Where Self-Interest Trumps Ideology: Liberal Homeowners and Local Opposition to Housing Development

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How much does self-interest drive Americans' policy attitudes? Survey research typically finds that self-interest's role is minimal. Such conclusions are typically reached by examining attitudes toward federal policies that present diffuse costs and low stakes. We consider a starker test case of self-interest: controversies surrounding development of dense and affordable housing in Americans' communities. Liberal homeowners, especially, must cope with dissonance between their egalitarian ideology and a desire to protect their home values and quality of life. They often embrace liberal housing goals and redistributive housing policies but join conservatives in opposing dense housing in their own communities. Two survey experiments show that liberal homeowners are cross-pressured and barely more likely than conservative homeowners to support dense housing development. Messages appealing to homeowners' self-interest reduce support further, while countervailing appeals about housing's benefits to low- and middle-income families barely offset the negative effect. We discuss implications for the politics of equal opportunity at the state and local level.

When does material self-interest influence policy attitudes? Political scientists have long puzzled over the reasons that cause Americans to adopt specific policy attitudes or vote for parties whose policy positions run counter to their well-being. From the earliest days of the modern survey era, political scientists have accumulated evidence that Americans' vote choices are driven by factors other than their economic class or a rational assessment of their material self-interest (Achen and Bartels 2016; Campbell et al. 1960). Political scientists have attributed voters' seemingly self-negating behavior to ignorance (Bartels 2005, 2008), altruistic personality traits (Gilens and Thal 2017), and religious and cultural beliefs (Frank 2004). Others have concluded that deviations from economic voting are more prevalent among educated, affluent voters who face few existential threats from the economic policies on offer and are therefore free to vote on the basis of "postmaterialist" issues (Gelman et al. 2007; Inglehart 1981). While scholars have occasionally found self-interested voter behavior on issues involving organized interest groups and high personal stakes (Campbell 2003), it rarely appears in national elections.

Self-interest's apparent irrelevance may, however, be an artifact of researcher choice. It may arise not from voters' self-negating behavior but because voters usually face few meaningful threats to their self-interest from national policies. For example, differences between the two major party platforms on economic policy questions are smaller than they might be if the United States had a viable socialist party or more multiparty competition. And voters often attribute their personal fortunes not to federal policies but to more proximal factors that are within their personal experience and control (Citrin and Green 1990; Feldman 1982). Their beliefs about federal

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policies' minimal effects are often well founded. For example, major economic policies such as recent changes in marginal tax rates are typically insufficient to change Americans' relative socioeconomic status. National politics thus can be a poor test of Americans' responses to conflicts between their material interests and political ideologies.

In contrast, state and local government policies can have substantial and immediate impacts on Americans' daily lives. In this paper, we draw upon original survey evidence in one such policy area: the regulation of housing development by local governments, a policy area for which the stakes are high and the policy-outcome link clear (Citrin and Green 1990; Green and Cowden 1992). Local government policies are frequently more important and visible to Americans' daily lives, touching on matters including policing, education, and transportation (Trounstine 2009). As the nation's primary land use regulators, local governments influence home values (Dettling et al. 2017; Molotch 1976). In response, homeowners become deeply involved in local politics and policy issues, using local government to defend both their home values and their "quality of life" (Einstein, Palmer, and Glick 2019; Fischel 2001a, 2001b; Hall and Yoder 2021; Yoder 2020). Under homeowners' influence, US municipalities have adopted restrictive single-family zoning laws that prohibit construction of multi-unit housing in most areas, thus excluding lower-income households who depend on such developments (Danielson 1976; Downs 1973; Levine 2006; Rothstein 2017; Trounstine 2018; Wilson 1996). Such exclusionary zoning policies are extensive and covary little with areas' partisan composition or ideology. In fact, land use policies are often more restrictive in more liberal coastal cities (Glaeser and Gyourko 2018, 19; Glaeser, Gyourko, and Saks 2006; Kahn 2011). In such areas, local governments are influenced by homeowners whose generalized ideological commitment to equality of opportunity (Jackman 1978) conflicts with their robust support for exclusionary local land use policies.[1]

Homeowners' attitudes toward local development thus present a hard test of the clash between ideology and self-interest. To demonstrate this, we present both observational and experimental analyses designed to assess how homeowner self-interest and ideology conflict.

In the first set of tests, we consider how liberals and conservatives, homeowners and renters differ over developmental and redistributive approaches to housing. While support for redistributive housing policies (such as aid to renters) follows ideological lines, support for policies to enable housing development does not. Next, in two survey experiments, we show that liberal homeowners—defined as those who support the ideal of a federal guarantee of housing access for all—respond negatively to proposals to build more housing in their communities.

In the first experiment, we test whether standard pro-housing messages could persuade homeowners to support dense housing development, using arguments made by supporters of additional housing production ("Yes in my backyard," or "YIMBY" activists). In a second experiment, we assess how self-interested behavior manifests itself in Americans' response to spatially specific threats from housing (Hankinson 2018), which vary with the types of residents served by the housing (market-rate tenants or low-income tenants) and the proximity of the housing to one's home. Both experiments reveal that, regardless of experimental condition, considerations attached to homeownership matter more than one's self-reported ideology on housing policy questions. Messages constructed to appeal to ideology are rarely sufficient to counteract messages that activate self-interest.

Whether they are responding to housing policies, political messaging, or hypothetical proposals for local development, homeowners remain opposed to local development plans that threaten their self-interest. For liberal homeowners, especially, appeals to ideological commitment shift attitudes in support of development but not enough to close the large gap in support between liberal owners and renters. In fact, differences between liberal and conservative owners are smaller than gaps between liberal owners and renters across analyses. Proposals to develop housing pose a proximal and legible threat to home values and associated local quality of life. The response of liberal homeowners, especially, confirms the power of self-interest over ideological commitment.

SELF-INTEREST AND IDEOLOGICAL DISSONANCE IN HOUSING POLITICS

Local attitudes toward housing development policy provide an ideal test of how ideologies forged through national politics clash with, and become subordinated to, the proximal concerns of daily life. Recent work focused mostly on national issues has concluded that Americans have adopted positions on national economic and social policy issues that are consistent with the party position (Levendusky 2009), often in response to cues from party elites (Barber and Pope 2019; Lenz 2009, 2013). Democrats tend to be liberal on multiple issues,

1. Restrictive housing policies have become a topic of debate in Democratic metropolitan areas such as New York, Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (Glaeser and Gyourko 2018). As more high-income workers move into these regions, legal limits on housing supply have caused prices to rise beyond the means of the middle class. In San Francisco, for example, the Zillow Price Index grew by 93% between 2011 and 2018. The rent for a typical one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco is now a financial burden (exceeding 30% of pre-tax income) for any household earning less than $136,000 per year (Brinklow 2018; Zillow 2018).

whereas Republicans tend to be conservative. However, partisan consistency on national issues may not translate to local government policy, even when seemingly well-established positions—for example, the liberal principle that government should aid the poor—logically imply a need for local action.

