

BUILDINGENERGY

Next up:

**Comfort & Savings for All:
Talking Decarbonization with Anyone!**

Miriam Gee, CoEverything
Paulina Dieffenbach, City of Boston
Sara Kudra, Architecture Towards Neutral

Marina 3-4
10:30 - 12:00 pm
1.5 AIA LU | HSW

Curated by Brendan Kavanagh & Eli Goldman

BUILDINGENERGY BOSTON

Comfort and Savings for all

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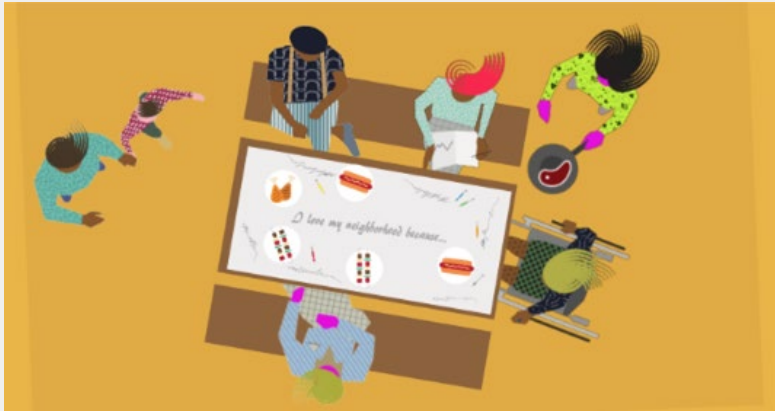
Curated by Brendan Kavanagh & Eli Goldman

Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) | March 23, 2026

Comfort & Savings

For All

Talking Decarbonization with Anyone!



We will get started at 10:35am!

Answer the Picnic Table Prompt

1. **Grab a pen** and find an empty spot on the paper.
2. **Trace your hand.**
3. Inside your hand, **write one thing** that comes to mind when you hear **"decarbonization."**
4. **Write your name** at the bottom of your hand.
5. **Grab a snack**, take a seat, and get settled—we'll start soon!

Comfort & Savings For All

Talking Decarbonization with Anyone!



Your Hosts:

Sara K - Atn

Paulina D - Environment Dept

Miriam G - CoEverything



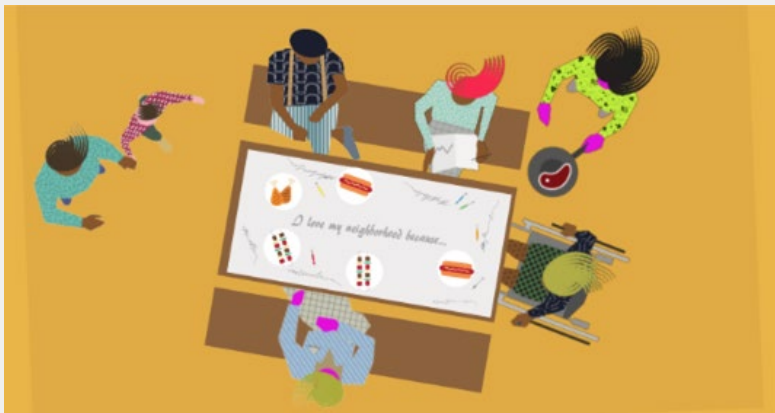
City of Boston
Environment

Atn:

CO Everything

Comfort & Savings For All

Talking Decarbonization with Anyone!



What is Decarbonization?

Answer the Picnic Table Prompt

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Comfort & Savings

For All

Talking Decarbonization with Anyone!



Effective decarbonization depends on reaching households with the highest energy burdens —and how we talk about energy efficiency.

This interactive workshop draws from City of Boston focus groups and trusted community partnerships to show how comfort, health, and cost savings unlock participation in small - building decarbonization programs.

Through hands - on exercises, you will gain practical communication tools to reframe conversations and help clients move from “that’s not for me” to “this works for my home.”



Hello!



Applaud if you are a:

- Contractor
- Engineer
- Architect
- Policy Maker
- Planner



Agenda



- Introducing our work
 - What we learned
 - How you can apply it
- Pair Group Activity
- Share back
- Raffle Time
- Questions



Our Work

A collaborative and fun approach to creating recommendations for decarbonizing Boston's Small Buildings

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How



Why Small Buildings?

