



AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAYBOOK

Sonoma County, CA

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What is Strategic CaseMaking™

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.

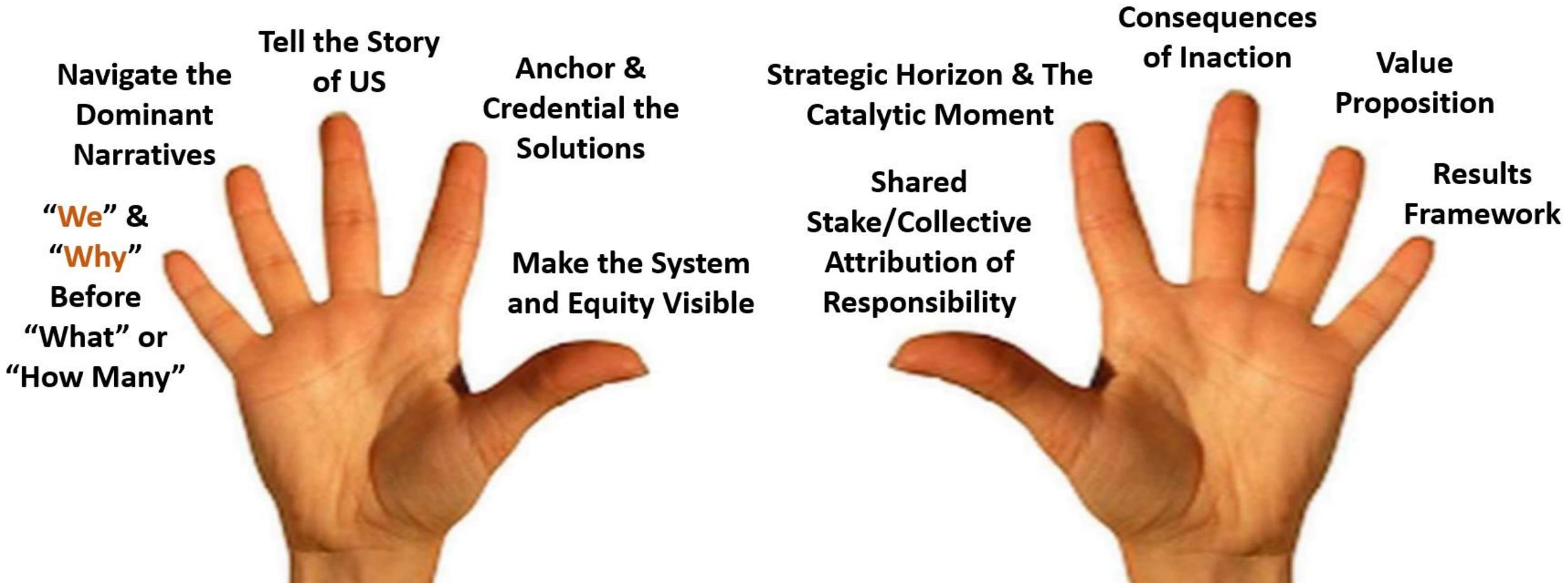
Strategic CaseMaking™

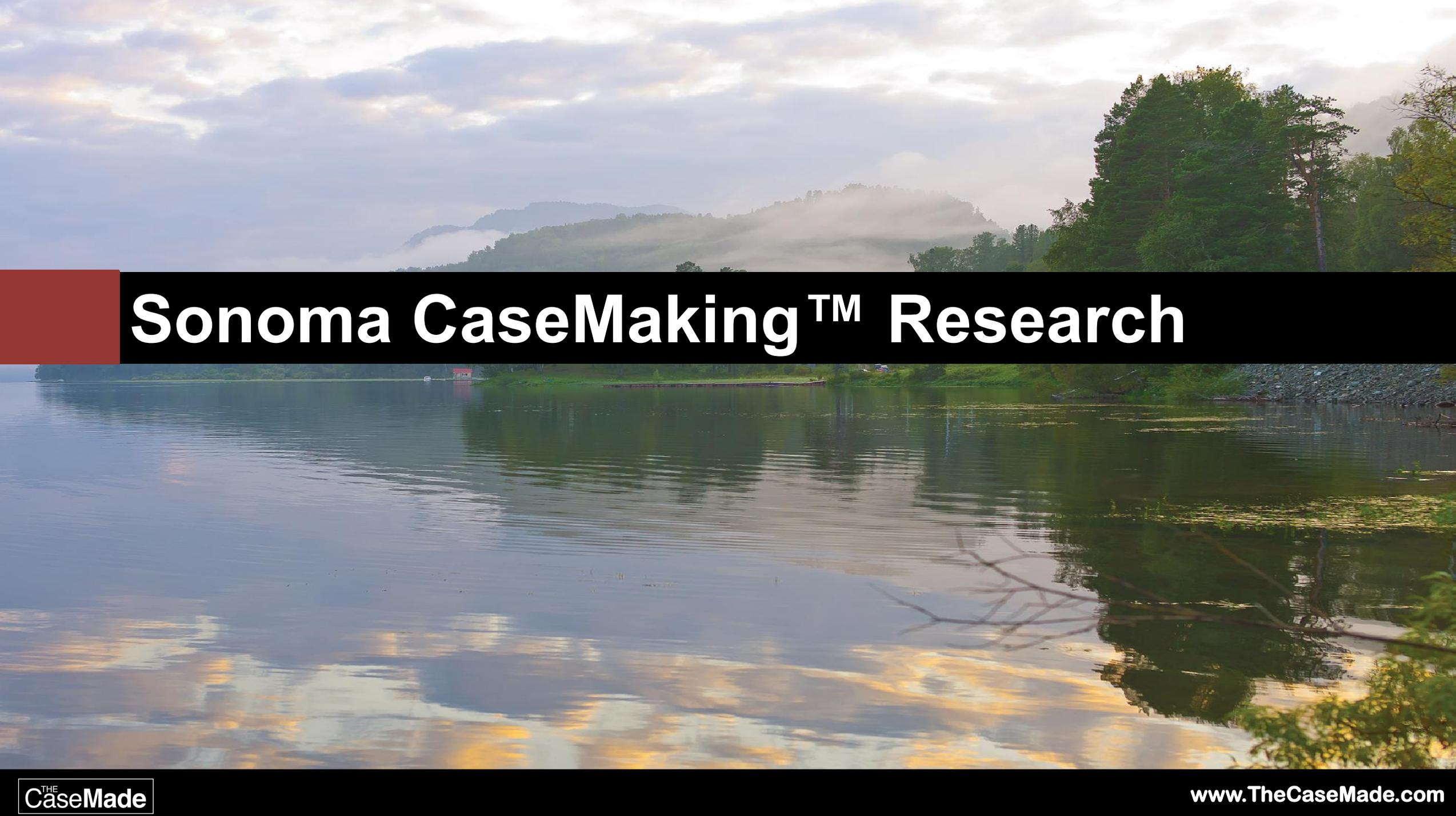
is about changing the way that we invite a more thoughtful public discourse, how we help people see their stake in our success and how we ultimately, bring a broader sense of trust, belonging and agency to the issues we are trying to solve.



