



According to MHProNews: "I'm not surprised that successive HUD Secretaries have refused to take on federal preemption: it's very controversial and above their pay grade. I remember Carson in particular began his tenure talking about overriding local zoning to get more housing built but then never did much." – Scott Susin, Founder of the Center for Mortgage Access (CMA), formerly an economist with HUD (Aug 2007 - Apr 2020) and senior economist with the FHFA (Apr 2020 - Jun 2025). Is there any other evidence online that former HUD Sec Ben Carson attempted to overcome local zoning as a barrier to HUD Code manufactured housing?

◆ AI Overview

Yes, there is substantial online evidence confirming that former HUD Secretary Ben Carson vocalized a strong intent to dismantle local zoning barriers and explicitly championed HUD Code manufactured housing as a prime solution. However, documentation from industry trade groups and housing policy reports directly supports Scott Susin's observation:

Carson ultimately chose not to enforce federal preemption to override local zoning ordinances. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

The public record outlines the trajectory of Carson's approach to local zoning and manufactured housing:

1. Robust Rhetoric and Promotion of Factory-Built Housing

- **The "Active Ingredient":** In multiple addresses to the Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI), Carson explicitly labeled manufactured housing as "an active ingredient in the medication we are prescribing for a stronger America".
- **Senate Testimony:** During a [September 2019 Senate Banking Committee hearing](#), Carson directly singled out state and local regulatory barriers as the primary bottleneck restricting access to manufactured homes.
- **Showcasing Innovation:** At the 2019 Innovative Housing Showcase on the National Mall, Carson aggressively touted the affordability and structural durability of modern HUD Code homes to combat the negative stigma ("trailer" perceptions) used by local planners to ban them. [1, 2, 3, 4]

2. Shifting AFFH Incentives Instead of Preemption

Rather than directly invoking HUD's statutory power under the Manufactured Housing Improvement Act of 2000 to legally preempt discriminatory local zoning, Carson attempted a different approach: [1, 2]

- **The Carrot-and-Stick Proposal:** Carson planned to rewrite the Obama-era Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. Instead of focusing on desegregation metrics, he proposed tying federal HUD grants to localities relaxing their density and zoning restrictions.
- **The Political Backtrack:** This proposal drew intense criticism from conservative suburban voting blocs who argued it interfered with local control. By late August 2020, Carson reversed course. He co-authored an op-ed stating the Trump administration would defend suburban single-family zoning, explicitly walking back his federal push against local land-use laws. [1, 2, 3, 4]

3. Industry Backlash over Unused Preemption Authority

Public records from the [Manufactured Housing Association for Regulatory Reform \(MHARR\)](#) heavily document the industry's frustration with Carson's lack of enforcement: [1]

- **Formal Demands for Action:** Throughout 2018 and 2019, MHARR sent letters and held meetings with Carson urging him to use HUD's **enhanced federal preemption authority**. They argued HUD had the immediate legal right to nullify local ordinances that discriminatorily excluded HUD Code homes.
- **The Final Outcome:** Post-tenure policy analyses and industry reviews note that HUD resisted taking explicit legal or federal enforcement action to strike down local zoning rules. While Carson did pass standard procedural updates to the internal HUD Code framework right before leaving office, actual local-level zoning barriers remained completely untouched by federal intervention.

[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

If you'd like to look deeper into this topic, let me know if you want to explore the specific **legal scope of HUD's enhanced preemption authority** under the 2000 Reform Law, or how **subsequent administrations** have handled zoning barriers for factory-built homes. [1, 2]