



BOSTON
INDICATORS
MEASURING WHAT WE VALUE



2024 GREATER BOSTON HOUSING REPORT CARD

With a special analysis of the use
of public land to build—or block—
affordable housing



Welcome to the 2024 Greater Boston Housing Report Card

Tuesday, November 12th, 2024
9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

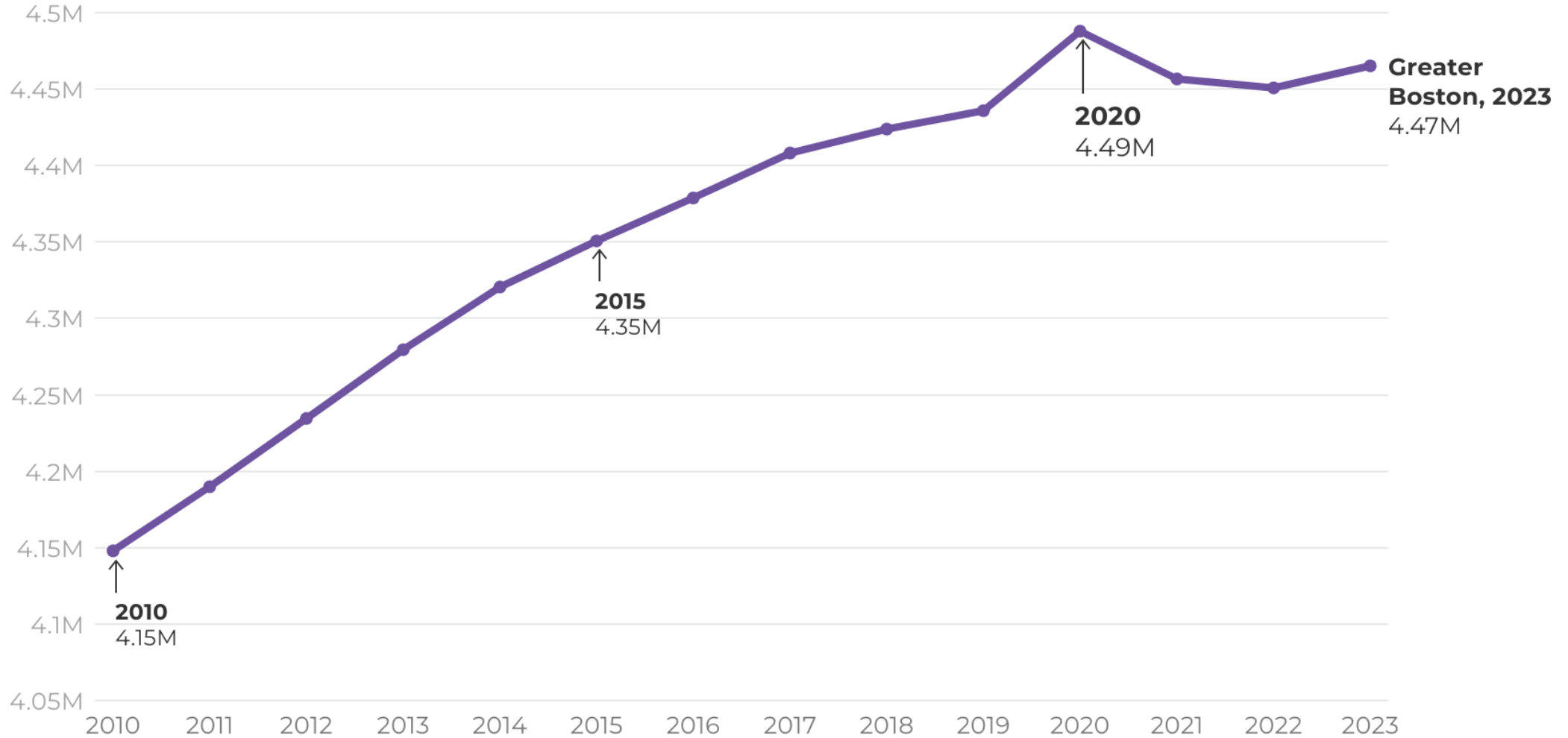
Core Metrics Overview

- Demographics & Economic Trends
- Supply
- Prices, Rents & Affordability
- Subsidized Housing
- Instability
- State Policy Round-Up

Demographics & Economic Trends

Population of Greater Boston

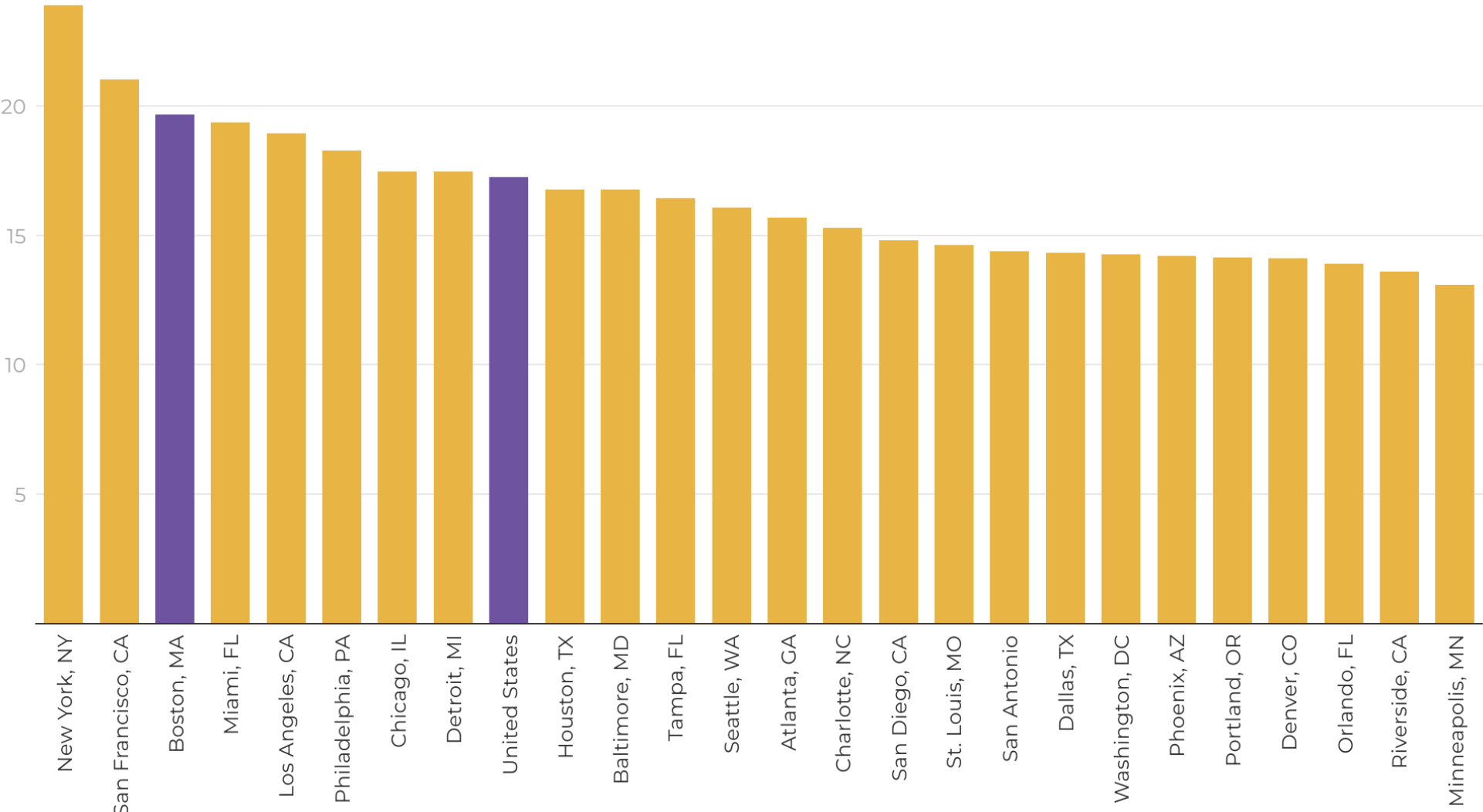
Five-county definition of Greater Boston including Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Plymouth.



Note: Population estimates restart each census year (in 2010 and 2020), and thus should not be viewed as a continuation of the previous 10 year estimates.

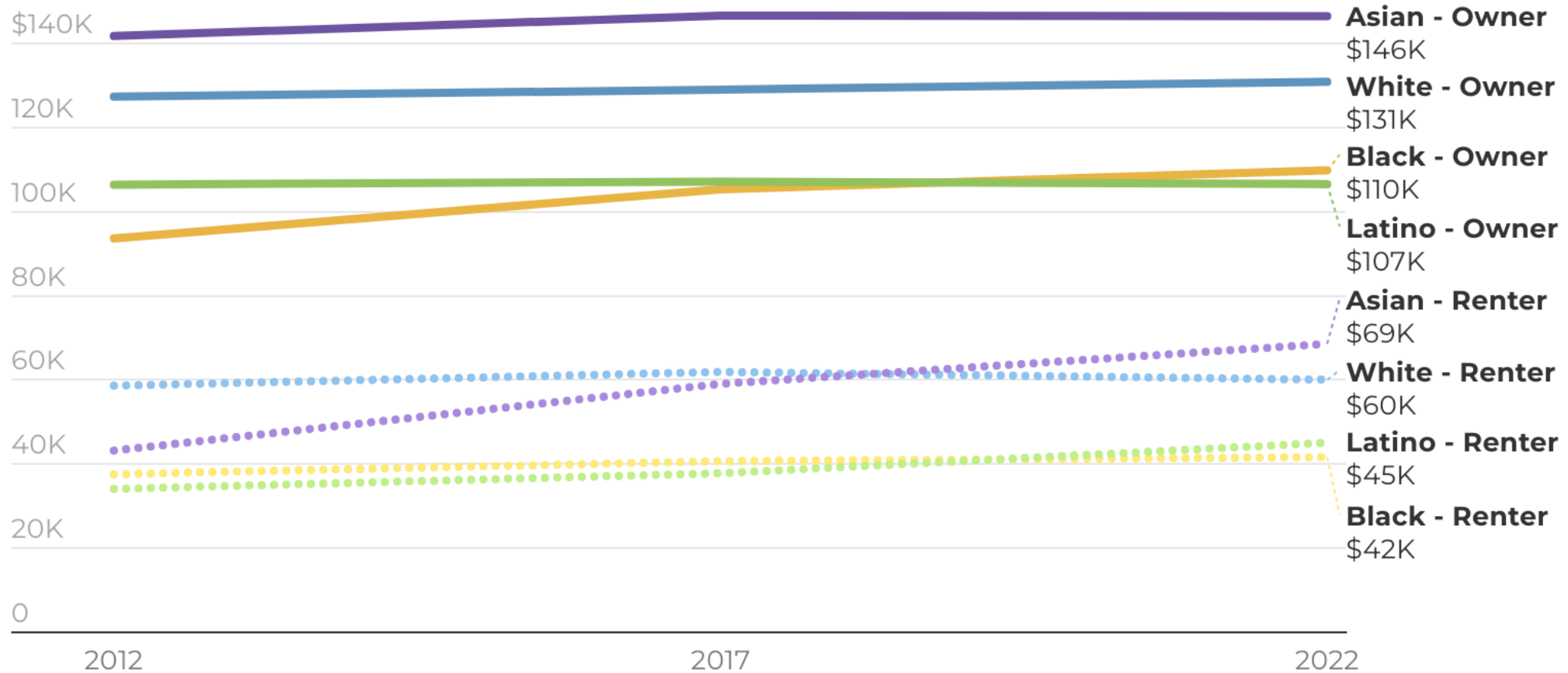
Greater Boston has the 3rd largest gap between high- and low-income households.

