

Framing the case for good homes for all

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Presented to
Housing Solutions Collaborative -
Peer Support Call

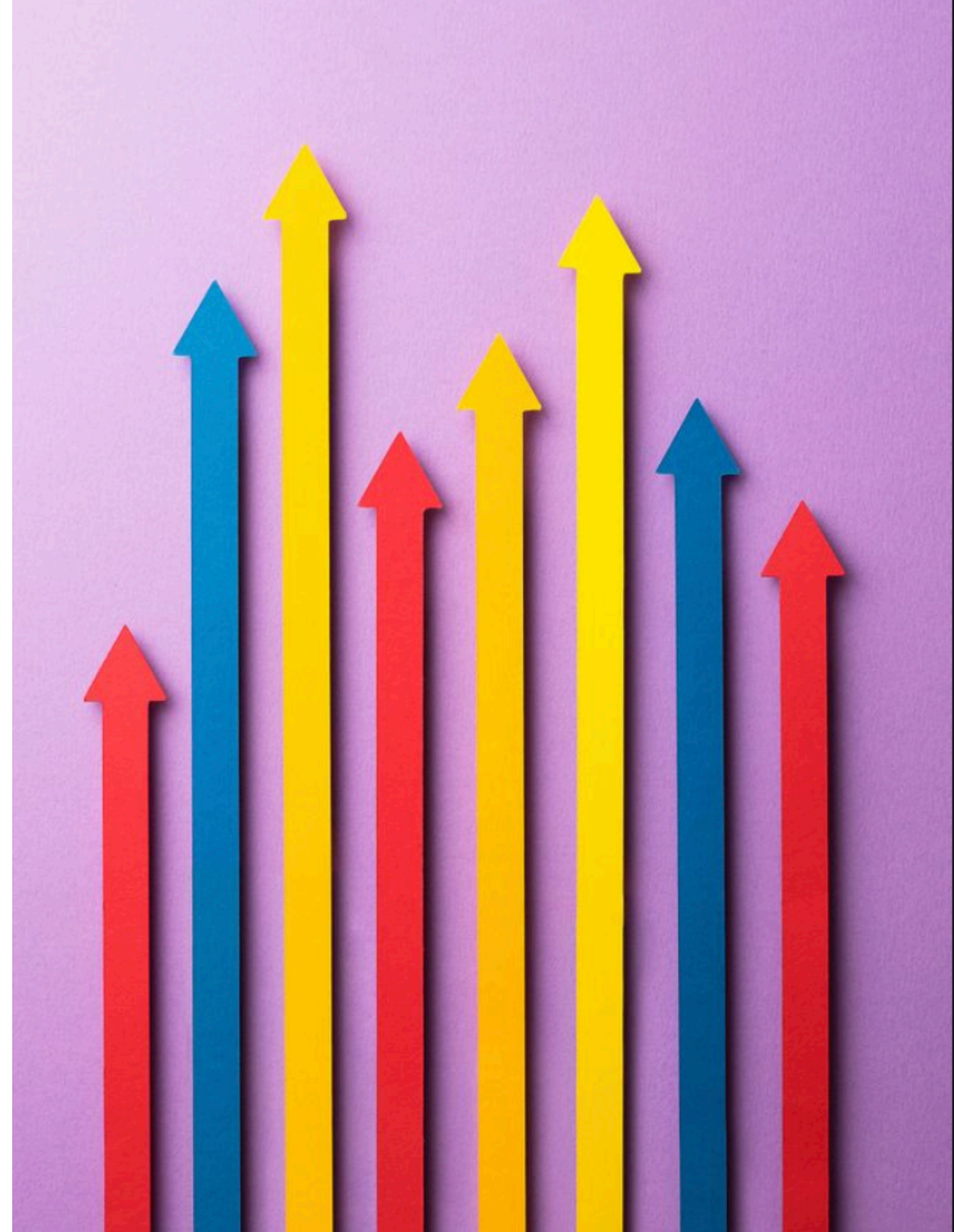
June 23, 2022

In this session

- Orientation to framing & framing research
- Frames that make our work harder
- Frames that make way for change
- Team Time
- Wrap up: Discussion, evaluation, next steps

Reframing goals

- Build understanding of big-picture factors that shape availability of good places to live
- Boost salience of the justice, equity, and inclusion aspects of housing
- Shift attitudes toward collective responsibility and collective efficacy
- Build more accurate and positive understandings of how community development organizations can help
- Build support for big-picture solutions: policies and strategies that promote safe, stable, quality housing for all



