



# **Building Bridges in Divided Communities**

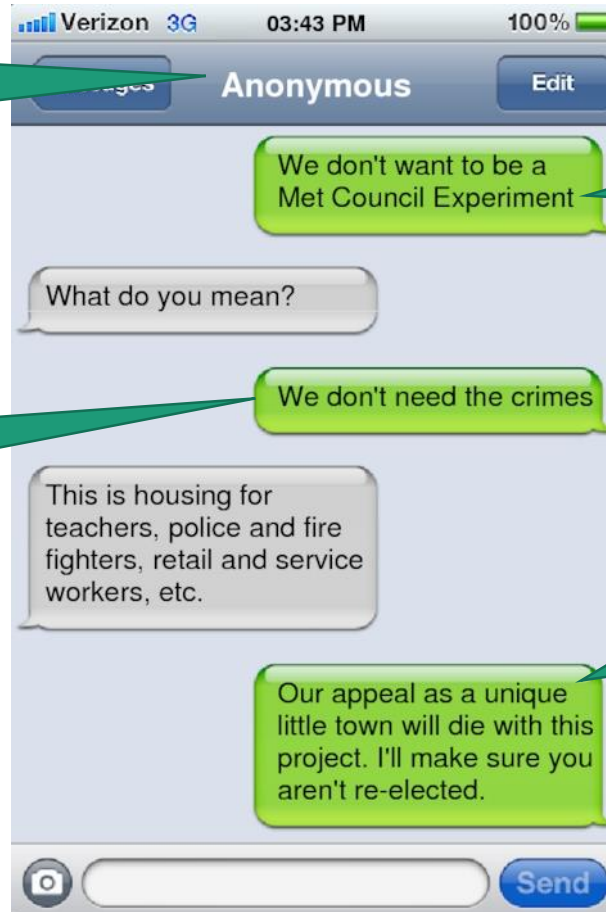
***Presented by  
Tom Horner***

# Today's political discourse

Immediate,  
anonymous

Opinions  
based on  
myths, fear

*Actual citizen comments from  
recent affordable housing  
debates in Chaska, Savage, MN.*



Mistrust

Narrow  
values;  
angry

# Information Overload...at the Speed of Rumor

*90% of history's data has been generated in last two years; much of it transmitted in the 35 daily texts sent/received by average texter. (Digital Intelligence Today)*



Every 60 seconds:

- ✓ 72 hours of video uploaded to YouTube
- ✓ 278,000 tweets
- ✓ 204 million emails sent

**Mainstream or Social Media? It's no longer OR...it's AND.**

**The "Daily Me" is becoming the "We Media."**

**Facebook drives 20 percent of the traffic to news sites and 30 percent of *U.S. adults* get their news directly from Facebook, according to NY Times**

**Grandparents are fastest growing demographic on Twitter (*Socialnomics*)**

**We don't search for ideas/products.  
New ideas and products search for us,  
often with peer endorsements.**

**- 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations. Only 14% trust advertisements (*Socialnomics*).**

**- 7% trust government great deal/a lot;  
22% trust newspapers great deal/a lot  
(*Gallup*).**



Facts, rumors, opinions merge in people's desire to be validated more than informed.

**55% of people use mobile devices to keep up with the news;  
among 18-44 year olds, it's 70%. (*Reynolds Journalism Institute, U of Missouri*)**

**How do we have  
conversations on big issues...**



**...when we have  
little common  
ground to start  
water-cooler  
conversations?**

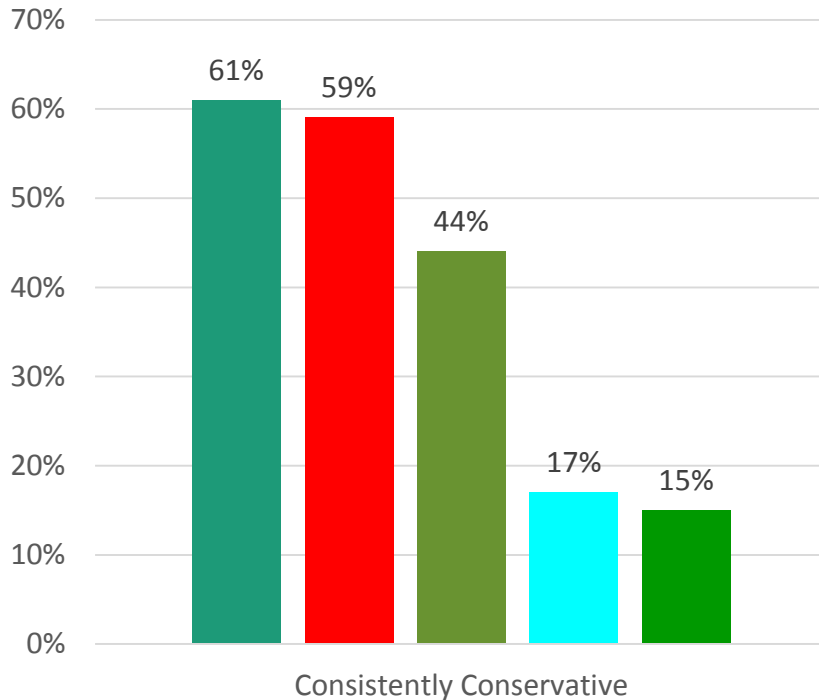
# Losing common cultural touchstones

- Fewer “melting pot” events.
- Television programming target smaller audiences.
  - ✓ In 1953, more than 67 percent of American households tuned into TV watched “I Love Lucy.”
  - ✓ Today’s top-rated shows draws 13.5 rating (percent of homes tuned into a program)
  - ✓ Racial divide among television viewers.

