
**City of Cambridge
Community Development Department**

Multifamily Housing Citywide: Envision Cambridge Context

Planning Board Presentation
January 18, 2022





Meeting Overview

Background:

- City Council asked CDD to work with the Planning Board to develop concepts for allowing multifamily housing citywide
- Second in series of meetings to discuss topic

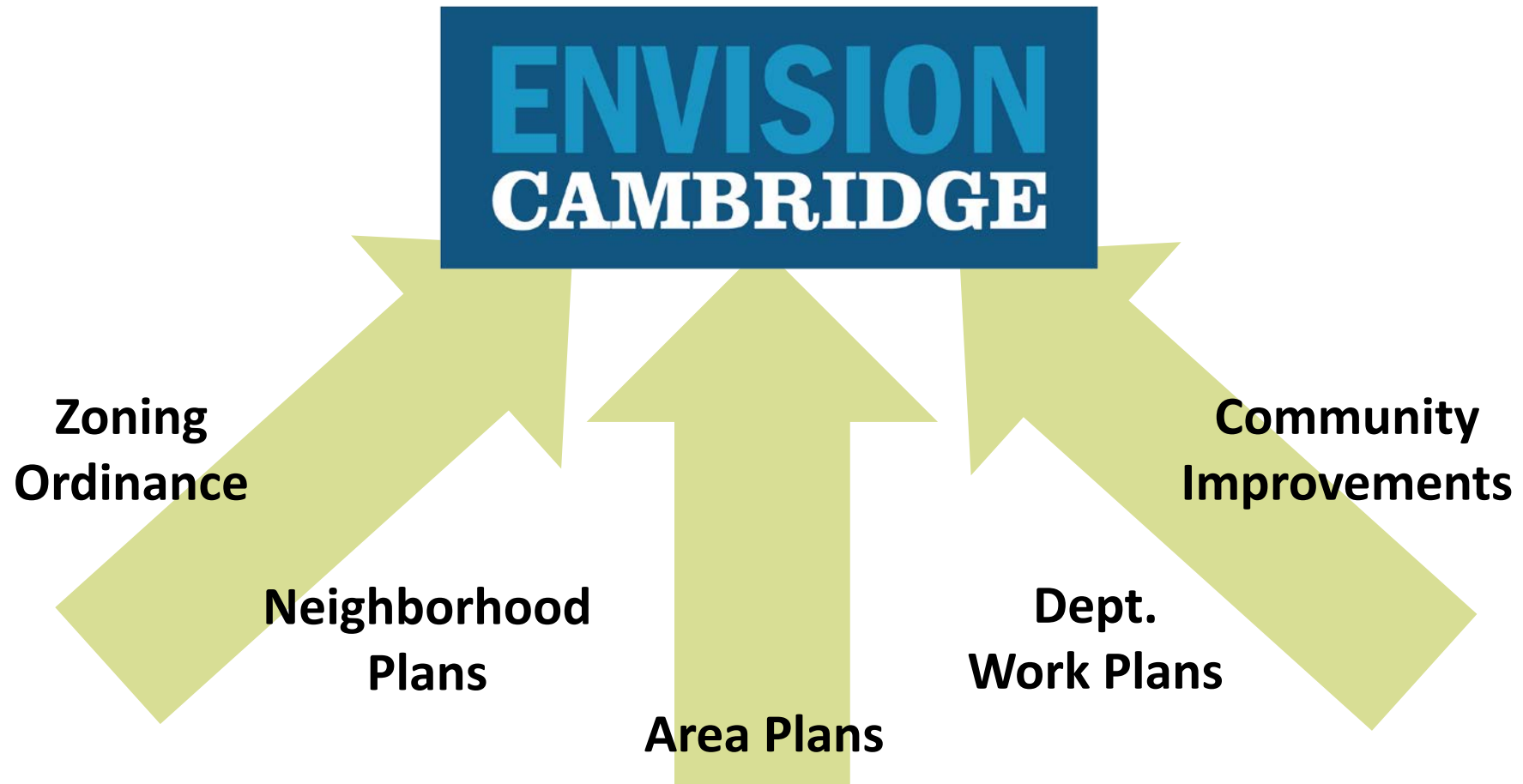
Meeting Purpose:

- Provide an overview of Envision Cambridge
- Discuss how allowing multifamily housing citywide relates to key issues and planning goals identified in Envision Cambridge



Background: Envision Cambridge

Envision Cambridge serves as overarching guide for local policies and plans





Vision and Core Values

Vision: What we want to be

“Cambridge is a forward-thinking, welcoming, and diverse city. We enjoy a high quality of life and thrive in a sustainable, inclusive, and connected community.”

Core Values: What is important to us

- Livability
- Diversity & Equity
- Economic Opportunity
- Sustainability & Resilience
- Community Health & Wellbeing
- Learning



Core Values

Community Health & Wellbeing: We promote healthy and active lifestyles in a supportive, safe community with diverse opportunities to connect with our neighbors and engage in civic life.