When ideology and self-interest clash, voters frequently forsake their generalized ideological commitments to protect specific proximal interests (Jackman 1978). For example, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to respond on surveys that they support a federal guarantee of housing for all, but such support does not consistently coincide with support for building needed housing in their own communities. Similarly, Republicans may state that they oppose intrusive government economic regulation but nevertheless support strong land-use regulation in their own communities.

On the matter of local housing policy especially, voter behavior appears especially unlikely to coalesce around the national political agenda (Hopkins 2018; Pew Research Center 2014). This disconnect merits exploration. A possible cause is that party elites—especially Democrats—have refrained from making exclusionary housing policies a national issue, because to do so would antagonize pivotal suburban voters (Schneider 1992). As a result, voters need not reconcile their nationalized ideologies with proximal concerns like local housing. A dearth of elite cues on housing development policy leaves Americans without usual partisan heuristics to determine the ideologically "correct" position on housing policy (Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012). Voters are thus left to their own devices or rely on typically nonpartisan local information. Their personal self-interest and familiarity with their local context fill a political information vacuum.

When a voter's local policy attitudes appear to violate their generalized political ideology, accusations of hypocrisy fly, and on matters of housing such a voter may be branded as a "NIMBY" ("Not in my backyard"). While this terminology is in widespread popular (and, increasingly, academic) use, it can inappropriately reduce individuals' complex responses to local and personally costly policy measures (Pendall 1999). Especially on questions pertaining to housing, voters may adopt behaviors that appear inconsistent with their ideological commitments for a host of reasons. Such a clash may arise in two forms: logical dissonance between political beliefs and behaviors that may outwardly appear as hypocrisy, and cognitive dissonance in which an individual must cope with the discomfort that arises when several of their "cognitions" conflict (Aronson 1969; Festinger 1962).

Logical inconsistencies around policy positions need not culminate in cognitive dissonance. For example, liberals are much more likely than conservatives to agree with a federal guarantee of housing for all. Logically, a voter who believes this should support federal, state, and local programs to create adequate housing in communities that currently lack it, including in their own town or neighborhood. But, consistent with the long-observed disconnect between general and applied principles (Jackman 1978), liberals may sway from supporting housing development and, instead, favor other policies such as rent control. For example, economists nearly unanimously conclude that standard rent control policies fail to deliver affordable, quality housing as housing development would (Glaeser and Gyourko 2018; Glaeser and Luttmer 2003; IGM Economic Experts Panel 2012; Lee 2019). Nevertheless, rent control is embraced by liberal homeowners and renters alike. Conveniently for homeowners, redistributive approaches to housing such as rent control or renter tax credits present diffuse costs, posing a less concentrated threat. But homeowners' beliefs may not reflect bias or "NIMBYism" but sincere policy positions deriving from a voter's knowledge and personal ideology.

Only if individuals perceive an inconsistency between their policy positions and their ideological commitments will they suffer from cognitive dissonance, the psychological discomfort associated with holding two conflicting cognitions (Aronson 1968; Festinger 1962). Cognitive dissonance scholarship is based on a single behavioral axiom: that individuals will seek to end the discomfort associated with holding two conflicting cognitions simultaneously. One of those cognitions may be an ongoing behavioral choice, such as the decision to own and maintain a home. Another may be their belief in equal opportunity, which may enjoin support for policies that could threaten their home-related interests. To cope with cognitive dissonance, they must develop rationales to justify holding both ideas simultaneously or select one cognition over the other (Festinger 1962). Changing beliefs to accommodate an entrenched behavior may be less taxing than changing behavior to match a perceived obligation (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2018; Aronson 1969).

Homeownership is a major life choice and source of identity. As such, it is likely to predominate over other cognitions, including prior ideological commitments. Homeowners who face a conflict between their status and other ideological considerations are likely to resolve their discomfort in a way that allows them to maintain their homeowner interests and political identity simultaneously. For example, homeowners looking to block local housing development and other threats to their self-interest, but who identify as liberals and otherwise support liberal causes, will be pressed either to renounce their liberal ideology or determine how to reconcile it with their self-interest as homeowners.

One way to manage such conflicts is to generate socially acceptable reasons for policy attitudes that are separate from

one's own self-interest. For example, in making public statements to oppose housing development, Americans seldom claim that their pecuniary self-interest is their reason for doing so. Instead, they frame concerns in terms of community quality of life: safety of children, traffic congestion, and school quality. Such rationales may be sincere, but they also allow development opponents to reconcile ideology and self-interest.

Homeowners may also justify their opposition to needed housing development by arguing for alternative policies to address housing affordability while (presumably) obviating the need for local housing construction. This may manifest itself in classic NIMBYism: homeowners embrace the idea of building housing somewhere in their general vicinity but maintain that local facts argue against building in their town or neighborhood (Pendall 1999).[2] Or, liberal homeowners may avoid cognitive dissonance by asserting that local housing development is futile or inadequate, instead proposing redistributive or means-tested housing policies such as renter tax credits, rent control, or Section 8 housing vouchers. Such policies typically present diffuse costs while promising to improve access to extant housing.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We conducted three different research studies on a sample of respondents from major US metropolitan areas, each designed to assess how voters' material self-interest interacts with their stated ideology to shape support for local housing development. We begin with an observational analysis of attitudes on different solutions to housing affordability, including housing development, then present results from two survey experiments. The first experiment is designed to test widely used messages extolling the virtues of building more housing supply to address regional housing affordability. The second tests how voters respond to aspects of a hypothetical apartment building proposal. We vary information about the project's proximity and whether the proposed facility features only market-rate apartments or reserves units for low-income residents.

We begin by defining a two-by-two typology to assess how ideology and self-interest are likely to conflict. The typology is defined on one axis by support for a federal guarantee of housing for all, which we shorthand as "liberal" or "pro-guarantee" respondents. On the other axis, homeownership status acts as the key variable capturing self-interest. Thus, our typology consists of pro-guarantee renters, pro-guarantee homeowners, anti-guarantee renters, and anti-guarantee homeowners.

Across these four categories, we assess how individuals respond to information constructed to appeal to self-interest or ideology as a function of their expected level of cognitive dissonance. Ex ante, we expected that the stated ideologies and material self-interest of both conservative homeowners and liberal renters would be logically consistent, producing the least amount of cognitive dissonance, whereas liberal owners and (to a lesser degree) conservative renters would be more cross-pressured on questions pertaining to local housing development.[3] Because we are especially concerned with how liberal homeowners' self-interest conflicts with their stated ideology, we focus on their survey responses while also reporting other groups' results.[4]

Our observational survey analysis considers how the self-interest associated with homeownership and ideology interact across policy alternatives proposed as solutions to housing affordability concerns. A battery of questions assesses attitudes toward a range of regulatory and redistributive policies (e.g., state renter tax credits and Section 8 housing vouchers) and development policies (e.g., loosening of zoning laws). If self-interest were a dominant force over policy attitudes, we would expect homeowners and renters to embrace policies consistent with their pecuniary interest and oppose those that most threaten it with concentrated threats to their financial well-being. Homeowners might be more favorable to policy alternatives that are funded through diffuse taxation and do not threaten their home values or quality of life.

