



Press Release

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COUNTY HOUSING TASK FORCE DECLARES HOMELESSNESS A CRISIS

CALLS ON CITIES TO PURSUE AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING MEASURES

SAN JOSÉ, CALIF., October 9, 2015 – At its meeting today, the Santa Clara County Housing Task Force unanimously passed a resolution ([found here](#)) declaring the problem of homelessness to be a crisis, and calling on cities within Santa Clara County to pursue several specific strategies to fund affordable housing. The unanimous vote is a striking achievement given the diverse organizations represented on the Task Force. Both of the Task Force Co-Chairs—Matt Mahood, President and CEO of the San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Ben Field, Executive Officer of the South Bay Labor Council—joined together to support the resolution.

“The problem of homelessness has reached crisis proportions,” said Mahood. “People are living in our creeks, along our freeways, and on our sidewalks. This is a problem not just for homeless individuals, but for our entire community.”

Field added: “The high cost of housing is a tremendous financial burden for working people in Silicon Valley and is the main barrier to homeless individuals seeking permanent housing. Today's resolution calls on local government leaders to take a number of specific, concrete actions to address this problem.”

The resolution listed potential strategies to fund affordable housing development, including development of surplus public land, zoning incentives, impact fees, a revenue ballot measure, and inclusionary zoning. It called on all cities within the County to evaluate and consider these strategies.

Many of the funding proposals included in the resolution were based on work done by Housing Trust Silicon Valley. Kevin Zwick, Chief Executive Officer of the Housing Trust, sits on the Housing Task Force and voted in favor of the resolution. “Funding for affordable housing development declined significantly after the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in California,” Zwick said. “Identifying new local funding sources is critical to providing enough affordable homes to meet demand.”

The resolution also highlights the costs of homelessness to public agencies. It points to the 2015 Home Not Found study ([found here](#)) which estimated that the cost of providing services to homeless residents, including services in the health care and criminal justice systems, averaged \$520 million per year over the six-year study period, or \$3.1 billion over the entire period. By providing permanent affordable housing and moving the homeless off the streets, these costs can be dramatically reduced.

By calling on all cities within the County to pursue affordable housing funding, the resolution highlights the need for coordinated regional action on the problem. Jason Baker, who serves as the Vice-Mayor of the City of Campbell and as the President of the Cities Association of Santa Clara County, represents the Cities Association on the Housing Task Force. “Our hope is that all cities within the County will adopt this resolution and commit to pursuing additional affordable housing funding,” Baker said. “The Cities Association is an excellent forum for us to promote a coordinated approach to this issue.”

The resolution was drafted by San Jose City Councilmember Donald Rocha, who was appointed by San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo to represent San Jose on the Housing Task Force. Rocha commented: “Homelessness is a crisis both because of the great hardship our homeless residents suffer and because of the quality of life impacts it has on all of us who live in the County. We need to take urgent action.”

About the Santa Clara County Housing Task Force

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors created the Housing Task Force in February of 2015 at the recommendation of Supervisor Dave Cortese. Its purpose is to identify solutions to the immediate housing needs of homeless families and individuals across Santa Clara County.

About the San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce

The San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit business association representing nearly 1,500 employers and 250,000 employees throughout the greater Silicon Valley. Its mission is to create a strong local economy, provide premier business connections and visibility, represent the interests of business to government, promote the community and initiate political and community action.

About the South Bay Labor Council

The South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council represents 94 unions and over 100,000 union members in Santa Clara and San Benito counties. For over 50 years the Labor Council has championed the cause of working families in the South Bay.

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