



The Research Bureau
ANNIVERSARY

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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CHAIR OF THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Now that the Worcester Regional Research Bureau has reached our fortieth year of serving Greater Worcester,

it is worth revisiting the opening words of our first President in 1986, George Tetler, in our very first Annual Report:

The Worcester (Municipal) Research Bureau was formed in May of 1985 to address a need widely perceived by civic and community leaders: an organization capable of conducting useful research on the issues and problems facing the City of Worcester.

Over the last forty years, our organization has established a strong record and reputation for our objective research on a wide range of topics, though much has changed about Greater Worcester. At the time of the Bureau's founding, the city was an estimated 166,000 residents, while in 2024, we reached a population of 211,286, showing an impressive rate of growth compared to our competitor cities. Through this expansion, the city has remarkably maintained a median age below 35 years old for over three decades, which has contributed to profound changes in our key occupations and industries. From a municipal government perspective, there has been much change in Worcester City Hall over the last forty years as well, with nine Mayors and five City Managers since the end of the legendary era of City Manager Francis McGrath.

Throughout these changes to the community and government, the Bureau has held to our founders' vision, as noted by President Tetler:

The mission of the Bureau is to conduct objective and independent research on issues facing the City of Worcester and to provide public officials, civic and community leaders and the public at large with access to solutions and information about these issues.

In delivering on this mission, the Bureau has published 344 research reports, briefs, and visualizations, held 303 events informing public discourse and government decision-making, and recognized 154 public servants through our Thomas Green Public Service Awards, while earning over 20 national and regional awards for our research. The Bureau has long provided the public with key resources for civic engagement, such as launching our first resources on benchmarking municipal finance in 2008, questions for the candidates in 2009, our municipal election forums and the Worcester

Almanac in 2015, and the State of the City program in 2017.

The policy challenges that the Bureau has addressed in our research over those forty years are legion, though at times the results of our work have taken years or decades to be implemented by policymakers. The most dramatic example of our impact is when in 1993, the Bureau recommended the sale of Worcester Airport to Massport, which took seventeen years to be completed in 2010. There are a long list of other such impacts from the Bureau's work, including reforming municipal employee and retiree health insurance, opposing a slots parlor proposal for the area now utilized for Polar Park, suspending fare collection for the Worcester Region Transit Authority, and calling for state offices to be located outside Boston, such as the Cannabis Control Commission in Union Station.

The Bureau's award-winning research has continued this year, as detailed elsewhere in this report, but two reports merit particular mention for their impact, as well as representing longtime priorities of transportation and public education. The first is our latest commuter rail report, *Express for Whom? Ridership, Recovery, & the Importance of the Worcester/Framingham Line*, which provides our municipal and state policymakers with the first detailed analysis of our commuter rail ridership in years. This effort was conducted in coordination with the Worcester MBTA Working Group, and is impacting conversations throughout the communities along the rail line, as well as on the state level, while is being utilized to strengthen our service and secure further capital investments. The other is *Fixing the Foundation: Uneven Access to Modern Schools and a Blueprint for a More Equitable Future*, a statewide report with MassINC, which selected the Bureau as their research partner to conduct an analysis of school facility needs in all Gateway Cities and Boston. This builds on the Bureau's signature work last year on the facility needs of the Worcester Public Schools, and is already informing policy deliberations on the state level to address the needs of our city's 25,000 students and those in other urban systems.

While impressive, none of this work could have been accomplished without tremendous support over the last four decades from throughout Greater Worcester. Simply put, the financial support from area employers, philanthropy,

higher education, health care institutions, and individuals are what has enabled the Bureau to deliver on our mission throughout the changes in the community. Beyond those resources, however, there has been incredible leadership from those serving on the Bureau's Board of Directors and Executive Committees over the last forty years. While there are too many to name individually, one exemplifies their selfless contributions – the indomitable Fairman Cowan, whose spirit of public service is immortalized in our award in his memory. Elsewhere in this Annual Report is a list of our Chairperson's Council, who continue to provide vision to the Bureau, but we also need to recognize those former Chairs who are tragically no longer with us – in order of their service, Richard Collins, Alexander Drapos, John Rowe, John Nelson, Agnes Kull, Mark Colburn, and Brian Buckley.

We also need to thank the long list of Bureau staff who have provided such instrumental research to Greater Worcester over the last four decades. While that is most notably our former Executives Dr. Roberta Schaefer and Timothy McGourthy, the Bureau has benefited from very distinguished staff alumni who have gone on to serve in key policy positions throughout the region, state, and nation.

As demonstrated by the Bureau's impressive impact and range of work over our first forty years, enabled by the support of so many, we will continue to inform the public and policymakers on the challenges and opportunities facing the community for years to come. The need and importance of the Bureau's work has only increased over the years since our founding, since in the words of our first Executive Director, Dr. Roberta Schaefer, the Bureau "was created to conduct independent, non-partisan research on municipal problems, to provide more information to our public officials on which to base their decisions, to educate the public regarding issues facing the government and the community as a whole, and to suggest ways of resolving those issues in the best interests of the city."

PAUL KELLY

Chair of the Board

PAUL F. MATTHEWS

Executive Director & CEO

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & DEMOCRACY

One of the Bureau's core missions is to promote public debate – that is, to promote engagement with the key issues of our city and the region. For that reason, this year the Bureau undertook several projects with the goal of promoting civic engagement and democratic citizenship.

One of the first reports the Bureau released this year on this theme was **Casting Ballots on Taxes: Town Meeting, Local Governance, and Proposition 2 1/2's Limits**. The report focused on Worcester's nine neighbors. Within, it explained how town meeting works and examined how Proposition 2 1/2 limits property tax revenues. Its focus was on voting patterns related to Proposition 2 1/2 overrides and new growth. The report concluded that Proposition 2 1/2 decisions are made by small margins of voters, and, with the limits it imposes, the real way to increase tax revenues is for communities to encourage new residential and commercial growth to fill the gaps.

In May, the Research Bureau, in conjunction with the City of Worcester, co-hosted a **"State of the City"** address by the City Manager. Presented at the Jean McDonough Arts Center, the City Manager discussed the many triumphs and challenges the City of Worcester has faced in the previous year, including beginning to implement Worcester Now | Next and the Vision Zero Plan. The Address can be watched on our website.



