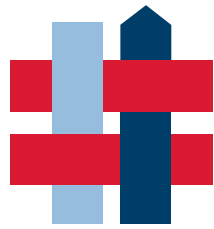


VIRTUAL CONVENING RECAP





SOLUTIONS

for HOUSING COMMUNICATIONS

★ MAY 27 ★
★ 2020 ★
CONVENING



On May 27, NHC held our Solutions for Housing Communications virtual convening. This event was originally scheduled to take place in March at the National Press Club. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHC took the necessary steps to cancel the in-person event, but still wanted to bring people together to take part in important discussions around messaging, marketing and advocacy strategies to build support for affordable housing. We thank everyone for joining us via Zoom, especially all of our speakers and special keynote speakers **Grovetta Gardineer**, senior deputy comptroller for bank supervision policy for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), and **Conor Dougherty**, *New York Times* economics reporter and author of “Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America.”

NHC is happy to share recaps of #SolutionsComms sessions.



“

There has never been data aggregated in a way that allows us to see the true impact of CRA nationwide, regionally, etc. We want to change that. We want to be able to measure CRA in a way that looks at it across a much broader perspective; from an impact perspective.”

—GROVETTA GARDINEER, OCC



OFFICE OF THE
COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY



WELCOME REMARKS AND SPECIAL DISCUSSION

NHC President and CEO David Dworkin joined **Grovetta Gardineer**, OCC senior deputy comptroller for bank supervision policy, in kicking off the convening with a discussion around the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) final rule and COVID-19 response efforts. Having recently finalized its proposal to modernize CRA, OCC is now focused on the implementation of the new framework, which Gardineer said is designed to ensure continual review of the statute and better measurement of its impact. The updates become effective this October; however, examinations will not be fully implemented until 2023, according to Gardineer, providing banks sufficient time to ramp up data collection. Working towards full implementation, the OCC will update its bank examination procedures, conduct training sessions and host informative webinars. Despite the absence of the Federal Reserve and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's participation in the final rule, Gardineer said the agencies were aligned in the need for CRA change.

OCC remains closely involved in monitoring financial institutions' response to the COVID-19 crisis, including the continuation of essential bank operations, as well as meeting the financial needs of consumers and businesses. Gardineer said financial institutions have been able to endure the stress on the system because of their solid liquidity and capital positions. Moving forward, the OCC will be focused on monitoring any ensuing credit risk.






POWERING YOUR NEWSLETTER FOR IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

Some tips:

- Use visuals
- Use compelling, action-oriented language
- Give clear, easy instructions
- Provide tools (e.g. campaign toolkit with suggested language and graphics)
- Sync call to action with broader campaign/goals

Empower your audience to take action

The Latest News



#KEEPCDFISSTRONG

OPPORTUNITYFINANCE NETWORK

CDFIs Call for \$1 Billion in New CDFI Fund Grants as PPP Misses the Mark

As Congress begins drafting "Phase 4" legislation to address the continuing health and economic impacts of COVID-19, OFN is strongly advocating for a \$1 billion appropriation for the CDFI Fund to administer a rapid response grant program. This capital will enable CDFIs to reach underserved businesses—many of which were left out of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)—and also meet housing, consumer, and other ongoing needs in the communities CDFIs serve.

[Read More →](#)

Join the Fight to #KeepCDFIsStrong

We invite you to join OFN all year long in our campaign to #KeepCDFIsStrong! Get started by checking out our campaign toolkit, which contains suggested social media language and graphics, including an advocacy graphic calling for \$1 billion for CDFIs.

[Read More →](#)

A lot of times, an external newsletter is the first impression your supporters and members have of your organization, making it an important communications tool. For this session, **Andrea Nesby**, NHC marketing and communications manager, led a conversation with speakers from three housing organizations on how they use their newsletters to influence the industry and mobilize audiences to action. **Caroline Valvardi**, senior associate of strategic communications with the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), spoke on how their newsletter plays a major part in their larger ecosystem of advocacy efforts. She suggested using compelling active language, such as using “Ask Congress” instead of “OFN is asking.” Caroline also touched on the importance of using graphics as an image header that includes a hashtag for a campaign to increase engagement.

