

Health Disadvantage Index Local Housing Policy Menu

Stabilize Residents and Neighborhoods

- **Rent Stabilization Ordinances** limit the amount rents can be raised per year, although California state law allows landlords to raise rents once a unit becomes vacant. Rents in California cities rose by almost 5% between 2015 and 2016, with increases in some cities in the double digitsⁱ—leaving 85% of renter households making less than \$50,000 a year paying more than they can afford for rent.ⁱⁱ Jurisdictions have taken many different approaches to limiting these rent increases. Some establish a set yearly percentage for allowable rent increases, while others tie increases to the Consumer Price Index. Policies can be crafted to apply to all rental properties or only to properties with a given number of units. State law limits the application of rent control for buildings constructed after 1995. Rent stabilization is most effective when paired with Just Cause Eviction ordinances. For more information, see: HCD’s [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and the Urban Displacement Project’s [Rent Control Policy Brief](#).
- **Just Cause Eviction Ordinances** ensure landlords can only evict tenants for a good reason, or “just cause.” In most cities, tenants can be evicted for no reason, even if they are paying their rent. Just Cause Eviction ordinances protect tenants from arbitrary, discriminatory, or retaliatory eviction. This stabilizes tenants in their homes, particularly when paired with Rent Stabilization ordinances. Jurisdictions can set their own definition of what constitutes just cause, but ordinances often include elements such as failure to pay rent, illegal activity, lack of lease compliance, capital improvement/rehabilitation/demolition, code enforcement, and the landlord or their family moving in. Ordinances can more effectively protect health by prohibiting evictions in cases of building seizure and transfer due to code violations and by limiting no-fault evictions for elderly, disabled, pregnant, or chronically ill tenants and those with small children. For more information see: HCD’s [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and Policy Link’s [Just Cause Eviction Controls](#). See, for Example: [San Francisco](#).
- **Relocation Benefits** provide compensation for tenants displaced due to no-fault evictions, uninhabitable building conditions, or public development. While federal law requires relocation assistance to be paid to residents displaced by federally funded projects, these policies have not historically been effectively implemented.ⁱⁱⁱ Local jurisdictions can augment federal law with local policies that cover private redevelopment and include relocation case management, a “build it or find it first” provision to ensure new housing is available before displacement occurs, and additional support for displacement due to unsafe conditions. Jurisdictions can also include a “right of first refusal” policy to require tenants receive the right to return to their housing at

previous rent levels in the case of property redevelopment or rehabilitation. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#).

- **Emergency Homeowner Assistance/Foreclosure Prevention Programs** are designed to keep residents in their homes as they struggle to afford mortgage payments or necessary repairs. Over 60% of homeowners earning \$50,000 or more pay more than they can afford for their homes. Assistance programs provide these homeowners with financial education and counseling, refinancing or emergency loans, or assistance negotiating with banks or in pursuing alternatives to foreclosure such as short-sales or deeds-in-lieu. For more information, see: National Community Reinvestment Coalition's [Rebuilding Communities in Economic Distress: Local Strategies to Sustain Homeownership, Reclaim Vacant Properties, and Promote Community-Based Employment](#).

Provide Housing and Supportive Services for People Without Homes

- **Housing First Policies/Programs** provide rapid access to permanent housing for people who are homeless without imposing treatment or behavioral conditions. These programs typically provide support services, for instance for mental health or substance addiction. For more information, see: The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' [Housing First](#).
- **Rapid Re-Housing Policies/Programs** quickly place homeless individuals and families into rental housing. Programs typically aid with initial (up to 6 months) housing costs including deposits, rent, and/or utilities to place people in privately operated rental housing. They also provide voluntary case management and assistance with financial health, lease negotiation, crises response, benefits, employment and other services. For more information, see: The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' [Rapid Re-Housing](#).
- **Supportive Housing** combines affordable housing with wrap around services. Housing may be provided through government or non-profit run dedicated housing, or subsidized through vouchers on the private rental market. In either case, supportive housing is directed towards people who need additional support to access both stable housing and mental or physical health services. Services may include: case management, mental and physical health care, substance use treatment, vocational support, independent living skills, and social activities. In some places, new funding sources for supportive housing may be available through [Whole Person Care Pilots](#) by partnering with your County Public Health Department. For more information, see: The Corporation for Supportive Housing's [Supportive Housing](#), and The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' [Supportive Housing](#).
- **Decriminalizing Homelessness** involves ending or reducing the policing and incarceration of homeless people while providing alternative services. Homeless individuals often end up caught up in jails or prisons, often for minor offenses—approximately 15% of those detained or incarcerated in the U.S. have been homeless.^{iv} Jurisdictions can reduce police involvement with homeless people by repealing or not passing “acts of living” laws that prohibit sitting, sleeping, eating, and panhandling in public places, providing police with trauma-informed, mental health, and de-escalation training, and utilizing specialized street outreach teams from health and social service agencies to help chronically homeless individuals. They can also help break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness by providing reentry services such as housing, health and

mental health care, and employment, and by treating addiction as a disease—providing harm reduction and recovery services such as safe injection sites/needle exchanges and treatment programs. For more information, see: The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' [Criminal Justice Reform](#) and [Searching out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to the Criminalization of Homelessness](#), and the King County Heroin and Prescription Opiate Addiction Task Force's [Final Report and Recommendations](#).

