

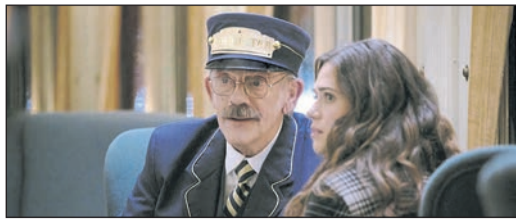
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'IT'S TOUGHER TODAY'

Home steep home: \$15,000 to \$2 million in 2 generations



PHOTOS BY KARL MONDON — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Real estate agent Jeff LaMont holds a picture of his father, Duke (second from left in front row of this wedding photo), in front of the onetime family home in Millbrae Meadows on Tuesday. Duke LaMont bought the house in 1956 for about \$15,000.

Bay Area homes once cost twice a typical family income; now it's 9 times

By Louis Hansen

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Jeff LaMont grew up in Millbrae Meadows, a pleasant suburban neighborhood where the families of police officers and office workers settled side by side in the 1950s and '60s.

His father, a real estate agent, bought a starter home on Redwood Way for about \$15,000 in 1956. LaMont, a third-generation real estate agent, has seen prices rise, middle-class families leave and his childhood neighborhood change completely. A few months ago, he sold a home in his old neighborhood for more than \$2 million.

"It's tougher today," said LaMont, who offered an example: "If you own the mechanic shop, you might be able to buy a home. But not if you're a mechanic."

First-time Bay Area home shoppers and buyers face a harsh reality — it takes a lot more for young families to buy a house today than it did for their parents and grandparents.

In the 1960s, not long after LaMont's father first bought in Millbrae Meadows, it took roughly twice a family's income to purchase a home in San Francisco or its suburbs, according to research by Clever Real Estate. By 2020,

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3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths
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2 Car Garage
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Many Extras
At No More Cost

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New Low FHA
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STONERSON HOMES

A 60-year-old San Francisco Examiner real estate ad promoting homes for sale in the Millbrae Meadows neighborhood is on display in Jeff LaMont's office.

it took about six times the median income to buy a Bay Area house. Now, it's grown to nine times a typical household's income.

The growing challenge for many families to afford a Bay Area comes despite the prevalence of soar-

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

First-time Bay Area homebuyers face a harsh reality — it takes a lot more for young families to buy a house today than it did for their parents and grandparents. Comparing the price paid for the home Jeff LaMont's father bought on Redwood Way in Millbrae in 1956 to now:

1956
\$15,000

Current
\$1.97 million

ing tech salaries and the wages of double-income professional couples. The region's median household income — about \$110,000 — remains among the highest in the U.S.

"The Bay Area has always been expensive," said Francesca Ortegren, data scientist at Clever Real Estate, noting that in most of the country, lenders recommend that a home cost no more than three times a buyer's income. Now, Los Angeles is the only place in the country that's less affordable.

A few factors have raised the financial bar higher for Bay Area buyers: lack of new homes, high demand in a growing economy, and the daunting level of savings needed for most down payments.

Young buyers have also been hit hard by rising costs in higher education.

PRICES » PAGE 5

COURT: 'FATALLY FLAWED'

OSHA suspends vaccine mandate

Agency will not enforce rule for large private employers pending further court action

By John Woolfolk

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The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has suspended enforcement of its requirement that large employers nationwide ensure their workers are either vaccinated against COVID-19 or tested weekly for the virus by Jan. 4 in light of a court stay, throwing President Joe Biden's controversial mandate into doubt.

The decision followed a stay the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans granted Friday in a lawsuit seeking to block the mandate filed on behalf of various companies, religious groups, private citizens and the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Utah.

The court concluded the mandate is "fatally flawed" and the lawsuit likely to succeed because "its promulgation grossly exceeds OSHA's statutory authority."

Critics of the mandate hailed the court decision as a victory for individual liberty. "Take it or you're fired" is not informed consent," said John Vecchione, senior litigation counsel for the nonprofit New Civil Liberties Alliance in Washington, D.C., which had filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case. "It is the practice of medicine without a license by a lawless bureaucracy."

OSHA said Wednesday that since the court ordered that it "take no steps to implement or enforce" the mandate "until further court order," the agency "has suspended activities related to the implementation and enforcement" of the requirement "pending future developments in the litigation." The mandate would be enforced if the administration ultimately prevails in court.

"OSHA remains confident in its authority to protect workers in emergencies," the agency said.

MANDATE » PAGE 5

CONCERTS TILL 11 P.M.

