



A Public Health  
Guide for  
Transformative  
Housing Solutions

# The Root Cause Test

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Health in  
Partnership

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# Introduction

**This resource offers a new tool, the Root Cause Test, to help guide health organizations' work on housing solutions.** The Root Cause Test is designed to assess whether a given proposal will help transform and shift power to meaningfully advance housing justice and health equity.

We begin with a brief history of housing commodification and racism in the US to explain why structural shifts that disrupt power imbalances are necessary. We then discuss some common “band-aid solutions” to the housing crisis and demonstrate application of the Root Cause Test to a public health and housing justice framework: the Five Ps – Production, Preservation, Protection, Power and Place. Finally, we provide a worksheet for use by the public health sector to evaluate and improve proposed housing actions.

## The Root Cause Test

For any given proposal, we should ask, does this action:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>1. Power</b>          | Increase the power of working-class and BIPOC communities to decide the future of their families, homes, and cities? |
| <b>2. Universality</b>   | Ensure stable, affordable, dignified homes for all?  |
| <b>3. Racial Healing</b> | Repair and heal the harms of systemic racism?  |
| <b>4. Sustainability</b> | Support the collective well-being of all living things and the earth?  |

## A note from HIP Housing Justice Project Director, Mariana Huerta



Our homes should be places of rest, refuge, and safety. But shortly after I moved into one of my first apartments as an adult, I realized that my new home wasn't safe or healthy to live in. I had no hot water, rain was puddling on the floor because of a lack of waterproofing, and mold covered the walls. I felt anxious, depressed, and trapped by a landlord who had all the power. Thankfully, I was fortunate: I knew how to take action.

I called the health department to do an inspection of my apartment. After conducting the inspection, the department reported the hazardous conditions, but they were unable to make the landlord fix the issues. Ultimately, I moved out and was able to keep my security deposit – and some dignity. But I wondered, How could this have been prevented? Could my local health department have used their power not just to respond to the harmful conditions when I alerted them, but to prevent this kind of housing injustice in the first place?

What if every time health practitioners worked on housing, we built communities' power to determine their own futures? By the time my kids move into their first apartments, could we ensure that homes are safe, and that histories of housing injustice are healed?

I believe that if we tackle problems at the root, we can build a future where quality housing is affordable and accessible, where the threat of eviction no longer looms, and where long-term neighbors come together to make decisions and advocate for healthy housing together. This resource supports public health organizations in helping to build this future by transforming the root causes of housing and health inequities.

Since its earliest history improving slum housing in the 1800s, public health has been dedicated to addressing harms when they occur and preventing future ones. Public health aims to treat the root causes of poor health, working towards a world where everyone has what they need to be healthy and thrive.

There has long been consensus in the field that achieving public health requires addressing the social determinants of health, including housing, employment, education, climate, and more. And our field is starting to coalesce around an understanding that it will take deeper and continued work to uproot the power imbalances and systems of oppression that are the root causes of health inequities.<sup>1</sup> Health practitioners have renewed our focus on housing, with health departments, nonprofits, medical systems, and even Medicaid programs advancing policies and programs to support affordable, stable, dignified housing. This work is already making improvements in people's housing and health.

**Yet, much of public health's work on housing still focuses on band-aid solutions, rather than addressing the root causes of housing injustices. The field now has the opportunity to build on the critical advances made in addressing the social determinants of health, by focusing on root causes — to ensure our solutions go beyond alleviating systems, to meaningfully shift and transform power.**

# The Root Causes of Housing and Health Inequities

*“Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political or economic changes... Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice.”*

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Housing as a battleground for power

Efforts intended to reduce health and housing injustices must address power. Power is a fundamental determinant of injustice, and of liberation: it shapes the outcomes of daily interactions between tenants and landlords, how our bodies react to the stressors of our housing conditions, where and how we can live, and whether communities can pass policies that support health.<sup>2-4</sup> When we talk about making structural changes to our housing system and addressing root causes of the housing crisis, we’re talking about redistributing power: creating a system where people have power to determine the outcomes of their lives.

