

# Homelessness and Housing Solutions

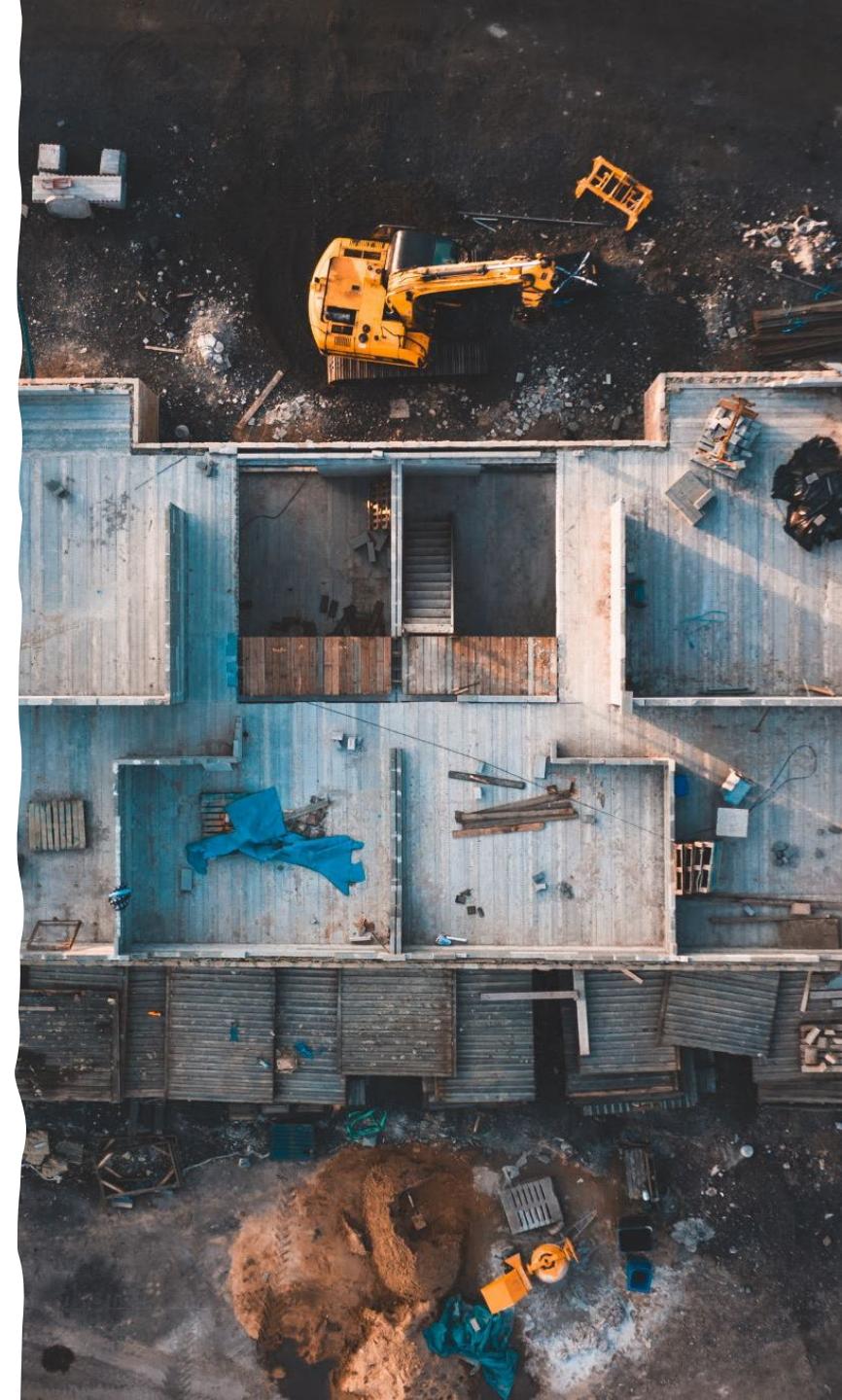
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Health and Human Services