Of course, observational studies do not allow manipulation of factors that might shape individuals' self-interest or ideology. Thus, we conduct two survey experiments, each designed to vary the salience of self-interest and ideology, and then measure attitudes toward housing development questions. In the first survey experiment, we randomly assign respondents to view alternative messages referencing economists' beliefs that allowing

2. This form of "NIMBY" behavior is sometimes described as a spatial version of the collective action problem (Hankinson 2018). This interpretation applies to renters who benefit from additional housing stock, but liberal homeowners' opposition to housing development is better understood as a traditional redistribution problem.

3. Alignment of ideology and self-interest can hinder identification of the effect of self-interest on behavior. For example, Sears, Hensler, and Speer (1979) find that conservative white parents whose children were subject to school desegregation busing were no more likely to oppose busing than other conservatives. For both groups, opinions on the issue were already set.

4. Of course, some conservatives could also experience cognitive dissonance around housing issues. In principle, libertarians oppose government intervention in free markets, whether in the form of welfare spending or intrusive local government land use regulation. However, such consistent libertarianism is rare, especially on housing policy questions. Data from an April 2015 Golden State Poll show that only 10% of California voters took a libertarian position on housing by supporting a looser zoning code while also opposing financial aid to renters (Hoover Institution 2015).

more housing development can reduce housing prices in an area. We then ask a battery of questions assessing support for five different housing types in their area, ranging from single-family homes to apartment buildings.

In setting up the first experiment, we expected that messages on housing supply's effects on housing prices would work in opposite fashion for homeowners and renters. A reduction in housing prices is usually beneficial to renters or potential home buyers in an area but detrimental to homeowners. Holding all else equal, we should expect attitudes toward housing development to vary with personal economic threat (Hankinson 2018; Hoover Institution 2015). But, anticipating that ideology may be a source of cross-pressure, we expected that housing production could be received more favorably by liberal homeowners who are more receptive to the importance of housing affordability. We expected that additional messaging on possible redistributive impacts of housing development could amplify these differences, increasing liberal owners' support for housing development.

In the second experiment, we test respondents' reactions to different versions of a hypothetical 120-unit apartment building proposed for their community. We randomly assign each respondent to view a different version of the proposed development, varying information on (1) the tenant population expected to occupy the housing (mixed low-income or market-rate tenants) and (2) the project's distance from the respondent's residence. We expected that projects built closer to one's place of residence would activate self-interest, prompting homeowners to oppose the developments. In addition, we expected that deliberately affordable housing (those with half of units rented to Section 8 voucher recipients) would also activate respondents' ideology, with conservatives opposing the housing to a greater degree and liberals supporting it, all else equal.

DATA

Our observational and experimental data were collected on a single original survey of $n = 4,100$ voting-eligible persons (US citizens over 18) in the 20 largest US metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs).[5] Many of the metropolitan areas included in our sample have experienced rising housing prices that disproportionately stress the finances of low- and middle-income people, placing adequate housing out of their reach. In other markets, housing development remains a pertinent policy issue: exclusionary suburban zoning policies prevent construction of multi-unit housing and quality affordable housing for less wealthy residents. We quota-sampled respondents to match the aggregated demographics of the MSAs included in each census region.[6]

After initial demographic screening, we ask respondents a series of questions on partisanship and economic ideology. The most important question asks them to place themselves on a 5-point (Likert) support scale in response to the following statement: "Some people say the federal government should ensure that all Americans have housing. Others say that shouldn't be a concern of the federal government." A critical advantage of this question is that, except in referring to the federal government, the question does not address support for specific policies to the desired end of a housing guarantee. Hereafter, we refer to individuals who strongly or somewhat agree with the statement as "liberal," or "pro-guarantee" and those opposed or neutral toward it as "conservative," or "anti-guarantee."[7]

To construct a homeownership-ideology typology following the logic in table 1, we used respondents' self-reported homeownership status and their support for the housing guarantee. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents on this typology by party, race, and respondent negative racial affect, which we

5. Included metros were New York–Newark–Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA; Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA; Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI; Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX; Houston–The Woodlands–Sugar Land, TX; Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD; Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE; Miami–Fort Lauderdale–West Palm Beach, FL; Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA; Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH; San Francisco–Oakland-Hayward, CA; Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ; Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario, CA; Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI; Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA; Minneapolis–St. Paul–Bloomington, MN-WI; San Diego–Carlsbad, CA; Tampa–St. Petersburg–Clearwater, FL; Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO; and St. Louis, MO-IL.

6. To generate the quotas, we started with the November 2014 Current Population Survey voting supplement (US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2014). We subsetted to respondents living within the metro regions we sampled. Then, within census regions, we designated quotas for Qualtrics intended to match the univariate distributions for each of the following variables, organized into quota categories: age (18–24, 25–44, 45–64, and 65+), sex, race/ethnicity (Asian only, black only, non-Hispanic white only, Hispanic, and multiracial/other), income (five categories with a top code at $75,000 per year), and MSA. The quota sampling was administered by Qualtrics. The appendix section "Survey Quota Targets" summarizes our sample's demographics in relation to quota targets. We also assessed sample representativeness on two additional variables for which quotas were not specified: education and homeownership (figs. A1, A2; figs. A1–A8 are available online). Like many online samples, our sample exhibited higher educational levels than the national average, but homeownership levels were only slightly below the CPS averages. We used multiple screening questions asking about each quota variable at the beginning of the survey to identify eligible respondents.

7. The 5-point version of the housing guarantee item correlates at $r = .53$ with a composite index of economic ideology constructed by asking whether the government should reduce income differences, whether people are better off under a free market, and whether the government should redistribute income through heavy taxes on the rich. Table A11 (tables A1–A11 are available online) presents correlations with other customary measures of economic liberalism.

Table 1. Two-by-Two Typology of Homeowners and Renters, by Support for a Federal Housing Guarantee

	Homeowners	Renters
Anti-housing-guarantee (conservative)	Consonant (30%)	Potential dissonance (13%)
Pro-housing-guarantee (liberal)	Potential dissonance (30%)	Consonant (27%)

Note. The table displays expected cognitive dissonance resulting from proposals for dense local housing development. Percentages refer to the proportion of the sample in our survey of the largest metro areas that fall into each group

operationalized by whether or not a respondent endorsed at least one of three negative stereotypes about blacks (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997). All cells of our two-by-two typology are well populated across these reported subgroups.

