

SITING OF HOMELESS HOUSING AND SERVICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE



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COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE STRATEGIES CONSORTIUM (CASC)

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Cover images: Photos are courtesy of St. Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room and Residence. With the help of volunteer photographer, Nita Winter, St. Vincent's exhibited these photos at local businesses in Marin to inform and win support for its dining room. The success story under Step 6 provides more information.

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ABOUT CASC

The Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium (CASC), is a unique twelve member network of homeless and housing service providers, advocates, legal professionals, and representatives of the public sector and faith-based communities. Part of HUD's Bay Area Regional Innovative Homelessness Initiative, CASC was launched in October 1996 to address a critical regional need: the provision of homeless housing and services.

Using capacity-building trainings and direct technical assistance, the CASC team enables developers of homeless housing and services throughout the Bay Area to obtain local government approvals for their development proposals by using a proactive and collaborative approach to the problem of local opposition. ("Local opposition" is defined as actions intended to block a meritorious proposal for homeless housing or services, or to create delays and obstacles to hinder its development.)

Prior to CASC, no regional network to aid developers of homeless housing and services manage neighborhood opposition existed. Since its inception, CASC has been able to bring together the cumulative expertise of homeless housing and service providers throughout the region, as well as advocates and supporters to bear on each particular development proposal. This allows homeless housing and service providers to maximize the benefits of past experiences and to avoid reinventing the wheel. The knowledge, skills, resources, and support gained through this network translates into more housing and services for homeless people.

(In 1996, HUD awarded a two-year \$7 million grant to the Bay Area Regional Innovative Homelessness Initiative to implement a new strategy for dealing with homelessness. The Bay Area Regional Innovative Homelessness Initiative provides financial support to a range of projects which enable homeless people to find a place to live, increase their incomes, secure employment and to enroll in training programs. CASC has received three grants from the Bay Area Regional Innovative Homelessness Initiative.)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the lessons learned and the success of the Community Acceptance Strategies Consortium (CASC) in reducing homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area. Through CASC's trainings, education, and legal and technical assistance work, CASC has helped high quality homeless housing and services proposals obtain local government approvals. This report is organized around an approach called "Six Steps to Getting Local Government Approvals," and provides a summary of CASC's on-going strategy for increasing the supply of housing and services for homeless people. The approach assumes that housing developers, sponsors, and service providers intend to provide developments which will meet important community needs, are well-designed, and will be well-maintained and well-managed.

CASC defines a successful community acceptance strategy as one which allows developers/sponsors of homeless and housing services to obtain funding and land-use approvals with fewer delays and reduced development costs caused by local opposition. Additionally, a strategy must meet three other objectives:

- ◆ Respond to the legitimate concerns of the local community.
- ◆ Maintain respect for the rights of current and prospective residents.
- ◆ Advance the prospects of future affordable housing and homeless services proposals in that community.

This report also identifies on-going challenges and makes recommendations for local government, community leaders, and developers related to the successful siting of homeless housing and services.

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness: A Shared Problem

Homelessness is a concern for every Bay Area community, small and large, urban and suburban. A report from HomeBase estimates that the total number of people who may have experienced homelessness in the Bay Area in 1994 may have been as high as 155,916 people. Although no thorough studies have been conducted in the Bay Area since 1994 to obtain current figures, the study suggests that these numbers will continue to climb dramatically. Local government, community leaders, businesses, individuals, and developers of homeless housing and services all share an interest in reducing the problem of homelessness. Whether its welfare-to-work initiatives, employment training, self sufficiency programs, or more emergency, transitional and permanently affordable housing, different communities vary in the way they approach this social crisis. CASC supports these efforts by helping developers obtain approvals for services and housing.



Formerly homeless kids happy to be in housing.

Everyone Loses When Effective Responses to Homelessness are Blocked or Delayed

Contemporary, well-managed emergency shelters, multi-service centers, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing have proven track records of success in assisting homeless people become reintegrated into the community, and cope with any substance abuse or mental health issues. Unfortunately, local opposition to the siting and/or funding of homeless housing and services often creates costly obstacles to the provision of more housing and services for homeless people. Sometimes opposition derails proposals altogether. According to a survey of 49 nonprofit developers in the Bay Area, 59% reported encountering local opposition in 1995. This resulted in delays in their development which ranged from two months to over two years. An average of \$100,000 in additional costs were added to some of the most significant conflicts that year. In 31% of the cases, the proposal was blocked altogether.¹ When this happens, everyone with an interest in reducing homelessness loses.



A family enjoying breakfast in transitional housing.

Individuals and the community benefits from homeless people being adequately housed and provided appropriate services. These are more cost-effective solutions and require less government subsidies than the alternative form of intervention, such as crisis care, incarceration or institutionalization. A study from the Corporation for Supportive Housing reveals that the cost of providing care for a homeless person in California is over \$17,000 a year. However, if this same person was housed and provided supportive services, the cost would be approximately \$8,000 (or \$22.00 per day).² According to the Northern California Grantmakers Task Force on Homelessness' 1996 report,

“Programs that offer training and placement services focused on the homeless are challenged by the difficulty of securing employment for people without a permanent address.....”.³ These studies suggest that programs for homeless people would be more effective if housing was incorporated into the solution. Getting the community to acknowledge the benefits of homeless housing and services and to accept these developments within their neighborhood often requires homeless housing and service providers to exert extensive education and outreach activities.

¹ Berkeley Housing Group, "Housing Development Strategies: Survey of San Francisco Bay Area Nonprofit Housing Development Corporations," October, 1998.

² Corporation for Supportive Housing, 1998 Background Report.

³ Northern California Grantmakers, Task Force on Homelessness, "What We've Learned 1989-1995," 1996.

CASC TRAININGS

An important component of CASC's work is the training CASC provides to encourage homeless housing and service providers to adopt new operating practices when preparing for community acceptance and local opposition. These trainings have included topics on:

- (1) working with the media;
- (2) dealing with legal issues;
- (3) building political and public support,
- (4) managing concerns of community members, and
- (5) updating housing elements.

Over 400 housing and service providers, local government staff and other housing practitioners have attended one or more of CASC's 16 workshops in the region. The wide breadth of agencies and individuals attending these trainings verified CASC's assumption that homelessness and housing are indeed shared community concerns. Not only did the workshops increase the skills of participants, it also proved invaluable in providing networking opportunities for those who shared the same focus. Most importantly, workshops created a forum where "success stories" could be shared.

CASC's Legal and Technical Assistance Work

CASC assists local developers and sponsors to obtain approvals for developing housing for homeless people and for operating needed homeless services. This often involved helping organizations obtain or renew their conditional use permit for a specific development. (CASC's strategy for gaining these approvals are discussed further in the Six Steps approach.) Sometimes, CASC's legal and technical assistance work was as simple as giving advice over the phone. CASC's main legal and technical assistance projects, however, required months of extensive strategizing and planning meetings. In addition to these services being free of charge, CASC provided technical assistance money to agencies who had limited funds to implement their community acceptance plan.

