

POLICY BRIEF

Right-Sizing Housing: Why Massachusetts Needs More Small Homes and How to Build Them

By Andrew Mikula

Executive Summary

Nationwide and in Massachusetts, households are getting smaller, and more seniors are living independently, as opposed to with relatives or in a nursing home.¹ But the housing stock has not kept up with these demographic trends. As a result, seniors often have difficulty downsizing within their community, and it has grown increasingly difficult for young families to find a home they can afford.

Discourse around the scarcity of “starter homes”—small, owner-occupied houses geared towards first-time buyers—usually focuses on broad trends. But Greater Boston in particular has a more severe scarcity of starter homes than most other regions of the state. In 2024, there was one owner-occupied house with two or fewer bedrooms in Massachusetts for every four households with one or two people.²

Lock-in effects—i.e., homeowners’ reluctance to give up low fixed-rate mortgages—contribute to low market turnover. But in the longer term, building new starter homes is the most direct way to address the problem. In many Massachusetts locales with expensive land, these starter homes are more likely to take the form of townhomes and small multifamily buildings than detached single-family homes.

For consistency, this policy brief defines a “small home” as one containing two or fewer bedrooms and a “small household” as one containing one or two people.

A Mismatch Between Demographics and Housing

- **Nationwide and in Massachusetts, average household sizes are shrinking.** As the population has aged and more women have entered the workforce, the average Massachusetts household size fell from 3.23 people in 1970 to 2.52 in 2024.³ Far from the proverbial “two-and-a-half kids and a dog,” in 2024 most Massachusetts households consisted of either a married couple with no underage children or a single adult living alone.⁴
- **The housing stock has not adequately evolved to accommodate these demographic shifts.** Rising land values and regulatory constraints have made small single-family development infeasible in a growing number of places.⁵ Nationwide, in 1984, 24 percent of new single-family homes sold had two or fewer bedrooms; by 2024, it was 5 percent.⁶ Similar financial and regulatory barriers apply to reusing existing buildings, and new multifamily homes are often controversial in places with the most available land.⁷

- **As a result, many Massachusetts households live in larger homes than they need**, whether by choice or necessity. In 2024, 63 percent of Massachusetts households had one or two people (hereafter “small households”), but just 44 percent of occupied housing units had two or fewer bedrooms (“small homes”).⁸ Some small households may want “extra” bedrooms—for example, for home office space. But small homes give the typical first-time buyer an opportunity to build wealth with a lower bar to entry.
- **Thus, Massachusetts has a great need for small, relatively low-cost new homes suitable for young families, downsizing seniors, and others.** The 2025–2030 Georgetown Housing Production Plan put it succinctly: demographic trends “suggest a gap in availability of “right-sized” housing, which the Town could address by encouraging the development of smaller housing units consisting of studio, one, and two bedroom units.”⁹

Figure 1A: Share of Occupied Homes in Massachusetts by Number of Bedrooms, 2024¹⁰

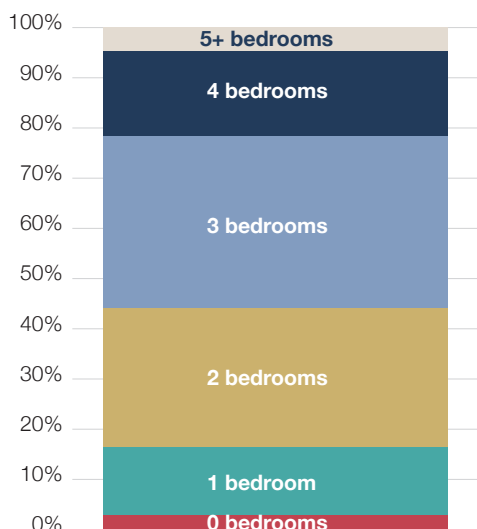
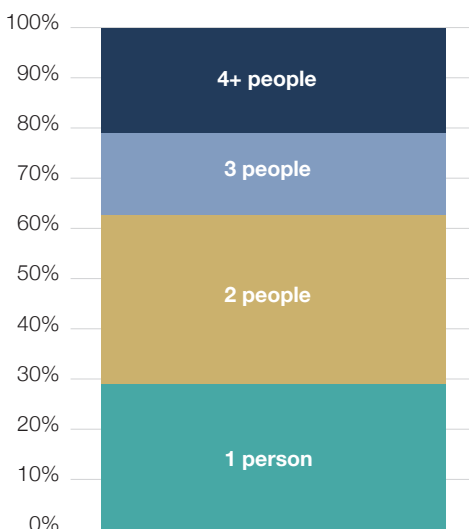


