

Assigned for all purposes to: Stanley Mosk Courthouse, Judicial Officer: James Chalfant

1 CALIFORNIANS FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP, INC.

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9 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

10 **FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

11  
12 CALIFORNIANS FOR  
HOMEOWNERSHIP, INC., a  
13 California nonprofit public benefit  
corporation,

14 Petitioner,

15 v.

16 CITY OF CLAREMONT,

17 Respondent.  
18

Case No. 22STCP03414

**VERIFIED PETITION FOR  
WRIT OF MANDATE**

[C.C.P. § 1085; Gov. Code §§ 65587, 65751]

19 Petitioner Californians for Homeownership (“Californians”) alleges as follows:

20 1. California is in the midst of a “housing supply and affordability crisis of  
21 historic proportions.” Gov. Code 65589.5(a)(2). That crisis is driven in major part by  
22 “activities and policies of many local governments that limit the approval of  
23 housing . . . .” Gov. Code § 65589.5(a)(1)(B).

24 2. As part of the Legislature’s effort to address this crisis, the law required  
25 cities in Southern California to adopt updated housing elements by October 15, 2021.

26 3. Claremont did not meet this deadline.

27 4. On behalf of the important public interest in the availability of housing,  
28 Californians seeks a writ compelling the City to adopt an updated housing element.

CALIFORNIANS FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP, INC.  
LOS ANGELES, CA

**PARTIES**

1  
2 5. Petitioner Californians for Homeownership, Inc. (“Californians”) is a  
3 California nonprofit public benefit corporation and 501(c)(3) public charity. Its  
4 mission is to address California’s housing crisis through litigation in support of the  
5 production and availability of housing affordable to families at all income levels.

6 6. Respondent City of Claremont is a city situated in Los Angeles County.

7 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

8 7. The Court has general subject matter jurisdiction over this action  
9 pursuant to Government Code Sections 65587 and 65751 and Code of Civil Procedure  
10 Section 1085.

11 8. The Court has personal jurisdiction over the City of Claremont pursuant  
12 to Code of Civil Procedure Section 410.10.

13 9. Venue for this action properly lies with this Court pursuant to Code of  
14 Civil Procedure Section 394.

15 **STATUTORY BACKGROUND**

16 10. In recent years, the California Legislature has sought to address what it  
17 has described as a “housing supply and affordability crisis of historic proportions.”  
18 Gov. Code 65589.5(a)(2). “The consequences of failing to effectively and  
19 aggressively confront this crisis are hurting millions of Californians, robbing future  
20 generations of the chance to call California home, stifling economic opportunities for  
21 workers and businesses, worsening poverty and homelessness, and undermining the  
22 state’s environmental and climate objectives. While the causes of this crisis are  
23 multiple and complex, the absence of meaningful and effective policy reforms to  
24 significantly enhance the approval and supply of housing affordable to Californians of  
25 all income levels is a key factor.” *Id.* (subdivision numbers omitted).

26 11. As a result of the housing crisis, younger Californians are being denied  
27 the opportunities for housing security and homeownership that were afforded to  
28 previous generations. Families across economic strata are being forced to rent rather

1 than experience the wealth-building benefits of homeownership.<sup>1</sup> Many middle and  
2 lower income families devote more than half of their take-home pay to rent, leaving  
3 little money to pay for transportation, food, healthcare and other necessities.<sup>2</sup> Unable  
4 to set aside money for savings, these families are also at risk of losing their housing in  
5 the event of a personal financial setback. Indeed, housing insecurity in California has  
6 led to a mounting homelessness crisis.<sup>3</sup>

7 12. Beyond the human toll, California’s housing crisis harms the  
8 environment. “[W]hen Californians seeking affordable housing are forced to drive  
9 longer distances to work, an increased amount of greenhouse gases and other  
10 pollutants is released and puts in jeopardy the achievement of the state’s climate  
11 goals.” Gov. Code § 65584.

12 13. At the core of California’s affordable housing crisis is a failure to build  
13 enough housing to meet demand. California’s Legislative Analyst’s Office estimates  
14 that the state should have been building approximately 210,000 units a year in major  
15 metropolitan areas from 1980 to 2010 to meet housing demand. Instead, it built  
16 approximately 120,000 units per year.<sup>4</sup> Today, California ranks 49th out of the 50  
17 states in existing housing units per capita.<sup>5</sup>

18 14. California’s housing crisis has been building for decades. The  
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20 <sup>1</sup> California Department of Housing and Community Development, *California’s*  
21 *Housing Future: Challenges and Opportunities: Final Statewide Housing Assessment*  
22 *2025* (2018), available at [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/SHA_Final_Combined.pdf)  
23 [reports/docs/SHA\\_Final\\_Combined.pdf](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/SHA_Final_Combined.pdf), at 18-19.

24 <sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 27.

25 <sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 3, 48-50.

