



# AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAYBOOK

Sonoma County, CA

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# Housing Stability in Sonoma County

# America's 25 least affordable housing markets: California home to 17 of them

Michael B. Sauter, 24/7 Wall Street

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## 9. Sonoma County, California

- Annual wages as pct. of median sales price: 9.1%
- Income needed to buy a house: \$156,249
- Avg. annual wages: \$53,677
- Q4 median sales price: \$591,000
- Housing units: 207,908

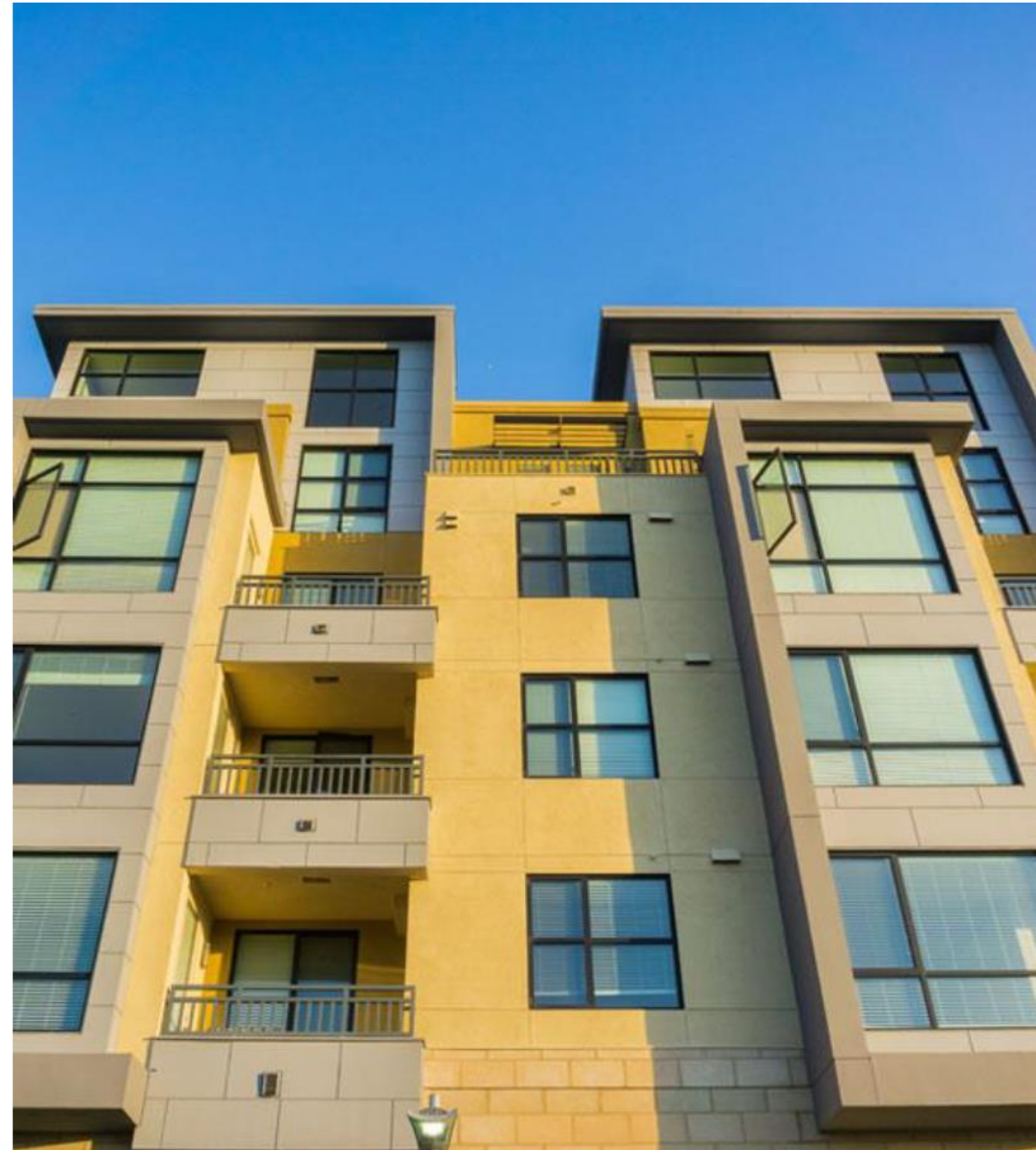
# The Gap is Projected to Widen

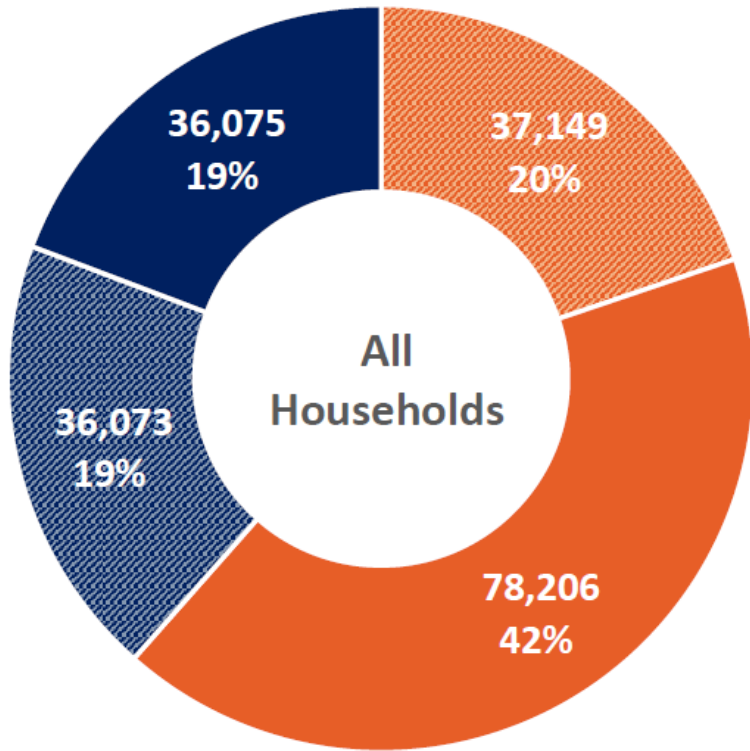
Over the next decade, the number of renter households is expected to continue growing **nationwide**. Yet there is little sign of turnaround in either income or rent trends.

Even using conservative assumptions, the number of renter households spending half or more of their income on rent is projected to rise at least **11 percent nationally, from 11.8 million to 13.1 million by 2025**.

Source: *Projecting Trends in Severely Cost-Burdened Renters*. Enterprise Community Partners, Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2015.

<http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/resources/ResourceDetails?ID=0100886#>





- Cost-Burdened Homeowners
- Affordably Housed Homeowners
- Cost-Burdened Renters
- Affordably Housed Renters

## Renters and Homeowners

**Sonoma County homeowners are more likely to be affordably and stably housed.**

Housing instability disproportionately affects renters. Around half of renters are cost-burdened, making up 19% of all households in the county. Renters also tend to be poorer: 50% are low-income, compared to only 26% of homeowners.

Source: 2016 ACS 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Data



# What is Strategic CaseMaking™

# Building Public Will Today is Tough

## The Challenges of Doing This Work in the Current Culture and Environment

Opinion

# A Nation of Weavers

The social renaissance is happening from the ground up.



By **David Brooks**

Opinion Columnist

Feb. 18, 2019

We're living with the excesses of 60 years of hyperindividualism. There's a lot of emphasis in our culture on personal freedom, self-interest, self-expression, the idea that life is an individual journey. On Dec. 7, 1941, countless Americans saw that their nation was in peril and walked into recruiting stations. We don't have anything as dramatic as Pearl Harbor, but when 47,000 Americans kill themselves every year and 72,000 more die from drug addiction, isn't that a silent Pearl Harbor? When the basic norms of decency, civility and truthfulness are under threat, isn't that a silent Pearl Harbor? Aren't we all called at moments like these to do something extra?



