



Messaging Toolkit

Earning support for affordable home developments requires the collaboration of local advocates - a diverse and unified team of engaged and invested neighbors, local community leaders, business owners, public officials, and developers - to get the job done in the best way for each unique neighborhood.

The following pages serve as a toolkit for partners interested in promoting affordable homes across Houston through comprehensive neighborhood engagement.

First, this toolkit outlines best practices of tactics, words, imagery, and coalition organizing to use when creating effective messaging. Next, the Messaging Map summarizes effective messaging strategies discovered in this study's literature review, interviews, and focus groups. Finally, there is a list of documents which city partners, developers, and neighborhood advocates can use and share in neighborhood engagement efforts.

AN INTEGRATED MESSAGING APPROACH

Effective communication weaves together the message, messenger, and distribution.

To raise neighborhood awareness of and receptivity towards affordable homes, messaging has to go beyond the technical delivery of government policy content. Both the message and messenger must resonate with, be relevant to, and reflective of the neighborhood.

Trusted Messengers

A message is only as effective as the person delivering it.

While many engagement strategies focus on crafting the perfect message and spreading it widely, building inroads into the neighborhood helps develop relationships with the leaders and neighbors who are essential to determining whether a neighborhood accepts a development.

Simply repeating information will not be enough to overcome the innate human tendency to seek information which confirms preexisting beliefs. Engaging trusted messengers can significantly improve how neighbors receive and react to new affordable homes in their neighborhood.

Partnering with trusted messengers who are similar to or a part of the neighborhood is often most effective. In interviews with partners and experts in neighborhood engagement, they reiterated the sentiment: “it takes someone inside to change minds” to get a neighborhood on board.

“The city could put up one thousand posters, it wouldn’t matter, it takes the right voice.”

Rather than utilizing a spokesperson, deep and effective neighborhood engagement is about having the voice of institutions and leaders who are deeply connected to the people and how they think and what they believe.

Trusted messengers can be long-standing residents, members of houses of worship, or local business owners who know how to build partnerships with the people who drive neighborhood opinion and action.

Executive Summary
Key Findings
MESSAGING TOOLKIT
Literature Review
Partner and Expert Interviews
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Appendices

WINNING WORDS

The intention behind a message is irrelevant if it is not properly received by the audience. Sometimes, the language used to communicate on behalf of affordable home developments can trigger a potential backfire.

When advocating for affordable homes, there is a responsibility to educate the public on the necessity of building quality affordable homes in all neighborhoods. Through intentional, focused language, neighborhood leaders, partners, advocates, and developers can effectively communicate with neighborhoods and reach a consensus.

This section offers language and messaging frameworks to keep in mind, as well as terms to use or to avoid to reduce stigma and negative bias when discussing affordable homes.

Fostering Empathy and Alignment

Effective neighborhood engagement starts with meaningful listening.

There will be many people who reflexively oppose change in their neighborhood, and their concerns are often based on lived experiences. Advocates, nonprofits, and developers bear a responsibility to meet people and neighbors where they are and see neighborhood engagement as an opportunity, not an obstacle.

When messaging on behalf of affordable home development, recognition and consideration of outside viewpoints in both planning and engagement are essential, and the language must reflect this. To illustrate understanding and active listening, steer clear of assumptive language or exaggeration in the messaging. The failure to recognize oppositional viewpoints can actually increase neighborhood resistance.

Words to Foster Empathy and Alignment

Language to Use	Language to Avoid
“I understand your concern”	“Clearly” or “Obviously”
“We have found”	“Always” and “Never”
“You might consider” or “One possibility is”	“Should”

The best way to gain neighborhood support is through concise, simple language which demonstrates empathy and acceptance of divergent viewpoints and a willingness to work with the neighborhood for a shared, positive outcome.

Shaming and Blaming will Backfire

Across the research, there is consistent guidance to avoid meeting negativity with negativity. Rather than respond to or make assumptions about the unknowable motivations behind potential opposition, counter negativity with a consistent flow of information from respected and trusted sources.

The antidote to the [“isms” \(skepticism, cynicism, and NIMBYism\)](#) is transparency and truthful information, properly presented to a fair-minded audience. This does not mean supporters should acquiesce to negative voices or fail to correct incorrect statements, especially when the statements may be divisive. Instead - these are opportunities supporters should use to turn the conversation back to the positive outcomes they are seeking to create within and for the neighborhood.

Avoid Consumerism

The research shows how the stigma of “affordable housing” often stems from the belief that an individual’s inability to afford a home is the product of laziness, bad behavior, poor decisions, or improper budgeting, rather than the complex systems impacting affordability.

The very term “affordability” often cues this consumerist thinking, which leads people to think of outcomes as the result of individual choices rather than of systems.

Words to Address the Project and Substance

Language to Use	Language to Avoid
“Affordable Homes”	“Affordable Housing”
“Homes” and “Neighborhoods” (“We need more homes in neighborhoods”)	Referring to the housing “market”
“Access or Availability [to safe and quality homes]”	“Scarcity” or “Supply”
“Investments in your neighborhood”	“Subsidies” or “Incentives”
“Neighbors,” “Workers,” “Families,” “Seniors,” and “Veterans”	“Residents” or “Tenants”

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Because housing and affordability are often, by default, considered through a consumerist lens, partners should avoid using consumerist language. The research from *The FrameWorks Institute* shows “consumerist thinking makes it easy to conclude that differential access is normal” and simply a natural result of market forces.

To avoid this line of thinking and to be persuasive when messaging in support of affordable homes, shift the narrative frame from a market-centric to a neighborhood-centric explanation. Demonstrate how the cost of homes can have numerous non-economic (civic, social, and health-related) outcomes.

To open people’s minds to neighborhood solutions, point to the source of the affordability problem in shared systems, not budgets and savings.

The *FrameWorks Institute* also suggests “communicators can avoid the problems introduced by the idea of affordability by focusing instead on cost and availability.”

DEPLOYING EFFECTIVE IMAGERY

A picture IS worth a thousand words.

Sharing images or renderings of safe, quality homes and of the future neighbors who are eligible to live in these homes will go a long way towards earning neighborhood support.

Images strengthen communication by capturing attention, evoking emotions, and better aiding understanding and recollection.

Neighborhood hesitance towards new affordable developments frequently stems from fear of the unknown and unforeseen. Using images can help residents better visualize their future, and contextualize the potential changes coming to their neighborhood. The effective use of visual collateral will “show, not tell” neighbors what is going to happen. This will help counter potential misrepresentations by others about aspects of the new affordable homes, and pre-emptively address underlying concerns.



