

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

The home is the center of life - a refuge from the grind of work, pressure of school, menace of the streets, a place to be ourselves.

~ Matthew Desmond,
Evicted: Poverty and Profit in
the American City

INTRODUCTION¹

Lexington is a suburban community of 34,454 located in Middlesex County, approximately fifteen miles west northwest of Boston. Two major highways – Routes 2 and 95 - respectively edge the southern and western edges of the Town, and the Alewife MBTA station stands roughly six miles to the east in Cambridge. Proximity to these routes and their connections to jobs in Boston and Cambridge and along the I-95 corridor, as well as the excellent school system, has made the Town a sought-after place to settle, raise children, and retire.

Lexington's desirability has created several housing challenges. The Town has attracted high earners and in 2019, had one of the highest mean household incomes in Massachusetts. This has led to rising housing costs, making homeownership less and less possible for many. In 2019, the average home price was nearly

¹ Information for the foregoing chapter has been culled from the US Census Bureau, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Housing Service Organization and Town of Lexington. Not all



An historic home on Bedford Street, undergoing rehabilitation. While "tear-downs" of historic homes have become increasingly popular in Lexington, some property-owners/developers opt for preservation.

\$900,000 and average monthly rents were \$2,475.² Thirty percent of all households, including homeowners and renters, are "housing cost burdened," spending more than 30% of their monthly gross income on housing. Since enacting its first zoning bylaw in 1924, Lexington has continued to increase residential dimensional requirements, resulting in construction of larger, and

data reflect the same date(s) and inconsistencies exist in some statistics.

² As of September 2021, the median selling price of a home in Lexington over the previous 12 months was \$1,500,000 (source: MLS Property Information Network, Inc.)

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- More than one in five Lexington households qualifies as low-income [defined as 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)]. For a household of two, low income is \$80,850. Nearly one-third of Lexington's households are cost burdened by housing, spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing.
- Lexington's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) rate (10.8%) is slightly above the state's threshold of 10%, however some units in this inventory are actually market rate. Only 5.5% of housing is truly affordable, and in the 2012-2021 timeframe gained a net of three affordable housing units (1332 in 2012 and 1335 in 2021).
- Approximately 19% of Lexington households are made of up older adults (age 65+) and by 2030, this population is expected to reach 27%. Demand for affordable housing for older adults is high, as indicated by the long waiting lists for both state and federal senior housing. The wait time for these units is four or more years.
- Opportunity exists, through provisions of the recently-enacted Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020, to amend Lexington's zoning bylaw through a simple majority vote to open up more housing options, including accessory dwelling units, multi-family housing, mix-use developments, and others.

larger homes. In recent years, builders of new houses have resorted to tearing down smaller homes and replacing them with homes 258% (on average) larger. These new structures, with more extensive utility systems and expansive areas of impervious surface, place greater strain on the environment.

The following chapter focuses on the status of housing in Lexington, including snapshots of household and housing characteristics, housing affordability and need, and past efforts on the part of the Town to achieve housing equity. It concludes with a summary of housing issues and challenges, as well as opportunities for better accommodating Lexington residents' future housing needs.



POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM OR LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF COVID-19

- Many Lexington residents who commuted to jobs in Boston, Cambridge, and along the I-95 corridor before the onset of COVID-19 and have been working remotely from home, may continue to do so into the future. Housing policy, including zoning bylaw provisions, will need to acknowledge this change and be amended accordingly.
- Lexington residents who have worked in the service industry may have experienced temporary or permanent lost in employment. These individuals will likely face an

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

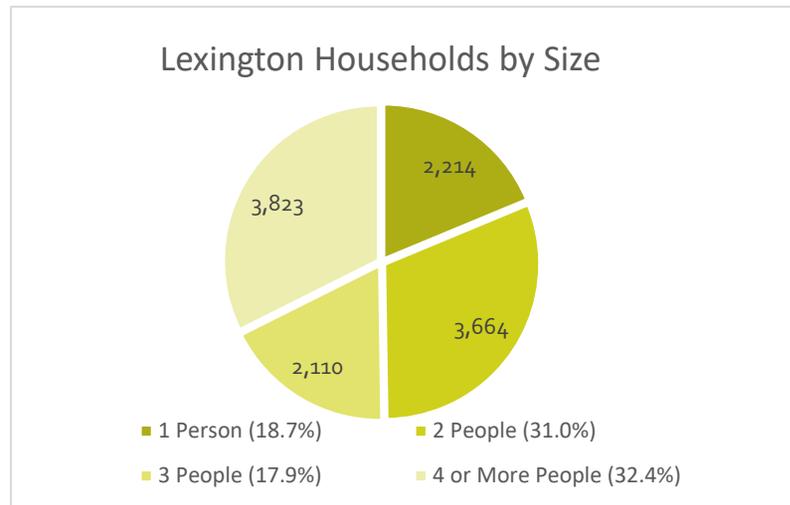
increasing housing cost burden, ultimately placing greater demand on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

- Increased demand for larger homes with access to private and public outdoor space may put further pressure on Lexington’s housing prices.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The number of households in any community is equal to the number of occupied housing (or dwelling) units. Since 1940, Lexington has seen a 450% increase in the number of households, while the population has not quite tripled. This means that the average size of each household has decreased,

Figure 1. Households by Size.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

from approximately 4.91 individuals per household in 1940 to just 2.73 in 2019.

