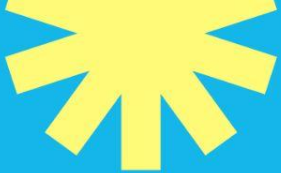
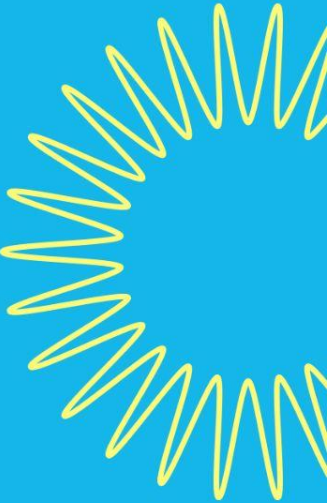




Comms 101

Making the Story Before the Story
Makes You

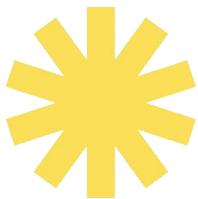


Built For Zero.



COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS

AGENDA



Tuesday, October 20 · 1:30–4:00 PM

1	Milestones That Matter	Show people the system is working and getting results	25 min
2	Talk to Your Audience	Focus on the stakeholders who matter most to your work	25 min
3	Op-Eds That Change Minds	Take a position, find the news hook, and get placed	25 min
4	Talking Direct to Camera	Make short, real-time video content from your phone	25 min
5	Crisis Communications	Respond quickly, honestly, and with your coalition behind you	25 min





Milestones that Matter

ACTIVITY #1

Built For Zero.



**COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS**

PRESENTERS



Claire Caldwell



OUR 25 MINUTES

mile·stone 'mī(-ə)l-,stōn (noun): any ol' reason to remind people of your aim and humblebrag about how you're making good progress



0-7 min

Live, in the wild, examples from the field

7-12 min

Opinion polling insights

12-15 min

AMP'ing the story

15-23 min

Your community: map the milestone

23-25 min

Shareout & Close



1

**LIVE, IN THE WILD,
EXAMPLES FROM
THE FIELD**



SAFE MOVE TULSA



Mayor launches Safe Move Tulsa plan to fix street homelessness

Nov 6, 2025

[Read More ↗](#)



More homeless encampments decommissioned; 55 people now housed

Dec 23, 2025

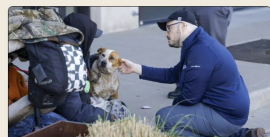
[Read More ↗](#)



Safe Move Tulsa moves 13 more people into housing while closing 2 more homeless encampments

Feb 5, 2026

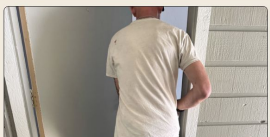
[Read More ↗](#)



Safe Move Tulsa Connects 50 People to Housing from Downtown Tulsa, Working to End Street Sleeping Downtown

Apr 8, 2026

[Read More ↗](#)



Tulsa leaders report progress as Safe Move initiative closes more encampments

May 26, 2026

[Read More ↗](#)



Safe Move Tulsa helps more than 300 people leave homelessness

June 24, 2026

[Read More ↗](#)



Tulsa is halfway to its goal of housing 1,300 homeless by the end of 2026

September 11, 2026

[Read More ↗](#)



very Day



500 in 500 - Allegheny County



6.6.2024

'500 in 500 days:' Allegheny County pushes to move unhoused out of shelters, into housing

June 6, 2024 - WESA

Allegheny County announces initiative to help move individuals from shelters to more permanent housing.

6.7.2024

Editorial: Finally, an encouraging sign for county's approach to homelessness

June 7, 2024 - Pittsburgh Post Gazette

The Post-Gazette Editorial Board has been consistently critical of the county's (and the city's) response to the homelessness crisis. But it is a praiseworthy step in the right direction, one that will hopefully set a course for more progress to come.

9.18.2024

100 days in, Allegheny County says it's on track to meet '500 in 500' affordable housing goal

September 18, 2024 - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Allegheny County officials said Wednesday that they were on track to meet the goals set by an affordable housing plan announced by county Executive Sara Innamorato in June, but one real estate broker who claims he could add units for nearly 180 people said county leaders haven't responded to his offer.

How

House People Every Day



500 in 500 - Allegheny County



11.10.2024

Ambitious plan moves more than 100 people into housing in Allegheny County - Pittsburgh Union Progress

November 10, 2024 - Union Progress

Allegheny County's plan to boost affordable housing has relieved pressure on shelters through its first 100 days but will not directly help everyone who are living on the streets and who have the most need, officials said.

2.10.2025

All homeless encampments cleared from Downtown Pittsburgh and Eliza Furnace Trail, officials announce

February 10, 2025 - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A stretch of more than two dozen tents along the Eliza Furnace Trail are now gone, marking the removal of a homeless encampment that drew complaints from those who bike or walk along the trail about illegal activity and unsanitary conditions.

2.11.2025

Allegheny County nearly halfway to goal of finding 500 affordable housing units in 500 days

February 11, 2025 - WTAE

Allegheny County and its community partners are nearly halfway to their goal of finding 500 additional affordable housing units in 500 days and helping people experiencing homelessness move into stable housing.

6.6.2025

Allegheny County officials say hundreds have been housed one year into '500 in 500'

June 6, 2025 - 90.5 WESA

The effort is focused on aiding people who are homeless for mainly economic reasons, and who don't have other complex mental health or addiction challenges.

Every Day



500 in 500 - Allegheny County



7.28.2025

Allegheny County Housing Plan Has a 500/500 Chance of Success

July 28, 2025 - City & State Pennsylvania

The initiative to create 500 units in 500 days is producing tangible benefits – and could be a model for other regions in the state and nation.

8.3.2025

Pittsburgh Mother Finds Stability Through 500 in 500 Program

August 30, 2025 - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Toniya Moseley fled a domestic violence situation in Georgia and was living in her van and shelter with son and daughter. The county's housing initiative has been a huge help, she says. Read the full article [here](#).

10.21.2025

Allegheny County officials hail housing success of '500 in 500' initiative

October 21, 2025 - 90.5 WESA

Allegheny County officials are celebrating having housed more than 500 individuals as part of its "500 in 500" initiative.

10.30.2025

Editorial: Innamorato's housing moonshot shows aiming big is worth it

October 30, 2025 - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato's bold plan to bring online 500 new units of affordable housing in 500 days has born fruit.