Figure 1B: Share of Households in Massachusetts by Number of Occupants, 2024¹¹



To Downsize or Not to Downsize?

Seniors disproportionately occupy homes with “extra bedrooms.” In 2024, there were more Massachusetts senior citizens (age 65+) living alone in 3+ bedroom houses than there were family households led by young adults (under age 35) living in 3+ bedroom houses.¹² The population of seniors is rising rapidly, and in recent decades they have grown more likely to live independently, as opposed to with relatives or in a nursing home.¹³ From 2021 to 2024, Massachusetts added 78,000 households led by seniors.¹⁴

Many of these seniors are interested in buying small, lower-maintenance homes. In 2025, nearly one in seven U.S. home buyers over the age of 60 said the primary reason for buying their home was that they wanted a smaller one.¹⁵ According to a 2024 AARP survey, 44 percent of older adults “expect to relocate at some point” and two-thirds of all adults are open to downsizing.¹⁶ At the same time, 75 percent of U.S. adults ages 50 and above “would like to live in their current home for as long as possible.”¹⁷

In 2025, nearly one in seven U.S. home buyers over the age of 60 said the primary reason for buying their home was that they wanted a smaller one.

For retirees on fixed incomes, the decision to downsize is often financial. In the 2024 AARP survey, strong majorities of older adults said that the cost of rent or mortgage payments, maintenance, and property taxes are factors motivating their decision to move.¹⁸ Another factor is that smaller, single-level homes are often easier to navigate and maintain than larger, multilevel homes, and in many cases, it is difficult and expensive to retrofit older homes to accommodate seniors with mobility challenges.¹⁹

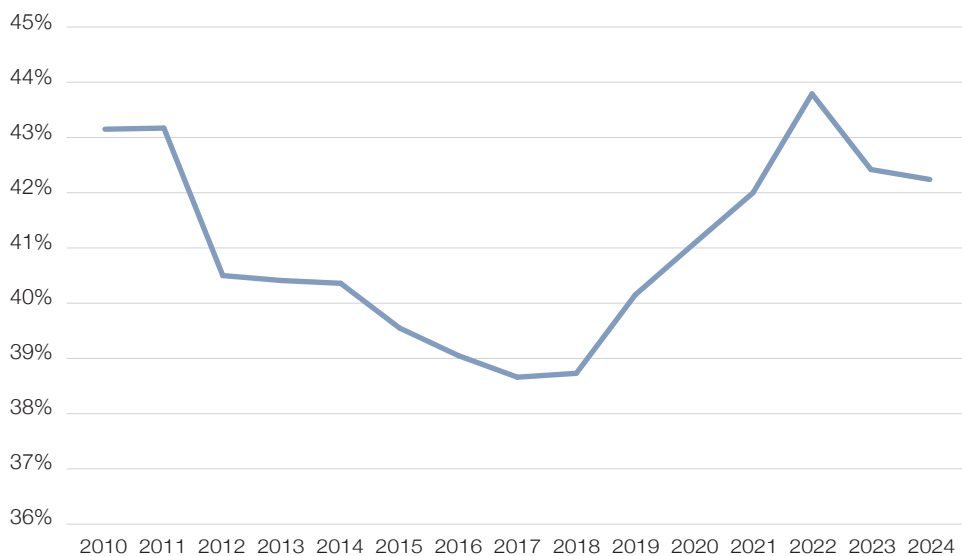
High housing-related costs also prevent many seniors from downsizing, including the steep costs of purchasing and moving into new homes.²⁰ High interest rates can deter would-be sellers, especially those who locked in lower interest rates on fixed-rate mortgages in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹

Younger Buyers on the Sidelines

- **Eroding affordability since 2020 has shifted the market in favor of repeat buyers.** Between January 2020 and January 2026, Zillow’s home value index for Massachusetts rose by 50.3 percent.²² Some existing homeowners used those home equity gains to buy a new home or refinanced mortgages when interest rates were low in 2020 and 2021. In 2025, the median age of all home buyers in the U.S. was 59, up from 39 in 2010.²³
- **Meanwhile, it has grown harder for renters to save up to buy a home.** From January 2020 to January 2026, Zillow’s rent index for Greater Boston rose by 28 percent, slightly faster than inflation.²⁴ In Central Massachusetts and Greater Springfield, it rose at more than double the pace of inflation.²⁵ Over the same period, the minimum annual income needed to afford the state’s median-priced house rose by 80 percent, to \$180,500.²⁶ In 2025, first-time buyers made up a record-low 21 percent of all U.S. home buyers.²⁷
- **Housing affordability challenges may contribute to decisions to delay household formation.** Young adults are relatively unlikely to be a householder at all—usually because they live with relatives or roommates.²⁸ In 2025, 36 percent of Massachusetts adults aged 18 to 34 lived with their parents.²⁹ While the share of Massachusetts young adults leading a household has generally risen since the mid-2010s, it declined again after mortgage interest rates rose in 2022 (see Figure 2).³⁰

In 2025, the median age of all home buyers in the U.S. was 59, up from 39 in 2010.

Figure 2: Share of Massachusetts Residents Aged 25–34 Who Head a Household, 2010–2024³¹

