

Teachers Get Help With Home Buying

Silicon Valley pilot program kicks in cash

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At least 50 Silicon Valley teachers should be able to purchase their first home over the next five years, thanks to a new housing-assistance program sponsored by Intel Corp. and the Santa Clara Unified School District.

The school district, which includes schools in Santa Clara and Sunnyvale, will pay \$500 a month toward teachers' mortgage payments for up to five years, using money from the computer chip-maker's \$1.25 million Teacher Housing Fund.

If the pilot program is successful, Intel officials said, it could expand to include other South Bay school districts.

District Superintendent Paul Perotti said the state's increased perfor-

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mance expectations have created new pressure to retain teachers, many of whom are leaving for less-expensive areas.

"The stakes are higher than they were before," he said. "Without stabilizing our workforce, every district in the valley will start wobbling in its ability to succeed."

This spring, 25 of the district's teachers decided to relocate to another area because they could no longer afford to live in Silicon Valley, according to Perotti. That was 17 more than the number that left the 14,000-student district the year before last.

"After spending time training new teachers, we want them here for the long haul," Perotti said.

Amber and Morgan Anderson, who both have taught for three years in Santa Clara, said they hope they will not have to join the teacher exodus. Although the Mountain View couple knew the cost of housing was incredibly high when they moved from Colorado two years ago, they said they had been certain

that they would be able to find something.

The Andersons are still paying \$945 per month for a one-bedroom apartment.

"We sat down with a Realtor and came up with a yearlong plan to purchase a home," Morgan Anderson said. "Last January, we started looking for a home. We made 10 bids and were outbid by \$20,000 to \$40,000 each time."

Morgan, a fourth-grade teacher, said the housing-assistance program will keep him and Amber, a high school theater teacher, in Silicon Valley for at least another year.

"The district is willing to work for us," he said. But if it doesn't work out, well, I can't say that we'll stay here forever."

So far, about 60 teachers have expressed interest in the new home-buyers program, which limits purchases to Santa Clara, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Alameda counties.

To be eligible, teachers must have worked in the K-12 district for more than three years and be able to qualify for loans. Eventually, the

teachers are expected to repay the district and the funds will be reused to help other teachers buy their own homes.

Teachers' salaries range from a low of about \$30,000 to a high of \$70,000. Under the new program, the \$500 monthly mortgage payment will allow the teachers to qualify for homes as if their salaries were \$1,500 per month higher than they really are, Perotti said.

A teacher with a yearly household income of \$74,000 could qualify for a \$338,000 mortgage with assistance from the housing fund.

That does not mean the housing search will be easy. In May, the median home price in Santa Clara County was \$480,000. Only 229 homes in the county sold for \$350,000 or less, according to district officials.

The school district also is building a 40-unit apartment complex for teachers at Pomeroy and Brookdale drives in Santa Clara, Perotti said. The apartment complex, expected to house about 50 teachers, is slated to open in April 2002.

DH-20000288 E1