

# MAKING SPACE FOR ART

Securing Cultural Infrastructure in Boston, Cambridge & Somerville



## MAKING SPACE FOR ART BRIEFING PAPER *HOUSING OUR REGION'S ARTISTS*

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# Introduction

Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville are working to preserve and expand cultural and creative workspace as foundational infrastructure to support the arts and culture sector. To support this effort, MAPC launched [Making Space for Art](#) in 2022 to document creative workspace in the three cities and identify policies to enhance workspace preservation and expansion efforts. Recognizing that housing both functions as creative workspace and has characteristics and policy considerations distinct from non-residential creative workspace, this paper complements a regional policy agenda and municipal action plans focused on non-residential cultural and creative workspace. It frames the role of housing as cultural infrastructure, offers an analysis of artists' housing needs in Metro Boston, and explores policy opportunities to expand housing affordability and production for artists and cultural workers.

# Housing as Cultural Infrastructure

Arts, culture, and creativity are fundamental aspects of human experience, and as such, they are part of lived experience in homes and in workspaces. Understanding housing as cultural infrastructure requires thinking about housing in two ways – first, as a place where individuals can connect with cultural practices within their home and family life – experiencing, exploring and developing artistic and cultural practices – and second, as a place that supports established artists and cultural practitioners in maintaining and expanding their artistic and cultural practices. Housing is critical for building an artistic practice, which can require many hours developing skills and exploring ideas with little to no compensation. Securing separate workspace for a creative practice may only be economically feasible after that practice has been well established or alternate income sources are secured. Housing that is supportive of artistic practice can function as creative incubation space.

Housing also supports the maintenance of established creative practice. Many professional artists in the region identify their homes as their primary workspace. Even established professional artists who primarily work outside their homes report that their homes remain a secondary workspace<sup>1</sup>. Affordable places to live in communities are necessary both to nurture artistic expression at home and to ensure that artists can live where they work. For those with stable housing and pathways to homeownership, housing can be a buffer against the risks of building a career as an artist or cultural worker. However, when stable, affordable housing and homeownership are out of reach, a lack of stable housing becomes a barrier to the growth of cultural production and the creative economy. Where a lack of affordable housing options exacerbates inequality by race, income, and ability, those inequalities become amplified in the creative sector.

Throughout this paper, the term "arts-supportive housing" is used to refer to homes that allow for and encourage a thriving artistic practice. Arts-supportive housing can and will function differently for artists and cultural workers engaged across different mediums and art forms. This paper uses the term "artists and cultural workers" because many artists, like some in the performing arts, creative placemaking, or cultural production fields, may not see themselves as artists or think others do not see them as artists.

Homes can support artistic practice in a variety of ways. Arts-supportive housing may include access to workspace or rehearsal space in the home or it might include access to arts space in a building or neighborhood where it can serve multiple homes. It may include living spaces designed to consider access to daylight, additional storage, or sound insulation; it may involve the creation of social spaces to build community around creative and artistic practice. Efforts to understand the housing needs of artists and cultural workers will help to develop and expand what "arts-supportive housing" can be, and how the concept can be considered and integrated in ways that improve housing not only for artists, but for everyone in the community.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2017, a survey conducted by MAPC for the Arlington Arts & Culture Action Plan found that 67% of respondents used their home as their primary workspace and 20% used their home as their secondary workspace. Published research tends to focus on artists in the creative economy and their needs for workspace outside the home. Few provide comprehensive data on the use of homes as secondary workspaces. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Arlington Arts & Culture Action Plan* (2017), accessed December 5, 2025, [https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ArlingtonArtsandCultureActionPlanComplete\\_final.pdf](https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ArlingtonArtsandCultureActionPlanComplete_final.pdf)

## Housing functions as workspace for artists

Artists consistently report that their home is their primary workspace.<sup>2</sup> The overlap between arts and culture as part of life and arts and cultural practice as a career provides one explanation for this. Longstanding land use frameworks that designate geographic zones for a single use (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) were not designed to accommodate the ways that professional arts and culture practice combine multiple uses into a single space. The application of this framework over many decades makes it increasingly difficult to secure appropriate and affordable space for artistic and cultural practice. In the late twentieth century, the innovation of repurposing formerly industrial buildings as hybrid artist live-work space emerged as a strategy to secure long-term affordable space for artists. It also required the creation of new use categories to allow for residential uses in areas zoned for industrial activity.<sup>3</sup>

