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Building a House For Under $200k:

Per ***UPGRADED***, Home prices in America are rising every year thanks to greed, political payola and profiteering. The median price doesnâ t seem to show any sign of it slowing down. Just about any homeowner would build a house for under $200k if the market made it easier. Luckily, **you** can build a house for under $200k, so follow along as we detail one of many easy ways to do so. Itâ s a HOUSING CRISIS in America. Now is the time to break the rules and avoid breaking your bank account!

Designing and building your dream home is an exciting prospect. It can seem unattainable and overly expensive to many people, but it does not need to be. Developers and crooked politicians want you to think you canâ t do itâ ¦BUT YOU CAN!

You can build your dream home for under $200k.

The average selling price for houses today is $300k. If you carefully choose your floor plans, square footage, location,materials, and the property it sits on, you can build a house for under $200k that will save you money.

If you want to build a house for under $200k, there are several things that you need to do, such as:

- **Minimize the square footage**
- **Choose cheap materials**
- **Keep it to one story**
- **Build simple**

More than anything, the biggest expense in building a home is the labor and materials. If you choose a lot that is already developed,that can save you a fortune that goes towards materials and labor.

Letâ s take a close look at everything that goes into building a house on a budget.

Do You Need to Hire an Architect or a Builder?

Get free, zero-commitment quotes from pro contractors near you.

Where to Begin

What region are you located in? Depending on where you are located, building a home can vary greatly in cost. That comes down toeverything from lot costs, local regulations, and the average cost of square foot in the effected region.

The location of the lot that you are trying to build on plays a key role as well. If you want the costs of your new home to be under$200k once all is said and done, choose a developed lot.

More often than not, developed lots are already in prime condition for a house to be raised. That includes easy plumbing set up, gaslines and ease of access for the workers building the house.

If you are dead set on building your new house on an undeveloped lot, it will be extremely hard to stay on budget due to added cost.That is because you will be paying for labor for a longer period of time. Undeveloped lots require excavation which can cost **up $4,000 for small lots**.

Floor Plan Pricing for Your 200K Budget

Building a home will cost **at least $153 per square foot**, which means youâ ll be right under the 200K budget. This means youcan expect to build **a home thatâ s around 1,200 square feet**.

The Design Phase & Cost Per Square Foot

How many square feet do you want your new house to be? The [average cost per square foot differs depending on where you are located](). On average, the **cost per square foot is $153 when building a home** in the United States.

With that number in mind, consider how much of your budget you want to go towards square footage. If you wanted to build a **1,200 square foot at $153 per foot**, for example, it would **cost $183,600**. It could be more or less varying state to state.

That would leave you room in your budget to spend money on furnishing and new appliances. However, going with 1,000 square feetinstead leaves you with more room to put the remainder of your budget towards settling into your new home.

Going down from 1,200 to 1000 square feet could **trim around $30,000** on building your house.

Square footage also affects the cost of the design. On average, architectsâ cost **$1.50 per square foot** in the design phase. If your new house you are planning is going to be 1,200square feet, that will cost you at least $1800.

Building Cost Per Square Foot (By State)

State	Building Cost Per Square Foot

California	$165.66
Connecticut	$172.17
Florida	$129.90
Georgia	$116.66
Illinois	$132.91
New Jersey	$162.64
New York	$165.01
Pennsylvania	$127.15
Texas	$112.98 (See Why The Californians move here?)
Virginia	$133.94

Choosing the Right Materials

Considering that labor and materials account for the majority of the costs of building a new house, it is important to choose wisely. There are several cheap materials that are also durable and aesthetically-pleasing,including:

- Reclaimed wood
- Prefabricated materials
- Brick
- Bamboo
- Concrete

Not only are those materials big money-savers, but they also each have a distinct look. More and more, homeowners have been buildinghouses built with concrete. It creates a modern look while also saving money.

Prefabricated materials may just be the biggest way to build a new house for under $200k. Modular homes are wildly popular today, and itis because of how cost-effective it is.

A modular home is one that is mostly constructed section by section at a different location then brought in and installed onsite. There are many possibilities for style and layout without modular homes and it does not only limit you to one story.

You can even have a modular home built atop a basement if you want to add value to your new house. Besides modular homes, choosingmaterials like reclaimed wood, classic brick or bamboo can save you as well.

Building a Garage

Do you want your new house to have a garage? Building a garage costs roughly **$49 per square foot** but can vary based on materials. A **one car garage can cost up to $14,200**.

If you want a **two-car garage**, however, the least you will spend is **likely $19,600**, with $28,200 or more being the highest. To be cost-effective, you could choose tobuild a one car garage and if there is room for a driveway or street parking, park the other car or cars there.

Spending up to $28,200 or more for a two-car garage is more than 10% of your budget and may not be worth it.

Every Choice Counts

If you want to stay on budget, stay simple with all of your design choices. Each decision adds to the cost, whether it be those extrasquare feet or the roof that you choose. The **roof alone will cost you roughly $7,200** minimum on average, if not more.

Every single choice in building a host adds to the price tag, right down to the foundation. There are only a few options forfoundations, but the cheapest one is the classic slab foundation.

Typically, you only **spend $5-$7 per square foot for a slab foundation**. If you want a basement, however, you will need a costly full basement foundation. A **basement foundation** costs anywhere from **$10 to $25 per square foot**.

Basements add cost besides just the foundation, such as plumbing and electrical work, so you should consider whether or not you need abasement for the budget. **Basements can cost up to $30,000** or more when all the costs are totaled.

Be Frugal With Finishes

Your new house can look great without having to overspend. One of the big costs that comes late in the process of building a house isthe finishes.

While marble and granite tops do look great, they are also extremely expensive. **Marble alone costs between $125 and $200 per square foot** and depending on the size of the kitchen, that can get quite pricey.

You would be spending **at least $1,000 and $10,000** depending on the size of the kitchen with premium materials likemarble or granite.

A great alternative to granite that can save you a fortune is tile. **Tile costs between $5 and $30** and has a classic yet modern look. You are usually not going to spend more than**$3000 for tile countertops** including the cost of labor.

Another great countertop finish option that is inexpensive is laminate. **Laminate countertops** are a little bit more expensive than tile, coming in at **$25-$50 per square foot**, but they are still a great deal.

The best thing about laminate besides the price is that there are many designs to choose from. Laminate countertops can look just asgreat as granite or marble countertops.

Installation and materials together wonâ t cost more than $2000, on average, and your counters will look gorgeous.

Plumbing Costs

Plumbing is one of the bigger costs in building a house. If you want to build your house for under $200k, consider the plumbing whenchoosing your square footage. The bigger the house and the more sinks, bathrooms, and showers it has, the more costly the plumbingwill be.

Plumbers and contractors charge you per sink, toilet, water heater, shower, washer/dryer, bathtub, and water line. Typically, youwill have to spend between **$600 and $1,600 per sink toilet**, shower, etc., etc. Keep that in mind when you are deciding on floorplans.

The type of piping that you choose for your houseâ s plumbing affects the total cost. Copper is the most common and popular type ofpipes for plumbing. That is because **copper** is durable and long lasting and **can cost up to $5 per square foot**.

When compared to **PEX pipes that cost $1.50 per square foot** on the low end, copper is not an ideal plumbing material to stay onbudget. The cost of PEX plumbing is rarely more than $6,000 at the high end.

Copper piping, on the other hand, **costs between $8,000 and $10,000**. PVC is another cheap alternative to copper that costs **$1.25 per square foot** on average and can **save you up to $5,000** when compared to copper.

Flooring Costs

Floors, much like countertops, are only as expensive as the materials that you choose. There are several budget floor materialsthat can keep your building costs under $200k, such as:

- Vinyl sheets
- Vinyl planks
- Oak wood
- Laminate

Laminate flooring, for example, only costs **between $2 and $8 per square foot**. If the house you are building is 1000 square feet and you wanted laminate floors throughout it all,materials would cost no more than $8,000 at the most, excluding labor.

One of the cheapest flooring material options available is vinyl sheet flooring. You can spend **between .50 cents and $2.00 per square foot for vinyl sheet flooring**. It is a cheaper alternative to vinyl plank flooring which costs roughly $5.00 persquare foot.

Vinyl plank flooring may cost more than vinyl sheet, but it is still much less than the $10 to $20 per square foot that marble wouldcost.

While it may seem expensive because of how great they look, oak wood flooring is a great budget option when building a house. Regular **oak wood floors cost $2 to $6 per square foot**. If you want to go with a different, brighter style, you could go with **white oak floors that cost $5 to $8 per square foot**.

Painting Costs

When your house is finally built, it is time to get it painted. Interior and exterior painting costs are different. If your new houseis **1,000 square feet**, for example, painting the **exterior could cost between $1,000 and $3,000**.

To **paint the interiors** of the same **1,000 square foot house** could **cost between $1,500 and $3,000**. Prices vary depending on labor, type of paint and how much is being painted. Depending on the materials that you chose,the exterior may not need to be painted.

If you went with classic brick, stone, or prefabricated materials, you probably do not need to paint the outside at all. The interior ismore expensive than the exterior because generally there are more surfaces to be painted inside.

Because of that, the painter or painters have to spend much more time priming and preparing the walls for the paint. The **paint itself** is fairly inexpensive **ranging from $25 to $70 per gallon roughly**. In general, two gallons of paint is considered enough to cover 800 square feet.

If your house is 1,000 square feet, that means you would be between $50 and $140 for the necessary paint. That is not asexpensive as the **labor which makes up for $1,200-$2,860 cost** of having a 1000 square foot interior painted.

Electric Costs

Electrical work is a huge expense in building a house. Generally, **workers will charge you between $40 and $100 per hour/100square feet**. That is before the costs of materials, parts, wiring, or individual fixtures, such as lights.

Outlets and lighting fixtures cost up to $150 to have installed by an electrician. To have a **1000 square foot house wired** can cost you **between $2,000 and $6,000**. If the house has a garage, it will be an additional $1,000 to $4,000 to get it wired as well.

What Did We Learn?

Building a house for under $200k is easier than it seems. All that you have to do is carefully consider the square footage andmaterials.

Cutting back on unnecessary frills like granite or marble and choosing to build on a developed lot can save you a fortune.

You can truly build a beautiful home for $200k with a little bit of ingenuity and careful planning.

Soâ ¦ you, with the same amount of money, can either build a **poop-hole:**

OR YOU COULD HAVE A HOME DESIGNED BY AN ARCHITECT LIKE ONE OF THESE:

Do you think this idea is a â nice optionâ ? Itâ s not just a â *nice opion*â ; it is now an EMERGENCY MUST HAVE. Here is why?

Public officials who are in charge of City, State, County and Federal Budgets generally get paid over $140,000.00 per year and live in wonderful homes. They never have to worry about any of their own housing issues. These housing issues are distant and unconnected to their own experiences.

The lack of affordable housing for low- and extremely low-income households has become a serious EMERGENCY problem in the U.S. for several decades. The last two years of historic rental growth immigration promotion and soaring home prices have only made matters worse, causing an even wider gap in available affordable housing.

Here are three charts that show just how serious the problem is.

Image source: Getty Images.

1. There arenâ t enough affordable homes

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a not-for-profit organization focused on advocating for affordable housing, found in its 2021 GAP report that for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, which are those who earn 30% or less than the median income for the area, there were only 37 available homes for rent in 2019. Those earning 50% or less of the median income had 60 homes for every 100 households.

Image source: National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Todayâ s affordable housing crisis goes a lot further than housing the nationâ s poorest families. The number of those who can no longer afford to buy or rent without majorly exceeding the recommended income threshold of 30% is rising due to the movement of the markets over the last two years.

2. The number of burdened households is expanding

Rapid rent growth has been spurred by record demand and a shortage of homes across the board. Homes that were once considered affordable as related to the median income for the area have increased pricing to match market rents, further reducing the supply of affordable homes. The cost of rent jumped 10.1% from 2020 to 2021, with some markets seeing rent prices climb in the 20% to 40% range year over year.

As of January 2022, wages grew at a national average of 4.5% from December 2020, clearly not enough to overcome higher costs for housing. When coupled with inflation, which reached 7% by the end of 2021, itâ s clear the burden on housing costs is only getting more severe.

A recent report from Vio Smart Security shows that close to half of the country has a rent-to-income ratio of 30% or higher. Florida has the highest percentage of residents paying 30% of their median income on rent, with other expensive states following close behind, like California, Oregon, and New York, to name a few.

Image source: Vio Smart Security.

Cities like Tampa, Florida; Phoenix; Fort Worth, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Las Vegas, which have seen a huge uptick in inward migration over the past two years, are among the leaders in the greatest change in housing affordability year over year. Notoriously expensive markets on the West Coast like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, as well as those on the East Coast, including cities like Boston, Washington D.C., and New York City, continue to be among the worst U.S. cities for affordable housing.

These markets arenâ t alone. In Q4 2021, 77% of the 575 counties surveyed are less affordable than their historical average, and one in five counties require an income of $75,000 or more to afford the median-priced home.

3. The golden rule is no longer a rule â more like a pipe dream

No state has an adequate supply of affordable housing for its lowest-income earners, but itâ s no longer just the lowest-income earners who canâ t afford to rent or buy. The nation is getting alarmingly close to needing half of all residents to pay 30% or more of their income to rent. Spending 30% or less of income, which is considered the target range for the cost of housing, is no longer the gold standard but an idyllic goal that is unattainable for the average American.

When consumers are forced to spend 30% or more on housing costs, they are considered â house burdened,â which means they have less money to spend on items like child care, healthcare, food, gas, and other necessities for living. A recent Statista report shows the number of households that are cost burdened due to housing has increased steadily since 2013, except for 2017. Today, there are an estimated 44.01 million rental households considered cost burdened.

The faces of those who are most impacted are diverse, with a mix of reasons for the financial hardships. This issue disproportionately affects people of color, but seniors and people with disabilities make up around 48% of low-income households impacted by the lack of affordable housing. The issue is widespread, and it impacts all of us. When there is a lack of affordable housing, people can be forced into unsafe living conditions or experience homelessness. This situation can also negatively impact quality of life.

Federal policies and local public housing initiatives are one way to combat the issue, but it wonâ t be enough to fill the growing gap. Those in the private real estate investing market will need to take part in creating and preserving affordable housing units to ensure everyone has a home. Using creative structures to help tenants become homeowners for the long term could be a beneficial play for all involved. And exploring alternative housing constructs, including 3D printed houses, prefab homes, and mobile home communities, could help alleviate construction costs and make housing more affordable for investors, developers, and ultimately tenants. The main problems with current American housing are detailed here: SOLVING AMERICAâ S HOUSING CRISIS 2022B

NEWS UPDATES ON THE EFFORT:

Knock L.A.: New $1 Billion NoHo Development Will Have Segregated Affordable Housing

By Madison Parsley [4-10-22] // The North Hollywood development, dubbed â District NoHo,â will replace the park-and-ride lot at the NoHo metro station. Twenty percent of the housing (311 units of 1,527) will be affordable, but they will be separate from the rest of the units.

[San Jose Spotlight: Affordable housing in Los Gatos faces uphill battle]

By Tran Nguyen [4-9-22] // Andrea Osgood, a senior vice president of Eden Housing, said some of the biggest affordable housing constraints in Los Gatos are land and funding.

[L.A. Times: A snapshot of new state government efforts to tackle Californiaâ s housing crisis]

By Hannah Wiley [4-11-22] // Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland), Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development chair, said lawmakers this year are most worried about Californiaâ s intense affordability crisis and how itâ s driving families out of communities.

[San Diego Union-Tribune: Santee must overturn approval of 3,000-home Fanita Ranch project, judge rules]

By Blake Nelson [4-11-22] // Developer says theyâ ll take a closer look at how new homes could affect wildfire evacuations.

[Mercury News: Housing proposed in East Bay hills derailed by court ruling]

By Joseph Geha [4-10-22] // State appeal court rules Livermore environmental review process was flawed.

[Terner Center Webinar: Lessons from Californiaâ s Homekey Program]

Thursday, April 14, 12-1.

[KQED Podcast: Sold Out: Rethinking Housing in America]

[3-14-22] // In this final episode of the season, Erin Baldassari and Molly Solomon look at the promise, the problems and the history of Section 8, as well as the push for guaranteed income.

[ABC: To keep family together, Inland Empire woman chooses to stay on streets]

By Leticia Juarez [4-10-22] // (Video) â I understand if people have no compassion for me as a 34-year-old woman and my mother as a 64-year-old, but my son deserves better,â said Courtney Lee. Even working 60 hours in a warehouse was not enough income. Assistance is only available if the multigenerational family separates.

[CalMatters: Duplex housing law met with fierce resistance by California cities]

By Manuela Tobias [4-11-22] // Cities around the state are trying to circumvent Californiaâ s new law allowing duplexes to be built on properties previously zoned as single family. Their methods include everything from removing parking and forbidding vehicle ownership to requiring arbitrary amounts of mature vegetation.

[San Gabriel Valley Tribune: Most LA and Orange County residents support higher-density housing, poll shows]

By Jeff Collins [4-11-22] // Eighty-four percent of respondents in Los Angeles and Orange counties support duplexes, triplexes and â accessory dwelling unitsâ in their neighborhoods, while 63% support medium-sized apartment buildings.

[Fortune: The housing market just hit a level not seen since 2007]

By Lance Lambert [4-10-22] // Now that mortgage rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels, new homebuyers are starting to feel the full weight of record prices.

GlobeSt.: Home Sellers Are Starting to Drop Their Asking Price

By Paul Bergeron [4-11-22] // Redfin reported 12% of homes for sale had price drops in the past four weeks, the highest level since early December.

OC Register: Million-dollar homebuyers getting cheaper mortgage rates

By Prashant Gopal [4-12-22] // The average for a 30-year fixed jumbo mortgage was 4.48% last week, compared with 4.95% for a conventional loan, the widest advantage for high-end borrowers in data from Bankrate.com going back to 1998.

Federal Housing Finance Agency: Foreclosure Suspension for Borrowers Applying for Relief through the Homeowner Assistance Fund

[4-6-22] // Servicers with mortgages backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac must delay the foreclosure process for up to 60 days.

HUD â PD&R: Exploring Homelessness Among People Living in Encampments and Associated Cost

By Lauren Dunton et al. [4-5-21] // This study lays out a novel framework for approaches to encampments in cities around the country: clearance with support, clearance with little or no support, tacit acceptance, and formal sanctioning. Local officials in Chicago, Houston, Tacoma, and San Jose generally converged on a common strategy for responding to their most visible encampments â clearance and closure with support.â

CityLab: Elon Musk Throws Spotlight on Homelessness with Twitter Office Idea

By Sarah Holder [4-12-22] // San Franciscoâ s tech billionaires have tried to address the crisis before, with limited effect.

ABC: Americaâ s homeless ranks graying as more retire on streets

By Anita Snow [4-10-22] // Fifty-five-year-old Karla Finocchioâ s slide into homelessness began when she split with her partner of 18 years and temporarily moved in with a cousin.

Reuters: Fed to raise rates aggressively in coming months, say economists

By Indradip Ghosh & Prerana Bhat [4-11-22] // The Federal Reserve is expected to deliver two back-to-back half-point interest rate hikes in May and June to tackle runaway inflation, according to economists polled by Reuters who also say the probability of a recession next year is 40%.

GlobeSt.: Wage Growth Has Helped Offset Rent Increases in the Sunbelt

By K.M. Borland [4-11-22] // Higher wages in the Sunbelt region are helping renters mitigate increased housing costs.

Fast Company: Revolutionary changes in transportation could slow global warmingâ if theyâ re done right, IPCC says

By Alan Jenn [4-9-22] // Transportation accounted for 23% of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions worldwide in 2019.

Planetizen: American Airlines Latest to Replace Flights With Bus Service

By James Brasuell [4-12-22] // A trend is emerging in intercity travel in an era of pilot shortages and high fuel prices: intercity buses are replacing flights for shorter regional trips.

Slate: How Japan Built Cities Where You Could Send Your Toddler On An Errand

By Henry Grabar [4-11-22] // The Netflix show Old Enough! offers a glimpse of an alternate reality.

Planetizen: San Diego County Development Turns Inward

By Diana Ionescu [4-10-22] // Formerly a bastion of sprawling suburban developments, the San Diego region is experiencing a renaissance of urban infill development and higher-density, mixed use construction projects.

Urbanize L.A: Micro-unit apartments begin construction in Downtown L.A.

By Steven Sharp [4-12-22] // With a $29.1-million loan in hand, developer Housing Diversity Corporation (HDC) has broken ground on a micro-unit apartment building in Downtown Los Angeles â one of five projects the Seattle-based firm currently has in the works for the region.

North Bay Business Journal: Investors are buying mobile home parks. Residents are paying a price

By Sophie Kasakove [3-27-22] // Golden, CO: When Sarah Clement and her seven-year-old daughter moved to a mobile home park two years ago, she felt sheâ d won the lottery. But just six months after she moved in, the plot of land and all of the stability and comfort that came with it seemed suddenly ripped out from under her.

More than half a dozen affordable housing projects in California are costing more than $1 million per apartment to build, a record-breaking sum that makes it harder to house the growing numbers of low-income Californians who need help paying rent, a Times review of state data found.

The seven subsidized housing developments, all in Northern California, received state funding within the last two years and are under construction or close to breaking ground. When completed, they will provide homes for more than 600 families.

But their exorbitant price tags mean that taxpayers are subsidizing fewer apartments than they otherwise could while waiting lists of renters needing affordable housing continue to grow.

â That is untenable,â said Assemblyman Tim Grayson (D-Concord), who is writing legislation aimed at simplifying state affordable housing financing. â That is not a sustainable model. We have got to do something to reduce the cost.â

A key driver of the increases is labor and material prices, which have soared because of inflation, supply-chain problems and worker shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic. But a Times investigation published in 2020 found numerous factors within the control of state and local governments also to blame for the high cost of building affordable housing in California.

In comparison with private sector development, low-income housing is often saddled with more stringent environmental and labor standards. Affordable housing projects also frequently face high parking requirements, lengthy local approval processes and a byzantine bureaucracy to secure financing.

