

# Resolving San Bernardino County's housing crisis

**By Carlos Rodriguez**

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California is in the grip of a housing supply and affordability crisis that threatens our state and region's economic health. The Building Industry Association Southern California (BIA) Baldy View Chapter serves as our region's first line of defense in addressing this crisis. We do this by advocating for good public policy to help make the American dream of homeownership available to the widest range of homebuyers and their families.

Recently, newly elected Gov. Gavin Newsom sought to alleviate this crisis by challenging the state Legislature and local



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cities to identify a public policy pathway to spur the construction of 3.5 million new housing units between now and 2025.

This challenge is long overdue. California ranks 49th among the 50 states for housing units per capita. Benchmarked against other states on a housing units per capita basis, California is short about 2 million units. In

addition, housing production in the Golden State averaged less than 80,000 new homes annually over the past 10 years, and ongoing production continues to fall far below the projected need of 180,000 additional homes annually.

The lack of availability and resulting lack of affordability has hit California's most economically vulnerable the hardest. For example, the majority of Californian renters — more than 3 million households — pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent, and nearly one-third — more than 1.5 million households — pay more than 50 percent of their income toward rent. Overall homeownership rates are at their lowest since the 1940s. Sadly, California is home to 12 percent of the nation's population, but a

disproportionate 22 percent of the nation's homeless population.

In San Bernardino County, the housing shortage is estimated to reach 70,000 units by 2020. Unfortunately, the housing availability gap only widened as housing permits declined by 27 percent last year to approximately 5,000. This is a far cry from the 11,000 permits needed in San Bernardino County each year — a level that hasn't been reached since 2006.

The chronic housing shortage in San Bernardino County has also resulted in a greater frequency of multiple families living in a crowded single household. Indeed, San Bernardino County is ranked ninth among the 58 California counties in residential household overcrowding, which has a variety of

adverse sociological impacts.

Similarly, the housing shortage in San Bernardino County also reflects a significant economic missed opportunity. For instance, there are seven well-paying jobs being created for every one new home. Likewise, if two-thirds of the county's projected house shortage were constructed, the direct economic impact would rise to \$2.15 billion.

The Legislature and local cities would be wise to resist pointing fingers as to the cause of the housing crisis and immediately seek policy reforms that encourage a greater variety of lot sizes, faster and more efficient processing of plans and reduced development fee costs, and discourage litigation abuse of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). BIA

stands ready to work with policy makers to address these challenges.

*Carlos Rodriguez is the chief executive officer of the Building Industry Association (BIA) Baldy View Chapter. Representing homebuilding professionals in San Bernardino County and the eastern portion of Los Angeles County, the chapter's mission is to promote, advocate for and grow the homebuilding industry through member representation and community education at the local level. In addition, the Baldy View Chapter shall maintain a presence and influence on industry-related issues at regional, state, and national levels.*