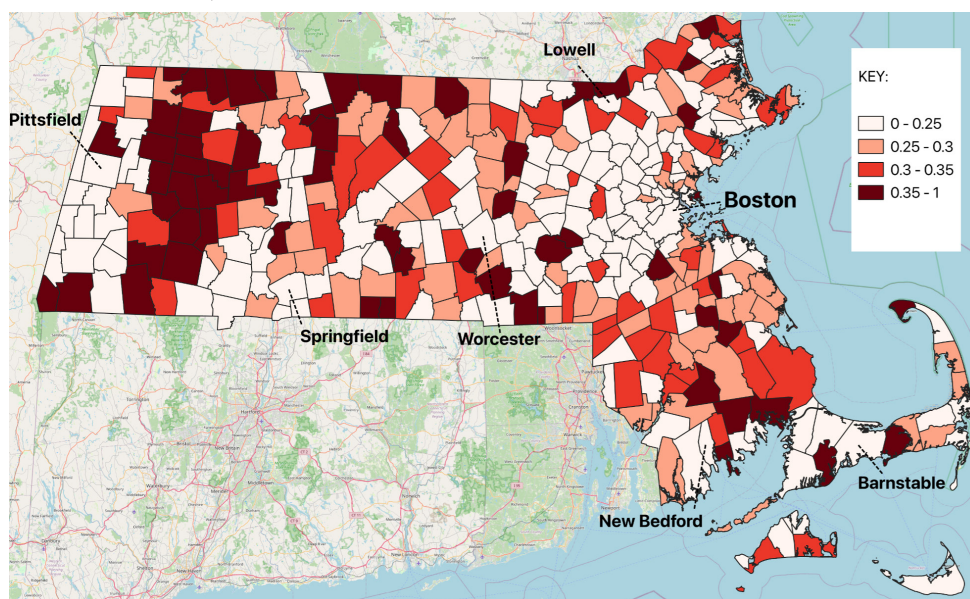


The ‘What’ and ‘Where’ of Right-Sized Housing

- **Owner-occupied small homes are particularly desirable to enable young families to start building wealth.** This desire for homeownership opportunities among younger populations also corresponds well with the needs of seniors. Between 2010 and 2024, Massachusetts added more than 200,000 households headed by owner-occupants aged 65+ and added fewer than 60,000 households headed by renters aged 65+.³²
- **But most small homes in Massachusetts are rentals.** According to the 2020–2024 American Community Survey, 21 Massachusetts localities had at least one small home for every small household.³³ Most of these places are vacation hubs where many homes are unavailable to year-round residents. The rest—cities like Quincy and Lynn—have more rentals than owner-occupied homes. In 2024, 8.4 percent of new for-sale homes completed in the U.S. had two or fewer bedrooms; in 2009, it was 20.7 percent.³⁴
- **Greater Boston has a particular scarcity of small owner-occupied homes relative to the need for them.** The ACS data show that no Massachusetts community had more than two *owner-occupied* small homes for every three small households.³⁵ For most communities in the immediate Boston area, this ratio is below one in four (see Figure 3). Other regions with a notable scarcity of starter homes include the Berkshires, urban parts of Pioneer Valley, southern Worcester County, and the Cape & Islands.

In 2024, there was one owner-occupied house with two or fewer bedrooms in Massachusetts for every four households with one or two people.

Figure 3: Ratio of Owner-Occupied Homes with Fewer Than Three Bedrooms to Households with Fewer Than Three People by Municipality in Massachusetts, 2020–2024³⁶



- **Expensive land is one of the most significant barriers to building small homes.** In 2022, the average value of a single-family residential land parcel in Massachusetts exceeded \$1 million per acre.³⁷ At these land prices, and assuming construction costs of \$300 per square foot, a 1,200-square-foot home selling for the median per-square-foot Massachusetts single family listing price could include just 3,900 square feet of land to be profitable for a private builder, a fraction of the minimum lot size most Massachusetts municipalities require.³⁸

- **In particularly pricey areas, small homes will likely take the form of condominiums and townhomes.** Where land and construction costs are significantly higher than average, the amount of land per home would be too small for private builders to justify building middle-market single-family homes.³⁹ Instead, only attached townhomes and condominium buildings would ensure that new small homes would remain attainable for households with even upper-middle incomes.
- **Townhomes and condos often offer a lower price point than detached single-family homes.** According to Redfin, in April 2026 the median sales price for a detached single-family home in Massachusetts was \$696,000, compared to \$549,000 for a townhome and \$567,000 for a condo or co-op.⁴⁰ However, many localities don't allow townhomes or condos to be built without long and discretionary reviews, and some ban them entirely.⁴¹

Recommendations and Conclusion

To facilitate the development of small, lower-cost homes, Massachusetts policymakers should take several steps:

- **Allow townhomes and small multifamily buildings by right.** Given high land and construction costs, townhomes and condos can reduce per-unit fixed costs amidst rising land values, improving affordability for buyers.⁴² Multifamily buildings with elevators, single-level units, and professional managers can improve navigability and reduce maintenance obligations for seniors.⁴³ Localities should allow these building typologies by right in most residential areas, especially near transit and commercial amenities.
- **Reduce or eliminate lot size, dimensional, and parking regulations.** Even in Greater Boston, most localities require at least 10,000 square feet of land to build any residential building.⁴⁴ By contrast, in 2024, the median lot size for a new single-family home sold in the western U.S. was 5,974 square feet.⁴⁵ Due to high land costs, smaller lots enable smaller, lower-cost new homes. To ensure viable development on small lots, setbacks, floor area ratios, parking mandates, and lot coverage limits should be relaxed in tandem.
- **Expand rights to build accessory dwelling units.** In 2024, Massachusetts had 228,000 homes with 3+ bedrooms occupied by one person, often seniors who may need additional income—such as ADU rental payments—to age in place.⁴⁶ ADUs are legal statewide, but more spare bedrooms could become ADUs with further reform. Lawmakers should standardize ADU dimensional rules (reduce setbacks and open space minimums, etc.), increase allowable ADU sizes, and loosen related septic regulations.⁴⁷
- **Extend the residential building code to 3–6-unit buildings.** Currently, stricter building standards apply to structures with 3+ homes than to single-family homes and duplexes.⁴⁸ Controlling costs in low-rise multifamily buildings, which account for many of Massachusetts' small homes, requires exempting them from some of those strict standards. A 2014 white paper from the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards recommended creating a separate code for 3–6-unit buildings.⁴⁹
- **Strengthen Chapter 40Y.** Chapter 40Y, the state's Starter Homes Zoning District program, offers localities incentive payments to zone for small single-family homes.⁵⁰ To make building those homes more feasible, cities and towns should be required to allow at least eight units/acre in these districts, up from the current requirement of four units/acre. Similarly, Chapter 40Y's cap on home sizes (currently 1,850 square feet) should instead be an average home size in each development.