Despite promises by Gov. Gavin Newsom and other state officials to rein in costs, they haven't made comprehensive changes to address the factors cited by The Times, whose findings are similar to those of auditors and academic researchers in recent years.

â We havenâ t seen any relief on any of those [cost] drivers,â said Elizabeth Kneebone, research director for UC Berkeleyâ s Terner Center for Housing Innovation, which published one of the reports. â Weâ ve only seen more challenges piling on top of each other. Thereâ s been nothing to bend the curve. It just rises further upward.â

To support housing for low-income residents, federal, state and local governments provide direct financing and tax credits, which reduce what banks and other large investors owe the Internal Revenue Service and the state treasury if they help pay for housing projects. The funding requires developers to cap what tenants pay in rent.

One of the seven projects at issue, a rehabilitation of an 84-unit public housing complex in San Franciscoâ s Hayes Valley neighborhood, will offer two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments for between $1,186 and $2,805 a month.

The amounts are far below market rates in San Francisco, where the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment is $2,592 a month, according to real estate firm Apartment List. The Hayes Valley apartments are only available to families earning less than 60% of the regionâ s median income.

The project, which is a partnership between the city of San Francisco and St. Louis for-profit developer McCormack Baron Salazar, costs $91.7 million, which translates to almost $1.1 million per apartment.

Previously, The Times identified one other â much smaller â proposed affordable housing development in California that eclipsed $1 million per apartment to build. But that project, which called for the construction of 10 units for low-income families in Solana Beach along the San Diego coast, collapsed in 2020 because it grew too expensive.

The seven projects that now top $1 million per unit would be the costliest built in California and probably the country. They are in the San Francisco Bay Area, the stateâ s priciest region, with three in San Francisco, two in Oakland and one apiece in San Jose and Concord, a Contra Costa County suburb. The most expensive is a rehabilitation of 69 public housing units in San Francisco at a cost of more than $1.2 million per apartment.

Developers and supporters of each project emphasize theyâ re sorely needed to provide safe and secure homes for lower-income and homeless residents. A proposed 80-unit complex in San Jose for formerly homeless foster youth and families will serve a neighborhood rife with overcrowding with two or three households frequently sharing a single apartment, said Geoff Morgan, president of First Community Housing, the complexâ s nonprofit developer.

But Morgan conceded the price tag of just over $80 million is hard to stomach.

â Itâ s nauseating,â Morgan said. â I hate it.â

Many of the factors contributing to the high cost of the project, known as Roosevelt Park, were identified by The Times in 2020. The complex has a two-level underground parking garage and the highest level of environmental certification by the U.S. Green Building Council, and developers will pay construction workers union-level wages. San Jose officials also wanted commercial space included in the project, which required more parking and a separate elevator, Morgan said.

The project additionally struggled to get financing through the stateâ s affordable housing system and is relying on six government funding sources to pay for its construction.

The Terner Center study on the cost to build low-income housing found that projects paying union-level wages to construction workers could cost $50,000 more per apartment and those built to stricter environmental standards cost $17,000 more per apartment than those that arenâ t. The study examined developments the state funded between 2008 and 2019.

The Times analysis of a similar set of projects found that for each additional funding source a project needed, the average per-unit cost increased by more than $6,000.

A significant part of the cost comes from developers paying attorneys and consultants to navigate state and local bureaucracies to secure financing.

Most large states have one agency that hands out affordable housing dollars. California has five â with varying requirements for what gets funded. Those agencies report to different elected officials, leaving no one in charge of overseeing the system as a whole. A 2018 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that 14% of the price tag for Californiaâ s affordable housing projects was made up of consulting fees and other administrative costs â the highest in the country and more than developers spend on land.

When unveiling his state budget proposal in January 2020, Newsom pledged to lead an effort to streamline how developers get their funding.

â Iâ ve just had enough with TCAC and CDLAC and OPRs and CalVets and HCDs and CalHFAs,â the governor said, name-dropping the alphabet soup of departments involved in financing housing projects. â Six of you understand what the hell I just said. No one else does. And thatâ s the point.â

But Newsom and others have not overhauled that process. Instead, they have implemented smaller reforms, such as consolidating funding streams within agencies and modifying regulations for evaluating individual projects to better account for costs.

This year, Graysonâ s legislation to centralize state affordable housing funding under the governor failed in a fiscal committee. Heâ s introduced a new version, Assembly Bill 2305, which passed the Assembly last month and is awaiting a Senate committee hearing.

â We should be looking at where we could save money on the government side so that we can fund these projects and make it pencil out for the developer on the building side,â Grayson said. Doing so, he said, is necessary â so that the people that need it the most are not the ones that suffer the most because the housingâ s not built.â

In the meantime, Newsom and state lawmakers have pumped unprecedented sums into affordable housing construction. This yearâ s budget includes a record $17 billion for housing and homelessness programs, including $1.75 billion in federal COVID-19 relief funds to finance proposed low-income developments that had stalled before breaking ground. Five of the 27 developments funded so far through that program are among those that cost more than $1 million per apartment to build.

The governorâ s office declined an interview request. Gustavo Velasquez, a Newsom appointee who heads the California Department of Housing and Community Development, said the $1.75-billion effort is meeting its goal of accelerating construction of developments that had been stuck.

â It is what it is,â Velasquez said. â Yes, there are some projects that were very expensive, arguably, in the Bay Area, many of them because the cost of housing there is more than in other parts of the state.â

Newsom has not taken a position on Grayson's legislation.

State Treasurer Fiona Ma, whose office is responsible for allocating affordable housing tax credits to developers, also declined an interview request. In response to written questions from The Times, Ma said she opposed Grayson's bill, which would diminish her power over the financing process, calling the effort "overly simplistic."

"Bureaucratic structures are the least of Californiaâ s problems," Ma said. "Streamlining local government land-use approvals and federal tax law constraints is the more effective approach."

Ma said that the agencies under her control prioritize cost concerns when handing out funding and that land values and inflation have driven recent increases.

During the pandemic, developers have had to contend with historic surges in material and labor prices. Those costs have gone up nearly 30% since February 2020, according to the stateâ s California Construction Cost Index. Last yearâ s 13.4% annual increase was the highest since the index began tracking costs more than a quarter-century ago. This yearâ s cost escalations are on pace to exceed that amount.

â What really hit people was in the beginning of the year, all of a sudden within a few months, we had a 15% increase,â said Morgan, the developer in San Jose. â That was crazy. I've never seen that in my career, and I've been doing this for over 20 years.â

Others blame high building costs on the historic lack of investment in low-income housing.

The three San Francisco projects costing more than $1 million per apartment will rebuild 310 units from the cityâ s public housing stock, which has deteriorated over decades. Included in the total are the millions developers must spend to temporarily relocate existing tenants during construction. So is the value of the existing properties, even though, in these cases, they're publicly owned.

But the projectsâ price tags also encompass layers of city requirements for affordable housing that go beyond the stateâ s, such as some mandates to include public art, increase access for people with disabilities and hire local construction workers, including those from disadvantaged neighborhoods.

â Each of these issues has its own constituency and has its own advocacy and its own social benefit,â said Lydia Ely, a top San Francisco housing official. â Each one on its own is worthy, and added up all together, they start to make an impact.â

Though the price tag for low-income housing in Greater Los Angeles has not reached $1 million per apartment, itâ s also rising. One 79-unit development under construction in Hollywood is costing nearly $848,000 per apartment to build, the highest on record of state-funded projects in the region.

These cost escalations show no signs of abating. Besides the seven projects already funded at more than $1 million per apartment, half a dozen other proposed projects identified by The Times across the Bay Area also eclipse that amount.

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AMERICA'S HOUSING CRISIS IS 'POLITICIAN MADE'

INVESTIGATING THE CULPRITS

The housing crisis has been created by special interest groups including: 1.) Big corporate real estate broker lobbyists (Sotheby, Better Homes Realty, CBRE, Coldwell Banker, etc.) ; 2.) big corporate developers (K&B, Pulte, Blackrock, Vanguard, Berkshire Hathaway, etc.); 3.) NIMBY's and 4.) certain exclusionist tech billionaires want to NEVER allow affordable housing and affordable pre-fab builders to exist. Almost every politician, especially county planning staff, are paid bribes by real estate broker lobbies and big corporate developers. Tracking the stock market assets of the politicians and their families clearly shows the bribes.

Anybody can use FBI, CIA, FINCEN-type AI-based forensic tracking software and looked at the heads of all of the housing agencies and housing decision "research" groups, particularly in California and New York State. 98% of those people do not make the majority of their money from their salaries, THEY MAKE IT FROM INSIDER STOCK MARKET PERKS and special gifts tied back to the special interests. Why are the real FBI not arresting them? You will have to ask The Director of the FBI that question. You can talk to the folks that run the sites at: (http://www.pogo.org), (http://www.sunlightfoundation.com), (http://followthemoney.org), (http://icij.org), and thousands of other investigative groups and prove it for yourself! Why is the public not demanding that stock market ownership by politicians and their families be made illegal? Because Goldman Sachs controls public policy more than you do?

In other words, the politicians that are supposed to be helping you are accepting bribes to hurt you!

As the pandemic made the poor poorer, meanwhile, it made the rich richer. Homeowners, already more than 40 times as wealthy as renters, were more likely to keep their jobs, profit from the stock market and have enough savings to take advantage of low interest rates.

Then thereâ s the role played by investors and speculators. Large corporate and Wall Street landlords, like Invitation Homes, American Homes 4 Rent, BlackRock and Blackstone, are arguably the most toxic players, driving up rents in the select markets they saturate, lobbying for corporate tax cuts and fighting tenant protections. But a majority of investment buyers are smaller companies and individuals: mom-and-pop landlords, tech workers looking to diversify their portfolios, teachers who supplement their paltry paychecks by Airbnb-ing properties on the side. The ease with which they can access credit strains the market and drives up prices. Those effects are likely magnified when investors target homes in cities less expensive than the ones in which they live, whether theyâ re Chinese investors in California or Californian investors in Texas. Politicians refuse to make laws against investment groups buying homes because the politicians are part of those investment groups.

California generally does not give resources to individuals. California gives the money to Housing offices, Public Housing Authorities (PHA'S) and "official" agencies that are historically rife with corruption, cronyism, racism, embezzlement, favoritism, over-paid executives and hand-offs to favored developers. The whole California Redevelopment program (ie: https://thirtymilesofcorruption.com/2011/12/29/supreme-court-abolishes-redevelopment-agencies-in-california/) had to be shut down because of corruption. California should offer money and mortgages to EVERY citizen in California that has lived in California more than 5 years and that makes less than $60,000.00 per year. Over 50% of the money give to "local agencies" is embezzled!

EASY SOLUTIONS TO THE CRISIS ARE BEING BLOCKADED

In San Mateo County, the housing agency does even fill out the forms to apply to the State for housing funds any more. Even though, in 2021, the State has nearly $100B to give away to housing, San Mateo has so many rich oligarchs living there that poor and middle class housing is too much of a bother for them.

Dwell Magazine-type modern low-cost prefab homes, CREATED in California, are blockaded by these special interest groups. Clayton Homes, BluHomes (now killed off by special interests), Factory OS, Homes Direct and hundreds of other California companies make off-site manufactured homes that are nicer looking, 50% lower cost, safer, faster to erect, more energy efficient and better than site-built homes. The real estate and union lobbies have gotten them banned in most counties because they are jealous of them. Powerful anti-trust law violating real estate and union lobbiests got the zoning codes changed to make off-site manufactured homes hard to get permits for. If you want the best home at the best price, sue your county to demand home equality and construction-justice.

Ensuring that our County has sufficient affordable housing for its residents is an urgent challenge. Off-site construction serves as the most promising tool to reduce costs and increase supply, but one whose full potential cannot be realized or optimized without thoughtful and intentional changes in the policy, process, and programs that support affordable housing in the County.

Across all stakeholder groups, you always found a shared desire and passion to address the monumental housing shortage, as well as a collective understanding of the collaboration needed to make modular one part of the solution. As one interviewee put it: â Everyone wants everyone else to succeed.â

While modular may not be a panacea, nor the only innovation needed, the County must take advantage of this opportunity to catalyze innovation in off-site construction methods and remove unnecessary anti-trust-violating barriers to its adoption created by special interest groups.

Many counties just pay lip-service, window-dressing, pretend-we-are-doing-something time to housing because their officials are paid by big business lobbies who HATE affordable housing because it competes with them.

Over a million Californians get $1500.00 from HUD Section 8 and related programs but they are blockaded by lobbying from these special interest groups from using those funds to buy a home. The HUD Section 8 Home Ownership program in California is a sham. Nobody can find the paperwork, get the help or get the counties to pay attention when they apply.

So there is this massively financed army of mega-powerful anti-housing people who have huge law firms working to stop all of your good deeds and manipulate all of your politicians and social service agencies.

HOW TO WIN THE BATTLE

As California enters what Sacramento calls: "the worst housing crisis in 100 years!", one must look at the big picture. The U.S. housing market is 4 million single-family homes short of what is needed to meet the countryâ s demand, according to a new analysis by mortgage-finance company Freddie Mac. The estimate represents a 52% rise in the nationâ s home shortage compared with 2018, the first time Freddie Mac quantified the shortfall because states like California have made home-building practically a crime.

Thousands of modern Dwell magazine-type pre-fab home suppliers can deliver amazing modern homes for around $150K but they are stonewalled, delayed and forced to double or triple those costs because of anti-building rules promoted by California and now mirrored nationally by greedy politicians. Greedy politicians take bribes from real estate lobbies and big developer corporations who HATE affordable homes because they don't make much profit on them.

One approach is to break-up and sue ALL of the real estate broker lobbies and big development corporations. You can sue them and their political lap dogs under RICO and anti-trust laws. Politicians recieve bribes from the anti-housing bad guys as: cash, search engine rigging, hookers, dinners and via hundreds of other forms of payola and stock market trades. You would think that using legal tactic to take them all down would be a slam dunk. It isn't. Those politicians control whether or not those legal actions can get launched. So you have to be very creative to counter-measure them. For example, you can shame them into submission using the internet's mass media technologies.

Farmers and Colleges, especially, have tons of extra land. Farmers are losing money on agriculture and could make far more money selling their land for housing. Stanford University is in so much trouble for bribery, sex abuse, mysogyny, politics and other scandals that the State can justify taking back the Stanford campus to build housing on.

If the State of California was serious about solving the housing crisis it would support a SIMPLE program for the hundreds of thousands of renters, who get $1600.00 a month, forever, from HUD for tiny rental apartments, to EASILY use that money for mortgage to build, or buy, a small home.

By law, there is SUPPOSED to be such a program: The HUD Section 8 Home Ownership Program, is supposed to allow this to happen, but it is shadow-banned across the state. Most county officials don't even know how it works or direct inquiries to dead-ends. The HUD Section 8 Home Ownership Program must be easier to get into, easier to find out about and no longer HIDDEN by County officials.

Don't believe it? Do a test yourself. Call the Housing agency office in each of California's 58 counties. When someone pick's up the phone say: "I am HUD-qualified for the HUD Section 8 Home Ownership Program. I would like to use the program to buy or build a home in your county. What do I need to do to complete the process?". Then experience a hell beyond anything you can imagine. You won't get in, most likely, and it won't be your fault.

You will be kept out. This is a federal law. It is your right to use this law. If you already get HUD money to underwrite your rent, you are per-qualified to use this program. Santa Cruz, Marin, San Francisco and other snooty counties will try to stop you because using it means you might not be white enough for their vision of high tax revenue home owners. You might be a deplorable if you use your federal $1500.00 for an actual home. The average mortgage payment in America is $940.00 per month to own a home. HUD pays an average of $1500.00 per month to your landlord. Do the math! These people will build free home inventory for California, die, and leave that inventory in California. Why won't California help them to help solve California's housing inventory crisis?

A person building their own home is going to make sure it is done right if they are going to live in it. Build-your-own-home singular home-builders can contribute to the home inventory problem faster and more cost-effectively.

Marcia Fudge at HUD said the Biden administration plans to level the playing field for Americans who want to buy a home by providing down payment assistance for people to move from public housing to home-ownership. â We will make sure those who can afford a mortgage are put in a position to be able to buy a home,â Fudge said. â Right now we have banks who donâ t want to lend to people to buy a home for less than $50,000â ³ â homes, she said, that â poor peopleâ can afford, with monthly mortgage payments often lower than rent.

THE FAKE INFLATED COST OF A HOME

San Francisco built brand new homes across from the Police HQ in San Francisco and these small prefab units ended up costing hundreds of thousands of dollars per unit: They cost twice as much as the same unit in Austin, Texas would cost to build. Why are cities spending the same per apartment for homeless people that you can build a 1600 sq. ft. stand-alone single family modular home for!??? The answer is: Cronyism. They could have cost much less but the process tripled their cost in California.

California spends an average of $800,000.00 to build each "low income apartment" for low income people. That is what the government pays for each unit. If you are not aware of how much things actually cost, and you are willing to pay all of the mark-ups and inflated numbers of retail prices then your average cost to build a 2,600 sq.ft. single-family home in the U.S. ranges from $240,000 to $710,000, with most homeowners spending around $423,800 for the job.

The high cost is $1,000,000+ for a 2,600 sq.ft. custom-built home with high-end materials, three-car garage, covered deck, and landscaping. That million dollar+ price is for the yuppie people who pay $150.00 per month for the same tv channels that smart people get for $10.00 per month. BUT!...The build-it-yourself cost for this is $140,000 for a 2,600 sq.ft. builder-grade home with no changes. Every time you change even the tiniest thing in your construction plan, add $10,000.00, or more, to your cost.

Most people only ACTUALLY need a 1,200 sq. ft. home but they can't let go of the "mine-is-bigger-than-yours" syndrome. That build-it-yourself modular/prefab home at 1,200 sq. ft. can be under $100,000.00 if you are an EDUCATED general supervising contractor who hires a licensed, top-references, electrician, carpenter and plumber to build it with them. If you build-it-yourself without hiring those seasoned specialists, your project will usually fail. Homes only cost a million dollars if you are a sucker.

2 bedroom stand-alone homes can be built for $100,000.00 in costs. Realtors, builders, developers and politicians will LIE all day long to keep this fact from being exposed. The bribes, mark-ups, payola, padding, profiteering, etc. make that same house cost $1.2M on the market. For example, see: http://ruralstudio.org/project/2020-20k-home/

In Santa Rosa California, it cost the County $268,000.00 to build a single seat public toilet. In Alabama it costs $268,000.00 to build a 2 bedroom house.

San Francisco City Hall found that painting and servicing a white rectangle on the ground for homeless people to put their tent in cost the City $6000.00 per month per rectangle. That is how much a penthouse luxury apartment with multiple bathrooms costs in Austin, Texas. Why is building something costing more than the thing is worth? Cronyism, kickbacks and self-dealing with buddies.

Many Housing Permit Department and City Hall people in San Francisco have been arrested, recently, but the corrupt practices and bribery continues without pause. Bribery of public officials often doubles the cost of a home.

ENCAMPED HOMELESS PEOPLE DON'T WANT YOUR HELP

Even more interesting: San Francisco took over luxury hotels and offered them to the homeless but 70% of the homeless refused to use the free housing. 70% of the homeless refused a free home in a luxury hotel!!! Why?

The homeless people said why, and it is documented, but NOBODY IN SACRAMENTO EVER reads the statements or they hide the statements from the public.

Here is why the homeless said they don't want California's free housing:
1.) The rules to live in the housing are not rules they can, or will, comply with.
2.) Most of them are addicted to smoking, drinking and drugs and the "free units" have cameras and sensors that record them doing the illicit things. They know that and won't move into a place they know they will get arrested or evicted from as fast as they move in.
3.) The vast contracts and regulation documents they must agree to are something they need a lawyer to explain to them and none of them have lawyers.
4.) Many of them use sex bartering and the cameras on the units will record sex worker activities.
5.) None of them want to be condensed into a tight space with other crazy people because they get set-upon by the worst of the bunch.
6.) They don't want multi-unit housing! They hate it. They want individual homes where they control the whole environment. San Francisco is spending at least TWICE as much money for short term solutions as it would cost for individual pre-fab stand-alone homes.
7.) Many of them are clinically insane and won't cooperate with any form of order or "rules".

Most of all: Drug-soaked crazy people don't want any help from The State. Families, seniors and disabled people want the help from the SSA and Housing people and they are getting ignored.

ALL homeless people should receive a free mental health evaluation and free therapy until their issues are resolved.

California has published a vast number of reports, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars, listing the exact number of homeless people, but California has never spent the $60,000.00 it would cost to ask each homeless person the 10 questions about what they want! California politicians in Sacramento don't actually care what homeless people want. They care what they can scam out of a "stimulus" fund to scrape their cut off-the-top of.

HOUSING AGENCIES (PHA'S) AND UNIONS ARE STOPPING SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

The San Francisco construction unions and lobbies won't allow the homeless solutions that will work. All of the special interests in San Francisco, from unions, to rich people, to politicians, to realty lobbies, to you-name-it, will block anything that makes housing cheaper. They ALL make their money off of a percentage of the most expensive property values. The Realtor lobby and the big building lobby are probably the most powerful special interest groups in California, after the teachers union. They HATE affordable housing. Anything they say to the contrary is a lie. They bribe 90% of the politicians in the state via Dark Money conduits. They are NOT going to help solve this.

Remember when California shut down it's 400 Redevelopment Agencies because the corruption and bribery was so out of control? It is the same exact thing with California PHA's.

When you call top Housing agency officials in Santa Cruz, Marin, San Francisco, Tulare and other counties to ask them what the main reason is that poor people can't get new homes built, they all pretty much said: "The State and County laws prevent us from building anything these days..."

San Jose got it right by promising a one hour permit time-frame for ADU home construction but other counties are resisting this permit optimization effort because permits are where bribes happen!

Factory OS, Clayton Homes, Homes Direct, and an army of other factory built home companies, have offered homes to Californians for $150,000.00, or less, if the State will just fix the permit process and give them a pre-order of 200 homes at a time. Banks will finance these...if the State of California will help bundle land and construction financing in the same package.

