

# City of Woonsocket Housing Needs Study

June 27, 2018

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**PREPARED FOR:**

City of Woonsocket  
Department of Planning and Development  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Woonsocket was incorporated in 1888, and is the sixth largest city in the state of Rhode Island with a population of just over 41,000. Lying directly on the Rhode Island-Massachusetts border, the City is perhaps best known as the headquarters of CVS Health. The City is made up of ten neighborhoods: Bernon District, Constitution Hill, Downtown, East Woonsocket, Fairmount, Globe District, Highland Corporate Park, North End, Oak Grove, and Social District. These neighborhoods have distinct demographic and housing characteristics which make them unique.

Based on the projected population and household growth figures, proactive measures are essential for encouraging new growth of population. A steady decline has been occurring in Woonsocket for the last 40 years. This downward trend in population manifests itself in terms of not having a robust real estate market for ground up new development projects. Additionally, declines in population and households have resulted in a declining tax base, which impacts funding for community priorities such as public infrastructure, schools, housing, and city services. Measures to enhance economic and leisure-based opportunities, which in turn will increase population, will help make Woonsocket a more attractive place to live and work.

A major issue in Woonsocket is that incomes are low. The median income for the city is \$37,235, well below the surrounding area (called herein the “Greater Woonsocket Area”) median income of \$66,980. The disparity in incomes makes it difficult for developers to justify building new market rate housing units in Woonsocket if the ability of owners or renters to pay is constrained. Compounding this issue is that approximately 44 percent of Woonsocket households are cost burdened, or paying more than 30% of their gross income on housing and utilities. This data indicates that many existing residents cannot afford the more modest housing already existing in Woonsocket, let alone the premiums in cost typically associated with new construction.

#### Key Woonsocket Facts

- Median household income in Woonsocket is \$37,235.
- Woonsocket residents account for 23 percent of total workers employed across the city.
- Renter housing accounts for 55 percent of all housing stock.
- Housing stock built before 1959 accounts for 72 percent of total.
- The median sale price for a single-family home is \$180,000; median condominium price is \$108,000.
- The average rent for a single-family home is \$1,409; average rent for a multifamily unit is \$1,068.
- For-sale single family home market is robust with a 2 ½ month supply.
- Nearly 44 percent of all households are cost burdened.
- For renter households below 30% of AMI, two households exist for every housing unit.

The price and availability of housing in Woonsocket is driven by supply and demand factors. Woonsocket is a majority renter community, with 55 percent of unit's renter occupied, 33 percent owner-occupied, and 11 percent vacant. There is considerable debate, and rightly so, among residents, boards, and officials about how, where, and what type of housing is needed to accommodate the population. On one hand, more investment into economic development and community amenities will be necessary to attract greater interest from more affluent households. On the other hand, ensuring that lower and middle-income households, and seniors, have adequate housing options is important for preserving the livability and accessibility of Woonsocket for all.

Demand for existing market-rate ownership units is strong across Woonsocket because of the community's relative affordability and the availability statewide financial incentives. Comparatively, demand for luxury housing is not strong because of structural economic and quality of life issues within Woonsocket. Among the factors identified during this analysis include lack of good-paying jobs for existing residents, lack of entertainment and leisure amenities, and comparative school performance to neighboring jurisdictions. While economic development recommendations are addressed elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, this analysis has identified an inextricable link between economic health and the housing market.

Since January 2018, the following housing developments have been either approved or proposed:

- 310 Estes Street (1 single family home to 2 single family homes)
- 90 Bertha Avenue (1 single family home to 2 single family homes)
- 1137 Diamond Hill Road (1 single family home to 28 single family homes)
- 2 Sunset Avenue (1 single family home to 9 single family homes)
- Oak Grove: Danielle Drive (creation of 42 single family homes)
- Neighborworks at Market Square (57 proposed units in three buildings)

Based on the hard data provided in the quantitative analysis as well as qualitative information gained from interviewing key stakeholders, insights regarding key development issues were obtained. The key development issues relate to population and households, socioeconomics, and market constraints for housing. Additionally, key housing needs were identified based on the results of the existing conditions, trends, supply and demand, and cost burdening analysis. These housing needs impact all the current and potential future residents of Woonsocket, as they will help pivot the trajectory of the community and create more opportunities for all. The five main housing needs identified were:

- Increasing new housing production;
- Modernizing the existing housing stock;
- Developing affordable housing for all incomes;
- Creating mixed-use development in downtown; and
- Addressing vacant and blighted properties in the neighborhoods.

Addressing these housing needs is a start towards repositioning Woonsocket to realize its potential as an affordable, livable, and thriving community.

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## Development Issues

### POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

The population in Woonsocket has been declining for the last 40 years. Additionally, the population in Woonsocket is changing, with the greatest percent change resulting from Baby Boomers aging. Between 2011 and 2016, the population of individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 increased by 24 percent. This cohort group is significant because they are close to becoming seniors and will develop special needs the city will have to address. In Woonsocket, the escalating housing-related costs (taxes, utilities, insurance) can make it difficult for senior residents to remain in their homes. Seniors housing choice, accessibility, and affordability are critical issues in the future to address if seniors are to remain a contributing component of Woonsocket's population.

An opportunity area is that between 2011 and 2016 the population of individuals between age 25 and 34 increased by 14 percent. This change can help the local economy because these people fill jobs and homes that are on the market, and support local retailers. Furthermore, this population group is starting their careers and also looking for places to rent or own which can help the local housing market.

### SOCIOECONOMICS

Even though the city has some major corporate employers, a clear majority of the residents work outside of the city and earn wages considerably lower than the regional and state median incomes. The general lack of an economically robust population impacts the overall housing market. While the for-sale housing market is operating at a brisk pace, based on information gained from interviews, the major contributor to the market are two state programs targeting homebuyers. These programs provide either financing help, or relief in the form of tax credits which ultimately lessens the burdens related to homeownership. The two programs are: First Down Rhode Island, and Rhode Island Housing Mortgage Credit Certificate Program. These programs enable individuals to purchase homes while not necessarily having the financial capital traditionally required. While these targeted programs for homeownership are helpful, the fundamental problem in Woonsocket remains that of low incomes and an inability of the population to obtain employment opportunities with higher wages.

### MARKET CONSTRAINTS

Woonsocket is a majority renter community with 55 percent of units renter occupied, 33 percent owner-occupied, and 11 percent vacant. Based on conversations with real estate brokers, a big advantage that Woonsocket has is that the prices for existing single-family homes are low which allows current renters to become first-time homeowners. With regard to multi-family housing, investors are purchasing multifamily buildings that generate modest positive cashflow at a relatively

low cost. The typical investment model is to purchase properties requiring minimal upgrades and then putting it on the market for rent.

New construction in Woonsocket is difficult for developers to undertake because the cost of developing from the ground up is prohibitive given the attainable rents and sales prices. Additional issues developers face in Woonsocket are related to zoning, parking, financing, and construction costs. With such an abundance of vacant housing units, new construction only makes sense in specific instances or locations, whereas rehabbing existing structures appears to be a more feasible business model for investors.

Long-term affordability is a major constraint in the Woonsocket housing market. Given the existing size of the low-income population, the construction and development of permanently affordable housing for all household types is an important and viable market. This is also true for senior households, which require housing that is accessible and connected to supportive services, particularly in the Downtown area.

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## Identified Housing Needs

### INCREASING NEW HOUSING PRODUCTION

The general need for an increase in housing production across Woonsocket is essential toward reactivating urban spaces. The existing housing stock across the city is old, and new construction of buildings is relatively rare given the cost of development. The work of producing housing falls upon both the development community and the city partnering together to realize the vision of Woonsocket. Based on conversations with developers, brokers, and city officials a streamlined process of identifying potential housing sites, working with both the Planning and Zoning Boards, community groups, and city staff can help ensure a smooth and timely development of housing. The benefits of new housing are that units are modern, safe, and have amenities households desire. New housing units activate underutilized spaces and offer a competitive product that households aspire towards.

### MODERNIZATION OF EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Most of Woonsocket's housing was created prior to 1959, accounting for 72 percent of all housing. This out-of-date housing stock does not necessarily reflect the changes in household patterns and desired amenities of the community today. Old housing has several issues of concern including environmental (e.g. lead paint), safety (e.g. old wiring), and interior aesthetics. Without significant investment in the old housing stock, the city loses its ability to attract new households to neighborhoods in transition.

### DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL INCOMES

Woonsocket has a large contingent of low-income households which require housing that is both affordable and accessible. While Woonsocket maintains an affordable housing inventory more than the state minimum 10 percent requirement, the supply still does not satisfy the need of the existing

population. Based on the affordability mismatch analysis and cost burdening data, it is apparent that the need for affordable housing spans the entire income spectrum but is particularly acute at the below 50 percent AMI thresholds. At these income levels, a shortage of rental housing is being experienced by all types of households including the elderly, small families, and large families alike.

#### MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN

Downtown Woonsocket has the potential for catalytic redevelopment. The existing land use in the downtown is a mixture of commercial and residential properties, with many of the Main Street properties and store fronts sitting vacant. The city can continue to work with property owners, community groups, and potential developers to identify parcels for development, as well as addressing regulatory requirements such as parking and zoning. The mixed-use model of development can help activate the street life on the commercial corridors.

#### VACANT AND BLIGHTED PROPERTY ABATEMENT

The city has about 11 percent of the housing stock listed as vacant according to Census data. The high level of vacancy results in quality of life issues for existing residents and makes neighborhoods unattractive to potential renters and buyers. Working with community members to improve neighborhood conditions can help improve the quality of life. As part of the blighted property abatement program the City is actively acquiring and demolishing vacant housing units that are targeted for removal, but demolition alone does not solve the housing problem as the creation of new housing that is modern and affordable is equally as important.

## INTRODUCTION

Woonsocket is the sixth largest city in the state of Rhode Island, with a population of just over 41,000. Lying directly on the Rhode Island-Massachusetts border, the City is perhaps best known as the headquarters of CVS Health. The City was incorporated in 1888, after rapid growth during the industrial revolution as a hub for textile mills. Attracted by mill jobs, French-Canadian immigrants composed 75 percent of Woonsocket's population by the Great Depression; in 1980 an estimated 70 percent was still of French-Canadian descent. With the slow decline of hard industry, felt across the US throughout much of the 20th century, Woonsocket saw its economic competitiveness wane.

Today the City faces economic difficulties on a larger scale than any of its immediate neighbors; household incomes remain well below its neighbors, and unemployment remains stubbornly above State and Regional rates. Still, the city's strong heritage, traditional downtown, and large stock of naturally-occurring affordable housing make it ripe for sensitive development and programs that can better house its residents, grow a diverse population, and provide good-paying jobs anchored by a set of impressive community assets.

The commercial artery of Woonsocket is Main Street. This street is populated by a variety of small businesses which help activate the corridor. Currently there is a high level of first floor and upper story vacancy along the street; however, there are a few bright spots which remain an attraction. Main Street is home to several restaurants which attracts both locals and out of city residents, such as Chan's a renowned restaurant and jazz club. Additionally, the Stadium Theatre is a venue which has become popular for shows and draws people to visit the city. The Downtown area also has the catalytic potential for rail connectivity, as there is an ongoing proposal to reestablish a rail link between Woonsocket and Worcester.

A secondary commercial street in the Downtown is Social Street. This street branches off Main Street and follows a northeastern direction through Woonsocket and into Massachusetts. Other major roadways in Woonsocket include Harris Avenue, Clinton Street, Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland Hill Road, South Main Street, Park Avenue, Manville Road, and Providence Street. These surface streets facilitate the flow of traffic around Woonsocket and provide important connections to the surrounding communities.

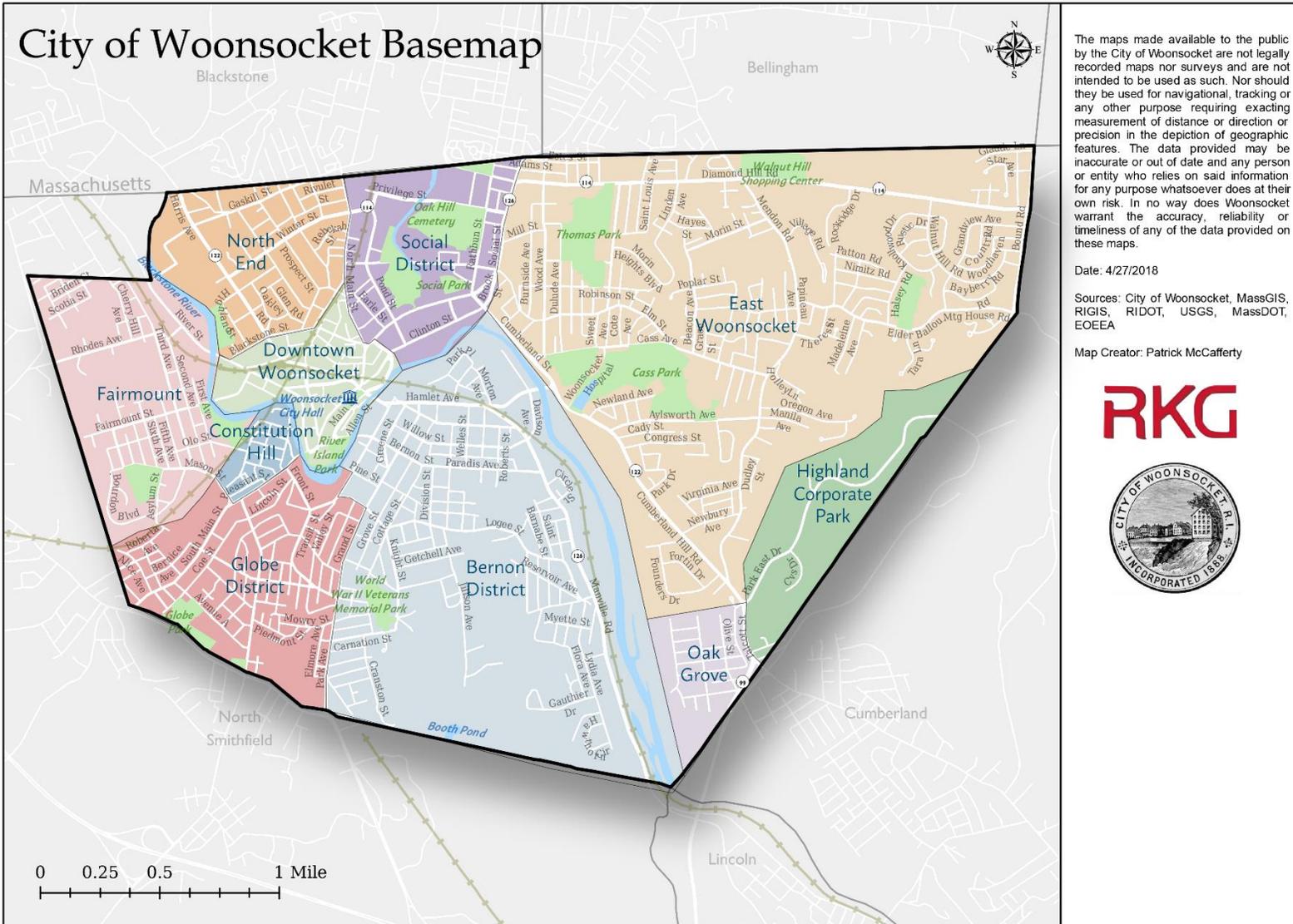
A major geographical feature is the Blackstone River which winds its way through the city. This natural resource has the potential to be a catalyst for the city, as it is near the commercial heart of the community. This underutilized resource can help reactivate the Downtown if curated with the help of the local community members.

Woonsocket's location along the Blackstone River and proximity to major roadways offers excellent connections to other major cities in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The closest large city to Woonsocket is Providence which is a mere 15 miles away and can be easily accessed by traveling along Route 146. Providence is Rhode Island's major employment center and has key amenities and anchor

institutions which make it the economic magnet of the state. The second closest large size city is Worcester, MA. The city of Worcester has a robust local economy, and many employers and institutional anchors; additionally, the City has nine colleges and universities which are catalytic because there are nearly 36,000 students, and provides a significant number of employment opportunities. The distance from Woonsocket is about 25 miles and can be reached via Route 146. Boston, which is the economic engine of New England, is about 50 miles away, and can be reached via Interstate 95. The relative ease of access to these cities is an asset that Woonsocket can leverage.

Woonsocket is made up of ten neighborhoods: Bernon District, Constitution Hill, Downtown, East Woonsocket, Fairmount, Globe District, Highland Corporate Park, North End, Oak Grove, and Social District. The housing needs analysis was completed city-wide, but in some instances findings related to census tracts and neighborhoods are presented. The census tract and neighborhood boundaries do not align in most cases. The neighborhoods of Woonsocket have distinct demographic and housing characteristics which make them unique. The map on the following page provides the geographic context of Woonsocket.

# City of Woonsocket Basemap



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Date: 4/27/2018  
 Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEAA

Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

**RKG**



## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used for the housing analysis comes from a variety of both public and private sources. Basic demographic data comes from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS). This resource is publicly available data that is both transparent and reproducible. Housing data used for the study includes data from the ACS, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), City of Woonsocket Assessor, the Warren Group (a real estate data firm), and Zillow. The housing data is used in the analysis to understand the baseline conditions of Woonsocket, and to provide context for understanding needs.

Information about employment and wages was obtained from the State of Rhode Island, and from the Census Bureau tool of OnTheMap, which provides data related to wages, job flows, and employment sectors. This data is helpful in painting the socioeconomic circumstances of Woonsocket, and the region.

Projections data comes from the industry standard proprietary source Alteryx. This data provides five-year projection data to the year 2022. The projections provide a reasonable forecast of population, household, and housing units. This information can help the City match future demand with policy goals.

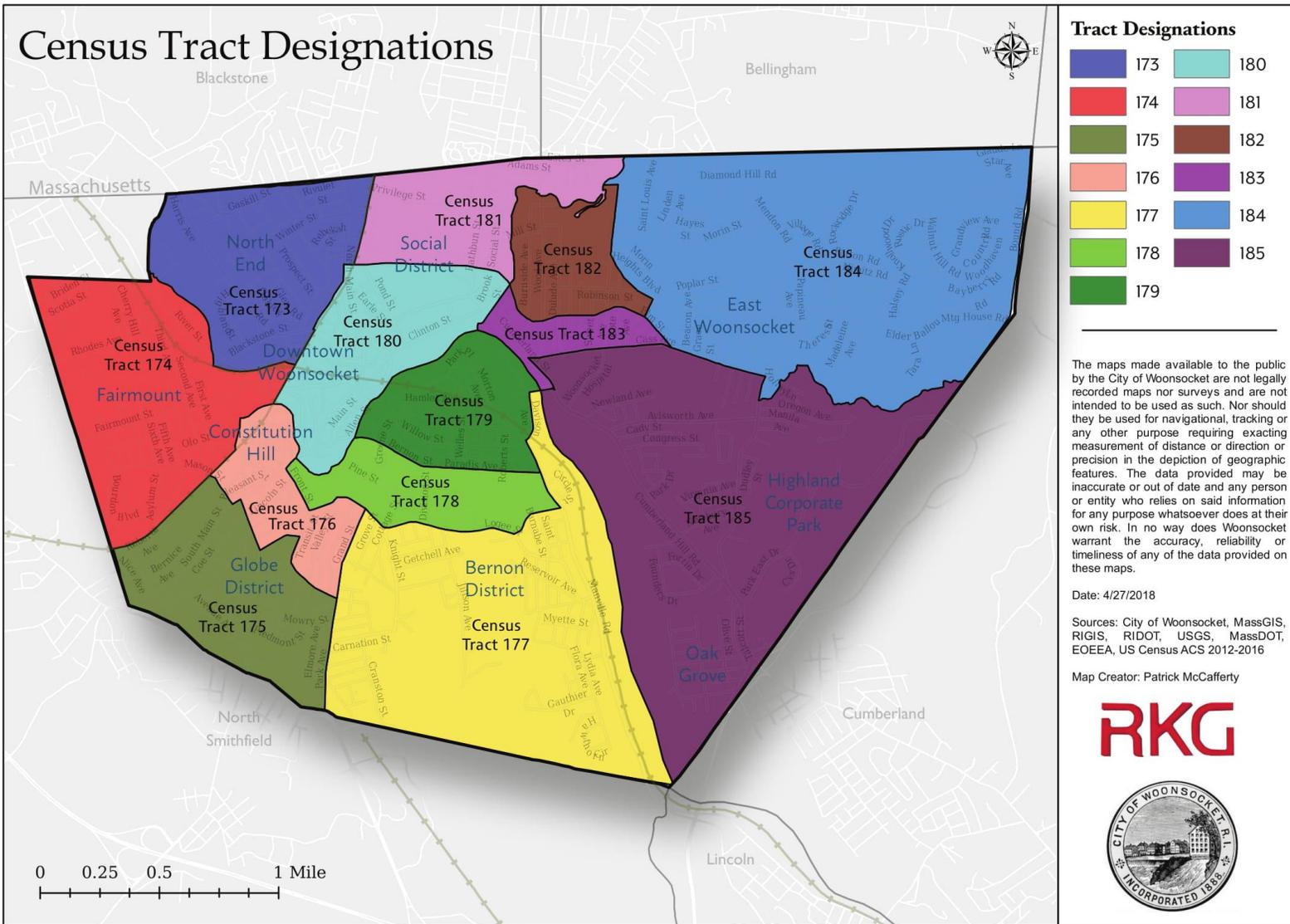
The approach to the analysis is manifold as it entails looking at different comparator communities from the local, regional, state, and aspirational perspective. Placing Woonsocket into the appropriate context will help policy makers and city staff identify possible paths forward based on the needs analysis. The primary objective of the study is to understand what is happening directly in Woonsocket and what needs are arising within the community. To contextualize Woonsocket, the study uses the adjacent communities to create a Greater Woonsocket Region which places Woonsocket amongst its peers. The next level of analysis is to compare Woonsocket to the State of Rhode Island. The final level of analysis is to compare Woonsocket to communities which are in a sense aspirational, or places which are succeeding and offer examples of pathways to success.

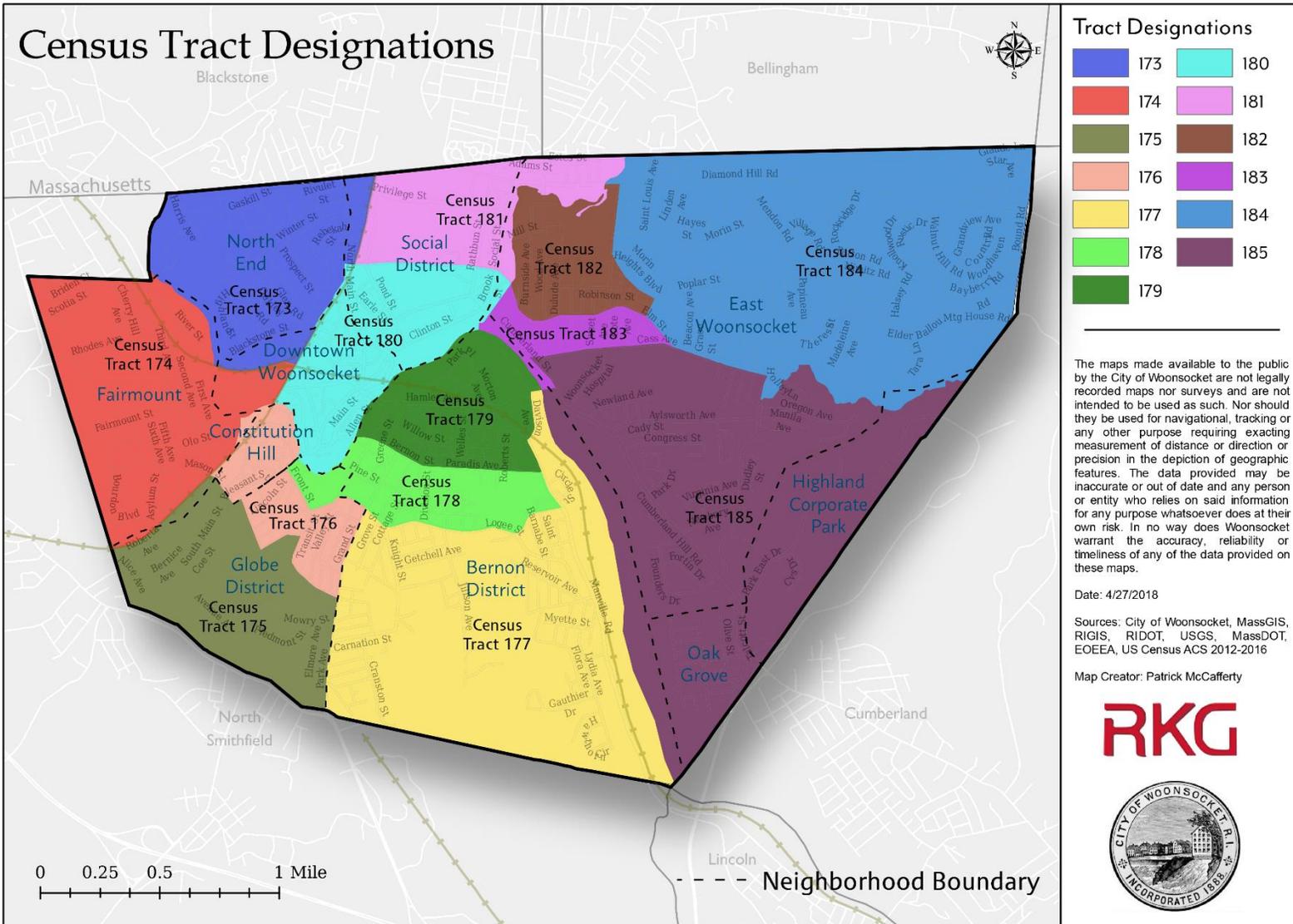
The geographies under examination for the housing study are Woonsocket, Greater Woonsocket, and the State of Rhode Island. The Greater Woonsocket geography is an agglomeration of the adjacent communities to Woonsocket. The communities are Bellingham, MA; Blackstone, MA; Cumberland, RI; Lincoln, RI; North Smithfield, RI; and Wrentham, MA. In addition to the above geographies a series of comparison communities were selected in collaboration with city staff to benchmark Woonsocket's progress at a macrolevel. The Comparison Communities are Attleboro, MA; Brockton, MA; Pawtucket, RI; and Worcester, MA. The selection of Comparison Communities made in conjunction with city staff and was based on criteria such as similar size, demographics, and employment.

To supplement hard data and provide a better understanding of the nuances found in Woonsocket, qualitative data was obtained. This information was obtained via interviews with stakeholders and

officials in Woonsocket. The individuals interviewed included developers, real estate brokers, affordable housing advocates, and city officials. These interviews are a method of obtaining data that is real-time and hyper-local to Woonsocket and is critical for understanding the greatest needs within the community.

Aside from a rigorous quantitative analysis, thematic mapping was conducted to visualize existing demographic and housing conditions for specific variables across Woonsocket. The visual representation of the data provides the necessary context to understand existing conditions. While the housing needs analysis is conducted at the macrolevel of the city, some census tract level data was used to understand conditions across the neighborhoods. The city is made up of 13 census tracts and while these tracts do not exactly align with neighborhood boundaries, they nonetheless offer insights as to the nature of what is taking place across the city. Additionally, mapping at the neighborhood level was conducted to show the nuance of each neighborhood given they are composed of various census tracts. The maps on the following two pages show Woonsocket broken down by its respective census tracts and neighborhoods.