Ratio of mean household income at the 80-100th percentile to the 0-20th percentile. 25 largest metropolitan statistical areas and the United States. 2023.



Household Incomes by Tenure, Race and Ethnicity

Median household income. Greater Boston. 2022 Dollars.



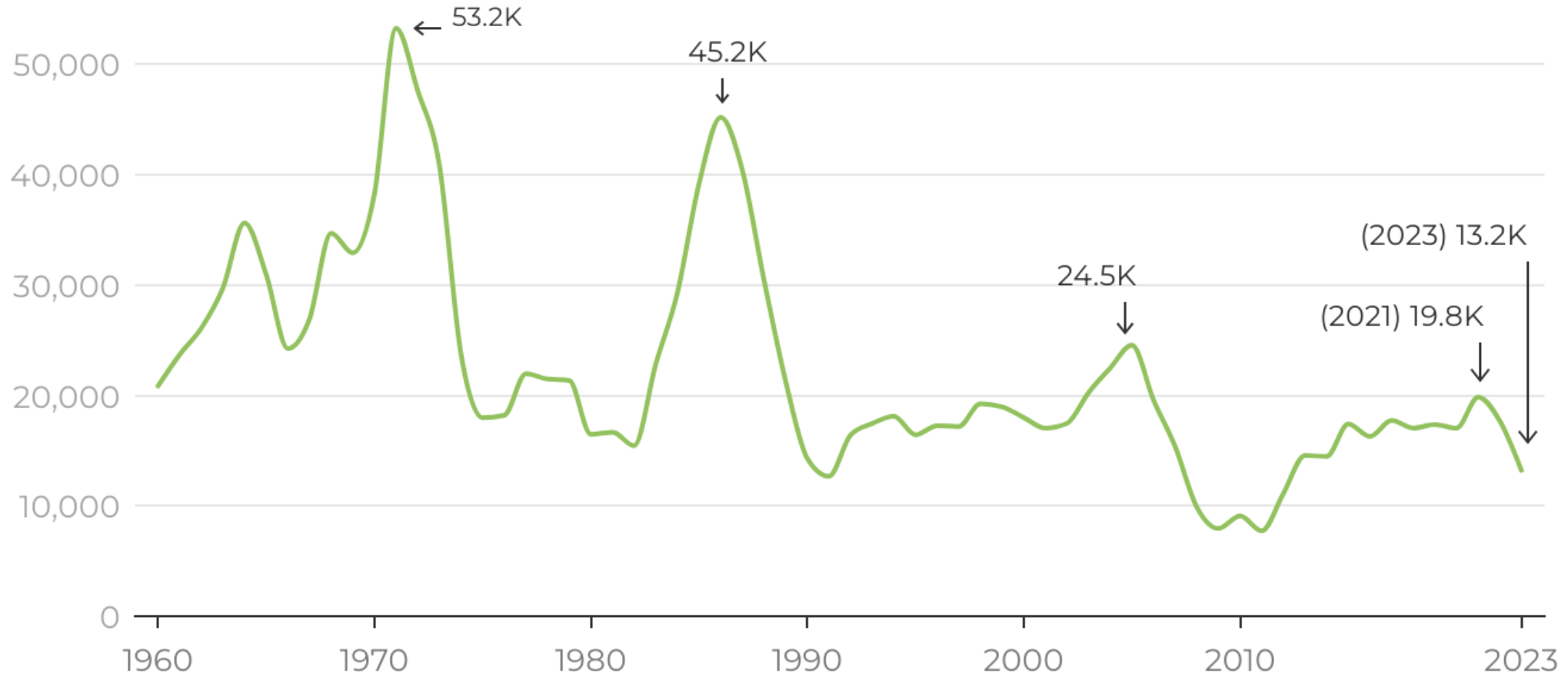
Note: Single-race alone, non-Latino. Latino can be of any race.

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: 2012, 2017, 2022 5-Yr American Community Survey. IPUMS, University of Minnesota,

Supply

The production uptick during the 2010s still leaves Massachusetts far below historic levels.

Annual housing permits in Massachusetts. Census Building Permit Survey.

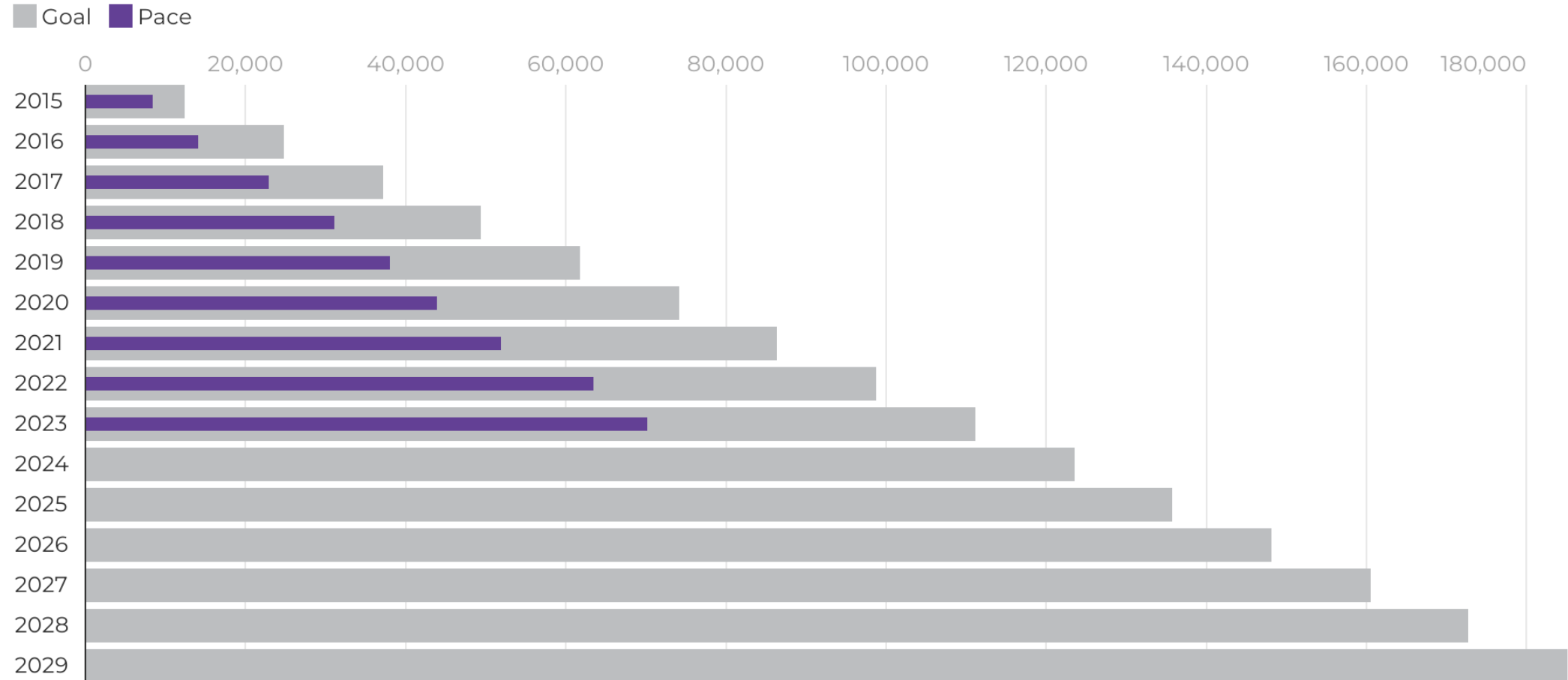


Metro Mayors Coalition Housing Permits by Municipality

Municipality	2015-17	2018-20	2021-23	Total	Total as % of 2010 Stock
Boston	13,676	10,714	9,413	33,803	12.5%
Revere	834	1,022	4,070	5,926	27.0%
Quincy	1,512	1,118	3,261	5,891	13.8%
Cambridge	2,157	2,437	1,229	5,823	12.5%
Everett	315	829	4,647	5,791	34.7%
Somerville	1,080	1,170	1,150	3,400	10.1%
Chelsea	85	914	692	1,691	13.4%
Newton	232	508	710	1,450	4.5%
Medford	665	545	158	1,368	5.7%
Malden	892	364	42	1,298	5.2%
Watertown	770	432	51	1,253	8.1%
Brookline	86	497	459	1,042	4.0%
Winthrop	209	220	115	544	6.6%
Melrose	277	50	181	508	4.3%
Arlington	34	80	231	345	1.7%

The Metro Mayors Coalition is not on pace to meet its 2030 production goal.