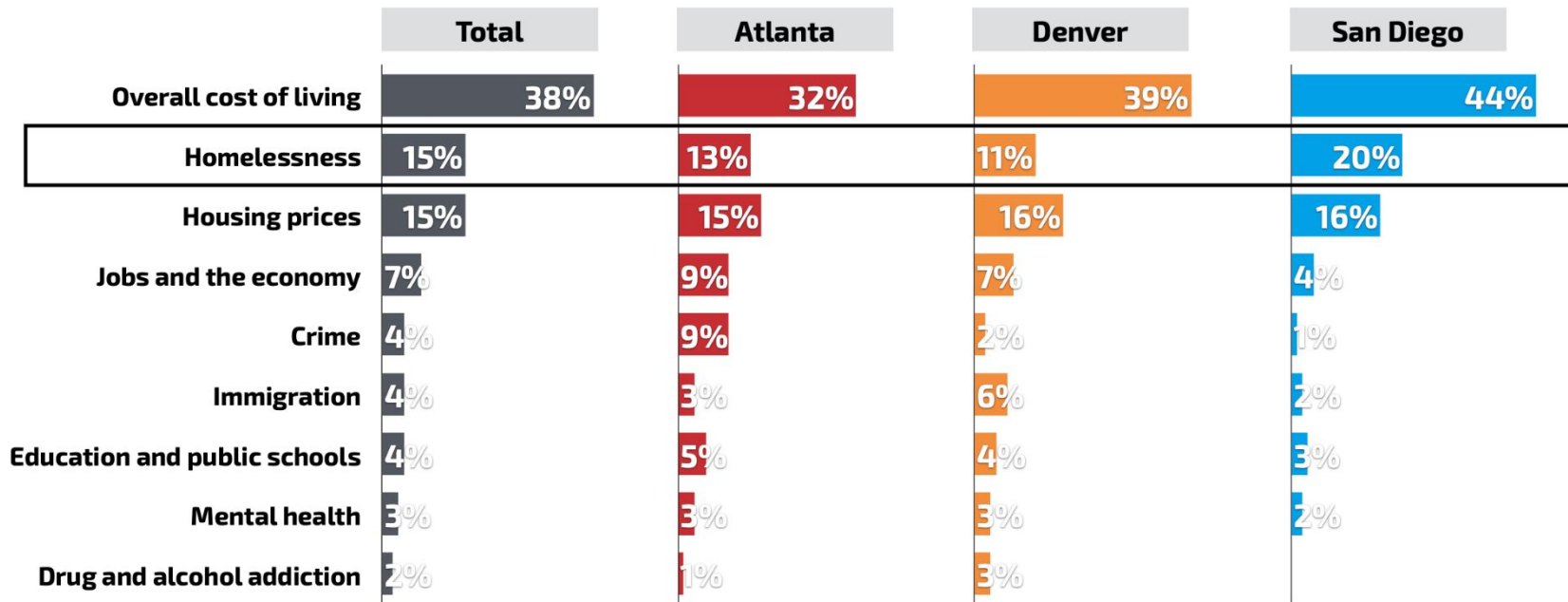


2

OPINION POLLING INSIGHTS



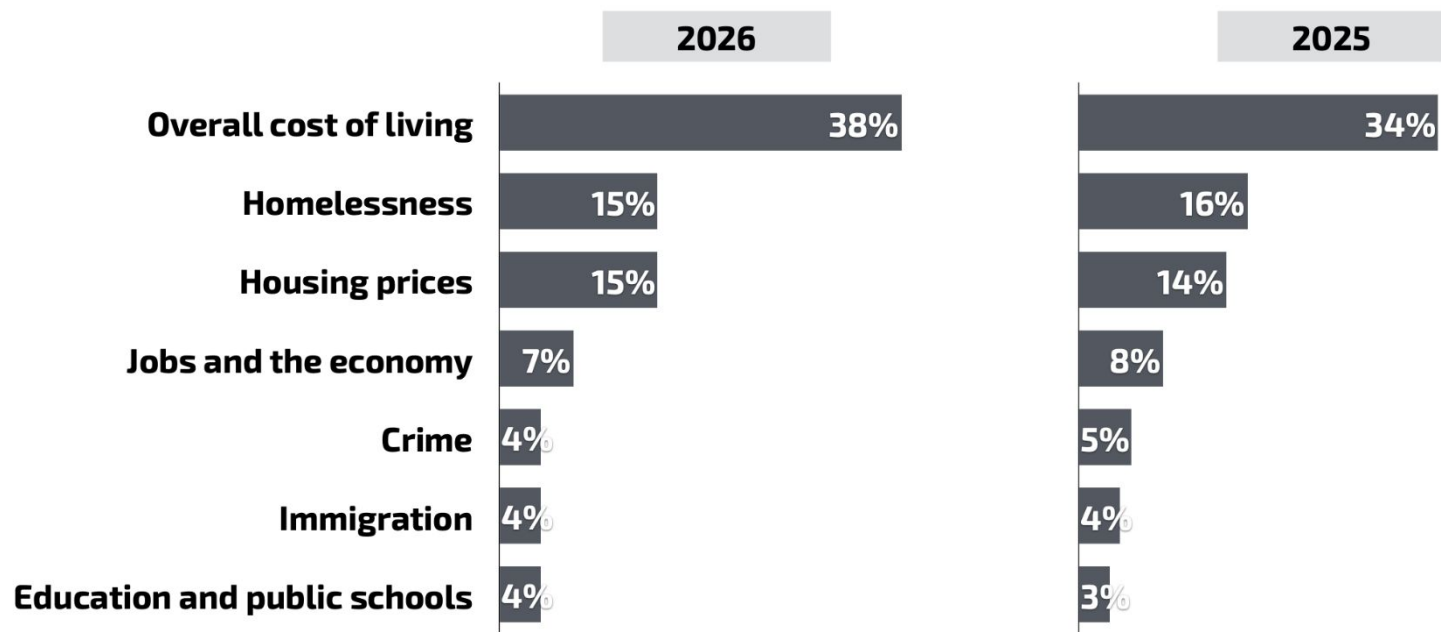
Homelessness ranks among the top three issues in all three cities, and it's especially top of mind in San Diego



Note: "Something else (please specify)" and "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" not shown
 Q. If you had to choose just one, which would you say is the biggest issue facing [CITY] today?



Little has changed since last year when it comes to priorities across cities



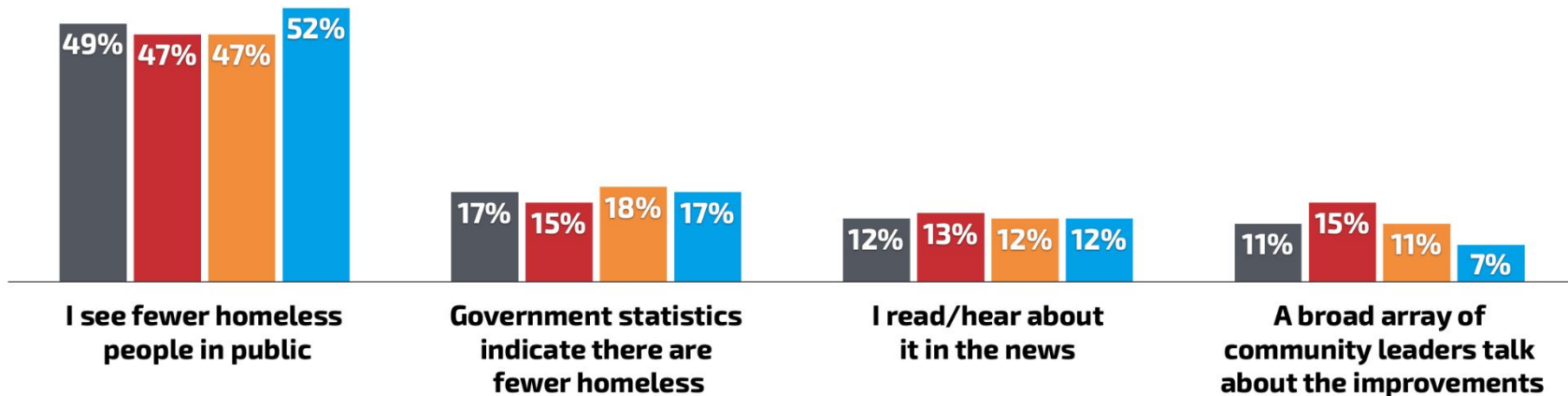
Note: "Something else (please specify)" and "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" and answer options not offered in the 2025 survey are not shown ("Mental health" and "drug and alcohol addiction")

Q. If you had to choose just one, which would you say is the biggest issue facing [CITY] today?

Voters will believe homelessness is improving when they see it, not when they read it in statistics or the news

Q. How will you know that homelessness is being actively reduced?

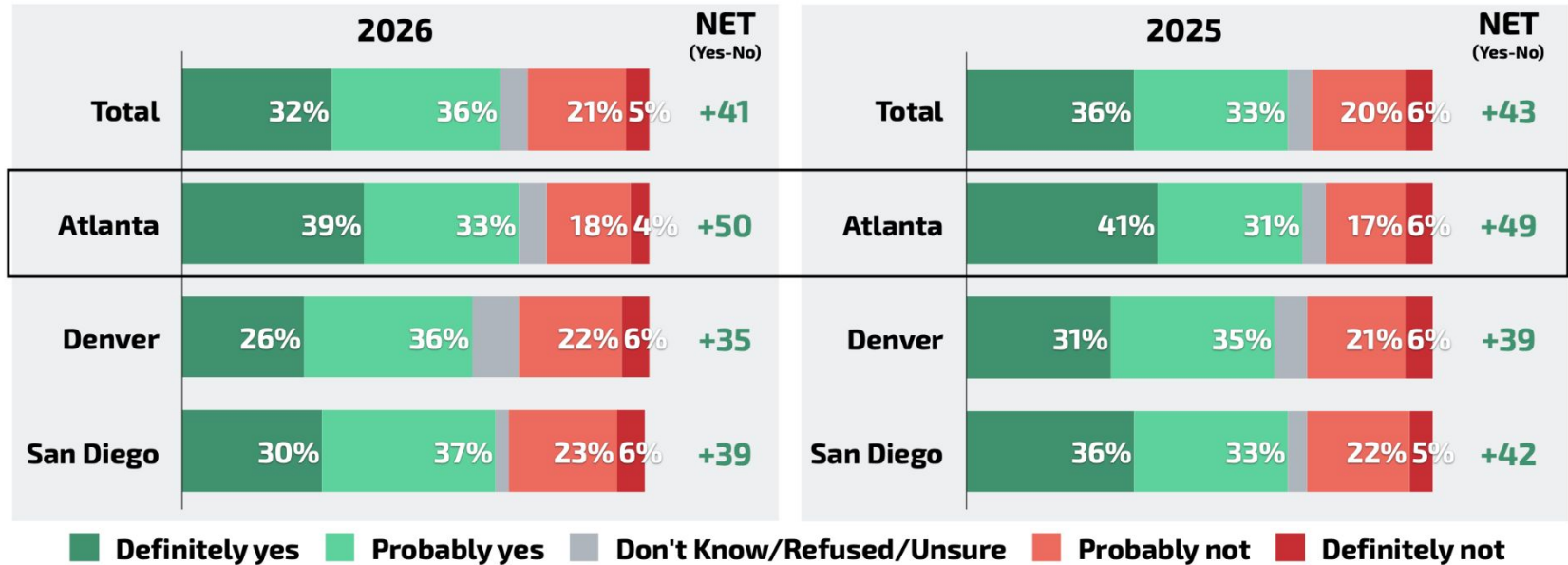
■ Total ■ Atlanta ■ Denver ■ San Diego



Note: "Something else (please specify)" and "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" not shown

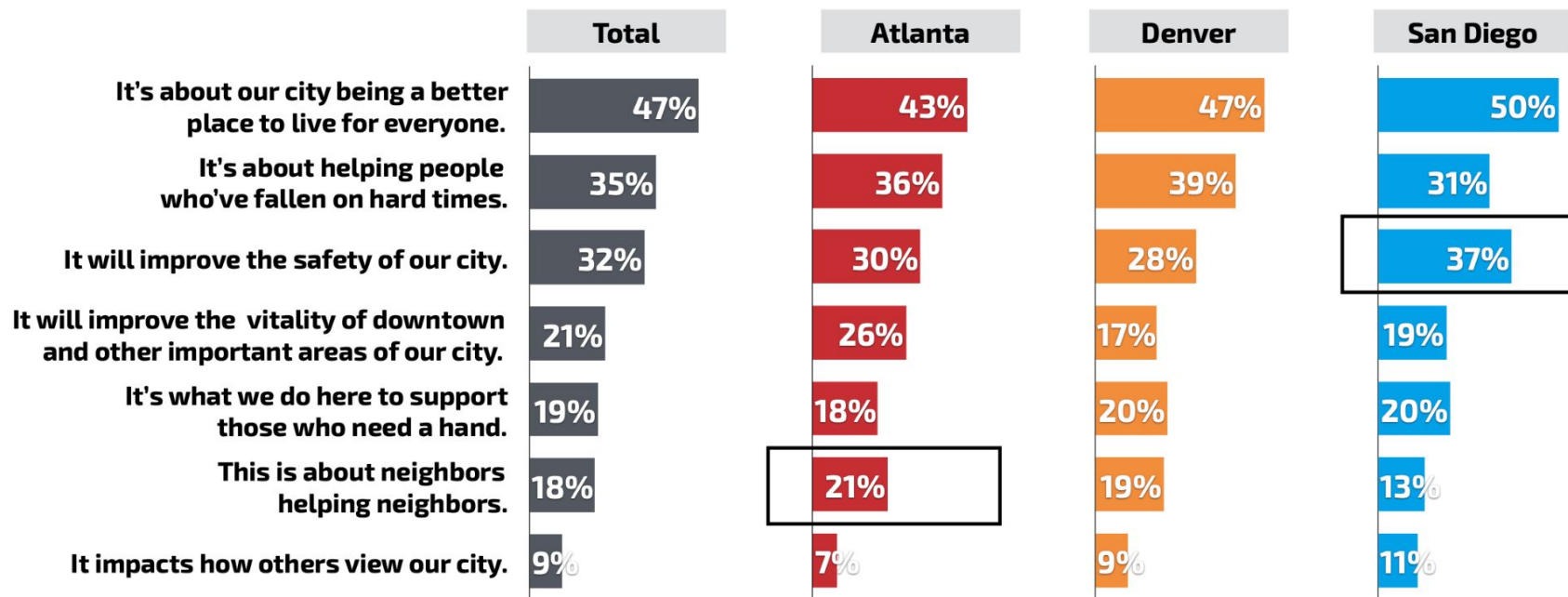
Pessimism hasn't erased hope: many see homelessness as solvable, especially Atlantans, despite being the most likely to say things are on the wrong track