Cherri Sinclair, communications director with the National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders (NAAHL), shared how she works to ensure her newsletter provides a variety of perspectives around housing policy issues, not just one point of view. Different voices matter. When it comes to deciding which articles to include, Cherri shared she considers if the article speaks to NAAHL’s mission and the mission of their members. **Brianna Gipson**, development and communications associate with Pathways to Housing DC, shared how she thinks of a nonprofit newsletter as serving as a bridge of information to supporters. Brianna shared a few ways to do this, including incorporating client stories, sharing perspectives from members and staff to keep content fresh and interesting, and addressing misconceptions or educating community members. For example, Pathways wrote a piece to address people’s assertions that encampments should be cleared and individuals experiencing homelessness should go to a shelter. Pathways shared avoiding shelters is usually a safety precaution. The session closed with speakers sharing strategies on increasing open and click through rates, such as A/B testing, segmenting audience lists and creating targeted emails, playing with subject lines, and testing out when to send.





ADVOCATING FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS DURING A HEALTH CRISIS



CO Homelessness In COVID-19 World

Strategies

- De-densification
- Screening / Testing
- Motel/Hotel
 - Activated Respite – Tested or Recovery
 - Protective Action – High-Risk People
- Long term housing options
 - Resources Needed
 - Housing stock
 - Vouchers and services

Data Points of Concern

- 2-3x more likely to need hospitalization, critical care, and death
- 1 in 3 in Boston shelter with COVID-19 but asymptomatic
- Testing Pilot in Denver



One of the alarming effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been its devastating impact on people experiencing homelessness. In this session, service providers and experts from across the country discussed strategies for advocating for this extremely vulnerable population, not only to ensure their immediate needs are met during the pandemic, but also to work toward a long-term solution to end homelessness. **Cathy Alderman**, vice president for communications and public policy at the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, kicked things off by discussing the work she and her colleagues have done to help ensure the needs of the local homeless community are being met. Alderman said that the coalition was hearing from shelters that they were unable to implement social distancing standards, so they took immediate action, including contracting with hotels to provide additional space for people experiencing homelessness to stay in a safe manner after being tested or while recovering. The coalition also conducted a survey of one of their shelters, finding that 14 of the 52 guests tested positive without displaying symptoms, demonstrating the extent to which COVID-19 could spread undetected in such congregate settings.

Barbara DiPietro, senior director of policy for the National Health Care for the Homeless Council (NHCHC), discussed NHCHC's work to respond to the crisis, emphasizing the importance of thinking beyond COVID-19 to ensure homeless individuals continue to get access to essential healthcare needs like insulin. DiPietro was followed by **Gina Wilt**, advocacy director at the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, who discussed strategies for obtaining federal and local funds for their homeless community. Session moderator **Karianna Barr**, director of development and communications at the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, led a Q&A session where panelists discussed a wide range of topics, from ways to tailor messaging to audience to the impact the crisis has had on people's perceptions of homelessness. Panelists emphasized over and over again that the homeless community was already in crisis before the pandemic, but that one possible outcome of COVID-19 is that it may now be easier for people to understand just how important safe housing is for everyone.





Jeffers emphasized the importance of writing stories in a way that appeals to the Wernicke area of the brain, which processes words, olfactory senses, the motor cortex, and empathy.



SURVIVING PR: A GUTSY NEW APPROACH TO TELLING YOUR STORY

David Jeffers, founder of First Story, LLC, a strategic communications firm that focuses on housing, housing finance and community investment, presented a session examining external communications, strategic marketing, public relations, and the creation of relationships with audiences. Jeffers began by discussing strategies for overcoming skepticism with audiences. For example, understanding what happens to the human brain as we read or hear stories can help us write stories in a way that fires parts of the brain and enhances the emotional experience for our readers.

Jeffers also emphasized the importance of writing stories in a way that appeals to the Wernicke area of the brain, which processes words, olfactory senses, the motor cortex, and empathy. When the listener or reader uses more of their brain when processing or engaging with a story to a story, it creates a richer brain event that leads to a more enjoyable experience, makes the information more deeply understandable, and causes the reader to remember the information longer. Jeffers also stressed the importance of telling stories that appeal to people's emotions, in order to make the listener or reader take the action the storyteller is asking them to take. Finally, Jeffers discussed the basic fundamentals of storytelling, as well as the importance of identifying the threat in storytelling.