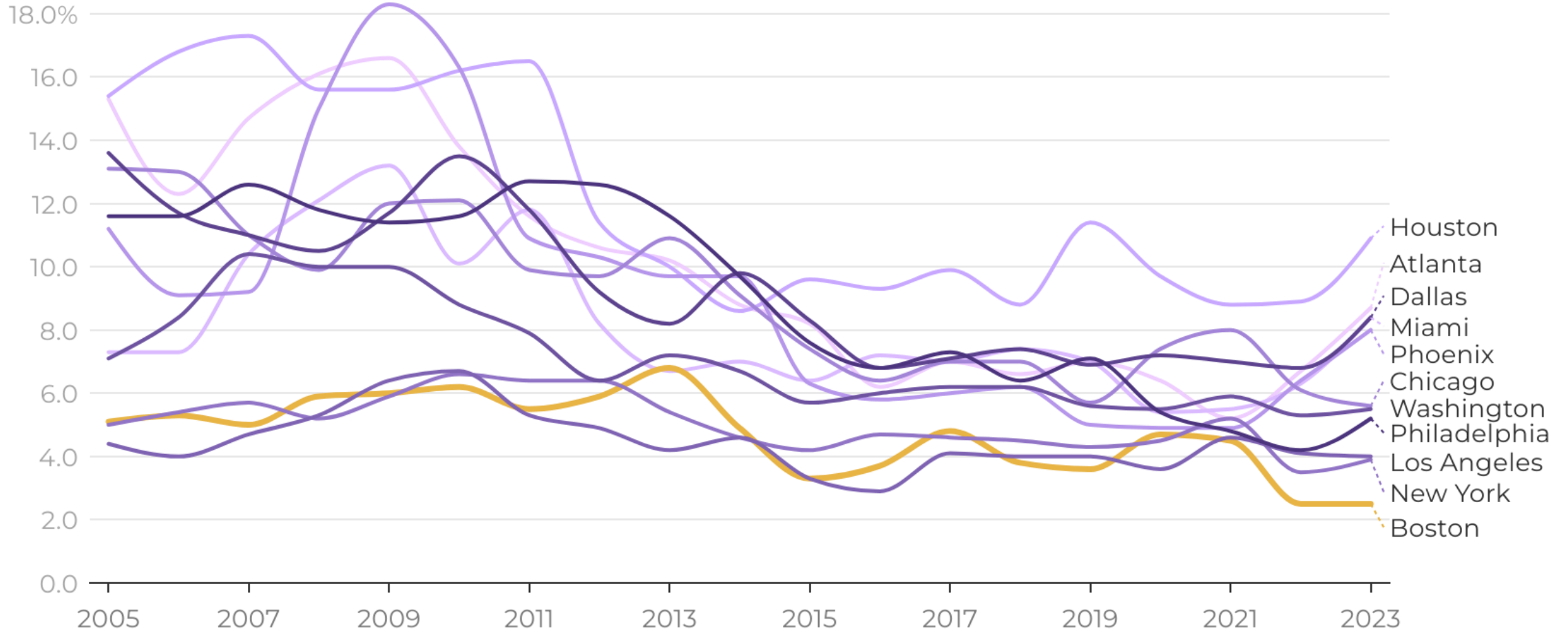
Actual housing units permitted (pace) versus goal to build 185,000 total units by 2030.



*The Metro Mayors Coalition housing production goal applies to 15 communities: Arlington, Boston, Braintree, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop.

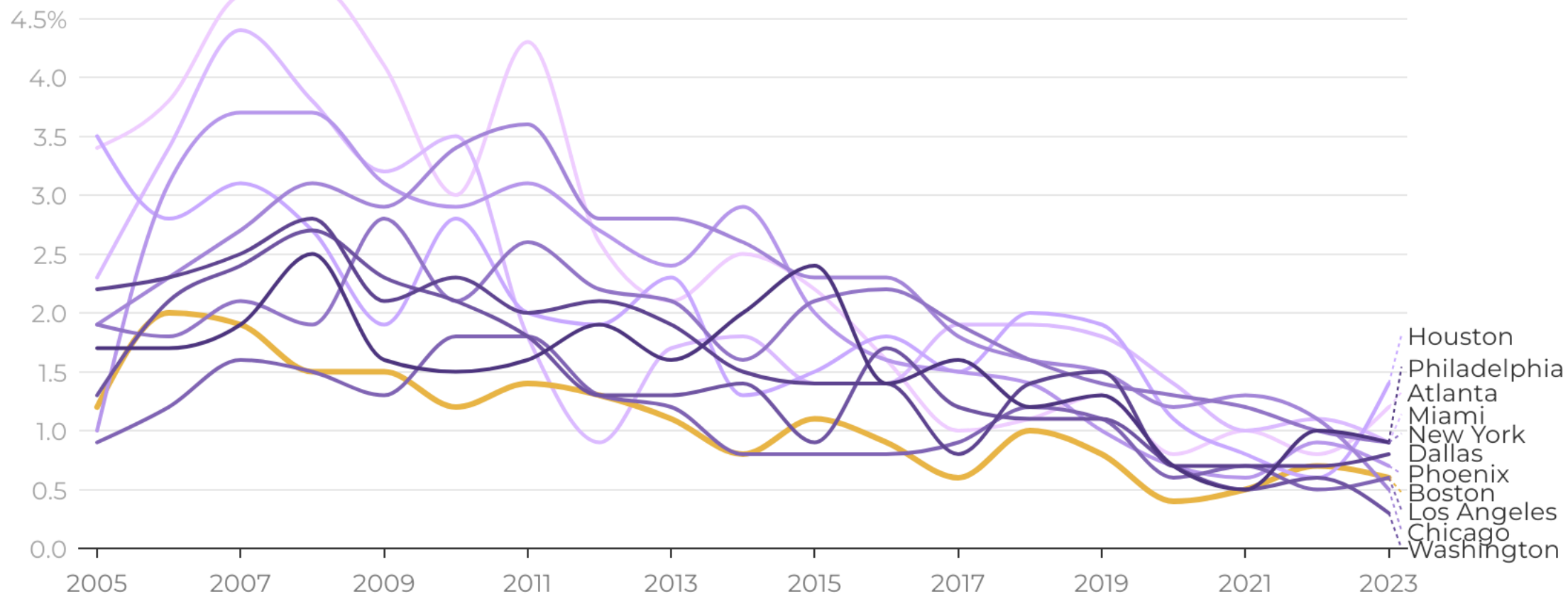
Rental vacancy rates remain extremely low.

Rental vacancy rates by MSA, Census Housing Vacancy Survey 2005-2023.



Homeowner vacancy rates remain extremely low.

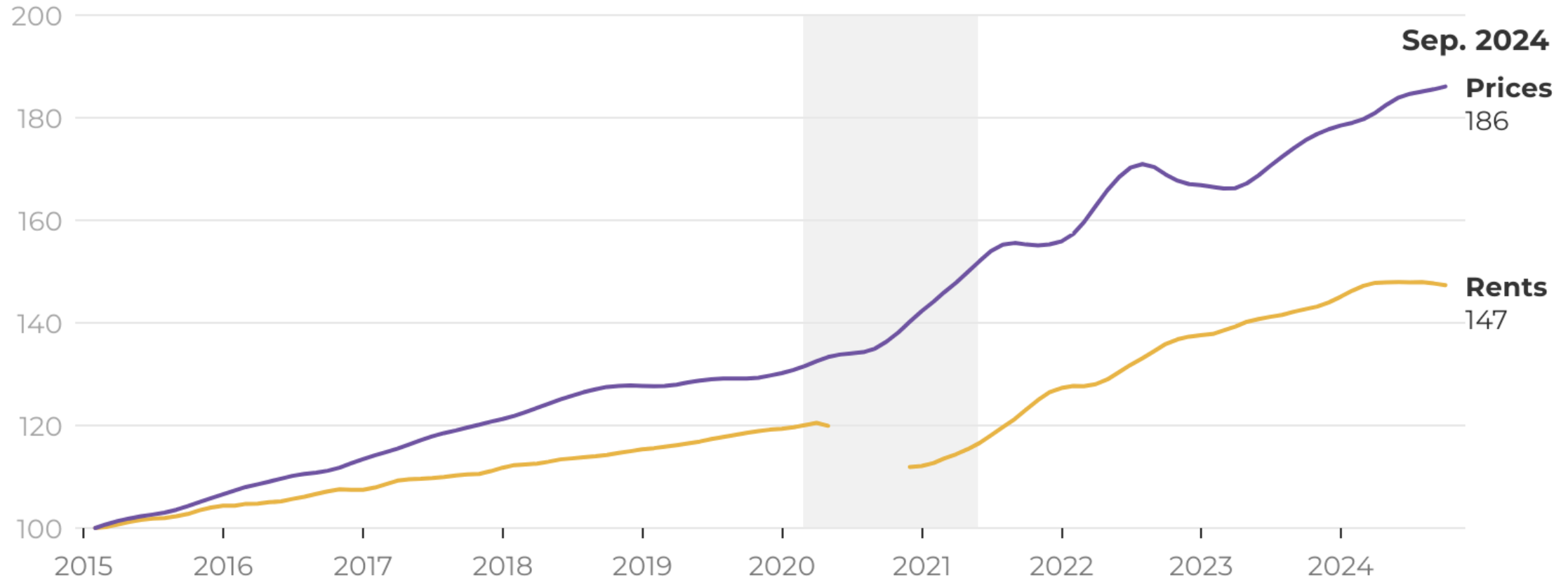
Homeowner vacancy rates by MSA, Census Housing Vacancy Survey 2005-2023.



Prices, Rents & Affordability

Home values have outpaced rent prices, though both are up significantly since 2015.

