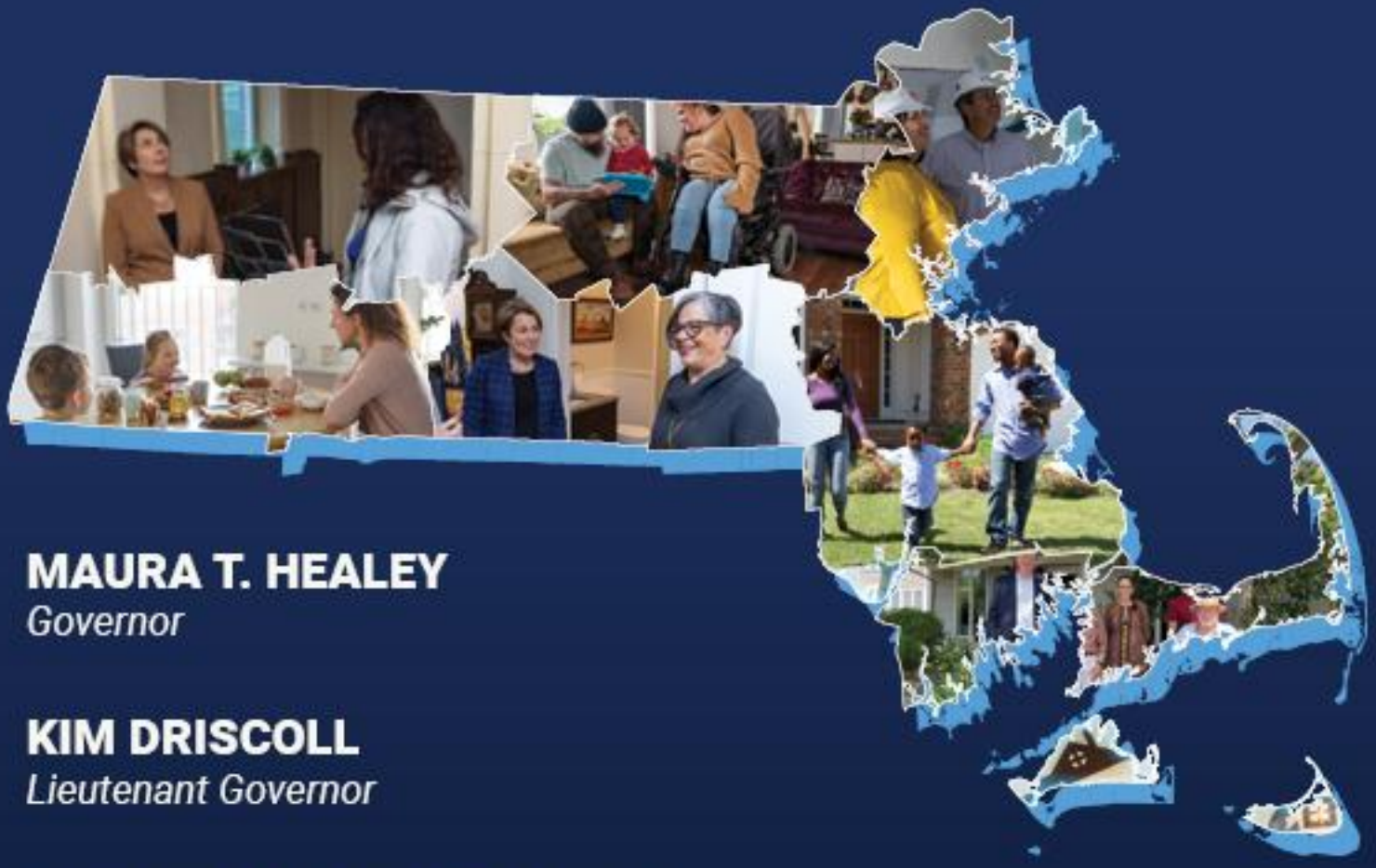
A HOME FOR EVERYONE

STATEWIDE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIM DRISCOLL
Lieutenant Governor

EDWARD M. AUGUSTUS, JR.
Secretary, Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities

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A Home for Everyone
Statewide Housing Needs Assessment
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Introduction to the Housing Needs Assessment

To plan for a brighter housing future in Massachusetts, it's essential to understand where we are today. This Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive overview of the Massachusetts housing landscape. It presents both new and previously-known data to create a foundation for understanding all aspects of housing, from demand and supply to conditions, risks, and future housing needs.

- To learn about who is in Massachusetts and what their housing needs are today, visit the Households section.
- To learn about the state's existing homes and recent trends in development, visit the Supply and Production section.
- For information about affordability of homes and what happens when people can't find a home they can afford, visit the Cost and Consequences section.
- To learn about the suitability of today's homes for different needs as well as the threats facing our current stock, visit the section on Conditions and Risks.
- For information about future household growth and anticipated housing need across the state, visit the section on Future Housing Needs.
- A summary of key takeaways from all these sections can be found in the Key Findings section.

Households

The first step in developing an effective housing plan is to clearly identify and understand the population it aims to serve. Our initial household assessment addresses three critical questions: Who is living in Massachusetts? What are their housing needs? What specific challenges do some households face that require deeper insight to fully assess the current crisis? In addition, we examined the demographic trends that have driven growth and demand over the past two decades. This section examines what we know about Massachusetts residents and households, and explores the implications for our current and future housing needs.

Key findings

- **Growth of New Millennial Households**. Massachusetts has seen strong growth in housing demand over the past 15 years as over 300,000 younger Millennials–many born and raised in Massachusetts–formed new households.
- **Changing Family Dynamics**: While Baby Boomer families dominated the housing market in Massachusetts 25 years ago, most of those householders are now empty nesters. During this period, the number of families and children in Massachusetts has steadily declined.
- **High Earners Driving Up Prices**. Massachusetts has seen rapid growth of both low-and high-income jobs, while middle-income occupations have decreased. With limited housing available, high earners often outbid all others, driving prices higher.

Population and Households

Who comprises Massachusetts' Households?

Massachusetts is home to 7 million people from diverse backgrounds. With a median age of approximately 40, two generations make up an outsized portion of the population: Baby Boomers (ages 60–80 years old), make up 22% of residents, while Millennials (born 1980–1999) account for another 27%. As shown throughout this plan, the housing preferences and needs of these two generations will significantly influence future housing planning.

Housing Diversity

Massachusetts residents have a wide range of housing needs and living situations. According to the 2020 Census, approximately 3.5% live in dormitories, nursing homes, correctional facilities, shelters, and other "group quarters" — residential arrangements where occupants lack separate living units[i]. While housing discussions typically focus on traditional housing units, we must also address the needs of people in group quarters as they transition into or out of permanent housing.

The rest of the population is considered to be living in a household, which is defined as all people residing within a single housing unit. Massachusetts is home to a variety of household types, including nuclear families, empty nesters, roommates, people living alone, child-free couples, and multigenerational families. As this plan will demonstrate, housing needs and household characteristics evolve with age, making it essential to support lifecycle housing that offers options for every generation.

A single household may consist of roommates or family members living together, even when some would rather live independently. It can also include "doubled up" households, where multiple 'subfamilies' share a household leading to overcrowding. These households represent what is called "latent demand" — people who want their own homes but currently can't access them. Addressing this latent demand is critical when establishing housing production goals.

Housing demand comes from three main types of households, each with unique needs and preferences:

- Families with children: Households with one or more adults and children under 18, including single parent families, two-parent families, and large multigenerational households.
- Multiple Adults without Children: Households with two or more adults and no children under 18. This encompasses married and unmarried couples, roommates, and other group living arrangements.
- People living alone: Households with a single occupant.

Households naturally change as people age. In their 20s, most people live with roommates, a partner, or alone. As they get older, many become heads or members of households with children. After age 65, most older adults live alone or in small households without children. Thus, housing demand is influenced not only by new arrivals or household formations, but also by shifting needs as people and families progress through life stages. When larger generations such as boomers and millennials all reach specific life stages, their collective influence on housing demand is

significant. Reviewing how these trends have played out since 2000 provides valuable insights into housing trends and needs over time.

Baby Boomers

In 2000, Baby Boomers formed 789,000 family households and the state had 1.4 million children under the age of 18. But in the intervening years, those children have grown up and the Boomers are well past 60 years old.

Between 2010 and 2020, Boomer families with children declined by 96,000 households, as many became empty nesters with different housing needs.

Generation X and Millennials

During that same period, Gen X and early Millennials transitioned from living with roommates to starting families. Those born between 1965 and 1985 formed 155,000 new family households with children after 2010, and fewer people were living as couples or with roommates. Since Gen X had fewer children later in life than Baby Boomers, however, they formed fewer families and the number of children in the state declined by 52,000 over ten years.

More recently, Millennials have rapidly formed households, driving housing demand. Between 2010 and 2020, younger Millennials (born 1986–1995) formed about 314,000 new households, accounting for 12.3% of all 2010 households. Being a larger generation than Gen X, Millennials are likely to increase the number of family households as they age. Current birth rates suggest, however, that the number of families or children will not rebound to the same levels as 2000.

Tenure and Housing Type

As residents move through these different stages and household types, their housing needs, preferences, income levels, and ability to afford to rent or buy a home also shift.

Younger householders, specifically those under the age of 35, are generally renters of multifamily housing. Only a small share of these households owns a home. As householders age, they are more likely to own and live in a single-family home. In fact, 70% of householders between the ages of 55 and 84 own their home.

Younger millennials lived in dorms, with parents, or with roommates in 2010 now occupy an estimated 408,000 homes, 66% of which are rental units. The growth of these households has been a major driver of housing demand. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that 27% of these new millennial households have incomes of $150,000 or more, putting them in a position to outbid existing lower income households for the units that are available.

Both homeownership and rental options are both critically important and preferred by different types of households at different stages of life. For those with a steady income and enough assets for a down payment, owning a home can provide predictable housing costs, the likelihood of property appreciation, tax advantage (including mortgage interest and SALT deductions), and long-term stability. Rental opportunities offer flexibility for people who may not have the income or assets to qualify for a mortgage, do not want the responsibilities of homeownership or those who anticipate moving or who lack long-term job security.

Household Income

While higher income households are a major driver of demand and price escalation, most households are moderate or low income. There are many ways to categorize income. In this plan we use Area Median Income (AMI). Using the AMI scale has both value and limitations.

Most low-income households, including many classified as Extremely Low Income (ELI), include one or more members who are a member of the workforce. However, wages in many occupations remain so low that households with two full-time workers can still fall below the ELI threshold.

The number of low-income working households in MA has increased since 1990, while middle-wage occupations have declined, shrinking middle-income households. A 2016 study by the Urban Land Institute found that in Metropolitan Boston, the number of very low or extremely low-income households increased by over 70,000 from 1990–2014. Over the same period, high-income households increased by 140,000[ii], while middle-income households decreased. In a housing market with limited supply, higher-income households are often able to outbid those with lower-incomes, contributing to gentrification and driving up housing prices.

Household income generally increases with age, driving higher demand for housing upgrades as people progress in their careers. After age 65, however, most households see their income declining as members retire and become dependent on retirement income and public assistance.

Race and Ethnicity

Massachusetts households are becoming more diverse. According to the US Census, individuals identifying as Black, Asian, Multiracial, or other non-White racial groups now head one quarter of households — a share that has doubled since 2010, with Asian, Multiracial, and other non-White communities experiencing the most rapid growth. As explored later in the needs assessment however, housing outcomes for people of color generally remain worse than those of the overall population. Systemic barriers stemming from historical discriminatory practices continue to create disparities in housing access, stability, and wealth accumulation. Centuries of redlining, exclusionary zoning policies, discriminatory real estate practices, restrictive covenants, and displacement through transportation and urban redevelopment projects have created enduring disadvantages for people of color. As a result, Black, Hispanic, and Native residents face reduced housing stability, higher homelessness rates, fewer opportunities to build wealth, restricted access to high-performing schools, higher exposure to health risks, and diminished prospects for upward mobility.

These disparities are most evident in the racial homeownership gap: only 37% of Black households and 32% of Hispanic households own their home, versus 70% of non-Hispanic White householders. Discriminatory practices persist in the real estate industry. Even high-income borrowers of color in affluent neighborhoods face disparities in mortgage approval rates and home appraisal values[iii]. Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data shows that high-income Black and Hispanic mortgage applicants — those earning above 120% of the Area Medium Income (AMI) — were twice as likely to be denied as White applicants.

Households identified in the Affordable Homes Act

The Affordable Homes Act established specialized commissions to address the distinct needs of three vulnerable groups: Extremely Low-Income households, Older Adults, and People with Disabilities.

Extremely Low-Income Households

Extremely low-income (ELI) households are those with incomes below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Income thresholds vary across the state, however, ranging from $26,300 for two-person households in Western MA and parts of the South Coast to $39,200 in Metro Boston. For a four-person household it ranges from $32,850 to $48,950.

ELI households include a wide variety of household types:

- Working households: 38% have at least one worker.
- Retired households: 13% rely on retirement income.
- Public Assistance households: 8% receive public assistance.

A four-person ELI household earning $48,000 per year can only afford $1,200 per month on housing to avoid cost burden or $1800 per month to avoid severe cost burden. Family-sized rental units at that price point are extremely limited throughout the state, creating additional barriers to stable housing for this population. Even units designated as "affordable" at 80% AMI are well out of reach for these households without additional subsidies such as rental housing vouchers.

This lack of affordable housing places ELI households at a great risk of homelessness. They have very little margin to get by if their rent is increased or if other unexpected financial demands arise. Some also need supportive services to maintain stable housing. The ELI population is likely to grow with the forecasted increase in senior households and continued polarization of wages.

Older Adult (aged 65+) Households

The Baby Boomer generation comprises 23% of the population and head 36% of its households. By 2035, the oldest Boomers will be approaching 90 years old, resulting in a substantial increase in older adult households. This will create new challenges as most of these households will experience low or extremely low income; limited mobility or cognitive challenges; a need for at-home medical services; and a higher sensitivity and lower adaptive capacity to climate events. At the same time, older homeowners in particular will have a significant influence on the housing market based on whether and where they decide to move in their later years.

The cost of housing is a fundamental challenge for older adults, since most see their income decline over time. The median income for over-65 households in Massachusetts is $63,000, half of the median income for householders 45–64. Even those that own their own home may have challenges making ends meet, despite the real estate value of their property. In 2022, University of Massachusetts researchers estimated that more than half of Massachusetts' older adults living alone, and one quarter of older couples, lack the financial resources required to pay for basic needs[iv]. Massachusetts ranks last out all of 50 states in economic security for older adults, with higher housing costs being the main driver. Though perhaps worse in Massachusetts, the rate of older adults experiencing homelessness has been rising substantially at a national level.

Approximately 68.7% of householders in Massachusetts aged 65 and older own their own home, and many have owned for some time. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, 62% of 65+ homeowners moved in before the year 2000. Over that time, median home values have increased by 74%. As home prices have steadily risen, many if not most of these homeowners have accumulated substantial wealth in the form of home equity, putting them in a more advantageous position than renters. A Joint Center for Housing Studies report found that homeowners have more wealth than renters in both home equity and non-housing assets. This increase in wealth could help older adult homeowners navigate many challenges. The same Joint Center report found that the typical homeowner aged 65 and over has enough wealth to pay for 42 months of nursing home care and enough non-housing wealth to cover 15 months of care[v]. The report continues, "the median older renter, in contrast, cannot afford even one month in a nursing home. Indeed, only 18 percent of renters could pay for nursing home care for more than a year."

Renters are much more vulnerable to unexpected housing cost increases and have less resources to pay for home care. Housing instability among older adults can lead to premature nursing home admissions, ultimately driving up the cost of care and often resulting in worse health outcomes. State funding has long prioritized access to community living for older adults, leading to a 5.4% decline in utilization of nursing homes and an increase in nursing facility closures[vi]. These trends may change, however, as the older adult population increases and recent findings show that nursing facilities across the state are approaching full capacity due to system-wide staffing shortages.

Households in Need of Accessible Housing

According to UMDI analysis of the 2017–2021 American Community Survey, 12% of the population statewide has some type of disability, amounting to just over 800,000 people. The Census Bureau defines disability across six categories: Ambulatory, cognitive, hearing, independent living, self-care, and vision. People may also report having multiple disabilities. An additional 45,000 residents living in institutionalized settings have a disability. Around one-third of the population 65+ has a disability. Currently, two in five people with a disability are age 65 and older. The aging Baby Boomer population along with the projected increase in the older adult population will drive up the number of people with a disability.

Approximately one in four households statewide — 24% or approximately 650,000 households — have a member with some type of disability. Households with a disability are more likely to have lower incomes: 36% of households with a disability make $35,000 or less, compared to 21% of all households in the state. Additionally, 60% of households with a disability earn less than $75,000, which is below the state's median household income. These households are also more likely to be renters: 41% rent compared to approximately 36% of all households in the state.[vii]

Western regions of Massachusetts have a higher share of people with disabilities, with reports of over 15% in the Berkshire (BRPC) and Pioneer Valley (PVPC) regions, compared to 12% overall in the state. This is likely due to the older populations in these regions. Some of the regions in the eastern part of the state have a lower share than the statewide average; Old Colony (OCPC), Metropolitan Area (MAPC) (10%), and Merrimack Valley (MRPC) (11%). Despite its lower percentage, MAPC still has the highest *number* of people with a disability due to its large

population. PVPC has the highest share of *households* with a disability at 30%, higher than the 24% in the state overall.

In terms of type of disability, the most common disability among households in the state is an ambulatory disability, affecting activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying. This is also the most common disability among older adults, affecting 19% of the 65+ population which translates to over 200,000 individuals. Around 335,000 households (12% of the total) have a household member with an ambulatory disability. Ambulatory disabilities can affect the type of housing needed as people may require elevator access, entrance ramps, or single-floor accommodations.

Independent living disabilities affect 10% or 264,000 households and involves physical, mental, or emotional conditions lasting six months or more that makes it difficult or impossible to perform basic activities outside the home alone such as shopping or attending medical appointments. This disability affects 13% of the 65+ population amounting to approximately 150,000 people.

Self-care disabilities affect 5% of households in the state or 143,000 households and 7% of the 65+ population. This disability involves a physical or mental health condition that has lasted at least six months and impairs basic activities such as bathing, dressing, or getting around inside the home. Self-care disabilities are also more common in older adults; however, they are not as common as ambulatory or independent living disabilities.

Hearing disabilities affect 7% of households in the state, which is approximately 200,000 households. Many people with disabilities do not require much, if any, accommodation or accessibility features in their homes. For example, a resident with a hearing disability may require only visual smoke alarms or doorbells.

Cognitive disabilities affect 10% of households in the state, which is approximately 270,000 households. Cognitive disabilities vary widely and include difficulties learning, remembering, concentrating, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition. This can range from mental health conditions like depression to intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. The type of accommodations needed for this population likely depends on other disabilities they might have such as self-care or independent living disabilities. Many may not need accessible housing, per se, but need affordable housing with support services.

People with disabilities in Massachusetts face multiple barriers to housing. It's nearly impossible to find a housing unit that is affordable, accessible, and available. Stories collected by the Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council highlight the real-life challenges of household members with disabilities, many of whom are living in spaces that do not adequately meet their needs, Common issues include units that are too small, units that are not located on the first floor, elevators that are not well maintained and reliable, and other accessibility deficits.

Housing affordability and housing security is especially difficult for people with disabilities who need long-term services and support (LTSS).[3] This population is more likely to have severe cost burdens, fall behind on rent or mortgage payments, and live in poor-quality housing. They also face other disparities such as living in neighborhoods with higher rates of serious crime and greater risk of natural disasters.

