

Key Themes of the National Community of Practice on Local Housing Policy



Local Housing Policy Matters

- While of critical importance, federal housing subsidy programs are not the only tools of housing policy
- All cities, towns and counties have levers they can use to advance housing policy objectives; this is not a topic limited to NYC, LA and other big cities
- There's a lot that localities can do to improve housing affordability and achieve other key housing objectives without spending tax dollars
- In addition to improving housing affordability and other housing policy outcomes, local housing policies can help to advance economic development, address racial and economic disparities in neighborhood conditions and provide a critical foundation for individual health, well-being and educational success

Every Community Should Have a Local Housing Strategy

- A local housing strategy describes the steps that a local jurisdiction plans to take to achieve a set of clearly defined housing objectives
- Smaller communities and communities relatively new to housing policy are likely to have shorter, less complicated strategies
- Local housing strategies can be iterative, expanding over time
- While there may be some overlap, a local housing strategy is not the same as the federally mandated housing consolidated plan or the housing element of a comprehensive plan

Localities Should Strive To Develop Comprehensive Approaches That Reflect The Coordinated Policies Of Multiple Local Agencies

- There is no "magic bullet" that will, through a single policy, solve a community's housing challenges
- Instead, communities should take a comprehensive approach, adopting one or more policies in each of four main categories of local housing policies:
 - i. Creating and Preserving Dedicated Affordable Housing Units**
 - ii. Promoting Affordability by Increasing the Overall Supply of Housing and Lowering Barriers and Costs**
 - iii. Helping Renters and Homebuyers Access and Afford Units they Locate in the Private Market**
 - iv. Enhancing Housing Stability and Quality**

Localities Should Strive To Develop Comprehensive Approaches That Reflect The Coordinated Policies Of Multiple Local Agencies (cont)

- Close collaboration among the many agencies that influence housing policy is important for success. Key local agencies include the housing department, planning department, planning / zoning commission, agency responsible for tax policy, building inspections department, public housing agency, and local housing finance agency (if any)
- Smaller communities and those new to housing may wish to start with the policies of one or two agencies and work to become progressively more comprehensive

Local Housing Strategies Should Be Balanced

- While there is no one-size-fits all solution, in general, local housing strategies should reflect a balanced approach. For example, in these four areas, it is important to strike a balance between:
 - i. Building and preserving dedicated affordable housing units *and* lifting barriers to increasing the overall supply of housing
 - ii. Accommodating growth *and* protecting residents from displacement
 - iii. Developing affordable housing in resource-rich areas *and* expanding the resources available in low-income areas and communities of color
 - iv. Rental *and* ownership

The Engagement Of A Diverse Group Of Community Stakeholders Will Help Localities Develop More Effective Strategies That Are More Likely To Be Implemented

- Rooting community engagement in transparency and honest dialogue promotes greater understanding of community needs and of government constraints and trade-offs
- Being proactive in engaging community members, especially people of color, low-income people, and marginalized groups, at the start of the process leads to a stronger local housing strategy and helps avoid implementation delays
- Investment in community engagement improves the long-term government-community relationship for future planning processes

Local Housing Strategies Should Include Measurable Goals And A Process For Periodically Reporting On Goals To Ensure Accountability

