

Overcoming Resistance and Meeting Opposition Head On

Housing First Partners' Conference

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Introduce self and credentials. TCP/C4 HUD. HF, development, TBRA. Poll audience on positions and familiarity with HF.

Instead of “overcoming” a more appropriate title may have been “managing” since there are some people who will oppose no matter what.

What We'll Cover Today

Common philosophical, ideological and practical objections.

Successful strategies to win over (or manage) critics and skeptics.

Your insights, comments and experience.

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Love to present on this – get to share good news. We know it works! And who doesn't like a good fight every once in a while?

Hope to leave enough time at the end for some conversation.

NIMBY

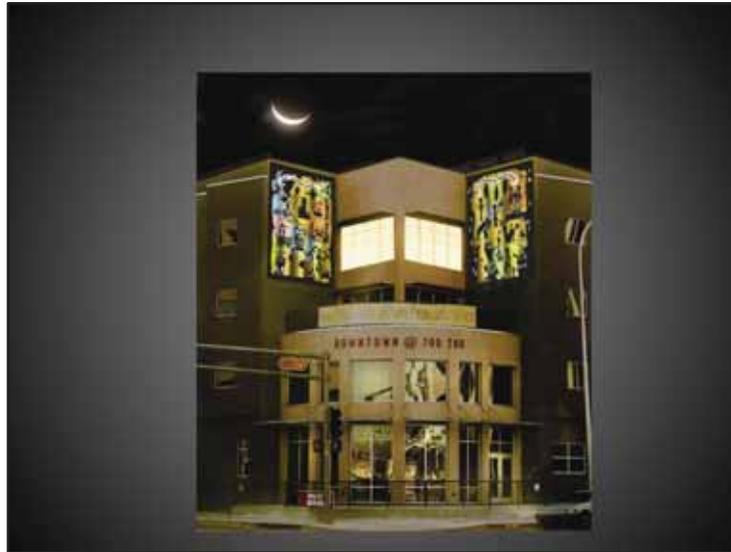
- LULUs
- NOPE
- BANANA
- TEDAO
- XYONDE

LULUs (Locally Unwanted Land Uses)

NOPE (Not On Planet Earth)

BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone)

and TEDAO (Tear Everything Down At Once)



- When possible, limit/avoid formal public input requirement – zoning, code, waiver requests, etc. Then they might be able to slow you down, but can't stop you outright.
- Persistence is key; precedent of giving up not just bad for a particular project but for future ones and for affordable housing in community overall. If the community sees that you will tuck tail and run, they will be emboldened to oppose future projects. Let them know explicitly and through your example that you are committed to this no matter how long it will take. Motto – “too dumb to quit.”
- here will be some percentage who will object no matter what you say or do – don't spend time trying to convince these people. Also know how to count votes if it is a formally convened body. Focus your time and efforts on where they can make a difference.
- Above does not excuse us from being conscientious and responsive, to the extent possible, re notification and addressing legitimate concerns and questions. We have to make the good faith effort.
- (There is, however, the eternal question about asking for permission in advance or forgiveness later. That is something that you and your agency will need to determine in your local context and about specific projects.)



- Identify your allies in the neighborhood and community and make sure they show up to the neighborhood association, city council, zoning hearing, etc. meeting.
- Bringing in former opponents whom you have won over (neighborhoods, etc.) is a more credible source that can neutralize some objections.
- Local partners are essential for outreach and credibility. To the extent you are seen as an outsider, the more difficult it will be.
- Bring tenants and potential tenants to meetings to “keep people honest.”
- Bring your kids to the meetings! Harder for people to shout at you when your young children are with you.
- Dress like the locals. But don’t pander.



- Good design can go a long way to counter people’s negative connotation of affordable housing or projects – (even though it is usually about the people “you are bringing in” and not the physical structure itself). Mixed use, sustainable “green” design, etc.
- (Though also criticized that housing “too nice” for “those people” or more expensive to build than market rate...)
- Mixed income developments may be better for tenant and neighborhood integration and less divisive (or scary) than a project that is devoted to 100% special needs population. This isn’t always possible and it is this population of course that has the worst case housing needs and where the unit deficit is most extreme.
- Offer to include neighbors in design charettes or advisory committees when possible. That doesn’t mean they get veto power – it means they will have the opportunity for formal input.
- Your previous projects performance is critical. If you can point to other existing projects that are operating well and demonstrate your track record, it is much better than being in a defensive position.



