

University of California Santa Barbara

BLUMCENTER
ON POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

PEOPLE'S GUIDE

TO UCSB'S HOUSING CRISIS



University of California Santa Barbara

BLUMCENTER

ON POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

The UCSB Blum Center on Poverty, Inequality, & Democracy aims to foster interdisciplinary, socially engaged research and learning about poverty and inequality, and contribute to collective action that advances intersectional economic and environmental justice regionally, in the United States, and abroad.



MEET THE TEAM

The People's Guide to UCSB's Student Housing Crisis was prepared by the Blum Center student leader team, with assistance from the Blum Center's Assistant Director Dr. Kashia Arnold.



Leon Barhoum



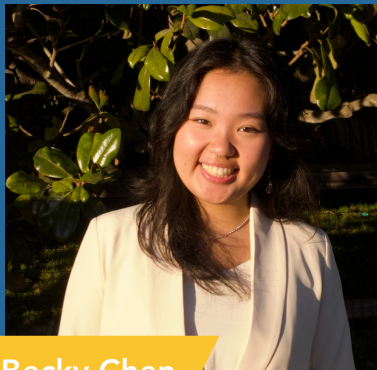
Reilly Wilson



Ashley Kim



Helena Karafilis-Spensley



Becky Chen



Cole Gerstle



Lindsay Miller



Tim Perez

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow Us

@BlumCenterUCSB
INSTAGRAM



@UCSBBlumCenter
FACEBOOK



@blumcenterucsb
TIKTOK



@UCSB_BlumCenter
X (TWITTER)



FOREWORD

A Call for Action



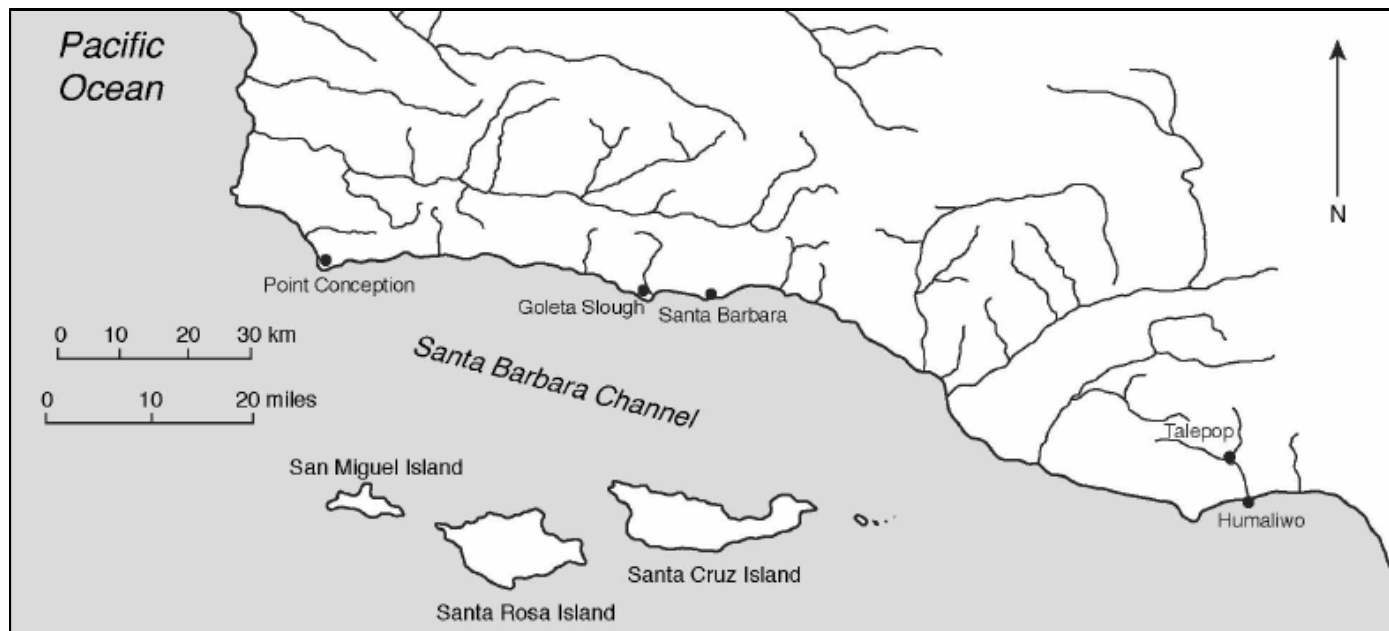
I doubt there's anyone who denies the seriousness of the housing crisis. It's a statewide situation, manifested in the increasing numbers of unhoused people, in the price of home ownership, and the proportion of paychecks needed for the rent.