Marin County staff said: "We have enough open, empty fields in the county to house every single homeless person in the State but we can't get anything built here without a ton of lawsuits, 5 year studies and permit hell-scapes. Every homeless person could get a modern Dwell Magazine-style stand-alone small house if the Country Office's didn't block every single construction project that is attempted!"

The difference between what California says, and does, is the same difference between night and day. San Francisco is an example of how home-building has been halted in the State. The rest of the state is following the profiteering based blockades to keep homes from getting built to deliver permanent supportive rental housing for people living with a serious mental illness who are homeless, chronically homeless, or at-risk of chronic homelessness. The government funds are rarely ACTUALLY used to acquire, design, construct, rehabilitate, or preserve permanent supportive housing, which may rarely include a capitalized operating subsidy reserve.

OK, so say you don't care about the homeless people. "Screw em all" you say. "They are low life drug users and weirdos who won't confirm to our white picket fence social programming..."

CORRUPTION AND CRONYISM MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR CALIFORNIA TO HELP MIDDLE-CLASS AND LOW-INCOME HOME BUYERS

Want to buy a home or buy a bigger home? Forget it, you are screwed if you live in California. The State has, essentially, "outlawed" construction.

You can't build a home without the process being so painful, expensive, delayed and litigation-focused that it will ruin your life.

If the State of California was serious about solving the housing crisis it would create a singe two to three page building permit application, that worked in every County, that a single state office could sign off on within 48 to 60 hours.

If the State of California was serious about solving the housing crisis they would change the zoning codes. Nobody can build in California without being punished for it by California and County regulations.

If the State of California was serious about solving the housing crisis they would turn the tsunami of state-created immigrant unemployment into a positive, Now that California has let half of Mexico in to the State, you have huge clusters of skilled workers hanging around, looking for work, a few blocks away from every Home Depot in the State. Each 20 of them can erect a move-in ready home in one week. Give them an empty pasture and a challenge and turn them loose with a pay-per-house incentive payment structure.

All of the programs listed at: https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/index.shtml need TRIPLE the amount of funds currently allocated and they need to be moved into no less than 3 main programs. The current MASSIVE number of programs guarantees that corruption, duplication, and transparency inefficiency are at a maximum worst-case level. In all of these programs there is nothing for the individual. Almost all of the plans are based on the "Shove-them-all-in-a-big-concrete-building" concept. The public does not want that. NOBODY wants to live in, or see, multi-unit housing. The State needs to also TRIPLE the amount of programs for the SINGLE FAMILY or INDIVIDUAL. County Housing agencies have been found to be corrupt and motivated by bribes. If the State of California was serious about solving the housing crisis it would put a billion dollars of it's freebie COVID CASH from Washington, DC into it's CalHOME fund and restart that fund.

On Broadway and Divisadero streets in San Francisco, giant mansions house two to four people. Those structures, without changing the outside of the buildings one tiny bit, can house hundreds of people. NIMBY's biggest complaint is based on appearance. If you change the inside of structures and keep the outside looking "classic", you get the least amount of NIMBY issues. San Francisco already has ALL of the fully constructed square footage to solve ALL of it's housing issues, if it works from the inside out. Empty office buildings and dead millionaire mansions can deliver the square footage.

Gavin Newsom based his election on providing millions of new homes to California. Nobody has been able to find a single one of these new houses he said he was going to build.

THE BIGGEST TAKE-AWAY: "NOBODY wants to live in a multi-unit concrete building block. Multi-unit project buildings harm people's mental state and create conflict, house gangs and they are bad socially. These is enough empty land for everyone in California to have a 1600 sq. ft. home of their own. Change the rules so that more people at below $100K income levels can buy or build a home and the public will solve the housing crisis.

Until those kinds of things happen, there is no hope for the State! Greed, payola, special interests and revolving door jobs control your housing opportunities in the state of California. California State has every tool, resource and dollar it already needs to solve every single housing issue in the State except one think: "Courage". It take courage to say "No" to the special interests. It takes courage to say "No to the Silicon Valley billionaires. It takes courage to cut off the spigot of Congressional bribes. Most of the federal cash that comes to California always ends up in a politicians, or their friend's pockets. It takes courage to say that every Californian that invested their lives in California deserves the home in California that they were promised. Fix the HUD Section 8 Home Ownership Program in California. Make an office in every major city that ONLY helps people with the HUD Section 8 Home "Ownership" Program and not just the Section 8 "rental" program.

ALL OF THE MONEY needed to fund that is already paid out in California, by HUD, EVERY MONTH!

Give citizens their promised right to build and own a home!

The State of California and HUD housing agencies have long lists of â Certifiedâ , â Qualifiedâ , â Approvedâ , etc. loan brokers and mortgage brokers that the agencies say will help low-income citizens get single family financing.

So we called everybody on one of those lists provided by the State of California.

In fact, those loan brokers and mortgage companies donâ t want to hear from you unless you are in a bid war on a $1.5 million dollar bungalow for which you already have $500K, or more, in cash in the bank.

Only a small percentage of the loan brokers and mortgage brokers on those lists had EVER done a completed subsidized home loan and even less had any clue how to paper a HUD Home Ownership financed home loan. Over 20 U.S. Bank mortgage brokers even refused to respond to emails or phone calls if one used the words â Cal-FHA USDAâ because, as one unusually talkative U.S. Bank employee stated: â To us, those are code-words for â poor peopleâ , the market is, frankly, too hot for banks to bother with the poors because we donâ t make any money off themâ .

It does not matter if you have spent years trying to keep your FICO score above 700. It does not matter that you never had a bankruptcy. It does not matter that you have guaranteed income for life from your government benefits. All of those things that the media told you to do to be a â good citizenâ with a good social credit score seem to be pointless.

The loan and mortgage brokers on those lists are only on those lists to get a few PR brownie points. They do not want to hear from you or deal with you unless you are making big bucks in tech. They will let you upload your information but they will do little or nothing to help you because they lose money by helping you. They only make money off of the big deals.

On top of that the big real estate developers like Pulte Homes, Berkshire Hathaway (Warren Buffet), Kauffman and Broad (K&B Homes), etc. are bribing the Governor and the heads of all of the agencies to keep you from building a home or getting a home that is not in one of their giant developments.

Most low-income people are the laborers who build the homes in those big real estate developments. Those people know how to build their own homes but State and Federal agency heads are bribed to make sure you NEVER can build your own home. Those people know they can build an incredible home, on their own, for under $100,000.00. You an see thousands of videos on the internet showing people that do it every day in any state but California. Try to build a home in California. You will find you are blockaded at every turn EXCLUSIVELY by rules that you have to follow but that big developers do not!

Try to buy a modular or factory build home in California ...Same thing.

The political bosses in California have taken so many bribes from big special interests that they canâ t stop sucking on the graft hose.

Political Bribes By Special Interest Lobbyists Make California Uninhabitable

If the state and federal government were actually serious about solving the housing crisis, they would have a mortgage agency that only serviced subsidized housing!

Low income people: â approvedâ lenders and mortgage brokers hate you and donâ t want you bothering them.

US BANK, Wells Fargo, Guild Mortgage, and all the rest, talk a good story when they are on-camera or doing a public presentation but the reality is that they consider you to be a â waste of their timeâ if you are needing subsidized housing. They all issue press releases where they talk about their â commitmentsâ and â special programsâ but they put zero effort into those green-washing intentions. They only say those things to keep the banking regulators off their backs and to make their favorite politicians happy.

When real estate developers are paying politicians and banks to ignore low-income people and 79% of America is now â low incomeâ , with more arriving daily, what chance does the public have?

The trend is edging toward disaster.

THE WORST PLAYERS IN WAR AGAINST HOMES

The incipient â Great Resetâ is a multi-faceted beast. We talk a lot about vaccine passports and lockdowns and the Covid-realated aspects â and we should â but thereâ s more to it than that.

Remember, they want you to â own nothing and be happyâ . And right at the top of the list of things you definitely shouldnâ t own, is your own home.

The headlines about this have been steady for the last few years, but it has picked up pace in the wake of the â pandemicâ (as has so much else). An agenda hidden on back pages, behind by Covidâ s meaningless big red numbers, but perhaps no less sinister.
You can find articles all over the net talking up renting over owning.

Last month, for example, Bloomberg ran an article headlined: America Should Become a Nation of Rentersâ ; Which praises what they call â the liquefaction of the housing marketâ and gleefully expounds on the idea that â The very features that made home buying an affordable and stable investment are coming to an end.â

The Atlantic published â Why Its Better To Rent Than Ownâ in March. Financial pages from Business Insider to Forbes to Yahoo and Bloomberg again are filled with lists titled â 9 Ways Renting is Better Than Buyingâ , or similar.

Other publications go more personal with it, with anecdotal columns about ignoring financial advice and refusing to buy your home. Vox, never one to sell their agenda with any kind of subtlety, have a piece titled: "Homeownership can bring out the worst in you"
Which literally argues that buying a house can make you a bad person: "Itâ s the biggest thing you might ever buy. And it could be turning you into a bad person."

So what exactly is the narrative here? Whatâ s the story behind the story?

The short answer is fairly simple: Itâ s about greed, and itâ s about control.

It almost always is, in the end.

The longer answer is rather more complicated. Major investment firms such as Vanguard and Blackrock, along with rental companies such as American Homes 4 Rent, are buying up single-family homes in record numbers â sometimes entire neighbourhoods at a time.
They pay well over market value, pricing families who want to own those homes out of the market, which forces the housing market up whilst the Lockdown-created recession is lowering wages and creating millions of newly unemployed.

Of course, this is motivating people to sell the houses they already own.

People all across America have been saddled with houses worth less than they bought them for since the 2008 economic crash, and are eager to take the cash from private investment firms paying 10-20% over market value. Combine an economic recession with a created housing boom and you have a huge population of motivated sellers.

Of course, many of these sellers donâ t realise, until itâ s too late, that even if they attempt to downsize or move to a cheaper area, they may be priced out of the market completely, and forced to rent.

As such, in the last year, the private investment share of single-family home purchases is estimated to have increased ten-fold, going from 2% in 2018 to over 20% this year.

As more and more people are forced to rent, of course, rental properties will be in higher and higher demand. This in turn will drive the cost of renting up.

Market Watch has already reported that, in the last year, rent has increased over 3x faster than the government predicted.
This problem is likely to get worse in the near future.

Congress â accidentally failedâ to extend the Covid-related eviction ban.

Which means, this weekend, while Senators adjourn to the summer homes they probably donâ t rent, the ban will officially end and a lot of people are likely to have their houses foreclosed or their landlords kick them out.

The newly empty buildings will be a feeding frenzy for the massive corporate landlords. Who will descend on the banks like starving hyenas to snap up the foreclosed properties for pennies on the dollar. Just like they did in 2008.

None of this is any secret, itâ s been covered in the mainstream. Tucker Carlson even did a segment on it in early June.

The Wall Street Journal headlined, back in April, â If You Sell a House These Days, the Buyer Might Be a Pension Fundâ , and reported:
Yield-chasing investors are snapping up single-family homes, competing with ordinary Americans and driving up prices
However, since then, something has clearly changed. The propaganda machine has kicked into gear to defend Wall Street from any backlash.

No better example of this shift can be found than The Atlantic, which ran this story in 2019: WHEN WALL STREET IS YOUR LANDLORD
With help from the federal government, institutional investors became major players in the rental market. They promised to return profits to their investors and convenience to their tenants. Investors are happy. Tenants are not.
â ¦and this story last month: BLACKROCK IS NOT RUINING THE US HOUSING MARKET, The real villain isnâ t a faceless Wall Street Goliath; itâ s your neighbors and local governments stopping the construction of new units.

Going back to the Vox well we have: "Wall Street isnâ t to blame for the chaotic housing market" Which ran just a few days after the Atlantic article, and is practically identical.

Both these (oddly similar) articles argue that Wall Street and private equity firms canâ t be blamed for buying up houses, and that the real problem is the lack of supply to meet demand.

You see, all the â selfishâ people who already own homes (they did say it makes you a bad person) are blocking the construction of new houses, and thus driving up the cost of property through scarcity.

This has been a logically flawed argument around the housing market for decades.

That there arenâ t enough houses for people to buy is patently absurd when the US census data says that there are over 15 million houses currently standing empty. Thatâ s enough to house all of Americaâ s roughly 500,000 homeless people 30x over.
Thereâ s plenty of houses, thereâ s just not enough money to buy them.

The reason for that is the same reason the California has massive â homeless campsâ in its major cities, and that so many people are having to become renters instead of owners: wage stagnation.

For decades now, wage increases have lagged behind increases in the cost of living. In the 1960s one full-time job could afford a decent standard of living for a family of four or more. These days both parents work, sometimes multiple jobs each.

It was huge amounts of financial de-regulation which created this situation. So, whether you believe Voxâ s BlackRock apologia or not, one way or another Wall Street very definitely is to blame.

But this isnâ t just about money. It never is. Just as the war on cash isnâ t just about efficiency, and the environmental push isnâ t just about climate change. Ditto veganism. Itâ s about control. Just like vaccines, lockdowns and masks.

It always comes down to control.

Itâ s an oft-used cliche, but no less true for that, that homeowning â gives people a stake in societyâ . A family-owned house is a source of security for the future and something to leave your children. It is also sovereignty and privacy. Your own space that no one else can control or take away.

In short: A homeowner is independent. A renter is not. A renter can be controlled. A homeowner can not.

Itâ s the same reasoning behind the way working people were encouraged to take out loans and become debt slaves. If you limit peopleâ s options, if you make them rely on you for a roof over their heads, you have control over them.

Thereâ s a great article about this situation called â Your New Feudal Overlordsâ .

Under Feudalism, land wasnâ t owned by the working class, but provided to them by landed barons, hence the term â Land Lordâ . If you disrespected your Lord, or broke his rules, or he perceived another peasant/farm animal/crop would be a better use of the land, he could take it back.

Essentially, the behaviour of serfs was kept in check by their reliance on the nobility for a place to live. Thatâ s very much the dynamic theyâ re going for here.

Rental agreements can be full of any terms and conditions the landlord wants, and the more desperate people get the more of their consumer rights they will sign over.

Maybe youâ ll agree to smart meters which monitor your internet or power-usage habits, and then sell the data to behavioural modellers and viral marketers.

Maybe youâ ll have to agree to certain power limitations or water shortages in order to â fight climate changeâ .
Maybe it will get worse than that.

Maybe theyâ ll go full Black Mirror style corporate dystopia. Maybe, through affiliation programs, the mega-equity firm which owns your rental house has ties to McDonaldâ s, and as such will require you to not eat at any competing fast-food franchises, or demand you observe at least ninety seconds of Disney advertisements per day.

Maybe it will be as simple as including vaccine status in the tenancy agreement, making it impossible for the unvaxxed to find a home.

Maybe they just want to make poor people miserable.

After all, the super-wealthy have got all the money they could ever need, and all the luxury they could ever use. Their living standards are as high as physically possible. So maybe the only way they can keep â winningâ , is to start driving the living standards of us proles down.

No air travel. No vacations. No going out at all. Live in a tiny house, or a pod. Eat bugs. Get rid of your car. Rent your clothes. Or your furniture. Pay taxes on sugar. And alcohol. And red meat.

Theyâ ve been very clear about this. Theyâ ve told you about the Great Reset and the Internet of Things. Thatâ s the plan.
You wonâ t own a house. And youâ ll be happyâ ¦or else the mega-corporation youâ re forced to rent from will kick you out.

The lenders said that Wall Street Conglomerates and investment corporations are coming in right behind the California fires and buying up all the fixer uppers and chunks of homes so that individuals cant get them. The contractors that made money flipping homes are saying they can't get enough fixer uppers any more. The lenders also said that "the lenders market is only looking at these $1.5M home deals where people are overbidding $200K or more".

There are two conglomerates that already have people on the ground in South Lake Tahoe and Southern Oakland making cash offers for properties, US Bank told us. We can build a nice house for about $100K. We have done such nice ones in the past that they were on TV. Access to housing in the county is being limited by the conglomerates and banks and the push by lenders to keep the over-priced housing market going for as long as possible. Alameda County and All East Bay counties should make these people buy houses for low income and seniors since they are stealing all of the homes in the area:

https://nypost.com/2020/07/18/corporations-are-buying-houses-robbing-families-of-american-dream/

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/magazine/wall-street-landlords.html

https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/02/single-family-landlords-wall-street/582394/

https://www.wsj.com/articles/wall-street-cant-get-enough-fixer-upper-houses-11631007001

Public Comments from Readers:

- This is an excellent article which should be blatantly obvious to all by now: Blackstone/BlackRock and the CCP are the major real estate owners â   this is the culmination of the 50-year long Rockefeller Plan, hatched by the meetings of Rockefeller and Mao and Zhou when Nixon and Kissinger, David Rockefellerâ   s minions, flew to Beijing with Rockefeller aboard Air Force One!
Blackstone Group â   founded with Rockefeller seed money by DRâ   s minion, Peter G. Peterson â   owned 30% of BlackRock which was spun off from the Blackstone Group â   who knows what their ownership is today?! In the 1970s Rockefeller and the Chicoms created the Rigged Market of Rigged Markets â   the control of capital/labor between these two economies, establishing them as the top 2 economies 50 years later â   eventually merging Wall Street and the CCP, which is exactly what happened! IT IS ALL ABOUT the ultra-concenetration of ownership â   welcome to the Global Neofeudalist State.

- Vanguard (privately owned) owns most shares of Blackrock as well as most of the other main players. Vanguard sits at the top of the pyramid of power and money and is THE big monopolist in this world. See this video
https://www.bitchute.com/video/QdbvR9Wn5HFU/

- If you donâ   t own real property, your economic security and independence is weakened. For the last 20 years Iâ   ve owned at least 2 places to live just for extra safety. At this time I have 3. But then Iâ   ve been a real estate investor for almost 50 years.

- Good analysis. Effectively, the US Constitution was Revolutionary because it made a statement that Individual Rights were going to be protected for everyone. In these Rights is understood the right to own, a key feature of real capitalism. But when we canâ   t make the difference anymore between Major Corporations and Government, and these mega corporations get into a complicit scheme to own everythingâ ¦our individual rights dissipate. Prior to the US revolution, Individual Rights were closely correlated with social status which is closely related to economic status. You just need to read the Plea (https://craigwright.net/blog/bitcoin-blockchain-tech/satoshi-and-the-sophists/) Mega elitists such as Craig Steven Wright, the fake Satochi Nakamoto and pretend Bitcoin creator, to understand to core of the Big Post Covid Resetâ ¦itâ   s running back to your life being a Privilege distributed by the State. In English, 2 words describe the core of our rights: Freedom and Liberty. One carries a exogenous dimension (Liberty), the other an
Endogenous one (Freedom). In the French language, there is no such nuance. And Liberty and Freedom are only LibertÃ© And it their dictum â   LibertÃ© Ã   galitÃ© FraternitÃ©â   , an Individual Rights incompetency arise. Because with these 3 words persists the idea that we are foremost a community before being Individuals, in line with a Matriarchal concept, but the Antitheses of the American Original vision. Is it surprising that Sarkozy promulgated laws which made it so that even in your House, what you say may be held against you. In France, if more than 3 persons in a house are talking, and that one is not a direct member of the family in the first degree, any hate speech articulated may send you in prison and get you a fineâ ¦No sanctity in the Household, even if you are the
owner.

- Manfred Max-Neef, the late â   Barefoot Economistâ   from Chile, who lectured at UC Berkeley, said 5 or 10 years ago that USAmerica was the 1st â   Undeveloping Nationâ   and cited formerly affluent homeowners living in vans at the curbside of their foreclosed mansions. An analogue to this, for â   dotâ   collectors, is what Alan Watts called over 50 years ago â   the Los Angelization of the worldâ   (himself an L. A. resident, and as a bonus fun fact, interviewed my old man, a profoundly corporatist lawyer â   ecjlaw.com â   for his services, in 1969, and declined them, despite an intro from his friend Laura Huxley).
Both the LosAngelization of the World and Undevelopment are sorry symptoms of the same disease of Organized Greed, without an apparent immune system or other remedy in most societies, since Intel is busily employed with its vast armies of termites to eviscerate all these structures, many ages old.
The controlled demolition of our societies and cultures goes on apace, with accelerants of salivating

covetousness, institutionalized sins. I myself have always preferred the nomadic way, the street, rich with the opportunities for unconventional wisdom, such as contented any number of native peoples here in USA, before having even their tribal roots and networks here largely deracinated and decimated by â settlersâ . And, even more so, â developersâ . All as a fairly recent development into this Age of Undevelopment. I met a guy 50 miles down the coast near the seaside in Bucanneer Park, Oceanside, north San Diego County. We talked a long time one sunny day, he told me from the front seat of his high end Lexus luxury model how he had been living there in his car with his cat for three years, after losing his mansion with custom swimming pool. He had little street savvy and I cringed while he told me, with childlike naivetÃ©, stories of being mistreated by all the usual suspects, health agencies, other street people, and on and on. I tried to warn him, seeing one gnarly red flag after another, but it went in one ear and out the other, from what I could tell.

- Here in the US, the CDC mandated a policy to prohibit eviction of renters for 1 year (that has just now expired). Many landlords sustained huge financial losses or bankruptcy as their renters became squatters. What this might portend for our biowarfare future is the squeezing of individual/small group rental property ownership using onerous regulation, a lack of access to financing, etc. to foster the consolidation of rental property by mega/global corporations who will seamlessly align with any and all tenets of The Great Reset.

- Do they not fear that creating a population that owns nothing, that population also have nothing to lose?

- Why doesnâ t anyone discuss zero to negative interest rates ? Why has this unprecedented phenomenon been pushed by the banksters ?

- In America, the government owns your home even if you pay the banksters off. Donâ t pay your property tax and out on the street you go.