In and around Metro Boston, artists have proactively developed real estate solutions that meet their needs for housing and workspace. Early examples of artist housing projects include the Piano Factory building that was renovated as affordable artist housing in the 1970s, the Payne Elevator Building, which was redeveloped in the 1960s as a cooperatively owned artist live-work building, and the Brickbottom Artists' Building in Somerville, founded in 1986 and developed as live-work condominiums.<sup>4</sup> A 2003 study on artist space needs in Boston found that of 2,000 artists surveyed, 62% preferred space to live and work. That study also found that artists interested in work-only spaces were more likely to own their homes than artists preferring live-work space.<sup>5</sup> A 2018 study of artists in Massachusetts found that only about 31% of respondents preferred a workspace independent from their living space.<sup>6</sup> In response to these efforts, a few cities in the region have created artist live-work zoning definitions and developed programs to increase artists' access to affordable spaces to live and work. The City of Boston has run its artist housing certifications for many years, and the City of Somerville has included live-work housing in its zoning since 2009 and has refined its zoning as a strategy to preserve the city as a place for artists to live and work.

## Market rate housing is not affordable for many artists

In 2025, Greater Boston continues to face a housing crisis. Housing affordability is a pressing challenge across the Metro Boston region and the supply of housing regionally has not kept up with growth. After decades of underbuilding housing, demand for housing continues to grow, and housing costs have now risen far beyond what many households can afford. In 2023, the median asking rents in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville were about \$2,850, \$3,095, and \$3,000, respectively. The federal definition of

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<sup>2</sup> According to the New England Foundation for the Arts' 2017 report *Jobs in New England's Creative Economy and Why They Matter*, more than half of working creatives (52 percent) in Massachusetts had a primary workspace located inside their homes in 2016. New England Foundation for the Arts, *Jobs in New England's Creative Economy and Why They Matter* (2017), accessed December 5, 2025, [https://donahue.umass.edu/documents/The\\_Jobs\\_In\\_New\\_Englands\\_Creative\\_Economy\\_-\\_NEFA\\_June\\_2017.pdf](https://donahue.umass.edu/documents/The_Jobs_In_New_Englands_Creative_Economy_-_NEFA_June_2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> A 1995 monograph published by the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies highlights case studies of live-work buildings across the United States with initial occupancy ranging from 1987 to 1995. Jan Plimpton, *Live/Work Space: Housing for Artists in Your Community* (Washington, DC: National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Community Partners Consultants, Inc., *Creating Artist Space: Report to the Boston LINC Working Group* (Medford, MA, 2003), 61–63, <https://www.lincnet.net/sites/linc/images/3862/Creating%20Artist%20Space%20A%20Report%20to%20the%20Boston%20LINC%20Working%20Group.pdf>; and Brickbottom Artists Association, "Our History," accessed May 13, 2025, <https://brickbottom.org/about-us>

