



Community Conversation Guide



Diverse housing options in our communities enhance the strength and prosperity of our economy so all Iowans can thrive. As we roll out the welcome mat across the state to ensure Iowans can live where they work, it's critical to educate stakeholder groups across the state about the importance of this initiative. While each relationship has its own nuances, effective conversations depend on a bit of preparation. Assemble some baseline thoughts and be ready to authentically engage with audiences, no matter where the discussion goes. Below are some reminders and talking points when speaking with stakeholders, as well as some thought starters for meaningful conversation.

- 1. Always start with “why.”** There’s a reason you have adopted your vision, your mission, your commitment to housing in Iowa. Clearly define that and look for ways that your “why” aligns with the “why” of the person or group you’re speaking with.
- 2. Let the “Why, Therefore, So That” formula be your guide.** Nearly all communications – whether advertisements, opinion pieces or direct mailers – are best organized according to this simple formula. It brings simplicity and structure to your messaging, and it will ensure you spend more time focused on the why.

“Why, Therefore, So That ...”

WHY: Create the need by exposing or acknowledging the situation or problem.

THEREFORE: Present the solution as a direct outcome of the problem.

SO THAT: Deliver the benefits to affirm the solution and offer a call to action.

- 3. Keep it simple.** Simple words are easier to remember. Simple words also keep your audience engaged; your audience can follow along and will actually hear what you have to say.



4. Localize it! Use the Iowa Finance Authority’s Iowa profile tool to include persuasive statistics for the area.

Example statements:

- Housing demand forecasts (The region is forecasted to need an additional xxx housing units by 2030).
- Housing cost burdened (xx% of renters and x% of homeowners in the region are housing cost burdened).
- Housing problems by income, race and tenure (xx% of black residents are housing cost burdened compared to xx% of white residents).
- Age of housing stock (xx% of housing units built before 1978, causing lead-based paint and other safety risks).
- Vacancy rates (The region has a vacancy rate of x%, which compares to a vacancy rate of 4.8% for the State of Iowa).
- Population trends
- Net Migration trends
- Average commute times
- Poverty rates

The Iowa Profile is available as a part of the community toolkit page at **WelcomeHomeIA.com**.

Please note that custom reports are available for every city in the state, some data points are only available at the county or regional level. Please contact IFA with any questions on how to access the correct report.



Stakeholder: Elected Officers and Government Officials

These individuals should be visited during office hours, via mail, at community events and during public comment periods at official meetings. It's important to express the impact on an elected officials' jurisdiction. In zoning and city council meetings, it's important to demonstrate that real people in the local community are hurt by the shortage of housing and fixing it benefits everyone. Be prepared to address points of concern around crime, property values, traffic and schools.

Key Talking Points:

WHY

- To meet the growing workforce needs of Iowa's robust economy, we must add 61,000 housing units by 2030.
- Supporting housing for all helps our friends and neighbors. In Iowa, 40% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing expenses.
 - ◇ These renters include hard working childcare providers, EMTs and paramedics, food servers, grocery store clerks, nursing assistants and teaching assistants.

THEREFORE

- An online survey of 400 Iowans ages 18 and older between June 22 and July 1, 2021, indicates 72% of Iowans support affordable housing as a matter of public policy.
 - ◇ The survey sample was designed to reflect the adult Iowan population in terms of gender, age, region, ethnicity, education and political party identification.
 - ◇ Research shows the support for affordable housing is bipartisan, crosses the urban/rural divide and is shared by both homeowners and renters.
- Iowans who support affordable housing in their ZIP code outnumber opponents by 51%.
 - ◇ Supporters are more likely to recognize the benefits over concerns when it comes to the impact on their community.
- While there is opposition, it benefits from an imbalance of enthusiasm.
 - ◇ Opponents are more likely than supporters to make their feelings known to elected officials, neighbors and others, giving them a greater share of voice in public conversations and creating the impression opponents outnumber supporters.
 - ◇ Developers indicate decision-makers are responding to what they perceive to be public opinion, but the research demonstrates that perception is mistaken.



- ◇ While the public is more likely to lean toward support, it's not apparent when opponents outnumber supporters in outreach to elected officials and presence at public meetings.
- You may have noticed that we're focused on calling this what it is. Housing. No more "flavor of the week" terms. No more distraction. No more confusion. It's housing. It's for everyone. And it benefits us all.
- It's important to support Iowa housing tax credit projects so our community can enjoy the benefits.
 - ◇ The one year impact is \$81.3 million and 1,098 jobs.
 - ◇ The ongoing annual impact is \$15.9 million and 279 jobs.

SO THAT

- For all of Iowa to thrive, every Iowan deserves the opportunity to live where they work, and when they can, it benefits real people, our businesses and our communities.
- We hope you'll use your influence to share this initiative with your networks and join the growing list of Iowans and businesses who have logged their support at **WelcomeHomeIA.com**.