

POLICY DIGEST

A monthly snapshot of housing-related policy research



PRIORITIZING CALIFORNIA'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE TRANSITION TOWARDS EQUITABLE BUILDING DECARBONIZATION

California Housing Partnership | Summit Report 2021

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Sustainability in Affordable Housing Building and Design

The California Housing Partnership's new report offers vital insights to inform the state's building decarbonization policies and ensure equitable outcomes for affordable housing providers and their residents. The report notes that **electrifying buildings is crucial to achieving some of California's more stringent climate goals**. This report informs the state's building decarbonization policies related to deed-restricted affordable multifamily housing, which often has rent restrictions. Over the past year, 42 cities and jurisdictions have passed local building energy codes that require new construction to be all or near electric.

Many California utility customers are highly energy insecure. Energy and pollution burdens disproportionately impact low-income Black and Latinx households. Over the last 20 years, TCAC and CDLAC awarded points to developments using the LIHTC program for sustainability measures. Developers can hire experienced consultants and development teams at the start of projects, and encourage affordable housing providers to co-locate their developments next to transit, to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

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Capacity to Decarbonize, Operate, and Maintain All-Electric Affordable Housing

Affordable housing sector all-electric buildings may impact workforce needs, since the current state of workforce availability is limited. Since many property management staff do not receive training to make informed decisions around efficient equipment choice and installation, it's essential to hire architects with all-electric experience who have relationships with qualified MEP consultants. When hiring contractors, it is essential to comply with specific labor requirements. Funding should be made available for external monitoring through a maintenance contract that can provide feedback on the equipment's performance, tracking project savings until the hired workforce is fully trained.

The Future of Title 24 and Reach Codes and their Impacts on Affordable Housing

When cities pass electric reach codes and an affordable housing development, it often exacerbates challenges for providers around development timelines, staffing needs, team capacity, project cost, and funding gaps. Developers should look to phase-in EV Requirements, support state policies and programs that support community solar infrastructure for high-rise infill developments, allow for trade-offs in local codes to support electrification, and require utilities to pay for up to 3 phase transformers to help simplify and streamline the utility and city inspection processes.

Financing All-Electric Affordable Housing

To prioritize all-electric developments, providers should pilot decarbonization efforts in different climate zones and track cost gaps to better inform policies for both new construction and existing buildings. Coordinating with local housing departments will allow cities with local reach codes to work closely with their housing departments early on to ensure that affordable housing priorities and needs are integrated into reach codes.

Programs and Policies to Decarbonize Affordable Housing

Local authorities should provide higher incentive for existing buildings. By implementing programs that support electrification of affordable housing, developers should look to designers and marketers who have expertise in housing finance. Agencies like the California Public Utilities Commission need to upgrade their cost-effectiveness tests. Although expensive, these upgrades would provide metrics to account for the non-energy benefits of comprehensively serving a low-income unit. Lastly, existing state energy efficiency and decarbonization funding programs should have resources to train providers to apply for efficiency improvement programs.

HOUSING DEMOLITION AND REDEVELOPMENT IN LOS ANGELES

March 30, 2021 | UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies



INTRODUCTION

To the extent Los Angeles is meeting its housing production goals, is it doing so by building on underused sites, with minimal loss to the existing housing stock and minimal community disruption? Or are we often simply trading older, more affordable homes for newer, more expensive ones? A new report from UCLA explores these questions to examine whether new development is resulting in widespread loss through demolition of older, more affordable housing units.

The report finds that multifamily development rarely leads to demolition. While public attention is understandably drawn to large projects that result in demolition, these cases are actually rather rare. In the time period studied, 88% of multifamily building permits, and 85% of new multifamily units, involved no multifamily demolition at all.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- **Multifamily development is not a major factor in the loss of affordable multifamily housing. The largest threat to affordability in Los Angeles is less the physical loss of units, and more the rising price of existing units.**
- Most new housing does not involve residential demolition
- Demolition is strongly associated with single-family homes, and most demolitions are of single-unit development
- Far more housing is built than demolished. From 2013–2019, over 94,700 residential units were permitted for construction while just under 12,500 units were permitted for demolition. This is a **ratio of 7.6 new units built for every unit lost to demolition**, and a net increase of over 82,000 homes.
- Residential demolitions were rare on commercially zoned parcels and most common on parcels zoned for single-unit residential.

