



"Housing is the most important issue for the future of Boston."  
Resident via draft plan feedback

# Housing

Boston is a national leader in affordable housing and is proactively encouraging housing growth that reduces pressure on existing neighborhoods and implementing antidisplacement policies to protect existing communities.

## Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030

To accommodate population growth and increase affordability, *Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030* set a goal of creating at least 53,000 new housing units by 2030 to provide housing that is affordable for Bostonians with a range of incomes. As of January, 2017, more than 12,000 units have already been produced and more than 7,000 are under construction. Imagine Boston 2030 is building on *Housing a Changing City* by identifying areas where continued growth can occur and where additional growth beyond the 53,000-unit target can take place. This growth will create a release valve for existing neighborhoods that are seeing immense pressure on housing prices.

Boston is growing rapidly, creating demand for housing and often resulting in price increases that affect Bostonians of all incomes. Addressing rising costs is critical for preserving the diversity and character that makes Boston a place where all residents can thrive. The City is addressing rising housing costs by providing dedicated affordable units and encouraging housing growth overall. These efforts build on Boston's long-term commitment to housing affordability. Boston has a larger share of designated affordable housing than any peer city, with deed-restricted affordable housing comprising nearly 20 percent of our overall housing stock.<sup>1</sup> We are the first city in the nation to launch an

Office of Housing Stability and we have a track record of helping residents avoid foreclosures 87 percent of the time the Boston Home Center gets involved. We are also one of the first cities to implement an Inclusionary Development Policy that preserves access to affordable housing options in all of Boston's neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> The following initiatives build on this legacy and leverage our recent growth to create more affordable units, increase overall housing supply to meet the needs of Boston's diverse populations, and proactively deploy a suite of antidisplacement policies to protect and strengthen existing communities in light of rising housing prices.

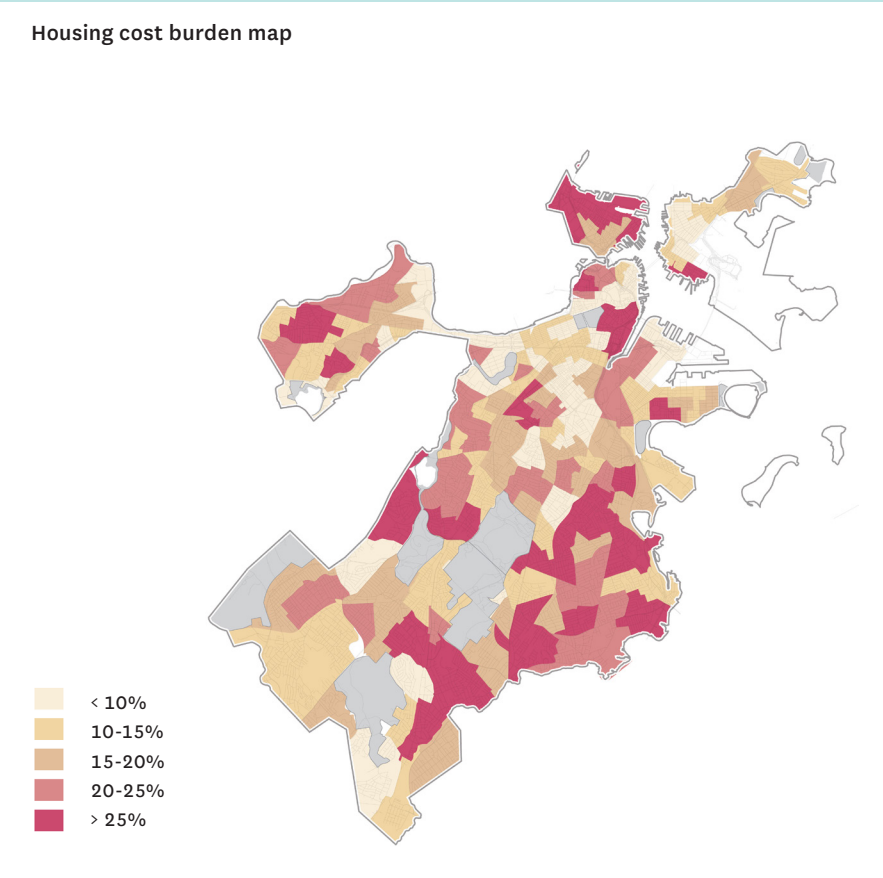


# This is what inspires us to act.

Boston’s housing costs have increased significantly in many neighborhoods as Boston’s population has grown. Housing cost increases have been particularly significant in low-income neighborhoods with larger renter populations such as Mattapan, East Boston, and Roxbury.<sup>3</sup>