For example, we recently interviewed mobile home residents whose communities had been bought by Wall Street investors. They described skyrocketing rents, unsafe water, crumbling infrastructure, and the exodus of the neighbors they loved. And they shared with us the feeling of being utterly trapped as their families were squeezed for profit, with little power to challenge the lawyers and lobbyists hired by their corporate landlord. But these residents are also organizing, filing lawsuits, working with health inspectors, building power to challenge their landlord, and winning healthier conditions.

### What do we mean by root causes in health and housing?

In public health, we understand root causes as the community conditions needed to thrive, and the power imbalances and structural oppression that shape these conditions.<sup>5</sup> Poverty, racial discrimination, segregation, public disinvestment, and White supremacy are among many of the root causes of health inequities and housing injustice.

To learn more about the root causes of housing injustice, take a look at Race Forward’s [Root Causes of Housing and Land Injustices](#) resource.<sup>6</sup>

## Systemic racism and housing injustice

The history of housing in the US is a history of power struggles, marked by the tension between those who wield power to exploit communities, and tenants and residents building power for well-being and liberation. Housing has long been a primary domain where racism is weaponized to extract wealth and value from Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, to divide people, and to block transformative change.

Slavery, colonization, and subsequent racist housing policies like racially restrictive covenants, redlining, and neighborhood redevelopment denied BIPOC communities access to safe, stable housing and resources, while generating wealth for corporations and White communities.<sup>4,7-9</sup> Today, housing discrimination persists through policies and practices including housing and loan discrimination, zoning restrictions that block development of affordable or multi-family housing, federal disinvestment from public housing, and limited tenant protections — all of which perpetuate the legacy of exclusion.<sup>7</sup>

Corporate speculation has further deepened the housing crisis. Since the 1990s, investors have bought cheap property in disinvested neighborhoods, driving gentrification and eroding tenant protections while maximizing their own profits.<sup>10</sup> Financial firms also disproportionately pushed discriminatory subprime mortgages in BIPOC neighborhoods, driving the subsequent financial crises and a massive wealth transfer away from these households.<sup>11</sup> Rather than aiding struggling families, the government bailed out big banks and corporations, who then capitalized on the crisis by buying up and renting out single-family homes at a massive scale.<sup>12-14</sup> Today, corporate landlords control nearly half of all US rental housing, and continue to leverage their market share and power to inflate rents, lower housing standards, and harm tenants' health.<sup>7,15,16</sup>

This history of racist exploitation translates into material consequences: today, more than half of Black and Latinx renters pay more than they can afford each month, and are far less likely than other racial groups to own homes.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, our largest federal housing subsidy — the mortgage interest tax deduction, which flows disproportionately to White and wealthy homeowners — receives six times more funding than all subsidized rental housing.<sup>18</sup> All of these policy choices have systematically blocked, contained, and fractured the power of BIPOC communities to control land, shape the future of their communities, and thrive.<sup>9,19</sup>



## Public health's role: past, present, and future

The public health field has played a complex and sometimes contradictory role in US housing history. While we helped lead early pushes for habitable housing, our field has also legitimized harmful policies, including the bulldozing of so-called “blighted” (a subjective and often racialized term) BIPOC neighborhoods,<sup>9,20</sup> the gentrification of working-class communities under the guise of walkable urban development,<sup>21,22</sup> and, in some cases, the forced removal of unhoused encampments.<sup>23,24</sup> We can and must do better. Equipped with a clear understanding of root causes and grassroots visions for change, we can help undo these legacies of harm and work to ensure dignified, affordable, and stable housing for all.

## Band-aids can't fix structural problems

While systemic racism has concentrated housing insecurity within BIPOC communities, the urgent housing and health crises in this country are now impacting people from all backgrounds. Homes are deteriorating, rents, eviction, and the amount of people becoming unhoused are soaring, and displacement is tearing communities apart.

When a patient is bleeding, a clinician must patch them up right away. But to ensure long-term health, they also need to diagnose and address the underlying cause. Similarly, urgent action is needed to keep people safe in their homes right now, but long-term solutions to create safe and healthy housing require identifying and addressing root causes. As a field, public health has too often been distracted by the urgency of the housing and health crises to address the deeper structural, root causes — including white supremacy, lack of renter power, widening income inequality, decreased public investment in housing, and corporate ownership and power. Too much of our credibility, data, and power is invested in temporary fixes, or “band-aids.” Below, we explore some of these short-term solutions and their limitations.