Existing federal support for people with disabilities is inadequate: 84% of people with disabilities in the U.S. who are low-income and eligible for housing assistance are not receiving public housing or rental assistance.[4] The number of very low-income older adult households that qualify for HUD housing assistance is rising fast.[5] As the population ages, the number will likely continue to grow.

These national trends are mirrored in Massachusetts, with a lack of accessible, affordable housing units across the state. The state's aging population will only compound these issues and older housing stock will need updates and modifications to support the diverse needs of people with disabilities.

The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Olmstead v L.C. (1999) maintains that states have a legal obligation to administer programs and activities in an integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals. This decision recognizes that States may satisfy this obligation through the development of a comprehensive working plan for placing individuals with disabilities in less restrictive settings — known as the Olmstead Plan. First completed in 2008, Massachusetts' Olmstead Plan encompasses efforts across government agencies to support individuals with disabilities access community living options. Updated every five years, the State plan recognizes the specific housing needs of this population and measures efforts to do.

In 2024, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) announced a settlement had been reached in a class action suit (Marsters v. Healey) for expanding opportunities for individuals in nursing facilities, including thousands of class members, allowing them to receive the services they need to live in their communities of choice. The partnership between EOHHS and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities establishes 800 new subsidized housing units specifically for elders and disabled MassHealth members transitioning from a nursing facility to the community.

Since disability and access needs present in numerous ways and change over time for individuals, it is difficult to create a definitive estimate of disability needs or inventory of units with accessibility and visitability features. What we define as "accessible housing" has not been updated to meet our current understanding of the ways in which disabilities require varying accessibility needs (i.e., vision impairment, neurodivergent).

Other Household Topics

Immigrant households

Massachusetts has been a destination for immigrants since the earliest colonial settlements. Many arrive in the Commonwealth on work or student visas with specialized skills, attracted by and ready to contribute to the region's innovative economy. Others are displaced by political and environmental crises and arrive here with an eagerness to build a new life.

The significant economic contributions of immigrants to the Massachusetts economy has been well documented. A Boston Indicators and Immigration Research Initiative study found that immigrants in Metro Boston contribute $103 billion every year to the region's economy, outpacing their share of the population[viii]. Though they make up 21% of all residents, immigrants represent 25% of workers and 28% of business owners. Despite this, the unique needs of immigrant households are often mischaracterized and poorly understood. Developing a clear understanding

the diverse characteristics of immigrant households is essential for planning for future housing needs of the entire community.

Over half a million Massachusetts households — one fifth of the total — are headed by someone who was born outside the United States. Foreign-born householders tend to be younger than native-born householders; only 19% of foreign-born householders are age 65+ compared to 28% of native-born householders.[1] Recent immigrants[2] and their households tend to be even younger. 51% of recent immigrant householders are 18–34, and only 3% are 65+.

32% of foreign-born householders are white, non-Hispanic (compared to 85% of native-born householders). 26% of foreign-born householders are Asian, non-Hispanic. 22% of foreign-born householders are Hispanic or Latino. 15% of foreign-born householders are Black, non-Hispanic

36% of foreign-born householders are from Latin America (including the Caribbean), 30% are from Asia, and 22% are from Europe. Almost two thirds of foreign-born heads of households have been in the country for more than 20 years.

Four-fifths of foreign-born householders speak English: 19% speak only English; 61% speak English and another language; and 19% do not speak English well (14%) or do not speak it at all (5%.) . Fully half of recent immigrant household members have a bachelor's degree, including 26% that have a graduate, professional or doctoral degree — a higher share than native-born residents (47%). Only one in six adult immigrants lacks a high-school diploma.

Foreign-born households are more likely to live in a family unit than are native-born households. Half (51%) of foreign-born households are married couple households, compared to 46% for native-born married couples. 72% of foreign-born households are family households compared to 61% for native-born households.

Whether recent or well-established, foreign-born householders tend to have larger households than native-born householders. 51% of foreign-born households are three or more people as compared to only 35% of native householders. Foreign-born householders are also more likely to have children in the household compared to native-born householders: 39% of foreign-born householders have children in the household compared to only 26% of native-born householders.

Foreign-born householders tend to have lower incomes than native-born householders, but the difference is not drastic. Just under half (48%) of foreign-born householders have a household income below $75,000, compared to 42% of native-born householders. 31% of foreign-born households have an income above $125,000, compared to 36% of native-born households.

Net international immigration recently peaked at 90,200 individuals from July 2023 to June 2024, according to the U.S. Census Bureau estimates released in 2024. The recent increase in immigration marks the highest level of immigration to Massachusetts since at least 1990. Between 2011 and 2019, annual immigration averaged 39,000 individuals per year. During the first Trump administration and the pandemic, immigration declined sharply, with a low of 16,477 in 2021. Since then immigration has steadily increased through mid-2024. Due to rapid changes in federal immigration policy, it is very likely that the number of international immigrant households will drop significantly in 2025.

Families with Children

As of 2020, there were 690,000 families with children making their home in Massachusetts. Families with children tend to be larger than the average household. These households include about 1.02 million "school-aged" children (5–17). This is slightly larger than the total enrollment of 905,000 students in public or charter public schools in Massachusetts in the 2019–2020 school year.

Both the share and the number of families with children has been declining, and along with it the number of school children statewide. Since 2000, the number of children aged 5 -18 fell by 50,000, a decline of nearly 5%. This is driven by changing population size (there simply weren't as many potential Gen X parents) as well as declining fertility rates, resulting in fewer and smaller families. In the 2004–2005 school year, there were 956,000 students in public schools in Massachusetts (including charter schools). This number has dropped to 887,000 students in the 2023–2024 school year, a 6.3% decrease.

In the 1990s, school enrollment was growing across Massachusetts due to the large number of children born to Boomer-headed families. Widespread subdivision development during this period accommodated many of these new families, and the resultant enrollment increases were attributed to the housing. Many growth policies and mindsets solidified during this period, often equating all growth with increased school enrollment and unrecovered municipal costs. These days, the number of families with children is declining and most are moving into existing homes rather than new construction. School enrollment changes are occurring for many reasons other than housing development. This requires a shift in conventional wisdom about the impacts and benefits of housing on school budgets and municipal finance.

Although families with children are a protected class under state and federal fair housing laws, they are often excluded from affordable housing due to restrictive zoning that often only allow overlays or approvals for age-restricted housing. Families with children and multigenerational families frequently have difficulty finding subsidized housing with more than two bedrooms, as most programs like Chapter 40B only offer 1 and 2 bedroom units. Additionally, families with children under 6 have the added disadvantage of locating and securing lead-free housing.

People in need of supportive housing

Some Massachusetts residents face complex barriers to housing, including unemployment, mental illness, substance use disorder, history of incarceration, long-term homelessness, and other challenges.

Supportive housing is affordable housing that is coupled with available services to provide dignified community living to individuals or families who exhibit "chronic and high need." This includes individuals, families, and young adults who are experiencing chronic and/or long-term or episodic homelessness and have disabling conditions such as mental illness, substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, and/or other comorbid chronic health conditions.

There are many different types of supportive housing; and not all homeless (or even chronically homeless) individuals or families need supportive housing. That said, data on chronically homeless individuals does provide context. As of November 2024, an estimated 16% of households in Massachusetts, (2,240 out of 13,770), experience chronic homelessness. Similar to national

trends, approximately 89% of chronically homeless households are single adults with only 250 family households being identified as chronic homelessness.

Evidence has shown that supportive housing leads to better long-term health outcomes and reduced utilization of costly emergency health care services, potentially creating savings for the entire community[ix].

Veterans

There are over 240,000 veterans in Massachusetts with 102,000 being of working age (18–64). The largest segment falls between the ages 35–54, although this population has fallen due to fewer military enrollments over the last 50 years. The racial and demographic makeup of veterans in Massachusetts mirrors that of the general population. Most veterans are white (74.2%), while 12.4% are Black and 8.6% are Hispanic/Latino.

Compared to the general population, veterans in Massachusetts report higher rates of disabilities as well as lower rates of bachelor's degree attainment[x]. They experience lower unemployment and poverty rates, however, as compared to the general population along with higher median household incomes and significantly higher homeownership rates. Despite this, approximately 32% of veteran households are experiencing housing cost burden. ACS data from 2017–2021 shows approximately 66,528 veterans live in homes with one or major problems of quality, crowding or costs.

Research has shown that veterans experience homelessness at higher rates than the general population, with combat exposure and PTSD identified as high-risk factors. In response, the Department of Veterans Affairs has increased funding and prioritized housing assistance for veterans while the state has allocated funding to ensure every municipality has a Veterans Service Officer (VSO). These combined efforts have resulted in more than a 50% decrease in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts — going from 1,268 veterans experiencing homelessness in 2011 to 545 in 2024. As outlined later in this report, the decrease in persons entering active service has resulted in a steady decrease in the veteran population which merits specific considerations as it relates to future housing needs.

Multigenerational households

While the traditional nuclear family (two parents and children) is often considered standard for a family household, three or more generations living together in a household is common in many locations and cultures. Multigenerational households may arise out of choice (the desire to have aging parents nearby) or out of necessity (adult children can't independently afford their own home). A nuanced view of multigenerational households can help inform policies to support households that are multigenerational by choice while offering alternatives for those who do so out of necessity.

Seasonal workers, temporary housing needs, and non-traditional housing arrangements

The conventional progression from first apartment to nuclear family to empty nester doesn't work for lots of people who have less conventional and more complex housing needs. Temporary workers are important to many leisure, hospitality, and retail trade businesses, especially in Seasonal Communities like the Cape and Islands. On Cape Cod the number of private sector jobs in July 2023 was 27,000 more than in February of that year. Many of these seasonal jobs are filled by workers who live elsewhere for the rest of the year. These workers become part of the seasonal population but their housing needs are very different from visitors and vacationers. They need a place to live for 4 months versus a week. The Affordable Homes Act has taken important steps towards acknowledging this issue through the creation of the Seasonal Communities designation and the Seasonal Communities Commission.

The Households Who Aren't There

Massachusetts has a history of attracting young people to its higher education institutions but faces challenges retaining them as they grow older. Over the past decade, net domestic outmigration for residents ages 25–54 have resulted in annual losses of 20,000–30,000 people[xi]. This significantly reduces the labor supply in Massachusetts, especially when thousands of Baby Boomers are retiring each month. If this trend persists, the workforce is expected to decline over the next decade, hampering economic growth. While high housing costs are a major factor, it is not the only one. Expanding housing options could help Massachusetts retain more of those young adults. This section examines the characteristics of people who moved out of Massachusetts recently and what kinds of households they formed.

In 2022, approximately 200,000 people moved out of Massachusetts. While the Commonwealth's many higher education opportunities attract young adults (18–24), Massachusetts is losing more residents than it attracts. In particular, young adults are choosing to make homes elsewhere. Massachusetts lost 13,700 residents aged 25 to 34 in 2022 and in total nearly 24,000 prime working age adults.

After leaving Massachusetts, these outmigrants established 85,000 households consisting of mostly single-person (over half) or two-person households (over a quarter). Eighty-five percent of these households had no children under 18, and over half were single and never married. Most individuals who moved out of Massachusetts were well educated, and over a third had a graduate degree.

The ability to work from home appears to have contributed to the increase in outmigration from Massachusetts as the occupation and industry composition in Massachusetts allows workers to embrace work from home opportunities more readily than other states.[1] The pandemic and the widespread adoption of work from home policies may have contributed to the short-term increase in domestic outmigration of remote workers, as Massachusetts returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2024, with a net loss of 27,500 residents[xii]. Policies designed to attract young adults and families to the Bay State will be vital in ensuring that Massachusetts continues to attract highly educated workers who are now less tethered to specific locations.

Supply and Production

This section provides an assessment of the current housing stock in Massachusetts by addressing two key questions: how many homes exist, and where are they located? While the total numbers are important this report will dive deeper into the specific types of housing, the demographics of who owns or rents the current stock, and what set asides are provided within the total units in the Commonwealth for specific populations. The assessment also addresses the number of housing units constructed in recent decades versus and who is (or isn't) living in them. Finally, the current supply assessment provides a useable reference point for vacancy rates by exploring current units available for sale or rent, along with those that are kept off the market for other uses. On the production side, we explore existing barriers to creating diverse housing in Massachusetts and ongoing efforts to evaluate these barriers through the Unlocking Housing Production Commission and other initiatives. Key findings include the following:

- Massachusetts has over 3 million homes; approximately 57% are single family homes and the remainder are in multifamily buildings.
- The state has a substantial inventory of housing for low-income residents: there are an estimated 144,000 privately-owned affordable homes, and over 71,000 homes in public housing. Together these comprise about 8.4% of the total housing stock.
- Housing production over recent decades hasn't kept up with housing demand. As a result, the available homes for sale or rent have shrunk to only 1.6%, a historically low vacancy rate. This creates intense competition for the homes that are available.
- The state added 19,000 units per year from 2010 to 2020, but only 11,600 homes received building permits in 2023. People seeking to build new homes face many challenges including restrictive zoning, elevated construction and operation costs, high expectations from investors, lack of water and wastewater infrastructure, and increasing sustainability, affordability, and design requirements.

Massachusetts' Existing Housing Stock

Supply overview

Massachusetts has 3.05 million housing units, including everything from studio apartments to luxury condos, public housing units, single family homes, and oceanfront mansions. Approximately 57% of the homes in Massachusetts are single family homes, 20% are in 2–4 multi-family homes, and 22% are in larger multifamily buildings (multifamily units refers to homes that are in structures with multiple units — not homes that are occupied by multiple families). The variation in housing supply is reflective of the diverse communities across Massachusetts. Urban municipalities have a more balanced mix of single-family homes and units in small (2–4 unit) and larger (5+) multifamily buildings. Most suburbs are predominantly single-family housing with large multifamily developments, relatively fewer 2–4 unit buildings, and a dearth of middle-income housing options.

One major distinction is whether homes are rented or owned by their occupants. Nine out of ten single-family homes are owner-occupied, while multifamily housing is over 75% renter-occupied. In many municipalities, someone looking to rent–at almost any income — has few units to choose from. The Massachusetts rental vacancy rate is around 2.5%, among the lowest in the country[xiii]. There is also a mismatch of available housing type that creates more challenges for larger

households. Families with two or more children face challenges finding homes with enough bedrooms. Statewide, 56% of housing units are “family-sized” with 3 or more bedrooms, but as detailed in the Conditions chapter, many family-sized units are occupied by empty nesters, singles, or roommates.

Affordable rental housing

Based on data from EOHLC partner Housing Navigator, there are approximately 215,00 rental homes in Massachusetts that are income-restricted. This includes affordable deed-restricted homes in private developments, state and federal public housing, and various types of supportive housing. The cost to the resident depends on the program: rent for subsidized units may be based on income (generally 30% of the household income) or fixed to a certain income standard.

The most commonly referenced measure of low-to-moderate-income units in municipalities across Massachusetts is the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), established under Chapter 40B, the state’s comprehensive permit law. 40B enables housing developers to circumvent local zoning in cities and towns that do not have more than 10% SHI eligible units and that do not meet other thresholds for affordable housing. Eligible units must be part of a subsidized housing development approved by a subsidizing agency and contain affordable, income restricted housing units among other requirements. However, this measure can include, under certain circumstances, market rate units that are not “affordable” if a certain percentage of affordable housing units in a rental development otherwise meet SHI eligibility criteria. Housing Navigator, which receives support from EOHLC and the other state subsidizing housing agencies, is another source of information on affordable housing units. Housing Navigator lists affordable, income restricted units for rent and also distinguishes units with a fixed rent vs rent based on individual household income.

Income restricted homes are created in a variety of ways: federal and state subsidies, federal and state low-income housing tax credits, municipal funding, and private sources. All these funding streams include varying restrictions on the length of time the unit maintains an affordability restriction. When those restrictions expire, homes can be sold or rented at market rates, unless the development is refinanced or resyndicated, which would prompt new affordability restrictions.

Units are generally targeted to households meeting specific income levels, such as 50% or 80% of the Area Median income. In some cases, very low or extremely low-income households use a mobile voucher to afford a unit restricted to 60–80% AMI. The voucher makes up the difference between 30% of the household income and the rent, limited to a payment standard set for a geographical area. The voucher program allows recipients to access at a lower cost than they would find in the open market while effectively “deepening” the affordability of low/moderate income developments. Linking project-based vouchers with these development projects makes it possible to meet the EOHLC Qualified Allocation Plan goal of setting aside a minimum percentage of the units for households with incomes at or below 30% of the area median income and to achieve the same outcomes for the other EOHLC-funded development programs.

Public Housing

Public housing is an invaluable asset in Massachusetts that supports many of our most vulnerable residents, specifically low-income older adults, families, and people with disabilities across 230 cities and towns. Public housing includes a variety of housing types including family housing in

large developments, elderly housing ranging from motel-style campuses to high-rises, group homes serving DMH & DDS clients, and scattered-site single-family homes and duplexes. Massachusetts is one of only four states to provide state-funded public housing and does not solely rely on federal public housing units. Both state and federal public housing units are overseen at the municipal government level through local housing authorities (LHAs). Massachusetts LHAs manage approximately 30,000 federally supported public housing units and 41,500 state funded units. On a per-capita basis, this is more than any other state[xiv].

Public housing in Massachusetts experienced a housing development boom starting in 1948 in response to the post-war affordable housing crisis for returning veterans. The construction of this critical housing resource occurred primarily between 1948 to 1956 through large scale public investments of capital funding that focused on common templates to achieve scale. Though many of these units are still serviceable, they often had common design issues and have seen significant deterioration over time, outpacing the funding provided to modernize these units. From 1960 to 1985 the state and federal governments also funded a large portion of public housing to house the elderly, but these buildings have also significantly aged and are lacking the accessibility features to support aging-in-place.

The Commonwealth and federal government have tried to revitalize public housing through increased capital funding and redevelopment programs including the HOPE and RAD/Restore-Rebuild programs on the federal side and the state Public Housing Innovations Program. Harbor Point was a successful and nationally recognized transformation, followed by many federal housing redevelopments including Old Colony in Boston and Lyman Terrace in Holyoke. On the state side, major redevelopments include Orient Heights in Boston, Innes Apartments in Chelsea, and Lee Fort Terrace in Salem. While these redevelopments utilized various public and private funding resources to transform neighborhoods and create much-needed housing, the available funds do not meet the demand. Most state and federal funding is allocated primarily toward maintaining aging infrastructure rather than developing new housing. In Fiscal Year 2025, the estimated capital backlog across the state-aided public housing portfolio was approximately $4 billion, compared to FY25 capital funding of $157M. This backlog combined with factors including staffing capacity (state public housing subsidy lags federal public housing operating support) across Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) and challenges with the centralized public housing waitlist implemented in 2019, has resulted in approximately 2,150 (5%) public housing units being vacant as of January 16, 2025, despite a waitlist of over 200,000 people. Although this level of vacant units is comparable to industry standards, it is unacceptable given the demand for rental housing.

