



Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
*plan * develop * promote*

MVPC Regional Goals and Policies and its Role in Addressing Poverty within the Region

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
March 2014



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MVPC Responsibilities

Like all Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), the MVPC monitors its region's socioeconomic conditions and evaluates policies/actions it can take in partnership with its member communities on employment, living conditions, public health and the environment – to promote the orderly development of the region. Implicit in this work is the broader goal of helping to reduce poverty in the region's communities.

What is Poverty?

Federal Definition: Family Median Income (FMI): U.S. Dep't. of Health and Human Services (HHS)

- % of people in families with incomes at or below a certain level
- all money income earned by a family before taxes
- thresholds depend on family size, updated for inflation
- thresholds for individuals and couples over the age of 65 are somewhat lower.
- HHS thresholds do not vary by geography and thus do not reflect differences in cost of living among states.



Poverty Measures

Area Median Income (AMI) – household-based

- Common measure for MPOs – 80%, 50-60%
- Common measure for housing-based programs
 - Varied thresholds used: 80%, 50%, 30% for housing programs

Per Capita Income (PCI)

- Used by some MPOs and Economic Development agencies as an indicator

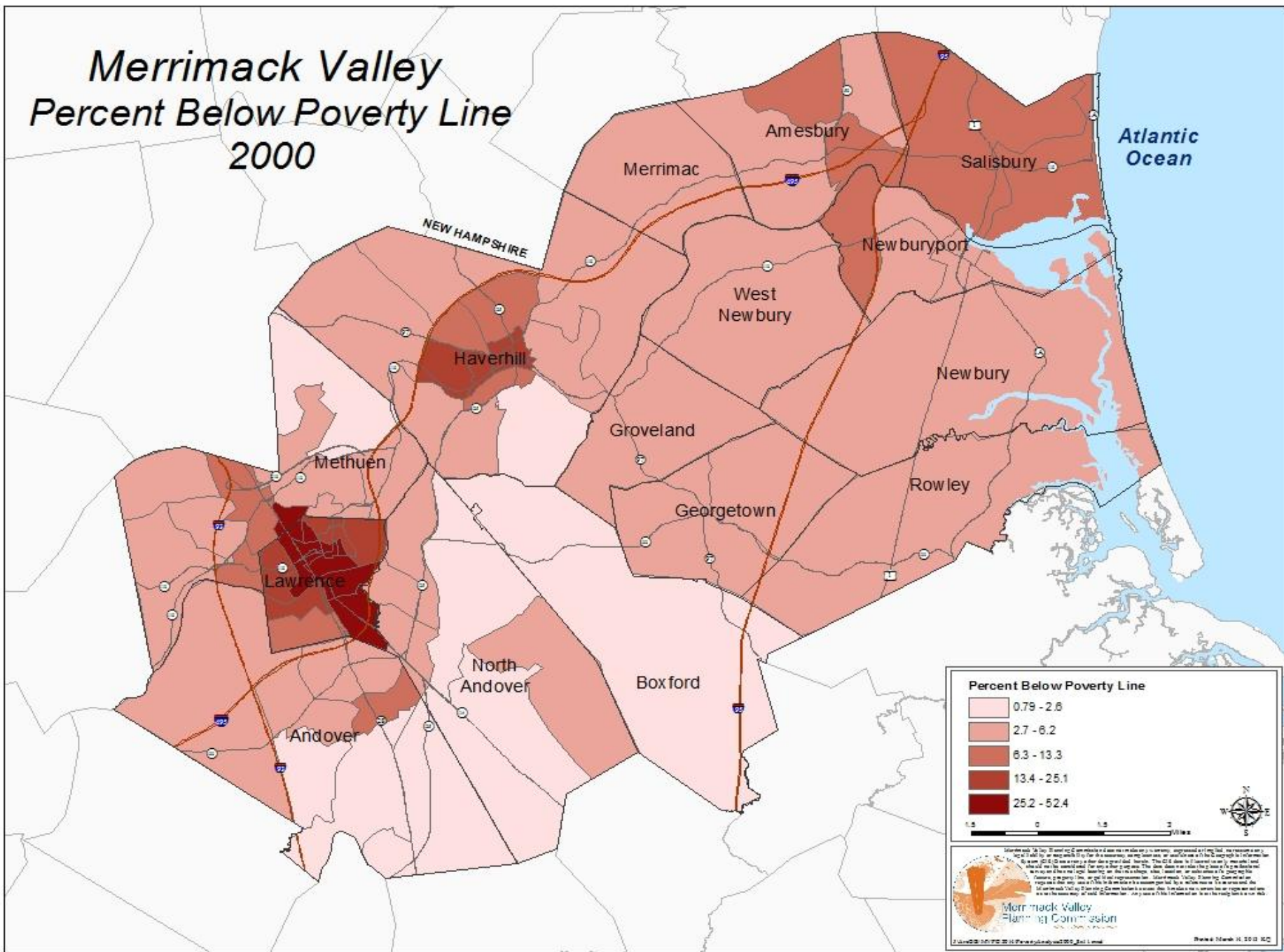
The MVPC uses 80% AMI as the most inclusive measure, as recommended by the MVMPO's Title VI/EJ consultant



