

Introduction (5-10 min)

My name is <interviewee name>. This is <team member's name>. We are students from Northeastern University and we are conducting a class project in collaboration with the Mayor's Housing Innovation Lab and the Boston Home Center. Our goal for this project is to serve Boston communities by creating an app that helps potential home buyers like yourself overcome challenges faced during the home search and/or buying process.

You are eligible to participate in this interview because you are currently taking a Boston Home Center course, you have considered buying a home in the past, or you have purchased a home in the past.

What can you expect today?

I will be asking you a set of questions to get to know you better. These questions will explore your experiences with the home buying process and any technology you have used during this process. I will also ask about your experiences with the Boston Home Center and interacting with government-provided services more generally. I have a list of questions here that I will be reading from. Please try to answer the questions as completely and truthfully as you can. There are no right answers and no wrong answers! My goal is to learn from you.

I may sometimes ask you to explain your answers to my questions in more detail. Again, my goal is to gain a complete understanding of your experiences, and how an app might be able to serve you even better.

This interview will last about 30-60 minutes. If at any time you would like to stop the interview, please let me know. Also, if there are any questions that you do not want to answer, please let me know.

Based upon what I and my classmates learn from you and other potential home buyers, we will develop new ideas for what an app for Boston home buyers might look like and what it can enable you to do. Later this Fall, we will bring our ideas back to home buyers, to get feedback on which designs you like best, and how we can further improve them.

I want to also mention that this class project is part of a larger research project being run by the course instructor, Dr. Andrea Parker. Her research team will be studying all of the information we collect from you and other home buyers in more detail. Their goal is to examine how technology can empower neighborhood residents through the home buying process. They are also interested in how technology can enable local governments to better support community residents. Her team may report the results of this project in publications or presentations. Your participation in this project is confidential. That means that any information you share will not be linked to you in any way. In future reports and presentations, quotes from your interview might be used, but your name and any other identifying information will never be attached to information shared. All of the information you provide us will be associated with a pseudonym or code name.

Do you have any questions?

**** If interviewees have any questions about the research component of this project, please write the question down, let the interviewee know that you will forward the question to the instructor who will follow-up with them shortly. Make sure to send any such questions to both Prof. Parker and Farnaz Irannejad Bisafar, the TA. ****

Audio Recording

I would like to audio record this session to make sure we capture everything you say today.

Is it OK for me to audio record?

**** If yes, audio record. If no, make sure the observing team member takes very complete notes, including verbatim quotes.*

Do you have any questions before we start?

Background: Experience with the Home Buying Process (30 min)

Let's start off by discussing your experience with the home buying process thus far. When I talk about the "home buying process", I will mean any aspect of thinking about, looking for, or purchasing a home.

1. Please describe the steps you have taken in the home buying process thus far.
2. What information have you tried to gain about buying a home thus far?
 - a. *Probe to ask about information related to finances, the buying process, the home buying team, homes, neighborhoods, etc.*
 - b. What information about buying a home are you currently lacking?
 - c. How might you go about getting this information?
 - d. What barriers could make it hard for you to get this information?
 - i. *Probe: time barriers, knowing where to look for information, etc.*
3. Please describe the people you have interacted with during the home buying process.
 - a. *(Your goal is to understand what stakeholders have been involved in the process thus far, if any. Try to help participants think through the range of individuals who might be involved in the home buying process, the characteristics of these individuals, their strengths/weaknesses etc.)*
 - b. What role have friends and family played during your home buying process?
 - c. Please think about any other individuals who you have interacted with in this process thus far. What role have these individuals played during your home buying process?
 - d. To what extent have these people helped you navigate the home buying process?
 - e. In what ways could these people have helped you navigate the home buying process better?
4. What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the home buying process?
 - a. Please discuss how, if at all, your daily life obligations and routines have made the home buying process challenging.
 - b. Are there other personal or family factors that have made the home buying process challenging?
 - c. What, if anything, has helped you overcome these challenges?
 - d. What challenges do you anticipate facing in the future if you continue along the home buying process?
 - e. What can you do to overcome these challenges?
5. What emotions would you use to describe how you have felt during the home buying process thus far?
 - a. What emotions would you use to describe how you *would like* to feel through the home buying process.
6. What would you like to change about how the home buying process currently works?
7. Please describe the websites, apps on your phone, or other technology you have used during your home buying process.
 - a. *(for each probe below, you want to understand their engagement with technology as richly as possible.)*
 - b. Please describe how you have used technology to understand or think through the financial aspect of buying a home.
 - c. Could you now describe any technologies you have used to look for homes that are for sale?

