

Public Policy Roundtable
“Whither Housing in California?”
Ms. Breidenbach, Senior Fellow, UCLA School of Public Affairs
August 30, 2006

The inaugural Public Policy Roundtable was led by housing advocate, Jan Breidenbach, a Senior Fellow at the UCLA School of Public Affairs. Ms. Breidenbach summarized the grim state of housing in California and offered timely policy recommendations aimed at alleviating the housing crisis in her white paper titled “Whither Housing in California?” She introduced California’s current housing shortage within the national context, highlighting historical events and policies that have greatly influenced home ownership throughout the U.S. Within California, Ms. Breidenbach discussed how changes in the local economy, combined with policy shifts—such as the passing of Proposition 13 and the removal of the depreciation benefit from rental housing—have encouraged municipalities to favor other types of land use over housing. This “fiscalization” of land use in California, described Ms. Breidenbach, has resulted in a multitude of housing problems including the second lowest homeownership rate in the nation, inflated home prices and rents, and multifamily unit shortages. Ms. Breidenbach concluded with policy options aimed at mitigating the housing crisis including recommendations to increase the supply of nonmarket housing, redistribute local housing market wealth, and increase the rental and multifamily housing opportunities.