- Concerns about increased criminal activity, decreased property values, parking and traffic volume that you hear over and over again can usually be addressed easily through the available research and the project design itself. (e.g., formerly homeless residents don't typically have vehicles, tenants will be screened, there will be on-site property management and services staff, etc.).
- However, much of the opposition will be fear-based and emotional in nature, meaning no matter what facts you bring, you won't win over everyone.
- These issues are sometimes stand-ins for bigotry and discrimination. Usually, people are savvy enough not to name it, but sometimes they will explicitly. Whether it is through explicitly stated illegal discrimination (race, disabilities...) or if the public policies/decisions are having a disparate impact on protected classes, Fair Housing issues and remedies need to be kept very much in mind.
- In my experience, one year after construction or operations, if we do our job right, the neighborhood has either largely forgotten about the project and moved on to something else, are neutral, or have been grudgingly won over.



Assume everyone here is well versed or at least familiar with the core elements and principles of HF. Thought we could use some of these as way to illustrate frequently heard concerns or objections to the model.



housing as right

Criticism:

- “How can we say we support housing first as a country if housing programs continue to be cut and funding is reduced?” Why fund HF with homeless programs?” If we really were going to do HF and have housing be a right it would be funded through Section 8, public housing... Not homeless programs. Homeless programs were created because housing programs were cut.”
- “Is HF a dramatic shift or a just PR strategy?”

Response:

[It is absolutely true that we can't end homelessness without additional affordable housing. That isn't a fault of the model itself however.]

low demand entry

- “Why should public tax dollars go to house people who are still using drugs and alcohol? “
- “Assistance should only go to those who are willing to change their behavior and who are morally deserving.”
- “We should use scarce resources to help those who have a chance of making it, not those who are too far gone.”
- “Why should we first take care of addicts when there is so much need among deserving families and others who actually have some potential?”

Response:

- Discuss outcomes, cost-effectiveness, disproportionate utilization of community resources, potential for freeing up those resources...
- Understood that it is not possible to have meaningful and sustained recovery from mental illness, substance abuse or physical problems while living on the streets. Understood that being homeless is itself traumatic. such as harm reduction and trauma informed care



focuses on the most vulnerable

- “Housing first focuses exclusively on single adults and therefore leaves families with children and people without disabilities behind.”
- “The focus on chronically homeless adults is arbitrary and necessarily comes at the expense of the growing numbers of homeless families.”
- "You're pitting one segment of the homeless population against another."
- "We need to end homelessness for all."

Response:

- Like the more recent 100,000 Homes Campaign which focuses on prioritizing the most vulnerable, HF has paralleled in many ways the chronic homeless initiative. The thought and hope was that reducing chronic homelessness, and the associated disproportionate cost, more resources would be freed up to serve other populations. Though that may not have happened to the extent it needed to, I don't think that is necessarily the fault of HF, but due to larger economic, budgetary and political will calculations.
- Response – HEARTH, expanded definition of homelessness, ARRA experience with prevention and rapid rehousing and Opening Doors goals.



services are voluntary

- “If you operate a housing program and don’t make treatment and services mandatory, you will expose the neighborhood to danger and violence.”
- “If people aren’t required to be clean and sober, they won’t try and we have therefore failed them. “
- “And besides, it won’t work.”

Response:

- Note resistance can include service provider partners who have historically operated from a treatment and housing ready approach.
- Legitimate practical considerations of sustained services...model fidelity...housing first doesn’t just mean handing out free housing and then forgetting about them...
- A significant challenge all over the country on how to provide services over sustained time.
- But participants are safer when housed compared to living on the streets and participants participation with

services can go up and substance use down...harm reduction model. **This is true even**

if they continue to use substances and/or refuse treatment for medical or mental health issues.

