

Fostering Effective Public Engagement

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Neighborhood Defenders

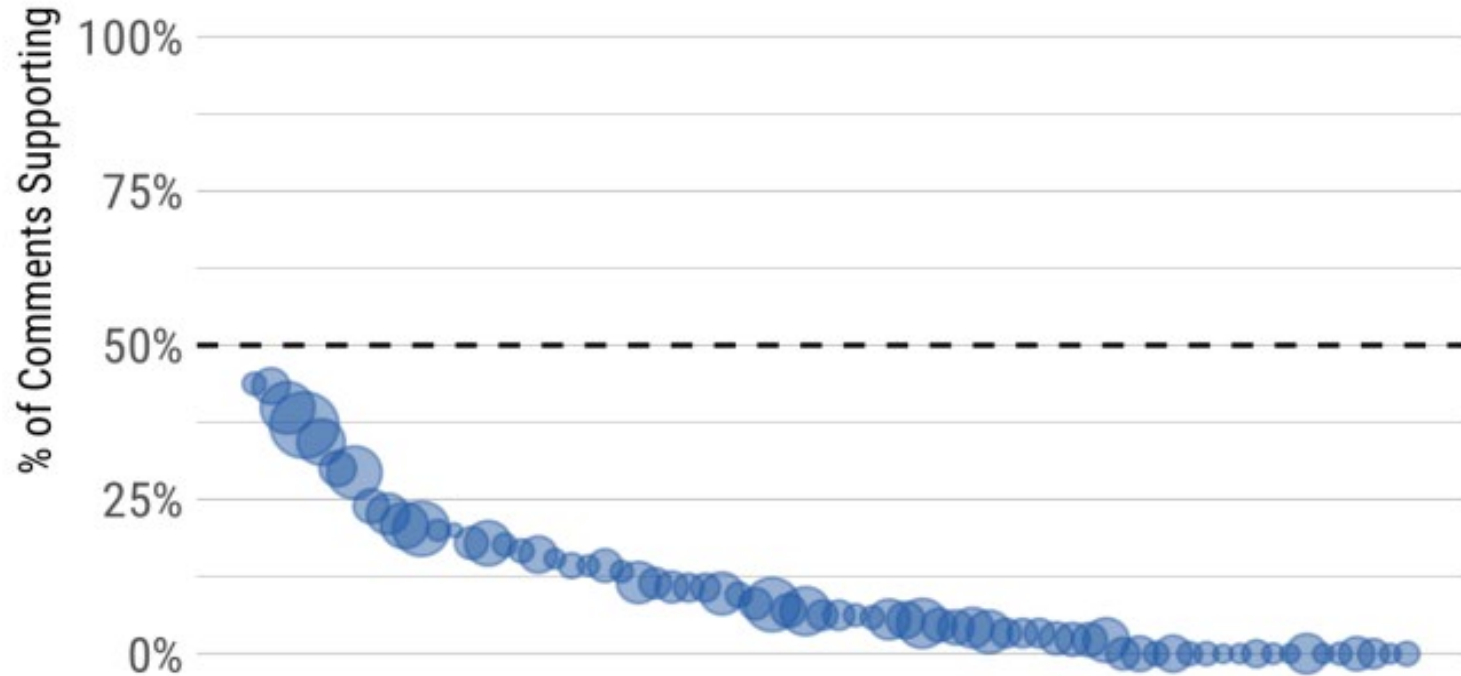
Research by Katherine Einstein, David Glick and Maxwell Palmer

- Observed 1000s of hours of public meetings on housing in MA
- Attendees do not represent the community as a whole
- Overwhelmingly older, white, male homeowners there to oppose new developments
- Trends persist in both high and low-cost cities
- Opposition in wealthier neighborhoods pushes development into lower-income neighborhoods, exacerbating gentrification and displacement
- housingpolitics.com

