

# Why is Housing So Expensive?

Jesse Kanson-Benanav

A Better Cambridge

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017

- 
1. Everyone please rise
  1. Sit down if you have never attended a public meeting or hearing about a proposed development project near where you live.
  1. Sit down if you have never spoken up or offered testimony at such a meeting/hearing.
  2. Sit down if you have never spoken in favor of the development project that was the subject of a meeting/hearing.

There is a “new” acronym for everyone who is still standing – You’re “YIMBYs.”



# Who Am I?

- Trained urban planner
- 15 years in affordable housing advocacy, policy, and development
- Local politics & government
- Founder **A Better Cambridge**



Jesse Kanson-Benanav heads A Better Cambridge (ABC), a YIMBY advocacy group currently pressing for zoning reform to increase the number of affordable units in Cambridge. [SEEK ADYOUNG](#)

## YIMBY takes a stand against gentrification

Yes In My Backyard group advocates creating more affordable housing to meet de  
in the Boston area. Jesse Kanson-Benanav heads A Better Cambridge (ABC), a YIMBY advocacy group current  
the last century." Kanson-Benanav started ABC in 2012 in response to a petition to reduce hotel and  
great outdoor spaces, tremendous job opportunity and a higher quality of living." Grinnell advised "As if it were

## Business

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE JUNE 26, 2016 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/BUS

### SAYING YES TO DEVELOPMENT

If you have spent any time in the development world, you know the term NIMBY. Not in My Back Yard is a catchall term for neighbors who fight new projects over concerns about traffic, density, and property values. NIMBYs have successfully cut back or killed many a development in Greater Boston.

Now they've spawned a countermovement: YIMBY — Yes in My Back Yard. YIMBYs are a small but growing group of activists pushing for more housing and development, under the theory that building more is the only way this crowded and costly region can remain affordable to everyday people.

One of the most active pro-growth YIMBY groups is A Better Cambridge, chaired by Jesse Kanson-Benanav (right), while others have sprouted in Roslindale, Newton, and Andover. They mobilize to contest zoning changes and other rules that discourage development and drive up costs.

There was even a national conference in Colorado last year to share war stories and strategies. A second is set for July.

In a local political climate where development debates often boil down to builders vs. neighbors, the emergence of a third group — independent pro-housing advo-

# What is a YIMBY?

**Y**es

**I**n

**M**y

**B**ack

**Y**ard

# What is a YIMBY?

- Emerging political movement in U.S. (and global) of local citizens supporting higher density residential and mixed-use development in their communities



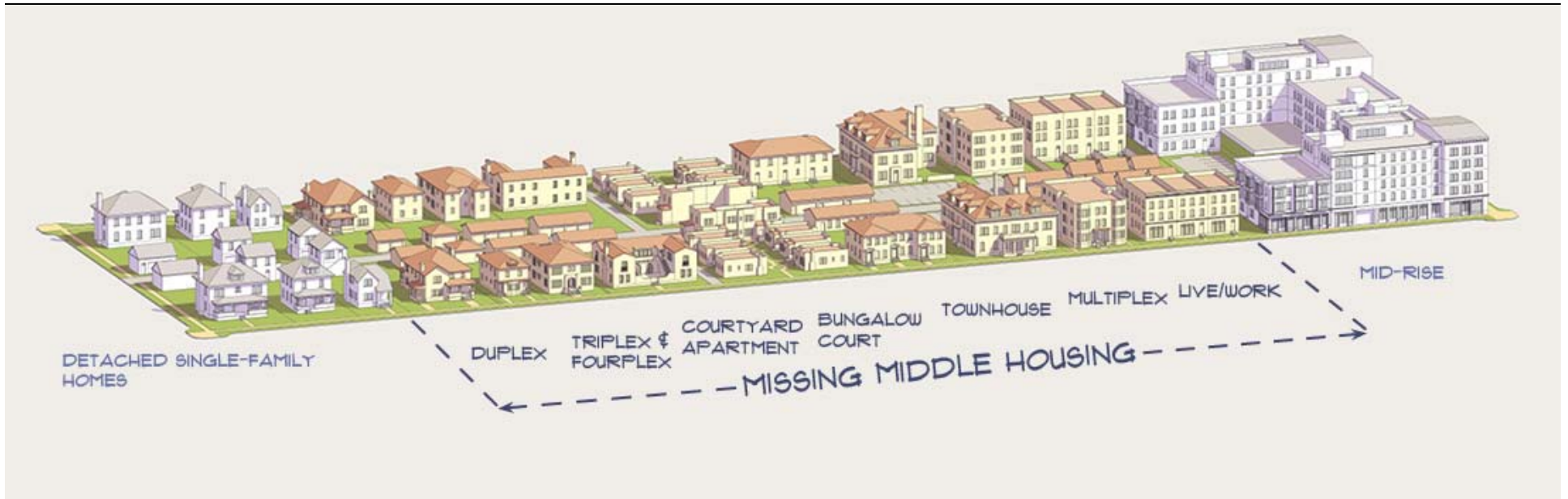


# Growing National Movement



- **No national organization or 'manifesto'**
- **Informal network of local activists and organizations**
- **Particular urban development challenges of their own communities**

