



2009: Tool Kit for Effective Advocacy

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**Housing
Colorado** 
ENRICHING COLORADO COMMUNITIES



2009: Tool Kit for Effective Advocacy

Table of Contents

Introduction to Housing Colorado	3
What is Advocacy?	4
2009 Housing Legislative Priorities	5
2009 Housing Facts	6
Key Messages: Why Housing Matters	7
Moving Your Message: Media Tips	8
Tips for Meeting with Your Legislator	9
Hosting Your Legislator	10-11
Other Advocacy Resources	12

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About Housing Colorado

MISSION: We are a unified voice supporting the preservation and production of quality affordable housing for low and moderate income Coloradans through education and advocacy statewide in order to build a strong economy and healthy communities.

VISION: A decent, safe and affordable home in a healthy and sustainable community for every Coloradan.

WHO ARE WE: Housing Colorado is a statewide membership organization, composed of housing professionals engaged in the full spectrum of affordable housing production and preservation activities, including both rental and homeownership opportunities, and supportive services. Membership spans all sectors: cities; public housing authorities; financial agencies and institutions; for-profit and non-profit developers; realtors; and human service agencies.

WHAT DO WE DO:

Annual Conference: The 21st Annual Housing Colorado NOW! Conference, Colorado's premier affordable housing event, will convene over 500 housing professionals in Breckenridge, Colorado from Tuesday, October 13-Friday, October 16. The four-day conference, titled *Pathways to Progress*, will feature keynote presentations from national experts, a Colorado Public Policy Panel, over 30 workshops on best practices and housing trends and a wide range of networking events.

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Luncheon Series: Sponsor a monthly educational and networking luncheon series in the Denver Metro area attended by 60-100 affordable housing professionals.

Regional Programs: Host educational and networking programs outside of Metro Denver at least 2/yr.

Resources: Host the online Affordable Housing Gallery and searchable Housing Resource Directory.

Advocacy: Provide a voice for affordable housing through a legislative presence and advocacy network.

Publications: Inform a network of over 5,000 housing professionals and advocates about affordable housing policies, issues and resources via a bi-annual newsletter, E- Newsletters and website. Publish an annual Facts book on the status of affordable housing in Colorado.

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What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is *more* than influencing a vote. Advocacy is about building awareness, changing opinions and making a difference in people's lives.

Speak Up for Housing:

Join Housing Colorado's **Action Network** - Contact seth@housingcolorado.org

Build a relationship with your legislators and offer your help with housing information and assistance for constituents - Legislator contact information is available to download [here](#)

Write a "**letter to the editor**" about the housing needs in your community - See our sample enclosed (Members in the News)

Share an affordable housing **resident story** illustrating how housing made a difference through Housing Colorado's online story bank - [Click here](#)

Expand the Network:

Bring a friend to the luncheon series or to our annual conference - [Learn more about our programs here](#)

Become a Housing Colorado Member - [Click here for more information on benefits](#)

Pass along a copy of the Housing Colorado **Facts Book** - [Download a copy here](#)

Put the **passion to work** by volunteering with a Housing Colorado committee - [Learn more](#)

Share the Good News:

Host a **tour** at one of your properties and invite elected officials

Submit a property for Housing Colorado's **Affordable Housing Gallery** - [Learn more](#)

Submit your properties, volunteers and staff for well-deserved **award recognition** - [Click here for a list of awards](#)

To Make an Impact, We Need to Tell Our Story:

When we talk to legislators, public officials, the media, or just people in general, we have lots of important statistics and facts, but what they remember are the stories. If you know a story that illustrates how housing made the difference in someone's life, share it with us! We're looking for great examples of how housing affects people's transportation needs, their health, the education of their children, their self-sufficiency and other areas of their lives. Visit our story bank at www.housingcolorado.org.

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2009



HOUSING COLORADO FACTS BOOK

Did You Know?