State-Aided Public Housing by Program

Program	# Units
Family	12,787
Elderly/Non Elderly Disabled	28,721
Group Home (Approximate)	1,850

State-Aided PH Demographics 2024		
	Family	Elderly
Average Income	$29,859	$21,593
Median Income	$23,960	$18,600
HoH Employed	47%	16%
HH Member Disability	26%	31%
HoH White	65%	77%
HoH Latino	35%	9%
Average Family size	2.8	1%

The legislature mandated a statewide application system for state-aided public housing as part of the Public Housing Reform legislation in 2014. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) established the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs (CHAMP) pursuant to this legislation, launching in April 2019 and fundamentally restructuring the Local Housing Authority (LHA) application process. Instead of requiring applicants to appear in person or mail an application to each LHA, who previously managed individual waitlists subject to state regulation but with minimal oversight, CHAMP now provides all applications through a single portal. Unfortunately, CHAMP's effectiveness has been hindered by multiple challenges, principally the huge volume of applications and prioritization claims while leaving most tasks in the hands of individual LHAs. The implementation of centralized emergency priority screening has addressed many of these challenges, however. EOHLC, in partnership with the legislature and LHAs, has identified additional steps to improve access and equity.

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is defined as affordable housing coupled with supportive services that allows people to live independently, most often older adults, veterans, and those experiencing long-term homelessness with a disability. Creation of supportive housing primarily takes two forms. 1) developing new units through acquisition, construction, and ongoing operating costs, while partnering with experienced service providers to deliver resident services; 2) master leasing existing structures or individual units by providers who deliver services directly to residents. While master leasing requires lower upfront costs and fewer zoning issues, there is no net gain in community housing units.

Supportive housing often requires significant levels of government assistance across multiple areas: capital financing for development, deep rental subsidies given that most households have little-to-no income, and funding for supportive services to ensure households with complex behavioral or physical health needs are able to maintain tenancy.

It is important to note that supportive housing is difficult to quantify precisely, since services may not be attached to a specific unit and supportive housing units in Public Housing may be double counted. In addition to these challenges, obtaining accurate data on supportive housing is complicated because federal funding and reporting requirements for homelessness operate at a local level by regional or municipal planning bodies called Continuums of Care (CoC). As outlined in the subsequent section on homelessness, Massachusetts has 11 CoCs, including the Balance of State CoC overseen by EOHLC, which includes multiple municipalities across the Commonwealth.

Analysis of the compiled 2024 CoC Housing Inventory Count (HIC) data shows there are approximately 1,300 units of permanent supportive housing for families and 7,500 beds in permanent supportive housing for adults[xv]. Though limited, HIC reporting provides some details on the total supportive housings units across homeless subpopulations including transitional-age youth (18–24), families, and veterans.

CoC	Adult-Only	Other Permanent Housing	Family	Youth	Veteran	Total Units
Boston	2594	345	431	43	754	3370
Lynn	177	0	20	0	0	197
Cape Cod	197	0	5	8	36	202
Springfield-Hampden	791	36	111	17	242	938
Bristol County	148	41	84	0	69	273
Worcester (City and County)	625	0	152	0	177	777
Three County (Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire)	450	0	41	42	305	491
Cambridge	404	0	24	0	165	428
South Shore (Quincy, Brockton, Weymouth, and Plymouth County)	830	0	156	9	351	986
Fall River	104	0	36	8	20	140
Balance of State	1288	121	247	0	461	1656
Total	7608	543	1307	127	2580	9458

As seen in the HIC data, supportive housing development has prioritized efforts to address homelessness among individual adults. There are many contributing factors for this, most notably that single adults do not have a statutory right to shelter like families or children. The issue of veteran homelessness has aligned both state and federal resources to create supportive housing units to meet the needs of this population. These initiatives have proven successful with veteran homelessness declining by over 50% since 2011. As highlighted in the HIC data, approximately 26% of identified supportive housing is targeted for veterans, however, veterans experiencing homelessness now account for just 4% of the total population. The success of these initiatives provides a potential blueprint for addressing other populations experiencing homelessness, while also considering future housing needs overall, given declining veteran population trends.

Who owns the rental units?

Rental housing is an essential component of the Massachusetts housing stock, and for decades has provided affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. Just as there is a great variety of rental housing across the state and within communities, there is great variety in the owners of the rental housing stock (also known as landlords). Some landlords are individuals or

families who own a two-family or three-decker, live in one of the units, and rent out the other(s). This 'resident landlord' model can create pathways to housing stability and wealth creation for households who have the means to acquire a multifamily home and the capacity to be a landlord. They can earn rent while building equity, and the additional units may also provide a home for family members.

Other landlords own one or two properties and rent them out but live elsewhere. Meanwhile, many rental properties are owned by corporate entities and investors who own dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of rental units. These properties are frequently held by trusts or limited liability corporations, making it difficult to assess what properties are owned by the same entity or group of entities. Landlord identities matter significantly because there is evidence that larger profit-driven investors are more likely to maximize rents, take quick action to evict renters who fall behind,[xvi] or make quick capital investments and 'flip' properties for short term capital gains[xvii].

While it is difficult to precisely estimate how many rental units are owned by individuals or small landlords versus large investors, we do know that investor ownership of multifamily housing has been evolving. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council's analysis of property transaction data in Metropolitan Boston found that 21% of transactions between 2004–2018 involved investor purchases[xviii] (defined as limited liability corporations; entities purchasing more than three residential properties within five years; any purchaser of a building with four or more units; and any purchaser acquiring more than $3.5 million of residential properties over the study period.).

This analysis also reveals investor activity increasing from 16% of sales in 2004 to 23% in 2018, with significantly higher investment rates in the small multifamily homes that used to be a pathway to wealth building for middle income households. Over 30% of two-family homes and nearly 50% of three family homes sold in 2018 were purchased by investors. MAPC's analysis also found that investors come to the table with a clear advantage: cash. Cash offers attract sellers more than traditional mortgages, and frequently secure acceptance even when bids are lower, enabling buyers to purchase properties below market value. More than half of investors who purchased condominiums during the study period did so in cash, with similarly high proportions for single-family (43%), two-families (45%), and three-family (39%) purchases.

MAPC found that 9% of residential buildings bought in Greater Boston between 2002 and 2022 were "flipped" within the next two years, with the highest flip rates among apartment buildings (12%) and three-family homes (11%). Large and institutional investors were most likely to flip the homes they purchased, with nearly a quarter of single-family homes and a fifth of two-family homes purchased by large or institutional investors being flipped within two years, compared to rates of just 8 and 9% respectively for non-investor buyers. Property flipping impacts the region's housing market in two significant ways. First, it removes lower-priced houses from potential owner-occupant buyers; the median purchase price for a home or building that will ultimately be re-sold within two years was $160,000 less in 2020 than it was for those not sold within two years. The price differential has been steadily climbing since 2014. In addition (and by intent), flippers resell properties for significantly more than the original purchase price, compared to non-investors. Since 2010, investors who flipped their single-family properties have achieved median re-sale prices of 55 to 85% above the original purchase prices, while non-investors who flip properties saw only 12 to 25% increases. The process of acquiring lower cost properties quickly through cash

offers and converting them into a product that sells at a much higher price point, is eroding the stock of moderately priced homes.

Transaction data also show that investor activity is most likely to occur in higher density neighborhoods with low or modest home and rent prices. In some of these neighborhoods at the core of the Boston Region, investors comprised nearly one third of all purchases, adding stress to already burdened communities experiencing above average cost burden and evictions.

Investor purchases are not limited to urban areas, however. About 20% of sales in high-cost, primarily single-family neighborhoods involve investor purchasers, a rate that has been increasing over time. This activity has led to a decline in availability of modestly priced starter homes. In some of these wealthy communities, ten percent of sales are flipped within two years, often after a teardown/rebuild or substantial expansion of the property and corresponding increase in value. As a result, flips in these markets contribute to pushing these already "exclusive" neighborhoods farther out of reach for the average Massachusetts resident.

Research from other states has found that when large investors and corporate landlords acquire small multifamily developments, they often raise rents and may seek to evict households in order to renovate and re-list an upgraded unit. Other researchers have found this leads to displacement of preexisting residents, especially people of color.

The challenges with investor ownership are not limited to unrestricted, market-rate units. In Massachusetts, some long-time owners of deed-restricted units set rents for their tenants at a stable or income-based level rather than according to the rent standard which has increased considerably over time. As these developments are sold or re-syndicated, new owners have the legal authority to increase rents substantially, as long as they are still below the rental limit specified by the affordability restriction. As a result, residents of deed-restricted affordable housing could see unmanageable rent increases. Anecdotal information from residents suggests this may be a growing problem that warrants further assessment.

Nationally the real estate industry has seen growth in single family rental market. Large corporate landlords are increasingly using algorithms to set rents and asking prices (e.g. RealPage), and all landlords now have access to online listings that provide a broad window into the market, allowing them to set their asking rents at the top of what they think the market will bear.

Historical housing production

Although it seems as if Massachusetts is building homes rapidly, the rate of production is still well below that of past decades. The total number of units grew by 190,300 from 2010 to 2020, an increase of 6.8%. This was largely a continuation of production rates in the 2000s, when the state added 186,300 units. It is far less than the historical rates. From 1950 to 1990, Massachusetts' housing stock grew its housing stock by 12% to 21% in *each decade*. This was also the period that produced many units that are still affordable to working families today.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to acquire comprehensive, detailed, and accurate information about most housing production in real time. Building permits are issued by municipal officials in each of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts, and there is currently no reliable mechanism for compiling this information in an automated way. The U.S. Census Bureau administers a monthly

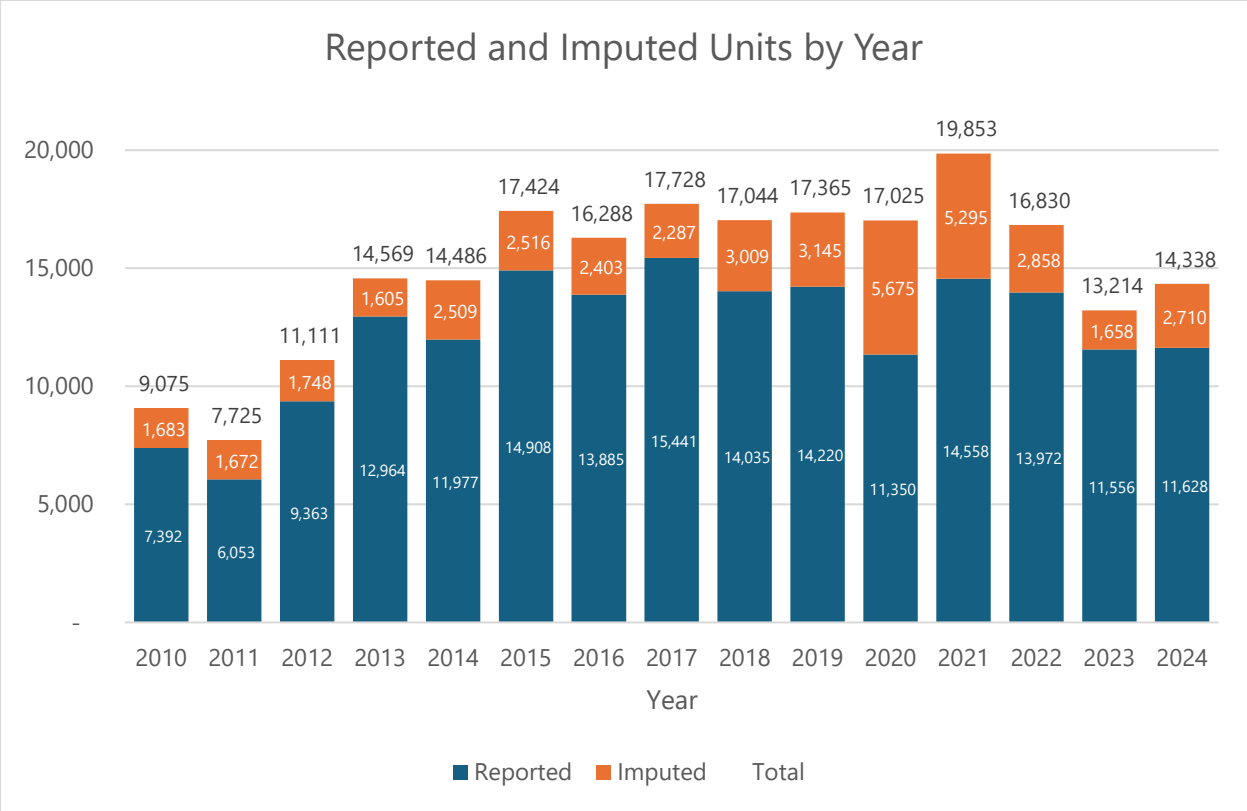
survey to building officials, seeking information about the number of structures and units permitted. However, municipal responsiveness to this survey is inconsistent. In 2024, 77 municipalities did not provide a single month of data to the Census Bureau. This 22% nonresponse rate matches the average of the past 15 years. Nonresponders include many large cities that are actively permitting large numbers of housing units.

When municipalities do not respond, the Census Bureau attempts to impute missing data based on permitting in prior years. From 2010 to 2019 there were 120,200 units reported, and an additional 22,600 units that were imputed, for a total of 142,800 units. Decennial census counts show that the state added a net 190,300 housing units from 2010–2019. This means the reported numbers underestimate total housing unit change by 37%, and the reported and imputed numbers underestimate by 25%.

At the municipal level, EOHLC has found that high levels of imputation can result in over- or-under-estimation of housing production activity as verified by decennial housing unit counts. There were 71 municipalities that reported less than 6 months a year during the decade from 2010–2019, resulting in imputed building permit estimates that over- or under-estimated production by an average of 45% when compared to the decennial census counts.

Even when reported regularly, building permit data are available only at the municipal level, and the permit issuance precedes actual occupancy of a building by at least a year, if not more. Furthermore, the Census Bureau does not collect information about demolitions, so building permits for teardowns imply addition of housing even if the net number of units has not increased. This results in overestimation of new production in municipalities with large numbers of replacements.

In 2024, municipalities reported issuing permits for 11,628 units, and the Census bureau imputed another 2,710 units for a total of 14,338. This total is a substantial decline from the peak permitting estimate of 19,853 in 2021. Comparison of the reported numbers shows a much smaller decline from 2021 to 2024, though one that is still worrisome.



Building permit data do provide insight into the type and cost of new homes. From 2013 through 2023, municipalities reported issuing permits for 148,900 units. More than half of those new homes (53%) were in buildings with five or more units. About 40% of those units were single family homes, and only 6% of new units were in two-, three- or four-unit buildings.

In 2023, the reported construction value of the 11,600 units that were permitted was nearly $3.9 billion, or approximately $336,000 per unit. The highest valuation per unit was on the Cape ($606,000 per unit) and Islands ($780,000 per unit on Martha's Vineyard and $1.6 million on Nantucket). Value per unit was below $300,000 in some regions surrounding Metro Boston (Northern Middlesex, Old Colony, Southeastern MA, Central MA) and in the Pioneer Valley.

Another source of data that has become available recently is the Current Address Count Listing Files produced by the Census Bureau. These files are based on the detailed Master Address File (MAF), a detailed and continuously maintained inventory of every residential address in the country. The MAF is updated biannually based on the latest information from US Postal Service delivery sequence files. Census Bureau staff also review the data to verify the addresses and remove those that no longer exist or which are misclassified (e.g., group quarters addresses listed as housing unit addresses.) Current Address Count Listing Files are provided at a detailed geographic scale (census block) and addresses are added around the time that units become available for occupancy.

The most recent Current Address Count Listing Files were released in July 2025. They indicate that the state has experienced a net increase of 97,700 residential addresses since the 2020 Census, a rate of approximately 18,700 new addresses annually. This statistic indicates that housing

deliveries exceed what would be expected based on building permit data, whether reported or imputed. Since Address Count Listing Files are anticipated to be updated twice per year, EOHLC will continue to investigate this dataset and use it for tracking overall housing deliveries moving forward.

How much housing is actually available for rent?

In a properly functioning housing market, vacant units should be available for sale or rent. Vacant units for sale or rent allow households who want to move to find an available unit. When there are lots of households looking for housing, and not enough units on the market, landlords are able to raise their rents because would-be tenants have few other options. Units for sale are frequently the target of bidding wars that drive up the price. Lower-income households suffer the most.

Conversely, too much vacancy results in units that can't be rented, landlord disinvestment, and declining property values. A study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies used historical trends to benchmark a "natural" vacancy rate for rental and ownership of 7.4% and 1.5%[xix]. These values correspond to rates in the mid-1990s before Massachusetts started experiencing extreme increases in rents and sale prices.

Not all vacant units are available for sale or rent. Some homes are used for seasonal occupancy, vacation homes, or short -term rentals (discussed below). Others are kept as a second home for people who split their time between two places. While these "unavailable units" are part of the housing stock, they aren't serving as permanent housing. Therefore, EOHLC calculates vacancy rates using "available units" only. These rates are calculated as the number of units for sale or rent, divided by the sum of occupied units and those available for sale or rent.

In Massachusetts there were about 258,000 vacant units on average available at any given point between 2018–2022. However, only 47,800 (less than one fifth of all vacant units), were available for sale or rent. Others were being held for seasonal use, had been rented or sold but not yet occupied, or were vacant for another reason. That means that only 1.6% of all homes were available for sale or rent.

The number of homes available for sale or rent has been declining for the past twenty years. Between 2006–2010, there were an estimated 54,300 homes for rent at any given time, and 23,700 for sale. By 2018–2022, the estimated number of vacant units for rent had dropped to 35,400, and the number for sale had dropped to 12,400. This is a 40% decline in the absolute number of vacant homes for sale or rent.

Meanwhile, other "unavailable" vacancies have been increasing. The number of "other vacant" units grew by about 2,500; and the number of units "sold but not yet occupied" *doubled* from 6,800 to 14,000 over the 2006–2022 time period. This latter category may include luxury homes or condominiums purchased as stable investment assets, not intended for occupancy.

What do we know about seasonal homes and short-term rentals?

Not all homes are used or available for use year-round. 118,000 units in Massachusetts are reported as being used for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use," equivalent to 4.0% of the total housing stock. This includes vacation homes used solely for personal stays as well as homes that are made available for seasonal or short-term rentals. The share of seasonal units varies

widely across the state. On Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, fully 60% of all housing units are set aside for seasonal use. Cape Cod reports 36% and Berkshire County 13%, while no other region reports a share greater than 3.5% for seasonal use.

In December 2018, the Massachusetts legislature passed, and Governor Charlie Baker signed a bill to regulate and tax short-term rentals in Massachusetts. This law extends the room occupancy tax that was levied on hotel stays to short-term rentals, creates regulations regarding short-term rentals, and explicitly grants powers to local city and town governments regarding short-term rentals throughout Massachusetts. The same law established a Public Registry of Lodging Operators (maintained by the Department of Revenue).

All types of lodging that must pay occupancy tax (hotels, bed and breakfasts, lodging houses, and short-term rentals) must register with the state. As of July 2024, there were 43,400 short term rentals (STRs) listed on the registry. This constitutes 93% of registered entities. Since the Registry does not publish the number of rooms in each hotel or motel, it is not possible to determine the share of registered units/rooms in STRs versus more traditional lodging operations. Six towns have no registered short-term rentals.

Registered short-term rentals are flagged by DOR as owner-occupied or occupied for 14 days or less. By law all units must register, but units occupied by guests for fewer than 15 days a year do not need to collect tax. Units rented for greater than 15 days are subject to community impact fees (if the municipality implemented them), the Cape Cod & Island Water Protection Fund Excise tax, and occupancy tax. If a unit is owner occupied it is not subject to the community impact fee unless a town opts to require it, and that is only in the cases of owner-occupied duplexes/triplexes.

Not all STRs are full units. Some are "rooms" or "suites". Since these don't impact units that could otherwise be sold or rented to a long-term occupant, they were excluded from the analysis. Analysis was performed on 34,000 STRs that are not owner-occupied, not tax exempt and do not specify that they are "Rooms" or "Suites." This covers about 78% of the 43,410 registered STRs.

