

Listening at Scale:

How We Strengthen the Narrative
for More Homes and Affordability

July 15, 2026

chapa.org



CHAPA
Housing Policy
Action Center

About CHAPA's Housing Policy Action Center

Leveraging CHAPA's place as a convener and bridge-builder, the Housing Policy Action Center strives to:

- Ask questions that matter
- Deliver rigorous research, partnering with top-notch academics and thinkers
- Activate ideas through CHAPA's practitioner network
- Move conversation forward into policies, programs, and systems that sustain a better Massachusetts



Welcome!

PRESENTERS



Jeff Reichman

Principal, January Advisors
januaryadvisors.com



Jennifer Gilbert

Muscant Cohen Executive Director
Housing Policy Action Center

Today

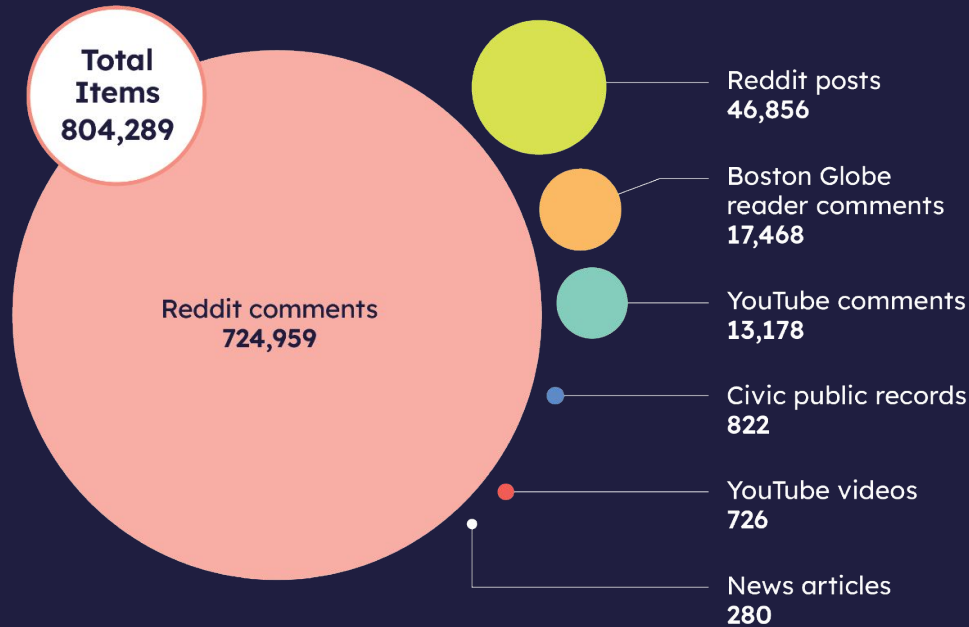
Our Agenda:

- What We Looked At
- Findings & Recommendations
- Q&A: Please enter questions in the chat. The CHAPA team will draw in as many as we can for responses.



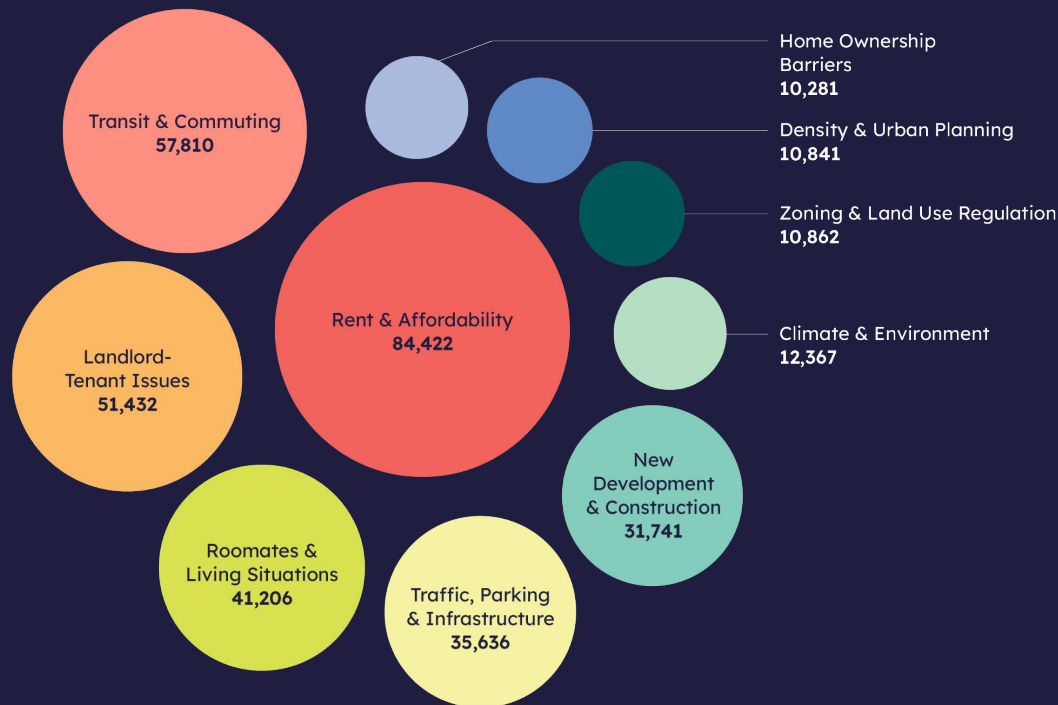
We are releasing the 2 reports today.
Check chapa.org for the full reports.

