



# Laying the Foundation: A Housing Needs Assessment of Lanesborough

Josh Kirschner, Marta Symkowick, Calvin Jackson ,  
Mafoudia Keita



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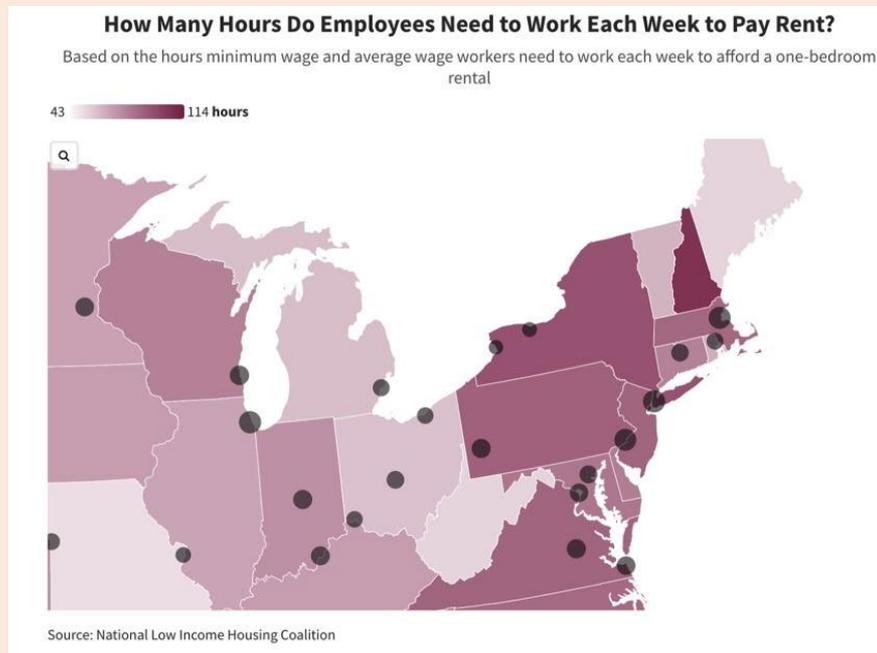
**01**

# Project Overview



# Our Motivation:

- **Promoting equitable and diverse communities**
  - Access to affordable, quality housing is a right that is foundational for community thriving
  - Our report informs us on ways to achieve this
- **BRPC and the Lanesborough Master Plan**
  - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is working on Lanesborough's first master plan in over 60 years
  - The data gathered by our group will be used to inform their recommendations for housing
- **National Housing Crisis:**
  - This research takes place behind the backdrop of an acute shortage of affordable housing across the US
  - This crisis has expanded to rural areas





# What is a Housing Needs Assessment?

- Comprehensive report on the state of housing in a town
  - **Divided by type of housing:**
    - Owner-occupied vs Rental units
    - seasonal/recreational housing
    - Subsidized housing
    - Senior living/disability living, etc.
  - **Key Focuses:**
    - Size of housing supply
    - Quality of housing
    - Housing Affordability
  - **Purpose:**
    - Provide a standard way of identifying trends overtime
    - Basis for later housing planning
      - Our report will be incorporated into the town master plan
- 
- 

## Town of Williamstown, Massachusetts

### Housing Needs Assessment

March 30, 2022

## Town of Dalton, Massachusetts

### Housing Needs Assessment

August 17, 2022

BRPC. (2022, March 30). "Town of Williamstown, MA: Housing Needs Assessment" <https://williamstownma.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Housing-Needs-Assessment-2022.pdf>

BRPC. (2022, August 17). "Town of Dalton, MA: Housing Needs Assessment".

# Key Terms

- **Housing Unit**- dwelling area for one person or family
- **Affordable Housing (small a affordable)**- housing that costs 30% or less of one's annual income
- **Subsidized Housing (big A affordable)** - housing available at below market rates due to government subsidies
- **Owner-Occupied vs Rental Housing**
- **Rent Insecurity**- spending more than 30% of annual income on housing
- **Recreational Housing**- vacation homes
- **Overhousing** - when the number of residents in a home is less than the number of bedrooms
- **Master Plan** - a community report that outlines long-term planning goals





# Guiding Questions

## Housing Data



How can we characterize town housing stock?

## Needs Assessment and Recommendations



What issues do residents face?

Does the town have the resources to support change?

How can the town promote, sustainable, equitable living?



**02**

# Methodologies





# What types of research did we conduct?

## Empirical Data Analysis

- American Community Survey (2011 + 2021)
- Lanesborough Tax Assessor Data

## Literature Review

- Neighboring Town Housing Needs Assessments
- Neighboring town Master Plans
- Berkshire "Housing Vision"
- 2018 Lanesborough Build-Out
- Local news coverage

## Geospatial Data Analysis

- Lanesborough Tax Assessor Data
- MASS GIS Database
- Town Public Infrastructure Data

## Interviews

- 13 interviews with town officials, housing advocates, and community members
- Discussed topics included:
  - Town demographic character
  - Factors in housing
  - Town recommendations



# DATA LIMITATIONS

- Lanesborough is a smaller community.
- The data we examined has a margin of error.
- Thus, we focused on trends more than individual units.
- There may be margins of error in these specific numbers, but we believe the trends we observed are accurate.
- We are informing the master plan, and so more investigation into these trends is necessary.



American Community Survey





03

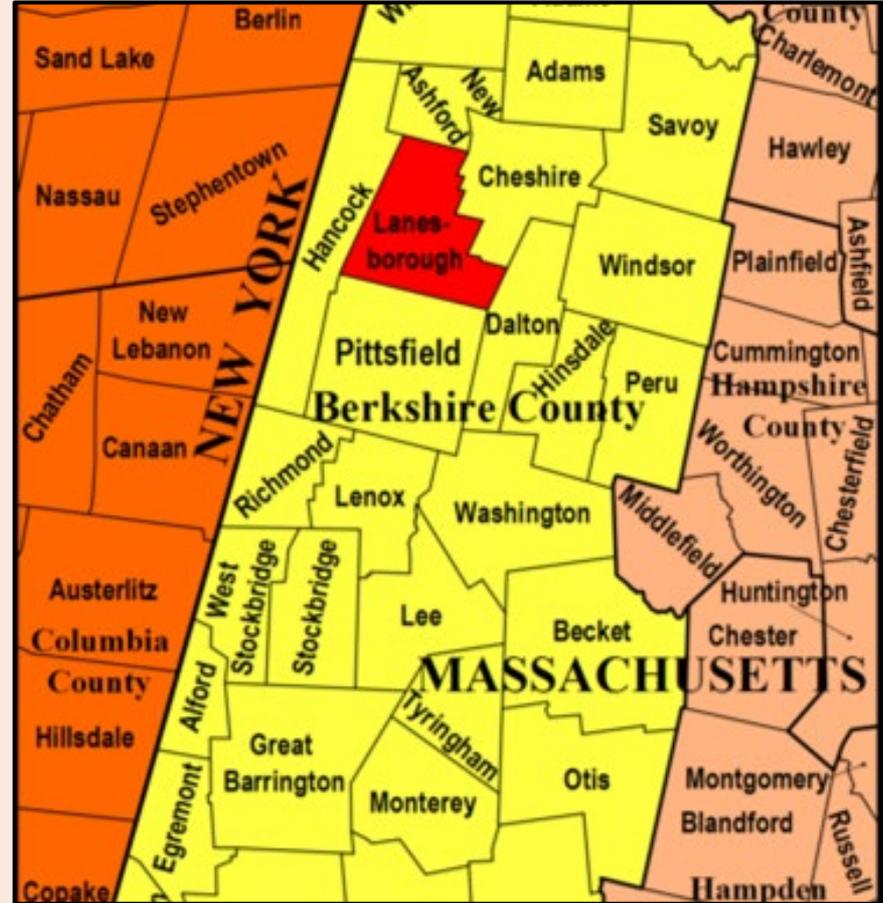


# Background on Lanesborough



# Town Overview:

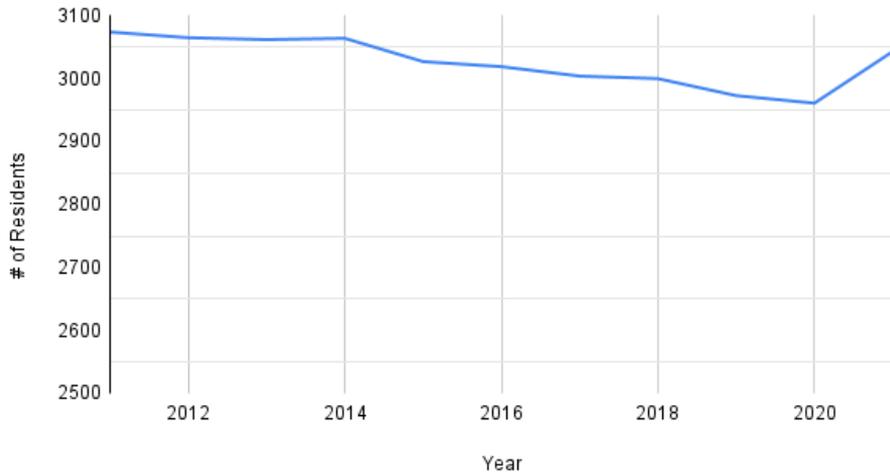
- Semi-rural town in the Northern Berkshires
- Mostly agricultural and outdoor recreation
  - Not a large commercial zone
  - Residents often commute to Pittsfield
- Part of Mount Greylock Regional School District
  - Popular for young families
- Proximity to Mt. Greylock and Pontoosuc Lake make it attractive for second homes



