Housing

The State of California is in the midst of a housing crisis. By many metrics, Santa Clara County is being hit hardest. Median home prices in Santa Clara County are more than double that of California, and almost 6 times that of the United States as a whole, making the American dream of homeownership unattainable for all but the wealthiest few. Meanwhile, the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment is almost $3,000 per month, with more than 30% of residents identified as "highly cost-burdened," meaning that rent alone eats up more than 50% of their income. This situation is unfair to an entire generation being priced out of their communities, not to mention devastating to the hourly workers, teachers, and public servants who are being forced to live on the street or in their vehicles, or commute as much as two hours or more each way to their jobs serving in our communities. This is unsustainable, and the Santa Clara County Democratic Party is determined to take a leadership role in remedying this crisis. Accordingly, the Santa Clara County Democratic Party:

- Recognizes that reactionary and exclusionary housing policies in one part of the county increase housing pressure in other parts of the county (particularly South County), which leads to increased reliance on cars (and related environmental problems) and unnecessary pressure on public transportation, elimination of open spaces and agricultural land, and unfair burden on rural communities being asked to house an ever-growing number of commuters.
- Supports state and federal legislative changes and funding to help address the housing crisis which extends beyond our county.
- Embraces people who work, sleep, or attend school in our communities as integral members of our community, regardless of whether they can currently afford adequate housing locally.

Supply of ~~Market Rate~~ Housing

- Strongly supports measures designed to increase the supply of market rate housing (with priority for the lower to middle ranges of the market rather than luxury), including, but not limited to, reducing parking minimums, increasing unit and area maximums, streamlining approval processes, expediting CEQA review without lowering environmental standards, ensuring adequate staffing for planning departments, and ensuring that development fees are consistent with housing policy.
- Support increasing height limits for multifamily housing. [25]
- Support updating zoning to allow more multifamily housing. [29]
- Supports policies cutting red tape/expediting approval for housing projects in incorporated areas near public transport hubs. (CEQA, architectural, etc). [20]
- Support policies giving fee waivers for planning, environmental reviews, permits, and more, for dense housing projects. [33]

- To increase housing as soon as possible, we support limited refundable or non-refundable city and county fee credits for developers. [31]
- Support increased funding and staffing for planning and development oversight departments to reduce administrative delays. [26]
- Recognizes that Santa Clara County is a major employment hub and we must scale up our housing supply accordingly to allow people to live near their jobs. By meeting the high demand for housing in our region, we can bring down the cost of housing. [5]
- Supports a moratorium on future single family homes zoning until the housing crisis has been resolved.
- Supports the rezoning of current single family home areas into other designations that can accommodate higher density development, particularly in areas adjacent to city centers, malls, and other commercial and retail hotspots that are pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- Recognizes the economic importance of agricultural and industrial zones and the need to protect these areas from redevelopment, and believes that these areas should be rezoned for residential only after every effort is made to up-zone appropriate R1 residential areas.
- Supports increased housing density around major transportation hubs (such as Caltrain, light rail, or BART stations) and along major transit corridors (such as El Camino Real), particularly where such transportation hubs and corridors are located in that area or could easily become bicycle or pedestrian friendly.
- Strongly supports expanded access to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) permits throughout the county, especially in cities where high-density development (such as multistory apartment buildings) is politically impractical.
- Strongly opposes Exclusionary Zoning ordinances that are leading to or exacerbating the racial re-segregation of our cities.
- Strongly supports policies designed to discourage real estate investors (including foreign purchasers) from purchasing homes as investments and then leaving them vacant, including vacancy taxes or fees.
- Opposes downzoning.
- Opposes net-loss of homes when property is redeveloped.
- Support bans/restrictions on private equity funds, investment firms, foreign companies, and other corporate entities from excessive purchase of residential properties. [32]
- Support establishment of Community Land Trusts [21]

~~Supply of BMR~~ Housing for those with Limited Resources and Communities that have been Historically Disadvantaged, Ignored, and Discriminated Against

- Create mixed-income housing in residential areas and near transit to create communities that are mixed income, racially and demographically and socially diverse, to provide folks with new financial and social resources and opportunities to actively combat racism, classism, and historical segregation across our predominantly "redlined" communities. [1]
- Support identifying and implementing policies to focus on the Black, Latino, Native/Indigenous, and other communities that are disproportionately unhoused.[2]
- Expand building affordable homes in residential neighborhoods, combat segregation in housing, and promote social and financial opportunities.[18]
- Support dense affordable housing units built near transit centers. [19]
- Expand Senior housing since Santa Clara County is number one in senior homelessness.[4]
- Advocate for sufficient funding for the Emergency Housing Voucher program (EHV) and implementation of re-housing programs for EHV recipients should the program be eliminated at the federal level. [16+17]
- Supports the creation, online and easily accessible publication, and regular update by the County of a comprehensive list of affordable developments. [23]
- Supports property tax exemption/reduction for ADUs built by owners that comply with regulations and are used to house low-middle income households for at least a required period. [22]
- Continues to support reasonable development impact fees designed to provide affordable housing and other services necessary to support new residences.
- Supports affordable housing mandates in new constructions to ensure that all new development includes opportunities for low- and middle-income families to remain in their communities.
- Supports the construction of low-cost, subsidized housing for teachers, educational administrators, law enforcement, and other public employees, particularly where such housing can be constructed on repurposed public land.
- Supports the construction of assisted living housing for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Supports measures to hold cities accountable for meeting RHNA.
- Opposes the destruction of existing affordable housing, unless replaced with greater numbers of homes and current tenants are offered a just transition accommodations and right of return following redevelopment without rental rate increases.