Since municipal elections occur in odd-numbered years, 2025 marks our latest opportunity to vote for Worcester's City Council and School Committee. The Bureau

remains committed to bringing the public information about the candidates, the issues, the election, and its results. The Bureau kicked off election season with the release of **Questions for the Candidates** in September, our semi-annual election release. This report provides candidates and residents alike with an opportunity to pare back some of the critical issues facing Worcester, and an equal opportunity to respond to them. Indeed, these questions were pivotal as election season continued through the Bureau's **Municipal Debate Series**, co-hosted with the *Telegram & Gazette* in partnership with Mechanics Hall. For five Wednesdays from September to November, the At-Large, Contested District, and Mayoral candidates from City Council and the School Committee had an opportunity

to respond to one another and to answer some of the important questions of the day. Voters got a chance to hear proposed solutions directly from the candidates and their ideas for what they would do in their term in office if elected.

This year, the Bureau followed up on an earlier report with **Bureau Update: Mass. Exodus from Civil Service**, which examines sweeping reforms enacted under the Mass Leads Act, which for the first time allowed municipalities to bypass the state's traditional civil service exam lists by creating local registers of candidates, directly hiring through cadet programs that no longer require a civil service test, expanding residency preferences to graduates of local schools, and using a broader "3n+1" formula that increases the size of candidate pools. With all Massachusetts police departments—including Worcester, which was released from the *Castro v. Beecher* consent decree in 2024—now free of federal oversight, the Bureau cautions that without deliberate action to promote equity in recruitment, hiring, and promotion, backsliding in the racial and ethnic composition of the Worcester Police Department is a real risk. The *Castro v. Beecher* decree, a 1970s federal court order, required race-conscious hiring to remedy systemic discrimination in police and fire departments across Massachusetts; its termination removed the monitoring and reporting requirements that helped sustain workforce diversity. Experience from other cities shows that once such oversight ends, diversity often declines rather than improves.

Finally, The Research Bureau released a report in October about civilian review of the police. **Overdue for Civilian Oversight: A Pathway for Lasting Police Reform** was the Bureau's response to a request from the City Manager earlier in 2025 to research oversight of local law enforcement. The report carefully looks at the history of calls for civilian review in Worcester, examines studies about civilian review across the United States, and presents 14 key practices for Worcester, using nationwide case studies.

In addition to publications, WRRB representatives have been active in many community initiatives. To name a few, chairing the Worcester Public Schools Strategic Plan, *Our Promise to the Future*, serving on the Community Advisory Board for UMass Chan's Prevention Research Center, and on the Steering Committee for the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester and co-chairing its Research & Evaluation sub-committee. In addition, The Research Bureau presented on a wide variety of its work at the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester's annual **Community Practices for Health Equity**

SCAN FOR MORE:



Casting Ballots on Taxes: Town Meeting, Local Governance, and Proposition 2 1/2's Limits



State of the City Address



Questions for the 2025 Candidates

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

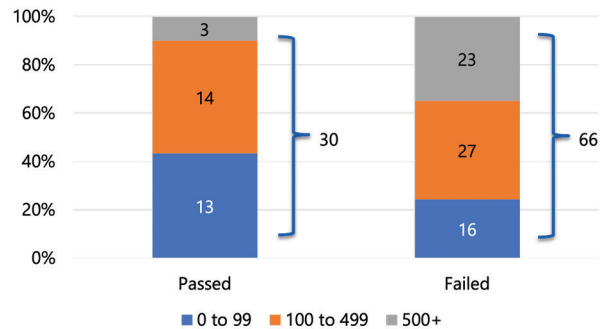
PROPERTY TAX REVENUES AMONG WORCESTER'S NEIGHBORS, YoY% Change

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2014-2024
Auburn	2.18%	7.20%	2.69%	1.31%	0.67%	1.55%	-0.76%	-2.96%	-2.04%	-0.99%	8.81%
Boylston	0.71%	1.13%	3.97%	4.34%	3.71%	8.27%	4.46%	-2.28%	3.05%	3.21%	34.70%
Grafton	8.22%	3.06%	2.70%	3.30%	2.59%	4.79%	5.71%	-1.53%	0.20%	2.68%	36.23%
Holden	3.12%	-0.48%	6.09%	3.81%	3.97%	2.00%	3.10%	-2.67%	-1.78%	2.21%	20.74%
Leicester	0.17%	3.38%	3.61%	3.38%	2.43%	4.46%	1.40%	-2.81%	-0.87%	4.49%	21.14%
Millbury	4.34%	2.43%	3.11%	3.66%	1.96%	3.92%	2.57%	-2.51%	0.26%	3.16%	25.19%
Paxton	3.36%	2.57%	3.44%	2.59%	4.29%	1.37%	0.92%	-3.06%	-2.05%	-1.64%	12.11%
Shrewsbury	12.02%	3.03%	1.46%	3.71%	2.12%	3.07%	4.86%	8.37%	-0.79%	1.79%	46.68%
West Boylston	5.34%	3.12%	1.24%	2.52%	3.48%	3.35%	2.14%	-3.46%	-1.84%	0.56%	17.36%
Grand Total	5.98%	3.03%	2.90%	3.18%	2.47%	3.28%	3.17%	0.42%	-0.79%	1.75%	28.32%

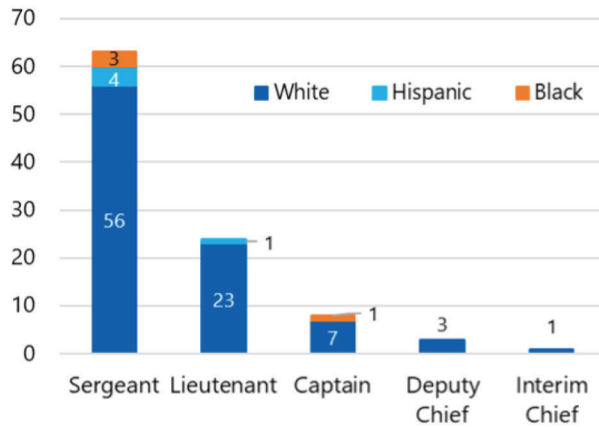


event. Much of what the Bureau has worked on, such as housing and transportation access, sits “upstream” from many health outcomes. This presentation provided participants at the event information about the reports, data, and visualizations that the Bureau has released in the last few years. Additionally, at September’s annual meeting of the Worcester Public Library Foundation, the Research Bureau had the opportunity to present on its 2024 visualization, **Check It Out: The Worcester Public Library in Space and Time**. The Bureau’s presentation focused on the connection between the Worcester Public Library and the neighborhoods that they serve.