**The single biggest failure of leadership is to treat **systems** and **adaptive challenges** like **technical problems**.**

## **Strategic CaseMaking™**

is an acknowledgement that the issues we are trying to solve are adaptive problems, rather than technical problems. So, our process to getting to solutions necessitate a more nuanced, engaged, intentional and strategy.

**Strategic CaseMaking™** is an acknowledgement that the issues we are trying to solve are adaptive problems, rather than technical problems. So our process to getting to solutions have to be more nuanced, engaged, intentional and strategic.

**Adaptive problems are too big for any one person, organization or group to solve. Solutions must be co-produced and implemented, if they are to truly be transformative.**

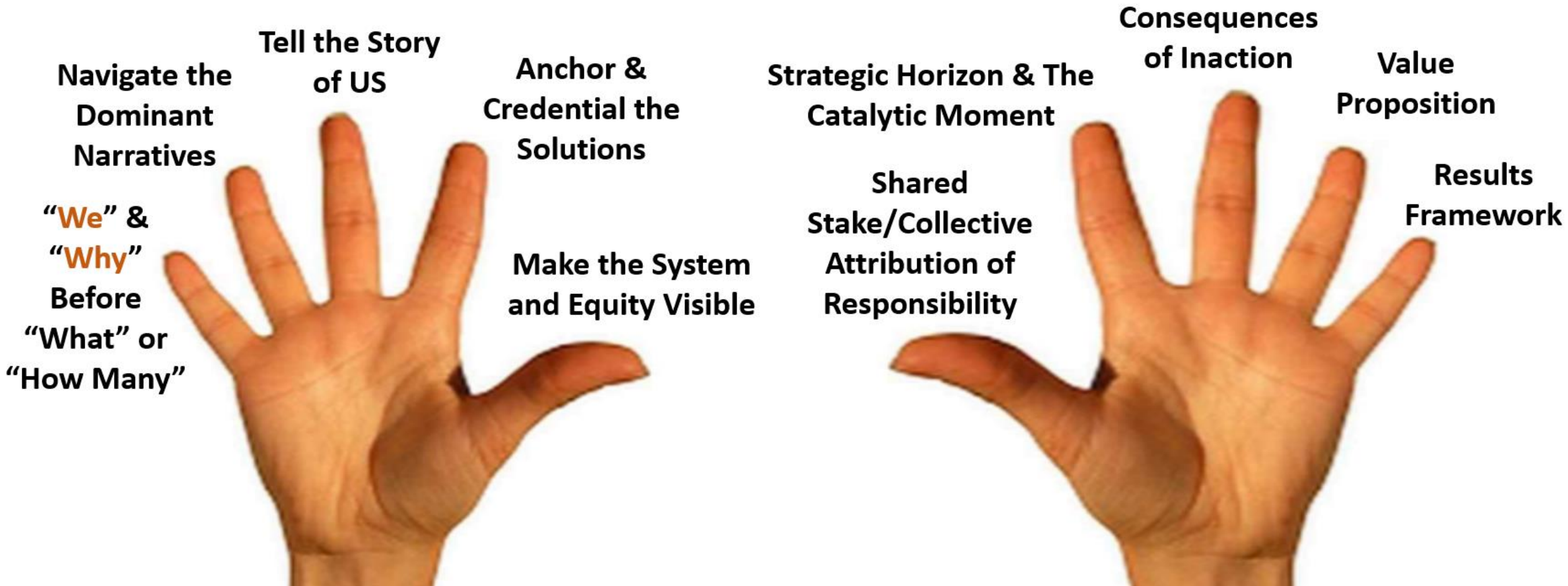
# Strategic CaseMaking™

is about changing the way that we invite a more thoughtful public discourse, how we help people see their stake in our success and how we ultimately, bring a broader sense of trust, belonging and agency to the issues we are trying to solve.



