

Coalition Building and Effective Messaging



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About CHAPA

CHAPA's mission is to encourage the production and preservation of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income families and individuals and to foster diverse and sustainable communities through planning and community development.

What Does CHAPA Do?



Advocate for
Opportunity



Expand Access
to Housing



Develop the
Field

Municipal Engagement Initiative

Local support can make or break new housing development. Yet many communities in Massachusetts lack a strong pro-housing advocacy group.

Founded in 2018, MEI works with residents on the ground to change the conversation and support existing local efforts in favor of more affordable housing.

Each city or town has its unique housing challenges, so we focus on bringing together big tent coalitions to support affordable housing production.



Building a Big Tent Coalition

- Municipal Staff
- Housing Advocates
- Housing Authority
- Planning Board
- Town/City Council Member
- Environmentalist Groups
- Religious Leaders
- School Representative
- Council on Aging
- Veterans Agency
- Transit Advocates
- Walk/Bike Advocates
- Commission on Disabilities
- Fair Housing groups
- Private Developers
- Non-profit housing developers
- Social Services
- Civic Groups (i.e. League of Women Voters)
- Interfaith Organizations
- Cultural Groups
- Residents (particularly active ones)
- Tenant Advocates
- Chamber of Commerce or other Business Leaders
- Racial Justice Advocates

Knowing Our Roles

Understanding what role you play in the housing justice landscape allows for incremental change to happen.

Housing Advocates

- Educate Residents
- Communicate Community Needs
- Recommend Reform

Residents and Constituents

- Exercise Policy
- Communicate Effectiveness of Programs

Residents and Constituents

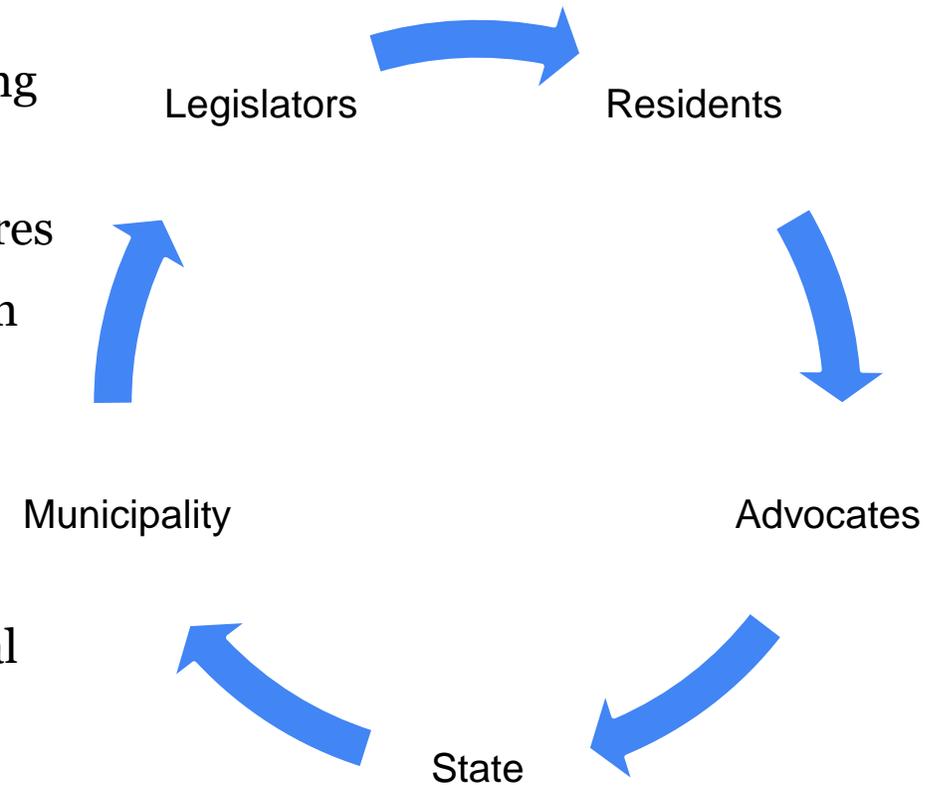
- Ensure Implementation
- Manage Funding
- Communicate Needs

