

Santa Barbara Happenings



Terry A. Bartlett – Reetz, Fox & Bartlett LLP

Isla Vista Rental Inspection Program Passes Halfway Point.

The Santa Barbara County Planning Department has given a progress report regarding the year-long Isla Vista rental inspection program. The program was originally approved in May, allowing government inspectors to enter tenants' property without their knowledge or approval. Currently, 63% of Isla Vista properties have registered for the program. Tenants in 208 units have refused the county's inspection. Landlords from the Isla Vista Rental Property Owners' Association are actively suing the county over the program, arguing that it violates tenants' rights.

The Planning department reported that 23 out of 60 properties needed "corrective action", such as flooring, kitchen appliance, and plumbing repairs, rodent infestations, a lack of smoke alarms and a lack of hot water. The county also reported a specific example of a roof leak on the oceanside of Del Playa Drive.

SB City Council Adds More Landlord Restrictions On Lawful Evictions.

The Santa Barbara City Council has added further requirements for lawful evictions. In a 4-3 vote, the city council tackles the municipal code for lawful evictions which are intended to remove units off the rental market. The council decided that to take down one unit from a rental property, they would need to take down all units on the property. Secondly, notices of lease termination must be given to all tenants at the same time, but eviction dates may vary. Lastly, properties that have been taken off the rental market may not be rented out for a minimum of five years.

Time to donate to the SBRPA Political Action Committee. New city elections are coming soon. Ballots are expected to be mailed on May 2 for the June primary.

SB County Democratic Central Committee Endorses Candidate.

With the upcoming mayoral election in Santa Barbara, City Councilmember Kristen Sneddon has been officially endorsed by the SB County Democratic party. The Democratic Central Committee interviewed three candidates, but Sneddon received

support from every voting member. After losing the 2021 election to current mayor Randy Rowse, the committee chose to register only one democratic candidate instead of two.

Fifth District of SB County Board of Supervisors Facing a Multi-Candidate Race.

For the first time since 2010, the SB County Board of Supervisors' most northern district, the fifth district, will undergo a race of three candidates. The candidates include Santa Maria City council member Maribel Aguilera-Hernandez, Lavagnino's chief of staff Cory Bantilan, and a Santa Maria-Bonita School District Board member and teacher Ricardo Valencia. While campaigns are expected to begin soon, Bantilan already leads in campaign fundraising.

The primary election is on June 2nd, with a possible runoff scheduled for November 3rd.

A Guide to Eliminating Affordable Housing in Santa Barbara.

If the Santa Barbara Housing and Planning Committee wanted to increase the cost and decrease availability of housing in Santa Barbara, the following nine-step guide outlines an efficient way to do so:

They would start by adding fees at every step of the way. School, transit, street, traffic, environmental, and any other fee you can think of would deter developers from investing in the area. But be sure to use the vague, umbrella term "inclusionary" to blur the line between affordable and market set rates.

Next, extend the permit/proposal process to require years instead of months, requiring a plethora of requirements each with their own lengthy approval time. Furthermore, associate each permit with a different committee, completely fragmenting the process.

This permit process could be further complicated with extremely tight and dense construction restrictions that limit the height, visibility, overlay, and other restrictions that deter developers from building in Santa Barbara.

If developers aren't deterred, then rent control would surely deter landlords. In turn, this lowers funds for landlord expenses such as maintenance

Continued on page 35

and forces them to sell. When landlords sell, rental housing availability shrinks, lowering the supply.

The slow increase of property taxes year after year shall also ruin housing affordability while also increasing the cost it takes to build a new home. With property tax increases, housing availability decreases!

The county can mandate energy efficient infrastructure like solar products or energy efficient based appliances, while raising the cost at the same time. But remember, this is for the environment!

The county would still allow the public to join hearings, in the name of democracy, to voice their criticisms, but make no action based on the "community review".

As all these requirements increase, so does the volume of lawsuits against landlords for violating these permits, inspections, and other "criminal" acts the landlords are now violating. Since these new rules are so perplexing, no landlord is safe from a lawsuit.

