

Why affordable housing?

Our state (and region) is in a housing crisis right now:

Limited supply is increasing housing prices

- There is a shortage of housing options at all income levels across the region, particularly for low income renters
- Vacancy rates are well below the healthy baseline identified in the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment
- Supply in Western Massachusetts is not keeping up with demand
- Permitting rates are comparatively low in Western MA which contributes to higher housing prices across New England

Vulnerable Populations have specific housing needs

- The 65+ population has increased substantially in Western MA since 2010, particularly in Franklin and Hampshire counties. Many older adults live on a fixed income and/or require accessible housing
 - Between 2010 and 2023 the 65+ population grew by +51% in Hampshire County
- The aging population has implications for housing needs in the region
 - Growing need for housing accessible to people with disabilities
 - There is a statewide shortage of accessible housing, especially affordable, accessible housing
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 - Older households are often smaller and may prefer small housing units

[^] source: UMass Donahue Institute's regional housing study, 2025

It's an equity issue:

- The **increasing risk of displacement and homelessness also disproportionately affect non-white populations due to higher rates of cost burden and poverty** seen in households headed by people of color.

[^] source: UMass Donahue Institute's regional housing study, 2025

Less than 2% of Southampton’s housing is affordable - the standard statewide is 10%

In municipalities where less than 10% of the housing is defined as affordable, Massachusetts’ Chapter 40B program allows developers to override local zoning bylaws in order to increase the number of affordable homes.

It’s a goal in our town’s Master Plan and Housing Production Plan:

Southampton’s 2020 Community Survey found that residents prefer to keep development clustered to certain areas in order to leave open space and maintain the town’s rural character. In the town’s Master Plan, recently updated based on the community survey, the stretch of College Highway along which this property lies was identified as an ideal location for further development.

Southampton’s [Housing Production Plan](#), developed by the Southampton Housing Authority in 2022 with input collected during two public engagement sessions, outlines several tactics for achieving “housing affordability, housing choice and fair access to housing for all community members.”

Challenges, according to the Housing Production Plan, include population growth, stagnation of housing production, an aging population desiring to age in place, and millennials and younger families trying to gain entry into the housing market.

Definitions:

In Massachusetts, Affordable Housing or Low-Income Housing typically refers to housing that is affordable for households whose annual income is less than 80% of the area-wide median income.

“Community Housing” under the Community Preservation Act refers to housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, with "Moderate income housing" defined as affordable for households whose annual income is up to 100% of the area-wide median income.

The area-wide median income is determined annually by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

FY 2025 Income Limits Summary

FY 2025 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income Click for More Detail	FY 2025 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Amherst Town-Northampton, MA MSA	\$119,000	Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	41,850	47,800	53,850	59,800	64,600	69,400	74,150	78,950
		Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)* Click for More Detail	25,150	28,750	32,350	35,900	38,800	43,150	48,650	54,150
		Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	67,000	76,550	86,100	95,650	103,350	111,000	118,650	126,300

NOTE: **Southampton town** is part of the **Amherst Town-Northampton, MA MSA**, so all information presented here applies to all of the Amherst Town-Northampton, MA MSA.

Will new affordable housing increase the burden on our schools?

