

Resolution in Support of an Empty Homes Tax

WHEREAS, Santa Clara County's housing shortage continues to deepen as new housing projects take millions of dollars and multiple years to build, home prices continue rising, with 13,769 empty homes in San Jose in 2020, including 4,316 of these homes completely off the market¹, and homelessness continues growing, with authors Richard Florida and Shane Phillips showing San Jose is one of the US's most unaffordable, unequal cities²; and

WHEREAS, in the 2022 election cycle, voters in San Francisco, Santa Cruz, & Berkeley all considered empty homes tax ballot measures, with two of them being approved³; meanwhile, Oakland and Washington, D.C. already have taxes on vacant land and/or empty homes⁴, with Oakland raising \$7 million from the tax to combat homelessness its first year⁵ and Washington, D.C. using a public dashboard & map to display all its vacant and blighted properties, with nearly 100% of initial inspections for vacant buildings completed within 30 days of a report⁶; and

WHEREAS, while jurisdictions passing empty homes or vacancy taxes have exemptions for homes transitioning between tenants, being renovated, or available for short rentals, they enable the remaining property owners to choose to fill their homes with occupants *or* pay the tax, which can dedicate funding to build affordable housing, as is the case in Vancouver, Canada, where a pioneering empty homes tax has succeeded, seeing vacancy rates drop and about 2,000 housing units came back on the market in two years while generating \$21.3 million in revenue for new affordable housing in 2019⁷;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Democratic Party believes city governments should begin studying the number of homes sitting empty, including the differing reasons for said status, and call on city governments to study the different ways of implementing empty homes and/or vacant land taxes, including estimates of the varied costs and revenues based on policy options; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Democratic Party calls on Democratic legislators to propose such a tax in their respective jurisdictions, because implementing a vacant homes tax can encourage hundreds of homes to be put back on the market for occupancy very quickly while dedicating revenue from the homes remaining empty to sizably fund affordable housing.

Submitted by Alex Shoor

¹ <https://sanjosespotlight.com/san-jose-has-no-plans-to-address-vacant-homes-empty-house-tax-housing-crisis/>

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-29/how-many-years-of-income-does-a-home-in-your-city-cost>
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/02/the-place-where-the-poor-once-thrived/470667/>
https://issuu.com/islandpress/docs/ch1_9781642831344_optimized

³ <https://www.courthousenews.com/amid-housing-crisis-california-cities-look-to-target-vacant-homes-with-taxes/>
<https://www.kqed.org/news/11931327/heres-every-bay-area-housing-measure-on-the-ballot-tomorrow>

⁴ t.ly/OtQb

⁵ t.ly/tcSd

⁶ t.ly/mfYR and <https://dob.dc.gov/page/vacant-buildings>

⁷ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/realestate/article/california-vacancy-taxes-17306326.php>
https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/BLA.Residential%20Vacancies.013122_final.pdf