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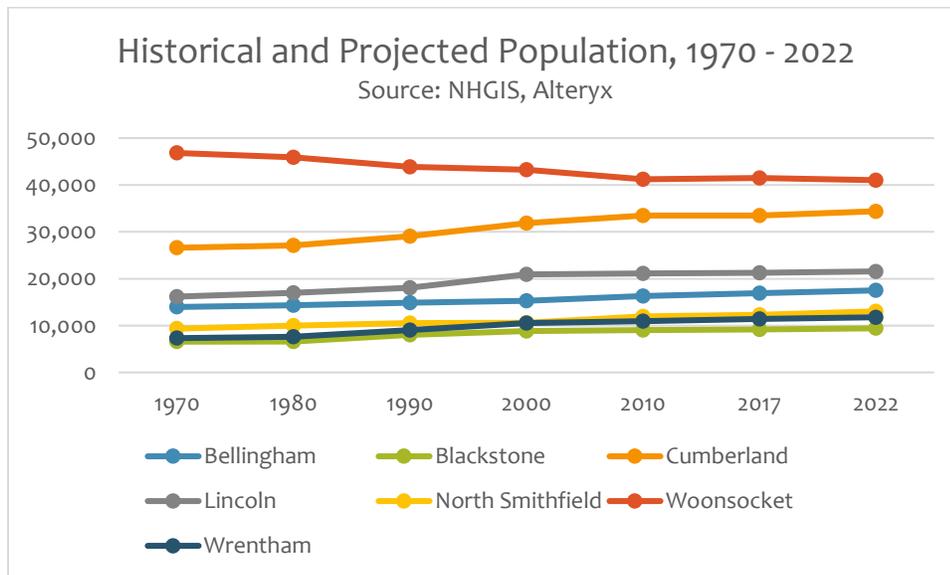
Date: 4/27/2018  
 Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEEA, US Census ACS 2012-2016

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population

Woonsocket experienced a considerable population decline starting in the 1970’s and is continuing to trend downwards. Over a more than forty-year period, the City’s population decreased 11 percent (over 5,400 residents). This shift can be partially attributed to suburbanization, but it seems that the attractiveness of Woonsocket has declined. The period of population decline has left an impact on the City in terms of a decreased tax base, which has resulted in a strain on the city’s resources. The most recent population estimate from the US Census has the city’s current population 41,272 as of 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Compared to the communities that make up the Greater Woonsocket area, Woonsocket is underperforming. All the communities that make up the Greater Woonsocket geography have experienced positive population growth. With the lowest growth community of Bellingham experiencing a 21 percent increase, while the highest growth community of Wrentham had a population growth rate of 56 percent between 1970 and 2017. The growth in these communities can be attributed in part to urban flight, suburbanization, and better performing school systems. Moreover, in the past these communities were less developed and had the space to grow. The graph below presents the historical and future population metrics for Woonsocket and the Comparison Communities.



Looking forward to the year 2022, the population of Woonsocket is projected to continue to decrease. Projections forecast a decrease of 1 percent between 2017 and 2022, or about 433 residents. The

<sup>1</sup> ACS 2012-2016, Table B01001, "Age"

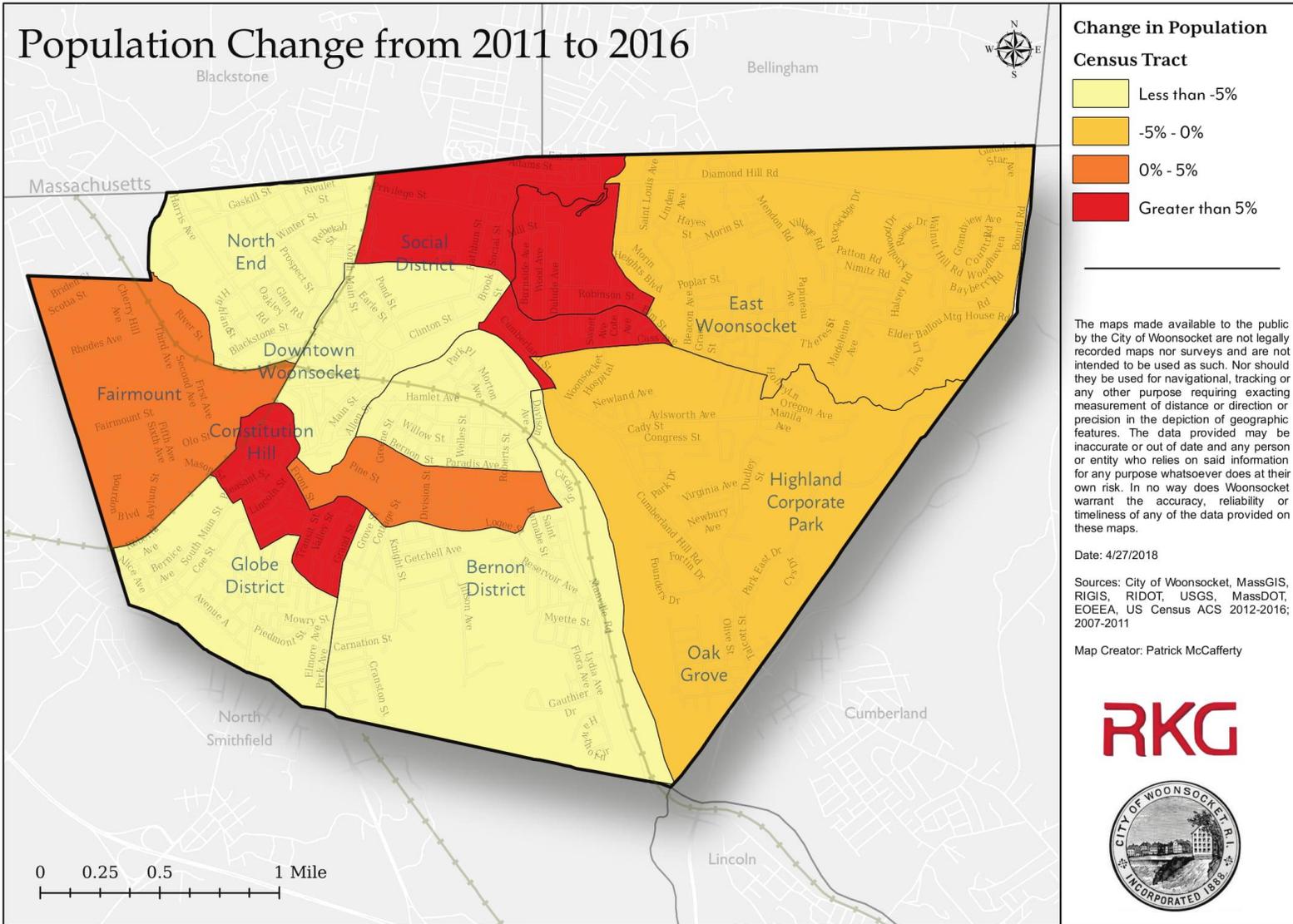
implication of this population decrease for Woonsocket is that the tax base will continue to decline which further hurts the economic position of the City; additionally, sustained decreases in population will have a detrimental impact on housing because the number of vacant units will increase. Population projections also indicate that Woonsocket will continue to experience a decline in population in the near term, whereas the communities that make up Greater Woonsocket are not expected to experience any population decrease. Collectively, Greater Woonsocket is slated to grow by 2 percent and Rhode Island is expected to grow by 1 percent between 2017 and 2022.<sup>2</sup> The growth in surrounding communities indicates that households are choosing to live outside Woonsocket.

While overall the population of Woonsocket is decreasing, some parts of the city have experienced population growth. The maps on the following pages show population growth between 2011 and 2016. While much of the City experienced negative or no growth, based on the census tract data, areas that consist of neighborhoods such as Constitution Hill, and the northern portion of the Social District, and western portion of East Woonsocket experienced positive population growth, in some cases greater than 5 percent. These neighborhoods have traditionally been lower-income and less densely populated, so small changes in population become magnified as a percentage change. In this instance, the creation of an affordable housing project (Glenark Mills) which was a mill conversion resulted in the increase in population. The North End was the only neighborhood in the city to entirely lose population.

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<sup>2</sup> Alteryx, 2018

# Population Change from 2011 to 2016



### Change in Population

#### Census Tract

- Less than -5%
- 5% - 0%
- 0% - 5%
- Greater than 5%

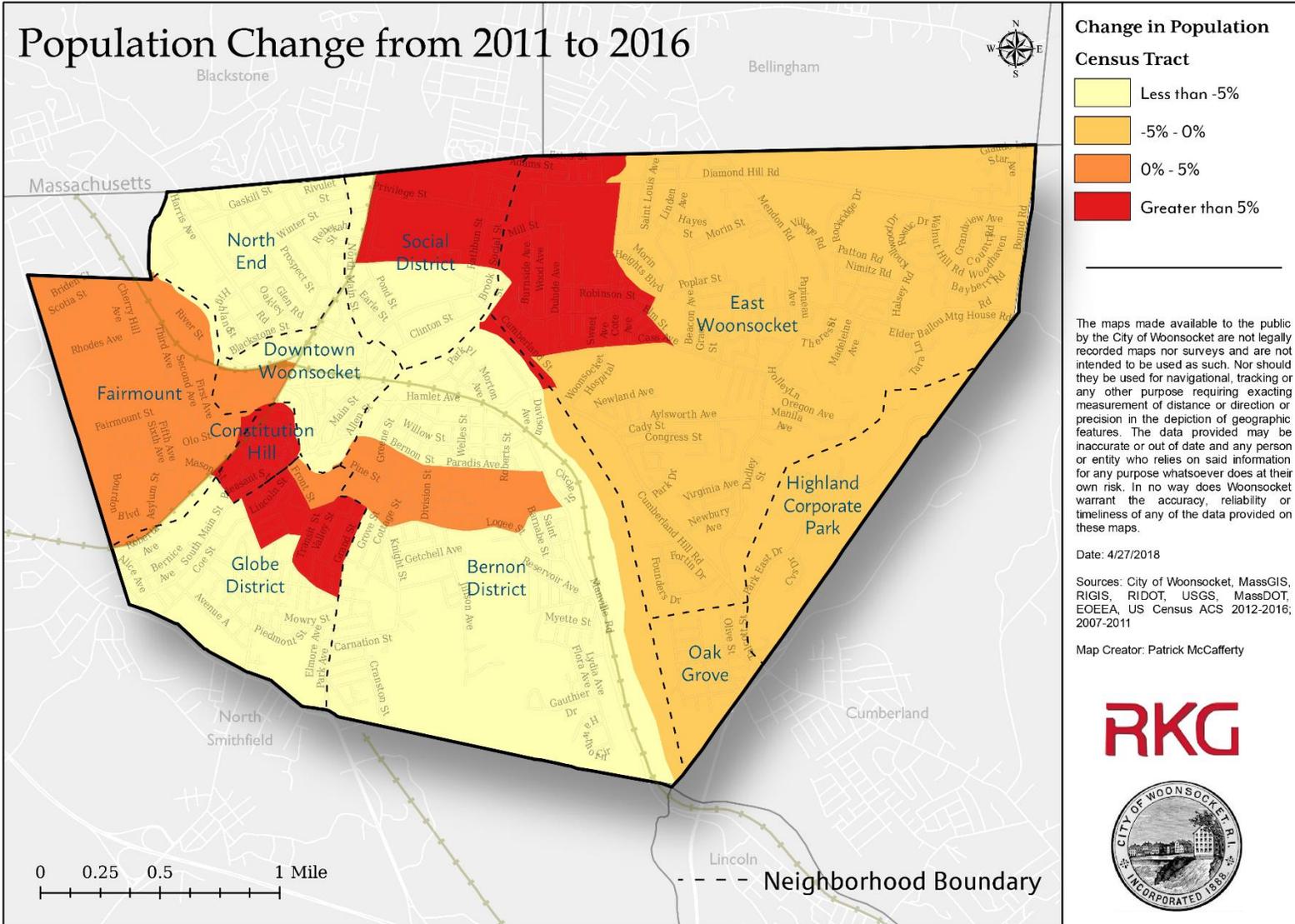
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Date: 4/27/2018  
 Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEEA, US Census ACS 2012-2016; 2007-2011  
 Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

# RKG



# Population Change from 2011 to 2016



### Change in Population

**Census Tract**

Light Yellow	Less than -5%
Yellow	-5% - 0%
Orange	0% - 5%
Red	Greater than 5%

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Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

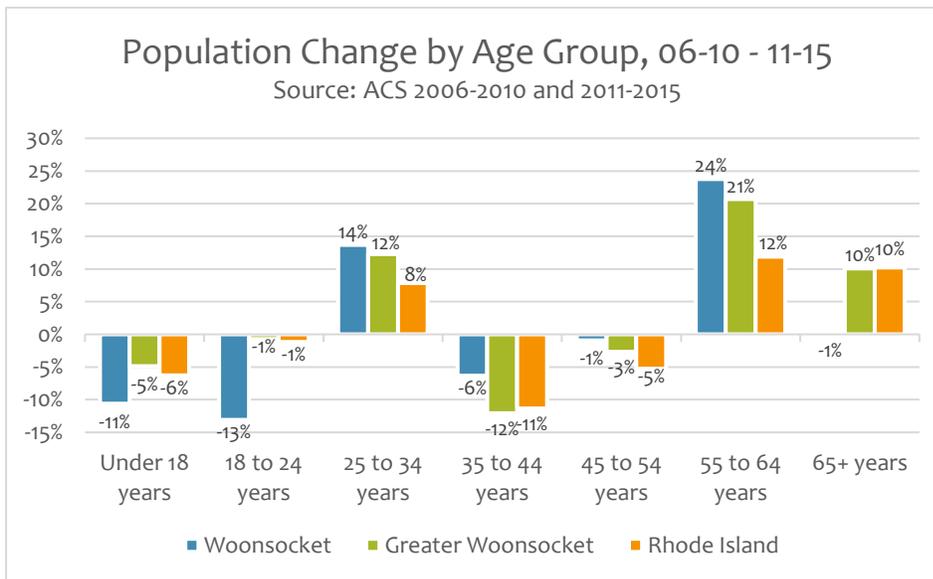


--- Neighborhood Boundary

## Population by Age

Population by age is one way to look at the demographic makeup of a community. This data can tell the relative make-up of a community through the balance of its population. A positive sign in Woonsocket is that between 2011 and 2016, the population of individuals between age 25 and 34 increased by 14 percent. This is positive because group can help fill jobs and homes that are on the market, and support local retailers. All this economic activity helps generate sales and property taxes that can be reinvested back into the community. Additionally, having housing that is affordable and available for this young population can help rejuvenate Woonsocket.

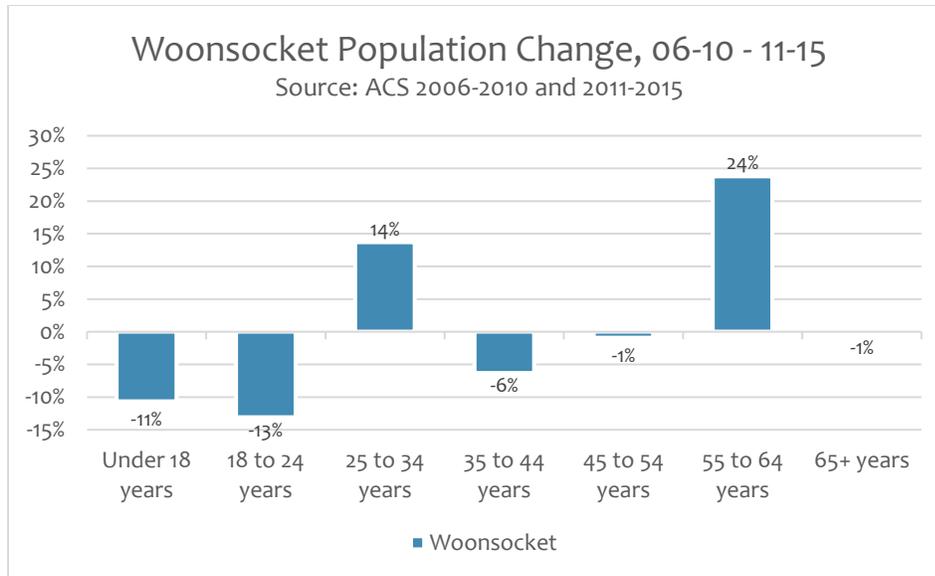
Areas of concern include decreases in nearly all other population cohorts and the sharp growth of the late middle age population. The largest percent decrease in population is in the 18 to 24 age group which fell 13 percent, indicating that the college age and young workforce population is leaving the city. Additionally, the highest population growth rate is found in the late middle age cohort. Between 2011 and 2016 the population of individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 increased by 24 percent. This cohort group is significant because they are close to becoming seniors and will develop special needs the city will have to address in the future which require city resources.



Looking at the current snapshot of population in Woonsocket can help inform current issues the city is facing. In 2016, approximately 22 percent of Woonsocket’s population was under the age of 18 years.<sup>3</sup> While this age cohort spans a total of eighteen years, it is important to note how large or small this group is, as these are the children in the community who are living, growing, and thriving in the city. In Woonsocket, the cohort group of between 25 and 34 years accounts for 16 percent of the total population, as compared to Greater Woonsocket and the State of Rhode Island which account for 12

<sup>3</sup> ACS 2012-2016, Table B01001, "Age"

percent and 13 percent, respectively. This age group represents residents who are likely out of school and in the early years of their professional career. This population segment usually brings life and vibrancy to a community, as well as disposable income.



In Woonsocket, residents between the ages 35 to 54 (made up of two distinct cohorts, 35 to 44 years and 45 to 54 years) constitute about 26 percent of the population.<sup>4</sup> This group is important to the health and success of a community as these residents are in their prime earning years and contribute significantly to the local economy. Their housing choices and spending habits have a direct impact on the city. They typically have school-age children, so school quality is an important driver in their decisions about housing choice and location.

Population estimates indicate seniors comprise about 14 percent of the population, and is expected to grow 9 percent between 2017 and 2022.<sup>5</sup> The growth in the senior population will have an impact on the housing supply as many seniors would like to age in place, resulting in a lack of housing turnover which will crimp available for-sale and rent supply.

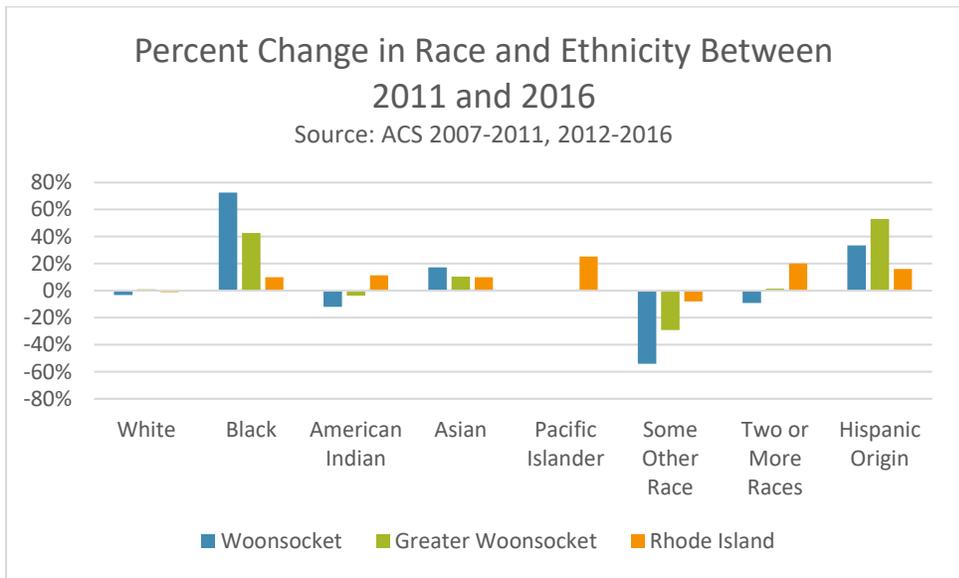
## Race and Ethnicity

Woonsocket is the most racially diverse city amongst its peer group of adjacent communities. The city is 81 percent White but the White population shrank by 3 percent between 2011 to 2016, indicating racial and ethnic changes. The second largest minority group in Woonsocket are African Americans, making up 8 percent of the population, which is nearly double the Greater Woonsocket percentage,

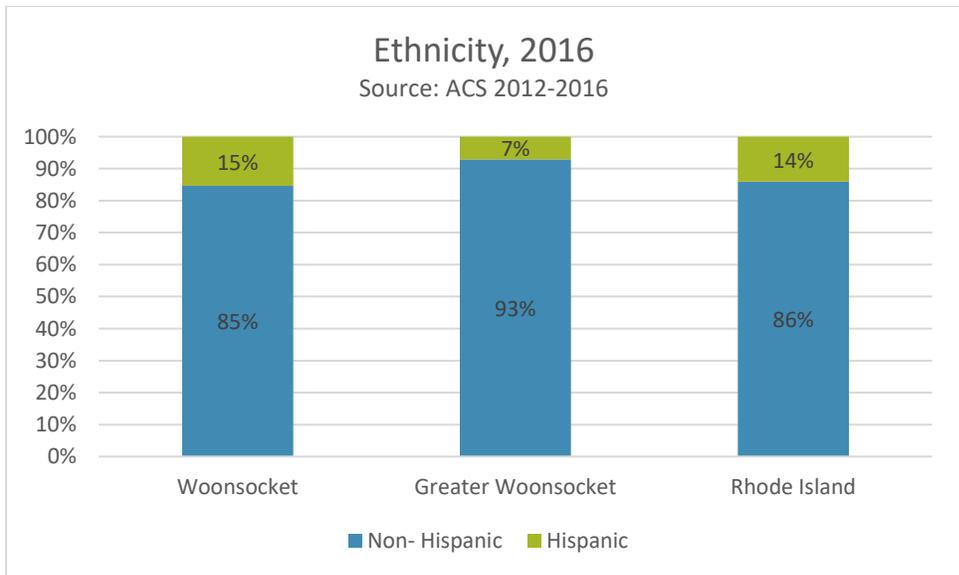
<sup>4</sup> ACS 2012-2016, Table B01001, "Age"

<sup>5</sup> Alteryx, 2018

but closely mirrors that of the state. The black population is estimated to have increased by nearly 73 percent between 2011 and 2016.

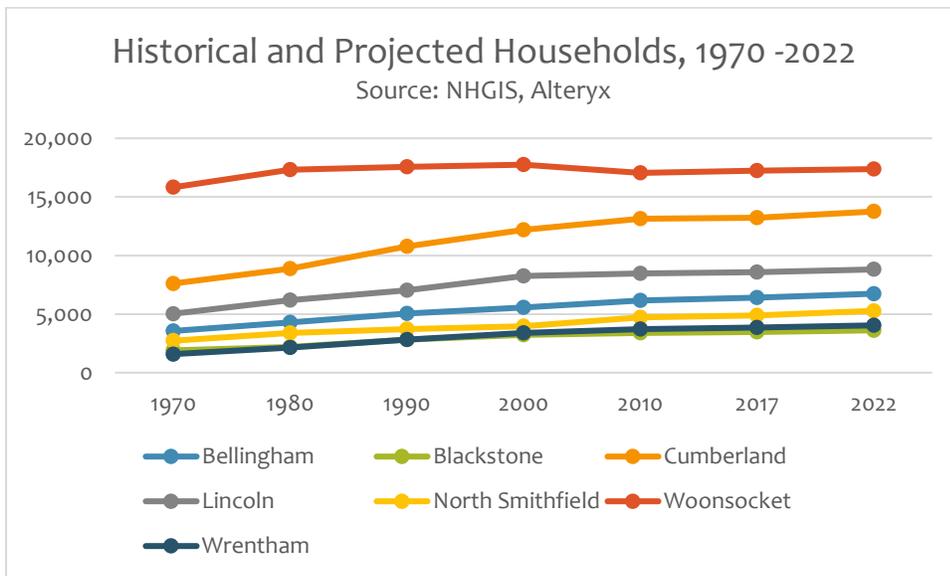


Woonsocket’s Hispanic population has risen more than 33 percent, from just 4,740 people in 2011 to 6,322 in 2017. Hispanics span the spectrum of races defined by the Census Bureau. In total, Hispanics comprise nearly 15 percent of Woonsocket’s total population, this is significantly larger than the Greater Woonsocket Hispanic population of 7 percent. The implication of increases in the Hispanic population is that typically households are larger and require housing options which have more bedrooms to house members.



## Households

The Census Bureau defines a “household” as one or more people living in a housing unit and includes a variety of living arrangements. From a historical perspective, Woonsocket has not experienced much growth in households over the last 40 years due to the general population exodus to the suburbs. It also reflects the lack of new housing stock delivered in the city. Based on projection data, Woonsocket is expected to experience relatively flat household growth over the next five years. Woonsocket’s 17,247 households are expected to grow to 17,371 by 2022 – a 1 percent increase that despite a decreasing population, is emblematic of a nationwide trend towards smaller and later-forming households.<sup>6</sup> The graph below presents historical and projected household information for Woonsocket and its adjacent communities. The data indicates that all the communities aside from Woonsocket have experienced sustained household growth, which is a net positive for those communities.



Household growth in Woonsocket historically lags Greater Woonsocket and the State. As presented in the table below, the communities that surround Woonsocket are expected to have household growth exceeding that of Woonsocket’s. It is projected that Greater Woonsocket will collectively grow by 3 percent over the next 5 years, and that Rhode Island will grow by 2 percent.<sup>7</sup> The communities that surround Woonsocket have maintained steady population growth over the last 40 years, and have

<sup>6</sup> Alteryx, 2018

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

built housing options to meet the needs of the growing population. Additionally, these communities offer employment opportunities and established public school systems which make them attractive.

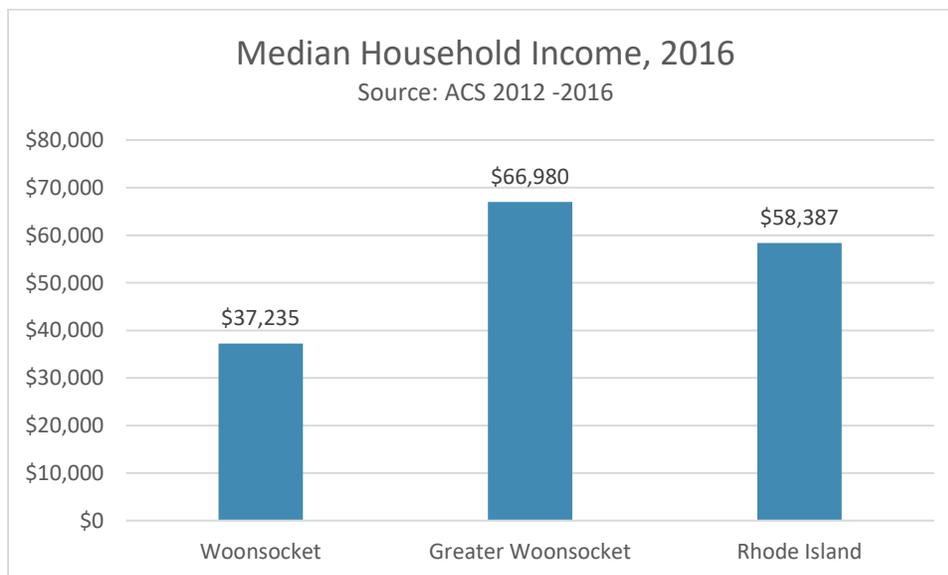
Table 1. Projected Total Households			
Community	2017 Estimates	2022 Projections	Percent Change
Woonsocket	17,247	17,371	1%
Greater Woonsocket	57,661	59,595	3%
Rhode Island	416,098	424,726	2%
Source: Alteryx, 2018			

## SOCIOECONOMICS

### Incomes

Household income directly influences the ability of residents to support their families, secure housing, patronize local businesses. Typically, residents spend their money locally, which helps both local businesses and government. The median household income in Woonsocket is \$37,235 in 2016, which is nearly half that of the Greater Woonsocket area, and well below the Rhode Island median income. The low incomes of Woonsocket residents directly translates into limited housing choices. Low incomes ultimately restrict the ability purchase homes and create fragile situations for individuals renting, result in cost burdening when renting.