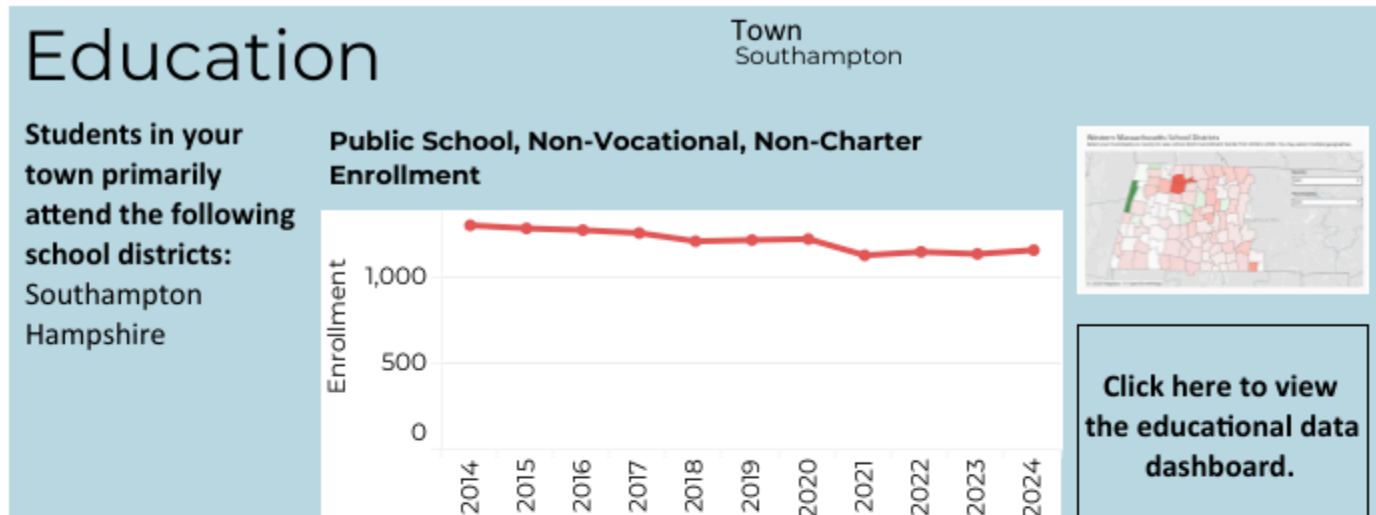
Excerpts from “An Update on Housing Production's Effect on Public School Enrollment”-- A Metropolitan Area Planning Council Research Brief

By Brandon Stanaway Feb 2024 mapc.org/learn/research-analysis/enrollment/

MAPC has updated our research with the latest data from the 2020 decennial census and school enrollment data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). We have examined changes in housing units and school enrollment across 231[2] public school districts over the ten years prior to COVID, from 2010 to 2020. We find that development of new housing units does not account for the changes in school enrollment in Massachusetts we've seen during our study period between 2010 and 2020. We find no significant association between the change in housing unit development and the change in school enrollment at the district level during this period.

This lack of relationship holds at the [community type](#) level too—we still see no clear association between development and enrollment when looking at clusters of similar suburban or urban municipalities. What is apparent, however, is that independent of housing development, school enrollment is changing meaningfully—there are some municipalities that have seen consistent enrollment growth and some that have seen consistent enrollment decline over the study period. While it is true that schoolchildren occupying new housing units may cause a marginal change in enrollment, it is one factor among many others... Demographic trends, parental preferences, and the characteristics and affordability of available housing often play a much larger role than housing development in enrollment growth and decline.

Southampton's current school enrollment:



The overall enrollment trend for your town's schools is shown above. In many Western Massachusetts communities, **school enrollments have been declining for over a decade**. New housing may result in more students in local public schools. Adding new students to these districts could benefit the local public schools because **state funding formulas for schools link state funding to enrollment**. In addition, new development is a means of increasing the local property tax levy, which is used to fund local public schools. Finally, schools have large fixed costs that do not change with enrollment, additional residents, in new housing, can help cover these costs by expanding the tax base.

Between 2019 and 2024, enrollment in the Southampton school district declined by **-6.0%**, Hampshire school district declined by **-4.0%**.

Adding new students should benefit your school district.

^source: Housing Data Explorer - <https://www.wayfinders.org/about/about-us/research-and-reports/housingdataexplorer/>

Will building affordable housing raise our taxes/hurt our local economy?

Southampton residents have expressed the desire for projects on this property that will generate revenue for the town and support our local economy. Affordable Housing would do both of those things.

Economic Impact

Town
Southampton

Your town is in Hampshire County. **Over the next 10 years, an additional 3,043 housing units will be needed to meet demand.** This is a collaborative effort, every town in the county can contribute a small amount towards this housing goal. There are substantial positive economic impacts for communities that build these housing units.

The construction of new housing units has a positive economic impact on the local economy by involving local businesses in construction, creating tax revenue, and after completion, bringing new residents to a town who spend their income and invest their resources in the community.

The production of **a new housing unit could create the equivalent of 4 full-time jobs.** This includes the firms that build the housing and their suppliers, which hire workers. Those workers then spend their incomes in the region creating an additional induced impact as their spending leads to more economic activity and hiring.