"The technical assistance provided by CASC allows agencies working with small project budgets the opportunity to consider and implement strategies necessary to win community acceptance."

*-Louis D. Chicoine, Executive Director
Tri-City Homeless Coalition*

The Six Steps Approach

Six Steps to Gaining Local Government Approval was initially produced for use by developers of homeless housing and services. It is designed to respond to both the uniquely local aspect of each proposal and the generic aspect, i.e. that similar concerns are raised in nearly every case. *Six Steps* encourages a homeless housing and service provider to conduct a "due diligence" process early in the development planning in which the provider gathers information, considers options and makes informed, deliberate decisions about what actions it will take toward local government, the local community, and the media. Specifically, *Six Steps* provides a guideline for homeless housing and service providers to plan in the following critical areas:

- 1 Work with local advocates to research, assess, and plan an integrated set of strategies.
- 2 Prepare a political strategy.
- 3 Build active community support.
- 4 Work through concerns of community members.
- 5 Protect and use legal rights.
- 6 Develop a public relations/media strategy.

(See Appendix – one page version of *Six Steps*.) *Six Steps* outlines an approach more fully detailed in **Building Inclusive Community: Tools to Create Support for Affordable Housing**, HomeBase, 1996.

Benefits to Local Government, Community Leaders, and Providers from *Six Steps*

While the *Six Steps* approach was initially produced for developers of homeless housing and services, local government and community leaders also benefit from its use. The primary shared benefit is well-managed homeless housing and services responding to identified community needs which engender numerous individual and community benefits. Some of these benefits for different groups are highlighted below.

For Local Governments

- ◆ Fulfills housing needs identified in Housing Element.
- ◆ Enables local government to take advantage of federal and state housing subsidies for homeless housing and services.
- ◆ Reduces drain on emergency resources and short-term fixes (i.e. crisis care).
- ◆ Prevents unproductive and painful community conflict.
- ◆ Creates positive support for elected officials in their decision making process.

For Community Leaders and the Community

- ◆ Promotes better discussion and resolution of legitimate community concerns about homeless people.
- ◆ Helps ensure that all communities take responsibility for this shared problem.
- ◆ Enhances the quality of life for a community by meeting the needs of its homeless residents and reducing the number of individuals and families living on the streets.
- ◆ Provides more efficient use of community resources and promotes long-term solutions to the problems of homelessness by eliminating or reducing short-term fixes (e.g. crisis care and incarceration).

For Developers of Homeless Housing and Services

- ◆ Incurs fewer delays and costs because of local opposition.
- ◆ Promotes better relations with local government, the community and the media.
- ◆ Provides a common language and approach to local opposition which enables more effective collaboration and learning through others' experiences.



Residents of Pittsburg Family Center enjoying an Easter Egg Hunt.



A formerly homeless family is now safely housed.

"When communities welcome well-designed and professionally managed housing and services for homeless people, the entire region benefits. I hope that CASC's proactive and collaborative approach for developing community acceptance becomes the standard for the San Francisco Bay Area."

--Gary Binger, Deputy Executive Director and Planning Director, Association of Bay Area Governments

PROPOSALS THAT HAVE SUCCESSFULLY GAINED APPROVAL WITH CASC'S ASSISTANCE

1. **Above the Line –**

Transitional housing for 20 homeless teenagers in Santa Cruz County (Developer–Mercy Charities Housing California)



Mercy Charities Housing California leases the above property to Above The Line, a non-profit group providing transitional housing to 20 homeless teenagers. This program won a prestigious award from the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco.

2. **BridgeWay –**

8 units of transitional housing for homeless families in Fremont and 3 units of transitional housing in Union City (Sponsor/Developer–Tri-City Homeless Coalition)

3. **Laurel Creek House –**

13 bed residential care facility for mentally ill, homeless people in Solano County (Sponsor/Developer–Caminar)

4. **Larkspur –**

7 bedroom home for transitional housing for families in Marin County (Sponsor–Center Point Inc.)

5. **Dolores Street Community Services –**

70 to 100 bed emergency housing and 8 bed transitional housing for homeless people in San Francisco (Sponsor/Developer–Dolores Street Community Services)

6. **Hamilton Family Center –**

Transitional housing for up to 20 families in San Francisco (Sponsor/Developer–Hamilton Family Center)

7. **Maple Street/Shelter Network –**

30 bed emergency shelter and 45 bed transitional housing facility for homeless individuals in Redwood City. CASC assisted this proposal with community outreach only. (Sponsor/Developer–Shelter Network)

8. **Whistle Stop Homes/Napa Valley Community Housing –**

4 units in for homeless families in 17 unit apartment in Napa County (Sponsor/Developer–Napa Valley Community Housing)

9. **Next Step –**

3 units of transitional Housing for homeless families with children in Martinez (Sponsor/Developer–Shelter, Inc. of Contra Costa County)

10. **Social Model Detox Center –**

Detox services for 625 people per year in Marin (Sponsor/Developer–People Care County of Marin)

11. **St. Vincent De Paul Community Free Dining Room and Residence –**

Dining room and limited services for mostly homeless people in Marin County (Sponsor–St. Vincent's de Paul Society)

12. **Transitional Housing, United Indian Nations –**

12 units of transitional housing for homeless people in Alameda (Sponsor–United Indian Nations)

13. Women's Daytime Drop-In Center –

Services for up to 25 homeless women with or without children in Berkeley. CASC assisted this program to add additional space and services for its clients. (Sponsor–Women's Daytime Drop-In Center)

14. East County Family Transitional Center –

20 units of transitional housing for homeless families located in Antioch (Sponsors/Developers–Contra Costa County, Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa County and HomeAid)

15. Homeless Youth Shelter –

40 bed emergency shelter and comprehensive supportive services for homeless young adults (ages 18-24) located in San Francisco (Sponsor/Developer–Larkin Street Youth Services)

16. Family Resource Center –

Emergency shelter and services for 25 homeless people in San Rafael. CASC assisted this program to increase its capacity from 20 to 25 persons. (Sponsor/Developer–Homeward Bound of Marin)

17. HOPE Resource Center –

Day shelter and comprehensive services for up to 150 homeless people in Napa (Sponsor/Developer–Napa County Council for Economic Opportunity)

“CASC assisted us with creating a viable settlement agreement with the City of San Rafael.”