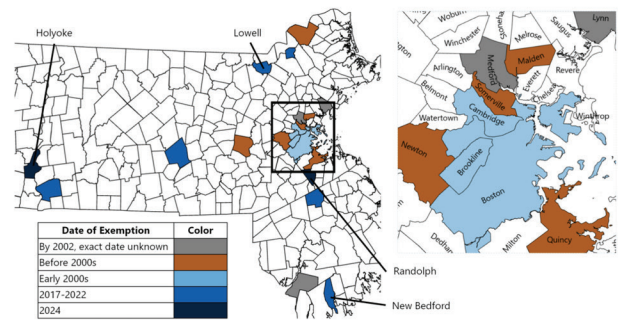
PROPOSITION 2 ½ VOTES BY VOTE MARGIN (FY90 to FY25) Among Worcester’s Neighbors



RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF WPD SUPERVISORS



MASSACHUSETTS CITY POLICE DEPARTMENTS EXEMPTED FROM THE CASTRO DECREE by Exemption Period



SCAN FOR MORE:



Municipal Election Candidate Debates



Bureau Update: Mass. Exodus from Civil Service



Overdue for Civilian Oversight: A Pathway for Lasting Police Reform

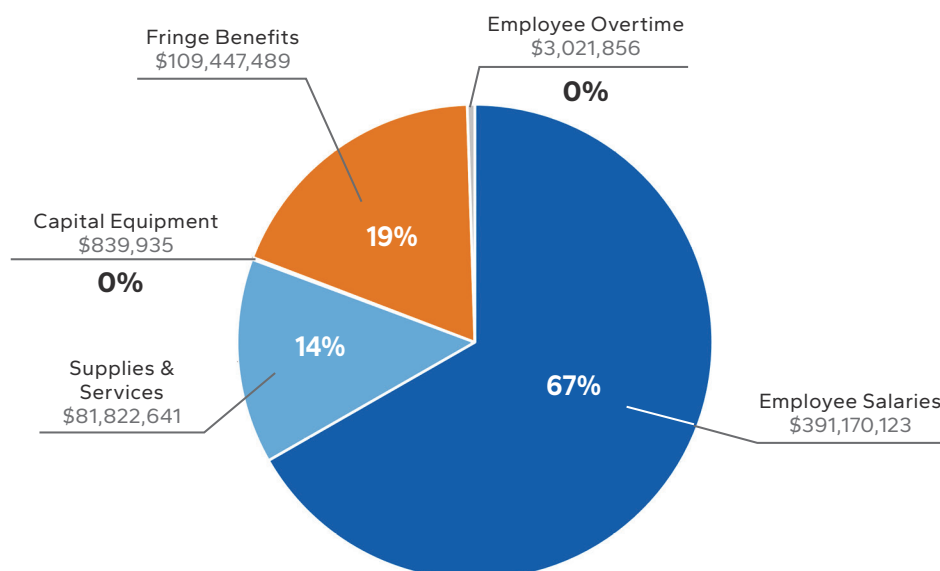
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The bread and butter of the Worcester Regional Research Bureau is public finance and public administration. Originally founded on the principles of good fiscal management and best practices in governance, the Bureau continues to issue its in-depth analyses on the budgets of the City of Worcester and Worcester Public Schools. **Breaking Down the Budget: An Examination of Worcester's FY2026 City Budget** explains how the City will spend \$948 million, an increase of 3.4 percent from FY25. The Bureau highlights Worcester's ongoing structural challenges and key FY26 investments, ultimately concluding that the FY26 budget represents cautious continuity: increased investment in schools, safety, and infrastructure, paired with fiscal discipline and conservative risk management, while the City and state prepare to absorb the impact of future federal cuts. The Bureau notes that the uncertainties make long-term planning, stronger local revenue strategies, and continued transparency vital as Worcester balances its priorities in the years ahead. Similarly, **Paying for a Public Education FY26**, explains how Worcester Public Schools will spend a \$586.3 million budget, up 6.1 percent from FY25. The "watch list" is clear: federal grant volatility (nutrition and other federal lines are material to WPS), FY27 as the final year of new SOA phase-in (no fresh SOA growth in FY28), projected stable-to-declining enrollment that can flatten revenue, the inflation cap's recent undercounting of actual costs, and uncertainty around charter reimbursement levels. FY26, in short, is a reset year that steadies operations, selectively advances strategic plan priorities, and protects core student services, while the district prepares for

tighter dynamics once Student Opportunity Act growth ends and external funding risks come into sharper view.

The Bureau's work on this report was recognized by the Governmental Research Association; Senior Research Associate, Dr. Joshua Boucher, served on a panel discussion, **The Role of State and Local Governments in Providing Adequate and Equitable K-12 Funding**, at its 2025 Annual Conference. On the panel, the Bureau spoke about the ins and outs of Massachusetts Ch. 70 funding, how Worcester Public Schools spends its funds, and how Worcester stacks up against other districts in terms of funding. In addition to participation at this conference, the Bureau is an active member of this national network of nonpartisan, nonprofit policy research organizations founded in 1914 to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and accountability of government at the state and local level. Executive Director and CEO Paul Matthews serves as Vice-Chair of GRA's Executive Council and is co-editor of **Moving Forward: Issues that Matter in Cities, Regions, and States**, a self-published volume that brings together 15 articles produced by GRA member organizations in recent years. WRRB's 2022 report **Boosting Broadband: Access, Performance, Improvements, and Funding** was featured in the Infrastructure chapter of the publication. The book was created with the support of the GRA and reflects the diversity of its members' research on education, finance, housing, and infrastructure policy, demonstrating the breadth and depth of independent, locally focused work while answering the central

WPS FY26 BUDGETED EXPENSES by Account Area



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

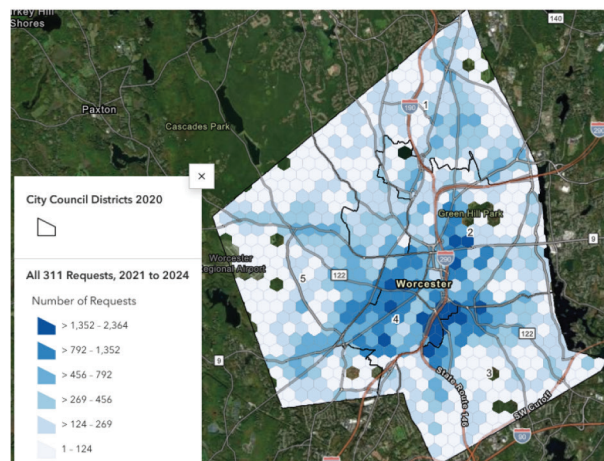
questions of what policymakers need to know and how they can use that knowledge. Eric Kneeland, Director of Programs and Operations, serves on the GRA's Board of Trustees and chairs its Operations Council. On the research side, Senior Research Associate Joshua Boucher and Research Associate Anthony Clough both serve on the Research Council and have hosted training sessions on data visualization tools. Together, these leadership roles underscore how the Bureau's staff not only inform decision-making in Worcester but also contribute to strengthening the field of independent policy research across the country.