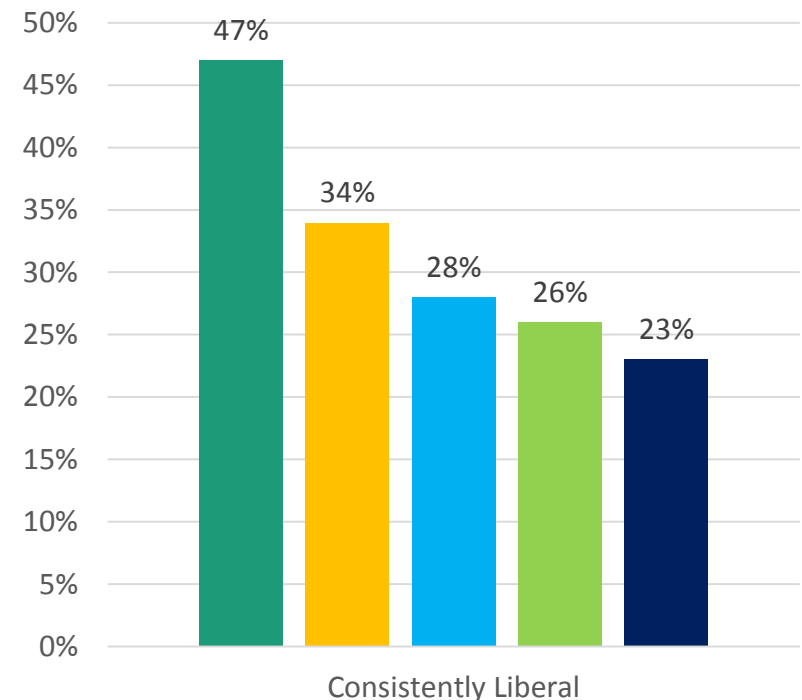


# Liberal or Conservative?

## *Most Important Child-Rearing Values*

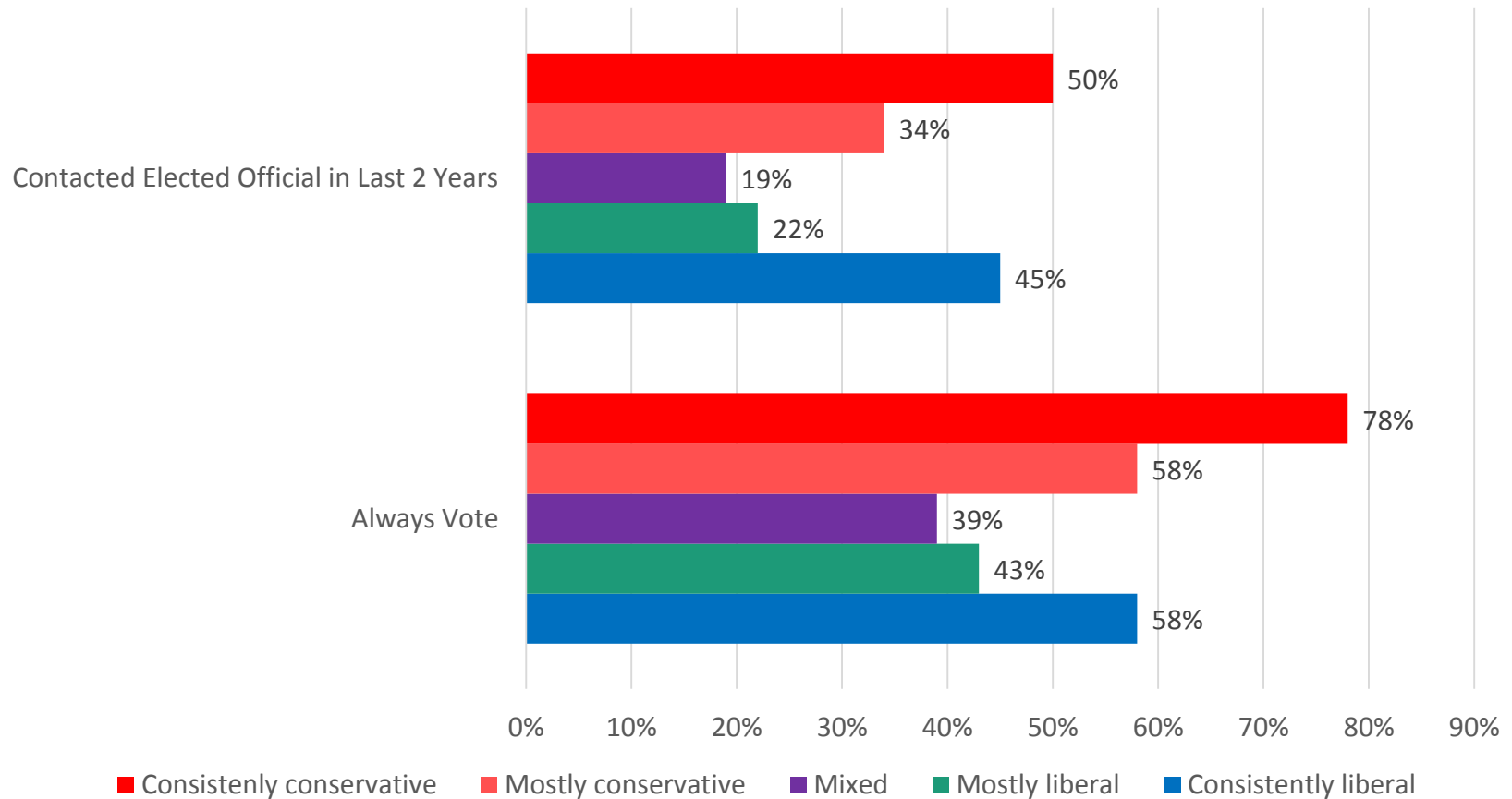


■ Being Responsible   ■ Religious Faith  
■ Hard Work   ■ Being Well-Mannered  
■ Obedience

