

Housing and Student Population Growth

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) study compared housing permits to student population growth in Massachusetts

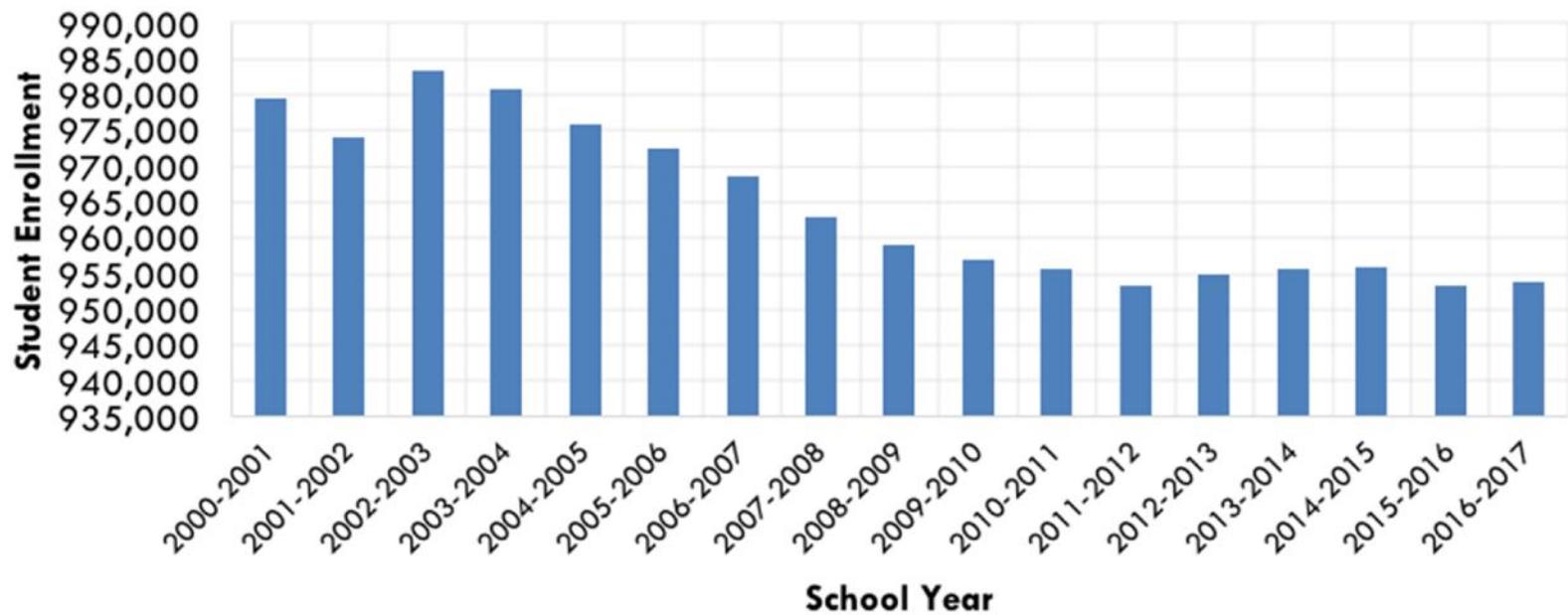
In late 20th century, during Baby Boomers prime child-rearing years, their residential choices caused housing stock, student enrollment and school budget expenditures to all grow together