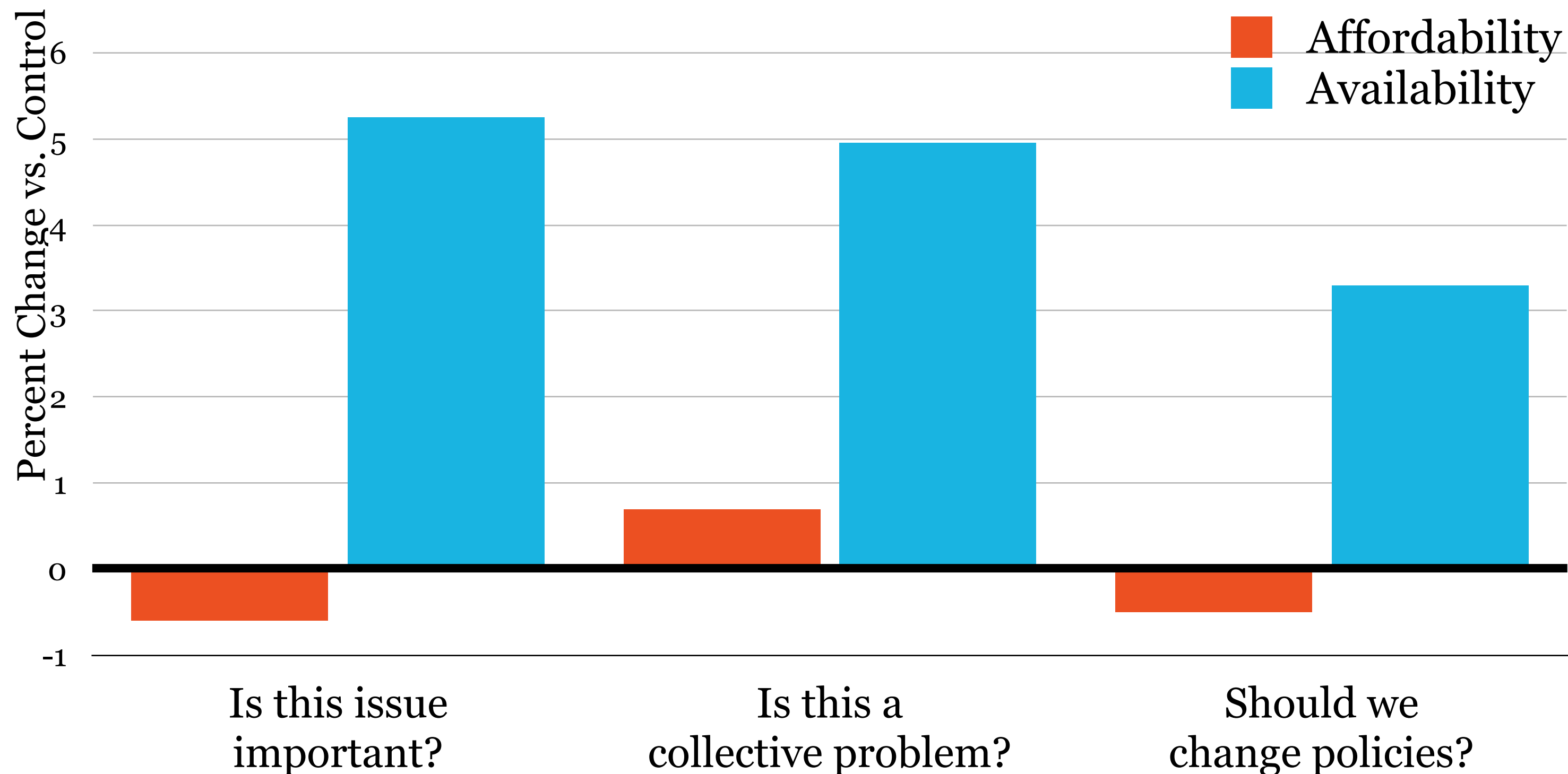
descriptive research

**how people
think now**

reframing research

**how to spark
new thinking**

How should we define the problem? That's an empirical question.



Traps

Frames that make our work harder

When we rely on
consumerist
language, people
conclude that we are all at
the mercy of “market
forces” and we are each
on our own.



Consumerist framing

The housing market has spiraled out of control. Even middle-class families with solid incomes are priced out of the neighborhoods where they could have afforded to buy just a few years ago.

Civic framing

Our community's housing costs have outpaced local incomes. One reason: our rules and guidelines for community development are out of date, which is allowing housing costs to spike.