While most of these recommendations apply equally to owner-occupied dwellings and rentals on paper, they will in practice disproportionately affect development typologies that are most likely to be owner-occupied, including single family homes and small multifamily buildings.⁵¹ Across typologies, average new home sizes have shrunk since the late 2010s, a response to growing buyer affordability constraints.⁵² Massachusetts localities simply need to revamp regulations and bureaucratic processes to spur the production of small homes at scale.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Jeff Rhuda of Symes Associates for reviewing the cost assumptions used to estimate the lot sizes suitable for building small homes. Thanks also to Chris Herbert of the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard and Luc Schuster of Boston Indicators for their helpful and timely peer reviews. While the author accepts full responsibility for any errors or omissions in this report, the above-named individuals made it substantially stronger and more well-informed than it otherwise would have been.

Appendix A: Household Type Data Tables

Table 1: Number of Massachusetts Households by Age of Householder and Household Type, 2024⁵³

Household Type	Ages 15–34	Ages 35–64	Ages 65+	TOTAL
Married couple with underage kids	64,318	409,576	2,990	476,884
Married couple, no underage kids	68,486	393,502	340,575	802,563
Cohabiting couple with underage kids	21,385	35,009	234	56,628
Cohabiting couple, no underage kids	82,185	66,203	20,875	169,263
Single adult with underage kids	32,151	124,688	291	157,130
Single adult living alone	136,820	319,609	362,590	819,019
Single adult with other relatives	31,880	131,641	82,343	245,864
Only non-related adults	64,487	27,163	10,807	102,457
TOTAL	501,712	1,507,391	820,705	2,829,808

Table 2: Households Headed by Senior Citizens (Ages 65+) in Massachusetts by Household Type and Home Size, 2024⁵⁴

Household Type	Studio	1 Bed	2 Beds	3 Beds	4+ Beds
Married couple with underage kids	0	0	330	770	1,890
Married couple, no underage kids	1,010	16,633	77,028	150,686	95,218
Cohabiting couple with underage kids	0	0	0	171	63
Cohabiting couple, no underage kids	56	1,260	6,165	9,388	4,006
Single adult with underage kids	0	0	64	60	167
Single adult living alone	14,496	113,975	113,831	85,862	34,426
Single adult with other relatives	397	4,347	23,097	33,183	21,319
Only non-related adults	143	831	3,763	4,655	1,415
TOTAL	16,102	137,046	224,278	284,775	158,504

Table 3: Households Headed by Middle-Aged Adults (Ages 35–64) in Massachusetts by Household Type and Home Size, 2024⁵⁵

Household Type	Studio	1 Bed	2 Beds	3 Beds	4+ Beds
Married couple with underage kids	1,513	6,181	56,755	171,610	173,517
Married couple, no underage kids	2,891	17,615	78,110	168,336	126,550
Cohabiting couple with underage kids	0	2,322	7,188	15,905	9,594
Cohabiting couple, no underage kids	1,110	7,150	24,326	23,345	10,272
Single adult with underage kids	2,014	2,852	42,839	53,543	23,440
Single adult living alone	24,332	105,629	100,203	64,662	24,783
Single adult with other relatives	848	6,243	44,498	54,030	26,022
Only non-related adults	263	1,336	11,610	8,536	5,418
TOTAL	32,971	149,328	365,529	559,967	399,596

Table 4: Households Headed by Young Adults (Ages 15–34) in Massachusetts by Household Type and Home Size, 2024⁵⁶