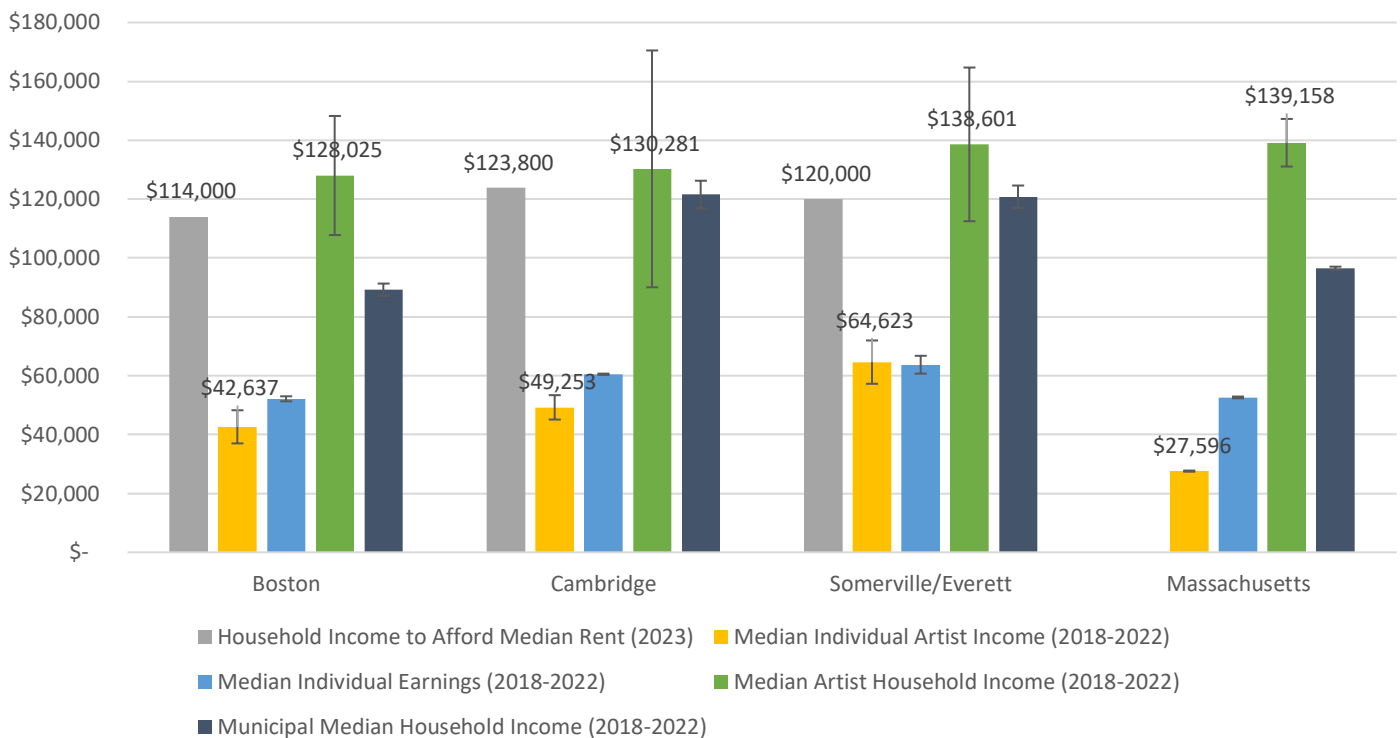
<sup>5</sup> Community Partners Consultants, *Creating Artist Space*.

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Artists Leaders Coalition (MALC) and Artmorpheus, *By Artists for Artists, Makers and Creative Entrepreneurs: A Survey of Massachusetts Artists, Makers, and Creative Entrepreneurs* (2018), 35, accessed December 5, 2025, <https://www.artistsunderthedome.org/ByArtistsForArtistsReport.pdf>

housing affordability considers housing to be affordable when housing costs like rent or mortgage payments do not exceed 30% of that household's income. To afford the median rent in any of the three communities in the study area, a household would need an income of at least \$115,000 per year.

According to American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5-year estimate data,<sup>7</sup> artists in Massachusetts have a median income of \$27,500 per year, about half of median individual income across all occupations in the state. Median incomes for individual artists are higher in Boston, Cambridge and Somerville than in the state and closer to median individual incomes. However, most artists – like most people – in these cities cannot afford median rental costs on their individual incomes alone and must live in multi-earner households or have other sources of income and wealth to afford median market rent in Boston, Cambridge, or Somerville. Figure 1 shows the discrepancy between artists’ individual and household incomes as compared with median rental costs in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. About 33% of artist households in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville meet the definition of low-income households eligible for most affordable housing programs in Massachusetts.

**Figure 1** Median Incomes and Income to Afford Median Rent in Massachusetts and Metro Boston



Source: MAPC Rental Listings Database (2023), PUMS 5-year estimates (2018-2022), ACS 5-year estimates (2018-2022), shown in 2022 dollars

In the 2018 survey of Massachusetts artists, more than half of professional artists reported owning their home. In a year when median rent in Massachusetts was \$1,336, 65% of respondents reported monthly rent or mortgage payments of less than \$1,500 across the Commonwealth.<sup>8</sup> The report also found that

<sup>7</sup> Analysis uses the American Community Survey's Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) five-year estimates to estimate artists' income within a collection of 21 occupation codes to create a broad definition for "artist" in this analysis, encompassing a variety of artists and cultural workers, including architects and other designers, fine artists, performers, writers, and photographers. A complete list of the occupation codes used can be found at the end of this paper. U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 5-Year Estimates*.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2016–2020*.

the two most common sources of supplemental income for artists is work unrelated to their creative practice and help from a spouse or partner. This raises questions about the extent to which dependency on an employer or on a spouse or partner creates vulnerability for practicing artists. This data also raises the question of whether access to below-market rents or access to supplemental income sources are frequent preconditions that enable artists to establish themselves as working professionals in Massachusetts.