When we build our case only on **single group interests**, we spark *us-vs-them* thinking that narrows support for change and widens perceived divisions.



"US VS. THEM" by decibel.places is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Framed with affected population

People who work low-wage jobs often must spend more than half of their earnings on rent. In our state, there isn't a single county where a single mother can afford a one-bedroom apartment on a minimum-wage job.

Systems Attribution

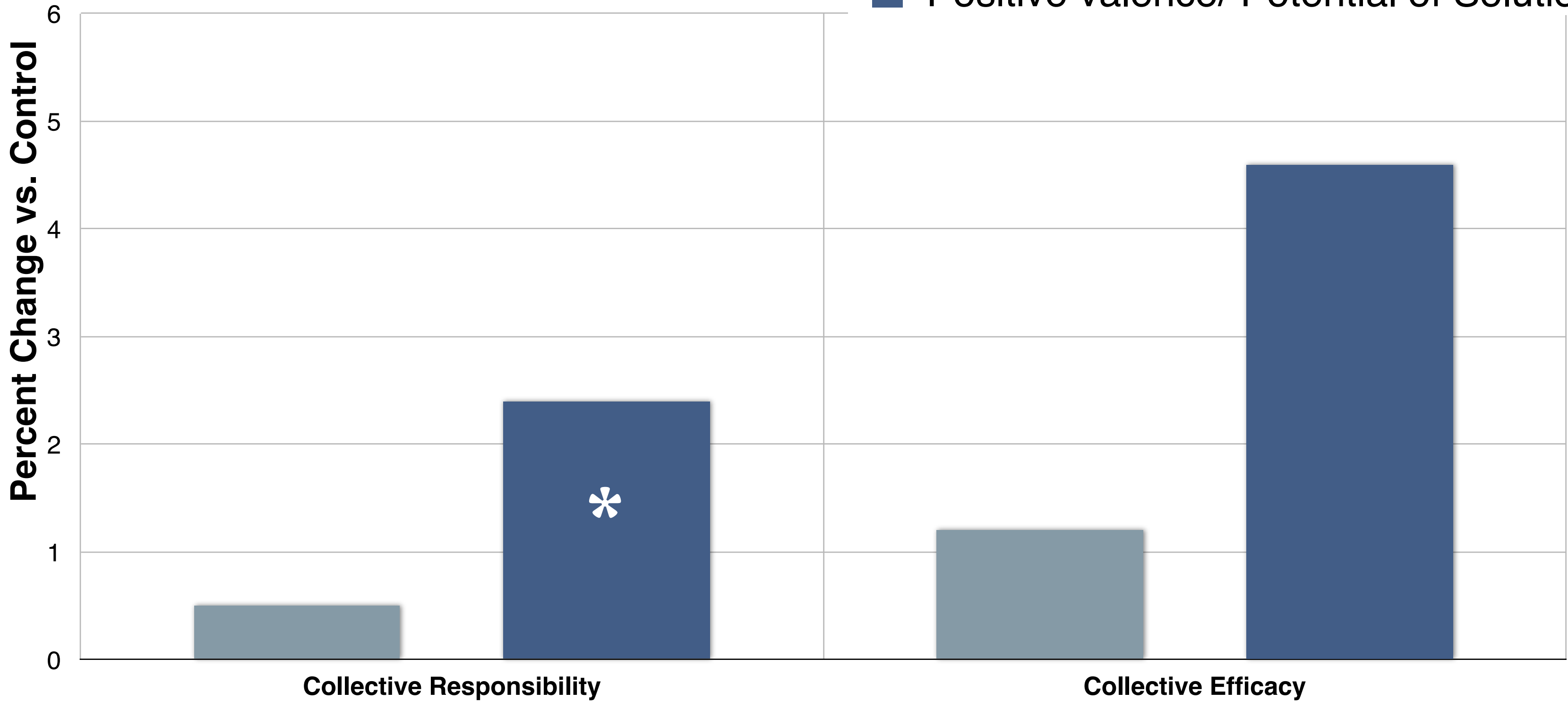
Housing costs are rising faster than incomes. As a state, we need to work on both sides of this equation. We can and must adjust what it costs to rent or buy a place to live, as well as factors that affect average incomes.

When we feed people **stark statistics**, they may agree that something seems off, but we rarely bring them to the table or spark an appetite for equity-focused solutions.