Local Staff and Elected

- Create Policies and Funding Locally
- Maintain Existing Structures
- Apply State Initiatives with Local Consideration

Legislators

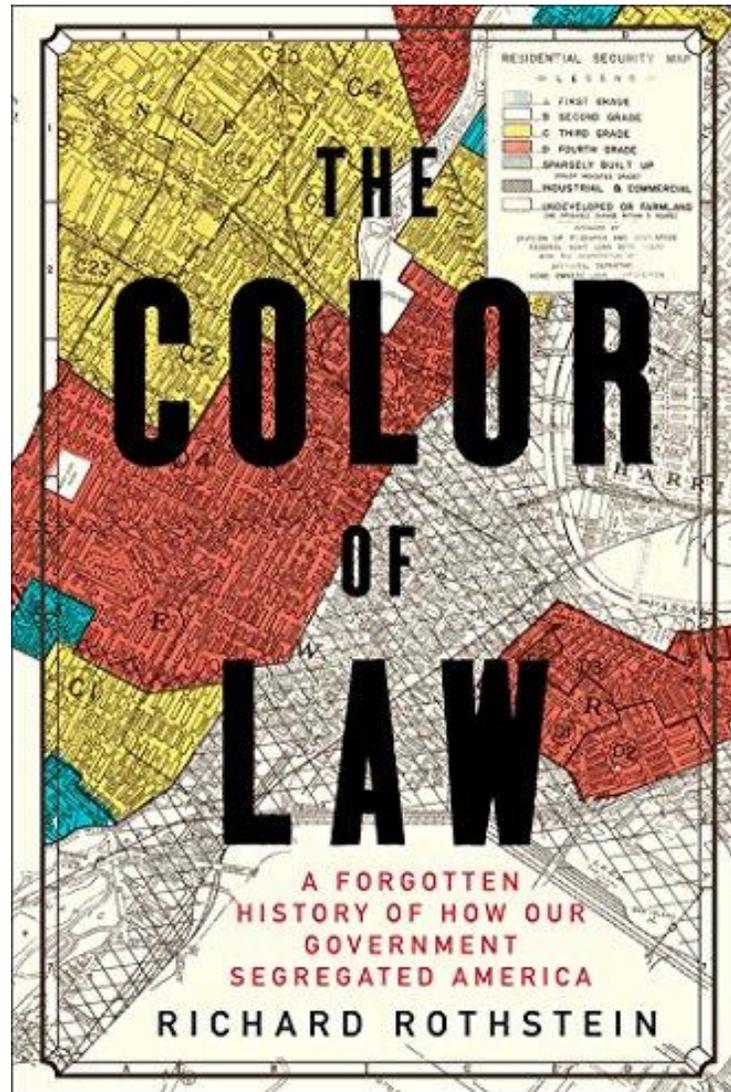
- Create and Amend Policy
- Communicate with Federal Actors
- Enforcement Agency
- Fund the work



Building Political Will

*Educating, listening, empowering, building trust, and
collective shared responsibility*

Every Legislator to Receive a copy



Neighborhood Defenders

Research by Katherine Einstein, David Glick and Maxwell Palmer

- Observed 1000s of hours of public meetings on housing in MA
- Attendees do not represent the community as a whole
- Overwhelmingly older, white, male homeowners there to oppose new developments
- Trends persist in both high and low-cost cities
- Opposition in wealthier neighborhoods pushes development into lower-income neighborhoods, exacerbating gentrification and displacement
- housingpolitics.com

Who is missing? Why?



