



AUGUST ADVOCACY

TOOLKIT

HOST A SITE VISIT

SHOW OFFICIALS HOUSING AT WORK DURING AUGUST ADVOCACY

PURPOSE

Once a meeting, tour, or local engagement is requested or scheduled, the next step is making it meaningful. Site visits give public officials and staff the chance to see housing and community development programs in action. Housing authorities, redevelopment agencies, and community development organizations can show the impact of policy decisions on the ground: homes preserved, residents served, communities strengthened, and challenges that still require attention.

This toolkit provides best practices for hosting site visits with community stakeholders and federal, state, and local officials and staff.

A site visit helps turn policy into something decisionmakers can see, hear, and remember.



WHY HOST A SITE VISIT?

Public housing agencies and community development organizations can do something most advocacy groups cannot: physically show the local impact of housing and community development programs.

A strong site visit can help officials and staff:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">» See how public investment supports housing stability and community development;» Understand local housing needs and operational challenges;» Meet residents, staff, commissioners, local partners, and community stakeholders; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Connect policy decisions to real people and real communities;» Understand both successes and ongoing needs;» Remember your agency when housing issues come before Congress, the state legislature, city council, county commission, or other decision-making bodies. |
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This is where housing leaders have a unique advantage. You are not just asking officials to support housing — you can show them the impact of their support in action.

WHAT COUNTS AS A SITE VISIT?

A site visit can be formal or informal. Choose the format that best fits your capacity, relationship with the office, and local story.

Examples include:

- » A property tour;
 - » A visit to a redevelopment or preservation project;
 - » A resident or stakeholder roundtable;
 - » A meeting with agency leadership, commissioners, and staff;
 - » A ribbon cutting or groundbreaking;
 - » A community event;
 - » A visit to a supportive services program;
- » A tour of a project funded through housing or community development programs;
 - » A local partner visit with schools, nonprofits, employers, health providers, or local government.
 - » A community development investment that improved a neighborhood;
 - » A challenge that shows why public resources are still needed.

Staff visits count too. If the elected official is unavailable, staff can still be valuable partners and messengers.



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SITE OR PROGRAM

Select a location that clearly demonstrates the value of housing and community development programs. Whether highlighting a successful RAD conversion or units facing backlog challenges, the location of your site visit is a statement of your intention for the visit.

Good site visit locations may show:

- » A successful preservation or redevelopment;
- » Public housing modernization needs;
- » Voucher program impact;
- » Resident services or supportive housing;
- » Community development investments;
- » Partnerships with local government, nonprofits, schools, health providers, employers, or service providers;
- » A local challenge that requires federal, state, or local attention.

Choose a site where you can tell a clear story:

- » What was the need?
- » What did your agency do?
- » What resources or partnerships made it possible?
- » What challenges remain?

2 IDENTIFY THE MAIN MESSAGE

Before the visit, decide what you want the official or staff member to remember.

SAMPLE MESSAGE STRUCTURE:

Housing and community development programs help our community [local outcome]. Continued support and partnership are needed because [local challenge or opportunity].

Examples:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Federal housing programs help families, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities remain safely housed in our community.» Public housing capital funding helps preserve affordable homes, but local needs continue to exceed available resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Housing Choice Vouchers help families access stable housing, employment, education, and opportunity.» Community development programs support neighborhood revitalization, infrastructure, services, and local partnerships.» State and local partnerships help turn housing plans into real community outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Predictable funding, flexibility, and local coordination help agencies serve residents more effectively. <p>Keep the message local, concrete, and nonpartisan.</p> |
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BUILD A SIMPLE AGENDA

A strong site visit does not need to be long. The best visits are focused, organized, and clear.

SAMPLE 30-MINUTE SITE VISIT

0–5 MINUTES: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce your agency, service area, and purpose of the visit.

5–15 MINUTES: SITE TOUR

Show the property, development, program, or community project.

15–25 MINUTES: LOCAL IMPACT DISCUSSION

Explain how housing and community development programs support the work being shown.

25–30 MINUTES: NEXT STEPS

Thank the official or staff, make a clear ask, offer to serve as a local resource, and identify follow-up items.

SAMPLE 60-MINUTE SITE VISIT

0–10 MINUTES: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce agency leadership, commissioners, staff, residents, and partners.

10–25 MINUTES: SITE TOUR

Highlight the property, program, development, or community investment.

25–40 MINUTES: RESIDENT, STAFF, OR PARTNER PERSPECTIVES

Share brief local examples that connect the visit to real outcomes.

40–50 MINUTES: POLICY DISCUSSION

Connect local needs to federal, state, or local housing and community development priorities.

50–60 MINUTES: QUESTIONS, ASK, AND FOLLOW-UP

Answer questions, make your ask, provide a leave-behind, and confirm next steps.

