

Housing Advocacy Bootcamp

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Tonight's Agenda

- I. Welcome, Introductions, and Overview
- II. Setting the Stage
- III. Barriers, Challenges, or Concerns [Activity]
- IV. How to Talk About Housing? Building Grassroots Support
- V. Power of a Personal Story
- VI. Practice Personal Story [Activity]
- VII. Tough Conversations
- VIII. Advocacy Tips and Tricks
- IX. Practice Supportive Testimony [Activity]
- X. Q & A + Closing



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to educate and engage communities and municipalities to advance diverse housing options.

We envision an ample supply of affordable, desirable housing throughout the seacoast region of New Hampshire and Maine, providing opportunities for members of the workforce and all families and individuals, to put down roots and create a more diverse and equitable community that benefits us all.

OUR WORK

We work with communities to support diverse housing options attainable to our workforce through community engagement, education, and technical assistance.



MISSION

The Kittery Housing Committee will seek options to make Kittery more affordable by researching and advancing policies and initiatives that will result in an increase in affordable housing supply for a wide array of residents.

Introductions

- Name
- Town
- What are you excited to learn about?



Setting The Stage

The Housing Glossary

- **“Little a” affordable housing:** Housing where no more than 30% of income goes to all-in housing costs (utilities, rent/mortgage, etc). Not tied to specific income.
- **“Capital A” Affordable Housing:** Specific programs that use the 30% rule and tie it to a specific area median income.
- **Workforce Housing:** Rental units affordable up to 100% of area median income and for-sale up to 120% of area median income
- **Market Rate Housing:** Housing with no restrictions, priced at what the market will support

The Housing Glossary

- **Naturally occurring affordable housing or attainable housing:** Diverse housing types that, generally, are more attainable for people at or below median area income (ex. ADUs, triplexes, manufactured housing)
- **Cost burdened and severely cost burdened:**



Households paying more than 30% for housing are "cost burdened"



Households paying more than 50% for housing are "severely cost burdened"

Housing Challenges: How Did We Get Here?

→ Economic conditions & influences

- ◆ Supply, demand, interest rates, COVID-19 migration

→ Demographic Shifts

- ◆ Smaller families, increase in single person households
- ◆ Desire to age in place
- ◆ Aging population