HOUSEHOLD TYPES

The United States Census tracks the number and characteristics of households in communities throughout the country. While the traditional definition of “family” is a two-parent household with one or more children, the census has been broadened to include many other constellations, all of which are considered families. Married couples continue to dominate households in Lexington, as well as the neighboring towns of Arlington and Burlington, whereas in the Metro Boston-Cambridge area and across Massachusetts as a whole, non-family (mostly single person) households make up a greater percentage of housing occupancy. These percentages appear in Table 1.

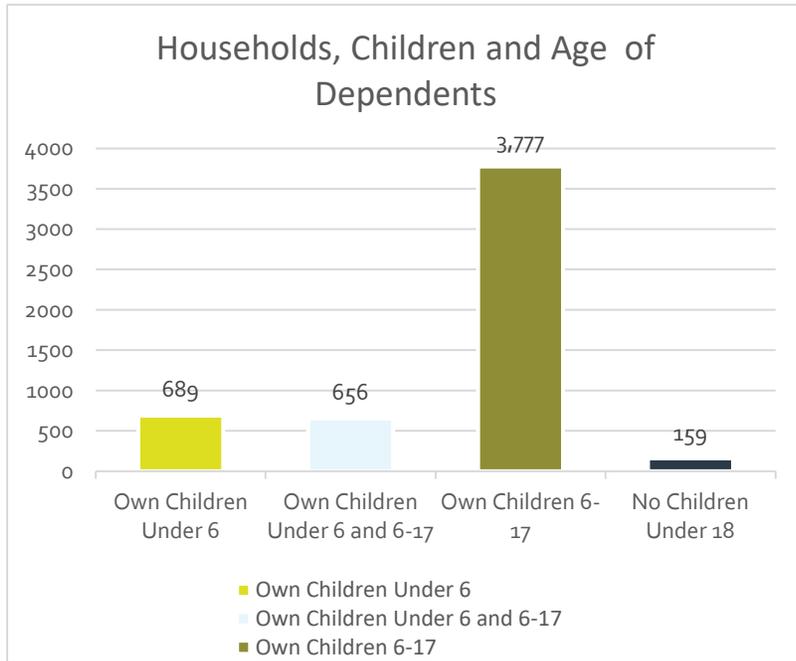
Table 1. Household Types: Lexington, Neighboring Towns, Metro-Boston, Massachusetts

Household Type	Lexington	Arlington	Burlington	Boston	Massachusetts
Married Couple	71.7%	50.0%	63.3%	48.2%	47.1%
Single Parent (M)	2.6%	2.3%	2.4%	4.2%	4.3%
Single Parent (F)	5.1%	8.7%	8.2%	11.2%	12.1%
Non-Family	20.2%	39.1%	26.1%	36.4%	36.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

**LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES**

Figure 2. Lexington's Households, Children and Age of Dependents



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Households with four or more people are the most common Lexington, representing 32.4% of all households in town, with two-person households representing a close second at 31.0%. Approximately one-fifth of Lexington's households consist of single persons living alone. Rental units house both families and single persons equally (one-half occupied by families and one-half by single persons).

Families make up 80% of Lexington's households, with 69% of families consisting of children between the ages of 6 and 17. Non-families make up approximately 20% of Lexington's households, and nearly 60% of these are persons over the age of 65.

HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY INCOMES

Lexington has one of the highest median household incomes in Massachusetts, estimated in 2019 to be \$186,201 per year, and a per capita income of \$82,557. Median incomes were highest, over \$250,000, in households with both spouses working but in households with one earner, the median income was \$159,514,

Table 2. Median House and Family Income in Lexington, 2010-2019 (adjusted for inflation)

Year	Median Household	Per Capita
2010	\$ 130,637	\$ 64,419
2011	\$ 136,610	\$ 67,584
2012	\$ 138,095	\$ 70,132
2013	\$ 139,561	\$ 76,261
2014	\$ 137,456	\$ 69,064
2015	\$ 149,306	\$ 77,377
2016	\$ 152,872	\$ 75,797
2017	\$ 162,083	\$ 74,427
2018	\$ 172,750	\$ 77,570
2019	\$ 186,201	\$ 82,557

Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

**LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES**

close to that of Lexington’s household median. Household income has steadily risen over the past decade, at an average rate of 5% per year. Lexington’s figures exceed the 2019 median income for households in the Metro Boston Area (\$82,383) and far exceed household median for the entire state (\$85,843). Lexington has, and continues to be in a strong economic position, and housing types, sizes and prices reflect this.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

HOUSING STOCK

The number of housing units in Lexington has grown over the past 80 years, even in decades when the Town’s total population decreased. However, the largest growth occurred after the end of World War II, when Lexington began its transition from a rural small town to a Boston suburb. Between 1940 and 1970, the number housing units increased, on average, more than 50% each decade, adding more than 6,000 total units. Development continued at a slower pace through the 1990s, and then slowed considerably between 1990 and 2020 at a pace that matched population growth. As of 2020, Lexington had 12,310 dwelling units, over three-quarters of which were one-unit, detached homes.

