

Successfully Marketing

Affordable Housing



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photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh

HUDSON VALLEY PATTERN FOR PROGRESS

Improving Hudson Valley Quality of Life
Through Regional Solutions Since 1965

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URBAN LAND INSTITUTE **10** Principles

for Developing Affordable Housing¹

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) created “Ten Principles for Developing Affordable Housing.” We integrate these principles—although not in numeric order—into our marketing strategy suggestions. These principles and strategies strengthen the capacity to move a development successfully through the process by providing direction on how to secure community and stakeholder support.

- 1** – *Inspire Leadership*
- 2** – *Build Community
Trust and Support*
- 3** – *Learn the Alphabet
...and Do the Math*
- 4** – *Know Your Market
& Your Customers*
- 5** – *Nurture Partnerships*
- 6** – *Select Site for Opportunity
and Choice*
- 7** – *Strive for Healthy,
Balanced Communities*
- 8** – *Use Design to Foster
Community, Safety and Pride*
- 9** – *Empower the Residents*
- 10** – *Orchestrate Sustainability*

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Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress has launched a new initiative, the Center for Housing Solutions, which will underscore the region’s housing needs through objective research, strategic collaborations with other housing and land-use experts, and steadfast advocacy for a wide variety of housing across the valley.

Affordable Housing Matters

“There’s no place that has enough affordable housing. Not a city, not a town, not a rural village.”

Kevin O’Connor, CEO of the Rural Ulster Preservation Co.
Times Herald Record, March 13, 2013, page 5

As our population ages and the repercussions of the busted housing bubble continue to reverberate throughout the Hudson Valley, the need and demand for affordable housing is greater than ever. But the term “affordable housing” continues to have what advertisers would call an “image” problem.

On the surface, no one seems to argue with the need to provide seniors, veterans, healthcare workers, firefighters, police officers and teachers a decent and affordable place to live. Yet the very housing developments that could provide relief are often met with tremendous opposition. The reason? Affordable housing is charged with fear and mistrust by its opponents with Not in My Back Yard Syndrome, or NIMBYs. NIMBYs tend to represent the minority, but they often become an effective minority. They organize fast and make their objections known and, as a result, influence local boards.

“We’re still working off the stigma of the failed housing policies of the 60’s and 70’s.”
Ken Kearney, *Kearney Realty & Development Group*

However, research demonstrates that when surveyed, the majority of people in a community tend to be in favor of affordable housing.² They believe that providing decent housing for all is part of what helps define a community. The challenge is inspiring this silent majority to speak up, enlist their support and involvement.

This document highlights the benefits of affordable housing while providing practical ideas for marketing a development, including how to engage the sleeping majority and community leaders, along with strategies to help maneuver through the planning/zoning board process for approval.

DID YOU KNOW?

New York State is the **5th most expensive** state to live in behind Hawaii, California, Maryland and New Jersey.

The Westchester/Hudson Valley region is the **7th least affordable** metropolitan area (Long Island is the fourth)

*(Community Housing Innovations, Inc.
www.chigrants.org)*

A New York State worker would have to earn **\$25.25 per hour** to afford a modest apartment.
(NLIW.org)

E. Parmenter Street Neighborhood Development

A Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh development that will provide affordable housing for 100 residents in an historic and formerly blighted neighborhood.



Turning NIMBY into YIMBY

Yes In My Back Yard!

For the NIMBYs, the fears, no matter the scope or type of development, tend to be the same. They are based on misinformation and imagery fueled by housing projects of decades past, local economies left in ruin and neighborhoods changed forever in an undesirable way. But that was then and this is now.

THE *Health* BENEFITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING³

- Freeing up family resources for nutritious food and health care expenditures.
- Reducing stress and related adverse health outcomes.
- Well-constructed housing limits exposure to allergens, neurotoxins and other dangers.
- Provides a stable platform for the delivery of long-term health care and related services for seniors and individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities.