After initial demographic questions and screening questions, our questionnaire features a question battery of state and local housing policy reforms used in our observational analysis. These questions are followed by the first survey experiment, which tests the effect of various persuasive messages on support for different types of housing development. Immediately after the first survey experiment, respondents see the second survey experiment, which tests responses to hypothetical apartment development scenarios.

OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS: ATTITUDES TOWARD HOUSING POLICY ALTERNATIVES

To examine the importance of self-interest to housing policy attitudes, we first collect data on respondents' attitudes toward state and local policies that relate to renter financial aid and protections, land use, and development rules.[8] For each of the items, we ask respondents to indicate their support on a 5-point Likert scale, and then dichotomize each variable to be coded 1 if individuals reported somewhat or strongly supporting the policy and 0 otherwise. The list of measures designed to aid and protect renters includes nondiscrimination against low-income (Section 8) housing voucher recipients, state measures to reduce racial discrimination, state tax credits for renters, and expanded local rent control. Another set of policies included regulatory changes and other reforms meant to enable high-density development. These included relaxing of state environmental limits, giving neighborhoods a greater role in development decisions, preempting local zoning to allow the construction of apartments, changing local laws to allow more housing construction, and allowing more development of housing in open space. Exact question phrasing appears in the appendix (available online).

To estimate differences in policy attitudes among comparable renters and homeowners of different ideologies, for each policy we estimate a linear probability model of the following form:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 G_i + \beta_2 H_i + \beta_3 G_i \times H_i + \mathbf{X}_i'\delta + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where Y_i is a binary outcome variable indicating respondent i supports the policy in question, G_i is a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent opposes or is neutral with respect to a federal housing guarantee for all, and H_i is an indicator for the respondent owning their home. These two key independent variables are interacted to assess how policy attitudes vary across ideology and self-interest, with liberal renters acting as the base category. Results for conservatives and liberal homeowners are reported relative to this base group. The regressions also included a vector, $\mathbf{X}_i$, consisting of additional covariates that may covary with our two-by-two typology: age, race, sex, income, as well as respondents' zip code population density.[9]

Table 3 presents the coefficients, which contrast liberal and conservative homeowners' support for each policy with a baseline represented by liberal renters' support.[10] The items are reported in descending order by the difference between liberal and conservative homeowners. Regardless of their stated ideology, homeowners were less supportive than renters of most proposed housing affordability solutions. Among homeowners, liberals and conservatives disagreed the most on programs tailored to deliver direct benefits to renters. Such programs—housing vouchers, rent control, and renter tax credits—address housing affordability through a programmatic approach to tenants' rights or through fiscal policy conducted at the state level. While these policies impose costs on real estate investors and landlords, they impose minimal, diffuse costs on homeowners—doing little to threaten their self-interest or home values.

In contrast, liberal and conservative homeowners articulated more similar attitudes toward local governments allowing more housing construction or state governments preempting

8. Many of these questions are based on items from an April 2015 Golden State Poll on housing policy (Hoover Institution 2015).

9. The appendix provides full coding details of covariates.

10. Full regression tables appear in the appendix, tables A-1 and A-2.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents on the Homeowner-Ideology Typology, by Group

	Anti-guarantee Homeowner	Anti-guarantee Renter	Pro-guarantee Homeowner	Pro-guarantee Renter
Party:				
Democratic	20%	10%	36%	34%
	(461)	(232)	(838)	(791)
Republican	50%	16%	21%	12%
	(630)	(207)	(263)	(157)
Independent/other	30%	16%	24%	30%
	(154)	(85)	(125)	(157)
Race:				
White	33%	14%	30%	24%
	(709)	(300)	(647)	(518)
Black	19%	8%	36%	36%
	(119)	(52)	(224)	(225)
Other	32%	13%	27%	28%
	(417)	(172)	(355)	(362)
Racial affect;				
Negative	32%	15%	27%	26%
	(491)	(230)	(416)	(400)
Positive	29%	11%	32%	28%
	(754)	(294)	(810)	(705)

Note. Percentages show row frequencies, and numbers in parentheses are sample sizes. Partisan identification includes "leaning" partisans; racial affect is a binary variable that is coded as negative if respondents endorse at least one of three negative stereotypes about blacks, positive otherwise.

local zoning codes to allow apartment construction, policies constructed to facilitate local development. Liberals stated more support for such development policies than conservatives did, but the gap between homeowners and renters was substantial and larger than the gap between liberal and conservative homeowners.

Finally, some policies that impede development are strongly backed by all groups. Liberals and conservatives, homeowners and renters supported giving neighborhoods a greater voice in development decisions and opposed relaxing environmental limits on development. While such policies may reflect the durability of public support for democratic norms (Imbroscio 2019), as well as general care for the environment, democratic procedures can be used by local homeowners and socioeconomic elites to stall construction, drive up the cost of new housing construction, and even impede construction of deliberately affordable, inclusionary housing (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2019; Einstein, Palmer, and Glick 2019).

While our cross-sectional analyses do not yield unbiased estimates of the causal effects of homeownership and ideology, they do indicate where self-interest is likely to manifest itself, as well as the types of policies that are likely to win broad-based support from renters and homeowners. Liberal homeowners were more likely to back liberal policies that manipulate rental markets or provide rental aid, but, like demographically comparable conservative homeowners, they tend to oppose measures that would allow more housing development.

EXPERIMENT 1: ASSESSING SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH- AND LOW-DENSITY HOUSING TYPES

Our first survey experiment tests the effect of different persuasive messages that refer to housing development's economic effects and appeal to voters' support for redistribution. The messages that we test have been widely used in housing debates to argue for state and local policies allowing housing development. Respondents selected for the experiment viewed one of four randomly assigned treatments containing informational and persuasive messages pertaining to local housing markets. These included a no-information ("control") condition and three persuasive messages explaining how building more housing in an area can help to reduce local housing costs:[11]

11. One-fifth of the sample was randomly assigned not to receive a treatment or answer the housing construction questions in this section.