- Iâ ve given this a lot of thought over the last dozen years. And done a lot of research too. It is one of the most important mechanisms of transforming middle-class life into out and out serfdom in America, this taking away the possibility of home ownership. First they went after the millennials, by way of impossible levels of student debt (so they couldnâ t buy a house), then they worked on the problem of what to do about the existing tens of millions of homeowners. Private equity entered into the picture big-time and since then has been at it relentlessly. Basically, it is not possible for any normal middle-class person to buy a home in any desirable part of the country (and increasingly even the less desirable, more remote and inaccessible parts), because you canâ t compete with the endless cash resources of private equity. The article is very right, and I have had the same thesis in mind for many years: homeownership provides a form of security, a political voice that comes from power, that the new feudal lords have to get rid of at any cost. And theyâ ve succeeded without any noise.

-IT IS ALL ownership â - not just home ownership! Who owns the banks? In a study of the Rockefeller Financial Group back in the early 1970s by Prof. James Knowles (impossible to find now, although once frquently found in other book citations), Prof. Knowles wrote that the owners of the banks was a carefully guarded secret. Once upon a time we knew. Recall that the original primary investors in Intel, Apple and Microsoft was the Rockefller family â who are the principal investors today â not the investment firms of BlackRock, Vanguard, State Street, etc., but those investing through them??? NOBODY KNOWS!

- â No property rights for private citizensâ ? Why so stalinist? Itâ s not necessary at all. They will just make us so poor, that we wonâ t be able to own anything of relevance, everything courtesy of free market inclusive capitalism. https://qz.com/work/1942727/pope-francis-backs-the-council-for-inclusive-capitalism/ They are well on track, today this is home, in few years you wonâ t be able to afford an electric car, carbon indulgences will impoverish us furtherâ ¦ People will have tooth brush and clothes of their Choice. And be happy, yeaaaa

- â ¦Where thereâ s *Rent* there are *Rentiers*â ¦â The Cantillon effect..The Cantillon effect was

explained by Richard Cantillon (1680s â 1734) an Irish-French economist and author of â Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en GÃ©nÃ©ralâ (Essay on the Nature of Trade in General). In his Essay, Cantillon provided an advanced version the quantity theory of money, however he also dug deeper and perceptively into the relative inflation associated with the introduction, circulation and velocity of money. He explained that the original recipients of new money enjoy higher standards of living at the expense of later recipients. This is because of inflation in asset prices e.g. affecting house prices and rents and as a result of time lags impacted by a disproportionate relative inflation in prices of assets and goods decreasing value of money in the hands of non-asset holding individuals i.e. the majority. These concepts of relative inflation, or a differential rise in prices among different goods in an economy, is now known as the Cantillon effect. The Cantillon effect has two components. One is the impact of new money on differential inflation rates between assets and consumption items and, the other, is the real incomes and wealth effects that result in an increasing disparity in incomes and wealth within the country. Under QE this effect has been extreme because banks short-circuited money distribution largely to themselves and a reduced number of large corporate customers to deal in assets and share buy backs. It is self-evident that if rentiers maintain a gowth in income that is ifnlation proof the state of theri real income will constantly rise. However, this is not the case of the state of real incomes for an increasing majority of the population. This Bank of England â policyâ has done little to help the conditions of the working population which is becoming increasingly asset-less. This mechansim constraining asset access and accumulation by the majority is a driver of an inevitable future increasing inequality.â
â The nature of asset-derived incomeâ ¦Thostein Veblen identified the problems we now face, back in 1921, well before the 1929 New York Stock Exchange crash, when he examined trends in financialisation and the growth in the rentier class in manufacturing and industry. Financialization is the process whereby all economic considerations are reduced to a nominal financial quantification usually measured in the local currency or expressed in a common currency by applying exchange rates. The crucial problem with financialization is that what appear to be distinct policies or even schools of thought, such as Keynesianism or Monetarism, and supply side economics are in fact questions of emphasis on which aspect of financialization is more significant as a policy target. These are aggregate demand (expressed as a quantified monetary aggregate) or money supply (expressed as a quantified monetary aggregate). Increasingly economic activities involve so-called financial engineering where the manipulation of numbers substitutes for real production or services where income is received in return for little effort beyond the holding of some asset which generates an income from those who make use of the asset. This has created a major financial services activity that is made up of Ã¼ber-rentiers.â â ¦(Emphasis mineâ ¦) http://www.realincomes.org.uk/classdivstab.htm
â ¦Now tell me, whatâ s *Wrong* with *This* picture?â ¦ â Note the 2008-2020 QE â rampâ , then note the 2020-2021 *Spike*â ¦ â Then further note the L/H scale is in 1,000s of Billions, ie: *Trillions* (â ¦Pic from University of Michiganâ s Federal Reserve Economic Database, sourced from this article: https://www.zerohedge.com/political/heres-why-new-covid-relief-program-will-turn-working-class-serfs):â ¦
â ¦US M1 Money Supply, 1960-2021: (â ¦Q: â Now just *Where* do yâ all think pretty much *Alla* that *Went* (and subsequently *Stayed Put*)?â ¦)

- First time commenting here. Today I just couldnâ t stand. Iâ ve checked the whole article and comments for instances of â capitaliâ .
Until now just 4 instances, not a one in article. Horror!!! No wonder we are in deep shit, since knowledge of who is banging us from behind is almost literally absent. Century+ years ago Marx predicted, capitalism will end in monopoly capitalism and that is exactly what we are experiencing now. They will buy everything, they will control everything. Sadly, even majority of the â leftâ would probably not agree with me on this point, because they believe monopoly capitalism happened during robber barons times. Never mind that concentration of capital today is unprecedented and is just increasing. And when I hear lamenting about feudalismâ ¦â ¦.I donâ t know whether to be sad or angry. From article: â The short answer is fairly simple: Itâ s about greed, and itâ s about control. â
Sure, control, power, no doubt. But greedâ ¦..Invoking greed is completely useless psychologization. Itâ s excellent time for an adage, one profane and profound: Why a dog is licking his balls? Because he is able to, because he can!!!! No bs about he likes it orâ ¦â ¦ability is first. Therefore the right question is: What is the

basis that allows today monopolists to grab? I havenâ t been precise enough in the third line from the end. Itâ s not just that ability is first, it is a necessary condition. To rephrase the final question, a million dollar question, not a rhetorical question, for most people is unfortunately like to ask what 42 means and I predict I wonâ t get the right answer: What is the ultimate necessary condition for monopolistsâ grabbing???

- The investor class has a powerful ally (as if we didnâ t know that) in the FHA in the US. Example: the condo community I live in now has so many rentals that the FHA will not approve a loan. Since these are lower end condos, FHA loan approval is absolutely crucial for a prospective buyer. Consequently, one has almost no choice but to sell to an investor â who is able to pay cash.
They got you coming and going.

- Yup. Ban ownership all non-resident owned property, along with the existence of all forms of corporate stock ownership, and the â rentalâ problem resolves in a flash. Of course no one backs these logical remedies, because theyâ re invested in IMF and World Bank controlled portfolios and pension funds. Whoâ s zoominâ who?

- Some guy in libya did it once, does anyone remember what happened to him? Muammar al Ghadafi.
â Today there is swine flu. Perhaps tomorrow there will be fish flu, because sometimes we produce viruses by controlling them. It is a commercial business. Capitalist companies produce viruses so that they can generate and sell vaccinations. That is very shameful and poor ethics. Vaccinations and medicine should not be sold,â he said. He went on to say that â medicines should be free of charge and vaccinations given free to children, but capitalist companies produce the viruses and vaccinations and want to make a profit. Why are they not free of charge? We should give them free of charge, and not sell them.â Muammar Gaddafi Speech To United Nations - September 23, 2009

- Sure our equally faux Govt will soon roll out this horror show too:
https://www.rt.com/usa/530813-eviction-blackrock-great-reset/

- Hello everyone! Re: Housing market in cities. Its fckin scandalous whatâ s going on in cities throughout the world. Average people who work damned hard for their barely minimum wages canâ t get the mortgages to afford to buy at even the bottom end of the market in the cities they were born in. They canâ t save enough for a deposit cos the prices are constantly rising. Private rentals are through the roof and there is a very, very long waiting list for cheaper, social housing. This is an excellent documentary I saw on TV not so long ago. Sorry I canâ t find a link for the whole film.The situation has gotten even worse since this film was made in 2019. â Pushâ 2019 trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iLWpuZrd-I
â Landlords without faces. Apartments without renters. A documentary exploring the new, unlivable city. Housing prices are skyrocketing in cities worldwide. Incomes are not. The working and middle classes are getting pushed out of cities, while financial powerhouses use housing as a place to park money. PUSH is a documentary from award-winning director Fredrik Gertten, investigating why we canâ t afford to live in our own cities anymore. We follow UN Special Rapporteur on Housing, Leilani Farha, on her quest to understand whoâ s getting squeezed, whoâ s getting rich and why housing has become one of todayâ s most pressing world issues? â The film had its World Premiere at CPH:DOX, 2019, where it won the coveted Audience Award.

- I donâ t know how wonderful a mortgage is. My darling ex paid for it for a while. Though as a migrant DownUnder coming from Berlin about 75% rent. The way the city council adminsters a quarter of a million buildings means rent doesnâ t kill life off as it does in similar sized anglo amerikanized cities like Sydney, which mortgage as the con to freedom when you are almost dead means no life before you get there. Saving for the deposit for instance at a time when you are twenty something should be spent getting ripped into life. Conconvid 19-33 or not. Sitting nowhere to save every penny because you known when youâ re old blah blah blah leaves no money to get into life. Which is perhaps what the politicians want. As they are proving with the lock up regime of no choice. Furthermore oneâ s money ought if possible to be invested in you choice so that with a better saving amount nationally foreign take overs will less than more. In Australia is it basically non existent. No one invests in anything. When Darwin harbour was up for the 99 yr lease no Australian firm, company or investors stepped up because the money was wasted in non productive real estate. The Chinese won the contract. Now the government is complaining that this is the Chinese Governments infiltration of Australia. Well almost. Implied. Apart from nearly all production DownUnder is US, UK, Holland and then EU, Japan in minerals mainly. The Chinese have stopped buying coal and Russian tenders have won some contracts. If the locals put their money where their mouths were theyâ d have more local ownership. A mortgage is not a life. Though the banks are laughing without having to try it on to get your life signed away for the next quarter of century â spent doing nothing cause you got no money. Most inner cities compared to other societies here are basically lame.

- â ¦Calling â em Vampires would be granting them a generous romanticism/glamour that they *Do Not* deserveâ ¦ â Straight-up-and-down *Leeches* is what they are, in point of factâ ¦ â ¦- *Life-Sucking Leeches*â ¦

- Two phenomena are occurring in parallel, at least here in Canada. On the one hand, in the cities, what we call â renovictionsâ are multiplying and throwing hundreds of families out on the street who canâ t find new housing. New landlords like Blackrock are buying up apartment blocks and shortly afterwards send eviction letters to tenants because major renovation work is needed. These renovations often involve cutting the number of units in a building by half and turning them into deluxe apts. Current tenants canâ t afford and, as a result, many people are looking for new housing and prices are skyrocketing. On the other hand, more financially comfortable people, mostly retired baby boomers with good pensions, are buying second and third homes in the countryside, which has pushed up house prices by 20-40% in a few months. Add to this refurbishing of of primary residences and their new second homes, which is driving up the price of lumber and creating shortages. In addition, covid-19 has created a buying frenzy: cars, RVs, motorcycles, electric bikes, boats, etc., itâ s completely crazy. Everything is going up except the inflation rate. People are living like thereâ s no tomorrow. Maybe theyâ re right. Personally I see a gloomy tomorrow.
Thereâ s also dire staff shortages in every sector. Things are not looking good and expect tribulations before owning nothing and being happy.

- â itâ s completely crazy. Everything is going up except the inflation rate. People are living like thereâ s no tomorrow. Maybe theyâ re right. Personally I see a gloomy tomorrow.â â ¦.. Yes Jean, Iâ ve been discussing this craziness with friends for quite a while now. Zero % interest rates on regular savings accounts, so people are being coerced into â investingâ with any extra cash they may have. The stock markets and housing markets are booming it seems. Mortgage rates have been at an all time low for years.
If (or more likely when) there is a massive crash it will be the small â investorsâ who will suffer after naively risking all their hard-earned savings. It may be quite lucrative for some right now, but I donâ t see how it can carry on like this. This surely canâ t be a sign of a healthy economyâ ¦.or maybe it is,but only for wealthy people. I donâ t know.

- A book called The Thought Experiment shows the quantum outcome of changing these things using thought patterning of the masses that Google and Facebook use every second of every day: 1) Obfuscation: Just basic confusion of one thing for another- a smoke and mirrors game. 2) World View Poisoning: Conditioning the way people view human nature and their own self-value. 3) Conditioning of Primal Fear: The exploitation of primal fears. 4) Divide and Conquer Strategy: Highlight any perceived differences between people and then exploit those differences to create infighting so they are easier to control and conquer. 5) Indoctrination of Education System: A left brain form of Nazis called it mastery learning. grade school, HS and university. Trivium and quadrivium education could counteract this. 6) Controlled Opposition: Basic dialectics - dialectical mechanics or Hegelianism Creating conflict that you already have an outcome management system for. Create the conflict and wait for a type of reaction to the conflict (usually chaotic that demands a resolution) and then you step in and resolve it. Artificial conflict resolution. 7) Monetary System of Control: Debt based fiat currency fractional reserve banking a system of illusion that we call money yet people believe in it like its a religion or god. People seem to be the most powerless to come out of. It exists purely in the mind. 8) Control of Mass Media: If you can control the info that people get to see hear and read you control their perception of reality. If you limit the scope of what they can take into their minds and awareness you limit their possibilities of solutions. Human perception management. 9) Food and Medicine: attack on the physical aspects of the body relates to how our brain development goes. You affect thought and consciousness you are what you eat. Use techniques that are damaging to consciousness through the modern medical system 10) Illusion of Time: Very important for people to grasp. Play on people's seeming inability to live in true present moment awareness-- getting people to live in regret over the past or anxiety over the future. Its a fear based technique. Takes us out of true present awareness. Being fully present now to take on what is happening now. If our consciousness can be manipulated into always looking into what has happened. It takes away effectiveness of dealing with the current situation. 11) The DHR Factor: Denial, Hassle, Ridicule: What other people perceive about you. Denial, hassle ridicule factor. Things are fine the way they are I don't want to rock the boat because I may have to deal with hassle of other people. The hassle free zone is-- I don't want all the uncomfortable aspects of life that come with standing up for truth. These are all fear based. Heightening those three forms of mental instability. Trap of inactivity and not really doing anything to make things better. 12) Religion: We need to understand these last three the best. Religion is a form of binding. To tie back Re-Ligare tying back. Forms of modern religion are mind control based on astro-theology. Giving people an exoteric version of something that was once esoteric or internal. Government is the binding on the left brain... religion is the binding of the right brain. 13) Use of Subversive Symbolism: Based on ancient sacred symbolism. Based on symbols that have been with us from antiquity. Solar symbolism, life force symbols, energy, blood, or anything we need for existence and life. They use these in modern institutions--- banks, police, media, stores. We're drenched in it. Basic symbols have a powerful psychic influence. They can speak to us without words. A wordless form of communication. Connects to occultism. 14) Problem-Reaction-Solution (Chaos Sorcery): A mass demonstration or a public display of the dark aspects of the Hegelian dialectic. Hegelian dialectic can be used in a positive or negative sense. Chaos sorcery or false flag terrorism. This is ritual magic being used openly in the light of day. You are creating a chaotic situation in the light of day and you know it will elicit an extreme reaction of fear and chaos that demands order be brought as soon as possible. You are manipulating the fear in the limbic system-- people are not in a state that they can reason. They are demanding solutions purely out of emotions. They are in a reactive mode of consciousness. They want the outcome of the game known before the game is played. Interject chaos, you know the reaction its going to cause and you know. A leap in consciousness will subvert this technique. This technique works over and over again. Humanity won't wake up. 9-11 was chaos sorcery.

- The astronomical prices for houses in the USA is caused almost 100% by the Fed buying a minimum of $40 billion a month in mortgage backed securities, the very instruments responsible for the GFC of 2008. Hard to make this shit up. For those who are not familiar with them, the banks make Ninja loans to deadbeats, then they immediately sell them to the Wall Street megabanks, who package them together as MBS. In 2008 the megabanks sold them to brain dead bureaucrats who run pension funds around the world. Now even they are to wary to buy them, so the Fed just prints the money out of thin air and buys them, adding them to their exponentially growing balance sheet. â Give me control of a nationâ s money and I care not who makes the laws.â ~ Mayer Amschel Rothschild [Mayer Amschel Bauer] (1744 -1812), Godfather of the Rothschild Banking Cartel of Europe

- Fed: "Thatâ s a nice housing market you have there. Be a shame if somethinâ happened to it." They did much the same early last year when they helpfully stepped in with generous loans to the flailing paper industry. The dread virus locked everyone up, paper usage took a tumble, the fed issued loans and bought up tumbling bonds, the year moved on and things re-opened, the fed sells back the bonds at interest PLUS gets the interest from the ongoing loans. Rinse, repeat, forever.

- US Federal Reserve provided over $16 trillion in financial assistance to some of the largest financial institutions and businesses, in USA and abroad, a clear case of socialism for the rich. â Bernie Sanders, 2011. Our investigation reveals that Federal Reserve provided at least $29.6 trillion in aid. Only one of these facilities, amounting to 12.9%, was within its mandate to protect the commercial banking system. The rest was an attempt to rescue the shadow banking sector, which is highly leveraged and hardly regulated or supervised. â Andrew Felkerson & Nicola Matthews, 2011

Tagged with: Atlantic, BlackRock, Economics, finance, guardian, home ownership, renting, the new normal, Vanguard,

MACHINE BIAS

Facebook (Still) Letting Housing Advertisers Exclude Users by Race

After ProPublica revealed last year that Facebook advertisers could target housing ads to whites only, the company announced it had built a system to spot and reject discriminatory ads. We retested and found major omissions.

by Julia Angwin, Ariana Tobin and **Madeleine Varner**

Nov. 21, 1:23 p.m. EST

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Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks in San Jose, California, in October 2016. (David Paul Morris/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

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MACHINE BIAS

Investigating Algorithmic Injustice

In February, Facebook said it would step up enforcement of its prohibition against discrimination in advertising for housing, employment or credit.

But our tests showed a significant lapse in the companyâ s monitoring of the rental market.

Last week, ProPublica bought dozens of rental housing ads on Facebook, but asked that they not be shown to certain categories of users, such as African Americans, mothers of high school kids, people interested in wheelchair ramps, Jews, expats from Argentina and Spanish speakers.

All of these groups are protected under the federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to publish any advertisement â with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.â Violators can face tens of thousands of dollars in fines.

Every single ad was approved within minutes.

The only ad that took longer than three minutes to be approved by Facebook sought to exclude potential renters â interested in Islam, Sunni Islam and Shia Islam.â It was approved after 22 minutes.

Under its own policies, Facebook should have flagged these ads, and prevented the posting of some of them. Its failure to do so revives questions about whether the company is in compliance with federal fair housing rules, as well as about its ability and commitment to police discriminatory advertising on the worldâ s largest social network.

Facebookâ s advertising portal lets users choose their audiences based on specific traits, demographics and behavior profiles. Our ad for an apartment rental excluded African Americans, Asian Americans and Spanish-speaking Hispanic audiences. It was approved in under a minute.

Housing, employment and credit are the three areas in which federal law prohibits discriminatory ads. However, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development â the agency responsible for enforcing fair housing laws â told us that it has closed an inquiry into Facebookâ s advertising policies, reducing pressure on the company to address the issue. In a 2015 newspaper column, Ben Carson, now HUD secretary, criticized â government-engineered attempts to legislate racial equalityâ in housing.

Facebookâ s failure to police discriminatory rental ads flies in the face of its promises in February that it would no longer approve ads for housing, employment or credit that targeted racial categories. For advertising aimed at audiences not selected by race, Facebook said it would require housing, employment and credit advertisers to â self-certifyâ that their ads were compliant with anti-discrimination laws.

Based on Facebookâ s announcement, the ads purchased by ProPublica that were aimed at racial categories should have been rejected. The others should have prompted a screen to pop up asking for self-certification. We never encountered a self-certification screen, and none of our ads were rejected by Facebook.

â This was a failure in our enforcement and weâ re disappointed that we fell short of our commitments,â Ami Vora, vice president of product management at Facebook, said in an emailed statement. â The rental housing ads purchased by ProPublica should have but did not trigger the extra review and certifications we put in place due to a technical failure.â

Vora added that Facebookâ s anti-discrimination system had â successfully flagged millions of adsâ in the credit, employment and housing categories and that Facebook will now begin requiring self-certification for ads in all categories that choose to exclude an audience segment. â Our systems continue to improve but we can do better,â Vora said.

About 37 percent of U.S. households rented in 2016, representing a 50-year high, according to the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. On average, renters earn about half as much as homeowners, and the percentage of families with children that rent rather than buy has increased sharply in the past decade, the study said. Minority renters have long faced pervasive housing discrimination. A 2013 study by HUD found that real estate agents show more units to whites than to African Americans, Asians and Latinos.

Facebook has long been a popular destination for rental listings, on pages hosted by real estate brokers, property owners and building managers. Earlier this month, Facebook announced that it had added two large providers of rental listings to its Facebook Marketplace service. â Marketplace is a popular place for people to look for a home to rent,â Facebook product manager Bowen Pan said in a press release.

Facebook warns rental advertisers in its Marketplace section that â listings that discriminate against a protected class can be reported and will be removed from Facebook.â

Facebookâ s anti-discrimination initiative was prompted by an article published last year by ProPublica. For that story, we bought a Facebook ad targeting house hunters. We were able to use Facebookâ s features to block the ad from being shown to anyone with an â affinityâ for African American, Asian American or Hispanic people. Our ability to narrow the audience based on race raised the question of whether such ads violated the Fair Housing Act.

