

When ‘No’ means ‘Yes’ to Affordable Housing



**“Bring Workers Home” 2012 Workforce Housing Forum
Advocacy and Policy Programs and Strategies Breakout
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The Issue

Massachusetts' most effective affordable and market-rate housing production law (Chapter 40B) was at significant risk for repeal via ballot initiative. (Nov. 2010)

What is Chapter 40B?

- Passed in 1969, sets a reasonable goal for all communities to provide at least 10% of their homes as affordable
- At least 25% of the # of units must be affordable to households earning less than 80% of the area median income (approximately \$66,000 for a family of four in Greater Boston)

What is Chapter 40B? Cont.

- Enables municipal zoning boards to approve affordable housing under flexible zoning rules if at least 20%-25% of the homes have long-term affordability restrictions
- Must meet all state environmental laws and building requirements
- Every proposal must first be approved under a state or federal housing program

The Opponents

- “Coalition to Repeal 40B”
 - Affordable Housing Now – Yes on 2
 - Better not Bigger (connected with Slow Growth Initiative)
 - Many suburban and rural Mass. towns and a few vocal state elected officials

The Arguments Against 40B

- Used to force developments down the throats of towns
- Developers “find” ways around the 20% profit maximum
- Many of the units created still not “affordable”
- Some projects were seen as not in the same “character” as the rest of the community.

The Challenges

- **Complicated issue to explain**
- **Staying out of the weeds**
- **Opponents co-opted “pro-affordable housing” message**
- **Controversial in many communities (specific projects determine public opinion)**
- **Fundraising**
- **Having to reach millions of voters within limited timeframe (defeating initiative vs. education)**

The Challenges Cont.

Ballot Confusion

“Yes” vote would repeal the law

“No” vote would make no changes

Proponents of repealing the law were
“arguing” in favor of affordable
housing...by trying to repeal the most
effective law for producing it.

The Beginning of 'No on 2'

- 25 member Steering Committee
- 200 member Advisory Committee
- Earned Media and Polling Consultants

‘No on 2’ Campaign Structure

- 8-Person Leadership Team**
- Full-time campaign manager (Megan Amundson), 8 organizers, office staff**
- Earned Media, Paid Media, Social Media, and Polling Consultants**
- 1,600 Supporters**
- Raised \$1.2 million from more than 1,000 individuals and organizations**

Key Themes and Messages

- **“Affordable Housing”**
- **40B responsible for 80% of new affordable housing outside the larger cities over the past decade**
- **58,000 homes for working families and seniors**
- **47,000 jobs and \$9.3 billion in economic activity over past decade**

Key Themes and Messages Cont.

- Law creates real homes for *real* families (homeowner videos)
- Law responsible for high quality housing developments across Massachusetts (development profiles)

Building a Coalition

Natural Allies and Outreach to Key Communities

- **Development and Real Estate Community**
- **Faith Community**
- **Senior Services Community**
- **Civic Engagement Community**
- **Environmental Community**
- **Smart Growth Community**
- **Unions**

Building a Coalition Cont.

A diverse coalition of over 1600 individuals and groups joined together to protect 40B, including:

- Habitat for Humanity
- AARP
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Boston Real Estate Board
- League of Women Voters of MA
- Environmental League of MA
- MA Affordable Housing Alliance
- MA AFL-CIO
- **Massachusetts Association of REALTORS®**
- MA Council of Churches
- Progressive Business Leaders Network of MA
- Soldier On/United Veterans of America
- YMCA of Central MA and the North Shore

Role of Coalition

- **Provided overall advice on message and strategy (held six advisory committee meetings)**
- **Reached out to constituencies with common message (e-mail, web site, social media, mailings, door to door)**
- **Provided in-kind staffing and other resources**
- **Hosted community meetings**
- **Assisted with fundraising**
- **Worked with local media**

Grassroots Outreach & Organizing

Outreach to local elected officials and opinion leaders

- **Legislators**
- **Local Elected Officials**
- **Party Officials**
- **Gubernatorial Candidates**
- **Housing Authorities**
- **Affordable Housing Management Companies**

Grassroots Outreach & Organizing Cont.

- 4,500 lawn signs
- 1.2 million palm cards
- Elected officials
- Direct mailings
- Community meetings and visibility events
- Literature drops at affordable housing developments



Grassroots Outreach & Organizing Cont.

Visibility Efforts and Using Volunteers



Grassroots Outreach & Organizing Cont.