One percent of the state's housing stock is registered at the DOR as a short-term rental. Half of all registered STRs statewide are in Barnstable County despite having only 6 percent of the state's housing units. Ten percent of Barnstable County's housing stock is registered as an STR with the state. This is just over one quarter of all seasonally vacant units. Dukes and Nantucket Counties each have over 20% of their housing stock registered as an STR, while Berkshire County contains 3% of the state's registered STRs and 2% of housing units. Provincetown has the highest share of housing that is registered as STRs with the Department of Revenue at 27%.

Outside of the Cape and Islands, towns with high rates of registered STRs are typically coastal communities or rural towns in the Berkshires with a smaller number of housing units and few STRs (such as Hancock, which leads Western Massachusetts with 12% of its housing stock used for STR usage). Some towns have low STR rates but high seasonal vacancy, such as Tolland in Hampden County where 57% of units are seasonally vacant but only 3% are registered with the DOR. Nantucket and Dennis have the largest number of registered short-term rentals, followed by Boston.

In FY2021, STRs accounted for 43 percent of total lodging tax revenue, with the remainder of revenue coming from hotels and other conventional lodging. Since then, the share of revenue from STRs fell to 20% by FY2024. Nominally, revenues from both forms of lodging have grown substantially. Between FY2023 and FY2024, traditional lodging revenue grew 8%, while STR revenue grew 35%. Owners may opt to list a property as a short-term rental for a variety of reasons. They may want to have access to it occasionally while also receiving income. For owners who do not plan to use the property, even seasonally, short-term rentals generate more income than long term leases.

The UMass Donahue Institute conducted analysis for EOHLC to learn about the financial advantages of STRs for property owners. Since reported earnings and taxes for individual properties is not yet available from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, UMDI used data from AirDNA, a service that compiles information from AirBNB and VRBO for prospective STR landlords. This dataset indicates that the average daily rate for an STR in Massachusetts was $346 in 2022, adjusted for inflation to 2023 dollars. In 30 days of short-term renting at the average daily rate, an STR operator could expect to earn over $10,000 in 2022, in real 2023 dollars. For comparison, median gross rent, a measure of rent which includes the cost of utilities, was found to be $1,653 in 2022, in real 2023 dollars. At the average nightly rate, and not accounting for expenses, an owner could book their short-term rental for just 5 days per month over the course of a year and would earn as much as a one-year lease at the median gross rent.

Production Barriers and Opportunities

The zoning framework in Massachusetts

For many decades, local zoning has served as the principal constraint on new housing production, especially multifamily housing. While many factors and limitations such as access to water, wastewater, physical constraints, and the housing market all contribute to production rates, zoning has had an outsized role. For the last fifty years it has been illegal to build any housing type other than single family homes on the vast majority of residentially zoned land in Massachusetts. Currently, the majority of zoning decisions are made locally.

The legal authority for the state to regulate land use was established in 1918 with the adoption of Article 60 of the state constitution. Article 60 grants the legislature the authority to limit the construction and use of buildings in specified areas; that is, to zone land for certain uses. Article 60 makes no mention of municipalities. In 1920, the legislature adopted the state's Zoning Enabling Act, Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws. This act codified the legal authority under which municipalities could regulate land use.

Prior to the adoption of 40A, municipal authority to regulate certain uses had not been enshrined in legislation or case law. Town meetings had no authority to specify what land uses were permissible anywhere, so landowners had largely unfettered development rights. Through the Zoning Act and its successors, the legislature specifies what municipalities may regulate through zoning, and withholds or conditioned other rights. For example, the Dover Amendment, adopted in 1950, (G.L. c. 40A, § 3) exempts certain land uses from some forms of local regulation. Specifically, municipalities may not prohibit, regulate, or restrict, religious and educational uses of land, though they may apply "reasonable restrictions" on bulk, height, and other dimensional requirements.

More recently, the MBTA Communities section of an Economic Development Bond Bill adopted in 2021 modified the Zoning Enabling Act to establish a requirement that municipalities have at least one zone of reasonable size where multifamily zoning is allowed 'as of right.' The Affordable Homes Act further modified 40A by including ADUs as a "protected use" that municipalities must allow as of right, with reasonable restrictions.

Zoning and land use regulations are adopted at the local level through varying processes depending on the structure of each municipal government. In general, zoning is adopted by the chief legislative body, either Town Meeting, Town Council, or City Council.

Much of Massachusetts is covered by zoning districts that are quite simple: single family homes with a minimum lot area of one-half to two acres. Until recently, very few municipalities have by-right zoning for multifamily housing, requiring developers to seek variances or a special permit for each project. The process of obtaining a special permit adds time, expense, and uncertainty to the entitlement process, effectively discouraging developers from even attempting to produce housing in certain communities.

The process through which many cities and towns solicit public feedback on development proposals can be unrepresentative of the communities in which those deliberations take place. Research in Massachusetts has found that participants in municipal developments are older, more likely to be White, and more often homeowners than the general public.

Zoning Practices and Data Availability

Despite the importance of local zoning to the state's housing future, obtaining a complete picture across all regions and 351 municipalities is difficult. Zoning codes in Massachusetts are dizzyingly complex. Each city and town adopt its own zoning according to its own rules and system. This makes interpreting them across municipalities very challenging. After years of painstaking work, the National Zoning Atlas has mapped residential districts in MA and estimated certain parameters relevant to multifamily housing production. Despite this progress, however, the spatial data is not available for public download and cannot capture every aspect of zoning restrictions in complex districts. All told, whether one is a developer, advocate, or regional planner, understanding what is permitted where and under what circumstances is an arduous task. Additionally, as municipalities update their codes, they often layer modifications over existing laws, creating a patchwork of rules and parameters that make interpretation even harder. Rarely do municipalities undertake a complete "recodification" of their zoning that would reconcile all the many overlapping modifications, redundancies, and conflicts.

Another challenge to interpreting and standardizing municipal zoning codes is that many terms within the general land use lexicon lack standard definitions and may be interpreted differently by municipalities. The terms multifamily, accessory dwelling unit, and percent lot coverage, for example, may refer to slightly different things in different municipalities. Most of the time municipalities will include a definitions section that explains specific terms, or will describe specifications in detail within the document, but there are cases in which these or similar terms are used without further explanation. This complexity is compounded by the wide variety of repositories and formats for zoning codes, ranging from PDF files or Microsoft Word documents posted on the municipal website to web pages hosted by third-party providers such as Municode.

Some municipalities even post the zoning text as a scanned document, hampering users' ability to search, copy, or quote the code itself. The lack of standard formats and definitions for zoning codes renders local bylaws and ordinances largely inaccessible and opaque to those without abundant time to find and parse the zoning text.

Current practices with regard to municipal zoning often fail to fulfill principles of government transparency and equitable engagement. They also provide unfair advantages to developers, attorneys, or realtors with inside knowledge and relationships, while disadvantaging those who have not previously worked in a given community. This is especially true for developers seeking to build much-needed workforce and affordable housing in suburban towns, where byzantine regulatory pathways stand between a proposal and a building permit.

Part of the challenge of accessing zoning data stems from the limited capacity of municipalities to maintain and publish electronic GIS records. Zoning changes, including the creation of new districts and the modification of existing district boundaries, are commonly authorized by changes to the text of the bylaw or ordinance itself. These changes must then be translated into new district boundaries on the zoning map itself, a task that may become an afterthought. In many cases, the available spatial data lags one or more revisions behind the code, if it is published at all. Additional barriers exist for those municipalities that don't even have direct access to their own zoning data, having outsourced the maintenance of the electronic records to consultants who may charge a fee for each change or record request. While this format of law making has been central to the historical makeup of the Commonwealth, it is challenging to assess the current state of zoning without standard formats, data systems, or definitions for municipal zoning. For developers, it is similarly challenging to navigate the various rules and protocols town by town when attempting to meet all requirements to build.

Financial Feasibility

Lately, zoning constraints have begun to ease in many communities. The support of state and local leaders, grassroots organizing, and business sector engagement, have all helped open opportunities for new development. Yet as these zoning barriers recede, developers are experiencing new challenges related to financial feasibility, which is blocked by escalating construction costs, higher operating expenses and insurance, and the rate of return expected by equity investors.

There are many different components that make up a residential development. Developers contribute labor and seed capital, generally all at-risk if a development doesn’t pan out. The funding for site acquisition and construction typically comes from two sources: loans and equity investments. Short-term construction loans give way to long-term mortgages (held by EOHLC, quasi -public agencies, and private banks) with predictable payment schedules. But loans can’t cover the entire cost; some major equity investment is needed. Some may come from developers, but most will come from outside equity investors who receive a portion of the net rent or sale proceeds. How much they get depends on the income and operating expenses of the development and sale price once it is sold. Since these values are uncertain (costs could be higher, rents could be lower), there is some risk associated with being a capital investor in a development.

EOHLC focus groups with industry representatives revealed that major equity investors are seeking risk-adjusted returns that exceed the ten-year treasury bond rate by certain amounts. If forecasts show the development can't meet that rate of return given current assumptions about construction costs, operating costs, or rental income, then equity investors may choose to invest elsewhere. That means the development can't get built unless the financial picture improves, or the developer can find another source of equity with lower return expectations.

Production is particularly difficult in weaker markets where even market rents and sale prices are insufficient to achieve an acceptable rate of return for lenders and equity investors. For affordable housing developers in regions with lower median incomes, low rent standards mean cash flow is hard to sustain. Inclusionary zoning is a tool to produce deed restricted units without public subsidy. The creation of inclusionary units has little to no direct impact on the construction cost of the development, since deed restricted units must be effectively identical to the market rate units. The financial difference emerges during operation, since inclusionary units don't produce as much income. Industry representatives report that in some cases the long term cost of inclusionary units (due to lost income over time) approaches or exceeds the entire profit margin for the developer.

Water and Wastewater

The state's ability to develop housing depends on access to adequate resources to support it, especially water and wastewater. The diverse landscape of water and wastewater systems and technologies as well as the environmental conditions across the state must all be considered as we shape housing plans. Factors include infrastructure issues and the availability of enough water from large public water supply systems, including the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) serving 61 communities and around 3 million people, and small public systems and private wells and septic systems. Housing policies must account for these diverse conditions, needs, and limitations.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) is a Massachusetts public authority that provides wholesale water and sewer services to over 3.1 million people in 61 municipalities in the Metropolitan Boston area and west of Boston. The MWRA operates regional drinking water transmission mains that deliver water to cities and towns, who operate the local distribution systems that carry water to customers. Similarly, for wastewater local sewer districts collect wastewater from properties and discharge it to MWRA interceptors that carry it to the Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Existing publicly available planning documents from the MWRA indicate that the system has some available capacity to serve new users in existing member communities. The MWRA has no available capacity in the sewer system for new communities. For municipalities served by MWRA water and/or sewer, new development can be accommodated if local collection systems are upgraded to reduce existing inflow and infiltration of groundwater and stormwater. Local distribution/collection systems may need upgrades to accommodate new development. Connection costs and upgrades needed principally for the new development are often paid for by developers or state grants, so even the extension of local collection/distribution systems may not have much of a fiscal impact on the locality. New development also broadens the base of ratepayers so that administrative and overhead costs can be spread out over more customers.

For municipalities with local or regional water and wastewater systems, the challenges are more diverse. These systems rely on local wells and/or reservoirs for their water supply; and wastewater treatment facilities that discharge treated effluent to the ground or rivers. While many water suppliers and wastewater plants have adequate supply, others are facing practical or regulatory limits on the amount of water that is available or sewage that can be treated. Climate change and pollution (especially PFAS, the so-called "forever chemicals") could reduce the total water supply available to local systems. Conservation and efficiency programs — such as peak season reduction, graywater reuse, infiltration reduction, and illicit discharge detection — have the potential to further reduce per-customer demand so that new growth can be accommodated without increasing in total demand. As in MWRA municipalities, connection costs and necessary upgrades are generally paid for by developers.

Developments beyond the reach of a public water or sewer system must generally provide their own supply or wastewater treatment. For individual homes and small developments, this generally takes the form of a private well and septic system. Properly designed septic systems can effectively dispose of wastewater while protecting humans and the environment from the bacteria and pathogens contained in wastewater. Septic systems are effective where the soil conditions are conducive to subsurface disposal and the cost of collecting and conveying wastewater to centralized treatment facilities is expensive. Septic systems are regulated by Title V, but municipalities regularly adopt local septic regulations that are stricter than the state. Some further regulation may be needed to account for specific local conditions while others are less tied to scientific findings and may be implemented to discourage or disable development. Larger developments must be licensed as public water suppliers, and if the system is expected to produce more than 10,000 gallons of sewage per day, the wastewater disposal system is subject to more stringent and expensive design and operational standards, resulting in a substantial increase in construction and operating costs.

Across the Commonwealth, diverse challenges with water and wastewater capacity that intensify depending on location. For example, the permeable soils throughout the Cape make on-site septic systems highly effective. However, even correctly functioning Title 5 systems are not designed to remove nitrogen. Nitrogen is a major source of pollution in the Cape's coastal embayment's, and the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) has identified wastewater as the primary culprit. To ensure the continued health and enjoyment of the water resources that are so critical to the character of Cape Cod, more aggressive wastewater management is needed to reduce the amount of nitrogen being delivered to estuaries and restore water quality. Nitrogen removal can be improved through a variety of technologies. One possible solution is cluster or satellite systems at the neighborhood or village level, and centralized wastewater treatment facilities. New housing co-located with cluster or satellite systems can help share the cost of those systems while enabling housing growth.[xx]

Labor availability and industry capacity

Quality firms and skilled labor are essential ingredients for housing construction. According to the Census Address Count Listing Files, Massachusetts has added nearly 20,000 homes per year since 2020. For Massachusetts to accelerate this rate of production, we need to either grow the construction industry dramatically or increase its productivity, preferably both. Employment in the

residential construction industry is up 11% from pre-pandemic levels, but it's still not enough to achieve the levels of production we need to achieve housing abundance. To meet this plan's production targets, Massachusetts will need to train a new generation of skilled labor and entrepreneurs prepared to build our future. Increases in worker productivity can also help achieve more homes with the workforce (and money) we have.

There are about 18,000 people working in residential construction firms today. This is not a historically high level. Employment in the residential construction industry peaked at nearly 20,000 workers prior to the foreclosure crisis and the great recession, then fell to just under 13,000 workers in 2012. The industry made slow gains through 2019 and has increased 10% since the pandemic.[xxi] That's just a portion of overall construction employment in Massachusetts, which includes 18,000 workers in non-residential building construction and 121,000 in specialty trade contracting firms. This category encompasses a variety of specialty establishments such as plumbing or concrete. Many in the construction workforce are self-employed. According to the Home Builders Institute 24% of the construction labor force in Massachusetts was self-employed.[xxii] Self-employed workers and sole proprietors will be especially important to smaller scale construction, such as ADUs, and the maintenance and remodeling of single-family homes.

As with the workforce overall, the construction workforce in Massachusetts is aging. Thirty percent of Massachusetts residential construction workers are 55+; the industry skews older as compared to the Massachusetts workforce overall or the residential construction industry nationwide, both of which are only 26% 55+. In the specialty trade contractor industry, only 23 percent of workers are 55 years old or older, similar to the nation overall. One challenge with homebuilding is that many of the occupations that are essential to the construction and maintenance of homes require extensive training and licensing. Thus, even if shortages result in increased incentives for workers to enter a trade, it will take time for workers to obtain the necessary training and certifications. For example, electricians need four years to complete the electrician apprenticeship process and become a journeyman electrician.

In recent years, much growth in the construction labor force has come from foreign-born workers. Research has shown that historic increases in immigration enforcement negatively impacted housing supply by reducing the size of the domestic and foreign-born construction workforce.[xxiii] Nationally, in 2022 nearly a quarter of the construction workforce was foreign-born with 31% of workers in construction trades reporting that they are foreign-born, according to a 2024 report from the Home Builder Institute. To the extent that immigration in Massachusetts declines, this could have a negative impact on the size of the workforce available to build, repair, and remodel new homes.

One means of growing the workforce is to attract members of groups who have been historically underrepresented in the construction industry, such as women. While 51 percent of all industry employment in Massachusetts is female, only 21 percent of workers in the residential construction industry and 15 percent of workers in the specialty trade contractor industry are female.

Compensation is crucial for attracting construction workers. Massachusetts residential construction workers earn higher wages than their peers in other states and slightly exceed Massachusetts average wage across all industries ($96,000 vs $94,000 in 2024 dollars). Employees in non-residential building construction earn more than the statewide average. Thus, many jobs in

construction provide the kind of solid, middle-income careers that have been disappearing in MA over the past 30 years. Within construction, however, disparities exist between high-skill union and prevailing wage positions and lower-skill, lower-wage, and less stable employment.

While wages are higher in Massachusetts, the Commonwealth has a higher cost of living than nearly all other states. A challenge for growing the residential construction workforce is the overlap in skills necessary to construct commercial buildings and elements of public infrastructure, such as schools and bridges. If these sectors are adding new jobs at wages higher than residential construction, finding enough skilled workers for home construction will be challenging. Consequently, increases in residential construction wages will also increase the cost of new construction.

National BLS measures of single-family residential construction productivity show that productivity of the industry also declined with the great recession and has remained consistently below pre-great recession levels. In part this is driven by the nature of the residential construction industry where technological innovation has been limited compared to other industries. Increasing productivity in home building could include implementing measures to encourage the adoption of new technologies and production methods, such as modular or off-site construction. Through standardization and controlled conditions, offsite construction can dramatically reduce the time it takes to build homes, increasing productivity of each worker. Massachusetts has historically been slow to embrace off-site construction, but there is potential for change. For example, in 2024, the Biden-Harris Administration and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the Metropolitan Area Planning Council a $3 million grant to explore innovative ways to build and install modular housing in the Greater Boston region.

Prior research has found that offsite construction can provide predictable, well-paying jobs for people who wouldn't otherwise be involved in the housing construction industry, particularly women and people of color. Offsite manufacturers can also be a positive workplace for formerly incarcerated workers or workers in recovery due to its predictable hours and work environment. Onsite construction often has long periods with little work, followed by periods of intense work, which is difficult for many workers to accommodate, especially working parents. Offsite construction typically has much more regular hours, with the added benefit that the work largely takes place at one facility rather than at construction sites that may be far away, reducing transit time. Manufacturing facilities are temperature-controlled and protected from inclement weather, making offsite construction friendlier to people who cannot work under difficult conditions due to age or disability. Industry trade groups have stated that there are numerous examples of unionized housing manufacturing facilities.

Remaining barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)

The Affordable Homes Act legalized ADUs by-right in every zoning district subject to the Zoning Enabling Act (this excludes the City of Boston.) As authorized, EOHLC promulgated regulations to implement the law. After a public comment period, the regulations went into effect on February 2, 2025. Protected Use ADUs of less than 900 square feet or half the size of the primary dwelling, whichever is greater, are permitted in every single-family zone and may not be subject to owner-occupancy restrictions. If a property owner seeks to create a unit that qualifies as a "Protected Use ADU", they may take their plans directly to the local building inspector for a building permit.

Municipalities may adopt reasonable regulations governing ADUs, with administrative approval. This law will open up opportunities for thousands of homeowners across the state to create separate small units.

