



Technical Assistance
for Local Planning
HOUSING



How to Talk About Housing

Regional Housing TA Program
April 27, 2021

Agenda

Welcome

- Somaya Abdelgany , ABAG/MTC

Housing Communications Research and Findings

- Ruby Bolaria-Shifrin, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- Alina Harway, Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California

Impacts on Housing Element Update

- Neysa Fligor, Mayor, City of Los Altos, ABAG Executive Board Member

Breakout Sessions - Communications Tips

Resources: Available Now

- [Housing Element Site Selection \(HESS\) Tool BETA](#)
- [Data Packets](#)
- [“What is a Housing Element?” Briefer Template](#)
- [Housing Element Timeline Template](#)
- [Housing Element RFP Template](#)
- [Housing Element Compliance](#) **NEW**

Resources: Available Soon

- Regional Planning Bench
- Local Grant Awards
- Initial Peer Cohorts & Topic-Specific Workgroups
- HESS Tool 1.0 + Office Hours
- Affirmatively Furthering Fair (AFFH) Housing Products
- Resilience Products
- ADU Affordability Survey

Upcoming Webinars

- May 11, Incorporating Environmental Justice and Safety into your Housing Element (co-hosted by OPR)
- May 18, Sites for Savants: A Deep Dive into the Sites Inventory **NEW**
- May 25, Engage How To! Best Practices and Tools for Remote Meetings

Housing Communications Research and Findings

Research and Implications

Ruby Bolaria-Shifrin

Manager, Housing Affordability Initiative, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

Alina Harway

Communications Manager, Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California

**Chan
Zuckerberg
Initiative** 



Housing Narratives — A Deep Dive

*Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Non-Profit Housing
Association of Northern California (NPH)*

April 2021

Seize the Narrative

A Housing Justice Narrative Playbook for the Bay Area



DIGGING IN ON THE BAY AREA: Overview of the regional approach, key research, message strategies, + recommendations

Our Regional Approach

Phase I: Discovery & Landscape Analysis

- **Convene a regionally diverse collaborative table** to shape research program and initiative approach from Sonoma to Santa Clara, from San Mateo to Contra Costa Counties and spanning multiple issue areas
- **Convene narrative experts** to share best practices and assess local opportunities.
- **Assess lay of the land**, via surveys, facilitated table conversations, one-on-ones, and shared media landscape.
- **Deploy best practices:** Workshops & breakout sessions to identify how best practice guidance works in the Bay Area & collect local experiences to identify additional opportunities, challenges, and ideas.



Phase II: Empirical Research Program

- **Literature Review:** Evaluation, themes, trends, and through-lines identified via dozens of Bay Area Polling Data (EMC Research)
- **Qualitative Research:** Community Voice Sessions/ Focus Groups (TheCaseMade)
- **Quantitative Research:** Polling & Values Mapping (EMC Research)
- **Coordination on Narrative Research:** Partnering with narrative initiatives locally, statewide, and federally to incorporate findings, leverage ideas, and identify value-add to our movement



Phase III: Deploy & Implement

- **Share the Playbook & Embed our Findings:** Extend the reach of our narrative work and support implementation
- **Support our networks with Content:** Message guides, toolkits, and online resources
- **Promote creative, innovative ways to amplify housing justice narratives into public discourse:** Implement a strategy to effectively engage media, influencers, and artists to reflect housing justice narratives
- **New Research/Evaluation:** Use state-of-the-art research methods to continue growing our understanding and refining our strategies to shape the narrative on housing and racial justice

Key Bay Area Research Findings

- 1. The conversation is viral** but it's currently stuck in an unhelpful place.
- 2. Bay Area residents value diversity** though are less willing to confront our history of racism and inequities.
- 3. Folks hold true, conflicting opinions simultaneously.**
- 4. Renters & Homeowners don't speak the same language.** Especially not in shared places.

Community Voice Sessions

Surprising Findings



How Bad Is It? The Conversation is Viral, but It's Stuck in the Wrong Place. People Resigned to the High Cost of Housing.



Negative Disruptors:

- Drugs, Crime and Homelessness
- High Wages and Compensation
- Traffic Congestions



Loss Aversion: NOT TALENT RETENTION!

- Children moving away
- Losing the unique "mom and pop" stores that dot the landscape of region and make it an exciting place to live
- Their frustration with falling behind economically



If the Problem is Structural and Systemic, the Solutions Must Be ____? Individualized Solutions?