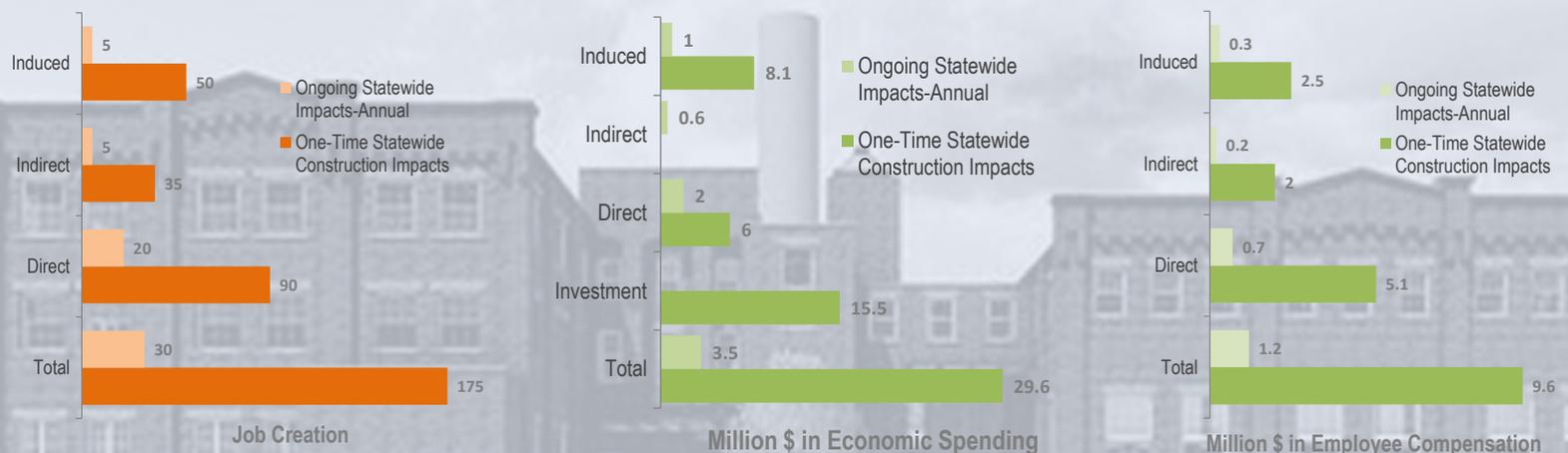
| FEARS | REALITIES |
|---|---|
| People who live in affordable housing are not “like us” | People who benefit from affordable housing already live in the community |
| More homes = increase in traffic | Tend to own fewer cars and drive less |
| High turnover rate among residents | Guaranteed stable rents result in tenants moving less often and supports family stability |
| Increase in school population | Rental apartments have fewer children per home (local data: less than 1 child/household) |

Measuring the Positive Economic Impact

What many also fail to realize are the tremendous economic benefits, both short-term and long-term, that affordable housing brings to a community. The diagram below details how a typical 100-homes development impacts the overall economic health of a community.

The benefits of providing affordable housing in a community far outweigh the negatives. It can generate broad economic activities, bolster municipalities’ financial status, stabilize neighborhoods, create jobs, and improve residents’ physical well-being. Like the direct economic benefits, health impacts translate to fiscal savings for a community as well. And while other segments in the housing market remain flat or are slow growing, affordable housing developments continue to impact the local economy long after construction is over:

One-Time & Ongoing Economic Impacts of Construction⁴



Based on 100 Unit Affordable Housing Development in NY State



Where Quality Meets Affordability



Pendell Commons

(Above) Kearny Realty and Development Group Pendell Commons, located in the Town of Poughkeepsie, is a “intergenerational” development, which applies the principle of combing mixed age groups in an affordable housing complex. The 15-acre site is home to 48 families and also includes a three-story building of 24 one-bedroom apartments just for seniors. Pendell Commons stands as one of the recent success stories in the Hudson Valley for affordable housing.

Principle #7 – Strive for Healthy, Balanced Communities “A healthy community provides a variety of housing types appropriate for residents in all stages of the life cycle...”



Length of approval process: 4 months

The Lace Factory Artist Live/ Work Space

An adaptive reuse of a 1903 building
55 units, Developed by RUPCO, Kingston, NY

“Artists bring the creative capital, sweat equity, and investment dollars needed to restore and transform.”

This project provided neighborhood revitalization and economic development through affordable housing. “The biggest factor by far was that the project conformed to the existing zoning, planning, and vision of the City of Kingston...As for getting the project approved, nothing beats eliminating the need for special variance and use permits,” Guy Kempe of RUPCO said.

The Importance of Strategy

Principle #1 – Inspire Leadership “Strong & creative leadership is necessary to successfully engage the public and surmount obstacles...”

Work with local business and civic leaders to create support and trust, empower them so they lead the conversation and ultimately help gain the support of the governing local boards.

- **Cultivate community and political support** before the development becomes public.
- **Enlist local leadership** to help educate the community on the need for affordable housing by presenting real-world statistics.
- **Beat opponents to the punch;** define the development’s nomenclature i.e.; ‘workforce housing’ vs. ‘subsidized/section 8 housing’

Principle #4 – Know Your Market & Your Customers “...should encompass the political, social and cultural facets of the community as well as the underlying market fundamentals.”