After ProPublicaâ s article appeared in the fall of 2016, HUD, then under the Obama administration, began examining Facebookâ s practices. Facebook then said it would build an automated system to spot ads that discriminate illegally. â We take these issues seriously,â Facebook Vice President Erin Egan wrote in a blog post. â Discriminatory advertising has no place on Facebook.â

Read More

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Facebook Lets Advertisers Exclude Users by Race

Facebookâ s system allows advertisers to exclude black, Hispanic, and other â ethnic affinitiesâ from seeing ads.

In February, Facebook announced it had built its system and was rolling it out. The press lauded the announcement: â Facebook cracks down on ads that discriminateâ was the Washington Postâ s headline.

Facebook has been under fire for other aspects of its automated ad buying system as well. Two months ago, the company disclosed that it had discovered $100,000 worth of divisive political ads placed by â inauthenticâ Russian accounts. And in September, ProPublica reported that Facebookâ s ad targeting system allowed buyers to reach people who identified themselves as â Jew hatersâ and other anti-Semitic categories. Facebook pledged to remove the offending categories and to hire thousands more employees to enforce its ad policies.

â Weâ re adding additional layers of review where people use potentially sensitive categories for targeting,â Facebook General Counsel Colin Stretch said during Senate testimony earlier this month.

After Stretchâ s public statement, we wondered whether the ability to buy discriminatory housing ads had really been addressed. So we set out to buy an advertisement with the exact same targeting parameters as the ad we bought last year. The ad promoted a fictional apartment for rent and was targeted at people living in New York, ages 18â 65, who were house hunting and likely to move. We asked Facebook not to show the ad to people categorized under the â multicultural affinityâ of Hispanic, African American or Asian American.

(ProPublica generally forbids impersonation in news gathering. We felt in this instance that the public interest in Facebookâ s ad system justified the brief posting of a fake ad for non-existent housing. We deleted each ad as soon as it was approved.)

The only changes from last year that we could identify in Facebookâ s ad buying system was that the category called â Ethnic Affinityâ had been renamed â Multicultural Affinityâ and was no longer part of â Demographics.â It is now designated as part of â Behaviors.â

Our ad was approved within minutes.

Left: A screenshot of ad targeting categories ProPublica submitted and Facebook approved in 2016. Right: Categories ProPublica submitted and were approved in 2017, raising questions about what the social network has done to police discriminatory ads.

Then we decided to test whether we could purchase housing ads that discriminated against other protected categories of people under the Fair Housing Act.

We placed ads that sought to exclude members of as many of the protected categories as we could find in Facebookâ s self-service advertising portal. In addition to those mentioned above, we bought ads that were blocked from being shown to â soccer moms,â people interested in American sign language, gay men and Christians.

We also tested whether it was possible to use geography as a way to target racial groups â a practice known as redlining. We bought a housing ad that targeted ZIP codes in Brooklyn whose residents are more than 50 percent non-Hispanic white people, according to the U.S. Census bureau. By definition, that meant the ad was not shown to Facebook users living in Brooklyn neighborhoods where minorities are a majority of the residents.

Facebook drew blue lines around our target neighborhoods and told us our â audience selection is great!â It approved the ad.

Filed under:

- Civil Rights

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Facebook And Google caused the Bay Areaâ s housing shortage while pretending to be social saviors

JEFF DURHAM/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

By Marisa Kendall

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48%

of those polled say tech companies are a major reason for the Bay Area's housing shortage, and in the same pollâ ¦

57%

say that developers are a major reason

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VERYONE HAS A THEORY about whoâ s to blame for the housing shortage thatâ s driving up prices and chasing Bay Area families out of the region.

A new poll offers surprising insights into where most of us point the finger: not at the government officials who control what homes are built where, but at the tech companies that have flooded this region with jobs and the real estate developers trying to maximize profits.

Experts say finding someone to blame is not that simple. The real answer, they say, lies entangled in a complicated web that implicates everyone involved, from businesses to local elected officials to your next door neighbor. And the stakes are high for policy makers trying to untangle that web as the housing crisis intensifies. To solve the problem, itâ s crucial to understand the factors that turned the Bay Areaâ s real estate market into one of the countryâ s most dysfunctional.

â There isnâ t one single sector to blame for the housing crisis,â said Pilar Lorenzana, deputy director of pro-affordable housing organization SV@Home, â and consequently there isnâ t one single sector thatâ s responsible for fixing it.â

In a five-county poll conducted for the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and this news organization, 48 percent of those surveyed pointed to tech companies as a major contributor to the regionâ s housing shortage. Only developers ranked higher, with 57 percent of residents saying they were a major factor.

â Before â Silicon Valleyâ got here, it was more affordable,â said 46-year-old microbiologist Megan Moore, who has lived in La Honda her whole life. â Itâ s great that there are so many jobs availableâ ¦but the lack of housing kind of unbalances it all.â

But some experts say city and state officials have far more control over the regionâ s supply of homes.

â People are not focused on the source of the problem when it comes to our housing shortage â if theyâ re blaming tech companies and developers, then theyâ re not showing up at our city council meetings,â said Ethan Elkind, director of UC Berkeley law schoolâ s climate program and an expert in land use and infrastructure policy. â Thatâ s where their attention should be focused.â

DAI SUGANO/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Construction for mixed-use residential and business project in Fremont.

Just 38 percent of survey respondents said local governments opposing new construction played a major role in the problem, while 28 percent pointed to the state government adding burdensome taxes and regulations to residential projects, and 19 percent blamed environmental groups attempting to block development.

Itâ s city officials who permit and approve, or reject and delay, new housing projects â and new housing is what the Bay Area needs to pull itself out of this crisis, most observers agree. Santa Clara and San Mateo counties together added about 47,000 jobs in 2017, while permitting just 12,000 new residential units, according to the Silicon Valley Index, an annual report released by Joint Venture Silicon Valleyâ s Institute for Regional Studies.

But while tech leaders might disagree, itâ s hard to argue that their industry â which accounted for 29 percent of new jobs from the second quarter of 2016 to the second quarter of 2017, according to the Silicon Valley Index â hasnâ t also played a major role in the housing crisis.

Part of the problem, said 58-year-old Mark Himelstein, is that the tech industry for years grew unchecked in Silicon Valley.

â We didnâ t have balance,â said Himelstein, a management consultant who owns a home in unincorporated San Mateo County and responded to the housing poll. â There was no relationship between the tech companiesâ hiring practices and hiring goals and funding lower-income housing opportunities.â

Himelstein would like to see companies work more closely with local cities and counties to fix the problem. For starters, he said, large companies should release data on their hiring plans â including how many people they are hiring, and their pay ranges â and then work with officials to plan housing for the new employees.

Even the techies themselves are quick to blame their employers for the housing shortage: Of the tech workers polled, 47 percent said technology companies are a major reason for the shortage, compared to 49 percent of nontech workers.

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COURTESY OF CITY OF MENLO PARK

In February, Facebook proposed to construct Willow Village near its headquarters in Menlo Park. At least 1,500 housing units (in pink) are planned.

More tech companies are stepping up as they realize the problem is impacting their bottom line, Lorenzana said. With the prohibitive cost of housing making it harder to recruit and retain workers, companies including Google, Facebook, LinkedIn and Cisco are contributing money and clout to building more housing. Another 100 tech leaders recently signed a letter supporting SB 827, which would lead to more housing development near transit hubs.

Thereâ s plenty more that tech companies can do, Lorenzana said, from donating money, to spearheading residential construction projects, to simply speaking out in favor of housing development.

â I think what youâ re seeing right now is tech and the private sector are finally understanding that this is an issue that is affecting their consumer base, and itâ s affecting their employees,â Lorenzana said. â And whether itâ s their job or not, there is a role for them to play.â

But tech companies canâ t conjure up more housing without city officials, who experts say can be reluctant to approve large-scale residential development projects, or can otherwise limit construction with rules that govern where projects can be built, how tall they can be and how much parking they must provide.

Brisbane city officials, for example, for years have resisted plans by Universal Paragon Corp. to build nearly 4,500 housing units on the Baylands former industrial site, only recently agreeing to consider allowing a fraction of that. In Cupertino, which approved Appleâ s massive new campus for 12,000 employees without any additional homes, housing advocates recently criticized Mayor Darcy Paul for saying the regionâ s housing shortage was â not dire.â Fed up with Cupertinoâ s approval process, Sand Hill Property Company recently used a new law, Senate Bill 35, to go over city officialsâ heads and propose a redevelopment plan for Vallco Mall that includes six times the number of housing units the city originally intended.

COURTESY OF SAND HILL PROPERTY COMPANY

Sand Hill Property recently submitted a new proposal to redevelop the old Vallco Mall in Cupertino. The plan includes 2,402 housing units as well as 1.8 million square feet of office space and a rooftop park.

25%

of those polled say NIMBY groups are a major reason for the Bay Area's housing shortage

â Theyâ ve been green-lighting office projects like crazy,â Elkind said of Bay Area cities, â but they donâ t care about where those workers are supposed to live.â

Some cities are making an effort to build more housing. Mountain View recently approved a Google-backed plan to build 10,000 new homes in North Bayshore, and San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo has proposed a plan to build 25,000 homes over the next five years.

Cupertino Vice Mayor Rod Sinks says city officials shouldnâ t shoulder all the blame for the Bay Areaâ s housing shortage.

â I recognize that the cities have a major responsibility for this, and we havenâ t generated enough housing,â he said. â On the other hand â ¦ it takes two to tango.â

Once the city approves housing, itâ s up to a developer to build it, Sinks said. And it can be challenging to find developers willing or able to step up. Housing projects are getting more expensive to build as construction costs rise, Sinks said, and itâ s more lucrative for developers to build office space or market-rate housing instead of affordable housing.

Itâ s also important to remember that citiesâ housing policies are largely a reflection of their constituents, including long-term residents with a â not in my backyard,â or NIMBY, attitude toward development, said Gary Painter, an economics professor at the University of Southern California who studies housing markets.

â Current residents are probably the source of a lot (of) blame,â Painter said. â They donâ t want newcomers to come in and change their quality of life, because theyâ ve already been here and established that.â

In the poll, just 25 percent of respondents said NIMBY groups play a major role in the Bay Areaâ s housing shortage.

State regulations have a hand in the problem too, experts say, by creating incentives for cities to favor commercial development over residential.

FIVE STEPS TO BUILDING RESIDENCES

Building large-scale residential projects can be boiled down into these five basic steps, according to developer Mark Rhoades of Rhoades Planning Group. He says a potential project can die at any one of these junctures.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Step 5

Step 1: Searching

A developer can't build a project without land to put it on, but finding a parcel of unused space at a reasonable price can be difficult in the Bay Area â where vacant lots are scarce and land costs are high.

Source: Developer Mark Rhoades of Rhoades Planning Group

JEFF DURHAM/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Many developers also blame the California Environmental Quality Act, a statute that imposes strict requirements on real estate projects to limit their environmental impact. Developers say residents also use CEQA to file lawsuits purely to delay projects and jack up construction costs. In the poll, 19 percent of people said environmental groups play a major role in the Bay Areaâ s housing issues.

DAI SUGANO/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Mark Rhoades, principal and CEO of Rhoades Planning Group

H-1B visa-reliant Cisco secured visas for foreign workers instead of hiring U.S. citizens But it's legal right? (mercurynews.com)

by rspix000 to news (**+3**|**-1**)

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HOW MONEY LAUNDERING AND POLITICAL BRIBERY USES REAL ESTATE FOR IT'S CRIMES

The 1933 Herbert Straus Sex Mansion -- No. 9 East 71st Street

Photo by Alice Lum

When Therese Kuhn married Herbert Nathan Straus on July 15, 1907, she became part of one of New Yorkâ s wealthiest merchant families. Herbert and his brother Percy were the sons of Isidor and Ida Straus of the R. H. Macy & Co. department store and the young men already had fortunes of their own. The following year Herbert purchased the first parcel of land in New Jersey which would grow into their sprawling 100-acre country estate, Middleton Farm.

Tragedy would strike in April four years later when Isidor and Ida Strauss set sail for New York upon the *H.M.S. Titanic.* As the ship slowly began to sank, the elderly Ida withdrew her foot from the lifeboat and turned to her husband. â Where you go I will go,â she said.

Idaâ s maid took her seat in the lifeboat as the aged couple sat quietly on deck chairs holding hands.

As the years passed Herbert Straus and his wife spent happy days in Middleton Farm; but what they lacked was a substantial Manhattan residence. Herbert began thinking about building a showplace.

East 71st Street just off Central Park in 1928 was lined with grand mansions. But it was also a time when most wealthy New Yorkers were giving up huge private homes in favor of luxurious apartments in modern buildings without the cost and bother of maintaining the houses .

On February 3 of that year it was announced that a syndicate had purchased six houses along East 71st to be replaced by a $5 million apartment building. Among them was the Edward H. Van Ingen mansion at No. 9. The Van Ingens had owned the house for decades.

When the ambitious apartment building plan fell through and the property became available once again, Herbert Straus snatched it up. He commissioned architect Horace Trumbauer of Philadelphia to design a 40-room French Renaissance palace. A few other millionaires were building new mansions simultaneouslyâ Virginia Graham Fair Vanderbilt, William Goadby Loew and George F. Baker, for instance.

It was a carefree time when money flowed freely and every common Joe played the stock market. But those times were about to come crashing down.

The Straus home was meant to reflect taste, elegance and wealth. Europe was swept for antiques and

fixtures. Entire 18th-century rooms were purchased to be shipped to New York and installed in the new mansion.
The 6-story French limestone mansion rose quickly but then, on October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. The good times were over and the Great Depression changed the faces of Americans.
Herbert Straus pressed on, however, and construction workers were retained for three more years. Then in 1931 he gave in, ordering work on the mansionâ now 90 percent completedâ stopped. To date he had spent approximately $600,000 on the project.
Herbert Straus would never see his dream home completed. Still living in the commodious apartment at 1144 Park Avenue he died in 1933 leaving an estate of just under $12 million.
The house on East 71st Street sat empty for over a decade. *The New York Times* would later report that â His heirsâ ¦never saw fit to spend the additional money necessary to put the finishing touches on this lavishly appointed home.â But there was the issue of real estate taxes.

Beautiful carvings decorate the entrance -- *photo by Alice Lum*

On March 30, 1944 newspaper said â Mr. Straus and his estate had spent a sizable fortune in recent years in tax payments on the house. The taxes have amounted to as much as $17,000 in some years.â

To get rid of what they undoubtedly considered a white elephant, the Straus family donated the house to the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of New York in 1944. Now the Church had a problem: what to do with a lavish, uncompleted mansion on an exclusive Upper East Side block.
There was no need for another school or convent facility in the neighborhood and the residential needs of church executives was fully taken care of. But at least now the Catholic Church-owned property tax-exempt; affording the Archdiocese time to think.

photo by Alice Lum

The solution was to convert the mansion into an extension of St. Clareâ s Hospitalâ ¦what *The Times* would call a â sumptuous fifty-bed convalescent institution.â Between $250,000 and $300,000 was spent on the renovation by architect Robert J. Reiley and the equipping of the new hospital. Thankfully, at least two of the 200-year old interiors from France were removed and reinstalled in the Metropolitan Museum of Artâ s period room collection.

The facility was opened on September 8, 1945. The ground floor now housed a Romanesque-style chapel hung with 16th century Genovese red velvet donated by staff member Dr. John Morrisey. The Louis XV reception room remained as did the dining room and library. Administrative offices were also on the first floor. In the basement were a modern kitchen and the nursesâ dining room.
Gleaming white tiles now lined the walls of the upstairs rooms. Two elevators carried patients to the new roof terrace where they could look out at Central Park.

The sumptuous French interiors were replaced by white tile. Above is the laundry on October 8, 1943 prior to opening -- *photo NYPL Collection*

The patients rooms retained the dimensions of those of the former mansion---some as long as 24 feet with ceilings from nine to twelve feet high. The Franciscan Sisters made floral draperies and pastel bedspreads for the rooms, which were furnished in Early American-style furniture donated by Mrs. John H. Rogan II of No. 145 Central Park Southâ a former patient of St. Clareâ s.

One of the most touching moments at St. Clareâ s Extension came about when an 82-year old homeless man was brought here. The blind man repeatedly attempted to sit on the floorâ in the elevator and in his assigned room, No. 203. A welfare worker explained to the nurses â He has lived a long time in Bowery flophouses. When there are no seats in flophouses, the men sit on the floor.â

Laurence Stroetz was bathed, given clean pajamas and a shave and little by little the nuns learned of his life. He had been born in Little Germany on the Lower East Side in 1877. His family owned a grocery store at No. 165 2nd Avenue. But by now his entire family was gone.

The old manâ s memory would come and go, but as time passed he told the nuns that when he was in his 20s he played violin professionally. For two years he had been with Victor Herbert in the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, he had played in the old Academy of Music on 14th Street and he played at the Savoy and in the Lyceum Theatre when Billie Burke performed in â Mrs. Dot.â

When Stroetzâ s eyesight began fading he began sleeping in the Bowery lodging houses. Around that time another Bowery resident named Charlie, pawned Stroetzâ s violin for him for spending money. The old blind man had not held a violin in the decades since.

One evening after dinner, around 8:00, the staff brought in an old violin that had belonged to a deceased nun. Laurence Stroetz felt the instrument, ran his fingers along the strings, then carefully tuned the violin and tightened the old bow.

While the nuns stood hushed in the white tiled room, the old blind man began playing. His first song, â Sidewalks of New York,â was a bit shaky; but then he regained his self-assurance. He played Handelâ s â Largo,â then â Humoresqueâ and â The Blue Danube.
A group of listeners gathered in the hallway outside Room 203, lured by the violin strains. Stroetz had rediscovered his touch and the music flowed from the old violin. Then, as if he understood how the piece would affect his audience, the old man finished his recital with Gounodâ s â Ave Maria.â
The old ragged man bowed to the applause he heard. But his blindness prevented his seeing the tears that streamed down the cheeks of the assembled nuns.
The following week eye surgeons removed the cataracts that had prevented Laurence Stroetz from seeing. The Welfare Department placed him in a nursing home so he could stay out of the Bowery flophouses. And he received a new violin.

photo by Alice Lum

After 16 years in the Straus mansion, St. Clareâ s closed the doors on July 24, 1961. The building was purchased by the Birch Wathen School, a college preparatory day school for well-to-do boys and girls from kindergarten through grade 12.

The school would remain here for over two decades before moving uptown. In 1989 retail mogul Leslie H. Wexner, founder of The Limited purchased No. 9 East 71st Street for $13.2 million. Wexner spent tens of millions of dollars in restoration, decoration and artwork to reconvert the 21,000 square foot mansion into a private home.

For the first time in half a century the magnificent French Renaissance mansion would be a home. Except Wexner never lived here. An advisor to the millionaire told *The New York Times* in 1996 that he spent no more than two months in the house.

Herbert Straus never had a chance to enjoy his glorious showplace. But after a long history of institutional use, it is unexpectedly a private family home today.

Posted by Tom Miller at 3:18 AM

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7 comments:

1. *Anonymous*November 3, 2013 at 2:10 PM

   Wow! Another great story! Thanks Tom!

   Reply
2. *Anonymous*August 17, 2014 at 11:48 AM

   My name is Corviniano Rodriguez Galvan. I am a retired ophthalmologist 80 years old. I worked as Resident at St. ClareÂ´s since May 1958 to 1959. My bosses were Dr. Gerolamo Bonaccolto and Dr. RamÃ³n Castroviejo. I had the oportunity of assisting at the operating room to a great deal of important surgeons working in New York at that time. I got along very well with the nuns, the owners of the Hostpital, nurses like Ann Burke and Leatrice Benke, Maria a wonderful portorican girl. William the cook, and so on. I will never forget the year I spent there...........

   Reply
3. *Anonymous*November 23, 2014 at 7:48 AM

   Dr. Galvan. Thank you for your personal note in relation to the house.

   Reply
4. *Anonymous*August 2, 2015 at 3:33 PM

   And I went to school there from 1st through 6th grades when it was Birch Wathen - though I wasn't really such a "well-to-do" kid! An intimidating building for a small child, far fancier than what one would expect for a school. Birch was on W. 93rd Street before it moved to this building - it's not clear to me why they moved, unless they had aspirations that were more suited to an east side address than one on the upper west side?

   Reply
5. *Anonymous*November 3, 2016 at 12:34 PM

   Unfortunately it is now owned by Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted pedophile and trafficker in white slavery!

   Reply
6. *Anonymous*February 13, 2019 at 2:21 PM

   That's the "advisor to the millionaire" noted in the story.

   Reply

7. Moishe OysheMarch 7, 2019 at 5:05 AM

   I was part of the BW move from the West Side to East 71st street. My best friend and I were accused of phoning in a bomb threat in the spring of 1963. The two of us were put on "social probation" by old lady Birch. We never did learn what that meant. The day we graduated in June, 1965 we learned the "perp" was the boyfriend of one of our classmates.

   Reply

Unjust Evictions: How Predatory Landlords Impact Communities

Imagine this: You hear a noise in the basement - not the furnace kicking on or the creaking of pipes - you hear water, and not just a drip, but a gush. You rush downstairs in fear and itâ s even worse than you thought. You discover a mix of sewage backing up into your home; the smell and toxicity overpower your senses. Your mind immediately goes to the children living in your home, who already suffer from asthma. How will this affect them?

What do you do? Youâ re renting this house, so your first instinct is to call your landlord, but the landlord doesnâ t respond. You know that this is unacceptable, but what recourse can you take right now? First you must take care of this issue. You have a friend help you pump the liquid out of the house several times a week while the kids are gone. Now, you have to decide whether to register a complaint against your landlord. In response to your claims, the city is unresponsive and unhelpful, too. Additionally, your landlord hasnâ t officially registered this rental property and therefore is not on the cityâ s rolls. In protest, you do the only response that you believe is within your power to get justice: withhold rent.

The problem is that while the landlord has not undergone proper inspections with the city or upheld his end of the contract, this fact barely matters in an eviction court. Here, the only thing that matters is that you, the tenant, have not paid rent. From here, eviction is almost inevitable. You will have to uproot your family and find another affordable housing option, this time with an eviction on your record. Chances are high that you will have to move to a place with a similarly negligent landlord. You feel trapped.

