



Stockbridge

Massachusetts

A Fiscal & Civic Profile

FY2026 Snapshot

Prepared by **Parcenomics**

May 2026

PARCENOMICS · *Aggregate · Assimilate · Evaluate*

© 2026 Parcenomics · hello@parcenomics.com · 413-441-5231

Executive Summary

Stockbridge has been changing for decades. The shift from a year-round community to a mixed seasonal community has been the underlying conversation of local politics for at least a generation. The data now shows where the town has arrived.

The through-line of this profile is a single structural observation. Stockbridge's tax base has transformed underneath a fiscal structure that has not adjusted to it. The residential base nearly doubled in assessed value over the past decade while the year-round community aged and compressed. The town met its obligations and funded its priorities throughout — within its existing means, without an override, while expanding relief for its senior homeowners. That record is real and worth stating plainly. But the same period left two things unaddressed: the town has not distributed the new burden the transformation created any more fairly than the across-the-board residential rate does by default, and it has not coupled its senior-homeowner relief with any mechanism for the next generation's entry into the community. As approximately \$3.9 million in new annual obligations arrives by FY2029, the residential property tax rate remains the Town's only reflexive tool — at exactly the moment the data shows other tools are available. This profile documents the transformation, the Town's response to date, and the tools that remain unused.

About 6 out of every 10 dollars of residential property value in Stockbridge is owned by people who do not live here year-round. Measured by assessed value, the split is 39.1% primary-resident, 59.7% non-resident, and 1.3% entity-held — homes owned by LLCs or trusts whose underlying ownership cannot be traced from public records. By a simple count of properties, the split is 41.2% primary-resident, 52.9% non-resident, and 5.9% entity-held. The value-weighted picture is heavier toward non-resident ownership than the property-count picture because non-resident-owned homes tend to be more valuable. Entity-held property runs the other way — many parcels, lower average value. The town's residential tax base totals approximately \$1.35 billion. Non-resident-owned property carries \$808 million of it.

The income composition of the year-round community has changed. Median household income in Stockbridge grew from \$56,027 in 2015 to \$146,250 in 2024 — nearly a doubling of purchasing power in nine years, after accounting for inflation. Across Massachusetts, the typical household's purchasing power rose by about 15% over the same nine years. Stockbridge's gain was roughly six times larger. The Stockbridge figure does not mean existing residents got richer. It means the composition of who lives here changed. As housing costs rose, middle-income households moved out. Higher-income households moved in. Current per-capita income of \$84,995 is 1.47 times the Massachusetts average.

Most non-resident-owned residential value has not been validated against a market transaction in 20 years. Of the \$808 million in non-resident-owned Stockbridge residential value, \$639 million (80%) sits in parcels with no arm's-length sale in the 20-year sales register. These parcels carry assessment estimates that have been carried forward

through ten biennial state Equalized Valuation cycles without an arm's-length sale anchor for the individual parcel. The aggregate effect of this lag is measurable: Stockbridge's FY2026 implied assessment-to-sale ratio is 114.1%, indicating that current market values run roughly 14% above the certified equalized valuation. Personal property tax declarations on these same parcels are similarly anchored to filings made at the time of acquisition and carried forward unchanged. The combined effect is a structural lag between current market reality and the tax basis on which the largest share of non-resident-owned residential property is currently assessed.

Commercial new growth has essentially stopped. For 5 of the 7 fiscal years since the pandemic, Stockbridge added zero new commercial or industrial property to its tax base. None. Residential property added \$57.4 million in new growth over the same period. Commercial and industrial added \$0.75 million combined — a ratio of 77 to 1. The tax base has continued to grow. The growth has been entirely residential.

The Town has managed this transformation within its means. The fiscal record does not describe a town in distress. Stockbridge has met its rising obligations, funded discretionary priorities — including approximately \$1 million in borrowing to restore its Main Street monuments, a capital choice many comparable towns could not contemplate — and maintained its AA+ bond rating, all within its existing Proposition 2½ levy capacity and without a single operating override. Across the 16-year record the Town has consistently left roughly \$1.1 to \$1.3 million of allowable levy capacity unused. The override path has been unnecessary for Stockbridge, not blocked. This distinction matters for what follows: the structural question facing the Town is not whether it can raise revenue. It is that the residential property tax rate is the only tool the Town reaches for by default, and that default falls hardest on the residents least able to absorb it.

The Town's most developed equity response has a structural limit. Stockbridge has built a genuine support structure for one vulnerable cohort — its legacy senior homeowners — adopting the full suite of senior exemptions and deferrals available under state law, several at parameters well beyond the statutory minimums, and funding that relief within its means. But a senior exemption is financed through an overlay: the revenue not collected from exempt seniors is recovered by raising the rate on every non-exempt household. Among those who absorb that overlay are the working-age, year-round households whose incomes have not tracked the property-value transformation the data documents. The Town has not coupled its senior relief with any mechanism addressing entry-level homeownership for the next generation. The gap is visible across the demographic record: an aging year-round population, a shrinking under-35 cohort, new buyers who do not convert to year-round residency, and a median-income trajectory driven by the in-migration of wealth rather than rising incomes among existing families. The senior toolkit addresses staying. Nothing the Town has yet adopted addresses arriving. This is the unfinished half of the equity response, and Chapter 5 names where in the available toolkit its missing pieces sit.

Responding to these trends costs money. A year-round community is sustained by more than housing. It depends on institutions — a well-funded library, programming for residents at every life stage, accessible day care for working families, services that keep older residents engaged in town life rather than shut in at home. Helping legacy homeowners stay in their homes is one piece. Strengthening the institutions that make Stockbridge a place worth staying in is another. All of it costs money. The question is where the funding comes from. The default — raising property tax rates across the board — falls hardest on the older, fixed-income year-round residents who are already most squeezed by the changing community, and on the working-age households carrying the senior-exemption overlay. The terminology of legacy homeowners — property-rich, cash-poor full-time residents — is increasingly used in Berkshire municipal discussions to describe one part of this population. The levers below offer an alternative. They are tools to fund a proactive response without raising the burden on the residents who can least afford to pay more.

Several fiscal levers exist for the Town to consider. Four independent compliance streams — personal property tax on furnishings, vehicle excise, boat excise, and short-term-rental community impact fees — carry an estimated combined annual gap of approximately \$0.3 million to \$0.9 million on the strict universe of parcels Parcenomics could classify with confidence. The range is a floor: some parcels excluded for classification uncertainty are likely also non-compliant and would surface through outreach. The state’s residential tax exemption, normally capped at 35% of average residential value but available to Stockbridge up to 50% under its 2024 Seasonal Community designation, would shift residential property tax burden from primary residents toward non-resident-owned homes. The Town also has \$1.13 million of unused levy capacity under Proposition 2½. Combined under a conservative recovery scenario, these three levers together would produce approximately \$1.41 million in new annual town revenue and approximately \$640 in annual savings to a typical \$1 million primary-resident home.

This profile presents what the data shows, in five chapters. The findings are neutral on policy. The choices are the Town’s to make.

Chapter 1 — Who Lives Here. Demographics from federal census estimates and the town voter file. The age structure, the income transformation, the household composition.

Chapter 2 — The Property Picture. The tax base by class, by ownership, by exempt status. Who owns the residential property. Who pays.

Chapter 3 — How We Got Here. The 16-year fiscal record: three trends — residential pulling away from commercial in AV growth, commercial new growth halting after the pandemic, and deliberate use of the excise lever — combine to explain the current tax base structure.

Chapter 4 — What This Means. Stockbridge as one of eight Berkshire County towns named in the Commonwealth’s original December 2024 Seasonal Community designation under the Affordable Homes Act, since expanded to 18 Berkshire towns. What that designation signals. What it means for the next generation of town policy.

Chapter 5 — What Can Be Done. Fiscal tools, housing-production tools, and legacy-resident-support tools. Each presented with its mechanics, its Stockbridge-specific numbers, and its trade-offs.

Chapter 1 — Who Lives Here

The income composition of Stockbridge has changed dramatically in the last decade. The town’s other demographic indicators — age, education, household size — all point in the same direction. Stockbridge is a small, older, well-educated, and increasingly affluent year-round community embedded in a much larger seasonal one.

A quick note on what these numbers mean

When this profile talks about the “median” household income, it means the middle of the road — the household that’s richer than half the town and poorer than the other half. A household is everyone who lives together at one address, with all their incomes added up. The income includes wages from work, retirement payments, Social Security, and other regular income. The middle-of-the-road household is a better gauge of how most people live than an average would be — averages get pulled way up by a few very wealthy households, especially in a town like Stockbridge.¹

The income transformation

In 2015, the middle-of-the-road Stockbridge family earned \$56,027. In 2024, that family earned \$146,250. Even after accounting for inflation — the fact that everything costs more now than it did then — the middle-of-the-road Stockbridge family nearly doubled its purchasing power in nine years.²

To put what that change looks like on the ground: in 2015, the middle-of-the-road Stockbridge family could afford a new Honda Civic — a practical, reliable family car. The middle-of-the-road Stockbridge family in 2024 could afford a new Beamer — roughly three

¹ Median household income figures are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, table B19013. Stockbridge: 2011-2015 vintage and 2020-2024 vintage. Massachusetts and Berkshire County figures from the same source and vintages.

² The middle-of-the-road Stockbridge household earned \$56,027 in 2015 and \$146,250 in 2024 — a 2.61-times increase in current dollars. Adjusted for the 32% rise in the Consumer Price Index between 2015 and 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI-U, U.S. city average, annual), the equivalent purchasing-power growth is approximately 1.97 times. Massachusetts grew 1.52 times in current dollars over the same period, equivalent to roughly 1.15 times in purchasing-power terms. Berkshire County grew at the state pace. Stockbridge’s purchasing-power growth was approximately six times larger than the state’s. The arithmetic of comparable proportional gains across the two geographies is invariant to inflation adjustment, since the same price-level multiplier applies to all figures; the choice of presentation affects the headline only, not the comparison.

times the price, and a different kind of car for a different kind of buyer. Same position in town. Different town.

Across Massachusetts, the typical middle-of-the-road family saw its purchasing power rise by about 15% over those same nine years. Berkshire County traveled at the state pace. Stockbridge’s middle family went somewhere else entirely. Roughly six times further than the state.

The Stockbridge figure is not the result of existing families getting richer. It is the result of who lives in Stockbridge changing. As home prices and rents rose, middle-income families moved out. Higher-income families moved in. The magnitude of that replacement is examined later in this chapter.

Per-person income in Stockbridge is now \$84,995 — 1.47 times the Massachusetts average of \$57,897. Federal census estimates for towns under 5,000 in population carry meaningful uncertainty around their point values. The pattern across multiple indicators holds nonetheless.

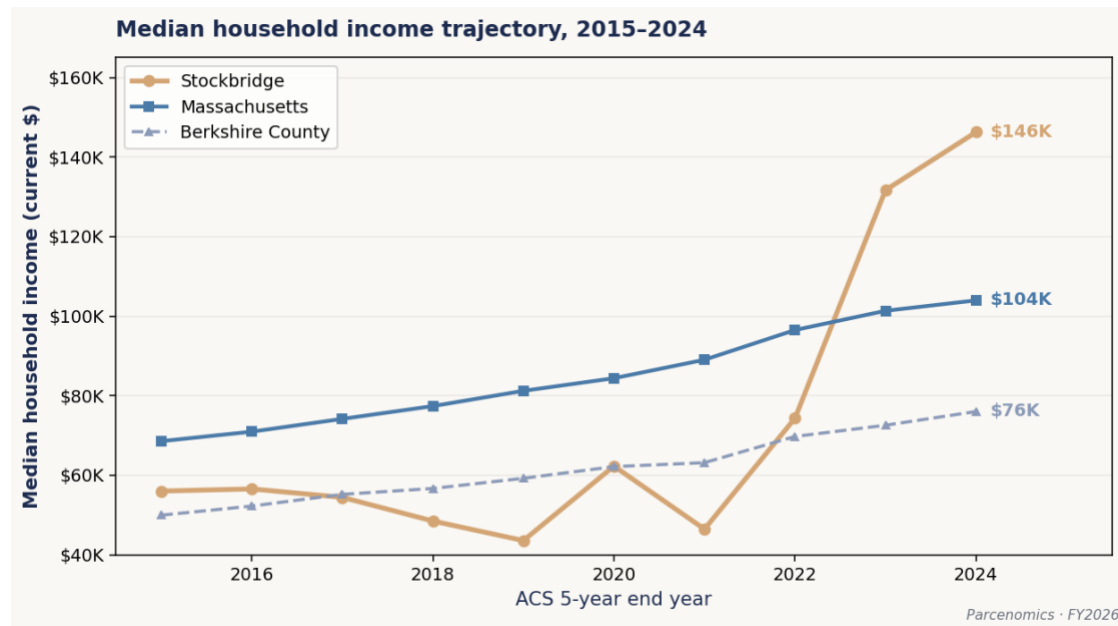


Chart 1.1 — Middle-of-the-Road Household Income Trajectory, 2015-2024

A small town that’s getting older

Stockbridge has 2,056 residents in 23.8 square miles. Population density is 86 people per square mile — about three-fifths the Berkshire County average and one-tenth the Massachusetts average. This is a small town in a sparse county in a dense state.

The middle of the road for age is 63.7 years in Stockbridge. The Berkshire County figure is 47.3. The Massachusetts figure is 40.0. Stockbridge is 16 years older than the county and 24 years older than the state.

The town’s active voter file — 1,600 registered voters who voted in at least one recent election, as of April 2026 — gives the clearest and most current picture of the adults who actually vote in Stockbridge. Of those active voters, 54.3% are 65 or older. Only 10.8% are 18 to 34. The single largest group is age 65 to 74, with 26.3% of active registrations.

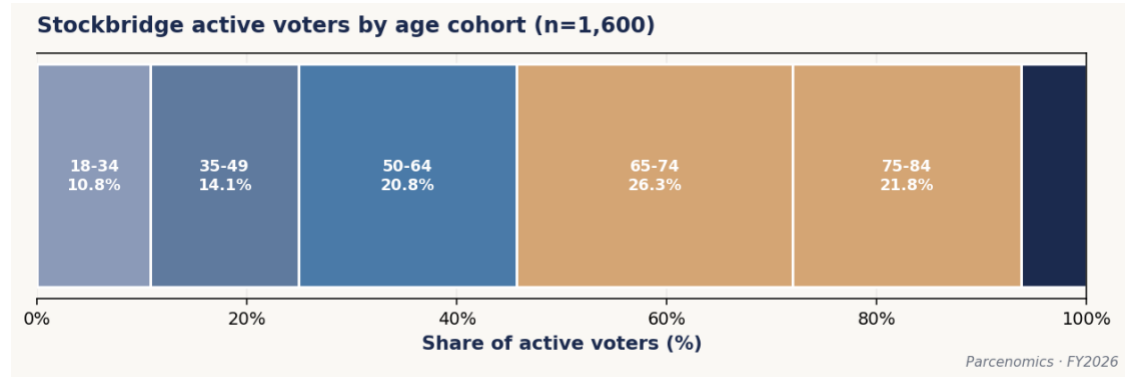


Chart 1.2 — Stockbridge Active Voters by Age

For comparison, the Massachusetts share of adults that is 65 or older is roughly 25%. Stockbridge’s 54.3% is roughly twice that. This is the demographic signature of a retirement-skewed community.

Education and household composition

Sixty-two percent of Stockbridge adults age 25 and over hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.³ Berkshire County’s rate is 40.0%. The Massachusetts rate is 47.3%. Stockbridge’s college-attainment rate is well above both.

This is consistent with the income picture. The households arriving in Stockbridge over the last decade are educated professionals and retirees from professional careers.

The town’s owner-occupancy rate among year-round households — the share of homes where the owner lives in the home rather than renting it to someone else — is 83%. The white-non-Hispanic share of the population is 97%. Both figures move with the median age and median income: older, more affluent, and more demographically homogeneous than the Berkshire or Massachusetts averages.

Stockbridge in Berkshire context

Across the standard demographic indicators, Stockbridge does not cluster with the Berkshire County average. It clusters with the highest-end Berkshire seasonal communities.

³ Education and household-composition figures from ACS 2020-2024 5-year, tables B15003 (educational attainment) and B25003 (tenure / owner-occupancy).

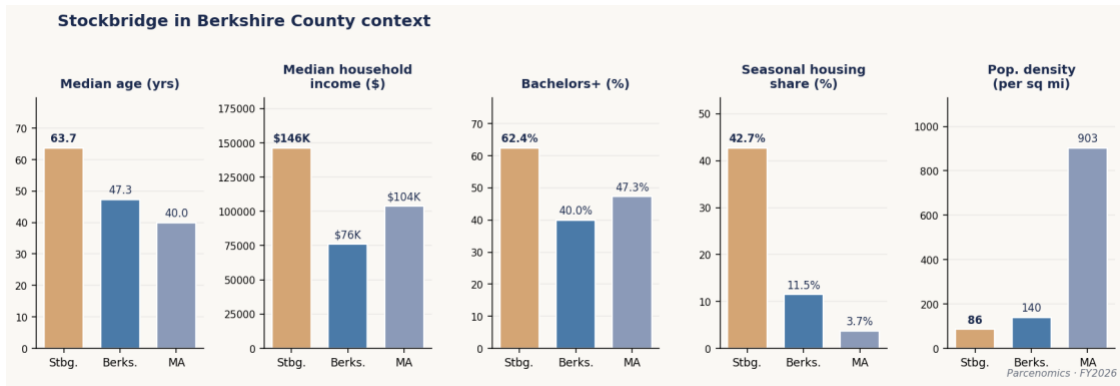


Chart 1.3 — Stockbridge in Berkshire County Context

Stockbridge was one of the original eight Berkshire towns named in the Commonwealth’s December 2024 designation of Seasonal Communities under the 2024 Affordable Homes Act. The Commonwealth’s list has since expanded to include 18 Berkshire municipalities — those with elevated seasonal-housing share, second-home concentration, or short-term rental intensity. Chapter 4 returns to this pattern in detail.

Who’s buying in

The data so far describes where Stockbridge is. The next question is where the road leads. The most direct indicator is the rate at which recent property buyers become full-time year-round residents.

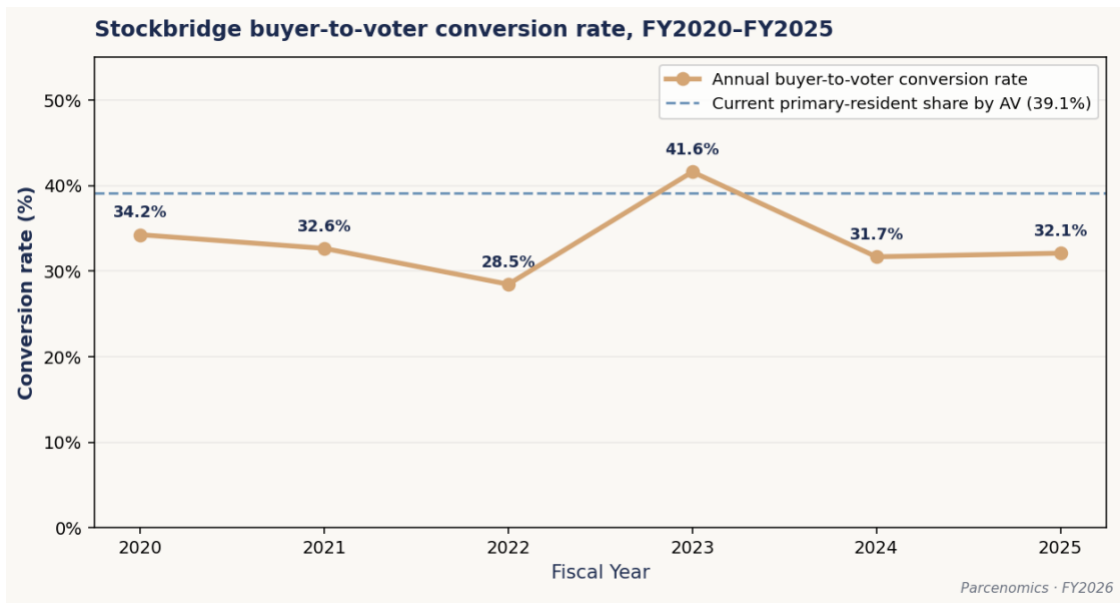


Chart 1.4 — Buyer-to-Voter Conversion Rate, FY2020-FY2026

Between FY2020 and FY2026, Stockbridge recorded 794 residential property sales. Of those buyers — whether named as individuals or through legal entities like LLCs and trusts

— 29.5% became Stockbridge voters at the purchased property’s address. Limiting to the most recent four fiscal years (FY2023-FY2026), the rate is 25.3%.⁴

The current primary-resident share of residential property by assessed value is 39.1%.⁵ Recent buyers are converting to year-round residents at a meaningfully lower rate than the share of property that currently has a primary resident. Each property turnover, on average, replaces a year-round-residence household with substantially less than one. Over time, the year-round community shrinks as a share of who owns property in Stockbridge.

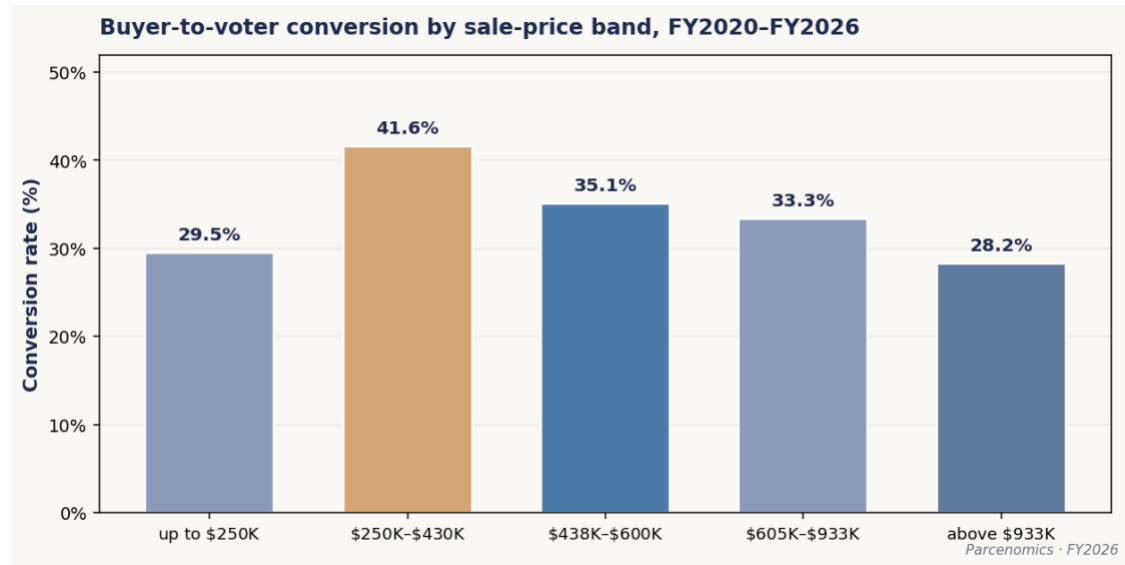


Chart 1.5 — Conversion Rate by Sale-Price Band

The conversion rate varies meaningfully by sale price. Sales were sorted from cheapest to most expensive and divided into five equal-count price bands. Lower-priced properties (up to \$250,000) convert at 29.5%. The middle-priced band (\$250,000 to \$430,000), which is the price range accessible to working professionals, converts at 41.6% — the highest of any band. The high-end second-home band (above \$940,000) converts at 28.2%. The

⁴ Conversion analysis universe: residential parcels (assessor classes 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109) sold to any buyer (individual or entity) between FY2020 and FY2026. Vacant land sales (classes 130-132, 106) excluded. Conversion is measured by matching buyer names and parcel situs addresses against the Stockbridge voter file. The canonical name layer handles nickname variants, spelling differences, and middle-name discrepancies. Entity buyers (LLCs and trusts) are counted as converted if any current voter is registered at the purchased parcel’s address. See Technical Appendix for canonical name layer methodology and override logic.

