

# The Challenge Presented by Stubborn Facts

February 19, 2017

**NB:** I have clarified the attached [February 14, 2017 Joint VNC Board & Discussion Forum Committee Meeting Discussion Generator Supplement](#) (pages 2 through 6 below) by changing the word **blacks** to **people** on page 5 to make it crystal clear that the **supplificant position** factor applies not only to **blacks** but to **all people** who find themselves trapped in areas where the fears common in what Tommie Shelby refers to as 'ghettos' exist - ie, 'ghettos' being what I characterize as 'disenfranchised communities'; and I have added new **Stubborn Facts** on page 5. On July 4, 2017, I added a new **Stubborn Fact** beginning on page 7 revealing why the state has failed to 'fix the housing crisis over the past 50 years, supplemented later with a concurring July 9, 2017 LA Times Editorial beginning on page 13. On July 21, 2017, I added a new **Stubborn Fact** on page 6 revealing how the zoning laws requiring construction of unused but expensive 'minimal parking' are fueling the LA housing crisis. On September 20, 2017, I added a new **Stubborn Fact** on page 15 revealing that a 'subsidized housing' strategy is unsustainable.

This is a complex systemic issue.

Please note the **stubborn facts** which any efforts to address it must consider.

Please look at what you may feel has 'helped' in the past and what you believe may 'help' in the future, and do so in the context of the irrefutable **stubborn fact** that **"the facts on the ground for a typical California family are really as bad as they've ever been in the state's history".\***

Ask yourself (and/or the organizations you believe are 'doing good') if your efforts (and/or your organization's efforts) may have failed and/or may continue to fail to achieve the desirable objectives you (and your organizations) hoped to achieve - and (more importantly) ask yourself **why they have failed** – and/or **why they may continue to fail** unless some sort of change is implemented.

I consider the below **Discussion Forum Committee Strategy Objective MOTION\*\*** an attempt to learn from past failures and perhaps use those experiences as a springboard to improving how we might do something more constructive in the future – something that might avoid us finding many years from now that **"the facts on the ground for a typical California family are really as bad as they've ever been in the state's history"**.

Sincerely,  
Joe Murphy  
[310-305-1444](tel:310-305-1444)  
[joedmur@gmail.com](mailto:joedmur@gmail.com)

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\* It's significantly worse now than it was in March 2015 when **"an average California home costs \$440,000, about two-and-a-half times the average national home price (\$180,000). Also, California's average monthly rent is about \$1,240, 50 percent higher than the rest of the country (\$840 per month)."**

[State of California Legislative Analyst Office](#)

\*\* MOTION: Request VNC Board support of the **Discussion Forum Committee's** commitment to generate and submit to the Board, for its review and approval, a set of recommendations capable of implementing the following **Strategy Objective**:

**Develop and present to the board a set of policies and laws which would encourage private and public efforts to provide more less-expensive 'homes' in existing LA residential communities in a way which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by less wealthy residents – 'homes' where they and their families would feel they 'belong' to a 'community' without the fears common in 'ghettos' – an approach designed to create & then maintain a systemic housing supply/demand balance in all of LA's residential communities.**

# February 14, 2017 Joint VNC Board & Discussion Forum Committee Meeting

## Discussion Generator – The Challenge

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### Facts are Stubborn Things

<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/3235.html>

**“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”** *John Adams, US diplomat & politician (1735 - 1826)*

*'Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials,' December 1770*

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### Who are L.A. County's homeless?

<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-homeless-los-angeles-2016/>

JON SCHLEUSS & LORENA INIGUEZ ELEBEE

OCT. 28, 2016

The 2016 count of the homeless population, taken in January, revealed that our county has more than 43,000 people living on the street or in shelters. (Long Beach, Glendale and Pasadena were not included.)

It's a diverse group of individuals. They're not defined by one characteristic, but by many. Some homeless subpopulations grew in 2016, while others decreased.

**“Blacks are the largest racial or ethnic group [39%] ... And they're disproportionately represented. Only 8% of the county's population is black.”**

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JDM inserted the below to show that similar facts in a federal case constituted “stubborn facts” justifying a ruling based on the equivalent of racial prejudice. The “stubborn facts” above (39:8) are significantly more dramatic than those cited below (41:20) and constitute a much stronger case for determining that racial prejudice is a major contributing factor in LA's homelessness and must somehow be addressed.

