Paul Emrath, National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
Caitlin Sugrue Walter, National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)

About NAHB

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) strives to protect the American Dream of housing opportunities for all, while working to achieve professional success for its members who build communities, create jobs and strengthen our economy. NAHB Multifamily provides services, benefits and opportunities to members with an interest in multifamily housing, including multifamily member meetings, newsletters, events, webinars and multifamily housing awards. It coordinates with other NAHB departments on advocacy efforts, economic studies and resources for multifamily housing. For more information, please visit NAHB Multifamily at nahb.org/nahb-community/councils/multifamily-council.

About NMHC

Based in Washington, D.C., the National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC) is the leadership of the apartment industry. We bring together the prominent owners, managers and developers who help create thriving communities by providing apartment homes for 40 million Americans, contributing $3.4 trillion annually to the economy. NMHC provides a forum for insight, advocacy and action that enables both members and the communities they help build to thrive. For more information, contact NMHC at 202/974-2300, e-mail the Council at info@nmhc.org, or visit NMHC's website at nmhc.org.

Perhaps more importantly, some of these regulatory mandates can discourage developers from building in the very marketplaces that have the greatest need for more housing. This can prove to be particularly burdensome in a world of rising costs. For example, 47.9 percent of multifamily developers said they avoid building in jurisdictions with policies such as inclusionary zoning, and a full 87.5 percent will avoid building in a jurisdiction with rent control in place.

There are also significant obstacles to development at the community level that are unrelated to governmental regulation. For instance, our research shows that "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) opposition to multifamily development adds an average of **5.6 percent to total development costs** and delays the delivery of new housing by an average of **7.4 months**. While most Americans agree that we need more housing and more housing affordable to middle-income households, too many change their opinion when someone proposes to put that new housing in their neighborhood. The intensity of opposition is escalated if that housing is rental housing.

About the Research

NAHB and NMHC distributed an identical survey in April 2022 to their respective memberships to access a wide range of development scales across the United States. The primary purpose was to quantify how much regulation exists for developers to contend with and how much that regulation is adding to the cost of developing new multifamily properties.

Some of these questions quantify the impact of regulations, such as inclusionary zoning and rent control, that not only may directly increase the costs of projects that are built but affect the supply and cost of housing in the community by causing some projects not to be built at all. An additional set of questions asked about the financial impact of NIMBYism, an issue that has been widely identified as one of the major cost drivers impacting affordability but where little quantifiable data currently exists.

A total of 49 usable responses were received. The responses from the survey were combined with existing public data and other survey collections to calculate the financial cost as a percent of total development cost for each regulation. A detailed description of the assumptions used in the calculations can be found in Appendix 1.

Total Cost of Regulations

Regulatory costs that exist during the multifamily development process can be divided into several categories. Table 1 shows the share of developer respondents subject to these various regulations and the average cost of each category as a percentage of the total development cost.

1

The last column of the table shows

1. A C D

		Average When Present*	Average Across All Properties
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
.	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
	. %	. %	. %
TOTAL COST OF REGULATION	100.0%	40.6%	

* The base is different for every percentage in this column, so the line items are not a

Source: NAHB and NMHC

As Table 1 indicates, the highest average regulatory cost is the result of changes to building codes over the past 10 years (11.1 percent of total development costs). The second highest are the costs imposed when site work begins (8.7 percent). The lowest average cost impact was the pure financial cost of delay, consisting of 0.5 percent when present, lower than the average cost of complying with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or other labor regulations (2.7 percent when present).

The first significant interaction between a multifamily developer and the government typically occurs when the developer applies for zoning approval to allow multifamily housing to be built on a particular parcel of land. Regulatory costs at this stage can vary from costs associated with fees owed to the local jurisdiction for proceeding through the approval process to market or environmental impact studies that must be commissioned from private consultants.

