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VOTERS CHOOSE HOUSING

A Summary of Housing and
Homelessness Ballot Measures in the
November 2022 Elections

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**NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION**

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INTRODUCTION

Elections provide an important opportunity to elevate the importance of affordable and stable housing, and to demonstrate the power of low-income renters as a voting constituency. For tens of millions of voters, the 2022 midterm elections also offered the chance to weigh in directly on housing policy by voting on state or local ballot measures.

Housing advocates have long used ballot measures as a tool to secure dedicated local resources for affordable housing. Past analyses by NLIHC, including reports on ballot measures in the [2018](#) and [2020-2021](#) election cycles, illustrate how ballot measures can build power among tenants and achieve major victories for housing justice. In 2022, organizers and elected officials again turned to ballot measures to enact bold policies and combat the housing crisis.

This year, most temporary protections and resources provided during the COVID-19 pandemic expired or were depleted, just as rents and other costs increased. Advocates, impacted people, and organizers demanded action, putting heightened pressure on state and local leaders across the country to address the affordable housing crisis. The U.S. Congress's failure to enact the housing resources included in the Build Back Better Act passed by the House of Representatives – which would have made transformative investments to repair public housing, expand rental assistance, and increase the supply of deeply affordable housing through the national Housing Trust Fund – prompted state and local governments to seek new, local funding streams for housing solutions.

Many municipalities turned to ballot measures as a pathway to securing new resources for short-term assistance and long-term development, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable

housing. Bond measures, real estate transfer fees, taxes on temporary lodging and short-term rentals, vacancy taxes, sales taxes, and business taxes were among the most common mechanisms for raising revenues. Other ballot measures did not impose new taxes but designated some portion of existing revenue sources for affordable housing. Some communities also enacted or strengthened tenant protections, building on the momentum of more than 70 states and municipalities that have enacted [more than 150 new tenant protections](#) since January 2021.

Not all successful ballot measures were helpful in addressing the housing crisis. A handful are likely to have a harmful impact, including a measure to criminalize unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento, California, and some measures that impose obstacles to new affordable housing projects. Other communities, however, rejected measures that would have restricted zoning and limited housing development. Overall, it is clear: voters said yes to affordable housing at the ballot box.

The pathway to place a measure on a ballot varies in each community. Some state laws require voters' direct approval to make certain policy changes, which creates the need for a ballot measure. In some communities, advocates can use the ballot initiative process to place their issue on the ballot by gathering signatures. Many local governments developed policy proposals and referred them directly to the voters in the form of a ballot measure. In other cases, advocates and activists responded to needs in their own communities by organizing grassroots ballot initiative campaigns – sometimes with the support of their local elected officials, and sometimes against their opposition. Housing advocates formed coalitions, developed their own policy language, and collected enough signatures to place their initiatives on the ballot,

demonstrating voters' eagerness to enact bold solutions that meet the scale of the need when local leaders have been unwilling to do so.


This report summarizes nearly 100 housing-related ballot measures and their outcomes, and contains five case studies from communities in California, New York, Florida, and Colorado, providing a glimpse into the inner workings of ballot measure campaigns, successful organizing tactics, and key lessons learned. The report concludes with an analysis of outcomes and a look ahead to ballot measures on the horizon in 2023 and beyond.

TENANT PROTECTIONS

The combination of unprecedented rent spikes and depletion of many state and local Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) programs made the lowest-income renters especially vulnerable to housing instability and eviction in 2022. In Portland, ME, Denver, CO, and Pasadena, CA, grassroots organizers crafted tenant protection ballot initiatives and collected signatures to qualify their policy proposals for the ballot. Elected officials referred tenant protection measures – often crafted in consultation with local tenant leaders – to the ballot in Oakland, CA, Orange County, FL, Santa Monica, CA, and Richmond, CA. Voters approved measures to establish rent stabilization or strengthen existing rent stabilization ordinances in every community where they had the opportunity to do so. The sweeping success of rent stabilization ballot measures is a testament to the devastating impact of rising rents and widespread demand for policy solutions. Because of state preemption laws, however, ongoing legal challenges are preventing a one-year emergency rent cap in Orange County, FL, from immediately taking effect.


Question C in Portland, ME, paired a measure to strengthen the city's existing rent stabilization ordinance with other tenant protection provisions, including a ban on rental application


fees and disincentives for no-cause evictions. Oakland, CA, expanded its just cause ordinance to prevent evictions of families with children or teachers during the school year, which will mitigate the destabilizing consequences of evictions on children's education. Denver's ballot initiative to establish the right to counsel in eviction court was the sole tenant protection ballot measure to be defeated in November 2022.

 **Denver, CO.** [Initiated Ordinance 305](#) would have charged landlords a \$75 yearly fee per rental unit, with the fee to increase based on the Colorado Consumer Price Index (CPI), to provide free legal representation to tenants facing eviction. The ballot initiative would also have created a tenants' committee of seven members and provided a \$1,000 yearly stipend to each member. The [No Eviction Without Representation Denver campaign](#) collected signatures to place the initiative on the ballot. The campaign had the support of a diverse range of civic groups, housing organizations, unions, political party organizations, neighborhood associations, faith communities, and other progressive groups. The Apartment Association of Metro Denver [opposed](#) the ballot measure. The measure [was defeated](#) on a vote of 43% to 57%.


 **Oakland, CA.** [Measure V](#) amends Oakland's existing just cause eviction protections to cover tenants in recreational vehicles (RVs) and tiny homes on wheels on private property. Measure V adds special eviction protections to protect families with school-age children and educators from no-fault evictions during the school year. Currently, tenants who live in buildings constructed after 1995 do not have just cause protections; Measure V expands the just cause ordinance to cover tenants in buildings that are more than 10 years old (on a rolling cutoff). Measure V also removes failure to extend (re-sign) a long-term lease as grounds for eviction and allows tenants to rent on a periodic (month-to-month) basis. Oakland City Council voted


to place Measure V on the ballot with a 7-0 vote, and it was proposed by Councilmembers Dan Kalb and Carroll Fife. A broad coalition of tenant and housing advocacy organizations supported Measure V. [Opponents](#) included the East Bay Rental Housing Association. Measure V [was approved](#) on a vote of 68% to 32%.


 **Orange County, FL.** The [ballot measure](#) would impose a one-year cap on rent hikes for certain rental apartments in multifamily buildings in Orange County at 9.8%, a percentage equal to the increase of the CPI for urban consumers in the South. The cap would apply to an estimated 104,000 apartments. The Orange County Commission voted narrowly to place the measure on the ballot in August, but the Florida Apartment Association and Florida Realtors [moved to block the measure](#). The measure still appeared on the ballot, but a court [issued two temporary injunctions](#) that will prevent the votes from being certified and bar the measure from taking effect. The basis of the legal challenge to the ballot measure is a provision in Florida state law that preempts local governments from enacting rent control unless it is necessary to address an “existing housing emergency which is so grave as to constitute a serious menace to the general public.” Advocates argue that Orange County is currently experiencing such an emergency. This measure was [approved by 59% of voters](#), but the temporary injunction prevents it from being certified.

 **Portland, ME.** [Question C](#) requires landlords to provide a 90-day notice for no-cause evictions and increase the length of notice that a landlord must provide for rent increases from 75 days to 90 days. The measure allows landlords to increase rents by 5% in addition to other annual increases when a new tenant moves in, but the 5% rent increase is limited to voluntary turnovers, which discourages no-cause evictions. Question C also reduces costs for tenants by restricting deposits to one month’s rent, prohibiting

application fees, and limiting the amount of standard annual rent increases that landlords can impose to 70% of the change in the CPI in the Greater Boston Metro Area. The increase currently allowed is 100%. Question C increases the fee for condo conversions - in which a rental unit is changed to a private, occupant-owned condominium - from \$150 to \$25,000. Question C is one of four ballot initiatives that the Maine chapter of the Democratic Socialists for America sponsored as part of its Livable Portland campaign. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

 **Santa Monica, CA.** [Measure RC](#) lowers the city’s maximum annual rent increase cap from 6% to 3% (from \$140 per month to \$70 per month). It also revises the conditions under which a landlord can evict tenants for owner occupancy to require that owners move into the unit within 60 days of vacancy and that an owner intend to occupy a unit as a primary residence for at least two years, unless extenuating circumstances exist. Measure RC was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). It was [approved](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

 **Santa Monica, CA.** [Measure EM](#) amends the city charter to authorize the Rent Control Board to disallow or modify annual rent adjustments during a state of emergency declared by the President of the United States, Governor of California, Los Angeles Public Health Officer, Santa Monica City Council, or Director of Emergency Services. Landlords are still permitted to file a petition to allow a rent increase. Measure EM was placed on the ballot as a referral. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

 **Pasadena, CA.** [Measure H](#) changes Pasadena’s City Charter to create a board to limit rent increases to 75% of CPI annually for multifamily rental units built before February 1, 1995. (Single family homes and units built after 1995 are exempt because of California’s statewide Costa-Hawkins law.) Measure H establishes just cause eviction protections

to expand upon the protections created by AB 1482, a state law passed in 2019. Just cause protections would apply to all renters immediately, without the one-year delay set at the state level, and would not expire, while the state-level protections expire in 2030. Measure H also creates an independent Rental Housing Board appointed by the City Council to oversee and adopt rules and regulations. Members of the Pasadena Tenants Union wrote the text of the amendment, and organizers launched a successful signature collection drive to place it on the ballot. [Pasadena For Rent Control](#), a diverse coalition of tenant organizations, civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, labor unions, other civic organizations, and community leaders, led the campaign for the ballot initiative. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 54% to 46%.

✓ **Richmond, CA.** [Measure P](#) caps the maximum rate that rent-controlled units can be hiked each year at either 60% of CPI or 3% of a controlled unit's current rate, whichever is lower. Currently, landlords can raise the rent to 100% of CPI. The Richmond City Council [referred](#) Measure P to the ballot in July 2022 on a 5-2 vote. Supporters of the ballot measure [include](#) the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, and opponents include the Association of United Richmond Housing Providers, the California Apartment Association, and the East Bay Rental Housing Association. This measure [was approved](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

CASE STUDY: The Road to Rent Stabilization in Orange County, FL

Voters in Orange County, FL, approved a ballot measure that would limit rent increases in multifamily apartment buildings to the rate of inflation for one year. (See page 3 for a detailed description of the ballot measure's provisions.) For Florida Rising, one of the key partners in the campaign, the push for rent stabilization emerged from the statewide [Justice on Every Block campaign](#). The campaign seeks to create a state where everyone, regardless of what block they live on, can be safe, happy, healthy, and whole. Local People's Assemblies and leaders in 11 priority counties set the campaign's vision and policy goals. Housing justice is a central component of most of the counties' campaign platforms, and members across the state endorsed rent stabilization as a policy priority.



A campaign poster for the rent stabilization ballot measure



Activists rally in support of the rent stabilization ballot measure.

of what constitutes a state of emergency. The panel ruled that a state of emergency cannot build slowly over time – it must result from an identifiable event that immediately precipitates the emergency conditions. Although this decision is currently in effect, the county has appealed, and the case could go before the Florida Supreme Court, if the court accepts the appeal. Florida Rising and other proponents hope to see the Florida Supreme Court roll back the appeals court's narrow definition of a state of emergency, which would reopen the pathway for rent stabilization ballot measures in other communities.

The Florida state government preempts local rent stabilization ordinances, but a carveout in state statute created an opening for organizers. State law allows local governments to put a one-year rent stabilization measure before the voters, with the possibility of renewal, if the local government declares a housing state of emergency that constitutes a grave threat to the public. This provision, however, had never been defined, and housing justice leaders across the state sought to test whether this carveout would enable local governments to enact rent stabilization. Local leaders, including Florida Rising members, made efforts to advance this strategy in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Miami-Dade, and Orange County. However, it was Orange County that ultimately placed rent stabilization on the ballot this year, despite fierce opposition.

State law requires the county commission to pass a resolution outlining the reasons for the state of emergency, then pass an enabling ordinance and language for the ballot. Commissioner Emily Bonilla, a champion of housing justice, brought the proposal to declare a housing state of emergency to the Orange County Commission, which kickstarted a campaign that once felt out of reach. Once the County Commission passed the resolution, Florida Rising and other partners worked through a local coalition to quickly pull together the next steps of the campaign.

The Florida Apartment Association and Florida Realtors were the main opponents of the rent stabilization campaign. Once the commission voted to place rent stabilization on the ballot, opponents filed a lawsuit demanding an injunction to stop the measure from appearing on the ballot. At the hearing, the local Supervisor of Elections declared that it would not be feasible to change the ballots so close to the print deadline. The judge ruled that the people deserved a say, even if the measure was unlikely to survive further legal challenges.

The decision was immediately appealed, and a three-judge panel issued a 2-1 ruling that dealt a difficult blow to the campaign. The panel determined that the ordinance could not take effect and narrowed the scope



Organizers from Florida Rising and coalition partners show up in support of the ballot measure.