Household Type	Studio	1 Bed	2 Beds	3 Beds	4+ Beds
Married couple with underage kids	692	2,399	20,258	26,317	14,652
Married couple, no underage kids	2,478	10,808	27,268	20,791	7,141
Cohabiting couple with underage kids	719	1,029	8,907	8,288	2,442
Cohabiting couple, no underage kids	3,889	22,767	37,695	14,812	3,022
Single adult with underage kids	492	646	16,118	11,645	3,250
Single adult living alone	20,702	59,183	38,801	13,911	4,223
Single adult with other relatives	670	2,594	14,088	9,131	5,397
Only non-related adults	209	2,838	31,435	19,556	10,449
TOTAL	29,851	102,264	194,570	124,451	50,576

Endnotes

- 1 Fry, Richard. "A smaller share of older U.S. adults live alone today than in 1990." Pew Research Center. December 4, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/12/04/a-smaller-share-of-older-us-adults-live-alone-today-than-in-1990/>
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Housing Characteristics." n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=vehicle+&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=vehicle+&g=040XX00US25$0600000); and U.S. Census Bureau. "Household Type by Household Size." n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B11016?q=B11016:+Household+Type+by+Household+Size&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B11016?q=B11016:+Household+Type+by+Household+Size&g=040XX00US25$0600000); and U.S. Census Bureau. "Tenure by Bedrooms." n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25$0600000)
- 3 U.S. Census Bureau. "1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population: Massachusetts." n.d. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1970/population-volume-1/1970a_ma-01.pdf; and U.S. Census Bureau. "Total Population." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=population&g=040XX00US25>; and U.S. Census Bureau. "Profile: Massachusetts." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/profile/Massachusetts?g=040XX00US25>
- 4 See Appendix A.
- 5 Massachusetts Municipal Association. "Starter Homes: How to Welcome New Homeowners." January 18, 2019. https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/starter_homes_how_to_welcome_new_homeowners_annualmtg19.pdf
- 6 U.S. Census Bureau. "Characteristics of New Housing." n.d. <https://www.census.gov/construction/chars/index.html>
- 7 Arsenault, Mark et al. "Beyond the Gilded Gate: Milton home prices." The Boston Globe. October 18, 2023. <https://apps.bostonglobe.com/2023/10/special-projects/spotlight-boston-housing/milton-restrictive-zoning/>
- 8 U.S. Census Bureau. "Occupancy Characteristics." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Household+Size&g=040XX00US25>; and U.S. Census Bureau. "Tenure by Bedrooms." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25>
- 9 Town of Georgetown, Massachusetts. "Georgetown, MA Housing Production Plan, 2025-2030." n.d. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/georgetown-hpp/download>
- 10 U.S. Census Bureau. "Tenure by Bedrooms." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25>
- 11 U.S. Census Bureau. "Occupancy Characteristics." n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Household+Size&g=040XX00US25>
- 12 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/VOCuGAU>; and U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Too." n.d. <https://loom.ly/kf-PF2w>. A family household is one in which at least two individuals are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.
- 13 Fry, Richard. "A smaller share of older U.S. adults live along today than in 1990." Pew Research Center. December 4, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/12/04/a-smaller-share-of-older-us-adults-live-alone-today-than-in-1990/>
- 14 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/akDSYjU>; and U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/hPCao6I>
- 15 National Association of Realtors Research Group. "2025 Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trend Report." April 1, 2025. <https://cms.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025-home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends-report-04-01-2025.pdf>
- 16 Binette, Joanne. "Building for the Future: Creating Homes and Communities for Aging Well." American Association of Retired People. November 21, 2025. <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/livable-communities/housing/2024-home-community-preferences/>
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 ElderLife Financial. "How Much Do Home Modifications Cost for Aging in Place?" January 30, 2026. <https://www.elderlifefinancial.com/resources/how-much-do-home-modifications-cost-for-aging-in-place/>
- 20 Weisman, Robert. "In a market badly out of kilter, many older residents are stuck in their homes." The Boston Globe. July 29, 2022. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/07/29/metro/market-badly-out-kilter-many-older-residents-are-stuck-their-homes/>
- 21 Maxwell, Tim. "What Is the Lock-In Effect and How Does It Affect Home Buying?" Experian. December 17, 2022. <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/what-is-lock-in-effect/>
- 22 Zillow, Inc. "Housing Data." n.d. <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>
- 23 Slok, Torsten. "Median Age of All US Homebuyers: 59 Years." Apollo Academy. November 13, 2025. <https://www.apolloacademy.com/median-age-of-all-us-homebuyers-59-years/>
- 24 Zillow, Inc. "Housing Data." n.d. <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>; and Federal Reserve Economic Database. "Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items in U.S. City Average." April 10, 2026. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CPIAUCSL>
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 According to a Pioneer analysis of the following data sources. Assumes a 10% down payment; an annual mortgage insurance premium of 0.5% of the loan value; a maximum debt-income ratio of 30%; and median values for home value, mortgage interest rates, property taxes, and home insurance. Zillow, Inc. "Housing Data." n.d. <https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>; and Federal Reserve Economic Database. "30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage Average in the United States." May 14, 2026. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MORTGAGE30US>; and Fritts, Janelle. "Property Taxes by State and County, 2026." Tax Foundation. March 16, 2026. <https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/state/property-taxes-by-state-county/>; and

