HousingWorks
AUSTIN

SEPTEMBER 2026 EDITION

IN THE WORKS

Research, partnerships, and strategies shaping an Affordable Central Texas

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

A note from Awais Azhar

**Executive Director,
HousingWorks Austin**

In July of this year, Congress passed the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, the first law of its kind in decades. While the Act includes a vast range of policies and actions geared to address housing issues, it is primarily focused on increasing housing supply; unlocking private capital while limiting some of its detrimental impacts; and updating several federal regulations and programs to provide flexibility and empower local communities.

I get to say this with great pride in our community because many of the policies and programs encouraged by the law have already been implemented in Austin, particularly to address zoning and permitting barriers and create local financing options for affordable housing. Our work here, though, is far from done.

We know the positive impact that the federal government can have on addressing housing affordability nationwide, when leaders choose to invest in supporting low- and moderate-income Americans. The Austin Housing Authority is a perfect example of the positive effects on communities when federal, state, and local governments and agencies join minds and hands to address some of the most critical affordability and quality of life issues faced by our communities. Today, 30 percent of the residents served by the authority are persons with disabilities, 12 percent are seniors over the age of 62, and 26 percent are children under the age of 18.

The Austin Housing Authority continues to modernize and upgrade its historic public housing properties, while increasing the number of overall affordable housing units and providing all existing residents the right to return to renovated units. This newsletter highlights the amazing work the authority is doing at Pathways at Rosewood Courts in collaboration with the City of Austin and other local organizations. By preserving not just the affordability at the site, but also highlighting its fraught past and the contributions of Black Austinites, the authority has laid another brick in the road to 21st century housing in Austin.

STICKS & BRICKS

New federal housing law boosts local reforms, manufactured housing

cdcb is providing affordable housing opportunities throughout South Texas by manufacturing high-quality, factory-built modular homes.

Passage of the bipartisan 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act this summer marked a major break from the gridlock that has defined federal housing policy for a generation and produced the most significant federal housing legislation since 1990, apart from emergency measures enacted by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The law is certainly a landmark achievement from a political and policy standpoint. Whether it moves the needle on affordability and actually produces more housing on the ground will depend upon future appropriations and implementation, at the federal, state, and local levels.

> "For now, this legislation represents an on-ramp to addressing the nation's housing affordability crisis. While it could have significant effects on housing supply and affordability, its impact will depend heavily on the federal government's capacity, the market's reaction, state and local governments' response, and Congress's political will for further investment in the housing market."
>
> **— Urban Institute**

Local Housing Reforms

The deregulatory approach in the new law tracks with how Austin has been addressing its housing affordability challenges in recent years. The law directs HUD to identify best practices in zoning and land use and also creates a competitive grant program for local programs that increase housing supply and foster reforms, including streamlining permitting, density bonuses and zoning changes.

Austin has been a leader in land-use and housing reform with City Council-approved ordinances that reflect those soon-to-be-official best practices: eliminating parking minimums; fostering density by allowing more housing units per lot; encouraging transit-oriented development; easing the way for accessory dwelling units; expanding density bonus options, and allowing single-stair apartment buildings. The City has also focused on streamlining its own permitting and development processes, with an eye towards efficiency and effectiveness.

This approach to expanding housing supply nation-wide had bipartisan support with a focus on pairing supply with preservation and providing housing support to families.

Manufactured Housing

The redefinition of a "manufactured home" to remove the permanent chassis requirement went into effect immediately, opening up another option for increasing affordable housing supply.

Since the mid-1970's, federal law had required manufactured housing to be built on a permanent steel chassis — the metal undercarriage needed to tow the home to its site. At the time, the policy was intended to address safety considerations and stability during transport. And owners did actually move the homes frequently during the '70s.

Today, however, only 5–7% of manufactured homes are moved after initial placement. At the same time, manufactured housing can play a key role in providing affordable opportunities for low-income residents, particularly for those who might otherwise struggle to access home ownership. Manufactured housing is significantly less costly than site-built housing, even though zoning and financing barriers still need to be tackled nationally.