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### Seattle Judge derided by Trump - a Conservative Jurist

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_TRUMP\\_TRAVEL\\_BAN\\_SEATTLE\\_JUDGE?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_TRUMP_TRAVEL_BAN_SEATTLE_JUDGE?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

BY GENE JOHNSON

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Feb 4, 2017

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**[Jan 2017 case]** ... Robart grilled a Justice Department lawyer, Michelle Bennett, asking if foreign nationals from the seven countries named in the order had been arrested for plots in the U.S. since 9/11. Bennett said she didn't know.

"The answer to that is none, best I can tell," Robart said. "You're here arguing on behalf of someone that says we have to protect the United States from these individuals coming from these countries, and there's no support for that."

He added that he was tasked with determining whether the president's order was "grounded in facts, as opposed to fiction."

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**[Summer 2015 case]** ... Robart was holding a hearing in [this] case in summer 2015 - a time fraught with tension over violence by and against police officers around the country - when he surprised the courtroom by adopting the mantra of protesters.

**"The importance of this issue to me is best demonstrated by the news,"** he said, shaking his head and sighing heavily.

**"According to FBI statistics, police shootings resulting in death involve 41 percent black people, despite being only 20 percent of the population living in those cities. Forty-one percent of the casualties, 20 percent of the population: Black lives matter."**

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# **California's housing affordability problems** **"as bad as they've ever been in the state's history"** **housing director says**

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-housing-affordability-1483490282-htmlstory.html>

Liam Dillon

JAN. 3, 2017

California's housing affordability challenges remain daunting and continue to increase, according to a draft report from the state's Department of Housing and Community Development released Tuesday.

The report found:

- Housing production over the last decade fell more than 100,000 new homes short of demand and continues to lag, leading to surging prices at all income levels.
- The state's homeownership rates are at their lowest since the 1940s.
- One-third of the state's renters spend more than half their income on housing costs.
- California has 12% of the nation's population, but 22% of the country's homeless population.

**"What the report tries to get at is that the facts on the ground for a typical California family are really as bad as they've ever been in the state's history," said Ben Metcalf, director of the Department of Housing and Community Development.**

The report includes a range of potential solutions, including streamlining local and state land-use and environmental rules and boosting funding for low-income housing.

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NY Times Sunday Review OPED

## **No Racial Barrier Left to Break (Except All of Them)**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/14/opinion/sunday/president-obama-martin-luther-king-racial-barrier.html>

**We can't create a more just nation simply by  
dressing up institutions in more shades of brown.**

**Now we must confront structural racism.**

**By KHALIL GIBRAN MUHAMMAD**

Khalil Gibran Muhammad is professor of history, race and public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School and the author of "[The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America.](#)"

January 14, 2017

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California Legislature

## **California cities would have to make it easier to build houses under new legislation**

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-cities-will-have-to-make-it-1485196277-htmlstory.html>

Article By Liam Dillon

January 23, 2017

State Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) statement regarding his proposed SB 35 bill:

**"Local control is about how a community achieves its  
housing goals, not whether it achieves those goals."**

The bill's provisions would only apply in cities where growth isn't keeping pace with housing production targets developed by the state every eight years that are designed to ensure California has enough homes for its growing population to live affordably.

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# Rethinking America's 'Dark Ghettos'

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/11/rethinking-americas-dark-ghettos/508400/>

A Harvard professor argues that fixing America's urban poverty will require a dramatically different approach.

[Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform \(2016\)](#), by [Tommie Shelby](#)

The Atlantic

Interview of Tommie Shelby by Alana Semuels  
November 22, 2016

**“... government’s interventions have amounted to policy tweaks, and haven’t focused enough on the unjust system that created these areas in the first place.”**

**Semuels:** “What is different about addressing ghetto poverty and addressing other forms of poverty, including rural and white poverty?”

**Shelby’s Response**

**“Ghetto poverty is marked by racial stigma and involuntary segregation. Not all forms of poverty have those features.”**

**Semuels:** “Some successful [government programs](#), such as Moving to Opportunity, help move black families from poor and dangerous neighborhoods to wealthier, white areas. Yet you argue that residential integration and programs such as these are not a fair solution. Could you explain your reasoning?”