*-Mary Kay Sweeney, Deputy Director,
Homeward Bound of Marin*

CASC is currently assisting several other proposals in the region.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- ◆ **19 homeless housing or service facilities have successfully received local government approvals through CASC's technical assistance program. The estimated value of the developments approved is \$27 million.**
- ◆ **Through its technical assistance efforts, CASC has provided several thousand homeless people with opportunities to gain stable housing and critical services.**
- ◆ **CASC has increased the ability of homeless housing or service providers and advocates to constructively manage local opposition. Over 400 housing and services providers from eight Bay Area counties have participated in CASC's trainings.**
- ◆ **CASC has expanded and enhanced the network of people trained in community acceptance activities. Over 145 staff of homeless housing and service providers have expressed interest in contributing to CASC's work by offering to share their technical expertise with others.**
- ◆ **CASC has reduced the overall development costs attributable to local opposition, thus making more funding available for other housing and services.**

STEP 1: CONDUCT MEETINGS TO RESEARCH, ASSESS AND PLAN STRATEGIES IN FIVE KEY AREAS.

Step 1 encourages homeless housing and service providers to conduct meetings with the development team early in the planning process and to make deliberate decisions on how to approach local government, community leaders, businesses, supporters, concerned community members, the media, and other stakeholders. The goal is to develop a well-designed, professionally managed community asset serving homeless people while meeting public standards and addressing legitimate community concerns.



CASC member Merlin Wedepohl (standing center) leads a community acceptance training.

Some local opposition can be avoided. This is particularly true when a proposed development meets community needs, is financially sound, and meets all legal requirements.

Yet even the best proposals encounter local opposition for a variety of reasons, including lack of information, fear, conflicts of interest, issues unrelated to the proposal itself, or discriminatory attitudes.

Although no developer can please everyone, meritorious proposals are more likely to receive community acceptance through a planned engagement with the local government, the neighborhood and the media. A planned process also enables developers to prevent delays and reduce related costs. Step 1 provides a plan-

ning process for directly addressing the likelihood that a proposal will be controversial. CASC has derived the following lessons from using this approach:

Lesson 1: Start the planning process early!

CASC found that organizations who used a proactive approach and started implementing the planning process early in the pre-development stage encountered less opposition to their proposal. Early planning gave organizations sufficient time to anticipate the concerns of local government and the neighborhood, and to develop authentic community support for the proposal.

Lesson 2: Staffing is important!

Some of the organizations CASC worked with did not have adequate staffing to implement a community acceptance plan which often requires spending lots of time with community members. Fortunately, CASC had technical assistance money available to hire a local community acceptance coordinator who was able to reach out to organized neighborhood groups and respond quickly to community concerns. If housing developers and homeless service providers were able to incorporate community liaison staff into their pre-development budget, it would help facilitate approval for the proposal.

Lesson 3: Collaboration helps!

Organizations who were inexperienced in community acceptance work found it useful to collaborate with experienced developers from their region. This offered them facts about the history and type of neighborhood where a proposed site was located, information about past conflicts, and connections with key community leaders. Organizations which linked with community groups that participate in ongoing policy development or land-use planning had more ability to get a hearing on the merits when their proposal came up for review.

If the project had called CASC in at an earlier point, I believe the struggle would have been neither as long nor as intense.

--Marianna Torres, Marin Continuum of Housing and Services

Lesson 4: Implement all *Six Steps!*

Focusing one's attention on one part of the strategy and skipping the others does not work! Organizations which worked through and made deliberate decisions about each of the six steps were less likely to encounter strong opposition. For instance, one sponsor developed broad support from local officials, funders, and other non-profit organizations. However, they failed to communicate clearly with their immediate neighbors. At the subsequent community meeting, the sponsor was caught off guard when some neighbors turned out to oppose the development.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ Early planning – The value of proactive planning continues to go unrecognized. Because this approach is still new, many organizations do not have the experience or training to do this work. Sometimes, it's not until a crisis that homeless housing organizations seek out help. More training and outreach is needed to enable more agencies to adopt the *Six Steps* approach as part of their standard development practice.
- ◆ Funding community outreach – Homeless housing and service providers usually operate on a tight budget. And, in order to compete effectively for scarce homeless housing and service funding, they may fail to provide for staffing for community outreach. Funding agencies may need to take the lead in promoting this use of funds by developers in order to secure their own investment in the proposal.

SUCCESS STORY:

CASC was most successful in cases where involvement began at a relatively early stage in the development process so that the full *Six Steps* approach could be implemented. In each of the following cases, there were numerous "red flags" that suggested intense local opposition would be likely. For instance, Laurel Creek House which would serve persons recovering from recent psychological crises would be located in a largely single-family residential area near a public school. Whistle Town Homes was proposed in a city which had recently rejected a similar development. The Next Step Apartments was to be located across the street from a similar residence raising the common over-concentration concern. BridgeWay apartments would be located near numerous small businesses in a district which perceives itself as already having a disproportionate share of the city's housing for low-income people. However, with sufficient time for planning, CASC was able to help the sponsors develop strong support for each proposal and avoid likely opposition for each of these proposals.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

While non-profits organizations are vaguely aware of each others struggles with local opposition, they had few opportunities to learn about and discuss them in detail. To foster this communication, CASC and the San Francisco Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO) co-sponsored an Affordable Housing Acceptance workshop to identify what neighborhood acceptance strategies work and which do not by focusing on actual case histories of opposed developments. CASC invited presenters from Community Housing Partnership, Mission Housing Development Corporation, Hamilton Family Shelter, Progress Foundation, and GP/TODCO to give an overview of their strategy for a specific development they worked on, from project conception to final approval. The panelists gave a frank assessment of what worked and what did not. This gave workshop participants an opportunity to draw upon already tested ideas and apply them to their own future proposals.

STEP 2: PREPARE A POLITICAL STRATEGY.

Step 2 recommends that developers and sponsors familiarize themselves with local elected and appointed officials, housing staff, and a jurisdiction's housing policies and experience. Then, they can appropriately plan outreach to local government.



Elected officials and members of the public meet to discuss issues.

When policymakers and non-profit organizations work together to establish communication and build relationships, the whole community benefits. This relationship building must be an on-going process that should take place prior to a specific proposal related decision. CASC has drawn the following lessons from using Step 2:

Lesson 1: Political support matters!

Engaging elected officials in the development process provides leadership, helps build vocal support for proposals, and facilitates dialogue between city officials and community residents. Proposals have a better

chance of receiving approval when key local officials can endorse these developments because they have participated in molding the proposal to best serve community needs.

Lesson 2: Education avoids misunderstandings!

CASC found that if policy makers and community leaders were aware of contemporary housing and services to homeless people from earlier education efforts, they were more likely to understand the benefits of a new proposal and be able to provide constructive input. Education efforts are most effective when organizations can demonstrate existing examples of high-quality, successful developments that are an asset to the community.

By broadening our base of supporters to include supporters of the various elected officials, we were able to demonstrate general public support for our efforts, which may be the reason the City Council decision was unanimous in favor of our proposal.