⁵ Primary-resident share of residential property by assessed value is computed using the residency tier classifier (class-aware, with manual overrides). Methodology is documented in Chapter 2 and the Technical Appendix.

pattern is consistent with what national resort-market research documents: middle-priced housing produces year-round residents at the highest rate, and high-end housing produces them at the lowest.

The replacement math

The buyer-conversion picture and the income-shift picture connect through a simple arithmetic. Between FY2020 and FY2026, sales of residential property in Stockbridge affected the year-round household population in four distinct ways.⁶

Some sales moved a property from one year-round family to another year-round family — a household replacement that left the year-round community the same size. Some sales moved a property from a year-round family to a non-resident buyer — a household departed the year-round community. Some sales moved a property from a non-resident owner to a year-round family — a household joined the year-round community. And some sales moved a property from one non-resident owner to another — sales that did not affect the year-round community on either side.

Sorting the sales register by these four categories: between FY2020 and FY2026, 234 year-round families joined the Stockbridge community through property purchases, and 244 year-round families departed it. The net change in the year-round household count over seven years was negative 10 — essentially flat.

The implication is forceful. For Stockbridge's overall middle-of-the-road income to have nearly doubled in purchasing power while the year-round community changed in count by only 10 families over seven years, the arriving families must earn dramatically more than the families they replaced. There is no other explanation. If the families that stayed in Stockbridge tracked the statewide pace of income growth — which is what would be expected — the arriving families earned approximately \$268,000, in comparable dollars. That is roughly 3.15 times what the departing families earned.

This is the composition shift quantified. The town did not get richer because its families got richer. The town's families were largely replaced by other families, and the new ones earn three times what the ones they replaced earned. Same position in town. Different town.

⁶ Implied newcomer income is calculated from the observed Stockbridge middle-of-the-road income shift (\$56,027 in 2015 to \$146,250 in 2024), the statewide pace of growth (1.52 times in current dollars), the four-category sale filter (Resident-to-Resident, Resident-to-Non-resident, Non-resident-to-Resident, Non-resident-to-Non-resident — distinguished by residency status of seller at time of sale and buyer post-sale), and the count of household-affecting sales between FY2020 and FY2026. The math is in current dollars throughout; because every term uses the same dollar convention, the resulting inferred newcomer income figure of approximately \$268,000 is in 2024 dollars — directly comparable to the 2024 Stockbridge middle-of-the-road income. See Technical Appendix for full derivation and sensitivity analysis.

“234 families joined. 244 families left. Net change: 10. Income shift: roughly threefold.”

What this profile is built on

The demographic figures in this chapter come from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-year estimates — the federal version current as of mid-2025, with 2015 figures from the 2011-2015 5-year estimates for the income comparison. The voter age distribution is from Stockbridge’s town voter file, snapshot dated April 21, 2026, filtered to active registrations with a known birth year. The buyer-to-voter conversion analysis matches buyer names against the voter file using a process that handles nicknames, spelling variants, and middle-name differences; conversion is measured at the purchased property’s address rather than against any in-town registration. Entity buyers (LLCs and trusts) are included in the analysis via situs-match — a parcel purchased by an entity is counted as converted if a current voter is registered at that parcel’s address. Each input is conservative. Small-town federal estimates carry meaningful uncertainty around their point values. Automated name-matching misses fuzzy variants that hand review would catch. Some seller residency at the time of sale could not be determined and was flagged accordingly. Full methodology is in the Technical Appendix.

Key findings of this chapter

- The middle-of-the-road Stockbridge household earned \$56,027 in 2015 and \$146,250 in 2024, a near-doubling of purchasing power in nine years after adjusting for inflation. The Massachusetts average rose roughly 15% over the same period.
- The Stockbridge income gain reflects compositional change, not existing residents earning more. Higher-income households moved in as middle-income households moved out.
- The median age of the year-round population is 63.7 years, against 47.3 in Berkshire County and 40.0 statewide. 54.3% of active voters are 65 or older.
- Of residential property buyers between FY2020 and FY2026, 29.5% became year-round Stockbridge voters at the purchased property’s address. In the most recent four fiscal years, the rate is 25.3% — declining within the window.
- Between FY2020 and FY2026, 234 year-round families joined the community through property purchases and 244 departed. The net year-round household change over seven years is negative 10.
- The arriving households earn roughly three times what departing households earned, implying a newcomer income of approximately \$268,000 in 2024 dollars.

Chapter 2 — The Property Picture

Like most Massachusetts municipalities, Stockbridge faces a tax base that wasn't designed around the fiscal pressures it now has to absorb. School obligations dominate. Commercial growth is limited. The residential tax base does the heavy lifting. This chapter examines Stockbridge's tax base in detail: what it consists of, who owns the residential portion, what sits outside the tax rolls, and what structural features of the picture determine what the town can do.

A note on what assessed value means before this chapter uses the term throughout. Assessed value is the dollar value the town assigns each property for tax purposes, set annually by the assessors based on recent sale prices of similar properties. State law requires these values to track what each property would actually sell for. In aggregate, Stockbridge's assessments do — the town's overall assessed value tracks within the state's accepted range of actual market value. Whether the assessments are equally accurate property-by-property is a separate question this chapter takes up below.

The total tax base

Stockbridge's total taxable assessed value for FY2026 is approximately **\$1.495 billion**.⁷ This is the figure the town reports to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the base from which the property tax levy is calculated. When tax-exempt property is added — religious institutions, the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood campus, the Town's own holdings, state-owned land — the inclusive base reaches approximately **\$1.682 billion**. The \$187 million gap is the value of property in Stockbridge that exists on the assessor's rolls but is exempt from taxation under state law.

⁷ All tax base figures from packet 2a, FY2026 Tax Rate Recapitulation reconciliation. The total taxable assessed value of \$1,495,161,601 is the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Recap-certified figure. Residential class total of \$1,361,988,320 is the Recap Class 1 line. A \$7.6 million reconciliation difference exists between the Recap residential total (\$1,361,988,320 / 1,697 parcels) and the parcels-table residential figure (\$1,354,342,520 / 1,696 parcels) used as the denominator for ownership-share analysis later in this chapter. The difference is attributable to Multi-use Residential parcels (classes 012-043) and Chapter 61/61A/61B land treatment edges. Both denominators are correct for their respective analytical purposes.

Stockbridge tax base composition, FY2026 (total \$1.7B inclusive)

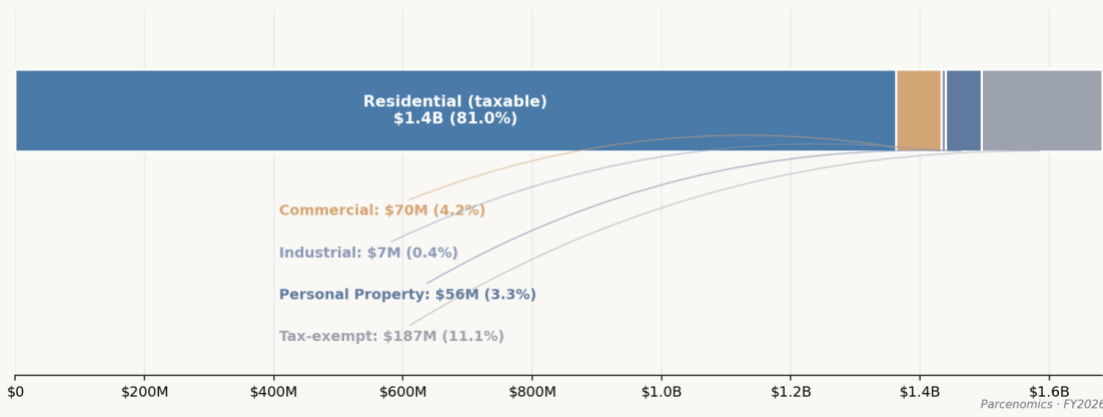


Chart 2.1 — Stockbridge tax base composition, FY2026

The chart makes the chapter’s most consequential structural feature visible immediately: residential property is 91.1% of the taxable base, and the four non-residential classes combined are less than 9%. Any fiscal lever that depends on the commercial or industrial base — broadening it, taxing it differently, growing it — operates on a footprint that is a small fraction of where the value actually sits. The exempt slice, addressed later in this chapter, is another 11.1% of the inclusive base sitting entirely outside the levy.

A structural question about the figures above

The figures above are accurate at the aggregate level. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue certifies each town’s assessments every five years by comparing total assessed value against the state’s independent estimate of total market value. Stockbridge passes that test.⁸

Whether the figures are equally accurate property-by-property within the residential class is a separate question that the aggregate test cannot answer. A substantial body of research — peer-reviewed work from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the University of Chicago, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy — documents that mass appraisal systems systematically over-assess modest homes relative to high-value ones,

⁸ Stockbridge’s FY2026 implied assessment-to-sale ratio (CAMA total ÷ DOR Equalized Valuation) is 114.1%. The Department of Revenue’s certification band requires the median ASR to fall between 90% and 110%. Stockbridge sits modestly above the upper bound, likely because local assessments have kept pace with post-pandemic market appreciation that the biennial state Equalized Valuation has not yet fully captured. The DOR certified Stockbridge’s FY2026 Recap on October 27, 2025.

even when the system's aggregate figure is correct.⁹ This is called within-class regressivity, and it operates not from bias but from a mathematical feature of how the assessment algorithm works.

The mechanism: the town's assessment algorithm calibrates from recent arm's-length sales. For a \$400,000 home, there are dozens of comparable recent sales in Stockbridge and similar Berkshire towns. The algorithm calibrates tightly against this rich comparison set. For a \$4 million estate with thirty acres, there might be two or three remotely comparable sales in the entire county over five years, and most of those sales pre-date the recent appreciation cycle. The algorithm has to extrapolate from dissimilar properties, and extrapolation almost always produces a conservative estimate.

The result is asymmetric. The modest home gets assessed at roughly what it would sell for. The high-value estate gets assessed below what it would sell for. Both pay tax at the same rate per \$1,000 of assessed value. But the modest homeowner pays property tax on close to 100% of their home's actual market value, while the estate owner pays property tax on 60% to 70% of theirs.

A concrete example. Take two properties in Stockbridge: a modest \$400,000 home and a \$4 million estate. Both pay tax at the same rate of \$6.79 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The modest home pays roughly \$2,716 in property tax. If the estate is assessed conservatively at \$2.8 million — which the research literature suggests is typical for high-end properties in resort markets — it pays roughly \$19,012.

⁹ Key references: Amornsiripanitch, N. (2022), "Why Are Residential Property Tax Rates Regressive?" Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Working Paper 22-02. Avenancio-León, C.F. & Howard, T. (2022), "The Assessment Gap: Racial Inequalities in Property Taxation," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137(3). Berry, C. (2021), University of Chicago Center for Municipal Finance. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, "Your House Is Worth More Than They Think: The Strange Case of Property Tax Assessment Regressivity," February 2025.

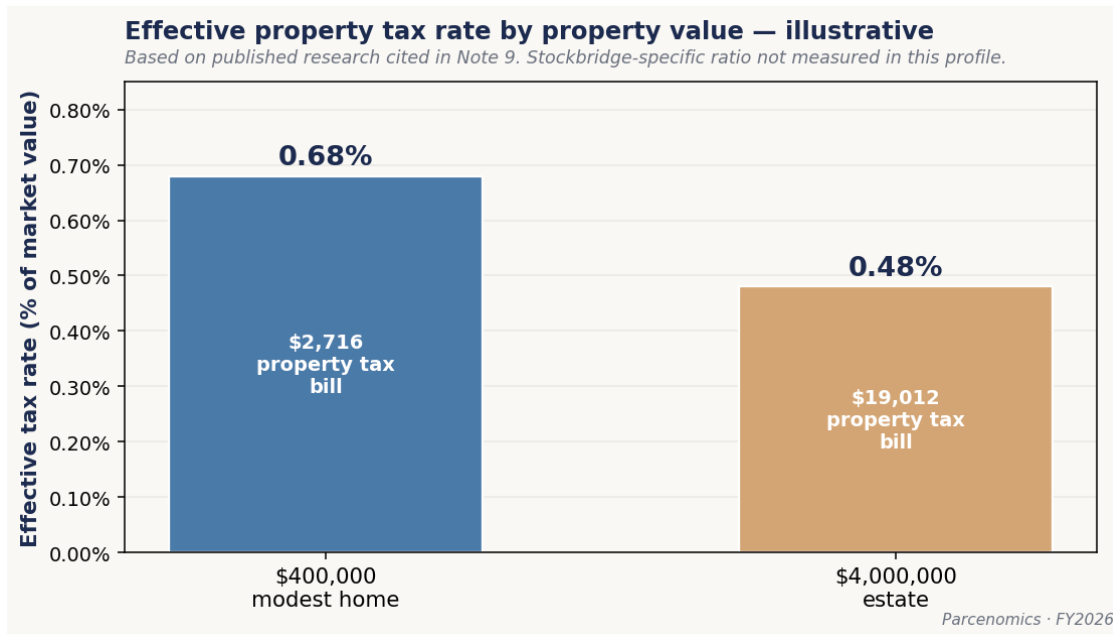


Chart 2.2 — *Effective property tax rate by property value, illustrative*

The estate pays seven times more in absolute dollars, in line with its assessed value. But against the estate’s actual \$4 million market value, the effective tax rate is 0.48%. The modest home pays 0.68% against its market value. The owner of the modest home is paying property tax at a higher effective rate than the owner of the estate, even though both are taxed at the same nominal rate.¹⁰

This is not an allegation against Stockbridge’s assessors. It is a known structural feature of mass appraisal in resort markets with extreme price variance and thin high-end transaction volume. Every town in Berkshire County with a trophy-property tail faces the same mathematical condition. Whether it operates at meaningful scale in Stockbridge specifically would require a price-stratified ratio study using local sales records — sorting residential transactions by sale price, dividing into bands, and comparing assessment-to-

¹⁰ The worked example uses illustrative numbers, not specific Stockbridge transactions. The 60-70% conservative-assessment range for high-end properties is consistent with published research on resort-market mass appraisal cited in note 9. The actual ratio for Stockbridge specifically is not measurable from the public records this profile draws on.

sale ratios across the bands. The data needed for that analysis exists in MLS records and assessor files; the work has not been performed for Stockbridge.¹¹

The point for the chapter that follows is this: every figure presented below sits within this caveat. The assessed-value-based ownership shares are accurate measurements of who owns what *by assessed value*. The underlying *market-value* concentration of property wealth in Stockbridge is almost certainly more extreme than the assessed-value figures suggest. This bears directly on every fiscal lever the town has and is the first of two distinct fairness questions this profile examines. The second — residency-status fairness, addressed by the residential tax exemption under c.59 §5C — is taken up in Chapter 5.

The transactional anchor

Mass-appraisal systems rely on observable sale prices to validate their assessment estimates. The Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal model used by the Stockbridge assessor produces a current estimated market value for each parcel based on the parcel's physical characteristics, comparable recent sales, and applicable market-trend adjustments. For parcels that have transacted recently, the model has a ground-truth signal — the actual sale price — against which the estimate can be calibrated. For parcels that have not transacted in many years, no such validation point exists. The model carries forward through biennial state Equalized Valuation cycles, applying market-trend overlays, but the estimate for any individual parcel is anchored to mass-appraisal logic rather than to an observable transaction.

The FY2026 implied assessment-to-sale ratio for Stockbridge — CAMA-aggregate value divided by the Department of Revenue's most recent Equalized Valuation publication — is 114.1%. The ratio sits modestly above the DOR's 90%-110% certification band. The aggregate lag is consistent with the biennial measurement cycle: the FY2026 CAMA reflects post-pandemic market appreciation that the FY2024 EQV publication had not yet fully captured. The FY2026 EQV, scheduled for publication in late 2026, will substantially close the gap.

The aggregate measurement is consistent with a structural pattern: long-held parcels carry the deepest lag because they have not produced transactional validation points within the available history. Chapter 5 Section A1 examines this pattern at the parcel level for non-resident-owned residential parcels specifically, where the cohort of long-held parcels constitutes the bulk of assessed value.

¹¹ A price-stratified ratio study — sorting residential transactions by sale price, dividing into price bands, and comparing median assessment-to-sale ratios across the bands — is the standard methodology for measuring within-class regressivity at the municipal level. Such a study has not been performed for Stockbridge. The data inputs needed (MLS arm's-length sales records matched against assessed values as of the prior January 1) are available; the analysis is not within the scope of this profile.

Who owns the residential property

Three categories of ownership account for substantially all of Stockbridge’s \$1.354 billion in residential assessed value.¹²

Primary-resident-owned property — homes where the owner is registered to vote at the home’s address — accounts for **\$528,966,400** across 698 parcels.

Non-resident-owned property — homes where the owner’s primary residence is somewhere else, identified through a combination of mailing-address evidence, voter-file absence, and class-aware classification rules — accounts for **\$808,300,020** across 898 parcels.

Entity-owned, unresolved — residential property held by LLCs or trusts whose underlying natural-person ownership could not be traced from public records — accounts for **\$17,076,100** across 100 parcels.

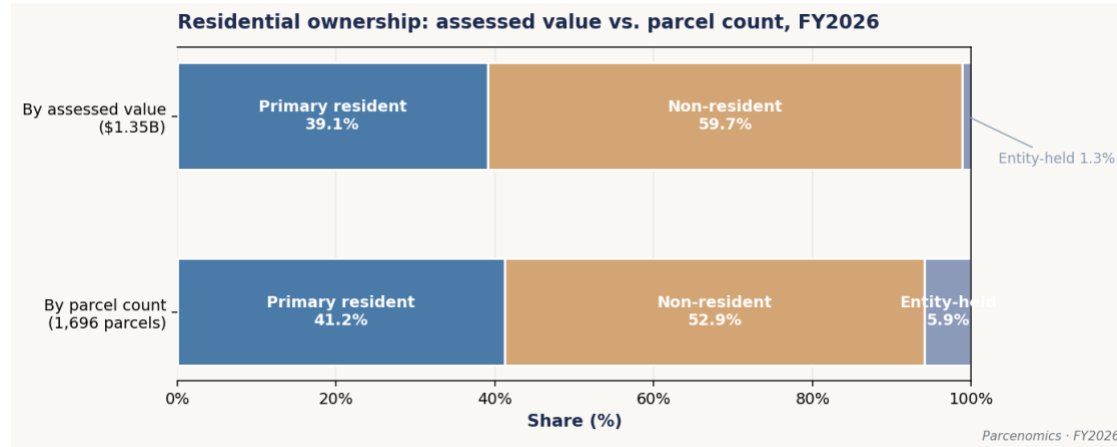


Chart 2.3 — Residential ownership: value vs. parcel count, FY2026

The chart shows the structural asymmetry directly. Non-resident owners hold 59.7% of residential value while owning only 52.9% of residential parcels. Primary residents hold 39.1% of value while owning 41.2% of parcels. **Non-resident-owned homes tend to be more valuable than primary-resident-owned homes** — substantially so. The average non-resident-owned residential property in Stockbridge has an assessed value of approximately \$900,000. The average primary-resident-owned residential property is approximately \$758,000.

¹² Ownership-share figures from FY2026 ownership triangulation using the residency tier classifier with manual override layer. Denominator for the percentage shares is the parcel-aggregated residential figure of \$1,354,342,520 across 1,696 parcels. See note 7 for the relationship between this figure and the DOR Recap Class 1 total. Methodology for the residency tier classifier is documented in the Technical Appendix.

About six out of every ten dollars of residential property value in Stockbridge is owned by people who do not live here year-round.

The structural fairness caveat raised above applies here with particular force. If high-value properties are systematically under-assessed relative to modest homes, the assessed-value-based ownership shares almost certainly understate the actual wealth concentration. The 59.7% non-resident share by assessed value almost certainly understates the actual market-value concentration. Non-resident-owned property in Stockbridge skews heavily toward the high-value tail of the residential market, which is the part of the market the assessment algorithm is most likely to under-state. The 39.1% primary-resident share is, by the same logic, an upper bound on the true market-value share. The directional finding holds. The precise magnitude of the gap between assessed-value share and market-value share is not measurable from the public records this profile draws on.

Where the non-resident owners are from

Locals know that non-resident owners are mostly not from here. The question that matters analytically is *how concentrated* the non-resident origin is, because origin concentration affects how aligned the non-resident population is around any particular set of preferences, expectations, or political pressures.

Owners with primary residences in New York hold approximately 17.7% of all Stockbridge residential property by assessed value — the single largest non-resident origin concentration by a wide margin.

Table 2.1 — Top 5 out-of-state origins of non-resident-owned residential property, FY2026

State	Parcels	Assessed Value	% of all residential AV
New York	245	\$239,215,400	17.7%
Florida	59	\$63,834,800	4.7%
New Jersey	54	\$39,061,900	2.9%
Connecticut	28	\$21,117,000	1.6%
California	27	\$25,501,900	1.9%

An independent data source confirms the pattern. A 2022 survey conducted by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission asked Berkshire County second-home owners where their primary residences were. Forty percent of respondents reported the greater

New York City area; another 18% reported the Boston area.¹³ Stockbridge was one of the top five towns by survey participation, so the county-level findings are partly Stockbridge findings.

The same survey asked respondents about household income. **Nearly half — 44.65% — reported income of \$250,000 or more, the survey’s highest category, with no upper bound.**¹⁴ Stockbridge sales data from FY2020-FY2026, analyzed in Chapter 1, implies that arriving year-round Stockbridge households earned approximately \$268,000. The 2022 survey and the 2026 sales analysis approach the wealth concentration from different angles. They agree on its scale.

What’s outside the tax base

Stockbridge has \$187 million in tax-exempt real property — buildings and land that exist on the assessor’s rolls but are exempt from property tax under state law because of how they are used. **That is 11.1% of the town’s inclusive assessed value.** Tax-exempt property sits within the town’s geography, draws on town services like roads and emergency response, but does not contribute to the property tax levy.

Table 2.2 — Top 5 tax-exempt institutions in Stockbridge by assessed value, FY2026

Institution	Parcels	Assessed Value	Category
Boston Symphony Orchestra / Tanglewood	9	\$31,108,500	Cultural / charitable
Town of Stockbridge	43	\$23,807,400	Governmental
Kripalu Center	3	\$22,558,600	Educational / religious

¹³ Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Survey of Second Homeowners — Results (August 2022). The survey was sent to all second-home owners in Berkshire County, with 731 respondents from across the county’s 30 towns (Berkshire County contains 32 municipalities — 2 cities and 30 towns). Stockbridge was one of the top five participating towns with 61 respondents (8.3% of the sample). The full report is available at berkshireplanning.org.

¹⁴ Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Survey of Second Homeowners — Results (August 2022). The survey was sent to all second-home owners in Berkshire County, with 731 respondents from across the county’s 30 towns (Berkshire County contains 32 municipalities — 2 cities and 30 towns). Stockbridge was one of the top five participating towns with 61 respondents (8.3% of the sample). The full report is available at berkshireplanning.org.

Institution	Parcels	Assessed Value	Category
Austen Riggs Center	9	\$17,400,900	Medical / charitable
Massachusetts Turnpike Authority	2	\$11,507,500	Governmental (state)

These five institutions account for \$106 million — 57% of all exempt assessed value in Stockbridge. If their property were taxable at the FY2026 rate of \$6.79 per \$1,000, they would together produce approximately \$720,000 in annual tax revenue.

A structural observation worth surfacing: the institutions on this list are not incidental to Stockbridge. They are part of what makes Stockbridge what it is. The Boston Symphony’s Tanglewood campus and Kripalu are among the cultural amenities the BRPC survey identified as the leading reason second-home owners chose Stockbridge in the first place (60% of survey respondents called cultural amenities “extremely important” in their purchase decision — the single most-cited factor¹⁵). Austen Riggs is a nationally significant psychiatric treatment center. The cultural and institutional anchors that drive Stockbridge’s appeal sit outside the tax base, which means the tax base bears the cost of municipal services to support an economy whose principal value-generators do not pay into the levy.

