

## Gentrification, Affordable Housing, and Housing Reform

Faced with a system in which developers, urban planners, and advantaged homeowners controlled the construction of housing, local policy makers gave power to neighbors to shape what could be built in their communities. Cities and towns recruited neighborhood voices to participate in forums that evaluated whether proposed developments complied with an ever-growing list of regulations. At these venues, community members could offer their neighborly insights on whether or not a project comported with local requirements over wetlands, flood mitigation, traffic management, or parking spaces.

What at first glance seemed an effective way of preventing developers from running roughshod over local communities, however, appears to be yet another case of an institution captured by advantaged and powerful interests. Instead of providing voice to underrepresented residents, planning and zoning board meetings amplify the voices of older, white homeowners. Moreover, because land use regulations govern everything from wetlands to parking, these advantaged neighbors have many opportunities to influence local planning and zoning officials, and to shape the development of new housing. Sometimes these neighbors are able to stop new developments. At a minimum, they are able to delay or extract significant concessions. This process reduces the production of all types of housing units – both market-rate and affordable.

In Chapter 2, we outlined a theory arguing that the intersection of participatory disparities and land use regulations hampers the construction of new housing. One implication of our argument is that, in places with high housing costs, neighborhoods or municipalities with lower levels of participation and more relaxed regulatory environments will see

gentrification. We turn now to exploring how land use regulations and participatory institutions may contribute to gentrification, and how gentrification pressures pose a significant obstacle to broad-based housing policy reform.

There is a wide consensus that many cities and towns across the country need more housing. Whether the housing shortage is due to population growth, migration, low rates of new construction, or other causes, the solution is more housing. Civic leaders, YIMBY (Yes in My Backyard) activists, and affordable housing advocates all agree on the need to increase the supply of housing. Here, however, the agreement ends. Some groups, especially those in the YIMBY movement, argue that building more market-rate housing will address both the general housing crisis and the affordable housing shortage, by increasing supply and reducing prices. Neighborhood groups, concerned about affordable housing, argue that building more market-rate housing will not actually address the affordable housing shortages in their communities. They also worry that it might be making the housing crunch worse for many through gentrification, which displaces current residents in some neighborhoods.

#### GENTRIFICATION

In Washington, DC, gentrification is so intense – and so disproportionately felt in communities of color – that the city is being sued for policies that a civil rights lawyer claims intentionally displaced low-income, black residents. Lawyer Aristotle Theresa argues that the administrations of former mayors Adrian Fenty and Vincent Gray intentionally sought to attract white Millennials at the expense of current city residents: “These policy documents say outright, we are planning to alter land use in order to attract people who are of a certain age range, in order to attract people who are a certain profession” (Wang 2018). The out-migration of blacks from Washington, DC, has been extraordinary: the city was 71 percent black in 1970, but less than 50 percent in 2018 (Starr 2018).

While gentrification is not universal, it is a widespread challenge in many cities, as working-class neighborhoods and communities of color become prohibitively expensive for longtime residents. Indeed, while more housing is at the core of any solution to the housing crisis, one divisive problem, as obvious as it may seem, is that new housing is, by definition, *new*. Given the lack of undeveloped land in most cities, the housing shortage cannot be solved by replicating the current housing stock. Instead, new housing must replace older, less-dense buildings, and

it is an imperfect substitute. While in some cases the increased supply will reduce prices and rents, in many other cases the new housing is part of a different market serving a different population. When dense housing is built in a wealthy suburb where the housing stock is mostly large single-family homes, the new housing might allow less wealthy residents to move in. In contrast, new housing in cities, especially luxury condominiums, creates opportunities for wealthier residents to move into poorer areas, potentially leading to gentrification. Indeed, developers looking to maximize rents or sale prices in high-cost cities will build expensive housing. When affordable housing is built, it is often mixed with new luxury housing to make the full development profitable. New middle-class housing is squeezed out by legal mandates for low-income housing on one end and developers' desire to maximize profits on the other. Moreover, limited mandates hardly provide sufficient affordable, low-income housing to meet exploding demand.

Thus, neighborhood defenders in the suburbs and neighborhood defenders in urban neighborhoods might be taking similar actions for very different purposes. Neighborhood defenders in wealthy communities fight against developments that allow more people – potentially more low- and middle-income people, depending on the nature of the development – access to the high-quality public goods in their communities. Neighborhood defenders in low-income communities facing gentrification contest projects that threaten their displacement from their homes.

Gentrifying communities face a number of structural disadvantages in mounting a successful neighborhood defense. First, they are often more laxly regulated and zoned for higher density housing. Wealthy neighborhoods typically are zoned for lower-density construction. Some are historic areas protected by a multitude of preservation requirements. Many city officials and members of the public prefer to keep them in their current form. *Gawker's* Hamilton Nolan is emblematic of this viewpoint: “Do you have to bulldoze all of the real pretty San Francisco neighborhoods and build awful glass cubes where beautiful Victorian homes once stood? No. You can build new things in other places” (Capps 2016).

Indeed, research on Los Angeles zoning changes finds that upzoning occurred more frequently where political resistance was most muted; neighborhoods with large numbers of homeowners – especially homeowners with access to valuable amenities – saw little change in land use regulations (Gabbe 2018). This means that, even in low-income communities with a large and highly motivated group of neighborhood defenders, there will be few institutional mechanisms available for them to use in the politics of delay.

Second, these communities are less likely to have large numbers of high-intensity neighborhood defenders. As we outlined in Chapter 2, disparities in participation based on socioeconomic status are well-documented in political science research (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). Moreover, the results in Chapter 5 show that participation is higher among white homeowners. While even one motivated neighborhood defender can certainly make a difference – just one person filing a lawsuit can delay a project – larger groups attending meetings are likely to be more persuasive to planning and zoning board officials. On average, we anticipate fewer of these sorts of groups in less advantaged neighborhoods. Indeed, in Chapter 5 we found that participation in planning and zoning board meetings was higher in wealthier communities.

Third, even when neighborhood defenders in gentrifying communities do mobilize, their voices may carry less weight with local officials. Sociologist Jeremy Levine (2017) shows that city leaders in Boston largely ignored residents of color when they invoked community concerns. In previous chapters, we found that advantaged residents were more likely to participate in land use forums, highlighting community concerns in the process – and, seemingly, their views were incorporated into important land use decisions. Even in less advantaged communities – places like Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Worcester, Massachusetts – the voices represented at these meetings were those of the most privileged. In contrast, Levine’s in-depth analysis of seventy-six community meetings in Boston shows that not all voices are amplified in planning and zoning board meetings. Even when less advantaged individuals are present at these meetings, their viewpoints are marginalized. This unequal responsiveness is consistent with national-level evidence that political elites are more attentive to the preferences of wealthy constituents (Gilens 2014).

