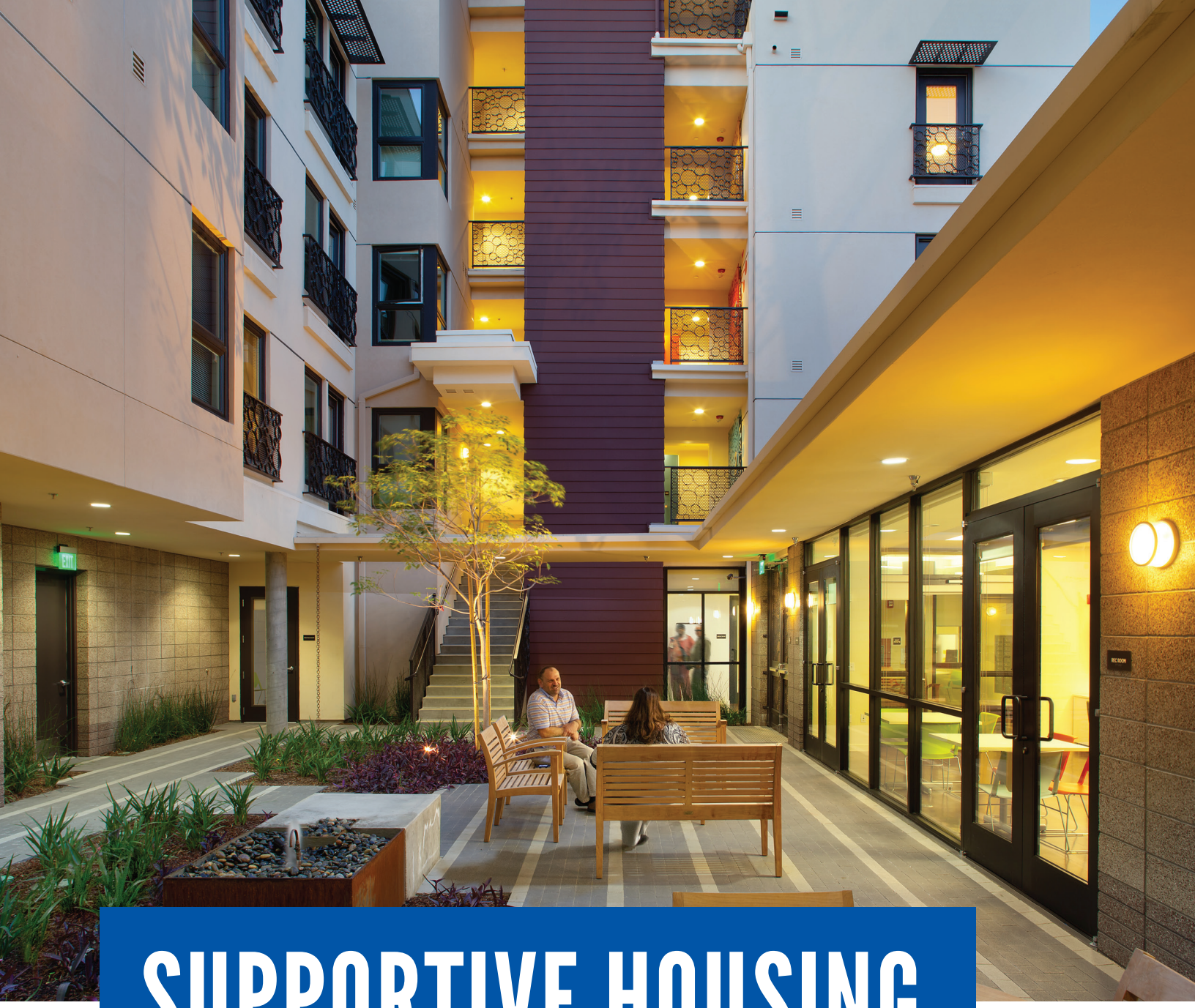
SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT 8

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TOOLKIT



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TOOLKIT

United Way GREATER LOS ANGELES



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

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Casa Yonde, Little Tokyo Service Center

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit represents the hard work and contributions of many, all for one purpose: building more supportive housing and ending chronic homelessness.

This work is intended to benefit the entire community of people who care about breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness for the most vulnerable people in our society. From supportive housing developers to homeless services providers to community leaders, we all can benefit from using the most effective language and strategies in the effort to build supportive housing.

We would be remiss if we did not thank these partners specifically — among many — for their input and guidance as we have built this toolkit:

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The supportive housing development community in Los Angeles County has been especially helpful in understanding the development process and the pressure points along the way. Over the course of many months they have been critical to understanding the communications and community engagement moments that exist in the life of a project. These developers include but are not limited to:

- Abode Communities
- A Community of Friends
- Clifford Beers Housing
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- LA Family Housing
- LINC Housing
- Little Tokyo Service Center
- Meta Housing Corporation
- PATH Ventures
- Skid Row Housing Trust
- Thomas Safran and Associates
- Venice Community Housing Corporation

We hope that the information shared in this toolkit is interesting, engaging and ultimately useful in the work to build supportive housing and end chronic homelessness.



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

MESSAGING



Centennial Place, Adobe Communities

INTRODUCTION

Developers' ability to build supportive housing is key to ending homelessness. In order to be successful, developers need to communicate with and engage communities effectively. The messages and strategies contained in this toolkit are intended to empower developers and housing leaders to be successful messengers.

> ***Community outreach must use a holistic "package" of messages and strategies that build on and reinforce each other.***

LA County residents are extremely supportive of solving homelessness — and passed broad measures like Prop HHH and Measure H to do so. However, community residents will often have questions, concerns and fears about a new supportive housing development coming into their neighborhood. To address these concerns, community outreach must use a holistic "package" of messages and strategies that build on and reinforce each other.

The following Key Messages were informed by focus groups and research across the county, where Los Angeles County residents were presented with the possibility of a supportive housing development in their community. They are designed to address the most common concerns, questions and fears that emerge. Developers are encouraged to localize and individualize each message to best suit their proposed development and the unique characteristics of the community.

Humanize Homelessness

Emphasize Community Safety

Explain Supportive Services

Clarify Tenant Selection



KEY MESSAGE 1: HUMANIZE HOMELESSNESS

Residents often associate homeless individuals with stereotypes of drug use, mental illness and poor life choices. Developers can humanize the homeless experience by describing the diverse paths that lead to homelessness.



KEY MESSAGE 2: EMPHASIZE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community members are generally concerned for their safety when learning of a new supportive housing building in the neighborhood. Explain that the well-being, safety and stability of building tenants and the wider community is a priority.



KEY MESSAGE 3: EXPLAIN SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Most residents are unfamiliar with supportive housing and assume that tenants will only receive shelter. Explain in detail the services that will support tenants to stabilize their lives (e.g. mental and physical health resources, job training and addiction treatment).



KEY MESSAGE 4: CLARIFY TENANT SELECTION

Communities are often concerned about how building tenants are “selected.” Communicate who is moving in, why tenants have been matched to supportive housing, and clarify the requirements for tenants to maintain their units.