This is not a hypothetical situation. The Detroit News recently reported on a story very similar to this that happened to Latasha Tucker in Detroit. While this is a particularly dramatic case, there are thousands of stories of renters being evicted for withholding rent from grossly negligent landlords in Detroit, with low-income families being more significantly impacted. The News did extensive research and found that one in five renters are evicted every year, flooding the eviction courts with cases. Detroitâ s 36th District court has averaged 35,000 eviction cases a year since 2009. While renters withhold rent for a wide variety of reasons, and there are poor tenants just as there are poor landlords, the failures in the system are revealed in the many cases where rent is withheld out of protest for lack of heating, sewage, or lead testing - things essential to safety and dignity.

Many tenants withhold rent because that action is their only option. If occupants have the resources, they may move to new housing. However, that is a strong â ifâ considering that low-income families are the population most likely to be affected this issue. The greater the rent-to-income ratio, the higher the eviction rate. Even if a family is able to leave a bad renting situation, how can they be sure, in this environment, that they will be able to find better housing? If they choose to break their lease, it could damage their chances of finding adequate housing in the future. A more important question to ask is why they should have to leave in the first place, as there are inspections and laws that should prevent these problems from occurring. The vicious nature of this cycle is why we call this trap predatory rental agreements.

What are the consequences for delinquent landlords? At best, the penalties are inconsistent, and most often are non-existent. The Detroit News report is an extreme story from a city with a particularly acute eviction problem, but Detroit is certainly not alone in this. In 2015, an estimated 2.7 million renters faced eviction.

This is how predatory rental agreements often play out: Landlords are able to buy foreclosed properties for very cheap, and then rent them to low-income families. In many ways, they can operate these rentals with impunity â no need to make improvements on the property or submit to inspections because the city does not hold them accountable.This enables them to make a quick profit and expect, almost always, to have the upper hand in eviction court. In this system, there is nearly no incentive to operate with integrity, enabling landlords to become predatory, meaning that they intentionally profit off this broken and distorted rental system.

However, it is important to note that not all of these 2.7 million evictions are clear cases of predatory landlords. While landlords need ways to hold renters accountable, local governments often fail to hold renters to the same level of accountability. If Detroit can function as a case study for this issue, then it is clear that local governments fail to consistently uphold justice for renters, particularly low-income. The existence of predatory rental agreements arranged b predatory landlords represents a complete breakdown of local government responsibility. The News report points out that â City ordinance requires that all rentals be registered, livable and inspected yearly, but most landlords have operated without that scrutiny for more than a decade. Lax city enforcement has contributed to an eviction cycle where many tenants live in dangerous and unfit homes.â This leaves tenants with absolutely no opportunities for recourse, and therefore no opportunities for justice.

> â Government has the responsibility to ensure that there are livable and safe conditions for occupants. Neighbors can pump sewage, but they shouldnâ t have to in the first place.

For public justice to be upheld, citizens and governments must embrace their unique responsibilities. As the Center for Public Justiceâ s Guideline on Government states, â The government of a political community bears responsibility to legislate, enforce, and adjudicate public laws for the safety, welfare, and public order of everyone within its jurisdiction.â Adjudicating between a landlord and renter represents a basic function of local government â to settle disputes and uphold the law. If a rental law is well written, it should provide the basic framework for property owners and renters to both flourish, each having rights and responsibilities in the relationship. By not enforcing the laws that hold landlords accountable, Detroitâ s local government has abandoned its role in providing justice for tenants. Government has the responsibility to ensure that there are livable and safe conditions for occupants. Neighbors can pump sewage, but they shouldnâ t have to in the first place.

Most troubling is the wider impact that predatory landlords have on families and communities. When thousands of families are evicted from neighborhoods each year, neighborhoods deteriorate and decay, health problems arise, and children are forced to transfer schools with frequency and unpredictability.

Take a moment to appreciate these ripple effects of unfair housing practices. As families move around, their family units are disrupted as children are moved or passed around to other friends and relatives. It hurts neighborhood and city-wide efforts to restore communities to wholeness. Property values suffer, and government workers are frustrated or jaded. Schools face increases in transience and stress in their student population. Parents might have to spend limited resources on transportation to keep their children in the same school. Health is harmed by exposure to lead and other toxins, and finances are harmed by trips to eviction court. This forced transience makes it difficult to establish the beautiful and necessary relationships that are vital to a flourishing community. Businesses are less likely to rely on those neighborhoods for future development, and their aesthetic beauty, so vital to human dignity, is diminished from neglect. It is not hard to see how deep and wide the shrapnels of injustice fly in a community burdened by unjust housing. This is not an individualâ s problem - it is a community problem.

There are certain laws that are not consistently enforced to the letter of the law for specific reasons â for example, speed limits. Many in Detroit recognize that some laws that are on the books are onerous and unrealistic to enforce; however, the government does grave damage to families and communities when it abrogates justice by not enforcing the laws that hold landlords accountable to their tenants.

Government is called to uphold the common good of the political community, which includes ensuring that families have the opportunity to flourish, and fair housing practices are essential to this. As the Center for Public Justiceâ s Guideline on [Government](#) goes on to say,â Healthy families help nurture future citizens, prepare future employers and employees, decrease public costs resulting from fragmented families, and build up strong social and cultural capital.â Converse to these results, as eviction rates go up, schools, businesses, and the whole fabric of a community begin to rip apart.

As Christians, we should be deeply troubled by this. Some people choose to rent, while some people have to out of necessity. Renting itself is not inherently evil, and should not add shame or stress to families. However, so often it does, reflecting a degradation of dignity and a disturbing disruption of families. We desire dignity and wholeness in our communities. Therefore, we cannot stand for negligence.

What can we do? Neighbors, churches, families, and local organizations can help, but the government has a unique and urgent responsibility here. It is not the churchâ s responsibility to drain sewage or make sure the heat works. The government needs to provide accountability in these areas. The first step, as it might happen in Detroit, is to assess what laws are already present. Are those laws upheld, and if so, are they creating an environment where renters have power and landlords are incentivized to act with integrity?

The next step is enforcement. How can the government take charge of its responsibility to shape housing practices? Do the penalties for predatory landlords provide incentives, without being draconian? In Detroit, some are working to restore this balance. Yearly inspections are currently required, and many agree that that is too frequent. With this, there are proposals to increase inspections and penalties, while simultaneously lengthening the inspection process to two or three years to reflect a more realistic timeline for landlords.

The bad news is that the issue of predatory landlords is incredibly widespread; there will not be a single comprehensive solution. The good news, however, is that it is an incredibly local problem â you can make an impact. Find out what is happening in your area, and advocate for government to fulfill its responsibility. When rental practices move toward justice, landlords, renters, and entire communities benefit alongside one another.

INSTANT SOLUTION TO IMMIGRATION PROBLEM: DNA TESTS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT NO MAN CAN ENTER YOUR COUNTRY WHO RAPED HIS FAMILY MEMBERS

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DNA tests show 70% kids in Zimbabwe not born by men they call fathers (trendiee.com)

by nusto to news (**+140|-22**)

- comments

Our Self-Imposed Scarcity of Nice Places

What kind of person do you think lives in the places pictured below? What social class connotations do these images carry for you?

And relatedly, if a new development mimicking these features were to go up in your city or town, who would you be most likely to assume it is "for"?

View fullsize.

View fullsize.

View fullsize.

View fullsize.

Every advocate for making urban design more [pick one: walkable, bikeable, beautiful, lovable, inviting, human-scale] has at some point or another faced the charge of elitism. Virtually every feature of public space that makes it more pleasant to linger in, stroll through, or simply view, has at some point been associated by someone with gentrification, or simply culturally coded as upscale.

This belief is rooted in the following true observation: The best American examples of top-notch urbanism are mostly places inhabited by well-to-do Americans, and their real-estate prices and rents are usually prohibitive for most others. This includes the majority of places that are *currently* walkable, bikeable, have attractive human-scale architecture, have attractive greenery, aren't pockmarked with parking lots, and are full of small storefronts suited for local businesses.

However, we go badly astray if the lesson we take from that observation is that the *design* features of such places are themselves exclusionary and elitist. Or, even worse, that basic quality-of-life things like pedestrian safety or generous public space are inherently elite concerns.

We need to learn how to separate form from (current) function. In fact, our shortage of nice places is almost totally self-imposed. And it's precisely because 98% of the North American built environment is so blah that the 2% of places that are really well-designed environments quickly get bid up by the rich and become inaccessible to the rest of us. The solution to this isn't to stop creating such places, but to create vastly more of them.

Milwaukee Avenue, Minneapolis, MN. (Source: Author.)

A Bygone Era's Working-Class Housing

The locally-famous Milwaukee Avenue in Minneapolis is a great example. This unusual street is a Rorschach Test when it comes to how people interpret the urban environment around them.

Milwaukee Avenue is a pedestrian street. It's fronted by these cute, historic brick bungalows, most of which were extensively renovated in the 1970s. The houses all have front porches facing a central walkway and lawn, a design which encourages neighborly socialization and a sense of cozy shared space. Car access is via shared parking lots at the end of each block; there is no direct alley or garage access to the individual houses. It's kind of an urbanist paradise for those of us who fantasize of living somewhere that relegates cars and all their nuisances and dangers to the margins of our environment.

(Strong Towns has published a piece on Milwaukee Avenue before, specifically addressing the financial benefits to the community of allowing such living arrangementsâ this place is much more valuable than a comparably-sized normal residential block in the same neighborhood.)

Socially, however, Milwaukee Avenue has the following reputation: It's a cutesy, self-consciously quaint, historic district populated by well-to-do snobs who paid way too much for small houses lacking many modern conveniences. By some accounts it has an overbearing HOA. I've heard it described as everything you hate about a suburban gated community, just in the city and without the gate.

Milwaukee Avenue, Minneapolis, MN. (Source: Author.)

Those who disdain Milwaukee Avenue for this reason should consider its origins. This street was built in the 1880s as cheap housing (due to the unusually small lots) for working-class immigrants, many of whom worked at the nearby railyards. Through most of the 20th century, it would not have been considered quaint, kitschy, or precious, nor snobbish, upscale, or uptight. And, if we had dozens or hundreds of Milwaukee Avenues, there's a good chance nobody would consider it any of those things today, either.

These homes today are quite expensive for their size and amenities. But here's the crucial thing to understand: They're not expensive because they're cute. Or because their architecture is traditional rather than modern. It's not even because the street is pedestrianizedâ it's not any of those things directly.

No, the explanation is simpler. Places like this are expensive because places like this are scarce, and scarce things almost always become expensive.

Milwaukee Avenue, Minneapolis, MN. (Source: Author.)

The same story applies to the countless row house neighborhoods of the Northeast, Chicago, and San Francisco. In city after city, the mass-market, working-class housing of its time has acquired a distinctly bourgeois reputation today. In all cases, the reason lies in economics, not design. What's abundant becomes culturally coded as middlebrow; what's scarce becomes culturally coded as elite.

There is abundant evidence that nearly the entirety of the U.S. and Canada are dramatically undersupplied, not just in quaint historic places, but in walkable urban places, period. It's our â shortage of citiesâ that makes urbanism a hot commodity. Even if car-free design to the extent of Milwaukee Avenue isn't a majority preferenceâ and it likely isn'tâ if a product serving a niche preference is rare enough, its price is liable to be bid up by those who hold that preference.

The answer to this isn't to lower our standards for design or to be dismissive of the things that are really lovable about these places. The answer is simply to allow a lot more Milwaukee Avenues to exist. And the same goes for the likes of all of today's beloved, "charming" historic districts.

Seaside, Florida. (Source: Flickr.)

Seaside Syndrome

Those familiar with the New Urbanist movement are likely well acquainted with this "elitism" critique leveled at the town of Seaside, Florida (a Gulf Coast resort community regarded as the first New Urbanist town, and famous for being the setting for *The Truman Show*), where it is often explicitly used to argue that Seaside has been a failure. In fact, the argument is extended to discredit New Urbanism itself. To paraphrase: "The original flagship New Urbanist project is a snobby resort community, so why should I believe this whole design movement has anything to offer normal folks?"

Seaside is a resort community that's quite expensive to buy a house in or even stay the night in, and I wouldn't be surprised if some of its second-home owners hold "snobby" attitudes, for what that's worth. But we have to understand the cause-and-effect here in the right order:

The wrong reasoning: Seaside is expensive and exclusive. â > Seaside's design must be causing it to be expensive and exclusive. â > Don't build more places like Seaside; build places that look like those that are currently inexpensive to vacation in.

The right reasoning: Seaside is expensive and exclusive. â > Seaside is so appealing that rich people will pay a lot to have a house there. â > Maybe middle- and working-class people would also like that kind of opportunity. â > Build a lot more places like Seaside.

Cute, traditional, walkable, safe, pleasant: all of those features of place can be built cheaply, *and thus could be possessed cheaply if there were simply enough to go around.*

A house in Seaside, Florida. (Source: Flickr.)

Scarcity Makes It Harder to Tell What Communities Really Want

None of this, by the way, means that there aren't meaningful differences in preference between the kinds of communities the rich want and the kinds of communities the working classes want. Or that those differences shouldn't be understood and honored. They should, largely through trial and error and learning from how people actually respond to spaces, once allowed to experience them.

There are also important differences in how different groups of people experience space. For example, women have different safety concerns than men in public, and people of color may experience the "natural surveillance" of eyes on the street differently than white people do. Single-family homes make sense for families, and not so much for other household arrangements. So design should always stem from actual community needs and preferences.

All I'm saying is that the existing distribution of placesâ who gets the option of walkable urbanism and who doesn't, who gets safe streets and who doesn't, who gets human-scale and missing-middle options and who doesn't, who gets local shops and cafÃ©s and who doesn'tâ does not give us an accurate picture of those needs and preferences. Rather, it primarily gives us a picture of artificial, enforced scarcity distorting the market.

Abundance as an Answer

You can play Mad Libs somewhere like Twitter with the phrase "[x] is gentrification," where *x* is literally anything potentially nice. Streetlights that work? Sidewalk repair? And so forth. The *reductio ad absurdum* is that we, as a society, shouldn't attempt to build nice things for the massesâ even comparatively cheap nice things like sidewalks that don't suckâ because rich people will just end up hoarding the nice things. Nobody actually believes this in its starkest form, but people making an argument where that is the logical end point should examine their underlying assumptions a little more closely.

What is true: As long as there is a private market in real estate, comparatively desirable, unique, and scarce places will be bid up by those who can afford them. There are policies that can push back somewhat on this reality. We can create below-market-rate and/or social housing. Cities can ensure quality public amenities like neighborhood parks, street trees, and working streetlights are in every neighborhood, and not make public investment decisions on the basis of neighbors' wealth or political influence. But short of [Fully Automated Luxury Communism](), there are limits to our ability to push against the realities of the market. What we can do, though, is create more of the nice stuff until the bar for "nice" simply moves higher.

This of course doesn't apply to things that we, as a society, can't financially sustain. A private country estate for everyone isn't in the cards (even if that was basically the marketing pitch for suburbia).

But the good news about walkable urbanism and streets where you won't get killed by a car: these things aren't expensive to provide. They're *cheap* to provide!

Neighborhood parks are a downright bargain. It's stuff like NYC's Little Island that isn't.

When I spoke with the developer of Serenbe, an affluent community outside Atlanta being built on traditional town design principles, he told me that the public investment required to build in that way offers a 60% savings over conventional suburbia. Let me stress that: *Urbanism is substantially cheaper to build than suburbia.* (So why is Serenbe an affluent community? If you've been reading this far, you know the answer.)

Where we've allowed cheaper-to-build, cheaper-to-maintain, quality-of-life-enhancing things to become luxuries, that is on us. That is our failure, and it's a failure brought about to a large extent by bad policy that tells us we can't have nice things, because nice things are for the rich.

Police crack down on Democrats use of homeless people for ballot fraud on skid row (latimes.com)

by One-Way_Bus to news (+37|-1)

- comments

Ronald Reagan socialized cheese, In this housing crisis, why can't we do the same for homes?

James L. Kraft of Illinois patented a manufacturing process in 1916 that allowed for mass production of his famous orange cheese "product". Containing a mixture of colby and cheddar with curds and emulsifiers, the Kraft company's almost-cheese became enormously popular during the first half of the 20th century. It was cheap, shipped easily, and had a ridiculously long shelf life. Processed cheeseâ which eventually came to be called, simply, 'American' cheeseâ became a staple of the 20th century American diet.

Meanwhile, as part of price support programs for farmers enacted in the 30s, the United States government began to stockpile dairy products. By the 80s, the stockpiles were so large that merely storing them became prohibitively expensive. The government even paid dairy farmers not to produce any dairy for five years, buying the farmers' cattle herds. The cheese would have eventually spoiled without any outlets, and there was no more space to store it. In 1981, the Reagan administration decided to distribute free processed cheese to America's poor under the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program.

During the 80s and early 90s, mysterious and powerful goo seemed to be all the rageâ think the ectoplasmic fluid in *Ghostbusters* and the Jheri curl chemicals. But "government cheese" might have been the era's most popular viscous substance. Because of the wide reach of the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, a significant proportion of the country's low-income population was eating cheese packaged and distributed by Uncle Sam. The goods were delivered from the federal government to each state, where it was sent to various warehouses and community centers for free pick-up. Less frequently, it was reserved for victims of natural disasters.

In the 90s, when the herd buyouts ended and the dairy market stabilized, there was little need for the government to continue its cheese hoarding. According to Ken Vorgert, chief of the Dairy Grading Branch of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, the donation programs dwindled once the government no longer had its cheap reserves.

We've all eaten and loved Kraft American Singles. But there's a special *je ne sais quoi* that accompanies the fact that your food is being made by Uncle Samâ often contempt, or associations with hard times. For many, recollections of the food transcend its gustatory characteristics; government cheese represents times of poverty, when its consumers were forced to rely on federal handouts to fill the dinner table. Some rappers reference government cheese in their lyrics to recall the lean times. In "F.U.T.W.," Jay-Z flaunts his rags-to-riches story: "*After that government cheese, we eating steak/After the projects, we on estates*." Kendrick Lamar similarly recalls a destitute and cheesy youth in "Money Trees:" "*Pots with cocaine residue, every day I'm hustling/ What else is a thug to do when you eating cheese from the government*?"

There were other issues that set government cheese apart from standard processed cheese. Because the quantities involved were so large, storage difficulties often led to moldiness. My uncle, Kirk Meyer, was involved with the Boston Food Bank when TEFAP went into effect. He recalled the logistical nightmare of storing and refrigerating the huge amounts of cheese, which often spoiled. "We're talking 40-foot semi tractor trailers with 20 pallets of cheese in each truckload," he said.

Perhaps more importantly, any type of cheese can be problematic for the digestive systems of millions of Americans. According to the University of Georgia, 75 percent of African-Americans, 51 percent of Latinos, and 80 percent of Asian-Americans are lactose-intolerant, versus the 21 percent of Caucasians. And because minorities historically have been heavily represented in welfare programs, the government wasn't really doing Americans' butts a favor. A choice excerpt from the Wayans brothers' early 90s sketch comedy show, *In Living Color,* reimagines archetypal television family the Bunkers as black:

Archie: Edith! What's for dinner?

Edith: Oh, Archie, it's your favorite! Macaroni and the government cheese!

Archie: Aw, geez, Edith! You know what the government cheese does to me! I spend more time on the throne than Queen Latifah!

But not everyone hated government cheese. According to the USDA document "PCD5 Pasteurized Process American Cheese for Use in Domestic Programs," the cheese must slice and melt easily. In fact, "The cheese shall have been tested for meltability in accordance with AMS Methods of Laboratory Analysis, and shall be at Number 3 or higher." AMS scale meltability Number 3â or as gourmets prefer, *NumÃ©ro trois*â apparently lends itself perfectly to grilled cheese sandwiches, nachos, and similar melty cheese foods. The popular Chico's Tacos in El Paso, Texas serves government tacos, a re-appropriation or perhaps even a celebration of a food that many poor immigrants in the largely Latino region likely ate regularly during the 80s and 90s. Online forums are rife with fond memories of government cheese omelets, cheese sauces, and sandwiches.

Like anything you grow up with and then lose subsequently access to, government cheese is parked in a prominent spot in the memories of its former consumers. It is more than a food that millions of people ate; it is a historical poverty symbol that has vanished from the pantry. Societally, recollections of government cheese are ambivalentâ but hey, that's representative democracy. Hail to the cheese.

In 2022, government cheese is distributed to anyone that is low income. When the USDA buys dairy goods from farmers to give to low-income people, it helps to save farms.

The government cheese log is a federally created nutritionally 'perfect' BASIC log of cheese that is inspected, certified, optimized and produced to stringent standards to be 'ideal'. The government gives these out to anybody that wants them. They taste like hell but they are just a base that any household can slice up, flavor, customize, melt, slice, dice or do other things with.

We would like to see the government do the same thing with a basic house. It will be mass produced, have all the basic stuff and you can customize it to be fancy or not. HUD says it can be done but needs others to do the prep because the government cannot do anything 'creative', like this. There is not just a single factory that makes all of the cheese logs in America. All of the builders could build the 'basic government free house' if they meet the construction manual just like the cheese factories have to meet the cheese log criteria.

Thousands of architects have designs and engineering for such homes.

HUD just needs to STEP UP!

THE HOUSING CRISIS THAT CORRUPTION CREATED

If it were finally illegal for politicians, and their families, to not own investment real estate and stock market assets then there would no longer be easy paths to bribe those politicians.

Washington Post: Corporate landlords are gobbling up U.S. suburbs. These homeowners are fighting back.

By P. Whoriskey & K. Schaul [3-31-22] // Using authority that lets them punish homeowners who fail to cut the grass, one predominantly Black neighborhood in North Carolina slows the pace of investor purchases.