Santa Clara eases curfew rules at Levi's

City manager can approve time extensions for 5 weeknights a year

By Grace Hase

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In a victory for concert lovers, hot musical acts such as Coldplay and U2 will get to blow past Levi's Stadium's 10 p.m. curfew on certain occasions.

After years of denying curfew extensions, the Santa Clara City Council relented Tuesday night in a split vote. The curfew — 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays — has been a sticking point between the city and the San Francisco 49ers, who oversee the stadium, for years.

The 49ers have contended the 10 p.m. stop time has cost the stadium millions in revenue and that acts such as Ed Sheeran have pulled out. City Manager Deanna Santana has countered that there's no evidence the curfew has led to money losses.

While the city manager has the power to extend the curfew under the original stadium agreement, the City Council in 2017

STADIUM » PAGE 5

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEDICAL CENTERS

Kaiser workers plan sympathy strike today

Nurses, others ready to picket in support of striking engineers

By Emily DeRuy

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Days after Kaiser reached an agreement with its pharmacists to avoid a strike earlier this week, the health care giant is bracing for thousands of workers to walk off the job at its Northern California medical centers today and Friday.

Unions representing Kaiser nurses, mental health professionals and others say their members are pre-

pared to strike in sympathy with Kaiser engineers, who have been picketing for better compensation for roughly two months. Kaiser acknowledges that some member services would be affected by the strike but says hospitals will remain open and urgent care available.

Around 40,000 members of three unions representing X-ray technicians, optometrists, phlebotomists, housekeepers and other employees are set to strike for a day if Kaiser and Local 39, which represents hundreds of engineers charged with keeping the health care provider's build-

KAISER » PAGE 5



JANE TYSKA — STAFF ARCHIVES

Alfred Cheng, right, and other engineers picket outside Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek Medical Center on Oct. 6.

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WEATHER

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Prices

FROM PAGE 1

cation. The price of a four-year college education skyrocketed fivefold between 1985 and 2019, in inflation-adjusted dollars. The added debt of student loans hinders many young professionals from saving up the needed down payment for a home, Ortegren said. For millennials, she added, “it’s really difficult — or unattainable — to get a home.”

Veteran Bay Area real estate agents talk about the changing fates and faces of homebuyers.

A rule-of-thumb, 20% down payment in the Bay Area means buyers need to have at least \$200,000 — and far more in desirable communities near tech headquarters. Agents say many buyers are coming into the market with 40% of a home’s purchase price ready in cash to win intense bidding wars.

Buyers today in more expensive Bay Area communities — Saratoga, Los Altos, Menlo Park, Berkeley — are mostly coming from the tech or finance industries with substantial stock portfolios, savings and two big incomes.

To many agents and policymakers, it’s another troubling sign of inequality and the widening gap between high-income earners and other workers

“A lot of young families are making this value decision. What’s important, quality of life or a job?”

— Dave Walsh, San Jose real estate agent and president of the California Association of Realtors

in the Bay Area. “It scares me,” said veteran San Jose agent Dave Walsh, president of the California Association of Realtors. “How close to this cliff are we going to get?”

The median price for a Santa Clara County house has reached more than \$1.5 million, and Walsh noted “that’s not a glamorous home.”

He’s concerned that even more people will be shut out when interest rates rise above their near-record low levels. “A lot of young families are making this value decision,” Walsh said, “What’s important, quality of life or a job?”

Santa Clara agent Alan Wang said tech buyers are coming in with a huge advantage — a stock portfolio that can be easily converted into a big, cash down payment. “It’s near impossible to fight with this tech money,” he said.



Third-generation real estate agent Jeff LaMont works inside his office on Tuesday in Burlingame.

“That’s the sad reality.” The priciest spot in the Bay Area during the pandemic has become San Mateo County. The median sale price for a single-family home in September hit \$1.79 million, an 8.3% rise from the previous year that topped medians in San Francisco (\$1.67 million) and Santa Clara County (\$1.51 million).

On a recent day in Millbrae Meadows, LaMont mingled with longtime

homeowners and friends. LaMont started selling homes in 1987 and has focused on San Mateo County. He’s sold nearly 250 homes in Millbrae Meadows, a neighborhood once populated by Italian and Irish families and now home to many Asian families with parents in tech.

It’s an easy market for a seller — good public schools, little fog and a neighborhood swim club.

“It’s a nice, sleepy suburban neighborhood,” LaMont said. Most of his listings sell in about eight days.

Gary Stelling, 81, and his wife moved into the neighborhood from San Francisco years ago to raise his two children. The former PG&E employees bought a nice, single-story home in 1971 for \$41,000. Low property taxes and a high potential capital gains bill have kept the couple in

their house.

