

SV JCRC Consensus Position Statement on Affordable Housing and Homelessness

There is a crisis of housing affordability in Silicon Valley that requires a regional approach, including state legislation and cooperation among neighborhoods, cities, counties, and governmental agencies. We support welcoming and inclusive communities with housing affordable and available to everyone located near jobs and core life activities.

JCRC has a strong interest in addressing homelessness and affordable housing, based both on our religious ethos and our democratic values. Our religious texts repeatedly compel us to exercise compassion for those in need - indeed our prophets proclaim that religiosity is devoid of meaning if it does not lead to demonstrative compassion for others. The relief of homelessness is seen as a religious duty preferable to ritual observance of any kind.¹

Addressing homelessness and affordable housing is at the core of a democracy, as it is the most fundamental requirement for human dignity, and is at the nexus of stable family and community life. The lack of adequate housing solutions has reinforced cycles of concentrated poverty, racial segregation and neighborhood disinvestment.

In addition to our stated Jewish and democratic values, we must actively work on fixing the housing crisis because:

- It is a dominant factor contributing to poverty among low income residents.
- It leads to homelessness even for some people that hold jobs. It is an injustice that even people working multiple jobs are unhoused.
- It is an excessive part of the fixed costs for middle income families.
- It has a significant detrimental impact on children.
- It makes hiring of talent uncompetitive for many of our businesses.
- It splits families by displacing young adults who cannot afford to stay in the area and raise their own children.
- It has the potential to derail Silicon Valley's economy which is a pillar of California and the Nation's economy.
- Overcrowding has a serious, negative impact on the physical and mental health of children and families.

Reasons for the housing shortage include: restrictive zoning, public opposition, cost of land and construction, and impact fees. Some of these factors are rooted in historic problems related to discrimination.

Types of solutions we support

There is no one solution to address the housing crisis facing Silicon Valley; solutions must address various aspects of the problem, including the lack of housing (e.g., workforce housing, homelessness) and affordability. The solutions cited here are not intended to be exhaustive. In order to solve the housing crisis, we need many solutions and openness to the path that can scale the solutions to the depth of the crisis.

We support evidence-based solutions that would make housing plentiful, inclusive, affordable, and environmentally sound. We support sustainable transit-oriented development and oppose urban sprawl.

¹ Isaiah 58:71

We also support zoning modifications that allow for infill, especially near jobs and transit, streamlining of the housing approval process, and examination of fees that may be impediments to affordable housing.

Dependable government efforts and a reliable source of funding is another challenge. Opinions differ as to the role of government in addressing the housing shortage, and the role of the market in supplying sufficient affordable housing stock. As a result, political support has been inconsistent. Nevertheless, public funding and public support will still be necessary to address the crisis. We will continue to support public funding efforts from multiple levels of government that indicate they will help alleviate the housing crisis, particularly for homeless people and extremely low income households.

Ending homelessness requires far more than we have achieved thus far and includes solutions such as public funding and wraparound services for homeless families and individuals - including housing, mental and physical healthcare, and job training and placement. It is important that these services are provided without criminalizing homelessness or infringing on the rights of homeless individuals.

Some high profile recent examples of the type of solutions that we support are the 'CASA Compact'², California Senate Bill 50 of 2019-2020³, and California Senate Bill 1120 of 2020⁴. A local recent example is supporting the continuation of the visioning process at Reid-Hillview Airport to increase affordable housing and open space access in East San Jose.

Subsidized housing for very low income populations such as Section 8 and Section 202 programs are particularly important to the Jewish community because of our disproportionately elderly demographics. It is essential, both out of concern for Jewish seniors and for the health and well-being of America's elderly, that these programs be fully funded. Currently, the Federation system operates more than 100 low-income housing facilities and provides housing assistance and services to more than 12,000 people in Section 202 housing.

² <https://mtc.ca.gov/tools-and-resources/digital-library/casa-compact>

³ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB50

⁴ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB1120