The Bribery In Your County Is Killing Your Housing Affordability

When you ask a County official if developers are paying bribes to County officials, those County officials always say: *"uh, no, not in our County..that must be in San Francisco or one of those OTHER counties..."*

If you ask the FBI, or any major forensic investigator, you get the opposite answer: *"Yes, bribes are paid pretty much every day.."*

As an average citizen, you may not care so much at first. You might think that those bribes are just for office buildings or shopping malls and why should you care?

You should care because those bribes are costing you your home!

Developers HATE affordable or reasonably priced homes. So do realtors. So do banks. THEY ALL MAKE MONEY OFF OF INFLATING THE VALUE OF REAL ESTATE.

None of them are on your side!

Ask yourself this: Why do Counties bill $900,000.00 to build a "low-income" studio apartment. Developers sell that same studio apartment for $1,600,000.00 and yet it only costs you $200,000.00 to build a whole 2 bedroom single family home if you are the GC?

It's an organized real estate crime racket!

If the developers didn't blockade your ability, or the small builder's ability, to build, you could build a $200,000.00 home in San Francisco, San Mateo, Marin or Alameda County.

For example, Alameda Naval Airbase in Oakland was going to be turned into a lovely "green city". All these small developers came in with great low-cost plans but the developer who got the contract was the one that paid the most bribes.

Bribes are paid to the Governor, the Mayor, the Supervisors. the agency bosses and staff. The bribes are paid through trusts, shell corporations, real estate, billions of dollars of Google, Twitter, Facebook, Tesla, Netflix and Sony Pictures stock and stock warrants which is never reported to the FEC; Billions of dollars of Google, Twitter, Facebook, Tesla, Netflix and Sony Pictures search engine rigging and shadow-banning which is never reported to the FEC; Free rent; Male and female prostitutes; Cars; Dinners; Party Financing; Sports Event Tickets; Political campaign printing and mailing services "Donations"; Secret PAC Financing; Jobs in Corporations in Silicon Valley For The Family Members of Those Who Take Bribes And Those Who Take Bribes; "Consulting" contracts from McKinsey as fronted pay-off gigs; Overpriced "Speaking Engagements" which are really just pay-offs conduited for donors; Gallery art; Private jet rides and the use of Government fuel depots (ie: Google handed out NASA jet fuel to staff); Recreational drugs; Real Estate; Fake mortgages; The use of Cayman, Boca Des Tores, Swiss and related money-laundering accounts; The use of HSBC, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs and Deustche Bank money laundering accounts and covert stock accounts; Free spam and bulk mailing services owned by Silicon Valley corporations; Use of high tech law firms such as Perkins Coie, Wilson Sonsini, MoFo, Covington & Burling, etc. to conduit bribes to officials; Payroll W2 and 1099 payments which were actually bribe payments for political work such as character assassinations and internet rigging; and other means.

The bribes pay permit offices to delay you or deny you, they pay zoning offices to zone you out, they pay insurance companies to not insure you, they banks to not finance you or to make your terms too harsh, they pay neighbors to sue your project, they pay every City, State and County office to stop, delay or cost-expand your single family home project so that you are not making the developers look bad!

YOU, with your $200,000.00 stand-alone home completely F*ck the market for all the $1,600,000.00 tiny condo's that the developers are hawking, particularly in the Bay Area!

All those Californian's that moved to Texas are the ones that finally worked out the math on this.

A nexus, though, was reached. The developer greed hole has sucked the entire American housing market into it's swampy dark whirlpool and now the emperor has no clothes.

Entire houses cost $200K to build. That is the fact that every American has become aware of. The developers and realty associations have hired a billion dollars worth of pundits, TV shills and fake bloggers to try to tell you that you must spend two million dollars to get a home...but they are lying scumbags!

In another example: There are national HUD Home Ownership Voucher HCV Homeownership Regulations (24 CFR Part 982, Subpart M) - HCV homeownership regulations are found in Sections 982.625-982.643 per the Statement of Homeowner Obligations.

A woman named Marcia Fudge is in charge of it in Washington, DC.

Many people have applied to the county on a monthly basis via the web, email, in-person visits, letter and phone calls.

Applicants participated with HUD and USDA in multiple qualification hearings and appraisals for the HUD and USDA home ownership vouchers and they were deemed â 100% qualifiedâ , under those agencies guidelines at every point.

When your name comes up, if you meet the criteria, you get $1600.00 per month of your mortgage paid for by the government. You have to pay the rest of your monthly mortgage, over and above, the $1600.00, or so. In many areas, on top of that, you can get up to $200K of your down-payment advanced by the feds. (ie: AC Boost, etc.)

The Developers and the real estate associations hate this! They pay part of their bribes to keep this program as inactive as possible. This program blows up their organized real estate crime racket. Marcia Fudge was supposed to have increased this program by 1000%, but the developers and real estate broker lobbies have blockaded every effort.

County agencies removed, deleted, hid, shadow-banned, held back or otherwise reprisal-harmed Applicant's from the waiting lists, holding databases and application programs in an intentional or malicious manner.

The developers hired their own hit-squads of ex-intelligence operatives including: Cardinal & Pine; Pacronym, Acronym; The Americano; Investing in US; Shadow Inc; Courier Newsroom; IN-Q-Tel; Gawker Media; Jalopnik; Gizmodo Media; K2 Intelligence; WikiStrat; Podesta Group; Fusion GPS; Google; YouTube; Alphabet; Facebook; Twitter; Think Progress; Media Matters); Black Cube; Correct The Record; Orbis Business Intelligence, Undercover Global Ltd; Stratfor; Jigsaw; ShareBlue/Acronym; Versa LLC; American Ledger; Supermajority News; New Venture Fund; Sixteen Thirty Fund; Cambridge Analytica; Sid Blumenthal; States Newsroom; Hopewell Fund; Open Society.; David Brock; AmpliFire News; American Bridge; Plouffe Consulting; Pantsuit Nation; MotiveAI; American Bridge 21st Century Foundation; Priorities USA; Kroll Tactical; PR Firm Sunshine Sachs; The American Independent Foundation; Covington and Burling; Buzzfeed; The American Independent; Perkins Coie; Secondary Infektion; Wilson Sonsini and thousands more to run hit-jobs, character assassinations, dirty tricks and economic reprisal attacks on any targets who reported their crimes or messed with the County officials they "OWN".

Using FBI and FINCEN quality forensic databases to check the stock market and investment banking ownerships of County officials and their families, which includes those entities that are financier/beneficiary oligarchs and tech companies, you can easily see the crime links.

Any developer or realty group who is, a USA and California governmental entity, doing business in the State of California, both, legitimately, and, covertly with an organized crime â enterpriseâ operating within our Government that makes any revenue can now be tracked.

Nearly 40 Congress people have bailed out of the 2022 elections because they got tracked. Now a number of forensic groups are tracking EVERY county official in the Bay Area. Did you notice that Nancy Pelosi's kid got busted in a real estate scam? That was only the beginning?

Have you noticed all those FBI arrests at San Francisco City Hall? That was only the beginning?

There is no County official in the Bay Area who should not think their phone was not bugged for the last two years!

Magazine|Will Real Estate Ever Be Normal Again?

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Credit...Photo Illustration by Dan Winters

By Francesca Mari
To hear more audio stories from publications like The New York Times, download Audm for iPhone or Android.
The third time Drew Menaâ s manager asked him about relocating to Austin, Texas, he and his wife, Amena Sengal, began to seriously consider it. They had deliberated each time before, in 2017 and 2018, but landed on a hard no: Drew and Amena had lived in New York for more than 10 years, and they loved it. They

owned a two-unit townhouse in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, and they felt lucky to have it, with its yard and the kind of close-knit neighbors who compete to shovel one anotherâ s sidewalks after a snowfall.

But now it was August 2020, and the pandemic had changed their calculus. When the city shut down, their daughter, Edie, was 7 months old; Drew and Amena co-parented while working full time, one at the kitchen island, the other at the breakfast table. In May, they escaped to Drewâ s familyâ s cottage in New Hampshire, and gradually their tether to the city began to fray. When the relocation offer came in from Drewâ s employer, an asset-management company, they started browsing listings online, and it looked as if they could get a lot more space in Austin. They would certainly save money on everything else, like gas and groceries. *The world is ending*, they said to themselves. *Why the hell not?*

Amena, who was born and raised in Houston and attended the University of Texas at Austin, called her parents to solicit their opinion. They were so thrilled at the thought of her return that they suggested she consider buying, and offered to help with the down payment. They could all share the home as an investment property if Drew and Amena moved on. Amena crunched the numbers and quickly realized a truth about America: Thanks to persistently low interest rates and tax policies that favor the rich, you can almost always get more space with a mortgage than with the same amount in rent.

So she threw herself into the search with zeal. She mapped commutes to Drewâ s new office downtown; she found a dozen preschools she liked, and video-toured more than half of them. In her mindâ s eye, she drew a backward C around central Austin, cutting out downtown and the expensive west side. Their maximum budget was $550,000, $575,000 tops. They were looking for a house that was move-in ready, maybe around 1,500 square feet overall, with three to four bedrooms, two baths and a shed or office space for Amena in the backyard â she planned to keep her New York job in education policy and telecommute.

She reached out to John Gilchrist, a close friend from college who was now a real estate agent and, in January, he began taking her on up to four FaceTime tours a day. In the background, she could see other intent buyers, masked but often encroaching on one another. She could sense quality, but scale was harder to discern.

â How many paces is that?â Amena would ask Gilchrist. â Can you put your hand in that sink? It looks tiny.â

The day that she and Drew were scheduled to fly to Austin for house-hunting, at the beginning of February, New York was buried in snow and flights were being canceled, so they opted to reschedule theirs. Feeling stranded and agitated, Amena began bidding on houses. There were two for sale in Johnston Terrace, on Emmitt Run, on the same block as Amenaâ s best friend from high school. Both were two stories and 1,700 square feet. One, listed for $437,700, was a bouquet of beiges â beige interior and exterior paint, beige carpets, beige linoleum floors and beige oak cabinets. The other, listed for $50,000 more, was being remodeled by its owner and his friends: modern gray paint, white cabinets, dark wood luxury vinyl plank.

â Weâ re all putting lipstick on a pig trying to get our houses sold,â the owner told me.

Amena bid on the beige, imagining sheâ d use the extra money to do her own remodel. It went under contract for $45,800 over the asking price, or $43,500 more than her bid. A few days later, Amena bid on another home sheâ d been dying to see on their trip, a black-and-white ranch house in South Austin listed at $460,000. At the urging of Gilchrist, who told her how tight the market was, she bid more aggressively, offering $495,000, and was chagrined when she lost that house too.

For Amena and Drew, their Austin home-buying odyssey was just beginning â a monthslong ordeal that would teach them quite a bit about the cruel realities of Americaâ s housing market, in which home prices nationwide have risen by an astonishing 24.8 percent since March 2020. And this first lesson, appropriately enough, demonstrated just one of many ways that the old, measured rules of home-buying no longer applied â that the cutthroat competitiveness that once defined only a few U.S. markets (San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles) had now become standard across the country, as the median home price in small- and medium-size metropolitan areas rose by jaw-dropping levels: Boise, Idaho, 46 percent; Phoenix, 36 percent; Austin, 35 percent; Salt Lake City, 33 percent; Sacramento, 28 percent.

By bidding on two properties she had never visited, in a city nearly 2,000 miles away, Amena joined the 63 percent of North American home buyers in 2020 who made at least one offer on a home that they had never stepped into. Homes had been one of the few things resistant to online shopping: We browsed online, but we didnâ t buy. The pandemic changed that. The result was a market that moved much, much faster.

What Amena and Drew would ultimately learn about Covid-era real estate was not just the necessity of raising their budget and lowering their expectations. It was also that the whole mind-set required to buy a house, the most important purchase that most Americans will ever make, had undergone a fundamental transformation â possibly a long-term one, given the realities of both supply and demand. Freddie Mac estimated at the end of 2020 that the United States was 3.8 million housing units short of meeting the nationâ s needs. Combine that with the surge of millennials into the housing market â they represented more than half of all mortgage originations last year â as well as the insatiable appetite of investors, who now snatch up nearly one in six homes sold in America, and the contours of a new, lightning-fast, permanently desperate housing market come clearly into view.

â Itâ s so irresponsible,â Amena lamented, when discussing those first, remote bids they made, and Drew chimed in: â In a normal market you would *never* do that.â By â normal,â Drew meant a time when a home buyer could tour a house in person, mull it over, go back a second time with her parents or friends and then make an offer with time for an inspection and an appraisal. But thereâ s reason to fear that Americaâ s real estate market, after passing through the pandemic madhouse, might never get back to that kind of normal again.

Several Austin real estate agents told me the same story about when the â flip switchedâ during Covid: a sale on Ephraim Road, in the suburb of Brushy Creek, on New Yearâ s Day 2021. The house was â well cared for,â a buyerâ s agent told me, but â nothing out of the ordinaryâ : two stories in brick, with a large arched window â the sort of place one of Tonyâ s underlings might own in a Texas spinoff of â The Sopranos.â It was listed on Dec. 30, 2020, for $370,000, and it seemed like mere minutes until buyers and agents began lining up in the bitter rain to tour the house one by one, a process that took hours. Agents texted Google Maps screenshots to one another, noting the red traffic jams around the property. By the 11 a.m. deadline on New Yearâ s Day, the house had received 96 offers, with the winning bid clocking in at $541,000 â a mind-boggling 46 percent above asking. â Just when you think you know a lot about real estate, you realize you donâ t know anything,â the listing agent told me. â The market shifts and keeps shifting.â

Austin real estate has been hot for years. Over the last decade, an average of more than 100 people have moved into the area every day. But 2020 broke the levees. In July, Tesla announced it would build an auto plant in Austin. Facebook and Apple, meanwhile, were expanding their local campuses. All were attracted by Texasâ lower cost of living and business-friendly tax and regulatory environment.

In December, the database giant Oracle said it was moving its headquarters from California to Austin. That month, the median sales price for homes in the Austin metropolitan region was up 23.7 percent year-over-year. â Before the pandemic, you would see a line of 20 people standing outside a restaurant downtown,â Albert Saenz, who has been a real estate agent since 2003, told me at the time. â Now you drive downtown, thereâ s nothing happening. But out in the suburbs, you see lines of 20 people waiting to see a house.â

The last time U.S. housing saw such rampant price growth was in 2005, and the market corrected itself, infamously, in 2008. But the underlying reality today is different. Back then, a geyser of subprime adjustable-rate mortgages sputtered out as borrowers defaulted. (According to Bloomberg News, 60 percent of mortgages during the bubble years were adjustable rate; fewer than 0.1 percent of mortgages are now.) The current boom is better compared to a river, one fed by streams that have long been visible on the horizon: high demand, low supply and a dysfunctional economy in which wages are stagnant while restrictive zoning and poor public policy have turned housing into an artificially scarce commodity. Historically low 30-year fixed mortgage interest rates, hovering between 2.68 and 3.08 for the last year, are narrowing the riverbed, quickening the current.

After a decade of too little development, the pandemic made the low inventory lower. Construction stopped. Sellers, afraid of inviting the virus into their homes or reluctant to move in uncertain times, didnâ t list, and inventory declined by nearly a third from February 2020 to February 2021, falling to the lowest level relative to demand since the National Association of Realtors began record-keeping almost 40 years ago. At one point in January 2021, the month the Ephraim Road sale broke everyoneâ s brains, Austin had just 311 homes listed for sale; in a normal month, the number would be 5,000. An estimated 65,000 starter homes were completed nationwide in 2020, less than a fifth of the number built annually in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

A typical home listed for sale on Zillow was available for a median of 14 days in December 2020, compared with 33 days the year before. Now itâ s nine.

As the pandemic made the poor poorer, meanwhile, it made the rich richer. Homeowners, already more than 40 times as wealthy as renters, were more likely to keep their jobs, profit from the stock market and have enough savings to take advantage of low interest rates.

Then thereâ s the role played by investors and speculators. Large corporate and Wall Street landlords, like Invitation Homes, American Homes 4 Rent, BlackRock and Blackstone, are arguably the most toxic players, driving up rents in the select markets they saturate, lobbying for corporate tax cuts and fighting tenant protections. But a majority of investment buyers are smaller companies and individuals: mom-and-pop landlords, tech workers looking to diversify their portfolios, teachers who supplement their paltry paychecks by Airbnb-ing properties on the side. The ease with which they can access credit strains the market and drives up prices. Those effects are likely magnified when investors target homes in cities less expensive than the ones in which they live, whether theyâ re Chinese investors in California or Californian investors in Texas.

Perhaps the most important factor driving the new housing market is demographic inevitability. Millennials â the 72 million Americans born between 1981 and 1996, including Amena and Drew â are aging into their prime home-buying years and belatedly entering the market. This has been made possible in part by a recent rise in wages, after years of stagnation. Even so, millennials, many of whom came of age during the Great Recession, will probably never make up all those lost earnings from their early adulthood. Now the largest living generation, they control just 4 percent of Americaâ s real estate equity; in 1990, when baby boomers were a comparable age, they already controlled a third. Whatâ s more, because of the financialization of housing, millennials need more savings or to take on greater debt to buy a house than previous generations did. The end result is that millennials buying their first home today are likely to spend far more, in real terms, than boomers who bought their first home in the â 80s.

Given these handicaps, they have to approach things differently, and thatâ s changing real estate, too. In a housing market riddled with speculators, the only way millennials can break in and compete is by acting like speculators themselves.

Back in 2012, Stephanie Douglass greeted a new East Austin neighbor in her usual manner, with a tin of pecan sandies. The woman who opened the door reminded Douglass of herself: cute and casual and blond. Except while Douglass was teaching fourth grade and bleeding away half her earnings on rent, this woman, just a few years older, had *bought* her house, and was building equity. As a math teacher, Douglass could crunch the numbers.

Shortly afterward, Douglass, who was 24 and had $35,000 worth of student loan debt, bid on nine houses in East Austin before winning one so far east it was almost outside the city: $180,000 with 5 percent down. Her friends thought she was nuts, planting roots at such a young age, but she fixed up the home herself; to cover half her mortgage, she rented the second bedroom to a friend from grade school in Houston. When Douglass moved in with her boyfriend, she rented out her whole house, and when the relationship ended, in 2016, she told her mom that she didnâ t want to waste money renting until her tenants left. They decided to buy a bungalow together and found one with popcorn ceilings and terrible wood paneling that would accept a 5 percent down payment. They spent July and August sharing a mattress on the floor and fixing up the place themselves.

Douglass loved her fourth graders, but not the way she loved her houses. At the end of summer, she dreaded returning to school, dreaded waking at 6 a.m. to work from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. â Remodeling this house was the first time I had been passionate about anything,â Douglass told me. She was a high achiever, but she had fumbled through college looking for a sense of purpose. With real estate, â Iâ d figured out how to take control of my life, and it was insanely exciting. I thought, This is cool, and everyone needs to know thereâ s another way.â

That same year, she got her real estate license and moonlighted as a sales associate, soon earning more than $100,000 annually in commissions. Her closest friends, who once thought she was crazy, now saw her as their financial guru. They began to follow in her footsteps â using her as their real estate agent, of course. Six of them now own homes within a mile and a half of her in East Austin; four of those friends, all under age 35, own at least two properties. â We wouldnâ t be able to stay in the city if we hadnâ t bought,â Douglass told me. She has invested in 13 properties around Austin, often adding additional units. Her mother, Meshelle Smith, oversees 10 of them as Airbnbs. (Smith quit her teaching job to found an Airbnb management company, which has 51 listings.) Douglassâ s passive net cash flow is $14,000 a month, and her net worth exceeds $3 million.

In 2017, Douglass had what she calls â the best first date everâ with Kristina Modares, a real estate licensee and investor who messaged Douglass on Instagram after following her home-renovation posts. They talked for seven hours and over the next few months decided to found an agency focused on the clientele they were already serving, clients most Austin agents donâ t want to touch: first-time buyers looking at homes under $200,000 or $300,000. Douglass quit teaching, and in June 2019, they opened their agency, Open House Austin, with a party at their office, a once-derelict commercial property on the east side that they (of course) bought and renovated themselves. In 2020, Douglass and Modares started offering Homeschool, a self-directed, six-week course (â The Surprisingly Simple Path to Buying Your First Home With an Investor Mind-Set â Even if You Know Nothing About Real Estateâ), which quickly sold out. Amid the economic turmoil of 2020, Open House sold 101 homes to millennials and earned a million dollars in net profits.

On a recent Wednesday evening, Douglass and Modares logged on to a video chat to answer questions from their third Homeschool class, a group of 30 students from across the country, almost entirely millennials and younger. It was the first meeting, which called for an icebreaker. â What is your first item you want to buy in your new house?â Kristina Modares asked. â Or first renovation,â Douglass added.

â I live in the Washington, D.C., area, in the suburbs, in Maryland, currently at my childhood home,â a young woman said. â Hopefully temporarily, but then we had a pandemic, so I was sort of stuck here. Iâ ve been looking to buy for a long time, looking to stay in my area and just find a house and a yard. The first thing I want to get is a dog.â

Another woman said that she and her husband lived in San Francisco but were originally from Fort Worth; they were torn about whether to buy in the Bay Area or in Texas near most of their friends and family. â We are in a super, super small apartment in San Francisco, so I imagine weâ ll have to buy a lot of furniture.â

Another attendee, a local, said, â Iâ ve always dreamed of building a little â catioâ for my cat, so that she can just go outside safely whenever.â

Most of the students found Open House through word of mouth or social media, and they signed up for the class ($979 for the homeowner track, $1,697 for investors) because they were intimidated by the market. Open House has more than 8,600 Instagram followers and 41,800 on TikTok. In one TikTok post with 1.1 million views, Modares acts out â Your parents buying a house VS You buying a houseâ :

MOM [Modares in â 80s glasses and a gray blazer]: Well, youâ re definitely going to have to save 20 percent for your down payment.

DAUGHTER [Modares in a black tank]: I donâ t think so. I talked to my lender, and they said actually I could put 3 percent down.

MOM: Me and your father have been living there for 30 years. Itâ s a big commitment.

DAUGHTER: Yeah, wow, so Iâ m actually going to live here for maybe two, three years tops, and then Iâ ll probably rent this out on Airbnb.