“

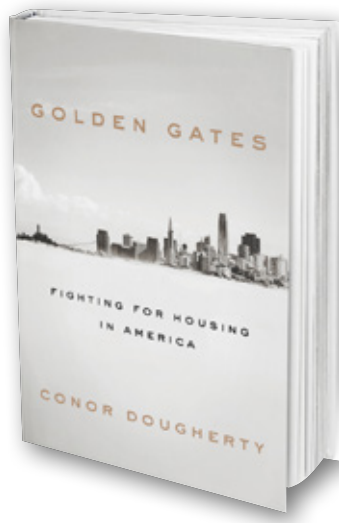
We have a long tradition in this country of acting like problems that affect really poor and non-White people aren't huge problems. ”

—CONOR DOUGHERTY, *Golden Gates*





Q&A WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER CONOR DOUGHERTY OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES*



The keynote address featured *New York Times* economic and housing reporter and author **Conor Dougherty**, who discussed lessons learned from the writing of his book “Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America.” During a lively Q&A session, Dougherty shared insights on how the YIMBY movement in San Francisco

was able to employ a non-traditional approach to communicating its message and successfully impact the affordable housing debate in California and beyond.





COVID-19
HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER

ABOUT NHC JOIN NHC

EXPLORE BEST PRACTICES

VIEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Search Resources

COVID-19 HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER

NHC has compiled COVID-19 resources from every facet of the housing industry so you are never more than one click away from the information you need.

FILTER OPTIONS

By Subject Matter

By Location

16 of 680 Resources



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Up for Growth National Coalition, "The Downstream Impacts of the Rental Crisis"

RENTERS

16 N

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

National American Indian Housing Council, "COVID-19 Resources - Recorded Webinars with Tribally Designated Housing Entities"

FORECLOSURE

19 N

HOMEOWNERS

HUD, "FHA extends foreclosure and eviction moratorium for single family homeowners for additional two months"

HOMEOWNERS

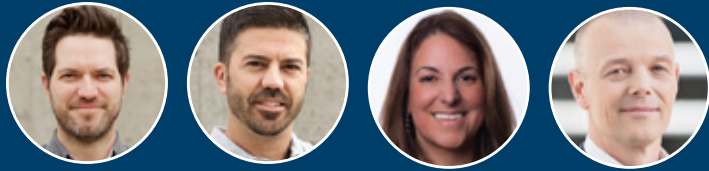
1 d

SINGLE FAMILY MORTGAGE INDUSTRY

FHFA, "FHFA to Re-Propose Updated Minimum Financial Eligibility Requirements for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Seller/Services"

SINGLE FAMILY

1 d



CREATING A COVID-19 WEB RESPONSE FROM THE GROUND UP

Recognizing the urgent need for a central resource for COVID-19 information for the housing community, NHC mobilized its web response at the onset of the pandemic. **Stefan Hartwig**, founder and chief creative officer, and **Aaron Mentele**, chief executive officer of web design company Electric Pulp, joined **Bob Simpson**, NHC senior policy advisor and founder of Simpson Impact Strategies, and **Gina Metrakas**, NHC senior policy advisor, to discuss the process of setting up NHC's COVID-19 Housing Resource Center.

NHC set out to create a user-friendly resource; this clear vision allowed Electric Pulp to move more quickly from concept to design. Drawing on a team of half a dozen researchers, NHC created shared documents, established resource tracking mechanisms, agreed on naming conventions and set up a standing weekly meeting to assist in the aggregation and organization of the website's content. By creating a flexible and adaptable format, NHC was able to get the website up and running as quickly as possible while still allowing for ongoing additions and modifications. As the NHC team continues to edit the website, ensuring content is relevant and up-to-date, it is relying on tools like Google Analytics to track engagement and SEO to drive web traffic.





TECH TALK: HARNESSING THE POWER OF DIGITAL MEDIA FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

Digital Campaigns Pt 2

- Ideas to build on for a digital campaign
 - Action alerts w/ goal on social media
 - Templates and scripts
 - Thank you/shout out lawmakers
 - Easy to comprehend legislative agenda
 - Messaging/framing



Minnesota
Coalition for the
Homeless

Allison Knapp Womack, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Enterprise Community Partners, led a discussion with other leading marketing experts to discuss what it takes to have an impactful digital presence. **Anthony Shop**, founder of Social Driver, kicked off the session discussing how to influence and connect with policymakers using social media. Advocates can't just broadcast messages out, he said; they must empower others to tell the story. Putting people at the center of the story is more impactful. He illustrated this example by sharing success from the #Internet4schools campaign, which got the attention of the Federal Communications Commission.

