

Building the Six Ts of Resident Engagement: Time, Trust, Transparency, Technology, Talent, and Tailoring

2026  Conference

Dessert Willow Conference Center, Phoenix, AZ

Ruben Rivera-Jackman, MNPL
206-337-5377
ruben.riverajackman@humangood.org

1

“Sense of community is a key driver of satisfaction among apartment residents.”

J.D. Power & Associates
study of apartment management companies

Happy Team Members = Happy Residents

Happy Residents = Happy Team Members



2

Senior Living Trends

- Older-adult population expected to double to 28% of the U.S. population by 2050.
- Increase in diversity; ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, National origin, social and economic status, etc.



3

Senior Living Trends

- Current life expectancy (79.25) continues to rise due to medical advances. (2024)
- Rapid growth in the proportion of the population aged over 65. (Baby Boomers)



4

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

- Started turning 65 in 2011 at a rate of 10,000 per day and will continue until 2029.
- Highly educated, demanding and strong sense of entitlement.
- Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll generation. (Alzheimer's and other dementias, Hepatitis (Cirrhosis of the Liver), HIV, etc.



5

Low-Income and Disadvantaged People Are:

- Often isolated in neighborhoods where affordable housing is not aligned with public transportation.
- Often disconnected from employment opportunities, child-care, education, recreation, health care and experience food insecurities.



6

Senior Living Trends

- Anticipated dramatic cuts to social, health and mental health services means that there is an even greater need for residents to do more for themselves.
- Lack of access and limited resources will be devastating and impact personal well-being and life expectancy.

7

Impact on Affordable Housing Providers

In anticipation of demographic trends and cuts to Medicare, Social Security, and other safety nets, housing providers will need to be:

- Flexible in the way they do things.
- Open, honest and transparent.
- Utilize a range of resident engagement strategies.

8

Impact on Affordable Housing Providers

- Increased need to consider investing in resident engagement and building community strategies.
- Increased need to identify “Outside of the Box” solutions to address gaps in social, health and mental health services.

9

What is Community Building?

Community building is the intentional process of creating relationships, belonging, and mutual support among residents, staff, and partners.

10

What is Community Building?

- Creating space literally through physical space, food, and childcare for all residents to identify solutions they feel will most benefit them.
- Fundamentally comes down to a belief that only the community can solve its own problems.

11

Build Strong Communications

- Building a strong connection with residents is vital to the success of any housing community.
- By getting out from “behind the desk,” you can engage with residents as they come and go.
- Helps to build rapport & trust and allows you to get to know your resident’s normal/baseline.

12

Sense of Belonging

- All about bringing residents together and creating a sense of belonging.
- Promotes strong vibrant communities by providing opportunities for social connections and encouraging activities that connect them to one another.



13

“Social connections are as important as money and health to a good later life.”

Study published by the
Center for Aging Better.



14

Community Building Includes

- Social connection and belonging
- Shared responsibility and respect
- Opportunities for participation and voice
- Trust between residents and staff

In senior housing, it is also a protective factor for health and safety.



15

Why Community Building Matters

Community building in affordable senior housing leads to:

- Reduced isolation and loneliness
- Lower rates of depression and anxiety
- Fewer resident conflicts and grievances



16

Why Community Building Matters

Community building in affordable senior housing leads to:

- Earlier identification of resident needs
- Reduced crisis escalation and emergency calls
- Increased housing stability and aging in place



17

The Reality in Senior Housing

Common challenges:

- Mobility limitations and health conditions
- Grief and loss of peers/family/pets
- Transportation barriers



18

The Reality in Senior Housing

Common challenges:

- Language and cultural differences
- Digital divide
- Trauma histories and mistrust of systems

Without intentional engagement → isolation becomes risk.



19

The Six Ts of Resident Engagement

1. Time
2. Trust
3. Transparency
4. Technology
5. Talent
6. Tailoring

These are the foundational pillars of intentional resident engagement.



20

The Six Ts Overview

TIME

Engagement requires presence, consistency, and availability

Key practices:

- Regular check-ins (not just scheduled meetings)
- Informal hallway conversations
- Predictable programming schedules



21

The Six Ts Overview

Impact:

- Builds familiarity and psychological safety
- Reduces escalation through early identification

22

The Six Ts Overview

TRUST is the foundation of all engagement

Build trust by:

- Following through on commitments
- Consistent staff presence and messaging
- Respectful communication
- Non-judgmental listening

23

The Six Ts Overview

Trauma-Informed Lens:

“What happened to you?” vs.
“What’s wrong with you?”