→ Local resistance to housing development

→ Some land use regulations that are overly restrictive and exclusive

Five L's of Housing Development



LUMBER
Materials,
Development costs



LABOR
Workforce
availability



LAND
Finite, but intensity
of use is variable



**Lending
Financing**



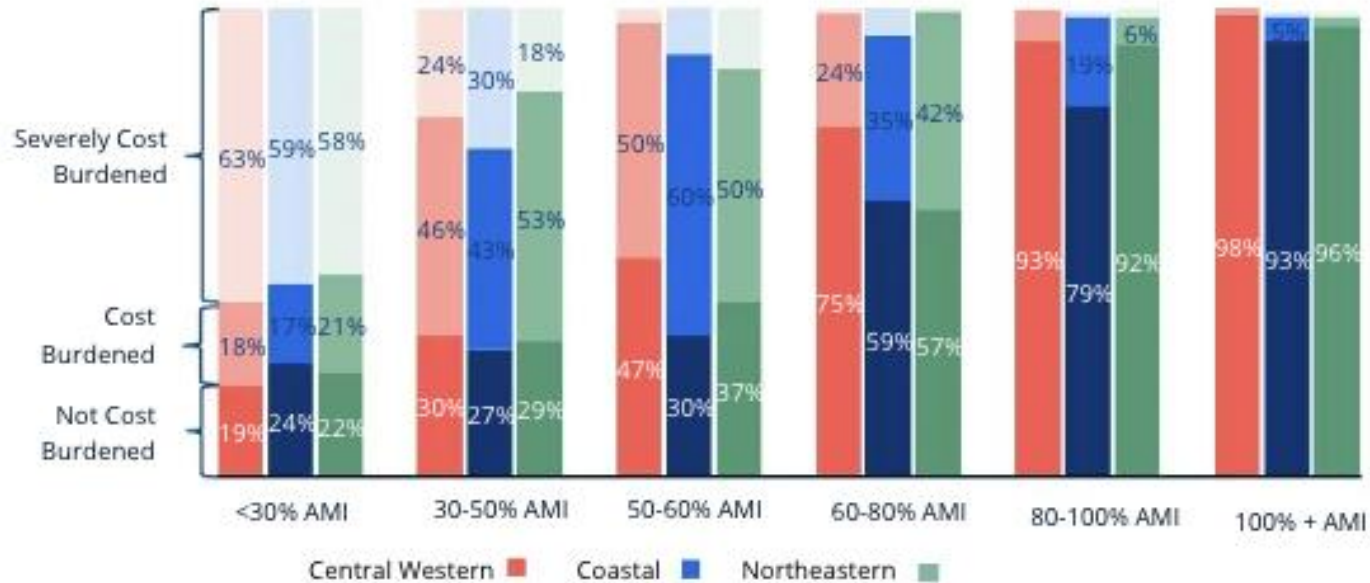
LAWS
Regulatory practices

Rental Affordability 2000 - 2021



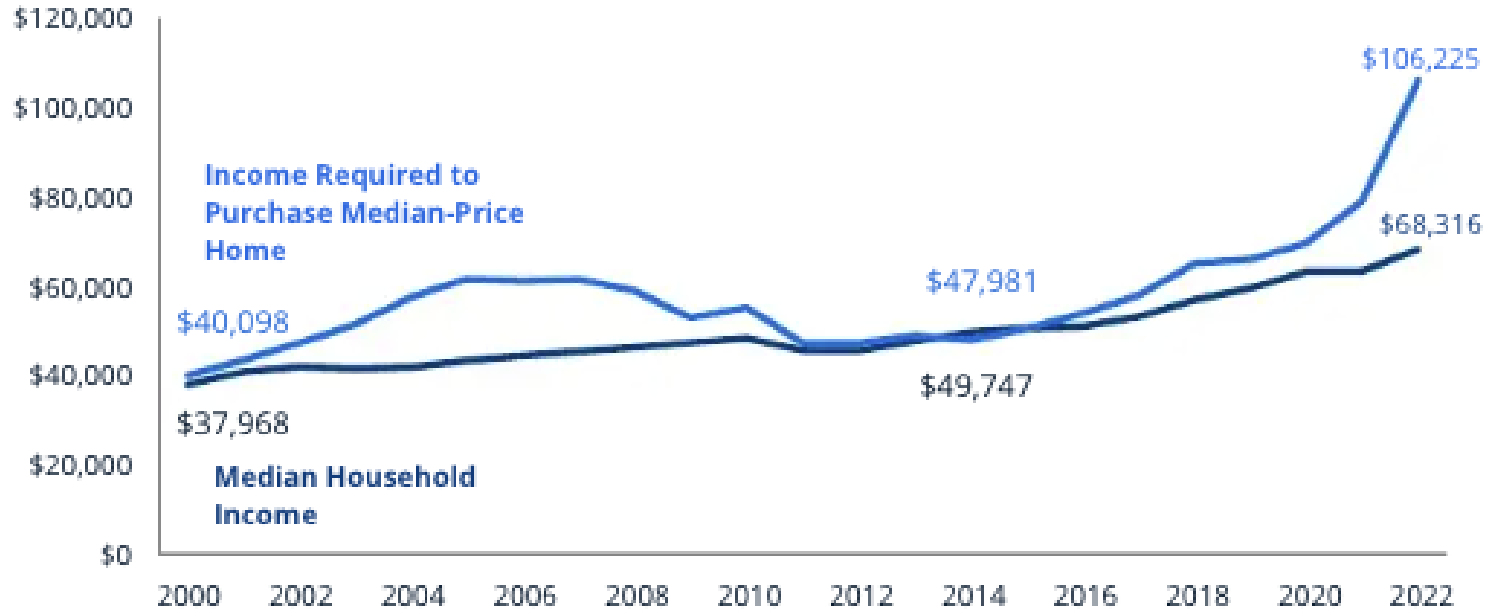
Source: State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, October 2023