In collaboration with the *Worcester Business Journal*, the Bureau developed an interactive dashboard, **Cashing in on Cannabis**, which tracks the rapid growth of local excise tax revenue from adult-use cannabis sales across Worcester County. The tool shows how excise revenues have grown from just three communities reporting collections in FY19 to 23 by FY24, with cannabis now contributing anywhere from less than 1 percent of total excise tax revenue in some municipalities to nearly 42 percent in others. The Bureau produced

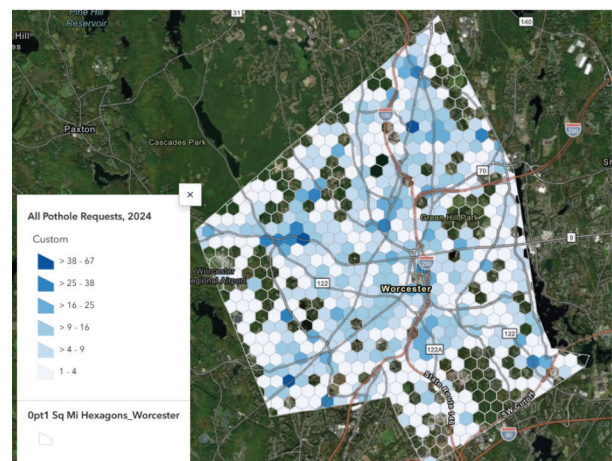
the data visualization, and the *Worcester Business Journal* provided subsequent reporting, ensuring that the public can both see the fiscal impacts and understand the broader economic and policy context.

With public administration of the utmost importance to the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, a **Welcome Reception for Superintendent Brian Allen** was held at Saint-Gobain's Norton Hall. The reception provided an opportunity for the new Superintendent to share his vision for the district's students and its schools. In addition to hosting civic leaders, the Bureau recognizes the unsung heroes of public service through its **Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards**. Five outstanding public servants were recognized for their extraordinary contributions to their communities: Maribel Cruz, Director of Housing and Development in Fitchburg; Adrian Machado, Spanish Teacher at Worcester East Middle School; Officer Rebecka Mailea, Community Outreach Officer for the Worcester Police Department; Linnea Sheldon, Community Relations & Communications Manager at Worcester Public Library; and Mohammed Siddiqui, Senior Software Developer for Worcester Public Schools.

ALL 311 REQUESTS, 2021-2024



ALL POTHOLE REQUESTS, 2024



SCAN FOR MORE:



Breaking
Down the
Budget



Paying for
a Public
Education



Cashing
in on
Cannabis



Thomas
S. Green
Public
Service
Awards

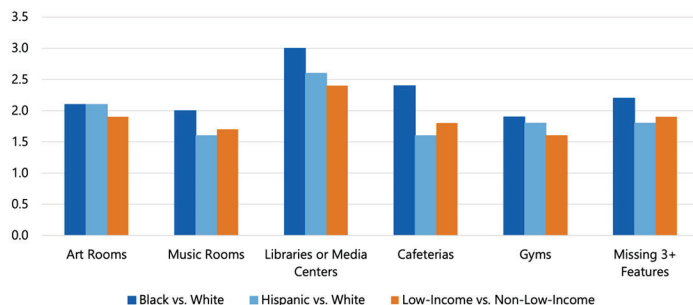
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure issues have long been a source of complaint by residents of any municipality. In May, the Research Bureau released an interactive StoryMap, **Where are Worcester's Woes?**, that mapped and detailed 311 and other customer service requests in Worcester. Aggregating requests into 0.1 square mile hexagons, the StoryMap shows requests between 2021 and 2024 in a visually appealing way, allowing residents of Worcester to see where the most requests are occurring. In addition to mapping all requests, the StoryMap also showed potholes, trash calls, and Winter 2024-2025 related requests. A map from this work won a Certificate of Merit for Best Digital Communication by the Governmental Research Association. In addition to these typical infrastructure issues, WRRB further expanded on its school facility infrastructure work by partnering with MassINC on **Fixing the Foundation**. This report examines facilities in all of the Gateway Cities and Boston and illustrates how state aid fails to prioritize those with the greatest need and the large socioeconomic disparities in facility conditions that result, the cost and timeframe for addressing the problem under various scenarios, and key actions policymakers can take now. Some findings include that cost-control policies disproportionately affect urban districts, MSBA's Core Program disproportionately benefited

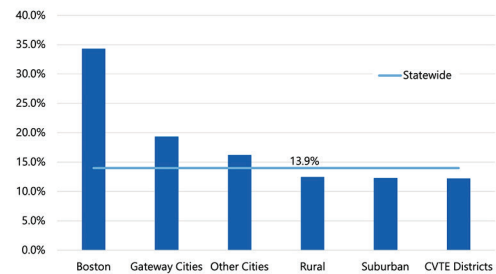
suburban districts, and Black, Hispanic, and low-income students are more likely to attend schools that are inferior, overcrowded, and lack features such as libraries, laboratories, or gyms. Additionally, the report recommends seven key actions that policymakers can take: 1) increase MSBA funding and prioritize inadequate buildings; 2) Reexamine land acquisition, site preparation, and other reimbursement policies; 3) ensure that the next facility conditions survey provides an objective and transparent benchmark for adequacy; 4) require municipalities to co-invest with the state when buildings are deemed educationally inadequate; 5) reimburse for the educational use of co-located facilities and offer incentive points to encourage agencies to bridge silos; 6) help urban districts build regional magnet schools; 7) provide greater support for feasibility studies, master plans, and long-term stewardship.

