

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half of the image is a solid teal-blue background. The bottom half shows a deep blue ocean with white waves breaking onto a wide, sandy beach. Several small figures of people are visible on the beach and in the shallow water.

Santa Monica Housing Authority

Code for America Community Fellowship

SOCIAL MEDIA

Research shows that social media is an important, low-cost tool for government to reach their public

SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

Research indicates that social media is an important tool for government to reach their public

- Engage and interact with the community
- Low-cost way to reach way more residents
- 2/3 of adults online participate in social media and get their news there!
- Spread important news to people that may not be utilizing local newspapers declining in popularity
- Increase community trust by responding to questions and posts

SMHA NEEDS its own SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is absolutely necessary for the Housing Division to **communicate directly with Santa Monica residents**. Community members interviewed did not know how to find any information about affordable housing in Santa Monica. Those that found the SMHA on the city's website said they were unable to find helpful information that answered their burning questions.

The Problems:

- Residents interviewed only knew what they knew about Section 8 from their friends, family, and community groups, so much of what they told us was incorrect or just rumors
- Senior residents didn't know about POD
- Eligible residents didn't have correct information about who is eligible for section 8 and didn't know they could apply
- Residents interviewed showed clear distrust of the city, citing that they just collected information from them but showed little, if no, willingness to really help them

SMHA NEEDS its own SOCIAL MEDIA

How can social media help SMHA with these problems?

SMHA can use social media to post:

- **Important housing division updates**, i.e. Section 8 announcements and available affordable housing units. With social media, the SMHA can post updates as they happen in a place that is highly visible and easily accessible for the community
- **Housing division news**, such as new programs like POD, can be announced. Information can then be posted that clearly says who is eligible to apply. Again, this is a lower cost, less labor-intensive way to easily spread information than what is currently being used. And it will make it easier for more people to get answers fast
- **Educational content** about the housing division programs and services, i.e. who is eligible for section 8, what is needed to apply. There is currently NO way for the community to learn general affordable housing information from the city. Again, the only knowledge circulating is mostly rumors and misinformation. The city can easily use social media to post answers to regularly asked questions!

SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

How You Can Better Use Social Media in Government

“Agencies can build a following by partnering with local influencers and encouraging constituents to follow them on social media, and then **they can build credibility on social media by debunking false information and relaying the correct narrative** before a crisis escalates.

Governments can also build trust with their constituents through social media by responding with empathy and professionalism to citizen complaints. People can be critical online, but governments can show that they have heard, and are willing to respond, to feedback on an online platform.”

”

SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

The Truth About Local Government and Social Media

“ Truth: Social Media Management is No Longer the Responsibility of a Single Person or Department

*There was a time when the use of social media by local governments was the responsibility of a single public information officer who would update a single community Facebook page. Today, **many municipalities are diversifying their social strategies and using various platforms at the department level to further unique aspects of their citizen engagement strategies.***

Truth: Social Media is one of the Most Effective Ways to Inform Citizens of New Legislation Quickly

*Citizens often discard direct mail unopened, local governments cannot always trust citizens to seek out updates on their local government website, and coverage by traditional media outlets must be earned. **Social media, on the other hand, is free, fast, and consumed by a large portion of citizens throughout their day. In fact, according to Sprout Social, 62 percent of U.S. adults get their news from social media.***”

SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

Forbes: Social Media and Local Government

“ *...social media could have a more meaningful convergence with local government, where it could help spread news on local issues. This could be extremely important as we've seen a decline in small community newspapers...*

"By some accounts two out of every three adults gets their news from social media," added Anirudh Ruhil, professor at Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs...

...Dr. Paul Russo, vice provost at Yeshiva University and professor in the Masters of Data Analytics and Visualization Program. "Cities need ways to get information out quickly, from hundreds of small understaffed offices, and Facebook and Instagram are ideal venues to connect with citizens where they live – and where they travel."