- **132,873 low-income renter households pay more than 50% of their income on housing.** 18% are elderly, 12% disabled, and 33% are children with families. This severely limits their capacity to secure other necessities like food, healthcare and utilities. There isn't a single county in Colorado where a worker earning 30% of the Area Median Income or below (\$20,626 for the state) can afford a one bedroom apartment (\$667/month). **Rent increases have been the greatest in rural areas, which have risen over 35% since 2000.**
- **From 2000 to 2006, home prices increased 66%, while wages only increased 18%,** creating a wide home purchase affordability gap. Even with the recent foreclosure-driven decline in home prices, the median home price in most Colorado communities remains beyond the reach of crucial members of our workforce — teachers, nurses, firefighters, and service sector workers just as a weak economy, combined with rising utility and gas prices, limits home buying power.
- **Rising foreclosure rates mean rising rents.** The passage of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 presents great opportunities, but only begins to address problems coming out of the national foreclosure crisis. Having one of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation has helped drive the Fair Market Rent (FMR) in Colorado to \$836 for a two-bedroom unit.

If you would like a copy of the Facts Book mailed to you, or need multiple copies for an event, please contact Seth Ford at 303-863-0126 or seth@housingcolorado.org. To download a copy of the 2009 Facts Book, visit us on-line at www.housingcolorado.org.



2009 Legislative Priorities

For legislative updates see our Advocacy page at www.housingcolorado.org or join our Action Network by contacting seth@housingcolorado.org. *Note: Any emergent legislation during the session is reviewed by the Housing Colorado Legislative Committee.*

PRIORITY 1: Secure adequate, reliable funding dedicated to providing and promoting the economic benefits of affordable housing in Colorado.

- Explore ways to redirect Fiduciary Interest on pooled escrow accounts to affordable housing through a collaborative approach
- Protect the Division of Housing Grants Line Item
- Pursue opportunities to establish a Colorado Housing Investment Fund
- Pursue the inclusion of housing funding in the federal stimulus package
- Promote high-impact utilization of NSP funding

PRIORITY 2: Expand opportunities and emphasize how including affordable housing in new developments and near transportation projects promotes economic development.

- Demonstrate how affordable housing development positively impacts the economic health of Colorado and generates jobs.
- Provide municipal flexibility for developer incentives
- Oppose barriers to the inclusion of affordable housing in transit oriented developments
- Support efforts to incorporate land use and housing into transportation planning

PRIORITY 3: Make housing more energy efficient and affordable through green building practices and energy assistance.

- Promote uniform and more cost-effective green standards
- Secure more funding resources, tools and technical assistance to achieve energy efficiencies
- Support energy assistance for residents of affordable housing

PRIORITY 4: Promote stability in housing through foreclosure prevention and renter protections.

- Prevent equity skimming
- Support foreclosure mitigation efforts to keep responsible owners in their homes

PRIORITY 5: Support a range of human services, which when tied to stable housing enable individuals and families to be as self-sufficient as possible.

- Comprehensive health care

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Why Housing Matters

Ensuring families, kids and seniors have affordable housing is the right thing to do.

Affordable housing is the foundation of cost-effective service delivery. It costs Denver about \$40,000 a year to maintain the health and safety of a chronically homeless person, but the average cost dropped to about \$17,000 once a person was housed. Denver's Road Home documented a 60% decrease in the use of emergency services for people enrolled in the Housing First program.

The graying of the West poses a major housing challenge. Colorado is home to almost 630,000 seniors (expected to grow to over 1 million by 2018). As the fastest growing population segment in Colorado, affordable housing for seniors on fixed incomes is a looming issue. For those seniors who are entirely reliant on Social Security benefits, the average \$982 per month is wholly inadequate to meet housing and other necessary expenses like food and health care.

Affordable Housing is good for your health. Families paying more than 30% of their income for housing can't afford medicine and medical services, so their conditions worsen until they require more costly emergency care. 23,000 Coloradans live in sub-standard housing, where they may face threats from lead-based paint to mold and poor wiring. Children who live under these conditions are 3.4 times more likely to need hospitalization and urgent medical care. A stable and safe home is the solid base all families need for good health.

Kids + Stable housing = School Success. Children who change schools three times or more before 8th grade are four times more likely to drop out. Poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the most common causes of family homelessness. One-third of Colorado's over 15,000 homeless are children and teens. When kids don't have to move all the time, they miss less school. Students who had a nearly perfect (95%) attendance record had twenty percent higher testing scores than peers who attended class 80% of the time or less.

Driving Until you Qualify Doesn't Mean a Cheaper Cost of Living. Combined housing and Transportation costs eat up 59% of the budget of working families in the Denver Metro area, which doesn't leave much for health care, education, and food. Over 35% of Colorado workers drive to jobs outside their county of residence. Renters generally earn half the income of homeowners and spend up to 63% of their budgets on housing and transportation costs. For every dollar saved by moving to a house that's affordable but away from a job, a family ends up paying 77 additional cents to cover transportation costs (buying a car, maintenance, gas, insurance, fees, taxes, and parking)—a situation that is only going to get worse with rising gas costs that have gone from \$1.24 to \$3.10 a gallon since 1997.