“The election results illustrate the widespread popularity of rent stabilization – and its power to mobilize voters who may otherwise be apathetic or disengaged.”

their bases of membership to recruit volunteers for the campaign. Many of the leaders that led the charge for rent stabilization had launched local housing campaigns to ensure housing for Puerto Ricans displaced by Hurricane Maria. Coalition partners harnessed these past organizing experiences and leveraged their relationships with elected officials to prepare for important votes on the commission.

The campaign spent a lot of time garnering earned media, and these efforts paid off. *The Orlando Sentinel* issued an initial endorsement in the month before the election, which the campaign did not anticipate. The endorsement focused on a pro-democracy message, emphasizing that the people deserved to vote on the issue regardless of what happened in the courts. In the week prior to early voting, the campaign highlighted opponents’ campaign spending and legal maneuvers to silence voters, and the *Sentinel* subsequently doubled down on its endorsement.

In the districts where the campaign focused its field work, rent stabilization received a majority of the vote in all but one precinct. The election results illustrate the widespread popularity of rent stabilization – and its power to mobilize voters who may otherwise be apathetic or disengaged. Despite well-organized and well-funded opposition, voters delivered a clear mandate for rent stabilization and housing justice in Orange County. This mandate will give momentum to supporters of rent stabilization and housing justice advocates as the campaign shifts its focus from the ballot box to the Florida Supreme Court and the passage of a comprehensive Tenant Bill of Rights.

Despite uncertainty about the future of the ballot measure, Florida Rising and its coalition partners moved forward in full force with the Vote Yes campaign. Although opponents of the ballot measure outspent its proponents, pouring at least \$2 million into mailers, digital ads, and TV ads, the rent stabilization measure ultimately received 59% of the vote – a greater vote share than any other amendment or ordinance on the ballot and the issue with the least amount of undervotes. As Ivanna Gonzalez, campaigns director of Florida Rising, explained, “When people see a clear choice in their favor, they will show up and vote for it.”

Opponents of rent stabilization worked hard to limit support for the ballot measure, even with the appeals court ruling in their favor. Florida Realtors and the Florida Apartment Association went as far as attempting to prevent the elections office from publishing the unofficial vote count to the website, but this effort failed. Opponents also attempted to have the court mandate signage at polling locations to warn voters that this measure would not go into effect. Fortunately, the court ruled that this signage was not permissible, since the Florida Supreme Court could overturn the ruling and the presence of such signage would invalidate the results and create the need for a special election.

Campaign leaders were concerned that all of the legal back-and-forth would confuse voters and inhibit the campaign’s momentum, but they found that media coverage did not cut through the election noise, and voters ultimately supported the campaign on the merits of the issue. In door-to-door canvassing, organizers found that most voters were already educated about the measure from Florida Realtors’ and Florida Apartment Association’s numerous mailings in opposition to rent stabilization – yet many voters rejected these messages and were eager to vote for rent stabilization nonetheless.

Because Florida Rising recently formed in a merger between two other statewide organizations, the organization is still in the process of base-building and building trust in communities. Other coalition partners – including Central Florida Jobs with Justice, a coalition of Latinx faith leaders called *Hablamos Español*, unions, and legal partners like the Community Justice Project – drew from

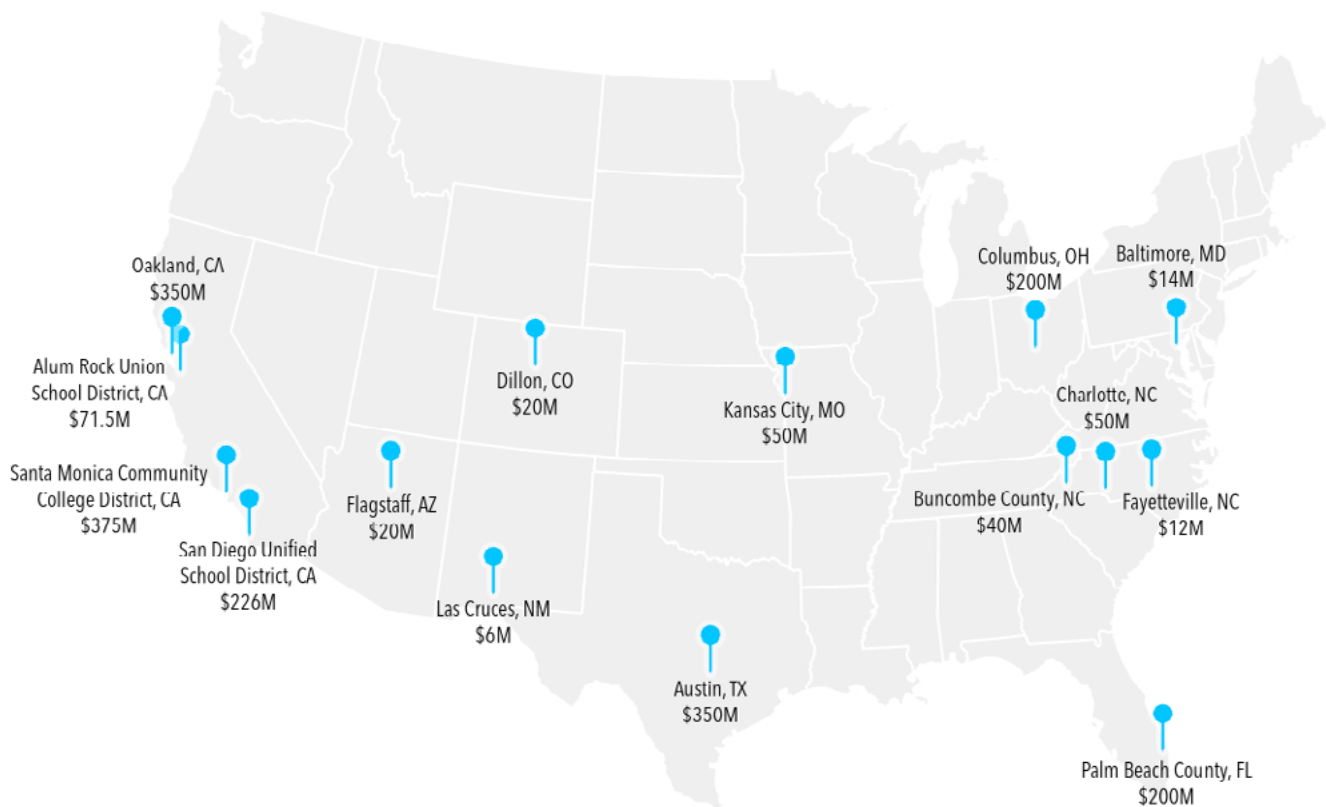
BOND MEASURES

Voters collectively authorized nearly \$2 billion in bonds for affordable housing development, acquisition, and rehabilitation. Affordable housing bond measures appeared on local ballots in every region of the country, and they received a majority of voters' approval in every community where they were proposed. Most housing bond measures were overwhelmingly popular, with margins of victory climbing as high as 66 points. Measure L in Berkeley, CA, was the only bond measure defeated; with 59% of voters in support, the measure fell short of the two-thirds supermajority approval required for passage. The near-universal success of affordable housing bond measures shows that voters have a strong appetite for spending

to address affordable housing needs - and that this appetite is present in a wide range of communities with diverse housing landscapes and political environments.

One noteworthy trend is the passage of multiple school district bond measures that respond to the impact of the affordability crisis on teachers and low-income students. San Diego Unified School District and Alum Rock Union School District (San Jose, CA) will reserve a portion of revenues from their bond measures to develop affordable housing for teachers and school district staff, and Santa Monica Community College will set aside revenues to build affordable housing for unhoused students.

Affordable Housing Bond Measures Passed in 2022



Note: Santa Monica Community College District's \$375M bond will fund a variety of infrastructure projects, including affordable housing for students experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

✓ **Alum Rock Union School District, CA.** [Measure S](#) authorizes the Alum Rock Union School District to issue \$71.5 million in bonds to fund a variety of school improvements. Some of the funding would be set aside to develop affordable rental housing for teachers and school staff. Measure S was placed on the ballot as a referral. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 71% to 29%.

✓ **Austin, TX.** [Proposition A](#) authorizes the city to issue \$350 million in bonds to fund the creation, rehabilitation, and retention of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing. The bond would fund programs and projects including, but not limited to, land acquisition, rental housing development assistance projects, ownership housing development assistance projects, and the home repair program. The bond measure is [estimated](#) to fund the construction and preservation of 3,500 homes. Austin City Council [voted](#) to refer Proposition A to the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 71% to 29%.

✓ **Baltimore, MD.** [Question A](#) authorizes the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore to borrow up to \$14 million for the planning, developing, executing, and making operative of the Affordable Housing Program of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore. Activities that could be funded [include](#) land and property acquisition and associated costs, support for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, improvement of unhealthy and unsafe conditions, and prevention of blight. The measure was placed on the ballot as a referral. It [passed](#) on a vote of 83% to 17%.

✗ **Berkeley, CA.** [Measure L](#) would have issued \$650 million in bonds to create or preserve affordable housing; repair streets, sidewalks, and underground utilities; and enhance buildings, infrastructure, and safety. The measure would have dedicated \$200 million to affordable housing, and the remaining \$450 million would have been dedicated to street paving, traffic safety, and

other infrastructure projects. The housing resources would have been invested in the city's housing trust fund to create an estimated 1,500 affordable homes for low-income residents and people experiencing homelessness. The bond measure was placed on the ballot as a referral, and Mayor Jesse Arreguín was a [strong champion](#). The [Yes on L Coalition](#) included housing advocates, unions, environmental organizations, other civic groups, elected officials, and other community leaders. This measure [received the support](#) of 59% of voters but did not meet the two-thirds supermajority threshold required to pass.

✓ **Buncombe County, NC.** The [Housing Bond](#) authorizes \$40 million of bonds to increase housing supply for low- and moderate-income people. The [Better With Bonds coalition](#), which encompasses a diverse group of community organizations and the Asheville Area Chamber of Congress, jointly supported the Housing Bond and another bond dedicated to land conservation, greenways, and trails. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 62% to 38%.

✓ **Charlotte, NC.** [City of Charlotte Housing Bonds](#) authorizes \$50 million of bonds to raise revenues for Charlotte's Housing Trust Fund. Bonds will be used to pay the capital costs of housing projects for low- and moderate-income people, including the cost of associated infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, and rights-of-way required. Qualifying projects include new construction and rehabilitation of multifamily homes; homeownership development in targeted neighborhoods; housing for seniors, disabled, and homeless populations; and acquisition of properties for developing mixed-income communities. The housing bond measure was placed on the ballot as a referral and had the support of the [Vote Yes for City Bonds campaign](#), which was endorsed by the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, the Black Political Caucus of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and *The Charlotte Observer*. The measure

[passed](#) on a vote of 74% to 26%.

✓ **Columbus, OH.** [Issue 16](#) will issue \$200 million in bonds for affordable housing and community development over the course of 20 years. The bond is aimed at helping households making less than \$50,000 per year. Revenues will be invested in [four priorities](#): \$80 million for the construction of affordable rental units; \$50 million for affordable homeownership; \$40 million to preserve existing housing affordability; and \$30 million for programs and permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Issue 16 was placed on the ballot as a referral alongside [four other bond](#) measures, collectively totaling \$1.5 billion. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 68% to 32%.

✓ **Dillon, CO.** [Ballot Issue 2C](#) issues \$20 million in bonds to finance construction, acquisition, and improvement of workforce housing projects. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

✓ **Fayetteville, NC.** The city of Fayetteville's \$97 million bond package, collectively dubbed [Fayetteville Forward](#), includes \$12 million devoted to housing opportunity. Possible uses of the revenues include a housing trust fund, homeownership programs, and other new housing initiatives to meet community needs. The City Council referred the bond package to the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

✓ **Flagstaff, AZ.** [Proposition 442](#) authorizes the City of Flagstaff to issue and sell general obligation bonds in a principal amount up to \$20 million for the purpose of increasing the supply of affordable housing and expanding the city's homebuyer assistance program. [Five million](#) dollars will be used to redevelop city-owned public housing to double the number of affordable homes on the same amount of land. Three million dollars will

be used for the city to partner with private developers, both for-profit and nonprofit, to repurpose existing buildings into rental properties. Five million dollars will be used to incentivize private developers to incorporate affordable rental housing in new projects, which would create an estimated 400 to 500 new affordable rental homes. Seven million dollars will be used to expand Flagstaff's homebuyer assistance program. The Flagstaff City Council placed Proposition 422 on the ballot as a referral after considering input from the Citizen Bond Committee, a group of committee members that meets regularly to consider the city's needs and make bond recommendations to the City Council. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 63% to 37%.

✓ **Kansas City, MO.** [Question 2](#) issues \$50 million in general obligation bonds for the city's Housing Trust Fund, which supports the rehabilitation, renovation, and construction of houses and buildings, including blight removal, to provide affordable housing for very low- to moderate-income households. The bond measure was placed on the ballot as a referral. Grassroots tenants' rights organizations KC Tenants Power and KC Tenants did not originally endorse the ballot measure, but they [crafted a compromise resolution](#) that promised the additional Housing Trust Fund resources would be dedicated to deeply affordable housing. Once the City Council passed the resolution, the tenants' groups backed the measure, and KC Tenants Power canvassed heavily in support. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 71% to 29%.