Over the last 15 years, this trend has not held up

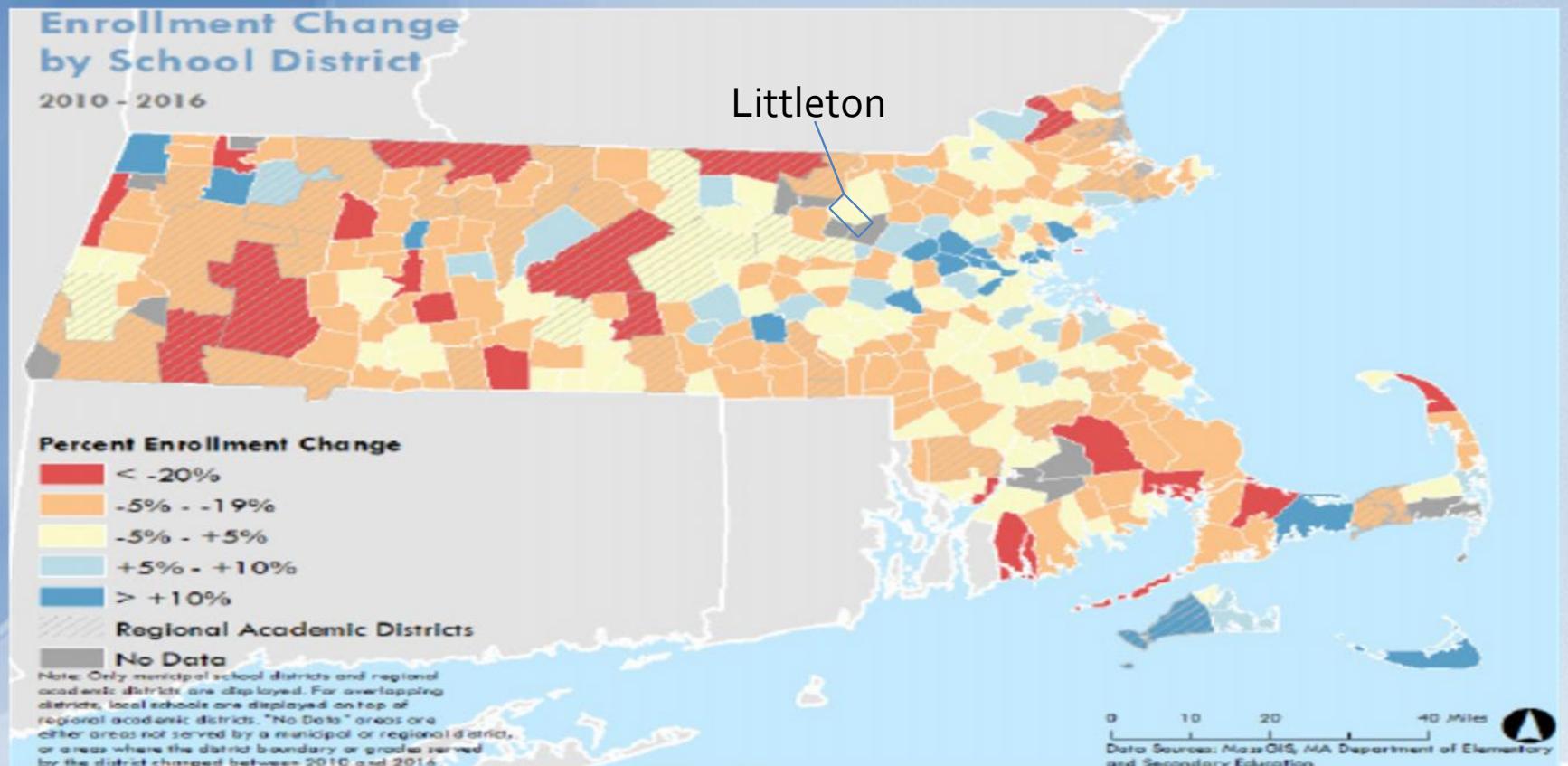
MAPC examined housing permit and enrollment trends across 234 public school districts over the past 6 years, from 2010 to 2016, inclusive

Housing and Student Population Growth

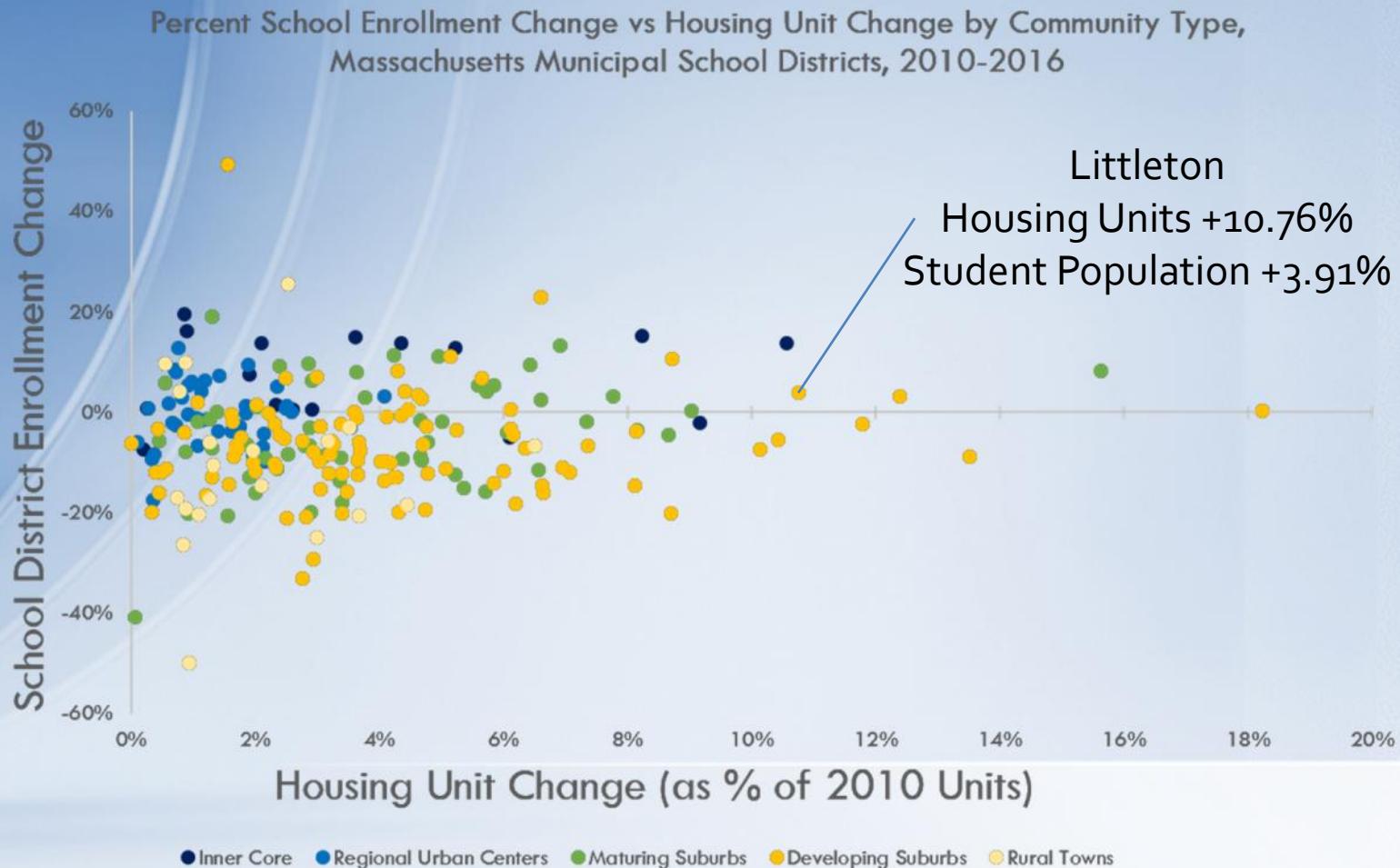
Public School Enrollment (conventional public school districts and charter schools), Massachusetts, 2000–2016