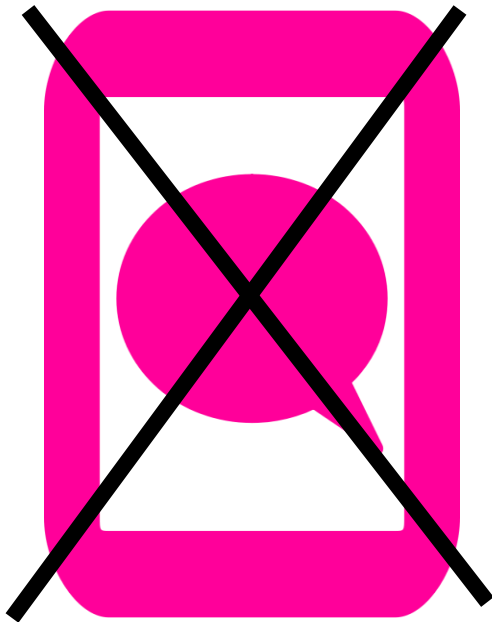


■ Being Responsible   ■ Empathy for Others  
■ Helping Others   ■ Hard Work  
■ Curiosity

# Political engagement is most active at the extremes...



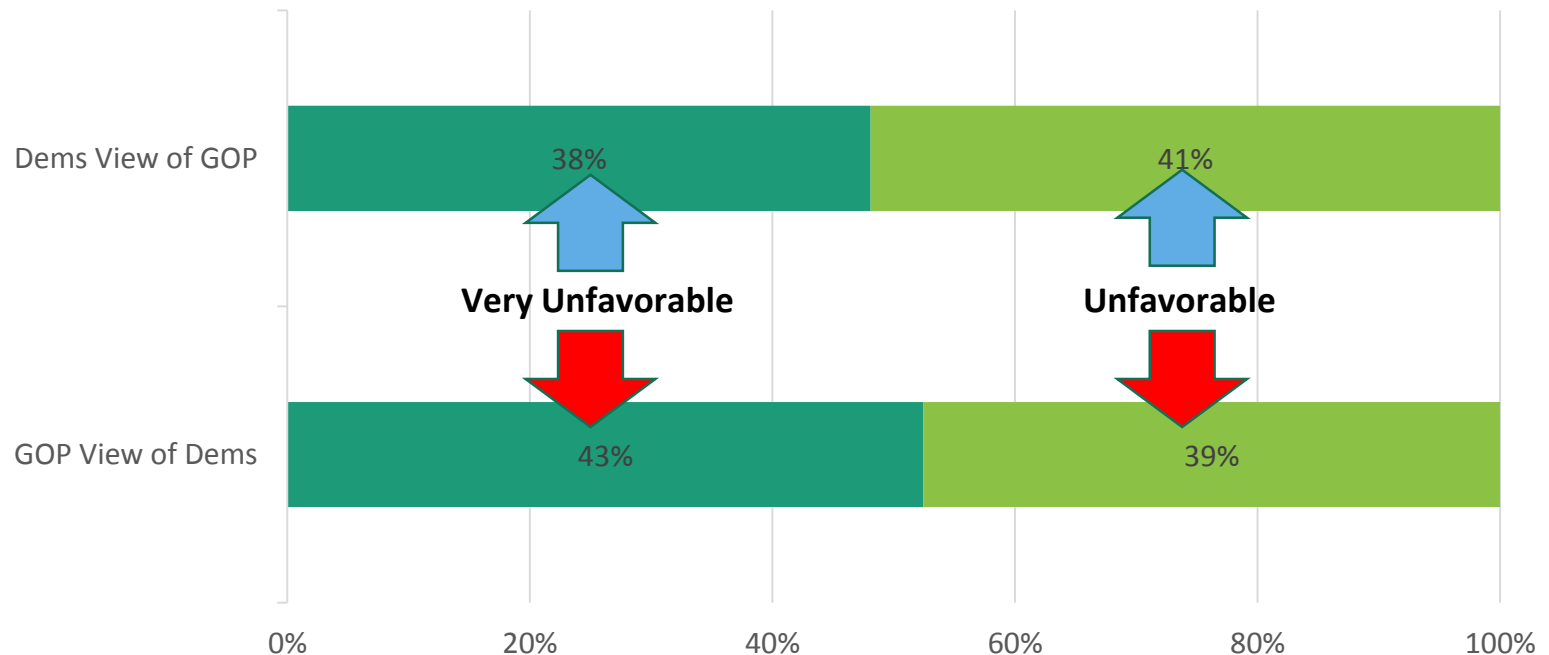
# ...but ideological purists often aren't open to other views



- 47% of “consistent conservatives” say the opinions they see on Facebook are mostly/always in line with their own
- 44% of “consistent liberals” are the most likely to block/stop following others on Facebook because they disagree with their views

# We don't just disagree... We think *THEIR* motives are suspect

*Unfavorable Views Partisans Have of Each Other*



**“Most...intense partisans believe the opposing party’s policies are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being.”**

***(Pew Research, June 2014)***

# Facts often don't matter

Safe to Eat Genetically Modified Food?

U.S. Adults:  
37%



AAAS Scientists:  
88%

Climate Change Mostly Caused by Human Activity?

U.S. Adults:  
50%



AAAS Scientists:  
87%

*Scientific American*, Jan, 2015; based on survey by Pew  
and American Association for Advancement of Science

“Head-on attempts to persuade can sometimes trigger a backfire effect, where people not only fail to change their minds when confronted with the facts—they may hold their wrong views more tenaciously than ever.”

