

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services

# City & Town

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## FY2024 Statewide Average Single-Family Tax Bill

Andrew Nelson - Bureau of Accounts Supervisor

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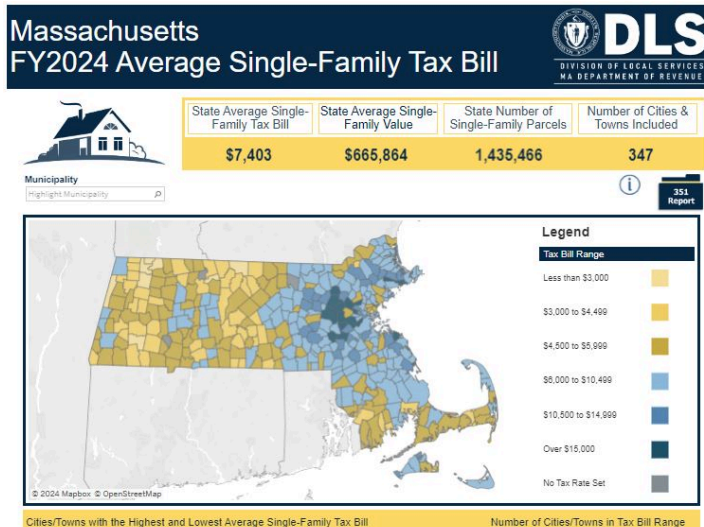
#### DLS Spring Update

Given the seasonal nature of certain reporting requirements, municipal responsibilities, billing processes and regulatory functions, we are utilizing seasonal pages on our website that provide helpful resources, tools and guidance you might find useful for the time of year. In Spring, local finance officials are continuing to prepare the FY2025 budget in addition to working on other important spring priorities highlighted below. Bookmark our Spring resources [here](#).

#### FY2025 Budget Issues and Other Related Matters

The Division of Local Services (DLS) Bureau of Accounts (BOA) has issued and posted Bulletin (BUL) 2024-2. This Bulletin addresses several topics that cities, towns, regional school and other districts should consider for FY2025 budgeting and other related matters.

[BUL-2024-2: FY2024 Budget Issues and Other Related Matters](#)



For decades, the Division of Local Services (DLS) has presented a calculation and analysis of the average single-family tax bill in Massachusetts. This article marks the third year of an improved approach that we believe will more accurately examine the subject by including communities that have adopted a [residential exemption](#) or senior means-tested exemption. These municipalities represent many of the Commonwealth's largest population centers such as Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville and Waltham and their inclusion in the following article results in a comprehensive analysis. Click [here](#) to review historical data, related to the average single-family property tax bill. Please click [here](#) to access our interactive map highlighting data from across the Commonwealth.

To view the bulletin, [click here](#). To access IGRs, LFOs and Bulletins, please visit this [webpage](#).

### **New Informational Guideline Releases (IGRs)**

The Division of Local Services recently published four Informational Guideline Releases (IGRs).

IGR-2024-1 provides municipal officials with updated information on reimbursements for Chapter 59, Section 5 property tax exemptions and Chapter 60A motor vehicle excise exemptions.

IGR-2024-2 explains the reporting procedures communities with smart growth zoning districts must follow in order to receive an annual state reimbursement, which covers additional school costs resulting from an increased number of public school students living in developments within the zoning districts.

IGR-2024-3 informs local officials of the administrative foreclosure process following the receipt of a Commissioner of Revenue's affidavit pursuant to a Land of Low Value tax title foreclosure application and how communities may accept title from the owners of properties on which there are municipal liens as an alternative to tax taking and foreclosure proceedings.

Lastly, IGR 2024-4 informs local officials about a new local option affordable housing property tax exemption. It also explains local standards and procedures that may be adopted relative to the exemption.

[IGR-2024-1 REIMBURSEMENT OF PROPERTY TAX AND MOTOR VEHICLE EXCISE EXEMPTIONS](#)

[IGR-2024-2 SMART GROWTH SCHOOL COST REIMBURSEMENTS](#)

[IGR-2024-3 LAND OF LOW VALUE POST AFFIDAVIT PROCESS AND DEEDS IN LIEU OF FORECLOSURE](#)

[IGR-2024-4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION](#)

To access IGRs, LFOs and Bulletins, please visit this [webpage](#).

### **New Bulletin and Local Finance Opinions**

The Division of Local Services recently published a new Bulletin

The methodology DLS uses presumes Massachusetts is one local governmental entity for which a tax bill would be determined. It does not represent the mean or median of actual single-family property tax bills. We calculate the state average single-family tax bill by multiplying each local average bill by each local parcel count then dividing that product by the total state parcel count.

