

Seize the Narrative

A Housing Justice Narrative Playbook for the Bay Area



A Playbook To Advance Housing Justice

At A Pivotal Moment for the Bay Area

This playbook is the product of months of deliberate collaboration among Bay Area organizations deeply committed to housing justice.

Housing justice is the holistic effort to ensure that the Bay Area remains a diverse place where all people are welcome, have a decent, affordable, accessible place to live in communities that are thriving and where people are free from the threat of displacement, homelessness, discrimination and unfair evictions. In order to make housing justice a reality, we recognize the need to work collaboratively to shift the narratives that limit public connection, understanding, and mobilization around this outcome. It means dismantling decades of unjust housing policies and replacing them with equitable, anti-racist, sustainable systems that are designed to bring housing justice to light.

This is a critical moment, calling us forward to fix systems that have been fundamentally broken for decades and have undermined the success of our friends, families, neighborhoods, small businesses and community organizations. While some see this as a particularly daunting moment to push for housing justice, when so many are facing eviction or imminent displacement, local and state budget shortfalls are expected, COVID-19 has stripped the capacity of our health care systems, and racial injustice protests are still looming large, we see it as a turning point. This moment is an opening to engage a broader audience. More than ever, we are united in the idea that real change is not only possible but necessary and unavoidable.

We do not wish or imagine a return to the way things were before this current iteration of crises began. We demand that we emerge better – more humane, just, explicitly anti-racist, prioritizing the housing needs of those most in need. We recognize that getting to this outcome means reframing the conversation – prioritizing housing as a collective concern, strengthening our resolve to make sure that everyone here has a home, and helping everyone recognize their stake in advancing housing justice in our region.

We have come together to advance better narratives, supporting and magnifying our work to change policies and systems, because we understand the power of narrative. We see the power of this playbook as a tool to build long-lasting public support that will help advance housing justice. We invite you to help us in this effort.



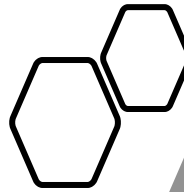
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A high-angle, wide shot of a densely packed urban neighborhood, likely San Francisco. The foreground and middle ground are filled with multi-story residential buildings in various colors (red, white, grey, blue, brown). Many buildings have flat roofs with visible HVAC units and satellite dishes. In the background, more buildings are visible on a hillside, and a range of blue mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent dark grey banner with a red rectangular accent on the left side is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing white text.

What is Housing Justice and Why We Need a Focus on Narrative to Advance It

What is Narrative and Why Do We Need Narrative Shift?



We are all shaped by the narratives around us. Narratives are the retelling of stories that remind us who we are, how we got here, and what needs to be done to shape the future we envision. In this moment, we can seed deep, broad support and political will for the housing justice that our communities deserve.

Narratives help people gain clarity: developing a strong conviction about what needs to be done and about their own agency and role in making change. What can they do that will actually matter?

*- Rashad Robinson
Color of Change*

What is Housing Justice?

The idea of housing justice is nothing new. A broad cross-section of activists, advocates, institutions and agencies have been pursuing versions of housing justice for decades in this country and in the Bay Area. Mostly the efforts to advance housing justice have shown up in hyperlocal movements across the country comprised of neighbors banding together to raise the issues of unfair treatment in the housing system. Their core admonition is the fundamental belief that every person deserves safe, affordable housing that is accessible, connected to thriving communities, and offers a pathway to share in the prosperity of the region. Some of the work has been about actively advancing policies and investments to help people whose housing circumstances were insecure – due to discrimination, loss of income, low wages, or threat of displacement – to get more stable housing. In more recent years however, housing justice has come to mean a wider array of policies, investments, programs, services and systems that need reform and/or dismantling to underscore this belief of housing as a right.

It is important to note that calls for housing justice are distinct from more traditional housing advocacy in that they: (1) hold an explicit focus on race and the policies of exclusion, discrimination and racism that make people of color more likely to experience housing insecurity; (2) go substantially beyond the focus on building affordable housing or expanding the supply (we cannot simply build our way out of the challenges that our unjust systems have created); and (3) result in a set of asks that go significantly beyond making marginal adjustments to existing housing policies; they call forward a complete rethinking of the interlocking systems that undermine the ability to people to be securely housed.

Angela Glover Blackwell, at the PolicyLink conference presentation in 2018, "[Claiming Our Power, Shaping Our Destiny](#)," said it this way:

"Radical imagination is embedded in the vibrant movement for housing justice. Activists are changing the very notion of housing—more than a dwelling or a commodity to be bought and sold on whim or for excessive profit, housing is a human right and an essential public good to be protected. The majority of residents in the 100 largest U.S. cities are now renters, and the majority of them spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The nation cannot build its way out of the crisis of housing insecurity. By redefining housing, the movement is spearheading innovations in tenant empowerment, community land trusts, and regulatory oversight. It's a visionary, adaptive response to the dramatic shift away from homeownership and the rise of the renter nation."

As Bay Area advocates have begun organizing and mobilizing behind the "3Ps" strategy of protections, preservation, and production together, our coalition has seen critical momentum and progress. In 2019, the formal 3Ps campaign helped pass 10 housing bills -- including the country's strongest renter protection law, AB 1482. This work continues to grow, and the "3Ps" approach has become a consensus frame across many coalitions, campaigns, and initiatives -- and embraced as an opportunity to advance housing justice broadly in the Bay Area. We are utilizing every tool (organizing, legislative advocacy, protest, art, civil discourse and/or disobedience, and narrative shift) to advance this work. We are bringing in new collaborators and partners as well as expanding our reach.

...And Why Do We Need a Focus on Narrative To Help Advance It?

Research conducted as part of this project suggests that Bay area residents hold competing values about housing, so our narrative strategy must help us amplify the values that best bring invite new champions to this cause. We want better narratives to help us underscore how central affordable housing is as an equity issue – that access to housing is a fundamental way that people get access to opportunity, build wealth and maintain their health.

More specifically, we recognize the imperative to make the case for renter stability. It's been widely documented and understood that the Bay Area is the least affordable region in the country for low- and moderate-income renters, and renters are most in jeopardy when it comes to the threats of displacement, discrimination and eviction. That's why a significant focus for our coalition has been on renter stability, which will be secured when the Bay Area commits to policies that prioritize renter protections and affordable housing production and preservation (the "3Ps") together.

This playbook is the product of months of deliberate collaboration among Bay Area organizations deeply committed to housing justice (a list of these organizations can be found in the Appendix). These organization have been on an emergent learning journey together to better understand how narrative works, how to reshape and shift narratives about housing, as well as how to create and socialize new ones. This work was made possible thanks to the generous support of several collaborating funders and sustained by more than 50 organizations who participated in trainings, workshops, our research programs and advocacy efforts. Moreover more than 2,000 people across the region provided input into this work – by responding to regional surveys, participating in community voice sessions, or otherwise helping us to better understand why and how a focus on housing justice is meaningful to them.

Now, more than ever, we need to invest in a narrative strategy that is evidence-based. Housing justice requires long-term investment, sustained support from a wide number of stakeholders, and changing the mindsets of ordinary people who have little time to learn about the nuances of public policy. As a result, we recognize that one central part of our ability to deliver on the call-to-action around housing justice requires deliberate attention to narrative strategy. A couple things to note as you read and review the recommendations that emerged from our research.