- Luthi, Ben. “How Much Does Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI) Cost?” Experian. May 7, 2026. <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-much-does-private-mortgage-insurance-pmi-cost/>; and
- Cornelissen, Sharon et al. “Overburdened: The Dramatic Increase in Homeowners Insurance Premiums and its Impact on American Homeowners.” Consumer Federation of America. April 2025. <https://consumerfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/OverburdenedReport.pdf>
- 27 National Association of Realtors. “Highlights From the Profile of Buyers and Sellers.” n.d. <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/highlights-from-the-profile-of-home-buyers-and-sellers>
- 28 “Householder” is a term used by the U.S. Census Bureau to describe the person or persons in whose name the home is owned or rented. It can also serve as a proxy for who is most likely to fill out decennial census forms and other government documents.
- 29 Cohen, Gabriel. “Mapped: Where Young Adults Live With Their Parents Most.” VisualCapitalist. April 4, 2026. <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-where-young-adults-live-most-with-their-parents/>
- 30 U.S. Census Bureau. “Microdata Access Tool.” n.d. <https://loom.ly/43lUwpw>; and
- U.S. Census Bureau. “Tenure by Age of Householder.” n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25007:+Tenure+by+Age+of+Householder&g=040XX00US25>
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 U.S. Census Bureau. “Tenure by Age of Householder.” n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2024.B25007?q=B25007:+Tenure+by+Age+of+Householder&g=040XX00US25>
- 33 U.S. Census Bureau. “Occupancy Characteristics.” n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S2501?q=household+size&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S2501?q=household+size&g=040XX00US25$0600000); and
- U.S. Census Bureau. “Selected Housing Characteristics.” n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=household+size&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=household+size&g=040XX00US25$0600000). “Small homes” are all homes with two or fewer bedrooms – both single-family homes and multifamily units. “Small households” are those with one or two people.
- 34 U.S. Census Bureau. “Characteristics of New Housing.” n.d. <https://www.census.gov/construction/chars/index.html>
- 35 U.S. Census Bureau. “Selected Housing Characteristics.” n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=vehicle+&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP04?q=vehicle+&g=040XX00US25$0600000); and
- U.S. Census Bureau. “Household Type by Household Size.” n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B11016?q=B11016:+Household+Type+by+Household+Size&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2024.B11016?q=B11016:+Household+Type+by+Household+Size&g=040XX00US25$0600000); and
- U.S. Census Bureau. “Tenure by Bedrooms.” n.d. [https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table?q=B25042:+Tenure+by+Bedrooms&g=040XX00US25$0600000)
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Larson, William et al. “Working Paper 19-01: The Price of Residential Land for Counties, ZIP Codes, and Census Tracts in the United States.” U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency. November 9, 2020. <https://www.fhfa.gov/research/papers/wp1901>
- 38 Also assumes soft costs (financing, insurance, taxes, permit fees, etc.) of 10% of hard construction costs and a 10% profit margin.
- 39 Alexandrov, Alexei. “Markets Where Land is Expensive Must Densify. Everywhere Else Must Bring Down Construction Costs.” New America Institute. January 13, 2026. <https://www.newamerica.org/insights/markets-where-land-is-expensive-must-densify/>
- 40 Redfin. “Massachusetts Housing Market.” n.d. <https://www.redfin.com/state/Massachusetts/housing-market>
- 41 Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “The zoning framework in Massachusetts.” n.d. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/the-zoning-framework-in-massachusetts>
- 42 Vitali, Kevin. “7 Great Reasons To Buy A Condo.” Merrimack Valley MA Real Estate. n.d. <https://merrimackvalleymarealestate.com/7-great-reasons-to-buy-a-condo/>; and