Typically, spending on housing accounts for 30 percent of a household's income, anything greater than that crowds out disposable income for other necessities such as food, clothing, and transportation. About 47 percent of Woonsocket households earn less than \$35,000 a year, compared to 29 percent of households in the Greater Woonsocket region. The low incomes found in Woonsocket necessitate the need for affordable housing being developed over new market rate housing. The affordable housing that is developed in Woonsocket enables the city to retain households, otherwise residents would be forced to relocated, further decreasing the overall population and having a negative impact on city finances.



The decline in real incomes in Woonsocket is a fundamental problem the city must tackle to retain and grow its population. Woonsocket saw median household incomes shrink between 2011 and 2016, heading the opposite direction of rising incomes in Rhode Island and Greater Woonsocket. Only Lincoln, among the peer municipalities, saw a larger percentage drop in median household incomes,

with a decrease of 12 percent. Over the past five years, income growth in the surrounding communities indicates that employment opportunities for residents are better than for Woonsocket residents. A disconnect between Woonsocket residents and job opportunities exists resulting in such low incomes.

Community	Growth Rate
Bellingham	9%
Cumberland	8%
North Smithfield	3%
Blackstone	3%
Wrentham	-1%
Woonsocket	-5%
Lincoln	-12%
Greater Woonsocket	1%
Rhode Island	4%

Source: ACS 2007- 2011, 2012-2016, B19013, "Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months", and RKG Associates, Inc.

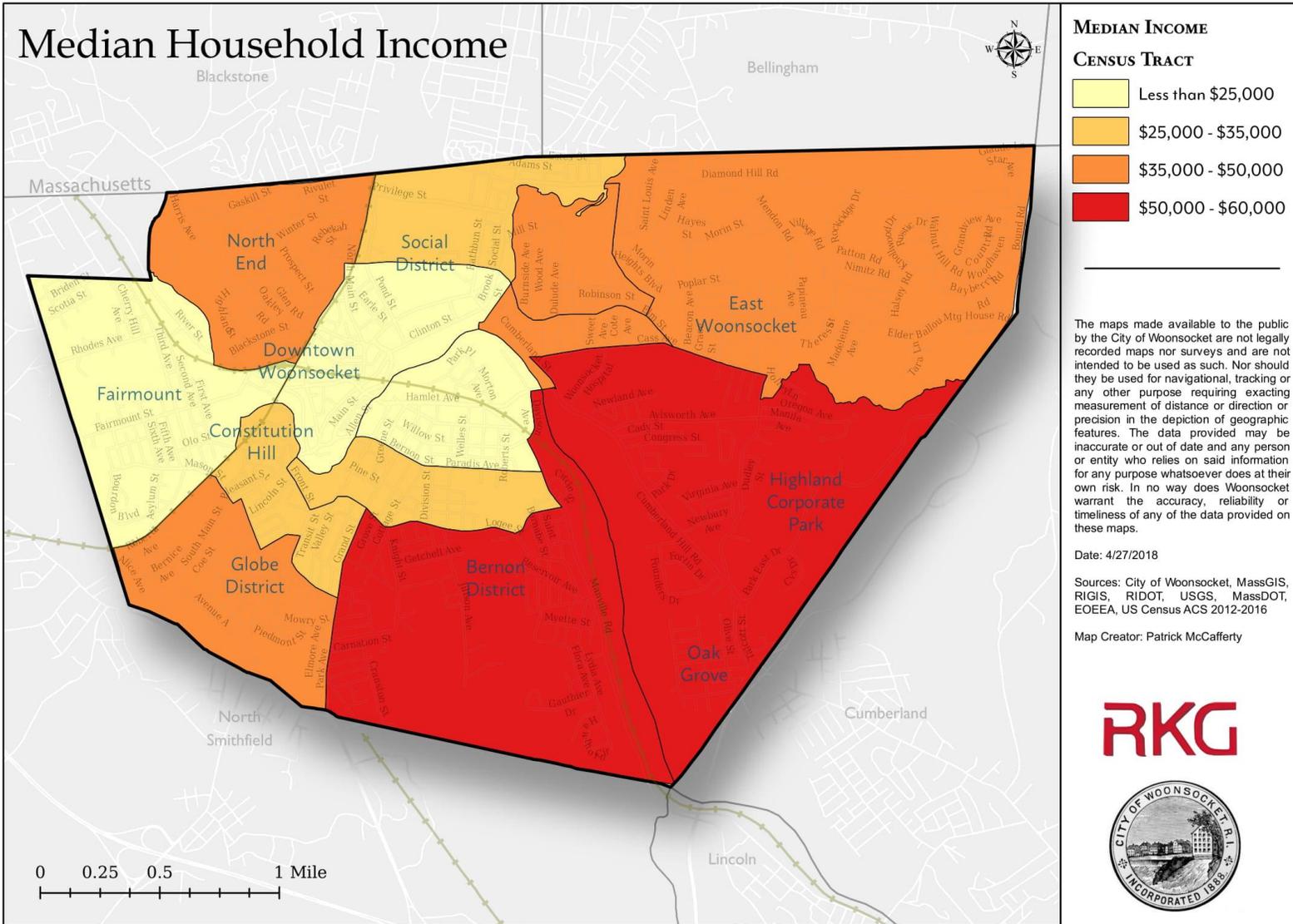
One positive sign is that based on projection data, between 2017 and 2022, Woonsocket’s median household income will grow in-line with the Greater Woonsocket regions median household income by a rate of 15 percent. While the income is projected to grow over the next five years, it will still lag the projected state growth rate of 18 percent. While it is a positive sign that income will grow in the future, the price and cost of housing will grow commensurately in the future.

Community	2017 Estimates	2022 Projections	Percent Change
Woonsocket	\$39,526	\$45,378	15%
Greater Woonsocket	\$77,788	\$89,316	15%
Rhode Island	\$56,839	\$67,221	18%

Source: Alteryx, 2018

Within Woonsocket median income differ substantially very from neighborhood to neighborhood. The neighborhoods of Fairmount, Downtown, Constitution Hill, and the Social District have some of the lowest median incomes and income diversity; with the Fairmount having a median income of less than \$25,000. These neighborhoods, which surround Downtown, have many affordable housing projects which cluster the low-income population. Conversely, the neighborhoods with higher incomes include the southern portion of both East Woonsocket and the Bernon District, Oak Grove, and Highland Corporate Park area; the median incomes found in these areas are between \$50,000 and \$60,000. These neighborhoods border North Smithfield, Lincoln, and Cumberland which are higher income communities. The homes in these areas tend to be single-family style and at a much higher price point than those located Downtown. The accompanying maps illustrates the differences in median incomes across Woonsocket and the gradation within each of the neighborhoods.

# Median Household Income



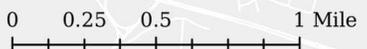
**MEDIAN INCOME**  
**CENSUS TRACT**

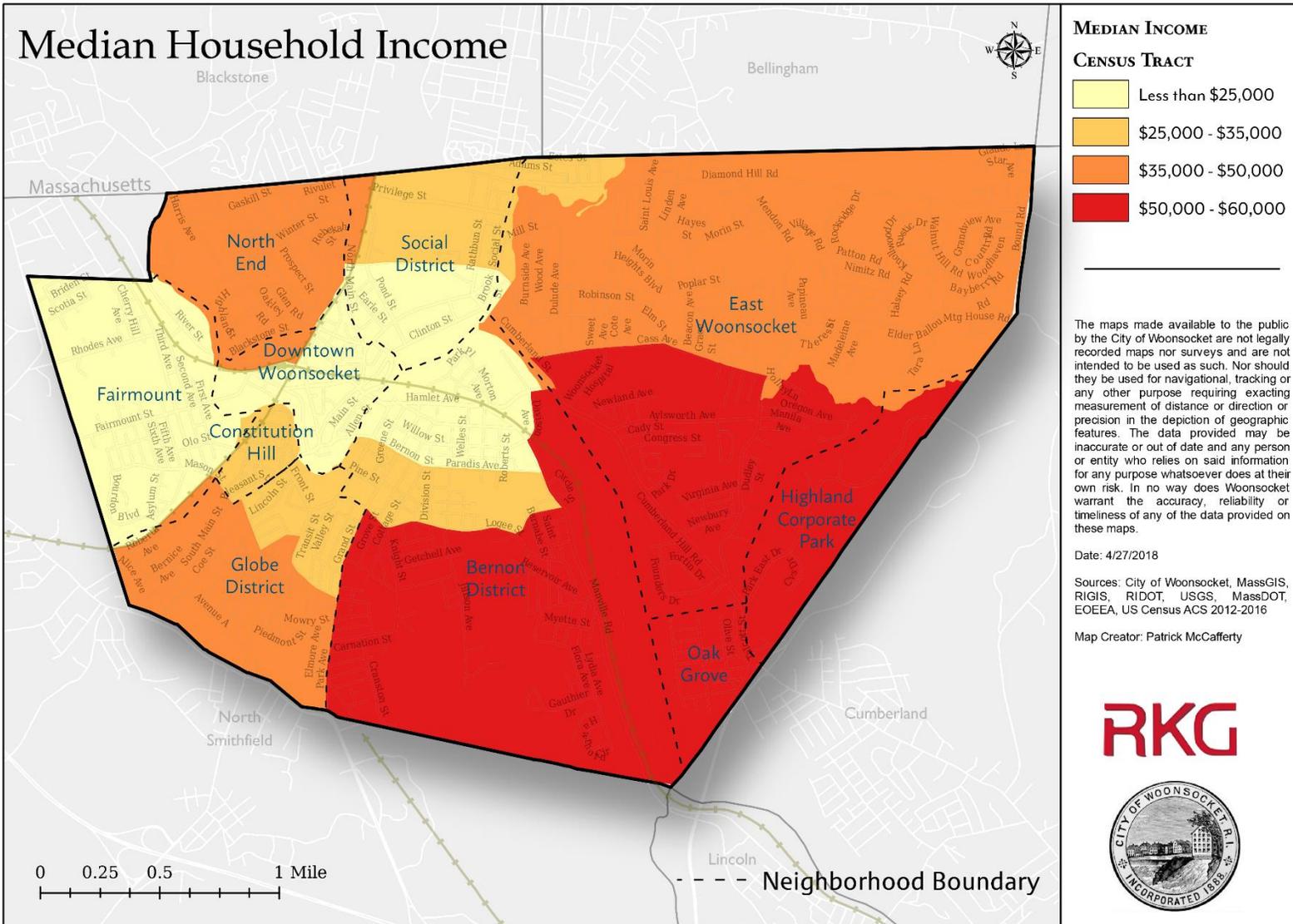
Less than \$25,000
\$25,000 - \$35,000
\$35,000 - \$50,000
\$50,000 - \$60,000

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Date: 4/27/2018  
Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEAA, US Census ACS 2012-2016  
Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

**RKG**





## Employment

### WORKERS

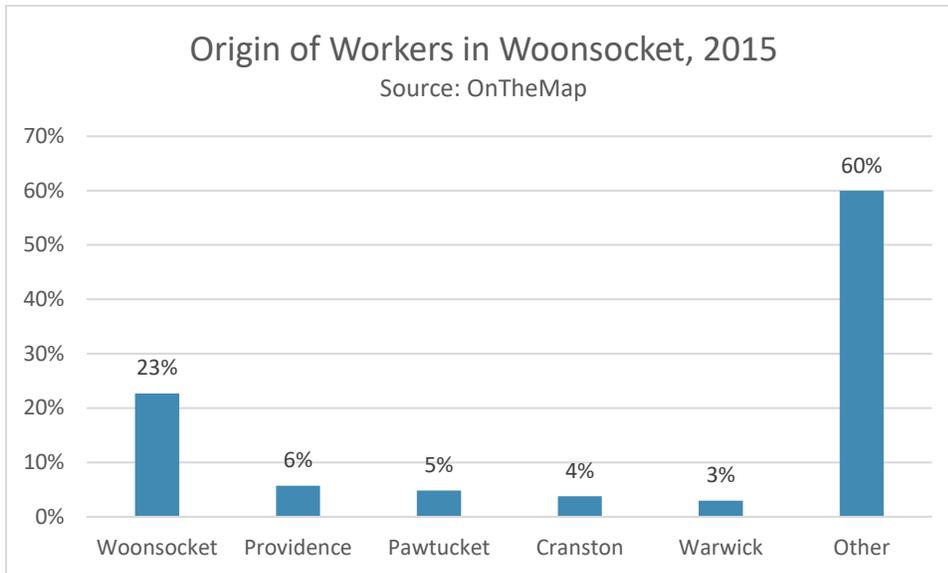
In Woonsocket, there are a total of 13,492 jobs which is inclusive of both private and government employment.<sup>8</sup> Of that total, 10,664 people come from outside of Woonsocket to work, while 3,128 live and work within Woonsocket. Aside from those working within Woonsocket, approximately 14,318 residents travel outside the city for employment, making Woonsocket a net exporter of labor to other communities. The export of labor from Woonsocket indicates that the existing population is not able to be gainfully employed in the local job market, hence the need to travel to other locations. Conversely, residents of Woonsocket who travel outside of the city for work tend to go to major employment centers such as Providence, Franklin MA, Cranston, and Warwick.



Understanding how many employees are in Woonsocket and what types of employment opportunities there are can provide a better understanding of the housing market. One of the key elements related to employment is how many individuals are employed in the area and where they commute from. This is important because it reflects if Woonsocket can attract and retain workers

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2002-2015). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program, OnTheMap

locally. If workers are also residents, then their disposable income gets circulated locally, otherwise the city does not necessarily see the impact in the local economy. In contrast, when workers commute to an employment destination, much of their personal spending does not occur in the community where they work, but rather where they live.

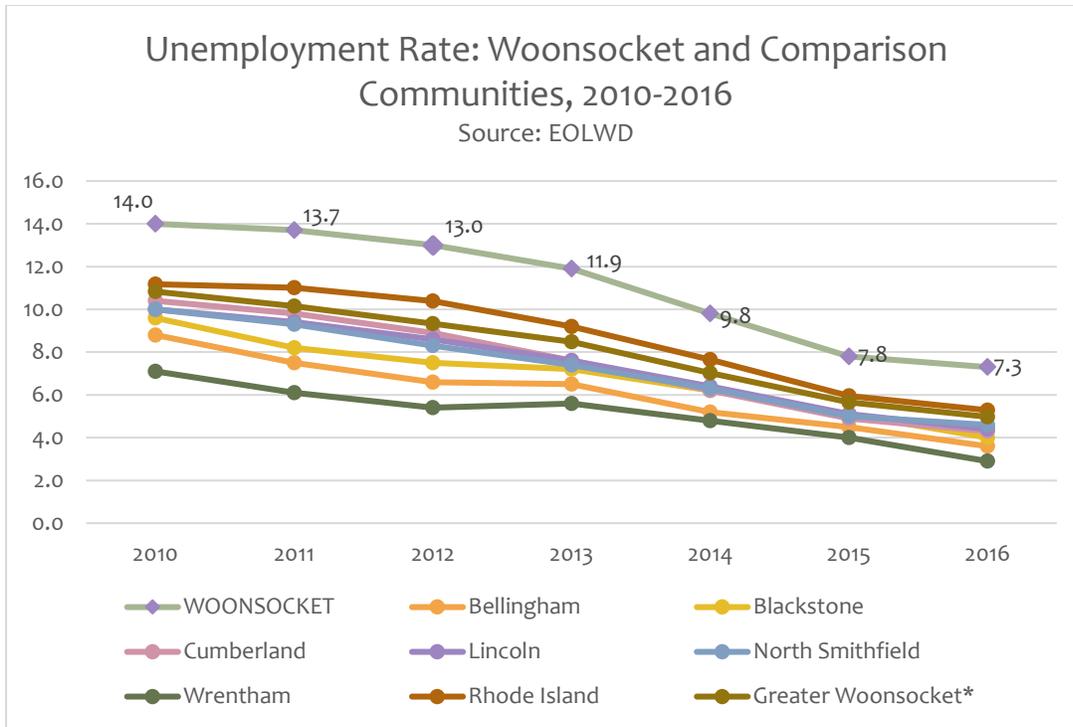


The percentage of residents who live and work in Woonsocket is 23 percent, indicating that the clear majority of Woonsocket residents commute outside of the city for employment opportunities. Of those workers traveling to Woonsocket, 6 percent come Providence and 5 percent come from Pawtucket. Additionally, 60 percent of workers who travel to Woonsocket for work come from other towns and cities in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, indicating that Woonsocket has attractive employment opportunities, but existing residents may not have skills local employers need. While employees travel to Woonsocket for employment, owning or renting in Woonsocket is a difficult proposition for some. While housing prices in Woonsocket are affordable, the lack of urban amenities, city services, and public-school system are disincentives to those individuals commuting to Woonsocket for work. Much of the worker population comes from local Rhode Island communities indicating that Woonsocket itself does not provide enough of an incentive to attract them to become permanent residents.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

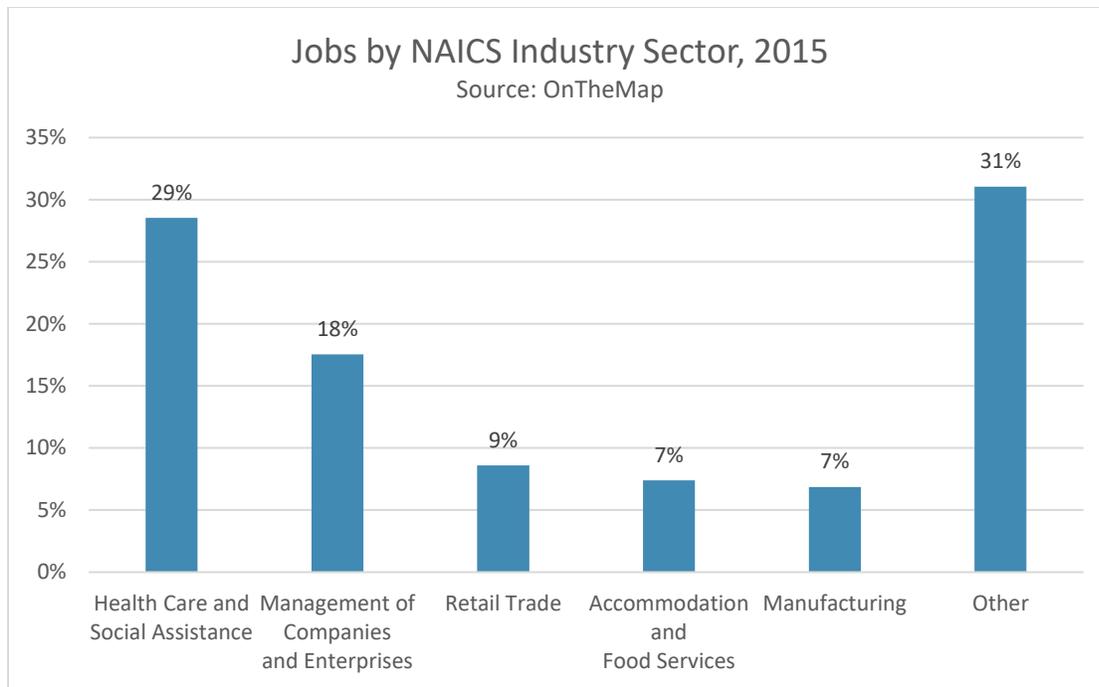
Woonsocket's unemployment rate fell to an estimated 7.3 percent in 2016, just over half of what it was in 2010. Despite this improvement, Woonsocket's unemployment rate remains an unfortunate outlier versus its neighbors and Rhode Island. The Greater Woonsocket region has an unemployment rate of 5 percent, indicating that neighboring communities have a greater percentage of their workforce productively engaged. Additionally, it shows that economic opportunities are greater elsewhere, and that the local population skills matches local employer needs. The high unemployment rate in Woonsocket builds upon the existing narrative of the community being low-income. Unemployment can have a cascading effect on the homeownership or rental market because the fragility of how

individuals live. The lack of high wage employment coupled with higher costs of housing results in the risk of foreclosure or eviction for many households. This ultimately results in higher levels of housing vacancy which contributes to urban blight.



### INDUSTRIES

In Woonsocket employment is clustered into a few main industries. The graph below presents the top five employment sectors across the city. As a percentage of total employment, Health Care and Social Assistance was the largest industry with 29 percent of the jobs. The second largest employment sector was Management of Companies and Enterprises, which accounted for 18 percent of the jobs in Woonsocket due to the presence of CVS Health. In contrast, Manufacturing accounted for 7 percent of the employment in the city. The Other category is made up of the remaining 15 NAICS sectors and accounts for 31 percent of the total employment in the city.



### MAJOR EMPLOYERS

One of the key issues that the City is facing is translating individuals who commute to work in the City into residents. There are many large employers within Woonsocket, and the City draws workers from many of the surrounding communities. However, Woonsocket's population has continuously declined for the last 40 years, indicating people are choosing to live elsewhere. Establishing Woonsocket as a desirable place to live will have benefits in the form of tax dollars from new residents. Employees who live and work in Woonsocket will spend their disposable income in Woonsocket and help the local economy.

Many large private employers exist within Woonsocket. These employers provide well-paying jobs that help contribute to the overall tax base of the City. Some of the largest private employers in Woonsocket are:<sup>9</sup>

- CVS (2,955 employees)
- Landmark Medical (1,000 employees)
- Mount Saint Francis Health Center (274 employees)
- Summer Infant (250 Employees)
- Woonsocket Health and Rehab Center (225 Employees)
- Honeywell (220 employees)
- Travelers Transit (180 employees)
- Friendly Home Inc. (160 employees)
- Valley Cab (150 employees)

<sup>9</sup> Information on specific employers provided by City Staff, 2018

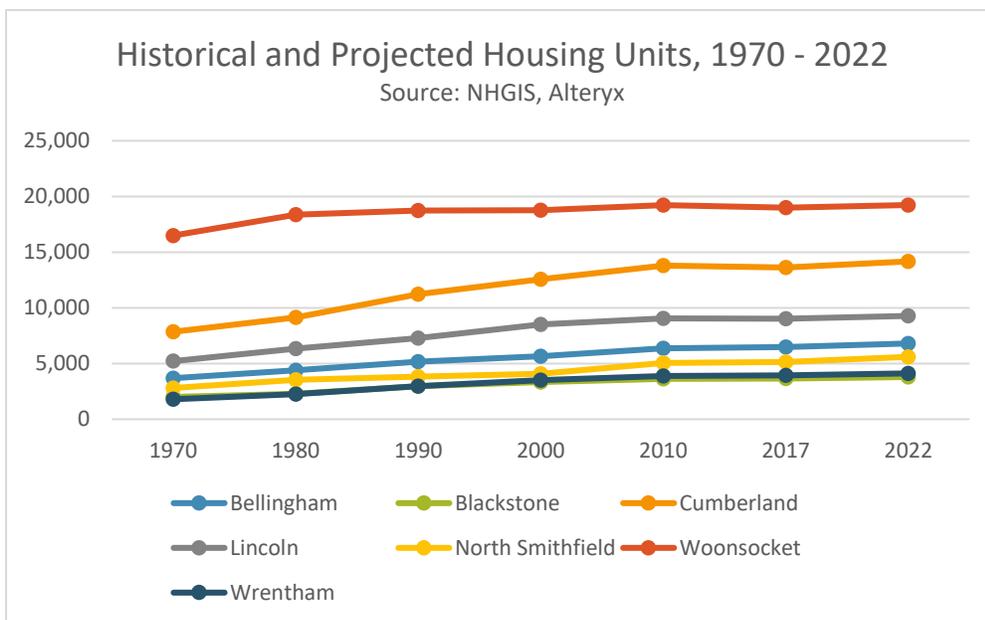
- ARC of Northern RI (Special needs) (150 employees)
- CCA – (150 to 169 employees)
- Sports Systems Custom Bags (100 employees)

Of the largest employers, CVS stands out because Woonsocket is the location of its corporate headquarters. An issue identified related to CVS's presence in Woonsocket is that the corporate campus is located off Cumberland Road and geographically removed from the downtown. Due to the distance, many employees of CVS do not frequent downtown businesses. Based on interviews with stakeholders, there is sentiment that employees of CVS commute to the corporate campus, work, and then leave, resulting in minimal time spent in the Downtown.

## HOUSING

### Housing Units

Housing unit growth in Woonsocket has essentially stagnated over the last 40 years. Between 1970 and 2017, Woonsocket’s housing supply by 15 percent; however, this growth rate is misleading because almost all of the growth occurred between 1970 and 1980. The era of growth during the 1970’s gave way to suburbanization and depopulation of cities. The recent past of Woonsocket indicates new construction of units lags significantly behind the communities which make up the Greater Woonsocket Region.