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

MESSAGING GUIDE

GENERAL GUIDANCE

1. **Avoid the term "permanent supportive housing" and use the term "supportive housing."**
   - Communities tend to see "permanent" as insinuating tenants will not become self-sufficient.
   - Residents respond positively to the term "supportive" as it indicates assistance to individuals.

2. **Use clear, direct and jargon-free language.**
   - Research found that words like "case management," "on-site services," "supportive services" and even "nonprofit developers" were confusing and unfamiliar.

3. **Describe building units with words like "homes" and "apartments" to humanize them.**
   - "Developments" and "projects" feel impersonal.

4. **Residents are more likely to respond to messages from their neighbors or community leaders.**
   - Developers are not viewed as trusted messengers. The strongest messengers are trusted friends, community leaders and voices that are perceived to be impartial. Developers must lean on community partners and work together to engage community members.

5. **Don't get dragged into myth-busting about property values or crime.** *(More info on following page).*
   - Instead, return to the key messages which address the crux of residents' fears.

6. **The messages that helped pass Prop HHH and Measure H won't help residents accept housing in their neighborhoods.**
   - The message must evolve to address fears and concerns that weren't present when discussing broad solutions and tax dollars.

MESSAGE TRAPS TO AVOID

The "Property Value" Argument

Despite research that shows property values don't fall, residents are unlikely to believe any message about property values. If possible, it is better to avoid them entirely.

- Most residents who are most concerned about property values also distrust any research or data on the subject. Research found nearly all residents were unaffected by research about property values — so there is no point in engaging on this topic.
- For other residents, even if they talked about property values as a concern, it was not nearly as impactful on their support of the project as safety and community concerns. It's critical to address safety, supportive services and tenant selection — and best to avoid this issue.

The "Voters Supported This Housing" Argument

Referencing Prop HHH and Measure H will not move the community to support the building. Most residents are unaware of the measures and even if they are, may have voted against them — it is best to avoid using the measures as justification for the development.

- It is fine to reference HHH or H in the context of financing. In fact, explaining that there will be regular financial and performance audits as well as a citizens' oversight committee helps residents feel more at ease and trusting, since these are measures of accountability that will be in place.

KEY MESSAGE 1: HUMANIZE HOMELESSNESS

Research shows residents overwhelmingly associate homeless individuals with drug use and mental illness, and thus see their potential new neighbors as undesirable and dangerous. In many instances, community members view this population as irresponsible and having made bad choices that led to their situation.

Messages that humanize people experiencing homelessness are key to breaking down these stereotypes. It is essential that residents be reminded about the variety of circumstances that lead to homelessness to help inspire greater compassion.



Bonnie Brae Village, PATH

SAMPLE MESSAGES

- The residents moving into these new apartments are diverse and of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, education levels and experiences.
- There is no single path to homelessness, and each building resident has faced their own particular struggles that led to the devastating experience of having no home.
- We all know people who either need this kind of help now or may need it in the future. For our new neighbors, supportive housing is the first step on the path to a new life.
- Some residents may be survivors of domestic violence, some may have experienced a debilitating injury or illness, or a sudden and unexpected loss of income.

TIPS

- **Describe** the various factors and circumstances that lead to homelessness, such as loss of a job or domestic violence.
- **Emphasize** the desire of future residents to be in supportive housing and to better their lives.

ACTION ITEM: Start developing your own inventory of messages to humanize homelessness.

KEY MESSAGE 2: EMPHASIZE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Both supporters and opponents of supportive housing often attribute mental illness and substance abuse to homeless individuals. Residents may have witnessed extreme behavior and, as a result, worry that they and their families are at risk. Unless safety issues are confronted upfront, it will be challenging for local residents to listen to anything else.

While safety must be addressed, it is critical to avoid affirming negative stereotypes. Use inclusive messaging that highlights the safety and well-being of the entire community of current and new residents. Also note that people experiencing homelessness are disproportionately the victims of crime, and that they themselves want a safe and stable community.

SAMPLE MESSAGES

- Our new neighbors have likely been victims of crime while experiencing homelessness and are eager to live in a safe environment.
- Qualified staff including trained health professionals, property managers and security personnel*, are on-site to support the well-being of tenants and to respond to community concerns.
- The new homes will not be disruptive to your quality of life as the continued safety of our entire community is extremely important.
- The apartments will benefit from 24-hour presence of highly trained property management staff.

**If applicable*



TIPS

- **Share** how the services and support that tenants receive will improve their well-being and stability in housing.
- **Consider** organizing a Community Input Board and designating a staff person as a neighborhood liaison, which allows neighbors to continue their relationship with the developer and/or property management company after the apartments open.
- **Illustrate** community support, including — where appropriate — law enforcement support.
- **Engage** local law enforcement early and mention their support in your messaging and outreach.

ACTION ITEM: Develop messages that are unique to your project that can be used for your outreach.

KEY MESSAGE 3: EXPLAIN SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Community members may believe that supportive housing only provides shelter and that tenants will continue to struggle despite being housed. It is up to developers and community partners to explain how the building will function and successfully help individuals out of homelessness. Residents need to understand that their new neighbors will be supported to become self-sufficient through the services offered.

Residents recognize and believe that supportive services make a big difference. When asked to rate the importance of various building elements, they consistently choose job training, mental health support and addiction treatment as the most essential.

SAMPLE MESSAGES

- Every day while living in these homes, residents receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.
- Apartments like these are helping our formerly homeless neighbors through physical and mental health services, addiction treatment, job training and other resources.
- If a new building resident has a mental health diagnosis or is overcoming a substance abuse disorder, they will get immediate access to treatment by professionals.
- Each resident has a case manager — a dedicated staff member who helps them to identify goals and works with them on an action plan to support their progress.



TIPS

- **Address** the specific support services available to tenants with a mental health diagnosis and/or addiction, including the professional staff on-site who will administer these programs.
- **Consider** providing a "day-in-the-life" story. Does the resident visit an on-site health center? Attend workshops? Meet with a case manager? Help out with activities for other tenants? Volunteer in the community? Have a job?
- **Advertise** a housing tour of an existing supportive housing site, preferably in the same community/neighborhood or a similar community.

EXAMPLE: A DAY-IN-THE-LIFE OF A SUPPORTIVE HOUSING RESIDENT

On a typical day, a resident will get up in the morning and have breakfast. Following breakfast, the resident may check in with the job training office, have lunch, then meet for counseling in the early afternoon. The late afternoon may be spent job hunting at the computer center followed by dinner with friends.

KEY MESSAGE 4: CLARIFY TENANT SELECTION

It is common for communities to have questions about selection criteria for tenants, building rules and repercussions of "bad" behavior. Residents may worry about unruly behavior and dangerous/illegal activity by tenants and visitors to the building.

Without re-enforcing negative stereotypes, it is important to demystify who is moving into the building, emphasize why tenants have been matched to supportive housing, and illustrate accountability measures. Highlight that tenants are prioritized based on their level of vulnerability, such as mental and physical disabilities, and that efforts are made to place people in the same communities where they were experiencing homelessness.