These factors mean that many low-income communities of color in high-demand housing markets receive a disproportionate share of housing development. Economists who favor increasing the supply of market-rate housing largely ignore this spatial inequity. While virtually everyone involved in housing policy agrees that we need to build more housing, those focused on building more *regionally* ignore the fact that this region-wide construction may in fact come with deleterious *neighborhood-level* consequences. Kriston Capps, writing for CityLab, describes this problem:

From a regional perspective, any and every city in a metro area could be building more. Any and every new housing unit adds to the supply and lets out some

pressure. But, from a neighborhood perspective, the view is different. Neighborhoods that build less than others are sometimes given a pass because they are beautiful or historic or wealthy or powerful (and often all of those things). The lack of new construction in wealthier neighborhoods puts pressure on less wealthy neighborhoods. . . . This pressure builds up until it explodes in distressed neighborhoods. (Capps 2016)

Legal scholar John Mangin explicitly links this spatial inequity with gentrification: “[G]entrification and exclusion are intimately related at the neighborhood level. If a high-demand, high-cost neighborhood won’t build, developers and people looking for housing will be diverted to the nearest low-cost neighborhoods. That increases demand and development and leads to gentrification” (Mangin 2014).

By pushing for more housing regionally without considering these disproportionate *neighborhood-level* impacts, much of the housing legislation targeting more relaxed zoning has exposed significant political fissures among housing advocates.

#### MARKET RATE VERSUS AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Communities experiencing significant gentrification thus have good reason to feel marginalized in the politics of land use. What’s more, many of them are unconvinced that solutions centered on the increased production of market-rate housing *alone* will ease the suffering of low-income residents crowded out by gentrification. One Boston-area affordable housing advocate referred to these supply-side housing policy solutions as “trickle-down” initiatives, and was deeply skeptical that they would work: “That’s not the case in our city.”

Even if the production of more market-rate housing does improve affordability – a premise that some housing advocates deeply contest – it is easy to see why these perceptions would exist among both residents of gentrifying communities and housing advocates. Imagine living in a community primarily comprised of middle- and low-income residents and people of color – places like the neighborhoods in Washington, DC, that have experienced rapid displacement. Suppose a developer proposes building a ten-unit condominium building with market-rate units. Because of changes in the housing costs in your city (and gentrification pressures in your neighborhood), the cost of those market-rate units places them out of reach for existing neighborhood residents. Instead, they will provide homes to newcomers largely from different income and racial backgrounds than existing residents.

Now imagine that a group of advocates insists that these units will actually improve affordability in your neighborhood. If these units are not approved, they insist, housing prices will go up even more than they already are. From your perspective as a current neighborhood resident, this line of argument may be difficult to swallow. Even a (potential) slight reduction in regional sale and rental prices from what they would have been in the absence of this development will do little to help you and many of your neighbors in the face of exploding citywide and neighborhood housing prices.

As we outlined in Chapter 2, some affordable housing advocates believe that in high-cost cities like San Francisco and Washington, DC, there are two related but separate housing crises. One is a shortage of market-rate housing, creating cost pressures even on fairly affluent renters and home buyers. The second is a dearth of subsidized or affordable housing – reachable for low-income home seekers. While building more market-rate housing could help ease the former crisis, there is less evidence on whether the benefits of redressing market-rate shortages will trickle down to low-income home seekers.

This has created significant fissures between YIMBYs – who fight for the production of *all* new housing – and many affordable housing advocates, who push for strategies involving the production of more publicly subsidized housing via paths like inclusionary zoning and city and state-level affordability requirements and rental protections. One affordable housing advocate we interviewed described the YIMBY movement as a “hornet’s nest,” noting: “Progressive groups, especially in communities of color, are lining up against it. A lot of people are involved without realizing the negative stuff.” These cleavages may create significant obstacles to building coalitions to support legislation targeting the production of more housing generally (or the production of more affordable housing).

#### SB 827: CONFLICT BETWEEN YIMBYS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCATES

This sharp divide between YIMBYs, affordable housing advocates, and communities of color is brought into sharp relief by the debate over (and ultimate failure of) proposed housing legislation in California. In 2018, California State Senators Scott Wiener and Nancy Skinner proposed tackling restrictive zoning with Senate Bill 827, which would have required California cities to permit mid-rise apartment construction (buildings up to forty-five to fifty-five feet tall) near train stations and bus

stops (Grabar 2018). Since a huge swath of California’s cities fell within a “1/2 mile radius of a major transit stop” or a “1/4 mile radius of a stop on a high-quality bus corridor,” the bill would have allowed higher-density housing construction in a number of neighborhoods presently composed of single-family housing (Wiener 2018). An analysis from the *Los Angeles Times* found that “190,000 parcels in L.A. neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes are located in the ‘transit-rich’ areas identified in SB 827.” Yeghig L. Keshishian, the spokesman for the LA Department of City Planning, said, “While we are still evaluating the full effects of the bill, close to 50 percent of the city’s single-family homes would be impacted under SB 827” (Zahniser, Dillon, and Schleuss 2018). The effects were even starker in San Francisco, where the *Los Angeles Times* found that “almost all” single-family housing would be similarly affected by the bill (Dillon 2018a).

### Early Support from YIMBYs

Many academics, urban planners, and YIMBYs expressed early support for SB 827. Marlon Boarnet, the chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Spatial Analysis at USC’s Price School of Public Policy, said, “This is a bold vision” (Zahniser, Dillon, and Schleuss 2018). The California Tech Network – a group of one hundred CEOs, co-founders, and technology investors supporting the construction of more housing in California – wrote a letter to Senator Wiener strongly endorsing the bill. They cited the crushing burden California’s astronomical housing prices placed on their workers:

We the undersigned California technology leaders wish to voice our support for SB 827. . . . The lack of homebuilding in California imperils our ability to hire employees and grow our companies. We recognize that the housing shortage leads to displacement, crushing rent burdens, long commutes, and environmental harm, and we want to be part of the solution. We hope to grow our businesses in California, but it’s difficult to recruit and retain employees when they could accept jobs in other states and pay a fraction of California’s housing costs. (California YIMBY Tech Network 2018)

They were joined by several leading environmental groups, including the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Climate Resolve, and Environment California. The groups wrote a joint letter of support to Senator Wiener:

The shortage of affordable housing in California is decades in the making. A failure to maximize transit opportunities, and to allow adequate housing – including

affordable housing – near those transportation centers, has contributed to displacement, longer commutes, more vehicle miles traveled, increased greenhouse gas emissions, loss of open space, and worsening urban sprawl. In this context, housing development near public transportation can be a key element in achieving California’s climate goals, by offering more people the opportunity to use transit for their daily trips. (Climate Resolve, NRDC and Environment California 2018)

At first glance, it appeared as though SB 827 had attracted a powerful group of allies who could usher the bill to success.