Affordable Housing is About Me When I _____ (insert life course event – retire, get married, having a new baby, thinking about getting to a new job, etc.)



Developers and Big Employers (Especially Tech) Was Named as Having Helped Create The Housing Problem But There Was No Expectation That They Help Solve It



Displacement of the Problem to Government (Which Was Seen as Flush With Cash)

- In a Country Where Money Solves Everything, Why Can't Our Tax Dollars Buy Us Out of This Mess!
- Don't Balance the Housing Crisis on My Back
- Who Exactly Can We Hold Accountable When the Problems Aren't Getting Better?
- For Goodness Sake, Just Enforce the Policies We Have On the Books Already!

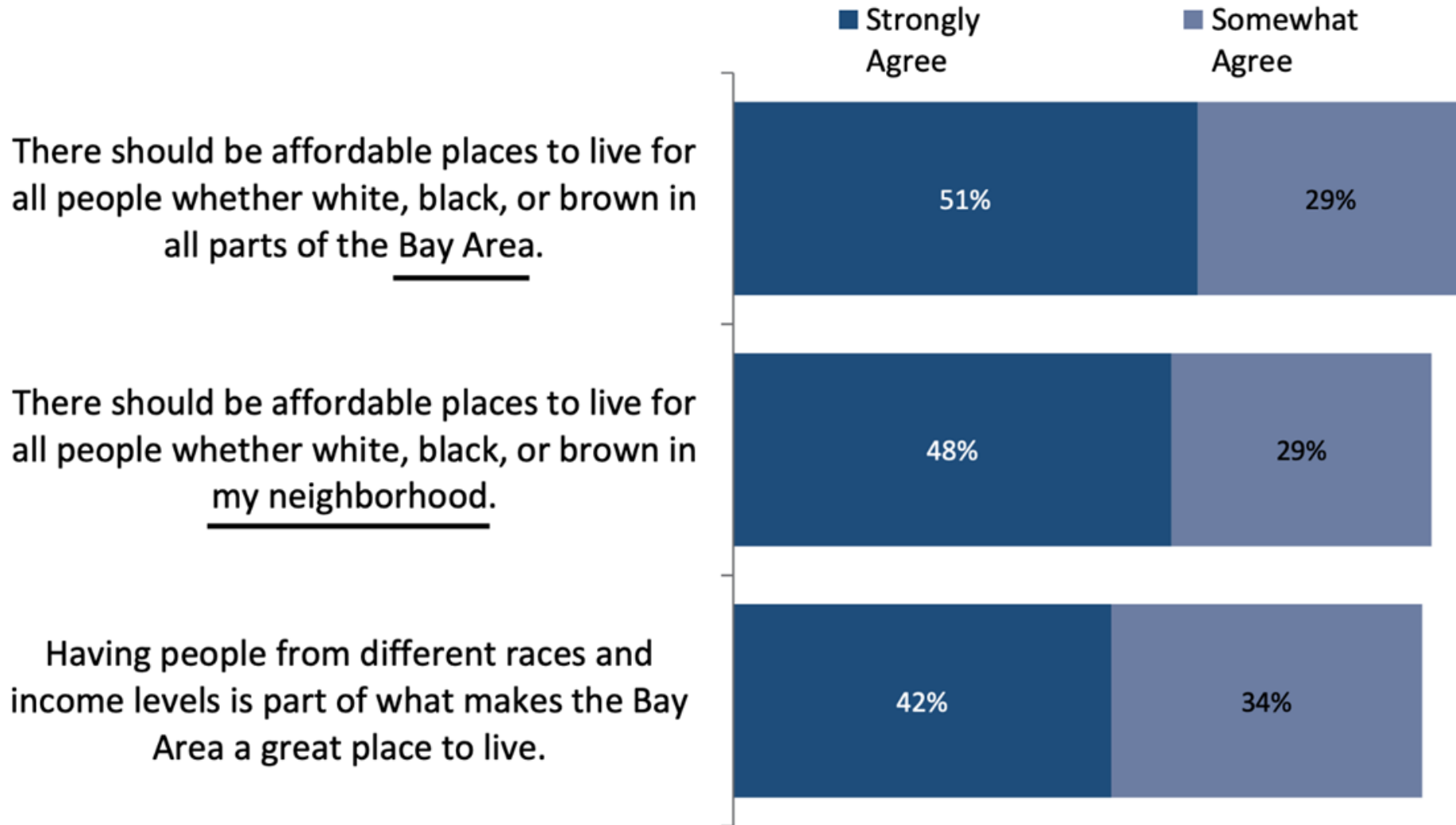


Less Stigma of Affordable Housing But No Sense That It Will Impact Them

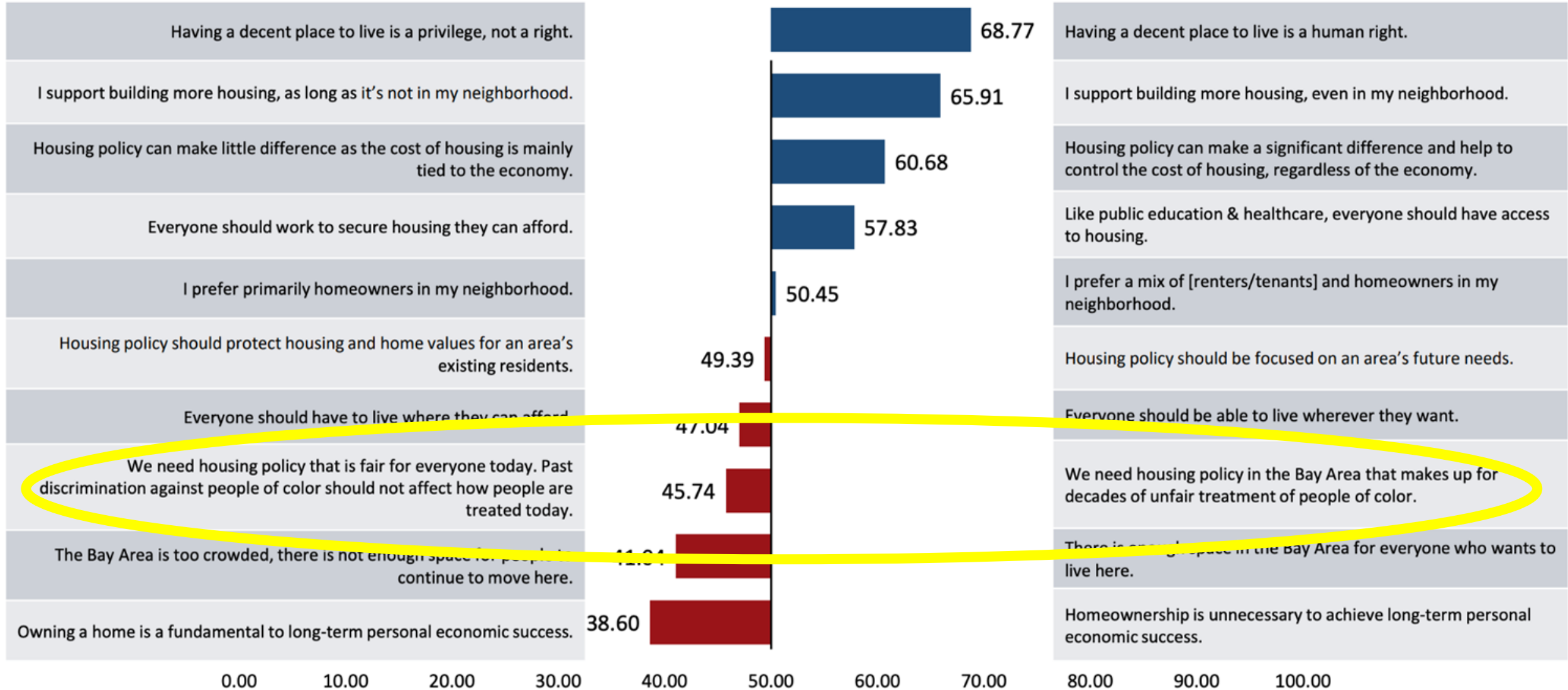


We're Waiting for the Tech Bubble to Burst and the Economy to Sink, to Fix This Mess!

Racial Equity in Housing



Overview of Housing Value Frames



Concerned but Cautious



Community Voice Sessions

Surprising Findings – Renters and Homeowners



When in Renter-only Groups, Renters Were Vocal about Their Shared Experiences, Some Shared their Shame in Being Unable to Buy a Home, and What Policies or other Solutions They Needed for Greater Housing Stability. But They Couldn't Get There with Homeowners in the Room.



