



ALBERTA
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Enabling Housing Choice Project

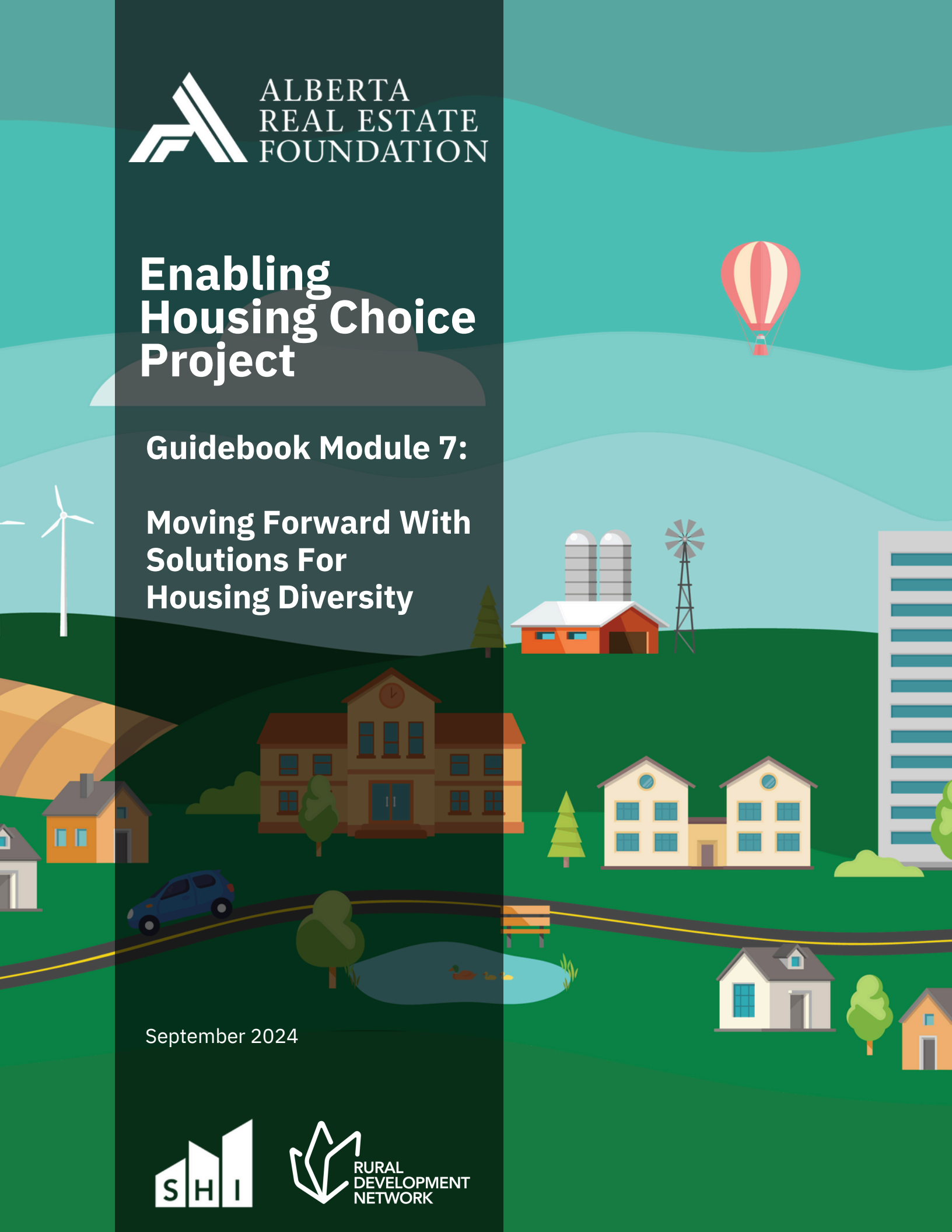
Guidebook Module 7:

Moving Forward With
Solutions For
Housing Diversity

September 2024



RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Enabling Housing Choice (EHC) team wants to acknowledge our connection with the ancestral peoples who have been on this land for millennia.

RDN's physical office is located on lands traditionally known as amiskwachiwaskahikan (A Miss Gwa Che Wuss Sky Gun) - aka Beaver Hills House, or Edmonton, the historical land of Treaty 6 Territory, which is also within the Metis Nation District 9.