Early reports from building inspectors indicate that the high cost of construction remains a major barrier to ADU adoption. The cost of labor and materials, building code requirements that mandate complete fire separation, and necessary upgrades to septic systems can drive the total cost of an ADU to $500,000, according to some inspectors EOHLC surveyed. Access to capital for homeowners is a known challenge, especially for low-income homeowners and those on a fixed income. Local interpretation of fire codes may require additional protective measures (possibly including sprinklers) for detached ADUs that cannot be reached by a fire lane. Managing the design and construction process is a complicated endeavor. Some property owners may have trouble finding qualified contractors and would benefit from a 'turnkey' solution, especially detached ADUs. Data collection requirements in the ADU regulations will provide a better window into the uptake, cost, and location of new ADUs, and may help identify additional areas of policy changes.

Cost and its Consequences

It's well known that Massachusetts housing is too expensive. Recent reports have ranked Massachusetts as having the 2nd highest cost of living in the country[xxiv]. While the state also has the second highest median income of any state, at $101,000, it's still not enough for middle income households to find homes they can afford.

This section summarizes a few key measures of housing costs, including homes available to households at different income levels, how this has changed over time, and how this varies across the state. It also explores the consequences that result from high housing costs: cost burden, housing instability, overcrowding, displacement, homelessness, and outmigration. Key findings include:

- Median home prices have risen 73% since 2000, while median household income has risen only 4% over the same period, after adjusting for inflation. As a result, fewer than one quarter of home sales from 2010–2019 were affordable to low-moderate income households. Lower-cost rentals are also vanishing.
- Household budgets are also burdened by rising insurance costs (up 40% since 2017); transportation costs ($13,000 annually for the average household with a car); and utilities such as heat, electricity, and broadband service.
- About 100,000 low-income households receive rental housing vouchers, which provide an average benefit exceeding $1,500 per month at the end of 2024. With rising rents and EOHLC policy changes that allow more flexibility, the cost of each voucher is increasing.
- The number of households paying more than 30% of their income has been rising across all income groups. More than one quarter of middle-income households are cost burdened, and more than three quarters of very low-income households.
- Eviction rates have rebounded since the pandemic moratorium. There were 27,000 eviction filings for nonpayment of rent in 2023, of which 9,000 resulted in an eviction.

- Homelessness of both individuals and families has been on the rise, even after accounting for the recent migrant crisis. Massachusetts now has the nation's 5th largest homeless population.
- Some people cope with high housing costs by living with parents, roommates or other families; others simply move out of state. There are an estimated 49,000 overcrowded households, 108,000 "missing households" that didn't form due to high housing costs, and 400,000 adult children living with their parents. On net, Massachusetts lost nearly 24,000 prime working age adults to other states in 2022.

The Cost of Housing

What it costs to buy or rent a home across Massachusetts

Massachusetts single-family home prices were at the national average in 1980, but since then have increased more than any other state. The current median single family home price in 2024 was $610,000 — a 10% increase from the prior year. Prospective homebuyers would need an annual household income of roughly $162,000 to afford a home. This is even more pronounced in high employment areas, notably Greater Boston, which is the third most expensive metropolitan area in the country with the median single family home price being $950,000.

Housing affordability in Massachusetts is not just an issue for prospective homebuyers as data shows rental prices are among the highest in the country. Recent findings from the National Low Income Housing Coalition show that Massachusetts is the 4th most expensive state in the nation for renting a two-bedroom apartment. By this measure, the Greater Boston area is the highest-cost rental market outside of California.

Sale prices and rents have risen drastically in recent years/decades. According to Zillow, the median price of a home increased by 73% in real dollar terms from 2000–2024, while the inflation adjusted median household income grew by only 4% over that same time period[xxv]. One key driver is a substantial increase in very high value sales and high-cost rentals, and an evaporation of homes affordable to low-and moderate-income households. The price of a "lower tier" home (in the 5th to 35th percentile of home prices) rose by 93% over the past 25 years.

A 2021 analysis conducted by MAPC for MassHousing analyzed 409,000 single family and condominium home sale transactions that took place across Massachusetts from 2010–2019. That analysis estimated that only 24% of sales would have been considered attainable to low-moderate income households (defined as 70% of the statewide AMI.) In most Greater Boston municipalities, fewer than 20% of home sales were attainable, and in dozens of suburbs, fewer than 5% of sales were attainable. A higher share of home sales was attainable in Southeastern, Central, and Western Massachusetts, though these locations are distant from job centers and contain older housing stock that needs upgrading. Notably, Gateway Cities tend to already have a higher share of attainable housing sales compared to the rest of the state. With the exception of Quincy, Malden, Salem, and Peabody, more than 20% of sales in each Gateway City were attainable. For most Gateway Cities outside of Greater Boston, the attainable share is higher than 50%, and over 75% in Springfield and Holyoke.

Affordable rentals are also scarce in Massachusetts. A four-person household with two full-time workers earning $20 an hour would have income right at the Very Low-Income limit for the Boston

region ($81,600), enough to rent an apartment for $2,050 without being cost burdened. Approximately 56% of all rentals in Massachusetts currently rent below that price, with only 36% in Suffolk County. Those figures may overstate the share of available homes affordable to a Very Low-Income household, since they include people who have lived in their homes for a long time and may be paying below market rent. According to Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data from HUD, the number of vacant units available for rent at prices affordable to VLI households declined to 13,800 between 2017–2021, down from 25,300 between 2007–2011[xxvi].

Affordability problems vary across the state. Western MA has units that would be "affordable" in Metro Boston but are out of reach for many workers due to lower wages. According to 2023 American Community Survey data, 36 percent of renter households in Western MA have incomes lower than $25,000 compared to 26% statewide. Rates of cost burden vary across Western MA, notably renter cost burden in Hampden County, home to the cities of Springfield and Holyoke, was above the statewide average at 53.9%.

Expenses beyond rent and mortgage payments

Beyond rent and mortgage costs, maintaining a home involves additional expenses: utilities, internet, property taxes, insurance, and maintenance are all direct costs that renters and/or homeowners must factor in as part of their housing costs.

Property insurance is essential to preserving the value and useability of a home. Disasters and other unforeseeable events could cause major damages, and insurance can cover the costs of repair and rebuilding. To make a profit, private insurance companies must generate sufficient revenue through premiums to pay out claims for covered losses. However, the rising frequency and cost of natural disasters has made it challenging for private insurers to provide insurance at affordable rates. NOAA reports that in 2023, the US experienced more than two dozen natural disasters that resulted in over $1 billion in direct costs. "Greater levels of risk translate to higher property insurance premiums as insurance providers raise rates to maintain profitability and ensure sufficient resources to cover future customer losses[xxvii]. The resulting sharp increase in insurance premiums for homeowners and property developers has exacerbated housing affordability challenges across the U.S."[xxviii] Furthermore, the rising cost of construction makes rebuilding more expensive.

Property insurance rates have been rising since the last quarter of 2017. Over the following five years, homeowners' insurance premiums rose 40% faster than inflation. The national average cost of homeowners insurance premiums is estimated at $1,750 to $2,500 annually. As a result, some homeowners may forgo insurance if not required by their mortgagor. Survey results indicate that 12% of homeowners nationwide do not have insurance, and nearly half of those homeowners have incomes below $40,000 per year[xxix]. While comparable data is not available for Massachusetts, it is clear that the rising cost of insurance will be challenging for low-income homeowners, especially those in vulnerable areas. Those who choose to opt out of insurance due to the cost put all their property assets at risk.

Nationally, in some high-risk areas some insurance companies have ceased issuing policies because the potential cost of a disaster is too high to support affordable premiums. When this happens, homeowners have fewer choices and are likely to face higher costs.

U.S. families spend an average of 3.1 % of income on energy bills, but the average energy burden for low-income households is three times that. Recent research found that average neighborhood energy burden is positively and significantly associated with eviction filing rates, holding rent burden constant. The cost of energy is likely to continue increasing due to the need for new renewables, grid modernization, and increasing demand. Some recent state policies help mitigate rising energy costs. First, in regard to new construction energy codes - notably the growth of Passive House- certified construction in multi-family (where there are currently over 23,000 units in the pipeline) is dramatically reducing energy costs for tenants and/or property managers. Second, the Mass Save weatherization program, particularly for low and moderate income households, is mitigating energy costs for mostly single-family households. Finally, the Department of Public Utilities is also expanding electric discount rate categories to cover moderate income as well as low-income households.

Energy is not the only utility that can be costly for households. Despite the ubiquity of 5G signals and Wi-Fi networks, high-speed wired connections are still essential for households to fully take advantage of the internet for learning, health, economic opportunity, and entertainment. This was no more evident than it was during the Pandemic, when a digital divide disproportionately impacted some populations more than others. According to the MBI Digital Equity Plan, "As more aspects of everyday life depend on the internet and as online activity grows more sophisticated and demands higher speeds for full participation, the availability of broadband has a greater impact on quality of life than ever before." That report found that the statewide median price for broadband service was $75 per month, or $900 per year. Half of survey respondents said it was either somewhat hard or very hard to pay their internet bill each month; and two thirds of households who said they don't have home internet services say that cost is the principal factor. Lack of competition is one contributing factor to high internet costs. Until July 2024, the American Connectivity Plan subsidized internet access for low-income households. The state is now implementing a Digital Equity Plan that aims to bring low-cost internet to communities that need it. One strategy being implemented by the Mass Broadband Institute is installation of free internet at public housing developments, along with device distribution and digital literacy training.

Recent polling from MassINC reports housing and transportation costs are the top two identified burdensome expenses — specifically amongst women, renters, public transit riders, and low-income residents[xxx]. Transportation is a key determinate of affordability and opportunity. The average US household spends $13,000 per year on transportation, equal to 15% of average household income (the second-largest category, after housing). Low-income households are particularly burdened by transportation costs; those in the lowest quintile of income (<$28K/yr) spend >30% of income on transportation. Auto-dependence is a huge driver of transportation costs: Auto ownership constitutes 93% of household transportation spending. Households (at any income level) without a vehicle generally spend only 5% of their income on transport. However, in order to live without owning a car, households need to find a) housing they can afford, in b) a neighborhood with transit or pedestrian access to most of the things they need. When such homes aren't anywhere to be found, households are forced to auto-dependent areas where any bargain on housing costs is likely offset by the costs of auto-ownership and operation. Therefore, one way to increase overall affordability is to create more homes in places where people can live with only one or no cars.

For car-free households, one hidden cost may come in the form of a free parking space. Parking spaces in new multifamily development may cost anywhere from $10,000 to $40,000 per space. If parking spaces are automatically "bundled" with the rent or the cost of a condo, then car-free households are required to pay for an amenity they do not need. The availability of space may actually encourage higher rates of car ownership and all its attendant costs and congestion. Research has found that middle-income households in urban areas were more likely to purchase a car if they moved into an apartment that had free parking.

Rental Housing Vouchers

As the first state to create a state rental voucher program, Massachusetts continues to recognize housing assistance as a necessary component of our social safety net. Households at or below 80% AMI may have some of their housing costs offset by subsidies or other government assistance, in order to afford housing they otherwise may not be able to afford, or to maintain their existing housing. Accounting for housing-related economic assistance is important to understand the true cost and benefits of renting or homeownership. However, the current lack of needed housing supply, specifically affordable housing, impacts the ability for this crucial resource to better address unmet need amongst eligible households on waitlists for these programs. Furthermore, the median household income across the programs highlighted below are below 30% AMI.

Massachusetts and the federal government provide financial aid, primarily in the form of rental housing vouchers, to low-income families and individuals in rental units other than public housing. Rental housing vouchers cover the difference between what a renter household can pay, often 30% of their total income, and what a landlord is charging for rent. There are different types of housing vouchers, with different funding sources, eligibility, and usage limits. There are long waitlists across both federal and state programs as appropriated funding falls well short of covering the entire eligible population. Furthermore, the current limits in housing supply have created significant challenges for voucher programs as rising rental costs outpace program funding, while EOHLC has had to increase payment standards and implement other costly measures to ensure vouchers are competitive in the market.

Federal Rental Vouchers: The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), often referred to as Section 8, is the federal government's main program for supporting very low-income families, older adults, veterans, and individuals with disabilities across varying HCVP programs. Federal rental assistance is provided and overseen at both the state level through HLC and local level through Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). As of October 2024, there are 91,968 leased HCVPs administered throughout Massachusetts, with 22,422 or 24% administered by HLC and the rest by about 100 PHAs.

	Leased and Searching Vouchers (including targeted programs)	Cost Per Voucher Per Month
CY20	22,777	$1,094
CY21	22,929	$1,159
CY22	23,343	$1,246
CY23	24,050	$1,397
CY24	25,285	$1,585

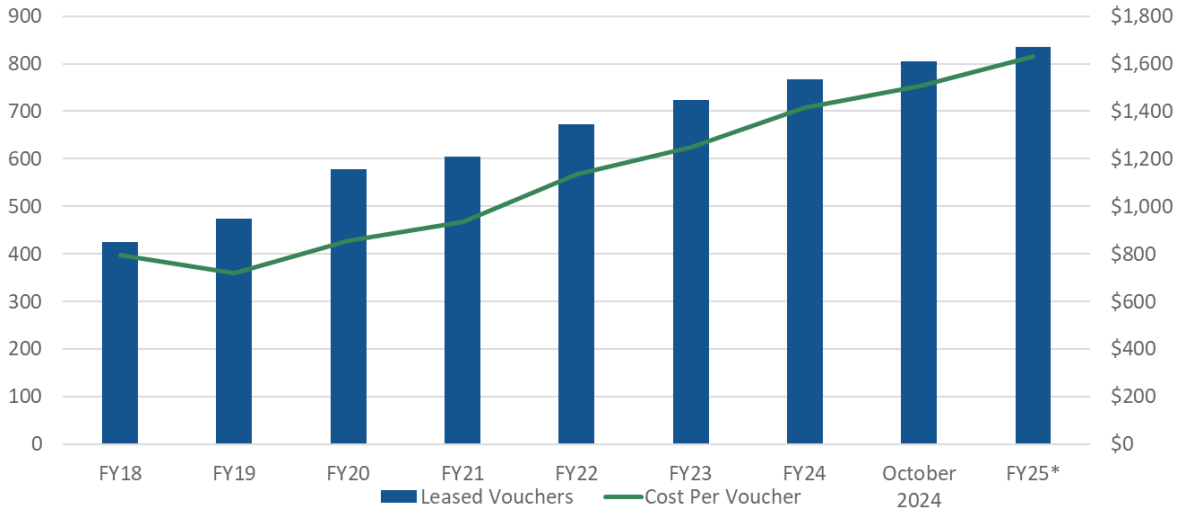
As of the end of 2024, 49% of HCVP households had a householder with a disability, and 55% had at least one household member with a disability. At least 31% of households had a non-white householder. The average family income was $20,913, and the average tenant rent share was $501.

State Rental Assistance: The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, administered by HLC, provides rental assistance in the form of vouchers to assist individuals and households in affording the housing costs of market-rate units. Generally, rental assistance program participants pay 30% of their income for rent and HLC pays the landlord the remaining cost up to the applicable payment standard. HLC uses small area (zip-code level) payment standards to better match the rental market. Some vouchers are mobile and allow the participants to choose the type and location of their unit. Other vouchers are attached to specific units and are not mobile. The smaller Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) works similarly, but is targeted by households headed by non-elderly, disabled individuals.

	MRVP Leased Vouchers	Cost Per Voucher per Month
FY17	8,268	$790
FY18	8,232	$867
FY19	8,535	$911
FY20	8,883	$967
FY21	9,001	$1,001
FY22	9,423	$1,153
FY23	9,527	$1,343
FY24	9,982	$1,574
October 2024	10,359	$1,654
Projected End FY25	10,935	$1,767

In 2024, the average annual income for a household in MRVP was $21,683 and $18,663 for a household in AHVP. In 2024, The average tenant rent share in MRVP was $455, and the average subsidy payment was $1,574. For AHVP, the average tenant rent share was $435, and the average subsidy payment was $1,459. Nearly half (48%) of households in MRVP had at least one household member with a disability. All households in AHVP have at least one household member with a disability. 24% of households were headed by someone of Hispanic or Latino heritage in MRVP and 9% in AHVP.

Householder Race	Percentage of MRVP Households	Percentage of AHVP Households
White	63%	71%
Black or African American	21%	15%
Asian	2%	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	0%
Did Not Disclose	7%	12%



Emergency Housing Support

In addition to rental housing vouchers, EOHLC provides emergency funding to help prevent evictions or secure housing for someone coming out of homelessness:

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT): RAFT provides emergency financial assistance for rent, mortgage, moving, and utility costs for low-income households facing a housing crisis. RAFT serves more households annually than any other single line-item with an $3.7k average annual benefit disbursement per household. When considering the average annual subsidy for an MRVP is $20k and an average $75k cost for a 9–month length of stay for a family in the EA shelter, RAFT is a crucial upstream intervention. It is also a program that disproportionately

serves marginalized populations. About 75% of RAFT assisted households have a female householder. 40% of RAFT assisted households are Hispanic / Latino, despite making up only 12.6% of the general population of MA. Over 30% of RAFT assisted households are Black or African American, despite making up only 6.5% of the general population of MA

HomeBASE: The HomeBASE program helps families that have been determined eligible for EA by providing up to $30,000 over a 2-year period, with the possibility of a third year. Funding is flexible and able to support monthly rent payments, move-in cost, arrearages, moving expenses, and even furniture. Similar to other rapid rehousing and rental assistance programs, households will pay at least 30% of their gross monthly income towards rent.

Comparing owner and renter tax benefits

Renters and low-income households are not the only ones receiving public sector housing-related subsidies. Federal mortgage interest deduction is a significant offset for homeowners, especially higher income homeowners. A household earning $200,000 with a $700,000 mortgage will be paying roughly $40,000 of federally deductible interest annually during the first decade, enough to reduce their federal tax bill by $10,000. The benefits of this deduction accrue relatively more for higher-income homeowners (in a higher tax bracket) and those with a relatively recent mortgage (where the monthly payments include a larger share of mortgage interest). Lower income households, those with an older mortgage, and those who do not have many other deductible expenses benefit the least. The availability of this tax deduction is a major reason why homeownership provides such wealth-building opportunities.

Massachusetts offers a tax deduction for renters, who may deduct 50% of their rent paid to a landlord for a principal residence in Massachusetts, up to $4,000. At the state's 5% tax rate, the maximum deduction results in a $200 reduction in tax liability, or $16 per month. This is equal to 1% of the median rent for all Massachusetts renters. This benefit is available to all Massachusetts renter taxpayers, regardless of whether they itemize deductions. Twenty-two other states plus the District of Columbia provide some form of rental deduction, credit, or refund for rent costs. Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Indiana are the only states that do not condition this benefit on income, age, disability status, or other factors. While the Massachusetts deduction provides some relief for renters, it is too small to make a substantial impact on renter cost burden.

Consequences of the Housing Cost Crisis

Cost Burden

Every household has different needs, incomes, assets, and preferences. All of these influence a household's ability to pay, and how much is 'too much.' The most commonly applied standard is that a household shouldn't spend more than 30% of their income on housing, leaving the rest of their income for food, transportation, health care, savings, and entertainment, among other things. Households that pay above 30% of their income on housing are considered cost burdened and those paying above 50% are considered severely cost burdened. The high cost of housing means that many MA residents are cost burdened or even severely cost burdened.

Cost burden has been increasing over the past few decades, not just for low-income households but middle-income households as well. Approximately 26% of households between 80 to 100%

area median income are now experiencing cost burden which is comparable to cost burden rates for low-income households 10–15 years ago.