This is a structural pattern Stockbridge shares with other Berkshire towns. Lenox has Tanglewood-adjacent institutions and Shakespeare & Company. Williamstown has Williams College and the Clark Art Institute. Great Barrington has Bard College’s former Simon’s Rock campus (now closed and pending redevelopment). Each town’s cultural identity rests on tax-exempt institutions that contribute to its character without contributing to its levy.

The edge: Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B

Massachusetts law allows certain working landscapes to be assessed below their full market value if they remain in productive use. Land enrolled under Chapter 61 (working forest), Chapter 61A (agricultural use), or Chapter 61B (open recreational use) pays property tax on a use-value assessment that is substantially below what the same land would be assessed at as residential development.

¹⁵ Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Survey of Second Homeowners — Results (August 2022). The survey was sent to all second-home owners in Berkshire County, with 731 respondents from across the county’s 30 towns (Berkshire County contains 32 municipalities — 2 cities and 30 towns). Stockbridge was one of the top five participating towns with 61 respondents (8.3% of the sample). The full report is available at berkshireplanning.org.

Stockbridge currently has 27 parcels enrolled under one of the three preferential classifications: 13 Chapter 61 forest parcels, 8 Chapter 61A agricultural parcels, and 6 Chapter 61B recreational parcels. Combined preferential assessed value: \$1,752,600. The footprint is small.

The trajectory matters more than the current footprint.

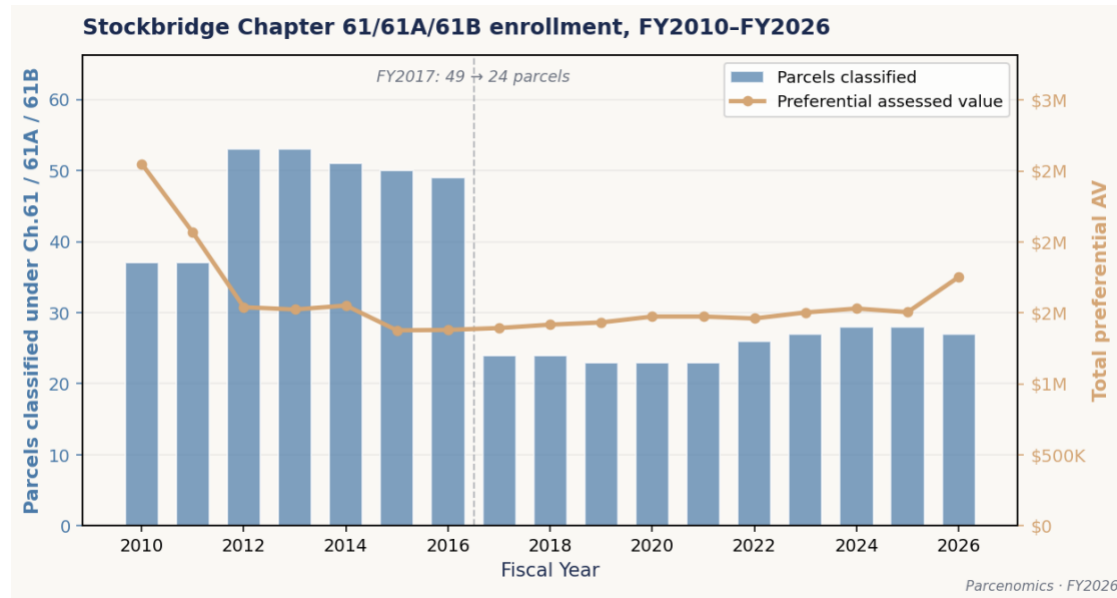


Chart 2.4 — Stockbridge Chapter 61 enrollment trajectory, FY2010-FY2026

In FY2017, the number of Stockbridge parcels enrolled in any Chapter 61 classification dropped from 49 to 24 — a roughly 50% reduction in a single year. The total preferential assessed value, however, stayed almost exactly flat (\$1.379 million in FY2016, \$1.393 million in FY2017). The 25 parcels that fell out of classification held only de minimis preferential value. The reclassification event was primarily administrative, not fiscal.

The Chapter 61 family is small in Stockbridge but worth understanding for one reason: it contains the existing legal precedent in Massachusetts for *rollback taxes on use change*. When a Chapter 61-classified parcel is sold or converted to non-qualifying use, the seller pays the municipality the difference between what was paid under the preferential assessment and what would have been owed at full assessed value — for the prior five years under Chapters 61 and 61A, the prior four years under Chapter 61B, plus statutory interest. The seller has the liquidity from the sale to make the payment. The municipality receives revenue it was due. No assessor needs to admit error. The market transaction itself triggers the correction.

The principle this establishes — that a property owner who realized the full market value of their property at sale should repay the tax benefit they received from preferential assessment during their ownership — is a precedent worth keeping in mind. Chapter 5 discusses how this same principle might be extended to address the within-class regressivity concern raised earlier in this chapter, through a sale-triggered assessment

true-up that operates on the same logic as the existing Chapter 61 rollback mechanism. The legal and philosophical foundation already exists in Massachusetts law. The question is whether it should be extended.

Personal property tax

Personal property tax is the part of the tax base that is not real estate. In Stockbridge it accounts for \$56.2 million in assessed value — 3.8% of the taxable base. Personal property tax is paid by two distinct categories of taxpayer.

Table 2.3 — Stockbridge personal property tax base, FY2026

Category	Assessed Value	% of PPT base
Utility infrastructure	\$44,541,897	79.3%
Second-home and business furnishings	\$11,620,784	20.7%
Manufacturing	\$0	0.0%
Total	\$56,162,681	100.0%

Top utility-classified taxpayers, FY2026:

Owner	Assessed Value
Tennessee Gas Pipeline	\$16,632,700
Massachusetts Electric	\$15,711,696
Berkshire Gas Company	\$3,619,867
Level 3 Communications	\$3,377,000
Verizon New England	\$1,803,400

The utility infrastructure category — gas pipelines, electric distribution equipment, telephone wires, and similar utility property whose value is set centrally by the state Department of Revenue rather than by local assessors — accounts for 79.3% of Stockbridge’s personal property tax base. Three companies alone — Tennessee Gas Pipeline, Massachusetts Electric, and Berkshire Gas — hold \$35.9 million in assessed value, **64% of all personal property and 81% of utility-classified personal property** in Stockbridge.

The second category covers self-reported personal property: the appliances, furniture, and equipment of seasonal homes and small businesses. Compliance among self-reporting taxpayers is uneven across Massachusetts. Whether Stockbridge’s actual personal property tax revenue from this category matches what the statute would produce under full compliance is one of the four compliance streams Chapter 5 examines as potential revenue recovery for the town.

What this means for Chapter 3

The picture this chapter presents is essentially static. It tells the reader what Stockbridge's tax base looks like in FY2026 — what it consists of, who owns the residential portion, what sits outside the tax rolls, what structural questions surround the assessed-value figures themselves.

Chapter 3 traces how the tax base got here. The 16-year fiscal record shows that the residential dominance, the value concentration, and the limited commercial footprint documented in this chapter are not recent features. They are the cumulative product of policy choices and market forces operating over a decade and a half. Understanding the trajectory makes the structural features of the current picture predictable rather than surprising.

Key findings of this chapter

- The Stockbridge residential tax base totals approximately \$1.35 billion across 1,696 parcels.
- Of residential property by assessed value, 39.1% is primary-resident-owned, 59.7% is non-resident-owned, and 1.3% is held by LLCs or trusts whose underlying ownership cannot be traced from public records.
- By parcel count, the split is 41.2% primary-resident, 52.9% non-resident, 5.9% entity-held. Non-resident-owned homes tend to be more valuable than primary-resident-owned homes; entity-held parcels tend to be smaller.
- Stockbridge's FY2026 implied assessment-to-sale ratio is 114.1%, modestly above the Department of Revenue's 90%-110% certification band. The lag reflects the biennial state Equalized Valuation cycle.
- Mass-appraisal systems rely on observable sale prices to validate their estimates. For parcels that have not transacted recently, no validation point exists; the estimate carries forward through biennial cycles without ground-truth anchor.
- Published research on resort-market assessment patterns suggests within-class regressivity is structurally plausible — high-value homes assessed at a lower percentage of true market value than mid-value homes. Stockbridge-specific measurement of this pattern is not within scope of this profile.

Chapter 3 — How We Got Here

Chapter 2 described what Stockbridge’s tax base looks like today: residential-dominant, value-concentrated, commercial-limited, with substantial exempt institutions outside the levy. This chapter traces how that picture came to be. Sixteen years of fiscal data show that the structural features of Stockbridge’s current tax base are not recent developments. They are the cumulative product of three trends operating in parallel: residential property growing faster than commercial, commercial new growth experiencing a categorical step-change after the pandemic, and excise revenue partly compensating for the commercial gap through deliberate policy action rather than market growth.

The revenue picture, from the state’s own dashboard

Before tracing the tax-base mechanics, it is worth establishing the shape of Stockbridge’s revenue over the same window from an independent source: the Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard, which publishes a standardized revenue-by-source series for every municipality in the Commonwealth. The dashboard tells the same story this chapter develops in detail, in three numbers.

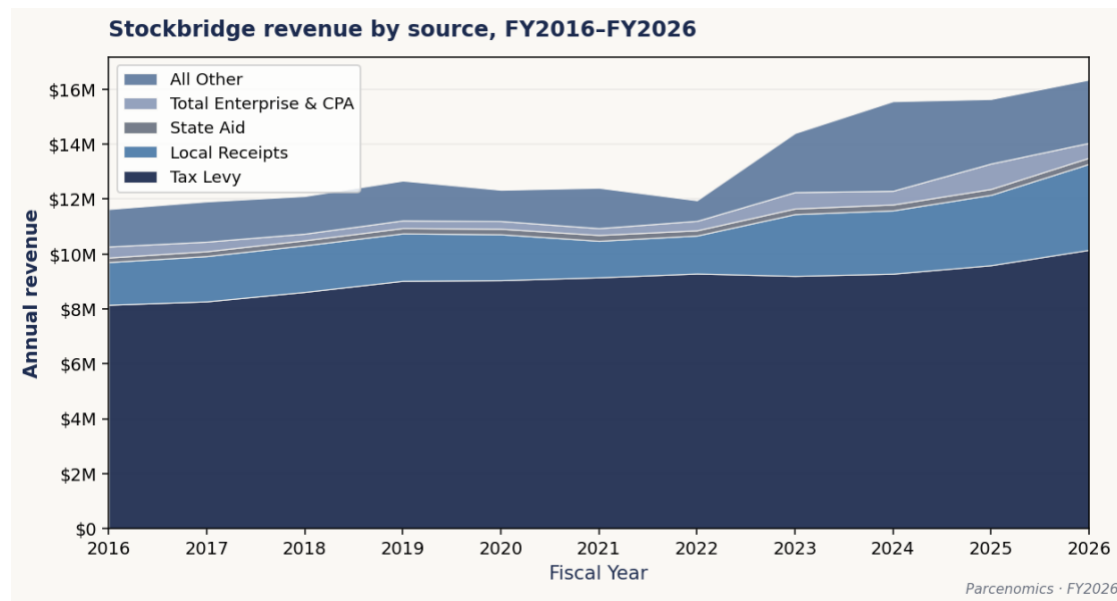


Chart 3.0 — Stockbridge revenue by source, FY2016–FY2026 (DOR Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard)

Three patterns in the state’s published revenue series frame everything that follows:

- **State aid has been essentially flat.** Stockbridge’s state aid moved from approximately \$164,956 in FY2016 to approximately \$222,446 in FY2026 — a nominal increase of about 35% over a decade, which after inflation represents roughly flat-to-declining real purchasing power. State aid has not kept pace with the Town’s rising obligations, leaving locally-raised revenue to carry the growth.

- **The tax levy has climbed steadily.** The levy grew from approximately \$8.15 million in FY2016 to approximately \$10.15 million in FY2026 — the steady, mechanical climb of Proposition 2½’s 2.5% annual baseline, with no override breaking the pattern. This is the levy doing the work that flat state aid did not.
- **Local receipts have roughly doubled in the back half of the window.** Local receipts moved from approximately \$1.56 million in FY2016, dipped to approximately \$1.33 million in FY2021, and then climbed to approximately \$3.13 million by FY2026. The inflection — flat-to-declining through 2021, then a steep climb — is the rooms-and-meals-and-excise story this chapter documents in its final section, visible in the aggregate revenue data before any of the potential new-growth projects Chapter 4 discusses have broken ground.

The DOR dashboard figures are presented here as independent corroboration of the tax-base mechanics that follow. Where a dashboard figure and the certified FY2026 LA-4 Recap differ (the dashboard refreshes on a different schedule than the Recap is certified), the locked per-scenario figures elsewhere in this profile are sourced from the LA-4; the dashboard series is used for the multi-year shape, not for the locked single-year constants.

Residential pulling away from commercial

Over the sixteen-year window from FY2011 to FY2026, residential property in Stockbridge appreciated faster than commercial property — and the gap compounded into a meaningfully different tax base shape by the end of the window.

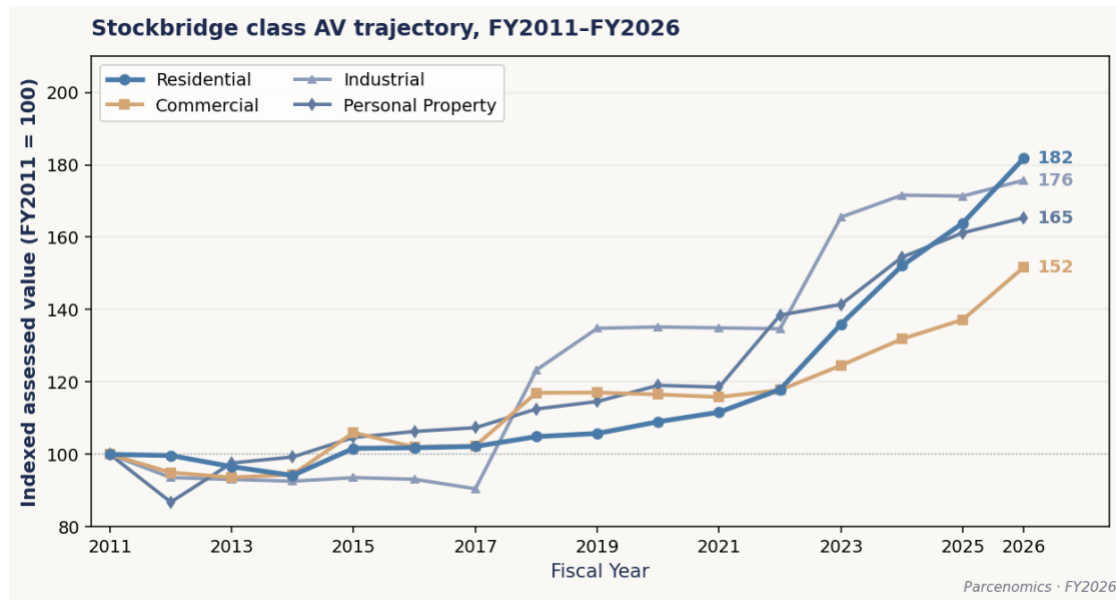


Chart 3.1 — Stockbridge class AV trajectory, FY2011-FY2026

Residential class assessed value grew from \$749 million in FY2011 to **\$1.36 billion in FY2026** — a cumulative growth factor of 1.82, or an annualized rate of 4.07% per year.¹⁶ Commercial class assessed value grew from \$46.3 million to **\$70.3 million** over the same window — a cumulative factor of 1.52, or 2.82% per year. Industrial grew at 3.83% per year, faster than commercial; personal property at 3.41%. Commercial was the slowest-growing class over the period by a meaningful margin.

Table 3.1 — Stockbridge class AV growth, FY2011–FY2026

Property class	FY2011 AV	FY2026 AV	Cumulative growth	CAGR
Residential	\$749.2M	\$1,362.0M	1.82×	4.07%
Industrial	\$3.8M	\$6.7M	1.76×	3.83%
Personal property	\$34.0M	\$56.2M	1.65×	3.41%
Commercial	\$46.3M	\$70.3M	1.52×	2.82%

The compounding effect across sixteen years matters more than the year-by-year difference. A 1.25 percentage point annual CAGR gap (4.07% vs. 2.82%) does not sound dramatic in any single year. Over sixteen years it produces the divergence the chart makes visible: by FY2026, residential has grown 1.82×, while commercial has grown 1.52×. That gap is what positioned Stockbridge’s tax base for the post-pandemic acceleration that followed.

The independent DOR dashboard series confirms this divergence from the state’s own assessed-value records: the dashboard’s residential/open-space class grew from approximately \$762.9 million in FY2016 to approximately \$1.362 billion in FY2026 (a 79% increase over the decade), while the commercial/industrial/personal-property class grew from approximately \$86.9 million to approximately \$133.2 million (a 53% increase) over the same period.[^{14a}] The residential base carried the appreciation; the commercial base did not.

Most of the residential acceleration concentrated in a three-year window. Residential AV moved from \$836 million in FY2021 to \$1.14 billion in FY2024 — a 28% increase over two assessment cycles, reflecting the post-pandemic Berkshire real estate market translating into assessed values. Commercial AV moved only modestly over the same window, from \$54 million to \$61 million.

The structural consequence for the tax base composition: residential’s share of the total taxable base grew from approximately 90% at the start of the window to 91.1% at the end.

¹⁶ 16-year class AV trajectory from packet 3a (FY2011-FY2026 reconstruction against the DOR-certified Class Levy Recap series). Residential CAGR of 4.066% computed as $(1,361,988,320 / 749,168,700)^{(1/15)} - 1$; rounds to 4.07%. Commercial CAGR of 2.818% computed as $(70,284,700 / 46,323,900)^{(1/15)} - 1$; rounds to 2.82%. Industrial CAGR of 3.83% and personal property CAGR of 3.41% surfaced from the same packet for context.

That sounds like a small shift but conceals the magnitude of the underlying movement, because both the numerator (residential) and the denominator (total taxable base) were growing. The fact that residential's share rose at all despite a denominator that included PPT growing at 3.41% and industrial at 3.83% means residential was outpacing those classes too.

The commercial new-growth step-change

The class AV trajectory in the prior section measures the growth of all property within each class — existing buildings appreciating, plus new construction, plus reassessment. **New growth** under Proposition 2½ is a narrower measure: only newly-added taxable property, the kind that permanently expands the Town's levy limit dollar-for-dollar without a voter override. New growth is the principal mechanism by which Massachusetts towns can fund new spending without raising rates on existing taxpayers.

Over the seven years from FY2013 to FY2019, commercial and industrial property contributed \$4.1 million in cumulative new growth to Stockbridge's tax base. Six of those seven years showed non-zero C&I new growth; only FY2016 was at zero. Residential added \$37.1 million over the same window. The pre-pandemic ratio: about 9 dollars of residential new growth for every 1 dollar of C&I new growth.

Over the seven years from FY2020 to FY2026, C&I new growth was **\$749,000 cumulatively** — less than one-fifth of the pre-pandemic figure. Five of those seven years showed zero C&I new growth: FY2020, FY2022, FY2023, FY2025, and FY2026. Only two years showed any C&I activity at all, and the two together accounted for less than a million dollars. Residential added \$57.4 million over the same window — itself a 55% increase over the pre-pandemic residential pace. **The post-pandemic ratio is 77 dollars of residential new growth for every 1 dollar of C&I.**¹⁷

¹⁷ New growth figures from packet 3d, capturing the Proposition 2½ new-growth allowance reported annually on the Tax Rate Recapitulation. Pre-pandemic window (FY2013-FY2019): \$37,133,100 residential / open space, \$4,124,900 C&I, ratio 9.0:1. Post-pandemic window (FY2020-FY2026): \$57,433,600 residential / open space, \$749,100 C&I, ratio 76.7:1 (rounds to 77:1). Five years at \$0 C&I new growth post-pandemic: FY2020, FY2022, FY2023, FY2025, FY2026.

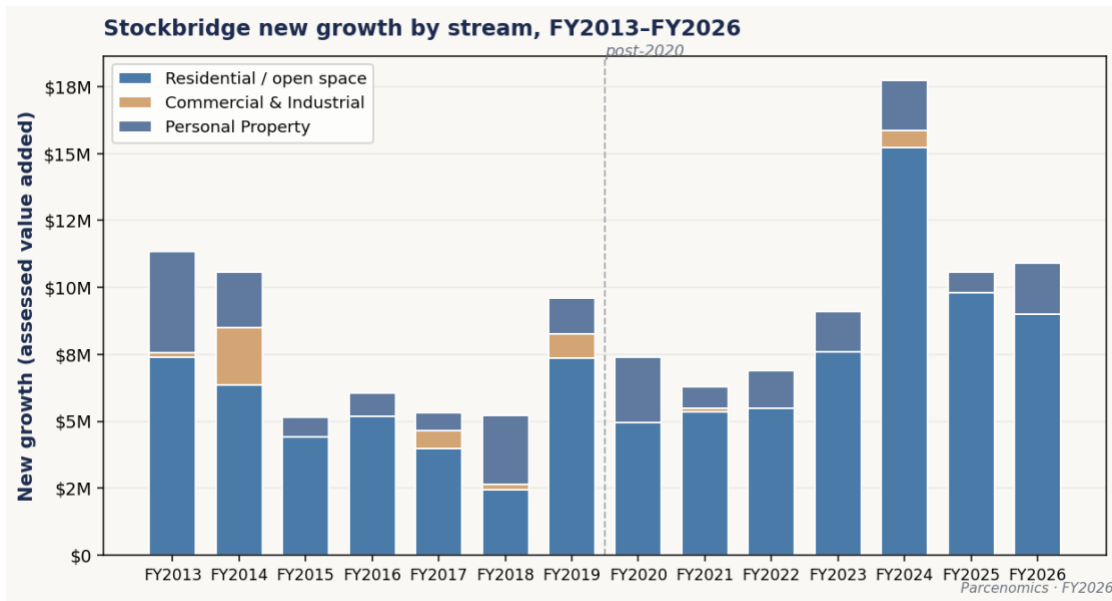


Chart 3.2 — Stockbridge new growth by stream, FY2013-FY2026

Table 3.2 — New growth comparison: pre-pandemic vs. post-pandemic

Window	Residential / open space	C&I	Ratio
Pre-pandemic (FY2013–FY2019)	\$37.1M	\$4.1M	9 : 1
Post-pandemic (FY2020–FY2026)	\$57.4M	\$0.75M	77 : 1

The shift is categorical, not gradual. Pre-pandemic, C&I new growth was small but functioning — six of seven years produced something. Post-pandemic, C&I new growth is essentially zero in most years. The mechanism is the most consequential structural feature of Stockbridge’s tax base trajectory: **the main way Proposition 2½ towns grow their levy without raising rates — adding new commercial property — has effectively closed for Stockbridge.** Without commercial new growth, levy limit expansion depends entirely on residential development — which has continued, but in a small town with limited buildable residential capacity, residential new growth alone cannot indefinitely compensate for the commercial nullity.

This is the structural pattern that makes potential commercial development the question Chapter 4 takes up. If new projects of meaningful scale reach construction in the next several years, they would represent the first significant commercial new growth in Stockbridge in roughly a decade.

The state’s measurement system has been lagging

Massachusetts requires local assessors to value property annually based on recent sale prices. The state Department of Revenue separately produces an Equalized Valuation (EQV) for every municipality every two years — an independent estimate of total market

value used for state aid distribution and, critically for Stockbridge, for the school capital cost formula under the 2017 amended BHRSD regional agreement.

Stockbridge’s local assessments have been well-calibrated against the state’s biennial EQV throughout the 16-year window. In each of the eight biennial cycles from 2010 through 2024, the ratio of Stockbridge’s CAMA total to its DOR-certified EQV fell between 95% and 99% — comfortably within the state’s 90-110% certification band.¹⁸

What changed in the post-pandemic period is not the calibration but the lag. The state’s biennial EQV is, by design, a measurement from two years prior. When Stockbridge’s local CAMA total moved sharply upward in FY2022, FY2023, and FY2024 — reflecting the post-pandemic market — the corresponding state EQV figures were measuring market conditions from one or two cycles back. The result is the divergence Chapter 2 noted: Stockbridge’s FY2026 CAMA of \$1.495 billion against the most recent published EQV (FY2024) of \$1.311 billion produces an implied ASR of 114.1%.