City of Worcester



# **City of Worcester Dept. of Health & Human Services (HHS)**



Oversees coordination on a variety of homeless initiatives, including



Providing direct information and referral, street outreach



Planning of seasonal protocols



Participation in the Worcester City & County Continuum of Care Advisory Board



Collaboration with community-based providers who offer homeless prevention and rapid re-housing

# What is our role?

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OUTREACH RESPONSE

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HARM REDUCTION

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CRISIS INTERVENTION

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HOMELESS PREVENTION

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PEER SUPPORT

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LIAISON TO LOCAL SHELTERS



# What is homelessness?

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- HUD defines **homelessness** as: An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, adequate night-time residence including those living in:
  - Places not meant for human habitation
  - Shelter designated to provide temporary living
  - An institution where they have resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution



# Family Homelessness

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- Defined by HUD as any group of persons presenting for assistance together with or without children irrespective of age, relationship, or disability.

## Distinctions about family homelessness

- Right to shelter state for families
- Shelters are accessed through DTA/EOHLC
  - Not accessible during weekends and non 'work hours'
  - Families usually get moved outside of the area they were residing in
- A required eligibility criteria that they need to meet before accessing shelter



# Individual Homelessness vs Chronic Homelessness

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**Individually Homeless:** An unaccompanied adult, or couple who do not have custody of any children

**Chronically Homeless:** An individual who has been homeless continuously for at least one year or at least four separate occasions in the last three years



# Sheltered vs Unsheltered (HUD)

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- Determined by the location of individuals and families on the night of the point-in-time count:
  - **Sheltered population** are those who on the night of the point-in-time count, are living in shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing designated for the homeless.
  - **Unsheltered population** are those who are living in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street etc.