Q. Do you believe homelessness can be solved?



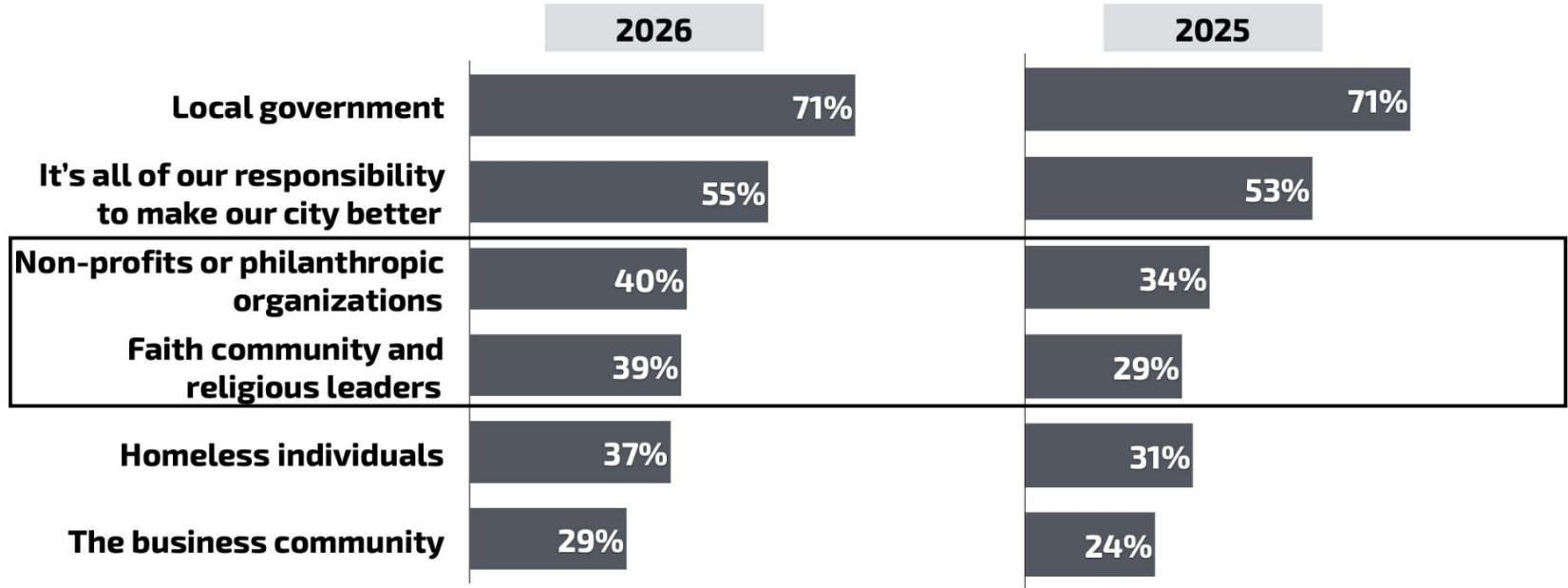
Note: This question was asked at the beginning and end of the 2026 survey, but was only asked once in the beginning of the 2025 survey. The chart here shows the results from the question asked at the beginning of the 2026 survey (QHomelessSolvedPre)

Voters are motivated more by making their city better than by charity, with nearly half saying it's about making the city a better place to live



Note: "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" not shown
Q. What best reflects your view about why [CITY] should work to reduce homelessness? Select up to two.

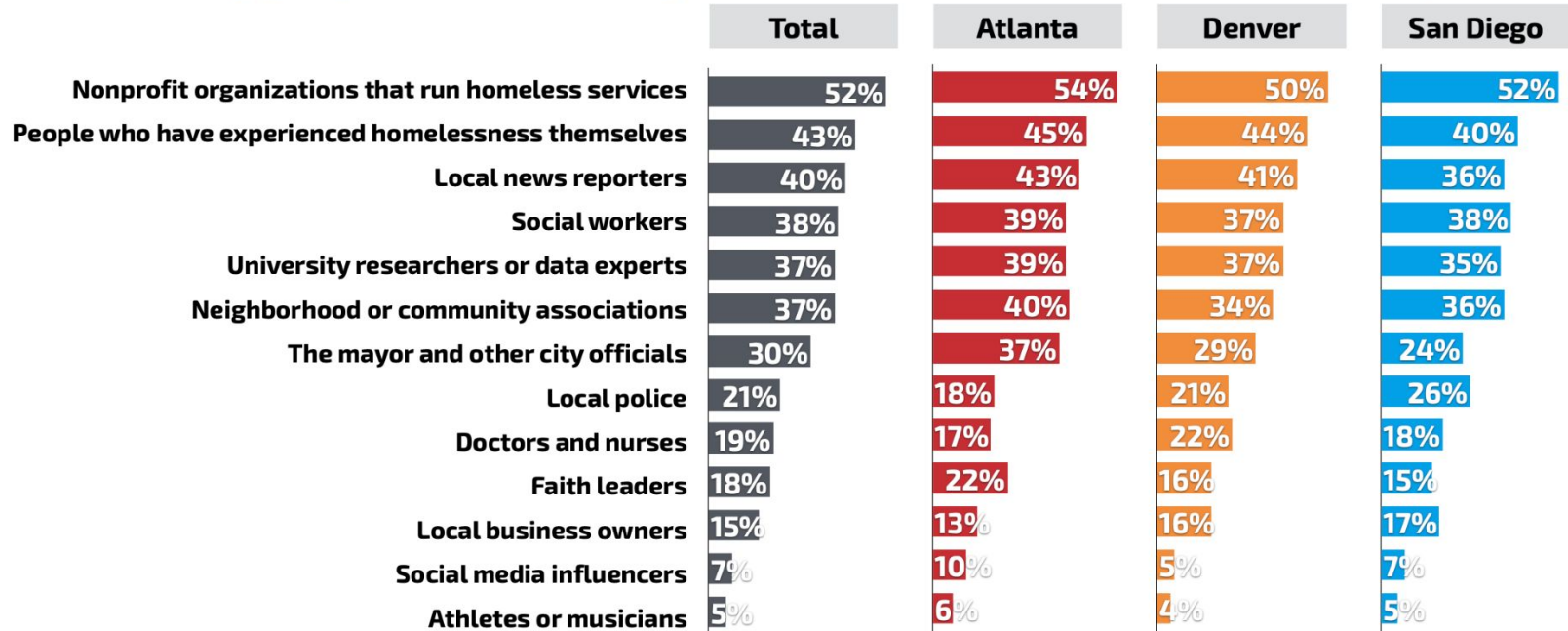
Voters are more likely to view non-profits, philanthropies, and the faith community as responsible for reducing homelessness compared to last year



Note: "Someone else (please specify)," "None of these," and "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" not shown
Q. Who do you think should be responsible for reducing homelessness? Select all that apply.



Nonprofits running homeless services are the most trusted messengers, followed by people who have experienced homelessness and local reporters



Note: "Don't know/Refused/Unsure" and "None of these" not shown

Q. Which of the following would you trust to provide information about homelessness reduction efforts in [CITY]? Select all that apply.



3

AMP'ing THE STORY



AMP the story

A

Announce the
aim. Know
that – over time
– it can change.

M

Mark the
milestones.
Narrate how
they advance
the aim.

P

Own
progress.
Celebrate
when you hit
your aim.

And begin again ...

4

YOUR COMMUNITY: PRACTICING AMP



WORKSHEET

Your Community: Practicing AMP



MILESTONES

Your milestones here.



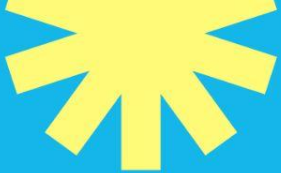
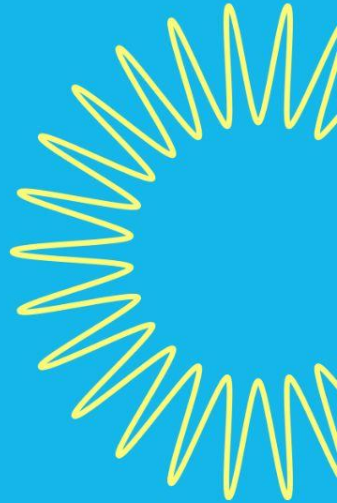


THANK YOU!

UP NEXT: ACTIVITY #2



**COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS**



Talk to Your Audience, Not to Yourself

ACTIVITY #2



Built For Zero.



COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS

PRESENTERS



Dawn Moskowitz



Katie Stasa



OUR 25 MINUTES

Knowing your most important audience helps determine where you communicate and how.



0-5 min

One story, multiple audiences

4-8 min

The five questions

8-12 min

Worked example: one message, five audiences

12-19 min

Community brainstorm

19-24 min

Shareout

25 min

Close



1

ONE STORY, MULTIPLE AUDIENCES

Why the audience comes before the tactic or the channel





LAST MONTH ON THIRD STREET

Last month our outreach teams helped 70 people move from the encampment on Third Street into homes.

Our partners at the city closed the street corner to sleeping.

THREE AUDIENCES

Does that statement do the job for all three of these people?

VP of community health, regional hospital system

WANTS TO KNOW

What happened to the people who came through her emergency department 11 times last year

WHY SHE MATTERS

A partner on complex case work, and one of the few voices who can speak publicly to system-level impact

President, Third Street neighborhood association

WANTS TO KNOW

What's being done to keep the space safe and accessible

WHY THEY MATTER

Closest to the residents whose skepticism decides whether this work survives another budget cycle

Council member whose district includes the site

WANTS TO KNOW

Whether those 70 people were swept or arrested, or connected to safe, lasting housing

WHY THEY MATTER

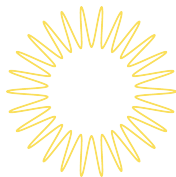
Can dispel skepticism with area residents in a way an outside organization cannot



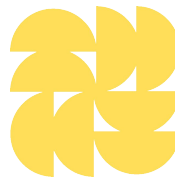
THREE GOALS



**Longevity of
the work**



**Dispelling
skepticism**



**Influencing
public opinion**



THE SAME NEWS, THREE WAYS

Does that statement do the job for all three of these people?

