

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON HOUSING IN MINNESOTA:

A Message Guide

PREPARED BY

HOUSING NARRATIVE LAB

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INTRODUCTION

The Housing Narrative Lab, in partnership with Minnesota Housing Partnership, engaged in a narrative research project to build the public will for future efforts that will ensure every Minnesotan has an affordable place to call home.

THE GOAL OF THIS PROJECT IS TO:

- ✓ Create broader support and build the public will for solutions that increase housing opportunities in Minnesota.
- ✓ Create momentum that influences public officials, the public and other stakeholders to invest in solutions that solve housing instability in Minnesota.
- ✓ Provide a framework for how to communicate and engage audiences about approaches and solutions, including campaigns.

The Housing Narrative Lab and Lake Research Partners conducted expansive narrative research to understand what Minnesotans think about housing and which narratives and messages increase support for solving housing issues in their communities. The research included a series of conversations with key stakeholders across Minnesota to understand their priorities, challenges and the current social and political landscape. We followed those sessions with four focus groups to dig into people's beliefs about current housing challenges across the state and then conducted an online survey of 850 Minnesota residents. The survey reached varying demographics, including people living in urban, rural and suburban communities across the state and residents of varying occupations and household incomes. The 850 participants include an "oversample" of Black and rural residents, meaning we included more people from those groups than their proportion of Minnesota's total population.

This report outlines what we learned about how Minnesotans think about housing and how Minnesota Housing Partnership and its coalition members can incorporate the findings to advance a shared narrative: Making sure our families and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here by making stable housing affordable.

Top RESEARCH Findings

Minnesotans want to live in a thriving community where everyone has an affordable place to live. Communications, campaigns and conversations should consider these key points from the research:

Minnesotans see housing costs becoming an increasingly big problem in the state and want elected leaders to prioritize solutions so that everyone can afford a place to live.

- **Minnesotans blame inflation and rising costs for unaffordable housing.** At least three-quarters also say needing multiple jobs to afford housing, wages being too low and a shortage of available housing all play at least somewhat of a role in the high cost of housing in Minnesota.
- **Minnesotans have a broad agenda to deal with housing issues. Noticeably, they say a livable wage and job security would be most effective in helping to keep people housed.** Then they turn to housing policies, such as placing limits on rent increases, passing regulations that reduce the cost of housing and investing more public funds to build housing that people can afford in every neighborhood. For elected leaders, it means they should prioritize ensuring Minnesotans can afford a place to live (not just have a place to live).
- **Narratives and messaging need to draw on inclusiveness and unity.** Minnesotans are drawn to narratives that reflect their lived experiences while also showing the universality of certain affordability struggles. For example, contrary to conventional wisdom that rural/Greater Minnesota Minnesotans would resonate differently with our messages than urban and suburban Minnesotans, our top messages worked well for rural, suburban and urban Minnesotans alike.
- **Minnesotans of all backgrounds see a big connection between jobs and housing** and also strongly want people to be able to live near where they work.
- **Black Minnesotans are more likely than others to say there is a housing affordability crisis in their community**, overwhelmingly support tenant and renter protections, tend to be slightly tax-sensitive and are more receptive to race-explicit language and solutions than other Minnesotans.
- **While rural Minnesotans tend to lean conservative and are tax-sensitive, worried about crime and open to NIMBY (not in my backyard) arguments, they are more receptive to issue framing and solutions that center jobs, wages and other economic factors.** And, like all Minnesotans, they respond positively to messaging that leans into creating a stronger Minnesota by ensuring people can afford to live in the same community where they work.

OVERARCHING NARRATIVE

Narrative is the collection of stories that shape how we think and feel about an issue. Every one of us is influenced by the narratives we hear and see around us, from the dinner table and the news to social media and pop culture. This research shows that the narrative – the collection of stories – to advance is **"Making sure our families and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here by making stable housing affordable."** This is the north star that all messaging should support, whether you are working on a statewide campaign, local initiative to build more housing, or fighting against attacks on people experiencing homelessness. This narrative should guide your communications, even if you don't use these specific words.

Making sure our families and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here by making stable housing affordable.

SHARED VALUES

Shared values bring our audiences into our conversation and communications. They allow us to identify what people care about so we can build connections to our issue. In Minnesota, there are key values that serve as jumping-off points for our narrative:



View and download this and other images and GIFs in the **appendix on page 27**.

- Housing is a basic human need that everyone should have access to.
- We need to ensure future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here.
- A strong Minnesota. The most successful message emphasizes the link between workers benefitting from a strong economy and Minnesotans being able to afford a place to live.
- Unity and inclusion. The majority of Minnesotans resonate with messages of coming together to solve problems WHEN we use messages that indicate they are included in the "we." A top tested message was, "No matter our race, gender or income, we all want to get and keep a roof over our heads."
- Community. This is a central value for Minnesotans. For example, our communities are better off when everyone has a stable home, and people should be able to afford to live in the communities where they work.
- Who has a major role to play. Most Minnesotans think the state government, followed by local government and housing and land developers, should play a major role in "addressing the housing affordability crisis facing Minnesota."

Top MESSAGES

Messages are the words, sounds and visuals that help tell your story and advance narratives. Regardless of age, race, income or where they live in the state, Minnesotans respond consistently to certain messages. That allows you to repeat the messages across different formats, including press, social media, talking points and conversations with friends and neighbors. This consistent repetition creates an echo chamber and reinforces the narrative – **that we can make sure current and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here when we make stable housing affordable**. In Minnesota, messages that link housing affordability, community and economic well-being resonated the most.