### Strange Bedfellows and the Death of SB 827

At the same time, a powerful coalition of seemingly disparate interests lined up in opposition to SB 827. Perhaps most unsurprisingly, homeowners and neighborhood associations in single-family districts – the sorts of neighborhood defenders featured throughout this book – prominently opposed the legislation. The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association in Los Angeles, for example, met with its state senator and assembly member, and sent formal letters to state senators sitting on the committee analyzing the bill (Sherman Oaks HA 2018).

The Sierra Club – a powerful environmental interest group – joined homeowners’ associations in favoring a less aggressive approach to development. In a press release, Lindi von Mutius, the Sierra Club chief of staff, argued:

This bill has the right aim, but the wrong method. We know that some members of the legislature are working to refine the bill to make it less damaging in approach. We hope they are successful because we need more transit-oriented development that is appropriately sited to ensure smart, walkable communities that improve quality of life, reduce pollution, and fight climate change. (Kash 2018)

The Sierra Club expressed concerns about the loss of local control, linking state preemption of zoning laws with a host of other state-level preemption efforts:

At the heart of this bill is what a coalition of labor, good government groups, and a host of others call state-level preemption. These bills strip local governments from the decision-making process. Last year we saw this used in Louisiana and Tennessee in an effort to stop local housing mandates for developers, using the same very blunt instrument – removal of local zoning authority. They have also been applied across blocking local fracking bans, deregulating factory farms, suppressing the minimum wage, and . . . restricting local elected officials’ ability to advocate for public lands protection. (Kash 2018)

In linking state-level preemption of zoning laws in liberal California with conservative-led preemption of progressive causes like raising the minimum wage, the Sierra Club attempted to paint SB 827 as fundamentally contrary to progressive interests.

Moreover, because the bill failed to tackle *affordable* housing explicitly, it also attracted the ire of a diverse coalition of affordable housing advocates. In February 2018, thirty-seven housing and tenant advocacy organizations and transit equity groups from Los Angeles wrote Senator Wiener to oppose the bill. They worried that SB 827 would undermine existing affordability requirements in Los Angeles neighborhoods and generate new housing that is out-of-reach for many existing residents:

[D]ozens of housing, community, labor, transportation, and environmental organizations have collaborated to create policies and plans that create more density around transit while *intentionally* producing deeply affordable units and ensuring local, quality jobs are created as we create a more sustainable city. . . . If SB 827 passes, we will lose these incentives for developers to include low-income, very-low income or extremely low-income units in their new buildings near transit. . . . If SB 827 passes, we stand to lose out on tens of thousands of affordable homes near transit and we are putting families who depend on rent stabilization at great risk of displacement at a time of severe housing and homelessness crises. (Alliance for Community Transit – Los Angeles 2018)

The Democratic Socialists of America Los Angeles Housing and Homelessness Committee, San Diego Housing and Homelessness Working Group, San Francisco Housing Committee and Climate and Environmental Justice Committee, Long Beach Housing Committee, and Sacramento Housing Committee similarly opposed SB 827 on the grounds that it would intensify gentrification:

We agree that apartment construction in affluent single-family-home neighborhoods would be a step in the right direction, especially if such development were truly affordable to low-income people. But this is not what this bill will accomplish. Instead, SB 827 will result in luxury housing exclusively for the wealthy while displacing and dispossessing the poor and working class. (Democratic Socialists of America Los Angeles 2018)

Some members of this group labeled themselves PHIMBYs: “Public Housing in My Backyard.” CityLab described this coalition as “a loose alliance of socialist activists and tenants’ rights and affordable housing boosters” who opposed SB 827, “convinced that unleashing market-rate development will not significantly improve the housing situation for low-income people” (Schneider 2018). Coined by Los Angeles

Democratic Socialists of America member Jed Parriott, the PHIMBYs presented their opposition as part of political movement on behalf of low-income and historically marginalized people (Schneider 2018). The PHIMBYs argued that SB 827, as written, would not affect the wealthy cities and towns in California – places where we expect neighborhood defenders to predominate. Rather, its impact, according to many activists, would be most deeply felt in low-income communities of color. Shanti Singh, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America–San Francisco’s steering committee said, “If you put race- and class-forward, affirmative zoning and planning into SB-827, you would not see the Marin Counties and the Beverly Hills of the world on the same side as the Boyle Heights [a low-income, gentrifying East Los Angeles neighborhood] (Schneider 2018).” The places least able to mount a neighborhood defense would find themselves receiving the brunt of SB 827’s downsides in this account.

Affordable housing advocates did not just express concern over the effects of SB 827; they also felt that the process had excluded their interests – much as the local planning and zoning process has marginalized non-white, non-homeowning community members. Singh complained that YIMBY supporters of SB 827 “do not consult with communities of color. They haven’t really tried to work with any tenants rights organizations” (Schneider 2018). According to a *San Francisco Examiner* account, this political exclusion became quite heated: “At a Tuesday rally, YIMBY protestors shouted down people of color at a rally on City Hall steps against Senate Bill 827. . . . The voices of black, brown and Asian community members at the rally were drowned out by the young, mostly white pro-housing at any cost group” (Rodriguez 2018). Wing Hoo Leung, the president of the Chinatown-based Community Tenants Association said: “Our members were intimidated by YIMBY. They felt threatened.” Shanti Singh, a Democratic Socialists of America member, said of her experience at the rally: “What does it say about you when you’re drowning out communities of color talking about their struggles? It was depressing”(Rodriguez 2018).

