

Next Level Housing Solutions: A Call to Action

The Boston Foundation, Bank of America, CHAPA and LISC joined forces in May 2019 to host a forum that served as a call to action for Massachusetts leaders to take our responses to the housing crisis to the next level. We gathered housing leaders, advocates, advisors, funders, regulators and thought leaders on May 6 at Bank of America to discuss why we need to step up our responses and how to do so.



Next Level Housing Solutions Discussion Series: July - October 2019

- Tackling Income Inequality and Driving Racial Equity—July 17th
- Creative Policy Solutions—July 30th
- Creative Financing Solutions—September 10th
- Aligning Leaders and Solutions Across Sectors—September 24th
- Building Urgency and Political Will—October 8th
- Next Level Housing Symposium—October 22nd

Follow Next Level Housing Solutions on Eventbrite or visit bit.ly/nextlevelhousingsolutions to register.

Why do we need Next Level Housing Solutions?

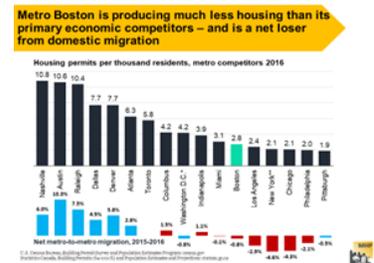
Massachusetts has a booming innovation economy that continues to grow. But we are facing a multi-dimensional housing crisis that is eroding our middle class, deepening our income inequality and exacerbating existing racial inequity which threatens the sustainability of that growth. Housing leaders know our current solutions are inadequate. We must take our

responses to the next level and unlock the potential our community has to meet this crisis head-on.

Our discussion was kicked off powerfully by **EOHED Secretary Mike Kennealy**, who has been spreading the housing gospel broadly as he works to pass the Governor’s housing choice bill to better enable communities to loosen up restrictive local zoning. He was followed by **Clark Zeigler, Executive Director of MHP**, who presented the data supporting four key challenges:

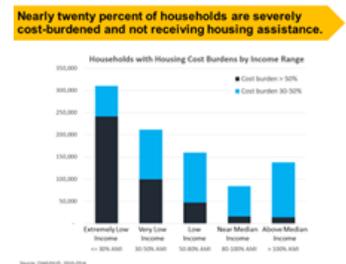
1. We Don’t Have Enough Housing.

High construction costs and restrictive local land use policies have led to a state housing supply gap of 39,000 units, heavily concentrated in metro Boston. We produce less than we used to and we produce much less than the metros we compete with for talent. Retiring baby boomers will widen the gap, challenging our ability to renew the workforce and sustain our regional prosperity.



2. Housing Costs Too Much.

As a result, rents and purchase prices are increasingly out of reach for low-wage and middle class workers, who are pushed further away from jobs, services and transit. Our rents and home prices are among the highest in the nation. More than 400,000 households pay more than half of their income for housing. That’s one in five Massachusetts households, with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable.



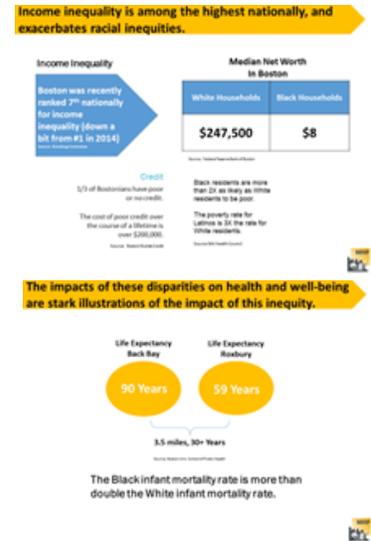
3. We Must Align Housing with Transit.

Record traffic congestion and system failures have demonstrated that investing in our transit system is imperative to our economic sustainability. However, aligned housing production across the system, and especially the commuter rail, will also be needed to capitalize on transit investments and get commuters out of their cars.



4. Our Housing Policies Drive Racial Inequities. Still.

Housing policies of the past subsidized suburban homeownership for whites while locking people of color out of FHA loan programs and redlining their neighborhoods, resulting in disinvestment. Today's exclusionary zoning policies serve to perpetuate the status quo and offer few paths for low-income households to build wealth. Homeownership rates are dramatically lower for households of color, in a market where homeowners are building equity and renters are being displaced as those same neighborhoods gentrify. Today's policies are exacerbating, not eliminating, income inequality and racial inequity, and the results show up as dramatic gaps in education, income, wealth and health.



The Discussion: How Should We Respond?

