The housing crisis in California has reached epic proportions not seen since the postwar period, when suburban sprawl was the response. Now we need new answers since sprawl, with its conventional single-family homes, fueled environmental problems, and few large sites remain within California’s cities. Instead, today’s builders and developers must squeeze into infill spaces, each one unique. This means that the design skills of architects are more important than ever if we are to build new, more creatively imagined urban landscapes. One part of the equation will be the design of infill buildings, another part is the design of infill sites, and another requires reimagining housing alternatives at the most fundamental levels in order to expand the affordable options. From capsule housing to pod-shares and granny flats, UCLA’s design research center, cityLAB, is generating experimental prototypes as well as state policy.

Dana Cuff is Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at UCLA where she is Founding Director of cityLAB (www.cityLAB.aud.ucla.edu). Since receiving her Ph.D. in Architecture from Berkeley, Cuff has published and lectured widely about spatial justice, the architectural profession, and affordable housing. She is author of several books, including The Provisional City about postwar housing in Los Angeles, and a co-authored book (available Jan 2020) documenting her innovative crossdisciplinary project at UCLA called the Urban Humanities Initiative, funded by the Mellon Foundation. Based on cityLAB’s design research, she co-authored a landmark bill that permits “backyard homes” on virtually all 8 million single-family properties in California (AB 2299, Bloom-2016), doubling the density of suburbs across the state. cityLAB recently established a satellite lab in one underserved neighborhood of Los Angeles, where a deep, multi-year partnership with community organizations will demonstrate ways that humanistic design of the public realm can create more compassionate cities.

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