26 <sup>4</sup> Legislative Analyst’s Office, *California’s High Housing Costs: Causes and*  
27 *Consequences* (2015), available at [https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-](https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.pdf)  
28 [costs/housing-costs.pdf](https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.pdf), at 21.

<sup>5</sup> McKinsey & Company, *A Tool Kit to Close California’s Housing Gap: 3.5*  
*Million Homes By 2025* (2016), available at [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured_insights/Urbanization/Closing_Californias_housing_gap/Closing-Californias-housing-gap-Full-report.ashx)  
[mckinsey/featured\\_insights/Urbanization/Closing Californias housing gap/Closing-](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured_insights/Urbanization/Closing_Californias_housing_gap/Closing-Californias-housing-gap-Full-report.ashx)  
[Californias-housing-gap-Full-report.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured_insights/Urbanization/Closing_Californias_housing_gap/Closing-Californias-housing-gap-Full-report.ashx), at document page 6.

1 Legislature has recognized that the crisis is driven, in part, “by activities and policies  
2 of many local governments that limit the approval of housing, increase the cost of  
3 land for housing, and require that high fees and exactions be paid by producers of  
4 housing.” Gov. Code § 65589.5(a)(1)(B).

5 15. Over the last five decades, the Legislature has increasingly sought to  
6 address the power imbalance at play in local housing policy. The most important state  
7 policy addressing the housing crisis is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation  
8 (“RHNA”) and housing element system.

9 16. The RHNA system is a process for assessing and allocating housing  
10 targets on a periodic basis, generally every eight years. Gov. Code § 65588. It starts  
11 with an assessment of statewide housing needs by the California Department of  
12 Housing and Community Development (“HCD”). The Department allocates the  
13 state’s anticipated housing needs on a region-by-region basis, at different levels of  
14 affordability, based on established criteria. Gov. Code §§ 65584.01, 65588. This need  
15 is then usually meted out to individual localities by a regional council of governments,  
16 as is the case in the Southern California region. Gov. Code § 65584.05.

17 17. Once the allocations are final, each locality is tasked with developing an  
18 action plan (the housing element) to enact land use policies that will produce enough  
19 housing to meet its RHNA goals. Gov. Code §§ 65583, 65583.2. The housing  
20 element must provide an inventory of sites available for residential development and  
21 assess constraints and market realities that affect the likely development activity at  
22 those sites, including local land use regulations. Localities must make changes to  
23 their land use rules, including by rezoning land, if needed to enable housing sufficient  
24 to meet their RHNA goals. Gov. Code § 65583(c), 65583.2(h).

25 18. Each city submits a draft of its Housing Element to HCD for review and  
26 receives written findings. Gov. Code § 65585(b)(3). In its written findings, HCD  
27 makes a determination whether the draft housing element “substantially complies”  
28 with the statutory requirements. Gov. Code § 65585(d). Prior to adoption of a

1 housing element, a city must consider HCD’s findings and either amend its housing  
2 element accordingly or provide findings of its own as to why it believes the housing  
3 element is compliant despite HCD’s determination. § 65585(e), (f).

4 19. California is currently in the midst of the sixth statewide housing element  
5 update cycle. For cities in the Southern California region, including the City, the  
6 sixth cycle covers an eight-year planning period starting October 15, 2021, and these  
7 cities were required to update their housing elements by that date. Gov. Code  
8 § 65588(e)(3).

9 20. A city without a compliant updated housing element is prohibited from  
10 using its general plan and zoning standards to reject certain housing development  
11 projects. *See* Gov. Code § 65589.5(d).

12 21. A city that does not adopt a compliant updated housing element within  
13 120 days of the due date is subject to accelerated rezoning under the housing element,  
14 once adopted. Gov. Code §§ 65583(c)(1)(A), 65583.2(c), 65588(e)(4)(C).

15 22. An interested party may bring an action under Code of Civil Procedure  
16 Section 1085 to determine whether a housing element conforms to the statutory  
17 requirements and to compel a city to adopt a compliant housing element. Gov. Code  
18 §§ 65587, 65751.

19 23. If a city’s housing element does not substantially comply with state law,  
20 a reviewing court must order the city to bring it into compliance within 120 days.  
21 Gov. Code § 65754(a). After adopting a housing element subject to such an order, the  
22 city must subsequently rezone to obtain consistency with the housing element within  
23 120 days. Gov. Code § 65754(b).

24 24. Additionally, the court must subject the city to penalties, which can  
25 include a suspension of all non-residential permitting and judicial approval of housing  
26 development projects. Gov. Code § 65755(a)(1), (4). The court can also grant this  
27 relief on an interim basis during the pendency of litigation. Gov. Code § 65757.  
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**FACTS**

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2 25. The statutory deadline for the City to adopt a sixth cycle updated  
3 Housing Element was October 15, 2021.

4 26. The City has not adopted a sixth cycle updated housing element.

5 27. Californians is a non-profit organization that aims to address California’s  
6 housing crisis, generally through impact litigation to support the development of and  
7 access to housing for families at all income levels.