--Linda Lazzareschi, Executive Director, Women' Daytime Drop-In Center, Berkeley

Lesson 3: Timing is critical!

Elected officials must respond to a wide range of constituencies. It's harder to listen when a proposal is already mired in public controversy. Developers need to carefully discern the appropriate time to discuss a proposal with elected officials.

Lesson 4: A knowledgeable policymaker can make all the difference!

Local officials who appreciate homeless housing and service developments as community assets can advocate to increase funds for more homeless services within one's community and initiate needed changes in local housing policies, making it easier to gain approval for needed developments.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ **Making the time – The best way for anyone to learn about contemporary homeless housing and services is to visit them. Unfortunately, it can be hard to get busy local government representatives to make the time to tour residences and service facilities.**
- ◆ **Getting beyond stereotypes to the facts – Without direct experience of contemporary homeless housing and services local government representatives are left with piecemeal impressions and stereotypes. While few residences or service agencies would claim to have no problems, issues which are minor can be blown out of proportion unless the policymaker has a good grounding in the facts.**

SUCCESS STORY:

Hamilton Family Shelter, which provides emergency and transitional housing for homeless families in San Francisco, requested assistance with community acceptance when it decided to move to a new site. The San Francisco Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO), a CASC member, was best qualified to work on a political strategy with Hamilton because of CCHO's extensive education and advocacy efforts on behalf of affordable housing. Years of policy interaction enabled CCHO to build solid support on all levels of City government. Getting approval for Hamilton required that the Mayor was aware of the proposal, the Planning Department staff and its director were on board, and that the Mayor's Office of Housing would advocate for the development. CCHO promoted the proposal to members of the Planning Commission, and alerted select members of the Board of Supervisors in case local opposition would cause the Planning Commission's vote to be appealed. As a result, the Hamilton Family Shelter proposal was approved.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

A few of CASC's trainings have included a panel of elected officials, city planners and city attorneys who were able to respond to questions and concerns that often arise in the approval process. These discussions have provided valuable information to developers and advocates about how local decision-makers like to be approached for support. CASC workshops also have the added benefit of drawing decision-makers to the training to be educated themselves. Informing politicians of the needs of the homeless community and increasing their awareness of laws that protect homeless people at these training, have resulted in an increased understanding of and support for homeless housing and services.



This affordable housing resident just received a backpack filled with school supplies and a Scooby Doo. Backpacks donated by St. Jon's Church, Clayton.

STEP 3: PREPARE A STRATEGY TO BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT.

Step 3 recommends that homeless housing and service providers build active, vocal community support for their proposal. This makes it easier to obtain political support, reduce opposition, and gain positive media attention.



"We have a real need for this kind of project in the area."

Howard Collins, retired engineer and member Irvington Presbyterian Church



"The typical homeless person is not who you think they are. Most in Sunrise Village are like me, wanting passionately to make it."

Deanna N.

"Every business in this area is working to build a future and that's what the tenants at BridgeWay-Fremont are trying to do.."

Visions for Hair, 4127 Bay Street, Gloria Dotson, owner



"[BridgeWay-Fremont] would be a win-win situation for the neighborhood...a real asset to the neighborhood and help the property values around the project."

Captain Ron Hunt, Fremont Police Department

Endorsements from neighbors, business owners, and police department increased the community's confidence in the BridgeWay-Fremont development. They were included on BridgeWay's flyers to build support as well as to answer relevant questions about the development.

Why do homeless housing and service providers need to build public support? Despite numerous examples of well managed developments that contribute to the health of the community homeless housing and services have a bad reputation. CASC's efforts to help organizations build public support has contributed to the following insights:

Lesson 1: Approvals for needed developments are more easily obtained with active public support!

Local opposition can prevent developments from being sited. When decision-makers only hear from opponents of a proposal, it is hard to justify approving it. Organizations that nurtured strong public support for their proposal were also able to reduce opposition to their development. In one instance, support for a proposal was so overwhelming that it was put on the city's consent calendar so that a full public hearing was not required.

Lesson 2: Supporters get enthusiastic about helping homeless people!

Sometimes, people will support causes with more than a checkbook. With just a bit of encouragement and information on how they can help, CASC has witnessed extremely successful letter writing campaigns, petition drives and large attendance and vocal support at public hearings for homeless housing and service proposals.

With CASC's help, I was able to learn and practice a process that will be valuable on subsequent proposals. Because of the relationships I built and contacts I developed during the Whistle Stop Town Projects, the Chief of Police is now more familiar with my organization and supportive of my efforts.

-Grania Lindberg, former Executive Director
Napa Valley Community Housing

Lesson 3: Reaching outside of the homeless and housing field generates more supporters!

Approaching a variety of community groups who have an interest in solving homelessness, such as churches and local business groups, greatly enhance an organization's outreach efforts. These groups can be powerful allies in the public approval process because they bring their own legitimate community credentials and membership with them.

Lesson 4: Often it's impossible to tell a person's position without asking!

Homeless housing providers and service agencies sometimes assume that anyone who is not already a vocal supporter of the work probably opposes it. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Only careful and patient outreach can determine the level of support a proposal may engender.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ Client involvement – In building community support, the greatest challenge has been involving the homeless community itself. While the uncertainties and instability of their lives present an obstacle to this participation, homeless housing and services sponsors need to continue their efforts to involve homeless and formerly homeless people.
- ◆ Learning to share the work with the community – While the development and funding processes and serving homeless people can be very complex, homeless housing and services sponsors need to find ways to share more of the work with more of their potential community supporters, not just at Thanksgiving and Christmas. It is only when the day-to-day work of housing and service providers and their participating in their successes that community alliances are forged.

SUCCESS STORY:

When Napa Valley Community Housing (NVCH) approached CASC and requested assistance in getting a use permit approval and local funding commitment for their Whistle Stop Town Homes proposal, CASC quickly mobilized its team to move the proposal forward. CASC met with NVCH staff to plan public support strategies to obtain the needed approvals. This involved framing the overall proposal strategy, deciding on the timing of activities, setting up a community committee, canvassing neighborhoods, and holding an open house. Using its outreach plan, NVCH garnered support for its proposal from the Napa Valley Wine Train, Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Network, and the Conference Visitation Bureau. With their broad show of support, NVCH's proposal was approved. Only one neighbor showed up in opposition of the development.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

Attendees at a CASC-sponsored training of the Santa Clara Collaborative on Affordable Housing and Homeless Issues reported that learning about the wide range of local needs and problems of affordable and transitional housing in their community proved to be invaluable. As a result of the Collaborative's community education campaign, the workshop drew over one hundred community members who had a deep interest in the issue. According to one participant, "Opening this up to all comers was superb. The individuals from the community who shared their real-life needs shed a glaring light on the needs and, for our group, provided a good direction."