- Who are the stakeholders? Who are the experts? Expand a more collaborative approach to allies with an equity lens.
- Go beyond the minimum threshold to create a welcoming environment.
 - Underrepresented voices
 - Access
 - Food. Timing. Translations. Digital Divide

“Strategic CaseMaking is not about preaching to the converted; it is about aligning and mobilizing diverse groups of institutions, residents, agencies, corporations and groups who are working toward better outcomes for all of us”

~ Dr.Tiffany Manuel, author

Local Strategy



Supporting the efforts in each community to build a culture that welcomes housing, including affordable housing.

Bolstering efforts to expand housing opportunities in these communities.

Growing the number of people supporting housing production in each community.

Inspiring a Shared and Collective Responsibility: Our stakeholders should see the resolution of this issue as inextricably connected to their own social and economic wellbeing



**How can you use stories in
your community engagement
process?**

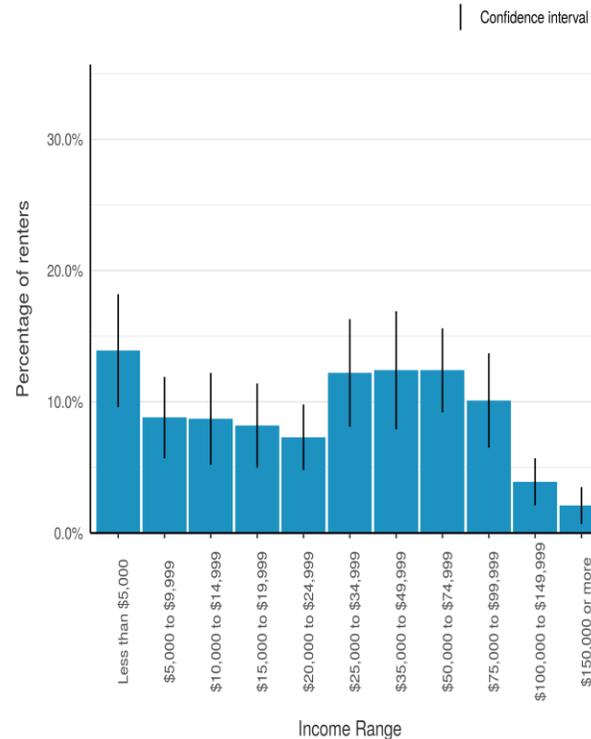
Utilizing Stories for Public Engagement

- Build a strong ‘we’ (CaseMaking Principle #1)
 - Center those with lived experience
 - In focus groups or other small workshop events, ask participants to share their housing stories
 - Life Cycle of Housing
 - How have rising home costs impacted you?
 - For larger events, provide prompts on large poster boards with sticky notes for responses
 - Utilize local and social media to share your story

Utilizing Stories for Public Engagement

- Use data to support what you know not to make claims
- Put data into context by sharing stories in presentations
- Use CaseMaking Practices to center positive data
- Shift the focus to solutions

