



# What is Affordable Housing in 2013?

Most people call housing “affordable” when they don’t have to choose between paying rent and buying groceries, and when they have a home that provides a sense of security and community.

Policymakers call housing “affordable” when a household pays no more than 30% of its income for housing costs. In the East Bay, low- and moderate-income people can have a very difficult time finding housing that passes this test. That’s why non-profit developers work closely with local governments and other partners to create and preserve housing for people at these income levels. (See chart below.)

EBHO’s definition of “affordable housing” means quality homes that are sustainable, well-managed and designed, and connected to services and amenities in their community.

## Why does affordable housing matter?

Communities thrive when people live near their jobs, schools, and places of worship; when they can rest, eat, and play in a healthy place; and when their housing is green and wisely planned.

But California’s ongoing shortage of affordable housing threatens this vision. Although home values plunged during the recession, displaced homeowners flooded the rental market. Rent increases are

outpacing income growth, while investors offering cash for foreclosed homes beat out other buyers.

This crisis isn’t just a concern for low-income residents. Employers have a hard time attracting potential hires who fear high housing costs. Public health and safety suffers when landlords make their apartments “affordable” by deferring maintenance. And efforts to improve educational outcomes can’t succeed when kids don’t know where they’ll sleep at night.

That’s why EBHO believes that affordable housing is both a universal need and a universal benefit.

## What we face:

▪ **Rising rents—and other costs.** The East Bay has traditionally provided relatively affordable housing in one of the nation’s most expensive markets. But investment speculation and a mini-tech boom have sent housing costs soaring. Average rents in Oakland (in buildings of 50+ units) increased 19% in 2012 to \$1,925.<sup>1</sup> The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that 59% of renters in the East Bay are unable to afford a two-bedroom apartment at “fair market” rent.<sup>2</sup>

The result? People are accepting substandard conditions, or very long commutes, to find housing they can afford. According to the U.S. Census, the Bay Area has the most “mega-commuters” of any metro area in the nation—people who travel at least 50 miles and 90 minutes to get to work.<sup>3</sup> These commutes take a toll on traffic, the environment, and family life.

**“Bringing down the cost of housing...will be a key part of increasing California’s competitiveness moving forward.”**

(East Bay Economic Development Alliance, Economic Outlook 2012)

## Who Qualifies for Affordable Housing?

This chart shows the range of income levels used to determine eligibility for affordable housing. For example, a person earning half of the Area Median Income (AMI) would be able to pay total monthly housing costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance) of \$819—far below most market-rate apartments. Non-profit developers, on the other hand, will set their rents at this level using public and private support.

	Extremely Low	Very Low	Low	Median
Income Level (% of Area Median Income)	30% AMI	50% AMI	80% AMI	100% AMI
Income limits for a one-person household	\$19,650	\$32,750	\$46,350	\$65,450
Affordable monthly housing costs (30% of income)	\$491	\$819	\$1,159	\$1,636
Income limits for a four-person household	\$28,050	\$46,750	\$66,250	\$93,500
Affordable monthly housing costs (30% of income)	\$701	\$1,169	\$1,656	\$2,338

Source: California Department of Housing and Community Development.



### ■ **Aftermath of the foreclosure crisis.**

The tide of foreclosures is ebbing, but its effects are still being felt. In 2012, foreclosures in Contra Costa County fell to 4,364 from a peak of 11,679 in 2008, but this reflects a distressing new normal: continuing instability, lost tax revenue, and a devastating loss of wealth by working families. (In 2005, the county had only 131 foreclosures.)<sup>4</sup> In Oakland, 42% of homes foreclosed between 2007–2011 were purchased by investors, who are much more likely to be non-residents.<sup>5</sup> This pattern is found all over the East Bay—how can we ensure that our low- and moderate-income communities maintain control of their assets?

■ **A “perfect storm” of funding cuts.** Even though housing is a basic need, it’s not always a top priority for local governments facing tough budget decisions. The affordable housing industry continues to suffer from the elimination of Redevelopment in 2012, and the federal government’s across-the-board budget cuts in 2013 mean that all communities will have less money for rental assistance and capital investment.

1. Carolyn Said, “Rents rise in S.F., Oakland, San Jose,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 18, 2012.  
 2. National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2013*.  
 3. U.S. Census Bureau  
 4. Kara Douglas, Affordable Housing Program Manager, Contra Costa County.  
 5. Steve King, *Who Owns Your Neighborhood? The Role of Investors in Post-Foreclosure Oakland*. Urban Strategies Council, 2012.

