Where is it toughest to build new homes? BuildZoom analysis digs in

How do you quantify how difficult it is for developers to break ground (and finish) a new building in a given city? When Issi Romem, chief economist at BuildZoom (an online remodeling marketplace), was asked to help a reporter at The Wall Street Journal find the toughest places to build in the country, he realized that looking at the locales that are slow to permit projects or don't issue as many permits for projects probably wasn't a good way to crunch these numbers. Why? "There's a selection issue," he explained. "In the places where it's toughest to build, developers aren't going to submit a lot of permits. Developers know what's likely to be feasible, and they don't try things that are likely infeasible from the start." He outlined the process for putting his research together in a blog post, "The toughest places to build: Behind the scenes of a Wall Street Journal analysis," and discussed the results with Inman. "A better way to gauge the toughest places to build is t...

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