Overall, the messages below work with the groups we most want to reach: Our base, persuadables, people of all ages and incomes, Black, white and POC Minnesotans and rural, suburban and urban Minnesotans. *(Please note, we describe these audiences more specifically below.)*

Messages that worked tend to:

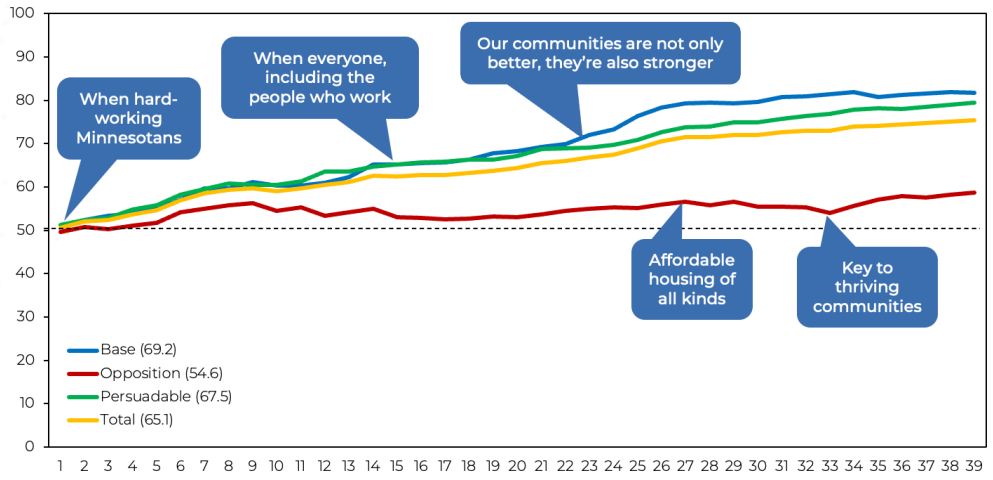
- Emphasize how communities are stronger when everyone has a home they can afford.
- Tie together 'others' with 'us' such as "whether our loved ones or complete strangers."
- Connect housing instability and financial struggles with the need for higher wages and other economic support.
- Name the connection between economic factors and housing solutions.

Messages that fell short tend to:

- Focus only on one group of people.
- Use absolutist language such as "everyone" or "all."
- Deflect responsibility and offer too general of a solution.

MINNESOTA STRONG

When hard-working Minnesotans – from teachers and nurses to firefighters and waitresses – are struggling to keep up with rising housing costs in our community, you know there's a problem. When everyone, including the people who work in everyday, regular jobs, can afford to live near where they work, our communities are not only better, they're also stronger. Affordable housing of all kinds is key to thriving communities, attracting good employers, improving the economic wellbeing for families and growing the middle class.



WHAT WORKS

Uses strength as a commonality to bridge between people, jobs, housing and communities.

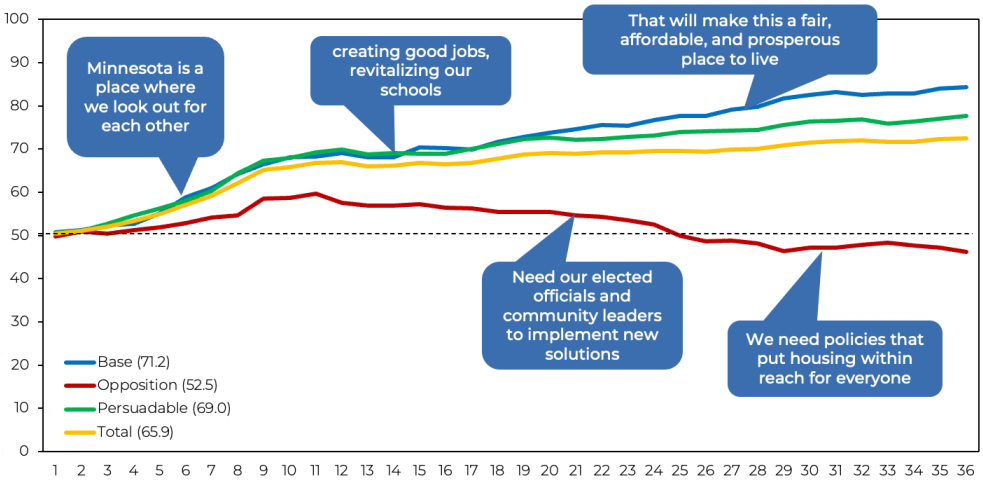
- Persuadables favor this message over all others.
- There is support across demographics for a positive vision that communities are better and stronger when people can live where they work, especially from our base.
- Minnesotans in the South respond to naming the different types of hard-working Minnesotans at the start of this message.

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Slow start by focusing on problems first.
- Black Minnesotans respond with less intensity, while rural Minnesotans dial down at the mention of affordable housing.
- Ending with a general call for better economic opportunity isn't specific enough - instead, a call to action to come together and enact solutions would have been stronger.

MINNESOTA TOGETHER

Whether we're digging each other out of the snow or sharing a meal, Minnesota is a place where we look out for each other. Today, we face many challenges: Creating good jobs, revitalizing our schools and ensuring everyone has a safe, secure place to live. We need our elected officials and community leaders to implement new solutions that will make this a fair, affordable and prosperous place to live. We need policies that put housing within reach for everyone.