✓ **Las Cruces, NM.** The [General Obligation \(GO\) bond](#) authorizes \$6 million for affordable housing. This investment would leverage up to \$36.5 million in federal, state, and private funds to add another 175 affordable homes to the city. The bond measure was placed on the ballot as a referral, along with three other bond measures, and has the support of the [Las Cruces Coalition for Attainable Housing](#). The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 65% to 35%.

✓ **Oakland, CA.** [Measure U](#) authorizes the City of Oakland to issue \$850 million in general obligation bonds that will be invested in creating affordable housing for Oaklanders experiencing homelessness; repaving streets to remove potholes; improving traffic/pedestrian safety; and updating fire stations and other public facilities. Of the \$850 million, \$350 million would be devoted to the construction and preservation of interim and permanent affordable housing. Measure U will fund the construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation of an estimated 2,200 to 2,400 affordable homes over the next four to six years, which will bring Oakland closer to its goal of 10,000 affordable homes by 2030. Measure U was placed on the ballot as a referral. Measure U required a two-thirds supermajority vote to pass, and it was [approved](#) on a vote of 75% to 25%.

✓ **Palm Beach County, FL.** The county's \$200 million [bond](#) will finance the development of workforce housing in the county, which will include the acquisition and construction of condominiums, multi-family rental homes, single-family homes, and townhomes. The bond is expected to provide gap financing for developers, with most funding for workforce housing projects coming from

other sources. The bond is estimated to result in 20,000 affordable homes and apartments for essential workers making less than \$128,000 a year. The Palm Beach County Commission referred the bond measure to the ballot [on a 4-2 vote in June](#). The measure had the strong support of the [Hometown Housing Trust](#), a political action committee created specifically to advocate for the bond measure that [raised nearly](#) \$1 million, with most contributions coming from developers and land use planners. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

✓ **San Diego Unified School District, CA.** [Measure U](#) will dedicate \$226 million of a \$3.2 billion bond measure to build affordable housing for school district employees on the site of its current headquarters. It was placed on the ballot as a referral. Measure U was [approved](#) on a vote of 65% to 35%.

✓ **Santa Monica Community College, CA.** [Measure SMC](#) authorizes the school district to issue \$375 million in bonds to upgrade facilities and to build affordable housing for unhoused students. The measure was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 58% to 42%.

Case Study: Organizing for Housing Justice across the East Bay

Voters in California's East Bay passed multiple ballot measures that will increase the supply of affordable homes and strengthen tenant protections. Oakland voters approved Measure V, which tightens the city's existing just cause eviction protections, and Measure U, a bond measure that dedicates \$350 million to affordable housing. Berkeley voters passed Measure M, a tax on vacant homes. Each city also passed an Article 34 authorization (Measure Q in Oakland and Measure N in Berkeley), fulfilling a state constitutional requirement for voters to directly approve government-funded affordable homes. A majority of Berkeley voters supported a bond package, Measure L, that included \$200 million for affordable housing, but the measure fell short of the 67% supermajority threshold required for passage. Organizers at East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO), an affordable housing advocacy coalition, worked on both cities' housing measures and shared insights from their experiences.



EBHO and NPH organized a joint canvassing session for bond measures in Berkeley and Oakland.



Organizers in Oakland ran a coordinated campaign for Measures V and Q.

Organizers in Oakland campaigned collaboratively for Measures Q and V, while the campaign for Measure U was a unique effort. The campaign for Measures Q and V primarily focused on Measure V and its groundbreaking just cause eviction protections. In Berkeley, the vacant homes campaign and the bond measure campaign were independent from each other, and there was not a significant campaign for Measure N (Article 34 authorization) because there was no organized opposition to it. Although each city had its own distinct set of ballot measures and campaigns, EBHO and Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) did organize a joint canvassing session for Measures L and U in the neighborhoods where Berkeley and Oakland meet.

All the measures were placed on the ballot as referrals from the city council, but advocates played a role in crafting the language of some of the ballot measures and powered the campaigns. Oakland housing advocates, pedestrian and bike safety advocates, and other community members were consulted on the contents of Measure U, which created strong buy-in at the outset. Members of Bike East Bay, Friends of the Oakland Library, and housing advocates all had a strong stake in the passage of the bond package. Collectively, their regular tabling at farmers' markets and other forms of community outreach ensured that a broad cross-section of Oaklanders were supportive of the bond measure. Tenants' rights organizations, including ACCE, the Oakland Tenants Union, and Moms 4 Housing, collaborated with Oakland City Council to develop the just cause measure and took on an important leadership role throughout the campaign. Tenant leaders spoke at the press conference that launched the ballot measure campaign and led weekly canvassing efforts for Measures V and Q.

In Berkeley, Vice Mayor Kate Harrison spearheaded the campaign for the vacancy tax (Measure M), which benefited from the [support](#) of tenant leaders and other civic organizations. Mayor Jesse Arreguin was the lead proponent of the bond measure (Measure L), but advocates expressed some frustration at the initial lack of community engagement on the measure. The campaign did not reach out to affordable housing advocates in the early stages of the process. Nevertheless, housing advocates still endorsed Measure L and hosted weekly phone-banking sessions in support.

Oakland's Measure U faced opposition from the Alameda Taxpayers Association, which opposes all ballot measures that would increase spending, but there was not a strong or well-funded campaign against the bond package. In contrast, opponents did mobilize heavily against Berkeley's Measure L. Opponents distributed lawn signs and posters against the bond measure. The campaign against Measure L highlighted one sentence in the text that stated that the specified dollar amounts "are not a commitment or guarantee that any specific amounts will be spent on particular



Oaklanders rally in support of expanding just cause eviction protections.

projects or categories of projects.” This boilerplate language is included in all bond measures since market conditions always create some uncertainty about the amount of revenues that will be raised, but opponents took this sentence as evidence that the money would not in fact be spent on affordable housing and would lack sufficient oversight. By calling public attention to this language, the opposition confused voters and made them more hesitant to support the bond measure.

Campaigns for housing justice in the East Bay developed messaging that resonated with voters’ concerns about the affordable housing crisis. The campaign for Measure V focused on the provision that will protect families with children from evictions during the school year. Messages about the connection between education and housing stability stuck with voters, and the campaign organized a press conference in front of a school where teachers

spoke about the impact of evictions on learning loss. The campaign for Measure M in Berkeley sent out mailers with images of blighted homes and highlighted the injustice of homes sitting vacant while people sleep on the streets – imagery that voters found salient.

Local media had mixed reactions to the ballot measures. *The East Bay Times*, which tends to take fiscally conservative stances, opposed every measure to raise revenues. The *San Francisco Chronicle* [endorsed](#) Measures Q and U in Oakland and Measures L and N in Berkeley. Because of the increased popularity of early voting and mail-in voting, however, many voters had already cast their ballots by the time the endorsements came out.

Organizers at EBHO emphasized the importance of building a strong coalition and gaining buy-in from community groups. Advocates were brought into the process much earlier in the campaign for Oakland’s Measure U than the campaign for Berkeley’s Measure L, which may partially account for the difference in outcomes. Berkeley voters also may have been hesitant to dedicate more money after passing Measure O, an affordable housing bond, just four years ago. Most voters were not aware that all the resources from Measure O had already been committed to projects. Organizers noted that the campaign could have done more to thank voters for passing Measure O four years ago, dispel the assumption that resources were still available, and emphasize the need for further investments. Some voters were also concerned about indebtedness and whether passing bond measures so frequently would be sustainable. Others were skeptical that the housing investments from Measure L, which would be targeted to renters between 20% and 60% of AMI, would be affordable enough to make a difference for community members with the greatest needs.

Despite the defeat of Measure L, advocates across the East Bay won a majority of voters’ approval for all their housing ballot measures and achieved major victories for housing justice. Tenant leaders successfully pushed Oakland City Council to craft a bold just cause eviction measure, and thanks to their organizing, the measure passed by a 24-point margin. Berkeley’s vacancy tax, Measure M, passed by a 30-point margin. This clear mandate for Measure M demonstrated voters’ appetite for innovative new solutions and their frustration with the visible injustice of people sleeping outside on streets where homes sit vacant. Ballot measure advocacy in the East Bay offers a powerful model of tenant organizing and cross-sector coalition-building to deliver major wins for housing justice at the ballot box.

“This clear mandate [...] demonstrated voters’ appetite for innovative new solutions and their frustration with the visible injustice of people sleeping outside on streets where homes sit vacant.”

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

In addition to ballot measures that raise revenues to address homelessness (see “Bond Measures” and “Other Taxes and Fees” for more information), two California cities adopted new policies relating to homelessness response. Sacramento’s Measure O, which passed despite significant opposition from people with lived experience of homelessness, is the latest in a nationwide wave of efforts to criminalize unsheltered homelessness. The passage of Measure O raises concerns that other cities will turn to ballot measures to pursue counterproductive strategies that punish people experiencing homelessness, rather than invest in proven solutions such as permanent housing and supportive services. In San Francisco, Proposition C aims to create greater accountability in the city’s homelessness services system and specifies a role for people with lived experience of homelessness.

✓ **Sacramento, CA.** [Measure O](#) makes it a criminal offense for four or more people to camp on public or private property, which will be enforceable once the city meets its obligation to provide emergency shelter space. The measure authorizes new emergency shelter spaces that equal at least 12% of the estimated number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the city. The city will authorize additional spaces once 60% of existing spaces are full. Measure O also requires the city to conduct outreach to people experiencing homelessness. Individuals can be punished for unauthorized camping if they have rejected available space in an emergency shelter or city-authorized temporary campground. Measure O creates a mechanism for residents to take legal action against the city if they are affected by unlawful camping or unlawful storage on city property. Measure O [will only go into effect](#) if the city reaches a legally binding partnership agreement with the county. Sacramento City Council referred Measure O to the ballot. A [coalition](#) of business groups, [including](#) the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce and Sacramento Region Busi-

ness Association, led the campaign for the ballot measure, and it had the endorsement of Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg. Many housing and homelessness advocates, including the Sacramento Homeless Union and Sacramento Tenants Union, opposed the ballot measure. City councilmembers were divided on Measure O. Measure O was [approved](#) on a vote of 52% to 48%.

✓ **San Francisco, CA.** [Proposition C](#) amends the city’s charter to create a Homelessness Oversight Commission to oversee the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and requires the city controller to conduct audits of services for people experiencing homelessness. The duties of the Homelessness Oversight Commission will include formulating, evaluating, and setting homeless policies; serving as a public forum to raise accountability issues and advocate for fair policies; conducting investigations into government operations within its jurisdiction; nominating candidates for department head to the mayor and removing department heads; and approving departmental plans and budgets before the Board of Supervisors casts a final vote. One board seat will [be reserved](#) for someone who has personally experienced homelessness. The ballot measure [was drafted in 2019](#) by a coalition of homeless service providers and county supervisors. The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to place Proposition C on the ballot. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 67% to 33%.

LODGING AND SHORT-TERM RENTAL TAXES, REGULATIONS, AND EXPANSIONS OF USE

Communities across California and Colorado passed new taxes, or raised the existing tax rate, on short-term rentals (STRs), which are temporary accommodations of less than 30 days listed on platforms such as AirBnB and

Vrbo. Some communities also raised taxes on traditional lodging, such as hotels, motels, and inns, and dedicated a portion of new revenues to affordable housing. An overwhelming majority of ballot measures to establish or increase STR and lodging taxes were successful. Such measures generally appeal to voters because of the clear nexus between the revenue source and the programs they fund. Voters tend to see it as fair for STR taxes to fund housing solutions in high-cost communities where STRs cut into the housing stock and put upward pressure on rents.

Some communities in Colorado expanded the permissible uses of lodging tax revenue to include affordable housing. Previously, local marketing districts and counties could only use lodging tax revenues to advertise and market local tourism. In March 2022, Governor Jared Polis signed [HB22-1117](#), which allows local marketing districts and counties to use lodging tax revenues for affordable housing and childcare, especially for the tourism-related workforce. The new law specifies that local governments must receive voter approval to expand the uses of lodging tax revenue. More than a dozen jurisdictions sought to take advantage of this new flexibility for their lodging tax revenues by placing the question on the ballot. Many communities proposed to broaden the scope of their lodging taxes without raising the tax rate, while others increased or enacted new lodging taxes and specified that a portion of new revenues will be invested in affordable housing for the tourism-related workforce.

A smaller number of communities considered ballot measures to restrict the number, location, or ownership of STRs. These ballot measures were all defeated. In Portland, ME, however, voters were confronted with two competing ballot measures to regulate STRs. Their defeat may be attributable to voter confusion, rather than rejection of the overarching policy ideas.