**Shelby’s Response**

**“What I find troubling is that in an attempt to deal with the problem of ghetto poverty, the government makes needed resources and services available only on condition that poor black people join predominantly white communities. I regard it as almost insulting to put the economic fate of the ghetto poor in the hands of more affluent whites, who then get to decide whether to allow blacks into their social networks and on what terms. Then you're sort of putting disadvantaged blacks in a supplicant position ...”**

## Inspired by Measure S, California lawmaker takes aim at anti-growth ballot measures

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-vote-slow-growth-measures-20170216-story.html>

Article By Liam Dillon

February 16, 2017

A Los Angeles lawmaker wants to make it harder for cities and counties to slow development in their communities, a response to decades of local ballot measures in Los Angeles and across California that have tried to restrain growth.

Assembly Bill 943 from Democratic Assemblyman Miguel Santiago increases the threshold from a simple majority to a two-thirds supermajority for passage of any local ballot measure that would block or delay development.

Santiago said the legislation would ensure local governments couldn't further restrict housing supply in the state.

**“You can't address California's housing crisis by suppressing the construction of housing.”**

Santiago said that ballot initiative [Measure S], as well as the continued worsening of California's housing affordability problems, spurred him to write the bill.

**More than two-thirds of coastal communities in the state have adopted growth-limiting measures such as caps on population or height limits on buildings, which are aimed at restricting residential development**, with the significant majority passed through the ballot, [according to the state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office](#).

These proposals can have a large effect on housing costs, a key issue at a time when **the state's median home value of \$485,800 is more than two and a half times the national average**. A 2006 study of California land-use rules by UC Berkeley researchers found that **each growth restriction a city adopted increased home prices between 3% & 4.5%**.

## L.A. community plans languished for years. Now they're an unlikely issue in the March election

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-los-angeles-election-community-plans-20170210-story.html>

Article By David Zahniser

February 17, 2017

**L.A.'s collection of community plans, and the city's longstanding failure to update them, have emerged as a major issue in the March 7 election campaign.** The plans are considered central to the work of real estate development, spelling out what can be built on each street. Yet they have languished for years, as the city coped first with a recession and then a legal defeat.

Community plans are one of the main tools Los Angeles uses to prepare for future population growth, anticipating where additional homes and job centers can be built. Yet most of those plans were adopted years before the region's rail network expanded into Pasadena, Santa Monica and East Los Angeles.

City leaders say the plans should already have been updated to ensure that higher-density housing and other amenities can be built near transit stops.

**“There will always be growth. We have to figure out where we're putting that growth ... and in what parts of the city. But ...”**

**“... if we don't have the basic elements in our community plans, we really don't know where we're headed.”**

Councilman [Jose Huizar](#)

**“There's a lot of conversation out there saying that ... if the community plans were simply updated, we would fix everything. I can't tell you how false that is.”**

Councilman [Mitchell Englander](#)



# How parking lots are ruining Los Angeles

*LA's parking crisis is fueling its housing crisis*

<https://la.curbed.com/2017/7/21/16011386/parking-lots-bad-los-angeles-development>

Article By Alissa Walker

July 21, 2017

**... parking minimums are the reason new affordable housing is so hard to build.**

## Proposed Discussion Forum Committee Action to be considered at its March 14, 2017 meeting

MOTION: Request VNC Board support of the Discussion Forum Committee's commitment to generate and submit to the Board, for its review and approval, a set of recommendations capable of implementing the following Strategy Objective:

Develop and present to the board a set of policies and laws which would encourage private and public efforts to provide more less-expensive 'homes' in existing LA residential communities in a way which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by less wealthy residents – 'homes' where they and their families would feel they 'belong' to a 'community' without the fears common in 'ghettos' – an approach designed to create & then maintain a systemic housing supply/demand balance in all of LA's residential communities.

The above Strategy Objective addresses the below Diversity Vision Goal:

Consider strategies that encourage & facilitate realistic recommendations designed to increase economic diversity, including [affordable less expensive\*] housing, etc.

[\* Clarification inserted November 24, 2014 by Joe Murphy]

And it also addresses the broader intent of the VNC Vision Goals:

... to promote a more proactive, collaborative vision for VNC Committees to include in their deliberations as they formulate recommendations for Board consideration, the intent [being] to create a working framework of integrated strategies capable of achieving, over time, broader consensus and increased ... [Focus on Children, Participation, Walkability, Diversity, Creativity, Collaboration, Brainstorming]

## DFC Chair's Personal Perspective

The above DFC's proposed Strategy Objective will not solve the short-term 'shelter' – or many of the related social – problems facing homeless people, and it would be a mistake to assume that such is intended.

