

Affordable Housing

November 25, 2019

Safe and affordable housing is central to a thriving life. Where we live determines our access to food, clean air, education, and a good job. It is where we raise our children, age with grace, care for our loved ones, and find solace from the outside world.

Communities riddled with food deserts, smog, underfunded schools, and lack of jobs cannot thrive. There is no reprieve without secure shelter. Every American deserves access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing as a basic human need.

Yet, all across the country there is a shortage of safe and affordable homes and rental units. Years of underinvestment in building new housing stock — and particularly affordable housing units — have left millions of Americans struggling to find an affordable, safe, and secure home.

There has been a corporate takeover of our housing stock as big banks and developers prey on consumers to keep rent sky-high and build for the already wealthy. Home ownership was once the bedrock of middle class wealth in America, yet that opportunity was explicitly kept from African Americans and other communities of color. Today, young people of all races and backgrounds, can no longer afford to buy their first homes.

As the demand for housing has increased — particularly in growing metropolitan areas — rents are rising and tenants are left unprotected. At the same time in other parts of America, a second housing crisis is unfolding: as economic growth has left places behind, families are left underwater on mortgages they can no longer afford to sell or maintain, and the housing stock is deteriorating and, in many cases, abandoned.

These market conditions are forcing more people onto the streets and leaving too many families on the financial brink.

Moreover, as the climate crisis threatens our communities, the buildings and neighborhoods where we live will play an incredibly important role in helping the U.S. meet our climate goals. It is imperative that we invest in climate-smart communities, zero-carbon buildings, transit-oriented development, and resilient structures.

A Steyer administration will work non-stop to ensure that safe and affordable housing is available to every American and will partner with jurisdictions to build climate-smart infrastructure. Tom will:

- Improve and Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing
- Fight Homelessness
- Build Family Wealth
- Develop Climate-Smart Communities

Improve and Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing

We must **increase the supply of total housing and reinvest in current units**. Far too many families struggle to find safe, healthy and affordable units. In fast growing metropolitan areas, demand for housing is higher than supply. When developers build, they focus almost exclusively on high income consumers, leaving working Americans and the poor with few affordable options.

Side by side with new construction, aging and under-maintained housing stock needs reinvestment, including general maintenance and repair, weatherization, and code upgrades to serve as healthier homes. In many economically depressed communities, often land owners abandon aging buildings or families do not have the extra capital to invest in repair projects, further eroding equity in the neighborhood as homes fall into ever greater disrepair.

We must ensure that a significant proportion of the supply remains affordable. To accelerate the construction of needed safe, healthy and affordable housing stock, Tom will:

- **Invest \$45 billion per Year in Affordable Construction and Renovation**

Tom will invest \$45 billion annually in the Housing Trust Fund and Capital Magnet Fund. These funds makes grants and loans for new construction, renovations and preservation for low-income housing, including for seniors and people with disabilities. Funds will highlight multifamily projects that include wraparound services, communal spaces and meet our climate goals. This needed capital will stabilize families and communities, allowing them to thoughtfully adapt their neighborhoods in a changing market.

- **Update Low-Income Housing Tax Credit**

Tom will increase LIHTC Housing Credit allocations by 50% over the next five years and establish a 4% housing credit floor for renovation projects which will create over 300,000 additional affordable rental units. Increasing housing stock requires changes to zoning and land use laws to allow for more affordable units to be built in high density areas. A Steyer administration will prioritize LIHTC projects that incorporate transit-oriented development, deep energy efficiency, and densification.

- **Establish the IDEAHousing Competition**

Tom will dedicate \$10 billion per year to solve the housing crisis through the creation of the Ideas to Develop and Ensure Affordability Housing Competition (IDEAHousing), a grant competition designed to support innovative new solutions in streamlining, financing, technology, and construction to end America's housing crisis. Grants will go to public-private partnerships based upon the creation of community-led innovative and replicable ideas that promote healthy, safe and affordable homes.

- **Preserve, Encourage, and Green Public Housing**

Tom will work to preserve, green and renovate all public housing to ensure that facilities provide a safe, healthy and climate-smart home for residents. He will work to repeal the Faircloth Amendment, which limits the supply of public housing. Repeal would allow the federal government to build new public housing — desperately needed homes for low income people.

- **Fight Unjust Gentrification**

Every city gets its soul from having its residents come from diverse backgrounds and from every kind of income level. Cities gain character from long-term residents who have invested deeply in their neighborhood life. We must center fairness for the people who have strong roots in a neighborhood to enable them to thrive in their community as it changes and ensure through strong tenant protections that long-term, aging residents will continue to have a home in the communities where they have built their lives. We will work with people who have called communities home for generations to help them build equity as the neighborhood gains wealth, so that long-time community members' economic fortunes rise as neighborhoods prosper.

- **Support Rural Housing**

To address the housing challenges specific to rural America, Tom will expand programs within the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Housing Improvement Program for affordable housing, including programs to develop new housing, acquire and renovate older units, provide senior housing, and house farm workers in communities

- **Support Local Governments and Community Projects**

Tom will increase funding for Community Development Block Grants to resource programs that help with equitable local economic development, affordable housing, transit-oriented development, disaster resilience, and infrastructure.