Tone Matters

- Negative valence/ Breadth of Problem
- Positive valence/ Potential of Solution



Framed with Negative Valence

Because housing prices downtown are unaffordable on most incomes, many families are forced to live in the outer suburbs. Parents endure long commutes, losing precious family time and adding to the stress and strain of everyday life.

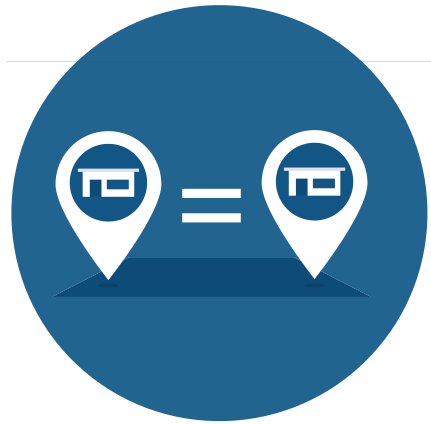
Reframed with Positive Valence

If our policies sync local incomes with local housing costs, more people will live closer to where they work. Our region would likely see a range of surprising benefits, from less traffic to greater family involvement in schools.

Reframes

Frames that can make way for change

Lead with a
PRINCIPLE



Set the BIG IDEA:
Fairness and Interdependence

Spell out a
PROCESS + PROBLEM



Explain it

Offer a clear
PROPOSAL



Stress the solutions

Key framing practice

Define the problem as availability.

When we emphasize the theme of **opportunity**, people conclude that opportunities abound, and it's up to individuals to make the most of them.



When we describe the problem in terms of **affordability**, people think about personal incomes, household budgets, and other individual-level factors.



Headlines framed w/ 'affordability'

“It’s getting harder to be poor:
Bill takes aim at housing
affordability”

“Need affordable senior housing?
You may be waiting for years.”

Headlines reframed w/ availability

“It’s getting harder to find a place:
Bill takes aim at apartment
availability”

“Want to live here in retirement?
Support ‘Homes for All Act’ now.”

Key framing practice

Make the story about fairness and interdependence.

‘Fairness Across Places’ prompts systems thinking

“No matter where people live or work, everyone should have a fair shot at doing well. We need to make sure that safe, healthy homes are available not only in a few desirable neighborhoods, but in every corner of our city.”



‘Regional Interdependence’ expands people’s view

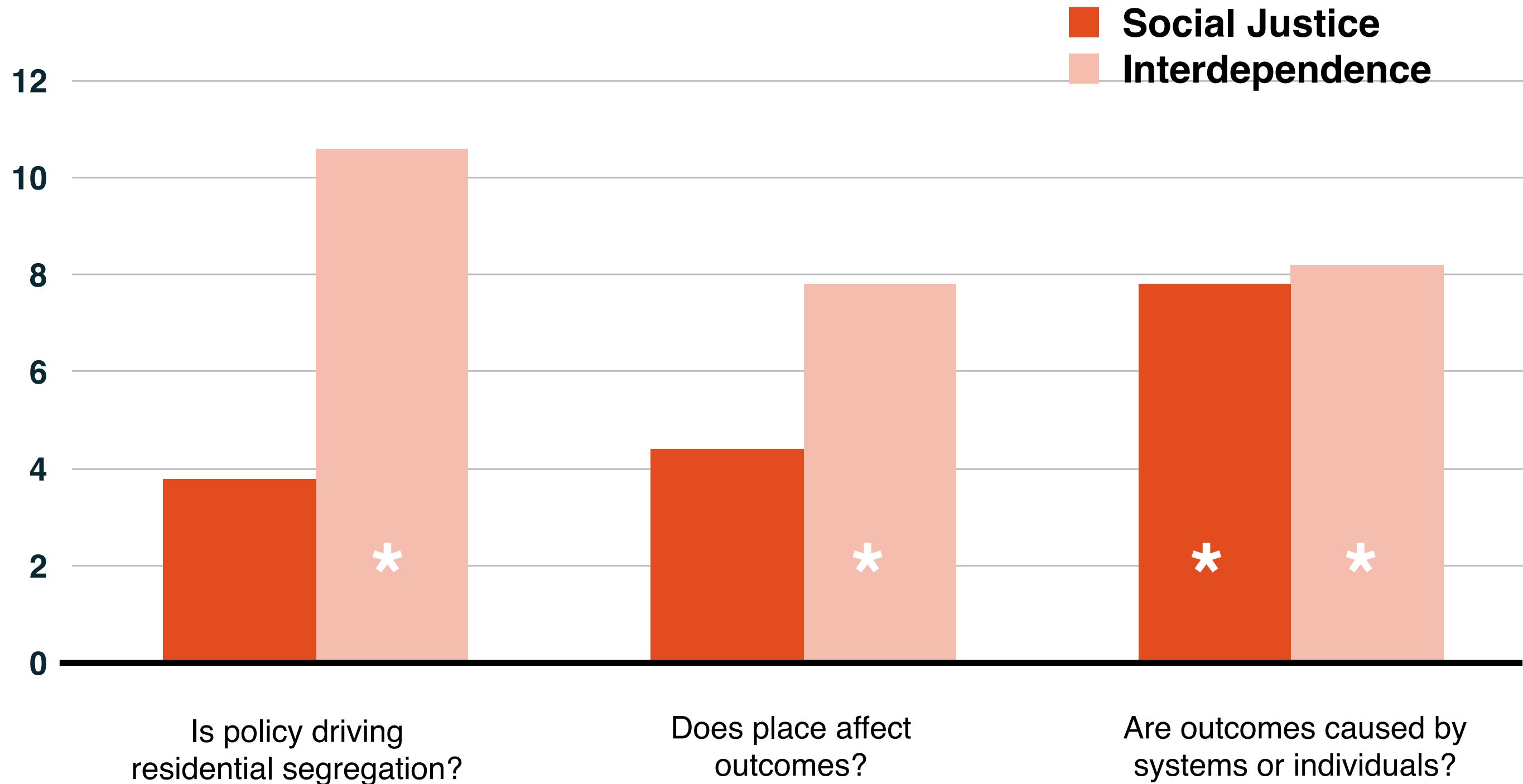
“What affects one part of our region affects us all. When we allow rents in the city to rise, more people take on long commutes. When we temper housing costs, people can live closer to work, which means less traffic and cleaner air for all. We should work regionally on inclusive housing policies.”