- Small buildings = ~75% of Boston's building stock
- ~30% of building-related emissions
- Older buildings, higher energy burdens
- Renters and small landlords face the biggest barriers

**TO HIT CARBON NEUTRALITY BY 2050
WE MUST REACH THESE HOMES**



Why Focus on Designated Equity Communities?

Environmental Justice neighborhoods
face:

- Highest energy bills
- Poorest indoor air quality
- Decades of disinvestment

CLIMATE JUSTICE =

Health + comfort + lower bills +
emissions cuts



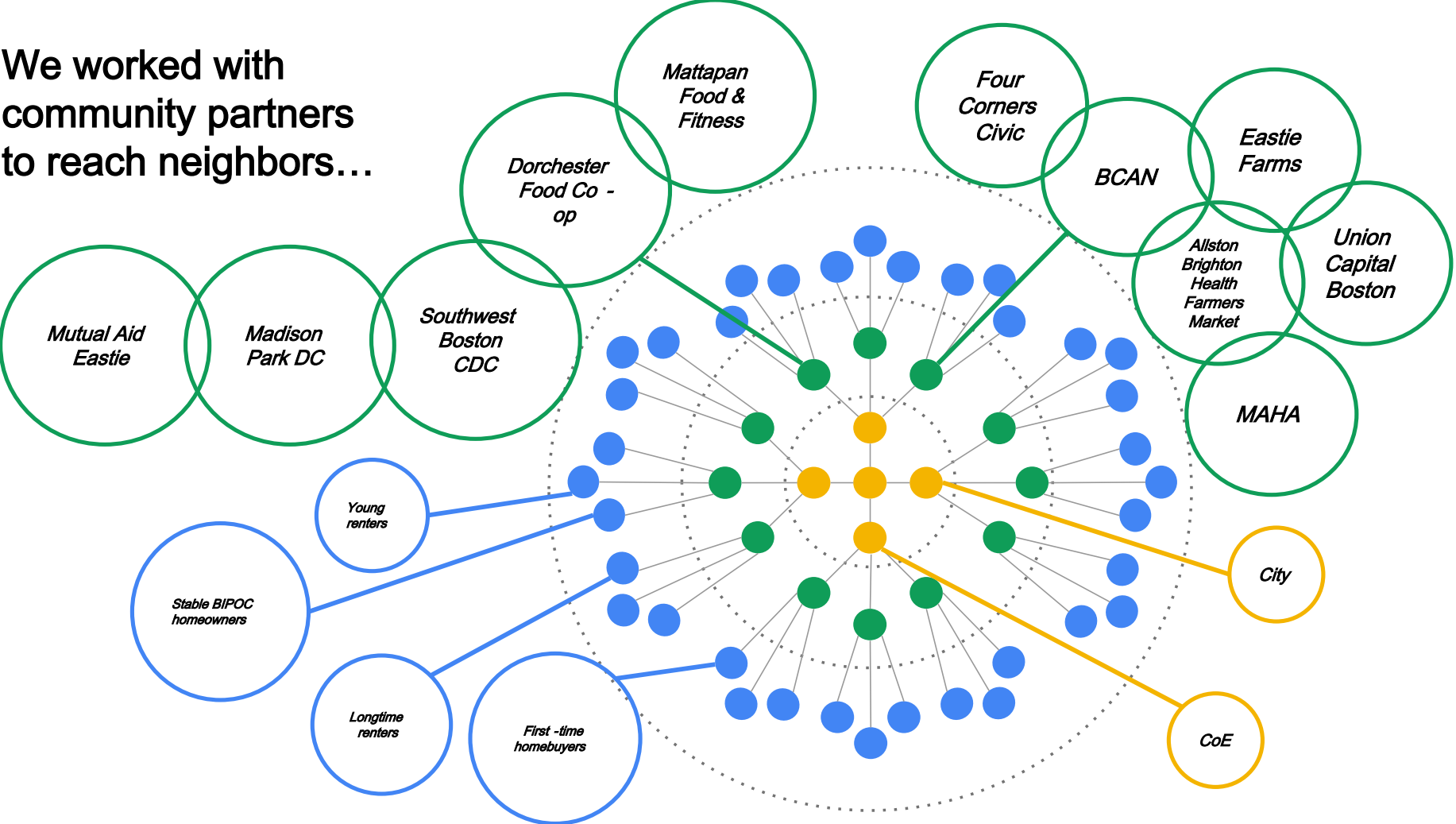
Who we talked to

Boston residents:

