

# Bay Area poll: Idea to help fix housing crisis gets support

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SAN JOSE — An outside-the-box approach to alleviating the Bay Area’s housing crisis for some workers has garnered support in Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco counties, according to a Silicon Valley Leadership Group poll released Tuesday.

The poll determined that 73 percent of voters in those areas would support converting publicly owned vacant lands to develop affordable rental housing. Twenty percent of respondents opposed the idea, and 7 percent had no opinion.

“This survey really was motivated by word that in some parts of the Bay Area, a household income for a family of four making \$100,000 a year was considered low-income by the government,” said Carl Guardino, president of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. “That kind of household income, in most parts of our country, would be upper middle class or high income. It’s mind-blowing.”

The poll surveyed 1,200 registered voters in the three counties from May 3 through May 9 of this year and had a margin of error of 2.6 percent.

“Many cities in the Bay Area have vacant lands, that are not parks or open space, that could be used for housing,” the poll question stated. “Many of these parcels of vacant land are next to schools, public buildings, roadways, and sites of former government uses. Some people have suggested the idea of allowing cities in the Bay Area to build affordable rental housing for individuals and families earning less than \$100,000 a year at these vacant government land locations subject to local City Council approval. This housing would not be traditional ‘public housing.’ This housing would be owned by a local non-profit agency and operated as a non-profit to keep rents as low as possible. Priority for the housing would be for public safety and public education employees, and medical and health care workers with jobs in a nearby Bay Area community. Would you support or oppose such a proposal?”

The leadership group believes the types of employees who would live in such housing provide crucial support for the Bay Area’s economy.

“We need more housing in our region for people at all income levels,” said Kevin Zwick, chief executive officer of Housing Trust Silicon Valley. “The only way to meet this need is to fill our toolbox with as many resources as possible.”

As land becomes more scarce in the region, government-owned properties could be part of the solution, according to the leadership group.

“We just don’t have much land left in the Bay Area for development,” Guardino said. “This plan could free up new parcels to building housing.”