[Read the entire report here.](#) **PAGE 3**



FIXING AMERICA'S BROKEN DISASTER HOUSING RECOVERY SYSTEM

BARRIERS TO A COMPLETE AND EQUITABLE RECOVERY

2021 | National Low Income Housing Coalition & Fair Share Housing Center



EMERGENCY PLANNING & RESPONSE

- **Emergency planning and response efforts have largely failed to fully recognize and incorporate the needs of the lowest-income survivors**, including seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, families with children, people experiencing homelessness, people with limited English proficiency, undocumented immigrants, and others.
- **Pre-disaster homeless populations are often excluded from, or face additional barriers to, shelters.** These actions stigmatize people experiencing homelessness and often bar them from the resources they need to stay safe during a disaster. Without the affordable and accessible homes survivors need, many have had no choice but to return to uninhabitable homes, or pay more than half of their limited incomes on rent, putting them at increased risk of eviction and, in worst cases, homelessness.
- **FEMA's temporary housing programs are also problematic for low-income families.** Rental assistance based on the county or territory fair market rent may be inadequate to meet post-disaster rental rates; families receiving FEMA rental assistance are frequently victims of housing discrimination.



LONG-TERM RECOVERY

State and local grantees struggle to administer disaster recovery funds. The foundation of many federal, state, and local recovery decisions is an assessment of the damage caused by the recent disaster and the needs of residents. These data, however, often underestimate the needs of the lowest-income survivors. When a disaster exacerbates the shortage of affordable rental homes, consequences can be devastating, putting individuals at risk of displacement, evictions, and homelessness. Rental prices often increase dramatically after a major disaster.

MITIGATION AND RESILIENCY

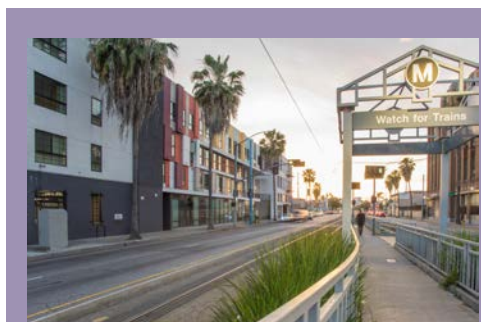
Stronger building codes have been shown to be successful, with studies of the devastating California wildfires revealing that over half of the homes built according to a stronger 2008 building code survived. The U.S. needs new visions for disaster housing recovery that prioritizes housing needs of the lowest-income disaster survivors.

[Read the entire report here.](#) **PAGE 4**

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2050

February 2021 | California State Transportation Agency

New Transportation Vision Plan & Housing



A Path Forward

California's long-range transportation vision establishes a roadmap to improve mobility and accessibility while reducing transit-related greenhouse gas emissions. The plan prioritizes improvements in **safety, climate, equity, accessibility, quality of life and public health, economy, environment, infrastructure.**

Statewide and Regional Housing Plans

Housing and transportation are deeply intertwined. The location and availability of housing determines how far people need to travel, how much they spend on transportation, and what mode of transportation they use—all of which impact cost of living, quality of life, and environmental sustainability.

The ramifications of housing shortages in urban regions, in addition to gentrification and displacement, have increased regional congestion and GHG emissions. As Californians continue to move further from jobs, goods, and services, they rely more heavily on their cars as the dominant travel mode. This has led to an increase in “super commuting,” which refers to those who travel more than 90 minutes each way to work. Integrating transportation and land use planning to reduce the jobs-housing imbalance, reduce super commuting, and ensure that Californians have access to affordable housing and mobility options can help alleviate economic hardships associated with the housing shortage.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS HOUSING RELATED TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES:

1. Better integration of transportation and land use to support improved access to affordable, low-carbon modes of transportation.
2. Aggressive regional targets for long-term housing production.
3. Strong local and regional leadership to advance social equity and environmental justice.
4. Anti-displacement measures to protect those at risk of displacement.
5. New technologies that reduce freight-related pollutants and other factors impacting community health.