STEP 4: PREPARE A STRATEGY TO WORK THROUGH COMMUNITY ISSUES.

Step 4 recommends that developers and sponsors listen carefully to community concerns and then design appropriate responses to them.



Neighbors contribute to the design process during a community meeting.

Housing developers, community leaders, local government, and community residents all have a common interest in reaching agreement on how homeless and housing developments can fit into their community. All parties want a good quality development. However, concerns about numerous issues (e.g. traffic, parking, crime, etc.) are sometimes used to block developments. In other instances, neighbors are looking for a meaningful way to participate. CASC focuses on how these developments are part of the solution to a community's problems, not another problem. Below are some lessons learned in responding to community concerns:

Lesson 1: Clear, factual information reduces some concerns.

Education of community members, either through one-on-one contact or informational handouts, has been useful in answering many of the concerns that neighbors have about a proposal. CASC encourages agencies to create brochures and flyers that provide background information about the organization and the proposed development. CASC also uses door-to-door canvassing and an "open house" format to keep neighbors informed and to prevent misinformation. When stakeholders learn about why a proposal is an asset to the community, they will be less likely to oppose it.

Lesson 2: Maintaining respect and listening to community concerns can help diminish conflict.

Dealing with opposition is not always easy. It can, however, be less stressful and more constructive when both sides open the way for communication. Developers who are able to listen actively to neighbors' concerns and to address them appropriately, have a better chance of calming those concerns. These important skills must also be adopted by all stakeholders to enable legitimate concerns to be heard and resolved. Sometimes concerned community members have good ideas to contribute. When there is an opportunity to exchange information and build trust, those who start off opposing the proposal may end up becoming active supporters.

Lesson 3: Concerned community members are not necessarily opponents.

There is a big difference between expressing concern about a proposal and attending a public hearing to oppose it. By not rushing to judgment, developers can work with many concerned members to provide them with the answers they seek. Sometimes what is required is explaining the intricacies of federal funding programs. Other times, it's providing background information, showing successful examples of previous developments, presenting studies, or sharing an endorsement from a respected authority.

Lesson 4: Sometimes community members can be participants in the design process.

Sometimes concerned community members oppose projects because of fear that the development's design and/or density won't "fit the neighborhood" and will cause an undue burden. In some cases developers can sponsor meetings in which neighbors' suggestions can be solicited and, when appropriate, incorporated into the design. However, it's important for the developer and community members to agree on groundrules and expectations in order to avoid disappointment.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ **Fear** – Fear about the potential behavior of residents remains one of the most difficult concerns to ameliorate. Stereotypes that some community members have of homeless housing and service developments often stem from negative anecdotes from media stories. Meanwhile, hundreds of impressive success stories go unreported everyday. Exploring forums in which these success stories can be heard is part of CASC’s on-going outreach efforts.
- ◆ **Blame** – Too often, the entire issue of homelessness in a community is blamed on an agency trying to respond to the problem. The misconception that building affordable housing or providing social services draws more homeless people to one’s community detracts from the fact that developments and services arise in the first place to meet an existing need. Well-designed proposals generally do not create new problems. Instead, they help alleviate and/or resolve existing ones. Responsible sponsors deal with any legitimate issues that do come up. When homeless advocates and community members can leave the “blame game” behind, they can work together fruitfully to improve their communities.
- ◆ **Appreciating timing complexities** – There is no right time to present a proposal to a skeptical public. If a developer comes before a clear concept is articulated, it can be criticized for being unprepared or unaware of the community’s needs. If a developer approaches the community with a relatively defined proposal, it can be criticized for presenting “a done deal.”

SUCCESS STORY:

For the past three years, Fremont had been embroiled in a particularly bitter conflict regarding an affordable housing proposal which dominated local politics and even city council elections. Within this climate of hostility, the Tri-City Homeless Coalition (TCHC) approached CASC for assistance in gaining community support for an eight unit transitional housing development in the Irvington District.

TCHC had successfully operated a homeless shelter in Fremont and wanted to fill the gaps in Fremont’s continuum of care for homeless people by providing transitional housing for families living in its shelters. The Irvington district perceived itself as already having more than its share of subsidized housing. Also, the proposed site was near small retail businesses, a situation which often raise concerns about potential impacts. After strategy sessions with local housing advocates and CASC, TCHC developed and implemented a careful political and community outreach plan to gain support for funding. This strategy involved door-to-door canvassing of local businesses, presentations to community groups, and meeting with elected officials.

Targeted outreach connected TCHC to all the key players and quelled potential community opposition. No opponents showed up to the open house forum and the funding proposal was approved on the City Council’s consent calendar! Eight families, who otherwise would have been locked out of the community by Fremont’s high-cost housing market obtained a dignified place to live.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

When CASC sent a survey to homeless and housing organizations to gauge their training needs, CASC found that working through the concerns of community members was their highest priority. Those who attended the training focused on this issue, found it useful to learn how to integrate this community outreach strategy into the development process, and recommended this training for all staff members. CASC conducted role play activities among attendees, including listening exercises, and used examples of actual local opposition experienced by housing groups in the San Francisco Bay Area. This experience gave workshop participants opportunities to develop skills in acknowledging and responding to concerns that often arise and provided guidance for formulating appropriate responses.

STEP 5: PREPARE A LEGAL STRATEGY.

Step 5 encourages homeless housing and service providers to be well-informed about laws that protect the rights of homeless people. Sponsors are encouraged to learn to assert their legal rights when appropriate without litigation.



Betty Pagett (center) and Mike Rawson (left) inform city planners, city attorneys and local officials of laws affecting affordable housing.

The CASC team had a lawyer on board who provided much of the legal assistance needed to help organizations gain project approval. Having legal expertise was extremely crucial since legal issues arose in many of the proposals CASC assisted. In preparing a legal strategy, CASC has the following lessons to share:

Lesson 1: All stakeholders need to become better educated about federal and state Fair Housing Laws and the state Housing Element Law!

These laws require communities to plan for affordable housing, approve certain affordable projects, and refrain from discrimination

against affordable housing or its residents. Unfortunately, few people are aware that these laws exist. For this reason, CASC has sponsored numerous legal trainings for city attorneys and community service providers. CASC has also published a legal manual called, “Laws Affecting the Location & Approval of Affordable Housing for Families and Homeless People: How They Work & How To Use Them.”¹

Lesson 2: Keeping informed of local laws reduces the likelihood of litigation!

Unfortunately, illegal discrimination against homeless people or those with special needs does occur, and an awareness of these laws can help homeless housing and service providers to work with local governments to avoid conflict and reach agreement. Because litigation is time consuming, expensive and adversarial, it should be considered as a last resort. If local officials are aware of these laws, it will be less likely that homeless housing and service providers will even need to threaten litigation. Community stakeholders would also be less prone to suing to stop a development if they knew that the basis of their opposition was not legally justifiable.

Lesson 3: Illegal planning codes and zoning ordinances must be revised!

Some jurisdictions have planning codes, zoning ordinances or other land-use practices that are not in compliance with federal and state laws. If a jurisdiction is trying to impose an illegal requirement and an agreement can not be reached, how to assert one’s legal rights is one of the most challenging predicaments a developer can face. Many of the agencies CASC worked with chose to avoid litigation because funding for their proposals was so closely tied to the jurisdiction they would need to sue. It was difficult to consider “biting the hand that feeds” them. Efforts to change an illegal planning permit requirement before a proposal goes to the city or county board are more useful than trying to challenge such a requirement in the process of seeking an approval. The current Housing Element updating process provides an opportunity for jurisdictions to review their planning codes and zoning ordinances.

The California Affordable Housing Law Project’s knowledge of State and Federal law regarding housing, people with disabilities and Fair Housing Law and regulations was critical in educating our local Planning Commission and City Council concerning their responsibilities to provide housing and services for people with disabilities. We obtained our Conditional Use Permit only because of this legal representation.

--Merlin Wedepohl, Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa County, In Center, Berkeley

Lesson 4: Compliance with all procedural requirements will help protect proposals against lawsuits!

When both development organizations and local government staff plan well and ensure that the development meets legal requirements (passes environmental, historical, and architectural review processes) and that all necessary procedures are conducted (completes appropriate paperwork, issuing public notices, etc.), the chances of a meritorious lawsuit against the jurisdiction by opponents of the development are reduced.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ Access to legal information and legal assistance – Despite CASC’s education efforts, a large percentage of homeless and housing service providers and local government officials do not realize that these anti-discriminatory laws exist. Legal advice is costly, and outside of CASC’s free legal assistance work, few services are affordable to local developers when they do encounter legal problems.
- ◆ Public misunderstanding of their own rights and resentment of laws protecting homeless people – Sometimes members of the public are resentful when informed about laws protecting homeless people. This feeling sometimes arises out of the expectation that someone currently living in a neighborhood has a right to determine who else can move in. This unfortunate understanding fuels confusion and painful community conflict.

SUCCESS STORY:

Center Point, Inc. proposed to establish and operate a transitional housing residence with supportive services for women and children in Larkspur. The Planning Commission had decided that Center Point did not require a conditional use permit (CUP) for its proposal. Neighbors, however, organized against the proposal and hired an attorney who wrote a legal memorandum opposing the Planning Commission’s zoning decision. They demanded that the City require Center Point to obtain a CUP, which in this case, would have been illegal. CASC’s own legal expert provided a legal memorandum to Larkspur’s City Attorney and the opponents’ attorney to counter the advice given by the opponents’ lawyer. The opponents met with Center Point on the eve of the public hearing, and agreed to withdraw their appeal in exchange for reasonable assurances by Center Point. Because of the legal memo written by CASC’s attorney the City Council supported the Planning Commission’s decision, approved the proposal and directed the City’s Attorney to examine its ordinance for compliance with fair housing law. With CASC’s legal support, Center Point was able to avoid an unnecessary and illegal approval process in getting their proposal approved.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

As part of its training efforts, CASC sponsored a workshop “Legal and Planning Issues for Siting Affordable Housing and Homeless Housing and Services” for city attorneys and planning department staff in San Rafael. The Bay Area Planning Directors, and the Marin County League of Women Voters endorsed this training. The workshop provided a safe, open environment for participants to learn about legal and planning issues and to discuss questions and examine possibilities with peers outside the context of a particular proposal. Many who have received CASC’s legal training felt empowered by the information because they had no prior knowledge of the laws which protect homeless people from discrimination.

STEP 6: PREPARE A PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA STRATEGY.

Step 6 recommends that homeless housing and service providers prepare for potential media coverage about their proposals and consider conducting proactive public relations activities.



Creative outreach strategies, like St. Vincent's de Paul's Dining Room photo exhibits, were displayed in various public buildings and used successfully to gather community support.

Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in the Bay Area have become the subject of many headlines in local and regional newspapers. On one hand, media attention provides an opportunity to educate community leaders and residents about homelessness and affordable housing in their community. On the other hand, unfavorable media attention reduces public support and may even stir up local opposition. Recognizing the controversial nature of housing and services for homeless people, providers should always consider the

likelihood of media coverage and, when it makes sense, publicize their good news. The following lessons are gleaned from CASC's media experience:

Lesson 1: It's important to share success stories!

A weary and skeptical public needs to be convinced that housing and services provided to homeless people really do make a difference. It's up to homeless housing and service providers to collect the facts, track outcomes and communicate their results.

Lesson 2: The use of media can be a very effective organizing tool!

This works well when the organization has a good relationship with the media. News coverage, letters-to-the-editor, radio interviews and editorial board meetings can generate support for a proposal by making the public and decisionmakers aware of how a proposal serves the needs of a community.

Lesson 3: A well-planned, creative public relations strategy is effective in building support!

A public relations strategy doesn't have to be limited to media coverage. Many groups have been successful educating and informing community members through billboards, postcards, posters, photo exhibits, calendars, and more.

Homeless shelter OK expected

San Rafael council approves free dining room site

Supporters cheer unanimous decision

Affordable housing project endorsed through vote of Napa's city planners

Richmond OK; AIDS group home

Fremont: Proposed motel purchase could provide transitional housing

◆ council not swayed by objections from residents of the the city's south-central neighborhood

The above are actual headlines from articles written about the developments CASC has assisted.

Lesson 4: Preparation is key!

In situations where CASC decided to actively involve the media, it was very important to have well-prepared briefing packets ready for the press and a point person prepared to take all press calls. This helped facilitate the flow of accurate information to the public. Keeping the facts about the proposal straight is critical to meaningful community dialogue.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ Media coverage – The media can work to the disadvantage of organizations by playing upon common fears and discriminatory attitudes towards homeless people. Stories of proposals that are an asset to the community and successfully serve homeless people are generally underplayed because they do not carry the same sensationalistic quality. Getting the media to recognize the value of a “success story” is crucial in documenting the contributions of the homeless and housing community. Positive recognition engenders more support for homeless programs.
- ◆ Staffing demand – The work of preparing useful statistics, organizing tours of facilities and cultivating relationships with reporters places yet another demand on the limited staffing and resources of homeless housing and service providers. The frequent turnover of reporters raises yet another obstacle.