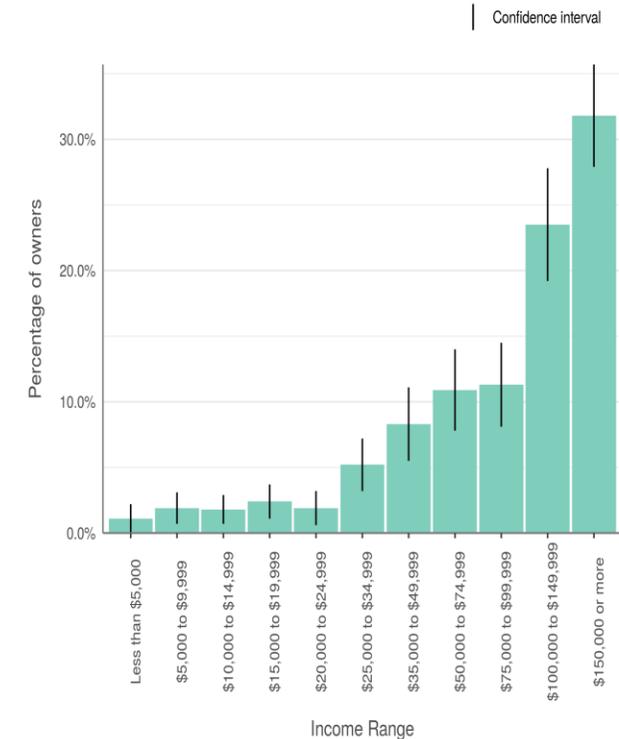
Renter households by income
Amherst



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-year estimates:
Table B25118: Tenure by household income in the past 12 months



Owner households by income
Amherst



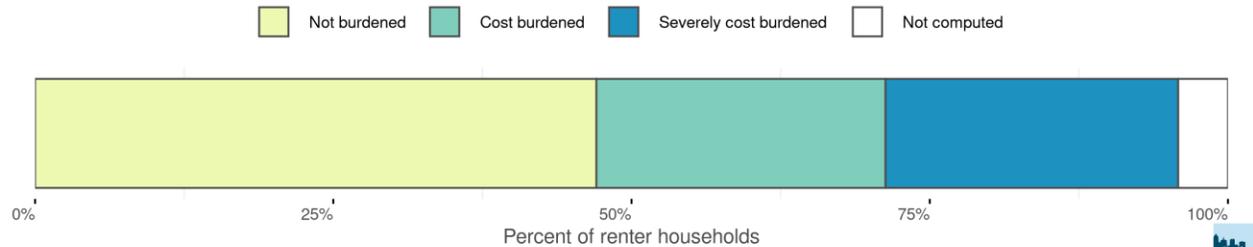
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-year estimates:
Table B25118: Tenure by household income in the past 12 months



Let's try a Local Example

- What story does this data tell?

Lowell renter households by cost burden



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table B25070: Gross rent as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months



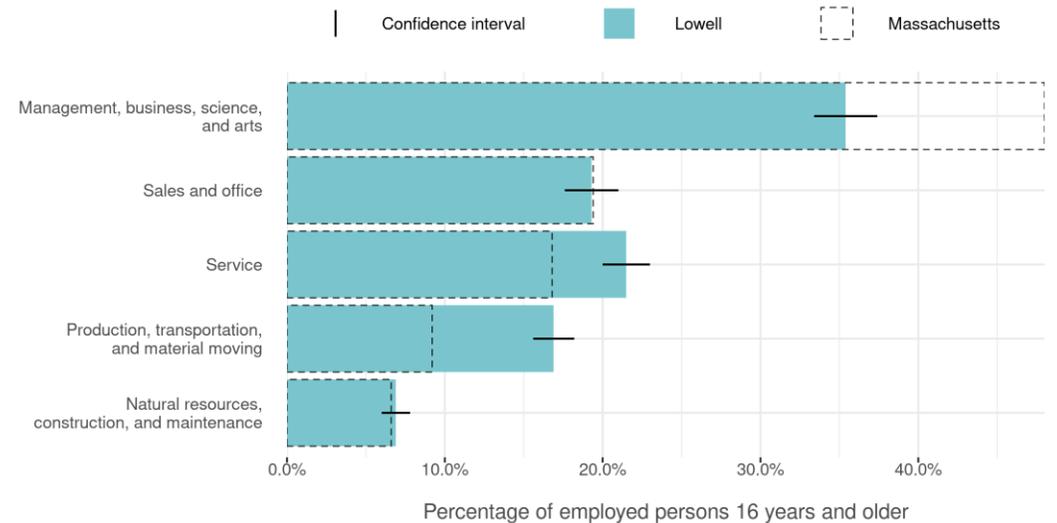
Lowell owner households by cost burden



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table B25091: Mortgage Status by selected monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months