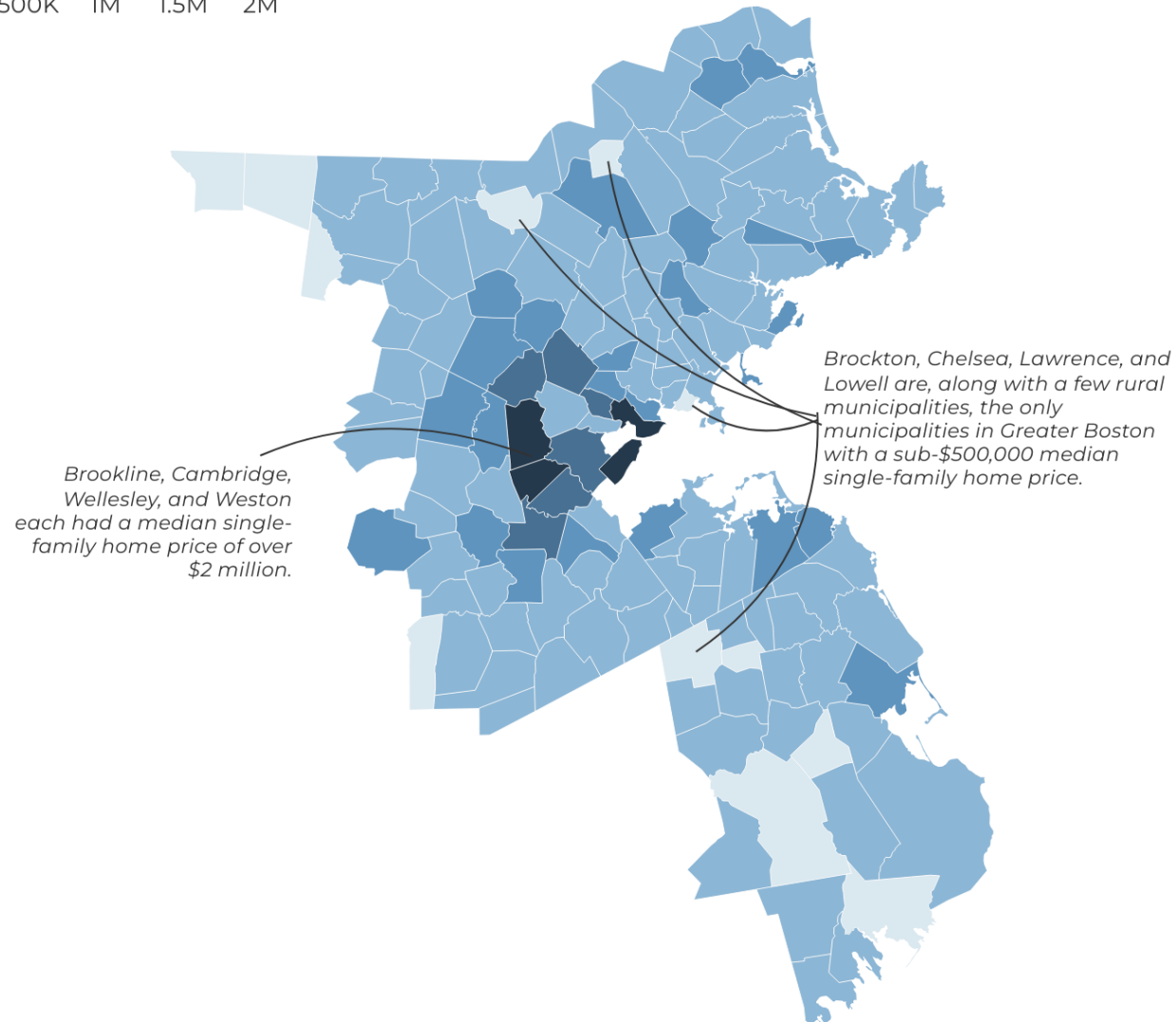
Indexed rate of growth for Zillow ZHVI and ZORI data. Boston MSA. January 2015 = 100.



35 Greater Boston municipalities had a median single-family sale price above \$1 million.

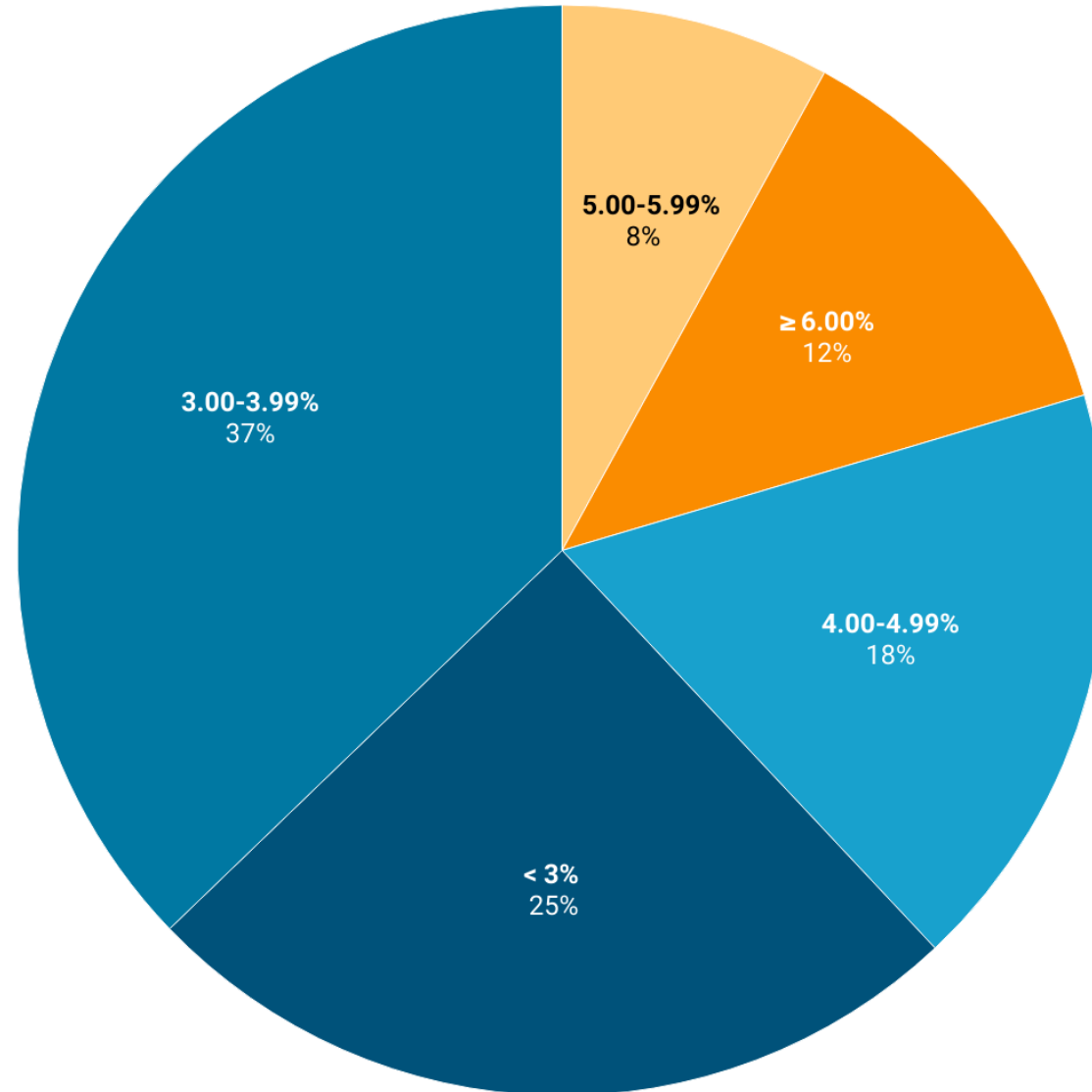
Median sale price, single-family homes. The Warren Group. YTD through June 2024.

2024 YTD Median Sale Price



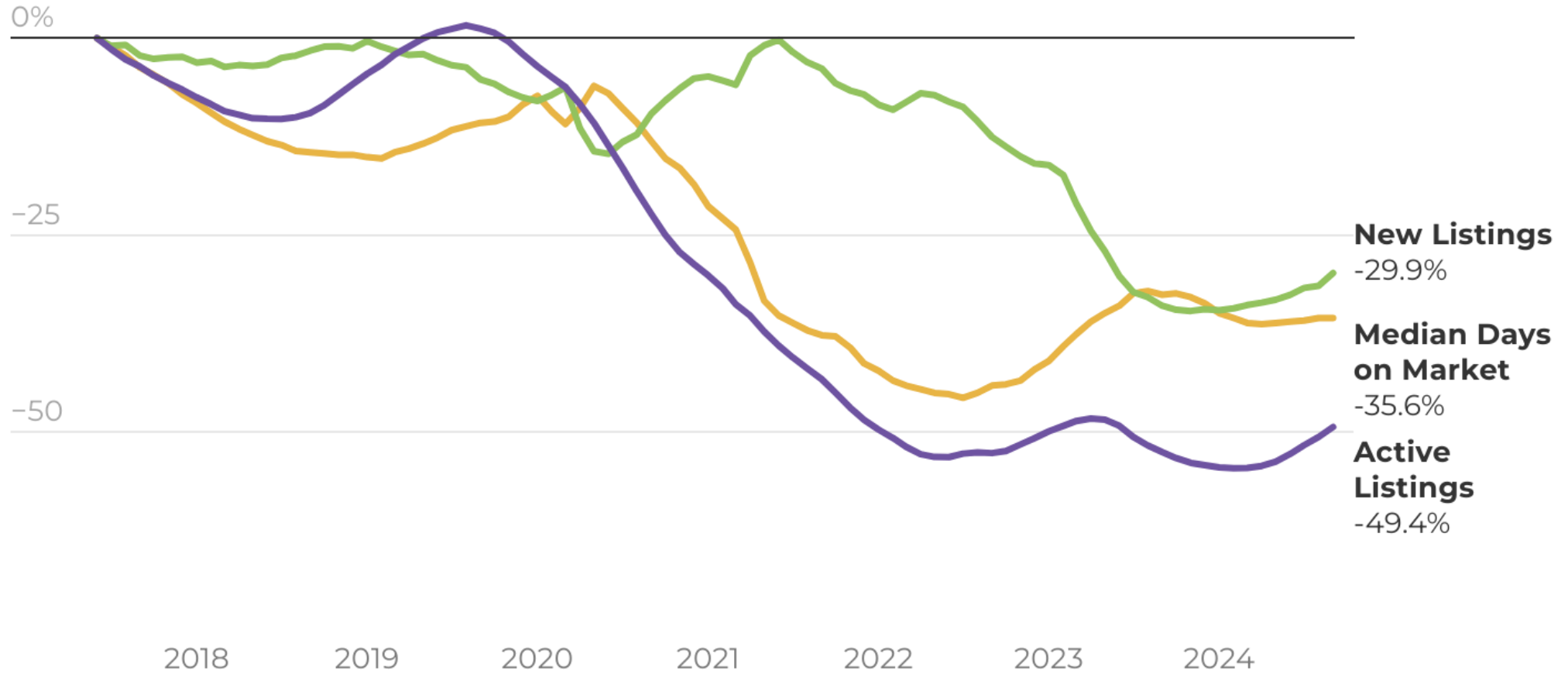
80% of outstanding mortgages have an interest rate below 5%

Federal Housing Finance Agency. Massachusetts. 2024 Q2



Change in Listings and Days on Market Over Time.

% change in rolling twelve month average since June 2017. Realtor.com. Boston MSA.



Entry level homeownership has gotten much more expensive since 2021.