ORGANIZING COALITIONS OF INTEREST



Houston's dwindling affordability also impacts local businesses and the economy.

Many of Houston's businesses are finding it difficult - if not impossible - to recruit and retain workers who are able or willing to pay the surging prices required to live near the city's less affordable job centers.

The economic strain placed on local businesses from Houston's diminishing affordability creates an opportunity for partners to build coalitions of local business leaders and interest groups impacted by the city's affordability.

To address the complicated and multifaceted obstacles associated with Houston's affordability, supporters must recruit and organize resources among nonprofits, city departments, private industry professionals, developers, advocacy groups, academics, and neighborhood leaders with legal, environmental, educational, employment, infrastructure, health, philanthropic, community development, and housing backgrounds.

Once convened, this coalition has to lead and win the broader argument in support of affordable homes across Houston and the Gulf Coast region.

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MESSAGING MAP

The message map presents a comprehensive strategy to approach and engage neighborhoods to earn support for affordable homes.

The map incorporates findings from across the research and recommends messages, tactics, and images to use to address neighborhood concerns, and ease the path to approval and acceptance.

The Messaging Map illustrates the items needed for anyone to effectively champion an affordable Houston, including, the who, what, where, and how of advocating for affordable homes, and outlines potential pitfalls and common neighborhood concerns.

This map can be utilized by all as a tool to build consensus within neighborhoods and communities.



How to identify and partner with trusted messengers

Images to deepen understanding

Frequent resident concerns

Contextual sample testimonials



Neighborhood engagement is an opportunity, not an obstacle.

- ✓ Listen to and address resident concern head-on
- ✓ Show the need and benefit of affordable homes
- ✓ Illustrate positive impact to neighborhoods
- ✓ Be open about developer interests in the project
- ✓ Speak clearly, honestly, and respectfully
- ✓ Be present in neighborhoods

EFFECTIVE MESSAGING ARCHITECTURE

WHAT TO SAY

Make connections between the public's current understanding of Houston's challenged housing market with the opportunities new affordable development can bring - improved quality of life and economic outcomes for all neighborhood residents.

Balance discussing positive outcomes while closely listening to and directly addressing resident concerns to overcome public misperceptions and stigma.

HOW TO SAY IT TO

Earn community trust through early, frequent, clear, consistent, truthful, and transparent messaging. Listen first, and then speak clearly, honestly, and respectfully to neighborhood residents.

Avoid inaccessible or out-of-the-way locations and instead meet the community where they are most likely to be - at home.

WHO TO SAY IT

Go deep. Build trust by engaging communities where they live. Go beyond the confines of formal town hall settings and be present in neighborhoods.

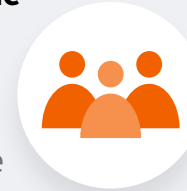
Proactively create opportunities for feedback to identify neighborhood support as you increase awareness and momentum for a project.

ADDRESS CONSISTENT NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS



Implications to Home Value

- Home Quality
- Type of Home
- Aesthetics of Home
- Impact on Property Value



Impacts on the Community

- Resident Background and Criteria
- Implications on Crime
- Implications on Schools
- Implications on Street Congestion



Faith in Execution

- Developer Track Record
- Project Timeline
- Developer Motives

USE PRODUCTIVE LANGUAGE

Words to Signal Respect

Language to Use	Language to Avoid
"I understand your concern"	"Clearly" or "Obviously"
"We have found"	"Always" and "Never"
"You might consider" or "One possibility is"	"Should"

Words to Overcome Stigma

Language to Use	Language to Avoid
"Affordable Homes"	"Affordable Housing"
"Homes" and "Neighborhoods" ("We need more homes in neighborhoods")	Referring to the housing "market"
"Access or Availability [to safe and quality homes]"	"Scarcity" or "Supply"
"Investments in your neighborhood"	"Subsidies" or "Incentives"
"Neighbors," "Workers," "Families," "Seniors," and "Veterans"	"Residents" or "Tenants"

PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

Avoid meetings in out-of-the-way or inaccessible locations.

- Meet people where they are.
- Hold face-to-face conversations
- Leave door hangers
- Engage on social platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, etc.
- Be present on neighborhood apps: NextDoor, Citizen
- Distribute flyers in community spaces

SHARE RELEVANT STORIES

Rather than using facts and figures, work to overcome potential opposition by sharing real-life stories of past or future residents in the context of the systems which create the need for more affordable homes.

Examples

Meet Nate and Amelia: Due to sustained damage after Harvey, Nate and Amelia, 32 and 28, and their family of five were forced to move out of the home they were renting and could not find an affordable place to live close to their jobs. They are now faced with having to move farther away from their jobs, sacrificing a longer commute and less time with their children, who will also have to change schools.

DEPLOY TRUSTED MESSENGERS

Build relationships with community leaders who already have connections and influence in the neighborhood.

Rather than using a spokesperson, engage people who are connected to the neighborhood and know how people think and what they believe.



Houses of Worship



Established Residents



Local Elected Officials



Local Business Leaders

IMAGES MAKE IT REAL

Using images of safe, quality homes and of the neighbors eligible to live in the homes will help earn community support.



SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS

While every project is different and will require a specific approach, the following materials can be used to earn neighborhood support for affordable homes. Each item is briefly described followed by examples of the materials. These materials include:

- **Developer Brochure**
- **Meeting Flyer**
- **Social Media Posts**
- **Meeting Sign**
- **Public Comment Card**
- **Affordability Infographic**
- **Petition Template**
- **Lawn Signs**
- **Neighborhood Pamphlet**
- **Letter to Your Local Official**
- **Business Storefront Sign**
- **Press Release**
- **FAQs (Developers Will Have to Address)**
- **Resource List**

Developer Brochure

Establishing neighborhood trust is the foundation for the successful approval and acceptance of quality, affordable homes which are responsive to the unique needs of each neighborhood.

The very idea of new affordable homes can trigger uncertainty for neighbors concerned about their home values, the quality of the new homes, developer intentions, and potential impacts to the neighborhood. All of these concerns must be addressed.

This sample brochure can be an important step to introduce the new affordable homes to the neighborhood. Concise, transparent, and honest communication of the developers' goals and intentions can help pre-empt misinformation and misconceptions.

This brochure should be delivered early in the development timeline as an introduction to the neighborhood.



We Invest in Houston

We build safe, quality, affordable homes to grow communities and neighborhoods here in Houston.