24

The Six Ts Overview

TRANSPARENCY

Clear communication reduces fear and misinformation

Strategies:

- Explain decisions and policies clearly
- Provide written + verbal communication

25

The Six Ts Overview

TRANSPARENCY

Strategies:

- Share timelines and expectations
- Acknowledge limitations honestly

26

The Six Ts Overview

Impact:

- Reduces conflict and rumor cycles
- Builds credibility with residents

27

The Six Ts Overview

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a bridge—not a barrier.

Examples:

- Community text alerts or robocalls
- Digital bulletin boards

28

The Six Ts Overview

TECHNOLOGY

Examples:

- Zoom resident meetings
- Telehealth access support
- Training residents on basic tech use

29

The Six Ts Overview

Equity Focus:

Always pair tech with non-digital options.

(flyers, sign up sheet, knock & talk)

30

The Six Ts Overview

TALENT

Talent = leveraging strengths of residents and staff

Examples:

- Resident-led clubs (gardening, knitting, walking groups)



31

The Six Ts Overview

TALENT

Examples:

- Peer ambassadors
- Volunteer opportunities within building
- Intergenerational programs



32

The Six Ts Overview

Impact:

- Builds purpose and identity
- Reduces passive isolation



33

The Six Ts Overview

TAILORING

One size does not fit all

Adapt engagement by:

- Culture and language
- Cognitive and physical ability
- Trauma history



34

The Six Ts Overview

TAILORING

One size does not fit all

Adapt engagement by:

- Personality and social preference
(introvert vs. extrovert)
- Mobility and transportation access



35

The Six Ts Overview

TAILORING

Key Question:

“What does meaningful connection
look like for THIS resident?”



36

Engagement and System Impact

How Engagement Reduces Crisis

Strong engagement helps:

- Detect early warning signs (mental health decline, hoarding, neglect)
- De-escalate conflicts before escalation



37

Engagement and System Impact

Strong engagement helps:

- Improve cooperation with service plans
- Reduce emergency interventions
- Strengthen eviction prevention efforts



38

Barriers to Engagement

Common barriers include:

- Staff workload and limited time
- Resident mistrust of systems
- Language and cultural differences
- Mobility and health limitations



39

Barriers to Engagement

Common barriers include:

- Cognitive decline
(dementia, memory loss)
- Past trauma or institutional experiences
- Digital exclusion

40

Trauma-Informed Engagement

Core principles:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

41

Trauma-Informed Engagement

Application in housing:

- Avoid power struggles
- Offer choices whenever possible
- Maintain predictable routines
- Respect personal space and dignity

42

Organizational Alignment

Resident engagement supports organizational values by:

- Strengthening housing stability
- Promoting dignity and inclusion
- Supporting equity and access
- Enhancing resident-centered care
- Preventing avoidable crisis escalation

43

Resident Engagement Defined

- Means different things to different people.
- Achieved when residents and family members feel that they have a voice and are a part of the decision-making process for what their community should look like.

44

Resident Engagement Process

- Leads to action and creates an environment that enables participation and involvement.
- Working with the residents who live in the community, in their space, where they are, and around the issues that they care about.

45

Resident Engagement Process

- Working together and forming relationships with residents and building community by offering programs and services.
- Success: a person is invited by the housing provider to be an active participant in designing their day-to-day living thereby individualizing their experience in a purposeful way.

46

Resident Engagement Process

- One of the first steps is to determine what your community needs and how you can help them. (Survey)
- Involve your residents in your business and you'll increase satisfaction and drive down costs.