The permanent chassis requirement had the effect of increasing the cost of both production and financing of manufactured housing while also reducing the design options. And it perpetuated the stigma that equated manufactured housing with the "single-wide trailer." The change means the temporary chassis can now be removed once the manufactured home is in place, which allows for designs, such as a two-story townhome or duplex, that better fit into a residential neighborhood.

Even with the removal of the chassis requirement, manufactured housing will continue to be regulated separately from modular housing. But the success of modular housing does demonstrate how manufactured housing can be used to improve access to affordable housing by reducing costs.

cdbd: come dream come build, a community development corporation and CDFI serving low-income communities in the Rio Grande Valley, turned to modular construction with off-site construction to cut the cost of a home, making it affordable for a family with an income of $35,000. The National Housing Crisis Task Force reports that modular construction can both reduce cut costs by 20-30 percent and speed up construction timelines by 30-50 percent. By combining creative financing policies and a resident-centered approach with the production of modular housing, cdcb has showcased the affordability impact of such an approach.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Historic Rosewood Courts gets modern makeover

Austin Housing Authority's redevelopment at Pathways at Rosewood Courts preserves the sites history while expanding affordable housing opportunities for residents.

The newly revitalized Pathways at Rosewood Courts — built in 1939 as one of the nation's first public housing communities for African Americans — offers residents high-quality affordable housing with modern essentials, including air conditioning, washer-dryer hook-ups and Google Fiber.

This Austin Housing Authority community features 184 units with 1-4 bedrooms. Along with an upgrade to a fully accessible complex, some units are wheelchair accessible, a significant improvement for residents who had difficulty getting around the original facility. Residents are moving in this fall, including those that lived at the previous property, who all had an option to return. These necessary upgrades have been made possible through partial funding from the Project Connect Anti-Displacement funds and the 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

In addition, Austin Habitat for Humanity has built 12 new townhome-style homes at Prospect Heights at Rosewood Courts. Developed in partnership with the Austin Housing Authority, the community creates new pathways to affordable homeownership for families in the heart of Austin.

The community also includes a Boys & Girls Club, medical and dental services, classrooms, resident services offices, fitness centers, gathering spaces, a sports court, playgrounds and a splash park, all designed to support residents and strengthen the surrounding East Austin community. At the same time, the Austin Housing Authority has preserved and upgraded several of the original units, created an open space commemorating Emancipation Park as well as several other opportunities to highlight and celebrate the historical nature of the site.

A related Austin Housing Authority project, Pathways at Chalmers Courts, last month received the 2026 ULI Austin Impact Award for Best Project Design, which honors design excellence together with sustainability, resiliency and equitable communities.

"What makes it truly special is that residents were at the center of every decision. It shows what's possible when affordable housing is created with the same ambition, quality and care as any other community," said Michael Gerber, president and CEO of the Austin Housing Authority, upon receiving the award.

The Austin Housing Authority and Austin Habitat for Humanity partnered to deliver 12 new affordable homes at Prospect Heights for families.

HOUSING+ RACIAL EQUITY

HOUSING+

Rich history lives on at Rosewood Courts

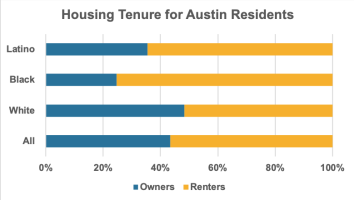
Austin Black history runs deep through the land where Rosewood Courts stands today, and the revitalization program aims to recognize and honor that history. Once Emancipation Park, the site hosted the first Juneteenth celebration in 1906 and was a regular gathering place for Black Austinites. Nearby Rosewood Park was established in 1929 for use by the Black community, following the forced segregation of the city's Black and Latino communities east of current-day I-35 under the 1928 master plan.

