



Technical Assistance  
for Local Planning  
**HOUSING**



**ASSOCIATION  
OF BAY AREA  
GOVERNMENTS**



# Let's Talk About Housing

Communications Guide for  
Local Governments

Clair A. McDevitt

July 2022

# The Impact of Home

Where people call home impacts every aspect of their lives.

Safe and affordable housing has the power to transform lives and build thriving communities.

But there is no one-size-fits-all solution that will unite everyone around an approach to equitable housing.

# Connecting with the Community

- Know your audience
- Use multiple strategies to connect
- Maintain variety with storytelling
- Use images
- Promote small group conversation
- View ABAG's [Equitable Engagement Primer](#) for more detail.



Photo Copyright Alain McLaughlin Photography, courtesy of NPH

# Communications Best Practices

- Keep it Simple
- Center Equity and Systems Change
- Attach and Amplify
- Reframe
- Avoid Challenging Different Points of View and Focus on the Facts
- Avoid the Term “Housing Crisis”



Photo Copyright MidPen Housing, courtesy of NPH

# Keep it Simple

- It is critical that communications and messaging is **simple, succinct and at a level where everyone can understand:**
  - Avoid acronyms and jargon
  - Speak clearly and directly
  - Tailor message to audience
  - Provide translated material and interpreters

# Bridging the Barriers

- Getting the Message Right
- Getting the Messenger Right
- Reaching People Where They Are
- Creating a Sense of Ownership of The Process



Approachable Materials



Pop-up Events



Social Media



Workshops



Neighborhood Association Meetings



Surveys



Telephone Town Halls



Host Walking Tours



Text/Low-Tech

## Center Equity and Systems Change

- Center equity in all messaging and integrate new narratives that position equity as the pathway to housing solutions
- **Connect the racial and economic disparities to historic policies and systems, rather than individuals**

## Attach and Amplify

- Understand issues community members care about and are motivated to protect
- **Center housing as a foundational element to creating strong, vibrant, equitable communities**
- Link housing to issues such as environmental justice, diversity, schools and other priorities for residents



# Reframe

Ask the question:

*How do we need to act before we lose opportunities to house future generations and preserve diversity and the small businesses that make great communities?*

# Avoid Challenging Different Points of View; Focus on the Facts

- Focus on the facts:
  - Identify common misperceptions and unproductive narratives and set the stage early to avoid them

## Avoid the Term “Housing Crisis”

- Calling this a “housing crisis” feeds into feelings of entrenchment and sounds blameless
- Reframing this as **creating “equitable housing opportunities”** moves away from an “us and them” dynamic

## Communicating About Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)

Adopted in 2018, AFFH requires jurisdictions to proactively address patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities in housing and community development activities.

- Just the Facts
- Economic Opportunity
- Racial Equity

# Learn More

## [Communications Guide for Local Government](#)

- Know Your Audience pp. 7-10
- Best Practices pp. 11-21
- AFFH pp. 22-24

## [Best Practices for Equitable Engagement](#)

## [Housing Element Completeness Checklist](#)

## [RHTA Support for Local Engagement](#)

## [ABAG Technical Assistance Portal](#)





# Thank You.

Clair McDevitt,  
[cmcdevitt@bayareametro.gov](mailto:cmcdevitt@bayareametro.gov)

Leah Zippert,  
[lzipper@bayareametro.gov](mailto:lzipper@bayareametro.gov)