## Limited income-restricted housing supply reduces access to affordable homes

Affordable Housing is defined as housing with an income-restriction for eligibility. This includes units for which rents are fixed below the market rate and are not adjusted to a household’s income, as well as units for which rents are set based on a percentage of each household’s monthly income (usually 30% of monthly gross income). Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville have more Affordable Housing units compared to many communities in the region, but the need for affordable homes still exceeds the existing supply of Affordable Housing.

**Table 1** Supply of Affordable Homes & Count of Low-Income Households and Artist Households in Massachusetts & Metro Boston

Municipality	Total Affordable Rental Units	Low-Income Households	Low-Income Artist Households
Massachusetts	215,562	1,157,161	21,207
Boston	52,293	146,035	3,545
Cambridge	7,309	19,146	1,092
Somerville	3,299	22,873	716
Everett	991		

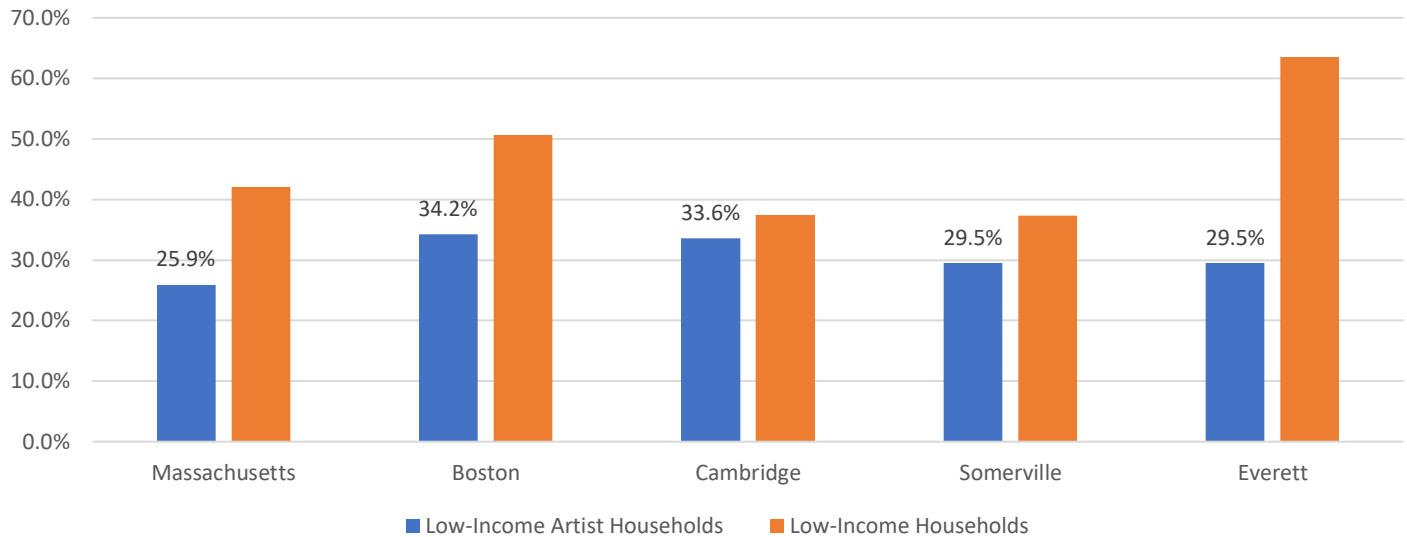
Source: Housing Navigator Data Dashboard (2024), PUMS 5-year estimates (2018-2022)

Note: PUMS data uses a PUMA for Somerville that includes Everett, shown for reference.

Across Massachusetts, the share of low-income artists households is proportional to the share of artist households. Artist households located in Metro Boston are more likely to be low income compared with artist households across Massachusetts. About a third (~30% - 34%) of artist households living in cities in Metro Boston are low-income compared with about a quarter of artist households in Massachusetts (~26%). Across Massachusetts, a smaller share of artist households is low-income compared with<sup>9</sup> the share of all households that is low-income. However, the extent of this difference varies by municipality.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)*, 2017–2021.

**Figure 2** Percent Share of Low-Income Households & Artist Households in Massachusetts and Metro Boston



Source: PUMS) 5-year estimates (2018-2022), Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy 2017-202. Note: PUMS data uses a PUMA for Somerville that includes Everett, shown for reference.

Artists may face unique challenges accessing income-restricted affordable housing, including difficulties demonstrating income from being self-employed or running a small business. Additionally, the units available as income-restricted affordable housing may not be suitable for the housing needs of an artist, like the need for additional workspace, management of noise, or proximity to gallery or performance spaces. More research is needed to understand barriers for artists to access affordable housing and to identify potential conflicts between income-restricted affordable housing standards and standards for housing that supports artistic practice. Several recent housing developments in Massachusetts have included income-restricted artist housing units that could provide a model for building arts-supportive affordable housing.