Housing affordability has been a priority of WRRB for many years. Continuing this focus, the Research Bureau and Harvard Kennedy School's Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston cohosted a virtual forum on inclusionary zoning, **In the Zone: Inclusionary Zoning, in Practice**. The event featured a panel of practitioners and policymakers from across the state as well as a presentation from Chris Kluchman, from the Massachusetts Executive Office of

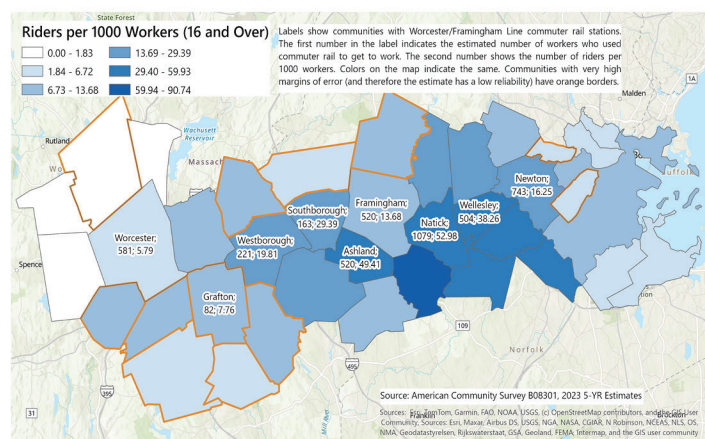
ACCESS TO SCHOOL FACILITIES BY STUDENT GROUP, Statewide



AVERAGE GAP BETWEEN STATUTORY AND ACTUAL REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR MSBA CORE PROGRAM PROJECTS (2008-2024)



COMMUTER RAIL RIDERS PER 1,000 WORKERS (16 and Over)



SCAN FOR MORE:



Where are Worcester's Woes?



Fixing the Foundation:
Uneven Access to Modern Schools and a Blueprint for a More Equitable Future

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

INBOUND ONBOARDINGS, Fall 2024

Stop	500	502	504	582	506	584	508	552	586	510	512	514	516	518	520	522	524	526	592	528	594	530	598	532	534	536	538
Worcester	9	64	105	-	123	-	176	100	-	63	51	39	35	78	38	50	26	38	-	27	-	31	-	31	30	12	13
Grafton	4	45	44	-	49	-	71	-	-	46	11	11	9	4	4	5	3	3	-	17	-	6	-	5	0	0	0
Westborough	5	41	25	-	46	-	91	-	-	44	14	9	11	20	8	3	11	8	-	18	-	9	-	2	4	1	0
Southborough	6	48	36	-	46	-	126	-	-	49	11	15	5	8	9	4	3	9	-	18	-	6	-	3	1	1	0
Ashland	3	51	32	-	67	-	129	-	-	57	7	9	0	0	4	2	9	0	-	5	-	3	-	0	0	1	1
Framingham	9	72	59	16	64	46	69	151	34	53	11	20	17	30	14	13	18	11	8	21	7	8	8	5	8	7	1
West Natick	7	48	44	3	77	37	100	-	49	33	10	2	9	20	9	7	14	-	13	-	15	0	3	0	2	1	0
Natick Center	7	11	-	27	-	113	-	-	56	41	9	7	4	4	6	8	11	-	26	-	22	12	2	0	0	2	0
Wellesley Square	2	14	-	46	-	102	-	-	65	7	12	1	1	18	6	47	18	-	24	-	29	12	5	7	10	4	1
Wellesley Hills	2	2	-	28	-	78	-	-	43	8	0	4	6	26	7	7	14	-	12	-	3	9	9	5	0	0	0
Wellesley Farms	4	7	-	36	-	96	-	-	44	16	4	13	1	2	3	0	2	-	3	-	3	2	2	0	1	0	0
Auburndale	0	2	-	26	-	44	-	-	31	16	0	3	-	12	-	-	5	-	-	-	10	-	3	-	1	0	-
West Newton	3	9	-	30	-	78	-	-	43	12	4	2	-	12	-	-	5	-	-	-	12	-	2	-	0	1	-
Newtonville	4	28	-	55	-	122	-	-	78	8	10	7	-	18	-	-	17	-	-	-	6	-	3	-	1	0	-
Boston Landing	5	25	39	106	45	114	56	-	118	33	8	15	5	40	7	16	67	39	39	14	40	4	13	16	5	1	0
Lansdowne	0	13	7	20	16	72	16	22	0	11	10	0	4	12	8	21	27	23	21	9	10	6	0	5	2	2	0
Back Bay	0	4	0	7	7	11	6	1	1	1	14	0	8	8	2	3	14	18	20	4	27	15	0	0	1	0	0
South Station	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Train Departing	4:15	5:00	5:45	6:35	6:30	7:25	7:07	7:40	8:15	8:13	9:05	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:05	14:00	15:00	15:47	16:40	16:30	17:20	17:45	18:55	18:35	19:55	20:55	22:50
Train Arriving	5:50	6:36	7:10	7:33	7:56	8:23	8:33	8:45	9:11	9:49	10:43	11:38	12:33	13:38	14:38	15:33	16:39	17:07	17:29	17:50	18:13	19:13	19:48	20:03	21:30	22:30	0:18

Housing and Livable Communities. Following that, Brian Iammartino from Harvard Kennedy School moderated a panel featuring Aaron Clausen (Principal Planning Director, City of Lynn), Peter Dunn (Chief Development Officer, City of Worcester), Andrew Levine (Town Administrator, Town of Hatfield), and Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler (City Councilor, City of Cambridge). Each panelist brought their own expertise and experience with inclusionary zoning to the group, offering perspectives from all levels and sizes of government. Additionally, WRRB hosted a forum, **Building for Tomorrow**, for a discussion on Massachusetts's Statewide Housing Plan "A Home for Everyone," the Unlocking Housing Production Commission's report, and other regional housing initiatives with Edward Augustus, Secretary of Housing & Livable Communities. Additionally, remarks were offered by Leah Bradley, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, and Emily Glaubitz, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

This year has seen an explosion of activity from the Bureau regarding the Worcester/Framingham Regional Rail line, with more to come. Since December 2024, the Bureau has been participating monthly in the Mayor's Commuter Rail Taskforce and will continue to do so. In June, the Bureau released a report about ridership on the line, titled **Express for Whom? Ridership, Recovery, and the Importance of the Worcester/Framingham Line**. The report charted ridership recovery on the line since its precipitous drop in 2020. It noted the incredible percentage that weekend ridership makes of total ridership. But

what Express for Whom? did well was demonstrate, using MBTA and MassINC polling data, the high number of riders getting onto the train every day in Worcester – more than any other single stop on inbound trains – and the high percentage of riders, nearly 50%, who get on the trains between Worcester and Framingham. The Bureau has been able to leverage this work, hosting a stakeholder briefing with policymakers in early September, presenting the report to the 495/MetroWest Partnership in October, and other potential briefings to statewide groups in the works.