“Now it’s a rich neighborhood,” he said, and laughed. “There’s still a few poor guys like me.”

His children and their families have settled in less expensive Napa and Seattle. “I never recommended them to live in the Bay Area because of the cost,” Stelling said.

“That’s one of the downsides,” LaMont chimed in. “Kids go away to college and they don’t come back.”

Mandate

FROM PAGE 1

Though California is outside the jurisdiction of the 5th Circuit court and is among 26 states with their own OSHA plans, the stay is being implemented nationwide.

Cal/OSHA, which was to meet today to determine how it would implement the mandate in the state, said Wednesday it is following federal OSHA guidance to not proceed while the stay is in effect.

OSHA’s proposed mandate would have affected

employers of 100 or more total U.S. full-time and part-time workers, even if they are scattered in smaller numbers at multiple sites — some 84 million workers, or two-thirds of the nation’s private-sector workforce.

Patrick Kallerman, vice president of research at the Bay Area Council Economic Institute, said there are over 15,000 firms in California with more than 100 employees, comprising 57.2% of the state’s workforce.

OSHA’s decision doesn’t prevent private employers from implementing their own vaccine requirements, which courts have supported, only a blanket na-

tional and statewide policy. Biden already has imposed similar vaccine or test mandates on federal workers and contractors, the military and federal health providers.

California already has adopted requirements for health care workers to be vaccinated and state workers and teachers to be either vaccinated or tested. California lawmakers considered a broader statewide employee vaccine mandate but failed to pass it this year; legislators may take it up again next year.

Several cities and counties, including San Francisco, Berkeley and Contra Costa and Los Angeles

counties, have adopted local requirements for certain employers such as restaurants, bars, nightclubs, gyms and dance studios to ensure their workers are vaccinated for COVID-19 or tested weekly.

But while business groups have supported vaccine requirements, they have been uneasy with the federal and statewide mandate.

Rob Moutrie, policy advocate for the California Chamber of Commerce, said that while the group supports businesses requiring vaccination, it also is concerned that a blanket mandate would hurt those already struggling with labor

shortages.

“The Chamber of Commerce is very much in favor of vaccines as the way out of this pandemic,” Moutrie said. “However we’re also really concerned about the labor shortage affecting California’s businesses and realize such mandates may have impacts on those labor-short industries, including restaurants.”

One major unresolved issue with the proposed mandate, Moutrie added, is whether the mandate, if it survives legal challenge, would force employers to pay for weekly COVID-19 testing for their unvaccinated workers, which could

cost some \$5,000 a year per employee.

The proposed federal rule said employers wouldn’t have to cover those costs, but Cal/OSHA generally requires employers to pay for tests for on-the-job exposures, and it was unclear whether California businesses would be exempted from paying for weekly COVID-19 tests. Moutrie says businesses believe those workers should bear that cost. But with the stay in effect, they won’t get an answer anytime soon.

“Uncertainty is never good for businesses,” Moutrie said. “We’re in favor getting this resolved quickly.”

Kaiser

FROM PAGE 1

ings running smoothly, don’t reach an agreement by early this morning.

“We are sympathy striking because Kaiser has lost its way and is putting its drive for profits over people, hurting our patients and union co-workers,” said Ethan Ruskin, a health educator at Kaiser San Jose and a member of the SEIU-UHW, which is striking. “The Local 39 engineers play a critical role in maintaining our facilities and the equipment we use to take care of patients.”

According to the SEIU-UHW, it would be the largest sympathy strike in the country in recent memory.

The showdown comes as health care providers

across the Bay Area and their employees are battling over work demands, wages and staffing shortages as the pandemic enters its second winter and medical centers prepare for yet another surge in COVID-19 patients.

Beginning Friday morning, more than 20,000 Kaiser registered nurses in the California Nurses Association are expected to strike for 24 hours, along with about 2,000 mental health professionals represented by the National Union of Healthcare Workers.

Kaiser’s medical centers across the Bay Area, out to Sacramento and down into the Central Valley, are expected to be affected by the strike.

Kaiser said some non-urgent medical appointments or procedures might be affected by the strike. Lab, op-

tomety and radiology services could also be closed or reduced. And some outpatient pharmacies are set to close temporarily both days.

“During the strike, care will be provided by physicians and experienced clinical managers and staff, with the support of trained and qualified contingency staff,” Kaiser said. “All our hospitals and emergency departments will continue to be open during a strike and remain safe places to receive care.”

In a note to members Wednesday evening, Kaiser said it anticipated significant wait times, writing, “Emergency Departments at other, non-Kaiser Permanente facilities may have shorter waiting times during this period.”