Diversity & Equity: We are a welcoming community that celebrates our diversity and ensures access to affordable housing choices and opportunities to succeed.

Economic Opportunity: We provide opportunity and stability through access to quality jobs, workforce development and training, and livable wages that support high level of services.

Learning: We embrace lifelong learning and celebrate the pursuit of knowledge, and our culturally rich and creative community.

Livability: We value a vibrant built and natural environment and support sustainable transportation with affordable and convenient access to daily needs and recreational resources.

Sustainability & Resilience: We take responsible action to reduce our impact on the environment and build a resilient city and strong community.

Planning Topics





Planning Rationale

Key Issues identified in Envision

01

Growing Economy

Our strong economy increases the demand for and cost of housing.

02

Growing Population

Economic growth, expansion of educational institutions, and desire for city living is fueling population growth.

03

Declining Affordability

Increased demand for housing has led to rising housing prices and unequal access to housing.

04

Rising Inequity

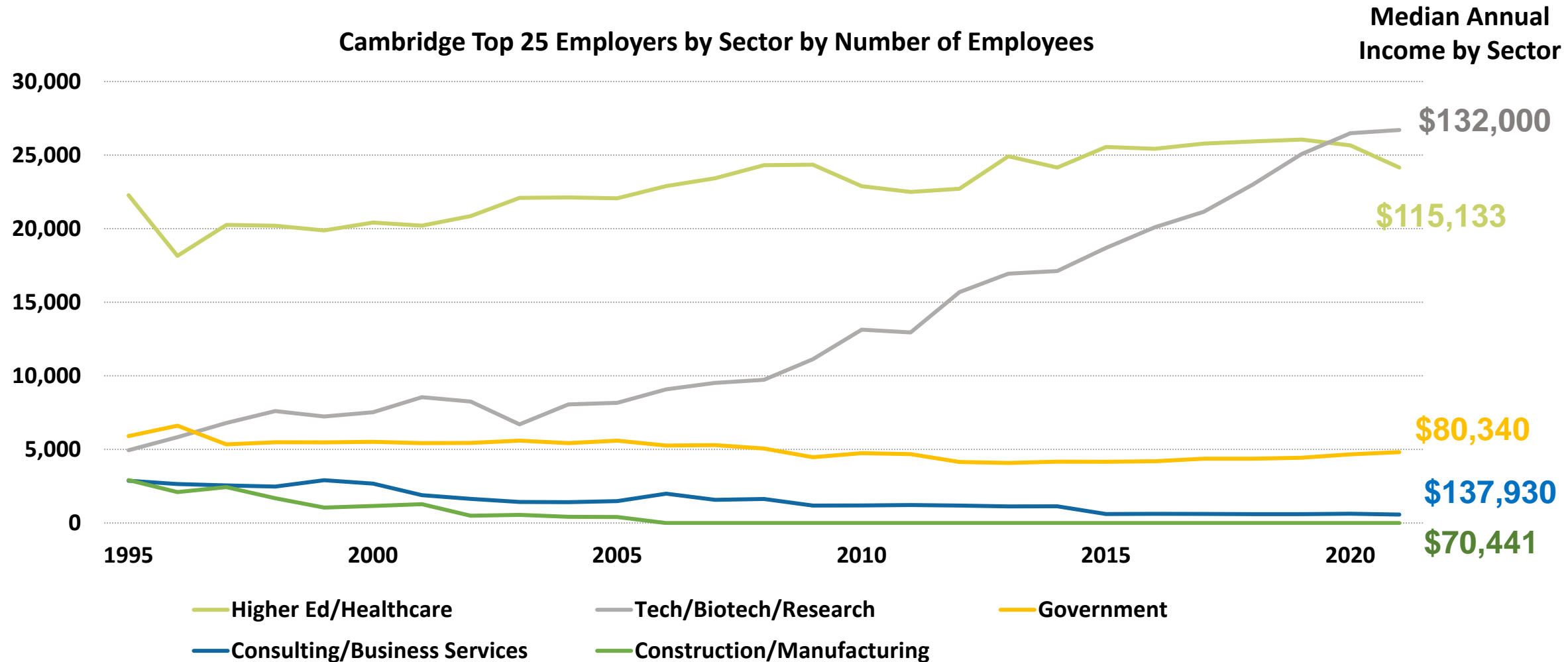
Not all people share in the benefits of growth.