Lodging and Short Term Rental Taxes and Redirection of Revenues into Affordable Housing

✓ **Aspen, CO.** Ballot Issue 2A will [establish](#) an STR tax that ranges from 5% to 10% depending on ownership. Guests at owner-occupied STR properties will be taxed at a rate of 5%, while guests at units owned by investors or second homeowners will be taxed at a rate of 10%. The tax will go into effect on May 1, 2023, and will generate an estimated \$9.14 million in its first year. A minimum of 70% of the tax revenue will go to the city's housing programs, and the other 30% can be used for other purposes, such as city infra-structural improvements and environmental efforts. Aspen City Council voted unanimously to refer Issue 2A to the ballot. It [passed](#) on a vote of 62% to 38%.

✓ **Carbondale, CO.** Ballot Issue 2A [enacted](#) a 6% excise tax on STR stays to support affordable housing projects and address some of the impacts of tourism. The excise tax will be added on top of the existing lodging and regular sales taxes that are applied to STRs. This measure is expected to generate an estimated \$150,000 per year. Carbondale expects to use the revenues to leverage state and federal grant opportunities and explore new opportunities to add to the town's deed-restricted housing stock. The Carbondale town board [voted unanimously](#) to refer the measure to the ballot. It [passed](#) on a vote of 72% to 28%.

✓ **Chaffee County, CO.** [Issue 1A](#) expands the use of Chaffee County's existing lodging excise tax to allow for up to 60% of tax revenues to cover housing and childcare for local and seasonal workers. Currently, the tax revenues are entirely dedicated to promoting local tourism; Issue 1A stipulates that at least 40% of the tax revenues will be retained for this purpose. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 64% to 36%.

✓ **Clear Creek County, CO.** Ballot Issue 1A will authorize Clear Creek County to use at least 60% of its revenue from the existing lodging tax to support housing and childcare for the tourism-related workforce, including seasonal workers. A maximum of 40% of lodging tax revenue will continue to be used for its current purposes of advertising and marketing local tourism. Ballot Issue 2A [passed](#) on a vote of 65% to 35%.

✓ **Dillon, CO.** [Ballot Issue 2B](#) will enact a 5% excise tax on STRs. The tax increase will raise revenues to develop community projects and address the impacts of tourism, among other purposes. The town council [voted unanimously](#) to place the measure on the ballot. Issue 2B passed on a vote of 65% to 35%.

✓ **Dolores County, CO.** Ballot Initiative 1A [enacts](#) a 2% lodging tax on hotels, STRs, bed-and-breakfasts, RV parks, and other lodging providers. Ten percent of the tax revenues will fund tourism marketing, 30% will be devoted to childcare and affordable housing for local workers, and 60% will fund road maintenance, emergency services, development of signage and trails, and other improvements for tourism. The tax will be limited to unincorporated areas of Dolores County and Dove Creek. This measure [passed](#) on a vote of 51% to 49%.

✓ **Durango, CO.** [Ballot Question 2A](#) allows the city to keep all revenues in excess of \$900,000 from the 2021 voter-approved increased lodgers' tax rate of 3.25%. Without approval of Ballot Question 2A, these revenues would otherwise be refunded, with residents expecting an average refund of \$218 per utility account. Of the excess revenues, the city proposed to devote 66% to affordable and workforce housing programs, 20% to transportation, parking, and transit, and 14% to arts and cultural programs. The City Council of Durango [referred](#) Question 2A to the ballot. The measure passed by a vote of 68% to 32%.

✓ **Eagle County, CO.** [Ballot Issue 1A](#) will enact a 2% lodging tax in the county's towns and unincorporated areas where a lodging tax does not already exist. Ninety percent of the revenues will be dedicated to providing affordable housing opportunities and childcare programs to support the local workforce, while 10% will be dedicated to tourism promotion. The tax will apply to the town of Gypsum and unincorporated areas of Eagle County, including Beaver Creek and Bachelor Gulch. Vail and other cities in Eagle County already have lodging taxes in place and will not be subject to the county tax. The Board of County Commissioners [referred](#) the measure to the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 60% to 40%.

✓ **Estes Park, CO.** [Ballot Issue 6E](#) would raise the existing 2% lodging tax to 5.5%. The revenues generated from the 3.5% tax increase, [estimated](#) at \$5.25 million, will be invested in workforce housing and childcare improvements. The Visit Estes Park marketing district voted to place the measure on the ballot. The measure was [approved](#) on a vote of 63% to 37%.

✓ **Georgetown, CO.** [Measure 2A](#) will enact a 2% lodging tax and invest a portion of the revenues in housing and childcare for the tourism-related workforce, including seasonal workers. The rest of the revenues will be dedicated to tourism promotion and marketing of public events, business recruitment and development, and other related purposes. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 56% to 44%.

✓ **Gilpin County, CO.** [Ballot Issue 1A](#) will adopt a 2% lodging tax on STRs, hotels, and other short-term lodging. Revenues will be dedicated to promoting tourism and addressing its impacts, which may include investments in recreation, transportation and roads, childcare, workforce housing, and historic preservation. The Board of County Commissioners for the County of Gilpin placed the measure on the ballot. It [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

✓ **Glenwood Springs, CO.** [Ballot Issue 2C](#) imposes an additional 2.5% excise tax on hotel, motel, short-term rental stays, and other temporary accommodations. This tax does not affect the existing 2.5% accommodations tax. Revenues from the new excise tax will be [dedicated exclusively](#) to a fund for workforce housing development and cannot be redirected into the general fund. The workforce housing fund can be used to purchase property, address infrastructure needs, redevelop existing housing, form partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors to develop workforce housing, support affordable rental housing and homeownership programs, and maintain existing affordable housing, among other purposes. [Supporters of the Yes for Workforce Housing campaign](#) included many tourism-based businesses, nonprofits, and the Glenwood Chamber Resort Association. [Citizens Concerned About City Council](#), which organized against the ballot measure, won some support from the lodging sector. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

✗ **Grand Junction, CO.** [Measure 2A](#) would have allowed the city to adopt an additional 1% tax on lodging. [Measure 2B](#) would have allowed the city to adopt an 8% excise tax on STRs. The revenues from both ballot measures would have facilitated the development of partnerships among nonprofits, the private sector, and governments for the acquisition of land and buildings, and the development, operation, and maintenance of affordable housing for households at or below 80% of AMI. New resources also would have been dedicated to homeownership assistance, shared and sweat equity programs, and other programs to facilitate homeownership. Both measures were placed on the ballot as referrals. [Measure 2A was defeated](#) in a vote of 37% to 63%, and [Measure 2B was defeated](#) in a vote of 26% to 74%.

✓ **Gunnison River Valley Local Marketing District, CO.** [Ballot Question 6A](#) authorizes Gunnison River Valley Local Marketing District to use up to 40% of revenue from its existing accommodations tax to support housing or childcare for the tourism-related workforce, to support recreation infrastructure, and for other allowable purposes. At least 60% of revenues will continue to be spent on marketing and tourism promotion. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 69% to 41%.

✗ **Park County, CO.** [Ballot Issue 1B](#) would have enacted a new 2% lodging excise tax, excluding the municipality of Fairplay, which already has its own lodging tax. At least 10% of the revenues would have been invested in advertising and marketing local tourism. The remaining 90% of the revenues would have been invested in housing and childcare for the tourism-related workforce and other workers in the community, and for infrastructure and recreational improvements to enhance the visitor experience. [Ballot Issue 1B was defeated](#) on a vote of 42% to 58%.

✓ **Salida City, CO.** [Issue 2A](#) establishes an annual license fee of \$1,000 for all short-term rental license holders, which will generate an estimated \$275,000 in its first year. [Issue 2B](#) will increase the nightly occupational lodging taxes on STRs from \$4.82 to \$15 per night per bedroom. The revenues from both measures will be earmarked to promote affordable housing in Salida City. Both [Issues 2A and 2B](#) were placed on the ballot as referrals from Salida City Council. [Issue 2A passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%. [Issue 2B passed](#) on a vote of 51% to 49%.

✓ **San Juan County, CO.** [Ballot Question 1A](#) authorizes the county to expand the use of the existing lodging tax revenues. Forty percent of the revenues will be dedicated to acquiring, constructing, renovating, and maintaining housing and funding childcare for the tourism-related workforce and other

workers in the community. Twenty percent of the revenues will be invested in infrastructure and recreational projects to enhance visitor experiences, and the remaining 40% will remain invested in the marketing and promotion of local tourism. Ballot Question 1A [passed](#) on a vote of 76% to 24%.

✔ **Snowmass Village, CO.** The [ballot measure](#) authorizes the town to expand the permissible uses of the existing town lodging tax and town sales tax to include workforce housing, including the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, operation, and maintenance of town-owned, controlled, or sponsored workforce housing. The Town Council [voted unanimously](#) to place the measure on the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 83% to 17%.

✔ **Steamboat Springs, CO.** [Measure 2A](#) establishes an additional 9% tax on short term rentals, which brings the total tax rate on STRs in Steamboat Springs to 20.4% - one of the highest STR taxes in Colorado. The tax will not apply to hotels and will sunset in 20 years. The tax will generate an [estimated \\$14 million](#) in its first year, which will be invested in the construction of affordable housing at the Yampa Valley Housing Authority's Brown Ranch development. The Steamboat Springs City Council voted to refer Measure 2A to the ballot on a 6-1 vote. The [No Way on 2A campaign](#), led by the Steamboat Springs Community Preservation Alliance, organized in opposition to the measure. The measure [passed](#) by a vote of 63% to 37%.

✔ **Summit County, CO.** [Referred Measure 1A](#) will implement a 2% excise tax on short-term rentals in the unincorporated area of Summit County, effective January 1, 2023. Revenues from the measure will fund the construction and acquisition of affordable workforce housing, childcare for local workers, and improvement of outdoor recreation facilities and services. The Board of County Commissioners referred the STR excise tax to

the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 73% to 27%.

✔ **Healdsburg, CA.** [Measure L](#) amends the city's Transient Occupancy Tax to expand the uses of funding and allow for the acquisition and construction of capital improvements for affordable housing, parks, and community services facilities. It was placed on the ballot as a referral. Measure L required a two-thirds supermajority approval, and it [passed](#) on a vote of 76% to 24%.

✔ **Santa Monica, CA.** [Measure CS](#) increases the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) rate on hotel rooms by 1% and on STRs by 3% for a total of 15% and 17%, respectively. The measure is estimated to raise \$4.1 million annually. Although the ballot measure does not legally require specific uses of the revenue, it lists possible activities that could be funded, [including](#) investments in addressing homelessness, improving 911 emergency response times and neighborhood police protection, and making public areas safer and cleaner. Measure CS was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). It was [approved](#) on a vote of 74% to 26%.

✔ **Santa Cruz, CA.** [Measure P](#) increases the Transient Occupancy Tax from 11% to 12% for hotels, motels, and inns, and from 11% to 14% for STRs, raising approximately \$1.38 million annually. The revenues will be invested to fund city services, including affordable housing for working families and people experiencing homelessness. Measure P was placed on the ballot as a referral. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 81% to 19%.

Short-Term Rental Regulations

✘ **Big Bear Lake, CA.** [Measure O](#) would have limited the number of STRs to a total of 1,500 and limited the number of vacation rental contracts to 30 per year per unit, ex-

cluding home-sharing arrangements. The measure would have further limited duplexes, triplexes, and four-plexes to one vacation rental per property. Measure O was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#) from the City Council. The Vote No on Measure O campaign, funded by Residents for a Better Big Bear, [opposed](#) the ballot measure. The measure was [defeated](#) in a vote of 42% to 58%.

✘ **La Quinta, CA.** [Measure A](#) would have phased out and permanently bans all non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in residential neighborhoods by December 31, 2024. Eleven neighborhoods designated for commercial tourism would have been exempt from the ban on STRs. [Neighbors for Neighborhoods of La Quinta](#) collected signatures to place Measure A on the ballot and led the campaign for the ballot initiative, while the Mayor and City Council opposed it. The measure was defeated in a vote of 49% to 51%.

✘ **Portland, ME.** [Question A](#) would have banned corporate and non-local operation of short-term rentals in Portland. This includes rooms and units for rent on Airbnb and VRBO for up to 30 days in a row. It would have tightened the regulations that already exist for these types of rentals, protected existing local short-term rental operators, ensured affordable and city-designated “workforce housing units” are not used as short-term rentals, and protected renters from eviction by landlords who want to convert their units into short-term rentals by retaining the cap of 400 short-term rentals. The ballot initiative was [drafted](#) by a group of short-term rental owners. It was [defeated](#) in a vote of 44% to 56%.

✘ **Portland, ME.** [Question B](#) would have limited short-term rentals to only those that are owner-occupied, tenant-occupied, or located in two-unit buildings occupied by the owner. The measure would have increased the annual fee for owner-occupied STRs to

\$250 and non-owner-occupied STRs to \$750, and simplified the fee structure. Question B also would have increased penalties for violations and strengthened enforcement and required the notification of neighboring residents within 500 feet of a registered STR. The measure would have included island housing, a point of controversy. Question B would have restored an estimated 350 homes that are currently operating as short-term rentals. The Maine chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America [drafted](#) the ballot initiative. It was [defeated](#) in a vote of 45% to 55%.

OTHER TAXES AND FEES

Some cities pursued ballot measures that directly confronted the paradox of homelessness and housing insecurity existing alongside extreme wealth. Los Angeles and four towns in Suffolk County, NY, enacted new one-time transfer fees on high-value real estate. The revenues will provide permanent funding to meet each community’s most pressing housing needs. Santa Monica and Emeryville, CA, raised the transfer tax rate on the highest-value properties. Voters in Santa Monica faced two competing proposals that both raised the transfer tax rate on properties valued at \$8 million or more. They approved a proposal from the mayor that was placed on the ballot by a citizen-driven campaign and rejected a competing alternative referred by the City Council to the ballot. The success of real estate transfer fees suggests that when faced with extreme inequality, voters are willing to ask the wealthiest homebuyers and corporations to invest in their communities and support their neighbors who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Frustration at vacant homes in the midst of a homelessness crisis prompted San Francisco, Berkeley, and Santa Cruz, CA, to place vacancy taxes on the ballot. These measures followed the success of a 2018 ballot measure that enacted a vacant homes tax in nearby Oakland, CA.

Citizen-driven initiatives qualified vacancy tax measures for the ballot in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, while the Berkeley City Council referred a vacant homes tax to the ballot. These proposals have the multipronged purpose of disincentivizing housing speculation, addressing blight, and raising revenues. San Francisco's and Santa Cruz's ballot measures specified that new tax revenues would be invested in affordable housing, while Berkeley's new revenues would be directed to the city's general fund. Vacant homes taxes were successful in San Francisco and Berkeley, but Santa Cruz's ballot measure was defeated by a significant margin. The difference is [likely explained by](#) Santa Cruz's popularity as a vacation destination, which may have prompted concerns from second-home owners and short-term rental operators.

Colorado was the only state to pass a statewide housing ballot measure in this election cycle. The measure does not enact any new taxes but rather dedicates 0.1% of existing income tax revenues to fund affordable housing programs. Although California's statewide Proposition 27, the "California Housing Solutions and Mental Health Support Act," was presented as a way to invest revenues from fees and taxes on online sports betting into homelessness solutions, housing advocates opposed the ballot measure because it contained many loopholes and would primarily serve the interests of online sports betting operators, not people experiencing homelessness.

Property tax measures saw mixed results, with property tax increases failing to pass in Chaffee County, CO, and Missoula, MT, and succeeding in the Fraser River Valley Housing Partnership, CO. Most measures to establish or increase sales taxes and business taxes to fund affordable housing and homelessness programs received a majority of voters' support. However, a sales tax in Fresno, CA, and a tax on cannabis and hemp businesses in Sacramento County, CA, were defeated because they required supermajority approval.

Many of the local sales tax measures across California are relatively open-ended. These measures list addressing homelessness as one of many possible activities that could be funded, but the measures do not impose a binding requirement to direct a certain portion of sales tax revenues to homelessness. Some of the ballot measures' language suggests that local governments intend to use new revenues to address homelessness with increased police presence and encampment clearings - not to secure stable housing for people experiencing homelessness. Advocates in these communities should engage with their elected officials and push them to invest new revenues into proven solutions, not counterproductive strategies that make it more difficult to exit homelessness.

Vacancy Taxes

✓ **Berkeley, CA.** [Measure M](#) enacts a vacancy tax on property owners who keep residential units vacant for more than six months in a year. Owners will be taxed \$3,000 per unit in condominiums, duplexes, single-family dwellings, or townhouses vacant in the first year, and \$6,000 for all other residential units. The taxes will double to \$6,000 and \$12,000 respectively, in subsequent years. Measure M exempts owners of apartments with four or fewer units who live on their property, if it is their only property. Measure M is estimated to affect about 700 homes in the city and will raise between \$3.9 and \$5.9 million in its first year. It will take effect on January 1, 2024, and expire after 10 years. Berkeley City Council voted 5-4 to [refer](#) Measure M to the ballot. Voters [approved](#) Measure M by a margin of 65% to 35%.

✓ **San Francisco, CA.** [Proposition M](#) enacts a new tax on owners of vacant residential units in buildings with three or more units if the units have been vacant for more than 182 days in a year. Vacant units will be taxed at a rate between \$2,500 and \$5,000, depending on square footage, in the first year of vacancy. The tax rate will increase in the

second consecutive year of vacancy and again after the third consecutive year, up to a tax of \$20,000 on the largest units. The tax will expire after 2053. Revenues will [be invested](#) in a new Housing Activation Fund that will provide rent subsidies for renters making at or below 50% of AMI, provide rent subsidies for seniors, and fund the acquisition and rehabilitation of apartment buildings where one-third of the units are vacant and homes are affordable to low-income renters. Supervisor Dean Preston [proposed](#) the empty homes tax, and a citizen-driven signature collection effort placed the measure on the ballot. The Fill Empty Homes campaign in support of the ballot initiative had the [endorsements](#) of the local Democratic Socialists of America chapter, the San Francisco Democratic Party, labor groups, tenants' rights organizations, and other progressive civic groups. Opponents included the San Francisco Taxpayers Association, the Small Property Owners of San Francisco Institute, and the San Francisco Apartment Association. Voters [approved](#) Measure M in a vote of 55% to 45%.

✘ Santa Cruz, CA. [Measure N](#) would have authorized the creation of a vacancy tax on residences that are in use for fewer than 120 days per calendar year in the amount of \$6,000 per single-family residence, \$6,000 per residential parcel with six or fewer units where all units are vacant for more than half the year, \$3,000 per vacant residential unit of a condominium or townhome, and \$3,000 per vacant residential unit on residential parcels with seven or more units. Owners would have been permitted to claim exemptions for hardships, including hospitalization, natural disaster, or construction activities. Revenues would have been dedicated to financing affordable housing construction, acquiring units for preservation or conversion into affordable housing, providing restroom and sanitation services for people experiencing homelessness, and paying the cost of administering the tax. Measure N would have established an Empty Home Tax Oversight Committee to oversee administration and make recommendations to

the Council on improving affordable housing in Santa Cruz and would have required three renters and two low-income residents to be included on the committee. The Yes on Empty Homes Tax campaign - which was [endorsed](#) by a coalition of housing advocates, unions, environmental organizations, and other progressive civic and political groups - [collected signatures](#) to qualify Measure N for the ballot. The measure [was defeated](#) on a vote of 46% to 54%.

Real Estate Transfer Fees

✔ Emeryville, CA. [Measure O](#) will increase Emeryville's existing Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT) for property sales between \$1 and \$2 million from \$12 to \$15 per thousand dollars in property value and will raise the tax to \$25 per thousand dollars in property value for property sales above \$2 million. Funds generated from the tax will [be directed towards](#) improving public safety, addressing homelessness, responding to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, improving transit and green spaces, repairing storm drains, and cleaning up pollution. The Emeryville City Council referred Measure O to the ballot. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 71% to 29%.

✔ Los Angeles, CA. [Measure ULA](#) enacts a 4% tax on property transfers between \$5 and \$10 million and a 5.5% tax on transfers valued at \$10 million or more. The measure will create the Los Angeles Program to Prevent Homelessness and Fund Affordable Housing, a permanent funding source for affordable housing development, preservation, and homelessness prevention. The measure is estimated to generate \$700-\$900 million annually and affect only 3% of property sales. Seventy percent of the revenues will be invested in the development and preservation of affordable rental homes, funding single family and cooperative homeownership opportunities, and other related programmatic needs. The remaining 30% of the revenues will be invested in the Homelessness Prevention Program, which

includes funding for eviction prevention and defense programs; funding for nonprofits and city agencies to monitor and enforce tenant protections; and tenant outreach, education, and navigation services. Measure ULA is estimated to create more than 26,000 homes in 10 years for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Programs will be targeted towards people experiencing homelessness and renters making at or below 30% of AMI. A coalition of homeless service providers, affordable housing nonprofits, labor unions, and tenants' rights groups drafted the ballot initiative, and the [United to House LA campaign](#) collected signatures to place it on the ballot. The measure [passed](#) in a vote of 58% to 42%.

✔ **Santa Monica, CA.** [Measure GS](#) authorizes the city to enact a third tier (in addition to the previous two tiers) of real estate transfer tax on property transfers valued at \$8 million or more. These properties will be taxed at a rate of \$56 per \$100,000 – a ninefold increase from the existing transfer tax rate. Increased revenues will be [designated for](#) homelessness prevention, affordable housing, and schools. Mayor Sue Himmelrich proposed Measure GS, and it qualified for the ballot through a successful citizen-driven signature collection drive. [Standing Firm for Santa Monica](#), the campaign in support of the ballot initiative, had the backing of Mayor Himmelrich and her husband Michael Soloff, co-chair of Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights. The committee strongly opposed the competing proposal, Measure DT. Measure GS was [approved](#) on a vote of 53% to 47%.

✘ **Santa Monica, CA.** [Measure DT](#) would have authorized a tax on real property sales over \$8 million and established an incremental tax of \$25 per \$1,000 of the value in excess of \$8 million. Measure DT was placed on the ballot as a referral and was in direct competition with Measure GS. Unlike Measure GS, Measure DT would have sunsetted after 10 years. Measure DT would provide an estimated \$12 to \$25 million annually. [Measure DTS](#)

is a transfer tax advisory measure that advised the city to spend 30% of additional revenue provided by the Comprehensive Real Property Transfer Tax Measure (Measure DT), if it were passed, for housing assistance to protect seniors and low-income families from housing displacement. The remainder of the additional revenue was recommended for homelessness services, behavioral health services, public safety and emergency response teams for city streets and parks, reopening public libraries, funding after-school programs, and providing crossing guards near public schools. Measure DT [was defeated](#) on a vote of 35% to 65%.

✔ **Suffolk County, NY.** [The Town Proposition for Community Housing](#) authorizes each East End town – East Hampton, Southampton, Southold, and Shelter Island – to establish its own Community Housing Fund. The ballot measure enacts a 0.5% real estate transaction fee to raise revenues for the Community Housing Funds. First-time homebuyers whose household income falls below a particular threshold (\$174,360 per year for one- to two-person households, and \$203,420 for three or more people) are exempt from this fee. These income thresholds are also used to determine who qualifies for community housing. The first \$400,000 of homes costing \$2 million or less are also exempt from the fees. Possible uses of the Community Housing Fund include buying land and building homes, assisting eligible first-time homebuyers with up to 50% of the purchase price, rehabilitating and maintaining existing buildings, assisting cost-burdened renters, providing loans for homeowners to add ADUs to rent, creating housing for employees of local businesses, buying individual units in existing multifamily complexes, and offering housing counseling. Supporters of the measure include East End YIMBY and a number of East End town supervisors. The measure was placed individually on each town's ballot. It [passed](#) on a vote of 69% to 31% in East Hampton; 53% to 47% in Southampton; 59% to 41% in Southold; and 50.4% to 49.6% in Shelter Island (by a margin of just [15 votes](#)).

Case Study: United to House LA Achieves Sustainable Solutions at the Ballot Box

Voters in Los Angeles, CA, approved Measure ULA, a historic ballot initiative that will enact permanent, deeply targeted housing resources in the city. Measure ULA will create the Los Angeles Program to Prevent Homelessness and Fund Affordable Housing, a permanent funding source for affordable housing development, preservation, and homelessness prevention. These funds will be raised through a 4% tax on the sale of real estate valued over \$5 million dollars and a 5.5% tax on the sale of real estate valued over \$10 million dollars. (See pages 20-21 for a fuller description of Measure ULA's provisions.)

Both the City and County of Los Angeles have approved other housing-related ballot measures in recent years. Measure H, passed in 2017, generates approximately \$335 million annually to support homelessness and housing solutions in Los Angeles County. Measure HHH, passed in 2016, issued \$1.2 billion in general obligation bonds to develop or acquire supportive housing in the City of Los Angeles. While these measures have had positive impacts, Measure HHH funds will expire in the next two years, and countywide Measure H funds will expire in 2027.



Coalition members rally in support of the United to House LA campaign.



United to House LA campaign organizers delivered more than 98,000 petition signatures to qualify for the ballot.

Housing and homelessness advocates chose to launch a citizen-led ballot initiative after it became apparent that the LA City Council was uninterested in pursuing permanent legislative solutions. City Controller Ron Galperin's annual audits of Measure HHH criticized the high costs of developing affordable housing, and his assessment had a strong influence on the council. Councilmembers expressed their support for affordable housing as a concept, but they were not interested in making new housing investments until the costs of housing development decreased. Nonprofit homelessness and housing organizations, recognizing that they could not afford to wait for a legislative fix, came together in 2021 and crafted language for a ballot initiative that would provide a sustainable funding mechanism.

The campaign filed the measure in December 2021, secured the ballot title and summary in January 2022, and promptly launched the signature-gathering phase of the campaign. Through in-person and digital canvassing, organizers gathered more than 98,000 signatures, far above the threshold of 61,000 votes that was necessary to qualify the initiative for the ballot. Signatures came from a diverse cross-section of Angelenos, ranging from residents with lived experience in affordable housing to wealthier, liberal residents in West LA.

Key members of the United to House LA coalition included the Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing (SCANPH), nonprofit housing developers such as Community Corporation of Santa Monica and Venice Community Housing, labor unions including SEIU and Unite Here, and equity groups including Move LA and SAJE. Members of Residents United Network (RUN), a grassroots statewide organization that builds power among tenants, played an essential role in every step of the campaign. RUN members gathered signatures,

spoke on the campaign trail as official surrogates, canvassed voters, and were featured in advertisements. Chris Bowen, public policy organizer at SCANPH, attributed the campaign's success to the broad coalition and involvement of tenant leaders. He highlighted the importance of "having the right people at the table to craft the initiative, early, and then elevating those voices with lived experience." With a narrower coalition, the campaign likely would not have had the resources to overcome a well-funded opposition or the reach to collect enough signatures. More than 200 organi-

zations ultimately signed onto the United to House LA campaign, and Measure ULA received [The Los Angeles Times' endorsement](#) more than a month before Election Day.

The campaign's messaging emphasized that funds would not come from the sale of modest homes but rather from the sale of multimillion-dollar homes and large retail properties. Measure ULA's opponents tried to mischaracterize the measure as a "tax on the middle class." Commercials highlighted high gas prices, asking Los Angeles residents if they really wanted another line item on their taxes. To combat this rhetoric, the United to House LA campaign emphasized that the tax would only apply to 3% of property sales and would tax millionaires and billionaires who acquire multimillion-dollar properties, not middle-class residents.

The United to House LA campaign also added strong oversight language to Measure ULA to preempt concerns from voters. Skeptics of Measure J, a ballot measure enacted in 2020 that shifted money away from policing and towards affordable housing, criticized the lack of oversight. Measure ULA prescribes a paid citizens' oversight commission, including members with lived experience of housing instability and homelessness. The Inspector General will lead the committee, which will have the support of paid staff. Measure ULA not only prescribes this oversight body, but also contains dedicated funding for it. Organizers found it effective to emphasize the measure's strong oversight mechanism, and this feature won over some skeptics. Voters were also persuaded by the highly detailed analysis of where the funding would go and LA City Council's lack of authority over the revenues.

Just weeks before Election Day, leaked audio recordings of racist, homophobic conversations between LA City Council president Nury Martinez, councilmembers Gil Cedillo and Kevin de León, and LA County Federation of Labor President Ron Herrera sent shockwaves throughout Los Angeles and the nation. Elected officials' blatantly racist, disparaging language and disregard for Angelenos' best interests only reinforced what housing and homelessness advocates had found to be true: community members could not depend on LA City Council to prioritize their greatest needs. Although most city councilmembers were reluctant to pursue permanent housing solutions, their constituents sent the opposite message: Los Angeles voters approved Measure ULA by a 16-point margin. The overwhelming success of Measure ULA demonstrates the power of a diverse coalition to overcome a well-funded opposition, organize against disingenuous attacks, and build the political will for sustainable solutions that elected officials are reluctant to pursue.

“Although most city councilmembers were reluctant to pursue permanent housing solutions, their constituents sent the opposite message...”

Case Study: East End Voters Choose Community Housing

Voters in four townships of the East End of Long Island approved Town Propositions for Community Housing, which establish a Community Housing Fund in each town. The East End townships are facing an unprecedented housing crisis: [less than 3% of housing](#) in East Hampton is confirmed to be affordable. Teachers, firefighters, police officers, healthcare workers, emergency responders, and other frontline workers struggle to stay stably housed in the communities where they live and work.

The New York State legislature passed the “Peconic Bay Community Housing Act” ([A2633](#)) in 2021. Sponsored by Assemblyman Fred Thiele Jr. (D-Sag Harbor), the act allows each East End town to establish a new half-percent real estate transfer fee on high-value transactions that will raise revenues for community housing. The state legislature had passed the bill before, but former Governor Andrew Cuomo vetoed it. As housing costs soared in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the bill passed again and was signed by Governor Kathy Hochul.

To establish the real estate transfer fee, each town needed to obtain voter approval via referendum. Four of the five East End towns placed the question on the ballot in November 2022; the town of Riverhead, which opted out, can choose to do so in a future election. The committee to support the ballot measure, [Vote Yes for Community Housing](#), ran a coordinated campaign across all four townships, but voters independently determined whether their township would establish its own Community Housing Fund. All resources in the Community Housing Fund will be invested in creating community housing. (See page 21 for a full description of the ballot measure's provisions.)

East End YIMBY, an all-volunteer organization, played a key role in leading and organizing the campaign. Michael Daly, founder of East End YIMBY, was inspired to start the group in 2017 after attending an affordable housing advocacy conference in Cape Cod, MA. The conference provided template resources, inspiration, and a peer-sharing network that supported the group's launch. Four years of public education and advocacy efforts laid the groundwork for East End YIMBY's leadership in the Vote Yes for Community Housing campaign.



Vote Yes for Community Housing distributed lawn signs to residents and business owners.



Organizers canvassed for community housing on Halloween, which fell during the early voting period.

Vote Yes for Community Housing sought out guidance from veterans of the campaign for the East End Community Preservation Fund (CPF). The CPF organizers, who had recently led a successful ballot measure campaign for a real estate transfer fee to fund environmental conservation, had deep local knowledge and expertise in what it would take to pass another ballot measure in the region. The CPF organizers recommended that Vote Yes for Community Housing raise \$150,000 for the campaign. At first, this number seemed extremely daunting, but in the end, the campaign raised over \$200,000.

Vote Yes for Community Housing officially launched its campaign in autumn 2021, shortly after the Peconic Bay Community Housing Act passed. Organizers held a rally in downtown Sag Harbor, complete with live music, that attracted a large crowd and press attention. The campaign kept their issue in the news throughout the duration of the election cycle. Volunteers consistently wrote Letters to the Editor, and every East End newspaper ultimately wrote editorials to endorse the ballot measure.

The campaign organizers credit their success to the non-partisan nature of their campaign. Both Democratic and Republican community members campaigned for the ballot measure. Much of the messaging focused on lack of affordable housing as an infrastructure issue. Without housing for firefighters, teachers, police officers, health-care workers, and first responders, the community's infrastructure would disintegrate. This message resonated with voters of all political backgrounds. Campaign videos featured "Help Wanted" signs, which connected the housing crisis to an issue that was already top-of-mind for voters, and presented the lack of affordable housing as an obstacle to filling vacancies in hospitals and other essential institutions.

Campaign [fliers](#) and other materials focused on the individuals who contribute to the fabric of community life in each township but who would be priced out of living locally if they did not have housing assistance. Although Vote Yes for Community Housing ran a coordinated campaign across all four towns, it tailored its outreach whenever possible. Direct mail sent to Southampton voters, for example, featured a fire department chief from their township.

Vote Yes for Community Housing elevated the stories of community members who were affected by housing cost-burdens and instability. In a small and tight-knit community where many residents know each other, it took a lot of courage for directly impacted individuals to share their stories. One grocer at the organic market, a well-known figure in the community, shared her experi-

ences with moving multiple times in just a few years because she could not keep up with rising housing costs. Despite the fear of stigmatization or shaming from neighbors they interact with regularly, community members spoke up and put a human face on the potentially transformative impact of the Community Housing Fund. Teachers and healthcare workers also participated in get out the vote (GOTV) activities in the leadup to Election Day.



Leaders in the Vote Yes for Community Housing campaign held public events to build support for the measure.

The campaign employed traditional tactics - such as town halls, meet and greets, door-to-door canvassing, buttons, and lawn signs - and spread its message through social media accounts. Some businesses that initially turned down lawn signs, fearing they would be perceived as too political, later changed their minds and requested signs once it became clear that the campaign was gaining momentum and had a broad base of support.

Most of East End YIMBY's leadership and volunteers were new to political campaigns, and they learned from their campaign advisors that it was not enough to just get out their message - they also had to get out the vote! The campaign dedicated a few thousand dollars to hiring paid canvassers for the last few weeks leading up to Election Day. Canvassers, organized by [Shelter For All](#), went door-to-door on Shelter Island, where the margins were

expected to be tighter. (The measure ultimately passed on Shelter Island by 15 votes.) Volunteers signed up online for GOTV tabling at grocery stores and fall festivals in their own communities. Most GOTV volunteers enjoyed the experience and returned to sign up for additional shifts. The campaign also stationed volunteers to hand out fliers at early voting sites. Organizers were surprised to see how many voters were reading the materials and learning about the ballot measure for the first time while waiting in line to vote. In the middle of the early voting period, however, one of the leading newspapers published its endorsement of the campaign, so a greater portion of Election Day voters were already well-informed.

The ballot measure passed with 69% of the vote in East Hampton, 53% in Southampton, 59% in Southold, and 50.4% in Shelter Island. The electorate of East Hampton is more liberal than that of the other townships, so the campaign expected the greater margin of victory.

As the Vote Yes for Community Housing campaign celebrates its achievements, organizers are also gearing up for the implementation phase. Proponents of the ballot measure face pressure to prove that the funds are spent well and demonstrate real results. East End YIMBY organizers met with Assemblyman Fred Thiele Jr., who represents much of the East End and chairs the Committee on Local Governments, after the election and determined that they will continue to hold weekly meetings to discuss implementation. Since the proposition did not prescribe in detail how the funds must be spent, each township will make its own decisions on how to invest the resources. Each town will also have public hearings and an advisory committee that will offer input, which will create ongoing opportunities for the campaign's supporters to remain engaged and shape the future of community housing in the East End.

“Leadership and volunteers [...] learned from their campaign advisors that it was not enough to just get out their message - they also had to get out the vote!”

Redirecting Existing Tax Revenues

✔ **Colorado (statewide).** [Proposition 123](#) will dedicate 0.1% of existing income tax revenues to affordable housing programs. The measure will allocate an estimated \$300 million to affordable housing in its first year – roughly six times the amount of the state’s current spending on housing. The measure will [establish](#) the State Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) dedicated to supporting affordable rental housing for families making at or below 60% of AMI and affordable homeownership for families at or below median income. Within the SAHF, 60% of revenues will be dedicated to the Affordable Housing Financing Fund, and 40% will be dedicated to the Affordable Housing Support Fund. Up to \$43.5 million in revenues each year can be spent on land-banking; up to \$121.8 million each year can be spent on financing low- and middle-income multifamily housing and providing direct support to renters; up to \$60.9 million can be spent on debt financing for projects that qualify for tax credits; up to \$58 million can be spent on grants and loans for nonprofits and community land trusts that help people buy homes, and for residents of mobile home communities to purchase the parks where they live; up to \$52.2 million can be spent on rental assistance, eviction defense, housing development, and other programs for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and up to \$5.8 million can be spent to help local governments process applications and plan for housing projects. Advocates collected signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. The Make Colorado Affordable campaign for the ballot measure encompassed a [diverse coalition](#) of housing and homelessness advocates, foundations, developers, trade associations, business interests, unions, community organizations, and local elected officials. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 53% to 47%.

Property Taxes

✘ **Chaffee County, CO.** [Issue 6A](#) would have increased property taxes by an average amount of \$9 per month. The tax increase would have raised an estimated \$2.2 million in its first year. Revenues would have been invested in the Chaffee Housing Authority, which was [established in 2018](#) and does not currently have a permanent funding source. The funding would have been used for new affordable homes, rental subsidies, eviction prevention, and downpayment assistance. The Chaffee County Commissioners [referred](#) Issue 6A to the ballot. The measure was [defeated](#) on a vote of 31% to 69%.

✔ **Fraser River Valley Housing Partnership, CO.** [Issue 6A](#) will levy a property tax on homeowners within certain parts of Grand County, CO, that fall under the jurisdiction of the Fraser River Valley Housing Partnership, a new intergovernmental entity. The measure will impose the tax at a rate of \$2 per \$1,000 in assessed value. Revenues will be used to address the shortage of affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities for year-round residents of the Fraser River Valley; to attract essential workers; to identify and develop a diverse range of structures that meet the housing needs of year-round residents; and to acquire, develop, maintain, and manage affordable and attainable housing. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 57% to 43%.

✘ **Missoula, MT.** The [Crisis Services Levy](#) would have enacted a property tax to fund homelessness services, mental health care, treatment for addiction, and criminal justice reforms. The city and county launched many of these services using temporary federal funds, including “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARPA) funds. The measure would have raised an estimated \$5 million annually, or \$20 million total. The Missoula County Commissioners referred the crisis services levy to the ballot. The measure [was defeated](#) on a vote of 46% to 54%.

Case Study: Colorado's Proposition 123 Addresses Full Spectrum of Housing Needs

Colorado's Proposition 123, a statewide ballot initiative, will dedicate 0.1% of existing income tax revenues to affordable housing. The measure passed with 53% of voters in support. The housing advocacy community in Colorado had long discussed the possibility of a sustainable funding source for affordable housing. Although the state is currently using "American Rescue Plan Act" (ARPA) state and local fiscal recovery funds for housing and homelessness resolution, these funds must be expended by 2026. This temporary federal funding is not enough to make up for decades of underinvestment in affordable housing. The looming funding cliff injected an even greater sense of urgency into ongoing conversations about the need for permanent resources.

Because of Colorado's Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR), voters must directly approve any tax measures. If the state's revenues exceed the limit set under TABOR, the state refunds that revenue to the taxpayers. Colorado housing advocates led a ballot initiative campaign and successfully made the case that a portion of excess revenues should be invested in permanent solutions to the housing crisis.

Gary Community Ventures, a foundation in the Denver area, spearheaded the campaign, including the initial research for the ballot initiative. The foundation worked with consultants and gathered community feedback to develop the long-term funding mechanism. Other key stakeholders, including Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), officially signed on in support of the ballot initiative after the details came together, shortly before the measure was filed with the Office of the Secretary of the State to receive title approval. With support from Gary Community Ventures, the campaign employed a signature collecting firm and launched its signature collection drive.

Colorado statewide ballot initiatives must gather an amount of signatures equivalent to 5% of the total votes cast for the Office of Secretary of State in the previous general election, which amounted to 124,632 signatures to qualify for the ballot in 2022. The campaign exceeded the required threshold and secured its place on the ballot.

The campaign for Proposition 123 brought in a broad coalition of housing and homelessness stakeholders, as well as multi-sector partners. Bankers and realtors' groups, which have not historically advocated to fund deeply affordable housing or homeless initiatives, recognized the urgent need for these resources and joined the coalition. Health care organizations, childrens' advocacy groups, and many elected officials also endorsed the measure.



CO State Senator Julie Gonzales attests to the importance of housing stability in her own life.

Proposition 123 addresses the housing needs of Coloradans across the housing spectrum, from homelessness to affordable homeownership. The measure will raise an estimated \$300 million per year, and the revenues will be divided into four buckets: homelessness initiatives, homeownership, land-banking and property acquisition, and developing affordable housing for renters earning up to 60% of AMI and homeowners with incomes at or below median income. To qualify for the funding, local governments must commit to increasing their affordable housing stock by 3% over a three-year period and demonstrate that they have expedited their permitting processes to allow for the development of affordable housing. Because Proposition 123 is a statutory ballot initiative, not a constitutional one, the legislature can make some adjustments to these provisions.

Although the text of the ballot initiative was complex, the campaign kept its messaging simple. Voters understand that housing is foundational to all other aspects of life. Most Colorado voters have personally experienced the impacts of the housing crisis. Voters see that they cannot afford to move into a new home, their children cannot move back to the communities where they grew up, or their neighbors and family members on fixed incomes are at risk of housing instability and homelessness. Messaging about vulnerable groups like seniors and

YES ON PROP 123
MAKE COLORADO AFFORDABLE

"When I became a firefighter 15 years ago, the job paid enough that new recruits could easily buy a home and live the American dream right away. Today, new recruits still start with a good salary, but they can't afford to buy a home. Rent is a challenge too. The people who make our communities safe are getting priced out of Colorado, and that's a problem. Prop 123 is an opportunity to change that."

CAPT. JED REDDIN
Western Slope Firefighter

Testimony from Capt. Jed Reddin highlights the impact of the affordability crisis on firefighters.

people with disabilities especially resonated with voters. Even younger voters, seeing the impact of the housing crisis on seniors with fixed incomes, fear that they will find themselves in a precarious housing situation once they retire unless the state takes action to curb the cost of housing. Housing needs vary greatly in every region of the state; the priorities in rural resort communities look different from larger urban areas. To appeal to voters across the entire state, the campaign emphasized how Proposition 123 meets diverse housing needs, from homelessness resolution to workforce housing to middle-income homeownership.

The campaign also highlighted the minimal cost of the measure to individual households. In 2022, every Colorado taxpayer received a TABOR refund of \$750. If Proposition 123 had been in place, taxpayers would have received \$710. The campaign emphasized to voters that investments in affordable housing to benefit all Coloradans are worth the small reduction in individual household tax refunds.

CCH and other partners engaged individuals with lived experience in the campaign. These interactions ran in both directions: CCH shared digestible information about the ballot initiative with community members and

collected individual stories about why the measure matters. Social media and traditional media campaigns featured the stories of Coloradans who discussed the importance of stable housing in their lives. Colorado is divided into four media markets, and the campaign targeted all four with advertisements to get the message out. In Colorado, when there are as many measures on the ballot as there were this year, mailers are not an effective strategy because voters are deluged with an overwhelming amount of content. Because of the large quantity of ballot measures in Colorado, campaigns face steep obstacles to getting earned media coverage. The media coverage that did occur was generally favorable, although there were some op-eds with a libertarian bent that questioned whether the funding measure was appropriate. Changes to TABOR always produce some skepticism, but there was no funded opposition to the ballot initiative.

Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, the campaign did not focus heavily on door-to-door canvassing, but the campaign did textbank and phonebank for the ballot initiative. Organizers also hosted virtual town halls, smaller house parties across the state, and textbanking parties. CCH registered hundreds of voters, and Proposition 123 proved a persuasive reason for new voters to register. When individuals expressed apathy towards the candidates on the ballot, organizers informed them that the ballot contained more than just elected offices - voters also had the opportunity to weigh in directly on policy questions such as Proposition 123, which motivated some individuals to register.

Cathy Alderman, chief communications and public policy officer at CCH, noted that Colorado is a unique environment for ballot measures because of TABOR rules and an anti-tax, libertarian streak in the state's political culture. Many lessons learned from the campaign, however, can be generalized to other states. Organizers should talk to voters about their particular housing challenges and craft a ballot measure that addresses a broad range of needs. A diverse coalition, including non-traditional partners, extends a campaign's reach and effectively conveys the message that housing affordability impacts everyone. Measures that encompass the full continuum of housing, from homelessness to homeownership, will resonate with more voters and gain buy-in across the political spectrum. This widespread appeal contributed to the success of Proposition 123 and offers an instructive example for organizers as they explore state-wide ballot initiatives in other states.

“Although the text of the ballot initiative was complex, the campaign kept its messaging simple. Voters understand that housing is foundational to all other aspects of life.”

Sales Taxes

✘ **El Cajon, CA.** [Measure P](#) would have replaced El Cajon's half-cent sales tax with a one-cent sales tax. The tax would have raised an estimated \$24 million annually for general city services, including adding police officers, abating homeless encampments, increasing funds for homeless intervention, expanding fire services, ensuring rapid 911 emergency response, increasing funding for roads, and enhancing parks. El Cajon City Council [voted unanimously](#) to place Measure P on the ballot. The measure [was defeated](#) on a vote of 39% to 61%.

✔ **Elk Grove, CA.** [Measure E](#), the Elk Grove Safety and Quality of Life Measure, establishes a one-cent sales tax to fund city activities including, but not limited to, addressing homelessness, reducing crime, improving rapid 911 fire, police, medical emergency, and disaster response, and maintaining public areas, parks, and roads. Elk Grove City Council referred Measure E to the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 54% to 46%.

✘ **Fresno, CA.** [Measure M](#) would have established a 0.125% sales tax to fund services and facilities for veterans. The tax would have generated approximately \$19.5 million annually for 20 years. Revenues would have been used for affordable housing, job training and placement, mental and physical healthcare, efforts to reduce veteran homelessness, and rehabilitation of local facilities for veterans. Measure M was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). It required a two-thirds supermajority vote to pass, and it was [defeated](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

✔ **Modesto, CA.** [Measure H](#) establishes a one-cent sales tax, which will raise an estimated \$39 million annually. The funds will be used for addressing homelessness, public safety, fire protection, emergency response, cleanup of public spaces, and other general purposes. It was placed on the ballot as a re-

ferred. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 63% to 37%.

✔ **Solana Beach, CA.** [Measure S](#) authorizes the creation of a one-cent sales tax that would address priorities identified by city residents in a community survey, which include homelessness response, street and infrastructure maintenance, pollution cleanup, public safety, fire protection, and paramedic services. Solana Beach City Council referred Measure S to the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 67% to 33%.

✔ **Vallejo, CA.** [Measure P](#) authorizes a 0.875% sales tax increase to fund city services. Funding would be used to address homelessness, prevent blight and dumping, improve roads, expand fire protection and emergency response services, and attract and retain local jobs and businesses. Measure P was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). It [passed](#) on a vote of 55% to 45%.

✔ **Walnut Creek, CA.** [Measure O](#) enacts a half-cent sales tax, which will raise an estimated \$11 million annually and is authorized for 10 years. The revenues will be invested in maintaining public safety, addressing homelessness, and providing services and programming for seniors and youth, which in part funds homelessness prevention. The Walnut Creek City Council voted unanimously to place Measure O on the ballot. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 65% to 35%.

✔ **Denver, CO.** [Referred Question 2K](#) allows the city to keep \$1.3 million in extra tax revenue from the sales tax that voters passed in November 2020 to fund homelessness resolution initiatives. The measure allows the city to impose and collect the tax to the full extent, which will [provide further resources](#) for the Homelessness Resolution Fund. If the measure were not approved, the excess \$1.3 million would have been distributed as a tax refund. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 71% to 29%.

✓ **Grand Lake, CO.** Issue 2A enacts a 15% sales tax on retail marijuana and retail marijuana products. The measure estimates that the town will collect \$150,000 annually from the tax. Half of the revenues will be invested in the town's general fund, and the other half will be invested in attainable housing programs. Issue 2A [passed](#) on a vote of 54% to 46%.

✓ **Vail, CO.** [Ballot Issue 21](#) authorizes the town to retain excess revenues from the new 0.5% sales tax enacted by voters in November 2021. The revenues will be used for housing initiatives, housing development, and related programs. Funds may be used for projects outside the town boundaries of Vail as long as they benefit the Vail community. Ballot Issue 21 [allows the town](#) to keep \$800,000 that the sales tax generated beyond the \$4.5 million authorized in last year's sales tax ballot measure. If the measure were not approved, the town would have temporarily paused tax collections until the town no longer exceeds its collection limits. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 74% to 26%.

Business Taxes

✓ **East Palo Alto, CA.** [Measure L](#) amends the city's existing business tax on the gross receipts of landlords with five or more residential units. Measure L raises the tax from 1.5% to 2.5% and applies it to all residential landlords, [regardless](#) of the number of units they own. The increased revenues will be used to fund programs for affordable housing, tenant rental support, and measures to protect local residents from displacement and homelessness. Landlords could apply for a one-year hardship exemption, and some types of housing - including affordable housing owned by nonprofits, rent-controlled units, income-restricted units, units occupied by tenants who receive monthly rental assistance, ADUs, and properties that have received certificates of occupancy within the past three years - are exempt. Measure L was

placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 70% to 30%.

✓ **Palo Alto, CA.** [Measure K](#) establishes a tax of 7.5 cents per square foot per month for mid-sized and large businesses operating in Palo Alto, defined as businesses with more than 10,000 square feet of space. The tax would be capped at \$500,000 per year. Grocery stores, nonprofits, schools, banks, and financial institutions will be [exempt](#). The tax will include annual 2.5% increases for inflation beginning in July 2026, and the tax will expire after 2058. According to the Palo Alto City Council's advisory spending guidelines, revenues will be spent on public safety, affordable housing and homeless services, and infrastructure improvements that maintain safety and mobility for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It is estimated that the tax will raise \$9.6 million annually. Measure K was placed on the ballot as a [referral](#). It [passed](#) on a vote of 67% to 33%.

✗ **Sacramento County, CA.** [Measure B](#) would have authorized the creation of a gross receipts tax from cannabis and hemp businesses in unincorporated areas of Sacramento County. The tax was expected to generate between \$5 million and \$7.7 million per year to fund county homelessness services. The County of Sacramento Board of Supervisors placed Measure B on the ballot as a referral. The measure required a two-thirds supermajority vote to pass, and it was [defeated](#) on a vote of 53% to 47%.

✗ **California (statewide).** [Proposition 27](#), the "California Solutions to Homelessness and Mental Health Support Act," would have legalized online sports betting in California outside of tribal lands for adults age 21 and over. Most of the revenues from betting fees and taxes would have addressed homelessness and the mental health needs of people experiencing homelessness, and the rest of the money would have been used to support

Native American tribes. Housing advocates largely opposed the measure; the Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California noted in its [voter guide](#) that Proposition 27 “is full of loopholes and deductions that will only benefit the online sports betting operators, failing to deliver on its promises to serve homelessness and mental health solutions.” Proposition 27 was [defeated](#) in a vote of 18% to 82%.

CALIFORNIA’S ARTICLE 34 AUTHORIZATIONS

Article 34 of California’s state constitution requires local governments to receive voter approval for construction of publicly financed or publicly owned affordable housing projects. This [racist provision limited affordable housing development](#) in California in the mid-twentieth century and reinforced segregation. Courts have determined that cities can ask voters to approve an overall number of affordable units rather than hold a separate election for each project. These authorizations do not require the city to build specific projects, nor do they generate money for affordable housing.

Five local governments placed Article 34 authorizations on the ballot in the November 2022 election cycle, which will lay the groundwork for increased government-funded housing development and create a pathway for these cities to fulfill their affordable housing targets. Although all five measures were approved by significant margins, Article 34 can [still impose](#) burdens and delay the development of affordable housing, while embedding racism and segregation in the California constitution. Housing advocates are gearing up to campaign for a [statewide ballot measure](#) in 2024 that would repeal Article 34 altogether.

✓ **Berkeley, CA.** [Measure N](#) allows Berkeley to develop, construct, or acquire an additional 3,000 low-rent residential units to meet the City’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation

(RHNA), without seeking separate voter approval. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 76% to 24%.

✓ **Los Angeles, CA.** [Proposition LH](#) allows the development, construction, or acquisition of up to 5,000 additional affordable housing units in each of the city’s 15 council districts for a total of 75,000 additional units of publicly funded affordable housing. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 70% to 30%.

✓ **Oakland, CA.** [Measure Q](#) allows Oakland to develop, construct, or acquire an additional 13,000 low-rent residential units to meet the city’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), without seeking separate voter approval. It [passed](#) on a vote of 80% to 20%.

✓ **Sacramento County, CA.** [Measure D](#) authorizes the county of Sacramento and cities within the county to build low-income housing units equivalent to 1% of the city’s overall housing stock each year. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 61% to 39%.

✓ **South San Francisco, CA.** [Measure AA](#) authorizes the City of South San Francisco to develop, construct, or acquire affordable, decent, and safe rental housing for low-income people, including families, seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans, in an amount up to 1% of the total number of existing housing units in the City of South San Francisco annually for an eight-year period, with any year’s unused units being carried over each year. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 59% to 41%.

ZONING AND LAND USE

Some California cities considered ballot measures to facilitate affordable housing development, while others voted on measures that would impose procedural barriers to construction. San Francisco voters faced two competing proposals, Propositions D and E, that each would have streamlined approvals for affordable housing projects, but each proposition contained different affordability restrictions, approval processes, and labor requirements. The defeat of both ballot measures could be attributed in part to voters' confusion when asked to decipher competing proposals, rather than outright rejection of the policy ideas. In other cities, changes to zoning laws that would open up land for housing development saw mixed results. Costa Mesa and San Diego passed measures to increase housing capacity in commercial areas, while Yorba Linda overwhelmingly rejected a rezoning proposal.

Elsewhere in California, voters considered measures that would require voter approval for affordable housing development on specific sites and therefore enact major hurdles to new construction. In Menlo Park, Brentwood, and Santa Cruz, these measures were placed on the ballot [in response to specific proposals](#) - for affordable housing on a former school site, a golf course, and a city parking lot, respectively - that sharply divided the community. The results differed in each jurisdiction; Menlo Park and Santa Cruz handily rejected these measures and will allow projects to move forward, while Brentwood voters overwhelmingly voted to require popular approval for new housing in recreational areas. Although these measures were crafted as a reaction to specific projects, they double as a referendum on broader issues of zoning, NIMBYism, and neighborhood preservation - issues that are especially salient in light of recent California state laws that limit local control over approvals for affordable housing and more aggressively push cities to fulfill their housing targets. Some ballot measures, such as Measure Q in Nevada City, represented direct

attempts to restore local control and limit the scope of state housing laws.

Zoning and Land Use Changes to Facilitate Housing Development

✓ **Costa Mesa, CA.** [Measure K](#) [peels back](#) part of the requirement for a citywide vote to approve rezonings, as enacted by Measure Y in 2016. The measure authorizes the City Council to adopt rezonings on certain commercial corridors without voter approval. Measure K was placed on the ballot as a referral. The [Costa Mesa Is For Everyone campaign](#) supported Measure K; the [Costa Mesa First campaign](#), which placed Measure Y on the ballot in 2016, campaigned against it. It was [approved](#) on a vote of 50.03% to 49.97%.

✓ **San Diego, CA.** [Measure C](#) excludes the Midway-Pacific Highway Plan Area from the city's 30-foot coastal height limit. The measure [opens up](#) the Midway District to new housing, businesses, and public spaces, and takes steps towards enabling the redevelopment of the city-owned Sports Arena. Voters approved a similar measure in 2020, but it was [invalidated](#) in court because of a technicality. Measure C was placed on the ballot as a referral. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 51% to 49%.

✗ **San Francisco, CA.** [Proposition D](#) (Affordable Homes Now) expedites approvals for three different types of housing projects: (1) 100%-affordable projects, (2) mixed-income projects containing 15% more affordable housing units than are required under city regulations, and (3) projects in which 100% of residential units are set aside for households that include at least one school district or city college employee and at least 80% of units are affordable. Eligible projects are exempted from discretionary and state environmental review if they comply with the Planning Code. The projects would have to be approved within five to eight months.

Improvements to grading, streets, and sewer and water connections would be expedited as well. Proposition D also requires that workers on projects with 10 or more residential units receive prevailing wages. Workers on projects with at least 40 units must receive health coverage and have access to an apprenticeship program. [Mayor London Breed](#) proposed Proposition D, and it was placed on the ballot following a signature collection initiative. The measure was [defeated](#) in a vote of 49% to 51%.

✘ San Francisco, CA. [Proposition E](#), the “Affordable Housing Production Act,” would have created a streamlined approval process for three types of housing projects: (1) housing for households with incomes up to 120% of AMI and for which the average household income was no more than 80% of AMI; (2) mixed-income housing projects in which additional affordable housing units amounted to 8% of the total number of units in the project; and (3) housing for households that included at least one school district or city college employee, with certain household income restrictions. Unlike Proposition D, Proposition E would still have required the Board of Supervisors’ approval for projects that used city property or financing. Under Proposition E, employers would have been required to pay prevailing wages to workers on projects with more than 10 units. Projects with more than 25 units would have been required to use a skilled and trained workforce. Under Proposition E, [projects could still have been subject](#) to discretionary review. Propositions D and E were in direct competition; if both passed, the proposition with the greatest number of votes would have gone into effect. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors placed Proposition E on the ballot. The measure was [defeated](#) in a vote of 46% to 54%.

✘ Yorba Linda, CA. [Measure Z](#) would have rezoned 19 parcels identified as Housing Element opportunity sites to allow for additional residential units and increase maximum

building heights. The ballot measure would not have authorized construction on these sites but would have allowed these zones to be used to increase housing capacity and satisfy the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Measure Z was placed on the ballot as a referral. It was [defeated](#) in a vote of 25% to 75%.

Zoning and Land Use Changes to Inhibit Housing Development

✔ Brentwood, CA. [Measure Q](#) amends the city’s General Plan to establish a new Voter-Protected Open Space land use designation, which would require voter approval for housing and commercial development on parks, open spaces, and recreation areas. Measure Q would apply the Open Space Overlay to an identified set of areas. The City Council [could redesignate](#) Open Space Overlay land under two conditions: if it is necessary for compliance with state or federal law, or if the Council simultaneously adds an equal or greater amount of space to the Overlay. The City Council referred Measure Q to the ballot, and [Alliance for a Better Brentwood](#) led the campaign for Measure Q. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 64% to 36%.

✘ Menlo Park, CA. [Measure V](#) would have revoked the city council’s ability to change the zoning of single-family lots. Instead, it would have required a popular vote in a general election to build multifamily housing on any property currently zoned as a single-family lot (R1). Measure V was placed on the ballot in [reaction to](#) a potential housing development for teachers and staff on land owned by the Ravenswood School District, which serves East Palo Alto and some of Menlo Park. Despite being a vacant former school site, the property is zoned R1. Thus, Measure V would have required a citywide vote to rezone the site, effectively blocking the project before it was even proposed. Measure V was a citizen-driven ballot initiative that had

the support of [Menlo Balance](#), while [Menlo Park Neighbors for Affordable Homes](#) led the campaign against the proposal. The measure [was defeated](#) on a vote of 38% to 62%.

✘ Nevada City, CA. Measure W would have amended the city's general plan and municipal code to designate a portion of the city with approximately [869 homes](#) as a Historic Neighborhood District. This designation [could exempt](#) the specified neighborhoods from a California state law, SB 9, which allows for development of up to four residential units on lots currently zoned for single-family housing. However, the exemption for historic neighborhoods is narrow, and it is unclear whether the proposed Historic Neighborhoods District would have been exempt. Measure W was placed on the ballot as a [citizen-driven initiative](#). It was [defeated](#) on a vote of 33% to 67%.

✘ San Benito County, CA. [Measure Q](#) would have amended the county's general plan to require voter approval whenever an agricultural, rangeland, or rural property owner wants to rezone their land for residential, commercial, industrial, or infill designations. The [Campaign to Protect San Benito](#) qualified Measure Q for the ballot via petition signatures. [Neighbors to Preserve San Benito](#) led the campaign against the ballot initiative. The measure was [defeated](#) on a vote of 44% to 56%.

✘ Santa Cruz, CA. Measure O would have amended the city's General Plan and Downtown Plan to prohibit the relocation of the Downtown Farmer's Market and block the construction of the proposed Downtown Library and Affordable Housing project. The project includes 124 affordable homes, a new library, and a childcare facility. The measure would also have required affordable housing development on other downtown city-owned parking lots and designated surplus parking revenue for downtown af-

fordable housing development, among other purposes. A coalition of individuals and organizations under the umbrella [Our Downtown, Our Future](#) collected signatures to place Measure O on the ballot, and the [Santa Cruz for Real Library and Housing Solutions campaign](#) formed to oppose Measure O. The measure was [defeated](#) on a vote of 40% to 60%.

✔ Watsonville, CA. [Measure Q](#) retains the city's urban growth boundary, which was approved by Watsonville voters in 2002. Some portions of the boundary [were set to expire](#) this year. The ballot initiative will extend the expiration date until 2040, which will limit commercial and residential development to areas within the existing boundaries. An [analysis](#) of Measure Q found that the current boundary imposes a barrier to housing development and may affect Watsonville's ability to meet its housing needs. The Committee for Planned Growth and Farmland Protection led the campaign to place the initiative on the ballot. The measure [passed](#) on a vote of 68% to 32%.

✘ Watsonville, CA. Like Measure Q, [Measure S](#) would have preserved the current urban growth boundary until 2040, but it would also have allowed the Watsonville City Council to identify possible areas for development beyond the boundary during the city's 2050 General Plan update. Watsonville city staff drafted Measure S, and it was referred to the ballot as a [countermeasure](#) to Measure Q. Only the measure with the [greatest number of votes](#) would have been enacted. Measure S received a narrow majority of voters' support, on a [vote](#) of 50.06% to 49.94%, but it will not take effect because Measure Q received a higher number of votes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

From the Sun Belt to the Rust Belt, across mountain communities in Colorado and beachside towns in New York, voters overwhelmingly chose to support affordable housing in the November 2022 elections. Every housing-related bond measure received the support of a majority of voters, and nearly every bond measure passed. In a year of skyrocketing rents, communities voted in favor of rent stabilization in every election where they were presented the opportunity to do so. The vast majority of tax increases, new taxes and fees, and measures repurposing existing tax revenues for affordable housing and homelessness were approved. Voters rejected strict regulations on short-term rentals, but short-term rental taxes and reinvestments of lodging tax revenues into affordable housing were generally successful. Most communities rejected proposals to require voter approval for new development and therefore limit affordable housing projects, but these restrictive proposals were successful in some communities. In some cases where voters faced competing ballot measures, such as San Francisco's dual proposals to expedite affordable housing development and Portland's two alternatives for short-term rental regulations, defeats may be attributable to voter confusion, rather than disapproval of the overarching policy ideas.

The passage of Measure O in Sacramento, which criminalizes unsheltered homelessness, is a negative outcome of the 2022 elections, and raises concerns that interest groups will again pursue ballot measures as a mechanism to enact misguided policies that fail to meaningfully address homelessness. Housing and homelessness advocates should be prepared

to respond to future efforts to criminalize homelessness at the ballot box.

The overall success of housing-related ballot measures will give momentum to future efforts to place housing policy on the ballot. Some housing ballot measure campaigns are already underway for 2023 and 2024. Seattle voters [will consider](#) a social housing ballot initiative in the February 2023 special election, and California housing advocates are gearing up for a campaign to repeal the state constitution's racist, archaic Article 34 in November 2024. The lessons learned from this year's victories – including those in the five communities featured as case studies in this report – will equip organizers in 2023 and beyond to launch strong ballot measure campaigns.

The widespread popularity of housing-related ballot measures also sends a strong message to elected officials: housing is a winning issue among voters. Support for housing ballot measures often transcends partisan divides, and the election results should encourage policymakers on both sides of the aisle to champion affordable housing. Voters are enthusiastic about bold housing policy solutions, but they should not need to wait until these proposals are presented to them directly on their ballots in the next election cycle. Local, state, and federal governments should pursue every possible opportunity to dedicate new resources to affordable housing and strengthen tenant protections. The fate of housing-related ballot measures in the 2022 elections suggest that they will be rewarded for doing so.

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OUR HOMES

OUR VOTES

BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS