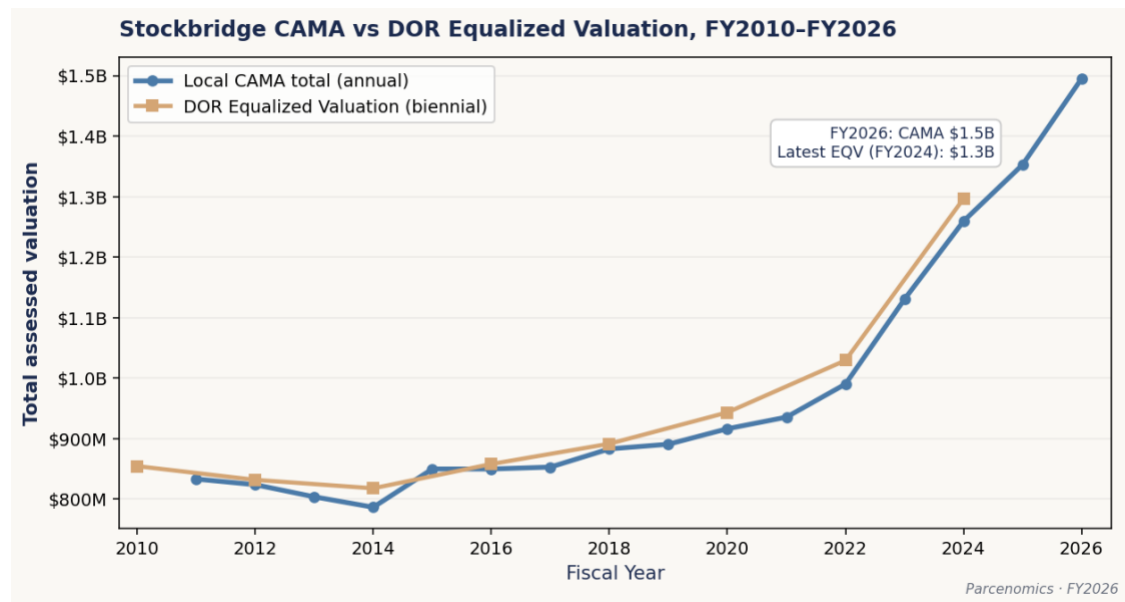


Chart 3.3 — CAMA vs. EQV trajectory, FY2010-FY2026

That implied 114.1% figure is not a measurement failure. It is the result of comparing the most recent local CAMA (FY2026) against the most recent published EQV (FY2024), which is now stale. The next EQV cycle — FY2026 EQV, scheduled for late 2026 publication — will

¹⁸ EQV trajectory from packet 3e, sourced from DOR LA-19 biennial Equalized Valuation publications. Eight biennial cycles in the window (FY2010 through FY2024). Per-cycle in-year assessment-to-sale ratios ranged from 94.78% (FY2014) to 99.72% (FY2010); all comfortably within the DOR’s 90-110% certification band. The implied 114.1% ASR for FY2026 referenced in Chapter 2 Note 8 is computed as FY2026 CAMA against the most recently published EQV (FY2024); the FY2026 EQV is scheduled for late 2026 publication and will substantially close the gap.

substantially close the gap by reflecting two more years of actual sales activity. Stockbridge's local assessors have been doing their job. The state's biennial measurement system simply was not designed to track the velocity of post-pandemic resort-market appreciation in real time.

The consequence for the BHRSD school capital obligation is documented in this profile's executive summary. The capital share lock-in operates on the EQV in effect at the November 2025 School Committee authorization vote — the FY2024 EQV of \$1.311 billion. By the time Stockbridge actually begins servicing its share of the bond, Stockbridge's true market value will be meaningfully higher than the locked basis suggests. The 30-year obligation is calculated against a measurement of Stockbridge wealth that was already two years out of date when it was locked.

The next commitment in the pipeline

The lagging-EQV mechanism documented above is not specific to the BHRSD capital obligation. It applies to every long-duration municipal commitment Stockbridge enters under the current measurement regime. The next commitment of comparable magnitude is already moving from planning into implementation.

In December 2024, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge voters approved a joint fire-and-EMS operation, target operational date July 1, 2027. The plan replaces Stockbridge's current fire-only municipal department and its current EMS arrangements — paid shared-services contracts with the Town of Lee (covering most of Stockbridge) and the Town of Lenox (covering the Stockbridge Bowl area), and at-no-cost regional coverage by the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad in the Furnace District and the southern portion of Stockbridge near Housatonic. Under the joint arrangement, a new fire/EMS station will be built on West Stockbridge Road near Routes 102 and 183, owned by the Town of

Stockbridge, with staff and operations shared between the two municipalities on a 60% Stockbridge / 40% West Stockbridge cost split.¹⁹

The capital cost of the new station is estimated at approximately \$5.27 million, debt-financed at 3.5% over 20 years, producing annual debt service of approximately \$354,000. Operating costs of the joint operation are projected at approximately \$1 million annually at full staffing — 1 full-time chief, 2 deputies, and 8 fire/EMS professionals — with Stockbridge’s 60% share at approximately \$600,000. Two ambulances are budgeted as part of the project: \$280,000 for an initial unit and \$450,000 for a transitional unit. The project is being funded through the operating budget rather than a debt exclusion. The FY27 Stockbridge operating budget approved by the Select Board in April 2026 reflects a 4.7% increase (\$627,000) that absorbs the first stages of fire/EMS expansion. Free cash reserves are projected to cover the first three years of debt service.

The same EQV-calibration mechanism that applied to the school capital lock-in will apply to whatever long-duration municipal debt Stockbridge enters in connection with the joint operation. The EQV in effect at the relevant authorization vote will set the basis on which Stockbridge’s wealth is measured for state-aid distribution and intergovernmental cost-sharing formulas over the life of the debt. The structural pattern is the same one the BHRSD lock-in already demonstrated: a long-duration commitment calibrated against a wealth measurement that may already be out of date when the commitment is made.

The combined annual incremental burden of the BHRSD capital share and the joint fire/EMS operation will compound over the next several fiscal years as both commitments come into full effect. The fiscal-tools analysis in Chapter 5 is calibrated against pressures of this magnitude.

¹⁹ Stockbridge / West Stockbridge joint fire and EMS operation. Sources: Berkshire Eagle, “Stockbridge leaders support landmark plan to share firefighter/EMS services with West Stockbridge,” December 26, 2024 (Clarence Fanto); Berkshire Eagle, “Stockbridge budget to rise 4.7% as town expands fire, EMS services,” April 15, 2026 (Clarence Fanto); The Berkshire Edge, “Stockbridge officials eye more detail on West Stockbridge merger of fire, emergency medical services,” April 2025; Town of Stockbridge Fire/EMS Committee documentation. Capital cost figures from the December 2024 Berkshire Eagle reporting and the Town’s March 2025 working-group presentations. Operational target date July 1, 2027; current Stockbridge EMS service is provided through paid shared-services contracts with the Town of Lee (covering most of Stockbridge) and the Town of Lenox (covering the Stockbridge Bowl area), and through at-no-cost regional coverage by the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad in the Furnace District and the southern portion near Housatonic. These arrangements continue through the FY2026 and FY2027 transition years.

Excise revenue and the lever that worked

The class AV and new-growth trajectories above describe the structural features of Stockbridge’s tax base. Property tax is not the only fiscal lever the Town has, however. Massachusetts permits local-option excise taxes on lodging (rooms tax) and on restaurant meals — revenue streams that flow outside the Proposition 2½ levy limit as local receipts.²⁰

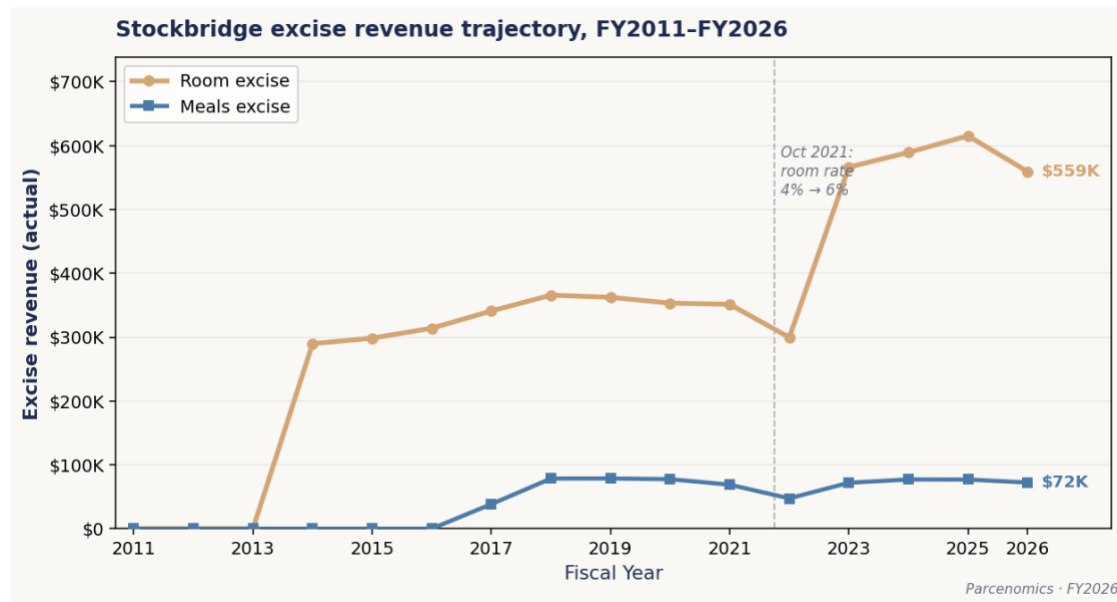


Chart 3.4 — Stockbridge excise revenue trajectory, FY2014-FY2026

Stockbridge had a local-option rooms tax in place at a 4% rate for several years before the pandemic. Room excise revenue grew gradually from \$290,000 in FY2014 to \$362,000 in FY2019 — a slow upward trajectory that tracked the modest growth of the lodging industry in the Berkshires.

In 2021, Town Meeting voters approved a Select Board recommendation to increase Stockbridge’s local-option rooms tax rate from 4% to 6% — the maximum allowed under

²⁰ The DOR Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard overlay series for Stockbridge shows abatements granted running between roughly \$20,000 and \$45,000 in most fiscal years, with a single-year spike of approximately \$152,000 in FY2019. This profile treats the FY2019 figure as likely an outlier — most plausibly attributable to one large case — and does not draw any inference about Stockbridge’s abatement posture from a single anomalous year.

state statute. The rate change took effect October 1, 2021.²¹ The result is visible in the trajectory: room excise revenue grew from \$362,000 in FY2019 to \$559,000 in FY2026, a 1.55× increase. Underlying room-night volume contributed only marginally to that growth. The Town’s deliberate policy action produced the bulk of the revenue gain.

The state’s local-receipts dashboard series corroborates the magnitude: Stockbridge’s total local receipts moved from approximately \$1.33 million in FY2021 to approximately \$3.13 million in FY2026, the same back-half climb the rooms-and-meals lever, growing excise on a recovering tourism economy, and other local-receipt growth together produce. The excise lever documented here is the deliberate, identifiable component of that broader local-receipts climb.

The arithmetic on the rooms lever specifically: at the prior 4% rate, FY2026’s gross lodging activity would have produced approximately \$373,000 — barely 3% above the pre-pandemic baseline. The 50% increase in the local-option rate produced the remaining \$186,000 of the revenue gain. Roughly fifty of the fifty-five percentage points of room excise growth from FY2019 to FY2026 are attributable to the rate change. The lever did the work.

Table 3.3 — Room excise revenue decomposition, FY2019 to FY2026

Scenario	Local-option rate	Room excise revenue
FY2019 (actual)	4%	\$362,000
FY2026 actual	6%	\$559,000
FY2026 if rate had stayed at 4%	4%	\$373,000
Revenue gain from rate change	—	\$186,000
Revenue gain from volume change	—	\$11,000

Meals excise has followed a more modest trajectory. Stockbridge’s first meals excise receipts appeared in FY2017 (\$38,000), and the line has stabilized at roughly \$70,000-\$80,000 per year since FY2018, with a COVID-era dip. Total meals excise revenue is small relative to room excise — meals excise has historically run at 15-20% of room excise volume — but it represents another local-option lever the Town has activated.

The aggregate effect: by FY2026, Stockbridge collects approximately \$631,000 per year in combined rooms-and-meals excise revenue. Of that, more than half is the product of the 4%-to-6% rate change. The town moved from a passive fiscal posture on rooms tax (the

²¹ Excise revenue trajectories from packet 3f, sourced from DOR DLS Schedule A annual filings. Stockbridge’s local-option rooms tax rate was increased from 4% to 6% by Town Meeting vote on Select Board recommendation, effective October 1, 2021. The decomposition of the FY2019 to FY2026 room excise growth: \$362,402 (FY2019, 4% rate) to \$559,265 (FY2026, 6% rate, full year). At the prior 4% rate, FY2026 gross lodging activity would have produced approximately \$372,843, a 2.9% increase over the pre-pandemic baseline. The rate increase accounts for the remaining \$186,422 of the gain.

lower available rate, the default option) to an active one (the maximum allowed under statute) right at the inflection point when commercial new growth was collapsing. The timing was not coincidence. The town's leadership recognized that the commercial revenue lever was failing and acted on the excise lever that was still available.

This is the empirical foundation for the fiscal levers Chapter 5 examines in detail. The levers are not theoretical. The Town has used one — the rooms tax rate change — and the revenue effect is measurable. The methodology that produced the room excise gain is the same methodology that applies to the other levers Chapter 5 takes up: identify a statutory authority the Town has not fully used, vote to use it, measure the result.

What this means for Chapter 4

The three trends documented in this chapter — residential outpacing commercial in AV growth, the post-pandemic commercial new-growth nullity, and the deliberate use of the excise lever — combine to explain the structural picture Chapter 2 described. The current tax base is not anomalous. It is the predictable cumulative result of sixteen years of these trends operating in parallel.

Chapter 4 turns from how the tax base evolved to what those evolved structural features mean for Stockbridge's fiscal position going forward. The town's 2024 designation as a Seasonal Community under the state Affordable Homes Act is the formal recognition of a status the data in this chapter and the prior two have documented analytically. Chapter 4 examines what that designation signals and what it permits.

Key findings of this chapter

- The Massachusetts DOR Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard independently confirms the revenue shape this chapter develops: over FY2016–FY2026, Stockbridge’s state aid stayed essentially flat in real terms ($\approx \$165\text{K} \rightarrow \approx \222K nominal), the tax levy climbed steadily on the Proposition 2½ baseline ($\approx \$8.15\text{M} \rightarrow \approx \10.15M), and local receipts roughly doubled in the back half of the window ($\approx \$1.33\text{M}$ in FY2021 $\rightarrow \approx \$3.13\text{M}$ in FY2026).
- Over the 16 years from FY2011 to FY2026, residential property pulled away from commercial property in the Stockbridge tax base. Residential class assessed value grew at 4.07% annually; commercial at 2.82%. The DOR dashboard’s class-level series confirms the divergence (residential/open-space +79% over the decade; commercial/industrial/personal +53%).
- Commercial new growth essentially stopped after the pandemic. Five of the seven post-pandemic fiscal years recorded zero commercial or industrial new growth. Residential new growth over the same window outpaced commercial 77 to 1.
- Stockbridge’s certified Equalized Valuation, the basis on which the town’s wealth is measured for state aid distribution and intergovernmental cost-sharing, has lagged actual market appreciation. Long-duration municipal commitments calibrated against the certified EQV at the time of authorization are locked against potentially stale wealth measurements.
- The BHRSD school capital obligation was locked in November 2025 against the FY2024 EQV. The joint Stockbridge / West Stockbridge fire-and-EMS operation, voted in December 2024, targets July 2027 implementation with \$5.27 million in debt and roughly \$1 million in annual operating costs at full staffing.
- The room excise lever has produced revenue growth: a Town Meeting vote in 2021 raised the local-option rate from 4% to 6%, accounting for roughly half the FY2019-to-FY2026 room excise growth. The lever was deliberately used; the structural composition of the tax base, by contrast, drifted toward residential without any deliberate decision.

Chapter 4 — What This Means

The first three chapters described Stockbridge as it is. Who lives here. What the town owns. How it got to this configuration. This chapter is about what that combination means — and about the Commonwealth’s December 2024 recognition of where Stockbridge has arrived.

A formal recognition

In December 2024, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities designated 25 Massachusetts communities as Seasonal Communities under the 2024 Affordable Homes Act. The designation applied automatically to municipalities meeting statutory thresholds — primarily a seasonal-housing share above 40% in Berkshire County. Eight Berkshire towns were on the original list: Alford, Becket, Hancock, Monterey, Mount Washington, Otis, Stockbridge, and Tyringham. In December 2025, the Commonwealth extended designation offers to 19 additional municipalities through a formula-based review (18 in the December 2025 announcement plus Rockport shortly thereafter), including 10 more Berkshire towns: Egremont, Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, New Marlborough, Richmond, Sandisfield, Sheffield, West Stockbridge, and Williamstown. Stockbridge was in the first wave.²²

The designation is recognition, not prediction. The statutory criteria measure where a town already is — by seasonal-housing share, short-term rental concentration, and second-home share — rather than where it is going. The Commonwealth has formally noted that Stockbridge and a growing list of its Berkshire neighbors no longer fit the structural profile of a typical year-round Massachusetts town. The data this profile has documented across three chapters supports that recognition for Stockbridge specifically.

The Seasonal Community designation carries specific policy implications, taken up at the end of this chapter and detailed in Chapter 5. Before getting there, it is worth surfacing what the designation is recognizing in the first place.

²² Seasonal Community designation: Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act of 2024 (Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024, codified at M.G.L. c.23B §32). The Act provided for automatic designation of municipalities meeting statutory thresholds — in Berkshire County, a seasonal-housing share above 40% as measured by ACS B25004. EOHLC published the original designation list in December 2024. In December 2025, EOHLC extended designation offers to additional municipalities through a formula-based review weighing short-term rental concentration and second/vacation-home share. Statewide total designated as of early 2026: 44 communities (25 statutory, 19 by formula — 18 in the December 2025 announcement plus Rockport shortly thereafter). 18 of Berkshire County’s 32 municipalities (2 cities + 30 towns) are designated or eligible. The designation tools become operable in a town only after Town Meeting accepts the designation; acceptance status varies.

Five indicators, one pattern

Stockbridge's structural condition shows up across five independent measures. Each one, taken alone, could plausibly be explained away as small-town sample noise, a single-decade artifact, or a regional outlier. All five pointing the same direction cannot.

Age structure. The middle of the road for age in Stockbridge is 63.7 years, against 47.3 in Berkshire County and 40.0 statewide.²³ Of the town's active voters, 54.3% are 65 or older. The age composition is not in transition — it has arrived at a place roughly two and a half decades older than the Massachusetts average.

Seasonal housing share. Of Stockbridge's housing units, 42.7% are classified as seasonal or vacation-use by the federal census, against a Berkshire County peer average of 27.6% and a Massachusetts overall figure of 3.7%. Stockbridge ranks sixth of the 22 Berkshire County municipalities for which ACS estimates at the necessary table level are available — out of the county's 32 municipalities total (2 cities, 30 towns). Roughly two of every five housing units in Stockbridge are not occupied by a year-round household.

Income transformation. The middle-of-the-road Stockbridge family earned \$56,027 in 2015 and \$146,250 in 2024 — close to a doubling of purchasing power across nine years, as Chapter 1 documented. Across Massachusetts the typical family's purchasing power grew about 15% over the same span. The Stockbridge figure reflects who lives in Stockbridge changing, not existing families earning more.

²³ Five-indicator data sources. Median age and seasonal housing share for Stockbridge and the 22 Berkshire County peer municipalities (the subset of Berkshire County's 32 municipalities for which ACS estimates at the necessary table level are available): ACS 2020-2024 5-year estimates, tables B01002 (median age) and B25004 (vacancy reason). Active voter file age distribution: Stockbridge town voter file, April 21, 2026 snapshot, active registrations with a known birth year. Median household income comparison figures cited in Chapter 1 Notes 1 and 2; reused here without re-derivation.

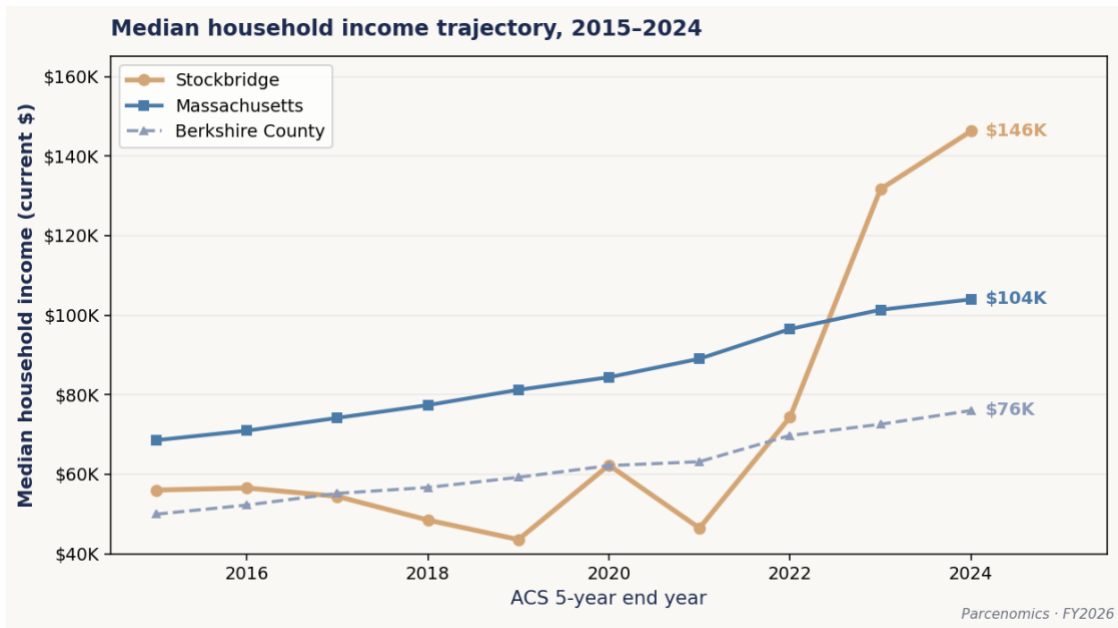


Chart 1.1 — Median Household Income Trajectory, 2015-2024 (referenced from Chapter 1)

Buyer-to-voter conversion. Of residential property buyers in Stockbridge between FY2020 and FY2026, 29.5% became year-round Stockbridge voters at the purchased property’s address. In the most recent four fiscal years, the rate is 25.3%, against a current primary-resident share by assessed value of 39.1%. The recent-half figure being lower than the all-period figure means the conversion rate has declined within the window. Recent buyers are converting to year-round residents at a lower rate than buyers earlier in the window did.²⁴

²⁴ Buyer-to-voter conversion methodology — see Chapter 1 Note 4 for full methodology. Figures used in this chapter are the same situs-match measure with entity inclusion, applied to FY2020-FY2026 residential property sales. The all-period rate (29.5%) covers the full seven-year window; the recent-half rate (25.3%) covers FY2023-FY2026. The current primary-resident share of residential property by assessed value (39.1%) is the Chapter 2 residency tier classifier figure with manual overrides applied; see Chapter 2 Note 12.