“Our regional economy depends on a diverse workforce. Right now, in our region’s major cities, wages generally don’t match up with what it takes to rent or buy a place to live. Unless we want to drive employees away, we must insist on housing policies that expand availability, temper rising costs, and make it possible for people at different income levels to work here and to live here.”



The right frame can move conservatives on racial justice issues

Selected findings from a FrameWorks' survey experiment on framing policies to reduce residential segregation



* = $P < .01$

Key framing practice

Show how structures work - and where they aren't working fairly.

When we help people understand how a system works by showing what affects what, we build the sense that change is possible.



On housing, what makes an explanation work?

- It helps when we **offer background** that people are probably missing.
- It's essential that we **show how housing connects** to other outcomes
- It helps when we **equip people to imagine change**

Explanatory chain:

How housing policy advantages the wealthy

Because housing is so important to community wellbeing, our federal budget includes funds to help Americans buy or rent homes. These programs guarantee loans, provide tax breaks, and offer other supports.



Right now, most of this money goes to people with higher incomes. In fact, more than half of government housing resources go to households making more than \$100,000 a year.



One effect is that people with higher incomes can spend less of their money on housing. **This gives wealthier people an advantage in other areas of life, as they are then able to spend more on things like education and health.**



Our current policy approach gives the most help to those who need it least. We can change this. In a time when housing costs are rising more quickly than incomes, we should make it a priority to ensure that everyone can secure a decent place to live.

Explanatory chain:

How housing policy disadvantages people without wealth

Because housing is so important to community wellbeing, our federal budget includes funds to help Americans buy or rent homes. These programs guarantee loans, provide tax breaks, and offer other supports.



Right now, very little of this money goes to people with lower incomes. In fact, less than a quarter of government housing resources go to households making less than \$40,000 a year.



One effect is that people with less money must spend a greater proportion of their incomes on housing. **This puts them at a disadvantage in other areas of life, as they are then able to spend less on things like education and health.**