A combination of steep constituent opposition and a rational interest in preserving legislative power spurred strong opposition among local political elites. Unsurprisingly, wealthy suburbs were vociferously opposed. Palo Alto’s mayor Liz Kniss wrote a letter to Senator Wiener on behalf of the city: “The City of Palo Alto is writing to inform you of our ‘oppose’ position on Senate Bill 827.” She argued that the bill would

undermine in-progress local efforts to re-zone and encourage development: “SB 827 in its current form could diminish local acceptance of residential development and undermine our local efforts” (City of Palo Alto 2018). The Beverly Hills City Council similarly voted unanimously against SB 827 (Talbot 2018).

In Los Angeles, the city council also voted unanimously to oppose the bill (Islas 2018). Opponents included many councilmembers with progressive and pro-housing leanings. Councilmember Mike Bonin argued: “This is a bad bill. . . . This bill was inevitable because our current system is, in some ways, as bad as this bill. Our current system does not protect against gentrification and displacement. Our current system is also not providing the affordable housing that we need for our next generation, for our children and for the people who are moving here.” He went on to note: “We can’t freeze our city in amber and pretend we don’t need more housing. But we also can’t blow up our neighborhoods and bury it beneath the Sacramento overreach that is at the heart of this bill” (Islas 2018). Councilmember Joe Buscaino used the now familiar critique of the bill as “too blunt a tool” to solve California’s housing crisis. He argued that it was the equivalent of surgeon using a “chainsaw” rather than a scalpel (Islas 2018). San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors followed suit, voting 8-3 to oppose SB 827 one week after the Los Angeles City Council’s unanimous vote (Sabatini 2018).

Opposition from Los Angeles politicians, in particular, may have proved pivotal in killing SB 827. Randy Shaw, the editor of *Beyond Chron* and Director of San Francisco’s Tenderloin Housing Clinic, wrote:

The California Legislature is not going to pass a land use bill unanimously opposed by the Los Angeles City Council and the city’s mayor. Period. I told backers of the bill over two months ago that SB 827 was dead unless they could get Mayor Garcetti [the mayor of Los Angeles] or Los Angeles state legislators on board; that never happened. Wiener needed a Los-Angeles-based co-sponsor from the start. He need a strong ally who Los Angeles unions, community organizations, and tenant groups could trust. This also never happened. (Shaw 2018)

More generally, Wiener’s failure to acknowledge gentrification pressures and obtain backing from a broad-based group of affordable housing interests – in addition to his firm base of YIMBY supporters – doomed the bill from the start. Shaw argues that his failure to build a broad coalition reinforced already existing distrust of Scott Wiener. Shaw notes: “Scott Wiener was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2010 with strong realtor and landlord support. He used that support in 2016 to win a close

race against Jane Kim for State Senate. Wiener has been consistently opposed by San Francisco tenant groups, and his record on the Board strongly served real estate interests” (Shaw 2018).

#### BUILDING COALITIONS AND A NEW PARTICIPATORY POLITICS

As policy makers consider potential solutions to the participatory inequalities – and the consequent undersupply of housing – outlined in this book, SB 827 offers a number of lessons about how to construct a coalition to support the construction of more housing. Perhaps most importantly, political actors should acknowledge that the production of market rate and affordable housing are distinct policy goals. Building more market-rate housing will not necessarily help those at the bottom of the income distribution – who are often those most affected by skyrocketing housing prices. Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar objected to SB 827 because it offered too much to developers without incentivizing affordable housing: “The affordable housing component should have been the driving force for this.” According to StreetsBlogLA:

Huizar reiterated that the status quo was not desirable . . . and he worried that the process by which the city is updating its community plans would simply continue to be a mechanism by which wealthy communities would protect themselves from future growth and force housing, especially affordable housing, *into communities that have historically taken on most of the burden.* (Islas 2018, emphasis added)

Low-income individuals not only find themselves increasingly unable to afford increasingly expensive housing; they also disproportionately assume the burden of out-of-reach market-rate housing construction in their neighborhoods.

YIMBYs and their allies cannot pretend that building more housing of all types – without affordability requirements – will help everyone. At its most extreme, the construction of multimillion dollar luxury condominiums in the city of Boston may not appreciably relieve low-income residents in the city’s poorest neighborhoods of rising costs (Anenberg and Kung 2018). Even if the construction of these new units marginally reduces demand – and therefore prices – in the high-end segments of the market, it is politically quite difficult to make the case that the construction of these ultra-expensive housing units will help the most downtrodden parts of the city.

What's more, policy makers must acknowledge that the participatory process has marginalized communities of color and low-income neighborhoods that may already feel as if they are bearing the brunt of new housing construction. Individuals who already feel marginalized by the process – and believe that developer interests, not community interests, are most important to city governments – are unlikely to trust a policy like SB 827 to help their community. Rather, they might fear a policy like SB 827 is essentially another giveaway to developers.

Instead, programs that deliberately target expensive communities may be more politically palatable. Chapter 40B in Massachusetts – which has been featured in previous portions of this book – is one such example. Unlike SB 827, Chapter 40B uses city and town affordability – not proximity to transit – as the criteria for whether or not to exempt developments from local zoning rules. One affordable housing advocate believed this distinction was critical: “Most of us feel that it’s been a good thing for the state. . . . It doesn’t affect Boston [which is above the qualifying affordable housing threshold]. It gives developers a lot of power, but that’s a different dynamic in Weston [one of the wealthiest towns in Greater Boston] than it is in Roxbury [one of the poorest neighborhoods in Boston].” Applied to California, such a policy would likely put affluent communities like Beverly Hills in the bull’s-eye, while still allowing local land use regulations to protect low-income neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

Indeed, Chapter 40B has been somewhat effective at encouraging the permitting of additional multifamily housing in Massachusetts (Schuetz 2009). That said, it is not enough. As we showed in Chapter 6, affordable housing proposed under Chapter 40B has still been stopped, delayed, or reduced by neighborhood defenders, and the threat of opposition prevents developers from proposing Chapter 40B housing in some towns. Furthermore, the amount of affordable housing in Massachusetts remains far too low. That said, Chapter 40B has several advantages over other policies designed to bypass local control; it explicitly focuses on affordability and targets the communities with the least existing affordable housing.

Moreover, a process that deliberately includes and considers the views of groups with a stake in the housing crisis will likely prove more politically durable and impactful. One of the chief obstacles to SB 827’s passage was its failure to appeal to natural anti-NIMBY constituencies supportive of housing production. Of course, this is easier said than done; tenant groups and YIMBYs, for example, do not necessarily share

the same goals. As Randy Shaw notes: “Tenant groups prioritize keeping existing tenants in place. YIMBYs prioritize expanding the housing supply to meet rising population and jobs growth” (Shaw 2018).