Low income families feel the rise of housing costs earlier, longer and more acutely than any other group. **We must protect the affordability of housing** for low-income and working family renters who have seen wages stagnate and rents skyrocket. To do so, Tom will:

- **Expand Access to the Housing Choice Voucher Program**

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is the first line of defense that keeps 2.2 million people from falling into homelessness. Yet a lack of funding stops roughly 3 in 4 eligible households from accessing the voucher. Tom will expand access to all families that qualify for the program and provide navigators to make access easier.

- **Provide Relief for Low- and Middle-Income Renters**

For millions of individuals and families, the cost of rent is an untenable part of the household budget, especially when balancing the rising costs of healthcare and other costs of living. Renters need relief now. Tom will support individuals and families with a quarterly tax credit to directly help low-income and middle-income families based on the local area Small Area Fair Markets Rents designation. Families who qualify can choose to use this credit either for rental payment assistance or to save for a down payment on a home mortgage.

We must **increase accountability and enforce civil rights provisions and renter protections**, particularly in disadvantaged communities, to ensure that every American, no matter their background, has access to safe and welcoming housing. To do so, Tom will:

- **Protect Tenants & Enforce Affordable Housing Standards**

Housing is a basic human need and the federal government needs to do everything in its power to mitigate evictions and keep people in their homes. Partnering with local governments and housing authorities, Tom will create a renters emergency fund to make one-time grants or loans to low-income families facing eviction due to an unexpected expense and assure that everyone has a right to legal representation in eviction proceedings.

- **Protect Vulnerable Communities from Housing Discrimination**

Tom will fight for the most vulnerable communities. He will reverse Trump's efforts to weaken the Fair Housing Act which weakened protections against discrimination for people of color, people with disabilities, and other protected classes, ensure that new technology products (like financing and placement algorithms) meet established civil rights standards, reform the Fair Housing Act to include non-discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identify, will increase resources to programs for homeless youth and victims of trafficking, and ensure that the protections for women in the Violence Against Women Act are fully enforced and funded.

- **Ensure Fair Chance Housing**

Tom will give returning citizens a fair chance in the housing market by prohibiting landlords, real estate agents, homeowner associations, banks, and government services from inquiring against past conviction records prior to processing an individual's financial application.

- **End Financial Discrimination Against Renters**

Tom will ban landlords and rental agencies from discriminating against applicants based upon the source of their income or history of bankruptcy, if they demonstrate current cash flow and stability requirements for occupancy.

Combat Homelessness

Homelessness is a persistent problem that is exacerbated by poor policy. The skyrocketing cost of housing puts many working class Americans on the brink of losing their homes. Far too often, rent increases result in eviction and homelessness. Homelessness is intricately related to the variable needs an individual must meet at any given moment: shelter, food, clothing, physical and mental healthcare and more.

A Steyer administration is ready to partner with municipalities and states to address this crisis and provide relief. Solving homelessness requires us to do all we can to keep people in their housing and provide holistic case management to address the needs of individuals who are experiencing homelessness to stabilize their living situation as rapidly as possible.

- **Invest \$8 billion in Homeless Assistance Grants and Case Management**

A Steyer administration will work to keep families in their homes and provide access to holistic case management services by increasing funding for McKinney-Vento Act, expanding Section 5 of McKinney-Vento to rehabilitate vacant properties to house the previously homeless or those at risk of becoming so, reforming and resourcing the Continuum of Care Program. For those that are experiencing homelessness, rapid rehousing can reduce chronic homelessness. Tom will take a housing first approach to homelessness, pairing stable, safe shelter with appropriate resources to nutritional, health, training, and education programs.

- **Empower and Improve Coordination with State and Local Governments**

Municipal and state governments are crucial leaders in the effort to reduce homelessness. Tom pledges to look to build strong partnerships with local governments, improve data collection and technology infrastructure, and expand upon the work of the Interagency Council on Homelessness and Continuum of Care hand in hand with local officials and advocates.

- **End Veteran Homelessness**

America has made great strides in decreasing veteran homelessness, but there are still over 37,000 veterans experiencing homelessness. Tom is committed to ending veteran homelessness once and for all. No one who bravely served our country should ever return home without a place to live. As president, Tom will expand access and increase funding to the HUD-VASH program so that more veterans who are homeless can obtain housing. He will increase funding for the VA's Support Services for Veterans Families anti-homeless program to provide housing assistance in high-cost areas, and increase job training opportunities for veterans returning home.

- **Allow Tribal Participation in HUD's Continuum of Care**

Homelessness among Native Americans is far too prevalent, leading to overcrowding of family homes and others left out in the streets. As president, Tom will include tribal participation in HUD's Continuum of Care so that they can have access to federal funds addressing homelessness.

Build Family Wealth

Home ownership remains one of the greatest opportunities for wealth-building in America. But with stagnant wages and new construction lagging, millions of Americans are unable to purchase a home. Compounding these economic factors, America's history of racist housing policies have willfully kept communities of color — and African Americans in particular — from accessing the wealth-generating opportunity that home ownership brings. These racist policies have permeated everything from school quality to intergenerational stability. Tom pledges to address racial inequities head on.