Analysis of data for this article focuses on single-family properties classified as property tax code 101 and does not include condominiums, multi-family homes or apartment buildings. For the 346 FY2024 reporting communities as of March 5, 2024, single-family values statewide represent 63.8% of all residential assessed values and 52.8% of statewide assessed values in all property classes. Based on review of statewide data for FY2024, the average value of a single-family home is \$665,993 and the average single-family tax bill is \$7,405. For comparison, the FY2023 average single-family tax bill was \$7,056.

### **Single-Family Residential Property Tax Bill – Community Averages**

For our analysis, we calculate a community's average single-family tax bill as follows. Single-family assessed values are divided by number of single-family parcels to determine an average single-family value. The average value is multiplied by the residential tax rate as certified by the Bureau of Accounts for the fiscal year.

The following graph presents the median or midpoint of community averages for the number of communities shown in parenthesis included in the 10-year period from FY2015 to FY2024.

and two new Local Finance Opinions (LFOs).

Bulletin 2024-1 discusses G.L. c. 44, § 53 Clause 4 special revenue fund treatment for Altria JUUL settlement receipts and monetized credits under the Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for certain green energy projects.

LFO-2024-1 addresses questions relating to (1) the accounting treatment of money received by a city, town or district under an insurance policy or as restitution for damage to its property and (2) the availability of the money for expenditure. LFO-2024-2 addresses questions about the municipal finance law and accounting treatment of (1) local option excises on the retail sales of marijuana for adult use and (2) impact fees or other payments under a community host or other agreement with a marijuana establishment or medical marijuana treatment center in connection with its siting and operation in the municipality.

[BUL-2024-1: G.L. c. 44, § 53 Clause 4: Inflation Reduction Act Monetized Credits for Local Governments for Certain Clean Energy Projects and Proceeds Received Pursuant to the Altria Settlement Regarding JUUL Products](#)

[LFO-2024-1: Insurance and Restitution Proceeds](#)

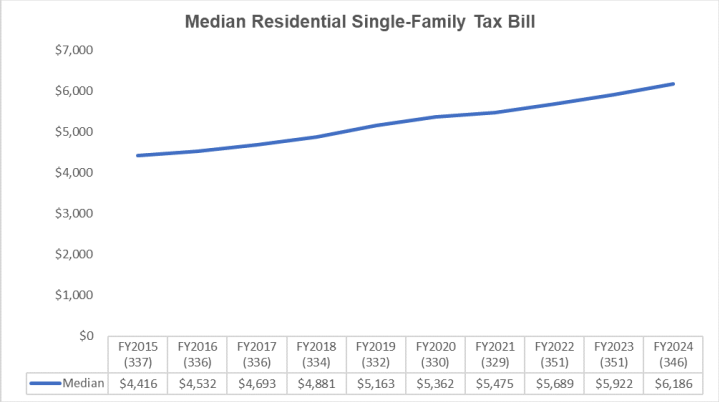
[LFO-2024-2: Money from Marijuana Establishments and Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers](#)

To access IGRs, LFOs and Bulletins, please visit this [webpage](#).

**Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program FY25 Action Grant Funding Round Now Open**

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is seeking proposals for MVP Action Grants, which provide eligible communities funding to implement priority climate adaptation actions. Projects are required to use climate data and projections. Projects that propose nature-based solutions, advance equity, and that have robust community engagement plans are preferred.

Applicants can request up to \$3 million in funding (regional proposals may request up to \$5 million), and a 10% match of the total project cost is required (see RFR for exceptions). Significant changes to the RFR from the last funding round are outlined on page 1. The link to the RFR and

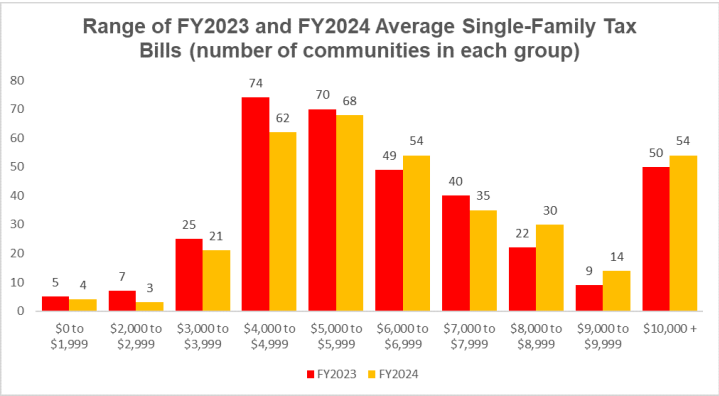


**Median of Community Averages by County**

The following chart shows the median of the FY2024 average single-family tax bills by county compared to the state median of \$6,186.