We acknowledge and confirm our commitment and responsibility to foster better relationships with Indigenous peoples, and to improve our own understanding of the unique and diverse cultures of local First Nations, Inuit and Metis people. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we gather on.

RDN is committed to connecting our programming to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as benchmarks for our reconciliation journey.

It is our sincere hope that the information provided in this guide will help communities address their own unique and diverse housing needs, and provide greater housing security and inclusion for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, both in the community and the surrounding area.





PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, the Enabling Housing Choice (EHC) team wants to thank the Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF) for their funding and support in this research project.

We also want to acknowledge the 6 Alberta communities that participated in this research: (alphabetically) City of Airdrie, Town of Bow Island, Town of Claresholm, Town of Mayerthorpe, Town of Pincher Creek and Town of Trochu. These communities embraced the EHC team's mandate and research process, enabling them to collect practical and compelling information about current housing issues, barriers and opportunities in their community.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the housing stakeholders who participated in the various community engagement exercises that were conducted for this project. We appreciate the time and effort you dedicated to sharing your insights, identifying challenges, highlighting opportunities, and suggesting ways to improve housing diversity in your community. Your contributions have played a vital role in shaping the understanding of the current housing landscape and guiding the research towards meaningful solutions. Your generosity and willingness to collaborate have been instrumental in our goal to facilitate a more inclusive and diverse housing environment, both in your community and across Alberta.

WHAT THIS MODULE EXPLORES

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MODULE 7: MOVING FORWARD WITH SOLUTIONS FOR ENABLING HOUSING DIVERSITY & CHOICE

MODULE 7 OF 8

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI) at the Rural Development Network, the **Enabling Housing Choice Project** (EHC) was set up through funding from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation. The EHC project's mandate was to conduct research focusing on housing issues, challenges and opportunities in a select group of rural Alberta communities, and then provide suggestions/recommendations to facilitate diverse housing development in those communities.

PURPOSE

This module serves as an initial starting point for municipalities seeking to foster housing choice and diversity within their communities through establishing both short and long-term goals to create a roadmap for diverse housing development that accommodates the community's housing needs. Central to this module is the inclusion of an evaluation framework, providing a structured approach to assess the efficacy of their proposed housing solutions.



1.0 HOUSING DIVERSITY SOLUTIONS: AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Creating an evaluation framework for housing diversity actions involves establishing criteria to assess the effectiveness of initiatives and policies aimed at promoting diverse housing options within communities.

This framework needs to be comprehensive, adaptable, and responsive to the unique needs and characteristics of each municipality. This module outlines a structured evaluation framework that can be modified and used to assess your community's diverse housing supply and housing-related actions.

NOTE: *This section does not delineate among any specific housing policies, projects, or initiatives that the municipality should be taking. These will be derived from research and analyses processes outlined in previous Modules of the Guide. Instead the more generic term "housing action" is being used as an objective that the municipality is undertaking to facilitate diverse housing development in their community.*



1.1 ESTABLISH HOUSING ACTION CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES

Establishing important context for diverse housing actions involves understanding the legislative, demographic, and market environment in which diverse housing actions are developed and implemented.

Doing so must include an analysis of existing laws and regulations, demographic trends, housing market conditions, and ongoing feedback from local residents and stakeholders. This context provides the foundation for developing effective housing actions that address the diverse housing needs, challenges and opportunities of the community.

In addition, the municipality will need to **establish diverse housing objectives** so that the specific targets of the housing action(s) are clearly delineated. The specified targets will guide the development and implementation of the action(s) to ensure they address the important local housing issues that have been derived through the community engagement sessions. In short, clearly outlining these targets will help the municipality prepare focused and effective housing action(s) that will create housing that better meets the needs of the community.

ESTABLISHING HOUSING ACTION CONTEXT:

Legislative Framework: Examine the community's existing legislative framework to ensure that the **housing action(s)** align with or can be further supported by existing policies, regulations and objectives.

Consider the following:

- Perform an environmental scan of local, provincial and federal housing policies.
- Identify current regulations affecting housing development (i.e. zoning bylaws, building and safety codes, environmental regulations).
- Explore government initiatives and programs that support housing diversity (i.e. grant and funding programs, incentive programs etc.).

Demographics & Housing Trends: Examine your community's existing demographic and housing market trends to obtain contextual insights on how the **housing action(s)** will benefit or enhance the community's housing landscape.