- Renters worried about upgrades that lead to unaffordable rent
- Home owners overwhelmed by the process
- Landlords who want to do right by tenants but need help
- Contractors trying to serve customers better



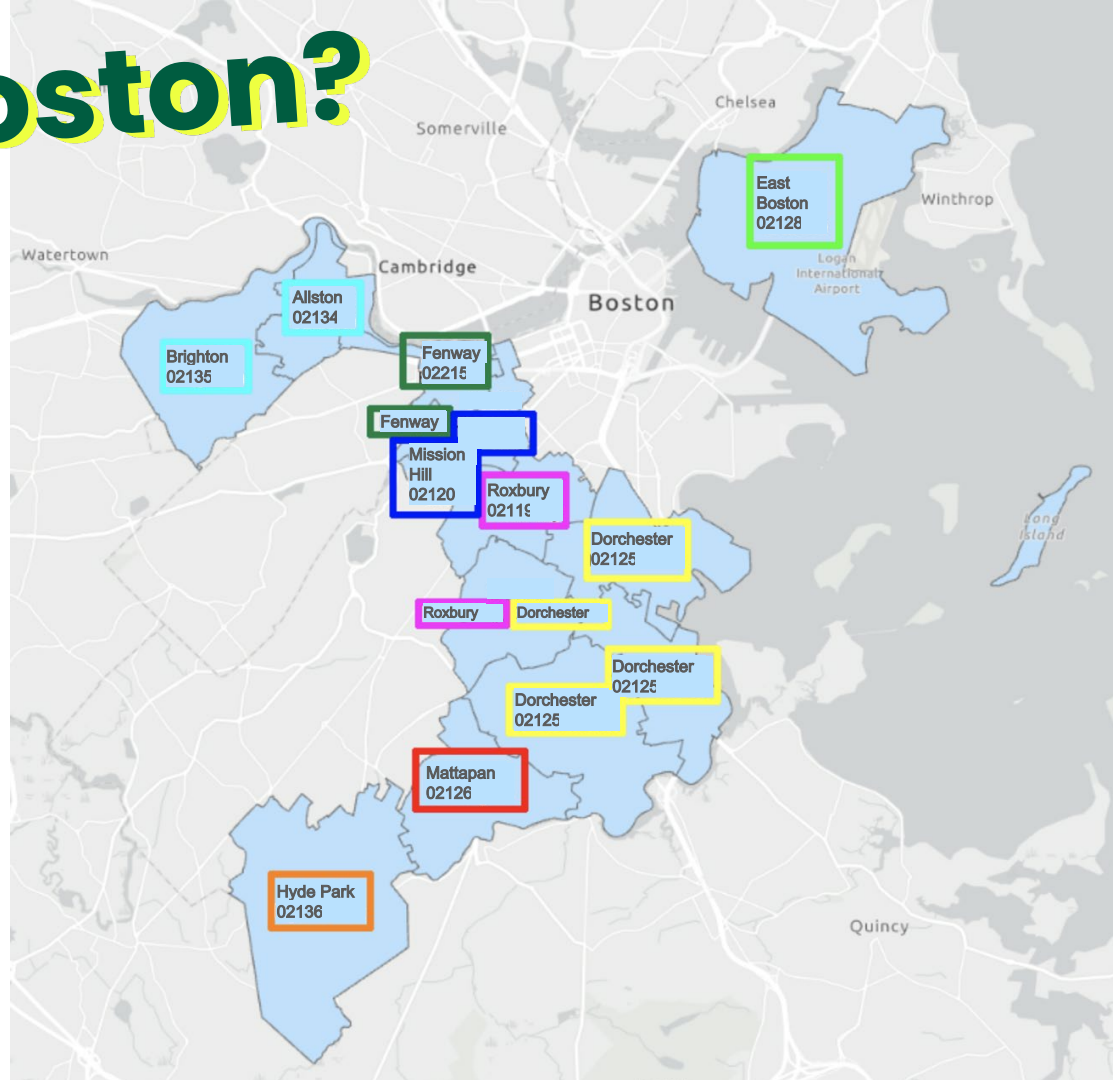
We worked with community partners to reach neighbors...



Where in Boston?