We make smart investments in people and places that promote vibrant, inclusive neighborhoods that strengthen and bring value to our city.

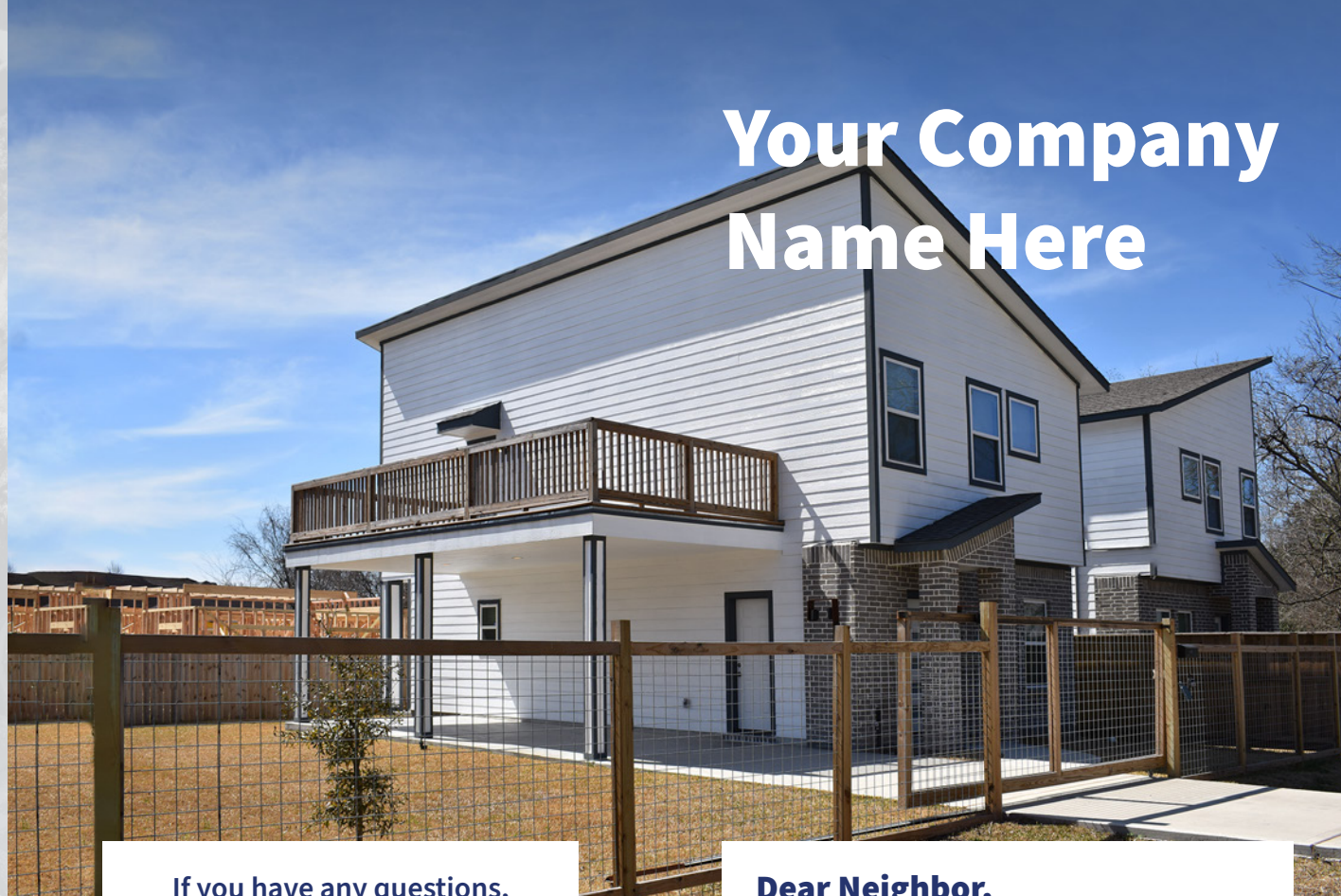
More specifically, we:

- 1 Build affordable homes for purchase and rent
- 2 Provide education and coaching that helps families grow and adapt in the long term
- 3 Support and develop neighborhood and community programs

This is all in the hopes of **improving the quality of life for all Houstonians** and leaving each neighborhood better than we found it.



Your Company Name Here



If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, we want to hear them.

Call: XXX - XXX - XXXX

Email: XXX@XXXXX.com

Or come to one of our meetings!

Dear Neighbor,

With your input, we hope to build affordable homes for Houston's hardworking families in [neighborhood].

We want to make it possible for Houstonians to afford to pay the rent [or have a roof over their head] and still have enough for the basics - like groceries and childcare. Our children, seniors, veterans, and hardworking families should have access to safe, affordable homes. With this development, we hope to make this a reality.

But we want your support. Our goal is to listen to you and use what makes [neighborhood] special to design these affordable homes.

Inside you will find more information about the project and process.

Houston is not as affordable as it used to be.

On average, households are spending too much on combined income and transportation costs.

To afford an average two-bedroom, market-rate rental,

Houstonians must earn

\$21.02 an hour



but the minimum hourly wage in Texas is

\$7.25 an hour

At this rate, a minimum-wage worker has to work

115

hours a week

That's nearly

Three full-time jobs



Even for Houstonians who make slightly more, at a rate of **\$10.92**, they would still have to work **77 hours a week or two full-time jobs** to afford a place to live.

The average Harris County household spends a combined

47%



of their income on **home and transportation costs**

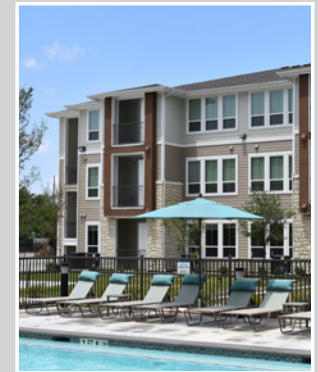


leaving little money behind for necessities.

[Neighborhood] needs affordable, decent homes for families in your neighborhood.

Our project will help hard-working Houston families afford safe, quality homes.

The Homes We've Built



Families We've Helped

We met John and Mary when they were first starting out as a new family. Clara was just born and John had just gotten a new job, but his salary wasn't enough to cover the cost of his home and his student loans. Two years later, John and Mary moved out of their apartment in [neighborhood] and into their first home.



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— John and Mary

George, 72, has lived in Houston for over 60 years, and now after retiring from military service and a burst pipe from the winter storms is no longer able to afford his home on his fixed monthly income. After moving into a [developer] home, George has been able to better access essential services and rebuild a sense of community in his new neighborhood.