Visit the Community Impact page of our web site for sources. www.housingcolorado.org/?section=Community+Impact



Moving Your Message: Media Tips

Pitching to the Media. A good pitch includes the frames and messages you've developed to state the larger problem, your organization's solution and the specific action you are calling for. Your success at pitching depends on how well you convince the reporter that your story is timely and should be told *now*, not filed away for some unspecified future coverage. A media advisory should include: *Who, What, Where, When, and Why.*

Pick up the phone. Your press release can languish in an inbox unless you follow-up with short phone calls. We can't over-emphasize the importance of direct communication with media to get on their radar and have a reporter assigned to your story. Make calls in the morning, before the deadline crunch.

Be a resource. Journalists will see you as a go-to source if you consistently offer accurate, up-to-date information, meet deadlines, deliver good sound bites and offer interesting angles. Provide other contacts to reporters, even from the other side, if requested. Give reporters a direct line and put your cell phone number on your press release. Make yourself available at all times.

Be Relevant. Your pitch or press release should be targeted toward the publication's audience or the individual journalist's beat (ie. Real Estate, Business, Local News, etc.)

Know your facts. If you do not know the answer to a reporter's question, do not make up something. You can spin your response with a talking point, but if what they want is a specific fact or statistic, point them to someone who knows it.

Respect deadlines. Find out about reporters' deadlines: They live by them and they are inflexible. If you have not called back by 3 or 4 pm at a print newspaper, the reporter will get nervous. By 4:30, you will be out of the story. For TV news, get back to a reporter at least a couple of hours before airtime.

Appear more reasonable than your opponents. Whoever appears more reasonable is ahead of the game. A typical frame you want to avoid is that of the "livid protestor" or "extremist." Avoid getting boxed in by staking your ground in positive terms. Channel and convert your rage into a message that moves people to awareness and action.

Share Your Opinion. The Op Ed page of daily newspapers is an accessible space to showcase your organization and summarize your message. This page is read by major decision-makers—business people, politicians and their staffs, CEOs, scholars, and involved citizens who are potential advocates of your cause.

Excerpt from Spin Project

Resources for working with the media:

The Campaign for Affordable Housing: http://www.tcah.org/pdf/Media_Training_Guide.pdf

Center for Community Change: <http://www.cccfiles.org/shared/publications/downloads/CCCNews18.pdf>

Spin Project: <http://www.spinproject.org/article.php?list=type&type=58>

Community Media Workshop: [http://www.newstips.org/interior.php?main_id=141§ion=PR+Tips&topic=.](http://www.newstips.org/interior.php?main_id=141§ion=PR+Tips&topic=)



Tips for Meeting with your Legislator

Think of your visit as a 20-minute conversation that will give you and your Legislator a chance to gain insight into where each of you stand on particular issues. This is a chance for you to build a relationship with your legislator and educate them on your organization. If you find the idea of lobbying your state representative intimidating, remember: They want to hear what you have to say. The information you provide about your district and your organization's experience is valuable to him/her. It is a representative's responsibility to respond to the concerns of their constituents.

When setting up a meeting tell the person who sets the appointment:

- Where you're from and what organization you represent.
- The purpose of the meeting.
- The number of people who will be attending the meeting.

Planning the Meeting:

- Set an agenda based on how much time you have, usually 20-30 minutes. Decide what issues you'd like to discuss (usually no more than 2-3). Provide the legislators with an outline of the issues you plan to discuss before the meeting so they are aware of the priorities you plan to discuss.
- Compile written materials to leave with your representative or staff person.