TO THE HOSPITAL VP

"Eleven of the people who moved inside last month were in your emergency department more than ten times each this year."

TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

"The corner is open, and the people who were sleeping there have a place to call home."

TO THE COUNCIL MEMBER

"Nobody was arrested and nobody was bussed anywhere. Here's where all 70 people went."



House People Every Day



STAYS THE SAME: THE MESSAGE

**Partners working
from the same plan
get more people into
homes.**



CHANGES WITH THE AUDIENCE

What we lead with

The proof we use

The messenger

The network



2

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Five questions that come before the tactic or the channel



FIVE QUESTIONS

1

What is the overarching message we want people to understand?

2

Who needs to hear it?

And why does this audience matter to the longevity of the work, dispelling skepticism about the work, and public confidence and support for the work?

3

What does that audience care about?

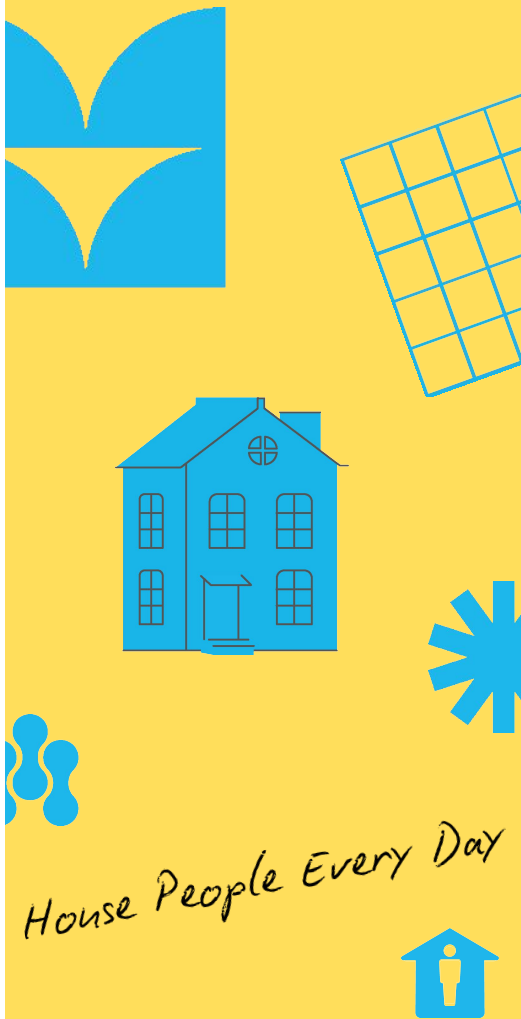
4

What proof will make the message credible to them?

5

Who is the best person to deliver it?

Which network does this person belong to (faith group, PTA), and who in it can carry the message?



3

ONE MESSAGE, FIVE AUDIENCES

A worked example



THE OVERARCHING MESSAGE

**“When partners
work from the
same plan, more
people move into
homes and off the
streets”**



MILESTONE: ATLANTA

450

people housed in six months

toward a goal of 1,750 by the end
of the year



FIVE AUDIENCES

AUDIENCE	EMPHASIZE	MESSENGER
Neighborhood groups & parents	The space stays safe and open, the walk to school, what happens to the next 1,300	A neighbor, a parent, a faith leader
Funder	Measurable outcomes, stewardship, scalability, whether the pace holds, what continued investment makes possible	System leader
Local business owners & workers	Visible progress, safer and more welcoming public spaces, effective coordination	A business owner on the same street
Elected official	Accountability, cross-sector cooperation, constituent concerns, a public number with a date attached	A constituent, or a cross-sector partner
General public	Real people moving home, visible community improvements, what happens next	<i>Too broad to pick a messenger</i>



INSIDE THE GENERAL PUBLIC

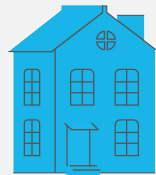
The general public isn't an audience. It's a category with audiences inside of it.



**Parents worried
about the walk
to school**



**Blue-collar
workers who
want to know
whether a place
in this town is
still within
reach on their
wage**



**Retirees on
fixed incomes**



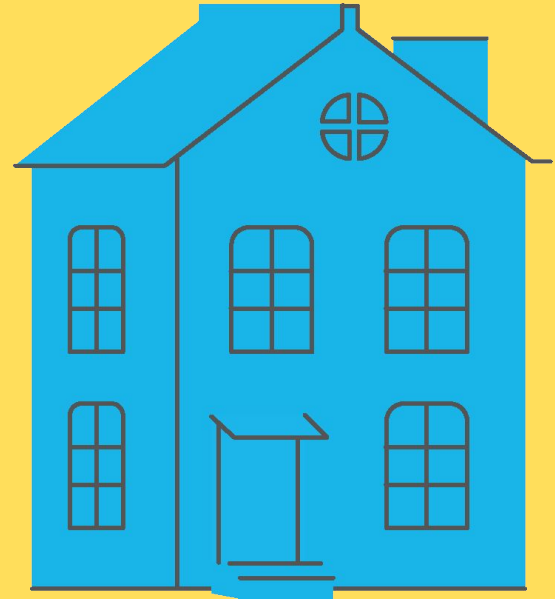
**People who
gave up on the
park**

Same news, and each of them needs a different first sentence.



4

WORKSHOP IT TOGETHER



BRAINSTORM

AUDIENCE

Who matters in your community, and why: longevity, skepticism, or public support?

WHAT THEY CARE ABOUT

What are they seeing on the ground right now?

THE MESSAGE

Start from the overarching message. Build the first sentence.

MESSENGER

Who delivers it, and through which network?



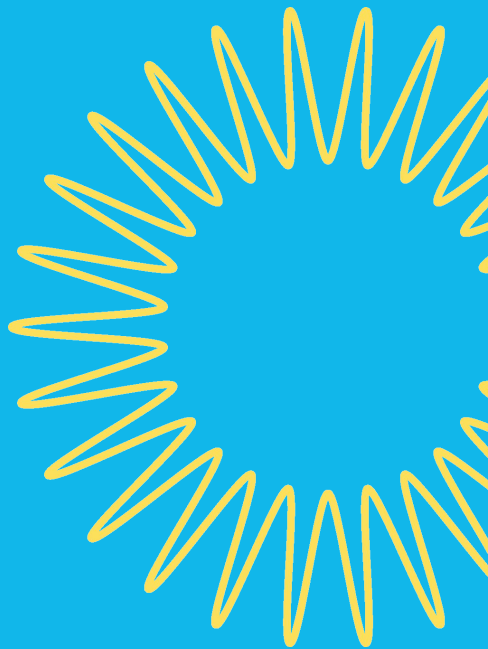
House People Every Day



REFLECTION

Did that feel familiar or unfamiliar?

What questions are you still holding?



TAKE THESE WITH YOU

1 What is the overarching message we want people to understand?

2 Who needs to hear it?

And why does this audience matter to the longevity of the work, dispelling skepticism about the work, and public confidence and support for the work?

3 What does that audience care about?

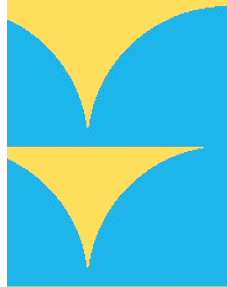
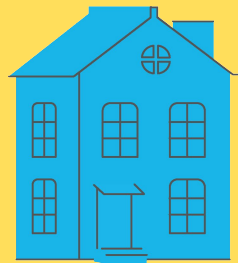
4 What proof will make the message credible to them?

5 Who is the best person to deliver it?

Which network does this person belong to (faith group, PTA), and who in it can carry the message?



House People Every Day



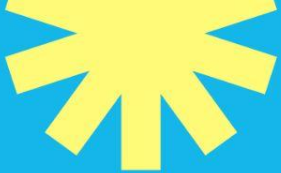
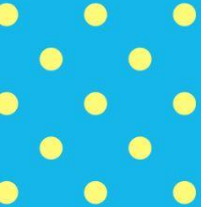
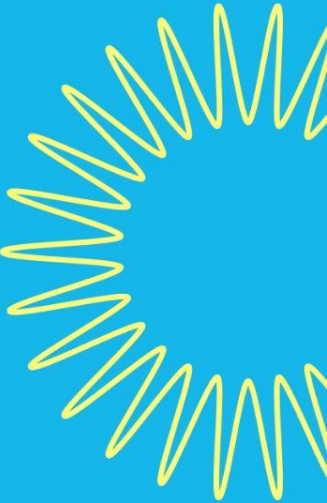


THANK YOU!

UP NEXT: ACTIVITY #3



COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS



The Op-ed Room

Activity III of "Comms 101: Making the Story Before the Story Makes You"



Built For Zero.



**COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS**

PRESENTERS



BRIAN JONES

Communications Director

Campaigns Team



MADDY TROHA

*External Communications
Manager*

Campaigns Team





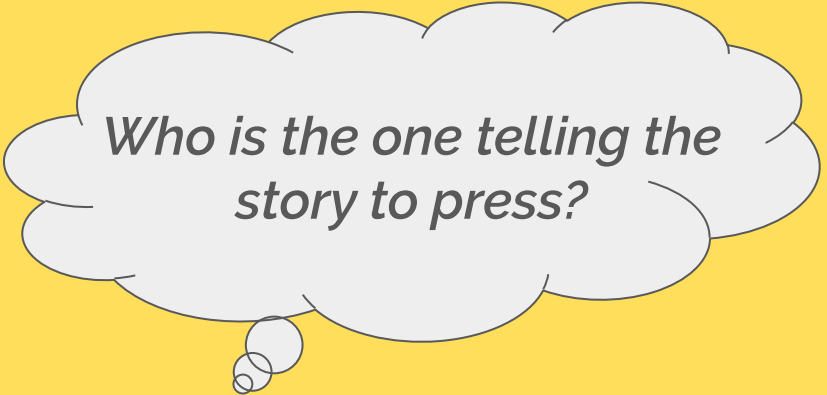
OPINION PIECES (OP-EDS)

- 1 | *Why they matter*
- 2 | *How to write them*
- 3 | *What to do with them*



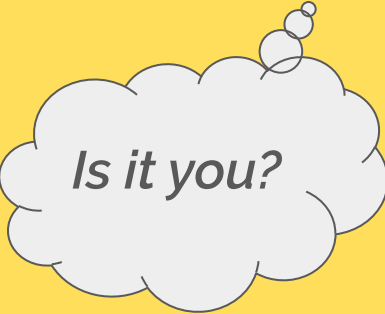


*Who is debating
it?*

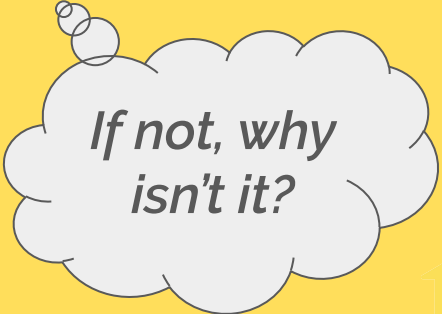


*Who is the one telling the
story to press?*

**Is there a topic being debated in your
community right now surrounding
homelessness?**



Is it you?