Table 3. Support for State and Local Housing-Related Policy Proposals among Homeowners Relative to Pro-guarantee Renters

Policy	Pro-guarantee Homeowners	Anti-guarantee Homeowners	Difference
Require accepting Section 8 tenants (state)	−.05*	−.30**	.26**
	(.023)	(.023)	(.019)
Pass rent control (local)	−.08**	−.30**	.22**
	(.022)	(.023)	(.020)
Tax credits for renters (state)	−.21**	−.40**	.19**
	(.022)	(.022)	(.019)
Require local governments allow apartments (state)	−.13**	−.28**	.15**
	(.023)	(.023)	(.018)
Combat racial discrimination (state)	−.04*	−.20**	.15**
	(.019)	(.021)	(.018)
Change laws to allow more construction (local)	−.08**	−.18**	.09**
	(.023)	(.024)	(.019)
Give neighborhoods more voice (local)	−.01	−.08**	.07**
	(.018)	(.020)	(.017)
Allow development of open space (local)	−.09**	−.13**	.04*
	(.023)	(.024)	(.020)
Relax environmental limits (state)	.01	.01	.00
	(.021)	(.022)	(.017)

Note. Point estimates in the second and third columns reflect differences in the proportion of pro- or anti-guarantee homeowners, respectively, that support a policy relative to demographically comparable liberal renters. The final column displays the difference between liberal and conservative homeowners. Estimates are drawn from a linear probability model containing the categorical homeownership-ideology variable, demographics, zip code population density, and MSA fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

- *Expert*: "Economists have shown that building more housing in an area can reduce housing prices." This message summarizes the received (albeit contested) economic wisdom. We expected that such a message could increase support for housing development among renters and reduce support among homeowners and that it could appeal to liberal homeowners who profess concern over high housing prices. Alternatively, the message could threaten homeowners by alerting them to potential home value losses.
- *Expert, with "escape clause" language*: "Economists have shown that building more housing in an area can reduce housing prices. Of course, housing prices are not the only issue affecting communities." The added diversionary escape clause is an attempt to offset experimenter demand effects. It invites respondents to simultaneously receive and then, if desired, disregard our message (Zizzo 2010). We expected the escape clause's effect to be largest among liberal homeowners subjected to cognitive dissonance.
- *Expert, with equality language*: "Economists have shown that building more housing in an area can reduce housing prices. This can make communities more affordable to low-income and middle-income families." This message prompts respondents to consider the positive association between development-induced lower housing prices and equality of opportunity. We expected it would appeal to liberal homeowners' ideology, boosting their support for dense housing relative to the control condition and the basic expert condition.

We then ask, "Thinking about the possibility of more housing development in your area, do you support or oppose constructing more . . ."

- apartment-only buildings,
- buildings that have both apartments and business spaces,

Table 4. Average Support for Apartment-Only Buildings and Low-Density Single-Family Housing among Metropolitan Residents

Condition	Anti-guarantee Homeowner	Pro-guarantee Homeowner	Anti-guarantee Renter	Pro-guarantee Renter
	Support for Apartment-Only Buildings (High Threat to Homeowner Self-Interest)			
Control	2.69	3.05	3.47	3.40
	(.08)	(.07)	(.08)	(.08)
Economist	2.74	2.74	3.33	3.50
	(.11)	(.14)	(.11)	(.11)
Escape clause	2.69	2.93	3.10	3.39
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)
Families	2.64	3.03	3.29	3.58
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
	Support for Single-Family Housing (Low Threat to Homeowner Self-Interest)			
Control	3.93	3.87	3.95	3.93
	(.07)	(.06)	(.07)	(.07)
Economist	3.78	3.88	3.90	3.87
	(.10)	(.12)	(.11)	(.10)
Escape clause	3.92	3.99	3.75	3.97
	(.07)	(.06)	(.07)	(.07)
Families	3.83	3.87	3.76	3.81
	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)

Note. The different groups on the homeownership-ideology typology are organized in columns, while experimental conditions appear in the rows. Outcomes are reported on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating the strongest support. Standard errors appear in parentheses.

- multifamily housing (for example, townhomes or duplexes),
- single-family houses in high-density subdivisions (small yards with neighboring houses close together),
- single-family houses in low-density subdivisions (large yards with neighboring houses far apart).[12]

Individuals respond on a 5-point Likert scale. For estimation, we treated the responses as continuous outcome variables.[13] Including multiple housing types in our outcome measures allowed us to assess how the response to the treatments was moderated by the threat implied by different housing development forms.

Table 4 shows the mean support across all treatment conditions and groups on the homeownership-ideology typology. For simplicity, we report only the results for housing types that are least and most desired, as measured in various previous surveys: apartment-only buildings, which are usually seen as a threat to homeowners and neighborhood quality of life, and single-family houses in low-density subdivisions, which represent a minimal threat.[14]

The top half of table 4 shows support for apartment-only buildings, while the second half shows support for single-family housing. Average support under the control (no-information) condition appears on the first line. Liberal homeowners were on average split over whether to support additional apartment construction, expressing average support of 3.05 on the 5-point scale. Conservative homeowners' average support was only 2.69. Renters were more uniformly supportive: liberal renters' support was 3.40, and even conservative renters' support was

12. These items replicate language used in an April 2015 Hoover Institution poll (Hoover Institution 2015).

13. Models with dichotomized outcomes are shown in the appendix. The substantive conclusions do not change.

14. In the April 2015 Hoover Institution Golden State Poll on which our questions were based, large majorities of liberals and conservatives and renters and homeowners supported building more low-density single-family homes in their area.

Table 5. Group Average Treatment Effects on Support for Apartment-Only Buildings and Low-Density Single-Family Housing among Metropolitan Residents

Condition	Anti-guarantee Homeowner	Pro-guarantee Homeowner	Anti-guarantee Renter	Pro-guarantee Renter
	Average Treatment Effects on Support for Apartment-Only Buildings			
Economist	.07	−.28*	−.18	.08
	(.11)	(.12)	(.16)	(.12)
Escape clause	.02	−.11	−.37*	−.05
	(.11)	(.11)	(.18)	(.12)
Families	.03	−.09	−.23	.13
	(.11)	(.11)	(.15)	(.11)
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	.09	.11	.11	.06
N	1,004	959	409	860
	Average Treatment Effects on Support for Single-Family Housing			
Economist	−.15	.02	−.12	−.05
	(.10)	(.10)	(.15)	(.11)
Escape clause	−.01	.10	−.25	.04
	(.10)	(.09)	(.16)	(.10)
Families	−.08	−.01	−.22	−.09
	(.10)	(.10)	(.15)	(.10)
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	.05	.06	.10	.07
N	1,004	959	409	860

Note. Treatment effects were estimated by least squares regression of the 5-point Likert support scale on indicators for the experimental conditions plus controls for basic demographics zip code population density, and MSA fixed effects. Robust standard errors appear in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

3.47. These differences between renters and owners are substantively large: the overall standard deviation in the no-information (control) condition was 1.26.

Next, table 5 and figure 1 present the average treatment effects relative to the no-information (control) condition.[15] The basic "expert" treatment calling attention to supply-and-demand logic has little effect on the already low support for apartments among conservative homeowners. However, it reduces liberal homeowners' support by 0.28 points ($p = .016$), an almost 0.25 standard deviation reduction that, in the process, eliminates the differences between liberal and conservative homeowners. Adding the escape clause to the treatment nullifies most of the "expert" treatment's negative effects among liberal homeowners. Separately supplementing the "expert" treatment with a statement of additional housing's benefits to "families" restores support, but only to the same level as in the no-information group.