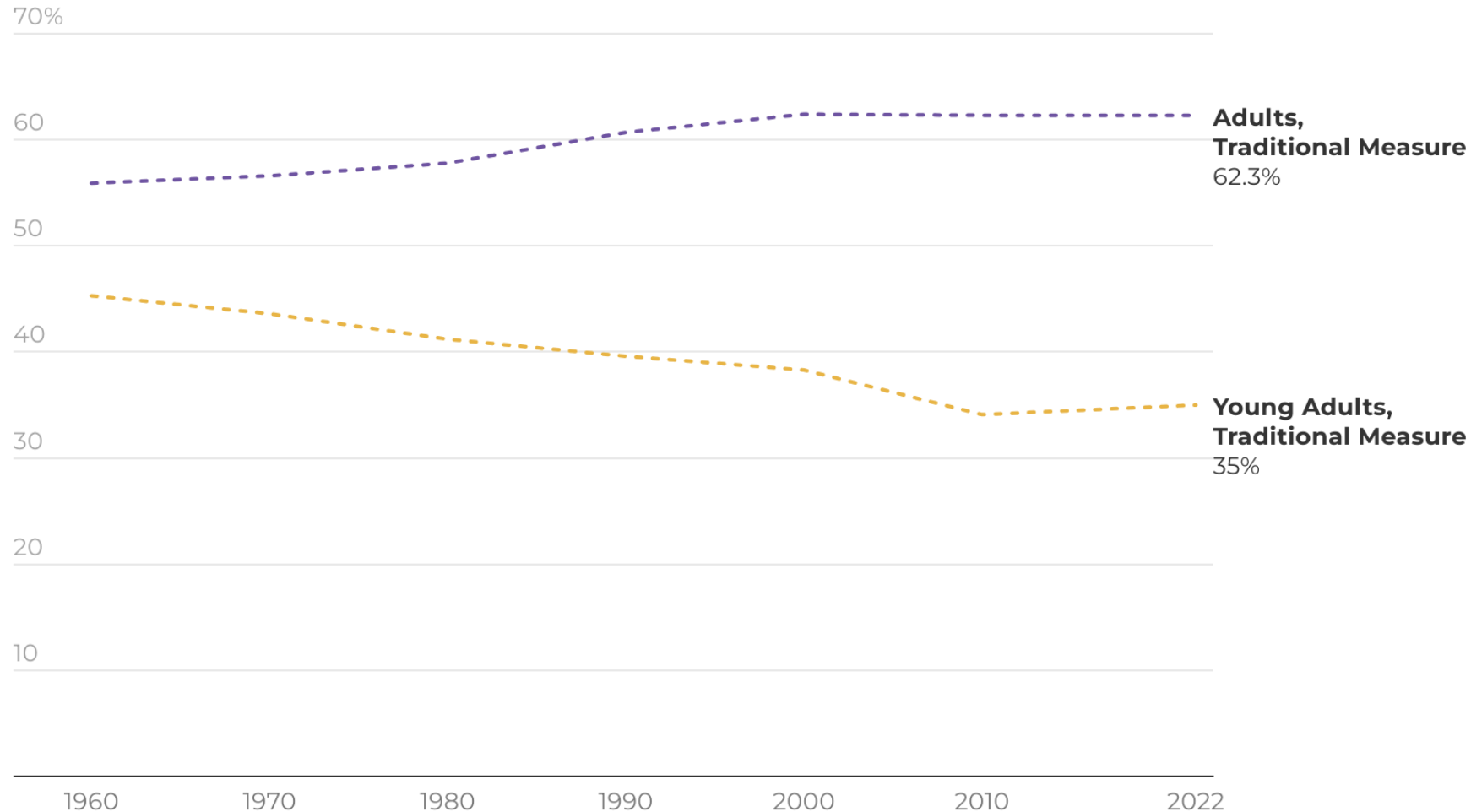
Estimated annual income needed to afford monthly payments. Greater Boston.

	Low-End Homes (Bottom Third of Market)			Middle-Tier Homes		
	2021	2024	Difference	2021	2024	Difference
Typical Home Price	\$401,530	\$493,271	+\$91,741	\$588,756	\$693,663	+\$104,907
Down Payment & Closing Costs	\$26,099	\$32,063	+\$5,963	\$38,269	\$45,088	+\$6,819
Interest Rates	3%	6.46%	-	3%	6.46%	-
Total Monthly Owner Costs	\$2,566	\$4,141	+\$1,575	\$3,622	\$5,753	+\$2,131
Annual Income Needed	\$99,315	\$160,297	+\$60,981	\$140,206	\$222,716	+\$82,509

Note: Estimates assume a 3.5% down payment on a 30-year fixed rate loan with zero points, 0.3% property insurance, 1.15% property taxes, 3% closing costs, credit score between 680-699, and a maximum 31% debt to income ratio. Low-end homes have values in the 5th to 35th percentile of all homes in Greater Boston, middle-tier homes are in the 35th to 65th percentile. Total monthly owner costs include monthly mortgage payments, property taxes, homeowner's insurance, and private mortgage insurance.

The homeownership rate among young adults has declined significantly in Massachusetts since 1960.

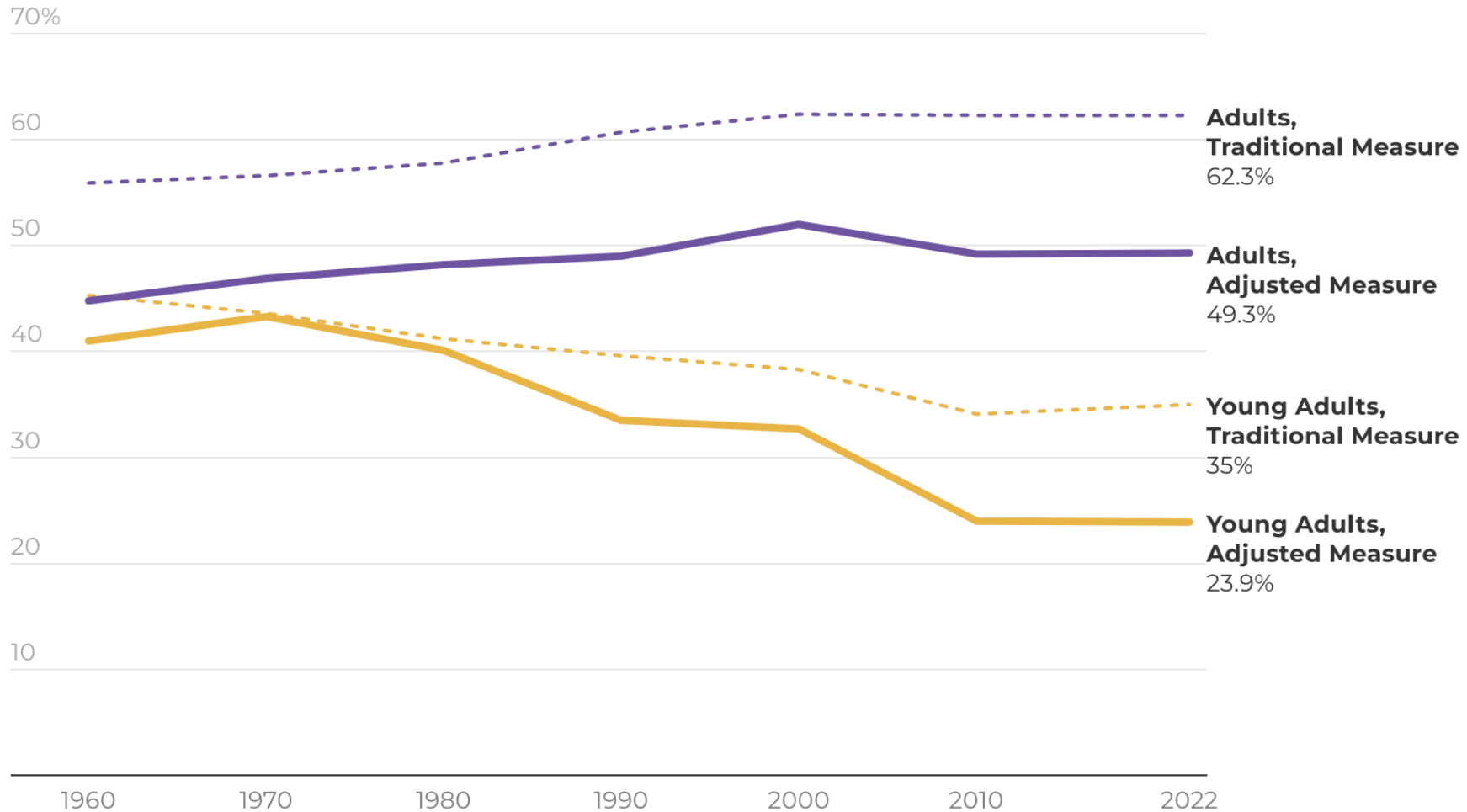
Homeownership rate. Massachusetts. Adults = 18+ years-old; young adults = 25–34 years-old.



Note: The traditional measure of homeownership looks only at whether the household head owns their own home. To understand who could potentially afford a home, it's useful to look at ownership rates among all adults (18+) and working age younger adults (25–34). Method adapted from John Voorheis, Census Bureau.

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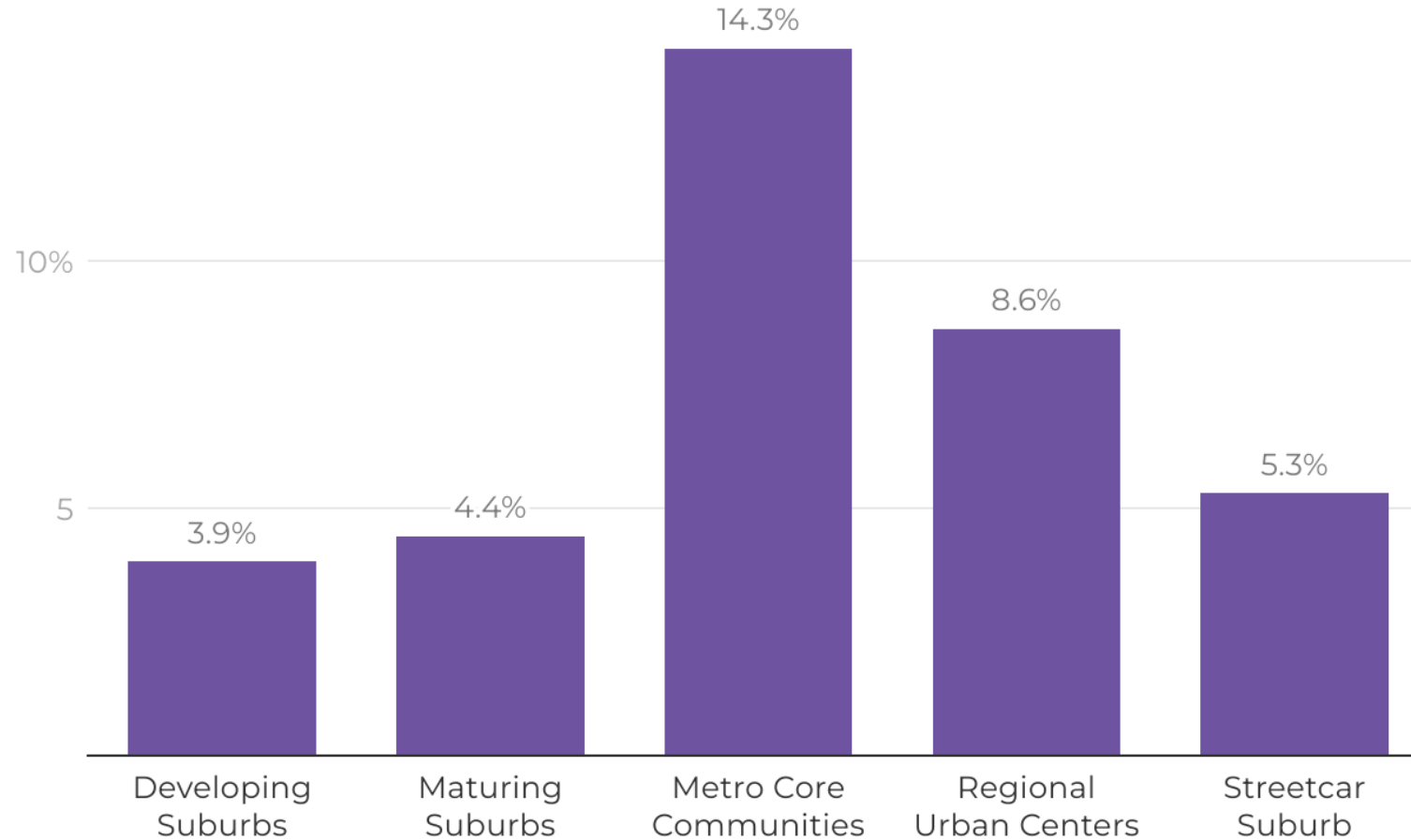