1. Our goal is to elevate the conversation around housing, in part by, providing the strategic messaging guidance that prioritizes racial equity and highlights the challenges faced by renters across our region.
2. The guidance and recommendations are also designed to “unseat” negative attitudes about renters (the common link of our table’s 3Ps consensus policy frame) as well as to help us do a better job of mobilizing renters as a group.
3. The recommendations in our playbook are coalition-led, evidence-based and led by the research - some of which we directly commissioned in the Bay Area as well as from the expanding array of research on housing narratives from other parts of the country.
4. Our playbook not only helps us explain the HOW of our narrative strategy, it also explains the what, and why at this moment we must integrate narrative strategy into our work more fundamentally.
5. This playbook is a mechanism to motivate our networks and inspire our coalition to think beyond traditional campaigns and lean into the bolder action that longer-term narrative shift requires around housing justice.

You are critical to this work. Learn. Share. And let's get to work together.



**Our Messaging
Research Is Meant
to Strengthen,
Not Replace,
Our Narratives
or
Our Storytelling**

This is a critical moment for anyone who values housing justice. It is a moment where large numbers of people are trying to make sense of what's happening to the communities around them, to their own prospects for success, and for the Bay Area overall. This is an especially critical moment for people who understand the central role that housing plays in all of that. We are being called on at this moment to be interpreters and guides; to help people connect to this issue, to help them see their stake in advocating for more equitable housing outcomes, and to mobilize them to act on the values they hold about the dignity of all people.

This is a moment where the shape of our storytelling, the enduring narratives we offer, matters a great deal. Narratives are powerful because our stories – the way we tell our truth – can help bring new champions to our work. Our narratives communicate powerfully the kind of Bay Area we are today and the Bay Area that we want for tomorrow.

The messaging research outlined in this playbook is meant to strengthen (not replace) our storytelling (the narratives we communicate about what happening around us). Messaging research offers us powerful tools (like an understanding of the values that can best elevate housing as an important concern for people) but to be effective, those messaging tools must be given life in our stories, in our narratives, in the way that we talk about our work.

As one of the core members of our table put it – if our chants at the protests are our “messages”, our “narratives” show up in the unique signs we bring to express our own truth. Narratives are enduring because they are our truth. It is also why narratives are so powerful for our work and why are working so diligently to strengthen how we communicate them.

Making the Case for Housing Justice

Strategy At A Glance

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



NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT

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



AMPLIFY

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



ATTACH

ASSOCIATE HOUSING WITH NARRATIVES IN OTHER SECTORS THAT EXPAND OUR COALITION



REFRAME

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



CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE

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



COUNTER

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



PIVOT & AVOID

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



MOBILIZE

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



YOUR ASK AND CALL-TO-ACTION

BE EXPLICIT ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED PEOPLE TO DO

Our Narrative Strategy

Must Do At Least Three Things

1.

Understand the People We Are Trying to Mobilize and What Motivates Them to Action

At its core, making the case for housing justice requires that we have some idea of the beliefs, aspirations, fears and hopes of the people we are talking to (essentially understanding what shapes their behavior and attitudes).

Because members of our collaborative table work with so many different audiences and on related but differing housing issues, it's impossible to define every audience in our playbook. So, to be helpful, we've done that at a very high level, thinking about: (1) *people who already believe in housing justice as an important concern*; (2) *people we believe are persuadable*, and (3) *people strongly opposed to seeing housing justice as a priority that deserves deep intervention and action*.

2.

Understand the Messaging Research Recommendations and

Messaging research helps us to use good social science to help us connect to different audiences most effectively. It helps us anticipate backfires in how we communicate as well as to see new pathways to better practice.


We only win if we are changing people's orientation to the world they are seeing. The research that we've conducted in the Bay Area has looked closely at the ways we can effectively do that. Through both quantitative and qualitative methods (involving more than 2,000+ people across the Bay Area), we've outlined what we know that works. Use what helps and share this with others who are advocating for housing justice.

3.

Use the Messaging Guidance Here To Help Shape Your Narratives, Not Replace Them

Messaging research should never replace your expertise as a community builder and organizer nor your truth. Look critically at the messaging advice in this playbook (and in other guides) for tips, tools, and language that can help you join our collective effort to elevate housing.

Messaging advice in this playbook should help you incorporate tools that can help you become an even better storyteller – sharing narratives that inspire people to action and present a stronger call-to-action. Tell your story and let the research we've done help you do that!



Making the Case for Housing Justice: The Narrative Pieces



NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT

DON'T

✗ Don't assume that all Bay Area residents understand the power and importance of this moment. Don't assume that they see recent social and economic events as a call-to-action that centers housing justice as a meaningful response.

DO

✓ Name the moment we are in and help people embrace the urgency for bold decisive action. Take the time to help them see this as a unique opportunity to address the many ways that our housing system can be redesigned so that it ensures (rather than undermines) renters in our region.



NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT

NAME THE MOMENT WE ARE IN AND HELP PEOPLE

EMBRACE THE URGENCY FOR BOLD DECISIVE ACTION

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Name the moment we are in as soon as possible in the conversation to strengthen and reinforce the sense of urgency. Naming the power of the moment forces people to consider what we need to be ready for the big challenges (and opportunities) confronting us today.**

These “adaptive challenges” help people lean into the current moment (examples like COVID-19 and the need to prepare for future health pandemics; police brutality and systematic racism that allows for the murder of people of color; the need for environmental sustainability – since no one wants to see our region under water because we did not act to innovate/change how we build and power our homes, create communities and re-use materials, etc.); the need to prepare for the tech-heavy economy that is emerging and the workforce it requires; the need to address racial equity in the face of active protests, etc.). Raising these larger adaptive challenges shifts people out of inertia and helps hasten their sense of urgency to act since the scale of these challenges cannot be ignored. It also helps people see the opportunity of this moment – that we can actually do some transformative systems change work.

- **Use your adaptive challenge as the “villain in the story” rather than rich or poor people, developers, policymakers or other common antagonists.** In every story, there is a need to help people understand the barriers between the good that we seek and realities of what we’re seeing. Unfortunately so much of our messaging ends up getting “stuck” in the “who done it” frame, that we miss the bigger opportunity to point people toward systems and structures. We are battling structural racism and greed embodied in powerful systems, structures and institutions. But labeling and vilifying specific groups or people (especially in the housing space where it takes so much collective effort to change systems) just doesn’t get us very far. Get out of that blame game. If we go after one person, rather than the structures they represent, we’re missing the call of this moment. Position the adaptive challenge as our “villain” and enable a wider range of stakeholders see their stake in adapting our systems to be more equitable, inclusive, anti-racist, and sustainable.



NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT

NAME THE MOMENT WE ARE IN AND HELP PEOPLE

EMBRACE THE URGENCY FOR BOLD DECISIVE ACTION

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- The world around us is changing rapidly, presenting us with the most complex set of issues facing our region in more than a generation. ***This is a moment where we can advance policies that are truly transformative for our communities – for now and for the next generation of Bay area residents.***
- If we fail to step up on this issue, everything we love about the Bay Area is in jeopardy if we do not work together to develop effective ways to support our most important asset – our people.
- COVID-19 and the protests around the country for racial justice, have made it clear that we need our systems to operate better – especially our housing system. COVID-19 has created great urgency for us all to rethink the importance of our homes, our neighborhoods and our resources for wellness. The pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of the current housing system—fragile for tenants, who are struggling to socially distance and access online resources; fragile for some landlords, who are struggling to operate remotely and collect rents; fragile for our economy, which needs healthy workers who have a place to be safe but still engage in everyday activities; and fragile for already displaced people in our streets.
- As we face these complex challenges, how we respond in ***this moment matters***. These challenges will not be solved merely by simply building more housing nor by the creation a new housing program or yet another app. The long-term prosperity of our region will depend on our ability to adapt quickly as the environments around us become more challenging and complex (environmental degradation, health care capacity shortages, automation of our jobs and more). If we fail to act swiftly to prioritize housing for people most in need, we will lose our ability to protect the legacy of this region for our children.
- Regions function best when they benefit from strong collaborative, adaptive leaders. ***Today, we need those leaders (community residents, corporate, philanthropic, nonprofit and government leaders) to show up powerfully to help solve the region's toughest challenges. Housing is at the top of that list.*** It is urgent and it is a priority. Every survey of Bay Area residents consistently shows how critical housing is a priority. If we want to have a diverse region – where people from all walks of life, backgrounds, cultures, expertise and careers are welcomed, we have to work to ensure that there is space for them.



AMPLIFY

DON'T



Don't miss the opportunity to use values that already work to elevate housing justice and that can do the heavy lifting of carrying housing justice messages forward.

DO



Deploy and reinforce VALUES that have a demonstrated ability to connect people to Housing justice. Be creative in sharing these values in stories, personal narratives, art, spoken word, and everywhere there is an opportunity to pull people forward on this issue.



AMPLIFY

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

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Not all values are the same or inspire people to action. Research has shown that several values help people powerfully connect with housing justice issues.** To construct sample language here, we use the quantitative empirical research conducted by EMC Research in the spring of 2020 to test values that resonate in the Bay area as well as national research conducted on housing. We list here some of the top performing values across these research efforts. Our task is to amplify these values as much as we can – especially as part of our legislative advocacy work, where these values are likely to already be gaining traction and may be easily deployed.
- Values that been empirically demonstrated in the quantitative research to help shift public perspective have included:
 - ***The Legacy We Owe to Our Children*** (EMC Research)
 - ***Aspirational/Place Where People Are Free to Pursue Their Dreams and Plan for the Future*** (EMC Research)
 - ***People First*** (Lake Research)
 - ***Health & Wellbeing*** (EMC Research & Lake Research)
 - ***Interdependence*** (EMC Research & FrameWorks Institute)
 - ***Fairness Across Places*** (FrameWorks Institute)



AMPLIFY

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

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- *With a safe, stable place to call home, our children have a better chance of succeeding in school, getting a job, and building their own strong families here in the Bay Area. **We owe it to our children and the next generation to make sure that there is enough housing for them to stay, if they choose to.***
- ***No matter where you start, success in life starts at home for all ages and all people.** When we have safe, secure places to live, parents earn more, kids learn better, health and well-being improve, our communities are strengthened, and our region has the building blocks for a thriving region.*
 - *We all thrive when we can live near our place of work, reducing the stress on our existing infrastructure as well as reducing the time and expense of commuting. Less commuting can also leave more time for community, health and family.*
 - *We all thrive when we put people first – making sure that everyone in our region has a decent place to lay their heads at night. Whether you are a renter, homeowner or without a stable place, we know that a stable home anchors our health and provides the ladder for future success.*
 - *We all thrive when our children have a secure home. Research indicates that kids are more likely to succeed in school and have better job prospects in the future when they don't suffer the stress of wondering where they will sleep.*
 - *We all thrive when those of us who have complex health care needs can be supported where we live. People with secure homes can more consistently, safely and effectively receive care.*
 - *We all thrive when Bay area residents have strong pathways to building wealth whether they are renters or homeowners. In a world of uncertainty, we all need to build and pass on wealth, which can help break a cycle of poverty and improve life for everyone in our region.*
 - *We all thrive when we ensure our seniors are integrated into our local communities and can choose a place to live that meets their physical, cognitive and social needs.*



REFRAME

DON'T

✗ Don't assume that all Bay Area residents understand what they are losing because we have a housing system that fails to address the needs of so many people across the region.

DO



Reframe the conversation by reminding people of what they lose if they fail to join our housing justice movement and position their hope/ goals /aspirations as the things being lost in the failures of the current system.



REFRAME

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

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Our values at the top of our messaging helps people to understand what they “gain” from being part of our movement. But we haven’t explained the consequences of their inaction on this. That is, what is it that they lose if they fail to support our work. People are used to thinking about what they might “lose” if the region has more affordable housing, but they don’t do much thinking about what happens if we don’t offer better housing options. This reframing highlights the consequences of inaction and triggers loss aversion in our favor.** If housing is a “predictor” of outcomes, we need to highlight the consequences of ignoring the housing needs of people in our region. Here our narrative is clear about the challenges that we face if we continue to put housing on the backburner.

- **This narrative makes it clear that the negative consequences of not prioritizing housing as an issue, are borne by ALL of us, not just the people who are struggling to find affordable housing.** Here, we project the negative consequences of our inaction and inattention to housing onto the broader collective. If the negative consequences of not providing more affordable housing across the region continue to be seen as only a problem for some but not others, there’s no collective stake in solving this issue (especially those who see themselves as having stable housing already).



REFRAME

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

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- *As we look ahead to our future, one thing is certain. **If we do not plan today for the housing needs of the people in our communities – the people that make this region what it is – we will lose what we value about living here.** Times have changed:*
 - *technology is automating the jobs many of us depend on to pay rent or mortgages;*
 - *the demographics of our region are changing rapidly, forcing us to rethink the types of housing we need versus what is being built today;*
 - *our environmental concerns are elevated, forcing us to rethink how we adaptively re-use materials to help sustain our planet and the beauty of the Bay;*
 - *our values around equity and inclusivity are stronger, meaning that we have no interest in policies that recreate racially and economically divided neighborhoods across our region.*
- *The simple truth is that we haven't built enough homes to keep up with the demand over the last decade. This means we now have more people trying to find homes they can afford near transit, their jobs, and good schools. **The consequences of our inattention on this issue is that it is driving up costs for everybody and we simply cannot afford to ignore this issue anymore. It costs all of us too much to ignore the housing crisis. Everyday that we don't all lean forward to solve this, makes the situation even worse. Let's just solve it already!***
- *By failing to locate new housing or to preserve homes that people from all walks of life can afford around transit and business corridors, **we are undermining our region's success and recreating divisions that weaken our collective strength.***



CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE

DON'T



Don't assume that people will readily support solutions to housing that center equity simply because they recognize and voice angst about the growing economic and racial divide.

DO



Center equity in all messaging and (where possible) socialize new narratives that position equity as the pathway to justice and liberation (as end goals).



CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE

CENTER EQUITY IN ALL MESSAGING AND (WHERE POSSIBLE) SOCIALIZE NEW NARRATIVES THAT POSITION EQUITY AS THE PATHWAY TO JUSTICE AND LIBERATION (AS END GOALS).

