



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

How to Advocate for Affordable Housing in your Area

KEY TERMS

Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and Councils of Governments (COGs)

The state department that provides guidelines and oversight for the RHNA/Housing Element process. California's local governments are organized into 23 Councils of Governments (COGs) for the purposes of transportation and housing planning.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation

The number of new housing units each county or city must plan for divided into four income categories (very low, low, moderate, and above moderate). This is determined every 8 years through the Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND).

Housing Element

The part of a city's state-required General Plan that addresses the housing allocated to their city by the RHNA. The Housing Element becomes the guide to make changes to the zoning code and provides plans on how much housing can be developed, listing a site inventory of land.

City Council

The City Council makes decisions regarding what types of housing are built, where, and for whom. If you want to be involved in housing advocacy, start here.

For a quick explainer on the process and how these components are connected, visit YIMBY Action and Yes in My Back Yard: <https://yimbyaction.org/rhna/>

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Review your City's Housing Element & Develop Talking Points

Web search your city, plus the words "Housing Element," to find the appropriate website. See the proposed policy changes to address the housing shortage. Use these to develop your talking points.

Research how your city is trying to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers. See your municipalities' RHNA numbers by visiting your Councils of Government. You can find your COG, by visiting www.calcog.org.

Through your COG, view the RHNA allocation and information about the city's demographics, population, income, current housing landscape, and disability information and living information, etc. Find RHNA information through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD): <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/regional-housing-needs-allocation>

Get to Know Your City Council

View their past agenda/meeting minutes to find out what your city has done recently about the need for affordable housing. Understand the need/data. Visit California Housing Partnership and review your county's "Housing Needs Report." <https://chpc.net/>

Know your City Councilmembers. What is their position on the housing shortage, high housing costs, or affordable housing?

Good storytelling can enable them to see themselves in a movement that works to ensure all Californians have a stable, affordable place to call their own in a thriving, sustainable community. –Housing California

TAKE ACTION

Voice your concerns about the lack of affordable housing options at City Council meetings

Generally, you have three minutes to provide in-person public comment during City Council meetings. Submit a speaker card at the beginning of the meeting, so the City Clerk knows of your intent to provide public comment. Or, submit public comment via email to the City Council. Check your city website for information on how to submit electronically.

Engage with City Council Candidates Running for Office – Not Just Current Councilmembers

Here is a sample email you can send to the candidate to see if and how they support affordable housing:

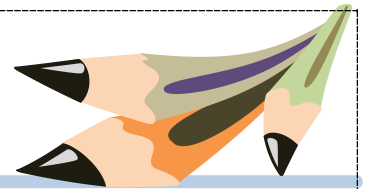
I'm a resident of [City], and I am concerned about the housing shortage and the affordability crisis in our city. I'd like to hear your thoughts on how we can address the issue at the city level so [my kids / my kids' teacher / my caregiver] can find housing and a future in our great city! Are you free this week for a conversation? -- People for Housing Orange County

Community Organizing Groups

This will vary depending on your area. Some groups are found at California YIMBY <https://cayimby.org/take-local-action/>.

CA Dream Toolkit: <https://cadreamtoolkit.org/>

This toolkit helps you create effective narratives to advance housing reforms.



Legislative Advocacy

Find your Congressman here:

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

Search for all your Representatives, including city council members, here:

<https://www.housingca.org/policy/action-center/>

Housing Legislation

There are a number of California advocacy groups that monitor housing legislation and provides sample letters on what to say to support/oppose the proposed legislation. Examples:

Housing California:

<https://www.housingca.org/>

California YIMBY: <https://cayimby.org/>

Lanterman Housing Alliance:

<https://www.lantermanhousingalliance.org/>

Engage & Support Others

The need for affordable housing is not unique to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is important not to alienate other groups in advocacy efforts. Caregivers, direct support professionals, and family advocates may also need it too!

The Kennedy Commission published a “Best Practices for Affordable Housing Development.” For ideas and talking points: https://bit.ly/housing_development