# Housing Barriers

Lack of  
Affordable  
Housing

Lack of  
shelters/beds

Availability/  
Low Vacancy

High Rents

Rental history  
and evictions

Poor credit  
score and  
insufficient  
savings

Unemployment/  
Low Income

Serious health  
conditions

Mental Health

Lack of social  
support

Legal barriers

Language  
barriers

Supportive  
services

Stigma

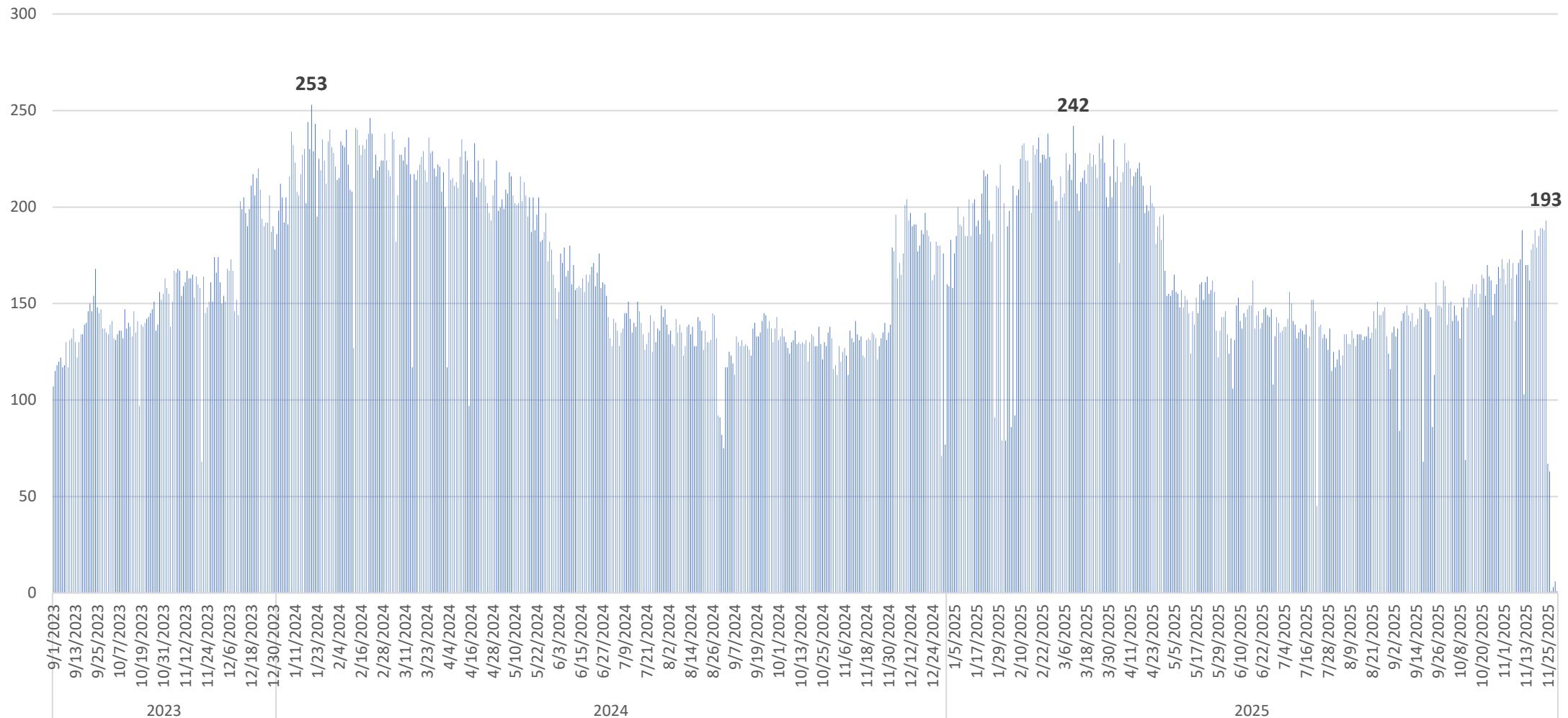
# Shelters in Worcester

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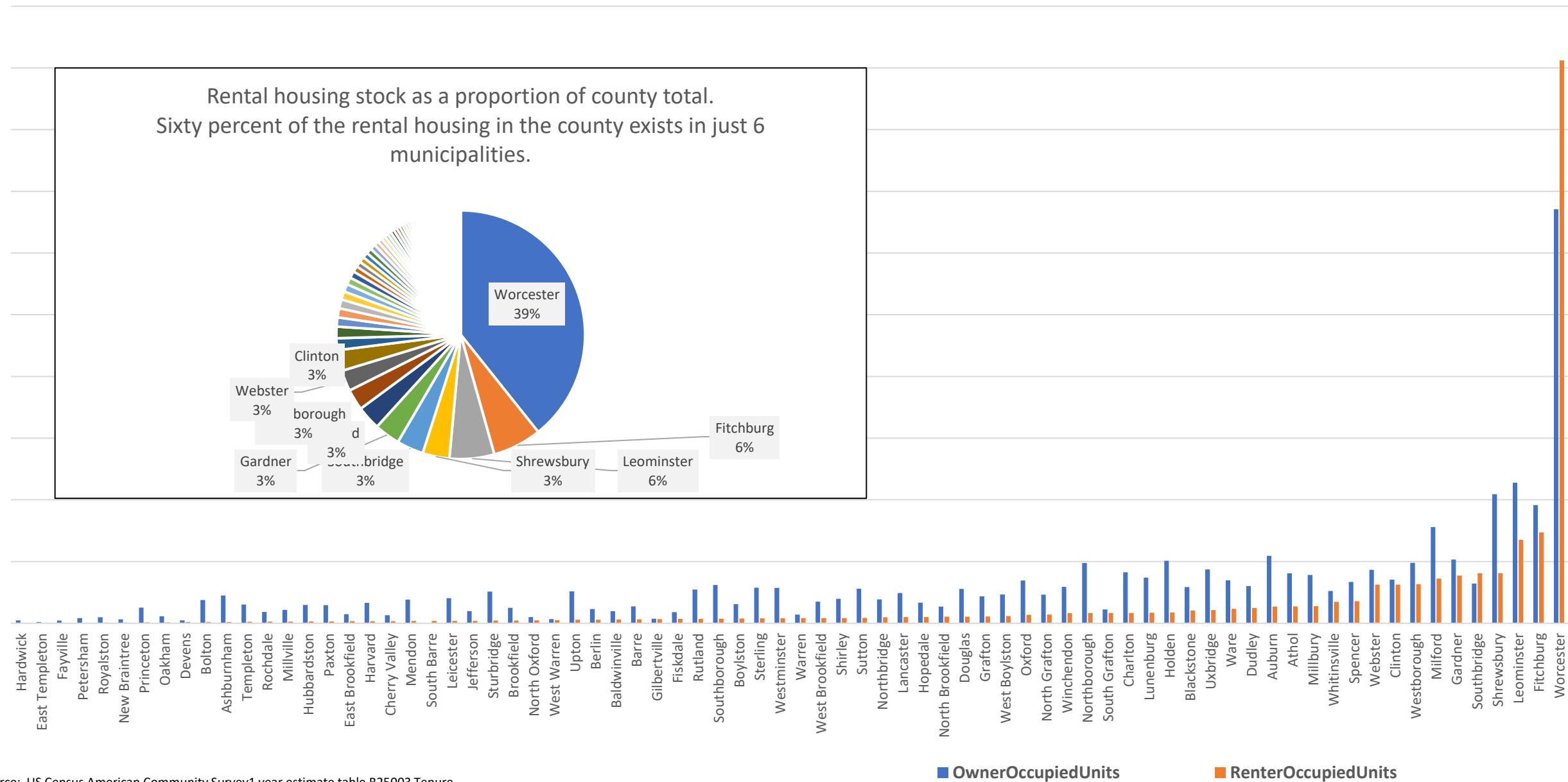
- 221 adult shelter beds are available in Worcester, not including the SMOC Winter Shelter
- **15 beds** for trafficked women opened March 17, 2025 Closed in August 2025

