



# Reframing Affordable Housing

Why some message about housing backfire when others do  
not

Invited by  
Home for All  
San Mateo County

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# What is a **Frame**?

Frames are sets of choices about how information is presented:

What to emphasize, how to explain it, and what to leave unsaid.

# Backfires reflect patterns in thinking

**Patterns can  
block issue  
engagement**

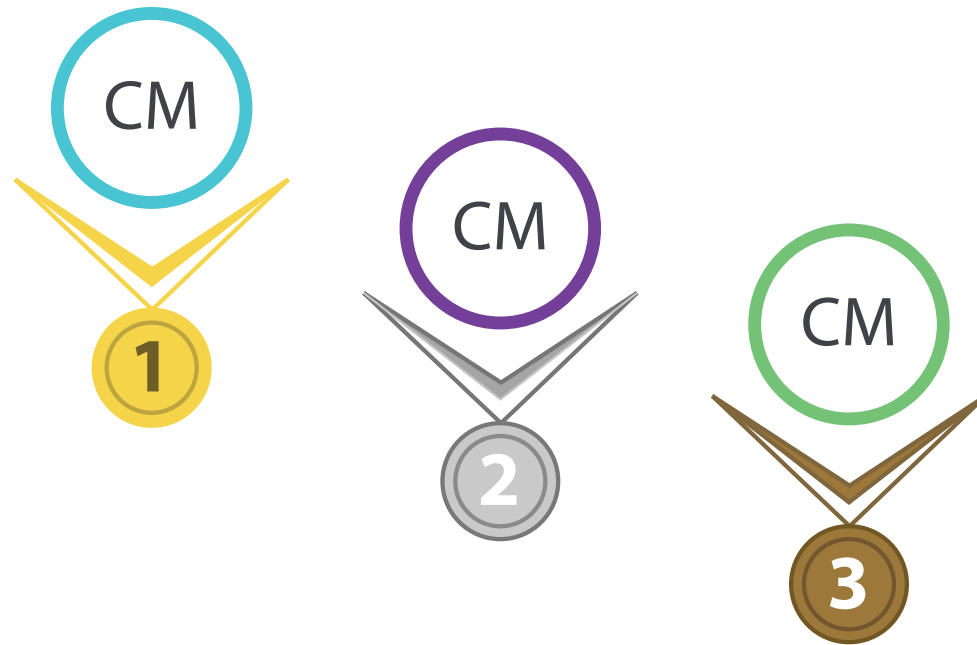
- Mobility, Personal Responsibility, and Self-Makingness
- Separate Fates and Zero-Sum Thinking
- Thin Understanding of Cause and Effect
- Crisis and Fatalism
- NIMBY and Segregation is Natural
- Facts Don't Fit the (Pre-existing) Frame

# Cultural Models:

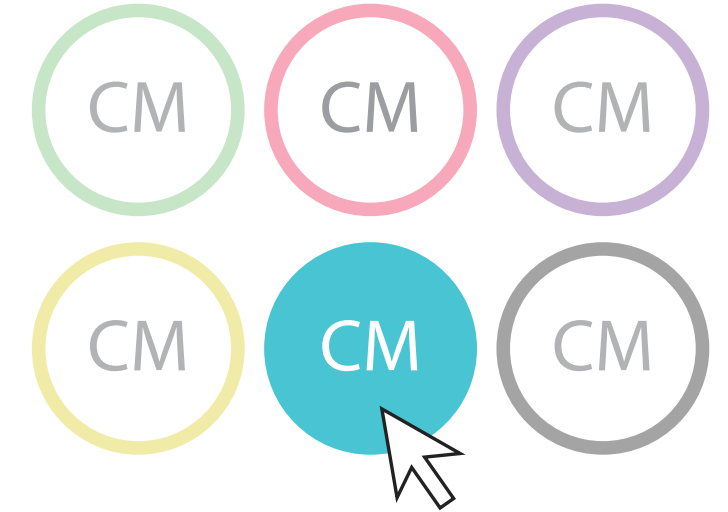
## The Basis of Strategic Communications



Multiple models available



Some are more productive than others



Choose the cues that activate productive models

**“Housing” =  
Assisted Housing**

**Fatalism**

**Individualism**

- Mentalism
- Individual Responsibility
- The Good Old Days
- Evil Slumlord

**Government**

- Responsible for Regulating Rentals
- Inefficient and Corrupts

*What's in the swamp of...*

**Housing**

**Context**

- Protection from Outside World
- What Surrounds Us Shapes Us
- Open Children

**Consumerism**

- Rising Costs
- Just the Basics
- Segregation is Natural

**Housing as Threat**

- Healthy Housing = Do No Harm
- Visible Contaminants
- Stress Affects Health

# Frames to avoid



- *Consumerism* — the “you get what you pay for” frame is naturalized
- *Fatalism & Crisis* — allows people to think problems cannot be solved
- *Individualism*— limits the types of solutions that are available