Lastly, as part of Jane Week in the Woo in May, the Research Bureau hosted a panel of experts to talk about minimum parking reform, a focus of the Bureau's 2024 report *Public Par(king): Worcester's Past, Present, and Future of Parking*. The panel, **A City for People: Reorienting Parking Policy**, featured Steve Rolle (Commissioner of Transportation & Mobility for the City of Worcester), Adi Nochur (Senior Transportation Planner at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council), and Councilor Burhan Azeem (City Councilor, City of Cambridge) at the Park View Room on Park Avenue. Each panelist discussed the historical development and impact of parking policies in Massachusetts and talked about recent and future developments in parking in the Metro Boston Area and within Worcester itself.



Where are Worcester's Woes was recognized by the Governmental Research Association with its 2025 Certificate of Merit for Best Digital Communication

SCAN FOR MORE:



In the Zone:
Inclusionary
Zoning, In
Practice



**Building for
Tomorrow:**
A Discussion
on Housing



**Express
for
Whom?**



**A City for
People:**
Reorienting
Parking Policy

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

WORCESTER ALMANAC, WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS, & INSIGHTS INSIDERS

Worcester County Insights is a collaborative effort led by the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Worcester Regional Research Bureau to provide essential data through a county-wide community indicators platform. The dashboard includes data on 60 indicators covering community life, demographics and diversity, economic mobility, employment and workforce, health and wellbeing, and youth and education. Since its launch, WRRB has issued a series of briefs called *Insights Insider*, which use data directly from Worcester County Insights to expand on a particular topic of note. This year, WRRB has issued editions on Asthma, Job Sector Growth, and Pre-K Education.

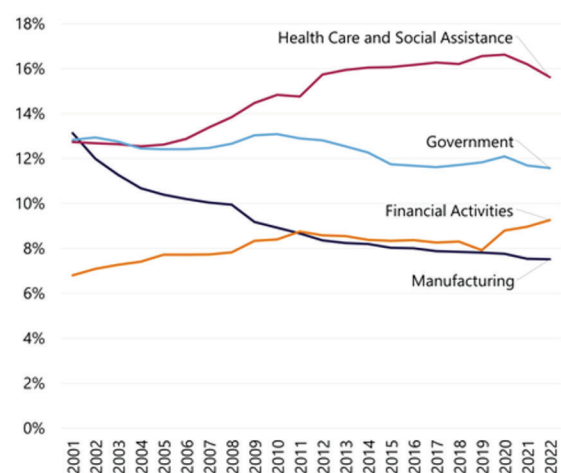
Insights Insider – Community Health: Asthma explores the prevalence of asthma among children in communities across the County. Differing environmental, demographic, and economic factors can play an important role in the presence of asthma as it does not exist in a vacuum. **Insights Insider: Worcester County's Growing Job Sectors** dives deep on job sector change, commuting patterns, and more. Between 2001 and 2022, Worcester County saw its total number of jobs grow by 22%, very similar to the Massachusetts total of 23%. In that same time period, Worcester County's population grew by an estimated 13.5%; Massachusetts grew by 9.8%. The last edition released this year, **Insights Insider: Pre-K Education in Worcester County**, focused on the geographic accessibility and affordability of pre-k education. Massachusetts is the second most expensive state for childcare, estimated at \$20,913

per year; Worcester County is estimated at \$20,592 and \$15,671 for the City of Worcester. The most Pre-K cost-burdened communities are Leominster (25%), Worcester (22%), Gardner (20%), Fitchburg (19%), and Athol (17%).

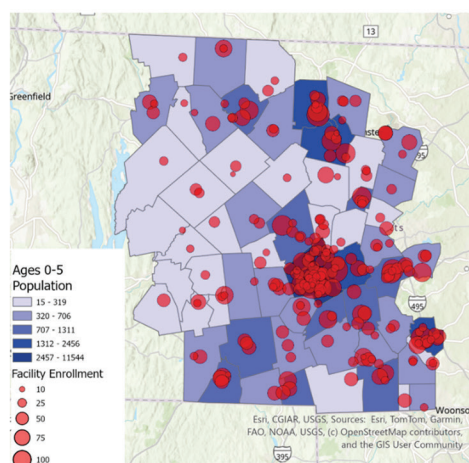
As part of its efforts to inform the public and decision-makers, in partnership with Greater Worcester Community Foundation, WRRB hosted a **Legislative Breakfast** to brief lawmakers, their staff, and key stakeholders on the utility of Worcester County Insights and some of its specific datasets. The presentation also coincided with the release of the *Insights Insider* focused on Worcester County's Job Sectors, providing key insights and a dialogue on an important opportunity for the region.

In addition to this important interactive dashboard providing data to the public, WRRB issues its own Worcester Almanac, our compendium of information on all things Greater Worcester. The 11th edition of this significant document compiles data on government, demographics & the economy, health, education, public safety, transportation, sports, and weather. The Bureau undertakes the Worcester Almanac each year to provide government officials, residents, businesses, and institutions with an easily accessible, user-friendly source of current and trending data on various civic concerns. The **Worcester Almanac** would not be possible without the generous support of UniBank which has been the longtime sponsor of this important resource.

JOB SECTOR SHARE OF TOTAL JOBS, 2001-2022



PRE-K ENROLLMENT, Worcester County



SCAN FOR MORE:



Insights Insider – Community Health: Asthma



Insights Insider: Worcester County's Growing Job Sectors



Insights Insider: Pre-K Education in Worcester County



Worcester Almanac

EACH YEAR, THE RESEARCH BUREAU RECOGNIZES THE “UNSUNG HEROES” IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT who are committed to making Worcester and nearby communities better places to live and work. The 2025 Thomas S. Green public service award recipients were honored at Mechanics Hall on May 29, 2025.



Adrian Machado

SPANISH TEACHER
WORCESTER EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL
Worcester Public Schools

“Adrian is a key part of our community and has made a huge difference in the lives of our students and families. He is well-known and respected for his hard work, kindness, and dedication to helping others.”



Maribel Cruz

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT
Fitchburg Community Development & Planning

“She approaches her work with dedication, efficiency, and an unwavering commitment to improving Fitchburg—qualities that make her not just fully competent in her position, but a true leader in public service.”



