



HOUSING VIRGINIA
INFORM | CONNECT | UNLOCK

Overcoming NIMBY

2019 VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S HOUSING CONFERENCE
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA | 20 NOVEMBER 2019

Sponsored by



What is Housing Virginia?



Housing Virginia is a statewide effort to
advance affordable housing.

We provide research, data and messaging to the affordable housing community to help change attitudes, policy, and practices so we can make affordable housing a reality for every Virginian.

Housing Virginia's goals are to **inform** discussions, **connect** housing to other issues, and **unlock** opportunities for the expansion of affordable housing.

Who's in the room?

Today's goals

Our challenge

"I believe in protecting the single family neighborhood and this is a terrible imposition to place on the residents of this community"

"This calm, quiet happy place will become one of chaos, noise and crime potential"

"Criminals would be drawn to the area, potentially killing us and our children"

Chesterfield Planning Commission votes against B&B plan

Richmond Times-Dispatch (July 21, 2015)



Link: bit.ly/2BHS2YA

Positive Signs.....

Voters Approve Charlotte Housing Bonds

Minneapolis Ends Single Family Only Zoning

“Legalization” of Multifamily

Accessory Dwelling Units

NIMBY Stories: Part 1

Helen McIlvaine

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HOUSING
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

PART 1

Understanding NIMBYism and *reframing* your messages

How is NIMBYism manifested?

NIMBY is bipartisan; NIMBY defines its own community boundaries

COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

- Voicing opposition at meetings
- Letters of opposition
- Rallying neighbors/Direct action
- Social media



INSTITUTIONALIZED NIMBYISM

- NIMTOO: *Not In My Term of Office*
- Uncooperative local staff
- Hostile elected/appointed officials



NIMBYism today



Time to Move Way from the Term Altogether?

- NIMBY is **pejorative** and can mean all things
- Anti-growth; development **VS** gentrification concern or the loss of affordability
- There are possible reasons to oppose development that are valid and a vital part of community development.

Instead Ask:

- 1) Who is opposed to a particular development? *and*
- 2) Why?



What brings out NIMBY responses in a community?

At its core, NIMBYism is a *fear response*, both to the *unknown* and to the *misunderstood*.

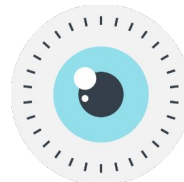
In order to address these fears and misunderstandings, you will need to *understand why* a NIMBY-ist thinks this way.



How can we be proactive about NIMBYism?

Predicting and **responding** to NIMBYism is a complex process, but not an impossible one.

1. **Understand** thinking behind NIMBY response
2. **Engage** with the community from the onset
3. Develop and maintain a **consistent** engagement strategy
4. Maintain **transparency** through the entire process



Backfires and reframing 101:

What is a **FRAME**?

Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented.

Effective framing requires:

- Knowing what to lead with
- Selecting words that “fit your frame”
- Choosing what to leave unsaid

Understanding is **FRAME DEPENDENT**

Given the importance of free speech, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?



85% in favor

Given the risk of violence, would you favor allowing a hate group to hold a political rally?



40% in favor

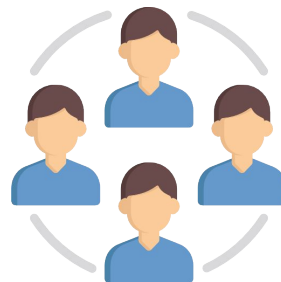
What is a **BACKFIRE**?

A message *backfires* when it reinforces the audience's existing biases, rather than changing them ...even when contradictory evidence is provided.

Tiffany Manuel, Ph.D, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Common Backfires in Community Engagement

ZERO-SUM THINKING: “This issue has nothing to do with me. It’s not my responsibility to solve other people’s problems.”



SOLUTION: Tell a “*story of us*” – how affordable housing benefits the whole community – instead of a “story of them.”

