

**Poll: Majority of Sacramento Residents Support Low-income Housing Ordinance,  
Thirty Percent Consider Relocation**

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Sacramento's housing price has increased dramatically: 112 percent in the past 5 years, and is ranked 25<sup>th</sup> nationally (Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight 2006). The median home price was \$169,310 in March 2002 and jumped to \$376,010 in March 2006 (California Association of Realtors 2001 and 2006). Sacramento has enjoyed one of the biggest five-year percentage gains in housing price in the nation even after the housing market slowdown since last summer.

In sharp contrast, during the same period, increases in the average annual salary in the Sacramento region have not kept pace. In fact, many jobs in the Sacramento County still pay the annual salary that qualifies as low income, including firefighters and school counselors. According to the Federal Government, a family is considered "low income" if, after adjusting for family size, the annual household income is below 80 percent of an area's median income (AMI). Using this standard, a family of four with an annual household income of \$51,300 or less in the Sacramento County in 2004 was regarded as low income. Housing is considered affordable by the Federal Government if it consumes no more than 30 percent of a household's income, so that families will have enough money left over for other basic necessities such as food, child care, health care, and transportation. Many working people in the region are struggling to support their families. This is especially the case for low income households that need to afford to buy or rent a place to live<sup>1</sup> (California Budget Report 2005; Sacramento Housing Alliance 2006).

To meet the housing needs of many working families, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors adopted an affordable housing ordinance in December of 2004. The program requires developers of residential housing designate 15 percent of new units be affordable to families and individuals who earn less than \$13,000 or less than \$51,000 per year, who are designated as extremely low-income or low-income families and individuals<sup>2</sup> (Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency 2006).

In response to this ordinance, the Building Industry Association filed a lawsuit against the County of Sacramento in an attempt to overturn it. Shortly thereafter, a coalition of low-income citizens and affordable-housing advocacy groups filed a motion seeking dismissal of the lawsuit. The attorney general's office later joined in that motion. Finally, in March

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<sup>1</sup> (For more information about this topic, please see Appendix I or visit the website: <http://www.sachousingalliance.org/>.)

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed information about the ordinance, please see Appendix II or visit the website: <http://www.shra.org/Content/Housing/HousingDevelopment/CountyAfford.htm>.

2006, the legal battle came to a halt after a judge threw out the building industry's lawsuit that had challenged Sacramento County's affordable-housing ordinance. However, the fight is not over yet. Builders may appeal and/or reopen the debate any time.

How many people in Sacramento County support the low-income housing ordinance? Do residents from the other three counties in the region also endorse this kind of affordable housing program? How many residents are seriously considering relocating due to the high housing cost? Does the housing market slowdown in the Sacramento region since the summer of 2005 make residents in the region believe that housing in the region is more affordable now than before?

According to *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, the majority of residents in the Sacramento region (77%) see affordable housing as a problem with 51 percent viewing it as a major concern. It is the second biggest concern in the region after transportation, and has remained one of the top concerns in the region in the past few years (48% in 2005, Liu and Livingston 2005; 50% in 2004, Liu and Sheley 2004; 51% in 2003, Liu and Sheley 2003; and 47% in 2002, Liu 2002).

Because of the persistent high housing cost, nearly one-third (30%) of Sacramento region families are seriously considering moving away from the area. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the public support providing housing opportunities for families earning less than \$51,000 per year (91%) and believe that 15 percent of new homes should be priced for low-income families (70%). Such a strong endorsement for the low-income housing program holds true regardless of whether people live in Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, or El Dorado County.

These are some of the results from *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, conducted from February 4 through March 5, 2006, by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), California State University, Sacramento.

### **Affordable housing remains a top concern**

Affordable housing has remained a big issue in the past five years since we started our survey in 2002. The perception that affordable housing is a major problem was 47 percent in February 2002 (Liu 2002), 51 percent in February 2003 (Liu and Sheley 2003), 50 percent in February 2004 (Liu and Sheley 2004), and 48 percent in 2005 (Liu and Livingston 2005). In 2006, three out of four residents (77%) regard the availability of affordable housing as either a big problem (51%) or somewhat of a problem (26%). Twenty-two percent report no problem, and one percent doesn't know. It is the second biggest concern in the region after transportation.