# What is Density?





# Why YIMBY?

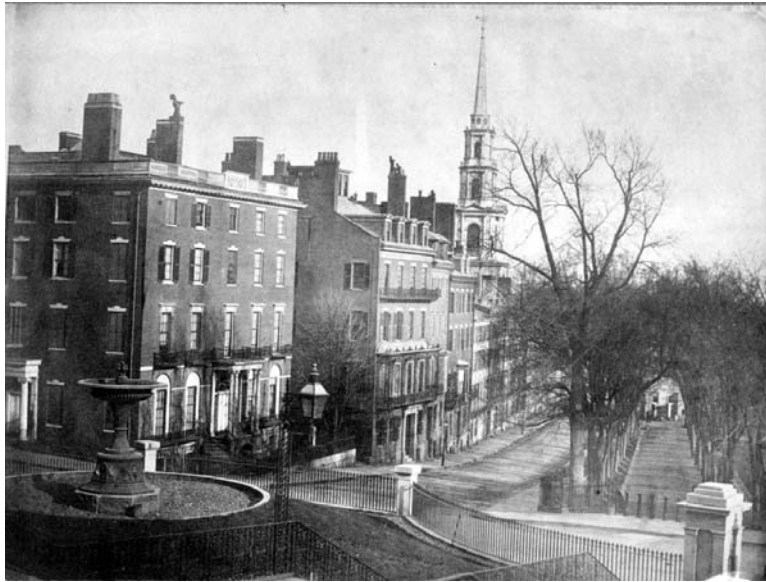
- New integrationist movement
- Higher density housing – affordable, mixed-income, & market rate
- Address the massive inequities/exclusion & environmental destruction caused by physical & social development of American communities





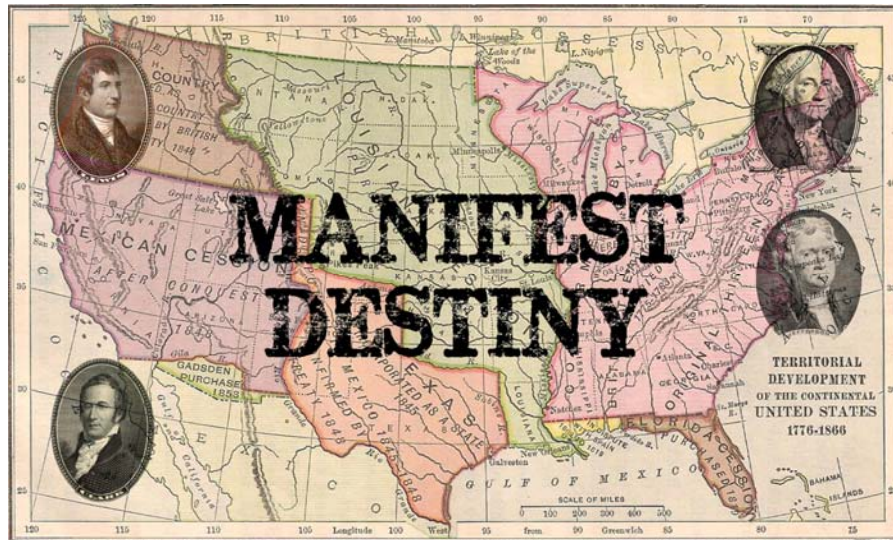
# Density Throughout US History

- European influence on colonial communities



# Density Throughout US History

- 19<sup>th</sup> century western land expansion



PRODUCTS WILL PAY FOR LAND AND IMPROVEMENTS!

# MILLIONS OF ACRES

View on the Big Bear, between Camden and Crest, representing Valley and Rolling Prairie Land in Nebraska.

## IOWA AND NEBRASKA LANDS

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BY THE  
**Burlington & Missouri River R.R. Co.**

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Only One-Seventh of Principal Due Annually, beginning Four Years after purchase.  
30 PER CENT. DEDUCTED FROM 10 YEARS PRICE, FOR CASH.

**LAND EXPLORING TICKETS SOLD**  
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These **LAND BUYERS GET A FREE PASS** in the State where the Land bought is located.  
These **TERMS ARE BETTER** at \$5, than to purchase United States Land at \$2.50 per Acre.  
EXTRAORDINARY INDUCEMENTS on FREIGHT and PASSAGE are AFFORDED TO PURCHASERS and THEIR FAMILIES.

Address **GEO. S. HARRIS, LAND COMMISSIONER,**  
or **T. H. LEAVITT, Ass't Land Comm'r,** Burlington, Iowa.

Or apply to

FREE ROOMS for buyers to board themselves are provided at Burlington and Lincoln.

CIRCULARS are supplied GRATIS for distribution in ORGANIZING COLONIES and to induce individuals to emigrate WEST.

A SECTIONAL MAP, showing exact location of our IOWA LANDS is sold for 30 Cents, and of NEBRASKA LANDS for 50 Cents.

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING FROM THE PUBLISHER, BOSTON, U.S.A.