- Tenants report spending more money on decorations for example which is less on alcohol...
- Can people have meaningful or sustained recovery from mental illness or substance abuse while they are still living on the streets?



housing is permanent

“Homeless need training, support and structure of linear housing progression and transitional settings to learn how to be housed.”

“Not right to force people to live somewhere permanently.”

- Housing as reward and housing readiness paradigm. Contrary to research findings.
- It isn't about forcing people to live in a particular setting, it is removing the barrier of a time limited opportunity...

lease agreement

“The problem is more complicated than simply handing out apartments -- the structure and rehabilitation provided by a shelter are essential to learning how to live independently. At shelters, “you have to learn how to clean up, straighten your bed out, keep your locker clean, wash, do the laundry, even have kitchen duties, This trains you to go back out, because when you’re homeless, you have no discipline, you have no structure.”

“Shelter advocates see homelessness not as a disease, but as a symptom of other problems, which is why they believe structure and services are essential to the transition away from homelessness.”

“Providing the homeless with homes “looks good on paper...but reformers must be sure they are not merely sweeping the problem under the rug — or into an apartment. Many of the homeless are homeless for a reason, and those problems must be resolved before they can become functioning members of society.”

[First, evidence does not bear these assertions out – outcomes, measured by housing stability, are better for HF and PSH than for transitional or treatment oriented housing. Second, HF as a model doesn’t abandon tenants and ignore personal vulnerabilities that may jeopardize their housing, but it does give the individual the power and asks the system to be more responsive, accountable, attractive and relevant, so that they will want to take advantage of the

opportunities presented. Third, this may be a difference in goals – ending homelessness versus fixing or changing people. Fourth, even so, harm reduction models have better outcomes than mandatory treatment. Fifth, the quote says this isn't about resisting change, but sometimes it is exactly that – see Burt quote.]



housing that is affordable

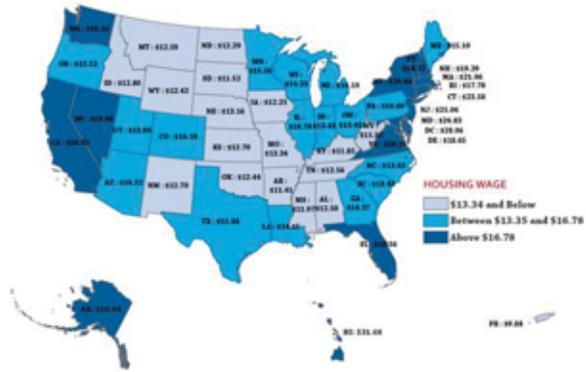
HF of course is geared on those who have ELI – at or below 30% AMI. Frequently people actually have incomes at or below 20% AMI with SSI. It is common for someone to have zero income in the beginning. Rental subsidies are therefore critical. “Affordable” is defined as a household paying no more than 30% of their adjusted income for housing costs.

A real limitation, and of course the primary reason we have homelessness in the first place, is a lack of housing that is affordable. Can be particularly challenging in smaller communities and rural areas.



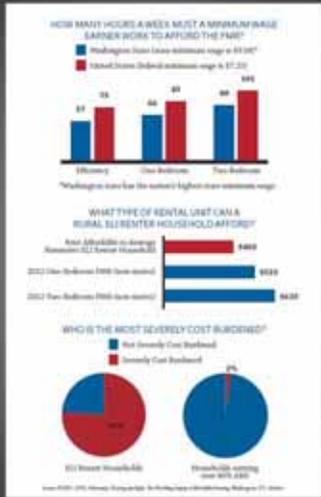
2012 TWO-BEDROOM HOUSING WAGE

Represents the hourly wage that a household must earn (working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year) in order to afford the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom unit at 30% of income.



