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### **“Keys to Success” for planning a visit at your property:**

Hosting a member of Congress at one of your property sites is an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate the life altering services that affordable housing provides to low-income individuals and families. These visits will give your Representative or Senator a first-hand view of housing programs in action, and this may inform and influence their future votes.

#### **SET YOUR TARGET**

Plan the visit starting with location: Do you have an upcoming event at a particular project? Which properties are most “showable”? Is there a specific lawmaker whose district you want to appeal to? After identifying the location, invite your elected officials and engage your staff and residents in the planning process.

#### **BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP**

Connecting with congressional staffers is the first step in building relationships with lawmakers. Begin by calling or emailing the district office, reaching out to the DC office, or filling out the official’s online event request form. Be patient, flexible, and persistent; always invite staff to attend if the lawmaker can’t make it.

#### **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS**

To set the right tone for the visit, clarify expectations ahead of time: Does the official want (or not want) media at the event? How much time do participants have—enough for a tour *and* a resident meet-and-greet? How many residents is too many? If residents are comfortable with photos, have your photo release form ready.

#### **MAKE IT RELEVANT**

Tailor your message to the lawmaker’s priorities in Congress. Explain funding sources for your project, and build in personal messages from residents to emphasize the importance of federal support for local housing. Engaging the right residents and staff will help deliver a full picture of affordable housing in the community.

#### **PREPARE FOR SUCCESS**

Even an informal visit needs an agenda. If you are planning a resident meet-and-greet, arrange for the flow, seating, and any refreshments in advance. Try preparing questions for residents and staff ahead of time, as well as handouts with property info and NAHMA’s advocacy factsheets. Determine the path of your property tour, including an inhabited unit and common areas, and build in time for questions.

#### **DON’T FORGET THE FOLLOW-UP**

The property visit is a stepping stone to more collaboration. Send a thank you message with follow-up information; invite the office to your next event and make sure to stay in touch. Posting photos of your visit on social media will also amplify the impact—remember to tag your lawmakers with a thank you message.

NAHMA Grassroots Website, [How to Find Your Congressional Representatives](#), for assistance on finding and contacting your representatives, and we suggest that members use this tool to draw attention to the number of affordable housing properties in your state/district. Please contact Larry Keys at [lkeys@nahma.org](mailto:lkeys@nahma.org) with any specific questions or concerns related to property site visits with Members of Congress.