Common Backfires in Community Engagement

TRADITIONAL MESSAGE:

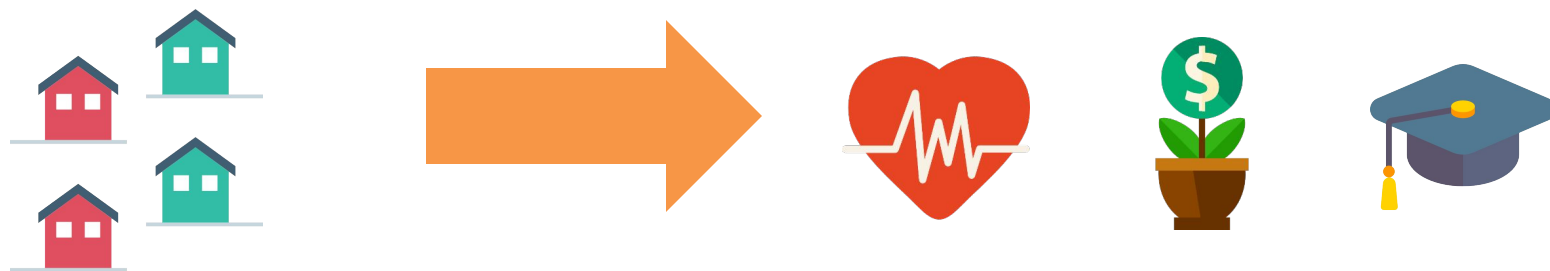
John and Mary need our help. They are trying to overcome addiction and homelessness. They need an affordable home and counseling support.

NEW FRAME:

Tell a “*story of us*”: Our community makes sure that all of our neighbors have the chance to succeed. When someone is struggling, we all come together to help. That’s what makes our community great.

Common Backfires in Community Engagement

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY: “Buy/rent the house you can afford or move. Stop making poor decisions and asking me to pay for them.”



SOLUTION: Make it clear that *where you live affects you*—community-level factors shape health, economic mobility, and opportunity.

Common Backfires in Community Engagement

NEW FRAME:

Everyone should have an equal opportunity to succeed. But we all start in different places. If you are born into a poor family in a neighborhood with little opportunity, you may need a boost that a more fortunate person doesn't need. The life expectancy, income potential, education (etc – fill in the stat) is very different for babies born in these two neighborhoods just two miles apart.

LUNCH BREAK

PART 2

Sharing is caring:
Successful frames
and how to use them

Speaking in “Freddish”



<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/06/mr-rogers-neighborhood-talking-to-kids/562352/>

STEP 1:

State the idea you wish to express as clearly as possible, and in terms preschoolers can understand.

"It is dangerous to play in the street."

STEP 2:

Rephrase in a positive manner.

“It is good to play where it is safe.”

STEP 3:

Rephrase the idea, bearing in mind that preschoolers need to be redirected to authorities they trust.

“Ask your parents where it is safe to play.”

STEP 4:

Rephrase your idea to eliminate all elements that could be considered prescriptive, directive, or instructive.

“Your parents will tell you where it is safe to play.”

STEP 5:

Rephrase any element that suggests certainty.

***“Your parents can tell you
where it is safe to play.”***

STEP 6:

Rephrase your idea to eliminate any element that may not apply to all children.

*“Your favorite grown-ups
can tell you where it is safe to play.”*

STEP 7:

Add a simple motivational idea that gives preschoolers a reason to follow your advice.

“Your favorite grown-ups can tell you where it is safe to play. It is good to listen to them.”

STEP 8:

Rephrase your new statement,
repeating the first step.

*“Your favorite grown-ups can tell you
where it is safe to play. It is important
to try to listen to them.”*

STEP 9:

Rephrase your idea a final time, relating it to some phase of development a preschooler can understand.

“Your favorite grown-ups can tell you where it is safe to play. It is important to try to listen to them, and listening is an important part of growing.”

Why do we reframe?

1. Increase support in principle
2. Expand knowledge of structural factors
3. Foster collective responsibility (*"We should act"*)
4. Foster collective efficacy (*"We can act"*)
5. Expand understanding of nonprofit/CDC work
6. Build support for policies and programs

“Finding a Frame for Affordable Housing”

FrameWorks Institute and Enterprise, October 2018

FRAME DEVELOPMENT

PEER DISCOURSE SESSIONS

ON-THE-STREET INTERVIEWS

“Problem Statement” frames



HOUSING INSECURITY AND AFFORDABILITY

“Too many Americans can’t afford housing.”

Cues consumerist thinking; leads to backfire.



HOUSING COST AND AVAILABILITY

“Quality rental homes are scarce and expensive.”

Names *housing* as problem to be solved by changing *policy*.