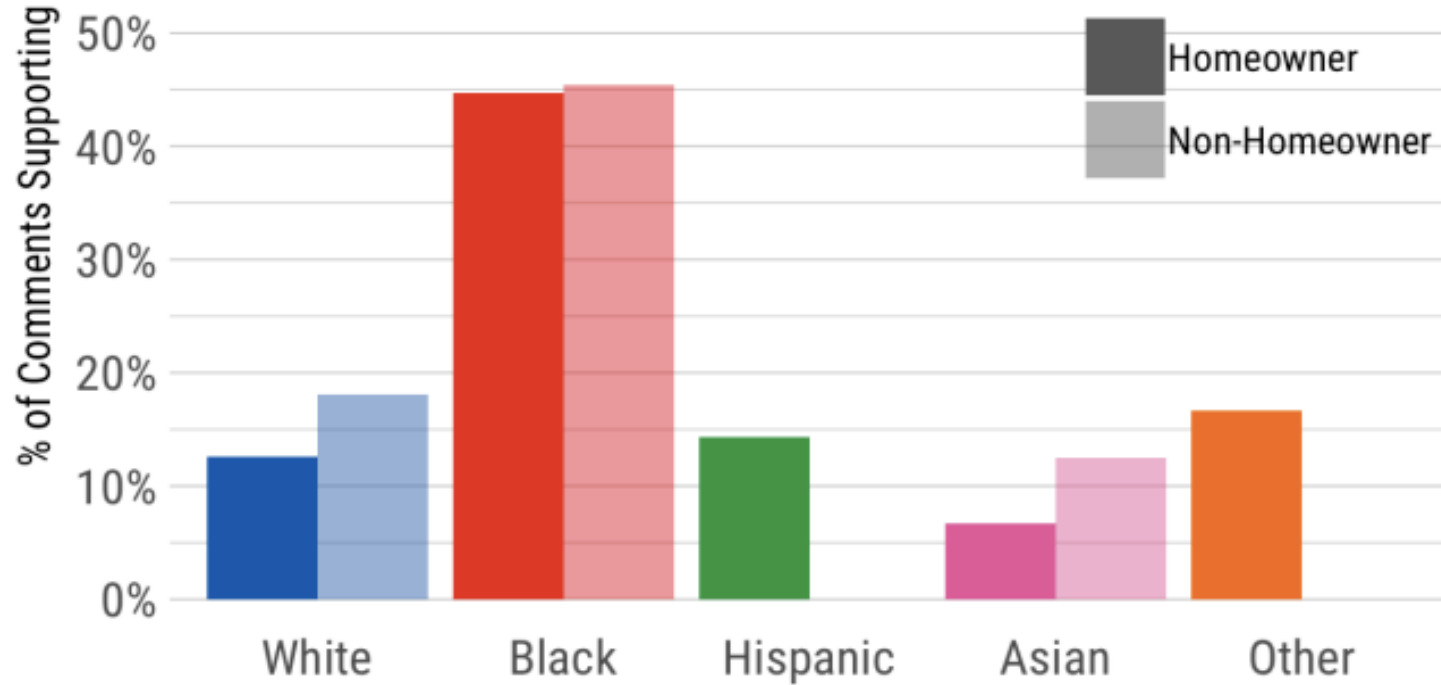
Differences Between Commenters & Voters

	Commenters	Voters	Diff.
Women	43.3%	51.3%	-8.0%
Whites	95.0%	86.7%	+8.2%
Age > 50	75.0%	52.6%	+22.4%
Homeowners	73.4%	45.6%	+27.8%

Majorities Oppose Multifamily Housing in Every Town



Differences in Support by Race and Homeownership



PARTICIPATION IN ZOOM MEETINGS: MARCH-SEPTEMBER 2020

(EINSTEIN, GLICK, GODINEZ PUIG, AND PALMER 2021)

	% of Commenters	% of Voters	Difference
Women	46.9%	52.8%	-6
Democrats	32.7%	30.9%	+1.8
White	82.5%	69.7%	+12.8
Age>50	73%	50.7%	+22.3
Homeowners	78.3%	53%	+25.3

Barriers to Participation

It is often the people who would benefit most from new housing that are unable to participate in these meetings. Barriers to more representative participation may include:

- Time - work and family commitments
- Insufficient outreach
- Bureaucratic gatekeeping
- Language barriers
- Sense of efficacy
- Harassment
- May not currently live in town but wish to move there

Identifying Stakeholders

Who is going to be most impacted by this? Who have you struggled to engage in the past? Reach beyond the usual suspects!

- Renters
- People of Color
- Young people
- Parents of young children
- People with disabilities
- People with low or no incomes
- Undocumented residents
- Non-English speaking residents
- Residents of Public + Affordable Housing



RACIAL EQUITY IN HOUSING POLITICS

Professors Katherine Levine Einstein & Maxwell Palmer

June 15, 2022

Boston University

TOWARDS HOUSING EQUITY

- Be attentive to diversity on boards and commissions
- Be aware of representational inequalities in political participation and public meetings
- Remember the beneficiaries of housing programs, not just the loudest voices
- Use inclusive engagement practices to incorporate the widest range of voices
- Use inclusive outreach on surveys to reach a truly representative population

NEWTON: CREATING SPACES FOR EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

- “As a person of color, and having only lived here for a few years, I have struggled to feel confident to engage in the process when people who are lifelong residents begin to get loud.” (participant in BIPOC focus group)
- “I have rented in Newton for more than 20 years and have never participated before. Typically, people in Newton get involved through their children’s school. I do not have kids and I always felt disconnected. I heard about this focus group through my landlord and just the fact that the City reached out directly to renters, like me, is why I am participating now.” (participant in renters’ focus group)
- “I would applaud what you’re doing here tonight - I’ve lived here 23 years, and this is the first such invitation for communication - so showing that Newton is welcome to other voices, a very small population of other voices in Newton but just showing that you’re interested in other voices sends a message, so that’s great.” (participant in BIPOC focus group)