

THE STORYTELLING PROGRAM



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About Us

**HEALTH
RESOURCES
IN ACTION**



Goals for Greater Lowell Storytelling Project



Amplify Underrepresented Voices

Center the perspectives of residents who are often excluded from housing debates, including seniors, renters, immigrants, people with lived experience of homelessness, and low- to moderate-income households.



Help Shift the Narrative

Move from reactive, oppositional discourse toward proactive, community-driven visions of housing solutions.



Inform Policy and Planning

Provide leaders, advocates, and community members with grounded stories that illustrate how housing decisions affect daily life and long term opportunity.



Build Lasting Storytelling Infrastructure

Create a platform that communities can expand over time through ongoing story collection, resident Ambassadors, and local partners.

Why We're Focusing on Stories Tonight



Beyond the Numbers

Housing conversations often center on costs, constraints, and compliance. Stories help us understand how people actually experience home.



Gathering Real Perspectives

Local media, municipal meetings, housing plans, and interviews with community leaders point to common patterns we're beginning to test.



Testing Our Themes

Tonight, we're sharing early themes shaped by research and interviews to see what resonates with your communities.

We reviewed local media, public meeting discussions, housing plans, and spoke with community leaders across the region. These draft themes reflect patterns we've identified—tonight we're testing whether they feel true to you.

A Simple Framework for Strong Housing Stories

Stories resonate when they connect three elements:



This framework helps shift housing conversations from personal choices to the conditions that shape people's options.

Three Story Frames

How we talk about housing shapes what solutions feel possible.



1

Home Shapes our Future & Health

How stable, affordable housing affects health, schooling, work, and a family's ability to plan and move toward their goals.

2

Rules and Resources Shape What's Possible

How zoning, local and state policies, transportation access, and community resources determine which housing options exist and who can realistically live in each community.

3

When Housing Works, Communities Work

How decisions in one town affect the region's workforce, schools, businesses, and ability to keep residents connected to opportunity.

These themes came from both research and real conversations. They give us a starting point for identifying stories that can help communities think differently about housing.

Theme 1: Home Shapes our Future and Health

- ❑ Every household needs a place that is safe, stable, and affordable enough to remain in. Instability affects people's physical health, stress, schooling, and long-term planning.

What This Theme Helps Explain

- When rents rise sharply or housing conditions deteriorate, families face stress, inconsistent routines, and health impacts.
- Stability depends on both the physical condition of a home and the policies that govern safety, affordability, and tenant protections.
- These effects show up differently for seniors, immigrants, renters, and households with limited incomes.

Questions this Theme Raises

- What practices help people remain safely and stably housed?
- How do housing conditions show up in health, schooling, or daily routines?
- What would a "secure place to live" look like in your town?

Theme 2: Rules and Resources Shape What's Possible

- ❏ People experience rules even when they don't know them by name. Local zoning, transportation access, and state supports determine which options exist and who has a fair chance at staying or moving in.

What This Theme Helps Explain

- Some towns allow a mix of housing types; others only permit large lots or limited multi family options.
- State incentives and funding create uneven capacity across communities.
- These structural differences shape access to good schools, reliable transportation, and essential services.

Questions This Theme Raises

- Where do local rules show up in everyday life, even if residents don't talk about them directly?
- How do zoning or transportation decisions shift who can live in a town?
- Where do you see people having fewer options because of policies where they live?

Theme 3: When Housing Works, Communities Work

- ❑ Housing decisions in one town influence the entire region. A healthy housing system supports workers, schools, businesses, and the services communities depend on.

What This Theme Helps Explain

- When one town limits housing growth, pressure moves into nearby towns.
- When homes match local wages, workers can stay in the region.
- Stable housing supports the staffing of schools, hospitals, small businesses, and public services..

Questions This Theme Raises

- How do housing decisions in one town affect its neighbors?
- Which workers are getting pushed farther away because of high housing costs, and what does that mean for local services?
- How do local housing decisions shape the region's ability to hire, retain, and sustain its workforce?

Next Steps

1

Which themes ring true for Greater Lowell?

2

What stories from your experience illustrate these themes?

3

Who else should we speak with as we expand story collection across the region?