# Density throughout US History

- 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cities & Post-WWI Suburban Expansion

THE MONDAY OREGONIAN, PORTLAND, MARCH 10, 1963

## PORTLAND HEIGHTS

IN A CLASS BY ITSELF HAS NO RIVALS IS ABOVE ALL

As a mother watching over the City, she reaches down and lifts her tired children from the dust and smoke of the crowded city, and places them on the beautiful evergreen hills overlooking the rivers and mountains

### GREATER PORTLAND HEIGHTS—A GLIMPSE INTO THE NEAR FUTURE

**ELEVATION**  
The Elevation of Portland Heights is from 600 to 1100 Feet, an elevation to the future. Transportation will bring several hundred feet higher than any section of the East Side.

**CAR SERVICE**  
During the winter there, while the roads are not completely cleared, the Portland Heights, with its regular street car service, will be the most convenient way to get to the heights. The street car service will be on the line, and the line extended to about 22 stations. It will be an excellent service, and it will be the most convenient way to get to the heights. The street car service will be on the line, and the line extended to about 22 stations. It will be an excellent service, and it will be the most convenient way to get to the heights.

**TAKE A STROLL THROUGH THE PROPERTY TODAY**  
Take an afternoon stroll on the Heights. You will find it a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place.

**D. E. KEASEY & COMPANY**  
Exclusive Dealers in Portland Heights Property

Come to "The Little Office on the Big Hill," Opposite the Ainsworth School. Or Room 7 Chamber of Commerce. Phone MA 1-1111

### Levittown OFFERS every modern city convenience plus country comfort \$8490

3 different exterior, all authentic Cape Cod architecture

**compare** the structural and accessory features of these remarkable homes, built by Levitt & Sons!

**compare** the community advantages only Levittown offers, at NO EXTRA COST!

- Spacious lot, minimum 4,000 square feet, mature shrubs, lawns and trees.
- Modern kitchen, with exhaust fan, G-I range and refrigerator. Double window. Every cabinet steel oak and steel cabinets.
- 3 comfortable, beautiful bedrooms, with choice of color schemes.
- Colonial style bathroom, with built-in tub and shower.
- Living office, with for 2 more bedrooms.
- Old Barber, Kaufmann's, Mar Water, and many other stores.
- Shopping center, including theater, movie house, and many other stores.
- Access, via major roads, to all city services.
- 8 bus, modern schools within walking distance.
- 4 complete shopping centers, within minutes of your home.
- Fast, frequent transportation—120 buses daily from West-Long and Bluffton stations.
- 8 supervised chessmanship, swimming pools, clubhouses for residents.
- Adult education courses.
- Nursery school.
- Sabbath school.
- Many fully-equipped playgrounds, tennis courts, parks.
- 30 churches and synagogues of every faith.
- Active community center, including theater group.
- Youth center and organized activities.
- Community library, including mobile van.
- Movie theater and bowling alley.
- No through traffic streets, safe for children.
- U. S. Post Office.

**Levittown**  
Levitt & Sons  
Levittown, N.J. 07030  
P.E.S. 4636

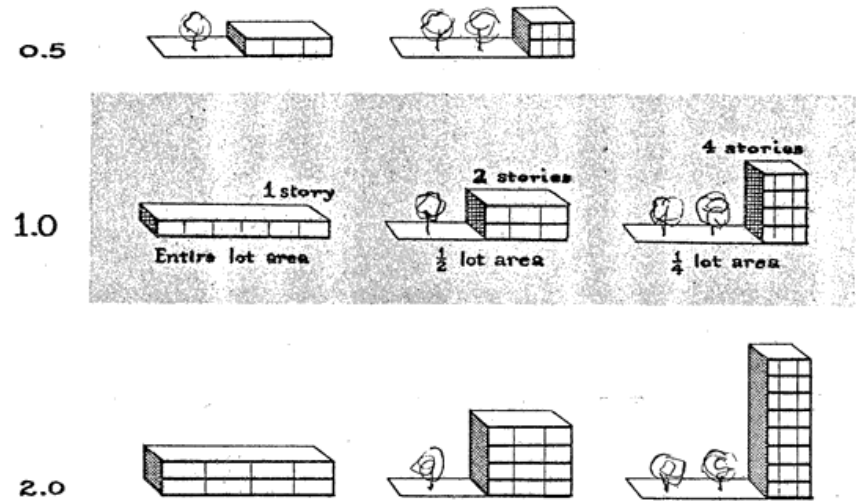
"After total war can come total living"

**PORTLAND HEIGHTS**  
Portland Heights is a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place. It is a beautiful and interesting place.



# Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- *Exclusionary land use policies = exclusionary communities*



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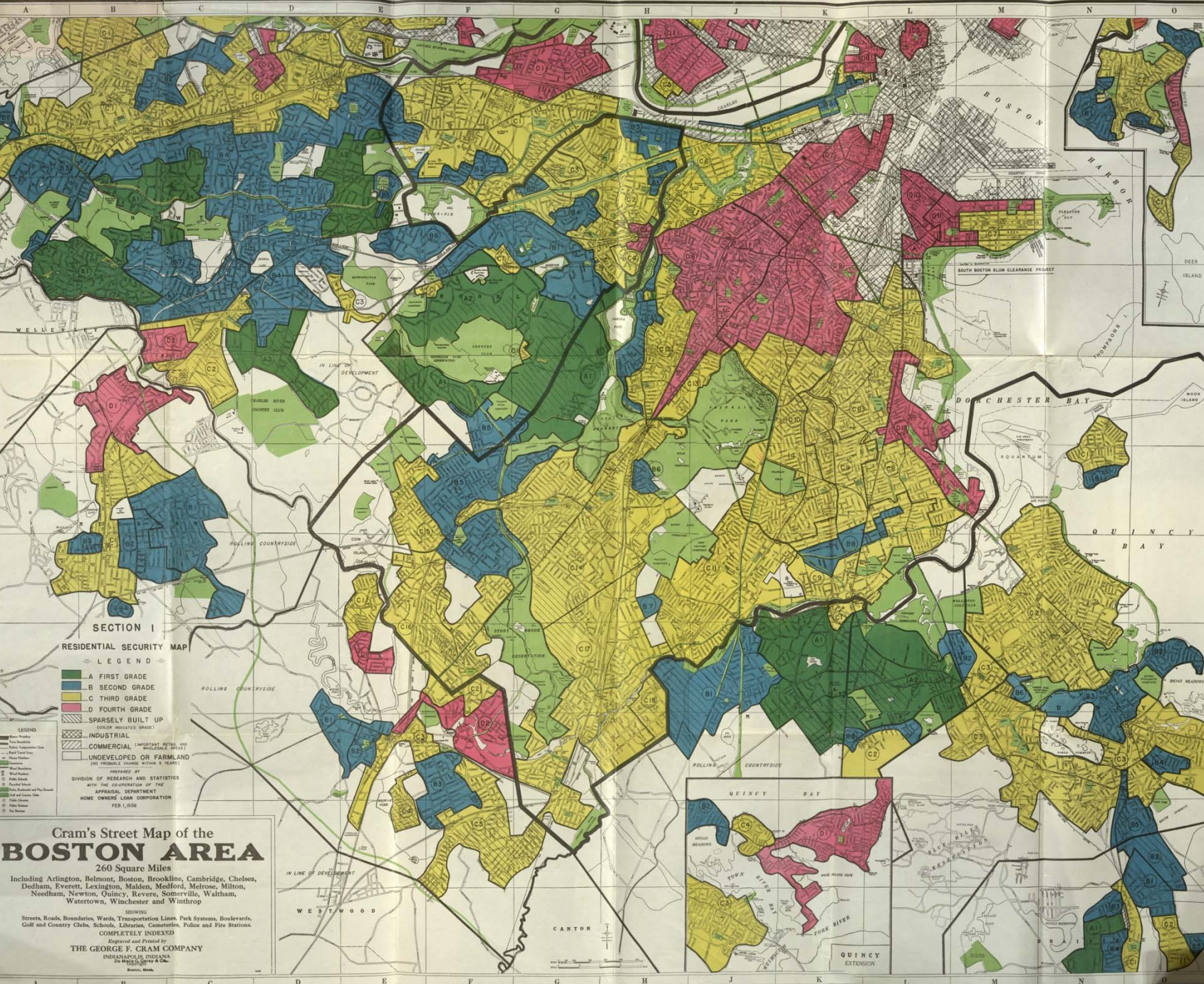
# Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Racial segregation

*Natural or artificially established **barriers will prove effective in protecting a neighborhood and the locations within it from adverse influences . . . [including] prevention of the infiltration of business and industrial uses, lower class occupancy, and inharmonious racial groups – FHA, 1938***







**SECTION I**  
RESIDENTIAL SECURITY MAP

LEGEND

- A FIRST GRADE
  - B SECOND GRADE
  - C THIRD GRADE
  - D FOURTH GRADE
  - SPARSELY BUILT UP (COLOR INDICATES GRADE)
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - COMMERCIAL
  - UNDEVELOPED OR FARMLAND (NO PROBABLE CHANGE WITHIN 5 YEARS)
- PREPARED BY THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND STATISTICS WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE APPRAISAL DEPARTMENT HOME OWNERS LOAN CORPORATION FEB. 1, 1936

**Cram's Street Map of the BOSTON AREA**  
260 Square Miles

Including Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Dedham, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Needham, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown, Winchester and Winthrop

SHOWING Streets, Roads, Boundaries, Wards, Transportation Lines, Park Systems, Boulevards, Golf and Country Clubs, Schools, Libraries, Cemeteries, Police and Fire Stations. COMPLETELY INDEXED

THE GEORGE F. CRAM COMPANY  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

**ABC**



# Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Urban Divestment





# Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Fossil Fuel/Greenhouse Gas Emissions



**It's Making '55 Famous—For Fun!**

*For sheer driving pleasure, Chevrolet's stealing the thunder from the high-priced cars.*

Let's be frank. Up to now, maybe there were reasons for wanting one of the higher priced cars. If you desired something really special in the way of driving fun, you simply had to pay a premium to get it. Usually, a big one!

Not any more! The Motoramic Chevrolet is taking the play away from the high-priced cars with pure excitement on wheels!

