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OPINION

Dallas' future depends on affordable housing

We are calling for an allocation of \$200 millions for the 2024 bond program



Construction takes place on future multifamily housing units at South St. Paul and Young streets in downtown Dallas on Wednesday, July 26, 2023. Dallas' future is tied to solving housing. Throughout our history, Dallas has proven its ability to rise to challenges, write Bryan Tony and Ashley Brundage. (Liesbeth Powers / Staff Photographer)

By Bryan Tony and Ashley Brundage

1:30 AM on Aug 31, 2023



Dallas, known for its thriving economy and vibrant communities, is facing a housing crisis, a growing disparity between income and affordability that puts the city on the verge of losing its residents and economic stability.

Our grassroots volunteer organization with over 150 Dallas representatives across sectors and geographies is appalled that the city of Dallas is continuing a tradition of investing less than one percent — \$6.9 million — of its proposed [\\$1.8 billion operating budget](#) to meet one of our most basic needs: housing. This continual lack of investment is generating a spiral effect of loss of residents who can no longer afford to live in Dallas, which leads to reduced workforce, reduced business and a reduced tax base. Where there are no people, there is no city.

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Due to the city of Dallas historically underinvesting in housing, we are calling for an allocation of \$200 million in the 2024 City of Dallas Capital Bond Program to

create more mixed-income and mixed-use communities, maintain existing housing and add infrastructure to develop vacant land.

Recent research from the [Child Poverty Action Lab](#) paints a bleak picture. The median income in Dallas stands at \$58,200, while the average home price in Dallas has skyrocketed to a staggering \$405,000. Deepening the housing crisis, Dallas has a supply gap of 33,660 rental units that, without intervention, could grow to 83,500 units by 2033. At an [average production cost of \\$200,000 per unit](#), the current housing gap will take at least \$6.7 billion in total investment to close as a conservative estimate.



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Research [from previous housing bonds in Texas cities](#) shows Dallas can expect a 1:10 leverage ratio with the private sector, and our \$200 million request is needed to fulfill the [city's forecast](#) to produce over 15,000 subsidized housing units, repair over 500 homes and leverage billions of private funding to create even more market-rate units in the next five years.

Dallas' future is tied to solving housing. Throughout our history, Dallas has proven its ability to rise to challenges, such as reducing rates of violent crime. This issue is no different. Cities that fail to offer affordable housing solutions experience shortages in their workforce, more negative health outcomes for their residents, rising unsheltered populations, and inevitably, discourage growth in their local economies.

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While the city of Dallas addresses a variety of short-term, recurring needs through its operating budget, bonds can backfill budget shortfalls to make necessary, larger, longer-term investments. San Antonio and Austin's 2022 city bond programs secured [\\$150 million](#) and [\\$350 million](#), respectively, for housing.

Meanwhile, Dallas has yet to invest more than \$6.3 million for affordable housing out of four [bond programs since 2003](#).

Demonstrated by our growing housing gaps, Dallas can no longer afford to rely upon stagnant federal funding that comes with strings attached and its meager budget allocations to achieve its housing, racial equity, land use and economic development goals. Successfully dedicating bond dollars towards housing would enable Dallas to leverage private-sector funding and produce over [100,000 units](#) by 2033 to keep up with demand.

As Dallas City Manager T.C. Broadnax and this publication acknowledged [on Aug. 6](#), the city of Dallas is expected to undergo leaner times in the year ahead. We can address this challenge head-on by building and rehabilitating more housing, and growing Dallas' property tax base through more productive land uses. Moreover, by keeping Dallas affordable, residents can afford to spend more on other needs besides housing, strengthening our local economy and communities. According to U.S. Census data, 40% of people move due to access to housing. Where people move, companies move, and that's not good for Dallas.

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Dallas city staffers further stand to benefit from a significant investment in housing through the bond. At recent community talks in Districts 7 and 14, we heard frustration from community members about the delivery of city services often being sluggish and subpar. Dedicating bond funding for use by the under-resourced Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization Department would allow the department to add capacity, executing development agreements in more timely fashion and making its current offerings like the [Senior Home Repair Program](#) as reported by KERA more effective and accessible.

As Dallas citizens, and as voters, we must be bold in our advocacy. We encourage you to tell our elected officials that a lack of support for housing is a lack of support for the city and its people. Together, let us seize this rare opportunity to secure \$200 million in the 2024 City of Dallas Capital Bond Program for inclusive development, housing preservation and needed infrastructure.

*Bryan Tony is the organizer of the [Dallas Housing Coalition](#). Ashley Brundage is the executive director of housing stability and senior vice president of community impact at [United Way of Metropolitan Dallas](#). They are spokespeople of the [Dallas Housing Coalition](#), a group of more than 150 non- and for-profit organizations committed to advocating for the development and preservation of attainable, affordable housing in Dallas. They wrote this column for *The Dallas Morning News*.*

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Bryan Tony and Ashley Brundage

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