<b>SMOC 25</b>	All Genders	83 Beds
<b>Queen St</b>		
<b>SMOC MLK</b>	All Genders	64 Beds
<b>Abby's House</b>	Female	18 Beds
<b>Oriol Drive</b>	All Genders	36 Beds
<b>Veterans Inc Canterbury</b>	Male	20 Beds
<b>Total Worcester Adult Shelter Beds</b>		<b>221 Beds</b>

City Adult night by night shelter attendance.  
Includes SMOC's Queen St, MLK and any any available winter shelter in the city.  
Peak attendance is about 250 concurrent shelter occupants.

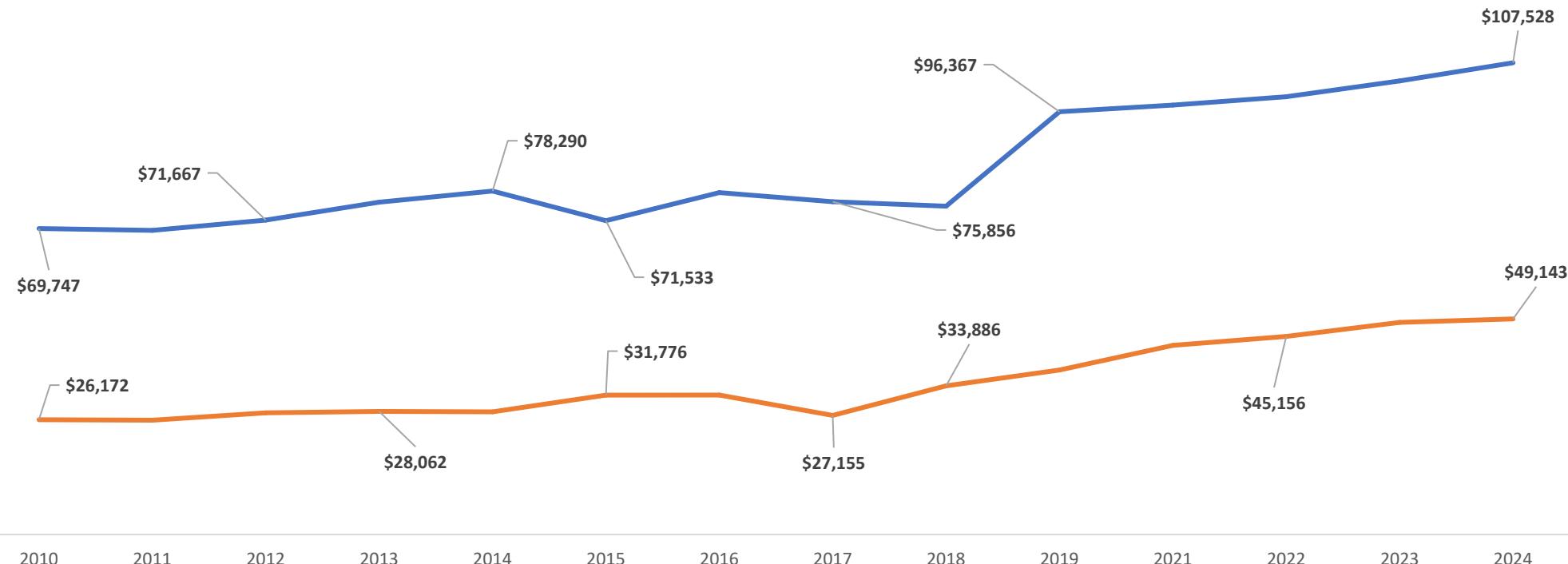


Nearly 40% of the rental housing in Worcester County is located in the City of Worcester



Source: US Census American Community Survey 1 year estimate table B25003 Tenure

City of Worcester  
Homeowner income vs Renter income

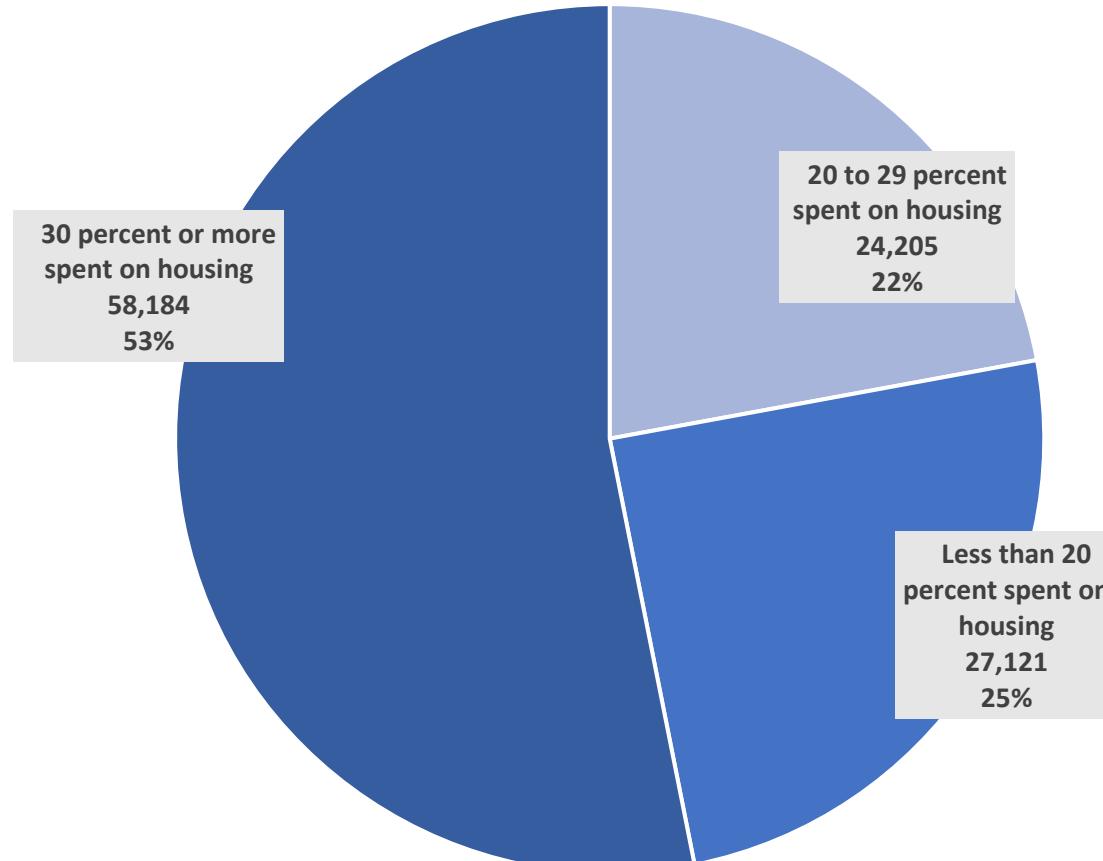


Source: US Census American Community Survey1 year estimate table B25119 Median household income in the past 12 months