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Subsidized Housing

Subsidized Rentals as a Share of Total Housing Stock

By community type. Greater Boston, 2024.



Source: Housing Navigator Massachusetts 2024, 2020 U.S. Decennial Census • Created with Datawrapper

Subsidized Rental Stock by Community Type and Age Restriction

Greater Boston, 2024.

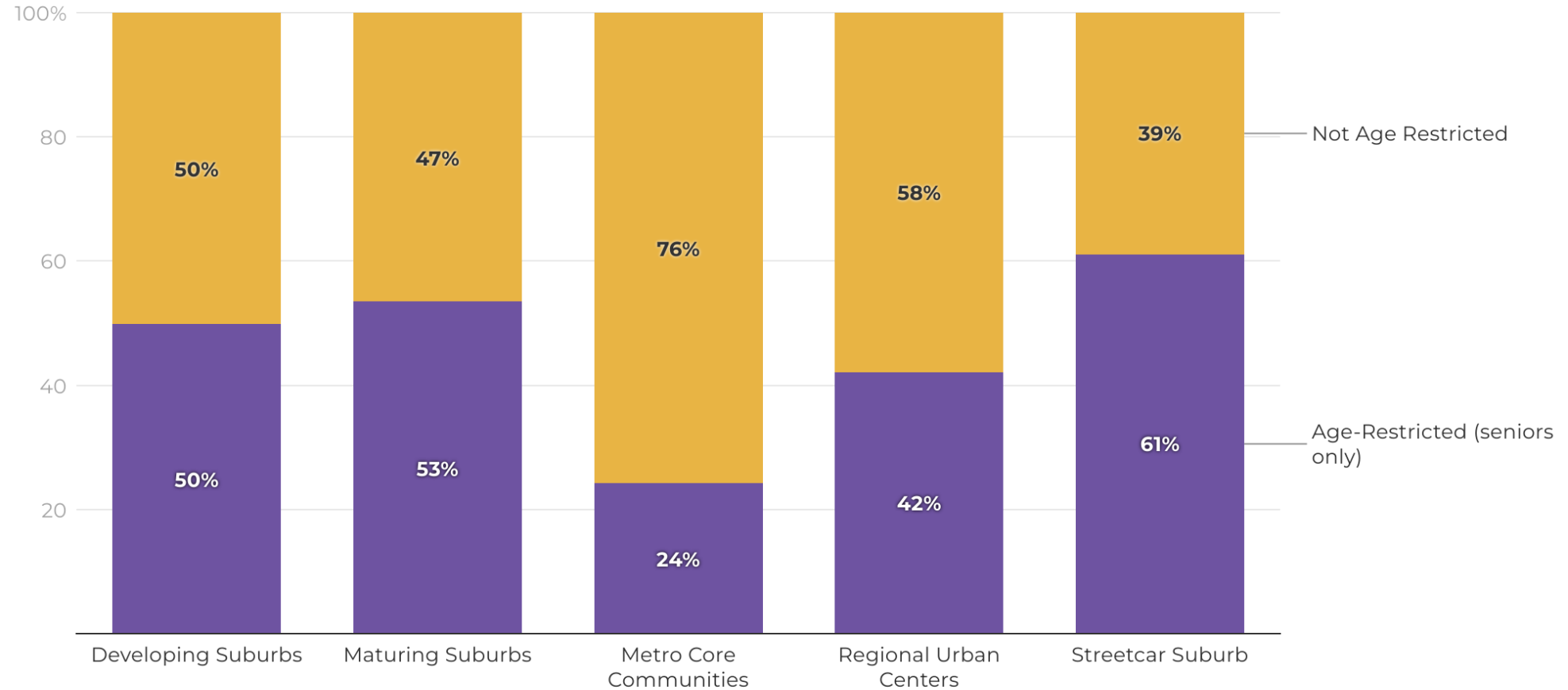
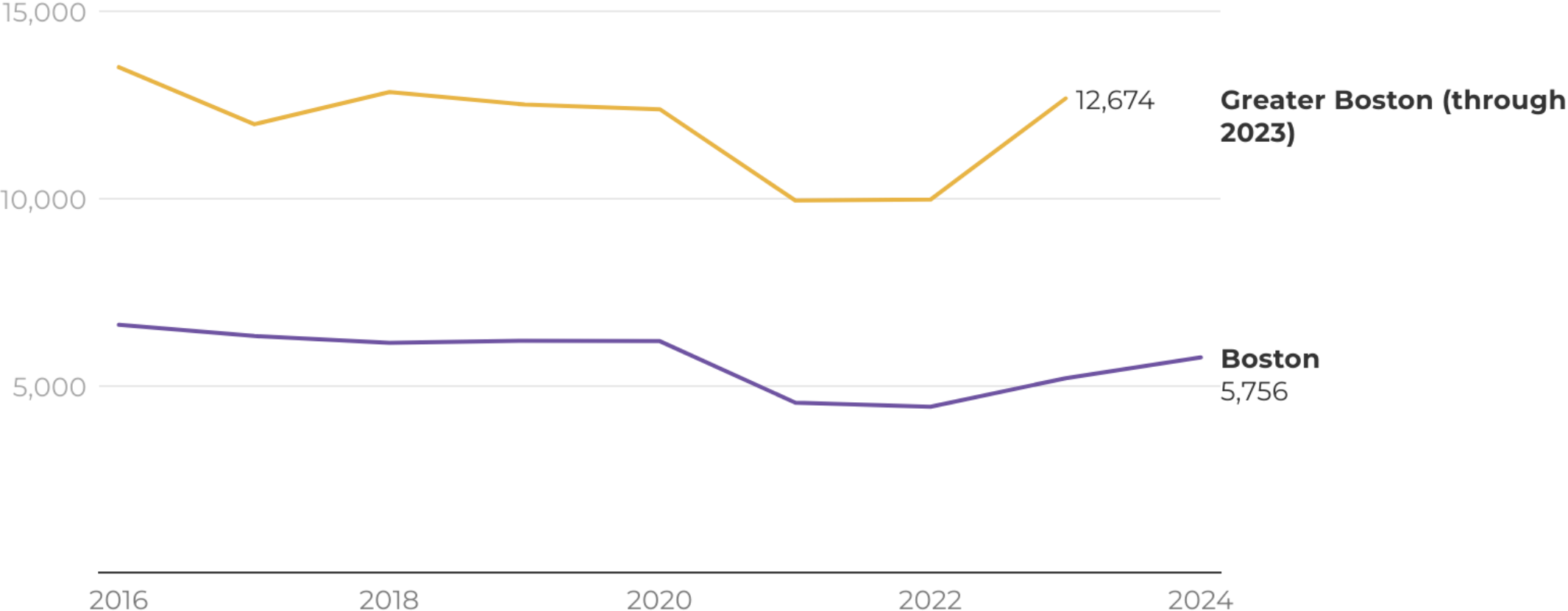


Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Housing Navigator Massachusetts 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

