

Affordable Housing

Across the United States, thousands of once-bustling office buildings now stand empty, yet individuals and businesses find themselves effectively barred from converting these properties into affordable housing because of restrictive state-level zoning laws and tangled bureaucratic red tape. Existing federal initiatives, such as Section 8, have largely proven ineffective—often riddled with exploitation and inefficiencies—leaving millions without access to safe, reasonably priced homes. Only bold, executive-level action can overcome these entrenched barriers and deliver meaningful relief. By invoking national security provisions, eminent domain authority, and a self-sustaining funding model, the President can swiftly transform vacant commercial spaces into habitable units for those most in need.

Leveraging Federal and GSE Assets via the DOGE Initiative

The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has exposed a trove of vacant federal properties, including high-rise office towers managed by the General Services Administration (GSA) under the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949. Recent audits, alongside FHFA findings of near-empty Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac offices, reveal spaces bought or leased with taxpayer funds—now idle due to remote work shifts. Through a targeted executive order, these structures could be swiftly repurposed into emergency housing. The Supremacy Clause ensures federal jurisdiction overrides local zoning, slashing rezoning delays and enabling rapid conversion of these pre-existing assets into habitable units for those in need.

Seizing and Repurposing Private Properties on National Security Grounds

In instances where foreign-owned commercial properties may pose economic or security risks, the President has the authority to invoke the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. Historical precedents from World War II and the Cold War confirm that such emergency measures can be legally justified. Once seized, these properties could be re-designated as federal emergency housing units, further eliminating local zoning and permitting barriers.

Employing Eminent Domain and Emergency Declarations

Beyond national security scenarios, the Takings Clause of the Constitution allows for property seizure when just compensation is provided. If homelessness is treated as a national emergency. Under the National Emergencies Act of 1976 or the Stafford Act, the President could temporarily suspend or relax building and fire codes. This would enable essential, cost-effective retrofits, such as installing portable fire extinguishers, ensuring adequate egress, and setting up basic sanitation facilities, without incurring the prohibitive costs of complete structural overhauls.

A Two-Tiered, Self-Sustaining Funding Model

One approach is to offer a low-cost housing option accessible to anyone in need of a stable living arrangement, without strict income requirements or proof of hardship. By setting a nominal monthly rent and requiring only valid identification and a signed contract, participants could secure a place to sleep, store their belongings, and use essential facilities. This arrangement would last for one to two years, granting individuals a critical window to pay off debts, accumulate savings, and prepare for more permanent housing solutions. Throughout their stay, on-site case managers and advocates would guide residents toward sustainable employment, further education, and eventually long-term stability. By

relieving the crushing burden of traditional market rents and administrative hurdles, this program would prevent countless people from slipping into chronic homelessness while reinforcing the notion that housing should be affordable and readily available to all.

By collecting a modest monthly rent, this initiative can generate a reliable revenue stream to offset both the initial investments in fair property acquisitions and the ongoing operational costs of maintaining these facilities. In many cases, an empty office building of just a few floors could accommodate hundreds of tenants, each paying either a flat rate or a sliding-scale fee, creating the potential for a net positive return. Such an arrangement would not only sustain the existing housing program but also fund future expansions, accelerating the nation's progress toward comprehensive affordable housing. Allowing them to save money, build credit, and regain financial stability. At scale, this solution would reduce demand in traditional rental markets, helping to stabilize and even lower rents nationwide, while also opening the door to homeownership for those who have long been priced out.

A second approach would target those facing chronic homelessness, severe financial hardship, or disabilities that make self-sufficiency especially difficult. Rather than relying on fragmented services, billions of dollars already allocated through HUD, FEMA, and Medicaid could be redirected to repurpose large commercial or federal properties into mass housing facilities, where residents could receive comprehensive support in a centralized environment. Mental health services, substance abuse recovery programs, and job training initiatives would be co-located, reducing costs and streamlining care. By ensuring these facilities remain drug-free and by offering robust recovery resources, this model would stabilize the most vulnerable populations while giving them a chance to rebuild their lives. In doing so, the program would demonstrate genuine national compassion and commitment to uplifting all citizens, especially those who need help the most. This also takes thousands of vulnerable homeless off of the streets making them safer and cleaner for business and society to flourish.

Navigating Zoning, Safety, and Compliance Challenges

Under federal designation, local zoning ordinances lose their force, allowing immediate repurposing of vacant commercial buildings. During a declared emergency, non-critical safety requirements can be temporarily waived, provided essential life-safety measures like marked exits and fire extinguishers remain in place. This balanced approach prioritizes swift deployment and occupant well-being while acknowledging the practical constraints of large-scale conversions.

Challenges and Mitigation

Legal challenges from property owners and safety advocates may arise, but proactive coordination with fire marshals, local authorities, and legal advisors can help forestall injunctions. A phased implementation rolling out these conversions in targeted regions first would allow for adjustments in response to any unforeseen obstacles. By maintaining transparency, engaging stakeholders early, and focusing on essential retrofits, this strategy can scale effectively across diverse jurisdictions.