

Santa Barbara Happenings

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State Street Promenade is a Complete Failure. Sales Tax Revenue Proves it.

The city defines the central business district (“CBD”) as State Street, and the three blocks surrounding each side of it. It spans from where State Street meets the 101 Freeway to Garden Street on the east, Bath Street on the west, and up to Mission Street. Based on the top 25 sales tax remitters in SB, only five of them were in the CBD. Of those 5, only two are in the State Street promenade: the Apple Store and Marshalls. The current emphasis of the State Street promenade, restaurants, did not make the list. The clear lack of car traffic and free parking puts the State Street promenade far behind upper State Street, and other districts.

Of the 11 districts of SB, Upper State Street brought the highest revenue in the third quarter of 2024, at \$1,652,083. To compare, the Airport District produced \$205,111 while the Waterfront District earned \$373,775. In the past few years, the CBD’s tax revenue is down 20%. The Waterfront and Coast Village Road Districts are up 7% and 5% respectively.



image downtownsb.org

California Lawmakers Reform CEQA; Housing Project Barriers Lowered.

Signed into law in 1970, The California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) required state and local governments to publicly declare the environmental impacts of the building developments they proposed. Under this statute, the government approval process could be met with lawsuits if the findings of possible environmental impacts were alleged and proven to be inaccurate or not detailed enough. The time spent on studying environmental impacts and fighting to avoid litigation necessarily delayed development, increased the costs, and discouraged developers.

Recently, California lawmakers decide to roll back statewide restrictions previously put in place by CEQA. To qualify under the revisited law, new developments must meet the requirements of being a level of density above single-family units urban “in-fill” housing developments. The development must be under 20 acres, comply with local zoning laws, and contain certain union wage requirements. Proposed developments meeting these standards will no longer have to describe their environmental impacts.

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56 Housing Unit Project Approved After City of Goleta and the Shelby Family Partnership Reach Settlement.

After their application for the 56 unit, including 13 lower-income housing unit, housing development was denied by the City of Goleta, the Shelby Family Partnership sued the city.

In February, SB County Superior Court Judge Thomas Anderle ruled in favor of the partnership, declaring that the application should not have been declined. However, this settlement does not mean the development has been approved. It will still need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and/or the

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City Council. The project, located near Dos Pueblos High School in Goleta.



image cityofgoleta.org

The “One Big Beautiful Bill” Act’s Effect on Housing.

The “One Big Beautiful Bill” Act was recently signed into federal law. While the act will have many effects, only some will directly affect housing. The new law will permanently increase the estate tax exemption, saving tax on transfers at death, enlarge and increase “opportunity zones” which incentivize investments in designated low-income areas, advance the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit which helps the construction and financing of affordable housing units, and enforce the 199A deduction (also known as the qualified business income deduction), allowing eligible business to deduct up to 20% of their income.

California’s Energy Problem and the Solution Under Our Nose.

While California may be an economic powerhouse, ranking 4th among global GDP compared to other countries, its energy grid will soon be overwhelmed. Following Germany’s plan to phase out nuclear energy, California has only one last nuclear plant left: Diablo Canyon in San Luis Obispo County. The plant currently supplies 9% of California’s electricity. Meanwhile, countries like Germany and Japan that are completely reliant on non-nuclear energy have seen their electricity prices spike, CO2 emissions increase, and limits to their selling power on the energy they actually produce to the global market.

To meet the ever-growing energy demands in the state (especially due to the high energy demands of technology firms and AI), California needs to keep Diablo Canyon in operation. History shows the fear of nuclear power plants is misplaced. Diablo Canyon has never had an incident, and it operates under very strict regulatory standards. Politicians push 100% “renewable” energy (which cannot sustain the state’s demand) by fearmongering the nuclear disasters of Chernobyl and Fukushima. Nuclear plants have proven safe and efficient producing electricity 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They produce about an acre of containable waste, held in steel storage cylinders that are roughly 20 feet tall, throughout the typical plant’s lifetime.

SB County Allows Pre-Approved ADU Plans, Easing Production Process.

The SB County Board of Supervisors have approved certain designs for Accessory Dwelling Units, or “ADU’s”, to decrease the time and cost it takes to design an ADU from scratch. These designs are all pre-approved by the county, meaning the developer need only choose the design they desire to skip the long review process of an unapproved design. The program offers sizes ranging from 400-700 square feet, styles such as “Spanish”, “Modern”, “Craftsman”, and more, all with a variety of color palettes.

Santa Barbara currently offers the most designs, while Buellton already offers three. Carpinteria offers two available designs meanwhile Lompoc, Goleta, and Santa Maria do not currently offer any but are in the process of accepting and planning designs.



image Approved ADU plans for Santa Barbara County Noozhawk.com

California Lost 18,000 Jobs Due to the \$20 Fast Food Minimum Wage Policy.

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, employment in the fast-food industry declined by an estimated 18,000 jobs since the law went effect in April 2024. The \$20 minimum wage for restaurants with 60+ locations in the US was enacted by Governor Newsom in 2023. That added a \$4 increase from the minimum wage required at the time. Since the bill only applied to restaurants with 60+ locations nationwide, its scope was limited. To result in 18,000 lost jobs among a limited list of restaurants is nothing less than a failure.

Instituting a higher minimum wage forces the food industries to decrease the number of workers they can pay. Remember, the real minimum wage is zero.

Isla Vista “Pilot Inspection Program” Violates Tenant’s Constitutional Rights.

Santa Barbara County’s recently enacted “Pilot Inspection Program” forces landlords to cooperate and allows county inspectors to infringe on the constitutional rights of uninformed Isla Vista tenants. Many students are ignorant of the fact that they may refuse to let county inspectors enter their property. Tenants are not told by the government that they can refuse entry, they are only told the scheduled date of the inspection.

If SB County cared about Isla Vista tenant's standard of living and their rights, they should rework their program to empower the tenant's ability to report issues that they encounter, rather than abusing tenant's privacy.

Federal Funding Shifted to Putting Homeless into Long-Term Treatment.

Recognizing that what we have been doing for the past 10 years does not work, the federal government instituted a new rule encouraging states and cities to relocate all homeless people (including those suffering from mental issues and addictions) to "treatment centers." The order incentivizes, with the use of grants, states to be very strict on urban camping and illegal drug usage. This builds off the supreme court case last year that ruled localities may fine those who camp on public property. The federal government is taking a much firmer stance on the homelessness issue, and is no longer allowing rat-infested tent camps and open drug abuse on the streets.

Federal Government to Streamline Processes by Operating Exclusively in English.

Phone calls to federal agencies and services are not known for their timely responses. The federal government has acted to not only help quicken this process, but also push society toward a more unit-

ed nation. The order will make English the official language of the United States. This will make phone calls, websites, forms, announcements, and wherever else that federal agencies deem possible, exclusively in English.

Past moves toward multilingualism in the United States has left citizens divided.

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Have News to Share?

If you have news or info on events that may be of interest to SBRPA members, please submit the data to magazine@sbrpa.org.



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