WHAT WORKS

A message of unity featuring shared experiences like shoveling snow or sharing a meal that connects job and housing challenges with community-oriented solutions that will result in prosperity for all.

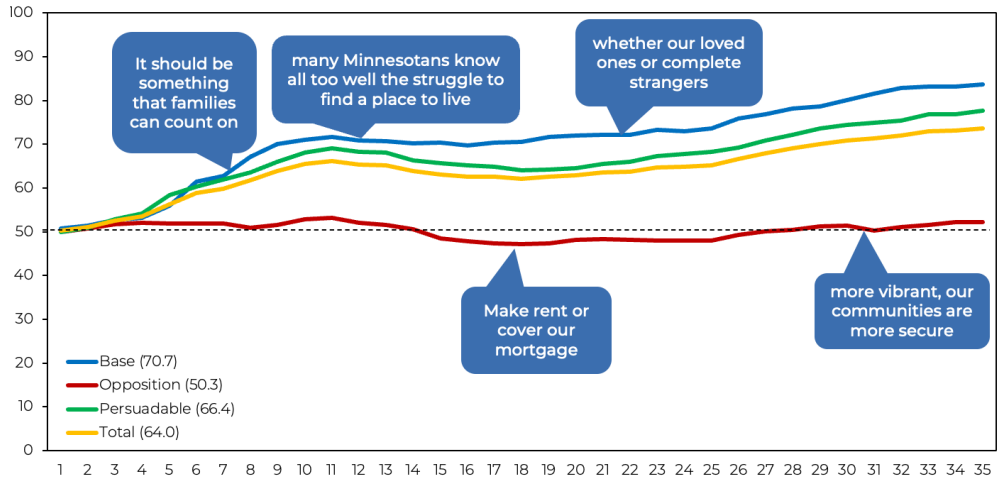
- The opening line – shoveling snow – resonated with Democrats, rural and urban Minnesotans.
- Strongest support from the base.
- The base responds strongly when the message calls on elected officials and community leaders to implement new solutions.
- Democrats and independents agree with the challenges named – education and ensuring everyone has a safe, secure place to live.

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Suburbanites did not resonate with the unity opening as much as the rest of the state.
- Needs a stronger call to action at the end.

VIBRANT, SECURE, THRIVING

Stable housing should not be something you have to think about and it should be something that families can count on every day. But today, many Minnesotans know all too well the struggle to find a place to live, make rent, or cover our mortgage. Making sure people, whether our loved ones or complete strangers, have a safe place to lay their heads at night means our neighborhoods are more vibrant, our communities are more secure and our state thrives.



WHAT WORKS

- Both base and persuadables dial up at "making sure people, whether our loved ones or complete strangers, have a safe place to lay their heads at night."
- Urban, rural and Independent Minnesotans respond to safety and security language, including "have a safe place to lay their heads" and "our communities are more secure."
- There is little difference among Black and white respondents throughout this message.
- A majority of rural Minnesotans agree with this statement and 47% strongly agree, indicating this message will perform well in rural communities.

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Twin Cities suburban respondents dial down for most of the message until the call to action at the end.
- Independents respond the same as Republicans on this message, indicating that the focus on safety and security may reinforce opposition frames.

AUDIENCES

When we communicate with others we are speaking to an audience. While the top three messages worked well with all groups, audiences will be most receptive when the people featured in images, the background images and the speaker delivering the message are adapted to match the local context. Knowing which messages resonate with each audience is important because different people will respond to different messages. Choose your message and your messenger based on who is likely to connect with it and which message will shift their perspective.

When we are trying to change how large groups of people think or act, our audiences generally fall within three categories:

BASE: People who already know about the topic and, for the most part, agree with values and solutions that provide everyone a safe, affordable home. The base in Minnesota are concerned with the high cost of housing and want the state government to take an active role in solving housing issues. They believe high housing costs impact Black, Latino and immigrant communities the most.

PERSUADABLES: People who can and will change their view if information resonates with their core values and motivations. In Minnesota, persuadables believe economic factors like inflation contribute to the high cost of housing and support solutions like paying livable wages. They think it's a priority that everyone can afford a place to live and are more concerned about an increase of crime than our base.

OPPOSITION: People who are largely opposed to the core goals and values of ensuring everyone has a safe home, and unlikely to change their minds. In Minnesota, the opposition opposes building new housing in their neighborhood, and does not support increasing taxes at the state level to address housing issues.

DIFFERENCES BY SUBGROUPS:

Women, people under 45 years old, Minnesotans earning less than $50,000 a year, urban residents, renters and Black Minnesotans and people of color	Strongest audiences to mobilize around policy or campaign efforts to increase investments in housing or pass renter and tenant protections
Persuadables	▸ Messages about the lack of affordable housing options paired with solutions resonated with these groups (see more messages **here**) ▸ One way to turn them off is by using explicit language about raising your taxes
Southern Minnesotans, Republicans and Independents	Resonated with messages that name different types of workers and with messages that indicate homes should be available near where people work
Northern Minnesotans	They support messages that name Greater Minnesota values (view **here** on pages 140-146), such as "Many of us choose to live in rural and small towns because they're a good place to raise a family and grow old"
People living in suburban and rural areas	▸ Supported the message *Jobs/Economy Connection* ▸ Rural Minnesotans tend to lean conservative and are tax-sensitive, worried about crime and open to NIMBY arguments ▸ Rural Minnesotans are also more receptive to issue framing and solutions that center jobs, wages and other economic factors
Black Minnesotans	▸ More likely than others to say there is a housing affordability crisis in their community ▸ Tend to be slightly tax-sensitive ▸ Are more receptive to race-explicit language and solutions than others ▸ Respond well to messages that emphasize a thriving community and unity (as illustrated in tested messages ***Vibrant, Secure, Thriving*** and ***Minnesota Together***)
ALL GROUPS	Tested well with ***Minnesota Strong***, ***Minnesota Together*** and ***Vibrant, Secure, Thriving***

SWOT

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

When we understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to advancing our goals, we are better able to make strategic decisions about where to put our resources and how we can achieve our goal. This framework should inform your narrative strategy as you work to ensure Minnesotans of all income levels and backgrounds have a safe place to live.