### **Short-Term Patches – Section 8:**

Some band-aid solutions are necessary short-term interventions that we have falsely come to treat as real solutions. For example, the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) is a lifeline for approximately 2 million renter households.<sup>25</sup> Tenants rent from private landlords, who receive government subsidies in exchange for lower rents. However, vouchers reinforce power imbalance by subsidizing landlords rather than tenants themselves, and tight markets and landlord discrimination mean that a third of tenants can't find a place to rent with vouchers.<sup>26</sup> In 2023, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) began consideration of the more transformative approach of giving tenants subsidies directly so that they could make their own decisions about their housing.<sup>27</sup> This would better address a root cause of housing insecurity: renters' lack of power.

## **Moving Away from Transformative Change – Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC):**

The LIHTC program serves an essential purpose, but has led us further from root causes and can be harmful. At a time when public housing funding was under attack, the LIHTC won bipartisan support by providing tax breaks for wealthy investors.<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that these tax breaks divert much-needed resources to investors instead of housing,<sup>29,30</sup> affordable housing developers have supported the program because there are few alternatives. It has grown into the largest source of affordable housing, funding over 3.65 million homes so far.<sup>31</sup> Corporate landlords are increasingly looking to profit from LIHTC properties and the loopholes that allow landlords to raise rents, evict, and exploit tenants.<sup>7,32</sup>

## **Partial Fixes – Zoning Reform:**

Some band-aid solutions aim to address root causes, but fall short or misdiagnose the problem. Abolishing single-family zoning is one example. Wealthy, White communities long excluded working-class and BIPOC residents through explicitly racist tools like racial covenants. When civil rights laws outlawed these practices, communities achieved the same ends by using zoning to exclude multi-family housing.<sup>4,33–35</sup> There is growing momentum to end restrictive single-family zoning, which could help undo the legacy of exclusion.<sup>36,37</sup> However, some of these efforts have been co-opted by real estate developers or YIMBYs (Yes In My Backyard: a pro-housing development movement encompassing a range of political orientations) more focused on expanding housing production than equity.<sup>38</sup> When upzoning is implemented without an equity focus, it can quickly increase property values and development in historically working-class and BIPOC communities, fueling gentrification and displacement.<sup>39–41</sup> Exclusionary and wealthy communities have also succeeded in securing exemptions from upzoning, further concentrating changes in less resourced areas. The important point here is not to conflate the policy tool of upzoning with the true root cause of racial inequities — depriving working-class and BIPOC communities of self-determination. We need to zone for dramatically more housing in wealthy enclaves, but not at the exclusion of reinvesting in the disinvested BIPOC neighborhoods that allow residents to remain near their social networks, cultural ties, and community connections. Zoning reform, if done right, should prioritize supporting communities' visions through careful, equity-centered planning, and ensure the resources needed to actualize these visions.

Our task is not to eliminate all housing band-aids. Short-term patches may be necessary interventions in the immediate term. But to create real and lasting change, public health practitioners must move beyond band-aids, and research, develop, and demand solutions that fundamentally transform power imbalances and address housing and health inequities at the root.

# The Root Cause Test

This section proposes four criteria to determine whether policies move us towards a healthier and liberated future, anchored in the power and self-determination of working-class and BIPOC communities. Much of this section draws from “[A Primer on Power, Housing Justice, and Health Equity](#),” which HIP developed with the Right to the City Alliance as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s [Lead Local Collaborative](#). We have refined these based on our ongoing experience working towards health equity and housing justice.

The Root Cause Test criteria should be used by public health leaders who are currently engaging in or considering ways to engage in work to improve housing and health equity. Ideally, these criteria should be applied before one begins work on a housing solution. While it is not necessary for a given housing solution to meet all of the four criteria below to be transformative, the solutions that meet at least one of these criteria can have lasting impacts, and make significant progress toward achieving health equity.

## Root Cause Test criteria

### 1. Power

*Does a given action increase the power of working-class and BIPOC communities to decide the future of their families, homes, and cities?*

#### **Why is this important to consider?**

Poor and working-class, immigrant, disabled, unhoused, women, trans and non-binary, and BIPOC communities must have self-determination, including the power to democratically control land and housing. Their leadership within housing movements should be prioritized and supported.

