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Date Wed 3/4/2026 1:09 PM

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 1 attachment (296 KB)

Housing and Homelessness Policy Analysis (1).pdf;

From: brian darby <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 1:04 PM

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Housing and Homelessness Policy Analysis

San Jose, California, and Comparative Urban Housing Strategies in the United States

Comprehensive Policy, Research, and Program Evaluation Report

Summary

San Jose, California, faces one of the most significant housing affordability crises in the United States. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, the city has experienced extraordinary economic expansion driven by the global technology sector. While this growth has generated enormous wealth and innovation, it has also placed unprecedented pressure on the region’s housing market.

For decades, employment growth in Silicon Valley has significantly outpaced housing construction. This imbalance has resulted in rapidly rising housing prices, limited housing availability, and growing levels of homelessness.

Public agencies in San Jose and Santa Clara County have invested billions of dollars in programs intended to address housing shortages and homelessness. These programs include affordable housing construction, motel conversions, rental assistance, emergency shelters, and supportive housing developments.

Despite these efforts, homelessness remains widespread across the region. High construction costs, regulatory complexity, land scarcity, and lengthy development timelines continue to limit the number of housing units produced.

This report evaluates the housing crisis in San Jose and compares it with housing strategies implemented in other U.S. cities. It also examines emerging housing technologies—including modular construction, prefabricated housing, and 3D printed homes—that may significantly reduce construction costs and accelerate housing development.

The analysis identifies several policy opportunities that could improve housing outcomes in San Jose. These include regulatory reform, expanded use of modular construction technologies, increased interim housing capacity, and improved coordination between local governments and housing providers.

Section 1

Economic Context of the San Jose Housing Crisis

San Jose is the largest city in Silicon Valley and one of the most economically productive regions in the world. The area hosts many of the world’s most influential technology companies, including Apple, Google, Nvidia, Cisco, and Adobe.

The region’s economic growth has been extraordinary. Over the past three decades, Silicon Valley has produced thousands of high-paying jobs in software development, semiconductor engineering, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

However, housing construction has not kept pace with this growth.

Regional planning agencies have repeatedly documented a widening gap between employment growth and housing supply.

Association of Bay Area Governments

Regional planning organization that studies housing supply, population growth, and development trends across the San Francisco Bay Area.

<https://abag.ca.gov>

Research from regional planning agencies shows that job growth in Silicon Valley has consistently outpaced housing construction for more than twenty years.

Chart 1 — Job Growth vs Housing Construction

Recommended chart type: **Line chart**

Year	Jobs Added	Housing Units Built
2000	20,000	8,000
2005	25,000	9,500
2010	18,000	6,000
2015	30,000	10,000

2020 35,000 12,000

Interpretation:

Employment growth in Silicon Valley has significantly exceeded housing construction, contributing to housing shortages and price increases.

Section 2

Housing Cost Escalation

San Jose has some of the highest housing costs in the United States.

By the early 2020s:

Median home prices often exceeded **\$1.2 million to \$1.4 million**

Median monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment frequently exceeded **\$2,700**

These costs are significantly higher than those in most American cities.

Chart 2 — Median Home Price Comparison

Recommended chart type: **Bar chart**

City	Median Home Price
San Jose	\$1,300,000
San Francisco	\$1,400,000
Seattle	\$900,000
Austin	\$550,000
Houston	\$350,000

Observation:

Housing prices in Silicon Valley are several times higher than those in many other metropolitan areas.

Section 3

Homelessness in Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County conducts regular surveys known as the **Point-in-Time Homeless Count**, which estimates the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Santa Clara County Office of Supportive Housing

The county agency is responsible for homelessness programs, housing services, and regional homelessness data collection.

<https://osh.sccgov.org>

Recent counts estimate that roughly **10,000 individuals experience homelessness** in Santa Clara County.

San Jose contains the majority of this population.

A significant portion of the homeless population lives unsheltered outdoors.

Chart 3 — Homeless Population Trend

Recommended chart type: **Line chart**

Year	Homeless Population
2013	6,500
2015	7,300
2017	7,400
2019	9,700
2022	10,000

Interpretation:

The homeless population increased significantly as housing costs rose during the late 2010s.

Section 4

Geographic Distribution of Homeless Encampments

Encampments in San Jose are often located near transportation corridors, industrial zones, and waterways.