STRENGTHS

- Minnesotans across communities are open to building new housing in their neighborhood to address a shortage of available, affordable housing in the state.
- Our messages beat the opposition's "not in my backyard" arguments.
- Minnesotans see being able to afford housing in Minnesota becoming an increasingly big problem, showing that it is a salient issue for broad populations across the state.
- Our base responds to a sense of fairness and ending racial discrimination.
- Minnesotans see a clear connection between the ability to have a stable home and economic causes.
- The messages that resonate with the majority of Minnesotans are also among the top messages across sub-region.

WEAKNESSES

- Minnesotans overwhelmingly support increasing dedicated funding for housing-related issues statewide, but they are sensitive to language that says, "even if it increases your taxes."
  - Minnesotans in the North and rural residents are especially likely to be tax-sensitive, with Black Minnesotans being somewhat so.
- A plurality of Minnesotans do not believe race has a role to play in the affordability of housing in their community.
  - Persuadables are much less motivated by discrimination.
  - Rural Minnesotans and those living in the Southern region of the state are especially likely to say race does not play a role.
- While Minnesotans across race and those in the base and persuadables respond positively to inclusive language, such as "No matter what we look like or where we come from" (that follows the Race, Class, Narrative model), language that emphasizes only specific groups with language such as "especially Black Minnesotans," or "especially essential workers" is less appealing to persuadables.

WEAKNESSES *(continued)*

- Persuadables say concern about increased crime is a reason to prioritize housing issues.
- Minnesotans are not as likely to blame vacation / second home buyers or investors for the current housing problem. They view inflation, rising costs, needing multiple jobs and wages being too low as the primary causes.
- Some Minnesotans are unsure about the effectiveness of tenant protection policies such as rent caps, and nearly one in five shifted away from supporting these policies after hearing our tested messages.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Minnesotans, including persuadables, become more concerned about housing after hearing our messages.
- Minnesotans have an appetite for a broad agenda of housing solutions, with economic factors rising to the top.
- Minnesotans believe the state, followed by local government and housing and land developers, play major roles in ensuring every Minnesotan has an affordable place to live.
- After hearing the tested messages, Minnesotans' support for dedicating public land to build more affordable housing increased by five points. This has strong support from the base; 81% said this would be an effective solution.
- Messages test best with a clear call to action and an explanation of "how" we will accomplish the goal. Both should be added moving forward. Individual groups can lift up their solutions and calls to actions based on their audiences and focus areas after establishing the shared values and narratives outlined in the research.

THREATS

- Persuadable audiences are susceptible to NIMBY messages about their property values being impacted by more affordable home building.
- The tested messages lack specific calls to action that would help motivate Minnesotans to advocate for specific policies, so these calls to action are untested.
- Minnesotans support messages that include mentions of safety and security. However, these risk reinforcing narratives about punishment, arresting people who are unhoused and excluding populations of people often demonized in security narratives, such as immigrants.

Key RECOMMENDATIONS

Putting Research into Action

There are key elements of successful communications that help your audiences connect with the narrative. These essentials show how you can put narrative into practice, whether you are discussing your organization's efforts or conducting state or local campaigns related to housing or homelessness.

For more insights, tips and suggestions see the accompanying **Field Guide**.

HOW TO ADAPT A MESSAGE BASED ON THESE DIFFERENCES:

TOP KEY MESSAGE

Minnesota will be stronger when everyone can afford a safe, stable home.

FOR A MAJORITY BLACK AND BASE AUDIENCE

Minnesota will be stronger when our leaders ensure everyone – Black, white and Native, retired or just starting out – can afford a stable place to live.

We need our elected officials and community leaders to make Minnesota a fair, affordable and prosperous place to live by implementing policies like tenant protections and building new homes that all incomes can afford. We need leaders that will put housing within reach for everyone.