# 10 Core Principles of Strategic CaseMaking™

Public Will Building Requires Strong CaseMaking





# Sonoma CaseMaking™ Research

# Objectives for the Sonoma CaseMaking™ Research

Understand the underlying mindsets, values and public sentiment toward the housing issues across the Sonoma region.

Use the research as a thoughtful entry point into public will building around affordable housing in Sonoma.

# An Unfolding Process

**February 2019**

## **Engaging Housing Advocates in the Region**

- 50+ participants in small discussion circles
- Engaging housing advocates about existing strategies for building public will
- Listening for key themes – challenges, opportunities, threats and agency

**April - June 2019**

## **In-depth Focus Groups**

- 75+ participants in focus groups
- 10 participants per focus group, drawn from across the Sonoma region
- Participants chosen to represent a broad range of experience, perspective and demographics

**July 2019**

## **Discussion of Findings**

- Re-engage housing advocates from across the region in discussion circles
- Discuss findings from the research together, generate ideas for next steps in building stronger public will
- Develop action plan for leveraging the research to date

# Participants of the Focus Groups

75+ participants were recruited through a professional recruiting firm to provide diversity on a number of indicators:

- Ages: 20 to 74
- Household Income: \$35K to \$250K+
- Racial/Ethnic Diversity
- Education: high school to post-grad
- Occupational mix
- Mix of renters and owners
- Mix of progressives and conservatives
- Mix of couples, singles, families, and single parents
- Range of housing situations, housing histories and perspectives
- Diversity of political affiliation, community involvement,
- All registered voters





# Key Insights: Housing Cuts Across Every Demographic

**More than any other issue, focus group participants identified homelessness and affordable housing as their top priorities for policymakers in the region.**



# Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

**Fear:** More housing will lead to overcrowding



**Fear:** More housing will bring silicon valley problems



# Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

**Fear:** Don't balance the housing "crisis" on my back



**Fear:** Catastrophe is the best way to bring us together



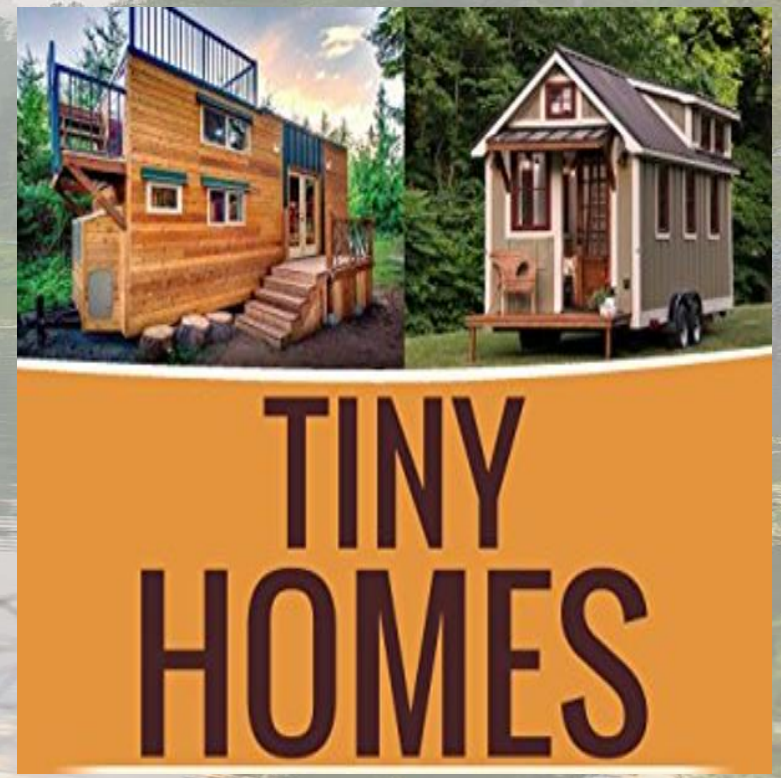
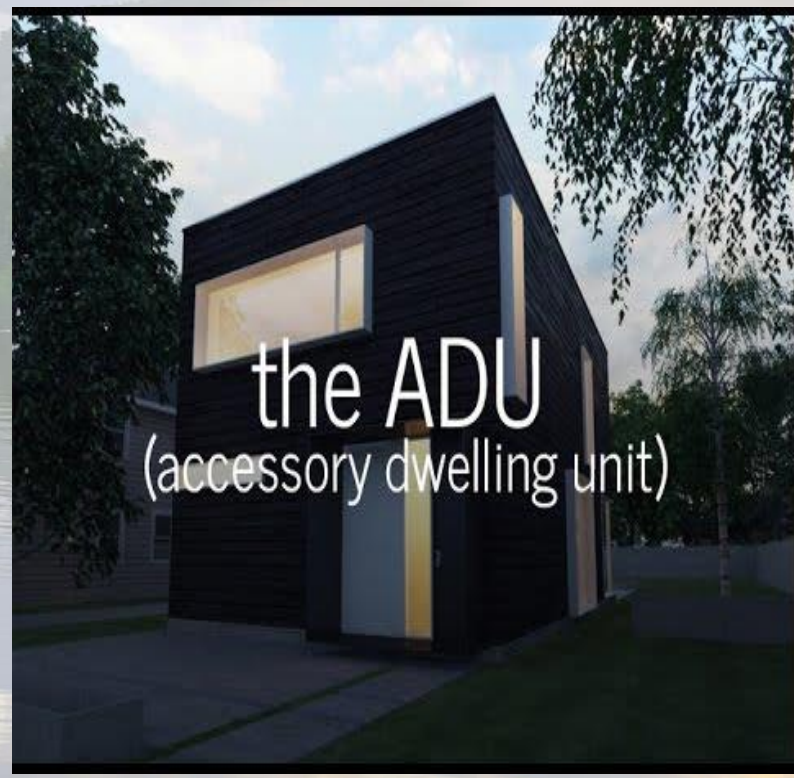
# Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

**Fear:** Causes are mostly systemic but where's the "housing system"?



# Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

**Backpack:** Solution set is limited to three animating ideas: rent control, ADUs and tiny homes



# Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

**Backpack:** Just get rid of the homelessness – which is a mental health issue NOT a housing issue



**Backpack:** The housing problem is NOT about me, I just need to find a cheaper place to live



# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

1. Start w/a WE and WHY that resonates with Sonoma residents (the **values of Stewardship, Legacy & Community Health**)
2. **Reframe the conversation** away from consumerist thinking/language about housing affordability (opting for ‘homes as the foundation of our community health’)
3. **Connect homelessness** to people’s understanding of housing issues (through examples)
4. **Highlight possibilities for wide-scale improvement**—not wide-scale disaster
5. **Introduce the housing “system”** and how system policies affect equity— without condemning the entire public and private sectors
6. Be **explicit about the metrics of success** for the region, explain how things will actually get better as a result of our sacrifices
7. **Position community development organizations positively** as solving the puzzle of varying concerns, expertise, and resources – with lots of relevant examples.



# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

Start w/a **WE** and **WHY** that resonates with Sonoma residents  
(the Values of **Stewardship**, **Legacy** & **Community Health**)

Stewardship + Experience  
Protecting the Environment



Protecting the Health of Our  
Community



Leaving a Rich Legacy of  
Sonoma for Our Grandchildren





# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Start w/a WE and WHY that resonates with Sonoma residents  
(the Values of **Stewardship, Legacy & Community Health**)**

*In Sonoma, we have mastered the art of protecting the beauty of our environment for everyone to enjoy. Whether you own hundreds of acres of land here or farm the land, whether you own or rent a home here, all are welcome to enjoy the beauty of our natural landscape. Our ability to leave a beautiful Sonoma to the next generation depends on our ability to plan for the needs of our region – our environment, our people, and our homes. Our businesses, farms and schools need workers and our schools need teachers who can afford to be here – people who live here because of the beauty of our landscape. In Sonoma, we know what it takes to plan forward – for our environment, our people and our homes. We all thrive when we take action to ensure a diverse mix of homes exists in our community.*

# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Reframe the conversation** away from consumerist thinking/language about housing affordability (opting for 'homes as the foundation of our community health')

## **Less of This**

*"Housing affordability is a major problem for many people in our community. The cost of a quality home in this community puts them out of reach for many people who work in our community."*

## **More of This**

*"Ensuring that we have a diverse mix of homes in Sonoma, actually protects the health of our community. We all thrive when Sonoma is not only a beautiful place to live but is a healthy, stable place to live. With so many of our friends, family and neighbors leaving because they can no longer afford to live here, our communities become more transient and we are all in jeopardy of losing the beautiful place that we love."*

# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Connect homelessness to people's understanding of housing issues (through examples) and overcome cynicism by positioning this as a solvable issue**

## **Less of This**

*"Homelessness remains one of the most stubborn public health problems in the county, one that's now getting worse after years of improvement. The reversal is confounding to Sonoma leaders who've made multiple efforts to remedy the predicament without much success."*

## **More of This**

*"We don't have to resign ourselves to high rates of homelessness – a growing number of cities across the country are solving homelessness by creating affordable housing. For example, Cuyahoga County in Ohio has all but eliminated chronic homelessness and they are moving now to eliminate family homelessness. Other cities are racking up similar victories using this approach – Houston, New Orleans, Phoenix have all eliminated veteran's homelessness and are now moving onto eliminate homelessness among other populations. It is time for Sonoma to join the growing list of places that are tackling the issue of homelessness and winning."*

# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Highlight possibilities for wide-scale improvement  
—not wide-scale disaster**

## **✗ Less of This**

*“Sonoma is a scary place to live today because the cost of living is so high. If we don’t build more affordable housing, housing prices will be driven even higher and more people will be forced to leave. Then, we’ll have more outsiders moving into the mega-mansions being built in Sonoma today and this will be a playground for the rich only.”*

## **✓ More of This**

*“Together with our partners, we are building on the unprecedented momentum in Sonoma to end homelessness by creating a diverse mix of affordable homes. For the first time in decades, we have a strong commitment across Sonoma to work together to find and implement solutions that make sense for our community. We cannot afford to waste this moment. With so much division in the world today, where leaders are often divided on so many issues, the fact that we have the foundation for true cross-community collaboration on an issue as important as this one, is key.”*

# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Introduce the housing “system” and how system policies affect equity— without condemning the entire public and private sectors**

## **✗ Less of This**

*“Policymakers and developers cannot solve the housing crisis, they created it. When they saw this coming, they didn’t act in good faith. They didn’t pass laws, make investments in housing for all of us nor revise regulations to help us keep our homes.”*

## **✓ More of This**

*“Our success in creating more affordable housing is dependent on our ability to bring together and align all components of our housing system. We need developers willing to build and policymakers creating favorable conditions for thoughtfully designed buildings. We need city planners, local elected officials, banks, housing nonprofits, neighborhood associations, and you! We all have a role to play in strengthening the health of Sonoma by creating affordable homes. When any of us is missing, whole groups of people get left out of the picture and their needs go unmet. That’s why we’re working to engage all of Sonoma in this effort.”*

# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

**Be explicit about the metrics of success for the region, explain how things will actually get better as a result of our sacrifices**

