

THE *Current*

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[Keith Hamm](#)

Pahl Initiative symposium on affordable housing convenes scholarship, politics and journalism

Of the myriad issues on the minds of voters in California — the country's most culturally diverse state and the world's fifth-largest economy — affordable housing has long ranked among the most pressing, and the most contentious.

For the past two years, with funding from the [Pahl Initiative on the Study of Critical Social Issues](#), UC Santa Barbara Associate Professor Clayton Nall and his team have studied how to improve and expand housing across the state while maintaining a sense of fairness among voters at the local level.

To present and discuss results from the study, Nalls will lead a talk and forum, [“Why Don't More Americans Support Housing Development?”](#) from 3:30–5 p.m. Thursday, May 18 in the Betty Elings Wells Pavilion at The Club & Guest House at UC Santa Barbara.

“Our work addresses significant misconceptions about what happens when more housing gets built, and why those misconceptions are so difficult to dislodge,” Nall said. “My talk will be focusing on what people think about adding housing supply, and what they think it will do to their communities.”

Nall's presentation will be followed by a response from Santa Barbara County First District Supervisor Das Williams and a Q&A session led by news reporter Ryan P. Cruz of the Santa Barbara Independent.

The event will cover a handful of pressing topics, including: how housing development has become a major issue in California politics; the reasons that people oppose housing development; the "supply skepticism" that building more housing is counterproductive; the political implications of state zoning reforms and more.

"Our findings suggest that a heavy state hand might lead to more housing production, but could also bring about a backlash that undermines or even totally reverses the state's housing production reforms," Nall said.

The Pahl Initiative — created with a \$1.1-million gift from alumni Louise and Stephen Pahl — was launched in 2019–2020 with a study on [gun violence](#). Past recipients have also studied [the impact of the pandemic on underserved populations](#) and [communication challenges faced by border-separated immigrant families](#).

In 2021, Nall was the third awardee of the initiative in support of rigorous social science research on topics of pressing social importance. Work sponsored by the initiative involves both graduate and undergraduate students, with the goal of bringing academic research to public discussion.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.