Table 3. Number of Dwelling Units in Lexington, 1940-2020

Year	Population	Change		Dwelling Units	Change	
		#	%		#	%
1940	13,187			2,688		
1950	17,335	4,148	31.5%	4,314	1,626	60.5%
1960	27,691	10,356	59.7%	7,182	2,868	66.5%
1970	31,886	4,195	15.1%	8,859	1,677	23.4%
1980	29,479	(2,407)	-7.5%	9,781	922	10.4%
1990	28,974	(505)	-1.7%	10,841	1,060	10.8%
2000	30,355	1,381	4.8%	11,333	492	4.5%
2010	31,394	1,039	3.4%	12,019	686	6.1%
2020	34,454	3,060	9.7%	12,310	291	1.8%

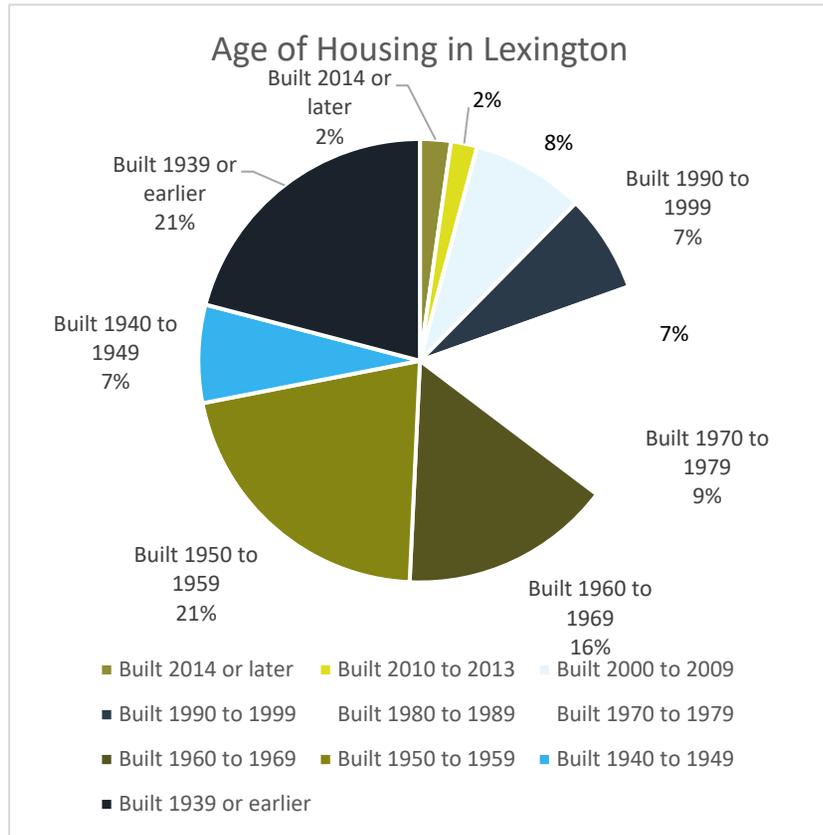
Source: US Census Bureau Data

AGE OF HOUSING

As illustrated in Figure 3, over 50% of Lexington’s housing units were built before 1960, and just 12% were constructed after 2000. The Town’s European history dates to the mid-1700s, and many of homes from the 18th century, as well as the 19th and 20th, have been preserved. Several architect-designed Mid-Century Modern homes stand in clustered in neighborhoods adding to this eclectic mix of architectural styles. Historic homes have been and continue to be some of the most desirable properties in Lexington. Alternatively, smaller homes built in the post-World War II housing boom have been considered by some to be too modest and are thus seen as candidates for replacement. In the last two decades, several such homes have been demolished and replaced with significantly larger structures, on average 258% larger.

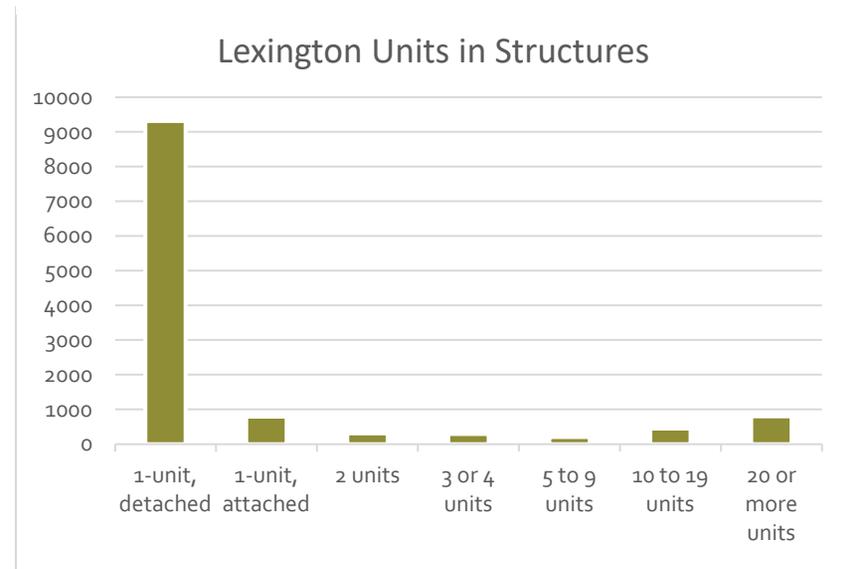
LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

Figure 3. Age of Lexington's Homes.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Figure 4. Lexington Units in Structures.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

dwelling units; one-unit attached dwellings add another 6.5% of housing stock, bringing the single-family unit total of 83.1% of all housing. Multi-family units containing ten or more units make up just 10.2% of housing. Over 75% of all housing has three or more bedrooms. In contrast, neighboring Waltham and Arlington offer a wider range of housing types including, buildings with ten or more units that respectively make up 20.8% and 20.7% of all housing.