Share of Renters Cost Burdened



Source: State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, October 2023

Median Income Needed For Purchase

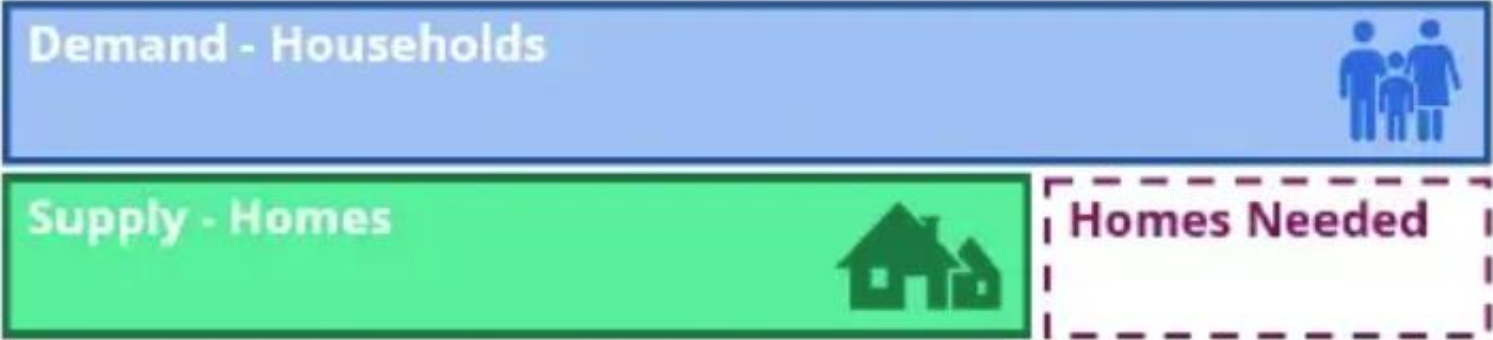


Source: State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, October 2023

Maine's Housing Need

84,000 Homes

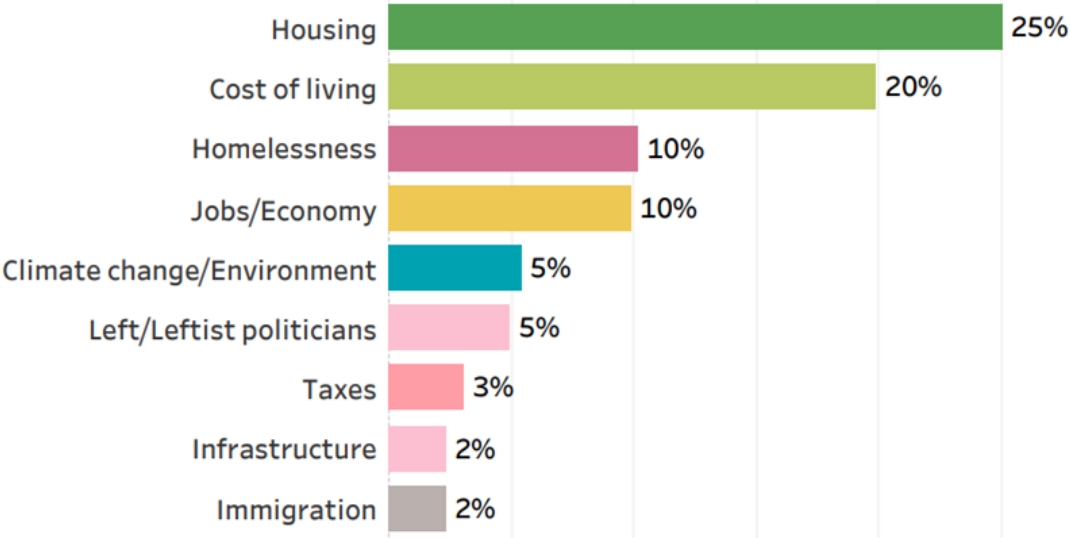
Maine needs an estimated 84,000 homes in the next seven years to accommodate existing population and projected growth.



Source: State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, October 2023

Housing Viewed As Most Important Problem

Most Important Problem Facing Maine - August 2023



Source: Pine Tree State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, August 2023

Activity!