47

Everyday Engagement Moments

Engagement is not only programming:

- Greeting residents by their preferred name
- Sitting in shared spaces
- Informal hallway conversations
- Noticing changes in behavior
- Listening without rushing

48

Practical Engagement Strategies

- Monthly resident councils
- Coffee chats with staff
- Walking groups
- Birthday recognition programs

49

Practical Engagement Strategies

- Cultural celebration events
- Resident-led committees
- Intergenerational activities
- Wellness check buddy systems

50

Resident Driven Activities

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ▪Nacho Night | ▪Chili Cookoff |
| ▪Wine Down Wednesday | ▪Community Gardens, dog park, etc. |
| ▪Watch the Big Game | ▪Community garage sale |
| ▪Potlucks | ▪Door decorating contest |
| ▪Coffee/Ice Cream Social | ▪Others? |

51

Importance

- People have an emotional connection to their homes, whether they are residents or owners.
- For residents, there is also a sense of having less control over major decisions about their homes.

52

Importance

Being clear and open in engagement with residents can therefore help to make the whole process feel easier for everyone.

53

Benefits

- Not just a time to party, but also an opportunity to talk face to face with renters about their living satisfaction and need for improvements.
- Cultivates closeness in your community and ultimately develop a sense of camaraderie among neighbors.

54

Benefits

- Helps residents to feel valued, and that it's worthwhile participating both in shaping services and community activities
- Imparts a greater sense of security as residents feel more in control of the services they receive.



55

Benefits

- Builds community; forges group identity.
- Gives residents a feeling of belonging to something greater than themselves.
- Decreases vandalism, property destruction, vacancies and unit turnover.



56

Benefits

- Increases resident satisfaction and sense of belonging..
- Reduces unit turnover and property damage.
- Increases staff satisfaction and reduces staff retention.

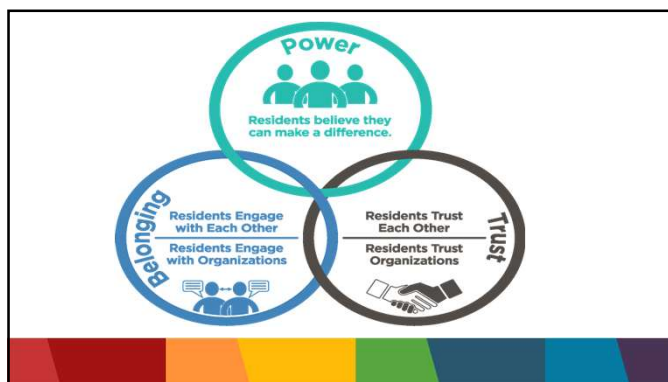


57

Benefits

- Empowers residents to play a part in strategic, long-term programs and services in their community. (Capacity building)
- Empowers residents to play a part in coordinating community building activities and engage in services in their community. (Community building)
- Reduces social isolation. (Social engagement)

58



59

Case Scenario 1 Isolation Turning into Crisis

Resident: 78-year-old widower
 Stopped attending meals and activities
 Begins calling staff repeatedly at night
 Reports “no one cares”

60

Discussion

- Which Ts are missing?
- What early engagement could have prevented escalation?

61

Response Strategies

Time: proactive check-ins

Trust: consistent follow-through

Talent: peer outreach volunteer

Tailoring: grief-specific engagement

62

Case Scenario 2 Resident Conflict

Two residents repeatedly argue in common areas:

- Complaints escalate quickly
- Tension spreads to other residents

63

Discussion

How can engagement
reduce conflict?

64

Response Strategies

Transparency: clarify shared space
expectations

Trust: mediated conversations

Tailoring: understand triggers and
communication styles (Baseline)

Talent: structured group engagement activity

65

Case Scenario 3

Resistant to Services

Resident refuses services and
becomes defensive with staff:
Accuses staff of “controlling behavior”

66

Trauma-Informed Response

- Acknowledge autonomy
- Offer choices
- Reduce pressure-based interactions
- Rebuild trust slowly through consistent presence

67

Key Takeaways

- Engagement is not optional—it is preventative care
- The Six Ts create a structured engagement framework
- Trauma-informed care strengthens trust and reduces conflict

68

Key Takeaways

- Community building reduces isolation and improves outcomes
- Intentional engagement improves housing stability and resident well-being

69

Closing Reflection

Ask yourself:

- Who in our community is most isolated right now?
- Which “T” are we strongest in, and which needs attention?
- How do we ensure every resident feels seen and connected?