Instability

Point-in-Time Counts of Homelessness

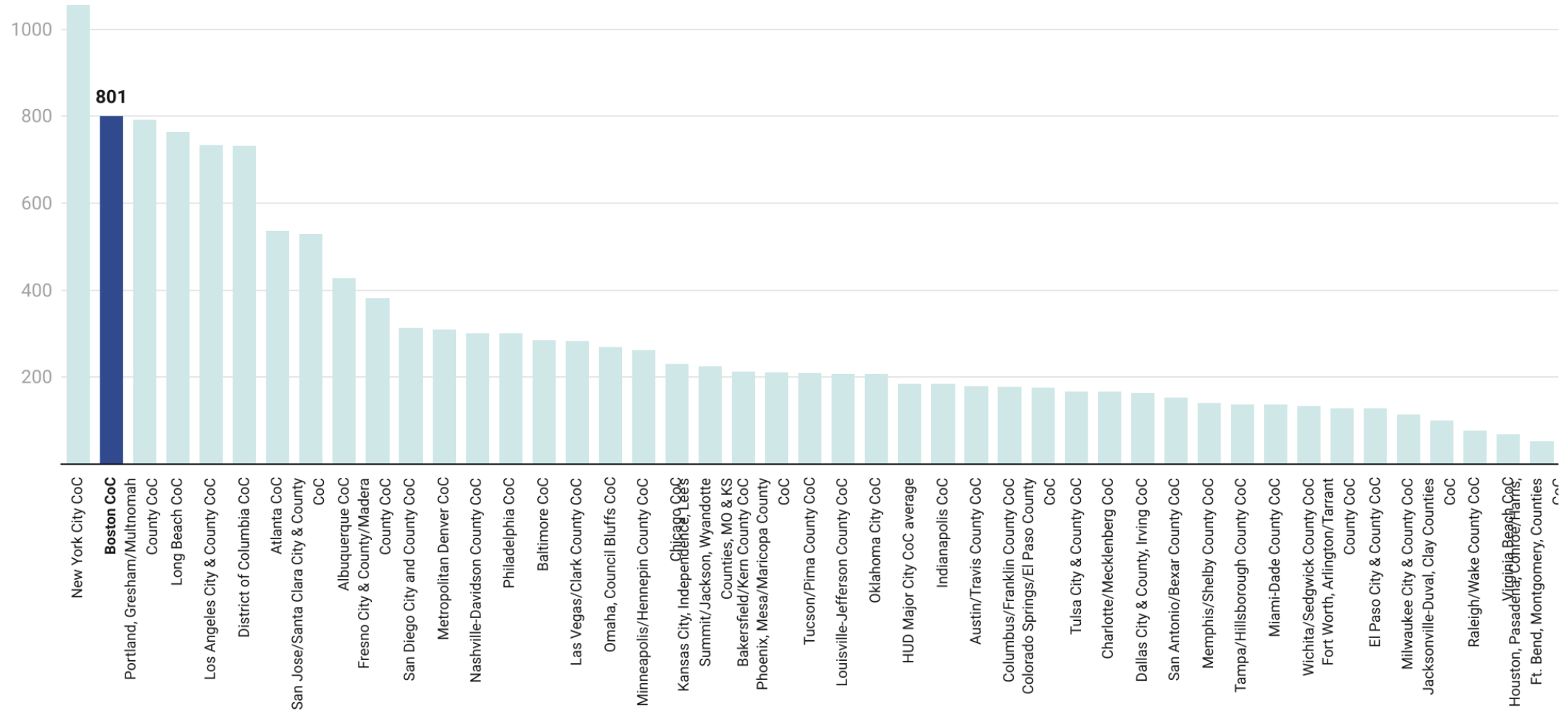


Note: Two of Greater Boston's Continuums of Care performed only partial counts in 2021, potentially leading to lower counts overall.

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: HUD Point-in-Time Counts, City of Boston Annual Homelessness Census. • Created with Datawrapper

Homelessness rates of large U.S. cities

Rates of homelessness per 100,000 residents in the 45 largest U.S. cities or Continuums of Care. 2023.

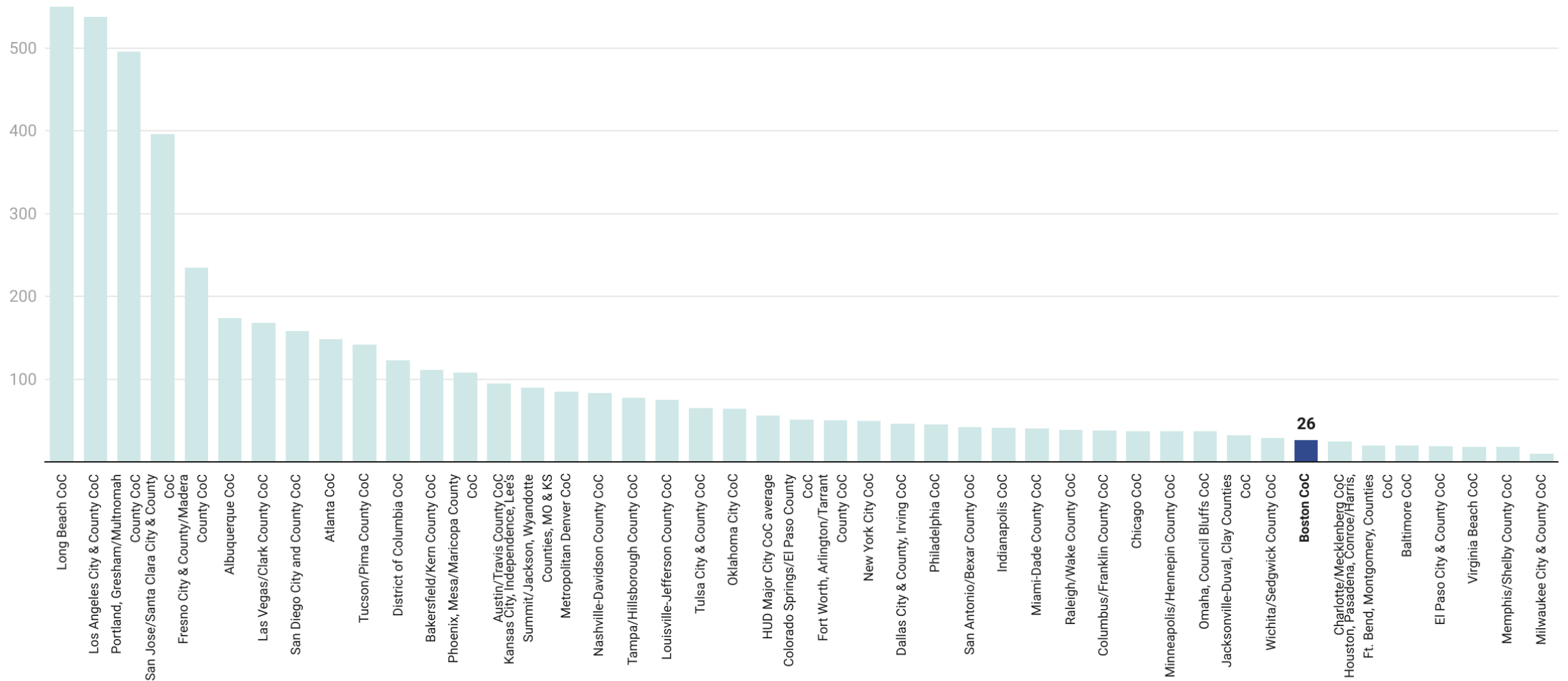


Note: Based directly off of Brookings Institute homelessness rate estimates, which align CoCs PIT counts with ACS population estimates for those geographies.

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Brookings Institute • Created with Datawrapper

Unsheltered homelessness rates of large U.S. cities

Unsheltered homelessness rates per 100,000 residents among the 45 largest U.S. cities or Continuums of Care. 2023.



Based off of Brookings Institute estimates of unsheltered homelessness, which align CoC's PIT counts with ACS population estimates for those geographies.

Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Brookings Institute • Created with Datawrapper

Families Receiving Emergency Housing by Type

Shelter National Guard Staffed (ORI) Hotel

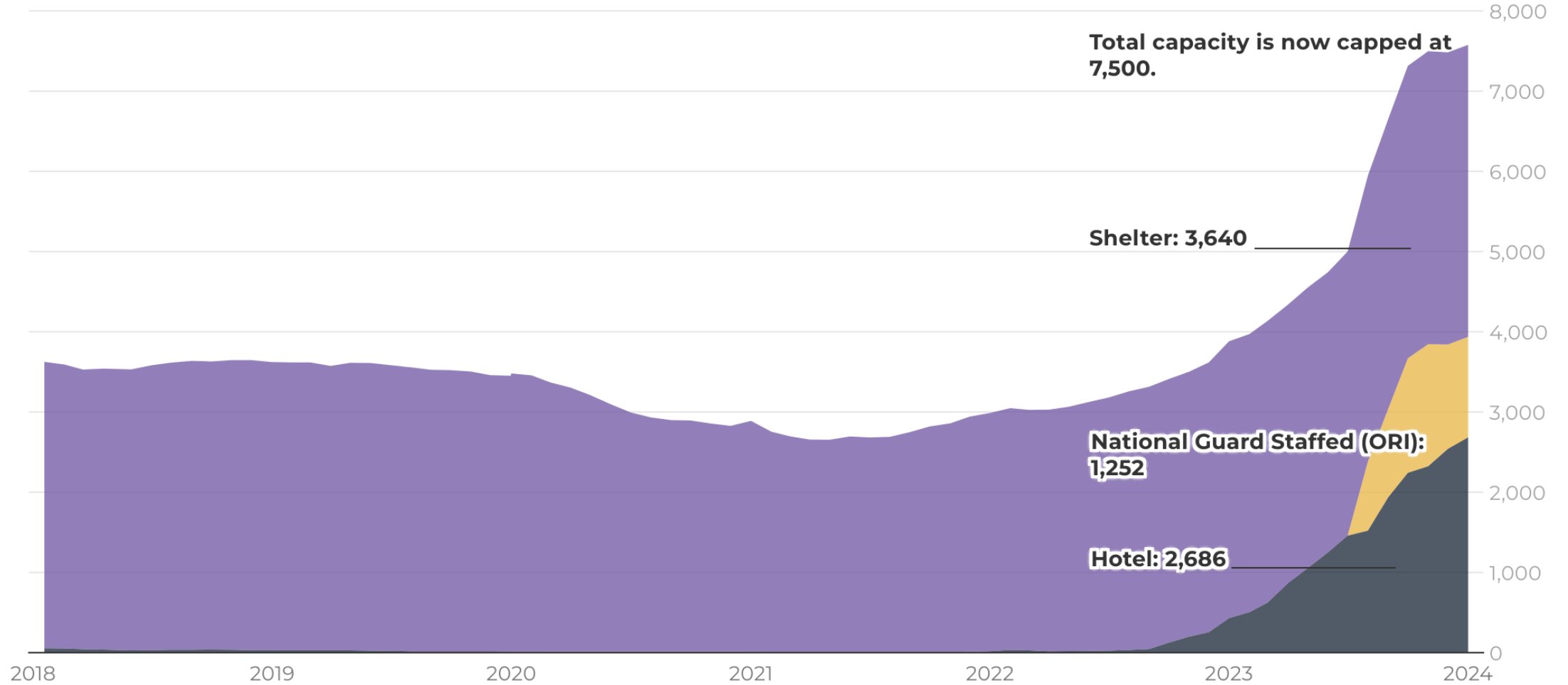


Chart: Boston Indicators • Source: Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. • Created with Datawrapper

State Policy Round-Up

Greater Boston Housing Report Card Special Topic

Opportunity or Obstacle? The Use of Public Land to Build (and Block) Affordable Housing

Katherine Levine Einstein

Maxwell Palmer

Danielle Mulligan

November 12, 2024



POLITICS

Harris and Trump see federal land in the Southwest as an opportunity for more housing

OCTOBER 16, 2024 · 6:21 PM ET

HEARD ON [ALL THINGS CONSIDERED](#)

By [Ben Giles](#)