- Neil, Michael and Laurie Goodman. “The Housing Market Needs More Condos. Why Are So Few Being Built?” Urban Institute. January 31, 2022. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/housing-market-needs-more-condos-why-are-so-few-being-built>
- 43 Nodell, Stuart. “Condo vs. House - What’s Better For Seniors?” May 7, 2025. <https://stuartnodell.com/condo-vs-house-whats-better-for-seniors/>
- 44 Metropolitan Area Planning Council. “Zoning Atlas.” n.d. <https://mapc365.sharepoint.com/:x/s/DataServicesSP/IQD6J655sP5HTIZhtw8NgZE3ASKXtrAv9gA1k1n1lZrOCYU?rttime=i-ay-rKg3kg>
- 45 U.S. Census Bureau. “Characteristics of New Housing.” n.d. <https://www.census.gov/construction/chars/index.html>
- 46 See Appendix A.
- 47 Mikula, Andrew. “Beyond Legalization: How Regulatory Reform, Standardized Appraisals, and Public Engagement Can Multiply the Impact of Accessory Dwelling Units in Massachusetts.” Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research. November 2025. <https://pioneerinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ADU-12082025.pdf>
- 48 Mikula, Andrew. “Sticker Prices, Elasticity, and Geography: A Cross-Metro Housing Affordability Analysis.” Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research. December 2024. <https://pioneerinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Cross-Metro-Analysis-White-Paper-12052024.pdf>
- 49 Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards. “The Cost and Effectiveness for Health, Safety, and Security of Fire Alarm Systems and Fire Sprinkler Systems in 3 to 6 Unit Residential Buildings.” Wayback Machine. May 13, 2014. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250901044842/https://www.mass.gov/doc/white-paper-cost-effectiveness-fire-protection-systems05132014msworddocx/download>
- 50 Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. “Starter Homes Program - Chapter 40Y.” Commonwealth of Massachusetts. n.d. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/starter-homes-program-chapter-40y>
- 51 U.S. Census Bureau. “Selected Housing Characteristics.” n.d. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=units+in+structure+by+tenure&g=040XX00US25>
- 52 Principia Consulting. “Homebuilders Say Home Sizes Are Shrinking - What Could This Mean For Future Demand?”

November 26, 2025. <https://www.principiaconsulting.com/2025/11/26/home-sizes-are-shrinking-homebuilder-sentiment/>

- 53 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/DYX7tL8>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/4mnsCWs>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/IE8T8u0>
- 54 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/3GnNpOw>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. https://loom.ly/YI_dtY4; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/51Fly1s>;
and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/OGhNfAQ>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/RH-PUZk>
- 55 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/mrV3suk>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/c4J1qVl>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/SQnW-ns>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/gjV-fFU>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/U3jsCvM>
- 56 U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/5GSKbjU>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/Qj9xYtQ>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/QHci4yc>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/3QPCz9E>; and
U.S. Census Bureau. "Microdata Access Tool." n.d. <https://loom.ly/cOSlj8A>

About the Authors

Andrew Mikula is a Senior Fellow in Housing at Pioneer Institute. Beyond housing, Andrew's research areas of interest include urban planning, economic development, and regulatory reform. He holds a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Mission

Pioneer Institute empowers Americans with choices and opportunities to live freely and thrive. Through expert research, educational initiatives, legal action, and coalition-building, we advance human potential in four critical areas: K-12 Education, Health, Economic Opportunity and American Civic Values.