It is intended to find a realistic and implementable strategy which, among other things, avoids

**“putting disadvantaged [blacks people\*] in a supplicant position.”**

[\* Clarification introduced Feb 11, 2017 by Joe Murphy]

If approved by the Board and subsequently pursued successfully, it could significantly and permanently erode a key underlying cause of the long-term homelessness crisis and its associated race-based 'black-ghetto-creating-and-maintaining' cycle. It could do this at a cost which would be relatively minimal compared to the combined costs of current efforts.

July 4, 2017 Stubborn Fact Addition to the February 19, 2017 version of **The Challenge**  
**California lawmakers have tried for 50 years to fix the state's housing crisis.**  
**Here's why they've failed.**

<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-pol-ca-housing-supply/>

Article By **LIAM DILLON**

JUNE 29, 2017, 3 A.M.



Azucena

**Gutierrez, 38, stands outside her apartment in Boyle Heights before leaving for her job in Torrance last fall.**

(Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

After an hour of debate, Herb Perez had had enough.

Perez, a councilman in the Bay Area suburb of Foster City, was tired of planning for the construction of new homes to comply with a 50-year-old state law designed to help all Californians live affordably.

Everyone knows, Perez told the crowd at a 2015 City Council meeting, that the law is a failure. It requires cities and counties to develop plans every eight years for new home building in their communities. After more than a year of work and spending nearly \$50,000, Foster City had an 87-page housing plan that proposed hundreds of new homes, mapped where they would go and detailed the many ways the city could help make the construction happen. But a crucial element was missing: Foster City was never going to approve all the building called for in the voluminous proposal, Perez said.

“What I’m seeing here is an elaborate shell game,” Perez said. “Because we’re kind of lying. It’s the only word I can come up with. We have no intention of actually building the units.”

**“We’re kind of lying”**

**Foster City city councilman says his city won’t approve the homebuilding it’s planning for.**

See <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-pol-ca-housing-supply/> for video of the above-referenced Perez statement

Perez’s prediction came true. Despite soaring demand for housing in the Bay Area, the city hasn’t approved any new development projects in more than five years.

Foster City's experience is shared by governments across California: The law requires cities and counties to produce prodigious reports to plan for housing — but it doesn't hold them accountable for any resulting home building.

The law, passed in 1967, is the state's primary tool to encourage housing development and address a statewide shortage of homes that drives California's affordability problems.

Now, a bill from Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) would, for the first time, force cities and counties that have fallen behind on their housing goals to take steps [to eliminate some of the hurdles they put in front of development](#), such as multiple planning reviews for individual projects. Wiener's legislation [passed the state Senate this month](#) and is awaiting a vote in the Assembly as part of a package of bills aimed at addressing the state's housing problems.

**“The law has been completely ineffective at addressing the issue of housing affordability.”**

**Paavo Monkkonen, UCLA professor**

“The system is so broken,” Wiener said. “It gives the public a false sense that a step has been taken toward having more housing when in fact it's just an illusion.”

One of the main criticisms of the law is that it hasn't spurred enough new home building. Fewer than half of the 1.5 million new homes the law said developers would need to build over eight years leading up to 2014 — the law's most recent reporting period — were built.

In addition, state officials don't know if cities and counties have met their housing goals. Local governments are supposed to give the state information on home building each year, but many don't. As a result, there is no reliable measure of how many houses are being built in California for **low-, middle- and upper-income residents** *[emphasis added by JDM]*.

State lawmakers have known about the law's weaknesses for decades but haven't fixed them. They have added dozens of new planning requirements to the process but have not provided any incentive, such as a greater share of tax dollars, for local governments to meet their housing goals.

“The law has been completely ineffective at addressing the issue of housing affordability,” said Paavo Monkkonen, an associate professor of urban planning at UCLA. “If anything, it's a waste of people's time.”

## **Prison beds and student dormitories count as low-income housing?**

California's housing affordability troubles have contributed to [the state's poverty rate, which is the highest in the nation](#). It also has [burdened millions with high rents](#) and, according to a recent study by the McKinsey Global Institute, created [a more than \\$100-billion annual drag on the state economy](#) by lowering disposable incomes and limiting construction jobs.