*(Yale Law School Professor Dan Kahan quoted in “The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science,” Mother Jones Magazine, May-June 2011)*

# In this environment, anger is big business

## The 'Outrage Industry'

- Media environment promotes anger.
  - ✓ Reality TV
  - ✓ Talk radio
  - ✓ Online newspaper comments
- Social Media fueled by anonymity, immediacy.
- Inevitable outcome: The "Outrage Industry" is growing local roots



**"Insight or Incite?"**

‘Richfield Becomes the  
~~Servants’ Quarters~~  
‘Workforce Housing’ for Edina’

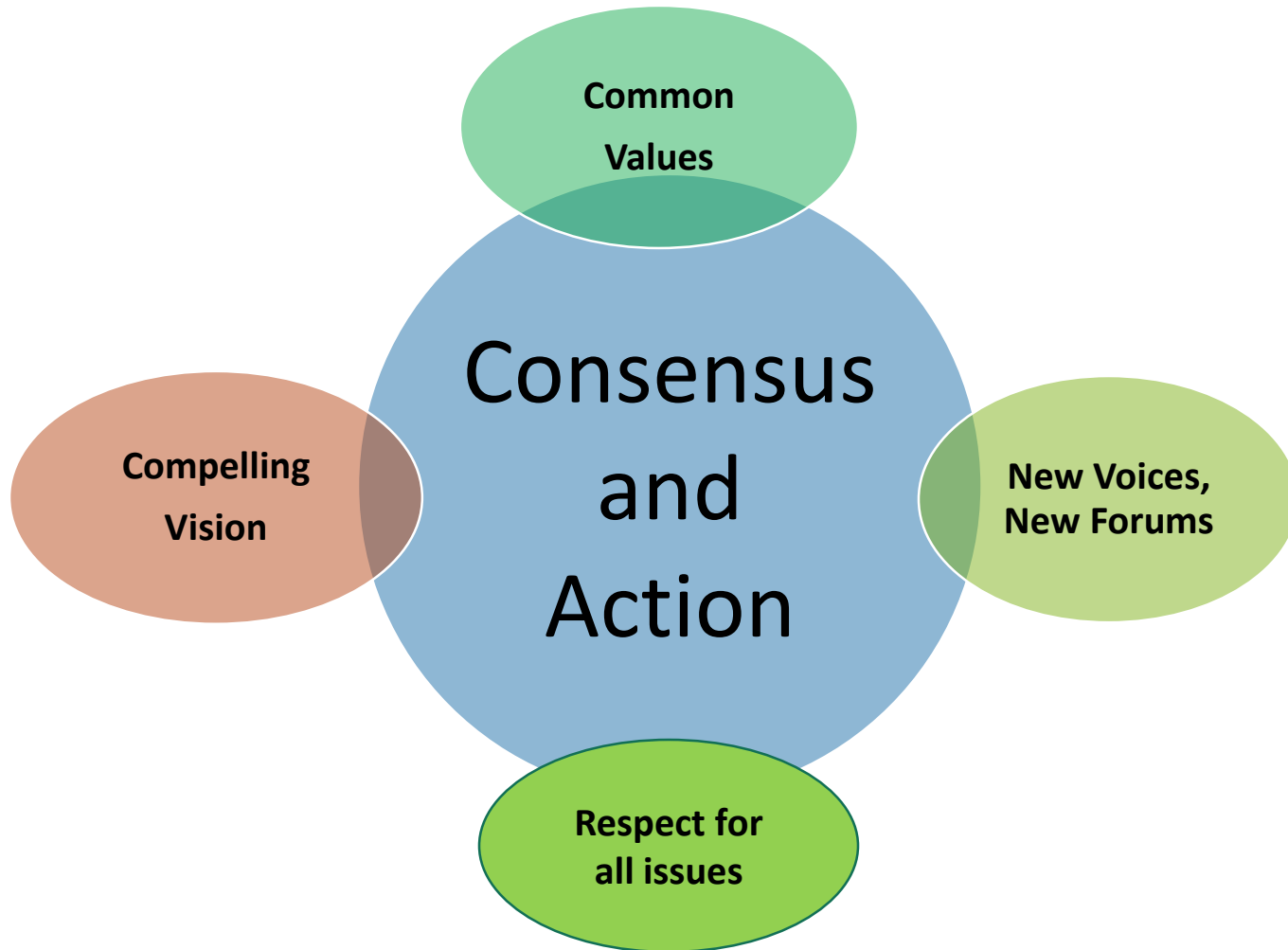
“At the risk of being called a racist, will we need to add police officers to handle these problem ridden folks? The whole deal sounds like Cabrini Green West to me. Has any government subsidized housing project not turned into a crime ridden slum?”

- Comment on “Richfield Patch,” a community news site

# Fear, frustration fuel discontent; discontent fuels opposition

“Families that are neither rich nor poor may be under more downward economic and financial pressure than common but simplistic rank-based measures of income or wealth would suggest....(O)ne reason many Americans viewed themselves as struggling was that their real incomes had not advanced significantly beyond their parents’ even when they reached higher educational levels, while those who matched their parents’ achievements were actually worse off.”

# Getting to 'Yes'



# Will ‘Your Solutions’ change ‘My Community?’

What We Like About Our Communities	What We Fear Change Brings
Nice people with a sense of community.	People who aren’t involved; “they aren’t like me.”
Safe, peaceful.	Crime, noise, social problems.
Open space, parks, trails.	Density, congestion; it changes the “character” of a community.
Good schools.	Disruptions in classrooms. Resources siphoned off by non-English speaking residents.
Well-maintained, nice homes.	Residents who don’t take care of their property, especially residents of multi-family rental units.