70

Funding Opportunities

- Resident's activity fund (RAF)
- Resident social committee fund
- Voluntary activities fee (Resort Fee)
- Fundraising
- Developer fees



71

Funding Opportunities

- Corporate Sponsorships (Starbucks, Safeway, Costco, Whole Foods, Sports franchises)
- Neighborhood Development Grants
- CDBG Grants
- Rotary/Eagles/Chambers of Commerce



72

National Resources

Administration for Community Living (ACL):
<https://acl.gov>

National Council on Aging (NCOA): <https://ncoa.org>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
 Administration (SAMHSA): <https://samhsa.gov>

LeadingAge: <https://leadingage.org>

Eldercare Locator: <https://eldercare.acl.gov>

73

California/Arizona /Nevada/Hawaii Region

California Department of Aging: <https://aging.ca.gov>

Arizona Department of Economic Security – Aging:
<https://des.az.gov>

Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division:
<https://adsd.nv.gov>

Hawaii Executive Office on Aging: <https://health.hawaii.gov/eoa>

Area Agencies on Aging (multi-state locator):
<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

74

Housing + Supportive Services Partners:

HUD Region IX (CA/AZ/NV): <https://hud.gov>

Catholic Charities local affiliates

United Way 211: <https://211.org>

75

1. NeighborWorks America

•**Website:** <https://www.neighborworks.org>

•**Description:** NeighborWorks America is a national nonprofit that supports affordable housing and community development. They offer resources, training, and technical assistance to housing providers, focusing on resident engagement and community building.

2. National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)

•**Website:** <https://nlihc.org>

•**Description:** NLIHC advocates for affordable housing policy and offers resources to affordable housing providers. They work on advancing policy, providing data, and sharing best practices for community engagement in housing development.

76

3. National Housing Law Project (NHLP)

•**Website:** <https://www.nhlp.org>

•**Description:** NHLP provides legal resources and advocacy support to affordable housing providers, including guidance on resident engagement strategies and policies. They focus on ensuring that low-income residents have access to fair and safe housing.

4. Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA)

•**Website:** <https://www.phada.org>

•**Description:** PHADA represents the leaders of public housing authorities. They offer resources on improving public housing operations, including engaging residents in the management and decision-making processes for affordable housing.

77

4. Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA)

•**Website:** <https://www.phada.org>

•**Description:** PHADA represents the leaders of public housing authorities. They offer resources on improving public housing operations, including engaging residents in the management and decision-making processes for affordable housing.

5. Enterprise Community Partners

•**Website:** <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org>

•**Description:** Enterprise works to create affordable housing and strengthen communities through development, policy advocacy, and resident engagement. They provide resources, tools, and financing options for affordable housing providers.

78

6. HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

•**Website:** https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing

•**Description:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides resources for public housing authorities (PHAs), including funding opportunities, regulations, and best practices for resident engagement and community building.

7. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

•**Website:** <https://www.lisc.org>

•**Description:** LISC offers funding, resources, and technical assistance to organizations working on affordable housing development, resident engagement, and community revitalization. They also provide tools for strengthening neighborhoods and fostering resident leadership.

79

8. National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)

•**Website:** <https://ncrc.org>

•**Description:** NCRC advocates for community reinvestment and affordable housing. They provide training, policy tools, and resources to housing providers focused on fostering equitable development and community engagement.

9. Resident Services Collaborative

•**Website:** <https://www.residentservices.org>

•**Description:** This collaborative provides a national network for housing providers, focusing on promoting services that support the well-being and engagement of residents in affordable housing communities.

80

10. Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund)

•**Website:** <https://www.cdfifund.gov>

•**Description:** The CDFI Fund provides financial resources to support the development of affordable housing and community facilities. They offer funding opportunities for organizations working in underserved communities and provide tools for fostering community engagement in development projects.

11. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota

•**Website:** <https://www.cura.umn.edu>

•**Description:** CURA offers resources and programs designed to engage residents in affordable housing planning and decision-making. Their work focuses on improving community health, housing, and social equity through resident participation.

81

12. Public Housing Resident Engagement Toolkit (by HUD)

•**Website:** https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph

•**Description:** HUD provides a resident engagement toolkit for public housing authorities to help them better engage with tenants in decision-making processes. It includes resources for effective communication, leadership development, and resident involvement.

13. The National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing (NARSAH)

•**Website:** <https://www.narash.org>

•**Description:** NARSAH is a national network of resident services professionals. They provide resources, networking opportunities, and training for those engaged in resident services, supporting better housing experiences and community engagement.