SUCCESS STORY:

Gaining approval for the relocation of the St. Vincent De Paul Dining Room which feeds 200 to 300 low-income and homeless people daily, was one of CASC's most successful examples of media/public relations work. The City of San Rafael had attempted to move the operation out of the downtown area, where it would have been difficult for clients to access services. Because of widespread misperception, CASC focused on the media outreach strategy to help people understand the work of the Dining Room, including the population served, the Dining Room's policies and codes of behavior. A professional photographic exhibit was shown in a downtown coffeehouse, then was circulated to banks and other public buildings for display. The exhibit was supported by a series of letters to the editor and op-ed articles in local newspapers describing the work of the Dining Room and the needs of the diners. The photographs featured diners, staff, and volunteers of the Dining Room. These photographs were an important public relations piece because they portrayed the diners as real people, in a way that people in the community could appreciate. This contributed to the ability of organizers to obtain 1,500 signatures on petitions and 2,300 letters in support of the Dining Room.

LESSONS FROM CASC TRAININGS

The need continues for housing and homeless service providers to receive training about developing and implementing a media strategy. The media trainings sponsored by CASC and East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) were well attended. Many individuals expressed a desire to receive more information about doing media work or to provide training to additional staff members at their organization. Participants learned how to develop a media message, write effective press releases, establish regular relations with the media, and get an organization's message out to the media. Since many organizations felt they did not have adequate resources to devote the time and energy needed to do this public relations work, several expressed interest in collaborating with other organizations on an on-going basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are CASC's recommendations to local government, homeless housing developers, homeless service providers, community leaders, and members of the Bay Area Community at large on how, together, we can meet the region's needs and contribute to increasing the supply of quality housing and services for homeless people.

Recommendations to local government:

1. Take the time to educate yourself and your staff about the need for affordable housing and homeless housing and services, as well as the existing stock of such housing and services in your community. Learn about their successes and benefits. Explain their community benefits to stakeholders, voters and the media.
2. Use the housing element updating process to establish meaningful homeless housing and services policy priorities and to pursue other recommendations listed.
3. Initiate and support reform of zoning ordinances, planning codes, and housing policy to bring them into compliance with federal and state fair housing laws and to promote a hospitable environment for homeless housing and services.
4. Make sure that activities related to community acceptance (e.g. community education and outreach) are eligible for your jurisdiction's pre-development funding.
5. Assist homeless housing developers and advocates in developing meritorious proposals which serve community needs, and support them when they come before you for a vote.

Recommendations to homeless housing developers and service providers:

6. Take a proactive approach to gaining support and approval for your project.
7. Educate decisionmakers, community stakeholders and the media about the value of homeless housing and services by showing successful examples.
8. Respect and listen to the concerns of community members when siting homeless and housing services.
9. Request money for community acceptance work for predevelopment funds.
10. Learn about the laws which protect homeless people and how to use them.

Recommendations to community leaders and members:

11. Learn about the need for homeless housing and services, the existing programs in your community, and consider their community benefits.
12. Identify yourself to homeless housing developers, service providers and local governments as willing to help support meritorious proposals by lending your name and presence in the media, at public hearings, and in letters of support.
13. Review proposals for new homeless housing and services carefully and fairly with an eye toward the entire community's needs.
14. When you have concerns about a proposal, engage in a constructive relationship with the developer to improve the proposal.

Communities in the Bay Area must revise and update their housing elements in 2001. The element must include an assessment and analysis of the needs of homeless people in the community and provide action programs that address those needs. One of the programs must identify specific sites which are available for emergency shelters and transitional housing. The development of a community's housing element presents a perfect opportunity for local officials, housing developers, services providers and community groups to ensure that the community analyzes and plans for the needs of homeless households. The obligation to identify sites, in particular, gives members of the community the chance to agree on the location of affordable housing and shelters in advance and thereby help avoid local opposition in the future. The process not only facilitates meaningful planning, but also can serve to educate everyone in the community about the obligation to plan for affordable housing and the laws prohibiting discrimination against affordable housing, shelters and low income and homeless people.

CONCLUSION

Prior to CASC, developers of homeless housing and services did not collaborate on the community acceptance issue at a regional level. Typically, they struggled against local opposition in isolation or with the support of local networks of advocates. Over the past three years, CASC has articulated and promoted a proactive and collaborative approach (*Six Steps*) to build support for needed homeless housing and services. Through this process CASC is developing a regional network of individuals and organizations experienced in carrying out this approach. This work provides homeless housing and service providers with a common language and set of skills with which to approach communities about their proposals for siting homeless housing and services.

Unfortunately, despite the burgeoning Bay Area economy, the region has suffered a growing shortage of affordable housing and skyrocketing rents. The Bay Area continues to see an increase in the number of homeless people. The consequences of welfare reform and the success of welfare-to-work programs are uncertain. For many reasons, affordable housing and homeless housing and services remain crucial to the social and economic health of the region.

CASC hopes that all community stakeholders will play a role in alleviating the problem of homelessness and use the valuable lessons in this report to actively support and advocate for an increased supply of quality affordable housing and services. This report provides government officials, community leaders, developers of homeless housing and services, and homeless advocates with an overview of how to achieve this goal. CASC also makes three conclusions about using a community acceptance strategy to obtain approvals:

- ◆ **Planning for community acceptance must be proactive and start early in the predevelopment stage.** How soon and how well developers plan for this activity often decides the fate of a proposal and determines whether the development gets approved, how long the proposal gets delayed, whether additional costs will be incurred, whether the development will undergo design modification, etc. The *Six Steps* approach is a useful guide for helping developers produce successful results.
- ◆ **Neighbors, local government officials, businesses, and other community stakeholders all share an interest in where homeless developments are sited, what kinds of services are being provided, what the development will look like, how the proposal fits their neighborhood, etc.** Carefully planned outreach, combined with a willingness to listen to community concerns and inputs, will help dissipate fears, avoid misinformation, reduce opposition, and win support.
- ◆ **Access to legal knowledge and resources is critical to getting local approvals.** Numerous laws support services for homeless people. Sometimes these must be drawn upon to avoid discrimination and win support.

To continue the progress that is being made to alleviate homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area, CASC's legal and technical assistance services and trainings will remain available to the extent possible. In addition, CASC will actively pursue regional collaboration in hopes of sharing successful community acceptance methods, experiences, stories, and resources.

It is important to recognize the homeless as individuals and as members of our communities. This is an important acceptance strategy with regard to the siting of homeless services since it helps counter the tendency of people to think of the homeless as "others."

*-John Leonard
Councilmember, City of Mill Valley*

Questions about CASC's network, and requests for assistance or training information should be addressed to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California at 415.989.8160.

APPENDIX

Six Steps to Getting Local Government Approvals

Community opposition continues to plague proposals for new housing and services for low-income people. While every local opposition conflict is different and there are no “silver bullets,” this page presents a proactive and collaborative approach that has been successfully used in the San Francisco Bay Area over the last several years to get needed local government approvals.