- d. Please describe how you have used technology to look for or interact with individuals that can help you in the home buying process.
 - i. *Probe: brokers, realtors, lawyers, etc.*
 - e. Please describe how you have used any other technologies to understand or navigate the home buying process.
 - f. *(for each tool described)* In what ways were these technologies helpful?
 - g. *(for each tool described)* How could these technologies have been more helpful to you?
8. How confident do you feel in your ability to successfully find and purchase a home?
 - a. How confident are you that you can overcome challenges in the home buying process?
 - b. What would help increase your confidence in your ability to overcome these challenges?
 9. How important is buying a home to you?
 - a. *If buying a home is important:* Please describe why this is an important goal for you.
 - b. *If buying a home is not important:* Please describe why this is not an important goal for you.
 10. You have described the steps that you have taken in the home buying process so far. Now, imagine that you meet someone who is just starting to consider the home buying process. How would you describe the steps in the home-buying process to them?
 - a. What advice would you give them for how to successfully overcome challenges in the home buying process?

Boston Home Center (10 min)

Now I would like to learn more about the Boston Home Center classes and your experience in these classes.

11. First, imagine I am planning to attend a class at the Boston Home Center. Please tell me what I might gain from attending the class.
 - a. When I leave the class, what questions might I still have?
12. What have you learned from the Boston Home Center classes?
13. Please describe any people you have met in the home buying classes.
 - a. To what extent have these new relationships helped you or not helped you in your home buying process?
14. Beyond what you have discussed so far, are there any other ways that you have benefited from being in the home buying class?
15. What changes to the home buying classes would make them more helpful for you?

Government Support (5-7 min)

The Boston Home Center classes are a service provided by the Boston Mayor's office. I would now like to hear what you feel the city government's role is in helping residents through the home buying process. When I refer to the "city government", I will mean the various government offices, programs, and resources that exist within the city of Boston.

16. The Boston city government provides financial assistance programs to help home buyers purchase homes. Please describe your experience using or seeking information about any of these financial resources.

17. The Boston city government has resources like the Neighborhood Homes Initiative, through which the city is building affordable homes in Boston. Please describe your experience using or seeking information about this resource or others like it.
18. Please describe any other government services or resources that you have used to help you through the home-buying process.
19. What do you think the Boston city government should be doing, if anything, to help residents purchase homes?
 - a. *If interviewee doesn't believe the city should be doing anything:* Please tell me more about why the government should not play a role in helping residents purchase homes.
 - b. In what ways is the Boston city government successfully providing this support to home buyers?
 - c. In what ways is the Boston city government failing to provide this support to home buyers?
20. Please describe how you have communicated with city government officials or workers during your home buying process. City government officials might include representatives of the Boston Home Center, people working in the Boston HUD office (HUD stands for Housing and Urban Development), or individuals in other city government offices.
 - a. Please describe ways in which you were satisfied or unsatisfied with this communication.
21. In what ways would you like to communicate with members of city government through your home buying process in the future?

Closing & Wrap Up (3-5 min)

22. Is there anything else you wanted to say but did not have a chance to?

Thank you so much for participating in this interview! We greatly appreciate your help and time. I have two final wrap-up questions.

23. If we have any follow-up questions about things we discussed today, may we contact you?
 - a. *If YES: Ask for the best way to contact them (email, phone call, text) and document their contact information.*
24. As I mentioned, we will be using what we learn to develop ideas for how an app might better help Boston residents through the home buying process. We will be doing a second round of interviews in late October/early November to get residents' feedback on these design ideas. Would you be interested in participating in this next round of interviews?
 - a. *If YES: Ask for the best way to contact them (email, phone call, text) and document their contact information.*

Thank you again!