— Owner occupied median household income

— Renter occupied median household income

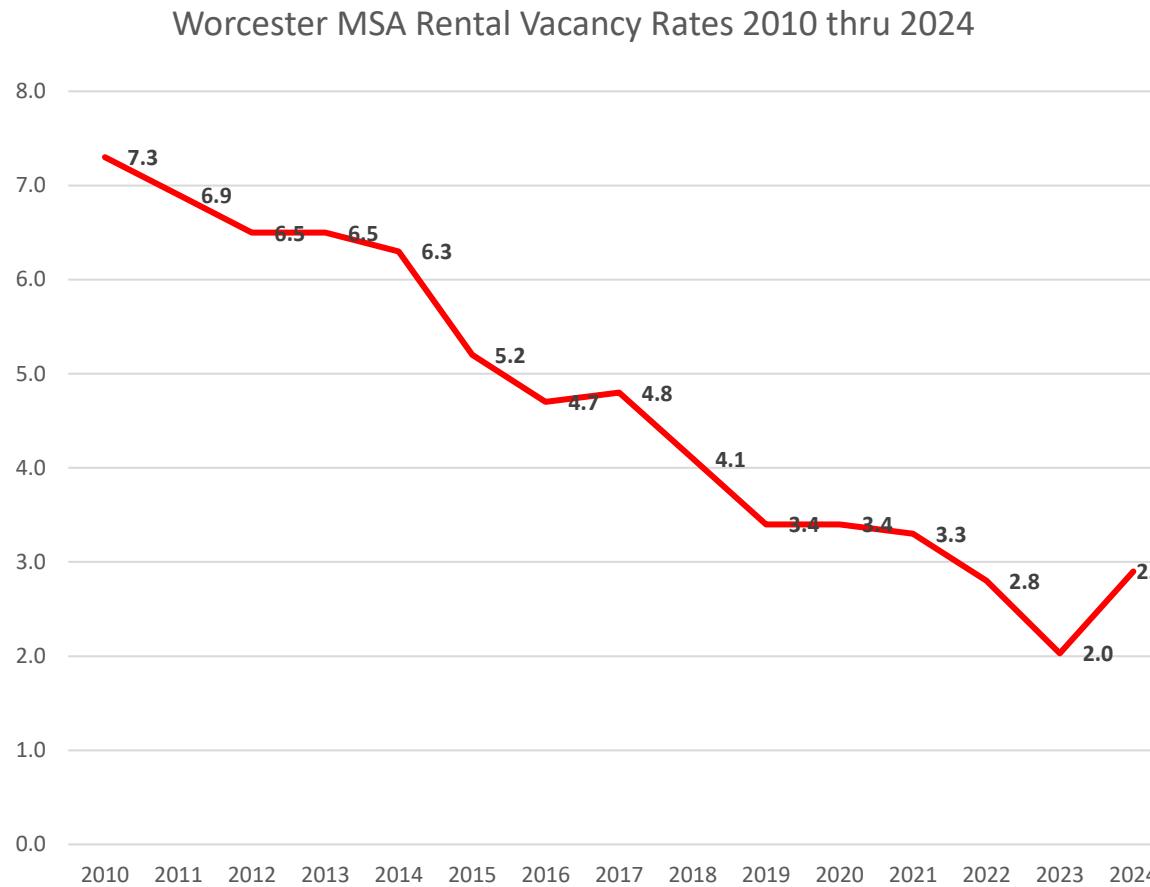
Over half of **renter households** in Worcester County spend more than 30% of household income on housing.