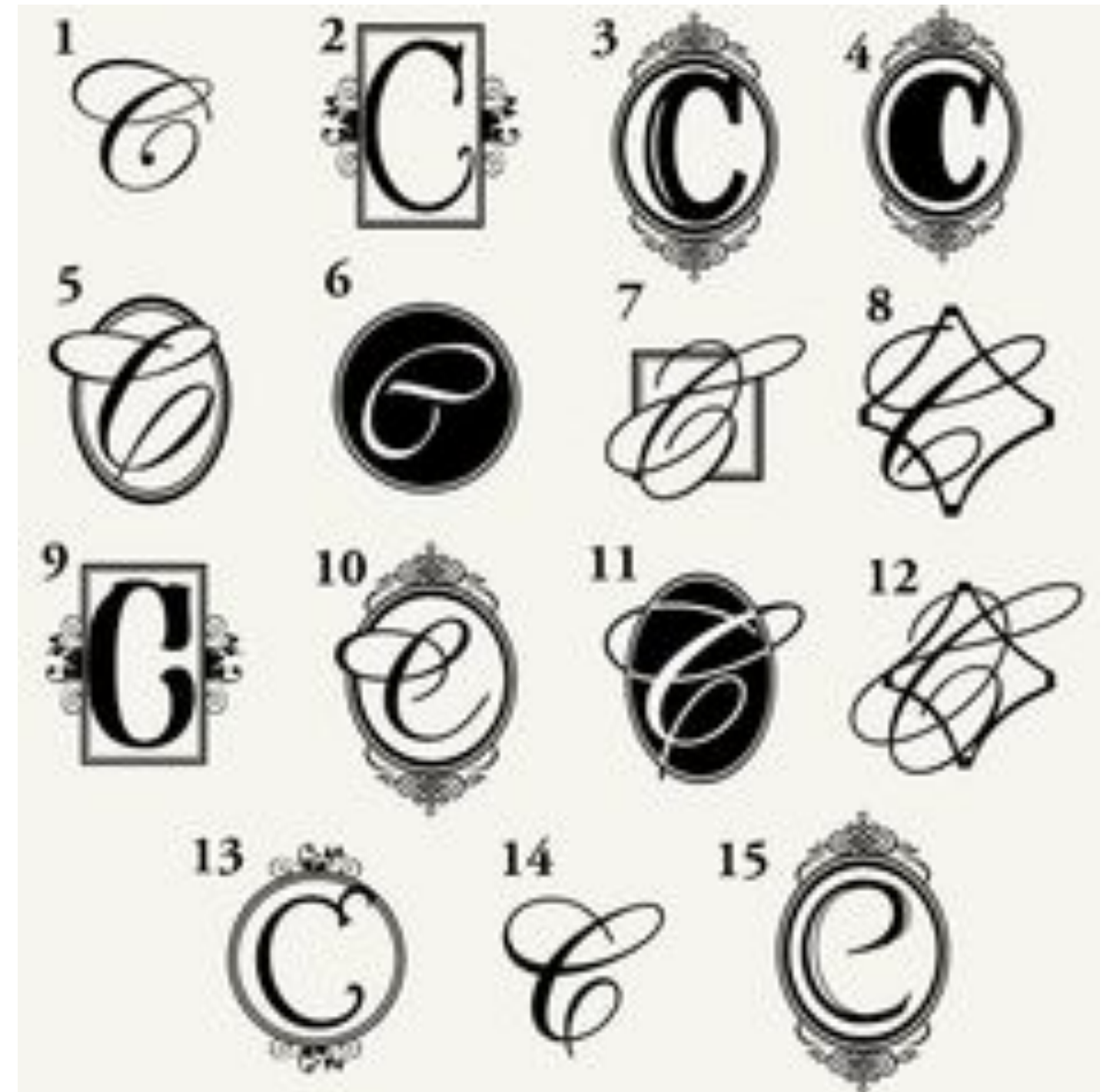
Our current policy approach gives the least help to those who need it most. We can change this. In a time when housing costs are rising more quickly than incomes, we should make it a priority to ensure that everyone can secure a decent place to live.

Key framing practice

Show that real solutions are within reach.

Effective solutions frames are...

- Collective: community-level, amenable to policy
- Concrete: specific, descriptive, possible to visualize/grasp
- Conceivable: feasible, realistic



Explain housing policy options, simply

We can make sure that every neighborhood has grocery stores where fresh produce is available, putting good nutrition within everyone's reach.

We can make sure that when we improve neighborhoods, the people who already live there aren't pushed out or priced out.

We can make it easier to quickly expand the number of places for rent. For instance, we can allow homeowners to add tiny houses to their back yards.

We can make it possible for essential workers (like teachers, nurses, and transportation workers) to rent or own a home in the city they support.

We can make it easier to stay in our communities as we age. Some college towns set up programs that pair students who need inexpensive housing with retired homeowners who benefit from a little rental income.



Let's dig deeper

Team time, discussion, and wrap-up

Team Time

- You'll have ~30 minutes to craft a short communication that uses the ideas we just explored.
- Write in the google doc we have prepared for you.
- When we come back, we'll ask you to add to the chat:
 - I noticed that...
 - I wonder about...
 - I want to...