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— George

For more on our background, you can visit our website at [url]

Some of Your Questions, Answered

- Who will be moving in?**
We want to make sure your new neighbors are a good fit for the area. This is why all those who apply are required to [be employed/earn YYY/ have a clear background check/XXX].
- How can I be sure the house will stay as nice as when it was built?**
In order to keep the integrity of your neighborhood, we use the proven best and most durable materials to ensure homes meet and match the standards of [neighborhood].
- What is the current project timeline?**
We have come to you early in the process to make sure our vision is aligned with [neighborhood]. If all goes well, development will begin [season/year] and likely conclude [season/year].
- What will this do to my property values?**
We have the history to prove our homes will increase home values in [neighborhood]. Over the past XX years, we have worked on XX affordable homes in Houston's XX, XX, and XX neighborhoods and have seen home values increase [provide any and all supportive stats here].

Meeting Flyer

In many instances, earning neighborhood support will require attending or hosting public meetings. Whether at a civic club, tenant association, local nonprofit, business association, or a meeting organized by supporters of the proposed affordable homes - for neighbors to attend a meeting, they must first be aware of it. This requires promotion.

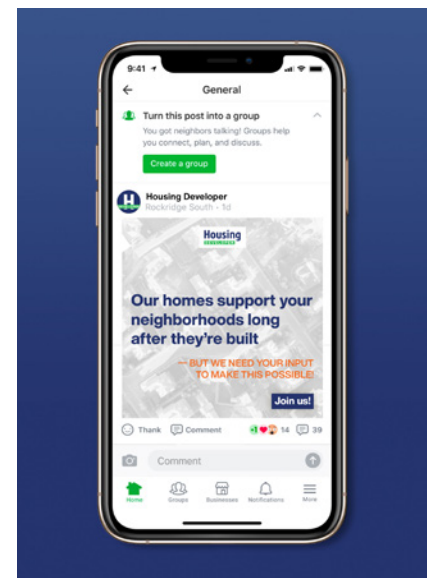
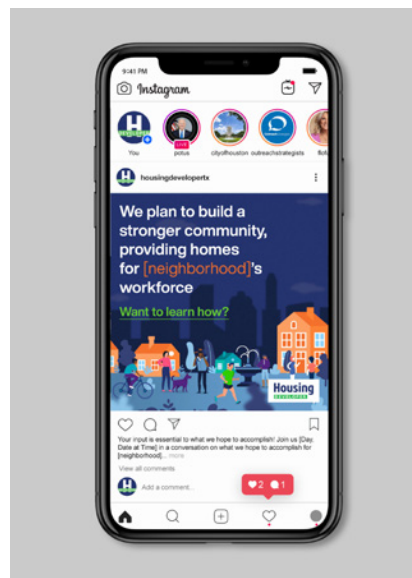
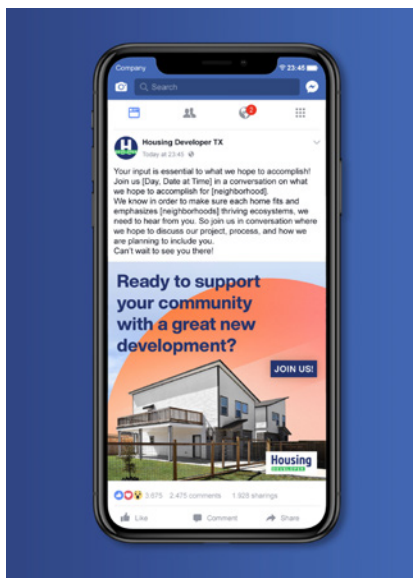
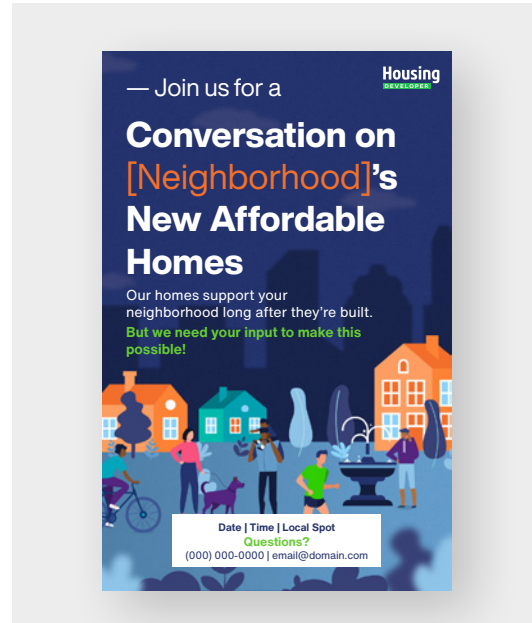
To ensure maximum attendance, flyers could be distributed to homes within the neighborhood, through community partner organizations, or at frequently used locations like post offices, grocery stores, or transit hubs.

These flyers should be used in conjunction with digital promotion efforts, including posting similarly branded collateral on social media and neighborhood applications.

Social Media Posts

Effective neighborhood engagement requires a layered approach. To supplement direct neighborhood efforts, supporters of affordable homes should take advantage of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, NextDoor, etc.).

Social media posts can be used during every phase of the approval process.