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



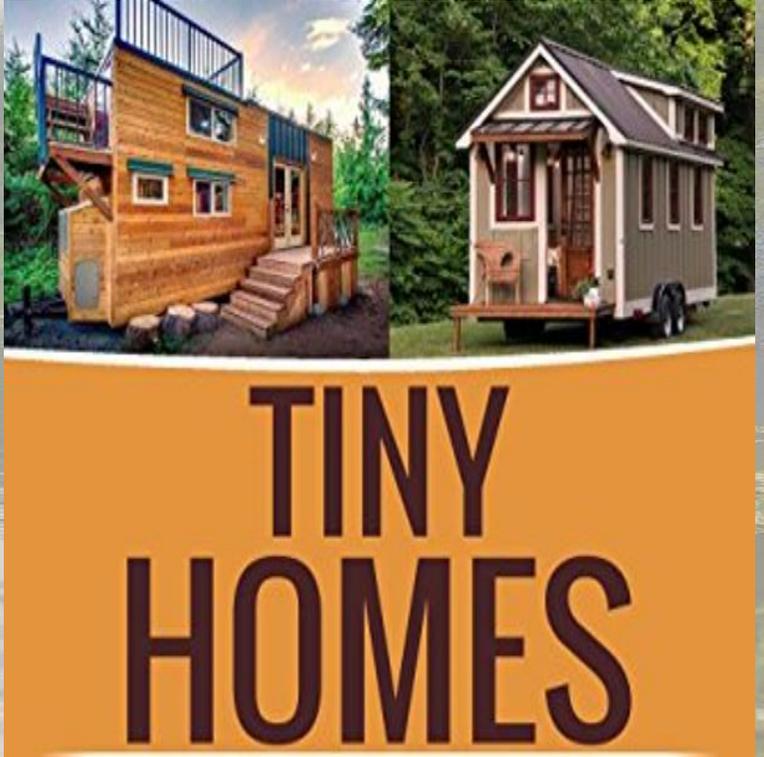
Key Insights: The Backfires, Backpacks and Bedtime Stories

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."

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.***



Discussion Questions

- What are the opportunities to build stronger public will around affordable housing policies in our agencies, organizations and institutions in Sonoma?
- What's on the strategic horizon for the region that would allow us to bring new folks along?
- Who are the people and organizations who would come along early and willingly? Who are the “persuadables” that we would need to “draft” for the challenge? Who might be more reluctant but necessary partners?
- What might be some “low-hanging fruit” for joint or collaborative public will building on this issue?
- Outside of the housing sector, who else in the region would benefit from having the affordable housing shortage solved and how might we use the recommendations in this work to help them to see their stake in our success?

Next Steps: Recommendations for Building Public Will

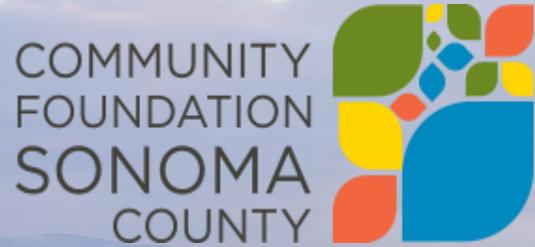
Develop a Campaign that Works to Engage Sonoma Residents in a Productive Conversation about Stewardship of Region

- Collect concrete examples where Sonoma came together to solve problems that benefitted a broad cross-section of the region
- Collect concrete examples of communities that have been able to solve an affordable housing problem and share the lessons learned as part of public will building campaign
- Identify some “low-hanging fruit” where housing advocates are poised to have some big wins by working across sectors
- Identify what larger catalytic moments exist for the region, where housing advocates can hang larger aspirations?
- Be explicit early on about the equity issues in Sonoma and take the time to introduce those issues productively into the conversation

**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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