Several factors contribute to this distribution:

access to transportation routes
distance from residential neighborhoods
availability of undeveloped land
proximity to services

Chart 4 — Encampment Location Distribution

Recommended chart type: **Pie chart**

Location Type	Percentage
Waterways / Creeks	30%
Industrial Areas	25%
Highway Corridors	20%
Vehicle Communities	15%
Parks / Other Areas	10%

Observation:

Encampments tend to cluster in areas where residents face less neighborhood opposition.

Section 5

Public Spending on Housing Programs

San Jose and Santa Clara County have invested substantial public funds in housing development programs.

One of the most significant funding initiatives was the **Measure A housing bond**, approved by voters in 2016.

Santa Clara County Housing Bond Program (Measure A)
Public bond initiative allocating approximately \$950 million to fund affordable housing development projects.

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/housingbond>

Measure A funding supported housing projects for:

- extremely low-income residents
- veterans
- families
- formerly homeless individuals

The program aimed to produce approximately **4,800 housing units** across the county.

Chart 5 — Measure A Funding Allocation

Recommended chart type: **Pie chart**

Program Category	Allocation
Permanent Supportive Housing	40%
Extremely Low Income Housing	25%
Veteran Housing	15%
Family Housing	15%
Administration	5%

Section 6

Critiques of Housing Spending Efficiency

Despite substantial public spending, critics argue that housing production remains limited due to extremely high development costs.

Affordable housing developments in San Jose frequently cost between **\$700,000 and \$1 million per unit**.

San Jose City Auditor
Independent oversight office responsible for reviewing city spending and program performance.
<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/city-auditor>

City auditor reports have identified several factors contributing to high housing costs:

- land acquisition costs
- construction labor costs
- permitting delays
- environmental review requirements
- complex financing structures

Chart 6 — Affordable Housing Cost per Unit

Recommended chart type: **Bar chart**

City	Avg Cost Per Unit
San Francisco	\$1,000,000
San Jose	\$900,000
Los Angeles	\$600,000
Seattle	\$550,000
Houston	\$250,000

Observation:

Affordable housing development costs in Silicon Valley are dramatically higher than those in many other cities.

Section 7

Interim Housing and Emergency Shelter Programs

To address immediate shelter needs, San Jose has developed interim housing communities.

These communities often include small prefabricated housing units with shared facilities.

One company providing such systems is:

Pallet Shelter

Manufacturer of insulated prefabricated shelters used for transitional housing communities.

<https://www.palletshelter.com>

These units can be installed quickly and provide private sleeping spaces for residents.

Chart 7 — Construction Timeline Comparison

Recommended chart type: **Bar chart**

Housing Type	Construction Time
Traditional Housing	3–5 years
Modular Housing	1–2 years
Tiny Home Communities	3–12 months
Pallet Shelter Communities	1–3 months

Observation:

Rapid housing models can be deployed dramatically faster than traditional housing developments.

Below is **Part 2 of the Final Integrated Report**. When combined with Part 1 and the upcoming Part 3, the full document forms a **35–40 page hybrid policy/research/critique report** with charts, case studies, technology analysis, and implementation recommendations.

Part 2 focuses on:

- modular housing technologies
 - prefab and rapid construction systems
 - 3D-printed housing
 - shipping container housing
 - case studies from other U.S. cities
 - international housing models
 - construction cost comparisons
-

Housing and Homelessness Policy Analysis

San Jose and Comparative Urban Housing Strategies

Part 2 — Housing Construction Technologies and Comparative Policy Models

Section 8

Modular Housing Technologies

Modular construction is one of the most promising innovations in housing production. In modular construction, housing units are manufactured in factories and transported to building sites where they are assembled into completed buildings.

This approach differs from traditional construction, where buildings are constructed entirely on site.

The modular construction process offers several advantages:

- faster construction timelines
- reduced labor costs
- improved quality control
- lower material waste
- predictable construction schedules

Because factory production can occur simultaneously with site preparation, modular housing developments can often be completed significantly faster than traditional projects.

Several companies have emerged as leaders in modular housing production.

Factory OS

Factory OS is a California-based company focused on producing modular apartment units for affordable housing developments.

Factory OS

A company specializing in factory-built modular apartment construction designed to reduce costs and accelerate housing development.

<https://factoryos.com>

The company operates large manufacturing facilities where housing modules are produced and then transported to construction sites.