### The region needs housing that supports artistic practice for all income levels

Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville all lack an adequate supply of dedicated housing for artists. Across the three cities, there are approximately 280 units of live-work housing and dedicated artist housing. These units are available at a range of affordability levels and include market rate units. According to the PUMS 5-year estimates for 2018-2022, the 16,000 artist households in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville make up about 20% of artist households statewide.

### There are 57 artist households for every unit of dedicated artist housing in Metro Boston.

In addition, the supply of this dedicated housing type is not stable. Artist live-work housing in the region that lacks regulations to preserve its arts-use has seen significant turnover to non-artists. The Brickbottom Artist Loft building in Somerville is an example of a development that was led by artists to create 150 live-work ownership units. Many of those units are now owned by non-artists, prices range from \$489,900 to \$1,295,000, and no artist-registration is required to purchase the loft spaces.

Housing that is supportive of artistic practice is not and should not be exclusive to artists who rely on their art as their primary source of income. The region will never meet the demand for arts supportive housing with dedicated artist housing and live-work housing alone and thus it is important that a broad share of our housing supply is made up of homes that can support artistic practice. Understanding what makes a good home for an artist should be considered in our understanding of what makes a good home for anyone in a community.

This need is particularly pressing as cities and towns implement the new state law<sup>10</sup> requiring municipalities within the MBTA service area to create zoning regulations to allow for more multifamily housing. This law is spurring the opportunity to increase production of housing for all income levels, and it is critical that this new housing support creative and artistic practice as part of home life for our region's residents. As cities and towns consider how the subsidized housing supply can be expanded through this larger zoning reform, land use and cultural planners should consider how the design of affordable housing can better support artistic practice and consider how inclusionary zoning policies can incentivize affordable arts-supportive housing.

### **Studies affirm the need for affordable space for artists to live and work**

Studies on artists' needs in Metro Boston over the last two decades affirm that artists in the area need affordable spaces to live and work.<sup>11</sup> The challenge of ensuring that artists and creative workers have access to affordable space has grown more acute in the Metro Boston area, and the cities of Boston, Somerville and Cambridge have all incorporated goals and strategies into their planning documents to address this issue. "Boston Creates," the City of Boston's cultural plan, highlights the need both to increase the supply of affordable live-work spaces for artists and explore new housing models to meet artists' needs. "Envision Cambridge," the city's 2019 comprehensive plan, includes a goal to "ensure artists have space in Cambridge to work, meet, produce, perform, and display their work," with a near-term strategy to "modify zoning to allow for live-work space for artists." The City of Somerville established artist live-work zoning and incentivized development of artist live-work space as part of its Union Square zoning updates adopted in 2009. These actions could serve as models for similar efforts in other parts of Metro Boston, particularly in communities that share a goal of attracting and retaining creative workers.

### **Access to artist housing is inconsistent across municipal boundaries**

Artist live-work zoning definitions and programs range from the inclusion of artist studios within the definition of a home-based business in Cambridge to well-established live-work definitions and programs in place for many decades in Boston. Somerville's live-work space definition has evolved since its initial adoption in 2009 for Union Square. In 2019, the City of Somerville replaced the definition of live-work studio space with a new definition, rendering some studios constructed in compliance with the 2009 zoning definition into non-conforming uses.<sup>12</sup> In 2025, the City of Somerville revised the zoning use definitions of both live-work studio and artist housing to address this issue.

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<sup>10</sup> Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 40A, § 3A, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40A/Section3A>

<sup>11</sup> Community Partners Consultants, *Creating Artist Space*, and MALC and Artmorpheus, *By Artists for Artists*.

<sup>12</sup> The issue with the 2019 live-work space definition was flagged in MAPC's 2022 *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment Study*. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment*, prepared for the City of Somerville, 2022, <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/somerville-art-space-risk-assessment-study/>

Both Boston and Somerville require separate artist registration processes to access artist live-work spaces. Due to the low inventory of spaces available, the time required for submitting and processing new artist applications can be cumbersome both for artists and municipal staff. Artists would benefit from an artist registration program that operates at a larger geography. This could be a regional or state-wide registration, or it could be a process for reciprocal recognition of artist registrations across different municipalities. This would ensure eligibility for dedicated artist housing across municipalities and increase artists' mobility.