05

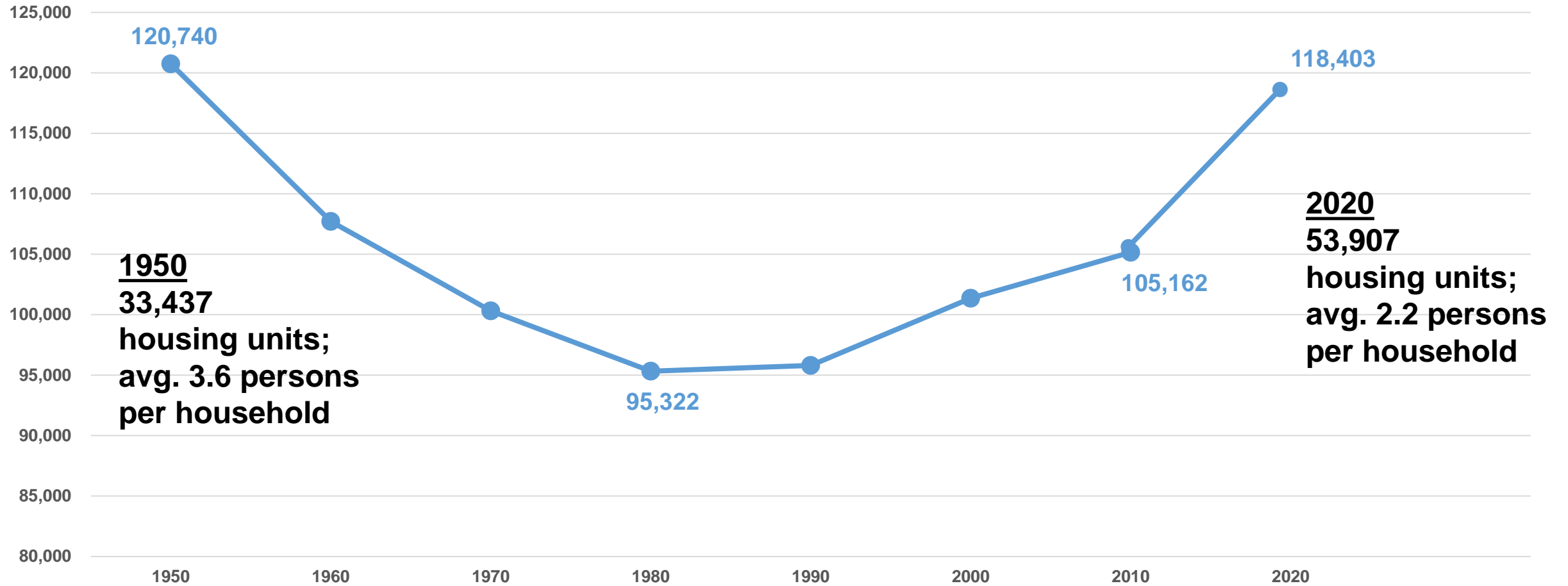
Changing Urban Form

Tension between existing and new urban development can drive conflicts over desired urban form.

Growing High-Income Employment



Growing Population

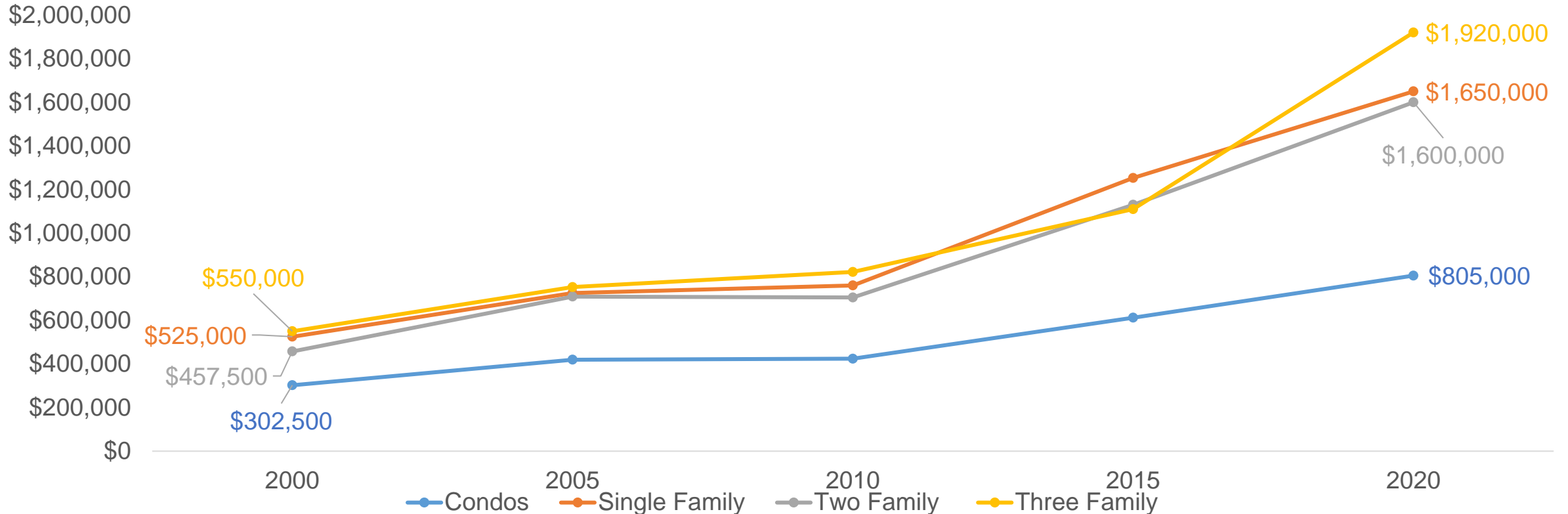


Source: US Census, 1950–2020

Rising Home Sale Prices

Cambridge Median Home Sale Prices, 2000-2020

| | Growth |
|---------------|--------|
| Single-Family | +214% |
| 2-Family | +250% |
| 3 Family | +249% |
| Condos | +166% |

