

Santa Barbara Happenings

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UCSB Students Develop App to Help Tenants Understand Leases

Five students at UC Santa Barbara have developed a tool using AI-technology that will help tenants with their leasing contracts. The app LeaseMate, though available to all, is especially helpful to residents in Isla Vista as many are first-time leasers. The on-line platform is designed to improve tenant literacy and help them navigate and understand the leases they signed. The AI-powered assistance helps guide the user to answer the questions that can be found in the lease: rent, pets, maintenance, dates, and more. It can also help solve minor issues such as plumbing leaks and household handywork by



Image: Noozhawk.com

providing step-by-step guides. The platform connects users in the area, granting tenants the ability to correspond with other leasers about issues they may have.

Santa Barbara Housing Authority Has Stopped Issuing New Section 8 Vouchers

The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara has halted its issuing of new section 8 vouchers for low-income residents. In the past year, the Housing Authority issued 152 Section 8 vouchers. Currently, there are 7,732 households that have applied for, and presently exist on the Section 8 voucher waitlist.

Santa Barbara is not the only area experiencing this funding deficit. For more information on this, read the Housing Authority's "Landlord Link" in this issue.

Old Town Goleta's Failed Lane Scheme Causes Drop in Economic Activity

Businesses in Old Town Goleta along Hollister Avenue are facing a drop in business due to the lane scheme inserted by the city. The lane adjustments, meant to increase parking, removed one vehicle lane in both directions. This change immediately resulted in a much longer commute just to get through Old Town. From Fairview to Kellogg Av-

enues, commuters were reporting a 15-30 traffic delay to travel, a little over a half-mile distance. And while the traffic has increased, the business sales have not. Sales taxes from businesses in the area saw an 8.5 percent decrease, while auto sales, which are a staple in the area, saw a 10 percent decrease.

19 parking spaces were added to Hollister Avenue in Old Town. However, the city plans to add more



Image: Independent.com

in the future as well as a roundabout to alter the flow of traffic. The city has also considered adding more crosswalks, dedicated bike spaces, time parking spaces, and more.

California's High Gas Prices A Result of Self-Harming Regulations

A recent study from the University of Southern California has concluded that the high gas prices in California are not a result of price gouging, alleged by Governor Gavin Newsom. Instead, the state's own regulations and policies are largely to blame for the high prices.

The study includes regulations such as the state's cap-and-trade charge, environmental fees, reporting and compliance costs, are all eventually passed on to the consumer. California's existing high excise taxes and local taxes certainly don't help either. All these taxes mean oil and gas producers have been leaving the state. 70 percent of refineries have left California since 1984, leaving only 13 who still produce for the state that commands the second most petroleum in the nation.

California averages \$4.85 per gallon, while the national average is \$3.20 per gallon.

Proposed Housing Development Set to Add 90 Units on Milpas Street

Developers received approval from the Santa Barbara Planning Commission for a four-story apartment complex consisting of 90 units, located on East Gutierrez St. and N. Milpas St. In addition to 9 very-low-income units and 6 moderate-income,

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the development proposes 65 parking spaces (that is less than 1 parking space per apartment) and 128 bike spaces. The developers are also looking to push the height limits of the Milpas area, indicating that this project will be larger than the pre-existing buildings and businesses.



Image: sitelinesb.com

Residents and business owners have spoken out against the project, claiming that the complex does not fit the area. The biggest concern of many is the lack of parking. N. Milpas St. currently

has issues with parking, so the addition of more residents with more cars will only congest things further. In response, the Planning Commission has considered developing a parking garage on N. Milpas St. Financing for planning and construction of the parking lot is to be determined "in the future".

Over 200 New Apartments at Presidio Springs for Low Income Senior Citizens

The Presidio Springs Senior Community has begun to conceptualize plans for 205 additional apartments in the community, approved by the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara. Construction on the apartments, which are specifically designated for low-income seniors, isn't expected to commence until July of 2027. The project is expected to last for over 10 years. Currently, the need for housing for low-income seniors in the area is still high. Over 200 parking spaces will be added to accommodate for the increase, meant for employees, visitors, and residents. This is less than 1 parking space per unit. Planners are out of touch on parking needs for residents

The plan is to demolish a 10-unit building to replace it with a 40-unit building, then 30 more units will be redeveloped. There will be 4 more phases after this, allowing for current residents to slowly adjust and accommodate themselves to the developments. By the time all 5 phases have been completed, the complex will have 327 units.



Images, Current building & New Concept, hacsb.com

California's High Unsolved Crime Rate Leaves Criminals at Large. Are You the Next Victim?

A study reveals California atop the ranks as the state with the highest number of criminals at large. The study compiled data from 2019-2024, such as violent crime rates, whether the cases were solved, population, and total land area to find that California had the most criminals at large per square mile adjusted for population. This is mainly due to the state's high rate of unsolved violent crimes. There were nearly 200,000 incidents of violent crimes reported, yet only 40% were solved. This indicates that nearly 119,000 violent crime offenders have not yet faced justice. Consider calling and asking your favorite Governor or government official, "Why not?"

Gifted Students Neglected, SB School District Faces same issues

The Seattle Public Schools District faces backlash from parents due to the diminished quality of the education found in their school systems. A survey found that 86% of parents are unhappy with the low-level of curriculum taught in the schools, and over half have proposed leaving the district entirely for the same reason. Parents of students who present gifted learning capabilities are upset at the possibility that the special schools in the district will be closed. The superintendent of the district offered a plan for gifted students where they would be enrolled with the general population yet still given a personalized lesson plan by the teacher. Though this plan is way less optimal for a student's success

Teachers and parents argue that instructors do not have time to create two or more lesson plans a day for their classes. This would only split attention between the advanced and non-advanced students. Furthermore, teachers receive little to no support or training from the district itself, causing more families to seek education privately, or reconsider their child's placement in gifted and advanced classes.

Santa Barbara School Districts face this same issue. Fewer and fewer students are taking advanced classes in their middle school years.

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