FOR A MAJORITY WHITE, RURAL AUDIENCE

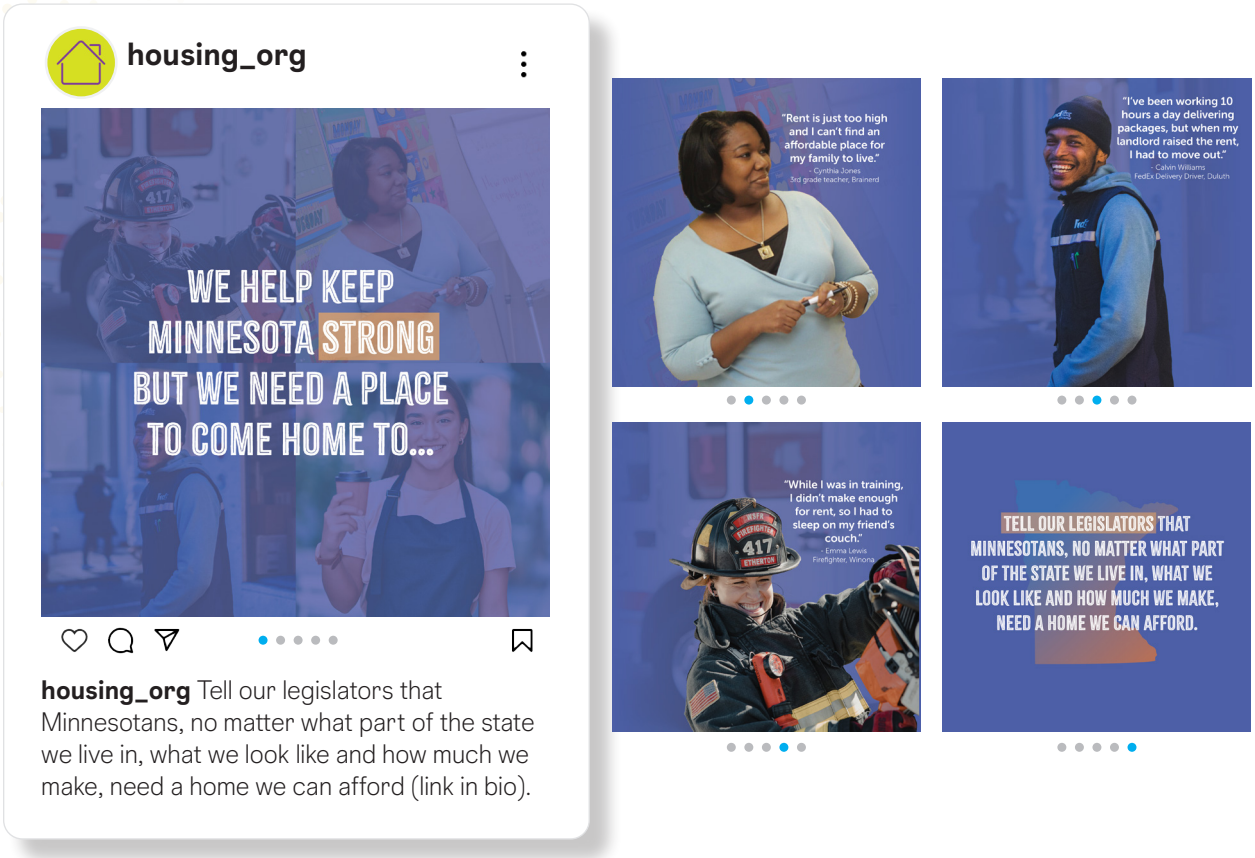
Every person needs a safe, quality and affordable place to live, and the rising cost of housing has become a big problem whether we're in the big city or a small town.

We need leaders who will ensure Minnesotans of all incomes have a place they can afford in a community with strong schools and good jobs. When everyone, including the people who work in everyday, regular jobs, can afford to live near where they work and the people they depend on, our communities are not only better, they're also stronger.

Shared Value
What connects us

Find points of commonality or connection with your audience, like “No matter our race, gender or income we all want to get and keep a roof over our heads that we can afford.” Make the affordability problem personal and show how it’s impacting a range of people. Include a call to action with a link people can click.

Example Instagram carousel
Audience: Base and Persuadables, Twin Cities Metro Area



Example of shared value message
Audience: Rural Persuadables

Instagram image of Habitat for Humanity volunteers (building crew) surrounding a multi-generational family with keys in their hands in front of a newly completed home. “A community that works together can solve even the biggest problems and Cottage Grove volunteers showed up in force this week to complete three new Habitat for Humanity homes. No matter what we look like or how long we’ve lived here, every person needs a safe, quality and affordable place to live.”

Example of shared value messaging
Audience: Black & Base

Instagram Image of a family standing in front of a newly built multi-family home with this caption: Minnesota will be stronger when our leaders ensure everyone – Black, white and Native, retired or just starting out – can afford a stable place to live. We were excited to join 13 new families like the Smith family – pictured here – at the Grand Opening of Parkway Terrace in the Summit Hill neighborhood. #GoBigAndGoHome #MinnesotaStrong.

Community and Unity
How we show up for one another

Narratives and messaging need to draw on inclusiveness and unity. Minnesotans are drawn to narratives that reflect their lived experiences while also showing the universality of certain affordability struggles. Show Minnesotans that solving high housing costs and homelessness is a community issue. Tell personal stories of individuals or families that gave back when they had a stable place to live. Show personal stories of people who are experiencing housing insecurity that emphasize their humanity, their positives, contributions and then challenges.

Example Instagram reel
Audience: Statewide

Single speaker (select several speakers to reach a range of Minnesotans and create multiple videos using the same script). Lending a hand is part of what makes Minnesota strong. Tell our legislators that Minnesotans, no matter what we look like or where we're from, need a home we can afford so we can be here for each other. (Video images behind of a snow plow in a blizzard, neighbors digging people out, a wild rice hot dish placed on a picnic table by a lake or a church, new baby lifted by EMT, teacher greeting a kid as parents rush to work).



View and download this video, along with images and GIFs in the **appendix on page 27**.

Example news article Twin Cities Metro Area
Audience: Persuadables

Pitch a back-to-school story about how stable housing improves the lives of families and school communities. Share the story of a parent volunteer and his child who bounced around homes and schools but can now stay in their neighborhood school because of rent stabilization. Share a story of how a child's emotional well-being and friendships improved after their family moved into a new affordable family apartment building living in their car and with relatives.