SAMPLE MESSAGES

- Our new neighbors are in need of immediate, stable homes. They have been matched to supportive housing because it will help them regain stability and well-being.
- The residents moving in have been prioritized for housing based on their level of vulnerability – for example, they may have been homeless many years, and/or have a physical disability.
- New tenants are required to undergo a thorough background check and sign a lease. Most will pay rent of up to 30% of their monthly household income.
- Residents are required to have room inspections, have a strict limit on how often they can have guests and are not allowed to disrupt neighbors in or outside the building.



TIPS

- **Clarify** the requirements for tenants to maintain their units (e.g, background checks, paying rent). Be specific about what the building rules are and how you monitor them.
- **Highlight** that these requirements will be regularly tracked by building staff and address how dangerous and/or unlawful activity will be handled by staff and authorities.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Use visuals of the building judiciously.

- In the early stages, use pictures of existing projects, combined with massings of the proposed project, instead of specific design renderings. Gathering input early is more effective than highlighting specific designs.
- Strike a balance to show that the building and services will be sufficient to meet the needs of tenants without being extravagant. Residents want to see a building nice enough to overcome misperceptions of government-funded public housing but not so fancy that it seems tenants are unfairly getting "more than they deserve."
- Use photos representative of the tenants who will be living in the building (e.g. women with children, veterans and people with physical disabilities) — these should figure more prominently than images of the building.

Images: Clifford Beers Housing and Killefer Flammang Architects



MASSING STUDY AT
SOUTHEAST (FRONT) CORNER



MASSING STUDY AT
SOUTHWEST (REAR) CORNER

Tie all messaging to the specific region and community.

- Use pictures of people and buildings that are relevant to that particular area.
- Reference statistics that are specific to Los Angeles County and cite local experts. To the greatest degree possible, localize statistics to the community.
- Community leaders like to see trusted, local leaders are in favor of the building, so enlist supporters that are community members, local nonprofits, civic and business leaders and religious institutions (for some residents) rather than government agencies or countywide nonprofits.
- Emphasize law enforcement support in neighborhoods where police/sheriffs have good relations with the community. This is not always the case, so ensure you know the landscape before using law enforcement voices.

Be aware that individual "success stories" may be dismissed as exceptions.

- Residents have a tendency to see stories of people who have been successful in supportive housing as "best case" scenarios and not indicative of the greater population. When using stories, look for ways to feature multiple and diverse examples.
- Tell stories that illustrate what life is like for supportive housing residents. Consider using a "day-in-the-life" of a tenant through text, photo or video that explains their background, the services they benefit from and their support network.



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

When communities raise questions about a new supportive housing development, they often voice concern that tenants will suffer from mental health issues. A pervasive worry heard among residents is that the erratic, "scary" behavior exhibited on the streets by some individuals experiencing homelessness will persist even in housing, raising serious safety concerns. Residents must first understand how homelessness can exacerbate mental health issues and then understand how mental health services within supportive housing can address and stabilize those diagnoses.

In reality, supportive housing offers the solution to much of this behavior by providing the stability and services that individuals need for recovery. To understand that, residents must first comprehend how homelessness can exacerbate mental health issues and then recognize how mental health services within supportive housing can address and stabilize those diagnoses.

Message: Communicate that housing coupled with mental health services help supportive housing residents recover and lead more stable lives.

Communities are concerned that supportive housing residents will not receive necessary treatment. Residents must be assured that residents suffering from mental health issues will live harmoniously with the community.

SAMPLE MESSAGES

The recommendation is to use these in response to community questions and concerns, not necessarily in general messaging about supportive housing.

- Supportive housing provides the stability and services that individuals experiencing mental illness need in order to recover and live healthy lives. Residents not only receive a safe, clean, quiet place to live but also comprehensive supportive services.
- When first moving in, individuals with a mental health diagnosis meet with experts including psychiatrists, psychotherapists and a dedicated case manager to develop a treatment plan to help them get settled in their new home.
- Mental health treatment and monitoring are consistent and ongoing and help residents transition into a stable, healthy lifestyle. For residents that may have exhibited severe behavior in the past, there is often a significant improvement in their well-being.
- Further, residents are expected to abide by building rules that promote community safety. Any behavior that causes disturbance to the community or threatens the safety of others may result in identifying more suitable living arrangements.



TIP

Personal testimonies and storytelling can go a long way. Sharing the experience of a formerly homeless tenant who received the mental health support they needed can help demystify mental illness and illustrate the effectiveness of supportive housing.

Message: Connect the stressful circumstances of homelessness to mental illness.

Residents may not understand that the behavior they see exhibited in the street is often a result of untreated mental illness. Nor do they understand how the physical and mental stresses of homelessness can cause and/or exacerbate mental health issues. Make the connection for them, explaining how housing and the support services are the solution they are looking for.

SAMPLE MESSAGES

- People living without a home have experiences that generate a lot of stress — they are often exposed to violence and assault and are living in extreme uncertainty.
- This kind of stress contributes to and exacerbates mental health issues, which are made worse because people lack reliable and easy access to mental health services.
- Matching individuals to housing gives them access to the kinds of services (psychiatric care, psychotherapy, community groups, etc.) that provide support and help them cope and overcome their illness.



TIP

In general, there is a societal stigma about mental health. Know that community members may be uncomfortable or reactive when broaching the subject. The more straightforward, factual and comfortable you are in talking about mental health, the more likely you are to put residents at ease.



Vendome Palms, A Community of Friends

FAQS

I. GENERAL FAQS

These are general FAQs that can be used in the marketing collateral created to educate neighbors. Don't use them all, but pull out five to six FAQs that are most relevant to your development (edit them if needed to ensure accuracy) and create a fact sheet to hand out to neighbors.

Basics

What is supportive housing?

Supportive housing combines apartments and on-site services to help individuals transition into living healthy and productive lives. Research shows that this form of housing is the most effective way to end homelessness through providing people safe, clean and stable homes with resources such as mental and physical health services, addiction treatment, job training and case management. There are nearly 150 apartment buildings like this throughout Los Angeles County, and they have proven to be successful for both the building residents and the surrounding communities.

Who lives in supportive housing?

Residents are diverse and of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, education levels and experiences. There is no single path to homelessness, and each person moving into supportive housing has faced their own particular challenges and struggles that led to the devastating experience of having no home. They may be survivors of domestic violence, or may have experienced a debilitating physical ailment or a sudden and unexpected loss of income. Some apartments serve the general population while others are targeted to a specific population such as seniors or veterans.

How are tenants selected?

The residents joining our community have been prioritized for supportive housing based on level of vulnerability, such as people who have been homeless many years and/or have a physical disability. Our new neighbors are desperately in need of immediate, stable homes. They have been matched to supportive housing because it will help them regain stability and well-being. Every tenant undergoes a thorough background check and must follow building rules and requirements.

Do tenants pay rent?

All tenants are required to sign a lease before moving into an apartment. Those tenants who have income — either through a job, social security or veteran benefits, for example — are required to pay up to 30 percent of that monthly income for rent.


NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

Who pays for supportive housing?

In November 2016, Los Angeles voters approved a ballot measure, Prop HHH, to fund supportive housing across the city. Developers who access HHH and other city funds are accountable to the Administrative Oversight Board and the Citizen's Oversight Board review and approval. Supportive housing in the greater LA County is funded through a combination of City, County, state and federal funds as well as through private grant programs. LA County and private funders also have rigorous evaluation and accountability measures in place for any funding they provide. All funding sources require the developer to manage and maintain the property for several decades, often 50 years or more. This ensures that supportive housing apartments are maintained and safe for the long-term.

What do the buildings look like?

Supportive housing buildings are designed to reflect the look and feel of the surrounding community, and a person passing by would not be able to identify it as a supportive housing building. It is common for a developer to engage local residents in giving feedback on the building designs and plans to make sure it integrates fully with the neighborhood.

Safety and Security

Who manages the buildings?

Supportive housing is generally operated by a local nonprofit or property management company who is highly trained and skilled in managing similar types of buildings in a way that maintains community safety and provides the right kinds of services to tenants.

How does supportive housing ensure the safety and security of the surrounding community?

The safety of building tenants as well as the surrounding community is of utmost priority. Some apartments have onsite security and benefit from 24-hour presence of highly trained property management staff, which is required by California law for all apartment buildings of 16 or more. Staffing requirements increase as the size of the building increases to ensure the building can be properly maintained. Security and staff are there to ensure that residents are accountable to the strict building rules and are being good neighbors to the community. Disturbances, excessive guests or illegal activities will be immediately addressed by staff on site.

How do you ensure tenants do not cause disturbances in the neighborhood?

When residents move into a building, they are immediately matched with intensive supportive services to help ensure that they are prepared and stable enough to live in the apartments. There are building rules and security cameras in place to ensure residents are held accountable to these rules. Residents are not allowed to engage in illegal, dangerous or disruptive activities, and there are consequences for not meeting these requirements, including eviction. On-site staff, including — in some buildings — highly trained security personnel, caseworkers and property managers are always available to respond to any community concerns and to prevent any problems from occurring.

Supportive Services

What services are available to tenants in supportive housing?

When residents move into a building, they are immediately paired with a case manager (a dedicated staff member who helps each tenant identify goals and track progress), who matches them to the supportive services they need to get their lives back on track. These include: medical treatment options and specific supports for tenants with a mental health diagnosis and/or addiction; employment programs and job training; and life skills training such as financial management and decision-making. All these services are administered by professional staff on-site including social workers, psychotherapists, psychiatrists and resident managers.

How does supportive housing help residents who might have mental health diagnoses?

Matching formerly homeless individuals to housing gives them access to the kinds of support needed to cope with and overcome their illness. When first moving in, individuals with a mental health diagnosis are connected with appropriate services (psychiatric care, psychotherapy, community groups, etc.) to develop a treatment plan to help them get settled in their new home. They meet individually with experts including psychiatrists, psychotherapists and a case manager (a dedicated staff member who helps each tenant identify goals and track progress) and also receive any needed medication. This treatment and monitoring are consistent throughout their stay in their home and help residents transition into a stable, healthy life.

How does supportive housing help residents who might have drug or alcohol addictions?

If a resident moves in and has an addiction, they are immediately offered appropriate services (psychiatric care, psychotherapy, community groups, etc.) to develop a treatment plan in order to overcome their addiction. In addition to general supports such as case management (a dedicated staff member who helps each tenant identify goals and track progress), they are connected to immediate and intensive recovery programs. The stability and services offered with housing allow individuals to recover and lead productive lives.

II. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

While community members may have general questions about supportive housing, more often they want specifics about the building coming to their neighborhood. Lack of clear information about the development can lead to wrongful assumptions spreading in the neighborhood and can increase community frustration and opposition, thus it is critical to be prepared.

In addition to the General FAQs, consider creating an internal FAQs "cheat sheet" for your internal staff and community partners. Whether in a public meeting, small group setting or one-on-one discussion, you'll want to be prepared to answer the following questions specifically and accurately. Refer to the **Messaging Guide** for key messages to inform your answers.

Basics and Tenants

- Who will be living in the building?
- How are tenants selected?
- What will the building look like? Will it "fit" into the neighborhood?
- What is the location of the building?
- How many units will there be and how many building levels?
- Do tenants get to live in the building forever for free?

Safety and Security

- What kind of security will be in place?
- Will tenants cause disruptions to the community?
- What happens if a tenant "acts out" or causes a disturbance?
- Does the project have the support of local law enforcement?
- What will be done to keep unwanted "visitors" away from the building?

Services

- What specific resources will be available to tenants?
- Who is providing the services and how often?
- Will people with mental illness and/or addiction live in the building?

Community Integration

- Can I provide feedback on the building design?
- Will I get to see the inside of the building before it opens?
- Do I have a say in who moves in?
- How can I be involved in giving feedback after the building opens?
- Who can I speak to if I have an issue with the building?

ACTION ITEM: Practice these questions with staff and role play as if you were in a community meeting.



Burlington Family Apartments, Clifford Beers Housing

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Arlington Square, A Community of Friends

TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Successfully engaging the community is imperative to gaining the political support for a project. Developers should consider the tips below to improve their outreach strategies — starting engagement early and using creative tactics that help avoid large community meetings — which are often the ones most likely to backfire and organize opposition. Before any general community meeting is scheduled, consider these strategies below:

TIP

Read our Six Steps to a Successful Community Outreach Strategy to learn a tried and successful method for engaging local communities and winning political support.

BE PROACTIVE — START EARLY AND OFTEN

Neighborhood concern typically occurs very early in the development process. As a result, affordable housing practitioners need to engage early and often. It is not advised to try to stay quiet and hope to "sneak the project" by the community.

TIP

Be prepared to have between 5–10 small meetings before any approvals are needed.

PARTNER WITH COMMUNITY EXPERTS TO SHAPE YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY

Partnering with local community "experts" — whether a consultant or an organization — can be a way to gain information that might make community outreach easier and the politics simpler. Partners should be engaged early and their information incorporated into community engagement efforts at the outset.

TIP

Information is power — the more you have, the better off you will be. Partner with local organizations to understand your project area, and don't assume you have all the info you need.

See also
SIX STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGY

IDENTIFY, RECRUIT AND MOBILIZE ALLIES AND SUPPORTERS

Finding, organizing and mobilizing supporters should happen before any other community outreach begins. Once some neighbors express support it becomes easier to identify other supporters. Local groups like faith organizations, businesses, service organizations and other community groups can all identify local supporters.



TIP

Collect letters or quotes of support to show the community and elected officials.

FOCUS ON SMALLER GROUP INTERACTIONS

Hold multiple small group meetings instead of a large community meeting, especially early in the process. You may inadvertently give concerned neighbors a forum to find each other and organize, whereas small group interactions allow for more diverse opinions to be heard. Consider housing tours, small focus-group style meetings and small group meetings with local leaders.