Housing cost burden is pronounced amongst Low-income households, renter households, and people of color — specifically Black and Latino-led households. Approximately 75% of very low-income households are cost burdened with 37% of VLI households being severely cost burdened[xxxi]. To no surprise, this is much higher for ELI households, of whom 80% are cost burdened and 63% experience severe cost burden.

Why is cost burden an issue? Cost burdened households forgo other necessary household expenses such as food, childcare, and transportation. Furthermore, they are unable to save money for opportunities that could provide a pathway to higher income as well as wealth-building — such as education, job training, or homeownership. Instead, these households are often one emergency expense from falling into housing instability, facing eviction, or relying on emergency systems such as shelter.

Households with a disability also are more likely to be cost burdened than all households statewide. More than half (56%) of renter households with a disability are cost burdened (including 31% that have severe cost burden). Similarly, 31% of household owners with a disability are cost burdened.

Evictions

Residential evictions are legal under Massachusetts law for three reasons: 1) nonpayment of rent; 2) lease violations other than nonpayment of rent, which are referred to as “fault” evictions; and 3) the expiration of a lease or the end of a tenancy at will, which are referred to as “no-fault” evictions. The law requires that a “notice to quit” be filed for all nonpayment and fault eviction filings. If the tenant does not move out, the landlord can file an eviction request with court, and eventually a judge may issue an “execution” of the eviction, which directs the tenant to vacate the apartment and authorizes a compulsory move-out if necessary. Filings often do not result in executed evictions. The eviction process can be time-consuming and costly for both tenants and landlords and often landlords, especially smaller landlords, may use other tactics to avoid eviction, in some cases working with tenants to help keep them in their apartments, or in others using tactics such as “cash for keys” (where a tenant accepts a cash payment to vacate the apartment) to encourage tenants to give up their apartment without a formal eviction filing. Thus, filings and formal evictions are often a small share of forced moves.

Formal evictions and forced moves are bad for households, families, and communities. Research has shown that experiencing an eviction is associated with negative infant and childhood health outcomes. There is also evidence that evictions are associated with an increased risk of homelessness. The loss of housing may also have negative outcomes for children by disrupting school attendance and for adults by disrupting employment. Eviction is concentrated in neighborhoods that are historically disadvantaged. There is also evidence that eviction may negatively impact levels of community engagement, as measured by 311 calls. Furthermore, evidence suggests that increased evictions lead to increased demand on local shelter systems. Black, female-led households are disproportionately impacted by evictions.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic federal and state moratoriums led to historic lows in evictions. Policies aimed at keeping vulnerable families housed worked. However, their effects were temporary and since the lifting of these policies the number of eviction filings has increased. In Massachusetts, for 19 consecutive months (August 2022 to February 2024) eviction filings surpassed average pre-pandemic rates, averaging over 3,000 monthly eviction filings compared to a pre-pandemic average of 2,600. The most common cause of the filings is non-payment; non-payment filings specifically have increased significantly since August 2022. Executed evictions have also been trending higher in recent months. The eviction execution rates for non-payment have averaged 800 eviction executions per month in the state.

In 2023, there were over 35,000 eviction filings for all causes, not just nonpayment. Over 27,000 filings were due to nonpayment, 4,000 were no-cause filings, and the remainder were "for-cause." In other words, about three out of four eviction filings were due to nonpayment of rent. Over 9,000 of these eviction cases were executed due to nonpayment, and an additional 3,000 for other reasons. This is an increase from over 5,000 in 2022 and around 3,700 in 2021.

The increase in filings corresponds with two changes in state policy. First, in April 2022 the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) ended. Second, in August 2022 the state reinstated the "notice to quit" requirement for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) applications (a state-funded homelessness prevention program). A notice to quit is a written notice that a landlord provides to the tenant that they intend to end their tenancy. Such a notice is required to access RAFT assistance.

Massachusetts Housing Partnership analysis of the eviction data by municipality and by county estimated there were approximately 17.4 eviction filings per 1,000 rental households. Rates significantly range across counties, with renters in Western and Southeastern Massachusetts having some of the highest eviction filings rates across the state, making people in these regions more vulnerable.

Having an eviction record can be a barrier to finding new housing, especially in tight rental markets. The Affordable Homes Act included a provision that allows tenants to petition a court to seal their eviction records in cases where there is a no-fault eviction, a dismissed case, or the tenant won their case in housing court. The law will go into effect in May 2025.

Unlike in criminal court, tenants are not guaranteed representation in housing court if they cannot afford it. However, there is evidence that representation is associated with better outcomes for tenants. The state provides limited funding for legal help for tenants, and many rely on volunteer legal services and Legal Aid services throughout for assistance when facing eviction.

A major challenge at the state and federal level is a lack of consistent and accessible data collection related to evictions. Improving data collection can help the state better target its resources as it seeks to improve housing stability. It is important to balance protecting the identities of residents with data and policy research needs.

Foreclosures

The rising costs of property taxes, insurance, maintenance, or adjustable-rate mortgages also jeopardize housing for lower-income and moderate-income homeowners. Foreclosure petitions

saw a sharp decrease during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the accompanying Moratorium on Foreclosures, which like eviction moratorium for renters, introduced new assistance programs to prevent households from facing foreclosure. Similar to the ERAP program, the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, supported over 6,000 households behind on mortgage payments to prevent foreclosure. The end of the moratorium in June 2021 resulted in a steady increase in foreclosure petitions until March 2023. In contrast to recent eviction trends, the rates remained below pre-pandemic levels and foreclosure petitions are now declining. Unfortunately, numerous petitions are still working their way through the system and resulting in more foreclosure deeds transferring the property to the lender. HAF, like ERAP, stopped taking applications when the moratorium was lifted. Homeowners in need of assistance can still apply for RAFT benefits, though the $7,000 maximum funding amount under RAFT is much lower than the average request for HAF applicants — — $20,000.

Overcrowding, Doubling Up, and Living with Parents

One basic way that households cope with high housing costs is to opt for a unit smaller than what they want or need. A family of four might not be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment, but can afford a 1–bedroom apartment. They are housed but overcrowded. Overcrowding is defined here as greater than 2 household members per bedroom.

Households also adapt to high housing costs by living with parents or extended family, or living with other family units in a “doubled up” household with two distinct “subfamilies.” These multigenerational or combined households may or may not be overcrowded, and some may be doubled up by choice, tradition, or convenience. When families double-up strictly for financial reasons, it can reduce living expenses but also create stress on personal or family relations, and lower educational outcomes for children. Lower income households, specifically households of color, are more likely to be in overcrowded housing situations.

In Massachusetts, there are an estimated 49,000 overcrowded households, 1.8% of the total. The rate of overcrowding ranges by RPA from 0.4% in the Berkshire region to 2.6% in the Merrimack Valley region. Overcrowding is predominately a problem for households with children under the age of 18. They make up 85% of all overcrowded households and are overcrowded at a rate of 5.4% compared to a rate of 0.4% for households without children. Multigenerational households — those with three or more generations of a family — are more likely to be overcrowded. 10% of multigenerational households are overcrowded and 21% of all overcrowded households are multigenerational. About 15% of overcrowded households (7,300 households) are families with children who are “doubled up” with another household in the same housing unit. BIPOC households are five times more likely to be overcrowded than White households, at a rate of 4.5% for all BIPOC households compared to 0.9% for White households.

Most overcrowded households (65%) are in rented units. About 8% either own their home free and clear or don’t pay rent, both strong incentives to stay put. Most overcrowded households aren’t huge: only 30% contain six or more people, while 70% have five or fewer members and just need a two-or three-bedroom unit to have adequate space.

These days everyone has stories about “empty nesters” whose adult children are living at home, often due to high housing costs. It is estimated that 15.0% of all households include parent heads

of households with adult children living at home. About one third of those households also have children under 18. By combining incomes from multiple adults, these households are more likely than the general population to have higher income and less likely to be cost burdened.

Missing Households

How housing costs prevent people from settling down

High housing costs have played a role in suppressing household formation over the last 25 years. When people can't find an affordable home for themselves or with a partner, they end up living with parents or roommates instead. This can be seen in the headship rates over time: back in 2000, about a third of people in their twenties were heads of household, either by themselves or with others. By 2019 that had fallen to a quarter. For some this may be preferable, for others, suboptimal. A recent report estimated 108,000 "missing households" in Massachusetts based on household formation changes since 2000. When people are unable to settle down — as homeowners or renters in a stable situation, it's harder to grow roots in a community. It is harder to create social connections.

Homelessness

The number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States has been steadily rising in recent years. The recently released 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) from HUD showed the highest total number of persons experiencing homelessness in the US since survey efforts began. Nationally there was an 18.1% increase relative to persons identified in 2023[xxxii]. Massachusetts saw an even more startling increase in persons experiencing homelessness with AHAR reporting a 54% increase in total persons experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts — the third largest increase among all states and the 5th largest homeless population. Rising housing costs and lack of affordable housing are national trends widely recognized as the leading causes of increasing homelessness. A 2019 study commissioned by HUD identified rising rents and housing overcrowding as key predictors for homelessness. That study found that, without other interventions, a 10% increase in average rent results in nearly 2 additional people (1.92) out of every 10,000 adults becoming homeless. The impact of overcrowding was even more powerful — when overcrowded housing units (defined as more than 1.5 people per room) increased by just 1%, more than 5 additional people (5.44) per 10,000 end up experiencing homelessness.

Doubling up is also a common precursor to HUD-defined homelessness — a recent statewide study of people experiencing homelessness in California found that nearly half (49%) had entered homelessness from a "non-leaseholder, non-institutional setting," compared to 32% who had been leaseholders and 19% who had been in institutional settings. The median notice period for non-leaseholders to vacate their homes was 1 day, compared to 10 days for leaseholders.

It is no surprise that Massachusetts, which has among the highest cost of living and home prices in the country, would see a more significant increase in homelessness, However, there are other contributing national and state-specific factors contributing to the increase.

In 2024, there were 22,845 persons in families experiencing homelessness–a 74% increase from 2023. As noted in HUD's findings, Massachusetts is one of many states that has seen a historic increase in immigration — specifically Haitian family households that are legal U.S. residents under temporary protective status. Massachusetts is the only state in the country with a statewide right to shelter law for families and pregnant persons, meaning that the state guarantees and must provide a place to stay for these groups if they are in need. While some stakeholders attribute the rise in homelessness in Massachusetts to an influx of immigrant or out-of-state families, there has also been a rise in longtime Massachusetts families experiencing homelessness because of rising housing costs and the end of the eviction moratorium in July 2021 that prevented households from falling into homelessness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Attention to current challenges caused by the significant growth in family homelessness has also attracted less attention to the quieter crisis of the rising rate of individual adults experiencing homelessness. In 2024 there were 6,950 unaccompanied adults experiencing homelessness, the highest on record and a 12% increase from 2023. As noted earlier, single adults are not covered by the Right to Shelter law and often rely on community-based shelter that is primarily provided through community-based organizations through funding from HLC as well as federal, local, and philanthropic support. Unfortunately, shelter capacity is not sufficient for the need, operates on a first-come-first serve basis, and is often not utilized by many homeless individuals due to a variety of personal factors including but not limited to: safety concerns, separation from romantic partners given shelters are often single-sex, and challenges related to substance-use disorder and/or mental illness. The 2024 count showed a 19.9% increase in individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Similar to other housing disparity trends outlined in this plan, homelessness is a racial equity issue as persons of color disproportionately experience homelessness nationwide — particularly African Americans who account for 40% of total persons experiencing homelessness but only 13% of the general population. This trend is even more pronounced in Massachusetts where 54% of the state's homeless population is African American but only account for 6.5% of the general population[xxxiii]. Though less pronounced, Hispanic or Latino individuals account for roughly 30% of the total homelessness population yet represent just 12.6% of the state population.

People experiencing homelessness are not a monolithic population and require differing levels of government assistance to meet their housing needs. A family who just got evicted requires different supports than a single adult with co-occurring mental health and substance-use disorder that has experienced long-term unsheltered homelessness. In an ideal state, efforts to address homelessness are structured to meet the specific needs of varying populations in order to maximize limited government resources in a manner informed through an overarching goal to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. This includes upstream, cost-effective preventive efforts to prevent homelessness in the first place, such as RAFT outlined elsewhere in the plan. However, despite RAFT being among the most utilized government assistance programs, many people still fall into homelessness. Government assistance and programs are designed to ensure the level of assistance is aligned with the acuity of the person experiencing homelessness. This may include rapid rehousing funding to help individuals pay upfront costs or initial rental assistance that they can support through their income, front-door interventions to help persons

identify housing support through family, and in the case of persons experiencing long-term homelessness, providing permanent supportive housing.

The federal and state response to homelessness has shifted over the last two decades towards prioritizing funding for permanent supportive housing (PSH) given strong empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this solution. PSH is designed to address both the housing and accompanying health-related needs for individuals and families experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness — defined by HUD as a person with a disabling condition that has been homeless for 12 consecutive months or experienced homelessness on 4 separate occasions over the course of 3-years that equals at least 12 months. Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness are more likely to experience unsheltered homelessness, utilize costly emergency healthcare services (e.g., emergency departments, inpatient treatment), and intersect with the criminal justice system. The cyclical nature of the intersection with these systems followed by a return to homelessness results in increased taxpayer spending, poorer health outcomes including higher mortality rates, and ultimately a government response that does not address individuals' underlying housing needs and fosters distrust towards future intervention efforts. As noted earlier, supportive housing requires a high level of government assistance, which hinders the ability to provide it at scale, and thus, must be prioritized for those most in need. As of November 2024, an estimated 16% of households in Massachusetts, 2,240 out of 13,770, are experiencing chronic homelessness. Similar to national trends, approximately 89% of chronically homeless households are single adults with only 250 family households identified as chronic homelessness. It is important to note that Massachusetts' efforts to utilize real-time data to observe emerging trends and better inform interventions addressing homeless is impacted by varying structural challenges.

As noted earlier, federal funding and required measurements on persons experiencing homelessness, with some exceptions for family households, are overseen at a local level through Continuums of Care (CoCs)–homelessness response planning groups that are accountable to the federal government (HUD). Massachusetts has 11 CoCs plus the Emergency Assistance system overseen by HLC — which is relatively high when looking at Connecticut, which is approximately half Massachusetts' size but has just two CoCs. Each of the eleven CoCs in Massachusetts has distinct plans and strategies for use of federal permanent supportive housing funds, different mechanisms for determining eligibility and prioritization for programs supported by those funds, distinct applications for those funds (each of which takes hundreds of hours to prepare), annual homelessness assessment reports, housing inventory charts, and point in time counts submitted to HUD. All of this results in needless administrative redundancy, confusion for people trying to navigate the system, and disparity in CoC funding across the Commonwealth. The Rehousing Data Collective (RDC) was established by HLC to provide a collective source of data on homelessness; however, it does not address many of the noted challenges regarding this structure as well as existing data issues across multiple CoCs. CoCs have not uniformly prioritized data quality and uploads to the RDC, significantly limiting the ability to rely on this data warehouse for policy planning. As the CoCs have no contractual relationship with any state agency, it is difficult to align with and enforce shared priorities.

In the face of record levels of homelessness, it is important to note that Massachusetts has long been a national leader in addressing homelessness even when responding to significant demand. Massachusetts has one of the lowest rates of unsheltered homelessness in part because

Massachusetts is the only state in the country that guarantees a right-to-shelter for eligible families and pregnant persons. Boston, which has the highest homeless population in the State, has the 8th lowest rate of unsheltered homelessness in the country at 6% — substantially lower than the national average of 40%. Massachusetts is also the first state to receive approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to allow for Medicaid-reimbursement for tenancy support services.

Outmigration and loss of talent

Massachusetts' population has grown over the last few decades, however, the State has seen an increasing trend of outmigration of long-time residents, particularly young adults, to other states. People move away from MA for many reasons, but housing cost is at the top of the list for many. High costs make it difficult or expensive for companies to locate and expand in MA. Outmigration to other states varies over years but has long been offset through population growth from international immigration. Massachusetts is losing residents across all demographics, regardless of age, income, and education. Young adults between 24–44 are leaving the state at the highest rate among all age groups.

In 2022, roughly 200,000 individuals moved out of Massachusetts and formed 85,000 households elsewhere. The Commonwealth's many higher education opportunities mean that there is net in-migration of people aged 18–24, but at every other age group Massachusetts is losing more residents than it attracts. In particular, young adults past their college years are choosing to make homes elsewhere. Massachusetts lost 13,700 residents aged 25 to 34 in 2022 and in total nearly 24,000 prime working age adults.

Reflecting their youth, greater than half of these households were single-person households and over a quarter formed two-person households after their move. Eighty-five percent of households that moved from Massachusetts had no children under 18 and over half were single and never married.

Individuals who moved out of Massachusetts were well educated and over a third had a graduate degree. Across every income group Massachusetts is losing residents, however those with lower incomes are more likely to leave, holding other factors constant.

The ability to work from home appears to have contributed to the increase in outmigration from Massachusetts because Massachusetts' occupation and industry mix meant that the workforce was able to embrace work from home opportunities more readily than other states.[1] It is possible that the one-time shock of the pandemic and the widespread adoption of work from home policies contributed to the short-run increase in domestic outmigration of remote workers. Policies to attract young adults and families will be necessary to ensure that Massachusetts continues to attract highly educated workers who are now less tethered to the location of their employer.

Why is it important to retain these folks in MA? Massachusetts has invested significant resources, such as public education, to support young adults as they grow up and contribute to the workforce, their communities, and the overall wellbeing of our state. Over the long term, continued outmigration will deplete the supply of labor in Massachusetts, from entry-level positions to highly-skilled professionals, ultimately resulting in fewer businesses operating in our state. This labor force is essential to the economic growth of Massachusetts and to maintaining healthy tax revenue

levels as more baby boomers exit the workforce and enter retirement. Recent analysis shows that in 2021, current outmigration trends cost the state $4.3 billion in adjusted gross income and $213.7 million in lost tax revenue[xxxiv]. These outmigration trends are even more concerning when considering Baby Boomers, many of which are entering or nearing retirement age, represent a larger size of the population.

Recent trends, however, indicate that these trends may be reversing. From 2023 to 2024, the state's population increased by almost 1%, approximately 70,000 people, representing the largest growth since the end of the baby boom. This is in part due to the highest immigration levels in decades as well as declining outmigration rates following the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conditions and Risks

The number and cost of housing units tell only part of the story. Size, condition, accessibility, and location also determine whether the housing stock meets the needs of the population. Even those homes that are working well today may be at risk in the near future. The growing threat of natural hazards from water, wind, and fire threatens to damage or destroy a large number of homes. Other homes may be lost to long-term residents not because they are destroyed, but because they are converted to seasonal homes or short-term rental properties. This section explores these topics with the following key findings:

- Over half the homes in the state have three or more bedrooms, making them suitable for larger families who need more room than the average household. However, only 38% of these homes are occupied by families with children. The rest are occupied by groups of adults, couples, or even people living alone (14% of all 3+ bedroom homes.)
- There is a profound shortage of homes accessible for people with disabilities, especially low-income households. There are 650,000 households where at least one member has a disability, but only 10,200 accessible homes are reserved for low-income households.
- While the state has identified financially feasible pathways for adoption of high efficiency standards in new construction, the existing housing stock will require significant upgrades to meet emissions reduction targets: 73% of homes still use on-site fossil fuels (gas or oil) for heating, and retrofitting these homes can be costly and complicated.
- Natural hazards, especially flooding, are damaging homes well outside previously mapped hazard areas. One recent analysis estimated that 193,000 properties in Massachusetts face a substantial risk of coastal flooding, and the property damage from inland flooding is projected to rise by 44% over the next 25 years.
- Cape Cod, the Islands, and Western Massachusetts lost an estimated 9,000 year-round homes to seasonal conversion from 2010 to 2020.