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Equity is an important concern of the people who live in this region. While national messaging research has shown that we must be careful in how we lift up the history of exclusionary policies and structural racism, we must acknowledge this! Acknowledging the exclusionary policies that have worked to the detriment of many groups of people across the region is an important part of shifting the conversation. The key is to address this quickly and then, position efforts to address housing as being intentionally about tackling equity and ultimately, liberation of our communities from perpetual hardship.** A narrative that is convincing on the issue of equity has to acknowledge how we arrived here (i.e. many of the policies and investments of the past have made it impossible for residents to hold onto their homes and the communities they've helped to build). This narrative allows us to do that (acknowledge the past) and position the push to prioritize housing as an explicit equity play in the context of the current environment).
- **This narrative locates the racial and economic disparities IN POLICIES AND SYSTEMS, not in the individual failings of people or their lack of budgeting skills.** Having a narrative that effectively addresses equity must be embedded in a broader discussion about systems (policies, investments, programs, services, etc.). This narrative works because – while it raises negative conditions of low-income people and people of color with respect to housing – the focus of the failure is centered in systems. This systems conversation doesn't negate the need to feature people in our narratives, it just means that we locate the source of the problem in our systems. This helps avoid the unfortunate backfires that can happen when we raise issues of vulnerability of some groups in our community but fail to explicitly connect that vulnerability to harmful intentional policies of the past.



CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE

CENTER EQUITY IN ALL MESSAGING AND (WHERE POSSIBLE) SOCIALIZE NEW NARRATIVES THAT POSITION EQUITY AS THE PATHWAY TO JUSTICE AND LIBERATION (AS END GOALS).


SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- ***Our work to expand, improve and diversify the mix of homes across our region is a critical part of an intentional effort to advance equity and inclusion in our region.*** We simply cannot ignore the context of how we arrived at this moment. We have to acknowledge the harm and mistrust that past housing policies created – racially and economically segregating many parts of our region, denying homeownership opportunities to people who work for and deserve those opportunities, displacing people from neighborhoods that they have culturally cultivated, reinforcing economic inequities through wholesale disinvestment in neighborhoods that desperately needed critical resources for wellness. The result is that people of color are over-represented among the homeless, those most impacted by the lack of affordable housing, job and health inequalities. We cannot undo the past, but we can redesign the policies of the past. We can also make investments in housing so that people from all walks of life have affordable places to live and are able to enjoy the benefits of our growing, prosperous region.
- ***We refuse to leave behind entire neighborhoods, communities and groups of people as our region thrives. The investment in housing is a way to create thriving, diverse and inclusive communities across our entire region.*** Our success in this effort will be judged in part by our ability to foster greater social, racial, and economic inclusion. That's why we are making an intentional effort to measure (with data and metrics) our ability to expand housing opportunities to a wide range of people across our region. ***We want to measure equity concretely and to show a real commitment to addressing the inequities of the past. We do not plan to take old inequities into the future of the Bay Area. We see and envision a different, more equitable way forward and are working to dismantle the unjust systems that keep people in a perpetual cycle of hardship.***




ATTACH

DON'T

 Don't assume that educating Bay Area residents about the housing challenges facing the region, renters or poor people will bring in new champions from other sectors and motivate them to action.

DO

 Associate housing with existing narratives in other sectors that hold promise for expanding our coalition. Connect housing to related narratives in racial justice, health, education, transportation, and climate change (for starters).



ATTACH

ASSOCIATE HOUSING WITH EXISTING NARRATIVES IN OTHER SECTORS THAT HOLD PROMISE FOR EXPANDING OUR COALITION

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Where applicable, seize the moment to attach housing solutions to messaging already in circulation in the health, racial and economic justice movements.** For example, in health equity the messaging around zip code as a predictor of health outcomes, is very easily and usefully applied to housing. The same kind of connections are useful on racial and economic equity issues.
- **Telling stories of interdependence is one of the most powerful casemaking techniques we can deploy to connect housing constructively to other sectors and movements at this moment.** Vivid and authentic stories about the ways in which we are all connected, our fates are intertwined, and our prosperity shared – are all important stories to lift up. This is especially important as we try to lift broader support (policies, investments, services) for those Bay Area residents most in need. When people are reminded consistently of their deep connection and reliance on others who are also in need, it helps them to see their stake in helping others.



ATTACH

ASSOCIATE HOUSING WITH EXISTING NARRATIVES IN OTHER SECTORS THAT HOLD PROMISE FOR EXPANDING OUR COALITION

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- Your zip code or the place where you live, whether you own or you rent, powerfully serves up your shot at success. Everyone should have a “shot” at creating the life they envision. They shouldn’t be denied that because we failed to grow the availability of accessible and affordable homes in our region.
- America needs a resilient healthcare system. COVID-19 reminded us how reliant we are on each other for our survival. Whether it is the doctors and nurses at our hospitals or the cooks and food delivery workers who enable our ability to shelter-in-place, we are all connected. Whether it is the home health aides who care for our aging parents or our children’s teachers who soldiered on through distance learning, we are leaning hard on each other at this moment. **Let’s face it - our health depends on their health; likewise our housing stability often depends on the housing stability of a great many workers across our region. Let’s not let them down!**

- No matter where we live or how we found ourselves in the Bay Area, having a safe, stable place to come home to the foundation for our wellbeing and mental health; it’s where we celebrate our good times and recover from the rest. **But today, because many of our systems have not been designed with an equity lens, too many of us are left merely surviving in unhealthy environments or under the threat that one unforeseen problem will have us out on the street. Far too many neighborhoods lack the pathways to opportunity to the critical resources that would allow them to build wealth, connect to resources for wellness, and pursue their aspirations. For people to be and stay well both physically and mentally, for children to grow and elders to flourish, we need to ensure that all of us has housing we can count on. Our region prospers most, when we all prosper.**
- Homelessness is solvable and our response to COVID has powerfully shown us that it is not inevitable. Many of the cities in our region have offered new options for people to shelter-in-place, proving that when we put our minds to something, we can solve it. Let’s not return to the cynicism or policies of the past but move more fully into the awareness of what is possible. We can and we must, make policy choices that treat shelter as a basic human need not a privilege for some.



MOBILIZE

DON'T



Don't turn away collaborators and would-be allies by only welcoming those who are **already** completely on the same page. Recognize the need to call new champions to our cause.

DO



Call together a broad-based coalition of renters and others who are deeply supportive of renter stability policies. Reach way beyond the usual set of partners to support renters. Help more people see their stake in this issue.



MOBILIZE

CALL TOGETHER A BROAD-BASED COALITION OF RENTERS AND OTHERS SUPPORTIVE OF RENTER STABILITY POLICIES

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Building a more inclusive coalition requires us to help people see THEIR way into this issue and by helping them relate a wide range of issues that they care about, to housing. Housing is inherently foundational – it involves economic development, education, workforce development, foster care, and much more. Help people see their concerns in it.** Our ability to mobilize people is strengthened as we connect housing to the central concerns of the people we are talking to. Take the time to connect housing to a wide range of other issues that need resolution in our communities, so that others see housing as foundational as we do.
- **This narrative reframes the conversation about housing into one about people's aspirations – connecting it to the positive things that people aspire to be or want to have.** By starting with the positive outcomes that housing determines, drives and shapes, we help connect people to things they actually want – economic mobility, longer life, freedom, new businesses, etc., we are able to mobilize more people to action.
- **This narrative puts housing back in the driver's seat!** It is difficult to get people to prioritize housing when they don't see it as a driver of outcomes that matter most to them. They see jobs, education and a host of other things as drivers of their success. So our task is to consistently position housing as a driver of outcomes that show up or shape the quality of our lives. If housing is a driver, then the focus on it as a “thing” to be fixed, solved, addressed, etc., becomes necessary for our success. Help residents across the region see housing as a shaping force that drives important outcomes across the region. Help people see that an investment in housing (as an input) can be the catalyst for a better region (better outcomes) in other areas of our lives (jobs, talent retention, health, infrastructure, education, social justice, etc.).