For more on how to organize small gatherings, see COMMUNITY MEETING BEST PRACTICES

GAIN TRUST WITH CONSISTENT REPRESENTATION

Ensure consistency among your neighborhood representation, sending the same staff to community forums so they can build relationships and get to know the community. This helps build trust and overcome negative perceptions of new developers.

UTILIZE COMMUNITY VOICES IN YOUR OUTREACH

Research found that neighbors and community leaders are seen as trusted sources of information, especially compared to developers, who are usually approached with skepticism and distrust. Incorporate creative ways to highlight the voices of local experts and community leaders into your community outreach — inviting them to speak at meetings or conduct their own individual outreach to share why they support the development. Community experts can also be your greatest advocates online — consider providing them a social media toolkit with specific content to share about the benefits of the new housing and why they support it.

PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE CLOSEST NEIGHBORS

These neighbors want to feel like their opinion matters and frequently want recognition that they are most impacted by the project. If the number of adjacent households is small, canvass door-to-door on a weekend to meet the neighbors face-to-face. Consider mixed gender, multi-lingual, multi-generational and racially diverse teams.



TIP

Be willing to hear the fears and concerns of the closest neighbors, and acknowledge their burden before trying to alleviate it with information.

PROVIDE AN ONLINE FORUM FOR ACCURATE INFORMATION

Ensure there is a place online for residents to find out more about the development. This can be a simple landing page hosted on the developer (and, even more ideally, community partner) website with basic information such as an "About" or "FAQs" page. Update the page as you gain more insight into what the community would like to learn, and add content such as messages of support from local partners/community leaders and images of the building in-process. Include a short survey to provide a feedback forum. Neighbors will appreciate increased ways to voice their opinion.

ENLIST SUPPORTERS TO HELP WITH ONLINE COMMUNITY SPACES

Identify a few supporters in your key neighborhood and then find out how those people communicate through social media. Is it Nextdoor? A Facebook group? Figuring out where people are talking is the first step. The second step is encouraging supporters to contribute their perspective to online conversations — not to be argumentative but merely to offer a different voice (discourage them from becoming involved in a "tit-for-tat" conversation with particularly concerned neighbors). Supporters can encourage neighbors to visit the developer's website to learn more about the development and can share key messaging and information.



See also
ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS



TIP

Consider using paid media. Facebook ads targeted by zip code can be a relatively low cost way to reach residents.



Ivy Terrace, Adobe Communities

SIX STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGY

While every situation is different and there are no "silver bullets," this handout summarizes a proactive and collaborative strategy that has been successfully used in the San Francisco Bay Area over the last several years.

KEY STEPS:

1. **BEFORE ANY COMMUNITY OUTREACH HAS TAKEN PLACE** — Development team works with local advocates and experts, meeting early in the development process to research, assess and plan the key areas below, conducting a high-level review of the development landscape.
2. Prepare a **POLITICAL STRATEGY** which coordinates all your work towards getting the votes you need.
3. Prepare a strategy to build active **COMMUNITY SUPPORT** for the proposal.
4. Prepare a strategy to work through concerns of community members and deal with **EXTREMELY CONCERNED COMMUNITY MEMBERS**.
5. Prepare a strategy to protect and use your **LEGAL RIGHTS**.
6. Prepare a **PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA STRATEGY** to send your message to decision-makers and the public.

This individual planning approach is like a "due diligence" or "case management" process in which you consider and make deliberate decisions about the key areas that may be important for every development proposal. Conducting this planning process is not the same as deciding to adopt a high visibility entry but rather can inform how and when you enter a community.

1. HOLD PLANNING MEETINGS TO RESEARCH, ASSESS AND PLAN THE KEY STRATEGIES.

Schedule two or more meetings of the entire development team together with local advocates and experts to share and review information about the community around the development. Examples of local advocates and experts might be: neighborhood council allies, local neighborhood service providers or nonprofits who know the area's politics or community organizing consultants in that area.

At the first meeting, draw on the collective experience of others to gain insight into the strategies for community acceptance.

Use the room's collective brainpower to assess:

- Your organization's reputation, capacity to attract broad community support for its work and its previous experience in dealing with local government, opponents and the media.
- What local government approvals are required, who will decide, what is the process and criteria for decisions and an expected timeline.
- Local government's current knowledge of and support for affordable housing, your organization's work and the current proposal.
- Full analysis of the neighborhood surrounding the proposed site (history, problems, organizations, concerned neighbors, supporters, etc.).
- Likely concerns neighbors might have about your proposal, the neighborhood's experience with similar programs and its potential for organized opposition.
- Potential legal issues associated with your development proposal, including your organization's and clients' legal rights.
- The regional and local media's approach to your work and clients.

Based on these assessments, you need to determine:

1. **Your strategies toward local government, potential supporters, concerned neighbors, legal issues and the media (see steps 2–5);**
2. **Staffing required to implement your strategies; and**
3. **Any consequences for your proposal's timeline, funding needs or site selection.**

Each strategy should have a clear plan of action: who will do what, when, how and with whom. Each strategy should be coupled with considerations of timing — when to reach out and implement each plan. Expect to change and improvise your plans as you go along. You won't regret your planning because it will help you manage the process and avoid some fire drills and surprises.

2. PREPARE A POLITICAL STRATEGY.

If the crucial vote were taken tonight, do you know who would vote for and against your proposal?

Who are the "key leaders" in this community who influence the political decision-makers? To find them, always ask: "Who else should I talk with about this?"

- Identify where your decision-makers stand on your project.
- Determine education and advocacy efforts needed to keep supporters, neutralize opponents and win uncertain votes.
- Document everything and tell your best story at public hearings, usually something like: "We're a professional, community-based group with significant community support meeting a critical need, and we've done everything we can to reasonably respond to neighbors' legitimate concerns..."

3. PREPARE A STRATEGY TO BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT.

Don't fall into the trap of spending all your time and energy responding to combative community members.

Active, vocal community support for your proposal will help you get political support, counter your opponents, tell your story to the media and, when appropriate, say hard things that developers usually do not want to say.

- Identify and prioritize actual and potential supporters, including tactical allies. Think widely about your potential allies.
- Develop solid support for the proposal (at least in the broader community) before contacting combative community members.
- Organize and support your allies with background information, housing tours and up-to-date information.
- Mobilize supporters at critical points (e.g. using a database and email lists).
- Keep them informed and encouraged.



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

4. PREPARE A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY CONCERNS.

Only when you understand why a person opposes can you select the best response.

Do not create an open forum for combative community members to organize themselves against you. Consider alternative methods for community outreach (e.g. door-to- door canvassing, open house forums or small house meetings) instead of the large open community meetings.

- Use an issue-based strategy for working through local community concerns.
- Find out the probable basis of their concerns before fashioning a response (e.g. misinformation, fears about impacts, expectation to participate, legitimate conflicts of interest, prejudice or issues unrelated to your proposal).
- Prepare appropriate responses to each kind of concern (e.g. education, reassurance by trusted authority, negotiation or clarifying legitimate from illegitimate issues).

See also
ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

5. PREPARE A LEGAL STRATEGY.

Learn to assert your legal rights without litigation.