## Equitable access to arts-supportive housing remains a concern

The barriers that prevent equitable access to housing also prevent equitable access to arts-supportive housing. The factors that lead to a disproportionate share of African American, Latine, and other non-white populations experiencing rent burden also create barriers to accessing affordable space to support a creative practice. Artists of color and artists with lower incomes both historically and presently have reduced access to capital for owning space and may also have limited access to social networks through which information about space is shared.<sup>13</sup> Cooperative, artist-owned live-work space models that can preserve affordability are also less accessible to groups impacted by discriminatory real-estate lending practices. In addition, where noise ordinances or restrictive home-based business regulations are in place, renters and those living in multifamily housing are at greater risk of eviction or fines based on neighbors' complaints than those living in single family homes.<sup>14</sup> Exclusionary zoning practices create additional barriers to equitable access. Individuals with disabilities and those with low-English proficiency also require special consideration to ensure access to arts-supportive housing.

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<sup>13</sup> The *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment* found that a reliance on benevolent landlords and social networks for access to affordable space created barriers for those without such connections. This was identified as particularly challenging for BIPOC and emerging artists. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment*.

<sup>14</sup> Data from the *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment* showed that no renters in Somerville reported owning creative workspace, while one-quarter of homeowners reported owning creative workspace. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment*.

# Metro Boston can address the housing needs of artists today

In the short term, municipalities, funders, and regional partners in Metro Boston can partner with entities at the state level to pursue three pathways to improve artists' access to affordable and arts-supportive housing.

- **Expand production of income-restricted affordable housing as a component of thriving communities in combination with cultural and creative workspace.**
- Incentivize the production of more housing and more Affordable Housing throughout Metro Boston.
  - Adopt zoning that defines artistic and creative uses to be allowed by-right in residential zones. Zoning and other related bylaws and ordinances should generally allow residents to use their homes for artistic production and accessory income-generating activities such as teaching their creative practice or selling their work, with reasonable allowances for the noise levels from musicians and other by-products of creative production.
  - Include artist live-work space as an allowable housing type.
  - Define cultural and creative workspace in zoning, building on the Arts and Creative Enterprise use definitions developed and refined by the City of Somerville to ensure that creative workspace is incentivized and maintained in areas near residential buildings.
- Establish funding programs to incentivize Community Development Corporations and other for- and non-profit housing producers to include cultural and creative workspace in affordable and mixed-income housing developments.
- With the recent legalization of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by-right across Massachusetts, new units that are built could target leasing advertisements to artist communities. ADUs are smaller and can serve as “naturally occurring affordable housing.” Detached ADUs can offer some of the benefits of single-family homes (fewer neighbors to be impacted by noise, smells, etc.) for a more affordable rent.
- **Encourage construction of affordable housing in proximity to cultural production spaces.**
- As tools like the Making Space for Art Digital Planning Platform developed by MAPC for the Making Space for Art project make it easier to document and map spaces of cultural production, municipalities can be more proactive about locating affordable housing in proximity to these spaces to better support the needs of artists.
  - Coordinate data sharing among state, local, and regional entities to compile and maintain inventory and map of cultural production and creative workspaces.
  - Integrate information about cultural production spaces into development review processes.

- Encourage construction of affordable housing near cultural production and creative workspaces.
  - Create formal roles within the development review process for municipal staff to connect with arts and culture stakeholders and include their needs within the approval process.
  - Develop new state-level policies or programs to encourage the construction of affordable creative housing and workspaces.
- **Educate developers on what makes for arts-supportive housing.**
    - The City of Boston has compiled a report detailing the space needs of artists and diagramming options for developing artist-supportive buildings and spaces.
      - Document the design features and attributes that make housing more supportive of creative production and identify barriers to the integration of those features in existing affordable housing regulations and design guidelines.
    - Recognize housing developers who are working to responsibly integrate artist workspace into their projects to meet the needs of artists for affordable space to live and work.
      - Create training and certification programs to support more developers to learn these strategies.
      - Increase awareness among municipalities and developers about training programs through educational forums, trainings, and workshops.

These steps would address some immediate challenges and barriers to increasing the supply of affordable housing that meets the needs of artists.

# Metro Boston can address the long-term housing needs of artists

In the long term, Metro Boston has two key pathways to ensure that housing production meets the long-term needs of a thriving arts and culture community. One critical step is to conduct a comprehensive artist housing study to quantify the housing needs and challenges faced by the artist community across the broader Metro Boston region.