### Encouraging Representative Participation

Policies that themselves promote inclusion in the housing participation process may be particularly appealing to the diverse set of groups interested in housing policy. Many groups might be interested in improving attendance at local government meetings. Meetings might, for example, be held at more convenient times to attract a broader subset of the population. Or, city outreach might target *all* neighbors, not just property-owners. In many locations, cities and states require developers to notify “abutters,” “adjacent landowners,” “adjoining landowners,” or “contiguous property owners” located within a certain geographic radius of a proposed development.

All of these legal definitions privilege the status of property ownership; these are not requirements to notify all people living nearby, but all landowners proximal to a proposed project. California, for example, defines “landowner” as “a private person or entity that lawfully holds any possessory interest in real property, and does not include a city, county, city and county, district, corporation, or other political subdivision, public body, or public agency” (State of California 1872). Massachusetts similarly defines abutters in terms of property ownership and instructs developers to use property tax lists from local assessors to locate mailing addresses for property owners:

Any person filing a notice of intention with a conservation commission shall at the same time give written notification thereof, by delivery in hand or certified mail, return receipt requested, to all abutters within one-hundred feet of the property line of the land where the activity is proposed, at the mailing addresses shown on the most recent applicable tax list of the assessors, including, but not limited to, owners of land directly opposite said proposed activity on any public or private street or way, and in another municipality or across a body of water. (State of Massachusetts 1872)

Renters are *not* a part of the abutter or landowner notification process.

As we noted in Chapter 2, recruitment increases political participation. Through recruitment, community members learn about political proceedings of which they may not have been aware. Moreover, they may be more likely to believe that their participation is efficacious if they are

expressly asked to participate. Changing notification requirements might help to attract a more representative neighborhood slice.

Such an initiative has the benefit of being both politically attractive and likely inducing a modest increase in the representativeness of public hearing processes. That said, the evidence we presented in Chapters 5 and 6 suggests that, regardless of recruitment procedures, public meetings will likely remain disproportionately comprised of opponents to new development. Changing notification requirements is unlikely to increase the proportion of housing supporters from 15 percent – its current level – to a majority pro-housing coalition. The concentrated costs and diffuse benefits of housing development will probably still incentivize participation from opponents far more than supporters. Moreover, it is not reasonable to expect individuals for whom the benefits of new housing will be diffuse (or indeed, even committed activists) to attend multiple two-plus hour meetings every time a new housing development is proposed in their jurisdiction.

Even the most ambitious efforts at boosting political participation have failed to produce the kinds of results that would meaningfully alter the oppositional tilt of planning and zoning board meetings. Numerous studies have used field experiments to measure the effects of Get Out the Vote (GOTV) techniques (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008; Enos, Fowler, and Vavreck 2014). While some of these interventions have produced impressive increases in voter turnout – one boosted turnout by eight percentage points (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008) – it is not clear that this higher turnout reduces participatory inequalities. Political scientists Ryan Enos, Anthony Fowler, and Lynn Vavreck (2014) find that GOTV operations generally increase turnout, but two-thirds of the ones they studied *increased* participatory inequalities by turning out individuals already over-represented in politics. GOTV operations yield the worst participatory disparities in low-salience elections. Local elections are low turnout affairs (Hajnal 2010; Oliver, Ha, and Callen 2012; Trounstein 2013; Anzia 2014) that hinge on a relatively limited set of local government responsibilities (Oliver, Ha, and Callen 2012) and are vulnerable to interest group capture (Anzia 2014). Interventions designed to boost turnout at planning and zoning board meetings, then, could just as easily prove motivating to neighborhood defenders, worsening the already sizable representational disparities at these land use forums. Opponents currently dominate supporters of new housing by a margin of fifty percentage points at planning and zoning board meetings. It is unlikely that

interventions solely targeting turnout will make a meaningful dent in such a potent oppositional tilt.

### **Encouraging Participation from Pro-Housing Interest Groups**

The concentrated costs and diffuse benefits of housing developments create powerful obstacles to the creation of a mass pro-housing coalition. But, there are still interest groups on the pro-housing side that might be activated to attend meetings and lobby their local zoning and planning boards. Indeed, a variety of groups profit from a more pro-growth local government (Logan and Molotch 1987). Developers and realtors, for example, stand to reap enormous profits from the construction of more housing. Construction workers (and the unions that represent them) similarly might benefit from the jobs these projects create.

These individuals have the incentive to show up, unlike the members of the mass public who more diffusely benefit from the construction of new housing. Moreover, at least some subsets of these real estate interests may be publicly sympathetic and persuasive. Take the example of this Cambridge union representative:

I'm a business representative for Carpenter's Local 40 in Cambridge at 10 Holworthy Street, and I have the privilege of speaking for over 40 men and women who are lifelong residents of Cambridge, who are in support of this project because of the work opportunities it will provide, but also because the nature of Cambridge, the commitment to affordability will allow them to stay here and live in the same communities with their families.

While he and his workers clearly benefit financially from this project, their motivations are likely seen as more sympathetic and deserving of concern than the developer's profits. In the union representative's words, they are simply community members seeking to earn reasonable livelihoods and maintain local affordability for families.

Despite their incentives and potential influence, these real estate interests are only sporadically represented at these land use forums. While the developer whose proposal is being reviewed always speaks, we seldom found examples of *other* developers showing up in support of a proposal. Realtors and union representatives are also infrequently featured at these forums. These interests, of course, likely have other avenues for exerting power over local political outcomes. They may, for example, have more direct access to zoning and planning board representatives or

elected local officials. Still, the fact remains that one group that might be most plausibly motivated to attend a lengthy public meeting on land use is largely absent from these highly influential forums. One remedy, then, to the oppositional bias of public meetings might be to actively recruit real estate interests – especially construction workers – to these land use meetings.

Of course, this possibility, too, comes with a number of potential obstacles. Perhaps most importantly, there are serious normative trade-offs that must be weighed when encouraging greater real estate interest group involvement. As we have noted at various points throughout this book, a local politics in which real estate interests predominate will not necessarily – or even likely – yield more just outcomes. The wholesale destruction of low-income and middle-income communities – especially communities of color – during urban renewal and the gentrification of urban neighborhoods today illustrates what happens when market forces run rampant without any government-imposed commitment to housing affordability. The capture of institutions of direct democracy by interest groups is not on its face a better version of democracy (Gerber 1999).<sup>1</sup>

What's more, an unchecked pro-growth orientation comes with serious environmental concerns (Lubell, Feiock, and Ramirez 2005, 2009; Mullin 2009). There are many locations in the United States where insufficient water or vulnerability to floods may make managed, highly regulated growth the most environmentally sensible and sustainable option. Allowing short-term real estate interests to drive land use decisions at the expense of the long-term environmental viability of a community is also obviously problematic.