In some cases, a developer can acquire land that allows for multifamily structures to be built on it without requiring rezoning or a special exemption. However, this is rare, with 93.9 percent of the respondents indicating that they must dedicate resources to rezone the land to allow multifamily construction. When they exist, these costs average 3.4 percent of the total development cost.

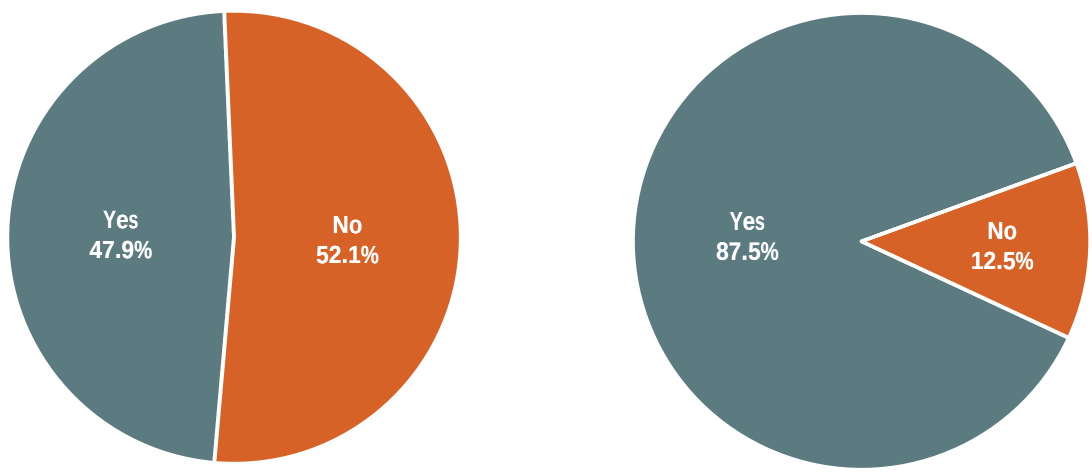
Once site work begins, local jurisdictions often require a variety of fees or other studies. Examples of fees could include impact fees (fees charged only on a new development to be used for capital improvements) or utility impact fees. Almost all respondents (98.0 percent) reported paying some of these costs in their typical project, representing an average of 8.7 percent of total development costs when present.

Research has shown, however, that these quick fixes, particularly rent control, have many pitfalls. One major pitfall of both, as shown in Figure 3, is that it can deter development completely. Almost half of the respondents (47.9 percent) reported that they avoid building in jurisdictions with inclusionary zoning policies. The response was more acute for rent control—the overwhelming majority of respondents (87.5 percent) reported they avoid building in jurisdictions where rent control is present.

In fact, these mandates can impact the financial feasibility of a project, both in the short-term and long term. As a result, developers may simply choose to avoid jurisdictions with these mandates because of the difficulty in making a project pencil out.

Rent control regulations similarly differ depending on the local jurisdiction. In its basic form, rent control is a restriction on how much a property owner can raise a resident's rent, ignoring market conditions. Some rent control laws exempt new construction from price controls, and others institute a cap on how much an owner can raise a resident's rent, often tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

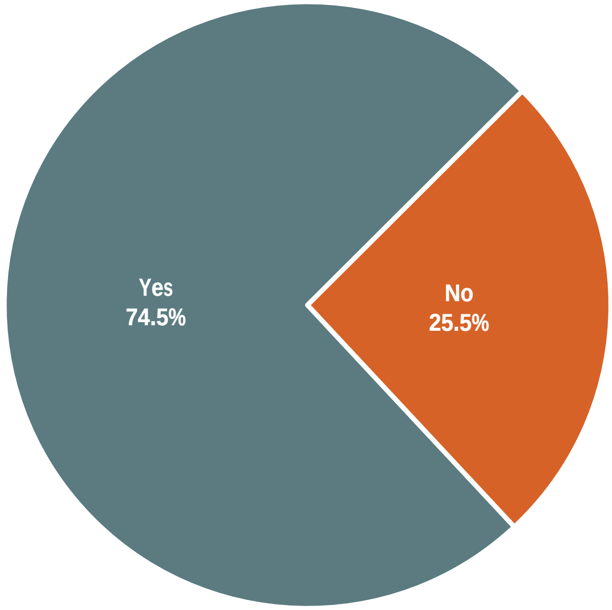
F 3. D D A B C ?( )