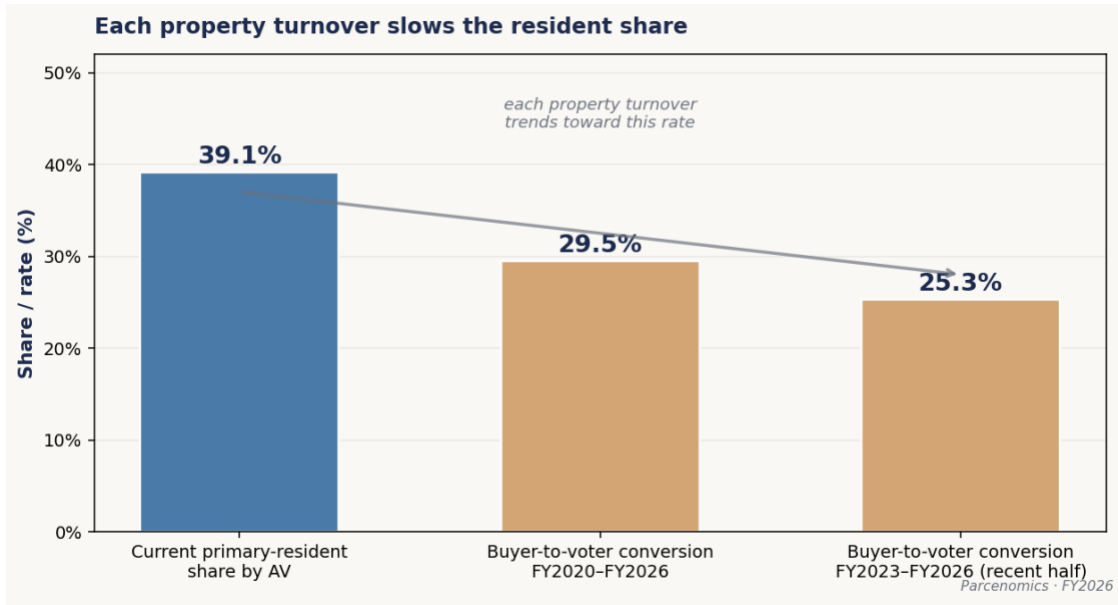


Chart 4.1 — Each Property Turnover Slows the Resident Share

Peer positioning. Five Berkshire towns sit further along on the seasonal-share axis than Stockbridge does. Of the 22 Berkshire County municipalities plotted on a combined age-and-seasonal-share map — those for which ACS estimates at the necessary table level are available, out of the county’s 32 municipalities total — Stockbridge clusters with the older, more seasonal towns rather than with the larger year-round towns like Pittsfield, Lee, or Great Barrington.

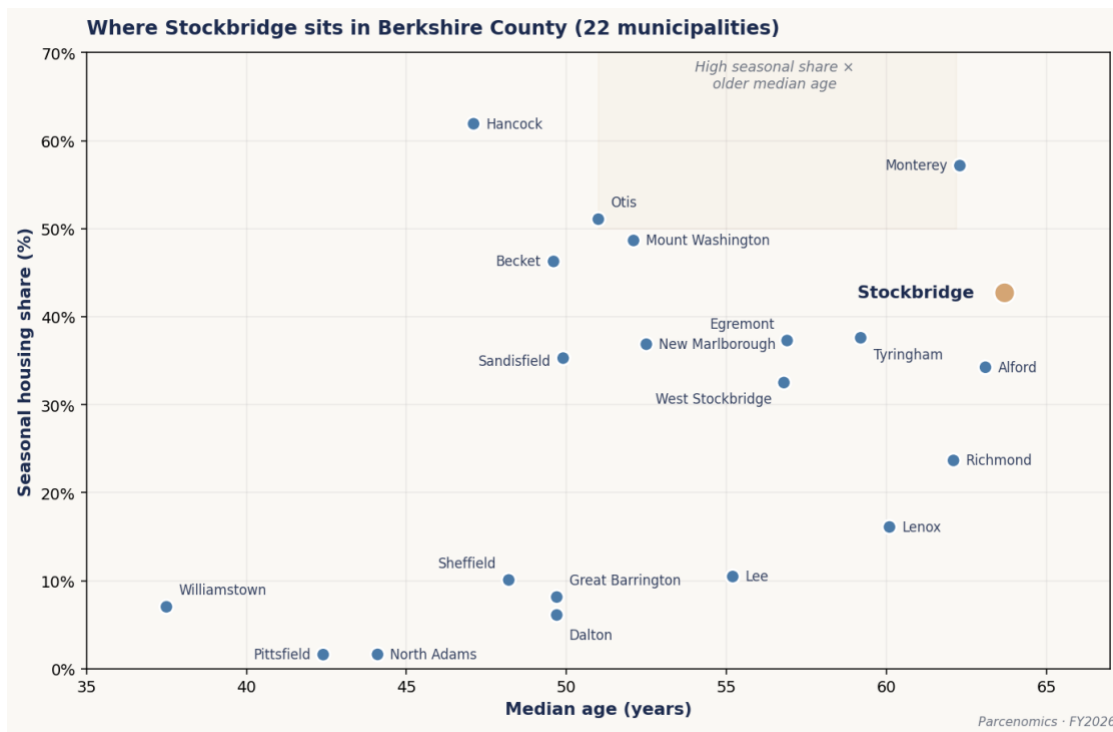


Chart 4.2 — *Where Stockbridge Sits in Berkshire County*

Each indicator measures something different. Age structure measures the year-round residential population. Seasonal housing share measures the housing stock. Income transformation measures composition turnover. Buyer-to-voter conversion measures the inflow at the household-formation edge. Peer positioning measures the regional company Stockbridge keeps. The five do not duplicate each other. That they all point the same direction is the pattern.

What “further along” looks like

The five Berkshire towns ahead of Stockbridge on the seasonal-share axis are the closest available reference points for what this pattern looks like at a further stage of compounding. Hancock leads at 61.9% seasonal share, followed by Monterey at 57.2%, Otis at 51.1%, Mount Washington at 48.7%, and Becket at 46.3%. The seasonal-share axis isolates one variable. The five towns ahead of Stockbridge differ from it in scale, geography, and institutional density. They are not Stockbridge’s future. They are the closest available reference points for what the structural condition this chapter has described looks like at a further stage of compounding.

Downstream effects on the year-round community

The structural condition compounds across five domains. Each follows from the indicators above. None of them depends on additional measurement.

Civic capacity. Stockbridge runs on volunteer labor — fire and rescue, library, conservation commission, finance committee, planning board, and the dozens of smaller volunteer roles a small-town government depends on. Volunteer capacity depends not only on engagement but on physical capability and time. Fire and rescue work especially is physical. A 70-year-old retired professional may be highly engaged in town affairs and still unable to staff a 2 a.m. ambulance call. As the median age of the year-round population rises, the volunteer base contracts regardless of how engaged the year-round community remains.

School cohorts. Stockbridge’s net year-round household change over seven years was negative 10 (Chapter 1). The school-age cohort moves with the year-round household count, lagged by the age of children. Chapter 3 documented how the FY2024 EQV — measuring Stockbridge’s wealth from a market cycle ago — was the basis on which Stockbridge’s share of the BHRSD capital obligation was locked for thirty years. A school capital obligation calibrated to one measure of town wealth and paid out over thirty years against a school-age cohort that moves with the year-round household count produces rising per-pupil capital costs if the cohort shrinks. Chapter 1’s negative-10 net household change implies it will.

Workforce inaccessibility. The cultural and institutional anchors that draw second-home owners to Stockbridge — the survey cited in Chapter 2 found 60% of respondents called them the leading factor in their purchase decision²⁵ — depend on a service workforce that increasingly commutes from Pittsfield, Lee, and Adams. Restaurant staff, hotel housekeeping, retail workers, and the seasonal workforce that supports Tanglewood-driven summer commerce are largely priced out of Stockbridge’s residential market. The amenity economy that defines Stockbridge’s identity is staffed by workers who can no longer afford to live in the town whose identity they sustain.

Seasonal commerce. Year-round businesses calibrate to summer demand. Restaurant capacity sized for July does not support year-round employment at scale. Retail hours contract in winter. Service businesses with year-round clientele compete for storefront space with seasonal operations that capture the bulk of their revenue in a 12-week window. Main Street’s commercial rhythm follows the tourist calendar rather than the residential one.

Tax base concentration. Chapter 3 documented that residential property is 91.1% of Stockbridge’s taxable base, with commercial new growth essentially zero for five of seven post-pandemic years. Every fiscal pressure — schools, roads, public safety, capital

²⁵ Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Survey of Second Homeowners — Results (August 2022). The survey was sent to all second-home owners in Berkshire County, with 731 respondents from across the county’s 30 towns (Berkshire County contains 32 municipalities — 2 cities and 30 towns). Stockbridge was one of the top five participating towns with 61 respondents (8.3% of the sample). The full report is available at berkshireplanning.org.

obligations — routes back through residential property tax. No other class has the scale to absorb meaningful additional revenue need. The tax base concentration is the fiscal face of the structural condition this chapter has described.

The political surfacing. The structural condition is no longer only visible in the data. On May 12, 2026, Great Barrington voters rejected a \$2 million Proposition 2½ override 631 to 397 — a roughly 61% no vote. The override would have funded an operating-budget gap; rejection produced a drawdown of free cash reserves to approximately \$454,000, below state guidelines for a financially healthy community. At the same town meeting and election, Great Barrington voters also *accepted* the Seasonal Community designation EOHLC had offered in December 2025 and *rejected* a citizen petition that would have directed the Select Board to adopt the §5C residential tax exemption.²⁶ The combination is informative for Stockbridge: a Berkshire town in the second-wave designation cohort affirmed the designation, declined the operating-budget override, and declined the §5C exemption — three companion decisions on the same evening on three of the same tools Stockbridge is weighing. The terminology of legacy homeowners — property-rich, cash-poor full-time residents disproportionately burdened by tax increases — is increasingly used in Berkshire municipal discussions to describe the population most exposed to the structural condition this chapter has described. The political response and the analytical condition are now converging.

What the designation permits

The Seasonal Community designation Stockbridge received in December 2024 is not just a label. It expands one specific policy tool. The residential tax exemption under M.G.L. c.59 §5C is normally capped at 35% of the average residential assessed value. The 2024

²⁶ Great Barrington override: The Berkshire Eagle, “Great Barrington voters overwhelmingly reject Proposition 2 1/2 override,” May 13, 2026. The override would have funded an operating-budget gap; rejection produced a drawdown of free cash reserves to approximately \$454,000, below state guidelines for a financially healthy community. Recent Berkshire County override votes have predominantly resulted in rejection; the May 2026 GB vote continued that recent pattern.

Affordable Homes Act raised that ceiling to 50% for designated Seasonal Communities.²⁷ Stockbridge is currently studying acceptance of the designation with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission; acceptance has not been brought to Town Meeting as of the date of this profile. The mechanics, the trade-offs, and the Stockbridge-specific numbers under both the standard 35% ceiling and the expanded 50% ceiling are taken up in Chapter 5.

Two of the highest-profile projects in Stockbridge’s development pipeline would, if either reaches construction, represent the first significant commercial new growth in roughly a decade. The Desisto property — a former school campus — has been the subject of a multi-year mixed-use redevelopment proposal. Elm Court — a historic estate on the Stockbridge/Lenox border — has carried hospitality and resort-conversion proposals for over a decade. Neither has reached construction. Whether either does, in what form, and on what timeline are open questions that will materially affect Stockbridge’s commercial new-growth picture over the next decade.

The other levers Chapter 5 takes up — compliance recovery across personal property tax, vehicle and boat excise, short-term-rental community-impact fees, and the unused Proposition 2½ levy capacity — are not contingent on the Seasonal Community designation. They are tools the Town of Stockbridge has had available throughout. The designation expands the residential exemption ceiling specifically. The compliance and capacity levers stand on their own statutory authority.

²⁷ Residential tax exemption ceiling under M.G.L. c.59 §5C is normally capped at 35% of the average residential assessed value. Section 32(f) of Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024 provides that a designated Seasonal Community may increase the §5C ceiling to 50% of the average residential assessed value, at the option of the board of selectmen in a town (or the mayor with the approval of the city council in a city). Under Section 32(f), the exemption applies only to the principal residence of the taxpayer as used by the taxpayer for income tax purposes — narrower than residency-classified property generally. The exemption is reset annually. The expanded 50% ceiling additionally requires the Town first accept the Seasonal Community designation under Section 32(b) by Town Meeting vote. Acceptance of the designation (Section 32(b), Town Meeting) and adoption of the exemption (Section 32(f), Select Board) are sequential and independent decisions. Stockbridge is currently studying acceptance of the Seasonal Community designation under Section 32(b) with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and has not voted on acceptance as of the date of this profile. Stockbridge has not adopted the residential exemption at any rate as of FY2026 — acceptance of the designation is the prerequisite for adopting the expanded 50% ceiling; the standard 35% ceiling under §5C is available without designation acceptance. Chapter 5 takes up the mechanics, scenarios, and Stockbridge-specific revenue and rate effects under both the standard 35% ceiling and the Seasonal-Community 50% ceiling.

The structural condition this chapter has described is the context in which those tools become consequential. They are not theoretical fiscal options. They are the operational levers a town in Stockbridge's position has to consider.

Key findings of this chapter

- In December 2024, the Commonwealth designated Stockbridge as one of eight Berkshire County Seasonal Communities under the 2024 Affordable Homes Act. The designation has since been extended to 18 Berkshire towns.
- Five independent demographic and ownership indicators all point in the same direction: an older year-round population, a high seasonal housing share (42.7% of housing units), a transforming income composition, a falling buyer-to-voter conversion rate, and peer positioning that clusters Stockbridge with the older, more seasonal Berkshire towns.
- The structural condition compounds across five domains over time: civic capacity (volunteer roles depend on physically capable year-round residents), school cohorts (which move with the year-round household count), workforce inaccessibility (the service workforce is increasingly priced out of Stockbridge's residential market), seasonal commerce, and tax base concentration.
- On May 12, 2026, Great Barrington voters rejected a \$2 million Proposition 2½ override 631 to 397. The override would have funded an operating-budget gap; rejection produced a free cash drawdown to approximately \$454,000, below state guidelines for a financially healthy community. The terminology of legacy homeowners — property-rich, cash-poor full-time residents — is increasingly used in Berkshire municipal discussions to describe the population most exposed to the structural condition.
- The Seasonal Community designation Stockbridge received in December 2024 expands one specific policy tool: the residential tax exemption ceiling under M.G.L. c.59 §5C rises from 35% to 50% of average residential assessed value for designated communities. Stockbridge is currently studying acceptance of the designation with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and has not voted on acceptance. Acceptance is the prerequisite for adopting the expanded 50% ceiling.

Chapter 5 — What Can Be Done

The four prior chapters described Stockbridge’s structural condition. Who lives here. What the town owns. How it got to this configuration. What the Commonwealth’s 2024 designation recognizes. This chapter turns from diagnosis to operation. The Town has fiscal levers and statutory tools the prior chapters’ findings make consequential. Each one is presented here with its mechanics, its Stockbridge-specific numbers, and its trade-offs. The decisions are the Town’s to make. The chapter’s task is to make the decisions legible.

Section A — Fiscal Tools

Four fiscal levers are available to Stockbridge. Three are not contingent on the Seasonal Community designation. The fourth — the §5C residential exemption at its expanded ceiling — requires designation acceptance.

Compliance recovery across four independent streams

Compliance recovery is the recovery of revenue the Town is statutorily owed but does not currently collect, because the underlying tax obligations are either under-reported or not reported at all. Four streams have been examined in detail for Stockbridge.²⁸

Personal property tax on second-home furnishings. Owners of second homes in Stockbridge are required by statute to file an annual return listing the assessed value of furniture, equipment, and other tangible personal property kept at the home. The town’s analysis identifies a strict universe of approximately 247 second-home parcels with no Personal Property Tax return on file — parcels whose non-resident classification is supported with high or medium confidence by the residency tier model and whose owners do not appear on the FY2026 personal property roll. Estimated annual revenue from this stream is approximately \$134,000 under a conservative 50%-recovery assumption against an insurance-replacement contents-valuation benchmark; full recovery against the same benchmark would yield approximately \$268,000. Approximately 24 additional parcels were excluded from the strict universe because their residency could not be classified with confidence — the contested-signal and unresolved entity-owned cohorts; some of these are likely non-compliant and would surface as additional non-filers through subsequent

²⁸ Compliance recovery analysis: packet 4a (outreach candidates plus per-stream gap estimates) at `outputs/v8_session2_packets/chapter5/`. Methodology and per-parcel outreach candidate identification documented in the Technical Appendix. Aggregate annual gap estimates use mid-band recovery rates of 50% (Conservative case) and 60% (Mid-case) against per-stream identified candidate universes.

data acquisition (LLC manager unmask, additional voter rolls). The strict universe represents a floor on the non-filer cohort, not a point estimate.²⁹

Statutory architecture — three distinct exemptions worth distinguishing

A recurring source of confusion in municipal discussions of the personal property tax is whether and when a taxpayer can avoid the itemized filing requirement. The short answer is that there is no taxpayer-elected option to file or not file. Every account that is taxable under M.G.L. c.59 §29 must be reported on an itemized Form of List by March 1 of each fiscal year. The Board of Assessors may require electronic filing. Failure to file authorizes the assessors under M.G.L. c.59 §36 to estimate value according to their best information — and the §29 obligation is verifiable by the assessors’ audit authority under M.G.L. c.59 §31A. The taxpayer does not choose between itemized and non-itemized treatment.

What does exist is a layered set of statutory exemptions that determine whether a given account is taxable at all. Three are relevant to the second-home cohort this section addresses, and confusion among them produces the most common municipal misunderstandings.

The first is the **domicile exemption under M.G.L. c.59 §5 Clause 20**, which exempts the household furnishings and effects of an individual at the individual’s domicile. A Massachusetts primary resident pays no personal property tax on the furniture, appliances, and household items kept at their year-round home, and consequently has nothing to itemize. Clause 20 is statewide; it applies regardless of whether the town has accepted any local option. The lever this section addresses operates outside Clause 20 by definition — the 247 non-filer parcels are non-resident-owned second homes, where the property in question is not at the owner’s domicile and therefore is not exempt under Clause 20.

The second is the **small-account local-option exemption under M.G.L. c.59 §5 Clause 54**, which allows a city or town to exempt personal property accounts whose total assessed value falls below a threshold set by the municipality up to a statutory ceiling of \$10,000. Clause 54 must be accepted by vote of the town’s legislative body before it has any effect; the threshold is the municipality’s choice within the statutory cap. Once accepted, accounts whose total taxable personal property is below the threshold are exempt — there is no tax owed and consequently nothing to itemize. The Board of Assessors retains the authority to challenge any taxpayer’s assertion that an account falls

²⁹ Personal property tax non-filer identification: 247 candidates identified as a strict universe — residential parcels classified as non-resident by the residency tier model (medium or high confidence, manual overrides applied) whose owners are not currently on the FY2026 personal property roll. The 247 cohort excludes approximately 24 additional parcels in the contested-signal and unresolved entity-owned tiers, which are deferred to subsequent residency-classifier refinement and would expand the recoverable universe if their classification firms up. Per-parcel outreach methodology and candidate list detailed in the Technical Appendix.

below the threshold, request supporting documentation, and require a complete Form of List if the asserted value is not credible. The exemption does not establish a self-certification regime that the assessors cannot review; it establishes a floor of administrative materiality below which the assessors typically do not pursue collection. The Form of List filing requirement under §29 snaps back into effect whenever the assessors have reason to believe an account exceeds the threshold.[^23a]

The third is the **statewide exemption for second-home contents valued below a de minimis threshold**, which does not exist. There is no Massachusetts statutory provision that allows a non-resident second-home owner to declare contents below a fixed value without filing — only the locally-accepted Clause 54 regime produces that effect, and only in towns that have accepted it. A second-home owner who tells the assessor “my contents are worth less than \$X so I don’t need to file” is making a Clause 54 claim, which is valid only if the town has accepted Clause 54 at a threshold of \$X or higher, and which the assessor may verify.

For the lever this section quantifies, the practical effect of Clause 54 — even where accepted — is structurally limited. The conservative recovery figure assumes contents valued at the insurance-industry replacement benchmark of approximately \$50 per building square foot of finished living area. A 2,500-square-foot second home implies contents in the \$125,000 range under that benchmark; a 1,500-square-foot home implies \$75,000. The Clause 54 threshold ceiling of \$10,000 sits well below either figure, meaning the lever’s recovery universe is not materially compressed by Clause 54 acceptance at the statutory cap. Confirming Stockbridge’s Clause 54 acceptance status and threshold is appropriate for engagement-level diligence but does not alter the structural finding.[^23b]

Vehicle excise on Stockbridge-garaged vehicles. Motor vehicle excise is owed in the municipality where a vehicle is principally garaged. Vehicles owned by Stockbridge property owners but registered elsewhere — typically at the owner’s out-of-town primary residence — are not currently producing excise revenue for Stockbridge. The analysis identifies approximately 117 non-resident-owned parcels where a Stockbridge-garaging claim is plausible based on use patterns. Estimated annual revenue gap: \$88,000 to \$351,000.³⁰

Boat excise on Stockbridge-moored boats. Boats moored or kept in Stockbridge waters are subject to excise tax regardless of where the owner lives. The analysis identifies

³⁰ Vehicle excise recovery candidate identification: 117 non-resident-owned parcels within a 300-mile radius with vehicle-garaging signals consistent with Stockbridge use. Methodology and candidate list documented in the Technical Appendix.

approximately 452 parcels with mooring or storage signals where no boat excise filing is on record. Estimated annual revenue gap: \$13,000 to \$136,000.³¹

Short-term rental community impact fee under M.G.L. c.64G §3D. Massachusetts allows municipalities to impose a community impact fee of up to 3 percent on professionally-managed short-term rental units under M.G.L. c.64G §3D(a). A separate vote under §3D(b) could extend the fee to owner-occupied two- and three-family dwellings operating as STRs; that option is dependent on first adopting §3D(a). Stockbridge has not adopted this fee — the FY2026 Tax Rate Recapitulation shows \$0 in community-impact-fee receipts. Estimated annual revenue at three potential adoption rates: \$47,000 (1%), \$93,000 (2%), \$140,000 (3%).³² If adopted, M.G.L. c.64G §3D(c) requires that at least 35 percent of community impact fee receipts be dedicated to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects. The remaining 65 percent is unrestricted and flows to the general fund. The statute does not require receipts to be tied to costs caused by short-term rentals; the only spending restriction is the 35 percent earmark.

The combined annual gap across the four streams, ranging across conservative and aggressive recovery assumptions on the strict universe, totals roughly \$0.3 million to \$0.9 million. This is a floor on the recoverable gap; parcels excluded for classification uncertainty include some likely non-compliant cases that would surface through outreach and subsequent data acquisition.

³¹ Boat excise recovery candidate identification: 452 parcels with mooring, dock, or boat-storage signals and no boat excise filing on record. Methodology documented in the Technical Appendix.

³² M.G.L. c.64G §3D(a) authorizes a community impact fee of up to 3% on professionally-managed short-term rentals; M.G.L. c.64G §3D(b) provides for a separate vote to extend the fee to owner-occupied two- and three-family dwellings operating as STRs. Stockbridge has not adopted either provision — FY2026 Tax Rate Recapitulation, Page 5 (Local Receipts Not Allocated) line 10b shows \$0 actual and \$0 estimated for “Community Impact Fee Short Term Rentals.” Estimated revenue at 1%, 2%, and 3% adoption rates derived from packet 4a STR base projection (approximately \$4.7 million estimated STR-attributable lodging activity in Stockbridge based on FY2026 room excise volume). M.G.L. c.64G §3D(c) requires that at least 35% of receipts be dedicated to affordable housing or local infrastructure; the remaining 65% is unrestricted general revenue.