Finally, the incentives for real estate interests to attend these meetings may not be as substantial as they seem at first glance. Zoning and planning boards review proposals on a project-by-project basis. While we should expect the real estate community to come out in droves for a city-wide rezoning discussion, there is no particular financial incentive for one developer to attend another developer's zoning board meeting in support of his development. Similarly, unless a particular construction union has been guaranteed jobs as part of an ongoing housing proposal, workers do not know whether a particular project will directly benefit them – in

<sup>1</sup> Gerber (1999) shows that advantaged economic groups primarily exercise their outsized influence in direct democracy by blocking – rather than proposing – ballot initiatives. In this way, they are analogous to the neighborhood defenders in our account who similarly exercise power via obstruction.

the same way that prospective home seekers cannot know whether they might acquire housing at a specific proposed housing development.

Developers and realtors are also not monolithic interests. Large developers, for example, may actually benefit from a more complicated regulatory structure that prices out smaller operations. Some realtors may favor a higher volume of sales, while others may actually prefer a tight real estate stock featuring many bidding wars and fast sales. Thus, even among more specialized interests, there may not be a pro-housing coalition that can be reliably mobilized to attend frequent planning and zoning board meetings.

A nonprofit coalition might be normatively more appealing than one centered on a profit-oriented, pro-growth orientation. Nonprofits and Community Development Corporations are critical players in the production of affordable housing, and have, in many communities, stepped in to produce subsidized housing in the face of federal government retrenchment in this arena (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Goetz 1993). The presence and efficacy of these interests, however, varies enormously from community to community (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993). What's more, these organizations operate under enormous fiscal constraints; with tight budgets and staffing, their capacity to organize may be limited. Asking these already overburdened organizations to take on the task of assembling a pro-housing coalition at every two to three hour planning and zoning board hearing is a tall order. This may be feasible for some larger, high-salience developments, but it is hard to imagine mobilizing such a group for meetings on the more modest projects that comprise so much of the housing production in many communities.

#### MEETING REFORMS

What, then, given the current structure of neighborhood meetings might be more effective avenues of reform? The next two sections explore two sets of policies: The first centers on reforming meetings, while preserving neighborhood-based decision-making. The second more radically considers making land use proceedings city-level affairs.

Our research suggests that ameliorating the oppositional bias of meeting attendees will be difficult, at best. But, just because community members are engaged in the politics of neighborhood defense does not mean that zoning and planning board officials need to disproportionately incorporate these critiques in their final decisions. In the meetings we studied, zoning and planning board officials often handed down

decisions immediately after deliberating over public comment. What if, instead, like judges, they waited some set period of time – perhaps one day or one week so as not impose massive delays – before issuing a decision on a proposed housing development? A waiting period would allow board officials to more fully incorporate the full body of evidence – including city staff review of proposed developments – rather than overly weigh the critiques from neighborhood defenders that are more recent in their minds. Social psychological research on the availability heuristic shows that we overvalue and overuse information that we can immediately recall. This leads recently acquired information – which is easier to remember – to play more prominently in decision-making (Tversky and Kahneman 1973). With neighborhood defenders' critiques most immediately available, it is unsurprising that many of the land use officials we studied asked for more studies or outright denied projects after hearing from concerned neighbors – and frequently cited those neighborhood defenders in issuing their decision.

Moreover, zoning and planning officials could set clear requirements on what will be required of developers in advance of public meetings, and then stick with those requirements in the face of vociferous neighborhood opposition. For example, local officials might clearly lay out in advance which studies developers are required to complete and the standards by which the studies will be evaluated. Neighborhood defenders then cannot – as in the current system – demand more studies once these requirements have been satisfied.

This procedure has analogues in the movement towards preregistration in research science. This push stemmed from the failure of prominent studies in many fields to replicate in followup studies. The culprit – at least in many cases – was not malicious researcher intent or fraud. Rather, it appears as though researchers' quest to find (and publish) statistically significant results is to blame (Ioannidis 2005; Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn 2011). Psychology researchers Joseph Simmons, Leif Nelson, and Uri Simonsohn describe the problem: “After much discussion, our best guess was that so many published findings were false because researchers were conducting many analyses on the same data set and just reporting those that were statistically significant” (Kupferschmidt 2018). Researchers were *p-hacking* – conducting exploratory analyses until they found statistically significant (and therefore publishable) results. Such analyses violated key statistical assumptions, and led to the reporting of false positives, in which authors unveiled statistically significant relationships that do not exist in actuality.

By asking for repeat studies when the initial ones do not support their beliefs, neighborhood defenders are essentially engaging in p-hacking. They are demanding additional exploratory analyses until they find one that backs their desire to delay or block a development. This not only adds costs and delays to housing construction; it also means that cities and towns may base important decisions off of invalid studies. Statistically, if a developer is forced to run a traffic study often enough, one will yield the results that bolster neighborhood defenders' claims – even if the neighborhood does not have noteworthy traffic problems. The same applies in the other direction.

Instead, we advocate for a system in which cities and towns clearly define what evidence is required to evaluate a proposed housing development. The Center for Open Science outlines the benefits of predefining analytic procedures:

When you preregister your research, you're simply specifying to your plan in advance, before you gather data. Preregistration separates hypothesis-generating (exploratory) from hypothesis-testing (confirmatory) research. Both are important. But the same data cannot be used to generate and test a hypothesis, which can happen unintentionally and reduce the credibility of your results. Addressing this problem through planning improves the quality and transparency of your research, helping others who may wish to build on it. (Center for Open Science 2018)

As in the research world, cities and towns should show developers and neighborhood defenders alike what studies will be required *in advance of any meeting*. In this approach, the board would spell out in advance the standards and criteria for a legitimate study that it would accept as definitive. Such a procedure would not only stop neighborhood defenders from demanding studies until they obtained the results they desired; it would also prevent the developer from cherry-picking evidence in support of his project. Moreover, it would prevent local officials from falling prey to the temptation to call for additional studies as a sort of sensible compromise between developers and obstructionist neighbors.