Source: NAHB and NMHC

Another major impediment to whether a project gets built can be neighborhood opposition. Opposition against multifamily development by current residents, commonly referred to as "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) opposition, can take many different forms. Residents may fight against rezoning attempts or may even file lawsuits to attempt to prevent development from occurring. Approximately three-quarters (74.5 percent) of respondents reported encountering neighborhood opposition to multifamily construction (Figure 4). The resources required to overcome this opposition add an average 5.6 percent increase in development costs when present. They also delay the development timeline by an average of 7.4 months.

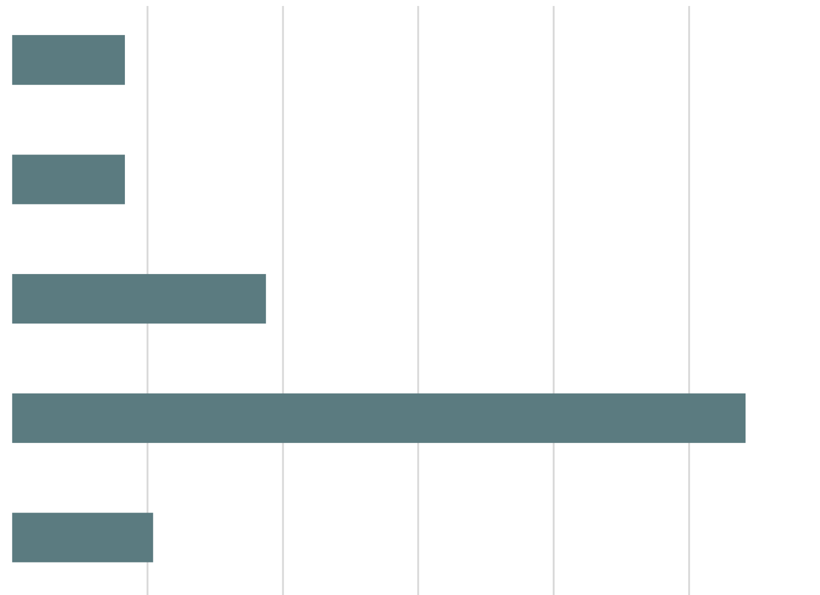
F 4. D E C ? ( )



Respondent Profile

A total of 49 usable responses were received from multifamily developers, with a slightly higher concentration of NAHB members than NMHC members (and no duplicates). In one instance, two survey responses were accepted from one

F 6. A ’ ( )



Source: NAHB and NMHC

The typical total development cost varied as well but was slightly more evenly distributed (Figure 7). The average total development cost of respondents for a typical project was $53.6 million. Barely over one-third (37.6 percent) reported a typical development cost of $50 to $99.99 million. Small and large projects were equally represented, with 17.8 percent of respondents reporting a cost of less than $10 million and 15.6 percent indicating the typical project costs at least $100 million.

F 7. D C ’ ( )

Average:
$56.6 Million

Source: NAHB and NMHC

Appendix 1: Assumptions Used in the Calculations

To calculate a final effect on development costs, many of the NAHB-NMHC survey responses need to be combined with additional information. Primarily these are assumptions about the terms of development and construction loans, how long construction typically takes, and how to allocate costs to different stages of the development and construction process. This appendix lists all the assumptions used in the calculations and gives the sources for each.

1. 1 point charged for all land acquisition, development, and construction (AD&C) loans, based on results from a Quarterly Finance Survey (QFS) that NAHB was conducting in the early to mid-2000s.