Barriers, Challenges, and Concerns

BARRIERS, CHALLENGES, AND CONCERNS

**What have you heard
in your community?**

How to Talk About Housing

Building Grassroots Support

Building Grassroots Support

Step 1: Make Connections

- You're concerned about housing and eager to make a difference, but no one does this alone. **Make connections. What's happening in your community?**
- **Collect your community's "people infrastructure."** Talk with folks you know and initiate conversations with other potential allies or stakeholders.
 - ◆ Chambers of Commerce. Business leaders.
 - ◆ Allies in local government.
 - ◆ Community organizations like senior center or young professional networks.
- When making connections, **be curious and ask questions, leverage personal stories, and don't lead with solutions.**

Building Grassroots Support

Step 2: Identify the Problem

- **What concerns are being articulated?** Are businesses concerned about employees? Older residents looking to stay in the community? Younger people struggling to enter the community?
- **Identify existing resources and data.**
 - ◆ Master Plan, Regional Planning Commissions, Maine Housing.
- When opposition arises – and it almost always does – one of the first questions is why are we doing this? These stories and resources will help answer that question.

Building Grassroots Support

Step 3: Build the Team

- This group is dedicated to increasing conversation and taking action to support housing choice, availability, and affordability.
 - ◆ This can be formal (ex. municipal housing committee) or more informal (ex. neighborhood group)
- **Formulate an initial outline to guide the process.**
 - ◆ What are your goals? What do you want to accomplish?
 - ◆ How will the group communicate with each other?
 - ◆ How will you gather community input and collect feedback?

Building Grassroots Support

Step 4: Gather, Engage, and Educate

- **Provide opportunities for people to share their experiences and join the group.**
 - ◆ Invite experts to speak to various housing-related topics and share data.
 - ◆ Have fun! Combine housing related discussions with social time and food.
- **Be patient** – when done well this work can be slow and iterative.
- What you learn from the community at these gatherings will inform next steps and future engagement.

Examples of Community Engagement

Documentary Screenings and Book Clubs



Examples of Community Engagement

Walking and Bus Tours



Examples of Community Engagement

Listening Sessions



Building Grassroots Support

Step 5: Feedback and Communication

- Repeat steps 1 - 4 as needed, until the group is ready to move toward solutions. This process often progresses slowly with small wins and challenges along the way.
- Build in feedback loops so that participants have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the process.
- **Communicate with the greater community.** Progress moves at the speed of trust. Transparency builds trust and allows people to engage.

Building Grassroots Support

Step 6: Solutions

- **Solutions will be fueled by stories, perspectives, and data shared throughout engagement process.**
 - ◆ Is there a specific underutilized area of your community that continues to be a focus? Are you hearing that there is a need for more rental housing? Senior housing?
- As the key problem(s) becomes clear, it will be easier to formalize solutions.
- As you move to solutions, you will need to **identify the key decision makers, current political will, and communicate with a clear message.**