What We Looked At



**90,000 individual
content creators**

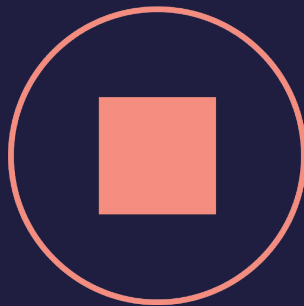
What We Discovered



Rent
affordability
is 8x the size
of zoning and
regulation

- 91% of the housing conversation is about everyday challenges of living in a tight housing market.
- Rent & Affordability top the list.

Applying What We Learned: Continue, Stop & Start



Continue: Using Lived Experience Narratives

What worked

- Missing Middle (home types like ADUs, starter homes)
- Places for first-time homebuyers
- Overall, simple lived experience



"Hate seeing the death of the starter home. Now it's the starter condo or nothing."
— r/massachusetts, 303 upvotes

"It's getting to the point where only the rich can live in Boston. I make a decent salary but being single, I can't afford to live anywhere in Boston or the suburbs."
— r/boston, 4,872 upvotes

Communities doing their “Fair Share” resonates

YouTube interface showing a video titled "Marblehead Annual Town Meeting 5-4-26" from the channel "Marblehead Community Access and Media". The video content shows a man speaking at a microphone during a town meeting. A red overlay on the video reads "Amend Zoning Bylaw - 3A Multi-Family Overlay District ARTICLE 4" and "TOWN MEETING 2026 MHFV". The transcript on the right shows a discussion about housing and the "Fair Share" concept.

Transcript

Search transcript

3:07:10 Yeah, kind of. Like, are we kind of being pricks?

3:07:17 Like, no. Yeah, I've like we we voted last year and how many how many times can we Okay, let me just like I don't like are we trying to do

3:07:24 nothing? Cuz it seems like we're doing nothing.

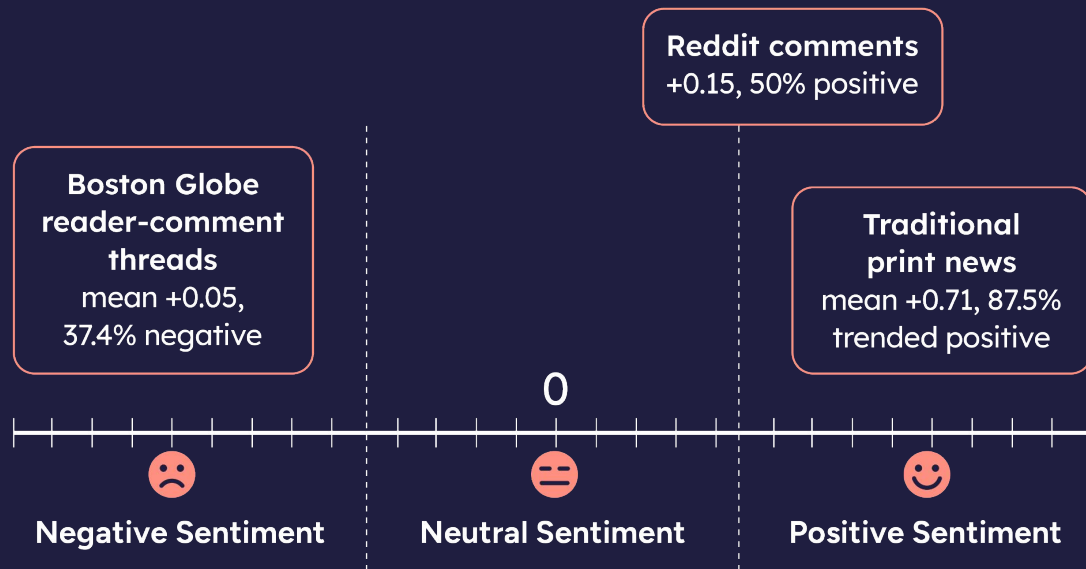
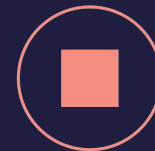
3:07:28 I'm not an expert on this. I didn't even know it was a golf course. I haven't driven by. But like what are we

3:07:36 trying to make sure we build no no

“So, but like when we're preserving the character of Marblehead, it's like it's bad. We're selfish. We're doing a bad thing. Like we're not doing any housing.”

David Modica
Marblehead Town Meeting
May, 2026

Stop: Believing Sentiment Runs Negative



"These towns benefit from the MBTA, which is funded by statewide taxes, but don't [want] to pay their fair share by engaging in the democratic process that is compromise."
— Boston Globe comment, 72 likes

Start: Spreading Correct Information on Social Platforms



- Social platforms are go-to advice source for complicated housing questions.
- Advice is judgment-free and humane.
- It's trust-building, anonymous, and 24/7.

