

# Symposium

*Two Essays on Unequal Growth in Housing*

*Guest Editor: John Carruthers*



# Note from the Managing Editor

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In 2018 I accepted a proposal from John Carruthers of Cornell University to present a symposium in this issue on the housing problems posed for all levels of government by the growth and decline of metropolitan areas. Between our agreement and the deadline for this issue, various barriers to completion of the symposium arose, most notably the coronavirus pandemic that interrupted the work of several participants. As a result, Professor Carruthers was only able to approve two studies that represent contributions to knowledge directly related to the mission of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Although two studies would not constitute a symposium under normal circumstances, we are still fortunate to be able to bring these works to our readers.

In “The Closing of America’s Urban Frontier,” Edward Glaeser of Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research notes that the movement of people to productive cities was historically responsible for a large part of the growth in the American economy and living standards, but that in the past 50 years the most productive cities have become resistant to increases in the housing stock. This has been a factor in rising inequality and reduced rates of overall growth. He sees two alternative policy paths for the nation: one in which the states and the Federal government find means of removing local regulatory barriers, and one in which Federal policy increasingly favors relatively depressed areas.

In “Housing Inequality in Metropolitan Areas in Developing Asia and the United States: Will Common Problems Mean Common Solutions?” Toshiaki Aizawa of the University of York, Mathias Helble of the Asian Development Bank, and Kwan Ok Lee of the National University of Singapore investigate and contrast housing inadequacy in 10 developing Asian countries and in the United States. The Asian nations are Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Tajikistan, and Timor-Leste. The data source for information on housing in those nations is the Demographic and Health Survey—an ongoing collaboration between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the governments of the named nations; the data source for information on housing in the United States is HUD’s American Housing Survey. The authors find that larger urban areas with greater income inequality tend to have greater amounts of inadequate housing, and they review possible policy responses.