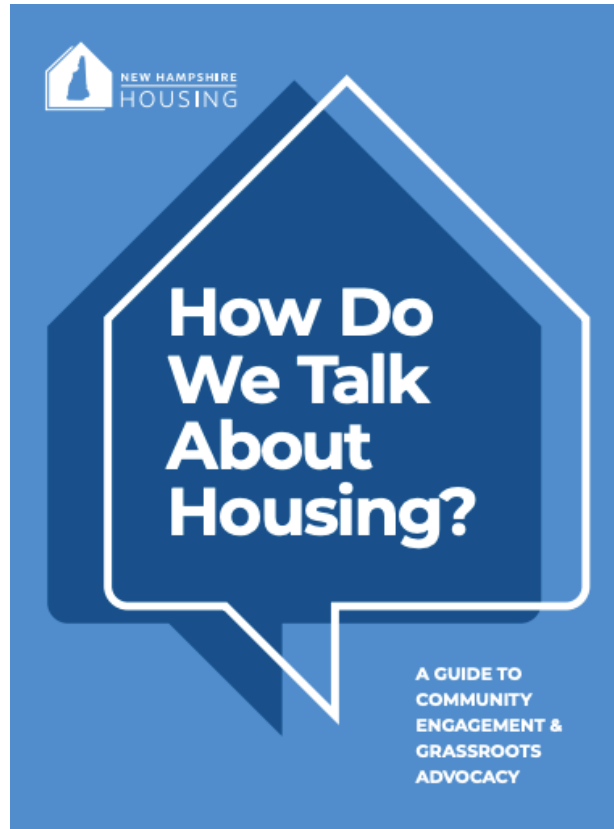
Building Grassroots Support

Step 7: Advocate and Vote

→ **The most well crafted zoning ordinance won't help if it's not enacted!**

- ◆ Continued engagement and outreach efforts are critical to success. Fear of change is a significant motivator.
- Utilize similar tactics to your initial grassroots outreach – meet with stakeholders, have conversations with neighbors and community leaders.
- **Go where the people are!**
 - ◆ Farmers markets, community events, senior centers, etc.

How Do We Talk About Housing Guide



Mythbusting

→ Building more housing is in conflict with environmental goals.

- ◆ Truth: Affordable housing and environmental concerns share a common opponent – sprawl!

→ Building more housing will lead to more kids and higher property taxes.

- ◆ Truth: The cost of an additional student is not the same as the cost of an average student. Many New England school districts are facing declining student enrollment.

→ Allowing more housing types will change the neighborhood.

- ◆ Truth: Many of the New England neighborhoods we love most were built prior to zoning and they fit right in. In the case of “missing middle housing” it’s about re-legalizing what we’ve always built.

Power of a Personal Story

FACT or FICTION Episode



[LINK](#)

Stories Humanize Policy

- It's human nature to use stories to convey information
- Personal stories are one of the best advocacy tools – **everyone has a story!**
- Sharing lived experiences helps people understand the **real-life impact policy will have.**



Effective Personal Stories

→ Effective personal stories tie personal experience to action

- ◆ **Introduction:** Introduce yourself and any relevant identities or information about yourself.
- ◆ **Challenge:** Describe the challenge faced
- ◆ **Solution:** What are you asking for?



Introduction

Goal: Establish relevance, credibility and tap into emotion.

Thank you for allowing me to testify tonight. I'm Nick Taylor and I live on Maple Street here in Kittery. I grew up in town, graduated from public schools, and now my wife and I really want to raise our family here. We love it here...



Introduction

Goal: Establish relevance, credibility and tap into emotion.

Establish relevance and credibility as a resident.

Thank you for allowing me to testify tonight. I'm Nick Taylor and I live on Maple Street here in Kittery. I grew up in town, graduated from public schools, and now my wife and I really want to raise our family here. We love it here...

Tap into emotion by sharing my personal desire to stay in town.

Challenge

Goal: Describe the challenge or barrier that is blocking the goal outlined in my introduction.

...But, right now, we cannot find housing that we can afford. We both work for community nonprofits and are currently living with friends while we search for housing. Everything is either too expensive or there's a dozen people asking as soon as a home becomes available...



Challenge

Goal: Describe the challenge or barrier that is blocking the goal outlined in my introduction.

...But, right now, we cannot find housing that we can afford. We both work for community nonprofits and are currently living with friends while we search for housing. Everything is either too expensive or there's a dozen people asking as soon as a home becomes available...

Establish challenge of no supply and high costs.

Solution

Goal: Outline the change you want to see.
What are you asking for?

...I'm here tonight to ask you to please approve this workforce housing development. I know this won't be an immediate fix, but there are so many families just like mine who make this community strong. We just need housing we can afford. Thank you.



Solution

Goal: Outline the change you want to see.
What are you asking for?

...I'm here tonight to ask you to please approve this workforce housing development. I know this won't be an immediate fix, but there are so many families just like mine who make this community strong. We just need housing we can afford. Thank you.

In this case, the ask is approval of a workforce housing development.

Activity!

Practice Personal Story

Personal Story Exercise

5 minutes to write down your personal story. Why do you want to see more housing?

5 minutes to share with someone sitting near you

Reminder

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself and any relevant identities or information about yourself.
- **Challenge:** Describe the challenge faced
- **Solution:** What are you asking for?

