

# *Housing America Business Plan*



## **MISSION**

Housing America is a public affairs campaign designed to educate decision-makers at all levels of government, the media and the American public about the critical role safe, decent and affordable housing plays in all aspects of life. Housing America seeks to underscore the importance of housing in our communities and highlight the economic benefits of affordable housing to the nation's economy. Affordable housing is, we believe, a vital component of the nation's infrastructure.

Together with our Housing America partners, Housing America initiatives seek to raise national awareness concerning the need for and importance of safe, decent and affordable housing for vulnerable families in communities across the nation. The campaign highlights successful attempts to provide affordable housing and in so doing, provide examples of the benefits derived from access to such housing by families, seniors, veterans, the handicapped and others in need of a safe and secure place to call home.

## **GOAL**

To continue to be the best housed nation on earth and to make decent safe and affordable shelter available to all who need it.

## **VALUE**

Galvanizing our combined resources to raise broad based public consciousness of the need to address the unmet housing needs of vulnerable Americans.

## **BELIEF**

Our actions and activities are founded on the belief that affordable housing plays a crucial role in thriving communities throughout our nation. It nurtures hope and provides security, strengthening our nation and its citizens. Lack of affordable housing will lead to an increased homeless population and substandard living conditions for millions of Americans. Housing is the bedrock of long-term national stability; without it, our economy, along with the health and well-being of our citizens, suffer.

## HISTORY

Housing America was established in 2007 by NAHRO, in response to requests from NAHRO members that more be done to raise national awareness of the important work of local housing authorities.

Responding to this charge, NAHRO believed it was important to create a unified front with other industry partners and not solely focus on the inventory of public and assisted housing. NAHRO's Washington, DC-based staff successfully united a group of industry partners that also recognized the importance of creating a coordinated, national effort to keep the need for affordable housing before the American public. Housing America partners included nationally recognized affordable housing organizations representing builders, realtors, mayors and county executives, housing developers and resident advocates.

Housing America partners have participated in numerous programs and initiatives during the life of the campaign to help convey an important narrative: the critical role that safe, decent and affordable housing plays in communities across the country.

In addition to activities and events coordinated individually and collectively by Housing America partners, housing authorities have written proclamations signed by mayors, local councils and governors and organized local events including, but not limited to tree planting ceremonies, Habitat for Humanity builds and ribbon cuttings ushering in new affordable housing in communities. In 2008, several Housing America partners held events at both the Democratic and Republican conventions in an effort to shine light on housing needs for our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Since 2008, NAHRO, under the Housing America banner, has: built and strengthened Housing America month; launched the "What Home Means to Me" annual poster contest; commissioned an annual poll to gauge the public's attitudes and feelings toward assisted and affordable housing; and elevated the messaging of families and individuals who once resided in or are currently residing in affordable rental housing.

Housing America month is a month-long celebration of affordable housing across the nation. Every October, events are held by national NAHRO, local housing authorities and industry partners in an effort to keep Americas affordable housing needs as a part of public discourse.

The "What Home Means to Me" poster contest is an annual competition for children living in federally-subsidized housing in grades K-12. The contest asks children to artistically describe what home means to them. One grand prize and 12 national winners are selected. The winning entries each represent one month in the following year's "What Home Means to Me" calendar. Additionally, the grand prize and national winners all receive \$500 and \$100 U.S. Savings Bonds respectively.

Each year, NAHRO commissions a public opinion poll with the aim of gauging the American public's understanding of affordable housing issues. Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, Zogby Analytics uses weighting techniques to represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Poll results are shared with NAHRO members, members of Congress, media outlets and the public.

In 2014, NAHRO aired the first in a series of *Voices of Housing* videos empowering residents and consumers to tell stories of how safe and affordable housing has contributed to the health and wellbeing of their families.

For the past seven years, Housing America has been proud develop and encourage the initiatives noted above. Our plan going forward is to continue to showcase the programs that provide affordable housing to help tell the stories of the people we serve and to partner with organizations that help provide housing to millions of America's most vulnerable each year.

### **NAHRO's Governance Structure for Housing America**

NAHRO's Housing America team manages the daily operations of this campaign and like our dedicated partners, are passionate advocates for safe, decent and affordable housing. They recognize that affordable housing plays a crucial role in thriving communities throughout our nation. Housing America leaders within NAHRO have devoted their careers to ensuring that all Americans enjoy the safety, comfort and dignity of a home.

The team is comprised of the NAHRO Chief Executive Officer, NAHRO President and the Chair of Housing America (appointed by the President). We are supported by our staff liaisons in Washington; Housing America regional organizers in each of eight regions and Housing America volunteers representing NAHRO state chapter organizations.

### **Our Housing America Partners**

Housing America is proud of the many organizations that have joined in its efforts. These organizations recognize that without safe, decent and affordable housing, pressing domestic issues are exacerbated – housing veterans, caring for seniors, ensuring children receive the education they need and deserve, helping young adults and families thrive, and creating jobs throughout the country.

Housing America programs and initiatives contribute to the services and assistance residents and consumers require to enjoy stability. Housing America's partner organizations have in ways both large and small. By lending their names and support to the campaign, our partners have made major contributions toward ensuring that campaign endeavors continue to support and lend credence to our common belief in a safe and decent home for all.