MOM: Well, donâ t you think you should be married before you buy your first house?

DAUGHTER: No, I got preapproved on my own. Iâ m actually going to house-hack, and my whole mortgage payment will be covered by someone else.

MOM: [Looks puzzled at the phrase â house hackâ]

DAUGHTER: [holds up a sticker that reads, â Houses before spousesâ]

Joking aside, the skit encapsulates a truth: Much of Open Houseâ s messaging nudges buyers to think beyond the traditional path of homeownership, built on long-term investment in one home. Instead, they encourage first-time home buyers to start as early as possible with whatever they can afford, typically small or farther-out homes chosen primarily for their investment potential. Open House advises buyers to use credit to leverage whatever they have to bet on appreciation and swiftly vault themselves into better and better homes in different budget brackets.

House hacking, cash flow, passive income, financial independence: These are the buzzwords, but they arenâ t new concepts. This is the natural culmination of the way in which housing has been transformed into

an investment vehicle over the last 50 years â and itâ s a recognition of the economy younger generations have inherited.
When Amena and Drew finally made it to Austin on Thursday, Feb. 11, they brought Snowmaggedon with them: sleet, snow, freezing temperatures and statewide power failures that amounted to one of the costliest disasters in Texas history. â We thought: Weâ re rugged New Yorkers. No one else wants to drive on this ice, but weâ ll do it as a competitive advantage,â Drew told me. Gilchrist had scheduled more than 20 showings, and so on that first weekend, as the state froze, they saw as much as they could, including trendy new houses and the Emmitt Run home being remodeled by its owner and his friends. It was weirder in person. Drew said they built the base of one vanity out of two-by-fours. â And then just like slapped the sink on top of it. It wasnâ t even sanded.â
But by Sunday, much of the city lost power, including the friends they were staying with. They moved in with friends at a different house â which lost power an hour later. Everyone slept in the dark, and the next day they trucked over to a third friendâ s house. The kitchen was being renovated, and they were washing dishes in the tub, but it had a hot plate and heat.Sign up for The New York Times Magazine Newsletter The best of The New York Times Magazine delivered to your inbox every week, including exclusive feature stories, photography, columns and more.
One of the last homes Amena and Drew were able to visit was a powder blue condo on a street crammed full of identical homes. It retained power because it was on the same grid as a major hospital. Driving up to the address, Malvina Reynoldsâ s â Little Boxesâ played in Amenaâ s head: â Little boxes on the hillside,/Little boxes made of ticky tacky,/Little boxes on the hillside,/Little boxes all the same.â â It was just like, *Oh, my God, theyâ re all the same!* But it was fully done, had the backyard, had all of the space and the rooms that we wanted, had a loft upstairs for me to have an office plus a guest bedroom and a room for the baby and the master,â Amena told me.
As night fell, Amena submitted three offers on her phone: on the powder blue little box; on a 2005 home that felt too far south but was across from a good Montessori school; and on an East Austin condo from 2006 with concrete floors that reminded Drew of the Greenpoint loft apartment they once rented in a former pencil factory. Doing three at once â felt so reckless,â Amena told me. But they werenâ t the only ones submitting simultaneous offers â a taboo during â normalâ times. The highest offer on the first house they bid on, the black-and-white ranch house in South Austin, fell through within an hour of execution, because the buyers learned they were also the highest bidders on another home that they liked better.
â People kind of just started losing their minds: â Iâ ll offer whatever it takes,â â the listing agent, Ashley Tullis, told me. â We learned some big lessons about the buyerâ s remorse.â As a consequence of backing out, the buyers lost their option fee, a sizable $3,000 (before 2020, a typical option fee was $500 or less). But such was the price of playing in this market.
On their simultaneous bids, Amena and Drew never went more than 8 percent over asking price, and they returned to New York having lost out on all three. Amena began to panic. The second house they considered on Emmitt Run, the one with the homemade vanity, erupted in flames during its inspection, injuring the inspector. The buyers pulled out, and it was taken off the market and re-listed, a month later, for nearly $50,000 more. It was hard to imagine a better metaphor for their search: Austin real estate was literally on fire. (The house sold above listing price, after again receiving multiple offers.)
By the end of February, Amena and Drew realized that if their budget was $550,000, they had to look at houses listed for $400,000. â Turnkeyâ â move-in ready â properties in central Austin were out of reach. For a brief moment, they sought homes needing a gut renovation. But anything less than $300,000 was inevitably being hoovered up by some investor paying all cash. Frenzied buyers were waiving their inspection periods and their appraisal contingencies, meaning they were contractually committing to buying homes even if their lender wouldnâ t cover the full price. And the market was moving so fast that this had become a real risk: Prices from a month before â generally the most recent data available to appraisers â were already outdated, leaving buyers scrambling to make up gaps of as much as $100,000. Others buyers were offering absurdly large option fees (say, $10,000) that they wouldnâ t get back if they canceled the contract.
Amena began bidding on any house that seemed acceptable, click-click-clicking through DocuSign at 11 p.m., exhausted, right before falling asleep. Homes blended together. A 1949 bungalow, totally renovated, in East Austin. A fixer-upper owned by a professor of Russian literature at U.T. A handful of other 1950s ranch

houses in Windsor Park. Amena was offering between $40,000 and $95,000 over asking. A squat yellow home from 1977 stood out because of its location on Duval Street, walkable to the coffee shops and vintage stores of North Loop. But the one that most seized Amenaâ s imagination was a 1955 home on Westmoor Street, brick and wood that was painted purple, green and blue, like a preschool. â It was a mess of a place â we would have to do everything over â but it was huge and beautiful in terms of its potential,â Amena told me. It was listed at $375,000, and she bid $400,000, needing to reserve cash for renovations. In her love letter to the seller, she wrote, â You will probably be offered all cash by someone, but please donâ t take it.â Amena and Drew couldnâ t bail on Austin. Drew had signed a contract, and theyâ d rented out their New York apartment.

â More bad news, my friends,â Gilchrist texted. â We got passed over for Duval and Westmoor. Westmoor acknowledged how brutal the market is with an apology, and Duval said they got 28 offers.â Westmoor got 27.

â This is market is no fun,â the Westmoor listing agent told me. â People think that realtors are making money hand over fist, but that means 26 realtors didnâ t get to feed their families.

â My client had a big heart and was sentimentally attached, but the less risky bids for her were cash and no contingencies,â the listing agent continued. â This was her nest egg.â She chose an all-cash bid from a buyer planning to tear down her house and rebuild.

At this point Amena and Drew were on their 10th failed bid. â Itâ s like a danceathon,â Drew told me. â Last person standing wins.â

Often, the person still standing was that most hated figure in the Austin real-estate market, the California investor. The winning bidder for Ephraim Road, for example, was Michael Galli, a Silicon Valley real estate agent. â Hereâ s the interesting truth,â he told me. â Iâ ve never been to Austin.â He toured the Ephraim Road house on FaceTime.

In 2019, Galli decided he wanted to diversify, so he spent eight months studying cities online and kept coming back to Austin. It had high-income job growth and an influx of venture capital, the very things that had made Bay Area real estate so lucrative. Galli bought a large map of Austin and mounted it on the wall, studying it in the evenings with a glass of red wine in hand. He stuck Post-its onto points of interest: Apple, Samsung, Tesla, new transit lines. He believed he understood what tech workers wanted: spacious feng shui- and Vastu-compliant homes, with a bedroom on the first floor to accommodate foreign parents on long visits. And most important, good school districts. He resolved to acquire 10 homes within a 12-minute drive of Apple. For $1 million down, heâ d own $5 million in assets that he would rent out for top dollar and that he believed would double in value in five years and double again by 12 years.

Then there was a 35-year-old tech worker in Long Beach, Calif., who bought a house in Round Rock for $300,000 last October. By January 2021, it was worth roughly $400,000; in February, he bought two more. His winning bids were two of dozens that his real estate agent, a former equities trader who now works primarily with individual investors, made sight unseen, all of them for at least $40,000 over the asking price.

â Iâ m part of the problem,â the buyer acknowledged to me, though he was not your stereotypical speculator: Despite earning six figures, he drives a 2005 Honda Civic and, when I spoke to him, was renting a room for $900 a month, preferring to save and invest. (Scarred by graduating into the Great Recession, he aligns with the Financial Independence, Retire Early movement popular on Reddit.) He marveled at how FaceTime, DocuSign and electronic transfers made everything seamless, but because real estate money can now move so easily, it meant what he had liked about real estate investing in the first place â its stability and relative slowness â no longer held true. â Weâ re gamifying real estate investment to the point that itâ s almost like throwing money at the stock market,â he told me.

Some Austin real estate agents have positioned themselves to capitalize on all this out-of-town money. On a steamy 95-degree day in late June, Matt Holm lifted the winged door of his Tesla Model X so that I could hop in the back seat behind his client, Jon, a man who worked in commercial real estate financing in Santa Monica. (Jon asked that I withhold his last name because he hasnâ t shared his relocation plans with his friends and family.) During the pandemic, Jon, originally from Madison, Wis., began to rethink what was keeping him in California. â Iâ m getting a little anxiety about making a longer-term commitment to L.A., just given the political climate, the tax climate, the homelessness problem,â he told me.

Jon had traveled to Austin three times in as many months and was getting a handle on the â resiâ market.

He was looking for a home where he could declare residency to take advantage of Texasâ lack of income tax â but he also wanted to live elsewhere half the year, and so he was looking for a place he could easily rent out and make money on. And he wanted guaranteed appreciation. â I mean everythingâ s an investment, right?â he told me. A friend of his who had just relocated to Austin introduced him to Holm, whose dirty-blond hair was pulled into a sleek ponytail. He founded the Tesla Owners Club of Austin in 2013 and proudly referred to himself as the â Tesla realtorâ in town. When Jon slipped in to look at a short-term rental, Matt told me that Jon would like to spend $500,000 to $700,000, â but heâ s going to spend 1.3 to 1.5 by the time heâ s done.â
â Thereâ s nine million square feet of office being built,â Holm said, as we drove through downtown, cranes and glass skyscrapers glinting above stalky yellow-limestone and red-granite buildings. (The Austin Chamber of Commerce gave a lower but still shocking figure, 6.2 million square feet.) â And itâ s *being built,* like, itâ s not occupied. So those jobs are coming. People are telling me, like, *Oh, you know, we peaked. â* ¦ As far as the metrics, the Texodus is not slowing down. Weâ re about to get a tidal wave.â
â People havenâ t even factored in the Elon effect,â he continued, â I canâ t tell you the number of people that are saying, *Oh, Elonâ s building a factory.* Like, no, Elonâ s not building a factory â this is headquarters for everything Elon. He hasnâ t officially announced it, and I donâ t know anything behind the scenes, but I can see very clearly the people that are moving here, and theyâ re not factory workers.â (Indeed, in October, Musk made it official.)
Holm and Jon spoke the same language. They analyzed every parcel for how to maximize profits and shared tips for minimizing taxes. Walking through a cavernous tiled-and-carpeted two-story in Travis Heights, Holm suggested that with its many bedrooms, it would make an excellent Airbnb. Although Austin and the state stipulated that owners could rent only their homestead and only for a maximum of six months a year, â that could be every weekend,â Holm said.
â The investor I know thatâ s killing it right now is a systems guy,â he continued. â And I told him for four years that he had to get into the Airbnb business and he thought I was B.S.ing him on the numbers. And finally, he believed me, and now he has 13 Airbnbs.â
â How does he do that?â
â Because heâ s bought them all in the ETJâ â the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, a broad swath of unincorporated land bordering Austin that isnâ t subject to the cityâ s short-term rental restrictions.
â Dripping Springs is about 30 minutes west of here, and itâ s the wedding capital of Texas,â Holm said. â You see these people getting married with cowboy boots on and a wedding dress, and theyâ re on top of a hill and all that [expletive]. Thatâ s where they are. But thereâ s like no hotels out there. â ¦ Well, if you can get a big-ass house out there where the entire wedding party can stay together, jump in the pool after the wedding ... thereâ s almost a completely unlimited market. ... He doesnâ t take any Airbnb bookings that donâ t gross rent $30,000 a month.â
â I like this place,â Jon said of the house. At 3,000 square feet and $1.2 million, this home was over Jonâ s budget. The question was how much was he willing to live in his investment. â I donâ t need so much house unless I was really going to take on the project you describe,â he said. â But that puts me in a bit of a conundrum, because I am living here six months a year. You donâ t want it to be a complete party house either.â
Next up was a condo with clean white walls, black fixtures and gray oak floors. At $1 million, it didnâ t offer the same opportunities for monetization: He couldnâ t build, and there were fewer rooms to rent.
â Everybody is from San Francisco today,â the sellerâ s agent said when we got there. â What about you guys?â
Despite the competitive market, despite having to work double the hours and write triple the offers, Open Houseâ s agents were moving cash-strapped millennials and some Gen Zâ ers into houses in record numbers: 130 so far this year, 88 percent of them first-time home buyers, at an average price ($369,000) far below the Austin metro median of $450,000. Because they were encouraging clients to think of property first and foremost as an investment, their young charges were going after what they could, buying new homes in neighborhoods with homeownersâ associations, older condos with perhaps-less-than-ideal natural light and suburban fixer-uppers that reeked of cigarette smoke. Anything to break in and start building equity.
At those price points, Open House clients were inevitably snapping up stock in once-affordable

neighborhoods. For the last decade, East Austin, the historically Black and Latino neighborhood atop the cityâ s less-desirable clay soil, has been among the cityâ s hottest destinations. It began with a couple of fun dive bars and an excellent Japanese fried chicken truck and exploded into the site of award-winning restaurants, a hipster honky-tonk, a Whole Foods and, now, some of the highest-price-per-square-foot real estate in Austin. Gut-renovated bungalows and new homes in moody shades of midnight blue, hunter green or white were rapidly multiplying, squeezing out the weathered old houses with pit bulls and barbacoa pits, the piÃ±ata shop, the tire-repair place.

In the spring, Douglass, Smith and Douglassâ s uncle, Moose Mau, took out a hard-money loan to buy their fifth property together (and Douglassâ s eighth property in East Austin), a run-down 1,614-square-foot home on the floodplain, along with a vacant lot next door. The cost for both was $550,000. As usual with Douglass, one project spawned another: The empty lot came with a shipping container filled with junk, and she decided to turn it into an Airbnb. For $20,000 she was going to carve out some windows, add a kitchen and bathroom and insulate it from the inside. For another $78,000, she ordered a tiny house to put in back. (During one drive, I saw three such miniature homes traveling the Texas highways.)

The Latino family that sold the two lots was using the profits to purchase a larger parcel of land outside the city, a move common among people of color selling their homes on the east side. Gentrification has different effects in different geographies, as research by Virginia Techâ s Hyojung Lee and Georgetownâ s Kristin L. Perkins has shown. In New York, where the cost of living is high for miles and miles, it tends to lead to densification â doubling and tripling up. But in Texas, where the sprawl is decidedly more affordable, it spurs suburban migration. The proportion of the Austin population that is Black has been declining for decades. Many of those selling homes in the city were moving to the parched suburbs of Pflugerville, Buda and Bastrop. Or they were moving on to the next phase of life, aging into retirement or nursing homes.

In the late spring, Mau flew in from Southern California, where he works as a mortgage broker, to help with the renovation. He was clearing trash in the front yard when a young man walked by and asked if he needed help. As they worked alongside each other, the man mentioned that his girlfriend was helping the woman next door. The woman said sheâ d sell her home for between $200,000 and $250,000, he said.

â Weâ re like, â Whoa, thatâ s supercheap,â â Smith told me. So she went over to the run-down yellow house, which seemed to be made of little more than splinters and asbestos. The owner, Maria SaldaÃ±a, was in her late 60s and partially blind and spoke little English. An orange Home Depot five-gallon bucket with a toilet seat on top sat beside her bed, because the toilet didnâ t work. She was eager to sell and asked for $210,000. Smith agreed. Micah Domingues â Smithâ s employee at her Airbnb management company and her middle daughterâ s 28-year-old boyfriend â was interested.

Before the sale closed, one of SaldaÃ±aâ s sons moved her into an affordable senior living facility. He vaguely described where it was located so that Smith and Domingues could visit her and finalize the sales contract. After studying the map, Domingues and Smith drove to the most likely complex, but the receptionist didnâ t think SaldaÃ±a had arrived. So the two started knocking on doors there, rapping, rapping, rapping as instructed by SaldaÃ±aâ s son, who told them to continue to knock so that she could follow the sound. She opened the third door they tried. She was alone and unfamiliar with her surroundings, so Smith and Domingues led her by the hand around the room.

â You have a new couch, and itâ s over here,â Smith said, helping her grasp the cushions.

â Hereâ s your table, and thereâ s a box of cereal on top of it.â

â Thereâ s cereal?â SaldaÃ±a said. â I have a little milk.â

Smith poured milk and cereal into a bowl, and SaldaÃ±a dug in as if she hadnâ t eaten all day. The air-conditioning was too cold for SaldaÃ±a, and so before leaving they led her out onto the patio she didnâ t know she had and brought out a chair so she could sit in the sun.

In the end, the sale fell through. There was a cloud on the title. SaldaÃ±a had been married, and although her husband was dead, he had grandchildren from a previous marriage who potentially could claim a share of the property, and two of them wouldnâ t sign off. Micah, who had been so excited to purchase his first property, told me that by the end, â I had no more emotions.â Given his budget â $300,000 was his upper limit â he worried heâ d have to wait a long time before stumbling upon another off-market house.

Real estate agents have a saying: â Thereâ s a buyer for every house, but there might not be a house for every buyer.â Thatâ s the definition of a sellerâ s market â and a pithy indictment of the way

America subsidizes homeownership, in an era when a majority of Americans are utterly shut out of it. All the changes that Covid brought to the market have only made things worse. It doesnâ t exclude just those who canâ t muster all-cash offers, or those without the financial cushion to take on the risk of losing a large option fee or forgoing an inspection. It also disadvantages those who are unable to drop everything to make a play for properties. In the Covid-era Austin market, there was seldom a house for anyone who couldnâ t house-hunt full time.

In keeping with seasonal trends, September 2021 brought an easing in the market, both in Austin and nationwide â but the cityâ s median sale price was still its highest on record for a September. The Case-Shiller home price index reported that the August 2021 year-over-year appreciation was 19.8 percent nationwide: â Thatâ s just an astronomical pace of price appreciation,â Jeff Tucker, a senior economist at Zillow, told me. â The only remotely comparable points in time in the modern era of low inflation were late 2005, when price appreciation peaked in the 14 percent range for many months, and 2013,â when prices finally began to rebound after the Great Recession. â And again, there it didnâ t quite crack 11 percent,â Tucker said.

As for Drew and Amena, things were still dire a month before Drew had to report to work in Austin. Amena began flirting with the idea of renting, but friends of hers were having as much difficulty finding a rental in Austin as she was with buying. Renters were offering $500 more than the monthly asking price and signing two-year contracts. Some were offering an entire year up front. Amena applied to four or five, and was rejected on all of them.

But two days later, miraculously, she and Drew were under contract to buy. The home had taken extra clicks to be located on Zillow because it was for sale by owner. It was smaller than they had wanted â 1,200 square feet, about the same size as their unit in Bed-Stuy. But it had a guest room for Amenaâ s parents, and the master bedroom was at the back of the house looking onto a huge backyard with a mature fig tree. They could build a home office, they figured â or a home gym or a rentable backhouse.

It was also in Windsor Park, a sleepy community of ranch houses that theyâ d come to love. The neighborhood was so close to so many major highways that it was no more than 20 minutes away from almost all of the major tech campuses. At $525,000, it was listed higher than comparable homes, but Drew and Amena had learned their lesson. They bid $50,000 over asking with an expedited five-day option period.

â I think, maybe, itâ s looking good,â Gilchrist said shortly after they submitted. â The guy is currently asking whether or not you will water and harvest the potatoes in their backyard for them once you close and then share the potato harvest.â

â We will take a potato-cultivating class if thatâ s what he wants us to do,â Amena said.

Amena and Drew went under contract, having seen only photos of the house online and a video shot by Gilchrist. The backyard was recently added to the flood zone, meaning theyâ d have to pay for a FEMA-approved flood-insurance policy. While talking to their lender, they also learned that the city wouldnâ t let them add anything to the backyard â a heartbreaker.

With two days left on her option period, Amena flew to Austin for 24 hours. Gilchrist picked her up at the airport and drove her directly to the home. She walked through the low-slung rooms with their boxy windows and opened every drawer, closet and cabinet. She FaceTimed Drew: The living and dining area was cramped, but the owners, who were moving with their two children 30 minutes south of Austin to Niederwald, where they could afford more square footage and more outdoor space, had large furniture. Most important, the house didnâ t smell, and it was theirs if they wanted it. They would redo the bathroom and reconfigure the kitchen. It would work.

The home was still under renovation when they moved in, in July. And it would be for quite some time, because houses werenâ t the only thing in short supply during the pandemic: The same was true of appliances, cabinets, vanities, sinks and shower heads. In October, they still didnâ t have kitchen counters. They were creatively laying cardboard and cutting boards atop the open cabinets. â Itâ s actually convenient from the standpoint of the silverware drawer,â Drew told me. â You donâ t have to open anything,â Amena said. â You just reach in and grab.â

But even before they were settled in, Amena couldnâ t see staying in Austin long term. The problem with Austin wasnâ t that housing deals sometimes hinged on potatoes. (The owners harvested them and left Amena and Drew a small bounty, which was reportedly delicious.) The problem, they felt, was that the city

seemed too staid, too homogeneous, too white â and each sale in this crazy real estate market seemed to be making it even more that way. When it came time to celebrate Drewâ s 40th birthday, they considered a number of destinations: Mexico, Cuba, Portugal. But in the end, the place they most wanted to go was New York.
â I still miss Brooklyn â I kind of want to move back,â Amena said, her voice echoing off the bare walls and hardwood floors of her empty new home. â To be honest, the Austin housing market was a little demoralizing.â Shared with you by a Times subscriber.