Tough Conversations

Tough Conversations

- Community engagement is not all large group public hearings
 - ◆ In many respects, that's the worst setting to productively have a tough conversation
- Most organizing is 1:1 and small group conversations
- This framework is about having productive individual conversations



The Skill of Having Tough Conversations

- Yes, it's a skill! And, one we all need to practice.
- Most of us have at least one important relationship that has either been strained by a painful conversation about political differences or silenced due to fear that it could get ugly.
- Knowing how to talk with each other across differences is an important component of sustaining relationships, communities, and our country.
- Goal is to understand the other person's perspective.

Source: Reaching Across The Red/Blue Divide, Essential Partners

Getting Ready

→ Are you ready? Ask yourself:

- ◆ Why do you want to connect? What do you want to learn?
- ◆ Are you ready to resist the strong pull towards anger and frustration?

→ Your conversation is most likely to go well if you:

- ◆ Share the same hopes for the conversation
- ◆ Have agreements about how to talk and work together
- ◆ Have some good questions to start the conversation

Choosing Your Spot

- Is the time and place right for a good conversation?
 - ◆ Do you need a place that is private?
 - ◆ Can you find enough time to be free from distractions?
- Location, context, and mindset make a BIG difference



Source: Reaching Across The Red/Blue Divide, Essential Partners

Extending the Invitation

- Invite the kind of conversation you want and be clear about the purpose.
 - ◆ “I really want to be able to talk about this with you. Can we have an honest conversation about this?”
 - If they say “no” – then you have to accept that.
- Create some simple agreements prior to the conversation:
 - ◆ Share the time – no interruptions, respectful of how long we are talking
 - ◆ Speak for ourselves – speak from personal experience, not on behalf of boards, parties, etc.
 - ◆ Respect each other’s differences by avoiding overly critical or dismissive comments

Start With A Good Question

- If you ask a yes or no question, you'll get a yes or no answer. Invite them to talk about what's important through beliefs, values, and hopes.
 - ◆ What hopes do you have for our community?
 - ◆ Let's connect as people – can you share your experiences in our community?
- Once people are able to talk about the things they really believe in and care about, they may be more willing to talk about what is complex and difficult