Linnea Sheldon

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Worcester Public Library

“Linnea Sheldon’s contributions to Worcester Public Library and the broader community have been nothing short of transformative. Her ability to develop creative communication strategies, foster community engagement, and build lasting partnerships is unparalleled.”



Rebecka Mailea

COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICER
Worcester Police Department

“Officer Mailea’s constant commitment to this city’s youth should inspire people in the City of Worcester to go out and be a more active member of the community.”



Mohammed Siddiqui

SENIOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPER
Worcester Public Schools

“Mohammed’s problem-solving and strategic planning abilities are second to none. With decades of hands-on experience in the field, he approaches every challenge with confidence and ingenuity.”

SCAN FOR MORE:



Thomas S. Green
Public Service
Awards

THE 2025 THOMAS S. GREEN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS

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Worcester Bravehearts
Worcester Red Sox
Worcester Wares



The Research Bureau
ANNIVERSARY

40 YEARS OF IMPACT



WRRB BY THE NUMBERS

344
PUBLICATIONS



303
EVENTS



20+
NATIONAL &
REGIONAL AWARDS



THOMAS S. GREEN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS



154 INDIVIDUALS



12 MUNICIPALITIES



3 REGIONAL AGENCIES



WORCESTER DEPARTMENTS:

23 DPW & PARKS

9 FIRE DEPARTMENT

12 POLICE DEPARTMENT

8 PUBLIC LIBRARY

44 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1980s

1985 – Founded & housed at Assumption College

1986 – First report & first forum

1988 – Launch Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards



1988 – Recommend Assistant City Manager for Economic Development position



1992 – City establishes Chief Economic Development Officer position

1990s



1993 – WRRB recommends sale of Worcester Regional Airport to Massport



2010 – City completes sale of Worcester Regional Airport to Massport



1996 – WRRB recommends governance of Worcester Vocational High School be transferred to Worcester School Committee



1997 – City Council transfers governance of Worcester Vocational High School to Worcester School Committee

2000s

2001 – Worcester Municipal Research Bureau becomes Worcester Regional Research Bureau



2001 – WRRB recommends Worcester Technical High School be built without Project Labor Agreement



2006 – Worcester Technical High School completed on time, within budget, and without a Project Labor Agreement

2002 – WRRB moves to Downtown Worcester to a storefront at Mechanics Hall

2003 – Conducts first Citizen Satisfaction Survey

2004 – Hosts National Conference for Sloan Foundation grantees engaged in government performance measurement

2005 – Establishes the Fairman C. Cowan Research Fund



2008 – WRRB issues first report benchmarking municipal finance



Present – Breaking Down the Budget



2009 – WRRB issues first set of questions for municipal candidates



Present – Questions for the Candidates Series



"The Research Bureau makes an incredible impact on Worcester and the future of Worcester."

MAYOR JOE PETTY

"The Research Bureau is an essential organization and entity in our community."

CHÉ ANDERSON

"The Research Bureau's work isn't about headlines, it's about the hard work that occurs to create change."

TIM MCGOURTHY



"I would like to thank the staff... for the integrity of the kind of work that they do and the investment that they give to community partners like us."

CASEY BURNS

2010s

2012 – WRRB moves to Assumption College



2013 – WRRB issues first report on Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability



2017 – City of Worcester establishes an adds OPEB Liability Fund

2014 – Tim McGourthy appointed Executive Director

2015 – Launch of the Worcester Almanac

2015 – Launch of Municipal Election Candidate Debate Series

2017 – Launch of WRRB's State of the City program with City Manager



2018 – WRRB works with WEC to develop 2018-2023 WPS Strategic Plan *Defining Our Path*



2023 – At conclusion of *Defining Our Path*, WPS produces an updated strategic plan, *Our Promise to the Future*, inviting WRRB & WEC to Co-Chair The Strategic Plan Advisory Taskforce.



2018 – WRRB issues *Brokering a New Lease: Capturing the Value of State Offices for Massachusetts*



2019 – Cannabis Control Commission locates at Union Station in Worcester.

2019 – Paul Matthews appointed Executive Director



2019 – WRRB issues report calling for a fare free Worcester Regional Transit Authority



2020 – WRTA suspends fare collection

2020s

2020 – WRRB moves to Downtown Worcester

2022 – Release of *Static Income, Rising Costs: Renting in the Heart of the Commonwealth*, first public release of the city's redlining maps in decades.

2023 – WRRB hosts the National Conference for the Governmental Research Association

2024 – WRRB & GWCF launch Worcester County Indicators, regional data dashboard collaboration and periodic research briefs *Insights Insider*

2024 – WRRB's Paul Matthews serves as editor and contributor to Governmental Research Association's research anthology, *Moving Forward: Issues that Matter in Cities, Regions, and States*

2024 – WRRB receives 4 national awards from Governmental Research Association

2024 – Isaiah Thomas Award resumes under the stewardship of WRRB.



*"My most heartfelt and fondest memory would be the time I spent with **Fairman Cowan**, and his wife Polly. We became true friends. I would have to say he was the greatest man I ever had the pleasure to know and work with. **His vision is what brought the Bureau to reality.** I feel I am a better person for having known him." – JEAN DEIESO*

FAIRMAN C. COWAN MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

2015
Robert L. Moylan, Jr.

2017
Daniel J. Morgado

2018
Philip R. & Gale Y. Morgan

2019
Brian Thompson

2021
Janice B. Yost, Ed.D.

2022
Edward M. Augustus, Jr.

2023
Harriette Chandler & Karyn Polito

EDUCATION

2025 Fixing the Foundation: Uneven Access to Modern Schools and a Blueprint for a More Equitable Future

2024 Building the Future: Investing in Worcester Public Schools Facilities

2024 Understanding Your Neighborhood Schools

2022 The Excellence Series – Governing, Strategizing, & Investing

2016 The Urgency of Excellence

2014 Toward a Common Understanding of the Common Core

2008 Choosing a New School Superintendent to Address Worcester's Challenges

2003 Education Reform and Collective Bargaining: C for Compatibility

1996 The Future of Vocational Education in Worcester

1986 Worcester's Three R's: Repair, Replacement, and Rehabilitation

TRANSPORTATION

2025 Express for Whom? Ridership, Recovery, & the Importance of the Worcester/Framingham Line

2024 Toward Safer Streets: Identifying Risk Factors for Non-Motorists in Worcester

2024 Public Par(king): Worcester's Past, Present, and Future of Parking

2024 Feeding the Meter: Public Parking Usage in Worcester

2023 Resurging Regional Ridership: An analysis of mobility flows, riders, and ridership in the WRTA region

2023 All Aboard: Financing a Fare-Free WRTA

2019 The Implications of a Fare-Free WRTA

2018 City on the Move: An Overview and Assessment of Worcester's Transportation Needs

2010 Worcester Regional Airport Positioned for Take-Off

2003 Worcester's Link to the Mass Pike: An Updated on the Route 146 Connector

2002 Worcester Regional Airport: Will it Take Off?

2000 Connecting the Heart of the Commonwealth to the Hub of the Universe: Making the Case for Expanding Commuter Rail Service Between Worcester and Boston

