



HOUSING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, BY THE NUMBERS

A summary of data presented at eight community meetings in winter/spring 2013

Eight communities, 12 weeks

The eight communities MBHP visited (and its local hosts) were:

- Braintree (Thayer Public Library)
- Cambridge (Cambridge YWCA)
- Chelsea (Chelsea City Hall)
- Everett (Everett City Hall)
- Malden (Malden Senior Center)
- Quincy (Quincy City Hall)
- Revere (Revere Youth Center)
- Somerville (Walnut Street Center)

In winter and spring 2013, MBHP invited residents, local housing professionals, elected officials, and other community members in eight communities to discuss housing and housing-related issues. The goals of the meetings, titled *Housing Challenges and Opportunities: Partnering for Innovative Solutions*, were to highlight the programs and services of MBHP and participating agencies; connect tenants, landlords, city and state officials, and housing providers; and to identify ways in which all involved organizations and agencies can partner to identify solutions to resolve the housing challenges our communities face.

During these eight meetings, MBHP staff engaged more than 220 community members and partners about available housing resources, programs, and services. Local agencies were also invited to present the programs and services they offer in each community. Attendees also made connections with MBHP staff and local service staff, and learned about the programs and services in their communities.

Among the 220 people who participated were 11 state legislators, six legislative aides, three mayors and three city councilors.

This summary compiles some of the data shared by MBHP during the meetings, lists the co-sponsors in each community, and provides a snapshot of the diversity of the communities in which we work. Even though the region MBHP serves is large and diverse, and even though there were many similar challenges and trends, the approaches each community took – and the assets each community brings to bear to address those challenges – varied.

METROPOLITAN BOSTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (MBHP) is the state's largest regional provider of rental housing voucher assistance, serving 7,700 tenant households and working with 4,300 property owners. MBHP serves individuals and families who are homeless, elderly, disabled, and/or of low and moderate incomes. MBHP's region spans Boston and 29 surrounding communities. MBHP's mission is to ensure that the region's low- and moderate-income individuals and families have choice and mobility in finding and retaining decent affordable housing; all MBHP programs and initiatives are designed to encourage housing stability, increase economic self-sufficiency, and enhance the quality of the lives of those it serves. To achieve its mission and to promote efficient service delivery, MBHP works collaboratively with a broad array of service providers and neighborhood-based organizations.

Demographics

The information shared with community meeting attendees included data collected by MBHP and data from external sources. The demographics of the select communities were drawn from the US Census' *American Community Survey* and Rental Beast, a proprietary real estate research firm. The diversity of the communities is apparent from these data.

For example, the median household income of renter occupied households ranged from \$32,563 in Chelsea to \$55,349 in Somerville. Chelsea had the highest percentage of residents living below the poverty level (23.3%), while Braintree had the lowest (3.8%). Despite its high median household income, Somerville had the fourth highest poverty rate (12.5%).

Figure One: Select Communities' Demographics

	Median household income, renter occupied*	Poverty level*	Average monthly rent for two bedroom apartments+	Affordable rent (30% of median household income) for renter-occupying households*	Percent of units renter occupied*
Braintree	\$42,610	3.8%	\$1,565	\$1,065	16%
Cambridge	\$49,843	12.9%	\$2,888	\$1,246	64.3%
Chelsea	\$32,563	23.3%	\$1,520	\$816	70.1%
Everett	\$42,612	11.8%	\$1,343	\$1,065	53.1%
Malden	\$45,808	9.2%	\$1,661	\$1,145	48.7%
Quincy	\$48,864	7.3%	\$1,902	\$1,222	41.1%
Revere	\$34,788	14.6%	\$1,481	\$870	43.6%
Somerville	\$55,349	12.5%	\$2,195	\$1,383	65%

Sources: * 2010 US Census and 2011 American Community Survey

+ All available two bedroom apartments on April 26, 2013, Rental Beast

Chelsea and Braintree also represented the extremes of the percentage of units that are renter occupied: Chelsea at 70.1%, and Braintree at 16%.

Cambridge and Everett represented the extremes of the average monthly rent for available two bedroom units: Cambridge at \$2,888 and Everett at \$1,343. Revere (\$1,481) and Chelsea (\$1,520) had the next lowest average rents, while Somerville (\$2,195) and Quincy (\$1,902) had the next highest rents. In none of the communities was the average monthly rent considered "affordable," meaning 30% of median household income would be sufficient to pay the rent. Only in Everett was the monthly disparity under \$300: \$1,343 for the rent of an average two bedroom apartment compared to \$1,065 at the affordable rent threshold.

MBHP Investments

The core of MBHP’s work is the programs to families and individuals who have low and moderate income. From state and federal voucher programs to emergency assistance to short term transitional housing, MBHP has programs and clients in each of the 30 communities in our region.

The eight cities and towns selected as locations for the winter/spring community meetings are among those with the highest concentration of MBHP-administered rental vouchers in the region. The rental voucher program, which includes all federal and state vouchers such as Section 8 and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, is the largest program for MBHP. Even the community with the fewest number of rental vouchers, Cambridge, had 91 families using vouchers as of March 1, 2013, while Quincy families used 464 vouchers.

In a trend that will be repeated in other measures below, Chelsea (415) and Revere (335) had the next highest number of families receiving rental vouchers living within their city limits.