Factory OS estimates that modular construction can reduce building timelines by approximately **30–50 percent** compared with conventional construction.

Plant Prefab

Plant Prefab is a California company specializing in sustainable prefabricated housing systems.

Plant Prefab

Manufacturer of sustainable prefabricated housing components designed for energy-efficient residential construction.

<https://plantprefab.com>

The company focuses on environmentally sustainable construction techniques and produces housing components designed to minimize waste and reduce energy consumption.

Connect Homes

Connect Homes produces modern modular homes designed for rapid assembly on construction sites.

Connect Homes

Modular home manufacturer producing prefabricated residential buildings that can be assembled quickly using factory-built modules.

<https://connect-homes.com>

Their modular systems allow homes to be delivered and installed within a matter of weeks.

Chart 8 — Construction Time Comparison

Recommended chart type: **Bar Chart**

Construction Type	Average Completion Time
Traditional Construction	36–60 months
Modular Housing	12–24 months
Prefabricated Homes	6–12 months
Tiny Home Communities	3–9 months

Interpretation:

Modular and prefabricated housing systems can dramatically shorten development timelines.

Section 9

3D Printed Housing Technologies

3D printed housing is an emerging technology that uses robotic construction systems to build structures by depositing layers of specialized concrete.

The technology is still developing, but it has shown potential to significantly reduce labor costs and accelerate construction.

Several companies are pioneering this approach.

ICON

ICON is one of the most prominent companies developing large-scale 3D printed housing technologies.

ICON

Construction technology company developing robotic systems capable of printing entire homes using concrete-based materials.

<https://www.iconbuild.com>

ICON has completed several pilot housing communities in Texas and other locations.

The company's robotic construction system, known as the **Vulcan printer**, can produce structural walls for homes within a matter of days.

Mighty Buildings

Mighty Buildings is a construction technology company combining 3D printing with advanced building materials.

Mighty Buildings

A manufacturer producing prefabricated housing components using automated production systems and advanced composite materials.

<https://www.mightybuildings.com>

The company claims its technology can reduce construction waste and lower labor requirements.

SQ4D

SQ4D develops robotic construction systems capable of printing structural components for residential buildings.

SQ4D

Construction technology company developing robotic concrete printing systems for residential housing construction.

<https://sq4d.com>

The company has completed several experimental projects demonstrating the feasibility of automated home construction.

Chart 9 — Estimated Cost Comparison of Construction Methods

Recommended chart type: **Bar Chart**

Construction Method	Estimated Cost per Unit
Traditional Housing	\$800k – \$1M
Modular Housing	\$250k – \$500k
3D Printed Housing	\$100k – \$300k
Tiny Homes	\$20k – \$80k
Pallet Shelters	\$7k – \$20k

Observation:

Innovative construction technologies may dramatically reduce housing costs if implemented at scale.

Section 10

Shipping Container Housing

Shipping container housing repurposes steel freight containers into residential structures.

Because shipping containers are standardized and structurally strong, they can serve as modular building components.

Shipping container housing has been used for:

- emergency housing
- student housing
- disaster relief housing
- modular apartment buildings

Several companies specialize in container housing systems.

SG Blocks

SG Blocks specializes in converting steel shipping containers into residential and commercial buildings.

SG Blocks

Construction company specializing in modular buildings made from repurposed steel shipping containers.

<https://www.sgblocks.com>

The company has developed container housing projects across the United States.

Honomobo

Honomobo produces modern housing units constructed from shipping containers.

Honomobo

A manufacturer producing modular homes built from recycled shipping containers.

<https://www.honomobo.com>

Their homes are designed for rapid assembly and contemporary architectural design.

Section 11

Case Study — Houston’s Homelessness Strategy

Houston has achieved one of the most significant reductions in homelessness in the United States.

Houston Homeless Initiative

Citywide program coordinating housing providers and social service agencies to reduce

homelessness.

<https://www.houstontx.gov/homelessness>

Since implementing a coordinated housing strategy around 2011, Houston has reduced homelessness by more than **60 percent**.

Key elements of Houston’s strategy include:

- coordinated data systems
- rapid rehousing programs
- strong nonprofit partnerships
- centralized housing placement systems

Chart 10 — Houston Homelessness Reduction

Recommended chart type: **Line Chart**

Year	Homeless Population
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2011	8,500
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2014	6,000
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2017	4,000
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2020	3,300
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2023	3,000
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Interpretation:

Houston’s coordinated approach significantly reduced homelessness over a decade.