As expected, persuasive messages have less effect among the groups expected to be less conflicted. Renters' support for housing was greater under the control condition but was barely changed across different treatment arms, regardless of renters' ideology.[16]

The bottom panels of tables 4 and 5 display, respectively, mean support levels and average treatment effects for the low-density single-family housing question. Such housing, often characterized as "sprawl," wins support across all cells of our

15. Estimates are derived from a least squares regression of the 5-point support scale on a set of indicators for treatment conditions, as well as baseline covariates including age, race, sex, income, and MSA indicators. The appendix presents balance statistics across treatment conditions.

16. An exception to this finding was that the "escape clause" language did reduce support for apartments among anti-guarantee renters.

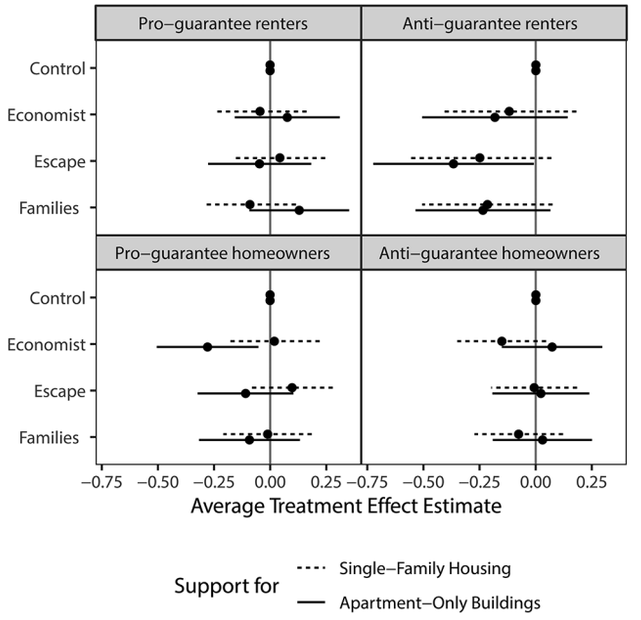

Figure 1. Coefficient plot of group average treatment effects on support for apartment-only buildings (*solid*) and low-density single-family housing (*dashed*) among metropolitan residents, along with robust 95% confidence intervals. See table 5 for model description.

homeownership-ideology typology. Construction of additional low-density single-family housing wins broad support from liberals and conservatives, homeowners and renters. Our persuasion messages have no detectable effect on any groups' already high support levels.[17]

EXPERIMENT 2: TESTING NIMBY ATTITUDES AS A FUNCTION OF IDEOLOGY

Our second survey experiment looks beyond informational appeals by asking respondents to evaluate a hypothetical housing proposal. Each respondent is randomly assigned to view and evaluate one of six different versions of a hypothetical 120-unit apartment development project proposed in their community, manipulating two different features of the projects. The first is an indirect measure of the socioeconomic composition of likely tenants: whether tenants would be paying market rate or if half of tenants would be low-income housing voucher recipients. The second is the distance of a project to the respondent's home, which can be interpreted as a measure of the spatial threat implied by a project (Hankinson 2018). After presenting the hypothetical proposal, we ask respondents to state their support on the 5-point Likert scale.

While we expected conservative homeowners to oppose apartment-style development projects regardless of treatment condition, we expected liberal homeowners to express more conflicted views. Developments built to house voucher recipients may appeal to liberal homeowners, perhaps enough to close the homeowner-renter divide among liberals. However, the logic of NIMBYism—that individuals respond negatively to spatially concentrated costs of development—suggests that liberal homeowners would only endorse low-income housing to a greater extent if the proposal called for it to be built elsewhere (Hankinson 2018).

Our fractional factorial design assigns respondents to one of six experimental conditions. We then measure support for the proposed development again on a 5-point Likert scale.[18] The treatments assigned to respondents are as follows:

- *Control (no information)*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community."
- *Low income*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community. About half of the units will be occupied by low-income housing voucher recipients."
- *Low income, quarter mile*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community. About half of the units will be occupied by low-income housing voucher recipients. The new building will be 1/4 mile from your home."
- *Low income, two miles*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community. About half of the units will be occupied by low-income housing voucher recipients. The new building will be 2 miles from your home."
- *Market rate, quarter mile*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community. The units will be rented at whatever price the local market supports. The new building will be 1/4 mile from your home."
- *Market rate, two miles*: "A local group is proposing to build a 120-unit apartment building in your community. The units will be rented at whatever price

17. In the appendix, we present results from a Mechanical Turk sample to address whether respondents' level of trust in economists moderated their response to our messages. We found that respondents who expressed distrust in economists were less responsive to the experimental manipulation. The treatment nonetheless increased the proportion of respondents identifying the "correct" expert position by 10 percentage points. Moreover, the basic expert (economist) treatment increased the proportion of respondents who agreed that housing supply would reduce housing prices by six percentage points.

18. Our design emulates a survey experiment presented in Hankinson (2018). Several treatment arms possible in a full-factorial design were excluded to maintain statistical power, without sacrificing ability to test pairwise hypotheses of interest.

> the local market supports. The new building will be 2 miles from your home."

All respondents are then asked to answer the question, "Based on this information, would you support or oppose such a project?" Again, respondents selected from a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly support" to "strongly oppose."

Table 6 displays mean levels of support for each scenario under the homeownership-ideology typology. The average treatment effect estimates are reported in table 7 and figure 2. We again find evidence that homeowners are much less likely than renters to support building apartments, regardless of their attitudes toward a housing guarantee. Conservative homeowners consistently oppose all versions of apartment housing. In the no-information (control) condition, conservative homeowners' average support for a generic 120-unit apartment building measures 2.61 on a 5-point scale, a number only slightly lower in experimental conditions describing low-income apartments. Their support is lower when the proposed building is described as being located within a quarter mile of respondents' homes. (The only exception to conservative homeowners' opposition is for market-rate housing located two miles away.)

Liberal homeowners express higher average support than conservatives for apartment buildings, at an average level of 2.89 on the 1–5 scale in the no-information condition. Unlike conservative homeowners, their support is slightly higher for a project described as serving low-income housing voucher recipients. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

Both liberal and conservative renters state more support for the hypothetical apartment development than homeowners. Liberal renters' support is especially strong: 3.68 on a 1–5 scale in the no-information condition. Support in this group drops by 0.31 points for an apartment with low-income apartments located one-quarter mile from the respondent's home ($p = .015$). Still, even for this comparatively unpopular proposal, support among liberal renters remained higher than support among homeowners for any proposal. Liberal renters showed less support for market-rate housing, with drops in support of 0.17 (not significant) and 0.39 ($p < .01$) for market-rate housing located a quarter-mile and two miles away from the respondents' home, respectively.