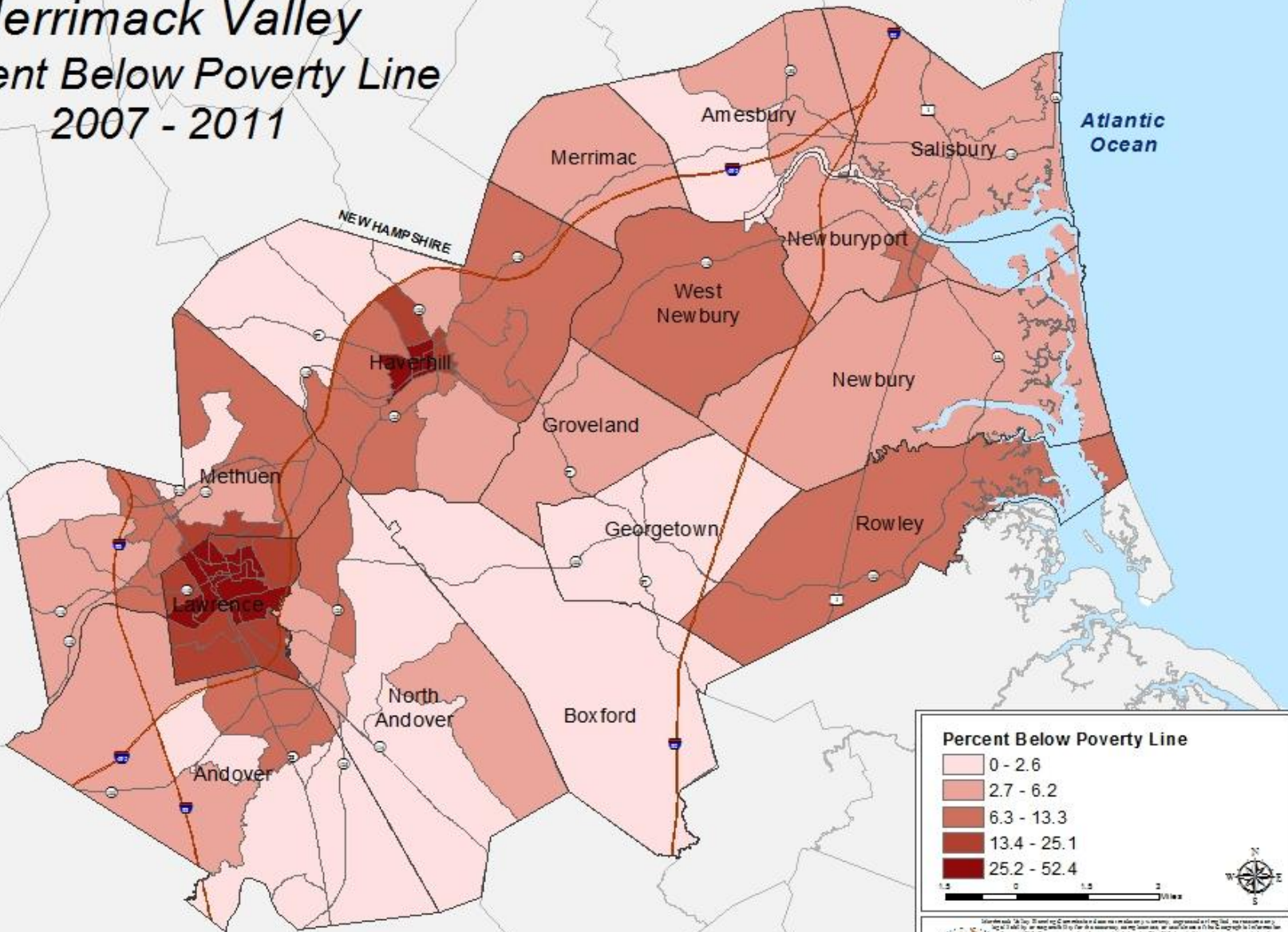
Poverty in Massachusetts

- The overall poverty rate in Massachusetts increased from 10.3% in 2009 to 11.4% in 2010. This compares with an increase in the overall poverty rate in the U.S. during the same period, from 14.3% to 15.3%.
- The Massachusetts poverty rate for children under 18 increased 1.3% between 2009 and 2010 to 14.3%, compared with a 1.6% increase in the childhood poverty rate nationwide during the same period, to 21.6%.
- Despite the increase in the overall Massachusetts rate, the Commonwealth ranks among ten states with the lowest poverty levels.

