



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Solutions Not Mandates: Solving the NYS Housing Crisis

PAMELA HELMING March 14, 2023



### **Column from Senator Helming**

Included in the Governor's proposed budget is an aggressive housing initiative that calls for building 800,000 new homes over the next decade.

The proposal mandates every city, town, and village outside of New York City to increase the number of housing units by one percent every three years. If this directive is not met, the budget includes language giving the state the ultimate ability to override local boards and approve building plans for single and multifamily affordable homes.

Using the budget to expand state control over local government is wrong. It implies a blatant disregard for municipal home rule which has long been the standard in New York State. This ignores the tremendous investment communities have made in adopting citizen-driven comprehensive plans.

Rather than pointing the finger at local government for a housing crisis that has been decades in the making, I believe we should be working collaboratively on a plan to increase existing housing stock. A plan that fits with the community's unique vision, protects our natural resources, and still allows developers to offer a variety of homes that are affordable to first-time homebuyers, seniors, families, and others.

During a recent roundtable I hosted with area builders, real estate professionals, municipal officials, and others, we discussed several steps that can be taken to accomplish this.

One is streamlining the current permitting process at every level of government, including state agencies. Reducing lengthy approval times for things like driveway cuts and townhome and condominium approvals could result in a lower cost to the consumer.

In addition, private utility providers, especially major electric suppliers, are challenged to complete their work in a reasonable timeframe. There is legitimate concern that these delays and associated costs will only increase should the state's proposed all-electric building mandate go into effect.

Strengthening our communities, helping local employers fill jobs, and attracting new business investment, all require affordable homeownership options for workers and their families—from firefighters to nurses to manufacturing technicians.

New York has the lowest homeownership rate of any state in the nation. We also have some of the highest property taxes in the nation. We must turn this around and stem the flow of

people moving out of state. We need to work together to ensure the American Dream is still within reach in our communities.