Whenever possible, work with communities that have adopted affordable housing-oriented zoning in the Comprehensive Plans. They have already demonstrated support for these kinds of developments. *Select the community first, real estate second.*

HELPFUL HINTS

- **Research** previous developments. Before submitting a site plan application, research other affordable housing developments and FOIL planning board minutes to capture the basic community and planning board objections. Address these elements in the design before initial submission.
- **Request** a scoping meeting with municipal officials and meet with the economic staff (if existing) to introduce the development to the planning process.
- **Present** an application that benefits the community and mitigates impacts.
- **Invest** in a market study.

General Marketing Techniques

Usually a product is marketed after it's produced. Not so in the case of affordable housing developments. Many a development has been killed before it even got to review due to the fierce influence of NIMBYism. *Dispelling negative imagery, educating the community, enlisting supporters and learning the politics and culture of a local board are all part of the marketing process* if a development is to find its way to success.

Create Objectives

The objectives may seem obvious, but clearly stating them can keep everyone focused and on track as the development progresses.

GENERAL MARKETING OBJECTIVES TO FOLLOW:

- *To raise awareness* of the need for affordable housing and the benefits it will bring to the community.
- *To gain support and approval* for an affordable housing development.

Know Your Target Audience

When marketing your development, it's important to tailor your message to address the interests and concerns of the audience you are targeting. It is not unusual to define more than one target audience:

- *The final decision and policy makers:* local and state elected officials; planning, zoning, and school board members.
- *The overall community* since they ultimately influence the decision makers, specifically people who believe that it is in the best interest of the community to make decent housing affordable and available. *While opponents to affordable housing are an audience, targeting them can be done more effectively when treated as part of the whole.*

Don't Ignore the Fears

Opponents' fears are very real. Providing the facts is key. Overall, communications should be kept positive.

For example, provide assurances that the homes will be safe, well built and well maintained while fitting in with the rest of the community's character.

Define the Benefits

What's in it for the community?

Does the development provide affordable housing for seniors so they stay close to family and friends or does it provide housing for young people to remain in the area, or both? Will the development rehabilitate an abandoned building or lot thereby increasing property values, transforming blight, helping local businesses and overall character of the community?

Define the benefits and be consistent in all your communications.

DID YOU KNOW?

Opposition to affordable housing tends to evaporate in the face of completed developments. *Upon completion, communities see the product as successful and desirable.*

The promotion of and education about the benefits and reality of affordable housing is warranted.

The New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) 2010 Mid-Hudson Regional Report, Office of Policy & Research, April, 2011



Communities Thrive When Housing is Affordable

Example of
a bumper
sticker

Creative Strategy & Tactics

What will your strategy convey?

- Communicate that providing housing that is *affordable is good for the community's overall economic health* and future well-being.
- Slogan: *Communities Thrive When Housing is Affordable!*

How do you get your message out without 'breaking the budget'?

- Ensure a *web presence* from the beginning to keep people in the community informed and up-to-date on what's going on with the development.
- Utilize local *newspapers, TV and radio* for advertising and press releases.
- Communicate through *social media* but ensure it is monitored regularly preferably through an advertising or PR agency. If not monitored regularly, social media can get out of control particularly when there are vocal opponents.
- Outreach with *direct mail, flyers, bumper stickers and events* are good on-the-ground tools and provide a grass roots approach that can be very effective for a local development.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING :30 TV "THRIVE"



AVO: It could be your father, mother, adult children, or even yourself.



The housing crisis has made it tough for many to afford to stay and call this home. But there is a better choice.



An affordable housing development is being proposed to local officials. And you have the power to make it happen...



...by speaking up and supporting it. So get out and tell your neighbors! Join us at the next public meeting.



Because communities thrive when housing is affordable. Visit AffordableforAll.com for more information.

Building Community Relationships

Building relationships with the community helps support a developer's success at achieving approval for a development. Often this critical step gets relegated to an afterthought rather than an integral part of the process. Engaging the full scope of the community helps create a sense of ownership for the development.

Principle #2 – *Build Community Trust and Support*

“Two key developer qualities—dedication to quality and open communication—facilitate collaboration and consensus as well as understanding and trust.”

Principle #9 – *Empower the Residents*

“Consulting, involving, and responding to the community, buyers, and residents are activities that build a sense of ownership (literally and otherwise) and create a sense of home, neighborhood, and community.”

Steps to Foster Trust & Support

- **Maintain clear and open communication** with all different constituents.
 - Create a *dedicated website* for the development with a competent point of contact who will be available for questions on a responsive basis.
 - Establish a process for each partner to be informed and heard.
 - Regular places for announcing dates for meetings and events (internet site, frequented venues, library, government buildings, etc.)
 - Open Houses allowing for one-on-one discussions
 - Community workshops
 - Advisory groups
 - Local press briefings
- **Explain benefits of affordable housing**—make the connection to the economic health of the community (use real statistics that reflect the people and demographics of the community).
- **Ensure a fair and open planning and design process** and use visuals to describe proposed development and simulate real life neighborhood effects.
 - Create Architectural Renderings: show scale, design, and anticipated finishes
 - Hold Design Charettes
 - Establish a Virtual Computer Model
- **Make only promises that can be kept**—promptly communicate and justify project changes that may appear to contradict previous promises made.