UNITS IN STRUCTURES

The number of units in buildings is an indicator of the diversity of the housing stock within a community. In Lexington, single-family (one-unit), detached houses make up 76.6% of the total

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

TENURE AND UNITS IN STRUCTURES

The US Census Bureau estimates that 96 percent of Lexington's housing units are occupied, and of these, 81.7 percent of are owner-occupied and 18.3 percent are rented. Over 20% of Lexington residents have lived in their homes for at least thirty years; just 7% have lived in their homes less than five years.

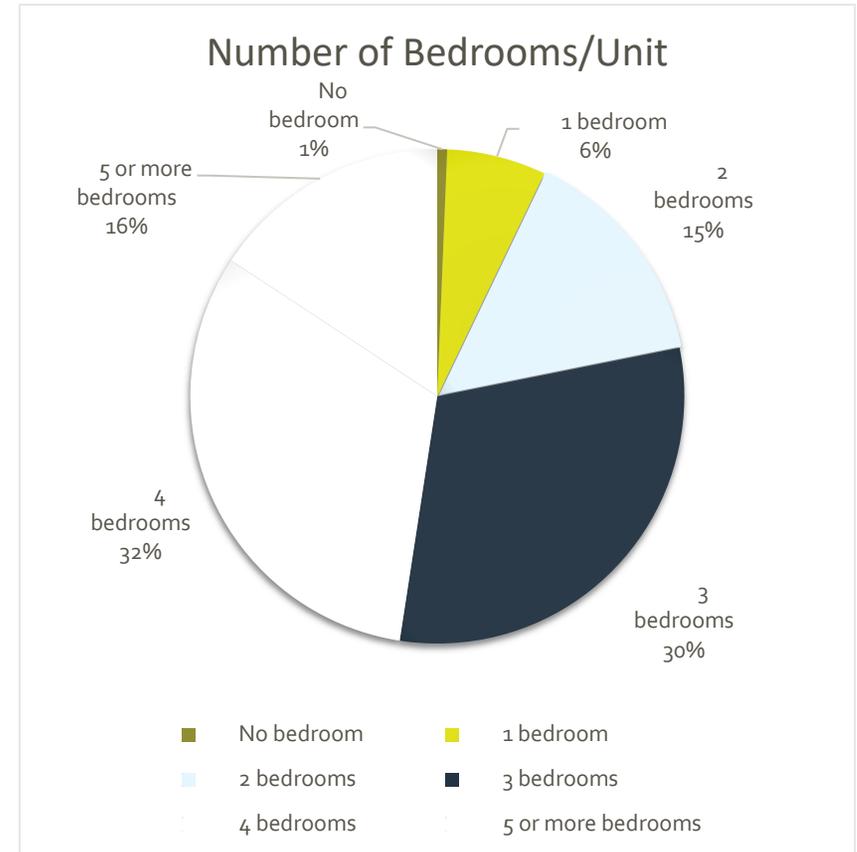
BUILDING PERMITS

Building permits are issued to property owners or builders in the initial stages of house construction, and the number of permits issued over a certain period (e.g. decade) can be an indicator of a trend or trends in housing. Over the past twenty years, little vacant land has been available for construction of new homes and as a consequence, property owners have torn down older houses, and replaced them with new larger homes. In the two decades between 1998 and 2017, 1,227 houses were torn down and replaced by new homes. In the last decade, the Town issued a total of 821 permits, and roughly 75% of these allowed an existing house to be demolished. Gross floor area of new homes increased 258 percent, from 2476 square feet to 6,378 square feet.

HOME VALUES AND RENTS

With its proximity to Boston and Cambridge, outstanding public school system, and ample recreation amenities, Lexington is a

Figure 5. Number of Bedrooms per Unit in Lexington.

