

A black and white photograph of a meeting is the background for the left half of the page. It shows several people seated around a table. In the foreground, a person's hand is raised high, wearing a watch and a ring. In the background, a woman with glasses also has her hand raised. The table is set with water bottles, cups, and some food items.

SENSEMAKING REPORT

Team members

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OVERVIEW

How might we...

- Collect rich and complex data from community dialogues, analyze and make sense of that data?
- Engage researchers and community leaders to exchange knowledge and learn together?
- Design outputs of sensemaking in a participatory way?

These are some of the questions that guide our analysis that builds on community-powered understanding and using custom-designed Insights tools. We see our sensemaking process as the invisible thread that weaves together all different phases of this initiative:

- We start by inviting people into a dialogue with each other through the carefully designed prompts in the conversation guide;
- We move to engage in deep listening of these conversations to surface participants' stories and experiences;
- We then thematically tag these experiences to identify trends and patterns using custom-designed Insights tools;
- We design sensemaking outputs for communities, policy-makers, journalists, and decision-makers.

CONVERSATIONS

Real Talk for Change invited trusted community leaders to facilitate conversations with their communities who are often underheard. For the pilot phase of the program, community leaders facilitated over 60 small group conversations with residents across the city. They invited community members from their local networks to join a facilitated conversation with 4-8 participants (in-person or on Zoom).

In these conversations, we invited community members to share: “What is your question about the future of Boston and your place in that future? What experience led you to that question?” These prompts serve as starting points for participants to share hopes, concerns, and lived experiences and engage with each other in identifying common hopes and concerns.

As a project that seeks to uplift the voices of Boston's most underheard neighbors, Real Talk for Change pursued a recruitment strategy that prioritized some of the most marginalized communities. The team focused on recruiting neighbors living in Roxbury and Dorchester, relying heavily on the robust social networks of its community partners and facilitators. Many of the facilitators are well-known leaders in these marginalized communities and have uplifted the voices of neighbors across different contexts, from civic groups to community-based and grassroots organizations.

LISTEN

After the facilitated conversations were hosted and recorded, they got uploaded on [Local Voices Network](#) and became part of a community-protected and community-owned collection. We start by [listening deeply](#) to all conversations and immerse ourselves into the conversation collection. As we listen, we systematically identify the questions and experiences that participants shared in the facilitated conversations.

Community members, community leaders, and researchers come together and engage in a rigorous process of gaining a deep understanding of people's lived experiences as shared in the facilitated conversations. We collaboratively work together and build on each other's knowledge, expertise, and skills to learn from one another and share nuanced insights into the experiences we are listening to.

ANALYZE

To thematically analyze the conversations, we generated a designated [codebook](#) following a multi-step iterative process. The codebook captured capturing 9 themes and 41 subthemes and served as a comprehensive map of themes expressed in the conversation transcripts and helped us navigate the complexity of the data. We started this process by asking ourselves:

- “What does this text mean to me?”, to then move to
- “What does this text mean to us collectively?” and ultimately to
- “What does this text mean in the context of the communities we engaged in these conversations?”

TOOLS

Beyond people-power alone, this project is supported and heightened with the help of different tools. Our process is designed to be supported and enabled by the unique collaboration between old, ancient, human technologies like facilitation, dialogue, and active listening with new, computer-enabled technology that allows us to analyze the transcribed conversations systematically and at scale. This unique collaboration allows for the depth and richness that comes from human technologies, with the scale, replicability, memory, and transparency of new tech.