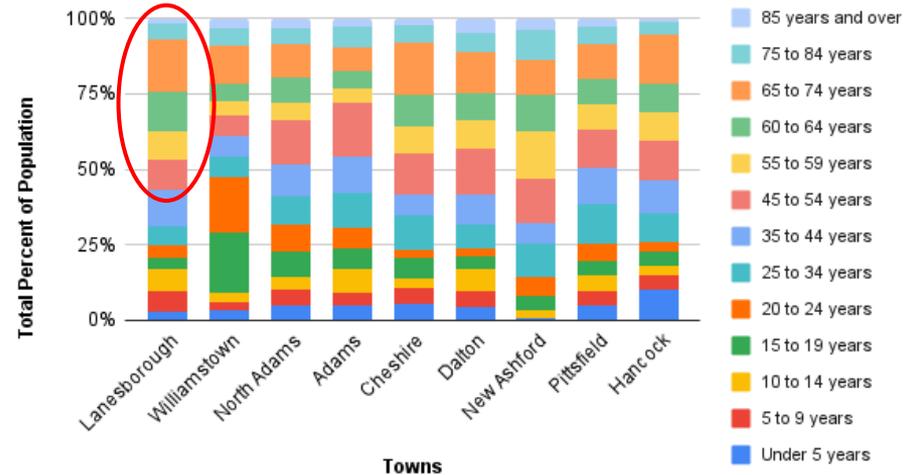
Lanesborough map

# Population Demographics

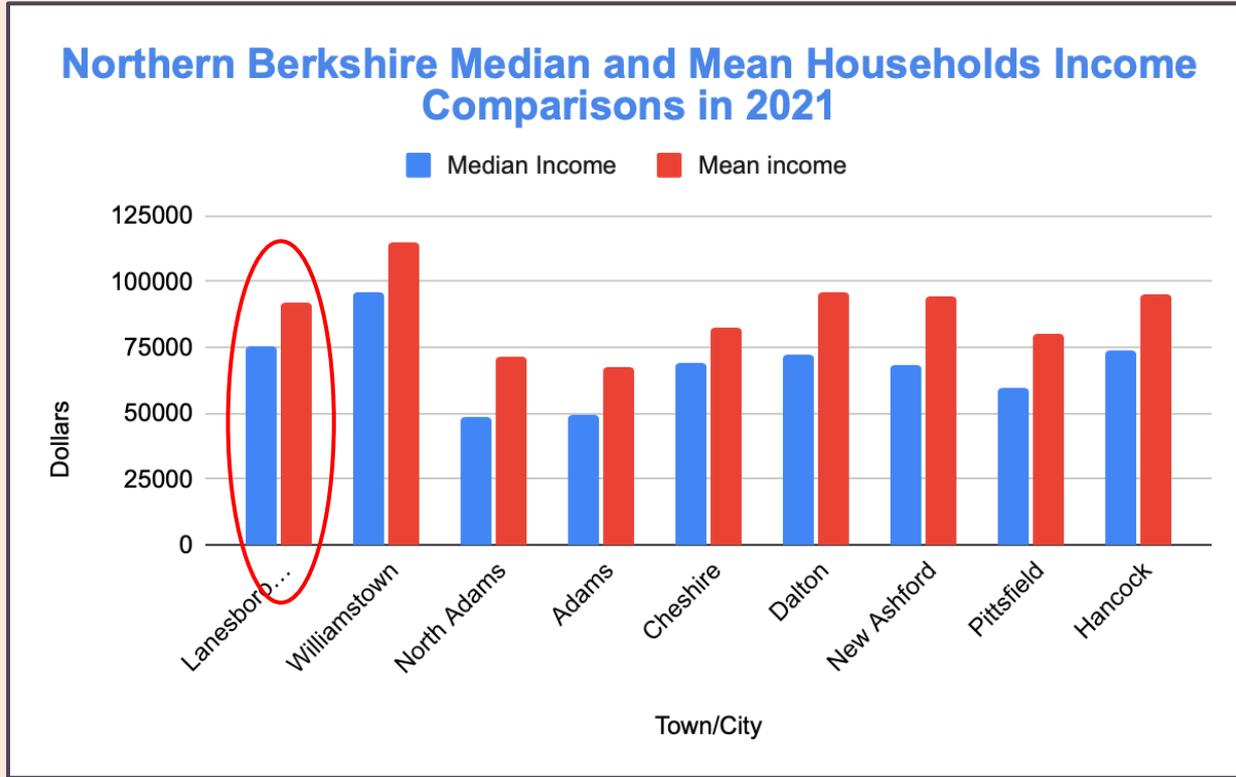
Population of Lanesborough from 2011 to 2021



Northern Berkshire Age Range Demographics in 2021

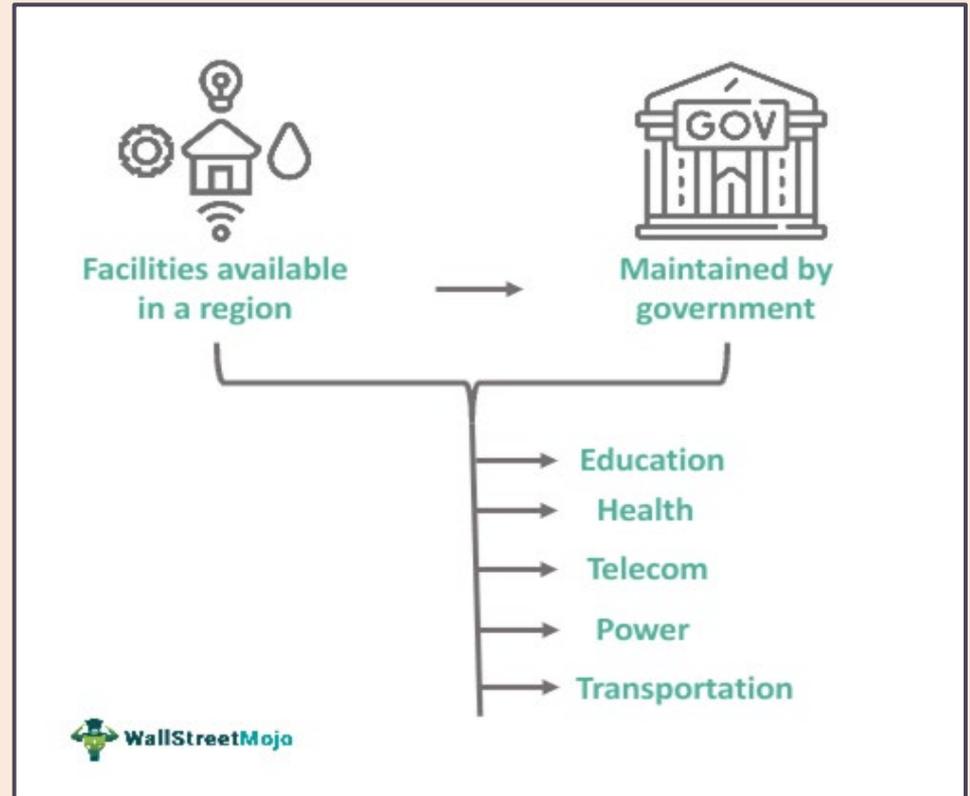


# Income Data



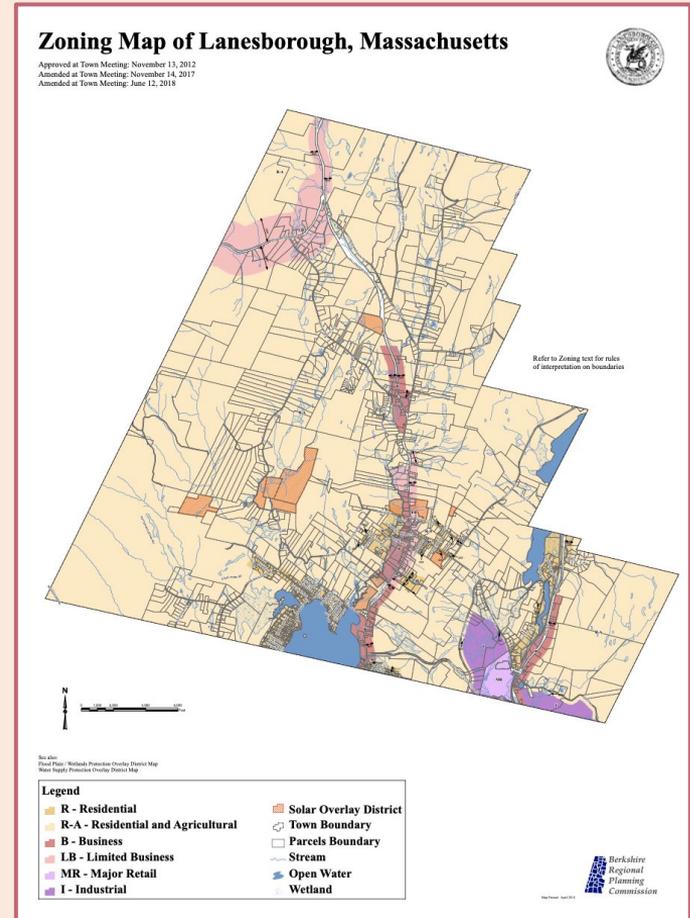
# Public Infrastructure:

- Public sewer and water limited to Route 7, the lake, and the Mall
- Houses not on the system require their own independent septic tanks and wells
  - Require extra land
- Limited public transportation
  - Single route
  - Limited service



# Housing Overview:

- 1,684 total housing units
  - Average Size: .72 Acres
  - Average Value: \$293,249
  - Average Value/Acre: \$508,613
- Most residential development along Route-7 Corridor and Pontoosuc Lake
- Most homes built in Residential or Residential-Agricultural Zoning Areas



BRPC. "Zoning Map of Lanesborough."  
[https://cms5.revize.com/revize/lanesboroughma/Document%20Center/Government/Board%20and%20Commissions/By%20Laws/zoning\\_181015.pdf](https://cms5.revize.com/revize/lanesboroughma/Document%20Center/Government/Board%20and%20Commissions/By%20Laws/zoning_181015.pdf), Massachusetts.  
"Tax Assessor Database." <https://next.axisgis.com/LanesboroughMA/>

# ZONING OVERVIEW

- Town has zoning districts
  - Limits what can be built
  - Set dimensional requirements
- Majority zoned as R or R-A
- Route - 7: Limited Business

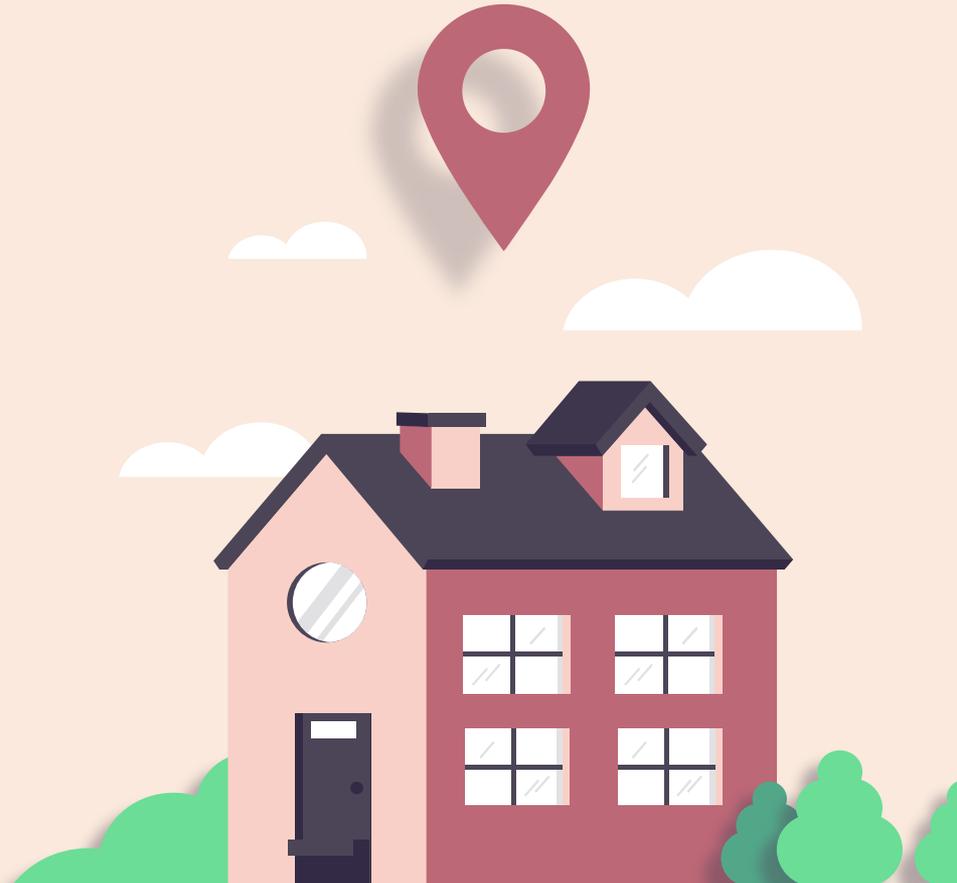
Table of Permitted Uses						
[Amended 6-8-2021 ATM by Art. 27; 1-22-2022 STM by Art. 15]						
	R	R-A	B	LB	MC	I
<b>RESIDENTIAL USES</b>						
Single dwelling unit	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Double dwelling unit	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Multi-unit dwelling (3 to 4 units)		✓	✓	✓		
Conversion of a single to a double dwelling unit		✓	✓	✓		
Conversion of a single or double dwelling unit to multi-unit dwellings		✓	✓	✓		
Apartment building complex			PBP	PBP	PBP	

