



LET'S TALK ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing is commonly defined as housing in which the renter or occupant pays no more than 30 percent of their total income for housing costs, including utilities.

So why do people become anxious, angry, or fearful when they hear the term “affordable housing”? What is it about these developments that makes homeowners and community members nervous?

Studies show that community concerns include:

- Increased traffic
- Additional costs and pressure on schools
- Rising demands on fire, police, and other services
- Stresses on water and sewer systems
- Worries about the quality of the new housing developments
- Environmental degradation
- Decrease in surrounding property values

Some people also suggest that affordable housing will bring in undesirable, dangerous changes to the character of their neighborhoods. These beliefs usually stem from underlying racial biases, discrimination, and false stereotypes.

How can you shift mindsets and gain support for affordable housing within your community?




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1. **Have an open conversation:** get a sense of your community's exact concerns and provide concrete plans for how you will address each one
2. **Elevate the issue:** building a shared understanding of why affordable housing and community development are *important for everyone*
3. **Explain disparities:** explain systemic barriers, what restricts access to affordable housing options, and the role of structural racism
4. **Highlight solutions:** how will this brownfields redevelopment project / new affordable housing development improve quality of life for all residents?
5. **Storytelling:** use personal stories instead of statistics to make the issue more relatable and authentic
6. **Connect around shared community values:** health, safety, security, fairness, opportunity for all
7. **Watch your language:** communities may respond better to a simple change in wording (“housing that is affordable” vs. “affordable housing”)



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Studies show that affordable housing developments that are designed with care, attentively planned for, and well-managed **do not** result in the concerns brought forth by many communities.

Rents and housing prices are at an all-time high.

Housing affordability is an issue that impacts all of us.

There is a lot of fear and misinformation when it comes to affordable housing, and we all have a responsibility to educate one another and recognize housing as a human right. Using brownfields redevelopment projects to build affordable housing units can help communities ensure that **everyone has a safe, healthy place to live.**

RESOURCES:

Shelterforce (Fear of Affordable Housing: Perception vs. Reality)

National Association of Realtors (Messaging for Affordable Housing)

Frameworks (Piecing it Together: A Framing Playbook for Housing Advocates)