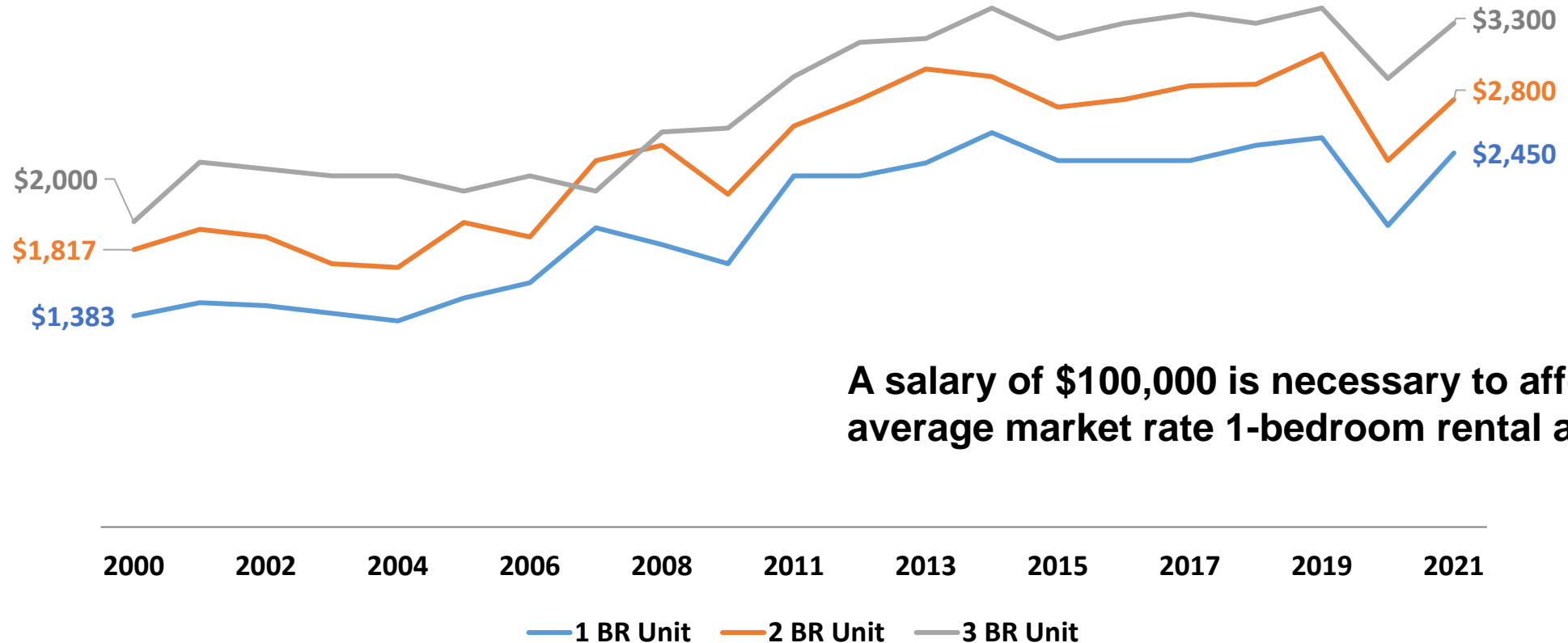


Rising Rents

Growth

| | |
|------|------|
| 1 BR | +77% |
| 2 BR | +54% |
| 3 BR | +65% |

Cambridge Median Asking Rents, 2000-2021

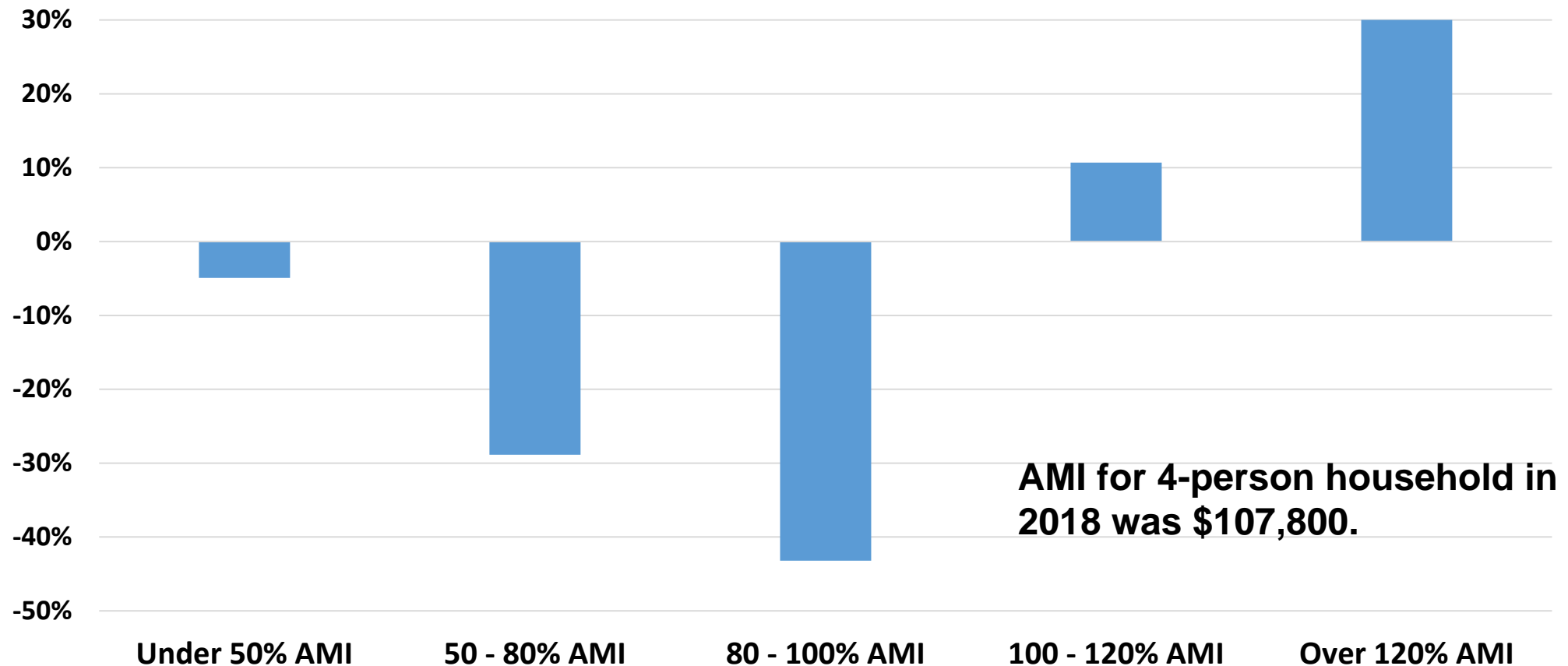


A salary of \$100,000 is necessary to afford an average market rate 1-bedroom rental apartment.

Source: City of Cambridge Housing Profile 2016. Rents for January of each year.