Zone	Type of Use	Area (square feet)	Frontage (feet)	Front (feet)	Side (feet)	Rear (feet)	Maximum Lot Coverage (%)	Stories	Maximum Height (feet)
R	Single dwelling unit	10,000	75	25	10	30	30	2.5	35
R	Double dwelling unit	15,000	100	25	10	30	30	2.5	35
R	Other than dwellings	20,000	100	35	20	30	30	2.5	35
R-A	Single dwelling unit	87,120	200	30	20	40	20	2.5	35
R-A	Double dwelling unit	87,120	200	30	20	40	20	2.5	35
R-A	Multi-unit dwelling (4 units)	108,900	250	30	20	40	20	2.5	35
R-A	Other than dwellings	87,120	200	40	40	50	20	2.5	35



04

# Identified Housing Trends





# Identified Housing Trends:



**1) Housing Supply**

**2) Housing Affordability**

**3) Diversity of Units**





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## Trend #1: Housing Supply

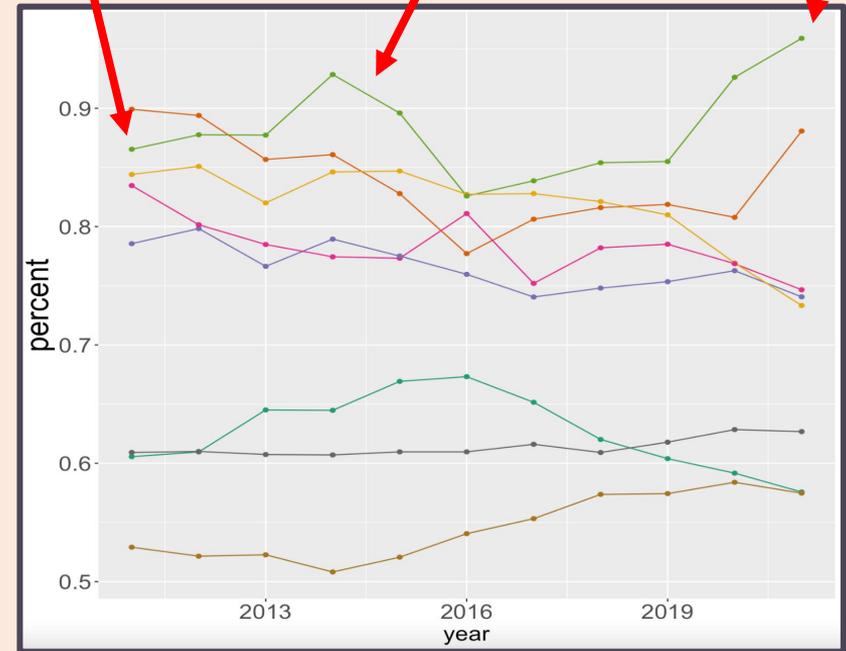
- Lanesborough has the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units in the Northern Berkshires. Most of these units are older, detached single-family homes.
- There has been an increase in the percent of owner-occupied housing units between 2011-2021
- Over the same period, there was a decrease in the number of renter-occupied units



# Percent of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in the Northern Berkshires from 2011-2021

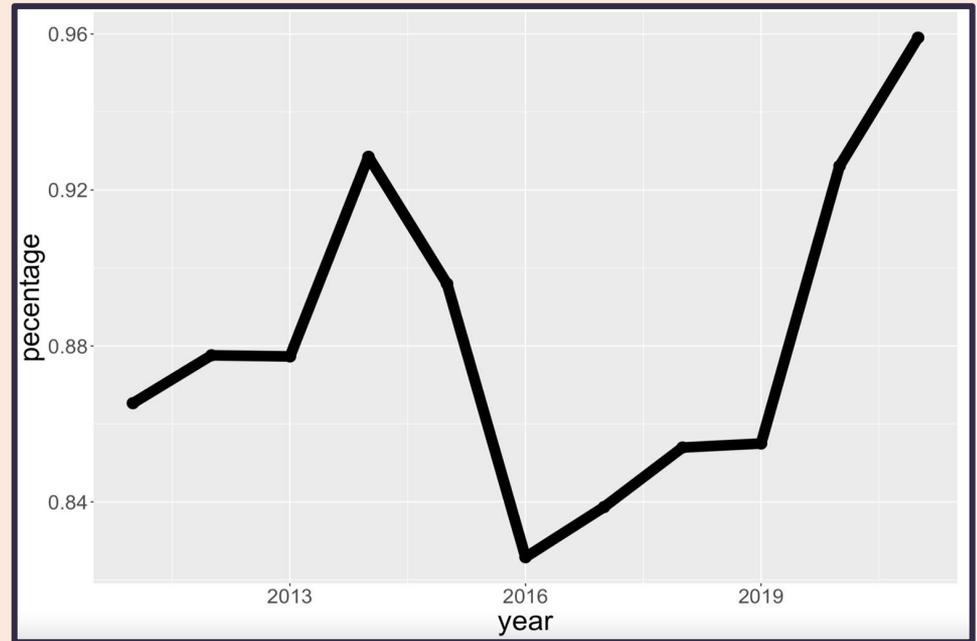
NAME	
	Adams town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Cheshire town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Dalton town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Hancock town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Lanesborough town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	New Ashford town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	North Adams city, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Pittsfield city, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
	Williamstown town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

- Lanesborough has the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units in the Northern Berkshires.
- The town is represented by the top green line starting at **87 percent** and ending at **96 percent**.



# Percent of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in Lanesborough from 2011-2021

- Lanesborough has experienced an overall increase in the percentage of owner-occupied housing units, from **87 to 96 percent**
  - Increasing from **1,240 to 1,368** owner-occupied units
- Several potential contributing factors:
  - Zoning restrictions of multi-family housing
  - COVID development by individuals moving in from cities
  - “Town character”

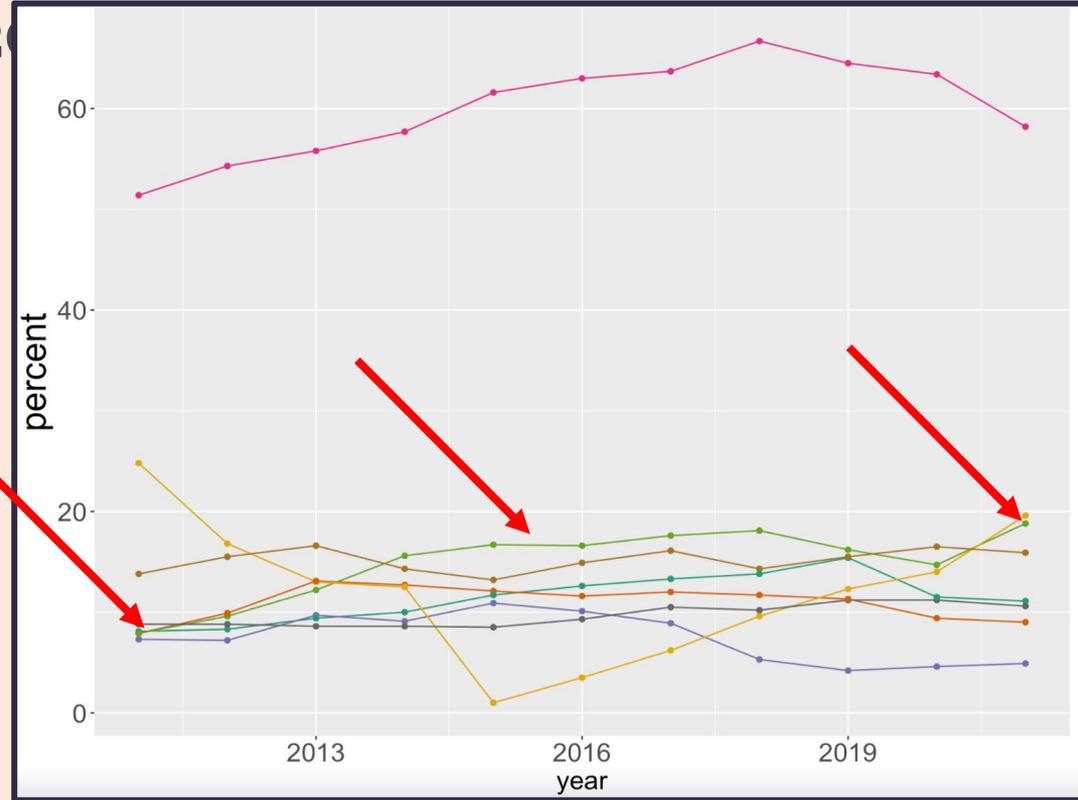


# Percentage of Vacant Housing Units in the Northern Berkshires, 2011-2021

## NAME

- Adams town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Cheshire town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Dalton town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Hancock town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Lanesborough town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- New Ashford town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- North Adams city, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Pittsfield city, Berkshire County, Massachusetts
- Williamstown town, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

- Lanesborough has relatively high percentage of housing vacancy in the Northern Berkshires, discounting Hancock
- The town is represented by the top green line marked with arrows, **starting at 9 percent and ending at 18 percent.**



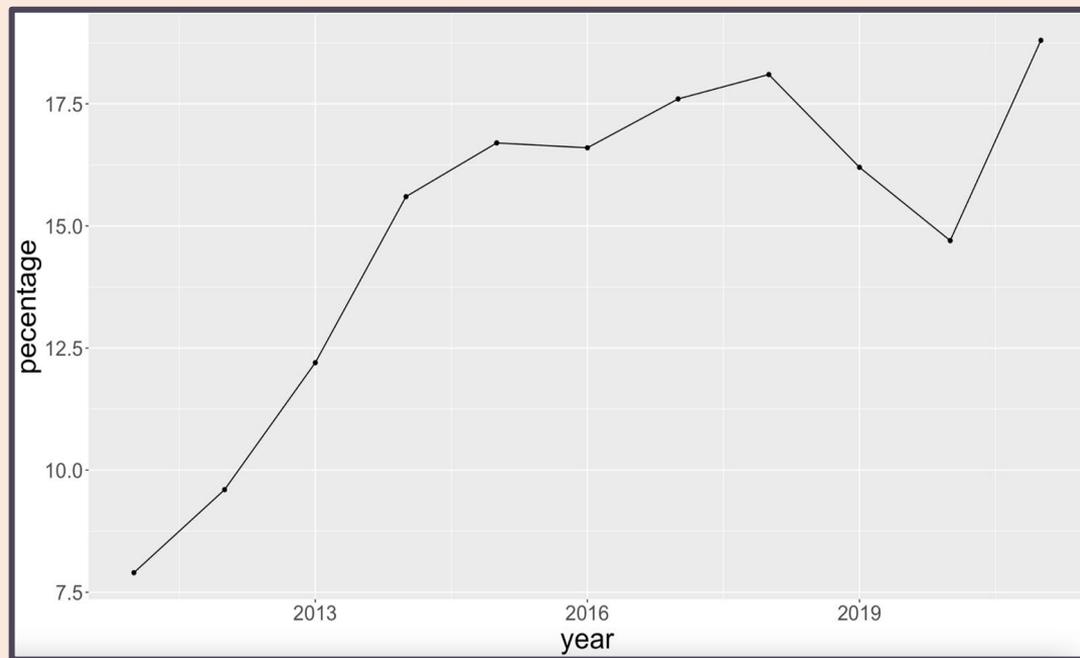
U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Graph DP04; generated by Marta Symkowiak.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2011.DP04?q=DP04&q=060XX00US2500334340>