*If not, why
isn't it?*



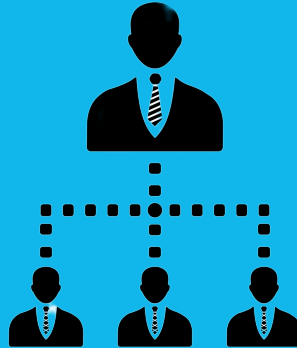
WORKING THROUGH THE WORKSHEET



WHY OP-EDS MATTER



They build
credibility.



They reach
decision-makers.



YOU control the
message.

WHAT MAKES A STRONG OP-ED?



OP-ED | YOU CAN'T SWEEP AWAY A CRISIS

The Philadelphia Inquirer

You can destroy a homeless encampment, but you can't destroy our community

The Progressive
MAGAZINE

Listen to the Voices of the Homeless

amNY

Op-Ed | Build housing so fewer people sleep on the streets like I did

CITYLIMITS

Opinion: Supportive Housing Can Help Break the Cycle Between Homelessness and Incarceration

INDY

Op-Ed: We Can't Address Durham's Affordable Housing Crisis One Rezoning at a Time

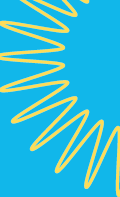
NJ Spotlight News

Op-Ed: Summit's proposed anti-homeless ordinance threatens human dignity

AN AUTHENTIC VOICE

Instead, it is volunteer mutual aid organizers who show up consistently to provide survival materials including food, water, wound care supplies, drives to doctor's appointments, help replacing destroyed identification documents, connections to HIV testing and treatment, and much more.

Our relationships with this community are more than just providing a service. We can tell you who in the camp can teach you about mythology or teach you carpentry. We know who takes their coffee black or with extra sugar. We trade songs we think one another might like, and we have helped each other shovel our cars out of the snow. When any of us has a bad day, we are there to comfort each other.



People Every Day



THE NEWS HOOK

In San Jose, a homeless man named Robert Emmons woke up not to outreach workers or shelter referrals—but to the sound of staple guns. The signs being posted made it clear: He and dozens of others living along the Guadalupe River Trail had just over a week to disappear.

“Haven’t seen them since,” Emmons told *The Mercury News*, referring to nonprofit workers who had promised help days earlier but never returned.

This is not an anomaly but a window into how California’s homelessness crisis is being managed—or mismanaged—with a broom and a bulldozer. The clearing of San Jose’s Autumn Parkway encampment is the latest in a series of sweeps that expose the cruel gap between rhetoric and reality.

House People Every Day



CLEAR, SINGLE ARGUMENT

problems, I am using my lived experience to provide solutions. In Harlem, a community that has seen a proliferation of shelters over housing, I want to help provide a better answer to the housing and homelessness crisis.

That is why I am urging the City Council to vote yes on Hill Top Apartments.

The project at **1727 Amsterdam Avenue**, between 145th and 146th Streets, would bring approximately 200 permanently affordable, rent-stabilized apartments to a site currently owned by NYC Health + Hospitals. Of those, 120 would be supportive housing units with on-site services, case management, and 24/7 staffing. The remaining 80 would go through HPD's Housing Connect lottery, with a preference for Community Board 9 residents. This nine-story building will give



People Every Day



YOUR CREDIBILITY

But this isn't just an urban issue—the rise in homelessness is happening in rural communities, suburban towns, and even on college campuses. Yet policymakers continue to make decisions without consulting those who live or have lived this reality.

Having been an unhoused single parent for nearly twenty years, I know firsthand how disconnected many “solutions” can be from what people actually need. While I made my share of bad decisions, I was also the victim of a broken system that fails to address the root causes of instability and poverty. My story is about the challenges that countless others face—barriers that prevent us from achieving stability and success, no matter how hard we work.

The need to keep a roof over my daughter's head while I was experiencing homelessness across the country was overwhelming. The solutions offered were often disconnected from the reality of what we were facing.

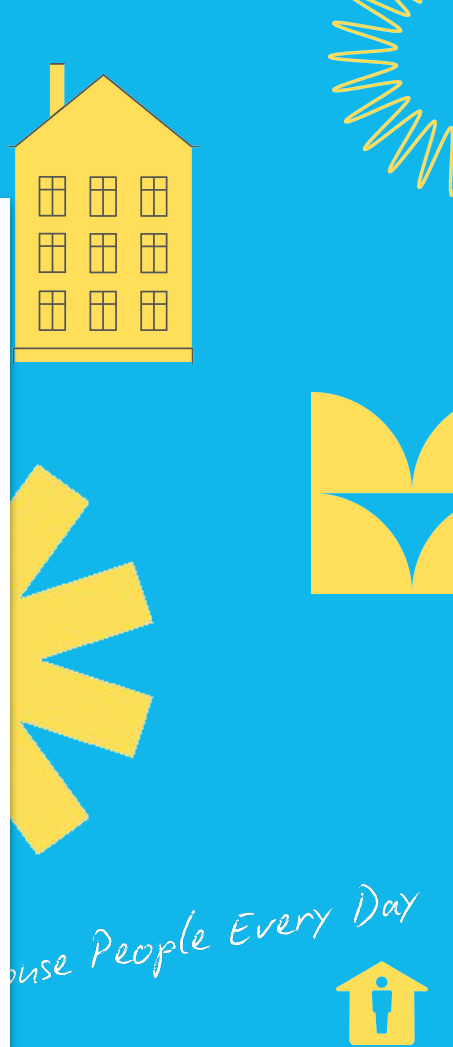
Day



EVIDENCE + STORY

Data indicates that people who receive mental health treatment at Rikers have an average length of stay of 357 days – 135 days longer than those who do not. A recent report by the comptroller put the cost of incarcerating someone for at Rikers at \$1,525 a day. That means that for this group of 2,500 people, the city is spending over half a million dollars on each person per year, just in incarceration costs.

While that is shocking and reason enough to take immediate action, the human toll is much worse. Take Darnell: like so many others, he has struggled with mental illness. To cope, he has habitually self-medicated with substances and, as a result, ended up repeatedly on Rikers. His family could not cope with his issues, and each time he was released, he went into shelter and, inevitably, back to Rikers...over and over.



ADDRESS THE OTHER SIDE

These critiques are individually legitimate. Rezoning cases offer a piecemeal opportunity to address development impacts and housing affordability, and honest people can disagree about the best course of action in any given case. Taken in aggregate, however, they obscure a crucial reality: we cannot address Durham's affordable housing crisis one rezoning case at a time. If we take this crisis seriously (and we must), then we should hold ourselves to a much higher standard. It's time for Durham, starting with its elected leaders, to commit to a comprehensive, evidence-based investment in housing affordability.

House 100



A CALL TO ACTION

We needn't choose between compassion and safety. The most sustainable public safety strategy involves meeting basic human needs.

How can you make a difference?

Act before this legislation passes:

1. Contact Summit Common Council Members immediately. Call 908-277-9400 and urge them to oppose any version of the Camping and Sleeping Ordinance.
2. Attend the upcoming Summit Common Council meeting in early May for the public hearing on the amended ordinance. Bring supporters, signs and your testimony.
3. Mobilize beyond Summit, throughout New Jersey and nationally. These local regulations reflect a broader pattern of harmful policies that require collective resistance.



People Every Day



COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

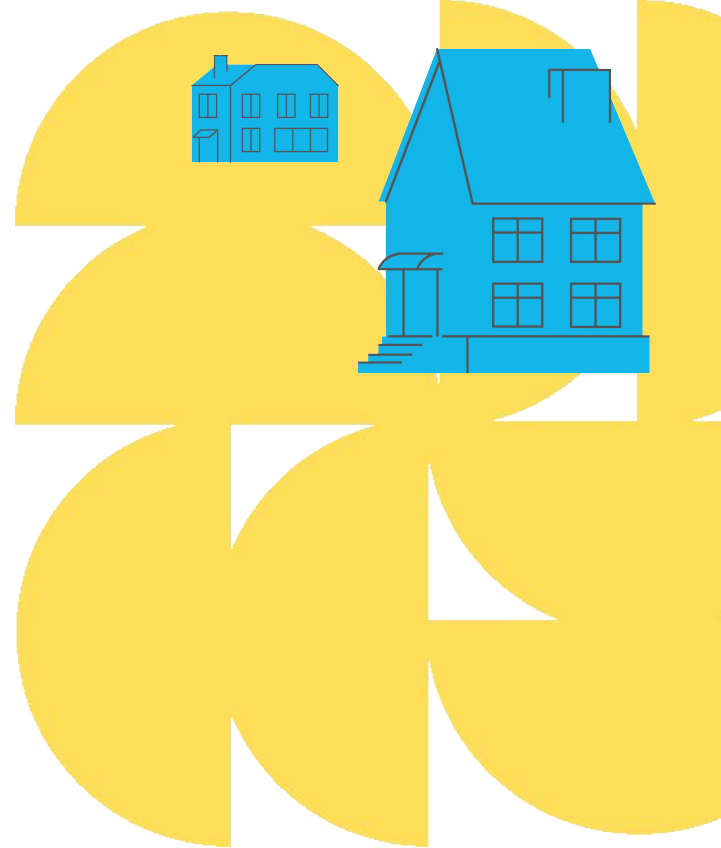


- Writing a press release instead of an argument
- Burying the main point
- Covering too many things at once
- Using insider language