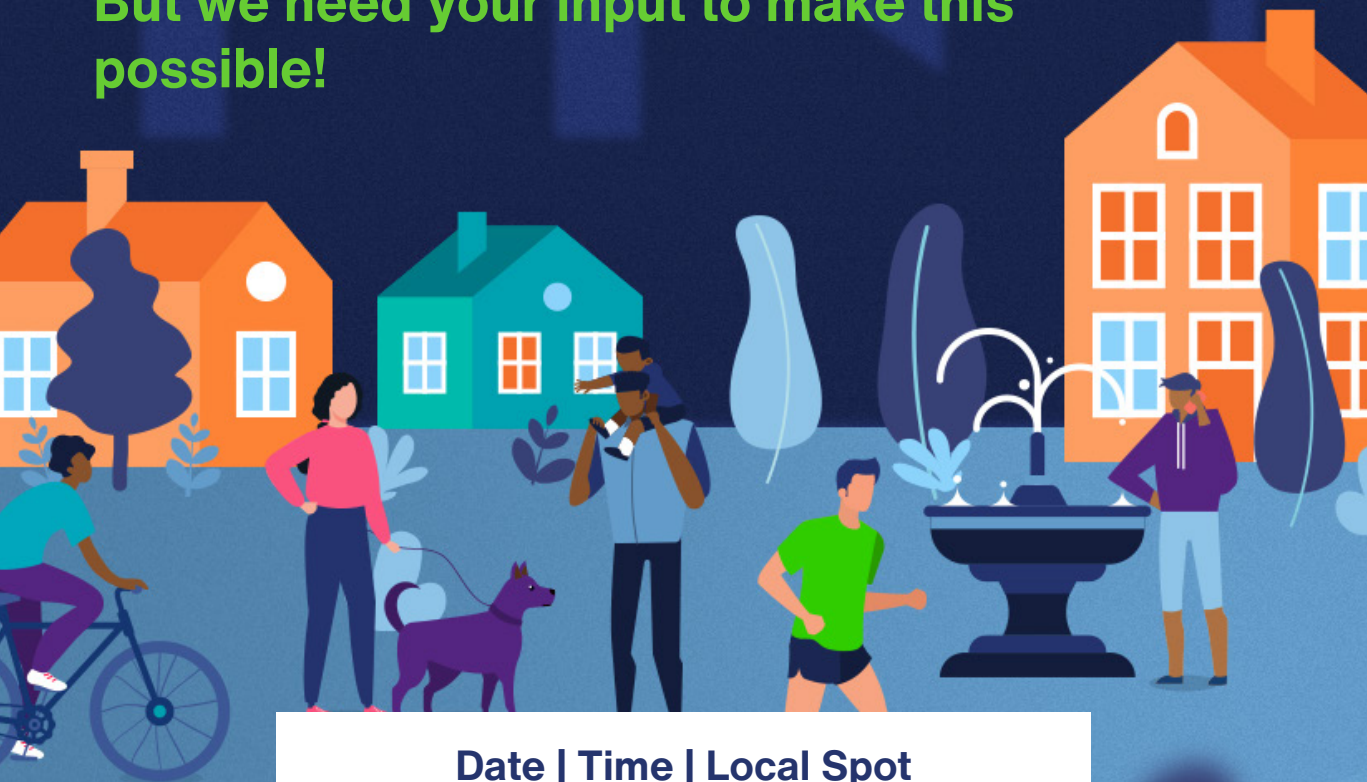


— Join us for a

Conversation on [Neighborhood]'s New Affordable Homes

Our homes support your neighborhood long after they're built.

But we need your input to make this possible!



Date | Time | Local Spot

Questions?

(000) 000-0000 | email@domain.com

**Ready to support
your community
with a great new
development?**

JOIN US!



**We plan to build a
stronger community,
providing homes
for [neighborhood]'s
workforce**

Want to learn how?



**Housing
DEVELOPER**

**Our homes support your
neighborhoods long
after they're built**

**— BUT WE NEED YOUR INPUT
TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE!**

Join us!



Meeting Sign

If the outreach has been done properly, there could be many first-time attendees to a public meeting or neighborhood conversation. Make sure these neighbors know how to get to the meeting with effective directional signage outside the venue, and use it as an opportunity to push your message at the same time.



Public Comment Cards

Earning neighborhood support for new affordable homes can start by listening and understanding the needs and concerns of the neighborhood.

Not every neighbor will be comfortable speaking in public or in group settings, so comment cards provide the opportunity for these neighbors to share their views.

This sample card can be used for any neighborhood event and will allow the City, developers, and neighborhood advocates to collect and address all resident concerns. The cards are particularly helpful during the planning and neighborhood outreach phases of the approval process.

- Executive Summary
- Key Findings
- MESSAGING TOOLKIT**
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**Conversation on
[Neighborhood]'s
New Affordable
Homes**

Affordable Homes in [Neighborhood]



Resident Comment Card

NAME

EMAIL

PHONE

HOME ADDRESS

Would you like to receive notification of our next meeting?

Yes

No

How would you prefer we follow up with you?
(check any/all that apply)

Email

Phone

Our next
meeting

COMMENTS

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for the resident to provide comments.



Affordability Infographic

The economic reasons for supporting more affordable homes in Houston are sound. However, it is sometimes difficult to verbalize the many impacts affordable homes can have on a city's health and prosperity.

This infographic can be used to demonstrate how building more affordable homes throughout the city can help boost Houston's local economy.

The infographic can be shared throughout the approval process to illustrate the impact affordable homes can have on the neighborhood.

Petition Template

Dwindling affordability is a problem impacting hundreds of thousands of Houstonians.

Collecting signatures through a petition can help demonstrate the scale of support from the people who stand to benefit from new, quality, affordable homes.

This petition should be used when engaging deeper in neighborhoods, particularly during the earlier phases of listening, learning, and planning.

Petition for a More Affordable Houston

Petition Summary and Background
To invest in Houston's future, and to preserve our status as an affordable City, people of all income levels should be able to afford to live here. Our teachers, firefighters, nursing aides, and other essential workers are struggling to find a place to live where they serve. We need to preserve and develop affordable homes to ensure workers and their families have a stable, affordable place to call home.

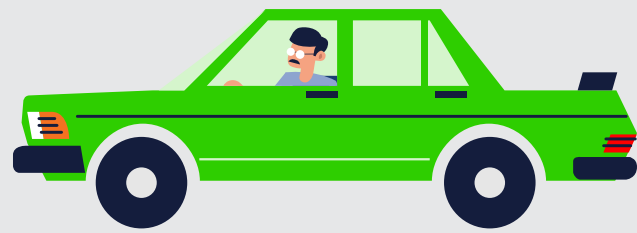
Action Petition
We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to build a more affordable Houston through the development of new affordable homes.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Comment	Date

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How access to **QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOMES** affects Houston's economy

When people have access to homes they can afford close to where they work, we all benefit.



