

Housing Unit Growth, 2000 – 2006

Building permits are a valuable indicator of housing growth, when reported consistently.



Between 2000 and 2006, Metro Boston cities and towns permitted construction of 55,230 new housing units, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This map shows the number of units permitted in each municipality from 2000 to 2006. Boston saw the most growth (over 8,000 units), while Nahant permitted only 18 units. Twelve of MAPC's 101 municipalities permitted over 1,000 units, together comprising nearly half of all new housing. Fifteen cities and towns permitted fewer than 100 units over seven years.

Building permit numbers are important to the region: they are a key economic indicator, they inform U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, and they influence funding decisions at all levels of government. While most cities and towns report faithfully, 40% of MAPC's municipalities have failed to report full or partial years of data since 2000, requiring the Census Bureau to estimate the housing growth. Ten cities and towns reported less than half of the time, making conclusions about their growth patterns infeasible. Overburdened and underfunded municipal staff may not prioritize building permit reports, but effective planning requires up-to-date knowledge. MAPC, the Commonwealth, and the Census Bureau must build new partnerships with municipalities to help collect and share the data necessary for informed decision-making.