Consider the following:

- **Conduct a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment to:**
 - Identify the housing needs of various local demographic groups (i.e. low-income groups, seniors and retirees, special needs residents).
 - Identify current trends in the housing market (i.e. supply and demand, price trends).
 - Perform an analysis of rental and homeownership rates.
 - Project potential future housing needs, based on demographic trends, population growth projections, household formation rates, and economic forecasts.
 - Determine the demographic make-up of the community (i.e. age, income levels, household size, ethnicity).
 - **NOTE:** For further information on conducting a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, please refer to *Guidebook Module 3: Identifying Diverse Housing Needs*.
- **Conduct Community Housing Stakeholder Engagement to:**
 - Identify common concerns, priorities and opportunities regarding diverse housing development in the community
 - Obtain insights, ideas and expertise from a variety of housing stakeholders to collaboratively address housing needs in the community.

ESTABLISHING HOUSING ACTION OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES CRITERIA:

In developing **housing action(s)**, consider the following criteria for setting housing targets, while also taking into account the need for housing diversity:

- **Affordability:** Increase the availability of low end of market and subsidized housing units for low and middle-income households. Establish achievable targets for these housing units that can be reached over a certain time period. Define what '*affordable housing*' means for the community.
- **Accessibility:** Create housing options that meet national accessibility criteria, as well as the needs of local individuals with specific accessibility issues.
- **Community Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve a wide range of residents and local housing industry stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process for local housing development.
- **Development Incentives:** Consider creating policies that incentivize the development of diverse and affordable housing options. Note: Refer to *Module 5: Enabling Diverse Housing Through Policy Incentives*.
- **Economic Sustainability:** Ensure that housing policies/initiatives contribute to the long-term economic stability of the community (i.e. attract investment, create jobs, retain existing population).
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Encourage green building practices that utilize environmental guidelines and meet national targets for energy-efficient housing construction.
- **Diverse Housing Forms:** Promote a range of housing types (i.e. attached housing, townhouses, apartments, tiny homes, modular housing, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs)).
- **Inclusivity:** Encourage the development of mixed-income housing to promote socio-economic diversity and encourage social integration.
- **Location:** Ensure that diverse, affordable and accessible housing options are distributed across the community; integrate housing with essential services and amenities (e.g. schools, healthcare).

1.2 EVALUATING HOUSING SUPPLY, AVAILABILITY & AFFORDABILITY

The evaluation of local housing supply involves assessing the availability, diversity, quality and affordability of housing units in a community to determine whether the housing needs of residents are being met. This includes examining various aspects of housing, such as the types and quantity of housing units, their geographic distribution, and their affordability, condition and occupancy rate.

These factors will need to be evaluated after implementing the **housing action(s)** so that municipalities can identify gaps in current housing supply, plan for future housing needs, and enhance policies to promote a balanced and diverse housing stock.

NOTE: *The intent of the evaluation framework below is to provide various housing supply criteria and metrics that may be assessed following the implementation of a diverse housing policy or initiative. For information about examining current housing supply and needs, refer to **Module 4: Identifying Diverse Housing Needs.***

HOUSING CRITERIA:

After developing the housing action(s) to be undertaken, establish the current or baseline rates of the housing metrics that are outlined below and then measure them again after the action has been in place for a predetermined amount of time.

- **Diversity of Housing Types:** Determine the types and numbers of diverse housing units that were built (i.e. single-family detached homes vs multi-family units, apartments, townhouses etc.).
- **Quantity:** Determine the total number of housing units that were built and will be built in the community including:
 - Number of new housing units built annually;
 - Number of units under construction and planned for future development.

- **Geographic Distribution & Density:** Determine the geographic distribution and density of housing units that were built, including:
 - Distribution of diverse housing units across different neighborhoods;
 - Housing density metrics (i.e. units per acre, population density);
 - Impact on community resources and infrastructure.
- **Housing Affordability:** Identify the impact that the housing action had on new housing development that was affordable, including:
 - The percentage of new housing units available at the various income levels: subsidized, below market, market-rate;
 - The number of new subsidized and below market housing units available for rent or ownership.
- **Housing Quality & Conditions:** Identify the impact that the housing action had on improving the quality and condition of the local housing stock, including:
 - Age and condition of existing housing stock;
 - Number and proportion of units still in need of repairs or renovations;
 - Compliance with building codes and safety standards;
 - Measures of housing quality (i.e. space, amenities, energy efficiency).
- **Occupancy & Vacancy Rates:** Monitor the overall changes in these rates after implementing the diverse housing action, including:
 - Percentage of occupied housing units;
 - Stability and turnover rates of residents;
 - Percentage of vacant housing units.