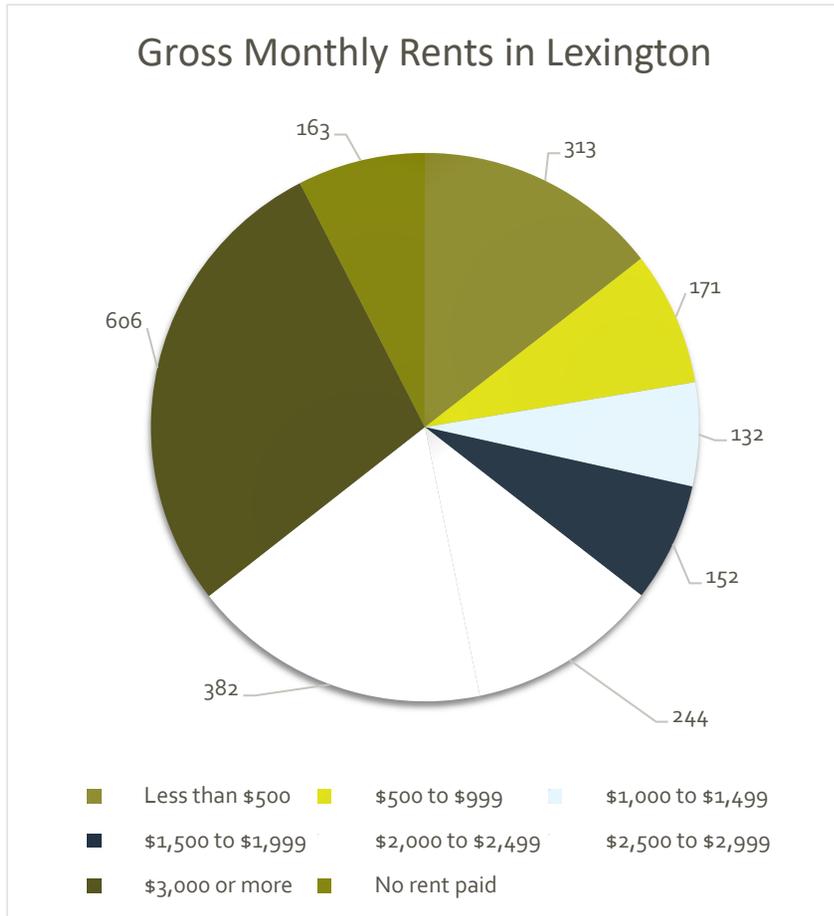


Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

desirable place to live, and demand for housing is very high. This demand has driven up the price of housing, making home-buying

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

Figure 6. Gross Monthly Rents in Lexington.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

unattainable for many. In 2019, the median price of a home reached was \$889,700, while the median gross rent price was \$2,475 per month.

Housing Prices and Sales. 2019 Census Bureau data estimates that 64% of Lexington residents have lived in their homes twenty years or less. In the two-decade period between 1997 and 2016, 8,271 single-family homes and 1,371 condominium units were sold. The average home price (single-family and condominium) nearly tripled during the same period.

Market Rents. Similar to the situation in many suburban Boston communities, Lexington’s housing market is dominated by single-family detached homes, limiting rental unit supply. Of the estimated 2,000 homes rented in Lexington, over 30% exceed of monthly rents \$3,000 and over 60% of monthly rents exceed \$2,000.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Under a 1969 Massachusetts law known as Chapter 40B,³ all communities are expected to have housing that is affordable to low-income households, and that remains affordable, even when

³ M. G. L. Chapter 40B, promotes responsible housing growth by creating a streamlined permitting process for eligible projects that utilize subsidized financing, and that meaningfully accommodate lower-income residents.

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

home values appreciate under bullish market conditions.⁴ Two types of housing fall into this category:

- **Deed restricted properties** – where a legal instrument (restriction) is tied to the property to protect affordability, and the property is only available to rent or buy by low-moderate income households. The price of deed-restricted properties is determined by the restriction terms.
- **Unrestricted properties** – typically older, moderately-priced homes without restrictions, available to any household, regardless of income. The price of unrestricted properties is determined by the market.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

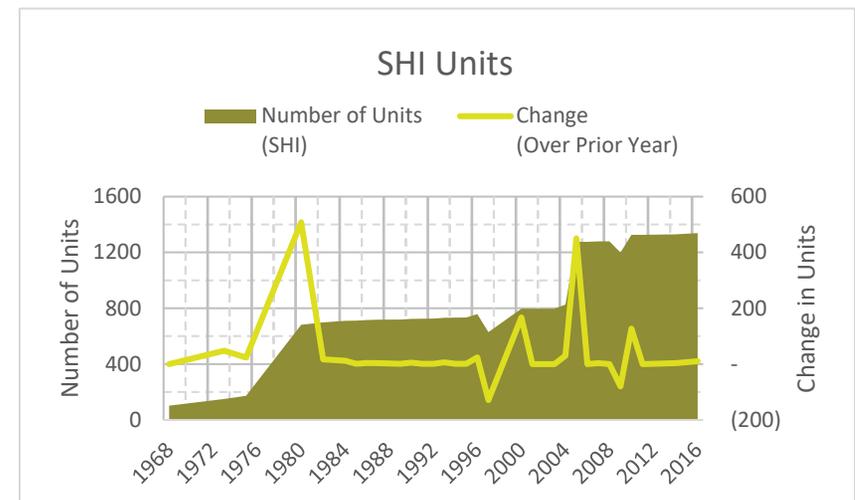
The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is the official measure a community's stock of affordable housing for the purposes of Chapter 40B as maintained by Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The numerator is the number of qualifying affordable units, and the denominator is the year-round housing units in the community, updated with the Census every 10 years. While housing developed under Chapter 40B is eligible for inclusion in the numerator of the SHI,

⁴“Low-income” refers to those households earning 80% or less of Area Median Income (AMI) and “affordable” means costing less than 30% of household income.

units created in other ways also qualify for the SHI. There are five requirements to be eligible for units to count on the SHI:

1. Occupancy limited to households earning up to 80% of AMI
2. Housing units created under an approved housing subsidy program
3. Property has a recorded use restriction, restricting occupancy and specifying other details
4. Housing units are subject to an Affirmative Fair Marketing and Resident Selection Plan

Figure 7. Lexington's Subsidized Housing Inventory (Units), 1968-2016. Note that between 2012 and 2021, Lexington had a net gain of 3 units.