# Percentage of Vacant Housing Units in the Lanesborough, 2011-2021

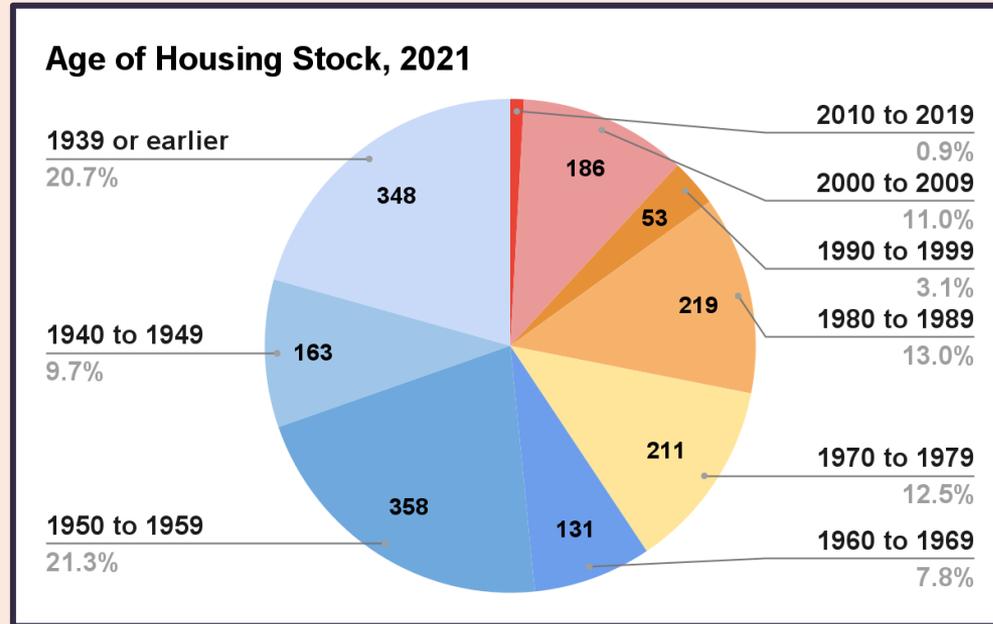
- As indicated by the homeowner and rental vacancy rates, all of these units are fall under owner-occupied units.
- The number of vacant housing units has **increased from 107 to 316 from 2011 to 2021**
- The percentage of vacant housing units in Lanesborough has **increased from around 8 percent in 2011 to around 18 percent 2021.**
- This is most likely due to homes falling into disrepair due to an elderly population not being able to downsize

*The homeowner vacancy rate was 1 in 2011 and is currently stable at 0 as of 2021.*



# Age of Owner-Occupied Housing Stock, 2011-2021

- Around 60% of the units were built before 1970 (blue)
- Demonstrating a an older housing stock



U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Graph DP04; generated by Marta Symkowiak.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2011.DP04?q=DP04&q=060XX00US2500334340>

# Type of Owner-Occupied Homes, 2011-2021

- Around **90 percent** of owner-occupied homes are **1-unit detached**
- Demonstrating an increase in single family homes, reflects zoning and town character

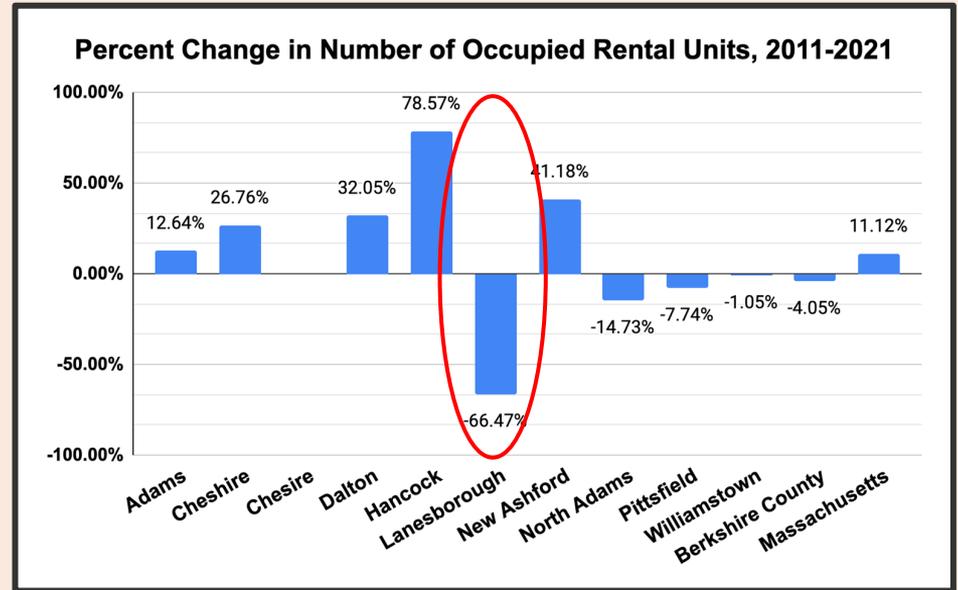


U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Graph DP04; generated by Marta Symkowitz.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2011.DP04?q=DP04&q=060XX00US2500334340>

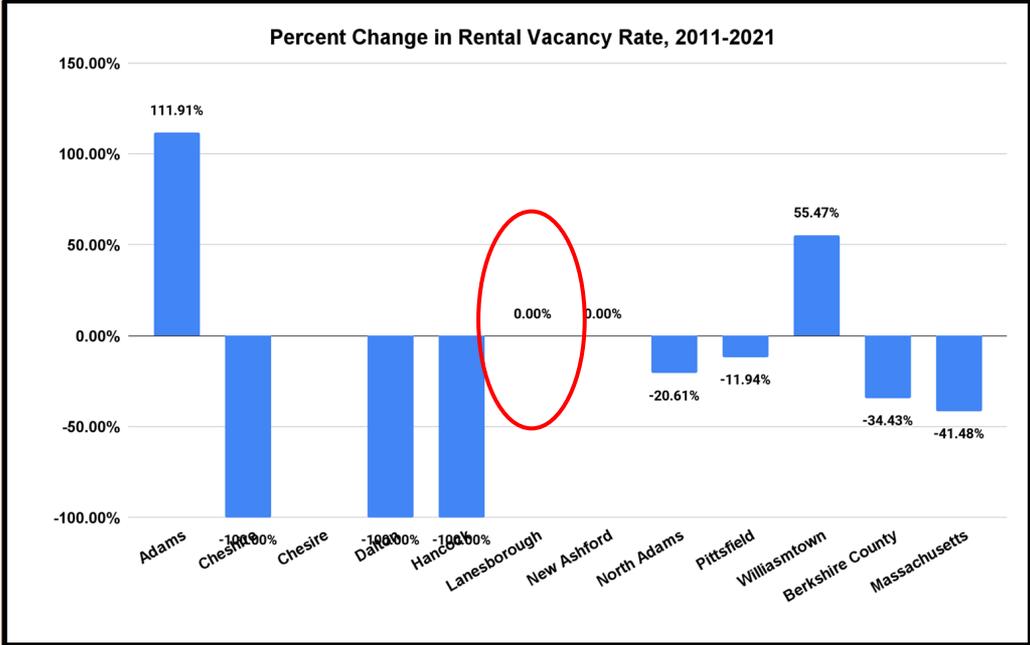
# Change in Occupied Rental Units

- Lanesborough saw a 66.47% decline in the number of occupied rental units
  - From **167 to 56**
  - An outlier in the Berkshires and state-wide
- Several factors may have contributed:
  - Aging housing stock
  - Conversion to short-term rental (Air BnB) and owner-occupied
  - High cost of new development
  - Single family zoning
  - “Town character”



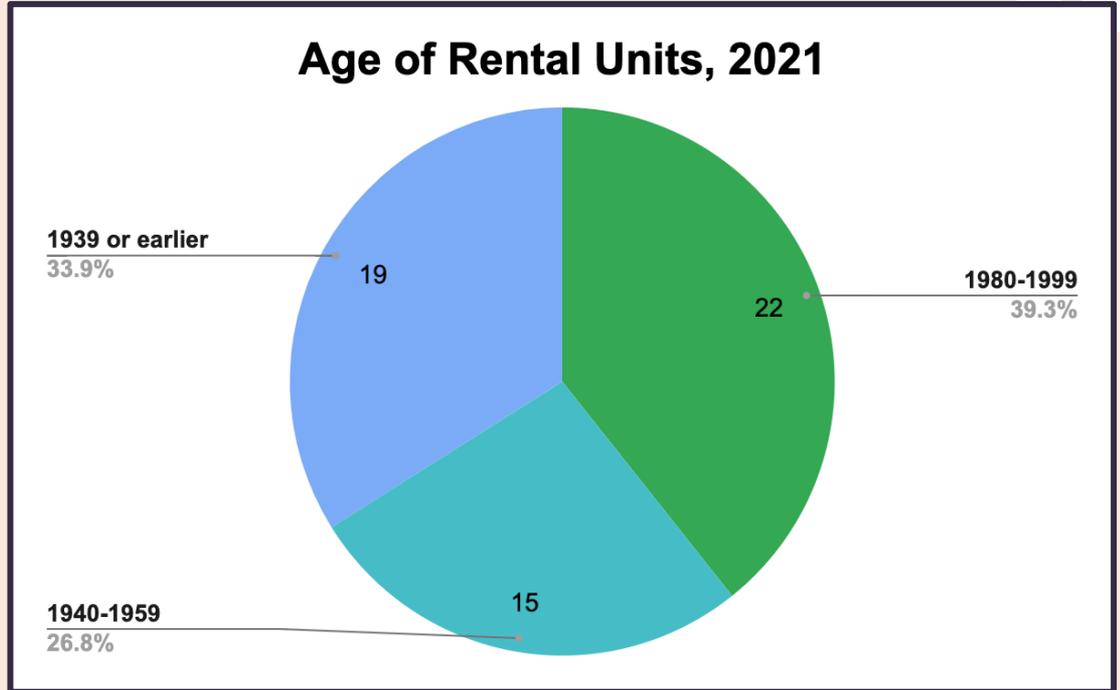
# Change in Rental Vacancy Rate

- Town rental vacancy rate stable at zero
- Suggests there is demand for available units; supply is limiting factor



# Age of Occupied Rental Stock, 2011

- Rental stock characterized by aging units and little newer developments

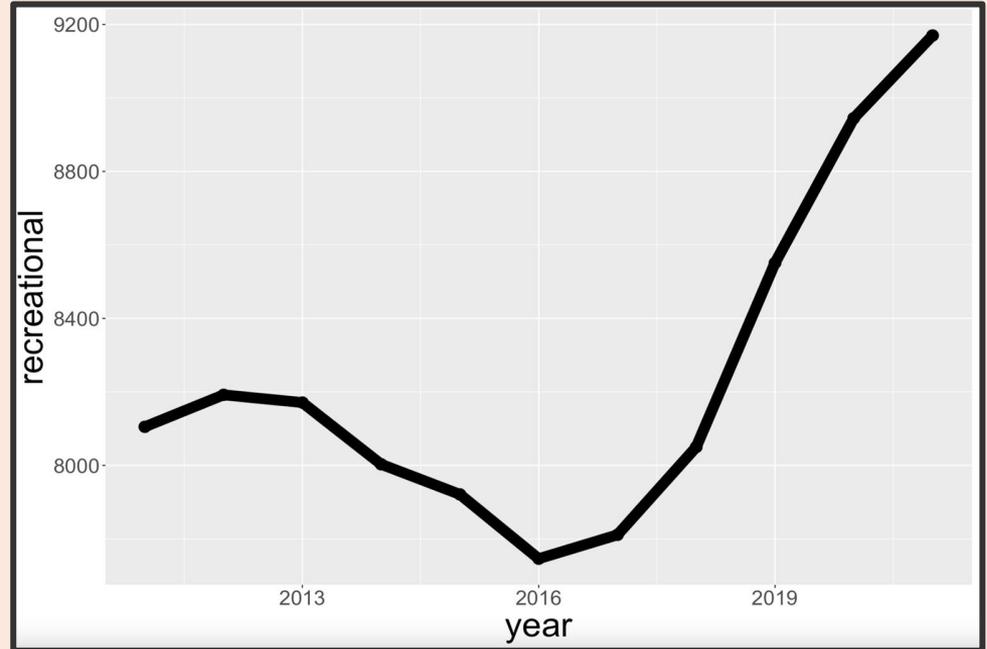


U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table DP04; generated by Josh Kirschner.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2011.DP04?q=DP04&q=060XX00US2500334340>