"Social media, if used correctly, can be the best channel for communicating all messages from a local government," added Dr. Dustin York, director of undergraduate and graduate communications at Maryville University...

The other benefit of social media is that it can allow local governments to reach more people with less effort.

”

SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

Government Public Relations and Social Media: An Analysis of the Perceptions and Trends of Social Media Use at the Local Government Level

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*“Social media tools can improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010). **This new technology allows officials in government to build relationships with key stakeholders, namely the citizens it represents.***

***Social media can enhance governments’ abilities to interact with and engage citizens as well as to meet their expectations for transparency.** Practitioners in government public relations have more tools to engage and communicate with the public than ever before.*

A recent survey showed that two-thirds of online adults use social media platforms (Smith, 2011). In addition, 40% of Internet users go online for data about government operations, and social media users are more tied to civic groups (Raine, 2011).

The boom of the Internet and particularly social media has changed the landscape for communications. Traditional media are now not the only source of public government information influencing public thought and discourse.

”

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Social Media Best Practices For Nonprofits – A Comprehensive Guide

“ **#6 — INTEGRATE EVERYWHERE** *“Every online asset you own (website, blog, email, etc.) should have your social media channels integrated and used for cross-promotion...*

Your website (homepage and all interior pages) should have social follow buttons (not just the icons), and they should be ‘above the fold’ or as a static bar to ensure your audience can easily find them...Email signatures + newsletter templates should have social channel icons built into them.

All of your events should promote your social media channels. On signage, in PowerPoint slides, in the announcements and speakers’ remarks. EVERYwhere.

#14 — HELP INSTEAD OF SELL *Your main goal on social media should be to provide valuable information and resources that help your audiences solve a problem.*

...80% of the content you post on social media should be helpful and valuable to your audience, whereas 20% can be self-promoting.”

”

Comparative Analysis: **Social Media**

How are other Housing Authorities engaging with their communities through social media?

Examples of Housing Authorities with Social Media Accounts

Nearly all of the Housing Authority offices I researched have Twitter and Facebook accounts. Some even had Instagram and YouTube accounts. All of them have social media links on their Housing Authority websites.

[Houston Housing Authority](#)

[NY City Housing Authority](#)

[Chicago Housing Authority](#)

[Boston Housing Authority](#)

[Santa Clara County Housing Authority](#)

[Portland Housing](#)

[Jersey City Housing Authority](#)

[Philadelphia Housing Authority](#)

[Austin Housing Authority](#)

[Cambridge Housing Authority](#)

[Fresno Housing Authority](#)

[San Jose Housing Department](#)

[Seattle Office of Housing](#)

The following pages demonstrate examples of how other Housing Authorities around the country are using social media to reach out to their public. They post news, services updates, educational infographics, and so much more!

SANTA CLARA

HA

Santa Clara County
Housing Authority
@SCC_HousingAuth

We provide & inspire affordable housing solutions to enable low-income people in Santa Clara County to achieve financial stability and self-reliance!

Joined May 2018

Joined May 2018

Joined May 2018



Tweets 137 Following 133 Followers 337 Likes 149

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Santa Clara County Housing Authority Retweeted

Jen Loving @jenloving23 · Nov 7
Great presentation to our @SCC_Foundation Board by Team @SCC_HousingAuth re: the work of our CoC. Housing retention is climbing & placements are growing. 8K people housed (!) & Homelessness Prevention has scaled 340% in 2 years. We've even added more shelter beds. Amazing teamwork!



Want to take advantage of all the new Twitter features?

Santa Clara HA posted to Twitter the number of new VASH vouchers they received from HUD, and also shared educational statistics about VASH



Santa Clara County Housing Authority @SCC_HousingAuth · Nov 11
We have allocated us more than 390 new VASH vouchers during the All the Way Home campaign, so we now have an allocation of 1222 VASH vouchers!