Merrimack Valley Percent Below Poverty Line 2000



Merrimack Valley Percent Below Poverty Line 2007 - 2011



Percent Below Poverty Line

0 - 2.6
2.7 - 6.2
6.3 - 13.3
13.4 - 25.1
25.2 - 52.4

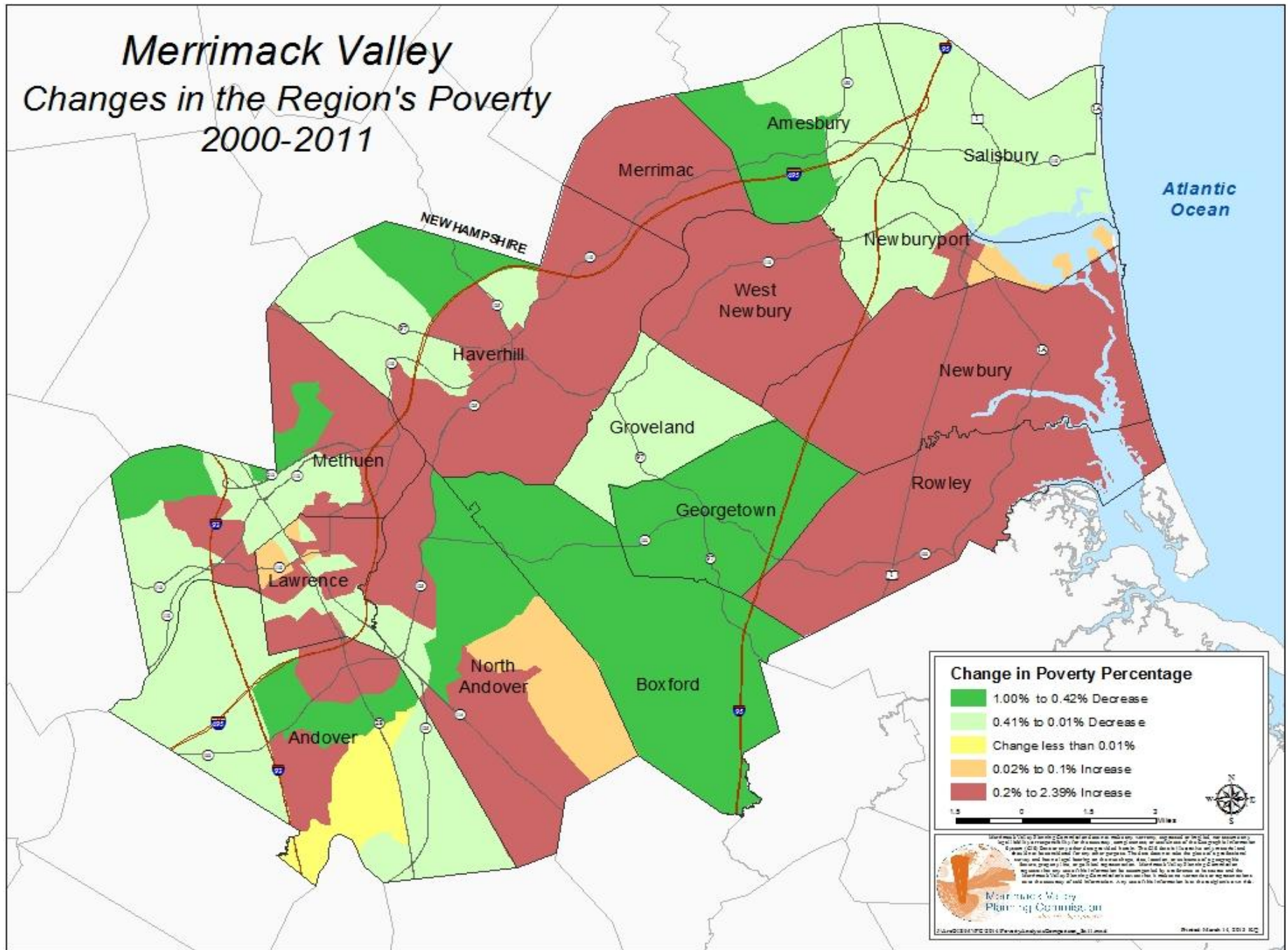
Scale: 0 to 2 Miles

North Arrow

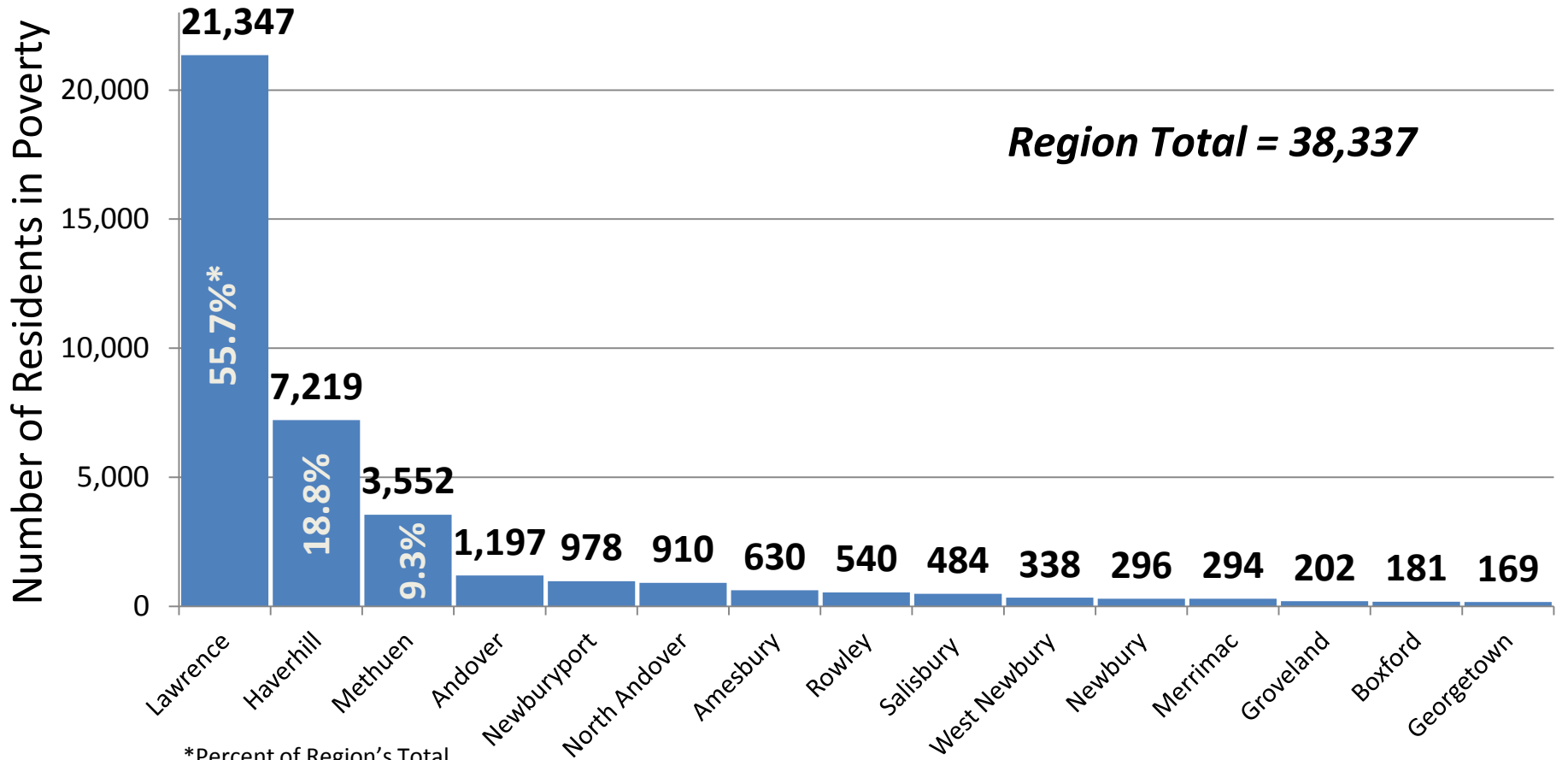
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Merrimack Valley Changes in the Region's Poverty 2000-2011