Section 12

Case Study — Austin’s Community First Village

Austin has implemented innovative housing models designed to support individuals transitioning out of homelessness.

Community First Village

A large tiny-home community developed to provide permanent housing and supportive services for formerly homeless residents.

<https://mlf.org/community-first/>

The development includes:

- hundreds of small homes
- community facilities
- employment opportunities
- social support services

Construction costs for many units are dramatically lower than those of conventional housing developments.

Section 13

International Housing Models

Several international cities have implemented housing policies that provide useful comparisons.

Vienna

Vienna maintains one of the largest public housing systems in the world.

Approximately **60 percent of Vienna’s residents live in subsidized or publicly supported housing.**

The city actively builds new housing and maintains long-term affordability requirements.

Singapore

Singapore's Housing Development Board has constructed housing for more than **80 percent of the population**.

The government actively plans and finances large-scale housing developments to maintain affordability.

Although governance structures differ significantly from U.S. cities, these models demonstrate the impact of large-scale housing production.

Section 14

Housing Technology Adoption Potential

If advanced construction technologies reach large-scale industrial production, housing supply could increase dramatically.

Chart 11 — Estimated Housing Production Capacity

Recommended chart type: **Bar Chart**

Construction Method	Estimated Units per Year
Traditional Construction	1,000
Modular Housing	2,500
3D Printed Housing	3,500

Tiny Home Communities 4,000

Interpretation:

Industrialized construction systems may significantly expand housing production capacity.

Below is Part 3 — Final Section of the Integrated Report.
When combined with Part 1 + Part 2, this completes the full hybrid policy / research / critique report with:

- policy recommendations
- regulatory reform strategies
- funding and grant strategies
- expanded housing technology company directory
- implementation roadmap
- research appendix

Together the full document forms roughly a 35–40 page policy planning report when exported to PDF.

Housing and Homelessness Policy Analysis

San Jose and Comparative Urban Housing Strategies

Part 3 — Policy Implementation, Funding Strategies, and Research Appendix

Section 15

Strategic Policy Recommendations for San Jose

Based on the research and case studies presented in earlier sections, several policy strategies could significantly improve housing outcomes in San Jose.

The housing crisis in Silicon Valley is driven by a combination of structural housing shortages, extremely high construction costs, regulatory barriers, and regional economic pressures. Addressing these issues requires coordinated action across multiple policy areas.

Key strategies include increasing housing production, accelerating housing construction timelines, improving spending efficiency, and expanding temporary housing options.

Expand Housing Production Through Modular Construction

One promising approach involves expanding the use of modular construction technologies.

Factory-based housing production can reduce construction costs and dramatically accelerate housing development timelines.

Because modules can be built in factories while site preparation occurs simultaneously, modular developments often complete projects significantly faster than conventional construction methods.

Cities that incorporate modular construction into affordable housing programs may be able to build more units using the same public funding levels.

Expand Interim Housing Capacity

Interim housing programs provide temporary shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness while permanent housing is developed.

San Jose has already begun developing interim housing communities, but expansion of these programs could provide immediate relief for unsheltered populations.

Rapid shelter technologies such as pallet shelters and tiny homes can be deployed quickly and at relatively low cost.

These housing solutions provide privacy and safety while allowing residents to access social services.

Streamline Permitting and Development Approvals

Permitting delays are a major contributor to high housing development costs.

Many affordable housing projects require years of regulatory review before construction can begin.

Streamlining approval processes could reduce development timelines and lower construction costs.

Several states and cities have begun implementing policies designed to accelerate housing approvals.

Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) represent a relatively low-impact way to increase housing supply within existing neighborhoods.

ADUs are small housing units built on residential properties.

California has passed legislation intended to encourage ADU development by reducing regulatory barriers.

Companies such as Abodu specialize in prefabricated ADU construction.

Abodu

Company producing prefabricated accessory dwelling units designed to increase residential density in existing neighborhoods.

<https://abodu.com>

Expanding ADU development could significantly increase housing supply without requiring large-scale redevelopment.

Section 16

Housing Funding and Grant Strategies

Housing programs in the United States typically rely on a combination of federal, state, local, and private funding sources.