Source: DHCD

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

5. Maximum housing cost parameters are met.⁵

According to 2020 US Census Bureau figures, Lexington has a total of 1,335 units of housing that are counted as ‘affordable’ by the state, or 10.8% of total units (12,310). Of the nine communities serviced by the Regional Housing Service Organization (described below), Lexington comes in second (tied with Lincoln) in number of subsidized housing units. This figure, however, is misleading, as it counts all units within a subsidized development, some of which are priced at market rate. The actual figure for affordable units in Lexington is 681 (5.5%).⁶ Subsidies for these are provided by several agencies, including HUD, DHCD and MassHousing.

COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT

A total of 368 units of affordable housing have been created in Lexington through Chapter 40B’s Comprehensive Permit process, beginning in the 1970s. The chapter authorizes the local Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant a comprehensive permit to pre-qualified developers to build affordable housing. Pre-qualification is determined by the state housing agency (MassHousing). Under Chapter 40B, the ZBA can waive local requirements and approve, conditionally approve, or deny a

⁵ Regional Housing Services Office, Acton, MA (www.rhsohousing.org)

⁶ The Avalon at Lexington Square, developed at the former Metropolitan State Hospital site, provides an example. All of the 387 apartment homes are counted in Lexington’s SHI, however just 25% of the units

comprehensive permit. However, the ZBA must balance the regional need for affordable housing against valid local concerns such as public health, safety, environmental resources, traffic, or design.

The following affordable housing developments have been created in Lexington through the Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit process (note that according to DHCD’s SHI inventory for Lexington, of the 40 affordable housing developments, eight were created through the 40B process):

Figure 8. Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permitted Developments in Lexington

Development	Type	SHI Units	Subsidy
Avalon at Lexington	Rental	198	MassHousing
Interfaith Housing	Rental	6	MassHousing
Katahdin Woods Apartments	Rental	128	DHCD
Pine Grove Village	Mix	16	MassHousing
Lexington Courtyard	Ownership	9	MassHousing
Fairview	Rental	4	DHCD
Farm View	Rental	6	DHCD
Wright Farm	Rental	1	DHCD

Source: DHCD Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, June 2021.

will be affordable in perpetuity to households earning no more than 80% area median income; another 10% will be affordable units for the Department of Mental Health through a combination of on-site housing (5% of the units) and off-site housing (5% of the units).

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

MEASURING HOUSING NEEDS

The need for affordable housing in a community can be determined by comparing the number of households making less than 80% of the AMI to the number of affordable housing units available. According to MAPC's Housing Production Plan for Lexington (HPP), one in five households falls below this level, meaning that 20% of the Town's households have incomes that would qualify for a Chapter 40B unit.⁷ It is important to note that this approach to measuring housing need is limited in scope, and, for example, does not account for households that do not currently live in Lexington but may desire to, including those with persons who work in the Town.

HOUSING COST BURDEN

Housing cost burden is the most accurate measurement of housing affordability in a community. The term is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition in which low- or moderate-income households spend more than 30 percent of their monthly gross income on housing. When households spend more than half their income on housing, they are considered to have severe housing cost burden. According to MAPC's HPP for Lexington, 30% of all households are housing cost burdened, nearly half of middle-income

households are cost-burdened, and many of Lexington's residents are living in units they cannot afford.

OTHER HOUSING NEEDS

Access to more affordably-priced homes for Lexington's low- and moderate-income residents is just one piece of the housing puzzle. Other needs, as identified in the HPP, include:

- Mechanisms for allowing older adults (age 65+) to age in place, through housing rehabilitation, modification, emergency repairs, buy-down programs, and property tax abatements or deferrals;
- Affordable housing with accessible and adaptable designs specifically for eligible older persons and individuals with disabilities;
- Greater energy-conservation and use of renewable energy in residential development or redevelopment.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS

Housing is created in Lexington through a variety development mechanism. Some of these, including development of affordable

⁷ Lexington's Housing Production Plan, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2014

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

housing units, have been discussed earlier in this inventory chapter. Others, including those allowed under current zoning and subdivision regulations, are included in the Land Use and Zoning chapter of this inventory. Existing mechanisms include:

- Single- and two-family homes built by-right on individual vacant lots;
- Single- and two-family homes built by-right on individual lots by demolishing an existing home on an existing lot;
- Single-family homes built by-right on individual lots created through a conventional subdivision of land;
- A cluster of single family and/or duplex homes built on a tract of land via special permit residential development subdivision, including deed-restricted affordable units;
- In-fill development of one or more single-family homes through a site-sensitive special permit residential development subdivision;
- Apartments and condominiums created by new commercial construction or the re-purposing of municipal buildings;

- Deed-restricted affordable housing created through private development with funding largely from Community Preservation Act resources;
- Deed-restricted affordable housing created through Chapter 40B comprehensive permits.

TOWN DEPARTMENTS, COMMITTEES, AND OTHER EXISTING HOUSING RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

Three primary entities are responsible for furthering the Lexington's housing goals, as follows:

LEXINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Lexington Housing Authority was established by the Board of Selectmen in 1964. The authority administers both state and federal public housing programs in Lexington. The housing authority is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners; four commissioners are elected and one commissioner is appointed by the Governor. The housing authority manages approximately 340 units of state and federal public housing in Lexington, all of which are part of the Subsidized Housing Inventory. There are two state public housing 'villages' in Lexington: Greeley Village and Vynebrook Village. In 2016, the authority added four new energy-efficient fully handicapped accessible units to their portfolio at Greeley Village. In addition to managing Countryside Village, the federal public housing

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

development in Lexington, the authority manages 17 'scattered sites' of federal public housing for low-income families.