Example Facebook/Instagram post Twin Cities Metro Area
Audience: Base and Persuadables

Connect more dots about how we have not yet eliminated race and class inequality in housing. Share a news story about inequity, such as the **Mapping Prejudice project**. Use a caption that highlights how unity is a solution to racial inequity in housing. "No matter our skin color, where in Minnesota we live or how much money we have in our pockets, we want the same things – to ensure our loved ones thrive. That hasn't always been the case in Minnesota, but we can come together and pass the [Example campaign name]. It's one real action we can take together to ensure all our kids and their kids have access to quality homes in every community."

Personal stories
Audience: Rural and Suburban

Use images and a unique quote from 5-10 storytellers explaining why all of Minnesota needs housing that is affordable for all income levels so current and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here. Stories can center around what more housing means to them, how they can now live close to their work and use time previously spent commuting to volunteer in their community; about how they can send their kids to schools they attended; live close to their family and put down roots. Use the same hashtag across X/Twitter and Instagram. Example: #MinnesotaStrong #MinnesotaHome

Specifics
Lean into specific solutions and challenges

Show don't tell: Don't just talk about how we need more housing, show people what that looks like. Share how doubling up impacts children and how more affordable homes can help. Talk about shifting resources toward converting public land and building homes that people of all incomes can afford and where people can find homes they can afford near their jobs.

Example video
Audience: Twin Cities Majority-Black, Base

A leader who lives in newly built senior affordable housing sharing their worries about how hard it is for families to find a home they can afford. Have them share what it was like raising a family in St. Paul in the 70's, how they thought it would be easier for their grandkids. Show scenes that scan vacant public land, and name how leaders should use the land we all share to ensure every family, elder and veteran has an affordable place to come home to. Include a call to action about passing the public lands ordinance/shifting funds to new affordable homes on public land.

Example video advertisement
Audience: Rural Persuadables

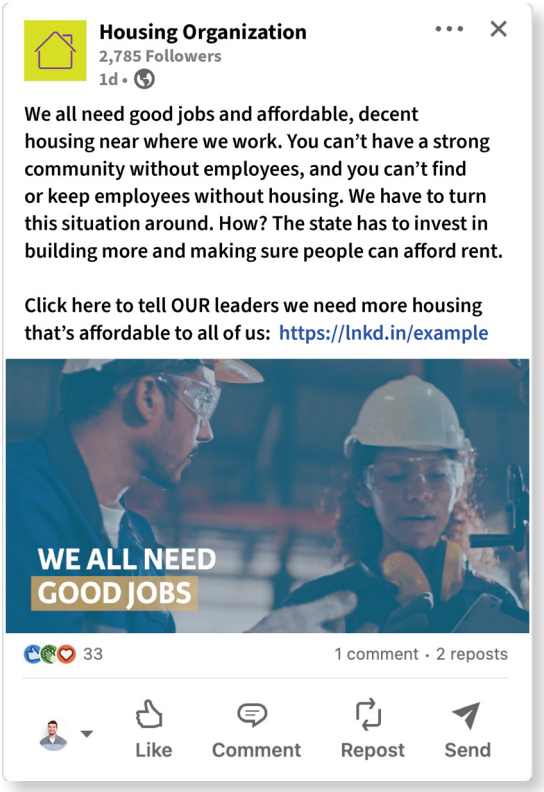
Every person needs a safe, quality and affordable place to live. But the skyrocketing cost to get and keep a home has become a big problem, whether we're in the big city or a small town. That's why we need our state leaders to ensure that hardworking Minnesotans from every walk of life can afford a place to live. Minnesota will be stronger when everyone, no matter what we look like or where we come from, can afford a safe, stable home. (Video is of a male speaker over scenes of a hardworking multiracial cast of Minnesotans – families greeting children as they arrive home from school, a warehouse worker backing up a truck, delivery people, grandparents opening their doors to young adults.)

Example Twitter/X or Instagram posts (from advocates)
Audience: Base



View and download these GIFs and other images and GIFs in the **appendix on page 27**.

Example LinkedIn post (from advocates)
Audience: Persuadables Statewide



Example message
Audience: Persuadables Statewide

We need leaders who will ensure Minnesotans of all incomes have a place they can afford in a community with strong schools and good jobs, so our families and future generations can live and thrive here. When everyone, including the people who work in everyday, regular jobs, can afford to live near where they work and the people they depend on, our communities are not only better, they're also stronger.

Example message
Audience: Persuadables Statewide

We need our elected officials and community leaders to make the Twin Cities a fair, affordable and prosperous place to live by implementing policies like tenant protections and building new homes that all incomes can afford. We need leaders that will put housing within reach for everyone.

Showing the Why
Root Causes

Focus on the systemic root causes like rising rents, low-paying jobs, inflation and not enough homes to keep up with the number of people who live here. Tell stories about people needing two jobs to afford a place to live because their wages from one job are not keeping up with inflation. Use language that shows unity across experience.

Example video
Audience: Persuadables Statewide

Feature diverse working people (nurse, police officer, retail employee, teacher) sharing stories about cost of housing.

"Some of us work two jobs to keep a roof over our heads, while others have to drive two hours to work in communities where the cost of homes are out of reach. All Minnesotans need homes we can afford near good paying jobs so we can contribute to strong communities, raise our families and ensure everyone has a roof over their head."