"I have been on the section 8 wait-list for over 5 years. We have a prior eviction. What is my best course of action? There isn't much for subsidized housing currently available nearby. I know there are programs that help with first, last, and security, but we will still need to find a way to cover month to month. We live near Springfield."
— r/massachusetts, 68 upvotes, post entitled "I need advice(no judgement please)"

Start: Spreading Correct Information on Social Platforms



- Finding: **21%** of advice was inaccurate in our audit of responses on vouchers.
- Recommendation #1: Meet People Where They Are by spreading correct information, especially in the age of AI.

"Landlord just sent me an email informing me of a rent increase 'effective 10/23/2025'... I thought he needed to provide a 30-day notice. Can he do this?"
— r/bostonhousing, 28 upvotes

RESPONSE/ANNOUNCEMENT:

We're hosting a Reddit housing AMA. Stay tuned for details!

Start: Hearing the Conversation



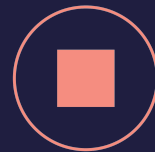
Social platforms can be leveraged for even more impact

- Getting feedback
- Anchoring policy in experience

"My landlord is not returning my security deposit. He is a private landlord and not responding to my messages. Could someone please tell what can I do to get my deposit back?"

— r/lowellma, 24 upvotes

Stop: Relying on Data-Driven Points for Social



Let's Agree: Data should drive policy.

Let's Recognize: On social, no one listens when we talk about needing 222,000 homes.

13

Number of times
222,000 homes appears
on social platforms &
68,125 posts.

Continue: Responding on Parking and Traffic



Traffic and parking surfaced more than:

4x

as often as fears of
declining
property values

100x

as often as fears of
increased school
enrollment

“For instance, eliminating parking minimums would be helpful for the greater Boston area, but out here in Worcester, our public transportation isn’t just a joke, it’s a whole Marx Brothers set...We need to solve public transportation before we remove the need for developers to build parking...”

— Response to post in r/massachusetts, 8 upvotes

Start: Addressing The “Luxury Housing” Roadblock

- “They only build luxury housing” is a conversation stopper.
- It’s frequent. It resonates.
- We have work to do.
A strong counter-argument is not showing-up.

“Don’t push out existing tenants by increasing the cost of living through encouraging rich transplants to enter the market by building luxury housing...The more rich people that enter the city the more the cost of living of the entire city increases.”

— r/somerville -2 upvotes

“Essentially a large portion of the luxury condos are wealth storage lockers. Many remain empty because the goal was never to house people, it’s to make money.”

— r/boston 29 upvotes

“I currently live in one of those luxury apartments. Not a single thing luxurious about it other than the cost lol.”

— r/massachusetts, 162 upvotes



What Truth Do People Rely On?

- The “source of truth” is rarely expert opinion or data.
- When people do use a source for advice, it’s usually an appropriate source.

1

mass.gov 3,831

2

mbta.com 2,578

3

zillow.com 1,193

4

Wikipedia.org 1,046

5

boston.gov 779

What this can/cannot tell us

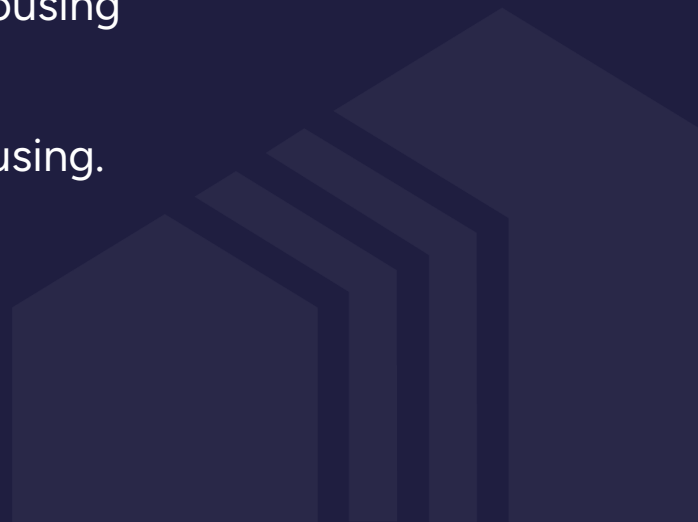
- **Framing:** What language people use, which frames appear and at what rate, which frames are absent in policy discussion
- **Pain Points:** A window into human experience in a tight, expensive market
- A baseline for tracking over time (especially Tier 3)
- A basis for next step research using traditional methods that rely on representative sampling

NOT SO MUCH: Who is saying what. While very large, we can't be sure this is a representative sample.



Where Do We Go From Here?

- Use this to shape your own framing and advocacy—policy & permitting!
- We want to help address the accuracy gap for housing advice. We're starting with an Ask Me Anything.
- We'd like to dig deeper on parking and luxury housing.
- We'd love your ideas too!



Time for Q&A

Please put questions in the chat.

We'd also love to hear how you can use the findings.



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CHAPA's Housing Policy Action Center is made possible through the generous donation of Howard Cohen and Myra Musicant.



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Thank You!



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