Conditions

Family-sized units

Larger households, especially families with children, need larger units to avoid overcrowding and enjoy a good quality of life. Statewide, there are an estimated 1.6 million 3+ bedroom units — over half the total homes in the state. Only 38% of these homes are occupied by families with children.

Nearly half are occupied by couples or groups of adults and 14% of these “family sized” homes — more than 215,000 homes statewide — are occupied by a single person.

A recent study in the Boston region found that large owner-occupied units, whether single family homes or condos, are more likely than rental units to be occupied by just one or two people, mostly older households without children. Fully one quarter of all large units in the study area were occupied by an over-55 household comprised of only one or two people.

Statewide, there are 250,000 family sized units occupied by householders over the age of 70. Many of these will be freed up in the coming years as those households downsize, move away, or pass away. Providing affordable and attractive options for those aging householders who would like to downsize might increase the number of large homes available to younger families.

In the Boston region, newer family-sized units are actually more likely than older units to house families: More than half (52%) of large units built since 2000 are occupied by a family with a child (compared to 38% of large units built prior to that year).

Healthy Housing

Housing affordability issues often force households to live in substandard housing that can pose detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing. The presence of lead, mold, radon, and other pollutants and substandard conditions contribute to serious health problems such as lead poisoning, cancer, and asthma and expose residents to increased risk for other injuries like trip and falls.

Most Massachusetts homes (71%) were built before 1978 and are therefore likely to contain some lead-based paint. Lead poses a wide range of health issues including cardiovascular, brain damage, and reproductive issues. Young children under the age of 6 are much more vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead exposure and increased levels of exposure can result in permanent health impacts such as developmental delays and learning disabilities. The Massachusetts lead law requires lead hazards be mitigated in homes with children under 6, however the cost to do so is expensive and there is less incentive for landlords to make this investment if they can find an alternative renter — thus further limiting available housing options for young families. This disproportionately impacts Black children, who are 2.5 times more likely than white children to have lead poisoning[xxxv].

The age of our housing stock also poses increased risks for increased prevalence of chronic health conditions, such as asthma and respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease, cognitive effects, and cancer due to poor indoor air quality. Older Massachusetts homes are more likely to have higher levels of radon — a chemical linked to increased rates of lung cancer. Indoor Air Quality in housing is hard to quantify and can also overlap with poor outdoor air quality because of higher levels of environmental and/or pollution in specific communities. Research from MACDC found Brockton, Holyoke, and Springfield, all of which are gateway cities, have higher rates of confirmed child elevated blood lead levels as well as slightly higher rates of asthma. The higher prevalence of housing condition-linked health impacts in Gateway cities is an issue of both racial and economic inequality. Hispanic and black children have 2.5–3.5x higher asthma-related emergency visits compared to white children.

Aside from the housing structure itself, the location and neighborhood environmental conditions plays a significant role in their physical and emotional wellbeing. Access to reasonably priced healthy food is now commonly understood as a major factor in a person's overall health. National research has shown that low-income communities and communities of color have less access to healthy food than higher income and less diverse communities[xxxvi]. Analysis has shown that Massachusetts rural areas experience significantly less access to food due to geographic distances as compared to urban and suburban communities[xxxvii]. Urban areas of Massachusetts with higher numbers of lower-income households, on average, have significantly less access to healthy food options. Mixed-use communities, specifically those including accessible public transit, are often designed to be more walkable allowing people to travel shorter distances for their daily needs. These communities provide substantial health benefits by allowing residents to walk, rather than drive to access basic needs such as groceries, open green space, entertainment, and work. Transit oriented development creates broad societal benefits through the reduced reliance on automobiles that contribute to increased pollution, air quality issues, and traffic congestion, leading to economic gains and additional time for people to spend on activities that contribute to their overall wellbeing.

Units Accessible to People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have different accessible housing needs that evolve as they age. The data needed by researchers and policy makers to assess the needs of people with disabilities and determine the available supply of accessible units in Massachusetts is limited, however, making it challenging to meet the needs of residents.

Housing accessibility varies depending on the nomenclature of the relevant federal or state accessibility code/law. "Fully accessible" units are required in typically 5% of units for new multifamily construction or rehabilitated units. "Adaptable" units can be modified for wheelchair users although the units are not as large as fully accessible units. This is generally required for all units in multifamily developments with elevators, or ground floor units without elevators. Often such units are not reported as "accessible" but still offer important benefits. Newly constructed townhouse or single-family homes are generally exempt from adaptable/accessible requirements under the state code.

The only national survey that measures characteristics of housing and allows insight into whether it may be accessible for those with mobility disabilities is the American Housing Survey (AHS). The sample size of the survey does not allow for state level estimates in Massachusetts. Analysis of the 2019 American Housing Survey found that "in total, just 42 percent of homes enabled single-floor living in 2019, with both a no-step entry and a bedroom and bathroom on an accessible floor." Accessible housing units were most likely to be found in multifamily buildings with at least 50 units. The study also found that older adults were more likely to experience difficulties entering or navigating their homes with 12 percent of households aged 65–79 and 23 percent of households aged 80 and up reporting some difficulties.

To increase the stock of accessible homes, Massachusetts law requires that five percent of large multifamily buildings are fully accessible. This policy adds accessible units to the market, but it does not ensure the units are affordable or accessible to households who need them. Accessible units can be rented to anyone, and most households with disabilities can't afford market rate units

that do become available. It's likely that many accessible units are occupied by households who don't need those features. This results in both a shortage and a mismatch.

The non-profit Housing Navigator Massachusetts maintains a database of affordable accessible housing units. The organization recently collected data from property owners across the state and while the data is not comprehensive, they found that there are 10,200 accessible deed restricted affordable units in Massachusetts (excluding naturally occurring affordable and accessible housing, and closed referral programs such as Community Based Housing and Section 811). Census data estimates that there are 650,000 households where at least one member has a disability, resulting in a significant unmet need for accessible units. The Housing Navigator suggests there is one accessible and affordable unit for every 63 renters earning 80% or less of AMI. Availability varies across the state, from 1 unit for every 46 households in Metro Boston to 1:103 in Bristol County.

Around 6,000 (60%) of the known accessible units are "deeply affordable", meaning rent is based on household income including those on fixed incomes such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Housing Navigator has a search tool to find affordable units across the state including those with accessibility features. This is the best existing resource to search for accessible, affordable housing, but it is still limited by incomplete data.

Massachusetts needs better data on accessible housing availability. The Housing Navigator inventory, developed with substantial support from DHCD and EOHLC, provides a good foundation. New data systems at EOHLC will track state-subsidized accessible homes, yet there is still no way to know what homes in the private market are accessible and to what degree, nor any system that could match accessible units with tenants who need them.

Many stakeholders have identified the need for better matching between people with disabilities and affordable accessible units. The DMH/DDS Set-Aside Program requires MassHousing-financed developments to set aside 3% of all low- and moderate-income units for referrals from the Departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Developmental Services (DDS). The state MRVP Set-Aside Initiative is designed to improve matching project-based vouchers and affordable units to those in need. The Community Based Housing (CBH) program provides funding for the development of integrated housing for people with disabilities, including older adults, prioritizing those in institutions, nursing facilities or at risk of institutionalization. While CBH doesn't require all units to be fully accessible, accessibility through visitability is strongly encouraged. The CBH Program excludes clients of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) who may access housing financed through the Facilities Consolidation Fund (FCF). FCF provides funding for the development of community-based housing for DMH and DDS clients. Improvements are needed, however, to better match people with disabilities with accessible units, not just affordable ones.

Energy Efficiency and Decarbonization

As mandated in the 2021 Climate Law and the state's Clean Energy Climate Plan, the Massachusetts residential sector must achieve a 95% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions below 1990 levels by the year 2050 and a 50% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030. In order to meet this target, housing units will need to be built or retrofitted to the highest energy

efficiency standards, while phasing out fossil-fuel powered systems and equipment (electrification) and deploying renewable energy at scale (greening the grid).

Massachusetts has 3.05 million existing housing units, including a substantial number of older housing units that lack adequate insulation and do not use clean energy sources for heating, hot water, cooking, or other needs. Approximately 22% of occupied housing units rely on oil heating systems, 51% rely on natural gas, and 20% use electricity for home heating. Further, roughly 80% of the buildings that will exist in 2050 have already been built, making retrofits essential to meeting net zero emissions limits. While there is a feasible pathway for decarbonizing newly built housing, retrofitting existing buildings is often more complicated and costly.

As stated in the Commonwealth's 2023 and 2024 Climate Report Cards and the report from the Commission on Clean Heat, it is critical that the Commonwealth rapidly scale up decarbonization efforts within the residential and commercial building sectors. The report alludes to the need to coordinate actions across multiple fronts including investments in affordable housing and low-to-moderate income communities as well as coordinated utility planning and urban development. The acceleration of decarbonization was central to the funding provided in the Affordable Homes Act, which provided funds for decarbonizing state-aided public housing that serves some of the most vulnerable residents and reauthorized the Climate Ready Housing program that provides funds for retrofitting privately owned affordable housing. The new 2025–27 Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) further prioritizes the state's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit equity to prioritize decarbonization by requiring, at minimum, stretch code building energy performance standards for all funded projects and Enterprise Green Communities Certification. The QAP priorities for decarbonization, per the Affordable Homes Act, will also be reflected in state capital grant making for affordable housing production and preservation. Additionally, EOHLC remains committed to working with partners at MassHousing in making key investments through the Climate Bank to increase the supply of decarbonized affordable homes.

The 2025–2027 Mass Save Plan significantly increases financial incentives and technical assistance available for building decarbonization, with specific equity targets and increased support for low- and moderate-income households. EEA has conducted an analysis and is advancing recommendations to further streamline and enhance resources for building decarbonization. Recent successes suggest that under the right circumstances with effective agency coordination, program design, and adequate funding, decarbonization and affordable housing goals can be mutually reinforced. For example, there are over 23,000 multifamily units in the Mass Save new construction program pipeline that meet Passive House standards, the highest level of energy efficiency. This effort has been led by the affordable housing developer community and incentivized by affordable housing tax credits and Mass Save as well as by municipal adoption of the Specialized Energy Code to meet the State's 2030 and 2050 climate mitigation mandates. The Specialized Energy Code which requires Passive House standards for new multifamily housing has been adopted by 48 municipalities covering 30% of state's population.

In order to reach the Commonwealth's goals of creating more sustainable housing it is critical to match continued investments with new innovative construction models to build more efficiently and sustainably across all housing development types. This includes building on the 'thermal code' approach of the Stretch and Specialized energy codes from the Department of Energy Resources

and exploring modular development and offsite construction strategies. The energy codes that were updated in 2023/2024 are a good example of this shift; new requirements to reduce heating and cooling loads (with policies like Passive House and TEDI) will reduce total cost-of-ownership through lower energy costs and also result in a x5 reduction in the ratepayer impact of future electric grid investments.

Risks and Responses

Natural Hazards and Climate Threats

Many homes in MA are at risk of natural hazards, and the exposure is getting worse. The ResilientMass Plan identifies key risks for the state that are projected to increase in intensity and frequency due to climate change: rising temperatures, increases in precipitation resulting in flooding even outside the 100-year floodplain, coastal flooding, and severe weather events. These include coastal erosion, coastal flooding and sea level rise, extreme storms, riverine and urban flooding, increasing heat waves, and wildfire.

Risks are not limited to coastal flooding, though coastal risks are significant with about 43% of the Commonwealth's population residing in coastal communities, with populations that continue to grow. Current annual coastal building damage averages $185M and is projected to double by 2030. Riverine and inland flooding is an increasing problem in places previously thought to be safe. A May 2010 storm caused widespread basement flooding and triggered a federal disaster declaration; 90% of claims in MA were outside a mapped flood zone. The 2022 MA Climate Assessment identified 'Damage to Inland Buildings' from heavy rainfall and overwhelmed drainage system as one of the most urgent infrastructure-related climate impacts, with inland residential property damage projected to increase by 44% by 2050.

New analytical tools show that existing maps underestimate flood risk. A 2020 First Street Foundation report found that 193,000 properties in Massachusetts face a substantial risk of flooding, a number far greater than those at risk according to existing FEMA flood maps. Thousands more may be at risk of inundation as the global climate warms in the coming decades. The MA Coastal Flood Risk Model (MC-FRM) is a dynamic model in use by state and local agencies to understand what areas might be subject to future flooding under various climate and storm conditions.

Climate change may also affect the infrastructure serving our homes, even if the home is untouched. Damage to utility distribution infrastructure, roads, rails, and dams from extreme precipitation, flooding, and temperature increases will all continue to impact communities

Heat exposure is a growing issue especially as summertime temperatures are forecasted to rise, with longer and more intense heat waves and more days projected to be over 90 degrees (from 4 historically to 25 by 2050 and 55 by late century), leading to health risks for vulnerable populations while damaging infrastructure for roads, rails, and utility systems.

The ResilientMass Plan identifies over 140 agency actions underway to build resilience across MA. To date, EOHLC's ResilientMass actions have been focused on increasing the resiliency of state-aided public housing. Commonwealth efforts will continue to expand to incorporate actions for privately owned affordable housing and community planning and development initiatives as the

Commonwealth continues to build expertise and adaptive capacity in this area. For instance, ResilientCoasts, an action in the ResilientMass plan, is currently developing a comprehensive, state-wide strategy for coastal resilience, including delineating new coastal resilience districts and best practices for new and existing development in areas vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal flooding, and erosion. Within ResilientCoasts there will be considerations for existing and future housing.

Seasonal Housing Conversion

Loss of year-round housing units to seasonal housing is a major concern for many Massachusetts regions. Many communities have seen large numbers of moderately priced units bought and converted to second homes, vacation homes, or short-term rentals. While the investments associated with these conversions might bring higher property values, increased local tax revenue, and greater economic activity due to tourism; seasonal conversions deplete the supply of available year-round homes resulting in fewer options and higher prices for permanent residents. Understanding the patterns of seasonal conversion is important to crafting policies to manage the rate of conversion and compensate for the year-round homes lost.

With the exception of the lodging registry for short term rentals, there is no definitive data source on what units are used only seasonally. The best available estimates come from the American Community Survey, which provides statistics on how many homes are not occupied by a household because they are used for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use." In many areas of the Cape, Islands, and Western Mass, the numbers of such units have been increasing while the number of units occupied by (or available to) year-round residents has been declining. The magnitude of seasonal conversion is greater than just the total decline in year-round units. Additional conversions are offset by the new year-round units built over the same time period. Those need to be netted out to create an accurate estimate of seasonal conversion.

For example, Cape Cod added 8,800 housing units from 2009 to 2019, of which at least 2,400 are occupied by year-round residents. Despite that, the total number of year-round housing units on the Cape *declined* by 3,400. Together, those figures suggest that 5,800 year-round homes were lost to seasonal use or for other reasons, almost 6% of the total year-round homes. New production made up part of the difference, but not enough to stem the overall loss of year-round units.

Similar patterns are observed, to a lesser extent, in three other regions: Berkshire County, Pioneer Valley, and Franklin County, where seasonal conversions affected 2.5%, 0.7%, and 0.1% of the year-round housing stock, respectively. On Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, small sample sizes and high margins of error make it hard to generate reliable estimates, though local housing plans and input from local stakeholders both indicate this is a known issue on the Islands. EOHLC estimates that 8,830 year-round residences statewide were converted to seasonal units between 2009–2019.

All other regions showed a net gain in year-round units, even after accounting for newly constructed ones. While some seasonal conversion is likely happening in these regions, the low incidence is such that it is not possible to quantify it with any precision.

Future Housing Demand

Massachusetts needs more homes, but how many? To answer this question, EOHLC and its partners pored over demographic trends and tested out different scenarios for the future. The analysis accounts for the aging of the population, movers to and from Massachusetts, and different housing needs across the life cycle. It also accounts for today's housing shortage and unmet housing needs, as expressed in overcrowded and doubled-up households, homelessness, and low vacancy rates. The team produced multiple scenarios for future demand based on different assumptions about population and household trends.

In order to close today's supply shortfall and meet anticipated housing needs under a mid-range population growth scenario from 2025–2035, Massachusetts needs to add at least 222,000 homes to the year-round housing stock. This is the minimum number needed to achieve a state of housing abundance, when the limited supply of housing is not a primary driver of unaffordability. Here are some key findings from the analysis:

After a decade of rapid growth in the 2010s, Massachusetts is facing strong demographic and economic headwinds likely to result in much slower growth over the coming decades. Contributors include declining birth rates, federal immigration and education policy, and competition from other states for young talent. If some recent trends continue through 2035, Massachusetts could experience no population growth and declines in the resident labor force.

Even if the population doesn't grow, housing demand is likely to increase. Over the next decade, an estimated 493,000 Millennials and Gen Z residents will be forming households. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation are projected to free up only 391,000 homes as they move away, pass away, or move to other housing situations. As a result, a no-growth population scenario still entails a net increase of 73,000 households.

More homes are also needed to address the current shortage. An estimated 57,200 homes are needed to accommodate overcrowded & doubled-up families, young adults living with parents or roommates, and families and individuals currently living in shelters.

In order to achieve a healthy vacancy rate, an additional 51,400 homes are needed for-sale or for-rent. The state may also need 9,600 units to compensate for the anticipated conversion of year-round homes to seasonal residences.

If the state can attract and retain more young adults, it can bolster its labor supply while modestly increasing housing demand. The Middle Scenario forecasts 0.7% population growth, stabilization of the labor force, and demand for an additional 36,000 homes. The High Scenario, which assumes even greater migration to Massachusetts, would result in population growth of 2.3% and an additional 39,800 households needing homes.

Additional supply is needed in every region across the Commonwealth at varying levels, ranging from less than 2% on Cape Cod and Western Massachusetts to more than 7.5% in Metro Boston and the abutting regions. This production target is about ensuring the adequate overall supply to meet demand; it is not a measure of how many affordable homes are needed for cost-burdened low- and moderate-income residents. That is a challenge that must be addressed partly through

new construction as well as through affordable housing preservation, acquisition of existing homes, and direct household subsidies.

Estimating the Existing Housing Shortage

Homes needed to comfortably accommodate today's population

The first step in developing a housing production target is estimating how many homes it would take to address the existing shortage of homes.

Doubled up and overcrowded households

As discussed in the Needs Assessment, one way that people cope with high housing costs is by "doubling up" with another household or by living with extended family, often in overcrowded conditions. Of the 48,800 overcrowded households in Massachusetts, EOHLC estimates that approximately 16,000 are families with children who are living with extended family or doubled up with another household. An equivalent number of additional units are needed to allow those families to find homes more suitable for their needs.

Families in the Emergency Shelter system

In addition, Massachusetts needs additional homes for residents who are not adequately housed. At the end of 2024, 6,800 families were living in the state's family shelter system. The Healey-Driscoll Administration has been working to move these families into permanent housing. This is a challenging effort because even with rental assistance and vouchers, there are very few homes available for rent. If most or all of these families can be moved into permanent housing over the coming years, they will enjoy better outcomes and there will be less strain on the Emergency Assistance system. Of course, these families will need homes to move into, and these needs are not accounted for in the calculations of demographic demand or other components of housing need. As a result, EOHLC estimates a need for an additional 6,800 homes to accommodate these families.