# Recreational/Seasonal Housing Units - The Berkshires

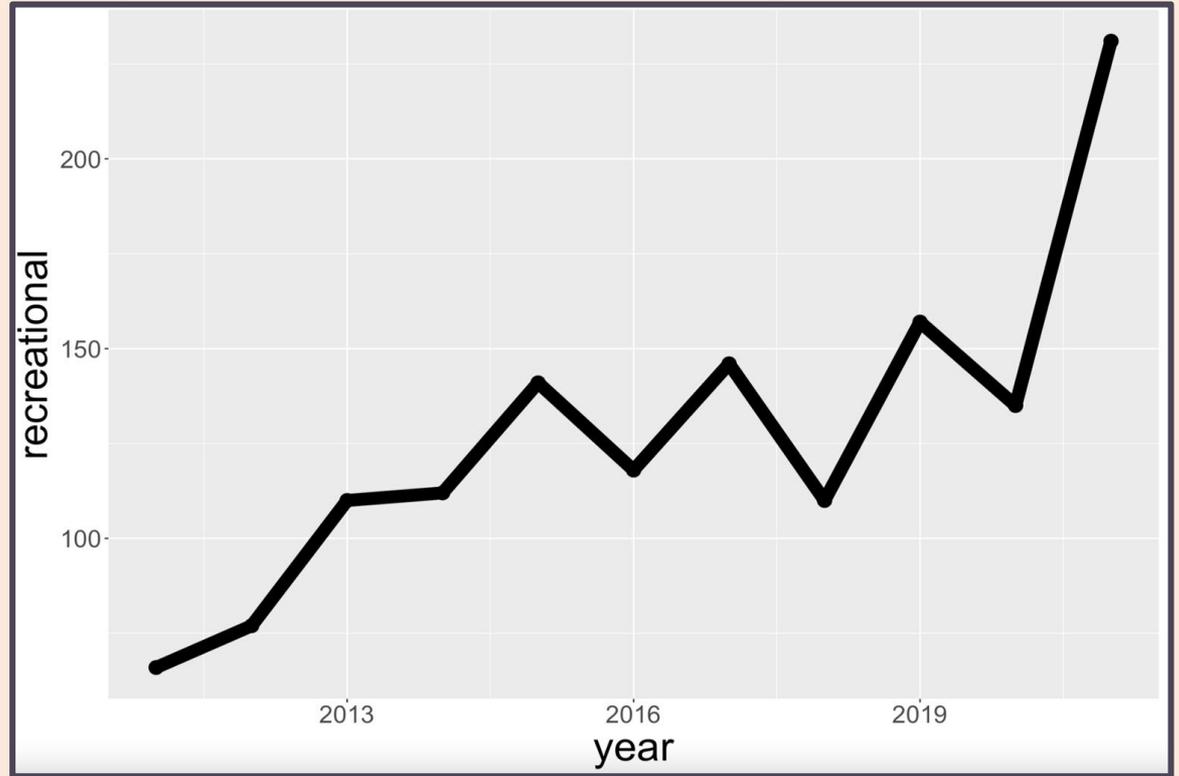
- **Recreational/ seasonal housing is a representation of second home ownership**
- Overall, the number of recreational houses in the Berkshires is increasing
- This fits the high levels of tourism in the community



U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Graph B25004; generated by Marta Symkowick.  
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B25004?q=B25004&q=060XX00US2500334340>

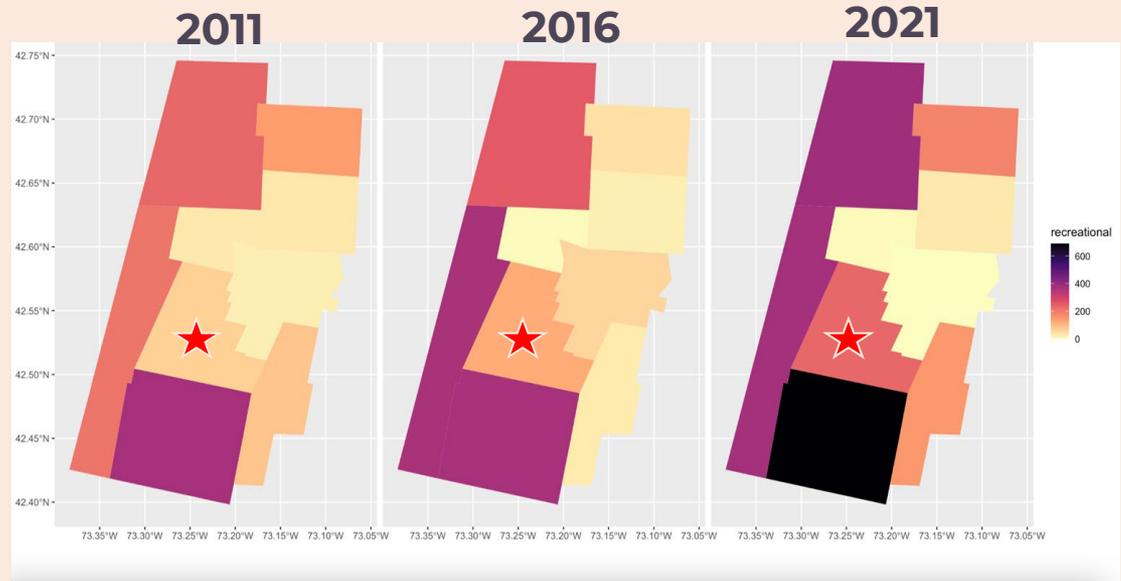
# Recreational Housing Units - Lanesborough

- With an increasing number of recreational units, Lanesborough follows this trend
- Lanesboroughs' recreational units **increased from under 25 in 2011 to over 150 in 2021**



# Recreational Housing Units - Lanesborough

- The image shows the density of recreational housing, the darker colors demonstrate higher density
- Lanesborough is marked with a star



U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Graph B25004; generated by Marta Symkowick.  
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B25004?q=B25004&q=060XX00US2500334340>



# Trend #1- Housing Supply

## Key Takeaways

- The number of owner-occupied homes have risen
  - New homes being built
  - Old home renovations
  - Trend toward single-family
  - People want to buy houses to access schools - Trybus
- The number of rental units have fallen dramatically
  - Older stock taken out of market and not replaced by newer developments
- Wealthy individuals seeking second homes buy housing stock - Gordon

## Ongoing Challenges

- Restrictive zoning makes it difficult to promote housing density and dissuades developers from entering the town - Peltier
- Inefficiency in approval process - Murphy + Dario + Parsons + Reid
- Cost of construction risen - Reid + Trybus
- Renovating existing stock can be more expensive than redevelopment - Reid
- Grants highly competitive - Peltier



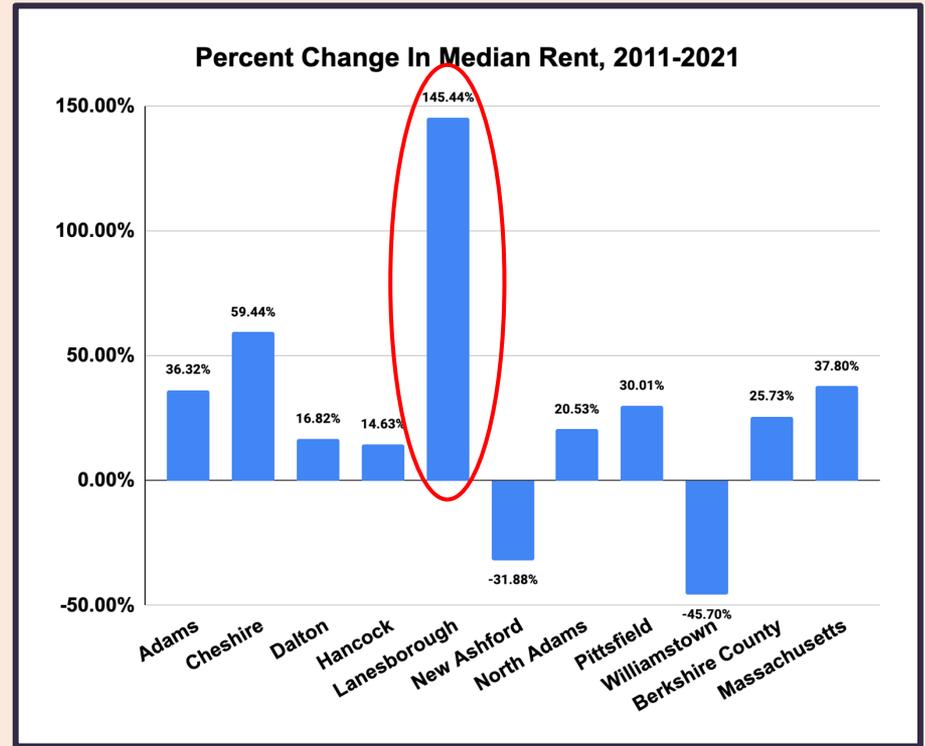


## Trend #2: Housing Affordability

- Rent and rental prices on the remaining units have risen dramatically.
  - Housing values have risen significantly as well.
  - While the number of mortgages in the Berkshires has decreased, the number of mortgages in Lanesborough has increased.
- 
- 
- 

# Change In Median Rent

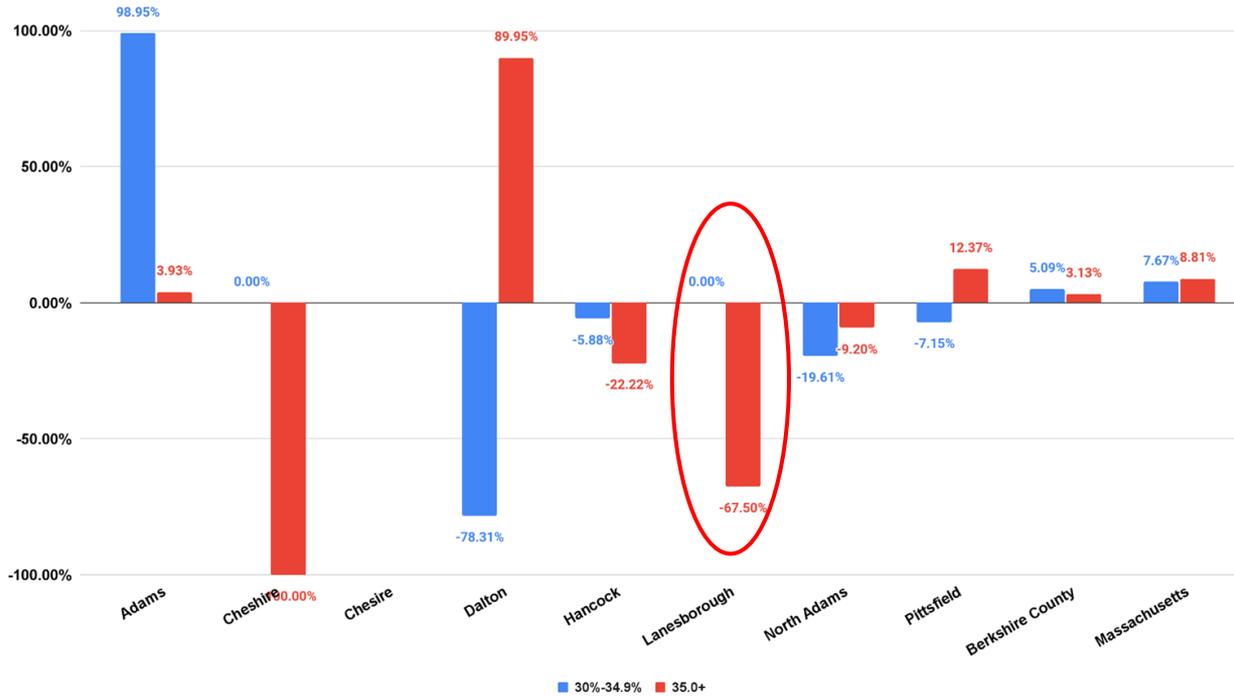
- Rent in Lanesborough grew 145.44%
  - From **\$625 to \$1534**
  - Anomaly compared to towns with more moderate rates of growth
- Several factors may have contributed:
  - Decline in supply
  - Increased building costs
  - Private investor takeovers