- **Discharge Policies** govern how publicly funded care services—such as foster care, health care and mental health facilities, prisons, and substance abuse treatment facilities—discharge people who do not have a home to go to after release. Effective policies and systems include adequate resources and clear understanding between discharging agencies and service providers to ensure that people are discharged into appropriate services, including housing and employment. For more information, see: HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs' [Discharged Planning From Publicly Funded Institutions, Customized Bibliography](#) and the [National Health Care for the Homeless Council's Discharge Planning Resources](#).
- **Hygiene and Storage Centers (Emerging Practice)** provide toilets, sinks, showers, laundry and other basic hygienic facilities, and/or storage facilities for homeless people. These programs help ensure the health of homeless people, and can provide an alternative to using the restrooms other public facilities such as libraries. These centers may be stand alone, or combined with drop in centers that provide other services. For more information, see: [The City of Seattle's Emergency Task Force on Unsheltered Homelessness, Recommendations to Mayor Murray](#).
- **Crises Response** services include shelters, street outreach and other critical services for people experiencing homelessness. Unless closely tied to the other policies in this section designed to ensure permanent housing, these programs provide emergency relief, but do not address homelessness itself. Nonetheless, they can be critical for the health and safety of homeless people. For more information, see: The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness' [Crises Response](#).

Preserve and Improve Existing Housing

- **Preservation/Acquisition/Rehabilitation/Conversion Programs** prevent existing affordable housing covenants from expiring or convert older buildings into safe, deed-restricted, affordable housing. Preserving existing affordable housing typically costs one-half to one-third as much as new development. ^v Potential sources include housing bonds, in-lieu fees, housing impact fees, and other local sources, in addition to federal programs such as HOME and Community Development Block Grants.
- **Rental Rehabilitation Programs** provide low-interest loans or grants to owners of rental units that are affordable to low-income households. These programs can be tailored to specifically address health concerns like lead or safety hazards. See, for example: [Richmond California](#).
- **Homeowner Rehabilitation Programs** provide low-interest loans, grants, labor, or materials to assist low-income, senior, or disabled residents make needed home repairs. These programs can be tailored to specifically address health concerns like lead or safety hazards. See, for example: [Richmond California](#).

- **Second Unit Amnesty Programs** assist residents in bringing unpermitted secondary units up to code. Many low-income residents live in unpermitted secondary structures, potentially exposing them to unsafe housing conditions. Amnesty programs can assist owners in making needed improvements, allow for habitability inspection, and provide occupants better access to tenant protections. See, for example: [Seattle Washington](#).
- **Proactive Rental Inspection/Code Enforcement** is the practice of routinely inspecting residential housing units to identify and correct unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions. Proactive inspection means units are inspected even when tenants have not made a complaint. This ensures units are inspected even when tenants are intimidated or lack knowledge of their resources to ensure habitable living spaces. Proactive Rental Inspection programs and code enforcement more generally can run the risk of displacing tenants living in substandard housing. Jurisdictions can mediate these risks by requiring relocation assistance; working with building owners to get buildings up to code; referring, tracking and supporting tenants' cases; setting up escrow accounts; and partnering with community based organizations and tenants' groups to ensure tenants know their rights and receive services in appropriate languages. Programs can also be set up to be triggered when public health nursing programs identify asthma triggers or other unsafe conditions. See, for example: Alameda County's [Healthy Housing Pipeline](#) and Los Angeles' inspection program in ChangeLabSolutions' [A Guide to Proactive Rental Inspections](#).
- **One for One Replacement (No-Net-Loss)** policies stipulate that if developers acquire and convert low-income housing to other uses, they must produce an equal number of affordable units. These policies help to ensure that a jurisdiction retains its affordable housing stock over time. One for One Replacement policies can also cover affordable housing units damaged during natural disasters. For more information, see: SCAG's [Comprehensive Guide to Local Housing Policy](#) and ABAG's [People, Places and Prosperity](#).
- **Condominium Conversion Ordinances** limit the number and/or process of conversions from rental units to condominiums to preserve a jurisdiction's rental housing stock. These ordinances can include additional tenant protections, limitations on the number of units per year, One for One Replacement, affordability requirements, and fees. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and the League of California Cities' [Primer on Condominium Conversions](#).
- **Mobile Home Preservation Programs** implement policies to preserve mobile home parks as an important source of affordable housing. These programs may contain provisions such as rent stabilization, stand-alone zoning designations that limit conversion to other uses, limits on conversion to ownership, relocation assistance, and the use of city funds to preserve parks. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and SCAG's [Comprehensive Guide to Local Housing Policy](#).
- **Community Land Trusts** are nonprofit organizations responsible for holding the title to land to preserve it for affordable housing or other uses. Community Land Trusts usually sell housing to low or moderate-income households with accompanying deed restrictions regulating its future use, while retaining land trust ownership of the land. This allows a range of non-traditional, affordable homeownership options including low or zero-equity ownership. Local jurisdictions