## What we’re doing:

This all seems like a bleak picture, but there are rays of hope.

■ **Advocacy and resident engagement.** Affordable housing residents are working with EBHO and other organizations to demonstrate the critical role affordable housing plays in strengthening public safety, health, educational success and economic prosperity. They are gaining the tools of empowerment: knowledge of planning processes, public speaking skills, and access to elected officials.

■ **Creativity.** In the face of decreased resources, many people are working harder and smarter. Advocates are watching the state’s cap-and-trade greenhouse gas emissions auctions as a possible revenue source. Cities like Walnut Creek and El Cerrito are considering the concept of “public

benefits zoning,” and Oakland has launched innovative public-private foreclosure prevention programs. And Senate Bill 391, the California Homes and Jobs Act, revives the campaign for a dedicated statewide funding source for affordable housing.

■ **Success stories.** Many exemplary properties, including those in this Guidebook, have been completed in the last year using the last of Redevelopment funds. Developers can still use the Low Income Housing Tax Credit to build or rehabilitate affordable housing. And every day, thousands of people in the East Bay come home to beautiful homes that are managed for the long term by mission-driven developers. (You can read a few of their stories on pages 19–22.) There is much to celebrate—and much more work to do.

By Gloria Bruce, EBHO

**Redevelopment revenues for affordable housing totaled \$54.5 million in Alameda County and \$29.5 million in Contra Costa County in 2010—funding that has since disappeared.**

(Source: Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California)

## How many hours would these East Bay residents have to work to afford an apartment?

This chart shows how many hours an average worker would have to put in to ensure their rent was no more than 30% of their income. The people in this chart—even though they are employed—all are below the median income and would have to work many hours to afford “fair market rent,” as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Occupation	Average hourly wage (source: California Employment Development Dept.)	Annual wage	Approximate hours a week needed to afford a fair-market one-bedroom at \$1,082/month
Food Preparation and Serving Workers (incl. fast food)	\$11.23	\$23,355	75
Cashiers	\$12.78	\$26,583	71
Security Guards	\$15.41	\$32,061	59
Receptionists	\$16.54	\$34,397	55
Preschool Teachers	\$16.18	\$33,650	56

**Based on HUD 2013 Fair Market Rent of \$1082 for a one-bedroom apartment in Alameda and Contra Costa. Note that HUD fair market rent levels were adjusted downward in 2013, and most community observers note that actual average rents are much higher. A worker at the federal minimum wage would have to work 104 hours a week to afford a fair market rent one-bedroom in Alameda or Contra Costa Counties (National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2013).**



# Building More Than Housing: Residents As Community Leaders

EBHO has a vision. We believe that by teaching affordable housing residents, developers and service providers to organize and advocate, we can bring more resources to the affordable housing and healthy communities movement in the East Bay and beyond. To achieve this, we've developed a thoughtful and strategic program with our members—including non-profit affordable housing developers—to train and educate residents and staff on how to become effective advocates, leaders, organizers and spokespeople for affordable housing.



organizing currently focuses on affordable housing and neighborhood issues in Oakland. It has also mobilized hundreds of residents throughout the East Bay on statewide housing issues.

Our Resident and Community Organization Program has three core components: the Resident Organizing Institute, the Staff Training Program, and Community Engagement and Action. Our Resident Organizing Institute (ROI) trains and empowers affordable housing residents to become leaders in their communities. We hold free, multilingual workshops for residents that focus on the fundamentals of leadership, advocacy and affordable housing policy. Many of these residents have gone on to take action in their communities, advocating for affordable housing through postcard campaigns, lobby day activities, candidate forums and public speaking.

## Investing in partnerships

In addition to empowering residents, EBHO is investing in partnerships with our non-profit housing developer members to train and engage their staff in advocacy and organizing work. Since we formally launched this new program in spring 2012, over 400 residents and staff of non-profit housing developments have attended forums and received trainings on the fundamentals of communications, advocacy and policy. This collaboration allows us to reach thousands of residents and staff in the East Bay and expand our scope and impact.