See opposite page: Housing price increases 2010-2015 →

Residents told Imagine Boston that they want more deed-restricted affordable housing, mixed-income housing, and senior housing—a broader range of housing for all income levels and stages of life.



21 percent of Boston households, including both renters and owners, are severely housing-cost burdened. This is defined as those households that spend more than half of their income on housing.<sup>4</sup>

See map below ↓

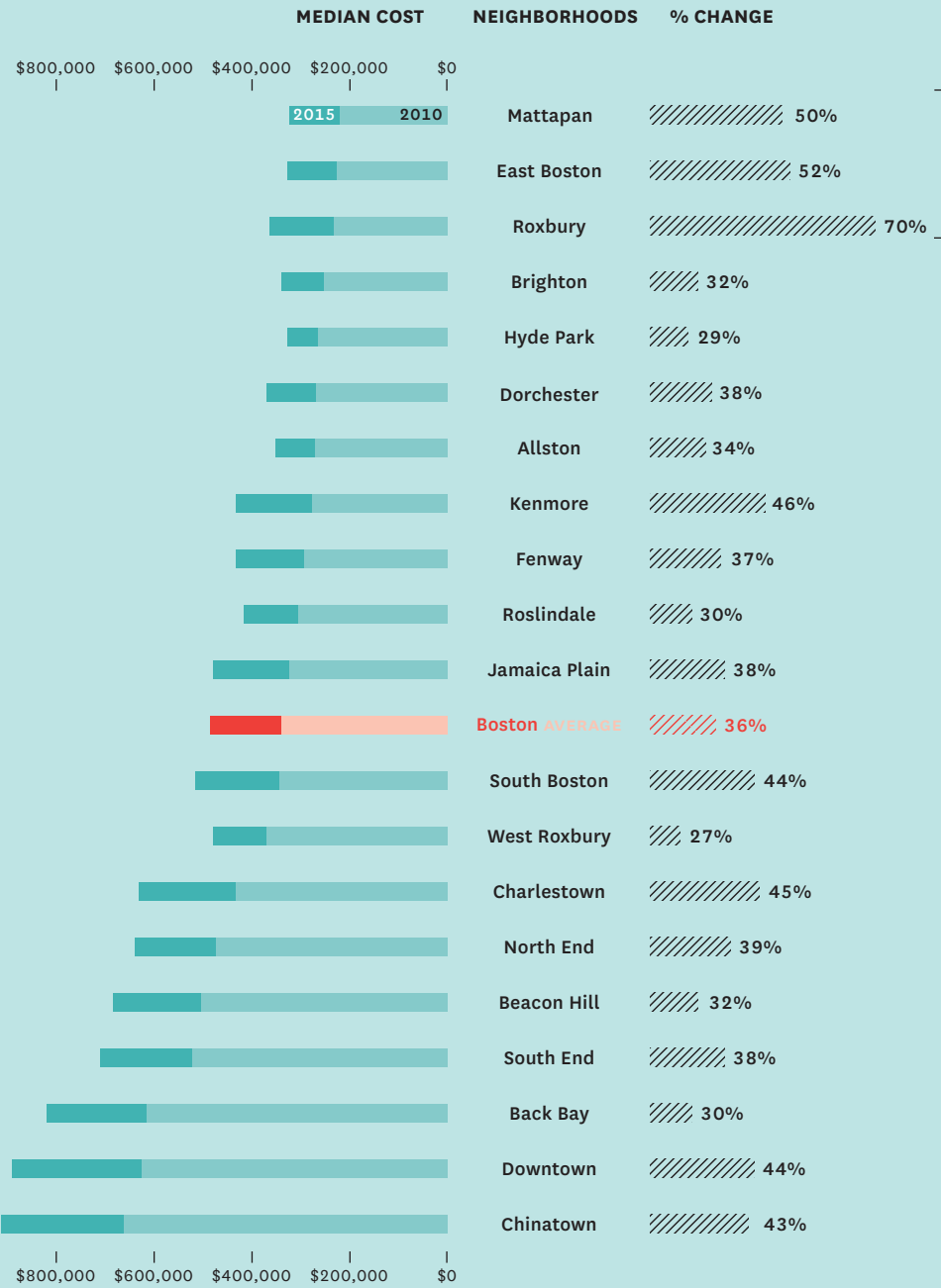
**The City is taking significant action to increase Boston’s housing supply.** As of January 2017, Boston has added more than 12,000 new units, with an additional 7,000 under construction. The impact of this new supply in stabilizing prices is clear: In Fenway, where housing supply grew by 6 percent, rents in older units declined by 0.4 percent. And in the South End, which grew by nearly 10 percent, rents in older units only rose 0.3 percent.<sup>5</sup>