Election day coverage

- 653 Polling Locations Covered
- In 150 Cities and Towns (of 351)



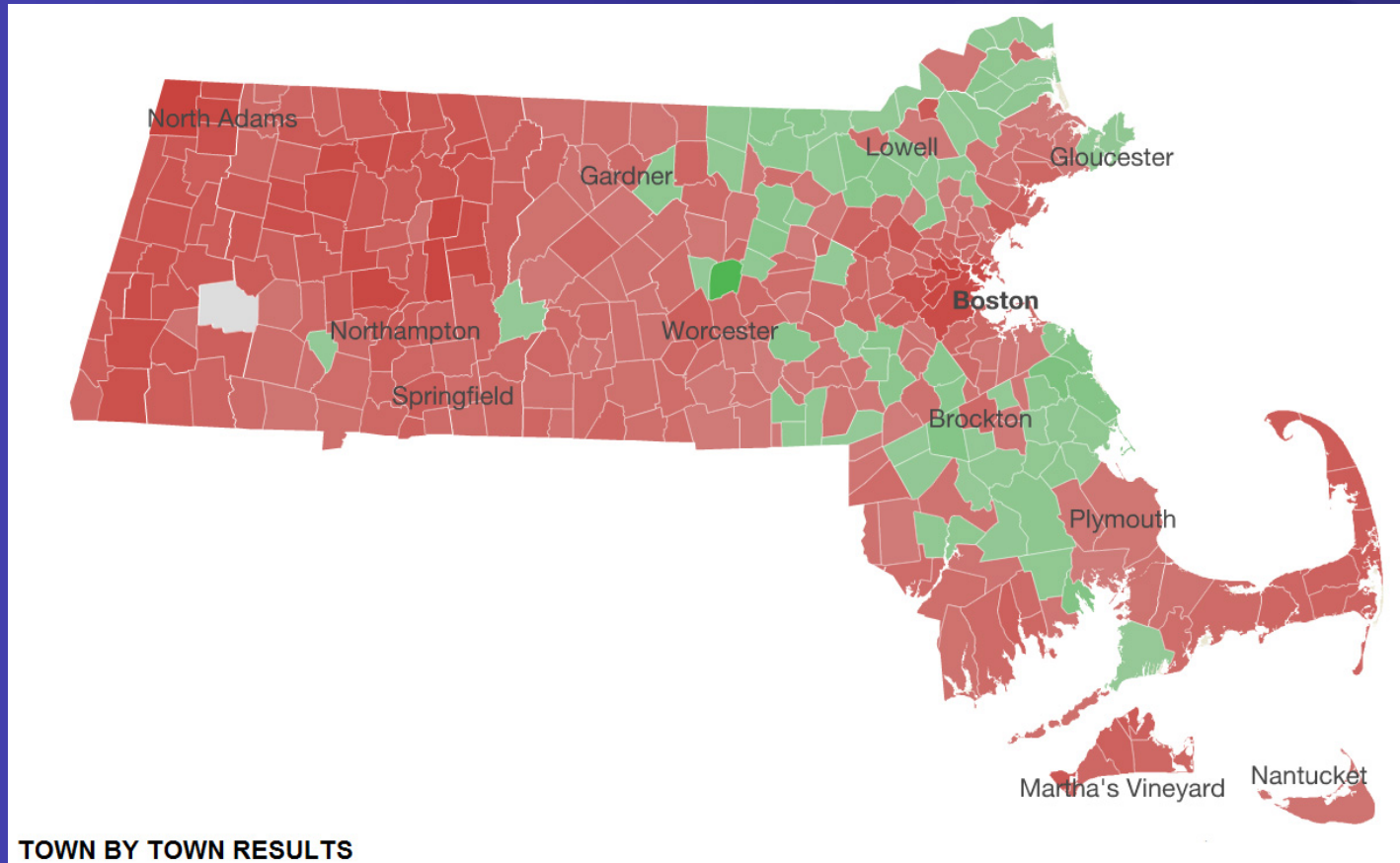
Communications Strategy

- www.protectaffordablehousing.org
Website
- Earned Media
- Social Media
- Paid Media

Election Results

- **58% (1.25 million voters) voted “No” to 42% “Yes”**
- **80% of cities and towns voted “No”**
- **Widest margin of three ballot referendums**

Election Results Cont.



Red = No on 2 (preserve 40B) Green = Yes to repeal 40B

Tips

- **Get started early on fund raising**
- **Go professional**
- **Keep eye on the prize**
- **Ask for early support**
- **Use the troops**

What's Next?

- **Reconvened Steering Committee post-election**
- **Held 14 community meetings to develop local and state agenda on affordable housing**
- **Maintaining and updating supporter database**
- **Revamping campaign website**
- **Creating online tool for local housing strategies**
- **Working group on 40B improvements**

What's Next Cont.

- **Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® Co-sponsored affordable homeownership symposium with MassHousing**

Questions?

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