Our panelists kicked off the discussion, followed by input from the many leaders in the room, including **Aaron Gornstein of POAH** and **Ann Houston of Opportunity Communities**, who helped us facilitate discussion.

Below are some key themes, many of the ideas contributed, and some proposed next steps.

There are Promising Policy Proposals on the Table.

The aforementioned Housing Choice bill, which would put a chink in the long-resistant armor of exclusionary local zoning, is a step in the right direction, but we know more will be needed. **Rachel Heller, Executive Director of CHAPA**, described legislation proposed by CHAPA to create new tools and new ways to use old tools, including ways to create new housing, reduce barriers to production, set production goals, and protect tenants from displacement. CHAPA's production bill would require multifamily zoning in communities served by transit, limit frivolous abutter lawsuits and prohibit exclusionary zoning that discriminates against developments that include affordable housing or families with children. Antidisplacement proposals by CHAPA, the City of Boston and others include a tenant right to counsel in eviction cases, limitations on eviction rights, tenant rights to purchase their buildings at foreclosure or short sale, landlord tax credits for keeping rents affordable and a subsidy for past due rent to prevent evictions. CHAPA's legislative proposals also include rental voucher and public housing reforms, economic mobility and increasing the state match for the Community Preservation Act. MassInc's neighborhood stabilization bill targets the need for neighborhood revitalization in Gateway Cities. There are also examples emerging from other cities and states, including the elimination of single-family zoning, density by right near transit where low-cost housing is included, and calls for rent control.

We do not wish to duplicate ongoing policy conversations. But we should connect to them, add more diverse perspectives, work to resolve competing priorities, and aggressively explore new and creative solutions.

We Need to Broaden the Call to Action.

Numerous speakers discussed the need to build ownership of the challenges and leadership of the solutions outside of the housing community. **Boston Foundation CEO Paul Grogan** noted the puzzling lack of urgency to respond to this crisis, which threatens to undermine the sustainability of our economic growth. **LISC CEO Maurice Jones** described other LISC markets, including Detroit, Seattle, New York City, and the Bay Area, where the private sector is stepping up at scale, creating large pools of low-cost funds to drive housing solutions. He urged us to cultivate private sector leadership – bring leaders and employers in the education, health, banking and nonprofit sectors to the table to craft solutions that embrace the interconnectedness of our work. **Boston Housing Chief Sheila Dillon** underscored the potential for private-public partnership to drive affordable housing solutions, but noted the importance of private capital coming in as grants or below-market loans. **Andrew Plepler, Global Head of ESG for Bank of America** underscored the need for philanthropic support, low cost debt and developer support, while **Maurice Jones** noted that the role that Bank of America played bringing private, low-cost capital to the table in Charlotte, North Carolina was an example of the type of leadership needed.

The Solutions Need to Address Racial Equity Gaps.

Policy decisions at the federal, state and local level have created and continue to drive, racial inequity. **Andrew Plepler** commented that fear is a dominant theme in local land use discussions, and we need to mitigate and reframe the issue through an education campaign. Unless our housing solutions are designed to address homeownership, wealth, health and opportunity gaps, they will likely serve to perpetuate inequity, rather than mitigate it. Changing both reality and perception of racial equity in greater Boston will require intentional focus, creativity and resources. Said LISC's Maurice Jones: "It's not possible to make progress without an intentional focus on racial segregation and equity. You need an explicit focus on black and brown folks." The Boston Foundation has been convening anti-displacement and racial equity stakeholders, is funding the *Undesign the Red Line* exhibit this summer and fall, and planning related forums in the fall.

Aligning Housing with Transit, Health and More.

Transit investment is an urgent priority for political and business leaders to ensure our continued economic growth. We must create greater alignment of transit and land use policy to ensure that housing development supports and enhances transit goals, and vice-versa. There are emerging partnerships between housing and health care leaders, including the Center for Community Investment Learning Lab led by Robin Hacke and sponsored by Robert Wood Johnson and other foundations. Boston Medical Center is among six national health care

systems participating in the Learning Lab with a team of Boston housers and a steering committee to see how health systems can work with housers to create an enabling environment to accelerate investing in healthier communities. These cross-sector alliances hold tremendous potential for innovation, coalition-building and scaling solutions.