can partner closely with land trusts providing public financing, operational funding, organizational support, public land, and reduced/streamlined regulations. For more information, see: The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy's [Community Land Trusts](#) and HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#).

Produce New Affordable Housing

- **Residential and Commercial Impact Fees** charge developers of new housing a fee based on the number of units or square footage and use this money to build or preserve affordable housing. Both types of fees require jurisdictions to complete *nexus studies* which calculate the impacts of new development to establish allowable fees. These studies are somewhat expensive, but some jurisdictions have established partnerships to share costs and develop countywide housing strategies. For more information, see: [21 Elements, San Mateo County](#).
- **Inclusionary Zoning Policies** require that a certain percentage of new housing units be designated as affordable. Programs can be tailored to the specific needs of a community. Many establish a minimum of 10-15% affordability, although 20% is also relatively common. Some programs require developers to construct units on site, while others allow off-site construction payment of an *in-lieu fee* which allows the city to construct housing in other areas. From a health perspective, it is important that affordability thresholds and percentages meet the needs of disadvantaged residents and that housing constructed off site be placed in neighborhoods where residents have the opportunity to be healthy. Because California state law does not currently allow inclusionary zoning policies to cover rental units, many jurisdictions utilize *Linkage* or *Impact Fee* policies to supplement inclusionary zoning for rental housing. For more information, see: SCAG's [Comprehensive Guide to Local Housing Policy](#), or UCLA/UC Berkeley's [Inclusionary Zoning Policy Brief](#).
- **Incentive Zoning/Public Benefit Zoning Policies** are used to grant additional density or building heights to developers in exchange for public benefits such as affordable housing. These exchanges can be made at the project level during development approval processes, but are more effective when applied to an entire area (such as a specific planning area) during the planning process. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and ABAG, MTC and EBHO's [White Paper on the Theory, Economic and Practice of Public Benefit Zoning](#).
- **Vacant or Underutilized Public Land** can be identified and utilized for affordable housing production. Under California's Surplus Land Act, jurisdictions and local agencies are required to prioritize affordable housing when they sell or lease vacant land. Proactive jurisdictions have created inventories of their publicly owned land and processes to prioritize sites and develop housing. See, for example: San Francisco's [Public Land for Housing Program](#).
- **Seek Additional Funding Sources** for affordable housing production and rehabilitation, including Real Estate Transfer/Excise Taxes, Hotel Taxes, Real Estate Document Fees, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds, Boomerang Funds, Housing Trust Funds, and Housing Bonds.
- **Lower Development Barriers** through streamlined permitting and reduced parking requirements for affordable housing. The risks and costs associated with the permitting process can be a serious deterrent to affordable housing development. Jurisdictions can lower these barriers by providing simple, expedited approval processes for affordable housing. The costs of

providing required parking are another common barrier to housing construction. Recognizing that low-income people tend to have lower rates of car ownership, it is increasingly common for cities to lower parking requirements for affordable housing projects. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#) and the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing's [Parking Requirements Guide For Affordable Housing Developers](#).

- **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Detached Dwelling Unit (DADU)** policies allow residents to easily develop second units behind other homes. These programs can be especially beneficial in areas with few other appropriate sites for new housing. California's Second Unit Law (AB 1866) allows development of second units *by-right*, meaning without discretionary approval. Jurisdictions can go over and above this law by adopting design or development standards, permitting procedures, reduced parking requirements, and other incentives for second unit construction. For more information, see: HCD's [Housing Element Best Practices](#).

ⁱ Apartment List, "June 2016 California Apartment List Rent Report". June 2016, <https://www.apartmentlist.com/rentonomics/california-rent-report-rentonomics/>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 1 Year Estimates", 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ Susan J. Popkin, "A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges," 2004, <http://webarchive.urban.org/publications/411002.html>.

^{iv} United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Criminal justice Reform", <https://www.usich.gov/solutions/criminal-justice>.

^v U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Preserving Affordable Rental Housing: A Snapshot of Growing Need, Current Threats, and Innovative Solutions," *Evidence Matters*, Summer 2013, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer13/highlight1.html>.