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MAPC observed no meaningful correlation between housing production rates and enrollment growth over the six-year period

Schoolchildren occupying new housing units may cause a marginal change in enrollment, but they are one small factor among many

In cities and town with the most rapid housing production, enrollment barely budged; and most districts with the largest student increases saw very little housing unit change

The rate of housing unit growth is not a useful predictor of overall enrollment change, nor is rapid housing development a precondition to sudden enrollment increases

It appears that broad demographic trends, parental preferences, and housing availability now play a much larger role in enrollment growth and decline

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MAPC examined the 12 fastest-growing MAPC-region districts, which grew by an average of 14% over a six-year period

In these 12 rapidly growing districts, as with the region overall, housing production rates show no significant correlation with enrollment

Only Natick, Everett, and Chelsea added more than 5% new units, a far lower jump than their enrollment rates

Meanwhile, the fastest growing district, Revere, reported less than 1% housing unit growth, and saw a 20% increase in enrollment

These findings suggest that rapid housing unit growth is neither a predictor, nor a precondition, of net enrollment change

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MAPC found that these 12 Districts fall into two distinct clusters

Seven districts (Arlington, Belmont, Brookline, Cambridge, Lexington, Lincoln, and Natick) could be characterized as highly desirable from an educational perspective, with high standardized-test scores relative to the rest of the region

These districts are also correspondingly expensive, with a 2016 median home sale value of \$815,000, almost twice as much as the MAPC regional median sale value of \$455,000

The other fast-growing districts (Revere, Everett, Chelsea, Lynn, and Waltham) are in diverse, lower-income, and generally more urbanized communities

While these districts exhibit lower test scores they are also much more affordable, with 2016 median sale prices of only \$360,000, or 20% less than the regional median

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MAPC Conclusion: The permits don't produce the pupils.

These findings demonstrate that the fiscal impact of new residential development cannot be estimated without a full understanding of district demographics and school capacity

While it's true that some students may be housed in new units, the enrollment effect of these students is dwarfed by larger demographic factors driving declines in school age children and parental location preference

As it turns out, the presence of students living in new homes may actually help to mitigate what would otherwise be rapid and disruptive declines in enrollment in many communities, while in other communities, new housing may add students to a much lesser degree than is commonly supposed

Municipalities should take heart in this additional piece of evidence that under most conditions, additional housing, even "family" housing, can be accommodated without driving enrollment through the roof

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In 2014, MAPC produced a report on population and housing demand projections

The report projected growth trends between 2010 and 2030 and used two scenarios:
Status Quo and Stronger Region

Littleton Status Quo Scenario			Littleton Stronger Region Scenario		
Total Population Change	> 65 Years Old Population Change	< 15 Years Old Population Change	Total Population Change	> 65 Years Old Population Change	< 15 Years Old Population Change
810	1810	-590	1050	1860	-530

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School Year	Littleton Student Residents	Growth By Year	Growth from 2013-2014	School Choice Students	Growth By Year	Growth from 2013-2014	Total Students	Growth By Year	Growth from 2013-2014
2013-2014	1513			74			1587		
2014-2015	1527	0.93%	0.93%	73	-1.35%	-1.35%	1600	0.82%	0.82%
2015-2016	1549	1.44%	2.38%	82	12.33%	10.81%	1631	1.94%	2.77%
2016-2017	1561	0.77%	3.17%	90	9.76%	21.62%	1651	1.23%	4.03%
2017-2018	1587	1.67%	4.89%	83	-7.78%	12.16%	1670	1.15%	5.23%

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Links to MAPC's October 2017 report
"The Waning Influence of Housing Production on Public School Enrollment."

<https://www.mapc.org/enrollment/>

<https://www.mapc.org/planning101/housing-production-and-school-enrollment-not-as-simple-as-the-birds-and-the-bees/>

http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/MAPC_HousingEnrollment_Final.pdf

http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SchoolEnrollmentandHousing_Data_Metadata.xlsx