The broad economic reforms in Tom's People Over Profit's Economic Agenda are the first step to deal with the housing crisis and help build family wealth. His housing policy will complement this reform agenda to help families build equity and realize a stable future. Tom will implement policies designed to expand ownership, build family equity, and right historic racist actions.

- **Encourage Densification that Grows Individual and Family Equity**

The supply of housing is woefully undersupplied in many major cities. As president, Tom will encourage densification that builds and shares equity, including incentives for accessory units, 2-4 unit construction, co-living houses and cooperatives, land trust ownership models, and other creative densification solutions.

- **Public Service Down Payment Assistance Loan Program**

Public servants are integral to American communities, yet in many jurisdictions, it has become hard for them to afford a home in the community where they work. Likewise, rural areas struggle to attract young people to their communities because student debt and a lack of economic opportunity prevents them from affording a quality home. Tom will create a revolving fund to provide down payment assistance to public servants — including first responders, doctors and nurses, and teachers — to help them build equity in the communities they strengthen every day through their work.

- **Extend Access to Less Expensive Mortgages**

Lower cost homes in rural and suburban America are being bought up by businesses and investors with access to plentiful financing and turned into rental units. Through rigorous enforcement of consumer protection laws, a revitalization and racially-corrective reform of the Federal Mortgage Program, and along with financial incentives, a Steyer Administration will ensure that individuals and families have access to financial products that will help keep housing stock in individual and family hands, instead of as a source of passive income for the already wealthy.

- **CFPB Financial Enforcement**

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) champions financial safeguards that protect Americans from big banks and corporations. President Trump's neutering of the agency's ability to enforce Fair Housing policy allows for discrimination in the mortgage market. Tom will return power to the agency so that people aren't being discriminated against when trying to purchase a home, and rigorously enforce against predatory landlords, mobile home loan programs, and discrimination in the mortgage system.

Develop Climate-Smart Communities

On day one of his presidency, Tom will declare a national emergency to address the climate crisis and rapidly begin the large-scale transformations needed to safeguard our economy and planet. Housing reform will play a critical role in helping reach our climate goals. Buildings remain one of the largest sources of energy consumption. It is not just the efficiency of the buildings we live in, but where they are located that determine our broader carbon footprint.

Good land use planning can dramatically reduce per capita emissions and ensure community resilience to climate impacts. To achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2045 and meet our community resilience goals, we must fully decarbonize our housing stock and incorporate our climate goals in the land use planning process. While many of these

determinations will be set at the local level, the Federal government can incentivize good practices and help direct resources to ensure that all communities — and particularly disadvantaged communities — benefit from a transition to a carbon-neutral economy.

- **Green America's Housing Stock**

Tom will ensure that by 2030, 100% of new residential buildings are zero-carbon buildings and retrofit 100% of existing residential stock to zero-carbon buildings by 2045. He will incentivize the use of clean building materials and technologies in affordable housing projects and enhance incentives for weatherization and energy efficiency, particularly for energy-burdened low-income families in relevant temperature zones.

- **Invest in Red-Lined Communities: Red Lines to Green Lines**

America's moral debt must be reckoned with to account for our history of segregation and discrimination. The Federal Housing Authority's complicit compliance in redlining denied African Americans the opportunity to purchase homes in resource rich communities has relegated them to communities with fewer federal and state resources, costing African Americans billions in community wealth and leaving communities with greater environmental pollution burdens. As president, Tom will provide \$156 billion in funding to previously redlined neighborhoods to build equity for homeowners, reduce environmental pollution, and grow community economic strength through well-paid, clean energy jobs.

- **Invest in Healthy, Climate-Smart Communities with Affordable Housing**

Tom will incentivize cities and regions to establish climate-smart plans. He will mobilize \$195 billion for clean affordable housing and communities, urban parks and greenspace, and universal renter displacement climate disaster insurance. He will issue \$250 billion over the course of ten years in new National Health Communities Climate Bonds and direct the funds to implement transformative climate-smart urban design such as: transit-oriented development, affordable housing, parks and public open spaces, urban gardens and local regenerative food systems, local clean energy generation, resilient clean water systems, and holistic solutions to reduce the need for super-commuting.

- **Ensure Americans are Connected to Nature and Each Other**

We need to invest in weaving our communities together in climate-smart ways. Tom will increase access to outdoor recreation so every American lives within a half-mile of a public park or protected natural area. He will mobilize \$650 billion in Federal and private investment for clean freight, public transit, intercity rail, and fleet purchasing incentives, competitively directing Federal resources towards cities, counties, and regions that have prioritized integrated climate-smart community

planning. A Steyer administration will work to harmonize nature, transportation and housing to increase community wellness.

- **Enhance Community and Climate Resiliency**

Improve the resiliency of public housing stock to climate disasters by incorporating climate models in the permitting, insurance, construction, and renovation process to protect tenants from extreme weather, fire, and other climate-driven threats. Modify the National Flood Insurance Program to ensure the use of the latest localized climate models into long- term land use planning.