**The connection to health:** Power is the most foundational building block of health, determining access to resources, protection from harm, and our bodies’ responses to harmful stress.<sup>4,42,43</sup> Both government and the private sector have misused power, depriving BIPOC communities of housing choices, and opportunities to be healthy.<sup>2,44</sup> The health field is coming to understand the health benefits of community-controlled housing, which can provide power, stability, affordability, and economic security.<sup>42,45–49</sup>

## 2. Universality

*Does a given action ensure stable, affordable, dignified homes for all?*

### **Why is this important to consider?**

A stable, affordable, and safe home is a basic necessity for our health and dignity. Our homes should be places to live, heal, and care for our loved ones. No one should have to worry about their homes poisoning them, be forced out of their home, or skip meals to make rent. We must take care of each other and ensure everyone has a roof over their heads, especially communities most impacted by housing discrimination and insecurity—because housing should be a human right.

**The connection to health:** Research indicates that shelter is a basic human need, critical for good health.<sup>44,50–53</sup> Affordable housing allows us to pay for essentials,<sup>2</sup> while increases in rent burden force us to sacrifice medical care, healthy foods, and other basic needs, and are associated with poor physical and mental health and higher mortality risks.<sup>54–60</sup> Stable housing prevents health risks associated with evictions,<sup>61–70</sup> ensures access to community resources,<sup>71–73</sup> and maintains community connections and political power.<sup>19,71,74–77</sup> Safe homes protect their residents from injuries, disease, and mental health impacts.<sup>71,78–80</sup> However, almost a third of US households struggle to afford their homes,<sup>81</sup> 770 thousand people are unhoused,<sup>82</sup> and nearly a million people don't have adequate plumbing or functioning kitchens.<sup>83</sup>

## 3. Racial Healing

*Does a given action help repair and heal the harms of systemic racism?*

### **Why is this important to consider?**

Housing justice requires repairing and healing the harms of racism past and present — especially colonization and anti-Black racism. Racial justice, reparations, and decolonization should guide us in returning land and housing to Black and Indigenous stewardship and ensuring we all have what we need to flourish.

**The connection to health:** Our housing system, via the exploitation of BIPOC land, labor, neighborhoods, and homes, has caused significant harm to BIPOC communities. Black and Latinx households are 20% and 14% more likely, respectively, to be rent-burdened than White renters,<sup>84</sup> and hold just one-sixth and one-fourth of the wealth of White people.<sup>85</sup> Black, Indigenous, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders are at least twice as likely as White people to become unhoused.<sup>86</sup> These inequities are a contributing factor to racial health disparities, with White people living on average 6 years longer than Black people, and 11 years longer than Indigenous people.<sup>87</sup>

## 4. Sustainability

*Does a given action support the collective well-being of all living things and the earth?*

### Why is this important to consider?

We shouldn't have to fear the impacts of another storm, fire, or heat wave caused by climate crisis. We must plan, build, and retrofit our homes to protect health, provide good jobs, limit emissions, protect nature, and help us weather the storm, now and in the future.

**The connection to health:** Climate change is a major threat to all living things and a major public health threat, causing extreme weather, wildfires, environmental degradation, disease and mental health risks, food system disruptions, and displacement.<sup>88–92</sup> Because racism and capitalism shape proximity to environmental injustices, climate risks, and the resources needed to respond, environmental impacts are concentrated in working-class and BIPOC communities.<sup>93,94,95,96</sup> Climate change is also worsening housing insecurity, with 60 million homes at risk nationwide.<sup>85,97–101</sup> Homes and neighborhoods can be designed to protect residents, reduce impacts on natural systems, and limit emissions — nearly half of which currently come from the built environment.<sup>98,101,102</sup>

## Root cause solutions at every stage of housing justice

It is critical that we advance root cause solutions at every level of housing policy. This section adapts a helpful public health framework for advancing housing justice — the Five Ps: Production, Preservation, Protection, Power and Place — to help illustrate how the Root Cause Test can be applied to different types and stages of housing policy.<sup>103,104</sup>

The framework, which was first developed by the [San Mateo County Health System](#), and then adapted by the [Bay Area Health Inequities Initiative](#), and by HIP below, is a great starting point for identifying housing and health solutions. See appendix for more information about the Five Ps.