Achieving a healthy vacancy rate

One expression of Massachusetts' severe housing shortage is critically low vacancy rates of 1.6% for sales or rentals. The shortage creates intense competition for available units, driving up prices and fueling displacement. If more homes were available, renters and buyers would have more options, landlords would have less power to charge maximum rents, and fewer home sales would generate bidding wars. Vacancy rates that are too high, however, create their own issues, such as disinvestment. A study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies used historical trends to benchmark "natural" vacancy rates of 7.4% for rentals and 1.5% for ownership. These values correspond to rates in the mid-1990s before Massachusetts started seeing the most extreme price increases. EOHLC estimates the state needs 13,000 additional homes for sale and 38,000 additional homes for rent in order to achieve the target vacancy rates. This would provide more choices for people looking to move, would reduce bidding wars, and would give landlords less power to set prices at or near the maximum rate.

"Missing Households"

Another element of our current shortage is pent-up, or latent, demand. When people can't find an affordable home for themselves or with a partner, they end up living with parents or roommates

instead. This can be seen in headship rates over time: back in 2000, about a third of people in their twenties were the head of a household. By 2019 that had fallen to a quarter of people in their twenties. For some this may be preferable; for others, suboptimal. A 2022 Up For Growth report, based on household formation changes since 2000, estimated 108,000 “missing households” in Massachusetts. If the analysis is limited to non-family households headed by someone under the age of 45, EOHLC estimates that there is ‘latent demand’ for approximately 34,000 housing units from young adults currently living with roommates or parents, but who would prefer to live independently. If more affordable homes were available, these young adults would likely establish their own households. Therefore, EOHLC identified a need for 34,000 housing units to meet this latent demand.

Conversion to seasonal use

Another element of housing need relates not to demand, but to supply. As noted in the Needs Assessment section on seasonal housing conversion, EOHLC estimates that the Cape and Islands and Western Mass collectively lost about 9,600 year-round homes to seasonal conversions during the past decade. Preserving these homes from conversion or producing enough homes to compensate for their loss is essential to ensuring adequate supply in those regions. Recognizing that there are currently few policy mechanisms for prohibiting or discouraging seasonal conversion, EOHLC identified a need to produce an additional 9,590 homes in order to compensate for the anticipated seasonal conversion.

Summary

In total, approximately 115,600 homes are needed over the next ten years just to solve our existing and growing shortage of housing. This figure doesn’t even account for the shifting housing needs of a growing and aging population.

"No-Growth" Housing Needs

Housing demand will grow even if the population doesn't.

While Massachusetts grew 7.3% from 2010–2020 and has continued to add residents in the last few years, there are signs that the population growth in the state will slow considerably over the next decade. The number of births in the state has been declining for decades, falling from more than 80,000 per year in 2001 to only 67,900 in 2024. Conversely, there were about 61,100 deaths in 2024, for a “natural increase” of 6,700 persons. This is only one small component of population change. The number of people moving to and from Massachusetts from other states and countries is a much bigger factor in future population growth and housing demand. Massachusetts tends to lose population to other states, with net domestic outmigration of 27,400 in 2024, about equal to the average rate since 2013. International immigration generally more than makes up for that loss to other states. Over the period from 2011 to 2023, an average of 43,600 net international migrants came to Massachusetts annually for education and economic opportunity.

For the baseline projections, EOHLC and its research team assumed continuation of recent age-specific birth and death rates; and assumed migration rates similar to the long-term averages of 27,700 for domestic outmigration and 40,000 for international immigration. Those assumptions result in a “low scenario” population decline of 0.4% from 2025–2035, a loss of about 28,000 residents. While the total population does not change much in this forecast scenario, the age

structure of the population does: all age groups under 40 are projected to decline by 3% - 9%, while there is a projected 25% increase in the population age 70 or older. Due to a shrinking working-age population, the resident labor force is projected to decline by 50,000 workers, a loss of 1%.

No population growth does equate to no growth in housing demand. Over the next ten years, Millennial and Gen Z residents — many native to Massachusetts — are projected to form about 493,000 new households. During that same period, the number of Baby Boomers and Silent Generation households are projected to decline by approximately 391,000 as their occupants move away, pass away, or move to other housing situations. After factoring in small changes in Gen X housing needs, the result is a net increase of 73,000 households. Therefore, EOHLC identified a need for an additional 73,000 homes to accommodate demographic demand in a no-growth population scenario.

Homes for a Competing and Growing Massachusetts

Potential population growth and housing demand

A no-growth scenario is not the only possible future for Massachusetts. As noted elsewhere, Massachusetts loses, on net, roughly 25,000 working-age residents to other states each year, trends that will result in a shrinking labor force if they continue. Labor shortages make it difficult for firms to grow and thrive. And while remote work enables some firms to retain some employees moving out of state, remote work is not conducive to the innovation and entrepreneurship essential to a robust economic future for Massachusetts. Some regions are facing even steeper declines in the working-age population. As a result, the state has an interest in attracting and retaining young workers to help growth the labor force and stem population losses in declining regions. EOHLC analyzed how many homes would be needed to accommodate the population if the state were able to attract and retain more young workers.

To create this scenario, the EOHLC research team looked back at migration rates from 2012–2018, when the state was losing fewer young people than it is today. During this period, net domestic outmigration was approximately 17,000 people per year, about 10,700 less than outmigration rates in 2024. Assuming that the state is able return to these lower rates of domestic outmigration, population projections indicate that the population could grow by 0.7% over the next ten years, an increase of about 51,000 residents. (This is referred to in charts as the “middle scenario.”) Notably, the state would see smaller declines in the population under that age of 40, and a stabilization of the resident labor force. Compared to the no-growth scenario, the state would see an additional 33,000 households forming in the next ten years.

High-Growth Scenario

Housing needs for a higher-growth future

Many factors beyond housing influence how many people want to live in Massachusetts and where. Some of these factors could drive more households to the state and its communities. For example, a strong economy, gender and reproductive freedom, and a high quality of life could attract and retain even more people than assumed in the middle scenario. Meanwhile, opportunities for fully remote work may drive people to lower cost communities and regions of the state. And despite the current changes in federal immigration policy, Massachusetts may continue

to attract international immigrants drawn here by the state's academic institutions, innovation economy, and international ties, as well as growing climate and political unrest abroad.

To determine how many homes might be needed under a future with such conditions, EOHLC created a "high scenario" that assumes further reductions in domestic outmigration and increased levels of international immigration. Specifically, the scenario assumes that net domestic outmigration is reduced to approximately 15,000 people per year; accounts for the influx of international immigrants that arrived in 2023 and 2024; and forecasts a 28% increase in international immigration as compared to the baseline assumptions. (Details on these assumptions can be found in the methodology section.)

Based on these assumptions, this high scenario projects population growth of 168,000 residents over ten years, an increase of 2.4%. The state's under-40 population is still projected to decline, but at half the rate anticipated by the no-growth scenario. As a result, the resident labor force is projected to increase by 76,000 workers, or 1.9%.

This scenario also examines what the outcomes might be if remote work enables more people to move to lower-cost regions of the state. Specifically, EOHLC's research team determined the number of single-family homes that sold for less than $500,000 in each county. The team then selected a portion of the domestic in-migrants and distributed them based on each county's share of moderately priced homes. As a result, about 25,000 future residents are shifted from Metro Boston to Central and Western Massachusetts.

In total, the higher levels of population growth forecast in the high scenario would result in an additional 39,800 households as compared to the middle scenario. Notably, the largest relative increases are in lower cost regions: Franklin County, Berkshire County, and Pioneer Valley, all of which see an increase of 50% or more in household growth as compared to the middle scenario.

Population and Housing Projections - Methodology

Technical details on the projections

In order to create a comprehensive picture of the evolving housing needs in Massachusetts, EOHLC partnered with researchers from the University of Massachusetts Donahue InstituteDonahue Institute (UMDI) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC.) With input from the Housing Advisory Council, EOHLC and the research team created multiple scenarios of population change and housing needs, based on different assumptions about the future. These scenarios illustrate the range of possible futures for the state and provide insight into the housing needs of the coming decade.

EOHLC chose to work with the research team of UMDI and MAPC since they have an established partnership and track record of developing projections for Massachusetts and its regions. For more than a decade, this same team has been contracted by MassDOT to support the detailed forecasts needed for regional transportation plans developed every four years. In this partnership, UMDI provides regional population projections and MAPC creates household and housing demand forecasts for each population scenario. To create consistency and comparability with regional transportation planning efforts, EOHLC also chose to use the 13 regional planning agency areas as the geography for projections.

UMDI's population projections use a cohort-component method that applies recently observed survival, fertility, and migration rates by age and sex to Census 2020 base populations to project population by 5-year age groups in 5-year increments to 2050 for all Massachusetts regions. Survival and fertility (deaths and births) are based on recent rates published by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health applied to the forecasted population for each age group. Migration into and out of each region is estimated for each age group at a variety of geographic scales: within Massachusetts, to and from other New England states, to and from the rest of Massachusetts, and international immigration. By changing the assumptions about migration at each geography, UMDI created three distinct population scenarios for the future decades.

Once the population scenarios were created, MAPC formulated household projections for each region. These projections use age- and region-specific rates derived from detailed census data to estimate the number, type, size, and income of households likely to form for each population scenario and forecast year. As part of this effort, MAPC adjusted assumptions about household formation and other attributes to create various alternative scenarios for housing needs. The most significant such assumption applies year 2000 household formation rates to certain age groups in order to estimate latent demand. MAPC also estimated the number of overcrowded and doubled-up families in each region and adjusted the headship rates to simulate each family forming their own household instead of doubling up.

In order to estimate the housing needs associated with the current shelter population, EOHLC examined administrative data from the Emergency Shelter program. This analysis produced estimates of the number, size, age, and nativity of families in the system. This information was then provided as inputs to the population and household models so that the needs of homeless families could be incorporated into the housing demand forecasts and the recent influx of international migrants could be incorporated into certain population scenarios.

MAPC and EOHLC compared current vacancy rates (by tenure) in each region to the target vacancy rates to estimate the current shortage of units for sale or for rent. Each housing scenario also accounts for the additional units needed to maintain a healthy vacancy rate as the housing stock grows. When calculating the vacancy rates, the research team excluded homes that were considered unavailable — those that are vacant for seasonal use, repair, or other reasons. Therefore vacancy rates are calculated as the number of units for sale or for rent, divided by the number of occupied units plus those for sale or for rent.

To estimate the number of homes lost to seasonal conversion between 2010 - 2019, EOHLC estimated how many households in 2019 were living in homes built since 2010, and then subtracted that from the net change in year-round housing units over that same period. For example, Cape Cod added 8,800 units but saw the number of year-round homes decline by 3,400 even as there were 2,400 households living in newly built year-round homes. These figures indicate that 5,800 homes were converted from year-round to seasonal use over that period. Similar patterns are observed, to a lesser extent, in three other regions: Berkshire County, Pioneer Valley, and Franklin County. In all four of these regions, the number of homes converted to seasonal use was converted to a percentage and then applied to the 2020 housing stock to estimate seasonal conversion over the coming decade.

In total, EOHLC and the research team created four different population and housing demand scenarios:

- **Crisis as Usual**: UMDI's low scenario population projections combined with baseline headship rates and no changes to vacancy rates
- **A Sense of Normalcy**: UMDI's low scenario population projections combined with headship rates that account for latent demand, doubled up households, shelter population, and return to healthy vacancy rate.
- **Competing and Growing**: UMDI's middle scenario population projections combined with headship rates that account for latent demand, doubled up households, shelter population, and return to healthy vacancy rate.
- **Ready for What Comes**: UMDI's high scenario population projections combined with headship rates that account for latent demand, doubled up households, shelter population, and return to healthy vacancy rate.

More details on the population and housing demand projections can be found in the methodology documents prepared by UMDI and MAPC, which can be downloaded using the links below:

- UMDI Population Projections Methodology
- MAPC Household Projections Methodology

Conclusion

This needs assessment demonstrates the breadth and complexity of Massachusetts' housing crisis and the challenges entailed in solving it. Much of the information is not new, nor even surprising, but for the first time it is documented in one place for all to see and contemplate. Collectively, it tells a powerful and intimidating story about our crisis yet also points the way towards achievable solutions. Reviewing all the information presented here, EOHLC draws five key conclusions:

A shortage of homes is the root cause of our housing cost crisis, but getting to a more abundant supply won't be easy.

For decades, housing supply has fallen behind demand. Units for sale or rent are at historic lows. Limited options and stiff competition drive up housing prices, which have risen much faster than wages or inflation. Lack of housing supply also prevents people from moving when they want to, makes it harder to exit homelessness, and drives up the cost of vouchers.

When housing is more abundant, home buyers can shop around, landlords are less able to charge premium prices, and people find it easier to move when the need arises. While increased supply won't necessarily reduce housing costs, it can slow the rate of increase so that wages have a chance to catch up.

This plan identifies the need to add 222,000 homes over ten years, including homes of all types, sizes, and affordability, in all regions of the Commonwealth. Meeting this goal will accommodate

our current population as it ages, reduce overcrowding and homelessness, and maintain a strong labor force.

There are significant obstacles to achieving this however. Local zoning lacks the capacity to develop the types of homes we need in the places we need them. Developers face difficult approval processes at both the state and local levels, alongside challenging financial constraints. Construction costs and operational expenses are also on the rise, with increasingly stringent requirements for energy efficiency, accessibility, inclusionary zoning, and design specifications.

No home can be built without capital investments, but securing those investments is difficult for both affordable and market-rate developments. Federal low-income housing tax credits are limited, and even the record amount of funding authorized by the Affordable Homes Act can't build all the homes we need. For market-rate developers, rising costs make it difficult for developers to build anything but high-end housing to accomplish the investment returns expected by many capital investors, creating an additional obstacle to the development of affordable housing.

Cities, towns, and regions have few revenue-raising tools to meet localized housing needs. Even homeowners wishing to build an ADU may have trouble accessing the financing for it. There is a limited supply of skilled labor and firms in the construction industry, arguably not enough to build 222,000 homes in ten years; but training new workers and growing new firms takes time.

We are at risk of losing the homes we have, especially the affordable ones.

Thousands of homes are at risk due to increasingly severe coastal and riverine flooding. But homes are also being lost for reasons beyond flooding. An estimated 9,000 homes were converted to seasonal homes or short-term rentals between 2010 and 2020 and are no longer available to year-round residents in those communities. The availability of modestly priced homes and apartments is dwindling as they are acquired and upscaled by investors who sell or rent at a much higher price point.

The state can be proud of its strong public housing portfolio and robust stock of affordable housing, yet the usefulness and affordability of these assets must be maintained. The state public housing system has an estimated $4B backlog, but the process for making improvements is not always efficient. Many homes need investments to protect them from natural disasters and to make them accessible for residents with disabilities. Achieving the pace and scale of public housing reinvestment will require new and innovative approaches and partnerships that bring private capital and expertise to the table.

In addition, 6,000 privately-owned affordable housing units are at risk of being converted to market rate as deed restrictions expire. Preserving the affordability of these existing homes is generally more cost-effective than building new homes elsewhere, but it's a complicated process.

A growing share of residents cannot afford the cost of living in Massachusetts and need assistance.

Housing prices already exceed what is sustainable for most low-income working households, not to mention fixed-income seniors, disabled individuals, and new residents. Add on the cost of utilities, transportation, insurance, and home maintenance, and the problem gets worse.

While housing abundance can create more affordable options and slow the increase in housing prices, these vulnerable residents can't wait that long. Furthermore, many don't have enough income to afford even modest rents or mortgages. Housing vouchers can help close the gap between rental fees and household income, but there is a long waiting list and voucher holders have difficulty finding units that meet their needs. The current process of applying for a privately-owned affordable housing unit is complicated and time-consuming, adding to the burdens these households face. Heating assistance can help in winter months, but for those with drafty homes and inefficient appliances, this assistance doesn't go very far; nor does it provide any support for cooling during our increasingly hot summers. The growing senior and disabled populations often can't afford accessible housing and do not have the finances to make improvements in their current homes.

The population with complex housing and medical needs is growing

Many Massachusetts residents have unique challenges that make it hard for them to acquire conventional housing, even with financial support. Chronically homeless individuals, people with substance use disorders, individuals with cognitive disabilities or severe medical conditions, and families fleeing unsafe conditions, all require special assistance to achieve stable housing.

The need for these services currently exceeds the resources available. Supportive housing has been proven to be effective in helping chronically homeless individuals, but there is simply not enough capacity or coordination to serve all those who need it. Stable housing can reverse the spiral of worsening health conditions; but complicated funding requirements make it difficult to provide solutions that can ultimately reduce health care costs. Massachusetts' commitment to shelter for families reflects our values, but the EA shelter crisis demonstrated the limitations of the system, and the actions needed to make it operationally and fiscally sustainable. Additional planning and capacity are needed to prepare the EA system for future crises, if and when they occur. The senior population has specialized health needs and is rapidly growing. Massachusetts needs new programs and approaches to help maintain housing for these seniors and reduce the number of premature or unnecessary nursing home admissions.

The housing crisis affects everyone in Massachusetts, and we all have to work together to solve it.

The most immediate impacts of the housing crisis affect people who are having trouble locating or affording housing. But no one is immune, including those who are comfortably housed (for now). The cost of housing is driving away young people, including Massachusetts natives who represent the future of our communities and economic livelihood. Without course correction, the resident labor force is projected to decline. Employers will find it harder to hire workers, discouraging them from locating or expanding here; and there will be fewer working taxpayers to support a growing

senior population. Remote work may mitigate some of these losses, but remote workers can't deliver critical in-person services such as auto repair or critical medical services. Nor does remote work foster the entrepreneurial energy that drives our economy.

Ratepayers and taxpayers end up bearing the burden of housing instability. Evictions and frequent moves affect individual health and childhood wellness, driving up health care costs and educational expenditures. Health care expenditures are also rising due to premature nursing home admissions and high utilization of emergency rooms by those who are homeless.

The housing crisis affects communities: People who can't find homes near work have to endure longer commutes, creating more traffic congestion in the cities and towns along the way. Renters who move frequently due to rent increases don't have the opportunity to establish roots in a community. Many city and town centers and commercial districts are struggling economically due to lack of foot traffic and resident customers.

It's well documented that these widespread impacts occur because many communities view new housing as a problem and seek to discourage development. Some are concerned that new housing will change a community's character and worry that denser development and different demographics will degrade the quality of a community. Others worry about the financial impacts on school budgets or property taxes. Many lower-income and Environmental Justice communities posit that new development is the reason rents are going up in existing homes nearby. Environmental stakeholders are concerned that new housing will degrade the natural environment in the surrounding neighborhood and globally.

These are valid concerns, yet some are often overstated or not supported by the evidence. For example, research shows no correlation between housing production and school enrollment changes in Massachusetts communities; and many new multifamily developments provide net positive fiscal benefits to their municipality. Leading research shows that the creation of new homes in gentrifying areas is associated with lower rent increases in surrounding areas.

More importantly, these are all solvable problems. The state can support infrastructure improvements and adjust funding formulas to account for communities doing more than their fair share. Designers and developers can create buildings and landscapes that enhance the local and global environment by mitigating heat, absorbing water, and facilitating sustainable transportation choices.

Massachusetts cannot achieve these win-win solutions unless everyone is working together. Too often progress has been stymied by a lack of coordination between different government levels and agencies, unrepresentative decision-making processes, disputes regarding the fundamental scope of land use regulatory authority, and disagreements about essential facts. All of these issues undermine our collective ability to address the crisis. Finding consensus on these complex issues won't be easy, but Massachusetts has a strong record of solving difficult problems.

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