Identify the legal rights of your organization and your prospective tenants/clients and learn how to spot potential legal violations. If your proposal is likely to encounter illegal discrimination or raise complex legal issues, contact legal assistance immediately to learn what you should do now to protect your rights and how and when to get further legal assistance.

- Work with legal advocates to identify how to protect and assert your legal rights without litigation (e.g. by educating the city attorney early in the process).
- Keep records of all statements, flyers, etc., that may be evidence of discrimination.

See also
LEGAL TOOLS

6. PREPARE A PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA STRATEGY.

At the very least, select and prepare a media spokesperson, your message and some easily emailed information.

Before you get any media coverage on a proposal, decide if you want to generate media coverage (proactive strategy) or if you want to be able to respond effectively to any media coverage you receive (reactive approach).

- Designate and prepare spokesperson(s) including former clients and supporters.
- Develop your message(s) and for your target audiences (e.g. decision-makers).
- Prepare brief, easily-emailable fact sheets about your organization, the proposal, your supporters and your efforts to resolve legitimate community concerns.
- Invite reporters for a tour of your existing facilities and to meet your staff and clients.
- Follow up on any coverage you receive with thank you's and corrections.
- Develop ongoing relationships with media (to the degree your resources allow).

Source: • *Building Inclusive Community: Tools to Create Support for Affordable Housing*, HomeBase, 1996.



Palos Verdes Apartments, LA Family Housing/Gonzalez Goodale Architects

COMMUNITY MEETING BEST PRACTICES

Community meetings can be an opportunity to address concerns. However, smaller meetings are more effective to address any major push back or concerns. The traditional large community meetings often allow vocal critics to find each other and organize. In a worst-case scenario, combative neighbors can dominate the microphone, persuading neutral listeners and derailing any information-sharing. To avoid these outcomes, consider alternative formats for the meeting itself, and try to abide by these simple rules..

1. **Avoid any large group gathering, even for brief periods of time.** Instead keep participants in smaller groups for the duration of your meeting.
2. **Don't have a microphone at the meeting.** If you need one for the space, consider a lavalier or handheld mic that never leaves the possession of one moderator.
3. **Have a neutral party moderate the event** — not the developer. Consider local neighborhood leaders or contacts at nearby universities. Make sure they have the skills to moderate and control the dialogue, including: impartiality, respect for the community and the ability to diffuse tension and move the conversation along.
4. **Arrange to have supporters in attendance**, ideally people known in the community.
5. **Always have a staff member to take notes** on recommendations or concerns of community members. Be prepared to follow up on these concerns at the next meeting.

ALTERNATIVE MEETING FORMATS

Multiple Table Breakout

Have multiple tables or stations around the room that each cover one topic relevant to the project — with a representative from the project or a partner organization at each station, prepared to address questions. Leverage community partners to help at each station, and have visual aids like posters that emphasize photos, not text. Tables can offer a conversational format or a brief presentation followed by Q&A. Every 10–15 minutes, attendees can be instructed to move to the next table. Have volunteers around the room who are directing the participants and breaking up informal group conversations that might be hostile.

TIP

Have a "Project Design" station with the architect and developer, a "What is Supportive Housing" table with CSH or United Way or a "Traffic and Community Safety" table with a police officer and property manager.

Small Community Listening Sessions

Hold a series of small, targeted listening sessions. Invite specific representatives from different neighborhood groups, keeping total group size below 20. Ensure that supporters are present, but you want to have genuine community representatives in the majority. Have a third-party moderator and invite your property managers and even third-party organizations like CSH to give five-minute presentations in an informal manner, followed by a roundtable discussion. Invite participants to make suggestions, ask questions and share concerns. The moderator should be skilled at moving the conversation along, and the presenters, including the developer, should attempt to listen carefully and not dominate the conversation with "answers" or responses.



Palos Verdes Apartments
LA Family Housing/Gonzalez Goodale Architects

Community Open House

To accommodate community members' schedules and for convenience, consider hosting "drop-in" hours where community members can stop by a location in the community like a local library or community center to hear about the proposal and provide feedback. Make sure to have information about the development on-hand, such as a simple one-pager and/or poster board images of the building design. Provide a sign-up sheet to capture contact information and follow up with email updates and more information for residents.

WHY SMALL GROUP SETTINGS?

- Smaller groups are more productive and are better for addressing major concerns
- Communication can be more intimate and facilitate trust building
- Avoids grand-standing and leaves space for voices of support to speak up
- Smaller groups make it easier to diffuse tense or negative situations

MEETING TIPS

Preparation

- Think about your own appearance at the meeting — you want to show respect by looking professional and competent, but avoid looking too slick.
- Arrange for translation and childcare at the event, if needed by the community.
- Arrange for simple refreshments, if possible from a local business.
- Make sure your invitations reach the right audiences — don't lose control of the meeting agenda.

COMMUNITY MEETING BEST PRACTICES

Facilitation

- In addition to a neutral moderator, consider a neutral convener — someone to invite attendees and host the event who isn't tied to the developer or development.

Discussion

- Prepare supporters to be helpful — raising questions or helping with the format of the event.
- Consider having a current tenant or prospective resident speak to "humanize" the need for the project. Ideally this is a tenant who has extensive training like the CSH SpeakUp! Program.
- Have a neighbor of a former development — who opposed and now supports the development — speak. They are likely to be the most powerful voice of persuasion to existing opponents.

During the Meeting

- Start and end on time.
- Make sure everyone can hear.
- Don't hesitate to say "I don't know, I'll get back to you on that" and be scrupulous about getting contact info and getting back with the answer. It is much better than risking a half-truth or wrong answer, which can destroy trust.
- Do not engage in bargaining during the meeting. Graciously accept ideas and explain your process for considering them. Be clear about any constraints or limitations that may make some ideas impossible.
- Keep the tone of the meeting friendly — use humor and relevant anecdotes.

Handling Combative Questions

See also
ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- Do not allow hostile questioners to dominate the meeting. To respond to hostile questions, first restate the question then look at people other than the questioner while responding to include everyone in your answer. (This can be difficult as we are so programmed to lock into dialogue with the questioner).
- Accept that you may be unlikely to convince some community members of the benefits of supportive housing during a public meeting. Your goal is to prevent their opposition from infecting others who are undecided or supportive.
- Do not ask a combative neighbor, "Did that answer your question?" because it will provide an opening for the questioner to continue to dominate the discussion.

After the Meeting

- Follow up on unanswered questions.
- Fulfill any promises or commitments made during the meeting.
- Debrief with other meeting planners — note what worked and what you will change for the next time.



Moonlight Villas, Penny Lane Centers

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

DOS AND DON'TS

Adapted from "How To Speak In Public About Affordable Housing," Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California.