Ben Metcalf, the state's top housing official, [has said the affordability problems are as bad as they've ever been in California's history](#). And the state is expected [to add an additional 6.5 million people](#) over the next two decades.

The primary driver of the affordability problem is a lack of home building. Developers in California need to roughly double the 100,000 homes they build each year to stabilize housing costs, according to [the McKinsey study](#) and reports from [the state Department of Housing and Community Development](#) and [nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office](#).

Home construction depends on complex factors including the cost of land, materials and labor, the availability of financing for developers and interest rates on mortgages for homeowners. But decisions made by California's cities and counties are important, too, and many of those local governments have made it even more difficult to build new housing.

More than two-thirds of California's coastal communities have adopted measures — such as caps on population or housing growth, or building height limits — aimed at limiting residential development, [according to the Legislative Analyst's Office](#). A UC Berkeley study of California's local land-use regulations found that every growth-control policy a city puts in place [raises housing costs by as much as 5% there](#).

The housing supply law, known formally as the “housing element,” is supposed to help knock down local barriers to development by requiring cities to plan for new housing that would accommodate children born in California and people expected to relocate to the state. Over an eight-year period, state officials send estimates of housing needed to meet projected population growth to 19 regional agencies, including the Southern California Assn. of Governments in the Los Angeles area.

These agencies outline how many new homes are needed across **four income levels: very low, low, moderate and above-moderate** *[emphasis added by JDM]*. So, in theory, all cities and counties would receive their fair share of growth. Local governments must show they've zoned enough land for the new housing — and the state must sign off on those plans. But the state doesn't hold cities accountable for the goals they set, and the plans are often ignored.



Even so, city and county officials resent the law, arguing it unfairly takes away their power over development in their communities. To avoid complying, local governments have over the years asked state lawmakers to, among other things, count prison beds and student dormitories as low-income housing and allow cities that place foster children in their communities to reduce the number of low-income homes they need to plan for.

In one case, La Habra Heights, in Los Angeles County, asked that it be exempted from the law because the city was too hilly for apartment complexes.

## **‘People want to be with people who are like them’**

At the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, the affluent bedroom community of La Cañada Flintridge has few apartment or condominium complexes — and many of the city’s 20,000 residents and public officials want to keep it that way.

Four years ago, city leaders wrote a plan to make room for multifamily housing in several sections of the city. But, to discourage developers, they chose areas already occupied by single-family homes and, in one case, a big-box retailer. As a result, developers would have needed to buy up the homes one by one or, in the case of the retailer, purchase the commercial real estate and force the store out. In devising the plan, city officials assured concerned residents that it would be prohibitively expensive for developers.

## **“People like people of their own tribe. I think the attempt to change it is ludicrous.”**

**Herand Der Sarkissian, a former La Cañada Flintridge planning commissioner**

“Everybody on this dais and that’s here is on the same page,” Planning Commission Chairman Rick Gunter told the audience at a November 2013 hearing on the housing plan. “We like living here. We like the way it is now.”

Herand Der Sarkissian, a former La Cañada Flintridge planning commissioner who approved the city’s housing plan, said in an interview it didn’t make sense for the state to try to force low-income housing into La Cañada Flintridge because the city’s high land costs made it fiscally irresponsible. He added that any state efforts to integrate housing of all income levels into wealthy communities are doomed.

“People like people of their own tribe,” Der Sarkissian said. “I think the attempt to change it is ludicrous. Be it black, be it white. People want to be with people who are like them. To force people through legislation to change in that way is impractical.”

None of the multifamily housing called for in the La Cañada Flintridge housing plan has been built.

In Redondo Beach, officials told the state in 2014 they would work toward the city’s housing goal by supporting a proposed commercial and residential development with 180 apartments — nine of them reserved for very poor families — to replace a run-down strip mall and parking lot along the Pacific Coast Highway. The city zoned the land for that amount of housing.

But in numerous hearings over the next two years, planning commissioners and council members argued the development was too big, and the city ultimately approved 115 apartments with none set aside for low-income residents. The developer has since sued Redondo Beach and [the project remains in limbo](#).

La Cañada Flintridge and Redondo Beach did not report housing construction data to the state from 2006 to ‘14. Some new homes were built in both cities, according to permit information, but far fewer than were outlined in the cities’ plans over that period.