A 7.65 percent interest rate on all AD&C loans. The QFS indicates that rates are typically set one point above prime, and 6.65 percent is NAHB's estimate of the prime rate that would prevail in the long run under neutral Federal Reserve policy.

The estimates also assume that three-fourths of any category of costs are financed, based on typical AD&C loan-to-value ratios in the QFS.

C

The source for information lags not directly collected in the NAHB-NMHC questionnaire is the Survey of Construction, conducted by the Census Bureau and partially funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Preliminary estimates are taken from the published annual tables, averaged over the 2001-2016 period:
Authorization to start = 1.71 months
Start to completion = 10.87 months

If the project is 5-9 units
- Authorization to start = 1.95 months
- Start to completion = 11.64 months

If the project is 10+ units
- Authorization to start = 1.94 months
- Start to completion = 13.21 months

The NAHB-NMHC survey collected data on how much time regulation adds to the development process. To assign this to a particular phase of the development, the following assumptions are used.

The regulatory delay is split and attributed half to the lag between applying for zoning approval and the beginning of site work and half to the period after site work begins. If half of the regulatory delay exceeds the lag between applying for approval and the beginning of site work, the excess is also attributed to the period after site work begins.

It is first assumed that the resulting regulatory delay is attributable to the period between the start of site work and the start of building construction, minus three months (the assumed minimum time it would take to do site work in the absence of regulation, based on conversations with developers). If any regulatory delay remains after being allocated to the zoning approval and site work periods, it is then attributed to the building construction period, and the start-to-completion lag is adjusted upward beyond the SOC-based average, accordingly.

The analysis assumes all loans are paid off when the buildings are completed.

C B

To implement the process described in the paragraph above and calculate a "pure" cost of delay (i.e., the effect regulatory delay would have even if the regulation imposed no other cost), estimates of costs incurred during different phases of the development process are needed.

The breakdown is based on the split between lot and construction costs in NAHB's Construction Cost Surveys (averaged over surveys conducted since 2000) and the Census Bureau's "non-construction cost factor" for raw land. The calculations also assume three-fourths of these costs are financed, based on typical AD&C loan-to-value rations in the QFS.

Resulting assumptions:

- Only the cost of applying for zoning occurs at the very start of the development process. Financing costs associated with this are charged to the regulatory cost of the application and not counted in the pure cost of delay.
- 10.2 percent of total development represents costs financed by a land acquisition loan at the start of the site work phase.
- 10.8 percent of total development costs represent costs financed by a development loan during the site work phase, assuming draws on the loan occur on average halfway through this phase.
- 54.0 percent of total development costs represent costs incurred after building construction has started and financed with a construction loan, again assuming draws on the loan occur on average halfway through the site work phase.

7. **(, , , .) %** **?** *(Please enter "0" if the jurisdiction's requirements don't go beyond what you would normally do.)*

______________%

8. **, (, , .) %** **?** *(Please enter ")" if dedicating land is required infrequently.)*

______________%

9. **( )?**

______________months

10. **( )** **?** *(Please enter "0" if regulations typically cause no delay).*

____

11. **, % ? , - .** *(Please enter "0" if fees paid during or after construction are Zero percent).*

______________%

12 . **, / ?**

- o Yes
- o No

12 . *[If the answer to 12a is "yes"].* **, ( ) %** **?** *(Please enter "0" if inclusionary zoning/ affordable housing mandates/fees in lieu of affordable housing are encountered infrequently).*

______________%

12 . *[If the answer to 12a is "yes"].* **, - ?**

______________%

13. D **?**

- o Yes
- o No

14. D **?**

- o Yes
- o No

15. **10** **,** **%** **?** *(Please enter "0" if code changes have had minimal impact on costs).*

______________%

- o Please select if you have not been in operation for the past 10 years

16. **A** **,** **%** **?** *(Please enter "0" if labor regulations have no impact on development costs).*

______________%

17. **?**

- o Yes
- o No

18. **,** **%** **?**

______________%

19. **,** **(** **)** **?**

______________months

20. C **:**