### City- and Town-Level Reforms

The neighborhood-level, project-by-project basis on which housing developments are reviewed makes marshaling a pro-housing coalition challenging. There are few individuals and groups that have the resources and incentives to attend these meetings at a scale that will meaningfully reshape the supply of housing. One more radical proposal, then, might

be to change the level of government at which key housing decisions are made. Rather than recruiting and empowering neighborhoods, local governments could instead focus their efforts on city-level proposals to modify their zoning – and then allow developers to build up to the limits of existing zoning with more limited public review.

Minneapolis's 2040 comprehensive plan illustrates the possibilities of city-level reform. In December 2018, the City Council voted resoundingly (12-1) in support of the city's 2040 comprehensive plan. Perhaps most strikingly, the plan abolishes single-family zoning, allowing duplexes and triplexes in all residential areas, including those presently zoned exclusively for single-family homes. The scope of the policy is vast, with more than half of Minneapolis zoned for single-family housing at the time of the land use reform. Housing advocates across the country have eagerly sought advice on how to promulgate Minneapolis's reforms. Tina Kotek, Oregon's Speaker of the House, said, "When Minneapolis took the bold step to address their crisis, it created a sense of momentum. Minneapolis made it clear that the conversation was about addressing historical exclusion and took a big step toward building inclusive communities. That conversation resonates across the United States and it resonates in Oregon" (Mannix 2019).

Importantly, the city-level plan succeeded despite ardent opposition from single-family neighborhoods. As one *Minneapolis Star Tribune* account put it, "Defenders of single-family neighborhoods dominated the thousands of online comments submitted to other city." In response, the plan evolved, allowing triplexes instead of fourplexes on single-family lots. Moreover, pro-density advocates helped bolster the plan as part of the Neighbors for More Neighbors Campaign. Janne K. Filsrand, a volunteer for campaign, said after the successful city council vote, "We as a city recognize that we have challenges that we have failed to address for decades. We . . . are committed to doing the work that we need to do, even when it's hard, even if we can't always agree on how we need to do that work" (Otárola 2018). While it remains to be seen how replicable the Minneapolis organizing strategy is elsewhere, the city shows that city-level organizing *can* yield sweeping land use reform.

Shifting the locus of policy-making authority to the city level comes with important tradeoffs. A number of urban politics studies have assessed this question through the lens of at-large and neighborhood-level city council elections. The general consensus has been that institutions channeling neighborhood-level influence enhance minority interests, while at-large, city-level elections respond more to majority preferences

(Meier et al. 2005; Mullin 2009).<sup>2</sup> Political scientists Jessica Trounstine and Melody Valdini (2008) suggest that the extent to which these institutions enhance minority interests is dependent on context. Minority interests must be both substantial and spatially concentrated in order to be amplified by neighborhood-level representation.<sup>3</sup>

The desirability of ensuring minority influence over the policy-making process is context dependent. If the minority in question is a historically disadvantaged group, we might feel considerable enthusiasm about using political institutions to enhance minority interests (Guinier 1994). In contrast, if such institutions allow a historically advantaged minority to hoard resources, support for institutional protections of minority interests likely wanes. Our analysis of neighborhood-level participatory institutions suggests that, in the case of land use politics, the balance of power is tilted in favor of entrenched, advantaged interests. It may therefore make sense to at least consider city-level political processes as potentially more representative of broader community interests.

Our analysis of meeting minutes data suggests that, at a minimum, city- and town-level conversations about zoning are considerably more likely to attract supporters of multifamily housing. In Chapters 5 and 6, we featured data on participants in planning and zoning board meeting minutes about specific housing development proposals. We also collected analogous data for the same cities and towns about participants in meetings surrounding city- and town-level *zoning proposals* centered on the construction of multifamily housing. These meetings encompassed a wide array of topics, including changes to the Master Plan, the introduction of mixed-use zoning (allowing commercial and residential development to occur in the same neighborhoods and buildings), and changes to parking bylaws, among other things. Because there were many fewer zoning proposals than specific housing developments over the three-year period we studied, these data only feature 374 meeting participants.

<sup>2</sup> The extent of this relationship varies by context and racial and ethnic group (Welch 1990). Moreover, while the bulk of research suggests that neighborhood-level elections favor concentrated interests, Welch and Bledsoe (1988) find that at-large elections provide more voice to middle-class and wealthy interests relative to neighborhood-level participation.

<sup>3</sup> Trounstine and Valdini (2008) also show that these effects differ by gender and race of the candidate: at-large districts boost the representation of white women, while neighborhood-level districts increase the proportion of black men in city councils. Candidates of other races and genders do not appear to be affected by city-level institutions.

As with our analyses in Chapters 5 and 6, we coded whether participants supported or opposed proposed zoning changes that would allow for higher density. We find *much* higher levels of support for town-level proposals that would increase density in the community than for specific projects. While a mere 15 percent of planning and zoning board meeting attendees showed up in support of specific housing developments, a striking 39 percent of meeting participants endorsed zoning changes that would permit greater density – a gap of more than twenty-five percentage points. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when people are asked to consider density in the abstract, they appear considerably more supportive than when contemplating specific housing developments in their own neighborhoods.

Importantly, though, even town-level mobilization has its limitations. While 39 percent is certainly higher than 15 percent, it still represents a minority of meeting participants. In other words, even city- and town-level zoning proposals that would permit more multifamily housing fail to attract majority support in public meetings.

Moreover, framing public conversations around city-level zoning may work well in communities where mass public opinion supports the construction of new housing. But, in places where the public as a whole is concerned about development – even projects far from their own backyards – town-level zoning changes may provoke considerable consternation. In a town like Ashland, Massachusetts – where community members were willing to support a multi-million-dollar ballot referendum to stop one development – such proposals would likely fall flat.

In addition, city-level politics are potentially more vulnerable to developer capture. Classic urban politics abounds with accounts of business domination of political regimes, with the interests of marginalized neighborhoods largely overlooked (Logan and Molotch 1987; Stone 1989). While the dominance and role of business-led coalitions has historically evolved (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003), private real estate interests remain highly influential, especially when neighborhood voices are more institutionally muted.