The City of Austin seized the Emancipation Park in 1938 for Rosewood Courts. At the time, the federal public housing complex was required to be segregated along with neighboring Santa Rita Courts for Hispanic families and Chalmers Courts for white families. It was not until the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 that housing was desegregated nationwide.

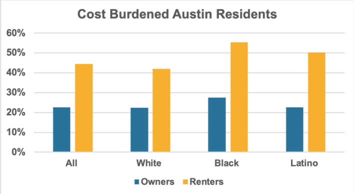
The current redevelopment of Rosewood Courts includes a heritage center and historic kiosks that guide visitors from the Juneteenth and Emancipation-era origins of the site through the New Deal, the original 1939 housing, and today's revitalization.

The impacts of this history of racial segregation and discrimination are not limited to the past alone, even today these patterns of disinvestment and separation continue to shape housing access for Black and Latino Austinites.

Data from the Census Bureau shows that even today Black and Latino Austinites are less likely to own a home, compared with White Austinites. While nearly half of White households own their home, this is true for only a quarter of Black households and a little more than one-third of Latino households.



At the same time, Black and Latino households, regardless of whether they are owners or renters, are more likely to be cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, limiting their ability to afford other family needs. As it is, all renters in Austin are twice as likely to be cost-burdened as compared to owners. However, half of Latino renters and 55 percent of Black renters are cost burdened, compared to 42 percent of their white counterparts.



These trends are not only the result of historic segregation but also present-day inequities in housing finance and access. HousingWorks continues to advocate for an Austin that has All Kinds of Homes, in All Parts of Town, for All Kinds of People.

To address these challenges, housing options must be available for all families and households throughout Austin and Central Texas at affordable costs to ensure that more residents can stay in their communities, residents have access to housing in high opportunity areas, and residents can be part of inclusive communities, free of discrimination. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to counter displacement pressures, provide stability and rights for tenants, open ownership opportunities for more residents through equitable lending and financial support, and develop accessible and inclusive housing for all.

IN THE KNOW

News, research and community updates

A brief roundup of new research, upcoming events and useful updates from HousingWorks Austin and its partners.

New Research

Poll: Strong support for affordable housing investments
More than half of Texans say housing affordability is getting worse in their community with 75 percent of renters reporting an increase in housing costs over the past year, according to a recent poll from the Texas Affiliation of Affordable Housing Providers (TAAHP).

"Today, the state is creating thousands of new jobs, but housing supply has not kept pace with demand, driving up housing costs and constraining continued economic growth," the report states. "Nearly half of Texas residents are renters – making it vital that state policies focus on providing affordable rental housing."

The poll also found growing public support for affordable housing investments. One-third of Texans said affordable housing should be a top priority for state leaders and 69 percent support expanding the financing tools needed to develop affordable housing for lower-income Texans.

Help Wanted

HousingWorks is hiring for a Research Manager
We're looking for a critical thinker and problem-solver who can conduct comprehensive, in-depth research on a broad range of housing and affordability issues in the Central Texas region.

If you have experience in planning or public policy as well as a deft hand with mapping and data analysis, we'd like to talk to you about joining the HousingWorks team.

Find details on the position here. Email a resume and letter of interest to awais@housingworksaustin.org.

Community Input Opportunity

Imagine Austin survey open until Oct. 18
Austin Planning is seeking community input on the priorities for the update of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. The 10-minute survey is aimed at identifying how priorities have changed since Imagine Austin was created in 2012.

The comprehensive plan covers land use, housing, transportation, public service, economic development and environmental stewardship. The original Imagine Austin priorities touched on compact and connected communities, sustainability, workforce, green infrastructure, the creative economy, household affordability and community health.

The survey will remain open through October 18, 2026.

HousingWorks
AUSTIN

All Kinds of Homes, in All Parts of Town, for All Kinds of People.

Research • Education • Advocacy

Support Our Work

View email in browser

1023 Springdale Road, #13F, Austin, TX 78721

update your preferences or unsubscribe