The last step is to divide. Pin tenants against landlords, "good" against "evil". No matter the specific situation at hand, an eviction will be labeled as a morally evil act from the landlord, who will consistently be pinned as the enemy. Meanwhile, the true enemy are the ones who have orchestrated the entire housing crisis from the start.

Rent Freeze Moratorium Temporarily Adopted While Permanent Rent Stabilization Ordinance is in the Works.

The Santa Barbara City Council has passed a rent freeze which disallows landlords to increase rent for up to a year. This temporary rental freeze has been put in place to allow the council to draft a more permanent rental ordinance that they expect to be ready later in the year. The plan set by the council puts "mom and pop" landlords at extreme risk of drowning in the rent prices that will be increased by large market and corporate landlords. The temporary freeze does not apply to units built in the past 30 years, single family units, most condos, hotels, motels, government/institutional housing, or affordability units.

Landlords will have to deal with increased utility fees, taxes, repair costs, insurance prices, payrolls, appliance maintenance, requirements, and now this potential rent freeze ordinance, which will further increase the cost of the burdens on landlords and renters.

Inflation Rate in 2025 Remains Constant at 2.7 Percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics published data that

noted the December annual inflation rate stood unchanged at 2.7 percent, aligning with the market consensus. Core inflation, or inflation minus energy and food prices, was 2.6 percent, falling under the forecast of 2.7 percent. The consumer price index increased by 0.3 percent, increasing 0.2 percent month over month. The month over month was below economists' expectations and is a benefit to consumers. While the inflation rate is not an immediate step forward, it is not a step backward. According to experts, two factors may be responsible for the inflation rate and for confidence in future progression: the decrease in population, a result of outside migrants returning home, has expanded the market supply for renters by putting downward pressure on prices.

Gasoline declined by 0.5 percent while electricity costs slid 0.1% overall. The national average for a gallon of gas finally fell below \$3 with nearly half of the states seeing prices under \$2.80. California's average is still floating above \$4 per gallon.

Help for First Time Home Buyers

The California Dream For All Program is returning in 2026, offering down payment help to first-time and first-generation homebuyers. The program, run by CalHFA, can cover up to 20% of your home's purchase price with no monthly payments. You repay the loan—and a small share of your home's appreciation—when you sell or refinance.

Learn more and sign up for updates: CalHFA Dream For All Program

The last round was extremely competitive, with tens of thousands applying for limited spots. Getting ready now gives you the best chance when applications open again.

How to Prepare

1. Check eligibility:
 - Must be a first-time and first-generation homebuyer.
 - Meet income limits by county.
 - Must live in the home as your primary residence.
2. Get financially ready:
 - Improve credit, reduce debt, and save for closing costs.
 - Complete a homebuyer education course (required).
 - Organize documents like tax returns, W-2s, and pay stubs.

Continued on page 37

3. Find an approved lender:

Only CalHFA-approved lenders can process Dream For All loans. Connect with one early to get pre-qualified.

4. Stay informed:

Subscribe to CalHFA updates so you'll know the moment 2026 applications open.

5. Act fast when it opens:

When the portal launches, apply right away and ensure your paperwork is accurate. If selected, you'll likely have limited time to purchase your home.

Final Tip: Preparation is key—buyers who were ready with financing and documents in hand had the best success in past rounds.

Hat tip to realtor Pam Shalhoob at Village Properties for the update.

Terry A. Bartlett is a real estate, housing, commercial leasing, and landlord attorney at Reetz, Fox & Bartlett LLP in Santa Barbara.

2026 Advertising Rates

The magazine is published 11 times per year. Monthly except for our Fall issue (Aug-Sep). Ads are generally due around the 15th of the month for the following month's magazine. 2026 rates are listed below. Questions e-mail magazine@sbrpa.org.

Ad size	SBRPA Member/ Business Partner		
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1/4 page	\$495.00	\$133.65	\$49.50
Business card	\$330.00	\$89.10	\$33.00

Ad size	Standard Advertiser Rates		
	Annual	Quarterly	Monthly
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Steven R. Battaglia
805.688.5333
srb@BattagliaRE.com • www.BattagliaRE.com • CA DRE #01318215