Example op-ed title, lede and opening paragraph
Audience: Twin Cities Metro Base and Persuadables

Minnesota can and should do better for our neighbors by passing the [Campaign Name]. ***Too many renters spend more than half their paycheck on housing, some of it unsafe.***

Everyone needs a safe, stable home to live in. But too many renters can't stay in their homes when landlords deliver rent increases of 15, 20 and sometimes 30%. [example story- Trina Brick and her two children spent $1,400 to live in a two-bedroom apartment for the last three years. But in October, a notice that her rent was raising to 1,800 was just more than she could pay with her 3,000 a month paycheck. So now she and her children stay in the living room of her aging mother's apartment.] This month, we have the opportunity to come together and make changes to ensure families like Trina can stabilize their lives by staying in their homes.

Our 2023 tenant survey shows at least 1 in 4 Minnesota renters pay more than a third of their paycheck on rent. We know many housing providers want to maintain the condition of their housing and charge fair rents, but rents have risen much faster than wages for home healthcare workers like Trina and the six hundred thousand workers in service industries across the state. The [Example campaign name/proposed policy change] ensures stable, predictable changes to rent for tenants like Trina, who live in buildings built more than 15 years ago.

Example Instagram post
Audience: Black and Base Twin Cities Audiences



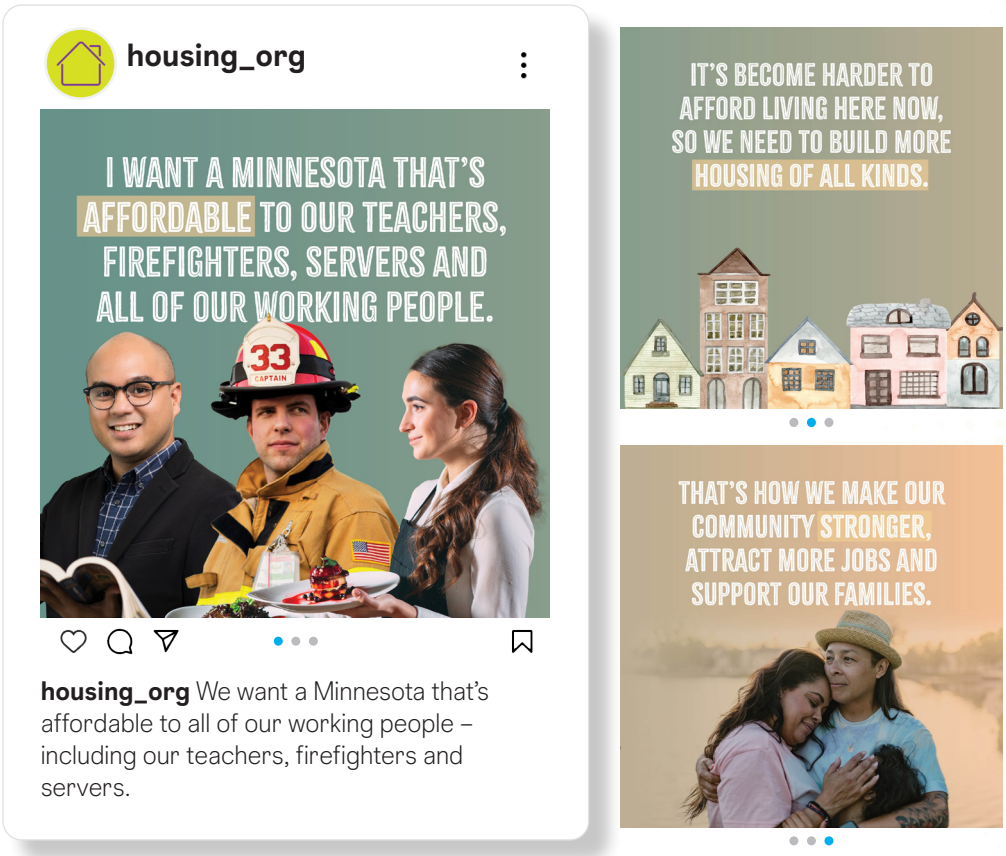
View and download this and other images and GIFs in the **appendix on page 27**.

Solutions
How we can create new affordable homes and helpsolve homelessness

Show what solutions are available and who has the power to implement them. Talk about how state and city governments have *an opportunity* to or *should meet the moment* to find creative solutions to solve the state's housing crunch so everyone has stable housing they can afford.

Focus on how Minnesotans are stronger when they work together to support specific policies or solutions so that they can ensure that their families and future generations can live and thrive in Minnesota by making stable housing affordable. Share a vision of how Minnesota's communities will be stronger because of specific solutions.

Example Instagram carousel
Audience: All, Statewide



View and download this and other images and GIFs in the appendix on page 27.

Image of a parent and child (portrait)
Audience: Persuadables Statewide

A home within reach for every Minnesota family. VOTE YES: [CAMPAIGN NAME]

Example Facebook post (from rural Minnesotan)
Audience: Southern Minnesotans, Rural, Republicans and Independents

I want my kids to be able to live here and they want to raise their families close to us. But the jobs available don't pay enough for them to find housing they can afford. That has to change if we want our families and future generations to live and thrive here. We need more housing that is affordable.

Example LinkedIn post (from business owners)

Audience: Southern Minnesotans, Rural, Republicans and Independents

Be sure to tag businesses, elected leaders, local builders.



Example LinkedIn post (from someone who cannot afford to live where they work)

Audience: Rural Persuadables

Tag chamber of commerce, elected leaders, journalists.