These and similar examples across California show that the housing law is a “complete farce,” Wiener said. His legislation would do away with some planning reviews that are often levied on projects in cities that haven’t kept pace with their housing goals.

“Many local communities basically run a scam where they spend all sorts of time — lots of public hearings, lots of public discussion — and then it’s over and you have this collection of paper sitting on a shelf,” Wiener said. “It doesn’t result in any additional housing.”

Sandwiched between wealthier communities to the north and south and more industrial areas to the east, the coastal Los Angeles County city of Torrance has swaths of single-family neighborhoods and lots of land for commercial and industrial business.

## “A city should be allowed to say we’re full”

**Torrance city councilman argues against new homebuilding.**

See <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-pol-ca-housing-supply/> for video of the above-referenced Bill Sutherland statement

“At some point, a city should be allowed to say we’re full,” Bill Sutherland, then a Torrance city councilman, grumbled before voting for the city’s most recent housing plan in 2013. “I think we are actually at that point.”

Torrance’s growth has slowed. Less than half of 1,828 houses called for in the city’s previous housing plan were built, according to construction permit data.

The lack of home building has had consequences.

Nearly 40% of Torrance’s 147,000 residents now pay more than 30% of their incomes on housing, according to federal data. In 2014, Toyota Motor Corp. decided to relocate its North American headquarters — and 3,000 jobs — from Torrance to Plano, Texas, [citing as one factor the Lone Star State’s lower cost of living](#).

High costs have left housing in Torrance out of reach for Azucena Gutierrez and other workers in the city.

Every weekday, Gutierrez goes into Torrance homes to teach prenatal and infant care to new and expectant parents. Gutierrez, 38, earns less than \$15 an hour.

She lives in Los Angeles’ Boyle Heights neighborhood, crowding into a two-bedroom apartment with her husband, who is a substitute teacher, their 14-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. Steep housing costs have forced Gutierrez’s older sister to move in with them too.

Gutierrez would like to live near her job and for her children to attend Torrance’s better rated schools. But the \$1,600-a-month rent she saw advertised for a one-bedroom apartment in Torrance was more than the \$1,500 she pays now for more room across town.



Azucena Gutierrez, 38, leaves her home before sunrise in Boyle Heights and heads to her job in Torrance. Gutierrez lives with her husband, children and sister and pays \$1,500 a month for her two-bedroom apartment. A one-bedroom in Torrance would cost her \$1,600 per month.

(Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

“I waste a lot of time in traffic,” Gutierrez said. “Time, I can’t get it back. I’m spending close to two hours driving every day. That’s 10 hours [a week] I could be spending with my family.”

Gutierrez’s colleagues share her struggles. Georgina Romero, 28, makes \$13.50 an hour teaching toddlers and pays \$600 a month to live with her boyfriend, mother, two younger siblings and her sister’s boyfriend in a three-bedroom house in Watts.

She moved there in March to help her mother with her housing costs. Before that, Romero paid \$300 a month to live with her boyfriend in a 400-square-foot garage behind his parents' house in Lawndale.

## **‘With this living situation, I can’t even think of having children right now’**

“I would love to have children,” Romero said. “But with this living situation, I can’t even think of having children right now. I don’t feel like I’m stable enough.”



Georgina Romero, 28, used to live with her boyfriend in a garage behind his parents' home in Lawndale.  
(Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)



**Romero works at a head start office in Torrance and said she wants children but doesn't feel stable enough in her living situation.**  
(Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)



Torrance Mayor Patrick Furey said he's sympathetic to those who can't afford to live in his city. But, he added, Torrance shouldn't have to make changes to the character of its neighborhoods to accommodate new housing.

Instead of Torrance, he said, nearby cities should take on the needed growth.

"You won't have the ZIP Code you want," Furey said, "but it's close enough."

## 'No intention of facing up to housing responsibilities'

The state's housing law faced problems from the start.

In 1967, Gov. Ronald Reagan signed the law, which had a simple goal: Cities and counties would have to plan "for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community." But just five months after the first plans were due in July 1969, state officials realized local governments were ignoring the law, with a report warning about "discouraging indications" that a number of communities had "no intention of facing up to housing responsibilities."

Over the years, legislators passed numerous bills adding detailed rules to local government housing plans. But things only got worse.

