

Quick Reference Messaging Guide

Core Messaging Principles

Our goal is to elevate the conversation around housing in ways that prioritize racial equity and highlight the challenges faced by renters across our region. This approach is also designed to unseat negative attitudes about renters and reduce resistance to the 3Ps consensus policy frame. **We want to shift the narrative:**

- From housing scarcity → housing justice
- From individual responsibility → structural change
- From “rugged individualism” → a shared community that benefits all
- From fear of loss through change → confronting the risks of the status quo
- From defeatism and reliance on luck → belief in change through collective action

What do I say when I’m talking about housing justice?

A primary goal is to help your audience see housing as a justice issue that connects to strong values of community, equity and diversity, and to see housing affordability as a structural problem that requires collective solutions.

- ★ We all deserve a decent place to live, regardless of race or income. That’s a matter of basic justice, of who we are as a community. Housing is essential, just like food, health care, and an education.
- ★ Our whole community does better when everyone has good, safe, affordable housing options. We all benefit from housing justice. And so it’s up to all of us to fight for it.
- ★ Wherever we look to lift up our community, having a safe place to call home is a crucial part of the solution.
- ★ Investing in diverse housing solutions helps us address issues like hunger, opioid dependence, homelessness, and the pandemic response.

What do I say when I’m describing the problem?

A priority is to emphasize the structural nature of the lack of affordable housing – this is not about individual failings. We also need to show what individuals and the community stand to lose if they fail to be part of the solution. Housing insecurity is a root cause of other community issues, which we can’t address unless we make sure people have somewhere to live.

- ★ Residents and small businesses are being displaced all over the Bay Area – and once they’re gone, they may never come back.
- ★ We need to act now to keep people [young families, our community, people of color] from getting ejected from the places they call home.
- ★ A lot of people in the Bay Area were lucky enough to buy homes when costs were lower, and they’ve been able to thrive. But many current Bay Area residents are being displaced from their homes by rising costs no matter how hard they work. Young families and the next generation deserve a decent place to live, and we create opportunities for more of us to be “lucky.”

What do I say when I’m describing solutions?

Apathy and defeatism stand in the way of change. The priority is to make change seem possible and urgent, to hold policymakers accountable, and to help the audience see the value of their individual action as part of a collective movement.

- ★ We know housing justice is a priority in our community. Now, we need to make it a priority for businesses, community organizations, and government/lawmakers. We need everyone to join in. For [decision-makers], that means investing in the future of our neighborhoods so that families today and the next generation can have a decent place to live. And it’s up to you and me to make sure they hear that message loud and clear.
- ★ A safe, stable place to call home is essential to give kids a chance to succeed. They need housing justice just like they need good schools and safe communities. And their future here in the Bay Area depends on investing in housing justice now. If we want young people to be able to build a life here and stay in the communities they were raised in, we need to produce and preserve housing options.
- ★ The Bay Area has an incredible record of innovation and problem-solving, and we have a chance right now to lead the way on housing. It’s up to us to build the future we want – one where people have stable homes and are free to pursue their dreams, raise their families, and keep the Bay Area thriving. We won’t get there right away, but we have to start now. That’s why we need [specific policy] – it’s a step toward ensuring that people have access to safe, stable housing they can afford.

How do I connect housing justice to racial justice?

People in the Bay Area value diversity (including, but not limited to, racial diversity). Yet, the lack of affordable housing disproportionately affects communities of color, the result of decades of policies that created structural inequality. We need everyone to see that we can't advance diversity and racial equity without housing justice.

- ★ Diversity has always been a part of what makes the Bay Area special, vibrant, and successful. People from every background are joined together to forge communities. The diversity of restaurants, parks and outdoor activities, cultures, art, neighborhoods is what makes the Bay Area like nowhere else in our nation. Protecting that unique legacy and building the future our children deserve means strengthening our communities. We need to work together to build a Bay Area that moves all of us – Black, white, and brown – forward.
- ★ You can't separate racial justice from housing justice. Generations of exclusionary policies and institutional racism have created an unjust housing system which falls hardest on communities of color [or name specific communities]. Strengthening those communities is how we move the whole Bay Area forward. And getting it right means being honest about how we got here, so we can take on the underlying problems. It means taking on the way that bigotry, racism, and inequity are baked into the structure of how housing is developed and delivered in our communities.

What do I say when someone opposes needed change?

We want to pivot and avoid deep-rooted beliefs that oppose housing justice. A priority is moving the frame from the risks of change, to what will be lost if the status quo persists. We also want to show that housing justice helps the whole community, including homeowners and those who are satisfied with the status quo.

- ★ Our homes and the people in them provide the foundation for success and progress. The longer we put off the need for a diverse mix of housing, the worse off our whole community will be. It's time to make this issue a priority for all of us.
- ★ Safe, stable homes are the foundation for strong communities. Good schools, good jobs, safe neighborhoods – those all depend on housing. And for the thousands of small businesses struggling to stay afloat, to attract customers and skilled employees, making housing more affordable is critical.
- ★ Your kids deserve a chance to succeed. That's why we invest in schools, that's why supporting businesses and job opportunities matters. But without a safe, stable place to call home, a future in the Bay Area will be out of reach for the next generation.

What do I say about these specific topics?

Homelessness: Attach to existing progress narratives, pivot toward solutions

- ★ We also have a long track record of preserving existing homes and working to keep them affordable. If each of our Bay Area communities meets its goals, we could see up to a x% reduction in families experiencing homelessness and the near elimination of veteran homelessness. That's a huge step forward – and we can start right now..

Gentrification: Amplify values of diversity. **See also:** How do I connect housing justice to racial justice?

- ★ When we talk about gentrification, a lot of what we are talking about is a challenge to the diversity that has always been an important part of the Bay Area. That means racial and ethnic diversity, people from all kinds of backgrounds being able to make a home here. And it's also about small businesses thriving, these pockets of innovation and culture that are truly unique.
- ★ Residents and small businesses are being displaced all over the Bay Area – and once they're gone, they may never come back. That's a direct threat to the diversity of our communities and everything we love about our neighborhoods.

Homeowners vs. renters: Amplify values of community

- ★ We all thrive when Bay area residents have strong pathways to building wealth whether they are renters or homeowners. In a world of uncertainty, being able to build and pass on wealth helps break a cycle of poverty and improve life for everyone in our region.
- ★ Whether we're paying rent to a landlord or a monthly mortgage to a bank, whether we're struggling to pay for utilities or home repairs, we all have to pay our way, and we all have a stake in creating affordable housing options.

Evictions/tenant protections: Reframe to emphasize downsides of status quo, center equity and system change

- ★ Housing instability creates uncertainty and chaos for families and workers. When people don't have a stable, affordable place to call home, our schools, economy, health care systems, and entire community suffers.
- ★ Ignoring the housing needs of our whole community is driving up costs for everybody. It costs all of us too much to ignore the housing crisis.
- ★ Harsh housing policies and high costs have fallen hardest on people of color, and we need to fix those broken systems. 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.