

# County Housing Authority: Helping people for 50 years

**By Katherine Harasz**

For 50 years, the Santa Clara County Housing Authority has been the largest provider of affordable housing in our community. We have weathered many challenges, including a recession and changing federal administrations and spending priorities.

Through it all, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to make rental housing safe and affordable for low-income families. Every day, the Housing Authority ensures that over 18,000 families have an affordable place to call home in Santa Clara County.

Our role in the community has taken on many forms: from buying land and building affordable housing to paying over \$21 million a month in rental assistance to landlords throughout our community on behalf of qualified low-income renters. Our work has been vital to the fabric of the county, ensuring that thousands of families are still able to call our community home.

But we don't do this work on our own. We partner with individuals and groups who are

equally committed to ending homelessness and solving our affordability crisis. We work with partners in county government to provide housing subsidies and with our city partners to assist new developments with project-based vouchers.

Now, with the passage of Measure A, the county's housing bond passed in November, we will play a prominent role in helping the county, our cities and the development community house our most vulnerable residents by adding our federal funding stream to the almost \$1 billion in new local funding.

Our single focus on affordable housing has allowed our strategies to be successful.

One example is the All The Way Home campaign. Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese, San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and I have worked to help veterans who bravely served our country but became homeless when they returned. So far we have helped more than 600 move into permanent housing.

We currently have 180 apart-

ments under construction and almost 600 vouchers committed to other housing projects that will build apartments for families with special needs. These different approaches both increase the housing supply and preserve affordability.

While we celebrate the history of the Housing Authority, we know that our work must continue. We are facing a significant shift in spending priorities at the federal level — a shift away from safety net funding. But no matter what happens in Washington, we take our obligation to be the housing safety net for thousands of families very seriously.

Families and communities cannot thrive with so many people in poverty, without stability for their children. Too many of them live in our streets. We've spent 50 years making homes and growing communities. We will be here for as long as we're needed.

---

*Katherine Harasz is the Executive Director of the Santa Clara County Housing Authority. She wrote this for The Mercury News.*