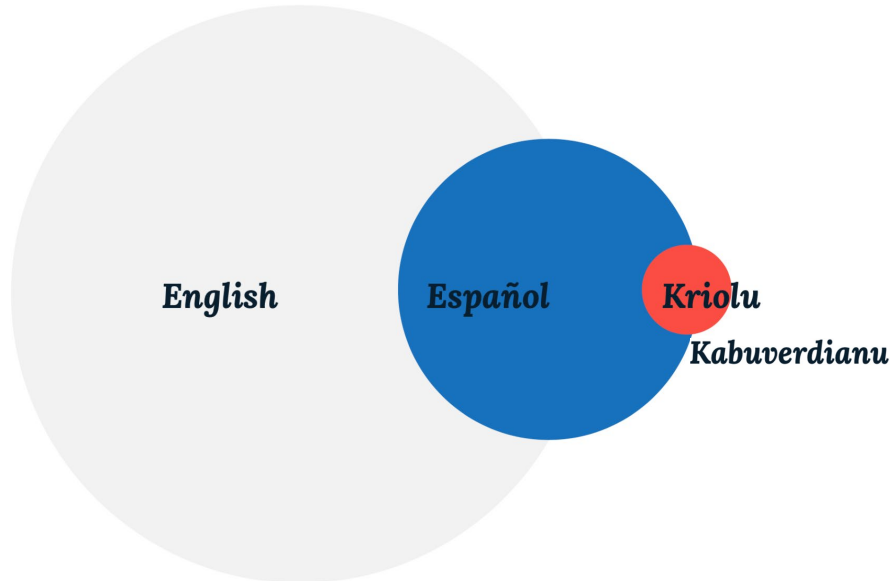
In neighborhoods that need investment in home energy upgrades...

- Allston
- Brighton
- Dorchester
- East Boston
- Hyde Park
- Mattapan
- Mission Hill
- Roxbury



How we did it

Fun, local activities in more languages spoken in our city.



How we did it

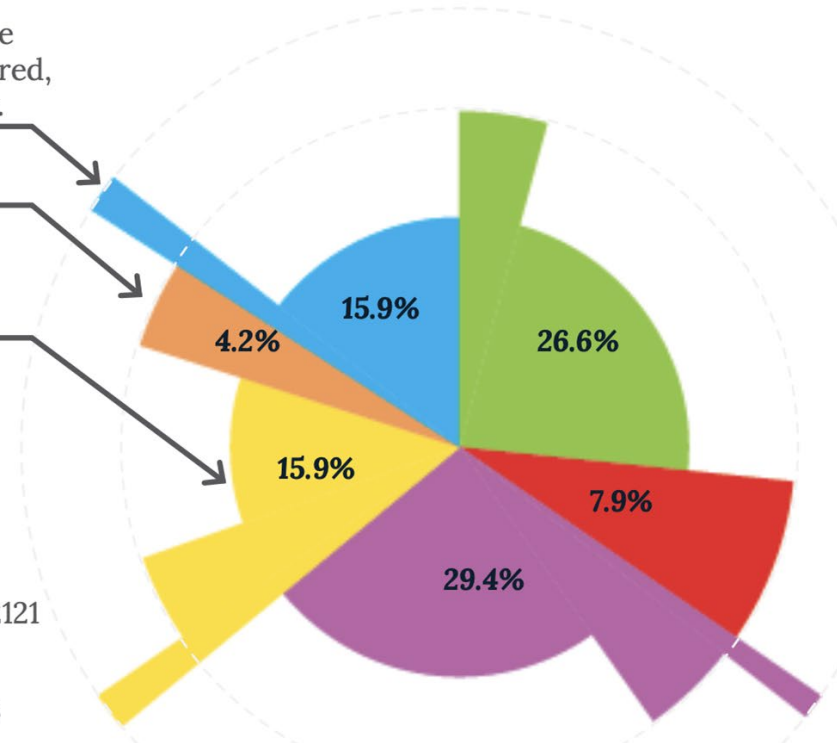
211 voices helped us understand what matters most to Boston's residents.

1:1 interviews were considered the most in-depth information gathered, represented by the widest radius.

Focus groups are in the middle

Listening sessions as the most superficial engagement type are represented at the inner radius

- Eastie 02128
- Fenway/Mission Hill 02115
- Mattapan 02126
- Roxbury 02119 & 02121
- Dorchester 02124 & 02125 & 02121
- Hyde Park 02136
- Allston 02134 /Brighton, 02135



What we learned

There are multiple barriers that stack:

- Programs are hard to navigate
- Trust comes from results, not outreach
- You want one reliable guide
- Renters pay bills but can't make changes
- Language support means trusted community members

The system needs help.