Christina Gotuaco, communications director with the California Housing Partnership, discussed internal processes around digital media outreach, including auditing social media channels to refine the organization's voice. She recommended creating a chart that outlines all potential target audiences and the best digital tools to reach these audiences. Gotuaco also discussed the importance of collaboration to increase digital media reach by uplifting one another's work through retweets, post shares, and letter sign-ons.

Kirsten Rokke, communications director with the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH), spoke on the importance of using a consistent brand that stands out. When it comes to building momentum around a digital campaign, Kirsten encouraged shout outs to lawmakers on Twitter, developing a visually appealing legislative agenda, and finding creative ways to make people see themselves in a campaign. For MCH's Minnesota Family Investment Program campaign, MCH encouraged people to retweet a picture of themselves from the 80s using one of their templates. Funding for the program had not increased since the late 80s, but eventually did last year thanks to MCH's digital advocacy. All the speakers agreed Twitter is one of the most powerful tools for digital outreach, but Anthony pointed out we should not forget about LinkedIn; people will likely be looking to build more of a connection on LinkedIn given COVID-19.



**Learned and lived
expertise shows:**

**Housing is central
to life
opportunities and
outcomes.**





TELLING THE STORY: WHY HOUSING PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE DURING A HEALTH CRISIS

The connection between health and housing has been put in the spotlight by the COVID-19 pandemic. But even before the pandemic, housing and health industry leaders increasingly acknowledged this connection and partnered across sectors to work to meet the housing and health needs of vulnerable populations. In this session, **David Adame**, president and CEO of Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC), and **Andy McHahon**, vice president for policy, health and human services for UnitedHealthcare, discussed their cross-sector partnership.

After moderator **Fred Karnas**, senior fellow at the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, introduced the panel, **Maya Brennan**, senior policy program manager at the Urban Institute, kicked things off by giving an overview on the importance of social determinants of health like housing. Brennan emphasized the importance of framing housing issues not as individual issues, but as market issues—for example, “housing markets don’t provide safe, decent homes at all income levels.” Afterwards, Adame and McHahon discussed lessons learned from the CPLC/UnitedHealthcare partnership. Adame said that it makes economic sense to treat housing and healthcare as the intertwined issues that they are, since not having stable housing will likely result in higher healthcare costs down the line. McHahon echoed this sentiment, arguing for a holistic approach to housing and healthcare: “The system has to respond to meet the needs of people, which collectively systems are not well-designed to do.”





GOODCOMM: MESSAGING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Strategies for Engaging Neighborhoods

Being a good neighbor + Highlighting resident voices

1. Establish Jubilee as a trusted and engaged neighborhood partner

- The built environment makes a difference. Jubilee's buildings match the neighborhood and are well maintained.
- Participate/show up at local neighborhood gatherings – Jubilee is a known entity
- Understand and support neighborhood interests and concerns: streetscape clean up, opposition to liquor licenses, etc.
- Respond to concerns/questions quickly with transparency
- Invite neighborhood groups to use our ground floor space for meetings/gatherings

2. Support, train and encourage Jubilee resident leadership

- Jubilee residents are part of the fabric of the community – many have been living in the community for generations
- Residents speaking at legislative and budget hearings – meeting with elected and appointed officials
- Neighborhood associations are often made up of higher income homeowners and younger white people – residents claiming their seat at the table changes this narrative



Deeply affordable. Thriving neighborhoods. Nearby services.

One of the biggest challenges housing professionals face is how to make the benefits of affordable housing resonate with a broader community. In this session, **Maria Plati**, communications director with the Preservation of Affordable Housing, led a discussion on messaging and engagement strategies that build support for affordable housing. **Mackenzie Price**, a principle strategist with FrameWorks Institute, kicked off the conversation and shared how their research has uncovered the assumption that if someone wants a home, then that is something they can afford. This mindset causes housing to get stuck in the realm of consumer good, making it hard to have a conversation around affordable housing. Mackenzie suggested a way for housing communicators and advocates to address this is to call out a housing availability crisis and point out how policy makes (or does not make) affordable housing more widely available.