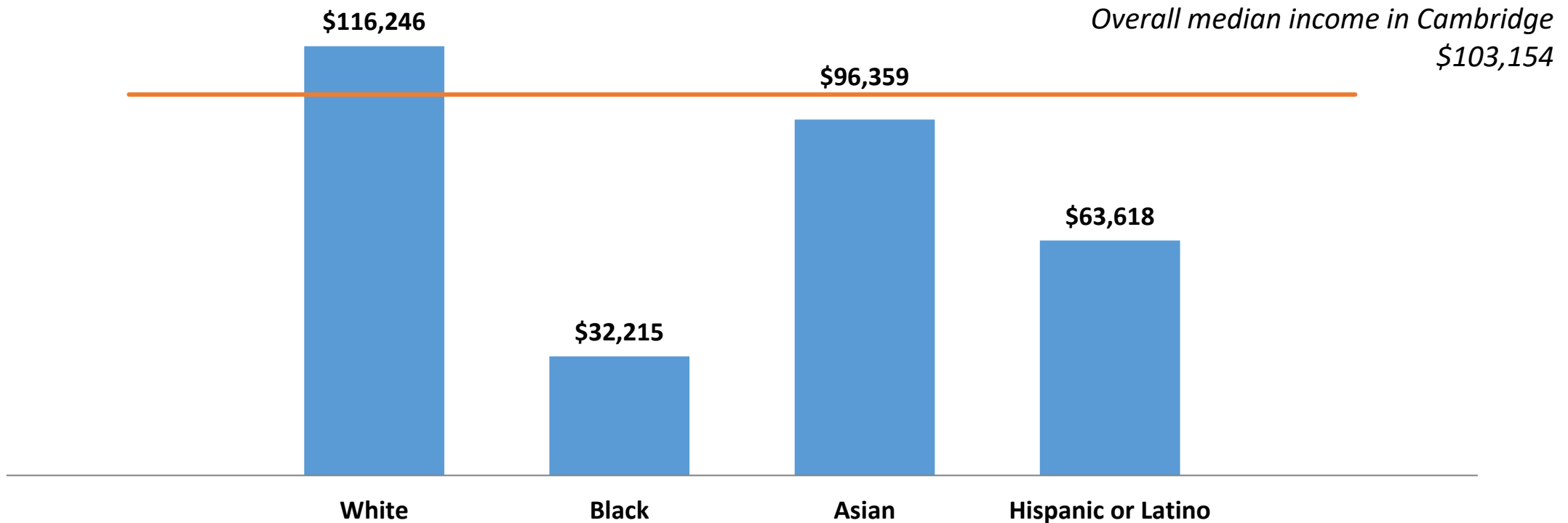
Changes in Household Income

Change in Share of Households By Income Range, 2000 to 2018

