

SANTA CRUZ

City workers' living wage sets record

Living Wage

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By Terri Morgan

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The Santa Cruz City Council has approved the most generous living-wage ordinance in the nation — a plan that pays city workers a minimum of \$11 an hour with health benefits, or \$12 an hour to those without benefits.

"This is just fantastic," said David Werlin, a member of the Santa Cruz Living-wage coalition, which helped draft the ordinance. "This

is the highest nominal living wage of any ordinance in the United States."

In 1998, Santa Clara County passed a living-wage ordinance requiring manufacturing firms that get tax abatements from the county to pay their permanent employees at least \$10 an hour and provide them with health insurance.

About 60 municipalities in the United States have passed living-

wage ordinances. Minneapolis, for example, requires its large contractors to pay employees at least \$8.25 an hour. Baltimore requires contractors to pay employees at least \$6.50 an hour.

The Santa Cruz ordinance covers full-time workers employed either by the city or a for-profit company that has a contract with the city. Businesses facing hard-

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