Source: US Census American Housing Survey table S2503 1 year estimate 2023

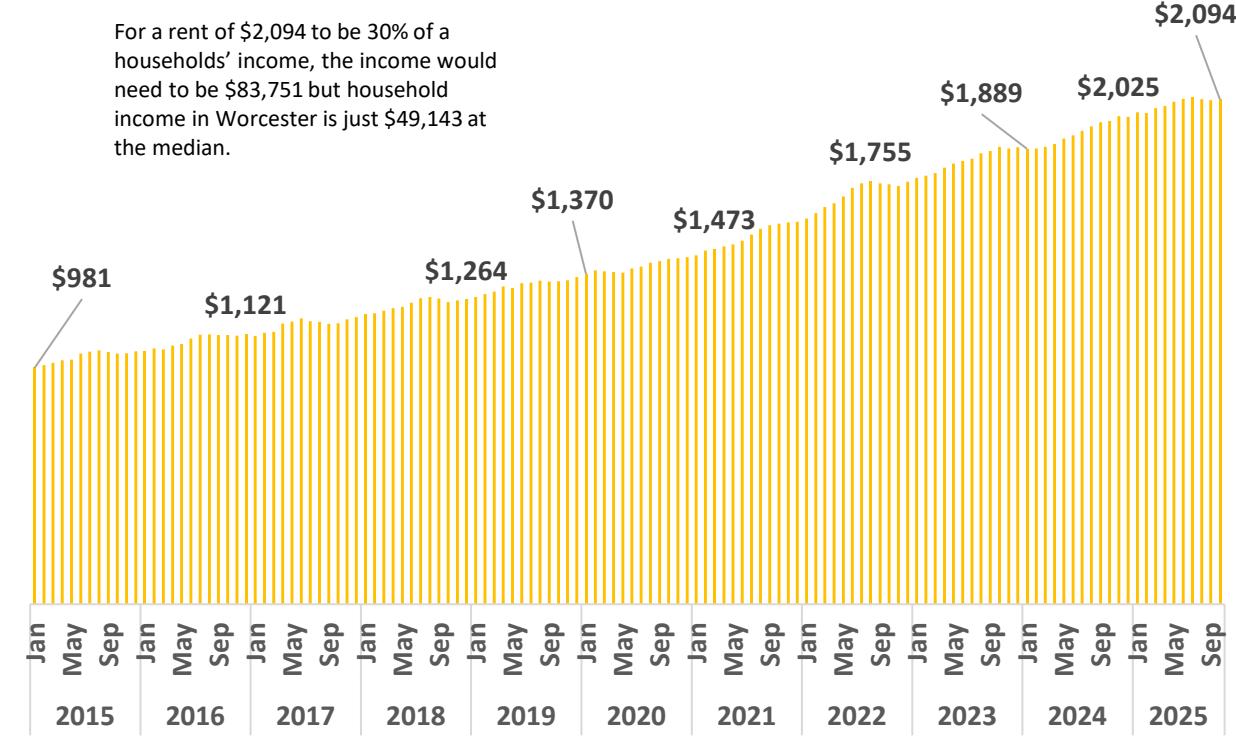


Low rental vacancy rate and high rents continue to challenge those looking to rent a home in Worcester.



