



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: Neighbors and Homeowners Associations

While the statement of “not in my backyard” may present a concern, establishing a transparent relationship with two-way communication as early as possible is important. Walk the block – literally. Get out and connect with residents one on one and also in formal community group meetings. Introduce developers to neighborhood leaders. Minimize surprises by communicating early and often.

Key Talking Points:

WHY

- Supporting housing for all helps our friends and neighbors. 40% of Iowa renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing expenses.
- It impacts hard working members of our community like childcare providers, EMTs and paramedics, food servers, grocery store clerks, nursing assistants and teaching assistants.
- Our communities benefit because our friends, neighbors, family members and colleagues work here and our communities and economy will be stronger still if these workers can afford to live here, too.

THEREFORE

- Maybe you’ve heard the “not in my backyard” argument. The small number of outliers who oppose housing expansion are more likely than supporters to make their opinions heard.
 - ◇ It creates a misconception about where the public, or sometimes silent majority, really stands.
- This opposition stops nearly 1 in 3 housing projects and significantly changes another 1 in 4 – literally standing in the way of building progress.
- In reality, 72% of Iowans support affordable housing. When told a developer was proposing affordable housing in their ZIP code, 65% of Iowans in a recent survey offered support.
- Iowans see many benefits of affordable housing in their community – and are more likely to see benefits than concerns. After learning more about the project and its benefits, 73% of Iowans supported development in their ZIP code.
- It’s imperative the majority breaks its silence. Community champions must come forward, and the welcome mat must be rolled out across Iowa. We can meet workforce demands and prosper as a state if we support our friends, neighbors and communities by being vocal about the importance of housing for all.



- Research shows that there is confusion around the term “affordable housing”. To address this, 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 us 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**.