



# CREATING SAFE SPACES TO DISCUSS HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCACY IN AFFLUENT COMMUNITIES  
NPH CONFERENCE | MARRIOTT SF | 3:30P | SEPT 21, 2018

# 1) WHO IS PALO ALTO?

- Very well **EDUCATED**, mostly caring community
- Interested in **IMPACTFUL** ideas + initiatives
- Politically active at the **NATIONAL** level
- More likely to consume **REGIONAL** not **LOCAL** media
- Used to getting results **QUICKLY**
- People more willing to give **MONEY** not **TIME**
  - Community organizing and housing advocacy paths are unclear and take a lot of time

## 2) WHY CREATE SAFE SPACES TO DISCUSS HOUSING?

### 'Troubling' Findings on Who Speaks Up About Housing Development



The skyline of Worcester, Massachusetts after sunset in 2017. SHUTTERSTOCK



AUGUST 22, 2018

New research highlights concerns that local officials are hearing a narrow subset of views at public meetings.

HOUSING

MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON

URBAN DESIGN

- Who speaks up about housing?
- How do they take over public discourse?
- How does this affect decision makers?

### 3) WHY A SAFE SPACE TO DISCUSS HOUSING IN PALO ALTO?



“I’m very surprised. I thought Palo Alto was a more caring community than that. It was a campaign that was full of both misinformation and disinformation. An awful lot of issues got mixed up. A lot of what was said was plain garbage.”

*-Ray Bacchetti, Human Relations Commission, Community Champion*

## 4) HOW DOES PALO ALTO FORWARD MAKE SAFE SPACE?

- We **CONNECT** Palo Alto community members who care about better housing and transportation options
- We **SHARE** stories about housing costs, housing insecurity and diminishing housing options for Palo Altans of all ages and incomes
- We **HOST** community education events on housing and transportation topics to let people learn, listen and share
- We **VOICE** opinions on planning efforts (Comp Plan, Zoning Ordinance changes) and specific projects (Wilton Court, Alta Locale)

## 5) WHY ARE SAFE SPACES TO DISCUSS HOUSING STILL NEEDED TODAY?

- Housing insecurity fosters **STIGMA** & **SHAME**  
...So the people most affected are **UNWILLING to SPEAK**.
- Housing is **COMPLEX** and hard to understand  
...So it is **SUSCEPTIBLE** to **FALSE NARRATIVES**
- Local issues are often **IGNORED** by most local residents  
...So the void is filled by the **TYRANNY** of a **BULLY MINORITY**

## 5b) WHY ARE SAFE SPACES TO DISCUSS HOUSING STILL NEEDED TODAY?

Think about the **2016 NATIONAL ELECTION**

Now multiply by **101 CITIES** in Bay Area....

*It's what we're watching with Trump and all the rest of that tribalism, which is **people being fearful and marking their territory and wanting to protect it**....We all have to realize this is a very powerful human emotion.*

*The only way you overcome that kind of feeling is with powerful coalitions. If enough groups can see common cause, and identify co-benefits and get behind a change, they can overcome that negative impulse to say, "Change is bad and I've got mine." -Peter Calthorpe, Urban Designer*

## 7) HOW DO WE EXPAND SAFE SPACES?

- Explain housing is the **ROOT and SOLUTION** to many issues
- **CATEGORIZE HOUSING** in media and social media
- **BROADEN WHO** participates
- **EXPAND** ways for people to participate **OUTSIDE** of council chambers

### The Mercury News

| NEWS ▲                | LOCAL ▼                  | OPINION ▼ | SPORTS ▼ | BUSIN |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|----------|-------|
| News                  | Health                   |           |          |       |
| Latest Headlines      | Politics                 |           |          |       |
| California News       | Transportation           |           |          |       |
| Environment & Science | Traffic Map              |           |          |       |
| Nation & World        | Mr. Roadshow             |           |          |       |
| Education             | Hanging Series + Podcast |           |          |       |
| Crime & Courts        | The Cannifornian         |           |          |       |

## DON'T

- Use the word **NIMBY**
- **VILLIFY** or **DISPARAGE** people with opposing viewpoints

## DO

- **EMPATHIZE** with people who have different viewpoints
- **HUMANIZE** who benefits from housing
- **FUND** community organizing to **CULTIVATE & SUSTAIN** housing leaders





**THANK YOU !**  
AND PLEASE CONNECT WITH US!

[www.paloaltoforward.com](http://www.paloaltoforward.com) | [info@paloaltoforward.com](mailto:info@paloaltoforward.com) | [www.facebook.com/paloaltoforward](https://www.facebook.com/paloaltoforward)