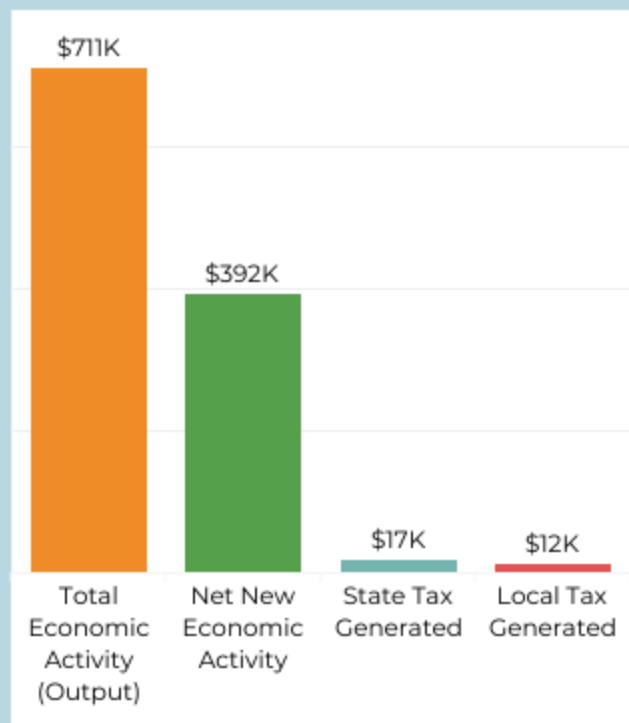
The impact analysis tool IMPLAN was used to create these estimates using a per-unit cost of \$450,000 in 2025 dollars. IMPLAN models how spending money in one part of the economy can translate to larger effects in the rest of the economy. The economic contribution shown here represents a one-time event in 2025 dollars, and has three relevant components:

Total Economic Activity (output): Total cost of materials and services (e.g. lumber, excavation services) plus payroll, taxes and profit.

Net New Economic Activity (GDP): Total Economic Activity minus the cost of its intermediate inputs (such as lumber) can also be referred to as Value-Added.

State and Local taxes: Total Economic Activity includes taxes. IMPLAN models property, sales, payroll and any other tax caused by the construction of housing. This does not include future annual taxes..

Economic Contribution of a New Unit



Fact Sheet - Potential Affordable Housing at 0 College Hwy - by the Southampton Housing Authority

^source: Housing Data Explorer - <https://www.wayfinders.org/about/about-us/research-and-reports/housingdataexplorer/>

- Once the town designates a piece of land for affordable housing, we can get a \$35,000 forgivable loan via the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to conduct all necessary surveying, site reviews, feasibility/concept plans, and support with requesting and reviewing development proposals.
- Nonprofit housing developer Way Finders, with whom the Housing Authority has been exploring development options, frequently develops housing without any Town funding at all. Southampton also has some funding available that is already restricted for community housing in our Community Preservation Act accounts.
- Wayfinders could not only build the housing, but also manage the property - so that responsibility would not fall on the town's limited staff capacity.
- As property owner and manager, despite being a tax exempt nonprofit, Wayfinders would come to an agreement with the town on an annual payment in lieu of taxes.

What type of affordable housing would we build?

- Estimated # of Units and Bedrooms based on max of ~85 bedrooms (septic limitations) and the specs of similar-sized Wayfinders developments:
9 one-bedroom; **20** two-bedroom; **12** three-bedroom = **total 85 BRs, 41 units**
- Mix of affordability levels
- Townhomes with "New England vernacular" look - for example, check out [Greenstead Grove](#) in Ludlow

Will multi-family housing with septic systems pollute the town's water supply?

"Multifamily housing can be safely built in areas not served by public water and sewer without hurting the environment. Environmental impacts of density are addressed by the public health code, which sets different standards for single-family and multi-family homes based on the number of bedrooms in a structure. If a proposed development would fall above safe limits, the public health code would not allow it to be built." - *Open Communities Alliance*.

Will this affect traffic safety on Route 10?

A traffic study will be conducted prior to any building to inform any necessary added safety measures / upgraded traffic controls.