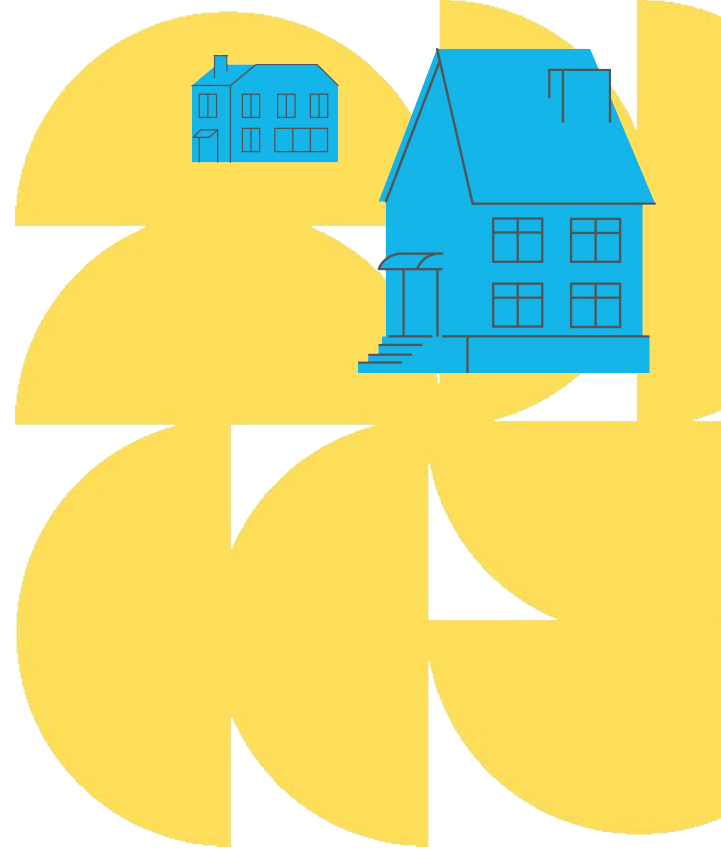
WHO IS THE RIGHT SPOKESPERSON?

- Relevance to the audience
 - Matching the messenger to the readership
- Credibility on the issue
 - Lived or frontline experience
 - Co-authors or unexpected pairings



A FEW FINAL NOTES:

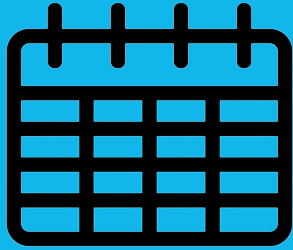
- Ghostwriting
 - The author's views and voice are required
 - EVEN if it's authored by someone else
- The willingness to own it
 - Confidence in your argument is critical



BACK TO THE WORKSHEET



HOW TO PITCH



Plan ahead



Do your research



Pitch to one
place at a time

AMPLIFYING YOUR WORK



- Share on socials
- Uplift in speaker pitches
- Upload to website
- Utilize as foundation for future material

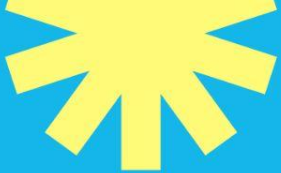
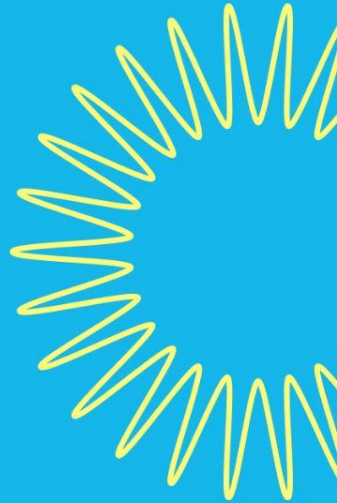


FINAL LOOK AT THE WORKSHEET



Thank you!





Talking Direct to Camera:



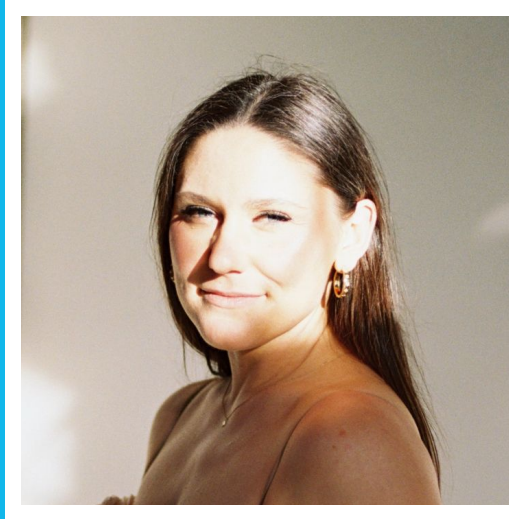
5 Minute Content for the Highly Online

Built For Zero.



COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS

PRESENTERS



Hannah Yoest



Lisa Tran





Storytelling made easy

1

Simplifying Production

Your phone is enough!

2

Why it Works and Where to Start

Authenticity is supreme

3

Case Studies

Learning from the best

Built For Zero.



**Your Content Does
Not Need to Be a Production.
Your phone is enough. Seriously.**



You do NOT need...



- ✗ A camera crew
- ✗ A perfect script
- ✗ Professional lighting
- ✗ Three rounds of approvals
- ✗ A 2-week production timeline



You DO need...



- ✓ A phone
- ✓ Good lighting
- ✓ One good idea
- ✓ Five minutes



**Why Direct to Camera Works:
People want to hear from people.**



Direct to camera gives you:

Speed

Respond while something is still relevant.

Control

Say exactly what you want people to understand.

Trust

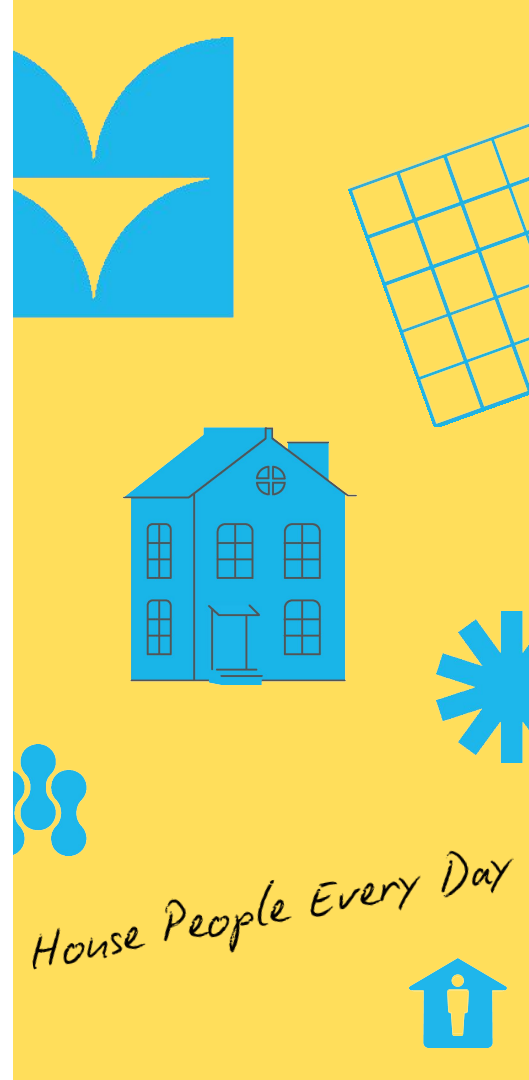
Put a real person behind the work.

Access

Show people what normally happens behind the scenes.

Personality

Sound like a human, not a press release.



House People Every Day

Stop Asking “What Should We Post?”

The content is already
happening.



Instead, ask: What happened today that I would tell a friend about?

“We just helped someone move into housing.”

“I just heard a stat that surprised me.”

“Everyone gets this part of our work wrong.”

“Something really cool happened in [your community] today.”

“Here’s what people don’t see behind the scenes.”

“I’m leaving a meeting and need to tell you about this.”



The 30 Second Formula: HOOK → EXPLAIN → WHY IT MATTERS

HOOK:

3 to 5 seconds
Give me a
reason to stop
scrolling.

“Okay, this is
actually a really
big deal.”

EXPLAIN:

15 to 20 seconds
Tell what
happened in
normal human
language.

“Over the last
two years, our
community has
helped...”

WHY IT MATTERS

5 to 10 seconds
Connect it to the
bigger picture.

“This is our plan
on reducing
homelessness...”

Talk Like a Person, Not an Organization

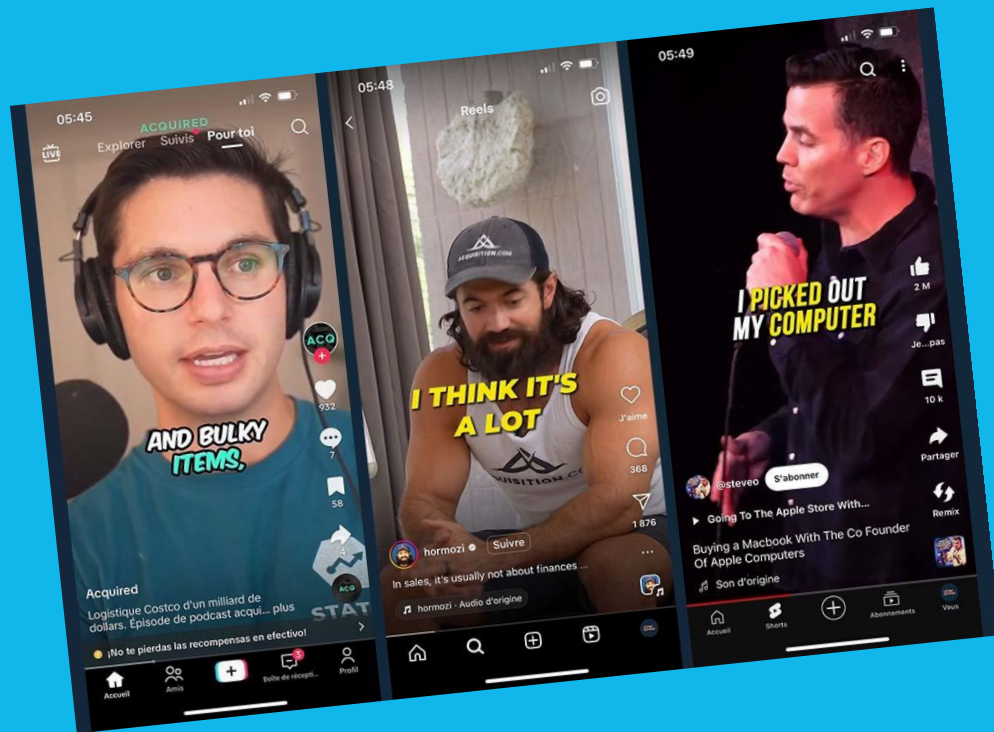
Please do not read the press release into the camera. 🙄

Instead of: *"Our organization is pleased to announce the implementation of a groundbreaking initiative..."*

Say: *"3 weeks ago, we set out to close an encampment at 4th and Main and get everyone living there connected to housing. As of today, we just moved 20 people into homes of their own, with another 20 set to move in in the next 7 days."*

Quick test: Would you actually say this sentence out loud to another human? If not, rewrite it.