Call to Action

Be part of the solution

Give people a way to be part of the solution and easy ways to show their support.

Example Facebook post (from service providers)

Minnesota is home to me and it's great but I want it to be great for everyone. Click here to tell OUR leaders we need more housing that's affordable so that everyone, no matter what we look like and how much we make, can live and thrive in Minnesota. It's time to make Minnesota work for all of us.

Goals and Audiences

Be clear on who you aim to reach and what you want them to do.

Base = people who agree with all or most aspects of your messaging and solutions. This is the group we want to excite and encourage to bring others in and take action.

Persuadable = the "movable middle." These people can hold two opposing ideas at the same time (i.e. Housing is a human right AND homelessness is caused by bad choices). We want to move them to our side through targeted, values-based messaging.

When deciding where to disseminate your messaging, think about whether you want to motivate your base to action or shift the views of persuadables.

When creating regional messages, consider how your message may be strengthened by mentioning goals like raising a family, or emphasizing how lack of good local jobs relates to housing. In more urban areas, consider naming the impact of corporate investors or rising rents.

ADDITIONAL TIPS for creating engaging content

Sample press stories/pitches:

- Identify 5-10 Minnesotans who are able and willing to publicly share their stories about homelessness or struggling to find housing. See **our guide** for working with people who have experienced homelessness and unstable housing to be sure they have the support they need and are clear about your plans.
- Reach out to journalists and offer to talk about your work, why housing affordability is essential to building a thriving Minnesota and offer to connect them with your contacts who are willing to share their stories. Use upcoming votes or public debates to connect with journalists to get these stories out.
- Write op-eds about how people with jobs struggle to find – and keep – a home. Or an op-ed about the impact of high rents on Minnesotans. Please see **our guide** to writing op-eds.

Other ways to create to advance the narrative across every platform:

- Focus all your communications, talking points, press statements and responses on shared values:
  - Making sure our families and future generations of Minnesotans can live and thrive here by making stable housing affordable.
  - Minnesota is stronger when every person, no matter our age, what we look like, or where we live, can afford a place to live.
  - Minnesota will be stronger when every person has a place to call home that they can afford to keep.
- Reiterate the need for more affordable housing and that Minnesota has public land or national funding that can be used for housing.
- Ask partners to post about how new affordable homes, policy changes or increased support for tenants helped someone in their community and explain how the new changes will help combat the big problem of rising housing costs.
- Use images of real people and real buildings to make the vision of what's possible concrete. Use text from one of the most successful messages, "We need to put housing that is affordable within reach for all Minnesotans."
- Connect with local creatives who have significant followings across social media. Find out what they care about, invite them to learn more about housing and homelessness and ask them to share posts about available solutions. For example, a young person may share about how her grandmother couldn't afford an apartment, and it's great that the [Example Bill Name] will create more housing for seniors. This is an important way to ensure your messages resonate with wide audiences and different backgrounds.

- In response to any negative comments about homelessness or new affordable housing consider a few standard responses to add your perspective to public discussions. For example:
  - "Housing is so expensive and people can't afford a place to live, even working full time. We have to build more housing for all income levels." Link to a campaign or call to action.
  - "I know a lot of people who are struggling right now – even with jobs they cannot afford rising rents. That's the problem. So the solution is to make sure people can get emergency assistance if they fall behind on the rent right now, and create more housing on public land and in communities across the state so that we have more homes for people of all incomes in the future."

STARTING
the conversation

RATHER THAN...	TRY THIS LANGUAGE
✗ Minnesota has a housing crisis.	✓ Affording a home in Minnesota is an increasingly big problem.
✗ Build multi-family housing in neighborhoods.	✓ Build new housing in neighborhoods that people of all incomes can afford.
✗ Provide tenants and renters with protections.	✓ Pass renter and tenant protections.
✗ Some Minnesotans, especially Black, Indigenous and low-income residents, have historically faced barriers to housing.	✓ I want every Minnesotan – Black, white and Indigenous, Minnesota-born or newcomer, small-town and city dweller – to have a place to call home in our community.
✗ Impact on businesses ✗ Impact of historical barriers ✗ People have a right to...	✓ Minnesota will be stronger and better for everyone when every Minnesotan, from every neighborhood and every income level, has a roof over their head.
✗ People have a right to housing. ✗ Housing is a human right.	✓ Every [Minnesotan / city resident] needs a decent, affordable place to live.
✗ City leaders must prioritize the most marginalized.	✓ Elected officials must make stable housing affordable to Minnesotans of every race, region and income level.
✗ We need to extend affordable housing opportunities to...	✓ No matter our race, gender or income, we all need a roof over our heads. ✓ We need policies that put housing within reach for everyone.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE IMAGES

Below are sample messages. Click each image to access the downloadable file. All images, videos and concepts are free for you to download and utilize as you see fit.

Square Images





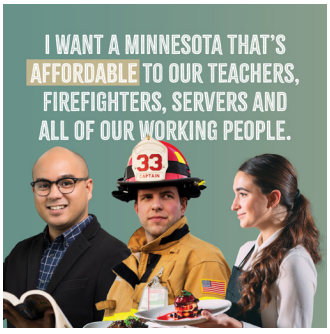








Carousel Images







Horizontal Images













GIFs

All GIFs are available in **this folder** in both larger and smaller file sizes. Larger files will appear less pixelated, but may not be as easily sharable. All are also available as MP4 files below.















Videos