The communities that make up the Greater Woonsocket region have experienced significant growth in housing units as compared to Woonsocket, with each community growing, at a minimum, more than 70 percent between 1970 and 2017. This growth in housing was due to the population and household increases experienced in these communities, coupled with an exodus from larger cities and growth of suburbanization. The community with the greatest growth is Wrentham which expanded from 1,795 housing units in 1970 to 3,935 in 2017, an increase of 119 percent. This dramatic growth illustrates the desirability of the community and the accompanying amenities which attract households. The growth trend is projected to continue into the near future as the communities making up Greater Woonsocket are expected to growth at a minimum 3 percent and as much as 9 percent; this projected growth is in stark contrast to Woonsocket which is expected to grow only 1 percent between 2017 and 2022.<sup>10</sup>

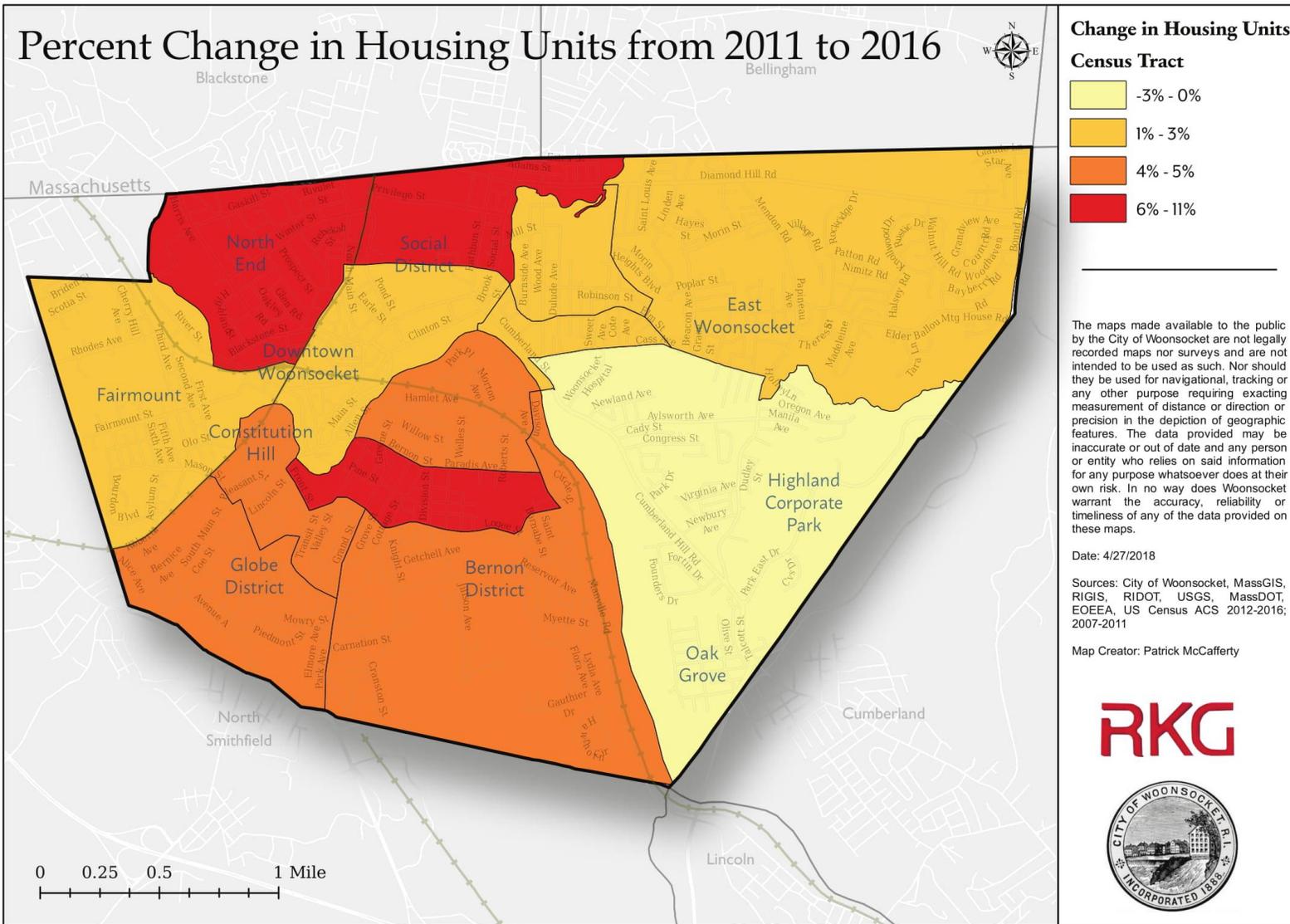
<sup>10</sup> Alteryx, 2018

Further diving into the data, growth in Woonsocket's housing stock has occurred in the North of the city in the neighborhoods of the North End, and Social District. In these neighborhoods between 2011 and 2016, there was an increased growth of between six and 11 percent. Additionally, the growth in these areas coincides with subdividing of existing lots to build single-family homes, and the creation of affordable housing developments (Glenark Mills) via mill conversions near Downtown. The North End is a desirable community and in recent years has experienced significant buyer interest because of the relatively affordable single family homes with large lots that are available for sale.<sup>11</sup> There was some growth in all of the neighborhoods, except Oak Grove and Highland Corporate Park. The accompanying maps provide a geographic illustration of the housing unit growth in the recent past.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on conversations with real estate brokers, the North End was considered one of the strongest neighborhoods for real estate sales and construction.

# Percent Change in Housing Units from 2011 to 2016



## Change in Housing Units

### Census Tract

- 3% - 0%
- 1% - 3%
- 4% - 5%
- 6% - 11%

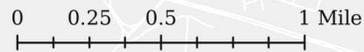
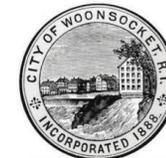
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Date: 4/27/2018

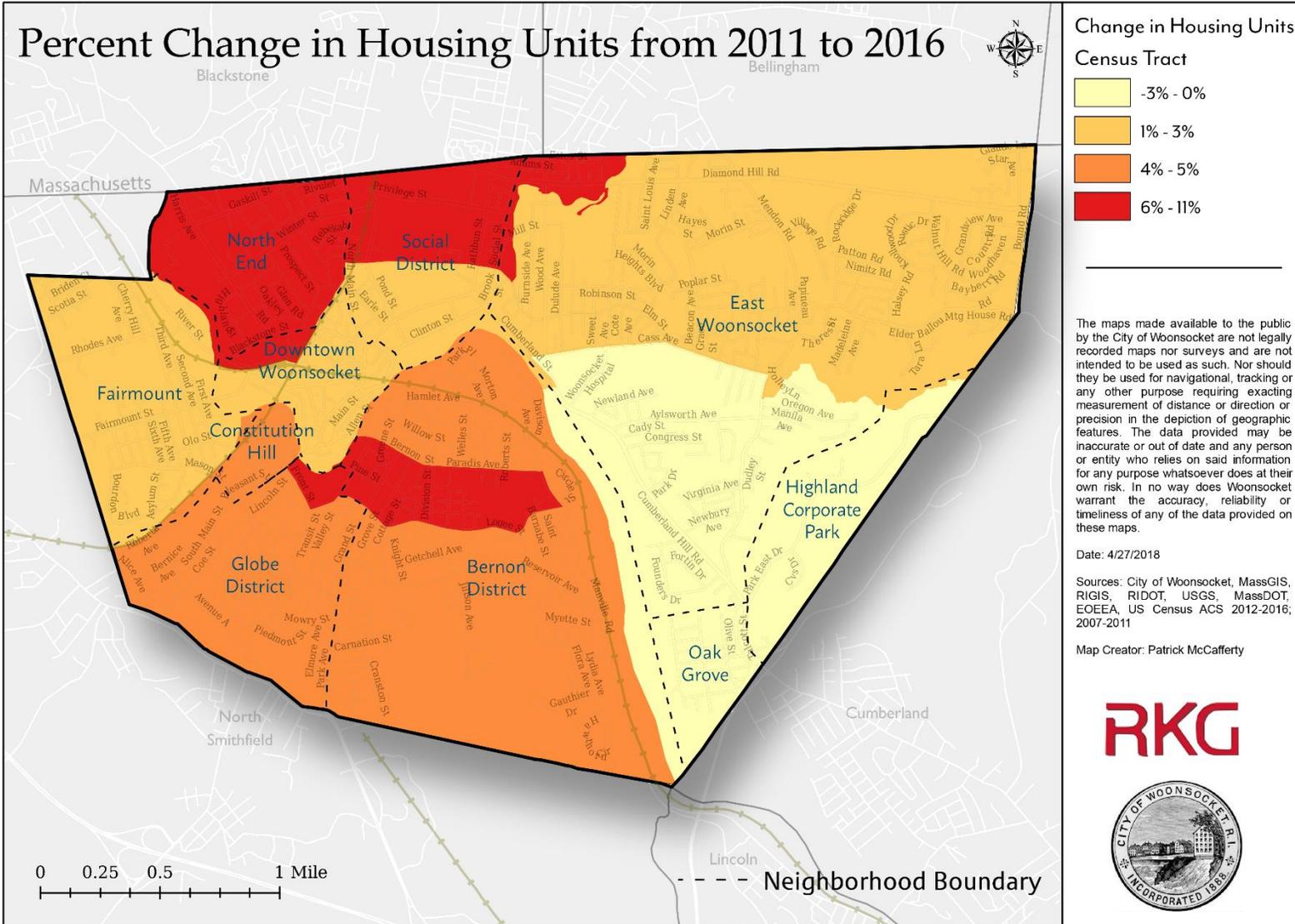
Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEEA, US Census ACS 2012-2016; 2007-2011

Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

# RKG



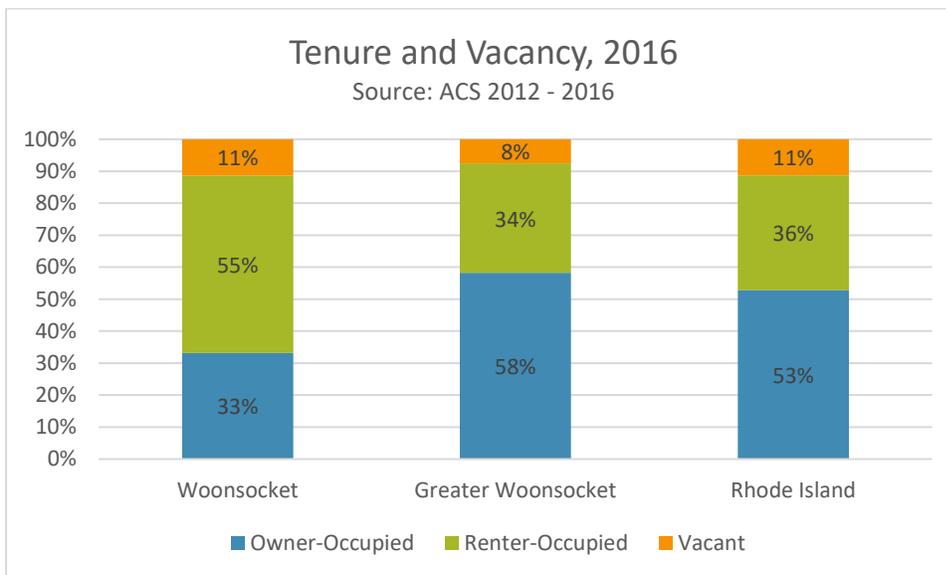
# Percent Change in Housing Units from 2011 to 2016



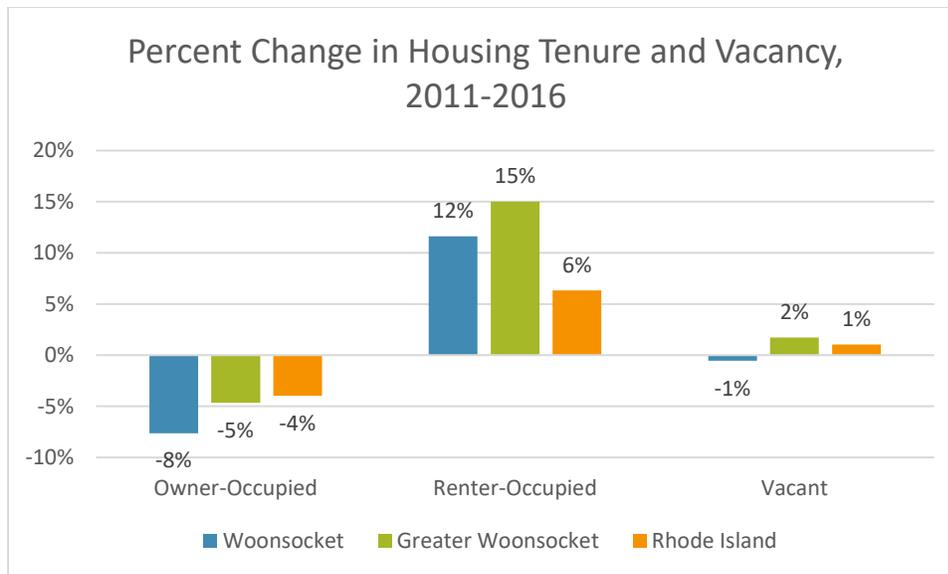
## Tenure

Housing tenure is defined as whether a not a householder is an owner or renter. The difference in whether a community is majority owner or renter occupied typically translates into the type of housing stock that is available. Renter housing typically is multifamily style housing, whereas single family homes tend to be the most prominent ownership units. Condominiums are also a unit type that provide apartment like amenities but with an ownership component.

Woonsocket is a majority renter community with 55 percent of unit's renter occupied, 33 percent owner-occupied, and 11 percent vacant. Compared to Greater Woonsocket and the State, Woonsocket has a vastly larger percentage of rental housing as indicated in the graphic below. The surrounding communities of Woonsocket have a majority of owner occupied units. The percentage of owner occupied units can be used as a proxy for understanding the income constraints of the existing population. Woonsocket is a low-income community, and as such many residents simply cannot afford housing at market prices.

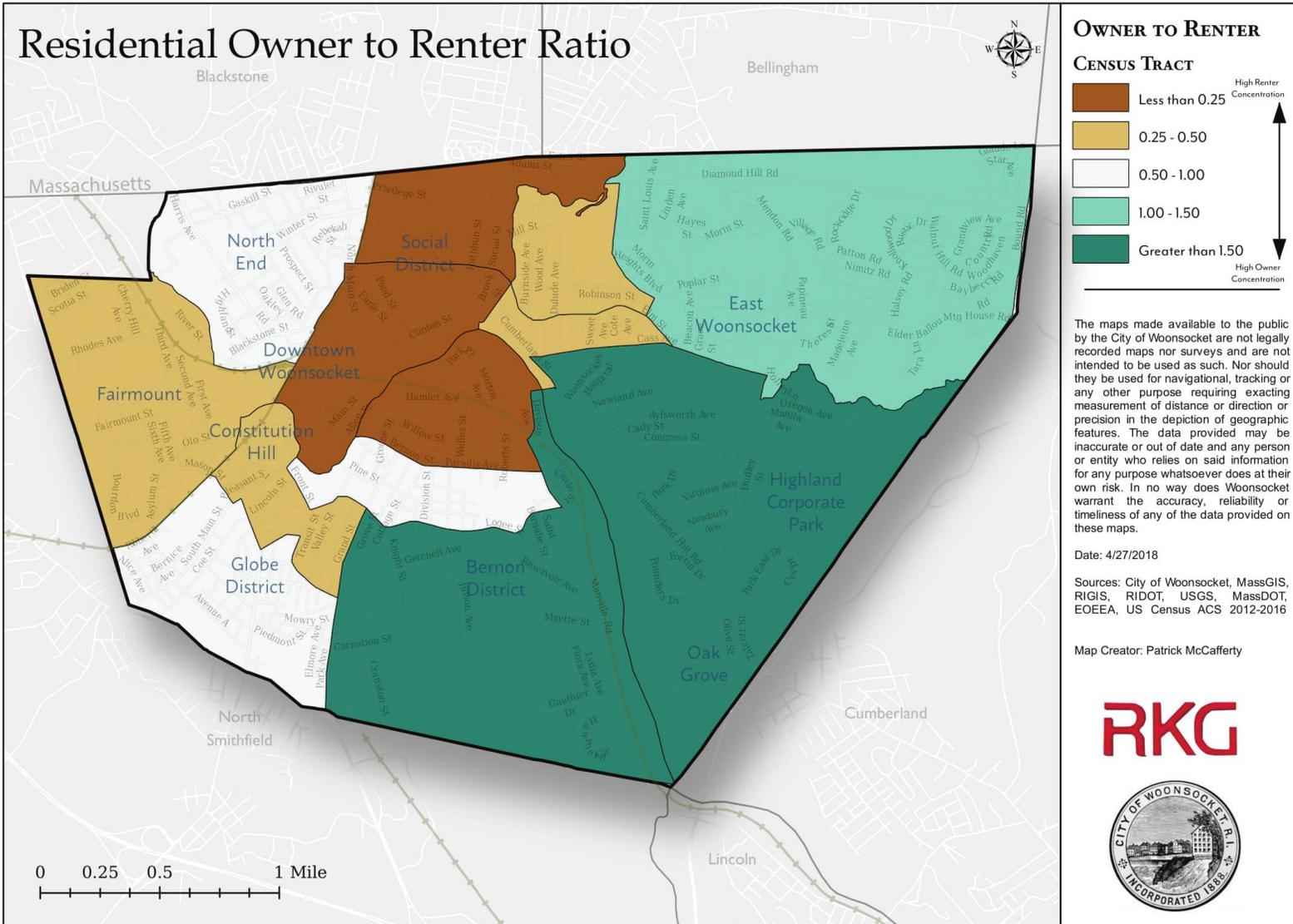


Between the ACS periods of 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 Woonsocket experienced an 8 percent decrease in ownership units, and a 12 percent increase in rental unit occupancy. This indicates the rental market grew stronger over that period than the ownership housing market. Additionally, the shift in housing tenure also indicates that the limited residential development has concentrated in rental, multifamily development. Given traditional ownership units generally have remained owner occupied (detailed later in this section), making greater investments into rehabilitation and modernization will be critical to ensuring ownership units remain owner occupied over time.



The accompany maps present a visual representation of the owner to rental ratio across the City. The neighborhoods with the highest concentration of renters are the Social District and Downtown. These neighborhoods have historically been renter communities and have many multifamily housing units. Conversely, East Woonsocket, Highland Corporate Park, and Oak Grove have the greatest concentration of homeowners. The Bernon District is unique in that it is the most diverse of the neighborhood regarding the owner to renter ratio, the area closest to Downtown has a higher ratio of renters than further away. The distribution of owner to renter households also tracts with high and low median incomes. This indicates that households with higher incomes tend to own homes in Woonsocket rather than rent.

# Residential Owner to Renter Ratio

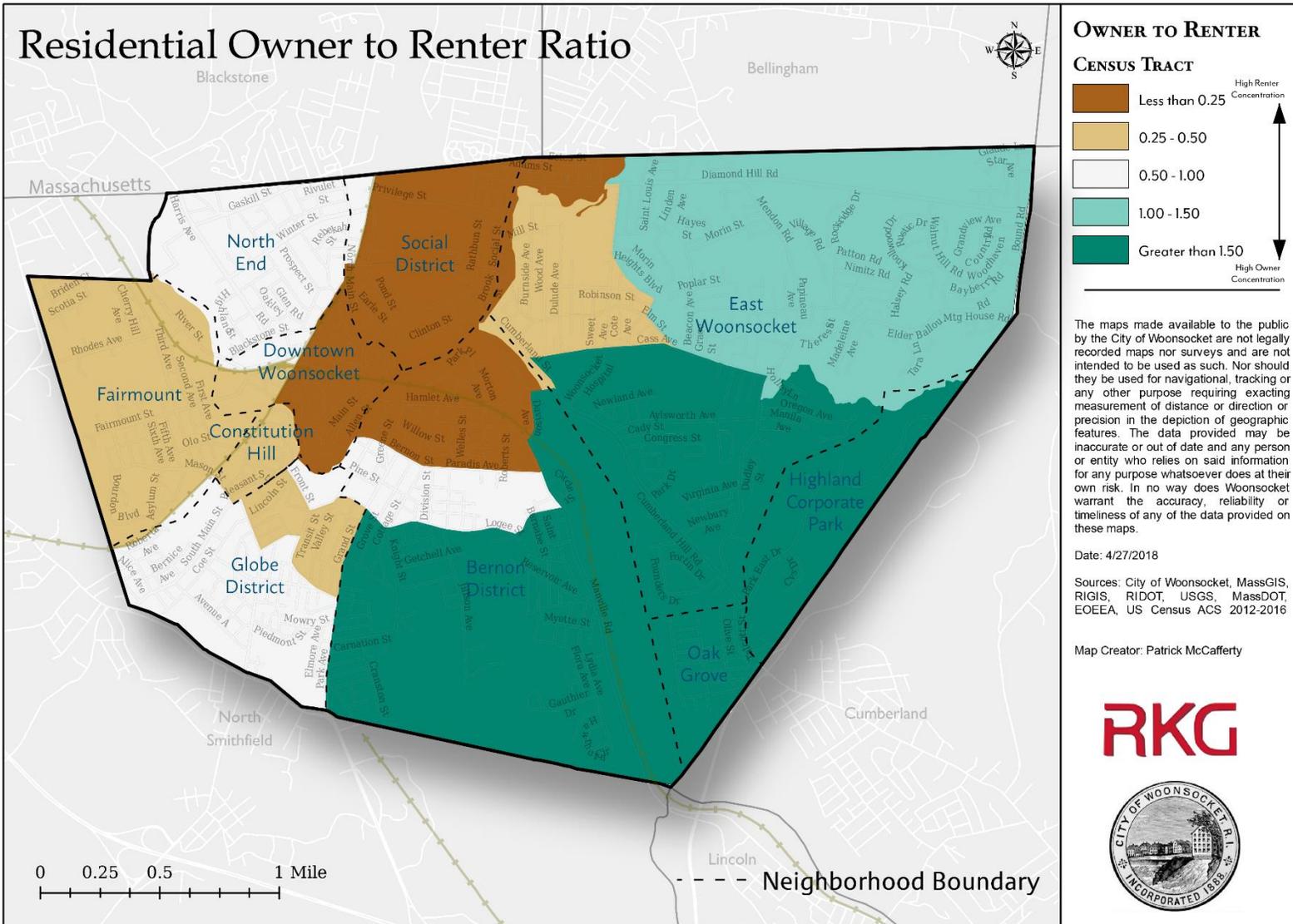


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Date: 4/27/2018  
Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEEA, US Census ACS 2012-2016

Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty





## Unit Types

Most of housing found in Woonsocket is some form of multifamily housing and accounts for about 74 percent all housing. Only 26 percent of the units are detached single family homes. Woonsocket's percentage of multifamily housing is significantly greater than both Greater Woonsocket and the state. In Greater Woonsocket single-family homes account for 54 percent of the total housing stock and closely mirrors the state with 55 percent of single-family homes. Within Woonsocket, small scale multifamily structures account for much of the housing found within the city; structures containing between three and nine units account for 40 percent of the total housing. Whereas in Greater Woonsocket and Rhode Island these types of units account for only 18 to 20 percent of the housing.

Diversity in housing stock enables both renters and owners the ability to live in housing units which they deem appropriate for themselves. Examples of different unit types are single family homes, duplex, small residential buildings, and large residential buildings. The differences in unit type traditionally translate down into pricing and housing tenure, with single family homes typically being ownership units, and multifamily homes as rentals or condominiums.

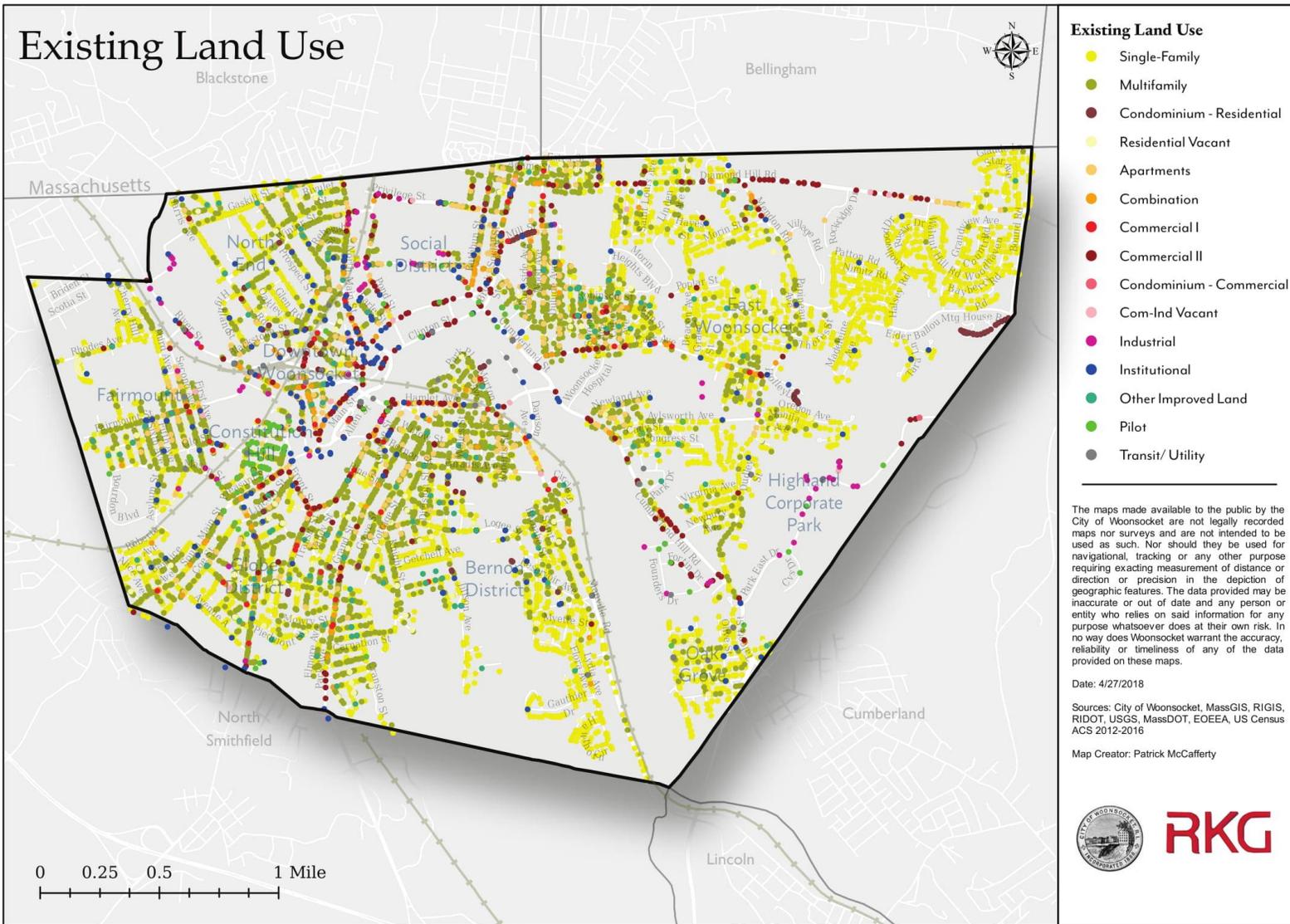
	Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island
Housing Units	19,480	61,574	462,657
Units - 1, detached	26%	54%	55%
Units - 1, attached	2%	4%	3%
Units - 2	15%	10%	11%
Units - 3 or 4	24%	12%	13%
Units - 5 to 9	16%	8%	5%
Units - 10 to 19	6%	4%	4%
Units - 20 to 49	3%	2%	3%
Units - 50 or more	7%	6%	5%
Units - Other	0%	0%	1%

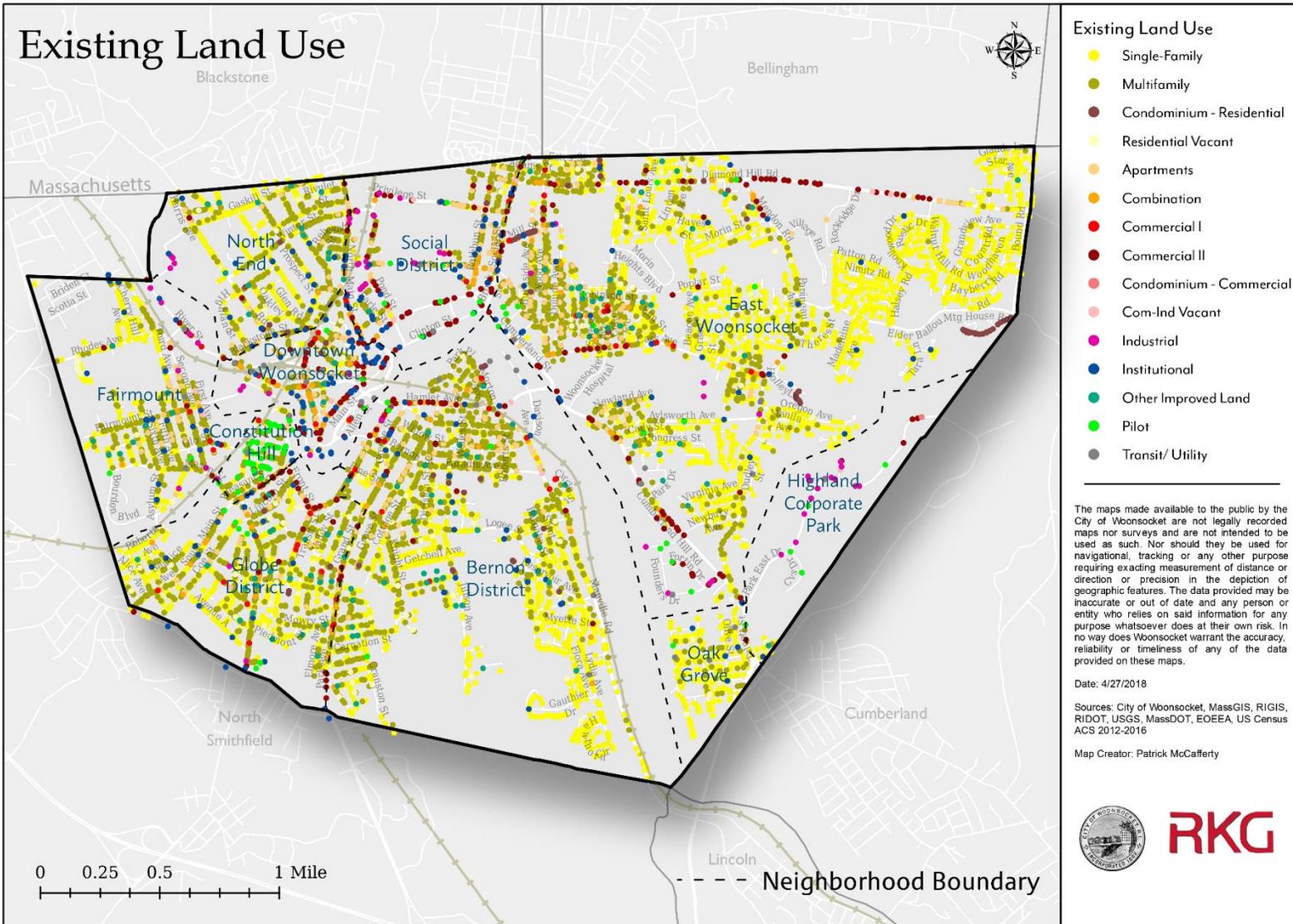
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"

The accompanying maps present the existing land use pattern found in Woonsocket. What is immediately apparent is that much of the single-family housing stock is on the urban periphery on the Eastern side of the city in East Woonsocket. This area is primarily single family suburban style development. Much of the multifamily housing in the city rings the Downtown district with the greatest intensity of multifamily units found in the Bernon, Constitution Hill, Fairmount, and Social Districts. Parts of these neighborhoods happen to also be some of the most low-income, so the abundance of multifamily housing is logical because it offers a lower price point. Many affordable housing developments, administered by the Woonsocket Housing Authority, exist in this area.

From the land use maps, it can be noted that the Downtown has a variety of uses which indicate a once vibrant past. The development pattern is a mixture of commercial and residential structures and

offers the potential for future development within the downtown core. At present, the Downtown has high levels of first and upper floor vacancy which makes it difficult to catalyze the space. That said, it is a potential target for a comprehensive revitalization strategy to activate upper-floor space, repurpose the remaining vacant mill buildings, and diversify the housing stock near the downtown.





### OWNER OCCUPIED

Single family, detached homes account for 69 percent of all owner-occupied housing units. This indicates a significant percentage of multifamily ownership/condo units, with 15 percent of the total occupied housing being in structures with 3 or more units. Comparatively, single family homes account for 83 percent of Greater Woonsocket owner occupied housing, and 84 percent of the state.

Table 5. Owner-Occupied Units in Structure, ACS 2012-2016			
	Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island
Housing Units	6,470	35,834	244,748
Units - 1, detached	69%	83%	84%
Units - 1, attached	3%	5%	4%
Units - 2	13%	5%	6%
Units - 3 or 4	9%	3%	3%
Units - 5 to 9	2%	1%	1%
Units - 10 to 19	2%	1%	1%
Units - 20 to 49	1%	0%	1%
Units - 50 or more	1%	1%	0%
Units - Other	0%	0%	1%
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"			

### RENTER OCCUPIED

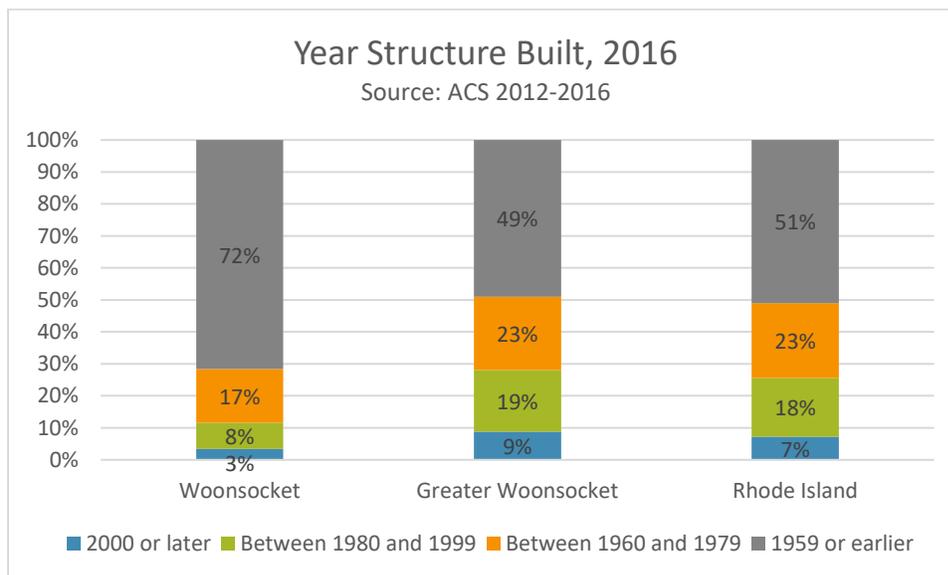
Single family homes as rentals appear to be very limited in Woonsocket. With only 5 percent of the rental units classified as single-family homes; while in Greater Woonsocket and across the state single family homes account for 10 percent and 15 percent of the respective rental markets. This indicates that the existing built environment in Woonsocket is targeted towards multifamily housing in structures of greater than 3 units.

	Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island
Housing Units	10,778	21,067	165,492
Units - 1, detached	5%	10%	15%
Units - 1, attached	2%	3%	3%
Units - 2	14%	16%	19%
Units - 3 or 4	31%	25%	25%
Units - 5 to 9	23%	18%	11%
Units - 10 to 19	8%	8%	8%
Units - 20 to 49	5%	6%	6%
Units - 50 or more	12%	14%	13%
Units - Other	0%	0%	1%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"

### Age of Housing

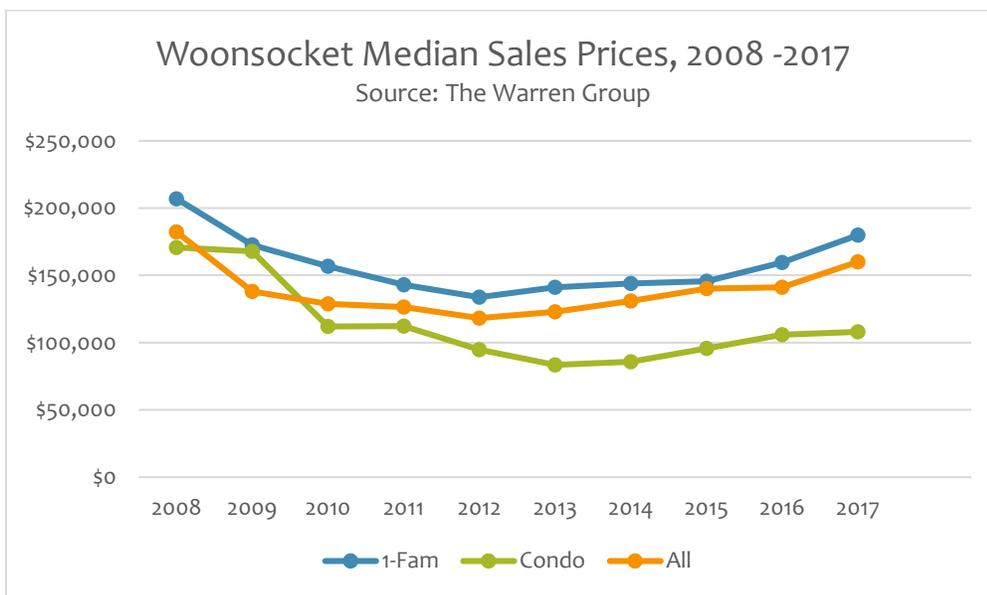
The housing stock in Woonsocket is much older when compared to Greater Woonsocket and the state. This reflects the building boom that occurred outside of the City after the 1970's during the period of suburbanization. Woonsocket has a very old housing stock with about 72 percent of all housing units built before 1959. One of the issues that results from having very old structures is that in some cases, many of the multifamily homes are preexisting non-conforming, which means that they were created before zoning was introduced. Preexisting non-conforming structures which need to be rebuilt can cause serious problems for owners due to the structures not following zoning. For the owner to rebuild a property they would have to conform to existing zoning potentially limiting the number of units allowed as compared to the preexisting non-conforming structure.



In total, about 11 percent of the housing units in Woonsocket were built after 1980 (1,926 units), with 3 percent of the total units in the city built after the year 2000. The percentage built after the year 2000, is drastically lower than both Greater Woonsocket (9 percent) and Rhode Island (7 percent). The lack of new housing developed in Woonsocket consistent with the findings detailed in the socioeconomic section about population and household decline. Without a more competitive economic and lifestyle conditions in Woonsocket, demand for market rate new construction will remain limited. Without the construction of new housing stock in Woonsocket, the city will continue to remain unattractive to certain demand sectors in the marketplace.

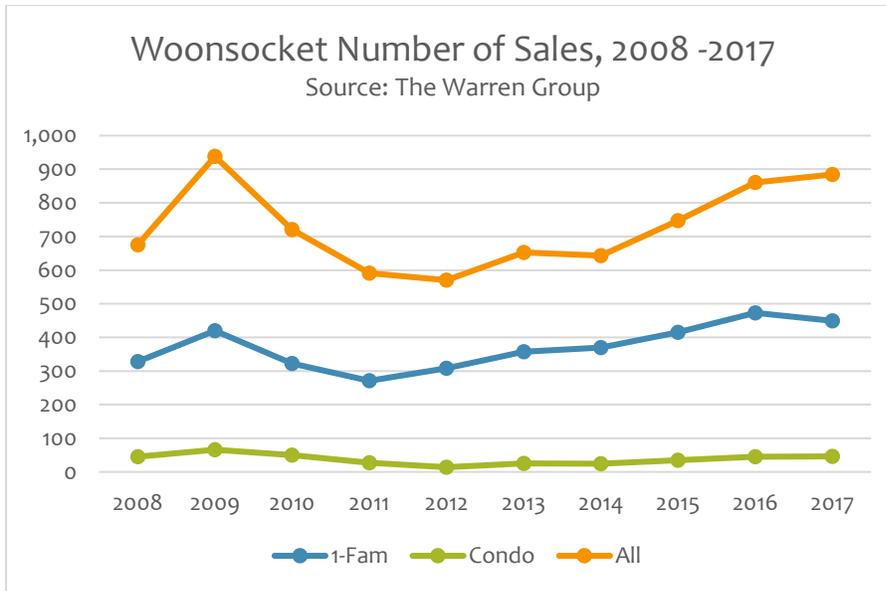
## Home Sales

Sales prices for single family homes have nearly recovered from the Great Recession and are up 26 percent over the period from 2011 to 2017. The median sale price for a single-family home in Woonsocket was \$180,000 in 2017. The general sales activity in Woonsocket has progressively recovered over the last six years. The peak sales for all types of housing units occurred in 2009. This was an outcome of the Great Recession, in which many homes were foreclosed upon and sold by banks.



Single family home sales have made a comeback to prerecession highs. The market is robust in terms of sales numbers. Based on conversations with real estate brokers, a traditionally healthy real estate market has a six-month supply of housing. Currently in Woonsocket, the supply of housing is about two and a half months; with the average number of days on market at 52 days.<sup>12</sup>

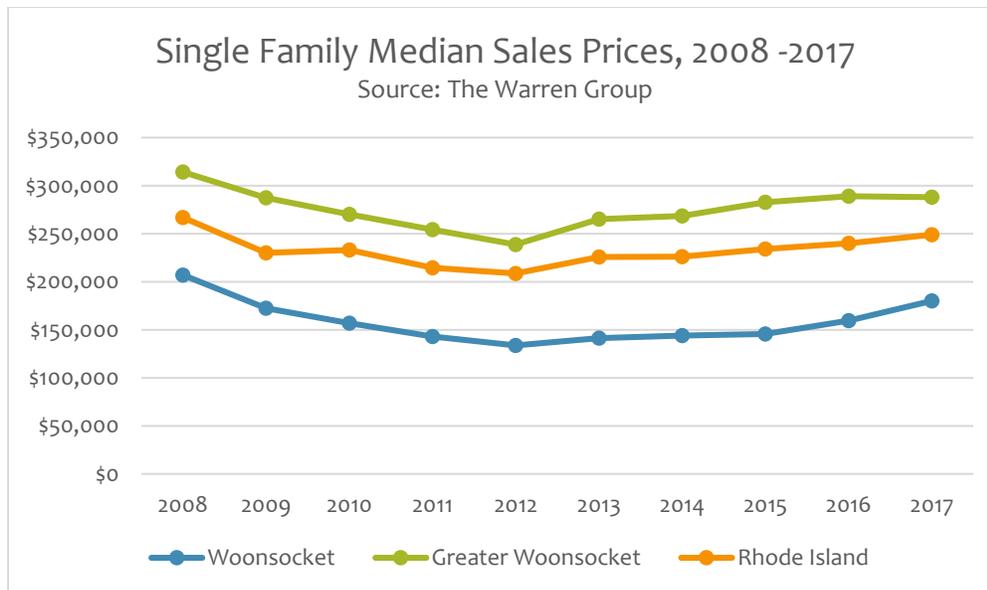
<sup>12</sup> Information obtained through conversations with real estate brokers.



Condominium sales have remained relatively flat since the Great Recession ended. This is partly due to the lower supply of condominium units in Woonsocket as compared to single family homes. In 2009, condominium sales reached a high of 66 units, as compared to 2017 where 46 sales took place, a decrease of 30 percent. The differential is in stark contrast to single family sales numbers which have continued to outpace the highs from 2009.

### SINGLE FAMILY HOME MARKET

The market for single family homes in Woonsocket has gotten better over time but is still much lower than both Greater Woonsocket and the state. Woonsocket's single-family home sales prices are about 1/3 less than those in Greater Woonsocket, and about a ¼ the price across Rhode Island. The median sales price of a single-family home in 2017 was \$180,000, as compared to Greater Woonsocket (\$287,921) and Rhode Island (\$249,000).



The low prices for homes in Woonsocket is an incentive for first-time homebuyers. The market for single family homes in Woonsocket is driven by pure value. The type and size of home that can be purchased in Woonsocket is vastly different than those found in the Greater Woonsocket area. The product and value differential is what is driving the pace of sales and interest in Woonsocket.

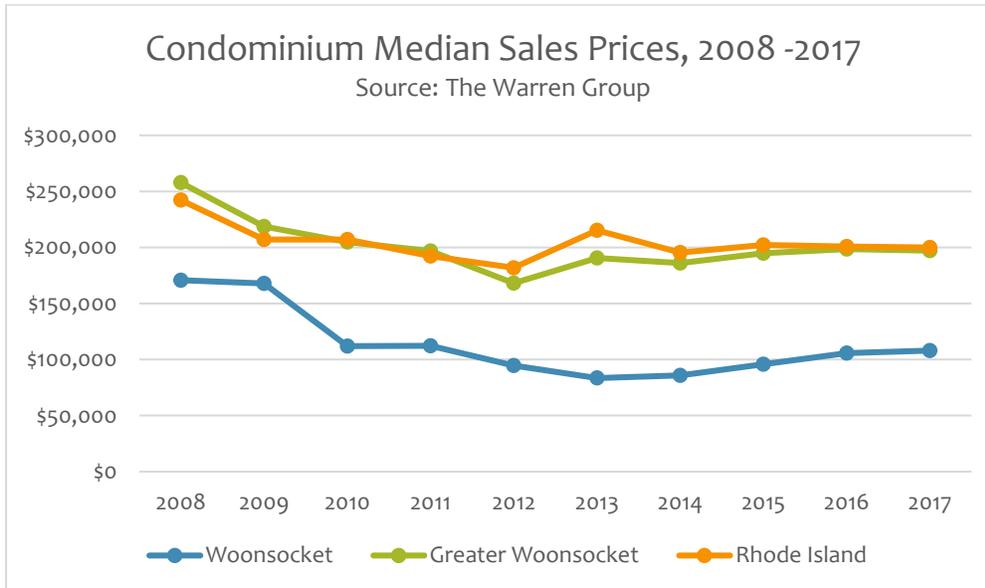
The market around single family home has tightened considerably, as buyers are purchasing properties at a fast pace. The average time on market is 52 days according to real estate brokers, meaning it is a sellers-market. Additionally, first-time homebuyer programs and tax credits are helping drive some of the sales in Woonsocket. The State of Rhode Island has a first-time homebuyer program that provides a \$7,500 forgivable loan to purchasers. This money can be used as part of a down payment, and when coupled with a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan it essentially makes homebuying accessible to those without the initial capital. An FHA mortgage can be obtained with just 3.5 percent as a down payment, and in the case of Woonsocket where median sales prices are \$180,000, the down payment on a loan would translate into \$6,300. The ability for homebuyers to secure favorable financing for home purchases has been key for Woonsocket in terms of reviving the local market for single-family homes.

## CONDOMINIUMS

The condominium market of Woonsocket lags both the Greater Woonsocket area and Rhode Island. The median condominium sales price in 2017 across Greater Woonsocket and Rhode Island was about \$200,000, while in Woonsocket the price was \$108,000. This differential is a result of the types of housing that is available in Woonsocket, with single family homes being more prevalent and attractive than condominiums. Additionally, the ability for first-time homebuyers to purchase single family home is more attractive than purchasing a condominium. The reason being that condominiums are multifamily units that are denser and have additionally condominium association fees. The fees for

some condominiums can sometimes be substantial, especially when compared to the single-family home market where fees are not applicable.

Many of the existing condominiums in Woonsocket are converted multifamily structures such as triple decker buildings. In addition to condominiums found within the neighborhood fabric, three larger condominium developments exist that containing many units.



Woonsocket has not recovered from the high attained in 2008, as the price of a condo in 2017 is still 37 percent below the price attained in 2008. Even though both Greater Woonsocket and Rhode Island have strong condominium markets, neither of these communities have themselves recovered from the prices seen in 2008, as they are still down by 24 percent and 17 percent, respectively. The lack of appreciation over nearly 10 years indicates the condominium market has not fully recovered.

### GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF SALES

As noted in the previous section, the for-sale market in Woonsocket is robust with sales occurring relatively quickly and low inventory. Understanding the geographic distribution of sales around the city and the accompanying price points can help clarify some of the housing issues in the city. The maps on the following page presents 2017 sales data taken from the property assessment database. The data is plotted on the neighborhood map to show the intensity of price and sales activity.

Neighborhoods which saw the greatest concentration of sales over the \$250,000 were the North End and East Woonsocket.<sup>13</sup> Based on conversations with real estate brokers, these neighborhoods are in

<sup>13</sup> Woonsocket Assessor Database, 2018

demand as first-time homebuyers and investors are acquiring properties. Across the city, only three properties breached the \$350,000 sales price.<sup>14</sup>

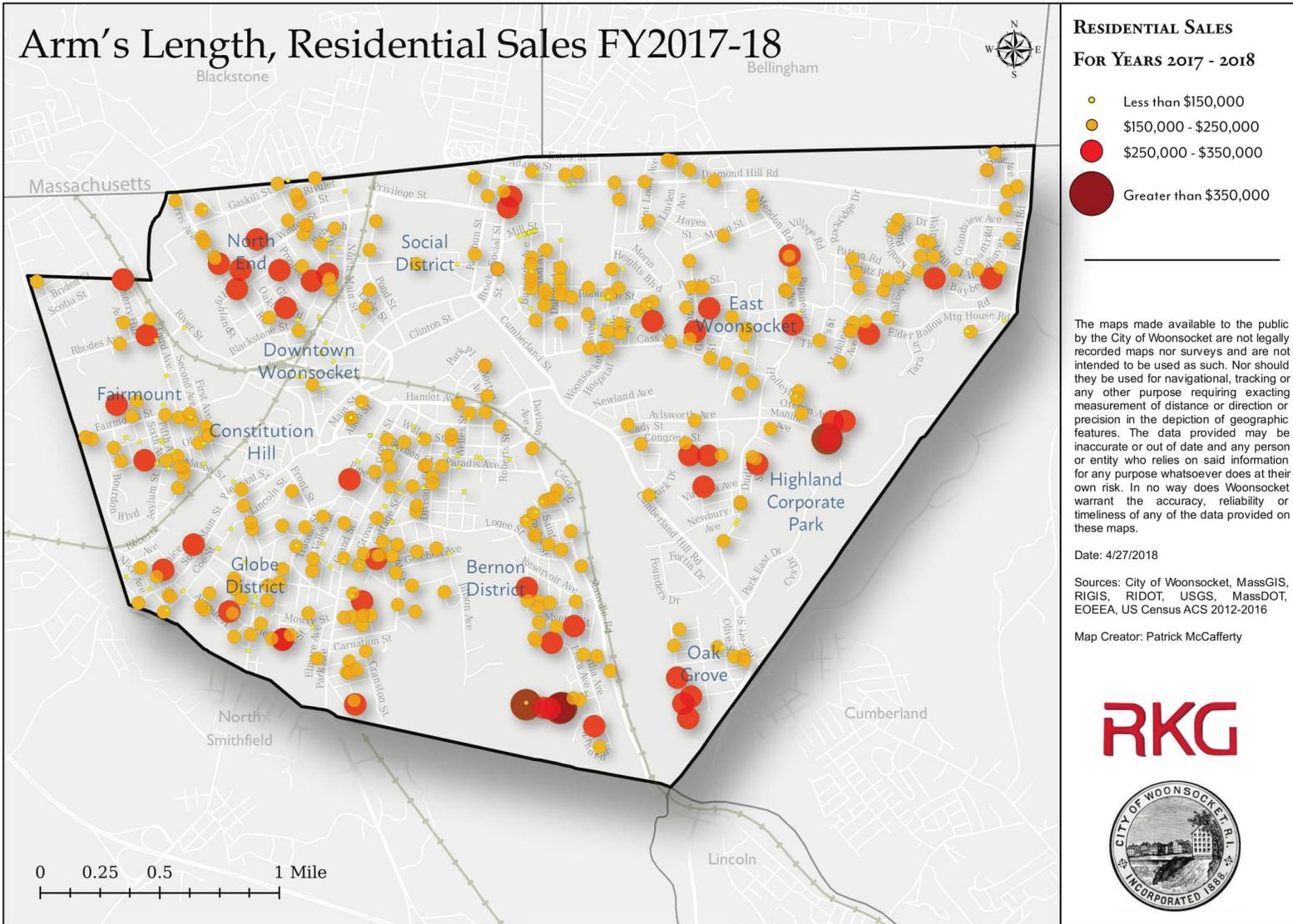
Most home sales fell between the price of \$150,000 and \$250,000; with most of the sales occurring South of the Downtown in the Globe and Bernon Districts.<sup>15</sup> East Woonsocket also had a considerable cluster of sales in the moderate price range. The \$150,000 and \$250,000 price point has become accessible to more households because of state programs what provide down payment assistance and tax credits for homebuyers.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

# Arm's Length, Residential Sales FY2017-18



## RESIDENTIAL SALES FOR YEARS 2017 - 2018

- Less than \$150,000
- \$150,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$350,000
- Greater than \$350,000

The maps made available to the public by the City of Woonsocket are not legally recorded maps nor surveys and are not intended to be used as such. Nor should they be used for navigational, tracking or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The data provided may be inaccurate or out of date and any person or entity who relies on said information for any purpose whatsoever does at their own risk. In no way does Woonsocket warrant the accuracy, reliability or timeliness of any of the data provided on these maps.

Date: 4/27/2018

Sources: City of Woonsocket, MassGIS, RIGIS, RIDOT, USGS, MassDOT, EOEEA, US Census ACS 2012-2016

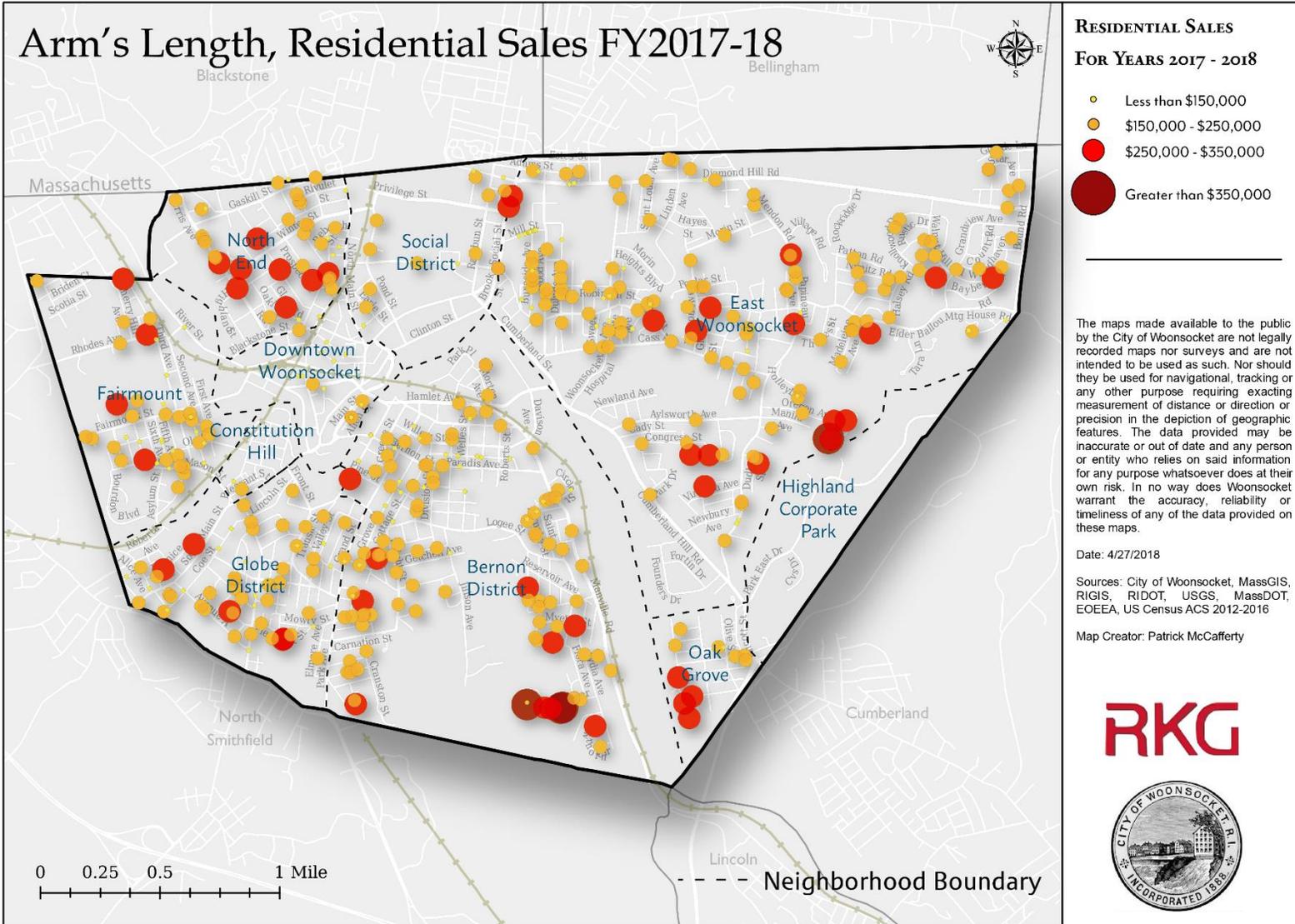
Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

# RKG



0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

# Arm's Length, Residential Sales FY2017-18



### RESIDENTIAL SALES FOR YEARS 2017 - 2018

- Less than \$150,000
- \$150,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$350,000
- Greater than \$350,000

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Date: 4/27/2018  
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 Map Creator: Patrick McCafferty

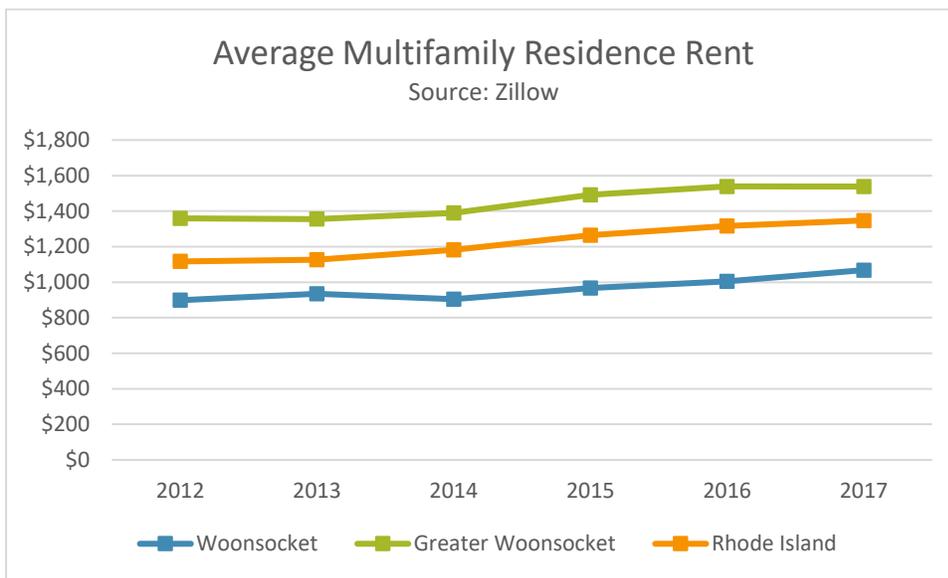
# RKG



--- Neighborhood Boundary

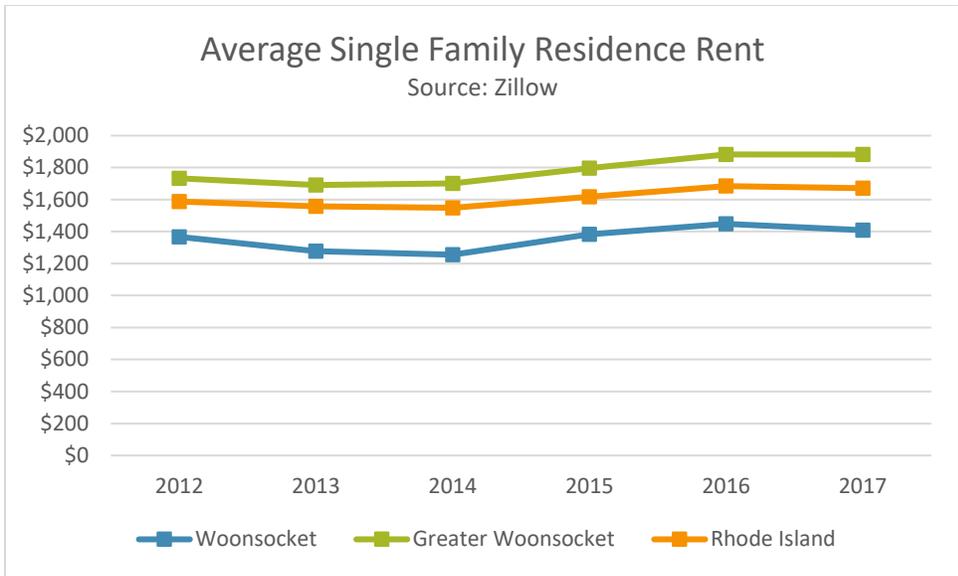
## Rents

Average Woonsocket multifamily rents rose by 16 percent between 2012 and 2017, from \$899 to \$1,068 per month. This growth outpaced the Greater Woonsocket region, which saw rent growth of 12 percent. Despite an older housing stock with an array of naturally-occurring affordable housing, rising rents are likely contributing to the housing cost burden that affects a significant number of Woonsocket residents. As indicated earlier, between 2011 and 2016, there was a 12 percent increase in the number of renter households, indicating strong renter demand which tracks with increases in rental prices.<sup>16</sup>



Woonsocket’s rent growth in the single-family market has lagged the State and Region. Between 2012 and 2017, rent for a single-family home only increased by 3 percent in Woonsocket, with an average rent of \$1,409 in 2017. That is less than the Greater Woonsocket area, which experienced rents grow by 8 percent, while Rhode Island grew by 5 percent.

<sup>16</sup> ACS 2007-2011, 2012-2016, Table B25003, “Tenure”



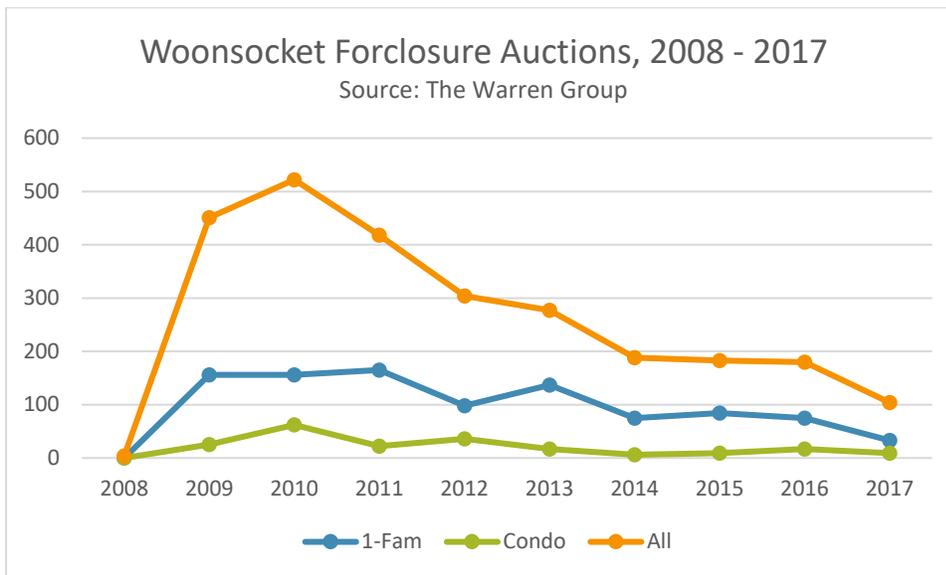
Data from the Census provides important information related to the contract rent for homes across Woonsocket and the region. Within Woonsocket, nearly 43 percent of the rental homes have rents between \$500 and \$799; this is considerably higher than Greater Woonsocket and the state which have respective percentages of 35 percent, and 30 percent. In Woonsocket, only 10 percent of the rents are over \$1,000 while across the region and state typically over 20 percent of the rental units have rents over \$1,000.

	Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island
Rental Units	10,533	20,427	159,900
Less than \$100	2%	1%	1%
\$100-\$299	12%	9%	10%
\$300-\$499	9%	10%	8%
\$500-\$799	43%	35%	30%
\$800-\$999	23%	23%	24%
\$1,000 - \$1,499	9%	17%	20%
\$1,500 - \$1,999	1%	4%	5%
\$2,000-\$2,499	0%	1%	1%
Greater than \$2,500	0%	0%	1%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Table B25056, "Contract Rent"

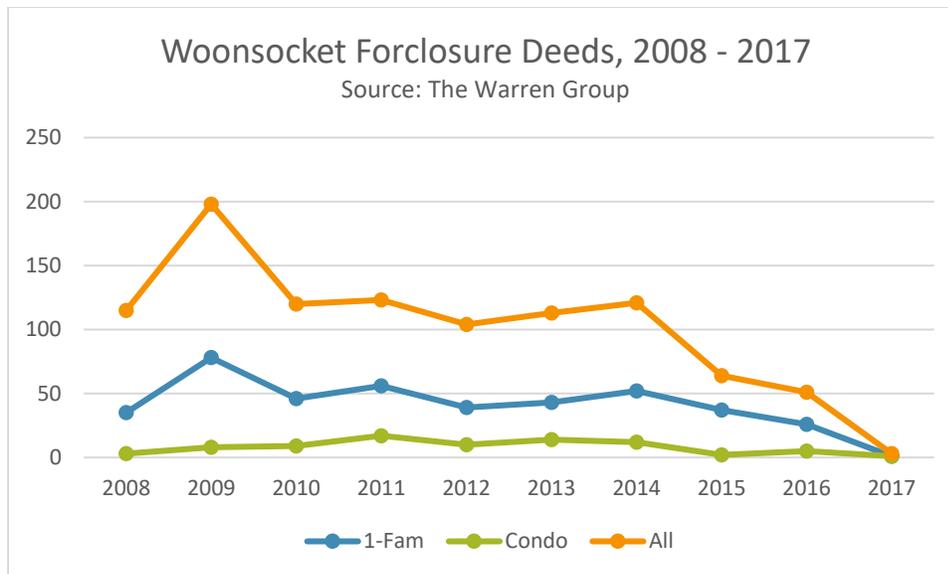
## Foreclosures

As the “Great Recession,” began to take hold in 2008, a general trend nationwide was the rise of foreclosure proceedings and actions. The two metrics that indicate significant foreclosure activity are the foreclosure auctions and the number of foreclosure deeds.<sup>17</sup> The legal actions represent lenders making petitions and taking possession of properties, which borrowers failed to make loan payments. During the height of the recession in 2010, Woonsocket had a total of 522 foreclosure auctions of which 156 were single family homes and 62 were condominiums. Since the economic recover began the number of foreclosure auctions have declined drastically (80 percent), and as of 2017 there were only 104 foreclosure auctions of which 33 were single family and nine were condominiums.



Similarly, foreclosure deeds decreased drastically from the height of the recession. A foreclosure deed is when the auction is successful, and the lender secures title to the property. The peak foreclosure deed year was 2009 where Woonsocket had a total of 198 foreclosure deeds of which 78 were single family homes and 8 were condominiums. Since the economic recover began the number of foreclosure deeds has declined drastically (98 percent), and as of 2017 there were only 3 foreclosure deeds of which one was a single family and one was a condominium.

<sup>17</sup> Rhode Island does not require lenders to file a petition to foreclose or proceed with the foreclosure process. Therefore, Warren Group statistics for Rhode Island only include auctions and foreclosure deeds.

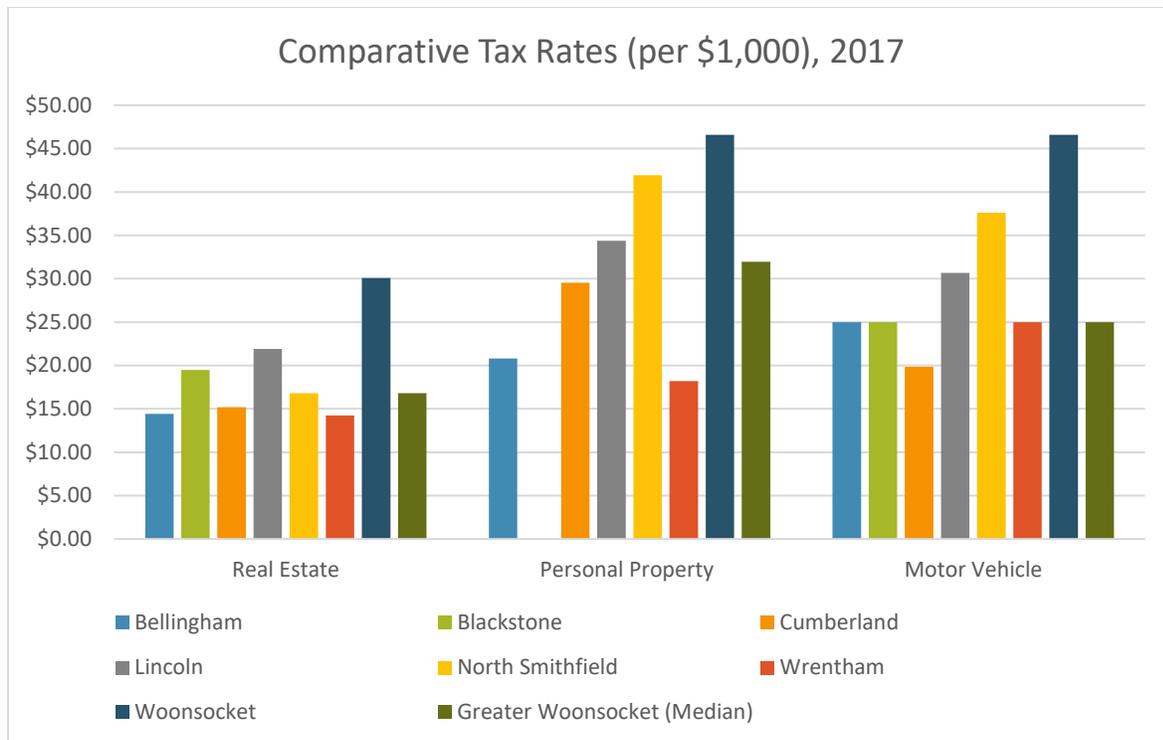


## Residential Property Taxes

Woonsocket consistently outranks its neighboring communities in terms of taxes.<sup>18</sup> The published real estate tax rate in Woonsocket (before any exemptions) is \$30.10 per \$1,000 in assessed value; while the median for Greater Woonsocket is \$16.91 per \$1,000 in assessed value. Personal property and motor vehicles are also significantly taxed in Woonsocket, which results in a disincentive to potential residents. The personal property tax rate is \$46.58 per \$1,000 and the motor vehicle tax rate is \$46.58 per \$1,000.<sup>19</sup> Based on the results of the interviews, the consensus is that Woonsocket's tax rate is a disincentive to potential homebuyers.

<sup>18</sup> Tax rate data was taken from each community which surrounds Woonsocket.

<sup>19</sup> Data from City of Woonsocket



Future residents, employers, and employees consider not only the cost of purchasing a home when deciding where to live or locate a business, but also associated property taxes. Rhode Island communities are particularly dependent on real estate taxes to fund local government services such as schools, public safety, and public works; and residential property invariably accounts for the largest percentage of the total assessed value in most cities and towns.

One of the biggest issues related to residential property taxes is their impact on the for-sale market. Based on conversations with real estate professionals, financial institutions lend based on the published rate of property taxes. Based on the published tax rate, the mortgage loans payments are determined. Even though Woonsocket has a high tax rate, there are several exemptions that result in making the tax rate lower. These exemptions include:

- Single Family and Condominium Homestead Exemption which is a 25 percent reduction on the assessment value.
- Two Family Homestead Exemption which is a 10 percent reduction on the assessment value.
- Three Family Homestead Exemption which is a 5 percent reduction on the assessment value.

While these exemptions allow for a reduction in the overall property taxes, Woonsocket is still a highly taxed municipality.

## HOUSING DEMAND ANALYSIS

Understanding current and future housing demand is essential to creating a policy that addresses housing needs. The housing demand by tenure analysis provides insights into demographic cohorts that are experiencing changes in demand. This information is essential because it can help to inform decisions about how best to address issues around housing supply based on projected demographic changes.

The key takeaway is that purchasing power found in Woonsocket is quite low. In 2022 it is expected that 61percent of all households will have incomes below \$60,000; this translates into the ability to purchase a home for just under \$200,000, or to rent an apartment for under \$1,500.<sup>20</sup> The average sales price in Woonsocket for a single-family home is \$180,000 and a condo is \$108,000 today. These prices seem to accurately reflect the reality of household incomes and purchasing power.

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### Ownership Unit Demand

Table 8 shows the estimated change in demand for year-round ownership units in Woonsocket between 2017 and 2022. The analysis takes into consideration age (head of householder), income, and affordable home price. The affordable home price was determined for each income bracket based on the maximum monthly payment a homebuyer could afford, when factoring purchase information such as real estate taxes, mortgage interest rates, and other fees.

The most apparent change in demand is at the highest income threshold of over \$100,000 per year (39 percent increase since 2017). Much of aggregate positive demand for year-round ownership units in Woonsocket is derived from the increase in households from this income bracket. Additional positive demand comes from households with incomes over \$60,000 per year but under \$75,000, with an increase of 194 households expected.

Based on the projections data there is an expected decrease in households of under \$60,000 per year. Projections forecast a general decrease in both the under \$40,000 threshold and \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year threshold by 11 percent.

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<sup>20</sup> Alteryx, 2018

**Table 8. Annual Owner Demand by Age, Income, and Value (2017 – 2022)**

Difference 2017 and 2022	Age Groups					Total	% Change From 2017	Home Values Based on Income
	Under 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	Greater than 65			
Less than \$40,000	(95)	(29)	(126)	(76)	(10)	(337)	-11%	Up to \$130,000
>= \$40,000 and <\$60,000	(44)	(22)	(46)	(19)	7	(125)	-11%	\$120,000 to \$200,000
>=\$60,000 and < \$75,000	29	32	4	9	22	96	17%	\$170,000 to \$250,000
>=\$75,000 and < \$100,000	18	31	(5)	23	31	98	15%	\$220,000 to \$330,000
Greater than \$100,000	61	45	60	51	83	300	39%	More than \$290,000
Aggregate Total	(31)	57	(113)	(13)	133	33	1%	
% Change From 2017	-2%	5%	-9%	-1%	10%			

Source: Alteryx, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018

The population that is expected to grow the most in the future are the senior population of over 65 years of age. This group is expected to increase by 10 percent (133 households) over the next five years. Another population that is expected to grow is the 35 to 44 years of age population, which has a projected growth rate of 5 percent (57 households). The biggest decrease in population by age cohort are those between the ages of 45 and 54, as they are expected to decrease by 133 households, or 9 percent.

## Renter Unit Demand

Table 9 shows the estimated change in demand for year-round ownership units in Woonsocket between 2017 and 2022. The analysis takes into consideration age (head of householder), income, and affordable rents. The affordable rental price was determined for each income bracket based applying a 30 percent ceiling on how much a household can spend on rent based on income.

The most apparent change in demand is at the highest income threshold of over \$100,000 per year with an increase of 39 percent, 527 households. Much of aggregate positive demand for year-round rental units in Woonsocket is derived from the increase in households from this income bracket. Additional positive demand comes from households with incomes over \$60,000 per year but under \$75,000, with an increase of 18 percent, or 169 households.

Based on the projections data there is an expected decrease in households of under \$60,000 per year. Projections forecast a general decrease in both the under \$40,000 threshold and \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year threshold of 10 and 11 percent, respectively.

Table 9. Annual Renter Demand by Age, Income, and Value (2017 – 2022)								
Difference 2017 and 2022	Age Groups							
Income Range	Under 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	Greater than 65	Total	% Change From 2017	Rents Based on Income
Less than \$40,000	(162)	(47)	(218)	(130)	(12)	(568)	-10%	\$500 to \$1,000
>= \$40,000 and <\$60,000	(76)	(37)	(80)	(31)	12	(211)	-11%	\$1,000 to \$1,500
>=\$60,000 and < \$75,000	52	55	8	15	39	169	18%	\$1,500 to \$1,875
>=\$75,000 and < \$100,000	33	56	(7)	40	53	175	15%	\$1,875 to \$2,500
Greater than \$100,000	108	78	107	88	146	527	39%	More than \$2,500
Aggregate Total	(45)	105	(190)	(17)	238	91	1%	
% Change From 2017	-2%	6%	-9%	-1%	10%			

Source: Alteryx, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018

The population that is expected to grow the most in the future are the senior population of over 65 years of age. This group is expected to increase by 10 percent (238 households) over the next five years. Another population that is expected to grow is the 35 to 44 years of age population, which has a projected growth rate of 6 percent (105 households). The biggest decrease in population by age cohort are those between the ages of 45 and 54, as they are expected to decrease by 190 households, or 9 percent.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

### Low and Moderate-Income Limits and Affordable Housing Costs

Most communities have some modestly priced housing that is more affordable to low- and moderate-income households: small, older single-family homes that are less valuable than new homes; multi-family condominiums; or apartments that can be leased for relatively low monthly rents. This type of affordable housing often stays affordable if the market will allow. In Woonsocket, housing prices are much lower than the surrounding communities, but the incomes of individuals living in Woonsocket are equally lower than the surrounding communities.

Permanently affordable housing for low-income households provides protection from price increase in robust market conditions. These units remain affordable because their resale prices and rents are governed by a deed restriction that lasts for many years, if not in perpetuity. There are other differences, too. For example, any household – regardless of income – may purchase or rent an unrestricted affordable unit, but only a low- or moderate-income household is eligible to purchase or rent a deed restricted unit.

Both types of affordable housing meet a variety of needs. The crucial difference is that the market determines the price of unrestricted affordable units, while a recorded legal instrument determines the price of deed restricted units.

Low and moderate incomes are based on percentages of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), adjusted for household size in Woonsocket. To determine what this looks like in Woonsocket, Table 10 reports HUD’s current housing program income limits by household size and the maximum housing payment that is affordable in each tier.

Area Median Income	Household Size							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Extremely Low (30%) Income Limits	\$16,900	\$19,300	\$21,700	\$25,100	\$29,420	\$33,740	\$38,060	\$42,380
Very Low (50%) Income Limits	\$28,150	\$32,150	\$36,150	\$40,150	\$43,400	\$46,600	\$49,800	\$53,000
Low (80%) Income Limits	\$45,000	\$51,400	\$57,850	\$64,250	\$69,400	\$74,550	\$79,700	\$84,850

Source: HUD and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018

For example, in Woonsocket, if a unit is deed restricted for a low-income household, for a family of four to qualify for such a unit, its annual income cannot exceed \$64,250, with the maximum dollar value spent on housing being \$1,606 per month, which translates into 30 percent of income. The income limitations and maximum payment thresholds ensure that households are not unduly burdened with housing expenses.

To assist in making housing affordable for Woonsocket residents, the Woonsocket Housing Authority operates four elderly/disabled high-rises and two-family developments located within the city. Several housing options are available to qualified applicants, from 1-bedroom to 5-bedroom units. The housing developments operated by the Housing Authority are:

- Family Developments
  - Morin Heights
  - Veterans Memorial
- Elderly Development
  - Crepeau Court
  - Kennedy Manor
  - Park View Manor
  - St. Germain Manor

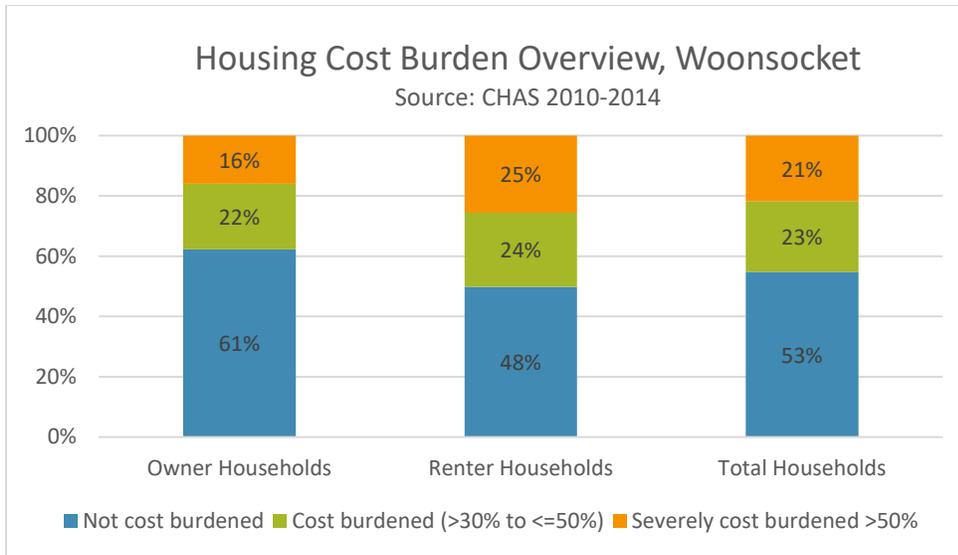
These developments coupled with the Federal Section 8 voucher program help provide housing to Woonsocket residents, many of whom would be unable to securing housing without such programs. The state of Rhode Island requires nearly all municipalities (some are exempt) to have 10 percent of their housing as permanently affordable. In the case of Woonsocket, 16 percent of the housing stock is considered affordable.

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## Cost Burdening

Rapid growth in housing prices coupled with sluggish growth or an outright decline in incomes, contributes to a housing affordability problem known as housing cost burden. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines housing cost burden as the condition in which low- or moderate-income households spend more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing. When low- or moderate-income households are spending more than half of their income on housing costs, they are said to be severely housing cost burdened.

Understanding the number of households impacted by cost burdening is a first step in helping solve the issue. Of all households in Woonsocket, 23 percent of households are cost burdened, while 21 percent are severely cost burdened. Conversely, 53 percent of households in Woonsocket are not cost burdened. The importance of cost burdening cannot be understated as the more a household pays as a percent of their income on housing, the less they have for consumer goods, and savings.



Further investigation of the cost burdening data between renters and owners indicates that renter households are more likely to be cost burdened than owner households. Of renter households, 25 percent were severely cost burdened, while 16 percent of owner households are severely cost burdened.

Of households with incomes below 50 percent AMI, 68 percent are cost burdened or slightly more than two in three households. Based on the data, 41 percent of the households in Woonsocket fall below the 50 percent AMI threshold indicating a significant problem with regards to income and cost burdening.

Household Income	Cost Burdened (Housing Costs >30%)			Severely Cost Burdened (Housing Costs >50%)			Total Households in Woonsocket	
	Est.	% of Total Cost Burdened Households	% of Total Households at this Income Level	Est.	% of Total Severely Cost Burdened Households	% of Total Households at this Income Level	Est.	% of Total Households at this Income Level
<= 30% HAMFI	2,925	39%	68%	2,185	61%	51%	4,320	25%
>30% to <=50% HAMFI	2,160	29%	78%	935	26%	34%	2,760	16%
>50% to <=80% HAMFI	1,325	18%	45%	335	9%	11%	2,970	17%
>80% to <=100% HAMFI	485	7%	32%	120	3%	8%	1,515	9%
>100% HAMFI	565	8%	10%	15	0%	0%	5,415	32%
Total	7,460	100%	44%	3,590	100%	21%	16,980	100%

Source: HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data; Note: Totals may not sum due to statistical error in CHAS data; and RKG Assoc.

### OWNER HOUSEHOLDS

Table 12 presents housing cost burden by homeowners and household type. The data is broken down by household types such as: Elderly, Small, Large, Elderly non-family, Other, and All. This data

provides a granular analysis of the types of households who are experiencing cost burdening and where along the income spectrum they reside. In some cases, cost burdening occurs relatively evenly distributed along the AMI thresholds, while in other cases certain household types are cost burdened in a rather stark manner.

**Table 12. Woonsocket Housing Cost Burdened Homeowners by Household Type**

Household Income Range	Elderly family (2 persons, with either or both age 62 or over)		Small family (2 persons, neither person 62 years or over, or 3 or 4 persons)		Large family (5 or more persons)		Elderly non-family		Other household type (non-elderly non-family)		All Owner Households in Woonsocket	
	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type
<=30% AMI	20	9%	10	2%	0	0%	55	26%	10	2%	95	7%
>30% and <=50% AMI	55	24%	55	11%	10	26%	95	44%	35	8%	250	18%
>50% and <=80% AMI	50	22%	65	13%	20	53%	40	19%	90	21%	265	19%
>80% and <=100% AMI	50	22%	160	32%	4	11%	10	5%	45	10%	269	19%
Income >100% AMI	55	24%	215	43%	4	11%	15	7%	255	59%	544	38%
Total	230	100%	505	100%	38	100%	215	100%	435	100%	1,423	100%

Source: HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data; Note: Totals may not sum due to statistical error in CHAS data; and RKG Assoc.

From the data elderly non-family households are significantly cost burdened at incomes below 50 percent AMI, with about 70 percent of these households cost burdened; contrasting sharply with Providence County which has 53 percent elderly households cost burdened. Of the cost burdened large family household’s 53 percent are cost burdened at the 50 to 80 percent AMI threshold.

**RENTER HOUSEHOLDS**

Table 13 presents housing cost burden by renters and household type. From the data renters are acutely cost burdened under the 80 percent AMI thresholds for all household categories with 94 percent of all cost burdened renter households below 80 percent AMI. Of severely cost burdened households 75 percent have incomes less than 30 percent AMI. The average market rental prices based on the previous analysis shows rents tend to be relatively fixed in terms of what is available, however given the large number of low-income households in Woonsocket, the cost burdening data shows large percentages of the population burdened.

Key data points from the household breakdown indicate that 49 percent of Small Families between the 30-50 percent AMI threshold are cost burdened. While Elderly Family burdened households have the largest percent of cost burdening at the 30-50 percent AMI thresholds.

**Table 13. Woonsocket Housing Cost Burdened Renters by Household Type**

Household Income Range	Elderly family (2 persons, with either or both age 62 or over)		Small family (2 persons, neither person 62 years or over, or 3 or 4 persons)		Large family (5 or more persons)		Elderly non-family		Other household type (non-elderly non-family)		All Renter Households in Woonsocket	
	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type	Est.	% of Total Household Type
<=30% AMI	45	32%	165	20%	20	16%	155	42%	260	27%	645	26%
>30% and <=50% AMI	60	43%	410	49%	105	81%	155	42%	240	25%	970	40%
>50% and <=80% AMI	35	25%	235	28%	0	0%	50	14%	405	42%	725	30%
>80% and <=100% AMI	0	0%	20	2%	4	3%	10	3%	65	7%	99	4%
Income >100% AMI	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,439</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS 2010-2014) Data. Note: Totals may not sum due to statistical error in CHAS data

The findings generally indicate that the renter households tend to be lower income and more financially stretched to afford existing housing options. The existing housing stock found across the city while naturally affordable due to market supply and demand factors remains unaffordable for many at lower income scale.

### Affordability Mismatch

While most communities have some older, more modestly priced homes and apartments with lower monthly rents, due to the housing’s age, condition, limited amenities or location, these units are not necessarily occupied by low- or moderate-income people. HUD reports data for an affordable housing barrier known as affordability mismatch, or housing units that are affordable but unavailable to lower-income households because higher-income households already live in the units. Affordability mismatch measures:

- The number of housing units in a community with rents or home values affordable to people with very low incomes (at or below 30 percent AMI), low incomes (between 31 and 50 percent AMI), and moderate incomes (between 51 and 80 percent AMI);
- The number of households in each income tier;
- How many of those households live in units they can afford; and
- How many of the affordable units have a high probability of housing problems in addition to housing costs, e.g., substandard or otherwise inadequate housing.

Viewing housing affordability in terms of income and cost (affordability threshold) serves as a proxy for understanding the overall quality of life in a community and estimating populations at risk of homelessness.

### MISMATCH: ALL BEDROOM TYPES

Table 14 presents affordability mismatch information for all rental bedroom types in Woonsocket, according to the most recent CHAS data. The discrepancy between supply and demand was most pronounced for renter households with incomes at or below 30 percent of AMI (extremely-low income households): there are 52 units of affordably priced housing for every 100 renter households in need of affordable housing. This translates into 3,625 extremely low-income renter households vying for only 1,870 affordable and available units.

While the discrepancy decreased going up the income ladder, it was still quite notable at the income threshold of at or below 50 percent of AMI (known as low-income households), which also includes the extremely low-income households discussed above. At this income threshold, there are 69 affordably priced units for every 100 households in need.

For households with incomes at or below 80 percent of AMI (moderate-income), which also includes the extremely low-income and low-income households discussed above, the affordability mismatch is erased, with a greater supply of homes than demanded. There were about 108 rental housing units for renter for every 100 household, resulting in an over-supply of 575 units.

Table 14. Affordability Mismatch, All Bedroom Types			
	Household Income<= 30% AMI	Household Income<= 50% AMI	Household Income<= 80% AMI
Total Units Affordable and Available	1,870	3,860	8,200
Total Renter Households	3,625	5,595	7,625
Total Shortage/Surplus of Units Affordable to Income Groups	1,755	1,735	-575
Affordable and Available Units Per 100 Renter Households	52	69	108
Source: CHAS, 2010-2014, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018			

**MISMATCH: ONE BEDROOM OR LESS**

Table 15 presents affordability mismatch information for one-bedroom apartments in Woonsocket, per the most recent CHAS data. For extremely low-income households, there were about 100 renter households vying for every 55 affordably priced one-bedroom units, which equaled a shortage of about 760 affordable units at this income threshold.

For low-income households (at or below 50 percent of AMI), which include the extremely low-income households mentioned above, there were a shortage of 605 units: there are about 74 affordably priced units for every 100 renter households at this income level.

For moderate-income households (at or below 80 percent of AMI), which also include the extremely low-income and low-income households discussed above, there was a slight oversupply of 35 units, showing that the available housing stock of one-bedroom units met the demand at this income level.

As a method to increase the number of one bedroom and less housing units, the City established a Micro-loft Ordinance which is applicable in the Main Street Overlay District. This would allow the

development of affordable by design units. There is a proposal by a developer to create 22 units at 122 Main Street which would also incorporate a mixed-use component.

Table 15. Affordability Mismatch, One Bedroom or Less			
	Household Income<= 30% AMI	Household Income<= 50% AMI	Household Income<= 80% AMI
Total Units Affordable and Available	940	1,765	2,870
Total Renter Households	1,700	2,370	2,835
Total Shortage/Surplus of Units Affordable to Income Groups	760	605	-35
Affordable and Available Units Per 100 Renter Households	55	74	101
Source: CHAS, 2010-2014, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018			

### MISMATCH: TWO BEDROOMS

Once again, lower-income renters in Woonsocket experienced significant competition for affordable housing that matched their income level. Table 16 presents affordability mismatch information for two-bedroom apartments in Woonsocket, according to the most recent CHAS data. For extremely low-income households, the mismatch was substantial: there were about 100 renter households vying for 57 affordably priced two-bedroom units (or 1,150 renter households competing for only 660 affordable units).

This shortfall decreased slightly at the low-income threshold, but not by much. At this income level, which also includes the extremely low-income households mentioned above, there were about 75 affordably priced two-bedroom units for every 100 households, which translated to a shortfall of 435 units.

For moderate-income households (at or below 80 percent of AMI), which also include the extremely low-income and low-income households discussed above, the supply of affordable two-bedroom rental units outstripped actual demand. There is a surplus of 390 affordable units.

Table 16. Affordability Mismatch, Two Bedrooms			
	Household Income<= 30% AMI	Household Income<= 50% AMI	Household Income<= 80% AMI
Total Units Affordable and Available	660	1,280	3,090
Total Renter Households	1,150	1,715	2,700
Total Shortage/Surplus of Units Affordable to Income Groups	490	435	-390
Affordable and Available Units Per 100 Renter Households	57	75	114
Source: CHAS, 2010-2014, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018			

### MISMATCH: THREE BEDROOMS OR MORE

In Woonsocket, at the lower-income thresholds, there was a significant shortage of three or more-bedroom units. For households with incomes at or below 30 percent of AMI (extremely low-income households), there was 34 affordably priced unit for every 100 renter households: a shortage of 510 units. For low-income households, which includes extremely low-income households, there were slightly more than 54 affordably priced three or more-bedroom units for every 100 households, which translates to a shortage of 700 units.

For moderate-income households (at or below 80 percent of AMI), which also include the extremely low-income and low-income households discussed above, there was no mismatch as an oversupply exists, with a surplus of 150 units that are affordably priced.

Table 17. Affordability Mismatch, Three Bedrooms or More			
	Household Income<= 30% AMI	Household Income<= 50% AMI	Household Income<= 80% AMI
Total Units Affordable and Available	265	815	2,245
Total Renter Households	775	1,515	2,095
Total Shortage/Surplus of Units Affordable to Income Groups	510	700	-150
Affordable and Available Units Per 100 Renter Households	34	54	107
Source: CHAS, 2010-2014, and RKG Associates, Inc. 2018			

## COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Broadening the analysis outside of the regional and state context can help Woonsocket policy makers understand communities from which to draw inspiration and ideas. Working in collaboration with city staff, five Comparison Communities were selected based on their relative sizes, economic positions, and regional importance. The communities examined are: Attleboro, Brockton, Pawtucket, Providence, and Worcester.

At a high level, the Comparison Communities are aspirational for Woonsocket because they have grown and developed in a mostly positive direction. Most of these communities have been able leverage private and public investment for economic development which results in community wide benefits. Some initiatives such as downtown redevelopment, business attraction, housing development (both market and affordable), and the reimagining of public spaces have helped these communities. In contrast, Woonsocket has experienced continued declines or stagnation in key demographic and economic indicators over a long period of time. Understanding the growth factors in the Comparison Communities can help Woonsocket pivot from existing policies towards a path which fosters city-wide inclusive growth.

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### Population

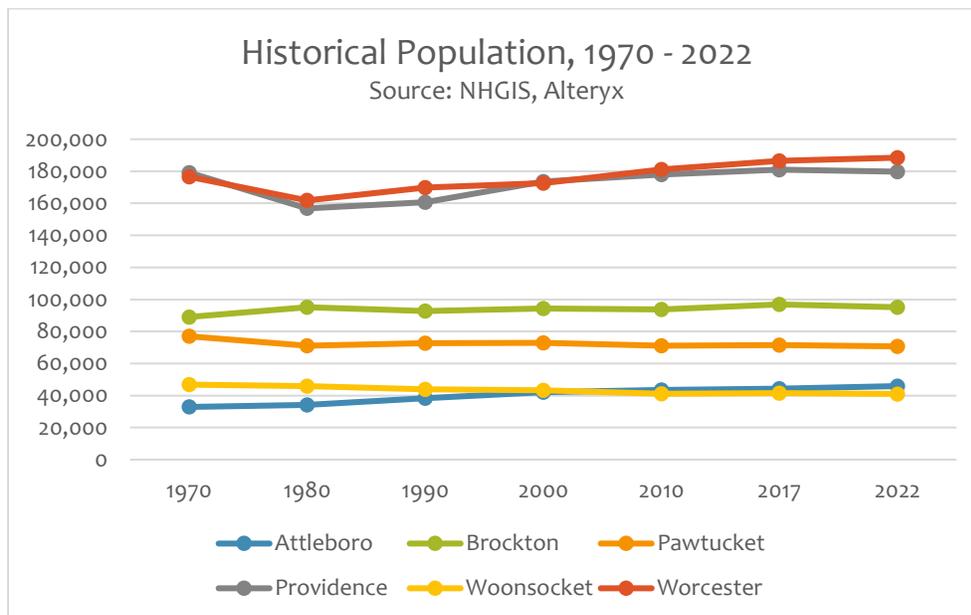
Thriving communities which have seen increases or a return to higher population levels of the past include Worcester, Providence, and Attleboro. These communities have been able to rebound from the population lows during the 1970s and 1980s. Communities have been able to rebound by working to attract new businesses and employment. Worcester in particular has pivoted in terms of transforming from a city with a history of deindustrialization, towards becoming an innovation center with an updated downtown. The catalytic development in the downtown called City Square, brings new mixed-use development to a previously underutilized spaces. Additionally, the proximity to Boston via public transit is an added benefit for the city. Similarly, Providence has reinvented itself through investment in the downtown and activation of public spaces to once again create a thriving urban center that contains commercial, residential, and public space. The combination of a positive market and economic development environment help drive population growth because of the creation of a virtuous economic cycle.

The community with the largest percent growth between 1970 and 2017 was Attleboro with a rate of 35 percent.<sup>21</sup> Attleboro's population growth can be explained in part by the depopulation of neighboring cities and the suburbanization of Attleboro itself. Attleboro has transit connections to

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<sup>21</sup> Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System (NHGIS): Version 12.0. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 2018; and Alteryx

major employment centers such as Boston and Providence via Interstate 95 and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail, which makes the community attractive to live.



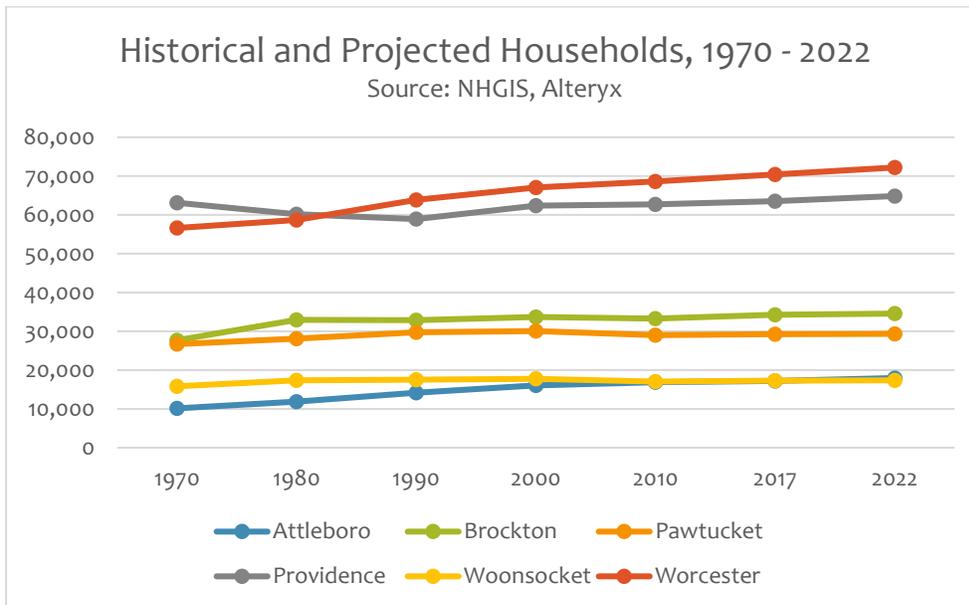
The increase in population across the Comparison Communities also helps bolster consumer spending power and property value growth, and therefore the tax base. In contrast, communities with declining population experience declining spending power and market demand, which adversely impacts tax base growth. The stunted tax base growth (and in some instances, decline) results in less funding for infrastructure and city services, which further drives residents from the city. Stemming population decline ultimately requires shifts in policy to enhance the community such that it is once again attractive to new residents.

Woonsocket has not experienced the same level of population growth as the Comparison Communities because of the structural issues which have yet to be resolved. These structural issues include an underperforming school system, employment mismatch between existing jobs and residents, low-incomes, and the overall lack of amenities such as a vibrant downtown and active restaurant scene.

## Households

Household numbers across the Comparison Communities trend in a similar manner to those of population growth. In terms of household growth, most of the communities grew much faster than Woonsocket, with Attleboro's household population growing at a rate of 69 percent between 1970 and 2017, while Worcester had a 24 percent growth rate. The steepness of household growth can be attributed to the coinciding growth and occupancy of housing units across the Comparison Communities. The definition of a household is defined as an occupied housing unit; with new housing units coming online, and the rehabilitation of existing vacant structures some communities are able to

grow their total household population. The graph below presents historical and projected household data.



From a historical perspective, Woonsocket has not experienced much growth in households over the last 40 years. Based on projection data, Woonsocket is expected to experience relatively flat household growth over the next five years. Woonsocket's 17,247 households are expected to grow to 17,371 by 2022 – a 1 percent increase that despite a decreasing population, is emblematic of a nationwide trend towards smaller and later-forming households. Repopulating Woonsocket with new households would help towards solving some of the major problems the city faces such as housing vacancy, declining tax base,

## Housing Units

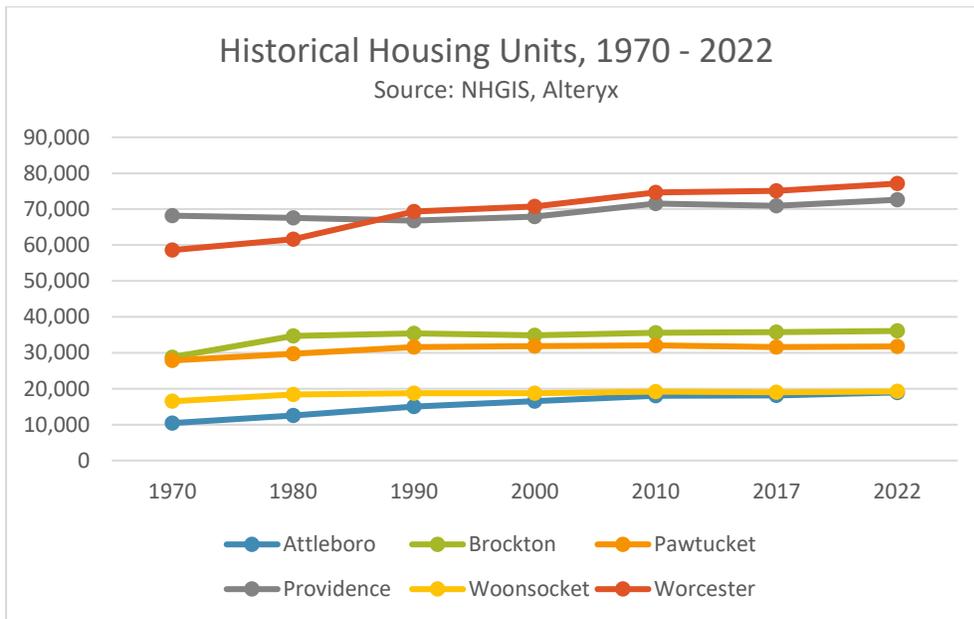
Some communities have faster housing unit growth than others depending on issues such as: respective market forces (supply and demand), attractiveness of a community, and land use and zoning. In the case of Comparison Communities, many have experienced considerable housing unit growth over the last 40 years. For example, the growth in housing units in Worcester coincides with the overall repopulation of the city and urban planning around downtown. As part of Worcester's development more than 1,000 new housing units are planned to come online, specifically in the downtown which had limited housing, in the near future.<sup>22</sup> The focus in Worcester on downtown has opened up opportunities to rezone areas of the city for higher density and mixed-use development. Worcester has become an attractive place to live because of the relatively affordable housing prices as

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.telegram.com/news/20180120/new-apartments-in-heart-of-worcester-rock-rental-market>

compared to Boston, accessibility to highways and trains, and robust employment base of educational institutions, medical centers, and technology companies.

Both Providence and Pawtucket have not experienced substantial housing unit growth, as each community respectively grew 4 percent and 13 percent between 1970 and 2017.<sup>23</sup> The slow growth rate in both communities can be partially attributed to the vast amount of existing housing stock built before 1970. These communities were historically well established, but lost a significant portion of population during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As the population has returned to these cities, many of the existing structures have been rehabilitated rather than demolished and built new. In this case, upgrades to existing units has revitalized some neighborhoods across the city; one example is the West End which has experienced an urban revitalization through a combination of housing rehabilitation and economic development.

Housing units in Attleboro grew by 74 percent between 1970 and 2017. This growth can be attributed to the overall growth of the community as an alternative to larger cities for families looking for more space. Many types of housing units were created in Attleboro to accommodate new residents, these included single-family homes, condominiums, and apartments, all of which have different price points which provide housing options.



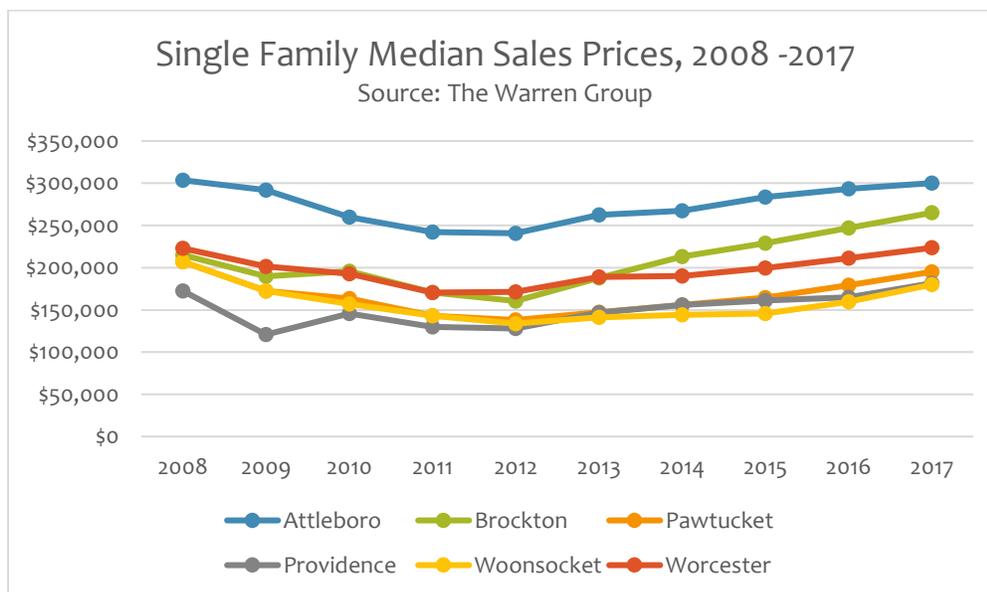
<sup>23</sup> The Warren Group, 2018

Similar to Providence and Pawtucket, Woonsocket experienced depopulation on a large scale, but has yet to achieve significant repopulation. The vast majority of housing built in Woonsocket was created before 1959, and the City currently has a vacancy rate of 11 percent. Due to existing market forces, the creation of new housing in Woonsocket tends to be uneconomical unless subsidies such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are used as part of the capital stack. Demand for market rate housing in Woonsocket does not outstrip the existing housing supply, so as to not yield a push for new development. Due to these factors housing unit growth in Woonsocket has not blossomed.

## Sales Prices

### SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

Desirability of a community and market demand tend to drive prices for housing. Single family homes in Attleboro tend to be the most expensive of the Comparison Communities, with the median sales price being \$300,000. The community with the second highest sales price is Brockton at \$265,000. Both of these median sales prices are considerably higher than the other communities, in part because single family homes are more desirable in these communities, and the schools have a better reputation. With regard to Brockton, it is located 25 miles from downtown Boston and has excellent transportation access with highway and commuter rail connections. Similarly, Attleboro has connections via commuter rail to Boston, and also has direct highway connections to Providence and the Metro-Boston region via Interstate 95.

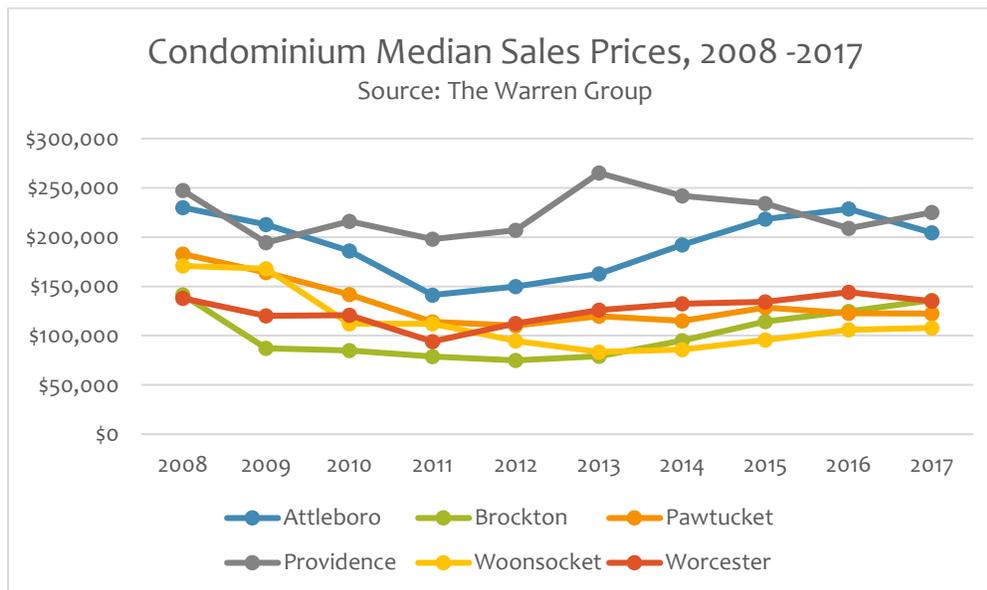


Woonsocket trails last in terms of sales pricing with a 2017 median sales price of \$180,000. One of the reasons why the other communities have higher sales prices are larger employment base and better school systems. From a competitive stand point, Woonsocket may have lower prices, but the amenities provided by the city cannot compete with those offered by the Comparison Communities. Perceptions

of public safety, school performance, and employment opportunities are part of the decision matrix homebuyers use to evaluate purchasing a home. Additionally, Woonsocket is a highly taxed municipality that further provides a disincentive to buyers.

## CONDOMINIUMS

The condominium market which is attractive to young and first-time homebuyers was strongest in Providence, with a median sales price \$225,000. This finding makes sense because Providence is a large city with many urban amenities and employment opportunities making it attractive for people to move there. Additionally, the proximity of jobs to housing in Providence helps strengthen the housing market in highly urban areas. Through the process of neighborhood revitalization in Providence, many previously multifamily structures were converted to condominium units to meet the needs of the urban housing market. The market with the second highest prices is Attleboro, which has a median price of \$204,500; as previously mentioned Attleboro is an desirable community with urban amenities which complement the housing market.



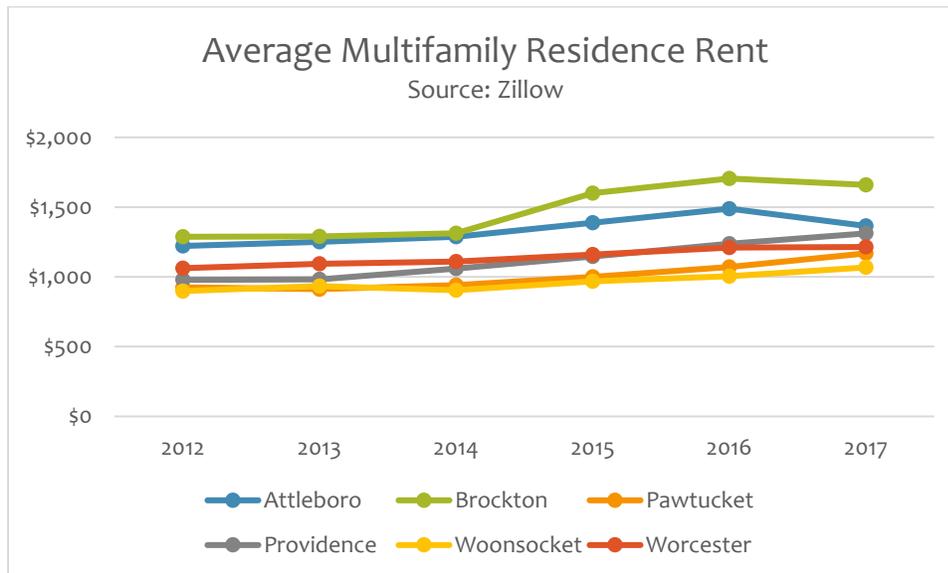
Again, Woonsocket is a laggard among the communities because the city lacks many of the urban amenities which young professionals and families seek. Even though the median sales price of a condominium in Woonsocket is \$108,000, that still is not an incentive for individuals to purchase units. Issues such as vacant store fronts in Downtown, a lack of restaurants, and a challenged school system are systemic problems which restrict Woonsocket's ability to full its potential.

## Rental Prices

### MULTIFAMILY RENTAL UNITS

The major outlier in terms of rental housing is Brockton. The city experience a stark increase over the last six years; the average rent escalated from \$1,287 to \$1,660 a difference of \$373 or 29 percent. This

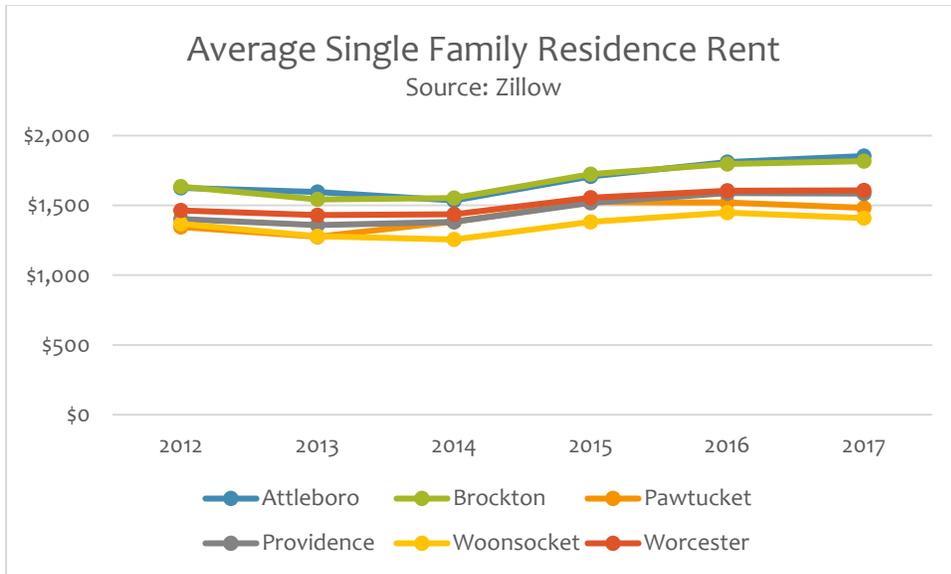
growth in rental prices is impacted by the supply and demand factors in the local market. The cause of this increase in rental housing prices can be attributed to the overall price increases found in the Boston rental market. More households are being priced out of the immediate Boston area and are moving to communities where they can afford housing that meets their needs. Brockton offers a diverse housing stock with excellent transportation connections and access to employment opportunities.



While rents in Woonsocket are low, with the average rent of multifamily units being \$1,068, they have increased over the last five years. This uptick tracks with rent increases found in other communities. One of the consequences of the Great Recession is that many younger households are unable to purchase homes and are therefore renting for longer terms. Due to the increase in the number of renter households, prices have risen considerably. While Woonsocket as a community has its challenges, comparatively, it is still a community that provides an opportunity to rent a home at a relatively affordable price.

### SINGLE FAMILY RENTALS

As found in the analysis of multifamily rental units, both Brockton and Attleboro lead the Comparison Communities in terms of rental pricing for single-family homes. Rental prices for single-family homes were relatively unchanged between 2012 and 2014 but have steadily increased after 2014. Price rises are an outcome of the population increases, as well as the overall demand for housing in an around all the communities under analysis.



Compared the other communities, Woonsocket has the cheapest single-family home rent, in 2017 rent average rent was \$1,409 per month. The reasoning for the low rent in Woonsocket is partially related to the overall housing stock available and general market demand as the Comparison Communities have a stronger employment and housing base.

## DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

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### Population and Household Growth

Based on the projected decline in population and households in Woonsocket, proactive measures are essential for encouraging the growth of population. A steady decline has been occurring in Woonsocket for the last 40 years. This downward trend in population manifests itself in terms of not having a robust real estate market for ground up new development projects as the demand side of the market lags. Additionally, the decline in the population and households results in a smaller tax base which impacts funding for community priorities such as public infrastructure, schools, housing, and city services. Measures to increasing population will help make Woonsocket a great place to live and work.

The population in Woonsocket is changing, with the greatest percent change in the late middle age cohort. Between 2011 and 2016 the population of individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 increased by 24 percent. This cohort group is significant because they are close to becoming seniors and will develop special needs the city will have to address. Residents ages 65 and older currently account for about 14 percent of the total population in Woonsocket. Seniors require services that can be different from the rest of the population. The need for amenities such as transportation services, grocery delivery, increased calls to the police and fire departments, and programming to maintain social interaction are all critical pieces to the health and general well-being of senior residents.

In Woonsocket, the escalating housing-related costs (taxes, utilities, insurance) can make it difficult for senior residents to remain in their homes. There are also very few options for seniors to move into different types of housing because of accessibility issues related to housing design and living space arrangements. Seniors housing choice, accessibility, and affordability are critical issues in the future to address if seniors are to remain a contributing component of Woonsocket's population.

Positive signs in Woonsocket are that between 2011 and 2016, the population of individuals between age 25 and 34 increased by 14 percent. This is a positive development because this group can help fill jobs and homes that are on the market, and support local retailers. All this economic activity helps generate sales and property taxes that can be reinvested back into the community.

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### Socioeconomics

A major issue in Woonsocket is that much of the population is low income. The inability to have robust purchasing power constrains housing choices. With that being said, the for-sale housing market is operating at a brisk pace, and a major contributor to the market are two state programs targeting homebuyers. These programs provide either financing help, or relief in the form tax credits which ultimately lessens the burdens related to homeownership. A brief description of the programs are as follows:

- First Down Rhode Island<sup>24</sup> - The program is designed to help strengthen housing demand and increase homeownership opportunities for first-time homebuyers. The down payment assistance is structured as a forgivable loan secured by a second mortgage in the amount of \$7,500. Buyers who remain in homes purchased with the assistance for at least 5 years are not required to repay the loan. If the buyer sells, refinances, or no longer uses the home as their primary residence within the first 5 years after closing, a portion of the loan would need to be repaid. To be eligible for the First Down Program, total annual household income must be less than \$87,360 (for a 1-2-person households) or \$101,920 (for a 3 or more-person households).
- Rhode Island Housing Mortgage Credit Certificate Program<sup>25</sup> – The annual amount of the tax credit is between 10 percent and 50 percent of the yearly interest paid or accrued on the mortgage loan; provided however, that if the credit rate exceeds 20 percent, the annual amount of the credit may not exceed \$2,000. The amount of the credit may not exceed the homeowner’s total tax liability for a specified year, but excess credit may be carried forward for up to three subsequent tax years.

While these targeted programs for homeownership are helpful, the fundamental problem in Woonsocket remains that of low incomes. Even though the city has some major corporate employers, a clear majority of the residents work outside of the city and earn wages considerably lower than the regional and state median incomes. The mismatch between existing resident skills and employer needs has resulted in a situation where most of the workforce within the city comes from outside the city.

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## Market Constraints

The price and availability of housing in Woonsocket is driven by the supply and demand of the marketplace. Woonsocket is a majority renter community with 55 percent of unit’s renter occupied, 33 percent owner-occupied, and 11 percent vacant. There is considerable debate, and rightly so, among residents, boards, and officials about how, where, and what type of housing is needed to accommodate the population. The City has a role in shaping the type, location, and even to some degree the price of new housing.

Based on conversations with real estate brokers, the market for buying and selling real estate in Woonsocket is robust. At present, there is about a 2 ½ month supply of housing, whereas typically a six-month supply of housing is standard. This means that demand for purchasing homes in Woonsocket is strong. Purchasers are a mix of Woonsocket residents and non-residents. A big advantage that Woonsocket has is that the prices for single-family homes are low which allows current renters to become first-time homeowners. In that regard, the state has a First Time Home Buyer loan program and tax credit program helps ease the transition to homeownership.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://loans.rihousing.com/First-time\\_homebuyer/](https://loans.rihousing.com/First-time_homebuyer/)

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.rihousing.com/filelibrary/Rhode\\_Island\\_Housing\\_MCC\\_2017\\_PUBLIC\\_NOTICE.pdf](https://www.rihousing.com/filelibrary/Rhode_Island_Housing_MCC_2017_PUBLIC_NOTICE.pdf)

Multifamily homes are also being purchased by both investors and homeowners. Investors can purchase multifamily buildings that generate modest positive cashflow at a relatively low cost. The typical investment model is to purchase properties that require minimal upgrades and the put it on the market for rent. Additionally, many investors are purchasing buildings which already have existing tenants and then slowly upgrade the units as tenants leave.

New construction in Woonsocket is difficult for developers to undertake because the cost of developing from the ground up is prohibitive given the attainable rents and sales prices. Additional issues developers face in Woonsocket are related to zoning, parking, financing, and construction costs. The capital-intensive nature of new development makes these projects difficult to build from a financial standpoint and typically subsidies are needed to complete the project; in many cases the use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits is used as part of the capital stack. This results in an increase in affordable housing units that gets built.

Long-term affordability within Woonsocket is of great importance because it affects many different types of households. Woonsocket is a challenged community, making it difficult for lower-income households to enter the housing market due to being priced out. Ensuring that lower and middle-income households, and seniors, have adequate housing options is important for preserving the accessibility of Woonsocket for all.

Seniors are also burdened with housing affordability issues as many are on fixed incomes and do not have the financial resources to cover ever increasing property taxes and housing-related expenses. Creating affordable housing options for seniors that are deed-restricted is one avenue of exploration to help solve the problem of affordability.

There is an opportunity for the City to come together and discuss future housing options including new construction, redevelopment, and permanently affordable units.

## IDENTIFIED HOUSING NEEDS

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### Increasing New Housing Production

The general need for an increase in housing production across Woonsocket is essential toward reactivating urban spaces. Across the City there are many vacant or underutilized parcels which could be transformed into new housing units. Examples of these types of developments include various mill buildings and subdivision developments that have occurred in recent years.

The work of producing housing falls upon both the development community and the city partnering together to realize the vision of Woonsocket. Based on conversations with developers, brokers, and city officials a streamlined process of identifying potential housing sites, working with both the Planning and Zoning Boards, community groups, and city staff can help ensure a smooth and timely development of housing. Some of the concerns related to new housing units relate to density, traffic congestions, and strain on existing city programs and services. These concerns are valid and should be addressed collectively with community input.

Barriers to the creation of new housing in Woonsocket relate to pricing, as it is expensive to build and lower cost alternatives exist throughout the city-wide housing market. The benefits of new housing are that units are modern, safe, and have amenities households desire. New housing units activate underutilized spaces and offer a competitive product that households aspire towards. Though incomes in Woonsocket are low, there is a robust employment base which could be leveraged to entice households to purchase new housing in Woonsocket as the price point would still be lower than neighboring communities.

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### Modernization of Existing Housing Stock

Woonsocket has a long history as a New England mill community. However, the economic changes that have occurred over the last 50 years have resulted in drastic shifts in demographics, economics, and housing from which the city has yet to recover. Most of Woonsocket's housing was created prior to 1959, accounting for 72 percent of all housing. This out-of-date housing stock does not necessarily reflect the changes in household patterns and desired amenities of the community today.

Old housing has several issues of concern including environmental (e.g. lead paint), safety (e.g. old wiring), and interior aesthetics. Without significant investment in the old housing stock, the city loses its ability to attract new households to neighborhoods in transition. Currently, sales of multifamily housing are brisk with investors acquiring properties, applying cosmetic upgrades, and renting quickly which results in positive cashflow. While this model from an economic stand point is beneficial to the property owners, the properties are not comprehensively upgraded to modern standards. The move toward a higher level of investment within the existing housing stock is important because these investments are for the long-term and can be beneficial to the community.

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## Development of Affordable Housing for All Incomes

The city has a large contingent of low-income households which require housing that is both affordable and accessible. While Woonsocket maintains an affordable housing inventory more than the state minimum 10 percent requirement, the supply still does not satisfy the need of the existing population. Based on the affordability mismatch analysis and cost burdening data, it is apparent that the need for affordable housing spans the entire income spectrum but is particularly acute at the below 50 percent AMI thresholds. At these income levels, a shortage of rental housing is being experienced by all types of households including the elderly, small families, and large families alike.

The existing market is not currently meeting the needs of a large segment of the population. While the for-sale market is robust, overall purchasing power remains low. The local housing market is helped in part due to state programs such as First Down Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Housing Mortgage Credit Certificate Program. These programs bring ownership accessibility to many low-income residents whom would otherwise be priced out of the market.

Financing and constructing affordable housing requires active participation from all levels of government and the community. Working collaboratively with a developer can help bring about housing choices for the populations most in need.

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## Mixed-Use Development in Downtown

Downtown Woonsocket has the potential for catalytic redevelopment. The existing land use in the downtown is a mixture of commercial and residential properties, with many of the Main Street properties and store fronts sitting vacant. This abundance of vacancy negates the immense potential of the downtown buildings with their brick facades and large glass storefronts. Many of the buildings are multistoried and have upper-floor vacancy as well. Repositioning these assets in a manner to contribute to both jobs and housing would be transformative for the city.

The city can work with existing property owners, community groups, and potential developers to identify parcels for development, as well as addressing regulatory requirements such as parking and zoning. The mixed-use model of development can help activate the street life on the commercial corridors. Woonsocket possesses several restaurants and shops along the commercial areas, and the addition of housing units and foot traffic would contribute to the vibrancy of the areas. A key hurdle towards developing mixed-use development in the downtown core is the existing market place for such housing. While the city does not have a high median income, the potential to attract new residents by reactivating the downtown core through the creation of offices, shops, and restaurants could spur an urban renaissance.

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## Vacant and Blighted Property Abatement

The city has about 11 percent of the housing stock listed as vacant according to Census data. The high level of vacancy results in quality of life issues for existing residents and makes neighborhoods unattractive to potential buyers. The vacancy in housing units also is symptomatic of a much broader issue of urban neglect across the city. Vacant property coupled with the preponderance of blight has an impact on property values and a demoralizing effect on the neighborhood feel.

The City has a program to acquire and demolish vacant housing units that are targeted for removal. The key difficulty once the housing unit is demolished is to incentivize the redevelopment on the vacant parcel. Demolition of structures alone does not solve the housing problem; in fact, many of the structures are non-conforming pre-existing meaning that what replaces the demolished structures would have to conform to existing zoning which is more restrictive. The demolition of housing units results in a de-densifying of the suburban areas of the city and does not necessarily help increase the overall number of housing units. The problem with conforming to the existing zoning results in being difficult to find developers willing to take risks without accompanying incentives from the city.

APPENDIX

**Table 1. Population by Age Group: Woonsocket and Region, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Under 18	9,040	22%	31,731	22%	212,406	20%
18 to 24 years	3,410	8%	11,465	8%	117,377	11%
25 to 34 years	6,531	16%	18,214	12%	137,781	13%
35 to 44 years	5,106	12%	18,031	12%	125,831	12%
45 to 54 years	5,940	14%	23,687	16%	152,284	14%
55 to 64 years	5,352	13%	20,530	14%	142,295	13%
65+ years	5,893	14%	22,996	16%	166,517	16%
Total Population	41,272	100%	146,654	100%	1,054,491	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B01001, "Sex by Age", and RKG Associates, Inc.

**Table 2. Race and Ethnicity: Woonsocket and Region, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
White	33,247	81%	132,685	90%	854,026	81%
Black	3,502	8%	5,084	3%	68,886	7%
American Indian	103	0%	177	0%	5,130	0%
Asian	2,714	7%	4,678	3%	34,598	3%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	575	0%
Some Other Race	708	2%	1,556	1%	61,218	6%
Two or More Races	998	2%	2,474	2%	30,058	3%
Total Population	41,272	100%	146,654	100%	1,054,491	100%
Hispanic Origin	6,322	15%	10,343	7%	148,375	14%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Tables B02001, "Race", B03002, "Hispanic or Latin Origin"; and RKG Associates, Inc.

**Table 3. Household Income, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Below \$15,000	3,832	22%	6,857	12%	54,351	13%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	2,365	14%	5,051	9%	39,047	10%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,963	11%	4,735	8%	36,905	9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	2,397	14%	6,298	11%	49,712	12%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2,700	16%	8,890	16%	68,424	17%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,547	9%	7,586	13%	52,414	13%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,803	10%	9,368	16%	61,508	15%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	389	2%	4,291	8%	25,358	6%
Above \$200,000	252	1%	3,825	7%	22,521	5%
Total	17,248	100%	56,901	100%	410,240	100%
Median HH Income	\$37,235	N/A	\$66,980	N/A	58,387	N/A

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B19001, "Household Income", Table B19013, "Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2016 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars), and RKG Associates Inc.

**Table 4. Unemployment Rate: Woonsocket and Region, 2010-2016**

Location	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bellingham	8.8	7.5	6.6	6.5	5.2	4.5	3.6
Blackstone	9.6	8.2	7.5	7.2	6.2	5.1	4.0
Cumberland	10.4	9.8	8.9	7.6	6.2	4.9	4.3
Lincoln	10.0	9.4	8.6	7.6	6.4	5.1	4.4
North Smithfield	10.0	9.3	8.3	7.4	6.3	5.0	4.6
Wrentham	7.1	6.1	5.4	5.6	4.8	4.0	2.9
Woonsocket	14.0	13.7	13.0	11.9	9.8	7.8	7.3
Greater Woonsocket*	10.8	10.1	9.3	8.5	7.0	5.6	5.0
Rhode Island	11.2	11.0	10.4	9.2	7.7	6.0	5.3

\*Weighted average based on 2016 population estimates.

Source: The Mass Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Labor Force and Unemployment Data (2010-2016); RI Department of Labor and Training; and RKG Associates.

**Table 5. Housing Tenure, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Owner-Occupied	6,470	33%	35,834	58%	244,748	53%
Renter-Occupied	10,778	55%	21,067	34%	165,492	36%
Vacant	2,232	11%	4,673	8%	52,417	11%
Housing Units	19,480	100%	61,574	100%	462,657	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25002, "Occupancy Status", Table B25003, "Tenure"

**Table 6. Year Built, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
2000 or later	678	3%	5,453	9%	33,256	7%
Between 1980 and 1999	1,577	8%	11,879	19%	85,221	18%
Between 1960 and 1979	3,280	17%	14,037	23%	108,429	23%
1959 or earlier	13,945	72%	30,205	49%	235,751	51%
Housing Units	19,480	100%	61,574	100%	462,657	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25034, "Year Structure Built"

**Table 7. Units in Structure, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Units - 1, detached	5,158	26%	33,307	54%	254,137	55%
Units - 1, attached	386	2%	2,673	4%	15,558	3%
Units - 2	2,878	15%	6,356	10%	51,862	11%
Units - 3 or 4	4,604	24%	7,161	12%	58,082	13%
Units - 5 to 9	3,164	16%	4,863	8%	23,774	5%
Units - 10 to 19	1,184	6%	2,297	4%	16,973	4%
Units - 20 to 49	661	3%	1,407	2%	13,421	3%
Units - 50 or more	1,412	7%	3,424	6%	23,888	5%
Units - Other	33	0%	86	0%	4,962	1%
Housing Units	19,480	100%	61,574	100%	462,657	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"

**Table 8. Units in Structure: Owner Occupied, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Units - 1, detached	4,469	69%	29,827	83%	204,430	84%
Units - 1, attached	198	3%	1,875	5%	8,751	4%
Units - 2	872	13%	1,909	5%	14,021	6%
Units - 3 or 4	563	9%	1,000	3%	7,792	3%
Units - 5 to 9	110	2%	481	1%	2,439	1%
Units - 10 to 19	159	2%	318	1%	1,768	1%
Units - 20 to 49	65	1%	94	0%	1,341	1%
Units - 50 or more	34	1%	277	1%	1,073	0%
Units - Other	0	0%	53	0%	3,133	1%
Housing Units	6,470	100%	35,834	100%	244,748	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25032, "Tenure by Units in Structure;" and RKG Assoc.

**Table 9. Units in Structure: Renter Occupied, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Units - 1, detached	500	5%	2,169	10%	24,589	15%
Units - 1, attached	188	2%	633	3%	5,634	3%
Units - 2	1,530	14%	3,390	16%	30,753	19%
Units - 3 or 4	3,291	31%	5,240	25%	40,986	25%
Units - 5 to 9	2,496	23%	3,776	18%	17,735	11%
Units - 10 to 19	909	8%	1,747	8%	13,159	8%
Units - 20 to 49	495	5%	1,197	6%	10,578	6%
Units - 50 or more	1,336	12%	2,882	14%	20,973	13%
Units - Other	33	0%	33	0%	1,085	1%
Housing Units	10,778	100%	21,067	100%	165,492	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25032, "Tenure by Units in Structure;" and RKG Assoc.

**Table 10. Contract Rent, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Less than \$100	219	2%	219	1%	1,752	1%
\$100-\$299	1,280	12%	1,938	9%	15,551	10%
\$300-\$499	977	9%	2,026	10%	13,195	8%
\$500-\$799	4,573	43%	7,113	35%	48,453	30%
\$800-\$999	2,433	23%	4,750	23%	37,943	24%
\$1,000 - \$1,499	948	9%	3,384	17%	32,282	20%
\$1,500 - \$1,999	92	1%	867	4%	7,377	5%
\$2,000-\$2,499	11	0%	122	1%	1,937	1%
Greater than \$2,500	0	0%	8	0%	1,410	1%
Housing Units	10,533	100%	20,427	100%	159,900	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25056, "Contract Rent"

**Table 11. Home Value, 2016**

	Woonsocket	Percent Woonsocket	Greater Woonsocket	Percent Greater Woonsocket	Rhode Island	Percent Rhode Island
Less than \$100,000	794	12%	1,841	5%	15,137	6%
\$100,000 - \$149,000	2,124	33%	3,410	9%	25,236	10%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2,078	32%	5,499	15%	50,254	21%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	926	14%	6,792	19%	41,577	17%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	313	5%	5,924	16%	33,142	14%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	175	3%	6,718	19%	39,652	16%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	23	0%	3,107	9%	16,940	7%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	0	0%	2,140	6%	14,244	6%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	7	0%	331	1%	4,283	2%
Greater than \$1,000,000	30	0%	175	0%	4,283	2%
Housing Units	6,470	100%	35,937	100%	244,748	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2012-2016), Table B25056, "Contract Rent"

**Table 12. Average Multifamily Residence Rent (Inflation Adjusted to 2017), Region**

Geography	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	12 - '17
Woonsocket	\$899	\$935	\$904	\$968	\$1,004	\$1,068	16%
Greater Woonsocket	\$1,360	\$1,355	\$1,389	\$1,492	\$1,539	\$1,538	12%
Rhode Island	\$1,117	\$1,126	\$1,181	\$1,265	\$1,316	\$1,347	17%

Source: Zillow, 2018

**Table 13. Average Single-Family Residence Rent (Inflation Adjusted to 2018), Region**

Geography	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	12 - '17
Woonsocket	\$1,368	\$1,278	\$1,255	\$1,382	\$1,448	\$1,409	3%
Greater Woonsocket	\$1,734	\$1,691	\$1,701	\$1,796	\$1,881	\$1,882	8%
Rhode Island	\$1,588	\$1,558	\$1,549	\$1,618	\$1,684	\$1,672	5%

Source: Zillow, 2018

**Table 14. Average Multifamily Residence Rent (Inflation Adjusted to 2017), Comparison Communities**

Geography	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	12 - '17
Attleboro	\$1,222	\$1,251	\$1,286	\$1,388	\$1,489	\$1,364	10%
Brockton	\$1,287	\$1,290	\$1,312	\$1,600	\$1,705	\$1,660	22%
Pawtucket	\$925	\$912	\$941	\$999	\$1,072	\$1,169	21%
Providence	\$979	\$983	\$1,060	\$1,146	\$1,237	\$1,312	25%
Woonsocket	\$899	\$935	\$904	\$968	\$1,004	\$1,068	16%
Worcester	\$1,062	\$1,093	\$1,110	\$1,160	\$1,211	\$1,214	13%

Source: Zillow, 2018

**Table 15. Average Single-Family Residence Rent (Inflation Adjusted to 2018), Comparison Communities**

Geography	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	12 - '17
Attleboro	\$1,626	\$1,595	\$1,535	\$1,708	\$1,809	\$1,853	12%
Brockton	\$1,634	\$1,542	\$1,553	\$1,724	\$1,797	\$1,817	10%
Pawtucket	\$1,346	\$1,275	\$1,383	\$1,524	\$1,521	\$1,481	9%
Providence	\$1,403	\$1,359	\$1,381	\$1,518	\$1,588	\$1,585	11%
Woonsocket	\$1,368	\$1,278	\$1,255	\$1,382	\$1,448	\$1,409	3%
Worcester	\$1,463	\$1,431	\$1,436	\$1,555	\$1,605	\$1,608	9%

Source: Zillow, 2018

**Table 16. Total Population, Region**

Communities	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2022
Bellingham	13,967	14,300	14,877	15,314	16,332	16,941	17,507
Blackstone	6,566	6,570	8,023	8,804	9,026	9,199	9,416
Cumberland	26,605	27,069	29,038	31,840	33,506	33,483	34,393
Lincoln	16,182	16,949	18,045	20,898	21,105	21,271	21,559
North Smithfield	9,349	9,972	10,497	10,618	11,967	12,286	13,035
Woonsocket	46,820	45,914	43,877	43,224	41,186	41,456	41,023
Wrentham	7,315	7,580	9,006	10,554	10,955	11,384	11,778

Source: U.S. Census, NHGIS 1970-2010, Alteryx 2018

**Table 17. Total Households, Region**

Communities	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2022
Bellingham	3,559	4,297	5,050	5,557	6,155	6,404	6,736
Blackstone	1,905	2,185	2,832	3,235	3,403	3,484	3,612
Cumberland	7,607	8,871	10,764	12,198	13,143	13,213	13,755
Lincoln	5,029	6,185	7,038	8,243	8,465	8,582	8,809
North Smithfield	2,726	3,397	3,729	3,954	4,714	4,870	5,276
Woonsocket	15,823	17,328	17,572	17,750	17,062	17,247	17,371
Wrentham	1,583	2,145	2,807	3,402	3,703	3,861	4,036

Source: U.S. Census, NHGIS 1970-2010, Alteryx 2018

**Table 18. Total Population, Comparison Communities**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2022
Attleboro	32,907	34,196	38,383	42,068	43,593	44,360	45,911
Brockton	89,040	95,172	92,788	94,304	93,810	96,881	95,109
Pawtucket	76,984	71,204	72,644	72,958	71,148	71,508	70,695
Providence	179,213	156,804	160,728	173,618	178,042	181,016	179,732
Woonsocket	46,820	45,914	43,877	43,224	41,186	41,456	41,023
Worcester	176,572	161,799	169,759	172,648	181,045	186,535	188,483

Source: U.S. Census, NHGIS 1970-2010, Alteryx 2018

**Table 19. Total Households, Comparison Communities**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	2022
Attleboro	10,142	11,898	14,180	16,019	16,884	17,163	17,956
Brockton	27,688	32,955	32,850	33,675	33,303	34,271	34,556
Pawtucket	26,687	28,147	29,711	30,047	29,022	29,291	29,346
Providence	63,148	60,157	58,905	62,389	62,718	63,503	64,839
Woonsocket	15,823	17,328	17,572	17,750	17,062	17,247	17,371
Worcester	56,606	58,720	63,884	67,028	68,613	70,369	72,199

Source: U.S. Census, NHGIS 1970-2010, Alteryx 2018