

How we talk about housing matters:

A conversation about housing messaging

Land Use Advisory Committee

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Today's discussion

- Why are housing messages backfiring?
 - What housing messages are backfiring?
 - How can we reframe the messages?
- Where are the opportunities to improve housing messaging?
- Questions, discussion, and next steps

“You Don’t Have to Live Here”

Why are housing messages backfiring?

- *“Facts, data, and vivid stories about individual troubles are not increasing public understanding...”*
- Misinformed people rarely change their minds

“You Don’t Have to Live Here”

Why Housing Messages Are Backfiring and 10 Things We Can Do About It



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Find the report online at:
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF/You_Don't_Have_to_Live_Here.pdf

What housing messages are backfiring?

Message:

- The Jones' are a real family struggling to find safe, affordable housing

Backfire:

- People are ultimately accountable for their own circumstances

Reframe:

- Balance personal stories with the context of *places* and *systems*

What housing messages are backfiring?

Message:

- Low-income families struggle with trade-offs; paying rent often means less food, medicine, or transportation

Backfire:

- Everyone makes trade-offs, it's not my responsibility to solve other people's problems

Reframe:

- Position our issues as *collective* problems with *collective* solutions

What housing messages are backfiring?

Message:

- There is an affordable housing crisis of unforeseen levels and government needs to do something now!

Backfire:

- Government hasn't been able to solve the problem so far, why should we think they can now?

Reframe:

- Share more examples of how new housing policies have *worked*

What housing messages are backfiring?

Message:

- Housing is a racial equity issue

Backfire:

- People want to live near people like them – especially people of similar means

Reframe:

- Where you live affects you. Everyone should have reasonable housing *choices* in whatever community is of interest

What housing messages are backfiring?

Message:

- Data and research don't lie – there are serious housing challenges for many households

Backfire:

- Data and research can be used however people want – they don't support my lived experience

Reframe:

- Data should not *be* the message, it should *enhance* the message

Other recommendations for housing messaging

- Avoid leading or over-relying on the terms “housing” or “affordable housing”
- Widen the public view of who is responsible for addressing housing needs and challenges
- Address the tension between dramatizing the message and downplaying the message

Where are the opportunities to improve housing messaging?

Group discussion

- Where are the spaces that you read, speak about, or discuss housing issues?
- What examples can you share of housing messages that backfired?

Changing embedded frames

- Changing our internal framework so that we consistently change our external messaging
 - Proofread your housing messages – tighten up messages that may backfire
 - Change your “go-to” narratives – be prepared to improve housing messaging in informal settings and interactions

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