## Torrance workers struggle to find nearby housing

See <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-pol-ca-housing-supply/> for video of the above-referenced workers statements

By 1993, the law's increased paperwork requirements turned it into "an energy- and money-guzzling bureaucratic maze," said Timothy Coyle, then-director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, at a legislative oversight hearing that year. He called the law "broken" because it did nothing to encourage cities to permit more homes.

Coyle said in a recent interview that the law "was destined to fail."

Today, the state lacks basic information on the law's effectiveness. More than a quarter of California's 539 cities and counties failed to tell the state how many homes were built within their boundaries over the eight-year period leading up to 2014, according to a Times review of housing department data.

Wiener's legislation would require all cities and counties to turn in home-building data and remove some of their ability to review and block new development if they fall behind their housing goals.

Gov. Jerry Brown has also said he'd also support tying state financial aid [to whether local governments met their housing goals](#). Still, if the state plans to hold cities and counties accountable for meeting those targets, the targets themselves might require reevaluation.

Bay Area counties are on track to meet their overall home-building goals for the eight-year reporting period ending in 2023, [the Legislative Analyst's Office found recently](#).

But developers aren't building nearly enough homes to affect affordability, the analyst's office also said. The Bay Area has added half a million more jobs than houses since 2011, and other fast-growing parts of the country — around Austin, Texas; Portland, Ore.; and Raleigh, N.C. — are building homes at more than twice the rate of the Bay Area.

Perez, the Foster City councilman, believes the state is ignoring the housing law's problems.

Developers have built more than 500 homes in Foster City since the council approved its housing plan in 2015, a number that already exceeds the new houses called for under the plan through 2023.

But all those new homes came from projects approved before 2012 that home builders are just now putting on the market. And the city has turned away other developers interested in building housing where the city's plan said they could, Perez said.

Since early 2015, Foster City's median home value has increased 13% to a record \$1.5 million, more than seven times the national average.

Perez believes state politicians should hold cities accountable for approving new housing projects by providing money to local governments that do, and penalizing those that don't. Otherwise, he said, cities will continue to act as he said Foster City did — signing off on plans to appease state regulators but blocking housing from being built.

"I think the most important part of this is that there's complicity on the part of the state," Perez said. "They created this fake thing that they know no one has any intention of doing, and then they say they've done something about housing."

# How many homes were built in your city?

Less than half the new homes called for in California's most recent eight-year housing plan, which ended in 2014, were built, according to permit data from the construction industry. See how building stacked up compared to state targets, and whether cities and counties reported their homebuilding to state regulators.

See <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-pol-ca-housing-supply/> for 27 pages of the below data

| City or county   | New homes built/needed | Percentage met of housing goal | Data sent to state |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Los Angeles County<br><b>Los Angeles</b>   | <b>76,942/112,876</b>  | <b>68%</b>                     | <b>Yes</b>         |
| Los Angeles County<br><b>Unincorporated Los Angeles County</b>   | <b>9,223/57,180</b>    | <b>16%</b>                     | <b>Yes</b>         |
| <b>Similar info for all CA cities and unincorporated areas in all counties (= well over 500 entries)</b> | <b>built/needed</b>    | <b>%</b>                       | <b>Yes/No</b>      |

Home construction depends on complex factors, such as the costs to build and mortgage interest rates for prospective homeowners. Researchers contend that local government regulations play a larger role in the housing supply of California's coastal communities than those inland. The data reflect the state's varied housing cycles for different regions of the state. Data from the San Diego region is from 2003-11; Sacramento, Fresno and Kern 2006-13; Los Angeles and greater Southern California 2006-14; Bay Area and the remaining jurisdictions 2007-14.

Credits: Additional reporting by Ben Poston. Graphics by Joe Fox. Produced by Andrea Roberson.

## July 9, 2017 Stubborn Fact Addition

### LA Times Editorial

#### It's time for cities to start building their fair share of housing

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-housing-elements-20170708-story.html>



Only the porch and facade remain during a reconstruction of this 1930s Craftsman home, located in La Cañada Flintridge, on Feb. 7.

(Adrian Scott Fine / Los Angeles Conservancy)

**The Times Editorial Board**

July 8, 2017



For 50 years, California law has required cities and counties to produce book-length reports explaining how and where they could accommodate both the affordable and market-rate housing development needed to house their share of an ever-growing state population. These reports and construction goals are supposed to be the backbone of the state's housing strategy.

