

Santa Barbara Happenings

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Illegal Immigration Surge Triggered 30% Rise in Home Prices and 20% Rise in Rents

US government researchers estimate that an increase in unauthorized immigrant workers boosted local employment roughly one for one, with little measurable effect on average wages. They found that however a 1% increase in unauthorized workers was associated with approximately 2.2% higher home prices and 1.4% higher rents, largely because housing supply did not keep pace with increased demand. Using this estimate, the economists calculated that unauthorized immigrant workers accounted for about a 30% increase of home prices and about a 20% increase in of rents in average metropolitan areas between March 2021 and March 2024. This does not mean immigration was the only cause of rising housing costs. The research also reports that net unauthorized immigration added roughly 7 million people in the US population during that period before slowing in mid-2024.

American's Spend More in Taxes Than They Spend on Food, Clothing and Shelter

Taxes are a major part of the U.S. affordability crisis. Americans collectively pay more in taxes than the spend on food, clothing, and housing combined. American pay roughly \$8.19 billion in taxes, including state and local, corporate income, property, payroll/social insurance and federal taxes and they spend \$7.39 billion on food, clothing, utilities, and housing spending. The total tax burden is substantial and holds families back from building better lives.

Fixing the Affordable Housing Problem

You want affordable housing? Easy. First of all, You don't build here!

You take a large parcel of land inland, use state resources to establish base infrastructure like roads, water, and electricity, and call the new town something like "Rinconada Ranch".

Remove all unnecessary regulatory expenses and build. Build starter homes that sell for under \$300K, rentals for \$1K/month!

Young families will move there in droves to take advantage of the American Dream. Schools will quickly be established, businesses will move there to serve the fledgling upstart town. More businesses will move there to take advantage of the opportunity to get into the area on the ground floor.

State Street Update

The SB City Council voted to extend Title 31, allowing State Street to remain in its current "closed to vehicle traffic" configuration while work continues on the State Street Master Plan. The final plan is expected to return to City Council for review and potential adoption.

The Council also directed staff to develop an interim operations and management plan. A community meeting on the interim operations plan is in the process of being scheduled.

Meanwhile there is plenty of available space for rent in every block on State Street...so at least there is that upside.

State Street's Interim, After Six Years – What Doesn't Work

The recent opinion piece by Santa Barbara Mayor Randy Rowse shows that after six years of closing downtown State Street to regular traffic, the city has learned what does not work—but is still choosing to maintain the status quo.

Rowse criticizes the lack of a promised interim plan or experimentation with reopening portions of the street, arguing that the "Promenade" concept has largely existed in name only. He says the closure has contributed to downtown stagnation, displaced traditional events such as parades and festivals, hurt property values and rents, created uncertainty for businesses, and made e-bike conflicts and public-safety concerns more prominent.

He advocates restoring vehicle circulation, not out of nostalgia or special concern for automobiles, but to improve access, retail activity, business viability, and city finances. At the same time, he points

to several positive developments—including new investments by the Santa Barbara Film Festival, Music Academy of the West, UCSB, and Yardi—as opportunities to revitalize downtown.

Cottage Hospital Named as One of California's Seven High-Cost Hospitals

Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital has been identified by California's Office of Health Care Affordability (OHCA) as one of just seven "high-cost" hospitals statewide, out of more than 400. The designation is based on unusually high commercial prices and spending—not on the quality of medical care.

Consumer advocates argue that Cottage's prices are contributing to the region's affordability problems and say high medical costs are forcing people to delay or skip care. OHCA has therefore imposed a stricter cost-growth target on the seven hospitals with potential penalties for noncompliance.

Cottage Health defended its nonprofit mission, pointing to financial assistance, community programs, research, education, and other investments. The central dispute is whether the hospital's high prices are justified by its services and regional role—or reflect the limited competition and strong market position of Cottage Health in Santa Barbara County.

New Federal Program Reduces Redundant Inspections for Housing Voucher Homes

When a landlord decides to rent a unit to someone who uses federal housing assistance vouchers, like Section 8 vouchers, that unit requires inspection. The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act doesn't get rid of that inspection requirement wholesale. Rather, it cuts down on multiple inspections in quick succession. Inspections are now waived if a unit has been inspected as part of a requirement for other federal housing programs within the past year.

New landlords can now do "pre-inspections," getting the inspection requirement out of the way so that a low-income tenant can move into the property faster.

Between the city and county's housing authorities, there are approximately 6,700 federal housing vouchers (commitments by government to pay the rent) distributed to tenants.

Santa Barbara Housing Project Gets Okay to Switch From Rentals to Condos

The Santa Barbara Planning Commission approved

changing a proposed 50-unit housing development at 560 North La Cumbre Road from apartments for rent to condominiums for sale, which include 10 affordable units that will remain affordable despite the switch to condos.

The property owned by Hope Community Church was rezoned from single-family to multifamily homes as part of the county's Housing Element effort to meet state housing requirements. Neighbors voice concerns about increased traffic, the size and character of the project, and lack of public notification and community input before the project advanced.