## A powerful constituency

People who live in non-profit affordable housing developments represent a powerful and compelling constituency: They can speak directly to the benefits affordable housing brings to their lives, their community, and the surrounding neighborhood. Our resident

## Leadership in action

The West Lake Christian Terrace Resident Council is one stellar example of resident leadership in action. This Christian Church Homes senior community in Oakland has an active and diverse resident council. Meeting monthly with an average attendance of over





Participants in EBHO's Resident and Community Organizing Program at training (above and below right) and at a City Council candidate forum (below left)

fifty residents, this democratically elected body works to create healthy, inclusive buildings and communities. The resident council meetings are held with simultaneous interpretation in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean, and the diverse agenda addresses topics such as public safety and transportation. Guest speakers and candidate forums have also been incorporated into their agenda.

Since they're already so involved in their community, a number of residents at Westlake Christian Terrace have participated in EBHO's Resident Organizing Institute to sharpen their communication and leadership skills, and the impact has been tangible. Resident Council President Marie Taylor says, "At each meeting we see more residents attending and asking questions to learn about what is going on in their community. Residents want to be involved in activities that will make their neighborhood a better place to live and ensure affordable housing is attainable for seniors and people on fixed incomes." In addition to monthly meetings, the residents have been actively engaged in a multi-year community planning process in their neighborhood, impacting the city's plan through public testimony, participation and coalition-building.

## New opportunities

EBHO's program is expanding as we tackle local, regional and statewide advocacy and organizing opportunities. Our work in 2013 included EBHO's first annual local lobby day and a series of workshops for residents to learn how to become community planners. In partnership with the East Oakland Building Healthy Communities initiative and The California Endowment, there will be opportunities throughout the year for residents to learn policy and organizing skills to effectively participate in and influence community-planning processes.

**As an affordable housing advocate, how do you want to use and develop your leadership and advocacy skills?** There are many opportunities to use your talent, stories and power to advocate for affordable housing and healthy communities at EBHO. We invite you to get active and participate in public speaking, letter writing, lobby visits and other important activities that advance our collective goal: gathering more resources and powerful voices for the affordable housing movement.

If you would like more information and want to get involved, please contact Director of Resident and Community Organizing Jean Cohen at 510-499-3660 or [jean@ebho.org](mailto:jean@ebho.org).

**By Jean Cohen, EBHO**



*"There'd be lots of families that'd be homeless on the streets without this."*

— Kashawna Williams, resident of Abode & MidPen's Main Street Village



# Affordable Housing Advocacy in the City of Alameda:

## Changing Minds and Winning Victories



Tom Matthews asks for a show of support for converting East Housing into affordable housing from the crowd of mostly Renewed Hope members at the City Council meeting on June 28, 1999, Alameda, CA. (copyright *Oakland Tribune*)

*The East Housing battle drew over 100 people to marches, vigils and city council meetings and introduced Alamedans to the concept of workforce housing.*

Renewed Hope Housing Advocates in Alameda was founded in the midst of a housing crisis. In 1999, an over-heated market, sparked by the early boom in high tech, was causing rents to escalate and forcing working families out. Residents, primarily in the city's neglected West End, joined forces with local churches to advocate for rehabilitating 500 family-sized apartment units abandoned by the Navy next to the closed Naval

Air Station. East Housing, as it was known, was slated to be torn down and replaced by expensive homes.

The East Housing battle drew over 100 people to marches, vigils and city council meetings and introduced Alamedans to the concept of workforce housing. The city was not ready to hear the message then, and East Housing was lost. But the battle to build affordable housing in Alameda had only just begun.

Since 2000, a dedicated core of Renewed Hope volunteers – including homeowners, tenants, religious leaders and other community members – has kept affordable housing advocacy alive in Alameda. Over nearly 15 years, we've spoken about the benefits of affordable

housing to the community and at city council meetings, and worked every conceivable legal and policy angle to obtain results. We've made slow and steady progress, with many achievements (and some setbacks) along the way. Renewed Hope has:

- Sued the city over the civilian conversion of the Naval Air Station, which won a commitment from the city to develop 25% affordable housing there.
- Joined residents of a large apartment complex of mostly low-income and minority tenants in their battle against eviction by out-of-state investors. The eviction forced a large portion of Alameda's black residents out of town.
- Pushed the city to require housing developers to build inclusionary affordable homes rather than paying into a housing fund.
- Pressured the city to confront the discriminatory and impractical planning restrictions of Measure A, a 1973 charter amendment banning multi-family housing construction.