Captions Are Not Optional

Assume the audience is watching with the sound OFF. Keep captions:

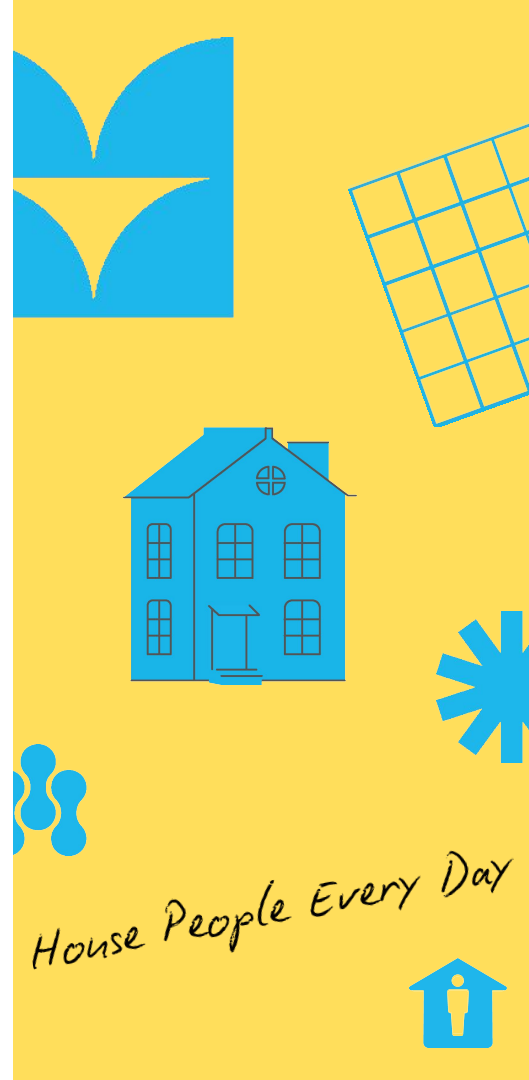
- **BIG** enough to read
- **SHORT** enough to follow
- **HIGH** enough that buttons don't cover them
- **TIMED** to what you're actually saying

Build Your Camera Roll

Whenever something interesting happens, capture 5 to 10 seconds.

Film:

-  Someone getting keys
-  Walking into an event
-  The neighborhood
-  Partners meeting
-  The dashboard
-  Notes on the wall
-  Someone speaking
-  A new housing development
-  Your team working
-  Even the walk from the meeting back to your car



**Question: What captures your
attention on social media?**



From the feed: Practical Examples



Previews & Highlights

Like movie trailers, pointing the audience casually to longer form work



The Teaser

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Dal2erSCe3L/>

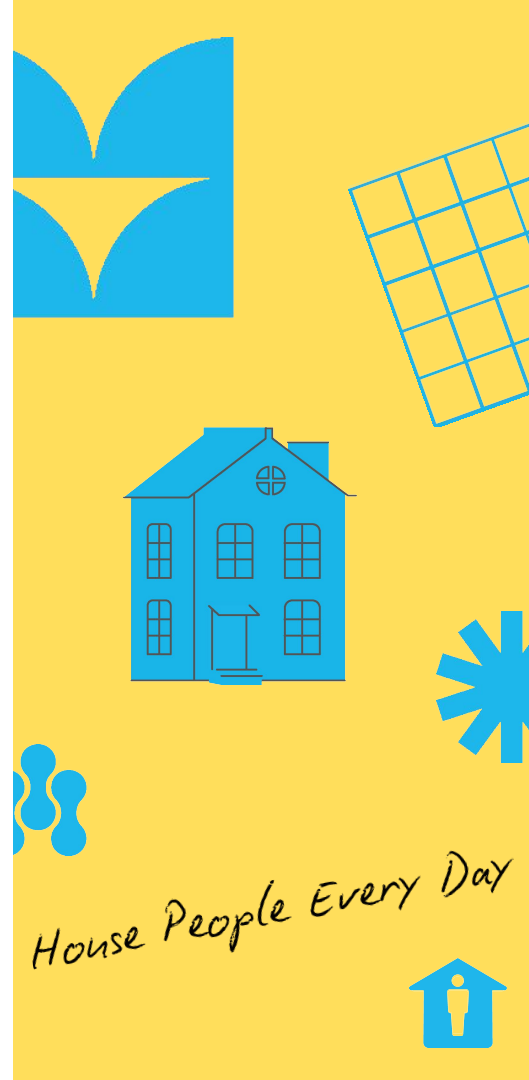
Uses a “hook”

Direct to camera

One b-roll clip

Call to action

Practice: Summarize a recent win, policy change, or update in a sentence then point the audience back to the source



NYT "The Call"

The medium and message



Talking with a friend

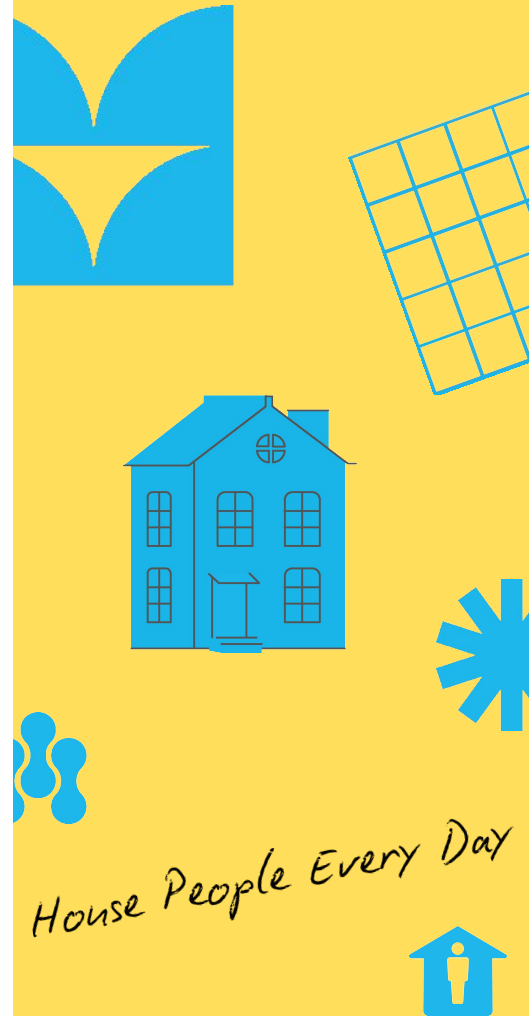
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Dd2WJngjmkS/>

Informal

Familiar, we all facetime

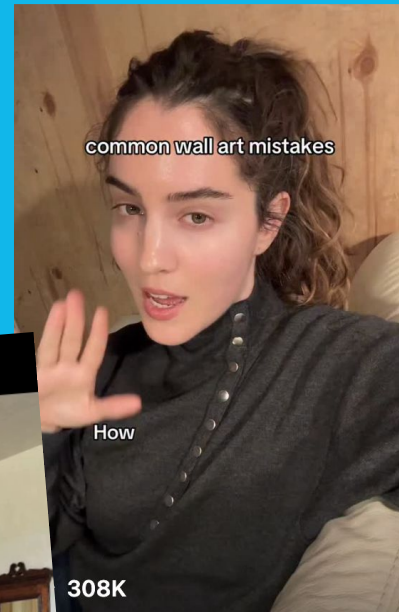
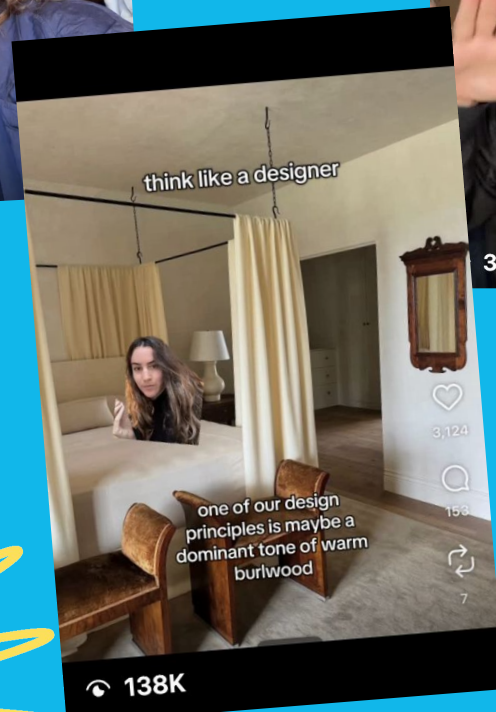
Disrupts the pattern of highly produced news and other information styles

Practice: What topic could you call a friend (or social media manager) and talk casually about in your field of expertise that has a mass appeal? Is there an event or environment you can walk around and show behind you while you discuss it?