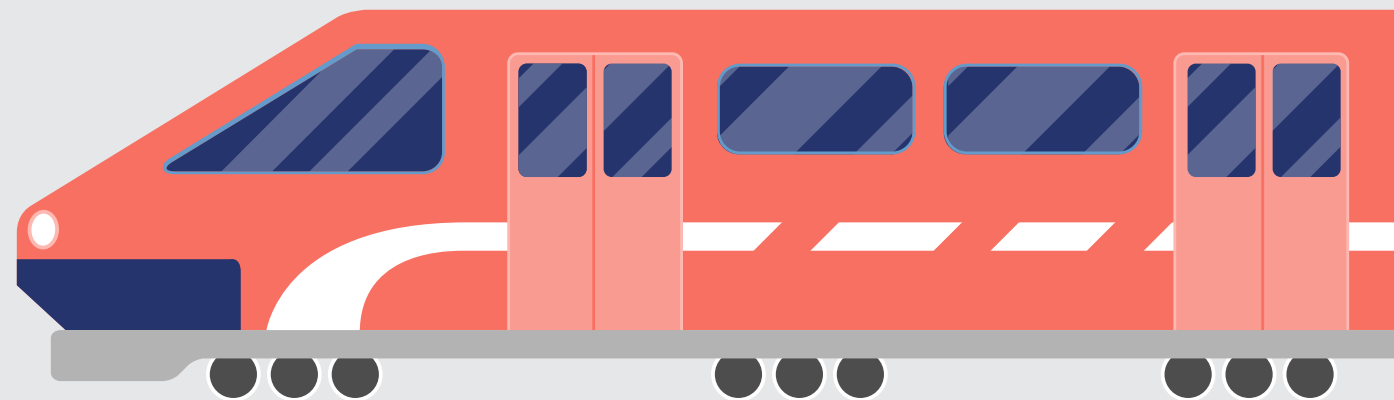
Teachers, home health aides, after-school carers

Teachers, home health aides, and after-school carers are paid less than they should.

Affordable homes in the community make positions more attractive to those who teach and care for our loved ones. If we want our children to receive the best education possible, we must make it affordable for our teachers to live close to the communities they teach.

Mechanic, social worker, chef

To attract the most talented and qualified workers, we need to make it more attractive and affordable to live near the communities they serve.



First responders

Getting on-site as soon as possible is critical to the role of a first responder. For them to do so, our first responders need to be able to afford homes close by.



Grocery clerk, wait staff, baristas

For people who work hourly and serve us daily, longer commute times reduce the overall wages/rates of the people who serve our most essential roles. By making homes more affordable close to local businesses, we support our local industry.



Housing insecurity becomes everyone's problem when the people who teach our children, maintain our lawns, fix our plumbing, serve our food, and provide care for our seniors and children cannot afford to live close to where they work.

Houston housing costs are surging past the median annual income of people living in our community, which, in turn, is making it more difficult for Houstonians to find or remain in affordable homes.

As housing prices increase, fewer people will be able to afford to work at the low costs we have come to expect. To attract talented and qualified workers, local businesses will have to raise wages to keep up with the cost of homes, which in the long run will likely be unsustainable for many of our locally run businesses.

When faced with a shortage of workers and a lack of affordable homes in the area, local businesses will likely raise prices, resulting in you paying more for goods and services in addition to higher property taxes.

Lawn Signs

Many times, affordable homes have broad neighborhood support, but few people may have the time or ability to participate in neighborhood meetings. These sample yard signs allow neighbors to visually demonstrate their support, and be a part of the “silent majority” without having to personally participate.

These signs should be developed and distributed to supportive residents throughout the approval process.



Neighborhood Pamphlet

It will take the efforts of many neighborhood voices to help Houston cultivate and develop new, quality, affordable homes responsive to the needs of neighborhoods and residents. Developers, local officials, city agents, community advocates, small business owners, and residents will all have to come together for the best outcomes.

Supportive coalitions empower people to apply their unique talents to each project and help push improvements to their neighborhoods forward. While identifying and cultivating local neighborhood advocates to serve as key points of entry and trusted messengers within a neighborhood, they still need tools to foster support.

This sample pamphlet is one way neighborhood advocates can find aligned and trusted neighborhood voices interested in advocating within their communities for affordable homes.



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Keep Houston Strong Keep Houston Affordable.



Hardworking Houstonians are being hurt by skyrocketing rents.

We need more quality options to keep Houston affordable.

It's why we support the preservation and construction of affordable homes in **[neighborhood]**.



If you are interested in promoting fair housing and helping hardworking Houstonians to obtain or retain safe, quality, affordable housing, here's how you can help.

We believe the people who help drive our economy—as small business owners, entrepreneurs, service workers, and rising professionals should be able to live close to where they work. It is better for their families and better for the neighborhood. People are more invested in the places they both work and live.

Please join our effort to build stronger neighborhoods and better opportunities for all, and strengthen **[neighborhood]**.

1

Join **[organization name]** and become a community leader for a stronger **[neighborhood]**.

2

Sign up for our updates. We periodically share information with our neighbors about upcoming opportunities to be a part of local conversations on how we want **[neighborhood]** to grow and improve. We would love your feedback and participation!

3

Share this information with your friends and neighbors and ask them to join with you in ensuring that **[neighborhood]** remains affordable and safe for everyone.

Letter to Local Officials

For local officials to act on behalf of new affordable homes, they need to know their constituents support new, quality affordable homes. One way to demonstrate support is through a letter-writing campaign

This document provides an example of what a letter could look like for neighborhood residents interested in keeping their neighborhoods affordable.

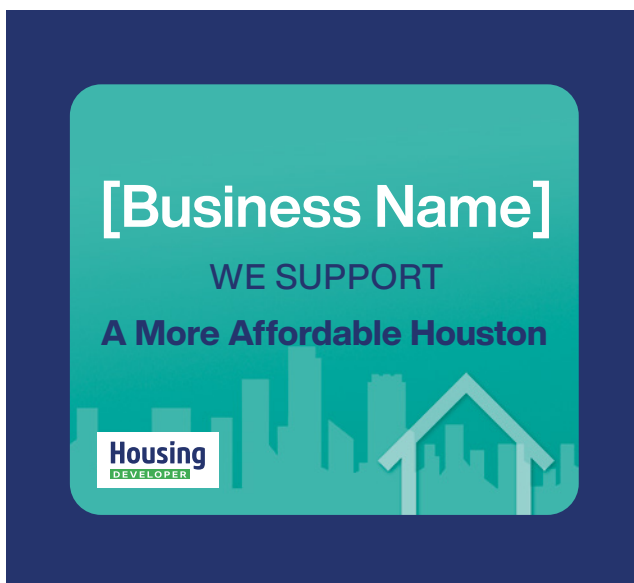


Business Storefront Signs

It is not only neighbors who stand to benefit from affordable homes; increasing Houston’s affordability supports local businesses by sustaining diverse jobs and wage levels in addition to attracting and retaining higher-quality workers - all of which are critical to the long-term success of a city.

To demonstrate support for and the economic value of affordable homes, we’ve provided templates for signs local businesses can feature in their storefronts in support of affordable homes.

As supporters organize in neighborhoods, they can provide standardized or customized signage to supportive businesses. These signs can be distributed throughout the approval process, but with a priority for the earliest phases of engagement to maximize their effectiveness and impact.



Dear **[Addressee]**,

I am writing in support of the proposed affordable home(s) **[or development name]** in our neighborhood.