*Renewed Hope can also take credit for shifting perceptions of affordable housing among Alameda's civic leaders.*



EBHO honored the late Eve Bach in 2010 with Renewed Hope members: Lois Pryor, Laura Thomas, Bill Smith, Gale Bach, Rev. Michael Yoshii, Lynette Jung Lee, and Modessa Henderson

Renewed Hope can also take credit for shifting perceptions of affordable housing among Alameda's civic leaders. In July 2012, bolstered by invaluable support from East Bay Housing Organizations and its members, we scored our biggest victory yet when Alameda adopted a certified housing element. While Renewed Hope was willing to turn to the courts for backup, it wasn't necessary; years of educating and lobbying the city's planning board and council bore fruit when they gave the document near-unanimous support.

City planners are now pressing developers of single-family projects to include multi-family units in their developments and welcoming developers of multi-family housing back to Alameda. While only a small percentage of Latinos and African-Americans call the city home, largely due to past discriminatory practices, we think the city is on the right track toward becoming the inclusive community it prides itself on being.

### How to get results in affordable housing advocacy:

- 1 Speak about the benefits of affordable housing for the whole community.** It can be a boon to local employers looking for reliable, committed workers, and provides stable housing for people in essential occupations such as teachers and emergency workers. It reduces miles driven by residents (especially if developed near public transit), eases traffic congestion, and reduces the carbon load in the atmosphere.
- 2 Find out the status of your city's housing element.** If it's current, make sure affordable housing programs are being implemented. If it's not, tell planning staff and council members that you support adopting a strong element. Not having a certified housing element could open the city to a citizen lawsuit or loss of transportation funding under current state policy, so it can be a great opportunity to advocate for strong housing policies.

- 3 Research local policies that encourage or fund affordable housing, and work to establish or strengthen them.** Require developers to build inclusionary units and the city to assess affordable housing impact fees on new commercial developments.
- 4 If a large part of your city is being developed or redeveloped, insist sites are set aside for affordable housing.** Suggest zoning incentives which offer developers increased density if they agree to build affordable homes.
- 5 Show up for hearings to support affordable developments and projects with inclusionary units.** Many residents oppose new development merely on the basis of traffic impacts, but studies show that lower-income residents own fewer cars and use public transportation more frequently. Ask for bike lanes and a walkable, community-oriented design, stressing the health and environmental benefits of increasing density and discouraging auto use.
- 6 Seek alliances with people or groups who support public transportation or business development.** They often understand that affordable housing supports both.
- 7 Find people who live or have lived in affordable housing who are willing to speak about what it has meant for them.** Their stories are often very poignant and can soften the prejudices of people who oppose it.

By Laura Thomas, President of Renewed Hope

**Renewed Hope Housing Advocates supports affordable housing in Alameda, especially on the former Alameda Naval Air Station and surrounding areas to ensure that current residents are not displaced and have a voice in the redevelopment process. We believe that safe, affordable housing is a basic human right and we are committed to making it a reality for Alameda's citizens.**





Rev. Sandhya Jha, Rev. B.K. Woodson, and Francisco Herrera make a joyful noise at the 2012 Interfaith Breakfast.



**"God is active in the cultivation of new and unexpected relationships, the elevation of public discourse, and the empowerment of community."**

—Rev. Michael Yoshii

## With Dignity For All: Interfaith Communities United

The Rev. Phil Lawson has often said that all religions believe in justice. EBHO's Interfaith Communities United (ICU) continues to prove that true, bringing a divine spark to the critical work of creating shelter with dignity for all.

### Among ICU's highlights from 2012

- Dozens of congregations made affordable housing a spiritual issue during the Housing Sabbath in May.
- The Rev. Phil Lawson, although technically retired, continues to speak about the need for housing justice to countless groups and coalitions.
- Our faith-based housing and homelessness partners raised up the voices of "the least, the last, and the lost" at events including St. Mary's Center's Annual Memorial Service for the Homeless in West Oakland in December.
- The Rev. Clarence Johnson of Mills Grove Christian Church, a longtime ICU member and advocate for justice, now serves on the EBHO Board of Directors.
- The ICU interfaith breakfast in October served as a source of inspiration to all who attended, as religiously diverse participants envisioned the future of ICU.
- EBHO and ICU hired a new Director of Interfaith Programs, the Rev. Sandhya Jha. Jha has worked with the ICU Committee to create a strategy to expand religious participation in key

EBHO campaigns. She will also train members of the religious community in the "faith-rooted organizing" model, which focuses on the distinct contributions people of faith can bring to community movements.