1993 The Future of Worcester Airport

1986 Charting a New Route for Worcester's Mass Transit

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2024 Appreciating the Value of Commercial Properties

2023 Reinventing Worcester

2023 Static Income, Rising Costs: Renting in the Heart of the Commonwealth

2022 Boosting Broadband: Access, Performance, Improvements, and Funding

2021 Achieving the American Dream

2020 Broadening Broadband

2018 The Immigrant Entrepreneur in Worcester

2018 Brokering a New Lease: Capturing the Value of State Offices for Massachusetts

2013 Should Worcester Welcome a Slot-Machine Casino?

2008 What's Up With Downtown Worcester?: Prospects for Revitalization

2006 Destination Worcester: What's the "Convention-al" Wisdom?

1997 Distressed Property in Worcester: The Problems and the Options

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

2023 Worcester's Municipal Elections, 2013-2023

2020 Absent Voters

2019 Choosing a Better Voting System: The Argument for Ranked Choice Voting in Worcester and Beyond

2015 Don't Boo. Just Remember to Vote.

2005 City Council Salaries and the Competitiveness of Elections: A Survey.



39TH ANNUAL MEETING





39TH ANNUAL MEETING





ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKERS

- 2024 SUSAN M. COLLINS**, President & CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- 2023 RENÉE CUMMINGS**, Professor of Practice in Data Science and first Data Activist-in-Residence University of Virginia
- 2022 KENNETH L. TURNER**, President & CEO, Massachusetts Life Sciences Center
- RITA L. SMITH**, Regional Director of Business HR – Americas Pharma, AbbVie
- BRIAN COHEN**, Senior Vice President CBRE/New England Consulting Group
- 2021 DR. LAURIE LESHIN**, President, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- 2020 DR. ROSABETH MOSS KANTER**, Ernest L. Arbuckle Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School
- 2019 DR. FRANCIS COLLINS**, Director, National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- 2018 DR. KERRY HEALEY**, President, Babson College, and former Lieutenant Governor
- 2017 JAMES A. PEYSER**, Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 2016 JOHN H. SUNUNU**, Former Governor, State of New Hampshire, and White House Chief of Staff
- 2015 JONATHAN KRAFT**, President, The Kraft Group
- 2014 JAY ASH**, City Manager of Chelsea
- BERNARD F. LYNCH**, Founder, Community Paradigm Associates, LLC
- MICHAEL V. O'BRIEN**, Executive Vice President, Winn Development
- 2013 EDWARD GLAESER**, Fred and Eleanor Glimp Professor of Economics, Harvard University
- 2012 ERIC S. ROSENGREN**, President & CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- 2011 SENATOR SCOTT BROWN**
- 2010 LISA A. MANCINI**, Senior Vice President, CSX Corporation
- 2009 AMITY SHLAES**, Bloomberg News Columnist, Political Economist
- 2008 JOHN W. ROWE**, Chairman, President & CEO, Exelon Corporation
- 2007 DR. THOMAS PAYZANT**, former Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools and senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- 2006 DR. DAVID DRISCOLL**, Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 2005 TAMAR JACOBY**, Author and Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute
- 2004 JOHN GANNON**, Staff Director, U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Homeland Security
- 2003 GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY**, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 2002 FRED SIEGEL**, Professor of History, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York City, and Senior Fellow Progressive Policy Institute
- 2001 HEATHER MACDONALD**, Senior Fellow, The Manhattan Institute
- 2000 REV. DR. FLOYD H. FLAKE**, Senior Pastor, Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church and former U.S. Representative to Congress
- 1999 HOWARD HUSOCK**, Director of Case Studies in Public Policy and Management Kennedy School, Harvard University
- 1998 MYRON MAGNET**, Editor, City Journal
- 1997 THOMAS BIRMINGHAM**, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1996 GLENN C. LOURY**, Professor of Economics, Boston University
- 1995 PETER HARKNESS**, Editor and Publisher of Governing
- 1994 JAMES Q. WILSON**, Author and Professor of Political Science, UCLA
- 1993 ROBERT POOLE**, President, Reason Foundation
- 1992 WILLIAM HUDNUT**, former Mayor of Indianapolis
- 1991 DAVID P. FORSBERG**, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1990 BRUCE CARNES**, Director of Budget Planning, Office of National Drug Control Policy
- 1989 EDWARD J. LOGUE**, CEO, Logue Boston, former Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority
- 1988 RAYMOND FLYNN**, Mayor of Boston
- 1987 WILLIAM BULGER**, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1986 IRA JACKSON**, Commissioner, Department of Revenue, Commonwealth of Massachusetts



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Board Meeting AT THE HANOVER THEATRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Featured Speaker Dr. Eric Dickson

President & CEO of UMass Memorial Health
Presentation on Healthcare Costs and Potential Solutions



MAY 20, 2025

Board Meeting AT SYNERGY INVESTMENT'S TOP OF THE TOWER

Featured Speaker Secretary Edward Augustus

Secretary of Housing & Livable Communities
Presentation on A Home for Everyone: Massachusetts' Statewide Housing Plan





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If we made an error, please let us know. Thank you.



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I'm **Jesse Drujon**, a web designer and strategist who helps small businesses, independent brands, and community organizations build trust online.

I believe a great website should express your identity clearly and intentionally, with the performance to match. I take the time to understand your story and turn it into something that helps people connect with what you do.

Whether it's a full redesign or a focused update, I'll guide you through every step, from vision to launch, so your site looks great and works even better.

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Let's Make Your Brand Sing

Hey there! I'm Jeanne Burgess and I help businesses and nonprofits connect with the right people through thoughtful, creative digital and print marketing design.

No one-size-fits-all here. We'll collaborate, think strategically, and solve problems with ideas tailored to your goals. I bring curiosity, clarity, and a team-first approach to spark engagement and real momentum.

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turn them into opportunities.



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ANNIVERSARY

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2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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