The chart below provides comparative examples of band aid solutions and root cause interventions, according to each of the Five Ps. It should be noted that the distinction is not always clear cut. Many policies — including those below — contain elements of both.

# Band-aid solutions vs. root cause solutions: Examples from The Five Ps Framework

## 1. Production

The Five Ps	Band-Aid Solutions	Root Cause Solutions
<p><b>Production:</b> Build homes that working-class and BIPOC residents can afford, prioritizing permanently affordable, community-controlled housing.</p>	<p><b>Market Rate Housing Development</b> Development of market rate housing creates more housing, but often provides luxury housing rather than providing affordable options for low-income residents or guaranteeing access to housing for historically redlined communities.</p> <p><b>Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)</b> LIHTC has successfully funded millions of affordable homes, but because it relies on tax incentives, it also directs significant resources to investors rather than ensuring long-term affordability and community control. This program does not ensure permanent affordability, require that buildings be carbon neutral, or advance racial justice in housing.</p>	<p><b>Green Social Housing</b> Green social housing should be community owned, permanently and deeply affordable, and prioritize environmental health.</p> <p><b>Community Land Trusts</b> Community land trusts are owned by non-profit organizations to maintain permanent affordability. They provide affordable housing options and can help <b>heal the harms of racism</b> by returning land to BIPOC stewardship.</p> <p><i>Examples of the health community supporting root cause housing solutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Strengthening Stable Housing for All Vallejo Residents to Improve Health Outcomes</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Community-Owned Land Trusts Catch Hospitals' Eye</u></a></li> </ul>

## 2. Protection

The Five Ps	Band-Aid Solutions	Root Cause Solutions
<p><b>Protection:</b> Prevent eviction and foreclosure, cost increases, unhealthy housing and housing instability, and the displacement of working-class and BIPOC communities.</p>	<p><b>Housing Vouchers (Section 8)</b> Housing vouchers provide subsidies to landlords, even when they are slumlords, but do not empower renters or increase autonomy over their housing conditions.</p> <p><b>Emergency Rental Assistance</b> Similar to housing vouchers, emergency rental assistance is a short term fix that benefits landlords, whether they maintain healthy and safe housing or not, and does not guarantee a person's right to stay housed at an affordable level.</p>	<p><b>Universal Rent Control</b> Rent control provides tenants with stability, prevents them from being priced out of their homes, and <b>shifts power</b> away from speculative landlords.</p> <p><b>Just Cause for Eviction</b> Just cause protections keep tenants housed by preventing landlords from evicting tenants unless they have a defensible reason.</p> <p><i>Examples of the health community supporting root cause housing solutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Alameda County Advances Equitable Housing Policies</u></a></li> </ul>



### 3. Preservation

The Five Ps	Band-Aid Solutions	Root Cause Solutions
<p><b>Preservation:</b> Keep existing homes habitable and affordable, and ensure residents can return after renovations, redevelopment, or disasters.</p>	<p><b>Mortgage Assistance</b> Giving financial assistance to existing homeowners or first-time buyers does provide housing stability and the power that goes along with it for some. If targeted effectively it can also help undo racial wealth inequities. But it continues to treat housing a commodity and does not improve long-term affordability.</p>	<p><b>Tenant or Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA/COPA)</b> When resourced with public or private funding, TOPA and COPA policies allow tenants or community land trusts to purchase residential buildings, maintain them as permanently affordable, and prevent the displacement of existing residents.</p> <p><b>Housing and Land Reparations</b> Returning land back or providing housing to Black and Indigenous communities whose ancestors were forcibly displaced will help <b>heal the harms of racism</b> and support the <b>collective well-being of communities and the earth</b>.</p> <p><i>Examples of the health community supporting root cause housing solutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Making the Public Health Case for Reparations</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>The Land Back Movement and Health</u></a></li> </ul>