Commissioner John Parke said that the commission was not reconsidering whether project should be built, only whether it could be sold as condominiums. He viewed the affordable for sale housing as a positive addition to the local housing mix.

Plants Do Well When Fed Plant Food. Global Warming Advocates Waking Up Because of New Data

International climate organizations, like the United Nations, are moving away from their earlier worst-case warming projections that were used to justify major changes to energy systems. Recent observations show a more positive environmental picture than was previously presented.

NASA satellite research shows substantial global vegetation growth over the past four decades, attributing most of this "greening" to higher atmospheric CO₂ concentrations. According to the post, elevated CO₂ improves plants water-use efficiency by allowing them to lose less moisture through their leaves, making vegetation more drought-resistant and enabling plant growth in previously arid regions such as the Sahel, the Middle East, and parts of Australia.

Roundabout Opens in Old Town Goleta

The new roundabout is now open at the intersection of Pine Avenue and Ekwil Street with one travel lane in each direction, providing northbound and southbound access on Pine Avenue to traffic marking another milestone in Project Connect. The project is designed to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion, increase safety for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists, replace the aging San Jose Creek bridge and improve flood protection, and create better east-west connections through Old Town Goleta. While some construction remains motorists should expect temporary lane changes, traffic controls, and occasional delays while additional work is completed.

The IPO Sonic Boom

The most significant outcome of SpaceX's public offering was not Elon Musk's immense wealth, but that roughly 4,400 employees became millionaires through company stock ownership. This demonstrates how manufacturing can create broad-based prosperity, benefiting not only engineers but also welders, electricians, machinists, technicians, mechanics, and other skilled tradespeople.

America's historical economic strength came from industries like aerospace, defense, and manufacturing, where wealth was shared across the workforce. Successful innovation depends on collaboration among scientists, engineers, technicians, and skilled labor—not on any single individual.

California's Central Coast has many advantages—including Vandenberg Space Force Base, strong universities, aerospace expertise, and skilled workers—but has failed to attract major aerospace manufacturing investments despite hosting many SpaceX launches.

Thousands Call for Public Safety, Environmental Regulation of a Proposed Giant Housing Development Adjacent to The Santa Barbara Mission

Community opposition is intense to a proposed 270 apartment, including 54 affordable units, eight-story development at 505 East Los Olivos Street. The project could reach a height of 112 feet, making it comparable to or taller than some of Santa Barbara's most prominent landmarks. Approximately 5,400 people signed a petition organized by the local nonprofit SAGE (Smart Action for Growth and Equity), calling for meaningful environmental review of the project. Particular concern is focused on wildfire risk and the flow of traffic during an evacuation from Mission Canyon.

Because the project qualifies under California's Builder's Remedy provisions, it can bypass many local zoning restrictions after the city missed a state housing update deadline.

Agricultural Production Reached \$2.2 Billion in Santa Barbara – Strawberries Lead the Way

Santa Barbara County's agricultural production reached an estimated \$2.2 billion in 2026. This represents an 11.5% increase compared to 2024, these figures represent gross value and do not account for production costs such as labor, planting, irrigation, harvesting, packaging, distribution, among other production activities reflecting the strength and

resilience of the local industry despite fluctuating markets, labor costs, weather, and water concerns.

High-value crops such as strawberries, wine grapes, and nursery products remained among the county's leading agricultural products, with berries continuing to be a major economic driver. The report emphasizes that agriculture supports thousands of local jobs and contributes significantly to Santa Barbara County's economy, while also reinforcing the region's national reputation for specialty crops and premium wine production.

Overeducated Liberals With Worthless Degrees are DSA's "Sweet Spot" Voter

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) draws much of its support from a specific demographic: highly educated people with relatively low or middle incomes, particularly those with postgraduate degrees earning roughly \$30,000–\$60,000 annually. Nate Silver's analysis suggests this group is among the most consistently Democratic and liberal in the country.

Education and income normally rise together, but this group represents a break in that pattern. Many DSA members are college-educated but work in fields such as teaching, nonprofits, social work, or the public sector, where advanced credentials may not translate into high earnings. This as a form of "credentialed downward mobility" that may create frustration and openness to socialist politics.

Silver identifies higher-income people without college degrees as one of the most Republican-leaning groups. He also finds that highly educated, lower-income voters tend to be especially focused on cultural issues such as LGBTQ rights, race, the environment, and Israel-Palestine, sometimes more than on traditional economic issues like jobs and healthcare.

Karl Marx and Frederick Douglass

Karl Marx & Frederick Douglass were both born in 1818. Marx grew up in comfort, Douglass in chains. Marx thought the world owed him more comfort; Douglass only demanded liberty, and he'd do the rest.

Unsurprising. The most resentful people in the US are those who believe they are owed everything and fail; the least resentful are those who were given nothing and achieve. Put me down as a Frederick Douglass supporter.

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