Without better information to integrate into housing planning processes, elected officials and planners in Metro Boston are limited in their ability to support the needs of artists in the region. A comprehensive study of artist housing needs in Metro Boston should build upon the lessons learned from the data gathering and analysis in the [Making Space for Art project](#), with the aim of shining a light on the unique housing needs and challenges – practical, physical, and programmatic – for artists and cultural workers in Metro Boston.

In addition to the quantitative data necessary to assess housing needs, dedicated outreach and engagement is needed to understand the lived experience of artists in the region and the unique housing challenges they face. An artist housing study should seek to understand several key factors of housing need: existing conditions; physical housing needs; affordability strategies; and the challenges of combining work with home. These factors, combined with lived experiences, can provide insight on how artists of color face different housing challenges than their white counterparts.

- **Conduct a comprehensive artist housing study to guide long-term planning**
  - Document the existing conditions of where and how artists and cultural workers live now:
    - *What resources are available and how are they utilized?*
    - *What challenges exist within current systems?*
  - Explore and document the physical housing needs of artists and cultural workers:
    - *What is the relationship between artists' relationship living space and workspace?*
    - *What type and scale of housing is best suited to art and cultural creation?*
    - *What building features are important to consider in housing for artists?*
    - *How do these needs vary among different types of artists and cultural workers?*
  - Document and record location needs for artist housing:
    - *Where should housing be located for artists?*
    - *How important is proximity to transit and commercial areas to artist housing?*
    - *How important is proximity and access to spaces of presentation?*

Housing affordability is a shared challenge in the region that extends beyond the arts and culture community: *Do artists and cultural workers have unique affordability challenges? What policies, programs, or mechanisms are best suited to supporting the affordability needs of artists in the community?*

Since housing market conditions vary considerably across municipalities, this study should account for local housing market conditions and differences, informed by [MAPC's housing submarket analysis](#).

## Conclusion: Build more housing for artists

Housing is a critical infrastructure that supports a thriving creative ecosystem. The ability to experience artistic and creative practice as part of family life and throughout one's lifespan relies on housing as a space of culture and artistic work. For many working artists, housing functions both as a home and as a primary or secondary workspace. Housing affordability is a major challenge across the region and creates particular barriers for artists. Artists need income sources beyond their creative practice to afford median housing costs in the region. This is likely a major barrier to individuals seeking to pursue a professional creative practice and creates vulnerabilities and dependence for those who pursue one. While the region does have a supply of dedicated artist housing, that supply is not sufficient to meet the needs of our region's artists. In addition, access to those spaces is regulated within municipal boundaries and requires separate registration and application processes.

Opportunities to address these challenges exist. In the near term, the region can improve access to artist housing by aligning municipalities' definitions of artist live-workspace with the definition used by the City of Boston's well-established program. Artists would also benefit from streamlined access to that housing. Reciprocal recognition of artist registration or a region-wide or statewide artist registration program would ensure eligibility for live-work space across municipalities and increase artists' mobility. Municipalities can amend zoning to allow for more housing that is supportive of artists, including live-work spaces.

In the medium term, the region can deploy tools to inventory and map existing artist workspaces so that municipalities can consider the location of creative workspaces as they plan for new affordable housing. In addition, the region can share existing resources to educate developers about how to design housing that is supportive of artistic practice.

In the long term, ensuring affordable access to housing that supports artistic and cultural activities requires a more comprehensive strategy, guided by data and research through a robust artist housing needs assessment and policy strategy.

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# Appendix: Data Analysis Overview

## About the Data

### Data Sources

- **American Community Survey (ACS) Data 2018-2022** unless otherwise noted
- **Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data 2017-2021** unless otherwise noted
- **MAPC Rental Listings Database (RLDB)**
- **PUMS data, or Public Use Microdata Sample data**, refers to a statistical sample of detailed, individual-level data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). This data is released as a set of records for housing units and people, with protections to ensure individual identities are not disclosed.

### Analysis Notes

Using PUMS data, we can look at individual and household data by profession. In this instance, we were able to look specifically at income information about artists and artist households using occupation codes noted in the PUMS data. For the purposes of this analysis, we used a variety of occupation codes to represent “artists.” The list includes Artists and related workers, designers, performers, writers, and producers of various types. The complete list of occupation codes used can be found on page 2.

Because the group represented by the data is still relatively specific, the margins of error are important to consider for the figures provided. These data represent the ACS 5-year estimates for 2018-2022.

- **PUMAs, or Public Use Microdata Areas**, are the most detailed geographic areas available in PUMS data. For this analysis, we used the PUMAs that cover Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. The PUMA for Somerville also includes Everett.

**Table 1. PUMS Occupation Codes used to define “artist” in this analysis**

<b>Occupation Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
1305	Architects, except landscape and naval
1306	Landscape architects
2600	Artists and related workers
2631	Commercial and industrial designers
2632	Fashion designers
2633	Floral designers
2634	Graphic designers
2635	Interior designers
2636	Merchandise displayers and window trimmers
2640	Other designers
	<i>Set and exhibit designers</i>
	<i>Designers, all other</i>
2700	Actors
2710	Producers and directors
2740	Dancers and choreographers
2751	Music directors and composers
2752	Musicians and singers
2755	Disc jockeys, except radio
2770	Entertainers and performers, sports and related workers, all other
2830	Editors
2850	Writers and authors
2910	Photographers
2920	Television, video, and film camera operators and editors

## Data Tables

### Artists, Artist Households, and Median Incomes

PUMS 5-year estimates, 2018-2022

Municipality	Individual Artists	MOE	Artist Median Income	MOE	Artist Households	MOE	Artist Median Household Income	MOE
Boston	12087	+/-961	\$42,637	+/- \$5,638	10,362	+/-1,890	\$128,025	+/- \$20,226
Cambridge	3835	+/-544	\$49,253	+/- \$4,144	3,250	+/-923	\$130,281	+/- \$40,232
Somerville/Everett	2722	+/-449	\$64,623	+/- \$7,359	2,426	+/-409	\$138,601	+/- \$26,107
Massachusetts	89186	+/-2794	\$27,596	+/- \$194	81,756	+/-5,777	\$139,158	+/- \$8,088

### Median Earnings (Population 16 years and older with earnings)

ACS 5-year estimates, 2018-2022, S2001

Municipality	Median Individual Income	MOE
Boston	\$52,161	+/- \$853
Cambridge	\$60,502	+/- \$2,222
Somerville	\$63,744	+/- \$3,029
Massachusetts	\$52,627	+/- \$302

### Median Household Income

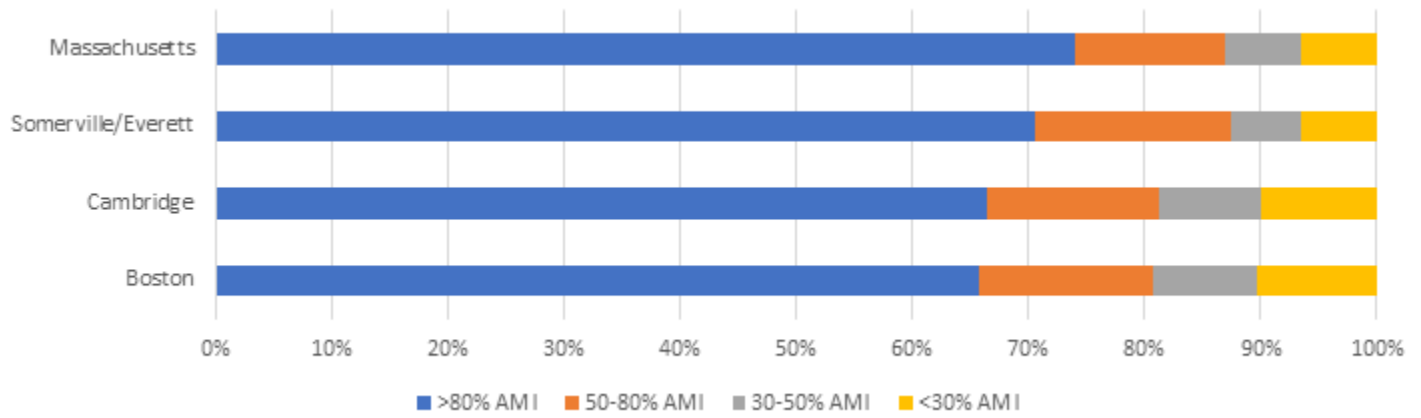
ACS 5-year estimates, 2018-2022

Municipality	Median Household Income	MOE
Boston	\$89,212	+/- \$2,101
Cambridge	\$121,539	+/- \$4,716
Somerville	\$120,778	+/- \$3,840
Massachusetts	\$96,505	+/- \$551

## Data Charts

### Artist Households by Income Status

PUMS 5-year estimates, 2018-2022



### All Households by Income Status

CHAS 5-year estimates, 2017-2021

