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California Department of Education plans to develop housing on school district-owned lands

State Supe Thurmond will announce the plan at a press conference Tuesday



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The state Department of Education is poised to get into the housing business, to pitch in to ease the chronic shortage of housing, which has become California's top economic, social and political issue.

To that end, state schools chief Tony Thurmond plans to launch a statewide plan to develop millions of new housing units on land owned by California school districts.

He will announce the plan during a 10 a.m. Tuesday press conference at DOE headquarters in Sacramento, where he will be joined by local and state leaders with experience of building housing on land owned by school districts.

Following Tuesday's press conference, Thurmond will convene a panel of housing experts at a housing summit on Aug. 14 to identify policy recommendations that can to boost housing development throughout the state, including housing that meets the needs of families in lower-income brackets.



California school districts — also called “local education agencies” in DOE parlance — own 75,000

Recent data from the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, the housing gap in California could be addressed by creating 2.5 million new homes, or an average of 300,000 units per year, over the next eight-year planning cycle.



"California's housing crisis is undeniable, but it is not unsolvable," Thurmond, the state superintendent of public instruction, said in a Monday statement announcing the press conference.

"We know that families across our state are impacted, from the homelessness crisis facing our urban areas, to the long commute times impacting families priced out of once-affordable neighborhoods, to the staffing crisis in schools whose educators can't afford to live where they work," he added. "I believe that California has enough resources and ingenuity to solve this, and the data shows that California's schools have the land to make this happen. As school leaders, we can get this done for our communities and restore the California Dream."

News headlines have chronicled the crisis over the last several years: The housing gap between demand and supply has expanded, especially in urban areas, and it has affected the California economy by discouraging business. It also drives employers and workers to other states with more affordable housing, fuels poverty and homelessness.

The state budget showed that in 2023 residential permits fell by 2.9 percent from 2022 to about 110,000 permitted units but it also predicted that single-family housing will increase this year; however, multifamily units are expected to contract 5.5 percent, the biggest drop since 2020.

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