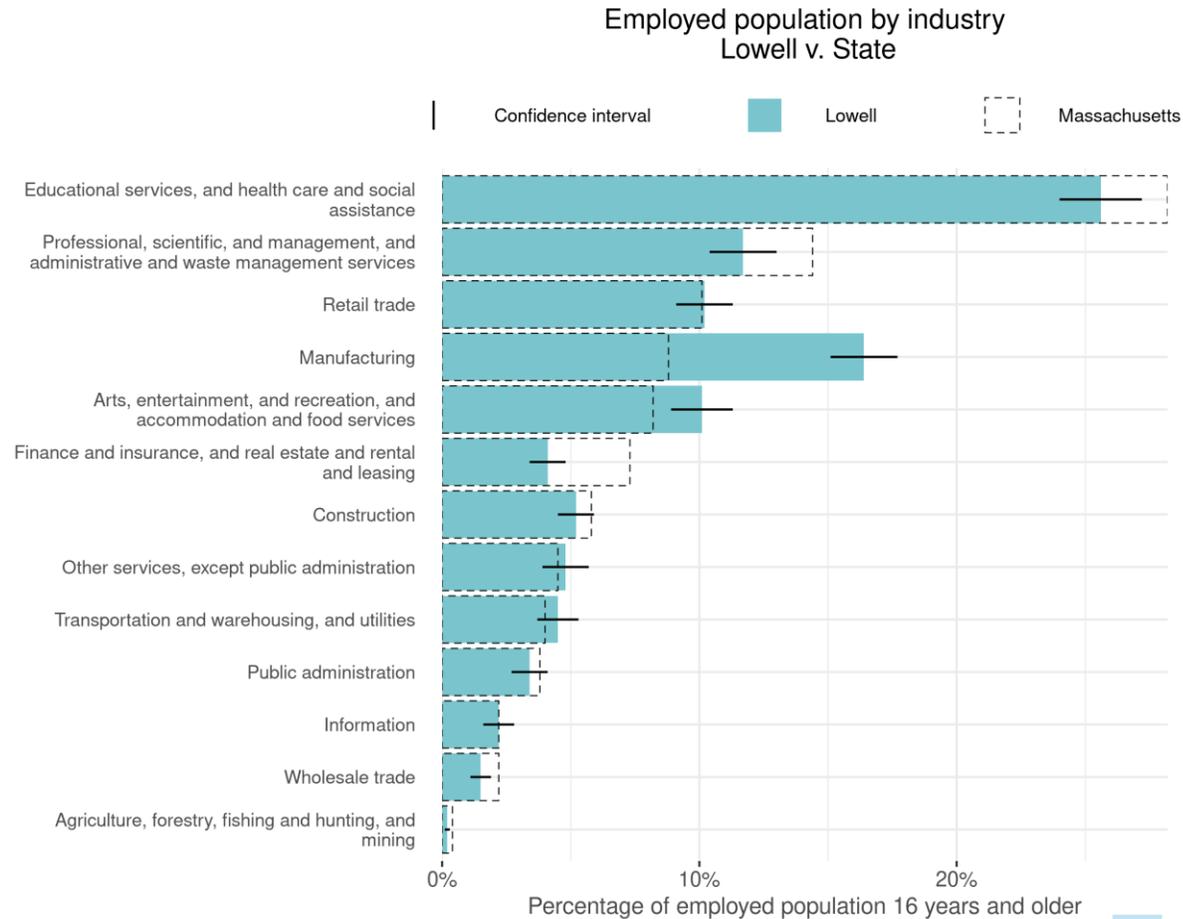
Employed population by occupation Lowell v. State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics



Let's try a Local Example



- This data shows that an overwhelming majority of Lowell's employed population work in education or social services, manufacturing, retail and other mid to low range earning roles.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics



Let's try a Local Example

This data shows that over 50% of renters and close to 30% of homeowners in Lowell are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened.