1.3 EVALUATING ECONOMIC IMPACTS

By evaluating economic impacts, municipalities will be able to better understand the broader economic benefits and challenges associated with diverse housing actions and development, ensuring that they contribute to sustainable economic growth in the community. It is recommended that these impacts are evaluated collaboratively with your municipality's Economic Development Office.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS CRITERIA:

After developing the housing action(s) to be undertaken, establish the current or baseline rates of the economic criteria that are outlined below and then measure them again after the action has been in place for a predetermined amount of time.

- **Job Creation:** Measure the impact of housing development on job creation, such as:
 - Number of jobs created during construction and ongoing operations;
 - Types of jobs created (e.g. construction, maintenance, management).
- **Business Attraction:** Determine the impact that housing development has had on business development in the community, such as:
 - Changes in local businesses (e.g. increased customer base, new businesses opening);
 - Changes in business revenue and economic activity in the area.
- **Property Values:** Measure changes that new housing development has had on local property values, including:
 - Impact on rental and purchase prices of nearby properties;
 - Changes in property values in areas with new housing development;
 - Increases in property tax revenue due to rising property values.

- **Investment & Funding:** Determine the impact of housing development on attracting new investment and funding streams in the community, including:
 - Amount of public funding allocated to housing projects/development;
 - Level of private investment and financing in housing development;
 - Return on Investment (ROI) for investors and stakeholders in housing projects.
- **Community Infrastructure and Services:** Evaluate the impact of housing development on community infrastructure and services, including:
 - Increased demand for public services (i.e. schools, healthcare, and transportation);
 - Increased investment requirements to develop / update infrastructure and services;
 - Assess the long-term benefits of infrastructure enhancements for the community.



1.4 EVALUATING SOCIAL IMPACTS

By evaluating various aspects of social impact, municipalities can better understand how diverse housing policies and initiatives affect the overall well-being and integration of residents within the community.

SOCIAL IMPACTS CRITERIA:

After developing the housing action(s) to be undertaken, establish the current or baseline rates of the community's current well-being and quality of life that are outlined below and then measure them again after the action has been in place for a predetermined amount of time.

Community Well-Being & Quality of Life: Consider the following metrics:

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Examine the demographic diversity of residents in new housing development (i.e. cultural groups, income levels, age groups);
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Determine the proximity of new housing developments to health care centres and hospitals;
- **Education Access:** Determine the proximity to and the overall quality of educational institutions and schools;
- **Neighbourhood Safety:** Monitor crime rates in areas that have implemented diverse housing development and evaluate residents' perceptions of safety in their neighbourhoods;
- **Community Services/Amenities:** Evaluate access to essential services such as childcare, social services, and recreational facilities;
- **Resident Retention:** Evaluate the impact that the diverse development initiative had on retaining residents and preventing outmigration from the community;
- **Newcomer Attraction:** Evaluate the impact that the diverse development initiative had on attracting new residents to the community.

MOVING FORWARD

Is your municipality or organization eager to initiate a diverse housing policy, initiative or action that will help meet your community's diverse housing needs? At the Rural Development Network, our Sustainable Housing Initiative specializes in empowering communities to strengthen their capacity to respond effectively to housing challenges. Our evaluation framework is also an essential step in understanding not only your current housing situation but also in recognizing the various ways in which diverse housing development can positively impact your community.

Whether you're grappling with affordability issues, accessibility, or the need for more diverse housing options, our team is excited to start the conversation and explore tailored solutions that align with your community's unique needs and aspirations.

At RDN, we believe in the power of collaboration and innovation to drive meaningful change. Our Sustainable Housing Initiative is designed to assist your community in enabling housing diversity and choice through comprehensive assessments, strategic planning, and actionable recommendations.

We offer expertise in policy development, regulatory adjustments, and identifying funding opportunities, ensuring that your community can achieve its housing goals. Let us help you build a stronger, more inclusive community where everyone has a place to call home. Contact us today to learn how we can partner with you to create lasting, positive impacts in your community.





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