## 4. Power

The Five Ps	Band-Aid Solutions	Root Cause Solutions
<p><b>Power:</b> Support the power of those most impacted by housing injustices to determine their own futures.</p>	<p><b>Traditional Community Engagement in Planning Processes</b></p> <p>Community engagement in city planning has historically failed to foster democratic participation and equity through community-driven decision making, and instead has often led to tokenization and planners falling short of implementing community input.</p>	<p><b>Tenant Unions</b></p> <p>Tenant unions <b>build political power</b> for safe, affordable housing and to fight against displacement and unjust landlord practices.</p> <p><i>Examples of the health community supporting root cause housing solutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Public Health for Community Power Coalition Support Letter for A Federal Rent Cap</a></li> </ul>

## 5. Place

The Five Ps	Band-Aid Solutions	Root Cause Solutions
<p><b>Place:</b> Ensure homes are near opportunity and away from health risks. Target resources to disinvested communities and undo exclusionary policies in more resourced places.</p>	<p><b>Reforming Single Family Zoning without Working-Class and BIPOC Leadership</b>  Reforming zoning codes to end single family zoning is an important step to ending exclusionary zoning, but if done without input from or protections for BIPOC communities, it can lead to real estate speculation and gentrification of these BIPOC communities.</p>	<p><b>Equitable Transit Oriented Communities (ETOC)</b>  When affordable housing is built or preserved in communities with transportation, jobs, green spaces and other amenities, it supports the <b>collective well-being of our communities and earth.</b></p> <p><i>Examples of the health community supporting root cause housing solutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Healing Through Policy's equitable transportation and planning recommendations</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Pittsburg Railroad Avenue Transit Oriented Development Health Impact Assessment</u></a></li> </ul>

# A Call to Action for the Public Health Sector

Providing immediate relief to housing instability and addressing root causes will require a bold, multi-strategy, ecosystem approach to address the layered causes of injustice. Both the public health and housing affordability community have studied the problem of housing insecurity extensively and identified a myriad of solutions, but many of these are short-term fixes that maintain the status quo. Considering the urgency and complexity of people becoming unhoused, as well as the housing and health crises, it is critical that we pursue remedies to end housing inequities and center human well-being over profit.

The public health sector is a key partner in the housing justice movement, and can play a powerful role alongside resident leaders and housing advocates. Public health practitioners should lean into their power to address the root causes of housing instability, and to advance the Five Ps in a meaningful way. We hope that the Root Cause Test can support the public health community in creating a future where housing is a universal human right.

Achieving housing justice will require a diverse set of actions from the public health field, and the transformation of our institutions to support more effective advocacy. This may require training and assigning dedicated housing justice staff, creating internal working groups or teams, building housing into our needs assessments and adopted priorities, pursuing and allocating funding, and building buy-in with leadership and policymakers about the imperative to focus energy and resources on root cause solutions.

Public health organizations have different capacities, strengths, and strategic roles to play. Non-governmental and non-profit organizations, foundations, and healthcare institutions can advance root cause solutions through administrative and legislative advocacy; providing research and casemaking; uplifting root cause solutions via media outlets; and providing funding resources to groups advancing root cause solutions. Governmental public health agencies can redirect resources – including staff time, funding, and political power – from band-aid fixes to root cause solutions; integrate community power-building into agency health equity and housing initiatives; partner with tenant-led housing justice groups; and leverage data and credibility to demonstrate how root cause housing solutions like tenant protections, land reparations, and social housing are key to improve health outcomes.

Ultimately, if we turn our attention to the root causes of housing injustices and enact transformative solutions, the public health field can help make a world in which we all have the power for self-determination, and access to the stable, affordable, dignified housing we need to be healthy.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Root Cause Test Worksheet

**How to use this worksheet:** This worksheet helps you evaluate a proposed action (like a new policy, program, investment, campaign, etc.) and strengthen its ability to shape root causes. Use it for an action you are developing, or one you wish to influence. This tool will be most helpful when the action and goals are defined enough to evaluate, but there is still room to adapt the proposal. Start by filling in the proposed action and goals. Then grade your proposal on the criteria and more detailed information in the “things to look for” column. Finally, propose ways the action could better advance root causes, or propose alternative actions to consider.