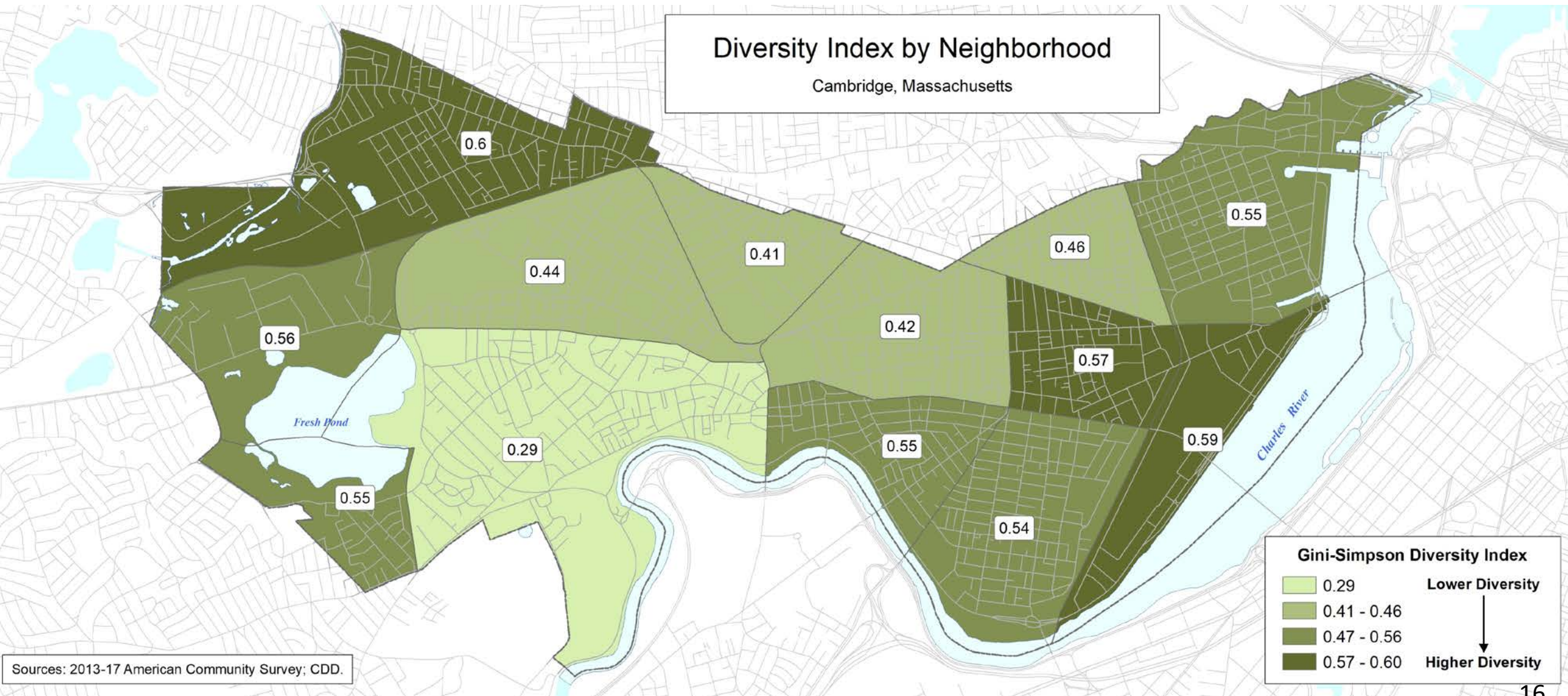


Income Inequality

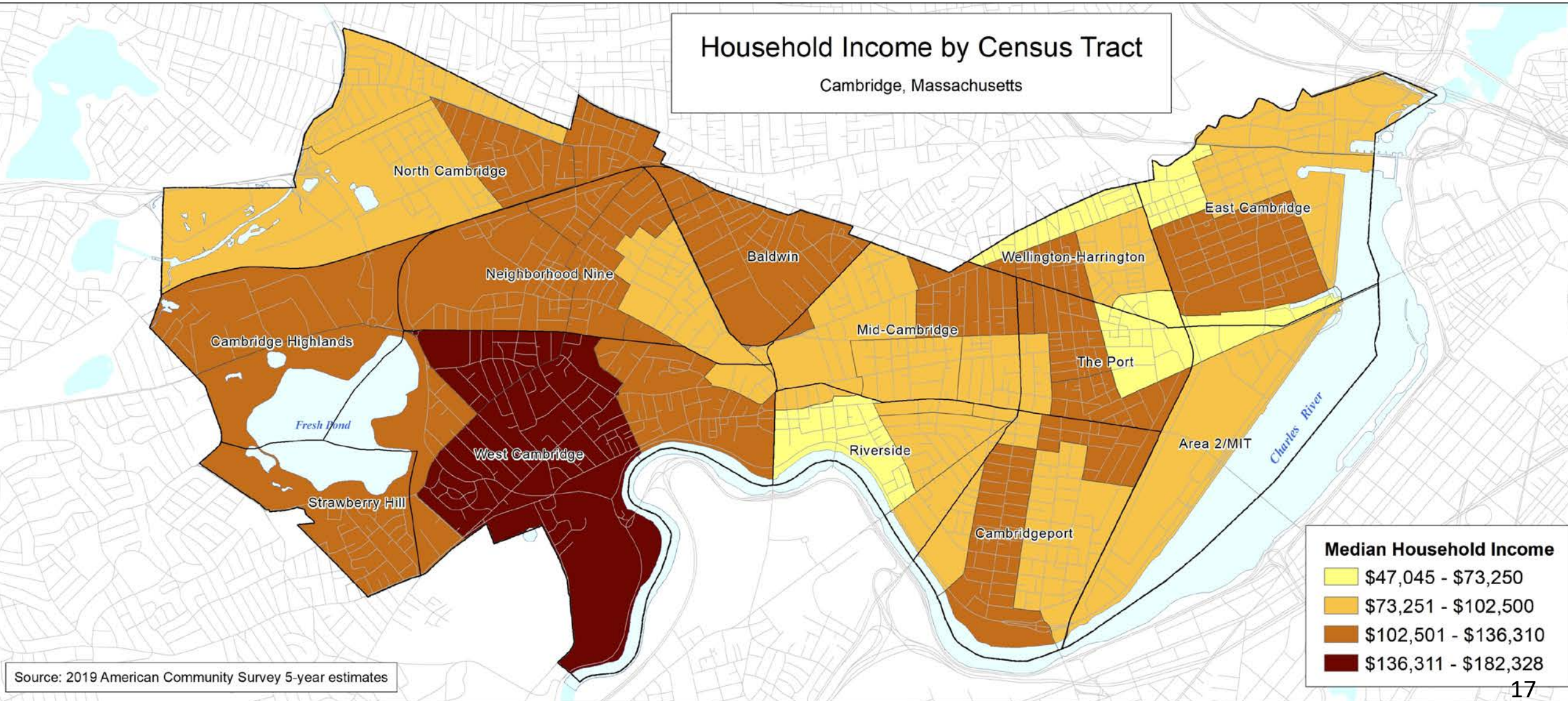
Median Household Income By