Consistent with cross-pressuring, conservative renters' stated positions fall between those of liberal homeowners and liberal renters. On average, they express more support for apartments in the basic (control) condition than do homeowners. As conservatives, they express less support for low-income housing, especially if located near their place of residence. Their support for low-income housing is 0.36 points lower than in the control condition ($p = .046$), making them less supportive than liberal homeowners. Market-rate apartments

Table 6. Average Support for Building Hypothetical 120-Unit Apartment Building among Residents of the Top 20 US Metropolitan Areas

	Support for Building 120-Unit Apartment Building			
Condition	Anti-guarantee Homeowner	Pro-guarantee Homeowner	Anti-guarantee Renter	Pro-guarantee Renter
No info	2.61	2.89	3.02	3.68
	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)
Low income, distance not given	2.33	3.02	3.05	3.62
	(.13)	(.13)	(.09)	(.09)
Low income, 1/4 mile	2.29	3.05	2.66	3.40
	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.08)
Low income, 2 miles	2.41	3.16	2.99	3.79
	(.09)	(.08)	(.13)	(.13)
Market rate, 1/4 mile	2.38	2.77	3.18	3.46
	(.08)	(.09)	(.10)	(.09)
Market rate, 2 miles	2.97	2.94	3.08	3.29
	(.13)	(.13)	(.09)	(.09)

Note. Different groups in the homeownership-ideology typology appear in columns, while experimental conditions appear in the rows. Outcomes are expressed on the 5-point Likert scale, and standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 7. Subgroup Average Treatment Effects on Support for Building a Hypothetical 120-Unit Apartment Building, as a Function of Randomly Assigned Information on Residents' Low-Income Status and Project Distance to the Respondent's Home

	Average Treatment Effects on Support for 120-Unit Apartment Building			
Condition	Anti-guarantee Homeowner	Pro-guarantee Homeowner	Anti-guarantee Renter	Pro-guarantee Renter
Low income, distance not given	−.21	.11	−.01	−.05
	(.12)	(.13)	(.18)	(.12)
Low income, 1/4 mile	−.35**	.15	−.36*	−.31*
	(.12)	(.13)	(.18)	(.13)
Low income, 2 miles	−.11	.26	−.11	.06
	(.11)	(.13)	(.19)	(.12)
Market rate, 1/4 mile	−.16	−.15	.14	−.17
	(.12)	(.13)	(.19)	(.12)
Market rate, 2 miles	.38**	.05	.00	−.39**
	(.12)	(.13)	(.18)	(.12)
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	.12	.08	.09	.08
N	1,233	1,211	515	1,096

Note. Treatment effects were estimated by least squares regression of the 5-point Likert support scale on indicators for the experimental conditions plus controls for basic demographics, zip code population density, and MSA fixed effects. Robust standard errors appear in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

receive the same support as the hypothetical development in the no-information (control) condition.

Liberal homeowners' net positive support for hypothetical mixed income projects presents a hard challenge to our claims, as it appears to deviate from naively self-interested behavior. Such stated preferences may reflect social desirability bias. Or, liberal homeowners asked to evaluate an apartment "in their community" without additional information may infer that the project is close to their home and occupied by low-income residents anyway. Providing specific information in the experimental profiles reduces uncertainty around proposed projects. Another possible reason for such support is that even the "low-income" apartments described in our experimental prompts are, in fact, mixed income: voucher recipients would occupy only half the units, a much less threatening prospect than a development dedicated entirely to low-income residents. However, even with ideology or social desirability at play in liberal homeowners' survey responses, their support for housing does not reach that of liberal renters. In summary, while conservative homeowners are quite consistently anti-apartment, liberal homeowners were only slightly more receptive to apartment construction, but never as receptive as liberal renters to any of the hypothetical proposals.

ADDRESSING ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

We have interpreted these findings as capturing self-interest. Two major alternative explanations may explain how the public interprets and responds to proposals for new housing development. The first concerns racial attitudes, which could better explain attitudes toward housing than material self-interest, especially if respondents make racial inferences about residents' different housing types. The second concerns how levels of support and effect sizes are likely to vary with population density, as people who live at different density levels have already selected into different residential environments, thereby expressing their preferences for specific housing types.

First, we assess the extent to which opposition to high-density housing is driven by racial attitudes versus material self-interest. Of course, racial biases and pecuniary considerations are not mutually exclusive: homeowners are likely to account for racial bias among potential buyers when anticipating changes in their home values. A preference for homogeneously

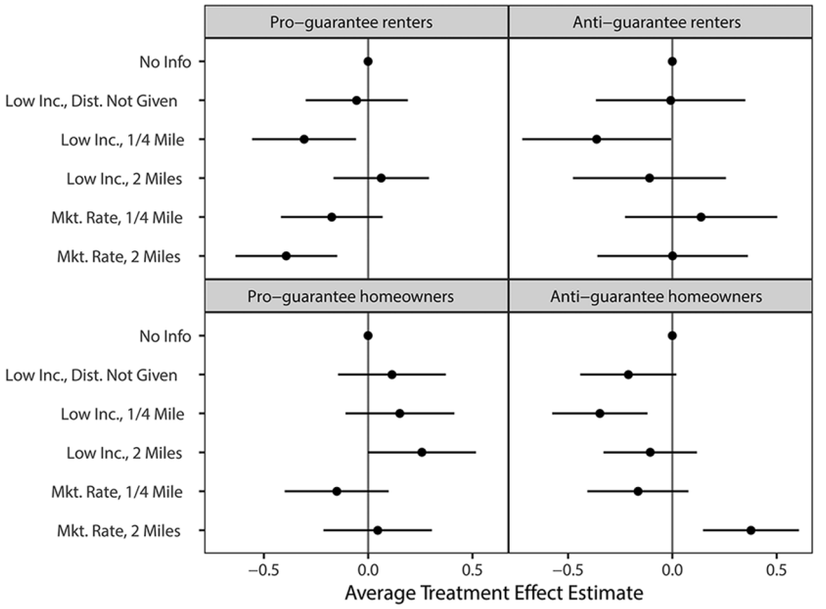

Figure 2. Coefficient plot for subgroup average treatment effects on support for hypothetical 120-unit apartment building, along with robust 95% confidence intervals. See table 7 for model description.

nonminority neighborhoods may be motivated not by personal racial animus, but by concern over home values and neighborhood trajectory (Ellen 2000). While our survey was not designed to study racial attitudes, it is nonetheless instructive to investigate the extent to which racial attitudes are associated with respondents' preferences over development policy. Ultimately, we find that one's racial attitudes are only partially associated with attitudes toward allowing development of more apartments and sometimes run counter to the expected relationship.