National Low Income Housing Coalition | State of Alaska 2012

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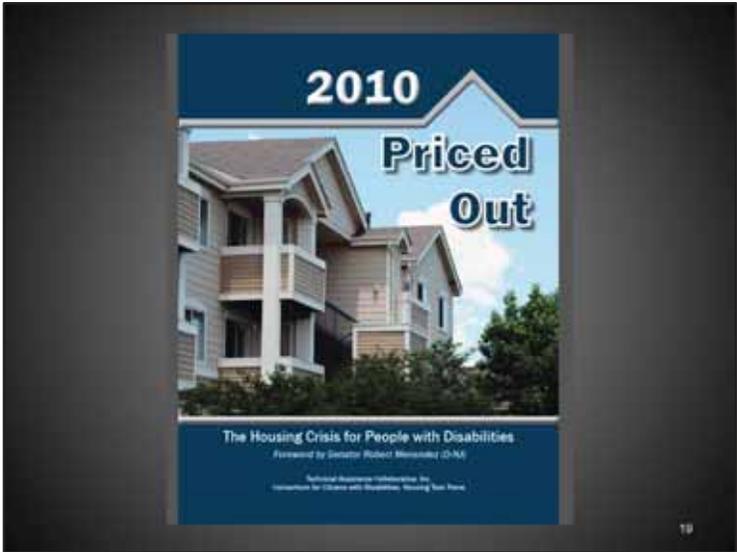


Table 4: Percent of SSI Needed to Rent a 1-Bedroom Housing Unit

State	% of SSI	State	% of SSI
Alabama	84%	Montana	80%
Alaska	80%	Nebraska	77%
Arizona	110%	Nevada	125%
Arkansas	76%	New Hampshire	116%
California	131%	New Jersey	155%
Colorado	105%	New Mexico	86%
Connecticut	120%	New York	141%
Delaware	123%	North Carolina	91%
District of Columbia	191%	North Dakota	71%
Florida	128%	Ohio	83%
Georgia	100%	Oklahoma	74%
Hawaii	198%	Oregon	101%
Idaho	77%	Pennsylvania	99%
Illinois	115%	Rhode Island	120%
Indiana	86%	South Carolina	90%
Iowa	75%	South Dakota	70%
Kansas	82%	Tennessee	87%
Kentucky	76%	Texas	99%
Louisiana	98%	Utah	95%
Maine	98%	Vermont	111%
Maryland	164%	Virginia	131%
Massachusetts	127%	Washington	111%
Michigan	89%	West Virginia	72%
Minnesota	88%	Wisconsin	81%
Mississippi	86%	Wyoming	81%
Missouri	86%	NATIONAL	112%

Again, rental subsidies are essential.



what about shelters? what about
my program?

- “We should be meeting people’s basic needs through emergency shelters and meal-sites and serve more of them, not focus on housing.”
- “It is too expensive.”
- “It will be implemented by de-funding other programs.”
- “It’s unfair that we have to cut programs to do housing...It puts a burden on existing providers trying to maintain a quality program.”

Martha Burt “We have built a homeless service industry, and it now has its own entrenched interests and expectations for continued funding. This homeless establishment, in the absence of new resources actually reduces the likelihood that new or creative approaches to ending rather than ameliorating homelessness will be developed or implemented...”

“There has been a growing professional identity of shelter providers and homeless advocates who contribute to expanded shelters and services. This population tends to be the most prominent opposition to the Housing First model as it can be seen as a threat to their profession and future careers. Culhane: Shelters are the sign of homelessness, They do not end homelessness. What ends homelessness is housing programs and prevention programs.”



EVP and improved outcomes

Review evaluation and outcome data for HF programs, including Pathways to Housing and Closer to Home Initiative re residential stability, duration of homelessness episode, etc. compared to housing ready based programs.

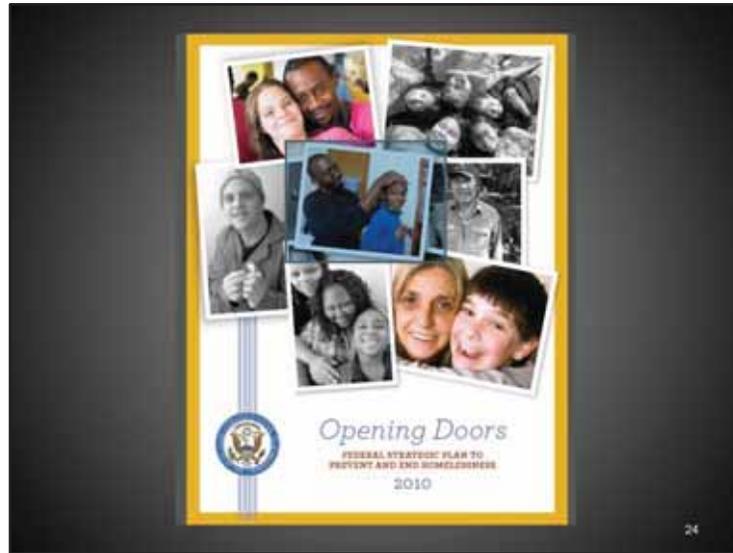
SHC-NM 91% retention after 7 months. Evaluation on-going. Discuss Albuquerque success at 91% - started in 2006 with 230 people and utilizes over 90 participating landlords in metro area.