Examples of the use of our custom-designed Insights tool

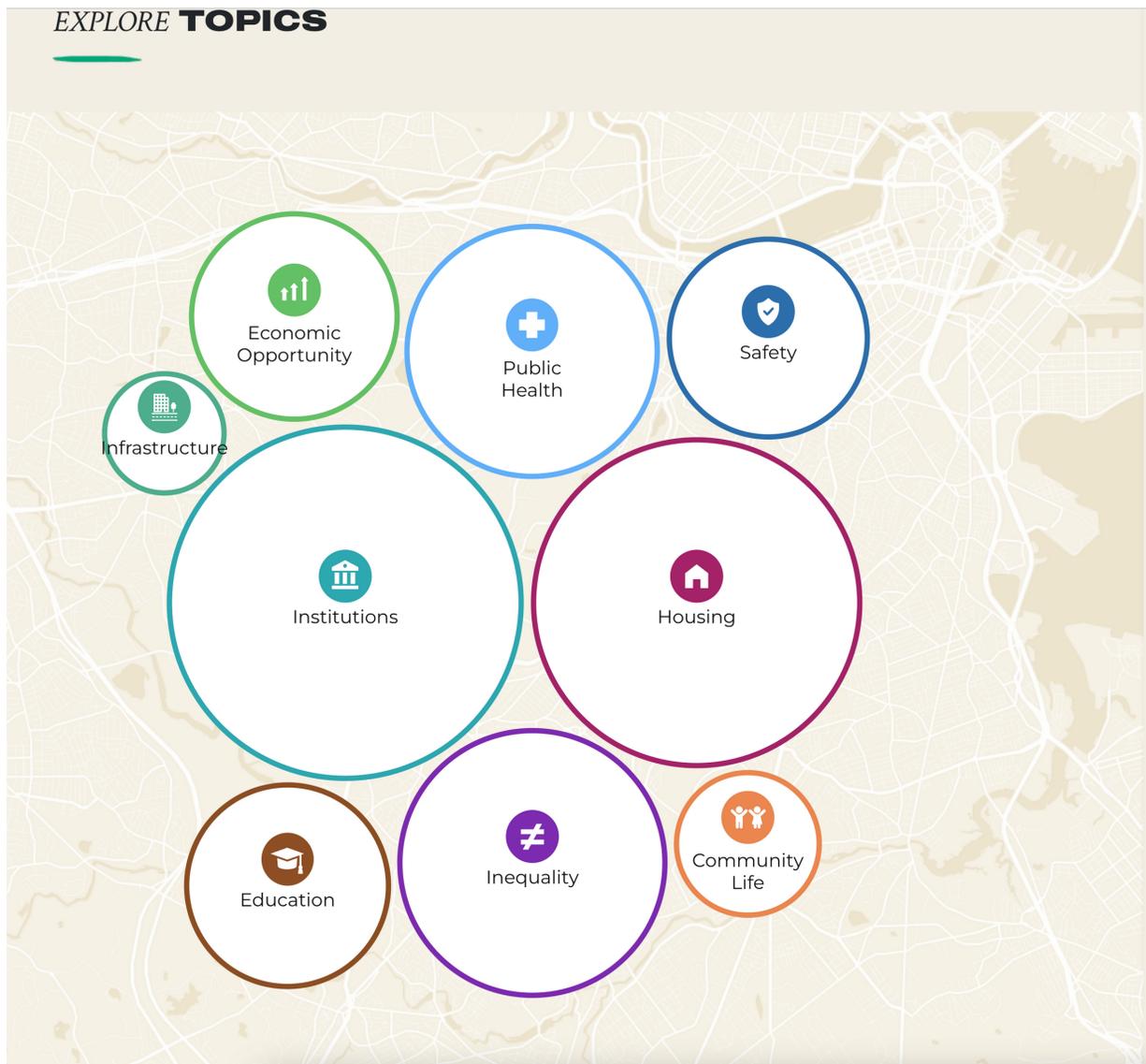
The screenshot displays the 'Highlights' interface of the Insights tool. It features a grid of 10 conversation highlights, each with a title, transcript, audio player, and a set of tags. The interface includes navigation tabs for 'Conversations', 'Highlights', and 'Speakers', along with search and filter options. A 'Tags' sidebar on the right lists various categories such as 'Race-Ethnicity', 'Income', and 'Housing Affordability'.

This block shows a detailed view of a single highlight. The transcript reads: "I don't know. It's not just owning, forget about owning, but renting. And, can I have a successful business here, because it seems to be, at least in my field, it seems to me that people treat black and brown businesses different than the white businesses. They quickly know they have t...". The highlight is associated with tags such as 'Experience', 'Race-Ethnicity', 'Expectations', 'Accountability', 'Processes', 'Housing Affordability', 'Jobs', 'Income', and 'Race-Based'. It also includes a speaker name 'Doug' and a conversation ID '#1441'.