In 2012 one of ICU's core members, the Buena Vista United Methodist Church, won a major grassroots coalition victory with the passage of the Housing Element in Alameda. (See page 14.) Over a decade ago, when discussing the emerging housing crisis in their community, the Rev. Michael Yoshii and his congregation decided "this was a new calling for us."

Over the years, Rev. Yoshii and his congregation discovered they had the power to change discussions about affordable housing in their community. "Trust that God will open the doors and bring the people and resources both within your congregation and community to do what you need to do."

This year, ICU is helping congregations deepen their commitment to helping the homeless by supporting affordable housing as a solution to homelessness. ICU is also helping congregations look at the interconnection between diverse issues like affordable housing, incarceration, immigration and racial justice. If your faith community would like to mobilize, pray or simply learn more about what affordable housing has to do with faith and justice, please contact [sandhya@ebho.org](mailto:sandhya@ebho.org) for more information.

**By Rev. Sandhya Jha, EBHO**

# Get Involved with EBHO

## Become an EBHO member

**EBHO members come together around the shared belief** that all people—including low-income families, people with disabilities, veterans, workers, youth and seniors—deserve a safe place to call home. EBHO is a community of advocates comprising over 300 organizations and individuals. We are affordable housing developers, faith leaders, architects, builders, homeless service providers and advocates, affordable housing residents, and people like you. Together, we are dedicated to promoting quality affordable homes in the East Bay. **Join us.** Visit [www.EBHO.org](http://www.EBHO.org) to learn more about membership.

### ■ Affordable Housing Week & Guidebook

Brings thousands of people together each May to participate in tours, groundbreakings, grand openings, policy seminars, community organizing workshops and more. Join us and pick up a copy of the annual Guidebook!



■ **Concord Campaign & Committee** Advocates as part of a broad-based community coalition for affordable housing, quality jobs, open space, sustainable development, and vibrant, walkable neighborhoods at the Concord Naval Weapons Station and citywide.

### ■ East Bay Regional Policy Committee

Generates and supports local and regional affordable housing advocacy efforts throughout the East Bay, focusing on innovative policies and strategies such as Land Value Recapture.

### ■ Foreclosure & Affordable Housing Committee

Strategizes around the foreclosure crisis and the shortage of affordable rental housing. Convenes housing, financial, policy and grassroots organizations to develop programs to keep families in their homes.

### ■ Interfaith Communities United for Affordable Housing (ICU)

Builds partnerships with interfaith and social justice organizations, homeless advocates, and faith leaders. Organizes EBHO's "Shelter in a Time of Storms" annual breakfast in the fall, and the Housing Sabbath during Affordable Housing Week.

■ **Oakland Campaigns & Committee** Develops advocacy campaigns; explores funding, policy, and land use strategies; and organizes coalitions to advance affordable housing development and preservation in Oakland.

### ■ Resident & Community Organizing Program Committee

Trains, organizes and mobilizes affordable housing residents to get involved in



affordable housing advocacy. Focuses on issues ranging from neighborhood planning processes to statewide funding efforts and legislation.

## Plus...

■ **Educate yourself and others** about affordable housing and its role in creating vibrant communities. Distribute EBHO's Affordable Housing Guidebook.

■ **Support affordable housing proposals** in your neighborhood. Participate in the community-planning process and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

■ **Testify** at public hearings and city council meetings.

■ **Call and write** your elected officials and ask them to support affordable housing.

■ **Mobilize and engage** your organization, neighborhood group, congregation, school and/or union.

To learn how to get involved, please call us at 510-663-3830 or visit [www.EBHO.org](http://www.EBHO.org).





# Life After Redevelopment

During Affordable Housing Week 2012, EBHO convened an expert panel to discuss “Life after Redevelopment” and look into the crystal ball to imagine a future without California’s largest source of funding for affordable housing (see text box). A year later, we asked a few of these individuals to reflect and tell us what they see on the horizon now. Here are a few of their collective insights.

significant loss of money, leverage, talent, and momentum that has made the development and preservation of affordable housing so successful in California.