We live in Houston because of the opportunities the city provides and want to ensure that this is an opportunity afforded to all who live here.

As a city, we are facing a housing affordability crisis, and one of the most important actions we can take to address that crisis is to build more affordable homes. As a leader in diversity and industry, it is important Houston be a leader in affordable housing and build homes all income levels can afford in any neighborhood they choose.

I look forward to contributing my voice and learning more as the conversation about this affordable development continues in the coming months. In the meantime, I wanted you to know how important this issue is to me, and I hope we can work together to build a stronger, more affordable Houston.

Thank you for your time,

John Doe
Housing Developer

[Business Name]

WE SUPPORT

A More Affordable Houston

Housing
DEVELOPER



**Support our Staff,
Support Affordable Homes**

Housing
DEVELOPER

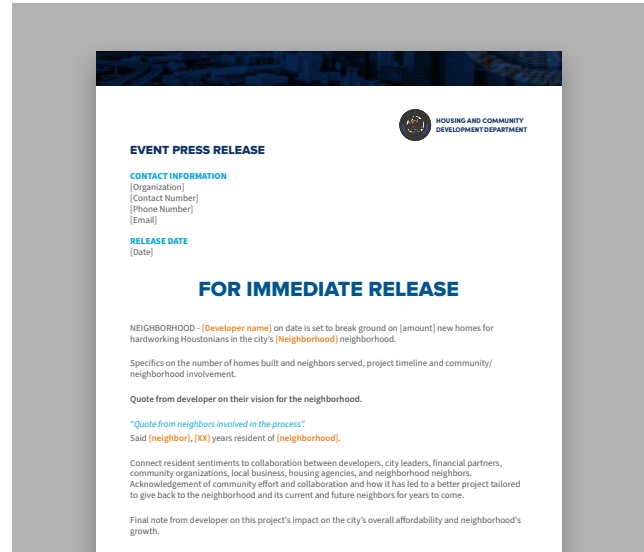


Press Release

The media can serve as both gateway and referee for engaging communities. Truthful and proactive information sharing will smooth the path to approval and acceptance, by demonstrating success and collaboration within the neighborhood.

Through effective media engagement, supporters can make their case and cultivate supportive relationships to make it easier to earn support in the future.

This document is a sample press release to be used as a template for what to say following the completion of new affordable homes, but releases can be deployed across the approval process.



Executive Summary

Key Findings

MESSAGING TOOLKIT

Literature Review

Partner and Expert Interviews

Focus Group Interviews

Appendices



EVENT PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT INFORMATION

[Organization]
[Contact Number]
[Phone Number]
[Email]

RELEASE DATE

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEIGHBORHOOD - **[Developer name]** on date is set to break ground on [amount] new homes for hardworking Houstonians in the city's **[Neighborhood]** neighborhood.

Specifics on the number of homes built and neighbors served, project timeline and community/neighborhood involvement.

Quote from developer on their vision for the neighborhood.

“Quote from neighbors involved in the process”

Said **[neighbor]**, **[XX]** years resident of **[neighborhood]**.

Connect resident sentiments to collaboration between developers, city leaders, financial partners, community organizations, local business, housing agencies, and neighborhood neighbors. Acknowledgement of community effort and collaboration and how it has led to a better project tailored to give back to the neighborhood and its current and future neighbors for years to come.

Final note from developer on this project's impact on the city's overall affordability and neighborhood's growth.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Frequently Asked Questions for Developers

Developers will bear most of the responsibility in earning neighborhood support, and will face many questions from neighbors. Being prepared to proactively address many of these questions as soon as the project is announced in a transparent and consistent way will ease the path to approval and acceptance.

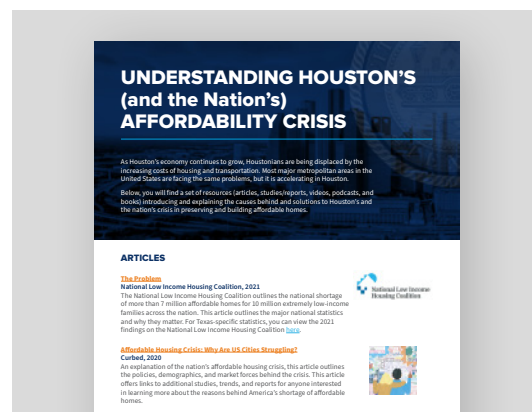
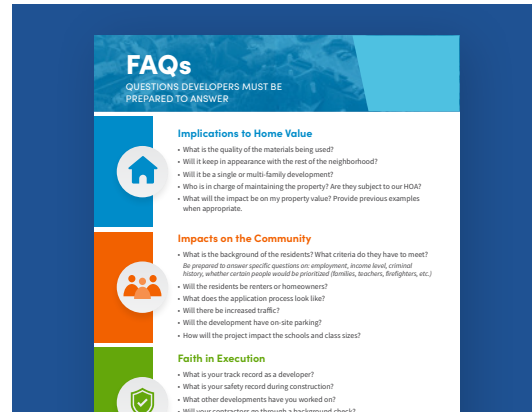
The research identified many questions neighbors will have when presented with the potential for affordable homes to be developed in their neighborhoods. This document provides a list of questions developers will likely encounter. Preparing responses, and having a proactive plan to share honest information with neighbors will limit the impact of misinformation or disinformation as developers seek to cultivate support and earn approval for their affordable homes.

How each developer decides to address these questions (for each project) is up to them. Whether through a project-specific microsite, in printed collateral distributed at meetings, or incorporating the content into other engagement strategies - these questions will come up, and developers will likely need to be prepared to address these questions more than once throughout the approval process.

Resource List

During the research process, there were several resources which stood out as the best summaries or explanations in building a comprehensive understanding of the need for and ways to communicate about affordable homes.

These resources - articles, studies, books, videos, and podcasts - can serve as important background materials for organizers and advocates, as well as for neighborhood partners, trusted messengers, and interested members of the public.



FAQs

QUESTIONS DEVELOPERS MUST BE PREPARED TO ANSWER



Implications to Home Value

- What is the quality of the materials being used?
- Will it keep in appearance with the rest of the neighborhood?
- Will it be a single or multi-family development?
- Who is in charge of maintaining the property? Are they subject to our HOA?
- What will the impact be on my property value? Provide previous examples when appropriate.