Renters Were Less Stigmatizing and More Empathetic, But Muted in the Face of Homeowners and Felt the Need to Rationale Renting



Homeowners Who Were Landlords Talked Openly About Their Angst At Prioritizing Their Own Personal interests



Homeowners Much More Sympathetic To Renters, When They Were Asked First to Think About Their Own Challenges with Affording Home Repairs



Juggling Multiple Jobs, Side Jobs and Hustles, Doesn't Leave Much Time for the High-Minded Work of Activism and Advocacy.



Resistance = Staying! For Renters Who Had Decided to Stay, Their Resistance Was Not Defined by Their Advocacy or Collective Action with Other Renters. It Was in the Defiant Act of Fighting to Stay in the Bay Area, Despite the High Economic and Personal Costs of Doing So.



What Would a Renter Movement Look Like? In Absence of a Visible Renter Movement, Participants Were Limited in Their Ability to Envision It.

RECAP: Key Bay Area Research Findings

- 1. The conversation is viral** but it's currently stuck in an unhelpful place. → *Folks are already attaching housing to others issue areas - make that a strength, not a challenge.*
- 2. Bay Area residents value diversity** though are less willing to confront our history of racism and inequities. → *Uplift current policy outcomes that impact racial equity and diversity in our region in a meaningful way.*
- 3. Folks hold true, conflicting opinions simultaneously.** → *Help constituents lean into their own existing values that align with our goals.*
- 4. Renters & Homeowners don't speak the same language.** Especially not in shared places. → *Demonstrate shared community experience, offer separate space for conversation.*

Making the Case for Housing Justice

Strategy At A Glance

A Narrative Strategy that is robust allows us to differentiate between stories that help people connect to housing justice and those that detract from it. In this playbook, we first breakdown parts of the housing justice narrative, so that we can be strategic in our narrative building. Then, we put the pieces back together in a few examples that can shape stronger narratives. Not all of these elements are in every message, so we also provide a template for how these pieces are most usefully assembled for different audiences.



NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT

NAME THE MOMENT AND HELP PEOPLE EMBRACE THE URGENCY FOR BOLD DECISIVE ACTION



AMPLIFY

REINFORCE VALUES THAT HAVE A DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO HOUSING JUSTICE



ATTACH

ASSOCIATE HOUSING WITH NARRATIVES IN OTHER SECTORS THAT EXPAND OUR COALITION



REFRAME

REMINDING PEOPLE OF WHAT THEY HAVE AT STAKE AND WHAT THEY LOSE IF THEY FAIL TO JOIN OUR HOUSING JUSTICE MOVEMENT



CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE

CENTER EQUITY IN ALL MESSAGING AND SOCIALIZE NEW NARRATIVES THAT POSITION EQUITY AS THE PATHWAY TO JUSTICE AND LIBERATION AS END GOALS



COUNTER

DECREASE THE IMPACT OF MISINFORMATION AND UNPRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES BY UNDERMINING THEIR LOGIC, LEGITIMACY, OR VERACITY



PIVOT & AVOID

REFUSE TO ENGAGE OR TRIGGER COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES AND PRACTICE CONSISTENT WAYS TO PIVOT AROUND UNPRODUCTIVE NEGATIVE DISRUPTORS.



MOBILIZE

CALL TOGETHER A BROAD-BASED COALITION IN SUPPORT OF RENTER STABILITY POLICIES

Key Bay Area Narrative Strategies

1. Attach & Amplify: Folks are already attaching housing issue to others - we can make that a strength, not a challenge. Identify & associate housing with the other areas where people already care and are motivated to protect.

1. Reframe: Move beyond negative disruptors by reminding folks what's at stake if we fail to act.

2. Counter: No tit-for-tat, but do decrease the impact of misinformation and unproductive narrative by undermining their logic, legitimacy, or veracity.

Attach & Amplify

✓ **DO:** Associate housing with existing narratives in other sectors that hold promise for growing public will for the task at hand. Connect housing to related narratives in racial justice, health, education, transportation, climate change, and others.

✗ **DON'T:** Don't assume that educating Bay Area residents about the housing challenges facing the region, renters, or poor people will be enough to motivate community members to be part of the solution.

OFFER: Vivid and authentic stories about the ways we're connected, our fates are intertwined, our prosperity shared. Show how housing relates to other community issue areas.