“Values” frames



COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY

“Every neighborhood should give people the opportunity to thrive.”

Fails to “decouple” thinking from consumerism;
most effective used *within* another frame.



FAIRNESS ACROSS PLACES / REGIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE

“Our region prospers only when every community prospers.”

Statistically significant increase in support for
investments in low-income areas.

“Policy Explanation” frames



POLICIES ADVANTAGE THE RICH

“Our housing policies help those who need it the least.”

Helps fill in common knowledge gap.



POLICIES DISADVANTAGE THE POOR

“Our housing policies give the least to those who need it the most.”

Particularly effective with “traditional” opponents.

“Explanatory Metaphor” frames



SOLVING THE PUZZLE

“CDCs gather the pieces necessary to help fix our problems.”

Increases understanding *and* builds support.



NAVIGATION / QUARTERBACK

“CDCs help steer resources to guide our community to the right place.”

May imply leadership without community support and involvement.

“Valence” frames



NEGATIVE VALENCE

“If we don’t provide good homes, we’ll all be worse off.”

Useful only for generating support for low-income communities.



POSITIVE VALENCE

“If we provide everyone with a good home, we’ll all benefit.”

Generally effective, especially among conservatives.

NIMBY Stories: Part 2

Vaughn Poller

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR
JAMES CITY COUNTY



~~AFFORDABILITY~~



FAIRNESS

1. Build on *Fairness Across Places* and *Regional Interdependence*

- Directs thinking away from assumption that outcomes are result of individual decisions
- Orients benefits to *all* of us

PROBLEM

"Our region's housing doesn't produce fair outcomes."



SOLUTION

"We need policies that expand our region's vitality."

2. Avoid “consumerist” language

- Focus problems on *systems*, not *personal decisions*



We have a shortage of affordable homes.



Rents have outpaced incomes.



The housing market is out of control.



Our housing policies aren't addressing needs.



Many workers have to live far from their jobs.



Better housing solutions will help lower traffic.

3. Move from the *individual* to the *collective*

- Tell stories with a wide cast of characters and explain their roles:
 - Systems and policymakers
 - Developers and service providers
 - Persons in need
- Don't rebut; *pivot!*

4. Productively point to policies' unequal effects on housing outcomes

- Explain the facts that you may take for granted
- Complete as many “missing links” as possible to form *explanatory chains*
- Don't let your audience fill in blanks on their own

Let's build an
explanatory chain

5. Don't avoid race, but be sure to frame and explain properly

- Common backfires include *natural segregation* and *crisis/fatalism*
- Avoid “drive-by” mentions of racial inequalities
- Give specific **explanatory chains**

Pair problems with process

Today's segregated neighborhoods are the result of legal and social discrimination.

Use relatable examples

Black home loan applicants are more likely to be given subprime mortgages.

Explain negative effects

These loans are hard to pay down, making foreclosure and wealth loss more common.

Pivot to solutions

We should increase fair housing enforcements that identify and fix discriminatory lending practices.

6. Establish community development organizations as puzzle solvers

- Normal people don't understand complexities of affordable housing / community development
- **"Puzzle"** metaphor:
 - Reduces suspicions about intent
 - Increases positive attitudes
 - Strengthens appetite for collective action

CDCs are...

MISSION-DRIVEN, NOT PROFIT-DRIVEN

CDCs are not-for-profits. Working with developers does not imply putting their interests first.

ACCOUNTABLE TO RESIDENTS

CDCs desire, seek, and value input from residents in the communities they serve.

EQUIPPED WITH EXPERTISE

CDC staff are simultaneously well-educated and community-focused to help build and provide housing that benefits the whole neighborhood.

7. Expand the possibility for multi-faceted improvements

- Good housing is more than just *“housing that doesn’t hurt you”*
- Mention costs of inaction, but devote more effort to explaining positive, community-wide benefits:
 - **Better housing** = better physical and financial health
 - Better physical health = *More active, connected communities*
 - Better financial health = *More money in local economy*

WHAT RINGS TRUE?

WHAT SURPRISES YOU?

WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

NIMBY Stories: Part 3

Heather Crislip

PRESIDENT & CEO

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES MADE EQUAL OF VIRGINIA

PART 3:

Different Communities....

Different Approaches

PART 3:

Making an action plan and
getting to YES



Thank you!