Median by County Compared to State Median						
County	Median	\$ Variance	% Difference	County	Median	% Difference
Barnstable	\$5,677	-\$509	-8%	Hampshire	\$5,363	-13%
Berkshire	\$4,323	-\$1,863	-30%	Middlesex	\$8,944	45%
Bristol	\$5,733	-\$453	-7%	Nantucket	\$8,877	44%
Dukes	\$7,272	\$1,086	18%	Norfolk	\$8,581	39%
Essex	\$8,887	\$2,701	44%	Plymouth	\$7,059	14%
Franklin	\$4,651	-\$1,535	-25%	Suffolk	\$5,672	-8%
Hampden	\$4,791	-\$1,395	-23%	Worcester	\$5,752	-7%

The following graph displays the range of FY2024 average tax bills across the Commonwealth for 346 reporting communities.



The following graph presents the 10 highest and 10 lowest FY2024 average single-family property tax bills.

required forms can be accessed through the [MVP program website](#) or directly on [COMMBUYS](#). Action Grant proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. ET on Wednesday, April 24, 2024 (via online form, see RFR for details) for project proposals that complete by June 30, 2025, or June 30, 2026.

All questions regarding the FY25 Action Grant RFR must be submitted to your [regional coordinator](#) by Wednesday, March 27, 2024 and will be posted to COMMBUYS by April 3, 2024.

The MVP team hosted a recent webinar about this FY25 funding round. The recording can be accessed [here](#).

**MA Dredging Program FY25 Annual Grant Round**

The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) FY25 Annual Grant Round of the [Massachusetts Dredging Program](#) opened March 11th. Grants will be competitively awarded with a focus on shovel-ready projects that contribute to the economic vitality, vibrant waterfronts, maritime safety, or ecosystem health of Massachusetts's harbors. All coastal municipalities are eligible to apply. [Click here for more information](#).

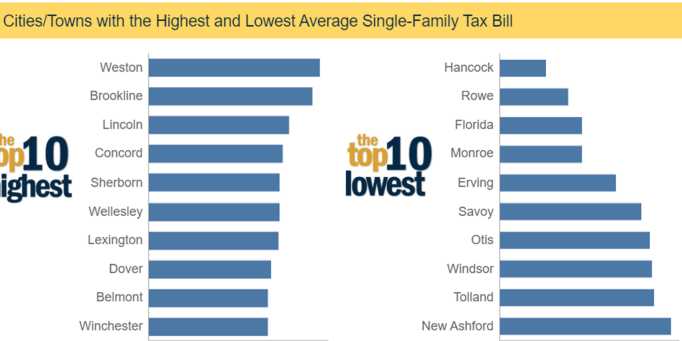
**Municipal Finance 101: Budgeting & Best Practices Webinar Now Available**

The Division of Local Services recently partnered with the [Massachusetts Municipal Association](#) to offer *Municipal Finance 101: Budgeting & Best Practices* webinar to local officials. This webinar reviews the building blocks of municipal finance, including Proposition 2 ½, budgeting revenues and expenditures, and the importance of financial policies, forecasting, and capital planning. The [recording](#) of the webinar is now available along with the presentation [slides](#).

Additional [budgeting and long-range financial planning resources](#) are available at the DLS [Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#).

**MassGIS' Statewide Geospatial Strategic Planning Initiative**

MassGIS is undertaking an update of the state's geospatial strategy, last updated in 2007. MassGIS would like all geospatial data and



**Statewide Trend in Current and Constant Dollars**

The following chart displays the FY2024 state average single-family tax bill and FY2024 median of the same in current dollars in relation to constant dollars adjusted for inflation. Current dollars for both have outpaced the rate of inflation over the time shown.

