

Developer-driven Housing Bills Won't Solve Affordability for People Purchasing Homes

Over 1,500 local elected officials and staff have recently voiced opposition to a series of bills out of Lansing that would preempt local decision-making in the name of housing solutions. Local leaders across Michigan recognize that housing is one of the most pressing concerns facing our residents. This is why we are working every day to solve the issue, but a one-size-fits-all approach is simply not the right thing for all of Michigan's diverse communities.

A one-size-fits approach would eliminate residents' voices in decision-making. Local governance allows participation and empowers democratic problem-solving, while centralized state decrees do not. We must protect spaces for communities to wrestle with complex issues, adapt to changing conditions, and take ownership of the solutions they implement. Durable outcomes emerge when people have a voice, a stake, and a responsibility in shaping decisions that affect their communities and their families.

Some laws are so universal and indisputable that they work in almost any situation. It's always wrong to steal things, commit unprovoked violence, etc., and so we create statewide and even federal laws to deal with such issues. In other cases, local context is required to make a good decision about what should be permitted. Local zoning is a perfect example; it relies on local context.

Would it make sense to apply the same noise ordinances statewide? Should every community allow every type of livestock or an unlimited number of dogs in the yard? Context matters.

As elected leaders of communities which each have a distinct character and set of needs, we listen carefully, plan thoughtfully for the future, and prioritize local decision-making. We live in the neighborhoods we serve, share in their challenges and opportunities, and are deeply committed to their long-term success. "Zoning" may not be the most exciting topic at a dinner party, but it helps to shape the communities we all choose to live in. As local officials, we are interested in *both* attracting new residents to our communities *and* keeping those we already have.

This is why so many of us are already working to implement growth strategies that will enhance housing opportunities while also preventing unintended challenges related to aesthetics, parking, public safety, and infrastructure capacity – all of which may result in higher costs for residents.

Communities like Dearborn, Canton Township, Harper Woods, Lansing, Monroe, Orion Township, Port Huron, Riverview, Rochester Hills, Southfield, Sterling Heights, Troy, and many others are already reforming zoning and approving plans for attainable housing — without state mandates.

State officials should work in collaboration and partnership with residents and local government rather than preempting local decision-making. Leaders from different political backgrounds stand united: strong Michigan communities depend on strong local government, and strong local government requires authority, accountability, and respect.

As local officials who rely on strong partnerships with our partners at the state and federal levels, we applaud Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature for their focus on delivering what we all want: quality, affordable housing for Michiganders. While the affordable housing crisis is real, bills to override local zoning may reduce costs for developers, but they will create new costs for residents.

A significantly better alternative is the [MI Home Program](#), which offers a collaborative solution — encouraging zoning reform, providing gap funding, and ensuring the availability of more homes while respecting local authority and encouraging partnership rather than preemption. Needs and solutions look different across our vibrant small towns and villages, agriculturally rich rural landscapes, active and dense urban centers, and fresh coast and waterfront communities.

MI Home includes:

- Funding to build and redevelop more housing
- Incentives for communities to pursue zoning reform
- State match for employer contributions to workforce housing
- A revolving loan program that only needs a startup amount to have a lasting impact

Further, MI Home is focused on ensuring that housing prices are within reach for working people and families earning at or near the area median income (AMI).

[COMMUNITY EXAMPLE] In an example of what can be accomplished by prioritizing affordability at the local level, Fraser Square – a new Harper Woods development planned in partnership with residents and community leaders – is offering opportunities at a range of levels: 60% AMI (\$45,600), 120% (\$91,200), and market rate.

The MI Home Program's opt-in nature promotes collaboration between local governments, developers, and residents to produce better-designed projects that respect the unique character, history, and long-term master plans of each community. It allows communities to first determine if they have the capacity, therefore reducing the risk of unintended consequences such as strained public safety services and traffic congestion. It preserves the principle of local accountability, ensuring residents can engage directly with decision-makers they elect and trust.

While we recognize that the state budget will be tighter than normal, funding for this program amounts to two-tenths of one percent of the State's budget. For the legislators who—like local leaders—consider the current housing market a crisis, this program should be an easy solution.