*Source: Survey of Minnesotans, McKnight Foundation, Decisions Resources, 2009*

# Start conversations where community is; not where you want it to be

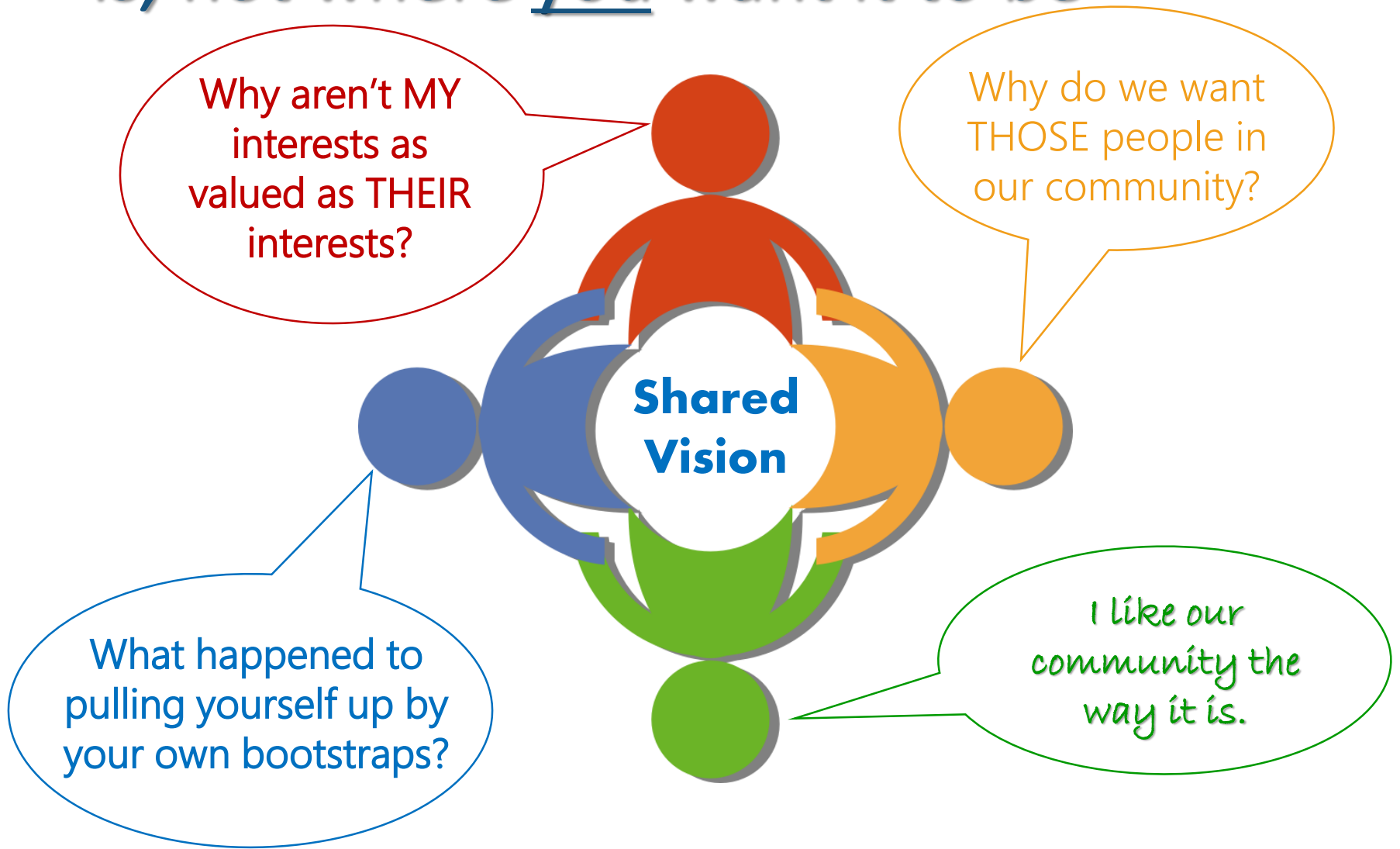
Why aren't MY interests as valued as THEIR interests?

Why do we want THOSE people in our community?

**Shared Vision**

What happened to pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps?

I like our community the way it is.



# Respecting the starting points isn't accepting the premises



**Community action  
to improve health of  
kids starts with  
parental  
responsibility**



**Climate change?  
Lots of snow in my  
back yard!**

**Transit**

*I like  
my  
car*



**Why  
should  
my taxes  
subsidiz  
e  
others?**

**Health  
reform  
starts with  
political  
ideology**



# Changing the conversation, not just the language

- Framing, messaging, advocacy are helpful...but honest conversations are essential.
- An honest conversation begins with listening.
  - ✓ Solutions are created, not imposed.
  - ✓ Incorporates actions, not just words.
  - ✓ Educates and informs community choices.



Be like Flo

- Friendly
- On your side
- A broker of information

# Tone and language matter

**The words you use make a difference. The most effective words do three things:**

- Tap into core values and emotions.
- Clarify; drives understanding of need, shared benefits.
- Simplify.

**“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”**

*- Mark Twain*

# Respect your audience's values

Casselton, ND...BNSF train derails in December 2013, spills 400,000 gallons of crude oil; 2,400 residents urged to evacuate in dead of winter; accident comes six months after Quebec derailment kills 47, incinerates town.

## BNSF Statement:

“We are thankful there have been no injuries...and are terribly sorry for the inconvenience this derailment has caused residents in the area.”



## Mayor Ed McConnell:

The North Dakota oil industry “has to convert from wildcatting to being a responsible neighbor.”