Your expert bestie

Simplify it



The basic explainer

https://www.instagram.com/there_you_are/reel/DTQrfVMjzbV/

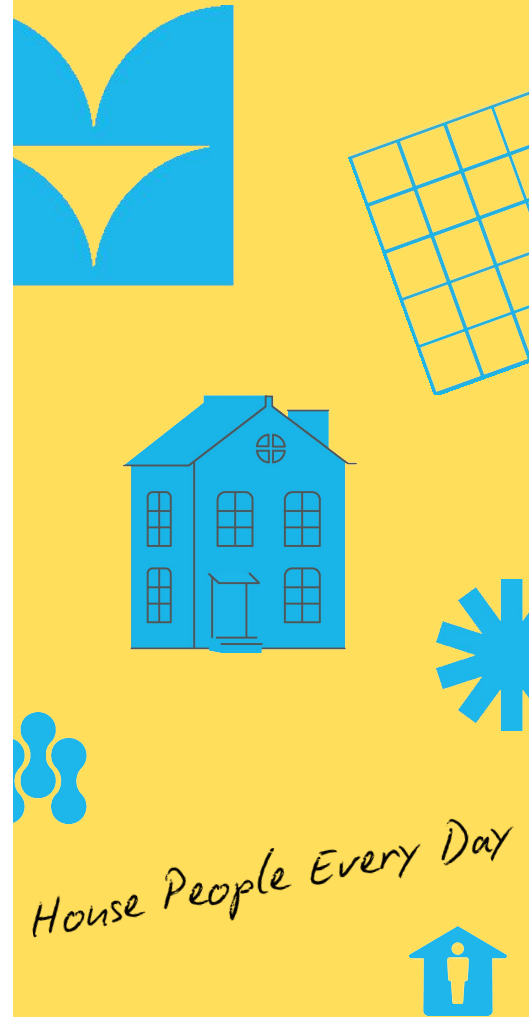
Hook

Curiosity gap / proof of concept

Intro, appeal to authority

Dive into concept

Practice: What are common misconceptions you can address? What have you noticed in your work that you think other people don't but should? State it, introduce yourself, example it as simply as possible.



Things to keep in mind

The literacy crisis: make your information as accessible to a general audience as possible

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch%E2%80%93Kincaid_readability_tests

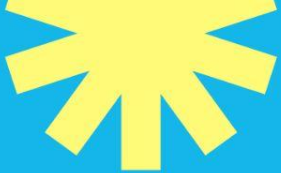
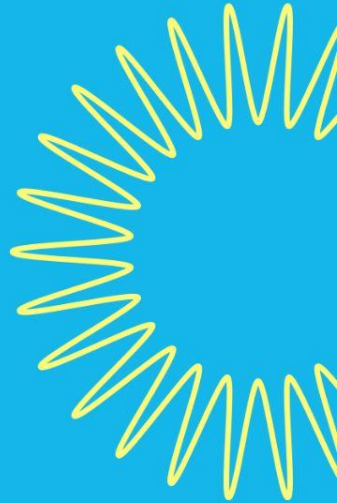
Consistency is key, building parasocial relationships

Stay encouraged and accept the role of luck in the algorithmic lottery, low performing posts are data, not indictments. You never know who might be watching and it makes a difference for, quality counts as much as quantity even if it is harder to immediately externally measure.



House People Every Day





CRISIS COMMS



RESPOND QUICKLY, HONESTLY, AND
WITH YOUR COALITION BEHIND YOU



Brian Jones and Maddy Troha
Community Solutions



Built For Zero.



COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS

PRESENTERS



BRIAN JONES

Communications Director

Campaigns Team



MADDY TROHA

*External Communications
Manager*

Campaigns Team





CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

OUR 25 MINUTES

1

RECOGNIZE IT

Know when criticism becomes a communications crisis.

2

RESPOND TO IT

Communicate with empathy, verified facts, and clear action.

3

WORK THROUGH IT

Practice responding to a developing situation together.

Built For Zero.



IS THIS A CRISIS?

1. ARE YOU THE VILLAIN?

Is your organization being portrayed as responsible for harm, indifferent, dishonest, or incompetent?

When both answers are yes, activate your crisis communications process.



2. IS YOUR CORE PROMISE AT RISK?

Does the narrative undermine the central reason people trust, fund, or partner with you?



PREPARE BEFORE THE PRESSURE

KNOW YOUR ROLES

- Who verifies facts?
- Who approves the response?
- Who speaks publicly?

ALIGN YOUR PARTNERS

- Maintain current contacts.
- Agree on how to coordinate.
- Identify an after-hours lead.

BUILD TRUST EARLY

- Share progress and challenges.
- Listen to community concerns.
- Keep staff and residents informed.

YOUR FIRST HOUR

CARE. CONFIRM. COORDINATE. COMMUNICATE.

1. Address immediate safety and support needs.
2. Separate verified facts from assumptions.
3. Bring the right partners together.
4. Identify who needs to hear from you first.
5. Explain what is happening next.

You can acknowledge concern before you have every answer.

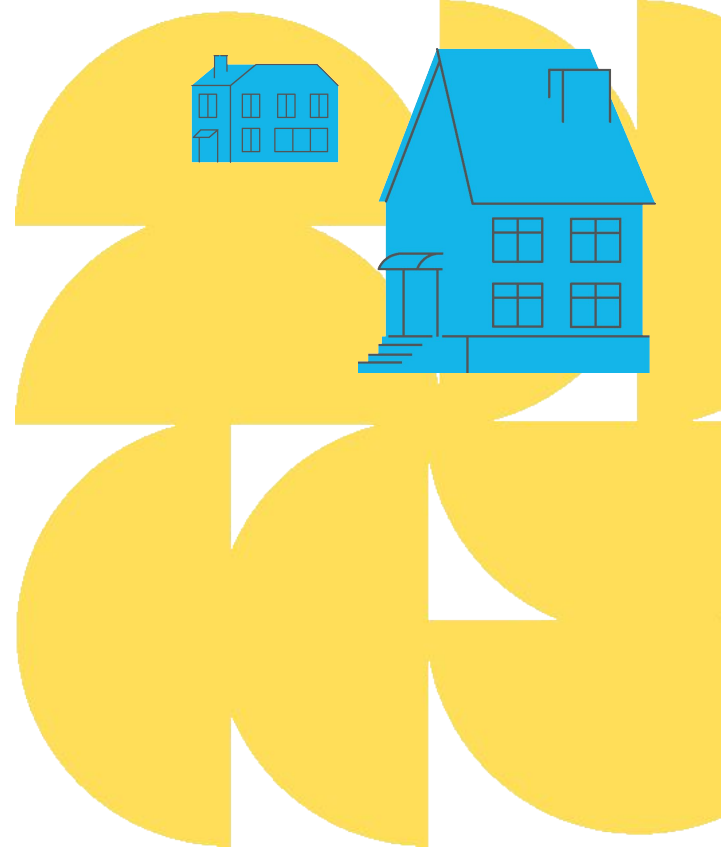


House People Every Day



WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW, START WITH “INCIDENT”

- Acknowledge what happened without guessing why.
- “Incident” avoids prematurely assigning cause, severity, or blame.
- “We are aware of an incident near the property this afternoon and are working to confirm what happened.”
- As facts become clear, use specific language.



THE FIRST RESPONSE

CONCERN → FACTS → ACTION → NEXT UPDATE

“We understand why people are concerned about [issue].

What we can confirm is [verified facts].

[Responsible team] is [confirmed action].

We will provide another update [time and channel].”

Commit only to actions and update times you can deliver.



House People Every Day



ANSWER THE HARD QUESTION

BE DIRECT

- Answer the question first.
- Acknowledge legitimate concerns.
- Explain what you know.

BE PRECISE

- Avoid speculation and blame.
- Protect privacy and dignity.
- Correct consequential errors.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

- Describe concrete action.
- Acknowledge confirmed mistakes.
- Make promises you can keep.

Broader messaging comes after a substantive answer.

A VIDEO. A DEADLINE. YOUR RESPONSE.

HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

A video circulating online shows a confrontation near a supportive housing property.

Posts blame residents and call for the property to close.

A reporter requests comment.

Key facts remain unverified.



WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST?

- Does this meet our two crisis criteria?
- What must you verify?
- Who needs to be contacted?
- Who should speak?



WHICH RESPONSE BUILDS TRUST?

RESPONSE A

“This video is misleading. Our organization does important work, and calls to close the property are irresponsible.”



RESPONSE B

“We understand neighbors’ concerns about the incident. We are working to establish what happened, including whether anyone involved has a connection to the property. We will share verified information as it becomes available.”



NEW INFORMATION. NOW WHAT?

The video does not establish who was involved or whether they have any connection to the property.

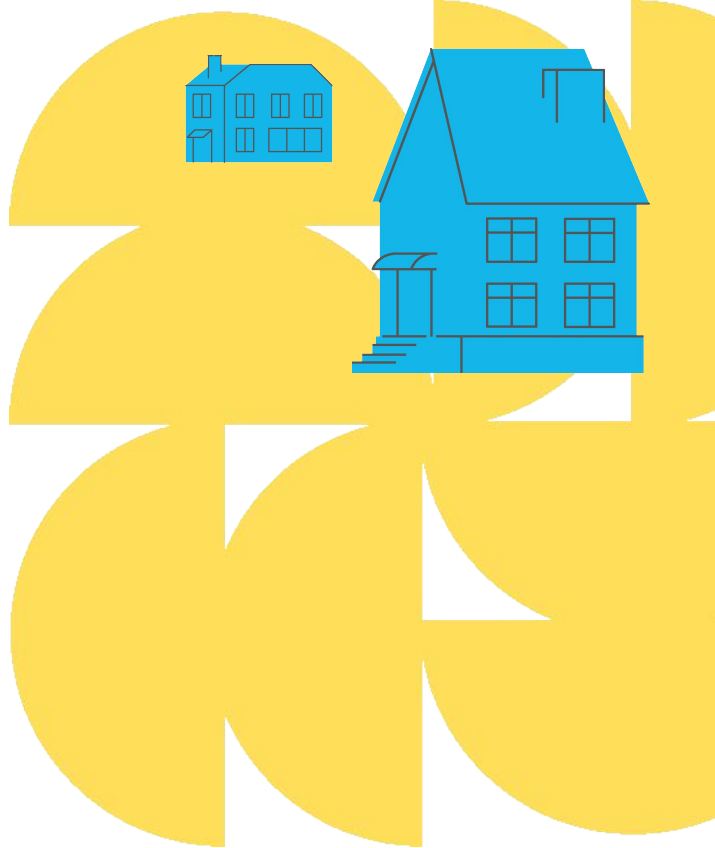
How do you address residents being blamed while the facts remain uncertain?

State what the evidence establishes.

Distinguish allegations from verified facts.

Explain what you are doing to learn more.

Give a realistic time for the next update.



Unverified blame should never become your starting assumption.



RECOGNIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Recognize the threat. Look for the opportunity to improve.

- Address the harm and immediate needs.
- Deliver promised updates.
- Fix gaps the situation exposed.
- Strengthen relationships and coordination.
- Show accountability through follow-through.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU

Establish facts. Organize the response. Reach the right people.
Communicate clearly. Follow through.

What is one change you can make now to strengthen your community's readiness?

