Racial Disparities in Housing Politics
Evidence from Administrative Data

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CHAPA: Who is the ‘M’ in NIMBY

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Citizen Participation in Local Democracy

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- Central question: who participates at community meetings?
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- Meetings typically solicit input from public, especially abutters.
- Creates multiple potential veto points where citizen objections can stop or delay the development of new housing.
- Veto points could be a good thing if they empower neighborhoods against developer excess.
Research Goals

- Demographic representation
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- Attitudinal
Meeting Minutes

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- $N = 3,327$ commenters and $N = 4,268$ comments
Towns with Public Comments

Number of Comments
- 5-15
- 16-20
- 21-24
- 25+

Legend:
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- 16-20
- 21-24
- 25+
Christine Gilbert of 56 Westminster Ave. thanked the board for their efforts and expressed hope for a compromise between the project and the neighbors. She also expressed concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety. Ed Temblay of 76 Wright Street expressed concern about parking and snow removal. Gary Kalajian of 24 Nourse Street is concerned about the height of the building. John Leonard, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 17, 26 Grove Street asked about Deed Restrictions for affordable housing, dumpster location and trash pick-up. Pam Hallett responded that there will be a deed restriction ensuring the units will be affordable to low and moderate income households in perpetuity. Lisa Heinz of Sunset Rd. expressed concern about curb elevation. Bob Levane of 26 Lantern Ln. spoke in support of the project. Michael Vest shared his experience as a tenant with HCA and expressed his support. John Guist, Town Meeting Member, and Neal Mongold, 12 Brattle Place, shared their support for HCA and the project. Dave Berggren of 2 Reservoir Rd. expressed concern about shadow impacts and flooding. Chris Loreti of 56 Adams Street inquired about setbacks, the parking reduction zoning bylaw, and whether the project would go to the Conservation Commission. Jenny Raitt replied that it would. William Thorndike of 1165R Mass Ave spoke in support of the project. Kate Casa of 62 Wollaston Rd. and Patricia O’Connor Prindle of 13 Newport Street supported the project. Tami Kalajian expressed concern about flooding, pedestrian safety and the size of the project. Tom Nee of 76 River Street supported the project. Suzanne McLeod of 61 Mountain Ave. supported the projected but preferred a more unique design. Linnea Berggren of 2 Reservoir Rd. expressed concern about parking overflow on adjacent streets. Tom Mansfield of 11 Lowell Street Place expressed concern about the project size and its shadow impact.

Atty. Nelson said it will be for speculation. It will be a high quality house for the neighborhood.

Frances Hanson, 42 Shannon Road asked, what type of house will be built there?

Atty. Nelson said he is not sure at this time.

Ms. Hanson asked, if they will be required to finish the road there?

Mr. Colantuoni said they will be required to comply with the Department of Public Works road requirements.

Alfred Franca, 38 Shannon Road asked, if this house will have a basement, as he has drainage concerns regarding that property?
Meeting Minutes

- % Oppose
Meeting Minutes

- Names and addresses allow for merge with MA voter file and CoreLogic Property Records
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  - Length of registration at address (proxy for length of residence)
  - Vote history
Race Matching

- Imai and Khanna (2016) algorithm: last name, census block, other demographic information
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  - Estimate race for all commenters and over 1.6 million people in the voter file
- Manually assess surnames in cities/towns that are > 10% Latino and identify Latino surnames ($n = 313$)
Results: Participants Compared to Voter File

**Gender**

- **% Female**
  - Voters: [Graph]
  - Commenters: [Graph]

**Race**

- **% White**
  - Voters: [Graph]
  - Commenters: [Graph]

**Home Owners**

- **% Home Owner**
  - Voters: [Graph]
  - Commenters: [Graph]

**Democrats**

- **% Democrats**
  - Voters: [Graph]
  - Commenters: [Graph]
Results: Participants Compared to Voter File by Race

![Bar Chart]

- **White**
- **Black**
- **Hispanic**
- **Asian**
- **Other**

**Voters**
- White: 100%
- Black: 0%
- Hispanic: 0%
- Asian: 0%
- Other: 0%

**Commenters**
- White: 100%
- Black: 0%
- Hispanic: 0%
- Asian: 0%
- Other: 0%
Latino Surnames

- 3 of 313 commenters in towns that were >10% Latino had a Latino surname
Latino Surnames

- 3 of 313 commenters in towns that were >10% Latino had a Latino surname
- 1 of 42 commenters in Lawrence, MA (75% Latino) had a Latino surname
Results: Participants’ Positions

14% Support
23% Neutral
63% Oppose
Results: Participants’ Positions

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- 23% Neutral
- 63% Oppose

▷ Predictors of opposition
Results: Participants’ Positions

- Predictors of opposition
  - White
Results: Participants’ Positions

- Predictors of opposition
  - White
  - Homeowner
Results: Participants’ Positions

- Predictors of opposition
  - White
  - Homeowner
  - Republican
Results: Participants’ Positions

- Predictors of opposition
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  - Republican
  - Number of comments
Results: Participants’ Positions

- **Predictors of opposition**
  - White
  - Homeowner
  - Republican
  - Number of comments
  - Infrequent voting
Black Voters Are More Likely to Speak in Support of Development

Comments Supporting Housing Development
by Commenter Race

% of Comments Supporting

White
Black
Hispanic
Asian
Other

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
Black Voters Are More Likely to Speak in Support of Development… Even After Accounting for Homeownership

Comments Supporting Housing Development
by Commenter Race and Homeownership

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other

% of Comments Supporting

- Homeowner
- Non-Homeowner
Mass Public Generally More Supportive of Housing

Vote for Affordable Housing in 40B Referendum

% Comments Supporting Multifamily Housing Developments

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Top 10 Reasons Given by Position Taken

- Traffic
- Septic/Water
- Schools
- Safety
- Privacy
- Parking
- Non-Compliance
- Noise
- Neighborhood Character
- Home Values/City Finances
- Height/Shadows
- Flooding
- Environment
- Diversity
- Pedestrian Impact
- Building Foundation
- Affordability
- Aesthetics
- Corruption
High level of expertise (e.g., “He stated that as an engineer he knows what kinds of games can be played with numbers. He gives no credibility to these counts. He added that Merrimack College traffic is not de minimus....He asked for a written report from the DPW on the impacts of proceeding with the facility.”)
Policy Impact

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  - Quantitative analysis correlated lawsuits with lower levels of housing permitting
Policy Prescriptions

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▶ Measures that improve socioeconomic disparities (e.g., abutters lists)
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- Measures that improve socioeconomic disparities (e.g., abutters lists)
- Measures that mitigate bias towards opposition (considering project proposals in bulk instead of one-by-one)
Thank you!