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PREPARE PARTICIPANTS

Before the visit, make sure everyone knows their role.

Internal Prep Checklist

- » Confirm date, time, location, and attendees;
- » Identify the main message for the visit;
- » Determine who will speak and in what order;
- » Prepare residents, staff, commissioners, and partners who may participate;
- » Confirm whether photos or media are allowed;
- » Prepare local data and a one-page leave-behind;
- » Confirm accessibility, security, parking, and arrival instructions;
- » Assign someone to take notes and track follow-up items.

Resident and Partner Participation

If residents or partners are participating, make expectations clear.

They should know:

- » Why the official or staff member is visiting;
- » What topic they are being asked to discuss;
- » Whether media or photography may be present;
- » That participation is voluntary;
- » That they do not need to share personal details they are uncomfortable sharing.

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CONNECT THE VISIT TO POLICY

Use the visit to show how policy affects local implementation. Avoid jargon where possible.

Suggested message points:

- » Housing programs are working in our community;
- » Local housing needs continue to exceed available resources;
- » Predictable funding helps agencies preserve homes and plan responsibly;
- » Administrative capacity matters for local program performance;
- » Housing investments support residents, neighborhoods, and local economies;
- » Local agencies need flexibility, stability, and partnership from policymakers at every level.

End with a clear request. Make sure the visit is more than a tour.

Depending on the official, ask the office to:

- » Support stable and predictable housing funding;
- » Stay engaged on housing and community development issues;
- » Connect your agency with relevant staff or agencies;
- » Attend a future event;
- » Help address a local implementation barrier;
- » Use your agency as a local resource;
- » Share what they learned with colleagues or leadership.

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CONSIDER LOCAL MEDIA

Some site visits may be appropriate for local media, while others should remain private. Make this determination in advance.

Media may be appropriate for:

- » Ribbon cuttings;
- » Groundbreakings;
- » Community events;
- » Major redevelopment milestones;
- » Public-facing tours;
- » Local success stories.

Media may not be appropriate for:

- » Sensitive resident conversations;
- » Properties where privacy or safety is a concern;
- » Discussions involving individual case details;
- » Sites where photography could compromise resident privacy.

If media is invited, coordinate with the official's office and obtain necessary permissions before the event.



FOLLOW UP AFTER THE VISIT

Follow-up is what turns a visit into long-term advocacy value.

After the visit:

- » Send a thank-you email to the official and staff;
- » Provide any promised materials or data;
- » Share approved photos, if appropriate;
- » Send a related NAHRO Action Alert when appropriate;
- » Follow up directly with the official or staff on the specific ask;
- » Encourage colleagues, commissioners, residents, and partners to take action;
- » Report the engagement to NAHRO.

Sample Follow-Up Email

Dear [Staff Name],

Thank you for joining [Organization Name] for [site visit/event] on [date]. We appreciated the opportunity to show how housing and community development programs are working in [Community].

During the visit, we discussed [brief summary of key issues]. We hope your office will continue to support policies and partnerships that help local agencies provide safe, stable, and affordable housing.

As a follow-up, we would welcome the opportunity to [insert specific ask or next step].

Please consider us a local resource on housing and community development issues. We look forward to staying in touch.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

REPORT YOUR ENGAGEMENT TO NAHRO

Reporting your site visit helps NAHRO understand where officials are hearing directly from housing and community development leaders and where additional outreach may be needed.

Please report:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Official or staff who attended;» Date and location of the visit;» Type of engagement;» Key issues discussed; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Whether residents, commissioners, staff, or partners participated;» Whether media attended or covered the event;» Any follow-up needed from NAHRO. |
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Reporting helps NAHRO tell a stronger national story about member advocacy and local impact.

QUICK SITE VISIT CHECKLIST

BEFORE THE VISIT

- » Request or confirm the meeting or visit;
- » Confirm the date, time, location, and attendees;
- » Choose a site or program that shows clear local impact;
- » Identify your main message;
- » Prepare a short agenda;
- » Brief residents, staff, commissioners, and partners;
- » Prepare local data or a leave-behind;
- » Confirm photo, media, accessibility, and security details;
- » Prepare a clear ask.

DURING THE VISIT

- » Keep the message clear and local;
- » Introduce residents, staff, and partners where appropriate;
- » Show how housing programs support real outcomes;
- » Discuss both successes and challenges;
- » Ask the office to stay engaged on housing and community development issues;
- » Make a specific ask before the visit ends.

AFTER THE VISIT

- » Send a thank-you email;
- » Provide promised materials;
- » Send a related Action Alert when appropriate;
- » Share approved photos or media clips;
- » Report the engagement to NAHRO;
- » Continue the relationship with the official's office.





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