Regardless of household incomes, rising interest rates and/or higher gas prices may negatively affect the perception of affordable housing, even though housing sales have slowed down dramatically in the past year. Now almost two-thirds (63%) of residents with household income less than \$50,000 believe affordable housing is a big problem, which is 6 percent higher than 2005 (57%). More than half (52%) of those making

\$50,000 to less than \$100,000 share this concern, which is also higher than a year ago (49%). Even people who are making \$100,000 or more are more likely to think this is the case this year, when compared to a year ago (41% in 2006 vs. 37% in 2005).

Homeownership status also makes a major difference in perception of affordable housing. More than two-thirds (67%) of the non-homeowners find affordable housing a big problem, while only 45 percent of homeowners think so. Furthermore, more than half of the non-whites (57%), those younger than 65 (52% for those between 41 and 64, and 55% for those 40 or younger), Democrats (56%), and other voters (52%) also share this concern.

The perception of affordable housing doesn't vary significantly by length of residence in the region any more. Almost half of long-time residents (51%) and newer residents (48%) are likely to think that affordable housing is a big problem. This is quite different from a year ago when length of residence made a big difference. In 2005, residents who had lived in the region for a long time were much more likely to perceive it as a big problem. More than half of the long-term residents (52% living 20 or more years), 47 percent of those living between 7 to 19 years, and 39 percent of those who had stayed six years or less reported affordable housing was a big concern (Liu and Livingston 2005).

**“I am going to read you a list of issues in the Sacramento region. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem.”**

*Comparison among the Sacramento Region*

	Sac. Region <sup>1</sup> (2006)	Sac. Region <sup>1</sup> (2005)	Sac. Region <sup>2</sup> (2004)	Sac. Region <sup>3</sup> (2003)	Sac. Region <sup>4</sup> (2002)
Affordable housing					
Big problem	51%	48%	50%	51%	47%
Somewhat of a prob.	26	27	31	33	33
Not a problem	22	23	16	14	18
Don't know	1	2	3	2	2

<sup>1</sup> The wording in our 2006 and 2005 survey is slightly different from our 2002, 2003, and 2004 surveys. The 2002, 2003 and 2004 surveys asked about the “availability of affordable housing,” while this year uses “the availability of housing you can afford”, the same as the PPIC surveys.

<sup>2</sup> Source: The 2003 Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region, June 2003, [www.csus.edu/ssis/](http://www.csus.edu/ssis/).

<sup>3</sup> Source: *The Executive Summary for the Regional Issues* for the 2004 Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region, April 2004, [www.csus.edu/ssis/](http://www.csus.edu/ssis/).

<sup>4</sup> Source: The 2002 Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region, June 2002, [www.csus.edu/ssis/](http://www.csus.edu/ssis/).

*Comparison among People with Different Household Income*

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	\$100,000 or more
2006			
Affordable housing			
Big problem	63%	52%	41%
Somewhat of a problem	19	26	32
Not a problem	17	21	26
Don't know	1	1	1
2005			
Affordable housing			
Big problem	57%	49%	37%
Somewhat of a problem	25	26	29
Not a problem	17	23	33
Don't know	1	2	1

*Comparison between Homeowners and Others*

	Homeowners	Non-homeowners
Affordable housing		
Big problem	45%	67%
Somewhat of a problem	28	22
Not a problem	26	10
Don't know	1	1

*Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups*

	White	Other Racial Groups
Affordable housing		
Big problem	48%	57%
Somewhat of a problem	28	24
Not a problem	23	18
Don't know	1	1

*Comparison among People with Different Age*

	40 or Younger	41 to 64	65 or Plus
Affordable housing			
Big problem	55%	52%	41%
Somewhat of a problem	29	28	17
Not a problem	15	19	40
Don't know	1	1	32

*Comparison among Registered Voters*

	Republicans	Democrats	Others
Affordable housing			
Big problem	41%	56%	52%
Somewhat of a problem	28	24	31
Not a problem	30	19	17
Don't know	1	01	0