- **Money and Leverage** Affordable housing has lost \$1 billion in annual revenues statewide, which typically represented about 20,000 affordable housing units per year. These funds leveraged federal, state and private investments in housing and stimulated thousands of construction and permanent jobs.
- **Talent** Thousands of professionals statewide—critical visionaries, project managers and ambassadors for developing affordable housing—are lost to other endeavors.
- **Momentum** Hundreds of affordable housing developments, many of which had received their jurisdictional approvals, are stalled as a result of the “perfect storm” of major cuts in federal, state and local resources.

Developers are challenged to assemble an increasingly complex matrix of funding sources to replace redevelopment funds and start construction. This is worsening the housing shortage.

## Are there silver linings? What do you think the future holds?

As President John Kennedy said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

With significant disruption comes significant change. Non-profit developers are now carefully restructuring and repositioning their organizations, leveraging core assets and strengths, and pioneering new ideas to make sure they

### The “Brain Trust” from EBHO’s 2012 Life After Redevelopment Forum:

Kara Douglas, Affordable Housing Program Manager, Contra Costa County

Linda Mandolini, President, Eden Housing

Anu Natarajan, Vice Mayor, City of Fremont

Laura Simpson, Housing Division Manager, City of Walnut Creek

Libby Seifel, President, Seifel Consulting, Inc.

Rick Williams, Partner, Van Meter Williams Pollack LLP

### What exactly have we lost with Redevelopment’s elimination?

Redevelopment was a state-authorized tool that local governments used to capture increases in property taxes for projects such as revitalizing downtown areas and encouraging economic development through capital projects. A minimum 20% of redevelopment revenues had to be used for affordable housing, and redevelopment areas were required to include affordable units, which resulted in the creation of thousands of below-market-rate homes. All redevelopment agencies across California were eliminated in early 2012 during the budget crisis. The largest state funding source for affordable housing disappeared practically overnight.

We have now passed through the five stages of grief into acceptance: Redevelopment is gone. With acceptance comes the need to acknowledge the

don't "miss the future." We must collaborate and hone our advocacy skills to preserve as much federal funding as possible, through engaging in the sequestration process and pushing for federal tax reform. Particularly important is preserving the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), the primary source of federal financing for affordable housing.

In California, we must continue to push for a dedicated statewide funding source and new legislation, including redevelopment "clean-up" bills, new financing tools, and use of former non-housing assets for affordable housing. At the local and county level, we must assure that a portion of so-called "boomerang" funds—tax revenues recaptured for counties from redevelopment's dissolution—are dedicated to affordable housing. At all levels of government, we should be discussing the need to create and fund affordable housing trust funds.

## What programs look most promising for affordable housing in the future?

- **The California Homes & Jobs Act (SB 391)** would replace some of the lost funds. If passed, this bill would provide \$500 million annually as a new revenue source for affordable housing.
- **City and County Long Range Property Management Plans** will transfer "non-housing" redevelopment property for future development as affordable/mixed income housing. Securing property for development is an essential part of the affordable housing equation.
- **County and city "boomerang" funds** may supply some resources in the near term.
- **Inclusionary housing programs** will still be viable in some locations and will require strategic refinements to continue to produce needed housing.
- **"Public Benefits Zoning" policies** can ensure that the public gets some benefit from private development when land values increase due to

This mixed-use community at Station Center in Union City was made possible with Redevelopment funds and tools, which are no longer available to local governments.



government investment. This may become a growing part of affordable housing funding.

- **Housing impact fees** ensure that new development projects help offset the increased need for housing and infrastructure.
- **Local housing trust funds** set aside a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing.

City policies will play an expanding role in making affordable housing work in the appropriate locations and managing costs. These might include:

- Parking "diets" which reduce the number of parking spaces required for affordable and higher-density housing near transit
- Density bonuses and zoning incentives, such as a streamlined development process that minimize pre-development costs
- More efficient and cost-effective design to reduce construction time

All of these programs have promise, but they won't replace the lost redevelopment funds. Collaboration is key as we put together the funding puzzle. That's why EBHO is working with a wide spectrum of business and environmental organizations, grassroots communities and residents, and housing industry groups to win state legislation for a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing. Join us as we chart a new course for creating affordable homes.