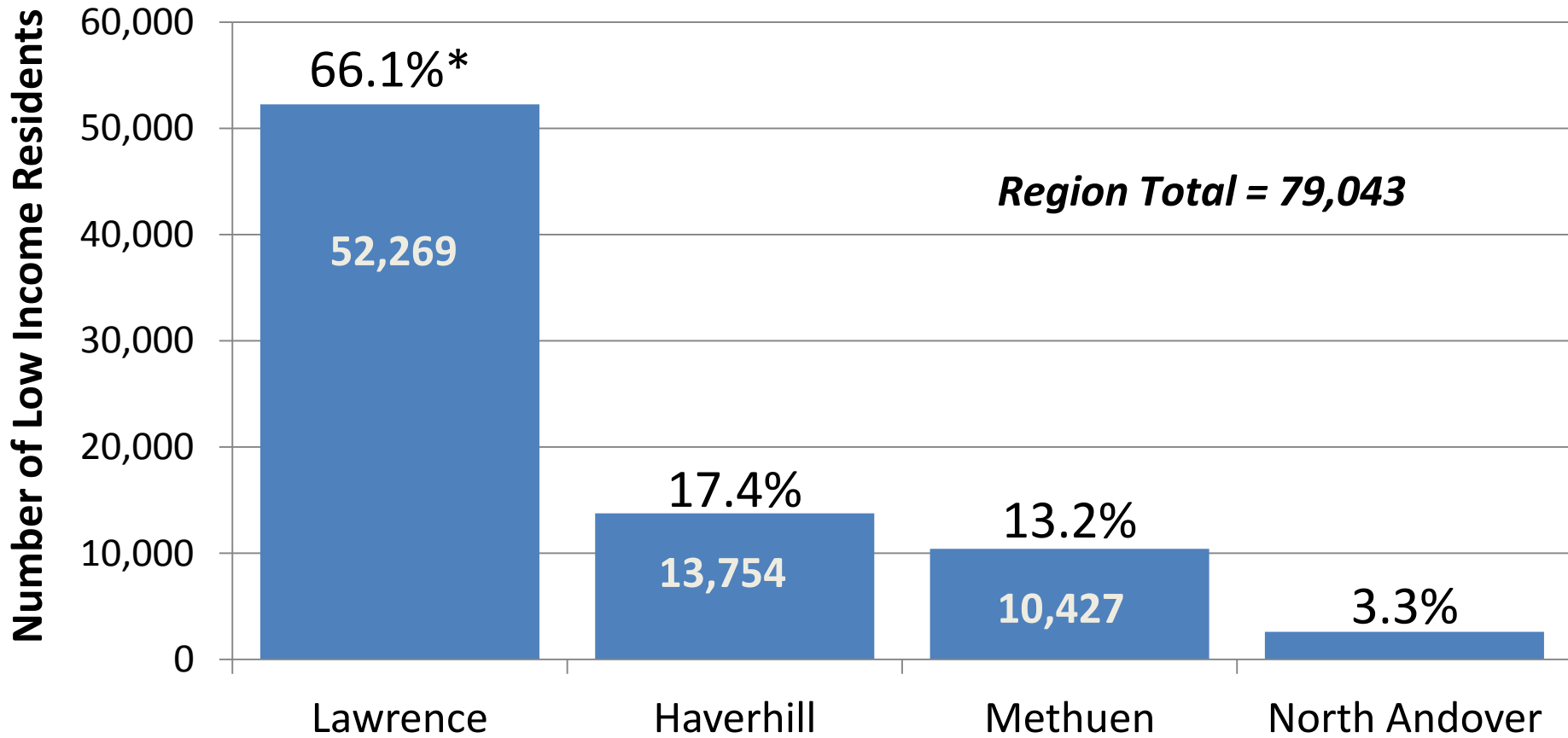
Poverty in the Merrimack Valley: A Tale of Three Cities