**Boston is a national leader in providing designated affordable housing for its residents, but demand for affordable units remains high.** Public housing communities are an important part of almost every neighborhood in Boston. Today the Boston Housing Authority maintains more than 25,000 housing units, but Section 8 waitlists for public housing remain as long as 40,000 residents at any given time.<sup>6</sup>

**Boston’s housing stock is older** (more than 50 percent was constructed before 1940) and skews toward mid-size properties. Nearly half of Boston units are in a two- to nine-unit building.<sup>7</sup> Adding new housing supply helps to stabilize rents in these existing, older units so that neighborhoods remain affordable.

Median housing price in 2010, 2015, and increases 2010-2015 in each neighborhood

## Median housing costs increased 36 percent citywide between 2010 and 2015.



Housing prices have increased significantly in many low-income neighborhoods.

Source: Zillow Housing Data, 2016 Rent Estimate

Note: Dorchester home value is based on an average of median home values for several geographies that comprise the neighborhood.

# We will:

## Work to increase overall housing supply.

Adding supply can help stabilize rents and prices by accommodating demand and relieving pressure on the existing housing market. We will also make housing more affordable through initiatives that make construction cheaper so that cost savings can be passed along to the renter or buyer (e.g., through innovative housing design, collaborating with building trades, and streamlining permitting). We will also create more housing outside of the open market by working with universities and developers to produce more student housing that will alleviate demand pressure in nearby neighborhoods.

## Deploy a suite of tools to support the preservation of affordable housing citywide.

These include building on BHA’s recent efforts to preserve affordable units, expanding the Acquisition Opportunity Program that provides loans to responsible investor-owners committed to supplying affordable housing, and investigating tax relief for affordable-housing preservation. We will also facilitate preservation plans for BHA’s units that incorporate mixed-income housing and work with state, federal, and other partners to increase funding for existing affordable-housing policies that are showing strong results.

## Pursue policies that encourage the production and maintenance of deed-restricted low-, moderate-, and middle-income housing.

These policies include the Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) and Linkage Fee, the reuse of surplus City parcels as locations for affordable housing, and the Community Preservation Act.

## Aspire to higher levels of affordability in geographies where this is feasible.

We will leverage a series of tools, including density bonuses, and prioritize the disposal of relevant City-owned properties with a preference for affordable and mixed-income housing in areas where feasible.

## Stabilize housing and reduce displacement.

To help Boston residents remain in their homes and communities, we launched the Office of Housing Stability in July 2016, and we will deploy an antidisplacement policy package, including strengthening and expanding eviction and foreclosure prevention, tenant organizing, and homeownership assistance programs. We will also provide greater assistance to community land trusts. In conjunction, we will identify opportunities to address racial disparities in access to housing and homeownership.