*Comparison among People with Different Length of Residence in the Region*

	6 Years or Less	7 to 19 Years	20 Years or Longer
2005			
Affordable housing			
Big problem	39%	47%	52%
Somewhat of a problem	31	30	24
Not a problem	28	22	22
Don't know	2	1	2
2006			
Affordable housing			
Big problem	48%	51%	51%
Somewhat of a problem	31	27	25
Not a problem	21	20	23
Don't know	0	2	1

**Nearly one-third of the public forced to consider relocation**

The persistent high cost of housing in the Sacramento region has made 30 percent of area residents seriously consider moving away from the part of the Sacramento region where they are now living. This is very similar to the situation a year ago, when 33 percent were thinking about relocation (Liu and Livingston 2005).

High housing costs are especially hard for non-homeowners. Half (50%) of them are forced to think about moving. Those with a household income less than \$50,000 (42%) and people 40 or younger (37%) are also significantly affected. The biggest gap is between homeowners and non-homeowners (27% gap) and between those people with lowest and highest household incomes (26% gap).

Among those who are thinking about relocation, the majority are considering leaving the state (70%). This is specially the case for those 41 years old or older (76%).

**“Does the cost of the housing make you and your family seriously consider moving away from the part of the Sacramento region you live in now?”**

*Comparison between 2006 and 2005*

	Sacramento Region (2006)	Sacramento Region (2005)
Yes	30%	33%
No	69	66
Don't know	1	1

*Comparison between Homeowners and Others*

	Homeowner	Non-Homeowner
Yes	23%	50%
No	76	47
Don't Know	1	3

*Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes*

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	\$100,000 or more
2006			
Yes	42%	31%	16%
No	56	68	84
Don't know	2	1	0

*Comparison among People with Different Ages*

	40 or Younger	41 to 64	65 or Plus
Yes	37%	31%	13%
No	61	68	85
Don't know	2	1	2

**Where do you plan to move: elsewhere within the four-county region, outside the region, or outside California?**

	Sacramento Region	40 or Younger	41 or Plus
Inside California	25%	33%	19%
Outside California	70	62	76
Don't know	5	5	5

**More than 90 percent think families earning \$51,000 or less deserve to live in their community**

Nine in ten residents (91%) in the Sacramento region think families earning less than \$51,000 per year should have opportunities to live in their community. Only six percent oppose this position while three percent have not yet formed an opinion. This overwhelming support holds true regardless of whether they live in Sacramento (90%), Yolo (93%), Placer (90%), or El Dorado (95%) County, they are white (90%) or residents from other racial groups (93%), they are men (89%) or women (92%), or they own a home (94%) or not (90%).

Democrats (94%), other voters (94%), and those families earning less than \$100,000 (94%) show more support for this general principle than Republicans (89%) and those making \$100,000 or more (86%). However, regardless of whether they are making more (86%) or less than \$100,000 (94%), or whether they are Democrats (94%), Republicans (89%) or other voters (94%), about 90 percent believe that low-income families deserve to live in their communities.

**“Do you think families earning less than \$51,000 per year should have opportunities to live in your community?”**

*Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region*

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer County	Sacramento County	Yolo County
Yes	91%	95%	90%	90%	93%
No	6	3	9	7	6
Don't Know	3	2	1	3	1

*Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups*

	White	Other Racial Group
Yes	90%	93%
No	7	5
Don't Know	3	2

*Comparison between Male and Female*

	Male	Female
Yes	89%	92%
No	8	5
Don't Know	3	3

*Comparison between Homeowners and Others*

	Homeowner	Non-Homeowner
Yes	90%	94%
No	7	4
Don't Know	3	2

*Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes*

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	\$100,000 or more
Yes	94%	94%	86%
No	4	4	12
Don't know	2	2	2

*Comparison among Registered Voters*

	Republicans	Democrats	Other
Yes	89%	94%	94%
No	9	5	4
Don't Know	2	1	2

**Seventy percent support a portion of new homes as affordable housing**

More than two-thirds of the residents (70%) in the Sacramento region think 15 percent of new homes built in their county should be priced as low-income, affordable housing. Twenty-two percent oppose the position while eight percent have not yet formed an opinion. Support for the low-income, affordable housing program is strong among residents regardless of whether they live in Sacramento (69%), Yolo (74%), Placer (69%), or El Dorado (72%) County.