The engineers say they are striking because the wages proposed by Kaiser

are lower than what other major health care providers are willing to pay. But Kaiser has said the engineers earn about \$180,000, factoring in wages, benefits and retirement benefits — making them among the highest paid in the profession.

In a statement Wednesday afternoon, Kaiser said the engineers were “asking for unreasonable increases far beyond any other unions at Kaiser Permanente.”

Kaiser said it had resumed bargaining talks with the union on Tuesday and “is committed to bargaining as long as it takes to reach an agreement that continues to reward our employees and supports health care affordability, just as we have with several unions this week.”

Kaiser also urged the unions staging a sympathy

strike to come to work instead.

“We question why leaders of other unions are asking their members to walk out on patients on Nov. 18 and 19 in sympathy for Local 39,” the Oakland-based health care provider said. “This will not bring us closer to an agreement and most important, it is unfair to our members and patients to disrupt their care when they most need our employees to be there for them.”

Kaiser engineers are not the only workers still trying to hammer out a contract. Mental health employees — including psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists and addiction medicine workers — represented by the National Union of Healthcare Workers are also working under an expired con-

tract. The union is pushing Kaiser to hire more mental health staff, saying they are not able to provide necessary treatment in an appropriate amount of time at current staffing levels.

Kaiser has cast itself as “indisputably one of the most labor-friendly organizations” in the U.S. but blasted union leaders for asking workers to show solidarity to the engineers by striking.

But union members planning to strike don’t see it that way.

“We’re embarrassed that Kaiser has dragged the engineers strike on for 8 weeks,” said Kundra Vaughn, a Kaiser Oakland pharmacy technician and member of OPEIU Local 29, which is striking. “Kaiser is supposed to be the labor-friendly health plan. They have lost their way.”

Stadium

FROM PAGE 1

asked the former acting city manager to not grant any extensions — a policy that has remained in place until now.

Late Tuesday evening, the council voted 4-3 to allow Santana to approve weeknight curfew extensions until 11 p.m. for five non-NFL events a year — pyrotechnics included. Any extensions after that will be considered by the council.

Mayor Lisa Gillmor and council members Kathy Watanabe and Kevin Park cast the dissenting votes.

The curfew has largely been maintained to lessen the noise in surrounding neighborhoods. But several council members stated that the same neighborhoods have to endure the constant roar of airplanes taking off and landing at the Mineta San Jose International Airport.

Councilmember Anthony Becker said that when he spoke with residents on the campaign trail, they rarely complained of stadium-related noise. Instead, he said,



A Grateful Dead flag flies in the parking lot before the band’s concert at Levi’s Stadium in Santa Clara in June 2015. The city voted Tuesday to allow curfew extensions at the stadium for five events per year.

JIM GENSHEIMER — STAFF ARCHIVES

they were concerned about traffic and the potential for loitering, trash or other criminal activity that could occur after concerts.

“It’s a concern to have noise, but at the same time when you have nonstop noise of airports basically drowning out the sound of a concert, it makes no sense,” he said.

But Watanabe, whose

district includes the stadium, said she gets complaints from residents after every NFL game. And when Beyoncé blew past the curfew, she said residents were upset for days because people returning from the Warriors game couldn’t get home.

“There are a lot of reasons why the decisions were made that were made

and it wasn’t because people wanted a music ban or anything like that,” she said. “It’s because promises were made to the residents, to the constituents of my neighborhood, my district.”

Gillmor wanted to make it a condition of the new curfew rule that the 49ers couldn’t book acts that would lose money or be a financial burden on the city

or taxpayers.

“They’re not good managers,” Gillmor said of the 49ers. “They’re not capable of booking money-making events at the stadium, as is evidenced by the fact that the events that they’re booking, especially the non-NFL sports events, are losing money dramatically.”

In 2018-19, non-NFL events lost \$2.6 million, ac-

cording to city documents.

In a statement, 49ers spokesperson Rahul Chandhok applauded the council’s vote to allow curfew extensions.

“This decision will help draw world class entertainment to Santa Clara and will not only excite those in our community who love live music, but will also generate necessary revenue for the City of Santa Clara, local hotels, and small business,” he said. “It’s thoughtful policy and we hope to continue moving past the petty political disputes and dysfunction under Mayor Gillmor and Manager Santana.”

The decision comes at a time when the 49ers have struggled to meet their obligations under the naming-rights agreement that allows the stadium to use the Levi’s name. The agreement requires them to hold at least 36 non-NFL events with more than 25,000 attendees in each three-year contract period.

While the pandemic had until recently hindered the stadium’s ability to host large gatherings, Levi’s has only seen five major events in the current contract period.