Chevrolet's new "Turbo-Fire V8" puts a

heaping hoodful of fun under your foot—162 h.p.! (Special to adventure lovers: 180 h.p. "Super Turbo-Fire V8" is optional at extra cost.) You can also choose from the two highest powered 6's in the low-price field.

As for drives, just name it. Chevrolet offers Overdrive, super-smooth Powerglide (extra-cost options) and a new and finer Synchro-Mesh transmission.

Find out how the Motoramic Chevrolet puts new fun in *your* driving life! Take the key at your Chevrolet dealer's—and you'll want it for keeps! . . . Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit 2, Michigan.

Motoramic  See and drive it at your Chevrolet dealer's adtlip.com





# Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Loss of farmland, natural landscapes/green fields



# Density through Smart Growth

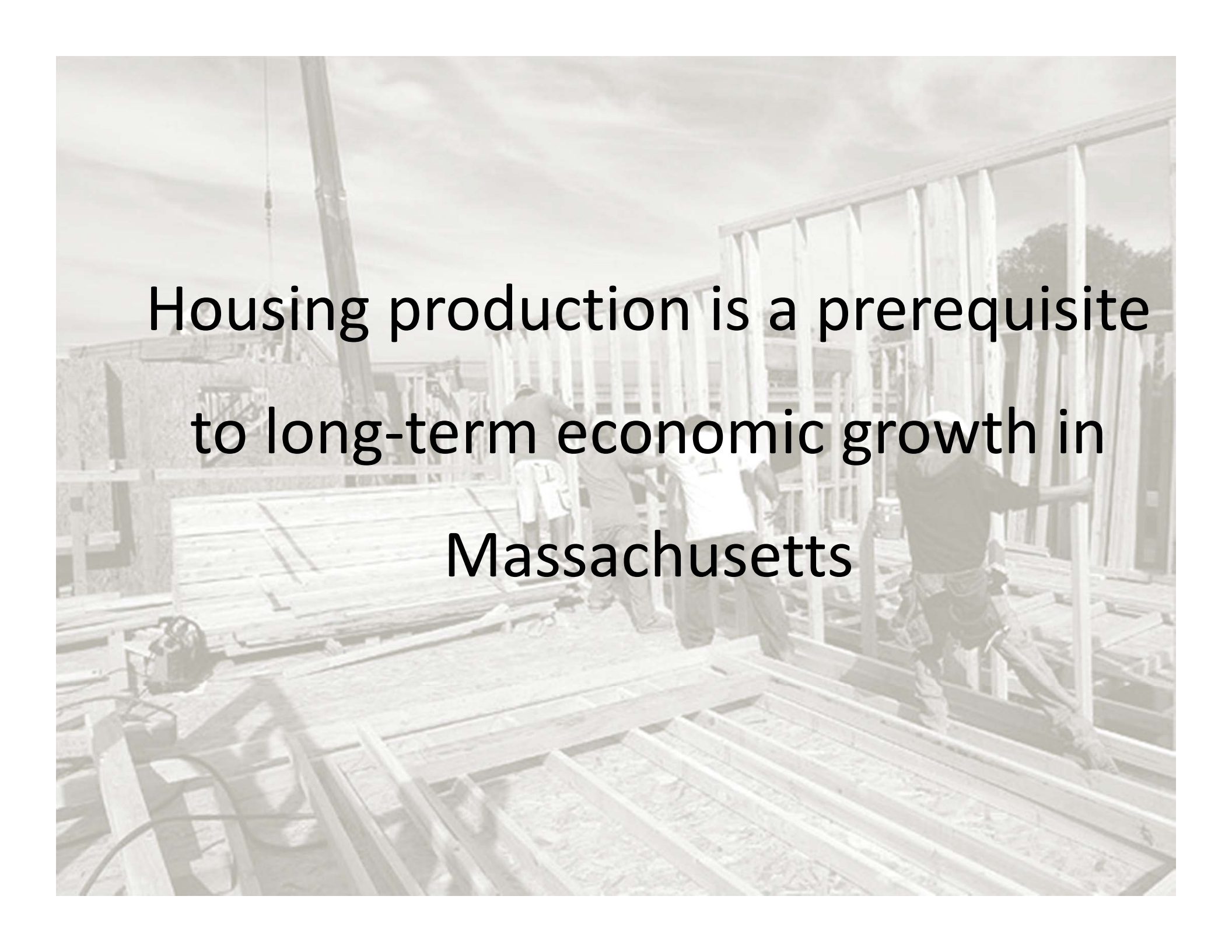


# Benefits of Density: Housing

- Building Inclusive communities



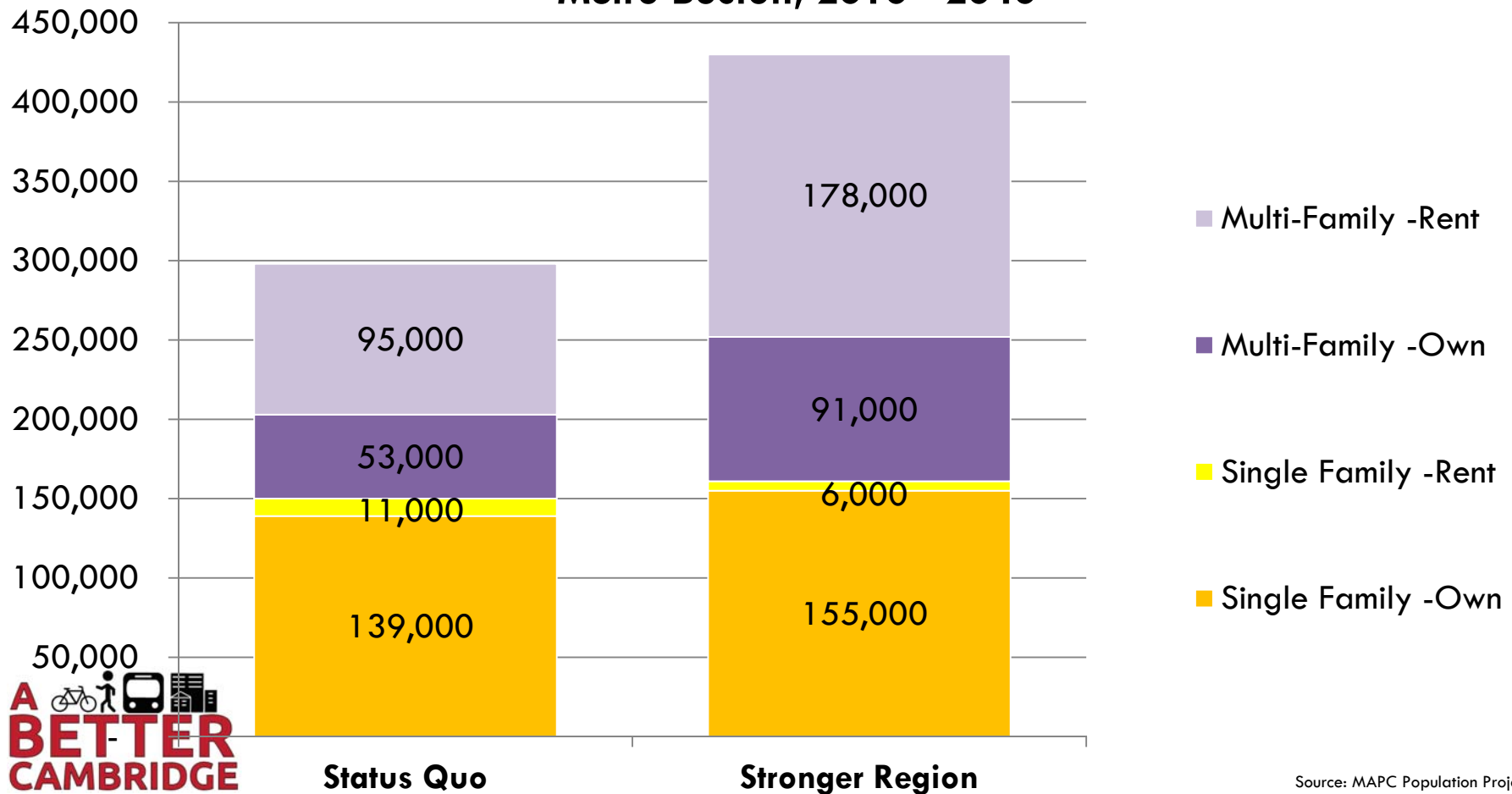




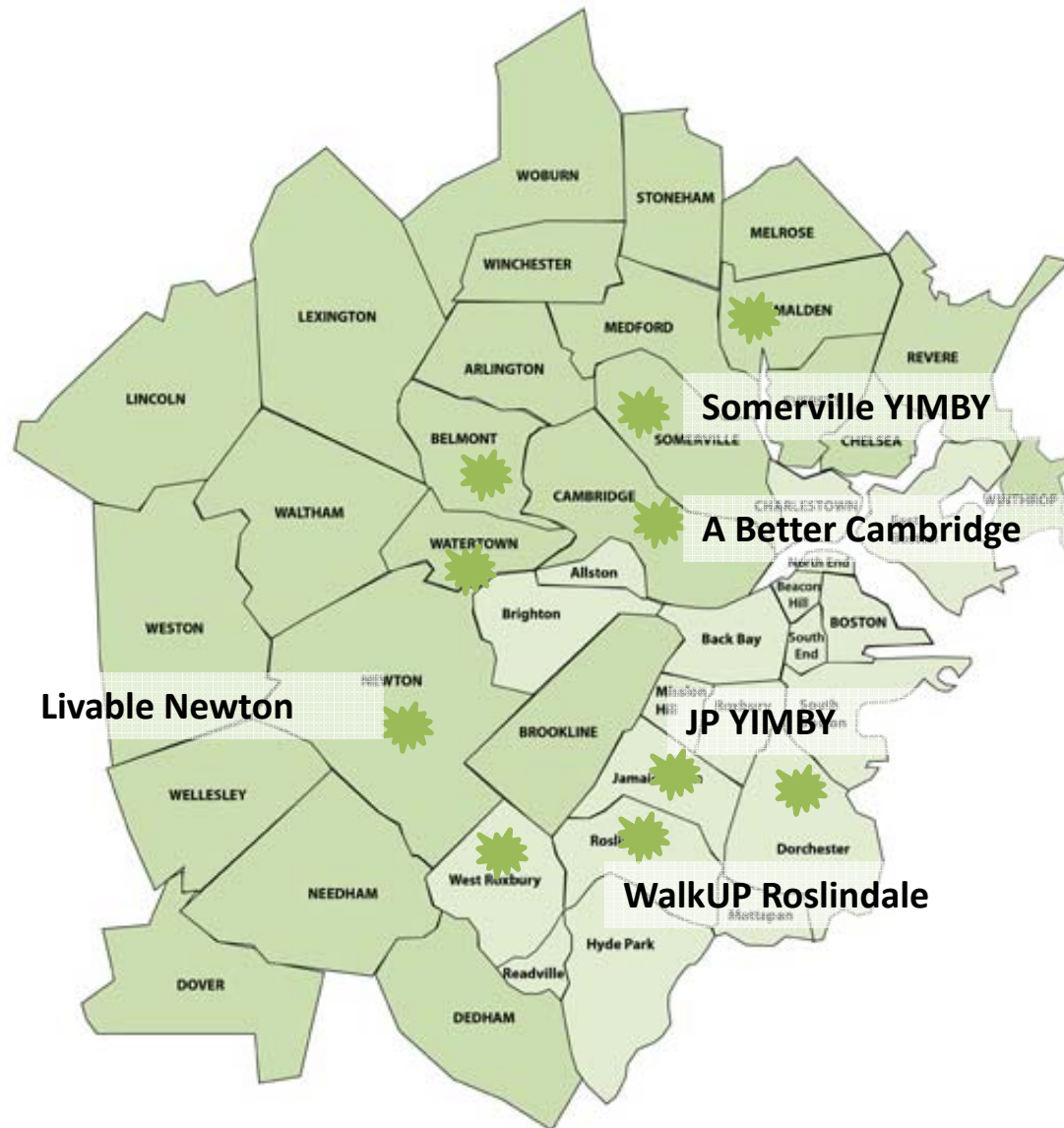
Housing production is a prerequisite  
to long-term economic growth in  
Massachusetts

# 435,000 new units in Metro Boston, ~500,000 units statewide, by 2040


Total Net Housing Demand, by Type,  
Metro Boston, 2010 - 2040