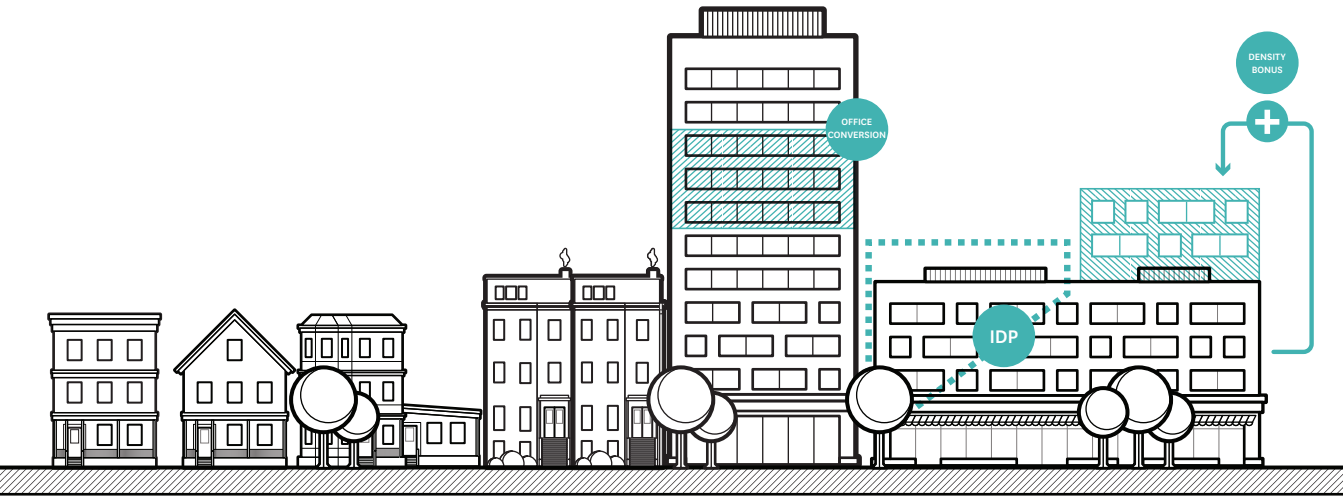
## Partner with neighboring municipalities to identify and consider regional solutions to housing challenges.

We recognize that housing affordability issues do not end at Boston’s borders and require regional solutions. These include funding solutions to advance affordable housing preservation and development in transit corridors throughout the region. We will support coordination with local housing authorities and advocate for state regulation and incentives that encourage housing production.

"Direct housing density close to public transit and near walkable main streets."  
Roslindale resident via online mapping comments

"Universities need to invest in much more student housing to help alleviate pressure on neighborhood housing supply in surrounding areas."  
Roxbury resident via online mapping comments

"Please incentivize developers to create affordable housing for residents in the neighborhood already so [as] to preserve the community. In addition, it would be amazing to see the City offer financial support to already existent residents to buy property so [as] to shift from renters to property owners."  
Roxbury resident via online mapping comments



### Key Terms

**Community Preservation Act:** Commonwealth of Massachusetts program that helps preserve open space and historic sites and creates affordable housing through the creation of a local Community Preservation Fund; CPA funds are generated through a small surcharge on local property tax bills and matched by a statewide trust fund to maximize community investment.

**Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP):** IDP-designated areas require developers to include affordable units within their developments (on-site), create affordable housing in an off-site location, or make a cash contribution toward the creation or preservation of affordable housing.

**Density Bonus:** Zoning tool that allows developers to build denser buildings in exchange for affordable housing or other defined public benefits.

**Linkage Fee:** Policy that requires new commercial developments in excess of 100,000 square feet to pay into funds to support housing and job training.

# Neighborhoods that are Affordable



In workshops and online in Summer 2016, residents rated ideas to make neighborhoods more affordable, such as density bonuses for affordable housing.

One Charlestown resident hit on a common theme with the suggestion that "developers need to be encouraged to build more middle-income housing."



Boston’s Antidisplacement Approach

We believe that Boston should be an open and accessible city for families and residents at all income levels.

