

# Effective Ways to Talk About Housing



Talking about affordable housing can be challenging, but framing our messages effectively can build support for affordable housing

## Who Lives in Affordable Housing?

Households making 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) are eligible to live in legally-binding affordable housing, which costs households 30% or less of their gross income.

## AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING IN THE TRIANGLE J REGION

**45% of renters are cost-burdened** meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent & utilities



&

**71% of renters that are making less than \$50,000 are also cost-burdened**



There is an estimated **shortage of at least 42,467 rental units** that households making \$35,000 or less can afford



## People in the Triangle J region working in all types of jobs are eligible for affordable housing & could benefit from it <sup>1</sup>

Childcare Worker



28% of AMI  
\$21,080\*\*

Bus Driver



37% of AMI  
\$28,290\*\*

Electrician



54% of AMI  
\$41,150\*\*

Teacher



59% of AMI  
\$43,970\*

Police Officer



66% of AMI  
\$49,180\*

Healthcare Social Worker



79% of AMI  
\$59,490\*

\* Durham, Orange, & Chatham Counties MSA

\*\* Wake, Johnston, & Franklin Counties MSA

Based on 2016 HUD calculations & mean wages from [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov) by MSA. Assumes worker is the sole earner in a 4-person household.

## TIPS ON HOW TO TALK ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

From the Frameworks Institute<sup>2</sup>



### Tell stories with people, places, & systems

Talk about people, places, & systems interacting. Discuss where challenges occur & where interventions could be implemented



### Explain causes & effects of housing insecurity

Describe the reasons for housing insecurity like lack of jobs & low-wages, so that people don't make assumptions



### Explain the role of systems in housing

Show how public policies shape the problems for people & communities. Avoid opening up conversations about "personal responsibility"



### Explain that where you live affects you

Making it clear that where we live influences our health, & other outcomes helps people focus on systems & policy solutions



### Connect housing with other issues

Make the case that housing affects us all & intersects with a variety of important issues like health, education, employment, & public safety



### Tell a "Story of Us" not a "Story of Them"

Discuss collective problems & benefits. We are all negatively impacted when there isn't enough affordable housing & we can all benefit from more housing that is affordable to all

## Effective Value Statements<sup>3</sup>

- Hardworking people should be able to afford housing & still have money for groceries & other basic needs.
- Children deserve an opportunity to succeed in school & life, which is tied to having a stable home.
- Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. To succeed you need a place to call home.
- It is only fair that everyone has a safe, decent place to live.
- We need to remove the barriers that Triangle residents with low incomes face in finding housing they can afford, close to work & schools.
- We can live in a region where everyone has access to opportunity & a decent, stable, affordable place to call home. By investing in housing opportunities, we can create communities with a better future for all of us.

This infographic was prepared by Triangle J Council of Governments in July 2017. More information and resources on affordable housing can be viewed at [www.tjocg.org/housing.aspx](http://www.tjocg.org/housing.aspx)

(1) AMI in 2016 for Wake, Johnston, & Franklin Counties is \$76,600 & for Durham, Orange, & Chatham Counties is \$74,900.

(2) "You Don't Have to Live Here" Why Housing Messages Are Backfiring and 10 Things We Can Do About It. (2016) Enterprise, Frameworks Institute. <http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources/you-dont-have-to-live-here>

(3) Talking about Housing: Effective Advocacy Messages. Portland Housing Alliance.

<http://www.oregonhousingalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Messages-that-work-Rev-Oct-20131.pdf>