✖ Don't try to convince each person of the total truth and righteousness of the cause.	✔ Remember your goals: to provide information, to present a human face, to begin a dialogue and relationship.
✖ Don't answer each question with a stock response.	✔ Listen to the actual question and its nuances, and pay attention to the questioner (body tone, language, demeanor). ✔ Take time to think about your response. ✔ Probe the questioner if you suspect there's more behind the question: "Does your question/concern come out of a particular experience you have had?"
✖ Don't talk about concerned neighbors' "perceptions" or "misperceptions" (e.g. "I see how you perceive the building"). That implies these are just feelings not grounded in real data or fact.	✔ Use the words "concern" or "apprehension" instead.
✖ Don't give "facts" that you are not sure about.	✔ Acknowledge a query as a factual question about which you'll need to find more information. ✔ Promise to get back to the person and be sure to follow up.
✖ Don't contradict the questioner's own experience and feelings of local opposition of a particular development.	✔ Put the experience in context. ✔ Acknowledge that you aren't familiar with all the facts of the situation. ✔ Acknowledge that developers (like everyone else) do make mistakes sometimes.
✖ Don't present yourself as an expert on every issue related to supportive housing.	✔ Give yourself permission to say, "That's a good question. I don't know the answer right now but can find out more for you."
✖ Don't refer vaguely to all developers or developments.	✔ Speak from your own experience about particular developments you know.
✖ Don't stop the education with one conversation or presentation.	✔ At every occasion share other opportunities for engagement: housing tours, small group conversations, etc.

I. HOW TO DEAL WITH VOCAL CRITICS IN A GROUP

In a group setting such as a public meeting or information session, you can expect that community members will have diverse opinions, concerns and questions about the proposed development. Your audience may also include particularly outraged and vocal opponents.



TIP

Watch your words. Hostile opponents are already on the defense, so your language matters.

Your #1 priority when faced with a vocal critic in public is to diffuse tension in the room and to stay in command of the conversation.

- Do not pass around a microphone to avoid vocal critics from dominating the meeting.
- To respond to combative questions, first restate the question then look at people other than the questioner while responding to include everyone in your answer. (This can be difficult as we are so programmed to lock into dialogue with the questioner).
- Accept that you are unlikely to change an extremely concerned neighbor's opinion in a public meeting. Focus your efforts on engaging with residents who are undecided or supportive.

II. HOW TO RESPOND TO A VOCAL CRITIC

It can be intimidating when faced with combative neighbors in a public setting, and your nerves can get the better of you. Listen to what is being said, stay calm and respond to sensible inquiries while also keeping the conversation focused and on track.

- **If residents air reasonable grievances, make sure to validate them** (e.g. "I understand your worry about on-site security, and appreciate you sharing it with me.")
- **Do not try to explain away the concern,** but listen to what may be the underlying worry (Is it about who will be living in the building? Safety? Process?) and respond with the top-line effective messaging we know works.
- **Avoid getting into a "tit-for-tat."** Address your response to the larger issue and always tie your answer back to the key messaging provided.
- **Do not ask a combative questioner, "Did that answer your question?"** because it will provide an opening for the questioner to continue to dominate the discussion.
- **Do not be afraid to shut down the conversation if it's not productive.** In fact, it is the facilitator's job to move the conversation along. Others in the audience will be grateful you're keeping the discussion in check.

Question: *"I've heard the building will allow people to use drugs on-site. I mean, that's just crazy! We can't have that kind of behavior in our neighborhood. And that's why I've started a petition against the building."*

Answer: *"I have heard concerns about drug use from other residents, and I can see why that would be a worry to people. Some of the building tenants may be suffering from drug addiction, and for those individuals we will offer immediate and intensive recovery programs. And I want to clarify for you and others who may share your concern: there will not be drug use on-site. In fact, there are building rules that include consequences for any drug use in the building."*

IV. HOW TO RESPOND TO ONLINE CRITICISM

Without an opportunity to talk face-to-face, conversations online can escalate quickly, particularly when individuals feel that they're talking to a large, faceless organization. Keep the tips above in mind and adapt them for online spaces, but know that you also have the opportunity to provide community members with additional information and resources (website links, videos, etc.) that you can use to point them in the right direction.



TIP

Stay focused. There are some opponents that simply will not budge from their position. Rather than trying to change their opinion, focus on lessening their influence on others, such as minimizing opportunities for them to distribute false or misleading information.

- **Listen to people's concerns.**
  - Revise your comments and content based off people's concerns and feedback. Perhaps there's an opportunity to invite them to an in-person small group meeting or sit down with them one-on-one. Online conversations can (and sometimes should) become opportunities for in-person connections.
- **Personalize your responses.**
  - Add personality to your conversations by signing each response with the name of your community manager. For example, "Thank you for sharing your concerns with us. — John"
- **Diffuse tension.**
  - Rather than using stock responses, customize the message slightly for each person's concern.
  - If someone continues to berate you after you've provided a clear answer, stop engaging with them and they'll eventually stop commenting.
- **Hide comments if necessary on Facebook.**
  - If someone uses inappropriate language, "hide" the comment and do not engage with them further. The person who commented and their friends will still see their post, but others will not. This allows you to control the conversion if someone is inappropriate or unreasonable.
  - Note that you cannot hide or delete comments on Twitter. You can report comments as "spam" only if they are posting spam-related content.

Sources:
- Felicity Miller, "Risk Communication: 5 Steps to Reduce Public Outrage," Posted November 15, 2016. https://consultationmanager.com/risk-communication-5-steps-to-reduce-public-outrage
- Peter M. Sandman, "Hostile Meetings: When Opponents Want to Talk," Posted March 30, 2010. http://www.psandman.com/col/hostile.htm



Ivy Terrace, Adobe Communities

POLITICAL OUTREACH



Tyrol Plaza, A Community of Friends

COMMUNICATING WITH DECISION-MAKERS

It is critical to develop a good relationship with political decision-makers and become a trusted source of information and guidance to them. Use your time wisely with carefully planned meetings, be sure to listen to what they are saying (and not saying) and provide information that is useful to them. Their interests are often aligned with what they think is best for the community, so be prepared to show evidence of local support and make the case for why your position is in the interest of their constituents. Use the tools and techniques below to prepare for successful meetings with local decision-makers.

GOALS

- Persuade the decision-makers to support your request or fully understand their position and why they are taking it (you don't have to agree).
- Become a trusted resource for future information on your issue and related matters.
- Be seen as their ally in improving the community and benefiting their constituents.

KEY TECHNIQUES

- Make it easy for them to say yes by making your request specific and relevant to their interests.
- Carefully select your arguments and statistics.
- Show that you represent hundreds of voters through your organization's membership and its allies.
- Be exceedingly accurate, truthful and polite.

GROUND RULES FOR MEETINGS

- Plan your visit carefully. Be clear about what it is you want to achieve and ask of the official.
- Keep a focused agenda; don't cram every topic you care about into one meeting. Only 2–3 key points are likely to be communicated, so plan those out carefully, and be clear how you will communicate each of them.
- Be punctual and patient. If the official is late or your meeting is interrupted, be gracious and flexible. If the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a staff member.