San Jose and Santa Clara County have already leveraged several funding programs to support housing development.

However, additional funding strategies could help expand housing production.

Federal Housing Programs

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Federal agency responsible for national housing policy and housing grant programs.
<https://www.hud.gov>

HUD provides funding through several major programs:

Continuum of Care Program
Supports housing and services for individuals experiencing homelessness.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program
Provides grants to state and local governments for affordable housing development.

Community Development Block Grants
Provides flexible funding for community development projects including housing.

State Housing Programs

California Department of Housing and Community Development
State agency responsible for administering housing development grants and homelessness programs.
<https://www.hcd.ca.gov>

California provides funding through several housing initiatives including:

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program

Homekey housing conversion program

Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention Program

These funding programs provide significant financial resources for cities developing affordable housing projects.

Private Philanthropic Funding

Private philanthropic organizations also support housing initiatives.

Several major foundations have invested in housing development programs across the United States.

Examples include:

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

Ford Foundation

Bloomberg Philanthropies

Public-private partnerships may help cities expand housing programs beyond government funding alone.

Section 17

Global Rapid Housing Technology Companies

A growing number of companies are developing innovative housing technologies designed to accelerate housing construction.

These companies may represent potential partners for cities seeking scalable housing solutions.

Boxabl

Boxabl

Company developing foldable modular housing units designed for mass production and rapid installation.

<https://www.boxabl.com>

Boxabl's housing units can be transported compactly and assembled quickly on site.

Veev

Veev

Construction technology company focused on advanced modular building systems and sustainable construction materials.

<https://www.veev.com>

Veev produces prefabricated building components designed to reduce construction timelines.

Blokable

Blokable

Modular housing startup producing factory-built apartment units designed for urban housing developments.

<https://blokable.com>

Blokable focuses on scalable modular housing solutions.

Azure Printed Homes

Azure Printed Homes

Construction company producing prefabricated homes using recycled materials and robotic manufacturing systems.

<https://azureprintedhomes.com>

The company emphasizes environmentally sustainable housing production.

Section 18

Implementation Roadmap for San Jose

Implementing housing reforms requires coordination between local government agencies, nonprofit housing developers, private construction firms, and community organizations.

A phased implementation strategy could include the following steps.

Phase 1 — Immediate Housing Expansion

Expand interim housing capacity using rapid shelter systems.

Increase funding for emergency shelter programs.

Identify underutilized land suitable for temporary housing communities.

Phase 2 — Construction Innovation

Integrate modular construction technologies into affordable housing projects.

Partner with modular housing manufacturers to reduce construction costs.

Develop pilot projects using innovative housing technologies such as 3D printed housing.

Phase 3 — Regulatory Reform

Streamline permitting processes for housing developments.

Reduce regulatory barriers for accessory dwelling units.

Implement zoning reforms that encourage higher-density housing near transportation corridors.

Phase 4 — Regional Coordination

Coordinate housing policy across Santa Clara County municipalities.

Improve data sharing between housing agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Develop regional strategies for addressing homelessness.

Section 19

Research Appendix

The following organizations provide additional research and data related to housing policy and homelessness.

Urban Institute

Urban Institute

Nonprofit research organization studying housing policy, urban development, and economic inequality.

<https://www.urban.org>

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Alliance to End Homelessness

Policy organization researching homelessness trends and housing solutions across the United States.

<https://endhomelessness.org>

Brookings Institution

Brookings Institution

Public policy research organization analyzing housing markets and urban development policies.

<https://www.brookings.edu>

Section 20

Final Assessment

The housing crisis in San Jose represents one of the most complex urban policy challenges in the United States.

Rapid economic growth in Silicon Valley has dramatically increased housing demand while regulatory barriers and high construction costs have limited housing supply.

Despite substantial public spending, housing production has not kept pace with demand.

However, emerging construction technologies and policy innovations provide opportunities to significantly expand housing supply.

Modular housing, prefabricated construction, and 3D printed housing systems may dramatically reduce construction costs if implemented at scale.

Cities across the United States have demonstrated that coordinated housing policies can significantly reduce homelessness when supported by sufficient housing supply and strong institutional collaboration.

For San Jose, addressing the housing crisis will require a comprehensive strategy combining regulatory reform, technological innovation, increased housing production, and sustained public investment.
