

Housing for Teachers

Santa Cruz City School's staff housing project is in full swing

By Gwyneth Holcomb

July 15, 2026



BUILDERS The leaders of Bogard Construction (left to right) Jared Bogaard, Ryan Bogaard and Dave Sullivan, stand at the 313 Swift Street site. PHOTO: Gwyneth Holcomb

Over the past decade, 127 teachers left [Santa Cruz City Schools](#) because they couldn't afford to live in the county, and 95% of job offers were declined for the same reason, according to the district.

To alleviate the cost-of-living burden on local teachers and improve retention rates, [Santa Cruz City Schools](#) broke ground on the district's first educator housing community last March.

The project, at 313 Swift Street, will house at least 100 district teachers and classified staff at [60-70%](#) of market rates.

"We simply plan on providing the biggest discount we can afford while still paying off the property in 30 years," said District Communications Officer Sam Rolens.

The average rent in Santa Cruz is over [\\$3,000](#) a month—approximately 70% higher than the national average, according to [Zillow](#).

A fully credentialed teacher in the district can earn a base salary of between \$66,350 and \$123,120 a year, according to the [district's salary schedules](#).

Housing is a challenge for new teachers and staff to remain in the district long-term, said incoming Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers president and Santa Cruz High School teacher Conor O'Brien.

"We've become something of a teacher farm," said O'Brien. "We train up teachers that are excellent, but then they're gone."

With this new development, the union is excited to have this option available to teachers in the near future, added O'Brien. "Dedicated housing for teachers will surely help us retain staff, which benefits students and the community at large."

[The planned 4-story building](#) on the Westside of Santa Cruz is expected to be completed in the [summer of 2028](#) and is currently estimated to cost the district just under [\\$86 million](#), according to a district update this past March.

The development promises to include approximately 100 units, including [11 studios, 28 one-bedroom units, 50 two-bedroom units, and 11 three-bedroom units](#), for both the district's certificated teachers and classified support staff, according to the Santa Cruz City Schools' press release this past March.

The project will also include additional site improvements and the renovation of two existing buildings on the four-acre property, according to a press release from Bogard.

The project is being funded by bond measures [K and L, which passed in 2022](#), totaling \$371 million, according to Rolens.

The district currently estimates that approximately \$40 million of the bonds will go toward the housing project, said Rolens. He explained that to pay off the remaining costs, the district plans to issue a Certificate of Participation—the mechanism that allows a school district to take in funds to be repaid over time.

The project used the [Teacher Housing Act of 2016](#), [which assists California school districts in establishing affordable housing for employees](#), as a reference in creating the legal framework with the City of Santa Cruz, said Rolens.

[Bogard Construction](#), along with architect firms EHDD and Studio VARA, officially joined the project in October 2023, according to the district timeline.

The idea of creating dedicated educator and staff housing was partly driven by the goal of reducing the financial burden on staff, within the limits of what the district was legally and financially able to do.

“We want to pay everyone more, and we don’t have any more money,” said Rolens. “So this is one of the things that we’re trying.”

According to the district’s records, the site was previously owned by the United States government and was transferred to the district in 1988.

“Many of us in our office are products of the Santa Cruz City School District,” said Jared Bogaard, the president of Bogard Construction. (The second “a” in his name is a reference to Victor F. Bogard, his grandfather and founder of Bogard, who dropped the second “a” and later requested the following generations add the “a” back into the name.)

“For the local teachers to have something that they can live in at an affordable rate,” said Bogaard. “It’s just nice to be part of something like that.”

“This is an easy one to get behind,” said Rocamora. “It’s sort of like an instant gratification in terms of doing something socially significant for your community.”

During the design process, the Bogard team and the project architect interviewed district teachers and staff to better understand their needs.

“We incorporated as much of the elements that were feasible into the design,” said Bogaard, explaining that creating a comfortable and desirable space to live in was one of the main priorities, which also led to some quintessentially “Santa Cruz” requests.

“An interesting one in the project that I don’t think a lot of other projects take into consideration is wetsuit storage and surfboard storage,” said Bogaard.

The project is also the most recent iteration of similar projects in neighboring districts, such as in Mountain View in the [Whisman School District](#), which opened in February 2025 at [below-market rates](#) and is only 72% occupied, according to reporting from [SFGate](#).

However, according to Rolens, he doesn't believe this will be a problem and that employee polling indicates strong interest among staff.

"If we have a persistent inability to fill a necessary percentage of our units, then we'll try to make memorandums of understanding with other school districts to say, we want to offer this space to your employees as well, running through the same process as what we have," said Rolens, adding that they are considering keeping several units vacant to offer to teachers and potential employees if needed.

Following the completion of the project, the district plans to select potential candidates through a lottery system, the terms of which will be decided after the district establishes a dedicated committee—expected to be comprised of union representation, human resources staff, and staff representatives—which is planned to be put together for the first time in 2027, said Rolens.

"That committee will also be part of the conversation about rents and things like that," said Rolens. "When we get closer to opening the doors, we'll be able to get an understanding of what the housing market looks like and how much we've spent so that we can set those prices."

Today, the project is well underway, but not without some difficulties, admitted Bogaard.

According to Bogaard, the site had a large amount of contaminated soil, which Bogaard and the district believe stems from the site's history as a property of the United States Government. Getting the site up to code, following guidance from a soils consultant, required removing and replacing it with new soil, a process Bogaard described as complicated and expensive, additionally saying that, once the proper measures are completed, the site will be entirely safe for occupancy.

Another complication so far has been that the soft soil on the site does not compact properly, said Bogaard, requiring the team to focus on stabilizing the dirt before building.

However, despite the complications, the team seems to be taking it in stride, according to Bogaard, adding that from his perspective “the district has kind of maintained a positive outlook.”