FrameWorks is available to you for technical assistance

- We can help with specific messaging challenges or larger strategic questions
- We can review and revise communications at any stage of completion
- You can send a detailed description of what you want to work on - or jump on a call and we can figure it out together



Thank you.

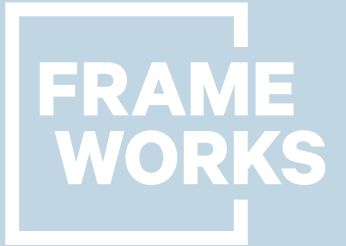
Let's continue the conversation.

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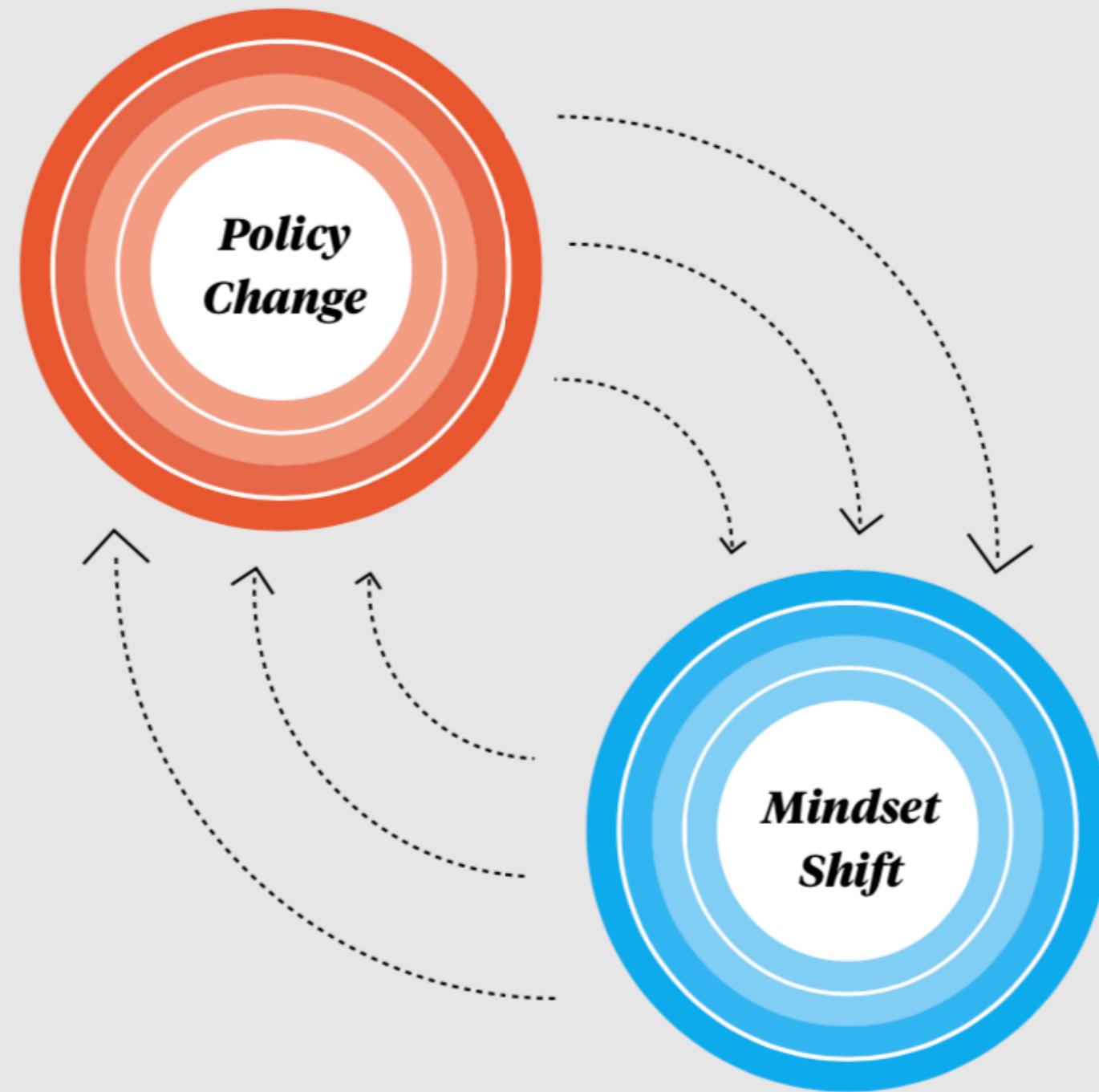
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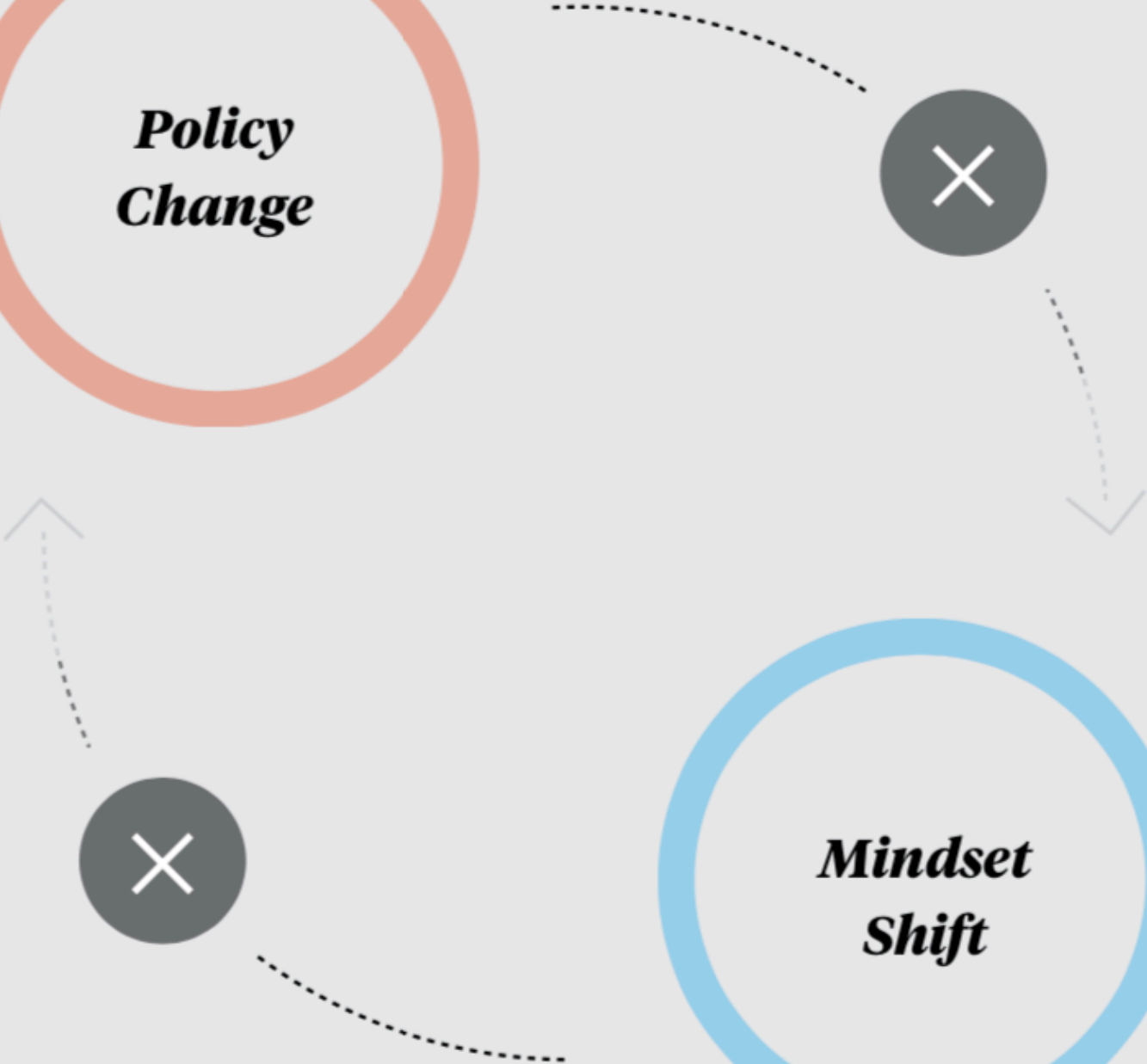
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Framing *vis a vis* Messaging

Framing	Messaging
Drives public narrative in a new direction	Drives action toward specific, measurable goals
Consistent over time to achieve long term goals	Varied across settings, audiences, etc.
Longer-term process & outcomes	Shorter-term process and outcomes
Key tools: themes, values, explanations	Key tools: Stories, turns of phrase, calls to action
Coordinates narratives and positioning across a field	Plans outreach and engagement along a calendar

Vary your goals (not your main story) by audience sta