When You Meet Your Legislator:

- Be Punctual: Legislators often have very tight schedules, so leave extra time to find that scarce parking space.
- Begin your meeting by introducing the attendees and stating the purpose of the meeting.
- Start with the problem and then move on to solutions. Have concrete and specific suggestions for action. (i.e. supporting, sponsoring, co-sponsoring or opposing a bill) Include both your local housing issues and how it is a state-wide concern with which the legislator can assist. *Try not to use acronyms or terms that they may not know.*
- Research where the legislator stands on your issue; establish a strategy to get the legislators involved; don't waste time educating the legislators if they are already committed to your housing concerns when they could be working with you on an advanced strategy. Visit: www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/hstat.htm
- Don't feel bad if you don't have all the information. Tell them you'll find the answer. Think of it as a chance to stay in touch with your legislator later on.
- Your legislators are elected to help you. Refrain from attacking their record, or discussing their party affiliation, etc. Remember, you want them to feel like your issue is a priority for them.
- Don't do all the talking. Be prepared to listen to the legislator's concerns; acknowledge and respect their point of view.
- Before closing the meeting, summarize any agreements reached and any follow up that must be done. Leave the relevant materials and thank your legislator or staff person for their time.



Tips for Hosting Your Legislator

Legislators want and need to meet people within their districts in order to learn their concerns so they can effectively represent their constituents on issues during the legislative session. This is your chance to guide their priorities and to demonstrate the direct impact of your organization's work in the community.

Benefits of hosting your legislators:

- You will have an effective contact that can be followed up with during the legislative session and beyond.
- The legislator will have direct communication with people working in the field and in the communities they serve, thereby gaining a better understanding of how state bills affect local issues.
- More exposure for your agency or coalition will boost public awareness about housing issues and needs.

When to host a legislator:

- Legislators are often busy, especially during the legislative session between January and May. If you are requesting a meeting with a legislator during the legislative session, you can contact their legislative aid and arrange a time to meet with them at the Capitol.
- June through December are often the best months to request a meeting with your legislators or to host them for a tour of your facility.
- Offer your facility as a location for the legislator to host a Town Hall meeting.

Which legislators to host:

- Make sure to target the legislators that represent your House and Senate district.
- To identify your current legislator you can either call your county clerk, or you can go online to www.votesmart.com.
- If you have a particular issue that a legislator from another area has championed you might consider inviting that legislator to also attend your meeting and help inform/educate their peer.

Continued on the next page

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Who else should attend your legislator events:

- When hosting legislators, it is often helpful to invite other like-minded organizations to participate in the meeting to demonstrate broad-based interest and support for local housing issues.
- Consider including your Congress person, Congressional staff from your district, local politicians such as city council members and county commissioners. This will show the legislator that housing is a wide-reaching community issue.
- Consider inviting members from the local media, and/or have someone available to take pictures for future newsletters and promotional materials.

Send a thank you letter and reminder of commitments:

- After the meeting, follow-up with a thank you note or letter.
- Remind the legislators of any commitments that were made during the meeting.
- Include contact information for key meeting attendees so they know how to contact you in the future.
- If you had someone taking pictures for the event, send copies.
- Provide any positive comments you received from attendees. This will encourage your legislators to stay interested in your issues.

STAYING CONNECTED

Stay connected with your legislator throughout the year:

- Make sure you stay current on bills that your legislators will be voting on, and write/call them to share your views and encourage their votes accordingly. Housing Colorado sends out frequent updates on housing issues to its membership during the legislative session.
- Add your legislators to your e-mail and phone lists so they receive current news and updates.
- Be creative; add your legislators to an agency's holiday card list, invite him or her to your fundraising event or other community activities.
- Invite them to join you at a future Housing Colorado event.



This is not a complete list—please visit our web site for additional resources.

State Legislative and Affordable Housing Information

Colorado General Assembly: www.state.co.us/gov_dir/stateleg.html (Find your legislators at <http://capwiz.com/nlihc/dbq/officials/>)

Colorado Division of Housing: www.dola.state.co.us/doh/

Colorado Housing and Finance Authority: www.colohfa.org

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless: www.coloradocoalition.org

Colorado NAHRO: www.conahro.org

Enterprise Community Partners: www.enterprisecommunity.org

Housing Colorado: www.housingcolorado.org

Housing Justice!: www.housingjustice.org

Habitat for Humanity of Colorado: www.habitatcolorado.org

Colorado Housing Search.com: www.coloradohousingsearch.com/index.php

Colorado Housing Investment Fund Coalition: www.colohousingfund.org

National Legislative and Affordable Housing Information

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): www.hud.gov

KnowledgePlex: www.knowledgeplex.org

National Low Income Housing Coalition: www.nlihc.org/index.html

Center on Policy and Budget Priorities: www.cbpp.org/11-30-01hous.htm

Federal Data from the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy: socds.huduser.org/chas/index.htm

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