Santa Clara County Housing Authority @SCC_HousingAuth · Nov 11
Since 2015 over 800 veterans have been housed with the help of @HUD VASH vouchers, which consist of rental subsidy AND supportive services to make sure our vets stay housed. We're proud to report that 96% of veterans housed with a VASH voucher remained stably housed!



Destination: Home @DSTNHome
1,602 veterans are home! After four years we are finally able to say that more veterans are leaving our streets than are becoming homeless. This is a huge milestone for our collective work. Thank you @SCC_HousingAuth ...

1 6 15

AUSTIN



HACA
@Hacanet

HACA is a high-performing housing authority that provides housing opportunities & community programs to more than 20,000 individuals & families in Austin.

Austin, TX

hacanet.org

Joined January 2014

567 Photos and videos



Austin HA used Twitter to share the grand opening of a supportive housing building for people experiencing homelessness



HACA @Hacanet · Sep 23
We are excited to announce the grand opening of @IntegralCareATX's Terrace at Oak Springs – offering permanent supportive housing to individuals experiencing homelessness in east Austin. HACA is proud to be a contributing partner for the Terrace at Oak Springs.



3 11



Houston HA uses Twitter to educate readers about everything affordable housing related using infographics

Houston Housing Authority

@Housing4Houston

Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 58,000 low-income Houstonians.

📍 Houston, TX

🌐 housingforhouston.com

📅 Joined August 2012

📷 513 Photos and videos



Tweets Tweets & replies Media



Houston Housing Authority @Housing4Houston · Nov 1

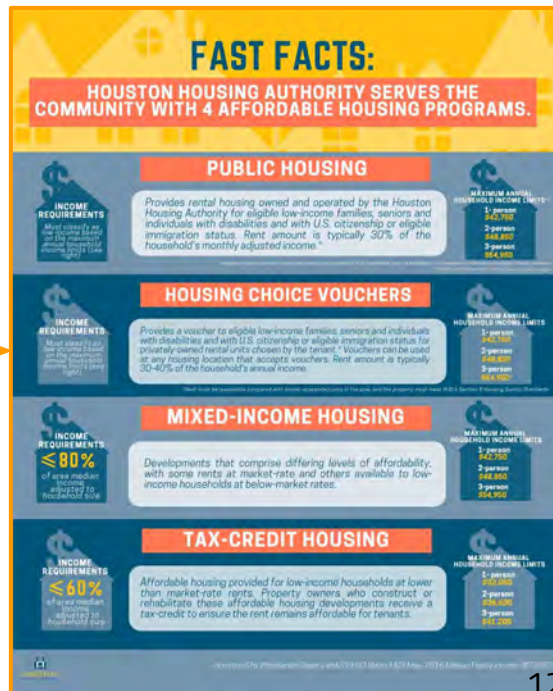
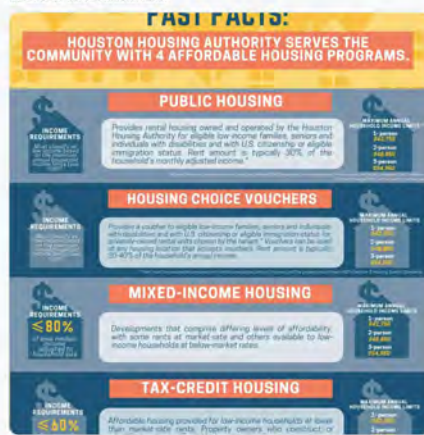
Mixed-income housing offers studied benefits for communities facing rising income inequality and residential economic segregation like the city of Houston.

We invite you to learn more about mixed-income housing by checking out today's infographic!



Houston Housing Authority @Housing4Houston · Oct 30

Understanding and sifting through all the information around affordable housing can be overwhelming, but HHA is here to help. Learn more about the programs we offer to serve Houstonians.