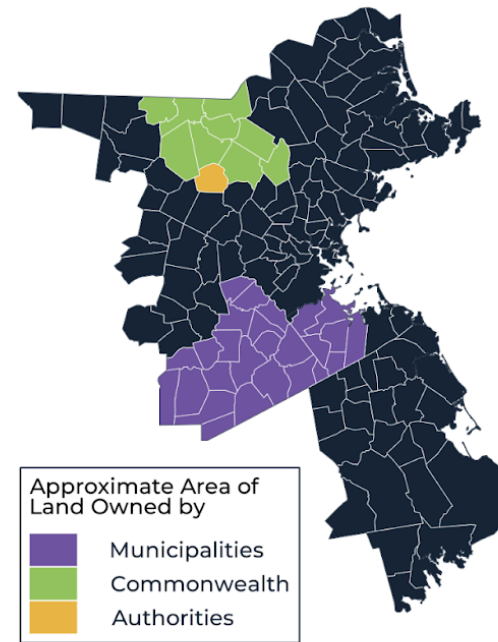
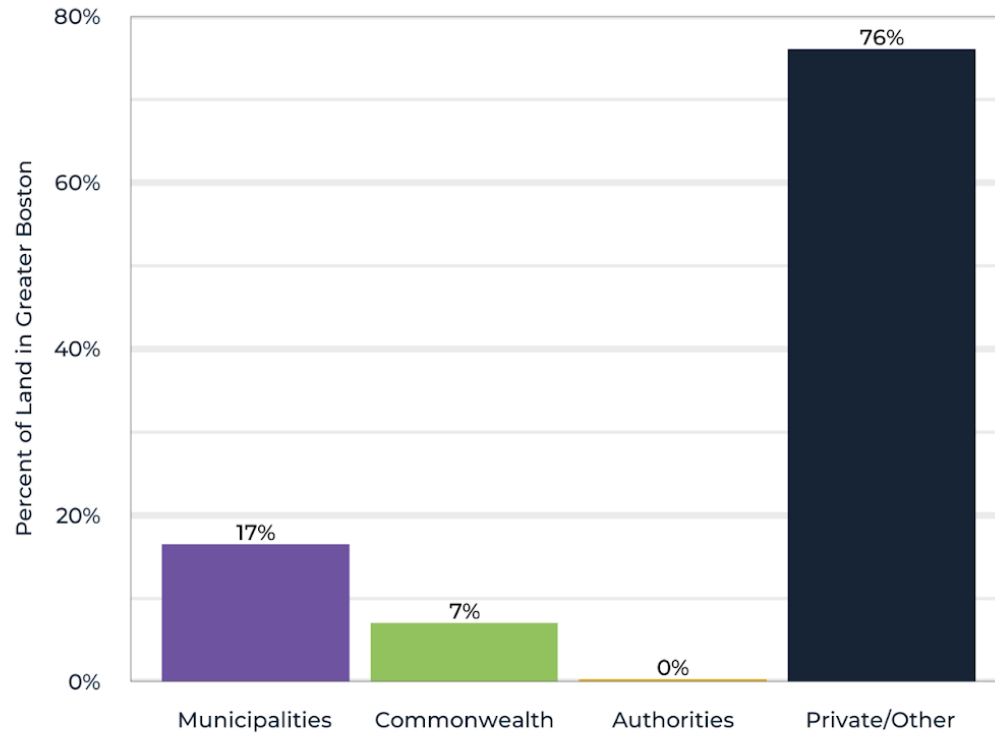
Build housing on federal land? Both Harris and Trump are in favor.

By [Scott Streater](#) | 10/02/2024 01:39 PM EDT

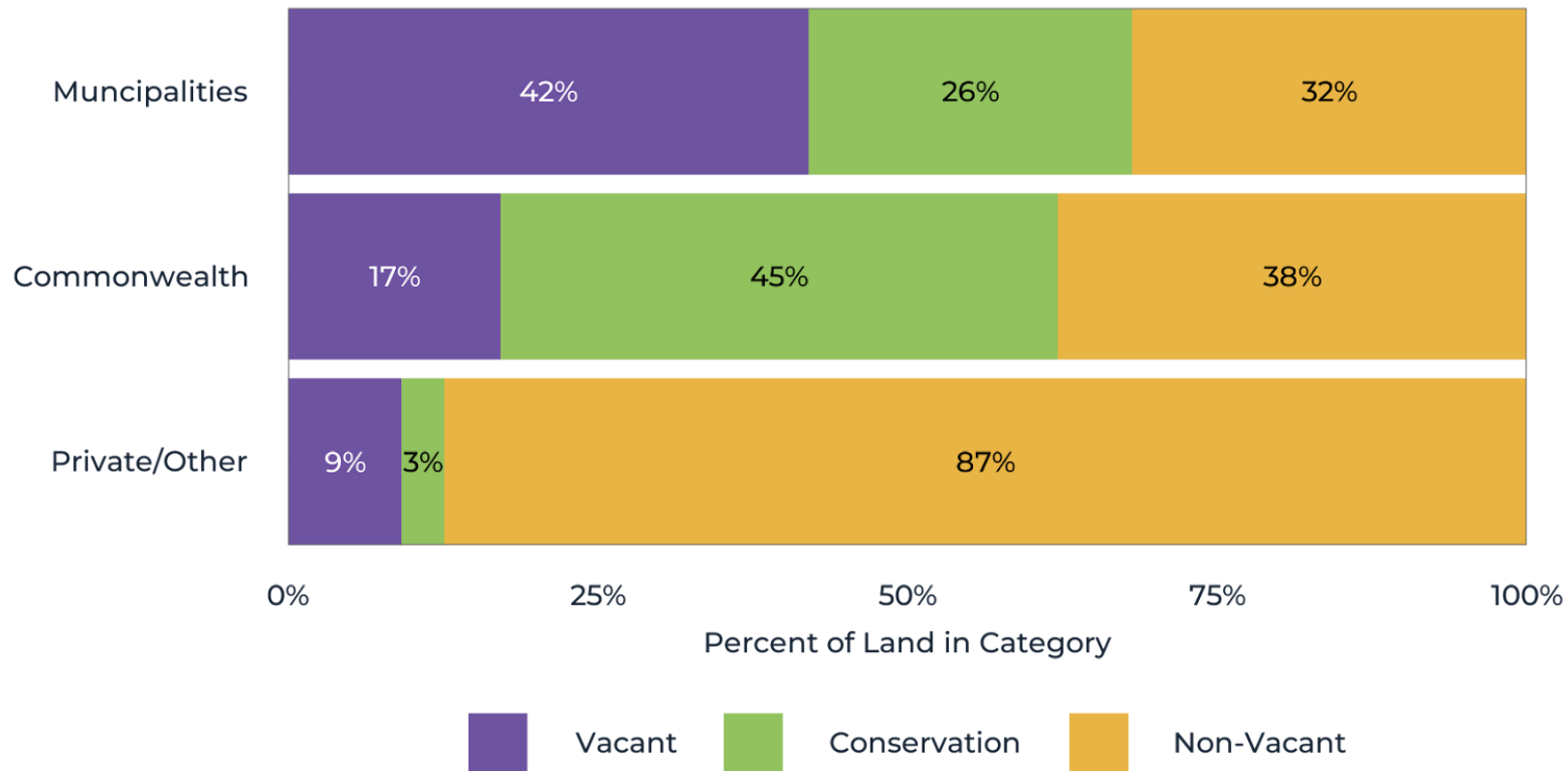
Outline

- **Public land in Greater-Boston is widely available and under-utilized.**
- Procurement laws and the housing permitting process make redevelopment prohibitive.
- Public opposition is a big obstacle. Some communities acquire public land to **stop** development.

Availability of Public Land



Availability of Public Land



Public Land: An Under-Utilized Resource

- Let's imagine redeveloping 5% of the vacant municipal and Commonwealth-owned land
- We can use the same minimum density as under MBTA Communities (15 units per acre)
- Produces:
 - 72,000 units on municipal land
 - 13,000 on Commonwealth land
 - Total of 85,000 units

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Development Process on Public Land

- Developing multifamily housing in MA is generally hard because of the regulatory process
- But...it's much harder on public land:
 - Land must first be declared "surplus," which requires 2/3 support from town meeting or city council
 - City or town then solicits bids to dispose of the land through an RFP
 - RFP process essentially means that developers have to go through design review twice, for the RFP and then as part of the general development process

“City and town officials think, we’re giving [the developer] land, we have to require several community benefits. But it doesn’t actually always pencil out, particularly when the goal is to maximize the amount of affordable housing.”

- Andrea Harris-Long, MAPC

Development Process on Public Land

- 6+ years to build 6 units of affordable housing in Weston (currently submitting final paperwork)
- 5+ years for the City of Somerville to even come up with a plan for .8 acres next to Gilman Square T Stop
- Newton was awarded >\$2.5 million in federal/state \$\$ in 2021 and 2022 to redevelop public land into affordable housing. Land has still not been approved for use as housing.

Outline

- Public land in Greater-Boston is widely available and under-utilized.
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What is the biggest obstacle to redeveloping public land?

- *“Neighbors. Neighbors that are empowered by leaders who cave to neighbors. It’s not even that many. Some communities you won’t get any applicants for an RFP because there’s so much opposition.”*

- Laura Shufelt, Director of Community Assistance at MHP

Public Opposition

- Affects any approvals through elected bodies and referenda
- Creates delays at public hearings
- Can lead to the weaponization of public land, facilitated at times by state resources

Town Name	Purchase Year	Purchase Price (in millions)	CPA Funds Used?	State Funds Used?	Debt Exclusion Vote?
Ashland	2018	\$3.5m	Yes	No	Yes
Billerica	2020	\$3.0m	No	No	No
Dover	2017	\$5.5m	No	No	Yes
Duxbury	2020	\$2.2m	Yes	No	No
Hingham	2013	\$3.7m	No	No	No
Marblehead	2014	\$1.5m	No	Yes	Yes
Norwood	2017	\$13.0m	No	No	No
Peabody	2023	\$7.2m	Yes	Yes	No
Quincy	2020	\$5.0m	Yes	No	No
Scituate	2021	\$2.0m	Yes	No	No
Scituate	2010	\$1.9m	No	Yes	No
Sudbury	2015	\$2.9m	Yes	No	Yes
Wellesley	2018	\$3.5m	No	No	No

Public Opposition

- > \$50 million in public money used to block affordable housing
- All but one purchase were in response to a 40B
- Blocked over 1,000 identifiable housing units
- Half of purchases used CPA funds

Policy Recommendations

- Streamline the process for the disposition of public land.
- Reform state funding programs like the CPA so they can't be used to block housing development.
- Provide technical assistance for municipalities looking to redevelop public land into affordable housing.
- Streamline the housing permitting process through additional housing reform, such as statewide affordable housing overlay.

Thank you

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