

## Summary of Housing Notes-

There are three issues within Housing: affordability, housing synergy, and access.

### **Affordability**

- Affordability means that no one family should pay more than 33 percent of their yearly income on housing.
- Data on affordability needs to show how many people nation-wide are paying more than 33 percent of their yearly income for housing and where they are located.
- In the case of affordable housing, data needs to take into account the problem with developers tacking on fees for services such as utilities and cable onto rent.
- In a longer-term outlook, advocates need to look at the tacking-on problem.
- There is also the tangentially related problem of a family paying less than 33 percent of their yearly income on housing, but living in unacceptable conditions. Therefore, data on affordability would also need to show the quality of housing people are living in.

### **Housing Synergy**

- Housing synergy is the connection between housing, jobs, transportation, and income.
- Within the Recovery Act, there is a public housing capital fund, which refurbishes public housing units and makes them more energy efficient.
- Weatherization is a critical component of housing because lower income families and minorities often live in inefficient units and end up paying more for utilities.
- Weatherization projects of public and affordable housing units should provide jobs to the unemployed living in those same communities.
- The specific jobs performed by these individuals are also important, as workers can take skills gained through the employment to their next job.
- Data on housing-related recovery projects needs to show who are getting those jobs. The data needs to show what job a person obtained, whether that person was in poverty, and all the associated characteristics of the person, such as race, gender, age, etc.

### **Access**

- Access is the ease with which affordable and public housing applicants find in entering a community.
- Access is a critical issue, as many communities emplace barriers to low income and minority families using background checks, credit checks, and exorbitant application fees. Moreover, housing communities selectively accept government vouchers.

- Data needs to show how communities screen potential homeowners, including the use of background checks, credit checks, and application fees.
- Advocates should rely on the Fair Housing Act to help with goals.

## **Data**

- The data is out there. However, much irrelevant data is mixed in with the relevant data. Advocates need to separate out race and poverty so a \$500,000 house is not in the mix.
- There is a difference between the quality of data gained from the federal and state levels, and even between agencies at those levels.
- Government agencies should have to share what projects they are involved with so that there may be a sharing of data between different agencies if possible.
- It would advantageous if advocates could get a data aggregation of the projects that occur because communities could actually find themselves and figure out who is getting funds and who is not.
- There are government systems in place for the collection of data that government entities can improve upon to collect better data. Advocates can push for government entities to sharpen their collection of data.
- There is a line to walk between the speed and the quality of the data collected. The speed is very important because you might be able to step in and do something about things that are going on now. The extemporaneousness of data, however, may be an issue because of the associated burdens of data collection and dissemination.
- The government needs to compel contractors to provide information on employees hired such as race, gender, class, and geographic origin at least to the zip code.
- Advocates also need to know the race, class, gender, and geographic origin of the individuals getting into affordable and public housing units.
- It is also important to know who controls or manages each affordable and public housing community, which could help to prevent or end discriminatory entrance practices.

## **Actions**

- With the required data, advocates can work within existing government programs, put new metrics on them, and create new demands that are in line with the advocates' goals.
- Advocates would create a template to display data output and use it to influence decision makers.
- Relevant decision makers could include those at the state, federal and local levels.
- The template could include questions that advocates are trying to answer, which would guide efforts for more data. Each cycle, information would come out and if there were unanswered questions, advocates would leave the space under them blank, showing where to concentrate efforts.

- Advocates would need to incorporate data display into a communications effort in an attempt to reframe the debate over relevant issues. Advocates must use communications to strengthen constituent groups while attempting to reframe the debate.
- Advocates would do a power analysis to examine whom to target and shape state, local, federal, or regional strategies accordingly.
- Advocates could create an opportunity map, which shows where limited resources could make the most impact, and overlay that on a power map to help determine whom to target.
- The strategy is flexibility enough to use both inside and outside, as advocates can look for battles to inject their data outputs easily.
- Advocates can also use specific cases to help highlight certain issues to help bring about change.