

The state's housing crisis won't be solved unless Californians embrace new home building, report says

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The largest barrier to California resolving the state's housing affordability crisis is Californians themselves, according to a new report from the state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst Office .

Local opposition to planning and building new housing to accommodate demand from current and future residents has led to an extreme shortage of homes that is driving up prices to record levels , the report said. Developers need to roughly double the amount of new homes built every year in California — at least 100,000 more — to keep pace with demand, according to a recent report from the state housing department .

Cities and counties are primarily responsible for approving new housing, and if local attitudes don't change, any action the state takes won't come close to solving the problem, the legislative analyst's report said.

“Unless Californians are convinced of the benefits of significantly more home building — targeted at meeting housing demand at every income level — no state intervention is likely to make significant progress on addressing the state's housing challenges,” the report said.

Every eight years, the state requires cities and counties to plan for enough new homes to meet projected population growth for residents of all income levels. But home building often falls short of those goals, and the legislative analyst's report found that actual development frequently doesn't occur where cities planned for it to happen. As a result, such projects often require changes to zoning rules that make it harder for housing to get approved and stirs up community opposition.

The state can try to alter this dynamic by forcing cities to plan for more housing, providing financial incentives to local governments to approve development and streamlining local processes for home building, the report said. But the analyst's report warned these efforts won't fix the problem unless local governments and residents embrace large-scale growth.

“Any major changes in how communities plan for housing will require their active participation and a shift in how local residents view new housing,” the report said.