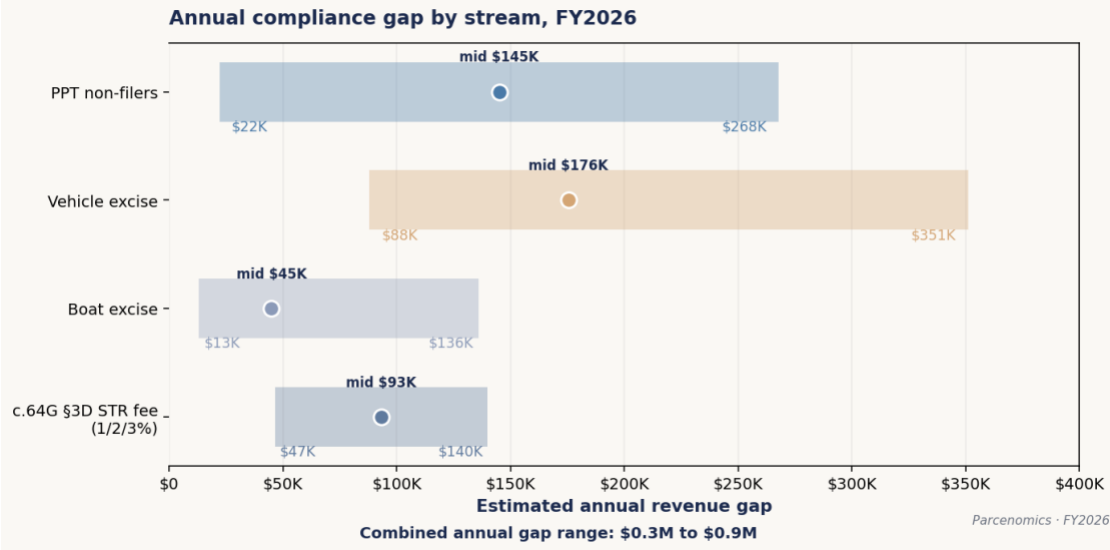


Chart 5.1 — Annual compliance gap by stream, FY2026

The methodology behind each stream’s gap estimate, the parcel-level outreach candidates the analysis produced, and the recovery-rate assumptions are documented in the Technical Appendix. The point for this chapter is that each stream is a real lever the Town can activate. Compliance recovery has not historically been pursued as a systematic program in Stockbridge. Doing so requires letters to identified non-filers and follow-up administration. It does not require a new statute, a new ordinance, or a Town Meeting vote.

Time-lag in the non-resident-owned residential base

The compliance recovery framework described above addresses non-filers — parcels with no Personal Property Tax declaration on record. A broader structural question concerns the relationship between the current market value of non-resident-owned residential property and the assessment-and-declaration basis on which it is currently taxed. The Chapter 2 finding of an FY2026 implied assessment-to-sale ratio of 114.1% measures the aggregate effect of assessment lag at the municipal level. The parcel-level reality is more concentrated and analytically consequential.

Of the 898 non-resident-owned residential parcels in Stockbridge, carrying \$808 million in assessed value, only 180 parcels (20%, \$169 million) have transacted at arm’s length in the past ten years. These parcels have a recent market-price validation point against which the assessor’s estimate can be calibrated. The remaining 718 parcels — 80% of the non-

resident cohort, carrying \$639 million in assessed value — have no arm’s-length transactional anchor in the 20-year sales register.³³



Chart 5.2 — Three-tier time-lag stratification of non-resident-owned residential parcels

The 718 parcels with no arm’s-length anchor stratify further into two distinct mechanisms producing the same effect. 577 parcels (\$480 million, 59% of non-resident-owned AV) have no transfer of any kind recorded in the 20-year register. These are parcels held by the same ownership across two decades, never appearing in the assessor’s transactional record. The remaining 141 parcels (\$159 million, 20% of AV) have had non-arm’s-length transfers recorded but no market transactions. The non-arm’s-length transfers are predominantly estate-planning conveyances. Validity-code flags on the 141 parcels overlap — a single deed can carry both a below-\$1K consideration flag and a zero-consideration flag — so the category counts are not mutually exclusive: 74 parcels carry below-\$1K token-deed flags,

³³ Time-lag stratification: parcel-level analysis of the FY2026 non-resident-owned residential cohort against the 20-year sales register. Cohort definition: parcels with residency tier in {medium_confidence_non_resident, high_confidence_non_resident, contested_neutral, contested_l1_n1_conflict, entity_owned_unresolved} and no manual override setting classification=‘resident’ — a broader cohort than the 805-parcel strict A1 compliance universe (Chapter 5 Section A1), which excludes the contested-signal and unresolved entity-owned tiers pending classifier refinement. Arm’s-length filtering applied per Massachusetts Department of Revenue conventions (excludes family transfers, foreclosures, distress sales, \$0 and \$1 deeds, government transfers). Cohorts: arm’s-length sale in last 10 years (180 parcels, \$169M AV); non-arm’s-length transfer only in last 10 years (141 parcels, \$159M AV); no transfer of any kind in 20-year register (577 parcels, \$480M AV). Total: 898 parcels, \$808M AV. Sales register depth: earliest sale September 2005, latest March 2026.

68 carry zero-consideration flags, with smaller flag counts on family conversions, trustee transfers, and estate releases. 128 of the 141 carry the Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s 1F validity code — “family / no consideration.” These transfers move parcels between family members or trust vehicles without producing a market-price validation point, leaving the underlying assessment basis intact across the transfer.

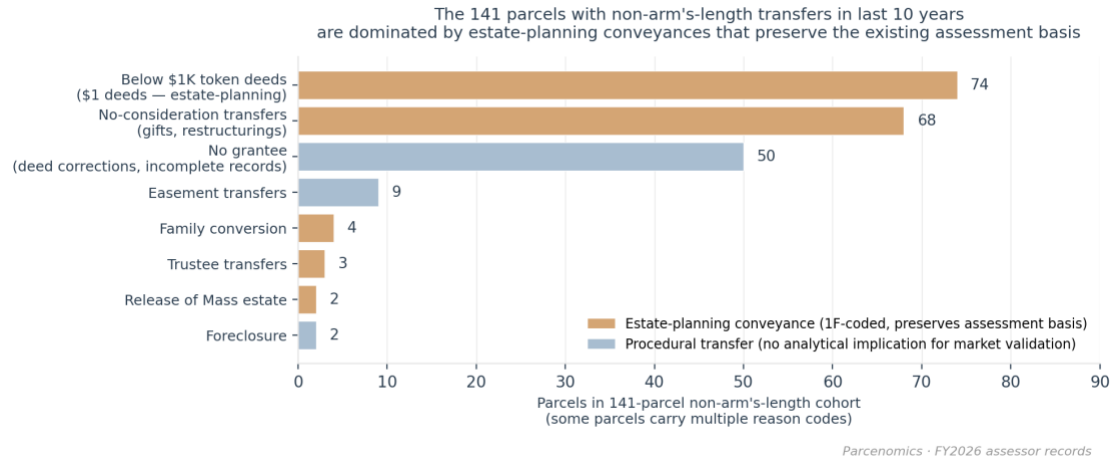


Chart 5.3 — *Validity-code texture of the 141 non-arm’s-length cohort*

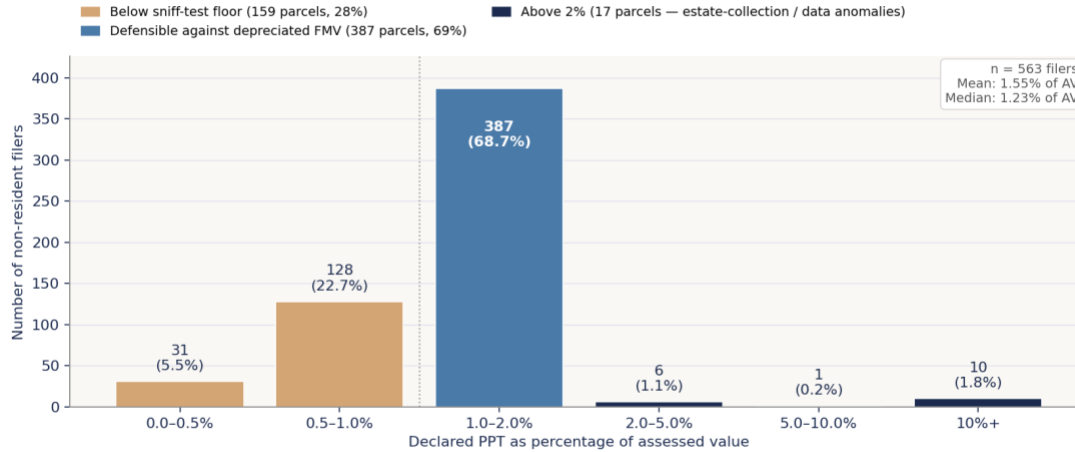
For both mechanisms, the structural result is the same: the assessment estimate has been carried forward through biennial Equalized Valuation cycles and market-trend overlays for a decade or more without an arm’s-length sale price to validate against. In a market that has experienced substantial appreciation — particularly for residential property in resort communities since 2020 — the gap between current market value and the carried-forward assessment grows with each year that passes without a transactional validation point.

Personal property tax declarations on these same parcels exhibit a parallel structural pattern. Massachusetts personal property is filed annually under M.G.L. c.59 §5 Cl.20 via Form of List, but the practical reality is that declarations are typically filed once, at the time of property acquisition or initial declaration, and carried forward year-over-year with minimal change. The assessor does not typically force annual updates absent specific challenge. Parcel-level quantification of how long Stockbridge declarations have remained unchanged is not available from the current ingestion, but the structural argument applies: declarations filed at the time of property acquisition carry forward without recalibration triggers, growing further from current contents fair market value over the same window.

The empirical pattern in current Stockbridge declarations is consistent with this structural argument. Across the 563 non-resident filers with current declarations on record, the mean PPT-to-AV ratio is 1.55% and the median is 1.23%. The bulk of filers (387 parcels, 69%) cluster in the 1.0%-2.0% band, approximately consistent with the depreciated fair

market value of mass-market seasonal home furnishings. But 159 parcels (28% of filers) declare below the 1% floor, including 31 declaring below 0.5% of assessed value.³⁴

PPT declaration ratio distribution among 563 non-resident filers:
28% (159 parcels) declare below the 1% floor that survives basic scrutiny



Sniff-test threshold: declarations below 1% rarely cover the cost of furniture in a single room

Parcenomics · FY2026 assessor records

Chart 5.4 — PPT-to-AV ratio distribution among non-resident filers

A declaration of 0.5% of AV on a \$2 million seasonal home implies total personal property value below \$10,000 — a figure that does not survive basic scrutiny for a furnished home. A single high-end sofa retails for \$4,000-\$8,000; a king bed and frame for \$2,000-\$4,000; a dining table set for \$2,000-\$5,000. The contents of a single living room and bedroom can exhaust the budget before the kitchen, dining room, second bedroom, primary bath, linens, art, lamps, or anything else has been accounted for. The 1% threshold is a sniff-test floor, not a depreciation calculation. Declarations below it are structurally suspect regardless of furniture category.

The non-filer pattern offers a complementary perspective. Of the 898 non-resident-owned residential parcels, 335 have no PPT declaration on record at all — a 37% non-filer rate. The distribution by assessed value band is not uniform.

³⁴ PPT declaration ratio: declared total appraised PPT divided by assessed value, computed across the 563 non-resident-classified residential parcels with current PPT declarations on file. Mean 1.55%, median 1.23%, distribution: 31 parcels below 0.5% of AV, 128 between 0.5% and 1.0%, 387 between 1.0% and 2.0%, 17 above 2.0% (including 10 above 10% that appear to be data-quality outliers). PPT declarations summed across multiple accounts at the same situs address.

Non-filer rate by assessed value band: highest at the low end and the small high-end cohort (82% of non-filers — 276 of 335 — are in homes assessed under \$1M)

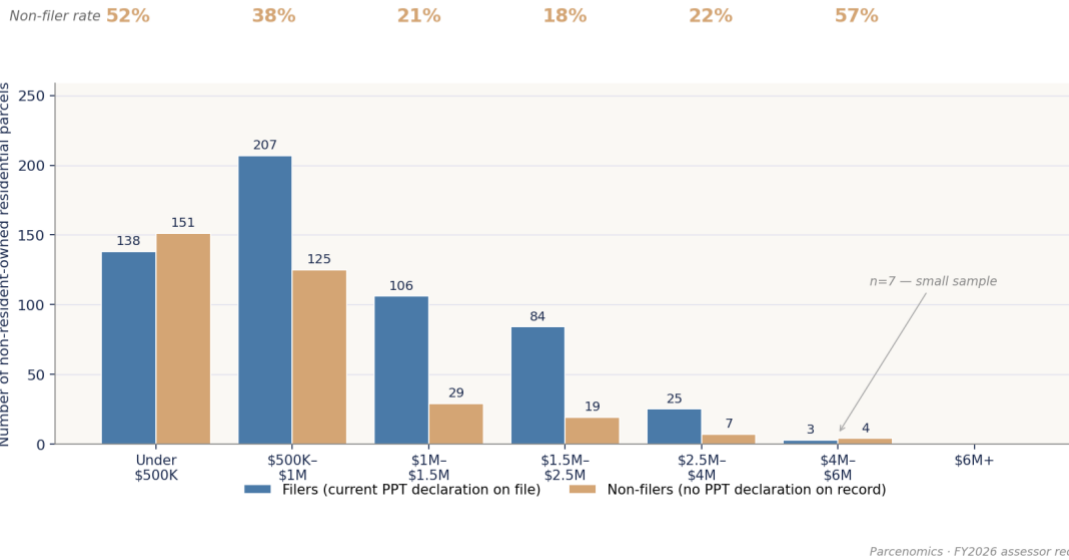


Chart 5.5 — Non-filer rate by AV band, non-resident residential parcels

The non-filer rate is highest at the low-AV end (52% under \$500K, 38% in the \$500K-\$1M band) and in the small high-end cohort (\$4M-\$6M, 57%, though the sample size of seven parcels warrants caution). 82% of non-filers (276 of 335) are in homes assessed under \$1M. The compliance gap from this cohort is distributed across the lower portion of the AV distribution rather than concentrated at the top.

The two patterns — under-declaration among existing filers and non-filing among those who don't file at all — compound with the time-lag in real estate assessment to produce a structural finding: the bulk of non-resident-owned Stockbridge residential value sits in parcels where neither the real estate assessment nor the personal property declaration has been validated against current market reality within the available transactional history. The longer the time since last arm's-length transaction, the larger the structural gap.

Why under-declaration concentrates in a narrow cohort:
the same five-year-old furnishings carry very different fair market values

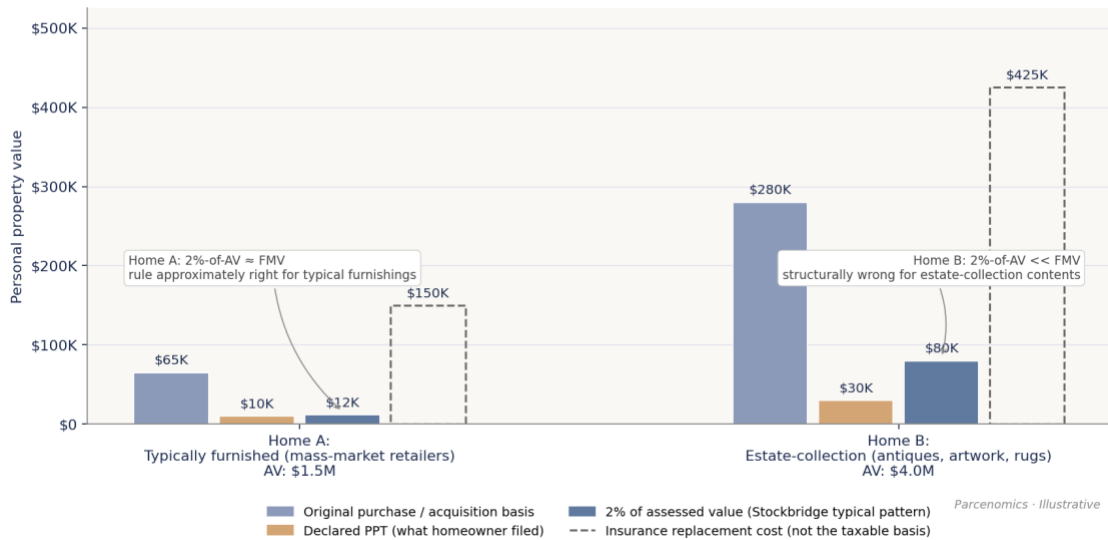


Chart 5.6 — *Two-home illustration: typical mass-market-furnished home vs. estate-collection home*

The chart above contrasts two illustrative configurations. A typically-furnished seasonal home filed at the time of purchase and carried forward will declare PPT in the 1-2% of AV range — a pattern approximately consistent with the depreciated fair market value of mass-market furnishings, which is the legally taxable basis. An estate-collection home with appreciating-asset contents (antiques, original artwork, period furniture, hand-knotted rugs, sterling, fine china, mature wine collections) declared at the time of an estate transfer decades ago and carried forward will exhibit the opposite pattern: the declaration anchors to a basis that contents appreciation has since rendered substantially below current fair market value. The same 1-2% declaration pattern is approximately right for one configuration and structurally wrong for the other.

Quantifying the precise recovery available from addressing this structural pattern is outside the scope of this profile. A defensible analysis requires methodology that goes beyond the public records available here — parcel-level contents review, comparable-market documentation, and procedural engagement with the Board of Assessors. The patterns documented above identify the analytical surface area; they do not produce a recovery estimate.

Procedural tools available to towns considering action. Under M.G.L. c.59 §5 Cl.20 and the broader statutory authority over assessment and personal property valuation, a Board of Assessors has procedural options for addressing the structural lag documented above. A targeted reassessment of parcels with no arm’s-length transactional validation point in the past decade — using comparable arm’s-length sales of similar parcels as the validation basis — is the standard remedy on the real estate side. A targeted Form of List update request to high-AV non-resident parcels with declarations below the 1% sniff-test floor, paired with documentation of likely contents value, is the standard remedy on the

personal property side. The Board can request copies of insurance contents schedules as supporting documentation, request professional appraisals for contested cases, and use auction-house records, gallery sale records, and qualified appraisals as the evidentiary basis for revised valuations.

The procedural tools exist. Their application requires Board of Assessors capacity and political support from the Select Board, and produces administrative and political costs that a town must weigh. The decision about whether to deploy them rests with the town's elected and appointed officials. The empirical pattern documented above identifies the magnitude of the analytical question; the procedural response is a matter of municipal policy.

The §5C residential exemption

The §5C residential exemption is the most consequential single lever available to Stockbridge under the structural condition Chapter 4 documented. It is also the lever most directly tied to the Seasonal Community designation, the only one whose expanded form requires designation acceptance.

Mechanics. The exemption deducts a flat dollar amount from the assessed value of a qualifying primary-residence property before the property tax rate is applied. The dollar amount is set by the Town as a percentage of the average residential assessed value in town. The Town then raises the residential tax rate to recover the levy lost on exempt properties. The result: primary-resident homes pay less tax. Non-resident-owned homes pay more. Total town revenue is unchanged. The exemption is reset annually.

The exemption as structural inverse of an override. A Proposition 2½ override and a §5C residential exemption operate on the same residential tax base in structurally opposite directions. An override raises the rate proportionally across all parcels, shifting burden toward the owners with the most assessed value to tax — disproportionately non-resident-owned property in Stockbridge given the median AV differential noted in Section A3 — but raising every primary resident's bill in the process. The §5C exemption keeps total town revenue unchanged while redistributing the tax burden specifically toward non-resident-owned property and away from primary residents. The structural effect on non-resident-owned property is similar to an override's; the effect on primary residents is the inverse. An override raises the typical primary-resident bill. The §5C exemption lowers it. The exemption delivers a shift of burden toward non-resident-owned property without imposing a uniform rate increase on the year-round residents the changing community has most squeezed.

Stockbridge's average residential assessed value is \$803,059. At a 35% exemption — the maximum available under the standard §5C ceiling — every qualifying primary-residence property would have \$281,071 deducted from its assessed value before the rate is applied.

The break-even point is approximately 1.5 times the town's average residential value. A primary-residence home assessed below that point comes out ahead under the exemption

— savings on the deducted assessment exceed the rate increase on the remaining assessment. A primary-residence home assessed above that point pays slightly more. Non-resident-owned homes pay the full rate increase without the offsetting deduction. They pay more at every value.

Scenarios. The locked analysis covers the standard ceiling at four exemption levels. At a 35% exemption, a primary-resident \$1 million home saves approximately \$1,087 per year, and a non-resident-owned \$1 million home pays approximately \$1,143 more.³⁵

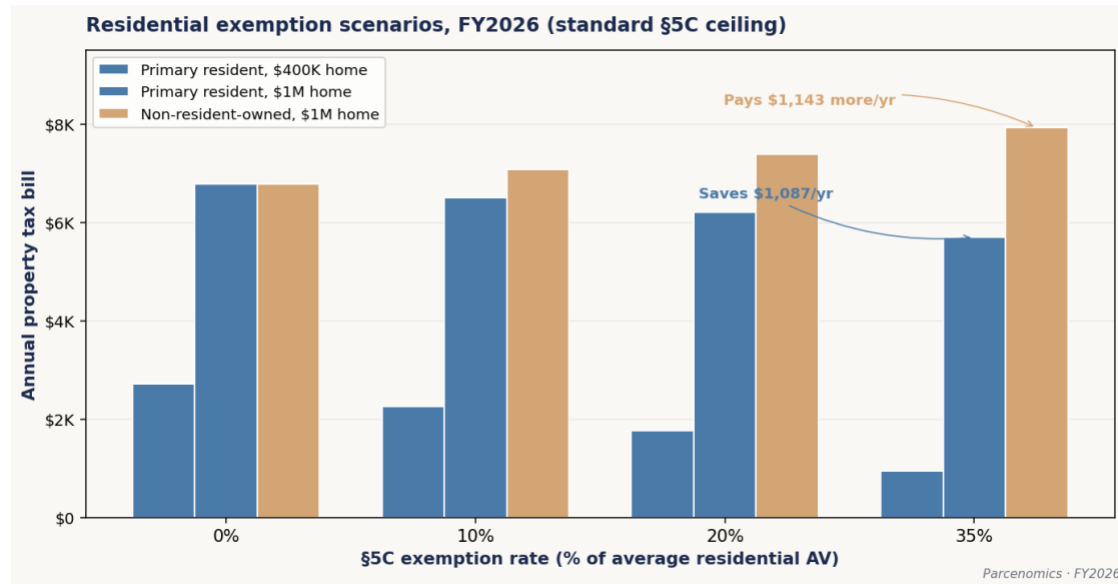


Chart 5.7 — Residential exemption scenarios, FY2026 (standard ceiling)

The 50% ceiling available to Stockbridge under the Seasonal Community designation produces a stronger version of the same effect — proportionally larger savings to primary residents below the break-even point and proportionally larger costs to non-resident-owned property. Specific 50% scenario numbers are pending a re-run of the §5C analysis under the expanded ceiling. The directional finding holds.

Stockbridge’s current posture. Stockbridge has not adopted the §5C exemption at any rate as of FY2026. Adoption of the expanded 50% ceiling requires the Town first accept the Seasonal Community designation under Section 32(b) by Town Meeting vote, then adopt

³⁵ §5C residential exemption mechanics: M.G.L. c.59 §5C. Per-parcel exemption equals the exemption-percentage times the average residential assessed value (FY2026 Stockbridge: \$803,059). The residential tax rate is recalibrated annually to recover the levy lost on exempt properties. Scenario figures apply to the 698 primary-resident parcels in Stockbridge as identified by the residency tier classifier (see Chapter 2 Note 12); the same FY2026 residential levy of \$9,247,901 is redistributed across non-exempt assessment. The 35% ceiling figures cited in this section are the operative analytical values; 50% ceiling figures are pending re-run under the Seasonal-Community expanded ceiling.

the exemption at the chosen rate by Select Board action under Section 32(f). Acceptance and adoption are sequential and independent decisions, and Stockbridge is currently studying acceptance of the designation with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Stockbridge has pursued legacy-homeowner support through the senior-exemption pathway under §5 Clauses 41A, 41D, 17E, and 18 — covered in Section C. The §5C residential exemption is a separate, additional statutory mechanism the Town has not yet adopted. Both pathways exist in statute. The §5 senior-exemption suite has been the one Stockbridge has used.