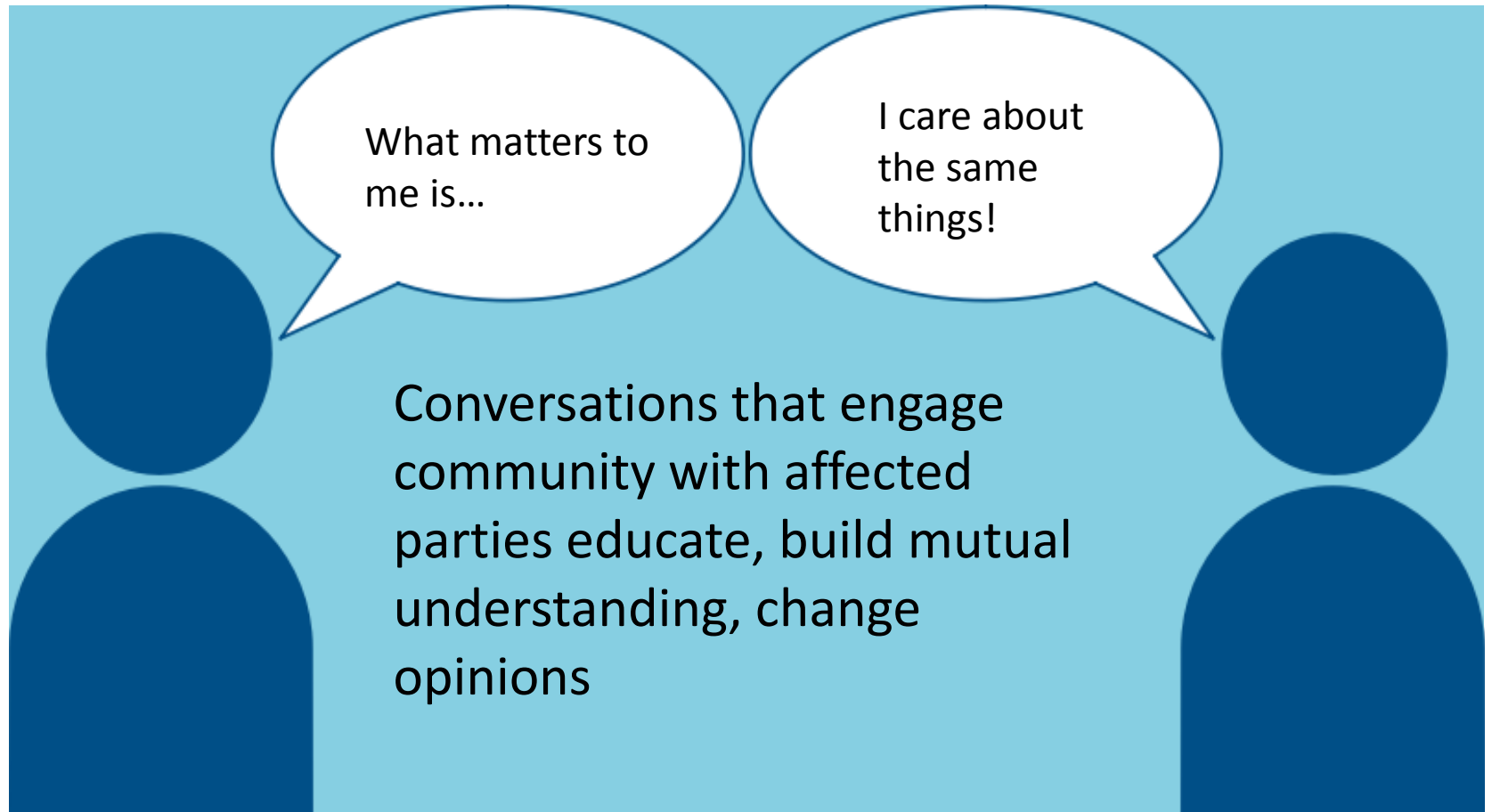
# Homeowners' have valid concerns

- How will you protect the value of my home?
- Will property taxes go up to pay for new social challenges?
- Can we maintain the character of the community?
- Will new residents have the same commitment to the community I do, or will they create new problems?
- Will this action benefit ME?

# Conversations are two-way

- Government hearings aren't conversations.
- Starting with defined solutions don't promote understanding and sharing.
- Words and actions define conversations.
- Conversations occur in multiple settings.

# Connect with new voices



What matters to me is...

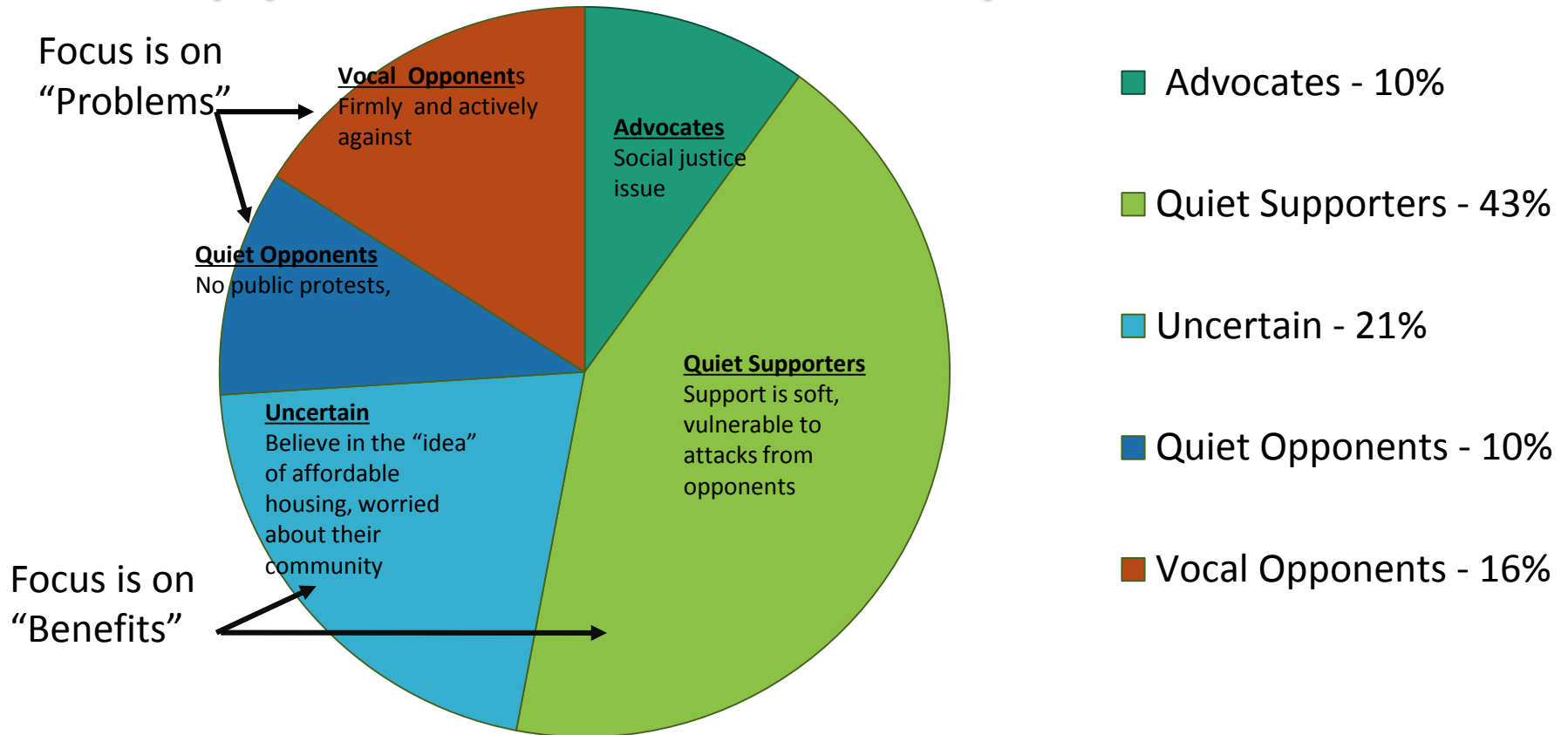
I care about the same things!