- Be prepared. Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. (Even if you sent them in advance, bring more copies with you). Plan to leave these materials with the decision-maker at the ***end*** of your meeting. Providing the materials at the beginning will distract from your verbal presentation.
- There is strength in numbers and strange bedfellows. Build coalitions that are as broad and deep as you can make them. Bring those coalitions to the meeting if it makes sense or evidence of their partnership, like letters of support.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

- **Start where they are, not where you are.** Ask questions about what they understand and their concerns so you can speak to the issues that are most pressing for them in the context of what you need.
- Be helpful. Officials want to represent the best interests of their district. Whenever possible, **demonstrate the connection** between what you are requesting and the interests of the community.
- Be prepared to explain how you will **offer political support**, if you are asking the official to take a position that puts them out on a political limb.
- Don't do all the talking; **have a conversation**. It will help endear you to the lawmaker and give you valuable information about the lawmaker's views and concerns.
- Don't be afraid to **admit you don't know something**. If an official wants information you don't have or asks something you don't know, say that you don't know and then offer to get the information. Be sure to follow through!
- Offer a **follow-up opportunity**, such as a tour through the community or invitation to an upcoming event that will show officials what you want them to see.
- Be sure to **thank officials** for their service to the people.



Burlington Family Apartments, Clifford Beers Housing

LEGAL TOOLS



Centennial Place, Adobe Communities

HOW TO USE PRO-AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAW

Some developers are familiar with the laws most often used by opponents to block or delay developments. However, there are also several laws that affirmatively support the development of affordable housing, including some that are useful before and during local opposition conflicts. This primer will talk about how developers and sponsors might use these "pro-affordable housing laws" effectively, as well as some discussion of problems related to using these laws.

Developers are frequently reluctant to invoke legal rights — even if they are aware of these laws — because of the risk of souring their relationship with elected officials. However, using the laws doesn't necessarily require a lawsuit or even require that the developer play hardball. Instead, you can use this information to convince a decision-maker of their legal obligation to build low-income housing, or give them political cover to do the right thing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep careful files of all records.
- Save any newspaper articles published about the development and any flyers or other written materials produced by the opponents.
- Try to get statements of concern from potential opponents and statements by local government staff about "what is required to get approvals in writing."
- Make sure any oral or written statements that your organization makes in any forum are absolutely accurate and consistent.
- Make notes of statements made at meetings in the neighborhood, or record the meetings.
- Get copies of the transcripts of public hearings soon after the hearing in case the files expire.



NoHo Senior Villas, Clifford Beers Housing

OVERVIEW OF PRO-AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAW AND POLICY

Below are federal and state statutes that override local government control or limit its discretion.

Housing Element Law (California Government Code §65580 et seq.)

State law requires each local government to adopt a "general plan" to guide its land use decisions. As part of this plan, each city must adopt a legally adequate "Housing Element." A Housing Element is a city's plan for how to address the housing needs of all income levels, including groups with special needs, such as individuals with disabilities, elderly, large families, families with female heads of households and individuals experiencing homelessness.

While not requiring local government to provide housing, this law can be used to force local jurisdictions to deal with the housing needs of all income groups and those with special needs in several ways: by challenging exclusionary zoning, by changing zoning to enable affordable housing to be built and by adopting policies and programs responsive to the identified needs of low income and special needs groups.

Once adopted, an adequate Housing Element has the status of law and can be used to force the city to perform what it promised to do in the plan. It can also be used to support a particular proposed development by showing that the development is consistent with the city's own statement of needs and helps fulfill those recognized needs. Generally, a city must revise the element every five years.

Fair Housing Law (42 U.S.C. § 3601, et seq. and California Government Code § 12900, et seq.)

Federal and state statutes prohibit discrimination by local government ordinances, practices and decisions against persons with disabilities and people who belong to a protected class based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, marital status, national origin or ancestry. "Discrimination" includes both actions which are motivated by discriminatory intent as well as those which have a disparate impact on protected classes. In the case of people with disabilities, local government must also make "reasonable accommodation" to provide them with fair housing choices. Fair housing law also prohibits private citizens from using intimidation, threats, coercion or harassment to interfere with the housing rights of the individuals protected by the law.

This law can be used to prevent local governments from making decisions about affordable housing developments based on discriminatory grounds urged by opponents of the proposal; to steer them to consider only legitimate concerns such as density, traffic and parking; to challenge pretextual uses of legitimate concerns; to prevent the imposition of additional requirements or procedures on affordable housing proposals; and to pressure local government to make reasonable accommodations necessary for project approval.

Anti-Nimby Statute (California Government Code § 65589.5)

This state law requires that if a local government disapproves a low- or moderate-income housing development land use proposal or conditions approval in a manner which makes the development infeasible, it must provide one or more of six of the following specific reasons based on "substantial evidence:"

- The project is not necessary for the jurisdiction to meet its fair share of regional housing needs.
- The project would have a specific, adverse impact on public health or safety which cannot be mitigated without making the project unaffordable.
- Compliance with state or federal law requires disapproval or conditions which make the project unaffordable.
- Approval of the project would further concentrate lower income housing in an area that already has disproportionate amount of such housing if there is no suitable alternative site.
- The project is proposed for a site zoned for agricultural or resource preservation, is surrounded on at least two sides by land being used for such purposes or does not have sufficient water or sewage facilities to serve the project.
- The project is inconsistent with the jurisdiction's land use requirements as they existed when the project was submitted for approval, provided the jurisdiction has adopted a valid housing element.



Rosslyn Hotel Apartments, SRO Housing Corporation

This law limits the discretion of planning commission and city councils considering affordable housing development proposals. It can be used to inform conscientious decision-makers or to offer a politically acceptable "excuse" to a decision-maker who wants to "do the right thing" but is afraid of political pressure. If a local government disapproves of a project without making any findings or with inadequate findings, the disapproval can be challenged by a lawsuit. The local government has the burden of proof to defend its findings if the disapproval is challenged in court.

State Anti-Discrimination Law (California Government Code § 65008)

This law prohibits cities from discriminating against any residential development or emergency shelter on the basis of any of the following:

- Method of financing (i.e. use of public subsidies).
- The race, religion, national origin, ancestry, lawful occupation or age of the owners or intended occupants.
- Intended use is by persons or families of low- or moderate-income.

In addition, cities may not impose different requirements on an affordable housing development or shelter which is subsidized, financed, insured or otherwise assisted by federal, state or local public entities.

Other laws favoring affordable housing

Water and sewer providers must grant preference to lower income developments in allocating service extensions (CA Govt Code *§ 65589.7*).

According to a group of laws commonly called the "six or under" rules, local government are required to treat certain group homes which will house six or fewer residents, including residential care facilities and alcohol and drug abuse recovery or treatment facilities, as if they were family residences and to allow them in any area zoned for residential use (CA Health and Safety Code *§ 1267.8, § 1566.3 and § 1568.083*).

In certain cases, challengers of affordable housing developments who sue to stop a project can be required to post bonds (CA Civil Code of Procedure *§ 529.2*). In all civil lawsuits brought by opponents to affordable housing projects where the lawsuit or the relief sought has the effect of preventing or delaying the project from being carried out, the defendant (usually developer or local government) may seek a court order requiring the opponents to post a bond as a security for costs and any damages that defendant may incur as a result of delays caused by the lawsuit.