

Zoning Reform May Alleviate The Affordable Housing Crisis

Evan Pritchard and Madeline Shay Williams co-authored a Law360 article on the significance of zoning reform as a first step toward resolving the affordable housing crisis. Recognition of widespread housing issues in the United States dates back to the early 1930s post-Great Depression and continued throughout the century. The Great Recession of 2008 had a massive effect on the economy, and Black Americans in particular were impacted by discriminatory housing practices as they disproportionately faced foreclosure during the crisis.

The housing crisis worsened once again post-pandemic, especially for people of color. A report by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies estimated that annual income to afford median homeownership rose 20% from March 2022 to March 2023. The study also found that “systemic racism and concentrated poverty have resulted in disinvestment in communities of color, reducing access to quality public and private services and opportunities for financial security and mobility, in turn furthering racial income inequities.” Exclusionary zoning also contributes to racial segregation and inequality in access to affordable housing, prompting the need for zoning reform initiatives.

Types of zoning reform include reducing single-family housing, increasing inclusionary zoning, allowing for accessory dwelling units, and developing comprehensive zoning reform. Many municipalities and states have passed meaningful zoning reforms to combat the challenges of insufficient affordable housing. Those who challenge the reform cite impacts on traffic, property values, green space, and the overall character of the neighborhood and do not believe it will make housing more affordable. Opponents can impact attempts to pass zoning reform, as well as its implementation. While the affordable housing crisis is not new, the current trajectory can be changed through new approaches such as zoning reform, one step at a time.

To read more, [click here](#).



Madeline Shay Williams

Associate

MadelineWilliams@cozen.com
Phone: (202) 280-6508
Fax: (202) 742-2537

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