Conversations that engage community with affected parties educate, build mutual understanding, change opinions

# Actions, honesty, respect make the long-term difference

- Think creatively about how new and old residents can be connected.
- Open the door to honest conversations about what new solutions mean to all stakeholders.
- Create a process for defining, addressing shared challenges.
- Respect those who are concerned with their self-interest.

# Get opponents to stand down or supporters to stand up?



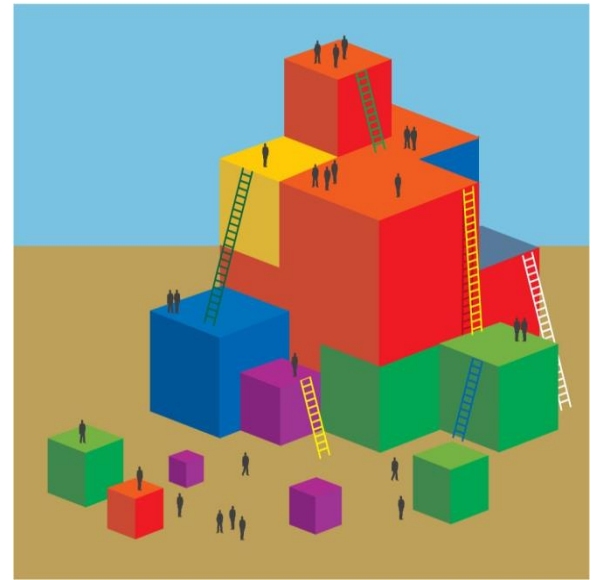
*Source: Survey of Minnesotans, McKnight Foundation, Decisions Resources, 2009*

# Create new forums

In communities in which people increasingly live, recreate and worship with people like themselves, places of employment are one of the few places in which we engage with people who aren't like us.

Businesses have a stake in healthier communities.

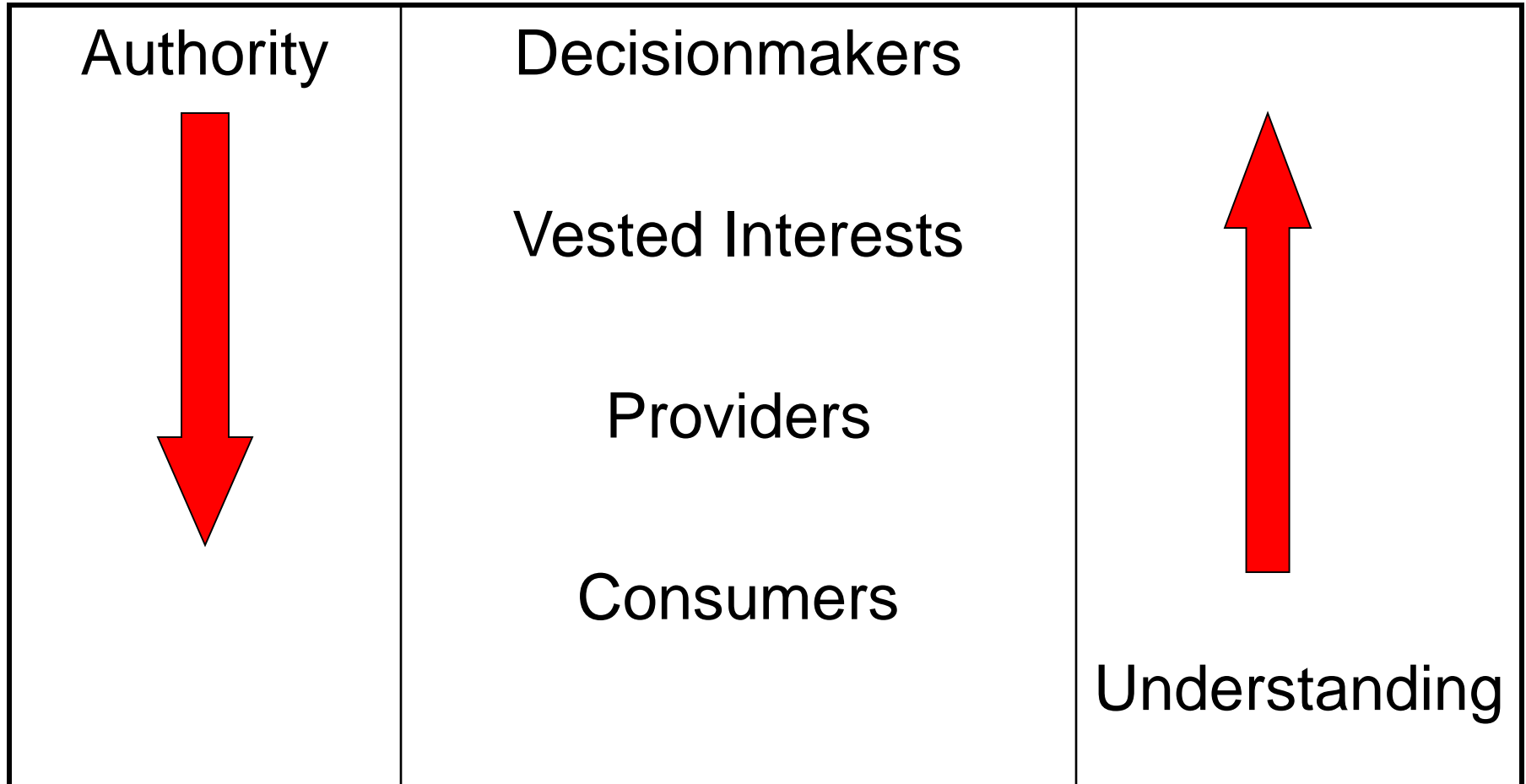
How can communities leverage that mutual interest?