Here on the central coast, the scarcity of affordable housing compels tens of thousands of people who work here to commute, and much difficulty recruiting professionally trained workers. There are a lot of reasons for our regional perfect housing storm, but one factor has been the failure of UCSB to fulfill its plans to house thousands of students, faculty and staff as the campus population grew. Admirably, the Blum Center provided an opportunity for students to turn their housing distress into a project aimed at promoting positive action. This PEOPLE'S GUIDE provides us with a comprehensive (and beautifully packaged) compendium of data, historical narrative, analysis and vision. It's a resource for students confronting housing issues as both consumers and activists—and equally for activists and community leaders working now for real solutions.

I appreciate this project as a housing justice advocate—but also as a teacher. It's a marvelous model of effective pedagogy. Use it and share it.

Dr. Richard Flacks, Professor Emeritus University of California, Santa Barbara and Director, Sustainable University Now (SUN).

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



UCSB and Isla Vista are located on Chumash land. The University was founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose lands this institution is located, the villages, and unceded lands of the Chumash people.

Many of the projects and research conducted by this University are within the traditional territory of the Chumash Peoples, and/or affect other Indigenous peoples in their territories. Each Tribe, Council, Clan, and Band is working diligently to restore and continue their traditional stewardship practices on these lands and heal from this historical trauma.

The UCSB Blum Center acknowledges the Chumash people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. We honor and respect the Elders and Indigenous peoples both past and present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Blum Center Student Team expresses its appreciation for the contributions, interest, and continued support for this project to the following individuals and organizations:

Dr. Richard Appelbaum

Dr. Kashia Arnold

Dr. Waverly Duck

Dr. Richard Flacks

Dr. Mireille Miller-Young

Dr. Alice O'Connor

The Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research (ISBER)

Isla Vista Tenants Union

Santa Barbara County Action Network (SBCAN)

UCSB Campus Planning & Design

UCSB Financial Crisis Response Team

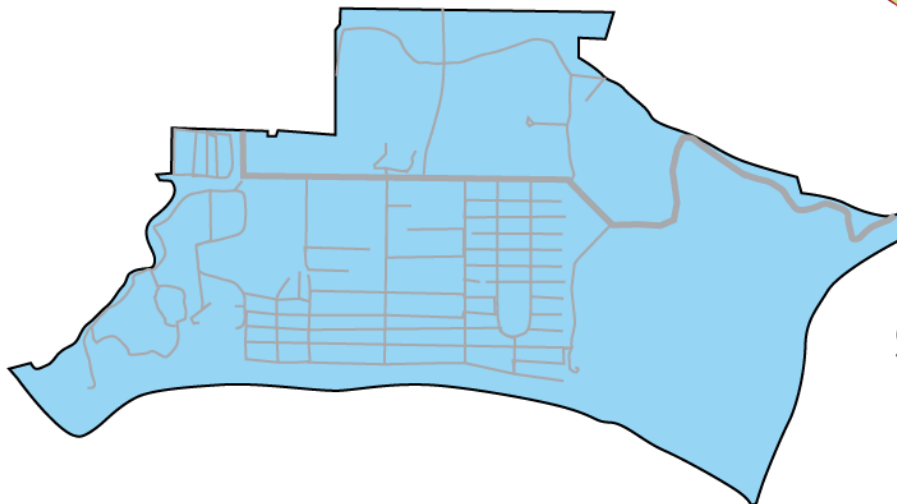
UCSB Housing Authority

UCSB University & Community Housing Services

University of California, Santa Barbara



Image Credit: Santa Barbara Independent



Santa Barbara Area Map
ISLA VISTA (IV)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Section 1 - The Current State of the Crisis	4
Section 2 - Private Development at UCSB (Munger Hall & Ocean Road)	21
Section 3 - California's Housing Crisis	38
Section 4 - Alternative Options	59
Section 5 - Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative	66
Addendum - Student Housing Resources	77

