Loss of Local News Sources in the MAPC Region

An Executive Discretionary Fund report by Tim Viall
Introduction
Where have all the newspapers gone?

‘Looks like the apocalypse’: Gannett weekly papers across the state announce the end of print publication
Almost 20 publications will cease print publication in May and another nine papers are merging into four papers.

Local newspapers aren’t dying. They’re dead.

‘It’s devastating.’ As Boston-area weeklies close, towns ponder civic life without local news.

Yes, hyperlocal newspapers are dying. But here’s what’s rising up to fill the void.

Gannett’s Mass. weeklies to replace much of their local news with regional coverage
What does “hyperlocal” mean?

1. Independent (or operates under a locally owned entity);
2. Print or online based;
3. Mainly focuses its coverage on community-based reporting in one city or town;
4. Must have published new stories within the last two months
What does this report exclude?
An in-depth look: Wicked Local
Connecting the analysis with MAPC’s data

- Municipal total population
- The BIPOC population % of each municipality
- % of a municipal population living in EJ block groups
- % of limited English and no English-speaking population in a municipality
- % of residents with an associate degree or higher
- % of the population that are foreign born
- Median household income
69 out of the 101 (68.32%) cities and towns in the MAPC region have at least one hyperlocal news source. Thirty-two (31.68% - nearly a third) do not have a hyperlocal news source.
Breakdown of Hyperlocal Sources

- 46 communities (45.54%) have one hyperlocal source
- 19 communities (18.81%) have two hyperlocal sources
- 3 communities (2.97%) have three hyperlocal sources
- 1 community (0.99%) has more than three hyperlocal sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Shore Coalition</th>
<th>Number of municipalities</th>
<th>Number of hyperlocal sources</th>
<th>Number of cities/towns lacking a hyperlocal source</th>
<th>% of cities/towns lacking a hyperlocal source in subregion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hyperlocal sources / number of municipalities ratio = 0.3077

- Cohasset Anchor (Digital)
- Duxbury Clipper (Weekly Newspaper)
- Hingham Anchor (Digital)
- Hull Times (Weekly Newspaper)
- WATD (Marshfield & South Shore)
### Table 1: Select Municipalities with No Local News Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Population (highest six municipalities):</th>
<th>BIPOC Pop.</th>
<th>% of pop. that are foreign born (highest percentage of foreign born)</th>
<th>Bottom 15 in median household income:</th>
<th>Bottom 20 in median household income:</th>
<th>% of municipal pop. living in EJ block groups:</th>
<th>% of pop. with associate degree or higher:</th>
<th>Falls within a news desert:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framingham</td>
<td>72,362</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waltham</td>
<td>62,186</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weymouth</td>
<td>57,437</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>42,670</td>
<td>15.37%</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braintree</td>
<td>39,143</td>
<td>29.94%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph</td>
<td>34,984</td>
<td>73.45%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>41.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockland</td>
<td></td>
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<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockport</td>
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<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weston</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boxborough</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holbrook</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>**</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>42.19%</td>
<td>**</td>
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<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acton</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoughton</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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Is there hope on the horizon? Or more problems brewing?

The Harvard Crimson aims to fill local news gaps with a new Cambridge-focused newsletter – Harvard NiemanLab, April 2023

A new bill in the Mass. Legislature could subsidize local newspaper subscriptions – The Boston Globe, February 2023

How public radio can help solve the local news crisis - Northeastern University’s School of Journalism, February 2023

Commission will explore ways to support local journalism in Massachusetts – The Berkshire Eagle, February 2021
Questions?

BREAKING NEWS!
NEWSPAPERS ARE PLANNING TO PUT ALL THEIR STORIES ABOUT NEWSPAPERS USING PAYWALLS, BEHIND A PAYWALL.

WHAT'S A NEWSPAPER?