Lowell renter households by cost burden

Not burdened Cost burdened Severely cost burdened Not computed



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table B25070: Gross rent as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months



Lowell owner households by cost burden

Not computed Severely cost burdened Cost burdened Not burdened



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Table B25091: Mortgage Status by selected monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income in the past 12 months



Let's try a Local Example

- When put together,
 - “these two graphs show that our community is made up of community members who work countless hours to serve the needs of our families, businesses, and social services. These vital community members are also those spending the most on housing. Our continued advocacy for affordable housing options will ensure that Lowell is able to retain these residents and make our town a place where families do not have to decide between housing affordability and other basic costs.”
 - Use real-life examples



Mythbusting in Practice

Common Housing Misconceptions

- **Affordability/Multifamily Housing will be a net drain on the town's fiscal resources.**
- **My town has enough people.** Why do we want to attract more people by building more housing?
- **New housing will harm the environment and reduce our open space.**
- **New housing development will change the character of our community.**
- **We do not have the infrastructure** to support more housing (ex. Sewer or water)

Common Housing Misconceptions

- If misconceptions present themselves at a Public Meeting, Coalition Convening, or small group you can:
 - Listen
 - Humanize the problem through rephrasing
 - Pivot the energy stating data and/or relevant information
 - Frame the pivot in a way that identifies with your audience using case making and community organizing skills

Common Housing Misconceptions

- New housing development will **change the character of our community**.
 - Listen:
 - This speaker is concerned about their community becoming unrecognizable and is therefore apprehensive to change.
 - Humanize the problem through rephrasing:
 - “What I am hearing you say is that the character of our community is important to you, could you tell me what specifically you mean?”
 - Pivot the energy stating data and/or relevant information:
 - "This new inclusionary zoning change will allow us as residents to have a hand in reshaping the future of our community."
 - Frame the pivot in a way that identifies with your audience using case-making and community-organizing skills:
 - "Our parents moved into neighborhoods with character much different than their previous homes. Through our advocacy for inclusionary change we are extending that same opportunity to our children, and families like ours who seek to become a part of our community."

Confronting Misconceptions on Social Media

- Decide when to engage and when to scroll away
- If you decide to engage...
 - Refrain from repeating erroneous or negative narratives
 - Help illuminate facts, lived experiences, and use your facing misconception tools
 - Shift towards a more positive outlook
 - Take it case by case



Opportunity for Advocacy: MBTA Communities Act

Why was Section 3A passed and how will it benefit communities?

- A healthy regional economy requires housing at a variety of scales and price points
- State Legislature passed Section 3A near unanimously in 2020 as part of an Economic Development Bond Bill, Governor Baker signed in 2021
- This legislation requires 177 communities to create a zoning district where multifamily housing is allowed by right
- 3A encourages the production of "Missing Middle Housing", like triple-deckers and townhomes, near transit and local businesses
- More housing options = greater access and affordability
 - Older adults can downsize and stay near their grandchildren
 - Renters become homeowners
 - Teachers, firefighters, and other public servants can afford to live in the towns they serve
 - Small businesses thrive
 - We all benefit!

MBTA Communities in Your Region

- Dracut (Open Town Meeting on 11/18)
- Tewksbury (voted down in the spring, waiting to see outcome of Milton lawsuit)
- Billerica (potential Open Town Meeting on 12/12)
- Lowell (passed)
- Chelmsford (passed)
- Westford (passed)
- Tyngsborough (passed)

Connect with us!

CHAPA's MBTA Technical Assistance providers have resources for advocates

- Overview of the law
- Toolkits with talking points about community benefits
- Guidance on crafting an effective public comment
- Connecting you with other advocates, both locally and in the region

We are hosting a **Regional Organizing Call** on Tuesday November 12th, at 7:30pm:

- Billerica
- Lynnfield
- Wakefield
- Wilmington

Connect with CHAPA staff to learn more:

Lily Linke, [llinke@chapa.org](mailto:lilinke@chapa.org)

Will Rhatigan, wrhatigan@chapa.org



Thank You!

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