	State Total				Median of Community Averages			
	Current Dollars	Constant Dollars	\$ Variance	% Variance	Current Dollars	Constant Dollars	\$ Variance	% Variance
FY2014	\$4,993	\$4,993			\$4,219	\$4,219		
FY2015	\$5,187	\$5,023	\$164	3%	\$4,416	\$4,244	\$172	4%
FY2016	\$5,391	\$5,098	\$293	5%	\$4,532	\$4,308	\$224	5%
FY2017	\$5,587	\$5,226	\$361	6%	\$4,693	\$4,416	\$277	6%
FY2018	\$5,792	\$5,398	\$394	7%	\$4,881	\$4,561	\$320	7%
FY2019	\$5,993	\$5,501	\$492	8%	\$5,163	\$4,648	\$515	10%
FY2020	\$6,177	\$5,561	\$616	10%	\$5,362	\$4,699	\$663	12%
FY2021	\$6,372	\$5,745	\$627	10%	\$5,475	\$4,854	\$621	11%
FY2022	\$6,719	\$6,153	\$566	8%	\$5,689	\$5,199	\$490	9%
FY2023	\$7,059	\$6,380	\$679	10%	\$5,922	\$5,391	\$531	9%
FY2024	\$7,405	\$6,616	\$789	11%	\$6,186	\$5,591	\$595	10%

Constant dollars for both State Total and Median of Community Averages are calculated beginning at the same point for FY2014 and applying the average yearly increase from the CPI for all Urban Consumers - Boston. FY2015 is +0.6%, FY2016 is +1.5%, FY2017 is +2.5%, FY2018 is +3.3%, FY2019 is +1.9%, FY2020 is 1.1%, FY2021 is 3.3%, FY2022 is 7.1%, FY2023 is 3.7%, FY2024 is estimated by this article at 3.7%.

(Source: CPI for all Urban Consumers – Boston and includes a 3.7% estimated inflation factor for FY2024.)

We continually strive to bring relevant and useful content to *City & Town* readers. Please email us with questions, comments, and suggestions for future topics at [city&town@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:city&town@dor.state.ma.us).

**Highly Recommended: Comprehensive Bylaw Review**  
Financial Management Resource Bureau

Town bylaws play an important role in informing and empowering municipal officials, employees, and residents. By adopting bylaws, a town can expand upon the minimal provisions for local governance set out in state statutes to establish its unique structure and procedures. In larger towns that also have a charter, the bylaws

technology users in municipal and regional government, state government, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, higher education, utilities, and the private sector to participate in the development of the strategy.

The strategy will lay out the strategic direction for all geospatial activities in the Commonwealth. MassGIS will lead the strategy development. Applied Geographics (AppGeo), a national company that has done such work for dozens of states, is under contract to assist with this update. The work will begin with distribution of a [survey](#) to capture initial input and feedback. The survey is intended for anyone who uses geospatial data or technology.

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

### **2024 Massachusetts Municipal Cybersecurity Summit**

The Massachusetts Municipal Cybersecurity Summit is an in-person event created by the MassCyberCenter at the MassTech Collaborative for the state's 351 municipalities. The event is designed for municipal leaders, first responders, utility providers, and IT personnel to help improve cybersecurity programs in their city or town. If you're part of a municipality, don't miss the opportunity to attend this free event and learn from experts on how to become more cyber resilient! [Click here to register.](#)

### **New DLS Visualization Tool Highlights Trends in Municipal Debt**

DLS is pleased to announce the release of our latest municipal finance visualization. Our new [Trends in Municipal Debt](#) tool provides an in-depth look at both general fund debt service and outstanding debt using data collected through the [DLS Gateway application](#). Individual charts show trends in debt service over time and sort the data by type and per capita. We've also included a glossary page to help explain many of the terms associated with [municipal debt](#). Each dashboard can be downloaded to a PDF file, and the source data can be accessed using the "351 Report" button.

Please email any feedback to the Data Analytics & Resources Bureau at [DARB@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:DARB@dor.state.ma.us).

### **Informational Resource**

serve as a supplement that fills in further details but with greater flexibility for revision as circumstances may warrant. Greater risks for bylaw weaknesses often exist within very small towns. The combination of a higher proportion of elected positions, predominance of part-time staff, and less operational complexity can curb momentum toward the adoption and compilation of informative, well-developed bylaws in those communities.

All towns should strive to maintain bylaws that are complete, cohesive, and up to date. Key to formalizing relationships and responsibilities among town officials and employees, bylaws also help explain residents' rights and obligations in their interactions with local government. A good set of bylaws defines the community's government structure, appointing authorities, and major procedural components, such as those involved with developing the annual budget. In doing all this, they help to ensure continuity and consistency in local government despite officeholder transitions. On the other hand, bylaws that are sparse, haphazard, or contradictory create confusion that can undermine confidence in government.