However, support for this specific low-income affordable measure (70%) is much lower than the general principle that those earning less than \$51,000 should be able to have a chance to live in their community (91%). Moreover, endorsement for this specific low-income affordable ordinance also varies a great deal more among the registered voters. Democrats (82%) support this program more than other voters (66%), which in turn show more support than Republicans (57%).

There are also big differences among the general public in the region. Support is highest from the non-homeowners (81%). Those whose families are making \$100,000 a year (58%) are much less likely to endorse it than those who are earning less than \$50,000 (78%). Those who are white (68%) or male (61%) show less support for lower-pricing structures than those who are non-white (75%) or female (75%).

**“Do you think 15% of new homes built in your country should be priced as low-income, affordable housing?”**

*Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region*

	Sacramento Region	El Dorado County	Placer County	Sacramento County	Yolo County
Yes	70%	69%	72%	69%	74%
No	22	28	21	22	20
Don't Know	8	3	7	9	6

*Comparison among Registered Voters*

	Republicans	Democrats	Other
Yes	57%	82%	66%
No	35	12	22
Don't Know	8	6	12

*Comparison between Homeowners and Others*

	Homeowner	Non-Homeowner
Yes	66%	81%
No	25	13
Don't Know	9	6

*Comparison among People with Different Household Income*

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	\$100,000 or more
Yes	78%	73%	58%
No	14	19	37
Don't know	8	8	5

*Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups*

	White	Other Racial Group
Yes	68%	75%
No	24	18
Don't Know	8	7

*Comparison between Male and Female*

	Male	Female
Yes	61%	75%
No	29	18
Don't Know	10	7

## Survey Methods

The above results are based on our fifth annual survey, *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*<sup>3</sup>. This study is a computer-assisted telephone interview of 1122 adult residents age 18 and older from randomly selected households in the Sacramento region, which includes Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, and El Dorado counties. The objective of this project is to assess quality of life and public opinion regarding a wide range of important local and national issues in the Sacramento region.

More than 30 students conducted phone interviews in English and Spanish from February 4 to March 5, 2006, at the Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. The sample is representative of the four counties in the Sacramento region and comparable to the 2000 U.S. Census (68% residents in the Census vs. 65.4% in the sample in Sacramento County, 14% in the Census vs. 16.3% in the sample in Placer County, 9% in the Census vs. 8.2% in the sample in Yolo County; and 9% in the Census vs. 10.1% in the sample in El Dorado County). The margin of error for the survey is approximately  $\pm 3$  percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The error for group comparisons in the Sacramento region would be higher than  $\pm 3$  percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

This survey has compared the Sacramento region findings with those from other California regions, the state, and the nation. Data cited regarding the state and other California regions often comes from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Surveys. Nationwide data often comes from Gallup polls.

The College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (SSIS), Department of Sociology, the Office of Public Affairs, the Office of Community Collaboration at California State University (CSU), Sacramento, and CSU, Office of Community Service Learning sponsored this project. Dr. Joseph Sheley is actively involved in this project and has made great contributions.

This research is directed by Amy Q. Liu, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Liu is an expert in public opinion polls, and has conducted over 20 surveys in the past nine years, including:

- 2005, 2004, 2003, and 2002 Annual Surveys of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region
- Survey of Iowa Business about Eldercare and Eldercare Needs
- Story County Conservation Board Survey
- Grundy County Youth Needs Assessment

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<sup>3</sup> This study was called Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region.

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**Appendix I. Who Needs Affordable Housing?**

By Sacramento Housing Alliance

<http://www.sachousingalliance.org/Who%20needs%20AH.htm>

Retrieved on June 12, 2006

Housing is affordable when households can pay for it out of their monthly income and still have enough money left over for food, transportation, clothes, and health care. According to the Federal Government, housing is considered affordable if it consumes no more than 30% of a household's income. Using this standard, a family of four with two working parents earning minimum wage could only afford to pay approximately \$700 in rent or a mortgage payment and utilities without cutting into other basic necessities. The 2003 Fair Market Rent for a three bedroom is \$1, 318\*, which is why the development, operation, and preservation of affordable housing is such a crucial issue. Affordable housing multi-family rental communities and single-family homes result from partnerships between private and nonprofit organizations, corporate investors, commercial lenders, and government agencies. Affordable housing is generally developed by nonprofit organizations using a combination of rental incomes, private funding, and government subsidies. These multiple funding sources allow the construction of quality units with many amenities at an affordable rental rate. Government funding generally ensures rents will remain affordable for at least 5 to 55 years, depending upon the funding type.

\*Source: 2003 Out of Reach, National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)

**Income Categories, Sacramento County, 2004**

Source: State Department of Housing and Community Development, 1/04

Income level	One Person Household		Three Person Household		Four Person Household	
	Income Amount	Affordable Rent	Income Amount	Affordable Rent	Income Amount	Affordable Rent
Area Median Income	\$44,850	\$1,121	\$57,700	\$1,442	\$64,100	\$1,602
Low Income (80% AMI)	\$35,900	\$897	\$46,150	\$1,154	<b>\$51,300</b>	\$1,283
Very Low income (50% AMI)	\$22,450	\$561	\$28,850	\$721	\$32,050	\$801
Extremely Low Income (30% AMI)	\$13,450	\$336	\$17,300	\$432	<b>\$19,250</b>	\$481

Under the federal government’s definitions, a family is considered “low income” if the household income is below 80% of an area’s median income (AMI), after adjustment for family size. A family whose income is below 50% of AMI is considered “very low income” after adjustment for family size.

Many residents of affordable housing work. The following are examples of jobs in Sacramento County that pay salaries that qualify as low income and very low Income. These workers struggle to find housing they can afford. “Out of Reach”, 2003 documents that in Sacramento, *a minimum wage earner would need to work 108 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom market rate apartment.*

<b>Income Category, Family of 3</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
Low Income, 80% AMI	Firefighter	\$41,152
	School Counselor	\$39,796
	Environmental Engineering Technician	\$35,734
	Medical Records Technician	\$30,730
<b><i>Very Low Income, 50% AMI</i></b>	Veterinary Technician	\$24,361
	Receptionist	\$24,344
	Preschool Teacher	\$23,560
Extremely Low Income, 30% AMI	Sales Person, Retail	\$14,851
	Cashier	\$14,768
	Minimum Wage	\$13,000

**Source:** Employment Development Department, March 2003

For more detailed information about affordable housing, please visit the website: <http://www.sachousingalliance.org/>

## **Appendix II. Sacramento County Affordable Housing Ordinance**

By Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

<http://www.shra.org/Content/Housing/HousingDevelopment/CountyAfford.htm>

Retrieved on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006

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On December 8, 2004, the County Board of Supervisors adopted Chapter 22.35 of the Sacramento County Code implementing an affordable housing program. This program applies to all new residential development of five or more units in the unincorporated County. In general, the program requires the production of 15% of all new housing at levels affordable to low, very-low and extremely-low income households, although there are many options to meet this requirement. County Planning and SHRA staff are developing guidelines and template documents to assist developers, builders, and potential homebuyers interested in the ordinance. Below, please find a copy of the affordable housing ordinance and a flow chart describing the County and developer options under the ordinance. For more information, please call Cindy Cavanaugh at (916) 440-1399, ext. 1403.

- [Affordable Housing Ordinance \(PDF\)](#)
- [Affordable Housing Ordinance FAQ's](#)
- [Development Flow Chart \(PDF\)](#)
- [Income Affordability Chart \(PDF\)](#)

For more detailed information about the ordinance, please visit the following website:  
<http://www.shra.org/Content/Housing/HousingDevelopment/CountyAfford.htm>.

### **Appendix III: The 2006 Annual Survey Research Team Members and Sponsors**

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