



CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN
FOR AFFORDABLE HOMES

A Regional Report

Los Angeles County

The Housing Situation in the 50th Assembly District Assemblymember Hector De La Torre

The housing market in Los Angeles County is broken. Most of what has been built is still too expensive, leaving far too many families without options for an affordable place to live.



People who are key to the local economy cannot even afford to *rent* a home. To afford an average two-bedroom apartment, a household in L.A. County needs an income of \$54,400 — significantly more than preschool teachers, cashiers, and paramedics earn.

Homeownership is even further out of reach. In October 2009, median sales prices were still high in communities like Bellflower (\$292,500) and Downey (\$368,000). Even with home prices dropping, a first-time buyer must earn \$61,239 to afford an entry-level priced home in L.A. County (\$325,000).

This gap between housing costs and wages highlights the need to create more balance in the housing market. We need greater housing variety and supply so everyone can find a place they can afford.



Some of the Los Angeles County residents who would benefit include:

VERY-LOW-INCOME EARNERS*

Security guards	\$25,996
Cashiers	\$21,181
Preschool Teachers	\$30,732
Paramedics	\$30,072
Retail Workers	\$25,082

*below 50% of median income

LOW-INCOME EARNERS**

Locksmiths	\$44,591
Administrative Assistants	\$46,010
Carpenters	\$48,418
Computer Support Specialists	\$46,873
Mental Health Counselors	\$46,444

**below 80% of median income

Increasing the predictability and stability of the housing market will bring many benefits to the 50th District.



Benefits to Education

Despite foreclosures and home price declines, finding an affordable home is an ongoing challenge for families in L.A. County. A recent report of the link between home and health states, "Inability to afford adequate housing drives many families into overcrowded units, frequent evictions or changes of address and episodes of homelessness, all of which have consequences for the families' health, both mental and physical."

Family relocations mean that children must move from school to school. The cost of these school moves to children is significant. They suffer from:

- Slower academic progress.
- Lower achievement levels.
- Disruptions in relationships with teachers and class friends, often resulting in social and emotional distress.
- A reduced likelihood of graduating from high school.

When families can find rents that are less than a third of their monthly income, they have more money for food, clothing, medical care, and other needs and are better able to send their kids to school healthy and ready to learn. Increasing options for families to afford a safe and stable home for their children will result in better outcomes for children. They will benefit from:

- Increased school attendance.
- Reduced stress, illness, and mental-health problems.
- Having a safe place to play, do homework, and share family time.

Local schools benefit from families' increased stability, too. Teachers and classmates have fewer disruptions and are better able to focus on student achievement.

Benefits to Young Adults

A greater supply of affordable rentals also helps college students. Today, college and university students are working more and taking on more debt. Rents just for a room in a shared apartment or house near Cal State L.A. are \$700/month, and \$800/month near UCLA. This means that a full-time student must also work 80-95 hours per month at minimum wage just to afford rent, which doesn't cover all of the other college fees (nearly \$4,000/year at CSU and over \$8,300 at UC), or books, transportation, food, utilities, etc.

If students are able to afford a reasonable place to live while in school and after graduation, more of these educated young adults will be likely to remain in the area and contribute their skills to the local economy. With more housing options, colleges and universities will also be more competitive in recruiting and retaining key faculty and staff.

Local schools benefit from families' increased stability, too.



The success of a community involves everyone

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Benefits to Health Care and Those with Disabilities

When medical assistants, nurses' aides, surgical technicians, medical receptionists, and others can afford to live in the area, it increases hospitals' and clinics' ability to recruit and retain staff needed to provide quality health-care services.

A supply of homes that are affordable to all benefits individual health as well. When individuals or families move frequently, live in overcrowded or substandard conditions, or are homeless, it is much more difficult to address health problems. More than 23% of L.A. County households are overcrowded. The 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count found that more than 73,000 people were homeless on any given night in the county, including more than 10,000 children. Homeless children, persons with mental illnesses, veterans, and seniors are especially at risk. For example,

- Homeless children have twice as many ear infections, 5 times as many stomach and diarrhea problems, and 4 times more asthma as housed children.
- Homeless veterans have high rates of hepatitis C, diabetes, prostate cancer, and HIV/AIDS, all potentially life-threatening conditions without proper treatment.
- People with mental illness often end up in jail or prison due to a lack of housing and treatment. Those who are homeless are also disproportionate users of costly emergency rooms, hospitals, and crisis care services.



From the stability of a home, it is much easier to contact health-care providers, receive appointment reminders, obtain medications, and maintain relationships with doctors and practitioners. If those with serious mental illnesses can find a home with supportive services that help them address their mental-health issues effectively, they are much more likely to remain stable, reducing demands on emergency rooms, public hospitals, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, and veterans hospitals. They are also less likely to engage in criminal behavior, reducing costs for law enforcement, imprisonment, and parole.

The availability and affordability of homes is also an issue for adults with severe disabilities. Today, about 77,000 Californians with intellectual or developmental disabilities live with parents or other caregivers who are over the age of 60, while only 9% live independently. If adults with such disabilities can obtain support for finding and keeping a home that meets their needs, whether alone or with others, it builds self-esteem and their ability to be as independent and productive as possible throughout their lives.