

Suggested Talking Points for Workforce Housing Event Speakers

REALTOR® ASSOCIATION

- Thank you to all of you for coming today. It's great to see so many of you taking an interest in this public-private initiative to encourage city officials, non-profit organizations, business leaders, lenders, Realtors® and employers to provide affordable homeownership opportunities for our workforce and to help current homeowners keep their homes.
- At the heart of workforce housing is the idea that employees should be able to afford to live in the communities in which they work, and that there are multiple benefits to being able to do so
- As you know, Americans are facing some tough challenges today. As we look across the nation, we see that many workers simply can't afford to live in the communities where they work. They are no longer our neighbors. And, for that, we all suffer.
- It is critically important that working citizens in our communities have access to reasonably priced housing
- With the downturn in the economy and tighter credit markets, families earning at or below the median income in their community have found it particularly difficult to find housing
- Even with the declining home values of the past few years, homeownership is still out of reach for our workforce. Even "affordable" rental is often too expensive.
- NAR's 2011 Housing Pulse Survey found that:
 - Having enough money for a down payment and closing costs is the largest obstacle that makes housing too expensive and unaffordable
 - Job security concerns remain high; eight in 10 cite these issues as a barrier to homeownership
- Yet despite these concerns, most Americans still believe that owning a home is a solid financial decision. According to the survey, Seven in 10 Americans also believe that buying a home is a good financial decision and a majority of renters aspire to home ownership as a long-term goal.
- Provide some data on local housing affordability re: homeownership and affordable rental. Paycheck to Paycheck is a good resource for this. For example:

In Washington, DC (the District) the median home price is \$245,000. According to Paycheck to Paycheck, a national database developed by the Center for Housing Policy, the annual income needed to afford a median priced home in the District is \$72,500. Teachers, police officers, and nurses in the District all earn \$20,000 to \$30,000 below this mark.

And other workers like retail clerks or custodians earn over \$40,000 less annually than they would need to earn to be able to purchase a median priced home in the District.

Renters don't fare much better. According to the database, workers in only seven of the 72 occupations covered can afford typical rents in the District, despite working full-time.



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- Besides the damage to families, the shortage of workforce housing also hurts local employers by making it more difficult to attract and keep workers
 - Workforce housing can play a critical role in helping our communities to stabilize and the economy to recover
 - Public-private partnerships are using workforce housing initiatives to promote targeted neighborhood revitalization, practice “smart growth,” and address regional imbalances in housing and jobs
 - Well-designed workforce housing programs can contribute to neighborhood revitalization and support a broad range of community development goals, such as infill development, community involvement and civic participation
 - Communities benefit from having increased access to affordable housing, including both homeownership and stable affordable rental homes. Higher homeownership rates generally correspond to greater neighborhood stability as well as increased tax revenues from both the homeowners and the retained businesses.
- PUBLIC OFFICIAL KEYNOTE
- I want to thank [association name] for undertaking this initiative and for all of you for coming today to find out how you can participate and be part of this initiative
 - I understand the importance of a strong employment base and the need to have a range of housing options that are affordable to our workforce. I also understand that we need to expand housing opportunities and make housing more accessible for our residents.
 - I am encouraged by the participation of the business leaders and lenders who have joined us this morning [names of the lender partners]. And, I applaud your efforts for your commitment to making homeownership a reality for more hard working families. You can work together with the non-profits in our community and the local Realtors® who can help you initiate your own EAH program.
 - When working families are not able to live close to work, their long commutes contribute to traffic congestion and air pollution
 - Unstable and unaffordable housing markets, as well as neighborhoods and families devastated by foreclosures, affect businesses with increased stress levels, reduced worker productivity, and unsafe neighborhoods
 - Serious and varied housing challenges abound throughout [city/region]. The problems range from lack of affordable housing to the need for economic development to stabilize and revitalize communities so potential homeowners can purchase quality housing.
 - The future economic health of the region and our local communities is dependent on maintaining a stable and competitive workforce for our businesses and industries, which means we need a diverse range of housing options located near jobs and transportation/transit



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- Workforce housing is one of the many community and economic development issues that requires that we develop innovative strategies that bring new resources and partners to the table
- Today, many of our local employers, including our school districts, hospitals, police and fire departments, hotels and restaurants and manufacturers, have employees that live too far from the workplace. In addition, many of our residents are worried about losing their homes.
- Employer-Assisted Housing programs can close the homeownership affordability gap and allow workers to purchase homes in the communities they serve
- We need to explore ways to raise awareness of EAH programs among employers, lenders, and community groups, seeing it as one way to effectively leverage public and private funds to address housing affordability challenges and community revitalization in our community
- Employer-Assisted Housing is a model to help businesses advocate for and actively support homeownership — it's a great way to open the door to homeownership for our workforce. It's a sound investment and another key for ongoing economic and community development in our state/city.

EMPLOYER KEYNOTE

- Discuss company's EAH benefit plan: types of benefits, number of participants, cost of implementation and administration, partners
- Discuss EAHs benefits and value to the company: loyalty, public relations, retention tool, productive employees, etc.
- Discuss one employee who has taken advantage of the company's EAH benefit and the outcome

HOUSING INDUSTRY EXPERT PLENARY OR KEYNOTE SPEAKER

- Discuss the current housing market and trends, and the impact of the market on opportunities for affordable homeownership and affordable rental
- Discuss strategies and solutions that can help address the challenges workforce buyers face
- Discuss how addressing affordable housing needs of the workforce benefits the community as a whole