# YIMBY in Greater Boston





**A**      
**BETTER**  
**CAMBRIDGE**

# Our Vision

- ABC believes that, for Cambridge to continue to live up to its promise, we must solve our housing affordability crisis. The only way to do that is to build new homes. Increasing density is crucial to racial justice, environmental sustainability and quality of life.
- <http://abettercambridge.org/platform>



# Founding ABC

***The Personal is Political***

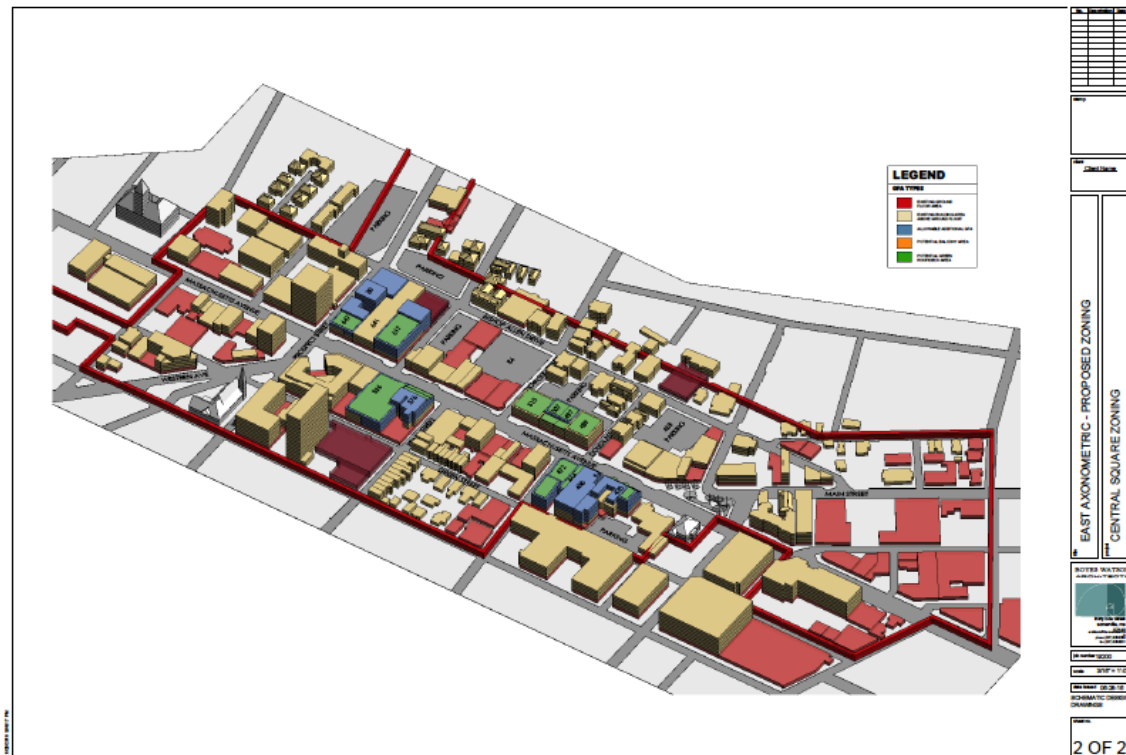
# What ABC Does

- Advocate for policy: zoning changes, planning processes
- Support smart growth development proposals
- Education
  - Educational forums
  - Candidate Education