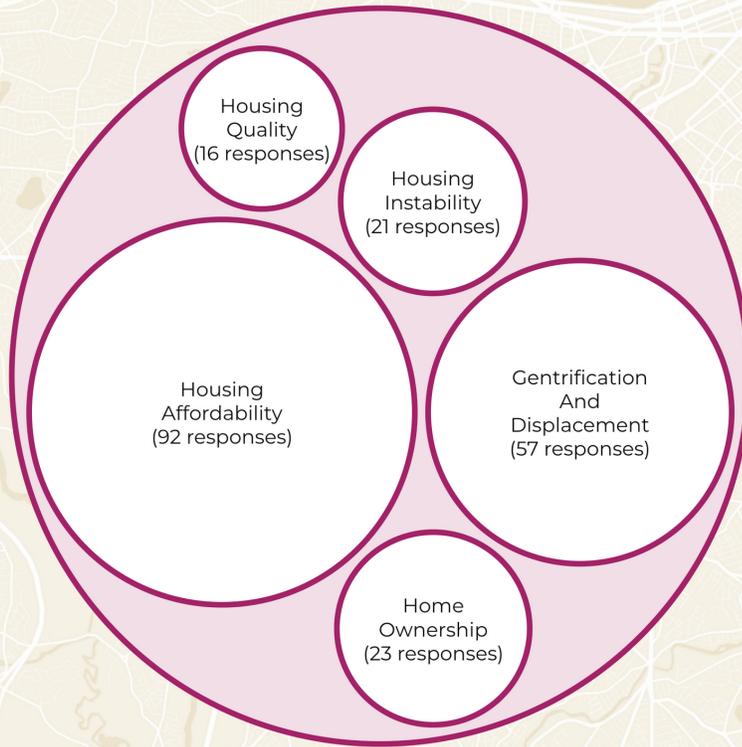
SYNTHESIZE

The main output of our sensemaking process is a public-facing conversation portal including a series of thematic summaries on each theme and subtheme level and are informed by the structure of our codebook. The goal of those summaries is to help users understand important trends in the kinds of questions and experiences that participants offer. Summaries lead and showcase the voices of people who lent their experiences to RTFC; reflect the tone and flavor of conversations; and communicate the most prevalent experiences that emerge across conversations.

Examples of the Conversation Portal

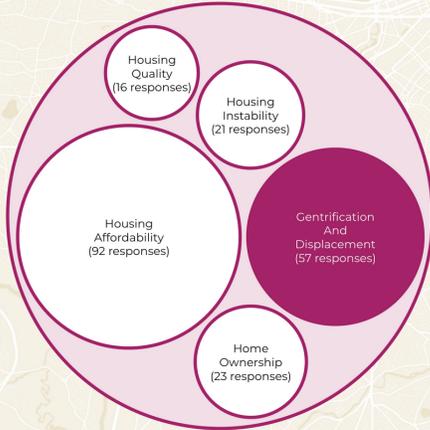


 [Back to Topics](#)



EXPLORE GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

← Back to **Housing**



"Everybody is being pushed out for big developments, and \$500,000-\$600,000 townhouse condos, and the taxes are so high. How are you supposed to afford to even keep where you stay at? ... Is there going to be a space, or a place for future generations to even be able to live in Boston?" So many of our neighbors are watching their neighborhoods gentrify as new housing development crops up. Like ► **Ceanier** from Dorchester, they connect this new development to their struggles with being able to afford housing in Boston.

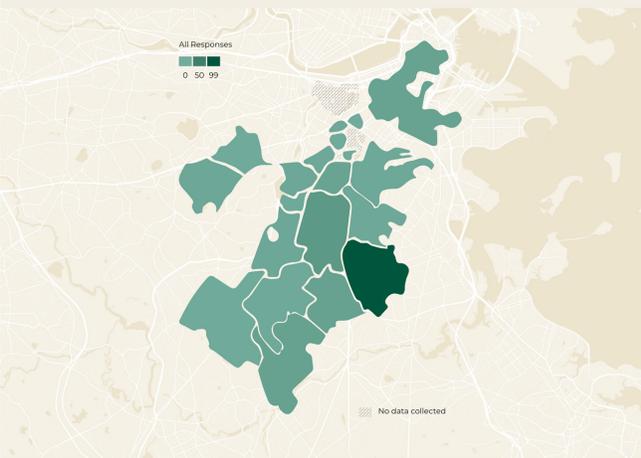
Some of our neighbors, like ► **Priestess Ziona**, feel torn about gentrification, "Even though we still want these property developments, we do want nicer living quarters and stuff like that, but how can we keep the cost of living as low as possible so that more people would have an opportunity to live in Boston and stay living in Boston?"

For neighbors like ► **Ian** from Dorchester, gentrification makes them feel excluded in their own neighborhoods: "I'm in my environment and I still don't feel included, but because I understand my surroundings, I know how to place myself. I don't feel invited and it's not just a black thing, it's just an education, it's a class thing. It's all the above. I don't feel welcomed."

Leave Feedback

HEAR BOSTON

In 2021, we heard from people in **21 Neighborhoods** about **9 Topics**.



- 1 What is your question about the future of Boston and your place in it?
- 2 What experience led you to that question?

James
Undisclosed Neighborhood | Dec 17, 2021

▶ Listen

My question is will my son and his peers receive a quality, socially, emotionally, intellectually enriching education in Boston Public Schools?

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Public Health Education Inequality

Antonio's Question Antonio's Experience

Antonio
Undisclosed Neighborhood | Dec 17, 2021

▶ Listen

My question was, how can we get more black men to prepare our youth to compete economically in the world with our white counterparts so that we can change our condition?

Share View Full Transcript What is this?

Education Economic Opportunity Inequality

Willis's Question Willis's Experience

Willis
Undisclosed Neighborhood | Dec 17, 2021

▶ Listen

My question is how can you be part of the future of Boston and make an impact on youth to recognize their worth?

Share View Full Transcript What is this?