The town clerk is responsible for maintaining permanent records of all the town's legislative actions, including all adopted bylaws and locally accepted statutes. As a town's general bylaws accumulate over time, local officials might identify provisions that are conflicting, ambiguous, or outdated and may recognize gaps in desired guidance. Periods characterized by numerous structural or personnel changes in town government might also prompt a reexamination of the bylaws. At these times, it is advisable for the select board to appoint a committee to undertake a formal project to review them as a whole.

A bylaw committee numbering three to five members and comprising a mix of residents and town officials tends to work best. In reviewing the bylaws, the committee's goals should be to (1) remove inconsistencies and clarify vagaries, (2) modify bylaws as necessary to reflect the town's actual framework and procedures, and (3) propose new bylaws that are informative and directive of the town's existing or desired practices, allowances, and prohibitions. Below are recommended committee tasks:



## Page for City/Town Clerks

The Division of Local Services is pleased to announce the availability of materials on the Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center under [resources by position](#) to assist city or town clerks. A city or town clerk is an integral member of the municipal management team and a central information point for residents. While the job responsibilities may vary from community to community in Massachusetts, the clerk is a bonded official who is the municipality's record keeper and often the chief election officer. The new page is one stop shopping for the following topics important to clerks:

- Overview of responsibilities
- Adopting local option excise
- Local elections and town meeting
- Local Officials Directory
- Municipal debt and borrowing
- Proposition 2 ½ votes
- Record legislative action
- Tax rate setting process

Be sure to bookmark the [Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#) page and subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#).

### Latest Issue of *Buy the Way* Now Available

Don't miss [Issue #25 of Buy the Way](#), the official magazine of the Operational Services Division (OSD).

[Click here](#) to get news and updates from OSD delivered to your inbox.

## DLS Links:

[COVID-19 Resources and Guidance for Municipal Officials](#)

[Events & Training Calendar](#)

[Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#)

[Local Officials Directory](#)

[Municipal Databank](#)

[Informational Guideline Releases \(IGRs\)](#)

- First ensure that all relevant documents are assembled, separating general bylaws from zoning and personnel bylaws.
- Review all existing bylaw articles and make decisions on which ones to retain, revise, or discard. Look for and resolve any contradictions among them, and remove references to any nonextant committees, boards, and positions.
- Seek to codify all standing boards and committees, describing their membership, terms, and responsibilities.
- If not codified in a town charter, it is also strongly recommended to adopt a bylaw that defines the role of the town administrator or town manager.
- Consider codifying fiscal procedures as well, such as the annual budget process and capital improvement planning.
- Examine the general bylaws of similar towns to discover the types of provisions that may be missing from the local bylaws and to view examples for organizing the document.
- Seek input from residents, employees, and officials through public forums.

As for the end-product, the revised bylaw document should:

- Be organized in a logical flow under topic areas with headings,
- Contain a table of contents listing all bylaw articles and subsections, and
- Include an appendix that contains a chronological list of all of the town's special acts and locally accepted statutes.

Upon the completion of the committee's work, the select board will vote on the bylaw changes and additions to present to the town meeting. Once approved by town meeting, the town clerk must then

[Bulletins](#)[Tools and Financial](#)[Calculators](#)

submit all new or revised bylaws to the Attorney General's Office for validation to go into effect.

The DLS [Financial Management Resource Bureau \(FMRB\)](#) provides tailored consultative services to municipalities across the state.

Articles in this series highlight a particular financial management best practice that we frequently recommend.

## Meet DLS Webinar Materials Now Available

The Division of Local Services is pleased to announce the availability of materials from the *Meet DLS: Who we are and how we can help* webinar held on March 11, 2024. During this webinar, DLS bureau chiefs shared our mission and what information and resources we offer to cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

The second half offered breakout sessions hosted by the [Bureau of Accounts](#), [Bureau of Local Assessment](#), and [Financial Management Resource Bureau](#) to provide a high-level overview of key concepts and functions that are important to your role.

The [recorded version](#) of the main webinar is now available on our YouTube channel, along with the [presentation slides](#). Additionally, the following resources were highlight during the meeting: [DLS Staff Directory](#), [BOA/BLA Field Staff](#), [Municipal Glossary](#), [Municipal Calendar](#), [Legal Index](#) and [City & Town Sign-up](#).

Be sure to bookmark the [Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#) page and subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) to stay updated on new items added. Is there something you would like to see added? Please email [DLSTraining@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:DLSTraining@dor.state.ma.us). We would love to hear from you!

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