NY



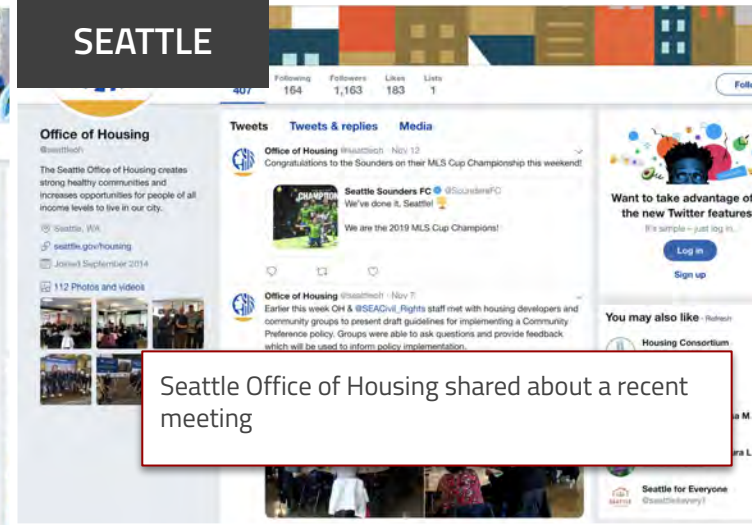
NYCHA posted official city news

CHICAGO



Chicago HA shared good news

SEATTLE



Seattle Office of Housing shared about a recent meeting

BOSTON



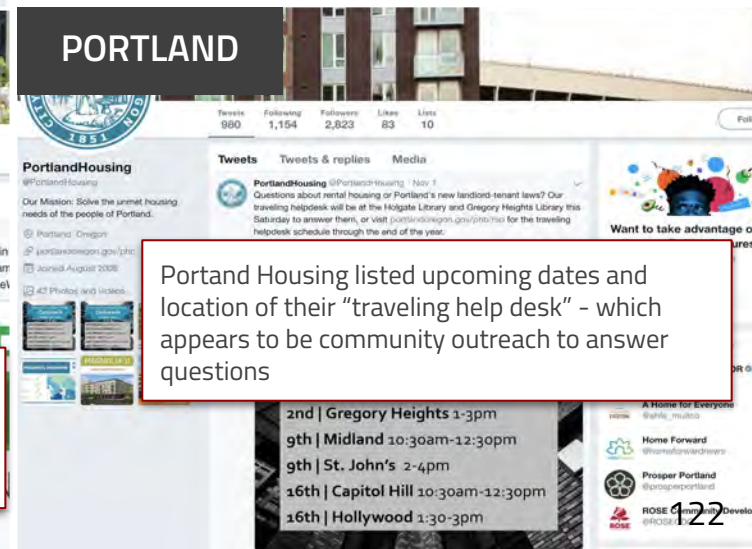
Boston HA retweeted about a grand opening of a mixed-income building

SAN JOSE



San Jose Housing encouraged community feedback by sharing upcoming event dates

PORTLAND



Portland Housing listed upcoming dates and location of their "traveling help desk" - which appears to be community outreach to answer questions

FRESNO



Fresno Housing Authority
@FresnoHousing

Official twitter account of the Fresno Housing Authority. Managed by the Communications Department.

Fresno, CA
fresnohousing.org
Joined July 2017
114 Photos and videos

Tweets **Tweets & replies** **Media**

Fresno Housing Authority @FresnoHousing · Nov 15
Your input matters! The @CityofFresno is looking for feedback on the housing and community development needs in Fresno neighborhoods. To complete an anonymous survey, visit fresnocoplanel.com #VibrantCommunities

Fresno Consolidated @fresnocoplanel
Want to take advantage of all

Fresno Housing Authority @FresnoHousing · Nov 15
Thank you to all those involved in making success, including @FCPL @WANGR @FSSocSciences

The community can experience Desmond's exhibit for free at the Central Library through December 30.

Fresno Housing Authority @FresnoHousing · Nov 5

PLEASE NOTE
FRESNO HOUSING
NOVEMBER OFFICE CLOSURES

NOV. 7
OFFICES OPEN AT 11 A.M.