“Developers need to take at least 6 months sharing the development with the community to gain support and understanding prior to meeting with local boards.”

Faith Piatt, Executive Director, Orange County Rural Development Advisory Corporation

Engaging Stakeholders

If outreach and messaging have been embraced as key elements the likelihood of getting a development successfully passed through the approval process increases. The vision of the development should be connected to the overall community vision.

“Sustainable affordable housing promotes economic vitality, fosters environmental integrity, and encourages a sense of community today and for future generations.”

Urban Land Institute

Principle #10 – *Orchestrate Sustainability*

“Sustainable development is high-quality development, but it does not need to be high-cost development.”

Principle #5 – *Nurture Partnerships*

“An ideal partnership provides benefits to both partners, with the pairing creating an entity that is stronger than its individual parts...A successful partnership relies on the strengths of each partner.”

Planners, advocates and citizens must work together to present a unified front and proactively get affordable housing developments on the municipal agenda. This includes both the specific development and, earlier on, the importance of affordable housing in general.

DON'T FORGET

Principle #3 – *Learn the Alphabet...and Do*

the Math “Knowing the myriad funding sources and how to put them together to make a deal work is the art of affordable housing.”

HELPFUL HINTS

Create an Effective Team

- **Assemble Coalition of Partners:** other developers, consultants, and attorneys who have succeeded at delivering homes as promised.
- **Select Consultants:** who have knowledge of, or access to, regionally relevant studies applicable to your development and are willing to design it around limiting environmental resources. *Such creative use of existing scientific data may prevent merited objections.*
- **Forge Alliances:** work with all who may benefit from the development, including political and community leaders. Doing so may diffuse the challenges raised by those strongly opposed.
- **Retain an Effective Land Use Attorney:** such an attorney should serve in a ‘behind the scenes’ team role rather than leading the approval efforts. *The mere presence of an attorney can conjure an adversarial position.*
- **Communicate with Team Members of Other Developments** within close proximity to gain from their research and strategies.

Navigate SEQRA Thoughtfully

- **Create a planning timeline** that advances the required studies in ‘parallel’ rather than sequentially.
- **Don’t dismiss an issue** until the planning board has had a say.
- **Create alternate solutions early:** Spend time during the Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) process to complete a limited technical study for each of the key SEQRA focus areas so that your development team can fully comprehend any environmental limitations and pre-anticipate the range of possible SEQRA issues before they become problems.

Good Design Makes the Difference



Principle #8 – *Use Design to Foster Community, Safety and Pride* “One of the greatest lessons from public housing’s failed approach is to focus on building communities and neighborhoods, not projects and developments.”

When RUPCO developed Woodstock Commons (photos on left) in the village of Woodstock, they hired a local architect who created “emblematic” designs that fit in with the community character. Overall design and construction focused on quality materials with “curb appeal” that helped quell the community’s concerns. This intergenerational clustered development is home to seniors, young families and artists. Situated on 28 acres, less than 1/3 of the site was used for housing, while the balance is dedicated to green space, preserving wetlands and creating nature trails.

Principle #6 – *Select Sites for Opportunity and Choice* “Affordable housing opportunities should be made available in a variety of markets and types of neighborhoods...”

The diverse geography of the Hudson Valley complete with cities, rural areas, and suburban communities, offers interesting site choices. The desires of a particular market can help define the type of development and appropriate site. For example, losing our young people due to lack of affordable housing can negatively impact the economic well-being of the region. Selecting sites near commuter hubs and commerce areas can appeal to this market while also investing in the region’s future.

What’s in the Design?

COMMUNITY

Curb appeal:
would you like to live here?

SAFETY

Windows facing street:
putting “eyes” on the neighborhood

PRIDE

A sense of ownership:
reflects the residents’ needs



Mason Ridge Workforce Housing

A Green Energy Development

82 units, Regan Development, New Windsor, NY

*Mason Ridge is an excellent example of how smooth a project can go with proper planning and community support. The time from the first meeting in the Town of New Windsor Supervisor's office to final planning board approval was only **5 months**. The community knew that they wanted workforce rental housing. Through a proactive community they were able develop a workforce floating zone in order to change the zoning of the property.*

The best advice given by Larry Regan, of Regan Development, is to make sure the project has the full backing of all elected officials.

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Affordable Housing Developments *in the Hudson Valley*



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