[Read the entire report here.](#) **PAGE 5**

AVERAGE DECLINE IN MATERIAL HARDSHIP DURING THE PANDEMIC CONCEALS UNEQUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

FINDINGS FROM THE DECEMBER 2020 WELL-BEING AND BASIC NEEDS SURVEY

April 2021 | Urban Institute



MATERIAL HARDSHIP IN THE COVID-19 ERA

The Urban Institute's Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey demonstrates the first probability-based national survey estimates of changes in hardship from a pre-pandemic baseline. As unemployment dropped, nonelderly adults reporting food insecurity and problems paying utility and medical bills declined between 2019 and 2020. However, this average change obscures the substantial hardships among families who lost work during the pandemic.



STUDY FINDINGS

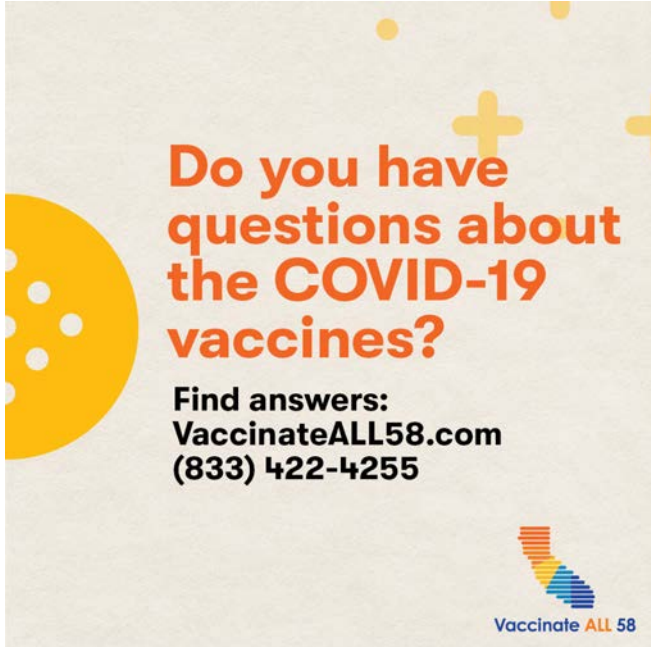
Safety net programs and pandemic-related income supports improved the average adult's ability to meet their family's basic needs.

- To replace lost income and help cover their basic needs, many families have turned to safety net programs and other relief measures.
- About 9 million fewer adults were employed in December 2020 than in December 2019. Hourly workers were most impacted.
- Adults reporting material hardships in the past 12 months fell between Dec. 2019 and Dec. 2020, with significant declines in food insecurity, utility shutoffs, and problems paying medical bills.
- Compared with adults whose family employment was unaffected by the pandemic, adults whose families lost jobs during the pandemic were 2x as likely to report food insecurity, nearly 3x as likely to report problems paying utility bills, and nearly 4x as likely to report problems paying the rent or mortgage.
- Adults whose families did not lose jobs but experienced furloughs, had work hours reduced, or lost income were also more likely than adults whose family employment was unaffected by the pandemic to report food insecurity, problems paying the rent or mortgage, and other hardships.

[Read the entire report here.](#) PAGE 6

TOGETHER WE CAN END THE PANDEMIC

OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, SCANPH WILL EXECUTE A CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTH MEASURES



We will count on SCANPH members to help spread the word to residents of affordable and permanent supportive housing.

Help residents stay informed and safe. Starting on April 15th, California has opened COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to everyone age 16 and older. Together, we can #EndThePandemic – in all of California’s 58 counties.



CA COVID-19 RENT RELIEF

NEW PROGRAM SUPPORTS HOUSING STABILITY FOR MOST VULNERABLE

- CA COVID-19 Rent Relief provides financial assistance to income-qualified tenants experiencing housing instability. The program provides rent reimbursement to landlords for unpaid rent accrued between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.
- Landlords are eligible to receive 80% of unpaid rent, as long as they agree to waive the remaining 20% of unpaid rent.

HOW TO APPLY:

- Tenants and landlords can determine eligibility and apply for funds directly at [HousingIsKey.com](https://www.housingiskey.com).
- If you don’t have access to the internet, you can call the CA COVID-19 Rent Relief Call Center, 1-833-430-2122 for information on the help center nearest to you to help you access an application.