Race and Ethnicity, 2019



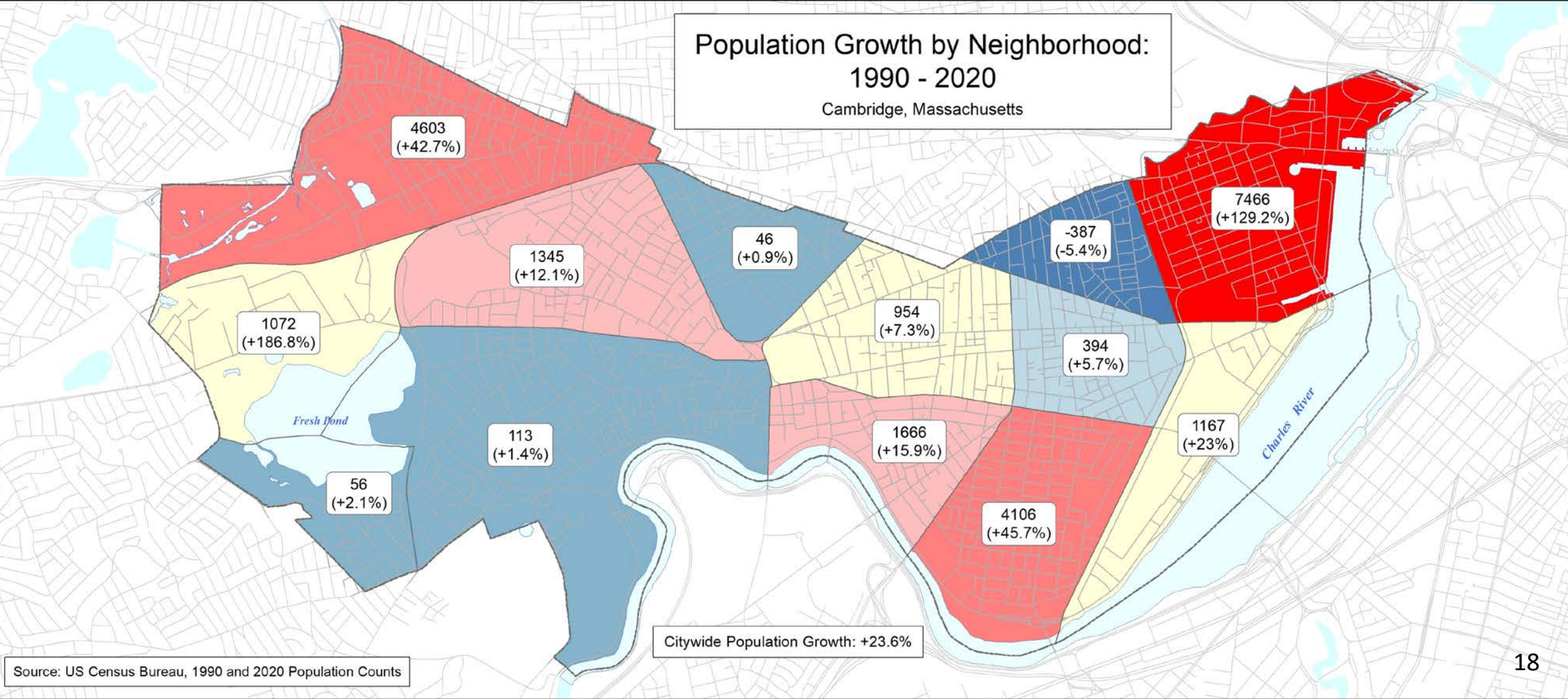
Racial diversity is not equally distributed across the city



