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Silicon Valley Set to Gain More Affordable Housing

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Working Partnerships USA

San Jose, California – one of Silicon Valley’s key cities – will soon see more affordable housing amid the pricey real estate in the high technology area, thanks to two years of advocacy work by grassroots, faith and business groups.

The San Jose City Council on Tuesday approved a housing impact fee of \$17 per square foot on new market rate development, a decision that will raise money to build about 10,000 units of affordable real estate in the coming years, Working Partnerships USA reported.

“This means that San Jose has committed new revenue to be able to build affordable housing for our most underserved communities of color and moderate income households,” Derecka Mehrens, the organization’s executive director, wrote in an email to supporters.

Other supporters include working families, housing advocates, neighborhood associations, legal experts, environmentalists and labor unions. “This monumental affordable housing victory is the culmination of all of our tireless advocacy efforts, organizing, research and community mobilization,” Mehrens said.

While Silicon Valley has high-paying technology jobs, grassroots advocates point out that housing costs have skyrocketed and many people have low-wage jobs in the region and are being squeezed by expensive living costs. In fact, a recent Census Bureau study identified California as the poorest in the country, largely because of housing costs.

This is not the first time residents in San Jose and the area have addressed the high cost of living in the technology-rich valley. In 2013, a voter-approved higher minimum wage went into effect in San Jose to help people have more money to cover their monthly housing, food and health care costs.

That vote raised the city’s hourly wage from \$8 to \$10. It was one of the first local efforts of its kind in the country in recent years.

Working Partnerships USA is a community-labor organization dedicated to addressing the root causes of inequality for workers and communities of color.



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