The authority is also responsible for the management of approximately 68 federal portable housing vouchers (commonly known as 'Section 8' vouchers) and several project-based state portable housing vouchers (MRVP also known as Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program). Recently the housing authority acquired 5 very low-income units at the Pine Grove/Judges Way development. The acquisition of these units was part of a collaboration between the Town of Lexington and MassHousing to preserve the affordability deed restrictions on the units in the complex.

LEXINGTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Housing Partnership Board was established in 2003 and the committee is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The charge of the Lexington Housing Partnership is to promote and support affordable housing activities and recommend appropriate actions. The Partnership will bring together committees, groups and housing advocates to create a unified and focused approach to achieve affordable housing goals in Lexington.

LEXINGTON HOUSING ASSISTANCE BOARD (LEXHAB)

LexHAB which stands for Lexington's Housing Assistance Board is a nonprofit housing corporation and was established in 1983. It was created by a Massachusetts law, Chapter 521 of the 1983

Acts. The committee is appointed by the Select Board and is part of Lexington's town government. LexHAB's mission is to create and manage rental affordable housing to serve low to moderate income individuals and families who are in need of housing. LexHAB owns and manages 71 rental units of affordable housing in Lexington plus 7 units that are coming online over the next several years. [The Regional Housing Service Organization (RHSO, discussed below) administers the condo resale of the Muzzey units, which are all deed-restricted.]

REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICE ORGANIZATION (RHSO)

The Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO) is a collaboration between the member towns of Acton, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Maynard, Sudbury, Wayland and Weston. The RHSO was formed in 2011 through an Inter-Municipal Agreement assisted by Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for Greater Boston. The RHSO serves its member towns by assisting with the municipal function of affordable housing, including proactive monitoring, program administration, project development and resident assistance.

WESTMETRO HOME CONSORTIUM

The WestMetro HOME Consortium provides funding and technical assistance to its fourteen member communities to support local and regional affordable housing goals. Lexington

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

joined the consortium following a recommendation of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan.

SPECIAL PERMIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
ZONING BYLAW AMENDMENT COMMITTEE (SPRD)

The SPRD is an ad hoc, nine-member committee tasked with gathering and providing stakeholder input, collecting housing data, and drafting a Statement of Values, so that consultants, under direction of the Committee, Elected Boards, and staff, can develop a draft zoning bylaw amendment and warrant article to either revise or replace Section 135-6.9 of the Zoning Bylaw, Special Permit Residential Development, to provide for the creation of more affordable and diverse residential dwelling units.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Tasked with implementing Lexington's [Community Preservation Act](#), this nine-member committee consists of three Select Board appointees; one Conservation Commission appointee; one Planning Board appointee; one Recreation Committee appointee; one Historical Commission appointee; one Housing Authority appointee; and one Housing Partnership appointee. Guided by the *Town of Lexington 2020 Community Preservation Plan: A Needs Assessment*, the CPC reviews applications and recommends funding for approval by Town Meeting.

PAST EFFORTS TO PLAN FOR HOUSING EQUITY IN
LEXINGTON

MAPC'S HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN FOR
LEXINGTON

In 2014, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) prepared a Housing Production Plan for Lexington that defined housing needs and provided strategies for meeting those needs. Goals focused on upping the Subsidized Housing Inventory; providing more options for low- and middle-income households, seniors, and persons with disabilities; incorporating sustainable building practices into housing; and coordinating with affordable housing development efforts throughout the MetroWest region.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

This statute, signed into law by the Governor of Massachusetts in 2000, permits municipalities across the Commonwealth to place a surcharge on local real estate tax to fund eligible and worthy projects in areas of community housing, historic resources, open space and recreation. Lexington residents voted to adopt the CPA in 2006 with the maximum surcharge allowed, 3%. Local funds are then matched by the state with revenues derived from registry fees. This has enabled the Town to support \$82,960,977 in all project areas, with \$11,574,512, or 14%, devoted to community housing. Implementation of the act is overseen by the nine-member Community Preservation Committee (CPC) (described previously in this chapter).

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

In 2020, the Town wrote [Town of Lexington 2020 Community Preservation Plan: A Needs Assessment](#) to help guide the CPC's decision-making process. It identified the following community housing-related recommendations:

- Develop new units of housing for persons with disabilities;
- Combine CPA funds with those provided by DHCD to develop new affordable housing;
- Develop housing for individuals, especially seniors wishing to down-size;
- Consider increasing affordability of rental units by contributing CPA funds to tenant rental payments;
- Work with LexHAB to secure land for additional affordable housing.

2003 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan recommended thirteen actions related to housing, eight of which were implemented:

- Establishing the Lexington Housing Partnership;
- Approving \$11,574,512 of Community Preservation Act funding for community housing (through 2020);

- Adopting limits to height and gross floor area;
- Allowing housing in business districts, including upper story apartments;
- Increasing density bonuses through a Public Benefit Development provision;
- Facilitating reuse of existing non-residential structures for housing;
- Permitting accessory apartments and relaxing rules pertaining to live/work arrangements;
- Joining the WestMetro HOME, the regional housing consortium.

