

Data Sources: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Census Building Permit Survey

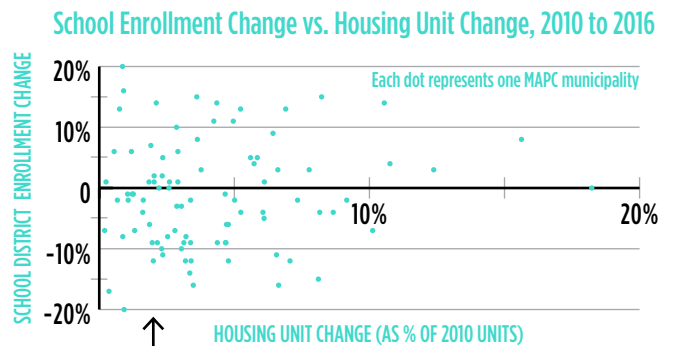
Housing Production and School Enrollment

Step into a community meeting about housing production, and you are likely to hear a conversation about its effects on school enrollment. All of us were once children, and most of us went to public schools. So it is discouraging to hear advocates oppose the development of new homes because the school population may grow. But does their central premise even hold water? Does the production of new homes have any demonstrable correlation with school enrollment? The answer, according to a recent MAPC study, is, “No.”

Statewide, public school enrollment is declining. More than two thirds of public school districts saw a decline in enrollment from 2010 to 2016, with an average decline of 8%; most of those declines were in suburban districts. Meanwhile, districts in MAPC’s Inner Core communities grew by 7% on average.

To analyze the patterns of enrollment growth, MAPC tracked housing permits and enrollment data for 234 public school districts in Massachusetts. We found that higher rates of housing production were not correlated with enrollment growth.

It appears parental preferences, perceived school quality, and overall housing affordability play a much larger role in enrollment. Even in communities with substantial housing production, the growth in households and children was not sufficient to offset the overall demographic decline in school-age residents.



There is no significant correlation between housing production and school enrollment