



Having enough homes is fundamental to strong, inclusive communities.

## Newton does not have enough homes.

We want to be a welcoming city, one that is economically, racially, and culturally diverse. But we don't have enough housing, and much of what we do have is unsuitable or too expensive for most people. Many are struggling to keep or find a home here.

**Housing prices in Newton are high and rising.** This is largely because demand far exceeds supply. Supply is low for a number of reasons, including high land and construction costs; our complicated permitting process; neighborhood resistance to change; and our restrictive zoning ordinance (zoning = dividing a city into districts with different allowable uses and development rules).

- Further restricting supply will not bring prices down.

**It's not just supply—Newton is also low in options.** We need more homes that are affordable to people across a range of incomes. We also need more of the kinds of homes people are looking for, both to rent and to own. Over 75% of our homes are either single-family (55%) or 2- and 3-family (21.3%) houses. This is a problem.

- Seniors interested in downsizing, people with disabilities, young professionals who want to live close to public transit and amenities, people who work in Newton but can't afford to live here—without a wider variety of housing types and sizes, we're shutting them out.

**Adequate housing has economic benefits.** A diverse and growing population, appropriately housed, produces more customers and employees for local businesses and expands our tax base. Conversely, insufficient housing impedes our ability to attract businesses and keep them here (see Economic Development Action Plan for Newton, 2019).

## NEWTON'S HOUSING IS TOO EXPENSIVE AND IT'S HOLDING US BACK.

### **Newton housing prices are rising rapidly.**

The median sales price for a single-family home nearly doubled between 2003 and 2016, from \$638,000 to **\$1,100,000**.

Buying a home at this price requires an annual income of \$202,247 and a down payment of \$220,000.

**Over 30% of Newton households are cost-burdened**, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. This includes **75% of low-income households**.

### **Newton is losing economic diversity.**

From 2000 to 2013, **we lost 4,700 households with annual incomes of less than \$125,000**, and gained 4,200 households earning more than \$200,000 (Newton Leads 2040 Housing Strategy).

**We also lag behind in racial diversity** compared to Massachusetts as a whole, largely due to our undersupply of affordable homes. **Only 3.1% of our population is black or African-American (vs. state's 6.7%), and only 5.5% is Hispanic or Latino (vs. state's 11.2%).** (2019 Greater Boston Housing Report Card).

**Many people who work in Newton can't afford to live here.** Almost 50% of employees in Newton work in health care, social assistance, education, accommodation, food services, and retail (American Community Survey 2013-2017). They contribute to our community and our economy. With an average monthly income ranging from \$1,784 to \$4,444, **they would spend between 54% and 136% of their income on a one-bedroom unit priced at the average \$2,427/month** (CoStar Realty Information Inc.).

**We should maximize the housing potential of key sites.** Newton is fairly “thickly settled,” but there are a few places, particularly near commercial and transit hubs, that could handle many more homes without creating huge new burdens on traffic or the environment.

- **Riverside** and **Northland Newton** are great examples: mixed-use proposals for new walkable neighborhoods on large underused lots that make the most of existing and proposed new transit infrastructure. Thanks to our **Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance**, a substantial portion of the hundreds of new homes at these two sites (at least 17.5%) will be affordable to low-income households (see box below). The more homes we build, the more affordable homes we get—without public subsidy, which can be saved for projects with deeper affordability.
- Building more homes near public transit, shops, and other amenities is the best way to get people out of their cars. It’s why Green Newton supports and even helps shape these kinds of projects, and why Newton’s **Climate Action Plan** calls for more of them.

**We can manage and mitigate the effects of development.** The Newton City Council, as the official body entrusted with reviewing proposals that require special permits, will always evaluate the potential impacts of new housing (and other project features) on traffic, parking, the environment, etc. The community should weigh in, at hearings and in letters to Councilors. Inevitably, proposals will morph in response to reasonable concerns and good ideas.

If we want to be a **strong, inclusive community for generations to come**, we should be able to grow and evolve, even as we strive to conserve our communal resources. With thoughtful planning and careful review, we can **manage growth without stifling development**.

**Just what does “affordable” mean, when applied to housing? Who gets to live there?**

- There’s “naturally” affordable: A home is affordable to you if the associated costs are no more than 30% of your household’s total income. If our supply of homes matched demand, many more would be naturally affordable.
- And then there’s “deed-restricted” affordable, as defined by HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development): Homes are affordable in this sense if they’re intentionally created to be permanently affordable to people with lower incomes, i.e., who earn less than the “area median income” (AMI) as determined by HUD.
  - Deed-restricted homes are reserved for income-eligible households, for whom the associated costs usually cannot exceed 30% of their income. Newton’s “inclusionary” units are mostly for households earning 50% to 80% of AMI, with a small percentage for households earning 80% to 110% of AMI (“workforce” units).

**These are the 2020 income limits for Newton** (Boston-Cambridge-Quincy HUD Metro Area):

Household/unit size > Income level	1 Person Studio	2 Person 1 Bedroom	3 Person 2 Bedroom	4 Person 3 Bedroom
≤ 30% of AMI	\$26,850	\$30,700	\$34,550	\$38,350
≤ 50% of AMI	\$44,800	\$51,200	\$57,600	\$63,950
≤ 80% of AMI	\$67,400	\$77,000	\$86,650	\$96,250
≤ 110% of AMI	\$98,560	\$112,640	\$126,720	\$140,690

**Show our elected leaders you care—speak up for housing in Newton!**

Help us build support for housing opportunities by letting the City Council and City staff know you want to see *more housing production*, more *affordable housing*, and more *housing options*. Contact the City Council at [citycouncil@newtonma.gov](mailto:citycouncil@newtonma.gov), and copy Mayor Fuller ([rfuller@newtonma.gov](mailto:rfuller@newtonma.gov)) and Planning Director Barney Heath ([bheath@newtonma.gov](mailto:bheath@newtonma.gov)). Be sure to include your home address.