

# Santa Barbara Happenings



Terry A. Bartlett – Reetz, Fox & Bartlett LLP

## UC Santa Barbara Approves Plans to Demolish Existing Housing and Build Larger Residential Complex

UCSB pledged to add 3,500 new beds 15 years ago. With these new plans receiving approval, the campus will be adding 1,668 new beds on the east side of the school. The plans include three apartment buildings totaling 1,276 new beds and a new hall with 412 new beds. To accomplish this, the Santa Rosa Residential Hall will need to be demolished. The plans also include renovations of the Ortega Dining Commons.

The plans still need approval from the California Coastal Commission; however, construction is expected to begin this summer. UCSB is also working on separate plans for housing that will be called the San Benito Housing Project and pledges to add 2,224 more beds.



Image: Daily Nexus -- "Phase 1 planned building site at the corner of Mesa Road & Stadium Road"

## Developers Expect to Add 23 Apartment Units on Milpas Street

A developer has pledged to build a 23-unit apartment building at 518 to 524 North Milpas Street. This will require demolishing a nightclub, parking lot, and a car wash. The building will be three stories tall and will embody the historic designs of the region. The apartment building will include 6 one-bedroom units, 14 two-bedroom units, and 3 three-bedroom units. Two of the units will be very low-income housing.

The project will also include a parking garage with 13 parking spaces for vehicles, 6 private garages, and 28 bicycle parking spaces.



Image: Noozhawk from DMHA Architecture rendering – Proposed 23-unit apartment building for Milpas Street

## New 18-Story Project Proposed in Carpinteria

At 5115 Ogan Road, a developer has proposed building an 18-story, 130-unit apartment building. The proposed development site lies just off of Highway 101 and, if built as proposed, would be 218 feet tall. Currently, the project consists of 47 one-bedroom units, 46 two-bedroom units, and 37 three-bedroom units. The project has been submitted twice before but was denied both times with the city of Carpinteria claiming the application was incomplete.

The manager of the LLC behind this proposed development is the also the manager of a different LLC responsible for the 8-story project proposed for the area behind the Santa Barbara Mission.



Image: Noozhawk – 5115 Ogan Rd in Carpinteria, proposed site of 18-story apartment complex

## California Criminals Given "Get Out of Jail Free" Card Are Left Untracked

Six years ago, California's legislature undermined voters by offering criminal offenders a "get out of jail free" card in their legislation. Specifically, criminals charged with burglary, attempted murder, child abuse, carjacking and more, were allowed to walk free without entering a guilty plea.

Assembly Bill 1810 contained a mental health diversion system with eligibility rules, two-year diversion

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periods and exclusion for the worst crimes such as murder and sex crimes. However, this exclusion list did not include any other felony crimes, and did not take criminal history, violent conduct or criminal associations into account. In order to be eligible, a criminal only needs a diagnosis from a qualified individual such as a psychiatrist, psychologist or therapist. After they receive the diagnosis, their records are cleared and they get out of jail free.

This has, of course, led to re-offenders running rampant. Burglars, violent offenders, abusers, etc. are all allowed to walk the streets. The program created by the California Legislature does not include any kind of tracking for these individuals. Law enforcement, prosecutors and judges cannot determine who has been through the system, let alone how many times they have been through. The program has received the support of many lawmakers and justice “reformers” which has led to a more violent state. If you are voting for the same governor and representatives who were in office six years ago, think twice. It’s time to correct the flaws in California’s system.

### **Apartment Project at Former Nordstrom Building Facing Rough Negotiations**

The city has proposed redevelopment of Paseo Nuevo Mall threatening the plans of the developers who submitted the application to build apartments in the building where Nordstrom’s was formerly located. The Nordstrom apartment project proposed 112 units, including 60 one-bedroom units, 23 two-bedroom units, 22 micro-units, and 7 studio apartments—11 of which would be considered affordable housing units. The proposed project would be 3 stories tall with underground parking.



Image: Independent.com – Santa Barbara Review Board says Paseo Nuevo Project is too big

### **Unchecked Mass Immigration Linked to High Home and Rental Prices**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development published a report that described “worst-case” housing needs for low-income Americans who do not receive government assistance and use more than 50% of their income to cover housing costs. According to the report, housing costs for this group have risen due to increased immigration between 2021 and 2024. During that period,

the number of people living in the U.S. who had been born in another country increased by 6 million, making the foreign-born population 53 million people—more people than we have ever had previously. This increase in population has led to an increase in housing demand, and a subsequent increase in housing prices. The report found that, in certain markets, immigration is entirely the cause of housing demand.

The report also found that economic growth is stagnant resulting in low-income families struggling to make enough to afford rent due to increased competition from mass migrants. Immigration policies, or lack of controls on immigration, have led to high demand for rentals and high rental prices. According to the report, only 60% of low-income individuals can find housing and only 40% of extremely low-income individuals can find housing.

### **Young Americans’ Anxiety Over Lack of Ownership: Pipeline to Becoming a Socialist.**

Here is a shock! A recent poll found that over 60% of young Americans today identify themselves as socialists, or view socialism as a favorable system. In Russia, by comparison, only 20% of young people view socialism favorably. Frustrated young American voters may look at our nation’s 65% average rate of home ownership, or Santa Barbara’s 40% average rate of home ownership, and wonder what else can be done. They call for rent control or low-income housing mandates (typical big government, socialist sales pitches) as solutions.

As many Russians would tell you today, these governmental solutions often lead to more problems than they fix. Instead, here are three simple actions the government can take (or NOT take) to help:

- 1) Privatize public housing
- 2) Allow apartment-to-condominium conversions
- 3) Incentivize government and non-profits toward ownership not renting

A combination of these three things would allow for more homeownership for young people and tax refunds for taxpayers who paid for existing public housing. Allowing a right of first refusal, down payment loans and grants, and amore monetary focus for the Americans who find themselves in the low or middle class, will bring the American dream of homeownership within reach of many who are now left behind.

### **The Quality of Incoming College Students Has Tanked. A College Education is Now Less Valuable Than Ever.**

UC San Diego has reported that incoming college students are now less prepared than ever before.

This lack of readiness is not limited to the toughest subjects but is also evident in the basic knowledge that is considered the framework of education itself. A combination of the pandemic, the removal of requirements for standardized tests such as the SAT, and grade inflation has caused a lack of academic readiness for college. Furthermore, the focus on activism and social issues rather than fundamentals and basic literacy also fuel this epidemic.

The results don't lie: the emphasis on activism, anti-racist rhetoric, and similar constructs have failed students. Schools need to recognize their shortcomings and revert to the basics if a college education is to regain the status it held a generation ago. Literacy, writing skills, math skills, scientific research and strategic thinking allow students to develop in the ways that they need in order to turn their high school or college diplomas into the valuable assets they were promised.

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