

# Santa Barbara Happenings

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## **The State Street Tradition Has Been Lost.**

The City Council has voted to move forward with the "master plan" that will add bollards to State Street, which aligns with their plan to revise State Street. The revision will open State Street to vehicles only at certain hours, while leaving the street accessible only to pedestrians and cyclists (including powered bicycles) for the rest of the hours. Originally, the bollards would be raised at 10 a.m. and lowered at 10 p.m., allowing vehicle access from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m. However, the council decided to take the hours out of the master plan, which they will decide on later. The bollards will be installed at every intersection on State Street, from Haley to Victoria Streets. It will cost the city \$48-68 million and take up to ten years.

Mayor Randy Rowse, who has been very vocal with his preference to open State Street, was the only dissenting opinion in the vote. Spending tens of millions of dollars when the city already has strained financial resources is poor government decision making. Maybe completing Economics 101 should be a requirement to qualify for the ballot.

## **SB City Attempts to Fix Budget.**

The City originally projected a \$14.6 million deficit but are now projecting only a \$3.6 million deficit for the upcoming fiscal year (starting in July) instead. The combined challenge of growing expenditures and slower revenues. Sales tax revenue has grown, but it cannot keep up with ever expanding city expenses. The city lowered their deficit projection by delaying new staff hires, holding off on new vehicle purchases, deferring funds from housing trust funds, and keeping \$2 million meant for street maintenance funds. But of course, the council member's recent raise in their own pay is untouchable.

The City's target reserve policy means that \$57.2 million should be in reserves. It is now projected to be \$28 million. There are no plans to make up the shortfall.

## **City Deficit Leading to Service Cuts for Santa Barbara MTD.**

About a dozen bus routes will be reduced for Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District riders starting in August. The district's decrease in funds will lead to several line reductions.

## **67 New Homes Coming to Project in Los Alamos.**

Santa Barbara Planning Commission has approved the Cottonwoods Housing Project, located on the eastern end of Los Alamos. The plan will bring 67 new single-family homes and town homes, park space, gardens, and a pool. Seven of these rental homes will be designated for very low-income households. The rest will go for market rate which for Los Alamos, averages around \$910,000. Due to the seven affordable homes, the project qualifies under California's affordable housing law, allowing the complex to avoid certain density and zoning laws.

## **More Housing Coming to UCSB.**

UC Santa Barbara's most recent housing plans have been approved by the California Coastal Commission. The plan requires the demolition of the current 412-bed Santa Rosa Residential Hall, built in 1955, to be replaced with the East Campus Housing Project. The project, consisting of 1,688 beds across four new buildings, will exceed current site height limits, but approved by the Coastal Commission. The project will not be required to include parking, as students have access to the current campus lots. The project will instead add 1,688 bicycle spaces, remove 131 non-native trees, and replace them with 166 drought-tolerant trees. The project currently has a \$566-million budget. This is the starting point for the project's expense. Overruns are expected. The project will begin in June and is expected to take two and a half years to complete.

## **UN Climate Committee Reveals Climate Projections Were Wrong.**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), recently revealed their drastic climate change projections were wrong. Sea level rise will not occur and we will not boil in the superheated atmosphere after all. 30 years pursuing the "green dream" has been a farce and waste of resources, especially financial ones..

## **California: Land of the Highest Taxes and Energy Prices.**

California's favoritism for "clean" energy policies and rejection of pipelines and transition lines has come to punish the State hard. California's effort to close refineries in the state and shutdown existing

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extraction operations have reduced or eliminated on shore local sources of energy. California is the only state that is dependent on oil coming from the Strait of Hormuz and energy prices at the pump have skyrocketed. California has made itself an energy island, and we only have their own government adopted policies to blame.

### SB County Supervisors Introduce Locals First Marketing Requirements for New Housing.

In the South Coast and Santa Ynez area, the SB County's Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance that mandates developers to target only local renters or buyers for the first 12 weeks of the marketing process. Only after this period may they expand their marketing search. In addition, once their housing project reaches 90 percent occupancy, they must report the number of locals in residence. In 2024, it was reported that nearly 20 percent of work trips in the South Coast started from outside the region, an inspiration for this ordinance. As Santa Barbara's housing prices remain high, their vacancy rate remains low. The ordinance requires developers to include local newspaper ads, social media posts, and outreach to employers, jurisdictions, and housing organizations in the local area.

### County Supervisor Pushing for 4 Stories of Tiny County Employee Housing in SB City.

County Supervisor Capps has proposed the county build "affordable workforce housing" for county employees only at the county probation department building. The units are proposed for a family of four, but the current projected size of the units is only 733 square feet. That's tiny! Even at the size, the units would cost \$450,000 each, in downtown Santa Barbara no less.

The project would only add 58 parking spaces for a proposed 104 units, meaning on top of the \$450k you are paying for a closet, many residents would likely have to pay for parking on the street as well. County employees make 80% of the average median income for families, meaning county employees are some of the highest paid workers in the city. The city prioritizes their own workers and are admirably attempting to create affordable housing for them. However, these aren't the people that are struggling the most! While this affordable housing project likely wouldn't go to waste, their priorities are not for the common person.

The city not only gives themselves extra pay, but extra cheap housing as well.

### SBA Funds Available for Small Business

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has initiated a new rule that allows eligible borrowers to get up to \$10 million in combined financing from 7(a) and 504 loan programs. The 7(a) initiative is

the SBA's primary business loan program that provides financial assistance to small businesses and has a maximum disbursement limit of \$5 million per borrower. The 504 program provides long-term, fixed-rate loans for major fixed assets, such as land, new facilities, and machinery. The maximum 504 loan limit is \$5.5 million. Currently, borrowers can have only \$5 million cumulatively in 7(a) and 504 loans. The new rule doubles this limit to \$10 million, raising SBA's maximum financing for small businesses to the "highest level in agency history," SBA said. The new rule is effective July 4.

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