82

14. The Housing Assistance Council (HAC)

•**Website:** <https://www.ruralhome.org>

•**Description:** HAC focuses on affordable housing in rural America. They provide technical assistance, research, and tools to housing providers and residents to enhance community engagement and improve affordable housing quality.

15. National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)

•**Website:** <https://www.nahro.org>

•**Description:** NAHRO represents public housing and community development professionals. They offer resources, advocacy, and training on housing policy, resident engagement, and best practices for affordable housing providers.

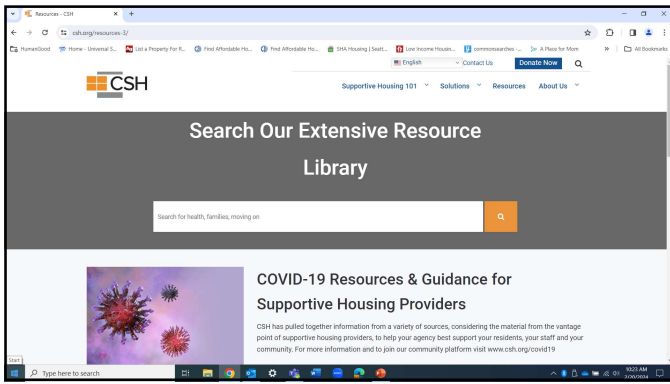
83

16. The National Resident Council (NRC)

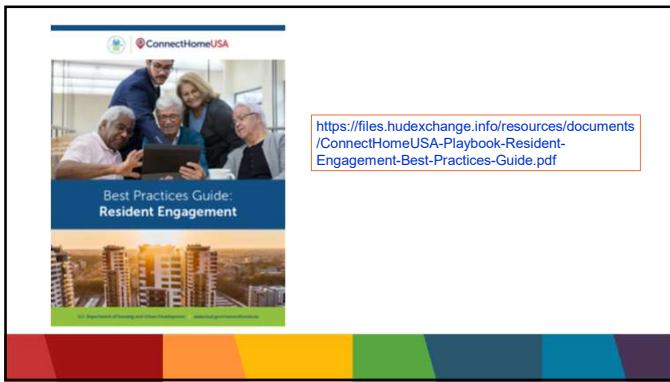
•**Website:** <https://www.nationalresidentscouncil.org>

•**Description:** NRC supports resident councils across public housing and affordable housing communities. They offer tools for resident empowerment and engagement in decision-making processes related to housing and community development.

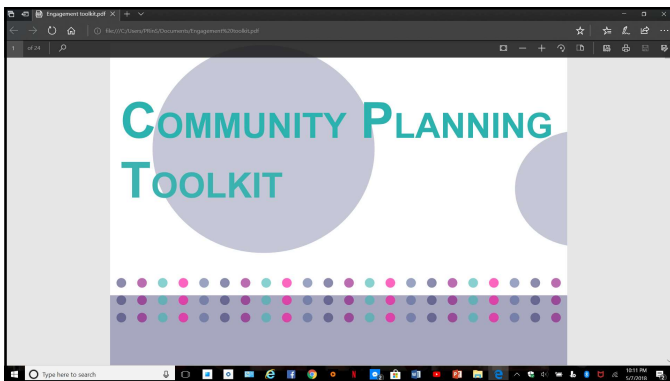
84



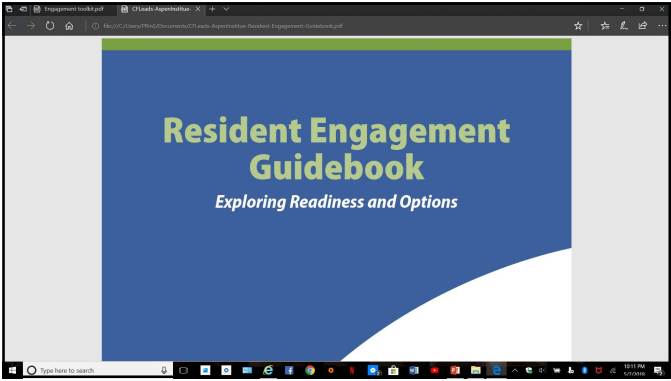
85



86



87



88