In addition to these key themes, there were many other insightful comments and important ideas shared (some after the forum):

- Developing affordable housing requires state resources, which means waiting in line, sometimes for several years, and limiting production and preservation to the current programs and tools. We need new, faster pathways to increased production and affordability.
- What approaches to municipalities will unleash multifamily production - incentives, mandates or conditioning other state funds?
- We must continue to explore ways to bring down housing costs. One participant urged prioritizing housing affordability when disposing of public land. Another suggested real estate tax abatements for affordable housing.
- Understanding and communicating the problem(s) requires good data.
- We are spending only 1/3 the amount on housing now that we did in the past. A meaningful approach will need more private and public funding.
- Several areas need more resources or focus, including senior housing, supportive housing, affordable homeownership and housing for extremely low-income households.
- The intersection of housing and other systems that serve very low-income people have created an intractable web of poverty with few opportunities to move toward independence, and in fact many structural obstacles. We need to rebuild the system to achieve a different result.

What did we miss?

Email your ideas – whether shared at the forum or not – to NextLevelHousing@lisc.org. We will aggregate and share them.

What Next?

Many of us are working on these issues in impactful ways, as partners. Since we met, the Mass Smart Growth Alliance has released a powerful study about multifamily zoning, Boston Medical Center's ongoing housing/health care learning lab has formed a steering committee to catalyze

impactful housing solutions together, and The Boston Foundation, with assistance from MHP, released the 2019 Greater Boston Housing Report Card this week. Each of these efforts included many of you. This conversation seeks to dovetail with and support all of these efforts, while calling upon us, together, to build the solutions and coalitions that are needed to meaningfully address the known crisis.

We propose to continue the conversation around the following topics over the next 3 months, in an effort to catalyze a broader, more robust response to our housing crisis.

Next Level Housing Solutions Discussion Series: July - October 2019

Visit bit.ly/nextlevelhousingsolutions to register or follow “Next Level Housing Solutions” on Eventbrite.



Discussion: Tackling Income Inequality and Driving Racial Equity

Explore actionable strategies for combating displacement of low- and middle income renters and communities of color and housing-related strategies, including but not limited to ownership models, to enable the stability, wealth and health of low- and moderate income people and of racial groups that have been disadvantaged by housing policy and structural racism.

July 17, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Discussion: Creative Policy Solutions

Policy solutions are being discussed at many levels, and we do not wish to duplicate those conversations. We do wish to connect to them, add diverse perspectives, work to resolve competing priorities, and explore new or creative solutions.

July 30, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Discussion: Creative Financing Solutions

How can we deploy existing and expanded resources creatively to leverage greater and/or faster impact and craft new solutions? If we ask private sector partners to come to the table as funders, what type of capital is needed and how could it be most impactfully deployed? How can we leverage opportunities created by the current market in support of our housing needs?

September 10, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Discussion: Aligning Leaders and Solutions Across Sectors

How can we bring civic leaders, employers, educators, public health professionals, media and community leaders together as leaders, funders, advocates and solutionmakers? Can the evolving partnerships between housing and healthcare leaders pave the way and set the pace? How will we seed the alignment of transit and housing policy? What other sectors are crucial, and how will we engage them?

September 24, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Discussion: Building Urgency and Political Will

There are many policy solutions that could have impact, but their viability is challenged by the lack of urgency and broad political will that is needed to get municipal leaders to lead on a crisis that their constituents may not currently feel. How do we sound the alarm and build the support needed to meet our housing challenges head-on? What are the educational, media, organizing, coalition building and other strategies we can pursue to create the necessary political will?

October 8, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

These discussions will overlap and inform each other, resulting in a more robust set of actionable ideas, and greater collective impact through collaboration. We urge you to join one or all of these conversations, and to bring other community, business, thought or civic leaders or influencers to join the conversation.

We will take notes, share the ideas exchanged in these conversations and any offshoots, and bring the evolving ideas and growing, diversifying leadership group back together in the fall:



Next Level Housing Solutions Symposium

October 22, 2019

Tentative Time: 10:00 – 3:00

Location TBD

How can I take my response to the Next Level?

- **Join the Conversation.** Join the Next Level Housing Solutions conversation by joining our email list. Visit bit.ly/nextlevel housingsolutions to sign up. You will receive information and event updates.
- **Share your ideas.** Bring your ideas to the meetings described above or submit them anytime via NextLevelHousing@lisc.org . You can also volunteer to help plan and facilitate a particular discussion group.
- **Help us broaden the conversation.** Forward this notice to another community, business, thought or civic leader or influencer and ask them to join the Next Level Housing Solutions conversation.
- **Spread the Word.** Look for opportunities to share with your neighbors and your community about these challenges and work for solutions in your neighborhood, city, town or community.