Unused Proposition 2½ levy capacity

Stockbridge has \$1,126,225 of unused levy capacity under Proposition 2½ in FY2026 — 9.99% of the maximum allowable levy of \$11,278,372 against an actual levy of \$10,152,147.³⁶ Across the 16-year window from FY2011 to FY2026, average annual unused capacity has been \$1,337,368 — about 14% of the maximum allowable. Stockbridge’s actual levy has consistently sat below the maximum allowable.

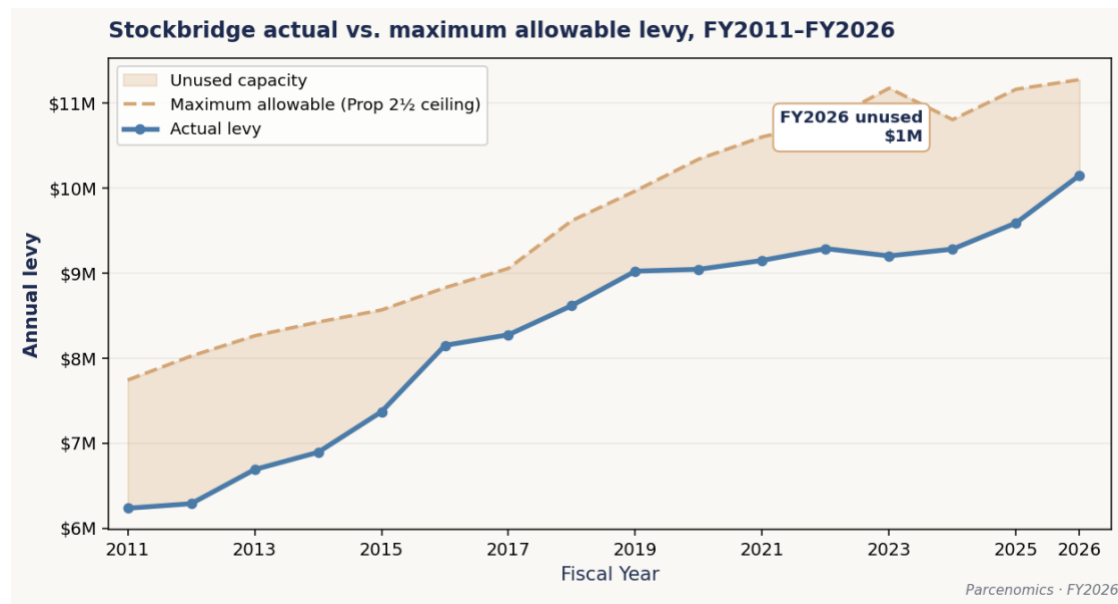


Chart 5.8 — Actual vs. maximum allowable levy, FY2011–FY2026

The override path — unnecessary, not blocked. Expansion of the actual levy above the existing baseline plus 2.5% annually requires a Proposition 2½ override vote at Town Meeting and the ballot box. Stockbridge has unused capacity available within the existing

³⁶ Unused Proposition 2½ levy capacity from packet 4c (FY2011–FY2026 levy limit reconstruction against DOR-certified Levy Limit form data). FY2026: maximum allowable levy \$11,278,372, actual levy \$10,152,147, unused capacity \$1,126,225 (9.99% of max). 16-year mean unused capacity \$1,337,368 (14.03% of max). Narrowest year FY2016 (\$678,594 unused, 7.69%); widest year FY2023 (\$1,973,991 unused, 17.66%).

ceiling, tappable without any override. The override path expands the ceiling itself. The two are distinct mechanisms.

The distinction matters for how Stockbridge's fiscal history should be read. Stockbridge has not gone to its voters for an operating override because it has not needed to. The Town has met its rising obligations, funded discretionary priorities — including approximately \$1 million in borrowing to restore its Main Street monuments, a capital choice many comparable towns could not contemplate — expanded its senior-exemption parameters well beyond the statutory minimums, and stood up new programs including an affordable housing trust (funded through Community Preservation Act revenue), all while maintaining its AA+ bond rating and leaving roughly \$1.1 to \$1.3 million of allowable levy capacity unused each year across the 16-year record. This is the fiscal record of a disciplined, well-managed town living within its means while still funding what it chose to fund. The override has been unnecessary for Stockbridge, not blocked.

The regional override environment is relevant context, not a constraint on Stockbridge. The Great Barrington May 12, 2026 override defeat — 631 to 397, a 61% no vote — and the mixed regional results that day reflect the fiscal corner that some neighboring towns have been pushed into: obligations outrunning capacity, forcing override questions that voters then reject. Stockbridge is not in that corner. Its disciplined posture is precisely what gives it the latitude to consider the fairer, override-free tools in this chapter rather than being forced toward an override it might lose. The contrast cuts in Stockbridge's favor: a town with room to choose its instruments, choosing among them deliberately.

Why the choice of instrument still matters. That Stockbridge has managed within its means does not make the choice of revenue instrument neutral. As the \$3.9 million in new annual obligations documented in Chapter 4 arrives by FY2029, the Town will need additional revenue — and the residential property tax rate is the tool it reaches for by default. A Proposition 2½ override, were the Town ever to pursue one, raises the tax rate proportionally across all taxable parcels. In Stockbridge, the median primary-resident-owned home is assessed at approximately \$588,900, producing an annual property tax bill of approximately \$3,999. The median non-resident-owned home is assessed at approximately \$673,650 — meaningfully higher — producing an annual property tax bill of approximately \$4,574.³⁷ An across-the-board rate increase of, for example, \$0.50 per

³⁷ Median residential tax bills by residency tier computed from the FY2026 assessor records using the residency tier classifier. Median assessed value among primary-resident-classified residential parcels: \$588,900 (n=698). Median assessed value among non-resident-classified residential parcels: \$673,650 (n=898). (A 2026-05-24 strict-universe re-derivation against a narrower 805-parcel cohort — excluding contested-signal and unresolved entity-owned parcels — produced a precise median of \$662,300; the 1.7% deviation reflects residency-tier composition shifts as manual overrides resolved contested cases.) Residential rate FY2026: \$6.79 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The hypothetical override increment of \$0.50 per \$1,000 is illustrative; actual override magnitudes vary.

thousand of assessed value would add approximately \$294 to the median primary-resident bill and approximately \$337 to the median non-resident bill. In absolute dollars, more of the burden falls on non-resident-owned property — but the increase lands on every primary resident regardless of capacity to absorb it, including the fixed-income seniors and working-age households the changing community has most squeezed. The §5C exemption and the compliance levers achieve a comparable shift of burden toward non-resident-owned property without imposing a uniform rate increase on the residents least able to pay. The instrument the Town selects determines who carries the new burden, even when the total revenue raised is the same.

Combined Scenario — all three independent levers

The first three levers — compliance recovery, §5C exemption (at the standard 35% ceiling), and tapping the unused Proposition 2½ levy capacity — can be activated independently or in combination. The locked analysis quantifies the combination under a conservative recovery scenario.

Under a conservative recovery scenario — approximately 50% recovery on the three outreach-driven streams (personal property tax, vehicle excise, boat excise) and adoption of the short-term-rental community impact fee at the 3% statutory maximum — plus the §5C exemption at the standard 35% ceiling, plus levy expansion to the maximum allowable: combined annual town revenue gain is approximately \$1,413,000. The residential tax rate moves from \$6.79 to approximately \$8.55. A primary-resident \$1 million home saves

approximately \$640 per year. A non-resident-owned \$1 million home pays approximately \$1,760 more.³⁸

The combined savings is smaller than the §5C-alone savings because the levy expansion in this scenario raises the residential rate, partially offsetting the exemption's effect on the primary-resident bill. The combined cost to non-resident-owned property is larger than the §5C-alone effect because the rate increase compounds on the unprotected non-resident assessment. Both directions are consistent with the structural intent of the combined approach.

Compliance recovery operates through two distinct fiscal mechanisms. Personal property tax recovery expands the residential AV base — additional assessed value enters the levy calculation, which holds the residential rate lower than it would otherwise be at constant town revenue. The other three streams (vehicle excise, boat excise, short-term-rental community impact fees) flow as estimated receipts — direct revenue to the Town outside the property tax levy. The Combined Scenario below presents both mechanisms; the town revenue gain figure reflects estimated receipts only, while the rate effect reflects the combined operation of both buckets.

Table 5.1 — Combined Scenario, Conservative case

³⁸ Combined Scenario figures, Conservative case assumptions: 50% recovery on the three outreach-driven compliance streams (personal property tax, vehicle excise, boat excise) against the strict-universe per-stream estimates; adoption of the M.G.L. c.64G §3D short-term rental community impact fee at the 3% statutory maximum; §5C residential exemption adopted at the standard 35% ceiling; Proposition 2½ levy expanded from \$10,152,147 actual to \$11,278,372 maximum allowable. Decomposition of the \$1,413,000 town revenue gain: \$1,126,225 from levy expansion plus \$287,000 from estimated-receipts compliance (vehicle excise conservative \$110,000, boat excise conservative \$37,000, c.64G §3D community impact fee at 3% statutory maximum \$140,000, which flow outside the property tax levy as direct revenue to the Town). Personal property tax compliance recovery (\$134,000 at 50% recovery against the strict-universe 247-parcel insurance-replacement estimate; AV-base expansion of approximately \$19.7 million at the FY2026 residential rate) operates as residential rate relief through AV-base expansion rather than as direct town revenue. The strict-universe basis makes the compliance-stream contributions to this scenario a floor; parcels excluded for classification uncertainty include some likely non-compliant cases that would expand recovery beyond what this scenario reports. The §5C exemption at 35% is revenue-neutral. Mid-case recovery scenario assumes 60% recovery on the three outreach streams (other assumptions unchanged): town revenue gain approximately \$1,443,000, primary-resident \$1 million home savings approximately \$658, non-resident \$1 million home extra cost approximately \$1,740, residential rate approximately \$8.53. Full per-stream methodology documented in the Technical Appendix.

The compliance recovery inputs below reflect the strict universe — parcels Parcenomics could classify with confidence at the time of analysis. The recovery shown represents a conservative floor; parcels excluded for classification uncertainty include some likely non-compliant cases that would expand recovery beyond what the table reports.

Lever	Town revenue contribution	Effect on residential rate
Compliance recovery — PPT (Bucket A: AV-base expansion)	\$0	\$19.7M of additional AV base producing approximately \$134,000 in residential rate relief
Compliance recovery — vehicle / boat / c.64G §3D (Bucket B: estimated receipts)	+\$287,000	None (flows directly to town revenue)
§5C exemption at standard 35% ceiling	\$0 (revenue-neutral)	Redistributes burden from primary-resident to non-resident-owned property
Levy expansion to maximum allowable	+\$1,126,225	Levy raised from \$10,152,147 to \$11,278,372 (Prop 2½ ceiling)
Combined Scenario, Conservative	+\$1,413,000	Rate \$6.79 → \$8.55 · \$1M primary saves \$640 · \$1M non-resident pays \$1,760 more

The mid-case recovery scenario (60% recovery against the mid-band estimates) produces incrementally stronger numbers: approximately \$1,443,000 annual gain to the Town and \$658 in annual savings to a typical \$1 million primary-resident home.

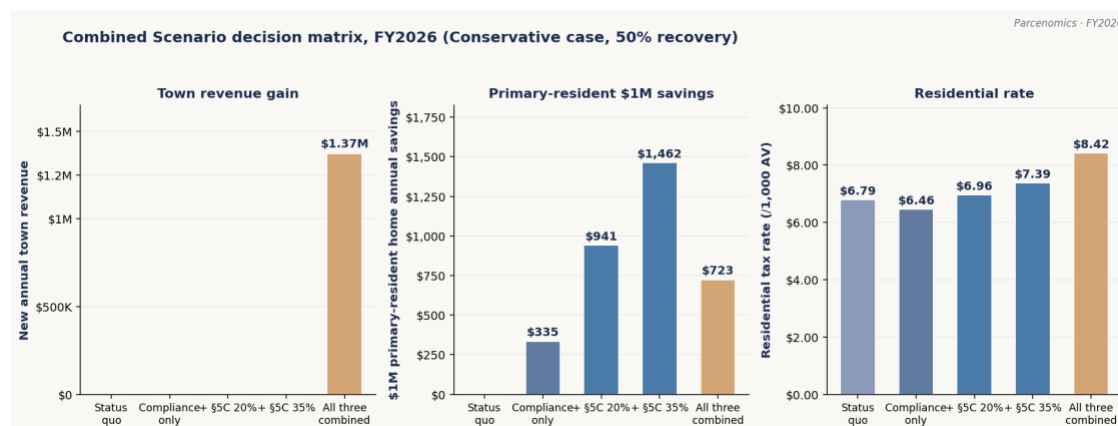


Chart 5.9 — Combined Scenario decision matrix

The combined commitments framing

The Section A levers above produce approximately \$1.41 million annually in the conservative scenario. Stockbridge currently faces two near-term municipal commitments of comparable scale. The BHRSD school capital obligation, locked in November 2025 against the FY2024 EQV documented in Chapter 3, will produce debt service the Town will begin paying in the next several years. The joint Stockbridge / West Stockbridge fire-and-EMS operation, approved by voters in December 2024 and targeted for full implementation by July 2027, will produce capital and operating costs that compound through the FY2026–FY2030 transition window. The combined annual incremental burden of these two commitments is comparable in magnitude to the revenue the Section A levers would recover. The levers do not eliminate the need for these expenditures. They produce the fiscal capacity that allows the Town to meet them by distributing the new burden toward non-resident-owned property rather than spreading it uniformly across the year-round residents least able to absorb a rate increase.

The timing of lever activation relative to when the commitments come online matters. The BHRSD bond enters debt service on a schedule the school district determines. The fire station authorization is in active planning. The Section A levers can be activated incrementally — some without any vote (compliance recovery, levy capacity expansion within the existing ceiling), some on a single Select Board action (§5C exemption at the standard 35% ceiling), some on a sequential Town Meeting plus Select Board sequence (§5C expanded 50% ceiling via Seasonal Community designation acceptance). The Town has the procedural pieces to begin activation now. The fiscal effects compound year over year.

Section B — Housing Production and Demand Tools

The Seasonal Community designation under Section 32 of Chapter 150 makes a suite of housing-production and fiscal tools available to designated municipalities. Stockbridge’s posture as of the date of this profile is one of active deliberation — the Town is studying acceptance with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and has not brought acceptance to Town Meeting. The toolkit below would become available if acceptance is voted. The obligations that come with acceptance are described alongside the opportunities.³⁹

The Section 32 toolkit

Discretionary tools (Section 32(d)) — may be exercised by an accepting municipality:

³⁹ Section 32 of Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024 (the Affordable Homes Act), codified at M.G.L. c.23B §32. Discretionary tools enumerated in Section 32(d); mandatory adoptions in Section 32(e); residential exemption ceiling expansion to 50% in Section 32(f). Seasonal Communities Grant Program eligibility limit per the December 2025 grant round announcement from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

- Acquire year-round occupancy restrictions on housing through restriction or deed amendment.
- Acquire and develop housing for public employees of the municipality.
- Conduct biennial housing-needs assessments.
- Establish a Year-Round Housing Trust Fund.
- Establish funds for artist and literary worker housing.
- Eligibility for the Seasonal Communities Grant Program, with state grants currently capped at \$175,000 per town per year.

Mandatory adoptions (Section 32(e)) — must be enacted by an accepting municipality:

- Adopt zoning bylaws permitting undersized lots for year-round housing.
- Adopt zoning bylaws permitting tiny houses for year-round residential use.

The §5C residential exemption ceiling expansion under Section 32(f), covered in Section A, is also conditional on acceptance.

The acceptance decision

Acceptance triggers both opportunities and obligations. The discretionary tools are opportunities the Town can choose to use or not after acceptance. The mandatory adoptions are zoning changes the Town must enact within the timeline the Act and the EOHLC regulations specify. The §5C 50% expansion is enabled but not required.

Whether the discretionary tools are valuable in Stockbridge’s specific context, and whether the mandatory adoptions are appropriate zoning policy for Stockbridge, are questions the Town and its planning processes are equipped to evaluate. The underlying zoning merits are not within the scope of this profile. The point worth surfacing is that acceptance is not a free option — there are obligations that come with the tools. The Town’s deliberation with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the procedural posture where these trade-offs are being weighed.

Tools not contingent on designation

Several housing-related tools are available to Stockbridge regardless of Seasonal Community acceptance.

Accessory dwelling unit authorization under state law became statewide in 2024. Accessory dwelling units of up to 900 square feet are now permitted by-right in single-family residential zones across Massachusetts.

Community Preservation Act funds. Stockbridge participates in the CPA, which dedicates a portion of property tax revenue to open space, historic preservation, and community housing. Housing-creation grants are available through the existing CPA framework.

Existing zoning flexibility. Special permits and variances available through the Town’s existing zoning board mechanisms can apply to housing-creation projects within the existing bylaw.

These tools have been available to the Town throughout. None requires designation acceptance.

Section C — Legacy Resident Support

The exec summary introduced the term *legacy homeowners* — property-rich, cash-poor full-time residents — increasingly used in Berkshire municipal discussions to describe the population most exposed to the structural condition Chapter 4 documented. Section C examines the statutory mechanisms available to a town that wants to keep its legacy homeowners in their homes as property values appreciate around them.

The §5C exemption as a legacy-support mechanism

The §5C exemption is the principal statutory mechanism for shifting tax burden toward the population that arrived during the transformation Chapter 4 documented and away from the population whose income did not move with property values. Through the exemption, every qualifying primary-residence household receives a flat-dollar reduction in assessed value before the tax rate is applied. The mechanism is age- and income-blind. It covers all primary residences in town.

Section A above quantified the §5C exemption at the standard 35% ceiling and noted the 50% ceiling available under Seasonal Community designation. The scenarios there are the operative numbers. The framing here is the structural argument for which population the exemption protects.

Senior tax deferral and exemption

Stockbridge has adopted the full senior-exemption package available under M.G.L. c.59 §5 — Clauses 41A (senior tax deferral), 41D (senior exemption with cost-of-living adjustment, the 41C variant), 17E (widow, elderly, minor exemption with cost-of-living adjustment, the 17D variant), and 18 (hardship abatement) — as a Town Meeting package rather than as

separate single-clause adoptions.⁴⁰ The four clauses together form a layered support structure for older, fixed-income, and disability-impacted year-round residents. Adoption is in place. The structural question facing the Town is utilization, not adoption.

Clause 41A — Senior Tax Deferral is the most powerful of the four. A qualifying senior may defer payment of all or part of their annual property tax bill. The deferred amount accumulates as a lien against the property repayable from the eventual sale or transfer. The deferral allows a property-rich, cash-poor senior to remain in their home through retirement years when income is fixed and property tax bills rise with assessed value. Two operative parameters set by Town Meeting determine the practical reach of the clause:

- **Income ceiling.** Stockbridge’s adopted income ceiling is **\$75,000** — the 2025 state Circuit Breaker non-head-of-household income limit. The statutory minimum is \$20,000.
- **Interest rate on deferred amounts.** Stockbridge’s adopted interest rate is **5%**. The statutory default is 8%; municipalities may adopt a lower rate by Town Meeting vote. The rate increases to 16% upon sale, transfer, or death of the deferring taxpayer.

Both parameters were deliberately expanded by Town Meeting vote in FY2024. The income ceiling moved from the \$20,000 statutory minimum to \$75,000, broadening eligibility to a substantially larger share of fixed-income seniors. The interest rate dropped from the 8% statutory default to 5%, reducing the long-term cost to a deferring household. The combined effect is a senior-deferral program that reaches well beyond what the statutory minimums would support.

Clause 41D — Senior Exemption (with cost-of-living adjustment). Provides a flat-dollar exemption on the current-year property tax bill for qualifying seniors meeting income and asset tests. Unlike Clause 41A, which defers tax to a future sale, Clause 41D reduces the

⁴⁰ M.G.L. c.59 §5: Clause 41A (senior tax deferral), Clause 41D (senior exemption with cost-of-living adjustment, the 41C variant), Clause 17E (widow / elderly / minor exemption with cost-of-living adjustment, the 17D variant), and Clause 18 (hardship abatement). Stockbridge accepted all four clauses by Town Meeting vote. Operative parameters confirmed by the Stockbridge Board of Assessors (Senior Property Tax Exemption Guidelines for Income & Equity, FY2026 schedule): **Clause 41A** income ceiling \$75,000 (the 2025 state Circuit Breaker non-head-of-household income limit), interest rate on deferred amounts 5%; both parameters expanded by Town Meeting vote in FY2024 from statutory minimums of \$20,000 income ceiling and 8% interest rate respectively. **Clause 41D** exemption amount \$1,000 per qualifying household per year; income limits \$27,475 (single) and \$31,705 (married) with statutory Social Security deductions applied; asset limits \$59,183 (single) and \$63,409 (married). **Clause 17E** exemption amount \$426 per qualifying household per year; no income limit; asset limit \$84,548 (single or married). **Clause 18** hardship abatement is granted at the discretion of the Board of Assessors; no applications have been received in recent years.

current-year bill outright. Stockbridge’s adopted exemption amount is **\$1,000** per qualifying household per year. The FY2026 income limits are \$27,475 (single) and \$31,705 (married), with statutory Social Security deductions applied per DOR rules. The asset limits are \$59,183 (single) and \$63,409 (married).

Clause 17E — Widow, Elderly, Minor Exemption (with cost-of-living adjustment).

Provides a fixed exemption to surviving spouses, elderly residents, and minor children of deceased property owners under specified conditions. Stockbridge’s adopted exemption amount is **\$426** per qualifying household per year. There is no income limit under Clause 17E. The asset limit is \$84,548 (single or married).

Clause 18 — Hardship Abatement. Authorizes the Board of Assessors to grant case-by-case abatements for taxpayers experiencing financial hardship. Adoption is in place. No applications have been received in recent years. Whether this reflects absence of qualifying hardship or absence of program awareness is not measurable from the available data.

The four clauses adopted together represent the most thorough senior-support posture available under the §5 framework, with both 41A and 41D extended materially beyond statutory minimums. The structural question facing the Town is whether the operative parameters reach the legacy homeowners the clauses are designed to support, and whether utilization tracks eligibility. The first question is answerable by Town Meeting review of the parameter values. The second question is answerable by Board of Assessors data on application rates, where that data is collected and surfaced.

The unaddressed gap — entry-level affordability for the next generation

The senior-exemption suite and the §5C residential exemption are both *retention* tools. They lower the carrying cost of a home for a household that already owns one — the senior aging in place, the primary resident protected from the rate increase that funds the exemption. They are the right tools for the population they serve, and Stockbridge has adopted them about as fully as the statute allows. But retention is only half of what a year-round community needs to sustain itself. The other half is *entry*: the ability of the next generation of year-round households — the working-age families who would staff the institutions, fill the volunteer roles, and enroll children in the schools — to acquire a home in town in the first place. Nothing in the toolkit Stockbridge has adopted addresses entry.

This gap has a fiscal dimension that is worth naming plainly. A senior exemption is financed through an overlay: the revenue the Town forgoes on exempt senior households is recovered by raising the residential rate on every non-exempt household. Among those non-exempt households are the working-age, year-round residents whose incomes have not tracked the property-value transformation Chapter 1 documents. The Town’s most developed equity intervention is, in part, carried by the very cohort that faces the next affordability problem and has no comparable mechanism addressing it. This is not an argument against senior relief, which is sound policy for a vulnerable population. It is an

observation that the Town has built one half of a generational strategy and not the other, and that the half it has built is partly financed by the half it has not.

The boards that expanded Stockbridge's senior-exemption parameters and stood up its affordable housing trust did real and prudent work. But that work has not been coupled with a mechanism for entry-level homeownership, and the consequence is visible across the demographic record assembled in this profile: an aging year-round population (54.3% age 65 or older per Chapter 1), a shrinking under-35 cohort, new buyers who do not convert to year-round primary residency at the rates the conversion analysis would predict, and a median-household-income trajectory driven by the in-migration of higher-income households rather than rising incomes among the families already here. Each of these is a symptom of the same underlying condition: a community that has built well for the residents it has and aging, without building a path for the residents it needs next.