MOBILIZE

CALL TOGETHER A BROAD-BASED COALITION OF RENTERS AND OTHERS SUPPORTIVE OF RENTER STABILITY POLICIES

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- *Whether we find ourselves renting or as homeowners, having a “home base” or a place to dream, aspire, plot and plan our direction, is key to the success of the people across our region. We all benefit when the Bay area remains a place where people have a place to pursue the things that matter most to them.*
- *Whether we pay rent or a mortgage, we all want a stable place to call home. We are all invested in the future of our communities and our future is only certain when we work together to support policies that benefit everybody – renters AND homeowners – no exceptions.*
- *Let’s face it. The availability and affordability of quality homes across our region determines so much of our future. That’s because where we live shapes every aspect of our lives. It affects how we connect to jobs, schools, cultural events and resources as well as how grow our talents, skills and opportunities for advancement.*
- *Having a home in a thriving neighborhood means everything – it predicts the likelihood of our economic mobility (or our ability to support our families in the long-run). It predicts the likelihood of having longer life expectancy – giving some in our region a decade more time to spend with their loved ones than others. It often shapes our aspirations, our ability to plan, to start new businesses, and or things like, the freedom to pursue a professional degree. We all want the opportunity to thrive, to plan for the future, to position our children and families for success in their own lives. It’s up to all of us to ensure that nobody gets left out of that opportunity. Join us to help ensure that we do that.*
- *We benefit so much from the contributions of our cultural and workforce diversity, now we need systems in place that explicitly work to expand and diversity the housing options available in the region.*



COUNTER

DON'T



Don't avoid tackling misinformation that is making it difficult for Bay Area residents to see the imperative of housing justice.

DO



Be careful to identify narratives that can be countered to decrease the impact of misinformation, skewed data, and unhelpful detractors. Counter by undermining the logic, legitimacy, or veracity of the arguments that undergird them.

COUNTER

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

WHY THIS MATTERS

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **We must always be careful not to engage in direct tit-for-tat messaging – that often serves to repeat and reinforce the misinformation that we are trying to counter. Instead, this strategy is about getting out in front of misinformation that can be useful redirected. In particular, our research suggested that we can productively counter the popular misconception that personal finance and budgeting is a solution or a solve for what we are experiencing in housing.** The challenges in housing have very personal outcomes but ultimately are macro-level, systems issues that can only be solved at that level. Helping people remember that, even before they voice this misconception, allows us to render it powerless before it gets voiced.
- **In the next section we specific identify the areas where our strategy is to avoid or pivot the most harmful dominant narratives and negative disruptors.**
- **Counter the prominent bedtime story (“I was lucky enough to buy my home when this area was affordable”), by reminding people that, when good policies are put into place, more people are able to “get lucky” and find housing that fits their needs and budgets.** The question becomes, how can we ensure that **all** Bay area residents feel “lucky” to live here because we have done the work to put systems in place that help them take care of their families, advance their careers, feel connected to all parts of our region, and take care of themselves and loved ones?
- **We need to counter the popular idea that the Bay Area has a failed record on affordable housing by pointing to policies that HAVE worked.** While it is true that the affordable housing crisis has been exacerbated by the lack of policies that address the scale of the need in the area, people also need to be reminded of how good policies have made a difference for many in the Bay Area.

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

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- You shouldn't have to be "lucky" to find a decent place to live in our region. Seniors shouldn't have to be "lucky" that they bought their homes early enough to benefit from their investments nor should seniors who are renters have to move away, simply because few options exist for them to stay in the region. Millennials who work in our region shouldn't have to be "lucky" to find an affordable rental or be forced to leave the Bay Area when they are ready to own a home simply because, so few options exist for them here. Families shouldn't be crammed into studios made for students or single adults, simply because they were not "lucky enough" to find rental homes that meets their needs. **When we make better housing policies and our housing system operates better, we don't leave the survival of so many people to chance or "luck". Our systems should help us plan for and provide the critical things that people actually need to live, work and thrive here.**
- **We also have a long track record of preserving existing homes and working to keep them affordable.** In a typical year, around 20 percent of all new rental homes built in the region receive some sort of assistance to make them affordable. With even more focused effort and support, we could improve and scale up the assistance available to people across the Bay Area. In our region, we've made great strides in preventing families and individuals from losing their homes—and, our goal has been to quickly reconnect people to stable homes, if they do lose their homes. A regional plan, launched in 2019, to expand the diversity, availability and accessibility of homes in our region would help put our region back on its feet. **If the recommendations and asks of each community across our region are achieved, we could see up to a 50 percent reduction in families experiencing homelessness and the near elimination of veteran homelessness. That's not all that is possible. We can do so much more, but we need your help to do it. [Note: The data shown here are meant as exemplars of language. Actual data reflecting Bay Area trends is needed here.]**



PIVOT & AVOID

DON'T

X Don't assume that all negative information or narratives can be easily countered or overcome in the short-term. Don't waste time trying to counter narratives or negative disruptors that are too ideologically rooted.

DO



Build a long-term strategy for unseating powerful dominant narratives. In the short-term, refuse to engage or trigger counter-productive narratives that “other” or blame people for their circumstances. Practice consistent ways to avoid these narratives and pivot back to system change.