Derek Madsen, executive vice president of resource development with CommonBond Communities, shared a brand perspective saying it's important to speak on the impact of providing service enriched housing to residents, as opposed to just talking about what your organization does. Your brand has to tell a powerful story and use a human face to illustrate your organization's impact in the communities you serve, he said. **Martin Mellet**, vice president of external affairs with Jubilee Housing, discussed how Jubilee uses the term "justice housing" instead of "affordable housing" to emphasize providing deeply affordable housing with supportive services in thriving communities. When it comes to engaging a community to build support for affordable housing, Mellet shared how Jubilee meets with neighborhood associations and offers training to residents to go out and speak at neighborhood association meetings, as well as legislative and budget hearings.





“

In the coming months, the focus will be on the safety net and how housing plays into the overall economic picture – without housing we don't have a functioning economy ”

—ALLY SCHWEITZER, WAMU



THE FUTURE OF HOUSING NEWS

In this session, moderated by **Miriam Axle-Lute**, editor of *Shelterforce*, panelists discussed how COVID-19 has impacted media pitching and strategy around housing.

Ally Schweitzer, a business and development reporter at WAMU, kicked things off by discussing the way COVID-19 has caused all journalists to become public health reporters. In the coming months, Schweitzer said, the focus will be on the safety net and how housing plays into the overall economic picture—without housing, she added, we don't have a functioning economy.

Roger Valdez, who writes for *Forbes*, discussed the impact of the decisions by many local governments in March to immediately impose eviction bans and the limited tools local and state governments have to respond to the crisis in terms of housing. Valdez also discussed the risk to the housing market posed by a potential rise in delinquencies and a bubble of unpaid rents, which affects housing providers and their balance sheets, as well as tertiary services, like landscapers and maintenance. Axle-Lute then discussed *Shelterforce*'s focus on the effect of the crisis for affordable housing developers and nonprofit-community groups, as well as the importance of viewing the crisis through an equity prism, given the problems that have ensued after past crises. Panelists also discussed what makes a compelling story and strategies for messaging and pitching to the media, including getting to the point of the problem and solution, and making yourself a resource when you pitch stories.





CLOSING PLENARY: SHAPING RESPONSES TO WITHSTAND HOUSING, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISES

David Dworkin led the closing session with a discussion on what the housing community is doing to mitigate the economic and health impacts of COVID-19 and what will be needed to grow out of this unprecedented crisis. **Shannon McGahn**, senior vice president of government affairs for the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), said the real estate industry, which has been deemed essential in all 50 states, has transitioned well, with more virtual showings, remote online notarizations and e-closings. As an organization, NAR has transitioned to virtual meetings, with their annual D.C. meeting, which usually draws around 10,000 attendees, having 30,000 registrants this year. **Bob Broeksmit**, president and CEO of the Mortgage Bankers Association, shared that the origination market has shown remarkable movement recently, from being 35% below last year's numbers just three weeks ago to now being 9% above last year's numbers. He said there was great confusion caused on the servicing side due to the delay between the Federal Housing Finance Agency issuing their forbearance notice on March 18 and issuing guidance on payment deferral options on May 13. Now, however, servicers have the tools they need to offer homeowners information on all of their options at once.

The conversation continued with **Doug Bibby**, president of the National Multifamily Housing Council, who shared how the stay-at-home orders placed a great burden on apartment owners and property managers, with things like trash pick-up and package delivery volume increasing. He went on to say that of the 11.5 million professionally managed units across the country, 41% are in apartment buildings with 50 units or fewer, highlighting the large share of small landlords at risk as the crisis continues. Bibby said that many owners have been able to implement short-term programs to collect portions of rent and to offer some forgiveness, but that as the crisis continues they will need to continue to collect enough rent to pay the mortgage on their buildings, payroll and property taxes — which will be a challenge.

Ed Brady, president and CEO of Home Builders Institute, shared that the organization had to stop all of their training programs in response to this crisis and, while they have made strides in online training programs during this time, construction requires hands-on training. He went on to share how this crisis will not only impact housing supply, which has been underdelivering demand for years, but also the opportunity for good career paths for people across the country. The robust and honest conversation with leaders from across the housing industry was a powerful way to end NHC's Solutions for Housing Communications convening.







We thank everyone for joining us
for our first #SolutionsComms virtual
convening; a special thank you
goes to all of our #SolutionsComms
speakers for taking time to share their
vast expertise with attendees.

SIGN UP FOR UPDATES ON
2021 CONVENING



NHC is the place housers
come to get things **DONE**



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