**Doing all we can to keep people in their homes would greatly reduce homelessness**

**By 2026, maximizing prevention would bring homelessness down by 27%**



# Key Insights: Opportunities for Productive Public Discourse

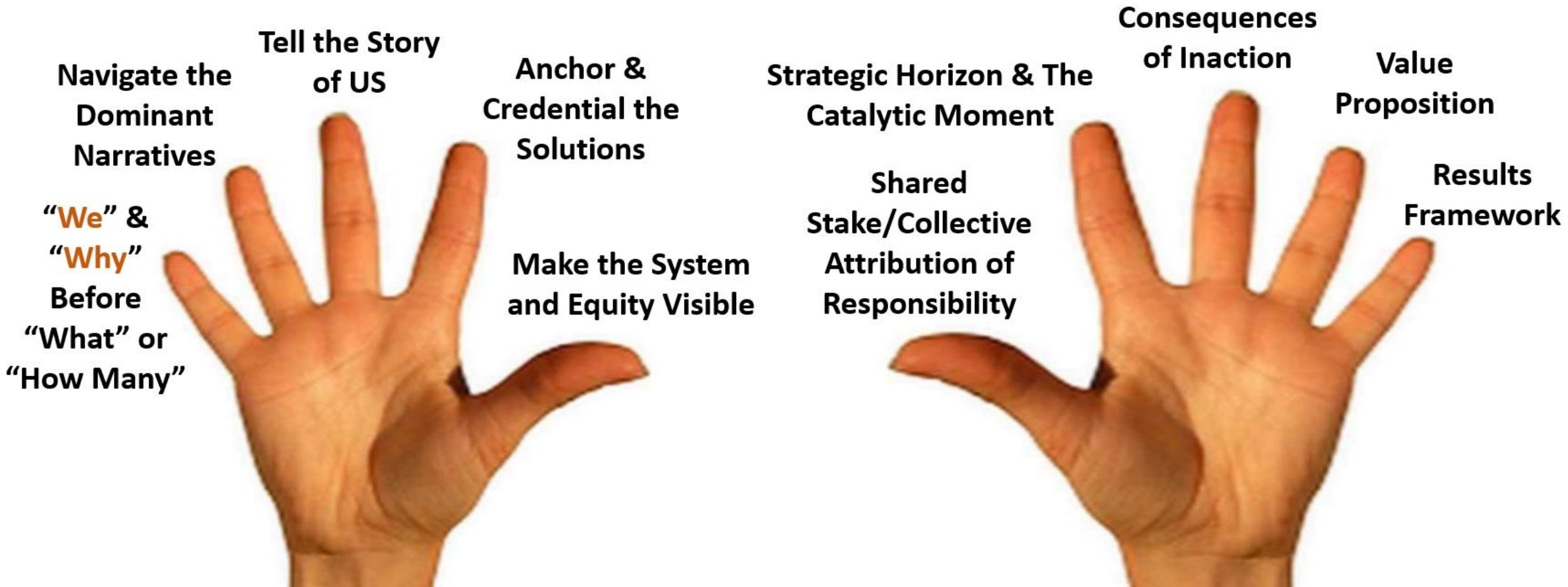
**Position community development organizations positively as solving the puzzle of varying concerns, expertise, and resources – with lots of relevant examples.**

*In Sonoma, our nonprofit community development organizations are critical. They **see all of the parts of our community and help align them behind fair and equitable housing solutions that strengthen our community. They help to ensure that Sonoma is a whole, sustainable community**—a place where people can find meaningful work, affordable homes, quality learning opportunities, and all the other **essential pieces of wellbeing**. If we draw on the skills of community development organizations, we can fit together a future where, in every part of our region, **the picture is filled in with everything that keeps Sonoma a strong healthy community.***



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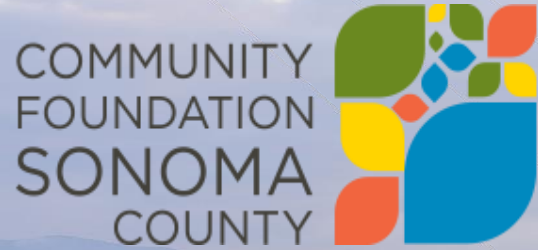




**This is a Catalytic  
Moment for Sonoma!**

**Let's Break New Ground  
Together!**

# Prepared with generous support from the Community Foundation of Sonoma County



For more information about this playbook,  
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