INTRODUCTION

UCSB Needs Affordable Housing



We started this project because we recognize that our campus housing scarcity and the high cost of rent has not been adequately discussed in a manner that identifies the causes and what can be done to address them. A common assumption we encountered in our conversations with UCSB students, staff, and faculty, is that “housing in Santa Barbara has always been expensive” and “there really isn’t anything that can be done about it.” As this People’s Guide seeks to demonstrate, this assumption is not true—we as a campus community can reasonably expect more affordable housing to be constructed, and in a timely and well-communicated manner.

This People’s Guide provides the knowledge and tools to clarify and assess the complex array of factors contributing to campus housing scarcity, the decision-making over the past decade that has yielded little housing construction, and the alternative options that are available to consider.

When we first began this project in January 2023, the campus was expecting the construction of Munger Hall, notoriously nicknamed ‘dormzilla,’ to house approximately 3,500 students in a dense housing experiment. UCSB’s 2010 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) had mandated that the University provide 5,000 additional beds for UCSB students by 2025 and Munger Hall was the University’s only solution to provide urgently needed student housing.

The brainchild of the recently deceased billionaire-philanthropist Charles Munger, the mega-dorm’s window-less rooms, dearth of natural light, and lack of open-air ventilation posed a serious concern to UCSB students and faculty who felt blindsided by the university’s

willingness to pursue an untested housing design that many considered unsafe for students' physical and mental wellbeing. When we returned to campus this Fall Quarter, we learned that Munger Hall was not to be, and that new plans were in the works to construct student housing, but it was not clear what had transpired.

In the aftermath of Munger Hall's demise, we recognize that our campus community can learn from its failure. Our argument, and what this People's Guide demonstrates, is that private contributions and participation have had an outsized influence on the public resources the university draws on to meet the housing needs of UCSB students, staff, and faculty. We recognize that UCSB has not received adequate financial support from the State of California in recent decades, and that this poses significant challenges for the University to meet its housing requirements. However, this budget squeeze has also been used to open the floodgates to arrangements that prioritize private profit over public need.

At the same time, our campus community does not appear well informed about the University's efforts to provide affordable and accessible housing. Our hope is that forthcoming campus housing construction will avoid the pitfalls of past decisions that enabled the Munger Hall plan to be adopted as the campus's only student housing solution. Far too much time and resources have been spent without UCSB meeting the LRDP's new housing requirements.

This People's Guide reflects an array of research into journalist reporting, campus announcements, webpages, and publications, interviews with UCSB staff, faculty, and students, and also a voluntary survey consisting of 237 undergraduate and graduate students. Students who contributed to this survey wanted to understand why UCSB lacked adequate affordable housing and expressed desperation, outrage, and alarm about the current state of affairs.

The sections are organized as follows: we first introduce the current state of the housing crisis, including the student housing experience in Isla Vista and the requirements of the 2010 Long Range Development Plan. Next, we discuss the failures of private

development with the demise of Munger Hall and the delay in completing the Ocean Road Housing Project for UCSB faculty and staff. We then turn to California's broader housing crisis, which includes examining housing across the UC system and the University of California's recent decision to invest in housing as a profit-seeking endeavor. Following this section, we introduce alternative housing solutions our campus can evaluate that better utilize the University's existing resources.

Finally, we connect the campus housing crisis to the Blum Center's Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative (CCREI), which addresses widening inequities on the Central Coast. Here we spotlight the graduate student housing experience at UCSB in the wake of COLA strikes and the high cost of living graduate students face to attend the University. We also provide an overview of existing campus resources and programs that UCSB students are eligible to use.

Thank you for supporting this work. We hope it helps you determine how the University should proceed with its construction of urgently needed campus housing.

In Solidarity,

The Blum Center Student Leader Team

