

## Santa Clara County Housing Authority Celebrates 180 New Affordable Apartments With Virtual Grand Opening

### 120 Residents Safely Move Into New Senior Housing Amid Pandemic

**SAN JOSE, Calif. – December. 23, 2020** – Today the Santa Clara County Housing Authority (SCCHA) warmly welcomes 366 residents to its recently completed Park Avenue Senior Apartments and sister development, Laurel Grove Family Apartments, which was completed in March 2019. Located at 370 and 298 Laurel Grove Lane in San José, the new apartment community is adjacent to Diridon Station, the city’s major public transit hub and nexus for Google’s planned transit village. The virtual grand opening celebration with a resident interview and comments from Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, San José Mayor Sam Liccardo, San José City Councilmember Dev Davis, Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, and SCCHA Board Chair Jennifer Loving is available for viewing on [SCCHA’s YouTube channel](#).

- The 100-unit Park Avenue Senior Apartments and 82-unit Laurel Grove Family Apartments provide 180 units of critically needed housing affordable to very low-income families and seniors earning between 20% and 50% of the county’s median income or between \$31,580 and \$78,950 per year for a family of four. (Two units are reserved for on-site management.)
- During April, a month into the county’s shelter-in-place order, 120 residents safely moved into their new homes at Park Avenue Senior Apartments thanks to the herculean efforts of SCCHA staff, property manager FPI Management, nonprofit social services provider LifeSTEPS and the county’s Office of Supportive Housing.
- All rental units are covered by a Section 8 project-based voucher contract, keeping the rents permanently affordable.
- Both developments include 20 units for preference for residents with special needs, including those who may have experienced chronic homelessness.
- Following public health directives, property management and social services staff are physically on-site but providing all programming virtually. They are working hard to be sure residents’ basic needs are met, from healthy food delivery to emergency financial assistance and other case management services.

“Our agency remains the housing safety net for thousands of people,” said SCCHA Executive Director Katherine Harasz. “We’re working tirelessly with our community partners to quickly house as many people as possible. Together, we’ll continue meeting the challenges of isolation and uncertainty during this public health emergency.”

“I am just so grateful to be here,” said Altagracia Hernandez, a Laurel Grove Family Apartments resident. About 3 ½ years ago, her family of four had nowhere to go when they were evicted from their apartment in East Palo Alto, where she’d lived since high school. Her landlord had nearly doubled the rent, and Hernandez simply couldn’t pay it. After 1 ½ years of homelessness, Hernandez, 45, never thought she’d be able to rent a 3-bedroom apartment, where she lives with her daughter, two sons and grandchild. “I want to help wherever I can because without this apartment, we would still be sleeping in the car.” Before the pandemic, Hernandez was a lead volunteer with LifeSTEPS’ food distribution program. She says that while it’s been tough sheltering in place, “our family and neighbors are safe, and I’m just so thankful for our home.”

For Park Avenue Senior Apartments resident Shirley Guzman, community is important. “I thank God every morning when I wake up for what I have here,” said Guzman, 75. “I feel very safe and comfortable, and I’m so thankful that I was settled in here before the pandemic got worse.” Though the outdoor courtyards and community room are closed to residents for now, Guzman appreciates LifeSTEPS’ resident services staff, who frequently drop by her apartment and provide socially distanced food distribution in the popular mailroom area. “Neighbors help neighbors, and everything is right here for us.”

### **Helping residents remain stable and healthy during pandemic**

On-site resident services provider, LifeSTEPS, pivoted to virtual programming at the beginning of the shelter-in-place order. Residents have access to a whole host of services, from online classes and after-school programs to “grab-and-go” food distribution, socially distanced coffee socials and at-home yoga. The LifeSTEPS team regularly reaches out to residents through phone calls, text, email, virtual meetings and socially distanced door-to-door visits wearing masks. Families that are struggling to make ends meet due to job loss or reduced hours are encouraged to meet with LifeSTEPS staff and participate in virtual workshops that cover budgeting, financing and job searching. Families and seniors may also sign up for hot meals from nonprofit Loaves and Fishes, delivered once a week to their door. Intensive case management services for residents with special needs is being provided by Peninsula HealthCare Connection at Laurel Grove and by the county’s Office of Supportive Housing at Park Avenue.

Both amenity-rich developments have a community room, supportive services space, outdoor courtyards, on-site laundry and underground parking. Laurel Grove Family Apartments also provides residents with access to annual transit passes, an outdoor play structure, barbecue area and bicycle maintenance shop.

San Francisco-based Gelfand Partners Architects designed both developments, which broke ground in 2016. The projects’ general contractor was Core Build JV, a partnership between San José-based CORE Builders and the Build Group. Laurel Grove received Gold certification under the Build It Green healthy and sustainable homes program, and Park Avenue is pursuing the Gold certification.

SCCHA acquired the two-acre property in 2008 for \$5.74 million. Financing for the developments occurred prior to the county’s 2016 Measure A affordable housing bond. The \$59.2 million Laurel Grove Family Apartments is being financed with \$18.8 million in low-income housing tax credit equity from US Bank Community Development Corp.; \$27.5 million in tax exempt bond proceeds from Citibank, N.A. and Silicon Valley Bank; and \$12.9 million in loans and contributions from SCCHA. The \$71.2 million Park Avenue Senior Apartments is being financed with a projected \$27 million in low-income housing tax credit equity from US Bank Community Development Corp.; \$20.3 million in tax exempt bond proceeds from Citibank, N.A. and Silicon Valley bank; and \$23.9 million in loans and contributions from SCCHA. The California Municipal Finance Authority is the bond issuer.

SCCHA owns or controls more than 2,400 affordable housing units countywide, with approximately 750 units currently in its development and rehabilitation pipeline.

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### **About SCCHA**

SCCHA is the largest provider of affordable housing assistance in Santa Clara County, helping make rental housing safe and affordable for low-income families through Section 8 voucher programs and below-market rental properties. Designated a Moving to Work agency by Congress, it currently assists more than 19,000 households through innovative policies for the delivery of assisted housing. For more information, visit [www.scchousingauthority.org](http://www.scchousingauthority.org).

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