Figure Two: MBHP Investments in Select Communities

	Number of rental vouchers*	Number of HomeBASE vouchers*	Number of RAFT clients**	Value of rental vouchers, HomeBASE vouchers, and RAFT assistance	Number of HCEC contacts***
Braintree	119	1 ¹	10	\$1,736,993	203
Cambridge	91	5	8	\$1,291,839	976
Chelsea	415	90	32	\$6,705,146	861
Everett	238	58	24	\$4,389,157	505
Malden	193	41	18	\$3,732,934	528
Quincy	464	14 ¹	20	\$6,415,655	628
Revere	335	53	23	\$5,511,007	551
Somerville	113	11	10	\$1,835,582	428
TOTAL	1,968	273	145	\$31,618,313	4,680

**As of March 1, 2013*

***Between July 2012 and March 2013*

****Between February 2012 and March 2013*

The number of HomeBASE clients within MBHP’s region followed a similar pattern. (HomeBASE is a short-term housing program to help families avoid homelessness.) While Braintree had only one family living within its borders¹ as of March 1, 2013, Chelsea had 90 families. Everett (58) and Revere (53) had the next highest number of HomeBASE families.

¹ Additional Braintree and Quincy families also received HomeBASE services from partner agencies on the South Shore that are not included on this list. This only accounts for MBHP HomeBASE families.

Rental Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT), which provides small cash grants to families to help families stay in their homes or otherwise avoid homelessness, supported eight recipient families in Cambridge and 32 in Chelsea between July 2012 and March 2013. Everett (24) and Revere (23) had the next highest number of RAFT families during that time period.

The total value of the rental vouchers, HomeBASE vouchers and RAFT support across the eight communities totals more than \$31 million.

Finally, the number of phone calls and in-office visits to MBHP's "front door", the Housing Consumer and Education Center (HCEC), were lowest in Braintree (203) in the 12 months ending in March 2013. Contrary to previous trends, the highest numbers of HCEC contacts were in Cambridge (976), Chelsea (861), and Quincy (628).

Conclusion

MBHP values input from the residents, elected officials, and municipal employees in all of the communities we serve, and we pride ourselves on maintaining open lines of communication. We also seek to ensure a wide distribution of the varied resources we have available which manifests itself, in part, by having a wide network of partner agencies across the region and co-locating our services with other agencies when feasible. We know that we must work in partnership to make a difference and that maximizing scarce dollars for assistance is imperative. We will continue to hold community meetings on a rolling basis to gather feedback regarding how we are doing and to make sure that the maximum number of people are aware of the programs that we offer. In the meantime, please feel free to contact us at any time.

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Other Contacts

- *Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC)*: 617-425-6700
- *Rental Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT)*: 617-425-6708

Community Meeting Locations and Co-Sponsors

Braintree

- Sen. Brian Joyce
- Sen. John Keenan
- Rep. Mark Cusack
- Braintree Housing Authority
- Father Bill's & MainSpring
- NeighborWorks Southern Mass
- Quincy Community Action Programs

Cambridge

- Sen. Sal DiDomenico
- Sen. Patricia Jehlen
- Rep. Marjorie Decker
- Rep. Jonathan Hecht
- Rep. Timothy J. Toomey
- Alliance of Cambridge Tenants
- Cambridge Community Development Department
- Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs
- Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
- Cambridge Housing Authority
- Transition House
- Just-A-Start Corp.
- YWCA Cambridge

Chelsea

- Sen. Sal DiDomenico
- Rep. Kathi-Anne Reinstein
- Rep. Eugene O'Flaherty
- City Manager Jay Ash
- Chelsea Collaborative
- Chelsea Housing Authority
- Chelsea Department of Planning and Development
- Chelsea Restoration Corporation
- Community Action Programs Inter-City
- Just-A-Start Corp.
- The Neighborhood Developers

Everett

- Sen. Sal DiDomenico
- Everett Housing Authority
- Housing Families Inc.
- Joint Committee for Children's Health Care
- Just-A-Start Corp.
- Mayor's Office of Human Services
- Mystic Valley Elder Services
- Tri-City Community Action Program

Malden

- Sen. Katherine Clark
- Rep. Paul Brodeur
- Rep. Christopher Fallon
- Rep. Paul Donato
- Mayor Gary Christenson
- Cambridge Health Alliance
- Housing Families Inc.
- Just-A-Start Corp.
- Malden Housing Authority
- Malden Redevelopment Authority
- Tri-City Community Action Program

Quincy

- Sen. John Keenan
- Rep. Bruce Ayers
- Rep. Tackey Chan
- Mayor Thomas Koch
- City Councilor Joe Finn
- City Councilor Margaret Laforest
- Father Bill's & MainSpring
- Housing Committee of Quincy City Council
- Interfaith Social Services

Quincy (cont.)

- NeighborWorks Southern Mass
- Quincy Community Action Programs
- Quincy Department of Planning and Community Development
- Quincy Housing Authority
- Quincy Veterans Services
- Sanger Center for Compassion
- South Shore Elder Services

Revere

- Mayor Dan Rizzo
- Speaker Robert DeLeo
- Rep. Kathi-Anne Reinstein
- Housing Families Inc.
- Just-A-Start Corp.
- Revere Cares
- Revere Housing Authority
- Revere Public Library
- The Neighborhood Developers
- Women Encouraging Empowerment

Somerville

- Sen. Patricia Jehlen
- Rep. Denise Provost
- Rep. Carl Sciortino
- Rep. Timothy Toomey, Jr.
- Community Action Agency of Somerville
- Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
- Somerville Community Corporation
- Somerville Homeless Coalition
- Somerville Housing Authority

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