city housing element in which 12 rezones were planned: 7264 Calle

Real (Kenwood Village), 625 Dara Road, 60 Colusa Avenue, 7020 Calle Real, 7190 Hollister Avenue, 7360 Hollister Avenue, 449 Kellogg Way, 669 Kellogg Way and a portion of 490 S. Fairview Avenue.

Those in Goleta who oppose the rezones cite increased traffic and the incompatibility of high-density projects with the surrounding single-family homes, while those in favor of the rezones point out that although most people are willing to admit that affordable housing is an issue, not many want that housing built near them.

## **Housing Solutions. Thinking Outside the Box.**

Some, who are against the infill development requirements of the Housing Element, have pointed out that building on small vacant lots and rezoning small areas of land in cities will eventually decrease regional quality of life in existing residential areas and that instead we should focus on developing "Master-Planned Communities" on low quality agricultural land surrounding or outside existing cities. These communities would be largely self-contained and designed to retain many of the comforts of a small town such as parks, uncongested roadways, walkways and other outdoor areas. With this approach we would avoid becoming the next Santa Monica.

## **Santa Maria Approves Six-Story Mixed-Use Building for Downtown**

Local Santa Maria developers Burt and Mark Fugate have proposed a six-story development for the strip of land between Center Mall and Cook Street. The building includes 104 apartments on the upper floors and a commercial area on the ground floor. It will be designed by architect Murray Duncan in the Spanish Revival style and, in a departure from usual practice, will rely on a nearby city owned parking structure to meet parking requirements.

## **Election Update: County Board of Supervisors**

Jenelle Osborne, the Mayor of Lompoc, is running

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for Third District Supervisor. She is a proponent of building more housing in each region of the County in order to lessen the need for commuting and help spread the burden of combating homelessness. Osborne supports diversifying energy sources and believes that supporting agriculture is important. She is running against incumbent Joan Hartmann and businessman Frank Troise who is connected to the technology industry. The election will be held on March 5, 2024.

### **New Santa Barbara County Planning Commissioner Appointed**

Roy Reed was recently appointed as the new Planning Commissioner for Santa Barbara County. He is replacing Larry Ferrini. Fourth District Supervisor Bob Nelson nominated Reed for the position.

Reed is a local Santa Maria rancher who retired from a career in the medical industry. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Cal-Poly (microbiology and plant pathology) and previously led the board of the Santa Barbara Taxpayer's Association.

### **SpaceX Yearly Launch Rate at Vandenberg Space Force Base Could Soar to 100 by 2025**

SpaceX recently described plans to increase the number of launches made from Vandenberg Space Force Base significantly in the coming years. The development of various space satellite constellation projects such as Starlink, Starshield, and OneWeb have meant that more launches are required to get equipment into space.

Four years ago, SpaceX did their first launch and by the next year they had increased the number of launches to three. The year after that they did 12 launches and last year (in 2023) they did 30 launches. According to their EconAlliance presentation, they intend to do around 50 launches in the coming year and could do up to 100 launches in 2025.

One of the reasons that SpaceX is able to launch so frequently is that they reuse many of the components of their rockets (such as the first-stage boosters). This means that less time is needed between launches to acquire new equipment. They are also planning to lease a second Vandenberg launch site and have recently acquired a new Falcon Heavy rocket that will increase their launching capability. Go Elon!

### **County Seeks New Contractor to Run Problem Plagued Dump**

The County of Santa Barbara installed an industrial anaerobic digester and composting facility at Tajiguas Landfill in Arroyo Quemada (Gaviota), finished in 2021, which has since been operated by Mustang Renewable Power Ventures, also known as MSB Investors LLC. Now, the County is considering hiring a new contractor to operate the composting facilities. Since 2022, residents have been urging the County to do something about the overpowering smell emanating from the facilities which culminated in a December hearing to decide whether or not to hire one of Mustang Renewable Power Ventures' competitors. Bekon Energy Technologies, a German based company, with offices in Oxnard, and Marborg are being considered as replacement operators.

Previously, CalRecycle, County Public Health, and the Regional Water Quality Board had all contacted Mustang about the smell and changing their practices in order to prevent it. Mustang found no evidence of pollution and could not seem to prevent the smell. For now, they may use manufacturing tarps and the County is also considering an extremely expensive electrically powered covering system.

### **What's Next for Santa Barbara's Downtown Parking Program? City is considering several options – including eliminating free parking – to completely kill the downtown.**

City staff are considering raising the parking fee to \$3 per hour and removing the free parking period in downtown parking garages and lots, among other possible changes. According to a survey administered by the city, over half of those who park in the garages downtown do so for less than 75 minutes at a time which means that they would likely stop coming downtown if that period was shortened or removed. It is also worth noting that the city of San Luis Obispo tried to take away the free parking period and free parking on Sundays but was forced to reinstate it after many complaints by citizens.

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