# Advocate for/against Policy Changes

- YES: Central Square Restoration Petition



- NO: Politicize Special Permit Granting Authority

# Supporting Smart Development





# Public Education



# Political Education





# Political Education



## 2015 CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE RATINGS

\* ANALYSIS BASED ON CANDIDATE RESPONSES TO A BETTER CAMBRIDGE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

	<b>DENSITY</b> Past planning efforts in Cambridge such as K2C2 have recommended greater housing density to be developed around transportation nodes in Cambridge. Do you support this approach?  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of: "Strongly support."</i>	<b>BUILDING HEIGHTS</b> Cambridge should allow taller buildings in certain areas if that height results in more affordable housing units.  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of: "Strongly Agree."</i>	<b>GROWTH</b> More people wish to live in cities and Cambridge, as an attractive place to live, will see increasing demand for places for these people to live. Should Cambridge: • Address change by allowing more housing and increased height/density? • Seek to limit growth by maintaining its current restrictions on height/density?  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of: "Allowing more housing and increased density"</i>	<b>MARKET RATE HOUSING</b> Increasing the supply of market rate housing will mitigate upward pressure on housing costs in Cambridge.  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of: "Strongly Agree."</i>	<b>AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b> The affordable housing crisis in Cambridge should be addressed without private development and through the expenditure of public money alone.  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of "Strongly Disagree."</i>	<b>MASTER PLAN</b> Do you support moving forward on existing large development proposals or other opportunities that may arise (i.e., MIT Kendall Square development, Volpe redevelopment) during the Cambridge master planning process?  <i>Maximum points (2) for answer of: "Strongly Support."</i>	<b>PARKING</b> Should Cambridge reduce/eliminate minimum parking requirements in the zoning code for new developments in areas well served by transit, bike share, and other alternative transportation options?  <i>Maximum points (2) for an answer of: "Yes."</i>	<b>TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT</b> Vehicle emissions in the United States are a major contributor towards global climate change. Building more mixed housing and commercial developments near transportation centers will help reduce car use in Cambridge.  <i>Maximum points for an answer of: "Strongly Agree."</i>	<b>CITY COUNCIL AUTHORITY</b> Do you believe it is the appropriate role for the City Council to review specific development proposals/special permit requests – a power they do not currently have?  <i>Maximum points for an answer of: "No."</i>	<b>MASS + MAIN</b> As a city councillor in the past City Council term, did you or would you have voted to support or oppose the final Mass & Main zoning proposal that included over 20% (50 units) of affordable housing?  <i>Maximum points for answer of: "Yes."</i>	<b>CANDIDATE VISION</b> Please describe your vision for Cambridge's future in the areas addressed by ABC's organizational mission and goals.  <i>Maximum points = 10</i>	<b>CANDIDATE TOP 3 POLICIES</b> Please name and describe three specific policies that the City Council can adopt to address the housing affordability crisis in Cambridge.  <i>Maximum points = 15</i>	<b>TOTAL ABC RATING</b>
Leland Cheung	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	10	15	45
Marc McGovern	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	10	13	41
David Maher	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	10	12	40
E. Denise Simmons	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	10	13	40
Dennis A. Benzan	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	5	14	37
Craig Kelley	1	1	2	1	2	2	-2	1	2	2	7	11	30
John Sanzone*	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	5	7	30
Tim Toomey	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	5	8	30
Mariko Davidson	2	2	2	-1	1	2	2	2	2	1	6	8	29
Gregg Moree	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-2	2	0	0	16
Nadeem Mazen	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	-2	-2	1	5	13
Minka vanBeuzekom	0	1	0	1	2	-1	2	2	2	-2	2	3	12
Jan Devereux	0	1	1	-1	1	1	1	1	-2	-2	2	5	8
Romaine Wait	-1	-1	0	-1	1	-1	2	1	-2	-2	5	2	3
James Williamson	0	-1	-2	-1	2	1	2	0	-2	-2	0	5	2
Paul Mahoney	1	1	2	-1	2	-1	-2	1	-2	0	-	-	1
Mike Cannolly	1	1	0	-1	1	-1	0	-1	-2	-2	1	0	-3
Kim Courtney	-1	1	-2	-1	1	-1	-2	-1	-2	-2	2	4	-4

Yes in YOUR Back Yard





# For more information...

<http://abettercambridge.org>

<http://yimby.wiki>

tw: @ABetterCambMA

tw: @JesseKB

fb: ABetterCambridge