*Percent of Region's Total

Source: American Community Survey, 2007-2011

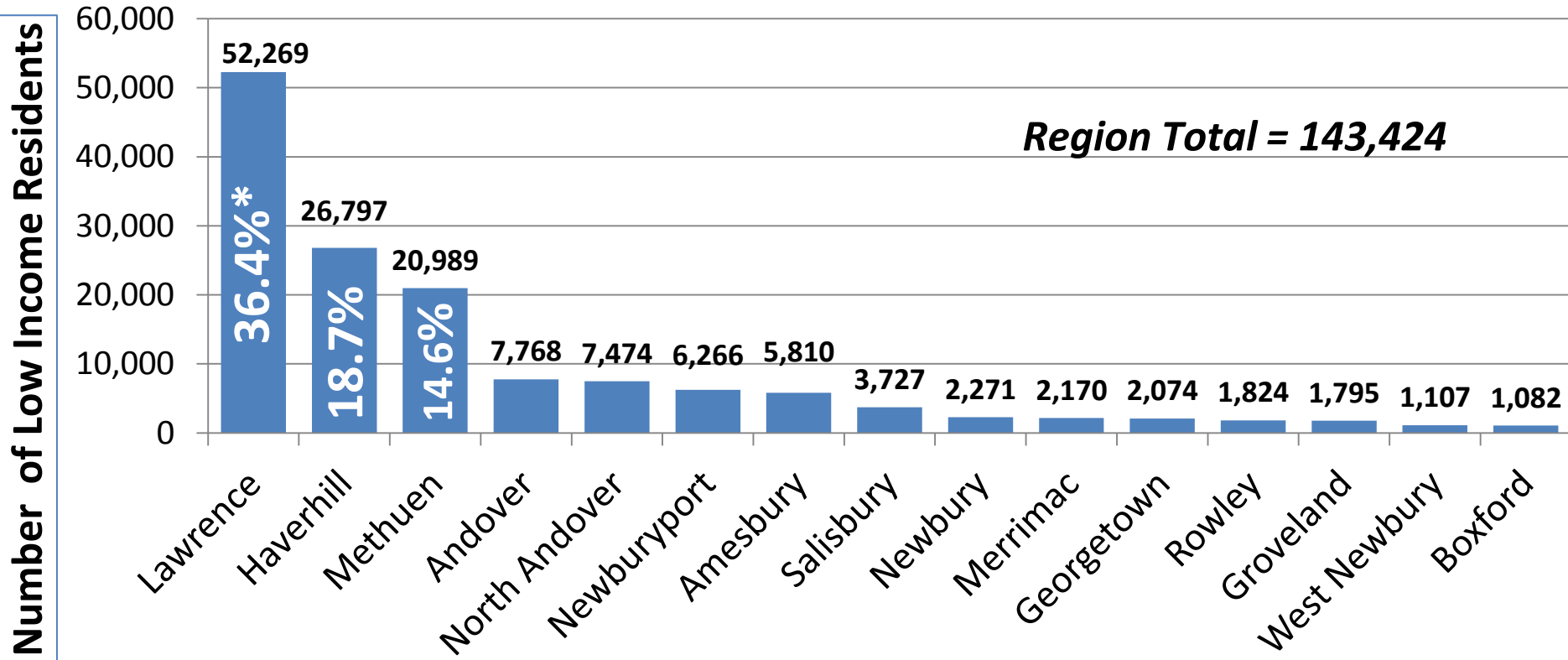
Low Income Residents as Defined by MVMPO for Environmental Justice



*Percent of Region's Total

Estimated by MVPC from 2006-2010 ACS

Low Income Residents Living in Households with Median Incomes <80% of Regional Average



*Percent of Region's Total

Estimated by MVPC from 2006-2010 ACS



Trends

- Incomes are recovering slightly from ‘great recession’, but underemployment and unemployment impacts are believed widespread and as yet are not well understood
- Higher-income jobs and populations are slowly moving toward as well as away from Boston – as far north as southern New Hampshire
- Population declines are reversing in some urban areas
- Some of the Commonwealth’s Gateway Communities have captured higher incomes and increased economic activity – results are uneven
- Poverty has increased in sections of, or all of, ten of the region’s communities