- Strongly support housing policies centered on preservation of low-income affordable units, protection of renters from eviction and displacement, and production of Extremely Low Income and Very Low Income Affordable Housing. [6]

Publicly Owned, Built, Financed, and/or Operated Housing

- Support the use of publicly owned land throughout California for the building of housing for faculty members and/or other staff of K-12, colleges, and universities. [9]
- Increase of affordable student and employee housing on public college campuses. [10]
- Encourage fiscal incentives to build dedicated college student housing [12]
- Support prioritizing state, county, and city budgets, and the budgets of the University of California, Cal State University system, and California Community Colleges, to include funding for more publicly-owned and/or nonprofit housing, especially where increases in student populations have an impact on housing available for nearby residents, and where the price of nearby housing has negatively impacted the feasibility of college and university student enrollment. [15]
- Support increasing funding and oversight of the Santa Clara County Housing Authority (SCCHA) and empowering the SCCHA to construct and manage more properties on its own or through its subsidiary corporations as price-scaled public housing that are well-managed, affordable, diverse, and integrated. [27]

Labor Standards Relating to Housing

We reject the false choice between building more housing and protecting workers. California can and must build more affordable housing while ensuring construction jobs provide fair wages, quality benefits, apprenticeship opportunities, safe working conditions, and equitable access to good-paying careers. Public investments in housing should create both affordable homes and middle-class careers while expanding economic opportunity in underserved communities and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are awarded only to responsible contractors that comply with labor laws.

We support:

- Requiring prevailing wages on publicly funded, publicly subsidized, and qualifying private housing developments.
- Utilizing a Skilled and Trained Workforce (STW) to ensure projects are completed safely, efficiently, and to the highest standards of quality.

- Encouraging or requiring Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on appropriate housing developments to promote labor stability, local hiring, apprenticeship opportunities, and workforce diversity.
- Expanding state-approved apprenticeship programs that create career pathways for women, veterans, foster youth, and historically underrepresented communities.
- Requiring developers receiving public funding, tax incentives, or other public benefits to implement targeted hire, local hire, and workforce development programs that recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers from low-income communities, historically underserved neighborhoods, minority communities, and other underrepresented populations, while partnering with state-approved apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs to create pathways to family-sustaining union careers.
- Strong enforcement against wage theft, worker misclassification, payroll fraud, and labor law violations.
- Disqualifying any developer, contractor, or subcontractor from receiving public funding, tax incentives, or other public benefits if they have been found by a final court judgment or final administrative determination to have committed wage theft, willful labor law violations, or have been debarred for prevailing wage violations within the previous three (3) years, unless all penalties, restitution, and compliance requirements have been fully satisfied and the contractor has been restored to good standing.
- Ensuring developers receiving public incentives comply with all federal, state, and local labor laws.
- Supporting local hire, targeted hire, and community workforce agreements that create opportunities for residents living in the communities where projects are built.
- Protecting workers' fundamental right to organize and collectively bargain free from intimidation and without retaliation.
- Investing in workforce development to address California's shortage of skilled construction workers needed to meet housing production goals.

Renter Protections

- Believes that reasonable rent stabilization ordinances tailored to the needs of the community are an effective means of protecting renters from unconscionably high rents in high-cost markets like Silicon Valley, and we, therefore, support tailored rent stabilization ordinances, particularly where rental cost increases are likely to leave low- and moderate-income people or families homeless or displaced out of the County.

- Supports renter protection policies, such as “just cause” eviction requirements and renter relocation programs, to prevent landlords from taking advantage of renters in high demand areas and help renters transition to new homes when needed.
- Supports the right of tenants to organize and to collectively bargain and advocate for their rights with landlords, financial institutions, voters, and government.
- Supports legislation requiring corporate residential property owners to report vacancy rates and rent increase amounts annually. [24]

Homelessness & Vehicle Dwellers

- Support state efforts to propose yearly budgeted state solutions to homelessness and lack of housing. [13]
- Strongly opposes policies that criminalize people who are unhoused, including those who live in vehicles.
- Supports safe overnight parking programs (particularly on college campuses for homeless and vehicle dweller students), the designation of safe dumping sites, and other public services designed to facilitate the health and safety of vehicle dwellers.
- Supports the funding and construction of free and low-cost transitional housing for homeless people, with priority for homeless veterans and other vulnerable populations, such as LGBTQ teens and young adults.
- Supports permanent supportive housing for homeless people who require ongoing services to ensure they can remain housed and healthy.
- Strongly opposes hostile architecture designed to prevent the homeless from using public accommodations, and which also disproportionately harms children, seniors, and persons with disabilities.