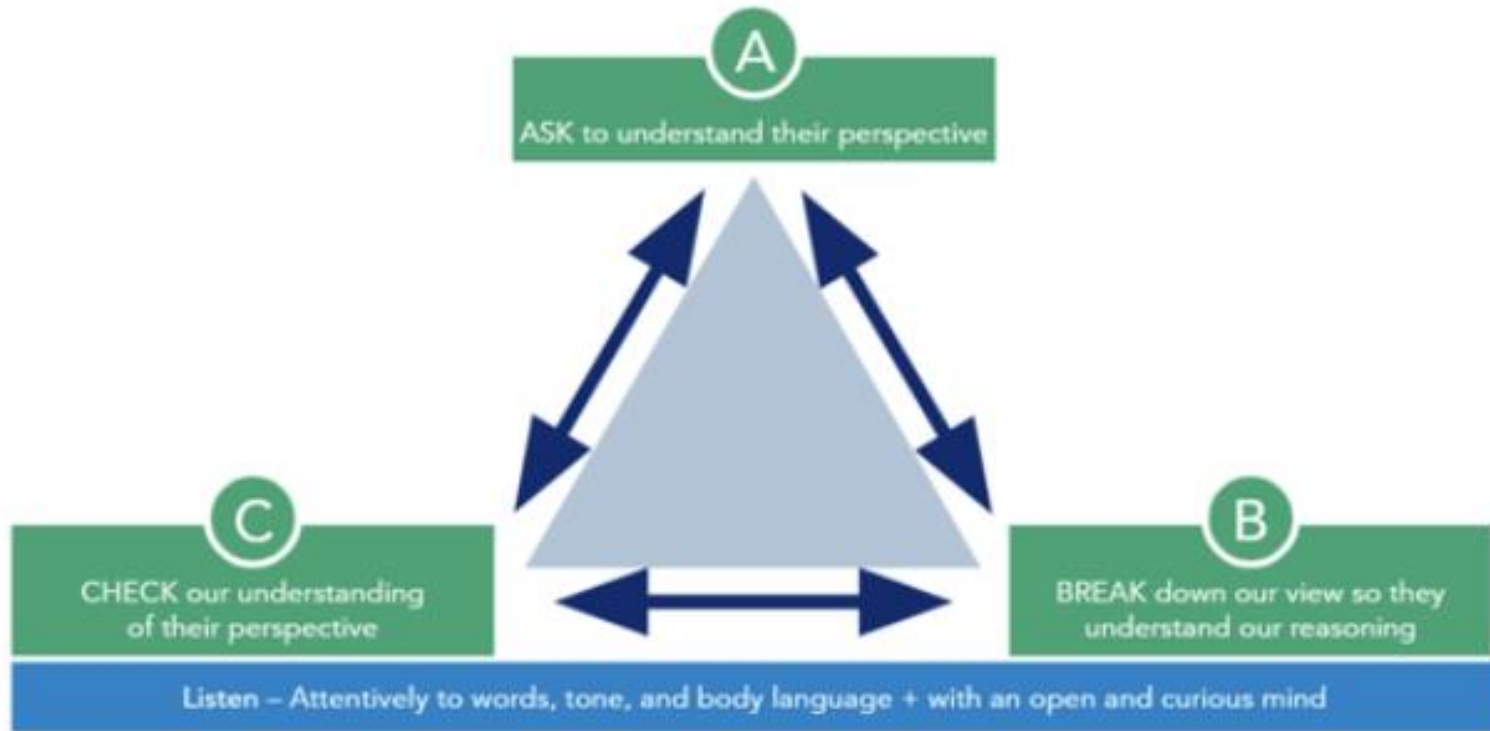


Source: Reaching Across The Red/Blue Divide, Essential Partners

Getting Back On Track

- Tough conversations are *tough* there's a good chance the conversation will get sidetracked or intensify at some point
- **Tune In:** Are you listening to understand or to find fault? Summarize the other person's point and ask if you have it right. That will show you are listening attentively, and allow for clarification if you are lost.
- **Get Curious:** When you are the most frustrated is when you have to get the most curious.
 - ◆ Ask yourself – why is this so difficult for me?
 - ◆ Ask them – why is that important to you?
- **Take a Break:** Let everyone calm down. Name your desire to continue the conversation and suggest a short break

ABCs for Challenging Conversations



Source: NH Listens

Application to Housing

→ Housing involves tough conversations

- ◆ Change is hard and homes are often a family's largest asset

→ **Everyone has a platform**

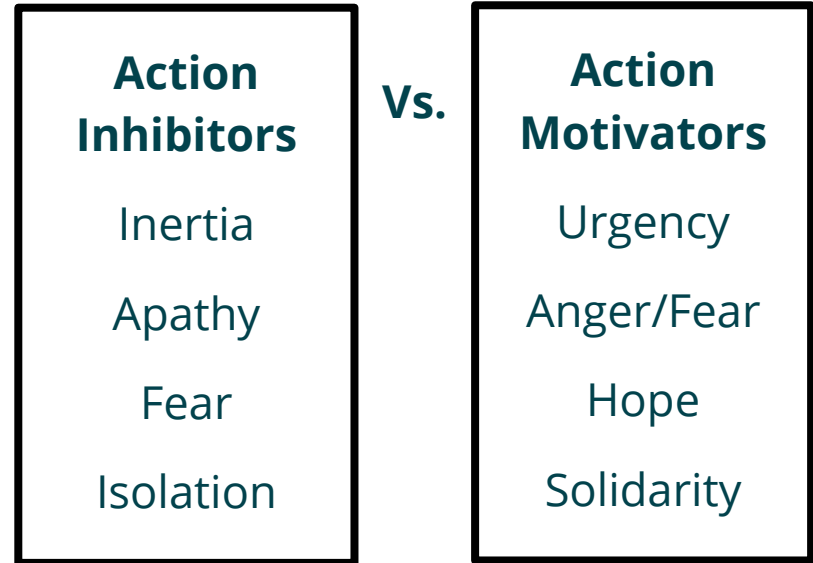
- ◆ There are people in your life to talk to about housing – friends, neighbors, family, coworkers, etc.