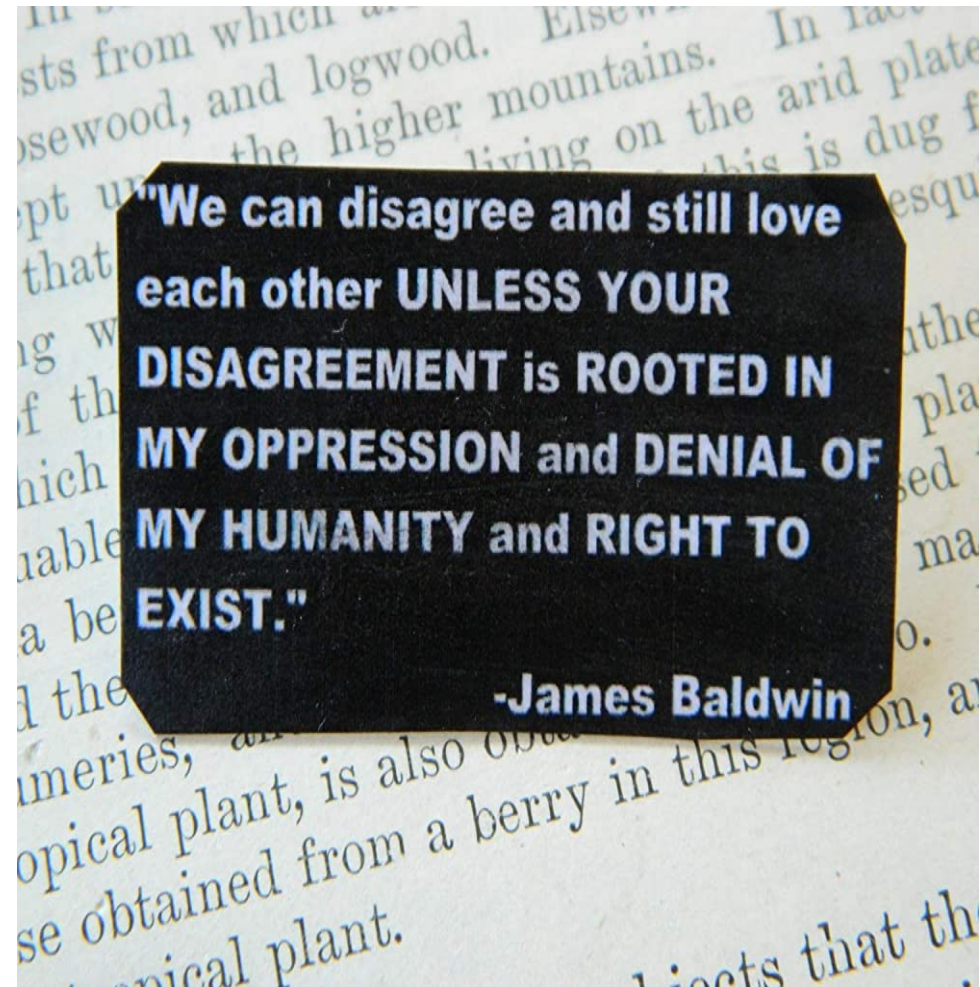


PIVOT & AVOID

REFUSE TO ENGAGE AND PIVOT AROUND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES AND NEGATIVE DISRUPTORS.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **There are some dominant narratives that are so counter-productive and disruptive, that we need to simply avoid them or pivot around them.** In the community voice sessions that we conducted as part of this project, several narratives and negative disruptors emerged consistently that made it more difficult to mobilize residents to action. Some were simply distractions or negative disruptors. Those we recommend that people simply pivot from, by using a bridging statement. Here are a few examples of bridging statements:
 - *Yes, I share your concern for our community, that's why I believe...[shared value]*
 - *You put a number of big issues on the table and to me, it all comes back to...[shared value]*
 - *Yes, about 10 years ago I would have said the same thing but so much has changed [adaptive challenge] and here's what changed how I see this...[shared value]*





PIVOT & AVOID

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

Pivot

Away From These Negative Disruptors

Negative Disruptor: Drugs, Mental Health and Homelessness. *Homelessness is about drug addiction and mental health. It cannot be solved with housing and that's why I can't support more housing in my neighborhood for the homeless.*

Negative Disruptor: High Wages. *It costs a lot to live in the Bay Area because the wages are higher than in other parts of the country. Teachers, fire fighters, nurses and other workers in this area make more than in any other part of the country. High housing costs come with the territory.*

Negative Disruptor: We Can't Solve This. *The system is rigged. We can't solve housing issues in the Bay Area because the people with all the resources, money and privilege have no stake in making sure we all get a shot at success. They lobby and buy out our government, so our voices never get heard. You are fooling yourself if you think things will ever change.*

Narrative of Separate Fates (Renters vs. Homeowners).

Renters have more rights than homeowners. Have you ever tried to evict somebody out of your rental? Being a good landlord doesn't pay and it hasn't paid for quite some time.


Avoid

These Dominant Narratives

Narratives of Mobility & Individual Responsibility. *If people cannot afford to live in the Bay area, I'm sorry but they will just have to move. We are full and we don't have room for people who can't pay their own way.*

Narrative of Separate Fates. *We are all better off if we move renters out of the Bay Area and get more homeowners. Homeowners take care of their homes because they have a stake in its upkeep. Renters only run down the neighborhood and then move on.*

Narrative of Racial and Economic Difference. *I don't have anything against renters per se, but I just think rental units bring a different class (or race) of people and I just don't think they'd feel welcomed here. But I totally support more housing for them in other parts of the region. There are some really great neighborhoods where they might feel more at home.*

A close-up photograph of a child's hands, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, working with dough. The child is using a yellow, wavy-edged cookie cutter to press shapes into a large, flat piece of light-brown dough. The dough is laid out on a dark surface that has been dusted with white flour. Several other yellow cookie cutters, including heart and star shapes, are scattered in the upper left corner. The scene is brightly lit, highlighting the texture of the dough and the flour.

Putting It All Together: Message Template

To elevate this conversation among our supporters and to bring in new champions, we'll need to be strategic about how to make the case for housing justice. This template is meant to be a helpful general guide as we carefully navigate many audiences in a very dynamic social and political environment.

OUR BASE (Existing Supporters)

**NAME POWER
OF THIS
MOMENT**



AMPLIFY



**CENTER EQUITY &
SYSTEM CHANGE**



**OFFER TOOLS &
RESOURCES**



MOBILIZE



YOUR ASK AND CALL-TO-ACTION

- **Take Action with Us:** Get involved. Come out and advocate with us for housing justice. Volunteer to help us create and preserve more housing. Contribute ideas or resources.

NEW CHAMPIONS (Persuadables & Bystanders)

**NAME POWER
OF THIS
MOMENT**



ATTACH



or

REFRAME



**CENTER EQUITY &
SYSTEM CHANGE**



COUNTER



MOBILIZE



YOUR ASK AND CALL-TO-ACTION

- **Take Action with Us:** Get involved. Advocate for housing solutions. Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more affordable housing. Contribute ideas or resources.

CONTRARIANS (Opposition)

**NAME POWER
OF THIS
MOMENT**



REFRAME



**CENTER EQUITY &
SYSTEM CHANGE**



**PIVOT &
AVOID**



YOUR ASK AND CALL-TO-ACTION

- **Put People First:** Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more housing, in your neighborhood and across the region. Invest in better housing solutions for our region.

**NAME POWER
OF THIS
MOMENT**



The world around us is changing rapidly and we are facing the most complex challenges we have had to tackle in more than a generation. COVID-19 and the protests for racial justice, have made it clear – we need our systems to operate better. That includes our housing system. This is an important moment for the future of the Bay Area and how we respond in this moment matters.

AMPLIFY



One of the smartest investments we can make is to secure a foundation of strong communities and stable homes for all. We owe it to our children and the next generation of Bay area residents not to saddle them a housing system that puts them in a perpetual cycle of hardship - especially renters who are often struggling hardest to stay in safe, affordable housing.

**CENTER EQUITY &
SYSTEM CHANGE**



Let's face it. The root cause of most of what we're seeing today is a housing system built on a toxic combination of structural racism and greed. The important work we are doing in housing is an intentional effort to undo and dismantle those structures. Our work to expand, improve and diversify the mix of homes across our region is a critical part of an intentional effort to acknowledge the harm past policies and make investments in housing so that those who have been mostly negatively impacted by those structures, are today able to enjoy the benefits of our growing, prosperous region. If we fail to prioritize housing for people most in need, we all lose the ability to protect the legacy of this diverse region for our children and for generations to come.

**OFFER TOOLS &
RESOURCES**



It doesn't have to be this way. There are dozens of real-world examples that we can draw from, as we work to balance the need for continued economic prosperity in our region AND provide housing stability for renters. Can we share some examples of what works?

MOBILIZE



If YOU show up, to help us hold our leaders accountable for the balance we need, (protection, preservation, production, and more), it would make ALL the difference. It would give our kids a fighting chance at a real future here.

**YOUR ASK AND
CALL-TO-ACTION**



Can we count on you take action with us? Get involved. Advocate for housing solutions. Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more affordable housing. Contribute ideas or resources.

**NAME POWER
OF THIS
MOMENT**



The world around us is changing rapidly and we are facing the most complex challenges we have had to tackle in more than a generation. COVID-19 and the calls for racial justice, have made it clear – we need our systems to operate better. That includes our housing system. This is an important moment for the future of the Bay Area and how we respond in this moment matters.