Actions not implemented include:

- Creating an inclusionary zoning bylaw to mandate affordability as part of new housing development;
- Amending regulations to require a contribution to affordability where relief from usual regulations is sought;
- Providing incentives for small-scale, age-restricted housing;
- Eliminating barriers to new housing approaches;

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY: HOUSING RESOURCES

- Establishing a building materials recycling yard.

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- More than one in five households in Lexington qualifies as low-income, meaning that 20% of all households qualify for affordable housing.
- Nearly one-third of households are cost-burdened by housing, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- While Lexington's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) (10.8%) is slightly above the state's threshold of 10%, only 5.5% of housing is below market rate. Over the 2012-2021 period, Lexington netted just three affordable housing units.
- Should the Katahdin development design to convert to condominium, Lexington is at risk of losing 102 units from the SHI.
- The high cost of housing and rent is a barrier to entry for people who would like to live in Lexington (including those who grew up and/or work in the Town).

- High housing costs are a barrier to promoting greater racial and economic diversity in Lexington.
- Older adults (age 65+) make up approximately 19% of Lexington's population and by 2030, this population is expected to reach 27%. The Town does not have an adequate housing supply to accommodate this demographic.
- Demand for affordable housing for older adults is high, as indicated by the long waiting lists for both state and federal senior housing. The wait time for these units is four or more years.
- Rapidly rising home prices have created the incentive to demolish smaller, modest homes and construct new larger replacement homes and further reducing the supply of attainable housing in Lexington. The average size of a new home is 258% larger than the home it replaces.
- Larger homes have larger infrastructure demands (heat, electricity, water, wastewater) and increase the amount of impermeable surface, placing added stresses on the environment.
- The large percentage of single-family housing and housing with three or more bedrooms leaves fewer

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

options for smaller households and those who desire other types of housing.

- The scarcity of vacant land available in Lexington for development presents an opportunity to creatively reuse existing developed land, as well as to provide a more diverse range of housing options (on either existing developed or undeveloped land).
- Opportunity exists, through provisions of the recently-enacted Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020, to amend Lexington's zoning bylaw through a simple majority vote to open up more housing options, including accessory dwelling units, multi-family housing, mix-use developments, reduced parking requirements, and others. (See Endnote #1)
- MAPC's Housing Production Plan for Lexington, created in 2014, is in need of updating. Opportunity exists for the Town to revise this plan, providing more in-depth data analysis to support short- and long-term efforts to create affordable housing and a variety of housing types.

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

ENDNOTES

1. Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020 (sometimes referred to as the economic development legislation of 2020) made several amendments to Chapter 40A of the General Laws, commonly known as the Zoning Act. Among these amendments are (1) changes to section 5 of the Zoning Act, which reduce the number of votes required to enact certain kinds of zoning ordinances and bylaws from a $\frac{2}{3}$ supermajority to a simple majority; and (2) changes to section 9 of the Zoning Act, making similar changes to the voting thresholds for the issuance of certain kinds of special permits.

Under the newly amended section 5 of the Zoning Act, a zoning ordinance or bylaw can be enacted by a simple majority vote, rather than the $\frac{2}{3}$ supermajority that applies to other zoning amendments, if that ordinance or bylaw does any of the following:

- Allows for multi-family housing or mixed-use developments “as of right” in an eligible location.
- Allows for open space residential development as of right.
- Allows accessory dwelling units, either within the principal dwelling or within a detached structure on the same lot, as-of-right.
- Allows by special permit accessory dwelling units in a detached structure on the same lot.
- Reduces the parking requirements for residential or mixed-use development under a special permit.
- Permits an increase in the permissible density of population or intensity of a particular use in a proposed multi-family or mixed-use development that requires a special permit.
- Changes dimensional standards such as lot coverage or floor area ratio, height, setbacks, minimum open space coverage, parking, building coverage to allow for the construction of additional residential units on a particular parcel or parcels of land.
- Provides for the transfer of development rights or natural resource protection zoning in instances where the adoption of such zoning promotes concentration of development in areas that the municipality deems most appropriate for such development, but will not result in a diminution in the maximum number of housing units that could be developed within the municipality.
- Adopts a smart growth or starter home districts in accordance with section 3 of Chapter 40R of the General Laws.

LEXINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE INVENTORY:
HOUSING RESOURCES

LIST OF RESOURCES

Lexington's Housing Production Plan, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2014.
Regional Housing Service Organization (www.rhsohousing.org)
Town of Lexington 2020 Community Preservation Plan: A Needs Assessment, 2020.
Town of Lexington website (www.lexingtonma.gov)
United States Census Data, American Community Needs Assessment, Five-Year Estimates, 2019.

INTERVIEWS

Caileen Foley, Lexington Housing Authority
Jeri Foutter, Lexington Housing Partnership
Margaret Heitz, Vision for Lexington Committee
Staphanie Hsu, Lexington Human Rights Committee, Working Group on Housing
Sean Osborne, Lexington Human Rights Committee, Associated Black Citizens of Lexington
Elizabeth Valenta, Regional Housing Service Organization
Melinda Walker, Lexington Housing Partnership, Lexington Housing Authority
Betsey Weiss, Lexington Housing Partnership
Lexington Planning Board:
 Charles Hornig, Chair
 Bob Creech
 Robert Peters
 Michael Leon
 Melanie Thompson