Trends

- Continued household size reduction
- Millennials' travel habits = less car ownership, less driving, more bicycling, walking and transit use
- Slowed traffic growth
- Aging transportation infrastructure
- Advances in restoring/replacing transportation assets
- Certain transportation connections to employment, civic and government services have improved, but overall remain limited



MVPC Responsibilities Relative to Low-Incomes

- Consider the region's needs in setting Commission goals, providing technical assistance and leveraging funding;
- Target work to key regional populations and geographic locations, consistent with its core programs, and
- Partner with other regional stakeholders to deliver funding and services that help to reduce poverty



MVPC Activities Consistent with Addressing Low Incomes

- Housing supply, quality, cost and location
- Job market and business/employee development
- Infrastructure conditions and levels of service
- Transportation choice, quality and connectivity
- Environmental protection, remediation and hazard reduction
- Regional cooperation to reduce municipal service delivery costs and enhance services



Activities in the Region by Core Program Area



Comprehensive Planning and Development

- DLTA, EDA Funded
- DLTA requires funds be spent on “Planning Ahead for Growth and Housing” and on “Regional Services”
- Several Commonwealth initiatives apply: PDA’s, Smart Growth Zoning, Gateway Cities Programs, 43D, 40R, MassWorks, HDIP
- Housing Development (affordable and market rate) integral to MVPC’s and Commonwealth’s mission
- EDA funds used to implement CEDS



Comprehensive Planning and Development

MVPC Comprehensive Planning efforts helping low income households:

- ‘Lower Acre’ Redevelopment Plan in Haverhill;
- Regional bus tour for developers and lenders showcasing housing development opportunities on six sites in the region’s Priority Development Areas, and
- Workshop and training on "compact neighborhoods“, 40R districts, 43D for housing, and development area pre-permitting. Session leaders included EOHED and DHCD development experts, and MVPC's Executive Director.



Comprehensive Planning and Development

- MassWorks grants were reviewed and endorsed by MVPC for projects funded in Amesbury, Haverhill, and Lawrence
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was completed and is now being implemented
- Housing Production Plan completed for Merrimac
- Priority Growth Strategy completed and implementation is on-going. Plan will be updated in 2014
- Executed MOU with Workforce Investment Board
- MVED Revolving Loan Fund helping create/retain jobs



Comprehensive Planning and Development

- Methuen 40R District application and HDIP application in development
- Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan completed
- MGL 43D: staff is actively engaged with communities on 16 43D sites
- Facilitated affordable housing development discussion for Merrimac Brownfields site
- Permit streamlining initiatives in Haverhill and Georgetown completed

Environmental Planning



Environmental Planning

- Many different funders:
 - Federal: EPA, FEMA, NOAA, USFWS, DOI, etc.
 - State: MassDEP, CZM / MassBays, DMF, DCR, etc.
 - Municipal and Non-Profit: ENHC, MassAudubon, Ducks Unlimited, etc.
- Projects must meet a wide range of individual program goals:
 - Preserving vital land and water resources
 - Restoring degraded habitats
 - Mitigating natural hazards
 - Remediating contaminated properties
 - Monitoring ecosystem health



Environmental Activities

- Brownfields Technical Assistance:

Brownfield: “A property whose expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence, or potential presence, of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”

- ASTM Phase I & II Environmental Site Assessments
- RLF Loans and Subgrants for Site Remediation



Brownfield Focus on Gateway Cities

Haverhill

- Locke Street – part of \$50M housing development
- Locust/Essex Streets – considered for MVRTA Transit Center
- Bradford Rail Trail – multi-use public trail along Merrimack River
- Stevens Street Mill – proposed redevelopment for 60+ housing units



Brownfield Focus on Gateway Cities

Lawrence

- 13 vacant City lots – potential public greenspace/community gardens
- Bodwell site – reuse as community orchard
- In-Town Mall – redevelopment for NECC Allied Health and Technology Center
- Oxford Paper Mill site remediation - \$100K sub-grant & \$250K loan for 3-acre public park



Brownfield Focus on Gateway Cities

Methuen

- Appleyard Trucking – redevelopment as public park & parking for nearby shops/restaurants
- 54 Osgood Street – potential downtown redevelopment w/adjoining former Shadi's Restaurant property



Environmental Activities

- Regional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (natural hazards)
- Stormwater Management Technical Assistance:
 - Local SWMPs per EPA General Permit Requirements
 - CIC Grant – Regional Stormwater Management Collaborative
- Coastal Technical Assistance (MassBays National Estuary Program)
- Local Open Space and Recreation Plans



Open Space/Recreation Plans: EJ Considerations

EOEEA/DCS Plan Development Guidance:

“Critical to advancing Environmental Justice in the Commonwealth is the equitable distribution of environmental assets such as parks, open space, and recreation.”