ATTACH



Ensuring that a diverse mix of homes is available at all price points across our region is one of the smartest investments we can make for our children. This investment in our region pays dividends that our region desperately needs in times like this – it strengthens our resources for wellness, it improves our competitive advantage in a national economy that is rapidly changing, and it helps us end the long legacy of disinvestment in neighborhoods that we can no longer afford to leave behind.

**CENTER EQUITY &
SYSTEM CHANGE**



As we look ahead to our future, one thing is certain. Our children won't get very far if we do not plan for their housing needs and the needs of the people in our communities – the people that make this region what it is. If we fail to act swiftly to prioritize housing for people most in need, we all lose the ability to protect the legacy of this diverse region for our children and for the next generation. No one thrives if we price out our children – many of whom are renters, want to stay in the Bay Area, but do not see real options to stay. No one wins if they take their talent and skills to other cities, at a time when we need the ingenuity that often comes from youth. No one wins if fail to provide renters with more stability and offer them real pathways to build wealth, own homes or create stable families here.

COUNTER



It doesn't have to be this way. Contrary to what some believe, we actually do have a long track record of preserving affordable housing and keeping them affordable in the Bay Area but the sheer scale of growth we've experienced in the last 15 years means that our efforts needs more scale. We know what works but we need more people like you, leaning forward to help.

MOBILIZE



If YOU show up, to help us hold our leaders accountable for the balance we need, (protection, preservation and production), it would make ALL the difference. It would give our kids a fighting chance at a real future here.

**YOUR ASK AND
CALL-TO-ACTION**



Can we count on you to help? Get involved. Advocate for housing solutions. Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more affordable housing. Contribute ideas/resources.

CONTRARIANS (Opposition)

Messaging Example: WE OWE IT TO OUR CHILDREN AND THE NEXT GENERATION TO FIX HOUSING IN THE BAY AREA

NAME POWER OF THIS MOMENT



The world around us is changing rapidly and we are facing the most complex challenges we have had to tackle in more than a generation. COVID-19, the changing economic climate and the need to address calls for racial justice, are critically important. They make it clear that we'll strong and resilient systems to operate better than they ever have to ensure the future of the Bay Area. How we respond in this moment matters.

ATTACH



In the Bay Area today, we enjoy vibrant neighborhoods and a dynamic economy—built on quality of life, a highly skilled workforce, a diverse population—that give us a strong competitive advantage, nationally and internationally. Our local businesses attract dedicated employees, our colleges and universities recruit high-caliber talent, and our neighborhoods are full of sites with historic preservation designation. But it is our homes and the people in them, that provide the foundation of our flourishing communities. They power our economy and provide the basis for the engine of our region's economy.

CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE



If we fail to act swiftly to prioritize housing for people most in need, we all lose the ability to protect the legacy of this diverse region for our children and for the next generation. No one thrives if we price out our children – many of whom are renters, want to stay in the Bay Area, but do not see real options to stay. No one wins if they take their talent and skills to other cities, at a time when we need the ingenuity that often comes from youth. No one wins if fail to provide renters with more stability and offer them real pathways to build wealth, own homes or create stable families here.

PIVOT & AVOID



We simply believe that people shouldn't have to be “lucky” to find a decent place to live in our region. When we make better housing policies and our housing system operates better, we don't leave the survival of so many people to chance or “luck”. Our systems should help us plan for and provide the critical things that people actually need to live, work and thrive here.

YOUR ASK CALL- TO-ACTION



Can we count on you to put people first? Volunteer with organizations (like Habitat for Humanity) that are working to create and preserve more housing, in your neighborhood and across the region. Help us invest in better housing solutions for all in our region.



Putting It All Together: Longer Overall Examples

Message Example #1: Our Base

A JUST ECONOMY MAKES HOUSING ESSENTIAL FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

FOOD. WATER. MEDICINE. BLANKETS. HOME?

These are the essential elements we think about for emergency response and relief. But to get those supplies where they're needed—and to identify who needs them most—essential workers, governments, and health practitioners need something else: the housing that keeps them showing up for work.

The availability, affordability and accessibility of housing in the Bay Area will be in increasing demand, even as we face a severe shortage already. With climate change leading to more frequent, more severe natural disasters, and other emergencies like COVID-19 reinforcing the need to stay close to our homes, we need a plan to ensure our health and wellbeing. People rely on their homes and its connectivity in their everyday lives, no matter where they live in our region. But are we making smart investments in housing to ensure that the people who live and work here, can afford to stay here?

[data point to be developed:] The number of essential workers in our region has increased by 640,000 since 2000 according to the 2015 Bay Area Workforce Housing Needs Assessment. Yet, the percentage of these workers who can afford a place to live here has steadily declined – at the very moment when we need them the most.

As our region tries to recover from the latest set of crises, let's refuse to jeopardize the health and wellbeing of essential workers. Let's refuse to leave behind entire neighborhoods, communities and groups of people as our region thrives.

Let's refuse to take old inequities into the future of the Bay Area. Instead let's envision a different, more equitable way forward where we prioritize the health and wellbeing of all workers. Let's work to dismantle the unjust systems that keep people in our region, in a perpetual cycle of hardship.

Let's choose to imagine a day where the essential workers in our region aren't shuffling to find places to live; aren't driving a ridiculous number of hours commuting; aren't flipping into and out of homes because of rising costs; aren't separated from their loved ones; or sleeping on floors, on our sidewalks, in front of our stores, or in cars and garages.

The housing problem in the Bay area is no laughing matter. If you're connected to this region in any way, it's a guarantee that you know somebody who's been adversely affected by the severe shortage of affordable places to live here. These are the people that make the Bay what it is, and they struggle to find afford, and hold on to, suitable places to live. The solutions aren't easy, but they exist. We've done a great job of conserving the beauty of the Bay, our open space and our history. Now let's put that energy into preserving our greatest asset: our people.

We all benefit when people across our region have access to the homes that keep them safe. And, we undermine our own health and wellbeing when we fail to provide what all of us need to thrive. Let's not be afraid to make smart investments in housing. It's our friends, co-workers, and neighbors who keep the Bay Area running, make it a great place to live, help us retain our workforce, support the business that are growing our economy, and shape the future of our region.

Take Action with Us: Get involved. Come out and advocate with us for housing justice. Volunteer to help us create and preserve more housing. Contribute ideas or resources.

Message Example #2: Our Persuadables

WE OWE IT TO OUR CHILDREN AND THE NEXT GENERATION TO FIX HOUSING

The world around us is changing rapidly and we are facing the most complex challenges we have had to tackle in more than a generation.

COVID-19 and the protests for racial justice, have made it clear – we need our systems to operate better. That includes our housing system. How we respond in this moment matters. One of the smartest investments we can make is to secure a foundation of strong equitable communities and stable homes for all. We owe it to the next generation of Bay area residents not to saddle them a housing system that puts them in a perpetual cycle of hardship.

Many of us love this area for the diversity, our vibrant neighborhoods, restaurants, strong economy, and our friends, family and neighbors who make the Bay what it is today. But it is our homes and the people in them, that provide the foundation of our neighborhoods. They power our economy, help us stay safe and connected as well as provide the basis for the engine of our region's economy.

But as we stare down a series of complex housing challenges, let's be clear that these challenges will not be solved merely by simply building more housing nor by the creation a new housing program or yet another app. The long-term prosperity of our region will depend on our ability to adapt quickly as the environments around us become more challenging and complex (environmental degradation, health care capacity shortages, automation of our jobs and more). If we fail to act swiftly to prioritize housing for people most in need, we will lose our ability to protect the legacy of this region for our children.