# Change in Rent Insecurity

Percent Change in Rent Insecurity (30%-34.9%) and Severe Rent Insecurity (35%+) by Town/Location, 2011-2021

\*New Ashford and Williamstown are omitted for scale

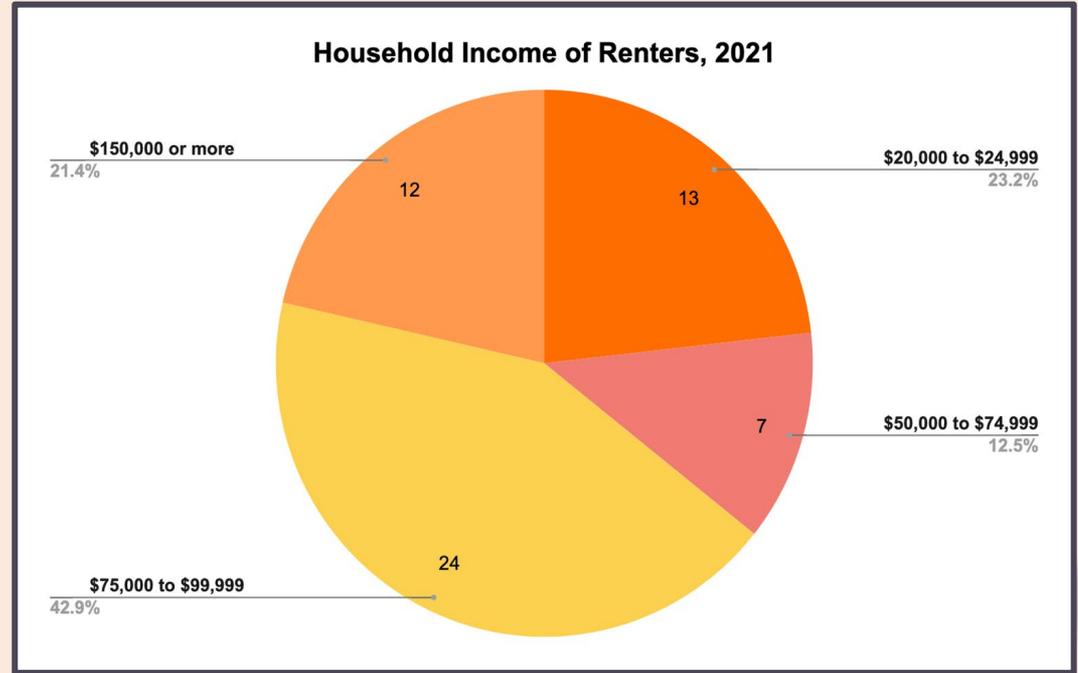


- No change in rent insecurity
- Decline in severe rent insecurity
- Results likely driven by the decline in number of renters overall, and the number of lower-income renters



# Renter Income

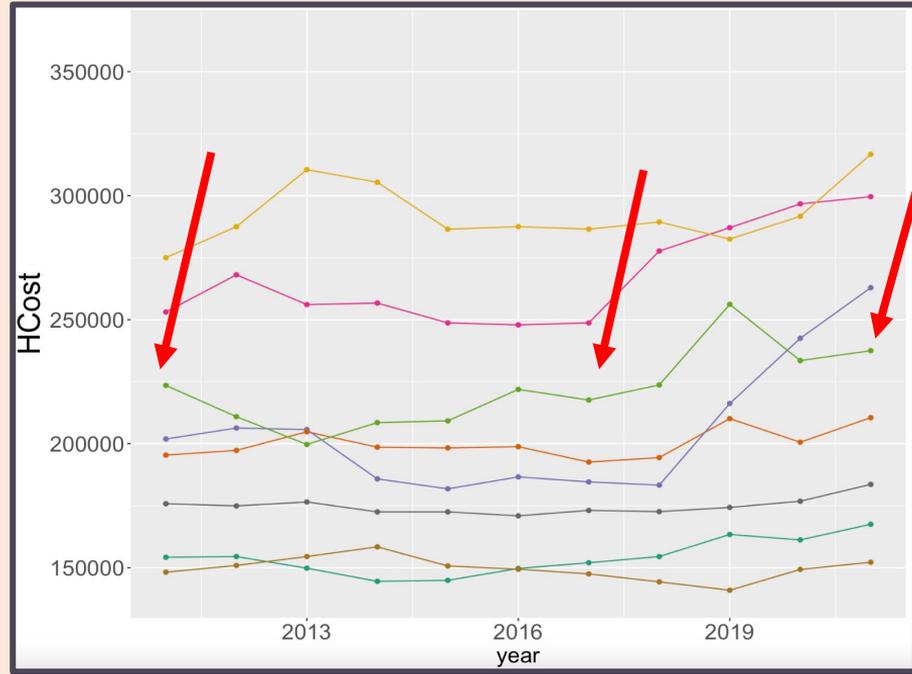
- The number of renters have declined
- Income of renters have are relatively high
  - Median income 75K



# Change in Median Owner-Occupied House Value in the Northern Berkshires, 2011-2021

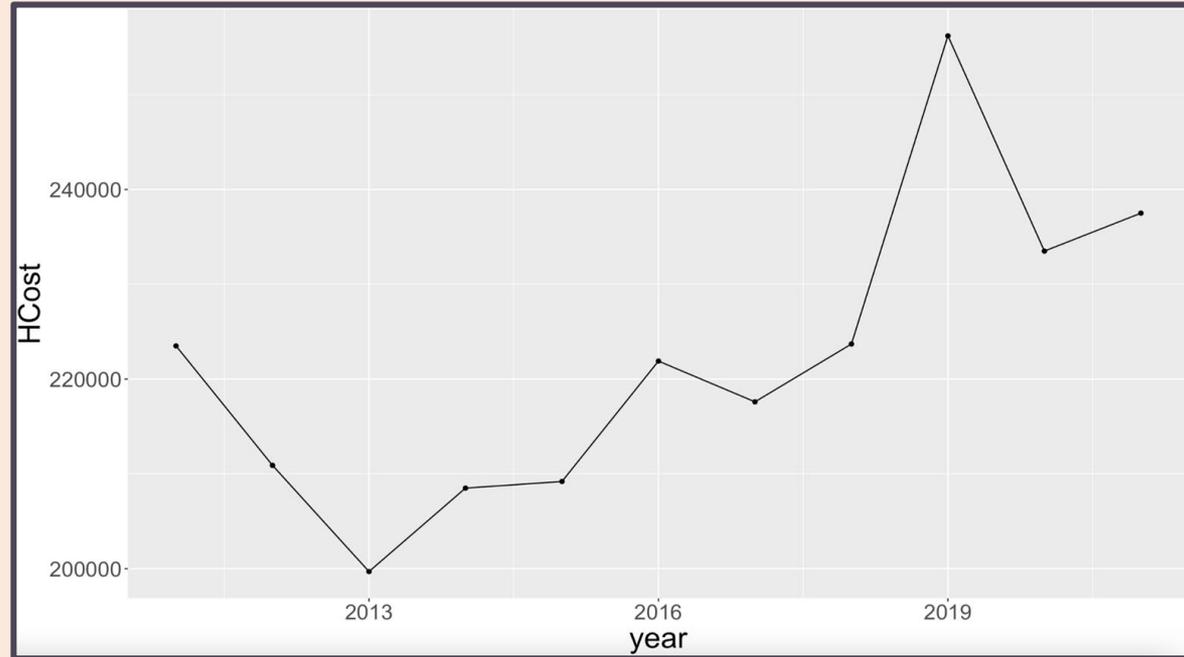


- Lanesboroughs' house value is around in the middle of the Northern Berkshires
- The town is represented by the third green line marked with arrows, starting at **\$223,500 in 2011** and ending at **\$237,500 in 2021**



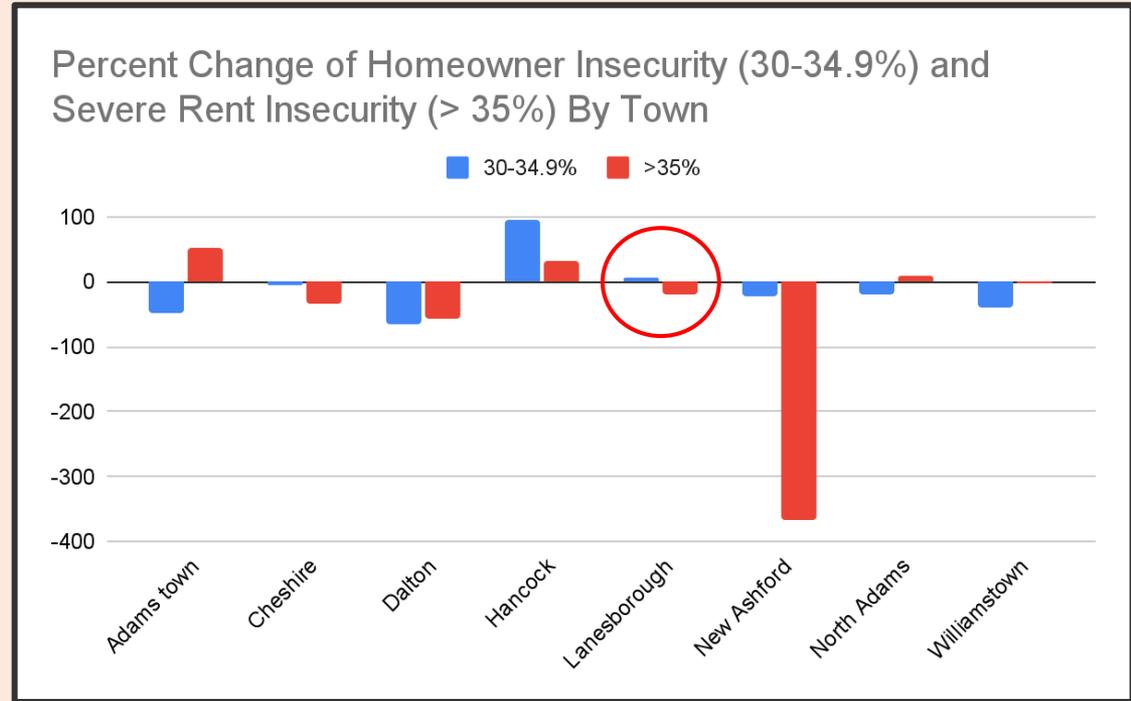
# Change in Median Value of Owner-Occupied House in Lanesborough, 2011-2021

- The median housing value has **increased from \$223,500 in 2011 to \$237,500 in 2021**
- This is most likely due to the increase of individuals from out of town coming into Lanesborough, driving up prices