cost effective

From CSH:

As compared with other very low-income people, this group disproportionately uses shelters, emergency health care, and public mental health services. They often cycle rapidly through various public institutions – shelters, jails, emergency rooms, and inpatient hospitals – at great cost to taxpayers. Studies have shown that supportive housing can break this cycle. NY NY (Culhane) ... 3,500 units of supportive housing – found decreases in use of homeless shelters, inpatient hospitals, emergency rooms, and jails and prisons among supportive housing tenants as compared with a matched comparison group. These reductions in service utilization resulted in an annualized savings of \$16,282 per unit, which if reinvested would offset 95% of the cost of providing supportive housing. (essentially cost neutral)



Funding will increasingly be focused on permanent housing and EVP.

Four key goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in five years
- Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in five years
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in ten years
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

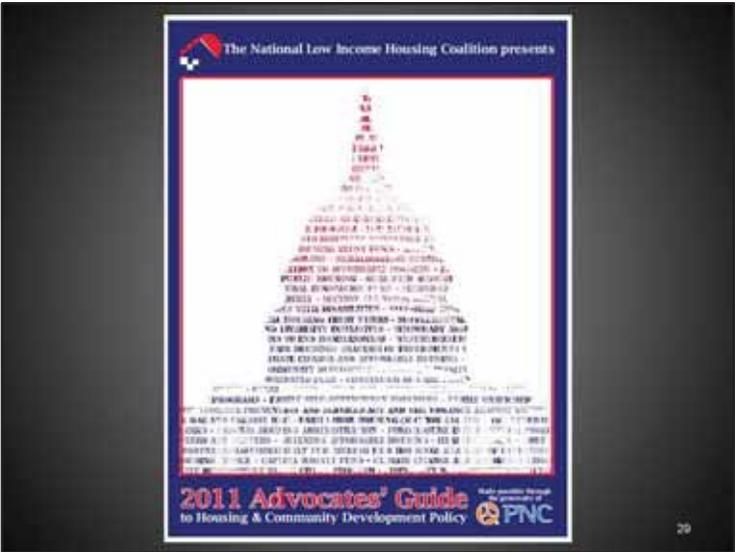
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Resources on NIMBY and Opposition

Where to go to learn more. Great resources out there.









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Fair Housing Fact Sheets

- [AF: Duty to Accommodate in Access](#)
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- [AF: Using Reasonable Accommodations to Prevent Eviction](#)
- [AF: Clarifying Discrimination in the Housing Application and Screening Process](#)
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- [AF: The Significance of Independent Living Requirements in Public Housing, Assisted Living Centers and Community Care Retirement Communities](#)
- [AF: Just Use Where You go: 7 Under-Integrated Housing Systems for People with Mental Illness](#)
- [AF: Use in Public or Private: Reasonable Accommodations Under the Fair Housing Act and Regulations](#)
- [AF: Resolving the Conflicts of Housing Choice Vouchers for People with Disabilities: published in Housing Law Bulletin, a publication of the National Housing Law Project](#)

Additional Housing Resources

[Guide: Fair Housing Information Center](#)
[Disability Housing Fact Sheet](#)

Resources from Advocates

• [Disability Housing Fact Sheet](#) and [Disability Housing Fact Sheet](#) developed by the John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic, published by the Center for Housing Discrimination, 2014. Used with the permission of the author.

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For more information....

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