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ABAG is the Bay Area’s Council of Governments. ABAG works with its 109 town/city/county members, other regional stakeholders, and state and federal policymakers to expand and protect housing choices and increase affordability. ABAG promotes and enables coordinated action by facilitating dialogue, sourcing critical decision-support information and providing technical assistance.

ABAG and numerous engaged stakeholders have proffered specific, actionable housing solution proposals that are consistent with the principles articulated in this memo. The task at hand is to craft a high-consensus common agenda.

To learn more about housing trends and ABAG’s actions, we invite you to explore these reports:

- State of the Region 2015
- People, Places, and Prosperity
- Displacement in the Bay Area
- Housing Production Progress Report
- Housing Element Sites Inventory
- Housing Solutions Menu

Finding Common Ground

The Bay Area harbors a condition dating back decades, housing un-affordability. It is chronic and episodically acute. In our current episode, almost every one of us here today has an immediate family member, or a community member we know well and rely on daily, who faces tough housing choices—spending too much for housing, or moving too far from a job or a neighborhood called home. Many of us here today face these challenges ourselves.

We know the remedies in general: build more homes, particularly more affordable homes, and preserve existing affordability. “Build more homes” will mean different things in different communities, from cul de sacs to condos near BART to accessory units behind (or inside) bungalows. “Preserving existing affordability” may mean seniors with paid-off mortgages being able to age in place, or renters in cities with local right-to-remain policies being able to stay in affordable open-market homes, or residents in homes with legally-assured affordability (aka affordable housing) being able to count on continuity for themselves and future residents long-term as affordability covenants stay in place.

These are, therefore, ABAG's overarching housing goals:

- Build more housing, particularly in locally designated priority development areas (PDAs)
- Increase affordable housing options
- Preserve affordable housing to maintain neighborhood stability and economic diversity
- Encourage smarter, safer housing to conserve resources and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters



So, what strategies are most promising, what solutions most potent in pursuit of these goals? We could make a list: how to solve the problem if everyone else would only see it our way. But that's not how we work. That's not finding common ground. That's not what this workshop is about.

It will be wonderful indeed if we all leave this workshop today having hammered out a grand compromise of 5 or 7 or 10 Housing Affordability Solutions we can all get behind and push. Wonderful, but probably a stretch!

But what if we discover instead that we have no common ground? What if we discover that our common ground is so small, so narrow that we're stuck with a *status quo* that isn't working?

Do we have the courage to ask ourselves:

How can we find actionable common ground at scale?

What are the core principles that can form the outlines the parcels of the substantial common ground that must underlay and support an actionable regional housing solutions initiative?

For your consideration today:

- Every community can do something, and should; and all of it should count.
- Proposed projects that conform to community, regional and state policy should get permits and get built.
- Communities that want to protect residents from displacement or raise funds to preserve housing that's already affordable, or create more, should be enabled to do so.
- Making "Safer Homes in Stronger Communities"—by upgrading vulnerable older structures to conserve resources, survive floods and 'quakes and remain affordable—makes sense.
- Together, we need to make a compelling case for what we know—that a too-tight housing supply and too-high housing costs directly impact community safety, health, education, economic prosperity and GHG—to anyone and everyone who can help invent, install and invest in workable, high-consensus housing solutions region-wide.
- Pooling our resources, with return-to-source protections, makes sense.