Household income levels vary by location



Population growth varies by neighborhood



Changing Urban Form

An evolving mix of building types, densities, and architectural styles define the character of Cambridge's neighborhoods.





Why allow multifamily housing citywide?

City Council Policy Order #289 (Dec 2020)

- Single family only zoning is “artifact of historically exclusionary housing practices”
- “Increased need for housing production in Cambridge”
- “Creates more flexibility”
- “Increases the availability of housing units in all neighborhoods”

City Council Neighborhood and Long-Term Planning Discussion (Aug 2021)

- More inclusive zoning, dismantling systemic racism
- Fewer instances of people needing variances
- Not having to reduce units due to other requirements, e.g. parking
- More to encourage multifamily housing



Why allow multifamily housing citywide?

Advances Envision Cambridge goals:

- Support overall market affordability and lead the region in mitigating housing cost increases.
- Distribute housing opportunities equitably citywide
- Support the ability of Cambridge residents to remain in Cambridge. Maintain a range of housing options to enable households to transition to units best suited to meet their needs.
- Provide a variety of housing options for people of different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs.
- Promote climate neutrality through compact, sustainable development
- Provide access to opportunities for all people regardless of differences.
- Work toward addressing race-based disparities and racial equity.
- Maintain the existing patterns of the city through a mix of preservation and complementary infill development.
- Provide a safe and welcoming community.



Specific Envision Cambridge Recommendation

Strategy: “Increase overall housing production”

Action: “Change zoning to enable more housing, including affordable housing, to be built along major corridors, squares, and in other areas that have the capacity to accommodate growth and are well served by transit (e.g., increase base zoning, allow multifamily residential development citywide, offer density bonuses for increased percentage of affordable housing units).”

Housing Goals

| Envision Cambridge Goal | Relevance to Topic |
|--|---|
| Market Affordability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases housing supply to mitigate the region-wide shortage and rising housing costs• Could stabilize housing costs by increasing supply and reducing steep increases |
| Housing Opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides additional housing in less dense neighborhoods• Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City’s educational opportunities and strong social services |
| Housing Diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases the range of housing options in some neighborhoods• Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge, including people at different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs |
| Housing Stability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could provide options for residents to remain in place or downsize within Cambridge while accommodating life transitions |
| Affordable Housing (regulated, deed-restricted) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporating affordability standards requires more in-depth analysis• Adding more market rate development potential could detract from the goal of the Affordable Housing Overlay to create more deed-restricted housing in areas with fewer affordable units |

Climate & Environment Goals

Envision Cambridge Goal

Relevance to Topic

Climate Action

- Housing development in Cambridge, an urban core community with good transit and access to jobs, is less energy intensive and more sustainable than building housing in the suburbs or undeveloped areas

Climate Change Preparedness

- Applicability depends on specific proposal
 - New or improved buildings could include measures to promote flood resilience and reduce heat impacts.
 - More dense development could reduce vegetation and tree canopy

Ecological Protection

- Applicability depends on specific proposal
 - More dense developments could decrease open space and negatively impact biodiversity
 - More development in urbanized areas has ecological benefits by reducing the pressure for greenfield development and sprawl



Urban Form Goal

Envision Cambridge Goal

Relevance to Topic

Development Patterns

- Smaller scale development is more likely to be compatible with existing neighborhood fabric
- Less restrictive zoning requirements would be better aligned with existing patterns of development in many areas.



Economy Goal

Envision Cambridge Goal

Relevance to Topic

Equity and Fairness

- Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City's educational opportunities and strong social services
- Addresses the exclusionary effects of single-family oriented zoning



Community Wellbeing Goals

Envision Cambridge Goal

Relevance to Topic

Access to Opportunity

- Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City's educational opportunities and strong social services

Racial Justice

- Addresses the exclusionary effects of single-family oriented zoning
- Unknown who would access new housing opportunities

Sense of Belonging

- Communicates that Cambridge is a welcoming community



Discussion

Considerations when developing concepts for City Council:

- Highlight how specific proposals advance core values
- Balance trade-offs between conflicting goals
- Mitigate any negative impacts