But all that paper hasn't produced the needed homes. Why? Because the "fair share" law has become an elaborate shell game, as a recent [Times story](#) revealed. Local elected officials can claim they have complied with the law by adopting detailed plans showing where they could put new housing — even if they have no intention of allowing that housing to be built in their city. And there's no penalty for scofflaw cities that thumb their noses at their own housing goals.

As a result, California communities have consistently failed to build enough housing to keep up with growth. The [state projected](#) it would need 1.5 million new homes between 2003 and 2014. Fewer than half that amount were built.

Just look at La Cañada Flintridge, an affluent single-family-home suburb in Los Angeles County where city leaders were required to plan for more than 300 new dwellings after falling short of previous housing goals. But recalcitrant city leaders adopted a plan that was so intentionally onerous for developers, it pretty much guaranteed that new housing wouldn't be built. Four years later, none of the multifamily housing called for in the fair-share plan has been constructed.

## Decades of insufficient construction have created a shortage that is now raising rents and home values much faster than incomes.

Far too many local elected leaders, like those in La Cañada Flintridge, have tried to block development to ward off population growth that will inevitably come as long as Californians keep having children and creating jobs. Is it any surprise, then, that California is in a housing crisis? Decades of insufficient construction have created a shortage that is now raising rents and home values much faster than incomes, a problem that is most acute in the pricey coastal regions like the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California. One in 3 renters in California pays more than half their income to their landlord, crimping budgets for other essentials and leaving too many residents one unexpected expense away from homelessness.

Although housing construction and prices rise and fall with the economy and interest rates, cities and counties also play an important role in determining how many homes get built — or don't get built — and whom they house. The state's interest is in making sure enough housing is built to avert problems that extend beyond local borders. When residents cannot afford to live near jobs, they often move to far-flung suburbs and commute hours each day to get to work, worsening traffic and air pollution. Employers say high housing costs also hurt the state's economy by making it hard to attract and retain skilled workers — a problem that has led some companies to relocate to states where their middle-class workers can buy homes.

That's why California mandated the fair-share plans, also known as "housing elements," in 1967. It was an attempt to make cities and counties plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community — rich and poor alike. Yet housing advocates have long complained that the law is toothless. That was by design, in part because cities can't control the real estate market or force developers to build houses. But that well-intentioned flexibility has allowed many local elected officials to act on their worst NIMBY instincts and shirk their responsibility to house current and future generations of Californians.

Now, state Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) has proposed putting some sharp teeth to the law. His bill ([SB 35](#)) would require cities that have fallen behind on their housing goals to streamline approval of certain residential projects, barring them from requiring any additional environmental review or city council vote. To qualify for fast-track approval, developers would have to comply with existing zoning and design rules, **make at least 10% of their units affordable for lower-income residents** *[emphasis added by JDM]*, and not demolish rent-controlled apartments or existing low-income units.

Cities, of course, are loath to lose any local control over land use, and many are fighting SB 35. But the bill wouldn't eliminate local control; it would require cities to follow their own land-use plans and speed approvals so they can finally meet their housing goals, which is what fair-share housing law was supposed to be doing all along.

There is a problem with the measure worth noting. Even as it would speed approval for housing developments in these communities, it would make these expedited projects more expensive to build by requiring the developers to pay construction workers prevailing wages, which tend to be double nonunion wages. That trade-off, which Wiener included to win support of politically powerful unions, could make it harder for smaller development projects to pencil out, potentially reducing the amount of housing being built. If so, it would defeat the very purpose of the bill.

## **10 points to keep in mind about housing affordability in California**

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-gatto-ten-points-housing-20170920-story.html>

**Mike Gatto**

September 20, 2017

### **Many politicians and activists push simplistic solutions when it comes to California's housing woes.**

... Some promote subsidies; others density. Some sell infill as the solution; others blame everything on the state's byzantine laws. Maybe I'm getting old, or maybe the election of 2016 just reminded me to beware of politicians appealing to the masses with buzzwords. We live in a complex world, and remedies for complex problems such as housing are complex.

**Subsidies for affordable housing average around \$357,000 per unit. ... that's unsustainable. If Sacramento were to subsidize just Los Angeles' needs for just one year, that would consume the entire state budget.**