HOMEConnecticut: It’s The Program, The Medium AND The Message

New Partners for Smart Growth
2015 Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD
January 30, 2015
David Fink, Policy Director
Partnership for Strong Communities
Overview of Connecticut

• Only 31 of the 169 towns have >10% affordable housing
• 2/5 households spend >30% on housing
• 6th highest median home values
• No justice: 138/169 have good schools, abundant services
Responses to Inequity, Segregation

- Stick – 8-30g: zoning override statute
- Carrot – Incentive Housing Zone Program
  - a.k.a: HOMEConnecticut Program: voluntary municipal incentive program encouraging proactive planning for smart-growth mixed-income housing near town centers, transit and in areas of existing or planned infrastructure.
  - Incentives: cash grants for planning, zone creation and construction of affordable units
The Program:
3 Incentives, 3 Requirements

Requirements:
• At least 20% affordable units at 80% AMI
• 20 MF, 10 townhouse/duplex, 6 SF per acre

Incentives:
• Planning, Pre-Dev Grant: no strings attached
• Zoning Incentive: Cash payment when overlay zones is created
• Building permit incentive: Cash when permits are issued.
Actors and Partners

- **Partnership for Strong Communities**: staff work
- **Partners**: Steering Committee of 40+ actors – business, philanthropic, housing, human services, municipal government, RPOs, Chambers of Commerce, banks, economists, “captive” industries (hospitals, universities, utilities)

Later expanded to other disciplines: environment, energy, education, transportation, healthcare
Strategy: No Wagging Fingers!

**NOT** what you “should” do

**Rather** what it’s “in your interest” to do

- Boomers
- Teachers, police, firefighters
- Adult children/Millenials
- Grand list – prop tax revenue
- Volunteers
What’s Most Important?

- The Product?
- The Sales Pitch?

**Answer:** Yes!

**But...** Best program is worthless unless it’s sold
The Only 4 Questions

- Who’s the audience?
- What’s the goal?
- What’s the message?
- What’s the medium?
The Audience

**Internal**
- Partners
- State policymakers

**External**
- Municipal officials
- Residents
- Power Actors (Business, Opinion Leaders)
- Developers
The Goal: Make The Sale!

Messaging: A Means, not an End!
• Educate?
• Establish credibility?
• Spark action?

ONLY ONE WAY TO DO IT:
1 Meeting, 1 Conversation, 1 Town at a time!
The Message

- FIRST: Dispel the myths and stereotypes
- NEVER – or RARELY – because it’s “the right thing to do.”
- ALWAYS because it’s “in your interest to do it...”
It’s Not What You Say, It’s How You Say It

• **Delicately**: Race vs. Income

• **Just The Facts**: Occupations & Incomes

• **Head On**: Confronting Fears
The Message

• **In the town’s interest:**
  ▫ Increased grand list
  ▫ Creates churn
  ▫ More people will stay
  ▫ More volunteers
  ▫ Economic vitality

• **Dispel the myths**
  ▫ School population will not explode
  ▫ No gangs
  ▫ Better property values
The Medium

- Establish credibility
  - Facts and the right messenger
- Multiple points of entry: www.pschousing.org
- Different tools to appeal to different groups
  - Housing Data Profiles
  - Factsheets
  - Maps
  - Videos
  - Games
The Medium

• Paper Deliverables
  ▫ Factsheets [http://www.pschousing.org/fact-sheets](http://www.pschousing.org/fact-sheets)
    • Suburban CT Fact Sheet - [http://www.pschousing.org/files/PSC_SuburbanCT.pdf](http://www.pschousing.org/files/PSC_SuburbanCT.pdf)
The Medium

• Maps
  ▫ Interactive map on connections between housing and transit
  ▫ HOMEConnecticut status map
The Medium

- Media
  - North Stonington Video
    [Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KavsQhOVFrk)
  - Idea Factories Video
    [Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bMcA95mPAk)
  - Rent Roulette
    [Link](http://www.pschousing.org/RentRoulette.html)
Lessons

**A long game**: 5-8-year gestation period

**A new game**: Proactive housing creation

- Towns must develop capacity
- State must provide help
- Developers must learn new tricks
- *Everyone* must recognize the world has changed!
- Advocates must learn patience!!!!
Sustainability

• A new education process
• A new sense of community: we need all types!
• An understanding that housing policy can solve other problems.
More Questions?

David Fink
Policy Director
Partnership for Strong Communities
227 Lawrence Street
Hartford, CT 06106
p. 860.244.0066
david@pschousing.org
www.pschousing.org