**Edited by Rick Williams, Partner  
Van Meter Williams Pollack**



# The Housing Element: A Tool to Bring Affordable Homes to All Communities



"It's been wonderful...management is very friendly."  
—Zakhar Shneyder, resident of EAH's Camellia Place

*Now is the time to start advocating. The next round of Housing Element updates starts in mid-2013, when the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) decides each city's fair share of the regional need for new housing for people of each income level.*

Recognizing an "urgent need" for more affordable homes, California law requires all cities and counties to plan for their fair share of the region's housing needs. All local governments must periodically update the Housing Element of their General Plan, identifying sites where affordable homes can be built and adopting policies to promote and preserve affordable housing. The Housing Element process is essential to combating economic and racial segregation and ensuring that everyone can find an affordable home.

State law requires that cities consult with the community in developing their Housing Element, so the update process

presents a great opportunity for affordable housing advocates to win stronger local policies. Housing Elements are reviewed by the state Department of Housing and Community Development for compliance, and are often required to access state and regional funding programs, such as OneBayArea infrastructure grants. These are important avenues for advocacy, and as a last resort, citizens can enforce Housing Element requirements in court.

Now is the time to start advocating. The next round of Housing Element updates starts in mid-2013, when the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) decides each city's fair share of the regional need for new housing for people of each income level. Local Housing Element updates must be completed by late 2014. The region is on track to assign the vast majority of the region's housing needs to "Priority Development Areas" (PDAs) in lower-income urban neighborhoods. This could fuel a wave of gentrification and displacement in lower-income communities while giving a free pass to wealthy suburbs with poor affordable housing track records. Against this backdrop, local advocates need to make sure all cities are doing their part to promote affordable housing and protect existing lower-income residents from displacement.





## Ordering from the Affordable Housing Policy Menu

When embarking on a local housing advocacy campaign, it's important to consider both the most pressing community needs and the most promising political opportunities. Here's a menu of proven affordable housing policies that have worked in other cities:

### Land

Affordable homes cannot be built unless cities apply appropriate zoning to suitable sites. Zoning determines whether a parcel can accommodate housing or retail, and whether residential development will be luxury houses or higher-density affordable apartments. Some useful zoning tools include:

- Zoning enough sites in the Housing Element to accommodate all affordable housing needs; sites should be large enough (over an acre) and zoned for at least 30 units per acre.
- Making the best sites available for affordable housing: sites near transit, schools, grocery stores and other amenities. Non-profit developers can help you find them.
- "By right" approval of affordable homes minimizes costly delays and maximizes affordability, while preserving the city's ability to ensure they are well designed and fit in with the surrounding neighborhood.
- An Affordable Housing Overlay or Incentive zone can provide incentives

to developments that include affordable homes. Incentives could include increased density, reduced parking, fee waivers and fast-track permitting.

### Money

Most affordable housing developments are funded by a combination of federal, state and local dollars. Finding new funding sources is particularly urgent, given the recent loss of Redevelopment, which generated more than \$1 billion per year for affordable housing in California. Housing Elements are local plans, and there are many established local policies that can generate money for affordable development:

- Jobs-housing linkage fees and affordable housing impact fees ensure that employers and developers of high-end housing do their part to allow lower-paid workers to live near where they work.
- Inclusionary Housing Policies require for-profit developers to include affordable housing in all new residential development.
- Mechanisms to "recapture" value created when cities rezone land for more profitable uses or invest public money in infrastructure make sure that public actions benefit the public rather than giving windfall profits to landowners.
- Local housing funds should promote housing for those most in need.
- Join with EBHO in supporting legislation to create a permanent

source of funding for affordable housing and finance mechanisms for neighborhood investment.

### Neighborhood Stabilization

A key piece of any affordable housing strategy is to make sure that lower-income people can afford to stay in their communities when their neighborhoods gentrify.

- Protect tenants with Just Cause/Fair Rent ordinances.
- Limit the conversion of rental units into condominiums.
- Protect owners and renters against foreclosure and require bank-owned properties to be maintained properly.

**By Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, Senior Staff Attorney, Public Advocates**



**Strong housing elements are also good for the environment and the economy. The state's landmark 2008 climate change legislation, SB 375, requires regions to coordinate land use and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet their full need for housing at all income levels. Giving lower-income people more opportunities to live near jobs and transit reduces driving, gives employers access to a larger, more stable workforce, and lets families have more money to spend in their communities.**