Changing housing needs and rising real-estate costs are affecting residents of each generation—young professionals balancing rent and student loans, families seeking a stable neighborhood for their children to grow up, and small business owners grappling with the implications of rising rents. As we grow, we must grow equitably and ensure that the city’s growth does not come at the expense of our neighbors with limited

incomes. Therefore, the City is developing an antidisplacement approach that combines strategies to increase affordable housing opportunities with policies to reduce residential and commercial eviction, support homeownership, address transportation costs, and facilitate economic well-being.

Boston’s efforts to reduce displacement will be undertaken in conjunction with efforts to expand access to

opportunity by connecting Bostonians to well-paying jobs and strengthening pathways to quality careers. These economic mobility and education strategies are explored further in the Education and Economy initiative sections.

The following initiatives represent early actions within a larger set of initiatives that the City of Boston and our community partners are developing to address displacement.



Three-deckers in Dorchester ↗

Boston created the first Office of Housing Stability in the nation. To help Boston residents find and secure stable housing, Boston provides a range of programs including one-on-one help via Boston’s Housing Crisis Hotline and counseling for individuals facing homelessness due to natural disaster, eviction, and other causes, as well as broader tools such as tenant rights information, answers on any rental housing matter, and affordable housing resources.

“Reducing displacement and encouraging affordable housing must be a priority for everyone in Boston.”  
**Chinatown resident via community workshop**

Creating and preserving affordable housing

We will facilitate the production of new, dedicated affordable units through:

- › Our redesigned **Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP)**, which requires private developers to set aside units for moderate-income households
- › The provision of **density bonuses** for developments, which create affordable housing above and beyond the IDP when developers want to build higher
- › The **Extremely Low Income Set Aside** policy, which requires at least 10 percent of units built in City-funded projects to be set aside for formerly homeless households
- › The **Acquisition Opportunity Program** which preserves affordable units by converting market-rate properties into income-restricted properties
- › Advocacy for inclusionary zoning that requires a substantial portion of all new residential development to be set aside for moderate- and middle-income households

Linking housing and transportation

We will work to keep transit costs affordable and reduce the commuting-time burden faced by many low-income residents by:

- › Working with **MassDOT and the MBTA** to better serve these communities
- › Revising zoning in targeted areas, like Strategic Planning Areas, to encourage **Transit Oriented Development**, which reduces the need for vehicle ownership and reduces the cost of parking in the cost of new housing development

Preventing eviction

We will support residents at risk of displacement, whether due to fires, collapsed buildings, rising rents, or other factors through:

- › Centralized case management and support for **legal counseling, court representation, mediation, and rent arrearage payments** for tenants facing eviction
- › Comprehensive **data analytics on evictions** to understand trends in Boston and proactively intervene before evictions occur
- › The **Boston Tenants Organizing Program**, which strengthens tenants’ rights in market-rate housing
- › A **Condo Conversion Ordinance**, which protects and assists tenants in the case of a proposed conversion of their apartment to condos
- › Assisting small landlords who are already preventing displacement by keeping their rents below market

Supporting homeownership

We will support homeownership by:

- › Assisting moderate- and middle-income Bostonians to purchase and maintain their first home through a variety of **homebuyer and homeowner programs** including prioritizing pathways to homeownership for tenants
- › Working to keep Bostonians in their homes by **preventing foreclosures** through counseling, mediation, and connecting residents to advocacy partners

Supporting small businesses

The City will promote small business growth and stability through a number of initiatives, including using zoning tools to provide **affordable commercial space** in a variety of neighborhoods.

The approach also calls for addressing the gaps in resources and support for women-, minority-, and immigrant-owned businesses that experience affordability challenges on a more acute basis. Some of those measures include increasing small business capital availability, providing more access to affordable real estate through lease negotiation in targeted areas, and supplying targeted one-to-one technical assistance.

I just want to share my support for increased density in order to make housing more affordable, and for preserving and expanding subsidies and income-controlled housing... More diverse neighborhoods... will also ensure that our schools, businesses, and other institutions are more diverse as well.  
**Back Bay resident via online survey**