NOV. 11
CLOSED FOR VETERANS DAY

NOV. 15
CLOSED FRIDAY

NOV. 28-29
CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Fresno HA uses Twitter to let the community know when their offices will be closed

PHILADELPHIA



Philadelphia Housing Authority
@PhilaHsgAuthPHA

Official Twitter Account of the Philadelphia Housing Authority & Choice Neighborhoods Initiative for Philly's Sharswood/Blumberg Comm
bit.ly/2zHAJSm

Lower North Philadelphia
phila.phila.gov
Joined February 2015
37 Photos and videos

Tweets **Tweets & replies** **Media**

Philadelphia Housing Authority @PhilaHsgAuthPHA · Oct 10
The new site, which will feature 85 apartments, also includes a LIFE Center operated by InnoVage. PHA's CEO Kelvin Jeremiah shared a laugh here with NewCourtland CEO Joseph Duffy.

Philadelphia Housing Authority @PhilaHsgAuthPHA · Oct 10
@PhilaHsgAuthPHA is proud to support one of our great partners, @newcourtland, in dedicating their new senior apartments on Henry Avenue in East Falls, across the street from PHA's Abbotsford Homes.

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@PhilaHsgAuthPHA is proud to support one of our great partners, @newcourtland, in dedicating their new senior apartments on Henry Avenue in East Falls, across the street from PHA's Abbotsford Homes.

Philadelphia HA announced new developments on Twitter

Social Media Resources

Here are some helpful links for Government use of social media

[The Importance Of Social Media To Government Departments](#)

[Forbes Social Media And Local Government](#)

[Social Media in Government: Benefits, Challenges, and How it's Used](#)

[HOW YOU CAN BETTER USE SOCIAL MEDIA IN GOVERNMENT](#)

[Improving the Accessibility of Social Media in Government](#)

[The Truth About Local Government and Social Media](#)

[Government Public Relations and Social Media: An Analysis of the Perceptions and Trends of Social Media Use at the Local Government Level](#)

Social media management guide:

[Social Media Best Practices For Nonprofits – A Comprehensive Guide](#)

WORKSHOPS

Workshops 2-3 times a year will help engage the community, spread education and updates to dispel circulating rumors, and help increase successful applications from qualifying locals

RESEARCH

Research indicates that civic engagement is very important for successful local governments

- Engage and interact with the community
- Increase community trust by showing support and willingness to help
- Invite community leaders, influencers, and nonprofits who will pass on what they learn
- Address and dispel misinformation and rumors

WORKSHOPS

Types of workshops that the SMHA should hold include, but are not limited to:

- Section 8 - what is it, who is eligible, etc (the most popular among community members)
- Section 8 - How to fill out the pre-application, what info is needed to apply, etc.
- Santa Monica Housing Authority programs and services- what does the SMHA do
- Additional Workshops for:
Section 8 residents, POD recipients, Landlords, etc

SMHA WORKSHOPS

Workshops, a form of civic engagement, is absolutely necessary for the Housing Division to **communicate directly with Santa Monica residents**. It's important to continue to repeat the main problem of lack of clear and correct information about affordable housing within the community. Those that found the SMHA on the city's website said they were unable to find helpful information that answered their burning questions. Additionally, they all have unique situations and don't know where to begin.

The Problems:

- Residents interviewed only knew what they knew about Section 8 from their friends, family, and community groups, so much of what they told us was incorrect or just rumors
- Residents does not know what the Housing Authority does or about any other program besides Section 8
- Not enough eligible local residents and employees filled out Section 8 pre-applications when the waitlist was open
- Residents interviewed showed clear distrust of the city, citing that they just collected information from them but showed little, if no, willingness to really help them

SMHA WORKSHOPS

How can workshops help SMHA with these problems?