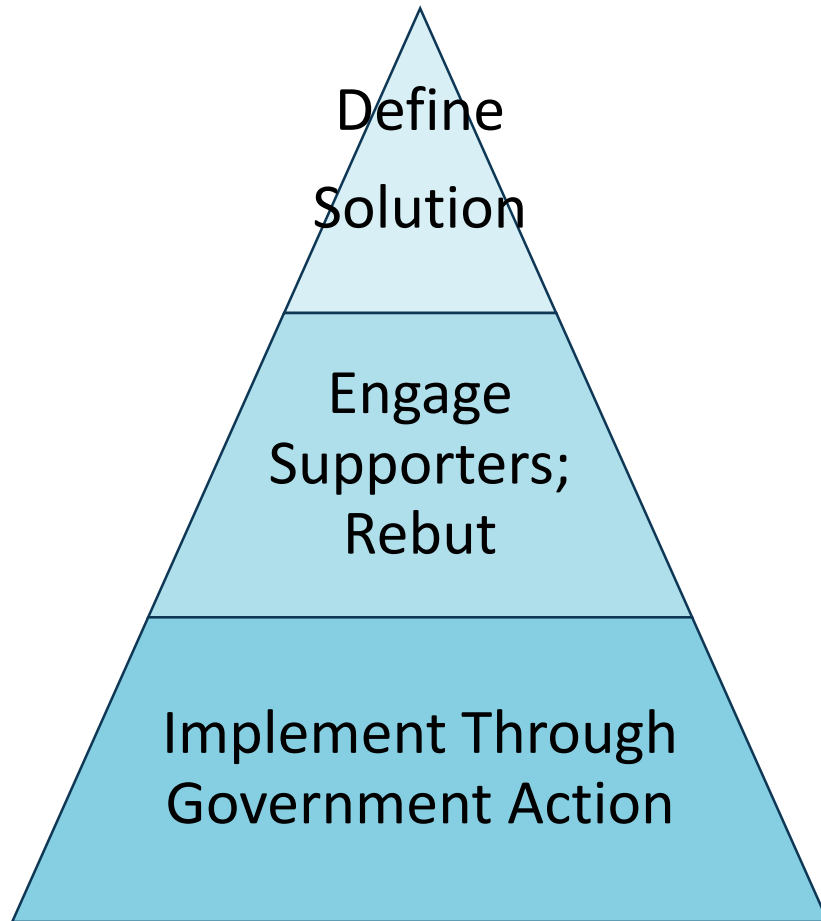
*There is a widening gulf between educated, wealthy white professionals and their less educated, less affluent, working-class white counterparts.*

Charles Murray,  
"Coming Apart"

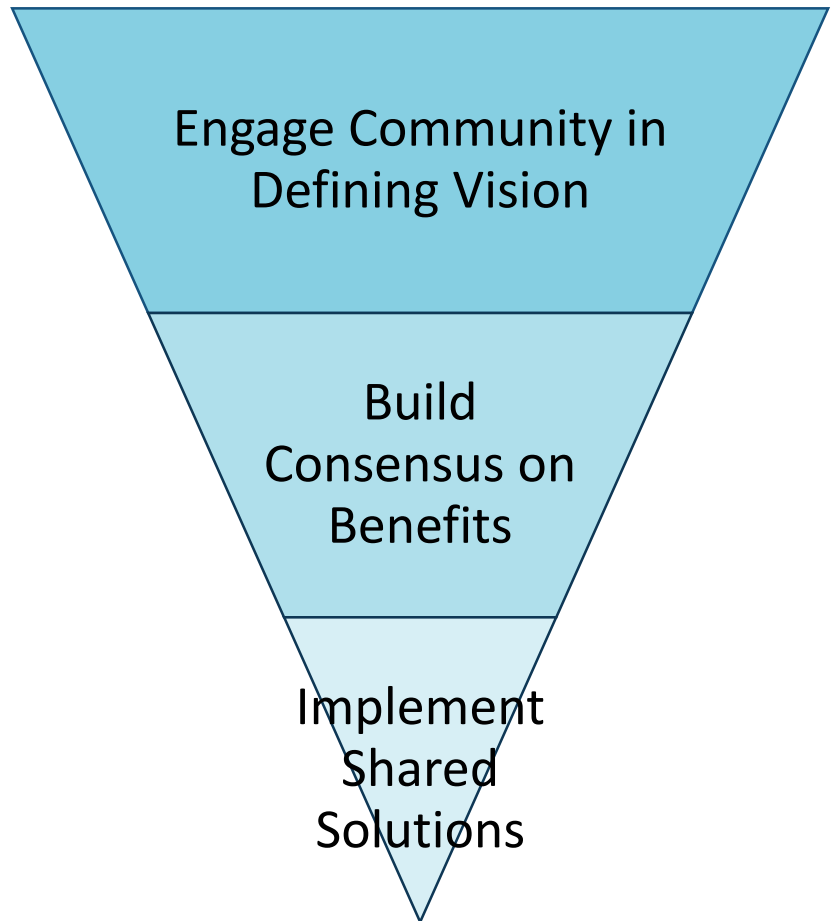
# ‘Voice of Understanding’ or ‘Voice of Authority’



## Voice of Authority



## Voice of Understanding



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