Housing is one of the smartest investments we can make because it pays dividends that our region desperately needs in times like this – it strengthens our resources for wellness, it improves our competitive

advantage in a national economy that is rapidly changing, and it helps us end the long legacy of disinvestment in neighborhoods that we can no longer afford to leave behind.

As we look ahead to our future, one thing is certain. We won't get very far if we do not plan for the housing needs of the people in our communities – the people that make this region what it is. In the long-run, no one thrives if we price out our children who have the talent and skills to strengthen our businesses. No one thrives if small businesses are forced to close their doors because their rents are too high, and they can't attract or retain a workforce. No one thrives if families struggle to put a roof over their heads and parents can't provide care for their children. No one thrives when we are divided based on race and class. This issue matters for all of us.

No matter where you live across the Bay area, we know that success in life starts at home for all ages and all people. When we have safe, secure places to live, parents earn more, kids learn better, health and well-being improve, our communities are strengthened, and our region has the building blocks for a thriving region.

Today, we need leaders from all walks of life (community residents, corporate, philanthropic, nonprofit and government leaders) to **show up powerfully to help solve the region's toughest challenges. Housing is at the top of that list. It is urgent and it is a priority. Every survey of Bay Area residents consistently shows how critical housing is a priority. That's in part because we all know that we are failing the next generation if we fail to make sure that there is enough decent, stable and affordable housing for them to thrive here.**

Take Action with Us: Get involved. Advocate for housing solutions. Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more affordable housing. Contribute ideas or resources.

Message Example #3: Persuadable/ Contrarians

WE NEED THE ECONOMIC WIN THAT HOUSING CAN PROVIDE

[Note: The data shown here are meant as exemplars of language. Actual data reflecting Bay Area trends is needed here.]

We generate \$10.7 billion in new investments and 35,000 jobs for every 10,000 new homes we build in the Bay Area. We need the economic boom that housing can deliver, while creating critical, foundational opportunities for all of our neighbors -- Black, White, Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous -- to thrive!

Now more than ever before, we need the economic relief that an investment in growing the diversity, availability and accessibility of homes will bring to our region. With a recession looming, housing is one of the smartest investments we could make to ensure our future and it has the added benefit of helping us bring economic vitality, at a time when we need it most.

Over the next ten years, we know that the Bay Area will fall even further behind in the number of homes we need to meet the demands of our job market. By strengthening the partnerships needed to scale our capacity on all fronts - with legislators, local businesses (both large and small), lending institutions, nonprofits and community residents – we can get back on track and stop the .

The severe shortage of homes necessitates some upfront costs, but we have an opportunity to create long-term benefits from this investment in our region. Increased construction brings good jobs, produces additional revenue, and can stabilize home prices on the open market so we can

further target public resources to areas where the private market doesn't work effectively. In our region, we will realize an estimated \$10.7 billion in investments and support more than 35,000 jobs for each 10,000 additional homes we build.

Such a significant increase will be difficult to achieve without policy changes that allow and encourage increased production, such as regulatory reform, widespread implementation of best practices, and economic incentives. But even without an accelerated effort to build housing, we would still need to innovate our solutions and systemic responses to solve for the challenges we face on the housing front.

Fortunately, there are policy reforms already underway and innovative solutions that are now emerging. In addition, some counties are already making progress toward reducing costs. For example, several counties have reduced building permit fees for affordable projects, as well as offers density bonuses and financial incentives for the inclusion of affordable housing units. Reduced parking requirements and higher-density zoning are two other ways to reduce the cost of housing and we are moving in that direction. Alternative approaches to building codes, such as performance-based standards, offer further flexibility without lowering safety expectations. These and other important policy considerations are important efforts to develop thoughtful and effective responses to the housing challenges our region faces.

Left to its own devices, the market will not effectively solve the shortage of homes. We know that now. Without a focus on renter protections as well as a significant increase in production and preservation of affordable homes, the Bay area will remain behind the curve.

We're in a moment of opportunity to expand the alliance of partners across all sectors and from around the Bay area to invest today in the future of our region. Now is the time to take decisive action to build the Bay area's future. If not today, when?

Put People First: Volunteer with organizations working to create and preserve more housing, in your neighborhood and across the region. Invest in better housing solutions for our region.

Seize the Narrative Implementation

This playbook is one of many tools we'll be sharing to help seize the narrative in the Bay area and activate housing justice.

Look out for additional trainings, guides, toolkits, online content, and other resources that still lay ahead. The next phase of this work will likely include a one-stop shop for getting and sharing info – helping our coalition to share the ways that they are seizing the narrative, developing and sharing new content as well as diversifying the channels through which we share this information – arts, music, cultural events, and much more.



Our Journey to Shift the Narrative

Phase I

Discovery & Landscape Analysis

- **Convene a Collaborative Table:** Convene a collaborative table comprised of Bay area organizations working on housing justice to identify opportunities for short-term/long-term collaboration around narrative shift
- **Convene Narrative Experts as Advisors:** Work with narrative experts from the Bay & across the country to share best practices in narrative change, host workshops, & help us assess opportunities.
- **Assessing our Lay of the Land:** Surveys, facilitated table conversations, and one-on-ones
- **Deploying Best Practice:** Workshops & breakout sessions to identify how best practice guidance works in the Bay area & tap our coalition's expertise on opportunities, challenges, and ideas.

Phase II

Empirical Research Program

- **Literature Review of Polling Data in the Bay Area & our coalition feedback** (EMC Research)
- **Qualitative Research: Community Voice Sessions** (TheCaseMade)
- **Quantitative Research: Polling & Values Mapping** (EMC Research)
- **Coordination On Narrative Research:** As our Bay Area Shifting the Narrative project began, several other narrative shift research projects got underway. We've embraced the opportunity to coordinate closely with several of these projects, seeking to incorporate findings, leverage ideas, and identify value-add to our movement.

Phase III

Implementation & Recommendations

- **Share the Playbook & Embed Our Findings:** Extend the reach of our narrative work & support implementation
- **Support our Table & Networks with Consistent Content:** Provide message guides, toolkits and online resources to support housing justice work in our region.
- **Promote Creative, Innovative Ways to Amplify Housing Justice Narratives Into Public Discourse:** Implement a strategy to effectively engage media, influencers, and artists to reflect housing justice narratives.
- **New Research/Evaluation:** Use state-of-the-art research methods to better understand how to shape this new environment around racial equity.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS, PARTNERS & LEADERSHIP TEAM

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Our Partnering Consultants

EMC Research
Dr Tiffany Manuel (TheCaseMade)
M+R
Anat Shenker-Osorio
Kiara Nagel (Center for Story-Based Storytelling)

Our Leadership Team & Partner Organizations

The Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) is proud to anchor the Bay Area Narrative Shift work, in close collaboration with our Leadership Team:

East Bay Housing Organizations
Eastside Arts Alliance
PICO California
Working Partnerships USA
The San Francisco Foundation
TheCaseMade

Our Collaborative Table

ACCE
BARHII
East Bay Housing Organizations
Eastside Arts Alliance
Glad Tidings
Hamilton Families

Housing Leadership Council
Monument Impact
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
North Bay Organizing Project
PICO
Public Advocates

Sacred Heart Community Service
San Mateo Anti-Displacement Coalition
Tech Equity
The San Francisco Foundation
Urban Habitat
Working Partnership USA

We Welcome Collaborators.

To become more involved in this effort, contact:
alina@nonprofithousing.org or visit nonprofithousing.org