The tools that would address entry are not in Section A or Section C. They are in Section B — the housing-production tools the Seasonal Community designation unlocks. The Section 32(d) discretionary tools (year-round occupancy restrictions, a Year-Round Housing Trust Fund capitalized beyond what CPA alone can fund, public-employee housing), the Section 32(e) zoning adoptions (undersized lots, tiny houses for year-round use), the statewide accessory-dwelling-unit authorization, and the existing CPA housing-creation framework are the supply-and-entry instruments that the fiscal and retention levers do not touch. This profile does not prescribe which of them Stockbridge should adopt; the Section 32 mandatory adoptions in particular carry real zoning trade-offs the Town and its planning processes are equipped to weigh, and the merits of any specific zoning change are outside this profile's scope. The point is narrower and structural: the retention half of the strategy (Sections A and C) and the entry half (Section B) are two halves of one generational problem, and the data shows Stockbridge has advanced the first without yet engaging the second.

Fiscal tools and legacy support as one strategy

The Section A levers and the Section C legacy-support mechanisms are two halves of one fiscal strategy. The Section A levers generate the revenue and the rate-structure shift that fund a proactive response to the structural condition Chapter 4 documented. The Section C mechanisms — the §5C residential exemption and the §5 senior-exemption package — protect the legacy homeowners the structural condition has most exposed.

The §5C residential exemption (Section A and Section C1) covers all qualifying primary residences regardless of age or income. It operates at the scale of the residential tax base. The §5 senior-exemption package (Section C2) covers seniors and limited-income or hardship-impacted year-round residents specifically. It operates at the scale of qualifying individuals. The two mechanisms are complementary, not redundant. Both are retention mechanisms; as the preceding section notes, the entry side of the strategy lives in the Section B housing-production tools.

The fiscal-tools analysis in Section A is calibrated against the combined annual incremental burden of the BHRSD school capital obligation and the anticipated fire station debt exclusion that Chapter 3 documented. The Section C legacy-support mechanisms are calibrated against the structural condition Chapter 4 documented — the demographic transformation that has compressed the year-round community and concentrated its tax burden on a fixed-income, aging population.

The timing matters. Lever activation that compounds for several years before the major commitments come into full effect produces a meaningfully different fiscal posture than activation that begins after. The Town has the procedural pieces to begin activation now. The decisions are the Town's to make.

Key findings of this chapter

- Four independent compliance recovery streams — personal property tax on furnishings, vehicle excise, boat excise, and short-term-rental community-impact fees — carry a combined estimated annual gap of approximately \$0.3 million to \$0.9 million on the strict universe of parcels Parcenomics could classify with confidence. The range is a floor: parcels excluded for classification uncertainty include some likely non-compliant cases that would surface through outreach.
- 80% of non-resident-owned Stockbridge residential value, \$639 million across 718 parcels, sits in parcels with no arm's-length transactional validation point in the 20-year sales register. 577 parcels have no transfer of any kind recorded; 141 have had only non-arm's-length transfers (predominantly estate-planning conveyances coded by the Department of Revenue as family or no-consideration transfers).
- The carried-forward assessment basis on these 718 parcels has not been validated against an arm's-length sale price for at least a decade. In a market that has experienced substantial appreciation, the gap between current market value and carried-forward assessment grows with each year that passes without a transactional anchor.
- Personal property tax declarations on the same parcels exhibit a parallel structural pattern: declarations filed at the time of acquisition tend to be carried forward unchanged. Of 563 non-resident filers, 28% declare PPT below 1% of assessed value — a floor that does not survive basic scrutiny for a furnished seasonal home.
- The §5C residential exemption is the most consequential single lever available to Stockbridge. Adopted at the standard 35% ceiling, it would shift approximately \$1,087 of annual savings to a \$1 million primary-resident home and approximately \$1,143 of additional annual cost to a \$1 million non-resident-owned home, while leaving total town revenue unchanged.
- Stockbridge has \$1.13 million of unused levy capacity under Proposition 2½, and has consistently left roughly \$1.1 to \$1.3 million unused each year across the 16-year record. The Town has met its obligations and funded discretionary priorities — including approximately \$1 million in borrowing for its Main Street monuments — within that capacity and without an operating override. The override has been unnecessary for Stockbridge, not blocked. The regional override difficulty (including the May 2026 Great Barrington defeat) is the contrast that makes Stockbridge's disciplined position notable, not a constraint on the Town.
- Combined under a conservative scenario — approximately 50% recovery on the three outreach-driven compliance streams, adoption of the c.64G §3D short-term rental community impact fee at the 3% statutory maximum, adoption of the §5C exemption at the standard 35% ceiling, and expansion of the levy to the maximum allowable — these three levers together produce approximately \$1.41 million in new annual town revenue, \$640 in annual savings to a typical \$1 million primary-resident home, and approximately \$1,760 in additional annual cost to a typical \$1 million non-resident-owned home.
- Stockbridge has adopted the most thorough senior-exemption posture available under the Massachusetts §5 framework — Clauses 41A, 41D, 17E, and 18 — with both 41A senior tax deferral and 41D senior exemption operating at parameters materially beyond statutory minimums. The structural question facing the Town is

Technical Appendix

This appendix describes the data sources, analytical methods at a categorical level, and the known limitations behind the findings in this profile. The intent is to satisfy a careful reader — a municipal evaluator, a peer analyst, a Town Counsel reviewing for due diligence — that the report rests on defensible methodology and verifiable sources.

1. Scope and intent

The appendix covers data provenance, analytical framework, and limitations. Methodology specific enough to replicate the analysis is not within scope. The Parcenomics analytical methods that produce findings in this report — the canonical name layer that resolves name variants and matches buyers against voters, the residency tier classifier that assigns each parcel to a primary-resident, non-resident, or entity-held category, the four-category sale filter that produces the household-change figures, and the compliance-recovery candidate-identification methodology — are proprietary to Parcenomics.

This appendix describes the *what* and *where the data comes from*. The *how* in operational detail is the firm's intellectual property. A reader who wants more detail on a specific finding can request a methodology consultation, described in Section 7.

2. Data sources

Federal

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Vintages 2011-2015 and 2020-2024. Tables used: B01002 (median age), B15003 (educational attainment), B19013 (median household income), B25003 (tenure / owner-occupancy), B25004 (vacancy reason, including seasonal / recreational / occasional use). The 2020-2024 5-year vintage is the most current ACS 5-year estimate available as of mid-2025; the 2011-2015 vintage anchors the income-comparison baseline. Geographic units used: Stockbridge town, the 22 Berkshire County municipal subdivisions for which ACS estimates at the necessary table level are available (out of Berkshire County's 32 municipalities total — 2 cities and 30 towns; the remaining 10 are very small towns where the Census Bureau either suppresses estimates or carries margins of error that exceed analytical usefulness), Berkshire County, Massachusetts statewide.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). U.S. city average, annual series. Used to deflate nominal income figures across the 2015–2024 window to comparable purchasing-power terms.

Massachusetts state

Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services. Tax Rate Recapitulation forms FY2011-FY2026 for Stockbridge; LA-13 form (new growth detail); LA-19 Equalized Valuation publications across eight biennial cycles (FY2010 through FY2024); Schedule A annual

local-receipts filings; Levy Limit form. The FY2026 Stockbridge Recap was DOR-certified on October 27, 2025.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Seasonal Community designation list as published in December 2024 (original 25-municipality statutory designation) and December 2025 (formula-based expansion offering designation to 19 additional municipalities — 18 in the December 2025 announcement plus Rockport shortly thereafter).

Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act of 2024 (Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024, codified at M.G.L. c.23B §32), Section 32 statutory text. Provides the statutory framework for the Seasonal Community designation, the discretionary and mandatory tools under Section 32(d) and 32(e), and the expanded §5C exemption ceiling under Section 32(f).

Massachusetts General Laws. Chapter 59 §5C (residential exemption); Chapter 59 §5 Clauses 41A (senior tax deferral), 41D (senior exemption, the 41C variant with cost-of-living adjustment), 17E (widow / elderly / minor exemption, the 17D variant with cost-of-living adjustment), and 18 (hardship abatement); Chapter 64G §3 (room occupancy excise, including the up-to-6% local-option rate under §3A) and §3D (short-term rental community impact fee under §3D(a), with the §3D(b) option to extend to owner-occupied two- and three-family STRs and the §3D(c) 35% affordable-housing / infrastructure earmark on receipts).

Local

Town of Stockbridge assessor records. Parcel inventory, ownership records, residency signals, and class codes, current as of the assessor data used in the FY2026 Recap reconciliation. Source for the residential AV figures used throughout the report.

Town of Stockbridge voter file. Snapshot dated April 21, 2026, restricted to active registrations with a known birth year for the voter age distribution analysis.

Town of Stockbridge sales register. Residential transactions covering FY2020 through FY2026, used in the buyer-to-voter conversion analysis and the four-category sale filter described in Section 4.

Town of Stockbridge Tax Rate Recapitulation. FY2026 form, certified by DOR October 27, 2025. Source for the FY2026 levy, residential rate, and class AV totals reported throughout the body of the report.

Regional

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Survey of Second Homeowners — Results (August 2022). 731-respondent survey conducted across the 30 Berkshire County towns (out of 32 total municipalities); Stockbridge was among the top-five towns by survey participation with 61 respondents. The full report is available at berkshireplanning.org.

Used in Chapter 2 for the New York origin concentration and the cultural-amenities purchase-decision finding.

Reporting

The Berkshire Eagle. News reporting on the May 12, 2026 Great Barrington Proposition 2½ override defeat (“Great Barrington voters overwhelmingly reject Proposition 2 1/2 override,” May 13, 2026). Cited in Chapter 4’s political-surfacing paragraph.

Town of Stockbridge Capital Planning documentation. Fire station replacement capital estimates and operating-cost projections, cited in Chapter 3’s “next commitment in the pipeline” subsection. Public-source citation pending final publication.

3. The five-indicator framework

Chapter 4 presents five independent indicators of the structural condition the profile documents. Each operates on a distinct data source. Agreement across all five — none of which can be derived from the others — is what makes the pattern interpretive rather than coincidental.

Age structure. Federal census table B01002 (median age) for Stockbridge, Berkshire County, and the Massachusetts state aggregate. Cross-validated against the Stockbridge active voter file’s age distribution, which independently confirms the elder-skew finding through a different data source.

Seasonal housing share. Federal census table B25004 (housing units classified by vacancy reason, including seasonal / recreational / occasional use). Reported value for Stockbridge against the 22 Berkshire County peer averages (the subset of Berkshire’s 32 municipalities for which ACS estimates are available) and the Massachusetts state aggregate.

Income transformation. Federal census table B19013 (median household income), measured at two vintages (2011-2015 and 2020-2024). Comparison is presented both in current dollars and in CPI-U-adjusted purchasing-power terms across the same nine-year window for Stockbridge, Berkshire County, and Massachusetts.

Buyer-to-voter conversion. Matched comparison between the Town of Stockbridge sales register (buyers in residential transactions FY2020-FY2026) and the Town of Stockbridge voter file (active registrations as of April 21, 2026). The matching process handles common name variants — nicknames, spelling differences, middle-name discrepancies. Conversion is measured at the purchased property’s address rather than against any in-town registration. Entity buyers (LLCs and trusts) are included via situs-match: a parcel purchased by an entity is counted as converted if a current voter is registered at that parcel’s address.

Peer positioning. Same data sources (B01002, B25004) applied across the 22 Berkshire County municipalities for which ACS estimates at the necessary table level are available (of 32 total), producing the comparative scatter and ranking documented in Chapter 4.

The matching, classification, and reconciliation methodologies that produce the buyer-to-voter conversion measure are described at the categorical level. The operational specifics of the canonical name layer that handles variant resolution and the override logic that processes ambiguous cases are Parcenomics methodology.

4. Four-category sale filter and implied newcomer income

Chapter 1’s replacement math and the approximately \$268,000 implied newcomer income figure rest on a four-category classification of residential property sales across FY2020-FY2026.

Every residential sale in the window is sorted by the residency status of the seller at time of sale and the residency status of the buyer post-sale. The four categories are: Resident-to-Resident, Resident-to-Non-resident, Non-resident-to-Resident, and Non-resident-to-Non-resident. The net household change is the difference between the third category (households joining the year-round community through purchases) and the second category (households departing). For FY2020-FY2026 in Stockbridge, 234 households arrived and 244 departed — a net change of negative 10.

The implied newcomer income figure is then derived from the observed Stockbridge median household income shift, the statewide income-growth pace as a counterfactual baseline, and the four-category sale count.

Technical framing. Let \bar{Y}_{2024} denote the observed 2024 Stockbridge median household income and \bar{Y}_{2015} the observed 2015 figure. The 2024 figure is decomposable into the population-weighted contribution of three groups: households that remained in Stockbridge across the window (N_S households at mean 2024 income $\bar{Y}_{S,2024}$), households that arrived through purchases (N_A at mean income \bar{Y}_A), and households that departed (N_D at mean pre-departure income \bar{Y}_D). The accounting identity is:

$$\bar{Y}_{2024} = \frac{N_S \cdot \bar{Y}_{S,2024} + N_A \cdot \bar{Y}_A - N_D \cdot \bar{Y}_D}{N_S + N_A - N_D}$$

The four-category sale filter produces $N_A = 234$ and $N_D = 244$ directly. The Stockbridge median household incomes $\bar{Y}_{2015} = \$56,027$ and $\bar{Y}_{2024} = \$146,250$ are observed from ACS table B19013. Under the counterfactual that staying households tracked the statewide income-growth pace $g_{MA} = 1.52$ in current dollars across the same window, we have $\bar{Y}_{S,2024} = g_{MA} \cdot \bar{Y}_{2015}$. The arriving and departing groups are assumed to have approximately equal pre-purchase income distributions absent evidence otherwise, so $\bar{Y}_D \approx \bar{Y}_{2015}$. The staying-household count N_S is the residual: the 2024 ACS reports approximately 1,051 Stockbridge households, against $N_A - N_D = -10$ net migration, implying $N_S \approx 827$ households that remained across the window. Solving the identity for \bar{Y}_A produces the

approximately \$268,000 figure cited in the body of the report — in 2024 dollars, directly comparable to the 2024 Stockbridge median.

The figure is reported as approximate because the identity is sensitive to the assumed mean income of the departing-household cohort. The Chapter 1 prose carries this caveat through the rounding convention (“approximately \$268,000”; “roughly 3.15 times what departing households earned”).

The residency-status determination for each party in each sale uses the residency tier classifier described in Section 5. The operational specifics — class codes used in the classification universe, override logic, edge-case handling, the residency tier classifier’s internal decision boundaries — are Parcenomics methodology.

5. Residency tier classifier

The 39.1% primary-resident / 59.7% non-resident / 1.3% entity-held split reported in Chapter 2 is produced by what the body chapters refer to as the residency tier classifier with manual overrides.

The classifier accepts as input each residential parcel in the Stockbridge assessor universe. For each parcel, it produces an assignment to one of three tiers: primary-resident-owned, non-resident-owned, or entity-held (LLC or trust with ownership not traceable to an individual from public records). The classifier operates by triangulation across multiple data sources, with a manual override layer applied where automated classification produces an ambiguous or known-incorrect result.

Technical framing. For each residential parcel p in the assessor universe, the tier assignment $T(p) \in \{\text{primary, non-resident, entity}\}$ is produced by a multi-source triangulation function:

$$T(p) = f(O(p), V(p, \text{addr}(p)), M(p), C(p), \Omega(p))$$

where $O(p)$ is the ownership record (owner name, owner type, entity flag), $V(p, \text{addr}(p))$ is the voter-file lookup at the parcel’s situs address, $M(p)$ is the parcel’s mailing-address pattern relative to its situs address, $C(p)$ is the assessor class code and any class-specific residency signal it carries, and $\Omega(p)$ is the manual override layer applied where the automated triangulation produces an ambiguous or known-incorrect tier assignment. The function $f(\cdot)$ implements the triangulation logic — assigning relative weights to consistent and inconsistent signals across the input vector, resolving conflicts where signals disagree, and producing the final tier assignment.

The specification of $f(\cdot)$, the conflict-resolution logic across inconsistent signal combinations, the override decision criteria, and the calibration of the classifier against ground-truth samples constitute Parcenomics methodology and are not disclosed in this appendix. The framework above describes what the classifier consumes and what it produces; the operational specifics are the firm’s intellectual property.

Cross-validation: an independent USPS-routing-corrected mailing-only methodology produces a primary-resident share within five percentage points of the classifier’s output, providing convergent validation of the headline figure.

6. Reconciliation and known limitations

Honest disclosure of the points at which the analysis has known limitations.

Federal census uncertainty for small towns. Stockbridge’s population is approximately 2,056. American Community Survey 5-year estimates carry meaningful margins of error at this population scale — typically wider for small-town subdivisions than for county- or state-level aggregates. The Chapter 1 prose acknowledges this caveat where each ACS-derived figure is cited; specific margin-of-error data is available from the Census Bureau alongside each estimate.

The \$7.6 million residential AV reconciliation gap. Two residential AV totals appear in the report depending on the analytical purpose. The Recap LA-4 Class 1 line reports the certified residential AV total of \$1,361,988,320 across 1,697 residential parcels — the figure used for fiscal aggregates and tax-rate calculations. The parcel-level aggregation used as the ownership-share denominator is restricted to assessor class codes in the 101-109 range and applies exclusions for Chapter 61 / 61A / 61B classified land at residential-edge treatment and for parcels in the Multi-use Residential class series (classes 012-043). The restricted aggregation produces \$1,354,342,520 across 1,696 parcels. The two denominators reconcile through the excluded categories — the gap is approximately \$7.6 million and 1 parcel in aggregate, reflecting the net effect of class-code-based exclusions applied to the restricted aggregation rather than a single \$7.6M parcel. Both denominators are correct for their respective analytical purposes: the Recap line for fiscal aggregates and tax-rate calculations, the restricted parcel aggregation for ownership-share analysis where Multi-use and Chapter-61-edge parcels would distort residency-tier assignment.

The 114.1% implied assessment-to-sale ratio. Stockbridge’s FY2026 CAMA total (\$1,495,161,601) measured against the most-recently-published Equalized Valuation (the FY2024 EQV of \$1,311 million) produces an implied 114.1% ratio. This sits outside the DOR’s 90-110% certification band but is consistent with the biennial EQV measurement lag rather than a local calibration failure. The FY2026 EQV, scheduled for late 2026 publication by DOR, will substantially close the gap by reflecting two additional cycles of actual sales activity.

Within-class regressivity in Stockbridge specifically. Chapter 2’s discussion of within-class assessment regressivity cites published peer-reviewed research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the University of Chicago, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and others. Stockbridge-specific empirical confirmation would require a price-stratified ratio study using local MLS sales records matched against assessed values — a methodology described in Chapter 2 Note 11. Such a study has not been performed for Stockbridge and is not within the scope of this profile.

Buyer-to-voter match completeness. The canonical name layer handles the most common name variants encountered in Massachusetts assessor and voter data. It does not handle every conceivable variant; some matches are missed (and some are caught at the override layer when hand-reviewed). The reported buyer-to-voter conversion rate is therefore a conservative estimate — the true conversion rate is plausibly slightly higher than the figures presented. Chapter 1’s “29.5% overall / 25.3% recent half” figures are floors rather than point estimates.

Bounded limitations from data not yet ingested. Three signals are referenced in the body of the report as not yet incorporated into the classifier and would tighten the residency-tier assignments if available: (1) per-parcel personal-property-tax linkage from assessor working files, which would resurface the clean second-home signal currently disabled in the classifier; (2) LLC manager and trust beneficiary identification from Massachusetts Secretary of State filings and the registry of deeds, which would resolve the 100 currently entity-held residential parcels (\$17 million in assessed value) into primary or non-resident categories; (3) voter rolls from Lenox, Lee, Pittsfield, and Williamstown, which would tighten the cross-town voter signal currently limited to Great Barrington. These are documented improvements available through subsequent engagements; they do not affect the figures reported in this profile, which use the data currently available.

Compliance-recovery gap estimation. The \$0.3M-\$0.9M annual compliance-recovery gap cited in the executive summary and Chapter 5 represents a methodologically defensible range across four independent revenue streams on the strict universe of parcels Parcenomics could classify with confidence at the time of analysis: personal property tax on second-home furnishings, vehicle excise on Stockbridge-garaged vehicles registered elsewhere, boat excise on Stockbridge-moored vessels registered out of state, and the M.G.L. c.64G §3D short-term-rental community impact fee (statutory authority unused by Stockbridge as of FY2026). The per-stream low and high bounds reported in Chapter 5 Section A1 sum to \$282K and \$895K respectively; the rounded range \$0.3M-\$0.9M is the figure used in the executive summary and Chapter 5 prose. The range is a floor on the recoverable gap: parcels excluded from the strict universe for classification uncertainty (the contested-signal cohort plus unresolved entity-owned parcels) include some likely non-compliant cases that would surface through outreach and subsequent residency-classifier refinement.

Technical framing of the aggregation. For each stream $s \in \{1,2,3,4\}$, the recovery range is estimated as an interval $[L_s, U_s]$ where the bounds reflect conservative and aggressive recovery assumptions calibrated against regional comparables and per-stream enforcement realities. The aggregate annual range across streams is:

$$\left[\sum_s L_s, \sum_s U_s \right] = [\$0.3 \text{ M}, \$0.9 \text{ M}]$$

The within-stream estimation methodology — the comparable-regional data sources used to anchor the bounds, the calibration of conservative and aggressive recovery

assumptions, the prior distributions informed by per-stream enforcement-capacity considerations, and the per-parcel candidate identification — is Parcenomics methodology and not disclosed in this appendix. The framework above describes the structure within which the bounds are produced.

The actual recovery any town would achieve depends on local enforcement capacity, the Select Board and Town Meeting’s appetite for outreach, and political conditions specific to the engagement window. The range described is a defensible estimate, not a guaranteed outcome.

7. Reproducibility and request-for-detail process

Every external data source cited in this report is publicly accessible. A peer analyst with appropriate domain knowledge can verify each source independently:

- American Community Survey data: data.census.gov
- DOR Recap, LA-13, LA-19, Schedule A, and Levy Limit forms: dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us
- Massachusetts General Laws and session laws (including the 2024 Affordable Homes Act): malegislature.gov
- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities publications, including the Seasonal Community designation list: mass.gov
- Town of Stockbridge records (assessor data, voter file, sales register, Recap): publicly available through the Town’s public-records-request process
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Survey of Second Homeowners (2022): berkshireplanning.org

For methodology questions beyond the categorical descriptions in this appendix, Parcenomics offers a scoped methodology consultation as part of engagement scoping. The consultation produces a written methodology disclosure scoped to the specific finding the requester is evaluating, with enough operational detail for a peer analyst to assess defensibility without exposing the full proprietary specification.

8. Versioning

This profile is the inaugural Stockbridge release in a planned Parcenomics municipal-profile series, dated May 2026. Subsequent profiles, covering additional Massachusetts municipalities, will follow as the series expands. The methodology framework described in this appendix is portable across municipalities and will form the analytical backbone of subsequent profiles. Any future revision of this Stockbridge profile will be re-dated and re-versioned.

Acknowledgments

Principal Author

Patrick White, Founder and Principal, Parcenomics.

Data Sources

This profile draws on public data and institutional records provided by:

- **Town of Stockbridge** — Board of Assessors and Town Clerk
- **Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services**
- **U.S. Census Bureau** — American Community Survey
- **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**

Specific datasets and public-access URLs are documented in Section 2 and Section 7 of the Technical Appendix.

Analytical Context

This profile is the inaugural municipal release in the Parcenomics Fiscal & Civic Profile series. Subsequent profiles, covering additional Massachusetts municipalities, will follow as Parcenomics expands its engagement footprint across the Commonwealth. The methodology developed for Stockbridge — multi-signal residency triangulation, the four-category sale filter, and the compliance-recovery candidate-identification framework — is portable across municipalities and will form the analytical backbone of the series.

Contact

Parcenomics · hello@parcenomics.com · 413-441-5231

License

For non-commercial review and evaluation purposes. Redistribution requires written permission from Parcenomics.