

RESOLUTION 21-28

**A RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD
OF THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY
RECOGNIZING THE INTERSECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY AS IT RELATES TO
HOUSING AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN HONOR OF MAY AS AFFORDABLE HOUSING MONTH**

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority is committed to conserving the natural environment, supporting agriculture, and connecting people to nature by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations; and

WHEREAS, at the state, regional, and local level, land-use policies, and decision-making significantly impact both the housing crisis and the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, low-density sprawled housing converts the community's critical natural and working lands and inadequately addresses the need for equitable and environmentally sustainable housing when compared to high-density infill housing in areas close to transit and other essential services; and

WHEREAS, additional development of low-density sprawled housing has detrimental impacts on the natural infrastructure that benefits community safety, well-being, and equitable access to social and economic opportunities and increases the amount of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emitted as households are forced to travel farther, and have longer commutes, in order to access affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, in California, "housing opportunity is integral to advancing economic well-being, education, and public health and managing climate change" according to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and

WHEREAS, the Bay Area has the third largest population of people experiencing homelessness in the United States according to the Bay Area Council Economic Institute's 2019 report; and

WHEREAS, Santa Clara County recorded a 31% increase between 2017 and 2019 of persons experiencing homelessness (the highest percentage in over a decade), with over 80% of those individuals reporting that they lived in Santa Clara County before they became homeless, and more than 50% of them having lived in the county for 10 or more years, according to the Homeless Census and Survey; and the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, which serves low-income individuals and family in Santa Clara County, reported a 30% increase in the number of housing-related cases in 2020; and

WHEREAS, adequate housing is defined as affordable, accessible, appropriately located, and not cut off from important services, according to the 2021 United Nations special report; and

WHEREAS, housing access is directly related to a person's safety and security in the face of climate change; and

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WHEREAS, those living in homelessness or lacking access to resilient or secure housing are the most adversely affected by climate-fueled natural disasters such as floods and wildfire, according to a United Nations (UN) special report; and,

WHEREAS, “low-income renters of color are hit first and worst when natural disasters strike” and oftentimes face higher barriers to accessing relief and recovery resources, according to statistics shared by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC); and,

WHEREAS, “the racial wealth gap and larger social and racial inequality in the United States exacerbate environmental disparities,” thereby making it more difficult for communities of color and low and medium-income communities to benefit from climate adaptation and other investments in long-term resiliency, according to a 2021 report by the Greenlining Institute; and,

WHEREAS, therefore, “States must build adaptive capacities in vulnerable communities” such as low-lying coastal zones, which includes “recognizing the manner in which factors such as discrimination, and disparities in education and health, affect climate vulnerability” according to the UN Key Messages on Human Rights and Climate Change; and,

WHEREAS, since this issue is “multidimensional,” strategies should provide, “coherence and coordination in all relevant policy areas” including urban planning and land regulation, and should strategize how to address specific barriers, such as environmental degradation, according to the UN special report; and,

WHEREAS, “policies that support housing affordability can actively contribute to reducing the negative impacts of climate change” and denser forms of development that increase proximity and connectivity between jobs can reduce travel time, travel costs, and the GHG emissions responsible for elevating the risks of climate change, according to HCD; and,

WHEREAS, “proactive planning reduces the need for reactive response” and can reduce the risk of harm caused by the impacts of climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; and,

WHEREAS, instead of “ever-expanding outward” in a region already exposed to multiple hazards including floods, wildfires, and earthquakes, “growing up” and cultivating what the Bay Area already has can “enable existing areas to become better places for people, retaining many of their essential qualities while supporting diversity and inclusion, public health, sustainable transportation and community life,” while also protecting farms, ranches, open spaces, and natural ecosystems, according to SPUR’s Regional Strategy; and,

WHEREAS, with thoughtful planning, the Bay Area “can accommodate the region’s housing and job growth without building in hazardous areas, agricultural lands and open spaces” while “adding humanity, empathy, accessibility, convenience, and a renewed appreciation for the region around us” according to SPUR; and,

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that through the Authority's commitment to its mission, the Authority:

- Recognizes the agency's responsibility to work towards understanding the most urgent needs of individuals within the community and how they impact, intersect with, and inform our mission.
- Recognizes how land use policy and decisions impact the day-to-day and long-term experiences of persons within the community.
- Recognizes that climate change will exacerbate existing inequities by disproportionately impacting marginalized and vulnerable members of the community.
- Recognizes the opportunity to, as a conservation agency in the Bay Area, more deeply understand its past, present, and future engagement and impact on issues related to social and environmental justice.
- Recognizes the agency's responsibility to work towards multi-benefit solutions that recognize the interconnectedness of the environmental, economic, social, and health challenges that our community faces, which includes, but is not limited to, access to safe and affordable housing.
- Commits to collaboratively seeking interventions that, through innovation, empathy, and a willingness to work together, will foster meaningful change; and,

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 27^h day of May 2021 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Kalvin Gill, Chairperson
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

ATTEST:

William P. Parkin, Legal Counsel

Kellie Guerra, Clerk of the Board