What's more, similar to project-by-project proposals, city-level land use reform may also be stymied by institutional veto points. As of this writing, zoning changes in the Massachusetts communities central to this book require a super majority of two-thirds of the city or town's legislative body. At present, a bipartisan coalition of Massachusetts lawmakers is seeking to reform this and other aspects of state zoning law. In December 2017, Republican Governor Charlie Baker submitted Bill H.4075,

“An Act to Promote Housing Choices,” to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, noting, “When a majority of a city or town legislative body wants to adopt zoning that will encourage housing production, state law should not stand in the way. I urge your prompt enactment of this legislation” (Governor Charlie Baker 2017). While Massachusetts is somewhat unusual in imposing this supermajority requirement, it is not alone. In Texas, for example, cities are permitted by state law to require a supermajority of the city council to “overrule a recommendation of the zoning commission that a proposed change to a regulation or boundary be denied” (American Planning Association Texas Chapter 2013). Other states similarly allow local governments to impose supermajority requirements at their discretion.

Finally, moving conversations about housing to the city-level misses the fact that housing shortages are usually *regional* problems. In the Boston region that has comprised much of the empirical basis of this book, the city of Boston has joined with 14 other surrounding inner core suburbs to commit to building 185,000 new housing units by 2030 (Logan 2018). These communities contend that one or two regional cities cannot shoulder the burdens of the housing crisis alone. Somerville, Massachusetts, Mayor Joseph Curtatone summarizes the challenge:

Our region is in the midst of housing emergency. It is a crisis of housing affordability and availability that has deep and disastrous impacts on individuals and families. And it is not contained by municipal boundaries it is a problem of such scale and scope that it demands cities, towns, and the state come together to develop bold regional solutions. That is our charge, and I’m encouraged to be announcing a regional goal as the result of our first phase of work. But this first phase is only a beginning. It is incumbent on us all to continue our work and implement actionable plans to achieve this goal. (Harmon 2018)

This kind of regional commitment – across advantaged and disadvantaged communities – is critical; when we concentrate a disproportionate share of the housing development in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, we contribute to gentrification and displacement. What’s more, we deny families access to the high quality public goods that are disproportionately located in America’s highly zoned suburbs (Trounstein 2018).

### Federal Government Retrenchment

The limitations of these local solutions suggest that higher levels of government may be better suited to addressing the needs of low-income

home seekers. Indeed, in his seminal work, political scientist Paul Peterson (1981) argues that, because they are highly constrained by competition from surrounding local governments and the regulatory powers of higher levels of government, local governments are ill-suited to promulgating redistributive programs like affordable housing. Instead, he makes the case that the federal government is better equipped to implement these sorts of policies. Political scientist Edward Goetz (1993; 2013) forcefully argues that local governments cannot make up for federal retrenchment in housing spending.

Indeed, publicly subsidized housing has been the subject of decades of cutbacks at the federal level (Goetz 1993; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004; Goetz 2013). During the Reagan administration, the federal government withheld capital funds responsible for the rehabilitation, modernization, and day-to-day maintenance of public housing from many public housing authorities. A report from the Urban Institute described the horrifying consequences: “By the end of the 1980s, many housing agencies were coping with aging properties that had dangerous problems like broken elevators, malfunctioning incinerators, mold, and leaking pipes that spewed raw sewage” (Popkin 2017). The federal government could scarcely maintain its existing subsidized housing stock, let alone expand the supply to meet need.

The challenges facing public housing have not lessened in the intervening decades. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has experienced sharp declines in funding; between 2001 and 2013, public housing capital funding fell from \$3 billion to \$1.78 billion (Cohen 2014). HUD’s most recent Capital Needs Assessment (in 2010) estimated that the backlog of public housing capital need stood at \$26 billion. The most recent Trump administration budget – which proposed eliminating this fund altogether (Booker 2018) – would dramatically worsen this shortfall.

Local government leaders are deeply concerned about these cutbacks. In the 2017 Menino Survey of Mayors, we asked a nationally representative sample of cities with more than seventy-five thousand inhabitants what they believed the chief obstacles were to improving access to housing across several groups. Fifty percent of mayors cited the lack of state or federal funds as one of the two biggest obstacles to improving access to housing for low-income families. Thirty-eight percent said that these cutbacks would similarly hamper efforts to improve access for elderly and disabled residents. Without dramatic infusions of state and federal aid, local leaders feel ill-equipped to reach housing policy goals that might

help to alleviate the housing crisis, including increasing the availability of multi-bedroom units, increasing homeownership rates, and modernizing and replacing older housing stock (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2018). In short, fully addressing community housing needs – especially for low-income residents – is impossible without substantial policy interventions from higher levels of government.

Federal reinvestment in housing must be accompanied by land use reform. Indeed, without such reform, neighborhood defenders will continue to be able to stymie the construction of affordable and market-rate housing alike. Substantial government interventions in the housing market – such as public housing and Low Income Housing Tax Credits – are hindered by these privileged neighbors (Harrison and Kraemer 2019). Land use reform *alone* cannot solve the nation’s housing crisis. Rather, it should serve as the first step in a multipronged progressive housing agenda.

### Facing the Housing Crisis

Facing staunch local opposition at planning and zoning board meetings and little support from the federal government, even the most affordability-minded local leaders face formidable obstacles in enacting progressive housing policies. Addressing this housing crisis requires a multi-pronged approach. Local governments must reform how they regulate the construction of housing and how they incorporate public input. Importantly, they should accompany these changes with careful consideration of how to ensure the production of *affordable* housing; producing more market-rate housing alone will not help all of those suffering the ill consequences of the housing crisis. While these changes would likely yield substantial improvements in the production of market-rate housing, local governments are probably more limited in their capacity to make significant headway on affordability challenges on their own. State and federal governments must step in as partners alongside local governments to address the inability of a wide swath of the American population to access safe and affordable housing.

We need housing. However, the conversation over what gets built, where it gets built, and how it addresses not just the housing crisis, but the severe shortage of affordable housing, is far from complete. In some communities, neighborhood defenders have stopped the conversation by preventing new housing, but in doing so they are pushing the costs of development to other communities. In other places, underprivileged

voices are not heard in this conversation. In these localities, new housing is being built, but it does not serve the needs of many in the community who need help. New housing will necessarily cause communities to change. The ability of some communities to resist such change, keeping out density, traffic, or less wealthy residents, and maintaining “neighborhood character,” represents tremendous privilege, and pushes the necessary housing to less privileged places, creating gentrification and displacement. Addressing the housing crisis requires more than changes to zoning regulations; successful policy solutions must recognize the participatory politics of housing and the ways that citizens and bureaucrats shape the development process.