SMHA can use workshops to:

- **Educate the community about Section 8, how it works, who is eligible, and answer questions**
- **Educate the community about the Housing Authority,** what it does, what other programs and services are available, what the city is doing to help
- **Answer questions!** Residents have tons of questions but many have unique situations and don't know where to begin. The workshops are a great starting point for people to learn the basics and find the answers they need to get the help they need
- **Engage the community and directly interact with residents** in order to build trust and communication with residents who feel left out and don't believe the city has their best interests in mind.
- **Invite and teach community leaders, influencers and nonprofit organizers** who will spread the knowledge they gain from the workshops- another route to correcting the spread of misinformation

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH

ILG Housing Toolkit: Addressing Community Concerns

“

Authentic public engagement cannot only help quell...concerns, but it can create a number of additional benefits including:

- Better identification of the public's values, ideas and recommendations
- More community buy-in and support for land use planning related activities
- Improved decision making and better outcomes
- Residents more informed about current housing issues and concerns
- Faster entitlement process and housing project implementation with less need to revisit
- More trust between local leadership and the community
- Better understanding of the broader vision of the community

”

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH

Center for Economic and Community Development: Why Community Engagement Matters

“

While research regarding the benefits and importance of community engagement varies, several key opportunities are commonly identified. Among these are:

- **Create more effective solutions.** Drawing on local knowledge from a diverse group creates solutions that are practical and effective...
- **Empower and integrate people from different backgrounds.** Groups that feel ignored can gain greater control over their lives and their community...
- Create local networks of community members. **The more people who know what is going on and who are willing to work toward a goal, the more likely a community is to be successful in reaching its goals.**
- **Create several opportunities for discussing concerns.** Regular, on-going discussions allow people to express concerns before problems become too big or out of control.
- **Increase trust in community organizations and governance. Working together improves communication and understanding.** Knowing what government, community citizens and leaders, and organizations can and cannot do may reduce future conflict.

”

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH

12 Inspiring Civic Engagement Examples [Smart Initiatives]

“

How to spread the word about upcoming workshops:

“1. Promote the sessions on your civic website. For the two weeks before the session, add a banner or prominent advertisement on your homepage to inform citizens of the date and time of the next session.

2. Promote on social media...Posting about the event helps to amplify the reach of your message and encourages social sharing. In addition, if using Facebook, create an event page that followers can RSVP to directly. Not only will it give you an estimated number of attendees, your event will be seen by the friends and followers of everyone who RSVPs that they are attending, further expanding the reach of your message. Ask your municipal leaders to share your posts on their social media pages as well.

4. Ask your civic leaders to mention the event at relevant speaking events. In the weeks leading up to the event, encourage your civic leaders to mention to audiences that they have the opportunity to discuss key topics further one-on-one at the upcoming open forum sessions.

5. Display posters and distribute postcards. Promote the event in local offices by hanging posters and putting stacks of postcards on display. Partner with local businesses and ask them to hang posters and hand out postcards as well.

6. Include information in bill stuffers. Including a small slip of paper with event details in ... envelopes is an easy way to educate residents about upcoming events.”

”

Engagement Resources

Here are some helpful links related to local government increasing engagement with residents. I did not find too much information directly related to educational workshops, but the following address the benefits of community engagement and includes cities that have had held workshops.

RESOURCES:

[12 Inspiring Civic Engagement Examples \[Smart Initiatives\]](#)

[ICMA - Community Engagement](#)

[10 Must Reads on Community Engagement in Local Government](#)

[ILG Housing Toolkit: Addressing Community Concerns](#)

[Community Planning Toolkit](#)

WORKSHOPS:

[HACLA Section 8 Lottery workshop](#)

[Denver Housing Authority HCV workshops](#)

[Somerville, MA Workshop](#)

[Erie, Pennsylvania Section 8 workshop](#)

[Dorchester, MA Workshop](#)

[WeHo Section 8 Workshop](#)

Thanks!

Questions?

Email: mmalin@codeforamerica.org