What we learned:

All of us can be advocates, everyday!

Near term recommendations
ranked by our partners:

1. Focus on what matters to residents
2. Build trust with community partners
3. Stay accountable & work together
4. Home upgrades for all
5. Make enrollment easy

[bit.ly/BES -Showcase](https://bit.ly/BES-Showcase)



How you can apply it

Talking Decarbonization to Anyone!

We can all be advocates, everyday.
Keep your language simple and:

1. Focus on what matters to the listener
2. Build trust with them
3. Stay accountable & work together
4. Meet people where they are - renter? homeowner?
5. Offer one easy step to take



Pair Group Activity

Storyboard Exercise

Instructions

1. Each pair gets one Storyboard paper
2. Introduce yourselves
3. Imagine you are having a neighborly conversation
4. Draw three scenes on the paper
5. Taboo: avoid the jargon list!



“A Neighborly Conversation”

Storyboard a *an **imaginary scenario** about home improvements and energy savings!*

***Challenge:** Avoid using jargon, focus on making the conversation relatable.*

Instructions:

1. In pairs, storyboard three key moments.
2. Draw a cartoon of what happens in each scene (stick figures encouraged)
3. Describe in text what is happening



Live Demo

Your scenario: It's early spring in New England. You bump into your elderly neighbor and start chatting about how their home felt so cold and drafty this winter. How do you start a conversation about comfort and saving money?

Your taboo words: *decarbonization, electrification, retrofits, manual J, GHG emissions....*

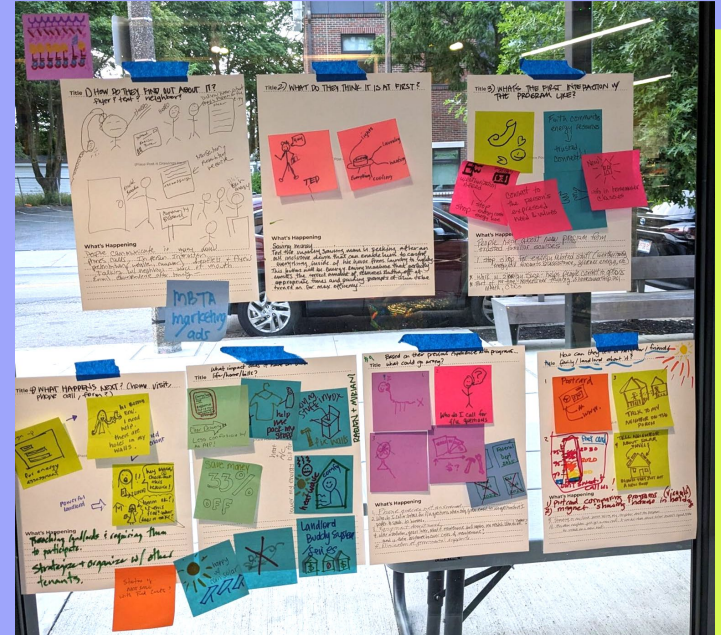


Shareback

Storyboard Exercise

Instructions

1. Each pair tapes their storyboard to the wall
2. Take a moment to read them all
3. Add a star to any ideas you like
4. When the music stops, return to your seats
5. Your hosts will read aloud the ideas with the most stars



Raffle Time



Three lucky participants will win a copy of the Small Building Decarbonization Recommendations report and chocolates!



How you can apply it

Talking Decarbonization to Anyone!

We can all be advocates, everyday.
Keep your language simple and:

1. Listen to their story and find common ground
2. Build trust with them
3. Empathize and meet people where they are - renter? homeowner?
4. Offer one easy step to take: connect them to a resource
5. Follow up!

Know someone who
wants to talk decarb?

BOSTON.GOV/SAVE

→ 617-635-save(7283)

→ energysaver@boston.gov



CITY of BOSTON

ENERGY  **SAVER**

Power your home.
Without draining your bank account.

Boston Energy Saver is here to help.

BOSTON.GOV/SAVE

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Questions?

Read the full report and find other
Boston Energy Saver resources at
[bit.ly/BES - Showcase](https://bit.ly/BES-Showcase)



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Please fill out an evaluation for this session



or: nesea.org/eval

Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA)