

OPINION > COMMENTARY

# Opinion: Commission working to preserve existing affordable housing



By **LISA C JONES**

PUBLISHED: January 29, 2025 at 6:00 AM PST

---

From young adults out on their own for the first time to families with children who do their homework at the kitchen table to older adults on fixed income, an affordable home is essential. However, in our high-cost San Diego housing market, instead of the stability, peace and hopefulness that an affordable home provides, too many of these families experience stress, anxiety and instability because their housing costs take too much of their monthly income.

We need more affordable housing for San Diegans.

But new construction alone cannot keep up with the growing need for homes people can afford, especially with budget constraints hindering resources for new development. Now more than ever, we must also preserve existing affordable housing.

The San Diego Housing Commission's study, "[Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego](#)," estimated that without intervention to preserve existing affordable housing units, 35% of all new production will simply replace units that lost their affordability. Over the next three years alone, we have identified 590 units at risk of losing their affordability and becoming market-rate.

Our study further estimated that over 13,000 housing units could become unaffordable by 2040 for those who need them (4,200 with affordability restrictions and 9,250 unrestricted naturally occurring affordable housing units).

And, over roughly the past decade, [permits were issued](#) for only a [small fraction](#) of the new housing units San Diego needs to build for families with low income.

[Read More](#)

00:00

02:00

Meanwhile, the looming budget crisis creates additional challenges for new construction. For example, the Housing Commission has led the region in awarding project-based vouchers to spur the development of affordable housing for families with low income and for those experiencing homelessness in our community. We will continue to provide rental assistance through the housing vouchers already in use in the city of San Diego. However, with anticipated cuts in federal funding, state and local governments experiencing deficits, and higher average rent subsidy costs, the Housing Commission has no choice but to [discontinue awarding new project-based housing vouchers](#) at this time.

The need for affordable housing in San Diego continues to increase, and with the lack of federal funding to provide new project-based vouchers to assist San Diegans, the preservation of San Diego's existing affordable housing is that much more critical.

Our preservation study in 2020 led to City Council approval of seven actions to implement a strategy for affordable housing preservation, including the development of a [proposed city law](#) that will be presented to the council for consideration in the coming weeks to encourage preservation of deed-restricted affordable rental housing units.

It is imperative that we continue to work to identify issues and potential solutions. Government alone cannot solve this issue. Philanthropic resources combined with public-sector resources will also be necessary to ensure we

---

Preserving quality affordable housing is essential to tackling our city's housing challenges. We're committed to working with city leadership and community partners to find and enact stronger, more effective preservation efforts.

**Opinion:** Editorials, commentary and reader reaction on the issues San Diegans care about most.



SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and to receive emails from The San Diego Union-Tribune.

*Jones is the president and chief executive officer of the San Diego Housing Commission. She lives in the College Area.*