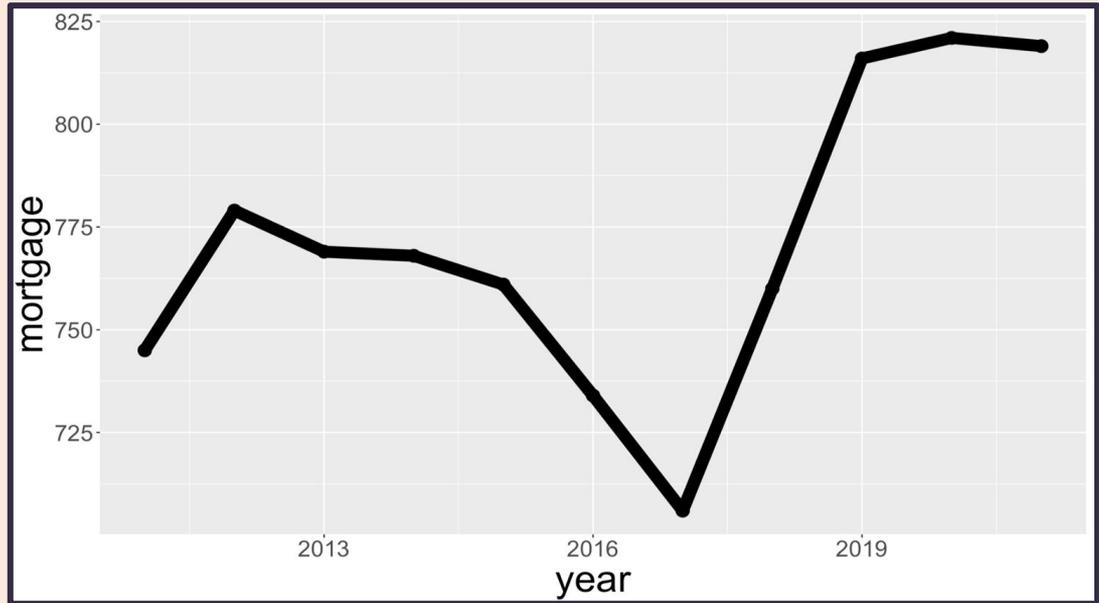
# Change in Homeowner Insecurity, 2011-2021

- There has been a small increase in homeowner insecurity.
- There has been a slight decrease in severe homeowner insecurity



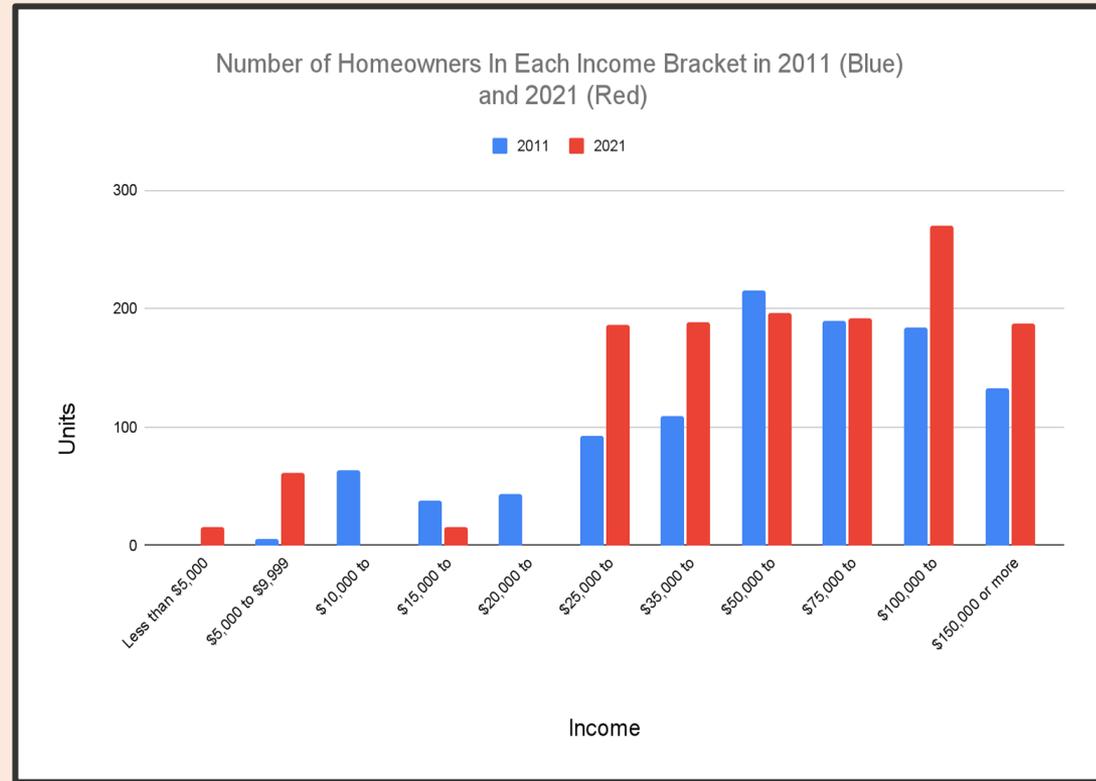
# Housing Units with Mortgages - Lanesborough, 2011-2021

- The number of mortgages are increasing
- This change can be potentially attributed to increase in second homeownership and increased number of occupied homes



# Change in Homeowner Income from 2011-2021

- There are more individuals with an income over \$100,000 in 2021 than in 2011





# Trend #2- Housing Affordability



## Key Takeaways

- Rent has increased but insecurity hasn't
  - Less low-income renters due to lack of affordable rental units
- There amount of high income homeowners is increasing

## Ongoing Challenges

- Less young people and families buying homes in Lanesborough
- It is difficult for young families and people making less than \$20k per year to purchase a home- Rick Reid





## Trend #3- Diversity of Units

- Lanesborough has the 2nd highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 in the Northern Berkshires
- Lanesborough has the 2nd lowest percentage of residents under the age of 34 in the Northern Berkshires
- Overhoused seniors limit the access to homes for young families looking to move into Lanesborough



# Overhoused Seniors

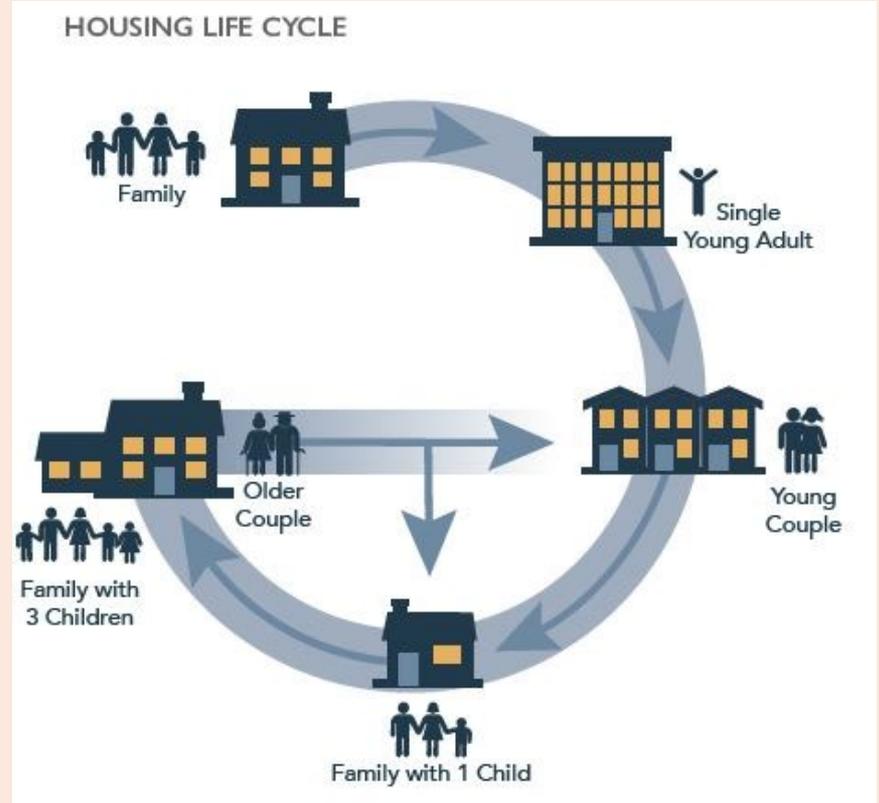
- A lack of diverse housing options appealing to seniors leaves senior residents without the ability to downsize leaving them 'overhoused'
- Overhoused senior residents leave young families with limited opportunities to purchase homes
- Laurel Ridge Senior Living Residence is the only senior living facility in Lanesborough and offers just 8 units



Laurel Ridge Senior Living Residence

# Housing for Young Families

- Young families unable to building ADUs on larger family property
  - Hard to get financing on property they do not own
- Young families are less likely be long running members of the community
- Not enough support for small landlords who tend be young couples





# Trend #3- Housing Mismatch

## Key Takeaways

- Lanesborough has an aging population
- Younger couples and families are limited with housing options for renting and buying
  - Makes them less likely to stay within Lanesborough

## Ongoing Challenges

- The mall is the only site that is actively zoned for higher density housing (more than 6 units per building) - CJ Hoss
  - Has access to public water and sewer systems
- Neighboring towns have senior housing options- Tim Sorrell





**05**

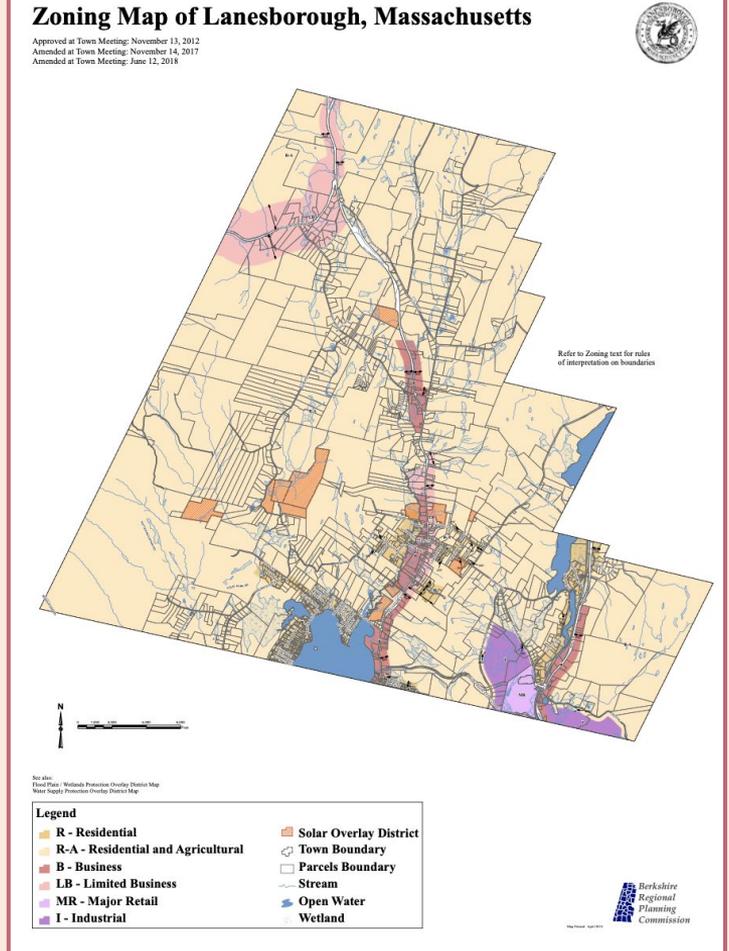
# Recommendations



# Changes to Town Zoning Bylaws:

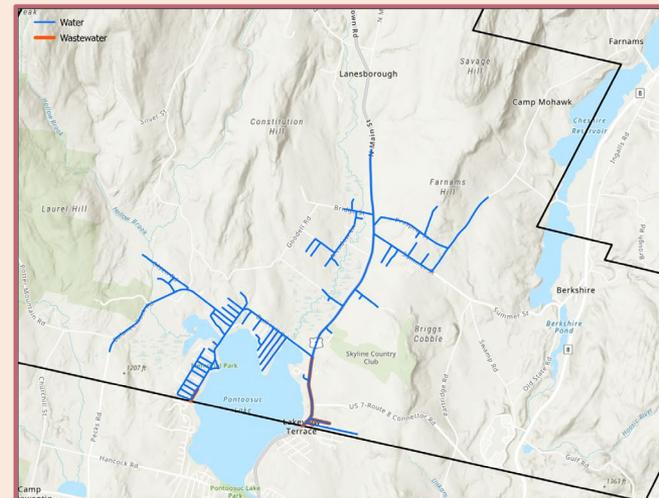
- Rezone residential to allow for multifamily units
- Create exemptions allowing for density when certain conditions are met
  - Ex: Access to public infrastructure
- Remove restrictive dimensional and design codes
  - Ex: lower frontage and setback requirements to allow for greater infill and easier development in R-A
- Allow for more residential development in Business areas of town to promote mixed-use development

[Zoning\\_181015.pdf](#)



# Expanding Public Infrastructure:

- As explored above, development is impaired by limited reach of public infrastructure
- Expanding public systems will promote density in newly accessible areas of town
  - Allow for greater plot subdivision
  - Allow for multifamily housing
  - More cost effective than public infrastructure for single-family homes
- Expansion of transit system will improve accessibility to downtown and recreation



[Work To Connect Lanesborough Water Lines to Berkshire Village Underway / iBerkshires.com - The Berkshires online guide to events, news and Berkshire County community information.](#)  
[plan-your-trip](#)

Effective July 1, 2022  
Monday - Saturday

## 5 Pittsfield Lanesborough

This bus route services:

- Pittsfield ITC
- Connections to: 1, 2, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15, 21x, Amtrak, Intercity Bus

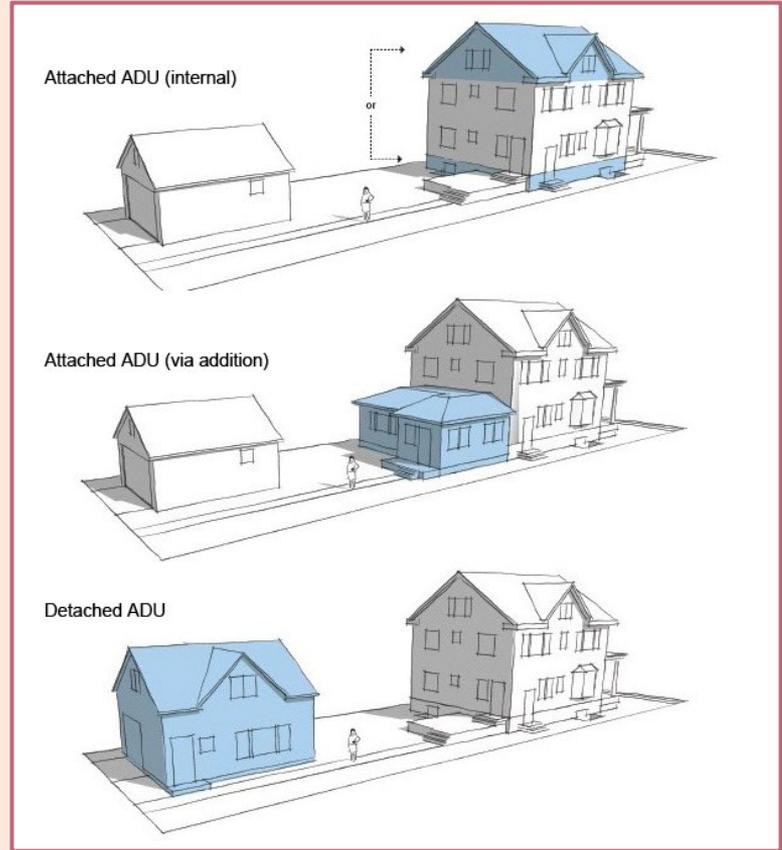
**Berkshire Regional Transit Authority**

More information available:  
Phone (413) 499-2782  
Online [www.berkshirerta.com](http://www.berkshirerta.com)  
Comments [info@berkshirerta.com](mailto:info@berkshirerta.com)

All vehicles are universally accessible

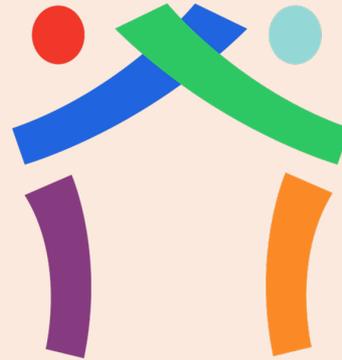
# Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- A secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot
- Change the zoning to make the permitting process more streamlined and accessible
  - Limiting design and dimensional restrictions
- Make the process more affordable and effective at addressing the needs of the elderly and young families
- Minimal environmental impacts



# Collaboration with Berkshire Housing:

- Non-profit housing organization
  - Property developer
  - Housing advocacy and resources
- Positive reputation in the county
  - Supported development in neighboring towns
    - Ex: Highland Woods
  - Housing Consumer Education Center
    - Information on housing support
- Interest in collaboration:
  - Access to state funding
  - Collaborative model focused on town needs



**BERKSHIRE  
HOUSING**  
CONNECTING PEOPLE TO HOME

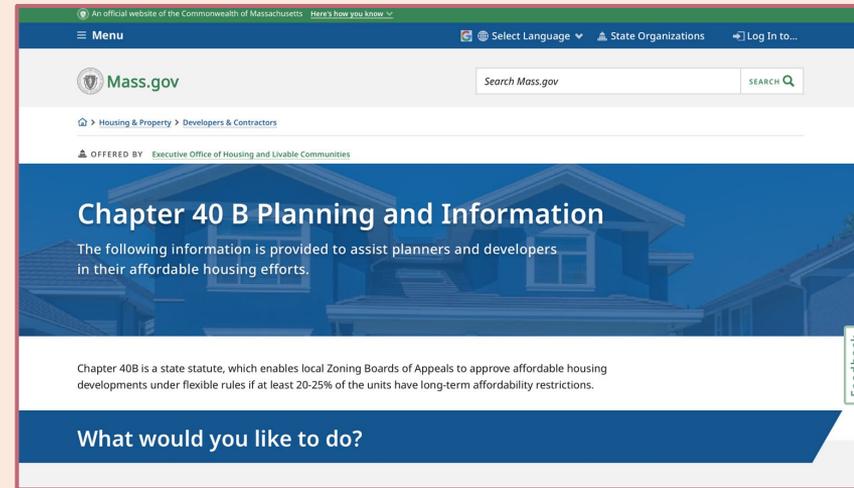


iBerkshires.com 2016

# Friendly 40B Program

- State program that encourages development in towns with limited affordable housing
- Collaborative affordable housing project:
  - Towns work with developers to ensure the project matches the local needs
  - Approved projects have access to state funding and a streamlined permitting process
- Funding available for Lanesborough housing needs
  - Chapter 667 - Elderly, Low-Income Housing
  - Chapter 705 - Family Low-Income Housing
  - Mass Housing Elderly Mixed Income Housing
  - MassHousing Multifamily Rental Program
  - Federal HUD grant programs
- Berkshire Housing may be an effective partner
  - Access Low-income Housing Tax Credit Program
  - Emphasis on collaboration will protect the interest of the town

<https://www.masshousing.com/en/programs-outreach/planning-programs/40b>  
<https://www.mass.gov/chapter-40-b-planning-and-information>

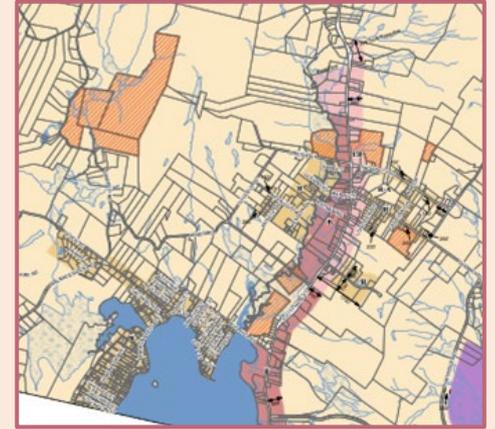


The screenshot shows the official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The page is titled "Chapter 40 B Planning and Information" and is part of the "Housing & Property" section under "Developers & Contractors". The page provides information to assist planners and developers in their affordable housing efforts. It states that Chapter 40B is a state statute that enables local Zoning Boards of Appeals to approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions. The page also includes a "What would you like to do?" section and a "Feedback" button on the right side.



# Density Housing in Already Developed Areas

- Construction should focus on developed areas
  - Smaller environmental impact
    - Less landscape clearing
    - Less impervious surfaces
  - Utilizes existing public infrastructure
  - Greater residential access to businesses
- Potential Sites:
  - Route-7 Corridor
  - Berkshire Mall Site
- Already developed areas present opportunities for partnership with Berkshire Housing



<https://www.masslive.com/business/2019/03/berkshire-mall-dark-once-again-owner-still-700000-behind-on-taxes.html>

# Streamlining Development Process:

- Formalize connections between different approval bodies
- Identify overlap and redundancies in the approval process
  - joint board meetings
  - Joint applications
- Create public resources to improve transparency and information access
  - Flowchart of approval process
  - Information about the role of each board and when they meet
- Expand hours of staff/hire full time individuals

Concord, Massachusetts Permitting Guide

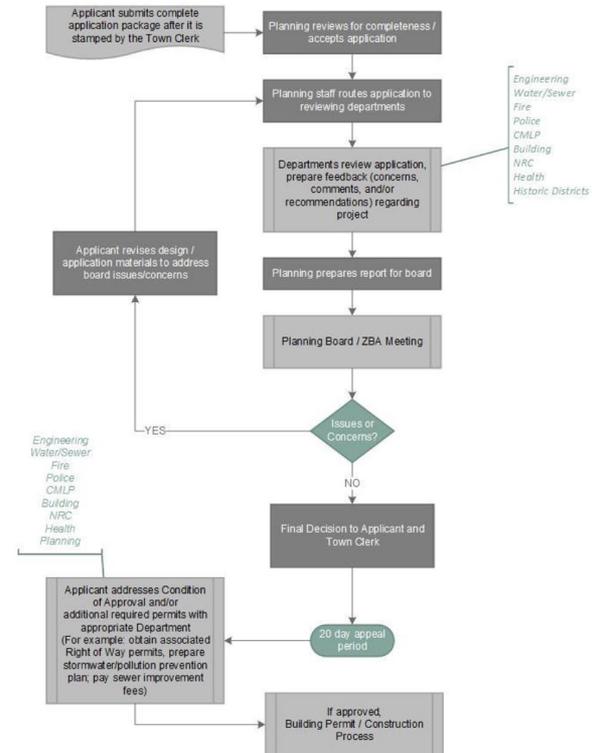


Figure 3: Work Flow for Projects Requiring Planning Board or ZBA approval

# Provide Educational Resources

- First priority in Housing Needs outreach
- Update town website
- Direct people to Berkshire Housing resources
- Community outreach and programming to inform people of resources available



- 1. Providing Educational Resources**
- 2. Streamlining Development Process**
- 3. Changing Town Bylaws**
- 4. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**
- 5. Collaboration with Berkshire Housing**
  - Friendly 40B on Developed Land
- 6. Expanding Public Infrastructure**



# Special Thanks to our Contributors

- Andrew Groff (Lanesborough Planning Consultant)
- CJ Hoss (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)
- Sarah Gardner (Professor of Envi Planning)
- Gina Dario (Lanesborough Town Administrator)
- Joe Trybus (Chair of Planning Board)
- Brad Gordon (Executive Director of Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority)
- Beth Carroll (Town Administrative Assistant)
- Laura Brennan (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)
- Michael Murphy (Chair of Select Board)
- Eileen Peltier (Berkshire Housing Authority)
- Rick Reid (Town Building Inspector)
- Tim Sorrell (Select Board Member)
- Stacy Parsons (Lanesborough Conservation Commission)
- Li Platz (Envi Planning TA)

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# THANKS

## QUESTIONS?

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