Reframe

- ✓ **DO:** Reframing the conversation by reminding people what they lose if they don't act, rather than focusing on what they lose if they do.
- ✗ **DON'T:** Don't assume that residents already understand what they are at risk of losing if we don't address the needs of our communities.
- OFFER:** Show how the negative consequences are borne by us all, not just those struggling to find affordable housing to build a collective stake in solving this issue.

Counter

✓ **DO:** Get out in front of misinformation early. Helping people remember the realities of our situation can help render misconceptions powerless before it gets voiced.

✗ **DON'T:** Don't engage in tit-for-tat, which repeats and reinforces misinformation.

OFFER: Set the stage early and reiterate how the challenges in housing have very personal outcomes but ultimately are macro-level, systems issues that can only be solved at that level. Bring examples of good policies that have worked to counter distrust.

Other Considerations

- Research, voter profiles, and narrative strategies provide helpful context to prepare for the unexpected reality of live, real-world engagement
- Other preparation can include research-informed engagement tactics:
 - Renter-focused space, agenda items, or tabling
 - Visioning exercises or pre-emptive dialogue on racial justice, loss aversion, and/or issue attachments
 - Example: “What Do You Love About Your Neighborhood”
Activity
 - Using research-tested language that’s highly meaningful to open and close your sessions

Attachment + Counter: Engagement Tactic

Tell Us What You Love About Your Neighborhood!

Great Schools Our Neighbors



Many schools are struggling to retain teachers because it costs so much to live here. At the same time, students and their families are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to the high cost of housing.

Thriving Local Businesses



Help Wanted Signs are widespread - local businesses are losing employees who can't afford to live in the community.

Diversity



Gentrification is rampant throughout the Bay Area. Communities of color are more vulnerable than ever.



Have any of your neighbors moved out recently? Families are being priced out of our communities every day.

[LEGACY: CHILDREN] With a safe, stable place to call home, our children have a better chance of succeeding in school, getting a job, and building their own strong families here in the Bay Area. We owe it to our children and the next generation to make sure that there is enough housing for them to stay in the communities where they were raised, if they choose to.

[INEQUALITY] The Bay Area thrives because of the diversity of our communities here. Rising rents and home prices affect everyone, and they have an especially hard impact on people of color and those working lower-paid jobs, many of whom are being forced out of our region. We need to act so that all of us — white and black, Latinx and Asian, indigenous and newcomer — can stay in this unique place we all love.

[LUCKY] Many homeowners in the Bay Area got lucky. They bought their homes when it was still relatively affordable to do so. But today, the price of renting or owning a home makes both options unaffordable to many who currently live in the Bay Area. Policy that produces, preserves and protects housing options for [renters/tenants] and homeowners across the region, means that more of us can be “lucky.”

[ASPIRATIONAL] Safe, affordable homes provide a foundation for our families, friends, neighbors, and veterans to thrive. With a safe, stable place to call home, people are free to pursue their dreams, to be creative, start businesses, or plan for the future. We must create policies that allow us to build more housing that more people can afford while also protecting [tenants/renters] and low-income communities from unjust evictions and displacement.

[HEALTH] It has never been clearer that safe, stable housing for all is critical for the health and safety of our communities. Those living in unstable situations have been in the most danger of getting sick during our COVID-19 public health crisis. We must work to preserve, protect, and produce housing so that our region can stay safe and healthy in times and crisis and beyond.

Outcomes/Benefits vs. Process/Mechanics

Focus on outcomes...

Housing for seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, teachers, first responders

Reducing traffic and congestion

Living close to where you work

Keeping young families from getting squeezed out

...not on the process

% affordable housing

Number of units

Increased height limits

Protection from gentrification

Available Regional Resources/Links

- Bay Area Seize the Narrative [Playbook](#)
- [Dig Deeper on Research](#)
- On the horizon:
 - New website going live in May with more resources
 - Exploring additional resources to specifically support Housing Elements

**Chan
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Thank you!

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April 2021

Questions



Process

Neysa Fligor

Mayor, City of Los Altos, ABAG Executive Board Member

Questions



County Breakout Activity

Report Back



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Other Resources

- Bay Area Seize the Narrative [Playbook](#)
- [Dig Deeper on Research](#)
- Clear Language Lab [seminars](#)

Thank You.

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