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REGIONAL: INCLUSIONARY HOUSING SWEEPS CALIFORNIA REAL  
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A new California housing report released today shows one third of California cities and counties, including five Bay Area cities, now have inclusionary housing policies to help keep reasonably priced homes available.

The report, "Affordable By Choice: Trends in California Inclusionary Housing Programs," reveals 170 jurisdictions - 32 percent of the cities and counties in California - now hold inclusionary housing policies, up from 107 jurisdictions, or 20 percent, in 2003.

Inclusionary housing policies require builders to price a percentage of market-rate homes at "affordable" levels to give those with lesser incomes the opportunity to live closer to their jobs, according to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California.

According to the report, middle- and working-class residents with a wide range of incomes live in inclusionary housing homes.

"These policies are helping to create neighborhoods like the ones many of us grew up in, where people with different incomes can live side-by-side," said Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the non-profit housing association.

California has an estimated 30,000 long-term affordable homes as a result of inclusionary housing policies, providing shelter for at least 80,000 residents, according to the report.

Five Bay Area cities - Dublin, Emeryville, Petaluma, Pleasanton and San Bruno - are among the eight California cities with the highest number of inclusionary housing homes, and Palo Alto was the first California city to adopt a policy, the report stated.

Rob Weiner, executive director of the California Coalition for Rural Housing, explained since California has not made enough homes for lower-income families in the past, approaches such as inclusionary housing are needed.

"California's housing market is just broken, and while inclusionary housing won't fix everything, at least it's a start," said Weiner.