8 28. Californians is currently engaged in a statewide effort to enforce both the  
9 substantive requirements and the deadlines in state housing element law, for the sixth  
10 housing element update cycle. As part of this effort, it has contacted over 50 cities to  
11 address concerns about their compliance with state law. So far in 2022, Californians  
12 has filed six lawsuits to enforce state housing element law. To date, three of these  
13 lawsuits have resulted in stipulated judgments in Californians’ favor, while the rest  
14 remain pending.

15 29. For cities that have not yet adopted sixth cycle updated housing  
16 elements, Californians’ approach involves contacting each city with a threat of  
17 litigation and an offer of compromise whereby Californians would agree to delay  
18 litigation in exchange for an acknowledgment by the city of certain state law penalties  
19 that apply due to its failure to timely adopt an updated housing element. In response,  
20 some cities have agreed to make such an acknowledgment, while others have  
21 declined.

22 30. On March 4, 2022, Californians contacted Claremont Community  
23 Development Director Brad Johnson to threaten litigation and offer this compromise.  
24 No response was received.

25 31. On March 28, 2022, Californians contacted the Claremont City Council  
26 to again threaten litigation and offer this compromise. No response was received.

27 32. On July 18, 2022, Californians contacted the City Council to again  
28 threaten litigation and make the compromise offer. The letter demanded a response

1 by July 22, but no response was received.

2 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

3 **Writ of Mandate to Compel Compliance with Housing Element Law**  
4 **(Gov. Code §§ 65587, 65751; C.C.P. § 1085)**

5 33. Californians incorporates and realleges all of the foregoing paragraphs.

6 34. Under Government Code Section 65587, any interested party may bring  
7 an action to determine whether all or part of a Housing Element conforms to the  
8 statutory requirements.

9 35. Pursuant to Government Code Sections 65587 and 65751, an action to  
10 challenge the legal adequacy of a housing element or compliance with housing  
11 element deadlines shall be brought under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1085.

12 36. Californians is an interested party for the purposes of these statutes.

13 37. The City's deadline to adopt a sixth cycle updated housing element was  
14 October 15, 2021.

15 38. Because the City missed this deadline, its housing element does not  
16 substantially comply with state law and it is subject to an action under Government  
17 Code Sections 65587 and 65751.

18 39. Californians has no available administrative remedies.

19 40. Californians has no plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law, other than  
20 the relief sought herein.

21 41. Accordingly, Californians is entitled to a writ of mandate.

22 **PRAYER**

23 WHEREFORE, Petitioner prays for relief as follows:

24 1. A writ of mandate directing the City to adopt a sixth cycle updated  
25 housing element pursuant to the schedule set forth in Government Code Section  
26 65754.

27 2. An injunction or order providing relief under Government Code Section  
28 65755.

- 1           3.    A declaration that:
- 2           a.    From October 16, 2021 until the City complies with the Court’s
- 3                 writ of mandate through the adoption of a housing element that
- 4                 substantially complies with state law, the City has not had a
- 5                 housing element that was revised in accordance with Government
- 6                 Code Section 65588 and the City’s housing element has not
- 7                 substantially complied with state law;
- 8           b.    The City is required to complete any rezoning required under
- 9                 Government Code Sections 65583(c)(1)(A) or 65583.2(c) by
- 10                October 15, 2022 or the timeframe to do so provided by
- 11                Government Code Section 65583.4, if the City meets the
- 12                requirements provided therein;
- 13           c.    The City is not permitted to use the provisions in subdivision (d)(1)
- 14                or (d)(5) of Government Code Section 65589.5 to disapprove a
- 15                housing development project that qualifies for approval under
- 16                subdivision (d) of that section—that is, a project in which either (A)
- 17                at least 20 percent of the total units shall be sold or rented to lower
- 18                income households, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section
- 19                50079.5, or (B) 100 percent of the units shall be sold or rented to
- 20                persons and families of moderate income as defined in Health and
- 21                Safety Code Section 50093, or persons and families of middle
- 22                income, as defined in Government Code Section 65008—or to
- 23                condition the approval of such a project in a manner that renders it
- 24                infeasible for development for the use of very low, low-, or
- 25                moderate-income households, or an emergency shelter, including
- 26                through the use of design review standards.
- 27           4.    Costs of suit;
- 28           5.    Attorneys’ fees under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1021.5 and as



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otherwise allowed by law;

6. Such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: September 16, 2022

Respectfully Submitted,  
CALIFORNIANS FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP, INC.

By   
Matthew P. Gelfand

Attorneys for Petitioner,  
Californians for Homeownership, Inc.

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**VERIFICATION**

I, Matthew P. Gelfand, declare:

1. I am an employee of and hold the position of Counsel at Petitioner Californians for Homeownership, Inc., and am familiar with the matters discussed in the foregoing Petition.

2. I have read the Petition and know the contents thereof. The statements of fact therein are true and correct of my own knowledge.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on September 16, 2022 at Los Angeles, California.



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Matthew P. Gelfand