

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

HOW TO:

BUILD YOUR CAPACITY TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA

GOALS

- Educate the public and decision makers
- Create a sense of urgency about the importance of affordable housing
- Sway public opinion and attract supporters
- Effectively react to harmful publicity
- Become an authority for reporters on your issue

KEY TECHNIQUES

- Develop a media list and make relations with media people a priority. Always try to make the reporter or writer's job easier for them and respond quickly to requests
- Build a team within your organization to promptly provide facts and spokespeople
- Think through the range of media activities and determine your media strategy

Develop a Media List and Build Relationships

- Identify your local news outlets – newspapers, local access cable channels, local radio stations – and determine which are likely cover your issue.
- Identify reporters covering local government, development, housing, the economy, and real estate. Most newspapers detail this on their website.
- Build relationships with these reporters by calling to introduce yourself, your organization and upcoming events that may be of interest.
- When you do see a story that touches on your issue, contact the reporter to say thanks and to build a relationship with them.
- Consider all media outlets:
 - › **Print:** News story, feature story, column, editorial, op-ed piece, letter to the editor
 - › **TV:** News story, consumer watch, human interest, public affairs
 - › **Radio:** News story, human interest, community calendars, listener perspectives
 - › **Ethnic and non-English speaking press:** News story, human interest, community calendars, listener perspectives

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Build a Media Team Within Your Group

- Contact the people in your organization with an interest in media activities.
- Use this group to identify media opportunities and plan coordinated messages.
- The team will be your eyes and ears in finding stories that you can respond to with letters to the editor or calls to broadcast stations.
- Identify spokespersons to respond to news stories and reply to follow-up questions.
- Choose a media contact for your organization – one person who can be available at all times by mobile phone. They do not need to know the answer to all the questions, just be willing to receive and reply to media inquiries and find the person within your group to respond.

Think Through the Scope of Your Media Activities

- A basic media strategy would include:
 - › Press releases about events and activities
 - › Reacting to negative publicity
- A proactive media strategy would include:
 - › Developing stories for the press
 - › Seeking newspapers' editorial page coverage
 - › Holding press conferences and media events
 - › A multi-faceted media campaign for a particular project or decision