

# Documentary explores 'The Price of Paradise'

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With its hilltop homes, sandy beaches and Spanish-style architecture, Santa Barbara is a place where beauty is irrefutable and the quality of life is arguably one of the best in the nation. However, paradise doesn't come cheap.

The county's inflated housing market is the focus of a 42-minute, locally produced documentary appropriately titled "The Price of Paradise." It premieres today as part of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

Financed by the Santa Barbara County Housing Department and produced by a former housing employee, the film unravels the housing challenges facing the area's work force through the eyes of those living and working here.

Lisa Snider, who wrote and produced the film, uses interviews from Santa Barbara city, county and state employees who work in the fields of law enforcement, health and education.

"The only way our people can continue to work here is to live in other communities, and that's unfortunate," former Sheriff Jim Anderson says in the film. "At least half of our personnel live in other counties." At Cottage Hospital, 30 percent of all job offers are turned down because of the home prices, according to Patrice Ryan, vice president of human resources, who was also interviewed for the documentary.

The purpose of making the documentary, according to Ron Cortez, deputy executive officer of the county's Housing and Community Development department, is so that it will become "an educational piece that will allow community dialogue for affordable housing to take place."

"Paradise," he said, will be replayed on the government access channel and to community groups throughout the county.

The film features housing and economic analysts, small-business owners, and two families who speak about the daily challenges of commuting, working multiple jobs and raising children.

Shown leaving his Ventura home

at 6 a.m., Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Detective Mike Sherbarth talks about his more than one-hour daily commute to work and the time his driving takes away from his family life.

According to statistics in the film, Det. Sherbarth is one of 16,000 Ventura County residents commuting to jobs in Santa Barbara County, a number, according to "Paradise" filmmakers, that could reach 100,000 in 25 years.

The film also compares the inequalities from Santa Barbara County's median home price, which has surpassed half a million dollars, to that of the national median home price, which is \$218,000.

"Paradise" takes a hard look at the social, economic and environmental problem created by the area's affordable housing shortage. Interviews are sprinkled intermittently with music, scenery and video clips of county meetings at which speakers talk passionately about the housing dilemma.

Although "Paradise" doesn't offer up any solutions, Mr. Cortez, who until recently was without a permanent housing director for six months, contends that that was never the film's or department's intention.

"This film will hopefully drive discussion and dialogue so the community can gather together to address this particular need," he said.

"We could probably do a hundred movies," added Jennifer Christensen, county project manager. "There are all kinds of other housing issues that are not discussed in the film."

"Paradise," which cost \$23,634 to make, won a Best Documentary award at the Ojai Film Festival last October.

The film is being shown at 10 a.m. at the Victoria Theater and 7 p.m. at the Marjorie Luke Theatre.

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