Impacts on the Neighborhood

- What is the background of the residents? What criteria do they have to meet?
Be prepared to answer specific questions on: employment, income level, criminal history, whether certain people would be prioritized (families, teachers, firefighters, etc.)
- Will the new neighbors be renters or homeowners?
- What does the application process look like?
- Will there be increased traffic?
- Will the development have on-site parking?
- How will the project impact the schools and class sizes?



Faith in Execution

- What is your track record as a developer?
- What is your safety record during construction?
- What other developments have you worked on?
- Will your contractors go through a background check?
- What was the impact on public safety and property values?
- How long will construction take?
- Why are you building in our neighborhood?
- What other projects are you planning for our neighborhood?



UNDERSTANDING HOUSTON'S (and the Nation's) AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

As Houston's economy continues to grow, Houstonians are being displaced by the increasing costs of housing and transportation. Most major metropolitan areas in the United States are facing the same problems, but it is accelerating in Houston.

Below, you will find a set of resources (articles, studies/reports, videos, podcasts, and books) introducing and explaining the causes behind and solutions to Houston's and the nation's crisis in preserving and building affordable homes.

ARTICLES

The Problem

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021

The National Low Income Housing Coalition outlines the national shortage of more than 7 million affordable homes for 10 million extremely low-income families across the nation. This article outlines the major national statistics and why they matter. For Texas-specific statistics, you can view the 2021 findings on the National Low Income Housing Coalition [here](#).



Affordable Housing Crisis: Why Are US Cities Struggling? **Curbed, 2020**

An explanation of the nation's affordable housing crisis, this article outlines the policies, demographics, and market forces behind the crisis. This article offers links to additional studies, trends, and reports for anyone interested in learning more about the reasons behind America's shortage of affordable homes.



No City In America Has Enough Low-Income Housing. Houston Is One Of The Worst.

Houston Chronicle, 2021

This article published by the Houston Chronicle addresses the severity of the city's shortage of affordable homes as summarized in a report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition.



Houston Is Now Less Affordable Than New York City

Texas Monthly, 2020

This article argues when factoring in the city's higher transportation costs and lower incomes, Houston is less affordable than the notoriously expensive New York City.



20 Housing Terms You Need To Know

Housing Action Coalition, 2018

This article explains 20 key technical terms used in housing policy.



Why Neighborhoods—And The Policies That Shape Them—Matter

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2020

The article illustrates how inequality in neighborhoods affects children, using a tool to measure that inequality: the Child Opportunity Index. By comparing two kids growing up in different neighborhoods of Cleveland, the article shows how where one lives influences life experiences.



How Whole Communities Benefit From Affordable Housing

Forbes, 2020



How Affordable Housing Can Improve The American Economy

Bloomberg City Lab, 2019

Both these articles illustrate how increasing affordable housing in metropolitan centers is vital for a city's economic health. Both articles discuss how having affordable places to live increases a city's economic prosperity and productivity.



STUDIES AND REPORTS

The 2021 State Of Housing In Harris County And Houston

Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 2020

This inaugural report conducted by Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research found Houston, overall, has become less affordable, especially for renters. The city's dwindling supply of affordable housing and rising construction costs suggest this problem will only continue to grow.



Where Affordable Housing And Transportation Meet In Houston

Kinder Institute for Urban Research and LINK Houston, 2020

In this report, the Kinder Institute for Urban Research partnered with LINK Houston to examine the intersection of housing and transportation. This report shows in order to effectively address affordability, it is essential to consider housing and transportation expenses together.

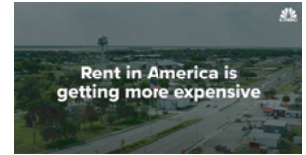


VIDEOS

[Why Rent Is Rising In The U.S.](#)

CNBC, 2021

This video gives a more detailed background as to why rental prices are increasing across the United States. A decades-long slowdown in development and increased construction costs have led to a shortage of quality affordable homes. In addition to issues in supply, most of the new homes built are for higher-income residents, leaving many renters paying more for a place to call home.



[Cruel Musical Chairs \(Or Why Is Rent So High?\)](#)

Sightline Institute, 2017

This animated video produced by the Sightline Institute demonstrates the impact of the housing shortage. By comparing housing to a game of musical chairs, this video illustrates the need for diverse home pricing for all income levels needed to grow and sustain a prosperous city.



[The Housing Affordability Crisis We Don't Want To Solve](#)

Economics Explained, 2021

In a longer video format, Economics Explained was able to illustrate a number of barriers to the nation's affordability crisis. This video examines the reasons behind increasing house prices pre and post-pandemic, the economic impact and implications, and address some potential solutions.



PODCASTS

[Three Reasons For The Housing Shortage](#)

NPR - Planet Money, 2021

The United States does not have enough homes. This podcast produced by NPR's Planet Money, outlines the three big reasons for the shortage.



[America's Two Housing Crises](#)

Vox - The Weeds, 2019

In this podcast, Matt Yglesias interviews Jenny Schuetz, a housing economist and David Rubenstein fellow at the Brookings Institution, on housing affordability. In the interview, Dr. Schuetz outlines two distinct issues when it comes to the national affordability crisis. First, low-income families across the United States do not earn enough to afford to live. Second, a number of major metropolitan areas have not built sufficient enough housing to meet the demands to live in these areas, driving up housing costs and making housing unaffordable for hard-working neighbors.



PODCAST SERIES

UCLA's Housing Voices

UCLA - Housing Voices, 2021 - ongoing

This podcast series produced by UCLA tackles questions on the national shortage of quality, affordable homes. Co-hosted by UCLA Lewis Center's Mike Lens and Shane Phillips, each episode invites a housing expert in conversation on housing affordability, displacement, development, and policy and how it impacts the creation of more affordable and accessible communities.

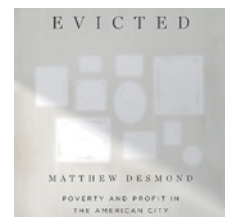


BOOKS

Evicted: Poverty And Profit Of The American City

Matthew Desmond, 2017

A book that examines the effect of poverty on housing in the United States, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit of the American City* follows eight Milwaukee families struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Supplemented with statistics from court records, police call logs, school reports, and other documents, author and professor of sociology at Princeton University, Matthew Desmond illustrates the importance of safe, affordable housing in fostering stable cities.



Golden Gates: Fighting For Housing In America

Conor Dougherty, 2020

In his book, Conor Dougherty, a housing reporter with the New York Times, chronicles America's housing crisis from the lens of the Bay Area, examining the many factors - home supply shortage, zoning restrictions, NIMBYism (the not in my backyard argument), structural racism, gentrification, and private wealth interest - behind the affordability crisis.