The survey includes a standard three-question battery on negative racial stereotypes against blacks (Peffley et al. 1997). Respondents who endorse at least one negative stereotype are coded as having negative racial affect or animus. To measure the association between racial animus and housing support, we focus on the apartment outcomes presented in experiment 1. We regress support for the apartment item on experimental conditions, plus racial affect and other pretreatment covariates. The results, which are presented in full in the appendix, indicate that racial affect is only loosely associated with attitudes toward apartment development. Among all white respondents and across several subsamples, those who endorsed a negative stereotype were less supportive of apartments. However, in none of the models we estimated was this difference statistically significant.

In a second analysis on racial attitudes, we measure revealed preferences for racial diversity: whether the respondent has moved to a less white zip code than their previous place of residence within the past 5 years. To be sure, this measure does not easily permit inference about preferences for racial makeup, since zip code racial diversity is correlated with a host of other characteristics, including income and the prevalence of multi-unit housing. However, we find that white homeowners who recently moved to a less diverse zip code were significantly more opposed to construction of apartments in their communities than white homeowners who recently moved to a more diverse zip code. Full results are available in the appendix.

Another question is whether our results are somehow an artifact of the types of contexts in which our metropolitan sample has chosen to live. People may respond to the prospect of high-density housing differently depending on their local community. For instance, residents of low-density suburbs may perceive construction of dense housing as a larger deviation from the status quo than do residents of dense urban areas. In appendix table A-7, we present support for apartment housing generally, and hypothetical proposed apartments specifically, by the a respondent's zipcode population density. Using the first experiment's outcome, we find that renters were more supportive of building apartments than homeowners, regardless of the population density of the area they live in. The homeowner-renter gap was substantial among those who live in low- and moderate-density zip codes but shrank in extremely high-density areas. Across all groups in the homeowner-ideology typology, those who live in higher-density areas were more supportive of building apartments. We found mostly similar results when applying a similar approach to the outcome measure from the second experiment—support for a

hypothetical 120-unit apartment complex.[19] Overall, existing population density is an important determinant of attitudes toward new housing construction, but homeowner-renter differences appeared in all but the densest zip codes.

CONCLUSION

Are Americans blind to their self-interest when forming their policy attitudes? Previous work has suggested that material self-interest broadly defined has little bearing on vote choice or on many policy attitudes. Scholarship built on this research often neglects an important caveat: threats to self-interest that are objectively large and appear in Americans' daily lives can lead to strong expressions of self-interest (Citrin and Green 1990). Our results demonstrate that homeownership is an important manifestation of self-interest in politics, overwhelming other political commitments. When local housing changes threaten their self-interest, homeowners may experience logical and cognitive dissonance between their self-interest and ideological principles.

In addition to showing that a threat's magnitude matters, our results also show how self-interest manifests itself in the kinds of policies that are embraced. Redistributive and regulatory policies, while moderately costly to the affluent, pose only a diffuse threat to home values and homeowners' quality of life. As such, liberal homeowners appear more willing to follow their ideological leanings over these policies. New housing construction, on the other hand, presents a more immediate and concentrated cost. We find evidence that attitudes toward development policies are structured more by homeownership interests than by ideology.

Our two survey experiments show that the policy preferences that divide renters and homeowners are robust and that large differences persist regardless of homeowners' ideology. Liberal homeowners prompted to think about the market implications of building more housing in their area express less support, and in the process look more like conservative homeowners. Additionally reminding homeowners of the benefits to lower- and middle-income families offsets the negative effects of the supply-and-demand message somewhat but does not increase net support. More importantly, none of these appeals to ideology prove sufficient to reduce the large gaps between renters and liberal homeowners, whose positions remained more similar to those of conservative owners than to those of liberal renters.

Our second experiment again shows a large homeowner-renter gap and reveals that we are able to present housing development proposals that induce expected cognitive dissonance. Ideology does clash with self-interest, with liberals expressing public support for affordable housing but not enough to eliminate the large gap between renters and owners.

Our results reveal the cognitive dissonance that citizens experience around the personally costly local implementation of policies that they might otherwise support. We suspect that liberal homeowners avoid or suppress cognitive dissonance by defaulting to opposition to development-based threats to their neighborhoods. While the ideal of equal housing opportunity is appealing, whatever additional utility homeowners might gain from redistributive housing policy in their communities is likely to be offset by threats to their quality of life. Having invested in both a private property and in a community they have good reason to stand by their material self-interest on questions of local policy (Fischel 2001b).

Our findings are consistent with previous work on the contingent expression of self-interest in politics, leading us to believe that they may generalize to other similar issues that entail a mismatch between vaguely considered principles and their real-world implementation (Jackman 1978). One test of the durability of our findings would be if behavior persisted even with clear partisan elite signals on the issue. Such elite signals have appeared occasionally around the housing topic but have had little bearing on homeowner attitudes or behavior. For example, late in the Obama administration, the Council of Economic Advisors released a "toolkit," a set of policy guidelines recommending that local governments eliminate restrictions on multifamily housing development (Housing Development Toolkit 2016; Woellert 2016). In an accompanying op-ed piece, the Council's chair wrote that "barriers to housing development can allow a small number of individuals to enjoy the benefits of living in a community while excluding many others, limiting diversity and economic mobility" (Furman 2016).[20] Such ideas have informed a "Yes in my backyard" or "YIMBY" movement consisting primarily of Democrats but which internally divides the party (Yglesias 2018). If such debates continue and Democratic partisan elites develop a consistent message, self-identified liberal voters—and homeowners especially—may be forced to grapple even

19. The only major difference was within the conservative renter group, which displayed a U-shaped relationship between population density and support for the apartment building. Conservative renters in low-density areas showed high support, with middling support among those in moderate-density areas, and strong support among those in high-density areas.

20. Former Obama White House officials have claimed that they could not persuade President Obama to endorse this position publicly (Stegman 2019). If they had, we would have an even clearer message to voters about the clash between housing opportunity and local housing goals.

more with the dissonance between their homeownership-focused proximal concerns and the "correct" partisan positions on various housing policies (Lenz 2013).

Our study offers insights to housing policy advocates seeking to promote housing development. Such advocates often believe that Americans' seemingly inconsistent views over housing policy result from misinformation. According to this view, voters embrace policies such as rent control that do not increase overall housing opportunity and can reduce quality housing stock, whereas if they were better informed they would support additional housing development. Our findings suggest that individuals are likely to disregard information—such as claims from economists about the importance of market forces for housing affordability—that is meant to be corrective (Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Presenting voters with expert endorsements or stylized facts about housing markets does not, on its own, increase net support for housing development—even when statements are framed to link these stylized facts to liberal policy positions. Similarly, presenting voters with different scenarios pertaining to development "in their backyard" does little to reduce the major divide in housing politics, which is not between the two parties or between ideological camps, but between homeowners and renters. While self-interest does not fully overcome political principles, homeownership remains a high-stakes investment that prompts Americans to treat their ideological commitments as secondary considerations.

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