→ Change happens outside of town hall

Crafting a Public Narrative

Public Narrative: Creating a Shared Story

- Stories mobilize the emotions that act as motivators
- Public narrative combines:
 - ◆ Story of Self: personal story
 - ◆ Story of Us: shared values and experiences
 - ◆ Story of Now: strategy and action



Story of Self

- The personal story, which we practiced earlier, includes the values that motivate your involvement in this issue, in this place, at this time
- In most cases, the story of self will be the largest portion of your public narrative
 - ◆ Personal stories resonate with the largest share of people
 - ◆ Personal stories build trust and empathy in a way that more general stories do not



Story of Us

- Shared values anchor your community.
This could be values that may be at risk or be sources of hope.
- Expressed through key choice points in your community's broader story
 - ◆ Moments of crisis, history, resilience
- Smaller portion of your public narrative than your story of self



Story of Now

- Communicates an urgent challenge you are calling on your community to act on
- Why this moment? What is the action that can make a difference?
- The community has a choice, which path will they take
- In most instances, this will also be a smaller portion of your public narrative than story of self



Advocacy Tips and Tricks

Changing Elected Official's Mind

→ Don't just go to meetings, set one up

- ◆ Public meetings are important and showing up can be a powerful demonstration for change. Public meetings can be a great place for pressure, but a lousy place for persuasion.

→ Have a gameplan

- ◆ Prepare for your meeting. Know what you want to say. Bring a fact sheet or photo. Clearly articulate your goal.

→ Start with “thank you”

- ◆ Immediately sets a positive tone for the meeting. If there is something they've done recently be specific to show they are appreciated.

Changing Elected Official's Mind

→ Ask questions and listen to the answers.

- ◆ Listening to what they say can be more valuable than what you have to say. You can learn what motivates them, how they are thinking about an issue, and who they trust.

→ Tell your story.

- ◆ You don't need to be a policy expert to be persuasive. Stories are how we connect with each other and help people understand.

→ Don't get into an argument.

- ◆ Stay respectful and look for common ground that can start to move the elected official in your direction.

Changing Elected Official's Mind

→ Make a specific ask.

- ◆ Know what you want this official to do and ask them to do it. It's important to be specific whether its casting a vote, talking to another official, or visiting your neighborhood.

→ Meet with multiple officials.

- ◆ Rarely is their only one person with the power to give you what you want.

→ Start before election day.

- ◆ One of the best times to talk to elected officials is before they are elected officials. While campaigning, they are especially willing to listen to community concerns and it can shape what they will do in office.

Tips For Testifying At Public Hearing

- Be brief, stick to your key points, and avoid being repetitive
- In addition to speaking, understand additional options for providing comments.
Can you submit written testimony in advance?
- Avoid reading directly from a piece of paper. Be personal, passionate, and reflect on your personal experience. Notes are encouraged!
- Practice will make it easier, so will watching others deliver their testimony

Tips For Testifying At Public Hearing

- Be respectful
- Bring someone you know with you – there is strength in numbers
- Adjust the microphone before you begin talking
- Take a deep breath
- Say “thank you”



Activity!

Practice Supportive Testimony

Practice Supportive Testimony

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

Scenario 1: Anytown, USA is considering a new zoning ordinance that would allow multi-family housing in commercial zones and provide a density bonus for affordable housing. Supporters say this will add an opportunity for much needed rental housing. Opponents say this will ruin the character of the town.

Scenario 2: Down the street from your home sits an empty former elementary school. A developer would like to convert it into a 18 unit project that includes half workforce and half market rate housing. The hearing is shaping up to be contentious as most of the surrounding homes are single family or two-family.

Practice Testimony Exercise

5 - 10 minutes to write down your draft testimony.

5 - 10 minutes to share with someone sitting near you and to the group.

Tips: Craft your public narrative. Story of self, story of us, and story of now. Make clear, concise points.

Community Engagement Plan

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

Scenario 1: Anytown, USA is considering a new zoning ordinance that would allow multi-family housing in commercial zones and provide a density bonus for affordable housing. Supporters say this will add an opportunity for much needed rental housing. Opponents say this will ruin the character of the town.

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Community Engagement Exercise

5 - 10 minutes to form small groups and write down your draft grassroots community engagement plan.

5 - 10 minutes to share with the group.

Tips: Build your coalition. Who do you want to engage? How will you do outreach?

Q & A

Thank You!

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