- \* Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
- \* Public Housing Authorities Directors Association
- \* Manufactured Housing Institute
- \* National Housing Conference
- \* National Housing Trust
- \* National Leased Housing Association
- \* National Affordable Housing Management Association
- \* Mortgage Bankers Association
- \* Enterprise Foundation
- \* Habitat for Humanity
- \* National League of Cities
- \* National Low Income Housing Coalition
- \* National Association of Home Builders
- \* National Association of Realtors
- \* The United States Conference of Mayors
- \* National Association of Counties
- \* The Housing Assistance Council
- \* Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- \* American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
- \* National Council of State Housing Agencies

**Goal 2:** Position NAHRO as the preeminent organization in the development and implementation of responsible housing and community development policy by vigorously advocating for legislation, policies, and programs that benefit the membership and those we serve.

**Strategy Statement 4:** Through NAHRO’s flagship public affairs campaign, Housing America, NAHRO seeks to provide real-time data on affordable housing programs to aid residents and consumers and commissioners with the information they need to craft their own messaging surrounding the importance of affordable housing. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 1: Hold the annual “What Home Means to Me” poster contest for children ages K-12. The annual poster contest is a chapter, regional and national collaborative effort. Winning regional entries will be sent to national NAHRO for national judging.

**Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 2: Collect resident success stories through a multi-media approach

Tactic/Task 3: Compile NAHRO members’ past and present residents/consumers stories via video and the Voices of Housing. Build on the success of the ReThink campaign to share stories through online video. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 4: Document and publish written stories of families or individuals who have lived or are currently living in assisted housing. **Timeline: 2-5 years**

Tactic/Task 5: Create a subcommittee within NAHRO’s Legislative Network dedicated to providing online training to interested commissioners about the basics of advocacy and Congress. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 6: Offer basic online webinar for commissioners specifically. Include panelists from the organization who are commissioners and have had success in their personal advocacy efforts in the past.

Tactic/Task 7: Translate Housing America collateral materials to Spanish for those individuals who do not use English as their first language. **Timeline: 2-5 years**

**Goal 3:** Build and reinforce partnerships and collaborations with traditional and non-traditional organizations to expand NAHRO's impact on the direction of the industry as well as members overall effectiveness.

**Strategy statement 2:** Through NAHRO's flagship public affairs campaign, Housing America, NAHRO seeks to educate residents and consumers, commissioners and local and national stakeholders about the importance of affordable housing opportunities for America's most vulnerable populations. **Timeline: 2-5 years.**

Tactic/Task 1: NAHRO will commission annual poll to gauge public perception and awareness of challenges facing affordable housing industry. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 2: NAHRO staff will maintain and continuously develop the Housing America campaign's primary tool—the Housing America website. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 3: Develop and update fact sheets on affordable housing programs as necessary.

Tactic/Task 4: Update Awards of Excellence honorees' stories annually.

**Strategy Statement 3:** Through NAHRO's flagship public affairs campaign, Housing America, NAHRO seeks to create opportunities for Public Housing Authority (PHA) and Community Development Corporation (CDC) executive directors, Housing America partners, and coalition partners to advocate for the expansion and preservation of affordable housing options to local and national stakeholders and media outlets. **Timeline: 2-5 years**

Tactic/Task 1: Educate PHAs and CDCs on Housing America objectives and associated resources. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 2: Provide educational speeches at local conferences about the campaign

Tactic/Task 3: Create Housing America toolkit for organizers and public consumption.

Tactic/Task 4: Create Housing America promotional teaser to be played at NAHRO Professional Development live and on-site trainings.

Tactic/Task 5: Insert Housing America promotion into Personify auto-generated emails for conference or training registration.

Tactic/Task 6: Strategically expand number of PHA and CDC planned events in honor of Housing America month in communities. **Timeline: 2-5 years**

Tactic/Task 7: Introduce existing Housing America partners to the reimagined Housing America campaign. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 8: Reestablish relationships with existing Housing America partners

Tactic/Task 9: Plan joint event with one or more Housing America partners.

Tactic/Task 10: Develop regional template Housing America event initiatives/partnerships. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 11: Maintain bank on the Housing America website of initiatives regions have taken to promote affordable housing programs under the branding of Housing America (i.e. Minor League Baseball).

Tactic/Task 12: Establish local relationship with Housing America partners through the Housing America organizers. **Timeline: 2-5 years**

Tactic/Task 13: Establish social media presence on Twitter specific to the Housing America campaign that is separate from national NAHRO. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

**Goal 7:** Encourage the active participation of NAHRO regions and chapters to ensure that NAHRO is a growing, member friendly organization that is open, responsive and committed to improving its highest-quality services to the membership.

**Strategy Statement 1:** Reorganize governance for NAHRO's Housing America campaign to support the redirection of campaign goals and strategies. **Timeline: 0-2 years**

Tactic/Task 1: Expand the size of the Housing America campaign leadership **by May 2014.**

Tactic/Task 2: Officially change name of the current Housing America Leadership (i.e. CEO, President and Chair) to Housing America Executive Advisory Board.

Tactic/Task 3: Create Housing America regional organizer position.

Tactic/Task 4: National president to name one Housing America organizer for each of the eight NAHRO regions. Will consult with regional president before making final selection.

Tactic/Task 5: Define the Housing America organizer position **by May 2014.**

Tactic/Task 6: Provide written description of the campaign organizer position which will include expectations, responsibilities, and ambassador meeting timeline.

Further detail: Housing America organizer will coordinate the annual poster contest with the assistance of regional senior vice president. The organizer will transmit information to regional service officer for inclusion in monthly or quarterly regional newsletter. Organizers are expected to participate in monthly conference calls and should direct any Housing America questions to Housing America Executive Advisory Board. They will also be the local contact person with local Housing America partners. Organizers will work with regional and national commissioner committee representatives to educate commissioners on advocacy best practices for affordable housing through Housing America.

Tactic/Task 7: Add page on the Housing America website dedicated (similar to committee page on NAHRO website) to resources for the Housing America organizers.