“Municipalities shall identify and prioritize open space sites in their Open Space and Recreation Plans that are socially, recreationally and ecologically important to EJ populations.”



Open Space/Recreation Plans: EJ Considerations

- MVPC helped prepare OSRPs for many communities including Haverhill, Lawrence and Methuen
- EOEEA requires each OSRP to identify and address recreational needs of community's EJ population
- GWL, as MVPC sub-consultant, met with and surveyed selected EJ groups in Arlington neighborhood of Lawrence and Methuen



Other Environmental EJ Considerations

Multi-Hazard Mitigation

- Grant application to MEMA for conduct of a pilot stormwater retrofit project in the Lawrence – Methuen Spicket River corridor – to reduce stormwater peak flows and localized flooding in riverfront neighborhoods

Water Quality Improvements

- Application to EPA for federal designation of lower Merrimack River (Lawrence to Atlantic Ocean) as a “No Discharge Area” – to help attain goal of “fishable/swimmable” water quality

Transportation



Title VI

FHWA/FTA require, through **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, that

“no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

MassDOT also requires similar protections on the basis of a person’s gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and other protected characteristics.



Environmental Justice

- Avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, *on minority and low-income populations;*
- Ensuring the *full and fair participation* in the transportation decision-making process by all potentially affected communities, and
- *Preventing the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.*



Transportation Focus Area 1: Title VI Populations

- 2010: average proportion of minorities residing in a given MVMPO Census tract: 28.66%. 25 MVMPO Census tracts are above 28.66%
- These tracts are located in four communities:
 - Haverhill
 - Lawrence
 - Methuen
 - North Andover



Transportation Focus Area 2: Low-Incomes

Census tract incomes and minority populations are compared.

- An MVMPO low-income household is one in which total income is 80% or less of the median MVMPO household income
- 54,905 households or 44.6% of the region's households were classified as low income in 2010
- Low income tracts are located in Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen.



Transportation Focus Area 3: Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Assumption: many (but not all) LEP households are also low-income households.

- In 2010, LEP persons constituted 22,429 or 7.28% of all residents, up from 14,495 or 4.90% in 2000.
- LEP is defined as someone who speaks English ‘less than very well’.
- Spanish is the predominant language spoken other than English
- Asian language-speakers are increasingly present



Transportation Priority: Increasing Participation in Low-Income Areas

MVMPO outreach increased in concert with MassDOT Title VI / Environmental Justice efforts:

- Expanded MVMPO contact list;
- Meetings with area organizations serving low-income citizens
- Participation in ‘non-traditional’ civic activities to get the word out about transportation and engage these populations
- Further refinements in definition of low income populations (use of Block Groups vs. Census Tracts)



Transportation Spending

- Since the 2007 RTP 40% of all FHWA and FTA funding spent in the (MVMPO) region was spent on projects in Haverhill, Lawrence
- FFYs 2010-2014 UPWPs: MVMPO devoted 51% of funds used for traffic studies in region's low-income areas



New Transit Projects

MVRTA Fixed-Route Service Frequency Increases:

- Route 1 (Lawrence-Methuen Haverhill)
- Route 41(Lawrence-Lowell)

MVRTA New Routes to Add Mobility:

- Route 54 – Amesbury/Salisbury via Newburyport
- Route 76 – From Lawrence to River Road in Andover
- Route 28 Employment Service – From Lawrence to
Route 28 in Salem, NH
- Plans for Sunday and Holiday Services



Transportation Performance

- Increasing at Federal, State and MPO levels
- All surface transportation modes included
- Emphasis areas: SGR, transit and non-motorized transportation improvements
- Performance Measure examples relevant to Environmental Justice communities:
 - % of population within 10-minute walk to transit
 - % of service in EJ neighborhoods
 - % of region's transit investments in EJ neighborhoods



Questions and Comments