In a nutshell, the approach consists of six steps:

1. Working with local advocates, the development team meets early in the development process to research, assess and plan in five key areas.
2. Prepare a political strategy which coordinates all your work towards getting the votes you need.
3. Prepare a strategy to build active community support for your proposal.
4. Prepare a strategy to work through concerns of community members and to deal with active opposition.
5. Prepare a strategy to protect and use your legal rights.
6. Prepare a public relations/media strategy to send your message to decision-makers and the public.

Instead of doing the same outreach for every proposal or waiting and seeing what will happen, this individual planning approach is like a “due diligence” process in which you consider and make deliberate decisions about five key areas that may be important for every development proposal. Conducting this planning process is not the same as deciding to adopt a high visibility entry with early notification of neighbors. Rather, whether to notify neighbors (and, if so, how and when) is one decision to make in this planning process. (For more information about each step, look for page references to *Building Inclusive Community: Tools to Create Support for Affordable Housing* (HomeBase 1996), hereafter “BIC”.)

In addition to this work, we recommend you participate in on-going, community-wide strategies to improve the political climate for affordable housing and services in your community, e.g. tenant organizing, voter registration, participating in the development of local housing policy, promoting pro-housing candidates in local elections, and promoting the enforcement of fair housing laws.

1 Planning meetings to research, assess and plan strategies in five key areas.

(BIC, pp. 21 - 30)

Schedule two or more meetings of the entire development team together with local advocates and assign responsibility for organizing the meetings (e.g. inviting key people) to a staff member.

At the first meeting, assess the following:

- Your organization’s reputation, capacity to attract broad community support for its work, and its previous experience in dealing with local government, opponents, and the media.
- What local government approvals are required, who will decide, what is the process and criteria for decisions, and an expected timeline.
- Local government’s current knowledge of and support for affordable housing, your organization’s work, and the current proposal.
- Full analysis of the neighborhood surrounding the proposed site (history, problems, organizations, assets, etc.)

- Likely concerns neighbors might have about your proposal, the neighborhood’s experience with similar programs and its potential for organized opposition.
- Potential legal issues associated with your development proposal, including your organization’s and clients’ legal rights.
- The regional and local media’s approach to your work and clients.

First, make sure your development plan includes at least two meetings to plan how you will obtain the local government approvals you need.

Based on these assessments, at the second and later meetings determine:

- (a) your strategies toward local government, potential supporters, potential opponents, legal issues and the media (see steps 2-5);
 - (b) staffing required to implement your strategies; and,
 - (c) any consequences for your proposal’s timeline, funding needs, or site selection.
- Each strategy should have a clear plan of actions: who will do what, when, how and with whom.

- Efforts to implement these five strategies will be going on simultaneously.
- Timing issues are critical and must be decided after consultation with persons most familiar with local politics and the relevant neighborhood.
- Expect to change and improvise your plans as you go along. You won’t regret your planning because it will help you manage the process and avoid some fire drills and surprises.
- Most importantly, draw on the collective experience of others to gain further insight into useful strategies for community acceptance.

2 Prepare a political strategy.

(BIC, pp. 27 & 29; 31 - 32)

- Get to know your local government’s players and relevant policies. There are “key leaders” in every community, but they don’t always have the same jobs or titles. To find them always ask: “Who else should I talk with about this?”
- Identify solid supporters, committed opponents, and uncertain votes on your proposal.

If the crucial vote were taken tonight, do you know who would vote for an against your proposal?

- Determine education and advocacy efforts needed to keep supporters, neutralize opponents, and win uncertain votes.
- Coordinate your efforts with supporters, concerned community members and with the media to get the votes you need.
- Act responsibly and document everything so that at public hearings you can honestly say: "We're a professional, community-based group with significant community support meeting a critical need, and we've done everything we can to reasonably respond to neighbors' legitimate concerns."

3 Prepare a strategy to build public support.

(BIC, pp. 31 - 40)

Active, vocal community support for your proposal will help you get political support, counter your opponents, tell your story to the media and, when appropriate, say hard things than developers usually do not want to say.

- Consider developing support for the proposal (at least in the broader community) before contacting potential opponents.

Don't fall into the trap of spending all of your time and energy responding to opponents.

- Identify and prioritize actual and potential supporters, including tactical allies. Think widely about your potential allies.
- Plan recruitment of supporters and what you want them to do for you.
- Organize and support your allies with background information, housing tours and up-to-date information.
- Mobilize supporters at critical points (e.g. using a database and fax sheets.)
- Keep them informed and encouraged.

4 Prepare a strategy to work through community issues.

(BIC, pp. 41 - 58)

- Notification and community outreach decisions should be designed to surface and deal effectively with legitimate concerns and for positive presentation of the proposal, not to create an open forum for opponents to organize themselves against you.
- Consider alternative methods for community outreach (e.g. door-to-door canvassing, open-house forums or small house meetings) instead of large, open community meetings.

Only when you understand why a person opposes, can you select the best response.

- Use an issue-based strategy for working through local community concerns.
- Find out the probable basis of their concerns before fashioning a response (e.g. misinformation, fears about impacts, expectation to participate, legitimate conflicts of interest, prejudice, or issues unrelated to your proposal.)
- Prepare appropriate responses to each kind of concern (e.g. education, reassurance by trusted authority, appropriate forum for participation, negotiation, clarifying legitimate from illegitimate issues.)
- Peel away layers of opposition and their issues to leave only "unreasonable" opponents.

5 Prepare a legal strategy.

(BIC, pp. 59 - 67)

- Identify the legal rights of your organization and your prospective tenants/clients and learn how to spot potential legal violations.
- If your proposal is likely to encounter illegal discrimination or raise complex legal issues, contact legal assistance immediately to learn what you should do now to protect your rights, and how and when to get further legal assistance.

Learn to assert your legal rights without litigation.

- Work with legal advocates to identify how to protect and assert your legal rights without litigation, e.g. by educating the city attorney early in the process.
- Keep records of all statements, flyers, etc. that may be evidence of discrimination.

6 Prepare a public relations/media strategy.

(BIC, pp. 69 - 70)

Before you get any media coverage on a proposal, decide if you want to generate media coverage (proactive strategy) or if you want to be able to respond effectively to any media coverage you receive (responsive strategy).

- Designate and prepare spokesperson(s) including former clients and supporters.
- Develop your message(s) and alternative stories for your target audiences (e.g. decision-makers).
- Prepare brief, easily-faxable, fact sheets about your organization, the proposal, your supporters, your efforts to resolve legitimate community concerns and other information to support your message(s) and alternative stories.

At the very least, select and prepare a media spokesperson, your message and some easily-faxable information.

- Invite reporters for a tour of your existing facilities and to meet your staff and clients.
- Follow-up on any coverage you receive with thank you's and corrections.
- To the degree your resources allow, develop on-going relationships with the media.

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