**Proposed Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Intended Goal(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Things to look for:	How would you grade this action on its impact on this root cause? (A: Very Well -> F: Not at All)	How could this action be improved to meet criteria? Or, are there other ways to meet goals that better meet root cause criteria?
<b>1. Power</b> Increase the power of working-class and BIPOC communities to decide the future of their families, homes, and cities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Democratic community ownership/control over land and housing</li><li>• Communities lead decision-making processes<sup>1</sup></li><li>• Builds capacity for resident leadership</li><li>• Limits displacement or forced migration</li><li>• Breaks corporate power</li></ul>	A B C D F	

<sup>1</sup> See for more:  
<https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>

Criteria	Things to look for:	How would you grade this action on its impact on this root cause? (A: Very Well -> F: Not at All)	How could this action be improved to meet criteria? Or, are there other ways to meet goals that better meet root cause criteria?
<b>2. Universality</b> Ensure stable, affordable, dignified homes for all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advances housing as a universal human need that should be a right</li> <li>• No group left out. Not means-tested, but may be targeted to address inequities</li> <li>• Improves outcomes by race, class, gender, immigration status</li> <li>• Significantly impacts housing stability, permanent affordability, housing quality</li> <li>• Does not create harmful unintended consequences</li> </ul>	A B C D F	
<b>3. Racial Healing</b> Repair and heal the harms of systemic racism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly repairs past harms like colonization, slavery, policing, displacement</li> <li>• Universal equity goals, targeted actions<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Improves racial disparities in housing and health outcomes</li> <li>• Counters discrimination</li> <li>• Challenges racist ideas, builds multi-racial solidarity</li> </ul>	A B C D F	

<sup>2</sup> See for more: <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>

Criteria	Things to look for:	How would you grade this action on its impact on this root cause? (A: Very Well -> F: Not at All)	How could this action be improved to meet criteria? Or, are there other ways to meet goals that better meet root cause criteria?
<b>4. Sustainability</b> Support the collective well-being of all living things and the earth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fosters healthy, sustainable communities for all residents</li> <li>• Reduces exposure to environmental and climate hazards</li> <li>• Reverses undue environmental burdens on working-class and BIPOC communities</li> </ul>	A B C D F	

## Appendix B: The Five Ps Framework

The Five Ps was first developed by the [San Mateo County Health System](#) as a simple framework to illustrate the comprehensive set of actions needed to address housing injustices.<sup>103</sup> It was adapted by the [Bay Area Health Inequities Initiative](#) and many housing organizations now refer to the “Three Ps” which do not include power and place.<sup>104</sup> The Five Ps framework is especially useful because it points to holistic change and has helped unify groups working on housing from different angles. We have included an adaptation of this framework below and encourage health organizations to use the Five Ps in their work towards health and housing solutions.

**P**roduction: building new, affordable homes for unhoused people and working-class households. Development should be community-centered and should engage and empower community members in decision-making processes. It should prioritize a community’s needs, including housing that is permanently affordable and community controlled – like community land trusts or social housing.

**P**reservation: keeping existing housing stock affordable and habitable. Preserve existing homes through remediation and rehabilitation of unhealthy units to maintain safe and healthy living conditions. Preserve “naturally occurring” affordable housing and keep subsidized housing permanently affordable. Low-cost rental units shouldn’t be demolished without replacement at the same affordability level. To keep communities intact, residents should have a right to return to their homes at the same affordability level after rehabilitation, redevelopment or after a natural disaster.

**P**rotection: safeguarding residents from eviction and foreclosure, exorbitant rent or mortgage increases, landlord harassment and housing insecurity. Protect communities of color from gentrification pressures including the mass acquisition of residential and commercial buildings by corporate real estate investors.

**P**ower: ensuring the ability to influence decisions in your community and about your housing conditions. Community power is built through organizing, is led by the people most impacted by housing insecurity and injustice – including renters, low-income homeowners, and the unhoused community – and leads to self-determination.

**P**lace: locating affordable housing where it will improve quality of life and health outcomes. Develop communities away from sources of pollution, and in places that are affordable, walkable, green and climate resilient, and near public transit, jobs and other amenities. Eliminate exclusionary zoning policies that have prevented low-income and BIPOC people from accessing housing in high opportunity neighborhoods.

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