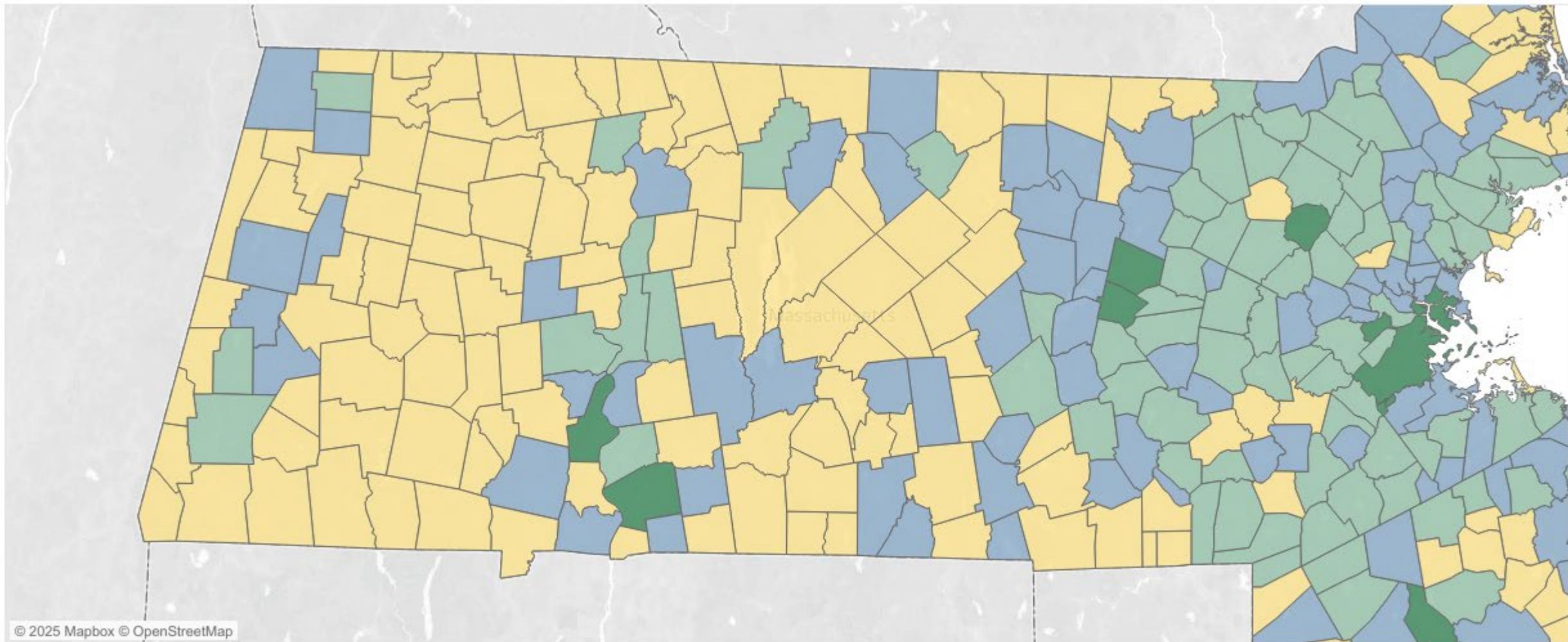
\*<https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/rates.html>

**City** of Worcester Market Rent per the Zillow Observed Rent  
Monthly updates 2015 thru 2025 year to date



\*\*<https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>

## Subsidized housing inventory per community



Subsidized Housing Inventory as a Share of Total Year-Round Housing Units

Less than 5%

5% to 9.99%

10% to 14.99%

15% or above



**Who are the residents of Worcester  
encampments?**



Significant increase in encampments across **Worcester city**, particularly during the **warmer weather**





**Encampments raise issues of:**  
Safety  
Poor health outcomes  
Inadequate sanitation





# Housing Projects

- **Quality Inn Hotel by Worcester Community Housing Resources (WCHR):** Currently underway to convert a hotel into 90 units of permanent supportive housing, scheduled for completion by 2026-2027
- **Claremont Street Pilot Project** Developing 4 Tiny homes for Seniors in collaboration with United Way and Worcester Community Housing Resources, Open Sky and other community partners
- **SMOC: MLK** Developing 20 single occupancy housing units at their Martin Luther King (MLK) site, also set to be completed by 2026
- **Worcester Community Housing Resources:** Developing 18 tiny homes , set to be completed by 2027
- **Worcester Housing Authority:** Curtis apartments are going from 372 to 527 units expected by 2026-2027



## Completed Projects

- **Lewis Street:** Successfully finished 24 single occupancy housing units on October 31st, 2023.
- **SMOC: 30 Winfield St:** Three-story building featuring 18 studio micro-units, completed August 2025
- **Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)** at 6 Wyman St: Completed 16 single occupancy housing units on February 1, 2024.



# Affordable Tiny Homes

- ❑ Developing 4 tiny homes for homeless seniors by Fall of 2025
- ❑ Create a sense of homeownership, independence, and dignity in our community



# What can I do?

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- **Decrease Stigma:** Check your own biases and see the homeless as humans
- **Social Determinants of Health:** Include housing issues and homelessness in conversations
- **Community Approach:** Homelessness and housing impacts us all
- **Stay Informed and Educate** yourself on current policies and initiatives
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Care about people
- **Advocate and Show Up**

# Questions?

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